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Omaha Public Schools: Opinion Survey of a Parent and Taxpayer Group

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OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Opinion Surveys of a Parent and a Taxpayer Group

July 1987



Center for Applied Urban Research
College of Public Affairs and Community Service
University of Nebraska at Omaha



Acknowledgments

This study was conducted by staff members of the Center for Applied Urban Research and faculty members in the College of Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Russell Smith, Carole Davis, and Katherine Darnell designed the study and developed the sampling procedures. Carl Ashbaugh and Katherine Kasten developed the questionnaire and wrote the report. Jerome Deichert provided technical review, and Tim Himberger supervised the data processing. Joyce Carson, Betty Mayhew, and June Turner typed the report, and Gloria Ruggiero edited the final manuscript.

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Executive Summary

The major findings of this report are as follows:

- A grade of A or B was given to the Omaha Public Schools by 62 percent of all respondents.
- Parents gave the Omaha Public Schools higher grades than taxpayers.
- Parents and taxpayers in the highest and lowest income categories gave schools higher grades than those in the middle income categories.
- Women respondents graded the schools higher than men.
- Parents and taxpayers who voted in school board elections gave the schools higher grades than nonvoters.
- Parents in the youngest age category graded the schools higher than parents in the middle age categories.
- Taxpayers in the oldest age category graded the schools highest.
- Parents who described themselves as well informed about the Omaha Public Schools graded the schools higher than parents who considered themselves not well informed.
- Taxpayers who described themselves as well informed graded the schools lower than taxpayers who considered themselves not well informed.
- Parents in the northwest quadrant of Omaha graded the schools lower than parents in the other three quadrants of the city.
- Taxpayers in the southwest quadrant of Omaha gave the schools the lowest grades, and taxpayers in the northwest quadrant gave the schools the highest grades.
- Ninety-four percent of the parents and 80 percent of the taxpayers considered themselves well informed or somewhat well informed about the Omaha Public Schools.

- Parents reported that children and school personnel were their primary source of information about OPS.
- Taxpayers reported that their primary source for information about OPS was newspapers.
- Parents and taxpayers indicated substantial support for adult education and recreational programs provided at modest cost to users. Less support was shown for day care and extended care services for children.
- Most parents said that too little was being spent by OPS to educate children. Nearly 50 percent of the taxpayers said that enough money was being spent.
- Taxpayers said that enough money was being spent by OPS in each of the nine categories about which they were asked.
- Parents thought that too little money was being spent by OPS on student transportation and vocational education.
- Parents and taxpayers thought that OPS should place more emphasis on academic programs.
- Many taxpayers and some parents thought that competitive sports should receive less emphasis.
- Most taxpayers and parents are not in favor of changing the way schools are financed in Nebraska.
- Parents and taxpayers thought the Omaha Public Schools could be improved through higher quality teachers, higher salaries for teachers, smaller classes, improved discipline, and more parent involvement.

Introduction

As part of a broader marketing effort by the Omaha Public Schools (OPS), Omaha residents were surveyed by telephone during April 30-May 6, (parent) and May 19-27, 1987 (taxpayer). The survey was intended to identify respondents' perceptions about the Omaha public school system. This report presents the results of the survey. The information and analysis provided should prove useful to interested citizens, board members, and district personnel as they plan the future of Omaha's public schools.

Methodology

The study was designed by staff of the Center for Applied Urban Research (CAUR) in consultation with a subcommittee of the OPS Marketing Committee. The subcommittee provided guidance to CAUR's work in developing the sampling design and the questionnaire.

Population Sample and Method. A disproportional random stratified sample was developed for the survey. Omaha households within the boundaries of the Omaha Public Schools district were divided into two groups: the parent group, residents with children in an OPS school, and the taxpayer group, residents without children in an OPS school.

A systematic sample of 300 telephone numbers was drawn (with a random starting point) from an alphabetized listing of parents and legal guardians of 41,000 students provided by OPS for the parent group.

A systematic sample (with a random starting point) of 300 residential telephone numbers, and 11 alternate telephone numbers for each sample listing, was drawn from the Polk Directory for the taxpayer group. Names of the OPS parents were deleted prior to sampling. Because the Polk Directory does not cover all of the OPS district, the Street Address Directory was used to supplement the Polk Directory.

Such a sample design allows each group to be treated separately as well as combined to describe the perceptions of all adults within the OPS district. When the responses of both groups are combined, the parent group is weighted to constitute 25 percent of the total sample (approximately one in four households within the city of Omaha has a child enrolled in an OPS school).

Telephone interviews were conducted by trained interviewers at the main office of Midwest Survey, Inc., in Omaha.

The Questions. Two nearly identical forms of the questionnaire were developed, one for parents (Appendix A) and one for taxpayers (Appendix B).

The questionnaire contained 17 items which asked respondents to provide letter grades of A, B, C, D, or F for various school programs and personnel. An additional item asked respondents to provide an overall grade for the OPS district. Ten items asked respondents to indicate whether they thought enough, too much, or too little money was being spent by the school district on a number of programs. Additional questions asked respondents to report their interest regarding possible fee-for-service programs. Respondents were asked to indicate how informed about the schools they considered themselves to be and their primary sources of information. Demographic information about respondents included income group, age group, gender, years of residence in the school district, and voting behavior in school board elections. With the exception of gender, all demographic information was provided by respondents. Four open-ended questions about ways to improve the schools were included in the questionnaire.

Accuracy. The margin of error associated with the two interview groups is ± 5.5 percent at the 95-percent confidence level. In other words, if all OPS parents and all adults without children in OPS were asked the same questions, we could expect that their responses would be within ± 5.5 percent of that found for the 300 taxpayers and 300 parents 95 out of 100 times. The combined and weighted sample of 600 would have a margin of error of roughly ± 4.0 percent at the 95-percent confidence level.

Results

Throughout the study, the term "parents" is used to designate respondents who have children enrolled in OPS. The term "taxpayer" is used to identify respondents who are not parents of OPS students. Although these terms are helpful identifiers, parents are also taxpayers, and taxpayers may be parents.

Breakdown of the Sample. Table 1 shows subgroups in both samples. A gender breakdown roughly equivalent to that of the city of Omaha was achieved by deliberately interviewing 46 percent male and 54 percent female residents. This was necessary because women answer the telephone more frequently than men, and they are more willing to participate in surveys.

Most respondents resided in the OPS district for more than 10 years and most respondents voted for school board members, but more taxpayers voted than parents.

Age distributions for the taxpayer and parent groups were not equivalent. Most parents of schoolaged children were in their 30s and early 40s, while older respondents were more predominant among taxpayers.

Table 1
Description of Samples

Item	Parents		Taxpayers	
	No.	%	No.	%
Children in OPS:				
1 or 2	227	75	0	0
3-5	74	25	0	0
Children in private school:				
Yes	21	7	37	12
No	280	93	263	88
Residence in OPS district:				
10 years or less	85	28	59	20
More than 10 years	216	72	240	80
Vote for school board members:				
Yes	176	58	211	70.4
No	123	41	88	29.3
No response	2	1	1	.3
Age:				
18-29	26	8	42	14
30-44	216	72	82	27
45-64	59	20	97	32
65 or older	0	0	78	26
No response	0	0	1	1
Income:				
Less than \$10,000	25	8	32	11
\$10,001 - \$20,000	52	17	58	19
\$20,001 - \$30,000	77	26	53	18
\$30,001 - \$40,000	66	22	36	12
More than \$40,000	63	21	35	12
No response	18	6	86	28
Gender:				
Male	138	46	138	46
Female	163	54	162	54
Area of residence:				
Southwest	37	12	39	13
Northwest	111	37	85	28
Southeast	64	21	103	35
Northeast	89	30	73	24

The parent group tended to have higher incomes than the taxpayer group; 28 percent of the taxpayer group refused to indicate family income range.

