

PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFORMATION
AND RATINGS

By

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The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between the degree that school district patrons are knowledgeable about their local public school systems and their ratings concerning the school and its various functions and programs. It is hoped that the results of this study have contributed both to a better understanding of the importance of keeping patrons informed about what is happening in the public schools and to the systematic measurement of how patrons rate the local school district.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. RESEARCH PROBLEM	1
Introduction.	1
Statement of the Problem.	5
Purpose of the Study.	6
Research Questions.	6
Limitations	6
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	9
Introduction.	9
How Public Opinion is Formed.	9
School-Community Communications	15
Importance of Public Understanding.	23
Rationale and Hypotheses.	30
III. METHODOLOGY.	37
Introduction.	37
Research Hypotheses	37
Conceptual and Operational Definitions of Variables	38
Level of School Information Held by Patrons.	38
Rating Patrons Give the School District.	39
Identification of Population.	40
Sample Selection	40
Demographic Data	41
Data Collection	43
Instrumentation	45
Questionnaire.	45
Data Analysis	46
IV. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA.	49
Introduction.	49
Testing the Hypotheses.	49
Hypothesis I.	49
Hypothesis Ia	50
Hypothesis Ib	53
Hypothesis Ic	54

Chapter	Page
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.	63
Introduction.	63
Summary	63
Conclusions	65
Discussion.	66
Recommendations	69
Recommendations for Practice	69
Recommendations for Further Research	69
Concluding Comments	70
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	71
APPENDIXES.	75
APPENDIX A - RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	76
APPENDIX B - LETTERS	85
APPENDIX C - INSTRUMENT DESIGN PANEL OF JUDGES	90
APPENDIX D - ADDITIONAL DATA	92

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. National Ratings of the Public Schools, 1974-1980.	2
II. Demographic Data Describing Respondents.	42
III. Respondents' Sources of Information and Amount of Contact With Schools	44
IV. Analysis of Computed Pearson Correlation Between Amount of School Information Held by Patrons and Rating Patrons Gave School District.	50
V. Summary of Findings of Correlations Between Amount of Information Held by Patrons and Ratings Given by Patrons of Eleven Operational Areas of School District Using Kendall's Tau	51
VI. Table of Means--Ratings by Groups.	52
VII. Table of Means--Total Number of Correct Answers by Groups	53
VIII. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Ratings of School District for Patrons With Children in Public Schools and Patrons With No Children in Public Schools	54
IX. ANOVA Summary Table of Parents' Ratings of School District for Parents Who Have Had Low Participa- tion in School Activities and Programs and Parents Who Have Had High Participation in School Activi- ties and Programs.	55
X. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Ratings of School District for Patrons With Children in Public Schools and Patrons With No Children in Public Schools	56
XI. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Total Number of Correct Answers for Patrons With Children in Public Schools and Patrons With No Children in Public Schools.	56
XII. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Ratings of School District for Patrons Working in Business and Pro- fessional Positions and Patrons Working in Other Occupational Positions	57

Table	Page
XIII. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Total Number of Correct Answers for Patrons Working in Business and Professional Positions and Patrons Working in Other Occupational Positions.	57
XIV. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Ratings of School District for Patrons Who Are College Graduates and Patrons Who Are Not College Graduates.	58
XV. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Total Number of Correct Answers for Patrons Who Are College Graduates and Patrons Who Are Not College Graduates.	58
XVI. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Ratings of School District by Sex.	59
XVII. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Total Number of Correct Answers by Sex	59
XVIII. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Ratings of School District for Patrons Who Are Fifty Years and Older and for Patrons Who Are Under Fifty Years Old.	60
XIX. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Total Number of Correct Answers for Patrons Who Are Fifty Years and Older and for Patrons Who Are Under Fifty Years Old.	60
XX. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Ratings of School District for Patrons Who Earn \$30,000 or More Annually and for Patrons Who Earn Under \$30,000 Annually	61
XXI. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Total Number of Correct Answers for Patrons Who Earn \$30,000 or More Annually and for Patrons Who Earn Under \$30,000 Annually	61
XXII. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Ratings of School District for Patrons Who Have Resided in District for Five Years or Less and for Patrons Who Have Resided in District for Over Five Years.	62
XXIII. ANOVA Summary Table of Patrons' Total Number of Correct Answers for Patrons Who Have Resided in District for Five Years or Less and for Patrons Who Have Resided in District for Over Five Years	62

CHAPTER I

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

The image of education in America is in serious trouble. Fred Hechinger, former education editor of The New York Times, is quoted:

America is in headlong retreat from its commitment to education. Political confusion and economic uncertainty have shaken the people's faith in education as the key to financial and social success. This retreat ought to be the most pertinent issue in any examination of the country's condition. . . . At stake is nothing less than the survival of American democracy.¹

America has lost its confidence in public education. This decline perhaps started in 1957 when Russia beat the United States into space. From that point on, public education in this country was no longer a closed sub-system, answerable only to itself. The public began to ask questions and demand answers. And some of the answers were not satisfactory.

Most inner city schools were deplorable. Facilities were inadequate and achievement was disappointing. Discrimination was uncovered. The federal government stepped in and passed the historic Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 which channeled billions of dollars into an effort to upgrade the education of the poor.

Teachers began unionizing. Quiet little school teachers, who traditionally had taught for a pittance, put down their chalk, picked up a picket sign, and demanded better wages and working conditions.

School finance became a major issue. State and federal courts declared state funding formulas unfair to poorer school districts. Property taxes escalated by leaps and bounds; state taxes rose rapidly. With improved methods of birth control and changing lifestyles, school enrollments began to decline and the cost of education continued to escalate. Senior citizens on fixed incomes joined the fray.²

In looking at the Twelfth Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, one can see that the lack of confidence has been a continuing trend since 1974 (Table I). In 1980, however, there was a slight gain in positive attitudes toward the public schools.³ It appears that the downward trend in public attitudes has bottomed out, but the changes do not yet exceed chance probability.

TABLE I
NATIONAL RATINGS OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS,
1974-1980

Ratings	1980 %	1979 %	1978 %	1977 %	1976 %	1975 %	1974 %
A rating	10	8	9	11	13	13	18
B rating	25	26	27	26	29	30	30
C rating	29	30	30	38	28	28	21
D rating	12	11	11	11	10	9	6
Fail	6	7	8	5	6	7	5
Don't know	18	18	15	19	14	13	20

Source: G. H. Gallup, "The Twelfth Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 62 (September, 1980), p. 35.

Thirty-five percent of the respondents said the public schools deserved an "A" or "B" as opposed to 34 percent last year and 48 percent in 1974. The proportion giving the schools a "D" or an "F" remained at 18 percent, the same figure reported in 1979. But that proportion had grown from 11 to 19 percent in previous years.⁴

The same Gallup Poll demonstrates what the nation generally thought the major problems confronting the public schools in 1980 were:

- Lack of discipline
- Use of drugs
- Poor curriculum/poor standards
- Lack of proper financial support
- Integration/busing
- Large school/too many classes/overcrowding
- Difficulty in getting good teachers
- Parents' lack of interest
- Teachers' lack of interest
- Pupils' lack of interest/truancy
- Crime/vandalism
- Mismanagement of funds/program
- Drinking/alcoholism
- Problems with administration
- Lack of proper facilities
- Communication problems
- School board policies
- Government interference
- Teachers' strikes
- Parents' involvement in school activities
- Too many schools/declining enrollment
- Transportation
- Non-English-speaking students.⁵

Continuing the search for causes in the decrease of public confidence leads to such factors as nostalgia in the 1970's; the public's whetted appetite for accountability; the nation's periodic swing to conservatism; the high divorce rate and the disintegration of the family, leading to demands that the schools provide the discipline which the home no longer can; the excesses of permissiveness; and a

bundle of causes in which Dr. Spock, television, and creeping socialism are crammed into the same bag.⁶

The "back to the basics" movement that this country is experiencing is another indicator that the public is not pleased with the current status of the nation's public schools. In an article in the March, 1977, Phi Delta Kappan, Brodinsky pointed out the whys and wherefores of the back to the basics movement: (1) parents have become more involved in school affairs; (2) Blacks and Hispanics claim that their children are shortchanged in regard to the basic skills; (3) teachers have focused on creativity rather than mastery of skills; (4) employers have complained that high school graduates are not productive workers; (5) colleges have complained that high school students are not prepared for college; (6) there has been a 12-year drop in national test scores; (7) educators have been charged with using the schools for experimentation rather than for the interest of children; and (8) the financial crunch has made taxpayers aware that it is cheaper to finance bare-bones educational programs.⁷

Further supporting this displeasure with education, Giamatti, a Yale University professor, is quoted:

Today's college students--the former grammar and high school students of the 1960's and 1970's--have lost touch with the language.

They are the products of the antistructures of the time. They have come and are coming out of the 'open classrooms,' vertical grouping, modular buildings with 50 pupils to a room. They have come out of 'new math' and its concepts, its logic and set theory, not knowing how to multiply. They have come out of 'individualized instruction' and 'elective systems,' not knowing how to listen to anyone else, not knowing how to take a direction.⁸

Statement of the Problem

With the current downward trend of public support for the nation's public schools as exemplified by national polls, periodical and newspaper articles, and failing bond issues, school administrators and school boards must seek ways that will reverse this decline. Other than the annual Gallup Poll, there have been relatively few studies of how the general public views its public schools and why it views them the way it does.

Public schools, in the past few years, have become keenly aware of the need to improve public relations by keeping the public better informed. It is very common today for school districts to publish both internal and external newsletters, to work very closely with the news media, to provide opportunities to inform citizens and obtain their input, and to develop brochures and audio-visual presentations. One may ask, of course, if all these efforts result in a better informed public, and, if negative attitudes are indeed being modified.

This study examines the extent to which people are informed about their schools and whether or not levels of information affect how they rate the local district. Previous research has indicated that parents are more supportive of the schools than non-parents.⁹ The study will also investigate this question and explore whether or not increased parental participation in school activities and programs has a significant effect on attitudes toward the district. Finally, the instrumentation developed for this study may serve as a model for other districts to measure how well informed patrons are about the district and its programs, as well as how patrons rate the local district.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between the degree that school district patrons are knowledgeable about their local public school systems and their attitudes concerning the school and its various functions and programs. The study will also examine whether or not parents rate schools higher than do non-parents, and whether parents who participate in school activities and programs rate schools differently from non-participating parents.

Research Questions

1. Does the amount of school information held by patrons affect their ratings of the school district?
2. Does the amount of school information held by patrons concerning specific operational areas of the school district affect their ratings of the specific areas?
3. Do patrons with children currently enrolled in public schools rate the school district differently from patrons with no children in public schools?
4. Do parents who actively participate in public school activities and programs rate the school district differently from parents who do not participate in public school activities and programs?

Limitations

This study was limited to a sample of school district patrons of Edmond, Oklahoma, Public Schools in Oklahoma County, Oklahoma. The sample was selected from the county tax rolls and was limited to

tax patrons who had filed homestead exemptions and who lived within the school district boundaries. Due to the uniqueness of the patronage of school districts, the results of this study should not be generalized beyond the sample district.

