

Issaquah School District Community Polling Study Results

Fall 2003 through Winter 2011

Prepared by:

**Dorothy Geraghty
Sammamish, WA 98074**

Background

- This study was launched in October 2003. The results encompass more than seven years (thirty 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. This Winter almost half (46%) 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 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 2011) 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 2011

- 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 the vast majority of performance attributes.
 - Furthermore, the level of “A” grades being given has increased significantly for most attributes.
- 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 42% giving the District an A grade for its performance.

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Fall 2003 Vs. Winter 2011

| | Fall 2003 (Oct., Nov., Dec.) | | | | | Winter 2011 (Jan., Feb., March) | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | A or B | A | B | C | D or F | A or B | A | B | C | D or F |
| Excellent teachers | 84% | 34 | 50 | 12 | 3 | 86% | 38 | 48 | 10 | 4 |
| Keeping schools safe | 88% | 46 | 42 | 6 | 4 | 86% | 54 | 32* | 10 | 3 |
| Neighborhood school performance | 81% | 30 | 51 | 13 | 5 | 83% | 38 | 45 | 13 | 4 |
| Communications from school district are open and honest | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | 80% | 42 | 38 | 16 | 4 |
| Well managed | 61% | 14 | 47 | 24 | 13 | 79%* | 30* | 49 | 15* | 6* |
| Trustworthy Administration | 57% | 15 | 42 | 25 | 17 | 79%* | 36* | 43 | 15 | 6 |
| Students educated to be successful adults | 77% | 28 | 49 | 18 | 5 | 79% | 36 | 43 | 13 | 8 |
| Keeps community informed | 72% | 25 | 47 | 18 | 9 | 78% | 39* | 39 | 15 | 7 |
| Good to work for | 67% | 22 | 45 | 20 | 12 | 77%* | 32* | 45 | 21 | 2 |
| Administration working with teachers to build relationships | 50% | 12 | 38 | 27 | 21 | 76%* | 24* | 52* | 20 | 3* |
| Excellent leadership | 57% | 18 | 39 | 28 | 13 | 76%* | 32* | 44 | 18* | 6* |
| Overall performance of Administration | 58% | 13 | 45 | 27 | 14 | 72%* | 21* | 51 | 22 | 5* |
| Collaborative Administration | 56% | 13 | 43 | 29 | 14 | 72%* | 28* | 44 | 23 | 5* |
| Financially well run | 49% | 14 | 35 | 34 | 16 | 70%* | 24* | 46* | 20 | 11 |
| Administration works with parents on programs that fit budget | 58% | 17 | 41 | 28 | 13 | 66% | 27* | 39 | 24 | 10 |
| Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems | 50% | 8 | 42 | 32 | 16 | 61%* | 22* | 39 | 26 | 13 |

