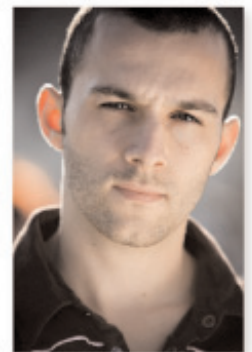


The Power of Know™



Columbia Public Schools 2010 Patron Telephone Survey

Final Report

December 22, 2010



Columbia Public Schools 2010 Patron Telephone Survey Executive Summary December 22, 2010

In October and November 2010, a 15-minute telephone survey was conducted with 400 randomly selected, head-of-household, registered voter patrons of the Columbia Public Schools to determine their level of satisfaction with the district's performance, and to engage them in a series of questions related to the general subject of communications.

In addition to being a head of household, a registered voter, and aware that he or she lived within the boundaries of the Columbia Public Schools, calls were divided into four quadrants, based on the cross-streets of Providence and Broadway. A total of 100 surveys were completed in each quadrant to match the general population patterns, as identified by the school district leadership.

(Calls were placed to landlines and cell phones using a list that contained only heads of household who were registered voters and who lived in the school district. But, all potential respondents had to confirm this information before they could continue with the survey.)

Generally speaking, the data suggests that the patrons are satisfied with the performance of their school district, and tend to look first to district-related sources for the latest school updates, rather than to the news media. Specifically:

- Patrons gave 21 of 27 different people, program, facility and district/patron relationship factors – plus the district's overall performance – a grade of “B” or better (or the statistical equivalent of a “B”) on the traditional A-F grading scale. Among the highest-rated areas were “performance of district teachers,” “performance of school principals,” and “preparation of students for college, vocational training or employment.”
- Three of the six areas that received a grade below the statistical equivalent of a “B” were district/patron relationship factors, while the others focused on class sizes, the balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities, and the district's performance in closing the achievement gap.
- Eleven of the 27 graded factors qualified as Patron Hot Buttons, meaning that at least 81% of the survey participants offered a grade on these areas, rather than saying “don't know.” These are the areas that the typical patron – no matter what his or her level of connection to the school district may be – uses to judge its performance. All 11 Hot Buttons scored at the statistical equivalent of a “B,” meaning the areas that are most important to typical patrons are ones where the district is performing well.



- Community involvement and support, teachers, and the district's overall high-quality education were the most frequently mentioned areas of strength, while "don't know" and "it's fine as is" were the most common answers to a question asking for areas needing improvement.
- A total of 58% of patrons said they preferred printed communication regarding the school district, while 37% said electronic. When asked to choose which provider of district news they would most likely turn to, 61% said it would be the school district, while 22% said it would be the news media.
- More than 2/3 of the survey participants said that they read either "every issue" or "every other issue" of *Quarterly Report*. Those who read it at least once a year rated its quality of news highly (85% saying either "excellent" or "good,") and were complimentary about its appearance (93% either "excellent" or "good").
- A total of 21% of the survey participants said they visited the CPS District website at least once every two weeks, while 22% said the same thing about individual school websites. Both the district and the individual school sites received high marks from those who visited at least once a month, with the district's site being called either "very easy" or "easy" to navigate and find information by 93% of participants, while 98% said the same thing about individual school websites.
- Very few respondents said they watched CPS Television, as only 7% said they watched it either "every day," "a few times a week," "at least once a week," or "at least once every two weeks," while 53% said they had never watched. Those individuals who had watched were complimentary about the quality of the information provided, and had very few suggestions for additional programming that would be beneficial.
- A total of 12% said they would visit a district-sponsored Facebook page either "every day," "at least once a week," or "at least once every two weeks." The idea for a blog or a Twitter feed from the district was not as popular at the time this survey was taken.
- Survey participants were interested in hearing more about nearly all the story ideas that the district provided for consideration, with a particular emphasis on topics such as "student and teacher success stories," "information on the district's finances and budget," and "news about programs that maintain and enforce discipline in schools."
- Nine different sources are consulted "frequently" for district news and information by at least 25% of the surveyed patrons, led by "friends and neighbors," "the print edition of *The Columbia Tribune*," and "the school district's annual report, called *The Yearbook*."



- The first place that most patrons would look for information about the district is “friends and neighbors,” followed by the print edition of *The Columbia Tribune*, teachers and other staff members in the district, and individual school newsletters. When all the district-related sources are combined, 49% of surveyed patrons would look to them first, followed by 33% who would look to the news media and 19% who would look to informal, unofficial sources.

The Final Report that follows this Executive Summary contains a series of findings, discussion of each finding, all related questions and answers, and appropriate subgroup analysis. A brief summary closes the report.



**Columbia Public Schools
2010 Patron Telephone Survey
Final Report
December 22, 2010**

Finding 1: Patrons gave 21 of 27 people, program, facility and district/patron relationship factors – plus the district’s overall performance – a grade of “B” or better (or the statistical equivalent of “B”) on the traditional A-F grading scale. Eleven of those areas qualified as Patron Hot Buttons, meaning that at least 81% of survey participants were willing to offer a grade on the particular area, rather than saying “don’t know.” All of the Patron Hot Buttons ranked at the statistical equivalent of “B” or better, meaning the areas that typical patrons use to judge the school district’s performance are all thought of highly.

In October and November 2010, a 15-minute telephone survey was conducted with 400 randomly selected, registered voter, head-of-household patrons living within the boundaries of the Columbia Public Schools.

Completed survey calls were divided into four quadrants – with 100 completed surveys coming from each – using the cross-streets of Providence and Broadway. The numbers for each quadrant were identified by the school district leadership in an effort to mirror the general population patterns.

After clearing the qualification hurdles, the survey began in earnest by asking respondents to “grade” – either A, B, C, D or F – 27 different people, program, facility and district/patron relationship factors, plus the district’s overall performance.

This question set serves three purposes.

First, by asking questions that don’t require any “inside knowledge,” respondents get an early sense that they can participate and be helpful.

Second, questions like these help build rapport between the interviewer and the respondent. Such rapport will be important when the questions become longer and more difficult as the survey moves forward.

Third, by asking respondents to “grade” certain areas, the district gets a glimpse into the opinions on the factors that patrons believe are strengths of the district, along with areas which may require some attention.



The grades for all of the areas are displayed below. However, to simplify the analysis, a 5-point scale is also employed.

In this scale, each grade of “A” is worth 5 points, down to each grade of “F” being worth 1 point. The points are totaled and divided by the number of people responding (meaning those who said “don’t know” are not included) to arrive at a single number between 1.00 and 5.00.

Given the near impossibility of achieving a 5.00 (which would require all those offering a grade to say “A”), the dividing line between areas of strengths and those areas which may need attention is 4.00, or a “B.” Taking into account the 5% Margin of Error for this survey, a grade as low as 3.80 is – statistically speaking – a “B.”

In the case of the Columbia Public Schools, 21 of the 27 areas – plus the district’s overall performance – achieved a grade of “B” or better (or the statistical equivalent of “B”).

