

For the seventh consecutive year, the Kappan is privileged to publish the full report of an attitude survey conducted by the Gallup Poll. The first report in the eight-year series was published in full by the Institute for Development of Educational Activities (/I/D/E/A/). A compilation of the first five polls is available as a Phi Delta Kappa paperback: The Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969-1973. Reprints of the sixth and seventh polls can be obtained from Phi Delta Kappa.

The Gallup education polls are an established source of reliable information concerning trends in opinion about significant school questions. For school officials, the polls can be valuable in two important ways. They alert decision makers to overall public reaction to a variety of school programs and policies. And they serve as a national benchmark against which local attitudes can be measured.

The paperback noted above includes a chapter titled "A Look into Your School District" telling how local attitudes

can be measured. If local poll directors wish to employ the same questions asked in the Gallup surveys, they are welcome to do so. The questions are not copyrighted. Moreover, no limitations are placed upon the use of information contained in this report, beyond customary credit to source and observance of the usual canons of accuracy and completeness of quotation.

The Gallup education polls were financed during the first six years of their existence by CFK Ltd., a Denver-based foundation. When CFK Ltd. was disbanded following the death of its founder, Charles F. Kettering II, the Ford Foundation supported the poll for one year, until another sponsor could be found. The Charles F. Kettering Foundation, through its affiliate, /I/D/E/A/, has now consented to finance the annual poll. We are particularly grateful to B. Frank Brown and Samuel G. Sava of /I/D/E/A/ and Kettering for their enthusiastic support. Also, we are grateful to Edward Brainard for his continued willingness to devote time and energy to the project. — SME

George H. Gallup

EIGHTH ANNUAL GALLUP POLL of THE PUBLIC'S ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Project Jointly Conducted by the Gallup Poll and the Charles F. Kettering Foundation

Purpose of the Study

The eighth annual survey of the series has attempted to measure the attitudes of Americans toward their public schools. Each year great care is taken to include new issues of concern to both educators and the public, as well as trend questions which have ongoing impact in the educational world.

This year's survey was funded by /I/D/E/A/, the Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc., an affiliate of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation. In prior years these studies have been sponsored by CFK Ltd. and the Ford Foundation.

To make certain that the current survey would embrace important issues in the field of education, a group of educators, together with the project directors from Gallup,

met in Miami early this year to discuss and evaluate preliminary questions and possible themes.

The group of panel members included: James Betchkal, editor, *American School Board Journal*, National School Boards Association, Washington, D.C.; Edward Brainard, director, Leadership Development, Colorado Department of Education, Denver (now professor of education, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley); B. Frank Brown, division director, /I/D/E/A/, Melbourne, Florida; Stanley M. Elam, editor, *Phi Delta Kappan*, Bloomington, Indiana; William J. Ellena, superintendent, Public Schools, Charlottesville, Virginia; Sidney P. Marland, Jr., president, College Entrance Examination Board, New York City; William Mitchell, superintendent, Public Schools, Greeley, Colorado; John W. Porter, state superintendent of public instruction, Department of Education, Lansing, Michigan; Samuel G. Sava, executive director, /I/D/E/A/, and vice president, Educa-

tional Activities, Charles F. Kettering Foundation, Dayton, Ohio; Suzanne Sepper, teacher, Bayview Elementary School, Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and M. Donald Thomas, superintendent of schools, Salt Lake City School District, Utah.

We wish to thank the above-mentioned individuals for their valuable suggestions.

Research Procedure

The Sample — The sample in this survey embraced a total of 1,549 adults (18 years and older). It is described as a modified probability sample of the nation. Personal, in-home interviewing was conducted in every area of the nation and in all types of communities. A full analysis of the sample will be found at the end of this report.

Time of Interviewing — The fieldwork for this study was carried out from April 21 through April 25, 1976.

The Interviewing Form — Questions included in the survey instrument were selected following extensive pretesting by the trained staff of interviewers maintained by the Gallup organizations.

Findings from this report apply only to the country as a whole and not to specific local communities. Local surveys, using the same questions, can be conducted to determine how local communities compare with the national norm.*

*Suggestions for such a local survey are outlined in *The Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969-1973*, Chapter 7: "A Look into Your School District." Available from Phi Delta Kappa, Eighth and Union Streets, Bloomington, IN 47401, \$2.25 postpaid.

