

**WALLA WALLA SCHOOL DISTRICT - BOND
SURVEY RESEARCH REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
MARCH 12, 2018**

The following survey research report provides some valuable information regarding the public's opinion about two potential construction bond measure proposals. This report should assist the Facilities Committee in its planning and recommendation to the School Board.

Throughout this executive summary, The Nelson Report identifies "key" demographics for many of the questions. Key demographics are those subgroups that respond at a higher percentage rate than the total sample for any given response. The key demographic groups for any given opinion are not necessarily the only subgroups in the survey who share that opinion. They are, however, the ones that hold that opinion most strongly.

A total of 313 respondents were interviewed between March 1 and March 9, 2018. The margin of error for this survey is +/-5.0% at the 95% level of confidence.

A large percentage of respondents participating in the survey, 75%, were frequent or perfect voters (voted in at least 3 out of the last 4 elections, or voted in all 4 of the last 4 elections). In addition, 71% of those participating in the survey were made up of older voter groups (45+ years of age and less likely to have children in school). It is important to note, this demographic group also makes up the majority of the district's frequent and perfect voters.

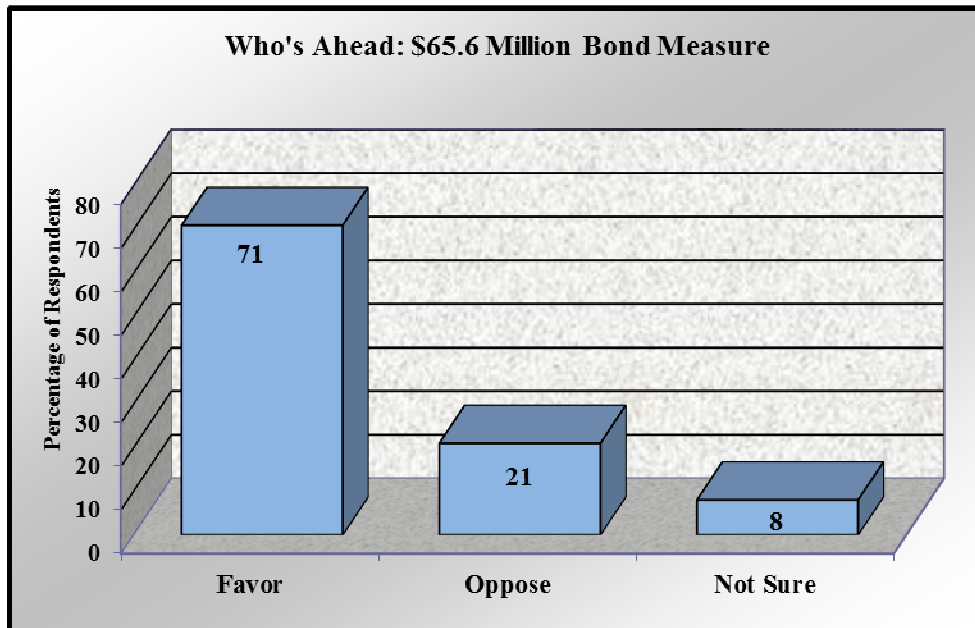
WHO'S AHEAD: \$65.6 MILLION BOND MEASURE

Respondents were read the following information and question:

“An 18-member, community-led facilities taskforce is currently considering a potential bond measure for Walla Walla School District and would like the community’s input. The proposed bond measure would pay for renovations to Walla Walla High School, Pioneer Middle School and Lincoln High School. In addition, select improvements at other schools would be made such as safety and security enhancements, roof replacements, and heating/cooling improvements. The total cost of this bond measure is \$65.6 million and would maintain the existing school district property tax rate of approximately \$1.23 per thousand dollars assessed value.

If an election were held today, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE a \$65.6 million bond measure that would maintain the existing property tax rate of approximately \$1.23 per thousand dollars of assessed property value?”

A very large number of respondents, 71%, favored a \$65.6 million bond measure (strongly favor-56%, somewhat favor-15%), while 21% opposed the proposal (somewhat oppose-5%, strongly oppose-16%). Eight percent were not sure.



Key demographics that favored a \$65.6 million bond measure were females (74%), 18-24 years old (83%), 45-59 years old (75%), 35-44 years old (73%), respondents with children in Walla Walla schools (80%), voters in 2 out of 4 elections (78%), non-voters (73%), and 1 out of 4 elections (72%).

