

School Funding Survey Results

Prepared for the 2015 School
Funding Interim Commission

September 23, 2015

by Pad McCracken, Commission Staff

The 2015 Montana Legislature enacted Senate Bill 128 to create the School Funding Interim Commission to "conduct a study to reassess the educational needs and costs related to the basic system of free quality elementary and secondary schools." The purpose of this survey is to gather broad input on school funding priorities in Montana. Responses will be compiled and presented at the commission's September 23, 2015, meeting. Thank you for participating in the survey. Your feedback is important.

Open August 19 – September 9, 2015
Posted to Commission webpage and listserv
Statewide press release
1,393 responses
149 of 382 district "combinations"

1. Please check all that apply. Are you:

- a teacher?
- a school or district administrator?
- a school employee (not a teacher or administrator)?
- a school district trustee?
- affiliated with an education advocacy organization (ex. MTSBA, MEA-MFT, SAM, MREA, MASBO, MQEC)?
- a parent of a current student?
- a parent of a former student?
- a parent of a future student?
- a current student?
- Other interested party (please specify)

* 2. In which county and school district(s) do you reside? You may find this [map](#) helpful.

* 3. Of the topics listed below, which 5 do you consider to be the highest priorities for the school funding commission to examine? (Choose up to 5; the topics listed are based on the Legislature's funding duty under Article X, section 1(3) of the Montana Constitution and the "basic system" definition and "educationally relevant factors" from 20-9-309, MCA.)

- Equitable distribution of state funds to school districts
- Adequacy of the state's share of costs
- The educational program specified by the accreditation standards (including required courses, content standards, class size standards, teacher and other professional requirements)
- Programs for children with disabilities who require special education
- Programs for English language learners
- Programs for at-risk students (students who are affected by environmental conditions that negatively impact educational achievement)
- Programs for gifted and talented children
- Indian Education for All
- Recruitment and retention of qualified teachers and administrators
- Facilities and distance learning technologies
- Student transportation
- Student assessment systems
- Preservation of local control of schools in each district by local boards of trustees
- The needs of small, isolated schools
- The needs of large, urban schools
- The needs of American Indian students

- Not a scientific poll
- Possible multiple responses
- Possible non-MT responses
- Treat as one snapshot/open mic

Goals were:

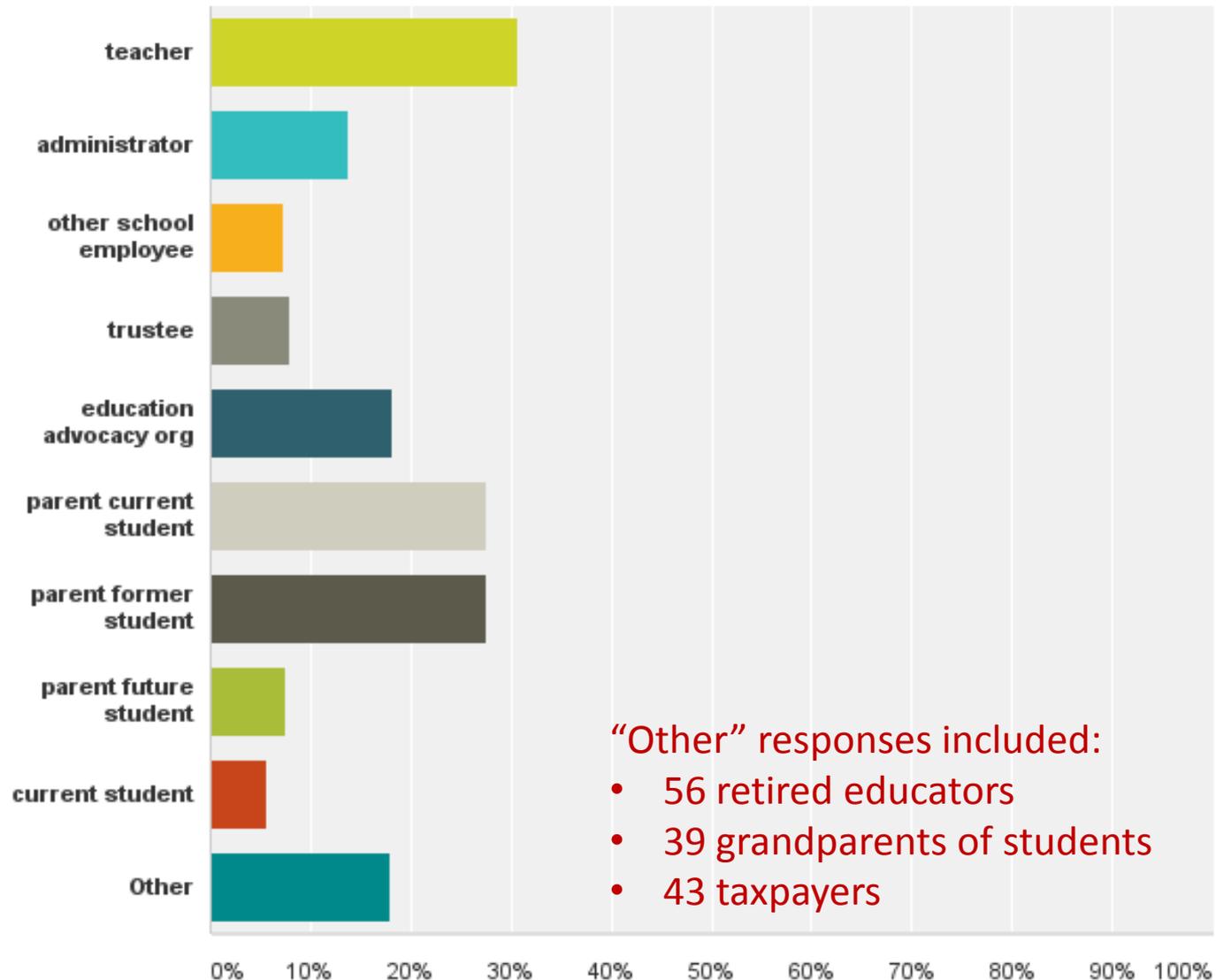
1. Allow broad public input
2. Raise awareness of study

