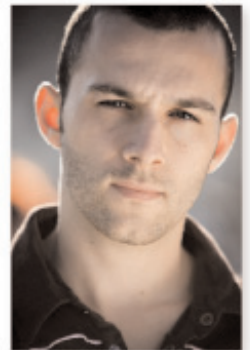


# The Power of Know™



## **Columbia Public Schools 2015 Patron Telephone Survey**

**Final Report  
October 19, 2015**



## **Columbia Public Schools 2015 Patron Telephone Survey Executive Summary October 19, 2015**

In late September and early October 2015, a 15-minute telephone study was conducted with 400 randomly selected, head-of-household, registered voter patrons living within the boundaries of the Columbia Public Schools (CPS).

As has been the case in past years, the survey focused primarily on communications topics, while also inquiring about issues such as satisfaction with the district and what qualities of a school district are most important to the survey participant.

Calls were placed to landlines and cell phone numbers, and the calls were divided into four equal quadrants, created by the cross-streets of Providence and Broadway. This means that the results in this report that reflect the views of all 400 research participants have a Margin of Error of plus or minus 5%. (The Margin of Error within the demographic and geographic subgroups is larger, because the number of respondents in each group is smaller.)

The results were as follows:

### **Grades for district performance**

Participants in the survey gave 17 of 26 different people, program, facility and district/patron relationship factors a grade of “B” or better (or the statistical equivalent of a “B”) on the traditional A-F grading scale. This result is nearly identical to the 2013 survey in terms of the number of factors receiving a grade of “B.” The areas achieving high marks included, “The performance of district employees in making you feel welcome when you visit a school or attend a school event,” “The quality of the district’s Early Childhood programs,” “The district’s graduation rate,” and “Performance of district teachers.”

Only five factors had a change in score from 2013 that was statistically significant, and all five had scores that declined somewhat.

### **Patron Hot Buttons**

All but three of the 26 factors achieved “Patron Hot Button” status, meaning that at least 81% of the survey respondents were willing to offer a grade, rather than saying, “Don’t know.” This affirms the presence of a very interested patron community.



### **Strengths and Areas needing improvement**

Very little has changed from 2013, when it comes to these two topics (at least at the top of each list).

“Teachers,” “Strong academics/curriculum/education” and “Parental/community support” led the list of strengths, while “Don’t know” was the most frequent answer on the question about areas needing improvement. This was followed by two answers dealing with finances and funding.

### **School district factors considered most important**

The top four factors this year were among the top five last year, indicating that residents have not altered their views very much on what constitutes a quality school district.

Topping the list were “Quality teachers and staff” and “Effective management of financial resources,” which makes this a bit of an “echo” of the most popular answers on the two questions above.

The only notable changes were that “Modern school facilities, including technology for student use” became more important, while “Small class sizes” became less important.

### **Preference for electronic or printed forms of communication**

The gap between these two choices narrowed considerably from the 2013 study; the two options are now in a statistical tie.

### **Preference for receiving news from the school district or the news media**

This gap narrowed as well, with 46% choosing the school district and 37% choosing the news media.

### **Review of the district’s printed materials**

Respondents continued to give a solid review to the content and design of *Quarterly Report*, and did so as well for *The Yearbook* and for individual school newsletters (both of which were added this year).

*Quarterly Report* readership remained stable, with 55% saying that they read at least every other issue. For *The Yearbook*, 23% said they had read at least some of the last issue, which was published in July of this year. A total of 27% of the respondents said they recalled seeing one or more individual school newsletters during the last school year. Considering that this survey was a cross-section of residents – meaning mostly families who do not have a child currently in the school district – 27% readership for individual school newsletters is a particularly solid score.



### **Review of the district's electronic communication**

The percentage of respondents who visit the district's website at least once a month remained steady at 22%. Visitors to individual school websites at the same frequency dipped from 47% in 2013 to 28% on this survey. Both the district's website and individual school websites got high marks on how easy it was to find what the respondent was looking for. Viewership of Columbia Public Schools television (cable or the website feed) remained very low, with only 2% of survey participants saying they watched "frequently" and 9% saying "sometimes."

### **Use of social media**

"Likes" for Facebook pages associated with individual schools in the district or with various school-related clubs or organizations jumped from 10% in 2013 to 19% this year. Twitter followers remained steady (from a statistical standpoint) at 11%, and 6% said they would follow a district Instagram account, if there was one.

### **Topics of most interest**

The only addition this year to the list of topics – "Safety and security" – had the highest percentage (74%) of respondents saying they would be interested in knowing more about it from the school district. This was followed by "Information on curriculum and curriculum changes," "Student and teacher success stories," and "Information on the district's finances and budget."

### **Sources of district news**

"Friends and neighbors" remained the source of district news that respondents said they consulted "frequently," although the percentage dipped from 86% in 2013 to 73% on this survey. Following that were "The print edition of *The Columbia Tribune* newspaper," "Local television stations" and "Students who attend school in the district."

When asked what source they consult first for district news, "The print edition of *The Columbia Tribune*" topped the list at 18%, followed by "Students who attend school in the district" (16%) and "Friends and neighbors" (13%).

The final report that follows contains a series of findings, discussion of each of those findings, and all the questions, answers and appropriate cross-tabulations. A brief summary closes the report.



**Columbia Public Schools  
2015 Patron Telephone Survey  
Final Report  
October 19, 2015**

**Finding 1: Respondents gave 17 of 26 different people, program, facility and district/patron relationship factors a grade of “B” or better (or the statistical equivalent of “B”) on the traditional A-F grading scale. Also, 23 of the 26 factors qualified as Patron Hot Buttons, because at least 81% of the respondents were willing to offer a grade, rather than saying, “Don’t know.” This high number of Hot Buttons indicates that the school district is a regular topic of conversation within the district’s boundaries.**

In late September and early October 2015, a 15-minute telephone survey was conducted with 400 randomly selected, head-of-household, registered voters living within the boundaries of the Columbia Public Schools.

Calls were placed to landlines and cell phone numbers in the district, and each potential respondent had to confirm that he or she was a head of household and a registered voter to continue with the survey. As in the past, the cross-streets of Providence and Broadway were used to create four quadrants that had 100 respondents each. Having a randomly selected participant group that generally mirrors the population pattern in the district means that the results in this report that reflect the views of all 400 respondents have a Margin of Error of plus or minus 5%. (The Margin of Error is larger in the demographic and geographic subgroups, because the number of respondents in each group is smaller.)

This is the fifth survey of its type for CPS in the last six years (a break was taken in 2014). The focus was similar to those completed in previous years (a variety of communication topics and perceptions of the district’s performance), although there were a handful of new questions, along with some very modest wording changes to some of the questions that regularly appeared in the survey.

Like the previous years, the survey began by asking respondents to “grade” 26 different people, program, facility and district/patron relationship factors, plus the district’s overall performance, using the traditional A-F grading scale.

Starting this survey with such evaluation questions serves three purposes.



First, it provides an easy start for the respondents, giving them confidence that they can actively participate in this process without needing any “inside information.” Second, it offers the chance for the respondents and the interviewers to develop rapport, which will be important once the questions become more complex later in the survey.

Third, and most importantly, these questions provide respondents an opportunity to express their views on the district’s current performance – views that play a key role in their willingness to advocate for the district, to support a ballot measure, to assist with committee work that involves community residents, etc.

All of the grades for all of the factors are displayed below. However, to simplify the analysis, a 5-point weighted scale has also been applied.

In this scale, each grade of “A” is worth 5 points, down to each grade of “F” being worth 1 point. The point values are totaled, and then divided by the number of respondents willing to offer a grade (rather than saying, “Don’t know”) to arrive at a single number between 1.00 and 5.00.

Recognizing that an “A” – meaning a 5.00 – would be next to impossible (because it would require all those with an opinion to say, “A”), the dividing line between areas of strength and those that may need attention is considered a “B,” or 4.00. Taking into account the Margin of Error, a score as low as 3.80 is, statistically speaking, still considered a “B.”

In the case the Columbia Public Schools, 17 of the 26 factors received a grade of “B” or better (or the statistical equivalent of “B”). Those that topped the list were:

- The performance of district employees in making you feel welcome when you visit a school or attend a school event – 4.40
- The quality of the district’s Early Childhood programs – 4.38
- The district’s graduation rate – 4.26
- Performance of district teachers – 4.23
- Safety of students – 4.20

In the 2013 survey, there were 27 factors – with the changes for this year being the combining of the Board and administration, and the removal of the transportation program. On that survey, 18 of the 27 factors earned a “B” or better, which makes the two surveys essentially identical in terms of this measurement.



Only two factors switched places, meaning either improved enough to achieve a “B” or declined below the level required for that grade. In 2013, “The effectiveness of communications with the public by the Columbia Public Schools had a score of 3.77; on this year’s survey, it was 3.86. On the negative side, “Class sizes, meaning the number of students in each classroom” was a 3.80 in 2013 and a 3.66 in 2015.

