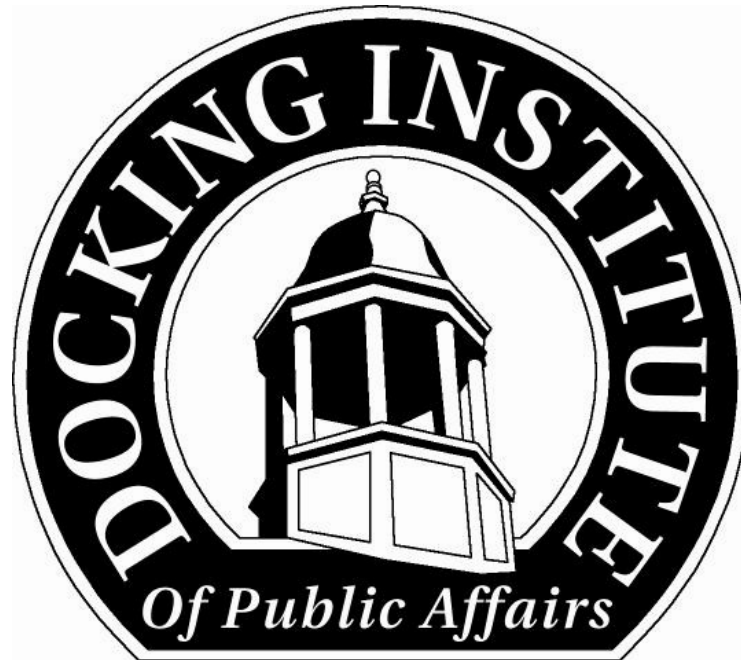


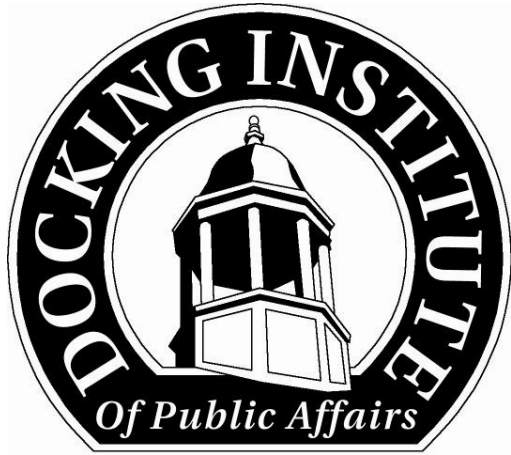
Unified School District 466  
School Bond Survey  
2017



Prepared For  
**Unified School District 466 Board and Administrators**

Prepared By  
**The Docking Institute of Public Affairs  
Fort Hays State University**

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Mission:

To Facilitate Effective Public Policy Decision-Making.

The staff of the Docking Institute of Public Affairs and its University Center for Survey Research are dedicated to serving the people of Kansas and surrounding states.

# USD 466 School Bond Survey 2017

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## **Prepared For:**

USD 466 Board and Administrators

In pursuit of  
The Docking Institute's Public Affairs Mission

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## Executive Summary

- Of the respondents who indicated a bond amount they would be willing to support, assuming it contained projects of which they approved, 61% indicated that they could support a bond as high as \$15 million, while only 41% indicated that they could support a bond as high as \$20 million.
- Ratings of support for the various improvement projects were significantly lower for respondents indicating they would not support a bond of any size (bond opponents). However, the relative priorities of those indicating they could vote for at least a \$15 million bond (bond supporters) were somewhat similar to bond opponents.
- The most popular improvement project among bond supporters, by far, was the tornado safe area, followed by upgrading classrooms, renovating the 60/80 Building, the elementary school front office and the middle school kitchen. Opponents to the bond also rated all of these projects relatively highly.
- The least popular improvement project among supporters and opponents was the flexible classrooms, followed by the fitness center and demolishing the wing for parking.
- Among supporters of a bond, less than 50% indicated support for flexible classrooms, the fitness center and demolishing the wing for parking. Including these projects in a prospective bond initiative would seriously threaten chances of the bond gleaning a majority of voter support.
- Among supporters of a bond, between 50% and 60% said they would support parking for the tennis courts, lighting for the track, media library, add band classroom and demolish houses. Including too many of these projects could threaten the likelihood of gleaning a majority of voter support.
- All other projects could be included in the bond with little chance of it threatening majority voter support.

## Methodology

In May of 2017, the Docking Institute of Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University contracted with Unified School District 466 to conduct a study to measure District voter support for a variety of prospective improvement projects identified as high-need by District administrators, as well as the size of school bond they would be inclined to support. The manifest purpose of the study is to provide valid data to assist administrators in authoring a bond proposal that will best meet the educational needs of students in the District and have a high probability of passing in a bond election. It also serves the latent function of enhancing trust and improving rapport between the voters and the USD 466 Board of Education. The opinions and preferences for the various proposed improvement projects among registered voters residing within the District were measured using a self-administered survey delivered to respondents' mailing addresses of record via U.S. Postal Service.

The cover letter (Appendix A) and survey instrument (Appendix B) were constructed in cooperation with District administrators and designed to measure respondents' level of support for each individual improvement project, the size of school bond they would be willing to support and any issues that would strongly affect the respondent's propensity to vote for or against a school bond. A Project Information Sheet (Appendix A) was also prepared to describe each project and each project's individual cost to allow respondents to make informed decisions.

The sample data were obtained from the Scott, Lane, Logan and Wichita County Clerks, which included the most current official list of registered voters in the District with their home mailing addresses. The Institute had the Post Office update the file to include recent moves, leaving a sample of 3,251 registered voters. Surveys were mailed to each registered voter on May 26, 2017. Data collection was terminated on June 26, at which time 795 completed surveys had been returned for a response rate of 24.5%. This is typical for our school bond surveys and represents what would be about 46.8% of the approximately 1,700 voters in the most recent USD 466 bond election. Because there was no random sampling and all members of the target population were sent the survey, there is no margin of error. However, because not all of the 3,251 registered voters responded, there is a potential for response bias. The survey data were entered into an SPSS data file for analysis.