Foremost reasons for favoring the bond measure were: (71% of all respondents)

		Of Total Universe
Schools need funding	22%	16%
Schools need renovations	21%	15%
Always support education	16%	11%

Key groups that opposed a \$65.6 million bond measure were males (24%), 25-34 years old (24%), 60+ years old (22%), respondents with no children in Walla Walla schools (25%), and voters in 3 out of 4 and 4 out of 4 elections (23%).

Top reasons for opposing the bond measure were: (21% of all respondents)

		Of Total Universe
Our taxes are too high	28%	6%
District mismanages money	22%	5%
Asking for too much money	16%	4%

In a special cross tab, 94% of respondents that later said they **strongly favored** a \$73.9 million bond measure (37% of all respondents) also **favored** a \$65.6 million bond measure.

In another interesting cross tab, 61% of respondents that later **strongly opposed** a \$73.9 million bond measure (15% of all respondents) also **opposed** a \$65.6 million bond measure.

PUSH RESULTS – \$65.6 MILLION BOND MEASURE

Next, respondents were asked a series of questions designed to gauge the positive or negative impact of certain pieces of information. This methodology was used to ascertain which arguments produced the greatest net movement from the original “who's ahead” question.

The reader should keep in mind the “if you knew. . .” format. Certain arguments may push people “if they knew,” but the nature of the argument may make it impossible to convince someone that it is factual. In addition, the resources required to do the convincing may be too great when compared to other arguments. This series was cross-checked later in the survey by the agree/disagree series. The results are ranked below in descending positive order. The net gain/loss reflects the push or movement off the **original** \$65.6 million “who's ahead” question.

Question	Favor	Oppose	Not Sure	Net Gain/Loss
Who's Ahead Results: \$65.6 Million Bond Measure	71	21	8	
If you knew Walla Walla School District would receive over \$50 million in state match dollars to renovate the three primary schools to help reduce the cost to property taxpayers, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE the proposed bond measure?	81	13	5	+10
If you knew bond expenditures would be overseen by a community oversight committee to ensure project accountability, transparency and the return of any remaining dollars after project completion to taxpayers, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE the bond measure?	81	13	6	+10

Question	Favor	Oppose	Not Sure	Net Gain/Loss
Who's Ahead Results: \$65.6 Million Bond Measure	71	21	8	
If you knew the community facilities task force has recommended the renovation of existing schools rather than the replacement of schools because it is more cost effective, while still maintaining adequate and safe schools for students, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE the bond measure?	81	14	5	+10
If you knew the proposed bond measure includes safety and security upgrades throughout the district such as enhanced access control, upgraded communication systems and increased security cameras, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE a \$65.6 million bond measure?	81	15	4	+10
If you knew due to retiring bond debt, passage of a \$65.6 million bond measure would not increase existing school district property tax rates, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE a school district bond measure?	79	14	7	+8
Many of the district's school buildings are over 50 years old. If you knew the proposed bond measure would protect and preserve the community's large investment in school buildings by making necessary repairs and renovations to existing campuses, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE the proposed bond measure that would include these improvements?	77	16	7	+6

Question	Favor	Oppose	Not Sure	Net Gain/Loss
Who's Ahead Results: \$65.6 Million Bond Measure	71	21	8	
The district spends approximately \$5 million per year in preventative maintenance. If you knew passage of the proposed bond measure would make renovations by replacing old, worn out systems, saving the district in utility and repair costs that could be redirected into the classroom, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE a \$65.6 million bond measure?	77	17	6	+6
If you knew, passage of a school district bond measure would enable the district to enhance science education, fine arts, and vocational/ career/technical programs for students, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE a \$65.6 million bond measure?	76	17	7	+5

Key observations to this series were as follows: It is important to note: a majority of respondents favored the \$65.6 million with **all** of the arguments presented. In addition, **all** of the arguments solicited a **strong majority of support** across all demographic groups.

Please note: All the demographics below are key demographics. Those respondents highlighted in **bold** are those demographics that move consistently with each of the arguments that have the most positive impact on support.

- An argument producing one of the largest increases in support for the \$65.6 million bond measure (+10%) was information that Walla Walla School District would receive over \$50 million in state match dollars to renovate the three primary schools to help reduce the cost to property taxpayers. Key demographics increasing to favor were females (+12%), **60+ years old** (+14%), **respondents with no children in Walla Walla schools** (+12%), voters in 1 out of 4 elections (+19%), and non-voters (+18%).

