

## Chalkboard

By

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While the facilities theme ended last week, I want to spend one more *Chalkboard* dealing with some of the opinions offered on the survey the district offered as a way of gathering information about school facilities. The information I share today is the results from two general question. The first was “*What do you see as strengths of the Gentry School District? (Check all that apply)*”. There were 251 respondents to this survey item.

The highest frequency of response was **Staff 70.9%**, followed by Academic Programs 51.4%, Facilities 47.4%, Athletic Programs 32.7%, Parent Involvement 32.7%, Activities Programs 30.7%, Community Involvement 25.5%, Other 8.0%, and Have none 4.4% .

The second question of this pair was the flip side of the coin, “*What do you see as weaknesses of the Gentry School District? (Check all that apply)*” The percentages of the 251 respondents are as follow. The highest frequency was **Parent Involvement 40.6%**, followed by Facilities 39.4%, Community Involvement 39.0%, Athletic Programs 27.1%, Academic Programs 18.7%, Staff 15.1%, Activities Programs 15.1%, Other 14.7%, and Have none 13.1%.

I will share a few quotes from the “Other” open response sections of both of the above survey items as I have done for other items in past weeks. They are unedited by me. You can decide which question with which the comment went

“There are some very effective teachers at Gentry Schools. At times the administration of the school causes limitations for these effective teachers to grow in their professionalism. If there was more accountability for the administrators, Gentry Schools could have a strong staff. Often I wonder why the school board does not educate themselves about many decisions that are not made without the best interest of the students in mind. A great school is awaiting. Let's eliminate the barriers that are holding us back. I believe in my heart that we have a caring school board. I think they would be incredibly surprised if they walked the halls of the campuses to see the lack of administrators being available to the teachers, staff, and students. I pose the question...do you have an accurate picture of what truly goes on in Gentry Schools? Or is the picture painted for you by the administration”

“I think our Athletic Program is up and running and will continue to get better. I would like to see summer activity programs offered for students. I feel that community involvement can be linked to parent involvement and I

think it is very weak. It is because parents are working one and two jobs and the kids are going in all directions. The most important thing is our students and their education. I plan to be in Gentry until I join our Father in heaven. I would love to see Gentry have growth. Our increase in school population was minimal. We cannot expect people to want to move to this area unless we offer more programs in our schools and we have more parents and community members involved in the school programs. It's true....it takes a village to raise a child”

“The staff is fine but sometimes I think that there are too many children for the teacher to give the right amount of attention to each child. I have noticed myself that sometimes a teacher looks overwhelmed”

“to much going on at the same time. out to late on school nights on away ballgames, even when they have semester tests the next day.”

The survey was an interesting tool. Last year you may remember that the school board held a series of public meetings out in the election zones. Attendance at these meetings was sparse. Out of eight meetings, maybe fifty people were involved in the data gathering process. While they did not answer or respond to all the items, about 304 participated in the on-line facilities survey. I saw that as significant and I can tell you that the district will use this venue again.

As I have noted earlier, this survey could not be deemed as scientific in the sense of determining a target population and sample group. It was not intended to be such. What it was intended to be was a convenient and easy way for parents, patrons, and staff to offer honest opinions in a non-threatening manner. I think it served that purpose.

I would say to you that the entire administrative staff spent time reviewing the information that came in. While some of the comments were not flattering to the administrative staff, some were. One of the viewpoints was anticipated and both were given equal weight. While the administrative staff was fully cognizant that this was a perceptual survey, all of us trust in the maxim that “Perception is reality (to the ‘perceiver’)”.