

2016 Amherst Elementary Building Project: Teacher/Staff and Parent/Guardian Survey Results

McBassi & Company
January 13, 2016

Overview: Survey Details

Description of Surveys

- Two surveys designed to gather anonymous opinions regarding the 4 options being considered by School Committee*
 - Administered online January 4, 2016, to January 10, 2016
 - Identical major elements for both teacher/staff and parent/guardian versions:
 - One-page sheet from district on facts/implications
 - Favorable/unfavorable ratings
 - 12 factors – choose 3 most important
 - Rank building options top to bottom
 - Open-ended additional comments
- Quick turnaround surveys
 - Get opinion “pulse” in way that can be quantified
 - No guarantee results are representative of full populations being surveyed (this is true of almost all surveys)
 - Be especially careful interpreting responses from small groups
 - Quantitative results complemented by detailed open-ended responses submitted by 50 percent of parent/guardian respondents and 38 percent of teacher/staff respondents

**Responses to some parents/guardians’ comments about the survey design are available in a separate document appended to the end of this report.*

Building Options Under Consideration

- **Option A:** Replace Wildwood with a new building (360 K-6 students); Crocker Farm remains PreK-6; Fort River remains K-6
- **Option B:** Replace Wildwood and Fort River with a single new building that contains two separate K-6 wings (670 students); Crocker Farm remains PreK-6
- **Option C:** Replace Wildwood and Fort River; reconfigure the district to have a new unified building containing 2 separate Grade 2-6 wings for all ARPS Grade 2-6 (750 students); Crocker Farm becomes a PreK-1 Early Childhood Center
- **Option D:** Replace Wildwood and Fort River; reconfigure the district to have a new unified building (750 students) containing one wing for Grades 2-4 and one wing for Grades 5-6; Crocker Farm becomes a PreK-1 Early Childhood Center

Teacher/Staff Survey: Detailed Results

Teacher/Staff Survey

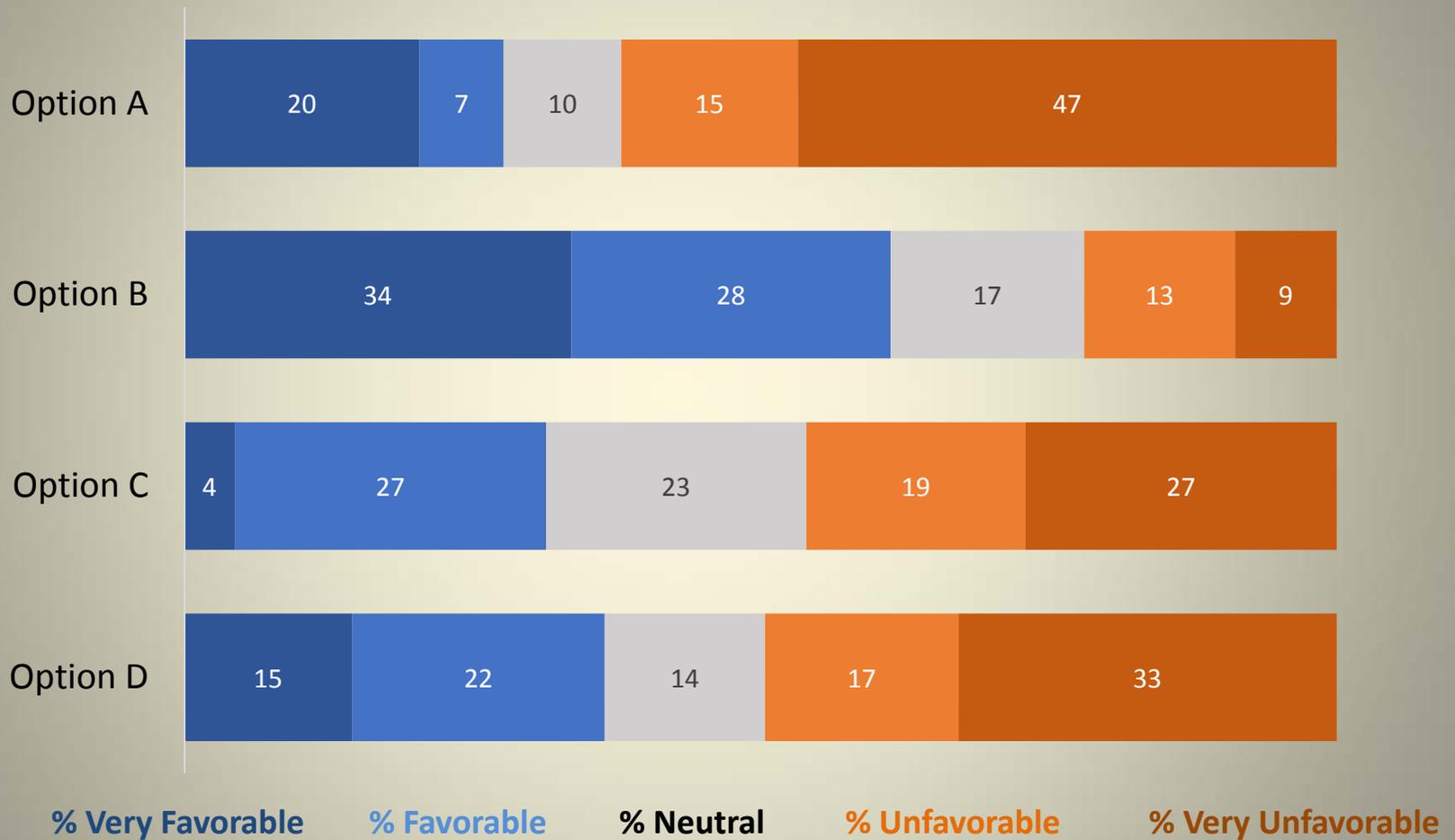
- All teachers/staff in 3 Amherst elementary schools invited (via emails) to respond
- Breakdowns by school and by job type
- Overall response rate = 50%
- Teacher/staff survey margin of error = $\pm 5.9\%$ (95% confidence level)

