



**Pittsburg School District USD 250
Follow-up Community Telephone Survey
March 9, 2016**

In late February, a five- to seven-minute survey was conducted with 400 registered voter heads of household (male or female) who lived within the boundaries of USD 250. The interviews were divided into four equal groups, using Broadway and 4th Street to create the quadrants.

The objective of the survey was to identify what had changed in the community between the time of the planning research study (which was conducted in late May and early June 2015) and the recent bond issue election.

The most recent survey, whose results appear below, asked respondents to share their opinions on why the recent bond issue was defeated and what they would recommend as the next steps for USD 250. This survey was completed at no cost to the school district.

Questions 1 through 3 confirmed that the respondent was the male or female head of the household, a registered voter, and lived within a region of the district where there was still room under the quota when he or she was contacted. Because specific answers were required on each of these three questions, neither the questions nor the answers are displayed below.

Topic: Why the bond issue lost

After confirming that the individual was qualified to participate in the survey, each person was read a list of seven potential reasons for the loss at the ballot box. He or she was then asked which they thought was the most important, the second-most important and the third-most important reason the ballot issue was unsuccessful. (They were also given the opportunity to add a reason that was not on the list, but only 3% did so.)

The responses were analyzed using a 3-point weight scale in which every “most important reason” was worth 3 points, down to each “third-most important reason” receiving 1 point. In reviewing these results, it is important to remember that the specific number of points for each reason is much less important than both the rank order created by totaling the points, and the space (in points) from one reason to another.

“The \$67,000,000 cost was too high” was the clear choice as the top reason, with 772 points. “Some people really like the design and the ‘look’ of the current middle school and didn’t want to see it changed” was a distant second with 369 points – which is less than half of the tally for the cost issue.

Four of the remaining five reasons were bunched fairly close together, with point totals ranging from 279 for “The proposal was not promoted well, meaning that voters didn’t understand the details,” down to 203 points for “Some people think that the school district doesn’t spend money wisely.” In last place, with 67 points, was “The people who advertised against the bond issue made a strong argument.”

The data was also analyzed based on the respondent’s demographic characteristics and where he or she lived. Because the number of points that are available within each group is determined by the number of people in the group (more people means more points are available), the results are shown in rank order only. It is also important to remember that the rank order numbers may not square with the overall numbers, in cases where there was a large percentage of respondents who said things like, “Don’t know” or “I only think that one reason was important.”

Spots 1, 2 and 7 were consistent, with the one exception being male respondents, where the points were tied for second for “Some people really like the design and ‘look’ of the current middle school and didn’t want to see it changed” and “The proposal was not promoted well, meaning that voters didn’t understand the details.”

Spots 3 through 6 had the most volatility, particularly with:

- Current student families
- Respondents who live north of 4th Street and east of Broadway

And to a lesser extent:

- Respondents who had lived in the district up to five years
- Respondents who had lived in the district from five to 15 years
- Respondents ages 18 to 34

These results indicate that, once the ballot issue was finalized, residents focused more on the total cost of \$67 million than on what the bond issue would cost each of them, in terms of a tax increase.

There was also a secondary focus (seen more acutely in the question about “What the district should do next”) on the view that not all of the projects were needed – which is associated with the concern regarding the total cost – rather than taking issue with specific, individual projects. While this did occur somewhat, the clear message was that the project list was too long and the cost was too high.

The planning research showed a modest majority generally in support of the projects and the cost of a proposal, “if the election were held today.” Once these ideas became an actual ballot proposal, residents began absorbing information and commentary from a variety of sources. Some of the content this accurate and some was, most likely, not. Over the seven months between the planning research and Election Day, it appears that many of the projects grew to be seen as not necessary – either because of the project itself or because eliminating that project would lower the current \$67 million cost.

The cross-tabulation results show that these views were not significantly impacted by the respondent’s demographic characteristics or where he or she lived, but, rather, were fairly commonly held across the district.

As you may know, the Pittsburg School District recently proposed a 67 million dollar bond issue for new construction and renovation projects, and that bond issue did not pass. Since then, the district has been asking patrons across the district why they believe the voters turned down the bond issue.

I'm now going to read you a short list of reasons that have been mentioned by others. As I read this list, please be thinking about which ones you think were most important in the voters' decision to turn down the proposal. These could be things you, yourself, think, or they could be things you have heard from others. If you have other ideas that aren't on this list, please let me know that as well.

