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Featured Article

["Market Research in Public Education"](#)

School Administrator

Author: Michael Gross

For a copy of the full-text article,
email Perspectives: info@perspec.com

Did you know...?

- 22% of respondents in a national sampling when asked "In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing the United States today?" stated education as an important problem...

Reference: *The School Administrator*

- Fun fact: a school in Philadelphia is offering a donor opportunity: a \$5 million donor gets school naming rights...
- "In states that allow, there are districts that now sell advertisements on their school buses..."

Reference: *The New York Times: "In Public Schools, the Name Game as a Donor Lure"*

- 38.4 million children were enrolled in pre-K through grade 8 in 2005

The Impact of Research

4 Reasons research can impact the future of the district

How different could your district be if you knew the answer to questions such as: where does our district rank in comparison to other schools; how have we improved in communicating with parents over the last five years; what are the priorities and issues of concern for our district to address according to the community? All of these questions can impact the future of your district and decisions the district is facing.

In our experience with school districts, research can benefit districts in many ways:

- **Accountability.** Documenting performance once research has been conducted reinforces accountability of the district with both parents and community. Research results that are reported to the community can improve standing of district and can be used as support for the accreditation process.
- **Effective Use of Resources.** District expenditures can be more efficiently allocated based on understanding the top priorities of the district according to parents and the community. By knowing the best media and methods, communication with parents and community members is more cost effective and efficient.
- **Opportunity for input and evaluation.** Information from research can aid districts in gaining accreditation. Accreditation requirements for valuing students and community, and strategic planning can be met by measuring external benchmarks through research.
- **Learn how to build relationships.** Move towards a two-way communication process by listening to parents and community members and responding with information and actions that address their concerns. Understanding their needs and concerns can strengthen relationships more so than public comments at board meetings.



Research can **significantly impact a district's future** based on data received and information learned. Perspectives Consulting Group, Inc. provides information

- 6% growth is expected by 2014-an additional 2.2 million elementary students
- Midwest projected percentage change in public Pre-K-8 enrollment is 2.4%

Reference: "Trends in Education Statistics"

Useful Links

Education Vital Signs 2006

See how Michigan ranks compared to other states: a wealth of great information and statistics

North Central Association: Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement

Find answers to questions such as: "How Does District Accreditation Work?"

The Parent Institute

Read great information about Parental Involvement: barriers and what your district can do to improve Parental Involvement

School Match

A great source for reliable information about schools-refer parents to check out your district

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and services, which will allow you to plan and make informed decisions based on **benchmarking data** about the performance, preferences, and priorities of the district.

Polls and Parents

Surprising results when comparing parents and staff

Districts strive to be on the same page with parents and their community—but what happens when that isn't the case?



In a recent article in *Principal* about a survey conducted with parents and educators about priorities for parental involvement, the author John Wherry states: "What surprised me was the striking difference between educators' and parents' priorities" (*Principal*, March/April 2005). For example, educators rated the statement "Read to your child every day and have your child read to you" first out of 25 priorities. Parents rated the same statement 15th out of the same 25 stated priorities.

Another recent study conducted by AP-AOL Learning Services involving 1,085 parents and 810 teachers showed differences in opinions about various aspects of education as well. For example, an Associated Press summary of the study states that this survey found "less than half of parents say student discipline is a serious concern...Teachers scoff at that. Two in three [teachers] call children's misbehavior a major problem." Both survey results show a divide between parents and staff when it comes to certain aspects of education. The AP-AOL survey also found differences in opinions related to importance of test scores, homework load, and quality of education.

This raises the question, does your district face some sort of disconnect when it comes to views of the parents and views of the teachers and administration?

Check out the article "[Do you have a Parent Involvement Disconnect?](#)" and see ways to improve parental involvement along with how your own district can begin to evaluate parental involvement. The article suggests districts take these first 2 steps: "1. Give parents and staff identical surveys...2. Have the staff choose 3 or 4 priorities from the results." By looking at the survey results and the priorities listed, your district can use the information to communicate more effectively with your parents and match the priorities of the district with not only parents, but also the community.

Perspectives Consulting Group, Inc. provides services such as parent, community, and staff surveys that can provide your district with essential information to make effective decisions.

Look at this book!

The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR

Al Ries & Laura Ries, Harper Business, 2002



Public relations are essential for school districts in the 21st century – and authors Al Ries and Laura Ries would say far more effective than advertising. *The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR* follows a path as predictable as the title; a discussion of the fall of advertising, building a case for the rise of PR, and finally a dissection of the differences between the two.

While the attack on advertising is interesting, the meat of the book begins about 50 pages in when the authors state their hypothesis; “Marketing deals with perceptions. To run a successful advertising or public relations program, you have to create more than talk value. You have to deal with those nasty perceptions . . . Publicity or PR is a more effective way to deal with those perceptions.”

There are actually some educational examples included in the book; however, they are all focused at the college level. However, throughout the book, and especially in the section about the rise of PR, there are useful ideas for anyone involved in public relations. One idea that should resonate strongly in the K-12 setting is that advertising can only be a reminder, it cannot be the argument. Ries & Ries go on to say that the reminder function is important, but only after you have established credibility in other ways, generally by public relations. How often has a millage campaign been defeated because the district has failed to establish credibility with the voters?

Another idea for K-12 schools comes from an example in the book citing the AARP – the American Association of Retired People. In the process of trying to change peoples’ perceptions of the AARP, Ries & Ries point out that “No publicity, no change of perception. It is as simple as that.” They go on to counsel that the solution to a PR problem is invariably a single, simple focus. How many districts send out dozens of messages, and wonder why the public does not understand? The authors caution that it takes fortitude to keep your focus narrowly targeted. They say the biggest mistake you can make is to try to broaden your appeal when you should be trying to “deepen” it.

If your work involves public relations to any degree, you will find *The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR* an interesting and thought-provoking book – that may inspire and invigorate your efforts.



In the next issue:

Questions answered!

3 Common Questions about Research

Did you receive the Educational CD-ROM?

We have developed a **resource** for school districts that outlines the services Perspectives Consulting Group, Inc. offers. If you are **interested in receiving the CD-ROM**, please e-mail Katie at info@perspec.com and we will be happy to send it to you and anyone else in your district who might be interested.

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