

**Arbor Park School District
Community Survey
Report**

Prepared by
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Overview

The Community Survey was conducted for the Arbor Park School District #145 in the fall of 2008 by School Perceptions L.L.C. School Perceptions has worked with hundreds of school districts throughout the country and is regarded as one of the nation's leading experts in the gathering and analyzing of stakeholders' perceptions of schools.

Survey Methodology

The survey was administrated and results are presented using School Perceptions' proprietary software. Each potential respondent was issued a unique 16-digit alphanumeric survey identification number. This ensured that every potential respondent could only take the survey one time. Respondents without access to the internet and those who were uncomfortable taking the survey online were given the opportunity to take a paper version of the survey.

Respondent Sample

When looking at a group of survey respondents, two important characteristics need to be analyzed - the size of the sample and the representative nature of the sample.

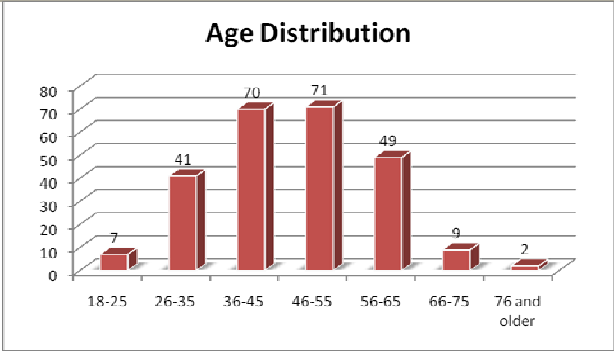
Response to the survey was low with 252 people responding to the survey. The margin of error for questions answered by all respondents to the survey is approximately plus or minus 6.1%.

Overall

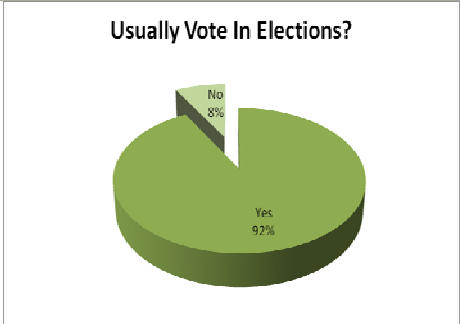
Although this sampling is small, clear trends emerged from the responses. The quantitative results combined with comment data analysis provides does provide the district with a good starting point to analyze alternatives and setting priorities for future planning. It is important to note that this survey tool should be one of many factors influencing the direction the school board and administration choose to take.

Demographic Summary

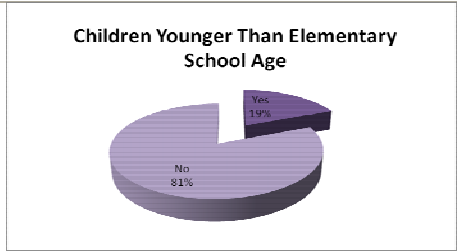
What is your age?		
	<u>count</u>	<u>percentage</u>
18-25	7	2.81
26-35	41	16.46
36-45	70	28.11
46-55	71	28.51
56-65	49	19.67
66-75	9	3.61
76 and older	2	0.8



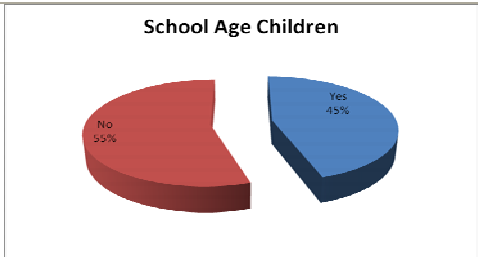
Do you usually vote in elections?		
	<u>count</u>	<u>percentage</u>
Yes	229	91.96
No	20	8.03



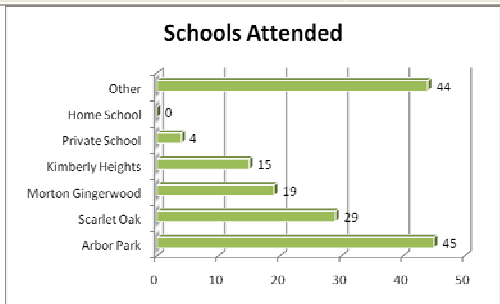
Do you have children younger than elementary school age?		
	<u>count</u>	<u>percentage</u>
Yes	47	18.87
No	202	81.12



