

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

**Fall 2003 through Winter 2008**

**Prepared by:**

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# Background

- This study was launched in October 2003. The results encompass more than four years (eighteen 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 Winter 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 (Winter 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. Winter 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 most 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
- In virtually all other areas, the levels of A/B grades have improved directionally.

# Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Fall 2003 Vs. Winter 2008

	Fall 2003 (October, November, December)					Winter 2008 (January, February, March)				
	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	90%	52	38	6	4
Excellent teachers	84%	34	50	12	3	82%	38	44	14	4
Neighborhood school performance	81%	30	51	14	5	82%	34	48	13	5
Keeps community informed	72%	25	47	19	9	75%	41*	34	14	10
Students educated to be successful adults	77%	28	49	18	5	76%	30	46	15	9
Well managed	61%	14	47	25	13	77%*	27*	50	18	4
<b>Overall performance of Administration</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>75%*</b>	<b>28*</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>
Trustworthy Administration	57%	15	42	25	18	79%*	31*	48	13	8
Administration working with teachers to build relationships	50%	12	38	28	22	69%*	22*	47	24	7
Good to work for	67%	22	45	21	12	77%*	28	49	19	4
Collaborative Administration	56%	13	43	30	14	73%*	26*	47	20	8
Excellent leadership	57%	18	39	29	13	74%*	30*	44	16	10
Financially well run	49%	14	35	35	16	67%*	19	48*	23	10
Communications from school district are open and honest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	75%	39	36	17	8
Administration works with parents on programs that fit budget	58%	17	41	28	14	67%	23	44	26	7
Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems	50%	8	42	33	17	58%	15*	43	28	13

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

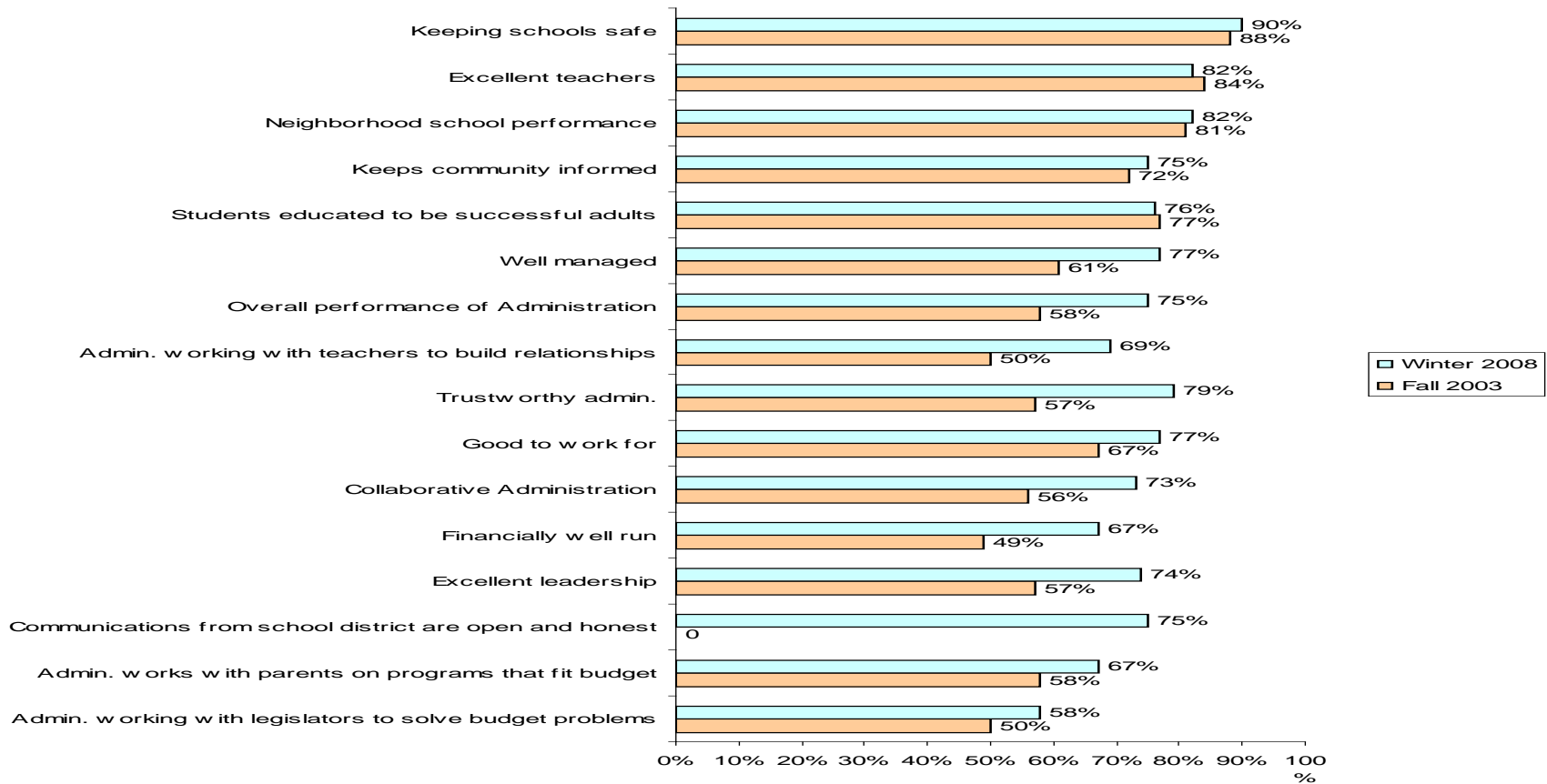
Note: Communications from the school district are open and honest was added to this study in Fall 2006.