Among the leaders:

- The performance of district employees in making you feel welcome when you visit a school or attend a school event – 4.49
- Performance of district teachers – 4.38
- Performance of school principals – 4.28
- Quality of school facilities – 4.17
- Preparation of students for college, vocational training or employment – 4.16
- Overall grade – 4.10

The six areas that fell below a 3.80 were:

- The balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities – 3.78
- The district’s record on making and fulfilling promises – 3.73
- The district’s efforts to involve citizens in decision-making – 3.69
- The district’s responsiveness to patron concerns – 3.56
- Class sizes, meaning the number of students in each classroom – 3.52
- The district’s performance in closing the achievement gap among its students – 3.47

In reviewing these results, it is important to remember that it is often easier for patrons – whether or not they have a current, direct connection with the school district – to comment on building level issues such as facilities, teachers and principals, than on the most nebulous district/patron relationship factors.



For some individuals, this lack of comfort with offering a grade will lead them to say “don’t know,” while others tend to default to a “C,” which is an average grade. This was clearly the case here, as only 144 (or less than 1%) of a possible 2,400 total opportunities to offer a grade on these six areas led to respondents saying “D” or “F” (which would have suggested that they had a serious issue with the factor being evaluated).

Even so, an additional subgroup analysis was conducted to determine if a respondent’s demographic characteristics or where he or she lived made them more or less positive on these lower-rated areas. The results of that analysis were as follows:

- Younger respondents (18 to 34) tended to be less positive than older participants on all areas except “district’s efforts to involve citizens in decision-making,” where they were in line with the other age groups.
- Length of time living in the district and student status (current student family, past student family, or “never” student family), and access or lack of access to high-speed Internet had no discernable pattern on these lower-rated areas.
- Caucasian respondents were somewhat more positive on these factors than were African-American and Hispanic/Latino respondents.
- Those living east of Providence and north of Broadway were more negative than any of the other quadrants on all these issues.
- And, as will be the case throughout this study, respondents who are currently either “very involved” or “somewhat involved” with the district were the most positive on these factors, followed by those who had been involved in the past, but are not now. The least supportive are those respondents who are either “not very involved” or “not at all involved.”

In an effort to segment these 27 areas to identify which ones are more important to the typical patron than others, a Patron Hot Button analysis was also conducted.

Patron Hot Buttons are those areas in which at least 81% of the respondents (meaning more than four out of five) were willing to offer a grade, rather than saying “don’t know.” These are the areas that, experience tells us, are the ones that typical patrons – current families, past families, “never” families and just average citizens – think of first when they are judging the performance of the school district.



The Columbia Public Schools had 11 of the 27 areas that qualified:

- The performance of district employees in making you feel welcome when you visit a school or attend a school event
- Performance of district teachers
- Safety of students
- Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities
- Quality of education provided to students
- Quality of school facilities
- Preparation of students for college, vocational training or employment
- The district's graduation rate
- The district's efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons
- Value received for the tax dollars spent
- The effectiveness of communications with the public by the Columbia Public Schools

This is a relatively high number of Hot Buttons, suggesting that typical patrons feel enough of a connection to the school district on a number of levels to be willing to offer an opinion. Even better news: All 11 Patron Hot Buttons received a grade of “B” or better (or the statistical equivalent of a “B”), meaning the areas that are most important to typical patrons are also among the ones they rate highly.

While there certainly are areas where the grades may fall a bit short of the district's goals, on balance, the scores show a generally satisfied – and very interested – patron population.

Note: Questions 1 through 3 asked respondents whether they were the male or female head of the household, a registered voter, and aware that they lived within the boundaries of the Columbia Public Schools. A “yes” answer was required to continue. As such, those questions and answers are not displayed. Percentages may add to more or less than 100%, due to rounding.



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 patterns in the district. 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	45%
B	41%
C	7%
D	1%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	7%

6. Performance of school principals

Response	Percentage
A	31%
B	42%
C	4%
D	1%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	20%

7. Performance of the Central Office administration

Response	Percentage
A	17%
B	37%
C	11%
D	3%
F	<1%
Don't know (not read)	32%

8. Performance of the Columbia Board of Education

Response	Percentage
A	15%
B	44%
C	9%
D	6%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	24%

9. Quality of education provided to students

Response	Percentage
A	36%
B	49%
C	10%
D	1%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	3%



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

Response	Percentage
A	34%
B	38%
C	14%
D	3%
F	<1%
Don't know (not read)	12%

11. Quality of technology available to students

Response	Percentage
A	28%
B	21%
C	7%
D	1%
F	<1%
Don't know (not read)	44%

12. Safety of students

Response	Percentage
A	41%
B	36%
C	10%
D	1%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	12%

13. Quality of school facilities

Response	Percentage
A	31%
B	52%
C	13%
D	1%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	3%



14. Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities

Response	Percentage
A	32%
B	55%
C	7%
D	1%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	5%

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

Response	Percentage
A	7%
B	36%
C	19%
D	8%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	29%

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

Response	Percentage
A	8%
B	26%
C	2%
D	1%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	64%

17. Value received by patrons for the tax dollars spent

Response	Percentage
A	21%
B	48%
C	14%
D	2%
F	3%
Don't know (not read)	13%



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

Response	Percentage
A	13%
B	31%
C	25%
D	3%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	27%

19. The district's responsiveness to patron concerns

Response	Percentage
A	7%
B	38%
C	26%
D	4%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	23%

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

Response	Percentage
A	23%
B	39%
C	16%
D	4%
F	<1%
Don't know (not read)	18%

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

Response	Percentage
A	8%
B	31%
C	17%
D	3%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	42%



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

Response	Percentage
A	13%
B	48%
C	16%
D	4%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	18%

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

Response	Percentage
A	3%
B	29%
C	19%
D	6%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	43%

24. The quality of vocational or technical programming for students

Response	Percentage
A	14%
B	25%
C	7%
D	1%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	53%



25. The balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities

Response	Percentage
A	16%
B	29%
C	18%
D	4%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	32%

26. The district's graduation rate

Response	Percentage
A	20%
B	52%
C	14%
D	3%
F	<1%
Don't know (not read)	12%

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

Response	Percentage
A	13%
B	39%
C	16%
D	2%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	28%



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

Response	Percentage
A	14%
B	35%
C	12%
D	3%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	35%

29. The quality of the district's transportation program

Response	Percentage
A	13%
B	25%
C	8%
D	3%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	51%

30. The district's efforts to get parents involved

Response	Percentage
A	29%
B	36%
C	9%
D	2%
F	<1%
Don't know (not read)	24%



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

Response	Percentage
A	51%
B	34%
C	3%
D	1%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	9%

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

Response	Percentage
A	26%
B	57%
C	14%
D	1%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	2%



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.

