

Issaquah School District Community Polling Study Results

Fall 2003 through Fall 2007

Prepared by:

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Background

- This study was launched in October 2003. The results encompass over four years (seventeen 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 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 large number of respondents have answered yes. We have their names, phone numbers, and when available, e-mail addresses. In the Fall of 2007, almost one in two respondents (45%) indicated that they can 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.

- Starting in Fall 2006, additional questions were added to this survey to gain an understanding of the overall 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 to include at least 50 parents for each school level—Elementary, Middle and High School. Some parents have children in more than one school level and, therefore, answer about more than one school level.

Research Analysis

Please note that:

- The responses given in the current wave (Fall 2007) 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 2007

- As the following charts detail, since the Fall of 2003 perceptions of the Issaquah School District have **significantly** improved in most performance areas...
 - Overall performance of Administration
 - Excellent leadership
 - Well managed
 - Trustworthy Administration
 - Collaborative Administration
 - Administration works with teachers to build relationships
 - Financially well run
 - Administration works with legislators to solve budget problems

- In all other areas, perceptions of the District have improved directionally.

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Fall 2003 Vs. Fall 2007

	Fall 2003 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)					Fall 2007 (Oct., Nov. Dec.)				
	A or B	A	B	C	D or F	A or B	A	B	C	D or F
Keeping schools safe	88%	46	42	7	4	95%	49	46	5	1
Excellent teachers	84%	34	50	12	3	90%	40	50	10	0
Neighborhood school performance	81%	30	51	14	5	87%	37	50	10	2
Keeps community informed	72%	25	47	19	9	81%	38*	43	12	6
Students educated to be successful adults	77%	28	49	18	5	79%	35	44	17	4
Well managed	61%	14	47	25	13	78%*	28*	50	16	6
Overall performance of Administration	58%	13	45	28	14	77%*	21*	56*	17	6
Trustworthy admin.	57%	15	42	25	18	75%*	27*	48	20	5
Admin. working with teachers to build relationships	50%	12	38	28	22	75%*	22*	53*	22	4
Good to work for	67%	22	45	21	12	74%	25	49	18	7
Collaborative Administration	56%	13	43	30	14	73%*	22*	51	20	6
Excellent leadership	57%	18	39	29	13	72%*	22	50*	23	5
Financially well run	49%	14	35	35	16	72%*	25*	47*	19	8
Communications from school district are open and honest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	71%	33	38	21	8
Admin. works with parents on programs that fit budget	58%	17	41	28	14	69%	20	49	25	7
Admin. working with legislators to solve budget problems	50%	8	42	33	17	61%*	15*	46	29	10

