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[CE SBAC] Against another school options survey

1 message

Jennifer Bodenrader <joplinfan69@hotmail.com>

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To: "cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org" <cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org>, "cesb@capeelizabethschools.org" <cesb@capeelizabethschools.org>, "cetowncouncil@capeelizabeth.org" <cetowncouncil@capeelizabeth.org>

Dear Cape Elizabeth SBAC, School Board and Town Council,

It is a trend these days to do one time surveys with questions created by well meaning people. It's also become a profitable pseudoscience.

Many are aware of the need for survey responses to be representative of the population in order to be able to generalize results. I have heard Mr. Benoit and Mr. Hussey express confidence that the SBAC survey results were generalizable because of the number of responses, demographics of respondents, and self reported votes.

However, in addition to generalizability is a more complicated, time consuming, vital process to ensure survey questions accurately elicit and measure the information they are designed to. The basics of ensuring survey reliability and validity require specific questions be based on a body of related peer reviewed research, be administered numerous times to measure internal consistency, and continuously improved while balancing trade offs.

Because the nature of school option questions are multifaceted they are not clear, concrete and simple/straightforward enough to accurately measure in a one time survey. Content validity relates to questions reflecting the subject we are asking about and making sure just the right amount and types of related information are included. SBAC will never know which questions to ask, which related subjects to include and how to include, or how to word or order questions. You can try for hours and do your best to develop questions but your results will have no scientific basis.

With respect, I believe by any measure, Mr. Benoit greatly over exaggerates the strength of findings from one question in the previous survey about a vote related to 5-10% tax increases. Being aware of personal biases and their influence on understanding survey results is research 101. Such misinterpreted findings and bias of all kinds are the exact things one must rigorously reduce and remove for surveys to have true meaning.

Here is a link to a quick laypersons overview of how to achieve a valid survey. I believe all aspects of our well meaning town government should increase the level of survey rigor related to town goals.

<https://www.voxco.com/blog/achieving-reliability-and-validity-in-survey-research/>

Thanks so much for reading,
Sincerely,
Jennifer Bodenrader P.h.D
Brentwood rd

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