



Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education

1251 – 1st Avenue SW, Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 8B4

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October 24, 2011

Dear Parents & Guardians of Students at St. Patrick's School:

I am writing to share with you the results of the recent survey I asked you to complete in regards to the over utilization of St. Patrick's School.

Attached in this e-mail you will find:

- A copy of the survey for reference
- Four charts which display the survey results
- A document which presents major themes found in the written comments people made on the surveys. I have also included some responses to those major themes.

The purpose of sending you this information ahead of the meeting on November 1 is to allow you time to study the results. It will also reduce the amount of time I will take explaining the results and allow more opportunity for you to provide Board Members and Senior Administration with feedback.

You are more than welcome to contact me prior to the meeting if you have additional questions or comments @ david.leahy@mhcbe.ab.ca or by calling me at 403-502-8345.

I look forward to seeing you on Tuesday, November 1 at 7:00 p.m. in the St. Patrick's School Gym. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Leahy".

David Leahy
Superintendent of Schools

Encl: Survey Document
Chart
Responses to Survey Comments



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September 26, 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians of Students at St. Patrick's School:

Shortly after being elected in October of 2010, the Board of Trustees held a retreat to establish the strategic plan for the division over the next three years. The Trustees built their strategic plan around five pillars:

1. *Building Catholicity*
2. *Efficient and Effective Operations*
3. *Facilities*
4. *Advocacy*
5. *Student Achievement*

In relation to ***Efficient and Effective Operations*** and ***Facilities*** the Board of Trustees set a goal to balance utilization rates within the school system. The term "utilization rate" describes the percentage of students attending a school when compared to the schools maximum student capacity. A schools maximum capacity is determined by an Alberta Education formula. Alberta Education policy states that schools are considered full when they reach a utilization rate of 85%.

St. Patrick's School has a current utilization rate of approximately 127%. I have been asked by the Board of Trustees to survey St. Patrick's parents about overcrowding at the school. There are other schools in our division that have a utilization rate much lower than 85%. If we were to balance the utilization rates then some students from St. Patrick's would have to be transferred to those schools.

Attached to this letter are a background document and a survey. Please complete the survey and return it to your child's home room teacher **or** email your responses by Thursday, October 6. I have scheduled a parent meeting to discuss the survey results on ***Tuesday, November 1, 2011***; in the ***St. Patrick's School Gymnasium*** beginning at ***7:00 p.m.***

If you have any questions, please contact my office at 403-502-8345. You can send an e-mail inquiry to David.Leahy@mhcbe.ab.ca.

Sincerely,

David Leahy
Superintendent of Schools

DL/dd

St. Patrick's School Survey

Background Information

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why might the Board change the attendance zones for St. Patrick's and transfer some students to other division schools?

The utilization rate for St. Patrick's School is 127%. The utilization rates for the other schools in Medicine Hat are listed below. As you can see from the list there is room at several other schools for more students.

Monsignor McCoy	66%
St. Francis Xavier	90%
St. Louis	48%
St. Mary's	61%
St. Michael's	108%
Mother Teresa	102%
Notre Dame	87%
École St. Thomas	90%

2. Why are schools considered full if they have a utilization rate of 85%?

The Alberta Education formula that determines utilization rates takes into consideration all the space inside the school, not just classrooms. So the library, hallway space, front foyer, washrooms, etc are included in the utilization calculation. As a result, Alberta Education says a school is full when it reaches 85% of capacity.

3. SD 76 has been awarded a new school in the south sector of the city, when will Medicine Hat Catholic get a new school?

We have been asking the government for a new school in the south for a number of years. Alberta Education and our MLAs have told us that we were very close to getting a new school in the latest announcements. However, close does not help us with the overcrowding at St. Patrick's School.

4. I have heard that although Medicine Hat Catholic did not get a new school the government did award the division with two additional modular classrooms. Where will these modular classrooms be placed and will it help the overcrowding at St. Patrick's School?

