

Issaquah School District Community Polling Study Results

Fall 2003 through Spring 2008

Prepared by:

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Background

- This study was launched in October 2003. The results encompass more than four years (nineteen 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 Spring 2008, approximately four in ten respondents (37%) 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 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 (Spring 2008) 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. Spring 2008

- As the following charts detail, since the Fall of 2003 the levels of A/B grades given to the Issaquah School District have **significantly** increased in almost all performance areas...
 - Overall performance of Administration
 - Excellent leadership
 - Well managed
 - Trustworthy Administration
 - Collaborative Administration
 - Administration works with teachers to build relationships
 - Good to work for
 - Financially well run
 - Neighborhood school performance
 - Students educated to be successful adults
 - Administration works with parents on programs that fit the budget
 - Administration works with legislators to solve budget problems
- In virtually all other areas, the levels of A/B grades have improved directionally.

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Fall 2003 Vs. Spring 2008

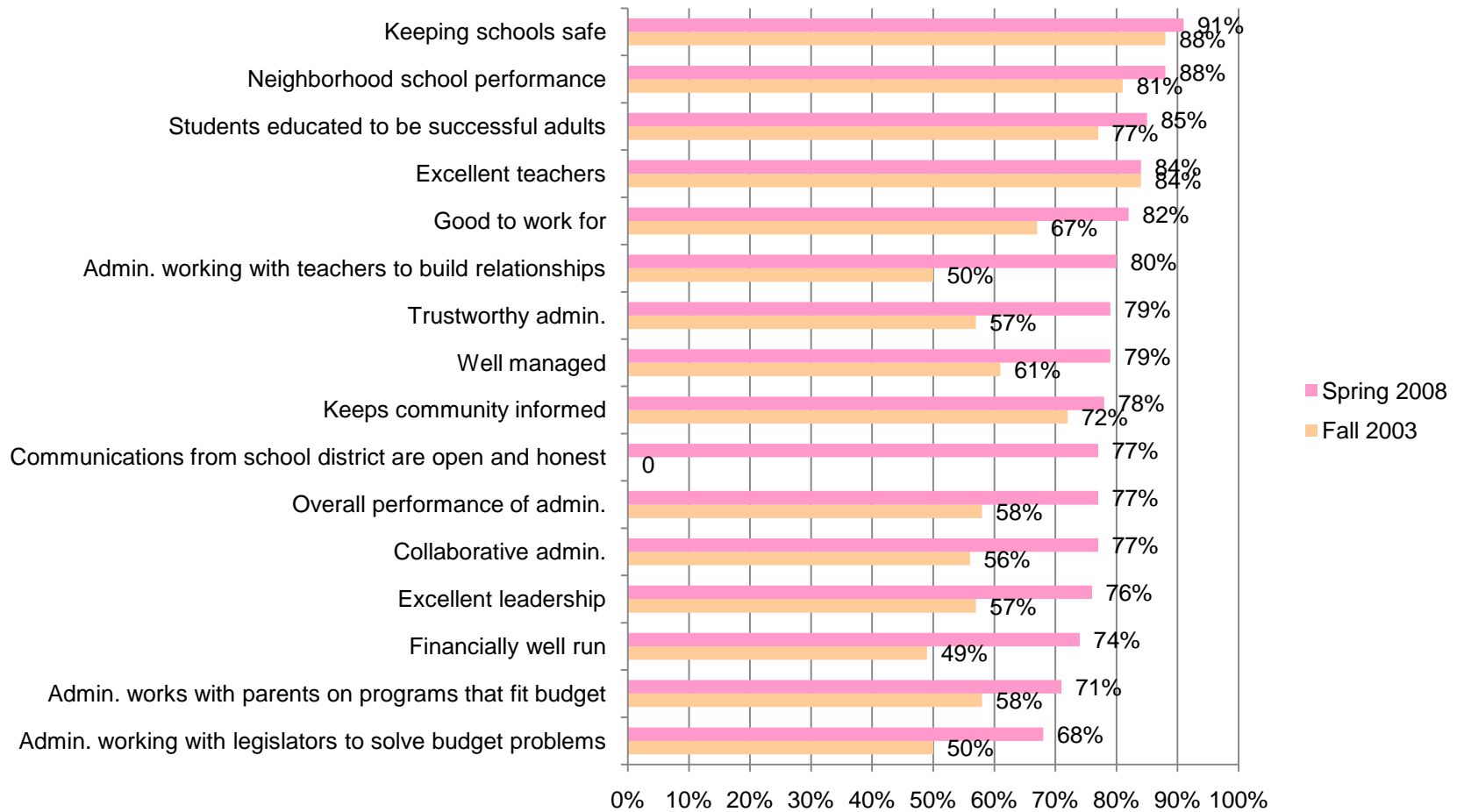
	Fall 2003 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)					Spring 2008 (April, May, June)				
	A or B	A	B	C	D or F	A or B	A	B	C	D or F
Keeping schools safe	88%	46	42	6	4	91%	60*	31	6	3
Excellent teachers	84%	34	50	12	3	84%	46*	38	12	4
Neighborhood school performance	81%	30	51	13	5	88%*	46*	42	7	5
Students educated to be successful adults	77%	28	49	18	5	85%*	35	50	11	4
Keeps community informed	72%	25	47	18	9	78%	41*	37	14	7
Good to work for	67%	22	45	20	12	82%*	38*	44	12	5
Well managed	61%	14	47	24	13	79%*	29*	50	16	5
Overall performance of admin.	58%	13	45	27	14	77%*	25*	52	17	7
Admin. works with parents on programs that fit budget	58%	17	41	28	13	71%*	25*	46	18	11
Excellent leadership	57%	18	39	28	13	76%*	32*	44	18	6
Trustworthy admin.	57%	15	42	25	17	79%*	33*	46	12	9
Collaborative admin.	56%	13	43	29	14	77%*	33*	44	14	9
Admin. working with teachers to build relationships	50%	12	38	27	21	80%*	34*	46	10	10
Admin. working with legislators to solve budget problems	50%	8	42	32	16	68%*	18*	50	24	8
Financially well run	49%	14	35	34	16	74%*	27*	47*	18	8
Communications from school district are open and honest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	77%	41	36	17	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. Spring 2008 % Giving an A or B Grade



