

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

School Start Times

While there is demand from certain sections of the community that school start times be changed, the results of this survey show that this demand is diverse and that there isn't any kind of consensus about what change should be made, and how it should be accomplished.

Generally speaking, there is little support for any of the tested proposals – certainly not the kind of support one would want to see before making changes.

Results show that...

- 41.5% of respondents think the present high school start time of 7.30am is too early – but 55.0% think 7.30am is about right for high schools
- 82.7% think 8.15am is about right for middle schools
- 78.5% think 9.00am is about right for elementary schools
- If they were in charge of making the decision, 41.7% of respondents would keep the high school start time at 7.30am - 21.4% would move it to 8.00am
- The mean high school start time response among all respondents is 7.58am
- 57.3% would leave middle schools starting at 8.15am
- The mean middle school start time response is 8.17am
- 66.1% would leave elementary schools starting at 9.00am
- The mean elementary school start time response is 8.45am

Combining respondents proposed start times at the three levels, we see the following significant responses...

	TIMES	
	Count	%
7.30am 8.15am 9.00am	127	32.8%
8.00am 8.15am 9.00am	19	5.0%
8.00am 8.30am 9.00am	15	4.0%
8.00am 8.00am 8.00am	15	3.8%
9.00am 9.00am 9.00am	15	3.8%
8.15am 8.15am 9.00am	13	3.3%
8.30am 8.30am 9.00am	10	2.7%
8.00am 8.00am 9.00am	9	2.3%
8.30am 8.15am 9.00am	8	2.0%
9.00am 8.15am 7.30am	7	1.9%
8.15am 8.15am 8.15am	7	1.8%
8.00am 8.15am 8.30am	7	1.7%
7.30am 8.00am 8.30am	6	1.7%
7.30am 8.15am 8.30am	6	1.5%
9.00am 8.15am 9.00am	6	1.4%

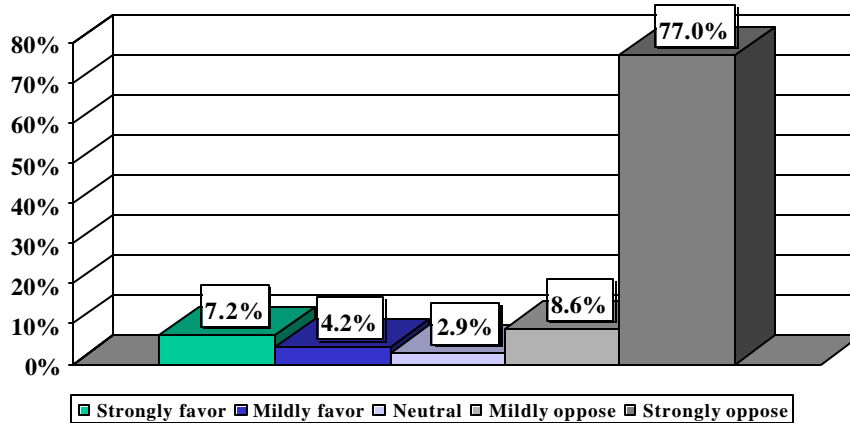
In other words, 32.8% of respondents propose leaving all three start times the same.

The next three most significant other responses, totaling 12.8%, all proposed moving high school up to 8.00am. 5.0% say leave the middle and elementary levels the same as they are now, 4.0% say move middle to 8.30am, and 3.8% say start them all at 8.00am.

Four specific start time proposals were tested. None of them were very well received, as follows in reverse order of popularity.

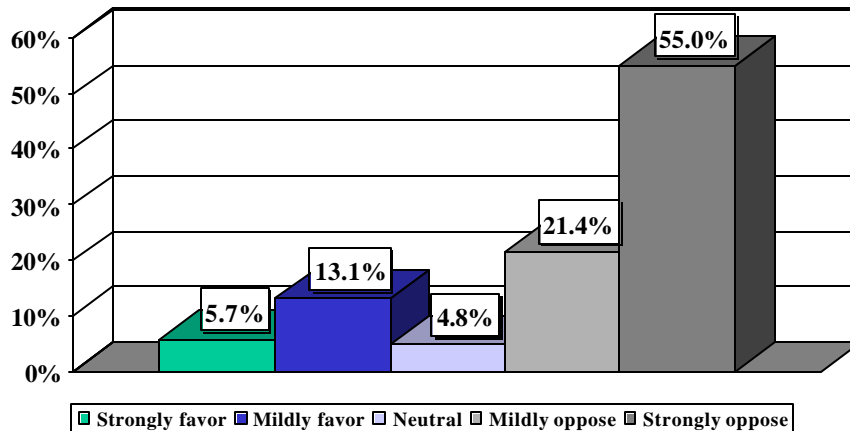
Start elementary at 7:30am, middle schools at 8:15 and high schools at 9:00am:

Flip the times...



