Board Work Session

Wednesday, November 18, 2026 6:00 PM
High School Library, 35 Church Hill Road, Kintnersville, PA 18930

1. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

1.A. Live Stream URL

1.B. Phone

2. **MEETING OPENING**

2.A. Call to Order

2.B. Salute to Flag

2.C. Roll Call

3. **PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS**

3.A. Charting our Course: Community Survey Review

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

BUILDING CONSOLIDATION OPTIONS

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSE SUMMARIES

A Compilation of Community Feedback and Perspectives

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document brings together summarized community responses regarding the various building consolidation options under consideration by the Palisades School District. It is intended to provide Board members with an organized overview of the feedback received and the reasons respondents expressed support or concerns about each option.

ABOUT THE SUMMARIES

The summaries were developed by reviewing the written survey comments submitted for each consolidation option. Responses were grouped by common themes and consolidated to identify the most frequently expressed reasons for support and opposition. Where possible, the number of respondents expressing each perspective is included.

> *These summaries are intended to support Board understanding and discussion. They organize the themes reflected in the comments and are not an evaluation or recommendation of any particular option.*

NOVEMBER 2026

Summary Responses: Option 1: Leave schools as they are.

Three reasons people believe Option 1 is a good option

1. Smaller class sizes and stronger individual student support: 60 - 70 responses
This was one of the most frequently expressed concerns.
Respondents believe the current configuration provides:

- Smaller, more manageable classroom sizes.
- More individualized attention from teachers.
- Stronger relationships between teachers, students, and families.
- Better opportunities to identify and address academic, behavioral, and special education needs.
- More manageable caseloads for interventionists and support staff.

Several respondents specifically referenced the importance of smaller K–3 classrooms, particularly for students who need additional support in reading, math, and foundational skills.

2. Appropriate grade configurations and minimizing disruption to students: 30 – 40 responses
Many respondents expressed concern about moving students into different buildings, particularly younger students sharing buildings with significantly older students.
Specific concerns included:

- Developmental appropriateness of grade configurations.
- Fifth graders being placed with middle school students.
- Eighth graders being placed in a high school environment.
- Longer bus rides, particularly for elementary students.
- Disruption to established friendships, routines, and school communities.

Some respondents also expressed concern about the impact of consolidation on students with special needs or medical conditions who benefit from familiar staff and smaller school environments.

3. Neighborhood schools, community identity, and family relationships: 35 – 45 responses
A number of comments were particularly passionate about the value of neighborhood schools.
Respondents described their schools as:

- Close-knit communities where teachers know every child.
- An important reason families choose to live in the Palisades area.
- A source of community pride and identity.
- Places where students and families feel connected and supported.

Several comments specifically defended Tinicum Elementary, with parents, grandparents, alumni, and community members describing the personal relationships and experiences that make the school valuable.
There was also a willingness expressed by some respondents to accept reasonable tax increases rather than lose a neighborhood school.

Three reasons people believe that Option 1 is not acceptable

1. Declining enrollment and underutilized buildings: 30 – 40 responses
This was the most consistent financial and operational argument for examining consolidation.
Respondents pointed to:

- Declining student enrollment.
- Buildings operating significantly below capacity.
- The expense of maintaining multiple facilities.
- Unused classroom space and resources.
- The belief that the district no longer needs the same number of buildings it needed when enrollment was higher.

2. Financial sustainability and responsible use of taxpayer dollars: 50 – 60 responses
Many respondents questioned whether maintaining all existing buildings is financially responsible given the district's enrollment and budget challenges.
Comments reflected concerns about:

- Continuing to operate buildings that are not fully utilized.
- Rising operating and maintenance expenses.
- The need to reduce expenditures.
- The impact of maintaining the current structure on future budgets and taxpayers.
- The importance of making difficult decisions now rather than waiting until the financial situation becomes more difficult.

Some respondents also suggested that consolidation could free up resources for instructional programs, staffing, and student services. Interestingly, not everyone advocating for consolidation was necessarily seeking lower taxes. Some simply wanted the district to use its resources more efficiently.