One consideration in any survey is the extent to which the sample is similar to the total population to which generalizations are made. Thus, comparisons were usually made between general demographic characteristics of the sample and the population from which the sample was drawn.

An exact comparison of the two sample groups with the adult population of the OPS district was difficult for several reasons. First, existing census data do not allow the identification of "parents" (adults with children in OPS) and "taxpayers" as is done in this survey. Second, many census tracts overlap the OPS district boundary lines. Finally, 7 years have elapsed since the 1980 census, and the characteristics of current residents of the OPS district may differ from those which existed in 1980.

Telephone exchange prefixes were used to subdivide the respondents according to area of residence within the OPS district. The southwest quadrant includes school district residents west of 72nd Street and south of Dodge Street. Northwest residents are those west of 72nd Street and north of Dodge Street. Northeast residents are east of 72nd Street and north of Dodge Street. Those in the southeast quadrant reside south of Dodge Street and east of 72nd Street.

A small percentage of respondents from each group had children enrolled in private schools. While none of the taxpayers currently had children enrolled in OPS, 55 percent had children enrolled in OPS at some time. This fact suggests that many taxpayers have had firsthand experience with the Omaha Public Schools.

Respondents' Evaluation of the Omaha Public Schools. Respondents were asked to suggest a grade of A, B, C, D, or F for the Omaha Public Schools. Table 2 shows the percentages of all respondents' answers and breakdowns by subgroups. A similar question was asked in a 1986 national Gallup Poll of citizen attitudes about schools. Although these data are not included in table 2, they are helpful in understanding the results. While 62 percent of all survey respondents gave OPS a grade of A or B, only 41 percent of the Gallup Poll respondents provided the same grades for schools in their communities. Table 2 shows that very few respondents gave OPS a grade of F; the most common response for the entire sample, and every subgroup, was a grade of B.

Table 2

Grade Distributions for the Omaha Public Schools by Parents and Taxpayers, 1987

Item	A %	B %	C %	D %	F %
Total	16	46	31	6	1
Gender:					
Male	15	43	33	7	2
Female	16	48	29	6	1
Age:					
18-29 years	9	47	40	4	0
30-44 years	13	50	29	6	2
45-64 years	21	41	30	6	2
65 and over	19	38	36	7	0
Income:					
Less than \$10,000	23	40	29	2	6
\$10,001 - \$20,000	13	43	34	9	1
\$20,001 - \$30,000	11	49	30	8	2
\$30,001 - \$40,000	10	57	25	7	1
More than \$40,000	28	45	24	3	0
Area of residence:					
Southwest	12	52	29	7	0
Northwest	15	54	25	5	1
Southeast	19	40	33	7	1
Northeast	14	40	37	6	3
Length of residence:					
10 years or less	12	50	33	4	1
More than 10 years	17	45	30	6	2

Comparison of Parent and Taxpayer Grades. The survey questionnaire included 18 items that asked respondents to provide a grade for various aspects of OPS. Table 3 lists the items and provides a grade point average for each item for parents and taxpayers. Grade point averages were obtained by changing letter grades to numbers according to the following point scale: A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0. The mean grade point for each item was computed for sample groups. No statistical tests of difference were conducted, and caution should be exercised in interpreting small differences in grades. Analysis was performed by noting apparent patterns among all 18 items.

Table 3

Comparison of Parent and Taxpayer Grades for the Omaha Public Schools, Personnel, and Programs, 1987

Item	Parent	Taxpayer
	Grade ¹	
Omaha Public Schools	2.76	2.60
Teachers	3.02	2.82
Principals and other administrators	3.02	2.67
Board of education	2.53	2.40
Preparing students for jobs	2.47	2.35
Preparing students for college	2.60	2.50
Handling student discipline	2.46	2.05
Athletic programs for boys	3.08	3.05
Athletic programs for girls	2.61	2.68
Programs for handicapped children	2.77	2.49
Programs for gifted and talented children	2.85	2.63
Programs for drug education	2.65	2.51
Counseling services	2.40	2.56
Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences	2.51	2.38
Programs in computer education	2.92	2.83
Programs in the arts	2.90	2.70
Programs to involve parents	2.75	2.40
Magnet schools	2.93	2.68

¹Letter grades were converted to grade points to provide a mean grade for each of several subgroups. The following conversions were used: A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00.

Parents graded the schools higher than taxpayers on 16 of the 18 items listed in table 3. Both parents and taxpayers gave their highest grades to athletic programs for boys. Teachers, principals, and other administrators received high grades from parents. Teachers and programs in computer education were graded high by taxpayers. Parents gave counseling services the lowest grade, while taxpayers gave the handling of discipline problems the lowest grade.

Comparison of Parent and Taxpayer Grades by Income Group. Table 4 displays parent grades by reported income of respondents. By ranking the mean grades for each item across the five income categories, one can generalize about which income groups awarded the highest and lowest grades. For example, the mean grades for "Preparing students for jobs," were ranked as follows: 2.72 (ranked 1) for those with incomes less than \$10,000; 2.71 (ranked 2) for those with incomes in excess of \$40,000; 2.57 (ranked 3) for those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$40,000; 2.26 (ranked 4) for those with incomes between \$20,000 and \$30,000; and 2.22 (ranked 5) for those with incomes between \$10,000 and \$20,000.

Table 4

Comparison of Parent Grades for the Omaha Public Schools, Personnel, and Programs
by Reported Income of Respondents, 1987

Item	Income (thousand dollars)				
	< \$10	\$10-20	\$20-30	\$30-40	> \$40
	Grade ¹				
Omaha Public Schools	2.39	2.59	2.68	2.70	3.10
Teachers	2.96	2.92	3.00	2.92	3.19
Principals and other administrators	2.79	3.02	3.16	2.91	2.97
Board of education	2.40	2.56	2.40	2.57	2.60
Preparing students for jobs	2.72	2.22	2.26	2.57	2.71
Preparing students for college	2.74	2.18	2.42	2.80	2.94
Handling student discipline	2.80	2.25	2.29	2.45	2.78
Athletic programs for boys	3.16	3.14	2.95	3.19	3.06
Athletic programs for girls	2.80	2.79	2.50	2.62	2.49
Programs for handicapped children	3.22	2.83	2.65	2.82	2.68
Programs for gifted and talented children	3.20	2.92	2.66	2.98	2.73
Programs for drug education	2.75	2.50	2.54	2.68	2.82
Counseling services	2.86	2.47	2.32	2.25	2.42
Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences	3.00	2.45	2.43	2.45	2.55
Programs in computer education	3.35	2.96	2.92	2.73	2.93
Programs in the arts	3.14	2.94	2.86	2.88	2.86
Programs to involve parents	2.96	2.86	2.61	2.61	2.84
Magnet schools	3.10	2.86	2.89	2.96	3.02

¹Letter grades were converted to grade points to provide a mean grade for each of several subgroups. The following conversions were used: A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00.

The mean grades of the group with less than \$10,000 of reported income ranked either 1 or 2 on 13 of the 18 items. The mean grades of the group with more than \$40,000 of reported income ranked 1 or 2 on 9 of the 18 items. By contrast, the mean grades of those in the \$20,000 to \$30,000 income category ranked 4 or 5 on 15 of the 18 items. Thus, those in the highest and lowest income categories tended to give the highest grades overall, while those in the middle income categories tended to give the lowest grades.

Table 5 reports the same income comparison for taxpayers and the same pattern occurs. The mean grades of the low-income group ranked 1 or 2 on 16 of the 18 items, and the mean grades of the high-income group ranked 1 or 2 on 11 of the 18 items. Grades of the middle income groups ranked 4 or 5 on 15 of the 18 items.

