



Lago Vista ISD

A Report of Survey Research
2008-2009 School Year



Overview of the Harris Interactive School Poll

Overview

The *Harris Interactive School Poll* has been designed to provide a school district with information necessary to engage in the **continuous improvement** of educational services.

Harris Interactive School Poll allows districts to **assess the current level of satisfaction** stakeholders have with most aspects of the school experience. The analysis determines the experiences and perceptions that have the largest **impact on satisfaction** and allows a district to develop a fact-based strategic plan to improve satisfaction among the populations they serve.

This system enables a district to **establish priorities** among potential improvements by **identifying the "vital few" actions** known to influence stakeholder satisfaction.

Harris Interactive School Poll has been designed primarily as a **management tool** for educators. The results provide strategic guidance for those responsible for the district as a whole, and for specific school areas and policies. It is not designed as an evaluative tool for personnel. In fact, the study provides feedback at the school and departmental level, but does not identify results for individual employees other than principals and the superintendent.

Throughout the analysis the emphasis is on the **improvements** a school can make and not on the absolute rating of a particular area or individual. The analysis is structured to facilitate the process of continuous improvement. What matters most is what and how to improve -- not the ratings at a point in time.

Improvement is possible no matter how high or low an area is rated. However, it is essential to concentrate on the "vital few" areas that will lead to improvement and to avoid issues of little or no consequence. **Impact analysis** is the statistical methodology that identifies these "vital few" for each portion of the questionnaire.

Creating the Questionnaires:

Each Harris Interactive School Poll questionnaire emerged as a result of dozens of focus groups, thorough pre-testing, and hundreds of hours of work on the part of school administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Three school districts, two New York State BOCES organizations, and consultants in the educational field were involved in the development process, which occurred over the course of a 12 month period.



Using the Harris Interactive School Poll Data

A Few Words of Caution About the Use of Data

Symptoms or Problems?

In many cases, data in this report are reported in terms of "% problem." However, the analysis of this survey truly discloses "symptoms," not "problems." This distinction is important. A fever is a symptom. The simple flu is most often the problem, but many other illnesses cause fevers as well. Similarly, disorderly behavior by students is a symptom of a number of different potential problems -- ineffective discipline policies at school, a lack of discipline in children's home life, etc.

A "symptom" is a piece of information that points in the direction of the underlying problem. If teachers complain about inadequate communication with the central administration, that is a symptom. The problem is a restatement of the symptom with its potential causes analyzed and understood.

The usual way to employ this type of data in the continuous improvement process is to examine the symptom through a "Problem Solving Process." This will almost certainly involve further data gathering including focus groups, personal interviews, cross functional teams, etc.

Through the continuous improvement process, the "problem" and its "symptoms" are treated as "opportunities for improvements." Consensual change is the objective, and blame is avoided. The greatest value of the analysis in this report is that it helps to establish the priorities for a continuous improvement process.

As you review these results, we caution you to treat the findings as symptoms of problems that need to be analyzed and understood.

Be Aware of Sample Size!

Please note that small sample sizes can affect the calculation of regression models. Regression analysis is difficult, sometimes impossible, if the overall sample size is low (less than 100), or if the number of responses in an individual area is low. Wherever possible, overall District coefficients or "penalties" are applied in building level regressions with low sample sizes to enable the calculation of an Impact Index. Therefore, where sample sizes are small/low, you may see:

- maximum satisfaction scores displayed as "0.0"
- current satisfaction ratings higher than the maximum
- issues showing penalty values, but no frequency of occurrence
- few, or no issues having an impact on satisfaction
- "penalty" columns with all values displayed as "0.0"

The last two items can occur with "normal" sample sizes as well, but may be more likely to occur when they are low. Therefore, please review your data tables (accompanied in this report under tabs 12-15) carefully as you read and utilize the information in this report. The data tables are your resource for determining the actual number of responses that are used to calculate the percentages you see in this report.

Harris Interactive School Poll Methodology

Methodology



The core *Harris Interactive School Poll* program consists of four separate surveys. The elementary student, secondary student, teacher/staff, and parent surveys are each four pages in length. The questionnaires have been included as an Appendix to this report.

The surveys are anonymous, written questionnaires that take 15-20 minutes to complete. They ask the students, teachers/staff members, or parents about their experience with the school district as well as key overall measures of satisfaction.

The questionnaires employ a specific design, *impact analysis*, that allows us to use a powerful statistical model to analyze the data. The design was originally developed on behalf of the Xerox Corporation in 1979 as a part of their quality movement. Impact analysis allows for the use of multivariate diagnostic methods of analysis, which provide much of the management information from the study.

An attempt is made to include all students (grades 3 or 4-12), all teachers and staff, and all parents in the study. For many reasons, including absenteeism, improperly filled out questionnaires, etc., the final sample does not include 100% of the possible respondents.

Student and Teachers/Staff surveys were administered during school time. The Parent survey was either mailed or taken home with the child. The response rates were sufficiently high enough that nonrespondent bias is not relevant. These results are highly reflective of the views of students, teachers, staff, and parents.

All questionnaires were tabulated by Harris Interactive Inc. They were optically scanned and downloaded into a database for analysis.

