



# *Report*

## **FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 2018 COMMUNITY SURVEY**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT**

PRODUCED BY

**OnStrategy**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Survey Launched:** October 9, 2018

**Survey Closed:** December 3, 2018

**2018 Number of Respondents:** 718

- **Parents of Student/s Enrolled at FNSBSD:** 528
- **Students:** 117
- **Community:** 37
- **Other Parents (Pre-K or Graduates of FNSBSD):** 36

**2015 Number of Respondents:** 967

- **Parents of Student/s Enrolled at FNSBSD:** 792
- **Students:** 28
- **Community:** 68
- **Other Parents (Pre-K or Graduates of FNSBSD):** 79

**Research Objective:** The primary purpose of this research is to obtain input from parents and community members to inform the development/refresh of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District's 5-Year Strategic Plan. Students were also included in the survey distribution to add unique and valuable perspective. Data obtained in this survey will be used to set priorities and goals for the District. Input will also help craft the District's execution around communication and engagement. Survey questions were designed by OnStrategy in conjunction with the Board of Education and Executive Leadership.

**Distribution:** A link to the online survey was distributed through multiple channels to reach as many parents and general community members as possible. A modified set of questions were distributed to FNSBSD students. Distribution methods included:

- Email distribution to all parents and staff
- Post on District website
- Shared through Social Media channels (ongoing throughout time period)
- Parent-Teacher conferences in October
- Promoted by the Chamber of Commerce
- Submission in the local newspaper
- Mention on the Superintendents' Radio Show
- Shared with PTA Council and through budget presentations
- Student communication via Principals/Teachers at the school level

**Statistical Confidence:** As the distribution of the survey was not managed through a controlled population, only an overall confidence level of the representativeness of the sample can be determined – representativeness of individual segments such as single parent families, traditional families, or ethnic considerations cannot be stated. The primary purpose of the research project was to obtain input from parents with students attending a District school, and the number of respondents for this segment is 528.

- 95% confidence level
- 5.0% +/- confidence interval
- Potential District parent population of 20,000



**Demographics:** The majority of survey respondents (74%) were parents of students enrolled at FNSBSD. Additional demographics are highlighted below:

- 77% female; 23% male
- Children under 18 years old in the residence - 8% with no children; 67% with 1 or 2 children, and 25% with 3 or more
- 77% have lived in the Fairbanks area for more than 10 years

See the chart below for a breakdown of demographic segments and number of responses per segment:

Demographic Segment	Number	Percent
<b>Parents with Student/s Enrolled</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>73.5%</b>
Parent with one or more children enrolled in FNSBSD	527	73.4%
Unidentified: 1	1	.1%
<b>Other Parents (Pre-K Child or Graduate of FNSBSD)</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>5.1%</b>
Parent of Pre-K child that will eventually enroll at a school in the District	12	1.7%
Parent of a home school child	4	.6%
Parent of an FNSBSD graduate	20	2.8%
<b>Community Segment</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>5.2%</b>
Community member with no children currently associated with the District	37	5.2%
<b>Student Segment</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>16.3%</b>
FNSBSD Student (or Home School Student within the District)	117	16.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>718</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Ratings:** Where respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement to statements provided in the survey, the rating scale was a 7-point Likert scale:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In some instances, capturing a Not Sure response was added since it is important to understand if substantial segments of the community are unaware of a particular topic. In this scale, any mean above 4 (4.01 and above) is considered positive: more people agree with the statement than disagree. Any mean below 4 (3.99 and below) is considered negative: more people disagree with the statement than agree.

In the tables that follow, results for “% Agree” reflect the sum of the percent who selected “Agree” (6) plus those who selected “Strongly agree” (7).

For the question regarding likelihood to recommend FNSBSD, an 11-point scale was used: 0 (Not at all likely) to 10 (Extremely likely).

**Comparison to 2015:** A similar community assessment was conducted in 2015 in conjunction with the Strategic Planning Process. Where possible and relevant, this survey report will compare results from community and student perspective in 2015 to the current state (2018).