3. Better utilization of staff, facilities, and educational resources: 30 – 40 responses
A third theme was that consolidation could provide opportunities to organize district resources more effectively.
Respondents suggested that combining schools could:

- Better balance student populations across buildings.
- Allow for more efficient use of teachers and support personnel.
- Reduce duplication of services and operational expenses.
- Provide more opportunities for collaboration among staff.
- Create opportunities to centralize programs and specialized services.
- Allow the district to use existing space more effectively.

Some respondents also suggested alternatives such as renting unused space to the IU, offering preschool programs, or repurposing portions of existing buildings.

Summary Responses: Option 2: Close one elementary building and alter the grade level bands: K-4; 5-7; 8-12

Three reasons people believe Option 2 is a good option

1. Financial savings and fiscal responsibility: 10 – 15 responses
Closing an elementary building would reduce operating costs, maintenance, staffing expenses, and the financial burden of maintaining three elementary schools

2. Better utilization of existing facilities: 10 – 15 responses
Consolidating students into fewer buildings would make better use of available classroom space and building capacity, particularly in buildings operating below capacity.

3. A more reasonable or manageable consolidation option: 10 – 15 responses
Some respondents view this as a reasonable first step, a less drastic alternative to other scenarios, or a preferable approach if the district must reduce its number of buildings.

A few additional positive comments referenced:

- More students having access to high school athletics, theater, and music programs.
- Better use of existing resources.
- The possibility of maintaining students within the district rather than sending them elsewhere

Three reasons people believe that Option 2 is not acceptable

1. Developmentally inappropriate grade configurations and student safety: 140 – 150 responses
Fifth graders are too young for middle school, and eighth graders should not be placed in a high school environment with students as old as 18 or 19. Concerns include maturity differences, social and emotional development, exposure to older students, and student safety.

2. Increased transportation time and logistical challenges: Approximately 60 responses
Closing an elementary school could create longer bus rides, particularly for younger students in this geographically large district. Respondents also raised concerns about early start times, bus scheduling, and younger students riding with older students.

3. Increased class sizes and reduced individualized support: Approximately 50 responses
Respondents worry that consolidating elementary students will increase classroom sizes, stretch teachers and support personnel, increase special education caseloads, and reduce the individualized attention students currently receive.

Additional concerns included:

- Disruption to established school communities and student relationships.
- Splitting seventh- and eighth-grade students who participate together in athletics, music, and extracurricular activities.
- Uncertainty about which elementary school would close.
- Questions about whether the projected financial savings justify the disruption.
- Lack of detailed information about staffing, classroom capacity, and educational impact.

Summary Responses: Option 3: Close one elementary building and keep the grade level bands the same: K-5; 6-8; 9-12

Three reasons people believe Option 3 is a good option

1. Maintains developmentally appropriate grade configurations: 50 responses Respondents like keeping elementary, middle, and high school students in their traditional grade groupings. They believe fifth graders are too young for middle school, and eighth graders should remain separate from high school students.

2. Represents a reasonable compromise and minimizes disruption: 25 responses
Respondents view this as a middle-ground approach that maintains much of the existing educational structure without requiring the district to reorganize all grade levels. Several describe it as the least disruptive of the consolidation options.

3. Provides financial savings and improves facility utilization: 20 responses
Respondents recognize the benefits of operating fewer elementary buildings, reducing maintenance costs, and better utilizing available classroom space in response to declining enrollment.

A few additional positive comments referenced:

- Better opportunities to organize students into appropriate developmental groups.
- The potential to redistribute staff and resources more effectively.
- The possibility of maintaining educational quality while addressing financial challenges.
- Preference for closing Durham-Nockamixon rather than Tinicum or Springfield, based on location, building condition, or transportation.

Three reasons people believe that Option 3 is not acceptable

1. Increased elementary class sizes and overcrowding: 95 responses
Respondents fear that combining three elementary schools into two will create larger classrooms, reduce individualized attention, increase special education caseloads, and place additional pressure on teachers and support staff.

2. Longer transportation times and geographic challenges: 60 responses
Respondents are concerned about young children spending significantly more time on buses, potentially reaching 60–90 minutes or longer. They also question whether additional transportation costs will offset the anticipated savings.