Do you have school age children?		
	<u>count</u>	<u>percentage</u>
Yes	112	44.97
No	137	55.02

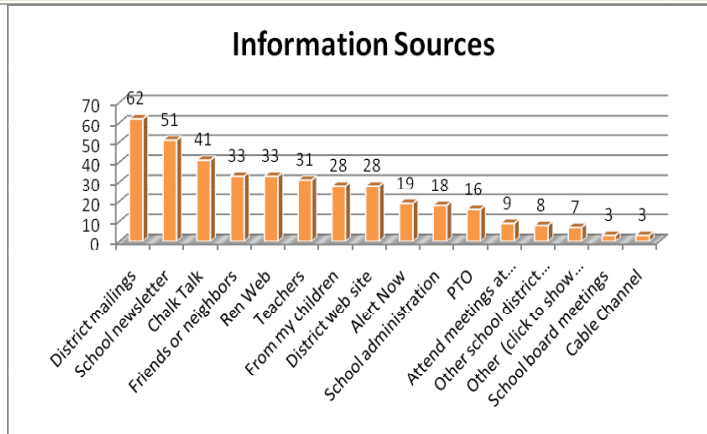


If YES, which schools do your children attend? (Select all that apply)		
	<u>count</u>	<u>percentage</u>
Arbor Park	45	28.84
Scarlet Oak	29	18.58
Morton Gingerwood	19	12.17
Kimberly Heights	15	9.61
Private School	4	2.56
Home School	0	0
Other	44	28.2



**How do you currently receive information regarding school district issues?
(presented for non-staff respondents)**

	<u>percentage</u>
District mailings	62%
School newsletter	51%
Chalk Talk	41%
Friends or neighbors	33%
Ren Web	33%
Teachers	31%
From my children	28%
District web site	28%
Alert Now	19%
School administration	18%
PTO	16%
Attend meetings at schools	9%
Other school district staff	8%
Other (click to show values)	7%
School board meetings	3%
Cable Channel	3%



Data Summary

A note about the sub-groups:

The data from the survey will be presented in various subgroups. This is done to provide clarity and discern patterns. Each of the subgroups is defined below.

Parents

This group includes respondents who indicated they were parents of school-aged children.

Non-Parents

This group includes respondents who indicated they did not have any children in school.

Total

This group includes all respondents.

Courses and Programs

In your opinion, how important are these programs?

(Critical = 4, Important = 3, Somewhat Important = 2, Not Important = 1)