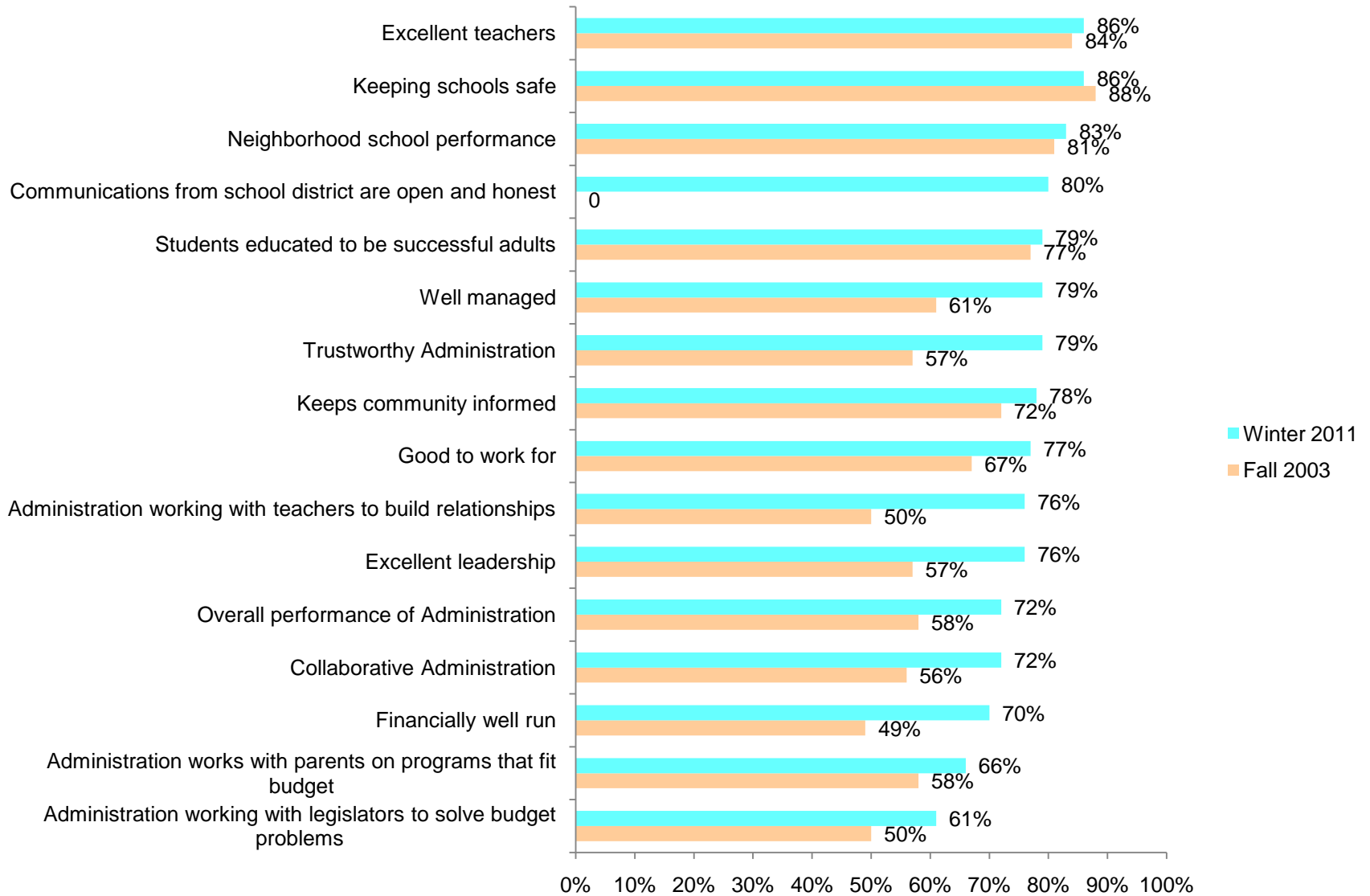
* = Significant difference vs. Fall 2003 at the 90% confidence level.

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 2011

% 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

- While the number giving the District a high grade continues to be high, there were directional declines in high grades for most performance areas during the past quarter.
- There was a significant decline in the levels of high grades given for:
 - *Neighborhood school performance*, from 90% of residents giving a high (A or B) grade to 83%.
 - *Students educated to be successful adults*, from 87% giving a high grade to 79%.
- The lower grades may in part reflect concerns about the possible impact of State budget cutbacks on the quality of education.

