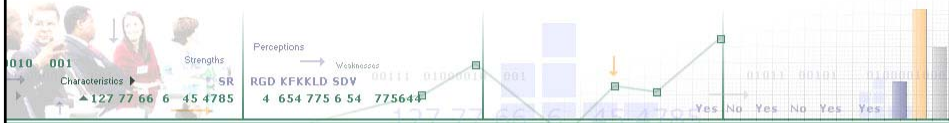




2011 Hopkinton School Committee Communications Survey - Research Results -



August 2011

Introduction



- Hopkinton School Committee (SC) was interested in understanding the best way to communicate with the community, both in terms of:
 - Collecting input **from** the community
 - Expressing plans and programs **to** the community
- Hopkinton SC asked Boston Research Group (BRG) to assist with this research process. BRG supported the process on a pro bono basis.
- Topics explored include:
 - Likely use of Methods of Providing input to SC
 - Likely use of Methods of Receiving info from SC
 - Likely use of Specific Types of Content
 - Degree to which Topics Require A High Level of Communication
 - Current Media Usage



Methodology



- In order to project the results to the town:
 - A structured interview was employed – structured interviews use scaled questions and ensure that all respondents see the same questions.
 - Quantitative data collection was employed – quantitative data collection allows the research team to project the results to the town population.
- Three methods were considered:
 - Phone: random, high participation, expensive
 - Mail: random, modest participation, also expensive
 - Web with listserv: free; less representative of entire universe

Methodology



- Web with listserv was selected due to cost:
 - Can be described as a “convenience” method (lower cost but less random because listserv is primarily a school-oriented vehicle)
- In an effort to balance the “school heavy” nature of listserv:
 - Paper surveys were available in the Hopkinton Library and the Senior Center (no one completed the survey at the library; 7 completed it at the Senior Center)
 - Press Releases, with the survey link, were sent to:
 - Educate Hopkinton
 - Hopkinton Patch
 - Hopnews
 - The District Website
 - The Hopkinton Crier
 - The Hopkinton Independent
 - The MetroWest Daily News

Methodology



- The invitation process included
 - Initial invitation sent on June 24th (along with Press Releases)
 - Reminder email sent on July 13th (along with reminder Press Releases)
 - Survey closed on July 22nd
- In total, 400 registered voters responded to the survey
- Given:
 - A total universe (voter population) of 9889 (based on Dec 2010 voter registration lists)
 - A sample size of 400 registered voters
 - The associated sampling error is $\pm 4\%$.
- This means:
 - For any statistic from the sample (i.e., 50% like the color blue)
 - The actual result among the entire universe (were one to take a census) is $50\% \pm 4\%$ (within the entire voter population, between 46% and 54% like the color blue)

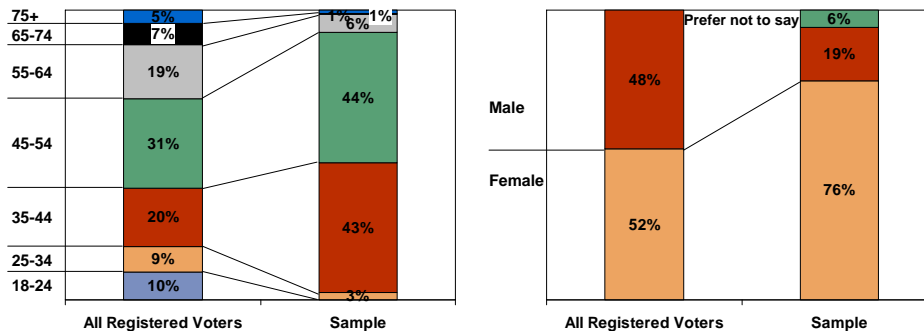


Methodology: Using Listserv as sample



Listserve can be described as a "convenience" sample because it 1) is cost effective and easy to use but 2) is not a perfect representation of Registered Voters in the Town of Hopkinton.
 Recommendation: efforts should continue to focus on collecting input from populations not on listserve

Registered Voter Demographics versus Sample Characteristics



While there are Registered Voters in all age categories, the survey sample was dominated by individuals between the ages of 35 and 54

Females account for 52% of Registered Voters and 76% of survey takers!