Table 5

Comparison of Taxpayer Grades for the Omaha Public Schools, Personnel, and Programs
by Reported Income of Respondents, 1987

Item	Income (thousand dollars)				
	< \$10	\$10-20	\$20-30	\$30-40	> \$40
	Grade ¹				
Omaha Public Schools	3.00	2.60	2.51	2.64	2.76
Teachers	3.41	2.96	2.88	2.90	2.97
Principals and other administrators	3.44	2.63	2.35	2.73	2.86
Board of education	2.85	2.38	2.13	2.44	2.59
Preparing students for jobs	2.32	2.14	2.24	2.37	2.55
Preparing students for college	2.76	2.43	2.33	2.50	2.62
Handling student discipline	2.52	1.91	1.77	1.97	2.27
Athletic programs for boys	3.36	2.91	3.36	3.19	3.19
Athletic programs for girls	2.71	2.60	2.91	2.74	2.64
Programs for handicapped children	2.89	2.50	2.34	2.32	2.54
Programs for gifted and talented children	3.11	2.70	2.62	2.42	2.75
Programs for drug education	2.95	2.62	2.35	2.34	2.28
Counseling services	3.00	2.65	2.35	2.22	2.54
Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences	3.00	2.42	2.34	2.00	2.36
Programs in computer education	3.28	3.04	2.81	2.65	2.92
Programs in the arts	3.06	2.87	2.61	2.54	2.70
Programs to involve parents	2.68	2.48	2.26	2.28	2.58
Magnet schools	3.21	2.67	2.57	2.69	2.86

¹Letter grades were converted to grade points to provide a mean grade for each of several subgroups. The following conversions were used: A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00.

Comparison of Parent and Taxpayer Grades by Gender. Table 6 shows the grades of parents for the 18 items by gender of the respondent. Women graded the schools, personnel, and programs higher than men on 16 of the 18 items. Table 7 reports the same breakdown for the taxpayer group. Again, women's grades were higher than men's on 13 of the 18 items.

Table 6
Comparison of Parent Grades for the Omaha Public Schools, Personnel, and Programs,
by Gender, 1987

Item	Gender	
	Male	Female
	Grade ¹	
Omaha Public Schools	2.69	2.81
Teachers	3.00	3.04
Principals and other administrators	2.88	3.14
Board of education	2.47	2.57
Preparing students for jobs	2.39	2.55
Preparing students for college	2.58	2.62
Handling student discipline	2.34	2.57
Athletic programs for boys	3.05	3.11
Athletic programs for girls	2.62	2.61
Programs for handicapped children	2.56	2.92
Programs for gifted and talented children	2.83	2.87
Programs for drug education	2.54	2.74
Counseling services	2.28	2.51
Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences	2.43	2.58
Programs in computer education	2.82	3.01
Programs in the arts	2.94	2.88
Programs to involve parents	2.65	2.83
Magnet schools	2.81	3.04

¹Letter grades were converted to grade points to provide a mean grade for each of several subgroups. The following conversions were used: A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00.

Table 7
Comparison of Taxpayer Grades for the Omaha Public Schools, Personnel, and Programs,
by Gender, 1987

Item	Gender	
	Male	Female
	Grade ¹	
Omaha Public Schools	2.56	2.64
Teachers	2.78	2.85
Principals and other administrators	2.66	2.69
Board of education	2.35	2.44
Preparing students for jobs	2.39	2.30
Preparing students for college	2.46	2.54
Handling student discipline	2.02	2.07
Athletic programs for boys	3.07	3.02
Athletic programs for girls	2.79	2.57
Programs for handicapped children	2.47	2.50
Programs for gifted and talented children	2.68	2.60
Programs for drug education	2.48	2.53
Counseling services	2.62	2.50
Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences	2.29	2.46
Programs in computer education	2.64	2.98
Programs in the arts	2.57	2.82
Programs to involve parents	2.35	2.44
Magnet schools	2.66	2.70

¹Letter grades were converted to grade points to provide a mean grade for each of several subgroups. The following conversions were used: A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00.

Comparison of Parent and Taxpayer Grades by Voting Behavior. In table 8, the grades of parents who reported that they voted in school board elections are compared with the grades of those who reported that they did not vote in school board elections. Those who voted graded the schools higher on 12 of the 18 items.

Table 8

Comparison of Parent Grades for the Omaha Public Schools, Personnel, and Programs,
by Reported Tendency to Vote in School Board Elections, 1987

Item	Vote in School Board Election	
	Yes	No
	Grade ¹	
Omaha Public Schools	2.88	2.56
Teachers	3.12	2.88
Principals and other administrators	3.06	2.96
Board of education	2.56	2.45
Preparing students for jobs	2.54	2.38
Preparing students for college	2.70	2.46
Handling student discipline	2.58	2.28
Athletic programs for boys	3.15	2.97
Athletic programs for girls	2.65	2.57
Programs for handicapped children	2.77	2.76
Programs for gifted and talented children	2.79	2.96
Programs for drug education	2.76	2.50
Counseling services	2.37	2.43
Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences	2.50	2.53
Programs in computer education	2.89	2.97
Programs in the arts	2.88	2.93
Programs to involve parents	2.72	2.79
Magnet schools	2.98	2.86

¹ Letter grades were converted to grade points to provide a mean grade for each of several subgroups. The following conversions were used: A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00.

The same pattern appears in table 9, which compares the grades of taxpayers who voted in school board elections with those who did not vote. Again, those who voted graded the schools higher on 12 of the 18 items.

Table 9
Comparison of Taxpayer Grades for the Omaha Public Schools, Personnel, and Programs,
by Reported Tendency to Vote in School Board Elections, 1987

Item	Vote in School Board Election	
	Yes	No
	Grade ¹	
Omaha Public Schools	2.66	2.45
Teachers	2.79	2.86
Principals and other administrators	2.69	2.62
Board of education	2.39	2.43
Preparing students for jobs	2.40	2.20
Preparing students for college	2.52	2.44
Handling student discipline	2.04	2.07
Athletic programs for boys	3.03	3.09
Athletic programs for girls	2.69	2.63
Programs for handicapped children	2.54	2.33
Programs for gifted and talented children	2.65	2.60
Programs for drug education	2.55	2.39
Counseling services	2.59	2.47
Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences	2.48	2.12
Programs in computer education	2.82	2.86
Programs in the arts	2.69	2.74
Programs to involve parents	2.41	2.38
Magnet schools	2.72	2.61

¹ Letter grades were converted to grade points to provide a mean grade for each of several subgroups. The following conversions were used: A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00.

Comparison of Parent and Taxpayer Grades by Age Groups. In table 10, parent grades are reported for three age categories. If the grades for each age category are ranked on each item, patterns can be observed. The grades of the 18-29 age group ranked 1 on 11 of the 18 items, while grades of the 30-44 age group ranked 3 on 9 of the 18 items. The youngest group of parents, then, tended to grade the schools, personnel, and programs highest, and the middle age group tended to grade lowest.

Table 10

Comparison of Parent Grades for the Omaha Public Schools, Personnel, and Programs,
by Age of Respondents, 1987

Item	Age		
	18-29	30-44	45-64
	Grade ¹		
Omaha Public Schools	2.54	2.77	2.81
Teachers	2.96	3.03	3.02
Principals and other administrators	3.28	2.97	3.10
Board of education	2.65	2.45	2.74
Preparing students for jobs	2.71	2.43	2.52
Preparing students for college	2.73	2.56	2.68
Handling student discipline	2.58	2.42	2.57
Athletic programs for boys	3.14	3.11	2.96
Athletic programs for girls	2.90	2.57	2.67
Programs for handicapped children	3.08	2.73	2.83
Programs for gifted and talented children	2.78	2.88	2.77
Programs for drug education	2.60	2.66	2.62
Counseling services	2.65	2.37	2.42
Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences	2.73	2.48	2.52
Programs in computer education	3.17	2.93	2.78
Programs in the arts	2.77	2.89	3.02
Programs to involve parents	3.08	2.73	2.67
Magnet schools	2.77	2.95	2.91

¹ Letter grades were converted to grade points to provide a mean grade for each of several subgroups. The following conversions were used: A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00.

