

Issaquah School District Community Polling Study Results

Fall 2003 through Fall 2009

Prepared by:

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Background

- This study was launched in October 2003. The results encompass six years (twenty-five 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

Purpose

- This study provides:
 - The opportunity to learn what parents and the community overall think about the District's performance. Respondents are selected randomly and are representative of the demographics in the community.
 - The ability to assess the District's performance on the Executive Limitations set by the Board.
 - Definitive facts to communicate to parents and the community if there are questions about the District's performance.

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. Since the sample is random, all residents have an equal opportunity of being selected for this study.
- 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 is representative of the types of people who live in this community. It 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 2009, four in ten respondents (40%) indicated that 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.

- Starting in Fall 2006, additional questions were added to this survey to gain additional understanding regarding...
 - The overall community's perception on...
 - *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 2009) 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 2009

- As the following charts show, since this study began in Fall 2003, the levels of A/B grades given to the Issaquah District have increased **significantly** for most performance attributes.
- The District's performance in virtually all other areas has increased directionally.

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Fall 2003 Vs. Fall 2009

	Fall 2003 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)					Fall 2009 (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	6	4	92%	57*	35	6	2
Neighborhood school performance	81%	30	51	13	5	84%	43*	41*	14	2
Excellent teachers	84%	34	50	12	3	82%	37	45	17	1
Communications from school district are open and honest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	82%	46	36	13	5
Students educated to be successful adults	77%	28	49	18	5	82%	39*	43	15	3
Trustworthy Administration	57%	15	42	25	17	81%*	36*	45	17*	2*
Overall performance of Administration	58%	13	45	27	14	80%*	27*	53	15*	4*
Keeps community informed	72%	25	47	18	9	80%	41*	39	15	5
Well managed	61%	14	47	24	13	79%*	33*	46	17	3*
Good to work for	67%	22	45	20	12	78%*	33*	45	20	1*
Excellent leadership	57%	18	39	28	13	77%*	33*	44	19*	4*
Financially well run	49%	14	35	34	16	76%*	28*	48*	17*	8
Administration working with teachers to build relationships	50%	12	38	27	21	76%*	30*	46	18*	6*
Collaborative Administration	56%	13	43	29	14	70%*	26*	44	26	4*
Administration works with parents on programs that fit budget	58%	17	41	28	13	69%*	27*	42	22	8
Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems	50%	8	42	32	16	69%*	24	45	24	7*

