



# CROWDSOURCED CONVERSATIONS 2023

## SURVEY REPORT: "OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS"



Learn more at [futureheights.org/cc23-our-public-schools/](https://futureheights.org/cc23-our-public-schools/)

# Some topline stats

- There were a total of **281 responses**:
  - **89.3% CH residents**, 5.3% UH, 5.3% former/elsewhere
  - **87.5% homeowners**; 8.2% renters; 2.5% students who live with a guardian; 1.8% other
  - **40% have lived in their homes +20 years**; 21% 10-20 yrs; 16.7% 1-5 yrs; 13.9% 5-10 yrs; 2.5% “other”; 1.4% 0-1 yrs
  - **67.1% identified as a woman**; 26.7% as a man; 5.4% preferred not to say; 0.7% as trans\*/nonbinary/genderqueer;
  - **58% identified as under the age of 60**; 42% as over the age of 60
  - **78.3% identified as White**; 6.8% as Black; 6.5% preferred not to say; 3.2% as multi-racial; 0.7% as Asian; 0.4% as Hispanic



**BACKGROUND**

**WITH OUR SCHOOLS**

# Respondent background with our schools:

- **70.5% never attended our schools;** 26% are former students; 2.8% are current students; 0.7% are “other”
- **35.8% have never had a child attend our schools;** 35.6% are parents of an alumni; 24.6% currently have a child attending our schools; 3.2% are currently students; 0.7% are “other”
- **48.5% have never worked for the schools;** 27.4% are former volunteers; 13.9% are a current volunteers; 3.7% are current & former teachers; 3.3% are current staff; 2.5% are former staff; 1.1% are current board members

# Familiarity with our school facilities

## Top 5 facilities respondents have direct knowledge of:

- Heights High (74%)
- Roxboro Middle School (47.3%)
- Fairfax Elementary (35.2%)
- Roxboro Elementary (28.8%)
- Monticello Middle School (28.8%)
- **12.10%** reported having no direct knowledge of any of our school's facilities

## Top 5 facilities respondents have a child currently enrolled (when applicable):

- Heights High (51.9%)
- Roxboro Middle School (42%)
- Roxboro Elementary (16%)
- Boulevard Elementary (9.9%)
- Fairfax Elementary (9.9%)

# Where'd you hear that?

Respondents reported hearing about our schools from:

- Word of mouth (76.9%)
- Direct experience (55%)
- Social media (52.3%)
- School's website (48.4%)
- Other media (40.9%)
- Local news (23.1%)
- Another website (18.5%)
- YouTube (6.8%)

**SCHOOL**

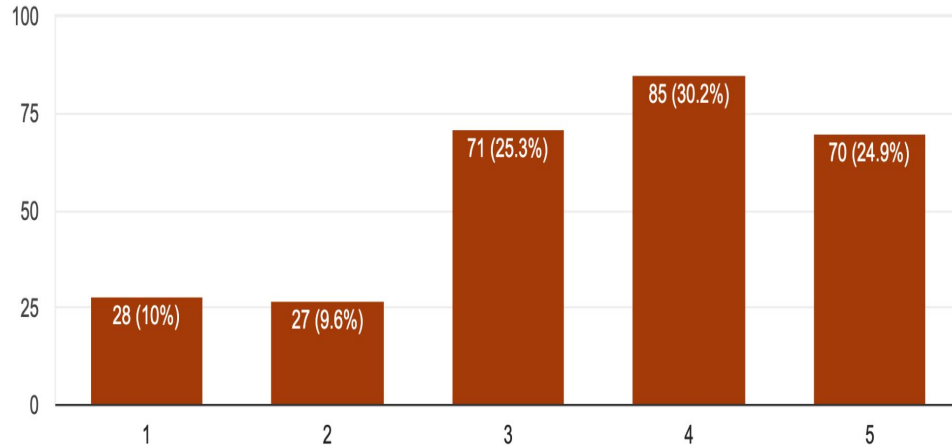
**PRIDE**



# Respondents' pride in our schools

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being "embarrassed" to 5 being "proud"), how do you feel about our schools?

