

THE STATE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN METROPOLITAN KANSAS CITY: PART I



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A Public Opinion Survey Conducted by the MORE² Education Taskforce
Roma Lee Taunton, PhD, Project Director
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METRO ORGANIZATION FOR RACIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUITY

MORE²

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Community Christian Church

Congregation Kol Ami

Country Club Christian Church

Country Club Congregational United Church of Christ

Crossroads Church

Grand Avenue Temple United Methodist Church

Linwood United Church

Prairie Baptist Church

Redemptorist/Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Second Baptist Church of Olathe

St. Andrew Christian Church

St. James United Methodist Church

Swope Parkway United Christian Church

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The State of Public Education in Metropolitan Kansas City

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Highlights

Of the 2009 MORE² Public Education Survey

- **Sample**: Volunteer sample of 697 drawn from 15 MORE² Congregations; diversity in age, ethnicity, education, and faith.
- **Reporting results**: Detailed reports provided about the Olathe, Shawnee Mission, and Kansas City, Missouri, School Districts where larger numbers of participants facilitate interpretation of the findings. Findings presented and interpreted with caution for other districts with fewer participants, namely: Blue Valley; Center, Grandview, Hickman Mills; Lee's Summit, North Kansas City, Raytown.
- **Perceptions of school districts**: Highly favorable perceptions of the Olathe and Shawnee Mission School Districts. Perceptions also positive for the Blue Valley, Center, Lee's Summit, North Kansas City, and Raytown School Districts.
- Small proportion of respondents views the Kansas City, Missouri, School District positively, but data generally reflect negative perceptions. Mixed perceptions of the Grandview District. More negative than positive perceptions for Hickman Mills.
- **Attention to student achievement**: 16% - 89% of participants report that their respective district pays about the right amount of attention to improving student achievement.
- **Preparing students for a job or technical career**: Shawnee Mission and Kansas City, Missouri, Districts pay too little attention to preparing students for a job or technical career. Preparing students for a job surfaces as a possible issue in the data for Blue Valley, Hickman Mills, and North Kansas City Districts.
- **Opinions from diverse community groups**: Kansas City, Missouri, and Hickman Mills participants indicate clearly that those districts do not consider opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making. However, respondent uncertainty makes it difficult to understand whether Olathe, Shawnee Mission, and several other districts consider opinions from diverse community groups.
- **School board elections**: 71% - 94% of residents report voting in their respective district's most recent (MO, 2008; KS, 2009) school board election.
- **Tax increase to support schools**: 40% - 72% of residents would vote to support a tax increase for the schools in their respective district.

The State of Public Education in Metropolitan Kansas City

The Metro Organization for Racial and Economic Equity (MORE²) is a bi-state, faith-based organization comprised of 20 covenanting congregations. Over the summer and fall of 2009 the MORE² Education Task Force conducted a public opinion survey related to public education. Data were collected among the covenanting congregations via electronic and paper questionnaires. The survey items focused on (a) MORE² congregants' perceptions of Metro Kansas City school districts and their involvement in the district in which they live, (b) the congregants' general engagement in PreK-Grade 12 education, and (c) the congregants' participation in MORE² initiatives to impact policy related to public education. The Task Force will use findings from the survey for two purposes: (a) to inform its 2010 policy agenda, and (b) as baseline data for evaluation of achievement of its 2012 outcome goals.

The Survey findings will be reported in two primary sections. *Part I: Perceptions of Metro Kansas City School Districts* describes participants' views of three Kansas districts and seven Missouri Districts. *Part II: Community Engagement* addresses the involvement of congregants in PreK-Grade 12 education and in MORE² initiatives to impact education policy. *Part II* is not included in this report.

Part I: Perceptions of Metro Kansas City Public School Districts

Data were obtained with items related to participants' perceptions of the overall quality of education in designated school districts, whether the respective school district meets seven commonly held expectations of successful districts, and the amount of attention the district gives to eight components of its work. Also included were respondents' reports about voting in the last school board election and their willingness to vote for a tax increase to support the schools in the district where they live.

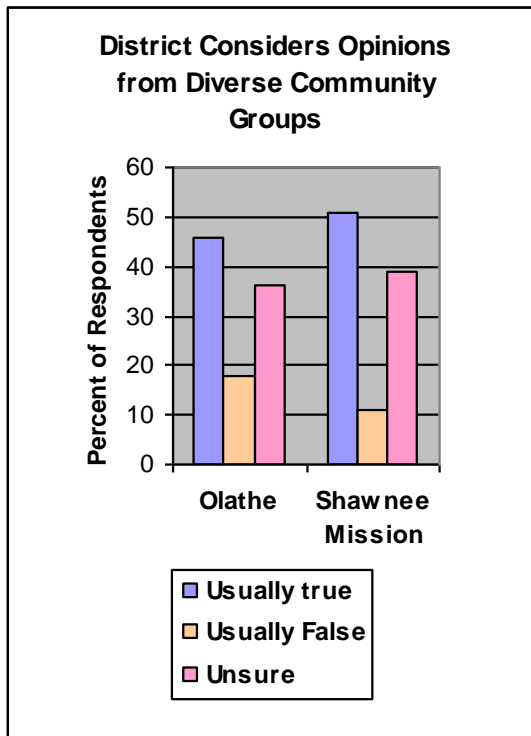
The 15 participating MORE² congregations are located within the Olathe, Shawnee Mission, and Kansas City, Missouri, School Districts, and the members are dispersed widely across the Metro area. Specific findings are reported for school districts that were identified by 15 or more respondents as "their district". Most participants (85%) reported about the district in which they live, but some chose to report about a different district where they worked or had children or grandchildren enrolled. In addition to Olathe, Shawnee Mission, and Kansas City, MO, findings are reported for seven other districts, namely: Blue Valley, Center, Grandview, Hickman Mills, Lee's Summit, North Kansas City, and Raytown. When the survey data were collected MORE² did not have a covenanting congregation in Kansas City, Kansas, and the number of responses for that district was less than the criterion for separate reporting.

