

Issaquah School District Community Polling Study Results

Fall 2003 through Spring 2009

Prepared by:

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Background

- This study was launched in October 2003. The results encompass over five years (twenty-three 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 2009, approximately four in ten respondents (41%) 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 (Spring 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. Spring 2009

- 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 for almost all performance attributes. The remaining attributes have increased directionally, with one exception where positive perceptions have remained the same.
 - Issaquah has historically received high ratings for having *excellent teachers*. In both Fall 2003 and Spring 2009, 84% gave Issaquah an A or B for its performance in this area.

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

	Fall 2003 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)					Spring 2009 (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%	57*	34	7	2
Neighborhood school performance	81%	30	51	13	5	89%*	40*	49	8	2
Excellent teachers	84%	34	50	12	3	84%	40	44	16	0
Students educated to be successful adults	77%	28	49	18	5	83%	35	48	10*	8
Trustworthy Administration	57%	15	42	25	17	81%*	34*	47	14	4
Communications from school district are open and honest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	81%	43	38	15	5
Good to work for	67%	22	45	20	12	80%*	35*	45	15	6
Keeps community informed	72%	25	47	18	9	77%	42*	35*	19	4
Overall performance of Administration	58%	13	45	27	14	77%*	25*	52	18	5
Excellent leadership	57%	18	39	28	13	77%*	29*	48	19*	4*
Collaborative Administration	56%	13	43	29	14	76%*	25*	51	19*	4
Well managed	61%	14	47	24	13	75%*	33*	42	18	7
Administration working with teachers to build relationships	50%	12	38	27	21	75%*	32*	43	20	5
Financially well run	49%	14	35	34	16	68%*	23*	45*	23*	10
Administration works with parents on programs that fit budget	58%	17	41	28	13	67%*	23	44	25	7
Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems	50%	8	42	32	16	65%*	18*	47	22*	13

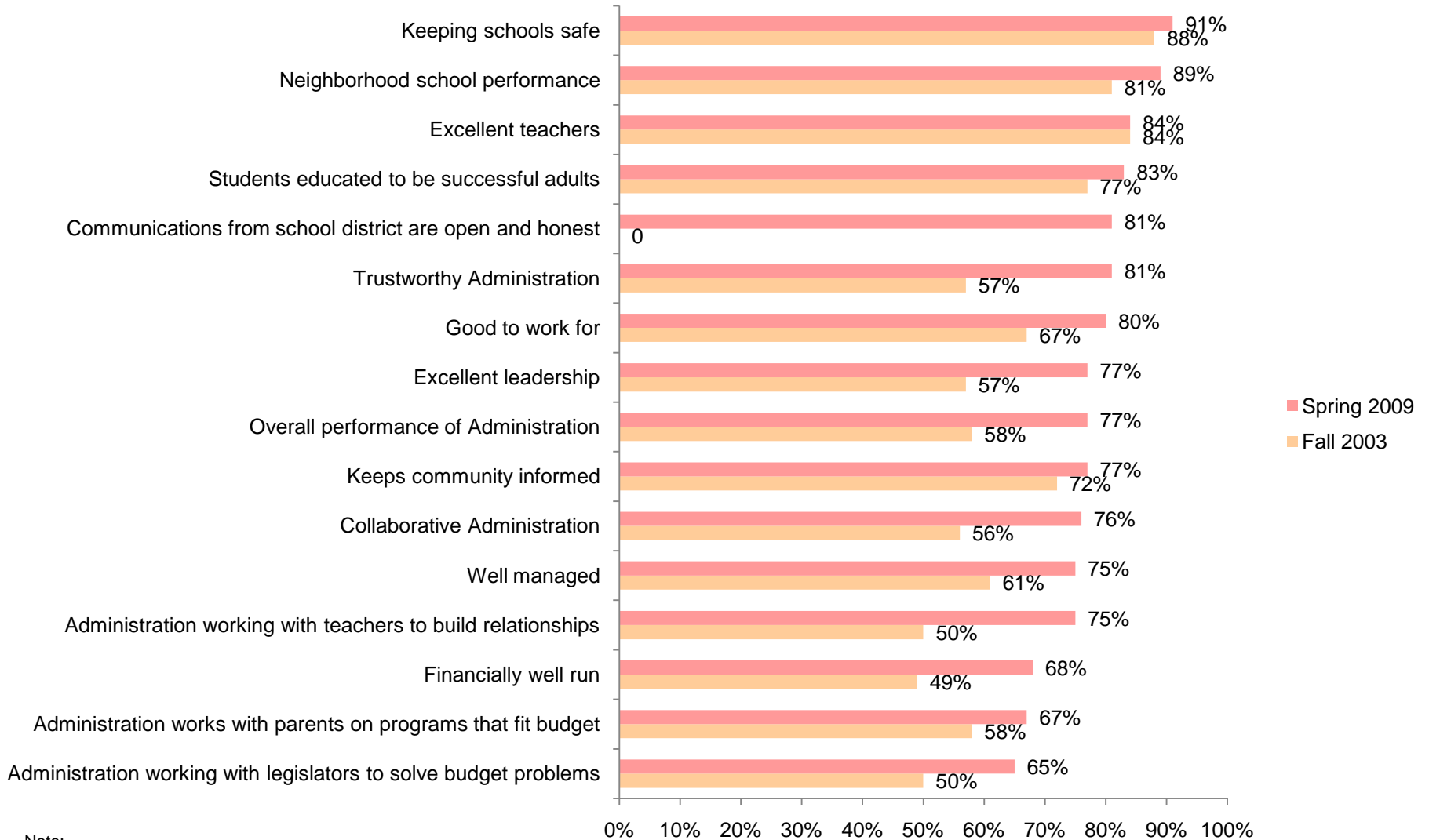
* = Significant difference vs. Fall 2003 at the 90% confidence level.

