

Issaquah School District Community Polling Study Results

Fall 2003 through Winter 2009

Prepared by:

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Background

- This study was launched in October 2003. The results encompass over five years (twenty-two 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 2009, 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 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. Winter 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 across the board, with one exception where there has been a directional increase...
 - Issaquah has historically received high ratings for *keeping schools safe*. In Fall 2003, 88% gave Issaquah an A or B for its performance in this area. In Winter 2009, 93% gave Issaquah an A or B rating.

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

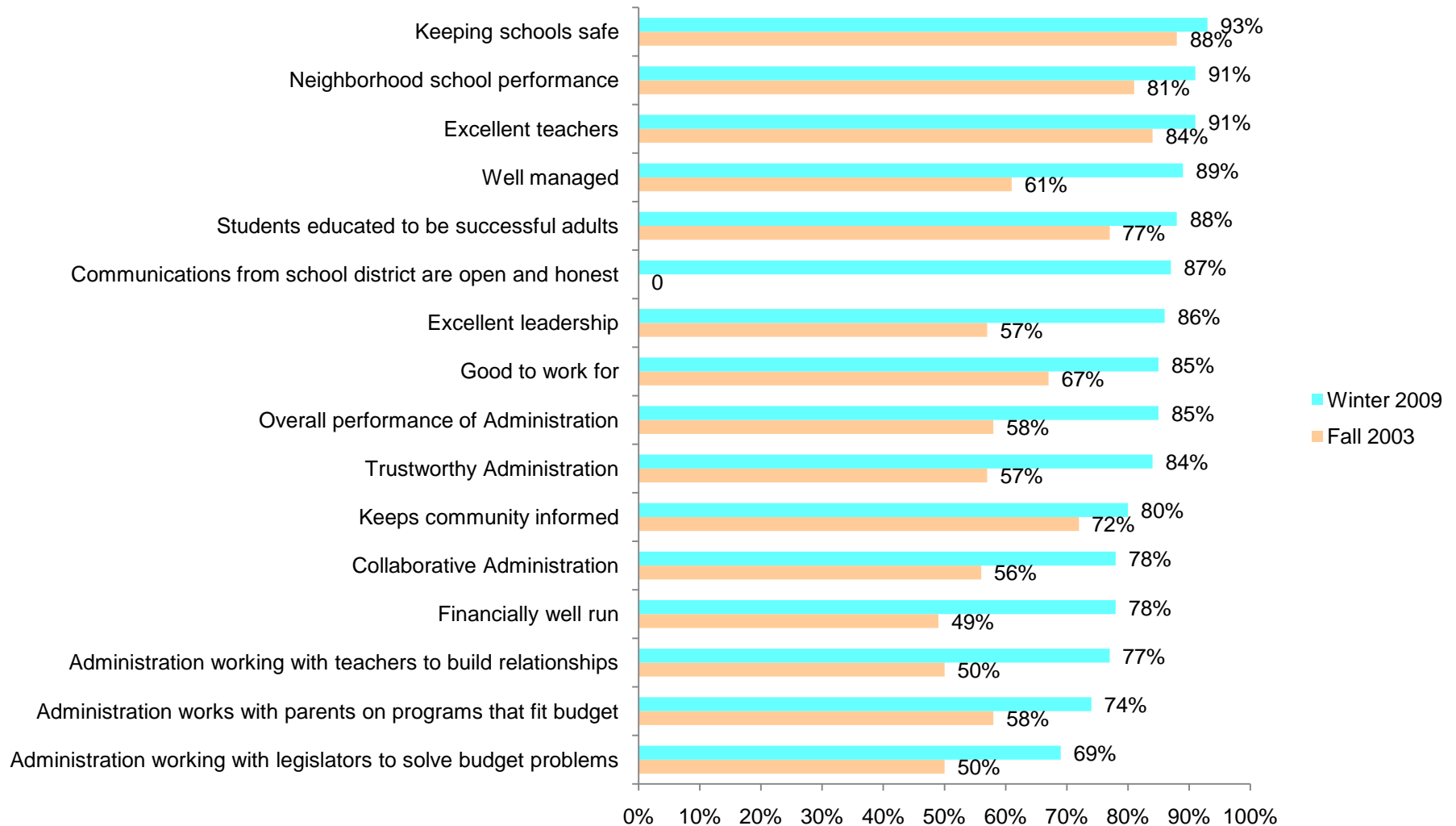
	Fall 2003 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)					Winter 2009 (Jan., Feb., March)				
	A or B	A	B	C	D or F	A or B	A	B	C	D or F
Keeping schools safe	88%	46	42	6	4	93%	52	41	5	3
Neighborhood school performance	81%	30	51	13	5	91%*	38	53	6	2
Excellent teachers	84%	34	50	12	3	91%*	36	55	8	1
Students educated to be successful adults	77%	28	49	18	5	88%*	31	57	10	2
Good to work for	67%	22	45	20	12	85%*	32	53	13	1
Well managed	61%	14	47	24	13	89%*	26*	63*	8	4
Keeps community informed	72%	25	47	18	9	80%*	38*	42	17	3
Overall performance of Administration	58%	13	45	27	14	85%*	24*	61*	12	4
Excellent leadership	57%	18	39	28	13	86%*	24	62*	11	3
Collaborative Administration	56%	13	43	29	14	78%*	24*	54	14	7
Trustworthy Administration	57%	15	42	25	17	84%*	30*	54*	12	3
Administration working with teachers to build relationships	50%	12	38	27	21	77%*	25*	52*	20	4
Communications from school district are open and honest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	87%	38	49	12	2
Financially well run	49%	14	35	34	16	78%*	24*	54*	18	3
Administration works with parents on programs that fit budget	58%	17	41	28	13	74%*	14	60*	23	3
Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems	50%	8	42	32	16	69%*	18*	51	23	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. Winter 2009 % Giving an A or B Grade



