

Issaquah School District Community Polling Study Results

Fall 2003 through Summer 2007

Prepared by:

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Background

- This study was launched in October 2003. The results encompass four years (sixteen 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 Summer of 2007, 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 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 (Summer 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. Summer 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 parents on programs that fit the budget
 - Administration works with teachers to build relationships
 - Good to work for
 - Financially well run
- In most other areas, perceptions of the District have improved directionally.

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

	Fall 2003 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)					Summer 2007 (July, Aug., Sept.)				
	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	88%	47	41	10	3
Excellent teachers	84%	34	50	12	3	84%	41	43	14	2
Neighborhood school performance	81%	30	51	14	5	85%	42*	43	13	1*
Students educated to be successful adults	77%	28	49	18	5	82%	33	49	16	2
Keeps community informed	72%	25	47	19	9	76%	35*	41	19	5
Good to work for	67%	22	45	21	12	81%*	25	56*	15	4*
Well managed	61%	14	47	25	13	73%*	26*	47	23	4*
Overall performance of Administration	58%	13	45	28	14	70%*	22*	48	26	5*
Admin. works with parents on programs that fit budget	58%	17	41	28	14	67%*	19	48	26	7*
Excellent leadership	57%	18	39	29	13	68%*	27*	41	27	5*
Trustworthy admin.	57%	15	42	25	18	78%*	32*	46	17*	5*
Collaborative Administration	56%	13	43	30	14	67%*	24*	43	26	7*
Admin. working with teachers to build relationships	50%	12	38	28	22	69%*	31*	38	24	7*
Admin. working with legislators to solve budget problems	50%	8	42	33	17	60%	15*	45	34	6*
Financially well run	49%	14	35	35	16	70%*	22*	48*	26	4*
Communications from school district are open and honest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	75%	40	35	18	7

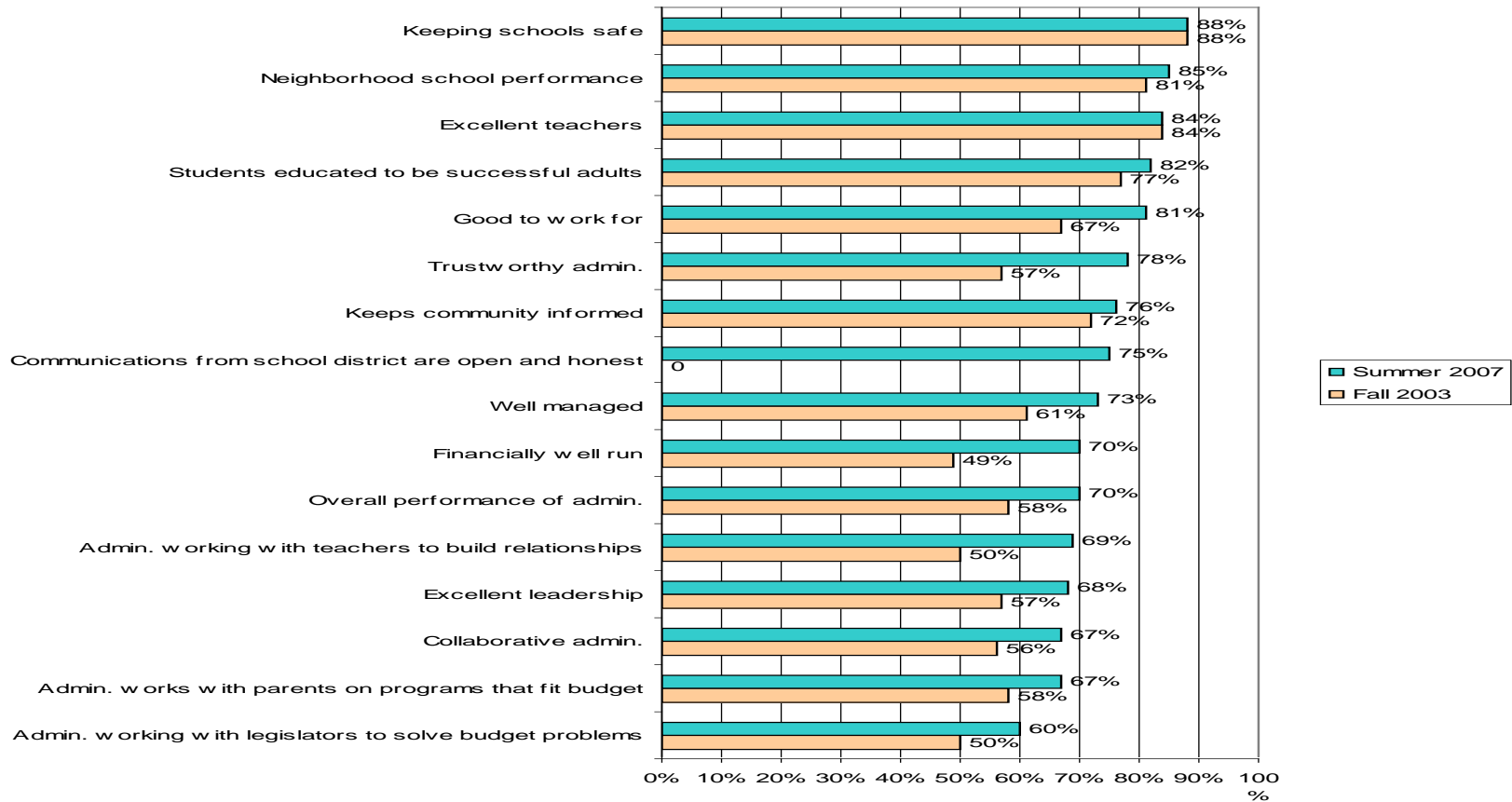
* = Significant difference vs. Fall 2003 at the 90% confidence level.