Teacher/Staff Survey: Response Rates

	Total Employees	Survey Respondents	Response Rate
TEACHERS/STAFF OVERALL	275	137	50%
Crocker Farm	95	54	57%
Fort River	87	44	51%
Wildwood	93	39	42%
Classroom Teacher 3-6	36	26	72%
Classroom Teacher K-2	23	17	74%
ELL Teacher	10	7	70%
Other Staff	21	10	48%
Other Teacher or Specialist	43	24	56%
Paraeducator	86	18	21%
Preschool Teacher or Specialist	10	8	80%
Special Education Teacher or Specialist	46	27	59%

Note: Many of the tables in this report use light-to-dark green shading to visually indicate relative lows (lighter green) to relative highs (darker green) within a given data row or column.

Teacher/Staff Survey: Overall Favorability



Teacher/Staff Survey: Favorability by Group

% of respondents rating each option “Favorable” or better (i.e., “Favorable” or “Very Favorable”)

% Favorable or Very Favorable	Options			
	A	B	C	D
TEACHERS/STAFF OVERALL	28	61	31	37
Crocker Farm	33	59	24	32
Fort River	14	57	41	50
Wildwood	36	69	31	28
Classroom Teacher 3-6	31	77	27	23
Classroom Teacher K-2	35	59	12	18
ELL Teacher	14	43	57	57
Other Staff	50	60	20	20
Other Teacher or Specialist	21	63	33	58
Paraeducator	61	67	22	17
Preschool Teacher or Specialist	0	25	63	75
Special Education Teacher or Specialist	7	59	41	44

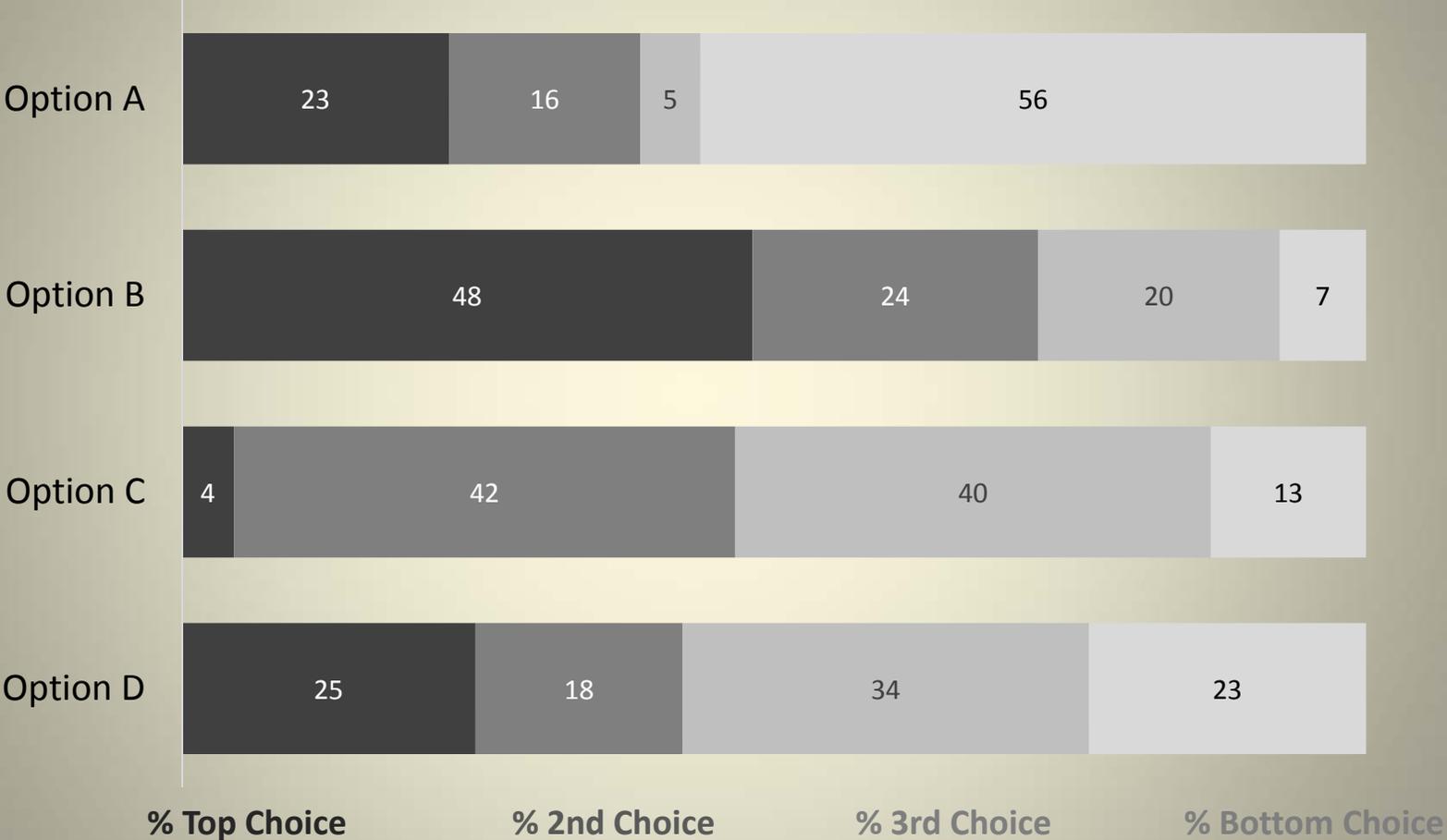
Teacher/Staff Survey: Favorability Points by Group

