



The Power Of Integrated Solutions

Proposed Scope of Services: Public Opinion Research
for

**IROQUOIS WEST COMMUNITY
CONSOLIDATED UNIT
SCHOOL DISTRICT 10**

April 9, 2018

UNICOM•ARC
505 S. Ewing Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63103
314-535-4900
www.unicomarc.com

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Introduction

It is difficult to envision a more controversial time for public schools across the United States.

As we have fully entered what Peter Drucker labeled the Information Age, wherein schools would, in his view, become modern day temples, public education has become subjected to more analysis, more criticism, and more complaints than ever before.

To some degree, public education has always been regarded as some kind of panacea for many national and local problems. Since our country's inception, an educated populace was deemed a prerequisite for a successful democracy. Poverty has been considered a result of poor education and lack of opportunity. Economic growth is thought to be the end-result of a well-educated and trained workforce.

So it should come as no surprise, when many think things across the country are off-track and moving in the wrong direction, that our public schools are even more intensely analyzed and criticized. The issues are many: academic performance of diverse students, discussions about the varying levels of performance and resources among school districts and whether those resources should be equalized, ongoing discussions of "standard setting" embodied in the current issue of common core standards, the alignment, design, construction and renovation of school facilities as they relate to student achievement and the challenge of funding both facility improvements and curriculum and instruction.

Of course Iroquois West Community School District is far from immune to national, state and local trends, issues and controversies in education. And if national issues and trends result in a difficult environment for District, state and local issues further compound this environment.

The state of Illinois is virtually ground-zero for financial difficulties as we emerge from the deepest recession in our country's history following the Great Depression. Financial pressures at the state level has led to controversies regarding state funding of school districts (both the level and formula for funding in addition to things like late payments), pensions, the need for district consolidation and more.

So the big-picture question is how can the District receive community permission and support for making changes that are needed to provide better educational facilities for students in a cost-effective manner.

To answer this question, in today's educational environment, it is important for school districts to "take the pulse" of public opinion. Scientifically accurate measures of public opinion can:

- Determine how district residents feel about various proposals to improve district facilities
- Indicate how much is understood about the need to improve facilities
- Assess community members' priorities for their school district in areas such as facilities, curriculum and programming
- Test messages and vehicles for effective communications with residents

To answer these and other needs for information, the District has requested a proposal from UNICOM•ARC for public opinion research. UNICOM•ARC is delighted to respond to this request. We know of no other firm with our experience in conducting public opinion research for school districts.

This year, our firm is entering its 48th year of doing business. Few firms such as ours have been in business for close to a half-century. Our success is built on three major factors: (1) an unswerving commitment to client service; (2) a corporate culture emphasizing the essential need to stay up-to-date on methodologies, technologies and approaches; and (3) an understanding that each and every project is different and must be customized to serve our clients' needs.

Overview on Research

Given the request for proposals by the District, discussing the need for public opinion is "preaching to the choir." Without upfront research, it is difficult to develop a reliable and accurate roadmap or plan for getting from where we are, to where we want to go. In addition, survey research can be a very useful tool for any type of strategic planning planned by a school district.

When conducted during a community engagement program, public opinion research has the advantage of measuring how "everyone" feels compared to those who attend engagement sessions. Much of the time there is alignment between active and inactive citizens, and whether or not that alignment exists is important to know.

So without question, effective public opinion research is the foundation of a well-executed communications and facility planning program. A survey is essential to:

- determine the starting point in terms of overall attitudes and benchmark support and possible for initiatives or proposals under consideration by the district.
- track and compare results to previous surveys to determine progress against goals set for communications.
- determine theme and message for a communications program.
- understand differences in attitudes that may exist in a school district from one community to another, or from one demographic category to another.

In order to give the District a better sense of how local residents perceive it and the challenges and opportunities it faces, UNICOM•ARC (U•A) proposes to conduct public opinion research on behalf of the District. U•A is uniquely qualified to conduct this research, as our firm has conducted public opinion research on behalf of hundreds of school districts, community colleges and other public institutions across the country, including many in the state of Illinois.

U•A's president, Dr. Rod Wright, is a nationally recognized expert on the subject of integrating public opinion research into decision-making and communications strategies. He speaks frequently on this topic with educational institutions and at both state and national professional conferences. We know of no other firm in the country with our level of experience in conducting education-related public opinion research.

Conducting the Research

There are five main steps in the research process, each of which is described below. But before presenting those steps, we will first discuss the overall approach.