Summary of Results of Community Polling Study Fall 2010 Vs. Winter 2011

| | Fall 2010 (Oct., Nov., Dec.) | | | | | Winter 2011 (Jan., Feb., March) | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|---------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| | A or B | A | B | C | D or F | A or B | A | B | C | D or F |
| Excellent teachers | 90% | 46 | 44 | 8 | 2 | 86% | 38 | 48 | 10 | 4 |
| Keeping schools safe | 88% | 59 | 29 | 11 | 1 | 86% | 54 | 32 | 10 | 3 |
| Neighborhood school performance | 90% | 55 | 35 | 8 | 2 | 83%* | 38* | 45* | 13 | 4 |
| Communications from school district are open and honest | 80% | 40 | 40 | 16 | 4 | 80% | 42 | 38 | 16 | 4 |
| Students educated to be successful adults | 87% | 42 | 45 | 11 | 2 | 79%* | 36 | 43 | 13 | 8* |
| Well managed | 84% | 34 | 50 | 12 | 4 | 79% | 30 | 49 | 15 | 6 |
| Trustworthy Administration | 79% | 41 | 38 | 13 | 8 | 79% | 36 | 43 | 15 | 6 |
| Keeps community informed | 83% | 42 | 41 | 14 | 3 | 78% | 39 | 39 | 15 | 7 |
| Good to work for | 82% | 43 | 39 | 15 | 4 | 77% | 32* | 45 | 21 | 2 |
| Administration working with teachers to build relationships | 81% | 32 | 49 | 16 | 2 | 76% | 24 | 52 | 20 | 3 |
| Excellent leadership | 76% | 39 | 37 | 20 | 5 | 76% | 32 | 44 | 18 | 6 |
| Overall performance of Administration | 78% | 31 | 47 | 16 | 6 | 72% | 21* | 51 | 22 | 5 |
| Collaborative Administration | 74% | 24 | 50 | 21 | 5 | 72% | 28 | 44 | 23 | 5 |
| Financially well run | 72% | 35 | 37 | 20 | 8 | 70% | 24* | 46 | 20 | 11 |
| Administration works with parents on programs that fit budget | 73% | 31 | 42 | 25 | 2 | 66% | 27 | 39 | 24 | 10* |
| Administration working with legislators to solve budget problems | 70% | 21 | 49 | 23 | 7 | 61% | 22 | 39 | 26 | 13 |

Note:

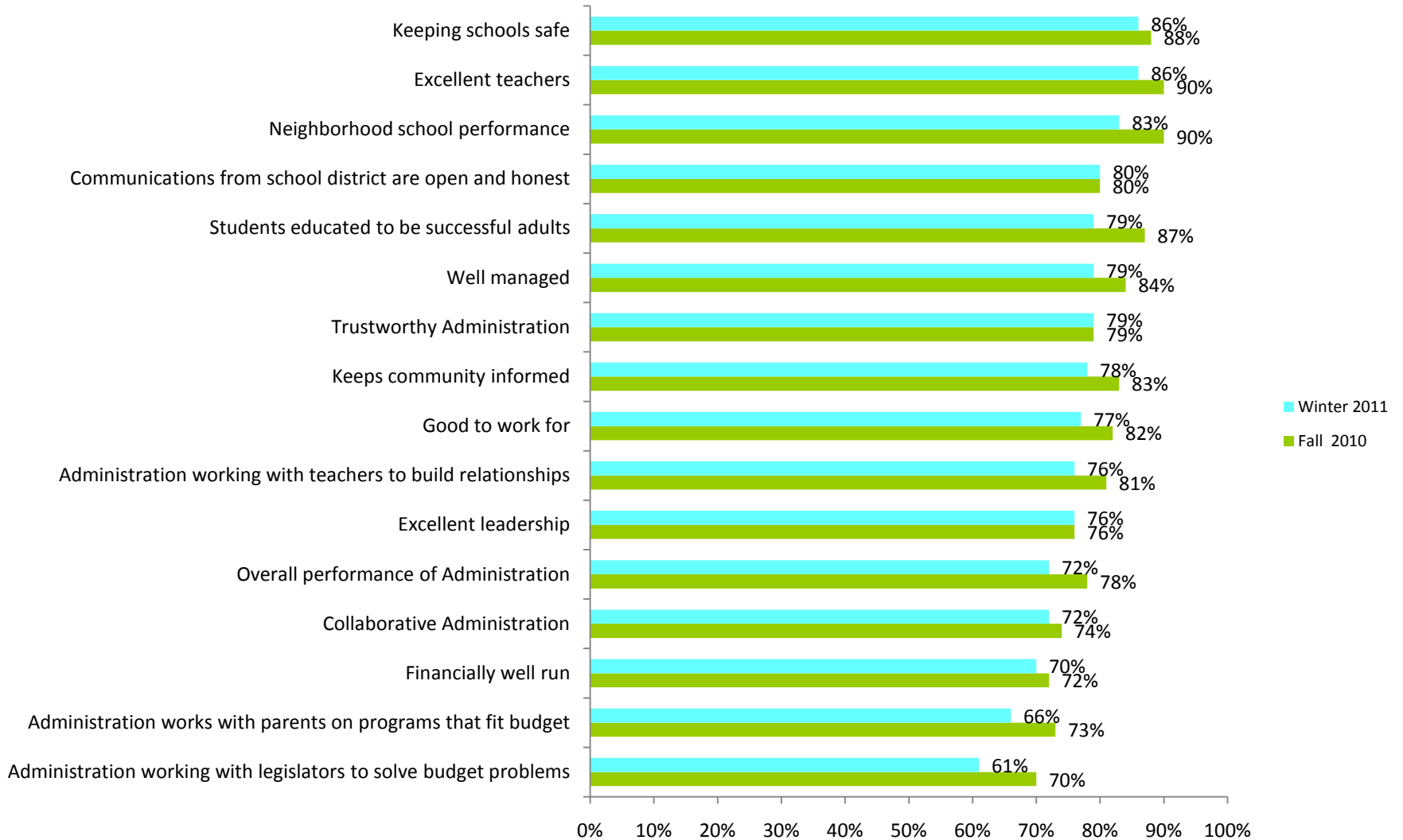
* = Significant difference vs. Fall 2010 at the 90% confidence level.