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 2009

% Giving an A or B Grade



Note:

The levels of A/B grades have increased significantly for most performance attributes since 2003. For the following attributes there have been directional increases: *keeps community informed, students educated to be successful adults, keeping schools safe*. The high scores for excellent teachers has remained stable since 2003 with 84% continuing to give a high grade.

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

- The budget crisis as well as the strong possibility of teacher and other staff layoffs were in the minds of many in the community during the Spring quarter. At the same time, there was a significant decline in the number of A/B grades being given for...
 - Excellent teachers (from 91% giving an A or B grade during the Winter of 2009 to 84% during this past Spring)
 - Overall performance of Administration (from 85% to 77%)
 - Excellent leadership (from 86% to 77%)
 - Well managed (from 89% to 75%)
 - Financially well run (from 78% to 68%)

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Winter 2009 Vs. Spring 2009

	Winter 2009					Spring 2009 (April, May, June)				
	A or B	A	B	C	D or F	A or B	A	B	C	D or F
Keeping schools safe	93%	52	41	5	3	91%	57	34	7	2
Neighborhood school performance	91%	38	53	6	2	89%	40	49	8	2
Excellent teachers	91%	36	55	8	1	84%*	40	44*	16*	0
Students educated to be successful adults	88%	31	57	10	2	83%	35	48*	10	8
Trustworthy Administration	84%	30	54	12	3	81%	34	47	14	4
Communications from school district are open and honest	87%	38	49	12	2	81%	43	38*	15	5
Good to work for	85%	32	53	13	1	80%	35	45	15	6
Keeps community informed	80%	38	42	17	3	77%	42	35	19	4
Overall performance of Administration	85%	24	61	12	4	77%*	25	52	18	5
Excellent leadership	86%	24	62	11	3	77%*	29	48*	19*	4
Collaborative Administration	78%	24	54	14	7	76%	25	51	19	4
Well managed	89%	26	63	8	4	75%*	33	42*	18*	7
Administration working with teachers to build relationships	77%	25	52	20	4	75%	32	43	20	5
Financially well run	78%	24	54	18	3	68%*	23	45	23	10
Administration works with parents on programs that fit budget	74%	14	60	23	3	67%	23*	44*	25	7
Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems	69%	18	51	23	9	65%	18	47	22	13

Note:

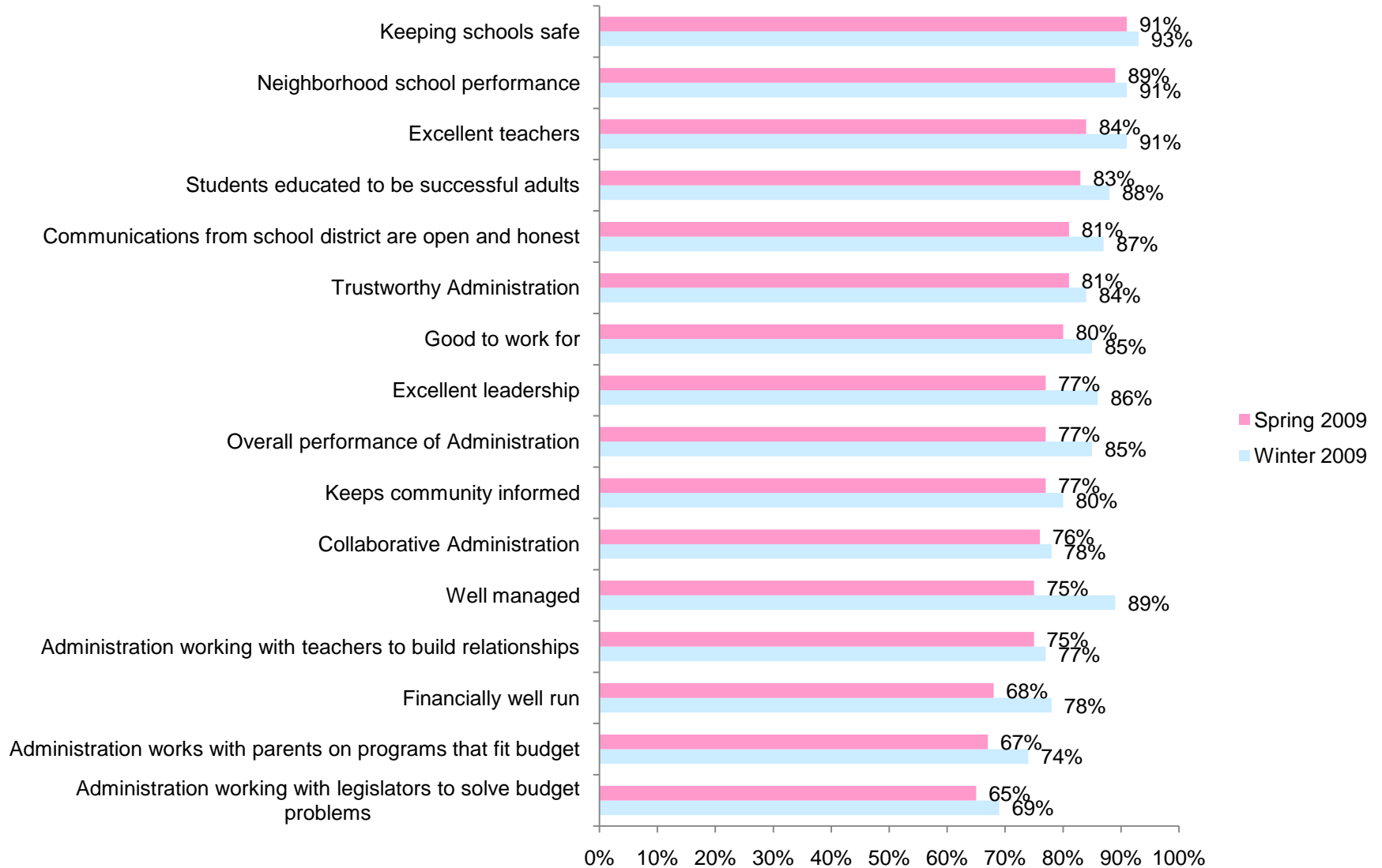
* = Significant difference vs. Winter 2009 at the 90% confidence level.

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— Winter 2009 Vs. Spring 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 shows, the vast majority of parents continue to give the District high grades for encouraging their opinions and welcoming their involvement.
 - Nine in ten parents overall (89%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*. Approximately two in three (67%) give the District an A grade.
 - Parents or Elementary school students continue to be *significantly* more likely to give an A grade than parents of Middle School and High School students.
 - Almost three in four parents overall (76%) give the District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district*.
 - Parents of High School students are significantly less likely to give an A grade than parents of younger students.

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

Fall 2006 (October, November, December)					Spring 2009 (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%	76%	82%	69%*	68%
A	34	41**	34**	19	34	40**	38**	22
B	47	49	49	53	42	42	31*	46***
C	14	6**	14	22	15	15***	30*	15***
D or F	6	4	4	6	9	4**	0**	17*
<i>Your involvement in your child's education is welcome</i>								
A or B	92%	97%	93%	87%	89%	95%**	87%	80%
A	63	77**	69**	47	67	78	65****	53****
B	29	20**	24**	40	22	17	22	27
C	7	3**	7	11	9	3	12****	17****
D or F	1	0	0	2	3	2	2	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 probed regarding reasons for the grade they give the Administration for its overall performance.
- Residents' perceptions of the Administration have improved since the first wave of measurements were taken in Fall 2003, a year after the strike.
 - Almost half (43%) mention a positive reason for the grade they give, which is significantly more than in Fall 2003 (27%), a year after the strike.
 - Approximately half (49%) mention that something needs improvement, this 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.
- The most frequently given positive reasons are:
 - Doing a good job (17% vs. 8% in 2003)
 - Positive Administration comments (10% vs. 2% in 2003)
 - Good parental involvement/support/communications (8% vs. 2% in Fall 2003)
 - Positive teacher comments (7% vs. 2% in 2003)
 - Satisfied with school experience (6% vs. 4% in 2003)