While there were modest score changes throughout most of the list, only five factors had changes that were statistically significant – meaning greater than 5%. All of them had a greater than 5% drop:

- Quality of education provided to students – 4.13, down from 4.36
- Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities – 4.04, down from 4.26
- The district’s efforts to ensure equivalent educational programming from school to school – 3.84, down from 4.07
- The district’s responsiveness to patron concerns – 3.46, down from 3.77
- The district’s plans to close the achievement gap among its students – 3.42, down from 3.61\*

*\*The question in 2013 asked about the district’s “performance” in closing the achievement gap, so this should not be considered an identical comparison of the scores from 2013 and 2015.*

While a statistically significant drop is disappointing, it is important to remember that the top three bullet-pointed factors shown above remained with a grade of “B,” even after the drop, while the other two factors were already below a “B” in 2013, and just dropped a bit more on this year’s survey.

To determine if where the respondent lived or his or her demographic characteristics had an impact on the score, a cross-tabulation analysis was conducted on the nine factors that scored below 3.80.

As stated above, the Margin of Error is much larger in this analysis than for the total survey group, meaning that it is better to look for trends, rather than to focus on individual numbers. Also, there were four groups that had a small number of members – African-American, Hispanic/Latino, those ages 18 to 34 and those who had lived in the district up to five years. In smaller groups, just a handful of responses can significantly impact the result. (And because the racial/ethnic group was dominated by Caucasian respondents, they will always be close to the overall score.)

The areas of note on the cross-tabulation were as follows:



- Those who had lived in the district more than 15 years were most often the group that gave the highest marks (among the “length of time” group).
- The differences in the scores between current student families and past student families (meaning all their CPS students had graduated) were generally modest. In six of the nine factors, past student families had the higher score between these two groups although, again, the differences were small.
- While there are interesting differences to review, there was no consistent pattern in the gender, age and location of residence groups.
- Because of the significant dominance of Caucasian participants, as detailed above, the racial/ethnic group results will be presented in the charts, but will not be discussed in the commentary. However, it is important to note that the percentage of participants from each of the three largest groups does, basically, mirror the racial/ethnic percentages of those groups in Columbia, based on the 2014 Census estimate.

The final aspect of this part of the survey is the identification of Patron Hot Buttons. These are the factors that were graded by at least 81% (more than four out of five) of the respondents. As such, they are the aspects of district life that typical patrons think of first, when the school district’s name is mentioned.

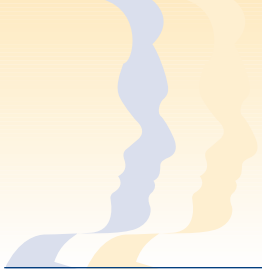
The active interest in the school district is seen in this analysis, as all but three of the factors qualified. The ones that did not were:

- The quality of the district’s Early Childhood programs
- The district’s record on making and fulfilling promises
- The district’s plans to close the achievement gap among its student

Interestingly, the grade on “the district’s record” item was below a “B,” but did not have enough respondents willing to *offer* a grade to have it be a Hot Button. This suggests the presence of a modestly sized group of residents who pay very close attention to this topic, while the balance has no opinion.

But the sum total of the grading exercise is that the scores remain similar to 2013, meaning that two-thirds were graded by the typical patron at a “B” or higher.

*Questions 1-3 confirmed that a respondent was a head of household, a registered voter, and aware that he or she lived within the boundaries of the Columbia Public Schools. A “yes” answer was required on each question to continue. As such, these questions are not displayed here. All responses with percentages may add to more or less than 100%, due to rounding.*



*Verbatim comments shown in this report are one comment, by one person each. Had they been indicative of a trend, they would have appeared in enough quantity to be displayed in the chart accompanying the question.*



4. **To make certain that we have people from all parts of the district participating in this survey, which of the following best describes where you live?** *Choices were read to respondents. Numbers of participants in each region were determined by school district leadership in an effort to match the general population pattern. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
West of Providence and north of Broadway	100
East of Providence and north of Broadway	100
West of Providence and south of Broadway	100
East of Providence and south of Broadway	100

As you know, students in school are usually given a grade to reflect the quality of their work. Those grades are usually A, B, C, D or F. Based on your experience, the experience of your children, or things you have heard about the Columbia Public Schools from others, please tell me what grade you would give the school district on each of the following items. Let's start with...*Questions 5 through 30 were rotated to eliminate order bias.*

5. **Performance of district teachers**

Response	Percentage
A	31%
B	54%
C	7%
D	1%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	7%

## 6. Performance of school principals

Response	Percentage
A	28%
B	43%
C	12%
D	1%
F	3%
Don't know (not read)	14%

## 7. Performance of the district administration and the Board of Education

Response	Percentage
A	19%
B	36%
C	24%
D	6%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	13%

## 8. How the Columbia Public Schools is handling the growth in the district

Response	Percentage
A	22%
B	49%
C	15%
D	1%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	11%

## 9. Quality of education provided to students

Response	Percentage
A	30%
B	53%
C	12%
D	2%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	2%

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

Response	Percentage
A	24%
B	47%
C	18%
D	1%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	10%

## 11. Quality of technology available to students

Response	Percentage
A	37%
B	32%
C	10%
D	3%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	16%

## 12. Safety of students

Response	Percentage
A	29%
B	54%
C	8%
D	1%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	7%

## 13. Quality of school facilities

Response	Percentage
A	40%
B	41%
C	17%
D	2%
F	<1%
Don't know (not read)	1%

## 14. Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities

Response	Percentage
A	31%
B	43%
C	15%
D	4%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	6%



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

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A	11%
B	46%
C	17%
D	5%
F	4%
Don't know (not read)	18%

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

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A	34%
B	21%
C	9%
D	0%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	37%

**17. Value received by patrons for the tax dollars spent**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A	16%
B	39%
C	33%
D	3%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	8%

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

Response	Percentage
A	24%
B	28%
C	31%
D	9%
F	4%
Don't know (not read)	4%

### 19. The district's responsiveness to patron concerns

Response	Percentage
A	13%
B	25%
C	36%
D	3%
F	4%
Don't know (not read)	18%

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

Response	Percentage
A	20%
B	38%
C	24%
D	3%
F	6%
Don't know (not read)	9%



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

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A	11%
B	34%
C	13%
D	17%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	23%

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

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A	18%
B	52%
C	16%
D	5%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	8%

**23. The district's plans to close the achievement gap among its students**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A	9%
B	26%
C	25%
D	8%
F	3%
Don't know (not read)	30%

#### 24. The quality of vocational, career or technical programming for students

Response	Percentage
A	37%
B	31%
C	13%
D	2%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	16%

#### 25. The balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities

Response	Percentage
A	19%
B	24%
C	35%
D	6%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	15%

#### 26. The district's graduation rate

Response	Percentage
A	34%
B	51%
C	7%
D	1%
F	<1%
Don't know (not read)	7%



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

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A	20%
B	43%
C	15%
D	4%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	18%

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

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A	17%
B	55%
C	18%
D	5%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	4%

**29. The district's efforts to get parents involved**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A	29%
B	34%
C	23%
D	6%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	6%



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

Response	Percentage
A	48%
B	32%
C	10%
D	1%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	9%

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

Response	Percentage
A	31%
B	53%
C	16%
D	1%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	0%

Cross-tabulation: 5-point scale rating for each factor. Items with a “\*” are Patron Hot Buttons, meaning that at least 81% of the respondents offered a grade, rather than saying, “Don’t know.” These are the areas that typical patrons consider first, when evaluating the performance of the school district. The items in bold changed at a statistically significant level from 2013 to 2015. In cases where there is a modest difference in wording, the 2015 version is displayed below.

Factor	5-point scale rating/2015	5-point scale rating/2013	5-point scale rating/2012	5-point scale rating/2011	5-point scale rating 2010
The performance of district employees in making you feel welcome when you visit a school or attend a school event*	4.40	4.38	4.45	4.45	4.49
The quality of the district’s Early Childhood programs	4.38	4.24	4.24	4.23	4.12
The district’s graduation rate*	4.26	4.33	4.07	4.13	3.99
Performance of district teachers*	4.23	4.38	4.35	4.29	4.38
Safety of students*	4.20	4.41	4.27	4.20	4.29
Quality of technology available to students*	4.20	4.37	4.39	4.08	4.33
The quality of vocational, career or technical programming for students*	4.18	4.07	4.30	4.16	4.12
Quality of school facilities*	4.18	4.36	4.05	3.94	4.17
<b>Quality of education provided to students*</b>	4.13	4.36	4.34	4.15	4.23
Overall grade	4.13	4.17	4.18	4.03	4.10
Performance of school principals*	4.07	4.20	4.27	4.28	4.28
<b>Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities*</b>	4.04	4.26	4.16	4.01	4.25
Preparation of students for college, vocational or career training, or employment*	4.02	4.22	4.30	4.11	4.16
How the Columbia Public Schools is handling the growth in the district *	3.99	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
The district’s effort to ensure equivalent school buildings*	3.94	3.87	3.96	3.53	3.85
The district’s efforts to get parents involved*	3.87	4.06	4.21	4.07	4.20
The effectiveness of communications with the public by the Columbia Public Schools*	3.86	3.77	3.95	3.83	3.82
<b>The district’s efforts to ensure equivalent educational programming from school to school*</b>	3.84	4.07	4.03	3.81	3.89
Performance of the district administration and the Board of Education*	3.74	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
The district’s efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons*	3.70	3.74	3.98	3.97	3.98
Value received by patrons for the tax dollars spent*	3.69	3.65	3.97	3.84	3.94
Class sizes, meaning the number of students in each classroom*	3.66	3.80	3.79	3.49	3.52
The district’s efforts to involve citizens in decision-making*	3.63	3.68	3.83	3.89	3.69
The balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities*	3.62	3.70	3.86	3.75	3.78
<b>The district’s responsiveness to patron concerns*</b>	3.46	3.77	3.86	3.70	3.56
The district’s record on making and fulfilling promises	3.46	3.64	3.69	3.63	3.73
<b>The district’s plans to close the achievement gap among its students</b>	3.42	3.61	3.79	3.64	3.47
Performance of the Central Office administration	n/a	3.92	4.21	3.99	3.97
Performance of the Columbia Board of Education	n/a	3.98	3.92	3.91	3.87
The quality of the district’s transportation program	n/a	3.73	3.98	3.71	3.95