3. Loss of neighborhood schools and disruption to families and communities: 45 responses
Respondents worry about losing established school communities, relationships with teachers and classmates, community identity, and the stability families value. Some also object to not knowing which elementary school would close.

Additional concerns included:

- Whether the remaining elementary buildings have sufficient classroom capacity.
- Potential loss of teachers and other staff.
- The impact on families who have built their lives around a particular neighborhood school.

- Whether enrollment could increase in the future and require the district to reopen or build another school.
- Whether the projected savings justify the disruption.
- The need for a longer implementation timeline and more detailed planning.

Summary Responses: Option 4: Campus approach which involves closing two elementary schools and have a grade configuration of K-2; 3-6; and 7-12.

Three reasons people believe Option 4 is a good option

1. Financial savings and more responsible use of taxpayer dollars: 16 responses
Supporters see consolidation as a necessary response to declining enrollment and the district's financial challenges. They believe operating fewer buildings would reduce waste, improve utilization, and make better use of taxpayer dollars.

2. Centralized campus, shared resources, and improved operational efficiency: 12 responses
Some respondents like bringing district schools, staff, and resources together in a more centralized location. They see potential benefits in staff sharing, collaboration, improved facility utilization, and having resources concentrated in one area.

3. Keeping younger elementary students together longer through the grade configuration: 6 responses
A smaller group appreciates the idea of keeping younger children in an elementary setting longer, particularly allowing sixth graders another year before transitioning to a secondary environment. Some see advantages in a primary/intermediate school structure.

Three reasons people believe that Option 4 is not acceptable

1. Developmental, social, and safety concerns about placing grades 7–12 together: 137 responses
This is by far the strongest theme in the responses. Parents and community members repeatedly object to placing seventh and eighth graders in the same high school environment as juniors and seniors. Their concerns include:

- The developmental and maturity differences between 12- and 13-year-olds and 17- and 18-year-olds.
- Exposure to older students' behaviors and social influences.
- Bullying, student safety, and supervision.
- Access to bathrooms, locker rooms, cafeterias, and common areas.
- Loss of an age-appropriate middle school environment.

A recurring sentiment is that the district previously moved away from a 7–12 configuration for a reason, and respondents do not want to return to it.

2. Transportation and geographic challenges: 72 responses
Transportation is another significant concern, particularly for families living in the more geographically distant portions of the district.
Respondents question:

- How long young children would spend on buses.
- Whether the district's rural roads and geography make a centralized campus practical.
- How families with children attending different grade configurations would manage transportation.
- Whether the district would need additional buses and drivers.
- Whether longer transportation times would negatively affect extracurricular activities and family schedules.

3. Overcrowding, class sizes, and building capacity: 42 responses

Many respondents question whether the remaining buildings can adequately accommodate the students being relocated.
Specific concerns include:

- Larger elementary and middle school class sizes.
- Overcrowded classrooms and common areas.
- Adequate space for special education and intervention services.
- Availability of gyms, cafeterias, music rooms, and other specialized facilities.
- Whether additional renovations or construction would be necessary.

A recurring question is whether the projected savings would still be realized if substantial facility improvements and additional staffing were needed.

Another significant concern: Closing two elementary schools
Respondents expressed concerns about:

- Losing neighborhood schools and their community identities.
- The impact on Tinicum and Springfield communities.
- The loss of relationships with teachers, staff, and principals.
- Property values and the attractiveness of the district to prospective families.
- The disruption caused by moving children multiple times during their elementary years.

Some respondents also expressed concern that closing two schools simultaneously is too drastic a step.

Summary Responses: Option 5: Close the middle school; Elementary schools would be K-6, and the high school would be 7-12.

Three reasons people believe Option 5 is a good option

1. Financial savings and fiscal responsibility: 19 responses
Closing a building could reduce operating expenses, staffing costs, and the cost of maintaining an additional school.

2. Keeping all three elementary schools open: 16 responses
Respondents appreciate retaining neighborhood elementary schools and allowing children to remain in their familiar school communities through sixth grade.