Factor	5-point scale rating
The performance of district employees in making you feel welcome when you visit a school or attend a school event*	4.49
Performance of district teachers*	4.38
Quality of technology available to students	4.33
Safety of students*	4.29
Performance of school principals	4.28
Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities*	4.25
Quality of education provided to students*	4.23
The district’s efforts to get parents involved	4.20
Quality of school facilities*	4.17
Preparation of students for college, vocational training or employment*	4.16
The quality of vocational or technical programming for students	4.12
The quality of the district’s Early Childhood programs	4.12
Overall grade	4.10
The district’s graduation rate*	3.99
The district’s efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons*	3.98
Performance of the Central Office Administration	3.97
The quality of the district’s transportation program	3.95
Value received for the tax dollars spent*	3.94
The district’s efforts to ensure equivalent educational programming from school to school	3.89
Performance of the Columbia Board of Education	3.87
The district’s effort to ensure equivalent school buildings	3.85
The effectiveness of communications with the public by the Columbia Public Schools*	3.82
The balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities	3.78
The district’s record on making and fulfilling promises	3.73
The district’s efforts to involve citizens in decision-making	3.69
The district’s responsiveness to patron concerns	3.56
Class sizes, meaning the number of students in each classroom	3.52
The district’s performance in closing the achievement gap among its students	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 five respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall score	18-34 (n=89)	35-54 (n=160)	55 or older (n=146)	Up to 5 years (n=76)	5 to 15 years (n=130)	More than 15 years (N=194)	Student, yes (n=136)	Student, past (n=138)	Student, never (n=126)
Balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities	3.78	3.60	3.74	3.91	3.75	3.70	3.89	3.75	3.87	3.70
District's record on making and fulfilling promises	3.73	3.69	3.73	3.76	3.63	3.85	3.73	3.75	3.75	3.67
District's efforts to involve citizens in decision-making	3.69	3.70	3.69	3.66	3.76	3.69	3.66	3.68	3.60	3.79
District's responsiveness to patron concerns	3.56	3.49	3.58	3.58	3.57	3.58	3.55	3.49	3.58	3.64
Class sizes, meaning the number of students in each classroom	3.52	3.37	3.48	3.58	3.50	3.49	3.55	3.52	3.58	3.45
District's performance in closing the achievement gap among its students	3.47	3.37	3.44	3.56	3.51	3.38	3.45	3.49	3.47	3.45

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 ethnicity will not square with "overall," due to one respondent stating "American Indian" and three others refusing to answer this question.

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=42)	Asian (n=11)	Caucasian (n=319)	Hispanic /Latino (n=24)
Balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities	3.78	3.98	3.43	3.82	3.88	3.70	4.11	3.78	3.50
District's record on making and fulfilling promises	3.73	3.92	3.48	3.69	3.85	3.58	3.63	3.77	3.42
District's efforts to involve citizens in decision-making	3.69	3.83	3.38	3.78	3.72	3.62	4.00	3.69	3.29
District's responsiveness to patron concerns	3.56	3.74	3.41	3.53	3.58	3.47	3.60	3.57	3.53
Class sizes, meaning the number of students in each classroom	3.52	3.63	3.32	3.44	3.68	3.48	3.78	3.57	3.13
District's performance in closing the achievement gap among its students	3.47	3.60	3.17	3.54	3.53	3.00	3.86	3.48	3.33

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

Response	Overall I score	Yes, high- speed access (n=338)	No, high- speed access (n=62)	Very/ Somewhat involved (n=123)	Not very/Not at all involved (n=161)	Involved in the past, not now (N=116)
Balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities	3.78	3.79	3.69	3.87	3.63	3.83
District’s record on making and fulfilling promises	3.73	3.74	3.64	3.84	3.60	3.75
District’s efforts to involve citizens in decision-making	3.69	3.72	3.49	3.80	3.57	3.69
District’s responsiveness to patron concerns	3.56	3.57	3.52	3.60	3.47	3.63
Class sizes, meaning the number of students in each classroom	3.52	3.51	3.55	3.66	3.33	3.57
District’s performance in closing the achievement gap among its students	3.47	3.49	3.35	3.57	3.36	3.46



Finding 2: Community involvement and support, and teachers were the most frequently mentioned district strengths, while close to half of the respondents couldn't identify an area needing improvement. Among those who were able to do so, "manage money better," "hire more/higher-quality teachers" and "reduce class sizes" were the most popular answers.

To close the grading section, patrons were given the opportunity to share their thoughts in an open-ended fashion on the district's strengths and areas where it could improve.

The responses were coded based on common words, phrases and ideas to create the charts displayed below. In doing so, several items in both the positive and negative columns stood out.

Seen as the leading strengths were "community involvement (or support)," mentioned by 85 respondents. This was followed by "teachers" (71 mentions), the fact that the district provides "an overall high-quality education" (55 mentions), and that it has a "good reputation within the state" (34 mentions).

Interestingly, 60 respondents (15%) said "don't know," which is somewhat curious considering the high number of Patron Hot Buttons.

"Don't know" (mentioned by 141 respondents) was the most common answer on the question asking for areas needing improvement, followed by "nothing" or "it's fine as is" (mentioned by 53 respondents). Among the actual answers offered were "manage money better" (51 mentions), "hire more/higher-quality teachers" (49 mentions) and "reduce class sizes" (40 mentions).

Not all the responses could be coded in a quantity that would place them on the charts which follow. Those verbatim comments are displayed below the charts. In reviewing these, it is important to remember that each is one comment, by one person. If they were indicative of a more commonly held belief, they would have appeared in sufficient quantity to merit inclusion in the charts.

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
Community involvement/support	85
Teachers	71
Don't know	60
Provide an overall high-quality education	55
Good reputation within the state	34
Support of parents	31
Strong/diverse academics/curriculum	28
Other (see below)	18
Communication with patrons	11
Nothing/have no strengths	7

Verbatim "other" comments

An increasing number of younger administrative people.

Athletics and good curriculum.

We appreciated the block scheduling.

Their college-bound program is good.

My children went there and did very well.

Administration is strong. Kids have many opportunities, if they just take advantage of them.

My children were very well-educated. They have done well. My daughter is a teacher in Kansas City.

Education of the top students is strong at the high school level. Advanced placement and gifted get all the energy. Superb drama and debate programs.

High-quality district. Great academics and teachers. I am proud of the district.



Managing the discipline of the students.

I was in one school building and saw some displays that were very nice. The students seem to like it here.

The whole Administration, from the teachers up. They work very hard to provide a good education.

English and math departments.

The computers are updated, and the teachers are always encouraging students to have a good work ethic.

I am very proud of my children's achievements, which came from a good background from Columbia Schools.

They do a good job of meeting the individual needs of the students.

They use their money wisely. The Early Childhood program is strong.

Meeting the challenge of diversity in all the grades at school.

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	141
Nothing/it's fine as is	53
Manage money better	51
Hire more/higher-quality teachers	49
Reduce class sizes	40
Other (see below)	33
Emphasize academics over activities	22
Communicate better with patrons	11



Verbatim “other” comments

I go to high school two times a year. They should require the public to go into the schools. Open some events to them, so they can see the facilities. They will see people welcoming them all the time.

Continue to concentrate on the drop-out rate.

More paraprofessionals are needed in the classrooms, especially when teachers need to give extra individual attention.

Get calendar input from parents for days off, early dismissals, etc.

Close the achievement gap among kids. The effort is being made, but it is not happening.

Finding more funding.

Being more clear about where their finances are going and letting the community know more about how the finances are being spent.

Update some facilities that do not have air-conditioning.

Making the socio-economic status more equal for the students.

Get rid of the trailers. Poor management caused the trailers. They do not need fancy buildings, but they put too much money in non-essentials. Now they are out of space, and some kids have to be in those horrible trailers.

So much time and energy goes to the top students and those who are struggling get little attention.

Improve the safety of each child by stopping bullying. Revamp the discipline program with stronger punishment.

They need to improve the programs for students who want to work with their hands. There is snobbism and racism in the Columbia Public Schools.

I would like to see permanent buildings replace the leased facilities.