Note:

The levels of A/B grades increased significantly for virtually all performance attributes.

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 detail, during the past quarter there were significant increases in the number of A/B grades given to the District for...
 - Students educated to be successful adults
 - Administration working with teachers to build relationships
 - Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems
- In virtually all other areas there were directional increases in the A/B grades.

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Winter 2008 vs. Spring 2008

	Winter 2008 (January, February, March)					Spring 2008 (April, May, June)				
	<u>A or B</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D or F</u>	<u>A or B</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D or F</u>
Keeping schools safe	90%	52	38	6	4	91%	60	31	6	3
Neighborhood school performance	82%	34	48	13	5	88%	46*	42	7	5
Students educated to be successful adults	76%	30	46	15	9	85%*	35	50	11	4
Excellent teachers	82%	38	44	14	4	84%	46	38	12	4
Good to work for	77%	28	49	19	4	82%	38	44	12	5
Admin. working with teachers to build relationships	69%	22	47	24	7	80%*	34*	46	10	10
Well managed	77%	27	50	18	4	79%	29	50	16	5
Trustworthy admin.	79%	31	48	13	8	79%	33	46	12	9
Keeps community informed	75%	41	34	14	10	78%	41	37	14	7
Overall performance of admin.	75%	28	47	18	8	77%	25	52	17	7
Collaborative admin.	73%	26	47	20	8	77%	33	44	14	9
Communications from school district are open and honest	75%	39	36	17	8	77%	41	36	17	7
Excellent leadership	74%	30	44	16	10	76%	32	44	18	6
Financially well run	67%	19	48	23	10	74%	27	47*	18	8
Admin. works with parents on programs that fit budget	67%	23	44	26	7	71%	25	46	18*	11
Admin. working with legislators to solve budget problems	58%	15	43	28	13	68%*	18	50	24	8

