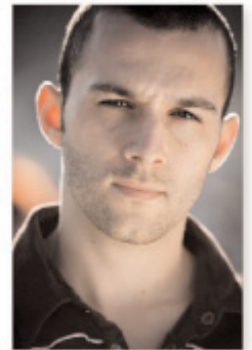


The Power of Know™



Columbia Public Schools 2013 Patron Telephone Survey

Final Report

December 5, 2013



Columbia Public Schools 2013 Patron Telephone Survey Executive Summary December 5, 2013

In late October through mid-November 2013, a 15-minute telephone study was conducted with 400 randomly selected, registered voter, heads of household living within the boundaries of the Columbia Public Schools. This is the fourth year that this survey, focusing on district/patron communication issues, has been conducted. This provides an outstanding opportunity to monitor trends, along with the chance to introduce new topics, when appropriate.

Calls were placed to landlines and cell phone numbers, and completed interviews were divided into four equal groups, based on the cross-streets of Providence and Broadway. This means that the data contained in this report for the full survey group has a Margin of Error of plus or minus 5%. (The Margin of Error within the demographic and geographic subgroups is larger, because the number of respondents in each group is smaller.)

Generally speaking, survey participants showed continued appreciation for the work being done by the Columbia Public Schools. The data also suggested a growing desire to learn more about non-classroom attributes of district life. Specifically, the results were as follows:

- Eighteen of 27 different people, program, facility and district/patron relationship factors – plus the district’s overall performance – received a grade of “B” or better (or the statistical equivalent of a “B”) on the traditional A-F grading scale. This is a decline from the 24 factors achieving that mark in 2012. As was the case in 2012, the lower-rated factors were mostly the more nebulous district/patron relationship areas, and none of the lower scores on these factors reflected a dramatic decline.
- Two of the factors – “quality of school facilities” and “the district’s graduation rate” – improved at a statistically significant level, while five areas saw a statistically significant decline.
- A rather stunning 18 factors qualified as Patron Hot Buttons, meaning that at least 81% of the respondents to the survey were willing to offer a grade, rather than saying, “Don’t know.” Having 18 of 27 factors achieve this status affirms just how interested patrons seem to be in district news and information.
- The district’s strong academics/curriculum/education, its teachers and the parental/community support were the most frequently mentioned district strengths. Those who had an idea on an area needing improvement focused on money/budget management and on reducing taxes.



- “Quality teachers and staff” was the clear choice as the most important school district factor from a list provided to survey participants. Clustered in a group well below this factor were “up-to-date safety and security practices,” “effective management of financial resources,” “small class sizes,” and “up-to-date curriculum.”
- Printed communication continues to be the preferred vehicle, but the gap between it and electronic forms has narrowed, with 52% preferring print and 46% preferring electronic. The school district continues to be the much-preferred provider of school news, topping the news media by a count of 62% to 27%.
- A total of 57% of survey participants said they read at least “every other issue” of *Quarterly Report*, down from 70% who said the same thing in 2012. Scores for the perception of the publication’s news content and appearance also slipped, but still were a combined “excellent/good” percentage of 79% and 82%, respectively.
- The number of regular (at least once every two weeks) visitors to the district’s website remained stable, but visits of such frequency to individual school websites grew to 32%, from 25% in 2012. Scores for ease of navigation on the district and individual school websites remained strong.
- CPS Television viewership remained low, with only 9% saying they watched the network at least once every two weeks. These results have remained statistically unchanged for the four years of this survey.
- Facebook “likes” grew from 5% in 2012 to 10% in 2013. While this is within the Margin of Error, when combined with the 6% growth in Twitter feed “follows,” it suggests that these mediums are finding a greater foothold among typical patrons.
- When presented with a list of potential topics that might merit additional communications attention by the district, “information on the district’s finances and budget” topped the list, followed by “student and teacher success stories,” “information on curriculum and curriculum changes,” and “updates on construction and renovation projects.”
- Eight different potential sources of district news are consulted “frequently” by at least 25% of the research participants. The list was lead by “friends and neighbors” (86%), “the print edition of *The Columbia Tribune* newspaper” (58%), “local television stations” (42%), and “students who attend school in the district” (39%).



- When asked to identify the source they look to first for district news, respondents named “teachers and other staff members in the district.” This was followed by “friends and neighbors,” “students who attend school in the district,” “the print edition of *The Columbia Tribune* newspaper,” and “the school district’s website, or websites from individual schools.”

The full report that follows contains a series of findings, discussion of each of those findings, and all the questions, answers and appropriate cross-tabulations. A brief summary closes the report.



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Finding 1: Eighteen of 27 different people, program, facility and district/patron relationship factors – plus the district’s overall performance – received a grade of “B” or better (or the statistical equivalent of a “B”) on the traditional A-F grading scale, down from 24 factors in 2012. Most of the factors that fell below a “B” were only marginally below that level.

In late October through mid-November 2013, a 15-minute telephone study was conducted with 400 randomly selected, head-of-household, registered voter patrons in the Columbia School District to determine their views on a host of factors – most of which had also appeared on similar studies each of the past three years.

Calls were placed to landlines and cell phone numbers, and the completed interviews were divided into equal amounts (100 each), based on where a respondent lived in relation to the cross-streets of Providence and Broadway. The quantities were determined by the district and were deemed to be generally representative of the population pattern. This means that the results presented in this report for the entire survey group have a Margin of Error of plus or minus 5%. (The Margin of Error for the subgroups shown in the cross-tabulations is higher, because the number of respondents in each group is smaller.)

After confirming their status as a head of household, a registered voter, aware that they lived within the boundaries of the district, and living in a quadrant where there was still room under the quota when they were contacted, respondents were asked to grade – A, B, C, D or F – 27 different people, program, facility and district/patron relationship factors, plus the district’s overall performance.

Such a question set provides an easy start to the survey for respondents, because all they need is an opinion; no special “inside information” is necessary. It also offers an opportunity for the respondents and the interviewers to develop some rapport, which will be important later in the survey when the questions become more difficult.

Most importantly, however, these questions provide a glimpse into the current opinion of a cross-section of typical patrons on key aspects of the district’s performance.

All the grades for all the factors are displayed below. However, to simplify the analysis, a weighted scale is also applied.



In this scale, each grade of “A” is worth 5 points, down to each grade of “F” being worth 1 point. The point values are totaled, and then divided by the number of respondents willing to offer a grade – those saying, “Don’t know” are not included – to arrive at a single number between 1.00 and 5.00. Recognizing that a 5.00 is impossible (because it would require all those with an opinion to say “A”), a 4.00, or a “B,” is typically the dividing line between areas of strength and those which may need attention. Taking into account the Margin of Error, a score as low as 3.80 is, statistically speaking, still a “B.”

In the case of the Columbia Public Schools, 18 of the 27 factors achieved this level. The leaders were:

- Safety of students – 4.41
- The performance of district employees in making you feel welcome when you visit a school or attend a school event – 4.38
- Performance of district teachers – 4.38
- Quality of technology available to students – 4.37
- Quality of school facilities – 4.36
- Quality of education provided to students – 4.36

Of the nine factors that fell short of the statistical equivalent of a “B,” five scored at 3.70 or higher, and the lowest score was a 3.61. While every school district would prefer to have all its factors score at a “B” or higher on this exercise, these scores should not cause any dramatic concerns, because they are so close to that level. The factors in question were:

- The effectiveness of communications with the public by the Columbia Public Schools – 3.77
- The district’s responsiveness to patron concerns – 3.77
- The district’s efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons – 3.74
- The quality of the district’s transportation program – 3.73
- The balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities – 3.70
- The district’s efforts to involve citizens in decision-making – 3.68
- Value received for the tax dollars spent – 3.65
- The district’s record on making and fulfilling promises – 3.64
- The district’s performance in closing the achievement gap among its students – 3.61

To determine if demographic characteristics or where an individual lived played a role in these lower scores, a cross-tabulation analysis was conducted. In reviewing the data from this analysis, it is important to look for trends, rather than to study individual results, because the smaller number of respondents in each subgroup means a larger Margin of Error. In doing so, the following was discovered:



- Current student family respondents did not always have the highest score, which is somewhat unusual. In fact, they were not the highest on “value received for the tax dollars spent” and “balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities.”
- Age of the respondents, length of time they had lived in the district, level of involvement with the district, and where respondents lived had no consistent impact on their scores for these lower-rated areas.
- Caucasian respondents and those with high-speed Internet access were closer to the overall score than were their counterparts. However, it is important to point out that these two segments made up the bulk of the participants based on racial/ethnic profile and access/lack of access to high-speed Internet. As such, these results are expected.

Comparing the total scores for all 27 different factors with those same factors on the 2012 study, the following saw a statistically significant improvement:

- Quality of school facilities
- The district’s graduation rate

These factors saw their scores decline at a statistically significant rate from 2012:

- The quality of vocational or technical programming for students
- Performance of the Central Office administration
- The district’s efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons
- The quality of the district’s transportation program
- Value received for the tax dollars spent

Neither the increases nor the decreases were eye-opening, yet the factors that saw a decrease likely bear monitoring over the course of the coming year.

The final aspect of this exercise is the identification of Patron Hot Buttons. These are the factors that were graded by at least 81% (more than four out of five) of the respondents. As such, they are the aspects of district life that typical patrons think of first, when the school district’s name is mentioned.

The active interest in the school district is seen in this analysis, as 18 factors qualified – a very high number:

- Safety of students
- The performance of district employees in making you feel welcome when you visit a school or attend a school event
- Performance of district teachers
- Quality of school facilities
- Quality of education provided to students



- The district's graduation rate
- Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities
- Preparation of students for college, vocational training or employment
- Performance of school principals
- The district's efforts to get parents involved
- Performance of the Columbia Board of Education
- Performance of the Central Office administration
- The effectiveness of communications with the public by the Columbia Public Schools
- The district's responsiveness to patron concerns
- The district's efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons
- The district's efforts to involve citizens in decision-making
- Value received for the tax dollars spent
- The district's record on making and fulfilling promises

Twelve of these 18 “Hot Buttons” received a grade of “B” or better, suggesting that the majority of factors that typical patrons use to judge the district are well thought of. However, again, the lower-rated factors may not have dramatically low scores, but likely merit ongoing monitoring throughout the course of the year.

Questions 1-3 confirmed that a respondent was a head of household, a registered voter, and aware that he or she lived within the boundaries of the Columbia Public Schools. A “yes” answer was required on each question to continue. As such, these questions are not displayed here. All responses with percentages may add to more or less than 100%, due to rounding. Verbatim comments shown in this report are one comment by one person each. Had they been indicative of a trend, they would have appeared in enough quantity to be displayed in the chart accompanying the question.