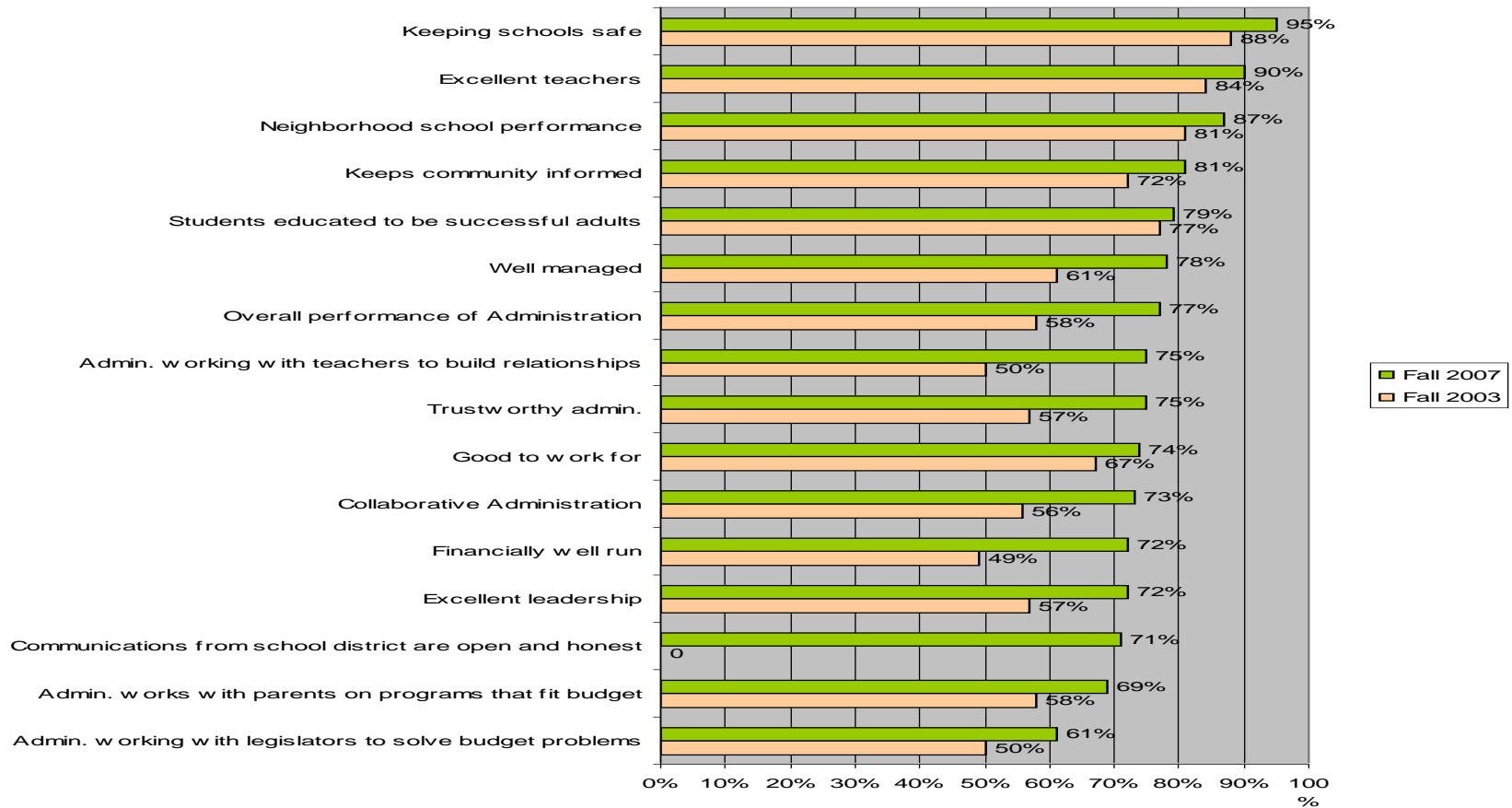
* = Significant difference vs. Fall 2003 at the 90% confidence level.

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

Q. Based on your impressions, if you were to give a grade to the Issaquah School District, would you give it a grade of A,B,C,D or F for its performance on...?

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study—Fall 2003 Vs. Fall 2007

% Giving an A or B Grade



Note:
 The levels of A/B grades increased significantly for: *Overall performance of Administration, excellent leadership, well managed, trustworthy Administration, collaborative Administration, Administration works with teachers to build relationships, Administration works 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.

Q. Based on your impressions, if you were to give a grade to the Issaquah School District, would you give it a grade of A,B,C,D or F for its performance on...?

Ratings During Past Quarter

- As the following charts show, during the past quarter there tended to be *directional increases* in A and B grades given to the District.

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Summer 2007 Vs. Fall 2007

	Summer 2007 (July, August, September)					Fall 2007 (Oct., Nov. Dec.)				
	A or B	A	B	C	D or F	A or B	A	B	C	D or F
Keeping schools safe	88%	47	41	10	3	95%	49	46	5	1
Excellent teachers	84%	41	43	14	2	90%	40	50	10	0
Neighborhood school performance	85%	42	43	13	1	87%	37	50	10	2
Keeps community informed	76%	35	41	19	5	81%	38	43	12	6
Students educated to be successful adults	82%	33	49	16	2	79%	35	44	17	4
Well managed	73%	26	47	23	4	78%	28	50	16	6
Overall performance of admin.	70%	22	48	26	5	77%	21	56	17	6
Trustworthy admin.	78%	32	46	17	5	75%	27	48	20	5
Admin. working with teachers to build relationships	69%	31	38	24	7	75%	22*	53*	22	4
Good to work for	81%	25	56	15	4	74%	25	49	18	7
Collaborative admin.	67%	24	43	26	7	73%	22	51	20	6
Excellent leadership	68%	27	41	27	5	72%	22	50	23	5
Financially well run	70%	22	48	26	4	72%	25	47	19	8
Communications from school district are open and honest	75%	40	35	18	7	71%	33	38	21	8
Admin. works with parents on programs that fit budget	67%	19	48	26	7	69%	20	49	25	7
Admin. working with legislators to solve budget problems	60%	15	45	34	6	61%	15	46	29	10

