



**Burlington Area School District  
Comment Analysis  
January 4, 2017**

The Comment Analysis Summary is intended to identify and represent the prevailing themes collected through the comments gathered in the community survey. A major theme is identified as a result of having multiple participants referencing similar issues or concerns. Supporting comments are included verbatim within each theme.

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## Respondents provided suggestions to improve communication.

- Have notices through Skyward go out to both parents and staff. Sometimes parents are notified of things that staff are not!
- Have board members attend one staff meeting per school per semester to fill staff in on what is going on. Not all board members at each school, maybe just one but it would help build that relationship with staff and the board.
- I am very excited BASD has hired a marketing/communication person to promote the great things happening in our district and the community as a whole.
- Shorter emails with clear subject headings for non-emergent info. Text message for urgent info.
- Multiple sources of communication is best, not everyone receives or seeks their information the same.
- I think the district does a good job communicating with parents.
- Currently, you use email for a lot of local advertising...it takes away from the vital information that is must know for parents. Please, consider eliminating those emails to parents.
- Would be nice to see minutes from school board meetings via email communications. Also, make sure the parochial parents know what's going on in the district, too. We still pay taxes and need to stay informed.
- Email notifications were okay initially but they seem to have gotten out of control. We receive email notifications sometimes 4 and 5 a day and for things unrelated to my child's education. Often times they are events happening in the community. I would much rather receive this type of information in the local paper or in ONE weekly email highlight all the community happenings. It's just gotten out of hand.
- There is a real need to highlight all the great things happening in Burlington. It is not your mother's BASD
- The website is cumbersome and challenging to navigate
- District Website is one of the worst in the area. It needs to be completely redone. The district needs to find someone who knows how to create a website that is organized and updated.
- I think the email portion of the Skyward app is terrible. The entire app could use an overhaul.
- I like being notified via phone for emergencies & Closings but for other info I believe sending a message through skyward if it acted like facebook messenger is a great idea!
- I attended a school board meeting where options to change the schools were discussed but I found the information lacking. There was little explanation for the issues we are trying to solve.

-- More of it. When something happens in the district, teachers should be one of the first to know so that we can be proactive. Often times, students find out before we do, and rumors begin. Informing teachers first, and more often can curb this. Also, we need to know more about our kids and what's happening with them. This will allow me to do my job much better! Thank you.

-- Even though I do not have children attending school within the Burlington School District, I would still like to receive a newsletter letting me know what the accomplishments of the students, faculty, and district are. Knowing that positive advancements are occurring within the district makes contributing to improvements more rewarding.

-- Perhaps have two originating numbers for messages: one for information and one for emergencies. That way, when receiving skyward messages while at work, I would know if I need to listen immediately (like the HS evacuation this past fall) versus reminders about parent teacher conferences.

-- It would be beneficial if teachers provided resources, updates, information through the district website--links to individual resources/information would be helpful. The website often is not updated or lacks the information needed.

-- Simply... honest and timely communication between the school administration and parents is needed, whatever means possible. Parents are always the last to hear everything that the administration does. Agendas and meeting minutes are no longer posted online (or haven't been since August).

-- Use the radio station for messages, and the cable channel for showing school board meetings, public bulletin board postings of events, and performances/graduations. Also use website for public bulletin board. I am not as into facebook as others, but can adopt if necessary.

-- Communication depends on the urgency and importance. Examples: 1) General communication is preferred via email. 2) Text & automated phone messages are great for emergency communication. 3) I also use BASD's website regularly to seek out specific information.

-- Overall, communication is very good already. A+

-- Just a suggestion, but for district residents with an interest in the project, but without currently enrolled children (natural communication channel) social media and opt-in email newsletters publicized through social and traditional media channels may make sense. An opt-in newsletter would allow those most interested to get regular updates without requiring them to regularly check in on a website or similar channel, where people would likely forget to check without reminders.

-- Skyward was extremely challenging to use to schedule conferences. The main webpage should be modified to have the major interactive features mores easy to locate. It is a very confusing site and not user friendly.

## **Respondents would like more information before making a decision to support any referendum and some expressed concern with adding space while enrollment is declining.**

-- I would like to know if are schools fill to capacity. I don't understand that the family's are getting smaller but the Burlington school district want to get bigger and better. How about use the school we have and utilize what we have .just because we are to the end of are so called paying off are debt.