ENDNOTES

¹National School Public Relations Association, Building Public Confidence for Your Schools (Arlington, 1978), p. 6.

²Ibid.

³American Association of School Administrators, "Slight Gain in Public Confidence," The School Administrator, Vol. 37 (October, 1980), pp. 18-19.

⁴George H. Gallup, "The Twelfth Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 62 (September, 1980), pp. 33-46.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ben Brodinsky, "Back to the Basics: The Movement and Its Meaning," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 58 (March, 1977), p. 523.

⁷Ibid.

⁸James K. Wellington, "American Education: Its Failure and Its Future," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 58 (March, 1977), p. 528.

⁹James D. Wilson, "Communicating with the Public," California School Boards, Vol. XXIX (May, 1970), pp. 18-22.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of literature for this study focuses on public opinion, communications, and the importance of public understanding as they relate to public schools. The examination of the literature begins with a review of: how public opinion is formed, the development of perceptions, the influence of others, the political process, and exposure and attitude.

The literature dealing with school-community communications is reviewed in the second section. Included are such areas as: channels of communication, informal communication, internal and external communications, the different publics of the school, and recent findings of national school surveys.

The third section reviews the literature in regard to the importance of public understanding. A school that has strong public understanding is a powerful school. The importance of building public confidence by planning public relations is emphasized. Part of this section also points out the problems that often arise in the absence of community understanding.

How Public Opinion is Formed

In his book, Public Opinion: Nature, Formation, and Role,

Childs reports finding out how public opinion is formed is to find out how individual and personal opinions are formed. The public is always a group, a collection of individuals, never an organic entity with an existence of its own. Public opinion is always a collection of the opinions of those individuals constituting the public. How then are personal opinions formed? The answer is quite simple, so long as it is stated in very broad, general terms. Opinions are what they are because personal attitudes are what they are, and these attitudes stem from the nature of the personality; in turn, the evolving result of the dynamic interaction of the person and his environment. From birth until death this interacting process goes on, producing everchanging personalities, attitudes, and opinions. There are, therefore, three basic elements in the opinion-forming process: the person, his environment, and the interaction between the two.¹

Attitudes and opinions emerge, not as the sole result of the operation of factors and determinants within or attributable to the person, but in consequence of the interaction between the person and his environment. The environment as a whole is so extensive and inclusive as to be almost incomprehensible. It is as close to the person as the air he breathes and as distant as the outer limit of the universe.²

Murray states ". . . (perceptions) could be described as emotionally toned learning by which one reacts consistently either for or against some person, object or idea."³ He further states:

Perceiving is a process comparable with discrimination, differentiating, and observing. The term is customarily used to refer to relatively complex receptor and neural processes which underlie our awareness of ourselves and our world. This awareness is referred to as perception.

Although the term perception is usually restricted to aspects of experience, it has certain behavioral implications. Perception of objects, situations, and relationships is often correlated with particular overt reactions.⁴

From the above, one can conclude that a definition of perception as it pertains to understanding public schools is as follows: Perceptions are those collected, stable and unstable, interpretations of received information concerning the schools. The impressions about the school which are held by an individual as a collection of information, representing the school (the concept of the school) are perceptions. Some of these perceptions will be seen to have behavioral implications. For example, the perception that school buildings are too expensive has certain effects on voting for a bond election for new construction.

Solomon suggested that perceptions are held because of one or more of the following factors: Perceptions may be held as the result of more or less systematic investigation by an individual, or they may be unconsciously collected emotionally, arising from the experiences of friends, family, or group membership. Perceptions may also be intuitive cognition or judgment, the impulse to move or take a stand for or against a particular topic.⁵

Members of society get almost all their knowledge of public issues through communication. People witness directly only a tiny part of the facts and opinions that make up what they know and think about public matters. They see and hear from others meaningful signs (words and pictures) that help them form or change attitudes and opinions. Some of these messages come from family members, friends,

and others who communicate more or less directly to them; the rest of the messages are received through impersonal media.

Communication interacts with personal observation. Although very few persons can form or change their opinions about public matters without some communication with others, direct observation may supplement, confirm, or disconfirm the meaning of communicated information. Many opinions, formed through communication, are thus tested by personal experience.⁶

Most opinions are based upon facts or upon other opinions, which are not learned firsthand but communicated by other individuals. Few opinions are based wholly or even in part on direct observation. Those few that are observation-based are often made possible by conditions that are established by prior communications.⁷

Katz and Lazarsfeld found that many people appear to be more crucially influenced by specific other individuals than by pertinent mass communications. These opinion leaders and the people they influence are very much alike and typically belong to the same primary groups of family, friends, and co-workers. Although most studies of opinion leadership have to date focused on the leaders' roles in producing change, there is good reason to postulate that they frequently exercise their influence in favor of constancy and reinforcement.⁸

Public consensus customarily has small beginnings. McCloskey stated that a reasonable criterion of public understanding is the similarity of perceptions among key citizens in the school-community relationship. Public understanding of decisions leading to school progress may begin with the faint beating of the public pulse in one of the most informal groups in the community. One such group

may be identified readily in the backfence visit in the neighborhood. If the climate is right for thought, exchange, and reaction which may grow and become public opinion, the amoebic group can exercise a profound informal control of the school.⁹

What is the proper role of public opinion in a democratic society? Grossman studied the works of Bryce, Lowell, and Lippmann as being relevant to the development of public opinion research. Bryce, considered the founding father of public opinion studies in the United States, outlined the role played by public opinion in the American society, and analyzed the formulation of public opinion. Lowell, the first scholar to apply the techniques of political science to the study of public opinion, wrote on the central theme of public opinion as a political process. Lippmann, like his predecessors, was concerned with the difficulty faced by a democratic system in which public opinion is supposed to rule but cannot organize itself for rule; with the need for the public to be informed; and with finding the proper role for public opinion. Yet, Lippmann criticized the concern over public opinion being strictly a political phenomenon in which the devices of democracy were at the center. The main thrust of his emphasis was on obtaining reliable information and making it available both to responsible officials and to the public.¹⁰

Katz and Lazarfeld, in studies of the psychology of communication and persuasion, found that the effectiveness of facts in bringing about attitudinal changes is frequently dependent upon whether those whose attitudes require change are themselves involved in obtaining the facts.¹¹

In a study associated with exposure and attitude change, Miller found that mere repeated exposure to a persuasive message was sufficient to enhance the respondents' attitudes toward that message. He also found that over-exposure decreased the positive attitudinal effects, although even under massive over-exposure the ratings were higher than before any exposure.¹²

Most of the work on repeated exposure has produced linear trends indicating that attitudes are changed to a greater degree with more exposure, but occasionally other studies have shown a curvilinear function indicating that a large number of repeated exposures lowers the evaluative ratings. Zajonc and others suggest that this curvilinear function is a result of psychological reactance or boomerang effect. When individuals believe that a persuasive manipulation infringes upon their right to decide for themselves, they often react in a manner opposite to the persuader's intention.¹³

Communications to voters during a school bond campaign were studied as factors in the success of the bond effort in a 1976 study. McCain and Wall hypothesized that more personal contact and printed material distribution would result in an increase in bond support. They also hypothesized that parents would support the issue considerably more than non-parents because of the degree of closeness with the school. McCain and Wall concluded that a variety of other factors contribute to the success or failure of school bond referendums; the data indicated that there are key communication elements that should be considered in the bond campaign.¹⁴

Henderson, in a very recent study, hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between the quantity of school-related

information a respondent can demonstrate knowledge of and the positive-ness of the respondent's attitude toward the school district in which the respondent resides. The design controlled for parent/non-parent respondents as an intervening variable. The study also tested correlations between years of education of the respondent and quantity of information as well as years of education and respondent's attitude toward the school system. The relationship between quantity of information and attitude was confirmed to be relatively strong and significant. Also, the relationship remained strong and significant controlling for the parent/non-parent variable. The posited positive relationships concerning years of formal education and quantity of information held showed weak correlations but significance.¹⁵

School-Community Communications

A review of the research literature dealing with the channels of communication in school-community relations was completed by Chaffee and Ward in 1968. Their findings relative to public opinion polls as a source of communication for the school district and the community are summarized as follows:

1. Polls of public opinion have demonstrated a lack of public knowledge about schools and that citizens do not appear particularly interested in increasing their knowledge. Overall, school parents tended to be more informed than others, especially elementary school parents. Occupationally, business and professional people knew more, and farmers and housewives knew less than others.

2. Carter found in one nationwide survey that one-half of the sample knew nothing about the membership of the school board, yet in

answer to specific questions, two-thirds expressed opinions about the representativeness of the board.

3. Opinions about schools are partly the product of rationalization, so that minor aspects of the curriculum are seized upon as major when they support one's opinion.

4. Both local and national opinion polls consistently show nearly universally strong, favorable evaluations of education in general. Although almost everyone is "for" education, many people can find something specific to complain about in their local schools.

5. Several case studies on influence procedures have demonstrated that increasing parent contacts with school personnel not only increased parent participation in school affairs, but also enhanced the attendance and reading test scores of their children.

6. Community quiescence is a negative pattern of support. The absence of conflict, or quiescence, is a rather negative basis for voter support, but it is an effective one as long as it lasts. It is not surprising, then, that school administrators see the quiescence-acquiescence pattern of support as evidence of an effective public relations program.¹⁶

Wilson worked with the Bureau of Research of the U.S. Office of Education in an interpretive studies project entitled "Putting Research into Educational Practice (PREP). He reported the following facts about school-community communications:

1. Studies which have been concerned with some aspects of public opinion of education and schools have indicated that opinions and attitudes are related to such factors as individual characteristics, value orientations, community characteristics, and the opinions of community leaders.

2. There is considerable public opinion supporting education and local schools; such support is more likely to be found among persons and communities having certain characteristics. Parents of school-age children are usually more favorable toward schools, as are persons who are better educated, have higher incomes, and are upper social classes.¹⁷

Chaffee and Ward's review of the literature relative to the sources of school-community communications revealed the following procedures and practices:

1. There was a strong tendency to emphasize one-way school to community communication, without feedback to schools.
2. There were no channels for feedback information from the nonaffiliated general populace.
3. Direct communication by superintendents was relatively uncommon.
4. Personal influence leaders were leaders both in their local neighborhoods and over longer distances with others of similar socioeconomic background.
5. A child's written notice sent home with the child was more effective in transmitting information than was an announcement by the principal.
6. There was no evidence that teacher participation in community activities was associated with strong community support for education.
7. Teachers oriented to public relations were more likely to assume a personal responsibility for receiving and transmitting school-community information.
8. Citizens committees typically were occasional creations of school boards, concerned more with facilities than with curriculum.

9. The newspaper was the single channel most often cited as helpful to the public.

10. Direct contact with teachers and, to a lesser extent, with administrators, was the most helpful channel for dissemination of school information to the public.