Note:

The levels of A/B grades increased significantly for all performance attributes except one, *keeping schools safe* which has been high since 2003 and has since increased directionally.

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

Ratings During Past Quarter

- As the following charts detail, during Winter 2009 the grades given to the District were significantly higher in a number of performance areas than they were in Fall 2008...
 - Overall performance of Administration
 - Financially well run
 - Excellent leadership
 - Communications from the school district are open and honest
 - Students educated to be successful adults
 - Well managed
 - Excellent teachers
- In virtually all other areas, performance has improved directionally.

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Fall 2008 Vs. Winter 2009

	Fall 2008 (Oct., Nov., Dec.)					Winter 2009 (Jan., Feb., March)				
	<u>A or B</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D or F</u>	<u>A or B</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D or F</u>
Excellent teachers	83%	42	41	16	2	91%*	36	55*	8	1
Well managed	78%	31	47	18	5	89%*	26	63*	8	4
Students educated to be successful adults	76%	36	40	19	4	88%*	31	57*	10	2
Communications from school district are open and honest	76%	38	38	17	7	87%*	38	49*	12	2
Excellent leadership	76%	31	45	16	8	86%*	24	62*	11	3
Overall performance of Administration	74%	24	50	22	3	85%*	24	61*	12	4
Financially well run	69%	27	42	24	7	78%*	24	54*	18	3
Keeping schools safe	91%	54	37	9	0	93%	52	41	5	3
Neighborhood school performance	85%	41	44	11	4	91%	38	53	6	2
Good to work for	85%	42	43	13	2	85%	32	53	13	1
Trustworthy Administration	76%	36	40	17	8	84%	30	54*	12	3
Keeps community informed	76%	39	37	20	3	80%	38	42	17	3
Collaborative Administration	74%	26	48	22	5	78%	24	54	14	7
Administration working with teachers to build relationships	75%	31	44	21	5	77%	25	52	20	4
Administration works with parents on programs that fit budget	68%	26	42	22	10	74%	14	60*	23	3
Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems	73%	14	59	21	5	69%	18	51	23	9

Note:

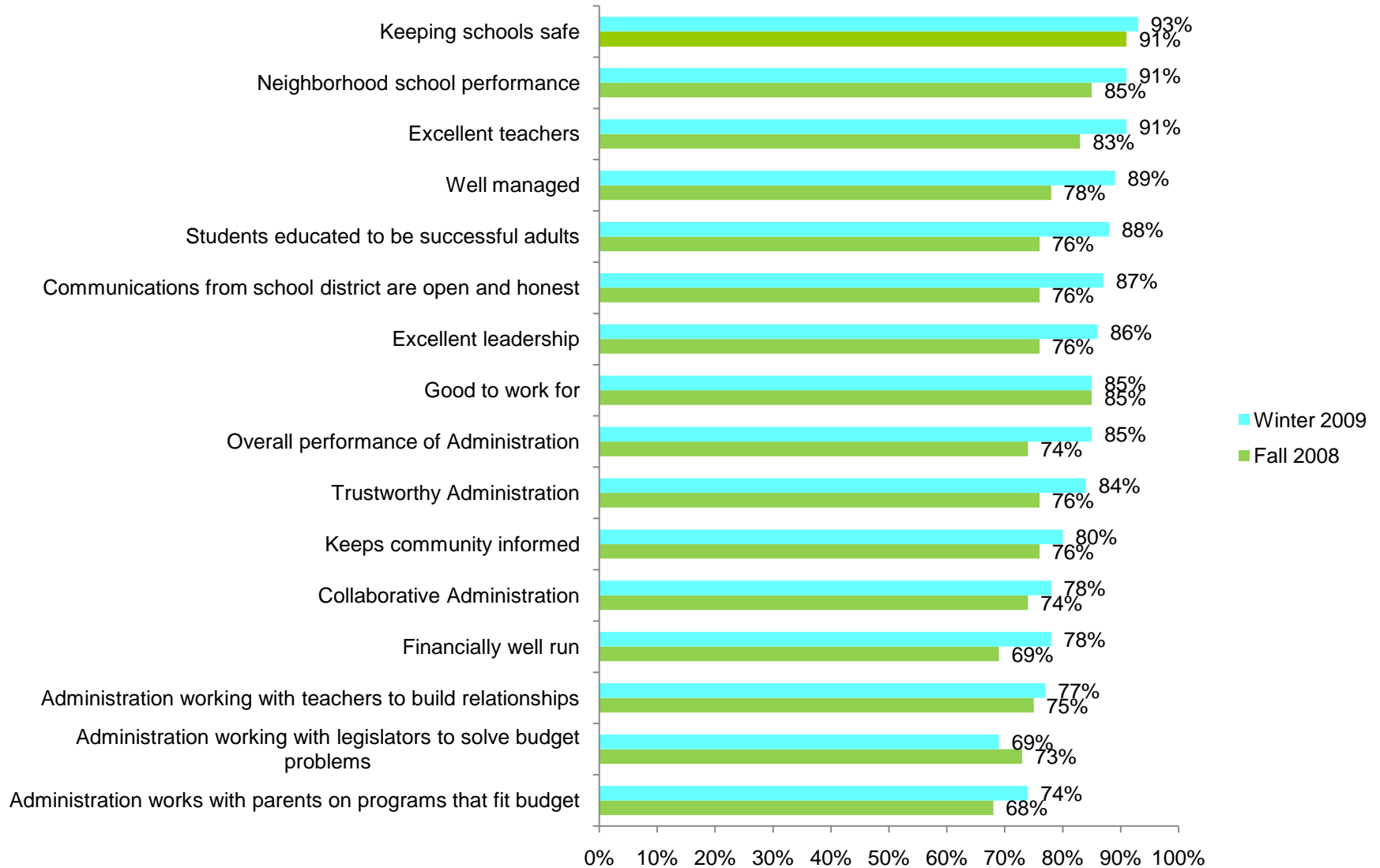
* = Significant difference vs. Fall 2008 at the 90% confidence level.

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—Fall 2008 Vs. Winter 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 illustrates, almost all parents continue to give the District high grades for encouraging their opinions and welcoming their involvement.
 - Nine in ten parents overall (90%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*. Approximately two in three (65%) give the District an A grade.
 - Parents of Elementary school are *significantly* more likely to give an A grade than parents of Middle School and High School students.
 - Almost nine in ten parents overall (87%) give the District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district*. Overall, they are *significantly* more likely to give an A grade now than in 2006 (50% vs. 34%).
 - Parents of High School students are significantly more likely to give an A grade now they were in 2006 (42% vs. 19%).