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— Fall 2010 Vs. Winter 2011

% 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 continue to give the District a high grade for *encouraging their opinions and welcoming their involvement*.
 - Over nine in ten parents overall (93%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*. Three out of four (75%) give the District an A grade, which is significantly more than in Fall 2006 (63%).
 - Significantly more parents of High School students now give the District an A grade for its performance than in 2006 (72% vs. 47%).
 - Over four out of five parents (83%) give the District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district*.
 - Significantly more parents of Elementary and Middle School students give the District an “A” grade than do parents of High School students (47%, 50% and 29% respectively).

Grades Given by Parents Regarding Involvement in Their Child's Education Fall 2006 vs. Winter 2011

| Fall 2006 (October, November, December) | | | | | Winter 2011 (Jan., Feb., 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% | 83% | 82% | 76% | 84% |
| A | 34 | 41** | 34** | 19 | 40 | 47** | 50** | 29 |
| B | 47 | 49 | 49 | 53 | 43 | 35** | 26*, ** | 55 |
| C | 14 | 6** | 14 | 22 | 14 | 14 | 20 | 13 |
| D or F | 6 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| <i>Your involvement in your child's education is welcome</i> | | | | | | | | |
| A or B | 92% | 97% | 93% | 87% | 93% | 97% | 92% | 91% |
| A | 63 | 77** | 69** | 47 | 75* | 78 | 71 | 72* |
| B | 29 | 20** | 24** | 40 | 18* | 19 | 21 | 19* |
| C | 7 | 3** | 7 | 11 | 5 | 3 | 2** | 9 |
| D or F | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 0 |

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 for Grade Given to Administration for Its Performance Overall

- Respondents are probed regarding reasons for the grade they gave 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. But, during the past quarter, there was some declines in residents' perceptions.
 - Approximately four in ten (38%) mention a positive reason for the grade they give, which is significantly more than in Fall 2003 (27%), a year after the strike, but directionally fewer than in the Fall (44%).
 - Almost six in ten (57%) mention that something needs improvement, which is significantly fewer than in Fall 2003 (72%) but significantly more than last Fall (40%).
- 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:
 - Satisfied/happy with school experience (14%)
 - Doing a good job (11%)
 - Good parental involvement/support (10%)
 - Positive Administration comments/good staff (7%)

All other positive reasons were mentioned by less than 5% of respondents.

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

- Negative reasons for the grade given to the Administration continue to be varied with no specific reason mentioned by more than a small number of residents. The most frequently given reasons are...
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding/better use of funds (11%)
 - Better administration/leadership/community relations/ decision making needed (7%), which is mentioned by directionally fewer residents than last Fall (8%) and significantly fewer residents than last Summer (14%).
 - Communications overall (7%)
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/Administration/more timely information (6%)
 - Better teachers needed/better teacher-student relations (5%)
- Very few (less than 5%) mention any other specific negative reason.

Suggestions for District

- Respondents are also asked to suggest improvements that would cause them to give the District a higher grade. The majority of residents continue to make at least one suggestion.
 - Approximately four out of five residents (79%) made a suggestion this Winter. This is directionally more than in the Fall when 71% made a suggestion.
- The suggestions continue to be diverse. The most frequently given suggestion continues to be to improve communications. Approximately one in five (19%) make this type of suggestion. Specific communication suggestions include:
 - Improve communication to parents from teachers/Administration/provide more/timely information (16%), which is directionally fewer than last Fall (24%).
 - Need to listen to parents/community, solicit input/involvement (4%)
 - Parents of students across school levels are equally likely to request an improvement in communications,

Suggestions for District Cont'd.

