

Masco Community Survey Summary of Results and Response February 25, 2016

Executive Summary

The Masconomet Regional School District (Masco) School Committee conducted a survey of all residents in Boxford, Middleton and Topsfield in October 2015 to gain a better understanding of the community's perception of Masco.

Overall, respondents were in general agreement that Masco provides an excellent education to its students. Over 90% have a good to excellent impression of Masco and over 75% agree or strongly agree that Masco provides an excellent education.

There were 535 responses from all three towns. Boxford had the most responses (243) and Topsfield and Middleton both had about the same at approximately 140. While we would like to hear from more residents in our communities, we appreciate those that took the time to complete the survey.

The following is a summary of the themes that arose from the survey responses.

Communication:

There was a recurring request for improved communication between the school and parents. A more informative and dynamic website is being developed and will be fully launched by September of this year. In addition, the School Committee created a Community Relations Subcommittee this school year. This subcommittee started its work with this survey and will work with the administration to improve the school's communication efforts.

Several areas were identified for improved communication.

School Budget:

Masco recognizes that while it produces and publishes a large amount of financial information, there is a need to improve communication of the school's budget, future capital needs and general finances. During this fiscal year, the School Committee formed a new Budget Subcommittee that is serving as an advisory board for the administration during the budget development process. This will allow the School Committee to be involved earlier in the budget process and to communicate the status of the budget to town governments on a proactive basis.

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In addition, this subcommittee will work with the administration to produce an executive-level budget summary that will enable town residents and their representatives to better understand the school's budget.

Masco Facility and Grounds:

The survey showed that most agree that Masco's facility and grounds are in good shape. As the current Masco facility approaches its 15th birthday, it is time to plan for larger needed investments in its buildings and grounds that will require separate financing by the towns. Masco has historically funded necessary capital projects through its annual budget and by using its reserves. Given the age of the facility, this will not be sustainable for long.

Beginning last year, the school expanded its capital plan document to include estimates of equipment life cycles and project long-term facility needs. This year the administration has engaged an engineering firm to perform a comprehensive evaluation of the school's buildings and grounds. The engineers' report, which will be completed this spring and shared with town governments, will provide information to determine the school's short- and long-term capital needs, as well as address parking issues.

Athletic Fees:

Many seem unclear about how athletic fees are calculated and how the funds are used. Masco's athletic fees are calculated to cover approximately 60% of the total cost to run the athletic programs. The remaining 40% is funded by the school budget. In fact, the administration performs a comprehensive financial analysis of athletic program costs and funding and will now include it in the annual budget book. In addition, the School Committee has requested that the administration prepare a one-page executive summary of how the athletic fees work and how the funds are used. It will be attached to the Sports/Co-curricular Activities Sign up Sheet and also posted on the website.

Instruction:

Although the vast majority of respondents agree that Masco provides a good education, there were several comments suggesting that not all students benefit the same. The primary goal of the School Committee and Superintendent is to "teach every student

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well.” This is the primary driver used when establishing budget priorities. Examples of recent initiatives in this area include co-teaching. Co-teaching is a partnering of two teachers with different areas of expertise to provide more comprehensive, effective instruction to students. . It’s not both teachers doing the same thing at all times, a specialist pulling “her” students to the back corner while the main teacher instructs the rest of the class, or one teacher acting as the expert while the other is always the helper. Co-teaching most frequently occurs with a special education teacher and a classroom teacher, but it’s becoming more common with all types of specialists. That’s because educators recognize the inherent sense in bringing together individuals with different talents to produce the best instructional outcomes. Additionally, personalizing learning and increasing students’ opportunities to pursue their interests thorough class work are important topics of conversation in Masco’s Strategic Planning process which began this January.

Homework Levels/Stress/Overworked:

Many comments and answers to questions regarding how to describe a Masco student indicate a general concern about the level of homework, affects of stress and general feeling of being overworked. The 2015 Tri-Town Council Youth Survey also identified similar concerns. The affect of stress on the health and well-being of students is a concern of the School Committee and School Administration. The School Committee will use this feedback in developing its goals for the coming years as well as during the Masco Strategic Planning Process. This is an issue that doesn’t have an easy answer and will require a community effort to address.

Instruction/Faculty:

There were many accolades for Masco’s faculty. There were also comments expressing the need for a clear procedure for communicating questions and concerns with teachers and School Administration. The School Committee will work with the Administration to establish and publish parent communication guidelines in the near future.

Emphasis on Athletics:

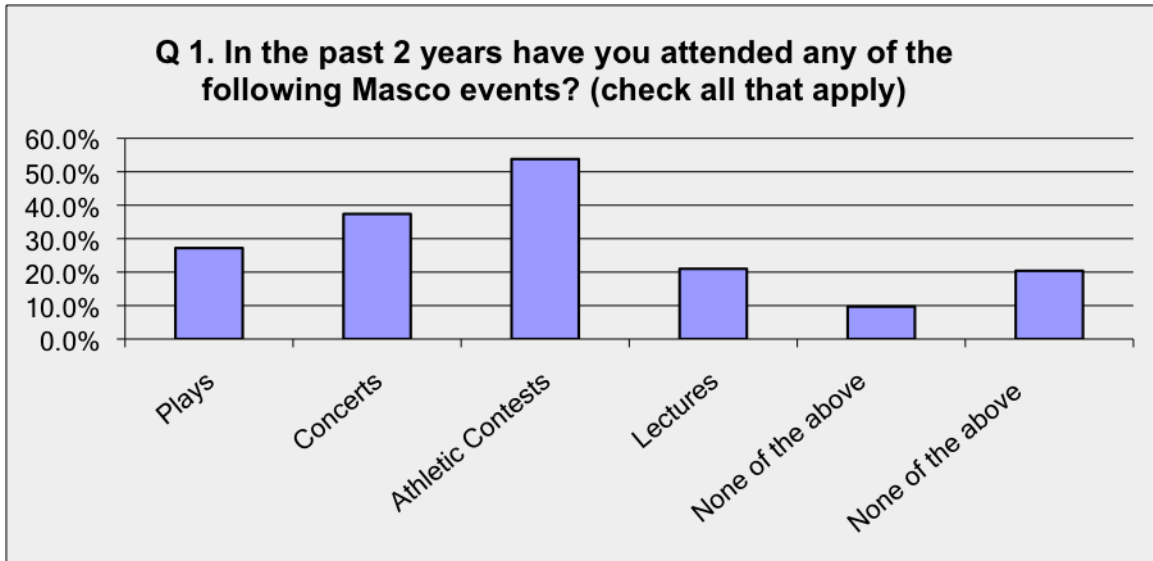
Several comments can be summarized with this one: “Sports are great but should not be more important, or appear to be more important than academics.”