Add more gifted programs.



Make an effort to challenge students who are above average, but who do not qualify for the advanced program.

Improve classes in English and math.

Improve the discipline in the classrooms and on the buses.

Transportation is a problem. Buses need to be maintained. They break down, and there is a high turnover rate with drivers. They may not be paid well yet.

Communication with the public could improve, and please spend the money more wisely.

Improving the social studies and history programs.

Perhaps work with the children a little closer who are struggling.

Get rid of the teachers' union.

More attention to children with learning problems.

Have more discipline and accountability of the teachers.

More challenging college-prep courses.

Teachers need more money and incentives.

Drug prevention. Bring back the D.A.R.E. program to help prevent teen drinking of alcohol.

Need to monitor children who are absent closer. Focus more on academics to maintain the quality of education.

Closing the achievement gap.

Behavior and dress code from middle school on up needs to be more strictly enforced.

District boundary lines could be more even.

By increasing the availability of the fine arts department.



Finding 3: Typical patrons turn to printed news sources somewhat more than electronic, and clearly prefer to get updates about what is taking place in the school district from the district itself, rather than from the news media.

The first set of the numerous communications questions that fill much of the rest of the survey was related to the typical patron's preference for the format in which he or she receives school district news.

A total of 58% of respondents said they preferred to secure their news from printed sources, while 37% looked to electronic outlets.

This pattern held true in all the subgroups – print being preferred (aside from the very small group of Asian respondents who had 45% selecting each option) – with print preferences ranging from 53% for “never” student families up to 63% for Hispanic/Latino respondents. Of the 22 subgroups studied, print was the choice of at least 55% of the respondents in 19 cases.

Those who preferred electronic news sources ranged from 28% (those who had lived in the district up to 5 years), up to 41% (those ages 35 to 54) – again, aside from the very small group of Asian participants.

Interestingly, the issue of high-speed Internet access seemed to have no impact on a respondent's preference as the two groups were nearly identical in their scores on this topic.

In terms of the source for that news – the school district or the news media – the choice was even clearer.

Specifically, 61% said they would look to the school district first, while 22% said they would choose the news media.

Aside from a low percentage (38%) among the Hispanic/Latino respondents – many of whom said “don't know” – preference for the school district ranged from 50% (those individuals who said they were either “very involved” or “somewhat involved” with the school district, up to 73% (those who said they “used to be involved in the school district in the past, but are not now”).

These results seem to suggest that while the electronic option for news is making inroads, typical Columbia School District patrons still lean more toward the printed word, and they would much prefer to get their school district news directly from the source.



35. 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
Printed	58%
Electronic	37%
It depends on what I'm looking for/not always the same (not read)	4%
Don't know (not read)	1%

36. 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
School district	61%
News media	22%
It depends on what I'm looking for/not always the same	17%
Don't know (not read)	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 five respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall score	18-34 (n=89)	35-54 (n=160)	55 or older (n=146)	Up to 5 years (n=76)	5 to 15 years (n=130)	More than 15 years (N=194)	Student, yes (n=136)	Student, past (n=138)	Student, never (n=126)
Printed	58%	61%	54%	60%	61%	55%	59%	60%	61%	53%
Electronic	37%	33%	41%	35%	28%	39%	38%	35%	35%	40%
School district	61%	64%	66%	53%	62%	64%	58%	67%	56%	60%
News media	22%	21%	18%	27%	18%	17%	27%	15%	29%	22%

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 ethnicity will not square with “overall,” due to one respondent stating “American Indian” and three others refusing to answer this question.

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=42)	Asian (n=11)	Caucasian (n=319)	Hispanic /Latino (n=24)
Printed	58%	60%	58%	57%	57%	55%	45%	59%	63%
Electronic	37%	38%	37%	36%	35%	38%	45%	36%	29%
School district	61%	57%	64%	63%	59%	64%	64%	62%	38%
News media	22%	23%	21%	18%	27%	14%	18%	23%	25%

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 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=338)	No, high-speed access (n=62)	Very/Somewhat involved (n=123)	Not very/Not at all involved (n=161)	Involved in the past, not now (N=116)
Printed	58%	58%	60%	58%	58%	58%
Electronic	37%	36%	40%	38%	34%	38%
School district	61%	61%	60%	50%	60%	73%
News media	22%	22%	24%	16%	22%	28%



Finding 4: The district’s *Quarterly Report* publication is clearly the most frequently consulted source for district news, as more than 2/3 of the respondents said they either read “every issue” or “every other issue.” The quality of the news and the piece’s graphic design were also applauded by patron survey participants.

The first question set dealing with specific, district-sponsored news tools asked respondents to rate *Quarterly Report* – how often they read it, how complete they believe the news contained therein is, and its look and feel. The publication scored strongly on all these counts.

Specifically, 49% of survey respondents said they read every issue, while 18% said they read “every other issue,” and 14% said they read it “at least once a year.”

Taking the first two categories and considering them “regular readers,” the cross-tabulation analysis showed that consultation of the publication was common across all the subgroups. In fact, those who qualified as “regular readers” ranged from 52% (African-American participants) up to 72% (those who say they are “very involved” or “somewhat involved” in the district, and those who live west of Providence and south of Broadway). (The 73% of Asian respondents who answered similarly should be discounted, because – as mentioned above – the group included only 11 participants.)

When those who read the publication at least once a year were asked to rate the quality of the information it contained and its look and feel, the results were also very positive.

A total of 85% of those who read at least one issue a year called the news content either “excellent” or “good,” while 93% of the same group rated the look of *Quarterly Report* either “excellent” or “good.”

Clearly, this is a flagship publication that is greatly appreciated by a broad cross-section of patrons in the district.

37. 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
Every issue	49%
Every other issue	18%
At least once a year	14%
Less than once a year	7%
Never	12%
Don’t know (not read)	1%



- 38. 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 322 respondents who answered question 37 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
Excellent	28%
Good	57%
Fair	13%
Poor	2%
Don’t know (not read)	1%

- 39. How about the way that *Quarterly Report* looks? Would you rate it...***Percentages are, again, of the 322 respondents who read *Quarterly Report* at least once a year.*

Response	Percentage
Excellent	21%
Good	72%
Fair	5%
Poor	0%
Don’t know (not read)	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 five respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall score	18-34 (n=89)	35-54 (n=160)	55 or older (n=146)	Up to 5 years (n=76)	5 to 15 years (n=130)	More than 15 years (N=194)	Student, yes (n=136)	Student, past (n=138)	Student, never (n=126)
Regular readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	67%	64%	69%	66%	62%	68%	68%	68%	70%	63%
Infrequent readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	21%	25%	20%	20%	25%	20%	20%	23%	17%	22%
Never readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	12%	11%	11%	12%	13%	11%	14%	9%	12%	14%

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 ethnicity will not square with “overall,” due to one respondent stating “American Indian” and three others refusing to answer this question.

