



**Columbia Public Schools
Patron and staff online surveys
Final Report
December 21, 2010**

In November and early December 2010, online surveys were made available to the staff and patrons of the Columbia Public Schools at the same time a random telephone survey of registered voter patrons was taking place.

The purpose of these online surveys was to provide an opportunity for patrons and staff who were not contacted as part of the telephone survey to share their thoughts and ideas. A total of 972 patrons and 368 staff members took advantage of this opportunity. However, not all participants completed every question, which is not unusual for a survey in the online format.

The general structure for each of these online surveys was similar to the telephone survey, except for minor wording changes to make it appropriate for the online format, and the use of more general demographic questions.

As with all online surveys, there are some limitations that make them more of a quasi-quantitative process, than true quantitative research.

First, those who participate are self-selected, meaning that the results tend to lean more toward the passionate respondents than being representative of a true cross-section of opinions from the audience in question.

Second, because they are self-selected, there is also not the true "random sample" spread across the school district that would be seen in a quantitative method driven by population patterns. As such, certain regions are often over-represented, while others are short.

Third, the format is more limiting than a telephone survey. Respondents can and do stop during the process, leaving one to wonder if a person didn't answer a question, because he or she had a specific issue with the topic, simply got fatigued or some other reason.

Fourth, the data charts for the online surveys will not show the “don’t know” responses and other similar answers. This is because answers such as “don’t know” were not provided to telephone survey respondents, and were only recorded if offered by those respondents. To make the comparisons between the survey types equivalent, only those answer options provided to all participants in both formats are displayed in this report. (As such, the percentages on the online questions will not always add to 100%.)

Even with these limitations, this data still provides a valuable glimpse into the opinions of the staff members and patrons who chose to take part.

This report presents a summary of the data from these studies by topic area and, where possible, compares that data to the statistically reliable patron telephone survey. (In the cases where rank order is presented, the base survey for determining rank order in the display is the patron telephone survey.)

Topic: 5-point scale ratings for the people, programs, facilities and district/patron relationship efforts of the Columbia Public Schools

The online surveys asked patrons and staff members to rate 26 people, program, facility and district/patron relationship factors, plus the district's overall performance. (The list was identical to the list for the phone survey in all but one area – the district's record on making and fulfilling promises – which, somehow was not noted as missing from the list despite multiple reviews of the draft online surveys.)

The results show a familiar pattern, as patrons who participated (92% of whom were current district parents) were more critical than were the typical patrons who took part in the telephone survey, while staff members had scores that ranged above, below and statistically identical to the telephone survey participants.

This is a fairly common pattern, because, as stated above, the online process tends to draw a higher percentage of the passionate than do statistically reliable telephone surveys, which include the passionate, the very dispassionate and everything in between in the survey groups.

As a point of comparison, 21 of 27 areas (plus the district's overall performance) received a grade that was the statistical equivalent of a "B" – which is 3.80 – or higher from telephone survey participants. On the patron online survey, eight areas achieved the same level, while 18 did on the staff online survey.

Factor	5-point scale rating/patron telephone	5-point scale rating/patron online	5-point scale rating/staff online
The performance of district employees in making you feel welcome when you visit a school or attend a school event	4.49	3.96	4.35
Performance of district teachers	4.38	4.10	4.45
Quality of technology available to students	4.33	4.04	3.96
Safety of students	4.29	3.87	4.07
Performance of school principals	4.28	3.95	4.11
Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities	4.25	3.73	3.65
Quality of education provided to students	4.23	3.80	4.25
The district's efforts to get parents involved	4.20	3.74	4.03
Quality of school facilities	4.17	3.61	3.62
Preparation of students for college, vocational training or employment	4.16	3.73	4.17
The quality of vocational or technical programming for students	4.12	3.94	4.26
The quality of the district's Early Childhood programs	4.12	3.94	4.12
Overall grade	4.10	3.63	3.99
The district's graduation rate	3.99	3.72	4.05
The district's efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons	3.98	3.60	4.05
Performance of the Central Office Administration	3.97	3.68	3.98
The quality of the district's transportation program	3.95	3.34	3.48
Value received for the tax dollars spent	3.94	3.53	4.07
The district's efforts to ensure equivalent educational programming from school to school	3.89	3.44	3.58
Performance of the Columbia Board of Education	3.87	3.40	3.51
The district's effort to ensure equivalent school buildings	3.85	3.25	3.26
The effectiveness of communications with the public by the Columbia Public Schools	3.82	3.52	4.00
The balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities	3.78	3.37	3.53
The district's efforts to involve citizens in decision-making	3.69	3.28	3.91
The district's responsiveness to patron concerns	3.56	3.36	3.95
Class sizes, meaning the number of students in each classroom	3.52	3.34	2.96
The district's performance in closing the achievement gap among its students	3.47	3.17	3.47