11. Chaffee and Ward concluded with Carter's findings that informal communication about schools is "more informal than might be expected." The conversations are casual and do not focus on specific interests.¹⁸

In a summary of studies designed to obtain knowledge about the flow of information and influence in informal communications about the schools, it was found that:

1. Persons who had strong viewpoints were most likely to engage in communication about the schools.

2. The amount of informal communication a person engaged in was directly related to his interest in school matters.

3. Informal communication about schools was more prevalent among women than among men.

4. Attempts to influence others were most successful between similar types of persons. Individuals having extremely differing views of the schools or those having different levels of knowledge were generally not successful in their attempts to influence each other.

5. To be effective, communication about the schools must be relevant to the situation at hand.

6. The citizens depended primarily on newspapers and conversations with friends for information about the schools.¹⁹

The National Education Association, in Feel Their Pulse, remarked: "Everybody has opinions about schools. These are based on such evidence as personal contacts; gossip; what they read in newspapers, magazines; what they hear; and what children say at the dinner table."²⁰

Teachers, by virtue of their position, play a key role in formulating the district's image while they disseminate information to parents directly or indirectly through the students. The concern to the school district is not whether it will have an image, but rather what kind of image it will have. Fine, former education editor of the New York Times, said some time ago, "Public relations is really the entire body of the relationships that go to make up our impressions of an organization or an individual."²¹ The key is personal relations; who does it is everyone who works for the school district. The most important ingredient in that process is the classroom teacher, because good teaching is not only good for children but also earns good will, confidence, and respect of the public.²²

In a 1969 study of urban schools and external communications, Williams identified three major conditions as antecedent to communication problems with the public.

1. Factors related to the image of the school system created by the emphasis on public relations. Public relations efforts were either defensive or attempted to gloss over weaknesses.
2. Problems related to lack of specific information. Citizens frequently expressed dissatisfaction with the level of information available to them.
3. Factors associated with inaction on the part of school administrators. A complex bureaucratic hierarchy often resulted in a decisional paralysis of field administrators. The stated posture of

having to check for a ruling from one's superiors in the hierarchy caused many citizens to take their demands to higher administrative levels in order to obtain action.²³

Williams concludes that schools must examine their external communication efforts and open external communication channels so that weaknesses are not allowed to snowball. If external communications are failing, the public's lack of information about the schools is correlated with a negative attitude toward education.²⁴

Contrary to popular thought, there is no single community audience or public. Instead, there are many publics. While these publics may share some school-related interests, they evaluate the school in light of their special interests and needs. Penk's study identified seven such publics: (a) the faculty and staff, (b) the student body, (c) the former students, (d) prospective students, (e) parents, (f) the business community, and (g) the taxpayers. The definition of special audience interest indicates the best way to address these various audiences. Every citizen should be informed of the many ways in which the school contributes toward making the community a better place for him to live.²⁵

Looking at communication from the schools to the community, Carter and Odell state, "It would appear that a program of information to the general public, as a single audience, would be futile. Specific informational programs to specific publics seem indicated."²⁶ In considering bond elections, Carter and Odell also found that most information was acquired by the public on an informal basis, such as telephone conversations, neighbors, friends, children, and sometimes from a teacher, but that there was no direct line of

information and there was no coherent structure of communication channels. Dissemination and feedback of information through these networks appeared impossible by any criterion of effectiveness. Persons seeking it could get information that was being disseminated by the district. School personnel who did not seek out the community might have found that such efforts would have increased community understanding. Those citizens who had already been informed did not generally seek further information; yet, they exerted a considerable effect on dissemination of information. The clearer the information, the lower the rumor content. It was also found that the issue of the school bond election was an excellent way for the community to bring up its problems about curriculum and other concerns.²⁷

Reports of the findings of the Gallup series of surveys have frequently pointed out that the persons who are most familiar with the public schools--parents whose children are now enrolled in these schools--hold the public schools in greater esteem than those persons less familiar with them. Further evidence that greater involvement and familiarity with the public schools result in a more favorable attitude is to be found in the ratings given the schools by those persons who have attended a lecture, meeting, or social occasion in any local school building during the past year.²⁸

Parents with children in school rate schools higher than other adults do. Among adults with children in school, 49 percent rate schools an "A" or "B". Among those who have no children in school, the comparable figure is 29 percent. Public school parents are also more positive when asked whether schools are better or worse than when they went to school. Of school parents, 53 percent said better.

Of other adults, only 36 percent said better. Significantly, the percentage of adults with children in school is dropping. In 1974 it was 45 percent; now it is 32 percent.²⁹

Quality education for their children and the communication of information about schools are major areas of public concern, according to the 1979 Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. The majority of parents who have children attending public schools at present think that today's education is better (53 percent).

That better communication between school and community is needed is indirectly shown by answers to two questions that reflect the extent of the respondents' knowledge about schools--only one of every eight persons knows what it costs to educate a child per school year and only one-third of those polled said they know the superintendent's name.³⁰

In their book, Communities and Their Schools, Carter and Sutthoff encouraged administrators to be aware of parents' perspectives of the schools. They made the following points:

1. The parent understands the problems of education largely in terms of his own child's needs to succeed in a highly competitive society. Thus, the parent reacts as a consumer to a product. The school's point of view is that its product is education, and this education is equally applied to all students. To the parent, whose product is the child, the schools are not perceived in these terms. Because of these differing perceptions, school personnel and community members have difficulty in understanding each other.

2. Research has revealed that communities with a high degree of understanding among their influentials have high success rates in financial elections.

3. One way for leaders to communicate effectively is by developing and using effective mediating agencies between school and community members.

4. Finally, no school-community relationship or understanding among leaders is likely to be any better than the school administrator who participates in its growth.³¹

Importance of Public Understanding

There is an important connection between understanding and school-community relations. The initiation of policy rests with a relatively few persons--leaders in the school and community. It is they who must formulate policy for review by the voters. They must know the school's problems and the community resources. It is they who must first understand. We can look forward to the possibility that more voters will interpret the situation in this manner and, by studying the effective use of communications, move toward community understanding.

Understanding means agreement as to what the situation is. In a state of understanding, leaders of school and community may not agree on what should be done about the situation but at least they agree on what the situation is. This is achieved through one of several effective mediating agencies, persons, or groups which can pass information between schools and community.³²

The Metropolitan School Study Council, in a source book entitled Administration for Adaptability, acknowledged public understanding as a tool that can make powerful schools. Public understanding is

itself mutable. It might be difficult to change many social and economic characteristics of the community that are related to the quality of education, but if public understanding is a causal agent between good communities and good schools, and public understanding can be raised by direct efforts, a new and very convenient way has been opened. Education's commitment to the policy that the public schools should be controlled by those who receive the services and benefits makes it imperative that public understanding be improved so that public expectancy becomes an enlightened force rather than a retarding influence. Public opinion often resists good education because the community members have not had an opportunity to recognize good educational programs.³³

Efforts to achieve support should concentrate on developing better understanding through improved and expanded communications between schools and communities. The efforts should include the development of more formalized means of two-way communication with the public.³⁴

In a recent article on public understanding and education decision-making, Mann pointed out that many people have attitudes about the public schools and those attitudes or opinions are based on different levels of information and understanding. The Gallup public school attitude polls are extremely useful in measuring people's attitudes about the schools, but they leave out one critically important factor--what do people know and understand about public school education?³⁵

Mann points out that the evidence suggests that the public has very low levels of knowledge about education and that the difference between the knowledge bases of the public and the professional

educator has been used by educators to exclude the public from participation in education decisions. This situation has likely contributed to the increasing negative attitudes the public has shown toward public schools.³⁶

John H. Wherry, executive director of the National School Public Relations Association, makes these points concerning building public confidence:

Building and maintaining public confidence in education is the most important single task we face. And the effort demands that education develop sophisticated understanding of the public relations process.

Education can no longer afford the naive view that public relations is only publicity through newspapers, radio and TV; that public relations is telling people just those things that make schools look good; that public relations is just a cosmetic approach to dealing with our problems. Unfortunately, many educators equate public relations and propaganda. And then wonder why they are not trusted!

The school district public relations process is a complex, demanding one. It serves in many respects as the conscience of the school district. Winning support from internal and external publics, we build morale, goodwill, cooperation and support by letting our constituents and our staff know what our goals are, our achievements and our plans, by getting their reactions then making adjustments as needed.

In a nutshell, public relations is a matter of doing the right thing and making sure that people know about it.

Public relations is a top-level management responsibility. It deals with the very essence of what our schools are all about and it must receive priority attention.³⁷

Mauger concluded that an educational program can advance much more rapidly with the assistance of a planned public information program than without such a program. Constant efforts should be made within the communication program to assess the attitudes and opinions

of people comprising the school community and to determine what their informational needs are.³⁸

Studies on "cognitive differentiation" tend to show that the attitudes of people who have elaborate and differentiated belief systems about a subject are not subject to much change, whereas people with little knowledge can be powerfully influenced by persuasive messages, under certain conditions. One may conclude from the principle of cognitive differentiation that to the degree that citizens are ignorant and unsophisticated regarding school matters, but are vaguely pro-school, the opportunities of the school to influence their attitudes are enormous. Those citizens who are knowledgeable about school affairs will be favorably influenced by information from a school source. But such citizens are probably favorably disposed toward the school anyway. The ignorant, indifferent, or hostile citizen, who should be the target of the message, may or may not be influenced; but he will either not expose himself to the message, or tend to reinterpret it and thereby make it congruent with his preconceived notions.³⁹

Banach and Barkelew state that schools need public relations because the public supports things they understand or think they understand. Without the understanding communication generates, schools and school people do not get the backing they need to provide necessary educational programs. People simply do not know very much about their schools. The polls conducted over the years show that the public has a great deal of quantitative information about the schools--information like when the school bus arrives, when the school day starts, the cost of hot lunches, school vacation dates, and the like.

But the public doesn't know much about what is really happening in the schools. They are not tuned in to what children are being taught and why. So, although the public is being subjected to increasing quantities of information, their qualitative information level remains quite low. Most people simply do not understand all the good things schools are doing and how effective they really are.⁴⁰

What information people want to know usually evolves around the first person. The most frequent response from parents is "How is my child doing?" Parents are also very interested in what their child is being taught and how. They want to know what special services are available to their child--people and things that will help their youngster get a better education. Non-parents are interested in school policies and rules and they want to know about the school curriculum--what educators are teaching, how, and why.