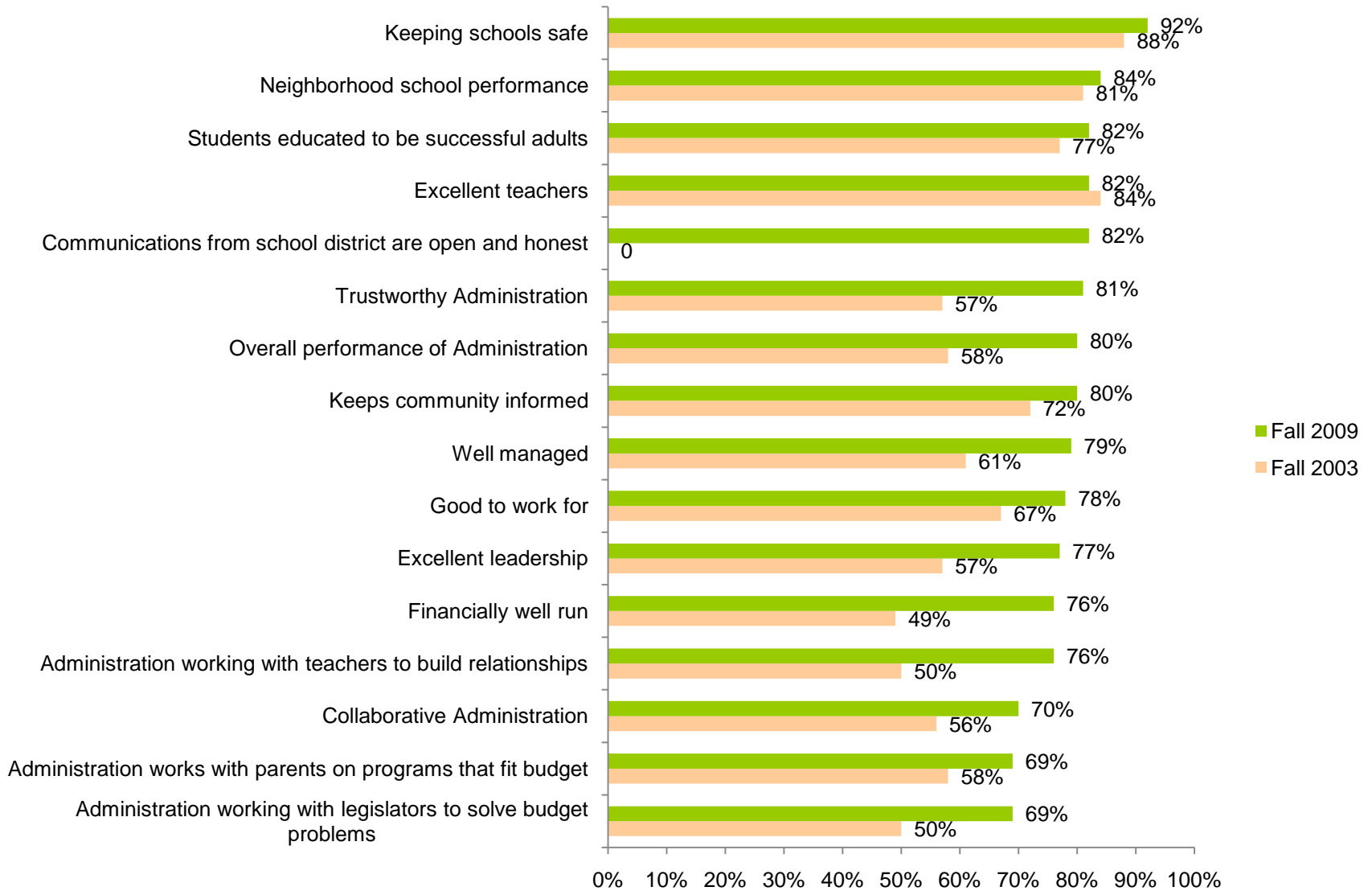
* = Significant difference vs. Fall 2003 at the 90% confidence level.

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 2009

% 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...?

Ratings During Past Quarter

- Overall, ratings were stable during the past quarter with only small directional changes.
- One exception is that the ratings decreased directionally by several points for *financially well run* after a significant increase during the Summer (from 83% in the Summer to 76% in the Fall). This is still an increase vs. the Spring (68%).
 - The significant increase during the Summer may in part have been due to satisfactions with District communications and meetings on budget issues during the Spring.
 - The directional decline in the Fall may be due to some dissatisfactions with budget cuts that began this school year.

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Summer 2009 Vs. Fall 2009

	Summer 2009 (July, August, Sept.)					Fall 2009 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)				
	A or B	A	B	C	D or F	A or B	A	B	C	D or F
Keeping schools safe	93%	58	35	6	2	92%	57	35	6	2
Neighborhood school performance	88%	34	54	10	2	84%	43	41*	14	2
Excellent teachers	85%	41	44	11	4	82%	37	45	17	1
Communications from school district are open and honest	80%	38	42	15	5	82%	46	36	13	5
Students educated to be successful adults	78%	36	42	15	6	82%	39	43	15	3
Trustworthy Administration	83%	32	51	14	3	81%	36	45	17	2
Overall performance of Administration	81%	26	55	14	6	80%	27	53	15	4
Keeps community informed	80%	43	37	14	7	80%	41	39	15	5
Well managed	78%	29	49	18	4	79%	33	46	17	3
Good to work for	77%	30	47	20	3	78%	33	45	20	1
Excellent leadership	81%	27	54	13	6	77%	33	44*	19	4
Financially well run	83%	27	56	13	4	76%	28	48	17	8
Administration working with teachers to build relationships	73%	30	43	22	5	76%	30	46	18	6
Collaborative Administration	73%	23	50	20	7	70%	26	44	26	4
Administration works with parents on programs that fit budget	69%	22	47	23	9	69%	27	42	22	8
Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems	67%	16	51	24	9	69%	24	45	24	7