Topic: Strengths and areas needing improvement/patrons

A total of 674 patrons responded to the question seeking their thoughts on the district's strengths. The main themes from those answers were as follows:

- Teachers are outstanding
- Caring, committed staff
- Extensive, challenging curriculum
- Committed superintendent

A total of 711 patrons responded to the question seeking their thoughts on areas where the district could improve. The main themes from those answers were as follows:

- Need to work on discipline/bullying issues
- Many school buildings need to be updated/improved
- Need to upgrade the curriculum/make it more rigorous
- Transportation system needs to improve
- Need smaller class sizes

Topic: Strengths and areas needing improvement/staff

A total of 264 staff members responded to the question seeking their thoughts on the district's strengths. The main themes from those answers were as follows:

- Great teachers and administrators
- Strong curriculum
- Ability to work with all cultures and skill levels
- Engaged community
- Superintendent is on the right track and very enthusiastic

A total of 261 staff members responded to the question seeking their thoughts on areas where the district could improve. The main themes from those answers were as follows:

- Need smaller class sizes
- Discipline issues are an ongoing challenge
- Need to do more to close the achievement gap
- Technology needs to be upgraded
- Need better communication between Central Office and the building/teacher level

Topic: Preferred type of source for news, and preference for district-sponsored or news media sources

Not surprisingly (given the medium), online survey participants from both the patron and staff groups said they strongly preferred getting their news from electronic, rather than print, sources. Whereas 58% of the typical patrons who participated in the telephone survey said they preferred print, only 23% of patron online participants, and 25% of staff online participants said the same thing.

However, in terms of their preferred source for school news (the school district or the news media), there was no difference of opinion. Patrons who participated in telephone and online surveys chose the school district as their preferred source (61% and 63%, respectively), while staff members were even more enthusiastic, with 80% preferring the school district.

Preference for type of news outlet	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
Printed	58%	23%	25%
Electronic	37%	77%	75%

Preference for source of school district news	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
School district	61%	63%	80%
News media	22%	37%	20%

Topic: *Quarterly Report*

Similar readership levels for *Quarterly Report* were seen in all three survey formats, while online participants were slightly more critical of the quality and completeness of the news contained in the publication, and its graphic design.

Specifically, 81% of telephone survey participants said that they read the publication “at least once a year” or more often, while 84% of patron online participants, and 82% of staff online participants said the same thing.

In terms of the quality and completeness of the news contained in *Quarterly Report*, 85% of the typical patrons who took part in the telephone survey rated it either “excellent” or “good,” while 63% of patron online participants, and 73% of staff online participants offered the same rating. While these ratings are lower, it is important to remember that both are still well over half, meaning that a strong majority of both online audiences still considers the news quality to be at least “good.”

The same pattern was seen in terms of the rating of the publication’s graphic design quality. While a stunning 93% of telephone survey participants rated the look and feel as either “excellent” or “good,” the number slipped to 77% among patron online participants, and 82% among staff online respondents. Again, it is important to keep the results in context, meaning that the scores may be lower among the online participants, but they are still quite strong.

Frequency of reading <i>Quarterly Report</i>	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
Every issue	49%	58%	58%
Every other issue	18%	15%	15%
At least once a year	14%	11%	9%
Less than once a year	7%	5%	3%
Never	12%	9%	12%

Quality and completeness of news in <i>Quarterly Report</i>	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
Excellent	28%	9%	15%
Good	57%	54%	58%
Fair	13%	30%	24%
Poor	2%	4%	1%

Quality of the look of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
Excellent	21%	19%	28%
Good	72%	58%	54%
Fair	5%	19%	14%
Poor	0%	3%	1%

Topic: CPS District website

The utilization pattern for the CPS District website among online survey respondents differs meaningfully from the answers provided by those who took the survey via the telephone.