- The fact that bond expenditures would be overseen by a community oversight committee to ensure project accountability, transparency and the return of any remaining dollars after project completion to taxpayers moved a number of respondents (+10%) to favor the bond measure. Key demographics that increased in support were males (+11%), **60+ years old** (+15%), **respondents with no children in Walla Walla schools** (+13%), and **voters in 3 out of 4 elections** (+16%).
- Knowledge that the community facilities task force has recommended the renovation of existing schools rather than the replacement of schools because it is more cost effective while still maintaining adequate and safe schools for students pushed another +10% of respondents to favor the bond measure. Key demographics increasing to favor were **60+ years old** (+14%), **respondents with no children in Walla Walla schools** (+13%), non-voters (+18%), and **voters in 3 out of 4 elections** (+16%).
- In addition, information that the proposed bond measure includes safety and security upgrades throughout the district such as enhanced access control, upgraded communication systems and increased security cameras also moved a number of respondents to favor the measure (+10%). Key demographics responding to this information were **60+ years old** (+15%), **respondents with no children in Walla Walla schools** (+14%), and **voters in 3 out of 4 elections** (+11%).

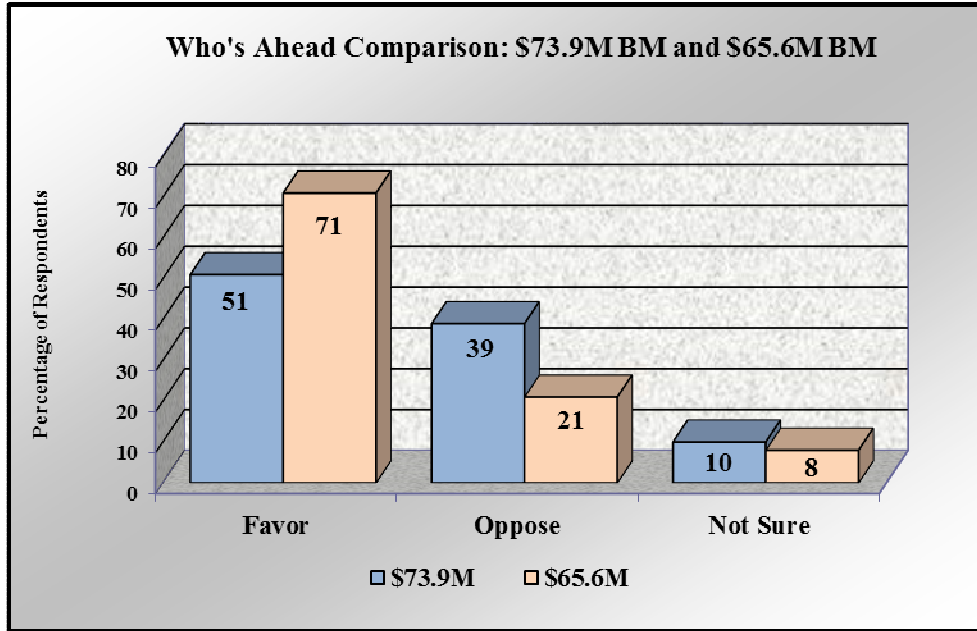
WHO’S AHEAD: \$73.9 MILLION BOND MEASURE

Next, respondents were given the following information and question:

“The facilities taskforce is also considering a larger \$73.9 million bond measure that would add an additional \$8 million in infrastructure and safety/security improvements to existing school buildings..

If an election were held today, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE a larger \$73.9 million bond measure that would cost property taxpayers an additional 15-cents per thousand?”

Slightly over half of respondents, 51%, favored a \$73.9 million bond measure (strongly favor-39%, somewhat favor-12%), while 39% opposed the proposal (somewhat oppose-14%, strongly oppose-25%). Ten percent were not sure.



Key demographics that favored a \$73.9 million bond measure were females (55%), 35-44 years old (64%), 18-24 years old (59%), respondents with children in Walla Walla schools (58%), voters in 1 out of 4 elections (56%), and 4 out of 4 elections (52%).

Foremost reasons for favoring the larger bond measure were: (51% of all respondents)

		Of Total Universe
Schools need funding	22%	11%
More can get accomplished with this amount	16%	8%
Schools need renovations	14%	7%

Key groups that opposed a \$73.9 million bond measure were males (44%), 25-34 years old (49%), 60+ years old (41%), respondents with no children in Walla Walla schools (42%), non-voters (45%), and voters in 4 out of 4 elections (40%).

