



Hammer Montessori Foundation 2014 Community Survey Results

About the Survey

The Hammer Montessori Foundation recently conducted an online survey of the parent community, and this report presents the survey results. The purpose of the survey was to collect parent perspectives on current and future activities of the HMF, including fund development, programs, community engagement, administration, and volunteer opportunities. The survey results will inform the HMF's strategic planning process in April.

The survey was open Thursday, February 27th through Thursday, March 13th. The initial invitation was sent via the Thursday Envelope, BigTent, and Yahoo; paper and Spanish language versions of the survey were available by request. Reminders were sent twice-weekly during the survey period via BigTent, Yahoo, and direct email from the Principal. This preliminary report presents the quantitative results of the survey. Analysis of the open-ended responses will be provided in a follow-up version of the report. For each chart in this report, the symbol "n" indicates the number of respondents who answered that question.

About the Respondents

121 survey responses were received, representing approximately 45% of Hammer Montessori families. While a higher response rate would provide even more information to act on, this year's response rate is three times the response rate on a similar HMF survey conducted in 2012.

The following charts depict survey response rates by the number of years responding families have been part of the Hammer Montessori Community, as well as how many of their children have attended the school. The higher response rates in the 3- and 4-year categories reflect the higher proportion of 2nd and 3rd grade students currently enrolled at our school.

Figure 1. Response Rates by Number of Years with the School (n=121)

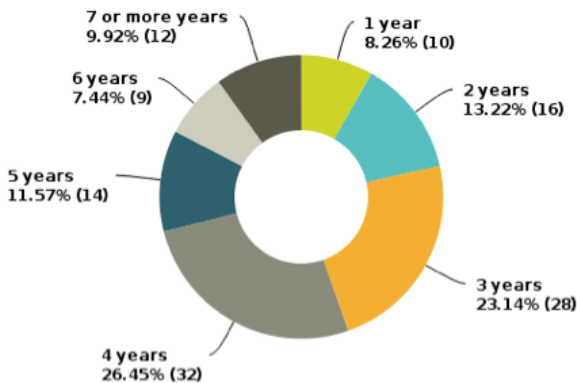
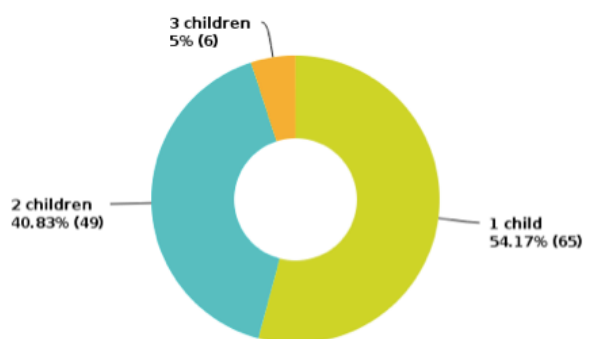


Figure 2. Response Rates by Number of Children Having Attended the School (n=120)

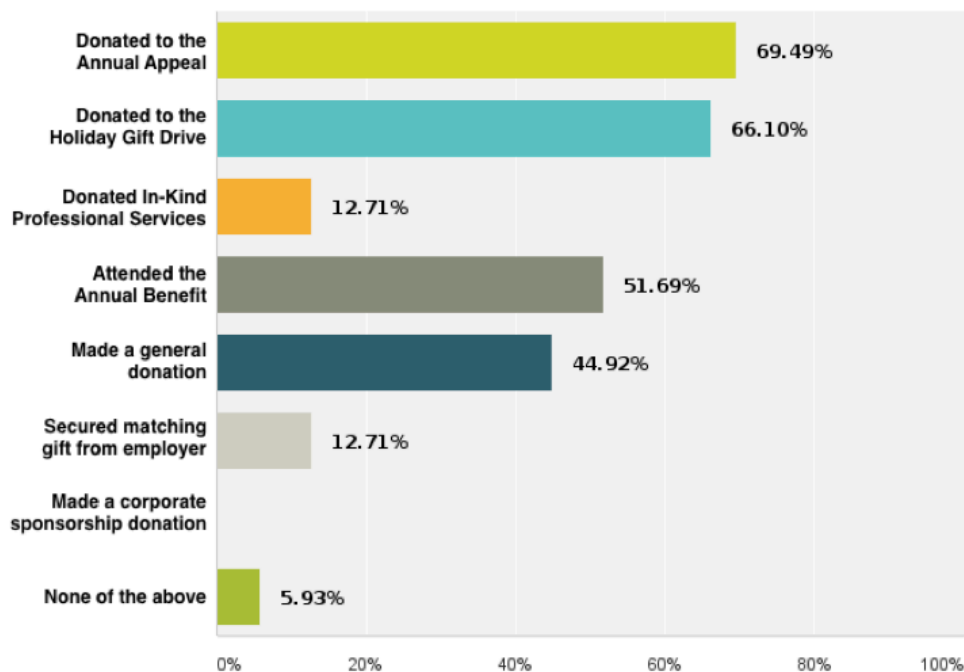


Fund Development

As an education foundation, fund development is central to the HMF's mission and activities. When the HMF was founded in 2009, the scope of fundraising and activities was designed to complement—rather than compete with—the work of the joint Hammer-Galarza PTA in place at that time. For this reason, the HMF focused its efforts on supporting the integrity of the Montessori learning environment through in-school programs, teacher professional development, and Montessori classroom materials.

When the joint Hammer-Galarza PTA disbanded in May 2013, Principal Belmonte convened a schoolwide task force to discuss the implications on fundraising and programs. Based on the Task Force recommendations, the HMF has been building capacity to take on school fundraising efforts that previously fell outside of the HMF scope. To this end, the Community Survey asked the school community about its participation in both HMF and non-HMF fundraising campaigns, programs, and events, with the results presented below.

