



# **Cedar Falls Community School District**

**SURVEY REPORT  
January 2019**

**Summary Report**

Prepared by



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In recent years, the Cedar Falls Community School District and school board have been evaluating the district's facility needs and exploring possible solutions. As part of this process, the district and board have held more than 50 public engagement sessions since 2014.

To help determine how the district could best meet its facilities needs, the school board and administration requested that a survey be conducted. The survey was organized by the Donovan Group. Input from community members will be used to evaluate solutions that meet the community's needs, are financially responsible and move our district and community forward.

The survey received a total of 1,724 responses. We consider this to be a satisfactory response for the purpose of collecting the data the district sought through the survey.

It is worth noting that, for most of the survey questions, there was a high level of clarity and consistency in terms of the preferences expressed by survey takers. To that end, it is unlikely that more responses would have significantly changed the survey's results.

In general, community members appear to be somewhat knowledgeable of the district's facility needs, but would likely benefit from more information provided to them on a regular basis. They also indicated a solid level of support for combining some academic or co-curricular programs with neighboring districts in the future.

It is important to note that this survey represents a convenience sample, rather than a scientific sample.

## **PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY**

The survey was administered using the Donovan Group's survey engine. Efforts were made to ensure that all eligible respondents had the opportunity to take the survey, but that no respondents took it multiple times. In accordance with best practices in online research and to protect the security of the survey, internet protocol (IP) addresses were logged and each response was time-stamped.

To date, there is no reason to believe that anyone has taken the survey more than once or that anyone from outside the district has taken the survey.

To encourage residents to take the survey, the school district issued a news release and posted links to the survey several times to its social media pages. The survey was open from January 7 to January 21, 2019.

Finally, it is worth noting that, by design, this data is not based on a scientific sample. Therefore, it should be treated as qualitative data that is similar to data from a large number of focus groups. Because we used a convenience sample, it would be methodologically inappropriate to carry out a regression analysis or attempt to calculate error. Our response pool to date is a solid one that provides sound data to the board.

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

A total of 1,724 community members completed the survey. To complete the survey, respondents must have clicked "submit" at the end of the survey and answered all of the required questions.

Below are the questions and their corresponding responses. The first set of data (in black) reflect the responses of all completed surveys. The second set of data (in *gray italics*) indicate responses from a comparison group of district residents who are not current parents of preschool or school-aged students, employees or students. The comparison group does include parents of former district students.

We typically find the comparison group to be a more accurate representation of the general population. There were 238 completed results in the comparison group. This is a good, but not great, comparison group, representing about 14% of the total respondents. In general, the responses of the comparison group did not differ considerably from the overall group.

Below each question and results is some brief analysis from the Donovan Group team (indicated in *red italics*).

**1) What is your age?\***

|             |        |               |
|-------------|--------|---------------|
| 18 or under | 0.64%  | <i>0.00%</i>  |
| 19–25       | 1.74%  | <i>7.98%</i>  |
| 26–34       | 11.02% | <i>4.62%</i>  |
| 35–44       | 42.87% | <i>2.94%</i>  |
| 45–54       | 29.06% | <i>19.33%</i> |
| 55–64       | 8.70%  | <i>25.63%</i> |
| 65 or over  | 5.97%  | <i>39.50%</i> |

*Nearly 72% of respondents were between the ages of 35 to 54. While this is an important constituent group for the district, we would ideally see a greater proportion of responses from both older and younger residents. It's worth noting that the comparison group consisted of a greater share of those 55 and older.*

**2) How long have you lived in the school district?\***

|                               |        |               |
|-------------------------------|--------|---------------|
| Less than one year            | 1.45%  | <i>1.26%</i>  |
| 1-5 years                     | 13.69% | <i>7.14%</i>  |
| 6-10 years                    | 16.76% | <i>7.98%</i>  |
| 11-20 years                   | 31.26% | <i>15.97%</i> |
| More than 20 years            | 34.40% | <i>65.13%</i> |
| I do not live in the district | 2.44%  | <i>2.52%</i>  |

*Here we saw a good distribution of responses, with more than one-third indicating they have lived in the district for 20 years or more. A roughly equal number (31.9%) have lived in the district 10 years or fewer. This will allow us to examine if there are any significant differences in opinion depending on how long respondents have lived in the district.*

**3) Which elementary school do you live closest to?\***

|                                 |        |               |
|---------------------------------|--------|---------------|
| Aldrich Elementary School       | 11.48% | <i>10.50%</i> |
| Cedar Heights Elementary School | 13.05% | <i>13.03%</i> |
| Hansen Elementary School        | 30.92% | <i>19.75%</i> |
| Lincoln Elementary School       | 11.48% | <i>13.45%</i> |
| North Cedar Elementary School   | 3.83%  | <i>5.04%</i>  |
| Orchard Hill Elementary School  | 12.01% | <i>13.87%</i> |

|                             |        |        |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|
| Southdale Elementary School | 14.97% | 20.17% |
| Unsure                      | 2.26%  | 4.20%  |