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The large majority of Masco's budget and administrative effort is spent on academics, although there may be a perception that sports are overemphasized. To counteract this, the School Committee recommends that the administration focus on a balance of "publicity" to cover all aspects of Masco: sports, co-curricular activities, arts, theatre, volunteer activities, academic achievement, etc. This balance should be considered in the morning announcements, principal newsletters, yearbook coverage, website front page and any other publicity that students see on a regular basis.

Detail of responses to all survey questions follow on the next pages.

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70% of respondents attended an event at Masco. Of the remainder 20% did not attend an event because of the lack of scheduling information and only 10% stated it was because they had no interest. Since 55% of respondents had a family member attending Masco (see question 25), few members of the community at large attend events.

Action Item:

Masco is creating a new dynamic website which will fully launch in September. The new site will be user friendly and will include an easy way for residents to opt-in to receiving event updates. Look for more information in the Tri Town Transcript and online when the site is launched.

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Q 2. The current Masconomet High School was constructed in 2001. The previous high school was then renovated as the Middle School and opened in 2002. What is your opinion of the condition of Masco's buildings and campus?



A third of respondents rated the condition of Masco facilities a 4 for excellent. Of that group, there was a divergence of opinion among the respondents from the 3 towns with Boxford at 39%, Topsfield at 35% and Middleton at 28%. Another 60% of respondents rated the facilities a 3.

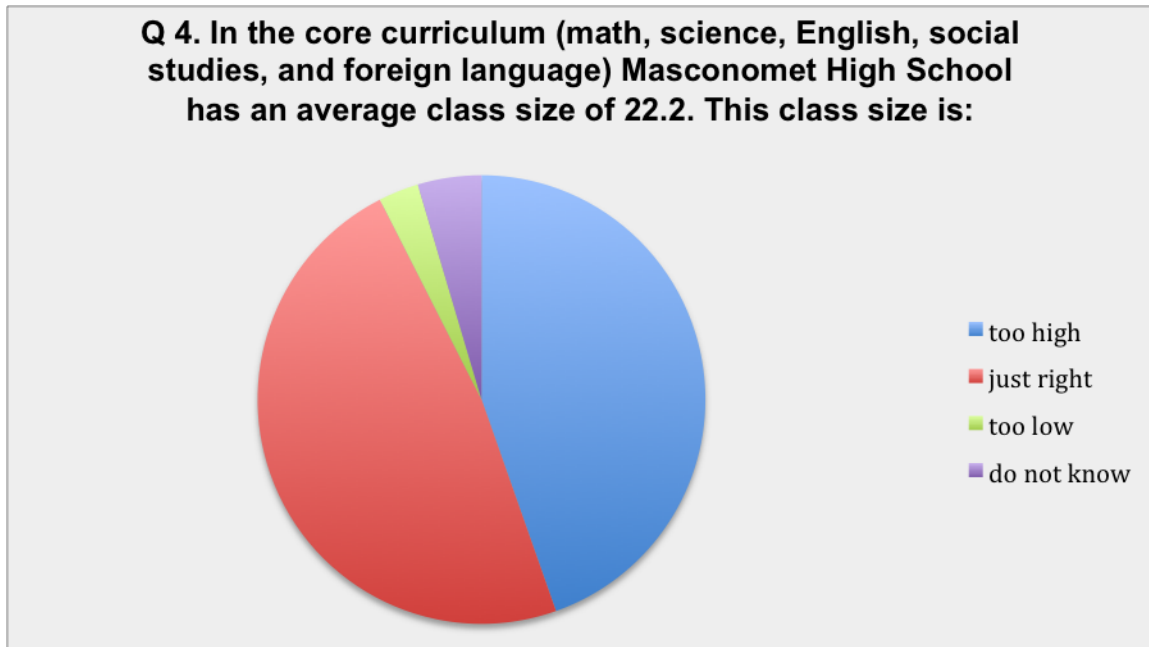
Q 3. In the core curriculum (math, science, English, social studies, and foreign language) Masconomet Middle School has an average class size of 22.8. This class size is:



44% of respondents answered that the average class size at the Middle

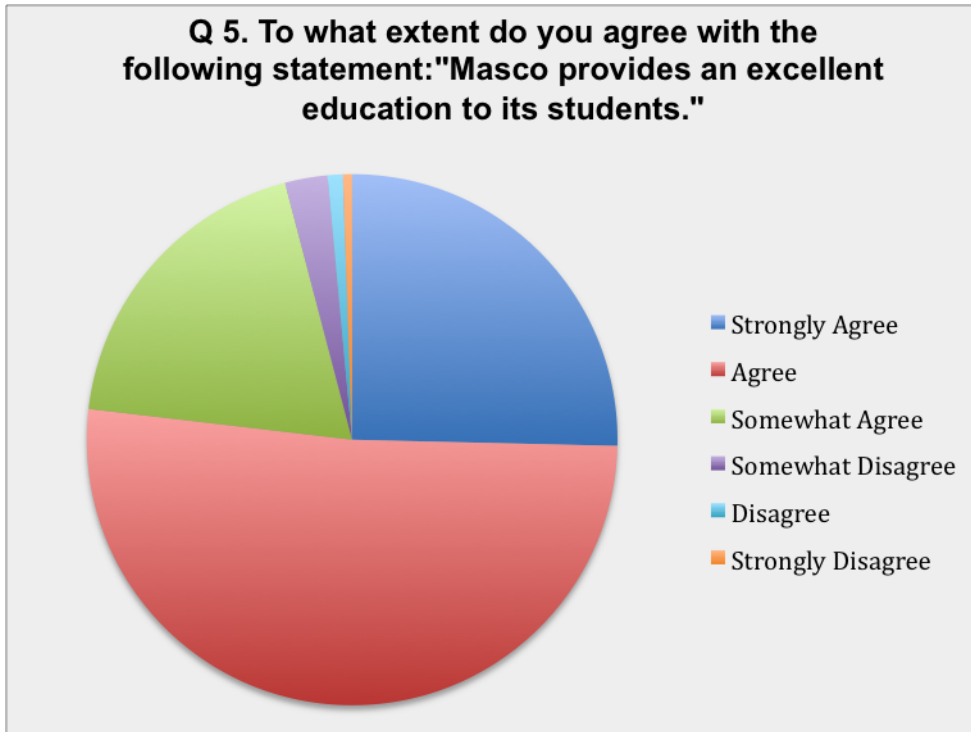
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School is just right while a slightly greater number – 48% - answered that it is too high. The comments on this question reveal an uncertainty as to how to answer with comments of “don’t know what the proper class size is” and lack of a “comparison” with other systems.



The responses for the High School average class size were reversed with 48% answering just right and 45% too high.