Olathe, Shawnee Mission, and Blue Valley School Districts

Olathe and Shawnee Mission. MORE² congregants have highly favorable perceptions of the Olathe ($n = 56$; Tables 1 and 2) and Shawnee Mission Districts ($n = 86$; Tables 3 and 4). The quality of education is rated as excellent or good by all of the respondents for each district respectively (Olathe, 60% excellent, 40% good; Shawnee Mission, 62% excellent, 38% good).

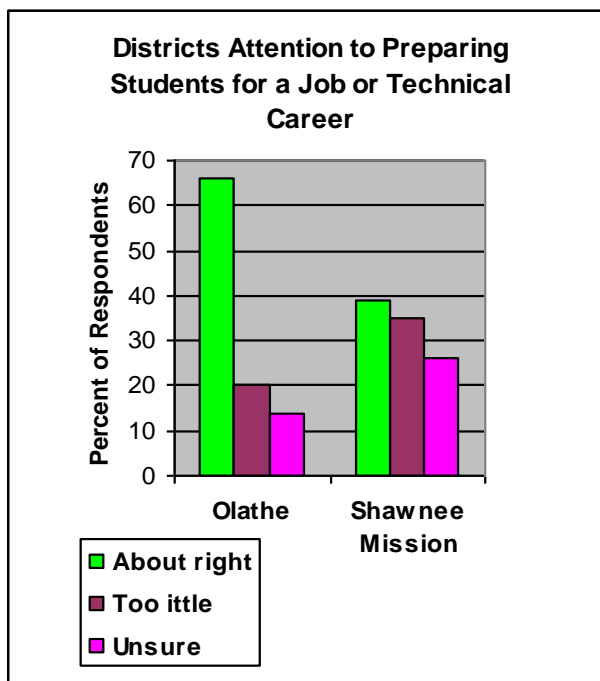
Generally, most respondents report that the Olathe (88%-96%) and Shawnee Mission (82%-91%) Districts usually make decisions in the best interests of the children and youth, act with fiscal responsibility, maintain a safe and orderly environment for staff and students, keep the

community informed, work to provide an equitable education for all children, and have stable leadership that looks ahead.



About half of the respondents indicated that their respective district **usually considers** opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making. Appreciably more respondents were unsure than perceived that the districts **do not consider** opinions from diverse community groups. Uncertainty impedes understanding of the findings and projection of actions that might be taken.

For either the Olathe or Shawnee Mission District, the uncertainty could reflect limited diversity among the residents or a lack of engagement among the respondents. Or, perhaps the district’s communication with the community about the inclusion of diverse groups is ineffective.



Overall, respondents indicate that the Olathe and Shawnee Mission Districts give **about the right amount** of attention to exposing students to a variety of career fields, preparing students for college, communicating with parents, upgrading the quality of teachers, upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators, fulfilling state requirements, and improving student achievement.

In contrast, more attention may be needed to preparing students for a job or technical career in the Shawnee Mission District. Olathe respondents, however, have positive views of their District’s attention to preparing students for a job or technical career.

Ninety-three percent of participants who live in the Olathe District voted in

the last (2009) school board election; 81% voted in the Shawnee Mission District. Most respondents in both districts (71%) would vote for a tax increase to support the schools.

Blue Valley. MORE² congregants have extremely positive perceptions of the Blue Valley District ($n = 36$; Tables 5 and 6). The quality of education is rated as excellent (89%) or good (11%) by all of the respondents.

Participants' fundamentally positive perceptions (89%-97%) are that the Blue Valley District usually makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth, acts with fiscal responsibility, maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students, keeps the community informed, works to provide an equitable education for all children, and has stable leadership that looks ahead. The response pattern regarding the district's consideration of opinions from diverse community groups is quite different: usually true, 49%; usually false, 0%; unsure, 51%. Again, the distribution limits interpretation without further exploration of respondent engagement, the district's inclusiveness in decision-making, and the district demographics.

Respondents (66%-94%) say that the district gives **about the right amount** of attention to exposing students to a variety of career fields, preparing students for college, communicating with parents, upgrading the quality of teachers, upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators, fulfilling state requirements, and improving student achievement. More attention may be needed to preparing students for a job or technical career.

Ninety-four percent of participants who live in the Blue Valley District voted in the last (2009) school board election. Sixty-four percent would vote for a tax increase to support the schools.

Table 1. Olathe School District: Characteristics

Characteristic	Usually True % (f ^a)	Usually False % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^a
1. Makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth	96% (54)	0% (0)	4% (2)	56
2. Acts with fiscal responsibility	89% (50)	2% (1)	9% (5)	56
3. Maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students	96% (54)	4% (2)	0% (0)	56
4. Considers opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making	46% (26)	18% (10)	36% (20)	56
5. Keeps the community informed	88% (49)	2% (1)	11% (6)	56
6. Works to provide an equitable education for all children	89% (50)	2% (1)	9% (5)	56
7. Has stable leadership that looks ahead	95% (53)	2% (1)	4% (2)	56
Answered question				56
Skipped question				0

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^a Frequency. ^b Number of respondents.