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. Summer 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 parents on programs that fit the budget, Administration works with teachers to build relationships, good to work for 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 detail, during the past quarter...
 - There was a significant increase in the number of residents who gave the District an A or B grade for *students educated to be successful adults*.
 - The levels of A/B grades given to the District increased directionally in most other performance areas.

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

	Spring 2007 (April, May, June)					Summer 2007 (July, August, September)				
	A or B	A	B	C	D or F	A or B	A	B	C	D or F
Keeping schools safe	89%	49	40	8	4	88%	47	41	10	3
Excellent teachers	79%	33	46	17	3	84%	41	43	14	2
Neighborhood school performance	80%	36	44	16	3	85%	42	43	13	1
Students educated to be successful adults	75%	26	49	18	7	82%*	33	49	16	2
Keeps community informed	73%	34	39	22	4	76%	35	41	19	5
Good to work for	76%	23	53	22	3	81%	25	56	15	4
Well managed	70%	26	44	25	4	73%	26	47	23	4
Overall performance of admin.	68%	18	50	26	7	70%	22	48	26	5
Admin. works with parents on programs that fit budget	68%	21	47	20	12	67%	19	48	26	7*
Excellent leadership	68%	23	45	27	6	68%	27	41	27	5
Trustworthy admin.	72%	26	46	22	6	78%	32	46	17	5
Collaborative admin.	62%	19	43	25	13	67%	24	43	26	7*
Admin. working with teachers to build relationships	70%	21	49	25	4	69%	31*	38*	24	7
Admin. working with legislators to solve budget problems	58%	13	45	31	10	60%	15	45	34	6
Financially well run	64%	23	41	28	8	70%	22	48	26	4
Communications from school district are open and honest	74%	35	39	20	6	75%	40	35	18	7