4. Please elaborate on your choices above and/or describe other school funding topics you consider to be high priorities.

5. What other input do you have for the School Funding Interim Commission?

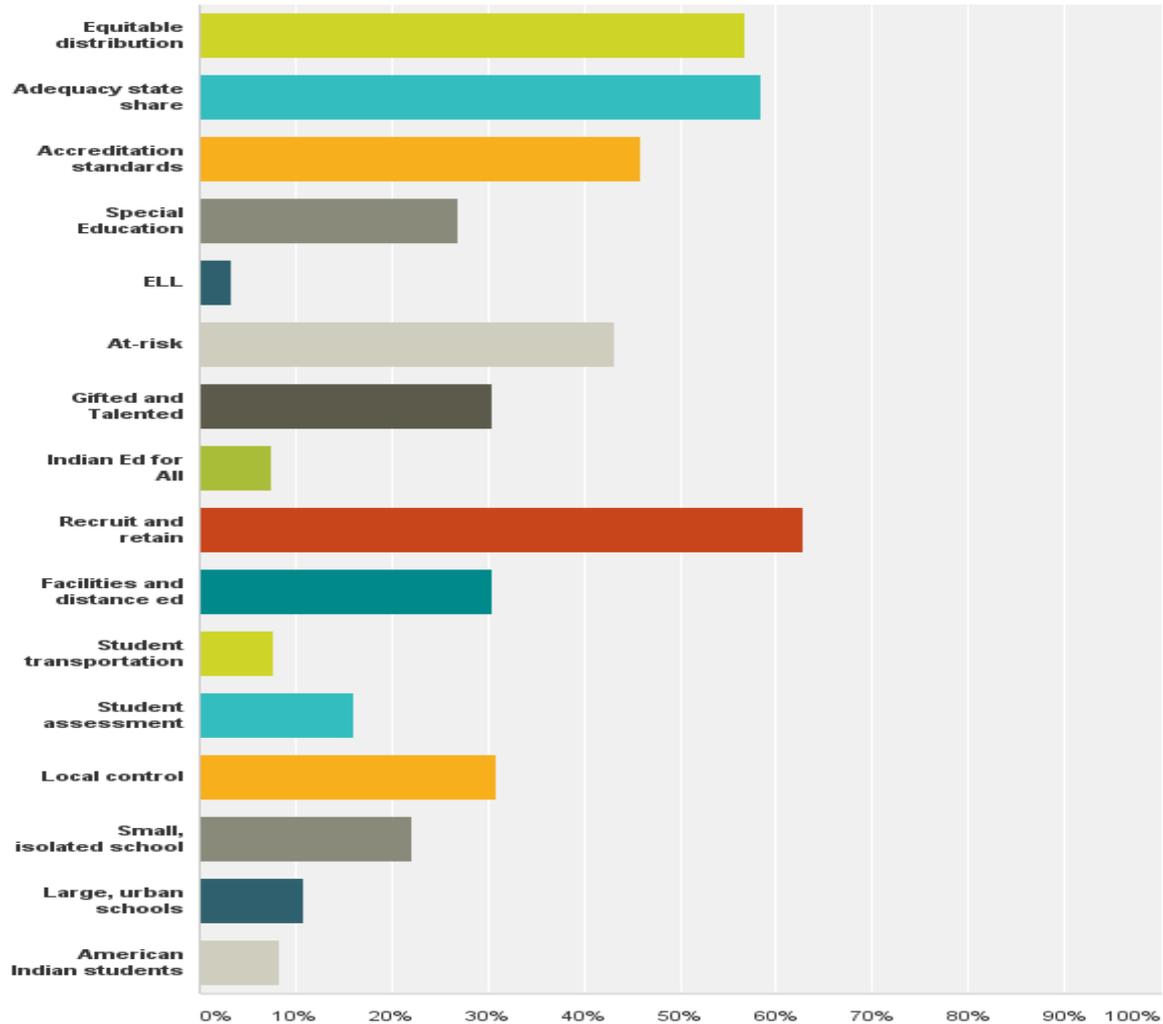
Q1 Please check all that apply. Are you:

Answered: 1,382 Skipped: 11



Q3 Of the topics listed below, which 5 do you consider to be the highest priorities for the school funding commission to examine? (Choose up to 5; the topics listed are based on the Legislature's funding duty under Article X, section 1(3) of the Montana Constitution and the "basic system" definition and "educationally relevant factors" from 20-9-309, MCA.)

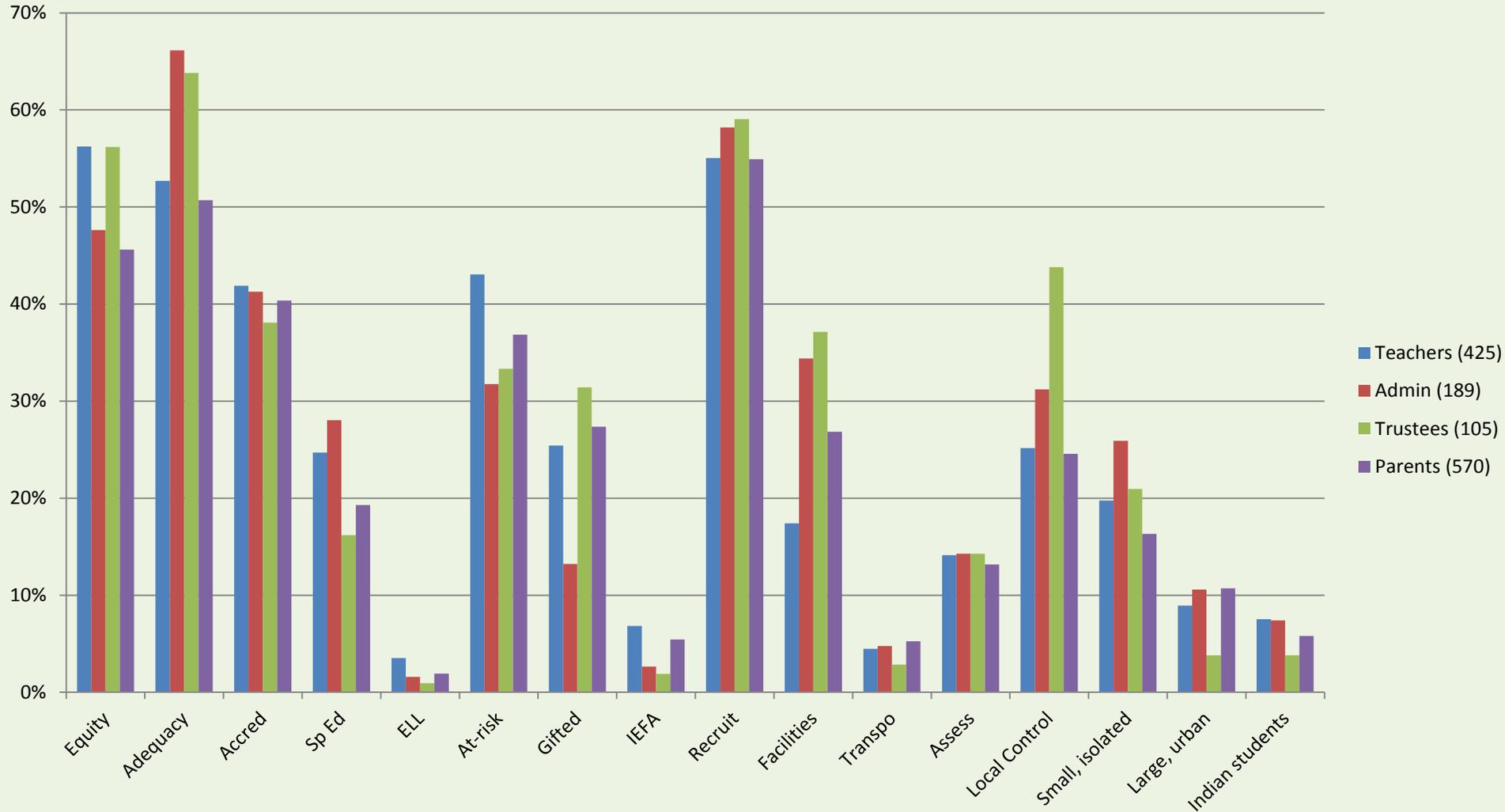
Answered: 1,150 Skipped: 243



Responses broken down by respondent information

