

Issaquah School District Community Polling Study Results

Fall 2003 through Summer 2008

Prepared by:

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Background

- This study was launched in October 2003. The results encompass five years (twenty 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 Summer 2008, approximately four in ten respondents (42%) 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 (Summer 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. Summer 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
 - 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. Summer 2008

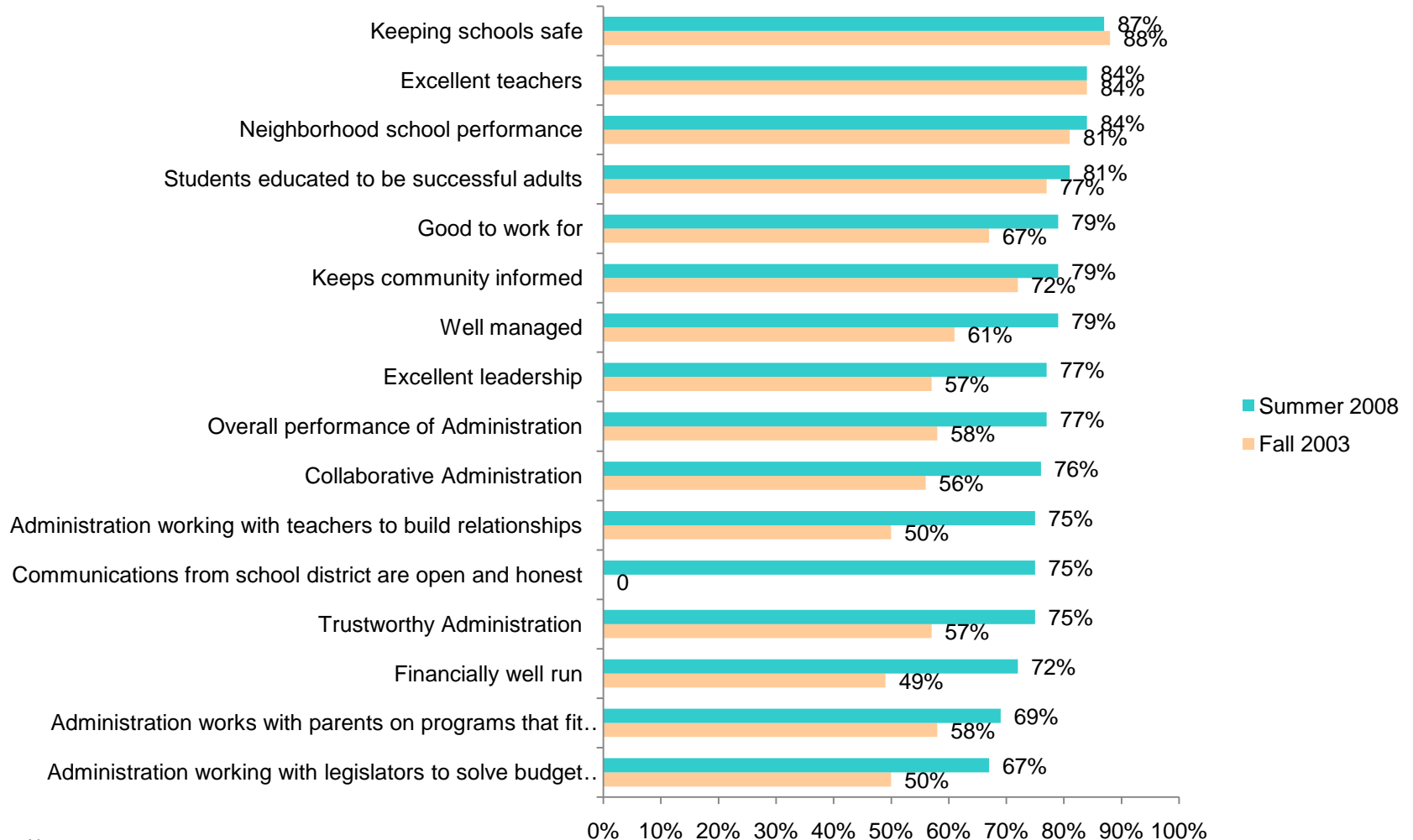
	Fall 2003 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)					Summer 2008 (July, Aug., Sept.)				
	A or B	A	B	C	D or F	A or B	A	B	C	D or F
Keeping schools safe	88%	46	42	6	4	87%	55	32	9	4
Neighborhood school performance	81%	30	51	13	5	84%	39	45	14	3
Excellent teachers	84%	34	50	12	3	84%	42	42	15	1
Students educated to be successful adults	77%	28	49	18	5	81%	38*	43	14	5
Good to work for	67%	22	45	20	12	79%*	31	48	17	3
Well managed	61%	14	47	24	13	79%*	27*	52	16	5
Keeps community informed	72%	25	47	18	9	79%	36*	43	15	6
Overall performance of Administration	58%	13	45	27	14	77%*	25*	52	19	5
Excellent leadership	57%	18	39	28	13	77%*	25	52*	18	5
Collaborative Administration	56%	13	43	29	14	76%*	22*	54*	19	5
Trustworthy Administration	57%	15	42	25	17	75%*	29*	46	18	7
Administration working with teachers to build relationships	50%	12	38	27	21	75%*	30*	45	23	2
Communications from school district are open and honest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	75%	39	36	18	7
Financially well run	49%	14	35	34	16	72%*	28*	44	19	9
Administration works with parents on programs that fit budget	58%	17	41	28	13	69%*	24	45	22	10
Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems	50%	8	42	32	16	67%*	19*	48	24	9