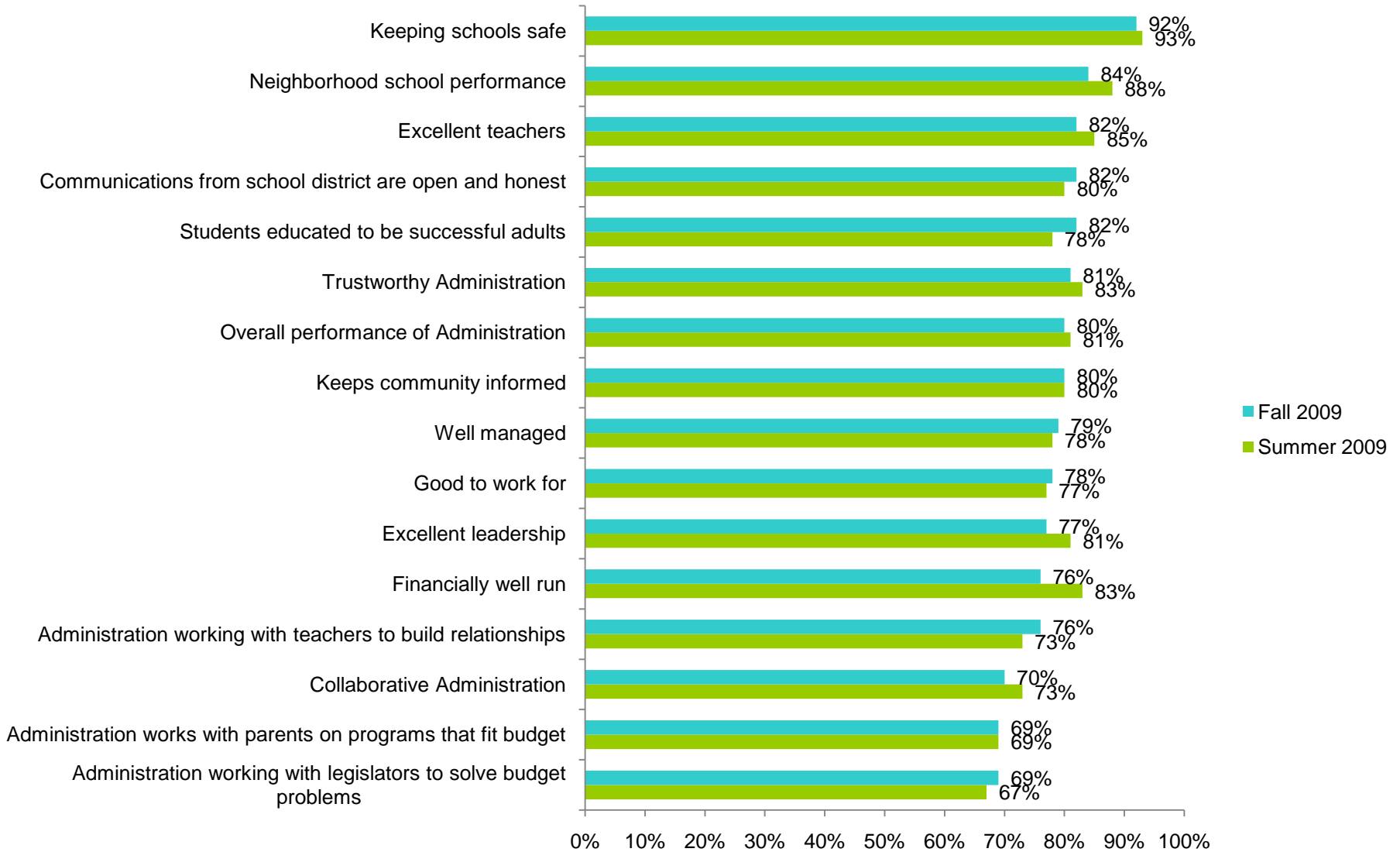
Note:

* = Significant difference vs. Summer 2009 at the 90% confidence level.

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...?