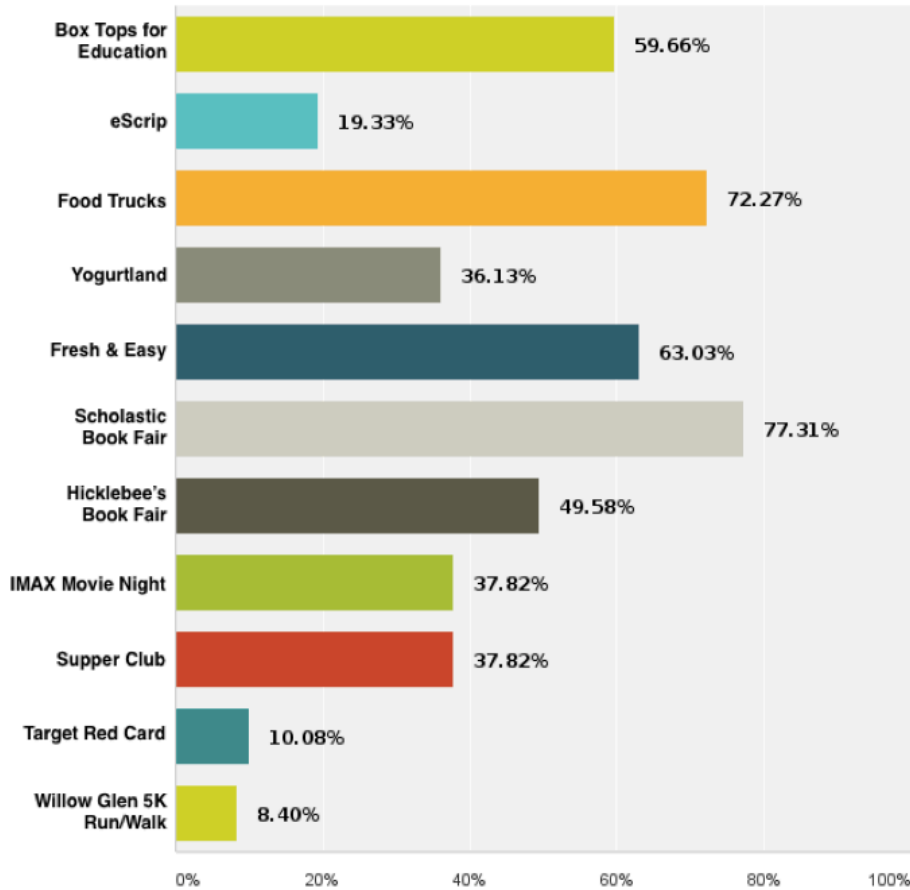
Figure 3. Involvement in HMF Fundraising Campaigns and Events (n=118)



The donation rates reported by the survey respondents are much higher than the actual donation rate in our school community, and only 6% of respondents had not engaged in any of the fundraising channels in Figure 3 above. This suggests that HMF donors, in particular, felt they have a vested interest in completing the survey. In recent years, the HMF has focused its fund development efforts on three core initiatives, which have subsequently drawn the highest participation numbers: Annual Appeal (69%), Holiday Gift Drive (66%), and the Annual Benefit (52%).

The results depicted in Figure 4, below, suggest that participatory fundraising programs provide an easy and appealing way for many families to support the school.

Figure 4. Involvement in Non-HMF Fundraising Programs (n=119)



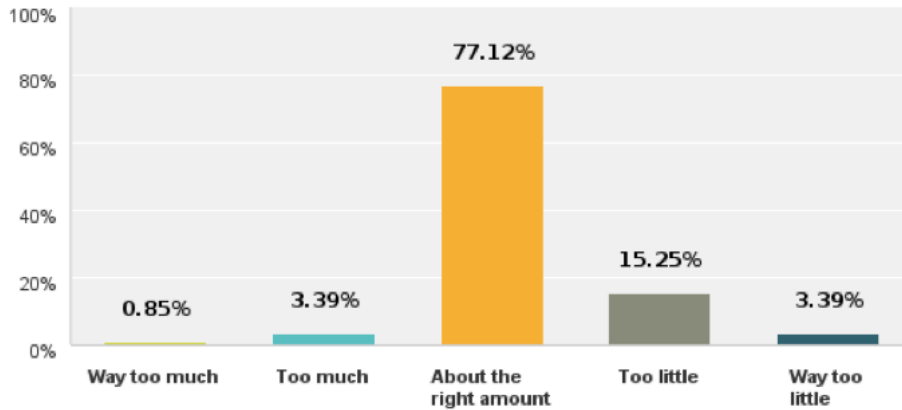
The Scholastic Book Fair and Food Trucks have attracted the most participation among survey respondents, with nearly 3 out of 4 families taking part. Other popular fundraisers were Fresh & Easy Shop for Schools, Box Tops for Education, and the Hicklebee’s Book Fair, each of which engaged at least half of the respondents. It is interesting to note that some of the most popular fundraisers have been active for many years (e.g., Box Tops and Scholastic Book Fair), while others have only been in place for the past 1 or 2 years (e.g., Food Trucks and Fresh & Easy). Additional fundraising ideas were suggested by the community via the survey, and that analysis is forthcoming.

Fundraising Capacity

During the first 5 years of the HMF, participation in fundraising efforts has grown at a steady pace. Campaign participation rates indicate that there is room to grow the percentage of families who participate annually, and it is also important to understand the community’s perception of the level of fundraising already happening at school. The following chart indicates

that 77% families think that the current level of fundraising is appropriate, while 19% of respondents felt that fundraising could be increased. Only 4% of respondents think that our school currently does too much fundraising.

Figure 5. Perception of Current School Fundraising Levels (n=118)

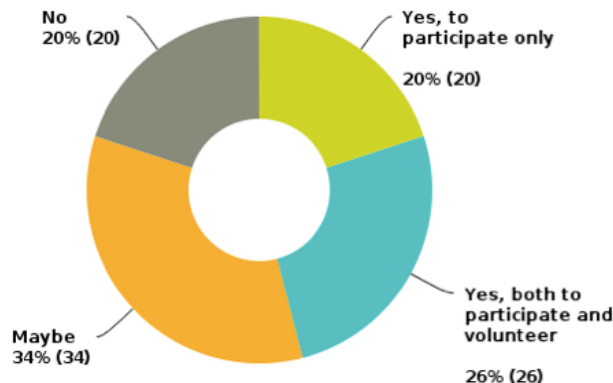


Other Fundraising Opportunities

When the PTA disbanded, it provided the HMF with one-time restricted funds for three specific purposes: teacher supplies, visual arts, and a LEGO Robotics school site license. A final unrestricted payout in an unknown amount has not yet been received from the District 6 PTA. Without additional funds available, the HMF proceeded to implement its planned programming and events, as well as Family Science Night because of its clear alignment with the HMF mission and consistent popularity with the school community.