When the modulares were originally awarded one was assigned to Mother Teresa School and the other to St. Michael's School in Medicine Hat. Administration in the division looked at St. Patrick's School and decided that an additional modular would fit onto the front of the school. Therefore we have asked the government to reassign the Mother Teresa modular to St. Patrick's School. We expect this request will be approved.

5. How much will one new modular reduce the utilization rate at St. Patrick's School?

One additional modular at St. Patrick's School will reduce the utilization rate to approximately 101%.

- 6. The new public school that will be going up near Notre Dame is going to be a Kindergarten to Grade Nine School. Is it possible that when that school opens in 2014 some of the current students going to St. Patrick's School will attempt to register in that new school and as a result reduce the utilization rate? If that is a possibility will the board wait another couple of years to see the impact on the new school before rezoning boundaries?**

When new schools open up they usually attract students from other districts. That happened when Notre Dame Academy opened. Medicine Hat Catholic gained a lot of students from the public system. St. Patrick's School may lose some students when the new school opens up. This possibility may be a factor when Trustees decide if rezoning is necessary for St. Patrick's School for 2012-2013.

- 7. One of the classrooms at St. Patrick's School is used for a pre-school program. Could this be used for regular classroom space?**

This space could be used as a regular classroom. However, many parents have told us that having a pre-school at St. Patrick's School is a real attraction and is one of the reasons they enroll their children in the school.

- 8. If the St. Patrick's attendance zones are changed is it possible that St. Patrick's could offer a K-6 program?**

Yes, that could be a possibility. However, that would probably keep the utilization of St. Patrick's School quite high and drop that utilization rate at Notre Dame.

- 9. It looks like the most logical school to move students to is St. Louis School. Can you tell me more about St. Louis?**

St. Louis School is the former Montreal Street School in the public school system. After the public system closed Montreal Street School the building was sold to a private developer who wanted to turn the building into a housing development for seniors. That project did not turn out to be successful. At that time the enrollment at the old St. Louis School was growing and the Center for Academic and Personal Excellence (CAPE) was looking for greater space. As a result the old Montreal Street received extensive renovations and the building was transferred to Medicine Hat Catholic and became the new St. Louis School. The old St. Louis School was leased to CAPE.

The new St. Louis School is a beautiful building with three floors and a full basement. There are classrooms on the first and second floor. The third floor features a loft with a beautiful library. St. Louis currently has a student population of 100 students. Its capacity is 316 students. This number however is very misleading because the school has wide hallways and stairwells which inflate its utilization rate.

- 10. Would you need to change the grade configuration of St. Mary's School if students from St. Patrick's were transferred there?**

Yes. St. Mary's would need to become a Grade K-9 school. There are a lot of merits to the K-9 school configuration.

- Less transition for students. Children only attend two schools in their 13 years of K-12 education, (K-9 and high school)
- More programming potential from a larger school
- Students build longer term relationships with other students and staff

- 11. When will the Board of Trustees decide if they are going to rezone the St. Patrick's boundaries?**

Senior administration will be asking Trustees to make a decision before the end of the year.

St. Patrick's School Survey-Sept 2011

SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS:

There are 2 *Options* for you to respond to the Survey:

Option #1: Please complete and return this Survey to your child's homeroom teacher by Thursday, October 6, 2011 *or*;

Option #2: Please forward your responses by email to david.leahy@mhcb.e.ab.ca by Thursday, October 6, 2011.

1. What level of over utilization *do you think* St. Patrick's School can tolerate before some students are transferred to another schools?

-100%
-110%
-120%
-130%
-135%
-other amount _____please fill in.

2. St. Louis School and St. Mary's School have the most room to accommodate new students. If students need to be transferred from St. Patrick's which school would you prefer?

-St. Louis School
-St. Mary's School

3. If needed, should the Pre-School Program be phased out at St. Patrick's School and that space turned into a classroom for a Kindergarten to Grade Five class?

-Yes
-No

4. Would you favor the transfer of some St. Patrick's School students to another school in the Division in order to allow St. Patrick's to become a Kindergarten to Grade Six School?