3. Less disruption for younger students: 8 responses
Keeping younger students in their local elementary schools may reduce long bus rides and unnecessary transitions between buildings.

Three reasons people believe that Option 5 is not acceptable

1.The age gap between seventh graders and high school seniors: 118 responses
This was by far the most frequently expressed concern. Respondents believe 11- to 13-year-olds should not share a school environment with 17- and 18-year-olds. Concerns included maturity, safety, bullying, social pressures, and the loss of a developmentally appropriate middle school experience.

2. Closing PALMS and losing valuable facilities: 67 responses
Respondents questioned why the district would close one of its newer, renovated buildings, particularly after investing in the auditorium. They also cited the loss of gym space, athletic facilities, fields, performance space, and community-use facilities.

3. Concerns about capacity, class sizes, and staffing: 35 responses
Respondents questioned whether the high school and remaining elementary schools could accommodate the additional students without overcrowding, larger classes, fewer electives, reduced student support, or loss of staff.

There are three particularly important observations from these comments:

1. **The strongest objection is not simply closing a building.** It is the proposed grade configuration. The 7–12 high school is the dominant concern, and respondents repeatedly describe the middle school as an important developmental bridge between elementary and high school.

2. **PALMS itself is viewed as a valuable district asset.** The comments repeatedly reference its condition, recent investments, auditorium, athletic facilities, and community uses. People are questioning whether closing this particular building makes sense.

3. **The support for Option 5 is largely conditional on the financial benefits.** Some respondents see it as a reasonable way to save money while keeping all three elementary schools open. However, even some of those who favor it want separate spaces, schedules, lunches, and supervision for seventh and eighth graders.

Charting our Course:
Community Survey Review

Board Work Session :
November 18, 2026

Presenters:

Dr. Bridget O'Connell
Dr. Michael Donnelly

Presentation Format

1. Survey of distribution methods
2. Overview of respondents
3. Survey responses - summary
4. Next steps

Survey distribution methods

1. Distributed via the Patch - (9,000 distinct email addresses, but some may not be district residents).

2. Distributed to all staff (400 email addresses which includes teachers, support staff, administrators, coaches/advisors, Bucks IU employees).

3. Placed on the website as a pop up so all those visiting the website would immediately see the community survey before entering the website.