Introduction

Aside from its historical significance, the year 1976 may well prove to be the turning point in the public's attitudes toward the public schools. Evidence from the present survey indicates a leveling off in the downward trend of recent years in the public's attitudes toward the public schools.

The public schools, like other public institutions, reflect the major trends in society. And the year 1976 has witnessed a nationwide shift toward more traditional values in almost every field.

Whether we have come to the end of the era of permissiveness is yet to be seen. The fact remains, however, that the public is now demanding stricter rules in dealing with the behavior of the young and higher standards in the public schools.

Juvenile delinquency, increasing yearly, has focused attention upon the need for moral education not only in the home but in the schools. Laws in many states are being changed to permit stiffer sentences for young offenders. We can hope that such laws, and new ways that are being tried in schools for dealing with the problem of discipline, will bring about a lessening of the turmoil found in so many cities.

A growing demand to place greater emphasis on the basics in the school curriculum is evidenced in the findings

of the present survey. Meeting this demand could result in higher national test scores and increased respect for the public schools.

Major Problems Confronting The Public Schools in 1976

Discipline continues to head the list of major problems when a sample of the nation's adults cite what they perceive as the most important problems of the public schools in their own communities. In fact, discipline has been named most often seven times during the last eight years.

The percentage of respondents citing discipline as the number one problem, however, has shown no increase during recent years. Next to discipline, and in second place, are the problems associated with busing and integration. In third place this year is "lack of proper financial support." These were also named second and third, respectively, in last year's survey.

The one significant change from 1975 is the marked increase in the number of persons in the sample who cite "a poor curriculum." This complaint, listed seventh in importance last year, has moved up to fourth, undoubtedly because of wide publicity given to the drop in national test scores and growing concern about the number of functional illiterates among school leavers.

Below, in order of mentions, is the list of major problems of the local public schools as perceived by the residents of these communities:

1. Lack of discipline
2. Integration/segregation/busing
3. Lack of proper financial support
4. Poor curriculum
5. Use of drugs
6. Difficulty of getting "good" teachers
7. Parents' lack of interest
8. Size of school/classes
9. School board policies
10. Pupils' lack of interest

1976 Rating of the Public Schools

A five-point scale, familiar to the American public, was employed for the first time in 1974 to establish a base for measuring the public's perceptions of the quality of public school education in their own communities.

The question asked is this:

Students are often given the grades A,B,C,D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A,B,C,D, or FAIL?

A significant drop in the public's ratings was recorded between the years 1974 and 1975. However, the decline has now leveled off, with ratings for 1976 being virtually the same as for 1975.

Here are the ratings given the public schools nationally for the last three years:

Ratings Given the Public Schools	National Totals		
	1976 %	1975 %	1974 %
A rating	13	13	18
B rating	29	30	30
C rating	28	28	21
D rating	10	9	6
FAIL	6	7	5
Don't know/no answer	14	13	20

If the top two positions — A and B — are combined, and the bottom three — C, D, and FAIL — are combined, the findings indicate that the lowest ratings come from those parents who send their children to private or parochial schools. Those with children in the public schools give the highest ratings to the schools, but even in the case of this group only 50% give the schools an A or B rating. This contrasts with only 34% of those whose children attend private or parochial schools who give an A or B rating.

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
A rating	13	12	16	6
B rating	29	26	34	28
C rating	28	26	30	40
D rating	10	9	10	12
FAIL	6	7	5	4
Don't know/ no answer	14	20	5	10

When ratings given by the major socioeconomic and demographic groups are analyzed, it is evident that the people who are least satisfied with the quality of education offered in their local schools are the recent graduates, the 18 to 29 age group, those who live in the center cities as opposed to the suburbs, and citizens who live in the Western states.

