

## Survey Timeline:

- Thought Exchange Survey Opened in Early September 2025.
- Thought Exchange Survey Closed September 22, 2025

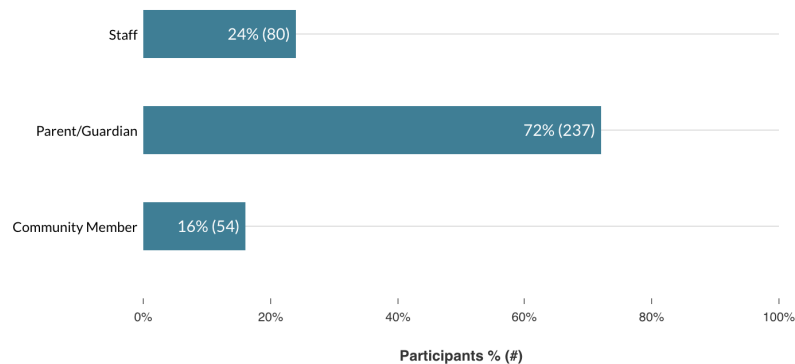
## Overview of Participation:

- 339 Total Responses
- 80 Staff members (24%)
- 237 Parent/Guardians (72%)
- 54 Community Members (16%)

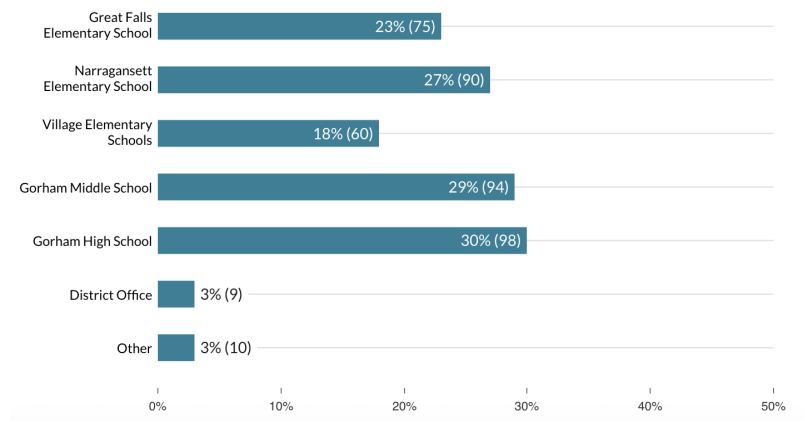
### Q1 | What is your role in the district

Answered: 329

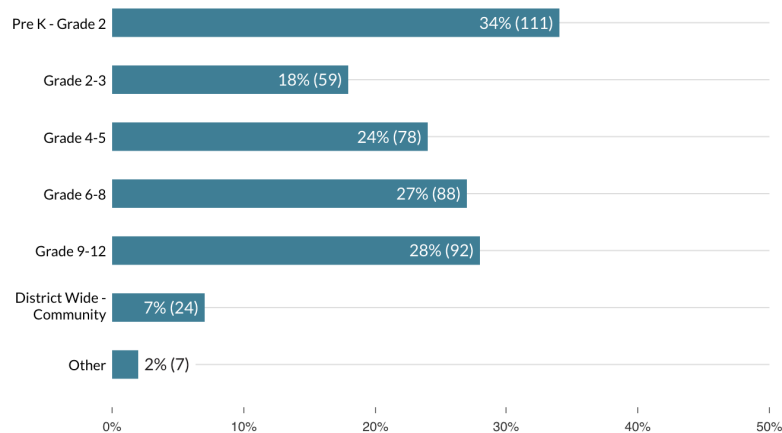
Not answered: 6



When participants were asked what building they were most associated with, the distribution was relatively equal across the five schools with the exception of Village Elem. School.



When participants were asked which grade level they were most associated with, responses indicated that most participants identified with the elementary grade levels.



Please note that it was determined that the survey link was shared with communities beyond Gorham via social media sites. There were a total of 3,557 independent views of the T.E. Survey. Of those, roughly 739 views came from outside our community (21%).