Some members of the community expressed interest bringing back the annual Walkathon, as well, so the question of whether to pursue the Walkathon in the future was posed to the community via the survey. As depicted in the chart below, reprising the Walkathon as a fundraiser has mixed appeal among respondents, with 46% supporting the idea, 34% neutral, and 20% not interested. The survey did not ask whether the community would support the Walkathon as a community-building and fitness-focused event (e.g., not a fundraiser).

Figure 6. Community Interest in Walkathon Fundraiser (n=100)



Programs

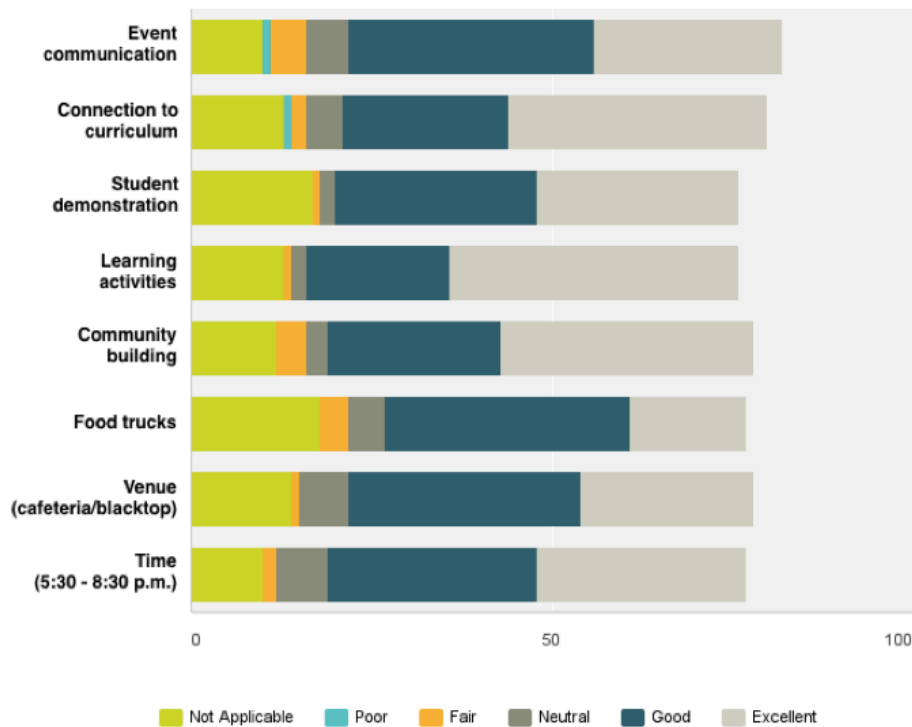
Each year, the HMF receives recommendations from the Principal and faculty regarding funding needs for student programs, teacher professional development, classroom materials, and parent/family education. Subsequently, like any education foundation, HMF fundraising is driven by the programs prioritized for support.

As noted previously, the HMF surveyed the school community 2 years ago regarding feedback and input on fundraising and program support, and has focused its efforts on a niche that supported school needs and complemented the work of the PTA. With the disbandment of the PTA, this year’s HMF Community Survey reflected an expanded conversation about the kinds of programs the HMF could potentially support at our school.

Parent and Family Programs

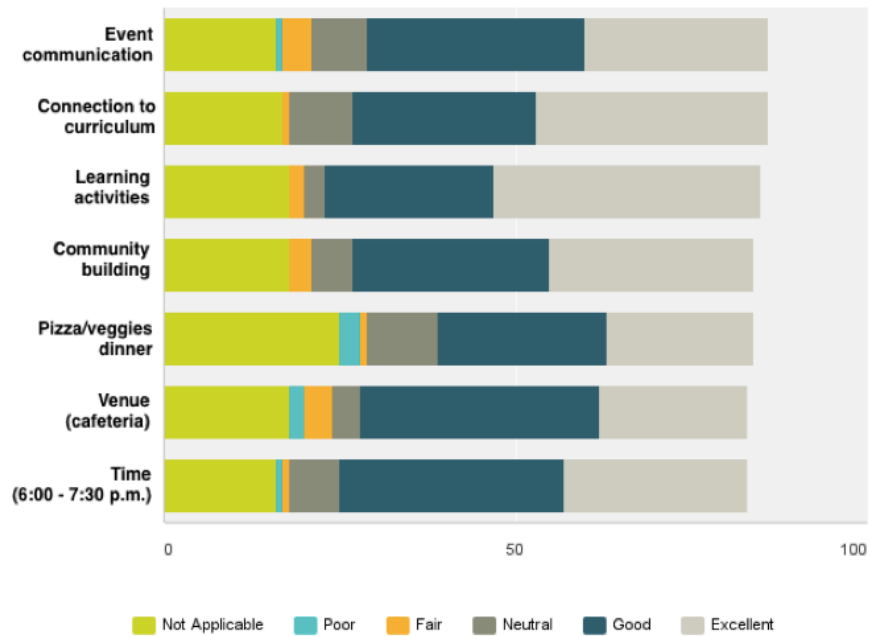
The following charts illustrate the feedback from survey respondents about the programs offered in the current school year. It is important to note that the HMF has varying levels of involvement in the implementation of each event. For example, the HMF has a limited role in events that are planned by the school faculty (e.g., Star Party) or by outside providers (e.g., Science Night).