In order to gain support, some school districts have even found it necessary to ask what the community would support. Gallup stated that such action is a reflection of the public's current attitude toward the schools. He wrote:

The public has an appetite for more information about the schools and what they are doing or trying to do. If the schools hope to avoid financial difficulties in the years ahead, they need to give far greater attention to this task of informing the public. And it isn't simply a matter of 'selling' present policies. Public relations is a two-way street. It is important to tell the public about the schools, but it is also incumbent upon the schools to listen to the public's views and after serious examination take steps to meet just criticisms.⁴¹

Small found that the schools and the public were far apart in terms of the understanding needed to provide adequate support for public education. This lack of mutual understanding has been attributed to the differing values held by school personnel and citizens,

and to the increasing size of school districts, which allows little opportunity for citizens to have a say in school policy. In many cases, citizens are given an opportunity to communicate their opinions to school officials only at election time when they vote yes or no on a school issue. This condition has shown that except for parents, many schools have little immediate support. Therefore, school administrators and board members should improve and increase their communications with the broader public. Communication in education has tended to be one-way, with information flowing primarily along hierarchical lines and providing an incomplete knowledge base for school operations. Effective community support of schools can only be expected when there is mutual school-community understanding, and for this to occur, two-way communication channels must operate.⁴²

Knezevich states, "Throughout history the social institutions responsible for education of children and youth have been prime targets of criticism during periods of social upheaval."⁴³ This has predictive value: schools will be criticized during difficult times. Even though he recognizes that there are times when the public schools will not be under attack, the administrator of the present day school feels that the best way to disseminate information and receive feedback is through the PTA or PTO. Therefore, it is imperative that a more systematic and comprehensive communication process be established in order for the administrator to communicate with the public.

Attempting to bring about support of the schools through better understanding would involve not only communicating with parents, teachers, and students but also with the rest of the public. Understanding will not always lead to support, but it should lead to a

lessening of conflict. Therefore, it is recommended that efforts to achieve support concentrate on developing better understanding through improved and expanded communication between the schools and the community, including the developing of more formalized means of two-way communication with the public.⁴⁴

Edward L. Bernays, author of the 1923 book Crystallizing Public Opinion, and generally regarded as the father of public relations in the United States, calls the task of salvaging education through better public relations "Possibly the most important in the country, because the future of the country depends on it." School districts, Bernays says, must "intensify existing favorable attitudes toward education, convert those who are on the fence, and negate attitudes that are negative." It can be done, he says, through goals, words, and actions embodied in an honest public relations effort. You have to reach the public, but you have to deal with the public differently than you do an individual in the classroom.⁴⁵

Gordon Cawelti, executive director of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, lists these implications of the 1979 Gallup Poll results:

1. Because two-thirds of adults do not have children in school, school systems need a strong public information program. The media will not do it because they deal mostly with controversial topics.
2. Parents want more information about what the curriculum is and how it is taught.
3. Schools should conduct their own polls, because people often give higher ratings to schools they know about than to schools in general.
4. There must be an effort to get more volunteers, aides, and resource people into the schools. (Two-thirds of those responding had not been in a school building in the last year.)

5. A strong program to help increase public confidence will have to deal with the public's perception of such issues as drugs and discipline.⁴⁶

Solomon stated that leaders in American education must possess a keen awareness of public perception toward what is going on in the schools. They must be sensitive to changes in the perceptions, for change is happening, and it is rapid. Developments in the public schools during the past few years should have shown the administrator that he is a part of a socio-political system to which he must attend if he is to be effective, and if, perhaps, he is even to survive. An efficient and realistic feedback system can play a central role in linking him with this increasingly important environment of which he must become a part.⁴⁷

Rationale and Hypotheses

A review of the current literature related to level of information and public attitude as it pertains to public education indicates that there is a direct relationship between level of information and attitude. In a study associating exposure and attitude change, Miller found that respondents' attitudes are favorably enhanced with repeated exposure.⁴⁸ McCain and Wall found that more personal contact and printed material can increase support for a school bond issue.⁴⁹

Very recently Henderson found that there was a strong and significant relationship between the quantity of school related information which the respondent can demonstrate knowledge of and the positiveness of the respondent's attitude toward the school district in which he or she resides.⁵⁰

Carter and Odell found that informed citizens did not necessarily seek more information, but they exerted a considerable effect on dissemination of information. Clear information decreased rumor content.⁵¹ Carter and Sutthoff state that research has indicated that communities with a high degree of understanding among their influentials have high success rates in financial elections.⁵² Citizens who are knowledgeable about school affairs will be favorably influenced by information from a school source.⁵³

Banach and Barkeley state that schools need public relations because ". . . the public supports things they understand . . ." Without the understanding communication generates, schools and school people do not get the backing they need to provide necessary educational programs.⁵⁴ Gallup stated that if schools hope to avoid financial difficulties in the years ahead, they are going to have to give greater attention to informing the public.⁵⁵ Understanding will not always lead to support, but it should lead to a lessening of conflict.⁵⁶ Cawelti, in summing up the 1979 Gallup Poll, pointed out that people often give higher ratings to schools they know about than to schools in general.⁵⁷

If people support things they understand, and if people give higher ratings to schools they know about, then there should be a positive relationship between the degree of information held by patrons and the ratings which patrons give to their schools and programs. Thus, the major hypothesis and first sub-hypothesis of this study:

Hypothesis I: There is a significant positive relationship between the amount of school information held by patrons and the rating patrons will give the school district.

Hypothesis Ia: There is a significant positive relationship between the amount of information held by patrons concerning each specific operational area of the school district and the rating patrons will give that specific operational area of the school district.

If a majority of the 11 operational areas show a significant relationship, the hypothesis will be accepted.

The review of literature also points out that parents generally show stronger support for schools than do non-parents. Carter found that parents are more informed than others.⁵⁸ The Gallup Polls have indicated over the years that persons who are most familiar with the public schools--parents of children now in school--hold the public schools in greater esteem than those persons less familiar with schools.⁵⁹ Parents have also given better ratings to schools than have non-parents.⁶⁰ And, parents think education is better today than do people who do not have children in school.⁶¹

The following sub-hypothesis is tested to determine whether having children in the public schools has a relationship with patrons' level of confidence:

Hypothesis Ib: Patrons who have children in school will rate the school district more favorably than will patrons who do not have children in school.

Further evidence that greater involvement and familiarity with the public schools result in a more favorable attitude is to be found in ratings given schools by those persons who have recently attended a lecture, meeting, or social occasion.⁶² The final sub-hypothesis is posited:

Hypothesis Ic: Parents who have high participation in school activities and programs will rate the district more favorably than will parents who have low participation.

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the degree that school district patrons are knowledgeable about their local public school systems and their attitudes concerning the school and its various functions and programs. The study will also examine whether or not parents rate schools higher than do non-parents, and whether parents who participate in school activities and programs rate schools differently than do non-participating parents.

This chapter includes the fully developed research hypotheses, the conceptual and operational definitions of the variables, and the definition and selection of population and sample. A description of the instrumentation and the procedures used in data collection and analysis is also included.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were posited and tested in order to determine the relationship between the variables that are presented in the research questions:

Hypothesis I: There is a significant positive relationship between the amount of school information held by patrons and the rating patrons will give the school district.

Hypothesis Ia: There is a significant positive relationship between the amount of information held by patrons concerning each specific operational area of the school district and the rating patrons will give that specific operational area of the school district.

Hypothesis Ib: Patrons who have children in school will rate the school district more favorably than will patrons who do not have children in school.

Hypothesis Ic: Parents who have high participation in school activities and programs will rate the district more favorably than will parents who have low participation.

Conceptual and Operational Definitions of Variables

The definitions provided below are presented to provide a clear understanding of the concepts and variables in the manner that they were used in the present study.

Level of School Information Held by Patrons

Quantity or degree of school information, the independent variable, is defined as the amount of factual school information perceived or understood by an individual and represents a range of objective knowledge about a given subject.¹

Eleven areas of public school education were selected utilizing the input from a panel of 10 expert judges. The panel submitted by mail facts they felt important for school patrons to know. A total of 292 items were submitted by the 10 panel judges. The 292 items were grouped into the 11 areas, typed, and sent back to the panel. The panel was asked to rank the five most important items in each of the 11 areas. The selections were tallied and the 292 original items

were narrowed down to 55 items (five questions in each of the 11 areas). The scoring of all information items was accomplished through assigning one (1) point for a correct answer on an item and no (0) point for an incorrect answer. Adding the total score indicated the level of information held by a patron/respondent. A high score indicated a high knowledge level and a low score, a low knowledge level.

Rating Patrons Give the School District

Conceptually, this variable refers to a measuring instrument that requires the rater to assign the rated item to categories that have numerals assigned to them.² The operational definition is taken from research conducted by Gallup. A five-point scale, familiar to the American public, was employed by Gallup for the first time in 1974 to establish a base for measuring the public's perceptions of the quality of public school education in their own communities. This rating system has been used each year since. The question asked in the Gallup polls is as follows:

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here--A, B, C, D, or FAIL?³

In each of the 11 categories an "A" or a five (5), when given a numerical value, indicated the most positive rating and an "F" or a one (1), when given a numerical value, indicated perceived failure and the most negative rating. The rating is understood as a quantitative value through a process of changing "A", "B", "C", "D", and "FAIL" values to 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The overall rating was the

sum of the 11 operational area scores and the 11 operational area scores were actual individual ratings transposed to numerical values.

Identification of Population

The population of this study was limited to the patrons of the Edmond Public School District, I-12, Oklahoma County, who had filed for homestead exemption at the time the sample was selected. This procedure did create a bias in that renters and other non-homeowners were excluded from the sample. Limiting the sample to those filing for homestead exemption prevented the sample from including all taxpayers, including businesses. It was decided that the property tax rolls were the best population source and it was the lesser of two evils to exclude renters and others who had not filed for homestead exemption than to include businesses in the sample. The total number of households having filed for homestead exemption totaled 7,736.⁴ Because the sample selected to participate in this study was drawn from the population described above, no attempt should be made to generalize the findings of this study to a broader population of school district patrons.

Sample Selection

The names of 397 patrons were drawn utilizing a random number generator program in the Oklahoma County Assessor's computer. The computer printed names and addresses of the entire population (7,736 names) and also the 397 names and addresses of the sample. The sample names and addresses were printed on labels for ease of mailing the questionnaires and follow-up reminders.

Demographic Data

A review of the demographic data obtained from the 202 respondents who completed useable questionnaires for this study is provided here as a description of the pertinent characteristics of the sample and population. Of the 202 respondents, 112 were parents of children attending the public schools. A great majority (over 77 percent) of the respondents were employed in a business and/or professional occupation. Sixty-four percent of the respondents were college graduates, and over 57 percent of the respondents were female. There were three age categories reported, with 31 subjects between the ages of 21 and 29; 127 between the ages of 30 and 49; and 44 that were 50 years and older. The annual family income of the participants in this study can be broken into five categories to show that of 202 respondents, five earned under \$5,000 annually; four earned between \$5,000 and \$9,999 annually; 34 earned between \$10,000 and \$19,999 annually, 72 earned between \$20,000 and \$29,999 annually; and 87 earned \$30,000 and over annually (Table II).