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	13	29	28	10	6	14
Sex						
Men	11	32	28	11	4	14
Women	14	27	29	9	7	14
Race						
White	13	30	28	9	6	14
Nonwhite	10	21	33	13	9	14
Age						
18 to 29 years	8	25	33	15	6	13
30 to 49 years	15	30	30	10	5	10
50 years and over	15	31	22	6	7	19
Education						
Grade school	18	22	27	8	5	20
High school	12	27	30	11	7	13
College	11	37	25	9	6	12
Community size						
1 million and over	11	27	32	13	6	11
500,000 — 999,999	11	34	21	13	7	14
50,000 — 499,999	10	26	32	11	10	11
2,500 — 49,999	13	33	25	8	2	19
Under 2,500	17	29	28	6	4	16

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Central City	7	21	32	16	11	12
Suburbs	14	34	28	7	5	12
All other	16	30	27	7	3	17
Region						
East	11	31	29	10	5	14
Midwest	16	32	27	8	4	13
South	13	27	29	9	7	15
West	10	24	30	15	8	13

How To Improve the Quality Of the Public Schools

After having obtained ratings of their public schools by different groups, our interviewers sought to determine what could be done, in the opinion of respondents, to improve the quality of local education. And as an aid, each respondent was handed a card listing a dozen suggestions and had the opportunity to choose as many as he or she wished.

Answers to this question correspond closely with those given in answer to the question concerning the most important problems faced by the local schools.

This approach sheds further light on the public's current concern that the schools should "devote more attention to teaching of basic skills." This is the most popular suggestion; 51% of all respondents chose it. Close behind — in fact, with virtually the same number of choices — is the suggestion to "enforce stricter discipline."

The proposals that get the third and fourth highest number of mentions are to "meet individual needs of students," with 42%, and to "improve parent/school relations," with 41%.

The top three choices of parents whose children now attend the public schools are the same as the top three of the general public. Oddly enough, parents place even higher on their list, in fourth place, "instruction in morals" — which has been generally regarded as the sole responsibility of home and church.

The question:

Which of these ways do you think would do most to improve the quality of public school education overall?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Devote more attention to teaching of basic skills	51	47	55	60
Enforce stricter discipline	50	47	52	64
Meet individual needs of students	42	39	47	44
Improve parent/school relations	41	43	36	47
Emphasize moral development	39	34	45	49
Emphasize career education and development of				

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
salable skills	38	39	36	37
Provide opportuni- ties for teachers to keep up to date regarding new methods	29	27	32	29
Raise academic standards	27	28	23	38
Raise teachers' salaries	14	15	16	8
Increase amount of homework	14	12	17	21
Build new buildings	9	8	12	7
Lower age for compulsory attendance	5	4	6	1
None	1	1	*	
Don't know/ no answer	4	4	2	3

*Less than 1%

(Totals add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Nationwide Test for Graduation

A consensus was found in favor of requiring high school students to pass a standard examination in order to receive a diploma.

Present survey findings on this question show a substantial shift in the public's attitude during the last 18 years. The question posed in 1958 by the Gallup Poll is the same one as that used in the 1976 survey, as follows:

Should all high school students in the United States be required to pass a standard nationwide examination in order to get a high school diploma?

The findings for the two surveys show:

	National Test for Graduation	
	1976 %	1958 %
In favor of such a test	65	50
Opposed	31	39
No opinion	4	11

It is the least well educated, strangely enough, who are most in favor of such a requirement. The same finding was reported in the 1958 study. Those who have had the advantage of one or more years of college education are much more evenly divided: 53% are in favor, 44% opposed. Those with a grade school education vote 76% in favor, 18% opposed.

Persons who are in the 18 to 29 age bracket are less enthusiastic than older persons, possibly because some may believe that such a test would have deprived them of their own diplomas.

Apart from these differences, the survey findings show that a majority favors such a requirement in all sections of the nation and in the large cities as well as the small towns.

Results by major groups:

	Yes, They Should %	No, They Should Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	65	31	4
Sex			
Men	66	31	3
Women	65	30	5
Race			
White	65	31	4
Nonwhite	67	27	6
Age			
18 to 29 years	56	41	3
30 to 49 years	67	30	3
50 years and over	71	23	6
Education			
Grade school	76	18	6
High school	69	27	4
College	53	44	3
Community size			
1 million and over	70	25	5
500,000 — 999,999	69	28	3
50,000 — 499,999	67	31	2
2,500 — 49,999	68	31	1
Under 2,500	58	35	7
Region			
East	65	31	4
Midwest	66	30	4
South	64	31	5
West	67	31	2

The Public's Conclusions from the Decline in National Test Scores

The American people, judging from present and past survey data, do not share the skepticism of many educators about the significance of standardized tests.