Table 2. Olathe School District: Attention to Selected Components of Its Work

Component of Work	Too Much % (f ^a)	About Right % (f)	Too Little % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Exposing students to a variety of career fields	0% (0)	71% (40)	9% (5)	20% (11)	56
2. Preparing students for college	4% (2)	82% (46)	7% (4)	7% (4)	56
3. Preparing students for a job or technical career	0% (0)	66% (37)	20% (11)	14% (8)	56
4. Communicating with parents	7% (4)	75% (42)	13% (7)	5% (3)	56
5. Upgrading the quality of its teachers	0% (0)	80% (45)	9% (5)	11% (6)	56
6. Upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators	0% (0)	80% (45)	5% (3)	14% (8)	56
7. Fulfilling state requirements	9% (5)	84% (46)	2% (1)	6% (3)	55
8. Improving student achievement	5% (3)	80% (45)	7% (4)	7% (4)	56
Answered question					56
Skipped question					0

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^a Frequency. ^b Number of respondents

Table 3. Shawnee Mission School District: Characteristics

Characteristic	Usually True % (f ^a)	Usually False % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^a
1. Makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth	85% (73)	2% (2)	13% (11)	86
2. Acts with fiscal responsibility	82% (69)	2% (2)	16% (13)	84
3. Maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students	91% (78)	0% (0)	9% (8)	86
4. Considers opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making	51% (42)	11% (9)	39% (32)	83
5. Keeps the community informed	85% (73)	5% (4)	11% (9)	86
6. Works to provide an equitable education for all children	85% (72)	4% (3)	12% (10)	85
7. Has stable leadership that looks ahead	85% (73)	2% (2)	13% (11)	86
Answered question				86
Skipped question				0

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Table 4. Shawnee Mission School District: Attention to Selected Components of Its Work

Component of Work	Too Much % (f ^a)	About Right % (f)	Too Little % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Exposing students to a variety of career fields	1% (1)	61% (52)	21% (18)	17% (15)	86
2. Preparing students for college	5% (4)	83% (71)	2% (2)	11% (9)	86
3. Preparing students for a job or technical career	0% (0)	39% (33)	35% (29)	26% (22)	84
4. Communicating with parents	2% (2)	80% (68)	5% (4)	13% (11)	85
5. Upgrading the quality of its teachers	0% (0)	69% (59)	7% (6)	24% (20)	85
6. Upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators	0% (0)	68% (58)	11% (9)	21% (18)	85
7. Fulfilling state requirements	18% (15)	69% (59)	0% (0)	13% (11)	85
8. Improving student achievement	5% (4)	73% (61)	8% (7)	14% (12)	85
Answered question					86
Skipped question					0

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents

Table 5. Blue Valley School District: Characteristics

Characteristic	Usually True % (f ^a)	Usually False % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^a
1. Makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth	97% (34)	0% (0)	3% (1)	35
2. Acts with fiscal responsibility	89% (31)	0% (0)	11% (4)	35
3. Maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students	94% (33)	0% (0)	6% (2)	35
4. Considers opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making	49% (17)	0% (0)	51% (18)	35
5. Keeps the community informed	94% (33)	0% (0)	6% (2)	35
6. Works to provide an equitable education for all children	89% (31)	0% (0)	11% (4)	35
7. Has stable leadership that looks ahead	94% (33)	0% (0)	6% (2)	35
Answered question				35
Skipped question				1

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Table 6. Blue Valley School District: Attention to Selected Components of Its Work

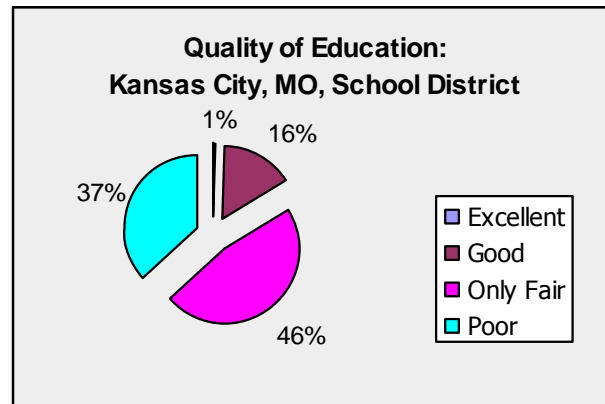
Component of Work	Too Much % (f ^a)	About Right % (f)	Too Little % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Exposing students to a variety of career fields	0% (0)	80% (28)	9% (3)	11% (4)	35
2. Preparing students for college	6% (2)	80% (28)	9% (3)	6% (2)	35
3. Preparing students for a job or technical career	0% (0)	37% (13)	34% (12)	29% (10)	35
4. Communicating with parents	3% (1)	94% (32)	0% (0)	3% (1)	34
5. Upgrading the quality of its teachers	3% (1)	74% (25)	12% (4)	12% (4)	34
6. Upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators	3% (1)	66% (23)	14% (5)	17% (6)	35
7. Fulfilling state requirements	6% (2)	80% (28)	0% (0)	14% (5)	35
8. Improving student achievement	6% (2)	89% (31)	3% (1)	3% (1)	35
Answered question					35
Skipped question					1