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. Winter 2008

## % 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 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 have been a number of directional changes in the levels of A/B grades given to the District, but no significant changes.
- A number of the directional changes have been downward. In the winter it is typical to see scores decline, possibly due to weather problems and problems with the school experience after school has been in session for a number of months.
- There were also directional improvements in some key areas:
  - Trustworthy Administration,
  - Good to work for,
  - Excellent leadership
  - Communications from the district are open and honest.

# Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Fall 2007 vs. Winter 2008

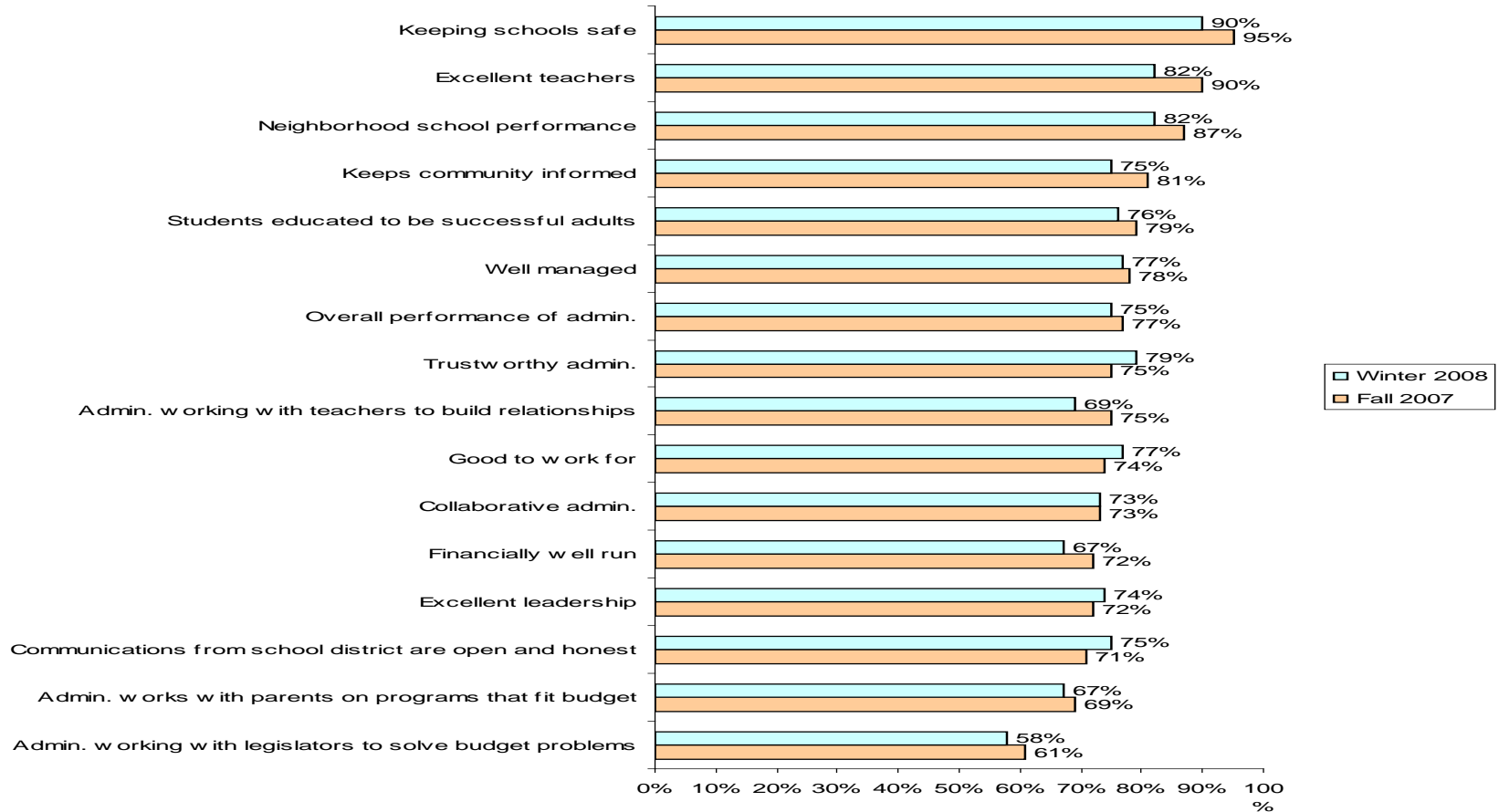
	Fall 2007 (October, November December)					Winter 2008 (January, February, March)				
	A or B	A	B	C	D or F	A or B	A	B	C	D or F
Keeping schools safe	95%	49	46	5	1	90%	52	38	6	4
Excellent teachers	90%	40	50	10	0	82%	38	44	14	4
Neighborhood school performance	87%	37	50	10	2	82%	34	48	13	5
Keeps community informed	81%	38	43	12	6	75%	41	34	14	10
Students educated to be successful adults	79%	35	44	17	4	76%	30	46	15	9
Well managed	78%	28	50	16	6	77%	27	50	18	4
Overall performance of admin.	77%	21	56	17	6	75%	28	47	18	8
Trustworthy admin.	75%	27	48	20	5	79%	31	48	13	8
Admin. working with teachers to build relationships	75%	22*	53*	22	4	69%	22	47	24	7
Good to work for	74%	25	49	18	7	77%	28	49	19	4