They believe, for example, that the decline in national test scores in recent years means that the quality of education today is declining. Of course, the test scores may only confirm what many already think about the schools.

There is surprising unanimity among all groups in the population that the tests are actually measuring a decline in the quality of education. By majorities of about 2-1, all segments of the population, in all areas of the nation, believe that the tests are correctly assessing the situation.

The first question asked was:

Do you believe that a decline in national test scores of students in recent years means that the quality of education today is declining?

The results by major groups:

	Quality of Education		
	Yes, Is De- clining %	No, Is Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	59	31	10
Sex			
Men	61	31	8
Women	58	31	11
Race			
White	60	31	9

Quality of Education

	Yes, Is De- clining %	No, Is Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Nonwhite	58	29	13
Age			
18 to 29 years	52	40	8
30 to 49 years	62	29	9
50 years and over	63	26	11
Education			
Grade school	54	25	21
High school	61	29	10
College	58	39	3
Community size			
1 million and over	67	28	5
500,000 - 999,999	64	29	7
50,000 - 499,999	62	29	9
2,500 - 49,999	58	33	9
Under 2,500	50	34	16
Region			
East	62	26	12
Midwest	56	38	6
South	56	31	13
West	66	27	7

All respondents were then asked to explain what they thought brought about the decline in test scores. Each was handed a card listing eight reasons, including one for the doubters reading, "The tests are not reliable."

The second question put to respondents was:

Here are some reasons that have been given to explain the decline in national test scores. Will you look over these reasons and then tell me which ones you think are most responsible for this decline.

Respondents, who were permitted to choose more than one reason for the decline in test scores, voted in this manner:

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. Less parent attention, concern, and supervision of the child	65	64	65	72
2. Students aren't as motivated to do well	52	50	57	53
3. Too much television viewing	49	48	51	51
4. Society is becoming too permissive	49	47	49	61
5. Teachers are giving less attention to students	39	39	41	32
6. It's easier to get into college now	16	20	10	14
7. Schools are expanding the number of courses offered	10	12	8	4
8. The tests are not reliable	16	15	16	16

Other and no opinion

National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
14	13	15	15

Overall, the public places the greatest blame for declining test scores on parents, on society, on children's lack of motivation, and on too much television viewing. Interestingly, parents of children now attending school most often cite the very same top reason for declining scores: "less parent attention, concern, and supervision." Parents themselves are readily accepting the blame and are not trying to place the burden on the schools, as one might expect them to do.

Career Education

The demand for more emphasis on career education continues to be strongly voiced throughout the nation. In almost every study, the public has made known its belief that public school education should train graduates for jobs.

There is obviously confusion in the public's thinking about what constitutes career education and the kind of skills needed in today's society. What does emerge from the various surveys that have covered this point is that the public believes that the public schools should prepare every student to take some kind of job after graduation if he wants to end schooling at this stage of his or her life.

This first question was asked of all respondents:

Do you think that the school curriculum should give more emphasis, or less emphasis, to careers and career preparation in high school?

Because the public sees many unemployed and unskilled young people, it is quite natural and logical to reach the conclusion that the schools they attended do not give enough attention to job training. What is likely to be overlooked is the need today for persons with language and mathematical skills as well as mechanical skills. In the current survey, 80% say more emphasis should be given to careers in high school.

A second question asked if more information about careers should be given in the elementary schools. Although the majority is small, the number who say this should be done is greater than the number who say this is not necessary.

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
More emphasis	80	80	80	84
Less emphasis	5	4	5	7
About the same as now	11	12	11	8
Don't know/no answer	4	4	4	1

The second question:

Do you think the elementary school curriculum should, or should not, include information about jobs and careers?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Should	52	52	53	47
Should not	39	38	38	48
Don't know/ no answer	9	10	9	5

Early School-Leaving Age

Some educators see very real advantages in permitting students who meet minimum requirements to leave school early, either to take jobs or to enter junior or community colleges. California has such a law at this time permitting students to leave school early.*

In many instances this practice would rid the school of students who are disruptive and who have no interest in continuing their education. On the other hand, it would permit bright students to start their college careers at an earlier age.

