

A Simple Evaluation Guide: How Well Are We Doing with Local Wellness Policy?



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GOAL:

To provide North Carolina schools with a user-friendly, straightforward guide for evaluating wellness activities.

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INTRODUCTION: Why wellness evaluation now?

Requirements of local wellness policy legislation

The *Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004* (PL # 108-265) required that each local educational agency receiving funds for Child Nutrition Programs (e.g., School Breakfast and School Lunch) from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) establish a local wellness policy by the beginning of the 2006-07 school year. By addressing the poor nutrition habits and sedentary lifestyles of young people, healthy school environments can help promote academic success in the classroom. They also help prevent childhood overweight and serious health problems, like type 2 diabetes.

This law placed the responsibility for wellness policies at the local level with the following minimum requirements:

- Goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that are designed to promote student wellness;
- Nutrition guidelines for all foods available on campuses during the school day with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity;
- Assurances that guidelines for reimbursable school meals are not less restrictive than the regulations issued by USDA;
- Involvement of parents, students, administrators, child nutrition staff, school board, and the public in developing and implementing the wellness policy.
- **Ways of measuring how well the school wellness policy is being implemented, including the designation of one or more persons at each school with responsibility for the wellness policy.**

This guide is designed to help your school meet the last requirement – to measure how well your school is doing with wellness. Your school may not need the entire guide. Using the table of contents, you can easily access only the information that you need to begin your wellness policy “check-up.”

LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION

USDA Team Nutrition

Local Wellness Policy

www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/wellnesspolicy.html

NC Division of Public Health

Nutrition Education and Training Program

Proceedings from Healthy Schools Eating Smart and Moving More: Establishing School Wellness Policy

<http://www.nutritionnc.com/ResourcesForSchools/index.htm#eatingSmart>

Action for Healthy Kids

Wellness Policy Tool

www.actionforhealthykids.org/wellnesstool/index.php



The purpose of this guide is to help North Carolina schools meet the letter and the spirit of the federal law. It is designed to help schools evaluate how well their local wellness policy activities are meeting the academic and health needs of their students by improving nutrition and fitness opportunities at school.

Recognizing that there are many demands on school resources, especially on the time of school personnel, this guide makes evaluating wellness activities easy, efficient and effective by:

- **Discussing the role of evaluation in the success of school wellness, including the continuous improvement of activities and policies.**
- **Describing three different levels of evaluation and providing a simple evaluation tool for local wellness policy activities.**
- **Outlining how to plan evaluation with your SHAC, wellness team or committee – and where to find the resources you need.**

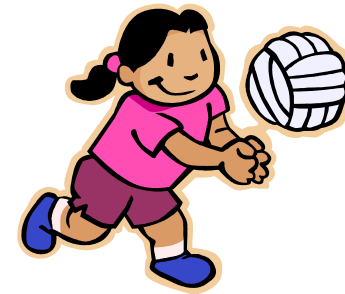
Role of evaluation in school wellness

Evaluation can seem complex and confusing. The evaluation world is filled with jargon and multiple models – over 100 by one account! There are evaluation courses, textbooks and workshops, as well as evaluation consultants for all types of organizations. Fortunately, everything you already know about evaluation – logic models, terminology and processes – can be used to help your school create an environment where children are fit, healthy and ready to learn.

The key is using evaluation to improve your school's approach to health and wellness for students and staff.

It doesn't matter which evaluation model you use; what really matters is having a systematic approach to collecting information so you can see how well your school is doing with wellness activities. Once you have collected data, the most important step of all is **using what you learn to make changes or adaptations that help improve** your school's ongoing wellness programs and activities.

LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Evaluating Local School Wellness Policies
<http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/ne-eval-local.pdf>

Education Policy Studies Laboratory
National Evaluation & Measurement Meeting on School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies
<http://epsl.asu.edu/ceru/Articles/CERU-0503-116-OWI.pdf>

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)
School Wellness Policy and Practice: Meeting the Needs of Low-Income Students
www.frac.org/pdf/wellness_guide2006.pdf

As you begin to evaluate wellness in your school, remember these key points:

Local wellness policies are just in their infancy.

