

Issaquah School District Community Polling Study Results

Fall 2003 through Fall 2006

Prepared by:

**Dorothy Geraghty
Sammamish, WA 98074**

Background

- This study was launched in October 2003. The results encompass three years (thirteen quarters) of interviews.
- It is being conducted to obtain learning on the *overall* community's perceptions of the Issaquah School District on a variety of performance areas...
 - Education
 - Finance
 - Workplace environment
 - Management/leadership

Research Design

- This is a quantitative study with statistically significant findings.
- Interviews are conducted continuously among a random sample of adult residents (18 years old or older) in the Issaquah School District, with approximately 13 interviews conducted each week or 150 each quarter.
- By conducting interviews continuously, perceptions are measured throughout the quarter rather than at just one point in time when breaking news or an event could have a significant impact on the entire quarter's results.
- Ten minute telephone interviews are being conducted by trained interviewers who probe extensively when asking diagnostic questions, such as reasons for giving the district a specific grade for its overall performance.

Research Design Cont'd.

- The sample replicates the demographic profile of adults in the Issaquah School District with regard to age and sex, based upon the US Census.
- Respondents are asked if they are willing to provide further input to the District at the end of the interview. In each quarter a number of respondents have answered yes. We have their names, phone numbers, and when available, e-mail addresses. In the Fall of 2006, four in ten respondents (41%) said they are willing to be contacted again.
- This is a flexible survey. If an event occurs that might impact perceptions in the community, the sample can be increased for a short time to assess the impact.

Research Design Cont'd.

- In this last quarter, additional questions were added to this survey to gain an understanding of the community's perceptions regarding...
 - Communications from the school district are open and honest
- Parents perceptions for...
 - Your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district
 - Your involvement in your child's education is welcome
- The sample was augmented so that there are at least 50 parents for each school level. Some parents have children in more than one school level and, therefore, answer about more than one school level. The sample includes:
 - 74 parents of Elementary school students
 - 51 parents of Middle school students
 - 56 parents of High school students

Research Analysis

Please note that:

- The responses given in the current wave (Fall 2006) are compared to previous responses given.
 - When there are **statistically significant** differences in responses from one wave of interviews to another at the 90% confidence level it is noted.
 - When there are **directional** differences in responses (numerical differences that are not statistically significant), they are also mentioned.
- Responses do not always add up to 100% due to rounding. Instead at times they add up to 99% or 101%.

Key Findings

Fall 2003 Vs. Fall 2006

- As the following charts detail, since the Fall of 2003 perceptions of the Issaquah School District have **significantly** improved in almost all areas...
 - Neighborhood school performance
 - Overall performance of Administration
 - Excellent leadership
 - Well managed
 - Trustworthy Administration
 - Collaborative Administration
 - Administration works with parents on programs that fit the budget
 - Administration works with teachers to build relationships
 - Good to work for
 - Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems
 - Financially well run
- In all other performance areas perceptions of the District have improved directionally.