281 responses



**Over 80% of respondents rated their pride in our schools a 3 or above. 55% rated their pride a 4 or above.**

## Top 15 Reasons Rating Chosen:

- Good personal experience (49)
- Good staff/teachers (36)
- Mixed feelings/mixed reviews (29)
- Schools are considered failing (28)
- Schools offer a great education (28)
- Concern about school violence/bullying (20)
- Concern about high taxes/school costs (17)
- Great extracurricular programs (17)
- Schools are good, reputation is not (16)
- Positive word-of-mouth (15)
- School are producing great grads (15)
- Great diversity in student population (15)
- There is room for improvement (13)
- Proud student/alum (11)
- Negative word-of-mouth (8)

**DIRECT KNOWLEDGE**

**VS.**

**NO DIRECT KNOWLEDGE**

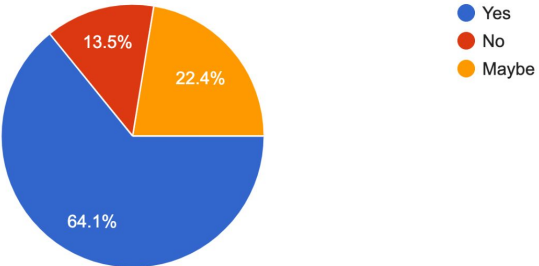
# Direct knowledge or no direct knowledge

- **223 respondents reported direct experience with our schools.**
  - This includes any alumni, current/former parents with at least one child currently or previously enrolled, and any teacher/staff/board/volunteer/organization that partners with the schools.
- **79 respondents reported no direct experience with our schools.**

# Recommending our schools to a new neighbor

If a new neighbor moved in next door, would you recommend they send their child or children to our public schools?

223 responses

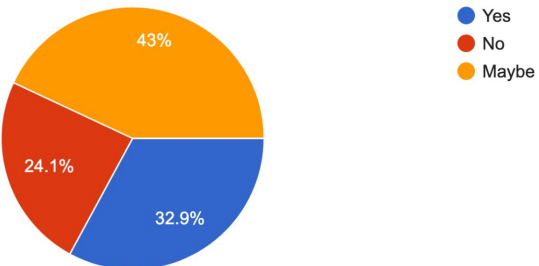


## Respondents WITH direct experience:

- 64.1% WOULD recommend
- 22.4% MIGHT recommend
- 13.5% WOULD NOT recommend

If a new neighbor moved in next door, would you recommend they send their child or children to our public schools?

79 responses



## Respondents WITHOUT direct experience:

- 43% MIGHT recommend
- 32.9% WOULD recommend
- 24.1% WOULD NOT recommend

# Reasons to recommend/not recommend

## Those WITH direct experience

*223 responses*

### **TOP TEN REASONS:**

- Schools provide a good education (42)
- Positive personal experience (40)
- Belief in public education (23)
- It depends on the kid/what they need (20)
- My children are happy/thriving there (19)
- Builds a stronger community (18)
- Schools are below average/low ranking (18)
- School is diverse & inclusive (18)
- Great programs for students (13)
- High quality teachers/staff (13)

## Those WITHOUT direct experience

*79 responses*

### **TOP TEN REASONS:**

- I support public schools (16)
- It would depend on the kiddo/family (15)
- I don't have experience so I can't make the rec. (11)
- Low test scores/poor rating (9)
- Sending kids to public schools supports the whole community/is community-building (7)
- I perceive the schools are bad (6)
- The diversity is a benefit for students (6)
- I perceive our schools are good (5)
- Underperforming students (4)
- Positive word of mouth (4)

# Resources

## **The teachers receive adequate support from the district.**

- With direct awareness: 97 neutral/no opinion
- Without direct experience: 27 neutral/no opinion

## **The teachers receive adequate support from the parents.**

- With direct awareness: 96 neutral/no opinion
- Without direct experience: 46 neutral/no opinion

## **The school administrators, teachers, and support staff provide a quality education to students.**

- With direct awareness: 90 agree
- Without direct awareness: 38 neutral/no opinion

## **The educational programming and supplies (textbooks, technology, etc.) meet the needs of students.**

- With direct awareness: 88 agree
- Without direct experience: 44 neutral/no opinion