Without question, the most accurate way to conduct a survey of a large and diverse population is by telephone. But the size of Iroquois West CUSD 10, makes that strategy difficult. After householding the list, and acquiring phone numbers, we are almost certain there will not be enough households to support even a 200-sample survey.

While our first thoughts were to conduct the research electronically (an internet survey), further thought led to a hybrid strategy using phone/mail/internet/paper options. This hybrid approach involves:

- ① Developing the questionnaire.
- ② Placing this questionnaire on a website so respondents can complete the survey online.
- ③ Either by mail, or by some kind of door-to-door canvass, invite participation in the survey.
- ④ Also telephone all households for which we have phone numbers and ask those reached to take the survey over the phone. [We are hopeful to be able to get 100 surveys completed this way and tally those results separately from surveys completed online or by paper.] Those not wishing to do that will be asked to go to the website. And those unable to access the website will be informed about how they can take the survey in paper/pencil format.
- ⑤ Use other communication channels that may be available to encourage participation in the survey.

Twitter, SKylert, Facebook

In the following pages, we outline the steps to be taken for conducting public opinion **research on behalf of the District** utilizing this hybrid approach.

Assessing informational needs

An important first step in designing this research project is evaluating the particular informational needs of the District. Initial meetings with District officials will provide guidance with respect to sampling issues. If the District wishes (and we highly recommend this), we will also hold up to four “input sessions” to help us develop the content of the questionnaire. **These informal focus groups might be comprised of Board members, administrators, faculty, staff, community members/senior citizens or parents.**

The purpose of these sessions is to bring our professional staff up-to-date about particular issues of importance to staff and local residents and the language they use to describe them. The language and specific concerns that emerge from these sessions would have a considerable impact on the survey instrument.

The budget includes **one or two days of fact-finding** that includes up to four input sessions. If the District wishes, we are happy to schedule additional input sessions at \$250 per group.

Developing a sample

Given the size of the District, all households **with a registered voter** will be included in the “sample.” As outlined above, we will invite participation in the survey by three different manners — (1) taking the survey over the phone, (2) completing the survey electronically by accessing a website, or (3) by paper and pencil.

Questionnaire development

Based on a review of all relevant information, including input sessions and other meetings with District representatives, U•A will develop a questionnaire to be submitted for approval. Following any necessary revisions, a final draft will be prepared for use by our telephone interviewers.

As part of this process we will review, along with District officials, previous public opinion studies to determine what questions, if any, should be used on this current project for tracking purposes. This kind of time-series, or tracking data, can be very helpful in terms of assisting in the **development of long-term communications programs.**

We recommend a questionnaire with 30-40 questions taking about 12 minutes to complete. A shorter questionnaire is possible, but it would (1) not affect the pricing very much, an (2) not allow a full investigation of the many issues facing the District and would not include sufficient questions on which to base an effective communications strategy.

Field Work

Once we have completed a final draft of the questionnaire, it will be pre-tested to ensure clarity before field work begins. As said earlier, there will be three options for completion of the survey:

- ① For those households for which we have telephone numbers (we will obtain phone numbers from either the election authorities, our vendor who sells numbers and/or from the District's parent list), a call will be made asking potential respondents to complete the survey over the phone. Those who opt-out will be asked to complete the survey online and directed to a website. If respondents are unable to access a website, we will offer to deliver a paper version of the survey. These telephone calls will be made by Customer Research International, a trusted business partner with a national reputation for producing accurate and reliable survey results.
- ② The District will do a mail-out (we can help with the production of this) to all residents announcing the survey and inviting participation by going to the website. Similar to the call, those unable to access the internet will be able to receive a paper version of the survey with instructions on completion and submission. An option to mail is to deliver this invitation door-to-door using District volunteers. This "grassroots" approach will be more effective if volunteer resources are available.
- ③ Use other communication strategies (social media, press releases, announcements to community organizations, etc.) to heighten participation in the survey.

Reporting and analysis

Overall survey results will be made available within two business days of completing field work. A subsequent final report will include the following items:

- an overview of data
- a separate analysis of those surveys done over the phone compared to other methods
- an executive summary (which includes key findings and interpretations in narrative form)
- complete frequencies (in both tabular and graphic forms) combining the phone survey and a weighted version (adjusting the demographics to reflect those of the telephone survey) of the internet/electronic survey
- a complete, electronic file of cross-tabulations (which break down the responses of each question by demographic category)
- a copy of the survey instrument

In addition to producing written reports, U•A will make an in-person, formal presentation of survey results to an audience of the District's choosing.