-- Moving 5th and 6th grades to Karcher would make Dyer empty. We clearly don't need another elementary school, since Winkler and Lyons have been cut back to one classroom per grade. With declining enrollment, how can you explain the need for a 5th elementary school. Send Montessori to Dyer. They can bus kids to Karcher for after school activities.

-- Student population is declining and is projected to continue on that path. Additions/expansions are an unnecessary waste of taxpayers money. It is an investment that won't give back to the community. Utilizing what we have is MORE than adequate for the future. Putting SOME money into updating facilities is a practical and GOOD use of taxpayers money. Why should the end times of debt trigger yet more debt/spending? Give the well deserved taxpayers a BREAK from this madness! -- There are many details missing in your explanation above.

-- I would need more information about exactly what will be done.

-- It depends on how it would all be done and the long-term impact of the upgrades(i.e. is this just a short term fix or a true long term solution.

-- what would happen to Dyer?

-- While in general I support the goals...I need more information/cost detail to be able to compare and contrast options.

-- I need more information regarding the need for additional gymnasium and auditorium space. What is the plan for consolidating the Montessori school?

-- I'd have to see what the existing budget looks like. I have no idea from the information provided here as to what the district is spending existing money on. First, I'd have to explore what could be cut from existing expenses to help fund what you're proposing needs to be done.

-- Before agreeing to anything, it would be nice to know specifics, the district has to many grey area's right now. What are the real upgrades, new heating plants in older buildings, new plumbing, urinals and toilets, partitions. What windows replaced, case work. More information is needed.

-- I do not support over spending. Depending on the needs, i am willing to spend money, but with the numbers going down in the district, it is obvious to myself that many of these ideas are foolish

-- I will not support any building needs referendum without questions addressing an operational expenses referendum to address the crisis that we are facing as a result of Act 10. Our teachers are getting the raw end of the deal by forcing the increase of insurance premiums down their throat at the expense of high turnover, and losing quality teachers to more appreciative districts

-- I would like a bit more information, for example, what is meant by "adjacent to the middle school"?

-- Why it is not being considered to consolidate to Montessori program to Dyer school after relocating the 5th and 6th grades to Karcher?

-- I would need to see the whole financial picture. I am extremely hesitant to approve more spending without knowing if the district has explored all other cost saving measures to self fund this effort. The fact that buildings are allowed to become outdated is directly related to lack of vision. Buildings age and need to be maintained and not allowed to get to a failed condition. Management is directly responsible for this. So I would need to see what capital improvements have been identified over the years and why maintenance items were deferred that would leave facilities in the condition they may be in.

-- The enrollment is dropping, and I prefer consolidation rather than spending money on sites that may no be needed.

-- Looks like we would be spending a lot of money to place the Montessori program at Karcher. Are there any other options regarding this that would be less expensive.

-- How will this affect property taxes? We pay a lot already.

-- Please explain the Montessori Program in detail.

-- I agree that some of these things need to happen but I think there are too many things piled on for this proposed referendum. What will happen to Dyer with the planned consolidation? I am not sure that gym and auditorium upgrades are necessary. Not enough detail on why these need to be updated. Seems very expensive to build new/expand.

-- Would this increase my tax payment that is already allocated to our school system and how much?

-- I support security measures and energy efficiency measures. I do not support any new infrastructure or complete remodeling.

## Some respondents expressed concern with a plan that would move 5<sup>th</sup> grade students to the middle school/with older students.

-- I don't believe combining 5&6 grade students with 7&8 grade students is a good idea. I believe the model we have is best for the students.

-- Not sure if I agree with the plan.

-- Keep 5th and 6th graders as elementary students.

-- I do not agree with combining grades 5 and 6 with the older students.

-- Not sure if 5th grades should be with 8th graders.

-- Only update buildings, leave grade levels as is

-- I am concerned that a 5th grader is too young to be in school with 8th graders. My child will be past that age by the time this happens, but 8th graders know and do things 5th graders don't need to be exposed to. They will get there soon enough. Please consider this before putting them together.

-- I don't think 5th grade should be viewed the same as 6th. Creating a junior high with 6th-8th is similar to what most districts are currently working with. If you are going to build a new junior high school use Dyer as an elementary school and then build a 6-8 school.

-- It is a huge mistake to move 5th and 6th together with 7th and 8th. Besides great teachers, the next big reason why Burlington has great schools is because they are small! Too many students in one building is not as effective as lower student population in one building. There is much research to support this idea. Children learn more when they are happy and feel a part of their school family. Keeping schools small makes it realistic that every staff member knows every student. If you combine 5-8 you will also see a huge jump in negative discipline issues because large schools create gaps in student/staff interactions. Children know when they are treated just as a 'number' and poor behaviors will rise dramatically and less learning will happen. Losing even one student in a large school setting is not worth offering a few more class choices.