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=42)	Asian (n=11)	Caucasian (n=319)	Hispanic /Latino (n=24)
Regular readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	67%	64%	69%	72%	63%	52%	73%	68%	71%
Infrequent readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	21%	23%	23%	20%	17%	29%	18%	20%	17%
Never readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	12%	12%	7%	8%	19%	17%	10%	11%	13%

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 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=338)	No, high-speed access (n=62)	Very/Somewhat involved (n=123)	Not very/Not at all involved (n=161)	Involved in the past, not now (N=116)
Regular readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	67%	66%	71%	72%	65%	66%
Infrequent readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	21%	22%	13%	19%	23%	20%
Never readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	12%	11%	15%	10%	11%	15%



Finding 5: A total of 21% of the survey participants said that they visited the Columbia Public Schools district website at least once every two weeks, while 22% said the same thing about individual school websites. Close to half (47%) said they had never visited either the district’s or any individual school site. However, those who said they did so at least once a month were very complimentary about the ease of navigation.

The survey then shifted to the Internet, by asking respondents about the frequency of their visits to the Columbia Public Schools district website and individual school websites.

A total of 21% said that they visited the CPS District site either “at least once a week,” or “at least once every two weeks.” When those who said “at least once a month” are added to this group, the total is 32%, suggesting the existence of a meaningful segment of patrons who look to the district’s Web presence somewhat regularly for news and information.

Within the subgroups, “regular visitors” (at least once every two weeks or more often) varied somewhat, but those variations were quite logical.

Current student families were overrepresented in the “regular visitor” category for the CPS District website (36%), while much smaller numbers were seen in logical groups such as “never” student families, those who had had a student (or students) in the district in the past, but they had all graduated, and those age 55 or older.

Those who did visit the CPS District website at least once a month were very complimentary of the navigation, with 93% saying it was either “very easy” or “easy” to use.

The number of regular visitors was statistically identical for individual school websites, as 22% said they visited one either “at least once a week” or “at least once every two weeks.” The pattern in the subgroup tracked with what was seen for the CPS District website: Those who would logically be more likely to visit did so in much more frequency than those who would have less of a reason.

And, just as was the case with the district’s site, the individual schools’ navigation was called “very easy” or “easy” to use by 98% of those who visited at least once a month.

These numbers seem to suggest that while the numbers are far from a majority, there is clearly a segment of patrons that check the websites frequently and find them easy to use when they visit.



- 40. 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
At least once a week	12%
At least once every two weeks	9%
At least once a month	11%
Less than once a month	23%
I've never visited the website	47%

- 41. 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 123 respondents who answered question 40 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
Very easy	41%
Easy	52%
Difficult	6%
Very difficult	0%
Don't know (not read)	2%

- 42. 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
At least once a week	13%
At least once every two weeks	9%
At least once a month	10%
Less than once a month	22%
I've never visited the website	47%



- 43. 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 127 respondents who answered question 42 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
Very easy	24%
Easy	74%
Difficult	2%
Very difficult	0%
Don't know (not read)	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” of 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 five respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall score	18-34 (n=89)	35-54 (n=160)	55 or older (n=146)	Up to 5 years (n=76)	5 to 15 years (n=130)	More than 15 years (N=194)	Student, yes (n=136)	Student, past (n=138)	Student, never (n=126)
Regular visitors/CPS website	21%	19%	24%	16%	14%	21%	22%	36%	13%	10%
Infrequent visitor/CPS website	34%	36%	38%	28%	34%	30%	35%	40%	28%	26%
Never visitors/CPS website	47%	45%	39%	55%	51%	49%	43%	24%	59%	57%
Regular visitors/individual school websites	22%	21%	30%	14%	21%	20%	24%	43%	13%	10%
Infrequent visitors/individual school websites	32%	35%	33%	27%	32%	35%	29%	36%	30%	27%
Never visitors/individual school websites	47%	44%	38%	58%	47%	45%	47%	21%	57%	63%

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” of 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 ethnicity will not square with “overall,” due to one respondent stating “American Indian” and three others refusing to answer this question.

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=42)				Asian (n=11)				Caucasian (n=319)				Hispanic /Latino (n=24)			
		18%				21%				21%				20%				19%				36%				21%				4%			
		34%				30%				35%				34%				29%				45%				33%				38%			
		48%				49%				44%				46%				52%				18%				46%				58%			
Regular visitors/CPS website	21%																																
Infrequent visitors/CPS website	34%																																
Never visitors/CPS website	47%																																
Regular visitors/individual school websites	22%	21%				20%				28%				19%				24%				45%				22%				17%			
Infrequent visitors/individual school websites	32%	32%				31%				30%				32%				21%				27%				33%				25%			
Never visitors/individual school websites	47%	47%				49%				42%				49%				55%				27%				45%				58%			

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” of the Columbia Public Schools website and individual schools’ websites by access to high-speed Internet (at either home or work), and 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=338)	No, high-speed access (n=62)	Very/Somewhat involved (n=123)	Not very/Not at all involved (n=161)	Involved in the past, not now (N=116)
Regular visitors/CPS website	21%	24%	0%	39%	10%	14%
Infrequent visitors/CPS website	34%	36%	16%	42%	32%	25%
Never visitors/CPS website	47%	40%	84%	19%	58%	61%
Regular visitors/individual school websites	22%	26%	0%	46%	9%	15%
Infrequent visitors/individual school websites	32%	35%	13%	35%	34%	23%
Never visitors/individual school websites	47%	39%	87%	19%	57%	62%



Finding 6: Interest in Columbia Public Schools Television is quite low, as only 7% of the surveyed patrons said they watch the station at least once every two weeks, while 53% said they had never watched.

As is the case with most school-sponsored television stations, viewership of Columbia Public Schools Television is quite low.

A total of only 7% said they watch the station at least once every two weeks (or more often), while an additional 10% said they watch it “at least once a month,” and 28% said they watched it “less than once a month.” More than half of the survey participants (53%) said they had never watched.

A review of the subgroups shows a strikingly similar pattern of responses among all the demographic groups and regions. While there were some differences here and there, there isn’t one group that is much more – or less – enthusiastic about the network. They all seem to watch (or, in this case, not watch) at the same level.

Those who do watch at least once a month, or more often, tend to tune in in the evening (78%), and find the programming to be of high quality (93% calling it either “excellent” or “good”). Interestingly, when given the opportunity to suggest additional programming ideas, 54 of the 63 respondents who watch at least once a month had no ideas. They are, quite clearly satisfied, even though their numbers are very small.

44. 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
Every day	1%
A few times a week	1%
At least once a week	3%
At least once every two weeks	2%
At least once a month	10%
Less than once a month	28%
I’ve never watched	53%
Don’t know (not read)	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 five respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall score	18-34 (n=89)	35-54 (n=160)	55 or older (n=146)	Up to 5 years (n=76)	5 to 15 years (n=130)	More than 15 years (N=194)	Student, yes (n=136)	Student, past (n=138)	Student, never (n=126)
Regular viewers/CPS television	7%	3%	7%	7%	3%	7%	7%	6%	9%	3%
Infrequent viewers/CPS television	38%	36%	40%	36%	39%	33%	40%	38%	34%	41%
Never viewers/CPS television	53%	58%	50%	53%	54%	57%	49%	52%	54%	52%

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 ethnicity will not square with “overall,” due to one respondent stating “American Indian” and three others refusing to answer this question.