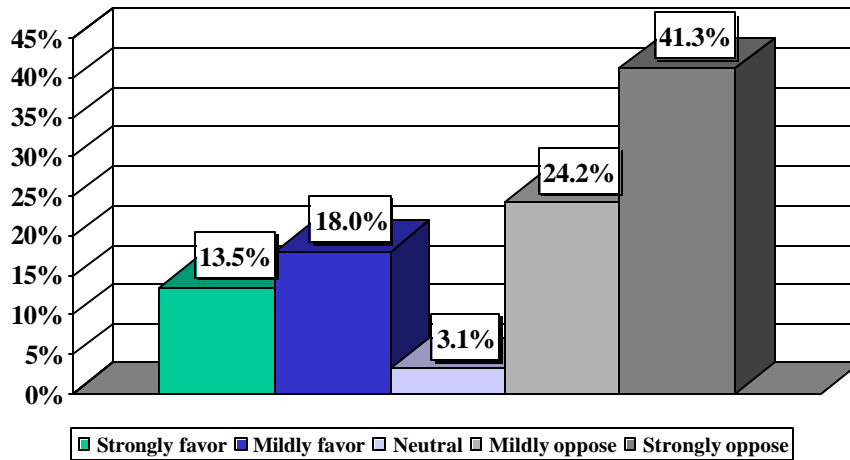
Switch the middle school and high school start time so middle school begins at 7.30am and high school begins at 8.15am. Elementary schools would still start at 9 am:

Switch middle and high...



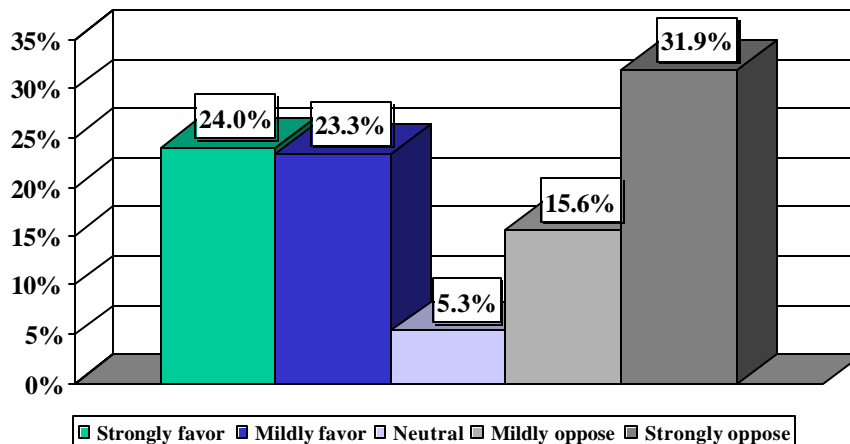
Start all schools 45 minutes later than they currently start, 8.15am for high schools, 9.00am for middle school, and 9.45am for elementary school:

All 45 minutes later...



Buy more school buses and start middle school and high school at the same time, 8.15am, and keep elementary start times at 9.00am:

Buy buses – 8.15am high school



The first three proposals are clearly non-starters from a public opinion point of view. The last option – to buy more school buses and start high schools at 8.15am shows the most public support, 47.3%, but is still opposed by a higher percentage, 47.5%.

