

# What belongs in a budget exit survey

The May 16 budget votes represent an excellent opportunity for school districts to survey members of the community both on how they voted on the budget as well as other issues. While unscientific, a budget

exit survey can be an efficient and low-cost way to gather information on the opinions of members of the public who show up at the polls and are willing to give feedback.

Below is a sample poll and some pointers to help school districts craft their own budget exit surveys.

— By Paul Heiser, Senior Research Analyst

## XYZ School District Budget Vote Exit Survey May 16, 2017

Ask respondents to either check the single most important reason or have them rank-order their choices rather than all that apply.

### School budget/other issues

How did you vote on the 2017-18 school budget? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Why did you vote as you did? (Please check THE most important.)

If you voted YES:

- ☐ The budget meets the needs of students.
- ☐ The budget spending increase is reasonable.
- ☐ The school tax levy is reasonable.
- ☐ I support education.
- ☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

If you voted NO:

- ☐ The budget does NOT meet the needs of students.
- ☐ The budget spending increase is NOT reasonable.
- ☐ The school tax levy is NOT reasonable.
- ☐ I support education, but can't afford the cost.
- ☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

An exit survey is a quick and relatively inexpensive way to gauge community sentiment.

Do results correspond with the actual vote tally, or are they skewed either "yes" or "no"?

Be sure to provide enough space for write-in answers.

This question may show a relationship between information source and voting sentiment.

What were your best sources of information about the budget? (Please rank-order your choices).

- ☐ Local newspaper
- ☐ School board meeting(s)
- ☐ TV broadcasts
- ☐ District newsletter
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ District flyer
- ☐ Discussions with district employees
- ☐ District website

Having respondents put items in rank order will yield more useful information.

Use the actual name of each publication or news station.

Look for patterns. Did many people who said they typically vote yes do the opposite this year? Their sentiments will be of particular interest.

Regardless of how you voted, did you find that the district newsletter and website provided you with sound information on which to base your decision? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Somewhat

This will give the district information about the effectiveness of information provided by the school district itself.

In the past, how did you typically vote on the budget?  
☐ I typically vote YES ☐ I typically vote NO ☐ No consistent pattern

What are your views on...? Do you support...?

A budget exit survey doesn't have to be restricted to questions about voting. It is an opportunity to get feedback on other important issues.

Routinely asking such questions in this survey, or another, will provide an important gauge of sentiment.

### About the school district

In general, how would you grade the quality of education provided by XYZ schools?  
☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ F

How would you rate the value per dollar spent on education in XYZ schools?  
☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

How would you rate the quality of leadership of the XYZ Board of Education?  
☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

How would you rate the quality of leadership of the XYZ administration?  
☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

### Demographics

In which town do you live?  
☐ North Egg ☐ South Egg ☐ East Egg ☐ West Egg

What age group are you in?  
☐ 18-29 ☐ 30-44 ☐ 45-60 ☐ 61+

OR  
 How many working adults are in your household?  
☐ One ☐ Two ☐ Retired/fixed income

A voter's residence can be a factor in the budget vote and opinions on other issues. For instance, voters in towns with higher tax rates may be more likely to vote against the budget.

Large numbers of "no" votes on the budget from any of these categories may inform budget outreach strategies.

Voters who were educated in the school district may see issues differently than those who did not.

Is there a big difference between voters who are parents and those who are not?

Are you a graduate of XYZ School District? ☐ Yes ☐ No  
 Do you have children in the XYZ School District? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Thank you for completing this survey. Additional comments and your specific concerns can be shared below.

Expect a wide range of feedback, both positive and negative.

Proud of your district's survey instrument? Send it to us at [editor@nyssba.org](mailto:editor@nyssba.org)