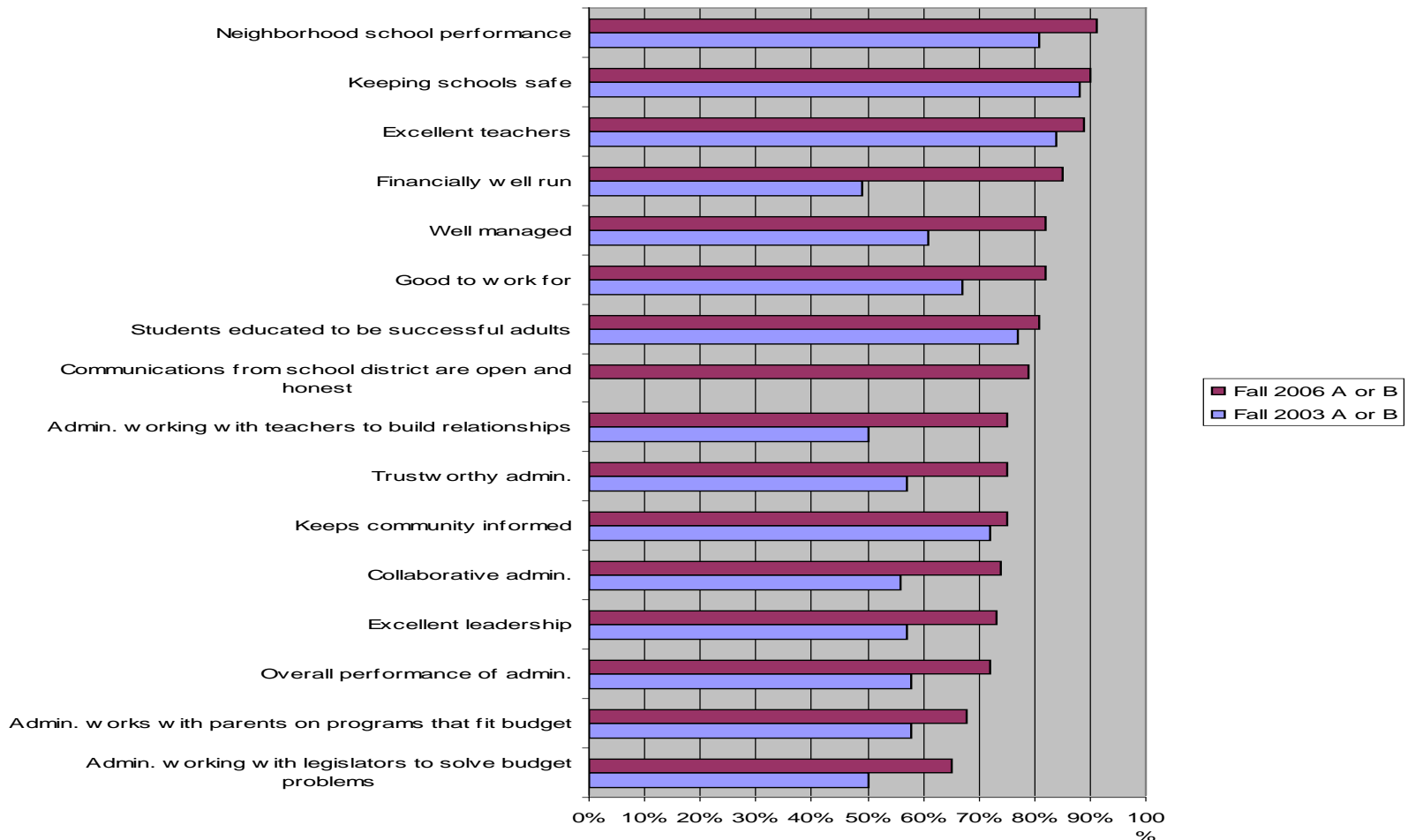
Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Fall 2003 Vs. Fall 2006

	Fall 2003 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)					Fall 2006 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)				
Survey asked respondents to "grade" following attributes of district. Numbers in the column represent the PERCENTAGE of people who gave each attribute letter grades. The numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.										
	A or B	A	B	C	D or F	A or B	A	B	C	D or F
Keeping schools safe	88%	46	42	6	4	90%	47	43	5	5
Excellent teachers	84%	34	50	12	3	89%	42	47	7	3
Neighborhood school performance	81%	30	51	13	5	91%*	40*	51	7	1
Students educated to be successful adults	77%	28	49	18	5	81%	29	52	14	6
Keeps community informed	72%	25	47	18	9	75%	35*	40	17	8
Good to work for	67%	22	45	20	12	82%*	32	50	15	3
Well managed	61%	14	47	24	13	82%*	33*	49	13	5
Overall performance of admin.	58%	13	45	27	14	72%*	26*	46	22	5
Admin. works with parents on programs that fit budget	58%	17	41	28	13	68%*	24	44	26	6
Excellent leadership	57%	18	39	28	13	73%*	25	48	21	7
Trustworthy admin.	57%	15	42	25	17	75%*	35*	40	19	6
Collaborative admin.	56%	13	43	29	14	74%*	27*	47	20	5
Admin. working with teachers to build relationships	50%	12	38	27	21	75%*	28*	47	22	3
Admin. working with legislators to solve budget problems	50%	8	42	32	16	65%*	23*	42	22	12
Financially well run	49%	14	35	34	16	75%*	29*	46*	19	8
Communications from school district are open and honest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	79%	40	39	17	4

* = Significantly higher than Fall 2003 at the 90% confidence level.

Note: Communications from the school district are open and honest was added to this study in Fall 2006.

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study—Fall 2003 Vs. Fall 2006 % Giving an A or B Grade



Note: The levels of A/B grades increased significantly for: Neighborhood school performance, Overall performance of Administration, Excellent leadership, Well managed, Trustworthy Administration, Collaborative Administration, Administration works with parents on programs that fit the budget, Administration works with teachers to build relationships, Good to work for, Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems, and Financially well run.

The attribute *Communications from school district are open and honest* was added to this study in Fall 2006.