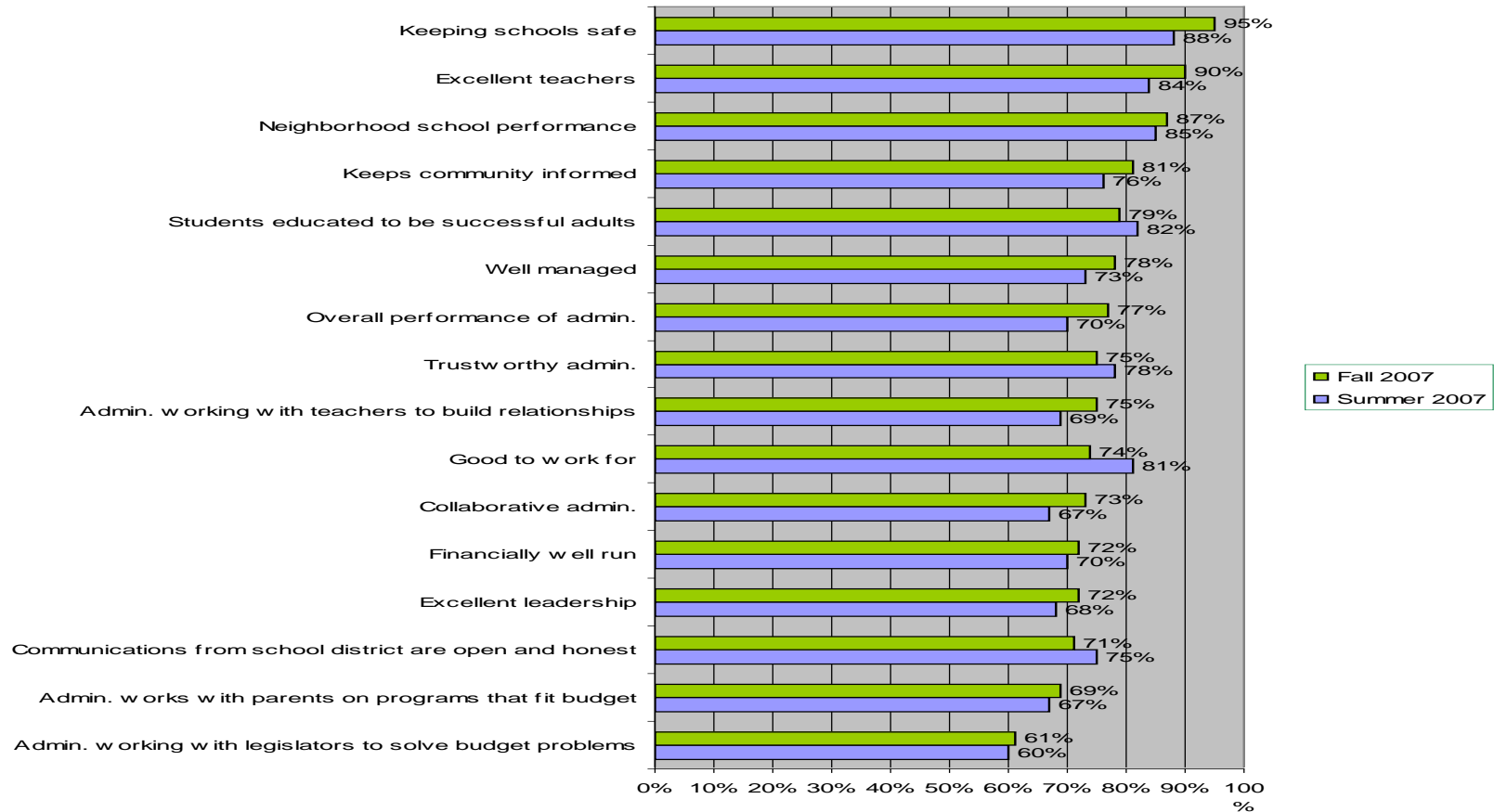
Note:

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

* = Significant difference vs. previous wave of interviewing (Summer 2007) at the 90% confidence level.