Four age categories are used in reporting the taxpayer grades in table 11. Again, if grades are ranked for each item, patterns can be observed. The oldest group of taxpayers, those 65 and older gave the highest grades on 12 of the 18 items. Again, the middle age group, taxpayers between the ages of 30 and 44, gave the lowest grades on 10 of the 18 items.

Table 11
Comparison of Taxpayer Grades for the Omaha Public Schools, Personnel, and Programs,
by Age of Respondents, 1987

Item	Age			
	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
	Grade ¹			
Omaha Public Schools	2.65	2.38	2.70	2.69
Teachers	2.90	2.74	2.77	2.92
Principals and other administrators	2.61	2.59	2.60	2.90
Board of education	2.34	2.32	2.42	2.48
Preparing students for jobs	2.13	2.36	2.38	2.41
Preparing students for college	2.32	2.43	2.58	2.59
Handling student discipline	2.33	1.94	1.98	2.07
Athletic programs for boys	3.11	3.14	3.06	2.88
Athletic programs for girls	2.55	2.71	2.68	2.70
Programs for handicapped children	2.06	2.38	2.59	2.73
Programs for gifted and talented children	2.46	2.74	2.57	2.73
Programs for drug education	2.56	2.28	2.56	2.68
Counseling services	2.51	2.39	2.53	2.83
Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences	2.27	2.17	2.45	2.62
Programs in computer education	2.97	2.72	2.82	2.87
Programs in the arts	2.63	2.64	2.72	2.80
Programs to involve parents	2.38	2.29	2.42	2.52
Magnet schools	2.69	2.71	2.61	2.75

¹Letter grades were converted to grade points to provide a mean grade for each of several subgroups. The following conversions were used: A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00.

Comparison of Parent and Taxpayer Grades by Perception of Being Informed. Respondents were asked whether they considered themselves to be well informed, somewhat informed, or not well informed about the Omaha Public Schools. Table 12 reports parents' grades for the schools by these categories. The grades of parents who considered themselves well informed were highest on 16 of the 18 items. The grades of parents who considered themselves not well informed were lowest on 13 of the 18 items.

Table 12

Comparison of Parent Grades for the Omaha Public Schools, Personnel, and Programs,
by Perception of Being Informed, 1987

Item	Perception		
	Well informed	Somewhat informed	Not well informed
	Grade ¹		
Omaha Public Schools	2.91	2.66	2.70
Teachers	3.14	2.96	2.90
Principals and other administrators	3.11	2.96	3.05
Board of education	2.62	2.49	2.24
Preparing students for jobs	2.63	2.36	2.47
Preparing students for college	2.83	2.49	2.18
Handling student discipline	2.70	2.32	2.28
Athletic programs for boys	3.19	3.04	2.73
Athletic programs for girls	2.67	2.59	2.46
Programs for handicapped children	2.89	2.75	2.17
Programs for gifted and talented children	2.99	2.76	2.62
Programs for drug education	2.76	2.61	2.17
Counseling services	2.49	2.35	2.27
Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences	2.64	2.42	2.39
Programs in computer education	2.97	2.89	3.00
Programs in the arts	2.92	2.89	2.93
Programs to involve parents	2.82	2.74	2.31
Magnet schools	3.13	2.83	2.42

¹ Letter grades were converted to grade points to provide a mean grade for each of several subgroups. The following conversions were used: A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00.

Table 13 presents an interesting contrast to table 12. Here, taxpayers' grades are reported using the same three categories. The grades of taxpayers who considered themselves well informed were lowest on 12 of the 18 items, while the grades of taxpayers who considered themselves not well informed were highest on 17 of the 18 items.

Table 13
Comparison of Taxpayer Grades for the Omaha Public Schools, Personnel, and Programs,
by Perception of Being Informed, 1987

Item	Perception		
	Well informed	Somewhat informed	Not well informed
	Grade ¹		
Omaha Public Schools	2.52	2.61	2.69
Teachers	2.82	2.77	2.97
Principals and other administrators	2.56	2.65	2.94
Board of education	2.14	2.41	2.68
Preparing students for jobs	2.23	2.34	2.54
Preparing students for college	2.40	2.50	2.64
Handling student discipline	1.92	2.09	2.03
Athletic programs for boys	3.20	2.96	3.24
Athletic programs for girls	2.82	2.57	3.00
Programs for handicapped children	2.58	2.40	2.71
Programs for gifted and talented children	2.55	2.57	3.03
Programs for drug education	2.33	2.50	2.81
Counseling services	2.26	2.60	2.74
Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences	2.42	2.34	2.48
Programs in computer education	2.64	2.82	3.13
Programs in the arts	2.58	2.66	3.10
Programs to involve parents	2.22	2.37	2.83
Magnet schools	2.80	2.59	3.00

¹Letter grades were converted to grade points to provide a mean grade for each of several subgroups. The following conversions were used: A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00.

Comparison of Parent and Taxpayer Grades by Area of Residence. In table 14, parents grades are reported by area of the city in which respondents reside. Ranking the grades for each item did not produce any clear patterns except that parents in the northwest quadrant gave the lowest grades on 8 of the 18 items and the highest grades on only 2 of the items. By comparison, parents in the southwest quadrant gave the highest grades on 6 items and the lowest grades on 4 items; parents in the southeast quadrant gave the highest grades on 5 items and the lowest on 2 items; and parents in the northeast quadrant gave the highest grades on 5 items and the lowest on 4 items.

Table 14

Comparison of Parent Grades for the Omaha Public Schools, Personnel, and Programs,
by Area of Residence, 1987

Item	Area of residence			
	SW	NW	SE	NE
	Grade ¹			
Omaha Public Schools	2.92	2.84	2.68	2.63
Teachers	3.03	2.98	3.09	3.02
Principals and other administrators	2.92	2.97	3.05	3.10
Board of education	2.43	2.56	2.60	2.46
Preparing students for jobs	2.60	2.41	2.54	2.46
Preparing students for college	2.86	2.65	2.67	2.39
Handling student discipline	2.30	2.63	2.33	2.42
Athletic programs for boys	3.00	3.10	3.05	3.11
Athletic programs for girls	2.56	2.52	2.63	2.72
Programs for handicapped children	2.74	2.75	2.80	2.79
Programs for gifted and talented children	3.00	2.76	2.83	2.92
Programs for drug education	2.70	2.71	2.49	2.67
Counseling services	2.41	2.16	2.56	2.54
Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences	2.50	2.45	2.53	2.57
Programs in computer education	3.13	2.78	2.93	3.03
Programs in the arts	3.09	2.74	3.14	2.86
Programs to involve parents	2.69	2.73	2.63	2.88
Magnet schools	3.11	2.95	2.91	2.86

¹Letter grades were converted to grade points to provide a mean grade for each of several subgroups. The following conversions were used: A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00.

Clearer patterns were apparent in the taxpayer group (table 15). Taxpayers in the southeast quadrant gave the highest grades on 12 items and the lowest grades on no items. Taxpayers in the southwest quadrant gave the highest grades on no items and the lowest grades on 10 items. In the remaining two groups, taxpayers in the northwest quadrant graded the schools higher (grades on 6 items were ranked 1 and the grade on 1 item was ranked 4) than taxpayers in the northeast quadrant (the grade on 1 item was ranked 1 and grades on 7 items were ranked 4).