*This question responses were skewed somewhat toward Hansen, Southdale and Cedar Heights elementary schools, with noticeably fewer responses from North Cedar. It is unclear why this may be the case.*

**4) Please check all of the following that apply to you: \***

|   |        |        |
|---|--------|--------|
| I have school-aged children   | 29.95% | 0.00%  |
| I have preschool-aged children  | 6.03%  | 0.00%  |
| I have children who are younger than preschool-age                                    | 4.81%  | 0.00%  |
| I have children who currently attend a Cedar Falls CSD school                         | 29.07% | 0.00%  |
| I have children who once attended a Cedar Falls CSD school                            | 9.87%  | 44.72% |
| I have grandchildren who currently attend or have attended a Cedar Falls CSD school   | 2.04%  | 19.57% |
| I have attended a Cedar Falls CSD school  | 8.29%  | 19.25% |
| I am a community member who has never had children attending a Cedar Falls CSD school | 1.99%  | 14.60% |
| I am currently a student at a Cedar Falls CSD school                                  | 0.27%  | 0.00%  |
| I am currently employed by the Cedar Falls CSD  | 6.73%  | 0.00%  |
| I do not live in the Cedar Falls CSD  | 0.95%  | 1.86%  |

*We are pleased that 36.07% of respondents are parents of current students, current staff members or current students of the district. This gives us a healthy pool of respondents who are directly connected to the district, while also giving us a wide selection of community members who do not currently have a direct connection.*

**5) If you have children who attended a Cedar Falls Community School District school but do not now, when was the last year one of your children attended?**

|             |        |
|-------------|--------|
| 2013-2018   | 52.21% |
| 2002-2012   | 26.55% |
| 1991-2001   | 11.95% |
| Before 1991 | 9.29%  |

*A majority of the respondents to this question have children who have last attended a CFCS D school in the past five years. However, we did see a good number of responses from people whose children graduated or last attended a district school at least 17 years ago.*

**6) If you have school-aged children, which schools do your children attend? (Select all that apply.)**

|                                 |        |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Aldrich Elementary School       | 7.84%  |
| Cedar Heights Elementary School | 5.34%  |
| Hansen Elementary School        | 12.44% |

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| Lincoln Elementary School                               | 4.83%  |
| North Cedar Elementary School                           | 2.73%  |
| Orchard Hill Elementary School                          | 5.34%  |
| Southdale Elementary School                             | 8.24%  |
| Peet Junior High School                                 | 14.66% |
| Holmes Junior High School                               | 13.92% |
| Cedar Falls High School                                 | 23.47% |
| Public school outside of the district (open enrollment) | 0.23%  |
| My children are homeschooled                            | 0.11%  |
| I do not have school-aged children                      | 0.00%  |
| Other   | 0.85%  |

*The responses here appear somewhat skewed toward Cedar Falls High School, the two junior high schools and Hansen Elementary School. Because this question only appeared for those who answered that they had school-aged children in question 4, there is no comparison group for this question.*

**7) How would you describe the Cedar Falls Community School District to someone who is not familiar with it?**

*In responding to this open-ended question, many referred to the school district's quality programs, excellent staff and strong reputation. However, respondents also, in large numbers, expressed concern about the facilities and overcrowding at the high school and, to a lesser extent, the junior high. In general, community members appear to understand the need to address the issues at the high school.*

**8) What can be improved in the Cedar Falls Community School District?**

*Again, the facilities at the high school was brought up by numerous respondents, who referred to the current building as old, outdated and potentially unsafe for students. They also spoke to grading systems, teacher pay and equity as areas of potential improvement for the district overall.*

**9) How satisfied are you with the Cedar Falls Community School District?**

|                        |        |        |
|------------------------|--------|--------|
| Very satisfied         | 30.62% | 34.65% |
| Satisfied              | 55.91% | 46.93% |
| Not very satisfied     | 8.43%  | 7.89%  |
| Extremely dissatisfied | 2.61%  | 3.95%  |
| No opinion             | 2.43%  | 6.58%  |

*The fact that more than 86% of respondents said they were very satisfied or satisfied with the school district suggests that there is considerable support for CFCSD in the community. We see this as a positive sign, as often community members who are dissatisfied with a district will use a survey like this to share their frustrations. We didn't see much of that with this survey.*

