

THE 2011 PORTAGE SCHOOLS SURVEY

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Introduction

The 2011 Portage Schools Survey was carried out by the Kercher Center for Social Research for the Portage Public Schools. This survey attempts to measure citizens' viewpoints on District services and issues. The survey instrument was initially drafted by the PPS staff and a committee of School Board members, reviewed by the KCSR, and subsequently approved by the Board. Since the intent in 2010 was to make the survey an annual event, most of the items were developed in order to permit comparisons over time. Therefore, only a few items were changed for this year, and additional items were also included to address citizens' attitudes toward current issues facing the District. This year, the data collection process began on January 11 with a letter, on District letterhead over the signature of the superintendent, to each of the nearly 2,000 people in the sample. That letter told them of the nature of the survey and requested their participation. A week later (January 18), the survey packets were put in the mail. Each packet contained a cover letter, again on District letterhead and over the superintendent's signature, reminding the respondent of the purpose and importance of the survey, plus the survey instrument itself, and a postage-paid envelope for return to the Kercher Center at WMU.

Coding of the data began on January 24, shortly after the first responses were received at the KCSR, and continued through the cut-off date of February 28. The sample, which was purchased from the same company that provided the sample for the earlier survey related to school bond issues, included 1,996 names. A total of 550 completed surveys were received, plus 9 surveys that were blank, for a total of 559. In addition to the 559, there were 40 mailings returned to the KCSR or the District due to inaccurate addresses, and, as of today, 6 have been returned after the cut-off date. This produces a response rate of 30.3 percent. While not quite as high as last year, this rate is still higher than is often expected with mail surveys. This factor adds confidence in the results.

The population of the District includes the City of Portage plus portions of adjoining townships. A completed sample of 550 respondents is more than sufficient to represent the adult population of the District with the required 95% level of confidence and sampling error of plus or minus 5 percent. Frequency distributions have been run for each item on the survey. In addition, the responses to open-ended items were sorted by question number, then alphabetized and edited for readability. All of these results are presented in the two appendices attached to this report. **Appendix A** contains a copy of the survey instrument with the frequency and percentage distributions for each item, and **Appendix B** contains the responses to the open-ended items.

Results

Characteristics of the Sample

In survey research, it is necessary to sometimes collect some pieces of demographic information about the sample of respondents in order to determine if the sample appears to be representative of the larger population of interest. The names and addresses were randomly drawn by a sampling company, and the response rate is reasonably high. This suggests that the mail approach worked well.

Although minor variations in the distribution of demographic characteristics invariably

occur across samples, such variations are generally within the confidence bands associated with samples collected using these kinds of systematic approaches. Therefore, given the same data collection approach, the relatively large number of cases, and the same basic geography, the sample can be expected to be similar to the one that was obtained in 2010.

Table 1 presents the results concerning the number of years lived in the District, the type of residence, and the area of the District where respondents live. When comparing the number of years lived in the area for those from the survey from last year and the community survey for 2009, there are some minor fluctuations in the indicators. In 2011, a bit larger proportion have lived in the District less than five years, and a bit smaller proportion have lived there ten or more years. Nevertheless, as in the community survey, it is true that the vast majority of survey respondents lived in their own homes and for more than ten years. The proportions from the various areas of the District in 2011 are quite similar to the distribution in 2010, and more widely dispersed than in the 2009 community survey. While the largest concentrations of respondents come from the northwest, southwest, and southeast quadrants of the District, there are still reasonable proportions from the northeast quadrant and the areas outside the City but still in the District.

Table 1. Residential Characteristics of the Sample, 2011 - 2009

	Schools <u>2011</u> %	Schools <u>2010</u> %	City <u>2009</u> %
<u>Years Lived in Portage</u>			
Less Than 5 Years	9.7	9.0	12.1
5 Thru 9 Years	18.6	13.5	12.8
10 or More Years	71.7	77.5	75.1
<u>Type of Residence</u>			
Single Family	89.6	88.5	82.9
Apt/Condo/Mobile/Other	10.4	11.5	17.1
<u>Area of City</u>			
Northwest Portage	29.0	29.6	46.6
Northeast Portage	10.1	8.6	10.9
Southwest Portage	23.9	24.8	16.0
Southeast Portage	23.3	23.1	26.5
Texas Township	11.6	10.9	n/a
Pavilion Township	0.8	1.4	n/a
City of Kalamazoo	1.3	1.6	n/a

In a parallel fashion, Table 2 below shows the age, education, family income, and gender distributions for the same three surveys. Well over half (61.2%) of the respondents have a college or graduate degree, slightly more than in 2010, and somewhat more than the city at large. The proportion of respondents over the age of 60 is somewhat higher than the 2010 sample and the sample from the city, and somewhat higher for those from 40-59. The vast majority of

respondents (84.4%) stated they were 40 years of age or older, down from but similar to the total in 2010 (88.5%), and the city total in 2009 (88.0%). In this year's survey, the gender makeup of the sample is notably different from either 2010 or the city survey in 2009. The gender distribution of this sample, with 45.4 percent male and 54.6 percent female, is reversed from the results for 2010 and 2009. However, that is also more typical of surveys in general. Overall, the 2011 survey participants continue to be middle-aged or older, highly educated, and relatively affluent. Indeed, although the rate of non-response to the question is quite high (22.0%), the proportion of respondents who appear to have a family income of under \$25,000 is somewhat smaller than the results from 2010 and the city, while the proportion of those with incomes over \$100,000 is substantially larger (which, again, probably reflects the broader geographic base of the school sample).

Table 2. Respondent Personal Characteristics, 2011 - 2009

	Schools <u>2011</u> %	Schools <u>2010</u> %	City <u>2009</u> %
<u>Age</u>			
Less Than 40 Years	15.6	11.5	12.0
40 Thru 59 Years	40.7	47.0	38.3
60 or More Years	43.7	41.5	49.7
<u>Education</u>			
High School or Less	9.0	13.2	13.6
Some College/Technical	29.8	26.3	33.5
College Degree	61.2	60.5	52.9
<u>Family Income</u>			
Less Than \$25,000	8.6	8.9	12.1
\$25,000 Thru \$99,999	60.1	60.6	67.2
\$100,000 or more	31.2	30.5	20.6
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	45.4	50.9	52.5
Female	54.6	49.1	47.5

The vast majority of Portage residents who responded to this survey (87.8%) identified themselves as White/non-Hispanic, down somewhat from the 93.8 percent in 2010. Only 1.7 percent identified themselves as Black or African American, and 1.1 percent as "multiracial. No respondents self-identified as Native American, while nine (1.7%) identified themselves as Asian-American, and six (1.1%) indicated they were Hispanic. These numbers are all comparable to the results from 2010 and the city survey.

A total of 88.7 percent of the respondents reported that they have Internet access at home. Once again, this represents a small increase in the percentage of city residents reporting such access (87.5% in the 2010 school survey and 84.2% in the 2009 city survey). The respondents were also asked what type of internet service they receive. Nearly half (47.1%) get it from cable,

up slightly from 2010, and another third have DSL (35.8%), also up slightly from last year. Only ten (1.9%) have dial-up access. Thus, as was the case last year, and is the case in the city at large, more than 8 out of 10 households that have internet service have high speed access. This translates into nearly three quarters of all the households in the District.

Because of the decision to use a mail survey approach instead of telephone, the respondents were asked what kind of telephone service they have at home. The respondents indicated that the vast majority of them (87.6%) have both a traditional land line and one or more cell phones. This is up from 82.9 percent in 2010. Only 1.9 percent reported that they only have cell phone service, and only 10.5 percent indicated that they have only land line service.

In addition to the above questions, a series of items again dealt with the respondents' experience with the Portage Public Schools. This year, like last year, almost a fifth (18.5%) of the respondents reported that they attended PPS themselves, up slightly from 17.7 percent in 2010. Over half (54.1%) of the respondents reported that they had other children who attended PPS at some point in the past. This is down somewhat from 58.3 percent in 2010. In addition, as was the case last year, nearly a third (30.4%) indicated that they have children currently attending PPS, along with 20.8 percent who indicated that they have children who will be attending PPS in the future. Based on all of these results, it would appear that the sample is not only representative of the geographic area covered by the District, but that the sample includes people with a considerable amount of both recent and past experience with the District.

Academics

In this part of the survey instrument, the respondents were asked a number of questions about various goals and practices. In most instances, they were asked to indicate how important the particular issue is to them, using a scale that ranged from "very important" to "not important at all" (see questions #4 thru #9 - **Appendix A**). For each item, point values were assigned to each of the categories (1 for "very important, 2 for "somewhat important, 3 for "not very important, and 4 for "not important at all). The number of respondents who selected the category was multiplied by the appropriate point value, the products were then totaled, and divided by the number of respondents. This procedure results in a weighted mean score. In Table 3 below, rankings are based on the mean responses which are displayed in parentheses -- the lower the mean score, the more important the issue. Also, the percentages include all responses in the "very important" and "somewhat important" categories. In 2011, since there was a tie in mean scores, the percentages were used to determine rank order.

Table 3. Perceived Importance of Academic Issues – 2011 & 2010

Issue	2011		2010	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
Global Economy and Society	1	(1.26) 96.6	1	(1.24) 96.7
Academically Challenged Students	2	(1.38) 95.6	3	(1.33) 96.3
Employment Following High School	3	(1.38) 92.5	2	(1.26) 96.3
Academically Gifted Students	4	(1.54) 92.2	4	(1.40) 94.2
Elementary Foreign Language	5	(1.81) 80.1	6	(1.95) 74.0
Community Service Requirement	6	(1.88) 79.0	5	(1.85) 79.4

It is quite clear from Table 3 that, as was the case in 2010, the top four issues are almost universally perceived as very important for the District. Between preparing students to be competitive in a global world (ranked #1) and meeting the needs of academically gifted students (ranked #4), there is minimal variation among them with respect to the perceptions of the respondents. It is equally clear that the respondents generally regard a community service graduation requirement and foreign language instruction in the elementary schools as much less important. However, it is also important to note that all of the scores are quite high, even for the two issues ranked in fifth and sixth places. This suggests that there would be considerable public response to actions (either positive or negative) affecting any of the issues or practices. These results are further reinforced by some of the comments offered in the final two items on the survey (see questions #44 and #45 - **Appendix B.**)

A similar set of results is generated by the responses to the four parts of question #10, which asked the respondents to rank four components of academics. Using the same procedure as described above, this time with the categories ranging from “most important” to “least important,” mean scores were again produced. The ranking of the four items is presented below in Table 4 along with the combined frequencies of the top two response categories. One caveat should be noted. Since the wording of the items was changed this year, the comparison of the results with those from 2010 is somewhat questionable.

Table 4. Perceived Importance of Academic Components – 2011 & 2010

Issue	2011		2010	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
Students Developing as Skilled Learners	1	(1.57) 87.5	2	(1.71) 83.9
Complex, Analytical and Creative Thinkers	2	(1.71) 85.0	3	(1.76) 81.9
Math, Science, Technology, Engineering	3	(1.73) 83.6	1	(1.36) 92.6
Well-rounded Education	4	(1.84) 79.5	4	(2.05) 70.8

Here again, all of the scores are quite high (indeed, with one exception, higher than 2010), suggesting that the residents of the District feel strongly about each of the components. However, the top ranked component in 2010 – Math, Science and Technology – dropped from the top to third, while - Well-rounded Education - continues at the bottom as the lowest ranked. The responses to the other two components are virtually identical.

In addition to the above two sets of items about academics, the respondents were asked what they feel the benchmark measure should be for the level of student achievement – districts in the local area, the state, or the nation (see question #2, Appendix A). The results this year indicate they definitely have their sights set high, since more than half (53.0%) said student achievement should be “as good as the top school districts in the United States.” This is up from 46.6 percent in 2010. Almost a third (30.3%) selected the top schools district in Michigan. Only a little over a sixth (16.6%) indicated that student achievement should be as good or better than other area districts. In contrast, when asked how satisfied they were with the reputation of the Portage schools, only a bit less than half (48.9%) chose “very satisfied,” while another third (37.7%) chose “somewhat satisfied,” leaving the balance (13.5%) as either neutral or dissatisfied.

These figures are almost the same as those from 2010. The juxtaposition of these two findings suggests that PPS has a way to go to convince at least some of the residents of the District that the schools are as good as the residents want them to be.

Finally, in 2011, this section of the instrument provided the respondents with nine possible priority areas for the District. They were asked to check the three areas that are the most important. These priority areas are presented in Table 5, in rank order, with the numbers and proportion of the respondents that selected them.

Table 5. Priority Areas for the District – 2011

Issue	Rank	%
Expand initiatives that focus on Math and Science	1	51.3
Maintain small elementary class size	2	46.4
Expand attention given to individual student needs	3	43.8
Expand the variety of challenging curriculum options at all grade levels	4	43.3
Expand initiatives that focus on communication, both verbally and in writing	5	42.5
Increase the world language offerings in elementary and middle school	6	19.5
Increase the number of Advanced Placement courses at the high school level	7	16.9
Increase the use of student laptop computers and other technology	8	12.9
Expand International Baccalaureate Program to the middle and elementary levels	9	6.2

These results suggest that there are some areas that the residents of the District clearly perceive to be of higher priority than others. For example, additional world language offerings, more AP courses, increased use of laptops and other technology, and expanding the International Baccalaureate program are only perceived as priorities to less than 20 percent of the respondents.

Indeed, in difficult economic times, these four areas might even be places for the District to conserve resources. In contrast, initiatives in Math and Science, small class size at the elementary level, special attention to individual student needs, the variety of challenging curriculum options, and a focus on communication skills all were identified by at least 40 percent as priorities. These areas, therefore, would probably produce positive public responses if additional resources were invested in them. In addition, these results are also reinforced by some of the comments offered in the final two items on the survey (see questions #44 and #45 - **Appendix B**).