	Non-Parents	Parents	Staff
1	Writing / Grammar 3.61	Reading/literature/vocabulary 3.87	Math 3.85
2	Science 3.52	Science 3.8	Reading/literature/vocabulary 3.8
3	Math 3.52	Math 3.78	Kindergarten 3.78
4	Reading/literature/vocabulary 3.51	Writing / Grammar 3.78	Writing / Grammar 3.71
5	Kindergarten 3.31	Preparation for high school 3.69	Preparation for high school 3.67
6	Social Studies 3.22	Social Studies 3.66	Science 3.56
7	Preparation for high school 3.22	Mac lab (Computer Education) 3.53	Critical thinking & problem solving 3.56
8	Critical thinking & problem solving 3.1	Programming for children with special needs 3.53	Programming for children with special needs 3.55
9	Mac lab (Computer Education) 3.08	Kindergarten 3.53	Social Studies 3.46
10	Programming for children with special needs 3.04	Library / Learning Center 3.5	Programming for at-risk students in early childhood 3.46
11	Technology integration in the curriculum 3.02	Critical thinking & problem solving 3.4	Instructional aides 3.43
12	Library / Learning Center 2.97	Physical education 3.4	Physical education 3.41
13	Applied technology 2.89	Technology integration in the curriculum 3.35	Library / Learning Center 3.39
14	Physical education 2.85	Programming for at-risk students in early childhood 3.34	Counseling services 3.35
15	Health education 2.83	Health education 3.28	Mac lab (Computer Education) 3.19
16	Programming for gifted & talented students 2.79	Counseling services 3.28	Character education 3.17
17	After school tutoring 2.77	Applied technology 3.23	Technology integration in the curriculum 3.16
18	Counseling services 2.73	Programming for gifted & talented students 3.19	Transitioning students to the next grade center 3.15
19	Programming for at-risk students in early childhood 2.7	Instructional aides 3.19	Health education 3.14
20	Gifted / enrichment services 2.6	After school tutoring 3.18	Programming for gifted & talented students 3.14
21	Elementary art & music 2.59	Character education 3.17	After school tutoring 3.11
22	Instructional aides 2.58	Transitioning students to the next grade center 3.15	Applied technology 3.1
23	Transitioning students to the next grade center 2.57	Elementary art & music 3.04	Gifted / enrichment services 3
24	Character education 2.56	Police resource officer 3.04	Elementary art & music 2.94
25	Summer school 2.53	Lunch program 3.01	Lunch program 2.87
26	Lunch program 2.51	Extra-curricular: sports 3	REN-WEB 2.85
27	Extra-curricular: non-sports 2.48	Extra-curricular: non-sports 2.98	Foreign Language 2.84
28	Foreign Language 2.47	Middle school art 2.98	Summer school 2.81
29	Extra-curricular: sports 2.46	REN-WEB 2.96	Extra-curricular: sports 2.81
30	Band/Choir (grades 5-8) 2.44	Gifted / enrichment services 2.96	Middle school art 2.78
31	Middle school art 2.4	Foreign Language 2.92	Extra-curricular: non-sports 2.78
32	Before and after school day care 2.33	Summer school 2.8	Before and after school day care 2.73
33	REN-WEB 2.24	Band/Choir (grades 5-8) 2.75	Police resource officer 2.69
34	Police resource officer 2.16	Before and after school day care 2.64	Band/Choir (grades 5-8) 2.63

Courses and Programs

How are we doing?

(Great = 4, Good = 3, Fair = 2, Poor = 1)

	Non-Parents	Parents	Staff
1	N/A	Kindergarten 3.62	Kindergarten 3.4
2	N/A	Programming for children with special needs 3.4	Before and after school day care 3.3
3	N/A	Reading/literature/vocabulary 3.32	Math 3.24
4	N/A	Physical education 3.31	Physical education 3.2
5	N/A	Library / Learning Center 3.25	Programming for at-risk students in early childhood 3.18
6	N/A	Programming for at-risk students in early childhood 3.25	Middle school art 3.13
7	N/A	Instructional aides 3.23	Reading/literature/vocabulary 3.12
8	N/A	Science 3.23	Library / Learning Center 3.09
9	N/A	Math 3.22	Science 3.09
10	N/A	Character education 3.21	Extra-curricular: sports 3.08
11	N/A	Applied technology 3.2	Instructional aides 3.07
12	N/A	Foreign Language 3.19	Programming for children with special needs 3.07
13	N/A	Before and after school day care 3.19	REN-WEB 3.04
14	N/A	Mac lab (Computer Education) 3.18	Elementary art & music 3.04
15	N/A	Elementary art & music 3.17	Extra-curricular: non-sports 3.03
16	N/A	Police resource officer 3.14	Preparation for high school 3.02
17	N/A	Preparation for high school 3.14	Social Studies 3.02
18	N/A	Transitioning students to the next grade center 3.13	After school tutoring 3
19	N/A	Social Studies 3.12	Writing / Grammar 2.99
20	N/A	Counseling services 3.11	Foreign Language 2.94
21	N/A	Middle school art 3.1	Transitioning students to the next grade center 2.92
22	N/A	Extra-curricular: sports 3.1	Counseling services 2.92
23	N/A	Extra-curricular: non-sports 3.07	Health education 2.86
24	N/A	Health education 3.06	Mac lab (Computer Education) 2.85
25	N/A	Summer school 3.05	Character education 2.74
26	N/A	After school tutoring 3.03	Applied technology 2.74
27	N/A	REN-WEB 3.03	Critical thinking & problem solving 2.74
28	N/A	Writing / Grammar 3.01	Summer school 2.72
29	N/A	Critical thinking & problem solving 3	Police resource officer 2.53
30	N/A	Technology integration in the curriculum 3	Band/Choir (grades 5-8) 2.48
31	N/A	Band/Choir (grades 5-8) 2.97	Lunch program 2.41
32	N/A	Programming for gifted & talented students 2.83	Programming for gifted & talented students 2.35
33	N/A	Gifted / enrichment services 2.8	Technology integration in the curriculum 2.27
34	N/A	Lunch program 2.7	Gifted / enrichment services 2.24