Q. Based on your impressions, if you were to give a grade to the Issaquah School District, would you give it a grade of A,B,C,D or F for its performance on...?

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study—Summer 2007 Vs. Fall 2007 % Giving an A or B Grade



Note:

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

Q. Based on your impressions, if you were to give a grade to the Issaquah School District, would you give it a grade of A,B,C,D or F for its performance on...?

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

- As the following chart illustrates, 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*.
 - Parents of Elementary School children are significantly more likely to give an A grade than parents of older students.
 - Of concern, parents of Middle School students were significantly less likely to give an A grade in Fall 2007 than in Fall 2006 (49% vs. 69%). At the same time, they were directionally more likely to give a "C" grade (16% in 2007 vs. 7% in 2006).
 - Three in four parents overall (77%) give the Issaquah School District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district*.
 - But, parents of Middle School students were significantly less likely to give an A grade in Fall 2007 than in Fall 2006 (19% vs. 34%). At the same time, significantly more were giving a C grade (31% in 2007 vs. 14% in 2006).

Grades Given by Parents Regarding Involvement in Their Child's Education Fall 2006 vs. Fall 2007

Fall 2006 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)					Fall 2007 (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	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%	77%	85%***	60%*	75%
A	34	41**	34**	19	35%	39***	19*	35***
B	47	49	49	53	42%	46	41	40
C	14	6**	14	22	19%	14***	31*	21***
D or F	6	4	4	6	4%	1***	9	5***
<i>Your involvement in your child's education is welcome</i>								
A or B	92%	97	93	87	92%	96	84	89
A	63	77**	69**	47	56	63	49*,****	47****
B	29	20**	24**	40	36	33	35	42
C	7	3**	7	11	9	4	16****	11****
D or F	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0

Note:

These attributes were added to the study in Fall 2006.

* = Significant difference vs. Fall 2006.

** = Significant difference vs. parents of High School students.

*** = Significant difference vs. parents of Middle School students.

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

Q. Based upon your impressions, if you were to give a grade to the Issaquah School District, would you give it a grade of A, B, C, D or F for its performance on...?

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 (40%) mention a positive reason, which is significantly higher than in Fall 2003 (27%), a year after the strike.
- The reasons given continue to be diverse with no specific reason mentioned by more than a small minority of respondents. The most frequently given positive reasons include:
 - Doing a good job (16%)
 - Good parental involvement/support/communications (9%)
 - Positive teacher comments (9%)
 - Positive Administration comments (8%)
 - Satisfied with school experience (6%)

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

- The number of respondents mentioning in their reason that an improvement needs to be made has declined significantly since Fall 2003 (from 72% to 56%).
- The most frequently desired improvement is still in the area of communication (19%). Specific requests for improvement in communication continue to be...
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/administration/provide more timely information (15%)
 - Need to listen to parents/community/solicit input/involvement/act on input/partnering (9%)
- Other negative reasons for the grade given to the Administration or desired improvements include:
 - Better administration/leadership/community relations (12%)
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding (7%)
 - Better organization/coordination/planning improvement needed (5%)
 - Put focus on classroom/education/decisions in best interest of student (5%)
 - More focus on students' individual needs/improve learning experience (5%)
 - Better placement of students in classes/programs (5%)
- Very few parents (less than 5%) mention any other specific reason.

Suggestions for District

- Respondents are also specifically asked to suggest improvements that would cause them to give the District a higher grade. The number making a suggestion increased significantly (81% in Fall 2007 vs. 70% in Summer 2007).
- The suggestions given continue to be diverse. The most frequently given suggestion continues to be to improve communication. Directionally more people are making this suggestion (26% in Fall 2007 vs. 22% in Summer 2007).
- There were small, directional increases in suggestions for better communication...
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/administration/provide more/timely information (17% vs. 15% in Summer 2007).
 - Need to listen to parents/community/solicit input/involvement/act on input (16% vs. 14% in Summer 2007).