## Responses to Survey Questions

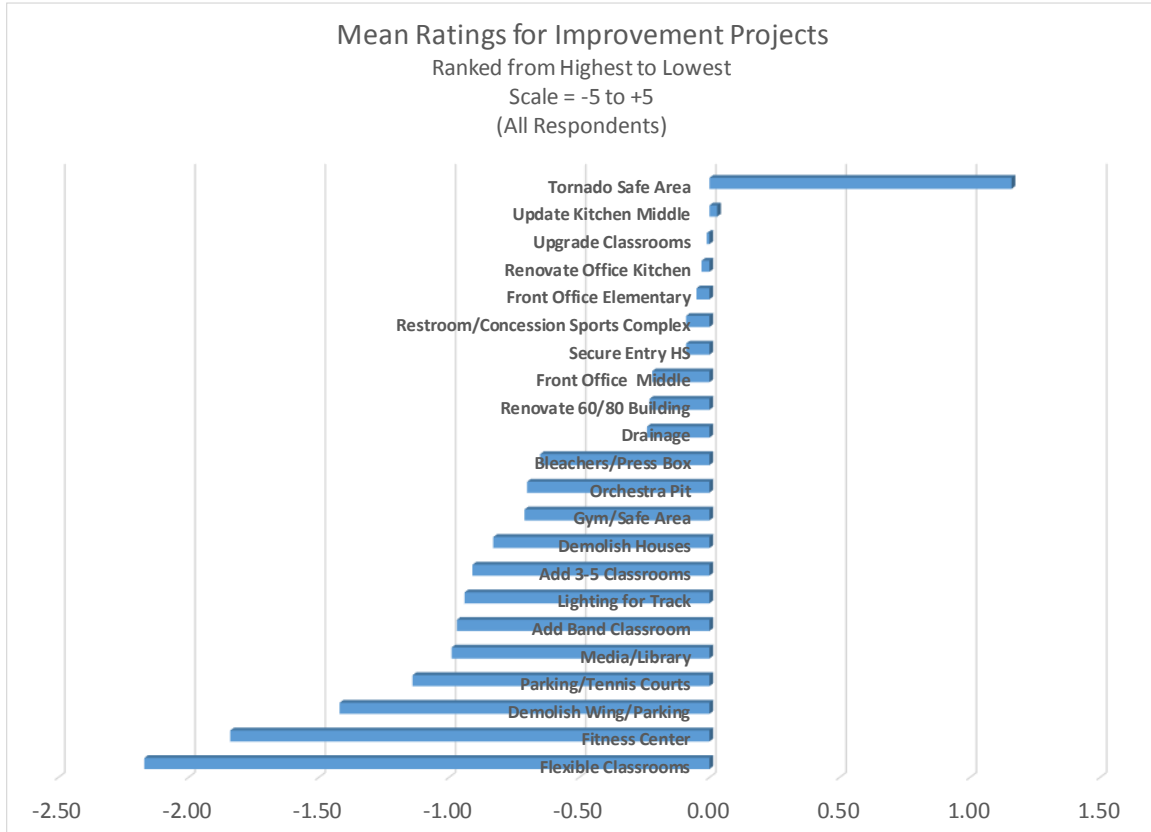


Figure 1: Mean Ratings for Improvement Projects (All Respondents)

Figure 1 shows the mean ratings of the 22 proposed improvement projects, ranked with the most popular at the top (highest mean rating). The tornado safe area was, by far, the most highly rated improvement. Opposition was similar to support for updating the middle school kitchen, upgrading the classrooms and renovating the office kitchen. The remaining projects all tended to receive more negative than positive ratings from respondents overall. The flexible classrooms and fitness center were, by far, the least popular projects, followed by demolishing the wing to provide additional parking and parking for the tennis courts.