Top reasons for opposing the larger bond measure were: (39% of all respondents)

		Of Total Universe
Asking for too much money	31%	12%
Taxes are too high	29%	11%
District mismanages money	12%	5%

PUSH RESULTS - \$73.9 MILLION BOND MEASURE

The results are ranked below in descending positive order. The net gain/loss reflects the push or movement off the **original** \$73.9 million “who's ahead” question.

Question	Favor	Oppose	Not Sure	Net Gain/Loss
Who's Ahead Results: \$73.9 Million Bond Measure	51	39	10	
If you knew passage of a larger \$73.9 million bond measure would cost property taxpayers an additional 15-cents per thousand or \$37.50 per year for the owner of a home with an assessed value of \$250,000, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE a larger bond measure?	54	35	11	+3
If you knew without the passage of a \$73.9 million bond measure, the district would be forced to use general fund dollars to address facility needs which would reduce funding for educational programs, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE a larger bond measure?	49	36	15	-2

Key observations are highlighted below.

- The argument that produced a slight increase in support for a \$73.9 million bond measure (+3%) was information that passage of a larger \$73.9 million bond measure would cost property taxpayers an additional 15-cents per thousand, or \$37.50 per year for the owner of a home with an assessed value of \$250,000. Key demographics increasing to favor were 60+ years old (+4%), respondents with no children in Walla Walla schools (+5%), and voters in 1 out of 4 elections and non-voters (+10%).
- On the other hand, an argument that slightly **decreased** support for a larger bond measure (-2%) was knowledge that without the passage of a \$73.9 million bond measure, the district would be forced to use general fund dollars to address facility needs which would reduce funding for educational programs. Key demographics that decreased in support were males (-3%), 35-44 years old (-10%), 25-34 years old (-7%), 45-59 years old (-4%), respondents with children in Walla Walla schools (-4%), voters in 1 out of 4 elections and non-voters (-9%), 3 out of 4 elections (-8%), and 2 out of 4 elections (-3%).

PRIORITY RANKINGS: CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Next, respondents were read a list of construction projects that may be included in a bond measure and were asked to rate each project on a scale of one to four, with “1” representing a low priority and “4” representing a high priority. The ones and twos have been collapsed into a low priority and the threes and fours into a high priority. Below, the projects are listed in descending order of priority.

Project	High Priority	Low Priority	Not Sure
Replace roofs and repair plumbing at some of the district’s oldest campuses at a cost of approximately \$3.5 million?	81	15	4
Make energy improvements district-wide such as replacing aged, inefficient and high maintenance heating and ventilation systems at some of the district’s oldest campuses at a local cost of approximately \$2 million?	78	18	4

Project	High Priority	Low Priority	Not Sure
Make safety and security upgrades district-wide such as enhanced access control, upgraded communication systems, increased security cameras, and emergency power at a local cost of approximately \$950,000?	75	22	3
Make modest renovations to preserve the 1927 Lincoln High School such as heating, cooling, electrical and plumbing upgrades, classroom renovations, and adding drama and fine arts space at a local cost of approximately \$5.5 million?	73	23	4
Make significant renovations and improvements at Walla Walla High School including the replacement of portables with permanent space, and enhancements to science education, fine arts, and vocational/technical programs at a local cost of approximately \$37 million?	72	24	4
Make significant renovations and improvements at Pioneer Middle School including replacing portables with permanent space, remodeling the 1950's wing, expansion, of the commons area, and improvements to physical education and activity spaces at a local cost of approximately \$16 million?	68	28	4

While a majority of respondents gave **all** of the proposed components a high priority rating, an extremely high percentage of respondents rated roofs and plumbing repairs as the highest priority, followed by energy improvements and safety and security improvements.

AGREE/DISAGREE

In this series, respondents were presented with a number of potentially prejudicial statements regarding Walla Walla Schools School District and its \$65.6 million bond measure proposal. This format was designed to serve as a cross-check on various closed-ended questions as well as to pick up variations on prejudices not readily apparent in those types of questions. This is an important series of questions, especially when cross-checked with the “if you knew” push questions.

The results are displayed in two different tables. In the first table, the key push arguments have been isolated and set against their corresponding agree/disagree questions. The second table simply displays all of the agree/disagree statements in descending order of agreement.