- 4. To make certain that we have people from all parts of the district participating in this survey, which of the following best describes where you live?** *Choices were read to respondents. Numbers of participants in each region were determined by school district leadership in an effort to match the general population pattern. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

| Response | Number |
|--|--------|
| West of Providence and north of Broadway | 100 |
| East of Providence and north of Broadway | 100 |
| West of Providence and south of Broadway | 100 |
| East of Providence and south of Broadway | 100 |



As you know, students in school are usually given a grade to reflect the quality of their work. Those grades are usually A, B, C, D or F. Based on your experience, the experience of your children, or things you have heard about the Columbia Public Schools from others, please tell me what grade you would give the school district on each of the following items. Let's start with... *Questions 5 through 31 were rotated to eliminate order bias.*

5. Performance of district teachers

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 44% |
| B | 49% |
| C | 5% |
| D | 1% |
| F | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | 1% |

6. Performance of school principals

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 31% |
| B | 52% |
| C | 7% |
| D | 3% |
| F | <1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 8% |

7. Performance of the Central Office administration

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 13% |
| B | 57% |
| C | 12% |
| D | 3% |
| F | 1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 15% |



8. Performance of the Columbia Board of Education

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 18% |
| B | 55% |
| C | 14% |
| D | 2% |
| F | <1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 11% |

9. Quality of education provided to students

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 47% |
| B | 44% |
| C | 6% |
| D | 3% |
| F | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | <1% |

10. Preparation of students for college, vocational training or employment

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 36% |
| B | 46% |
| C | 11% |
| D | 2% |
| F | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | 5% |

11. Quality of technology available to students

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 33% |
| B | 37% |
| C | 5% |
| D | 1% |
| F | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | 26% |



12. Safety of students

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|------------|
| A | 52% |
| B | 34% |
| C | 9% |
| D | 1% |
| F | <1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 4% |

13. Quality of school facilities

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|------------|
| A | 49% |
| B | 36% |
| C | 10% |
| D | 2% |
| F | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | 3% |

14. Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|------------|
| A | 41% |
| B | 38% |
| C | 11% |
| D | 3% |
| F | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | 7% |

15. Class sizes, meaning the number of students in each classroom

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|------------|
| A | 10% |
| B | 49% |
| C | 14% |
| D | 6% |
| F | <1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 21% |



16. The quality of the district's Early Childhood programs

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 17% |
| B | 31% |
| C | 4% |
| D | 0% |
| F | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | 48% |

17. Value received by patrons for the tax dollars spent

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 12% |
| B | 48% |
| C | 24% |
| D | 9% |
| F | 1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 7% |

18. The district's efforts to involve citizens in decision-making

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 10% |
| B | 46% |
| C | 23% |
| D | 7% |
| F | <1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 13% |

19. The district's responsiveness to patron concerns

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 17% |
| B | 36% |
| C | 28% |
| D | 4% |
| F | 1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 16% |



20. The district's efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 13% |
| B | 52% |
| C | 25% |
| D | 6% |
| F | 1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 4% |

21. The district's record on making and fulfilling promises

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 9% |
| B | 44% |
| C | 26% |
| D | 4% |
| F | 2% |
| Don't know (not read) | 16% |

22. The effectiveness of communications with the public by the Columbia Public Schools

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 11% |
| B | 58% |
| C | 22% |
| D | 5% |
| F | <1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 4% |



23. The district's performance in closing the achievement gap among its students

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 8% |
| B | 40% |
| C | 16% |
| D | 7% |
| F | 2% |
| Don't know (not read) | 27% |

24. The quality of vocational or technical programming for students

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 17% |
| B | 43% |
| C | 8% |
| D | 2% |
| F | <1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 30% |

25. The balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 9% |
| B | 47% |
| C | 14% |
| D | 8% |
| F | 1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 22% |

26. The district's graduation rate

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 38% |
| B | 46% |
| C | 7% |
| D | <1% |
| F | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | 9% |



27. The district's efforts to ensure equivalent school buildings

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 13% |
| B | 48% |
| C | 11% |
| D | 5% |
| F | 1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 23% |

28. The district's efforts to ensure equivalent educational programming from school to school

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 12% |
| B | 52% |
| C | 5% |
| D | 1% |
| F | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | 31% |

29. The quality of the district's transportation program

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 10% |
| B | 44% |
| C | 12% |
| D | 6% |
| F | 2% |
| Don't know (not read) | 27% |



30. The district's efforts to get parents involved

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 27% |
| B | 47% |
| C | 14% |
| D | 3% |
| F | <1% |
| Don't know (not read) | 9% |

31. The performance of district employees in making you feel welcome when you visit a school or attend a school event

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 43% |
| B | 50% |
| C | 6% |
| D | 0% |
| F | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | 2% |

32. Overall, what grade would you give Columbia Public Schools?

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| A | 37% |
| B | 45% |
| C | 16% |
| D | 2% |
| F | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | <1% |

Cross-tabulation: 5-point scale rating for each factor. Items with a “*” are Patron Hot Buttons, meaning that at least 81% of the respondents offered a grade, rather than saying, “Don’t know.” These are the areas that typical patrons consider first, when evaluating the performance of the school district. The items in bold changed at a statistically significant level from 2012 to 2013.

| Factor | 5-point scale rating/2013 | 5-point scale rating/2012 | 5-point scale rating/2011 | 5/point scale rating 2010 |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Safety of students* | 4.41 | 4.27 | 4.20 | 4.29 |
| The performance of district employees in making you feel welcome when you visit a school or attend a school event* | 4.38 | 4.45 | 4.45 | 4.49 |
| Performance of district teachers* | 4.38 | 4.35 | 4.29 | 4.38 |
| Quality of technology available to students | 4.37 | 4.39 | 4.08 | 4.33 |
| Quality of school facilities* | 4.36 | 4.05 | 3.94 | 4.17 |
| Quality of education provided to students* | 4.36 | 4.34 | 4.15 | 4.23 |
| The district’s graduation rate* | 4.33 | 4.07 | 4.13 | 3.99 |
| Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities* | 4.26 | 4.16 | 4.01 | 4.25 |
| The quality of the district’s Early Childhood programs | 4.24 | 4.24 | 4.23 | 4.12 |
| Preparation of students for college, vocational training or employment* | 4.22 | 4.30 | 4.11 | 4.16 |
| Performance of school principals* | 4.20 | 4.27 | 4.28 | 4.28 |
| Overall grade | 4.17 | 4.18 | 4.03 | 4.10 |
| The quality of vocational or technical programming for students | 4.07 | 4.30 | 4.16 | 4.12 |
| The district’s efforts to ensure equivalent educational programming from school to school | 4.07 | 4.03 | 3.81 | 3.89 |
| The district’s efforts to get parents involved* | 4.06 | 4.21 | 4.07 | 4.20 |
| Performance of the Columbia Board of Education* | 3.98 | 3.92 | 3.91 | 3.87 |
| Performance of the Central Office administration* | 3.92 | 4.21 | 3.99 | 3.97 |
| The district’s effort to ensure equivalent school buildings | 3.87 | 3.96 | 3.53 | 3.85 |
| Class sizes, meaning the number of students in each classroom | 3.80 | 3.79 | 3.49 | 3.52 |
| The effectiveness of communications with the public by the Columbia Public Schools* | 3.77 | 3.95 | 3.83 | 3.82 |
| The district’s responsiveness to patron concerns* | 3.77 | 3.86 | 3.70 | 3.56 |
| The district’s efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons* | 3.74 | 3.98 | 3.97 | 3.98 |
| The quality of the district’s transportation program | 3.73 | 3.98 | 3.71 | 3.95 |
| The balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities | 3.70 | 3.86 | 3.75 | 3.78 |
| The district’s efforts to involve citizens in decision-making* | 3.68 | 3.83 | 3.89 | 3.69 |
| Value received for the tax dollars spent* | 3.65 | 3.97 | 3.84 | 3.94 |
| The district’s record on making and fulfilling promises* | 3.64 | 3.69 | 3.63 | 3.73 |
| The district’s performance in closing the achievement gap among its students | 3.61 | 3.79 | 3.64 | 3.47 |

Cross-tabulation: 5-point scale ratings for factors rated below 3.80 by the total survey group by age, length of time living in the district, and presence of a current district student, past district student or no district student ever in the household. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and “age” will not square with “overall” score, because six respondents refused to answer this question.

| Response | Overall score | 18-34 (n=85) | 35-54 (n=158) | 55 or older (n=151) | Up to 5 years (n=53) | 5 to 15 years (n=99) | More than 15 years (n=248) | Student, yes (n=145) | Student, past (n=137) | Student, never (n=118) |
|---|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Effectiveness of communications with the public by CPS | 3.77 | 3.74 | 3.77 | 3.75 | 3.67 | 3.80 | 3.77 | 3.87 | 3.70 | 3.71 |
| District’s responsiveness to patron concerns | 3.77 | 3.86 | 3.78 | 3.70 | 3.85 | 3.76 | 3.75 | 3.88 | 3.63 | 3.79 |
| District’s efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons | 3.74 | 3.63 | 3.75 | 3.71 | 3.63 | 3.74 | 3.77 | 3.85 | 3.67 | 3.69 |
| Quality of the district’s transportation program | 3.73 | 3.82 | 3.69 | 3.73 | 3.67 | 3.80 | 3.71 | 3.79 | 3.73 | 3.67 |
| Balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities | 3.70 | 3.72 | 3.76 | 3.63 | 3.66 | 3.78 | 3.68 | 3.80 | 3.58 | 3.88 |
| District’s efforts to involve citizens in decision-making | 3.68 | 3.74 | 3.62 | 3.66 | 3.55 | 3.74 | 3.68 | 3.83 | 3.56 | 3.61 |
| Value received for the tax dollars spent | 3.65 | 3.69 | 3.60 | 3.67 | 3.66 | 3.74 | 3.60 | 3.62 | 3.61 | 3.72 |
| District’s record on making and fulfilling promises | 3.64 | 3.67 | 3.62 | 3.62 | 3.59 | 3.68 | 3.64 | 3.77 | 3.56 | 3.57 |
| District’s performance in closing the achievement gap | 3.61 | 3.74 | 3.55 | 3.60 | 3.53 | 3.63 | 3.63 | 3.67 | 3.54 | 3.63 |