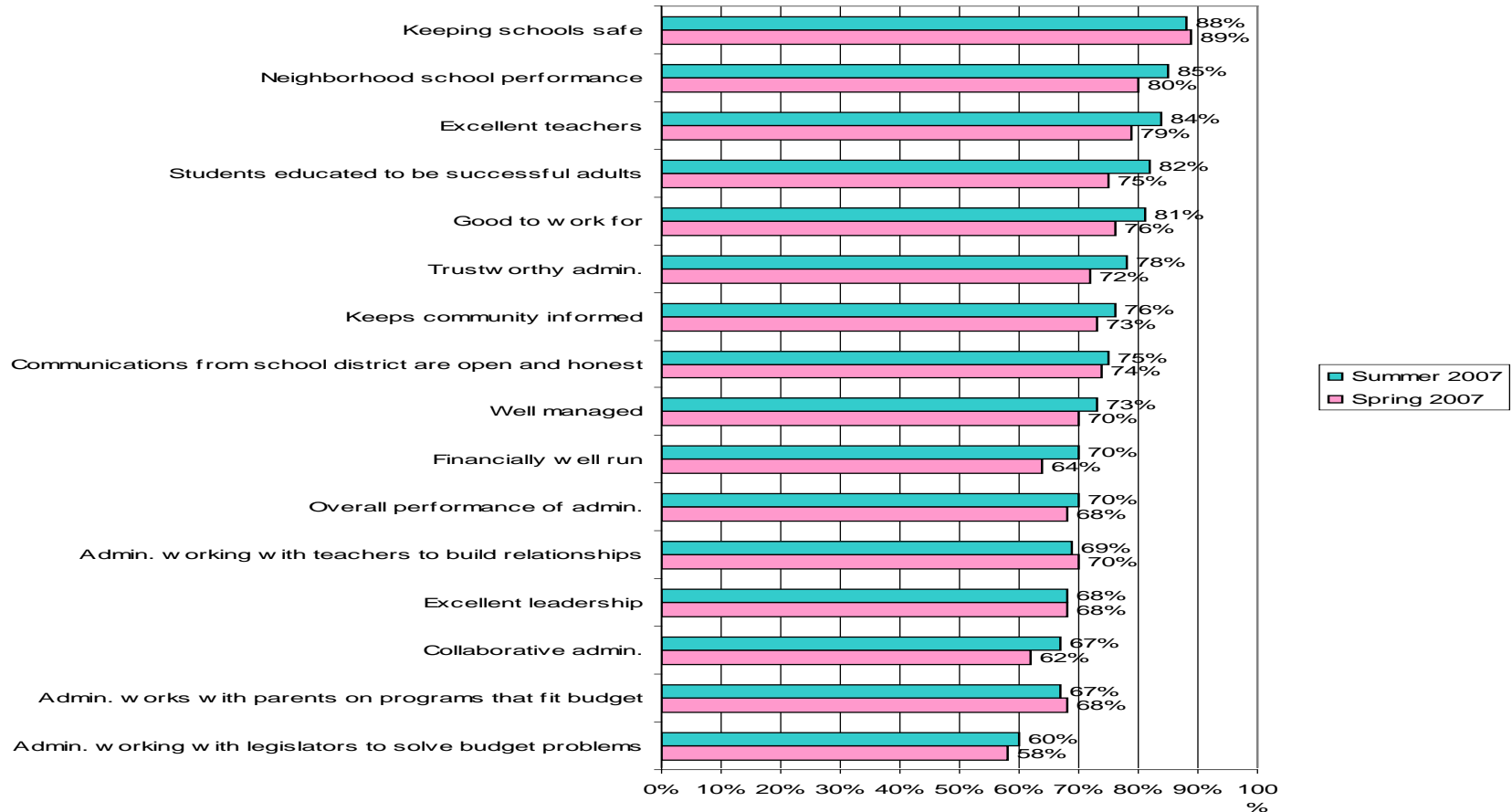
Note:

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

The survey asks respondents to “grade” the district on these attributes. Numbers in the column represent the percentage of people who gave each attribute a specific grade. The numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

* = Significant difference vs. previous wave of interviewing (Spring 2007).

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



Note:

A and B grades increased significantly for *students educated to be successful adults*.

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 for How the Issaquah School District Treats Them

- As the following charts detail, 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 (90%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*.
 - 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*.
 - Parent of High School students are less likely to give the District an "A" grade than parents of younger students.

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

Fall 2006 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)					Summer 2007 (July, Aug., Sept.)			
<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%	81	78	69
A	34%	41*	34*	19	35%	40*	40*	23
B	47%	49	49	53	42%	41	38	46
C	14%	6*	14	22	21%	17**,**	20	31
D or F	6%	4	4	6	2%	3	2	0
<i>Your involvement in your child's education is welcome</i>								
A or B	92%	97	93	87	90%	92	86	86
A	63%	77*	69*	47	63%	76*	64*	49
B	29%	20*	24*	40	27%	16*	22*	37
C	7%	3*	7	11	7%	7	13	9
D or F	1%	0	0	2	3%	2	2	6

Note:

These attributes were added to the study in Fall 2006.