In analyzing IP addresses using Thought Exchange, it was determined that most outside views did not actually complete the survey. Therefore, we determined that there were no significant “outside” influences on the overall results of the study. We feel confident that the results outlined below represent the perceptions of our Gorham Community and no others.

## Quick Recap of this Engagement

### Completed by Thought Exchange A.I.

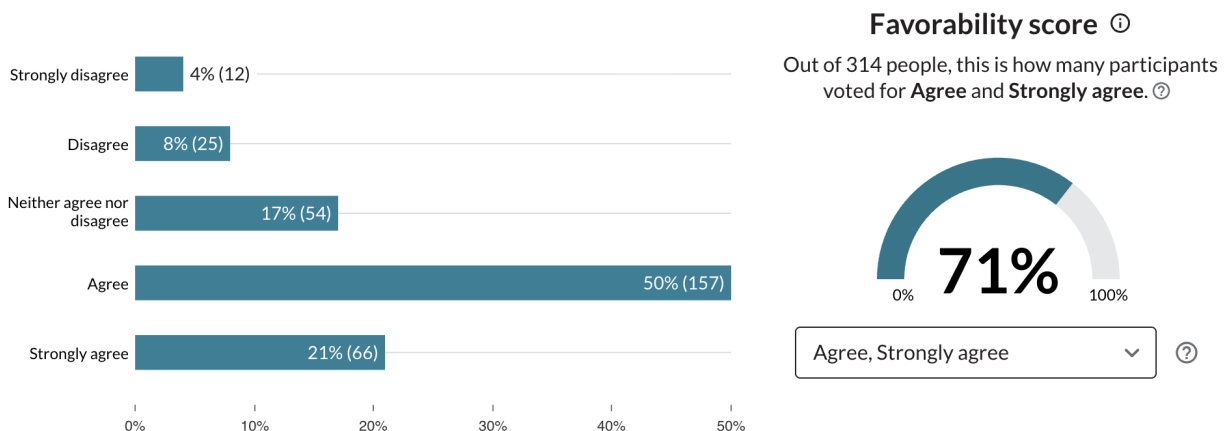
#### Summary

The survey responses indicate a predominantly positive perception of the Gorham School District's performance. The data shows that 71% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that the district is doing a great job, while 77% are confident in the district's ability to support student success. Most participants, 86%, feel satisfied with the district's communication, and 56% view the school budget as adequate.

Notable qualitative feedback highlights concerns about resource allocation, the need to maintain small class sizes, and the expansion of diverse educational programs. There is a strong emphasis on maintaining or enhancing current staff levels, technological infrastructure, and extra-curricular activities.

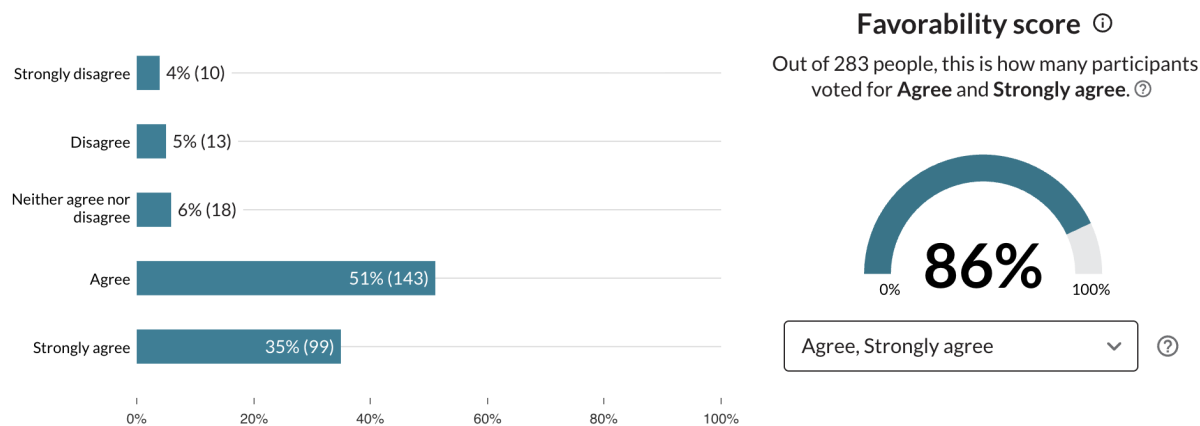
#### Categories

**District Performance and Perception:** Most respondents perceive the district's performance positively, with 71% expressing satisfaction. However, qualitative insights reveal some contention, particularly regarding priority areas for expenditure and the need to enhance educational programs to better prepare students for real-world challenges. Concerns about budget spending and the need for a more strategic financial approach were also mentioned.