Specifically, while 32% of telephone participants visited the CPS District site “at least once a month” or more often, 72% of patron online participants, and 90% of staff online participants said the same thing.

In terms of the ease of navigation and “finding what you are looking for” the results were similar, though modestly lower among online survey participants. A total of 93% of those telephone survey participants who had visited the District website at least once a month said it was either “very easy” or “easy” to navigate. Among online respondents with the same level of use, 77% of patrons and 83% of staff members said the same thing.

How often the CPS district website is visited	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
At least once a week	12%	26%	53%
At least once every two weeks	9%	19%	20%
At least once a month	11%	27%	17%
Less than once a month	23%	24%	9%
I’ve never visited the website	47%	4%	<1%

Among those who visit at least once a month, how they rate the ease of navigation and the ability to find what is being sought	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
Very easy	41%	15%	24%
Easy	52%	62%	59%
Difficult	6%	18%	14%
Very difficult	0%	4%	3%

Topic: Individual school websites

The participation pattern and review of navigation ease for individual school websites was similar to the CPS District site.

Specifically, while 32% of telephone participants said they visited an individual school website at least once a month or more often, 76% of patron online participants, and 84% of staff online respondents said the same thing.

Among those who visited at least once a month, 98% of telephone survey participants called the individual school websites either “very easy” or “easy” to navigate, while 79% of patron online respondents, and 92% of staff online participants said the same thing.

How often individual school websites are visited	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
At least once a week	13%	32%	58%
At least once every two weeks	9%	18%	13%
At least once a month	10%	26%	13%
Less than once a month	22%	21%	15%
I've never visited an individual school website	47%	4%	1%

Among those who visit at least once a month, how they rate the ease of navigation and the ability to find what is being sought	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
Very easy	24%	19%	31%
Easy	74%	60%	61%
Difficult	2%	16%	5%
Very difficult	0%	4%	1%

Topic: CPS Television

Viewing frequency for CPS Television was very similar among the three survey groups, as only 17% of telephone survey respondents, 13% of patron online participants, and 15% of staff online participants said they watched “at least once a month” or more often.

Online participants tended to have somewhat more morning viewing of CPS television than did telephone survey respondents, although the evening viewing hours were the most popular among all three surveys. And, while a solid majority of all three audiences that viewed the network at least once a month called the programming either “excellent” or “good,” at least one in four on both online surveys called it only “fair.”

How often respondents watch CPS television	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
Every day	1%	1%	1%
A few times a week	1%	2%	1%
At least once a week	3%	3%	3%
At least once every two weeks	2%	1%	2%
At least once a month	10%	6%	8%
Less than once a month	28%	26%	37%
I’ve never watched	53%	62%	49%

Among those who watch at least once a month, when they watch most often	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
Morning	3%	17%	12%
Afternoon	1%	5%	4%
Evening	78%	69%	75%

Among those who watch at least once a month, how they would rate the quality of the programming	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
Excellent	33%	11%	11%
Good	60%	45%	59%
Fair	6%	31%	25%
Poor	0%	7%	4%

CPS Television programming suggestions from patrons who responded to the online survey

A total of 39 patrons chose to answer this question. The main themes from those responses were:

- More programs produced by students
- More information about individual school activities

CPS Television programming suggestions from staff members who responded to the online survey

A total of 17 staff members chose to answer this question. The main themes from those responses were:

- Show more school-level news and activity reports
- Spotlight more on individual students and teachers

Topic: Interest in a Facebook page, district blog and Twitter feed

Online survey participants were somewhat more enthusiastic than telephone survey participants about the possibility of a district-sponsored Facebook page or blog, but they were equally blasé about the possibility of a district Twitter feed.

Specifically, while only 12% of telephone survey participants said they'd check a district Facebook page "at least once every two weeks" or more often, 29% of patron online participants, and 28% of staff online participants said the same thing. These numbers are not overwhelming, but it is somewhat more encouraging that those who obviously make more use of the Internet would be more interested in a Facebook presence for the district than the typical patron.