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

** = Significant difference vs. Fall 2006.

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 (42%) mention a positive reason, which is significantly higher than in Fall 2003 (27%). This probably is a reflection of the higher grades being given to the District for its performance.
- 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 (13%)
 - Good parental involvement/support/communications (9%)
 - Positive Administration comments (9%)
 - Positive word of mouth/reports (9%)
 - Satisfied with school experience (9%)
 - Positive teacher comments (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 continued to decline significantly since Fall 2003 (from 72% to 48%).
- The most frequently desired improvement continues to be in the area of communication (13%). Specific requests for improvement in communication include...
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/administration/provide more timely information (10%)
 - Need to listen to parents/community/solicit input/involvement/act on input/partnering (7%)
- Other negative reasons for the grade given to the Administration or desired improvements include:
 - Better administration/leadership/community relations (11%)
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding (5%)
 - Better organization/coordination/planning improvement needed (5%)
 - Teachers need to be better supported/pay/more respect (5%)
- Very few parents (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. While most (70%) give a suggestion, this is **significantly** fewer than in Fall 2003 (83%).
- The suggestions given continue to be diverse. The most frequently given suggestion continues to be to improve communication. But, directionally fewer people are making this suggestion (22% in Summer 2007 vs. 27% in Fall 2003).
- Suggestions for better communication continue to center on...
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/administration/provide more/timely information (15%).
 - Need to listen to parents/community/solicit input/involvement/act on input (14%)

Suggestions for District Cont'd.

- Other suggestions include...
 - Better administration/leadership/community relations/decision making needed (11%)
 - Put focus on classroom/decisions in best interest of student (9%)
 - Need better teacher/Administration relations (8%)
 - Better organization/coordination/planning needed (6%)
 - Change curriculum/unhappy with curriculum/go back to basics (5%)
 - More focus on student's individual needs/improve learning experience (5%)
 - Facilities need improvement/upgrade/need lockers (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 four in five residents (79%) 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	15%	
About right	66%	} 79%
Too low	13%	
Don't know	6%	

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 Issaquah Press and/or its affiliates, the District Newsletter and the Internet.
- Since this study began in Fall 2003, significantly more residents mention that the Issaquah Press and its affiliates are their primary source of information (17% vs. 10%) and the Internet (10% vs. 4%).

Primary source of information about Issaquah Schools

Friends and Family	28%
District Newsletter	21
Issaquah Press and its affiliates	17
The Internet	10
Seattle Times	7
School Employees	6
Work there/personal experience	5
From the School	1
Other	1
Don't Know	4

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 parents on programs that fit the budget
 - Administration works with teachers to build relationships
 - Good to work for
 - Financially well run
- 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.
 - Three in four residents (75%) give the District an A or B grade for *communications from the school district are open and honest.*
 - Nine in ten (90%) 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.*

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 or when they are asked to suggest improvements. This is likely a reflection of increased satisfaction levels since the start of this study in Fall 2003.
 - Only half (48%) 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).
 - Fewer suggest an improvement when asked to suggest improvements (70% in Summer 2007 vs. 83% in Fall 2003). This may be a reflection of increased satisfaction levels overall since the start of this study.
- A minority (22% in Summer 2007) continue to suggest an improvement in communication, which is directionally fewer than in Fall 2003 (27%).

Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- Approximately four in five (79%) residents feel that the taxes they are paying for education are about right (66%) or too low (13%).
- The Issaquah Press and its affiliates have grown significantly as a source of information about the Issaquah school district and its schools since Fall 2003. Almost one in five residents (17%) now consider it to be their primary source of information (vs. 10% in Fall 2003).
- The Internet has also grown significantly as a source of information about the District and its schools since Fall 2003 (from 4% to 10%). But, no one is specifically mentioning the School or District e-newsletters. We could probe about this in future interviews.
- 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 improvement. This quarter four in ten (41%) 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.