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

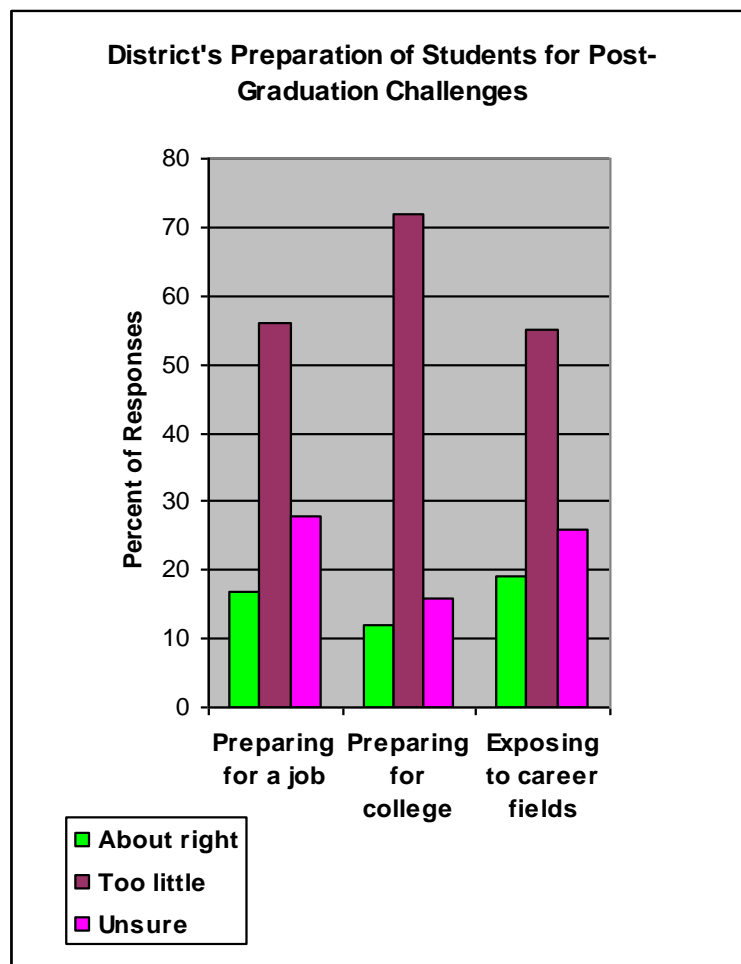
^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Kansas City, Missouri, School District (n = 329)

Although a small portion of the MORE² congregants who are stakeholders in the Kansas City, Missouri, School District (KCMSD) perceive the District positively, generally reports about the District reflect negative perceptions (Tables 7 and 8). The quality of education is rated **only fair** or **poor** by most respondents.



Participants were asked whether commonly held expectations of successful school districts related to decision making, fiscal responsibility, safety, community engagement, equity, and leadership are characteristic of the district. Responses that the respective characteristics are **usually true** of KCMSD ranged from 8% (has stable leadership that looks ahead) to 36% (works to provide an equitable education for all children). **Usually false** responses were more prevalent for each characteristic, including consideration of opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making.



KCMSD focuses too little attention on the critical components of its work, including improving student achievement. Stakeholders indicate that change is needed, particularly more attention to preparing students for success after graduation.

Eighty-seven percent of participants who live in the KCMSD voted in the last (2008) school board election. Forty-four percent would vote for a tax increase to support the schools.

Table 7. Kansas City, Missouri, School District: Characteristics

Characteristic	Usually True % (f ^a)	Usually False % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^a
1. Makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth	21% (67)	48% (153)	31% (97)	317
2. Acts with fiscal responsibility	15% (47)	58% (184)	27% (86)	317
3. Maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students	31% (98)	43% (138)	26% (82)	318
4. Considers opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making	30% (94)	41% (131)	29% (92)	317
5. Keeps the community informed	29% (91)	46% (146)	26% (81)	318
6. Works to provide an equitable education for all children	36% (113)	43% (134)	22% (68)	315
7. Has stable leadership that looks ahead	8% (26)	70% (221)	22% (71)	318
Answered question				324
Skipped question				5

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Table 8. Kansas City, Missouri, School District: Attention to Selected Components of Its Work

Component of Work	Too Much % (f ^a)	About Right % (f)	Too Little % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Exposing students to a variety of career fields	0% (0)	17% (53)	56% (177)	28% (88)	318
2. Preparing students for college	0% (0)	12% (38)	72% (229)	16% (51)	318
3. Preparing students for a job or technical career	0.3% (1)	19% (62)	55% (174)	26% (82)	319
4. Communicating with parents	0.6% (2)	20% (63)	53% (169)	26% (84)	318
5. Upgrading the quality of its teachers	0% (0)	22% (68)	58% (183)	21% (66)	317
6. Upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators	0.6% (2)	19% (60)	55% (174)	25% (78)	314
7. Fulfilling state requirements	6% (18)	22% (69)	47% (150)	25% (80)	317
8. Improving student achievement	0.3% (1)	16% (49)	67% (211)	17% (54)	315
Answered question					325
Skipped question					4

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Center, Grandview, and Hickman Mills School Districts

Center (n = 19). MORE² congregants generally have positive perceptions of the Center School District (Tables 9 and 10). The quality of education is rated excellent/good by 82% of the respondents.

More than half of the respondents say the Center District usually makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth, acts with fiscal responsibility, maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students, keeps the community informed, works to provide an equitable education for all children, and has stable leadership that looks ahead. Regarding whether the District considers opinions from diverse community groups, equal portions of respondents (44%) chose the **usually true** and **unsure** options; 11% chose **usually false**.

Half or more of the Center stakeholders say that about the right amount of attention is focused on communicating with parents, upgrading the quality of teachers, upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators, and fulfilling state requirements. Change may be needed in regard to improving student achievement and preparing students for what comes after graduation.