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study— Summer 2009 Vs. Fall 2009 % 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 details, the vast majority of parents continue to give the District high grades for encouraging their opinions and welcoming their involvement.
 - Almost all parents (93%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*. And, seven in ten parents (69%) give the District an A grade, which is directionally more than in the Summer (60%).
 - Parents of Elementary school students continue to be *significantly* more likely to give an A grade than parents of Middle School students (75% vs. 57%).
 - Almost nine in ten parents (85%) give the District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district*, which is directionally more than the previous period (79%).

Grades Given by Parents Regarding Involvement in Their Child's Education Fall 2006 vs. Fall 2009

Fall 2006 (October, November, December)					Fall 2009 (October, November, December)			
<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%	85%	87%	85%	83%
A	34	41**	34**	19	42	43	38	39
B	47	49	49	53	43	44	47	44
C	14	6**	14	22	13	11	13	15
D or F	6	4	4	6	2	2	2	2
<i>Your involvement in your child's education is welcome</i>								
A or B	92%	97%	93%	87%	93%	92%	91%	94%
A	63	77**	69**	47	69	75	57****	65
B	29	20**	24**	40	24	17	34****	29****
C	7	3**	7	11	5	7	9	2***
D or F	1	0	0	2	2	1	0	4

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 asked about their reasons for the grade they give the Administration for its overall performance.
- Residents' perceptions of the Administration have improved since this study began in 2003 as well as in the past quarter.
 - Approximately half (53%) mention a positive reason for the grade they gave, which is significantly more than the in Summer 2009 (36%) and Fall 2003 (27%).
 - Approximately half (49%) mention that something needs improvement which is significantly less than in Fall 2003 (72%).
- The reasons given continue to be diverse with no specific reason mentioned by more than a small number of respondents.

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

- The most frequently given positive comments (which are also being mentioned significantly more frequently this quarter) are:
 - Satisfied with school experience (22%) vs. 13% last quarter and 4% in 2003.
 - Doing a good job (19%) vs. (10%) last quarter and 8% in 2003.
 - Good parental involvement/support/communications (11%) vs. 2% in 2003.
 - Positive comments about the Administration (9%) vs. 4% last quarter and 2% in 2003.
- The most frequently given negative reasons for the grade given to the Administration are mentioned by only small numbers of residents.
 - *Room for improvement* (15%), which significantly more residents mention than in 2003 (6%). About the same number (13%) of residents gave this reason last quarter.
 - *Improve communications to parents from teachers/Administration/provide more timely information* (9%) which is mentioned by directionally more residents than the previous quarter (4%). Historically, this has been one of the most frequently given reasons.
 - *Better Administration/leadership/community relations needed* (5%), which is mentioned by significantly fewer residents than in 2003 (12%).

Suggestions for District

- Respondents are also asked to suggest improvements that would cause them to give the District a higher grade. Historically, most make at least one suggestion.
 - Approximately three in four residents (75%) made a suggestion this Fall. This is directionally fewer than in Fall 2003 (83%).
- The suggestions continue to be diverse. In this community where education is highly valued, the most frequently given suggestion continues to be to improve communication. One in four (25%) made this suggestion this Fall quarter, which is significantly more than in the Summer (15%). This recent increase in requests for improved communication *may* be due to not receiving as many communications or invitations to meetings as they did during the budget crisis.
- Specific suggestions for improvements in communication include:
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/Administration/provide more/timely information (16%), which is suggested by directionally more residents than the previous quarter (8%).
 - Need to listen to parents/community, solicit input/involvement (11%), which is suggested by directionally more residents than the previous quarter (7%)

Suggestions for District Cont'd.

- Other suggestions include...
 - Better teachers needed/better teacher-student relations (15%)
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding (12%). Significantly more residents are requesting this than in the Summer (5%) but a comparable number of residents made this request the previous quarter (13%).
 - Need better teacher-Administration relations (7%)
 - Better Administration/leadership/community relations/decision making (6%).
- All other suggestions were given by less than 5% of respondents.