## **The school district manages funds appropriately.**

- With direct awareness: 77 neutral/no opinion
- Without direct experience: 27 neutral/no opinion

# Perception of School Safety

In your opinion/experience, students, teachers, and staff are SAFE in the following school-related environments:

## Those WITH direct experience (223):

- Classrooms (121)
- Music events (124)
- Playground (101)
- Driving to/from school (92)
- School hallways (86)
- Cafeteria (89)
- Walking to/from school (80)
- I am unsure (74)
- Taking the bus to/from school (71)
- Sporting events (59)
- None of the above (17)

## Those WITHOUT direct experience (79):

- I am unsure (45)
- Taking the bus to/from school (18)
- Classrooms (16)
- Playground (16)
- Cafeteria (16)
- Walking to/from school (16)
- Driving to/from school (15)
- Sporting events (15)
- Music events (15)
- School hallways (14)
- None of the above (9)

# Reasons for selecting safety responses:

## Those WITH direct experience (223):

- Fighting is common (15)
- Nowhere feels safe anymore (10)
- Fights at football games prevalent (8)
- "Safety" can change quickly (7)
- Traffic can be challenging near schools (5)
- Schools should have more security (4)
- Negative press/reports (3)
- Mental health issues need support/addressing (3)
- Open concept classrooms are unsafe (2)
- Answers different for different schools (2)

## Those WITHOUT direct experience (79):

- Negative word of mouth related to school safety (5)
- I perceive it's safe but don't directly know (4)
- My experience is too limited to answer (4)
- Fear of school shootings is high (2)
- Nowhere is really safe anymore (2)
- Traffic safety around the schools is a problem (1)
- I perceive the schools are not safe (1)
- I actively work to combat the bad perceptions (1)
- Safety to and from school is out of the district's control (1)
- I believe violence/inappropriate behavior is tolerated & denied (1)



# Perception of Student Experience

**Students are appropriately challenged academically.**

- With direct awareness: 102 agree
- Without direct experience: 36 unsure

**Students are encouraged to participate in Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs, Advanced Placement classes, and the College Credit Plus program.**

- With direct awareness: 101 agree
- Without direct experience: 40 unsure

**Students have access to supports at school that minimize barriers to a good education (i.e. lack of food, clothing, shelter; poor mental or physical health; transportation; technology and other school supplies)**

- With direct awareness: 78 agree
- Without direct experience: 35 unsure

**Students with special learning needs (IEP, gifted, 504) receive the support they need.**

- With direct awareness: 76 agree
- Without direct awareness: 41 unsure

# District strengths

## Those WITH direct experience (223):

- Diversity & Inclusivity (48)
- Teachers/staff (42)
- Options/opportunities for students (38)
- Sense of community (28)
- Creativity/arts/music (28)
- Educational options (28)
- Extra curricular programs (18)
- The Heights community supports education (17)
- Serves students of all ability levels (15)
- There's something for everyone (14)

## Those WITHOUT direct experience (79):

- Diversity (17)
- Sense of community (14)
- Good teachers/staff (7)
- Nothing (7)
- Creativity/the arts/music (5)
- "Tiger Pride" (3)
- Ability to engage even residents without kids in the schools/full community support (3)
- Strong history of excellence (3)
- Opportunities for each student to pursue their own path (3)
- Demonstrable efforts being made to support the schools (3)

# Opportunities for District Improvement

## Those WITH direct experience (223):

- Better PR/better story-sharing (19)
- Stronger community connections (15)
- Safety/less fighting (13)
- More equitable funding from state (8)
- Better social-emotional/mental health support (8)
- Better support for teachers/staff (8)
- Vocational training for students (8)
- Developing post-grad plans for students (7)
- Discipline management (7)
- Better communication from/with administration (7)

## Those WITHOUT direct experience (79):

- Improved optics/PR (9)
- Better fiscal management (5)
- Safety (5)
- Improved accountability/transparency (4)
- Reduce unnecessary staff (4)
- Reduce spending/lower taxes (4)
- Get rid of vouchers (3)
- “Start over” (3)
- Equity across all of the schools (2)
- More open houses/info sessions (2)