**Cross-tabulation: 5-point scale ratings for factors rated below 3.80 by the total survey group by age, length of time living in the district, and the presence of a current district student, past district student or no district student ever in the household. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and “age” will not square with “overall,” because two respondents refused to answer this question.**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Overall score</b>
Performance of administration and BOE	<b>3.74</b>
District’s efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons	<b>3.70</b>
Value received for the tax dollars spent	<b>3.69</b>
Class sizes, meaning the number of students in each classroom	<b>3.66</b>
District’s efforts to involve citizens in decision-making	<b>3.63</b>
Balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities	<b>3.62</b>
District’s responsiveness to patron concerns	<b>3.46</b>
District’s record on making and fulfilling promises	<b>3.46</b>
District’s plans to close the achievement gap among its students	<b>3.42</b>

<b>18-34 (n=83)</b>	<b>35-54 (n=176)</b>	<b>55 or older (n=139)</b>
3.69	3.75	3.76
3.69	3.71	3.71
3.45	3.76	3.75
3.61	3.65	3.70
3.61	3.71	3.53
3.63	3.67	3.52
3.45	3.46	3.46
3.39	3.52	3.41
3.41	3.41	3.44

<b>Up to 5 years (n=44)</b>	<b>5 to 15 years (n=127)</b>	<b>More than 15 years (n=229)</b>
3.40	3.63	3.96
3.41	3.55	3.84
3.41	3.53	3.84
3.64	3.67	3.66
3.61	3.54	3.69
3.63	3.53	3.66
4.05	3.33	3.56
3.26	3.63	3.56
3.11	3.31	3.55

<b>Student, yes (n=126)</b>	<b>Student, past (n=164)</b>	<b>Student, never (n=110)</b>
3.81	3.84	3.50
3.72	3.79	3.54
3.74	3.82	3.43
3.72	3.66	3.57
3.73	3.65	3.40
3.63	3.53	3.70
3.51	3.56	3.23
3.50	3.52	3.26
3.44	3.45	3.35

**Cross-tabulation: 5-point scale ratings for factors rated below 3.80 by the total survey group by location of the respondent's residence, ethnicity of respondent and gender. Note: "n" equals the number of respondents in each group, and the racial/ethnic groups will not square with "overall," because only groups with at least modest levels of participants are included below.**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Overall score</b>	<b>W of Prov/N of B'way (n=100)</b>	<b>E of Prov/N of B'way (n=100)</b>	<b>W of Prov/S of B'way (n=100)</b>	<b>E of Prov/S of B'way (n=100)</b>	<b>African-American (n=41)</b>	<b>Caucasian (n=312)</b>	<b>Hispanic /Latino (n=34)</b>	<b>Female (n=215)</b>	<b>Male (n=185)</b>
Performance of administration and BOE	<b>3.74</b>	3.68	3.79	3.97	3.53	3.91	3.74	3.58	3.74	3.74
District's efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons	<b>3.70</b>	3.71	3.70	3.94	3.34	3.42	3.77	3.45	3.74	3.66
Value received for the tax dollars spent	<b>3.69</b>	3.68	3.55	4.03	3.49	3.62	3.75	3.35	3.74	3.64
Class sizes, meaning the number of students in each classroom	<b>3.66</b>	3.72	3.70	3.59	3.68	3.80	3.60	3.88	3.64	3.68
District's efforts to involve citizens in decision-making	<b>3.63</b>	3.64	3.73	3.84	3.50	3.36	3.70	3.50	3.67	3.59
Balance of spending on academics and extracurricular activities	<b>3.62</b>	3.55	3.59	3.83	3.48	3.69	3.64	3.44	3.59	3.65
District's responsiveness to patron concerns	<b>3.46</b>	3.50	3.34	3.71	3.26	3.17	3.52	3.22	3.52	3.38
District's record on making and fulfilling promises	<b>3.46</b>	3.43	3.38	3.75	3.22	3.29	3.51	3.12	3.54	3.35
District's plans to close the achievement gap among its students	<b>3.42</b>	3.38	3.42	3.69	3.22	3.31	3.46	3.19	3.47	3.39



**Finding 2: “Teachers,” “Strong academics/curriculum/education” and “Parental/community support” were the strengths of the district that received the most mentions among the survey participants. “Don’t know” was the top response on areas that needed to improve, followed by “Manage money better” and “Finding funding.”**

Immediately after the grading exercise, respondents were asked to name what they considered to be the school district’s strengths and the areas where it needs to improve.

The open-ended responses were coded, meaning common words, phrases and ideas were identified to help provide a clear picture of typical residents’ opinions on these two topics.

Under the category of strengths, “Teachers” was most frequently identified (97 mentions), followed by “Strong academics/curriculum/education” (74 mentions). The third most frequent response was “Don’t know” (64 mentions), with “Parental/community support” coming in fourth (59 mentions).

Comparing these results to the previous survey, the top two answers switched places, with “Strong academics” (or words to that effect) leading by a wide margin. The other interesting comparison is that “Don’t know” was only mentioned 11 times (on the question about strengths) in 2013.

On the subject of areas needing improvement, “Don’t know” led with way (128 mentions), followed by two financial items: “Manage money better” (72 mentions) and “Finding funding” (44 mentions).

In 2013, “Don’t know” was also the top answer. For this particular question, this is good news, because it means that a large segment of the population has nothing they would recommend to the district. Interestingly, while the words were somewhat different between the two surveys, the second- and third-most popular answers on both were financially related.

The statements – shown in verbatim form – below the charts associated with each question are comments that did not have enough mentions (or that had more than one idea in the comment) that they did not make it into the chart. It is important to remember, as stated above, that each is one comment, by one person only.

### 32. What do you think are the greatest strengths of the Columbia Public Schools?

*Responses were coded from open-ended comments, based on common words, phrases or ideas. Numbers, rather than percentages displayed below.*

Response	Number
Teachers	97
Strong academics/curriculum/education	74
Don't know	64
Parental/community support	59
Other (see below)	43
Good facilities	37
Good communication with residents	26

#### Verbatim "other" comments

Good teachers with strong support from the community.

They really seem to care about the students and want them to do well.

Their athletics throughout the district are pretty strong.

I'll just say they took good care of my kids when they were there and I didn't need to worry about them.

They prepare the students well for college and challenge them along the way.

They give a very good education value for the tax money we spend.

Some of the individual teachers and counselors; the athletic programs.

Strong music program.

Good tax base.

Good diversity of students.

The districting of the schools provides great locations for neighborhood schools.

The leadership cares and does a pretty job of doing what's needed for the kids.



They have a very educated staff that does a good job challenging the students.

Trying to keep up with academics, good class sizes and keeping up-to-date buildings.

I think it has an overall good reputation.

They have neighborhood schools.

The teachers and the resources they put into it.

They do a pretty good job working with all levels of students.

Capabilities of the teachers and superintendent of all the schools. The amount of transportation for the schools.

They offer students a wide variety of opportunities.

The faculty. Most of the teachers are very well-prepared.

They try to take care of all the kids equally. The teachers are pretty committed, too.

They prepare the students for growth outside the school, like going to college.

I haven't gotten too involved with the district yet. My daughter is only four.

The education level of the teachers; their concern for their students that are bound for college.

Their teachers and administration. I just feel like our district has wonderful coaches and teachers.

Music program.

The faculty. It's pretty diverse and the people I've met personally care about their students.

The diversity of education for the kids. The kids get a good education on culture and in all walks of life, which will help them as adults.

Good district academics and their inclusiveness to get all the kids to do well in school.

Resources – plenty of money and opportunity to spend it better.



Their good teachers. They try to keep the kids safe at school.

I don't think they have many strengths, as evident by my answers.

Administration and course offerings.

To me, it seems they are coasting. Just trying to get by being average. They do, however, offer the students opportunities to be involved in many things.

The teachers – some are good. They have lots of funding. Their interaction with the community. The vocational career training is not enough.

I think there are a lot of areas that are weak right now, but I do think they care and are trying. Just inadequate leadership.

They need help in about every area. Not sure there are any strengths right now.

I really can't think of any real strengths, at this time.

I know when my daughter went there, she had some concerns. The Board listened to our concerns and sometimes made changes.

I like the AP classes. Extracurricular activities, the career center.

The quality of education, support of the public and the overall emphasis on excellence of the district.

Their vision. They are very strong in their vision of how to improve things.

**33. Where could the district improve?** *Responses were coded from open-ended comments, based on common words, phrases or ideas. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Don't know	128
Manage money better	72
Finding funding	44
Other (see below)	39
Reduce emphasis on test scores	35
Smaller class sizes	29
Better pay for teachers	27
Communicating with residents	26

#### **Verbatim “other” comments**

Just keep communicating well.