4-6. Here's the list...ROTATE LIST. READ SLOWLY. Based on what you think or what you may have heard from others, which one of these do you think was the most important reason the bond issue lost? If the most important reason is not on this list, please tell me that reason. What do you think was the second-most important reason that the bond issue lost? And, finally, what do you think was the third-most important reason that the bond issue lost?

Statement	Most important reason	Second-most important reason	Third-most important reason	3-point weighted scale points
The \$67,000,000 cost was too high.	190	84	34	772
Some people really like the design and the "look" of the current middle school and didn't want to see it changed.	68	56	53	369
The proposal was not promoted well, meaning that voters didn't understand the details.	58	32	41	279
Some people think that the district should build storm shelters at the elementary schools, rather than building gymnasiums that would also serve as storm shelters.	37	47	57	262
Some people thought that constructing a new Performing Arts Center at the high school wasn't needed and that the district should just build a stage.	4	78	49	217
Some people think that the school district doesn't spend money wisely.	25	51	26	203
The people who advertised against the bond issue made a strong argument.	6	13	23	67

Cross-tabulation: Rank order of statements, using a 3-point weighted scale by age, length of time living in the district, and presence of a current district student, past district student or no district student ever in the household. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group. “Age” participants will not add to 400, because four respondents did not answer this question.

Statement	3-point weighted scale points and rank order	18-34 (n=75)	35-54 (n=167)	55 or older (n=154)	Up to 5 years (n=34)	5 to 15 years (n=134)	More than 15 years (n=232)	Student, yes (n=128)	Student, past (n=155)	Student, never (n=117)
The \$67,000,000 cost was too high.	772 (1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Some people really like the design and “look” of the current middle school and didn’t want to see it changed.	369 (2)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
The proposal was not promoted well, meaning that voters didn’t understand the details.	279 (3)	3T*	3	4	3	5	3	5	3	3
Some people thought that the district should build storm shelters at the elementary schools, rather than building gymnasiums that would also serve as storm shelters.	262 (4)	5	5	3	4T	4	4	6	4	6
Some people thought that constructing a new Performing Arts Center at the high school wasn’t needed and that the district should just build a stage.	217 (5)	3T*	4	5	6	3	6	3T*	5	4
Some people think that the school district doesn’t spend money wisely.	203 (6)	6	6	6	4T*	6	5	3T*	6	5
The people who advertised against the bond issue made a strong argument.	67 (7)	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7

**Point values were tied.*

Cross-tabulation: Rank order of statements using a 3-point weighted scale by location of the respondent’s residence and gender.

Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group.

Statement	3-point weighted scale points and rank order	N of 4th/E of Broadway (n=100)	N of 4th/W of Broadway (n=100)	S of 4th/E of Broadway (n=100)	S of 4th/W of Broadway (n=100)	Female (n=209)	Male (n=191)
The \$67,000,000 cost was too high.	772 (1)	1	1	1	1	1	1
Some people really like the design and “look” of the current middle school and didn’t want to see it changed.	369 (2)	2	2	2	2	2	2T*
The proposal was not promoted well, meaning that voters didn’t understand the details.	279 (3)	5	3	3	4	3T*	2T*
Some people thought that the district should build storm shelters at the elementary schools, rather than building gymnasiums that would also serve as storm shelters.	262 (4)	4	5	4	3	3T*	4
Some people thought that constructing a new Performing Arts Center at the high school wasn’t needed and that the district should just build a stage.	217 (5)	6	4	5	5	5	6
Some people think that the school district doesn’t spend money wisely.	203 (6)	3	6	6	6	6	5
The people who advertised against the bond issue made a strong argument.	67 (7)	7	7	7	7	7	7

**Point values were tied*

Topic: Next steps for the school district

The main portion of the survey closed with an open-ended question that asked (paraphrasing), “In light of the ballot issue being defeated, what should the district do next?”

The answers were coded, meaning that common words, phrases and ideas were identified to provide a clearer picture of the most frequent comments.

Given the heavy focus on cost in the answers to the previous questions, it comes as no real surprise that “Propose a lower cost plan/scale back & prioritize” was the most frequent response, with 113 mentions. Another cost-related suggestion – “Be more detailed/specific on costs” – was in second place (97 mentions).