Most districts have only had a local wellness policy for a few years and have only just begun to implement activities. Only a few have started any kind of evaluation.

No evaluation method will work for every school.

As mandated by federal legislation, school wellness policies are **local** policies. This means that the policies – and the activities based on them – vary from school to school. While you will be able to use tools (e.g., questionnaires and surveys from other districts), your evaluation will be unique to your school.

New evaluation strategies and tools are currently being developed to meet school wellness needs.

USDA and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, among others, are researching the most effective ways to evaluate school wellness. Their results will become available online and through workshops over the next few years.

Any wellness evaluation is better than no evaluation.

The responsibility for school wellness policies has been added to the already busy schedules of administrators, teachers and child nutrition directors. Since complicated evaluations are often not appropriate, or even possible, SHACs, school wellness teams or committees need easy ways to share information that is already being collected and to pull together other supporting data.

The best time to plan for evaluation is before you actually implement a wellness activity.

The easiest way to do evaluation is to include it in your planning process from the beginning. This is the most efficient way to collect the baseline data you need and to build outcome data collection into the activity itself. If you have already implemented some wellness activities, don't worry – they can still be evaluated. Fortunately, you can start the process of continuous improvement at any point.

LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION

Center for Health and Health Care in Schools
School Wellness Policies and the Fight on Childhood Obesity

<http://healthinschools.org/News-Room/EJournals/Volume-8/Number-4/School-Wellness-Policies-and-the-Fight-on-Childhood-Obesity.aspx>

USDA Team Nutrition

2006 Local Wellness Demonstration Projects Grants

<http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/Grants/demoprojects06.html>

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Childhood Obesity Initiatives

www.rwjf.org/programareas/programarea.jsp?pid=1138



Using evaluation for continuous improvement

To be truly useful, evaluation of your wellness activities must be integrated into a cycle of continuous improvement.

This means that evaluation is never a one-time activity nor is it the end point in a process. The most successful evaluations are ongoing – in order to continuously improve policies and interventions. This process is illustrated in the simple diagram below and, on the following page, in the example using classroom rewards.

Write local wellness policies to reflect best practices.



Collect baseline data prior to initiating an intervention.



Initiate intervention using appropriate materials, resources and/or experts.

(Repeat cycle as necessary.)

EVALUATE effects of the intervention activities.



When appropriate, rewrite or adapt local wellness policy based on evaluations and practices within the school.

LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Healthy Youth! Program Evaluation
www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/evaluation/index.htm

ND Department of Public Instruction
Team Nutrition and Training
North Dakota System Standards for a Healthy and Safe School Environment
www.dpi.state.nd.us/child/team/standards.pdf

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)
Improvement Must Be the End Game for Evaluation
<http://sustainability2002.terc.edu/invoke.cfm/page/64/show/print>

EXAMPLE: Improving Classroom Reward Practices

- School wellness policy is originally written as:
Encourage non-food rewards in the classroom.
- Baseline survey reveals that 90% of teachers currently use food to reward classroom performance at least two to three times per week.
- **ACTIVITY:** School wellness team distributes handout (*Classroom rewards*) to all teachers in school.
- **EVALUATION:** Repeat of survey after three months shows a decrease in classroom food rewards. However, it indicates that 75% of teachers still use food rewards at least one to two times per week.
- **ACTIVITY:** Wellness team arranges for staff in-service training on *Effective Rewards for Optimal Performance* with a Registered Dietitian (RD) from local health department and a classroom teacher who is experienced in positive behavior supports. The RD talks about problems with using food rewards and the teacher reinforces non-food, effective alternatives.
- **EVALUATION:** Repeat of survey after three months indicates that most teachers have now discontinued the use of food to reward performance in their classrooms.
- School wellness team recommends – and the school board approves – that the school wellness policy be strengthened to read:
Only non-food rewards may be used in classrooms.

LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION

USDA Team Nutrition

Making It Happen

Use Fundraising Activities and Rewards That Support Student Health

http://teamnnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/o_app6.pdf

NC Division of Public Health

Nutrition Education and Training Program

Classroom Rewards

<http://www.nutritionnc.com/ResourcesForSchools/pdf/esmm/actionTools/lwp---classroom-rewards.pdf>

Michigan Team Nutrition

Alternative to Using Food as a Reward

www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/foodrewards.pdf

Archives Pediatric Adolescent Medicine 2005

Schoolwide Food Practices Are Associated With Body Mass Index in Middle School Students

<http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/reprint/159/12/1111>

School Nutrition Association

Local School Wellness Policies: Classroom Rewards and Incentives

www.schoolnutrition.org/PrinterFriendly.aspx?id=2196

EVALUATION: Easy, efficient, effective

Measurements of success for busy schools

The success of any program or activity, like wellness in schools, can be measured on several levels. For the purposes of this guide, schools can think of wellness evaluations on three possible levels:

Level 1: Pre-Implementation and baseline analysis

The purpose of this phase is to collect baseline information and document existing needs. In terms of local wellness policy, this ideally should have been completed as part of a needs assessment during the development of your school's wellness policy.

If such an assessment has not been done for your school, your wellness team can complete one using the simple checklist (from North Dakota Team Nutrition) or another tool, like CDC's comprehensive *School Health Index*.

Level 2: Program clarification and progress toward goals

Level 2 is the main focus of this guide. It will be explained thoroughly on the next several pages. As mentioned above, the purpose is to provide information to improve your wellness activities and, **if the appropriate local resources exist**, to prepare for Level 3 evaluations.

Level 3: Research on program impact and replication

This level takes evaluation into the areas of experimental research, developing model programs to be used in other areas and reporting results in research journals. At this level, the goal is to compare effectiveness among different approaches and to suggest program models to be used in other schools. Your school wellness team might choose to do some evaluations at this level with research assistance from students or faculty at a college or university.

LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION

**ND Department of Public Instruction
Team Nutrition and Training**

*PRE-project Changing the Scene School
Improvement Checklist*

www.dpi.state.nd.us/child/team/prechklist.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Healthy Youth! School Health Index

<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/default.aspx>



Successful evaluation one wellness activity at a time

The main goal of this guide is to provide North Carolina schools with an easy, efficient, and effective way to plan evaluations of their local wellness policy activities. The tool to accomplish this goal is the *Wellness Activity Evaluation Form*. The Planning section (pages 12 to 15) will cover how a SHAC or wellness team can use the tool, while this section defines the terms used on the form and gives several specific examples for each column. It also includes two completed sample evaluation forms for two different wellness activities (i.e., nutrition improvements in high school concession stands and switching to recess before lunch).

Page 8 – Wellness Activity Evaluation Form

Print and copy this blank form as needed to develop your evaluation plans. Multiple copies should be made for your meeting to plan evaluation, as outlined on page 12.

Page 9 – Definitions and examples

This form defines the terms used in each column (in red) and provides two examples. They illustrate the variety of strategies that might be appropriate, depending on the type of activity being evaluated. For this guide, the following definitions are used:

OUTPUT: Counting numbers of participants in an activity or sales of a specific item is a good place to start. In some cases, it may also be a way to document the effect on an activity. However, in most cases, it is also necessary to measure effects in other ways.

OUTCOMES: The exact way to measure the effect of an intervention will vary with the activity. Surveys, questionnaires, and other indicators may be appropriate depending on the activity being evaluated (see planning discussion on page 13).

Page 10 – Sample Wellness Activity Evaluation Form #1

This form illustrates a completed 3-year evaluation report for **Healthy Offerings at Concession Stands during High School Athletic Events**. Note that in this case, the outcomes measured in the short, medium, and long term are all the same. In other words, the evaluation plan was to determine the success of the activity (offering healthful items at concession stands) by tracking the same trends (sales of healthful items and customer satisfaction) over a three-year period.

Page 11 – Sample Wellness Activity Evaluation Form #2

This form illustrates a completed evaluation report for another wellness activity: **Recess Before Lunch**. In this case, the wellness team measured different factors in the short, medium, and long term. This is appropriate in cases where the effects of an activity may not be immediately apparent, but can be measured after a year or two of a program.