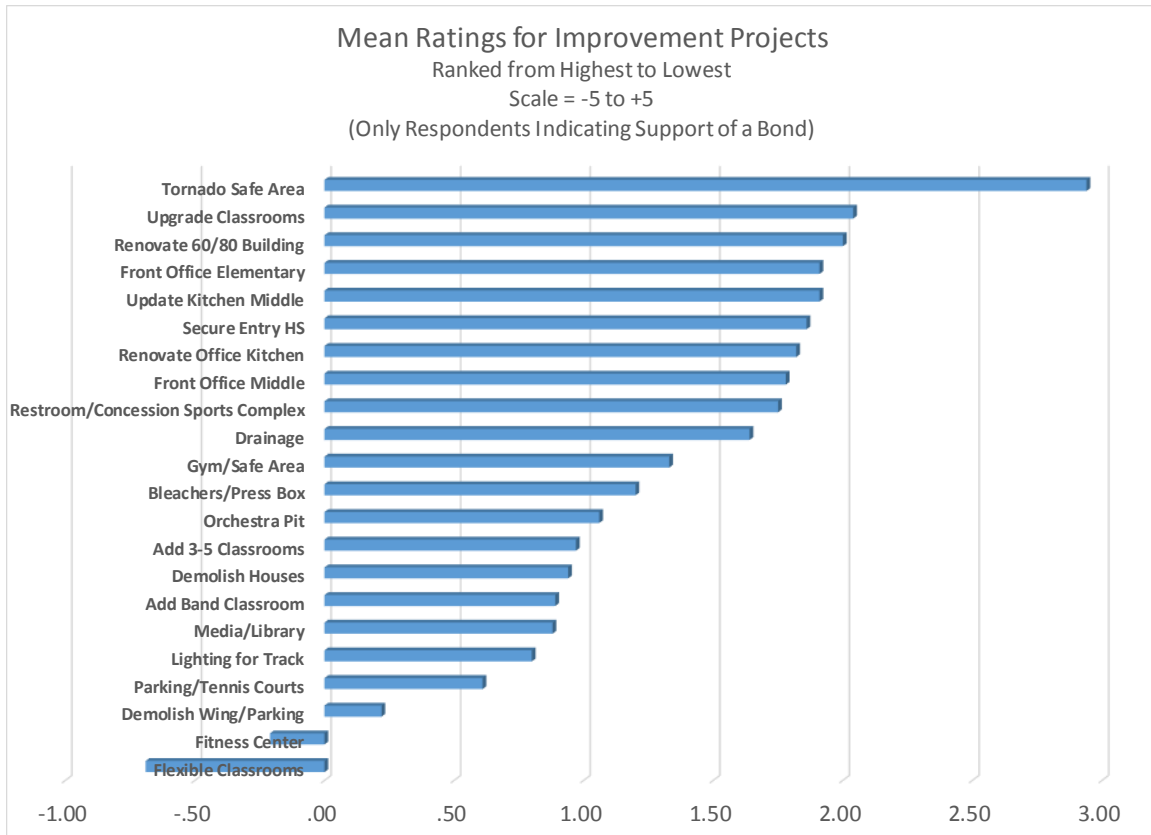


Figure 2: Mean Ratings for Improvement Projects (Only Respondent Indicating Support for a Bond of Some Size)

In order to get a better idea of project priorities for only those respondents indicating on a follow-up question that they would tend to support a bond of at least \$15 million, the previous analysis was replicated for only those indicating support for a bond of some size. The results are shown in Figure 2.

One striking comparison to Figure 1 are the great differences in mean ratings, suggesting that those indicating they would not support a bond of any size were also highly likely to rate the projects with extreme negative values. One flaw of the mean statistic is that it is overly sensitive to extreme values. This effect is demonstrated in the dramatic shift from negative to positive means when the extreme negative scores of those opposing any school bond are excluded from the analysis.

Although the mean scores of all respondents and only supporters are quite different, the resultant priorities change only somewhat. A tornado safe area remains the highest priority. Bond supporters were more likely to want upgraded classrooms, to renovate the 60/80 building and to renovate the elementary school front office. The lowest priorities of the bond supporters are similar to those who would not support a school bond of any size.



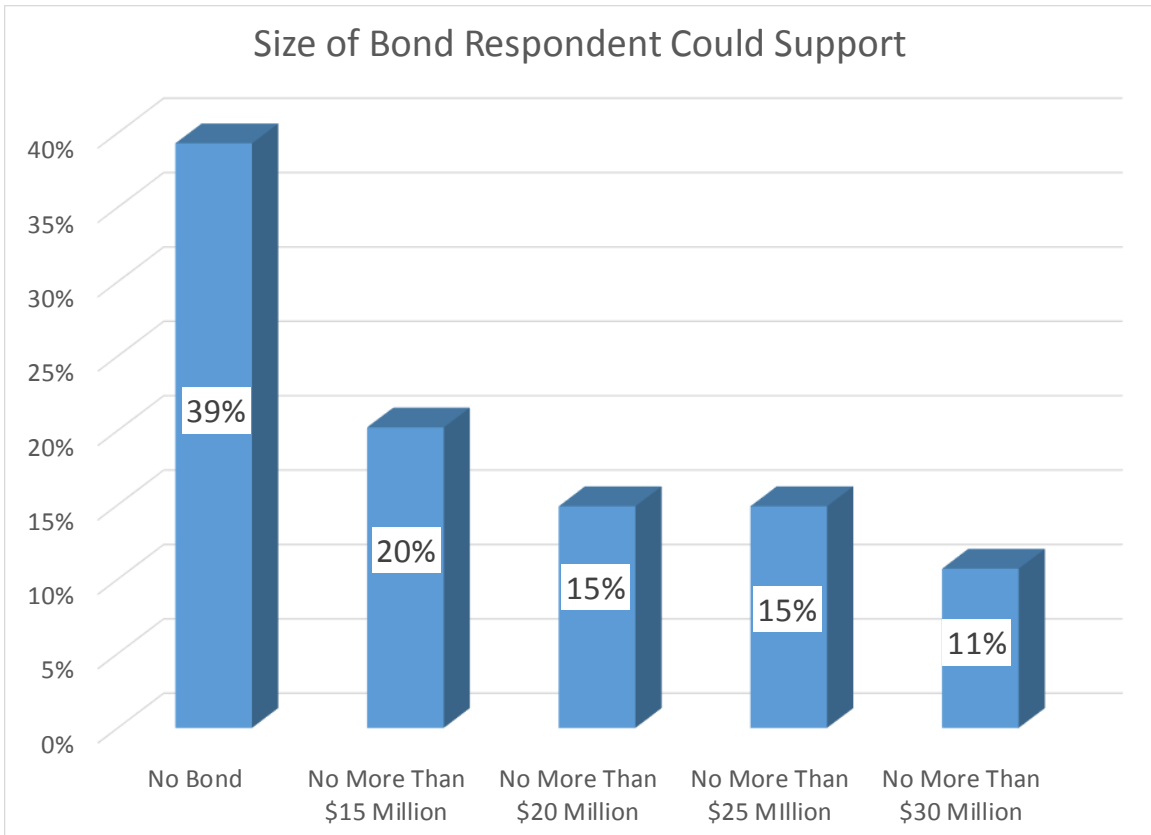


Figure 3: Largest School Bond Respondent Would Support (Assuming Highly Rated Projects)

Figure 3 shows the distribution of responses when respondents were asked, “Assuming that a proposed bond contained projects that you rated highly, what is the largest school bond you would consider voting for?” It is interesting that about the same percentage of respondents supported a \$25 million bond as a \$20 million bond. Except for this anomaly, the larger the bond, the lower the level of support.