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

- The most frequently given negative reasons for the grade given to the Administration are mentioned by only small numbers of residents. This may reflect the diverse needs of the residents and parents in Issaquah.
 - Better Administration/leadership/community relations needed (8%)
 - Need to listen to parents/community/solicit input/involvement/act on input/partner (8%)
 - Better organization/coordination/planning needed (7%)
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/Administration/provide more timely information (6%)
- Very few (less than 5%) mention any other specific reason.

Suggestions for District

- Respondents are also asked to suggest improvements that would cause them to give the District a higher grade. Historically, the majority of residents make at least one suggestion.
 - Three in four residents (75%) made a suggestion this Spring. This is directionally less than in Fall 2003 when 83% made a suggestion.
- 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 to them. Almost one in four (23%) make this suggestion. Specific suggestions include:
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/Administration, provide more/timely information (18%).
 - Need to listen to parents/community, solicit input/involvement (17%)

Suggestions for District Cont'd.

- Other suggestions include...
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding (13%)
 - Better administration/leadership/community relations/decision making (13%)
 - Better organization/coordination/planning needed (11%)

 - More focus on student's individual needs/improve learning experience (6%)
 - High turnover/retain quality teachers/staff (6%)
 - Need to improve school atmosphere/environment (5%)
 - Need to reduce class size/lower teacher-student ratio (5%)

- 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 (70%) feel that the amount of taxes that they pay for local public education is about right or too low. Directionally more residents felt this way the previous quarter (74%).
- Residents feel that the taxes they pay for local public education are...

Too high	16%	
About right	57%	} 70%
Too low	13%	
Don't know	14%	

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. 25%) and the Issaquah Press/its affiliates (10 vs. 18%).

Primary source of information about Issaquah Schools

Friends and Family	28%
The Internet	25
Issaquah Press and its affiliates	18
District Newsletter	14
Seattle Times	3
Television	4
Work there/personal experience	3
School Employees	2
From the school	1
Don't Know	4

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

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Overall, the number of residents giving the District high grades has improved since 2003.
- The levels of high grades have increased significantly for most performance attributes and directionally for the remaining attributes with one exception. It was at a high level (84% giving an A or B grade) for *having excellent teachers* in 2003 and is still at this level.
- But, there were some declines in perceptions during the past quarter. There were also some negative circumstances during this quarter. Specifically, for a good part of this quarter parents and residents continuously heard in the news about the District's budget crisis from a reduction in State funding and possible teacher/staff layoffs. After the positive announcements that started in late May about such things as teachers being able to keep their jobs, perceptions *may* improve in the Summer quarter.
- During the Spring quarter there were significant declines in the number of A/B grades vs. the previous quarter...
 - Having excellent teachers (from 91% in the Winter of 2009 to 84% during the Spring quarter)
 - Overall performance of the Administration (from 85% to 77%)
 - Excellent leadership (from 86% to 77%)
 - Well managed (from 89% to 75%)
 - Financially well run (from 78% to 68%)

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 with the vast majority of parents giving high grades.
 - Approximately four out of five residents (81%) give the District an A or B grade for *communications from the school district are open and honest*. This represents a directional decline from the level (87%) achieved during the previous Winter quarter.
 - Nine in ten parents (89%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*. This is comparable to the level of high grades achieved during the previous quarter (90%).
 - Approximately three in four parents (76%) give Issaquah an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this District*. This is directionally lower than the previous quarter when 87% gave a high grade.

Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- The improved grades for the Administration's overall performance vs. 2003 are reflected in the reasons given for the grades.
 - Almost half (43%) mention a positive reason, which is significantly more than 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. This may reflect the diverse needs and interests in the community.
- There were no significant changes in the reasons given for grades that would explain the declines in grades that occurred during this past quarter.
- 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. In this involved community, three in four (75%) gave a suggestion during the past quarter, 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 (23%), which may reflect to this community's high involvement and interest in education.

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. Seven in ten (70%) feel that the taxes they are paying for local education are about right (57%) or too low (13%).
- The most frequently mentioned primary sources of information about the District continue to be Family and Friends (28%), the Internet (25%), the Issaquah Press (18%) and the District Newsletter (14%). Almost all (85%) of residents 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 25%).
- This quarter approximately four in ten respondents (41%) 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.