4. Notice of the survey was provided at all polling locations within the Palisades School District .

Overview of 892 respondents

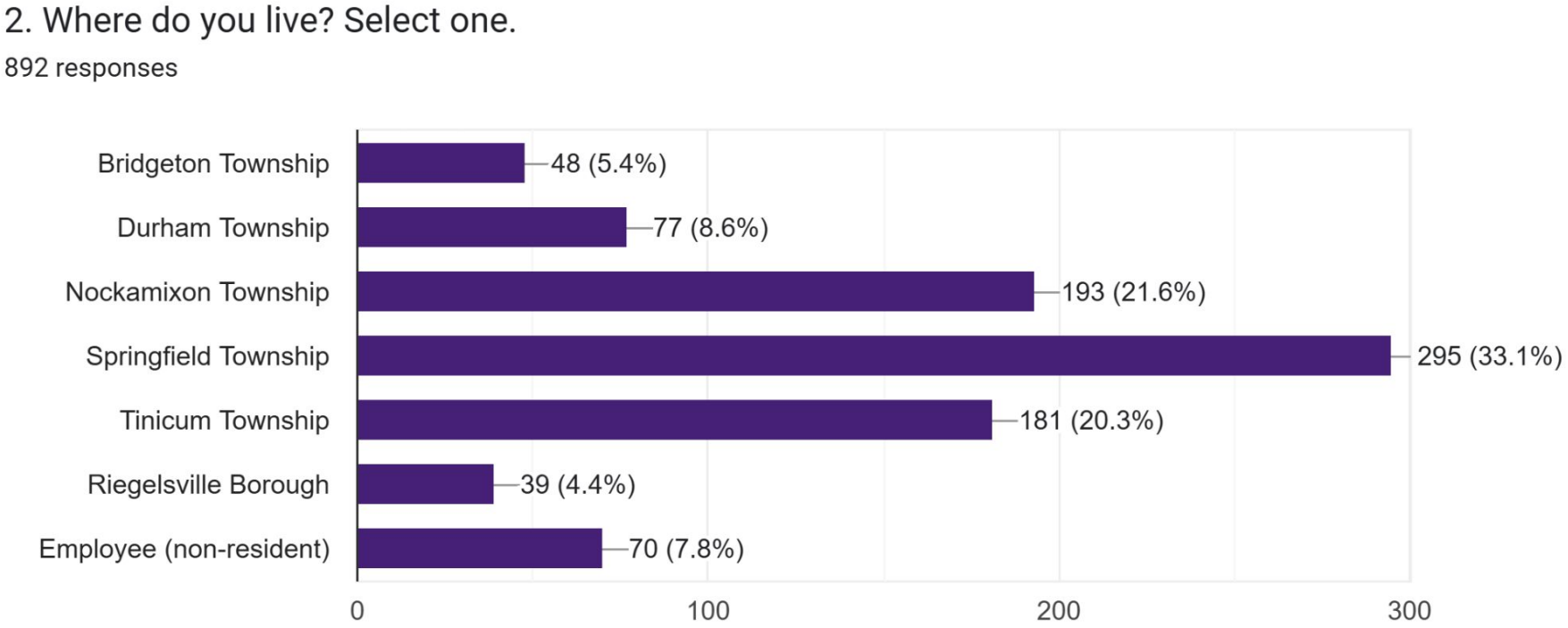
Residents = 73.9%

Parent/guardian of a current district student = 48.2%
Parent/guardian of a child not yet in kindergarten = 11.5%
Parent/guardian of a child in another school or home education = 4.4%
District employee = 15.5%
Local business or community organization = 8.2%
Other:

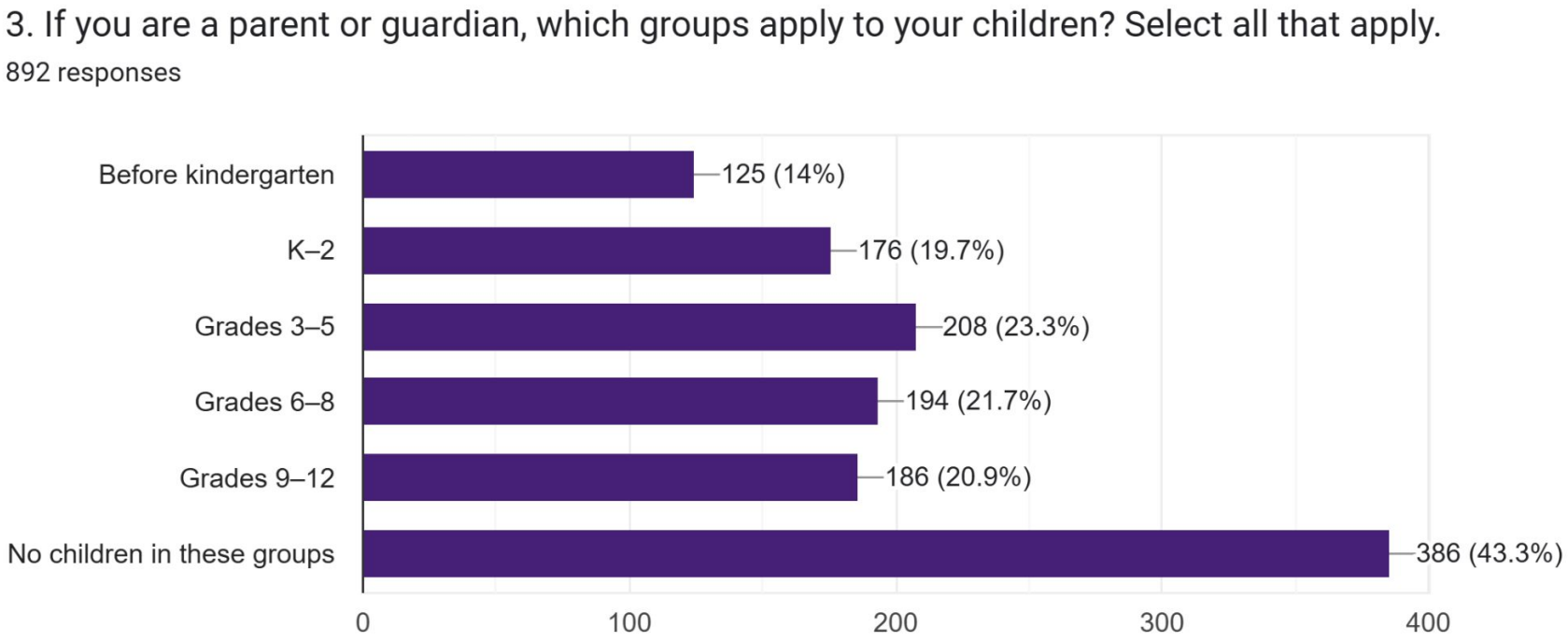
- Planning to move to the district
- Once lived in the district
- Relatives of students in the district
- Teacher in a neighboring district