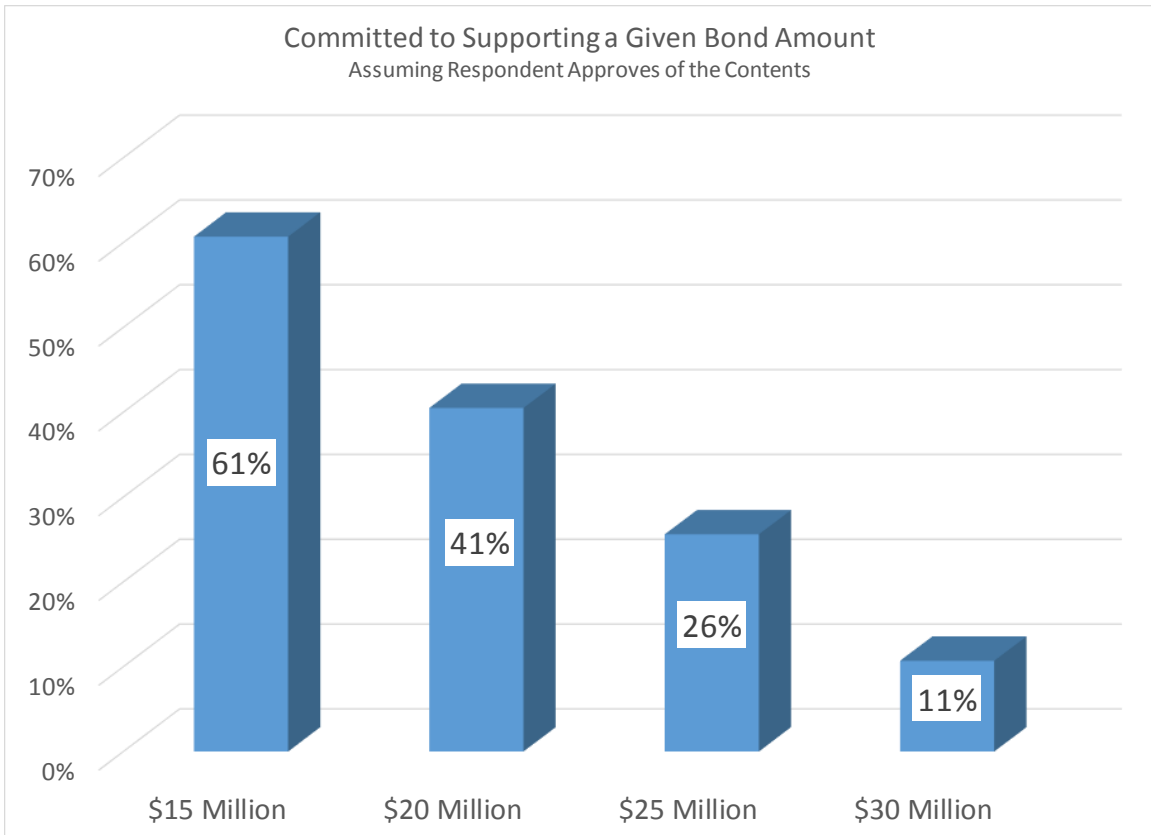


Figure 4: Overall Support for Various Bond Sizes

Assuming that respondents would vote for school bonds that were smaller than the maximum bond they indicated they would vote for, Figure 4 shows the percentage of respondents that “should” vote for school bonds of varying size.

The results suggest that 61% of voters would support a bond of \$15 million, but only 41% would support a bond of \$20 million. Since over 50% is required for a bond to pass, these results suggest that a bond of at least \$15 million, but not approaching \$20 million, should pass in a bond election, assuming the bond did not include any of the projects with high negative mean ratings among likely supporters.

The results suggest that a bond of over \$20 million would be supported by less than 41% of voters.