Findings and Recommendations Community Outreach



- **Finding:** Email communications and listserv are
 - A potent combination for reaching female parents of school-age children
 - Ineffective at reaching registered voters without school-age children (both young and old)
- **Recommendation:** The SC should aggressively explore methods of reaching the youngest and oldest voters within Hopkinton

Findings and Recommendations Methods of Communicating

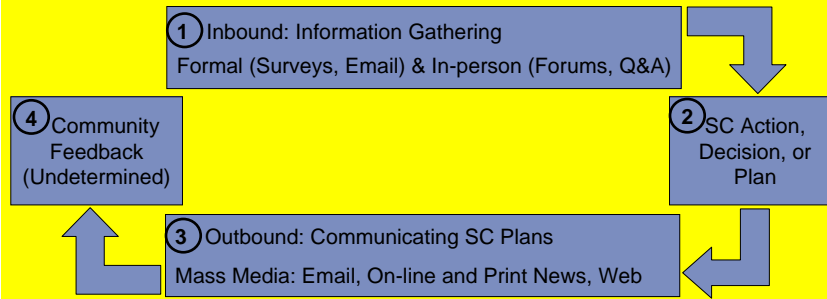


- **Findings:**
 - **Inbound:** Voters prefer a variety of methods for providing input to the SC including both structured and unstructured communication methods:
 - Formal/Structured/One-Way methods:
 - Surveys
 - Email
 - Interpersonal/Give and Take:
 - Idea File
 - Community-Wide Forums
 - Q&A at Town Centers
 - SC Office Hours
 - **Outbound:** Participants prefer mass media methods for receiving information from the SC:
 - Email
 - On-line news
 - Print news
 - SC web site

Findings and Recommendations Methods of Communicating



- **Recommendation:** For topics of high importance, the SC should adopt a systematic and repeatable communications system



- System should be repeated to encourage familiarity within the community
- TBD:
 - What topics trigger a formal communication system?
 - Should it be to topically driven or cyclical/periodic?

Findings and Recommendations Tailoring Outbound Communications



- **Finding:** Voters prefer focused communications from the SC:
 - SC articles and Press Releases on key initiatives
 - Statements of “action items” after SC Meetings
- General documentation (strategic documents, SC Meeting minutes) are of less interest
- **Recommendation:** For topics of keen interest to voters, the SC should adopt a specific and targeted communications plan; Strategic documents and minutes should be available to the community as backup

Findings and Recommendations Which Topics are of Keen Interest?



- **Finding:** 75% indicated that the Capital Project Budget (renovations, improvements, maintenance, new construction; typically requires tax override or debt exclusion) require a very high level of communication from the SC.
- **Finding:** Just over 50% indicated that the following require a very high level of communication:
 - Fees
 - Strategic Plan
 - Annual Budget/Operating Budget
 - School Improvement Plans
 - Transportation
 - Strategic Plan updates and revisions (just under 50%)
- **Recommendation:** The SC should place topics in two categories:
 1. Topics that require custom, dedicated articles and Press Releases
 2. Topics for which general communications, such as a statement of “action items” would suffice

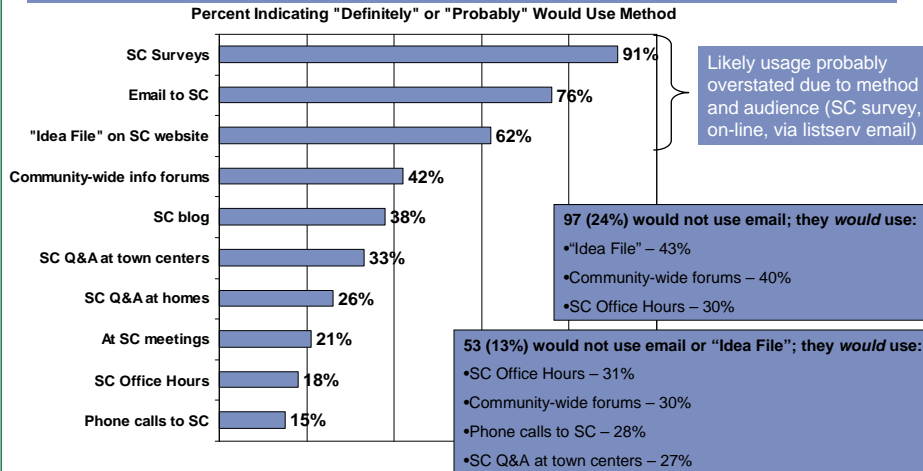
Detailed Findings



Likely use of Methods of Providing input to SC



Some combination of technical means (email and "Idea File") and personal means (forums, Office Hours, Phone) are likely to meet the needs of the town.