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=42)	Asian (n=11)	Caucasian (n=319)	Hispanic /Latino (n=24)
Regular viewers/CPS television	7%	5%	4%	7%	9%	7%	10%	6%	8%
Infrequent viewers/CPS television	38%	36%	35%	38%	41%	33%	36%	39%	29%
Never viewers/CPS television	53%	58%	57%	49%	47%	48%	55%	52%	63%

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 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=338)	No, high-speed access (n=62)	Very/Somewhat involved (n=123)	Not very/Not at all involved (n=161)	Involved in the past, not now (N=116)
Regular viewers/CPS television	7%	7%	5%	6%	4%	9%
Infrequent viewers/CPS television	38%	37%	42%	41%	32%	41%
Never viewers/CPS television	53%	53%	52%	50%	60%	46%



- 45. When do you most often watch? Is it in the morning, afternoon or evening?** *Asked only of the 63 respondents who answered question 44 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
Morning	3%
Afternoon	1%
Evening	78%
It varies (not read)	17%

- 46. 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 63 respondents who watch Columbia Public Schools television at least once a month.*

Response	Percentage
Excellent	33%
Good	60%
Fair	6%
Poor	0%

- 47. What additional types of programming about the school district would you like to see on Columbia Public Schools television?** *Of the 63 respondents eligible to answer this question, 54 had no recommendations. The verbatim comments from the other nine respondents are listed below.*

Statistics on grades.

Graduation rate percentages.

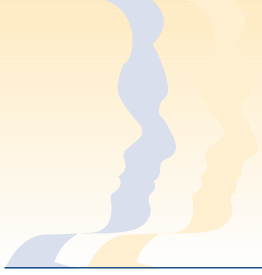
I would like to see information on math and science scores and how they are doing.

How the school compares to other districts in academics.

The percentage of passing and failing grades.

Teacher history.

More on the black community.



Other than activities, I would like to see more information on how students are doing overall grade-wise.

Individual teacher qualifications and teaching methods.



Finding 7: The idea of the district starting a Facebook page, establishing a blog or launching a Twitter feed drew a lukewarm reaction from surveyed patrons, with the Facebook idea being the most preferred.

As a way of testing the waters on various social media tools, the survey then turned to the possibility of the district creating a Facebook page, initiating a blog and starting a Twitter feed. None of these ideas generated much excitement among typical patrons.

Specifically:

- A total of 12% said they would visit a prospective CPS Facebook page “at least once every two weeks” (or more often), but 71% said they would never visit.
- Less than 3% said they would keep up with a district blog on that same schedule (at least once every two weeks), and 75% said they would never read it.
- And, 7% said it was either “very likely” or “somewhat likely” that they would add a CPS Twitter feed to the ones they follow, while 58% said it was “not very likely” or “not at all likely,” and 36% said “I don’t use Twitter.” (This response – “I don’t use Twitter” – was not offered, but was recorded by the interviewer if the individual said that, instead of selecting one of the four choices. It is, however, highly possible that some of those who said “not very likely” or “not at all likely” actually are not signed up for Twitter either, but did not choose to offer that information.)

Interestingly, there was very little movement on this topic within the subgroups. Groups that one might expect to be much more enthusiastic about these communication options (younger respondents, families with current district students, those who have access to high-speed Internet, etc.) were not dramatically more excited about any of these options than any other subgroup.

As with all things fairly new, this data seems to suggest that if the district were to press ahead with any or all of these options, that it will be vital to set realistic expectations for participation among patrons and to be patient with the growth. It was not very many years ago that websites drew almost no visitors, and, today, they are a primary news outlet for a growing segment of individuals. It is likely that these tools will find a measure of favor as well, but it will clearly take time.



48. If the district had a Facebook page, how often do you think you would visit?

Choices were read to respondents.

Response	Percentage
I'd check every day for a new posting	2%
At least once a week	4%
At least once every two weeks	6%
At least once a month	11%
Less than once a month	5%
Never	71%
Don't know (not read)	3%

49. If the district had a blog, how often do you think you would check to see if anything new had been posted? *Choices were read to respondents.*

Response	Percentage
At least once a week	<1%
At least once every two weeks	2%
At least once a month	6%
Less than once a month	12%
Never	75%
Don't know (not read)	5%

50. If the district signed up with Twitter, how likely would you be to add the district's Twitter feed to those you already follow? *Choices were read to respondents.*

Response	Percentage
Very likely	3%
Somewhat likely	4%
Not very likely	6%
Not at all likely	52%
I don't use Twitter (not read)	36%

Cross-tabulation: “Regular readers” (every day, up to at least once every two weeks), “Infrequent readers” (at least once a month or less than once a month), and “Never readers” of a prospective Columbia Public Schools Facebook page and blog, and “Very likely/Somewhat likely,” “Not very likely/Not at all likely,” and “I don’t use Twitter” on a possible Twitter feed 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 five respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall score	18-34 (n=89)	35-54 (n=160)	55 or older (n=146)	Up to 5 years (n=76)	5 to 15 years (n=130)	More than 15 years (N=194)	Student, yes (n=136)	Student, past (n=138)	Student, never (n=126)
Regular readers/Facebook	12%	10%	14%	10%	9%	13%	11%	15%	15%	10%
Infrequent readers/Facebook	16%	18%	16%	13%	17%	18%	13%	15%	14%	17%
Never readers/Facebook	71%	71%	66%	75%	70%	65%	75%	68%	74%	70%
Regular readers/blog	2%	2%	4%	1%	1%	2%	4%	5%	0%	2%
Infrequent readers/blog	18%	20%	19%	14%	17%	21%	16%	21%	13%	20%
Never readers/blog	75%	75%	70%	80%	72%	72%	77%	69%	83%	71%
Very likely/Somewhat likely/Twitter	7%	10%	8%	4%	7%	6%	7%	9%	3%	9%
Not very likely/Not at all likely/Twitter	58%	64%	55%	56%	58%	60%	55%	54%	60%	57%
I don’t use Twitter	36%	26%	38%	40%	36%	34%	38%	37%	37%	34%

Cross-tabulation: “Regular readers” (every day, up to at least once every two weeks), “Infrequent readers” (at least once a month or less than once a month), and “Never readers” of a prospective Columbia Public Schools Facebook page and blog, and “Very likely/Somewhat likely,” “Not very likely/Not at all likely,” and “I don’t use Twitter” on a possible Twitter feed by location of the respondent’s residence and ethnicity of respondent. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and ethnicity will not square with “overall,” due to one respondent stating “American Indian” and three others refusing to answer this question.