Timeline

The timeline for a project such as this can be flexible. What is described below is a “normal” or “comfortable” (for both our agency and the District) timeline that can be shortened if needed. Input sessions can be scheduled after acceptance of our proposal. An initial draft of the questionnaire will be submitted to the client within one week following the input sessions. It usually takes about a week after delivery of the first draft to complete a final draft in consultation with the client. Fieldwork usually takes 5 to 7 days. In this case, with internet and paper and pencil options, we recommend another week or two for fieldwork. Development of the sample for the telephone survey portion of the study can begin upon acceptance of this proposal and completed in time for field work. An overview of data will be provided within two business days of completing field work, and the final report will follow within two weeks of completing field work.

We will work with the District to ensure that the project is completed in a timeline that **meets the District’s particular needs**. Depending on the District’s schedule for helping to organize the input sessions, this project can easily be finished within a two month time period, and done more quickly than two months if needed.

Budget

Our all-inclusive fee for completing this project **is \$14,250**. This fee covers set-up costs, questionnaire development, pre-testing, sample development, professional phone calls and interviewing, analysis and reporting of results. This fee also includes a formal presentation of the survey results to the Board of Education or another audience of the District’s choice. In all instances, travel expenses will be billed at actual cost. }

The fee does not include the mail-out of an invitation to complete the survey, or data entry for paper and pencil surveys. The process for “entering” results of the paper and pencil survey is simple. Someone in the District simply goes to the website where the online survey is housed and enters survey results at the site.

The fee also does not include any costs for a door-to-door invitation to complete the survey online or out-of-pockets costs for any other method for publicizing the survey (such as a newspaper advertisement). Also, travel costs between St. Louis and Iroquois West CCUSD 10 will be billed at cost. As part of our fee, we will provide advice and consultation for ways to publicize the online survey.

We will provide three paper copies of all reports. All reports and other materials from the study will be delivered, in digital format, to the District on a CD enclosed with the final report.

If the District wishes to reduce costs, we would enjoy the opportunity to discuss a possible approach using electronic surveys only.

Conclusion

UNICOM•ARC is delighted to offer the services of its team of professionals to Iroquois West Community Unit School District 10. We strongly believe that careful, intelligent research is a critical component of long-term planning, and we are confident that no other firm has our record of providing school districts and other educational institutions with the tools they need to build long-term solutions.

For more information, please contact:

Rod Wright, President

UNICOM•ARC

505 S. Ewing Ave.

St. Louis, MO 63103

Phone: 314-535-4900

Direct: 314-256-4123

Email: rwright@unicomarc.com

Or visit our website www.unicomarc.com

Professional Staff

Rod Wright

Specializing in customized public opinion and market research, Rodney D. Wright joined Attitude Research Company (the research arm of UNICOM•ARC) as its president in 1986. Prior to joining ARC, Dr. Wright was vice president and director of research with Public Response, Inc., a political/business consulting firm. He has also served on the faculty at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville and the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Dr. Wright has directed a wide variety of public opinion and market research projects for public and private clients, including Citicorp, A. G. Edwards, Anheuser-Busch, Western Textile Corporation, United Investors, Browning-Ferris Industries, Hycel Corporation, Taylor-Morley Home Builders, The Jones Company, the Home Builders Association, St. Louis Community College, Girl Scout Council of Greater St. Louis, the League of Women Voters Education Fund, Moberly Regional Medical Center, the St. Louis Zoological Park, the St. Louis Science Center, the St. Louis Art Museum and the St. Louis History Museum.

Since joining the firm, Dr. Wright has conducted workshops, led training sessions and lectured to organizations and classes including Confluence, the Missouri School Board Association, the Missouri Association of School Budget Officers, the National School

Public Relations Association, the Missouri School Public Relations Association, the St. Louis County Municipal League, the St. Louis Chapter of the American Statistical Association, East-West Gateway's/St. Louis Community College's Training Program in Public Affairs and a variety of classes at Washington University, Webster University and the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Education:

P.h. D. (Political Science), Washington University
Masters (Political Science), Washington University
Bachelor of Arts (Music), William Jewell College

Associations:

National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA),
Missouri School Public Relations Association (MOSPRA)
Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association (INSPRA).