Question #3: Of the topics listed below, which 5 do you consider to be the highest priorities for the school funding commission to examine? (Choose up to 5; the topics listed are based on the Legislature's funding duty under [Article X, section 1\(3\)](#) of the Montana Constitution and the "basic system" definition and "educationally relevant factors" from [20-9-309, MCA.](#))

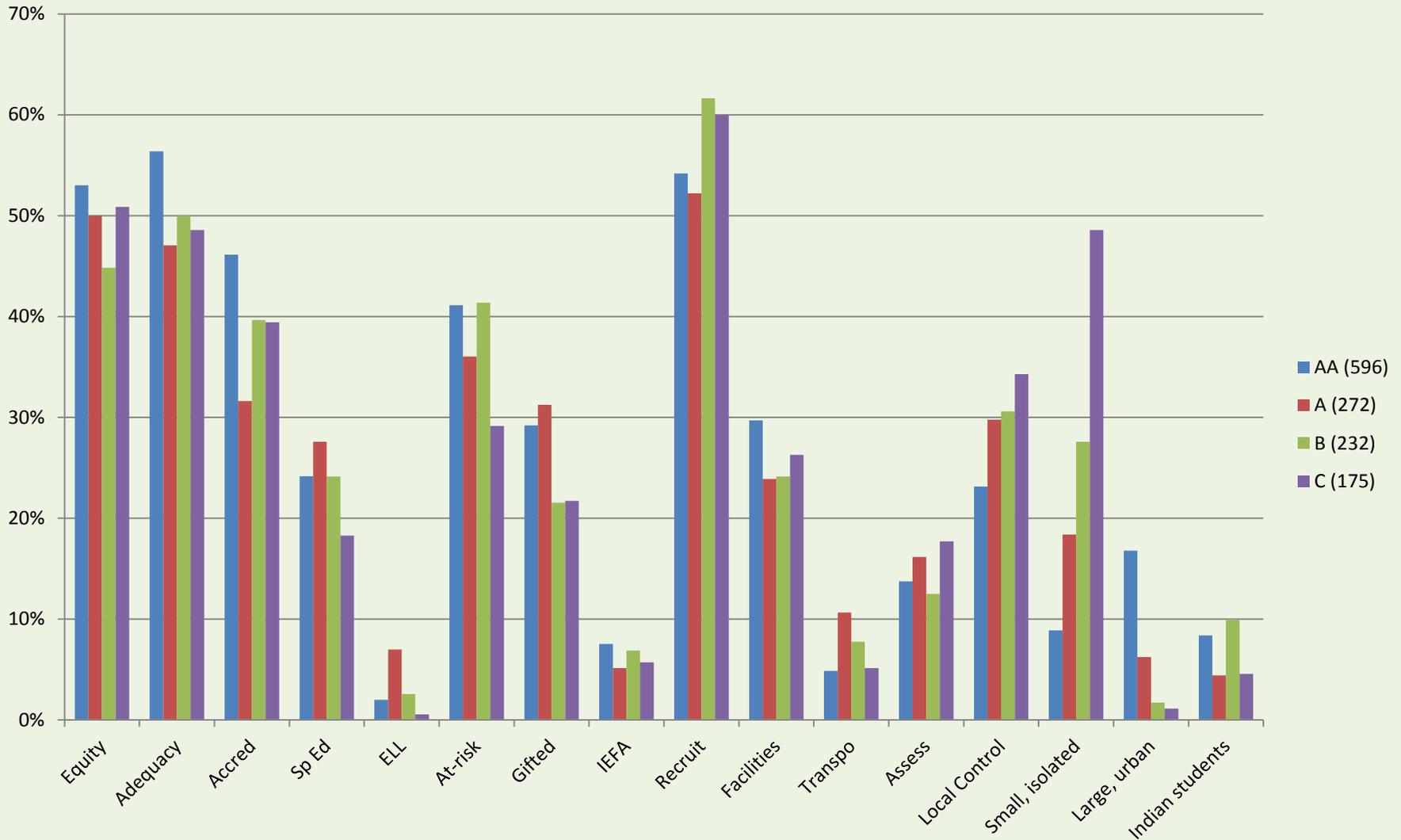
(Totals exceed 100% as respondents could identify in multiple groups—i.e. teacher and parent—and select up to 5 priorities)