WELLNESS ACTIVITY EVALUATION FORM

Activity and its Goal	Output	SHORT-Term Outcome (6 - 9 months)	MEDIUM-Term Outcome (1-2 years)	LONG- Term Outcome (3+ years)	Impact

WELLNESS ACTIVITY EVALUATION FORM - Definitions

Activity and its Goal	Output	SHORT-Term Outcome (6 - 9 months)	MEDIUM-Term Outcome (1-2 years)	LONG- Term Outcome (3+ years)	Impact
<p><i>Describe activity and the goal of the activity to be evaluated</i></p> <p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p>Before-school walking club to improve fitness levels of students and staff</p> <p>Nutrition standards to improve quality of items in vending machines</p>	<p><i>Counting the number of people participating in an activity or number of units involved</i></p> <p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p>Number of children and staff participating in daily walking program</p> <p>Sales numbers (units of product) from vending machines after nutrition standards are applied</p>	<p><i>Measuring the effects of an intervention, (changes in individual or group knowledge or behavior) after 6 to 9 months</i></p> <p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p>Changes in fitness test scores after six months walking program</p> <p>Trends in vending machine sales six months after standards and new product introduction</p>	<p><i>Measuring the effects of an intervention, (changes in individual or group knowledge or behavior) after 1 to 2 years</i></p> <p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p>Changes in fitness test scores after one full year in walking program</p> <p>Trends in vending machine sales two years after standards and new product introduction</p>	<p><i>Measuring the effects of an intervention, (changes in individual or group knowledge or behavior) after 3+ years</i></p> <p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p>Changes in fitness test scores after three full years in walking program</p> <p>Trends in vending machine sales three years after standards and new product introduction</p>	<p><i>Assessing impact on goals of the wellness policy, like improving academic achievement or health status of students or staff</i></p> <p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p>Comparison of walking program participants to non-participants on fitness levels, test scores, and walking outside of school</p> <p>Nutritional quality of snacks typically consumed from vending machines by students</p>

WELLNESS ACTIVITY EVALUATION FORM - **Example #1**

Activity and its Goal	Output	SHORT-Term Outcome (6 - 9 months)	MEDIUM-Term Outcome (1-2 years)	LONG- Term Outcome (3+ years)	Impact
<p>Changing offerings at concession stands during high school athletic events to improve nutritional quality of foods and beverages consumed by families.</p>	<p>Total number of athletic events catered during year</p> <p>Total gross sales for catered events</p> <p>Sales of various items</p>	<p>Improvement in nutritional quality of foods/beverages at events</p> <p>#1. Increase in sales of healthful items at booths. Catering orders and total sales both indicate a switch to healthful items after six months. Survey of concession stand patrons indicates a high level of satisfaction with current items, as well as requests for additional healthful items.</p>	<p>Improvement in nutritional quality of foods/beverages at events</p> <p>#1. Increase in sales of healthful items at booths. Catering orders and total sales both indicate an increase in healthful items of 50% after one year. Yearly survey of patrons continues to show a high level of satisfaction with current items, as well as ongoing suggestions for more healthful items.</p>	<p>Improvement in nutritional quality of foods/beverages at events</p> <p>#1. Increase in sales of healthful items at booths. Catering orders and total sales both indicate an increase in healthful items of 65% after two years. Yearly survey of patrons continues to show a high level of satisfaction with current items, as well as ongoing suggestions for more healthful items.</p>	<p>Over a 3-year period, there was a significant improvement in the nutritional quality of foods and beverages sold at concession stands during high school athletic events.</p>