Uncertainty confounds findings about the District's attention to exposing students to a variety of career fields. Less than half of the respondents report that the right amount of attention is given to preparing students for college as well as to preparing students for a job or technical career.

Of participants who live in the Center District, 83% voted in the last (2008) school board election. Sixty-five percent would vote for a tax increase to support the schools.

Grandview (n = 15). MORE² congregants hold mixed perceptions of the Grandview School District (Tables 11 and 12). Stakeholders rate the quality of education as **good** (64%) or **only fair** (36%).

More than half the respondents say that Grandview meets five of the commonly held expectations of successful school districts. The District makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth, maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students, keeps the community informed, works to provide an equitable education for all children, and has stable leadership that looks ahead. Most stakeholders are uncertain about whether the District acts with fiscal responsibility or considers opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making.

Stakeholders are less positive about where Grandview focuses its attention. Except for upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators (50% **about right**), less than half of the respondents see the right amount of attention focused on exposing students to a variety of career fields, preparing students for college, preparing students for a job or technical career, communicating with parents, upgrading the quality of teachers, fulfilling state requirements, and improving student achievement.

Seventy-seven percent of participants who live in the Grandview District voted in the last (2008) school board election. Forty-seven percent would vote for a tax increase to support the schools.

Hickman Mills (n = 22). Fewer respondents hold positive perceptions than hold negative perceptions of the Hickman Mills District (Tables 13 and 14). Most of the participants rate the quality of education as ***fair*** or ***poor***.

Half or more of the respondents say that five of the characteristics of successful school districts are usually true of Hickman Mills, namely: acts with fiscal responsibility, maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students, considers opinions from diverse community groups, keeps the community informed, and works to provide an equitable education for all children. Fewer respondents say that the district makes decisions in the best interest of the children and youth or that there is stable leadership that looks ahead.

Responses indicate that change may be needed in where the Hickman Mills District focuses attention. Although 55% of respondents indicate that the district is giving about the right amount of attention to communicating with parents and to fulfilling state requirements, insufficient attention is focused on other aspects of its work.

Stakeholders (50%-65%) say that too little attention is given to exposing students to a variety of career fields, preparing students for college, preparing students for a job or technical career, upgrading the quality of teachers, and improving student achievement. Responses about attention to upgrading principals and other administrators offer less clear direction for change.

Seventy-six percent of participants who live in the Hickman Mills District voted in the last school board election. Forty percent would be willing to vote for a tax increase to support the schools.

Table 9. Center School District: Characteristics

Characteristic	Usually True % (f ^a)	Usually False % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth	58% (11)	16% (3)	26% (5)	19
2. Acts with fiscal responsibility	68% (13)	11% (2)	21% (4)	19
3. Maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students	58% (11)	16% (3)	26% (5)	19
4. Considers opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making	44% (8)	11% (2)	44% (8)	18
5. Keeps the community informed	68% (13)	16% (3)	16% (3)	19
6. Works to provide an equitable education for all children	68% (13)	11% (2)	21% (4)	19
7. Has stable leadership that looks ahead	58% (11)	11% (2)	32% (6)	19
Answered question				19
Skipped question				0

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Table 10. Center School District: Attention to Selected Components of Its Work

Component of Work	Too Much % (f ^a)	About Right % (f)	Too Little % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Exposing students to a variety of career fields	0% (0)	42% (8)	5% (1)	53% (10)	19
2. Preparing students for college	0% (0)	47% (9)	21% (4)	32% (6)	19
3. Preparing students for a job or technical career	0% (0)	37% (7)	32% (6)	32% (6)	19
4. Communicating with parents	0% (0)	58% (11)	11% (2)	32% (6)	19
5. Upgrading the quality of its teachers	0% (0)	63% (12)	0% (0)	37% (7)	19
6. Upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators	0% (0)	58% (11)	11% (2)	32% (6)	19
7. Fulfilling state requirements	0% (0)	56% (10)	6% (1)	39% (7)	18
8. Improving student achievement	0% (0)	47% (9)	16% (3)	37% (7)	19
Answered question					19
Skipped question					0

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Table 11. Grandview School District: Characteristics

Characteristic	Usually True % (f ^a)	Usually False % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth	64% (9)	0% (0)	36% (5)	14
2. Acts with fiscal responsibility	36% (5)	0% (0)	64% (9)	14
3. Maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students	86% (12)	0% (0)	14% (2)	14
4. Considers opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making	29% (4)	14% (2)	57% (8)	14
5. Keeps the community informed	71% (10)	29% (4)	0% (0)	14
6. Works to provide an equitable education for all children	64% (9)	14% (2)	21% (3)	14
7. Has stable leadership that looks ahead	69% (9)	0% (0)	31% (4)	13
Answered question				14
Skipped question				1

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Table 12. Grandview School District: Attention to Selected Components of Its Work

Component of Work	Too Much % (f ^a)	About Right % (f)	Too Little % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Exposing students to a variety of career fields	8% (1)	39% (5)	31% (4)	23% (3)	13
2. Preparing students for college	0% (0)	43% (6)	36% (5)	21% (3)	14
3. Preparing students for a job or technical career	7% (1)	29% (4)	36% (5)	29% (4)	14
4. Communicating with parents	0% (0)	43% (6)	29% (4)	29% (4)	14
5. Upgrading the quality of its teachers	0% (0)	39% (5)	39% (5)	23% (3)	13
6. Upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators	0% (0)	50% (7)	14% (2)	36% (5)	14
7. Fulfilling state requirements	7% (1)	43% (6)	7% (1)	43% (6)	14
8. Improving student achievement	0% (0)	36% (5)	43% (6)	21% (3)	14
Answered question					14
Skipped question					1