John Siemers

John joined UNICOM•ARC in 2007 after retiring as the Assistant Superintendent for District Operations (Facilities, Transportation, Food Service, Environmental Services, Material Management and Security) with Parkway School District, a 20,000 student school district in suburban St. Louis, MO. He also spent ten years at Parkway as the Director of Public Affairs and Communications, serving as president of the regional chapter of the Missouri School Public Relations Association and receiving numerous awards for excellence in school public relation work from the National School Public Relations Association. In addition John trained with the Burke Institute in qualitative research and focus group facilitation during his tenure with Parkway.

His other accomplishments include the successful completion and authorship of numerous educational research projects including safety and security, demographics, food and nutrition, discipline, diversity and instructional space. Additionally, John led several community engagement programs for district planning purposes. The 2006 "Current Realities" program developed by John was the recipient of a National School Public Relations Association Gold Medallion award. John has also been awarded the "Pillar of Parkway" award for exemplary leadership and integrity and the Superintendent's Leadership Award.

Throughout his 30 plus year career, John has served in the public sector in a variety of leadership positions. He served eight years as the executive director of a non-profit, United Way organization and four years as an administrator of a municipal government in west St. Louis County. He completed his masters degree at Washington

University in counseling psychology and participated in post graduate studies in social work at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work.

John works for UNICOM•ARC in a consulting role and with educational institutions, non-profits and municipal governments to facilitate community engagement programs, communication audits, public opinion research, facility study efforts and other communication-related issue.

Andrew Duttlinger

Mr. Duttlinger joined UNICOM•ARC in July 2000. He is responsible for all aspects of public opinion research projects, including questionnaire design, statistical analysis, and interpretation of research results. Since joining UNICOM•ARC, he has worked on projects for a wide range of public and private entities. Public clients include Metro, St. Louis County, the O'Fallon (MO) Parks and Recreation Department, Manchester Corridor Revitalization Committee and dozens of school Councils and community colleges across Missouri and Illinois.

Mr. Duttlinger has presented original research at a number of professional conferences, including the National School Public Relations Association, Missouri School Public Relations Association and Pennsylvania School Public Relations Association. He has taught several undergraduate courses at Washington University in the fields of electoral politics, comparative politics, and American politics.

Education:

Masters of Arts (Political Science), Washington University
Bachelor of Science (Political Science), University of Illinois

Associations:

American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)
National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA),
Missouri School Public Relations Association (MOSPRA)
Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association (INSPRA)

References

Parkway School District

Paul Tandy
Director of Communications
455 N. Woods Mill Road
Chesterfield, MO 63017
314-415-8100
ptandy@pkwy.k12.mo.us

UNICOM•ARC has worked for many years with Parkway School District conducting comprehensive telephone surveys of District residents on a variety of topics, including long-range planning and referendum related issues.

Bedford Central School District

Dr. Jere Hochman
Superintendent
Fox Lane Campus, P.O. Box 180
Mt. Kisco, NY 10549
914-241-6010
jhochman2785@bcsdny.org

In collaboration with the District, UNICOM•ARC has for several years conducted annual telephone surveys to gather information about District residents' perception of various issues. The sample was developed with quotas that ensure all areas of the district are represented in appropriate proportions. Data is disaggregated by elementary attendance area. The most recent survey, collected information about the community's perception of the District's facility improvement plan that was crafted with community input.

Iowa City Community School District

Dr. David Dude
Chief Operating Officer
Educational Services Center
1725 N. Dodge Street
Iowa City, IA 52245
319-688-1289
gjdavis@dps61.org
Dude.David@IowaCitySchools.org

UNICOM•ARC worked with the Iowa City Community School District to coordinate a implement an extensive community engagement program to support development of a long range facility plan. Included in this work was the completion of a 500-sample telephone survey.

Rockwood School District

Kim Cranston
Chief Communications Officer
111 East North Street
Eureka, MO 63025
314-773-2000
cranstonkim@rockwood.k12.mo.us

UNICOM•ARC has worked with Rockwood School District for many years supporting its communications program. We are currently implementing a community engagement program that will include a public opinion survey conducted in October. Previously UNICOM•ARC conducted focus groups and public opinion surveys to support the *Point Rockwood* long-range visioning and planning program.

Pattonville School District

Mickey Schoonover
Director of School-Community Relations
Pattonville School District
11097 St. Charles Rock Road
St. Ann, MO 63074
314-213-8025
Mickey Schoonover mschoonover@psdr3.org

UNICOM•ARC has conducted public opinion research for Pattonville School District for more than 20 years. A recent project included a survey to support the development of the District's recent property tax increase.