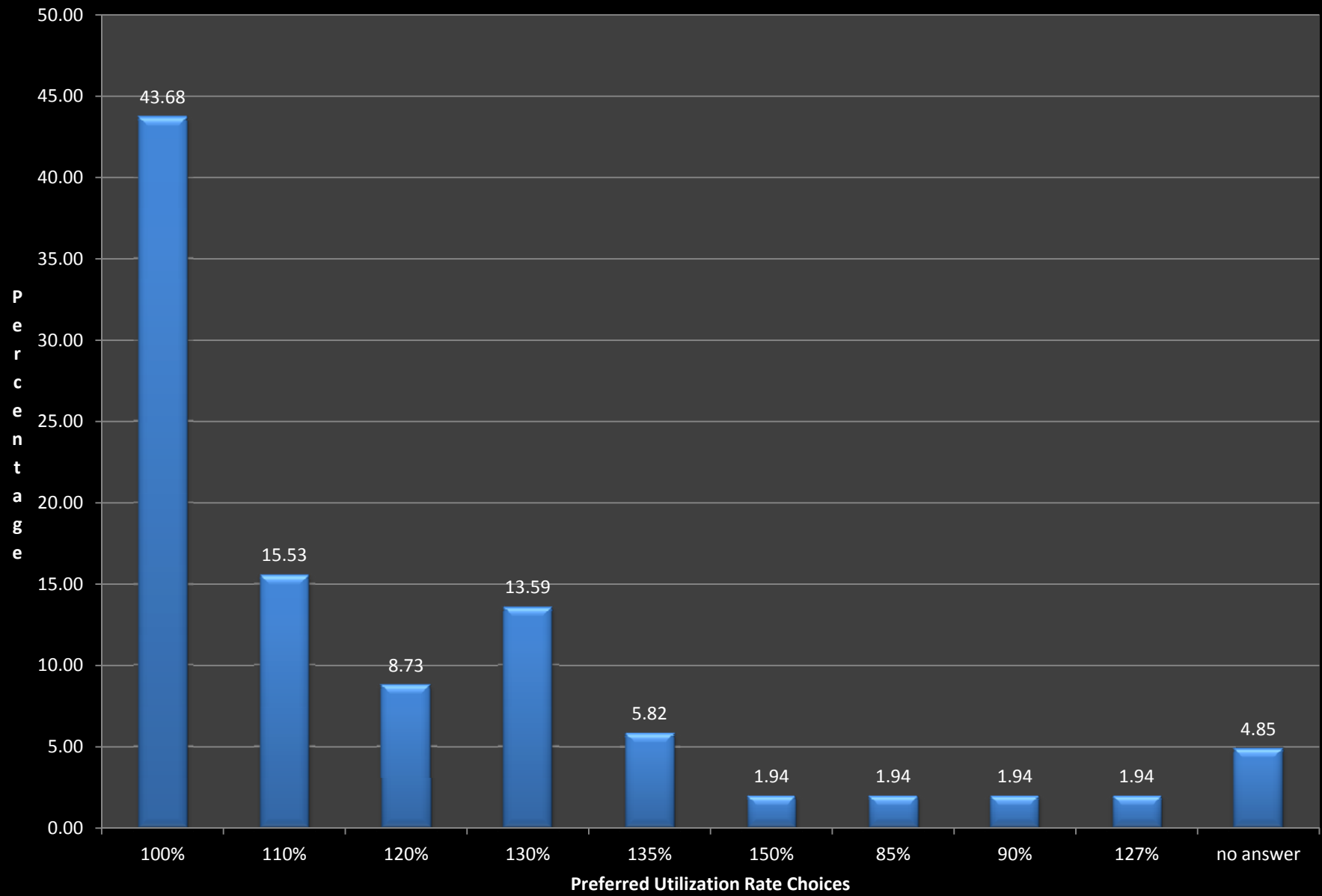
-Yes
-No

5. If you have any questions or comments please use the space provided below.

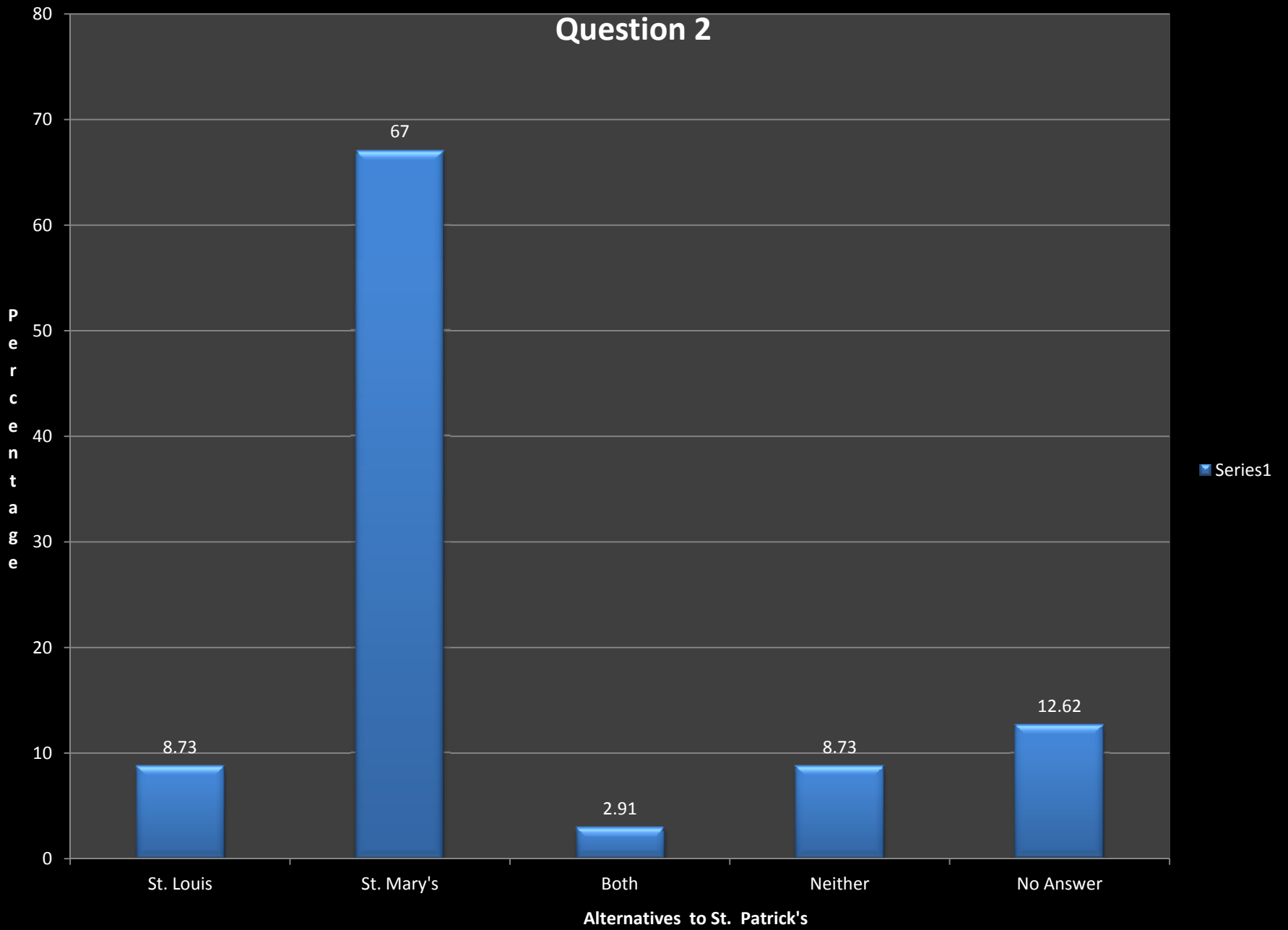
Thank you for completing this survey. Your opinion matters.

The Board of Trustees values your feedback. Please plan to attend the Parent Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, November 01, 2011 @ 7:00 pm at St. Patrick's School Gym.

