

# **Issaquah School District Community Polling Study Results**

**Fall 2003 through Spring 2010**

**Prepared by:**

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# Background

- This study was launched in October 2003. The results encompass over five years (twenty seven 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 2010, approximately four in ten respondents (42%) 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 2010) 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 2010

- 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 most performance attributes. The remaining attributes are receiving directionally more A/B grades than in 2003.
- In 2006, the attribute *communications from the school district are open and honest* was added to this survey. The vast majority of residents (80%) give the District an A/B grade for its performance in this area, with 50% giving the District an A grade for its performance.

# Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Fall 2003 Vs. Spring 2010

	Fall 2003 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)					Spring 2010 (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	89%	61*	28	7	3
Excellent teachers	84%	34	50	12	3	89%	46*	43	11	0
Neighborhood school performance	81%	30	51	13	5	88%	46*	42	10	3
Students educated to be successful adults	77%	28	49	18	5	81%	41*	40	15	4
Trustworthy Administration	57%	15	42	25	17	80%*	46*	34	15	5
Communications from school district are open and honest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	80%	50	30	13	7
Keeps community informed	72%	25	47	18	9	78%	40*	38	17	4
Well managed	61%	14	47	24	13	78%*	33*	45	18	4*
<b>Overall performance of Administration</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>77%*</b>	<b>33*</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>
Administration working with teachers to build relationships	50%	12	38	27	21	77%*	35*	42	18	6
Collaborative Administration	56%	13	43	29	14	76%*	31*	45	17	7
Good to work for	67%	22	45	20	12	75%	38*	37	19	6
Excellent leadership	57%	18	39	28	13	75%*	35*	40	21	4
Financially well run	49%	14	35	34	16	74%*	35*	39	17	10
Administration works with parents on programs that fit budget	58%	17	41	28	13	73%*	34*	39	17	10
Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems	50%	8	42	32	16	68%*	28*	40	25	7*

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

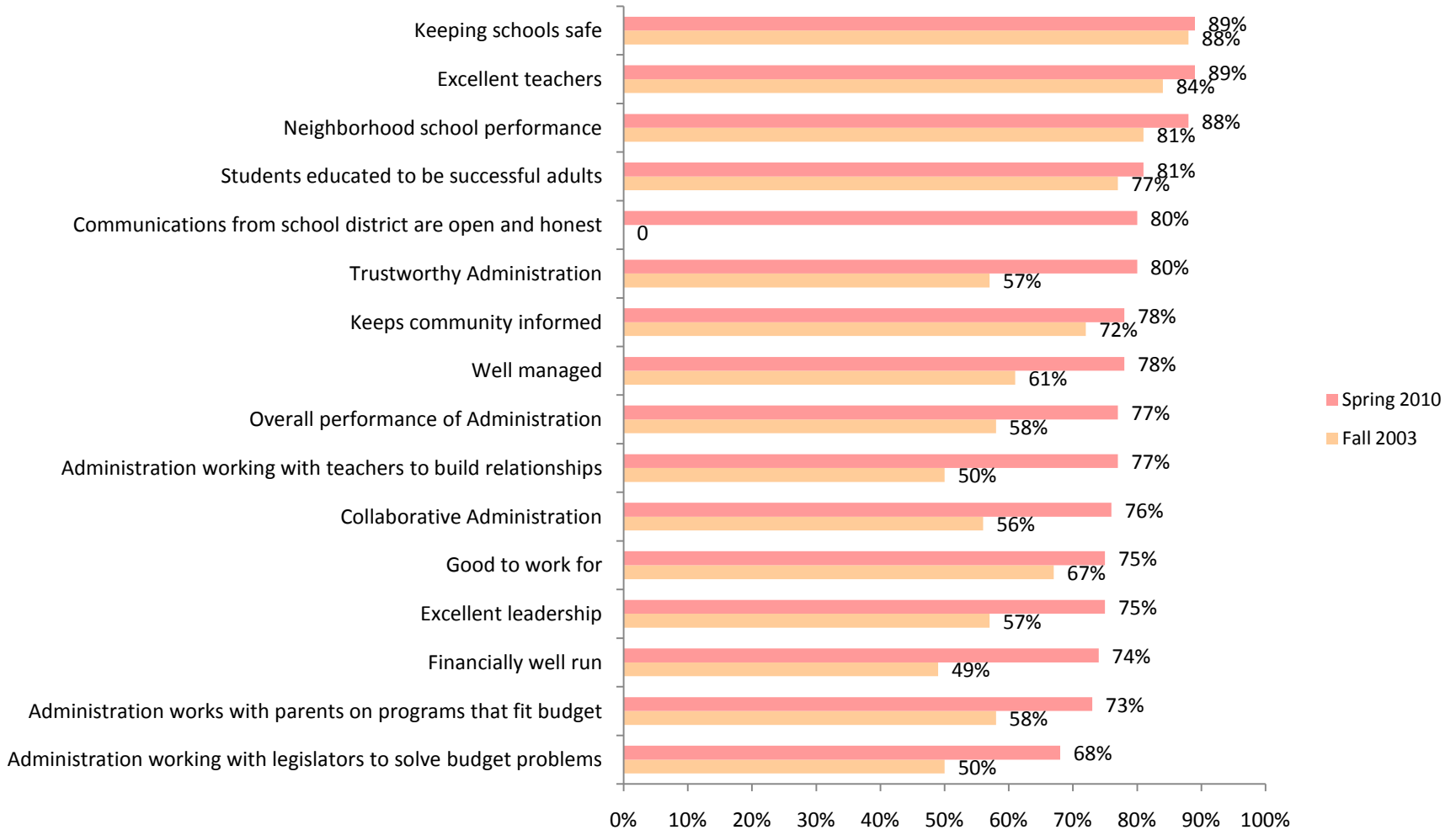
Note: *Communications from the school district are open and honest* was added to this study in Fall 2006.