Cross-tabulation: 5-point scale ratings for factors rated below 3.80 by the total survey group by location of the respondent's residence and ethnicity of respondent. Note: "n" equals the number of respondents in each group, and the racial/ethnic groups will not square with "overall," because only groups with at least modest levels of participants are included below.

| Response | Overall score | W of Prov/N of B'way (n=100) | E of Prov/N of B'way (n=100) | W of Prov/S of B'way (n=100) | E of Prov/S of B'way (n=100) | African-American (n=32) | Caucasian (n=321) | Hispanic /Latino (n=39) |
|---|---------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Effectiveness of communications with the public by CPS | 3.77 | 3.78 | 3.71 | 3.78 | 3.80 | 3.53 | 3.79 | 3.76 |
| District's responsiveness to patron concerns | 3.77 | 3.69 | 3.82 | 3.75 | 3.87 | 3.55 | 3.78 | 3.88 |
| District's efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons | 3.74 | 3.76 | 3.67 | 3.79 | 3.76 | 3.50 | 3.77 | 3.73 |
| Quality of the district's transportation program | 3.73 | 3.82 | 3.82 | 3.64 | 3.67 | 3.33 | 3.76 | 3.90 |
| Balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities | 3.70 | 3.64 | 3.65 | 3.69 | 3.86 | 3.52 | 3.70 | 3.84 |
| District's efforts to involve citizens in decision-making | 3.68 | 3.65 | 3.61 | 3.66 | 3.77 | 3.70 | 3.67 | 3.65 |
| Value received for the tax dollars spent | 3.65 | 3.59 | 3.67 | 3.68 | 3.65 | 3.37 | 3.67 | 3.69 |
| District's record on making and fulfilling promises | 3.64 | 3.66 | 3.66 | 3.74 | 3.62 | 3.43 | 3.68 | 3.63 |
| District's performance in closing the achievement gap | 3.61 | 3.63 | 3.45 | 3.68 | 3.71 | 3.65 | 3.62 | 3.59 |

Cross-tabulation: 5-point scale ratings for factors rated below 3.80 by access to high-speed Internet (at either home or work) and by level of involvement with the school district. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group.

| Response | Overall score | Yes, high-speed access (n=371) | No, high-speed access (n=29) | Very/ Somewhat involved (n=131) | Not very/Not at all involved (n=171) | Involved in the past, not now (n=98) |
|---|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Effectiveness of communications with the public by CPS | 3.77 | 3.77 | 3.68 | 3.72 | 3.82 | 3.73 |
| District’s responsiveness to patron concerns | 3.77 | 3.78 | 3.67 | 3.83 | 3.77 | 3.66 |
| District’s efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons | 3.74 | 3.75 | 3.62 | 3.73 | 3.82 | 3.63 |
| Quality of the district’s transportation program | 3.73 | 3.73 | 3.81 | 3.78 | 3.72 | 3.68 |
| Balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities | 3.70 | 3.72 | 3.45 | 3.73 | 3.70 | 3.68 |
| District’s efforts to involve citizens in decision-making | 3.68 | 3.67 | 3.71 | 3.72 | 3.71 | 3.55 |
| Value received for the tax dollars spent | 3.65 | 3.65 | 3.58 | 3.58 | 3.72 | 3.60 |
| District’s record on making and fulfilling promises | 3.64 | 3.64 | 3.73 | 3.58 | 3.73 | 3.58 |
| District’s performance in closing the achievement gap | 3.61 | 3.60 | 3.82 | 3.53 | 3.73 | 3.54 |



Finding 2: The district’s strong academics/curriculum/education, its teachers and its parental/community support top the list of strengths shared by respondents. A total of 113 could not name an area of the district needing improvement. Those with a suggestion were led by respondents who want the district to manage the money/budget and to reduce taxes.

The evaluation portion of the survey closed with open-ended questions that offered respondents a chance to share their views on the district’s strengths and on areas where it could improve.

The responses were coded, based on common words, phrases and ideas to pinpoint which answers were offered in quantity. In doing so, “strong academics/curriculum/education” topped the list of strengths, with 124 mentions. This was followed by “teachers” (87 mentions) and “parental/community support” (61 mentions).

In terms of areas needing improvement, 113 respondents (28%) said, “Don’t know.” Among those with a suggestion, the results are in keeping with the narrative found in most school districts these days: finances. Specifically, 76 respondents said “manage money/budget,” while 52 said, “reducing taxes.” An additional 44 said, “listening to the public” and 38 said, “smaller class sizes.”

The somewhat lower grade for “tax dollars” seen in the previous section, and the common refrain among taxpayers of most districts for some sort of fiscal relief, makes these results not terribly surprising. What is encouraging is the strong awareness of – and appreciation for – the district’s curriculum and its teachers.

33. What do you think are the greatest strengths of the Columbia Public Schools?

Responses were coded from open-ended comments, based on common words, phrases or ideas. Numbers, rather than percentages displayed below.

| Response | Number |
|---------------------------------------|--------|
| Strong academics/curriculum/education | 124 |
| Teachers | 87 |
| Parental/community support | 61 |
| Other (see below) | 30 |
| Good reputation | 28 |
| Strong leadership | 23 |
| Good communication | 19 |
| Good facilities | 17 |
| Don’t know | 11 |



Verbatim “other” comments

Dedication of teachers, staff and administration.

They do a good job communicating with the parents, have good teachers and plenty of extracurricular activities to choose from.

I really think they are struggling with handling budget constraints, and I can't think of anything they are doing well.

Do a good job preparing kids for college or the work force.

They are improving. Hickman is getting a new baseball field.

Special School and Expressive Arts are wonderful. We appreciate it so much.

Lots of courses available to students, and the gifted program is good.

Not much of anything. There are too many bureaucrats.

Nothing at all.

They provide as good an education as other competitive school districts.

Multi-cultured student body is welcomed. If students are exposed to different cultures, they benefit. It has helped mine adjust to college well.

They are trying to keep a low teacher-to-student ratio. Also, they are trying to keep up with growth, by building many new facilities.

A good combination of strong leadership and good teachers.

High-quality courses with high-quality teachers.

Not sure there are any.

Good, strong School Board. The district provides students with a good education.

Plenty of resources in town to pull from, especially with the college here.

Lots of options for students.



I was observing a classroom, and was impressed with the freedom the kids had to explore and ask questions. I was excited to see their excitement in learning.

Very focused students.

Great community support with dedicated teachers. Only two times in 50 years that the levy didn't pass.

Providing special curriculum for the gifted or smarter students. I like the college prep courses.

An average school district with lots of room for improvement. But, perhaps, I would say that a strength is the options available for extracurricular activities.

The Career Center is excellent. Most teachers, especially the elementary ones, do a good job. Advanced Placement courses are great.

Relatively small class sizes.

Keeping class sizes small and continuing to get high-quality teachers.

Administrators and teachers are dedicated.

The Performing Arts Department is well-organized and does well. The preschool program is excellent.

They do a decent job of letting us know what's going on. That's both at the individual school level and at the district office.

Quality and variety of classes.

34. Where could the district improve? *Responses were coded from open-ended comments, based on common words, phrases or ideas. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

| Response | Number |
|--|--------|
| Don't know | 113 |
| Manage money/budget | 76 |
| Reducing taxes | 52 |
| Listening to the public | 44 |
| Smaller class sizes | 38 |
| Focus more on academics than extracurricular activities/sports | 33 |
| Other (see below) | 29 |
| Pay teachers more | 15 |

Verbatim “other” comments

Getting the slow learners up to par.

Better use of the resources they have. Quit asking for more money.

Improving the aspects of technology, and dealing with the overcrowding.

Increase cameras for security. Some kids are out of control. Trailers should be gotten rid of.

The early start time is a burden to our family; 7:55 is one hour earlier than last year.

A lot of misinformation comes out at all levels, from individual schools to district administration.

Improve communication with parents, and get rid of some of those old people in administration.

This district is a joke. Between drugs, lack of discipline and leadership that is rudderless, it has a long way to go.

Improve the school buildings, and perhaps have tougher curriculum.

I think they could be more transparent. Stop hiding behind closed doors.



It would be nice if they could find alternative financing to help with needed projects, other than raising taxes.

Class rank is needed for college. High-achieving students should be acknowledged at the high school level.

They need to get on top of the gun violence situation. Students must feel safe when they go to school.

There is a lot that needs improving. I would start with new leadership and hiring better teachers.

Real estate taxes are too high.

Bus transportation could be more efficient.

They need to improve the inner-city schools. Students in new schools get iPads. Old school buildings are neglected, and students get overlooked.

Backing up the teachers in disciplining the students.

Replace all the central administrators. Closing the socioeconomic gap is most important. Closing the achievement gap depends on getting smaller class sizes.

Probably asking for too much money, due to over-budgeting.

Improving the achievement gap. This is much better at parochial school, where my kids go.

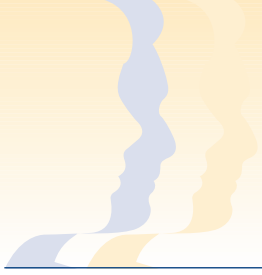
Start with less-crowded classrooms. Student body, with help from administration, could support the extracurricular activities better. Stop the three-tier bus system and get rid of trailers.

Transportation is outsourced and inefficient. Half of the troublesome issues we've had in the past 15 years have been about transportation.

Keep building facilities and recruiting good teachers.

Make sure the funds are being allocated in the most efficient means possible.

Too many to mention. Can't pick one.



The central administration could listen better to parents and not make up their minds before listening.

Get rid of the trailers and add more buildings.

Academics should be stressed and given more money.



Finding 3: When asked to pinpoint the school district factors that are most important to them, respondents overwhelmingly selected “quality teachers and staff.” In a group of responses well below this item were “up-to-date safety and security practices,” “effective management of financial resources,” “small class sizes,” and “up-to-date curriculum.”

This year, a new question set was added that asked respondents to rank order the top four items that they viewed as the most important aspects of a school district, from a list of 11 provided options.

The responses were evaluated, based on a 4-point weighted scale, with 4 points being awarded for each “most important” response, down to 1 point for each “fourth-most important” answer. The point values themselves are immaterial, except to pinpoint the importance of various factors, in relation to other factors. The intent is to provide a better reading on the total opinion of research participants.

As the chart on the following page shows, there is no doubt that “quality teachers and staff” is considered by survey respondents to be the most important factor for a school district.