Not bending to political correctness on issues, such as on transgender students.  
Represent all students, not just special interest groups.

Get off their duff and do some maintenance inside and outside.

Buildings are in need of help and more teachers are needed.

By getting rid of the A to F grading system and allowing teachers the flexibility to teach what the students are interested in.

By worrying more about education and less about political correctness.

Continued efforts on drug and alcohol education.

Have more extracurricular activities.

I can't think of anything. I love the school!

I don't know how to explain it, but something better needs to be done with the STEM schools.



I understand technology means improvement, but teaching kids how to communicate without social media and having their nose in their phone all the time would benefit them muchly.

I'd like to see them increase the effectiveness of the career center.

I'm not impressed with their ACT scores.

Many parents use the school system as a baby-sitting service. They are not held accountable at home and it is difficult to make them accountable at school.

Math program.

Maybe streamlining administration.

Motivate the teachers to be more consistent in grading and meeting the needs of all students, including gifted kids.

Smaller class sizes.

They need textbooks. Students are not prepared for college.

Emphasize education over athletics.

Figure out a better way of spending. They need to reduce administrative spending.

I know of some bullying that's occurred and little is being done to stop it.

I think they are too political in their decision-making. They should just do what's best.

I would love to see more emphasis on teaching real-life skills.

Increase accessibility to counseling at schools.

More time should be spent learning math and science.

Providing the same education throughout the schools.

The timing of when school starts and ends. When you have three children that go to three different types of schools, they all start at different times.

Smaller class sizes.



They need to be more accepting of diverse styles of teaching to meet the needs of the students.

Too top-heavy at the administration level.

I want to see it expanded and improved big time, because of what's happening with the kids graduating. No skills for high-paying jobs.

Communication to the children and having a teacher that's available for a parent when they have concerns. Calling Battle High School and getting the voice mail doesn't work.

They are too heavy on administration. They are not holding the kids accountable to a higher standard.

Better fiscal responsibility.

I didn't agree with the school schedule switch, where the older students go earlier than the younger students.

Once your kids are out of school, you kind of lose touch. Our children have been out of school for nine years.

The district is a total mess right now. Kids are out of control and administration turns its head. They are only worried about politics.

They could have a lot more practical knowledge. A lot of kids graduate without the knowledge of finances.



**Finding 3: The factors considered by participants to be the most important ones for a school district were similar to those identified in the 2013 study with two exceptions: “Modern school facilities” became more important and “Small class sizes” became less.**

Before moving into the section of the survey dealing with communications, participants were read a list of 11 factors that could be used to judge the quality of a school district. After hearing all 11 (which were rotated to prevent “order bias”), each person was asked to identify which ones would be most important, second, third and fourth on his or her list.

The answers were converted to a 4-point weighted scale, meaning that 4 points were awarded for each “Most important” answer, down to 1 point for each “Fourth-most important” response. By totaling the points, a clear picture of the views of typical patrons comes into focus.

At the top of the list – by a wide margin – was “Quality teachers and staff,” followed by “Effective management of financial resources,” “Up-to-date safety and security practices,” “Up-to-date curriculum,” “Modern school facilities, including technology for student use,” and “Nurturing, supportive culture in the school buildings.”

The list was very similar to the answers in 2013, with three exceptions:

- In 2013, the answers for the “financial management” and “safety and security” items had the same number of points. This year, “financial management” was the clear number two.
- “Modern school facilities, including technology for student use” had the ninth-highest number of points in 2013, while it was fifth on this survey.
- Going the other direction, “Small class sizes” was seventh this year and fourth in 2013.

Considering the responses to the open-ended questions that preceded this section, it comes as no surprise that “teachers” and “financial management” were the top two here.

34-34c.

I'm now going to read a list of factors that others have told us are important to them, when it comes to the school district. When I finish reading the list, I'm going to ask you which one of these items is most important to you. Many of these will probably be very important to you, but I'll want to know which one is most important. Which is second-most important? Third-most? And, finally, fourth-most? List was read and rotated. The number in parenthesis is the rank order.

Factor	Most important	Second-most important	Third-most important	Fourth-most important	4-point weighted scale points/2015	4-point weighted scale points/2013
Quality teachers and staff	176	62	44	18	996 (1)	1286 (1)
Effective management of financial resources	51	41	74	38	513 (2)	478 (T2)
Up-to-date safety and security practices	43	47	32	57	434 (3)	478 (T2)
Up-to-date curriculum	10	70	30	79	389 (4)	394 (5)
Modern school facilities, including technology for student use	28	43	58	8	365 (5)	130 (9)
Nurturing, supportive culture in the school buildings	9	85	11	31	344 (6)	196 (6)
Small class sizes	34	19	36	14	279 (7)	476 (4)
Visionary district and building-level leadership	46	1	25	13	250 (8)	189 (7)
Equivalent classes and programs from school to school	2	15	27	45	152 (9)	150 (8)
Active engagement between the district and the community	1	0	39	27	109 (10)	49 (11)
Large variety of extracurricular activities available	0	12	6	21	69 (11)	70 (10)



**Finding 4: Electronic and printed methods of communicating school district news are now statistically equivalent, in terms of a preference. The school district is still preferred over the news media as the respondents' more likely place to look for school district news. However, the gap continues to narrow.**

One of the most interesting parts of this survey is observing the slowly changing preferences in how school district news is received and who is consulted for that news.

This year, electronic forms of communication were preferred by 50% of the participants, compared to 47% for printed. Considering the Margin of Error, these scores are – at least statistically speaking – tied. Yet, the trend is unmistakable.

In addition, 46% of the respondents said they would look to the school district as their source of district news, while 37% said they would consult the local news media. That is a spread of 9%; in the 2013 study, the spread was 35%.

The cross-tabulations present an interesting picture of the trends on these two topics.

The groups that prefer printed communication were:

- Those age 55 or older
- Those who had lived in the district more than 15 years
- Past student families
- Those living west of Providence and north of Broadway (but “printed” scored just 51%; two of the other locations had a tie between printed and electronic)
- African-American participants (but, remember, this is a very small subgroup)
- Caucasian participants (although the scores were close – 50% to 46%)

All other groups preferred electronic communication.

In terms of the source of information, these are the groups that prefer the school district over the news media:

- Those ages 35-54
- Those age 55 and older
- Those who had lived in the district five to 15 years
- Those who had lived in the district more than 15 years
- Current student families
- Past student families



- All respondents by location, except those living east of Providence and south of Broadway
- African-American participants
- Caucasian participants
- Both female and male respondents

The balance of the subgroups would look to the news media before the school district.

Studying this data – and particularly the trends – will be important as the district continues to execute its communication programs.

**35. Generally speaking, do you prefer receiving information about what's going on in the school district in a printed form, such as in newsletters or stories in the newspaper, or in an electronic form, such as e-mails, e-mail newsletters and websites?**

Response	Percentage/ 2015	Percentage/ 2013	Percentage/ 2012	Percentage/ 2011	Percentage/ 2010
Printed	47%	52%	56%	52%	58%
Electronic	50%	46%	39%	41%	37%
It depends on what I'm looking for/not always the same (not read)	4%	2%	5%	8%	4%
Don't know (not read)	0%	<1%	0%	0%	1%

**36. In terms of information about what's going on in the school district, are you more likely to consult information that is provided by the district itself, or are you more likely to look to the news media to get your information?**

Response	Percentage/ 2015	Percentage/ 2013	Percentage/ 2012	Percentage/ 2011	Percentage/ 2010
School district	46%	62%	65%	58%	61%
News media	37%	27%	31%	27%	22%
It depends on what I'm looking for/not always the same (not read)	15%	11%	3%	14%	17%
Don't know (not read)	2%	0%	1%	1%	1%

**Cross-tabulation: Preference for printed versus electronic news and for school district-provided news versus the news media by age, length of time living in the district, and the presence of a current district student, past district student or no district student ever in the household.**  
**Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and “age” will not square with “overall,” because two respondents refused to answer this question.**

Response	Overall score
Printed	<b>47%</b>
Electronic	<b>50%</b>

18-34 (n=83)	35-54 (n=176)	55 or older (n=139)
36%	38%	65%
63%	69%	32%

Up to 5 years (n=44)	5 to 15 years (n=127)	More than 15 years (n=229)
16%	38%	58%
82%	59%	38%

Student, yes (n=126)	Student, past (n=164)	Student, never (n=110)
36%	66%	31%
62%	29%	67%

School district	<b>46%</b>
News media	<b>37%</b>

30%	45%	55%
47%	38%	29%

30%	39%	52%
59%	35%	34%

56%	50%	27%
29%	34%	52%

**Cross-tabulation: Preference for printed versus electronic news and for school district-provided news versus the news media by location of the respondent’s residence, ethnicity of respondent and gender. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the racial and ethnic groups will not square with “overall,” because only groups with at least modest levels of participants are included below.**

Response	Overall score
Printed	<b>47%</b>
Electronic	<b>50%</b>

W of Prov/N of B’way (n=100)	E of Prov/N of B’way (n=100)	W of Prov/S of B’way (n=100)	E of Prov/S of B’way (n=100)
51%	48%	47%	41%
45%	48%	47%	59%

African-American (n=41)	Caucasian (n=312)	Hispanic /Latino (n=34)
56%	50%	12%
44%	46%	85%

Female (n=215)	Male (n=185)
46%	47%
50%	50%

School district	<b>46%</b>
News media	<b>37%</b>

43%	46%	61%	33%
38%	35%	29%	46%

46%	48%	24%
39%	35%	53%

50%	41%
35%	39%



**Finding 5: In terms of printed communications coming from the school district, *Quarterly Report* continues to have a solid level of readership, with good reviews for its content and visual appeal. Questions about *The Yearbook* (an addition to the survey this year) show more modest readership, but excellent reviews of its content and design. This year's survey also introduced questions about individual school newsletters. While the readership on these pieces was also modest (which is to be expected, considering this was a community-wide survey), those who *were* readers were impressed with both the content and design.**

The review of the district's outbound communications began with printed pieces. Using similar sets of questions, the survey asked respondents to review their readership frequency, the content and the visual appeal of *Quarterly Report*, *The Yearbook* and individual school newsletters.

