



K-12 Public Education in Oregon: Qualitative Highlights of Research Findings Regarding Stakeholder Opinions

– INTRODUCTION –

From May through August, 2004, Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall, Inc. conducted qualitative research as part of an ongoing effort to support the work of the Chalkboard Project. The purpose of the research was to learn more about the attitudes and opinions of those who have a direct interest in public education in Oregon.

The research explored the range of opinions of different stakeholders about quality, accountability, and finance in K-12 public education in Oregon, and what they view as best practices in that context. Some stakeholders were asked to suggest what Chalkboard and others could do to improve K-12 education.

The research involved focus group discussions with teachers, students, principals, parents, and school board members, student written comments, and interviews of school superintendents to explore the range of their opinions and to gain insight into what underlies them. The research findings are based on a content analysis of their oral and written comments.

Although research of this type is not designed to measure with statistical reliability the attitudes of a particular group, it is valuable in giving us a sense of these stakeholders' concerns about public education. The research helps provide elaboration on survey research, validate other primary and secondary research, and guide future survey research. It also is helpful, through group-to-group validation, in establishing quantitative boundaries for the attitudes expressed by participants.

The following presents a brief summary of the research methodology and research findings for the different stakeholder groups.