# Top 10 Words Used to Describe the District

## Those WITH direct experience (223):

- Diverse (12)
- Challenged (6)
- Opportunity (6)
- Potential (5)
- Engaging (5)
- Community (4)
- Excellence (4)
- Failing (3)
- Trying (3)
- Vibrant (3)

## Those WITHOUT direct experience (79):

- Diverse (5)
- Failing (4)
- Potential (3)
- Average (2)
- Challenged (2)
- Committed (2)
- Embarrassing (2)
- Excellent (2)
- Expensive (2)
- Struggling (2)

**STUDENT**

**FEEDBACK**

# Student Demographics

- 8 survey respondents identified as being a current student.
- Students reported currently attending:
  - Roxboro Middle School (3)
  - Heights High (2)
  - Roxboro Elementary (1)
  - Noble Elementary (1)
  - Monticello Middle School (1)

# What students like best & what they wish was different

## What students like best:

- Teachers (5)
- It's fun/a good experience (1)
- Classes/Learning (1)
- Having access to Infinite Campus (1)

## What students wish was different:

- Fellow students (2)
- Less fights (1)
- I don't wish anything was different (1)
- COVID-19 safety being ignored (1)
- My Chromebook is slow (1)
- More hands-on learning (1)
- Can feel stuck in a loop where it doesn't feel like much is being learned (1)
- More staff to increase efficiency (1)
- Easier access to guidance counselors (1)
- Better communication about events (1)
- Improve safety (1)



# Student perspective on school safety

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being “not at all” and 5 being “extremely”), **most of the students surveyed responded with a rating of 4 (6 responses)** followed by tie with ratings of 3 and 5 (1 response each) No student responses reported a rating of a 1 or a 2.

## Reasons provided for student’s safety ratings:

- Feel mostly safe at school (4)
- Teachers make us feel safe (2)
- Less fights would be better (1)
- We are taught how to handle safety situations (1)

# Student's reported stress levels at school

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being “not at all” and 5 being “extremely”), **most of the students surveyed responded with a rating of 3 (4 responses)** followed by a rating of 4 (2 responses), and then a rating of 2 (2 responses). No student responses reported a rating of 1 or 5.

## Reasons provided for student's school-related stress ratings:

- Academic pressure/school is hard (3)
- Deadlines are stressful (1)
- Nearing graduation (1)
- “Because” (1)
- Lack of COVID-19 safety (1)
- Too many tests/too much homework (1)

# Student comfort level with reaching out for support

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being “not at all” and 5 being “extremely”), **most of the students surveyed responded with a rating of 4 (4 responses each)** followed by a rating of 3 (3 responses) and a rating of 5 (1 response). No student responses reported a rating of 1.

## Reasons provided for a student’s comfort level in seeking support ratings:

- I feel comfortable (2)
- It's hard to express stress/I'm shy (2)
- I trust my teachers (2)
- “Because” (1)
- I don't know if it will help (1)
- I am not at all comfortable (1)

# What students wish everyone knew about their school:

- The teachers are nice (2)
- The teachers make us feel safe (1)
- Nothing (1)
- It's bully-safe (1)
- How to sign up for less popular sports (1)
- It has a lot to offer (1)
- Communication could be improved (1)

# What's one thing you wish people knew about what it was like to be a student:

- It can be pretty fun (1)
- It can be hard sometimes (1)
- It's different after COVID-19 (1)
- We have to learn a lot (1)
- It can be “chill” until the end of the semester when a lot gets crammed in (1)
- There are annoying/rude kids at school (1)