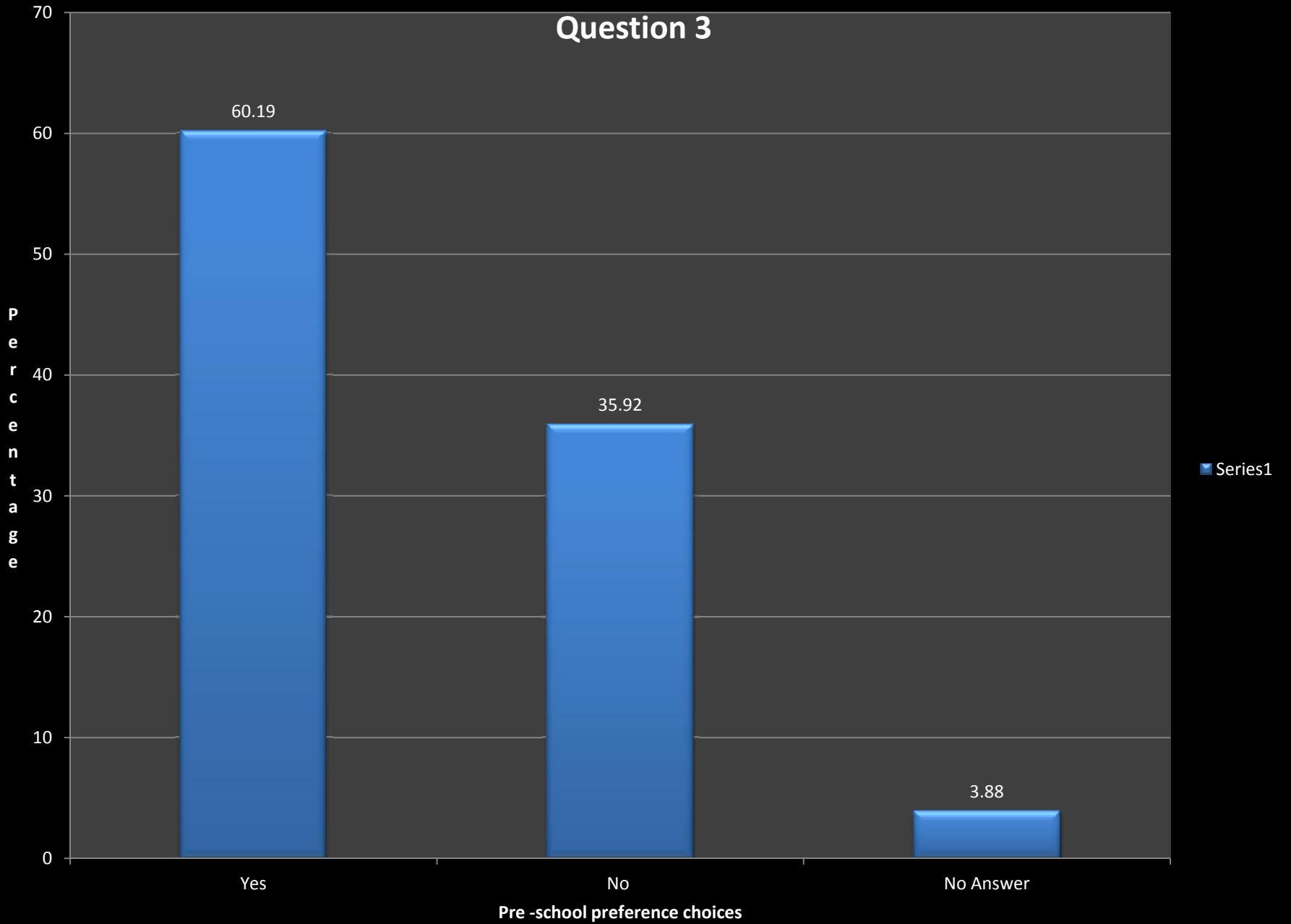
Question 1



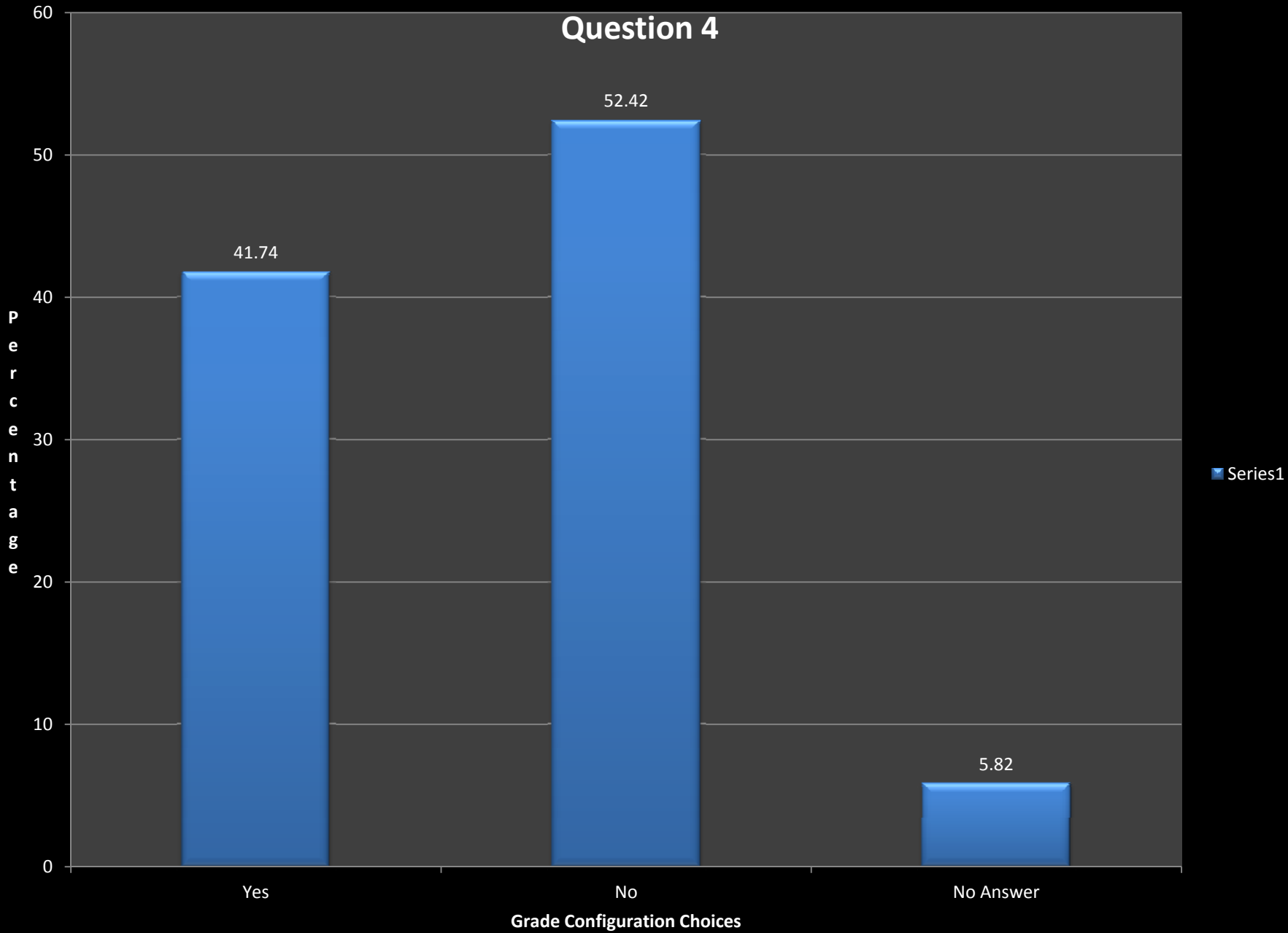
Question 2



Question 3



Question 4



Question 1

Choices	Percentage
100%	43.68
110%	15.53
120%	8.73
130%	13.59
135%	5.82
150%	1.94
85%	1.94
90%	1.94
127%	1.94
no answer	4.85

Question 2

Choices	Percentage
St. Louis	8.73
St. Mary's	67
Both	2.91
Neither	8.73
No Answer	12.62

Question 3

Choices	Percentage
Yes	60.19
No	35.92
No Answer	3.88

Question 4

Choices	Percentage
Yes	41.74
No	52.42
No Answer	5.82

St. Patrick's Parent Survey - School Utilization
Major Themes/Questions/Concerns

1. Parents want a better understanding of how utilization rates are determined.

Comment: *At the start of the meeting on November 1, senior administration will provide more detail on how utilization rates are determined.*

2. There are rumors that the Board of Trustees have already decided to transfer students out of St. Patrick's and that the students going will be the ones who live closest to the school?