The following data serve to describe how the respondents obtain school information; how long they have resided within the school district; how involved parent respondents are with their children's school activities; and whether or not respondents would like to receive more information concerning what is going on in the local schools. When asked what were usual sources of information concerning the public schools, respondents indicated the following: 70.3 percent checked local newspapers; 65.3 percent indicated word of mouth; 58.9 percent checked direct involvement with children; 42.1 percent checked

TABLE II
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA DESCRIBING RESPONDENTS

Variable	Frequency	Frequency (Percent)	Cumulative Frequency (Percent)
<u>Parent/Non-Parent</u>			
No Children in School	84	41.6	41.6
Children in Public School	112	55.4	97.0
Children in Private School	6	3.0	100.0
<u>Occupation</u>			
Business and Professional	157	77.7	77.7
Clerical and Sales	11	5.4	83.2
Farm	0	0	0
Skilled Labor	11	5.4	88.6
Unskilled Labor	4	2.0	90.6
Non-Labor Force	3	1.5	92.1
Undesignated	16	7.9	100.0
<u>Education</u>			
Elementary Grades	1	.5	.5
High School Incomplete	2	1.0	1.5
High School Graduate	23	11.4	12.9
Technical, Trade School	7	3.5	16.3
College Incomplete	39	19.3	35.6
College Graduate	130	64.4	100.0
<u>Sex</u>			
Male	86	42.6	42.6
Female	116	57.4	100.0
<u>Age</u>			
Under 21 years	0	0	0
21 to 29 years	31	15.3	15.3
30 to 49 years	127	62.9	78.2
50 years and older	44	21.8	100.0
<u>Income (Family)</u>			
\$30,000 and over	87	43.1	43.1
\$20,000 to \$29,999	72	35.6	78.7
\$10,000 to \$19,999	34	16.8	95.5
\$5,000 to \$9,999	4	2.0	97.5
Under \$5,000	5	2.5	100.0

school publications; 40.6 percent indicated metropolitan newspapers; and 32.7 percent checked radio and television. Over 35 percent of the participants had lived in the school district for over 10 years; 23.3 percent had lived in the district from one to three years; 21.8 percent had lived in the district between 5 and 10 years. One question limited to public school parent respondents asked how many school activities had parents participated in during the year. Forty-six percent checked none, 9.9 percent indicated one, 14.9 percent indicated two, 16.3 percent indicated three activities, 9.4 percent checked four, 2.5 percent checked five, and only one percent had participated in as many as six school activities. Forty and six-tenths percent of the respondents indicated that they desired more information about what was going on in the schools (Table III).

Data Collection

The following data were collected from questionnaires which were mailed to a sample of the population. The subjects were asked to respond to five true-false questions in each of the following 11 operational areas of the school district: administration, curriculum, teaching staff, public relations, school finance, guidance and counseling, special education, extracurricular activities, school facilities, food service, and transportation. Also, the subjects were asked to rate each of the 11 areas with a letter grade of either A, B, C, D, or FAIL.

On May 3, 1980, questionnaires were mailed to a sample of 397 school patrons of the Edmond, Oklahoma, Public School District. The sample was selected from a population of 7,736 residences whose

TABLE III
 RESPONDENTS' SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND
 AMOUNT OF CONTACT WITH SCHOOLS

	Frequency	Frequency (Percent)
<u>Sources of Information</u>		
Local Newspaper	142	70.3
Metropolitan Newspaper	82	40.6
Radio and Television	66	32.7
School Publications	85	42.1
Direct Involvement w/Children	119	58.9
Word of Mouth (Neighbors, etc.)	132	65.3

Variable	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency (Percent)
<u>Years Lived in District</u>		
Less than One Year	14	6.9
From One to Three Years	47	23.3
From Three to Five Years	26	12.9
From Five to Ten Years	44	21.8
Over Ten Years	71	35.1
<u>Participation in School Activities</u>		
No Participation	93	46.0
One Activity or Event	20	9.9
Two Activities or Events	30	14.9
Three Activities or Events	33	16.3
Four Activities or Events	19	9.4
Five Activities or Events	5	2.5
Six Activities or Events	2	1.0
<u>Amount of Information Desired</u>		
Desires More Information	82	40.6
Does Not Desire More Information	120	59.4

owners had filed for homestead exemption. The sample was just over five percent of the population. Along with the questionnaire was an explanatory letter and a stamped, self-addressed envelope (see Appendix B). The names making up the sample were kept confidential. By the end of two weeks, 40 percent of the questionnaires had been completed and returned. A post card reminder was sent to the entire sample on May 22, 1980, which encouraged the non-respondents to complete the questionnaire and thanked the respondents who already had returned their completed questionnaires. By June 6, 1980, a total of 225 questionnaires, or 56.6 percent, were returned. Twenty-three of the questionnaires were not useable, due to being incomplete, leaving a useable total of 202 questionnaires, or 50.8 percent.

Instrumentation

Questionnaire

According to Henderson, who conducted related research in 1979, there was apparently no instrumentation designed to measure the information level of a given respondent.⁵ For this study, 11 operational areas of the public school were selected for presentation to a panel of experts in school public relations and public school education in general. The judges were asked what facts or concepts should school patrons ideally understand in each school area (see Appendix C). The panel submitted a total of 292 items in the 11 areas. The items were grouped and redundant and unclear items were eliminated, narrowing the 292 items to the 10 most appropriate information items in each of the 11 areas. The revised list of 110 items was sent back to the

panel with instructions to select the five most important items in each area (see Appendix A). When returned, the selections were tallied and the 55 questions became the actual true-false items used in the questionnaire. The sixth item in each area of the instrument asked the respondent to rate the school district's performance in the area utilizing the A, B, C, D, and FAIL rating scale used in the nationwide Gallup polls.⁶

Demographic information including whether or not respondents had children in school, occupation, education, sex, age, income, indication of sources of school information, tenure in school district, and level of participation in school activities was deemed important and therefore was collected from each respondent.

Data Analysis

After the returned questionnaires were tabulated, the data were keypunched and computer processed using programs available from the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).⁷ In addition, an SPSS program was used to tabulate frequency counts for each variable.

The following statistical techniques were used to analyze the data: Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to determine if significant relationships existed between the overall level of information held by patrons and the overall rating given the district; the Kendall's tau (τ) correlation was used to determine if significant relationships existed between the individual levels of information held by patrons and the individual ratings of 11 operational areas of the school. Kendall's tau correlation was selected because of the limited range of the two variables--correct answers

(0-5) and ratings (A-F). A one-way analysis of variance was used to determine if a significant difference existed between how parents and non-parents rated the schools. The one-way analysis of variance was also used to determine if the amount of parental participation in school activities and programs significantly affected the ratings parents give the school.

ENDNOTES

¹Richard Lee Henderson, "External Organizational Communications; The Relationship Between Attitude and Information in School District Populations," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1979.

²F. N. Kerlinger, *Foundations of Behavioral Research* (New York, 1964), p. 547.

³Vernon Smith and George Gallup, What People Think About Their Schools: Gallup's Findings (Bloomington, 1977), p. 22.

⁴George C. Keyes, *Oklahoma County Tax Rolls*, May, 1980.

⁵Henderson, pp. 27-28.

⁶Smith and Gallup, p. 22.

⁷Norman H. Nie, C. Hadlai Hull, Jean G. Jenkins, Karin Steinbrenner, and Dale H. Bent, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 2nd ed. (New York, 1975).

CHAPTER IV.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

Of the 397 patrons surveyed, 225 or 56.6 percent responded; however, 23 questionnaires were incomplete and had to be discarded. The data used in this study were taken from the 202 completed questionnaires, which accounts for 50.8 percent of the patrons surveyed. Additional analyses of the data, specifically the results of a frequencies program which gives a breakdown of the ratings given and the number of correct answers given in each of the 11 operational areas, are presented in Appendix D.

Testing the Hypotheses

For this study, any directional hypothesis was accepted if the stated relationship was shown to be at the $p < .05$ level of significance.

Hypothesis I

The major hypothesis for this study predicted a significant relationship between the overall amount of school information held by patrons in all 11 areas and the rating patrons would give the school district. This hypothesis was tested by calculating a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient for these two major variables.

Hypothesis I: There is a significant positive relationship between the amount of school information held by patrons and the rating patrons will give the school district.

The Pearson correlation coefficient for the amount of school information held by patrons and the ratings given was computed to be .197 at a $p < .002$ significance level. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted and a significant relationship was shown to exist between the two variables (Table IV).

TABLE IV

ANALYSIS OF COMPUTED PEARSON CORRELATION
BETWEEN AMOUNT OF SCHOOL INFORMATION
HELD BY PATRONS AND RATING PATRONS
GAVE SCHOOL DISTRICT

	N	Amount of Information	p
Ratings Given School District	202	.197	<.002

Hypothesis Ia

Hypothesis Ia predicted a significant relationship between the amount of school information held by patrons in each of the 11 operational areas of the school district and the rating patrons gave each specific operational area. This hypothesis was tested by calculating Kendall's tau (τ) correlation for each of the 11 operational areas of the school district. This non-parametric test was used because of the

limited ranges in both the ratings given (5-1 or A-F) and the total number of questions that could be correctly answered (maximum of five).

Hypothesis Ia: There is a significant positive relationship between the amount of information held by patrons concerning each specific operational area of the school district and the ratings patrons give that specific operational area of the school district.

If a majority or six of the eleven operational areas showed a significant relationship between the two variables, the hypothesis was to be accepted. Seven of the eleven areas showed that a significant relationship existed; therefore, the hypothesis was accepted (Table V).

TABLE V

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OF CORRELATIONS BETWEEN
AMOUNT OF INFORMATION HELD BY PATRONS
AND RATINGS GIVEN BY PATRONS OF
ELEVEN OPERATIONAL AREAS OF
SCHOOL DISTRICT USING
KENDALL'S TAU

Operational Area	Correlation Kendall's Tau	Significance
Administration	.02	.41
Curriculum	.22	.001*
Teaching Staff	.07	.15
Public Relations	-.14	.01*
School Finance	-.31	.001*
Guidance and Counseling	.32	.001*
Special Education	.11	.038*
Extracurricular Activities	.23	.001*
School Facilities	.08	.11
Food Service	.33	.001*
Transportation	.07	.13

*p<.05

Since means are important in interpreting ANOVA tables, Tables VI and VII are presented to contrast mean ratings and correct score means. This information will assist in interpreting Tables VIII through XXIII.