Suggestions for District Cont'd.

- Other suggestions include...
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding (11%), which is significantly higher than in Summer 2007 (4%).
 - Better administration/leadership/community relations/decision making needed (11%)
 - Change curriculum/unhappy with curriculum/go back to basics (10%).
 - Better placement of students in classes programs (8%).
 - Put focus on classroom/decisions in best interest of student (7%)
 - Better organization/coordination/planning needed (7%)
 - More focus on student's individual needs/improve learning experience (6%)
 - Higher student standards/expectations (6%).
 - Better teachers needed/better teacher-student relations (5%).
 - Better training/monitoring/mentoring of new teachers needed (5%), which is significantly higher than in Summer 2007 (1%)
- All other suggestions were given by less than 5% of respondents.

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

- Approximately four in five residents (79%) continue to feel that the amount they pay for local public education is about right or too low.
- Specifically, residents feel that the taxes they pay for local public education are...

Too high	11%	
About right	59%	} 79%
Too low	20%	
Don't know	11%	

Q. Do you feel that the current share of tax dollars that you pay for local public education is...?

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 District Newsletter, the Issaquah Press and/or its affiliates, and the Internet.
- Since this study began in Fall 2003, significantly more residents mention that their primary source of information is the Internet (13% vs. 4%). And, directionally more residents mention the Issaquah Press and its affiliates (16% vs. 10%).

Primary source of information about Issaquah Schools

Friends and Family	28%
District Newsletter	21
Issaquah Press and its affiliates	16
The Internet	13
Seattle Times	3
School Employees	7
From the School	5
Through the mail/School Bulletin	1
Other	4
Don't Know	2

Q. Where do you get most of your information about Issaquah Schools? (Do not read list.)

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 performance areas...
 - Overall performance of Administration
 - Excellent leadership
 - Well managed
 - Trustworthy Administration
 - Collaborative Administration
 - Administration works with teachers to build relationships
 - Financially well run
 - Administration works with legislators to solve budget problems
- In virtually all other areas, perceptions of the District have improved directionally.
- With regard to the new attributes that were added to this study in Fall 2006, the District's performance continues to be high.
 - Approximately seven in ten residents (71%) 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*.
 - Three in four parents (77%) give the District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district*. Of concern, significantly fewer parents of Middle School students are giving an A grade (19% in Fall 2007 vs. 34% in Fall 2006).

Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- Fewer residents mention a need for improvement in the District's performance when they explain why they gave their overall grade for the District's performance. A little more than half (56%) mention that the District needs to improve in some area when they explain why they gave the District the overall grade that they did (vs. 72% in Fall 2003).
- But, when specifically asked to suggest an improvement, the number of residents suggesting an improvement has increased significantly in the past quarter, from 70% in Summer 2007 to 81% in Fall 2007. There were directional increases in suggestions for improvement in many areas. Two significant increases in suggestions were for...
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding (from 4% in Summer 2007 to 11% in Fall 2007).
 - Better training/monitoring/mentoring of new teachers (from 1% in Summer 2007 to 5% in Fall 2007).
- A minority (26% in Fall 2007) continue to suggest an improvement in communication, which is directionally more than in Summer 2007 (22%).

Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- Approximately four in five (79%) residents continue to feel that the taxes they are paying for education are about right (59%) or too low (20%).
- The Internet has grown significantly as a source of information about the District and its schools since Fall 2003 (from 4% to 13%). But, no one is specifically mentioning the School or District e-newsletters. We could probe about this in future interviews.
- The Issaquah Press and its affiliates have grown directionally as a source of information about the Issaquah school district and its schools since Fall 2003. Approximately three in twenty residents (16%) now consider it to be their primary source of information (vs. 10% in Fall 2003).
- 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 improvements. This quarter almost half the respondents (45%) indicated that they are willing to be contacted again to give further input.

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.