Ratings During Past Quarter

- As the following charts detail, during the past quarter Issaquah School District's ratings increased significantly for...
 - Good to work for (from 73% giving an A or B grade to 82%)
 - Administration working with teachers to build relationships (from 66% giving an A or B grade to 75%)
 - Financially well run (from 71% to 85%).
- Overall the ratings have changed upwards or downwards by only a few points or less during the past quarter with the following exceptions.
 - There have been *directional* improvements for:
 - Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems (from 59% in Summer 2006 to 65% in Fall 2006.)
 - Well managed overall (from 76% to 82%).

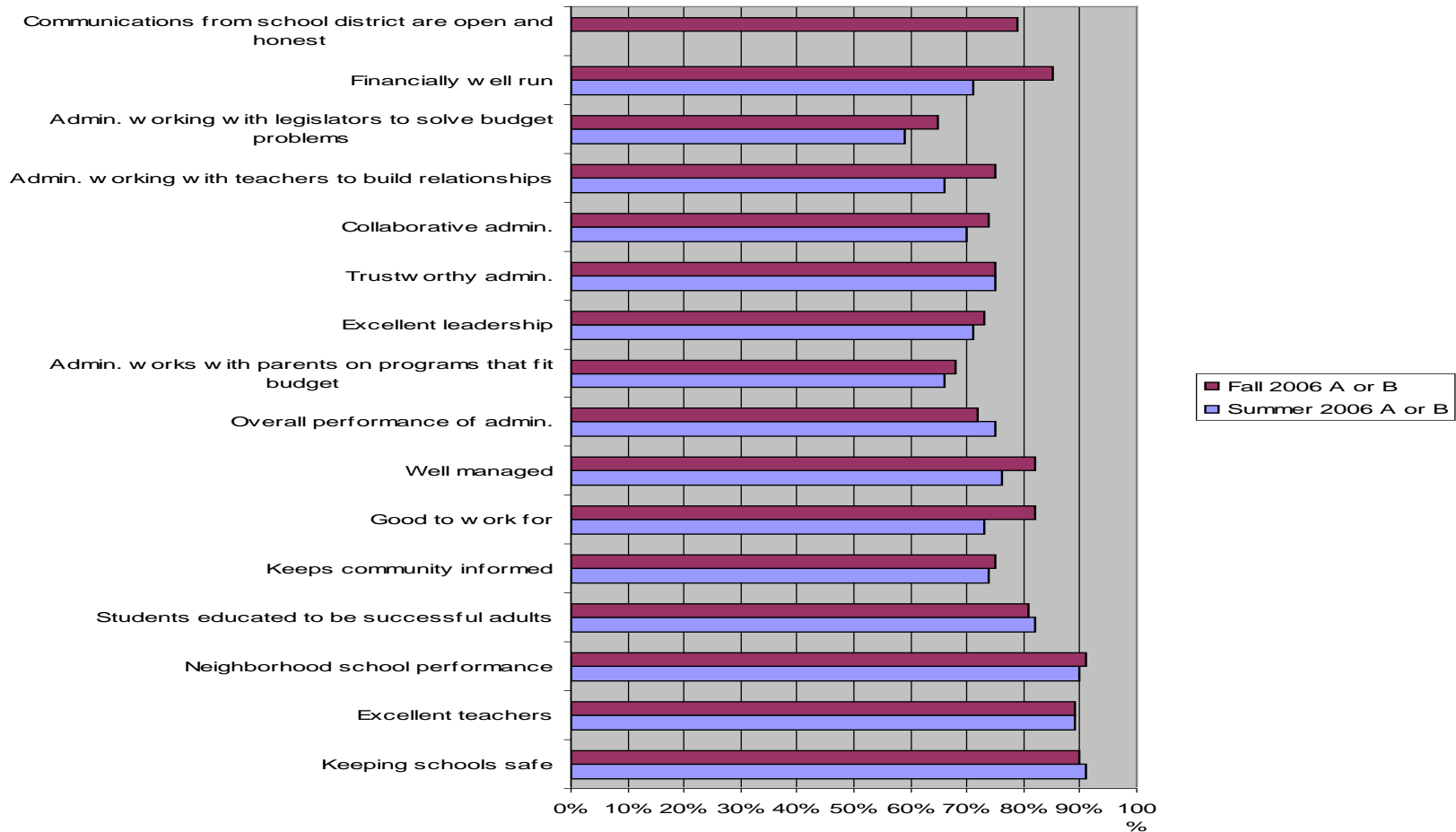
Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Summer 2006 Vs. Fall 2006