Board Budget Planning

(Segmented for respondents living in the district)

Do you feel you have a good understanding of the current school district budget situation?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Yes	36%	48%	42%
No	44%	38%	41%
Not Sure	20%	14%	17%
Do you agree in principle that the district should cut the budget between \$1.2 and \$1.4 million to balance the budget each of the next three years?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Yes	32%	58%	45%
No	24%	14%	19%
Not Sure	44%	28%	36%
Should the district implement participation fees for athletics and extra-curricular activities?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Yes	60%	80%	70%
No	26%	15%	21%
Not Sure	14%	4%	9%
Should the district raise the registration fees?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Yes	48%	75%	61%
No	36%	16%	27%
Not Sure	16%	9%	12%
Should the district consider increasing its current class size practice to save money?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Yes	11%	33%	23%
No	84%	60%	72%
Not Sure	5%	7%	5%
In order to reduce expenses, should the district consider changing its current policy of providing full transportation services to all students?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Yes	18%	50%	34%
No	63%	36%	49%
Not Sure	19%	14%	17%

Board Policy Planning

Overall, are you satisfied with the safety and security in our schools?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Yes	83%	71%	77%
No	10%	3%	7%
Not Sure	7%	26%	16%
Should the district consider moving parent/teacher conferences to the week of Thanksgiving?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Yes	34%	45%	40%
No	47%	24%	35%
Not Sure	19%	31%	25%
Are you satisfied that the district only offers a half-day kindergarten program?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Yes	54%	52%	53%
No	35%	27%	31%
Not Sure	11%	21%	16%

Funding Support

Next year, the district is facing a \$1.3 million deficit. What percentage of this deficit would you like to see reduced by cutting existing programs and services before you would consider some type of revenue relief?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
0% (keep current programs)	44%	24%	34%
20%	30%	31%	30%
40%	10%	14%	12%
60%	9%	7%	8%
80%	2%	3%	3%
100% (the entire deficit)	5%	22%	13%

Funding Support (Continued)

Assuming there are no changes in the state's school funding methods, what increase do you feel your household budget could afford, if any, to help the district maintain current programs and services for the next three years? (Tax impact based estimated on a \$150,000 home)	Parents	Non Parents	Total
No increase	28%	40%	36%
\$126.00 annually	27%	22%	24%
\$189.00 annually	16%	9%	12%
\$253.00 annually	8%	4%	6%
\$316.00 annually	2%	0%	1%
\$379.00 annually	0%	4%	2%
\$442.00 annually	0%	1%	1%
\$506.00 annually	2%	2%	2%
Not sure	16%	16%	16%
Under the current state school funding formula, when local tax revenues increase, the state reduces their contribution to the school district thus penalizing the local tax payer. Would you be more willing to support an increase in the tax rate if the district worked with the legislation to make sure state revenue would not be impacted?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Yes	50%	43%	46%
No	12%	24%	18%
I don't know/I need more information	38%	33%	36%
Illinois law places limits on the amount a school district may borrow and repay annually. This amount is called the Debt Service Extension Base. One option to providing some relief would be to increase our Debt Service Extension Base. Simply speaking, increasing this limit would allow our district to repay debt on a short-term payment schedule saving interest expense. Would you support a referendum to increase District 145's debt service extension base?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Yes	52%	48%	50%
No	6%	22%	14%
I don't know/I need more information	42%	31%	36%