TABLE VI
TABLE OF MEANS--RATINGS BY GROUPS

Groups	Means
Patrons With Children in School	39.8482
Patrons With No Children in School	40.2778
Parents With Low Participation	38.0000
Parents With High Participation	40.4353
Patrons in Business and Professional Positions	40.0764
Patrons in Other Occupational Positions	39.9111
Patrons Who are College Graduates	40.3566
Patrons Who are Not College Graduates	39.4794
Patrons Who are Female	39.9739
Patrons Who are Male	40.1264
Patrons Who are Fifty Years and Older	40.2954
Patrons Who are Under Fifty Years Old	39.9684
Patrons Who Earn \$30,000 or More Annually	39.7159
Patrons Who Earn Under \$30,000 Annually	40.2895
Patrons Who Have Resided in District Five Years Or Less	40.0805
Patrons Who Have Resided in District Over Five Years	40.0087

TABLE VII
TABLE OF MEANS--TOTAL NUMBER OF CORRECT
ANSWERS BY GROUPS

Groups	Means
Patrons With Children in School	40.9643
Patrons With No Children in School	39.4667
Patrons in Business and Professional Positions	40.8790
Patrons in Other Occupational Positions	38.2667
Patrons Who are College Graduates	41.3101
Patrons Who are Not College Graduates	38.5068
Patrons Who are Female	40.1391
Patrons Who are Male	40.5057
Patrons Who are Fifty Years and Older	39.3182
Patrons Who are Under Fifty Years Old	40.5696
Patrons Who Earn \$30,000 or more Annually	40.4659
Patrons Who Earn Under \$30,000 Annually	40.1667
Patrons Who Have Resided in District Five Years or Less	40.6322
Patrons Who Have Resided in District Over Five Years	40.0435

Hypothesis Ib

Hypothesis Ib predicted there would be a significant difference between the overall summed ratings given the school district by patrons with children in the public schools and by patrons with no children in the public schools. This hypothesis was tested by using a one-way analysis of variance (Table VIII).

Hypothesis Ib: Patrons who have children in school will rate the school district more favorably than will patrons who do not have children in school.

TABLE VIII

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' RATINGS OF
SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR PATRONS WITH
CHILDREN IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND
PATRONS WITH NO CHILDREN
IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Source	df	SS	MS	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	9.2043	9.2043	.316	.5747*
Within Groups	200	5826.4541	29.1323		
Total	201	5835.6563			

*Not Significant

The mean differences between the patron groups failed to reach significance. The F ratio was .316. The hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Ic

Hypothesis Ic predicted that parents who participate in school activities and programs will give a significantly higher rating than will parents who do not participate in school activities and programs. The sample results indicated that out of 112 parent respondents, 27 of the respondents were parents who had participated in no activities or only one activity or program during the school year and 85 of the respondents were parents who had participated in from two to six school activities or programs during the school year. The hypothesis was tested by using a one-way analysis of variance (Table IX).

Hypothesis Ic: Parents who have high participation in school activities and programs will rate the district more favorably than will parents who have low participation.

TABLE IX

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PARENTS' RATINGS OF
SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR PARENTS WHO HAVE HAD
LOW PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
AND PROGRAMS AND PARENTS WHO HAVE
HAD HIGH PARTICIPATION IN
SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND
PROGRAMS

Source	df	SS	MS	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	121.5416	121.5416	4.317	.04*
Within Groups	110	3096.884	28.1535		
Total	111	3218.4255			

*Significant, $p < .05$

The differences between the means of parent groups were significant with an F ratio of 4.317. The hypothesis was accepted.

Data concerning the number of correct answers and the ratings given by different groups of respondents utilizing demographic information are presented in Tables X through XXIII.

TABLE X

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' RATINGS OF
SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR PATRONS WITH
CHILDREN IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND
PATRONS WITH NO CHILDREN IN
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Source	df	SS	MS	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	9.2043	9.2043	0.316	0.5747
Within Groups	200	5826.4541	29.1323		
Total	201	5835.6563			

TABLE XI

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' TOTAL NUMBER
OF CORRECT ANSWERS FOR PATRONS WITH
CHILDREN IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND
PATRONS WITH NO CHILDREN
IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Source	df	SS	MS	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	111.8830	111.8830	4.30	0.0394*
Within Groups	200	5204.2368	26.0212		
Total	201	5316.1172			

*Significant, $p < .05$

TABLE XII

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' RATINGS OF
SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR PATRONS WORKING IN
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS
AND PATRONS WORKING IN OTHER OCCU-
PATIONAL POSITIONS

Source	df	SS	MS	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	0.9883	0.9883	0.034	0.8542
Within Groups	200	5834.7061	29.1735		
Total	201	5835.6914			

TABLE XIII

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' TOTAL NUMBER
OF CORRECT ANSWERS FOR PATRONS WORKING IN
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS
AND PATRONS WORKING IN OTHER
OCCUPATIONAL POSITIONS

Source	df	SS	MS	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	238.6005	238.6005	9.398	0.0025*
Within Groups	200	5077.4790	25.3874		
Total	201	5316.0781			

*Significant, $p < .05$

TABLE XIV

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' RATINGS OF
SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR PATRONS WHO ARE
COLLEGE GRADUATES AND PATRONS WHO
ARE NOT COLLEGE GRADUATES

Source	df	SS	MS	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	35.8768	35.8768	1.237	0.2674
Within Groups	200	5799.7937	28.9990		
Total	201	5835.6680			

TABLE XV

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' TOTAL NUMBER
OF CORRECT ANSWERS FOR PATRONS WHO ARE
COLLEGE GRADUATES AND PATRONS WHO
ARE NOT COLLEGE GRADUATES

Source	df	SS	MS	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	366.2948	366.2947	14.80	0.0002*
Within Groups	200	4949.8242	24.7491		
Total	201	5316.1172			

*Significant, $p < .05$

TABLE XVI

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' RATINGS
OF SCHOOL DISTRICT BY SEX

Source	df	SS	MS	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	1.1779	1.1779	0.040	0.8409
Within Groups	200	5834.5095	29.1725		
Total	201	5835.6836			

TABLE XVII

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' TOTAL
NUMBER OF CORRECT ANSWERS BY SEX

Source	df	SS	MS	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	6.6361	6.6361	0.250	0.6176
Within Groups	200	5309.5007	26.5475		
Total	201	5316.1367			

TABLE XVIII

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' RATINGS OF SCHOOL
DISTRICT FOR PATRONS WHO ARE FIFTY YEARS
AND OLDER AND FOR PATRONS WHO ARE
UNDER FIFTY YEARS OLD

Source	df	SS	MS	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	3.7103	3.7103	0.127	0.7217
Within Groups	200	5831.9517	29.1597		
Total	201	5835.6602			

TABLE XIX

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' TOTAL NUMBER
OF CORRECT ANSWERS FOR PATRONS WHO ARE
FIFTY YEARS AND OLDER AND FOR
PATRONS WHO ARE UNDER FIFTY
YEARS OLD

Source	df	SS	MS	F	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	53.8443	53.8443	2.046	0.1541
Within Groups	200	5262.2183	26.3111		
Total	201	5316.0625			

TABLE XX

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' RATINGS OF SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR PATRONS WHO EARN \$30,000 OR MORE ANNUALLY AND FOR PATRONS WHO EARN UNDER \$30,000 ANNUALLY

Source	df	SS	MS	M	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	16.2879	16.2879	0.560	0.4552
Within Groups	200	5819.3237	29.0966		
Total	201	5835.6094			

TABLE XXI

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' TOTAL NUMBER OF CORRECT ANSWERS FOR PATRONS WHO EARN \$30,000 OR MORE ANNUALLY AND FOR PATRONS WHO EARN UNDER \$30,000 ANNUALLY

Source	df	SS	MS	M	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	4.3733	4.3733	0.165	0.6853
Within Groups	200	5311.7107	26.5585		
Total	201	5316.0820			

TABLE XXII

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' RATINGS OF SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR PATRONS WHO HAVE RESIDED IN DISTRICT FOR FIVE YEARS OR LESS AND FOR PATRONS WHO HAVE RESIDED IN DISTRICT FOR OVER FIVE YEARS

Source	df	SS	MS	M	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	0.2527	0.2527	0.009	0.9259
Within Groups	200	5835.4050	29.1770		
Total	201	5835.6563			

TABLE XXIII

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF PATRONS' TOTAL NUMBER OF CORRECT ANSWERS FOR PATRONS WHO HAVE RESIDED IN DISTRICT FOR FIVE YEARS OR LESS AND FOR PATRONS WHO HAVE RESIDED IN DISTRICT FOR OVER FIVE YEARS

Source	df	SS	MS	M	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	17.1120	17.1120	0.646	0.4226
Within Groups	200	5298.9910	26.4949		
Total	201	5316.1016			

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the degree that school district patrons are knowledgeable about their local public school systems and their attitudes concerning the school and its various functions and programs.

Summary

The population of this study was limited to the patrons of the Edmond, Oklahoma, Public School District who had filed homestead exemptions. A sample of 397 patrons were drawn from the total population of 7,736 using a random number generator program.

A questionnaire was developed utilizing a panel of judges having expertise in school public relations. The questionnaire design included 11 areas of public school programs and functions: administration, curriculum, teaching staff, public relations, school finance, guidance and counseling, special education, extracurricular activities, school facilities, food service, and transportation. Five true-false questions were selected in each of the 11 areas with the assistance of the panel of judges. Respondents were asked to rate each of the 11 areas utilizing the same rating system common to the Gallup surveys (A-B-C-D-F). The questionnaires were mailed to the 397 patrons

making up the sample on May 3, 1980. By the end of two weeks, 40 percent of the questionnaires had been returned. A post card reminder was sent to the entire sample on May 22, 1980. By June 6, 1980, a total of 225 questionnaires or 56.6 percent had been returned. There were 202 useable questionnaires.

From the analysis of data the following results were drawn for the main hypothesis and three sub-hypotheses:

H.I: There is a significant positive relationship between the amount of school information held by patrons and the rating patrons will give the school district.

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was employed to examine the relationship between the variables. The test yielded a correlation of .197, which had a significance level of less than .002. The hypothesis was accepted.

H.Ia: There is a significant positive relationship between the amount of information held by patrons concerning each specific operational area of the school district and the rating patrons give that specific operational area of the school district.

This hypothesis was tested using Kendall's Tau (τ) correlation for each of the 11 areas selected for the questionnaire. If a majority of the 11 areas (6) showed a significant relationship between the two variables, the hypothesis was to be accepted. Seven of the 11 areas indicated that a significant relationship existed; therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

H.Ib: Patrons who have children in school will rate the school district more favorably than will patrons who do not have children in school.

A one-way ANOVA was used to test this hypothesis. The test yielded an F ratio of .316, which was not significant (.5747). The hypothesis was rejected.

H.Ic: Parents who have high participation in school activities and programs will rate the district more favorably than will parents who have low participation.

A one-way ANOVA was also used to test this hypothesis. An F ratio of 4.317 resulted which was significant at the .04 level of significance. The hypothesis was accepted.

Conclusions

While considering the conclusions of this study the reader should keep in mind the limitation mentioned in Chapter I--the population was taken from only one school district; therefore, one should not generalize beyond the one school district. The reader should also be reminded of the potential bias noted on page 40, dealing with the exclusion of renters and those who did not file for homestead exemption. The conclusions are:

1. The amount of information a patron has concerning the overall school district has an effect on how that patron rates the school district.
2. The amount of information a patron has concerning a single area of the school district has an effect on how that patron rates that operational area of the school district.
3. Whether a patron currently has children in the public schools or not has no effect on how patrons rate the school district.
4. Parents who participate more in school activities and programs give higher ratings to the school district than parents who participate very little or not at all.