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Table 13. Hickman Mills School District: Characteristics

Characteristic	Usually True % (f ^a)	Usually False % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth	41% (9)	32% (7)	27% (6)	22
2. Acts with fiscal responsibility	59% (13)	27% (6)	14% (3)	22
3. Maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students	55% (12)	32% (7)	14% (3)	22
4. Considers opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making	55% (12)	27% (6)	18% (4)	22
5. Keeps the community informed	68% (15)	23% (5)	9% (2)	22
6. Works to provide an equitable education for all children	59% (13)	36% (8)	5% (1)	22
7. Has stable leadership that looks ahead	41% (9)	32% (7)	27% (6)	22
Answered question				22
Skipped question				0

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Table 14. Hickman Mills School District: Attention to Selected Components of Its Work

Component of Work	Too Much % (f ^a)	About Right % (f)	Too Little % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Exposing students to a variety of career fields	0% (0)	32% (7)	50% (11)	18% (4)	22
2. Preparing students for college	0% (0)	36% (8)	59% (13)	5% (1)	22
3. Preparing students for a job or technical career	0% (0)	36% (8)	55% (12)	9% (2)	22
4. Communicating with parents	5% (1)	55% (12)	32% (7)	9% (2)	22
5. Upgrading the quality of its teachers	0% (0)	36% (8)	50% (11)	14% (3)	22
6. Upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators	0% (0)	36% (8)	41% (9)	23% (5)	22
7. Fulfilling state requirements	9% (2)	55% (12)	23% (5)	14% (3)	22
8. Improving student achievement	5% (1)	25% (5)	65% (13)	5% (1)	20
Answered question					22
Skipped question					0

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Lee's Summit, North Kansas City, and Raytown School Districts

Lee's Summit (n = 25). MORE² congregants hold the Lee's Summit School District in high regard (Tables 15 and 16). The quality of education is rated excellent or good by 96% of respondents.

Almost all (80% - 92%) of the participants say that Lee's Summit usually makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth, acts with fiscal responsibility, maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students, keeps the community informed, works to provide an equitable education for all children, and has stable leadership that looks ahead.

The **unsure** and **usually true** responses are almost equal regarding whether the District considers opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making, likely reflecting uncertainty more than an absence of the desired behavior.

More than half (60% - 84%) of the stakeholders indicate that Lee's Summit gives the right amount of attention to exposing students to a variety of career fields, preparing students for college, communicating with parents, upgrading the quality of teachers and of principals and other administrators, fulfilling state requirements, and improving student achievement. Forty-eight percent of participants say that either **too much** or the right **amount of attention** is given to preparing students for a job or technical career.

Ninety-one percent of the participants who live in the Lee's Summit District voted in the last (2008) school board election. Sixty-six percent would vote for a tax increase to support the schools.

North Kansas City (n = 22). Overall, participants report very positive perceptions of the North Kansas City School District (Tables 17 and 18). The quality of education elicited 90% **excellent** or **good** ratings.

MORE² congregants depict North Kansas City as a district that makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth, acts with fiscal responsibility, maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students, keeps the community informed, works to provide an equitable education for all children, and has stable leadership that looks ahead. Uncertainty confounds responses regarding whether the District considers opinions from diverse groups in decision-making.

Half or more of the stakeholders indicate that the District gives **too much** or **about the right amount of attention** to exposing students to a variety of career fields, preparing them for college, communicating with parents, upgrading the quality of teachers, upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators, and fulfilling state requirements. Less than half of participants (32% - 46%) say that the right amount of attention is given to preparing students for a job or technical career and improving student achievement.

Seventy-one percent of the participants who live in the North Kansas City District voted in the last (2008) school board election. Sixty-three percent would vote for a tax increase to support the schools.

Raytown (n = 23). MORE² congregants generally report positive perceptions of the Raytown School District (Tables 19 and 20). The quality of education is rated as **excellent** or **good** by 71% of respondents and **only fair** by 29%.

Most respondents attribute the characteristics of successful school districts to Raytown. Participants say that the District makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth, acts with fiscal responsibility, maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students, keeps the community informed, works to provide an equitable education for all children, and has stable leadership that looks

ahead. The distribution of responses regarding the District's consideration of diverse opinions in decision-making warrants further exploration.

Half or more of the stakeholders indicate that Raytown gives ***about the right amount*** of attention to exposing students to a variety of career fields, preparing students for college, preparing students for a job or technical career, communicating with parents, upgrading the quality of teachers, upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators, fulfilling state requirements, and improving student achievement.

Eighty-four percent of participants who live in the Raytown District voted in the last (2008) school board election. Seventy-two percent would vote for a tax increase to support the schools.

Part I Summary

Findings were reported related to participants' perceptions of the overall quality of education in designated school districts, whether the respective school district meets commonly held expectations of successful districts, and the amount of attention the district gives to several components of its work. Also included were respondents' reports about voting in the last school board election and their willingness to vote for a tax increase to support the schools in the district where they live.

The quality of education was rated as *excellent/good* by all or almost all of the respondents for the Olathe, Shawnee Mission, Blue Valley, Center, Lee's Summit, and North Kansas City Districts. For the Grandview District, the quality of education was rated as *good* by most participants. Most respondents rated quality as *fair/poor* for the Kansas City, Missouri, and Hickman Mills Districts.