Table 15

Comparison of Taxpayer Grades for the Omaha Public Schools, Personnel, and Programs,
by Area of Residence, 1987

Item	Area of residence			
	SW	NW	SE	NE
	Grade ¹			
Omaha Public Schools	2.41	2.68	2.68	2.50
Teachers	2.73	2.81	2.87	2.78
Principals and other administrators	2.59	2.74	2.61	2.73
Board of education	2.34	2.36	2.48	2.35
Preparing students for jobs	2.25	2.38	2.43	2.23
Preparing students for college	2.42	2.61	2.50	2.41
Handling student discipline	2.03	1.90	2.22	1.95
Athletic programs for boys	3.00	3.14	3.05	2.96
Athletic programs for girls	2.57	2.71	2.74	2.60
Programs for handicapped children	2.33	2.50	2.65	2.31
Programs for gifted and talented children	2.48	2.65	2.73	2.55
Programs for drug education	2.25	2.47	2.72	2.34
Counseling services	2.59	2.55	2.73	2.28
Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences	2.15	2.54	2.44	2.21
Programs in computer education	2.64	2.86	2.83	2.90
Programs in the arts	2.60	2.82	2.74	2.55
Programs to involve parents	2.35	2.41	2.49	2.26
Magnet schools	2.45	2.67	2.92	2.48

¹Letter grades were converted to grade points to provide a mean grade for each of several subgroups. The following conversions were used: A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00.

Sources of Information. In the parent group, 94 percent of the respondents considered themselves either well informed or somewhat well informed. This compares with 80 percent of the respondents in the taxpayer group who considered themselves either well informed or somewhat well informed (table 16). Most respondents considered themselves somewhat informed about the schools.

The primary source of information about schools for parents was children or school personnel (N=150), while newspapers provided the primary source of information for taxpayers (N=129). The second most frequently mentioned source of information for parents was newsletters and flyers (N=91); for taxpayers, the second most frequently mentioned source of information was friends (N=51). Radio and television were listed as primary sources of information by surprisingly few parents and taxpayers.

Table 16A

Comparison of Parents and Taxpayers Perceptions of How Well Informed They Are About Omaha Public Schools, 1987

Assessment	Response			
	Parent		Taxpayer	
	No.	%	No.	%
Well informed	113	37	54	18
Somewhat informed	168	56	187	62
Not well informed	20	7	54	18
No response	0	0	5	2

Table 16B

Comparison of Parents and Taxpayers Sources of Information About Omaha Public Schools, 1987

Primary source of information	Response		Perception ¹					
			Well informed		Somewhat informed		Not well informed	
	Parent No.	Taxpayer No.	Parent %	Taxpayer %	Parent %	Taxpayer %	Parent %	Taxpayer %
Friends	15	51	27	16	73	72	0	12
Children/school personnel	150	50	37	30	55	60	8	10
Television	21	27	38	15	57	70	5	15
Radio	1	17	0	12	0	53	100	35
Newspapers	56	129	37	18	59	61	4	21
Newsletters/flyers	91	27	32	4	64	85	4	11
Parent organizations	47	2	40	50	53	50	7	0

¹Percentages are based on responses for each source of information.

Comparison of Parent and Taxpayer Attitudes About User Fees for Programs. Respondents were asked if they would be likely to participate if certain programs or activities were made available to community members for a reasonable fee. The results are reported in table 17. Adult education programs and recreational programs received support from about two-thirds of the parents and almost half of the taxpayers. Day care for preschoolage children was supported by only 34 percent of the parents; 47 percent of the parents said they would support extended care service for children in elementary school. If OPS considered providing programs such as day care and extended care, apparently these programs would have to be targeted to specific neighborhoods to be successful. Taxpayers did not show strong interest in programs requiring user fees.

Several parents suggested other programs for which they would be willing to pay a fee, including classes in current events, computers, local history, and parenting.

Table 17

Comparison of Parents and Taxpayers Interest in Programs Provided with User Fees, 1987

Program	Response			
	Parent		Taxpayer	
	No.	%	No.	%
Day care for preschoolage children:				
Yes	103	34	68	23
No	188	63	213	71
Don't know	10	3	19	6
Extended care for elementary children:				
Yes	141	47	62	21
No	151	50	212	71
Don't know	9	3	26	8
Adult education programs:				
Yes	201	67	144	48
No	88	29	135	45
Don't know	12	4	21	7
Recreational programs:				
Yes	197	66	101	34
No	91	30	176	59
Don't know	13	4	23	7

Comparison of Parent and Taxpayer Perceptions About Financial Support for OPS. Parents and taxpayers were asked whether the amount of money spent to educate children in OPS was adequate. Results are reported in tables 18 and 19. Most parents (59 percent) said that too little was being spent. The most common response from taxpayers (46 percent) was that enough money was being spent. Only a small percentage of the parents and taxpayers thought that too much was being spent by OPS to educate children.

School Buildings. Most parents and taxpayers thought that enough money was being spent on the care of school buildings (tables 18 and 19). This suggests that there may not be much support for an expanded building and maintenance program in OPS.

Number of Course Offerings. Most parents and taxpayers thought that enough money was being spent on providing a variety of course offerings for students (tables 18 and 19).

Class Size. Parents were divided almost equally between those who said that enough money was being spent on adjusting the number of students per teacher and those who said that too little was being spent in this way. The most common response for taxpayers was that enough money was being spent in this area (tables 18 and 19).

Extracurricular Programs. Most parents and taxpayers thought that enough money was provided for extracurricular programs by OPS (tables 18 and 19).

Student Testing. Most parents and taxpayers thought that enough money was spent on student testing programs by OPS (tables 18 and 19).

Student Transportation. Parents' responses differed from those of taxpayers in regard to the amount of money spent on student transportation (tables 18 and 19). Fifty percent of the parents thought that too little was spent, and 46 percent of the taxpayers thought that enough was being spent.

Counseling and Guidance Services. The most common response for parents and taxpayers was that enough money was being spent on counseling and guidance services for students. Nearly one-third of each group, however, reported that too much was being spent on this area (tables 18 and 19). This was the only item of this type for which more than 20 percent of the respondents said too much money was being spent.

Computers. Parents' responses to the question about the amount of money being spent on computers were distributed almost evenly between "enough" and "too little." The most common response for taxpayers was that enough money was being spent (tables 18 and 19).

Table 18

Parents Perceptions About the Financing of Selected Items in the Omaha Public Schools, 1987

Item	Response							
	Too much		Enough		Too little		No response	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Education of children	4	1	100	33	177	59	20	7
Care of school buildings	14	5	206	68	65	22	9	5
Number of courses from which students can choose	21	7	182	60	71	24	27	9
Adjusting the number of students for each teacher	21	7	127	42	137	46	16	5
Extracurricular programs	38	12	192	64	54	18	17	6
Student testing	22	7	176	58	83	28	20	7
Student transportation	5	2	107	36	151	50	38	12
Counseling and guidance services for students	103	34	143	47	41	14	14	5
Computers	11	4	129	43	128	42	33	11
Vocational education classes	4	1	105	35	138	46	54	18

Table 19

Taxpayers Perceptions About the Financing of Selected Items in the Omaha Public Schools, 1987

Item	Response							
	Too much		Enough		Too little		No response	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Education of children	22	7	139	46	107	36	32	11
Care of school buildings	9	3	202	67	46	16	43	14
Number of courses from which students can choose	29	10	164	55	48	16	59	19
Adjusting the number of students for each teacher	36	12	136	45	66	22	62	21
Extracurricular programs	49	16	171	57	41	14	39	13
Student testing	21	7	153	51	60	20	66	22
Student transportation	13	4	138	46	98	33	51	17
Counseling and guidance services for students	97	32	145	49	22	7	36	12
Computers	18	6	148	49	66	22	68	23
Vocational education classes	10	3	141	47	88	30	61	20

Vocational Education. While 46 percent of the parents thought that too little was being spent on vocational education by OPS (tables 18 and 19), 47 percent of the taxpayers thought that enough was being spent.

Although parents and taxpayers differed somewhat in their responses to questions about expenditures by OPS (tables 18 and 19), in no case did a majority of either group suggest that too much money was being spent on any aspect of school district operations. This suggests that citizens, in general, are supportive of the Omaha Public Schools system.