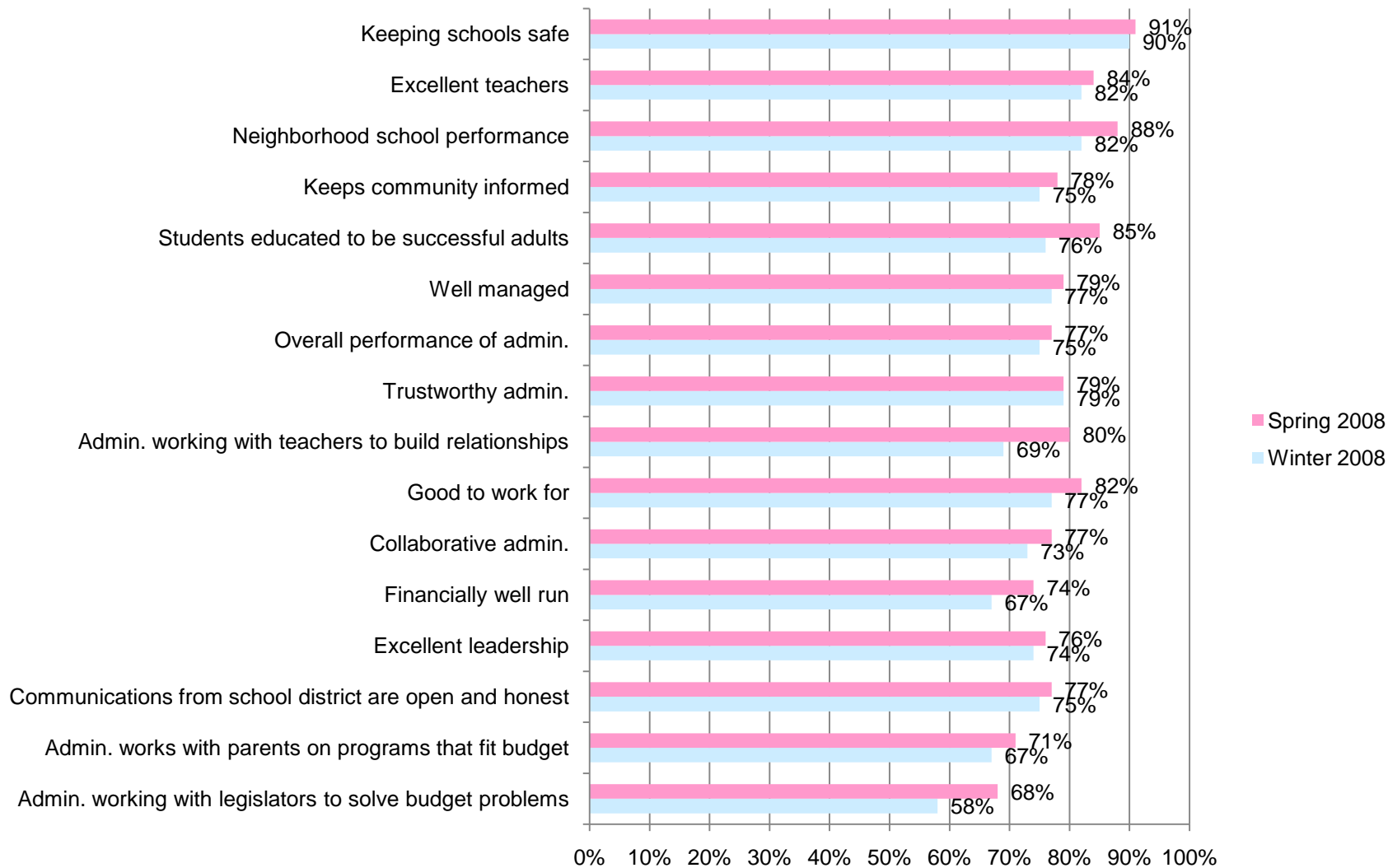
Note:

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...?

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study—Winter 2008 Vs. Spring 2008

% 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 continue to give the District high grades for encouraging their opinions and involvement in their children's education.
 - Nine in ten parents overall (91%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*.
 - Parents of Elementary and Middle school students are significantly more likely to give an A grade than parents of High School students. This was also the case in Spring 2007 and may be a reflection of the time of the year and stresses that are unique to parents of High School students, such as the stress of meeting graduation requirements.
 - Four in five parents overall (83%) give the Issaquah School District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district*.
 - Parents of Elementary school students are directionally more likely to give an A or B grade than parents of older students.

Grades Given by Parents Regarding Involvement in Their Child's Education Fall 2006 vs. Spring 2008

Fall 2006 (October, November, December)					Spring 2008 (April, May, June)			
<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%	83%	85	81%	81%
A	34	41**	34**	19	48	53	50	40
B	47	49	49	53	35*	32	31	41
C	14	6**	14	22	12	8	14	14
D or F	6	4	4	6	6	8	5	5
<i>Your involvement in your child's education is welcome</i>								
A or B	92%	97%	93%	87%	91%	94%	92%	87%
A	63	77**	69**	47	65	73**	76**	54
B	29	20**	24**	40	26	21	16	33***
C	7	3**	7	11	8	6	6	12
D or F	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	1

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.
- Residents perceptions of the Administration have continued to improve since the first wave of measurements were taken in Fall 2003, a year after the strike.
 - Almost four in ten (38%) mention a positive reason for the grade they give, which is significantly more than in Fall 2003 (27%), a year after the strike.
 - Approximately one in two (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 minority of respondents. The most frequently given positive reasons continue to be:
 - Doing a good job (10%)
 - Good parental involvement/support/communications (9%)
 - Positive word of mouth/reports (7%)
 - Positive Administration comments (6%)
 - Satisfied with school experience (6%)
 - Positive teacher comments (5%)