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77% of respondents strongly agree or agree that Masco provides an excellent education while less than 5% answered with any level of disagreement. There was a divergence of opinion among the 3 towns with Middleton respondents at 81%; Topsfield respondents at 79% and Boxford respondents at 74%. Despite the strong support there is room for improvement as comments like these indicate:

“students learn differently”

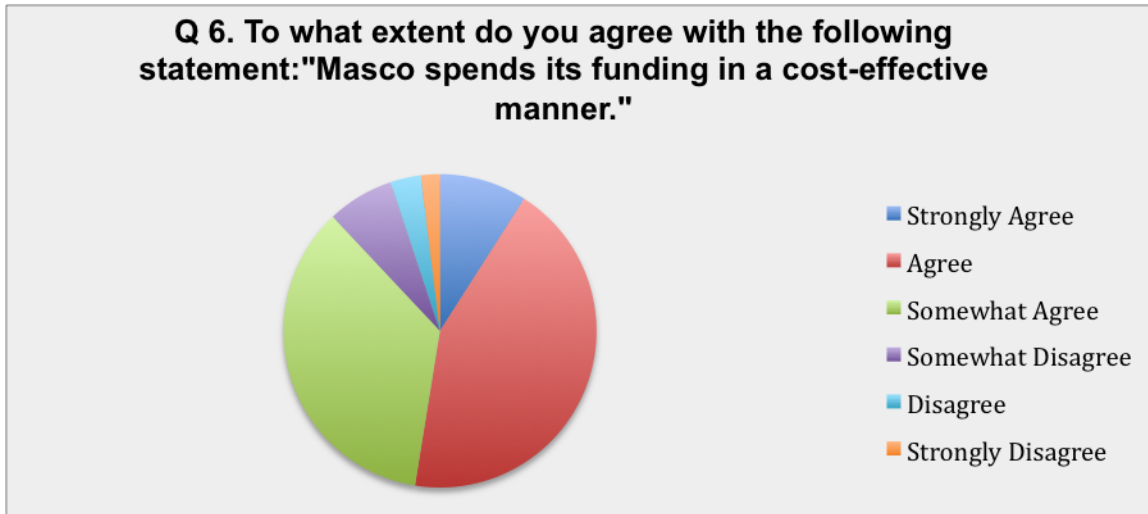
“an average student is lost in the crowd”

“more so for girls than boys”

“middle gets lost”

“more vocational and life skill content”

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Over 52% of respondents strongly agree or agree that Masco spends its funding in a cost effective manner. At 45% Topsfield respondents are the most skeptical. Many comments were “I do not know”, “not sure” and “have no idea”. Perhaps this is because as one respondent wrote “reports are dense and indecipherable”.



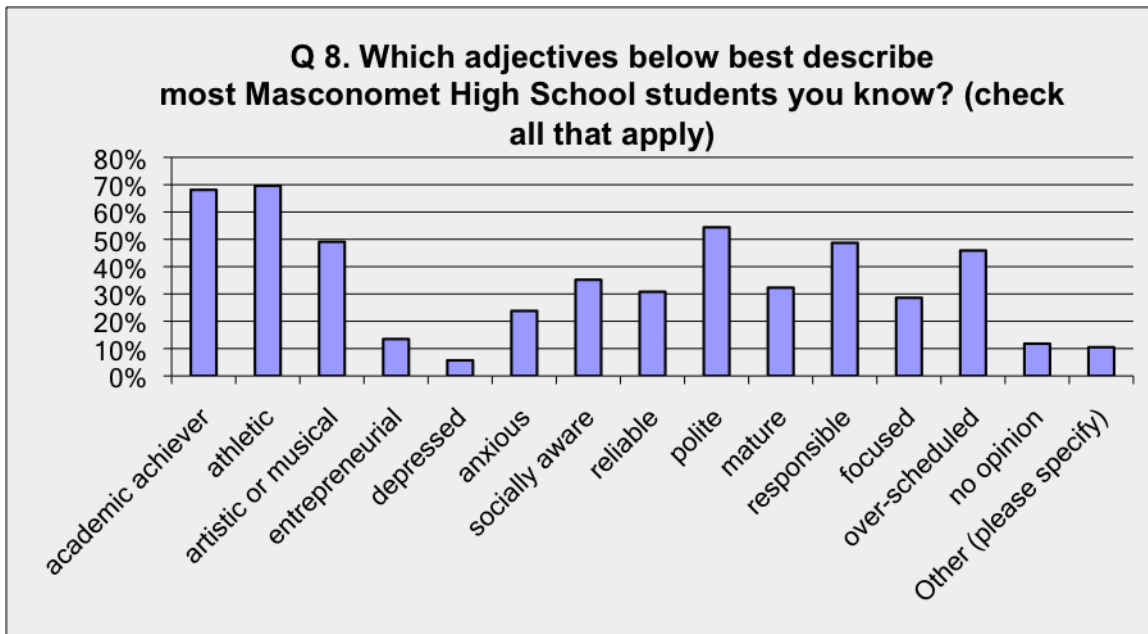
There is a strong desire for Masco to rent its facilities. All suggested uses

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had majority support except religious events/services. This sentiment may be driven by “anything that generates revenue”.

Action Item:

The School Committee will consider this feedback when approached by outside organizations to use its facilities. The School Committee approved a revamped user fee schedule after the completion of the survey.

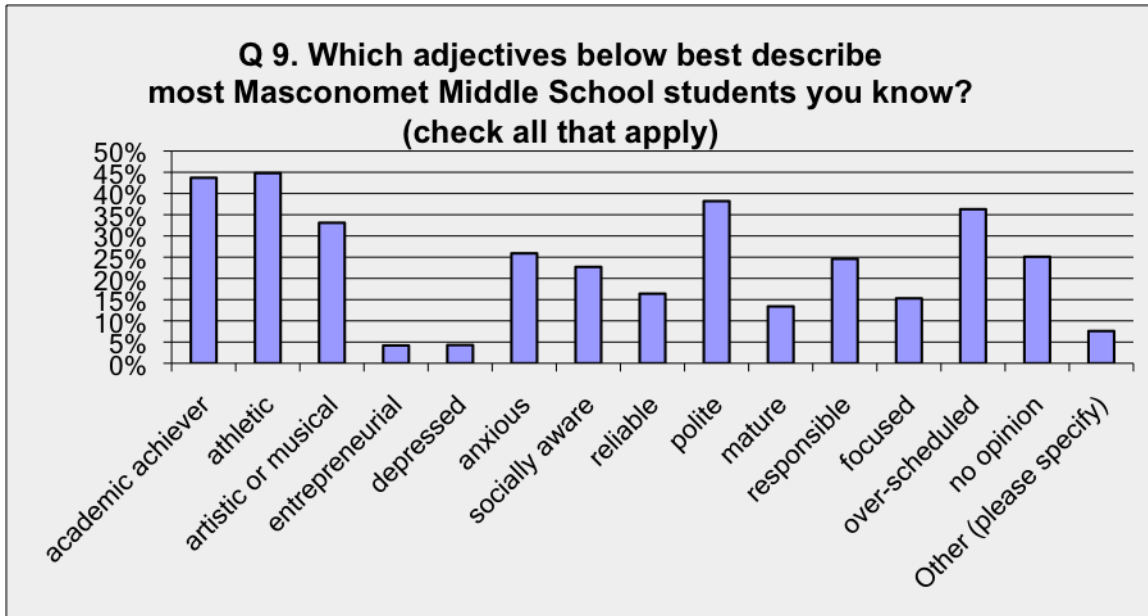


The most popularly selected adjectives (greater than 40%) were “athletic”, “academic achiever”, “polite”, “artistic”, “responsible” and “over-scheduled”.