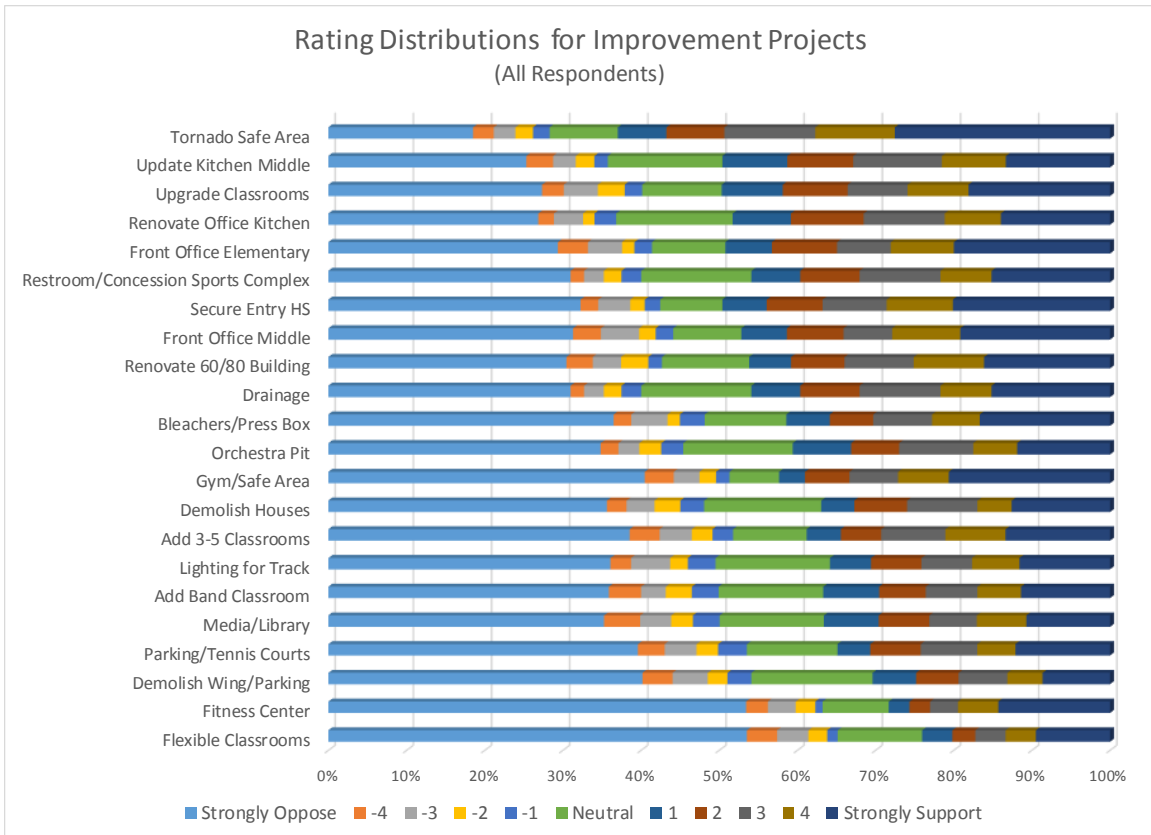


Figure 5: Rating Distributions of Proposed Improvement Projects (All Respondents)

Figure 5 shows the proportional breakdown of ratings for the 22 individual improvement projects. This graph is useful for assessing the effect described earlier in the report for the mean statistic to be overly sensitive to outliers (extreme scores). For these variables, the extreme scores are the -5s and +5s.

Figure 5 shows a distinct tendency for the extreme ratings on the projects to be significantly greater for the negative ratings. Also, the more negatively an item is rated, the greater the discrepancy between the proportion of +5 ratings and -5 ratings. This indicates that the measured opposition to the less popular projects is not as great as the mean statistics suggest.

This graph also allows the reader to assess majority support. Where the green section (neutral rating) moves to the left of the 50% mark, those projects have majority support. Note that only five projects meet this criterion among all respondents.

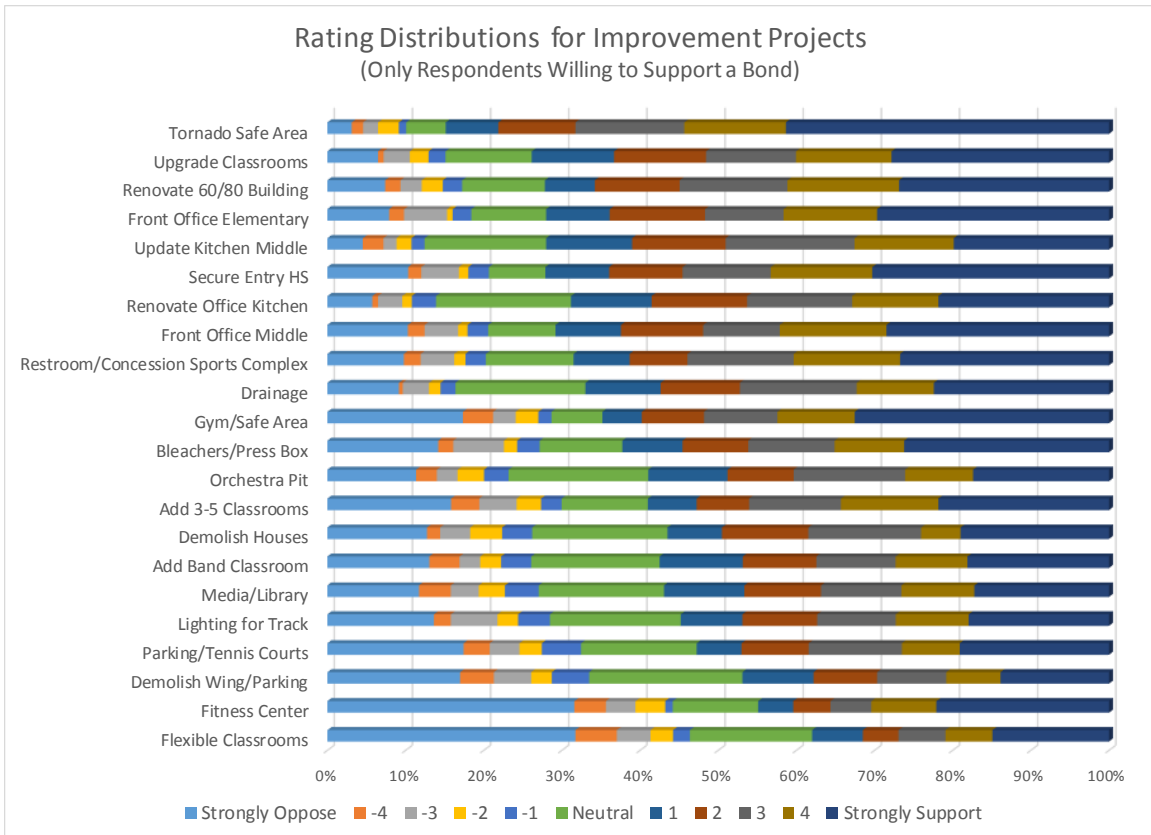


Figure 6: Rating Distributions of Proposed Improvement Projects (Only Respondent Indicating Support for a Bond of Some Size)

Figure 6 shows the project ratings for only those respondents indicating in a follow-up survey question that they would be willing to vote for a school bond of at least \$15 million, assuming they approved of the projects included. Note that supporters of a bond were much less likely to “strongly oppose” the projects and more likely to “strongly support” the projects. Also note that even the least popular project, flexible classrooms, was supported to some degree by over one-third of bond supporters.