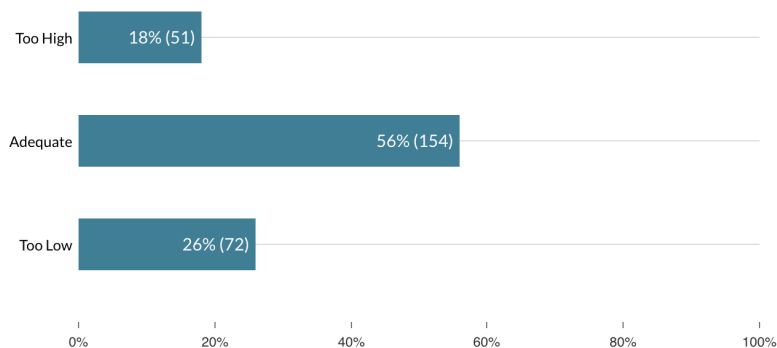


**Communication and Community Engagement:** Communication between the district and stakeholders is deemed effective by a majority, with 86% agreeing. Qualitative feedback

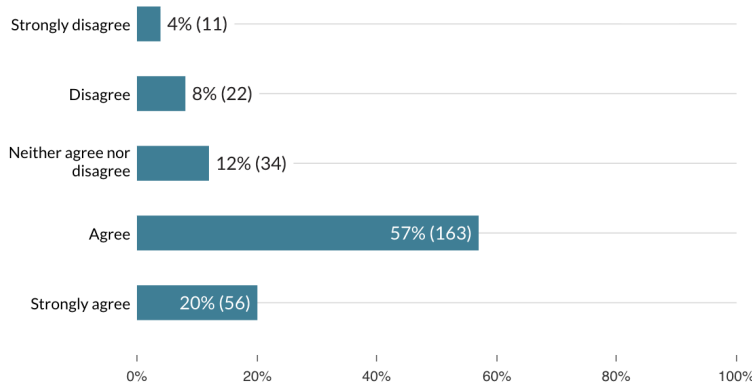
suggests that while communication is generally effective, there's room for improvement and a desire for greater transparency.



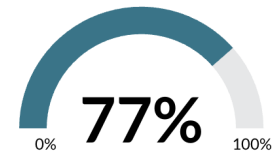
**Budget Allocation and Financial Management:** While 56% believe the school budget is adequate, some respondents (26%) feel it is too low, and 18% think it's too high. A high priority was placed on budget needs for facilities, staff retention, class size, and technology. Some feedback suggests concerns about effective resource allocation, with emphasis on equitable distribution across different student groups being mentioned.



**Educational Programs and Resources:** Key areas for budget prioritization include facilities, staff retention, class size, technology infrastructure, extracurricular programs, school safety, career & technical education, and special education, with 100% of respondents recognizing the importance of each. While confidence levels in the district supporting success for all students is high (77% agree or strongly agree), some qualitative feedback indicated worries about resource distribution and the need for a broader range of educational services.