Funding Support (Continued)

<p>In 2004, the board made a commitment to abate (reduce) local property taxes based on state grant reimbursements and proceeds from the sale of property in the amount of \$300,000 per year which averages about \$50 per home. To date, the majority of that obligation has been paid. One option to help the district maintain some of its current programs and services would be to revise the abatement commitment. Given the very limited options to fund current programs and services, should the board consider revising its current tax abatement position?</p> <p>(This would help to reduce our budget deficit by about 20%)</p>	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Yes	60%	56%	57%
No	9%	17%	13%
I don't know/I need more information	31%	28%	30%
Overall, what advice would you provide the board in terms of project priorities?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Balance the budget by cutting programs and services regardless of student impact (no tax impact).	14%	36%	26%
Balance the budget by a combination of cutting programs and services with a smaller referendum that would represent a property tax rate increase.	29%	38%	33%
Balance the budget completely with a referendum which would maintain existing programs and services.	57%	26%	41%

Overall Satisfaction

Are you satisfied with the amount and type of communication you receive from Arbor Park School District?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Yes	87%	78%	82%
No	13%	22%	18%
Overall, how satisfied are you with the financial management of Arbor Park School District?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Very satisfied	22%	8%	15%
Satisfied	43%	42%	43%
Not Satisfied	9%	17%	13%
Extremely Unsatisfied	1%	12%	7%
No Opinion/No Response	24%	21%	22%
Overall, how satisfied are you with Arbor Park School District?	Parents	Non Parents	Total
Very satisfied	47%	27%	37%
Satisfied	50%	45%	47%
Not Satisfied	1%	6%	4%
Extremely Unsatisfied	0%	4%	2%
No Opinion/No Response	2%	18%	10%

Comment Summary

The comment summary was developed in an attempt to identify common themes by first reading all of the non-staff comments collected throughout community engagement survey. A theme is identified if multiple respondents refer to similar issues or concerns.

We then selected comments that were representative of each theme and added them to this section to reflect the nature and tone of the theme.

It should be noted that each comment was gathered anonymously. Each comment has been “cut and pasted” verbatim. Comments that were “outliers” or not supported by other participants are discounted and not felt to be representative of the whole population. Additionally, this summary is not intended to represent all comments submitted; rather we attempted to represent the prevailing themes represented by the majority of comments.

Theme: Many people would like more information regarding the challenges facing the district.

Sample comments:

-- If you are going to share more information about the above, please put it all in layman's terms, so everyone can understand it. What each option would mean to the school district & its programs, your budget & our taxes. Currently, I have my head above water when it comes to keeping up with my bills, but I have been treading water for a very long time & I feel everyone is getting a raise but me!!! The paycheck can't get stretched much further.

-- Is the average class size in district 145 similar to the average class size in other surrounding districts? What is the registration fees for students in other districts. The current fee seems as though it could be increased. Extra-curricular activities should have some sort of fee applied to them to at least cover the cost of paying for coaching and uniforms.

-- The comment I have is about the budget. The district should send out annual financial reports that include salaries, book expenses, utility expenses, and other bugetary expenses so the taxpayers can see how things are being budgeted and make a better decision when asked for their taxes to be raised. If this information is available than I am unaware of where to find it.

-- I think it's pretty clear that some more information would be helpful to people whose children have not yet reached elementary school age.

Theme: Given all of the financial challenges, the district needs to set priorities, cut costs, charge hirer fees and focus on providing “the basics”.

Sample comments:

-- Start charging after school groups (especially those outside the district) to use the facilities.

-- All of my kids played multiple sports at Arbor and continue to do so. I would have no problem paying for extra-curricular activities especially as the school is now paying higher prices for gas to transport athletes. Registrations fees could be increased within reason. As for transportation, it could be looked at and adopt a option similiar to the high school. Free transportation if you have to cross main streets or live more then 2 miles. There are quite a few kids who live in gingerwood area that could techincally walk to Arbor

-- Costs should be cut first; either by curtailing or eliminating altogether certain targeted services.