	Summer 2006 (July, Aug., Sept.)					Fall 2006 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)				
Survey asked respondents to "grade" following attributes of district. Numbers represent the PERCENTAGE of people who gave each attribute letter grades. The numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.										
	A or B	A	B	C	D or F	A or B	A	B	C	D or F
Keeping schools safe	91%	54	37	7	2	90%	47	43	5	5
Excellent teachers	89%	37	52	8	4	89%	42	47	7	3
Neighborhood school performance	90%	38	52	8	3	91%	40	51	7	1
Students educated to be successful adults	82%	35	47	13	5	81%	29	52	14	6
Keeps community informed	74%	36	38	20	6	75%	35	40	17	8
Good to work for	73%	18	55	19	8	82%*	32	50	15	3
Well managed	76%	19	57	14	9	82%	33*	49	13	5
Overall performance of admin.	75%	18	57	15	11	72%	26*	46	22	5
Admin. works with parents on programs that fit budget	66%	20	46	20	14	68%	24	44	26	6
Excellent leadership	71%	17	54	16	13	73%	25	48	21	7
Trustworthy admin.	75%	25	50	14	12	75%	35*	40	19	6
Collaborative admin.	70%	21	49	19	12	74%	27*	47	20	5
Admin. working with teachers to build relationships	66%	17	49	22	12	75%*	28*	47	22	3
Admin. working with legislators to solve budget problems	59%	8	51	27	15	65%	23*	42	22	12
Financially well run	71%	18	53	18	11	85%*	29*	46	19	8
Communications from school district are open and honest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	79%	40	39	17	4

* = Significantly higher than previous wave of interviewing (Summer 2006).

Note: The attribute *Communications from school district are open and honest* was added to this study in Fall 2006

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study—Summer 2006 Vs. Fall 2006 % Giving an A or B Grade



Note: A and B grades increased significantly for Good to work for, Administration working with teachers to build relationships and Financially well run.

The attribute *Communications from school district are open and honest* was added to this study in Fall 2006.

Grades Given by Parents for How the Issaquah School District Treats Them

- As the following chart details, the vast majority of parents give the District high grades for encouraging their opinions and involvement in their children's education.
 - Nine in ten parents overall (92%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome.*
 - Eight in ten parents overall (81%) give the Issaquah School District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district.*
 - Parent of High School students are less likely to give the District a high grade than parents of Elementary and Middle School students.

Grades Given By Parents Regarding How the Issaquah School District Treats Them

Grades Given By Parents Regarding How They Are Treated by the District Fall 2006 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)				
	<i>Your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this District</i>			
	All Parents of Students Attending Issaquah Schools	Parents of Elementary School Students	Parents of Middle School Students	Parents of High School Students
A or B	81%	90	83	72
A	34%	41	34	19*
B	47%	49	49	53
C	14%	6*	14	22
D or F	6%	4	4	6
	<i>Your involvement in your child's education is welcome</i>			
A or B	92	97	93	87
A	63	77	69	47*
B	29	20	24	40*
C	7	3	7	11**
D or F	1	0	0	2

Note: These attributes were added to the study in Fall 2006.

* = Significant difference vs. parents in the other grade levels.

** = Significant difference vs. parents of Elementary school students.

Reasons Given for Grade Given to Administration for Its Performance Overall

- Respondents are probed regarding reasons for the grade they give the Administration of Issaquah School District for its overall performance.
- Approximately four in ten (44%) mention a positive reason, which is **significantly** higher than Summer 2006 (26%) and most other preceding quarters. The most frequent positive reasons include:
 - Doing a good job (15%)
 - Positive word of mouth (11%)
 - Good parental involvement/support/communications (10%)
 - Positive administration comments (7%)
 - Satisfied/happy with school experience (6%)
 - Positive teacher comments (5%)
- The number of respondents mentioning that an improvement needs to be made has declined **significantly** since Fall 2003 (from 72% to 53%).

Reasons Given for Grade Given to Administration for Its Performance Overall Cont'd.

- The improvements desired continue to be diverse with no specific desired improvement mentioned by more than a small minority.
- The two most frequently desired improvements are:
 - Better administration/leadership/community relations (11%)
 - Communication (9%). Specific requests for improvement in communication include...
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/administration/provide more timely information (8%)
 - Need to listen to parents/community/solicit input/involvement/act on input/partnering (3%)
- Other reasons for the grade given to the Administration are:
 - Better teachers needed (6%)
 - Average/OK performance (6%)
 - Room for improvement (5%)
- Very few parents (less than 5%) mention any other specific reason.