\$65.6 MILLION BOND MEASURE

PUSH I: COST OF BOND MEASURE TO PROPERTY TAXPAYERS

If you knew due to retiring bond debt, passage of a \$65.6 million bond measure would not increase existing school district property tax rates, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE a school district bond measure?

Favor 79

Oppose
14

Not Sure
7

AGREE/DISAGREE

I can't afford a 15-cent per thousand increase in my property tax rates. I would vote no on a \$73.9 million bond measure, but I would support a \$65.6 million bond measure because it won't increase my existing property tax rates.

Agree 39

Disagree
50

Not Sure
11

\$65.6 MILLION VS. \$73.9 MILLION

After listening to all the pros and cons, if you had to choose, would you prefer a \$73.9 MILLION BOND MEASURE that would address most of the district’s urgent facility needs at an additional cost of 15-cents per thousand, or a \$65.6 MILLION BOND MEASURE that would address some of the district’s most urgent needs, but would **not increase** existing school district property tax rates?

\$73.9M 46	65.6M 30	Either 5	Neither 10	Other 1	Not Sure 8
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\$73.9 MILLION BOND MEASURE

PUSH I: COST OF BOND MEASURE TO PROPERTY TAXPAYERS

If you knew passage of a larger \$73.9 million bond measure would cost property taxpayers an additional 15-cents per thousand or \$37.50 per year for the owner of a home with an assessed value of \$250,000, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE a larger bond measure?

Favor 54	Oppose 35	Not Sure 11
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AGREE/DISAGREE

Our schools need all of the proposed improvements included in a \$73.9 million bond measure. I believe 15-cents is a reasonable price to pay to ensure our students have adequate facilities and get the level of education they deserve and need. I would vote yes on a \$73.9 million bond measure.

Agree 58	Disagree 32	Not Sure 10
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I can’t afford a 15-cent per thousand increase in my property tax rates. I would vote no on a \$73.9 million bond measure, but I would support a \$65.6 million bond measure because it won’t increase my existing property tax rates.

Agree 39	Disagree 50	Not Sure 11
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\$73.9 MILLION VS. \$65.6 MILLION

After listening to all the pros and cons, if you had to choose, would you prefer a \$73.9 MILLION BOND MEASURE that would address most of the district’s urgent facility needs at an additional cost of 15-cents per thousand, or a \$65.6 MILLION BOND MEASURE that would address some of the district’s most urgent needs, but would **not increase** existing school district property tax rates?

\$73.9M 46	65.6M 30	Either 5	Neither 10	Other 1	Not Sure 8
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AGREE/DISAGREE STATEMENTS IN DESCENDING ORDER OF AGREEMENT