Community Engagement and District Services

These two sections of the survey instrument begin with a question that could also be taken in light of the above finding regarding the respondents’ satisfaction with the reputation of the schools. It asked if the respondents agree or disagree with the statement that the community receives an appropriate level of educational services for its tax dollars. A total of 81.5 percent agreed (down slightly from 82.9% in 2010) – with 18.0% strongly agreeing and 63.5% agreeing. Only 18.5 percent disagreed (14.4% disagreeing, 4.1% strongly disagreeing). Although this could be seen as strong support for the educational uses to which tax dollars have been put, the relative balance of the two positive responses also raises a concern about the depth of support by

the respondents. Again, some of the comments in response to the final two items on the survey instrument bear on this topic (see questions #44 and #45 - **Appendix B**).

The next several items refer directly to the degree to which the respondents feel the District is engaged with the community at large. When asked how connected the District is to the community, a total of only 17.5 percent felt the District was disconnected (down slightly from 19.2% in 2010). Well over half (61.5%) perceive the District to be “somewhat connected” and another fifth (21.0%) think it is “very connected.” Table 6 below includes the results from three questions regarding the importance of mechanisms by which the District is engaged with the community. Once again, the same procedure is used as before, with the items presented in rank order according to their mean score, while the percentages refer to the combined ratings of “very important” and “somewhat important.”

Table 6. Perceived Importance of Mechanisms for Community Engagement – 2011 & 2010

Item	2011		2010	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
Childcare Programs	1	(1.66) 87.5	3	(1.75) 84.6
Making Facilities Available	2	(1.68) 89.5	1	(1.62) 91.8
Life-long Learning Opportunities	3	(1.77) 87.7	2	(1.75) 87.0

The 2011 results are quite similar to those from 2010, although the ranking is somewhat different, with childcare ranked higher than the other two mechanisms. Nevertheless, all three of the means are low and the percentages are high, and thus positively perceived by the respondents. It would be difficult to argue that these differences clearly differentiate among the three options. Moreover, there is support for all three echoed in some of the comments that respondents made in response to questions #44 and #45 (see **Appendix B**).

In contrast to the previous items which all relate to the connections between the District and the community, the last three questions in this section of the survey instrument relate to the connection of the respondents to the District. This year, only 12.1 percent of the respondents report that they have physically attended a meeting of the Board of Education during the last five years. That is up only slightly from 2010 (10.8%). In addition, almost a third (30.2%) have watched at least one of the meetings on television (down from 34.0% in 2010). When asked how often they have voted in the last five years, just half of the respondents (52.0%) indicated they voted “every time,” and more than a quarter more (27.1%) indicated they voted “most of the time.” This leaves just over a fifth (20.9%) who have either not voted at all or only once or twice. These results suggest that the District has a strong core of public support, but that much of the connection between the people and the District is relatively indirect or even tangential.

Other items also underscore this conclusion. “Inside PPS,” the monthly insert to the Portage Gazette, received positive but somewhat mixed support. Almost a third of the respondents (31.3%) indicated it is “very important,” while 41.6 percent indicated that it is “somewhat important.” This leaves more than a quarter (27.2%) who find it to be relatively unimportant as a source of information. Again, these results only vary slightly from the 2010 survey. (From the final comments, it appears that a number of people simply do not receive the

Gazette, making the insert irrelevant to them.) By comparison, the support for the PPS website is also mixed, but more positive. In 2011, fully 47.7 percent of the respondents indicate that it is “very important” as a source of information, while another 35.2 percent report that it is “somewhat important.” Only 17.1 percent find it to be relatively unimportant. To the extent that this latter group does not have good internet access or skills (the rate of non-response was 18.4%), the proportion can be expected to drop over time as computers continue to penetrate the population. Indeed, the results from 2011 show such a change, compared to 2010.

Respondents were also asked if they had any direct contact with employees of the District during the past year. Given that only about a third of the respondents reported having children currently enrolled in PPS, it was surprising that 45.6 percent reported that they did have contact (almost the same proportion as 2010 – 47.8%). Of those that did have contact, the vast majority 87.5% were satisfied – 60.5 percent “very satisfied,” and another 27.0 “somewhat satisfied.” There were some (6.0%) who were “somewhat dissatisfied,” and some more (6.4%) who were “very dissatisfied.” This latter group was asked to explain why they were so dissatisfied. These comments can be found in **Appendix B**, Question #28a.

Current Issues

Several items on the survey instrument dealt with issues that are likely to have particular salience given the current economic situation in Portage and beyond, plus the fact that considerable school construction has been completed in the last year or is currently under way. Respondents were asked if they are satisfied with the appearance of District buildings and property. Although a substantial proportion (8.5%) indicated that they have not visited any of the properties or otherwise don’t know, the respondents generally appear to be satisfied. Almost half (49.9%) (39.3%) indicated that they are “very satisfied,” and just under three out of ten (28.4%) (31.0%) indicated that they were “somewhat satisfied.” Only 15.3 percent reporting being “neutral” and only 6.2 percent reported being dissatisfied. As might be expected, these results do show some improvement over the perceptions reported in 2010.

The situation is also relatively clear for the Enhancement Millage. Just over half of the respondents in 2011 indicated support for it (53.5%), and only 14.7 percent say they oppose it. While a substantial proportion are as yet undecided (27.7%), only a small proportion indicated they probably would not vote (6.1%). While the net result shows overall support, the sizeable number of people who are undecided suggests that significant efforts will be necessary to educate the voting public about the need for the renewal of that millage. A positive sign, however is the fact that the respondents showed somewhat more support this year than the respondents in 2010.

Despite the level of support that the above results indicate for the District, as was the case in 2010, people this year are clearly not at all satisfied with the way the state funds K-12 education. Only 23.5 percent of the respondents indicated that they were either “very” or “somewhat” satisfied. In contrast, fully 54.2 percent reported being either “somewhat” or “very” dissatisfied. The rest of the people who responded (22.3%) chose the neutral response. It should also be noted with respect to this item that the rate of non-response was relatively high (13.3%), thus reducing the level of confidence that can be associated with the results.

There were two items that asked the respondents how important it is for parents to pay fees for their students to participate in certain programs offered through the schools. The results

from these two questions are displayed in Table 7. As before, the items are arranged in order based on the mean score, and the percentages are those that selected either “very important” or “somewhat important.” First, it should be noted that there is no effective difference between the two sets of results in 2011 or between 2011 and 2010. The means and the percentages are essentially the same and therefore the conclusion is still that the people who responded are only moderately supportive of such fees (given that the responses in the “somewhat important” category are nearly double those in the “very important” category). However, since both rates of non-response in 2011 are again higher than desirable (13.5% and 10.4%), the level of confidence in the results must be reduced somewhat.

Table 7. Perceived Importance of Parental Fees – 2011 and 2010

Item	2011		2010	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
Co-Curricular & Extra-Curricular Activities	1	(2.13) 73.3	1	(2.19) 69.9
Specialized Academic Programs	2	(2.26) 66.5	2	(2.22) 66.6

The issue of non-response is even more striking with respect to the remaining three items on the survey instrument, dealing with substance abuse, safety, and bullying. They each have levels of non-response that are far too high (43.8% and 35.8%, and 46.7%, respectively) for any confidence in the outcomes (this was also the case in 2010). In the case of the substance abuse question, the proportion of those who think the District is doing “just enough” (41.1%) is much smaller than the proportion who think it is doing “too little” (57.3%). By the same token, those who think the District is doing “just enough” to curb bullying (41.3%) is well below the proportion who think it is doing “too little” (55.6%). In contrast, a large proportion of the respondents think the District is doing “just enough” to keep the students safe (81.6%), compared to those who believe it is doing “too little” (17.0%). However, all of those results could change dramatically if the large numbers of non-respondents were included. There do appear to be only two reasonably safe conclusions, in both cases. First, the people of the District simply do not know what actions the District is taking with regard to these issues. Second, few people think the District is doing too much. Whether it is doing enough or too little is open to interpretation.

Prospects and Problems

Two open-ended questions were included in the survey instrument. The first asked about the best two features of the District, and the second provided an opportunity for the respondents to offer any comments, concerns or suggestion they might have for the District. All of the responses to these two questions are provided in **Appendix B**, questions #44 and #45.

It is clear from the responses to the first of these open-ended questions that several themes appear. As positive features of the Portage schools, the bulk of the respondents specifically identified the teachers and staff of the District. In addition, large numbers noted the academic programs that are provided (including the curriculum in general and a variety of special programs in particular). After those two, a variety of features were included, although a substantial number of respondents pointed out the facilities and equipment that are available to

the students, which is probably to be expected, especially given the recent and current construction.

As is frequently the case, the final comments contain an array of concerns, opinions, and personal complaints, along with some interesting suggestions. Moreover, some echo the above themes. Many others are idiosyncratic and thus do not offer much in the way of useful policy information (although some do offer specific actions that might be taken). This is to be expected, since it happens in virtually all surveys of this kind. Still, there are some themes that appear with regularity. The recent publicity concerning the relationship between the school board and the superintendent has obviously touched a public nerve. Regardless of the direction of their support (i.e., for the board or the superintendent), almost all of the people who brought up the issue want to see it resolved as soon as possible. In addition, many of the respondents are concerned about the cost of public education. This includes District efforts to control costs, the need to increase efficiency, and in some cases what they perceive to be excessive spending on the part of the District. Some of these concerns, but certainly not all of them, appear to come from the more senior respondents.

By the same token, the teachers and staff (of all kinds) who work in the District are frequently singled out, mostly for praise, but sometimes for concerns as well. Similarly, the District's administration, especially at the level of the individual school, received a fair amount of attention – again mostly positive, but some negative. Many respondents also expressed their satisfaction with the District and the efforts that the respondents have seen.

Although they are generally quite satisfied with the District, some respondents also provided targeted suggestions that lend salience to their perceptions about the schools. These range from programs (e.g., athletics and fine arts) and broader curricular decisions (e.g., the amount or quality of history, mathematics, science, foreign language) to specific issues or circumstances that they perceive to be important (e.g., bullying, IB versus AP, driver education). Some of these are clearly salient issues for the respondents, and the survey provides them with an opportunity to express their opinions anonymously.

Once again, a final note of caution is warranted with regard to all of the open-ended responses. First, it is quite common for people to take such opportunities to simply “vent” about a particular issue or matter that is of particular concern to them. This is frequently the origin of the idiosyncratic comments. More importantly, however, the bulk of open-ended responses tend to be at the extremes of opinion – either positive or negative. Relatively few are “middle of the road” in character. Therefore, responses to open-ended questions, while certainly interesting (and sometimes entertaining), are seldom representative of the attitudes or opinions of the majority of people. Consequently, while they can be useful for specific public relations efforts, they should be treated with great caution in the process of making decisions about policy.

Appendix A

Research Instrument with Frequency and Percentage Distributions

2011 Portage Schools Survey

Please check the box next to the response that best represents your opinion or experience. Skip any question you do not want to answer. There is space at the end for any comments you may wish to make.

ACADEMICS

1. How satisfied are you with the academic reputation of the Portage Public Schools?

248	48.9%	1	Very-satisfied
191	37.7	2	Somewhat satisfied
46	9.1	3	Neutral
15	3.0	4	Somewhat dissatisfied
7	1.4	5	Very dissatisfied
43	[7.8]	6	I don't know

2. What do you think the overall goal for the Portage Public Schools should be? Should the level of student achievement be...

26	5.1%	1	as good as all other area school districts?
59	11.5	2	ahead of all other area school districts?
155	30.3	3	as good as the top school districts in the state of Michigan?
271	53.0	4	as good as the top school districts in the United States?
39	[7.1]	5	I don't know

3. Which of the following are the highest priority areas for the District? Check the three areas that you feel are most important, but check only three.

241	43.8%	Expand attention given to individual student needs
234	42.5	Expand initiatives that focus on communication, both verbally and in writing
282	51.3	Expand initiatives that focus on Math and Science
34	6.2	Expand International Baccalaureate Program to the middle and elementary levels
238	43.3	Expand the variety of challenging curriculum options at all grade levels
107	19.5	Increase the world language offerings in elementary and middle school
93	16.9	Increase the number of Advanced Placement courses at the high school level
71	12.9	Increase the use of student laptop computers and other technology
255	46.4	Maintain small elementary class size

4. The district provides classes and programs to prepare students for employment following high school. How important is this to you?

382	71.4%	1	Very important
113	21.1	2	Somewhat important
30	5.6	3	Not very important
10	1.9	4	Not important at all
15	[2.7]	5	I don't know

5. The district provides services to meet the needs of academically gifted students. How important is this to you?

288	54.6%	1	Very important
198	37.6	2	Somewhat important
36	6.8	3	Not very important
5	0.9	4	Not important at all
23	[4.2]	5	I don't know

6. The district provides services to meet the needs of academically challenged students. How important is this to you?

360	67.5%	1	Very important
150	28.1	2	Somewhat important
18	3.4	3	Not very important
5	0.9	4	Not important at all
17	[3.1]	5	I don't know

7. How important is it for the school district to prepare students to be competitive in a global economy and society?

416	78.0%	1	Very important
99	18.6	2	Somewhat important
12	2.3	3	Not very important
6	1.1	4	Not important at all
17	[3.1]	5	I don't know

8. The school district currently offers Spanish in all elementary schools and Chinese in some elementary schools. How important do you think it is for foreign languages to begin in elementary school?

243	46.1%	1	Very important
179	34.0	2	Somewhat important
69	13.1	3	Not very important
36	6.8	4	Not important at all
23	[4.2]	5	I don't know

9. How important do you think it is for community service during high school to be a graduation requirement?

215	40.6%	1	Very important
203	38.4	2	Somewhat important
69	13.0	3	Not very important
42	7.9	4	Not important at all
21	[3.8]	5	I don't know

10. Academics are the top priority for Portage Schools. How would you rank each of the following components of academics?