Programs Requiring More Emphasis. Taxpayers and parents were asked what activities or programs should receive more emphasis in the Omaha Public Schools. Up to three answers were tallied for each respondent. Parents' responses totaled 343, and taxpayer responses totaled 309. Answers mentioned by nine or more parents or taxpayers were listed as separate items in table 20, while the remaining answers were clustered under other programs.

Table 20

Comparison of Parents and Taxpayers Perceptions About Which Subjects, Activities, and Programs Should Receive More Emphasis in the Omaha Public Schools, 1987

Item	Response ¹			
	Parent		Taxpayer	
	No.	%	No.	%
Academic core	33	9.6	62	28.1
Mathematics	49	14.3	40	18.1
Reading	36	10.5	22	7.1
Drug and alcohol education	25	7.3	23	7.4
English	20	5.8	21	9.5
Sex education	26	7.6	14	4.5
Computers	26	7.6	14	4.5
Vocational training	15	4.4	12	3.9
Science	12	3.5	13	4.2
Arts	11	3.2	12	3.9
Counseling	10	2.9	11	3.6
Programs for handicapped children	16	4.7	5	1.6
Sports	10	2.9	6	1.9
Spelling	9	2.6	4	1.3
Other programs	54	15.7	50	16.2
No response	58	NA	79	NA

NA = not applicable.

¹Percentages are based on 343 parent responses and 309 taxpayer responses. Respondents could list more than one item.

Parents top three choices for receiving more emphasis by OPS were the academic core, mathematics, and reading. The same three were found among the top choices of taxpayers. The academic core category included responses such as "the basics," college preparation," "the 3 R's," and "academics." Many who advocated more emphasis on sports programs, specified girls sports.

Programs Requiring Less Emphasis. Table 21 lists subjects, activities, and programs that respondents thought should be given less emphasis by OPS. Using the minimum of nine responses as a cutoff, a much smaller list was generated. Most parents and taxpayers offered no response to this question. Parents' responses totaled 138, while taxpayers provided 153 responses. Over one-third of the parents who responded and almost two-thirds of the taxpayers said sports programs should receive less emphasis. Sex education was mentioned by 30 respondents, a surprisingly low number given the community attention to this topic during the time the survey was conducted.

Table 21

Comparison of Parents and Taxpayers Perceptions About Which Subjects, Activities, and Programs Should Receive Less Emphasis in the Omaha Public Schools, 1987

Item	Response ¹			
	Parent		Taxpayer	
	No.	%	No.	%
Sports	54	39.1	101	66.0
Sex education	15	10.9	15	9.8
Arts	11	8.0	3	1.9
Music	11	8.0	1	.6
Other	47	34.1	33	21.6
No response	175	NA	154	NA

NA = not applicable.

¹Percentages are based on 138 parent responses and 153 taxpayer responses. Respondents could list more than one item.

Changes in Financing Education in Nebraska. Respondents were told by interviewers that in the average school district in Nebraska, about two-thirds of the funds for operating schools were raised through local real estate taxes. Respondents were asked if they were in favor of keeping this system or if they would support changing it. About 60 percent of the parents and taxpayers said that they were not in favor of change (table 22). Respondents who said the system should be changed were asked to suggest changes. Some offered more than one suggestion, but 59 parents and taxpayers said they could think of no way to change the system of financing education. Forty-four parents and taxpayers suggested changes in the sales tax; other suggested changes are listed in table 22. Although the current system for financing education in Nebraska has been widely criticized, parents and taxpayers apparently do not think that the system needs to be changed. Many of those who support change are unclear about what should be done.

Table 22

Comparison of Parents and Taxpayers Perceptions About Changing the Ways of Paying
for Schools in Nebraska, 1987

Item	Response			
	Parent		Taxpayer	
	No.	%	No.	%
In favor of change:				
Yes	93	31.0	83	28.0
No	181	60.0	178	59.0
No opinion	27	9.0	39	13.0
Ways to change: ¹				
Don't know	35	34.0	24	28.0
Sales tax	20	19.0	22	26.0
More state support	11	10.6	3	3.5
User fees	4	3.8	10	11.8
Gambling/lottery	7	6.7	4	4.7
Income tax	4	3.8	5	5.9
Combination of tax revenues	7	6.7	1	1.1
Property tax	4	3.8	4	4.7
Business donations	2	1.9	4	4.7
Other	6	5.8	8	9.4

¹Percentages are based on 104 parent responses and 85 taxpayer responses. Respondents listed only one item.

Improving OPS

Respondents were asked what, in their opinions, would it take to make the Omaha Public Schools better. Respondents could give more than one answer; 334 responses were received from parents and 326 from taxpayers (table 23). Responses listed by at least nine people were listed separately in table 23.

The most frequently mentioned item by parents was higher salaries for teachers. One respondent, for example, said, "Upgrade the salary of teachers so we could get better qualified teachers." Parents frequently listed smaller classes and more money as ways of improving the Omaha Public Schools. The most frequently listed taxpayer response was higher quality teachers. Taxpayers also frequently mentioned improved discipline and more parent involvement.

Table 23

Comparison of Parents and Taxpayers Perceptions About Areas That Could Be Improved
in the Omaha Public Schools, 1987

Item	Response ¹			
	Parent		Taxpayer	
	No.	%	No.	%
Higher quality teachers	22	6.6	35	10.7
Improved discipline	16	4.8	29	8.9
Higher salaries for teachers	28	9.4	13	4.0
More parent involvement	23	6.9	16	4.9
More teachers/smaller classes	25	7.5	13	4.0
More money	25	7.5	12	3.7
Stop busing students	17	5.1	12	3.7
Better communication with parents	17	5.1	5	1.5
More community involvement	8	2.4	12	3.7
Better administration, including the school board	7	2.1	12	3.7
Attend to children's needs	11	3.3	3	.9
Other	59	17.7	36	11.0
Don't know	76	NA	128	NA

NA = not applicable.

¹Percentages are based on 334 parent responses and 326 taxpayer responses. Respondents could list more than one item.

While 25 percent of the parents and 47 percent of the taxpayers did not know how OPS could be improved, responses reveal opinions that range from pride in the schools to disappointment and cynicism. The following are some illustrative responses:

- "I can't think of anything. I think they're doing a good job."
- "It would take a miracle."
- "Parents, teachers, administrators, and the board of education should agree more. There is too much disagreement in the system."
- "It would take a stick of dynamite. We need more drug education, less busing, and some hard-facts learning."
- "Get the parents more involved in the education process."
- "More authority to the teachers."
- "I think the schools do quite well."
- "Prayer."

Discussion

Rather than repeat the generalizations which are reported throughout this document various topical areas will be analyzed and discussed.

Athletics. While athletic programs, especially those for boys, were consistently given high grades by respondents, they were not identified as programs requiring more emphasis, except for a few respondents who mentioned girls sports. In fact, many respondents said that athletics should be de-emphasized. Constituents perceived the athletic programs to be of high quality, but had some reservations about the amount of emphasis placed on the programs.

Academic Programs. Programs for gifted and talented students, college-bound students, and handicapped students, received grades in the middle range. Low-income parents gave very high grades to programs for gifted students, handicapped students, and magnet schools. The academic core should be given more emphasis, according to 95 respondents. Over 200 additional respondents recommended more emphasis on specific academic courses. Survey results indicate strong support for academic programs among OPS constituents.

Teachers and Administrators. Teachers and administrators received high grades, particularly from parents. Several respondents recommended more money for teachers and smaller classes as ways to improve the school district. Parents and taxpayers disagreed about spending more money to obtain smaller classes. Taxpayers thought that enough money was being spent to maintain an appropriate student-teacher ratio; parents split their votes between

"enough" money and "too little" money for reducing class size. There was obvious support from parents and taxpayers for investing more money in teachers.

Computers. Programs in computers were graded high by parents and taxpayers. Yet, 40 respondents said that computers should receive more emphasis. Taxpayers said that enough money was being spent on computer education, while parents split between "enough" and "too little." The Omaha Public Schools have developed a program that constituents perceive as having high quality, but there is some support for continued development in computer education.