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

- Dissatisfactions with the District's communication have declined. Specifically, the number requesting an improvement in this area has declined significantly since this survey began, from 15% in Fall 2003 to 7% in Spring 2008...
 - Need to listen to parents/community/solicit input/involvement/act on input/partnering (6% vs. 9% in Fall 2003)
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/administration/provide more timely information (3% vs. 6% in Fall 2003)
- Other negative reasons for the overall grade given to the Administration and desired improvements include:
 - Better administration/leadership/community relations (13%)
 - Better organization/coordination/planning improvement needed (8%)
 - Room for improvement (8%)
 - Put focus on classroom/education/decisions in best interest of student (5%)
- Very few (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. Historically, when asked to suggest an improvement, the vast majority of residents make at least one suggestion. The number making a suggestion in Spring 2008 (75%) is directionally fewer than Fall 2003 (83%).
- The suggestions given continue to be diverse. The most frequently given suggestion continues to be to improve communication with approximately one in four (26%) making this suggestion. Specific suggestions include:
 - *Need to listen to parents/community, solicit input/involvement (20%)*
 - *Improve communication to parents from teachers/administration, provide more/timely information (15%)*

Suggestions for District Cont'd.

- Other suggestions include...
 - Better administration/leadership/community relations/decision making (12%)
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding (9%)
 - Put focus on classroom/education/decisions that are in best interest of student (7%)
 - Better organization/coordination/planning needed (7%)
 - Better teachers needed/better teacher-student relations (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

- Approximately seven in ten residents (72%) feel that the amount they pay for local public education is about right or too low. This is directionally fewer than in the previous quarter (77%) and may be a reflection of a weakened economy.
- Specifically, residents feel that the taxes they pay for local public education are...

Too high	16%	
About right	59%	} 72%
Too low	13%	
Don't know	12%	

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 (14% vs. 4%).

Primary source of information about Issaquah Schools

Friends and Family	25%
District Newsletter	21
Issaquah Press and its affiliates	12
The Internet	14
Work there/personal experience	4
Seattle Times	2
School Employees	3
From the School	0
Through the mail/School Bulletin	2
Television	3
Other	7
Don't Know	10

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, the levels of A/B grades given to the Issaquah School District have **significantly** improved in almost all performance areas...
 - Overall performance of Administration
 - Excellent leadership
 - Well managed
 - Trustworthy Administration
 - Collaborative Administration
 - Administration works with teachers to build relationships
 - Financially well run
 - Good to work for
 - Neighborhood school performance
 - Students educated to be successful adults
 - Administration works with parents on programs that fit the budget
 - Administration works with legislators to solve budget problems
- In virtually all other areas, perceptions of the District have improved directionally since 2003.

Conclusions and Recommendations Cont'd.

- With regard to the new attributes that were added to this study in Fall 2006, the District's performance continues to be high.
 - Three in four residents (77%) give the District an A or B grade for *communications from the school district are open and honest.*
 - Nine in ten parents (91%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome.*
 - Four in five parents (83%) give Issaquah a high grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district.*

Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- Residents' perceptions of the Administration have continued to improve since the first measurements were taken in Fall 2003, a year after the strike. When reasons are given for the grade given to the Administration for its overall performance...
 - Almost four in ten (38%) mention a positive reason, which is significantly more than in Fall 2003 (27%).
 - Approximately one in two (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 (vs. 72% in Fall 2003).
 - The reasons given continue to be diverse with no specific reason mentioned by more than a small minority of residents, which possibly is a reflection of the diverse needs and interests in the community.
- Respondents are also asked to suggest improvements that the District could make, and historically the vast majority of residents will suggest at least one improvement. The number suggesting an improvement has declined directionally, 75% in Spring 2008 vs. 83% in Fall 2003.
 - The suggestions continue to be diverse. The most frequently given suggestion is to improve communication (26% in Spring 2008), which may in part be due to this community's high involvement and interest in education.

Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- Almost seven in ten (72%) residents continue to feel that the taxes they are paying for education are about right (59%) or too low (13%). There are directionally few residents feeling this way than in the previous quarter (77%) and this may be due to the weakened economy.
- The two most frequently mentioned sources of information about the District continue to be Family and Friends (25%) and the District Newsletter (21%). The Internet has grown significantly as a source of information about the District and its schools since Fall 2003 (from 4% to 14%).
- 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. They could also be re-contacted about new issues that the District would like their input on. This quarter approximately four in ten respondents (37%) 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 Bank of America, US West, Bristol Meyers, Seagrams, Wells, Rich Green Advertising, Porter Novelli Public Relations and various consulting companies.