Average Favorability Points: 0.0 to 4.0 scale

(0=Very Unfavorable, 1=Unfavorable, 2=Neutral, 3=Favorable, 4=Very Favorable)

	Options			
	A	B	C	D
TEACHERS/STAFF OVERALL	1.4	2.6	1.6	1.7
Crocker Farm	1.6	2.8	1.5	1.6
Fort River	0.7	2.5	1.9	2.1
Wildwood	1.9	2.7	1.5	1.4
Classroom Teacher 3-6	1.4	2.9	1.3	1.4
Classroom Teacher K-2	1.8	2.4	1.1	1.2
ELL Teacher	0.9	2.1	2.4	2.4
Other Staff	2.2	2.7	1.2	1.2
Other Teacher or Specialist	1.2	2.9	1.7	2.1
Paraeducator	2.5	2.7	1.4	1.1
Preschool Teacher or Specialist	0.4	2.0	2.5	3.0
Special Education Teacher or Specialist	0.7	2.6	2.0	2.0

Teacher/Staff Survey: Ranking Options



Teacher/Staff Survey: Top Choice by Group

% of respondents ranking specified option as #1 choice:

	A	B	C	D
TEACHERS/STAFF OVERALL	23	48	4	25
Crocker Farm	22	48	7	22
Fort River	11	50	0	39
Wildwood	36	46	5	13
Classroom Teacher 3-6	19	62	4	15
Classroom Teacher K-2	41	41	0	18
ELL Teacher	14	29	14	43
Other Staff	40	50	0	10
Other Teacher or Specialist	8	58	4	29
Paraeducator	50	39	0	11
Preschool Teacher or Specialist	0	25	13	63
Special Education Teacher or Specialist	11	48	7	33

Teacher/Staff Survey: % Open to Considering

% of respondents likely open to considering each option

Defined as: ranking choice either 1st or 2nd *AND* favorability rating of Neutral, Favorable, or Very Favorable



Teacher/Staff Survey: % Open to Considering

% of respondents likely open to considering each option

Defined as: ranking choice either 1st or 2nd *AND* favorability rating of Neutral, Favorable, or Very Favorable

	A	B	C	D
TEACHERS/STAFF OVERALL	31	66	37	37
Crocker Farm	37	65	37	31
Fort River	14	59	48	50
Wildwood	44	74	26	28
Classroom Teacher 3-6	31	73	35	31
Classroom Teacher K-2	53	59	6	29
ELL Teacher	14	43	71	71
Other Staff	60	80	20	10
Other Teacher or Specialist	25	71	42	42
Paraeducator	56	78	33	11
Preschool Teacher or Specialist	0	25	88	75
Special Education Teacher or Specialist	11	63	41	48

Teacher/Staff Survey: Underlying Factors Overall

- % of respondents citing each factor in their “Top 3” factors most important in determining their preferences among the building options:

	All Respondents
Healthy Work & Learning Environment	65%
Impact on Student Learning	61%
Grade Span in School	43%
Equity Considerations	36%
Number of Transitions	20%
Teacher Collaboration	16%
Personal Considerations	13%
District Financial Considerations	12%
SE-Specialized Programs	11%
Student Transportation	10%
Redistricting Implications	9%
ELL Options	4%

Teacher/Staff Survey: Underlying Factors by Top Choice

- % of respondents, by top choice, citing each factor in their “Top 3” factors most important in determining their preferences among the building options:

	If First Choice is Option...			
	A	B	C	D
Healthy Work & Learning Environment	45%	74%	83%	62%
Impact on Student Learning	74%	48%	67%	71%
Grade Span in School	55%	53%	33%	15%
Equity Considerations	19%	29%	83%	56%
Number of Transitions	26%	26%	17%	6%
Teacher Collaboration	6%	12%	0%	35%
Personal Considerations	19%	14%	0%	9%
District Financial Considerations	10%	15%	0%	9%
SE-Specialized Programs	0%	11%	17%	21%
Student Transportation	23%	11%	0%	0%
Redistricting Implications	23%	5%	0%	6%
ELL Options	0%	3%	0%	12%