*Quarterly Report* has been a part of each of these surveys since 2010, meaning that the data not only presents a picture of 2015, but also shows a trend line in these three areas.

From a high water mark of 70% (who said they read "Every issue" or "Every other issue") in 2012, the score was 57% in 2013 and 55% this year. Taking the Margin of Error into account, the scores for 2015 and 2013 are statistically identical.

This result should not come as a significant surprise, considering the narrowing gap between those who prefer to receive school district news in a printed form and those who would rather have it electronically. The cross-tabulation results seem to reinforce this point.

Combining those who said they read "Every issue" with those who said they read "Every other issue," the top percentages were seen in the following subgroups:

- Respondents who live west of Providence and south of Broadway – 72%
- Current student families – 61%
- Those who had lived in the district more than 15 years – 61%
- Past student families – 60%
- Respondents who were age 55 or older – 60%
- Respondents who were ages 35-54 – 59%
- Female respondents – 58%

While not a direct match to the list of subgroups that preferred printed school district news over electronic, there are significant similarities that can be very instructive as communications planning moves forward.



Among those survey participants who said that they read *Quarterly Report* at least once a year, 80% called the content either “Excellent” or “Good” (the score was 79% in 2013), while 80% also provided one of these two answers when asked about the way the publication looks (the score was 82% in 2013). Statistically speaking, the scores on these two factors – content and design – were identical in 2013 and 2015.

*The Yearbook* was added for this year’s survey, with the same types of questions about readership, content and design.

The readership question asked if respondents remembered if they had read “at least some of the most recent edition, which came out in July.”

The response was not as strong as for *Quarterly Report*, as only 23% answered “yes.” (The question was focused on readership of the most recent issue, rather than over time, because of the infrequency of publication – which might make it more difficult for respondents to remember and, therefore, provide an accurate answer.)

The cross-tabulations showed almost no variation in the percentage of those who said “yes,” they had read the July issue. The range was from a high (aside from the 32% of the small group of Hispanic/Latino participants) of 29% of current student families, to a low of 19% for past student families and female respondents.

While readership hovered around one-fourth of the respondents, those who did read the last issue were very impressed.

A total of 88% called the quality of the information in the publication either “Excellent” or “Good,” while 93% said the same thing when asked about how the publication looked.

The readership, content and design results were similar on a set of questions about individual school newsletters – which were also an addition to the survey this year.

A total of 27% said they had seen “one or more of such newsletters during the last school year.” Remembering that this survey covers the entire community – not just current district parents – this result was more than expected.

Those who did answer, “Yes” were complimentary about the quality of the information in the newsletter (or newsletters) they remembered seeing, as 81% called it either “Excellent” or “Good.” On the subject of way the newsletter (or, again, newsletters) looked, the results were even stronger, with 92% answering “Excellent” or “Good.”

**37. Thinking now just about the school district's printed newsletter, called *Quarterly Report*, how often would you say you read it? Would you say...Choices were read to respondents.**

Response	Percentage/2015	Percentage/2013	Percentage/2012	Percentage/2011	Percentage/2010
Every issue	32%	43%	57%	54%	49%
Every other issue	23%	14%	13%	15%	18%
At least once a year	16%	9%	11%	11%	14%
Less than once a year	9%	17%	3%	6%	7%
Never	14%	15%	15%	13%	12%
Don't know (not read)	7%	2%	1%	2%	1%

**38. How would you rate the quality and completeness of the news that you see in the *Quarterly Report* newsletter, would you say it is....Asked of the 282 respondents who read "every issue," "every other issue," or "at least once a year." Percentages are of 282 respondents.**

Response	Percentage/2015	Percentage/2013	Percentage/2012	Percentage/2011	Percentage/2010
Excellent	20%	24%	27%	19%	28%
Good	60%	55%	59%	61%	57%
Fair	19%	18%	12%	15%	13%
Poor	1%	3%	1%	2%	2%
Don't know (not read)	0%	0%	1%	3%	1%

**39. How about the way that *Quarterly Report* looks? Would you rate it....Percentages are, again, of the 282 respondents who read *Quarterly Report* at least once a year.**

Response	Percentage/2015	Percentage/2013	Percentage/2012	Percentage/2011	Percentage/2010
Excellent	18%	25%	29%	23%	21%
Good	62%	57%	65%	64%	72%
Fair	18%	15%	6%	10%	5%
Poor	2%	2%	0%	<1%	0%
Don't know (not read)	0%	0%	<1%	3%	3%

Cross-tabulation: “Regular readers” (every issue or every other issue), “Infrequent readers” (at least once a year or less than once a year), and “Never readers” of *Quarterly Report* by age, length of time living in the district, and the presence of a current district student, past district student or no district student ever in the household. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and “age” will not square with “overall” score, because two respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall score
Regular readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	<b>55%</b>
Infrequent readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	<b>25%</b>
Never readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	<b>14%</b>

18-34 (n=83)	35-54 (n=176)	55 or older (n=139)
37%	59%	60%
28%	25%	23%
20%	13%	12%

Up to 5 years (n=44)	5 to 15 years (n=127)	More than 15 years (n=229)
43%	47%	61%
27%	29%	22%
18%	15%	12%

Student, yes (n=126)	Student, past (n=164)	Student, never (n=110)
61%	60%	38%
25%	23%	28%
10%	12%	21%

Cross-tabulation: “Regular readers” (every issue or every other issue), “Infrequent readers” (at least once a year or less than once a year), and “Never readers” of *Quarterly Report* by location of the respondent’s residence, ethnicity of respondent and gender. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the racial/ethnic groups will not square with “overall,” because only groups with at least modest levels of participation are included below.

Response	Overall score
Regular readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	<b>55%</b>
Infrequent readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	<b>25%</b>
Never readers of <i>Quarterly Report</i>	<b>14%</b>

W of Prov/N of B’way (n=100)	E of Prov/N of B’way (n=100)	W of Prov/S of B’way (n=100)	E of Prov/S of B’way (n=100)
41%	54%	72%	42%
31%	21%	16%	32%
12%	19%	11%	13%

African-American (n=41)	Caucasian (n=312)	Hispanic /Latino (n=34)
54%	57%	32%
24%	24%	35%
15%	14%	15%

Female (n=215)	Male (n=185)
58%	51%
25%	25%
13%	14%



**40. Switching now to the district's annual report, called *The Yearbook*, do you remember if you read at least some of the most recent edition, which came out in July?**

Response	Percentage
Yes, I read it	23%
No, I did not read it	64%
Don't know/ Don't remember (not read)	14%

**41. How would you rate the quality of the information in that issue of *The Yearbook*?**

*Asked only of the 91 respondents who answered question 40, "Yes, I read it."*

*Percentages are of 91.*

Response	Percentage
Excellent	7%
Good	81%
Fair	12%
Poor	0%
Don't know (not read)	0%

**42. How about the way that the most recent issue of *The Yearbook* looked?** *Asked only of the 91 respondents who answered question 40, "Yes, I read it." Percentages are of 91.*

Response	Percentage
Excellent	30%
Good	63%
Fair	7%
Poor	0%
Don't know (not read)	1%

**Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents who remember reading at least some of the July 2015 issue of *The Yearbook* and percentage of respondents who recall seeing one or more individual school newsletters over the “last school year” by age, length of time living in the district, and the presence of a current district student, past district student or no district student ever in the household. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and “age” will not square with “overall” score, because two respondents refused to answer this question.**

Response	Overall score	18-34 (n=83)	35-54 (n=176)	55 or older (n=139)	Up to 5 years (n=44)	5 to 15 years (n=127)	More than 15 years (n=229)	Student, yes (n=126)	Student, past (n=164)	Student, never (n=110)
Read at least some of the July 2015 issue of <i>The Yearbook</i>	<b>23%</b>	25%	23%	20%	25%	22%	23%	29%	19%	21%
Have seen one or more individual school newsletters during the last school year	<b>27%</b>	36%	27%	20%	27%	26%	27%	41%	23%	15%

**Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents who remember reading at least some of the July 2015 issue of *The Yearbook* and percentage of respondents who recall seeing one or more individual school newsletters over the “last school year” by location of the respondent’s residence, ethnicity of respondent and gender. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the racial/ethnic groups will not square with “overall,” because only groups with at least modest levels of participation are included below.**

Response	Overall score
Read at least some of the July 2015 issue of <i>The Yearbook</i>	<b>23%</b>
Have seen one or more individual school newsletters during the last school year	<b>27%</b>