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 2010

## % 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

- For the most part, the levels of high (A/B) grades being given were stable during the past quarter with only small directional changes.
- There was one significant change. Significantly fewer residents gave a high grade to the District for *being a good organization to work for* than in the Winter, from 86% giving an A or B grade, to 75%. This may be a reflection of potential budget cuts/layoffs as well as contract issues not yet being resolved.

# Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Winter 2010 Vs. Spring 2010

	Winter 2010 (Jan., Feb., March)					Spring 2010 (April, May, June)				
	A or B	A	B	C	D or F	A or B	A	B	C	D or F
Keeping schools safe	94%	59	35	7	0	89%	61	28	7	3*
Excellent teachers	92%*	41	51	6*	2	89%	46	43	11	0
Neighborhood school performance	89%	44	45	10	0	88%	46	42	10	3
Students educated to be successful adults	86%	38	48	12	2	81%	41	40	15	4
Communications from school district are open and honest	85%	49	36	11	4	80%	50	30	13	7
Trustworthy Administration	79%	40	39	17	5	80%	46	34	15	5
Keeps community informed	81%	45	36	15	4	78%	40	38	17	4
Well managed	78%	32	46	16	7	78%	33	45	18	4
<b>Overall performance of Administration</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>
Administration working with teachers to build relationships	75%	26	49	19	7	77%	35	42	18	6
Collaborative Administration	76%	34	42	17*	7	76%	31	45	17	7
Good to work for	86%	33	53	11	3	75%*	38	37*	19	6
Excellent leadership	76%	33	43	17	7	75%	35	40	21	4
Financially well run	70%	26	44	22	8	74%	35	39	17	10
Administration works with parents on programs that fit budget	70%	22	48	21	8	73%	34*	39	17	10
Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems	65%	19	46	28	8	68%	28	40	25	7

Note:

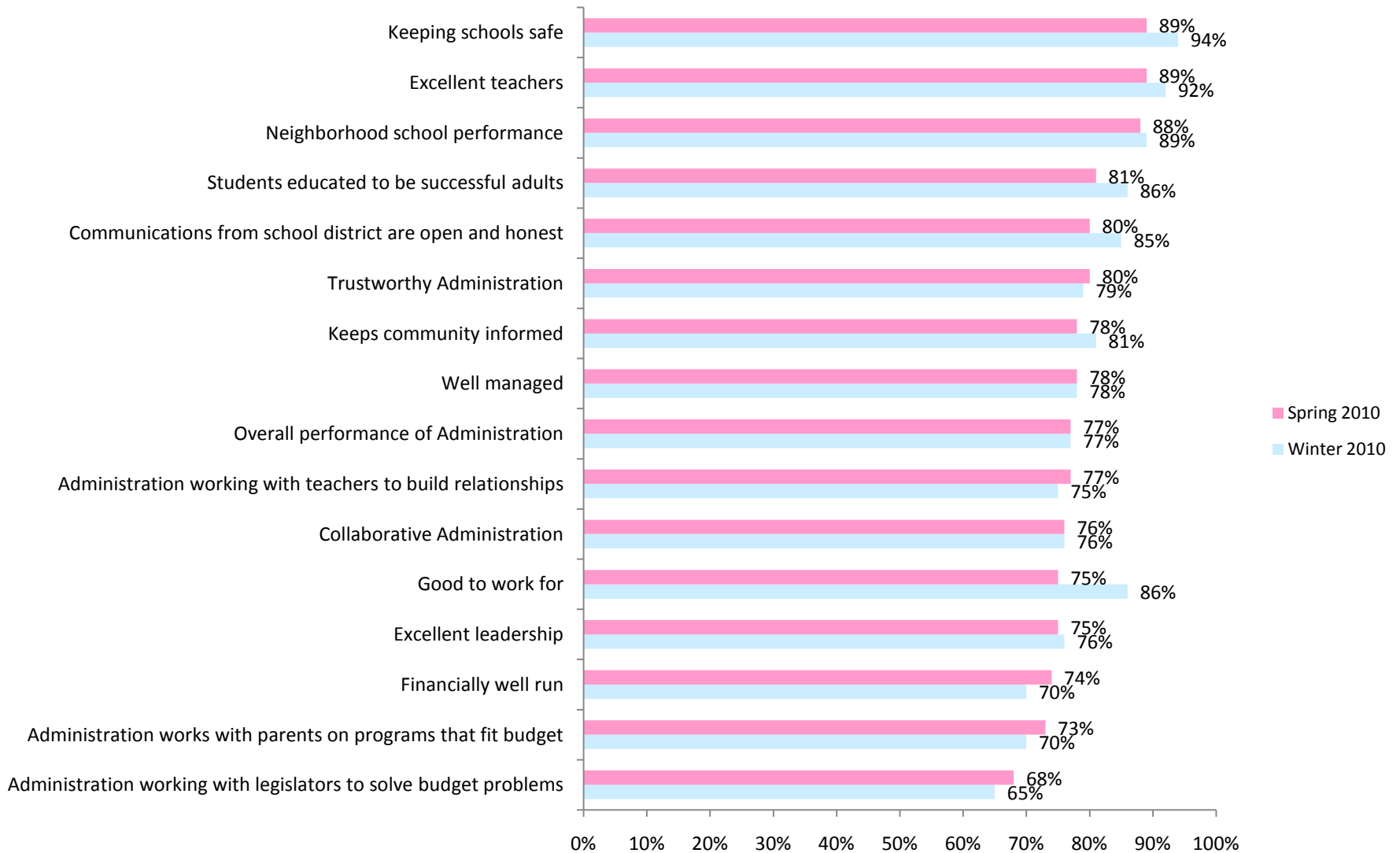
\* = Significant difference vs. Winter 2010 at the 90% confidence level.

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 2010 Vs. Spring 2010

### % 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.

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

- As the following chart details, almost all parents give the District high grades for encouraging their opinions and welcoming their involvement.
  - Over nine in ten parents overall (94%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*. Seven in ten (70%) give the District an A grade.
    - Parents of Elementary school students are *significantly* more likely to give an A grade than parents of Middle School students and *directionally* more likely than parents of High School students.
    - Since 2006, significantly more parents of High school students are giving an A grade (65% vs. 47%).
  - Almost nine in ten parents (87%) give the District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district*.
    - Parents of Elementary school and Middle school students are significantly more likely to give the District an A grade than parents of High School students.