Teacher/Staff Survey: Underlying Factors by Job

- % of respondents, by job category, citing each factor in their “Top 3” factors most important in determining their preferences among the building options:

	Classroom Teacher 3-6	Classroom Teacher K-2	ELL Teacher	Other Staff	Other Teacher or Specialist	Paraeducator	Preschool	Special Education Staff
Healthy Work & Learning Environment	65%	65%	86%	30%	71%	67%	50%	70%
Impact on Student Learning	54%	59%	86%	60%	63%	61%	75%	56%
Grade Span in School	62%	71%	0%	30%	37%	44%	13%	37%
Equity Considerations	35%	29%	57%	30%	42%	22%	50%	37%
Number of Transitions	31%	24%	14%	40%	8%	33%	13%	7%
Teacher Collaboration	8%	18%	14%	10%	33%	6%	25%	15%
Personal Considerations	12%	18%	0%	20%	21%	6%	0%	15%
District Financial Considerations	12%	0%	0%	30%	8%	17%	25%	11%
SE-Specialized Programs	4%	0%	0%	10%	8%	6%	38%	26%
Student Transportation	4%	12%	0%	40%	8%	17%	0%	7%
Redistricting Implications	12%	6%	0%	0%	0%	17%	13%	15%
ELL Options	4%	0%	43%	0%	0%	6%	0%	4%

Teacher/Staff Survey: Underlying Factors by School

- % of respondents, by school, citing each factor in their “Top 3” factors most important in determining their preferences among the building options:

	Crocker Farm	Fort River	Wildwood
Healthy Work & Learning Environment	54%	75%	69%
Impact on Student Learning	48%	80%	56%
Grade Span in School	48%	27%	54%
Equity Considerations	30%	45%	33%
Number of Transitions	26%	16%	18%
Teacher Collaboration	17%	14%	18%
Personal Considerations	17%	7%	15%
District Financial Considerations	19%	9%	5%
SE-Specialized Programs	9%	11%	13%
Student Transportation	19%	5%	5%
Redistricting Implications	9%	7%	10%
ELL Options	6%	5%	3%

Summing Up: Teacher/Staff Survey

- Option B is viewed more favorably and is the top choice of a higher % of respondents, with broad appeal across schools and job categories
- A few variations:
 - Fort River respondents statistically-significantly different on many responses than Crocker Farm/Wildwood; still favor Option B, but not as strongly
 - ELL teachers, preschool teachers/specialists favor Options C/D
- Healthy Work/Learning Environment and Impact on Student Learning both cited in Top 3 by 60%+

Parent/Guardian Survey: Detailed Results

Parent/Guardian Survey

- Parents/guardians of current or future elementary school students invited to respond
- Outreach: 2 emails, backpack flyer, “robo-call,” PGO blogs and communications, superintendent email newsletter, contacted local pre-school and daycare centers by email and phone
- Breakdowns by school, grade level, special education
- *Estimated* overall response rate = 27%
- Margin of error = +/- 4.1 percent (95% confidence level)

Parent/Guardian Survey: Response Statistics

- 451 overall responses
 - Survey available in English and Spanish; received 1 Spanish response
- Estimated 27% response rate is based on calculation using unique parent email addresses; estimate excludes future parents
- Survey also open to future parents (live in Amherst, have children not yet of school age); 68 responses received from this group
- **69% of respondents would be directly affected** by possible new building and/or reconfiguration (i.e., at least one child in K-2 or not yet in school)