W of Prov/N of B’way (n=100)	E of Prov/N of B’way (n=100)	W of Prov/S of B’way (n=100)	E of Prov/S of B’way (n=100)
24%	20%	22%	25%
28%	26%	25%	27%

African-American (n=41)	Caucasian (n=312)	Hispanic /Latino (n=34)
20%	21%	32%
20%	27%	32%

Female (n=215)	Male (n=185)
19%	27%
23%	30%



**43. The last questions on printed materials are about individual school newsletters. Do you recall seeing one or more of such newsletters during the last school year?**

Response	Percentage
Yes	27%
No	60%
Don't know/ Don't remember (not read)	14%

**44. How would you rate the individual school newsletters you saw in the last school year on the quality of the information presented? If you saw more than one individual school newsletter, please answer based on your overall feelings. Asked only of the 106 respondents who answered question 43, "Yes." Percentages are of 106.**

Response	Percentage
Excellent	35%
Good	46%
Fair	15%
Poor	0%
Don't know (not read)	4%

**45. How about the way that the individual school newsletters looked? Again, if you saw more than one individual school newsletter, please answer based on your overall feelings. Asked only of the 106 respondents who answered question 43, "Yes." Percentages are of 106.**

Response	Percentage
Excellent	31%
Good	61%
Fair	8%
Poor	0%
Don't know (not read)	0%



**Finding 6: The survey participants’ review of the district’s electronic forms of communication – the school district’s website, individual school websites and Columbia Public Schools television – showed mostly modest (if any) changes from 2013.**

Respondents began this section by talking about their experiences with the Columbia Public Schools District website.

The frequency of visits was down modestly (but not at a statistically significant level) from 2013, as 22% on this survey said they visited the site “At least once a month.” In 2013, the total was 27%. (This year’s survey answers began with “At least once a month,” while there were also “At least once a week” and “At least once every two weeks” in 2013. These two, plus the “once a month” result, were combined to achieve the score of 27 % for 2013.)

Among the “At least once a month” visitors, the site’s navigation continued to receive rave reviews, as 94% called the ease with which they were able to find what they were looking for either “Very easy” or “Easy.” In 2013, the score was 91%.

Visits to individual school websites saw a statistically significant decline. Those answering “At least once a month” stood at 28% this year, but were 47% in 2013. (Again, “At least once a week” and “At least once every two weeks” were collapsed into “At least once a month” for this year’s survey.)

But the ease of navigation was still quite strong, with 88% calling it either “Very easy” or “Easy” this year, while 90% gave one of these two answers in 2013.

In the cross-tabulations, 37% of current student families said they visited the school district website at least once a month. The next highest answer was 26% (respondents who live west of Providence and south of Broadway).

On the subject of individual school websites, there were five subgroups that had at least 30% of participants say that they visited such a website at least once a month:

- Current student families – 38%
- Those who had lived in the district more than 15 years – 31%
- Those who were ages 35 to 54 – 31%
- Those who live west of Providence and south of Broadway – 30%
- Male respondents – 30%

The scores on the subject of Columbia Public Schools television showed that only 2% said that they watched (either on cable or streamed on the district’s website) “Frequently,” while 9% said “Sometimes.”



The answer choices in previous years had been more specific, such as “Every day,” “A few times a week” and “At least once a week.” If one considers those three – combined – to be the general equivalent of “Frequently,” then the result was 4% in 2013.

Of the 42 respondents who watch CPS Television “Frequently” or “Sometimes,” 24 said they would be looking for a “Schedule for activities” and 14 were seeking out “News about students/student accomplishments.” When asked what additional programming they would like to see 35 of the 42 participants said, “Don’t know.”

**46. Which of the following best describes how often you visit the Columbia Public Schools District's website? Choices were read to respondents.**

Response	Percentage/2015	Percentage/2013	Percentage/2012	Percentage/2011	Percentage/2010
At least once a week	n/a	11%	6%	11%	12%
At least once every two weeks	n/a	3%	9%	12%	9%
At least once a month	22%	13%	10%	6%	11%
Less than once a month	36%	32%	22%	20%	23%
I've never visited the website	43%	42%	53%	52%	47%

**47. Thinking about the last time you visited the Columbia Public School District's website, how would you rate how easy it was to navigate and find what you were looking for? Asked only of the 87 respondents who said they visited "at least once a month." Percentages are of 87.**

Response	Percentage/2015	Percentage/2013	Percentage/2012	Percentage/2011	Percentage/2010
Very easy	45%	39%	43%	38%	41%
Easy	49%	52%	42%	59%	52%
Difficult	5%	9%	14%	4%	6%
Very difficult	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know (not read)	1%	0%	1%	0%	2%

**48. What about the websites for individual schools in the Columbia Public Schools? Which of the following best describes how often you visit one or more of them? Choices were read to respondents. Again, percentages are of 87.**

Response	Percentage/2015	Percentage/2013	Percentage/2012	Percentage/2011	Percentage/2010
At least once a week	n/a	22%	14%	16%	13%
At least once every two weeks	n/a	10%	11%	10%	9%
At least once a month	28%	15%	12%	8%	10%
Less than once a month	35%	7%	3%	11%	22%
I've never visited the website	37%	47%	61%	55%	47%

**49. Thinking about the last time you visited an individual school website, how easy was it to find what you were looking for? Asked only of the 113 respondents who answered question 48 either “at least once a week,” “at least once every two weeks,” or “at least once a month.” Percentages are of 113.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage/2015</b>	<b>Percentage/2013</b>	<b>Percentage/2012</b>	<b>Percentage/2011</b>	<b>Percentage/2010</b>
Very easy	46%	54%	24%	39%	24%
Easy	42%	36%	63%	52%	74%
Difficult	12%	10%	12%	9%	2%
Very difficult	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know (not read)	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%

**Cross-tabulation: “Regular visitors” (at least once a month), “Infrequent visitors” (less than once a month), and “Never visitors” to the Columbia Public Schools website and individual schools’ websites by age, length of time living in the district, and the presence of a current district student, past district student or no district student ever in the household. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and “age” will not square with “overall” score, because two respondents refused to answer this question.**

Response	Overall score
Regular visitors/CPS website	<b>22%</b>
Infrequent visitors/CPS website	<b>36%</b>
Never visitors/CPS website	<b>43%</b>

18-34 (n=83)	35-54 (n=176)	55 or older (n=139)
20%	24%	20%
35%	35%	37%
45%	41%	43%

Up to 5 years (n=44)	5 to 15 years (n=127)	More than 15 years (n=229)
18%	21%	23%
34%	36%	35%
48%	43%	42%

Student, yes (n=126)	Student, past (n=164)	Student, never (n=110)
37%	19%	16%
33%	37%	36%
36%	44%	49%

Regular visitors/individual school websites	<b>28%</b>
Infrequent visitors/individual school websites	<b>35%</b>
Never visitors/individual school websites	<b>37%</b>

29%	31%	24%
35%	32%	40%
36%	37%	36%

23%	25%	31%
34%	36%	35%
43%	39%	34%

38%	25%	22%
32%	38%	35%
30%	37%	43%

**Cross-tabulation: “Regular visitors” (at least once a month), “Infrequent visitors” (less than once a month), and “Never visitors” to the Columbia Public Schools website and individual schools’ websites by location of the respondent’s residence, ethnicity of respondent and gender. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the racial/ethnic groups will not square with “overall,” because only groups with at least modest levels of participation are included below.**

Response	Overall score	W of Prov/N of B’way (n=100)	E of Prov/N of B’way (n=100)	W of Prov/S of B’way (n=100)	E of Prov/S of B’way (n=100)	African-American (n=41)	Caucasian (n=312)	Hispanic /Latino (n=34)	Female (n=215)	Male (n=185)
Regular visitors/CPS website	<b>22%</b>	22%	20%	26%	19%	12%	24%	15%	21%	22%
Infrequent visitors/CPS website	<b>36%</b>	34%	36%	35%	37%	32%	35%	41%	33%	38%
Never visitors/CPS website	<b>43%</b>	44%	44%	39%	44%	64%	40%	44%	46%	39%
Regular visitors/individual school websites	<b>28%</b>	29%	27%	30%	27%	24%	29%	24%	27%	30%
Infrequent visitors/individual school websites	<b>35%</b>	32%	36%	38%	35%	20%	38%	32%	34%	37%
Never visitors/individual school websites	<b>37%</b>	39%	37%	32%	38%	54%	33%	44%	40%	33%

**50. How often do you watch Columbia Public Schools Television, either on cable or streamed on the district's website?**  
*Choices were read to respondents. Answer choices and question were modified in 2015.*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage/2015</b>
Every day	0%
Frequently	2%
Sometimes	9%
Rarely	29%
Never	61%

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage/2013</b>	<b>Percentage/2012</b>	<b>Percentage/2011</b>	<b>Percentage/2010</b>
Every day	0%	2%	<1%	1%
A few times a week	3%	5%	1%	1%
At least once a week	1%	3%	2%	3%
At least once every two weeks	5%	1%	4%	2%
At least once a month	6%	6%	2%	10%
Less than once a month	33%	24%	29%	28%
I've never watched	52%	59%	61%	53%
Don't know (not read)	1%	1%	2%	4%



**51. What types of programming do you watch on the school district’s television station?** *Asked only of the 42 respondents who answered question 50 either “Frequently” or “Sometimes.” Responses were coded, based on common words, phrases and ideas. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Schedule for activities	24
News about students/student accomplishments	14
Other (see below)	4

**Verbatim “other” comments**

General school news.