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=42)	Asian (n=11)	Caucasian (n=319)	Hispanic /Latino (n=24)
Regular readers/Facebook	12%	14%	13%	12%	7%	7%	10%	13%	4%
Infrequent readers/Facebook	16%	14%	13%	13%	21%	10%	10%	16%	17%
Never readers/Facebook	71%	71%	71%	72%	68%	81%	64%	69%	79%
Regular readers/blog	2%	4%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%	3%	0%
Infrequent readers/blog	18%	14%	15%	21%	21%	10%	36%	18%	21%
Never readers/blog	75%	76%	80%	72%	71%	90%	64%	73%	71%
Very likely/Somewhat likely/Twitter	7%	8%	5%	6%	8%	0%	10%	8%	8%
Not very likely/Not at all likely/Twitter	58%	53%	56%	59%	63%	55%	45%	57%	71%
I don’t use Twitter	36%	39%	39%	33%	33%	45%	45%	36%	21%

Cross-tabulation: “Regular readers” (every day, up to at least once every two weeks), “Infrequent readers” (at least once a month or less than once a month), and “Never readers” of a prospective Columbia Public Schools Facebook page and blog, and “Very likely/Somewhat likely,” “Not very likely/Not at all likely,” and “I don’t use Twitter” on a possible Twitter feed by access to high-speed Internet (at either home or work), and 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=338)	No, high-speed access (n=62)	Very/Somewhat involved (n=123)	Not very/Not at all involved (n=161)	Involved in the past, not now (N=116)
Regular readers/Facebook	12%	12%	8%	19%	7%	9%
Infrequent readers/Facebook	16%	16%	13%	15%	16%	13%
Never readers/Facebook	71%	70%	74%	63%	72%	77%
Regular readers/blog	2%	3%	2%	6%	1%	2%
Infrequent readers/blog	18%	19%	11%	22%	18%	13%
Never readers/blog	75%	73%	85%	65%	76%	83%
Very likely/Somewhat likely/Twitter	7%	7%	3%	10%	7%	3%
Not very likely/Not at all likely/Twitter	58%	59%	48%	53%	63%	54%
I don’t use Twitter	36%	34%	48%	37%	30%	42%



Finding 8: When asked to select topics they'd like to hear more about from the school district, survey respondents expressed interest in nearly all of the provided options.

In an effort to better understand what types of stories would attract the interest of typical patrons, the survey then presented 10 different story categories, and asked respondents to identify those that they'd be "really interested" in knowing more about.

In a question like this, the risk is always that respondents will simply select all the ideas, because they all have merit. The results here suggest a bit of that phenomenon, but also show some thought and consideration.

More than 50% of the survey participants said that they would be "really interested in" learning more about:

- Student and teacher success stories – 88%
- Information on the district's finances and budget – 74%
- News about programs that maintain and enforce discipline in schools – 61%
- Information on curriculum and curriculum changes – 58%
- Updates on construction and renovation projects – 53%

The other story ideas drew less interest, although even the lowest rated topic – transportation news – still was of interest to 29%.



- 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
Student and teacher success stories	88%
Information on the district's finances and budget	74%
News about programs that maintain and enforce discipline in schools	61%
Information on curriculum and curriculum changes	58%
Updates on construction and renovation projects	53%
School Board news	46%
News about efforts to close the achievement gap	41%
News about extracurricular activities	40%
School lunch and nutrition news	32%
Transportation news	29%
None of these (not read)	2%
Don't know (not read)	<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, 374 said either "don't know" or "nothing." The other 26 verbatim comments are displayed below.**

Colleges coming to talk with the kids.

Results of surveys like this.

I would like to see some results regarding math and science test scores.



Ways in which the public can be welcomed into the schools and perhaps participate in school events.

Drug usage stats and what they are doing to reduce drug use.

I wish they would track results of physical education skills, i.e., average push-ups, etc. of the students.

Just teacher backgrounds and qualifications.

I would like to see how many kids are being busted each month, because of drugs and alcohol.

Strategies that teachers use in the classroom, and perhaps knowing their professional development.

Charitable activities the school is involved in.

Overall more fair and statistically accurate information regarding the students' development.

Results on all athletic events.

Updates on efforts to break down barriers between students based on ethnic, racial, religious or economic differences. Efforts to remove bullying. Math curriculum specifics, not just generalizations.

Drug prevention education.

Articles on reading scores and methods of teaching. Children learn at different rates. Success has a lot to do with the age at which the child crawled.

Teaching methods used.

Graduation rate and drug usage info.

News about what the district is doing to educate students on drug usage.

Anything on graduation rates, test scores, etc.

Information about what the district is doing to prevent drug use and bullying.

Drug prevention updates. What the district is doing to curtail drug use.



Info on graduation rate.

Drug prevention news and programs.

Maybe some articles on graduation rates.

Comparisons academically to other districts.

Student demographics and how each group is doing academically.



Finding 9: “Friends and neighbors,” the print edition of *The Columbia Tribune*, *The Yearbook*, and local television stations topped the list of other primary sources of district news.

Having now secured patron feedback on the *Quarterly Report*, district and individual school websites, and Columbia Public Schools Television, the survey then presented respondents with a list of other potential sources of district news. As the list was read, respondents were asked to identify which ones they consulted “frequently,” for district updates – beyond weather-related school closing information.

The results show that patrons rely on a mix of informal, third-party and district-sponsored sources for the latest news.

“Friends and neighbors” was (as it usually is in school districts) the most frequently consulted source. A total of 89% of respondents said they relied on this source frequently. The print edition of *The Columbia Tribune* newspaper was second, with 61%, followed by the school district’s annual report, called *The Yearbook*, with 43%, and local television stations, with 41%.

In all, nine different sources were consulted frequently by at least 25% of the survey patrons, suggesting a very healthy appetite for district news.



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
Friends and neighbors	89%
The print edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i> newspaper	61%
The school district’s annual report, called <i>The Yearbook</i>	43%
Local television stations	41%
Students who attend school in the district	33%
Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail	32%
Local radio stations	32%
Individual school newsletters	31%
<i>Inside Columbia</i> magazine	25%
Principals at district schools	24%
The School Board, either in person or in the media	20%
The district’s Central Office Administration, either in person or via e-mail	19%
The online edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i>	18%
Phone calls from the district’s automated message system	18%
Various parent organizations at the schools	17%
<i>The Columbia Business Times</i>	16%
The print edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i> newspaper	14%
The school district’s electronic newsletter, called <i>Key News</i>	9%
The online edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i>	8%
<i>Columbia Home & Lifestyle</i> magazine	7%
The district’s text message alert system, called CPS Alert	4%
After school clubs, such as Boys and Girls Club, and Adventure Club	4%
The Partners in Education program	3%
Social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, or blog sites	2%



Finding 10: When asked to select which source for district news they would consult first, survey respondents chose “friends and neighbors,” followed by the print edition of *The Columbia Tribune*, teachers and other staff members in the district, and individual school newsletters.

The substantive portion of the research closed with a very simple question: Of all the sources that have been discussed, which one would you turn to first for district news?

Once again, “friends and neighbors” was the most popular choice (18%), followed by the print edition of *The Columbia Tribune* (13%), teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail (13%), and individual school newsletters (11%).

Looking at the news sources by different categories, district-related sources fared well, even though they weren’t one of the top two options.

- All district-related sources: 49%
- News media: 33%
- Informal sources (friends and neighbors, and parent organizations): 19%

Print also showed its strength as compared to electronic sources, although the margin was narrower than would have been expected, given the preferences stated earlier:

- All print sources: 32%
- All electronic sources: 23%

In looking at this data, it is important to remember that this question asks a rather unnatural question, in that while an individual can only consult one source “first,” he or she is likely to consult more than one in seeking to understand more about an issue. This is particularly true in a community like Columbia, where the results suggest a very interested and engaged population.

Nonetheless, it is still interesting to see and understand the hierarchy that patrons have assigned to the various options they have for securing district news.

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?