The bottom three projects are supported by less than half of bond supporters, so it is highly advisable to exclude those projects from a bond proposal. The Parking/Tennis Courts, Lighting for Track, Media/Library, Add Band Classroom and Demolish Houses are supported to some degree by over 50% of supporters, but under 60%. It is advisable to include as few of these projects in the bond as feasible. The remaining projects should be safe to include on a school bond with little chance they will cause a significant number of voters to vote against that bond.

## Narrative Responses

Institute researchers conducted content analysis on the narrative data to categorize the various comments and quantify the most commonly cited issues.

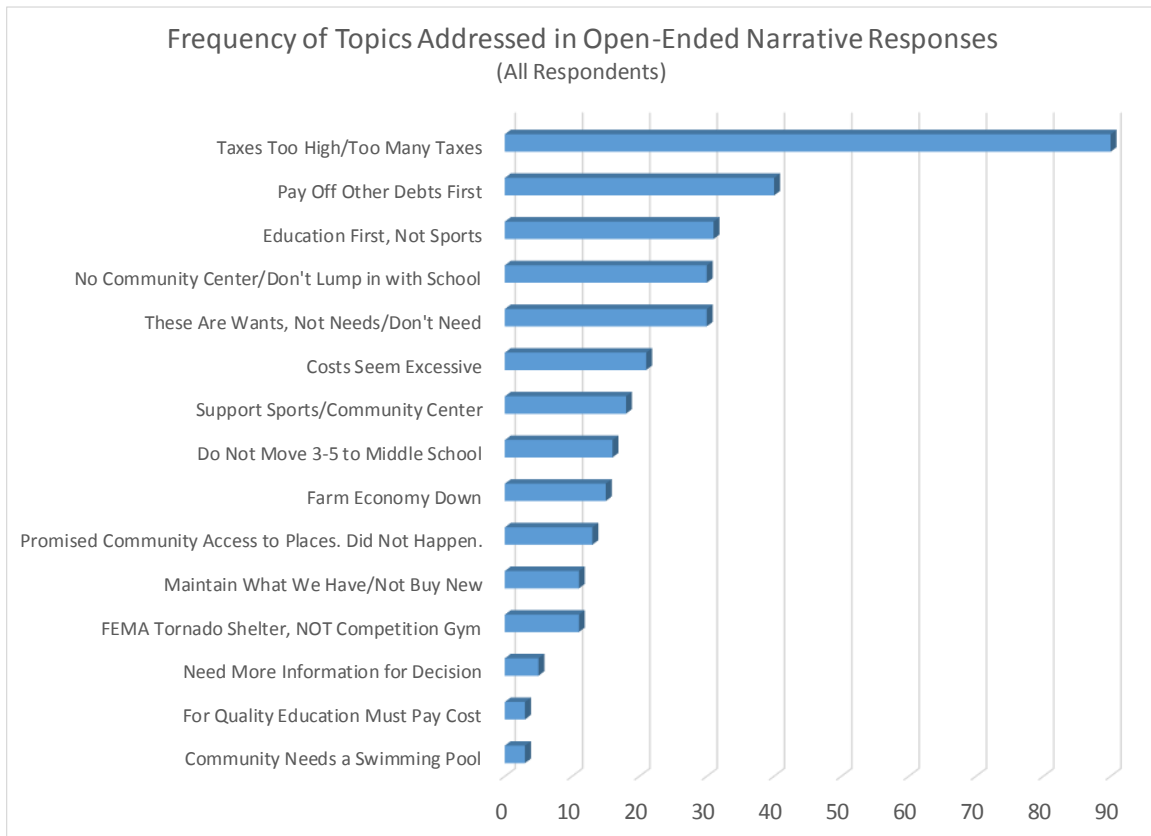


Figure 7: Topics Addressed in Open-Ended Narrative Responses (All Respondents)

The most common narrative responses expressed opinions of excessive taxation, that taxes were either too high or there were too many of them. Other common comments included a desire to pay off other debts before passing a new bond, that educational needs should take priority or be the sole purpose of bond funding, that Community resources should not be mixed with K-12 resources and that some of the improvement projects seemed more like desires than needs.