**PERSONAL**

**STORIES**



# A selection of personal stories shared by survey respondents:

- “Every Weds, 6 kindergarten students at Oxford light up my life.”
- “We hopefully enrolled both of our children in CHUH schools. We reluctantly and sadly removed both of them due to concerns for safety reasons, bullying, inadequate supervision of so many children who arrive on campus with behavior/discipline problems My oldest son felt emotionally and physically threatened on a daily basis; his anxiety impaired his ability to learn. He is thriving at another school whose main attraction has been lack of chaos in the classroom. CHUH is a great place to learn, if children can feel relaxed and safe enough to do so.”
- “Mrs. Friedman is one of the most impactful teachers that 2 of the 4 of my kiddos have had. An amazing 7th grade teacher with so much support and love! All of these teachers are outstanding: Mr. Colicchio, Mr. O’Connell, Mrs. Speight, Mr. Kless, Mr. Roberts, Mrs. Smrdel, Mrs. Hollender, Ms. Triscaro, Mrs. Petersen, Mrs. Preston, Mrs. Spferry, Mrs. Eaton, Mrs. Infield, Mrs. Reynolds, Mrs. Robinson, Mrs. Walker, Mrs. Carver, Ms. Malquest.”
- “...I think the district would do well to have targeted surveys of families that start with the district and then leave. Some non-public families would have never used the district no matter how good it is. But many did give the district a chance but left for some reason and that information would be very useful to the district... I just wish the district could get out of its own way. There is SO much good here. So much. But it can't shine through. It’s just disappointing because it doesn't have to be that way.”



# A selection of personal stories shared by survey respondents:

- “I've enjoyed being part of the Noble Neighbor's ‘Welcome Back to School’ initiative of chalking encouraging messages near the entry ways of our neighborhood schools.”
- “We have created an institution that focuses more on support and funding than individual achievement that will be required when they leave this system.”
- “I loved the experience I had growing up in the heights and attending its schools. It wasn't until I got older, traveled and met other people who didn't get to have that diverse dynamic in their community and school that I had an appreciation for our unique experience. I tell people in first grade I sat at lunch next to an Asian girl who brought sushi, I sat next to a foreign exchange student from Yugoslavia, I had knew friends who wore lipstick as a boy and wrestled as girls. I've been to friends houses that were a small two bedroom apartment and 20 room mansions, I participated in a variety of sports, educational, extra-curricular, social programs and clubs. As a person of mixed ethnicity I saw myself reflecting in the wide range of skin tones and cultures. I felt like the community actively supported the schools, students and each other.”
- “I decided not to send my kids to Heights schools 30+ years ago because of their poor ratings. They have only gotten worse. I'm tired of sinking more tax dollars for a system that's completely broken.”

# A selection of personal stories shared by survey respondents:

- “Attended Women's Day Celebration on March 23. Three Heights students were honored as Inspirational Young Women and two read their poetry (Lake Erie Ink’s Ink Spot members) and they were introduced by people who knew their qualities, such as teachers. I was seated next to a friend who shared that her grandchildren had participated in wonderful programs such as Link's and the impact such programs at Heights make on students. Volunteers make sure that money is secured for trips that broaden children's lives. What a difference our schools make on our youth!”
- “I have been a public school advocate my entire life, but my family is considering private school for our child next year. I'm angry, honestly, that I have to choose between my child having to see fights in the hallway every week or sending my child to a private school. It's not fair for families that don't have the option to send their child to another school. Habitual violence in the schools is not acceptable.”
- “I was told I was too happy to be there (it's weird how cynical people are).”
- “The administration has worn me down. I used to volunteer and advocate. Could have been considered a district cheerleader. But the BOE and administration has proven to me over the last 4-5 years that they are unwilling to improve or change and they are incapable of accepting responsibility when things are wrong while freely taking credit for things they shouldn't.”

# A selection of personal stories shared by survey respondents:

- “My family hosted 7 AFS exchange students who attended Heights High and my 2 biological daughters both graduated from Heights High. I have had a lot of experience with the high school in the last 20 years! I have seen each of my 9 daughters receive incredible support and encouragement from their teachers, coaches, and guidance counselors. None of my daughters were on the same path since each one had different interests and abilities. I have learned about the vocal music department (VMD), the instrumental music department (IMD), photography, ceramics, and drawing/painting, swimming, softball/fastpitch, volleyball, field hockey, track & field, CTE (cosmetology), and College Credit Plus (CCP, dual credit). I've survived 9 homecoming dances and proms, and 8 graduations (one AFS student was too young to graduate) and several IMD and VMD Spring Tours. All nine are grateful and proud to be Heights Tigers!”
- “I toured two buildings and met with staff when my child was entering Kindergarten. CHUH simply did not sell the school. The meetings and open houses were treated as info sessions assuming everyone was selecting CHUH, but I happened to be shopping across public and private schools. The district needs to stop the narrative that people who choose religious or private schools were never going to choose public in the first place. That’s false. It also feels exclusionary to Jews and Catholics in particular. I was a very happy public school kid growing up and wanted to choose CHUH, but could not reconcile paying extremely high taxes (that went up 40% in one year) with schools that regularly end up on lists of “failing” schools. The math equation simply didn’t compute for me.”
- “I think all schools across the country are trying their best and yet are still struggling. It must be really difficult for kids in these trying times. Also, I think there should be less focus on testing for schools and more real life skills to help them thrive as functioning members of society. The teachers, school representatives, and aftercare employees seem burnt out and sometimes fed up.”