Note: total number of adult Palisades School District residents = 13,200

Overview of 892 respondents



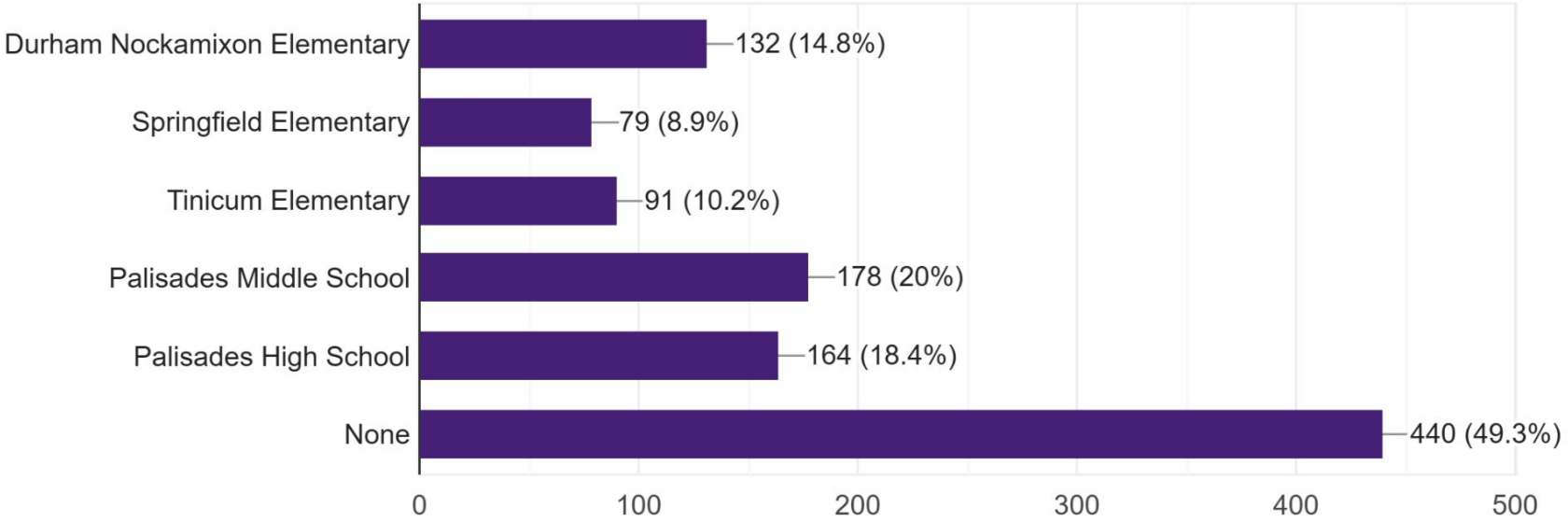
Overview of 892 respondents



Overview of 892 respondents

4. Which district schools do your children currently attend? Select all that apply.

892 responses



Survey summary: scenario feedback

Only two scenarios received a majority of respondents in support or strong support.

1. Scenario 1 (Status Quo) leads with 74.6% support
2. Scenario 3 (close one elementary school with current grade band configuration) with 54.9% support

All other scenarios received a majority of respondents that do not support or very strongly oppose.