Discussion

The findings indicate that a significant, but relatively weak relationship exists between the level of information held by school patrons and how well they rate the local school district. These findings support the concept of keeping patrons well informed to gain their support. This concept would hold true assuming the district is providing a quality education for its students. Even when analyzing this concept in terms of the separate programs and functions of the district, as was done in the first sub-hypothesis, we continue to find support. Seven of the eleven sub-areas indicated significance in regard to the level of information and its relationship to ratings given by patrons. As was indicated in Table V, the Kendall's Tau correlation test resulted in 2 of the 11 areas yielding negative correlations. The conclusion would be in this case that the better informed a patron is about public relations and school finance, the lower the rating he will give.

The reader will note in Appendix A that the item that asks the respondent to rate the district concerning school finance actually asks that the adequacy of the district's funding sources be rated instead of how the district utilizes what funds are available. The fact is at the time of the study the district was the seventh poorest high school district in Oklahoma out of 457 high school districts as measured by the State Department of Education's computations of revenue per child. The better informed patrons, knowledgeable of this fact, would answer more questions and rate the funding source lower. The writer believes that the type of questioning used in the Public Relations section--two questions inviting opinion rather than

questioning fact--contributed to the weak but negative correlation. It also should be noted that of the 11 operational areas used in the questionnaire, all received an average rating of "B" while these two having negative correlations had an average rating of "C".

Four of the eleven operational areas--administration, teaching staff, facilities, and transportation--failed to show significance in the relationship. Further analyses indicated that in these four areas, patrons were relatively less informed than they were in the other areas that showed significance.

It was interesting to note that Hypothesis Ib which predicted that parents would give higher ratings than non-parents was not supported. Over the years the Gallup Polls have indicated that parents hold the public schools in higher esteem than do non-parents. An analysis of Tables X and XI indicate that while there was no significant difference in the ratings given by parents and non-parents, there was a significant difference in the number of correct answers that were given by parents and non-parents. Parents were definitely better informed than were non-parents. Perhaps this can be explained by the circumstances which exist in the district sampled. Edmond has evolved into an upper socioeconomic community, partly because of the attractive terrain of the area which has caused developers and builders to build more expensive homes. The higher priced homes, the pleasant surroundings, and the suburban lifestyle have attracted the upper socioeconomic family which includes those moving to the metropolitan area and those families already in the metropolitan area. Mandated busing in the nearby metropolitan schools, coupled with a generally very good reputation in the Edmond Public Schools,

may provide other factors. Parents enrolling children in the district during the 1970's often indicated that they moved to Edmond just because the schools have an excellent reputation. The enrollment has jumped from 5,094 in 1971-72 to over 8,500 in 1979-80. It is the writer's opinion that the level of information held by patrons as a factor in giving ratings may be somewhat overshadowed by the general feeling that the schools are good. Thus, both parents and non-parents would tend to give good ratings to the schools based solely on the reputation of the district.

The third sub-hypothesis which predicted that parents who had a relatively high degree of participation in school programs and activities will rate the district higher than parents who did not participate in school activities and programs was supported. It is the writer's opinion that parents with high participation have a better understanding of the school system and have a generally more positive attitude toward the school district than do parents who do not participate.

Other interesting data concerning the demographics of the study include the fact that district ratings between business and professional and non-business and non-professional patrons were not significantly different; however, the business and professional group answered significantly more of the questions. Also, while district ratings between college graduates and non-graduates were not significant; there was also a very significant difference in the number of questions correctly answered. There were no significant differences in ratings or the number of questions correctly answered when

respondents were categorized according to sex, age, income, and length of residency in the district.

Recommendations

It is in consideration of the findings, the conclusions made from those findings, and the previously described limitations of this study that the following recommendations are offered:

Recommendations for Practice

1. Results of this study indicate that school districts should strive to better inform patrons concerning all aspects of the operation of the district. There are some important areas such as school finance about which patrons know very little.

2. School districts should continue to communicate with all patrons--both parents and non-parents. Parents are better informed about schools than are non-parents, but most patrons pay school taxes and most are eligible to vote in bond elections.

3. School districts should strive to get parents involved in activities and programs, for involved parents are more supportive.

4. School districts should provide opportunities for the patrons of the district to give essential feedback. Surveys, public meetings, and individual parent-teacher conferences are suggested.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. It is recommended that this study be replicated in a wide variety of school districts of different sizes, locations, and different socioeconomic mixes to enable the findings to be generalized to a larger population.

2. Even though a considerable amount of time and effort was spent in the development of the questionnaire, the instrument should be refined to make certain that the questions are appropriate to the school district(s) being sampled.

3. Since the results of this study concerning the ratings of parents and non-parents differ from the findings of Gallup, it is recommended that the study be replicated in other settings to ascertain whether or not parents rate school districts differently from non-parents.

Concluding Comments

It is hoped that the findings of this study have added substantially to the understanding of school public relations by confirming that if school districts work to better inform their patrons the district will generate more positive support from the community.

With the decrease of public confidence experienced by America's public schools during the past two decades, it is imperative for school administrators to do everything possible to improve the confidence level locally, at the state level, and at the national level. It is hoped that practitioners of Educational Administration will be able to use the results of this study to better understand and improve their profession.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

EDMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
1216 South Rankin
Edmond, Oklahoma 73034

PUBLIC SCHOOL SURVEY

May 1980

PLEASE DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME. YOUR
RESPONSES WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION (information concerning individual completing this questionnaire)

1. Parent/Non-Parent (check one)

- a. No children presently in school
 b. I have a child (or children) attending public school in this district
 c. I have a child (or children) attending private or parochial school

2. Occupation (check one)

- a. Business and Professional
 b. Clerical and Sales
 c. Farm
 d. Skilled Labor
 e. Unskilled Labor
 f. Non-Labor Force
 g. Undesignated

3. Education (check all appropriate)

- a. Elementary Grades
 b. High School Incomplete
 c. High School Graduate
 d. Technical, Trade, or Business School
 e. College Incomplete
 f. College Graduate

4. Sex

- a. Male
 b. Female

5. Age

- a. Under 21 Years
 b. 21 to 29 Years
 c. 30 to 49 Years
 d. 50 Years and Older

6. Income (Annual Family Income)

- a. \$30,000 and Over
 b. \$20,000 to \$29,999
 c. \$10,000 to \$19,999
 d. \$5,000 to \$9,999
 e. Under \$5,000

7. My usual sources of information concerning the public schools are: (check all appropriate)

- a. Local Newspaper
 b. Metropolitan Newspaper
 c. Radio and Television
 d. School Publications
 e. Direct Involvement With My Children
 f. Word of Mouth (Neighbors, Friends, Etc.)

8. I have lived in this school district:

- a. Less Than One Year d. From Five to Ten Years
 b. From One to Three Years e. Over Ten Years
 c. From Three to Five Years

9. (This question is for parents with children in the public schools). During this school year I have participated in the following school activities: (check all appropriate)

- a. Band Boosters, All-Sports Association, or Other Similar Organizations
 b. Elementary Parent/Teacher Organization or Booster Club
 c. PALS Organization (Volunteer Parents Program)
 d. Homeroom Sponsor or Class Sponsor
 e. Parent/Teacher Conference Day
 f. Athletic Events, Musical Programs, or Other School Events
 g. District-Wide Committee (Textbooks, Facilities, Etc.)
 h. Other _____

10. Briefly list the strengths of this school district:

11. Briefly list the weaknesses of this district:

12. Check if appropriate:

- I desire more information about what is going on in the schools.
 I would like to receive a monthly newsletter containing information concerning the local schools.

II. INFORMATION AND RATINGS

This section will give us information concerning how well our patrons are informed about the schools. It also gives you an opportunity to rate the various programs and functions of the school district. Questions one through five in each section are to be scored either true or false (T or F). Question number six in each section asks for you to grade the school in that area. Please answer all questions.

Administration

- T F 1. The superintendent is the chief executive officer of the Board of Education and the school district.
- T F 2. The superintendent's job is to carry out the policies of the Board through the administration of the school district.
- T F 3. Board members' legal power is not limited to occasions when the Board is in session.
- T F 4. Special Board meetings are not open to the public.
- T F 5. The Board's duty is to set district policy.
- A B C D F 6. What grade would you give this school district's administration?

Curriculum

- T F 1. The State Department of Education does not have to approve all courses offered for credit in the local schools.
- T F 2. Standard test scores indicate that students in this district generally score above the Oklahoma mean (average).
- T F 3. The State Department of Education sets the graduation requirements for local schools and local Boards of Education may not add to the graduation requirements.
- T F 4. Over 120 courses are offered to high school students in this district.
- T F 5. The school term in Oklahoma's Public Schools must contain a minimum of 180 days including professional days.
- A B C D F 6. What grade would you give this school district's curriculum?

Teaching Staff

- T F 1. All classroom teachers must be certified by the State Department of Education.
- T F 2. Teachers are not required to renew their teaching certificates.

Teaching Staff (Continued)

- T F 3. A dismissal procedure which contains procedural due process is clearly stated in writing by state law.
- T F 4. The teacher-pupil ratio in this district's elementary schools is approximately one teacher to 29 students.
- T F 5. Teachers in this state must be evaluated by the administration to determine their teaching effectiveness only once every five years.
- A B C D F 6. What grade would you give this school district's teaching staff?

Public Relations

- T F 1. This school district publishes a monthly newsletter to keep patrons informed of school news.
- T F 2. PTA or a similar group at the local level works to ensure the promotion and improvement of quality education in all schools in the district.
- T F 3. When a district patron calls the schools or the administration office every effort will be made to give the patron an answer to his or her question.
- T F 4. The public has a right to know about conditions in the schools.
- T F 5. The school district employs a public relations director to assist in informing the news media and the public regarding school news.
- A B C D F 6. What grade would you give this district's efforts in public relations?

School Finance

- T F 1. This school district is one of the wealthier districts in the state in terms of expenditures per student.
- T F 2. The general operating budget for this district for 1979-80 is approximately 12 million dollars.
- T F 3. This district ranks in the lowest one-tenth of state schools in total revenue received per child.
- T F 4. The average expenditure per child in this district is over \$1600 per year.
- T F 5. Each school district in the state receives the same amount per student for education.
- A B C D F 6. How would you grade the adequacy of this district's sources of financing for public school education?

Guidance and Counseling

- T F 1. School guidance counselors provide services to all children in the district (grades K-12).
- T F 2. There is at least one counselor assigned to each school site in the district.
- T F 3. Standardized test results are not available to parents of students in this district.
- T F 4. Guidance counseling services are available to parents concerning their child's social and academic progress.
- T F 5. Counselors are specifically trained to work with both students and parents.
- A B C D F 6. What grade would you give the guidance and counseling program in this district?