Students developing as skilled, lifelong learners

315	60.2%	1	Most Important
143	27.3	2	
44	8.4	3	
17	3.3	4	
4	0.8	5	Least Important
27	[4.9]	6	No response

Creative thinkers, capable of complex, analytical issues

250	48.4%	1	Most Important
189	36.6	2	
57	11.0	3	
18	3.5	4	
2	0.4	5	Least Important
34	[6.2]	6	No response

A well-rounded education, including the core curriculum plus humanities, arts, and world languages

248	47.4%	1	Most Important
168	32.1	2	
63	12.0	3	
30	5.7	4	
14	2.7	5	Least Important
27	[4.9]	6	No response

Emphasis on math, science, technology and engineering

248	47.2%	1	Most Important
191	36.4	2	
65	12.4	3	
20	3.8	4	
1	0.2	5	Least Important
25	[4.5]	6	No response

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

11. Do you agree or disagree with the statement that the community receives an appropriate level of educational service for its tax dollars?

80	18.0%	1	Strongly agree
282	63.5	2	Agree
64	14.4	3	Disagree
18	4.1	4	Strongly disagree
106	[19.3]	5	I don't know

12. How connected do you feel the school district is to the community at-large?

103	21.0%	1	Very connected
302	61.5	2	Somewhat connected
62	12.6	3	Somewhat disconnected
24	4.9	4	Very disconnected
59	[10.7]	5	I don't know

13. The district offers life-long learning opportunities through the Community Education Center. How important do you think these are for the community?

201	39.0%	1	Very important
251	48.7	2	Somewhat important
46	8.9	3	Not very important
17	3.3	4	Not important at all
35	[6.4]	5	I don't know

14. The district offers childcare programs through the Community Education Center and in most elementary schools. How important do you think these are for the community?

255	50.0%	1	Very important
191	37.5	2	Somewhat important
45	8.8	3	Not very important
19	3.7	4	Not important at all
40	[7.3]	5	I don't know

15. How important is it for the district to make its facilities available for community use?

232	44.2%	1	Very important
238	45.3	2	Somewhat important
44	8.4	3	Not very important
11	2.1	4	Not important at all
25	[4.5]	5	I don't know

16. In the last five years, how frequently have you voted in Portage School elections (e.g., Board of Education, millages, or bond proposals)?

271	52.0%	1	Every time
141	27.1	2	Most of the time
49	9.4	3	Once or twice
60	11.5	4	Not at all
29	[5.3]	5	Don't recall

17. In the last five years, have you attended a Portage Board of Education meeting?

65	12.1%	1	Yes
471	87.9	2	No
14	[2.5]	3	Don't recall

18. In the last five years, have you watched a Portage Board of Education meeting on television?

160 30.2% 1 Yes
370 69.8 2 No
20 [3.6] 3 Don't recall

CURRENT ISSUES

19. Do you feel the school district is doing too much, just enough, or too little to control substance abuse by students?

5 1.6% 1 Too much
127 41.1 2 Just enough
177 57.3 3 Too little
241 [43.8] 4 I don't know

20. Do you feel the school district is doing too much, just enough, or too little to keep students safe in school?

5 1.4% 1 Too much
288 81.6 2 Just enough
60 17.0 3 Too little
197 [35.8] 4 I don't know

21. Do you feel the school district is doing too much, just enough, or too little to protect students from bullying?

9 3.1% 1 Too much
121 41.3 2 Just enough
163 55.6 3 Too little
257 [46.7] 4 I don't know

22. How satisfied are you with the way the State of Michigan funds K-12 education?

15 3.3% 1 Very satisfied
93 20.2 2 Somewhat satisfied
103 22.3 3 Neutral
129 28.0 4 Somewhat dissatisfied
121 26.2 5 Very dissatisfied
89 [16.2] 6 I don't know

23. How important do you think it is for parents to pay fees for specialized academic programs that are not required in the curriculum (such as Math and Science Center classes)?

111 23.3% 1 Very important
206 43.2 2 Somewhat important
87 18.2 3 Not very important
72 15.1 4 Not important at all
74 [13.5] 5 I don't know

24. How important do you think it is for parents to pay fees for after school, co-curricular and extra-curricular programs (such as debate and athletics)?

125	25.4%	1	Very important
236	47.9	2	Somewhat important
75	15.2	3	Not very important
57	11.6	4	Not important at all
57	[10.4]	5	I don't know

25. The countywide Enhancement Millage expires at the end of the 2010-2011 school year. These funds provide direct support for the district's educational programs. The cost to the owner of a \$150,000 home is approximately \$113 per year. At this point, how do you think you would vote on its renewal?

284	53.5%	1	Support
147	27.7	2	Undecided
78	14.7	3	Oppose
41	[7.7]	4	Unlikely to vote

DISTRICT SERVICES

26. As a source of information about what is going on in the school district, how important is the monthly "Inside PPS" insert to the Portage Gazette?

152	31.3%	1	Very important
202	41.6	2	Somewhat important
84	17.3	3	Not very important
48	9.9	4	Not important at all
64	[11.6]	5	I don't know

27. As a source of information about what is going on in the school district, how important is the website of the Portage Public Schools?

214	47.7%	1	Very important
158	35.2	2	Somewhat important
44	9.8	3	Not very important
33	7.3	4	Not important at all
101	[18.4]	5	I don't know

28. During the past year, have you had any direct contact with school district employees?

237	45.6%	1	Yes (please answer #28a below)
283	54.4	2	No
30	[5.5]	3	I don't know

28a. If yes, how satisfied were you with the overall quality of service received from these employees?

141	60.5%	1	Very satisfied
63	27.0	2	Somewhat satisfied
14	6.0	3	Somewhat dissatisfied
15	6.4	4	Very dissatisfied (Please explain why)

See Appendix B

29. How satisfied are you with the appearance of school district buildings and property?

251	49.9%	1	Very satisfied
143	28.4	2	Somewhat satisfied
77	15.3	3	Neutral
23	4.6	4	Somewhat dissatisfied
9	1.6	5	Very dissatisfied
47	[8.5]	6	Have not visited/I don't know

DEMOGRAPHICS

30. How many years have you lived in the Portage School District?

4	0.7%	1	Less than 1 year
48	8.9	2	1 to 4 years
100	18.6	3	5 to 9 years
386	71.7	4	10 or more years
12	[2.2]	5	No response

31. Are you male or female?

241	45.4%	1	Male
290	54.6	2	Female
19	[3.5]	3	No response

32. What is your age?

13	2.4%	1	29 years or younger
70	13.2	2	30-39
97	18.3	3	40-49
119	22.4	4	50-59
232	43.7	5	60 years or over
19	[3.5]	6	No response

33. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

48	9.0%	1	High school or less
158	29.8	2	Some college/technical school
174	32.8	3	Bachelor's degree
151	28.4	4	Graduate degree
19	[3.5]	5	No response

34. How would you classify your racial or ethnic heritage?

475	87.8%	1	White/non-Hispanic
9	1.7	2	Black/African American
0	0.0	3	Alaskan Native, American Indian, Eskimo
9	1.7	4	Asian American or Pacific Islander
6	1.1	5	Hispanic
2	0.4	6	International/non-US resident
6	1.1	7	Multiracial
8	1.5	8	Other
35	[6.5]	9	No response

35. Did you attend the Portage Public Schools?

100	18.5%	1	Yes
440	81.5	2	No
10	[1.8]	3	No response

36. Are there any children living with you that currently attend Portage Public Schools?

164	30.4%	1	Yes
375	69.6	2	No
11	[2.0]	3	No response

37. Are there any children living with you that will attend Portage Public Schools in the future?

108	20.8%	1	Yes
410	79.2	2	No
32	[5.8]	3	No response

38. Have you had any other children who have attended Portage Public Schools in the past?

291	54.1%	1	Yes
247	45.9	2	No
12	[2.2]	3	No response

39. Which of the following best describes where you live?

480	89.6%	1	Single-family home
6	1.1	2	Mobile home
22	4.1	3	Apartment
26	4.9	4	Condominium
2	0.4	5	Other (please specify)
14	[2.5]	6	I don't know

40. Which of the following areas of the community best describes where you live?

152	29.0%	1	Northwest Portage
53	10.1	2	Northeast Portage
125	23.9	3	Southwest Portage
122	23.3	4	Southeast Portage
61	11.6	5	Texas Township
4	0.8	6	Pavilion Township
7	1.3	7	City of Kalamazoo
26	[4.7]	8	I don't know

41. Which of the following categories represents your total family income for the last year before taxes?

37	8.6%	1	Less than \$25,000
78	18.2	2	\$25,000 to \$49,999
107	24.9	3	\$50,000 to \$74,999
73	17.0	4	\$75,000 to \$99,999
134	31.2	5	\$100,000 or more
121	[22.0]	6	No response

42. What type of access to the internet do you have from your home?

59	11.3%	1	No internet service
10	1.9	2	Dial-up
186	35.8	3	DSL
8	1.5	4	Satellite
245	47.1	5	Cable
12	2.3	6	Other (Please specify)
30	[5.5]	7	I don't know

See Appendix B

43. What kind of telephone service do you have in your home?

56	10.5%	1	Land line only
10	1.9	2	Cell phone only
468	87.6	3	Both land line and cell phone
16	[2.9]	4	No response

GENERAL OPINION

44. In general, what do you feel are the best two features of the school district?

See Appendix B

45. Please indicate below any other comments, concerns, or suggestions you may have for the Portage Public Schools.

See Appendix B

Appendix B

Responses to Open-ended Questions

28a. How Satisfied were you with the overall quality of service rendered from these employees? Very dissatisfied (Please explain why)

Honestly, I don't know how or why some of these teachers ever got hired. How did that level of disconnect get through the interview process?

Building facility management at [REDACTED] was very responsive.

Rude, self-important, inconsiderate and eventually incorrect - but still employed.

I spoke with the principal who referred me to the school board, who referred me to the superintendent, who referred me back to the principal. No one wanted to answer my question about who would be my child's teacher when her teacher died. I was never given an answer. Absurd! Also, my child came home from school and told me her teacher had died. No communication from principal for 4 days.

Administrators at [REDACTED] use a far too heavy handed discipline method regarding suspensions. Bus drivers need to be held accountable for their inappropriate actions. 504 programs really do nothing, and no one seems to care enough to do anything about it.

Access to counselors by students is broken - fix it please.

What we were looking for wasn't accomplished.

Tenured teachers are extremely disengaged with the students and parents, specifically at [REDACTED]. Their teaching to my children has been extremely disappointing.

Central administrators - not satisfied with my service/communication

The janitorial staff, for some reason, is rude and disrespectful to those of us in [REDACTED]. They refuse to sweep the floors, leaving them slippery with dirt (which is dangerous), they vacuum only during the hour we have class (which makes it difficult to hear the music), and walk right through our class. This is at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (the dirt).

It has been made very clear to us that it is not your problem how a student gets to school. Getting there should be the first step, and a priority to getting opportunities in front of those who may otherwise be washed away in the lack of concern to teach them. You don't care - why would they take a city bus?

The custodians should not have been let go.

Would rather not explain - it was with a [REDACTED] employees.

Last fall a band student got hurt due to no lights in a parking lot. I talked to one of the office staff (administrative secretary). They were very rude, didn't want to help - so I called the project manager- he got right on it and got it handled. Why do we need office help when I can go right to the source? Saves school money. Get rid of them.

My kids take a PPS bus to Hackett. It arrives after start and leaves 15 minutes before classes end everyday. When I called and inquired, I was told that I was lucky they were bussed at all and it wasn't going to change. Keep my tax money for other kids, I drive mine now.

I did not like the way the busing [REDACTED] handled an incident with allowing my child back on the bus.

Some teachers do not know how to react with an advanced student

I attempted to secure a location for my son to meet with a tutor from the [REDACTED] before school at [REDACTED] Elementary. After many attempts, an administrator finally called back and just told me to work with the secretaries at [REDACTED]. A suitable location was not found other than a storage room. We eventually moved the tutoring outside the school.

The [REDACTED] Department was very rude when we called about a late bus taking kindergarteners home at the end of last year. They were not compassionate at all.

42. What type of access to the internet do you have from your home?

AT&T U-Verse (n=6)

Broadband-mobile

Wireless

Connect Card

Cell phone

Had to cancel internet because of the internet

Fiber (Broadband)

Both DSL and Cable

44. In general, what do you feel are the best two features of the school district?

The facilities upgrade and generally good teachers (although with the early retirement "incentives" many awesome have left, and with them their knowledge and experience).

They are trying to improve. Teachers seem concerned.

Good teachers. Children that want to learn.

Appears to provide a well rounded list of learning opportunities for its students. A very competent teaching staff.

School staff. Test scores

Excellent teachers. Excellent curriculum.

Quality staff who have high expectations for all students. The size of the district allows for a variety of resources to challenge and help students.

Excellent staff. Curriculum seems appropriate.

Commitment of staff and administrators toward student success. Community outreach and involvement.

In general, our schools are quite good. Teacher conferences are informative. We have some good teachers.

Structure of curricula. Elementary schools that I have been associated with maintain discipline, which creates a more structured learning environment.

Number of kids that graduate. Number of kids that move onto college.

Quality teachers and administration; and new attractive and highly functional buildings i.e. new ~~buildings~~; new elementary buildings.

Perception or reputation as being a good school district for education. Willingness of the community to pay for building improvements and upgrades to its schools.

Outstanding teaching staff. Have always conveyed and functioned within a great sense of community.

Great teachers help potential filled kids advance/grow and succeed!

Involved community that supports schools with taxes and board members. New schools. Interest in educational development

KAMSC. [REDACTED] elementary school.

New schools. Schools of choice

Good academics. Good community relations and information furnished to the community.

Academics

Teachers. Extra-curricular programs.

Reputation (although it is really going downhill recently). Performing arts (theatre) programs at both high schools.

PPS is forward looking - trying to achieve quality education for all students. Music/theatre/debate opportunities.

Quality caring staff. Quality education.

Academic offerings. Support for students before and after school.

Good teachers. Schools are very clean.

The teachers. The staff.

Curriculum. Promotion of extra-curricular activities.

Academic excellence. Outstanding teachers

The recognition of PPS in debate and sports competition. Construction of new schools.

The teachers and the new buildings. School board is approachable. Administrators? never see them.

Efforts to keep community aware and involved. Openness to innovation and variety of offering.

Academic programs. Sports programs.