Total n=400

2. How likely would you be to provide input to the School Committee using each of the following methods?

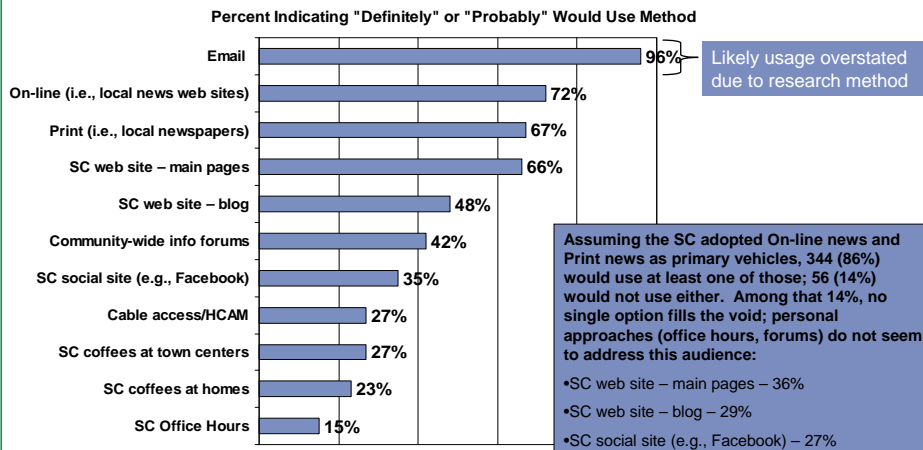
Scale: Definitely Would, Probably Would, Might/Might Not, Probably Would Not, Definitely Would Not



Likely use of Methods of Receiving info from SC



For outgoing SC communications, mass communication including Email, On-line news, and print news cover the majority of the audience; personal methods (forums, coffees, Office Hours) are less likely to be used.



Total n=400

4. What methods would be most effective when the SC needs to communicate their plans and ideas to you?

Scale: Definitely Would, Probably Would, Might/Might Not, Probably Would Not, Definitely Would Not

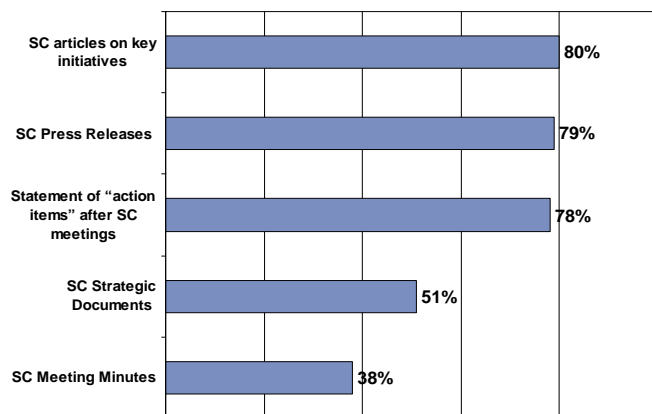


Likely use of Specific Types of Content



The Town appears to be more interested in summary statements and articles that focus on specific topics rather than the detailed documents and notes employed by the School Committee.

Percent Indicating "Definitely" or "Probably" Would Use Each Type of Content



Total n=400

5. How likely would you be to use each of the following types of content or information?

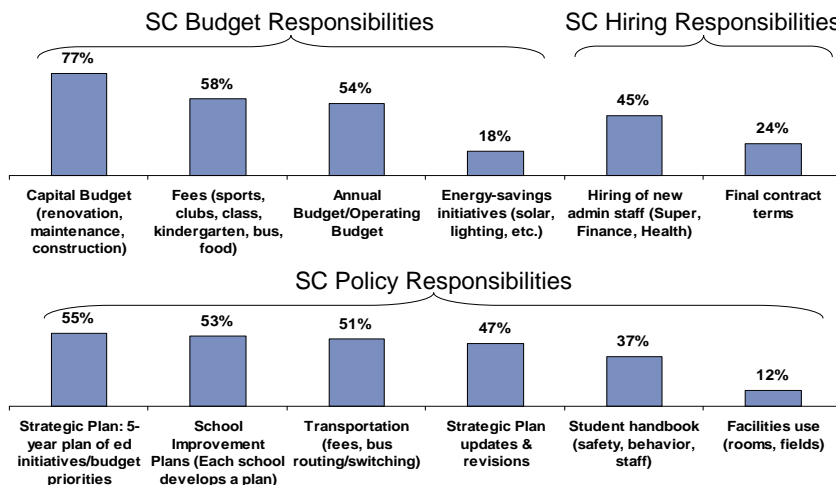
Scale: Definitely Would, Probably Would, Might or Might Not, Probably Would Not, Definitely Would Not



% Indicating Topic Requires A Very High Level of Communication from the School Committee



Over three-quarters indicated that the Capital Budget requires a very high level of communication. Over 50% felt the same for Fees, Annual Budget, Strategic Plan, School Improvement Plans, and Transportation.