They had one program on highlighting students on their achievements.

I watch what is happening within the district and schools.

Graduation.

**52. What additional types of programming about the school district would you like to see on Columbia Public Schools Television?** *Asked only of the 42 respondents who watch Columbia Public Schools Television “Frequently,” or “Sometimes.” Of that 42, 35 said, “Don’t know.” The seven other responses are displayed in verbatim form below.*

I don’t recall seeing any administration meetings. That would be nice to watch.

Highlight teachers and their methods of teaching.

It would be nice to see more activities that go on at school, like assemblies and plays, for example.

Overall, more school activities.

Classroom activities.

Put cameras in buses and let parents watch kids on the bus.

I would like to see more sports programs.



**Finding 7: The growing impact of social media is seen in the results, as survey participants who have “liked” at least one of the numerous district-associated Facebook pages jumped from 10% in 2013 to 19% in 2015. Twitter results were statistically identical between the two surveys, and 6% said they would follow a district Instagram account, if one was created.**

Nearly one in five survey participants said they had “liked” Facebook pages associated with individual schools in the district or various school-related clubs or organizations, compared to one out of 10 in 2013. Again, remembering that this survey included a cross-section of community residents, this year’s score is quite an accomplishment.

Those who said that they followed Twitter feeds from, again, individual schools or school-related clubs and organizations remained statistically the same (11% this year, 8% in 2013).

A question was added this year asking respondents whether or not they would follow a district Instagram account, if there was one. Six percent said they would, which suggests enough interest to probably consider it, because it is unlikely that the scores for any of these three platforms will see a decline in the near future.

**53. Have you clicked “like” on Facebook pages associated with individual schools in the district or various school-related clubs or organizations?**

Response	Percentage/2015	Percentage/2013	Percentage/2012
Yes	19%	10%	5%
No/Don’t use Facebook	81%	91%	95%

**54. Do you currently “follow” Twitter feeds associated with individual schools in the district or various school-related clubs or organizations?**

Response	Percentage/2015	Percentage/2013	Percentage/2012
Yes	11%	8%	2%
No/Don’t use Twitter	89%	92%	98%

**55. If the district had an account on Instagram, would you “follow” it? *Question was new in 2015.***

Response	Percentage
Yes	6%
No/Don’t use Instagram	94%

**Cross-tabulation:** Percentages are of those who engage with the district via Facebook and Twitter and who would if the district had an Instagram account by age, length of time living in the district, and the presence of a current district student, past district student or no district student ever in the household. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and “age” will not square with “overall” score, because two respondents refused to answer this question.

“Yes” Percentages	Overall score
Facebook	<b>19%</b>
Twitter	<b>11%</b>
Instagram	<b>6%</b>

18-34 (n=83)	35-54 (n=176)	55 or older (n=139)	Up to 5 years (n=44)	5 to 15 years (n=127)	More than 15 years (n=229)
19%	20%	17%	11%	18%	21%
11%	13%	9%	7%	11%	11%
5%	9%	4%	0%	9%	6%

Student, yes (n=126)	Student, past (n=164)	Student, never (n=110)
25%	19%	13%
16%	11%	5%
10%	5%	4%

**Cross-tabulation:** Percentages are of those who engage with the district via Facebook and Twitter and who would if the district had an Instagram account by location of the respondent’s residence, ethnicity of respondent and gender. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the racial/ethnic groups will not square with “overall,” because only groups with at least modest levels of participation are included below.

“Yes” Percentages	Overall score
Facebook	<b>19%</b>
Twitter	<b>11%</b>
Instagram	<b>6%</b>

W of Prov/N of B’way (n=100)	E of Prov/N of B’way (n=100)	W of Prov/S of B’way (n=100)	E of Prov/S of B’way (n=100)
21%	20%	21%	14%
11%	10%	13%	9%
5%	4%	11%	5%

African-American (n=41)	Caucasian (n=312)	Hispanic /Latino (n=34)
15%	20%	21%
10%	11%	9%
5%	6%	6%

Female (n=215)	Male (n=185)
18%	21%
9%	12%
7%	5%



**Finding 8: The results on this year’s research show modest changes in the level of interest in most of the topics that a school district could communicate to its patrons. Topping the list – at 74% of respondents saying they would be interested in knowing more – was “Safety and security,” a topic that was added for this year’s study.**

The research then presented respondents with a list of 11 topics that a school district *could* communicate to its patron audience. As the list was read, participants were asked to say, “Yes,” if it was a topic that they *would* be interested in knowing more about.

The list was led by the 74% who said, “Yes” on the topic of “Safety and Security,” which was new this year. All but two of the 11 topics (“School lunch and nutrition news” and “Transportation news”) had at least 50% of the respondents saying, “Yes.” Last year, the number was six out of 10 topics, so there was a slight increase in the percentage of the presented subjects that area residents would like to know more about.

What is particularly interesting is reviewing which of the topics had a statistically significant change in interest between 2013 and this year’s survey. Those results were as follows:

- Information on curriculum and curriculum changes – 69% this year, 60% in 2013
- School Board news – 54% this year, 45% in 2013
- News about extracurricular activities – 50% this year, 41% in 2013
- School lunch and nutrition news – 35% this year, 28% in 2013
- Information on the district’s finances and budget – 64% this year, 77% in 2013
- Updates on construction and renovation projects – 51% this year, 59% in 2013
- Transportation news – 18% this year, 24% in 2013

This means that seven of the 10 topics that were on both the 2013 and 2015 surveys saw a statistically significant change of interest, further affirming the fluidity of what typical patrons want to hear about from their school district.

56. The school district provides a lot of information on a variety of topics. But we want to make certain we are covering what local citizens want to know about. As such, can you tell me which of the following topics you, personally, are interested in hearing more about from the school district on a regular basis? If you'd really be interested in knowing more on this topic, please say, "Yes." If you'd only be a little interested – or you wouldn't be interested at all – please say, "No." List was read to respondents. Percentages will add to more than 100%, because respondents were free to select more than one choice. "Safety and security" was added in 2015.

Response	Percentage/ 2015	Percentage/ 2013	Percentage/ 2012	Percentage/ 2011	Percentage/ 2010
Safety and security	74%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Information on curriculum and curriculum changes	69%	60%	69%	52%	58%
Student and teacher success stories	68%	72%	79%	85%	88%
Information on the district's finances and budget	64%	77%	74%	81%	74%
News about programs that maintain and enforce discipline in schools	60%	56%	60%	50%	61%
News about efforts to close the achievement gap	57%	53%	52%	34%	41%
School Board news	54%	45%	41%	47%	46%
Updates on construction and renovation projects	51%	59%	57%	53%	53%
News about extracurricular activities	50%	41%	38%	35%	40%
School lunch and nutrition news	35%	28%	23%	21%	32%
Don't know (not read)	<1%	0%	0%	0%	<1%
Transportation news	18%	24%	27%	18%	29%
None of these (not read)	0%	1%	2%	1%	2%



**57. Are there other topics that you would be interested in hearing more about from the district that I did not mention?** *A total of 392 respondents said, “No.” The verbatim comments from the other eight respondents are displayed below.*

What the School Board does to reflect the wishes of the parents, rather than their own agenda.

Drug education policy.

This may be covered in finances, but I would like to see a specific breakdown on athletic finances. Cost versus income generated.

Changes in policy.

Treatment of the teachers.

Expansion of vocational technical skill sets that are available before leaving high school.

College prep information.

Teacher tenure and background.



**Finding 9: The healthy appetite for school district news among typical residents is further confirmed in the question that asks respondents to identify, from a provided list, the sources they consult “frequently” for such information. While “Friends and neighbors” saw a decline (though it remained the number one source), those sources just below number one showed gains.**

Research participants were then read a rotating list of potential places or people they might consult if they were looking for school district news. As the list was being read, they were instructed to say “Yes,” if the source was one they would consult, “Frequently” for such information.

“Friends and neighbors” remained at the top of the list, but its score dropped from 86% in 2013 to 73% on this survey. The next 11 sources all saw increases in their scores, though not all of the increases were statistically significant. The next five after “Friends and neighbors” were:

- The print edition of *The Columbia Tribune* newspaper – 61% this year, 58% in 2013
- Local television stations – 56% this year, 42% in 2013
- Students who attend school in the district – 43% this year, 39% in 2013
- Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail – 39% this year, 37% in 2013
- Local radio stations – 38% this year, 23% in 2013

Overall, eight sources on this year’s study topped 30% (specifically, 31%), compared to six in 2013, providing another piece of evidence that the district’s news is regularly sought by typical residents.

58. In addition to the ones that we’ve already discussed, people get their news about the school district from a variety of other sources. I’m going to read a short list of some of those sources. As I read this list, please say, “Yes,” if you also consult this source frequently for school district news – aside from news about weather-related school closings. If you consult the source only every so often – or you don’t consult it at all for school news – just say, “No.” Choices were read to the respondents and rotated. Percentages will total to more than 100%, because respondents were free to select more than one information source.