The greatest amount of comments related to concerns regarding too much homework, stress and “Race to Nowhere” issues.

Some comments offered less positive adjectives; however, there was no common one mentioned other than the general concept of being “sheltered.”

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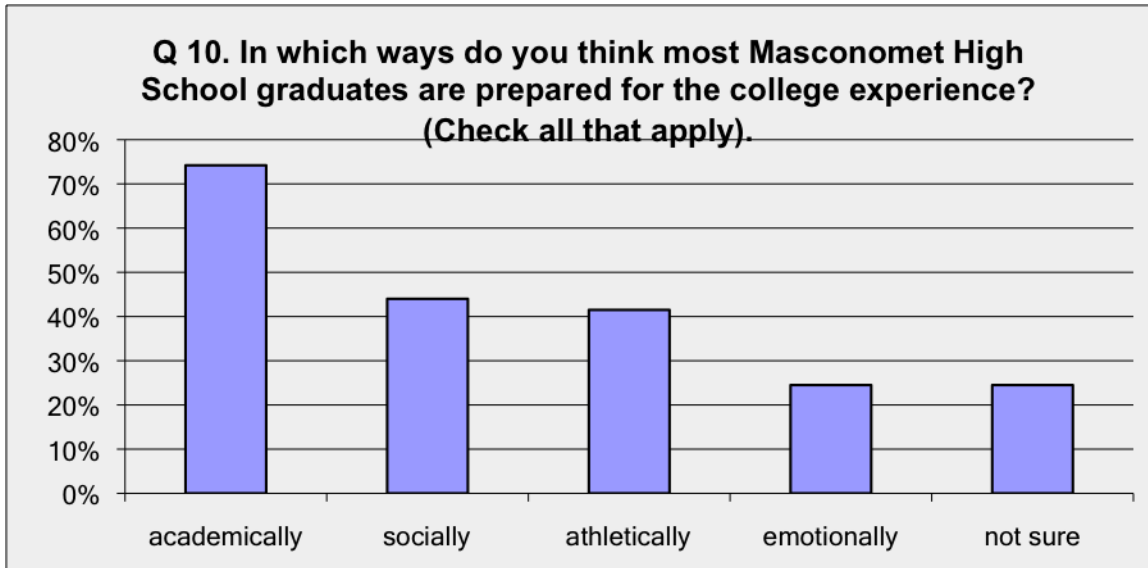
The selected adjectives for Middle School students were somewhat more evenly dispersed than for High School students. The only adjectives selected more than 40% were also the same top 2 as the High School- “athletic” and “academic achiever”. “Polite” and “overscheduled” received the next highest amount at around 37%.

By far, most comments related to the question itself as many respondents indicated they didn’t know any Middle School students or that the question was too broad.

Action Item (Questions 8 and 9):

Future surveys could consider omitting this question and/or replacing it with one regarding perceptions of students’ emotional health.

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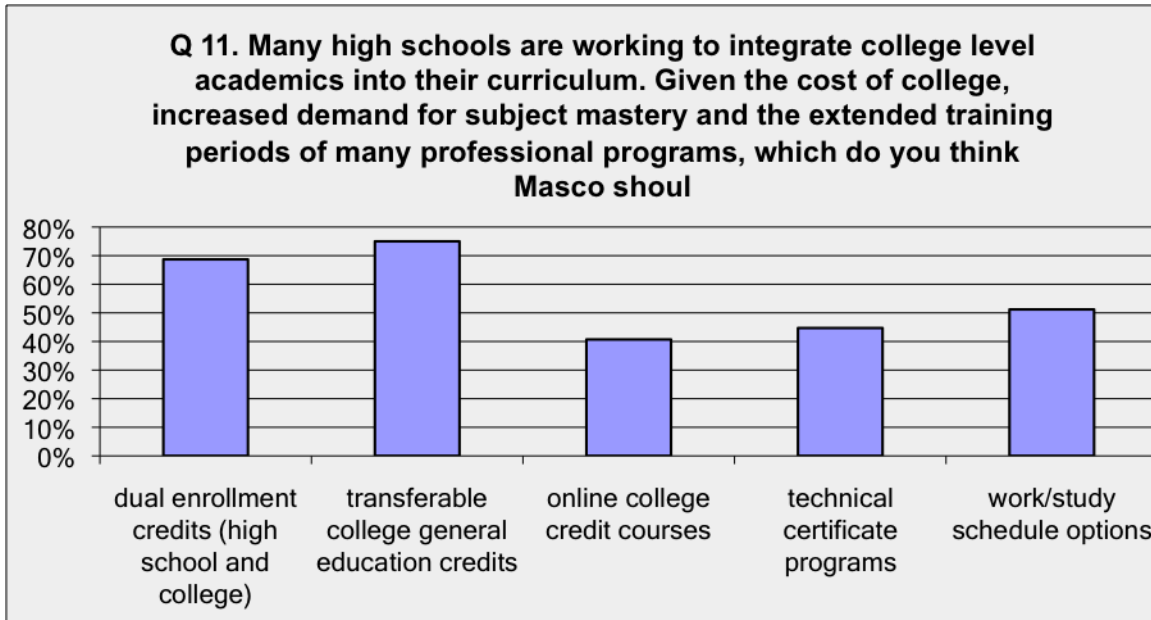


The majority of respondents (nearly 75%) believe Masco graduates are academically ready for college. Less than half agreed graduates were socially, athletically or emotionally ready.

Most comments agreed that students are academically ready but several expressed a question about what the school does to emotionally prepare graduates: “It would be nice if Masco did more with social/emotional curriculum. I would like Masco to spend more time helping young adults become responsible, respectful adults.”

Additionally, a few comments indicated concern that the top students are the only ones academically prepared.