**10) Where do you get most of your information about the schools and the district? (Select all that apply.)**

|  |        |        |
|--|--------|--------|
| Parent organizations                   | 4.22%  | 2.09%  |
| Friends or neighbors                   | 7.87%  | 12.30% |
| My children and their friends          | 9.23%  | 5.32%  |
| District e-newsletter                  | 12.27% | 7.40%  |
| District mailings                      | 5.43%  | 4.48%  |
| District website                       | 7.46%  | 6.67%  |
| District Facebook                      | 5.34%  | 3.55%  |
| District Twitter                       | 1.61%  | 1.04%  |
| School board meetings                  | 2.35%  | 5.74%  |
| Building level social media            | 4.36%  | 1.98%  |
| Email from school building             | 11.33% | 1.67%  |
| Email from child's/children's teachers | 8.96%  | 0.52%  |
| Teachers and staff                     | 8.33%  | 9.91%  |
| Channel 15                             | 1.68%  | 5.32%  |
| Local newspaper                        | 4.30%  | 14.39% |
| Local television                       | 3.88%  | 13.14% |
| Local radio                            | 0.74%  | 2.61%  |
| Other                                  | 0.63%  | 1.88%  |

*Respondents reported getting their news and information about the district from a variety of sources, with the most common being the district e-newsletter, emails from school buildings, emails and communication from teachers and staff. Understandably, the comparison group was more likely to get district-focused news and information from the newspaper, television and friends/neighbors.*

**11) How would you prefer to receive information about the district? (Select all that apply.)**

|  |        |        |
|--|--------|--------|
| Parent organizations                   | 2.93%  | 1.49%  |
| Friends or neighbors                   | 3.25%  | 5.15%  |
| My children and their friends          | 4.27%  | 1.90%  |
| District e-newsletter                  | 15.54% | 12.33% |
| District mailings                      | 7.72%  | 7.72%  |
| District website                       | 8.12%  | 8.13%  |
| District Facebook                      | 5.96%  | 4.47%  |
| District Twitter                       | 1.83%  | 1.22%  |
| School board meetings                  | 2.58%  | 5.69%  |
| Building level social media            | 4.47%  | 2.44%  |
| Email from school building             | 14.49% | 2.71%  |
| Email from child's/children's teachers | 10.86% | 0.41%  |
| Teachers and staff                     | 7.72%  | 6.91%  |
| Channel 15                             | 1.96%  | 7.72%  |
| Local newspaper                        | 3.42%  | 13.82% |
| Local television                       | 3.38%  | 13.01% |
| Local radio                            | 0.91%  | 3.25%  |
| Other                                  | 0.59%  | 1.63%  |

*The responses here generally matched those from the previous question. In general, respondents appeared to be satisfied with the ways in which they are communicating with the district.*

**12) I believe the high school facility needs must be addressed now.**

|                   |        |        |
|-------------------|--------|--------|
| Strongly agree    | 72.19% | 54.85% |
| Agree             | 17.97% | 24.89% |
| Disagree          | 5.39%  | 9.28%  |
| Strongly disagree | 4.45%  | 10.97% |

*There was strong consensus among respondents that the needs at the high school should be addressed now. It's worth noting that while this support was a little less strong in the comparison group, nearly 80% still indicated they believe the needs should be addressed now.*

**13) I would vote "yes" on a referendum question if I felt it were the correct solution and it had a tax impact of less than \$11 per month on a \$100,000 assessed home.\***

|                   |        |        |
|-------------------|--------|--------|
| Strongly agree    | 60.21% | 43.70% |
| Agree             | 23.78% | 30.25% |
| Disagree          | 8.12%  | 10.50% |
| Strongly disagree | 7.89%  | 15.55% |

*These results indicate that nearly 84% of respondents would support a bond issue that would address the high school's facility needs. The comparison group, while less enthusiastic, still indicated considerable support. Please note that this is not a scientific sample, and therefore the results of the survey would not necessarily align with support for a future bond vote.*

**14) Are you likely to vote in a school bond referendum?**

|     |        |        |
|-----|--------|--------|
| Yes | 93.68% | 91.95% |
| No  | 6.32%  | 8.05%  |

*While an overwhelming majority said they would be likely to vote in a school bond referendum, we have found that those who take the time to complete a school district survey tend to be some of the more civically engaged members of a community.*

**15) Please use the space below to provide any additional information you would like to share regarding possible solutions to the district's facility needs.**

*Comments for this question largely focused on the need for new high school facility and support for or opposition to the district's current plans at the site. Some residents expressed concern about spending and property tax impact, along with several other issues. Others said that they agreed that a new school was needed, but that they were not convinced the current targeted site was the right option.*