Figure 7. Star Party Feedback (n = 83)



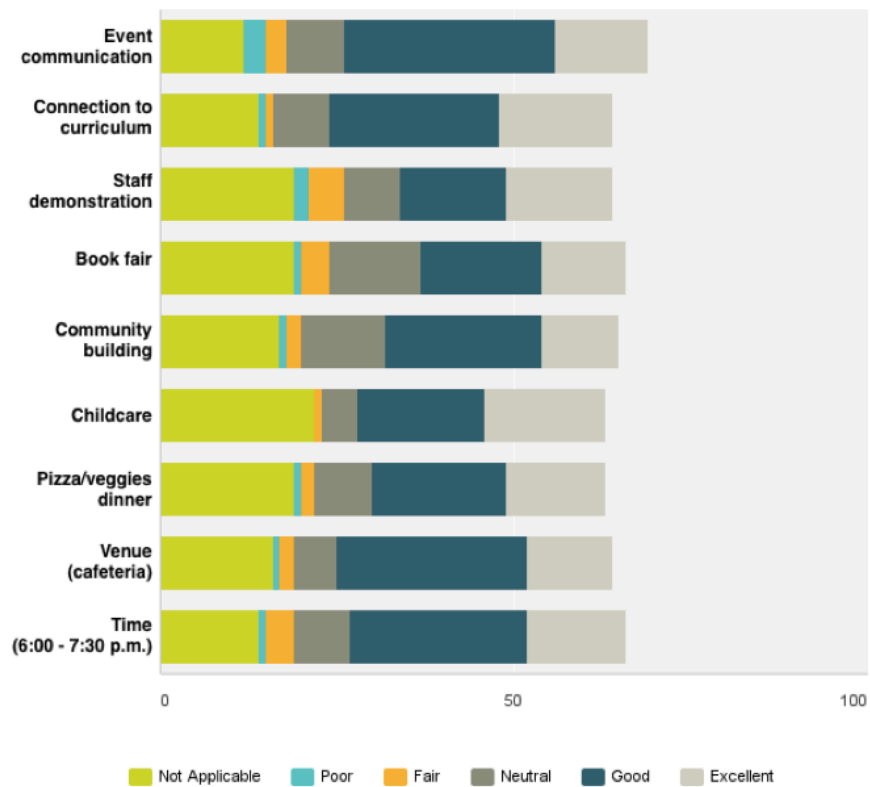
Note: Scale above reflects the # of respondents, rather than %.

Figure 8. Science Night Feedback (n = 87)



Note: Scale above reflects the # of respondents, rather than %.

Figure 9. Common Core Literacy Night & Hicklebee's Book Fair (n = 71)



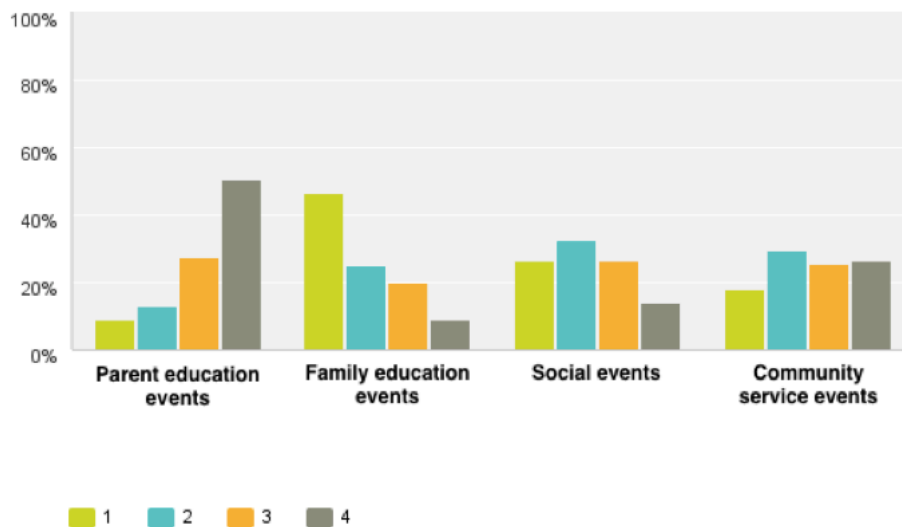
Note: Scale above reflects the # of respondents, rather than %.

Overall, HMF-sponsored programs for parents and families received strong positive ratings from the survey respondents. The Star Party and Science Night events were rated higher than the Common Core Literacy Night, which the comments suggest was less engaging due to the direct instruction format. Respondents who have not participated in parent and family events generally cited weeknight schedule conflicts such as sports and work as the primary reason.

The open comments offered by respondents will be extremely helpful in pinpointing ways to improve the value of these types of events for parents and families, with regard to engagement, content, format, and timing of the events. The feedback will be shared with the school administration and faculty, as well as outside providers as appropriate, to help inform future program development.

The following chart depicts the priority ranking that respondents placed on various types of programs for parents and families (Scale: 1 = highest priority, 4 = lowest priority).

Figure 10. Prioritization of Parent and Family Event Types (n = 101)



In keeping with the ratings of the individual parent and family events offered this year, events that focus specifically on parent education do not appear to be a priority for Hammer Montessori families that responded to the survey. Instead, a higher priority is placed on family education events, followed by social events and community service events.

Afterschool Programs and Clubs

Last summer, the HMF created a provisional category of programs called Afterschool Programs and Clubs, to encompass LEGO robotics, drama, and Spanish programs on campus. Early in the year, it was determined that the drama program fell more accurately into the “outside vendor” model, similar to the chess and soccer programs. Therefore, it did not involve any direct oversight by the HMF this year once it was up and running.

LEGO Robotics

The LEGO robotics program came under the umbrella of the HMF primarily because of the high need for parent volunteer resources and the site license funds received from the PTA. Because half of the robotics equipment went to Galarza in the PTA disbandment, it was proposed that the HMF invest in new equipment to sustain robotics at the previous level. Therefore, the HMF budgeted \$8,169 for the robotics program this year, \$5,300 of which was dedicated to one-time equipment purchases for WeDo and EV3. As seen in the charts below, the LEGO robotics programs received strong positive feedback from the survey respondents.