In terms of a blog, only 8% of telephone participants said they would check one from the district "at least once a month" or more often, while 37% of patron online respondents, and 41% of staff online respondents said the same thing.

However, a district-sponsored Twitter feed was not nearly as popular, as more than 80% of participants in all three surveys said either that they would be "not at all likely" to add a CPS Twitter feed to the ones they follow, or that they "don't use Twitter."

How often respondents would check a district Facebook page	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
I'd check every day for a new posting	2%	7%	5%
At least once a week	4%	16%	16%
At least once every two weeks	6%	6%	7%
At least once a month	11%	11%	7%
Less than once a month	5%	13%	14%
Never	71%	33%	39%

How often respondents would check a district-sponsored blog	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
At least once a week	<1%	15%	17%
At least once every two weeks	2%	7%	10%
At least once a month	6%	15%	14%
Less than once a month	12%	13%	15%
Never	75%	33%	34%

How like respondents would be to add a district-sponsored Twitter feed to the ones they already follow	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
Very likely	3%	5%	6%
Somewhat likely	4%	5%	7%
Not very likely	6%	7%	7%
Not at all likely	52%	9%	10%
I don't use Twitter	36%	74%	71%

Topic: Additional topics of interest

As was the case with the telephone survey of typical residents, nearly every story idea presented to the online participants for consideration drew strong support.

While the numbers differed somewhat among the three surveys, with the exception of transportation news, all the stories generated a meaningful level of interest in “hearing more from the school district.”

Subjects that respondents would like to hear more about from the school district	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
Student and teacher success stories	88%	73%	82%
Information on the district's finances and budget	74%	64%	73%
News about programs that maintain and enforce discipline in schools	61%	63%	60%
Information on curriculum and curriculum changes	58%	86%	75%
Updates on construction and renovation projects	53%	57%	56%
School Board news	46%	52%	57%
News about efforts to close the achievement gap	41%	54%	59%
News about extracurricular activities	40%	57%	45%
School lunch and nutrition news	32%	48%	29%
Transportation news	29%	35%	19%

Other topics that patron online survey respondents would like to hear more about

A total of 248 patrons chose to answer this question. The main themes from their responses were as follows (ideas that are repeated from the above list are intentional, because they were emphasized by the respondents in the follow-up question):

- How the district helps students who need more individualized programming
- How the district is working to make school a safe environment
- Efforts to close the achievement gap

Other topics that staff online survey respondents would like to hear more about

A total of 61 staff members chose to answer this question. The main themes from their responses were as follows (ideas that are repeated from the list above are intentional, because they were emphasized by the respondents in the follow-up question):

- Discipline issues and what's being done
- Innovations in education
- How the district is addressing the challenge of serving multiple cultures
- Focus on individual schools and their achievements

Topic: Additional sources that are consulted frequently for district news

When presented with a list of potential other sources for district news, and asked to identify which ones they consult frequently, online survey respondents differed from a little to significantly, as compared to the patron telephone survey.

To simplify the process, it is most helpful to identify the news sources that at least 25% of the respondents said they consulted frequently, because these should be considered the primary news sources for these audiences. Nine such sources were seen on the telephone survey, while the patron online survey had 12 and the staff online survey had 10.

Sources consulted “frequently” by respondents for district news	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
Friends and neighbors	89%	59%	47%
The print edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i> newspaper	61%	43%	52%
The school district’s annual report, called <i>The Yearbook</i>	43%	12%	15%
Local television stations	41%	66%	71%
Students who attend school in the district	33%	53%	39%
Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail	32%	58%	75%
Local radio stations	32%	57%	53%
Individual school newsletters	31%	64%	52%
<i>Inside Columbia</i> magazine	25%	25%	31%
Principals at district schools	24%	26%	24%
The School Board, either in person or in the media	20%	14%	24%
The district’s Central Office Administration, either in person or via e-mail	19%	13%	37%
The online edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i>	18%	49%	45%
Phone calls from the district’s automated message system	18%	24%	11%
Various parent organizations at the schools	17%	31%	17%
<i>The Columbia Business Times</i>	16%	13%	8%
The print edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i> newspaper	14%	11%	7%
The school district’s electronic newsletter, called <i>Key News</i>	9%	11%	10%
The online edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i>	8%	24%	20%
<i>Columbia Home and Lifestyle</i> magazine	7%	8%	11%
The district’s text message alert system, called CPS Alert	4%	39%	43%
After school clubs, such as Boys and Girls Club, and Adventure Club	4%	11%	4%
The Partners in Education program	3%	7%	9%
Social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, or blog sites	2%	13%	9%

Topic: Source that is consulted first for district news (online percentages will add to somewhat more than 100%, due to the need to round up percentages on numerous choices)

When asked who they turn to first for school district news, online respondents differed significantly from telephone research participants.