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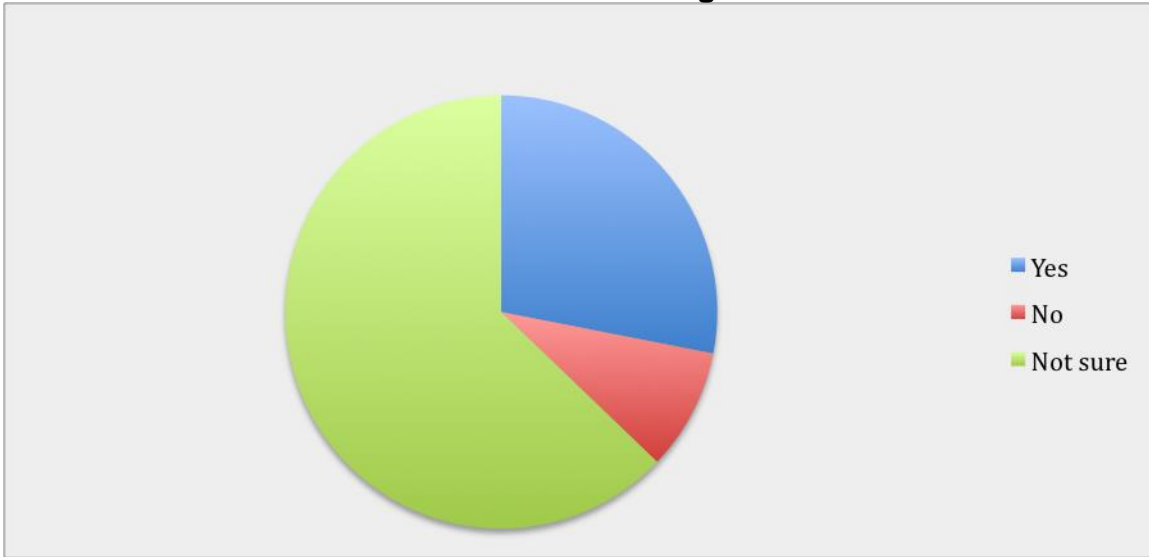
Overall, respondents were in favor of Masco exploring ways to integrate college level academics into the curriculum. Well over 60% of respondents think Masco should explore dual enrollment credits and transferable college general education credits.

Action Item:

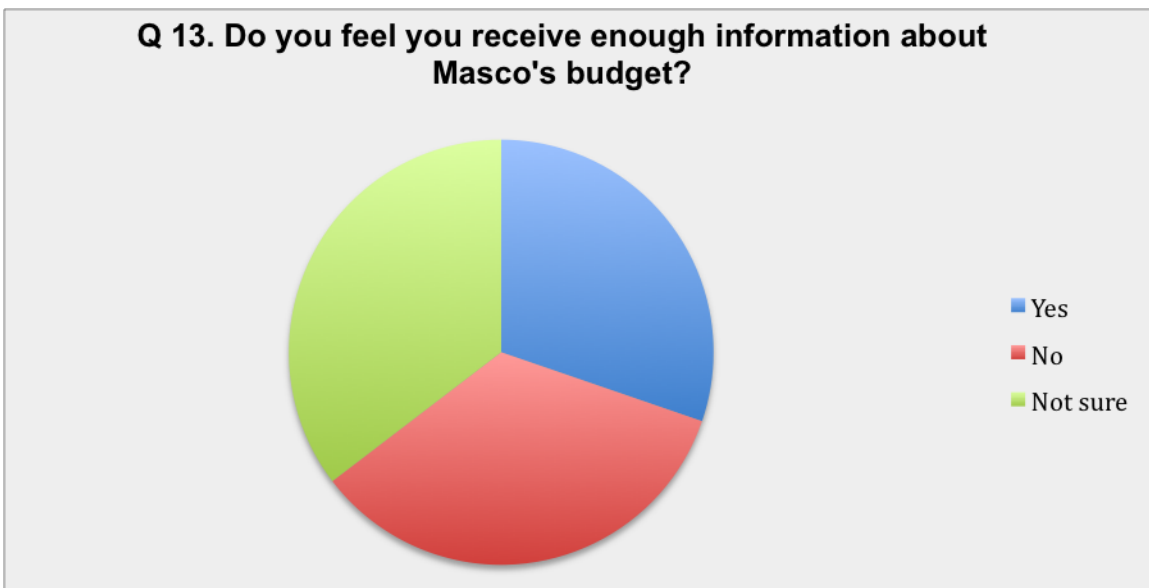
Currently, Masco does offer dual-enrollment opportunities with North Shore Community College. Also, advanced French students are engaging in college-credit class. Community support for more of these types of opportunities will be considered in Masco's Strategic Plan.

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Q 12. During the budget process, the Masconomet School Committee members and administration meet with Town Finance Committees and/or Boards of Selectman. Do you think your Town officials receive the information they need to collaborate with Masco officials on the budget?



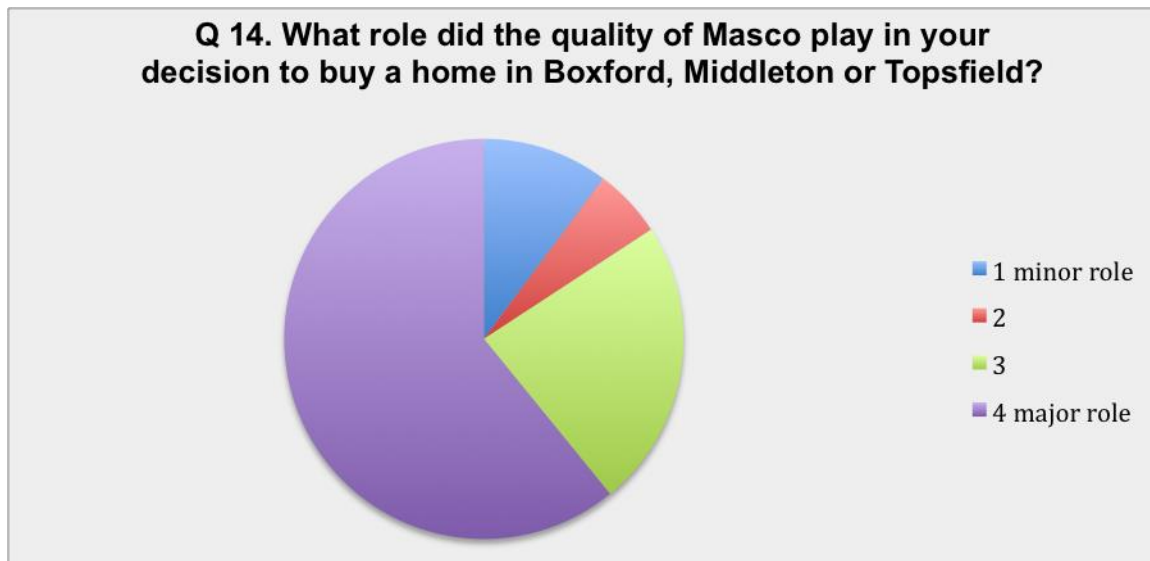
60%-65% of respondents from each town are not sure that town governments receive the information they need to collaborate with Masco on the budget.