Figure 11. LEGO WeDo Club Feedback (n = 51)

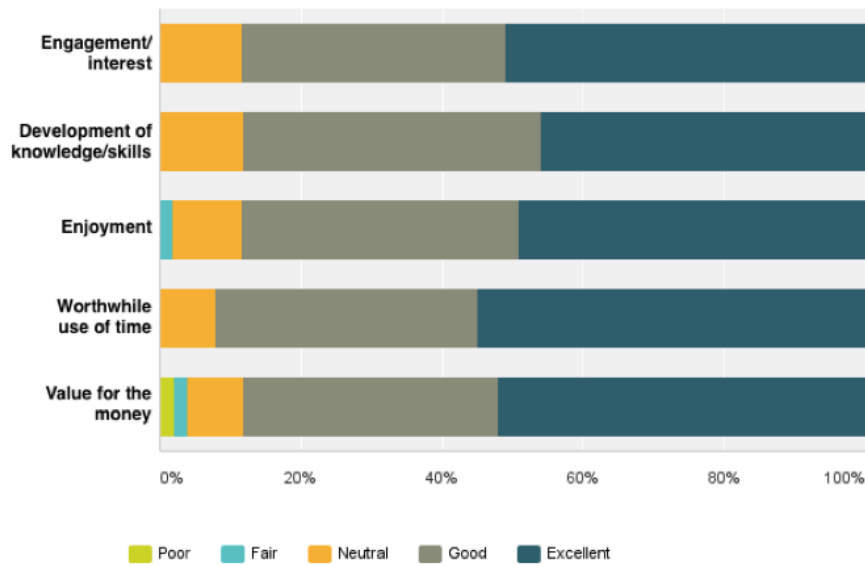
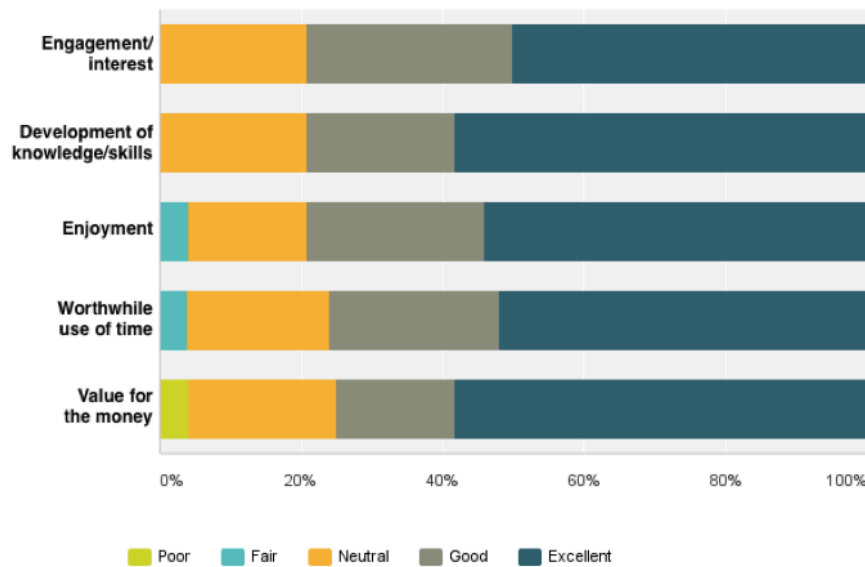


Figure 12. LEGO EV3 Club Feedback (n = 25)



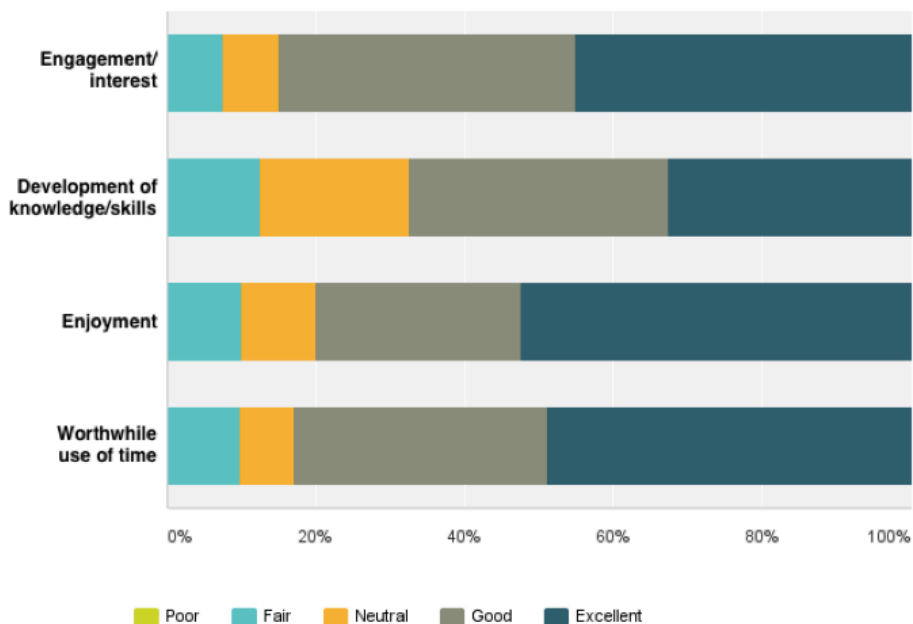
Because the LEGO robotics clubs are offered afterschool and do not serve all students, the HMF decided to offer them on a per-student fee basis for the first time, keeping fees as low as possible to cover school staffing and facility expenses and a small percentage of the unanticipated equipment expense. More than 4 out of 5 families felt the program was a “Good” or “Excellent” value for the money.

The survey also gauged community interest in creating a FIRST LEGO League team next year, which would use a LEGO robotics curriculum to help students (ages 9 and up) develop skills and values around teamwork, learning together, and friendly competition. More than 1 in 3 respondents expressed interest in a FIRST LEGO League, to participate (29 respondents) and to volunteer (14 respondents). The LEGO robotics team will use these survey results, as well as the individual comments, to refine and strengthen the LEGO program for next year.

[¡Español con Amigos!](#)

The lunchtime Spanish club program, ¡Español con Amigos!, is run by parent volunteers as well, and was offered only to grades K-2 this year, based on limited retention of students in grades 3-5 last year.