-- CUT SUMMER SCHOOL & BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS (CHILD CARE)

-- It would be a good faith gesture on the part of the district to make some budget cuts. The most logical area seems to be extracurricular activities. Though I think these activities are good for the rounding out of our children, I do not think that they should be without a price. For example: sports, band, choir, after school reading programs, parties and dances should be supported by those who wish to participate. The added salary of the teacher who is running the sport or program should be covered by the families of students who are participating. From my experience, people tend to value something more if they have to pay SOMETHING for it, even if it is a small amount. If the district puts forth a revision of its tax abatement policy, I think that would be a slap in the face to all the people who supported it in 2004 - there was a clear understanding between the board and the taxpayers about how the middle school funding would be handled. Please keep up the district's end of the agreement.

-- Cut the over staffed janitors at night and have the teachers teach the children to pick up their messes. Do we really have that much violence in our school that we need a police officer on duty?? Call 911 if you have an emergency. What about combining the kindergarten with another school and getting rid of Kimberly Heights?? Then you would only have 3 building in the district. I see alot of wasted space in that school. Do we have room to combine elsewhere?

-- Cut back on all programs, raise the fee, charge to use the facility and cut cleaning staff.

-- Basics are a need. Everything else should be canceled. You want to raise how much we pay yet we can't afford to keep our homes.

-- Each building administrator MUST remember to spend each dollar as if it was coming out of his/her PERSONAL checking/savings. I guarantee you that not one child will lack anything; money will not be wasted; the district budget will be balanced in no time at all!!! The results: my property taxes won't need to be raised and your new building will be paid off sooner.

-- Teach kids basic skills, math, reading, science.

-- If raising the registration fees (within reason) would help close the deficit, then I would be in agreement. I am not opposed to raising class sizes by a few students per class, but the survey does not specify numbers.

-- Having worked in and had children in other school districts I KNOW there are places to cut budgets without affecting the quality of education.....generally, schools are overstaffed with administrators, principals, assistant principals, heads of departments, etc. Parents should be held responsible for more realistic registration fees, student activity fees, transportation costs, etc. It is not the responsibility of tax payers to pay these additional costs. Many tax payers have paid or are paying for their children to attend parochial schools, some do not have children. Why should anyone be expected to pay what is the parent's responsibility?

-- Turn the heat in the building down more, like we do at home to lower the fuel expense. People can concentrate better in a lower temperature room, they can bundle up more, like wear sweaters and hoodies, instead of short sleeve clothes in the middle of winter. I like the idea of those that use the facilities, like athletics and extra-curricular activities should pay some of the expense of the activity, so not to overcharge ALL students/parents for something we do not participate in.

-- expenses must be cut - not in getting the children to school either. Programs need to be trimmed but not cut. There are always ways to cut back. This country is out of control with it's spending and the answer is NOT to raise taxes or admission fees or anyother fees. There must be cut backs. Maybe there are too many teachers and aids. Maybe the class rooms can be increased in size somewhat. Maybe the school should hold major fundraiser events to cover extra costs. So many things to consider but not take more money out of the parents pockets. As it is we,(I) being a single mother with hardly any support financially from anybody can not afford to pay more out of pocket. As it is with my current financial situation I can't even afford to have my children involved in any extra cirr. activities because it's too expensive. And I am sure there are many families out ther just like me.

-- Academics should be funded first. Programs to keep the gifted challenged are also important as well as programs for those who can't keep up or are at risk of falling behind I think it is important to keep physical education classes as this maybe the only introduction to regular exercise some students get. Arts and extra sports are a great bonus but, not if they mean a cut in academic funding.

-- Extra curriculum classes should be paid for by parents not taxpayers.

Theme: Taxes are already high, so any tax increase will be difficult, especially on people with a fixed income. People are worried about the economy.

Sample comments:

-- My taxes were already raised.

-- Cannot afford to raise taxes. Budget cuts need to be taken by everyone.

-- As far as taxes are concerned, households in this city that have no children past, present or future should not be punished with the mismanagement of funds that has been ignored for many years. Families with more children should be paying more. People without children should not be paying.