Response	Percentage/ 2015	Percentage/ 2013	Percentage/ 2012	Percentage/ 2011	Percentage/ 2010
Friends and neighbors	73%	86%	87%	86%	89%
The print edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i> newspaper	61%	58%	61%	54%	61%
Local television stations	56%	42%	68%	38%	41%
Students who attend school in the district	43%	39%	42%	32%	33%
Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail	39%	37%	39%	33%	32%
Local radio stations	38%	23%	40%	17%	32%
The School Board, either in person or in the media	32%	24%	27%	20%	20%
Individual school newsletters	31%	27%	26%	35%	31%
The district’s Central Office administration, either in person or via e-mail	25%	21%	21%	18%	19%
<i>Inside Columbia</i> magazine	25%	16%	21%	18%	25%
Parent Link (first percentage in past years, automated phone calls; second number, automated message system)	22%	15%/14%	9%/15%	12%/8%	4%/18%
<i>Columbia Home</i> magazine (was <i>Columbia Home &amp; Lifestyle</i> magazine in 2010)	21%	12%	8%	10%	7%
The school district’s annual report, called <i>The Yearbook</i>	20%	35%	32%	44%	43%
<i>The Columbia Business Times</i>	19%	7%	10%	11%	16%
Principals at district schools	18%	26%	24%	18%	24%
Various parent organizations at the schools	17%	11%	14%	15%	17%
Social networking sites, like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram	15%	9%	6%	4%	2%
<i>Columbia Prime</i> magazine	14%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
The online edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i>	13%	9%	14%	12%	18%
The print edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i> newspaper	11%	10%	12%	9%	14%
The Partners in Education program	11%	8%	5%	4%	3%
Blogs operated by local residents	9%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
The Columbia Public Schools free mobile app for cell phones	8%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
The online edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i>	4%	2%	3%	6%	8%
Mediacom Newsleaders	3%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>CEO</i> magazine	2%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Relocating</i> magazine	1%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a



**Finding 10: The print edition of *The Columbia Tribune* newspaper topped the list of sources respondents said they would “consult first” for school district news, with a score of 18%. In 2013, “Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail” was number one, at 19%. It was fourth on the list this year.**

The modestly increasing reliance on the news media, instead of the school district, for district news that was seen earlier in this survey appeared again on this question that asked which of the sources that had just been discussed would the respondent would “consult first” for school district news.

The top five in 2013 were:

- Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail – 19%
- Friends and neighbors – 18%
- Students who attend school in the district – 15%
- The print edition of *The Columbia Tribune* newspaper – 11%
- The school district’s website, or websites from individual schools – 10%

The top five on this year’s survey were:

- The print edition of *The Columbia Tribune* newspaper – 18%
- Students who attend school in the district – 16%
- Friends and neighbors – 13%
- Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail – 12%
- Local television stations – 10%

The actual changes in the scores are less important than the rank order. This year, the newspaper was in the lead, followed by two informal sources, a district-affiliated source and local television.

In 2013, the scores were led by a district-affiliated source, followed by two informal sources, the local newspaper and a website (either the district’s or an individual school’s).

Again, this would seem to further reinforce the narrowing of the preference for the source of school between the news media and the school district itself.

59. Of all of the news sources we've discussed, which one do you consult first for news and information about the Columbia Public Schools? Only those sources with at least one person selecting it during the past five surveys are shown.

Response	Percentage/ 2015	Percentage/ 2013	Percentage/ 2012	Percentage/ 2011	Percentage/ 2010
The print edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i> newspaper	18%	11%	14%	16%	13%
Students who attend school in the district	16%	15%	12%	6%	8%
Friends and neighbors	13%	18%	15%	14%	18%
Teachers and other staff members in the district, either in person or via e-mail	12%	19%	18%	17%	13%
Local television stations	10%	4%	11%	4%	9%
Parent Link (first percentage in past years, automated phone calls; second number, automated message system)	9%	1%/1%	0%/1%	2%/0%	<1%/0%
Individual school newsletters	8%	7%	6%	11%	11%
Local radio stations	5%	1%	2%	3%	3%
Social networking sites, like Facebook, Twitter or Instagram	4%	3%	2%	0%	0%
Principals at district schools	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%
The online edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i>	2%	0%	0%	<1%	<1%
The district's Central Office administration, either in person or in the media	1%	2%	0%	<1%	1%
The School Board, either in person or in the media	1%	1%	<1%	1%	3%
Various parent organizations at the schools	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
The school district's website, or websites from individual schools	0%	10%	7%	6%	5%
The printed newsletter from the district, called <i>Quarterly Report</i>	0%	3%	3%	8%	3%
The district's electronic newsletter, called <i>Key News</i>	0%	2%	3%	5%	1%
The online edition of <i>The Columbia Tribune</i>	0%	1%	3%	2%	4%
The print edition of <i>The Columbia Missourian</i> newspaper	0%	<1%	2%	1%	3%
<i>Inside Columbia</i> magazine	0%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%
Columbia Public Schools Television station	0%	0%	2%	1%	1%
The school district's annual report, called <i>The Yearbook</i>	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Mediacom Newsleaders	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%
<i>CEO</i> magazine	0%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Columbia Prime</i> magazine	0%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Relocating</i> magazine	0%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
The Columbia Public Schools free mobile app for cell phones	0%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Blogs operated by local residents	0%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a



## Demographics

The final set of questions gathered key demographic information that allowed for the creation of the cross-tabulations seen in this report. The key statistics from these questions were:

- The survey group was led by those who had lived in the district more than 15 years (57%), but also had 32% who had lived there more than five years up to 15 years.
- 62% of the participants were between the ages of 25 and 54.
- There were 126 current student families, 164 past student families and 110 “never” student families.
- 78% of the participants were Caucasian/white, with 10% being African-American/black and 9% being Hispanic/Latino. The 2014 Census estimate for Columbia shows 79% Caucasian residents, 11.3% African-American/black residents and 3.4% Hispanic/Latino residents.
- In terms of gender, the survey group was 54% female and 46% male.

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

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

Response	Percentage
Less than 2 years	3%
2 years to 5 years	8%
More than 5 years to 10 years	15%
More than 10 years to 15 years	17%
More than 15 years	46%
I've lived here all my life	11%

**61. In what age group are you? Is it...***Choices were read to respondents.*

Response	Percentage
18 to 24	3%
25 to 34	18%
35 to 44	22%
45 to 54	22%
55 to 64	20%
65 or older	15%
Refused (not read)	1%



**62. Do you have any children or grandchildren who attend school in the Columbia Public Schools right now?** *Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Yes, children	119
Yes, children and grandchildren	7
Yes, grandchildren	53
No	221

**63. Do you have any children or grandchildren who previously were students in the district, but who have graduated?** *Asked only of the 274 respondents who did not say either “Yes, children” or “Yes, children and grandchildren” on question 62. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Yes, children	140
Yes, children and grandchildren	24
Yes, grandchildren	6
No	104

**64. And, finally, which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic group? Is it...** *Choices were read to respondents.*

Response	Percentage
Caucasian, or white	78%
African-American, or black	10%
Hispanic or Latino	9%
Asian	2%
Refused (not read)	1%
Other (see below)	1%

**65. RECORD GENDER**

Response	Percentage
Female	54%
Male	46%



## Summary

The late September and early October 2015 telephone survey of 400 randomly selected, head-of-household, registered voter patrons of the Columbia Public Schools showed some modest changes from the 2013 study on the questions that were repeated along with solid results on the new questions.

The trends seen in this study were as follows:

- Residents generally have the same positive view of the district they did in 2013.
- The factors that people find important in a school district are also similar to 2013.
- The preference for electronic – rather than printed – forms of communication continued to grow, and the two are now in a statistical tie. While the school district remains preferred over the local media as the source of that information, the gap between the two has narrowed significantly.
- The school district’s primary printed pieces – *Quarterly Report*, *The Yearbook* and individual school newsletters – get solid reviews for content and design and, generally, have the expected level of readership.
- Engagement by residents with the various electronic forms of communication remained fairly consistent with one exception: Social media, which saw strong gains for Facebook, held steady for Twitter and showed at least some interest in a district Instagram account.
- Safety and security were what respondents most wanted to hear about from the school district, and the overall interest in school district news on any topic remains very strong.

The results of this research indicate that the school district should focus on the following areas, going forward:

- **Continue to work on the areas that were graded below a “B.”**

While none of the lower grades were particularly eyebrow-raising, many of the factors that scored below a “B” have been in that range for several surveys. Some of these factors routinely occupy a similar spot in surveys for other districts – particularly the more nebulous district/patron relationship factors. But some (particularly ones, like the “Awareness of the plans to close the Achievement gap” item) have a greater possibility of upward movement and may need a revised strategy to help build that awareness.



- **Monitor how communications resources are being applied, so that both the printed and electronic “audiences” are well-served.**

As the interest in electronic forms of communication grows, there continues to be a valuable place for printed materials. These materials serve an audience that often feels neglected by school districts – an audience that, in this survey, spoke very highly about the content and the design. The challenge will be finding ways to maintain that link to this audience, while growing the district’s social media presence.

- **Make certain that subjects that are of most interest to residents have a higher than average presence in the district’s communication.**

In this survey, participants have shared what they consider to be the most important qualities in a school district and the list of topics they are most interested in hearing more about from CPS. The appearance of news about these topics in district-sponsored venues should receive the appropriate level of attention, so patrons feel they are being heard by the school district.