* = 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 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 Summer the grades being given to the District were similar to those given in the Spring.
 - There were no significant changes.
 - Overall, the levels of A/B grades remained consistent with only small directional changes.

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

	Spring 2008 (April, May, June)					Summer 2008 (July, Aug., Sept.)				
	A or B	A	B	C	D or F	A or B	A	B	C	D or F
Keeping schools safe	91%	60	31	6	3	87%	55	32	9	4
Excellent teachers	84%	46	38	12	4	84%	42	42	15	1
Neighborhood school performance	88%	46	42	7	5	84%	39	45	14*	3
Students educated to be successful adults	85%	35	50	11	4	81%	38	43	14	5
Keeps community informed	78%	41	37	14	7	79%	36	43	15	6
Well managed	79%	29	50	16	5	79%	27	52	16	5
Good to work for	82%	38	44	12	5	79%	31	48	17	3
Excellent leadership	76%	32	44	18	6	77%	25	52	18	5
Overall performance of admin.	77%	25	52	17	7	77%	25	52	19	5
Collaborative admin.	77%	33	44	14	9	76%	22	54	19	5
Communications from school district are open and honest	77%	41	36	17	7	75%	39	36	18	7
Trustworthy admin.	79%	33	46	12	9	75%	29	46	18	7
Admin. working with teachers to build relationships	80%	34	46	10	10	75%	30	45	23	2
Financially well run	74%	27	47	18	8	72%	28	44	19	9
Admin. works with parents on programs that fit budget	71%	25	46	18	11	69%	24	45	22	10
Admin. working with legislators to solve budget problems	68%	18	50	24	8	67%	19*	48	24	9

Note:

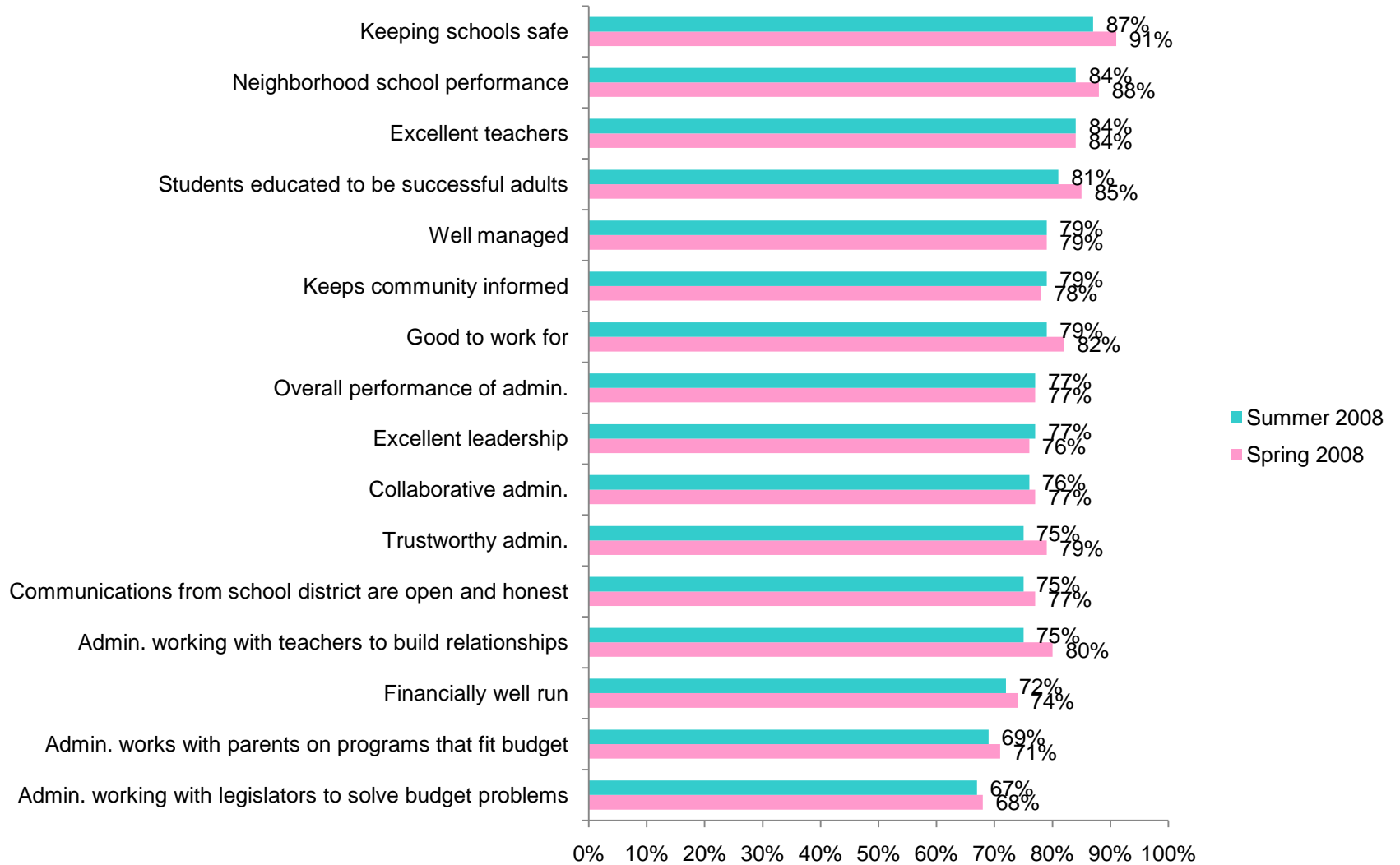
* = Significant difference vs. Spring 2008 at the 90% confidence level.

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—Spring 2008 Vs. Summer 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 (93%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*. Almost two in three (63%) give the District an A grade.
 - Parents of Elementary school students continue to be significantly more likely to give an A grade than parents of older students.
 - Almost four in five parents overall (77%) give the Issaquah School District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district*.
 - Parents overall are directionally more likely now to give an A grade than they were in 2006 (42% vs. 34%).

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

Fall 2006 (October, November, December)					Summer 2008 (July, August, September)			
<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%	77%	79%	78%
A	34	41**	34**	19	42	43	49	37
B	47	49	49	53	35*	34	30*	41
C	14	6**	14	22	19	18	19	22
D or F	6	4	4	6	4	4	4	0
<i>Your involvement in your child's education is welcome</i>								
A or B	92%	97%	93%	87%	93%	97%	94%	92%
A	63	77**	69**	47	63	78	61****	49****
B	29	20**	24**	40	30	19	33****	43****
C	7	3**	7	11	2*	1	4	4
D or F	1	0	0	2	4	2	4	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 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.
 - 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.
 - While the majority (57%) 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 minority of respondents. The most frequently given positive reasons continue to be:
 - Doing a good job (19% in Summer 2008 vs. 8% in Fall 2003)
 - Good parental involvement/support/communications (12%)
 - Positive Administration comments (9%)
 - Positive word of mouth/reports (6%)
 - Satisfied with school experience (6%)
 - Positive teacher comments (5%)