Quality of the education.

The length of the school year. The PIV.

Students that apply themselves receive a good education. Teachers (most) care about our schools and students accomplishments.

Academic opportunities. Computerized information.

Strong math program. Strong science program.

The quality teaching staff. Solid curriculum.

Hard working and caring teaching staff. Elementary level foreign language opportunities.

High academic standards and achievements. Quality educators/teachers.

Schools close to home. Safety.

Great teachers, for the most part. Good superintendent who keeps our school system running extremely smoothly.

Quality of education, e.g., historical performance at Angling Road- We moved here for the school! The teachers and administration are excellent. Top Notch teachers and small elementary school class size help foster success for our students.

Bus service. Subjects offered.

A great staff. Wonderful buildings.

International Baccalaureate Programs, the EFE, and EFA programs. They allow students to concentrate on an area of interest. If you let them choose what they want to study, they will be better students and they'll get more out of the curriculum.

Quality of education awarded. Forward thinking management.

Students get an excellent education.

Finest education. Sports/activities offered for the students.

Great principals and teachers.

Good teachers. Good classes.

District employees (administrators and educators included). Advanced programs

Solid curriculum. Fairly high level of parental interest/involvement

Great at preparing our kids.

Staff. Buildings.

The current upgrading of the facilities. The talent that students can express and develop in the "non-core" areas.

Teachers

Academic achievement and opportunities they present. Athletic opportunities and training results.

Theater programs – both Central and Northern. Forensics programs.

Strong teachers. Excellent college preparation.

Awesome teachers. Cleanliness.

Challenging curriculum. Strong diversified athletic programs

Qualified teachers/staff. High level of academics/resource opportunities.

Lots of buildings. New buildings.

Academics. Athletics.

Graduation rates. Test score results (but could be better)

New high school and additions. Upgrading and building new elementary schools.

Modern facilities. Continual striving for academic excellence.

Academic reputation. Caring teachers.

Excellent staff. Community support.

Good academic and sports reputation. Safe environment with up to date technology.

Dedicated leadership

The International Baccalaureate Program. The high academic standards

Community support of public education as a priority. Dedicated, quality teachers.

General level of education. Reasonable financial support.

Seemingly unlimited funds to build new schools.

Faculty – they care about educating students. Administration that supports teachers.

The elementary school preparation for middle and high school. Aggressive academic college preparatory classes

Generally well-funded programs with good facilities and many committed and hard-working teachers. Those who fit this category should be paid well and those who do not should be supervised closely and given sufficient professional development assistance.

Parent involvement. Communication

Abundance of opportunities available to students as far as challenging academics, co-curricular clubs, and athletics. High level of communication with community.

Continuous improvement. Communication

Constant contact with any issues. Good teachers. PIV is great

High achievement level of students. Importance given to helping each student achieve up to the highest level of his/her capabilities

Reputation.

The small and manageable elementary schools

IB Program. EEP program.

Academics. In-house services

One child with ADD received special help when she needed it. Another was sick a lot in 1st and 2nd grade and needed help catching up on her reading and got it.

Maintaining high academic standards K thru 12

Many expensive and fancy new school buildings. Nice new bus garage.

Its Academics. Administration/Faculty commitment to all concerns

Replacement of the old school buildings. Upgrade of some of the other buildings.

Doing better than most other schools.

Academics. Sports

Seeking high achievements for students. Communication with parents and community

Good financial support. Caring and involved parents.

Advanced Academic opportunities.

Overall quality of teaching staff. Availability of IB Program.

Good staff and involved parents

High academic standards. Excellence in sports, debate, and forensics

The teachers

High Quality teachers. Good facilities.

Academics. Extra-curricular activities.

All the people associated with schools. The focus on the kids.

Curriculum (AP courses). Teachers

The high level of teaching talent that the district attracts and employs. Dedication to continuous improvement to ensure that our children are prepared for college and beyond.

Good teachers. Highly motivated and competitive student body.

The best feature is the teachers. Buildings and administration don't inspire students to excel, teachers do. Parent and community support is the second best feature. They create a safe supportive, reinforcing environment where every student strives for excellence.

Quality of teaching staff! The people and students who support the overall funding and involvement of our schools and sports.

Overall quality of teachers.

Quality schools.

Teachers.

Teachers! The staff is dedicated to the kids. E2 program and language at younger levels

Many of the teachers I have met who work for PPS are great people and should be paid better. Also, your principal is great!!

Better reputation than Kalamazoo schools

Academic achievement standardized tests. Positive reputation.

Quality of education. Updated facilities and technologies.

The new schools and remodels. They were needed along time ago. Staff is supportive and takes action against children causing trouble.

The improvement of the buildings.

Long summer breaks. Students enthusiasm and school pride.

The ability of the school district to pass multi million dollar buildings millage and other requests.

Learning to cut their spending. Healthy lunches

I can only speak to [REDACTED]. The involvement of Mr. ___ in all school activities is very impressive. He's a real asset to the district.

High expectations and achievement.

Facilities. Community support.

There are some exceptional administration and teachers. The technology was ahead of many districts and had good support.

Teachers. Their dedication to their particular discipline and their enthusiasm. Facilities. Clean, safe, and well-equipped.

Only the best teachers. School board.

Qualified teachers. Variety of courses offered.

Quite high education. Nice schools. Hope teachers are doing their jobs

Two people at [REDACTED].

Staff. Classes offered

Good teachers. Standard of education we've maintained.

Pretty buildings

IB Program. Support for arts.

New Facilities

Teachers. Families here in Portage.

Rural school setting. High achievement.

Dedicated teachers. Challenging courses.

Its tenacity when it needs additional funds from the taxpayers.

Teachers and kids

Quality of teachers and staff members.

Enrichment programs offered

Good curriculum for all types of students

Teachers. Students.

Academic excellence. Quality staff.

Physical appearance and maintenance of properties in district. Teachers and staff who, for the most part, are very committed to helping each student succeed.

The Board of education is up to date and is keeping up with the times and needs.

Teachers truly care about their students. Wide variety of enrichment programs (Spanish, KSO, mad science, etc.)

The teachers do a fantastic job

So many students going onto college. That it strives to better.

Parental involvement and support. Attention to facilities/ technology

The high quality teaching staff at the schools, the dedication of these teachers is outstanding. Most of these teachers have the skills to be successful in the classroom- why else do we have such a high graduation level? Give the teachers the tools they need to teach!!

Good academic reputation. Good facilities.

The quality of the teachers throughout the schools. The level of academics being taught in the schools.

Good families. Safe environment.

Teachers that are making school informative and interesting. Preparing students for the future.

Most teachers.

Academic reputation. Good, well-maintained buildings

Local neighborhood feel. Facility renovation improvement - huge opportunities both combined are powerful.

Reputation as a high level school. The parents' participation.

Buses. New Schools

Quality of teachers. Effective use of available funds

Communication and facilities

Infrastructure (computers, media center, buildings). XXXXXXXXXX

Recent upgrades to buildings. Parent internet viewer.

Good education. Competitive athletics.

Class sizes seem to be all right. Students academic seem to be monitored and cared about.

Buildings. Quality at teachers.

Encouraging public comment and conversation to improve the academic environment. Involvement of employers at public events.

Graduation rate. Percentage that go on to college.

Updated buildings. Academics.

Supportive community. Good PR

Overall positive reputation and consistent quality.

Dedicated staff. Professionally staffed media centers (which have now been cut to half time per building K-8. Therefore this feature will decline).

The arts

High standards for curriculum/teachers. Expectations for students to perform beyond average. Elementary- young 4's curriculum- (encourage parents involvements)

Up to date curriculum. Up to date and well maintained properties.

Educational choices for students promoting higher education. Property owners supporting the various educational funding needs.

The pride you have and the equal opportunity every students gets regardless of race, income, gender, etc. Don't change that.

IB Program. That's It!

Devoted staff. Excellent facilities.

EFA and EFE classes at the high school level, with it's partnership with other school districts, WMU, KVCC and community members. World Languages offered at elementary level.

Current investment in new schools (at all levels) with new technology shows a level of community support. Extraordinary program at ██████ – emulate it!

The people in administration. Certain teachers.

Attention to quality. The individual schools care about the kids

Teachers, opportunities.

High level of parental volunteer support and involvement from elementary classrooms to high school arts and athletics programs. Overall, high quality of school administrators and faculty.

Caring teachers and staff. Above average quality education

High academic standards. Communication with parents and community.

The school board is working to meet the expectations of the community.

The commitment of most teachers to their students. Relatively small classroom size. The test scores are impressive but shouldn't be the one and only gauge of a good school district.

Superintendent. Forward thinking of district.

Reputation for solid education. Well compensated teachers

Strong academics preparing students for college and life. Large enough to offer different opportunities.

The reputation of the school district. Academic success of graduates.

Safety. Proximity.

The loyalty of the teachers, secretaries and other support staff to continue the best possible service to students while facing larger class sizes and fewer support personnel to manage offices and media centers.

The teachers (especially at ~~████████████████████~~). The curriculum at the lower elementary level

Curriculum. Dedicated teachers.

Music, sports, arts – all outstanding.

Work hard academically. Trying to provide communication.

Educational opportunities for our kids. Progressive opportunities for the arts, music, etc.

The building is big and new. The facility is wonderful. It offers students playing and learning environment. Its management is reasonable, the parking is convenient, and children feel safe.

Teachers: knowledgeable and dedicated. Variety of programs offered.

Good teachers for the most part at all levels – my children have openly commented on how their teachers prepared them for college. The IB credit that my kids took into college – saving us money and them time in classes they had already taken.

The music program. The theater and forensic programs.

Scholastics and Music

Bus service. Teachers are held accountable!

Talented and gifted programs (you must continue to challenge all students!). Math and Science Center.

Teachers and superintendent. Curriculum

By far the teachers, who I can tell are overworked this year (less organized field trips, no teaming at the middle school, long line at [REDACTED] because of more students per teacher little after school help). Rigorous curriculum if desired.

General level of quality maintained over the years. Physical/hardware of the system.

A sound academic program for the students. Quality Teachers.

High MEAP scores. Education received for dollars spent.

Providing a top education for everyone. Clean schools. Managing a difficult budget

Management. School conditions + appearance is excellent.

Teachers, Challenging curriculum

Good faculty and staff

Renovations and upgrades. Grade reputation

Teachers, Transportation

Accredited IB Program. Strong, devoted, knowledge staff (with a few exceptions).

Integrity of many of the teachers, principals and other staff. Students fare well in achievement tests on a comparative basis and do well in higher education.

Good springboard for college. Lots of choice.

Special education interventions. Challenging Curriculum

Always intelligently run with a capable school board. Strong academic standards.

I do see PPS striving for academic excellence which is good. Staff have great hearts and I believe have the best interest of kids at heart

I think they try to keep the curriculum relevant to the needs of the community.

Excellent education. Math and science top rate.

Curriculum is challenging but may be too disciplined for the younger students. Extra curriculum programs are excellent. I really like curious kids availability.

Seem to be concerned about the students and are trying to make our money to the best it can.

Parents involvement. Community involvement. Curriculum.

Closeness. The curriculum I think is good for all grades.

The teachers and staff.

Curriculum. IB classes

Academics. Arts such as music (bands) in middle school and arts in high school.

Young fives

Academics. Updates to several elementary and high schools.

High standards. Teachers are caring and devoted.

Athletics. Student accomplishments.

Teacher dedication. Help for children with special needs.

The brand new buildings.

What my sons received in education helped them sail right thru WMU with no problems.

The teachers and educators. The students.

High academic achievement. Highly competent and involved teachers.

Academics and a whole range of activities being offered are strengths.

Small elementary classroom size. Easily accessible faculty and staff.

Good Teachers. Sports, student entertainment. Majority are A-ok, considerate and polite

Community support. Quality of the teaching staff.

Overall quality of education. Up to date facilities.

Access to technology and its use in educational programs. Parents involvement is strongly encouraged and supported within the learning process.

Forensics Team. Drama and Music department.

Educating our children the best we can. Preparing them to go out into the world.

Good academic reputations and performance

Involvement of parents. Most teachers willing to communicate with parents.

The new school buildings - and . The reputation for excellent schools. Quality teachers. Small class size.

They have nice looking buildings and good teachers.

Staff and facilities.

Good and experienced teachers. Good curriculum.

The academic reputation of Portage Schools. The small elementary school size.

High academic standards. Low disciplinary problems

Investment in educational achievement. Quality of teachers and administrators.

Outstanding teachers. Outstanding programs, especially the arts (choirs, musicals, forensics, etc).

Excellent teachers and administrators! Ongoing commitment to the various gifted and talented programs despite budget challenges.

Desire for excellence. Academics are a priority.

Small class size. Active in the community.

New schools. I heard the recent play was outstanding. Good area for raising children.

Past Reputation. Students.

In the Kalamazoo Gazette 1 or 2 years ago, Portage schools were give an A+ or B+ grade overall in the state and were ranked in the top 10 to 15% overall in the state.

The students and their accomplishments. The teachers.

Property taxes are reasonable (lower than Kalamazoo). Have classes and programs for academically gifted.

Strong academic performance. Great teachers. Good [REDACTED], has poor support from the school board.

Overall, teachers are very nice and seem concerned for each of their students. I love the reading recovery and speech/language programs.

The new schools are beautiful. I help out sometimes in my granddaughter's classroom and am involved in the kids Hope program.

Tries to keep the community informed of the school district. Has a good superintendent.

Excellent administration in the elementary school.

The principals and teachers at [REDACTED]

Teachers. The music program.

The teachers in the system. The variety of academic programs (i.e., extra curricular) that are offered to students.

Teachers. Reading recovery.

The teaching staff and the continued capital improvements in buildings and technology.

Not too large, yet relatively diverse.

Parent involvement. Teachers committed to academic goals.

Counselors. Newly-installed technology.

Outstanding teachers! I feel they are highly qualified. Communications to the community.

The education that my children are receiving. The expectations for their education to be successful.

Good facilities. Large offering of subjects/interest.