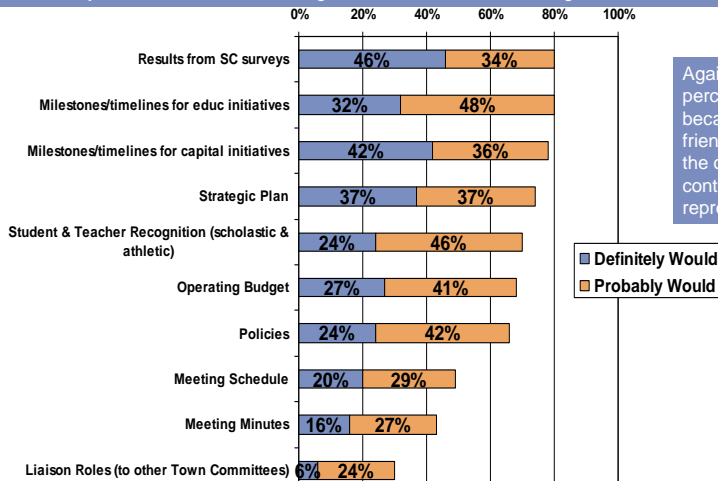
6/7/8. To what degree do each of the following topics require a higher level of communication from the SC? Scale: Requires a very high level of communication, somewhat high level of communication, does not require a high level of communication



Likelihood of Accessing Content on SC Web Site



This question is based on those who expressed an interest in accessing content on the SC web site. Among them, survey results, educational & budget milestones, and the Strategic Plan were of the greatest interest.



Again, the overall percentages are inflated because this is a web-friendly sample; however, the order or priority of content types should be representative.

Total n=266: Base=those who definitely or probably would access the SC web site for information (Q.4)

9. How likely would you be to access each of the following types of content on the School Committee's web site?

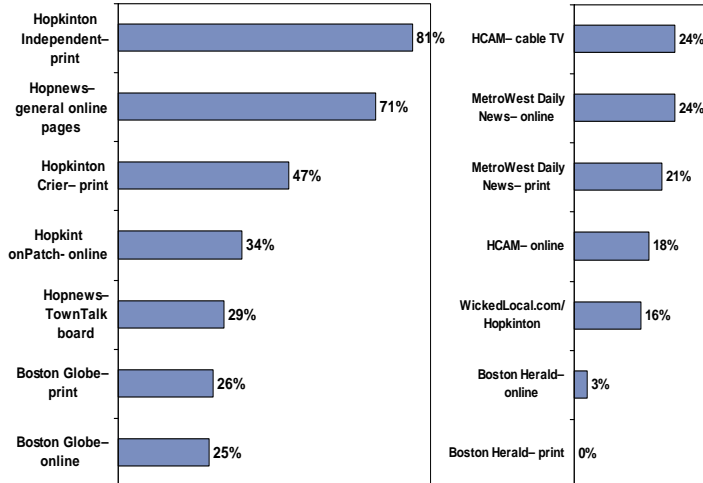
Scale: Definitely Would, Probably Would, Might or Might Not, Probably Would Not, Definitely Would Not



Media Usage – news sources used for info about the Town of Hopkinton (all topics)



The Hopkinton Independent (print) and Hopnews (general pages) are by far the two most common media outlets. Both are over 70% and no other achieves 50% usage (although the Crier is close at 47%).



19. Which of the following news sources do you use for information about the Town of Hopkinton (including all topics such as schools, public safety, taxes, local businesses, local happenings, etc.)?



Demographics



The vast majority of respondents are parents or guardians of school age children living in Hopkinton.

% that are Parents/Guardians of:		Current Employment Status:	
Any child living in Hopkinton	96%	Employed Full Time	44%
A 2011-2012 High School student	34%	Homemaker	27%
A '11-'12 Middle School student	35%	Employed Part Time	23%
A '11-'12 Elementary (K-5) School student	59%	Unemployed	3%
A child of Pre-K age in '11-'12	16%	Retired	2%
A student being educated outside the Hopkinton System	11%	Student	1%

Total n=400
 11/12: Are you the parent or guardian of:
 18. How would you describe your employment status?



Appendix: Summary of Open Ends



Open-ended question: What methods would you like to use to express your ideas and opinions to the Hopkinton SC?



Open ended responses were coded and collapsed into the following groupings; verbatim responses are available if needed. These represent how the community would like to **provide input to the SC**.

Email	299 mentions
In-person forums/meetings	79 mentions
Surveys	74 mentions
Wiki's/blogs/on-line forums	35 mentions
Written correspondence (letters)	17 mentions
Telephone	15 mentions
Forums (not clear if on-line or in-person)	7 mentions
SC Office Hours	5 mentions
Social Media (Twitter, Facebook)	2 mentions
One-on-one discussions	1 mention

Open-ended question: What methods would be most effective when the SC needs to communicate their plans and ideas to you?



Open ended responses were coded and collapsed into the following groupings; verbatim responses are available if needed. These represent how the community would like to **hear from the SC**.

Email	391 mentions
School/Town/SC Web site	54 mentions
Local newspapers	50 mentions
In-person forums/meetings	34 mentions
Wiki's/blogs/on-line forums	22 mentions
Written correspondence (newsletters)	20 mentions
Telephone	8 mentions
HCAM/Televised meetings	8 mentions
Social Media (Twitter, Facebook)	8 mentions
Mix of personal and electronic methods	4 mention