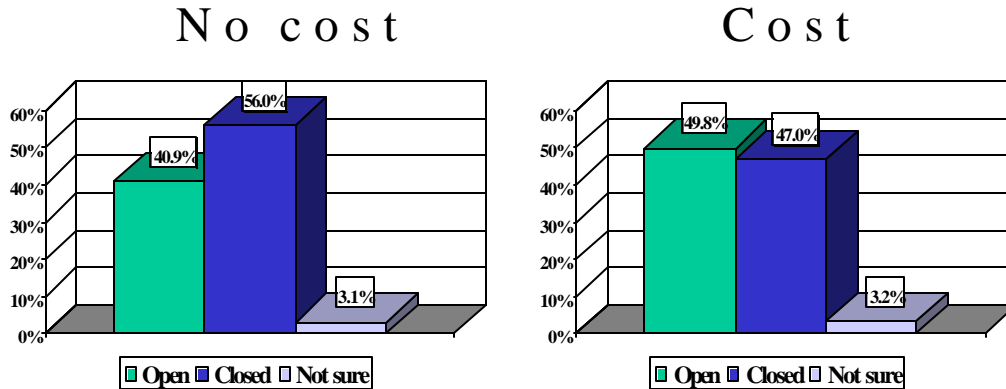
Recommendation– There is no straightforward solution to this issue. The only course of action that enjoys any kind of solid support is to leave start times the way they are.

Closed campus

Respondents were asked to consider the issue of whether high school campuses should be open or closed. With their initial opinion measured, they were then told of the estimated cost of closing campuses, \$1.5 million, and asked their opinion again.

The results are as follows:

Open or closed campus?



There is support for closed campus, but when the money element is introduced, the result becomes split down the middle.

As we saw in the voter survey, respondents with ASD children show significantly more support for open-campus:

	None	One or more
OPEN OR CLOSED?		
Open	37.6%	45.2%
Closed	58.8%	52.3%
Not sure	3.6%	2.5%
KNOWING COST, OPEN OR CLOSED?		
Open	46.5%	53.9%
Closed	49.9%	43.3%
Not sure	3.6%	2.7%

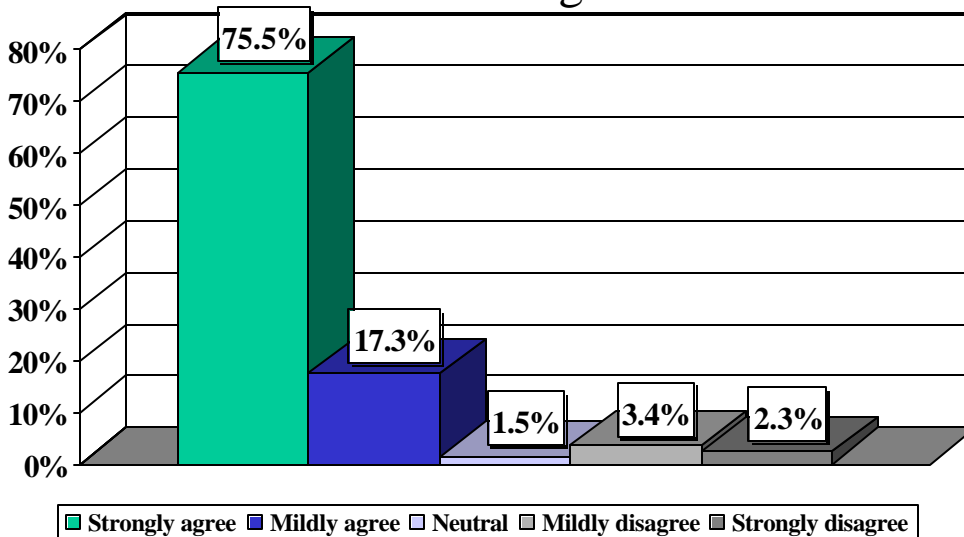
With gender too, we see an interesting difference, with men more likely to support open-campus, and women more likely to support closed-campus:

	Men	Women
OPEN OR CLOSED?		
Open	44.5%	37.3%
Closed	53.2%	58.8%
Not sure	2.3%	3.9%
KNOWING COST, OPEN OR CLOSED?		
Open	55.0%	44.5%
Closed	43.6%	50.5%
Not sure	1.4%	5.0%