Responses broken down by MHSA size classification

Question #3: Of the topics listed below, which 5 do you consider to be the highest priorities for the school funding commission to examine? (Choose up to 5; the topics listed are based on the Legislature's funding duty under [Article X, section 1\(3\)](#) of the Montana Constitution and the "basic system" definition and "educationally relevant factors" from [20-9-309, MCA.](#))

(Totals exceed 100% as respondents could select up to 5 priorities)



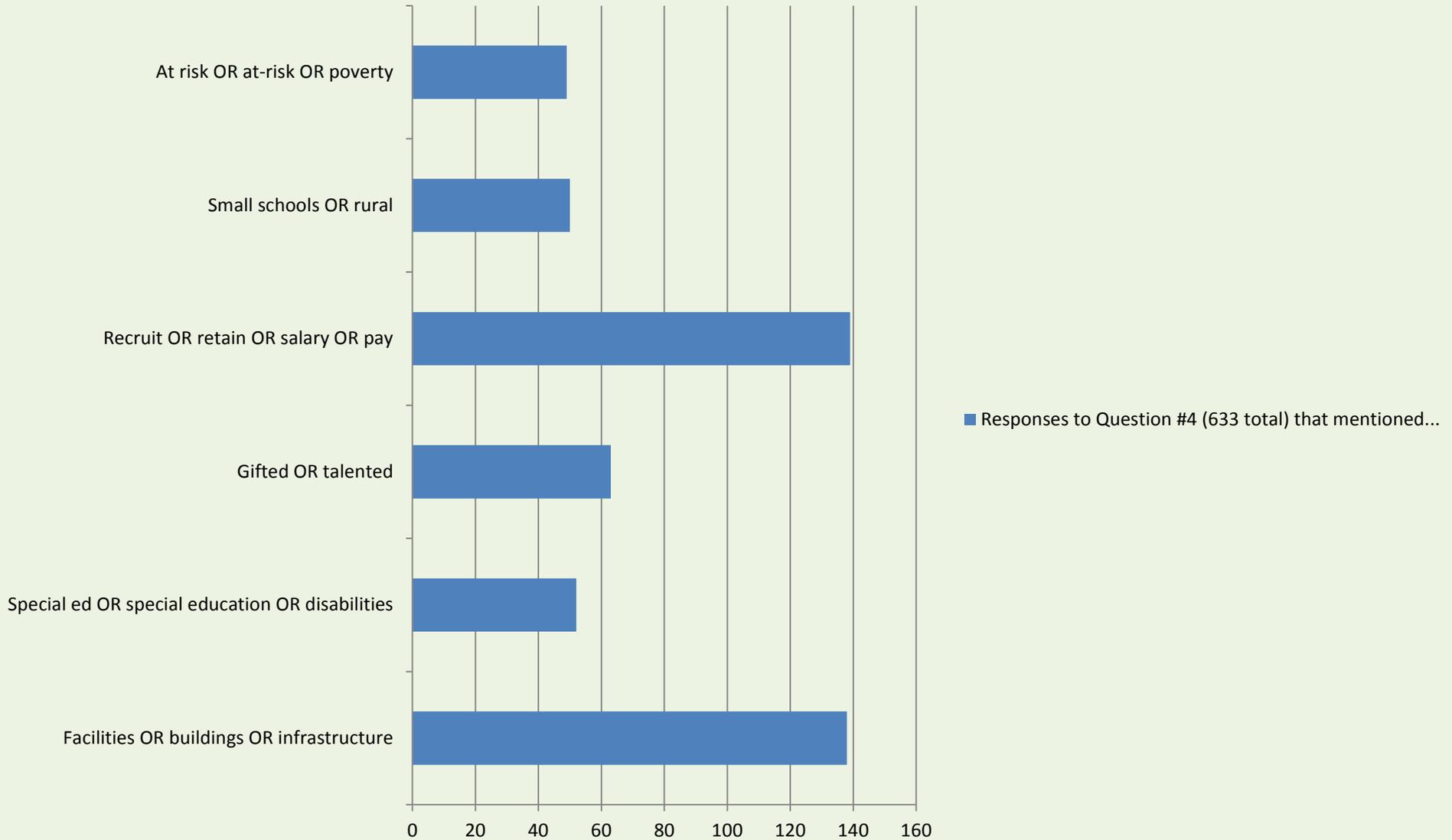
Survey Monkey has a text analysis tool that generates a “wordle”-like image of “most important words/phrases”.