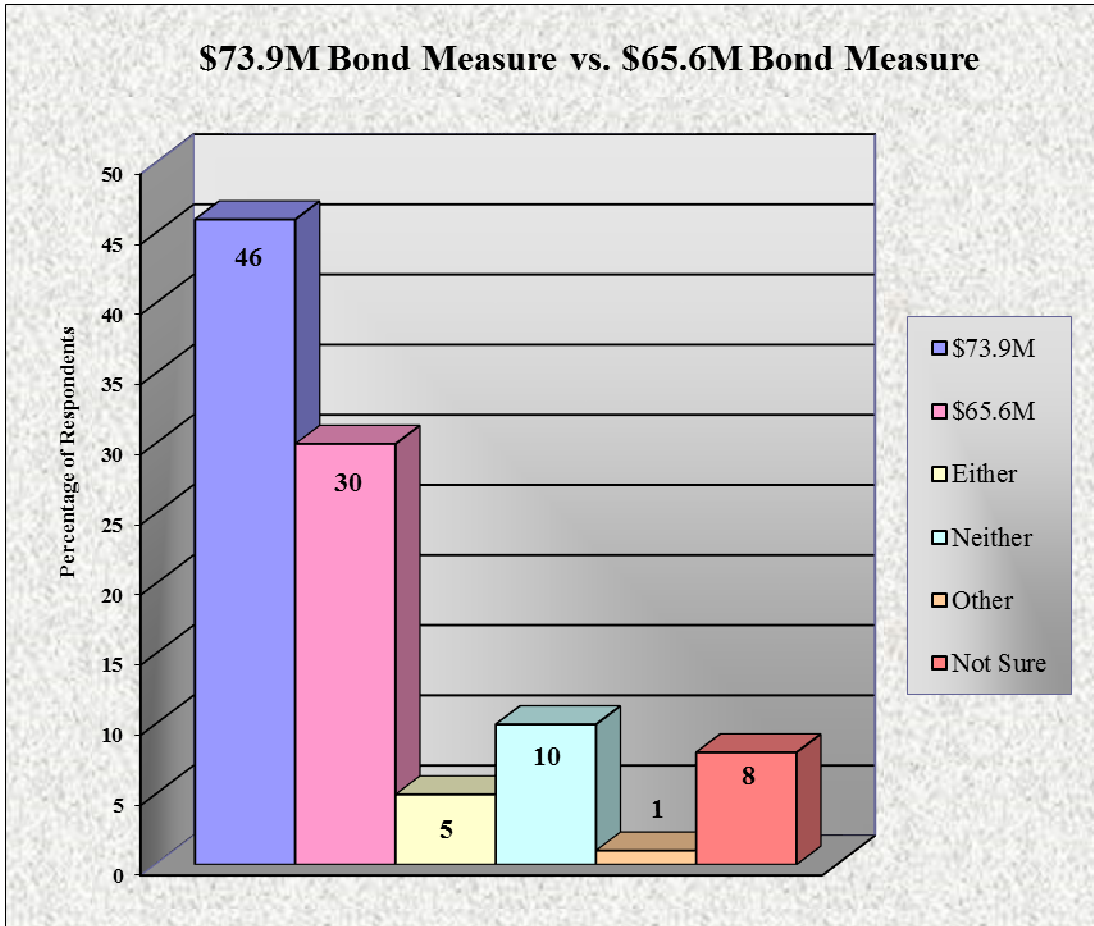
Statement	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
Our schools need all of the proposed improvements included in a \$73.9 million bond measure. I believe 15-cents is a reasonable price to pay to ensure our students have adequate facilities and get the level of education they deserve and need. I would vote yes on a \$73.9 million bond measure.	58	32	10
I can’t afford a 15-cent per thousand increase in my property tax rates. I would vote no on a \$73.9 million bond measure, but I would support a \$65.6 million bond measure because it won’t increase my existing property tax rates.	39	50	11

\$65.6 MILLION BOND MEASURE VS. \$73.9 MILLION BOND MEASURE

Next, respondents were asked:

“After listening to all the pros and cons, if you had to choose, would you prefer a \$73.9 MILLION BOND MEASURE that would address most of the district’s urgent facility needs at an additional cost of 15-cents per thousand, or a \$65.6 MILLION BOND MEASURE that would address some of the district’s most urgent needs, but would not increase existing school district property tax rates?”

A plurality of respondents, 46%, preferred a \$73.9 million bond measure, while 30% preferred a \$65.6 million proposal. Ten percent said neither, 5% said either and 1% cited “other” options. Another 8% were not sure.



Key demographics that preferred a \$73.9 million bond measure were females (47%), 18-24 years old (71%), 35-44 years old (61%), respondents with children in Walla Walla schools (48%), voters in 1 out of 4 elections (59%), and 4 out of 4 elections (47%).

Key groups that preferred a \$65.6 million bond measure were males (32%), 45-59 years old (38%), 60+ years old (31%), respondents with children in Walla Walla schools (32%), non-voters (55%), and 3 out of 4 elections (39%).

Key demographics that said neither proposal were males (12%), 25-34 years old (17%), 45-59 years old (12%), respondents with no children in Walla Walla schools (13%), and voters in 4 out of 4 elections (12%).

All “other” responses are listed below. It is important to note the following percentages were taken from very, very small sub-sample (1% of all respondents).

		Percent of Universe
Look at the condition of schools	20%	less than 1%
People can’t find places to live	20%	less than 1%
Both bonds should include safety improvements	20%	less than 1%
Need to focus on educating students	20%	less than 1%
Give to schools that need it first to level the playing field	20%	less than 1%