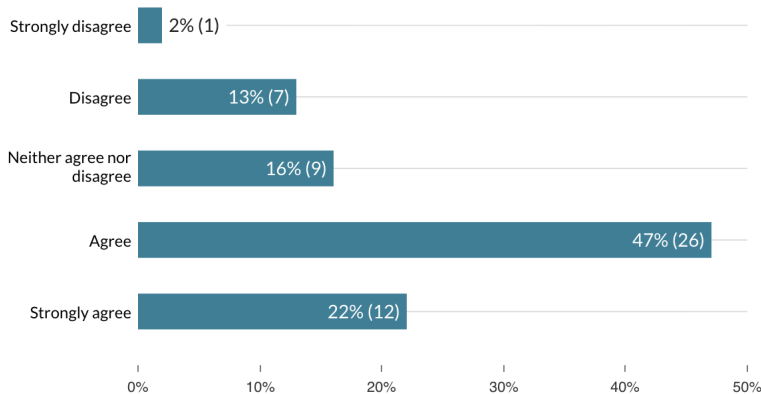
**Favorability score** ⓘ  
Out of 286 people, this is how many participants voted for **Agree** and **Strongly agree**. ⓘ



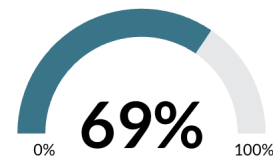
Agree, Strongly agree ▼ ⓘ

## **Staff ONLY Questions**

In a section of the survey, only district staff were asked to participate; they were asked whether they felt they had adequate resources to do their job effectively. The results showed that 69% agreed or strongly agreed, while 15% indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 16% remained neutral.



**Favorability score** ⓘ  
Out of 55 people, this is how many participants voted for **Agree** and **Strongly agree**. ⓘ



Agree, Strongly agree ▼ ⓘ

When staff were asked to explain their responses, the top five themes were as follows:

1

**Funding Issues**

Participants frequently mentioned funding as a major concern impacting their resources. They expressed frustration that budgets are inadequate to cover diverse needs, such as staffing, instructional materials, and support for special education. Several responses highlighted issues in the budget process, implying a lack of transparency and understanding of resource allocation. There is a perceived need for clearer communication regarding budget decisions to better grasp resource availability. Additionally, the reduction in budgets has left educators without the essential supplies needed for effective teaching.

## 2 Staffing Constraints

There is a widespread concern about insufficient staffing, particularly in roles demanding specialized skills. Respondents highlighted the strain placed on existing staff who must manage increased responsibilities with limited support. This leads to challenges in delivering quality education, especially for students with significant needs. The lack of adequate personnel exacerbates the difficulty teachers face in meeting individual student requirements. The perception is that current staffing levels are insufficient to address both routine and extraordinary demands effectively.

## 3 Physical Space

Participants identified limited physical space as a constraint affecting teaching effectiveness. Teachers reported that navigating shared classrooms and small teaching environments detracts from their ability to focus on students. This issue aligns with complaints about large class sizes, where overcrowded environments hinder personalized attention. The overall consensus is that more space would significantly improve educational delivery. Space constraints are seen as a substantial barrier to achieving an optimal learning environment.

## 4 Program Resources

Teachers expressed a need for specific educational programs and resources to enhance their teaching. There is a particular emphasis on the necessity for a phonics program to support elementary education. The existing lack of targeted programs results in teachers creating their own materials, which may lead to inconsistencies in educational quality. Respondents also noted the need for appropriate resources to support growing programs, like the band, and questioned decisions that could compromise these areas. Overall, participants perceive a gap between current resources and those necessary for comprehensive teaching.

## 5 Personal Investment

A few participants acknowledged their personal willingness to use personal funds for necessary resources. This suggests a commitment to student success despite systemic inadequacies. However, such actions point to a broader issue where teachers feel compelled to compensate for institutional shortcomings. This sense of responsibility demonstrates dedication but also underscores dissatisfaction with provided support. Teachers' personal investment reflects an ongoing struggle to meet educational needs with available resources.

### **Budget Priorities For The Coming Year**

When considering building a budget for the coming year (FY27), what are the most important educational programs and services we should focus on to support the success of our students and schools?

Responses indicated the following **TOP FIVE** Focus Points should be considered:

## 1 Special Education

Special education emerged as a top priority, indicating a widespread recognition of its crucial role in ensuring inclusivity and support for diverse learning needs. Participants emphasized the need for adequate resources, staffing, and specialized training to support students with special needs effectively. Concerns about current understaffing and the complexity of supporting students with autism were frequent themes, highlighting the need for dedicated attention in this area. The perception is that improving special education services is essential for the success of all students, especially those requiring unique accommodations. This category also tied into broader discussions around ensuring all students have equal educational opportunities and access to the support they need.