Reputation as one of best school districts around. New buildings are Great! Love, that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] schools are same design - so clever and attractive.

The elementary teachers and staff I've encountered are outstanding. The IB program in the high schools.

IB Program. Teaching staff.

45. Please indicate below any other comments, concerns, or suggestions you may have for the Portage Public Schools.

Big fancy stadium/athletic complex. Big fancy school - high taxes - poor quality education, high costs, liberal benefits for administrators.

Until the present time the school district seemed responsive to Portage citizenry. Now-?

Our student count is going down. We are building new schools. Prestige of buildings does not give a good education.

I think you need to cut spending down a lot. When I see the new school on Portage Road, it makes me sick. This school is for K-6th grade and you have 2 or 3 floors. You can't keep track of all the children on one floor let alone 3 floors. You can only spend money and more money

The strength of the district once was teachers and support staff. I am not sure any more.

When I was a student in Portage it was one of the most desirable districts to send your children. I hear many different concerns now.

It would seem to me that less money should be spend on new buildings and administration. When I attended school in St. Joseph, the elementary was built in the 30's. Is now used by the county. It was maintained for other uses.

Give the students a good foundation in the basics. In this rapidly changing economy, we can't afford the luxury of specialization in any field at that age. The jobs in a particular field may not be there in as little as five years.

Our previous experience was with a charter school we were very happy with. Our concerns about entering the public schools have been totally removed because of the caring, professional attitude of administration and staff at [REDACTED]

The radical shift the school made in the science program 6 years ago lessened the quality of instruction (having ½ year of core subjects required). Make sure the emphasis remains on teacher/student interaction and teaching and not only on technology. I do feel as though the reputation has gone down in recent years due to quality teachers leaving the district

Lack of consistency for working with special need students. It's easy for these students to become targets of unfair discipline.

Need programs that keep kids off the streets - ROTC programs that teach discipline.

I am concerned with falling standards and with large class sizes in the elementary schools. In addition, I am worried that the disagreements between the school board and superintendent will negatively affect the students and teachers. I am willing to pay higher taxes to improve the educational system in Portage.

The country and this community need to wake up and realize that we need a better emphasis on math and science. The Chinese know this and are way ahead of us in educating their young. The more we can get kids excited about math and science at a younger age, the better our kids will be. I do think the schools are doing a good job overall, and I am glad I live in this area; but there is always room for improvement.

I am so embarrassed by, and disappointed in, the current board of education. They need to learn their oversight roles and quit micro-managing every issue. Let the administration run the district and make them accountable if/when they do not perform well. The board should set goals and let the administrators work to meet these goals. Empower the staff to excel. Quit the in-fighting. You are an embarrassment to the entire community and counter-productive to all the goals implied in this . Shape up! I will NOT support any millages until/unless the board changes.

The school board is a huge concern. Turnover, infighting, the disconnect with the superintendent and apparent lack of focus are all very troubling!

Doesn't state money follow the student to the Math and Science Center? If there are fees above that, then parents should pay. "Inside PPS" could be a good place to cut costs. Just put press releases of stories of interest in the Gazette. Your new buildings may be too nice.

While I'm sure that the responses to this will prove to be interesting, I sincerely hope that decisions regarding the direction and areas of emphasis will be made by competent professional educators and not by the lay public. I would hope that the purpose of this survey is some sort of P/R initiative and not a serious attempt to determine the direction of your district.

North - kind of old - outdated

Instead of striving to be a "super-tier" district, make sure all students are receiving the interventions they need so all succeed. There are a growing number of at-risk children in Portage and they are being left behind.

The public disputes between the school board and district administration reflect poorly on the community. A commitment to partnership for the benefit of our students and the community should replace the adversarial, back-biting behavior and relationships of all parties. Their operations should be transparent, but they should speak with one voice, with one message, outside the board room.

Disappointed all day kindergarten is not offered. If Portage schools desire to be a leader, all day kindergarten should not be a question but immediately begun.

Students are smoking at the edge of school property during school hours. Youth smoking in general. These kids don't know what they're in for and should be educated about it.

I have been very disappointed at the recent developments between the school board and superintendent. Although I feel there could be better choices/decisions made for our district, the idea that the board would terminate her employment immediately is outrageous. I lack confidence in many of our school board members.

I think the district overspent on the new elementary school. I think they thought less about functionality and more about appearance.

On a fixed income and the owner of property in Portage, it has been difficult for me to justify raising millage for the school district. If the city isn't raising taxes for street improvements and services; the school district is. If and when the housing market improves, I will leave Portage for a more affordable community.

I have lived in Portage for 27 years as a homeowner. I have paid taxes to support PPS although I or my family have never directly benefited from PPS (no children). That being the case, I still believe in the importance of PPS on a community level and would be willing to pay more taxes if the money was spent wisely for education (not football etc.)

We need to keep the high standards of education, discipline and opportunities for our kids. To be competitive in their educational opportunities is key to laying the groundwork for meaningful post graduation success no matter what choices the student makes after graduation. I think a stimulating environment with excellent, involved teachers assures learning from kindergarten through senior year, and that involves programs for college bound kids and programs for technical-minded kids too! Not everyone is college material! We need plumbers, electricians, etc. P.S. We raised 2 girls in Portage from kindergarten through senior year – my husband and I were very pleased with their schooling and so were they. They are both professionals and loved the environment for learning!!

I believe community service is important, but in my children's case they were so involved in things at the school; yearbook, student council, sports, YIA, etc. that it made it hard to "get credit" when they were so busy "working" for the school. Pay to play should be looked at for sports if necessary – hopefully your booster programs can step up and sponsor kids. I believe that kids will do better in school if they feel ownership – keeping them involved is key. Having had kids graduate rather recently, it was brought to my attention that there is still a serious drug problem in the high schools. I know effort has been made – keep doing your searches, keep them quiet and they'll pay off.

Traffic needs some work. It's a real mess in the AM.

All of the negative publicity regarding the superintendent doesn't make our community look good to the public. For not having children in the school district, I don't feel much ownership in the education program in the community.

The significant use of drugs around student athletes and if coaches know they are not handling it correctly. Also, student athletes who are under academic supervision should not be allowed to be part of the team until their academic performance improves. Higher standards are needed. There is a big issue within sports teams and little is being done

I am concerned how Portage is going to maintain its high standards with all the cuts and overloading of present employees.

I think it is disgusting that ██████████ received a \$21,000+ boost to his retirement credit last year while class sizes continue to increase. Shame on the administration!

It looks like the superintendent has lost the confidence of the school board, and for a position as important as this it is time for her to move on.

Properties look GREAT!!

Concern that the school board wants to blame the superintendent for problems they perceive. Why not use their energy and ideas and work with her as a team? We have had many changes in our area and we are still maintaining our academic standards. However, not everyone is college bound.

Why did we put media centers on the 2nd floor of the two elementary schools? What is being done for the average students to move them up? How are we going to recruit new families into Portage? What is being done to incorporate cell telephones into the education process? I see a need for stronger written communication skills. When will the district put resources into the alternative High School?

The bus drivers bother me! I can't even count how many times I have called in on them because of their speed. My street is 25 MPH and I have clocked buses with a radar gun doing 40 MPH plus! They need to slow down. Poor families shouldn't have to pay fees

What do the truancy officers do? I used to live next door to the school and a police officer asked me if the kids could smoke out in my backyard. When I said no he looked at me like I did something wrong. Your truancy team doesn't do anything at all that I could see.

The board is looking to me like they will not listen to the superintendent. Grow up or get a plan. All the talk in the paper is not encouraging. Contract does not have to be renewed. Get rid of the teachers union too!

Our 3 children graduated with honors from [REDACTED] - all have at least 1 Masters.

It seems that more dollars are spent on gifted students than are spent on others, specifically middle of the road kids. Just because one school has something doesn't mean another has to have it. Stop bowing to parental pressure. Stand up. If administration has a weakness - that's it. Teach them to read - all of them (English).

I've heard of bullying and incentives to turn in related drug people.

Keep pushing to be the best.

I am very concerned about millage revenue sharing across the county. Tax revenue should not be collected based on home value and then distributed based on head count. My child is required to eat lunch while wearing full winter outdoor gear. This is cruel and more than a little odd ([REDACTED])

I think the idea of having to pay to play sports needs to be reconsidered. It sounds like saying you have to have money or no play. That's singling the low income out. If one tries out and makes the team, they should play. Not being able to play all because of money issues ruins a kids dream, opportunity for the future and possibly the team. My child is a junior at [REDACTED] and her 2nd year on varsity girls basketball team. Obviously she is good. You tell her she can't play next year because of money and see how she will cry. To put a price on something that has been part of the school system forever is wrong. Sports try-outs, debates, etc. are about being good enough to make the team and play your best for your school - its not about if you can afford it. Some kids make it to college on sports scholarships, otherwise they wouldn't be in college. Every child deserves the right to education in public school, the right to play sports if they want to. That's the problem with today's society - Money. If you don't have money then you're left behind and forgotten. Money doesn't make the future - our children do. If the class is offered through school then there should be no charge. There should be no fees for sports. Some great athletes can't afford to pay I think it's total [REDACTED]. The kids are representing your school and doing it with pride and hard work. Isn't that good enough?

Fire the [REDACTED] today. Stop lies about air quality at [REDACTED]. The union is winning.

I feel there needs to be more attention paid to playground activities. Although bullying has not become an out of control issue, it has been a concern. At least once a week, my son witnesses bullying that crosses the line to bad language and physical contact. On many of these occasions the playground supervisor has been told and zero action has taken place ([REDACTED]). Our

bus route, bus # [REDACTED], is very inconsistent due to long discussions between the driver and other parents. The driver is very nice and generous and small greetings/quick questions are ok, but long daily gossip and discussions hold up traffic and more importantly the bus schedule. Thanks.

The needs of the changing dynamics of the current school system aren't always shared with the public who support the school system. The teachers have done an outstanding job educating our current students to make them competitive in the higher education and business circle.

School taxes should be based on family spending and not on property taxes.

Students need to feel successful in early years. Demand excellence – no excuses. There must be funding from community foundations for those unable to pay.

It's wrong to have taxpayers pay for the rebuilding of schools with an increase in taxes when they have no children and don't plan on having children that attend the school.

Although service to the academically gifted is very important, the service should be done by supporting the classroom teachers, not through a pull out program.

Portage is a "gene pool school" If kids come in on third base it doesn't take a lot to get across the plate. Higher expectations are needed for students. Service learning is already required under the social studies expectations. Mow the lawn in the summer at [REDACTED].

Not at all impressed by credentials or performance of the present school board. Too many agendas and bias.

Bullying needs to be addressed more aggressively! The principal at [REDACTED] needs to come out from behind doors and stop relying on the [REDACTED] - who apparently has very little authority.

Reconsider a new athletic field (football) for [REDACTED]. Increase bus service to schools by increasing buses and routes to reduce overcrowding on the present buses. Improve janitorial services in the schools - restrooms are filthy at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. It disgusts me and my family (students refuse to use these facilities at school). This is disgraceful.

Close campus for lunch. Watch school parking lots for drug deals. Bullying and gossiping are big at high school level. Teachers burn out/lack of interest. Balance sports with school - school should come first. School board needs to focus on the schools, not on other agendas.

Keep up with communications between parents/teachers/students.

Let the [REDACTED] do her job! Board should provide oversight and strategic planning. Hire more teachers.

Parent internet viewer needs to be updated daily so parents can stay current with the multitude of homework their kids need help with completing on time. Accountability for administrators that act inappropriately with our children - Big Problem. Our government needs to get serious about funding our schools instead of all the talk about it. Let's not worry about going to Mars. Fix the schools. Smaller classrooms (by far). Struggling kids need extra help - give it to them, it's your job!!

I feel the athletics program at ~~Portage~~ is one sided and supports male coaches over female coaches. Parents also have too much input into athletics.

Keep schools as nice as possible

I wonder if Portage residents would consider contributing to a Portage Promise specifically targeting academically proficient students if they knew what it would cost? I would. I just don't know what it would cost. If we challenged our students to hit 3.4 to be eligible, I wonder what improvement we might see academically if we were able to do this.

I am happy that my grandchildren have a great school district.

Dress code enforcement at high school. Musical productions at both high schools are amazing, which says a lot for both directors! The students learn a lot more then just acting in front of an audience such as discipline, dedication, loyalty, and working with peers.

Funding must continue for the fine arts programs within the school district at all levels.

Portage has the same problems ALL public schools districts have: union contracts/rules in contracts that are unfavorable; school boards that are obsolete and useless; responsibility for things that are beyond the schools' control (i.e. kids from families who don't value education); every dollar received in state aid becomes up for grabs on the collective bargaining table - as a result there will never be enough money

The conflict between individual board members and the superintendent - not productive.

I do not like reading where the school board is trying to out manage the superintendent. If they want to manage the district, do away with the superintendent. Get a secretary to take the message around to the schools - save \$180K, then they can manage the whole thing. If they didn't want the superintendent to manage, why did they hire one in the first place.

Keep up the good work.

I also don't like teachers giving candy as rewards. I have been very concerned with the food provided to students - over processed artificial color and ingredients (liquid butter alternative with 7 ingredients is better than butter? No way!) We need to get back to basics with food - get

rid of pink, HFCS strawberry milk to start. My son is only allowed 3 of the hot lunches and I had to manually sit with the [REDACTED] and pan through binders of nutritional statements to figure that out. Food information should be readily available online so parents can make informed choices. How can a child focus and learn when their body is struggling to process the food they're eating.

Pay for play for sports is appropriate, even if only a small fee. Encourage formation of an endowment to provide "scholarship" support for kids/families that can't afford the fee. Maintain high standard for academic athletics and accountability. The alternative high school is extremely important.

School board friction and micromanaging is damaging the schools reputation and stopping others from volunteering. After having 2 children graduate with normal years, we have experienced medical issues over the last year with our third child, which has caused attendance/class work problems. Seeing another side of PPS and staff - they are outstanding! Working very well with us. Accolades to two people at [REDACTED].

Feel the counseling offices need help. Not been happy with their help. One person is amazing though.