Special Education

- T F 1. Special education programs operate at a student per-capita cost about equal to regular educational programs.
- T F 2. Special education is mandated by federal law and totally funded by the federal government.
- T F 3. Educators work with parents of all eligible special education students in the development of individualized education programs (IEPs).
- T F 4. This district offers a special program for those students identified as gifted and talented in grades 2 through 7.
- T F 5. Parents do not have to give permission for placement of students in special education programs.
- A B C D F 6. What grade would you give this district's special education program?

Extracurricular Activities

- T F 1. Extracurricular programs are financed totally from the district's tax revenues.
- T F 2. High school students have an opportunity to participate in over 50 different clubs and organizations such as the Chess Club, the Science Club, and the Spanish Club.
- T F 3. Teachers and administrators have the same legal control over students during school activities as during regular school.
- T F 4. Most school activities are governed by the local school and by the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association.

Extracurricular Activities (Continued)

- T F 5. Students must meet certain academic requirements before participating in all activities.
- A B C D F 6. What grade would you give this district's extracurricular program?

School Facilities

- T F 1. School districts have the authority to raise any desired amount of money for school construction.
- T F 2. A simple majority of popular vote is needed to pass a bond issue.
- T F 3. This district utilizes about 60 portable or temporary buildings for classrooms.
- T F 4. All schools are air conditioned in this district.
- T F 5. The state assists local school districts with funds for new buildings and facilities.
- A B C D F 6. What grade would you give the facilities of this district?

Food Service

- T F 1. A free or reduced-price lunch is available for all students whose parents qualify (based on income).
- T F 2. Menus for our schools do not have to be approved by the State School Lunch Department.
- T F 3. All food service kitchens in this district are licensed by the State Health Department.
- T F 4. The nutritional make-up of each menu and serving portions are spelled out in federal regulations.
- T F 5. The local school district does not allow students to have input into the planning of meals for the lunch program.
- A B C D F 6. What grade would you give this district's food service program?

Transportation

- T F 1. In order for the state to reimburse the school district for transportation services provided students, the student must live at least two miles from the school.
- T F 2. A student who refuses to behave on the bus is subject to losing his/her privilege to ride the bus.
- T F 3. All bus services provided by this district are reimbursed to the district by the state.

Transportation (Continued)

- T F 4. All bus drivers must go through a special training and safety program provided by the State Department of Education.
- T F 5. This district has about 50 square miles in its transportation area.
- A B C D F 6. What grade would you give this district's transportation services?

APPENDIX B

LETTERS

May 3, 1980

Dear Edmond Public School Patron:

National polls have indicated that there have been significant changes in public school confidence in recent years. The Edmond Public School District believes it is vital to seek input from people who live in the school district. You have been randomly selected as one of four hundred selected to complete this school district questionnaire, which has been approved by the Edmond Board of Education.

The questionnaire gives you an opportunity to rate the school system; it asks you to indicate strengths, weaknesses, and the degree to which national education problems exist or do not exist in the local district; and it allows us to measure how well the patrons are informed about the operation of the schools so we can better inform the public in areas that the survey indicates a need for improved communication.

Your response is extremely important to the Edmond Public Schools. Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire, whether you have children attending public schools or not. It is important for us to see how patrons with no children in our school as well as patrons with children feel about public education in this community. It is this type of input, both positive and negative, that serves as a basis for improving the public schools.

We request that you mail your response by May 15, 1980, in order to be a part of this school survey. Should you have questions about the survey please call 341-2246 for assistance. Thank you for your assistance in this research survey.

Sincerely,

Darrell L. Garrison
Assistant Superintendent

Enclosures

May 22, 1980

Dear Edmond School Patron:

You recently received a questionnaire seeking your opinions concerning the Edmond Public Schools. If you have not completed the questionnaire, won't you please take a few minutes to complete the form and mail it to us? Your input is vitally important to the success of this study. If you have misplaced the questionnaire, please call 341-2246 and we will mail you another form and return envelope. If you have already returned the questionnaire to us, thank you for your assistance in this study. Results of the study will be made available in July.

Sincerely,

Darrell L. Garrison
Edmond Public Schools

February 25, 1980

Dear _____:

In reference to our phone conversation on February 22, 1980, I am seeking your assistance in developing a survey instrument to collect data from Edmond school patrons. I am trying to measure how well informed school patrons are concerning the operation and programs of the local school district. The central hypothesis of the study is: a school patron's level of knowledge about the school is positively related to the patron's level of confidence in the school district.

I am concerned at this point with determining what school information is important for school patrons to know. We are taking an approach of breaking the school operation down into categorical areas. This method will enable us to ask questions to measure how well informed the respondent is in a specific area; we can then ask the respondent how he or she rates the district on its performance in that area.

I have enclosed a form for you to list the information you feel is important for school patrons to know about the local school district. We are trying to generalize the questions so that most any school district could use the instrument should they desire to replicate the study.

Please list general questions in each school-related category that you feel patrons should be able to answer. Any comments that you might have concerning the addition or deletion of categories will be valued.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated. Please return your suggestions in the enclosed envelope at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Darrell L. Garrison

Enclosure

April 21, 1980

Dear _____:

Thank you for previously providing input to the development of the school patron information questionnaire. We have narrowed the input down to ten questions in each category, and we are asking you for assistance once again to help us make the final selections of items to be used in the questionnaire.

Please select five statements (questions) in each category that you feel best represent what is important for school patrons to know. Indicate your choices by circling the item numbers.

Thank you again for your time and input. I will send you a copy of the actual survey questionnaire when they are printed.

Sincerely,

Darrell L. Garrison

Enclosures

APPENDIX C

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

PANEL OF JUDGES

Mr. Ken Dolezal, President
Oklahoma School Public Relations Association
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

Dr. Carl Downing, President
Oklahoma Education Association
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Mrs. Lloyd Leveridge, President
Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers
Norman, Oklahoma

Dr. Edna Manning, Assistant Superintendent
Edmond Public Schools
Edmond, Oklahoma

Dr. Clarence G. Oliver, Jr., Superintendent
Broken Arrow Public Schools
Broken Arrow, Oklahoma

Mr. Howard Potts, Assistant Administrator
Planning, Research and Evaluation
State Department of Education
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Ms. Francis Powell
Director of Community Relations
Union Public Schools
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Dr. George A. Rowley, Superintendent
Edmond Public Schools
Edmond, Oklahoma

Dr. Kenneth St. Clair, Professor
Department of Educational Administration and
Higher Education
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma

Dr. L. M. Sullivan, Area Supervisor
Accreditation Section
State Department of Education
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

APPENDIX D

ADDITIONAL DATA

TOTAL NUMBER OF QUESTIONS CORRECT IN
EACH OPERATIONAL AREA

	Number Correct	Frequency	Percent
Administration	2	12	5.9
	3	49	24.3
	4	77	38.1
	5	64	31.7
		<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Curriculum	1	1	.5
	2	15	7.4
	3	42	20.8
	4	80	39.6
	5	64	31.7
	<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>	
Teaching Staff	1	4	2.0
	2	13	6.4
	3	63	31.2
	4	97	48.0
	5	25	12.4
	<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>	
Public Relations	0	1	.5
	1	1	.5
	2	33	16.3
	3	67	33.2
	4	73	36.1
5	27	13.4	
	<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>	
Finance	0	11	5.4
	1	26	12.9
	2	55	27.2
	3	51	25.2
	4	35	17.3
5	24	11.9	
	<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>	
Guidance and Counseling	0	1	.5
	1	1	.5
	2	9	4.5
	3	23	11.4
	4	47	23.3
5	121	59.9	
	<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>	

	Number Correct	Frequency	Percent
Special Education	0	2	1.0
	1	6	3.0
	2	13	6.4
	3	35	17.3
	4	71	35.1
	5	75	37.1
		<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Extracurricular Activities	0	2	1.0
	1	1	.5
	2	11	5.4
	3	42	20.8
	4	85	42.1
	5	61	30.2
		<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>
School Facilities	0	3	1.5
	1	23	11.4
	2	53	26.2
	3	63	31.2
	4	44	21.8
	5	16	7.9
		<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Food Service	1	3	1.5
	2	3	1.5
	3	17	8.4
	4	80	39.6
	5	99	49.0
			<u>202</u>
Transportation	1	4	2.0
	2	42	20.8
	3	79	39.1
	4	62	30.7
	5	15	7.4
			<u>202</u>

RATINGS IN EACH OPERATIONAL AREA

	Rating	Frequency	Percent
Administration	F	2	1.0
	D	4	2.0
	C	56	27.7
	B	110	54.5
	A	30	14.9
		<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Curriculum	D	3	1.5
	C	43	21.3
	B	108	53.3
	A	48	23.8
		<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Teaching Staff	D	9	4.5
	C	61	30.2
	B	95	47.0
	A	37	18.3
		<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Public Relations	F	4	2.0
	D	22	10.9
	C	85	42.1
	B	78	38.6
	A	13	6.4
		<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Finance	F	20	9.9
	D	39	19.3
	C	69	34.2
	B	62	30.7
	A	12	5.9
		<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Guidance and Counseling	F	6	3.0
	D	14	6.9
	C	73	36.1
	B	76	37.6
	A	33	16.3
		<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Special Education	F	1	.5
	D	7	3.5
	C	66	32.7
	B	104	51.5
	A	24	11.9
		<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>

	Rating	Frequency	Percent
Extracurricular Activities	D	6	3.0
	C	47	23.3
	B	99	49.0
	A	50	24.8
		<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>
School Facilities	F	1	.5
	D	11	5.4
	C	81	40.1
	B	89	44.1
	A	20	9.9
	<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>	
Food Service	F	6	3.0
	D	16	7.9
	C	69	34.2
	B	95	47.0
	A	16	7.9
	<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>	
Transportation	D	9	4.5
	C	51	25.2
	B	110	54.5
	A	32	15.8
	<u>202</u>	<u>100.0</u>	

2
VITA

Darrell Lloyd Garrison

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN INFORMATION AND RATINGS

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Borger, Texas, August 28, 1945, the son
of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd L. Garrison.

Education: Attended elementary school at Texhoma, Texas; at-
tended high school at Texhoma, Oklahoma, Laverne, Oklahoma,
and graduated from Guymon High School, Guymon, Oklahoma,
in 1963; received Bachelor of Music Education degree with
a major in French Horn from West Texas State University,
Canyon, Texas, in January, 1968; received Master of Arts
degree in Music Education from West Texas State University,
Canyon, Texas, in July, 1969; completed requirements for
the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University,
Stillwater, Oklahoma, in May, 1982.

Professional Experience: Junior High Band Director at Pampa
Junior High School, Pampa, Texas, 1968-69; Adjutant/
Executive Officer of Army Element, Armed Forces School
of Music, Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Virginia,
1969-71; Assistant High School Band Director at Pampa
High School, Pampa, Texas, 1971-73; Superintendent/
Principal of Texhoma Independent School District, Texhoma,
Texas, 1973-77; Assistant Superintendent of Edmond Public
Schools, Edmond, Oklahoma, 1977-80; Superintendent of
Blackwell City Schools, Blackwell, Oklahoma, 1980 to
present.