Below the chart that displays the most frequent responses is a list of verbatim comments. These are comments that either didn’t appear in enough quantity to merit placement in the chart, had more than one thought, or both. It is important to remember when reading these comments that each is from one person and is, therefore, not indicative of a widely held belief.

7. **In light of the ballot issue being defeated, in your opinion, what do you think the Pittsburg School District USD should do next?** *Responses were coded, based on common words, phrases and ideas. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Propose a lower cost plan/scale back & prioritize	113
Be more detailed/specific on costs	97
Other (see below)	76
Don’t know	58
Campaign/get information out better next time	35
Find a way to accomplish this that taxes everyone, not just homeowners	21

Verbatim “other” comments

Relook at what is essential to meet our immediate future needs.

Take a look at their needs, then, address the cost that way. Also, maintain the buildings. The pool was the perfect example of it not being kept up. It had moldy water in it!

The economy is poor. Social Security is being cut. If you own a home, you can’t afford any extras.

The arts school by the fire department is nice. I have not seen the middle school lately.

They should go along with the desires of the voters.

The high school needs a new heating and cooling system. Do that first. Concentrate on kids' safety. Also try and find a way to have everyone bear the cost of a bond issue, not just homeowners. Renters have kids and don't have to bear the costs of these projects. Lastly, keep the middle school, because it is an historic building. Do small repairs to it.

There are certainly improvements that are needed. Somehow find a way to show what those are and why it would be bad to not do anything. Must be believable.

Reformulate the proposal using details and reasons for needing each section. Give costs and time lines.

I don't think they need to tear down the middle school.

Try to block Brownback, who has cut school funds. The middle school only needs carpet and new floors and, maybe, new paint.

We voted, "Yes." The schools need improvements. People that voted, "No" did so mostly for selfish reasons. I think it needs more promotion. I forwarded e-mails that I got.

Be more transparent and fiscally responsible.

I think they should try to revamp the whole thing and put it before the people again.

Give the public a chance to talk, then listen. It can all be worked out.

They will probably have to revamp it. I voted for it, so I don't really know how they're going to get it passed next time.

They need to reorder the way they ask for various elements of the proposal. Prioritize. Seniors are being pounded by high taxes and you need their vote.

They aren't going to get anything done all at once. Be slow and sure.

Come up with a better proposal and be more upfront about their plans.

Emphasize the need for improved heating and A/C.

Lower the cost or find someone to do it cheaper.

I'm not sure how they could have promoted it any better. I just think a lot of people thought the taxes would go too high.

The method of voting in this election just amazed me. If I was at the County Clerk's office, I could have seen how they voted. They should not mail ballots to dead people. Taxes in Pittsburg County are just too high.

The district should concentrate on what each school really needs. Maintain what you have. Keep schools safe and comfortable. I worked for the district for 31 years, and we were always freezing and getting sick or sweating and almost passing out. Also, I did not receive a ballot. I recently moved and it never got to me. I don't like mailing a ballot as the only way to vote.

I know Brownback has crapped on our school system in Kansas and it is tough to find funding, but I think they have to find creative ways to fund it. Somehow get the public to help with fundraising and/or propose a small sales tax to help.

The safety of the children is our highest priority. Start there.

They have a school there that might need some remodeling, but not a new school.

When a bond issue fails, start over and get a better bond issue in the making.

They should always try to live within their means and \$67 million is not within the district's means.

We need another bond election in November just for the high school needs.

They need to try and fix what they have.

They need to come up with a more convincing reason why these things need to be done.

Make another design and try again. The naysayers started campaigning three weeks earlier than the district.

I think we are in a time now where people are tired of politics and doing everything the same way. Another tax is doing it the same way. You have to motivate people to believe in your cause. Get innovative and show people why you need what you are asking for without the BS and fluff that often accompany these types of proposals.

Start with baby steps.

They need to break apart the bond.

Have two separate bonds; attempt to offset the payments. I know we need the bond, though.

They have got to get back to the drawing board and redo it. They need to gather with the opposition and get their opinions.

Besides being more transparent and detailed, I would tell them to really look at what is needed and fix a few things, but not all at once.

Try to get some of the people who were against it on the steering committee. They can cut a few of the costs and wants.

Pursue the improvements in stages.

Propose another bond issue at less cost that addresses priorities and that clarifies that the reason the preschool building was not included for safe rooms is because it is not part of the district.