In a group that is clustered together – but significantly below the top spot – are “up-to-date safety and security practices” (which was judged a strength of the district on the grading exercise), “effective management of financial resources,” “small class sizes,” and “up-to-date curriculum.”

Considering the appreciation for teachers seen on the open-ended question about strengths, it’s not surprising that it would top the list. But where this data is most instructive is in seeing just how important financial issues are – more important than facilities, visionary leadership, equivalent programming from school to school, and engagement with the community. As the district considers how it will communicate with residents about its work, knowing how important the subject of finances – and safety – is to patrons should help to inform communications going forward.

35. I'm now going to read a list of factors that others have told us are important to them, when it comes to the school district. When I finish reading the list, I'm going to ask you which one of these items is most important to you. Many of these will probably be very important to you, but I'll want to know which one is most important. Which is second-most important? Third-most? And, finally, fourth-most? List was read and rotated. Points for each "place" are listed, along with 4-point weighted scale points.

| Factor | Most important | Second-most important | Third-most important | Fourth-most important | 4-point weighted scale points |
|--|----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Quality teachers and staff | 229 | 83 | 52 | 17 | 1286 |
| Up-to-date safety and security practices | 53 | 31 | 42 | 89 | 478 |
| Effective management of financial resources | 34 | 46 | 61 | 82 | 478 |
| Small class sizes | 30 | 68 | 57 | 38 | 476 |
| Up-to-date curriculum | 17 | 29 | 94 | 51 | 394 |
| Nurturing, supportive culture in the school buildings | 8 | 37 | 24 | 5 | 196 |
| Visionary district and building-level leadership | 21 | 25 | 5 | 20 | 189 |
| Equivalent classes and programs from school to school | 0 | 38 | 10 | 16 | 150 |
| Modern school facilities, including technology for student use | 3 | 6 | 33 | 34 | 130 |
| Large variety of extracurricular activities available | 5 | 9 | 5 | 13 | 70 |
| Active engagement between the district and the community | 0 | 21 | 0 | 7 | 49 |



Finding 4: The difference in the percentage of respondents preferring printed communications versus electronic has narrowed. However, the school district remains the much-preferred source of school district news (versus the local news media).

Once again, the survey asked respondents to state their preference for printed or electronic forms of communication, and whether they would be more likely to consult a school district source or the local news media for school district news.

On the former, print is still the preference, but the gap between it and electronic forms of communication is narrowing. Specifically, 52% said they preferred print, while 46% chose electronic. In 2012, the gap was 17%; now, it is just 6%.

Of the 21 demographic and geographic subgroups, seven gave the edge to electronic (and one was tied). And while groups such as respondents 55 or older did have an 18% difference in their preference for print instead of electronic, the gap was much narrower in most of the other groups.

In terms of whether they preferred to get their school district news from the district or from the local news media, the district continues to be the dominant choice, with 62% preferring school district-provided news, versus 27% who would look to the news media for such information. These results are statistically identical to 2012, suggesting that the district's trustworthiness remains strong among typical patrons.

In fact, among the subgroups, the preference for the school district as the source of district news ranged from a low of 48% (those respondents without access to high-speed Internet) to a high of 75% (African-American respondents). Both of these were relatively small subgroups. Among the more heavily populated groups, the percentages preferring the school district tended to be in the high 50s to low 60s range.

While this data certainly should not signal the end of the need for printed communication, it does suggest the growing importance placed on electronic forms of messaging by the district. It also clearly affirms that the district is frequently looked to when school news is sought, which is an ongoing positive sign.

36. Generally speaking, do you prefer receiving information about what's going on in the school district in a printed form, such as in newsletters or stories in the newspaper, or in an electronic form, such as e-mails, e-mail newsletters and websites?

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 | Percentage/2011 | Percentage/2010 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Printed | 52% | 56% | 52% | 58% |
| Electronic | 46% | 39% | 41% | 37% |
| It depends on what I'm looking for/not always the same (not read) | 2% | 5% | 8% | 4% |
| Don't know (not read) | <1% | 0% | 0% | 1% |

37. In terms of information about what's going on in the school district, are you more likely to consult information that is provided by the district itself, or are you more likely to look to the news media to get your information?

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 | Percentage/2011 | Percentage/2010 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| School district | 62% | 65% | 58% | 61% |
| News media | 27% | 31% | 27% | 22% |
| It depends on what I'm looking for/not always the same (not read) | 11% | 3% | 14% | 17% |
| Don't know (not read) | 0% | 1% | 1% | 1% |

Cross-tabulation: Preference for printed versus electronic news, and for school district-provided news versus the news media by age, length of time living in the district, and presence of a current district student, past district student or no district student ever in the household. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and “age” will not square with “overall” score, because six respondents refused to answer this question.

| Response | Overall score | 18-34 (n=85) | 35-54 (n=158) | 55 or older (n=151) | Up to 5 years (n=53) | 5 to 15 years (n=99) | More than 15 years (n=248) | Student, yes (n=145) | Student, past (n=137) | Student, never (n=118) |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Printed | 52% | 51% | 46% | 58% | 53% | 44% | 55% | 51% | 57% | 48% |
| Electronic | 46% | 49% | 51% | 40% | 45% | 52% | 44% | 48% | 41% | 48% |
| School district | 62% | 54% | 64% | 62% | 58% | 64% | 61% | 66% | 60% | 58% |
| News media | 27% | 33% | 24% | 28% | 28% | 27% | 27% | 22% | 28% | 32% |

Cross-tabulation: Preference for printed versus electronic news, and for school district-provided news versus the news media by location of the respondent’s residence and ethnicity of respondent. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the racial and ethnic groups will not square with “overall,” because only groups with at least modest levels of participants are included below.

| Response | Overall score | W of Prov/N of B’way (n=100) | E of Prov/N of B’way (n=100) | W of Prov/S of B’way (n=100) | E of Prov/S of B’way (n=100) | African-American (n=32) | Caucasian (n=321) | Hispanic /Latino (n=39) |
|-----------------|---------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Printed | 52% | 58% | 47% | 48% | 56% | 53% | 53% | 44% |
| Electronic | 46% | 42% | 49% | 51% | 41% | 47% | 45% | 54% |
| School district | 62% | 63% | 67% | 57% | 59% | 75% | 61% | 62% |
| News media | 27% | 20% | 27% | 34% | 28% | 16% | 28% | 31% |

Cross-tabulation: Preference for printed versus electronic news, and for school district-provided news versus the news media by access to high-speed Internet (at either home or work), and by level of involvement with the school district. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group.

| Response | Overall score | Yes, high-speed access (n=371) | No, high-speed access (n=29) | Very/Somewhat involved (n=131) | Not very/Not at all involved (n=171) | Involved in the past, not now (n=98) |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Printed | 52% | 53% | 48% | 49% | 57% | 48% |
| Electronic | 46% | 46% | 41% | 50% | 40% | 49% |
| School district | 62% | 62% | 48% | 63% | 61% | 60% |
| News media | 27% | 26% | 45% | 24% | 29% | 29% |



Finding 5: Readership of *Quarterly Report* slipped somewhat, as did the perception of the publication’s appearance and the judgment of its news quality. However, the publication is still clearly valued and appreciated.

Immediately on the heels of a series of questions suggesting the growing importance of electronic communications, respondents were asked to discuss their thoughts on the district’s *Quarterly Report* publication: How often they read it, along with their view of its news quality and of its appearance.

In terms of readership, the publication saw a bit of a dip from 2012, with 43% of respondents saying they read “every issue” and 14% saying they read “every other issue.” The total of these two answer choices was 57%, as compared to 70% in 2012.

Within the cross-tabulation groups, the percentage of “regular readers” (either every issue or every other issue) ranged from 47% (African-American respondents), up to 64% (those living west of Providence and south of Broadway).

Perception of the publication’s news quality slipped modestly as well, with 79% calling it either “excellent” or “good,” as compared to 86% in 2012. While any slip is not desirable, the fact that almost four out of five respondents continued to call the publication’s news content “excellent” or “good” means that it is still quite valued.

The “look” of the publication also saw a bit of a dip, with 82% calling it “excellent” or “good,” as opposed to 94% in 2012. The same comment from above applies here: While a slip is not preferred, the score for this factor continues to be quite high.

38. Thinking now just about the school district's printed newsletter, called *Quarterly Report*, how often would you say you read it? Would you say...Choices were read to respondents.

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 | Percentage/2011 | Percentage/2010 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Every issue | 43% | 57% | 54% | 49% |
| Every other issue | 14% | 13% | 15% | 18% |
| At least once a year | 9% | 11% | 11% | 14% |
| Less than once a year | 17% | 3% | 6% | 7% |
| Never | 15% | 15% | 13% | 12% |
| Don't know (not read) | 2% | 1% | 2% | 1% |

39. How would you rate the quality and completeness of the news that you see in the *Quarterly Report* newsletter, would you say it is....Asked of the 265 respondents who answered question 38 either "every issue," "every other issue," or "at least once a year." Percentages are of these respondents, not the total respondent group of 400.

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 | Percentage/2011 | Percentage/2010 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Excellent | 24% | 27% | 19% | 28% |
| Good | 55% | 59% | 61% | 57% |
| Fair | 18% | 12% | 15% | 13% |
| Poor | 3% | 1% | 2% | 2% |
| Don't know (not read) | 0% | 1% | 3% | 1% |

40. How about the way that *Quarterly Report* looks? Would you rate it...Percentages are, again, of the 265 respondents who read *Quarterly Report* at least once a year.