**ACTION**

## Respondents are **VERY WILLING** to:

- Advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion practices/education (93)
- Advocate for students who are differently abled (87)
- Advocate for students who may not have access to wifi at home (86)

## Respondents are **WILLING** to:

- Advocate for anti-bullying/conflict resolution education (83)

## Respondents are **NEUTRAL** regarding:

- Volunteer with the Music Boosters (105)
- Volunteer with the Parent-Teacher Association (103)
- Volunteer to help welcome new families coming into the Heights/help acclimate them to the schools (91)
- Volunteer as a mentor (85)
- Volunteer as a tutor (75)
- Volunteer for a community organization like Reaching Heights (73)

## Respondents are **NOT AT ALL WILLING** to:

- Volunteer with the Athletics Boosters (116)
- Volunteer with the Music Boosters (105)
- Volunteer with student clubs (like Robotics, Art, AFS, etc.) (93)

# Volunteer Opportunities

- **Respondent awareness of volunteer opportunities:**
  - PTA (70.2%)
  - Many Villages Tutoring (40.6%)
  - Reaching Heights Role Models (30.2%)
  - One-and-Done (21.7%)
  - None of the Above (20.4%)
- **Respondent willingness to participate in volunteer opportunities**
  - None of the Above (48.4%)
  - PTA (39%)
  - Many Villages Tutoring (16.4%)
  - One-and-Done (6%)
  - Reaching Heights Role Models (2.5%)

Top self-reported: 22 respondents reported volunteering directly in the classroom.

**TAKEAWAYS**

## Topline Takeaways:

- Over 80% of survey respondents rated their pride in our schools a 3 or above (on a scale of 1-5) – 55% rated their pride in our schools a 4 or above.
- 64.1% of respondents with DIRECT experience would recommend our schools to a new neighbor vs 32.9% of respondents with NO DIRECT experience.
- There is a lot (A LOT) of love reported for teachers in our district.
- There are more struggles reported when it comes to the administrative level.
- The music and arts programming is a shining star in the district.
- With word-of-mouth being the most common way residents learn about the schools, there are opportunities for the district to communicate more effectively with the community-at-large.
- Student experience can vary drastically, depending on if the kiddo is honors/AP, if they're utilizing an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or if they are an “average” student.
- Fighting and disciplinary needs at Roxboro Middle School was a persistent theme.
- Frustration over low test scores and high taxes was a persistent theme.
- Support for public schools and support for telling the stories of our schools better was a persistent theme.

## What is noteworthy:

- As go our schools, so goes our community. So many respondents spoke about our schools as a community in itself but many others talked about our schools as a key ingredient of our community as a whole. Better communication and connection would benefit us all.



**FACTS ABOUT**

*Who what when where why how*

**OUR STATS**

## About this survey:

This survey was created and distributed as part of the [Crowdsourced Conversations 2023 Forum Series](#), being conducted in partnership with FutureHeights, Reaching Heights, Home Repair Resource Center, City of Cleveland Heights Racial Justice Task Force, Racial Inequity Repair Committee of Forest Hill Church, representatives of Cleveland Heights City Council, and more.

Survey data was collected from March 1 through March 31, 2023. Respondents completed an online-only Google Form that was distributed via email, on social media, through the media, via fliers, and through word of mouth.

This survey data analysis was completed by FutureHeights and shared with forum series partners, including elected officials, and is available for the community to review.

Any questions, please contact Sarah - [swolf@futureheights.org](mailto:swolf@futureheights.org).