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### PERCEPTION & SATISFACTION

**Internal Evidence of Quality Education:** The #1 internal factor community adults use to evaluate quality of education within the District continues to be class size. Secondary, but important factors are support for students (social/emotional and/or academic), access to their child’s principal or teacher, and number of programs/options available to meet student needs. Notably, these factors are significantly more likely to be factors used to evaluate the quality of education than are test scores or graduation rates.

**External Evidence of Quality Education:** External factors used to evaluate quality of education were consistent with 2015 survey results: the #1 external factor to evaluate the quality of education in the District is active parent involvement in the school; this factor received 25% more #1 and #2 ranking responses than community involvement, which overall ranked #2. The #3 (awards and recognition) and #4 (school appearance) ranked factors were lower priorities, but still received a somewhat meaningful percent of #1 and #2 rankings.

**School District Influence:** The District’s influence on choosing whether to live in Fairbanks North Star Borough is low with two-thirds of community adults expressing that the District had no influence on their decision of where to live (slightly fewer than one-quarter expressed the District had some influence). This may indicate that the District might be less negatively affected by community adults who are Critics (detractors) of the District.

### LIKELIHOOD TO RECOMMEND

Parents of students in the District hold the most positive opinions of FNSBSD and community adults without children in the District have the second-largest percent of positive opinions; students hold the lowest opinions of the District. The percent of the entire community (all adults and students) who are Supporters and would advocate for the District remained the same in 2018 (35%) versus 2015 (36%).

- **Students:** The percent of students who are Critics or detractors of the District (feel negatively about the District and may even share their negative opinions with others) increased significantly over 2015 while the percent of students who are Supporters of the District declined significantly since 2015.
- **Parents of Students:** Parents of children in the District are more likely to be Supporters or Critics than “Fence Sitters” in 2018 than they were in 2015.
- **Community Adults:** Community Adults (without children in the District) showed a marked increase in the percent of Supporters in 2018, but the largest percent of community adults remained as Critics.

If a good friend or relative was moving to the area and in search of great education, how likely are you to recommend the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District as opposed to alternative options such as home school or private? *								
NPS Groups	All		Students*		Parents of Students		Community	
	2015	2018	2015	2018 (N=117)	2015	2018 (N=527)	2015	2018 (N=73)
Supporters	36.0%	35.4%	32.1%	13.7%	37.3%	40.3%	17.9%	35.6%
Fence Sitters	30.3%	23.5%	21.4%	26.5%	30.0%	23.1%	40.3%	20.5%
Critics	33.7%	41.0%	46.4%	59.8%	32.7%	36.5%	41.8%	43.8%

Nearly one-quarter of the entire community are “Fence Sitters” or hold neutral opinions about the District. Shifting these people’s opinions about the District to be more positive (Supporters) is an opportunity requiring some effort, but likely much less effort and time than shifting the Critics’ opinions to be positive. However, reducing the percent of Critics may be addressed over time with consistent effort.



**Students Perspective:** Students who are *Critics* gave qualitative reasons for their ratings: these included concerns about safety at schools (bullying), generally about how the District operates or runs the organization, and either dissatisfaction with a particular school or concern that classes / programs are being cut. *Fence Sitters* considered attending a District school a better option than homeschooling, but they notice the budget constraints or question some of the District's operating decisions. *Supporters'* opinions were driven by their positive opinion of a specific school or teacher in the District.

**Community Adults Perspective:** Community adults (parents and other adults in the community) who were *Critics* of the District felt home schooling or other alternatives were better options than public schools (generally or within FNSBSD), or were concerned that class sizes have increased / are too large, or felt that high-achieving students are under-challenged / struggling students are not adequately supported, or they hold negative opinions about Personalized Learning Approach, or were unhappy that the quality of schools is inconsistent throughout the District. Most *Fence Sitters* felt generally positive about the District but believed it could be better. They felt that home schooling or other alternatives were better than public schools, and *Fence Sitters* were also unhappy with the inconsistent quality school-to-school. The largest percent of *Supporters* of the District were so because they generally believe in the principle of public schools and/or feel that public schools are a better choice than home schooling or other alternatives; several *Supporters* identified positive experiences with instructors or a school's caring and support for their child, and several mentioned how much they like a specific school.