Specifically, patron online respondents preferred the print edition of *The Columbia Tribune*, the school district's website, local television stations, the online edition of *The Columbia Tribune* (tied), and teachers and other staff members, in that order.

Staff members, however, were more likely to look to teachers and other staff members, followed by the print edition of *The Columbia Tribune*, principals at district schools, local television stations, the online edition of *The Columbia Tribune*, and either the school district's website or individual schools' websites.

Two items which generated responses of greater than 10% among patron telephone participants – friends and neighbors, and individual school newsletters – were not mentioned as frequently by online respondents.

Response	Percentage/patron telephone	Percentage/patron online	Percentage/staff online
Friends and neighbors	18%	3%	<1%
The print edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i> newspaper	13%	16%	15%
Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail	13%	12%	23%
Individual school newsletters	11%	9%	2%
Local television stations	9%	13%	13%
Students who attend school in the district	8%	4%	1%
The school district's website, or websites from individual schools	5%	15%	10%
The online edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i>	4%	13%	12%
The School Board, either in person or in the media	3%	1%	1%
The print edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i> newspaper	3%	1%	0%
Local radio stations	3%	4%	1%
The printed newsletter from the district, called <i>Quarterly Report</i>	3%	2%	2%
Principals at district schools	2%	3%	14%
The district's Central Office Administration, either in person or in the media	1%	<1%	5%
<i>Inside Columbia</i> magazine	1%	<1%	0%
Columbia Public Schools television station	1%	2%	0%
Various parent organizations at the schools	1%	1%	<1%
The district's electronic newsletter, called <i>Key News</i>	1%	1%	0%
The school district's annual report, called <i>The Yearbook</i>	1%	<1%	0%
The online edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i>	<1%	1%	0%
Phone calls from the district's automated messaging system	<1%	1%	1%
The district's text message alert system, called CPS Alert	0%	2%	2%
After school programs, such as Boys and Girls Club and Adventure Club	0%	<1%	<1%
<i>The Columbia Business Times</i>	0%	<1%	0%
Social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, or blog sites	0%	<1%	0%
The Partners in Education program	0%	<1%	0%

Topic: Demographics/patron online survey

As is typical for a patron online survey, the respondent group was dominated by current district parents (92%), however, there was a fairly good distribution of respondents by geographic group.

Location of a patron's residence	Percentage
West of Providence and South of Broadway	45% - 4th ward
East of Providence and North of Broadway	23% - 3rd + 1st
West of Providence and North of Broadway	18% - 1st
East of Providence and South of Broadway	14% - 2nd + 5th

* 74 respondents chose not to answer this question

Student status situation	Percentage
I currently have a child (or children) attending school in the Columbia Public Schools	92%
I had a child (or children) who attended school in the Columbia Public Schools in the past, but they have all graduated	10%
I have never had a child (or children) who attended school in the Columbia Public Schools	3%
I have school-age children who currently attend private or parochial school, instead of the Columbia Public Schools	2%

*Percentages will add to more than 100%, because respondents were permitted to choose more than one category if more than one applied; 59 respondents chose not to answer this question

Topic: Demographics/staff online survey

With teachers dominating the staff of any school district, it comes as no surprise that 76% of survey respondents identified themselves as being Certified Staff, while 86% of the participants said they live inside the district's boundaries.

General job title	Percentage
Certified staff	76%
Classified staff	17%
Administration	7%

*30 respondents chose not to answer this question

Location of the staff member's residence	Percentage
Inside the boundaries of the Columbia Public Schools	86%
Outside the boundaries of the Columbia Public Schools	14%

*26 respondents chose not to answer this question