Response	Percentage
Friends and neighbors	18%
The print edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i> newspaper	13%
Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail	13%
Individual school newsletters	11%
Local television stations	9%
Students who attend school in the district	8%
The school district's website, or websites from individual schools	5%
The online edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i>	4%
The School Board, either in person or in the media	3%
The print edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i> newspaper	3%
Local radio stations	3%
The printed newsletter from the district, called <i>Quarterly Report</i>	3%
Principals at district schools	2%
The district's Central Office Administration, either in person or in the media	1%
<i>Inside Columbia</i> magazine	1%
Columbia Public Schools television station	1%
Various parent organizations at the schools	1%
The district's electronic newsletter, called <i>Key News</i>	1%
The school district's annual report, called <i>The Yearbook</i>	1%
The online edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i>	<1%
Phone calls from the district's automated messaging system	<1%



Finding 11: The survey group was heavily Caucasian, had a good mix of ages and lengths of time living in the district, and an excellent blend of current student families, past student families and “never” student families.

While a respondent had to be a head of household (either male or female), a registered voter, aware that he or she lived within the boundaries of the school district, and living in a region of the district that still had room under the quota when he or she was contacted, the other demographic information was collected, but was not subject to quota.

The result was a survey population that:

- Included 20% who had lived in the district up to 5 years, 33% who had lived there more than five years up to 15 years, and 49% who had lived there more than 15 years
- Had a good mix of ages: 22% were 18 to 34, 42% were 35 to 54, 37% were 55 or older
- Included 31% who said they were at least “somewhat involved” with the school district, and another 29% who said they had been involved in the past, but were not now
- Had 85% of the respondents saying that they had access to high-speed Internet either at home, at work, or both
- Included 136 current student families, 138 past student families, and 126 “never” student families
- Was heavily Caucasian (80%), but included representation from individuals of African-American, Hispanic/Latino and Asian heritage

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

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

Response	Percentage
Less than 2 years	4%
2 years to 5 years	16%
More than 5 years to 10 years	12%
More than 10 years to 15 years	21%
More than 15 years	39%
I’ve lived here all my life	10%



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	20%
45 to 54	22%
55 to 64	23%
65 or older	14%
Refused (not read)	1%

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	7%
Somewhat involved	24%
Not very involved	19%
Not at all involved	21%
I was involved in the past, but am no longer involved	29%

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

Response	Percentage
At home and work	43%
At home only	38%
At work only	4%
Neither	16%



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

Response	Percentage
Yes	5%
No	96%

60. In what capacity is this person employed? Is it...*Asked only of the 17 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	11
Food service staff	2
Secretarial staff	1
Transportation staff	1
Parent educator	1
Refused to say	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	129
Yes, children and grandchildren	7
Yes, grandchildren	63
No	201

62. Do you have any children or grandchildren who previously were students in the district, but who have graduated? *Asked only of the 264 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	128
Yes, children and grandchildren	10
Yes, grandchildren	9
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	11%
Hispanic or Latino	6%
Asian	3%
Refused	1%
American Indian	<1%

64. RECORD GENDER

Response	Percentage
Female	54%
Male	47%



Summary

The October/November 2010 survey of 400 randomly selected, head-of-household, registered voter patrons in the Columbia Public School District revealed a patron population that:

- Is generally quite satisfied with the people, programs and facilities of the school district, but seems to have some modest concerns about some district/patron relationship factors, about spending and about class sizes.
- Feels very connected to the school district, as 11 different areas qualified as Patron Hot Buttons, meaning that more than four out of five respondents were willing to offer a grade on those areas, rather than saying “don’t know.” Even more encouraging was the fact that all 11 Hot Buttons were rated at the statistical equivalent of a “B” or higher, meaning the areas that are of most interest to typical patrons are also ones which are rated highly.
- Identifies “community involvement,” “teachers” and the fact that the district “provides an overall high-quality education” as the primary strengths of Columbia Public Schools, while nearly half said either “don’t know” or “it’s fine as is” on a question asking for areas needing improvement.
- Leans more toward printed news sources, though more than one out of every three respondents said that he or she preferred electronic sources. And, is more likely to look to the school district for school district news, than to the news media.
- Includes avid readers of the *Quarterly Report*, which they rate highly for its quality, completeness and visual appeal.
- More infrequently consults the Columbia Public Schools district website and/or individual school websites, but finds these various tools to be well-constructed and easy to navigate.
- Rarely watches CPS Television, although those that do rate it highly as well.
- Offers very modest interest in a district-sponsored Facebook page, a blog or a Twitter feed, with the Facebook page being the most supported of this group of ideas.
- Would like to hear more information about a host of topics that were presented for consideration, particularly “student and teacher success stories,” “information about the district’s finances and budget,” “news about programs that maintain and enforce discipline in the schools,” “information on curriculum and curriculum changes,” and “updates on construction-related projects.”
- Relies on a variety of news sources for district updates, with nine being consulted “frequently” by at least 25% of the surveyed population.
- Would look to “friends and neighbors” first for district news, followed by the print edition of *The Columbia Tribune*, and teachers and other staff members in the district. When all the various options for “who would you turn to first?” were listed, the district-related sources were named by 49% of the respondents, followed by the news media (33%), and informal sources, such as “friends and neighbors” (19%).



The primary pieces of important news from this research would appear to be the following:

- **CPS patrons are satisfied with the performance of their school district, but some express a modest desire to feel more engagement.**

This is not at all uncommon, and is one of the ongoing challenges for school districts of all shapes and sizes. Opportunities to get patrons involved are presented, attendance/participation is slim, and research results reveal a modest – but noticeable – segment saying, “The school district doesn’t involve me.”

Recognizing that there will always be a portion of the patron population that avoids involvement opportunities, yet that expresses concern about not being involved, the focus should be on maximizing those instances as much as possible and actively reporting on their results – even if the attendance was slim or the participation was low.

- **Patrons look to the school district for the latest updates (rather than the news media), and express a modest preference for printed communication versus electronic.**

While electronic communication and the local news media clearly have their champions in the community, a solid segment of patrons count on the district as their first source for school news and prefer the printed word. (These results will be extremely interesting to track from year to year.)

- **Given those results, it’s no surprise that *Quarterly Report* is well-read, followed by the district website (and websites for individual schools), with CPS television still searching for a measurable audience.**

The message seems quite clear: *Quarterly Report* is working. Don’t change it.

The scores for the district and school websites show a modest, but growing, affection for these outlets as sources for news that cannot wait for the next issue of *Quarterly Report*. While the numbers are not large, they are respectable and consistent between the two sources (district and individual school websites).

The television network appears to suffer from what most school district television networks suffer from: Low viewership. While it is a valuable community service to broadcast School Board meetings and other district news, these numbers make it seem very unlikely that CPS Television (again, like nearly all school district television channels) will be a primary source for very many patrons for the foreseeable future.



- **When it comes time to look for school district news, district sources are somewhat more likely to be consulted than the news media, or neighbors in a conversation “over the back fence.”**

While the most survey respondents said they would ask “friends and neighbors” first if they wanted to know what was going on in the school district, district-related sources (newsletters, teachers, websites, etc.) were the “first choice” of close to half, followed by the news media and then those informal, unofficial sources.

Although it is encouraging to see that the school district has built up a reservoir of trust that has it being the first choice for close to half of the individuals who took part in the research, it’s evident that there is also a high-degree of appreciation for third-party news outlets, and an active appetite for news that has patrons turning to multiple sources.

This should be seen as very good news, because it means that the school district is an active topic of conversation among a very engaged patron audience. Clearly, keeping that appetite satisfied is an ongoing – very positive – challenge for the district and its leadership.