Suggestions for District

- Respondents are also asked for suggestions that would cause them to give the District a higher grade. While most (69%) give a suggestion, this is **significantly** fewer than in Fall 2003 (83%).
- The most frequently given suggestion continues to be to improve communication. But, significantly fewer people are making this suggestion (17% in Fall 2006 vs. 27% in Fall 2003).
- Suggestions for better communication still center on...
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/administration/provide more/timely information (15%).
 - Need to listen to parents/community/solicit input/involvement/act on input (10%)

Suggestions for District Cont'd.

- Other suggestions include...
 - More focus on students' individual needs/improve school/learning experience (9%)
 - Better placement of students in classes/programs (8%)
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding/better use of funds (6%).
 - Need to reduce class sizes (6%)
 - Better organization/coordination/planning needed (5%)
 - Teachers need to be better supported/pay/more respect (5%)
 - Put focus on classroom/education/decisions in best interest of student (5%)
 - Top heavy administration/salaries too high/reduce overhead (5%)
 - Change curriculum/go back to basics (5%)
- All other suggestions are mentioned by less than 5% of respondents.

How Voters Feel About the Tax Dollars They Pay for Local Public Education

- Four in five residents (81%) feel that the amount they pay for local public education is about right or too low.
- Residents now feel that the taxes they pay for local public education are...

Too high	11%	
About right	65%	} 81%
Too low	16%	
Don't know	8%	

Primary Source of Information About Issaquah Schools

- Residents of the Issaquah District most frequently say they receive information about Issaquah schools from their friends and family, the Issaquah Press and/or its affiliates, the District Newsletter and the Internet.
- Since this study began in Fall 2003, significantly more residents mention that the Issaquah Press and its affiliates are their primary source of information (20% vs. 10%) and the Internet (15% vs. 4%).

Primary source of information about Issaquah Schools in Fall 2006

Friends and Family	25%
Issaquah Press and its affiliates	20
District Newsletter	16
The Internet	15
Seattle Times	8
School Employees	7
Television	2
Work there	2
King Country Journal	2
From the School	2
Through Mail/School Bulletin	0
Don't Know	2

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Since the inception of this study in Fall 2003, *significant* improvements have occurred in residents' perceptions of the performance of the Issaquah School District in most areas...
 - Neighborhood school performance
 - Overall performance of Administration
 - Excellent leadership
 - Well managed
 - Trustworthy Administration
 - Collaborative Administration
 - Administration works with parents on programs that fit the budget
 - Administration works with teachers to build relationships
 - Good to work for
 - Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems
 - Financially well run
- In all other performance areas perceptions of the District have improved directionally.
- With regard to the new attributes that were added this Fall, the District's performance is high.
 - Four in five residents (79%) give the District an A or B grade for *communications from the school district are open and honest.*
 - Nine in ten (92%) parents give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome.*
 - Eight in ten parents (81%) give the District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district.*

Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- Fewer residents are requesting improvements in the Issaquah school district (69% in Fall 2006 vs. 83% in Fall 2003). This may be a reflection of higher satisfaction levels overall.
- Although significant changes have been made in the perceptions of residents, a minority (17% in Fall 2006) continue to suggest an improvement in communication. This is significantly fewer than in Fall 2003 (27%).
- Four in five (81%) of residents feel that the taxes they are paying for education are about right (65%) or too low (16%).
- The Issaquah Press and its affiliates have grown significantly as a source of information about the Issaquah school district and its schools since Fall 2003. Approximately one in five residents (20%) now consider it to be their primary source of information (vs. 10% in Fall 2003).
- The Internet has also grown significantly as a source of information about the District and its schools since Fall 2003 (from 4% to 15%).
- If additional in-depth learning is desired on any of these findings, it is possible to contact the respondents who have agreed to be re-contacted with additional questions on such things as the underlying reasons for a grade or suggested improvement.

Dorothy Geraghty, Education Market Research Consultant

- Dorothy Geraghty has over 20 years of experience in Market Research and over 5 years of experience in Education as a teacher/head teacher in the Lake Washington and Bellevue School Districts. She has a B.S. in Marketing and M. A. in Education.
- Prior to becoming a consultant, Dorothy was the Market Research Analyst for Evergreen Healthcare, where she conducted *all* the quantitative and qualitative market research for the hospital, its medical offices and offsite facilities. While at Evergreen, Dorothy developed a Community Polling Study, which is used to assess and track its performance as a public entity in a variety of areas.
- Dorothy has consulted for other educational institutions and also for major businesses, such as Seafirst, Bristol Meyers, Seagrams, Wells, Rich Green Advertising, Porter Novelli Public Relations and various consulting companies.