Computers & Technology

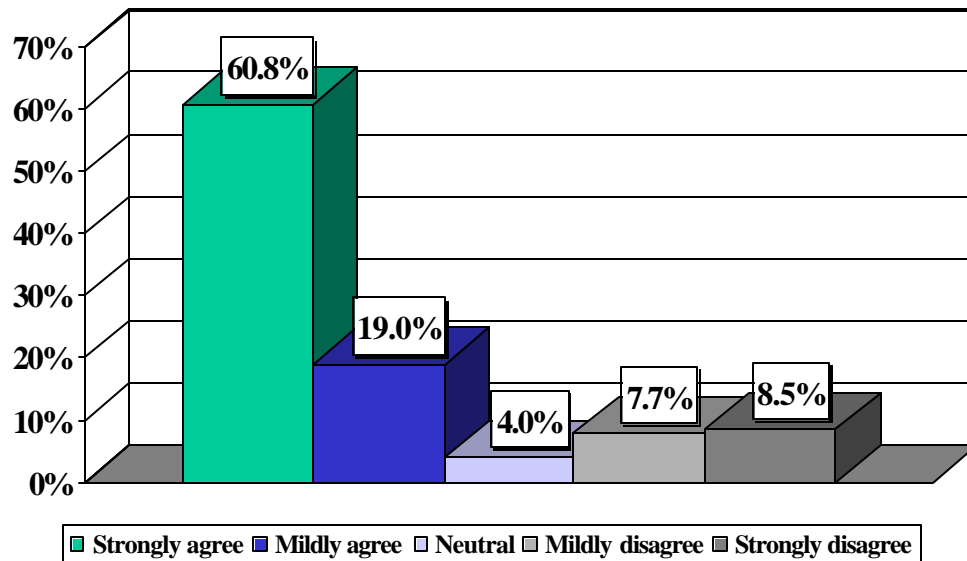
The results of this survey reinforce the results of the voter survey, showing an extremely high level of support for computers in schools, even to the extent of bonding for them and funding purchases through tax increases. The following result is the strongest of all:

Computers are an important part of learning



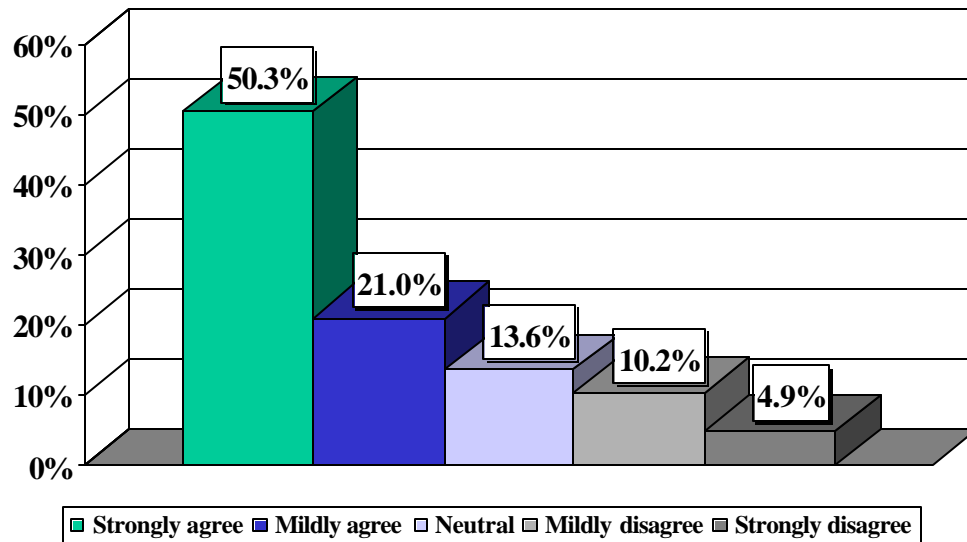
This result is perhaps the most surprising, with perhaps more of a disagreement percentage to be expected. It is a resounding result:

Every teacher should have his or her own computer



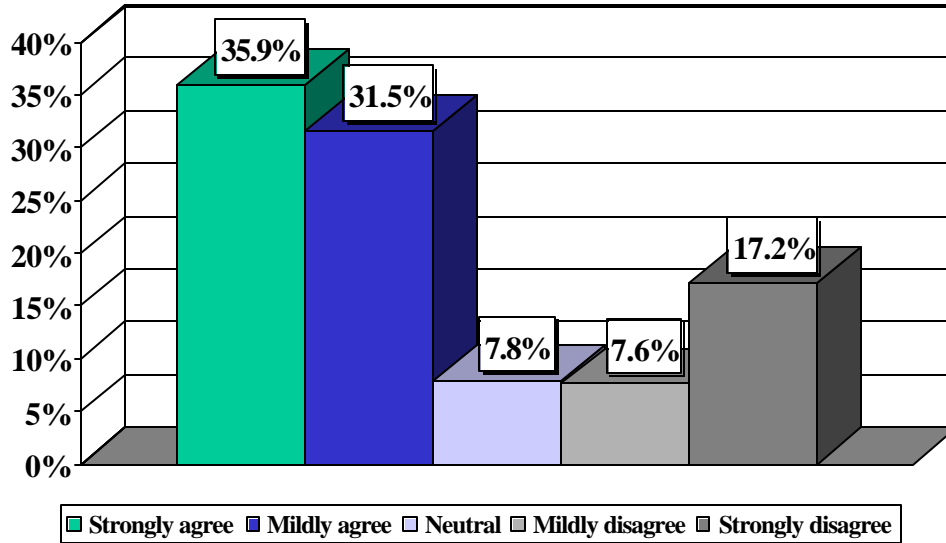
The following result is an endorsement of the idea of bonding for more computers for Anchorage schools:

I think classrooms should have more computers



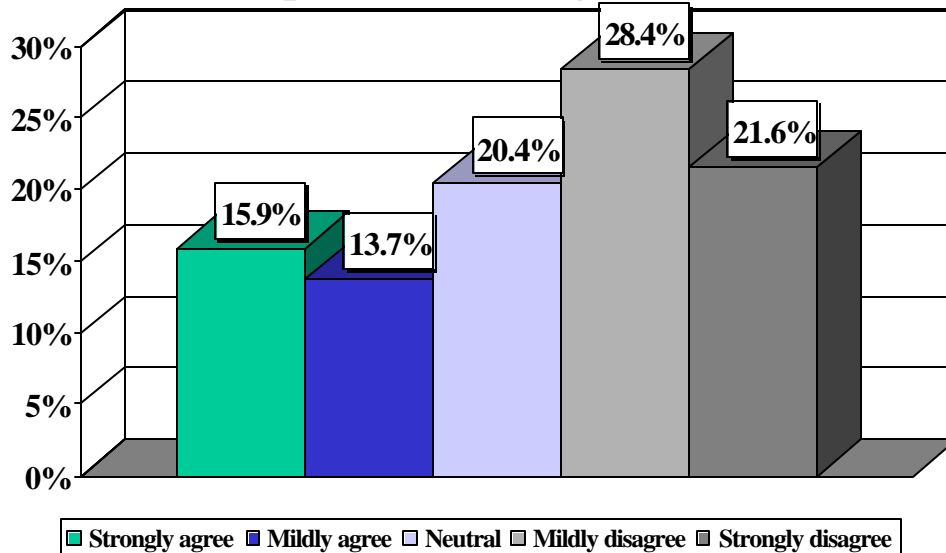
And while the results are gradually getting weaker, a 67.4% majority says they would be willing to pay for them with increased taxes:

I would pay more in taxes to increase technology in schools



A bond statement, worded negatively, has only 29.6% agreement, with 50.0% disagreeing:

The School District shouldn't pay for computers through bonds



Respondents with ASD children are considerably more likely to support most of the computer related issues, as follows:

	None	One or more
I THINK CLASSROOMS SHOULD HAVE MORE COMPUTERS		
Agree	66.7%	77.2%
Disagree	14.5%	15.8%
Neutral/Not sure	18.8%	6.9%
EVERY TEACHER SHOULD HAVE HIS OR HER OWN COMPUTER		
Agree	74.9%	86.2%
Disagree	21.2%	9.8%
Neutral/Not sure	3.9%	4.0%

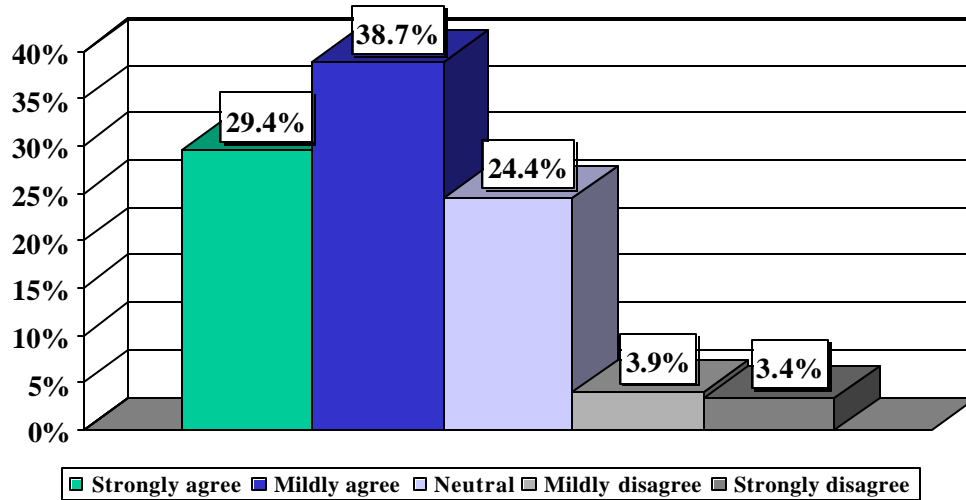
Computers have reached near saturation in Anchorage now, with 89.7% of households equipped with a computer, and 83.7% connected to the Internet.