35% of Boxford respondents, 28% of Middleton respondents and 24% of

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Topsfield respondents answered that they receive enough information on the Masco budget. This means that at least two-thirds of respondents in each community do not or are unsure. One respondent wrote “I check the school & parent websites regularly, so I am relatively well informed. People who do not have time to stay connected like this miss out.” As another respondent wrote “an email with an at-a-glance look at what’s happening during budget season” is needed. Other respondents would like to see a “breakout of salaries and benefits” and an “explanation of reserves”.



61% of respondents answered that Masco played a major role (4) in buying a home in the three towns. The breakdown by town is Topsfield 63.5%, Boxford 59% and Middleton 58%.

Q15 and 16:

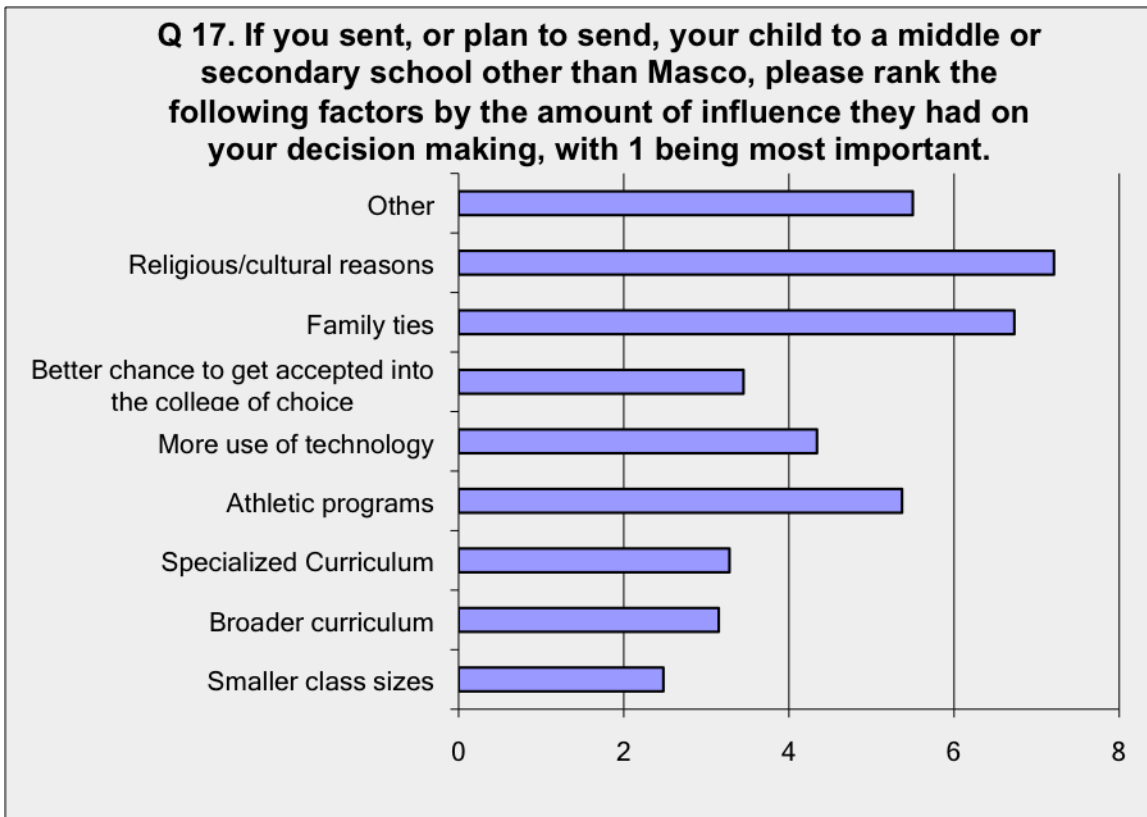
Masconomet High School offers a senior internship program for qualifying seniors in the last quarter of their senior year. The purpose of the program is to give students an authentic learning experience and expose students to the world of work. Are you involved in a business or organization that could benefit from a senior intern?

Students at Masconomet High School are required to earn 10 hours of community service in each of the 4 years they attend school. Are you involved

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in an organization that could benefit from providing meaningful volunteer opportunities to these students?

Approximately 45 respondents indicated that they are involved in a business or organization that could benefit from a senior intern or volunteers. All names have been forwarded to the internship program or the guidance department and will be contacted.



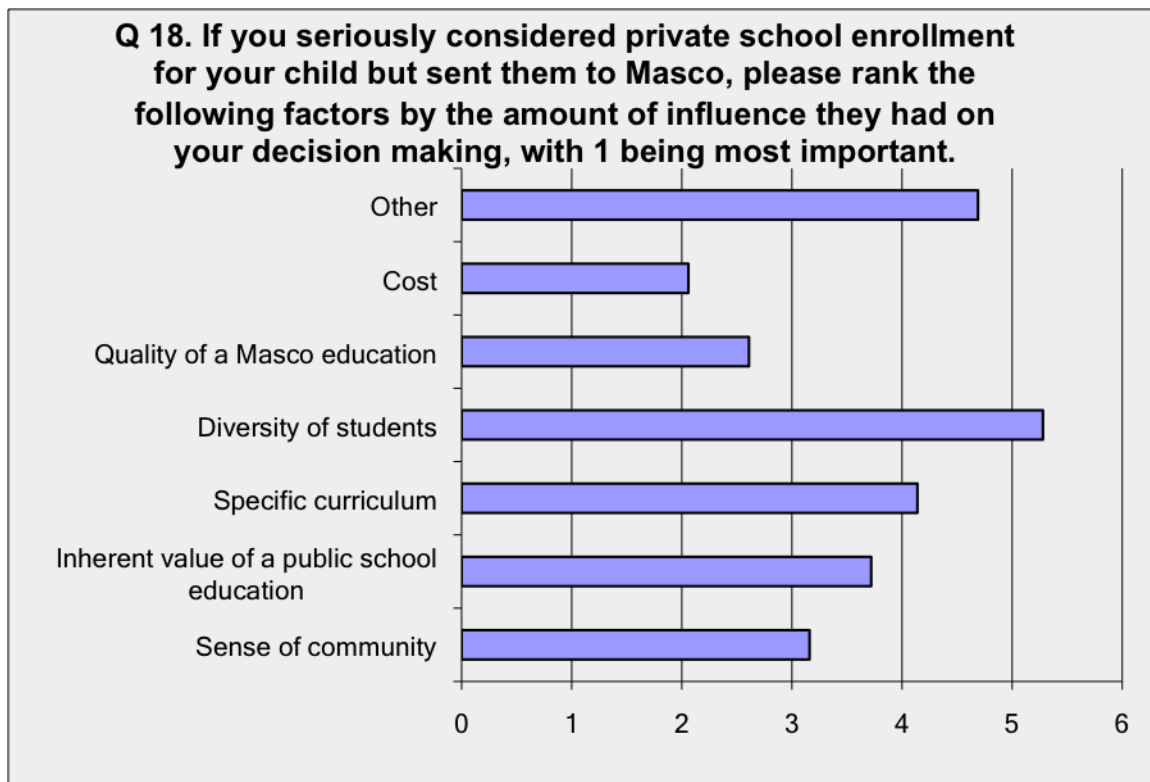
Of those respondents that sent or plan to send their child to a middle or secondary school other than Masco, 63% said the first or second most important factor that influenced their decision was smaller class size. Specialized curriculum, a “better chance to get accepted in the college of choice” and a broader curriculum were identified as the first or second most important factors by 35-40% of respondents.