RESPONSE RATES

	<u>Popu- lation</u>	<u>Usable Returns</u>	<u>% Return</u>
Elementary Students	214	203	95%
Secondary Students	575	619	108%
Teachers/Staff	160	129	81%
Parents	1243	220	18%

The Harris Interactive School Poll Approach

The Event-Oriented Approach

This is a major reason why the Harris Interactive School Poll is effective. Each questionnaire -- teachers/staff, students, and parents -- is designed in a manner that permits the use of appropriate and powerful statistical modeling. This modeling, which we call *impact analysis*, provides the assessment of the relative impact of various events, conditions, or circumstances on stakeholder satisfaction.

Our School Poll research has a number of unique elements:

1. Phrasing of most questions as dichotomous events rather than using repetitive rating scales
2. Collecting evaluative overall ratings and ratings of particular areas of interest
3. Combining the rate of occurrence of the experience and its importance into a summary statistic, which we call the **Impact Index**



1. The Use of Dichotomous (Yes/No) Questions

Each section of the questionnaire uses either a dichotomous (Yes/No) response or a three point scale where the responses are "excellent," "adequate," or "inadequate." The items in each section come from several sources -- focus groups, volunteered responses to pre-test questionnaires, and faculty and staff members of school districts who reviewed the questionnaires during the pilot year. When satisfaction questionnaire respondents talk about the things that make them satisfied or dissatisfied, they talk about very specific events, circumstances, or conditions they experience. The questions attempt to capture the respondent's language.

The number of items in each section reflects two conflicting requirements:

- the need to include every event, condition, or circumstance that might have an important influence on stakeholder satisfaction, and
- the need to keep the questionnaire to a manageable length.

In each section, the necessity of reaching a compromise between these opposing requirements forced the deletions of some issues that appeared less important to the satisfaction of the respondents.

The above items are the "symptoms" that our analysis links with varying degrees of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. They are the factors that we use to explain what is driving satisfaction. For example, an impact chart may indicate that the top issue for teachers is the effect of disorderly student behavior on overall teachers/staff satisfaction. This "symptom" may be mentioned by 46 percent of the respondents. We do not understand from this analysis what "causes" the disorderly behavior, but we know that the behavior is having a negative effect on the satisfaction of the employees in the schools.

Items are grouped logically by subject matter in a section, and the sections are designed to encompass the various ways that students, teachers and staff, and parents experience their schools and the district. *There is a separate statistical analysis for every section in the questionnaires.*

2. Evaluative Overall Ratings

The questionnaires include both an overall satisfaction rating and ratings of satisfaction within each functional area on an A-F scale after the respondent has evaluated his/her experiences. This causes the respondent to think about specific events before giving an overall rating. The result is a more measured and educated answer from the respondent. These satisfaction scores serve both as tracking measures of performance and as the basis for the modeling process. The A-F responses are converted to an eleven point scale (0-10): **A = 10, A- = 9, B+ = 8, B = 7, B- = 6, C+ = 5, C = 4, C- = 3, D+ = 2, D = 1, F = 0.**

The Harris Interactive School Poll Approach (Cont'd)

3. The Impact Index

There are two important elements that are required to determine priorities for the improvement of stakeholder satisfaction:

- How often a problem (or symptom) occurs (Incidence Rate)
- The effect of the problem on satisfaction for those people who experience it (Importance Rating or Penalty)

How often a problem occurs is measured directly by the survey. How important the problem is among those who experience it is measured through a statistical technique called regression analysis. In these regressions, problems are the independent (predictor) variables and the satisfaction measures are the dependent (predicted) variables. That is to say, the problems respondents experience are used to explain how satisfied these stakeholders are.

The statistical modeling discloses several things:

- a. the **relative rate of change in stakeholder satisfaction** that is associated with each of the events, circumstances, or conditions in the survey;
- b. the **maximum score they can achieve within the model** if all of the important problems were eliminated; and
- c. the **total amount of satisfaction** that can be explained exclusively on the basis of the variables in the model.

The rate of change factor is sometimes called the **importance score**, and sometimes is referred to as the **penalty** associated with the various problems. We use the term "penalty" in our charts to describe the difference between the mean satisfaction scores of those who reported that an issue was a problem and those who reported that the same issue was not a problem.

The **impact score** combines both the **incidence rate** and the **penalty**. The **incidence rate** is multiplied by the **penalty** for each variable where both scores are greater than zero. This value is then divided by the sum of these scores to produce an **impact score** for each variable. These **impact scores** always add to 100 percent.

Each **impact score** represents the percentage of **potential improvement** that is attributable to the elimination of each problem. The **percentage of improvement** is the distance between the **current score** and the **maximum possible score** predicted by the model.

EXAMPLE: Let us say that the following information is true for the teachers/staff in a school district:

- The current score for overall teacher/staff satisfaction is 7.3.
- The maximum possible score predicted by the model is 9.3.
- The impact of one of the issues, "Disorderly student behavior", is 17%.

If the frequency of employees complaining about student behavior was reduced to zero, overall satisfaction would increase by 17% of the distance between 7.3 and 9.3, or by .34 to a total score of 7.64.

By inference, if a building could eliminate all of the problems listed in the model, overall teachers/staff satisfaction would rise from 7.3 to 9.3. The analysis provides a relative measure of the impact of each problem and points out which problems represent the greatest potential opportunity for improving employee satisfaction.

Note: A sample size of at least 100 is required to run a building level regression. For buildings where there are less than 100 respondents in any given category, the district level penalty will be applied to the building level incidence to calculate the impact index. The maximum possible score reflected in the corresponding graph will be that of the district rather than the building -- the current level of satisfaction at a building can, in fact, be higher than the maximum possible level of satisfaction for the district.