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 | Percentage/2011 | Percentage/2010 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Excellent | 25% | 29% | 23% | 21% |
| Good | 57% | 65% | 64% | 72% |
| Fair | 15% | 6% | 10% | 5% |
| Poor | 2% | 0% | <1% | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | 0% | <1% | 3% | 3% |

Cross-tabulation: “Regular readers” (every issue or every other issue), “Infrequent readers” (at least once a year or less than once a year), and “Never readers” of *Quarterly Report* by age, length of time living in the district, and presence of a current district student, past district student or no district student ever in the household. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and “age” will not square with “overall” score, because six respondents refused to answer this question.

| Response | Overall score | 18-34 (n=85) | 35-54 (n=158) | 55 or older (n=151) | Up to 5 years (n=53) | 5 to 15 years (n=99) | More than 15 years (n=248) | Student, yes (n=145) | Student, past (n=137) | Student, never (n=118) |
|---|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Regular readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i> | 57% | 58% | 58% | 55% | 51% | 63% | 56% | 59% | 58% | 54% |
| Infrequent readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i> | 26% | 25% | 25% | 29% | 26% | 23% | 27% | 26% | 27% | 26% |
| Never readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i> | 15% | 16% | 16% | 12% | 19% | 12% | 15% | 14% | 12% | 18% |

Cross-tabulation: “Regular readers” (every issue or every other issue), “Infrequent readers” (at least once a year or less than once a year), and “Never readers” of *Quarterly Report* by location of the respondent’s residence and ethnicity of respondent. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the racial/ethnic groups will not square with “overall,” because only groups with at least modest levels of participation are included below.

| Response | Overall score | W of Prov/N of B’way (n=100) | E of Prov/N of B’way (n=100) | W of Prov/S of B’way (n=100) | E of Prov/S of B’way (n=100) | African-American (n=32) | Caucasian (n=321) | Hispanic /Latino (n=39) |
|---|---------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Regular readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i> | 57% | 55% | 51% | 64% | 58% | 47% | 59% | 56% |
| Infrequent readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i> | 26% | 29% | 26% | 21% | 29% | 31% | 25% | 36% |
| Never readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i> | 15% | 13% | 19% | 14% | 12% | 19% | 15% | 5% |

Cross-tabulation: “Regular readers” (every issue or every other issue), “Infrequent readers” (at least once a year or less than once a year), and “Never readers” of *Quarterly Report* by access to high-speed Internet (at either home or work) and by level of involvement with the school district.

| Response | Overall score | Yes, high-speed access (n=371) | No, high-speed access (n=29) | Very/Somewhat involved (n=131) | Not very/Not at all involved (n=171) | Involved in the past, not now (n=98) |
|---|---------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Regular readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i> | 57% | 57% | 52% | 62% | 54% | 56% |
| Infrequent readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i> | 26% | 27% | 21% | 27% | 31% | 17% |
| Never readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i> | 15% | 14% | 21% | 11% | 13% | 21% |



Finding 6: While the frequency of visits to the district’s website remained static, the scores for the ease of navigating the site saw a modest increase. Visits to individual school websites saw a slightly more notable increase, while the ease of navigating those sites remained strong.

The importance of having high-quality individual school websites shines through the data in the 2013 district survey, as the percentage gap between visitors to individual sites and visitors to the district’s site continues to grow.

Specifically, 14% said they visited the district’s website at least once every two weeks, while 32% said the same thing about individual school sites. In 2012, those scores were 15% and 25% respectively.

Not surprisingly, respondents who considered themselves “very” or “somewhat” involved in the school district, and current student families had the highest percentages of regular (at least once every two weeks) visits to individual school websites. But aside from those without Internet access and those who were “involved in the past, but who are not involved now,” percentages for regular visits trended in the high 20s and low 30s.

In terms of ease of navigation, the district site was judged “very easy” or “easy” to navigate by 91% (versus 85% in 2012), while individual school websites received the same responses from 90%, as opposed to 87% in 2012. Clearly navigation is not an issue – a fact that will grow in importance as the visit numbers continue to increase.

41. What about the Columbia Public Schools District's website? Which of the following best describes how often you visit it? *Choices were read to respondents.*

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 | Percentage/2011 | Percentage/2010 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| At least once a week | 11% | 6% | 11% | 12% |
| At least once every two weeks | 3% | 9% | 12% | 9% |
| At least once a month | 13% | 10% | 6% | 11% |
| Less than once a month | 32% | 22% | 20% | 23% |
| I've never visited the website | 42% | 53% | 52% | 47% |

42. Thinking about the last time you visited the Columbia Public School District's website, how would you rate how easy it was to navigate and find what you were looking for? *Asked only of the 105 respondents who answered question 41 either "at least once a week," "at least once every two weeks," or "at least once a month." Percentages are of these respondents, not the total respondent group of 400.*

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 | Percentage/2011 | Percentage/2010 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Very easy | 39% | 43% | 38% | 41% |
| Easy | 52% | 42% | 59% | 52% |
| Difficult | 9% | 14% | 4% | 6% |
| Very difficult | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | 0% | 1% | 0% | 2% |

43. What about the websites for individual schools in the Columbia Public Schools? Which of the following best describes how often you visit one or more of them? *Choices were read to respondents.*

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 | Percentage/2011 | Percentage/2010 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| At least once a week | 22% | 14% | 16% | 13% |
| At least once every two weeks | 10% | 11% | 10% | 9% |
| At least once a month | 15% | 12% | 8% | 10% |
| Less than once a month | 7% | 3% | 11% | 22% |
| I've never visited the website | 47% | 61% | 55% | 47% |

44. Thinking about the last time you visited an individual school website, how would you rate how easy it was to navigate and find what you were looking for? If you've visited more than one recently, please tell me, generally, how easy they all are to navigate. Asked only of the 188 respondents who answered question 43 either "at least once a week," "at least once every two weeks," or "at least once a month." Percentages are of these respondents, not the total respondent group of 400.

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 | Percentage/2011 | Percentage/2010 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Very easy | 54% | 24% | 39% | 24% |
| Easy | 36% | 63% | 52% | 74% |
| Difficult | 10% | 12% | 9% | 2% |
| Very difficult | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Don't know (not read) | 0% | 0% | 0% | 1% |

Cross-tabulation: “Regular visitors” (at least once a week or at least once every two weeks), “Infrequent visitors” (at least once a month or less than once a month), and “Never visitors” to the Columbia Public Schools website and individual schools’ websites by age, length of time living in the district, and presence of a current district student, past district student or no district student ever in the household. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and “age” will not square with “overall” score, because two respondents refused to answer this question.

| Response | Overall score | 18-34 (n=85) | 35-54 (n=158) | 55 or older (n=151) | Up to 5 years (n=53) | 5 to 15 years (n=99) | More than 15 years (n=248) | Student, yes (n=145) | Student, past (n=137) | Student, never (n=118) |
|--|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Regular visitors/CPS website | 14% | 11% | 13% | 13% | 9% | 14% | 13% | 19% | 10% | 8% |
| Infrequent visitors/CPS website | 45% | 46% | 49% | 42% | 42% | 52% | 44% | 46% | 44% | 47% |
| Never visitors/CPS website | 42% | 44% | 38% | 44% | 49% | 34% | 43% | 34% | 46% | 45% |
| Regular visitors/individual school websites | 32% | 31% | 35% | 31% | 26% | 41% | 30% | 57% | 23% | 14% |
| Infrequent visitors/individual school websites | 22% | 20% | 22% | 21% | 36% | 17% | 19% | 18% | 20% | 26% |
| Never visitors/individual school websites | 47% | 49% | 44% | 48% | 38% | 41% | 50% | 26% | 57% | 60% |

Cross-tabulation: “Regular visitors” (at least once a week or at least once every two weeks), “Infrequent visitors” (at least once a month or less than once a month), and “Never visitors” to the Columbia Public Schools website and individual schools’ websites by location of the respondent’s residence and ethnicity of respondent. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the racial/ethnic groups will not square with “overall,” because only groups with at least modest levels of participation are included below.

| Response | Overall score | W of Prov/N of B’way (n=100) | | | | E of Prov/N of B’way (n=100) | | | | W of Prov/S of B’way (n=100) | | | | E of Prov/S of B’way (n=100) | | | | African-American (n=32) | | | Caucasian (n=321) | | | Hispanic /Latino (n=39) | | |
|--|---------------|------------------------------|--|--|--|------------------------------|--|--|--|------------------------------|--|--|--|------------------------------|--|--|--|-------------------------|--|--|-------------------|--|--|-------------------------|--|--|
| | | 13% | | | | 16% | | | | 13% | | | | 10% | | | | 25% | | | 12% | | | 13% | | |
| | | 49% | | | | 43% | | | | 46% | | | | 44% | | | | 47% | | | 45% | | | 51% | | |
| | | 38% | | | | 41% | | | | 41% | | | | 46% | | | | 28% | | | 44% | | | 36% | | |
| Regular visitors/CPS website | 14% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Infrequent visitors/CPS website | 45% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Never visitors/CPS website | 42% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regular visitors/individual school websites | 32% | 28% | | | | 37% | | | | 31% | | | | 34% | | | | 31% | | | 33% | | | 28% | | |
| Infrequent visitors/individual school websites | 22% | 25% | | | | 15% | | | | 23% | | | | 21% | | | | 19% | | | 21% | | | 31% | | |
| Never visitors/individual school websites | 47% | 47% | | | | 48% | | | | 46% | | | | 45% | | | | 50% | | | 47% | | | 41% | | |

Cross-tabulation: “Regular visitors” (at least once a week or at least once every two weeks), “Infrequent visitors” (at least once a month or less than once a month), and “Never visitors” to the Columbia Public Schools website and individual schools’ websites by access to high-speed Internet (at either home or work) and by level of involvement with the school district.

| Response | Overall score | Yes, high-speed access (n=371) | No, high-speed access (n=29) | Very/Somewhat involved (n=131) | Not very/Not at all involved (n=171) | Involved in the past, not now (n=98) |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Regular visitors/CPS website | 14% | 14% | 0% | 20% | 9% | 10% |
| Infrequent visitors/CPS website | 45% | 47% | 21% | 45% | 46% | 45% |
| Never visitors/CPS website | 42% | 39% | 79% | 35% | 44% | 45% |
| Regular visitors/individual school websites | 32% | 35% | 0% | 60% | 23% | 11% |
| Infrequent visitors/individual school websites | 22% | 22% | 7% | 15% | 25% | 22% |
| Never visitors/individual school websites | 47% | 43% | 93% | 24% | 52% | 66% |



Finding 7: Columbia Public Schools Television saw no meaningful positive movement in terms of viewership, as only 9% said they watched the network at least once every two weeks, which is statistically identical to the 11% who said the same thing in 2012.

School district-based television networks continue to struggle to find a dedicated audience, and the results from the questions about Columbia Public Schools Television show that the network is no exception.

Just 9% said they watched the channel at least once every two weeks, which reflects no statistical change from the 11% in 2012. The numbers have moved only slightly since this survey process was started: 7% in 2010, 7% in 2011, 11% in 2012 and 9% in 2013.

The highest percentage of such “regular viewers” were those who had lived in the district up to five years, and those who had lived in the district more than five years up to 15 years (15% each), those ages 18 to 34 (11%), current student families, “never” student families, those who considered themselves either “very” or “somewhat” involved, and those who were involved in the past, but who are not now (10% each).

Of the 21 subgroups, 15 had at least 50% of their members who said they had never watched the newtwork, further affirming the uphill climb to get attention.