Vocational Education. Vocational education was graded very low by both parents and taxpayers. Parents said that too little was being spent by OPS in this area, while taxpayers said that enough was being spent. Vocational education was identified as an area requiring more emphasis by 27 respondents. At a time when vocational educational is being criticized throughout the nation, it is remarkable that there is a respectable level of support among OPS constituents for emphasizing vocational education programs.

Financial Support. Most taxpayers and parents did not support changing the system for financing schools in Nebraska. Generally, they thought that enough money was being spent on schools and school programs, yet many said more money would improve OPS. Additional expenditures or changes in the system of financing education in Nebraska will be supported only when the public becomes aware of how the schools are financed and the problems that are created by the current structure.

Support Services. Support services, such as counseling, drug education, sex education, and programs to promote understanding of cultural and racial differences, were assessed differently by parents and taxpayers. About 30 percent of respondents said that too much money was being spent on counseling services. In general, support services were graded lower than academic programs. The attitude toward sex education was particularly ambivalent. While 40 respondents said that sex education should be given more emphasis in the schools, 30 said sex education should be given less emphasis. These important areas, which support the basic mission of schools, continue to be controversial. Public consensus regarding the role of these services in the overall school program is not likely to be attained soon, although school officials should continue to inform and educate the public about the importance of support services in OPS.

Discipline. In the 18th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitude Toward the Public Schools, lack of discipline was one of two major problems identified by parents. Constituents of OPS had a similar concern about discipline of students. Among all items for which respondents graded the schools, the lowest grade (composite 2.15) was given to the handling of student discipline. Improved discipline was suggested by 45 of 601 respondents as a way of improving OPS. Because the concern voiced by respondents in Omaha is comparable to that voiced nationally, this aspect of school performance should be examined. Omaha citizens perceive the lack of discipline as a serious problem.

Overall, this survey of perceptions regarding the Omaha Public Schools shows that the citizens of Omaha have a great deal of confidence in the schools and in the professionals who operate them, although some concerns were identified.

The results of surveyed public opinion should be interpreted cautiously. Results should be taken seriously but the data should not be over-interpreted. Reporting what respondents say is straightforward; explaining why they say what they say is problematic. Finally, data gained from any public opinion survey are useful for only a limited time. To be confident that expressions of public attitude are accurate, institutions must solicit public opinion regularly and consistently.

Appendices

Appendix A
OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Opinion Survey – Parent Group

INTERVIEWER: As the survey progresses, determine before dialing whether you need to speak to a male or female to meet the overall quota of 54% female and 46% male.

TO PERSON ANSWERING THE TELEPHONE SAY:

Hello, my name is _____. I'm with Midwest Survey Inc. in Omaha, and we are conducting a survey for UNO's Center for Applied Urban Research. We are interviewing parents in the Omaha Public School district to find out their attitudes toward the Omaha Public Schools. May I speak with the (male/female) parent or guardian of a student in the Omaha Public Schools?

IF THAT PERSON IS NOT AVAILABLE, ARRANGE TO CALL BACK. IF THAT PERSON WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE, THANK WHOEVER YOU ARE TALKING WITH FOR HIS/HER TIME AND GO TO THE NEXT TELEPHONE NUMBER.

Time to call back _____

Telephone number _____

IF THE RESPONDENT IS THE SAME PERSON, GO TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR THE FIRST SURVEY QUESTION.

IF THE RESPONDENT IS A DIFFERENT PERSON, SAY:

Hello, my name is _____. I'm with. . . (REPEAT INTRODUCTION ABOVE).

WHEN INTRODUCTION IS FINISHED, GO TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR THE FIRST SURVEY QUESTION.

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Opinion Survey — Parent Group

1. How many children do you currently have enrolled in the Omaha Public Schools?

RECORD NUMBER _____

2. Are you the parent or guardian of a student in a private school or a school operated by a church or church-affiliated group?

Yes 1

If yes, ask question 3.

No 2

If no or no response, skip to question 4.

No response 9

3. Please tell me the major reasons for selecting a school other than one of the Omaha Public Schools?

CIRCLE ALL RESPONSES BELOW. DON'T READ CHOICES FROM THE LIST.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Dissatisfaction with Omaha Public Schools. | 1 |
| 2. Desire for education which emphasizes religious values. | 2 |
| 3. Quality of the school selected | 3 |
| 4. Convenience. | 4 |
| 5. Family tradition | 5 |
| 6. Other (please specify) _____ | 8 |

4. How long have you lived in the Omaha Public School district?

CIRCLE RESPONSE.

Less than 1 year 1
 1-3 years 2
 4-10 years 3
 More than 10 years 4
 No response 9

5. Do you usually vote in the election of school board members?

Yes 1
 No 2
 No response 9

FOR QUESTIONS 6-12 CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER FOR EACH RESPONSE.

	A	B	C	D	F	No Opinion
6. Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, or F to indicate the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools of Omaha were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the Omaha Public Schools, an A, B, C, D, or F?	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. What grade would you give the teachers in the Omaha Public Schools, an A, B, C, D, or F?	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. What grade would you give principals and other administrators in the Omaha Public Schools, an A, B, C, D, or F?	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. What grade would you give to the board of education of the Omaha Public Schools, an A, B, C, D, or F?	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Using the same grading system, what grade would you give the Omaha Public Schools for the job they are doing in preparing students to get a job when they graduate from high school, an A, B, C, D, or F?	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. What grade would you give the Omaha Public Schools for the job they are doing in preparing students for college, an A, B, C, D, or F?	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. What grade would you give the Omaha Public Schools for the handling of student discipline problems, an A, B, C, D, or F?	1	2	3	4	5	6

13. I am going to list several programs in the Omaha Public Schools.
Would you please rate each of them using the same grading system
of A, B, C, D, or F?

CIRCLE ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH ITEM.

	Grade					No Opinion
	A	B	C	D	F	
1. Athletic programs for boys.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Athletic programs for girls.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Programs for handicapped children.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Programs for gifted and talented children.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Programs for drug education..	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Counseling services.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Programs that promote better understanding of racial and cultural differences.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Programs in computer education.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Programs in the arts: music, drama, visual arts.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Programs to involve parents in the schools..	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Schools that specialize in a specific subject area, such as math, science, or computers.	1	2	3	4	5	6

14. What subjects, activities, or programs do you think should
receive more emphasis in the Omaha Public Schools?

LIST FIRST RESPONSE(S) ONLY. DO NOT PROBE.

If no opinion/no response,
circle the six.

6

15. What subjects, activities, or programs do you think should
receive less emphasis in the Omaha Public Schools?

LIST FIRST RESPONSE(S) ONLY. DO NOT PROBE.

If no opinion/no response,
circle the six.

6

16. Where do you get most of your information about the Omaha Public Schools?

CIRCLE FIRST RESPONSE(S) ONLY. DO NOT PROBE.

1. Personal contact with friends. 1
2. Personal contact with children or school personnel 2
3. Television 3
4. Radio 4
5. Newspapers 5
6. School newsletters and fliers 6
7. Parent/teacher organization. 7
8. Other (Please specify) _____ 8
9. No response/no answer. 9

17. Would you describe yourself as pretty well informed about the Omaha Public Schools, somewhat informed, or not well informed?

CIRCLE RESPONSE BELOW.

- Well informed. 1
- Somewhat informed. 2
- Not well informed. 3
- No response/no answer. 9

18. In general, is it your impression that too much, enough, or not enough money is being spent to educate the children of the Omaha Public Schools?

CIRCLE RESPONSE BELOW.

- Too much 1
- Enough 2
- Not enough 3
- No response/no answer. 9

19. In the average Nebraska school district, about two-thirds of the funds for operating schools are raised through local real estate taxes. Are you in favor of keeping this pattern, or would you change it?