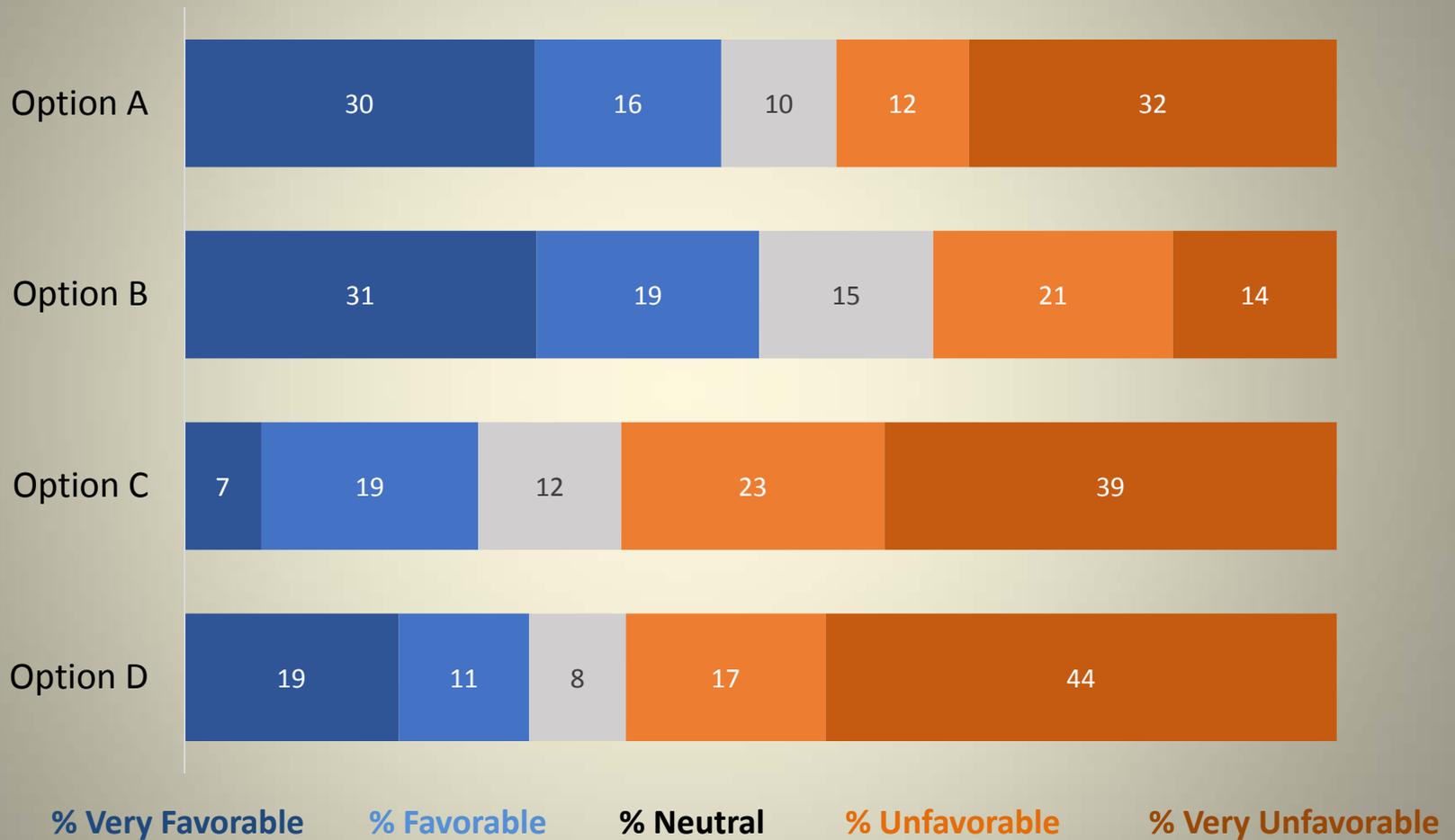
Parent/Guardian Survey: Response Statistics

- Among parents with children in elementary schools, response proportions were quite comparable to school enrollment and special education percentages:

	Actual % of All Amherst Elementary Students	% of Survey Responses	# Survey Responses
All Responses			451
Crocker Farm	35%	35%	137
Fort River	29%	32%	127
Wildwood	36%	33%	129
Future Parents (Children Not Yet of School Age)			68
1+ Child Receives Special Education Services	18%	19%	86

For school-by-school counts and breakdowns, respondents with children in multiple schools are included in all applicable schools. They are counted only once, however, for overall averages.

Parent/Guardian Survey: Overall Favorability



Parent/Guardian Survey: Favorability by Group

% of respondents rating each option “Favorable” or better (i.e., “Favorable” or “Very Favorable”)

% Favorable or Very Favorable	Options			
	A	B	C	D
PARENTS/GUARDIANS OVERALL	47	50	26	30
Crocker Farm	48	57	26	23
Fort River	21	47	37	48
Wildwood	68	43	16	19
Future Parents (Children Not Yet of School Age)	53	48	20	28
One or More Child Receives Special Ed	42	44	34	29
Directly Affected (at least one future or K-2)	48	54	23	26

Differences across schools are statistically significant (95%+ confidence level). This is also true of almost all other parent/guardian school-based differences in the slides that follow.