I know getting past the history of the middle school is going to be hard, but it does need to be renovated. Promote more classroom space, instead of gymnasiums.

Well, they say they are going to bring it up again in November, and I think they should, but just ask for what is essential.

Lower the overall costs or don't propose any new building work.

Do the storm centers and enlarge some of the schools to accommodate more students.

Campaign harder. A good job was done with parents, but they need to work on other sectors.

I'm not picky. I'm going to leave that up to people that get paid more than me. Keep the teachers' and students' well-being in mind first.

They need a budget manager. The stairwells are a waste of money. They should ditch the entire proposal.

Voters need to recognize the risk factors for children, if things aren't improved. They need to understand how overcrowded some areas are.

We need to revise the proposal and promote the new plan better.

Do a lower-cost plan. The population that is growing is seniors. We need more families coming in. But, in the meantime, have some seniors on the planning committee.

Need to contact Dr. Howard Smud and ask him what they did to get the last bond issue approved.

Regroup and present alternative approaches with at least three options.

Find other ways to fund construction. Tornado shelters are important, but tax things that will not affect the seniors as much. This is a poor community for the most part, but it is taxed high. The district is spending our money to do this survey.

They need to regroup, reeducate the people and streamline their plans on a smaller scale.

Their bond issues usually don't pass at first, then next time they do it they ask for less and then it usually passes.

The cost was the main problem, but the schools do need space. Maybe a smaller bond issue.

I will go with the majority. I don't feel my opinion counts much, since I don't have a child in school.

They need to get by with what they have now and make repairs. They should be glad they have what they have.

I just think the mail ballot was a big issue. Too easy to discard.

They should lower the cost. We haven't paid off the last bond issue.

Pass a bond, but, the next time, I would take the time to mock up the plans. I've heard a lot of people complaining and they weren't happy there weren't more details.

Like with anything, they need to regroup and see what the most important needs are and go from there.

The middle school and the high school should be their number one priority; address the issue of overcrowding.

Detail how you can use what you have now and, then, explain and detail new construction needs and why they are needed.

Be more honest about it and put it as a secret vote, like it should be, at the polls.

I'm in favor of some storm shelters. Most other districts have storm shelters, but we don't.

Go back to the basics.

They probably will raise our tax levy and they can do that. We are still paying on the last bonds.

Pick what is most important and beneficial to the students. The bond was too much and the old bond wasn't even paid off. We are a poor community and couldn't take the rise in property tax.

The proposal should give the list of projects in order of priority, with the cost for each and the time needed to complete each one. This would make the details very clear.

Focus on the elementary school storm shelters. The middle school needs work as well.

They definitely need another school, but don't send ballots through the mail. They need a place to vote. People were leery about the ballot being mailed.

Focus on the shelters and safety of the kids. The frills are not needed.

We really do need to revisit, first and foremost, the safety of our teachers, students and visitors. I'm thinking of multi-purpose rooms. Get this back on the ballot as soon as possible.

Nobody wants to be locked in for 25 years on a bond issue. It should be lowered.

Topic: Demographics

Answers to the following questions allowed the data to be analyzed by a respondent's demographic characteristics and by where he or she lived in the district.

My last few questions will help us divide our interviews into groups.

- 7. How long have you, yourself, lived within the boundaries of the Pittsburg Community Schools? Is it...?** *Choices were read to the respondents.*

Response	Percentage
Less than 2 years	2%
2 years to 5 years	7%
More than 5 years to 10 years	15%
More than 10 years to 15 years	19%
More than 15 years	43%
I've lived here all my life	15%

- 8. In what age group are you? Is it...?** *Choices, except where indicated, were read to the respondents.*

Response	Percentage
18 to 24	3%
25 to 34	16%
35 to 44	20%
45 to 54	22%
55 to 64	21%
65 or older	18%
Refused (not read)	1%

- 9. Do you have any children or grandchildren who attend school in the Pittsburg School District right now?** *Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Yes, children	123
Yes, children and grandchildren	5
Yes, grandchildren	82
No	190

10. Do you have any children or grandchildren who previously were students in the district, but who have graduated? *Asked only of the 272 respondents who did not answer question 9 either, “Yes, children” or “Yes, children and grandchildren.” Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Yes, children	131
Yes, children and grandchildren	24
Yes, grandchildren	7
No	110

11. RECORD GENDER

Response	Percentage
Female	52%
Male	48%