3. Scenario 2 (close 1 elementary with reconfiguration) 73.4% oppose
4. Scenario 3a (½ day K) 81.4% oppose
5. Scenario 4 (campus approach) 77.4% oppose
6. Scenario 5 (close middle school) 78.6% oppose

Survey summary: scenario support by stakeholders

Stakeholder Group	Support for scenario 1 (status quo)	Support for scenario 3 (close one elementary building)
Current Parents (N=430)	87.7%	50.5%
Non-Parent Residents (N=328)	55.8%	59.1%
District Employees (N=104)	79.8%	58.7%

Survey summary: support of scenarios vary by township

Demographic Group	Sample Size (N)	Scenario 1 Support	Scenario 3 Support	Key Notes:
Springfield Township Residents	294	66.7% (196)	58.8% (173)	These four townships show majority support for scenarios 1 and 3 with scenario 1 having a significantly greater majority. These two municipalities show majority support for scenario 1 only.
Nockamixon Township Residents	193	74.2% (141)	57.4% (109)	
Tinicum Township Residents	181	78.1% (139)	53.4% (95)	
Durham Township Residents	74	79.7% (59)	51.4% (38)	
Bridgeton Township Residents	46	89.1% (41)	37% (17)	
Riegelsville Borough Residents	37	78.4% (29)	43.2% (16)	

Survey summary: support of scenarios vary by elementary school

Demographic Group	Sample Size (N)	Scenario 1 Support	Scenario 3 Support	Key Notes
Durham Nockamixon Elementary Parents	132	92.4% (122)	37.9% (50)	This parent group shows majority support for scenario 1 only.
Tinicum Elementary Parents	91	93.4% (85)	51.6% (47)	These parent groups show majority support for scenarios 1 and 3 with scenario 1 having a significantly greater majority.
Springfield Elementary Parents	161	81.4% (131)	57.8% (93)	

Survey summary: influential factors for scenarios 1 and 3

Key finding: across all six scenarios evaluated, educational environment factors far outweigh immediate tax savings in the minds of community members.

1. **Class Size / Capacity:** Consistently ranked as the #1 primary factor by a majority of respondents in every scenario—leading Scenario 1 at 58.2% 1st-rank votes (519 respondents; 80.0% top-2 rank) and Scenario 3 at 55.0% 1st-rank votes (491 respondents; 79.4% top-2 rank).

2. **Staffing Operations:** Ranked in the top two positions by 58.6% of respondents (523) in Scenario 1 and 59.6% (532 respondents) in Scenario 3

3. **Transportation & Bus Times:** Ranked in the top two positions by 41.5% of respondents (370) in Scenario 1 and 43.7% (390 respondents) in Scenario 3.

4. **Fiscal Responsibility:** Ranked 1st by 26.1% of respondents (233) in Scenario 1 and 29.3% (261 respondents) in Scenario 3.

Survey summary: themes through open-ended responses

1. **Preserving educational quality & neighborhood schools (Scenario 1):**
   a. Respondents emphasize that small class sizes and close-knit community schools are the main reasons families move to Palisades. Opponents counter that operating empty classrooms drains tax dollars that should fund educational programs.
2. **Developmental risks of altering grade bands (Scenarios 2, 4, and 5):**
   a. Overwhelming resistance stems from putting 7th/8th graders (ages 12–13) in the same building as high school seniors (ages 17–18). Parents cite concerns over social exposure, bus safety, and premature loss of childhood.
3. **Compromise option:**
   a. Scenario 3 ranks as the only acceptable consolidation model. Feedback focuses on bus route duration and calls for clear criteria when deciding which elementary building closes.
4. **Reduction of kindergarten**:
   a. Parents strongly oppose reducing kindergarten hours, noting it creates impossible logistics for dual-income households and puts Palisades at a competitive disadvantage against neighboring districts offering full-day programs.

Next Steps/Questions for Board Consideration:

1. Are there any scenarios that can be eliminated for consideration at this time?

2. If so, what additional information is needed regarding the remaining scenario(s)?

3. What does the Board see as the next step in this process, including when should the Board meet again?