Figure 13. ¡Español con Amigos! Feedback (n = 41)

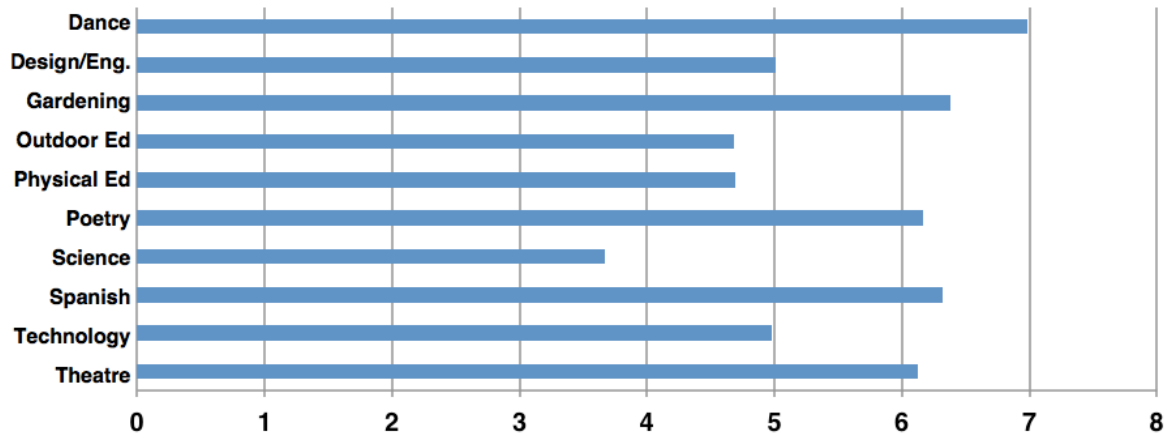


1 in 3 respondents (32%) expressed interest in reintroducing the Spanish club program for grades 3 through 5, so the HMF and program leads will need to determine how best to sustain student interest if the program continues to compete with the appeal of lunchtime recess.

Expanding the Scope of HMF Program Support

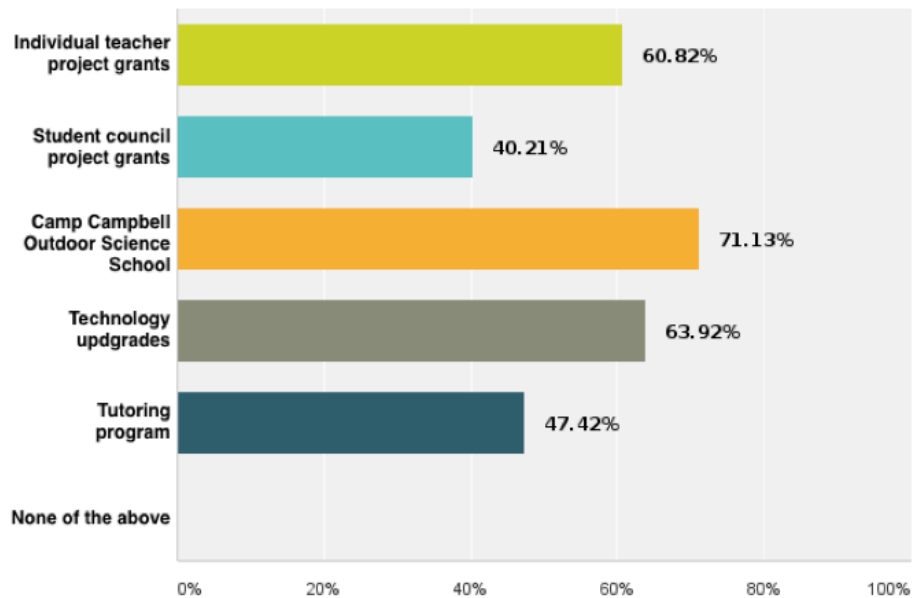
With the growing fundraising capacity of the HMF and the disbandment of the PTA, the HMF has an opportunity to gradually and sustainably expand the range of needs it supports at the school. Several possibilities were proposed to the school community in the survey, with the following results.

Figure 14. Opportunities for In-School Program Support (n = 100)



As a reminder, the ranking question above indicates that the item with the lowest score is the highest priority among respondents. Therefore, science was clearly the highest priority among parents, followed by physical education and outdoor education, and then design/engineering and technology. That said, the fact that the highest-rated item only earned an average ranking between 3 and 4 indicates that our parent community has strong interest in a variety of program areas.

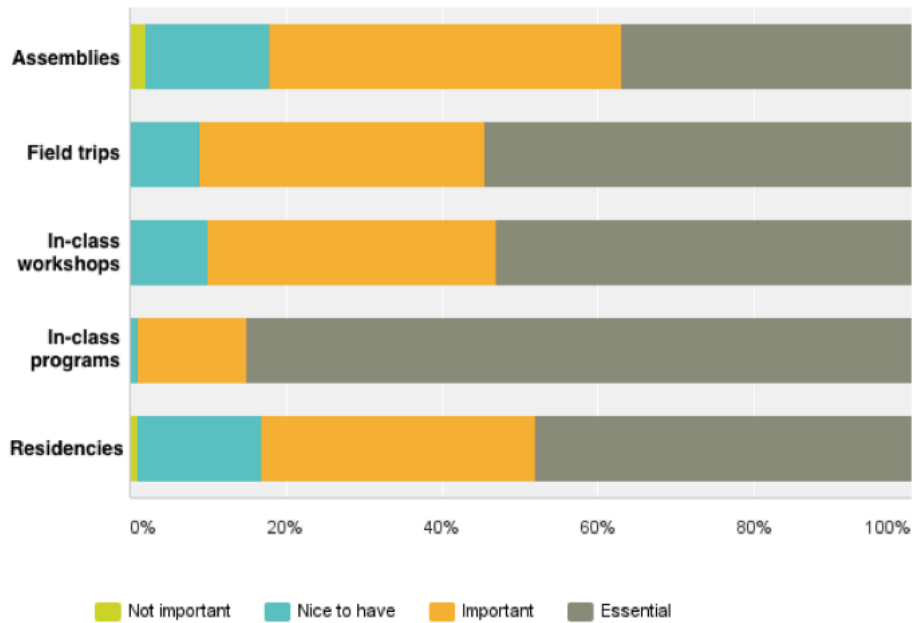
Figure 15. Opportunities for Focused Student and Teacher Support (n = 97)



As seen above, survey respondents expressed some level of interest in all of the proposed opportunities for focused HMF involvement, with more than half of parents expressing support for Camp Campbell Outdoor Science School (a.k.a., 5th grade science camp), technology upgrades, and individual teacher project grants. Overall, the results suggest that the community supports the idea of the HMF targeting some of its funding to smaller subgroups of students.