This section closed by asking the 59 respondents who watched the network at least once a month if there were any types of programming that they would like to see on the station. The most prominent answers were given by the 19 respondents who said they would like information about security, while 11 participants wanted details on the budget.

45. How often do you watch Columbia Public Schools Television, either on cable or on the district's website? Choices were read to respondents.

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 | Percentage/2011 | Percentage/2010 |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Every day | 0% | 2% | <1% | 1% |
| A few times a week | 3% | 5% | 1% | 1% |
| At least once a week | 1% | 3% | 2% | 3% |
| At least once every two weeks | 5% | 1% | 4% | 2% |
| At least once a month | 6% | 6% | 2% | 10% |
| Less than once a month | 33% | 24% | 29% | 28% |
| I've never watched | 52% | 59% | 61% | 53% |
| Don't know (not read) | 1% | 1% | 2% | 4% |

Cross-tabulation: “Regular viewers” (every day, up to at least once every two weeks), “Infrequent viewers” (at least once a month or less than once a month), and “Never viewers” of the Columbia Public Schools Television by age, length of time living in the district, and presence of a current district student, past district student or no district student ever in the household.
Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and “age” will not square with “overall” score, because two respondents refused to answer this question.

| Response | Overall score | 18-34 (n=85) | 35-54 (n=158) | 55 or older (n=151) | Up to 5 years (n=53) | 5 to 15 years (n=99) | More than 15 years (n=248) | Student, yes (n=145) | Student, past (n=137) | Student, never (n=118) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Regular viewers/CPS Television | 9% | 11% | 9% | 7% | 15% | 15% | 5% | 10% | 7% | 10% |
| Infrequent viewers/CPS Television | 39% | 32% | 44% | 36% | 36% | 40% | 38% | 44% | 34% | 36% |
| Never viewers/CPS Television | 52% | 58% | 45% | 56% | 47% | 43% | 56% | 45% | 58% | 53% |

Cross-tabulation: “Regular viewers” (every day, up to at least once every two weeks), “Infrequent viewers” (at least once a month or less than once a month), and “Never viewers” of the Columbia Public Schools Television by location of the respondent’s residence and ethnicity of respondent. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the racial/ethnic groups will not square with “overall,” because only groups with at least modest levels of participants are included below.

| Response | Overall score | W of Prov/N of B-way (n=100) | E of Prov/N of B-way (n=100) | W of Prov/S of B-way (n=100) | E of Prov/S of B-way (n=100) | African-American (n=32) | Caucasian (n=321) | Hispanic /Latino (n=39) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Regular viewers/CPS Television | 9% | 9% | 7% | 9% | 9% | 6% | 9% | 5% |
| Infrequent viewers/CPS Television | 39% | 38% | 40% | 36% | 40% | 44% | 38% | 44% |
| Never viewers/CPS Television | 52% | 50% | 53% | 54% | 49% | 50% | 52% | 51% |

Cross-tabulation: “Regular viewers” (every day, up to at least once every two weeks), “Infrequent viewers” (at least once a month or less than once a month), and “Never viewers” of the Columbia Public Schools Television by access to high-speed Internet (at either home or work) and by level of involvement with the school district. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group.

| Response | Overall score | Yes, high-speed access (n=371) | No, high-speed access (n=29) | Very/Somewhat involved (n=131) | Not very/Not at all involved (n=171) | Involved in the past, not now (n=98) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Regular viewers/CPS Television | 9% | 9% | 3% | 10% | 8% | 10% |
| Infrequent viewers/CPS Television | 39% | 39% | 28% | 42% | 34% | 34% |
| Never viewers/CPS Television | 52% | 50% | 69% | 48% | 53% | 53% |

46. When do you most often watch? Is it in the morning, afternoon or evening? *Asked only of the 59 respondents who answered question 45 either “every day,” “a few times a week,” “at least once a week,” “at least once every two weeks,” or “at least once a month.” Percentages are of these respondents, not the total respondent group of 400.*

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 | Percentage/2011 |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Morning | 29% | 17% | 11% |
| Afternoon | 8% | 3% | 37% |
| Evening | 47% | 46% | 29% |
| It varies (not read) | 15% | 33% | 23% |

47. In terms of providing you information about the activities of the school district, how would you rate the quality of Columbia Public Schools Television? *Percentages are, again, of the 59 respondents who watch Columbia Public Schools Television at least once a month.*

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 | Percentage/2011 |
|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Excellent | 36% | 27% | 3% |
| Good | 61% | 63% | 80% |
| Fair | 3% | 10% | 17% |
| Poor | 0% | 0% | 0% |



48. What additional types of programming about the school district would you like to see on Columbia Public Schools Television? *Asked only of the 59 respondents who watch Columbia Public Schools Television at least once a month. Responses below were coded from open-ended comments, based on common words, phrases or ideas. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

| Response | Number |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Don't know | 24 |
| Information regarding security | 19 |
| Details on the budget | 11 |
| Other (see below) | 5 |

Verbatim “other” comments

Perhaps some features on teachers.

Concerts and plays.

I would like to see debate tournaments.

Construction updates.

Shows and plays.



Finding 8: Facebook and Twitter continue to trend upward, in terms of typical patrons utilizing these sources to stay in touch with school district news.

While the growth was not dramatic, it's clear that Facebook and Twitter are slowly gathering steam as a source of district news.

Ten percent of respondents said they had “liked” Facebook pages associated with individual schools or various school-related clubs or organizations. While the growth from the score of 5% in 2012 was not statistically significant, the trend is definitely up.

In terms of Twitter, 8% said that they follow feeds from individual schools or various school-related clubs or organization. This 6% growth from last year is statistically significant.

Again, while the growth was not eye-popping, it does reinforce how important it will be to continue to monitor the quality of these mediums to make certain that as their audiences grow, they are seeing content that is in keeping with the expectations of the district.

49. Have you clicked “like” on Facebook pages associated with individual schools in the district or various school-related clubs or organizations?

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Yes | 10% | 5% |
| No | 91% | 95% |

50. Do you currently “follow” Twitter feeds associated with individual schools in the district or various school-related clubs or organizations?

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Yes | 8% | 2% |
| No | 92% | 98% |



Finding 9: The topic of district finances makes another appearance in the question about the subjects that the respondents would like to hear more about from the district, replacing “student and teacher success stories” as the subject generating the most interest. Interest in many of the other topics remained consistent with the 2012 results.

While the percentage change was nominal, the fact that “information on the district’s finances and budget” was the topic that generated the greatest level of interest among survey participants (up from second in 2012) was in line with the interest in financial topics expressed earlier in this survey.

Specifically, 77% of the survey respondents said they would be interested in hearing more about such a topic, followed by “student and teacher success stories” at 72%. The other topics generating interest from at least 50% of the survey participants were the following:

- Information on curriculum and curriculum changes – 60%
- Updates on construction and renovation projects – 59%
- News about programs that maintain and enforce discipline in schools – 56%
- News about efforts to close the achievement gap – 53%

Looking back over the four years that this study has been conducted, the subject of “finances and budget” has always been a popular one, while “student and teacher success stories” – though remaining strong – has dropped each year. In 2010, it was clearly the favorite, at 88%. Today, it is 72%.

On the other hand, there was limited interest in the “achievement gap” story in 2010 and 2011. Beginning in 2012, interest topped 50%, where it remains today.

The other factors have had modest increases and decreases over the four years, but, on average, have seen similar scores for each year of that time period.

Interestingly, there is also little variation in the level of interest in the topics among the different subgroups on this survey. While there were some instances with modest switches of place (moving up or down one spot), the general pattern among subgroups with notable numbers of members suggests that the areas of interest overall are not dramatically impacted by an individual’s demographic characteristics, or the location of his or her residence.

51. The school district provides a lot of information on a variety of topics. But we want to make certain we are covering what local citizens want to know about. As such, can you tell me which of the following topics you, personally, are interested in hearing more about from the school district on a regular basis? If you'd really be interested in knowing more on this topic, please say, "yes." If you'd only be a little interested – or you wouldn't be interested at all – please say, "no." List was read to respondents. Percentages will add to more than 100%, because respondents were free to select more than one choice.

| Response | Percentage/2013 | Percentage/2012 | Percentage/2011 | Percentage/2010 |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Information on the district's finances and budget | 77% | 74% | 81% | 74% |
| Student and teacher success stories | 72% | 79% | 85% | 88% |
| Information on curriculum and curriculum changes | 60% | 69% | 52% | 58% |
| Updates on construction and renovation projects | 59% | 57% | 53% | 53% |
| News about programs that maintain and enforce discipline in schools | 56% | 60% | 50% | 61% |
| News about efforts to close the achievement gap | 53% | 52% | 34% | 41% |
| School Board news | 45% | 41% | 47% | 46% |
| News about extracurricular activities | 41% | 38% | 35% | 40% |
| School lunch and nutrition news | 28% | 23% | 21% | 32% |
| Transportation news | 24% | 27% | 18% | 29% |
| None of these (not read) | 1% | 2% | 1% | 2% |
| Don't know (not read) | 0% | 0% | 0% | <1% |



52. Are there other topics that you would be interested in hearing more about from the district that I did not mention? *Of the 400 respondents, 366 said, either “No,” “Don’t know” or “Nothing.” An additional 26 suggested “Safety/security updates.” The other eight verbatim responses are displayed below.*

How problems like bullying are being handled at schools.

More overview of programs. The *Quarterly Report* is more of a cheerleading piece that covers successes, but plays down, or does not cover at all, challenges like how to stop bullying, etc.

Areas where funding is being sought, other than tax increases.

More information on the mentoring program.

My kids go to parochial school, so I don’t really follow the district much.

Whether the arts will continue.

Cover all schools equally.

School demographics for various socioeconomic levels and class sizes.