## STUDENT SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

Adults and students have different opinions about additional skills that would be valuable to supplement foundational skills. Similar to 2015, Community Adults consider critical thinking and communication skills to be high priorities, but more Community Adults in 2018 than did in 2015 feel that life skills are a high priority. While Students also see **communication and life skills** as important to learn, their #1-ranked skill is career planning skills, which ranked a distant #6 among Community Adults.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION

**Personalized Learning – Progress thus Far:** Questions regarding the Personalized Learning Approach received a significant volume of responses (ratings) in the middle of the scale, i.e., “Neutral,” “Somewhat agree” or “Somewhat disagree” and simply “Don’t know.” This indicates that students and adults don’t know about the Personalized Learning Approach or do not know enough to feel comfortable rating it.

Just over one-quarter of Community Adults and Students believe that the Personalized Learning Approach has greatly enhanced the quality of education in the FNSBSD. More adults and students simply don’t know about the Personalized Learning Approach, so aren’t comfortable evaluating its effectiveness. Community Adults who rated the Personalized Learning Approach negatively feel that this program is simply replacing teachers with screens and third-party online education courses, providing little 1:1 time with instructors. A notable number of *Critics* of the District gave the same sentiment for why they would not recommend the District.

Students’ perceptions about the variety of instructional options are solidly in the middle of the Likert ranking scale with a large percentage either only somewhat agreeing or somewhat disagreeing that they have an adequate variety of options. This opens up the question whether students are not fully aware of the options or if there actually are not enough options.



**Personalized Learning - Additional Options:** Students and Community Adults were closely aligned on the #1 proposed additional option of Competency Based Learning to enhance Personalized Learning—this is a marked shift from 2015’s #1 ranking of Magnet Schools (note that CBL was not an option in the 2015 survey). For Community Adults, the proposed options ranked #2 through #9 were given significantly lower priority; so that while access to Career & Technical Education was ranked #2 by all respondents, it received considerably less weight among Community Adults. Students, however, ranked school start time as a high priority #2 with access to Career & Technical Education and Expanded eLearning or Virtual / Blended Learning as notable #3 and #4 ranked priorities, respectively.

**Additional District Priorities:** Class size is clearly a recommended priority for the District to focus on for the next 3 to 5 years to ensure quality education. A distant second priority is providing current, relevant materials/resources. A tertiary priority for Students is Social/Emotional support for students, and for Community Adults a tertiary priority is ensuring reading at grade level by third grade.

Open-ended suggestions for improving the quality of education in the District included smaller class size, fair compensation of teachers and careful consideration of resources exhausted on Personalized Learning.

## PARENT / COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Consistent with 2015, Career & Technical Education in collaboration with business leaders followed by youth service projects ranked as the Top 2 best ways to strengthen partnerships and further engage the community.

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Just over one-third of community adults agree that communication with the District is 2-way, but “frequent district dialogue (2-way) through multiple channels, including positive direct contact from school staff” was ranked as only a tertiary priority for community adults, so this may not be critically important to them, this is supported by the fact that there were a minority percentage of adults who did not agree that communication is 2-way.

More community adults agree than disagree that there are adequate methods for providing input to the District, but one-quarter of the community’s adults feel neutral about this—which may indicate that a fair percentage aren’t interested in providing input, but those who are interested, agree they have adequate means to do so.

A slight majority of community adults feel adequately informed about what’s happening at the District with those who don’t feel this way having an issue with not receiving enough context or explanations for District decisions.

Similar to 2015, Email ranked as the most preferred communication method from the District and schools, with text messages as both a new option in 2018 and the second-most preferred method of communication from the District and schools.

## SCHOOL SAFETY

Generally, schools are considered safe, however, there is some room for improvement to more consistently secure access points and some Community Adults would like to see more security personnel.