The image below is generated from the 677 open-ended responses to Question #4 from the survey: Please elaborate on your choices above and/or describe other school funding topics you consider to be high priorities.

Local Control Minimum Public Education Charter Schools
Small Schools Mill Levies Special Education
Specific Learning Insurance Pay Infrastructure
Facilities Equitable Programs Testing
School Districts Oil Children Choices
Adequate Funding Stop Quality
Education Ask Qualified Teachers Deal Think

Question #4: Please elaborate on your choices above and/or describe other school funding topics you consider to be high priorities.

Responses to Question #4 (633 total) that mentioned...

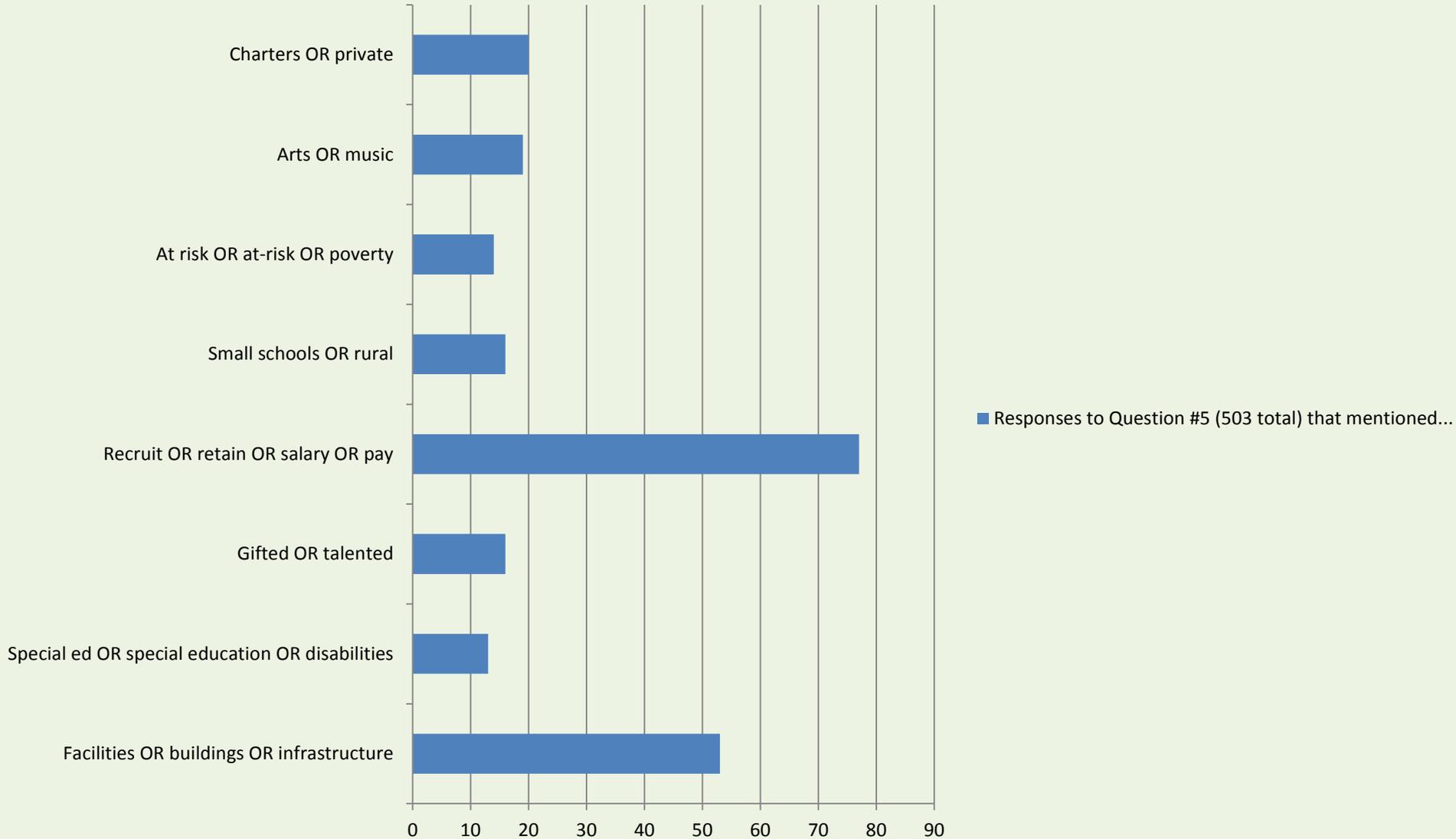


The image below is generated from the 503 open-ended responses to Question #5 from the survey: What other input do you have for the School Funding Interim Commission?

Good Luck Funding Statewide Stop Rural Areas Gifted Safe
Arts Bigger Schools School System
Government Districts Affect Students
Wyoming Education Health Insurance
Teachers Common Core Public Schools
Fix Charter Schools Groups Infrastructure
Adequate and Equitable School Board Regular Basis Politics
Middle School

Question #5: What other input do you have for the School Funding Interim Commission?

Responses to Question #5 (503 total) that mentioned...



To explore the responses to open-ended questions #4 & #5, visit the commission webpage at www.leg.mt.gov/sfc, click on meeting materials, and open the [pdf](#). You'll be able to search for terms using the find function (Ctrl+F).

the Montana Legislature

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MONTANA 64th Session

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School Funding Interim Commission 2015-2016