Cross-tabulation: Interest level in various story topics by age, length of time living in the district, and presence of a current district student, past district student or no district student ever in the household. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and “age” will not square with “overall” score, because six respondents refused to answer this question.

| Story topic | Overall score | 18-34 (n=85) | 35-54 (n=158) | 55 or older (n=151) | Up to 5 years (n=53) | 5 to 15 years (n=99) | More than 15 years (n=248) | Student, yes (n=145) | Student, past (n=137) | Student, never (n=118) |
|---|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Information on the district’s finances and budget | 77% | 81% | 74% | 77% | 68% | 78% | 78% | 78% | 80% | 72% |
| Student and teacher success stories | 72% | 74% | 72% | 72% | 70% | 79% | 70% | 75% | 71% | 70% |
| Information on curriculum and curriculum changes | 60% | 62% | 58% | 62% | 57% | 62% | 60% | 54% | 61% | 66% |
| Updates on construction and renovation projects | 59% | 58% | 61% | 56% | 51% | 60% | 60% | 56% | 59% | 61% |
| News about programs that maintain and enforce discipline in schools | 56% | 45% | 59% | 58% | 53% | 64% | 54% | 57% | 59% | 52% |
| News about efforts to close the achievement gap | 53% | 46% | 49% | 62% | 49% | 51% | 55% | 46% | 62% | 52% |
| School Board news | 45% | 47% | 46% | 42% | 45% | 52% | 42% | 48% | 42% | 45% |
| News about extracurricular activities | 41% | 47% | 37% | 43% | 40% | 36% | 43% | 41% | 41% | 41% |
| School lunch and nutrition news | 28% | 25% | 30% | 28% | 26% | 35% | 26% | 48% | 20% | 13% |
| Transportation news | 24% | 20% | 22% | 28% | 8% | 25% | 27% | 24% | 28% | 19% |

Cross-tabulation: Interest level in various story topics by location of the respondent's residence and ethnicity of respondent. Note: "n" equals the number of respondents in each group, and the racial/ethnic groups will not square with "overall," because only groups with at least modest levels of participants are included below.

| Story topic | Overall score | W of Prov/N of B'way (n=100) | E of Prov/N of B'way (n=100) | W of Prov/S of B'way (n=100) | E of Prov/S of B'way (n=100) | African-American (n=32) | Caucasian (n=321) | Hispanic /Latino (n=39) |
|---|---------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Information on the district's finances and budget | 77% | 80% | 79% | 68% | 80% | 75% | 78% | 77% |
| Student and teacher success stories | 72% | 74% | 69% | 74% | 72% | 75% | 73% | 74% |
| Information on curriculum and curriculum changes | 60% | 61% | 59% | 59% | 62% | 47% | 63% | 54% |
| Updates on construction and renovation projects | 59% | 59% | 55% | 68% | 52% | 56% | 59% | 59% |
| News about programs that maintain and enforce discipline in schools | 56% | 52% | 54% | 61% | 57% | 50% | 57% | 56% |
| News about efforts to close the achievement gap | 53% | 57% | 48% | 53% | 54% | 56% | 55% | 38% |
| School Board news | 45% | 47% | 48% | 47% | 37% | 41% | 47% | 33% |
| News about extracurricular activities | 41% | 40% | 45% | 39% | 39% | 56% | 40% | 38% |
| School lunch and nutrition news | 28% | 24% | 34% | 25% | 30% | 28% | 28% | 31% |
| Transportation news | 24% | 24% | 24% | 26% | 21% | 31% | 24% | 21% |

Cross-tabulation: Interest level in various story topics by access to high-speed Internet (at either home or work) and by level of involvement with the school district. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group.

| Story topic | Overall score | Yes, high-speed access (n=371) | No, high-speed access (n=29) | Very/Somewhat involved (n=131) | Not very/Not at all involved (n=171) | Involved in the past, not now (n=98) |
|---|---------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Information on the district's finances and budget | 77% | 77% | 72% | 74% | 77% | 79% |
| Student and teacher success stories | 72% | 72% | 79% | 76% | 72% | 67% |
| Information on curriculum and curriculum changes | 60% | 61% | 55% | 62% | 58% | 62% |
| Updates on construction and renovation projects | 59% | 58% | 59% | 63% | 57% | 56% |
| News about programs that maintain and enforce discipline in schools | 56% | 56% | 62% | 55% | 58% | 54% |
| News about efforts to close the achievement gap | 53% | 52% | 62% | 52% | 56% | 50% |
| School Board news | 45% | 45% | 41% | 47% | 42% | 46% |
| News about extracurricular activities | 41% | 41% | 38% | 34% | 47% | 22% |
| School lunch and nutrition news | 28% | 30% | 0% | 48% | 21% | 14% |
| Transportation news | 24% | 23% | 28% | 29% | 22% | 20% |



Finding 10: Eight different sources are consulted “frequently” for school district news by at least 25% of the survey population – a decrease of one from the 2012 study (although it is important to note than one factor scored 24% and another factor scored 23% this year, suggesting that interest remains very high). Local television and radio stations – which saw dramatic increases from 2011 to 2012 – dropped off just as dramatically this year, while *Key News* saw a notable increase.

The final main section of the survey presented respondents with 24 different potential sources of district news, asking them which ones they consulted “frequently” for school information beyond weather-related closing updates.

Eight different sources were identified by at least 25% of the survey participants. While this is down from nine sources in 2012, it is important to point out that “The School Board, either in person or in the media” (24%) and “Local radio stations” (23%) were within striking distance of the mark that is generally considered the dividing line between sources that merit focused attention by the school district, and those that may be less important.

The sources that achieved a score of 25% or better were:

- Friends and neighbors – 86%
- The print edition of *The Columbia Tribune* newspaper – 58%
- Local television stations – 42%
- Students who attend school in the district – 39%
- Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail – 37%
- The school district’s annual report, called *The Yearbook* – 35%
- Individual school newsletters – 27%
- Principals at district schools – 26%

“Principals” was new to the list this year (moving up from 24% in 2012), while “The School Board, either in person or in the media” and “Local radio stations” dropped off the list.

Interestingly, after a brief, but dramatic, increase for “Local radio stations” and “Local television stations” from 2011 to 2012, both experienced significant decreases this year. Television stations are now in a range that is similar to their scores for 2011 and 2010, while the scores for radio stations appear to bounce around quite a bit from year to year.

The most encouraging data is that *Key News* increased from 11% to 20%, suggesting that this e-newsletter is finding a following – which is not terribly surprising, given the growing appreciation for electronically delivered information.

53. In addition to the ones that we've already discussed, people get their news about the school district from a variety of other sources. I'm going to read a short list of some of those sources. As I read this list, please say, "yes," if you also consult this source frequently for school district news – aside from news about weather-related school closings. If you consult the source only every so often – or you don't consult it at all for school news – just say, "no." Choices were read to the respondents and rotated. Percentages will total to more than 100%, because respondents were free to select more than one information source.

| Response | Percentage/ 2013 | Percentage/ 2012 | Percentage/ 2011 | Percentage/ 2010 |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Friends and neighbors | 86% | 87% | 86% | 89% |
| The print edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i> newspaper | 58% | 61% | 54% | 61% |
| Local television stations | 42% | 68% | 38% | 41% |
| Students who attend school in the district | 39% | 42% | 32% | 33% |
| Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail | 37% | 39% | 33% | 32% |
| The school district's annual report, called <i>The Yearbook</i> | 35% | 32% | 44% | 43% |
| Individual school newsletters | 27% | 26% | 35% | 31% |
| Principals at district schools | 26% | 24% | 18% | 24% |
| The School Board, either in person or in the media | 24% | 27% | 20% | 20% |
| Local radio stations | 23% | 40% | 17% | 32% |
| The district's Central Office administration, either in person or via e-mail | 21% | 21% | 18% | 19% |
| The school district's electronic newsletter, called <i>Key News</i> | 20% | 11% | 16% | 9% |
| <i>Inside Columbia</i> magazine | 16% | 21% | 18% | 25% |
| The district's text message alert system, called CPS Alert | 15% | 9% | 12% | 4% |
| Phone calls from the district's automated message system | 14% | 15% | 8% | 18% |
| <i>Columbia Home</i> magazine (was <i>Columbia Home & Lifestyle</i> magazine in 2010) | 12% | 8% | 10% | 7% |
| Various parent organizations at the schools | 11% | 14% | 15% | 17% |
| The print edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i> newspaper | 10% | 12% | 9% | 14% |
| The online edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i> | 9% | 14% | 12% | 18% |
| Social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, or blog sites | 9% | 6% | 4% | 2% |
| The Partners in Education program | 8% | 5% | 4% | 3% |
| <i>The Columbia Business Times</i> | 7% | 10% | 11% | 16% |
| After-school clubs, such as Boys and Girls Club, and Adventure Club | 6% | 2% | 2% | 4% |
| The online edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i> | 2% | 3% | 6% | 8% |



Finding 11: “Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail” retained its position as the source that survey participants said they would consult “first” for news and information about the Columbia Public Schools. “Friends and neighbors” once again came in second, followed by “students who attend school in the district,” “the print edition of *The Columbia Tribune* newspaper,” and “the school district’s website, or websites from individual schools.”

Having now listed the sources they “frequently” consult for school district news, respondents were asked a simple question: Which one do you consult first?

While there has been some modest movement (up or down one or two places) since this survey began in 2010, there is also a consistency in terms of the sources that routinely appear at or near the top.

Specifically, the top two sources from 2012 were also the top two sources this year:

- Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail – 19%
- Friends and neighbors – 18%

Just below that – but still at 10% or higher – were:

- Students who attend school in the district – 15%
- The print edition of *The Columbia Tribune* newspaper – 11%
- The school district’s website, or websites from individual schools – 10%

The biggest increase in any score was 3% (which is not statistically significant) for “friends and neighbors,” “students who attend school in the district,” and “the school district’s website, or websites from individual schools.” The biggest decline – 7%, which is statistically significant – was for “local television stations.”

Comparing the preference for district-related sources, informal sources and the news media unearths two very interesting pieces of data.

First, the distance between district-related sources and the news media has grown. In 2012, the gap was 10%. This year, it is 31%.

Second, informal sources have now supplanted the news media as the second-most preferred “first” source for district news, reinforcing the growing importance of social media and other electronic forms of communication.



Specifically, the breakdown is as follows (the percentages will add to more than 100%, due to rounding of multiple numbers on a long list):

- District-related sources: 49%
- Informal sources (friends and neighbors, students in the district, and social media): 36%
- News media: 18%

In terms of the “form” of the source that is consulted first, the preference for “human” sources remains strong (again, percentages will add to more than 100%, due to multiple instances of rounding):

- All “human” sources – 58%
- All electronic sources – 23%
- All print sources – 22%

What all this data seems to suggest is that while the district remains a highly trusted resource, its news is also the subject of much conversation in the community. Making certain that those who are sought out to discuss the district’s news are well-informed (and can, therefore, pass along accurate information) continues to grow in importance.