Although responses varied, most of the commonly held expectations of successful school districts related to decision making, fiscal responsibility, safety, community engagement, equity, and leadership were characteristic of most of the districts except for Kansas City, Missouri. The pattern is different in regard to whether the districts consider opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making.

Kansas City, Missouri, and Hickman Mills participants indicated clearly that those districts do not consider opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making. Respondent uncertainty confounded interpretation of the findings about whether Olathe, Shawnee Mission, and several other districts consider opinions from diverse community groups. For the respective district, the uncertainty may have reflected limited diversity among its residents, a lack of engagement with the district among the respondents, or ineffective communication with stakeholders about the inclusion of diverse groups.

Generally most districts except for Kansas City, Missouri, were giving appropriate attention to exposing students to a variety of career fields, preparing students for college, communicating with parents, upgrading the quality of teachers, upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators, fulfilling state requirements. More attention to preparing students for a job or technical career is needed in the Shawnee Mission and Kansas City, Missouri, Districts. Further examination of students' opportunity to prepare for a job or technical career is warranted for the Blue Valley, Lee's Summit, and North Kansas City Districts. MORE² congregants indicated that the Kansas City, Missouri, and Hickman Mills Districts should pay more attention to improving student achievement.

A substantial majority of the survey participants for each of the districts voted in the most recent school board election. Kansas City, Missouri, and Hickman Mills would not have voter support for a tax increase for the district schools, whereas an ample majority of respondents for the other districts would support a tax increase.

Table 15. Lee’s Summit School District: Characteristics

Characteristic	Usually True % (f ^a)	Usually False % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth	88% (22)	0% (0)	12% (3)	25
2. Acts with fiscal responsibility	84% (21)	0% (0)	16% (4)	25
3. Maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students	88% (22)	0% (0)	12% (3)	25
4. Considers opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making	44% (11)	8% (2)	48% (12)	25
5. Keeps the community informed	92% (23)	4% (1)	4% (1)	25
6. Works to provide an equitable education for all children	80% (20)	0% (0)	20% (5)	25
7. Has stable leadership that looks ahead	80% (20)	0% (0)	20% (5)	25
Answered question				25
Skipped question				0

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Table 16. Lee’s Summit School District: Attention to Selected Components of Its Work

Component of Work	Too Much % (f ^a)	About Right % (f)	Too Little % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Exposing students to a variety of career fields	4% (1)	64% (16)	12% (3)	20% (5)	25
2. Preparing students for college	12% (3)	80% (20)	0% (0)	8% (2)	25
3. Preparing students for a job or technical career	8% (2)	40% (10)	28% (7)	24% (6)	25
4. Communicating with parents	8% (2)	84% (21)	4% (1)	4% (1)	25
5. Upgrading the quality of its teachers	4% (1)	75% (18)	0% (0)	21% (5)	24
6. Upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators	4% (1)	60% (15)	4% (1)	32% (8)	25
7. Fulfilling state requirements	24% (6)	68% (17)	0% (0)	8% (2)	25
8. Improving student achievement	8% (2)	76% (19)	4% (1)	12% (3)	25
Answered question					25
Skipped question					0

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Table 17. North Kansas City School District: Characteristics

Characteristic	Usually True % (f ^a)	Usually False % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth	82% (18)	5% (1)	14% (3)	22
2. Acts with fiscal responsibility	82% (18)	5% (1)	14% (3)	22
3. Maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students	86% (19)	0% (0)	14% (3)	22
4. Considers opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making	41% (9)	14% (3)	46% (10)	22
5. Keeps the community informed	91% (19)	0% (0)	10% (2)	21
6. Works to provide an equitable education for all children	77% (17)	5% (1)	18% (4)	22
7. Has stable leadership that looks ahead	77% (17)	0% (0)	23% (5)	22
Answered question				22
Skipped question				0

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Table 18. North Kansas City School District: Attention to Selected Components of Its Work

Component of Work	Too Much % (f ^a)	About Right % (f)	Too Little % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Exposing students to a variety of career fields	0% (0)	50% (11)	23% (5)	27% (6)	22
2. Preparing students for college	14% (3)	46% (10)	18% (4)	23% (5)	22
3. Preparing students for a job or technical career	9% (2)	32% (7)	27% (6)	32% (7)	22
4. Communicating with parents	0% (0)	82% (18)	9% (2)	9% (2)	22
5. Upgrading the quality of its teachers	0% (0)	50% (11)	18% (4)	32% (7)	22
6. Upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators	0% (0)	55% (12)	18% (4)	27% (6)	22
7. Fulfilling state requirements	9% (2)	68% (15)	5% (1)	18% (4)	22
8. Improving student achievement	0% (0)	46% (10)	27% (6)	27% (6)	22
Answered question					22
Skipped question					0

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Table 19. Raytown School District: Characteristics

Characteristic	Usually True % (f ^a)	Usually False % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Makes decisions in the best interests of the children and youth	82% (18)	14% (3)	5% (1)	22
2. Acts with fiscal responsibility	73% (16)	9% (2)	18% (4)	22
3. Maintains a safe and orderly environment for staff and students	91% (20)	9% (2)	0% (0)	22
4. Considers opinions from diverse community groups in decision-making	41% (9)	36% (8)	23% (5)	22
5. Keeps the community informed	73% (16)	18% (4)	9% (2)	22
6. Works to provide an equitable education for all children	68% (15)	23% (5)	9% (2)	22
7. Has stable leadership that looks ahead	64% (14)	9% (2)	27% (6)	22
Answered question				22
Skipped question				1