-- Our taxes and contributions to the school district especially for seniors on fixed incomes are too high! Families with school children should be the ones that are taxed to support the school system. Again, families living in our neighborhoods...with multiple families in one household (illegal citizens) should not be allowed without payment made for their schooling. IF the school system requires additional fees it should be coming from the families that is providing the students.

-- I cannot afford to keep paying more taxes. My property taxes are currently about \$7000 and continue rising. You really expect people like me to approve a tax hike, are you serious?

-- retired cannot afford tax increases - will have to sell and move

-- Very bad economy; all companies slowing down; people out of work; seniors on fixed incomes-no money to spare! 75% OF MY PROPERTY TAXES are split between Arbor Park, Oak Forest H.S. and South Suburban College!!!!!!!!!!!! That's a huge burden for homeowners. Each school/staff must learn to live within their means; no more special staff luncheons-bring your own dish to pass around-it's called "Potluck". Administration/staff must "get creative" to fund your "wants". My kids went through Arbor Park and OFHS; my husband and I paid our dues; we need our money to survive.

-- We need to find ways of cutting cost, seems like right now we have too much high cost. We cant keep expecting taxpayers to cough up money they don't have. I feel we are already overtaxed and should find ways to cut them not increase them.

Theme: People had various comments and ideas on how the district could make improvements.

Sample comments:

-- make bussing more efficient.

-- If you can, you should make the lunch times longer. My kid was bringing her lunch from the beginning of the school year because she/he was worried that she/he wouldn't be able to finish her/his lunch

-- I would like to see an increase in technology.

-- Place the rest of the schools on RenWeb

-- I don't understand why it is not mandated that the children learn to write cursive. They are not taught proper penmanship. my 7th grader does her homework in pen and prints all of the time. How is a child to learn proper writing skills and penmanship if this is not enforced in school?

-- I think the kids should have a longer lunch period, so the kids do not have to stuff their food down their throat. Or it might be because of how the lunch line is.

-- My child is very intelligent, is in the high classes, but still is not challenged enough and that worries me. I feel I need to get more classes outside the school to keep him challenged especially during the middle school years when he is soaking it all in.

-- Programs for above average (gifted) students have been cut or are almost non-existent. District is known for special education services to the exclusion of the gifted programs. Those children continue to leave the district.

Theme: Many people like and support the district.

Sample comments:

-- Thank you for working on this problem. We live in this area BECAUSE of the excellent schools. We have been here almost 30 years. We need to tighten our purse strings, not spend more. We, Americans, are in trouble for spending beyond our means. Need to fix what is broke, and look long term how to fix it.. Wishing you well.

-- teachers and administrators really do care about what's best for each child

-- The teachers! For the most part they are hardworking, nurturing, dedicated people that want the children to succeed. I am also very happy with the classroom size. I feel my child has benefited from the commitment to lower class size. I was also very happy with the early intervention preschool program my child took part in a few years back. Support staff also seems to play an important role in the classrooms. I feel most of our students have benefited from there assistance.

-- Small class sizes and the teachers. My children are in 3rd grade and 1st grade and I am amazed at the education my children are getting. WONderful teachers, administrators, and support staff!! The kindergarten and Pre-K programs are wonderful!!

-- Friendliness of the teachers. Being friendly and understanding makes the teacher more approachable if the child has a problem. The children need to feel they are in a safe and caring environment. Negative teachers promote negative feelings and attitudes.

-- I can't say enough good things about Arbor Park SD 145. Specifically, I think the entire staff truly cares about the students. It also shows that the staff puts considerable thought effort into each decision that is made. I am truly grateful to be able to send my children to Arbor Park District 145 schools.

-- Some of my favorites are: most of the staff I have had dealings with have been friendly and helpful. I love the bus service you offer (we are spoiled), the extra curricular programs you have offered and my children enjoy going to school which speaks for itself.

-- I choose to move into the Arbor Park School District because as a former employee I KNEW this would be a great school district for my children to attend.

-- I would like to see Arbor Park Middle School place dates (not just the day of the week) on there RenWeb messages/announcements. I am very happy with District 145.