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

- Even in this tight economy, Issaquah's residents have consistently been comfortable with the taxes they are paying for local education. Approximately four out of five residents (79%) feel that the amount of taxes they pay for local public education is about right or too low.
 - Directionally more feel this way now than in the Summer (79% vs. 70%), which primarily comes from an increase in the number feeling that the taxes they are paying for education are about right (70% in the Fall vs. 62% in the Summer).
- Residents feel that the taxes they pay for local public education are...

Too high	11%	
About right	70%	} 79%
Too low	9%	
Don't know	9 %	

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 continue to most frequently mention that their Friends and Family, the Internet, the Issaquah Press/its affiliates and the District Newsletter are their primary source of information about Issaquah schools.
- Since this study began in Fall 2003, significantly more residents are using the Internet as their primary source of information (4% vs. 16%) and the Issaquah Press/its affiliates (10% vs. 24%).

Primary source of information about Issaquah Schools

Friends and Family	26%
Issaquah Press and its affiliates	24
The Internet	16
District Newsletter	15
School Employees	7
The School	2
Seattle Times	2
Work there/personal experience	1
Other	4
Don't Know	3

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

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Overall, the gains made in satisfaction levels since 2003 have been maintained.
- The levels of high grades have increased significantly for most performance attributes and directionally in virtually all other areas since 2003.
- During the past quarter, grades for the District's performance remained stable with only small, directional changes. One exception is the level of high grades for *financially well run* where there was a directional decline of several points...
 - Ratings decreased directionally for *financially well run* (from 83% giving the District a high grade in the Summer to 76% in the Fall). This directional decline *may* be due to some dissatisfactions with budget cuts that occurred this school year.

Conclusions and Recommendations Cont'd.

- With regard to the new attributes that were added to this study in Fall 2006, the District receives high grades from the vast majority of parents.
 - Virtually all parents (93%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*.
 - Almost nine in ten parents (85%) give the District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this District*. Directionally more parents now give a high grade than in the Summer (85% vs. 79%).
 - Approximately four out of five residents (82%) give the District an A or B grade for *communications from the school district are open and honest*.

Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- Attitudes toward the District have continued to improve, which is reflected in the reasons residents provide for the grade they give to the District for its overall performance.
 - Approximately half (53%) mention a positive reason for the grade they give the Administration, which is significantly more than in the Summer (36%) and when this study began in Fall 2003 (27%).
 - Approximately half (49%) mention that the District needs to improve in some area when they explain why they gave the District the overall grade that they did. But, this is significantly fewer people than in Fall 2003 (72%).
 - The reasons continue to be diverse with no specific reason mentioned by more than a small minority of residents which may reflect the diverse needs and interests in the community.
- Respondents are also asked to suggest improvements that the District should make, and historically most residents will suggest at least one improvement. In this involved community, three in four residents (75%) made a suggestion this Fall, which is directionally fewer than in Fall 2003 when 83% made a suggestion.
 - The suggestions continue to be diverse. The most frequently given suggestion continues to be to improve communication (25%), which is significantly more than in the Summer (15%). The recent increase in requests for improved communication may be due to residents noticing fewer communications or invitations to District meetings than had occurred during the budget crisis.

Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- The vast majority of residents continue to be satisfied with the amount of taxes they are paying for local education. Approximately four in five (79%) feel that the taxes they are paying for local education are about right (70%) or too low (9%).
 - This represents a directional improvement vs. the Summer when seven in ten (70%) felt they were about right (62%) or too low (8%).
- The most frequently mentioned primary sources of information about the District continue to be Family and Friends (26%), the Issaquah Press (24%), the Internet (16%), and the District Newsletter (15%). The vast majority of residents (81%) mention one of these sources as their primary source.
 - The Internet has grown significantly as a source of information since Fall 2003 (from 4% to 16%).
- This quarter four in ten respondents (40%) indicated that they are willing to give further input. If additional in-depth learning is desired on any of these findings, it is possible to contact these respondents...
 - with additional questions on such things as the underlying reasons for a grade or suggested improvements
 - regarding new issues that the District would like their input on, such as program changes under consideration
 - to invite them to join an advisory group

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 Bank of America, US West, Bristol Meyers, Seagrams, Wells, Rich Green Advertising, Porter Novelli Public Relations and various consulting companies.