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

Table 20. Raytown School District: Attention to Selected Components of Its Work

Component of Work	Too Much % (f ^a)	About Right % (f)	Too Little % (f)	Unsure % (f)	n ^b
1. Exposing students to a variety of career fields	0% (0)	40% (8)	50% (10)	10% (2)	20
2. Preparing students for college	0% (0)	50% (10)	45% (9)	5% (1)	20
3. Preparing students for a job or technical career	0% (0)	60% (12)	25% (5)	15% (3)	20
4. Communicating with parents	5% (1)	55% (11)	20% (4)	20% (4)	20
5. Upgrading the quality of its teachers	0% (0)	55% (11)	35% (7)	10% (2)	20
6. Upgrading the quality of principals and other administrators	5% (1)	55% (11)	30% (6)	10% (2)	20
7. Fulfilling state requirements	5% (1)	70% (14)	20% (4)	5% (1)	20
8. Improving student achievement	0% (0)	68% (13)	26% (5)	5% (1)	19
Answered question					20
Skipped question					3

Note. Responses on a given item may total to less than or more than 100% because of rounding.

^aFrequency. ^bNumber of respondents.

How the Survey Was Conducted

Over the summer and fall of 2009 the *MORE2* Education Task Force conducted a public opinion survey related to public education. *MORE2*'s covenanting congregations comprised the bi-state population of interest. Both paper and electronic forms of the questionnaire were available, and leaders of each congregation decided what approach would work best for them.

Sample. All congregations were invited to participate. Congregants 18 years of age or older were eligible for the survey. The volunteer sample recruited across 15 congregations contributed 697 useable questionnaires.

Respondents varied widely in age, with 5% in the 18-30 group, 71% in the 31-65 group, and 24% over 65. Participants reflected appreciable diversity in education, ethnicity, and faith. *MORE2* congregants reported their highest education credentials as GED or high school diploma (11%); post-secondary technical certification or other credential (8%); and associate (10%), baccalaureate (29%), or graduate degrees (42%).

Participants identified their ethnicity as black/black Americans (36%), white/white Americans (60%), Hispanic/Latino (2%), and other or more than one group (2%). Congregants reflected the following faith diversity: Baptist (13%), Catholic (8%), Christian (24%), Church of Christ (4%), Jewish (5%), Methodist (19%), Non-Denominational (5%), Presbyterian (3%), and Unitarian Universalist (19%).

Questionnaire. The Survey Strategy team reviewed items from a number of publicly available questionnaires used in surveys regarding education. Selected items published by the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion¹ were chosen for adaptation to survey *MORE2* congregants about public education in Metropolitan Kansas City.

The survey questionnaire included 21 items to elicit respondent perceptions of their school districts (6), to obtain information about their engagement in activities related to PreK-12 public education (7), and to describe their participation in *MORE2* initiatives to impact policy related to public education (1). The remaining eight items addressed the sample demographics, established respondents' school district of residence, and identified their preferred district for focus in completing the questionnaire.

A paper form of the questionnaire was pretested with 17 respondents drawn from 8 congregations. The letter of invitation, directions, and items were refined based on feedback from participants. The changes were limited in both scope and number, so the pretest questionnaires were included as part of the final dataset.

Data collection and analysis. The paper questionnaire was converted for electronic data collection and analysis using *SurveyMonkey* web-based software (www.surveymonkey.com). The electronic questionnaire was pilot-tested with three respondents to assure that directions and items worked appropriately in that medium. Congregations used a variety of announcements in newsletters and bulletins as well as from the pulpit to raise awareness of the survey. Data were collected in two stages.

First, three congregations were identified for field testing the within-congregation procedures for recruitment and data collection. One congregation used only paper questionnaires, one used only the electronic questionnaire, and one used both questionnaires. Second, the field testing

¹ Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. (2007). *Inside public education: How Dutchess and Ulster County residents view their public schools*. Poughkeepsie, New York: The Institute.

experiences informed the adaptation of procedures, and the remaining 12 congregations collected their data.

A personal invitation to participate in the survey was distributed to congregants via standardized e-mail and paper letters signed by their respective spiritual leader. Paper questionnaires were distributed and collected within the participating congregations. Electronic questionnaires were completed at a single internet address. Data were collected over a 4-week period that included one reminder communication from the spiritual leader.

Data from the paper questionnaires were entered into SurveyMonkey for processing and analysis. Consistent with the limitations of the non-probability sample, descriptive analyses were conducted using frequencies and percents. Graphs were constructed using EXCEL.

Most participants reported about the district in which they live, but some chose to report about a different district where they worked or had children or grandchildren enrolled. Specific findings are reported for selected school districts that were identified by 15 or more respondents as “their district”. Detailed reports are provided about the Olathe, Shawnee Mission, and Kansas City, Missouri, School Districts where larger numbers of participants facilitate interpretation of the findings. Findings are presented and interpreted with caution for other districts with fewer participants.

How to interpret the numbers. Findings from the survey are most useful in identifying potential issues for further examination within the respective school districts and within the MORE² congregations. Because of the voluntary sample, the findings represent the perceptions and behaviors of the specific group of respondents, and cannot be generalized to the population of MORE² congregants or any other group.

For example, one can say with confidence that 87% of the 278 participants who live in the Kansas City, Missouri, School District and responded to the question voted in the 2008 school board election, but one cannot use that value as an estimate of the percent of MORE² congregants who voted in that election. Asking the same question in a different sample, voluntary or random, likely would generate a different result.