CIRCLE RESPONSE BELOW.

- Keep it the same 1
- Change it. 2
- No opinion. 9

IF ANSWER IS "CHANGE IT," GO TO ITEM 20; OTHERWISE GO TO ITEM 21.

20. How would you propose to change the way we pay for schools in Nebraska?

LIST FIRST RESPONSE ONLY. DO NOT PROBE.

21. Here is a list of items for which schools spend money.
Please tell me if you think enough, too little, or too much
money is being spent on each item by the Omaha Public
Schools.

CIRCLE APPROPRIATE NUMBER FOR EACH RESPONSE.

	Enough	Too Little	Too Much	Don't Know/ Not Applicable
1. Care of school buildings	1	2	3	9
2. Number of courses students can choose	1	2	3	9
3. Number of students for each teacher.	1	2	3	9
4. Extracurricular programs: for example, athletics, band, choir.	1	2	3	9
5. Student testing	1	2	3	9
6. Student transportation	1	2	3	9
7. Counseling/guidance services for students.	1	2	3	9
8. Computers	1	2	3	9
9. Vocational education classes	1	2	3	9

22. Some school systems are offering programs to community
members and charging minimal fees for participation. If
the Omaha Public Schools offered the following programs,
and charged fees to users, would you be likely to participate?

CIRCLE APPROPRIATE NUMBER FOR EACH RESPONSE.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
1. Day care for preschool children	1	2	9
2. Extended care for elementary children	1	2	9
3. Adult education programs.	1	2	9
4. Recreation programs	1	2	9
5. Other (please specify) _____	1	2	9

23. What do you think it would take to make the Omaha
Public Schools better than they are at present?

LIST FIRST RESPONSE ONLY. DO NOT PROBE.

THERE ARE TWO FINAL QUESTIONS SO THAT YOUR ANSWERS
MAY BE COMPARED WITH THOSE OTHERS HAVE GIVEN.

24. In which of the following age categories would you place yourself?

READ CHOICES. CIRCLE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE.

18-29 years 1
30-44 years 2
45-54 years 3
55-64 years 4
65-74 years, or 5
75 years or older? 6
No response; unwilling to answer 9

25. In which of the following annual household income
categories would you place yourself?

READ CHOICES. CIRCLE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE.

Less than \$10,000 1
\$10,001 - \$20,000 2
\$20,001 - \$30,000 3
\$30,001 - \$40,000 4
Over \$40,000 5
No response; unwilling to answer 9

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION!

INTERVIEWER COMPLETE AFTER CLOSE OF INTERVIEW

Sex of respondent:

Male 1
Female 2

Appendix B

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS Opinion Survey – Taxpayer Group

INTERVIEWER: As the survey progresses, determine before dialing whether you need to speak to a male or female to meet the overall quota of 54% female and 46% male.

TO PERSON ANSWERING THE TELEPHONE SAY:

Hello, my name is _____. I'm with Midwest Survey Inc. in Omaha, and we are conducting a survey for UNO's Center for Applied Urban Research. We are interviewing taxpayers in the Omaha Public School district to find out their attitudes toward the Omaha Public Schools. May I speak with an adult (male/female) who is a resident of the Omaha Public School district?

IF THAT PERSON IS NOT AVAILABLE, ARRANGE TO CALL BACK. IF THAT PERSON WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE, THANK WHOEVER YOU ARE TALKING WITH FOR HIS/HER TIME AND GO TO THE NEXT TELEPHONE NUMBER.

Time to call back _____

Telephone number _____

IF THE RESPONDENT IS THE SAME PERSON, GO TO SCREENING QUESTION 2

IF THE RESPONDENT IS A DIFFERENT PERSON, SAY:

Hello, my name is _____. I'm with Midwest Survey Inc. in Omaha, and we are conducting a survey for UNO's Center for Applied Urban Research. We are interviewing taxpayers in the Omaha Public School district to find out their attitudes toward the Omaha Public Schools.

WHEN THE INTRODUCTION IS FINISHED, GO TO SCREENING QUESTION 1.

SCREENING QUESTIONS

1. Are you a resident of the Omaha Public School district?

Yes

IF YES, CONTINUE WITH SCREENING QUESTION 2.

No

IF NO, THANK WHOEVER YOU ARE TALKING WITH AND TELL THEM THAT FOR STATISTICAL PURPOSES YOU MUST SPEAK ONLY WITH PERSONS IN THE OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT. GO TO THE NEXT TELEPHONE NUMBER.

2. Are you the parent or guardian of a student currently enrolled in the Omaha Public Schools?

Yes

IF YES, THANK WHOEVER YOU ARE TALKING WITH AND TELL THEM THAT FOR STATISTICAL PURPOSES YOU MUST SPEAK WITH PERSONS WHO DO NOT HAVE CHILDREN CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN THE OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS. GO TO THE NEXT TELEPHONE NUMBER.

No

IF NO, GO TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR THE FIRST SURVEY QUESTION.

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Opinion Survey – Taxpayer Group

1. Are you the parent or guardian of a student in a private school or a school operated by a church or church-affiliated group?

Yes 1

If yes, ask question 2.

No 2

If no or no response, skip to question 3.

No response 9

2. Please tell me the major reasons for selecting a school other than one of the Omaha Public Schools?

CIRCLE ALL RESPONSES BELOW. DON'T READ CHOICES FROM THE LIST.

- 1. Dissatisfaction with Omaha Public Schools. 1
- 2. Desire for education which emphasizes religious values 2
- 3. Quality of the school selected 3
- 4. Convenience 4
- 5. Family tradition 5
- 6. Other (please specify) _____ 8

3. Have children living in your home ever attended an Omaha Public School?

Yes 1

If yes, ask question 4.

No 2

If no or no response, skip to question 5.

No response 9

4. Why did these children stop attending an Omaha Public School?

CIRCLE ALL RESPONSES BELOW. DO NOT READ FROM THE LIST.

- 1. Graduated 1
- 2. Dropped out 2
- 3. Dissatisfied with OPS. 3
- 4. Children left home 4
- 5. Other (please specify) 8

5. How long have you lived in the Omaha Public School district?

CIRCLE RESPONSE.

Less than 1 year 1
 1-3 years 2
 4-10 years 3
 More than 10 years 4
 No response 9

6. Do you usually vote in the election of school board members?

Yes 1
 No 2
 No response 9

FOR QUESTIONS 7-13 CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER FOR EACH RESPONSE.

	A	B	C	D	F	No Opinion
7. Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, or F to indicate the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools of Omaha were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the Omaha Public Schools, an A, B, C, D, or F?	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. What grade would you give the teachers in the Omaha Public Schools, an A, B, C, D, or F?	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. What grade would you give principals and other administrators in the Omaha Public Schools, an A, B, C, D, or F?	1	2	3	4	5	6
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14. I am going to list several programs in the Omaha Public Schools. Would you please rate each of them using the same grading system of A, B, C, D, or F?

CIRCLE ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH ITEM.

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11. Schools that specialize in a specific subject area, such as math, science, or computers.	1	2	3	4	5	6

15. What subjects, activities, or programs do you think should receive more emphasis in the Omaha Public Schools?

LIST FIRST RESPONSE(S) ONLY. DO NOT PROBE.

If no opinion/no response,
circle the six.

6

16. What subjects, activities, or programs do you think should receive less emphasis in the Omaha Public Schools?

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45-54 years 3
55-64 years 4
65-74 years, or 5
75 years or older? 6
No response; unwilling to answer 9

26. In which of the following annual household income
categories would you place yourself?

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\$10,001 - \$20,000 2
\$20,001 - \$30,000 3
\$30,001 - \$40,000 4
Over \$40,000 5
No response; unwilling to answer 9

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION!

INTERVIEWER COMPLETE AFTER CLOSE OF INTERVIEW

Sex of respondent:

Male 1
Female 2