## 2 Mental health & well-being

The need for enhanced mental health resources and social-emotional learning was a predominant concern among participants, indicating a growing awareness of the impact of mental well-being on students' success. Many responses highlighted the importance of adequately supporting the mental health of both students and staff as an ongoing top priority. The emphasis was on making mental health services more accessible and integrated into the school environment. The topic of mental health was frequently linked to creating a safe and supportive educational environment, suggesting a desire for policies and initiatives that foster overall wellness. Participants view this category as foundational to fostering a positive and supportive school culture, which is seen as crucial for academic success.

## 3 Arts & extracurriculars

This category reflects a strong desire from participants to maintain and expand arts and extracurricular programs, as these offerings are viewed as vital to student engagement and personal development. Responses suggest a broad consensus on the importance of these programs in enhancing education beyond traditional academics. The perceived role of arts and extracurricular activities in fostering creativity and social skills was emphasized, as was their potential in providing students with avenues to pursue their interests and talents. Concerns about cuts to these programs were notable, with participants advocating for sustained or increased funding and resources. Overall, the community seems to highly value the enrichment opportunities these programs offer to students, promoting a well-rounded educational experience.

## 4 School infrastructure & safety

There was a significant emphasis on the need for improved school infrastructure and increased focus on safety measures. Respondents expressed concerns over inadequate facilities such as overcrowded classrooms and inadequate cafeteria spaces. Proposals included building expansions, enhanced security measures, and improved maintenance protocols to ensure a safe learning environment. The sentiment was clear that a secure and well-maintained physical environment is crucial for both student well-being and effective learning. Ensuring the facilitation of safe and adequately resourced educational spaces is considered a key investment to support the educational mission.

## 5 Class sizes & staffing

The responses indicate substantial support for maintaining small class sizes and adequate staffing, reflecting a belief in the direct correlation between lower student-to-teacher ratios and student success. Many participants were concerned about ensuring each student receives personalized attention to maximize their potential. Comments highlighted the challenges of large class sizes and the subsequent compromise in education quality, pointing to the need for more hiring of teaching staff to address these issues. This category is seen as a critical investment to improve teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. Additionally, there was a desire to maintain consistent class sizes, implying a priority on predictability, which aids both students and teachers in their planning and learning activities.

When participants were asked to rank (in order of importance) ten predetermined items of possible priority for FY 27 budget development, the result was as follows:

| Ranking                                                 | Average ranking | Top choice count |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| #1 Maintaining Existing Staff/Staff Retention Practices | 3.62            | 43               |
| #2 Maintaining Class Sizes (not increasing class sizes) | 3.76            | 54               |
| #3 District & School Safety                             | 4.26            | 64               |
| #4 Facilities/Capital Needs                             | 4.41            | 46               |
| #5 Investing in Technology Infrastructure & Support     | 6.07            | 5                |
| #6 Special Education Programs                           | 6.18            | 11               |
| #7 Mental Health Services for Students                  | 6.23            | 10               |

|     |                                                                                                               |      |    |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----|
| #8  | Provision of Co & Extra Curricular Programs (i.e. athletics, drama, etc)                                      | 6.29 | 1  |
| #9  | Career & Technical Education, Extended Learning Opportunities, and other Career/Aspirations Focused programs. | 6.45 | 19 |
| #10 | Early Childhood Programs                                                                                      | 7.72 | 5  |

### **Areas to investigate moving forward**

**Budget Perception:** Although a majority believe the budget is adequate at 56%, there remains a significant 26% who think it is too low, which warrants further exploration.

**Equity in Resources:** A notable portion (29%) either disagrees or neither agrees nor disagrees that resources promote equity among different student groups, indicating a possible area requiring further attention and improvement.

**Communication and Accessibility:** While the communication satisfaction is high at 86%, some feedback mentioned the need for better accessibility in voting and possibly broader communication methods. A closer look is required to ensure all community members feel sufficiently informed and involved.