Athletic programs, technology, family ties and religious/cultural reasons were not significant factors for most.

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Action Item (for Questions 17, 18 & 20):

The School Committee respects parents' decisions about what school is best for their children. The School Committee and Administration are working to enhance Masco's open house experiences and Tri Town elementary school outreach efforts to help parents to make informed decisions about where their children will attend school in the following years. Additionally, personalizing learning and increasing students' opportunities to pursue their interests through class work are important topics of conversation in Masco's Strategic Planning process.



149 Respondents answered this question (406 skipped) it suggesting that at least a 25% of all respondents had considered private school. Given that only a percentage of respondents were parents, this suggests that many Masco parents have considered private education. Approximately 59% (scoring 1 or 2) indicate the quality of a Masco education as the primary deciding factor in choosing Masco, while about 74% site cost as a primary factory. Sense of community and specific curriculum were moderately important factors.

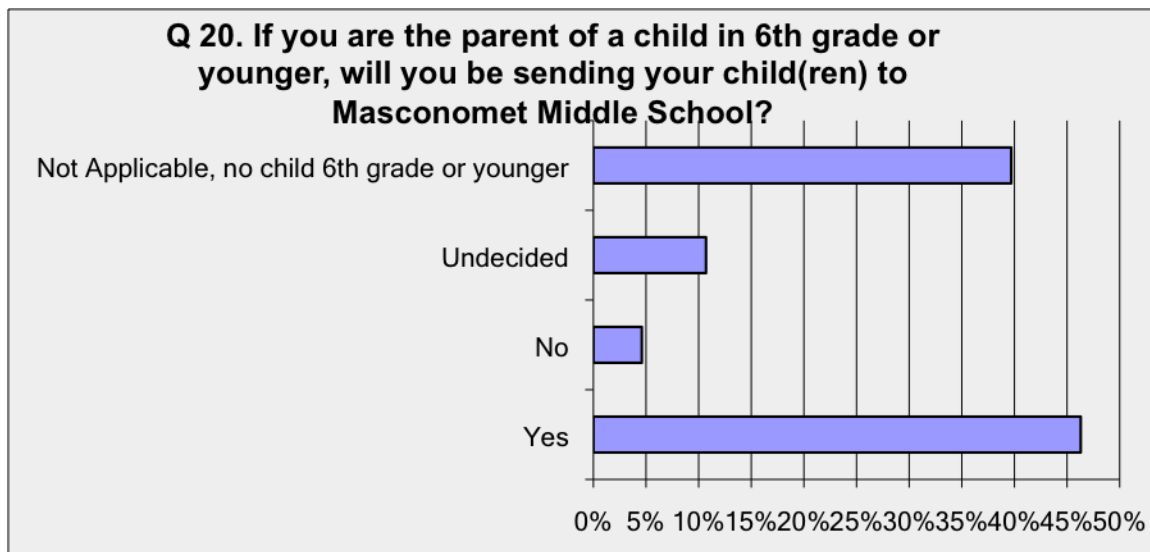
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Question 19: If your child attends or attended Masco, are there any significant programs or opportunities you think would provide a better education experience for future students?

164 respondents indicated specific suggestions ranging from lowering fees, a pool for the swim team, Jr.ROTC, to vocational opportunities and improved transition from elementary to middle school. The majority of responses were thoughtful and appeared to be based in personal experiences and knowledge of the district. Certain themes, however, did emerge. “Hands on” and experiential learning opportunities, financial literacy, civics, STEM, and Performing Arts and vocational opportunities were most commonly cited. A significant minority of suggestions included offering Latin, adding additional course level between CP and Honors, dual enrollment and college level course material. Several negatively suggested that athletics is valued above academics at Masco. “Too much homework” also got multiple mentions.

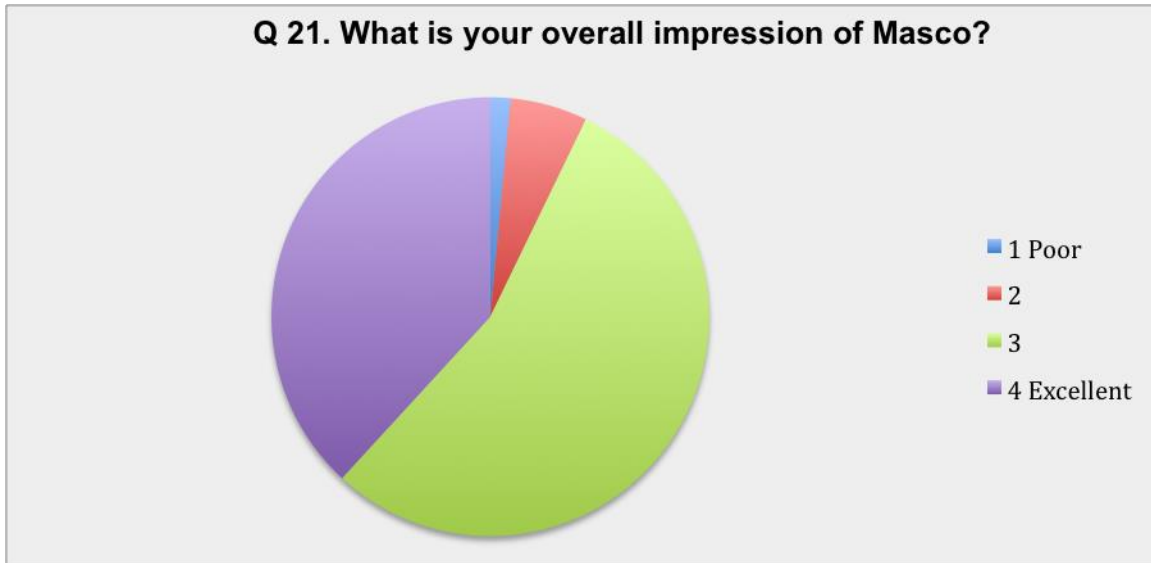
Action Item:

Most responses were consistent with current School Committee and administrative goals and priorities. These responses were addressed in the executive summary where appropriate and others have been passed on to the Masco Strategic Planning Committee.