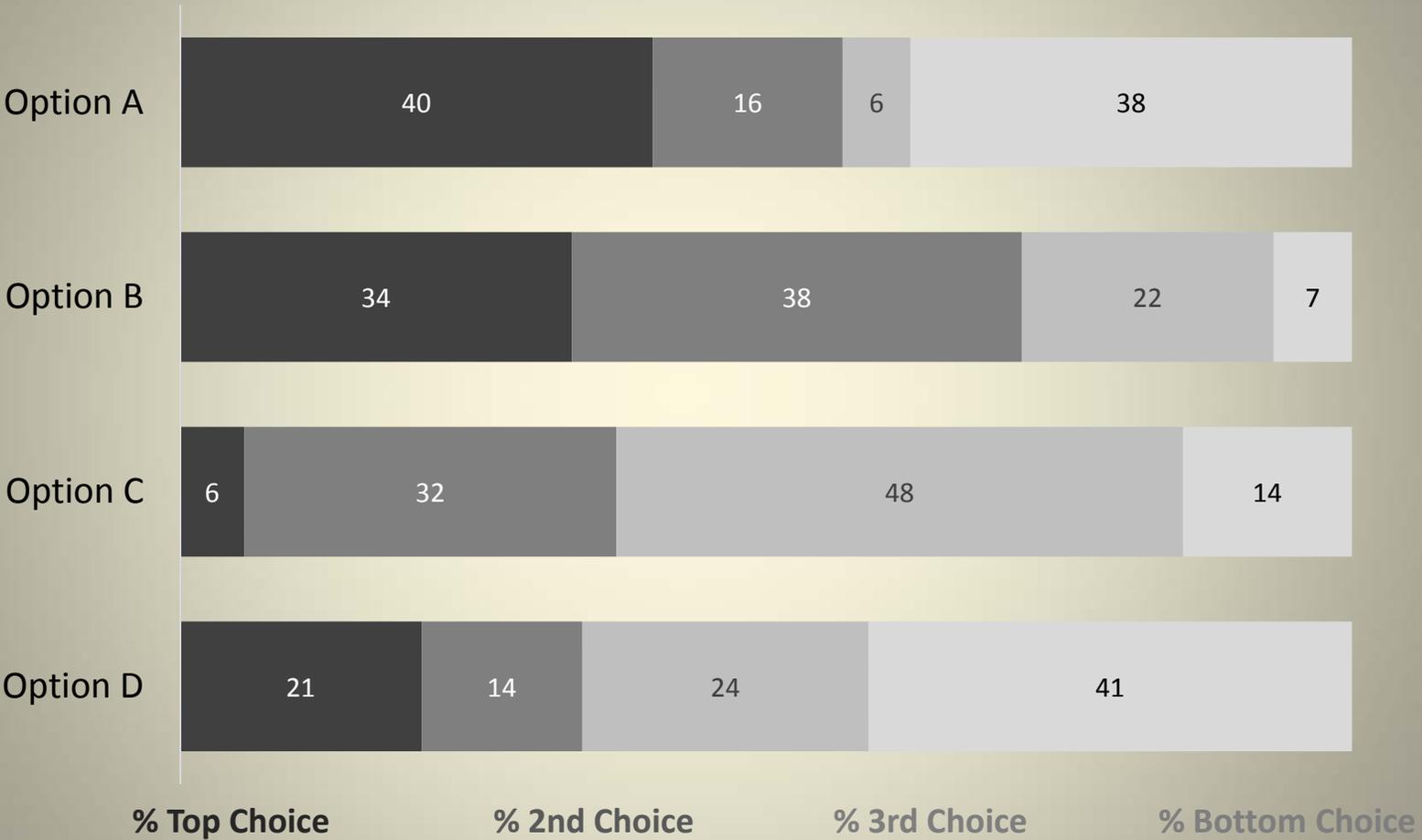
Parent/Guardian Survey: Favorability Points by Group

Average Favorability Points: 0.0 to 4.0 scale

(0=Very Unfavorable, 1=Unfavorable, 2=Neutral, 3=Favorable, 4=Very Favorable)

	Options			
	A	B	C	D
PARENTS/GUARDIANS OVERALL	2.0	2.3	1.3	1.4
Crocker Farm	2.2	2.6	1.2	1.2
Fort River	1.0	2.3	1.8	2.2
Wildwood	2.8	2.1	0.9	1.0
Future Parents (No Children Yet Enrolled)	2.2	2.2	1.3	1.3
One or More Child Receives Special Ed	1.9	2.2	1.5	1.6
Directly Affected (at least one future or K-2)	2.1	2.4	1.3	1.3

Parent/Guardian Survey: Ranking Options



Parent/Guardian Survey: Top Choice by Group

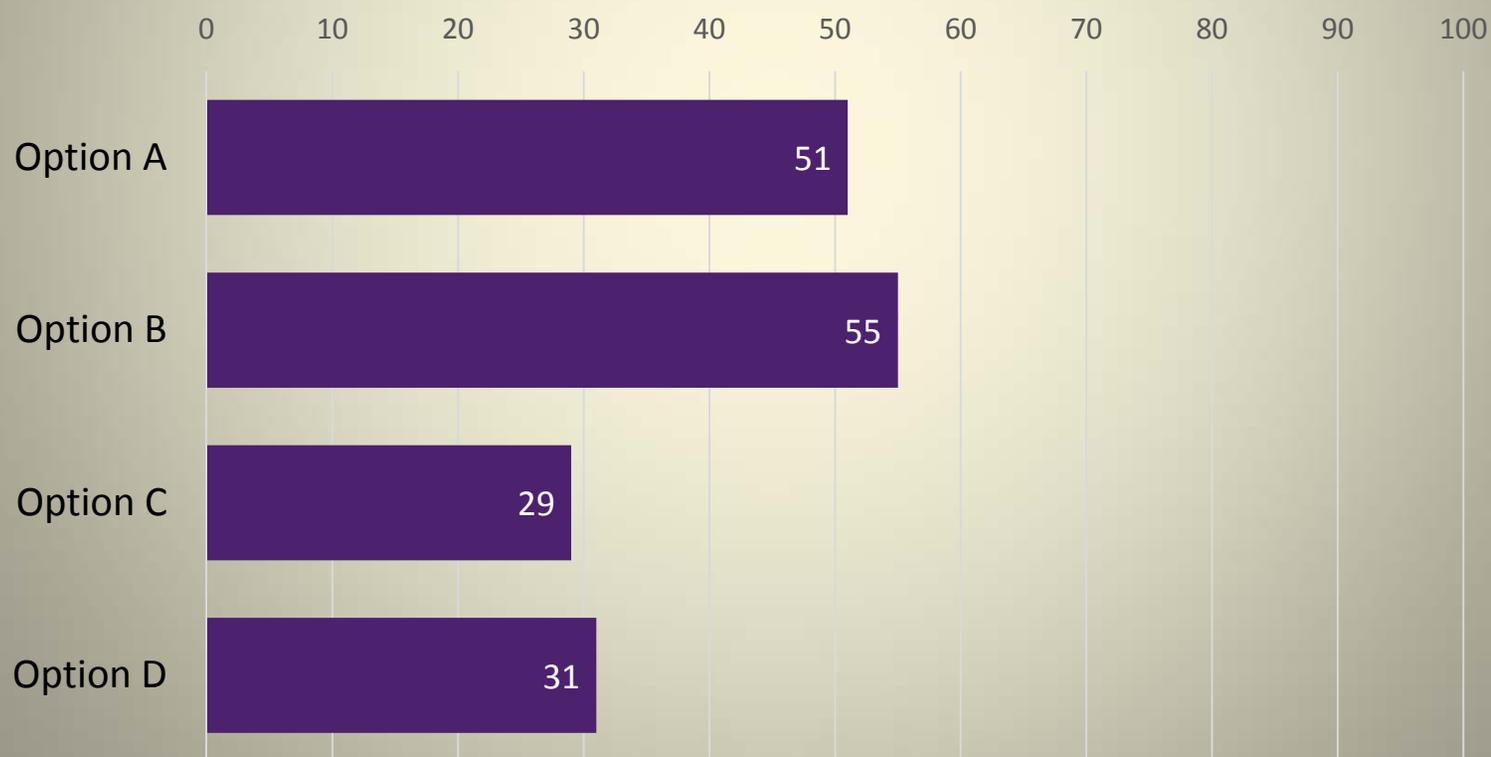
% of respondents ranking specified option as #1 choice:

	Options			
	A	B	C	D
PARENTS/GUARDIANS OVERALL	40	34	6	21
Crocker Farm	37	41	5	17
Fort River	21	37	5	38
Wildwood	59	24	6	11
Future Parents (Children Not Yet of School Age)	50	28	6	16
One or More Child Receives Special Ed	37	34	6	23
Directly Affected (at least one future or K-2)	42	37	5	16

Parent/Guardian Survey: % Open to Considering

% of respondents likely open to considering each option

Defined as: ranking choice either 1st or 2nd *AND* favorability rating of Neutral, Favorable, or Very Favorable



Parent/Guardian Survey: % Open to Considering

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	A	B	C	D
PARENTS/GUARDIANS OVERALL	51	55	29	31
Crocker Farm	55	65	28	26
Fort River	24	48	47	48
Wildwood	73	55	14	20
Future Parents (Children Not Yet of School Age)	54	50	25	28
One or More Child Receives Special Ed	48	60	36	34
Directly Affected (at least one future or K-2)	54	60	27	26

Parent/Guardian Survey: Underlying Factors Overall

- % of respondents citing each factor in their “Top 3” factors most important in determining their preferences among the building options:

	All Respondents
Impact On Student Learning	65%
Healthy Work & Learning Environment	55%
Grade Span In School	43%
Number of Transitions	32%
Equity Considerations	27%
District Financial Considerations	18%
Student Transportation	17%
Personal Considerations	14%
Teacher Collaboration	11%
Redistricting Implications	10%
SE-Specialized Programs	5%
ELL Options	2%

Parent/Guardian Survey: Underlying Factors by Top Choice

- % of respondents, by top choice, citing each factor in their “Top 3” factors most important in determining their preferences among the building options:

	If First Choice is Option...			
	A	B	C	D
Impact On Student Learning	72%	54%	60%	69%
Healthy Work & Learning Environment	41%	61%	80%	66%
Grade Span In School	53%	48%	20%	23%
Number of Transitions	45%	38%	4%	4%
Equity Considerations	12%	28%	60%	48%
District Financial Considerations	10%	21%	8%	31%
Student Transportation	24%	18%	12%	3%
Personal Considerations	20%	14%	4%	4%
Teacher Collaboration	4%	5%	20%	31%
Redistricting Implications	13%	7%	20%	9%
SE-Specialized Programs	4%	5%	12%	8%
ELL Options	2%	1%	0%	4%

Parent/Guardian Survey: Underlying Factors by School

- % of respondents, by school, citing each factor in their “Top 3” factors most important in determining their preferences among the building options:

	Crocker Farm	Fort River	Wildwood
Impact on Student Learning	60%	70%	68%
Healthy Work & Learning Environment	50%	65%	51%
Grade Span in School	47%	35%	50%
Number of Transitions	38%	24%	29%
Equity Considerations	26%	39%	22%
District Financial Considerations	18%	19%	19%
Student Transportation	19%	8%	18%
Personal Considerations	14%	9%	16%
Teacher Collaboration	10%	17%	8%
Redistricting Implications	8%	6%	17%
SE-Specialized Programs	9%	6%	1%
ELL Options	2%	2%	1%

Summing Up: Parent/Guardian Survey

- Options A and B very close (within survey margin of error) on almost all summary measures
- Statistically-significant differences across schools in most measures of favorability and preferences
- Responses from “directly-affected” parents and from parents of children receiving Special Education services are both similar to overall sample of all respondents
- Top factors cited (50%+): Impact on Student Learning, Healthy Work/Learning Environment

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**RESPONSES FROM McBASSI TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS' SURVEY COMMENTS ON THE
DESIGN OF THE AMHERST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT SURVEY
January 11, 2016**

Approximately 5 percent of open-ended comments received in the just-completed parent/guardian survey contained some critique of the survey design, the survey process, and/or the options presented within the survey. This document provides a brief response from survey administrator McBassi & Company to the issues raised in those critiques.