Keep stressing the importance of parental supervision of children. Children need structure. Only parents can give that. The teachers can only do so much.

We are concerned about the teachers union sense of entitlement. Effectiveness and productivity of teachers need to improve.

Schools need more programs for gifted and academically strong students in the middle schools and elementary schools, in particular the elementary schools.

Get back to basics. Keep PPS top academically at area wide. Keep classes small enough that teachers can meet the needs of all children.

In an effort to keep Portage "as good" as other schools in Michigan, it aligns our school district with other Michigan schools that are already moving to full day kindergarten and provide additional classroom time and learning that the students are not able to benefit from with half days. It provides additional funding from the State of Michigan vs. the districts attempt to renew a millage that will be paid for by homeowners in the community in order to balance the budget.

All three of my children attended Portage Schools. All three admit drugs can be had if sought. No one is held back if not proficient in academics. As an employer in the city, I am constantly amazed at how poor the spelling and handwriting is of high school students.

Portage schools are best known for drugs.

Our 3rd child is a senior at [REDACTED]. The district has provided an excellent education and experience that has given our children the tools they need to succeed in college and the work force. Our senior was just accepted to an elite college and I feel [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] played a huge role in that. We are huge advocates for the district.

Immigrants should learn English when they are here. When in USA, speak English.. Extra curricular is part of the school system.

It should also be made clear that the football/soccer field belongs to the district (i.e., [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], not just [REDACTED]). Tenured teachers need to be held accountable for their lack of involvement academically and make themselves available to students that are struggling and to parents with questions. [REDACTED] has several in the math dept that fit this description. Why would [REDACTED] get a whole new school and [REDACTED] get only a few updates? As a community member and tax payer it was my understanding that the delineation would be equal; it is not.

Schools and the Police must work together to cease the students gathering and smoking across from the Milham Post Office. What a sight for future enrollees.

Stop "waste of funds" for things we don't need to "keep taxes down"

So happy we chose the Portage area and were able to have our 2 daughters educated here. Both were able to attend prestigious Michigan universities and receive advanced degrees. Their studies at PPS gave them both a great advantage!

[REDACTED] is an arrogant micromanager who impedes the work of administration to work for students. Until that person is off and the board can unify, there will be significant losses for the district.

Keep up the good work! Our children in college have been well-prepared thanks to PPS.

A good education takes more than huge luxury new buildings and ever-expanding budgets.

Get rid of [REDACTED]. New Schools have bad flaws.

I would love to see a district curriculum focused on a two step approach. 1. No intention of going to college, employable at some skill. 2. College bound with college level general education courses met in high school so student is able to pursue upper level studies immediately instead of wasting 2 more years of general education requirements in college. Get rid of the kids not motivated to learn.

Portage needs to incorporate more trades - all of the emphasis is on college. It's important that parents do not have to pay extra fees. It discriminates against students with lower family incomes. Some of the buildings are getting older, but during these economic times, I would not

like to see money going for cosmetic surgery. Keep it (money) in the classroom! [REDACTED]
Alternative ED is extremely important- Adult classes: 50/50.

Meet individual needs and needs of diverse learners.

There are too many special millages. Our tax bill goes up and up. There is a limit to how much money is available for taxes after monthly expenses. Our income has not gone up as fast as the taxes and special millages. Who decides on community service? What kind of community service - PCOC, church, or neighborhood? Not everyone is able to or wants to go to college. The lottery was supposed to provide money for schools. The 2 % increase in sales tax was supposed to provide money for public schools. Now this 2nd renewal.

Currently my daughter is riding the bus back and forth to school a total of 15hrs a week. The school district doesn't seem to mind sending out notices that she will be picked up and dropped earlier in the AM and later in the PM. You need to stop allowing one parent on the route to dictate everybody else's daily schedules. (we are all getting tired of these)

I am fed up with KRESA and would like to see it disfunded. Residents of Kalamazoo County are being taxed to teach the children of [REDACTED] English. Talk about [REDACTED]

Keep building. new buildings. Skip so darn much football and get the kids technology.

I am most concerned about teachers who are unhappy teaching and make their feeling clear to the students. Also I am concerned that the teachers care more about supporting the teachers' union (MEA and NEA) than educating students. Additionally, the teaching staff exhibit immature behavior in front of students.

Poor allocation of funding within the school itself. Re the [REDACTED] rebuild - poor allocation items within the school will drive up maintenance costs, etc. Teachers cannot function due to lack of authority. Students are finishing school with no application skills or awareness. The application skills and situational awareness are keys to success.

I participate in Continuing Education activities and observe a lot of waste of money - heat and other facilities.

I believe all children should have access to extra curricular activities and academically gifted programs, but the cost should be charged on an "as needed" basis. So families who cannot afford it would still be able to have their child participate regardless.

I think that Portage needs to purchase the old white Pfizer Building on Portage Road. Tear it down and build a nice sports facility to include a new football stadium and swimming facility. The Kalamazoo Foundation may be willing to help. Our schools are great, but our sports facilities are the worst. The GR area high schools all have great sports facilities. I want my

children prepared to go to college; they don't need training to work at a minimum wage job. The new buildings are great, ██████ and ██████ Middle Schools and some elementaries need a face lift.

Fund the basics such as math, English, history, science and civics and reduce the funding for athletics and extra-curricular activities. Make sure that the curriculum in elementary schools emphasizes integrity and responsibility and eliminates the focus on "esteem training." Review and question some of your programs so the school can live within a reasonable budget. Not all programs need to continue. We have a community college - why duplicate the effort and waste funds. We were tricked; it was supposed to be a one time enhancement millage.

Too bad you spent printing and postage on this survey.

Small elementary class sizes is the number 1 priority. Over 20 in grades K-2 is unacceptable!!

I am disturbed that I have heard that there are car and clothing allowances for administration. That is shameful when teachers lose their jobs.

I teach post-secondary and need students that have math/science knowledge.

Spanish seems to be more important than Chinese.

Portage needs to improve McCamley and develop a football stadium at ██████ equal to McCamley. However, if Portage does not wish to have two football stadiums they should build one at a neutral site, perhaps on 12th Street.

The safety and overall welfare of how our students get to the school is now stretched beyond reason. Give the system a yes vote and all promises made are directly revoked. Not likely to happen again. Kids are forced to walk further in the dark with a very large number of pedophiles in the area. Get our kids closer to the bus! Access=Success. Success is the definition of how many ways you offer an opportunity! Elderly were promised use of school facilities, health and support services, and every time the district goes back on what was promised (i.e. stable for the elderly never happened but sure needed their vote, busing and still cut and forced kids to walk in dark long distances to new stop!)

Focus on academics. Down play social engineering.

We need a ██████ in place as soon as possible that is responsive to our elected school board, the district in total, students, and teachers. The current ██████ has created a feud with the trustees that cannot be allowed to continue. Her ██████ of the board president is reason enough for immediate firing without a contract buy out.

Less emphasis on technology, more core curriculum. Focus on teaching life skills, not political correctness.

If the PPS district feels it has the funds to buy out the superintendent's contract, then how can they ask for a renewal of the enhancement mileage? Drop IB courses and do AP courses instead.

We need to do more life skills education regarding understanding basic applications in income and budgets - explaining how things we teach in school can apply in life. More hands on and internships would/could help.

PPS actions need to reflect the result of this type of community feedback. Invest in teachers. That is the honest impact of student achievement. Perhaps you should ask the community if they agree.

Keep board and superintendent issues behind closed doors - embarrassing and a black eye for the community now and going forward.

The in-fighting between the board and superintendent is embarrassing. The Board should provide oversight, not deal into the day to day.

I am hoping that drug issues will be adequately addressed with the students. (Also, issues with bullying, self-esteem, and suicide prevention). I believe academic standards must be maintained, but not to the detriment of teaching the students in a manner that addresses their whole being.

Wish the Portage school board would all get along.

PPS, especially [REDACTED] teachers, counselors, and staff lack the insight and ability to attend to mentally and emotionally handicapped students. Bullying continues to go on with minimal support from some instructors. We had to pull our daughter out of [REDACTED] and move her to [REDACTED] to get better special ed help for her emotional/mental health issues. Even with this we had to pull her out of high school to complete her GED. The damage done to her at [REDACTED] will be long reaching.

The board and superintendent need to work together. It is an embarrassment to read the Gazette articles about this.

When was the last time a teacher was held accountable, and a teacher not meeting standards was fired. Salary and benefits of all within the system should reflect the community and not exceed such.

A suggestion - set up a public voluntary fund that might raise monies for added teachers - you definitely need smaller class sizes at the elementary level. I believe you'd be surprised at the response to such an appeal.

The high schools in Portage are too large and out of control. Students are able to slip thru the cracks. The high school is ranked very poorly in national assessment of high schools based on AP scores. The middle schools are too impersonal and have many social problems - drugs, sexuality, bullying. Unfortunately the Portage Public Schools are mediocre by national standards.

Criticism of the ██████████ from the school board should never have been made public. The Kalamazoo Gazette's headline was harsh and not appropriate. She has been a wonderful administrator in a harsh climate. How are we ever going to replace someone who has been so positively motivating all of our teachers? I do not have kind regard for her harsh treatment.

When a parent has direct interaction with their child being bullied on the playground, stop the excuse of the bully and comply with the handbook.

Our children and I have all graduated from ██████████. We all have had a wonderful education, thank you.

Times are tough and taxes in Portage are too high! Cut backs for Portage schools are way past due! No new taxes!

Pay for specialized academic programs over after school, co-curriculum, etc. expenses.

I'm not sure if parent input really changes important issues. One of my main concerns are some of the teachers but they are so protected by the union. Also, I voiced concerns about a few items while my son was in high school but never felt like anyone wanted to acknowledge the problems or wanted to make changes, even if they completely agreed with my concerns.

Stop the Politics.

I have a child in 5th grade who is not challenged by the class curriculum. She was tested for E2 but did not make it into that program. There needs to be something in the class curriculum to challenge the kids who are at the upper end of the spectrum but don't qualify for E2. Parents shouldn't have to pay for special classes. They should be offered so that kids are challenged.

Would like to see more 1 on 1 help for those having trouble with their subjects. Too many students are failing in classes that are necessary for their future. Home guidance is not always adequate, therefore homework seems to be a burden. Perhaps those going from elementary to middle school need more guidance in class selection so they are not bogged down, especially the first year.

I have concerns that teacher performance seems weak at times - in the quality of teacher/student interaction to quality of education. It seems that from numerous comments from my child and peers that many teachers have little accountability for their performance.

Need to increase communication between special education services (especially with elementary age children) along with those in E2

School bus service [REDACTED] - get rid of them all - start new. You can save money by having Portage [REDACTED] graduation at Wings instead of WMU. You the board spend too much money. The [REDACTED] can buy her own car, and clothes along with all the other board members.

Keep the successful teachers and help the rest to be successful. Give students plenty of help in choosing a career path with or without college. Help each student discover what he/she really WANTS to do. I worry about families with too few dollars.

Class sizes are too large at the secondary level. District should establish a maximum class size (Say 27), determine staff needs, "suck it up" in one year to fund staffing level, and go hire staff. (Pressing the reset button so to speak). Teachers quality of life will improve. Research is showing a human limit to care for people to point of proactively helping at about 150 people. Take the average teacher, subtract close friends and family, and teachers' loads are too high.

Stop patting yourself on the back. Students graduate functionally illiterate and unable to do arithmetic. Too many don't graduate. Concentrate on 3 Rs. Make sure everyone can read. Prevent drop outs. Should be taxpayers paying for programs.

Concerns about the board/superintendent relationship. There is too much bad press. Let the superintendent do the job hired to do. System has been working well before this board. We now have too much strife and drama. No more outsourcing.

Instead of pushing for student athletics, focus on the visual arts (drawing, painting, etc.). Offer more art classes or have an after school art club. When I went to school, the emphasis was on math and science, but in order to be a critical thinker and creative problem solver you need the creative thinking skills that you learn in art class. Art has been more useful to me in every day life than the stuff I learned in the advanced math and science courses I took, and this is coming from a straight A student.

Never, Never, Never give up!

It is evident to our family that PPS cares about all of its students and the community. The program for adult ed, academically challenged, AP-students – they all are addressed. Please don't lose focus on the bullying protection like the proactive approach to help coach kids how to get help from adults. Please keep up the good work.

Do not let the school board oust [REDACTED] Where are their brains? If they do, I will fight to oust each and every one until they are all off the board. Grow up! Stop bickering and do the job we voted you in to do.

The demographics of Portage have changed so much that we have genuine concerns about the directions of PPS. Societal issues and economic pressures impact the district in ways that harm quality education. Our grandchildren will not attend PPS due to the changes. Kalamazoo Christian here we come.

Suggestion - stop outsourcing services. Outsourcing did not work out well for janitorial services and would be a disaster for something more complicated.

Teachers are not supported/appreciated. Class sizes are too big to adequately meet all the varied needs in the classrooms. It is appalling that secondary teachers are expected to teach 6 out of 7 classes. We have been concerned, and it has grown to disgust, with the situation with the superintendent and the school board. This is not a healthy way to handle discord and is now tearing apart the community. We have always tried to support the PPS- but our confidence is greatly shaken by the points above. Landscaping looks terrible- it is up to parents/volunteers, and that is not right

Stay within your budget.

The school board went overboard on the outer appearance of the new schools, especially with Portage's record of "build them up to tear them down."

Have the school board quit being so self centered and work for the kids, not themselves.

My biggest concern would be that there isn't enough advanced placement at the elementary level. We moved our 2 sons to a charter school just for that reason. There is too much focus on the problem kids and the advanced kids get left to themselves. Also, there aren't any consequences for bad behavior at any level of school in the district.

I would like to see smaller class sizes. I would like to see more younger teachers, more energetic ones, especially for the little ones (Y5-K)!

My major concerns are bullying and preparing students for college and to survive in the world today.

I have had 3 children enrolled at ██████ and KAMSC. Due to budget issues there is no guarantee that KAMSC students can fit the 3 core humanities into their schedule at the IB level. I believe this is unacceptable. KAMSC students should be able to do their English, history and Spanish IB in the mornings before going to KAMSC and not have to travel to ██████ or take an online AP class for their CORE humanities.