40.1% of respondents have accessed the ASD website at some time in the past, with 79.1% of these respondents finding the site very or moderately useful.

General statements

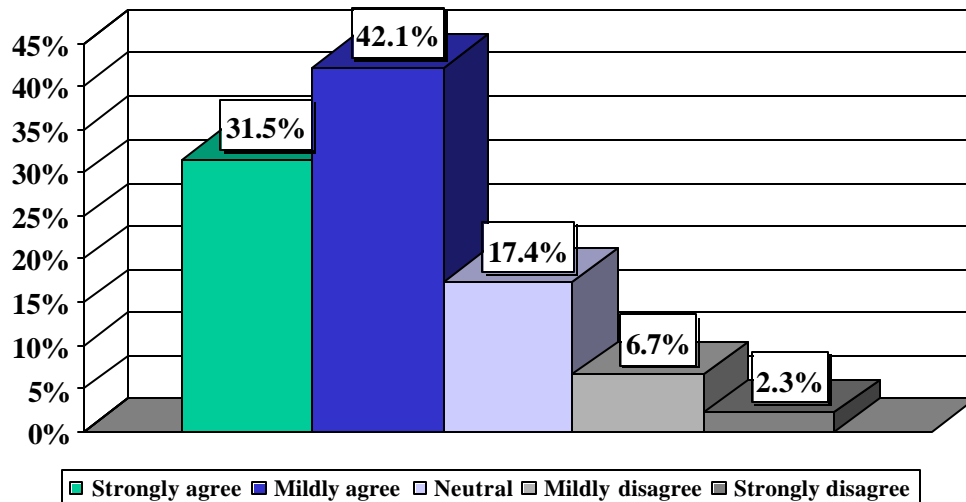
We see a mix of good results and poor results in this general section. The superintendent gets a vote of confidence:

I think the superintendent is doing a good job



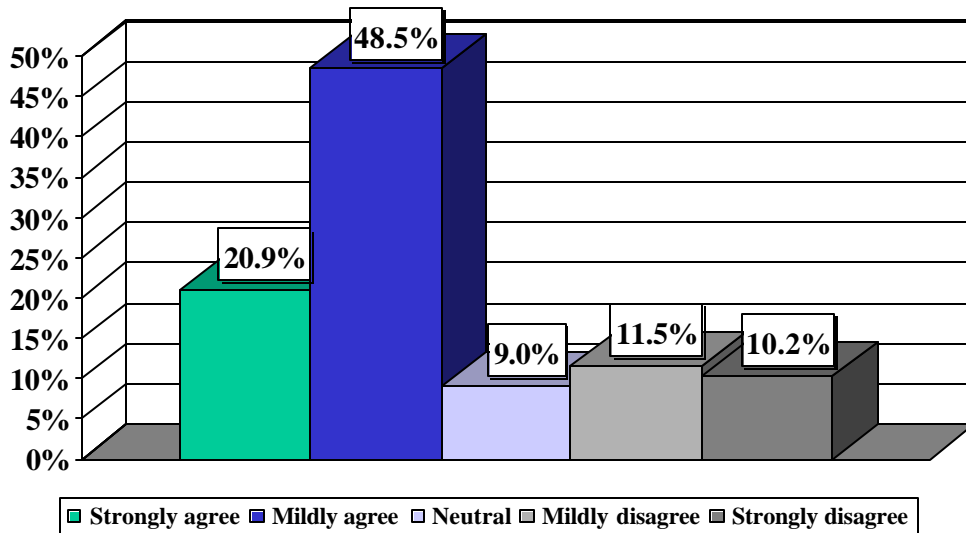
These results are particularly good among respondents with ASD children:

Households with ASD children



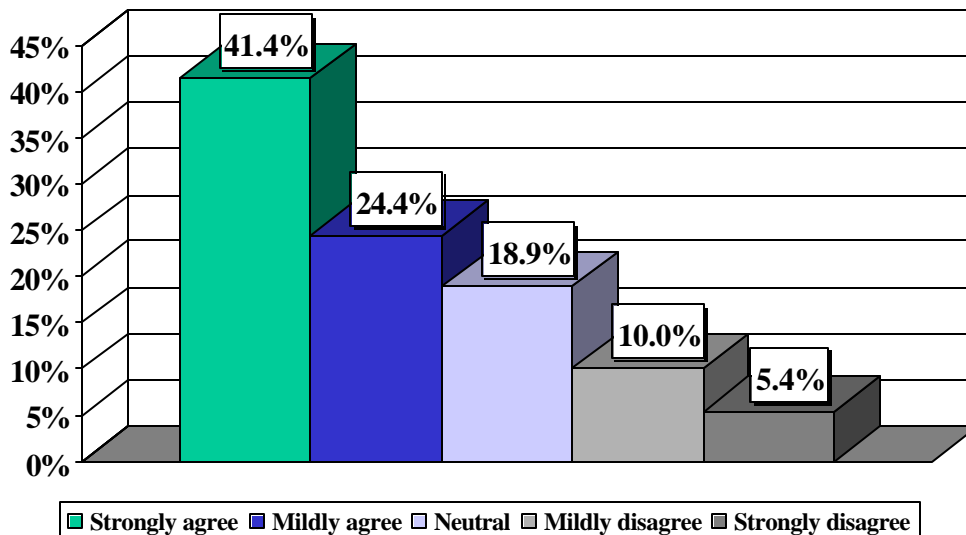
Respondents respond favorably concerning the performance of the Anchorage School District:

I am generally satisfied with the performance of the ASD



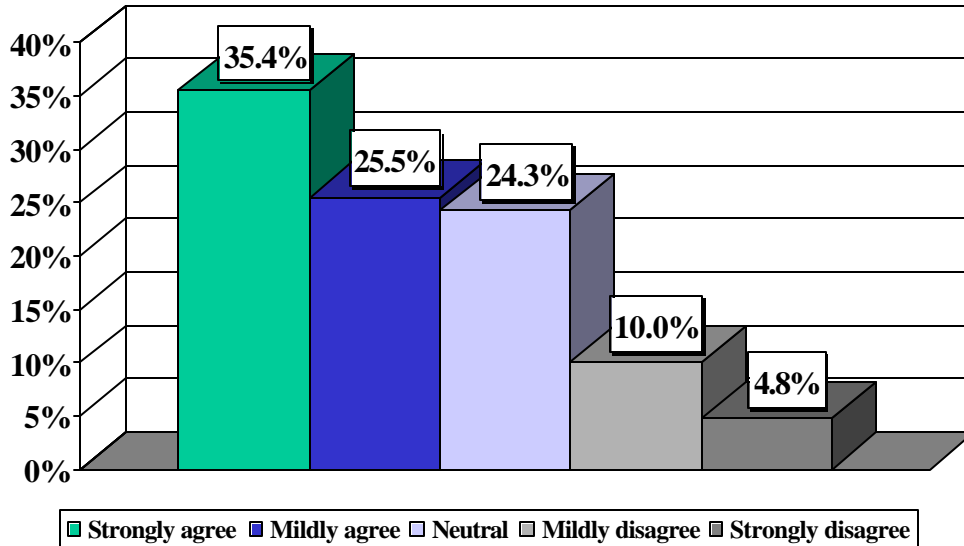
Yet, on the downside, respondents are not thrilled with class sizes:

Average class sizes in Anchorage schools are too high



And also on the downside, test scores do not receive much of a vote of confidence either:

Test scores in Anchorage are lower than they should be



Curriculum

Most respondents, 66.3%, feel the number of credits currently required to graduate is “about right”. The balance of the remainder think the current amount is too few.

Do respondents feel the current curriculum adequately prepares students to pass the exit exam? 44.8% say yes, but 33.1% say no. Respondents in households with ASD children are more likely to say the curriculum does prepare students, with 53.0% saying yes and only 30.2% saying no.

The concept of an Alaska Studies course receives a fairly favorable response, with 66.2% of respondents supporting the idea of high school students being required to take the course. 32.6% oppose the idea. Among ASD respondents, this 2:1 ratio is smaller, with 60.3% supporting and 38.7% opposing.