Parents were asked what in-school program formats they felt offered the most educational value for their children. As illustrated in the chart on the following page, in-class programs (such as the current music and art programs) are seen as most valuable (3.84 average on a 4-point scale), followed by field trips (3.46), in-class workshops (3.43), residencies (3.30), and assemblies (3.17).

Figure 16. Educational Value of In-School Program Formats



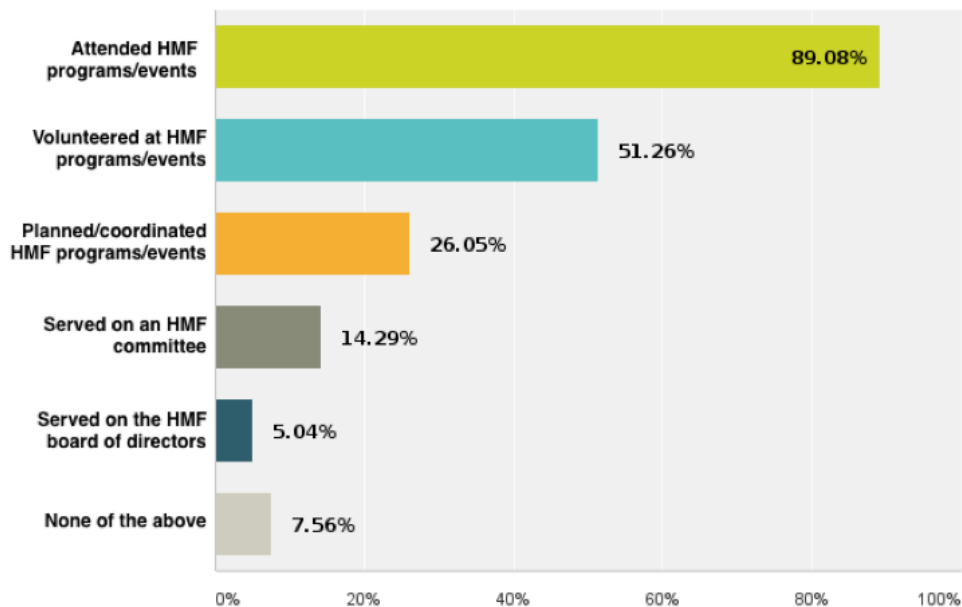
It is important to note that each of the formats earned an average rating above 3 “Important,” indicating that parents feel that all formats are worthy of HMF support. With regard to field trips, in particular, 73% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay a nominal per-student fee for field trips, if needed, to enable additional field trips to take place each year.

The HMF programs committee will use these survey results—as well as the forthcoming analysis of individual suggestions provided on open-ended survey questions—in combination with the priorities set by the school administration and faculty to inform program planning for the year ahead.

Community Engagement

Respondents reported strong levels of involvement in HMF programs and events. Nearly 9 out of 10 respondents have participated in an HMF-sponsored program or event, more than half of respondents have volunteered at an HMF program or event, and more than 1 in 4 respondents have participated at the level of planning or coordination. Nearly 15% of respondents have served on a committee, 5% have served on the board, and about 8% have not yet participated on any level (or may not be aware that they have, for example, attended an HMF-funded event).

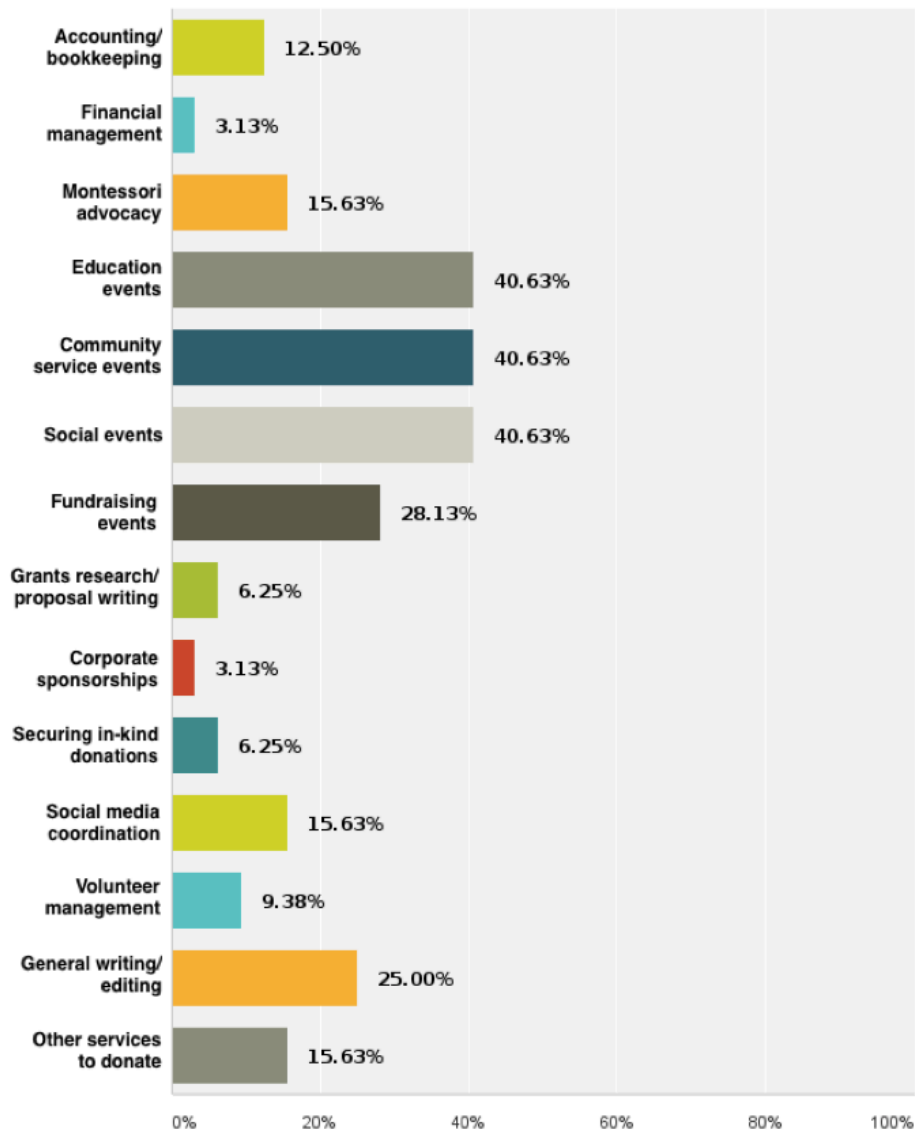
Figure 17. Involvement in HMF Activities and Administration (n=119)