- Other suggestions include...
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding (17%), which significantly more residents requested this Winter than in the Fall (9%).
 - Better teachers needed/better teacher-student relations (12%)
 - Change curriculum/go back to basics (9%)
 - Improvement needed in Math curriculum (6%)
 - Teachers need to be better supported/pay more respect (6%)
 - Better administration/leadership/community relations/better decision making (5%)
 - More support/concern for LD/ADD/Special Education students (5%)
 - More focus on student's individual needs/improve learning 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

- Almost four out of five residents (78%) feel that the amount of taxes that they pay for local public education is about right or too low.
- In spite of the tough economy, 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 | 14% | |
| About right | 58% | } 78% |
| Too low | 20% | |
| Don't know | 9% | |

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 the Internet, the Issaquah Press/its affiliates, their Friends and Family, 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. 30%). Furthermore, usage of the Internet as a primary source skyrocketed during the past quarter (from 19% the previous quarter to 30%).
- Usage of the Issaquah Press/its affiliates as a primary source of information has also grown significantly since Fall 2003 (from 10% to 26%).

Primary source of information about Issaquah Schools

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| The Internet | 30% |
| Issaquah Press and its affiliates | 26 |
| Friends and Family | 21 |
| District Newsletter | 10 |
| School Employees | 4 |
| Work there/personal experience | 2 |
| From the school/school bulletin | 3 |
| Seattle Times | 2 |
| TV | 1 |
| Other | 1 |
| Don't Know | 0 |

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.
 - The levels of high grades (A/B) have increased significantly for the vast majority of performance attributes.
 - “A” grades have increased significantly for most attributes.
- During the Winter quarter, there were directional declines in high grades for most performance areas as well as significant declines in high grades for...
 - *Neighborhood school performance*, from 90% of residents giving a high (A/B) grade to 83%.
 - *Students educated to be successful adults*, from 87% to 79%.
- The changes in grades may in part reflect concerns about the possible negative impact of State budget cutbacks.

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 extremely strong with the vast majority of parents giving it high grades.
 - Four out of five residents (80%) give the District an A or B grade for *communications from the school district are open and honest*.
 - Over nine in ten parents (93%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*. Three out of four (75%) give the District an A grade, which is significantly more than in 2006 (63%).
 - More than four out of five parents (83%) give Issaquah an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this District*.

Conclusions And Recommendations Cont'd.

- Respondents' perceptions of the Administration have improved since 2003. But, during the past quarter, there were some declines in perceptions. With regard to reasons for the grade given to the District for its overall performance...
 - Approximately four in ten (38%) mention a positive reason, which is significantly more than in Fall 2003 (27%) but directionally fewer than in the Fall (44%).
 - Almost six in ten (57%) mention something that needs improvement, which is significantly fewer than in 2003 (72%) but significantly more than last Fall (40%).
 - 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 the vast majority of residents continue to suggest at least one improvement. This Winter, approximately four out of five residents (79%) made a suggestion, which is directionally more than in the Fall when 71% made a suggestion.
 - The suggestions continue to be diverse. The four most frequently given suggestions are:
 - Increase funding/school support/work with State for funding (17%), which is significantly more than in the Fall (9%).
 - Improve in the area of communications (19%); e.g., improve communications to parents from teachers/Administration/provide more timely information (16%)
 - Better teachers needed/better teacher-students relations (12%)
 - Change curriculum/go back to basics (9%)

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 four out of five (78%) feel that the taxes they are paying for local education are about right (58%) or too low (20%).
- The most frequently mentioned primary sources of information about the District continue to be the Internet (30%), the Issaquah Press (26%), Friends and Family (21%), and the District Newsletter (10%). Almost nine in ten (87%) residents mention one of these sources as their primary source of information about the District.
- This quarter almost half of the respondents (46%) indicated that they are willing to give further input. If additional in-depth learning is desired, it is possible to contact these respondents...
 - with additional questions on these findings, such 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.