Next Meeting: The commission's first meeting will be held on September 23, 2015, in room 137 of the Montana State Capitol beginning at 8 AM.

[Draft agenda](#) **NEW**

[Meeting materials](#) **NEW**

Announcements:

Sign up to receive email updates about the School Funding Interim Commission on the [Sign up for e-notices](#) page.

To find out more about the commission, visit the [About SFIC](#) page.

For links to background materials, go to the [Meetings and Materials](#) page.

Please contact Pad McCracken at padmccracken@mt.gov or 406-444-3595 with questions about the commission.

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Committee Topics

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September 23, 2015 School Funding Interim Commission Meeting

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes Log](#)

Administrative matters and commission background

- [Rules, Procedures, and Guidelines for Interim Committees](#)
- [Public Comment Guidelines](#)
- [Article X, Montana Constitution](#)
- [Senate Bill No. 128 \(2015\)](#)

Input on school funding study

- [Survey results](#)
- [Responses to open-ended Questions #4 and #5](#)
- [Survey presentation](#)

School funding in Montana

- [Montana school funding from 50,000' \(ppt\)](#)
- [School district funds](#)
- [Overview of district general fund](#)
- [FY 2016 General Fund Budget Overview and Worksheets \(OPI\)](#)
- [FY 2016 General Fund Budgeting spreadsheet \(OPI\)](#)
- [Individual district info prepared for budgeting exercise](#)

Commission resources and work plan

- [Montana State Library GIS map of school districts](#)
- [OPI GEMS Data Warehouse - School Finance](#)
- [Education Commission of the States](#)
- [Possible Commission timeline and meetings](#)

Other materials

- [Montana School Funding Quiz \(Pad McCracken\)](#)
- [Montana School Funding Quiz with answers](#)

Questions?