Committee Volunteer Opportunities

In preparation for planning, it is important to have a sense of community interest in taking on volunteer roles in the coming year. Nearly 40% respondents expressed interest in pitching in on an HMF committee, with the breakdown of interests shown in the chart of the next page. The highest interest levels were reported for education, community service, and social event coordination (41% each). Fundraising events (28%) and general writing and editing (25%) also attracted volunteer interest. Every volunteer category attracted some degree of interest, and the HMF will use the survey results and contact information provided to match volunteers to needs based on their interests, expertise, and availability.

Figure 18. Committee Volunteer Needs and Interest Levels (n = 99)



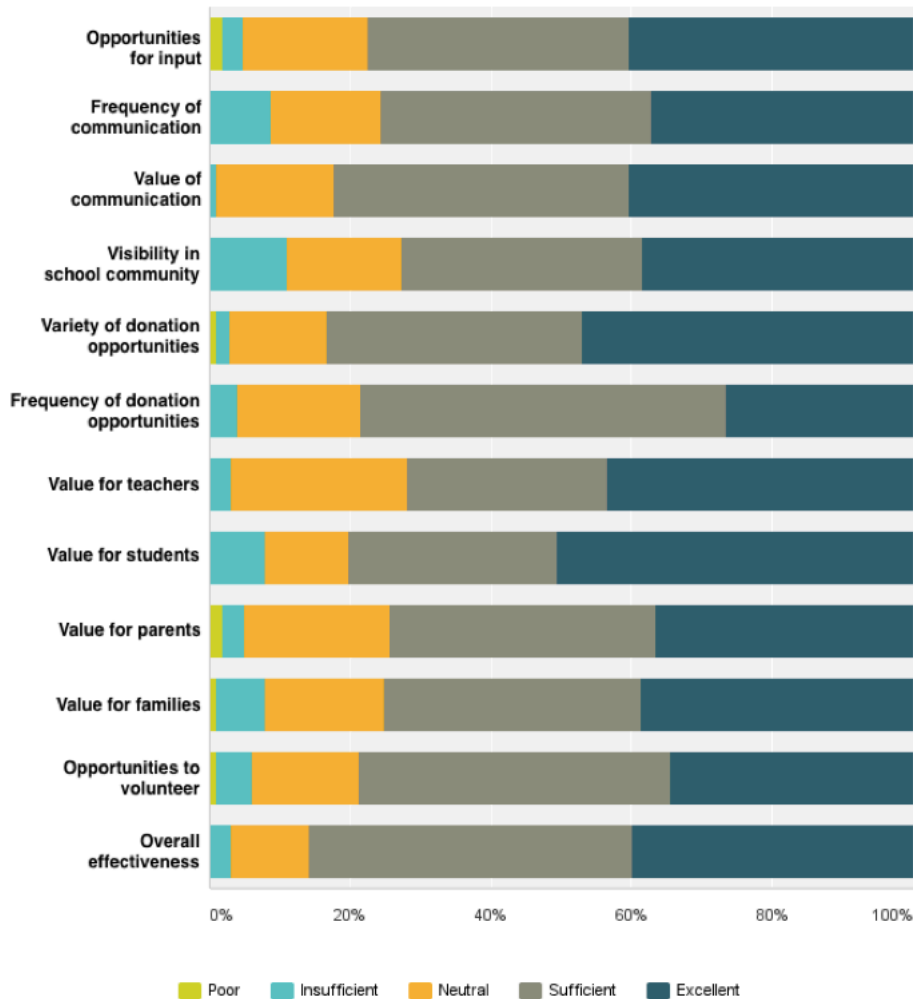
Board of Directors Volunteer Opportunities

More than 1 in 7 survey respondents (14%) expressed interest in serving on the HMF board of directors. Among these 17 respondents, the most appealing aspects of board work were educational programs (10), community engagement (9), and organizational effectiveness (7). All areas of board work attracted some degree of interest, including finance (5), fund development (4), documentation (4), and nonprofit compliance (1). In the coming months, the HMF nominating committee will use these results and the contact information and interests indicated by individual respondents to cultivate a slate of new board candidates for 2014.

HMF Organizational Effectiveness

The final survey question requested community feedback on how the HMF is doing in general. As seen in the chart below, the HMF received positive feedback across all categories, with an average of 4 out of 5 respondents rating the HMF as “Sufficient” (39%) or “Excellent” (39%). The HMF will use the survey feedback, both general ratings and analysis of specific comments, to set targets for organizational improvement in the coming years.

Figure 19. Respondent Ratings of the HMF (n = 102)



The HMF values the highly constructive feedback and inspiring input provided via the survey, and will use it expand community involvement, support, and trust moving forward. Please join us at one of the following events to help identify conclusions to be drawn from the survey:

- **HMF Community & Board Meeting:** Thursday, March 20, 2014, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m., Cafeteria
- **Hammer Montessori School Principal’s Coffee:** Friday, March 28, 2014, 9:15 a.m., Staff Room

Thank you again for your generosity with your time, expertise, and ideas!