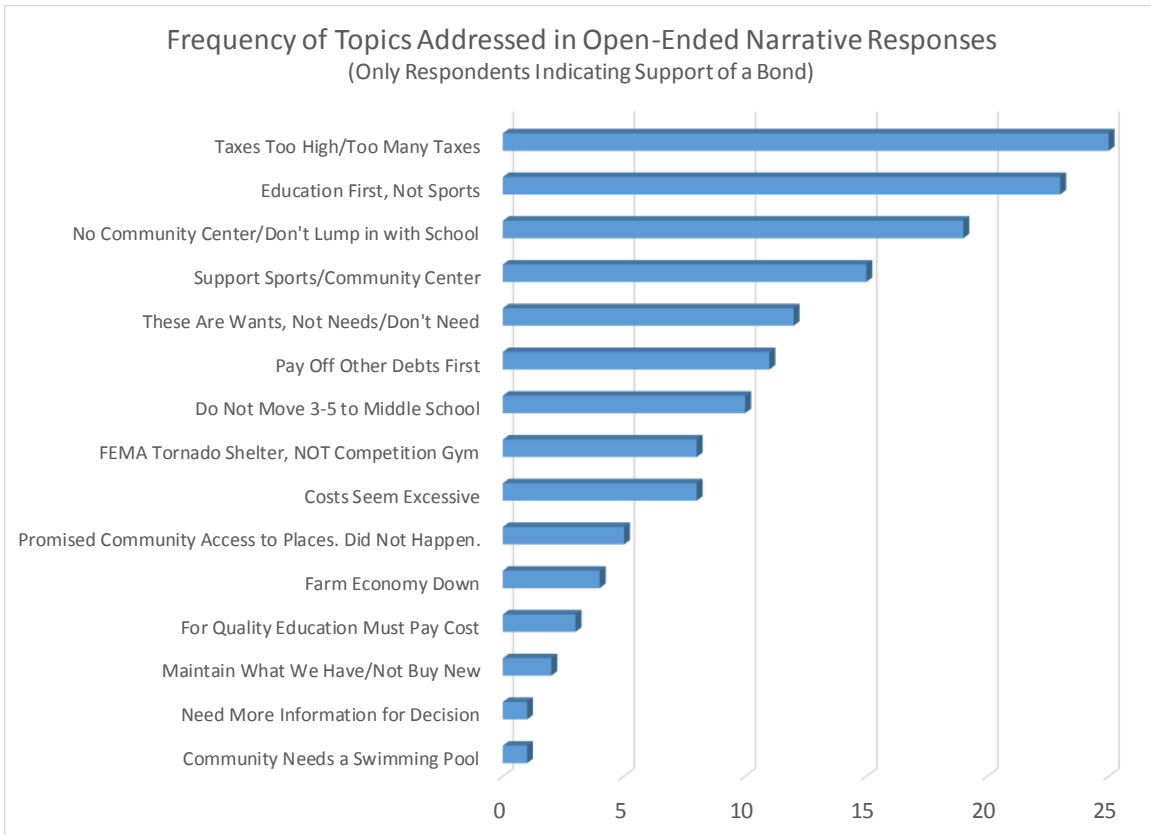


Figure 8: Topics Addressed in Open-Ended Narrative Responses (Only Respondent Indicating Support for a Bond of Some Size)

Figure 8 shows the results of the previous analysis, but for only those respondents indicating they were open to voting for at least a \$15 million school bond. Most common to both groups were the sentiments regarding taxation, that education should hold a higher priority than sports, not to lump in community projects with K-12 projects and that many of the projects are perceived as wants, not needs. Non-supporters were more likely to want to pay off other debts first, while bond supporters were divided on whether to support the community center with K-12 funds.

## Conclusions

The study has found strong majority voter support for a \$15 million school bond among a sample of registered voters residing within the boundaries of USD 466. Support for a \$15 million bond was high enough (61%) that a higher bond would also likely pass. However, the bond amount should not approach \$20 million, in that only 41% of survey respondents indicated they would consider supporting a bond of that size.

Although highly rated improvement projects can be readily included in a bond proposal, a successful bond initiative should not include projects that rated most negatively among bond supporters. These include the projects associated with the community center, demolishing the wing for parking and parking for the tennis courts. The decision to include projects with marginal support is subjective. It is impossible to say which combination of projects will or will not garner majority voter support, but it is safe to assume that the more negatively rated projects included in the bond, the less chance that it will pass.

The narrative responses largely supported conclusions from the close-ended questions. There is high concern for keeping the tax burden as low as possible, so creating the impression that the District is asking for only what is necessary should improve support for a bond. Many bond opponents are apathetic to expenditures for sports and the community center, but bond supporters tended to submit positive comments on sports and, to a lesser degree, collaboration with the community. Finally, the sentiment of supporting needs, and not wants, was prevalent among supporters and opponents, suggesting that it is important for the District to disseminate why projects are critical to the District's mission.

## Appendix A: Cover Letter/Project Description Sheet

Dear USD 466 Voter,

As a regular voting member of the community, Unified School District 466 desperately needs your opinions on the current needs of our public school children. USD 466 needs to know what the voters feel are the most important elements of a vibrant, efficient school system in order to prioritize future improvement projects. Working together, we can appropriate the resources most critical to provide for the safety, education and all-around success of our children.

Board of Education members know that voters will ultimately decide what resources will be appropriated for public education. To help the Board learn more about what voters feel are the most important building projects, they have asked the Docking Institute at Fort Hays State University to conduct a study to assess the opinions of the local voters. The Institute will attempt to collect preferences from all registered voters residing within the District, which is why you have received this letter and survey questionnaire.

The Board is approaching improvement of our public school system with three primary goals; safety, enrollment growth and critical upgrading of facilities. Enhancements to safety include the provision of tornado shelters capable of protecting all students and staff, controlled entry to buildings to prevent unauthorized access, and lighter traffic flow during drop-off and pick-up, as well as more convenient access to gyms, to avoid having to schedule early morning and late night practices. Enrollment now exceeds 1,000 students, more than the District has served since 2001, when Shallow Water Schools were open. The Board's strategic planning will strive to meet current and future capacity. With regard to upgrades, many features of our buildings need upgrading, including heat and AC units, roofs, windows, parking lots and updates to the interior and exterior features. Future planning will attempt to address all of these issues.

This survey is voluntary and anonymous. Nothing on the survey form or return envelope identifies you, so feel free to give your honest opinions. The survey data will be aggregated and presented to the USD 466 Board to help them develop a plan based on the will of the voters. We hope that all voters will respond, so that the information we provide to the Board will be highly reflective of community sentiments. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about our study. Otherwise, please use the Explanations, Descriptions and Clarifications sheet on the back of this cover letter to complete the enclosed survey form and return it to the Docking Institute in the business reply envelope provided by **June 12**.

