

Winter 2006

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Featured Article

Title: "KPS students, parents want more help"

Results of a student and parent survey related to the Kalamazoo Promise

Kalamazoo Gazette

Columnist: Julie Mack

For a copy of the article: e-mail request to info@perspec.com

Did you know...?

- **70%** of teachers feel "out of the loop" in their districts' decision making process
- **4%** of superintendents see communication with the community as their most pressing concern

Reference: *American Teacher*, 2001

- **74.6%** of survey respondents think that the local school districts are encouraging parents and community members to be **active in the schools**

Reference: 2006 Community Educational Accountability Survey

The Three Legged Stool:

Parents, the community and staff supporting the district

When thinking about the word "involvement," it is likely the next thought that comes to mind is "increase involvement" or "more engagement," especially with parents of children in the district. In a recent article, it was reported that 59% of teachers and 71% of principals believe in the importance of parental involvement and, at the same time, are frustrated with the [actual] level of involvement.



What if we looked at involvement further and evaluated the community's involvement, district staff involvement *and* parental involvement?

Gaining information from all **three** of these groups is an essential part of strengthening the involvement with your district; and the experts agree. As NSPRA Executive Director Rich Bagin stated in a recent NSPRA report,

"...research leaves no doubt that well-planned and effective **ongoing communication** from schools makes a significant impact on parent and community involvement." The key is *two-way* communication. 1- Parents and the community having a way to communicate **with** the district, and 2- the district communicating **to** staff, parents and the community.

Once a district offers or presents a way for parents and the community to communicate with the district, the district can focus on gaining information from these groups. From this communication, certain conclusions can be made and trends can be seen, which allows the district to move forward with implementing changes and new standards.

As stated in a recent article in *The School Administrator*, "Our studies of the views of parents, teachers, superintendents, and others indicate that different groups often operate on surprisingly different wavelengths." Therefore, it is important to work to understand these differences. The article in *The School Administrator* can be summarized with the following thoughts:

- **Challenge** parents to stay informed with up-to-date information about their child's education; and

Useful Links

Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships

A part of Johns Hopkins University; using research to produce new and useful knowledge that helps to connect communities, and schools improve learning and development

SEDL

National Center for Family and Community Connections With Schools

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Critical Issue: Creating the School Climate and Structures to Support Parent and Family Involvement

National Association of Elementary School Principals

Check out this site for resources specifically for parent education and motivation

Contact Us

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challenge them to get involved

- **Communicate** with all three groups: the internal district staff, parents, and the overall community to understand the perception gaps
- **Collaborate** and form a stronger district. Engage the community to work together on certain issues and district goals

Information can be gained from the parents, the community and staff simply by asking questions. This research can **guide a district's future** based on data received and information learned. Perspectives Consulting Group, Inc. provides information and services, which will allow you to plan and make informed decisions based on **data** about staff, parent and community opinions, concerns and perceptions about the district.

References:

Just Waiting to Be Asked? A Fresh Look at Attitudes on Public Engagement. Public Agenda.

Johnson, Jean, and Will Friedman. "Dear Public: Can We Talk?." The School Administrator February (2006)

Padgett, Raven. "Best Ways to Involve Parents." Communicator Nov.(2006): 44-45.

"How Strong Communication Contributes to Student and School Success: Parent and Family Involvement" from the NSPRA.

*Was this article helpful? How can we improve?
Click here to send feedback to kshoop@perspec.com.*

How to Get the School Board on Board



(excerpt)

It is no secret that school districts and district administrators have many things in common. More often, districts are facing similar situations, such as tight budgets and less monetary assistance from the state. Similarly, most administrators have faced matters regarding putting a bond proposal on a ballot, and then managing either the positive or negative outcome of the election.

Along with both examples listed above, in our experience, administrators can also relate to the issues and challenges that come about during the decision-making process to conducting research or select a consultant. After working with a number of school districts, we have found that for any type of consulting project—such as surveys, strategic planning, or long-range planning research—groups such as district leadership, staff, parents, and the community play a role in the decision-making process.

With all the people, and all the questions raised regarding the expenditure, the question becomes, how does everyone get on the same page? It is a familiar situation where the superintendent and maybe other administrative staff are interested and understand the benefits and need of research, but when the topic is brought to the board, there

might be a disconnect causing the board to question, and possibly turn down the proposed idea.

If your district has ever asked the following questions—

- ✓ How important is scientifically conducted research?
- ✓ What about internet surveys?
- ✓ How can we justify spending that money when we are already facing a tight budget?
- ✓ We already offer opportunities for community feedback and communication—isn't that enough?

—contact us to read the full whitepaper “How to Get the School Board on Board: Answers to Common Questions and Concerns 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 us at info@perspec.com. We will be happy to send the information.

Announcement of NEW website!

We are pleased to announce that a new Perspectives Consulting Group, Inc. website is now available at www.perspec.com!

The redesigned site includes even **more resources** and **improved navigation**. The website now includes a section for links that are useful to the general public, as well as links specific to educational administrators, staff, and district leadership. The website also includes “How to select a consultant,” a resource for organizations that are looking to hire a consultant that will fit their research needs. E-newsletters for educational organizations now are included on the site, where viewers have the opportunity to subscribe to future newsletters or view past newsletters. Over the next few months, we will continue to introduce **new features** and **improved navigation** on our new website. Your comments and suggestions for strengthening our communications are encouraged and welcome!



Feel free to send website comments to:
info@perspec.com