Technology, technology, technology! Mattawan schools are beginning their one-to one initiative to get each student their own Apple Laptop and Parmetheon boards in every classroom. PPS

needs to get going with this! Also stop increasing class size. Research shows increases in learning with smaller class size.

Fees for many extra-curricular activities are certainly a feasible option. However, I would strongly urge some type of scholarships for students who would require assistance.

I am concerned about the negative publicity in regards to the board's dissatisfaction with the superintendent. I support the work which she is doing.

Some administrators appear a bit arrogant and haughty at times, refusing to listen to ideas and comments from the community. In particular, professional, experienced, and caring teachers should be sought for counsel and advice. They are closest to the children and problems and can have good suggestions. Also, keep sports programs under close scrutiny and under the control of academically concerned administrators, not PR folks.

Meet the child's interest beyond "no child left behind". Let teachers do what they are best at - teaching, preparing our children for the future.

Funding that will help students maintain and grow.

We need to have the best teachers. The teachers need to be evaluated annually on job performance and not allow tenure to protect a poor teacher.

The students should get a good teaching of U.S. history and the constitution. Civics is still very important.

Make sure the schools are kept clean inside out and in good repair. Safety first.

The only contact I have with Portage schools is buying over priced paper, magazines, candy, etc. that I feel obligated to buy as long as the schools force children to sell.

Very happy with the interaction we have had with the [REDACTED] staff. My kids enjoy going to school.

A four year college education is no longer a viable option due to cost and effectiveness in securing life long employment. PPS needs to promote a major restructuring in our country's educational system and to work closely with job focused junior colleges (ex. KVCC)

Better budget management. Recent tax request included replacing buses. Why wouldn't this be planned for.

Acknowledge Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday and Black History Month

[REDACTED] needs its own football field, if this is not possible the present field should have turf.

PPS needs to develop and implement a formal policy for food allergies. A local food allergy group has brought this to the attention of the superintendent a few times - and has provided all of the necessary info. If PPS wants to be a leader, this is one critical way to achieve that goal.

Not all students are good in math, or science or whatever, but each student does have an area of interest or ability to achieve. Hopefully, the schools will continue to reach all students and provide for all students and prepare them for after high school, whether it be college, technical, or any employment.

Portage should focus on reasonable realistic goals for the district, not so much the competition with others. The student-teacher ratio should be kept low. Work on bringing the ratio down in the district.

The new elementary schools are beautiful. However, as a resident of a neighborhood that feeds into a much older elementary school, it is very frustrating to have my own taxes go up and then not see any improvements to MY elementary, while at the same time be paying for other people's schools to be nicer.

██████ needs to focus more on their athletic programs. The athletic programs are much better at ██████. The coaches and ██████ don't take coaching very seriously. Look at some of the teams - they definitely have potential, but need stronger, better coaches - that want to win. Would like to know where all the money goes from the cost of getting into the games. Students shouldn't have to pay to play.

Keep your eye on the prize. Children need to learn how to respect and have basic manners. These are the basics to anything you need to achieve in life. I think that has been lost over the last 10 years and needs badly to be reiterated! Also to learn life skills, balancing check book, money management, home economics and money management.

I have been surprised to hear of problems between the school board and superintendent. I do not understand just what has caused the problems, or what should be done to improve the situation, but I certainly hope something can be done so that the Portage schools can continue to be outstanding and become even better.

PPS should not support IB program over, or instead of, AP program - colleges know AP better than IB. We are gravely concerned about the high school science program - freshman do not have math skills to be successful at physics and possibly chemistry. Why is PPS the only district in the area to offer H.S. science like this? And why has it not been more aggressive about evaluating its H.S. science program now after 4 years? Raise the expectations of the students at every level - the students can do it! Other districts throughout the country have shown that. Math and science classes are required! Accelerated classes should not require additional fees if special needs classes do not.

Full day kindergarten.

I do not think that the children should have to take foreign languages. They need to learn to speak English. They do not need computers either. They need to learn reading, writing, math, and general American lessons. As far as what kind of phone I have or what my income is, it's none of your business and it has nothing to do with the schools.

Property tax is too high!

Conflict between board members and superintendent. Board is too emotional, little attempt at conflict resolution. Make extracurricular activities pay for themselves. Yearly check of teachers' competence.

Students need to be close to the schools. Smaller schools, fewer students. Busses should stop closer to girls homes. Careful background checks on persons involved with students.

School board/administration battle is very damaging for all. School board is full of power hungry [redacted] Superintendent. is very qualified. No superintendent will satisfy our [redacted] board. The board values themselves too much - they are way off base; let go! And let the qualified school administration get to work keeping our school system functioning at a very high level. Stop the bickering! Board thinks like a liberal arts committee - lots of ideas, but little consensus. Why would a high achiever have to pay? We don't charge low achievers for daycare, remedial programs, etc.

I have only been involved in Portage [redacted] schools and find them always dirty. The girls restrooms are disgusting in both middle and high school.

I have a concern with increasing cost of public education. I feel more budget cost measures are needed

If we are concerned about cutting costs, consider consolidating administrative positions, not sacrificing our teachers! Teachers are our unsung heroes and deserve raises, not the cuts they were forced to take! Also, when discussing global competition and the best schools in the nation, do not fall prey to many of the currently- popular, false paradigms surrounding public education! Be proud of the outstanding education the Portage public schools have always provided, and remember the foundation of human growth and development when planning curriculum. If we truly want children to become life long learners, we have to make sure there is enjoyment in the process. Finally, be rid of this notion that teachers are responsible for students test scores! Students need to be responsible for their own success.

Debate and creative writing are as important as Latin - anything to improve a knowledge of words. Also, current affairs, the import of history, and its impact on our lives today. Not all parents of gifted students can afford fees!! That shouldn't penalize the child!

Be more aggressive in working with underachievers to help them succeed. Look at kids across from post office at noon hour.

Important to reduce class size at elementary schools for improved individual student attention. Implement full day kindergarten. Increase school year or maximize instructional hours for improved academic performance. Avoid additional public dispute between the board and the superintendent - bad for the district reputation.

My concern is that while we enjoy a good standard of education in Portage, probably as good as most in Michigan and maybe even the country, we do not expect enough academic excellence from our children, so we do not challenge them enough. Therefore, we lag behind many foreign countries in educational excellence. Sadly, I believe that we are not equipping or positioning our children to compete in a global community. Our students should be the example of educational excellence that other countries strive to achieve, not the other way around as it is now. We seem to be more intent on spending money on building monuments to education in which to house our students, then we are in spending it to educate them. Buildings are important but the fact is, it is more important now to educate future generations to be equipped to compete in a global market than we've never seen in history. We need to equip them to be the intellectual and moral foundation of our society. Instead it seems we are electing to equip more people to follow than we are to lead. I know it sounds like a national problem and it is. But we need to start some where. Why not here. EDUCATION FIRST. We should be even more intent on preparing them for college or tech school, which is much more important than jobs after high school.

The IB program is too expensive! Some high school teachers have 30+ students per hour while IB teachers have 10-12 students and extra time without students to grade work. How is that fair to a teacher who teaches nearly 150-180 students of all levels? AP classes are just fine and cost the district much less. You train IB staff who actually never end up teaching IB – what a horrible waste of money! The fee to be an IB district is horrible! IB is just too expensive and serves too few students. The district needs to focus on helping more students (at all levels) be successful. Portage continues to be a “snob” district that cares too much about the top few.

Get rid of the Baccalaureate program. Too much money for too few students. Increase advance placement.

It'd be nice to have some competent employees to work in the new schools. Privatizing the janitorial staff was a huge mistake. Take some of the above funds and pay some good ones. We don't tear down our houses – we fix them up. We clean. We borrow from our vacation fund to pay the electric bill – so saying the funds for the new buildings have to be kept separate from the cleaning staff is ridiculous and nobody believes it. The corners are filthy. You need a 55-gallon drum of Limeaway for [REDACTED]. The place is disgusting. I go to [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is filthy too.

I think the PPS wasted a lot of tax payer money when it upgraded ██████ a few years back and now it built a brand new school(which does look very nice). Don't waste any more money like that. Get spending under control. There are still a lot of people out of work. We don't need any more debt.

Grading is far too easy. It's not possible for every student to be above average in the real world. Some of the turmoil related to the school board has been embarrassing. The board needs to hire good administrators and let them do their jobs.

██████ members of school board should leave their emotions at home and use logic! ██████
██████ should learn where the community is and leave his own, very personal agenda, at home!

Tear down the old building when the new ██████ is built. It would be an eyesore if it were left standing.

I believe we need a new school board. I believe the superintendent is doing a great job and we are way lucky to have a person like her.

Academics first, sports second.

I wish during elections that candidates would stop promising to improve the schools. They are doing a great job, with teachers working hard all over this county. Their "promises" simply give the schools a black eye. PPS is an exceptional district, one I was proud to have my children attend.

██████ needs its own track and football field. It's ridiculous that a school district of the size of PPS does not have handicap accessible football and track facilities at both schools. ██████ is losing income by not having its own field and track. The district should be ashamed it did not take care of this 30 years ago. Busing kids back and forth to ██████ is just insulting to the ██████ parents and students. Also, the district needs to go green with its text books. Offer more online so kids don't have 90lb backpacks and back problems. I also feel that more attention needs to be kept on making all building environmentally safe - no mold. More air cleaners, filters, healthier schools. And someone needs to take a long hard look at the tornado shelters where the kid's are sent - someone that is a structural engineer that understands the building structures. The safest places in the schools are not always the places that are used during a "disaster drill."

Can never be "too safe"

Stick to the basics - it worked for our generation, and it continues to work well at ██████

The board of education needs to make suggestions and stop being so negative. There are more positives than negatives in the district. Very disappointed in the board of education's behavior toward the school leadership.

You need to look into the bullying that is going on at the schools, at all levels. Stop the high school drug use. The board individuals should not be talking to the media!

It was a great concern to pass a sizable bond issue and then find out there was insufficient funds to pay salaries. Need to improve where possible thru efficiencies.

Don't change much

Doctors have repeatedly said students need more sleep - 4 or 5 hours isn't enough. Also, they (after loads of too much homework) are on cell phones, google, facebook, texting, computers, etc. Results - 10th grade dropouts, tired out, sick of school. School starts too early. Students are home by 3 or 3:30. No parents are home from work. Our little 3 to 5 year olds are too young for computers. Please let them learn ABCs plus conversation with each other first. The new buildings are too elaborate Fancy! Too expensive!

Class sizes have ballooned. My H.S. daughter came home and has 30+ students in about 5 of her seven classes. More behavioral problems, more stress for the teachers, leads to less learning time. I love Portage Schools but what evolved this past year is a shame. Every teacher I talk to is overwhelmed and stressed out. I can see the difference from (1st daughter) to now (2nd daughter) with the same teacher.

Keep classes small and provide choices in foreign language in the curriculum.

I believe the conflict between the board of education the superintendent is detrimental and may have a negative effect on families moving into the area. Rather than bread lifts, etc., encourage more meaningful and more challenging community service. Specialized classes should be based on ability to pay. I don't want to penalize academically capable kids that are not financially capable to pay.

The student/teacher ratio is too high. I don't think some students are getting the one on one attention they need, especially in the younger grades. These are the foundation years. I think specialized classes should be free of charge

I am a graduate of ██████ myself, as well as my son in 2009. We needed to update our schools with a "class A" school appearance. We needed this construction years ago. Keep updating the advancement classes in the curriculum as well as the technology in the classroom. I also feel that if cuts need to be made in the district, then the superintendent can own a car on her own instead of leasing from the district. I feel any cuts to be made can start with some of the ██████ "perks"! This pertains to all other members too. Thank you

Information in the Kalamazoo Gazette is of no use. I stopped the paper because it is so thin and late giving news. Coworkers are best source of school news.

Use money with frugality instead of constantly guiltig the tax payers. Resist union pressures.

The bad publicity about in fighting on the school board is an ongoing and increasing concern.

Equal focus on academics and arts as a whole. Specialized programs should be funded - not by parents! Parents paying would not allow all students to participate.

As someone very familiar with kids that attend (as a volunteer coach), I'm very concerned about drugs and alcohol abuse. This is a situation students seem pretty cavalier about. Too many students seem to find this an acceptable form of "recreation." Unfortunately, they seem to be bringing the problem to school.

Quite frankly, I voted against the new buildings. Sometimes I don't think the board members are not prudent. New is not always better!

Services for gifted and challenged students are great as long as election for these services is done carefully. It may be best not to focus on these offerings until middle school and later.

Reduce the number of votes on school funding as it seems to occur every couple of years. Have a board and administration that works together well, enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the schools.

English/literature programs need improvement. Geography/history programs need improvement. Math/science programs are excellent.

Need to teach and integrate technology into each discipline including sciences, math, English, art etc. and the use of technology to expand your resources to find knowledge such as Wikipedia. It is ironic that PPS bans Wikipedia because it is open source information while the rest of world is pushing for open source and freedom of information. It is akin to censorship.

I believe that after the new high school is completed, the path needs to be paved that runs from the end of Shamway up to the back of the middle school (by tennis courts, and new drainage pond) and the high school. It is currently used by numerous students/parents to reach these schools. Currently it is just a dirt foot path. This would ensure safe, cleaner walk for the students using these trails to go to school! If a child is in advanced class, must the parents pay for them to be able to attend to specialized classes? If so, this is not fair.

Get these kids a dose of "reality." They cannot communicate in public or in the work place! Very bad communication skills. Their attitudes stink! (The way the look, act, and dress for work!) And in public it is awful.

I think PPS continues to do a great job for students in the community. I do think the last agreement with teachers to cut school days, continue MESSA insurance, etc. was reprehensible and made me question the integrity of the administration. That was not an appropriate solution.

I guess my primary concerns with schools are that they challenge students across all subjects (math, science, writing, language art, etc) and foster independent thought and critical thinking skills.