WELLNESS ACTIVITY EVALUATION FORM - **Example #2**

Activity and its Goal	Output	SHORT-Term Outcome (6 - 9 months)	MEDIUM-Term Outcome (1-2 years)	LONG- Term Outcome (3+ years)	Impact
<p>Switching to recess before lunch to improve cafeteria environment, student nutrition and academic performance.</p>	<p>Seven classes (total of 198 children) in grades K thru 6th switched to a schedule of recess before lunch</p>	<p>Improvement in cafeteria environment</p> <p>#1. Fewer referrals to principal after lunch. Reduction from average of six per week to less than one per week.</p> <p>#2. Reduced noise levels. Survey of foodservice and education staff rated noise level as a three compared to an eight before the change.</p>	<p>Improvement in consumption of lunches</p> <p>#1. Less garbage from lunch. Custodian report shows two to three fewer bags per average lunch service.</p> <p>#2. Increased consumption of milk at lunch. Before and after measures show twice as much milk consumed after change.</p>	<p>Improvement in performance during after-lunch classes</p> <p>#1. Better classes after lunch. On survey, teachers report five to 10 more minutes productive teaching time.</p> <p>#2. Improvement in test scores and grades. Overall test scores increase in afternoon classes by average of 12%.</p>	<p>Over a 3-year period, switching to recess before lunch in kindergarten through sixth grade improved the cafeteria environment, student nutrition and academic performance.</p>

PLANNING: Simple evaluations for wellness

Planning for evaluation is the perfect time to use the expertise, creativity and diverse backgrounds of your SHAC, school wellness team or committee. If your group has been meeting regularly, it will be easy to schedule evaluation as a topic for discussion. If your team needs to be revitalized, this is the perfect time to recruit some new members – with the expertise you need to plan successful evaluations.

Planning evaluations with a team or committee

To get the planning process going, set a meeting date and time for your wellness committee. Allow a minimum of two hours discussion for the first meeting about evaluation. Send a copy of this Evaluation Guide to everyone before the meeting. You may also want to make certain that each person has a copy of your school's current wellness policy and any completed wellness assessments.

An agenda for a school wellness evaluation meeting might include:

- **Introductions and expectations** (e.g., rules for brainstorming)
- **Review of wellness policy and any previous wellness assessments at school**
- **Discussion of wellness activities**
 - List ongoing wellness activities or programs
 - Brainstorm list of possible new activities, based on identified needs
- **Overview of evaluation and *Wellness Activity Evaluation Forms***
- **Evaluation planning with two or three wellness activities**
(Remember, not everything can or should, be done immediately. Baby steps are often the most successful ways to make wellness changes.)
 - Using blank copies of *Wellness Activity Evaluation Forms*, work from left to right and complete each column with input from team members.
 - When identifying outputs and outcomes, there will be multiple options. (See following sections on thinking outside the box and resources.)
- **Assignment of team members to locate evaluation resources as needed**
- **Setting date and time for next meeting**

LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION

STEP-BY-STEP PLANS for an Evaluation Planning Meeting as PowerPoint slides available at:

ND Department of Public Instruction
Team Nutrition and Training
PowerPoint SLIDES

<http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/child/team/index.shtm>

Thinking outside of the box about evaluation

There is no predetermined, one-size-fits-all survey to evaluate the success of school wellness activities. Since schools must tailor their evaluation plans to their specific activities, here are several key points to keep in mind.

Be realistic:

Most people in schools are already loaded with responsibilities. Although in-depth evaluations might be nice, they may not be realistic given the resources in your school. Avoid frustration by choosing the simplest possible approach to getting the information you need.

A simple evaluation - completed on time - is always better than a complex evaluation that is never finished.

Be flexible:

An evaluation plan may look good on paper, but it may need to be adapted, based on available resources or changing circumstances. Encourage your team to be flexible and to modify evaluation plans as activities evolve or as new information becomes available.

Be creative:

There are lots of ways to get help with your evaluations plans – if you think outside the proverbial box. Many schools and community programs have developed innovative ways to do comprehensive evaluations. Here are just a few ideas; encourage your team to brainstorm other possibilities that may work in your school. **NOTE: The easiest way to get these groups involved is have them represented on your wellness team, such as members from student council, PTA/PTO, MDs and local health department staff.**

STUDENTS:

- Middle/high school students may be able to tabulate and/or graph results of a survey as part of math class.
- College students from statistics, evaluation, education or health classes may need a research project or practicum.