Sincerely,



Dr. Gary Brinker, Director  
Docking Institute of Public Affairs  
Fort Hays State University  
785-628-5233 or [gdrinker@fhsu.edu](mailto:gdrinker@fhsu.edu)



## Definitions, Explanations and Clarifications

### **Scott City Elementary School (Total Cost: \$1,885,150)**

FEMA-Rated Tornado Safe Area – Tornado-safe walls large enough to house all students & staff. (\$695,000)

New Front Office with Secure Entry – Controlled access to building to prevent unauthorized entry. (\$480,150)

Remodel Building to Upgrade Classroom & Handicapped Accessibility – Convert current office to Special Education. Slight remodeling to make restrooms handicap-accessible, repair the roof and gutter, carpet and paint. (\$710,000)

### **Scott City Middle School (Total Cost: \$20,410,000)**

Renovate 1960/1980 Portion of Building – Remove asbestos tiles and reconfigure classrooms. Renovate to create special education and intervention classrooms in upper level. Create office and work space in the basement for teachers. (\$5,300,000)

Update Kitchen Equipment- Update heating and serving equipment. Renovate dishwashing area. (\$200,000)

Add Classrooms for Grades 3 - 5 - Add wing SW of current building to provide 4 rooms each for grades 3 – 5, plus an art room and choir room. (\$3,500,000)

Add Band Classroom for Grades 5 – 8 – East of current gymnasium to provide band room for grades 5 – 8. (\$750,000)

New Media Center/Library - In between the two additions above, a new media center and library. (\$530,000)

New Front Office with Secure Entry – To control for unauthorized access to the building. (\$730,000)

District Competition Gym - Multi-use gymnasium will be added south of the middle school for physical education classes, tornado safe area for the middle school staff and students, varsity competitions, athletic practices and performances by the middle and high schools. (\$9,400,000)

### **Scott Community High School (Total Cost: \$311,000)**

Safe & Secure Entry Door Through Front Office – For controlled entry to building. (\$125,000)

Demolish Houses for Additional Parking – Additional parking needed for school and special events. (\$121,000)

Orchestra Pit Filler and Stage Roof Repair – Minor updates and repairs needed. (\$65,000)

### **Scott City Sports Complex (Total Cost: \$1,565,000)**

Improve Drainage – To preserve the new track. (\$155,000)

New Restrooms (separate building) and Concession Stand – Current facilities inadequate. (\$300,000)

Increase Parking/Convert Tennis Courts – Will add 100 parking stalls for events. (\$350,000)

Replace Bleachers and Press Box – Demolish current bleachers and replace with 1500-seat **Handicapped Accessible Bleachers**, which doubles the old capacity. Replace old press box. (\$500,000)

Improve Lighting for Field and Track – Current lighting is insufficient. (\$260,000)

### **Scott County School District Office (Total Cost: \$650,000)**

Demolish 1952 Wing and Create Parking – Demolish lower level south of the 1921 part of the building and create parking for elementary and District office. (\$200,000)

Renovate Central Kitchen – To meet health and safety codes and renovate to serve all three campus buildings. (\$450,000)

### **Community Center (Total Cost: \$1,108,000)**

Fitness Center – Middle school gym configured for daily access by community members to fitness rooms, a walking track and access to gym when not in use by school. New tennis courts with lights and seating will be built. (\$800,000)

Flexible Classrooms and Meeting Rooms – For use by community service organizations and special interest groups. (\$308,000)

## Appendix B: Survey Instrument

### USD 466 Voter Preference Survey

Next to each item listed, please indicate by **circling the number** on the scale indicating your personal level of support or opposition for each of the proposed projects. Definitions, clarifications and/or brief explanations are included. **It is strongly suggested that you read the enclosed Definitions, Explanations and Clarifications BEFORE completing this section.**

<b>Scott City Elementary School</b>	<b>Strongly Oppose</b>				<b>Neutral</b>				<b>Strongly Support</b>			
FEMA-Rated Tornado Safe Area	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
New Front Office with Secure Entry	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Remodel Building to Upgrade Classroom & Handicapped Accessibility	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
<b>Scott City Middle School</b>												
Renovate 1960/1980 Portion of Building	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Update Kitchen Equipment	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Add Classrooms for Grades 3 – 5	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Add Band Classroom for Grades 5 - 8	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
New Media Center/Library	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
New Front Office with Secure Entry	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
District Competition Gym/PE Classroom & FEMA-Rated Tornado Safe Area	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
<b>Scott City High School</b>												
Safe & Secure Entry Door Through Front Office	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Demolish Houses for Additional Parking	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Orchestra Pit Filler and Stage Roof Repair	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
<b>Scott City Sports Complex</b>												
Improve Drainage	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
New Restrooms and Concession Stand	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Increase Parking/Convert Tennis Courts	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Replace Bleachers and Press Box with Handicapped-Accessible Seating	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Improve Lighting for Field and Track	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	

Scott County School District Office	Strongly Oppose				Neutral				Strongly Support			
Demolish 1952 Wing and Create Parking Lot	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Renovate Central Kitchen	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
<b>Community Center</b>												
Fitness Center	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Flexible Classrooms/Meeting Rooms	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	

**Assuming that a proposed bond contained projects you rated highly, what is the largest school bond you would consider voting for? A successful bond issue would be paid for by the residents and property owners of USD 466. Estimates of the changes in residential and farm property taxes are provided below for each bond amount, based on the current property valuations, which are updated every July. Please check to indicate each bond amount you would support (vote for in a bond election).**

ESTIMATED Property Tax increase on a: \$100,000 House      160 of Dryland Property

- I would not vote for any school bond.
- No more than \$15 million      0 mills      \$ 0 per year      \$ 0 per year
- No more than \$20 million      2.5 mills      \$ 10 per year      \$ 3 per year
- No more than \$25 million      4.8 mills      \$ 55 per year      \$ 19 per year
- No more than \$30 million      8.6 mills      \$ 99 per year      \$ 35 per year

**Is there something specific that would lead you to vote for or against a future USD 466 bond issue?**

**THANK YOU for taking the time to give us your opinions.  
The information you have provided will help us in our planning.**

*The USD 466 Board of Education*

Visit us at

[www.usd466.com](http://www.usd466.com)