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

- During this Summer quarter, more residents mentioned a dissatisfaction with Communication than in the previous Spring quarter (18% vs. 7%). Interestingly, in recent years dissatisfaction has risen during the Summer. This may be due in part to fewer communications going out in the summer, such as from schools. Dissatisfactions mentioned include...
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/administration/provide more timely information (15%)
 - Need to listen to parents/community/solicit input/involvement/act on input/partnering (14%)
- Other negative reasons for the overall grade given to the Administration and desired improvements include:
 - Better administration/leadership/community relations (16%)
 - Better organization/coordination/planning improvement needed (7%)
 - Room for improvement (8%)
 - Increase funding/school support (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. Approximately four out of five residents (83%) made a suggestion this Summer.
- The suggestions given continue to be diverse. The most frequently given suggestion continues to be to improve communication with approximately three in ten (30%) making this suggestion. Specific suggestions include:
 - *Need to listen to parents/community, solicit input/involvement (17%)*
 - *Improve communication to parents from teachers/administration, provide more/timely information (24%). Significantly more residents are making this suggestion than in the Spring (15%).*

Suggestions for District Cont'd.

- Other suggestions include...
 - Better administration/leadership/community relations/decision making (13%)
 - Better organization/coordination/planning needed (11%)
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding (10%)
 - Better teachers needed/better teacher-student relations (8%).
 - Better training/monitoring of new teachers needed (7%)
 - Change curriculum/go back to basics (6%)
 - Improvement needed in math curriculum (5%)
 - Put focus on classroom/education/decisions that are in best interest of student (5%)
 - Better placement of students in classes/programs (5%)
 - Need to improve school atmosphere/environment for school experience (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 three in four residents (76%) feel that the amount they pay for local public education is about right or too low. This is directionally more residents than in the previous quarter (72%) and may be a reflection of a strong commitment to education even in this weakened economy .
- Specifically, residents feel that the taxes they pay for local public education are...

Too high	13%	} 76%
About right	62%	
Too low	14%	
Don't know	10%	

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 (16% vs. 4%). At the same time, there has been a significant decline in the number of residents mentioning that their primary source of information is Friends and Family (19% in Summer 2008 vs. 30% in Fall 2003).
- During the past quarter, a large minority (18%) said they don't know. This answer was given by 23% of parents and 7% of residents who don't have a child. Since this was during the Summer, this *may* be a reflection of lack of involvement/awareness of education during the Summer.

Primary source of information about Issaquah Schools

Friends and Family	19%
District Newsletter	17
Issaquah Press and its affiliates	17
The Internet	16
Work there/personal experience	2
Seattle Times	2
School Employees	4
From the School	1
Through the mail/School Bulletin	1
Television	1
Other	1
Don't Know	18

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 A or B grades is high.
- Furthermore, 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
 - 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 (75%) give the District an A or B grade for *communications from the school district are open and honest*.
 - Nine in ten parents (93%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*.
 - Almost four in five parents (77%) give Issaquah a high grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district*. And, parents are directionally more likely to give an A grade than they were in 2006 (42% vs. 34%).

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 (43%) mention a positive reason, which is significantly more than in Fall 2003 (27%).
 - The majority (57%) 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. And, in this involved community approximately four out of five (83%) made a suggestion in Summer 2008.
 - The suggestions continue to be diverse. The most frequently given suggestion is to improve communication (30% in Summer 2008), which may in part be due to this community's high involvement and interest in education. Also, some may be getting less communication, such as from schools, during the Summer.

Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- Approximately three in four (76%) residents feel that the taxes they are paying for education are about right (62%) or too low (14%). This level has not declined in the weakened economy which may be reflect a high commitment to education in this community.
- The most frequently mentioned sources of information about the District continue to be Family and Friends (19%), the District Newsletter (17%), the Issaquah Press (17%) and the Internet (16%).
 - The Internet has grown significantly as a source of information about the District and its schools since Fall 2003 (from 4% to 16%).
 - At the same time, Family and Friends has become less frequently mentioned as a source (from 30% in Fall 2003 to 19%)
- 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 (42%) 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.