PARENTS:

- Parent groups (PTA, PTO, etc.) may be willing distribute, collect and tabulate results from a questionnaire.
- With minimal training, parents may be able to help administer fitness tests to students or observe cafeteria behaviors.

LOCAL PROFESSIONALS:

- Health department staff, like RNs, registered dietitians (RDs) and health educators, may have expertise in evaluation.
- Hospitals, health departments or Cooperative Extension staff may be collecting community-wide data that could be useful.

Be smart:

Maximize your use of existing data – information that is being collected for other purposes. For example, participation in school meals (breakfast and lunch) is a good, easy way to evaluate the effects of new menus. Discipline referrals to the principal can be used to evaluate the effects of switching to recess before lunch or adding physical activity breaks during classroom time.

Finding the evaluation resources you need

As the sections on the previous and following pages clearly indicate, there are many resources for North Carolina schools to utilize in evaluating their wellness activities. **Here are a few other sources of evaluation tools and information for your wellness team to consider before you “reinvent the wheel.”**

Since nearly every school in the country is looking for ways to evaluate wellness activities, it is quite likely that someone has already developed some survey questions – or even an entire questionnaire – that you can adapt, rather than having to create your own from scratch. For additional ideas, search online with Google or another search engine. Also, brainstorm with your wellness team. Someone in your group is likely to know where to find exactly what you are looking for!

COLLEAGUES:

It is always a good idea to check in the neighborhood before you go looking all over the country. Check with your colleagues in nearby districts to see how they are approaching evaluation and whether they have some background information or a specific tool (e.g., survey, questionnaire, etc.) that can be adapted to your needs.

LISTSERVS:

Most school professionals participate in at least one online listserv or discussion group. These are perfect places to post a question and to check about resources. It is often most effective to post your request on listservs for different groups at the same time, like one for school nutrition professionals and one for school nurses.

WEB SITES:

The Web sites of school wellness groups and organizations, like **Action for Healthy Kids**, have already begun to post evaluation tools. More information will undoubtedly become available in the future. Another key place to search for surveys and other tools is the **Center for Advanced Studies in Nutrition and Social Marketing**. On this site, you can search for tools to measure nutrition and physical activity of both environments and individuals.

LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION



USDA Team Nutrition

Mealtalk Discussion Group for Child Nutrition

http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=14&tax_level=2&tax_subject=24&topic_id=1510

Action for Healthy Kids

Resources to Improve Schools

www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources.php

Center for Advanced Studies in Nutrition and Social Marketing at UC-Davis

<http://socialmarketing-nutrition.ucdavis.edu/Tools/somarktools.php>

WEB-BASED SURVEY SERVICES:

There are many advantages to using Web-based surveys. They can be free or very inexpensive. They eliminate piles of paper and the need for staff time to tabulate and analyze the results. The analysis from an online survey is available as soon as the last survey is completed – usually with a variety of tables, charts, and graphs for presenting the results. They are also a perfect fit for today’s Web-savvy consumers.

Most providers offer a minimal level of service for free (like surveys with 10 questions or less and 100 respondents or less – per month). Expanded services are available for a modest monthly or yearly fee. Some school districts already pay for these services; so additional wellness surveys would not incur additional costs.

TIPS:

- **Keep questions and the entire survey short and direct. Utilize technology-savvy staff or students to help translate paper-and-pencil surveys to electronic surveys.**
- **Test an online survey online with a small sample of your target audience before you distribute it widely. It is critical that all survey functions are working smoothly before you send it out to a large number of people.**

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North Carolina Local Wellness Policy Resources

Additional materials related to local wellness policy in North Carolina are posted at www.afhk.org, www.nutritionnc.com and www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com. Look for the Successful Students Eat Smart and Move More logo. SHACs or school wellness teams with questions about evaluation may call the Child Nutrition Services Section at the NC Department of Public Instruction at 919.807.3506.

LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION

Reputable providers of Web-based surveys include:

QUESTION PRO

www.questionpro.com/web-based-survey-software.html

SURVEY MONKEY

www.surveymonkey.com/

ZOOMERANG:

<http://info.zoomerang.com/>