-- I don't love the idea of having 5-8th graders in the same building. My preference would be to have the 5th and 6th graders stay in the same school they went to for K through 4th. I am sure this was explored and may be logistically impossible but I would prefer this set up if possible. If this can't happen it is my hope that the 5-6th graders and 7-8th graders are separated in the school. Developmentally 5th graders and 8th graders are sooo different. I would also hope that there is attention paid to the bus experience having 5th graders share a bus ride with 8th graders. Yikes!

-- I don't feel that combining the 5th and 6th grade with the 7th and 8th grade would be beneficial. Keeping them separate seems to allow the younger kids to stay younger and not be thrust in with older kids.

**While some respondent expressed support for the Montessori investment, others were reluctant to support any referendum that provides funding for the program.**

- definitely support - Montessori all in one building - One less transition for our students
- I am very happy to see that the Montessori program is attached to the proposals and at a building where we can continue to offer programming for the upper levels. It would be a great goal to expand Montessori into the 7th and 8th grades.
- I am very much in support of consolidating and expanding the Montessori program as well as consolidating the middle school grades for greater access to resources and advanced placement classes.
- I am a big supporter of consolidating the Montessori program to one location.
- Montessori is a luxury and despite the articles in the paper, people will not move to Burlington for that program alone. That is a pipe dream by the advocates of Montessori without any evidence to back it up. People select a city for the overall quality of life, home and tax prices and commute time.
- We are not interested in funding the Montessori program or high school improvements at this time.
- Do not support the Montessori Program, waste of resources + money.
- Montessori program should not be a part of the public school system.
- Not in favor of an separate Montessori facility - very small portion of our children in the community being catered to in a dedicated, specialized facility. Montessori should be a private school offering funded by those who want it, not at the added expense of a public school system, where all children should receive the same level of benefits.
- I am opposed to the Montessori curriculum, and will not support any referendum that uses/increases my taxes for this program's purpose. If people want a special program for their kids, then they should shoulder the additional expense.
- I don't see the need for additional costs adding an all in one school theory for Montessori. This is a private school type option we provide as a public school offering.
- I feel the main priority should be to the districts "traditional" students versus the "Montessori" program. I attended one of the community informational meetings this past summer, and was frustrated by the influx of Montessori parents and teachers that seemed to take over this informational meeting for ALL students. I brought my children who attend school at Burlington and they were frustrated by this at the meeting as well. I feel that the Montessori program is a very small percentage of the student population at Burlington, and that every student does deserve a proper environment to learn in and priority should be focused on the buildings and to ALL the students that attend them.

## **Respondents, especially those on fixed incomes, expressed a concern with any increase in taxes.**

-- depends on the cost. The community just past the pool referendum which will cost us tax money now. I don't know that you will get homeowners wanting to increase again.

-- Will not improve the quality of education nor will the property taxes go down. Enough is enough! You got your pool so our taxes are going up as it is; I am an intelligent person I just hope others are!

-- Any funding should come from current budget. I would like to see my tax bill go down \$112/\$100k beginning 2019. No lending or tax increases.

-- would like taxes to go down not up!!!!!!!

-- We are already overly taxed from the school districts. The school districts need to start reigning in on overspending and excessive teacher benefits. The answer is not to always run straight to the tax payers and ask for more spending.

-- AS A SENIOR, THE HUGE AMOUNTS TO INCREASE TAXES WOULD PUT A STRAIN ON A FIXED INCOME

-- The taxes are already too high! Plus I have to pay for a pool I don't want. My sister has a new house in Mukwonago and pays less on taxes than I do. My house is small and 90 years old.

-- Do not want my property taxes increased.

-- Retired people cannot afford more taxes.

-- Can't afford the additional taxes

-- My taxes have gone up for the last 5 years for both Township + city.

-- I have paid taxes for 21 years in Burlington and never had a child in school yet I pay for it! No more tax increase!

-- taxes are going up enough with other projects! These updates would put too much burden on the taxpayers when combined with the school expansion.

-- Live within means. Do not raise property taxes.

-- Not interested in paying more taxes. Figure out a different way to pay for it.

-- All of the updates recommended are not necessary for the education of the kids in the district. 54% of my real estate taxes go to the Burlington School District. I think that's a high enough tax burden.