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

Fall 2006 (October, November, December)					Winter 2009 (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%	87%	95%	81%****	81%****
A	34	41**	34**	19	50*	55***	36	42*
B	47	49	49	53	37	40	45	39
C	14	6**	14	22	11	4	13****	17****
D or F	6	4	4	6	2	1	6	2
<i>Your involvement in your child's education is welcome</i>								
A or B	92%	97%	93%	87%	90%	97%	86%****	81%****
A	63	77**	69**	47	65	75	50*, ****	57****
B	29	20**	24**	40	25	22***	36	24***
C	7	3**	7	11	8	2	12****	14****
D or F	1	0	0	2	2	1	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 continued to improve since the first wave of measurements were taken in Fall 2003, a year after the strike.
 - Almost half (46%) 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 (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:
 - Positive Administration comments (11% vs. 2% in 2003)
 - Satisfied with school experience (9% vs. 4% in 2003)
 - Good parental involvement/support/communications (9% vs. 2% in Fall 2003)
 - Positive teacher comments (8% vs. 2% in 2003)
 - Positive environment (6% vs. 0% 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 only mentioned by small minorities of residents.
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding/better use of funds (8%)
 - Better Administration/leadership/community relations needed (7%)
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/Administration/provide more timely information (7%)
 - Need to listen to parents/community/solicit input/involvement/act on input/partner (6%)
 - Better organization/coordination/planning needed (5%)
- 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.
 - Approximately seven in ten residents (72%) made a suggestion this Winter. This is significantly 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. Approximately one in four (24%) make this suggestion. Specific suggestions include:
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/Administration, provide more/timely information (22%).
 - Need to listen to parents/community, solicit input/involvement (14%)

Suggestions for District Cont'd.

- Other suggestions include...
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding (11%)
 - Better administration/leadership/community relations/decision making (9%)
 - Better training/monitoring of new teachers needed (9%)
 - Better teachers needed/better teacher-student relations (8%)
 - Poor Teacher-Administration relations/Need better relations (7%)

 - Put focus on classroom/education/decisions that are in best interest of student (5%)
 - Need more AP classes/more challenging coursework/curriculum/access to Merlin (5%)
 - Top heavy administration/salaries too high/reduce overhead (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 (74%) feel that the amount they pay for local public education is about right or too low. Approximately the same number of residents felt this way the previous quarter (73%).
- Residents feel that the taxes they pay for local public education are...

Too high	17%	
About right	55%	} 74%
Too low	19%	
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 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. 22%).

Primary source of information about Issaquah Schools

Friends and Family	25%
The Internet	22
Issaquah Press and its affiliates	18
District Newsletter	17
Seattle Times	4
Television	4
Work there/personal experience	2
School Employees	2
Don't Know	5

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 continues to improve.
- 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 all performance areas, with one exception where there has been directional improvement.
 - Performance for *keeping schools safe* has historically been high and has improved directionally since 2003—from 88% of residents giving an A/B grade to 93% in Winter 2009.

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. And, there have been some significant improvements in perceptions during the past quarter.
 - Almost nine in ten residents (87%) give the District an A or B grade for *communications from the school district are open and honest*. This is significantly more than in the previous quarter (76%).
 - Nine in ten parents (90%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*. Furthermore, two in three (65%) give the District an A grade for its performance.
 - Almost nine in ten parents (87%) give Issaquah an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this District*. Importantly, parents are significantly more likely to give an A grade now than they were in 2006 (50% vs. 34%).

Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- The improved grades for the Administration's overall performance are reflected in the reasons given for the grades.
 - Almost half (46%) 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.
- 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, seven in ten (72%) gave a suggestion during the past quarter, which is significantly fewer than in Fall 2003 when 83% made a suggestion.
 - The suggestions continue to be diverse. The most frequently given suggestion is to improve communication (24% in Winter 2009), 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. Approximately three in four (74%) feel that the taxes they are paying for local education are about right (55%) or too low (19%).
- The most frequently mentioned sources of information about the District continue to be Family and Friends (25%), the Internet (22%), the Issaquah Press (18%) and the District Newsletter (17%).
 - The Internet has grown significantly as a source of information since Fall 2003 (from 4% to 22%).
 - At the same time, Family and Friends has become directionally less frequently mentioned as a source (from 30% in Fall 2003 to 25% in Winter 2009).
- 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 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.