SURVEY IS POORLY DESIGNED OR BIASED: Many comments in this category seemed related to the limited number of building options included in the survey, and reflected frustration that other options (e.g., renovating Wildwood; building two separate new schools) were not included. Other options were not included in the survey because the School Committee was looking for feedback on only the four options it is actively considering.

Other comments suggested the survey was specifically designed to yield a pre-specified set of results desired by the School Committee and/or administration. This is not the case. The only survey content provided by the School Committee was the one-page "implications" PDF document. All other survey content (including all descriptions of the options and factors) was drafted by McBassi, which has no stake in the survey outcome. The School Committee relied on McBassi's text and recommendations and made only very light edits. Indeed, the most significant set of changes that were made to the original survey draft came from suggestions submitted to the School Committee by parent reviewer Catherine Corson.

SURVEY WAS "RUSHED": The survey timeline, from approval to results, was indeed quite compressed, but we are confident the survey is well-suited to accurately capture opinions on the options being considered by the School Committee. The most significant positive effect of a longer time frame would have been to increase the response rates (by some unknown amount). While, for many reasons, it is always better to have a larger number of different respondents, we are also encouraged by the finding that response patterns from early respondents and late respondents to the survey seemed similar, providing some evidence that there is not significant difference between the most enthusiastic respondents (who tend to respond early) and others who responded near the end of the (admittedly short) survey response window.

MISSING FACTORS: Some respondents noted that important factors were not available in the list of 12 presented. Most frequently cited was "school size." The factor question was designed to present a manageable number of factors for respondents to review and prioritize. In our experience, a question like this becomes more confusing or unwieldy for respondents as the number of possible choices increases, especially for complex factors like many of the ones affecting this decision. We therefore sought to list a relatively limited number of different factors. Having reviewed parents' comments, however, it is clear that "school size" in particular would have been a useful addition to the list.

ONLY ALLOWED TO RANK 3 FACTORS; WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO RANK THE IMPORTANCE OF EACH ONE ON THE LIST: The School Committee was most interested in learning what few factors were the very most important to each respondent, and to facilitate this, requested a design that would eliminate the possibility of respondents potentially ranking all or a large percentage of the factors as "very important." We therefore specifically designed the question to be "forced choice," where respondents were presented with a list of multiple positive factors, and asked respondents to select the limited number that were most important in shaping their preferences.

FACTORS ARE INTERDEPENDENT: Other respondents noted that the 12 factors are interdependent. We agree, but this would be true of any set of factors related to such a complex decision. We sought to differentiate the inherently interdependent factors as much as possible (and added factor definitions, per Ms. Corson’s suggestion, in an effort to clarify how they differed from one another).

NO “OTHER” (FILL-IN-BLANK) OPTION FOR EACH QUESTION: A primary goal of the survey was to quantify opinions of respondents. There is always a tension in survey design between (1) providing flexibility to respondents to capture most accurately their precise opinions and (2) being able to quantify results more broadly in a straightforward, meaningful way. More respondent flexibility thus means less ability to quantify and summarize the results clearly. We sought to address this tension directly by enabling both: keeping the initial questions closed-ended and quantifiable while providing an unlimited open-ended comment box at the end of the survey. (Fully 50 percent of parent/guardian respondents took advantage of this opportunity to share their comments.)

NO SOCIOECONOMIC OR DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS: Whether or not to include these items was an extremely difficult decision. In the end, socioeconomic and demographic questions were not included for two main reasons, reflecting another tradeoff inherent in survey design.

First, there was strong emphasis at the most recent School Committee meeting on the desire for a fully anonymous survey, and the entire survey was designed with this in mind (for example, it asks only about students’ grade ranges, not specific grade levels). We felt that including a large number of questions regarding personal characteristics could undermine this message. We therefore avoided any questions with small potential response groups that may have eroded respondents’ confidence that their responses were anonymous.

Second, every question asked about personal characteristics increases the likelihood that a respondent will choose to abandon the survey. The parent/guardian survey already opens with 4 (or 5) key personal questions (in Amherst schools, which school, which grade(s), special education status). To help maximize response rates, we opted not to add additional personal characteristic questions on top of these.

Alternatively, other comments suggested asking “optional” socioeconomic/demographic questions. In our experience, large percentages of respondents typically opt out of answering such items when permitted to do so. This makes it extremely difficult to interpret any counts for such questions with large numbers of missing values.

NO OPTION INCLUDED TO GO BACK AND CHANGE RESPONSES: A “back” button was not included in the survey because of the initial screening questions used to confirm that respondents were current or future Amherst elementary parents. We sought to avoid actively signaling, by inclusion of the back button, that changes to such responses (potentially in order to gain access to the survey) were acceptable.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION NOT INCLUDED: Financial information (costs of various options) was not included in the survey because it was not available at the time of the survey.

SURVEY WAS INTERNET-ONLY: The compressed timeline necessitated an Internet-only survey, as distributing, collecting, and coding paper surveys was impractical given the reporting time constraints. The School Committee attempted to address this issue in its communications to parents/guardians, which specifically invited anyone without Internet access to take the survey at a school computer.