54. Of all of the news sources we've discussed, which one do you consult first for news and information about the Columbia Public Schools? Only those sources with at least one person selecting it during the past four years are shown.

| Response | Percentage/ 2013 | Percentage/ 2012 | Percentage/ 2011 | Percentage/ 2010 |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail | 19% | 18% | 17% | 13% |
| Friends and neighbors | 18% | 15% | 14% | 18% |
| Students who attend school in the district | 15% | 12% | 6% | 8% |
| The print edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i> newspaper | 11% | 14% | 16% | 13% |
| The school district's website, or websites from individual schools | 10% | 7% | 6% | 5% |
| Individual school newsletters | 7% | 6% | 11% | 11% |
| Local television stations | 4% | 11% | 4% | 9% |
| The printed newsletter from the district, called <i>Quarterly Report</i> | 3% | 3% | 8% | 3% |
| Social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, or blog sites | 3% | 2% | 0% | 0% |
| Principals at district schools | 2% | 1% | 2% | 2% |
| The district's Central Office administration, either in person or in the media | 2% | 0% | <1% | 1% |
| The district's electronic newsletter, called <i>Key News</i> | 2% | 3% | 5% | 1% |
| The online edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i> | 1% | 3% | 2% | 4% |
| Local radio stations | 1% | 2% | 3% | 3% |
| The district's text message alert system, called CPS Alert | 1% | 1% | 0% | 0% |
| The School Board, either in person or in the media | 1% | <1% | 1% | 3% |
| Phone calls from the district's automated messaging system | 1% | 0% | 2% | <1% |
| Various parent organizations at the schools | 1% | 0% | 1% | 1% |
| The print edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i> newspaper | <1% | 2% | 1% | 3% |
| <i>Inside Columbia</i> magazine | <1% | <1% | 1% | 1% |
| Columbia Public Schools Television station | 0% | 2% | 1% | 1% |
| The school district's annual report, called <i>The Yearbook</i> | 0% | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| The online edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i> | 0% | 0% | <1% | <1% |



Finding 12: Survey participants included mostly long-term residents, a high percentage of those who were Caucasian, and 145 current student families, 137 past student families (meaning all the students had graduated), and 118 “never” student families.

The demographic questions presented at the end of the survey provide a glimpse into the makeup of survey participants. These questions revealed that the survey group included:

- 63% who had lived in the district more than 15 years, along with 25% who had lived there more than 5 years up to 15 years.
- 57% who were between the ages of 25 and 54.
- One-third (33%) who said they were either “very involved” or “somewhat involved” with volunteer opportunities associated with the district, and 25% who said they had been involved in the past, but were not now.
- Only 7% who did not have access to high-speed Internet service, either at home, at work or both.
- 145 current student families (a notable increase versus 2012), 137 past student families and 118 “never” student families.
- 80% who identified themselves as Caucasian, 10% who identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino, and 8% who identified themselves as African-American, which is in line with 2010 Census data for the racial/ethnic diversity in Columbia.

My last few questions will help us divide our interviews into groups.

55. How long have you, yourself, lived within the boundaries of the Columbia Public Schools? Is it...*Choices were read to respondents.*

| Response | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Less than 2 years | 4% |
| 2 years to 5 years | 10% |
| More than 5 years to 10 years | 11% |
| More than 10 years to 15 years | 14% |
| More than 15 years | 50% |
| I’ve lived here all my life | 13% |



56. In what age group are you? Is it...*Choices were read to respondents.*

| Response | Percentage |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 18 to 24 | 5% |
| 25 to 34 | 17% |
| 35 to 44 | 21% |
| 45 to 54 | 19% |
| 55 to 64 | 23% |
| 65 or older | 15% |
| Refused (not read) | 2% |

57. How involved would you say you are with volunteer opportunities associated with the Columbia Public Schools? Would you say you are...*Choices were read to respondents.*

| Response | Percentage |
|---|-------------------|
| Very involved | 13% |
| Somewhat involved | 20% |
| Not very involved | 9% |
| Not at all involved | 34% |
| I was involved in the past, but I am no longer involved | 25% |

58. Do you have high-speed Internet access at home, at work, both or neither?

| Response | Percentage |
|------------------|-------------------|
| At home and work | 35% |
| At home only | 3% |
| At work only | 54% |
| Neither | 7% |

59. Are you, or is anyone in your immediate household, employed by the Columbia Public Schools?

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Yes | 1% |
| No | 99% |



60. In what capacity is this person employed? Is it...*Asked only of the four respondents who answered “yes” on question 59. General job titles were read, and respondents were free to add others to the list. Only those with at least one mention displayed below. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed.*

| Response | Number |
|--------------------|--------|
| Classroom teacher | 2 |
| Food service staff | 1 |
| Secretarial staff | 1 |

61. Do you have any children or grandchildren who attend school in the Columbia Public Schools right now? *Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

| Response | Number |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Yes, children | 142 |
| Yes, children and grandchildren | 3 |
| Yes, grandchildren | 47 |
| No | 208 |

62. Do you have any children or grandchildren who previously were students in the district, but who have graduated? *Asked only of the 255 respondents who did not say either “yes, children” or “yes, children and grandchildren” on question 61. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

| Response | Number |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Yes, children | 126 |
| Yes, children and grandchildren | 11 |
| Yes, grandchildren | 1 |
| No | 117 |



63. And, finally, which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic group? Is it...*Choices were read to respondents.*

| Response | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Caucasian, or white | 80% |
| African-American, or black | 8% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 10% |
| Asian | 1% |
| Refused (not read) | 1% |

64. RECORD GENDER

| Response | Percentage |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Female | 57% |
| Male | 43% |



Summary

The October/November 2013 survey of 400 randomly selected, head-of-household, registered voter patrons in the Columbia Public Schools suggests the presence of a population that continues to hold the district in high regard, and that is going through some modest changes in how it chooses to interact with CPS.

Specifically:

- The number of factors being graded at a “B” or higher saw a notable decline. Even so, most of those that were below a “B” were within striking distance of that mark.
- The areas that fell below a “B” were mostly the more nebulous district/patron relationship factors. Whether this modest slippage is due to a lack of attention to these areas by the district or to the increasing busyness of patrons is impossible to tell from the data. However, the growth in the preference for electronic communications would tend to suggest that the district may be getting less *detailed* attention from patrons than it has in the past.
- The district’s curriculum, its teachers, and its parental and community support all continued to receive positive reviews from survey participants. Those with a concern focused, once again, on money matters – such as budget management and a desire to see taxes reduced. Such comments are not unique to Columbia, as comments about funding have been seen frequently on such research in districts of all shapes and sizes for the past several years.
- When asked to identify what is most important to them, in terms of their school district, respondents overwhelmingly chose “quality teachers and staff.” In a group that was notably below this top item were “up-to-date safety and security practices” (also a common concern among school district patrons today), “effective management of financial resources,” “small class sizes” and “up-to-date curriculum.”
- The gap between a preference for print versus electronic communications narrowed, but the school district continues to be the choice for school news (versus the news media).
- *Quarterly Report* readership slipped, as did the perception of its news content and its appearance, but the scores for the publication were still quite strong.
- The higher number of current student families was evident on the question about website visits, as the school websites saw a notable increase in visit frequency, while the district’s site remained statistically identical to last year. The best news of all: The scores for ease of navigation remained strong, which is important as more visitors travel to these various sites.
- Columbia Public Schools Television continues to be a medium in search of an audience, as viewership remained low and flat. However, engagement with district-affiliated Facebook pages and Twitter feeds continued to grow.



- The interest in financial matters was seen in the question about which types of news respondents would be most interested in hearing more about from the district, as “information on the district’s finances and budget” moved ahead of “student and teacher success stories.”
- The number of potential sources of district news consulted “frequently” by at least 25% of the survey participants slipped by one from 2012 (down to eight), with “friends and neighbors” and the print edition of *The Columbia Tribune* still occupying the top two spots. Local television stations and local radio stations dropped markedly, however.
- In terms of the sources that respondents would consult first, “Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail” was number one, followed by “friends and neighbors.” In all, five sources were named as the respondents’ “first source” by at least 10%, clearly separating these outlets from the rest of the list.

In reviewing this large amount of data, the following appear to be the key findings:

- **Building meaningful district/patron relationships is an ongoing challenge.**

The signs of this challenge are seen throughout the data.

There was a modest dip in the grades for a host of district/patron relationship factors: No alarming drops in any individual score, just a pattern that suggests more limited connection on the more difficult-to-judge performance areas.

The preference for electronic communications continues to grow, as there was an increase in the number of visits to school websites, and Twitter and Facebook connections continue to increase. At the same time, the readership of *Quarterly Report* saw a modest decline.

Clearly, more patrons are focused on trying to grasp what they need to know now, rather than seeking the depth that they might have in the past. What this suggests is that looking for ways to increase the number of exposures in the mediums that are growing in preference – all the while staying true to the brevity that leads to successful communication in these formats – may make a stronger connection with those who seem to be harder to reach with details.

- **The areas of judgment of school district quality paint a clear picture of what patrons believe is important and, in turn, what the district should emphasize in its communications.**

It comes as no surprise that “quality teachers and staff” was the factor considered most important by district patrons. It is the next group, however, that is particularly instructive in terms of what area residents are also interested in hearing more about.



“Safety and security” is a hot topic, and even though the district scored well on this factor in the grading exercise, patrons clearly want regular reassurance. “Effective management of financial resources” is also a popular subject and seems to be growing among CPS patrons.

Patrons don’t get to the actual classroom core components (again, besides wanting quality teachers and staff, which is the common number one answer on an exercise like this) until items four and five, “small class sizes” and “up-to-date curriculum.”

All of this data – plus the fact that “financial information” topped the list of information requests from participants – says that patrons seem to be comfortable with what is taking place in the classroom, but want more information on other aspects of district operations.

This is not to suggest that the district should abandon the dissemination of information about its quality educational “product.” Rather, it appears that a way to build the kind of district/patron relationship that is most beneficial for both parties may be to enhance the focus on the issues that seem to be dominating the headlines today.

- **As electronic communication continues to grow, so, too, does the need to monitor the quality and consistency of what is being disseminated.**

While those without a current student will likely always find favor with a printed publication that provides an update on district news, there is no denying that CPS patrons are relying more and more on specific electronic media (rather than local television and radio stations) for updates.

As utilization of such sources to share news proliferates, the risk of having well-meaning individuals distribute information that is not in keeping with the district’s style guidelines, content expectations, timing preferences or any potential combination of such factors also increases.

While it would be fiscally imprudent to have someone spend all of his or her day approving Facebook posts and Twitter announcements, for example, it will be important to review the current guidelines for those who have taken on the responsibility for their school, their booster club, etc. to make certain that what is put into the public arena is in keeping with the quality and content expectations the district places on more global communications that it disseminates.