Should graduation requirements be changed to accommodate Alaska Studies? Fewer say yes, 51.5%, and among ASD respondents only 45.1% say yes.

The idea of replacing a math credit was soundly rejected, with 70.7% of respondents opposing.

School District Performance

The following table lists the mean results for the importance mean for each of the following eight skills and abilities. The importance mean is on a 1-5 scale. The ASD performance mean is on a 0-4 scale. Dividing the importance mean by 5 to yield an “importance factor” and multiplying this factor by the ASD mean calculate the combined score. This serves to adjust ASD’s performance mean by the perceived importance of each factor.

	Importance Mean	ASD mean	Combined
Literary skills, reading and writing	4.936	2.530	2.498
Mathematical skills	4.767	2.508	2.391
Computer skills	4.295	2.621	2.251
Knowledge of the sciences	4.363	2.573	2.245
Being prepared to enter college or university	4.508	2.390	2.155
Being prepared to enter the workforce	4.548	1.961	1.784
Awareness of the importance of civics and citizenship	4.151	1.956	1.624
Knowledge of music and the arts	3.468	2.327	1.614

Reading, writing and arithmetic rank at the top of the list. Literary skills and mathematical skills rank as the top two most important skills, and they also rank near the top in terms of ASD performance. Teaching computer skills ranks highest performance-wise.

Satisfaction with the School District

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement “I am generally satisfied with the performance of the Anchorage School District”. The following tables analyze the differences in opinions between those who are satisfied with the performance of the School District and those who are dissatisfied. The variables in the first table are all agree-disagrees (0-4 mean); those in the second table are ASD performance grades (0-4 mean). The listed variables all display differences between the satisfied and dissatisfied groups significant at the 99% level.

The tables list the means for the satisfied and dissatisfied groups and through use of the t-test the lower limit for the 95% confidence interval for the difference between the means is computed. In short, the higher the lower limit figure, the more significant the difference in opinion between the two groups. The table is ranked in decreasing order of this lower limit figure. The top issues in the list are those that “predict” dissatisfaction with the School District most.

	Satisfied Mean	Dissatisfied Mean	2.5% Lower Limit
Anchorage students are prepared for post-secondary education	2.590	0.987	1.318
The district listens to the concerns of the community	2.782	1.332	1.167
I am generally satisfied with the performance of schools in my neighborhood	3.123	1.892	0.960
I think the superintendent is doing a good job	3.146	2.256	0.660
I think the superintendent is accessible	2.698	1.976	0.472
I think school board members are accessible	2.699	2.013	0.433
I would pay more in taxes to increase technology in Schools	2.810	2.033	0.420
Test scores in Anchorage are lower than they should be	2.637	3.275	0.350
My neighborhood school does a good job of communicating with me	2.765	2.120	0.332
Schools rely too much on computers	1.180	1.765	0.244
I think classrooms should have more computers	3.141	2.670	0.175
I think students learn less now than when I was in school	1.918	2.431	0.134
E-mail is a good way for teachers and parents to Communicate	3.200	2.767	0.106
Computers are an important part of learning	3.711	3.401	0.102

	Satisfied Mean	Dissatisfied Mean	2.5% Lower Limit
Grade for teaching mathematical skills	2.732	1.859	0.647
Grade for teaching knowledge of the sciences	2.777	1.997	0.579
Grade for teaching literary skills, reading and writing	2.737	1.941	0.576
Grade for preparing students to enter college or University	2.577	1.895	0.459
Grade for teaching knowledge of music and the arts	2.497	1.846	0.413
Grade for teaching awareness of the importance of civics and citizenship	2.100	1.500	0.340
Grade for preparing students to enter the workforce	2.114	1.566	0.303

Among the agree-disagrees, the two variables that showed the strongest differences break down as follows:

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Anchorage students are prepared for post-secondary education		
Agree	66.4%	16.7%
Disagree	21.9%	76.8%
Neutral/Not sure	11.7%	6.5%
The district listens to the concerns of the community		
Agree	76.3%	29.5%
Disagree	15.9%	65.9%
Neutral/Not sure	7.8%	4.6%

This shows that satisfaction with the performance of the School District is most strongly related to these variables, to the perception of whether ASD prepares students for post-secondary education, and whether the district is perceived as listening to the community.

In terms of ASD grades, teaching mathematical skills ranked top, though not by a very great margin.