CONCLUSIONS

1. A very large number of respondents favor a \$65.6 million bond measure. This proposal has a strong majority of support across all demographic groups.
2. Top reasons for favoring a \$65.6 million bond measure are “schools need funding,” “schools need renovations” and “always support education.”
3. Primary reasons for opposing a \$65.6 million bond measure are “our taxes are too high,” “district mismanages money” and “asking for too much money.”
4. An argument producing one of the largest increases in support for the \$65.6 million bond measure is information that Walla Walla School District would receive over \$50 million in state match dollars to renovate the three primary schools to help reduce the cost to property taxpayers. Matching state funds will reduce the cost to property taxpayers is a **primary** issue for respondents and generates a **very** strong majority of support across **all** demographic groups.
5. The fact that bond expenditures would be overseen by a community oversight committee to ensure project accountability, transparency and the return of any remaining dollars after project completion to taxpayers moves a significant number of respondents to favor the bond measure. Citizen oversight and the return of remaining funds to property taxpayers is a **primary** issue. This argument solicits a very strong majority of support across **all** demographic groups.
6. Knowledge that the community facilities task force has recommended the renovation of existing schools rather than the replacement of schools because it is more cost effective while still maintaining adequate and safe schools for students pushes respondents to favor the bond measure. Renovation of existing schools will maintain adequate and safe schools and is more cost effective than replacement is a **primary** issue. Again, this argument solicits a very strong majority of support across all demographic groups.
7. In addition, information that the proposed bond measure includes safety and security upgrades throughout the district such as enhanced access control, upgraded communication systems and increased security cameras also moves a number of respondents to favor the measure. Safety and security improvements is **primary** issue for respondents and is one of the community’s top priorities. Once again, this information solicits a strong majority of support across all demographic groups.

8. Slightly over half of respondents favor a larger, \$73.9 million bond measure.
9. Main reasons for favoring a \$73.9 million bond measure are “schools need funding,” “more can get accomplished with this amount” and “schools need renovations.”
10. “Asking for too much money” tops the list of reasons for opposing a \$73.9 million bond measure, followed by “taxes are too high” and “district mismanages money.”
11. An argument that produces a slight increase in support for a \$73.9 million bond measure is information that passage of a larger bond measure would cost property taxpayers an additional 15-cents per thousand or \$37.50 per year for the owner of a home with an assessed value of \$250,000. While this argument slightly increases support for the larger bond measure, it does not solicit the 60% needed to be successful in a Washington election.
12. On the other hand, an argument that slightly **decreases** support for a larger bond measure is knowledge that without the passage of a \$73.9 million bond measure, the district would be forced to use general fund dollars to address facility needs which would reduce funding for educational programs. It is unclear whether respondents have a negative response to the threat of using general fund dollars, or if they misunderstood the question altogether.
13. While a majority of respondents give all of the proposed components a high priority rating, an extremely high percentage rate roofs and plumbing repairs as the highest priority, followed by energy improvements and safety and security improvements.
14. There is strong support across all demographic groups for a \$65.6 million bond measure. In addition, several arguments significantly increase support for the proposal such as matching state funds, citizen oversight to ensure leftover funds are returned to property taxpayers, safety and security improvements and the cost effectiveness of renovating versus replacing schools. In addition, a majority of respondents in every demographic group respond favorably to all of the arguments presented in favor of a \$65.6 million bond measure and rate all of the components as a high priorities.

Respondents are significantly less supportive of a \$73.9 million bond measure, (it is important to note, however, a slight majority of respondents favor the larger bond measure proposal). While support for the larger bond measure slightly increases when presented with the cost of the bond measure (at 15-cents per thousand), it does not solicit the 60% support needed to be successful in an election.

It is interesting that when asked to choose, a larger number of respondents prefer a \$73.9 million bond measure over a \$65.6 million proposal, and these overall sentiments appear to hold the agree/disagree series. While these numbers indicate potential support for a large bond measure, The Nelson Report believes it would be risky to ask voters to increase their taxes (especially in light of their expressed concern about their taxes already being too high). Couple this with the 60% support needed to be successful, and the risk becomes even greater.

No matter what proposal the district decides to moves forward with, it will be **very** important for campaign messaging to be woven into a clear, **disciplined** and concise strategy (significant state matching funds will offset cost to property taxpayers, citizen oversight of bond expenditures with the potential of returned funds to taxpayers, and the cost effectiveness of renovating buildings to safe schools for students). It will also be necessary for the district to emphasize those components the community highly values (protecting the community's large investment in schools by replacing roofs and plumbing, energy improvements that would significantly save the district in maintenance and operating costs and safety and security improvements district-wide).

Finally, there appears to be an underlying concern by some respondents throughout the survey regarding fiscal accountability and money management that the district should continue to address.