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47% of respondents have clearly decided to send their children to Masco, while 5% have definitely decided not to send their children to Masco. Of those opting out, many mention the availability of Middle School at St John's Prep as a factor. The major theme is a quest for the most individualized instruction possible, small class size, sense of community and school culture.

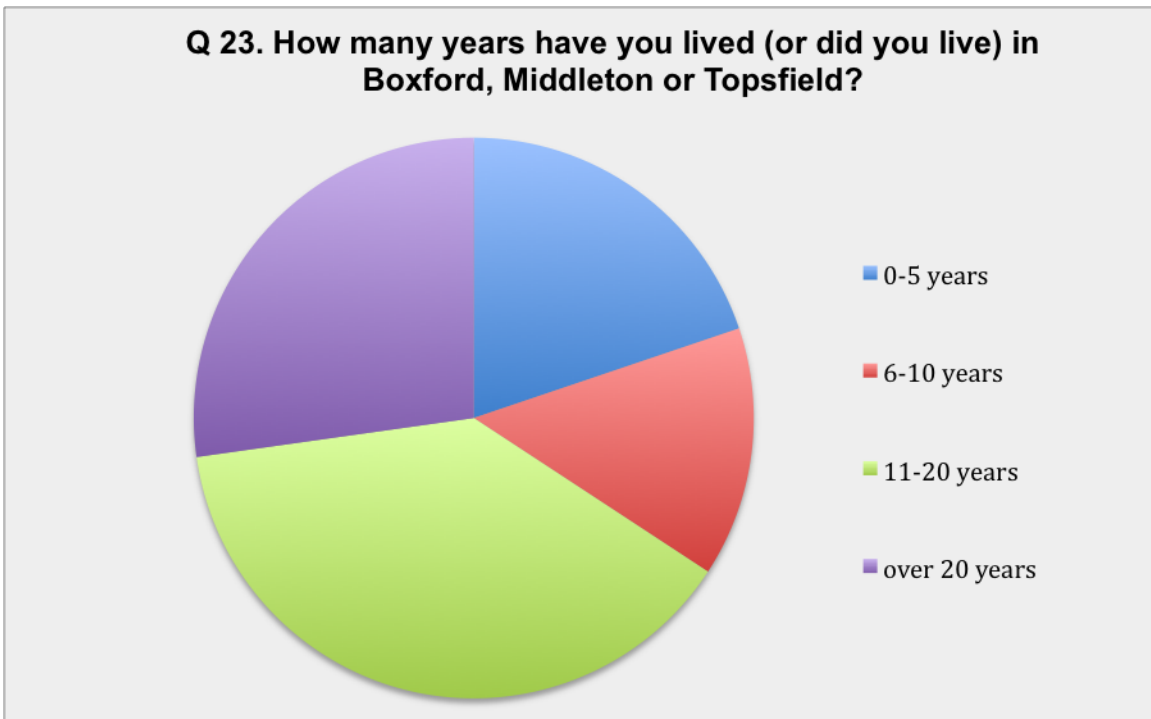


38% of respondents have an excellent impression of Masco and another 55% have a good impression. There was no significant deviation in overall impression among the 3 towns.

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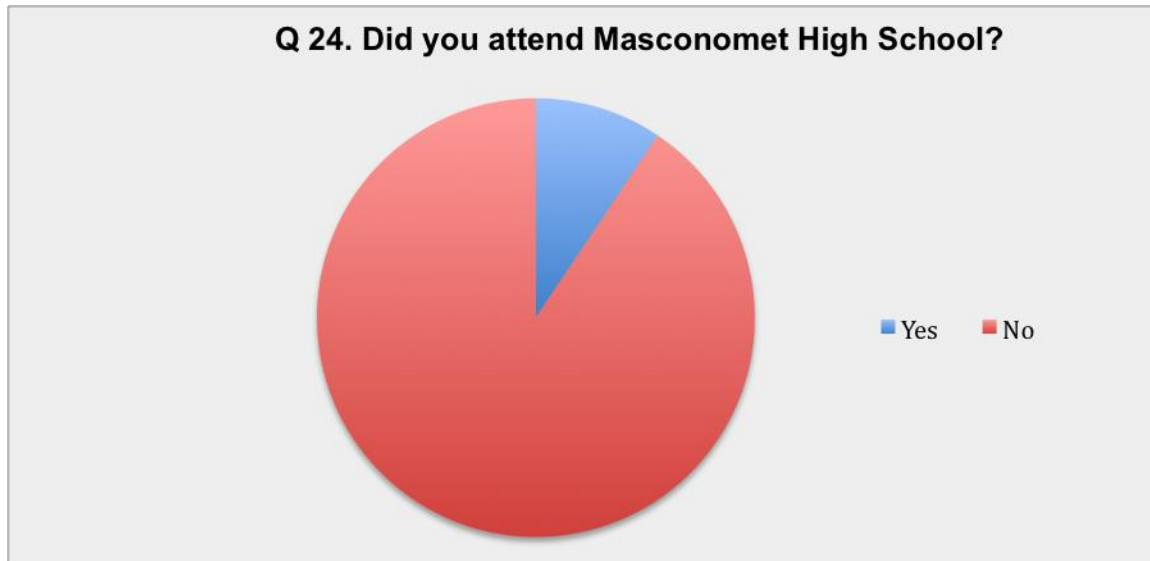


45% of respondents live in Boxford, 28% in Middleton, and 27% in Topsfield.



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39% of respondents have lived in the 3 towns for 11-20 years and another 27% for over 20 years. This is expected given the role Masco plays in the decision to buy (see Question 14) and the number of respondents with a family member currently attending Masco (see Question 25).



Only 10% of respondents are Masco alumni with the highest concentration from Topsfield at over 15%.

Q 25: Is any member of your immediate family currently attending Masconomet Regional High School or Middle School?

55% of respondents have a family member currently at Masco.

Question 26: Regarding immediate family members who are Masconomet graduates.

38% replied yes and 62% replied no.

Question 27: Anything you'd like to tell us about your impressions about Masco?

A clear majority of comments were positive and praising of Masco. There were several thoughtful suggestions and also many negative comments, most of which seem to come from individual bad experiences. These comments are addressed in the Executive Summary.

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Question 28: Contact information.

65 respondents provided contact information. Of those, 46 indicated a possible senior internship and/or community service opportunities. 33 requested general information about Masco, and a few were alumni interested in information of interest to former attendees.

Action Item:

These individuals will be contacted by Masco. Also, the school's new website will include an easy way for users to opt-in to receiving event and school updates.