Collaborative admin.	73%	22	51	20	6	73%	26	47	20	8
Excellent leadership	72%	22	50	23	5	74%	30	44	16	10
Financially well run	72%	25	47	19	8	67%	19	48	23	10
Communications from school district are open and honest	71%	33	38	21	8	75%	39	36	17	8
Admin. works with parents on programs that fit budget	69%	20	49	25	7	67%	23	44	26	7
Admin. working with legislators to solve budget problems	61%	15	46	29	10	58%	15	43	28	13

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—Fall 2007 Vs. Winter 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 (89%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*.
    - Parents of Elementary School children continue to be significantly more likely to give an A grade than parents of Middle and High school students.
  - Four in five parents overall (82%) 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 more likely to give an A grade than parents of High School students.

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

## Grades Given By Parents Regarding How They Are Treated by the District

Fall 2006 (October, November, December)					Winter 2008 (January, February, March)			
<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%	82%	83%	77%	82%
A	34	41**	34**	19	40	42**	40	32
B	47	49	49	53	42	41	37	50
C	14	6**	14	22	16	17	21	15
D or F	6	4	4	6	3	0	2	4
<i>Your involvement in your child's education is welcome</i>								
A or B	92%	97	93	87	89%	94%	83%	86%
A	63	77**	69**	47	61	68	53****	46****
B	29	20**	24**	40	28	26	30	40
C	7	3**	7	11	9	6	12	10
D or F	1	0	0	2	2	0	4	3

Note:

These attributes were added to the study in 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.
- The reasons given by residents continue to reflect more positive attitudes than existed in Fall 2003, a year after the strike.
  - Approximately one in three (35%) mention a positive reason, which is directionally higher than in Fall 2003 (27%), a year after the strike.
  - One in two (51%) 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 (12%)
  - Good parental involvement/support/communications (9%)
  - Positive Administration comments (7%)
  - Satisfied with school experience (7%)
  - Positive teacher comments (5%)

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

- The most frequently mentioned problem or need given as the reason for the District's overall grade is still communication. But, the number requesting an improvement in this area declined significantly in the past quarter, from 19% in Fall 2007 to 9% in Winter 2008...
  - Improve communication to parents from teachers/administration/provide more timely information (6% vs. 15% in Fall 2007)
  - Need to listen to parents/community/solicit input/involvement/act on input/partnering (4% vs. 9% in Fall 2007)
- Other negative reasons for the overall grade given to the Administration and desired improvements include:
  - Better administration/leadership/community relations (11%)
  - Better organization/coordination/planning improvement needed (8%)
  - Put focus on classroom/education/decisions in best interest of student (7%)
  - More focus on students' individual needs/improve learning experience (6%)
  - Better placement of students in classes/programs (5%)
  - Top heavy administration/salaries too high/reduce overhead (5%)
- Very few parents (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 increased significantly in recent quarters (81% in Fall 2007 and 81% in Winter 2008 vs. 70% in Summer 2007).
- The suggestions given continue to be diverse. The most frequently given suggestion continues to be to improve communication. Directionally more people are making this suggestion (26% in Fall 2007 and Winter 2008 vs. 22% in Summer 2007).
  - During the past quarter, there was a directional increase in suggestions for *improve communication to parents from teachers/administration, provide more/timely information* (22% in Winter 2008 vs. 15% in Summer 2007).

# Suggestions for District Cont'd.

- Other suggestions include...
  - **Better teachers needed/better teacher-student relations (10%).**
  - **Better training/monitoring/mentoring of new teachers needed (9%)**
  - **Better placement of students in classes programs (9%).**
  - **Higher student standards/expectations (8%).**
  - **Better administration/leadership/community relations/decision making needed (7%)**
  - **Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding (6%)**
  - **Teachers need to be better supported/pay more respect (6%)**
  - **Improvement needed in math curriculum (6%)**
  - **Better organization/coordination/planning needed (5%)**
  - **More focus on student's individual needs/improve learning experience (5%)**
  - **Need better teacher/Administration relations (5%)**
  - **Need to reduce class size/lower student-teacher 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

- Almost four in five residents (77%) continue to 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	13%	
About right	61%	} 77%
Too low	16%	
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 (18% vs. 4%) and the Issaquah Press and its affiliates (20% vs. 10%).

## Primary source of information about Issaquah Schools

Friends and Family	23%
District Newsletter	16
Issaquah Press and its affiliates	20
The Internet	18
Seattle Times	8
School Employees	8
From the School	0
Through the mail/School Bulletin	2
Television	1
Other	2
Don't Know	3

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 most 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
- In virtually all other areas, perceptions of the District have improved directionally since 2003.
- 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 (89%) parents give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome.*
  - Four in five parents (82%) give the District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district.*

# Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- Significantly 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. Approximately half (51%) 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, possibly reflecting diverse needs and interests in the community. The most frequently desired improvement continues to be in the area of communication. But, the number requesting an improvement in communication declined significantly in the past quarter—from 19% in Fall 2007 to 9% in Winter 2008.
- Respondents are also specifically 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 increased significantly in recent quarters (81% in both Fall 2007 and Winter 2008 vs. 70% in Fall 2007). The suggestions continue to be diverse. The most frequently given suggestion is to improve communication (26% in Winter 2008), which may be a reflection of this community's high involvement and interest in education.

# Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- Almost four in five (77%) residents continue to feel that the taxes they are paying for education are about right (61%) or too low (16%).
- The Internet has grown significantly as a source of information about the District and its schools since Fall 2003 (from 4% to 18%). But, no one is specifically mentioning the School or District e-newsletters. We could probe about this in future interviews.
- 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. Approximately one in five residents (20%) now consider it to be their primary source of information (vs. 10% in Fall 2003).
- 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.