Comment: *Trustees have not made any decisions or had any discussions on whether students should be transferred out of St. Patrick's.*

3. If students were to be moved how will the decision be made which students will be moved?

Comment: *Senior administration will study demographic data within the St. Patrick's attendance boundaries. Population projections will also be studied. Proximity to the school will likely be a factor. (eg. A student living across the street from the school would be less likely to be transferred than someone who is being bused to the school.)*

4. What has led to St. Patrick's being over utilized?

Comment: *One of the reasons that St. Patrick's is over utilized is because the school serves some of the fastest growing communities in the city. Secondly, school boards are reluctant to bus students out of their attendance area. For example, Three years ago there was a rumor in the community that the school board was thinking of transferring students out of St. Patrick's. Trustees and senior administration met with St. Patrick's parents for a meeting. Parents were told:*

- *There were no plans for to move students at that time*
- *That at some point in the near future students may need to be transferred out of St. Patrick's because of space issues*

The clear message parents gave trustees and senior administration at that meeting was that they were willing to tolerate a high utilization and were not interested in any kind of boundary changes. That message was heard. However parents were told that if the division did not get a new elementary school in the area there may be a time when student transfers may be necessary. Since that time two additional modulars were added to St. Patrick's.

5. How come new students are being accepted into St. Patrick's if the school is over utilized?

Comment: *Catholic students who move into the St. Patrick's attendance area must be accepted for registration.*

Two years ago senior administration directed school administration to no longer accept cross registration requests to St. Patrick's. Cross registration is when parents from outside of the St. Patrick's attendance area request to register their child at the school. There have been a few exceptions when class sizes would tolerate the requests.

6. How many students can be in St. Patrick's before we exceed guidelines for washrooms?

Comments: *St. Patrick's is rated as having the washroom capacity to accommodate 450 students. Currently there are 377 full time equivalent students attending the school. Despite those numbers washroom access is a concern.*

7. Can St. Patrick's be enlarged?

Comment: *Yes and no. At the meeting the history of the school will be explained in greater detail. In summary, the core part of the school was moved from its initial location on Riverside to Southridge in the mid 1980's. Additions were added to the core, and subsequently a number of modular classrooms. The infrastructure of the school is at or near its capacity. If we were to add 2 or 3 more attached modulares there would also be a need for a "wet modular." A "wet modular" is a modular that contains bathrooms. Free standing modulares could be added, however they would take up playground space.*

Please note that in order to be approved for modulares a division needs to make an application to Alberta Education. Modulares are at a premium in the province.

8. How could you move elementary students to St. Mary's if it is a grade seven to nine school?

Comment: *We would change the grade configuration of St. Mary's to Kindergarten to Grade Nine.*

9. Why does St. Patrick's have a pre-school?

Comment: *Medicine Hat Catholic started to add pre-school service at its schools in response to parent requests. Pre-schools spaces were at a premium in the city. When full day kindergarten was eliminated many parents told us they needed pre-school service at schools.*

10. I have heard parents talk about Grandfathering. What does that mean?

Comment: *In many divisions when students need to be transferred students are sometimes "Grandfathered." What would this mean in the context of St. Patrick's? If a family is currently attending St. Patrick's and their part of the attendance zone is changed to another school the children in the family currently attending St. Patrick's can stay at St. Patrick's and any younger siblings can also attend St. Patrick's. Only families who are new to the Division are directed towards the new school.*

11. Will non-Catholics be transferred before Catholics?

Comment: *No. If transfer is necessary it is likely that all the students in a particular area will be moved.*