Communicate better on budgets and spending. Let the community help with trimming unnecessary spending since we pay for it. Excel with learning opportunities for everyone not just the wealthy. Consolidate millages, don't keep asking for more every 2 years. It is really frustrating to try to get to the bottom of the "real needs." What about poor families. It should not be about how much money a family has. Kids should be allowed to reach their full potential even if parents can't provide funds. Would really like more communication. Send out budgets, salaries, and be transparent. Need real info and not a sales pitch about how things are great.

Love the high quality preschool program that doesn't cost too much money. Would be nice to have school closer to home (Lexington Green). Some confusion on which school to enroll child in this fall. Seems odd to have a child attend a Central elementary school, but Northern Middle/High School. Feels like child will have a hard adjustment from elementary to middle school.

I was very disappointed in the testing that was done at ██████. There wasn't any construction being done when the air quality was determined. It was a controlled test. Peoples' illnesses were brought to their attention. They were given a solution and environmental experts on environmental toxicity were given to the group and also the parent/teachers group, but it wasn't taken seriously. I myself have gotten ill from being in the building. They should have rebuilt ██████, not remodeled the school. Schools need to be adequately ventilated. You need to use environmentally safe wood, paint, glues, carpeting, desks. The schools seem very VOC, very toxic. I don't want to pay more when students and teachers are ill or sick from the building. Example - science rooms at Portage ██████. Appearance doesn't matter if they breathing clean air. 20 percent outside air 80 percent recycled air.

Keep school employees, do not privatize services such as janitorial, transportation, maintenance.

PPS used to be cutting edge when it comes to academics, but we are falling behind. Work needs to be done to increase our academic reputation.

Science and math curriculums need to be totally revised.

With a declining population in Michigan, why do we continue to build larger and larger schools and more of them. Fix the buildings we have and save the money for the students and teachers.

I would like to express a legitimate concern over either the over expenditure of district funds for capital improvements and or the lack of efficient utilization of facilities. Case in point - one daughter was a gymnast on the Central/Northern gymnastics squad through high school. The gymnastics team was allowed to practice in any of the school gyms but there were time constraints given the demands of other team sports. So, the district helped pay for the rental of space in a private gym. Then the system built not 1, but 2 new auxiliary gyms for the district. Guess what - there is still no time and space available for Gymnastics. I must say, it was infuriating as the parent of a gymnast that my tax dollars were paying for a new gym for each of the schools and the gymnastics team still had no available facility to practice. On top of that, my tax dollars were still going to support renting a private gym for the team as well. It makes you feel resentful for supporting something you fundamentally believe in. Second case in point - I believe that it was explained to taxpayers that the rationale for such a high volume of "commons area" in the new [REDACTED] was so that the needs of community groups and businesses could be accommodated. To that I say "what"? My point is that I believe that fiscally responsible evaluation of needs would have resulted in a more "rational" commitment to commons area space and the funds to build it. I also find it ironic that we are tearing down a very nice, perfectly functional, never filled to capacity gym- and there still won't be space available for a gymnastics team to practice. I suppose there will be those who suggest this is a moot point as Portage did not have a gymnastics team this year. Too bad, because it has had an excellent program over the years - including last year. Introduce curriculum on learning skills and reading speed and comprehension. I believe that a strong "non tolerance" philosophy should be emphasized in health or other social studies curriculum.

My grandson is in 8th now and came from another school district and has struggled with school classes. (Kalamazoo to Portage). I wish there were more help that is readily available to him. Slower students seems to get left behind.

Forget sex education - a poor choice! Feature discipline for those that require it! Require more reading and learning how to budget and basic finance courses. Let's go back to reading, writing, and arithmetic in elementary classes. P.S. How about a survey on WMU?

Do not keep raising our taxes. Do best with what we have. Everyone should pay city taxes for their children going to school.

Our kids have attended school in IL, OH, and VA. We chose to live in Portage because we were told the schools were excellent. PPS was a full year behind what my kids had in Virginia. Portage is the lowest standard of learning we have had. I would also like to add I have never been anywhere that had a 90%-80%-70% grading scale - again, the lowest possible standard.

Keep high standards! Low performing students, and trouble makers should get a short chance at correction. If they continue to have unacceptable performance they should be expelled. We spend far more on education than we should. Don't let PPS become [REDACTED]

Is it possible that you have too many administrators? Does every elementary school need a Principal? Do you need a PR person? Why can't the Superintendent communicate to the Public?

I think the schools need to learn how to cut back and live on their budgets like everyone else. The money that is wasted on athletics could be used on better classes for students. They also have too many administrators and people at the top. Our economy is changing too fast. I know college graduates that can't find work. Kids are too busy working to save for college

Financially, I think the schools need to re-look at how they do things. Schools are too top heavy with administration. I do not think PPS should consider charging families with academically talented kids, they should be not penalized. Enforce the substance use rules you have, if athletes are drinking/using drugs, they don't play. That would get attention. Teachers should have more power to discipline kids/teens who are disrespectful. Keep kids to a high standard. Community service is important but should not be the schools' job

To prepare for the future, more students need technology classes. (Example: create websites, Powerpoint, movie maker, etc.)

Do not forget the children who fit the college mold.

Students today are real good if they have a computer or IPAD, but once the computer is gone they have a hard time finding the correct answer to math, geography, or any general life question.

Should include dates of school closing

Dysfunctional board of education. Work on the middle school curriculum - "back to basics." Keep early elementary class sizes small. The school district is not funded adequately by the state.

Very concerned regarding school board's treatment of the superintendent. Seems the board is more interested in status and being competitive with other school districts rather than with the students at Portage. The superintendent has always promoted excellent curricula and has been doing an amazing job of handling the many facets of her position. Very concerned that the average student can be overlooked while we emphasize the gifted and challenged.

I grew up in PPS, moved away, then came back to raise my son here - I'm proud of our schools. Keep up the good work!

I am getting quite concerned over the television exposure regarding the Board versus the superintendent. This is all far too negative and from what I've seen thus far, counter productive.

If it keeps up, the district will suffer and so will support. Regarding curriculum, please do not remove "Earth Science." It is too important to our future.

Feels very closed-off - go more international in terms of ideology rather than staying within Southwest Michigan. More varied cultural courses maybe? Would help students in the future compete better on the international level.

Requires challenging curriculum, competitive environment, and high expectations of students.

Early elementary classrooms need a cap on how many students are in each class (18). All elementary teachers should have guided reading support.

I've heard stories about drug use and would like to see a stronger reaction/proactive work to deal with the problem. Don't give just suspensions for discipline - make students come in on Saturday or do work in the community helping the disadvantaged. Work on developing more scholarships for students at all income levels. Explore different class options for students who learn differently.

The bickering between the board and the superintendent concerns me. In my opinion there is not enough reason to talk about firing the superintendent. Much of the problem, I feel, is the state of Michigan keeps renegeing on its funding obligation to school systems. Things are pointing in the wrong directions. The state is forcing many curricula to teach to the MEAP test instead of focusing on the individual needs of students. Many of the regulations being imposed are being directed in order to bust the teachers' union. Cuts are not the answer. Forcing employees in any profession to accept substandard compensation is demoralizing at best. I feel the state of Michigan is the problem by taking away local control of school districts. Academic freedom is also being taken away, forcing a cookie cutter mentality throughout all school districts.

On Milham, you see students stand by on the sidewalk smoking in front of soccer field.

If the school district wants support from the community, they should in turn support the people of the community. Example - hire local contractors to build the new schools.

At [REDACTED] I do not like the lay out of the school. Several times students go missing! My son was one, twice! The language arts teacher pulls him out without the teacher knowing. The office is located in the middle of the school. There have been many times the principal comes running around the corner -oh you found him! Unacceptable! Security needs to be enforced! Bullying on the bus has been a problem too. Also, older elementary students take the younger ones to the bus. I can just say Hi and take my son. They have no idea if he can or cannot leave with me. Something needs to change. I didn't care for the rezoning either. I loved [REDACTED] Elementary.

I am concerned about the number of kids who are still slipping through the cracks, not graduating or not knowing basic reading, writing and math skills. Also, some kids are graduating with very little or no life skills such as making a budget, taking out a loan or mortgage, nutrition, and parenting skills.

Education should not focus only on the top achievers but offer classes of interest to all students. This may include non-traditional subjects and approaches to learning. We should judge our success not only by the number of college-bound students or the top GPA, but how many drop out or do the minimum to get by. We are judged as a nation not only by our successes but also but our failures. Board of Education - stop acting like children and do your jobs! If you can't work with the superintendent, maybe we need a different makeup on the board.

School board members need to act independently, think for themselves. I am unhappy with the way they "gang-up" and hold grudges. They overstep their authority frequently.

Let's keep God and Christianity in our hearts and in our minds when we make decisions about what our kids need in school and apply it. A lot depends on what happens at home, but this might help keep our schools safer and our kids off drugs. Alcohol kills more people each year than any other illegal drugs, so let's kick drugs out of school and our homes.

We understand that the "yes" vote you received for the new building site was a millage request. Now we've heard it was not a set amount but an open ended vote to fund it no matter what it costs. So, now that you are falling short of funds, you can just keep increasing taxes until everything you want is paid for? You can count on a "No" vote from now on!

Get your house in order!!! Stay out of the newspaper regarding how the board of education and superintendent can't work together. Resolve this issue now and focus energy on what is important for education in PPS.

Where is the Community Education Center? More publications are needed to keep residents informed. I don't like to hear the school board & superintendent spending our tax dollars fighting. It sounds like our government. The goal of both parties should be focused on the students and providing the best education possible. The Gazette is having a field day.

More specialized care for needy or problem students. Better parental communication.

The new schools seem to be way over the top. Who needs such luxuries for a decent education? I think there is too much extra fluff, and the tax payers are stuck with it.

Get the superintendent issue resolved immediately. The curriculum must be more competitive on a global basis. MEAP scores are not a measure of relative success of our children. This whole exercise is about the children, not about union health/pension benefits or egocentricities of the school board or the superintendent.

As a parent of a 4th grade and a 7th grade student, I have been impressed with the efforts toward both my daughters success in school. Access to information and other resources via e-board sites, direct contact with educators, and the district and school websites is key to knowing all the tools we need to succeed.

We need to care less about how we compare to other school districts and just concentrate on the education of our own students. If we make sure each and every one of our students makes appropriate individual progress, then we have done our job. We need to eliminate at least half of our benchmarks so teachers have enough time to teach the remaining skills to mastery. We teach too much too soon, when young eye muscles aren't even developmentally ready for the tasks. We need to offer classes to meet all academic interests, but not every one will need a foreign language or high level math or science class to hold down a job of their interest, or live successfully. Just because some of our top students can do it all doesn't mean they should. Check out suicide rates, alcohol and drug use, and anxiety/health issues in students.

Not enough extra curricular activities. No programs for talented students. Shouldn't be a reduction in library services in elementary schools.

I am concerned about the number of people I know who say they are voting against the millage. When I ask why, many bring up IB as an example of a program that has high cost (both direct and hidden), and for which AP is a much less expensive alternative. IB is something we can do without.

Over emphasis on sports (like many other schools)

We have been very satisfied with the education our children received (k-12). Teachers, generally, are excited about teaching, and convey this to students. Courses are challenging and prepare the students for college.

I don't always think that money is spent wisely. The students need to be exposed to technology, but I'm not sure that large screen TV's etc really add to the quality of the education the students receive. Blackboards and overhead projectors are much cheaper, and work just as well. Communication at the middle school is not very good, but has gotten better in the last year.

I would like to see full-day kindergarten put into place.

The school board dramas are a distraction to the education of our children. Sort it out and move on.

A program that keeps kids off the streets. ROTC programs that teach discipline.

The middle school teachers, as a whole, seem unhappy with their jobs. There are some great exceptions to that, but the overall experience we've had is underwhelming. Examples – teachers

have not recognized kids as their own after weeks in class; at conferences, they have no information on specific students, just an overview of the class; they complain to the students about how much work they have to do. One teacher told the class, during Red Ribbon Week, they were going to "Heroin High" - Completely inappropriate. Also, the students need textbooks. If they have homework, they need access to books or online. Teachers should be qualified to teach the classes they are assigned.

First, let me start by saying that we think the PPS system is a wonderful school system. However, as parents of two gifted and talented children who have participated in many academic opportunities available to us, they are still not challenged enough within the classroom on a daily basis. Unfortunately, we think the curriculum (even the advanced courses) is geared toward "no child left behind" and being taught to the lowest level in the classes.

In 2nd grade, we were considering other schools for our oldest child because we were underwhelmed and frustrated by the unchallenging curriculum. We worked with the principal at the time and decided to continue with PPS. While our child was still not challenged by the course work, he did participate in E2 which he loved. As our child entered middle school, we were disappointed in the hesitant approach by the 5th grade teachers and the teachers and administration at the middle school toward encouraging kids to excel. While he was definitely doing Math+, had it not been for guidance from friends, we might not have put him in the ELA+ as well in middle school. After attending the orientation and being scared by the intensity and magnitude of the supposed work load of both Math+ and ELA+, we were very uneasy, but decided to go ahead. Within six weeks or so, our child was grateful that we put him in both as he would have been bored otherwise. However, we wouldn't say that he was challenged even in the plus classes as he went through middle school without ever having homework (except for his ATYP math in 7th and 8th grade) and achieved straight A's. In fact, in many classes, he read a novel while the teachers were teaching (and they knew it), and he still managed to get A's without effort! Even now in high school and KAMSC, he is still not challenged except for KAMSC. In fact in our KAMSC carpool, the kid's joke about how "easy" high school is - and they are all taking honors classes. Our youngest child is in 6th grade and is following the same path. She hardly ever has homework, never studies and is getting straight A's. While I understand it's difficult to meet every child's needs, we need to do more to differentiate teaching or find a way to challenge the kid's who thrive on learning and stimulate their learning abilities. We completely support PPS, but to maintain the academic excellence reputation, we need to raise our expectations, challenge the children, encourage their learning abilities and provide the support our teachers need to make it happen! Thank You.