# Grades Given by Parents Regarding Involvement in Their Child's Education Fall 2006 vs. Spring 2010

Fall 2006 (October, November, December)					Spring 2010 (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%	87%	89%***	71%	80%
A	34	41**	34**	19	44	52**	43**	30
B	47	49	49	53	43	37	28*, **	50
C	14	6**	14	22	9	8***	24	12***
D or F	6	4	4	6	4	3	4	7
<i>Your involvement in your child's education is welcome</i>								
A or B	92%	97%	93%	87%	94%	99%**	93%	92%
A	63	77**	69**	47	70	75***	61	65*
B	29	20**	24**	40	24	24	32	27
C	7	3**	7	11	4	2	5	4
D or F	1	0	0	2	3	0	2	5

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.
  - Approximately four in ten (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 four in ten (44%) mention that something needs improvement, which is significantly fewer 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 (15% vs. only 8% in 2003)
  - Satisfied /happy with school experience (11% vs. 4% in 2003)
  - Positive teacher comments (5%)

## 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, which may be due to the diverse needs of the residents and parents in Issaquah.
  - Better Administration/leadership/community relations needed (7% vs. 12% in 2003)
  - Communications overall (6% vs. 15% in 2003)
  - Average/OK performance (5% vs. 8% in 2003)
- 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 which may reflect the strong interest in education in this community.
  - Two out of three residents (67%) made a suggestion this Spring. This is significantly less 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 communications. Approximately one in five (18%) make this suggestion. Specific communication suggestions include:
  - Need to listen to parents/community, solicit input/involvement (10%)
  - Improve communication to parents from teachers/Administration, provide more/timely information (9%).

## Suggestions for District Cont'd.

- Very few other suggestions were made by 5% or more of the residents...
  - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding (13%)
  - Better teachers needed/better teacher-student relations (11%)
- All other suggestions were given by less than 5% of respondents.

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

- Seven in ten residents (70%) feel that the amount of taxes that they pay for local public education is about right or too low. Since this study began in 2003, residents have consistently had a positive attitude towards the taxes they pay for education.
- Residents feel that the taxes they pay for local public education are...

Too high	22%	
About right	57%	} 70%
Too low	13%	
Don't know	7%	

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. 19%) and the Issaquah Press/its affiliates (10 vs. 21%).

## Primary source of information about Issaquah Schools

Issaquah Press and its affiliates	21
District Newsletter	20
Friends and Family	19%
The Internet	19
Seattle Times	5
Television	1
Work there/personal experience	6
School Employees	3
From the school	1
Other	4
Don't Know	1

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.
  - Since 2003, the levels of high (A/B) grades have increased significantly for most performance attributes and directionally for the remaining attributes.
- During the past quarter, the levels of A/B grades tended to be stable with small directional changes. The one exception was *being a good organization to work for* which received significantly fewer A/B grades in the Spring than it did in the Winter (75% vs. 86%). This may be due to potential budget cuts/layoffs being in the news as well as employee contract issues not yet being resolved.

## 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 noteworthy with the vast majority of parents giving it high grades.
  - Approximately four out of five residents (80%) give the District an A or B grade for *communications from the school district are open and honest*. One in two residents (50%) give the District an A grade for its performance in this area.
  - Over nine in ten parents (94%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*. Seven in ten (70%) give the District an A grade.
  - Almost nine in ten parents (87%) give Issaquah an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this District*. This is directionally more than in 2006 (81%).

# 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.
  - Approximately four in ten (43%) mention a positive reason, which is significantly more than in Fall 2003 (27%).
  - Approximately four in ten (44%) 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.
- 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, two out of three residents (67%) had 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 in the area of communications (18%), 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 the Issaquah Press (21%), the District Newsletter (20%), Family and Friends (19%), and the Internet (19%). The vast majority (79%) of residents mention one of these sources as their primary source of information about the District.
- This quarter approximately four in ten respondents (42%) 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 25 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 Squibb, Seagrams, Wells, Rich Green Advertising, Porter Novelli Public Relations and various consulting companies.