The public, however, has never responded favorably toward proposals for changing present regulations about school age. When questions bearing upon this issue have been asked in these surveys, most respondents show reluctance to change the rules now in effect in their communities, either in respect to leaving age or the age at which children start school.

The public has been found willing to provide special schools and special training for students who are unable to keep up with their classes, and other national surveys reveal a willingness to establish training camps on the order of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s. But without some such provision for training and supervision, the public disapproves of letting young people out of school before they reach the legal minimum age.

Parents with children in public school turn down the proposal by a ratio of 69% to 28%. Those with children in the parochial schools like the idea even less. They oppose it by a ratio of 73% to 26%.

The question asked was:

Currently some states are considering legislation which will permit students to leave school as early as age 14 if they can first pass a test showing that they can read, write, and figure with sufficient skill to get along. Those who pass the test and leave school can take jobs if they wish or go on to community college at an earlier age. Do you approve or disapprove of such a plan for letting students leave school at a younger age?

*Among the nearly one million youngsters in California's public high schools, 30,500 took a test last year authorized by this law and 11,350 passed it. State department officials do not know, however, how many of those passing the test actually left school early.

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Approve	30	33	28	26
Disapprove	66	63	69	73
Don't know/ no answer	4	4	3	1

There is close agreement in all segments of society; the vote in nearly every group is about 2-1 against. Greatest support for this plan of lowering the age of compulsory attendance comes from those with the least education. But even this group opposes the idea by a vote of 52% to 41%.

The results by major groups:

	Approve %	Disapprove %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	30	66	4
Sex			
Men	34	63	3
Women	27	69	4
Race			
White	30	67	3
Nonwhite	35	57	8
Age			
18 to 29 years	34	62	4
30 to 49 years	29	68	3
50 years and over	29	66	5
Education			
Grade school	41	52	7
High school	26	70	4
College	32	66	2
Community size			
1 million and over	33	64	3
500,000 — 999,999	33	64	3
50,000 — 499,999	31	66	3
2,500 — 49,999	33	66	1
Under 2,500	25	69	6
Region			
East	29	66	5
Midwest	28	69	3
South	33	63	4
West	33	65	2

Courses To Help Parents Help Their Children in School

For many decades, teachers and parents have tacitly accepted something akin to a "territorial imperative." The province of the school was not to be invaded by parents; conversely, the province of the home was off limits to teachers.

This arrangement is rapidly falling apart as it becomes apparent that the schools cannot function properly unless parents cooperate with teachers, and unless teachers give guidance to parents.

It is obvious to parents, and to the public at large, that a new kind of shared responsibility must be accepted if students are to gain most from their education.

Both the public and parents have shown their willingness in many previous surveys to work more closely with the schools. What has been lacking is a *modus operandi*. The

proposal presented to respondents in the 1976 survey offers one way that the schools can help parents.

Many good ideas for improving education are turned down because they require higher taxes. The real test, therefore, of how much the public really supports a given proposal is to find out if the people who favor it are willing to have their taxes increased in order to put the proposal into effect.

In the case of the proposal to offer courses for parents as part of the regular public school system, those who favor the idea are also ready to accept a tax increase by a ratio of 51% to 21%.

The first question asked:

As a regular part of the public school educational system, it has been suggested that courses be offered at convenient times to parents in order to help them help their children in school. Do you think this is a good idea or a poor idea?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Good idea	77	76	78	74
Poor idea	19	18	20	25
Don't know/ no answer	4	6	2	1

And of those who approved the idea, this additional question was asked:

Would you be willing to pay additional taxes to support such a program?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	51	50	52	50
No	21	21	21	24
Don't know/ no answer	5	5	5	

The most interesting finding when the results are analyzed is that the youngest age group — those from 18 to 29 years old — overwhelmingly supports the idea, and by a greater margin than the older age groups. Parents of children in the public schools vote 78% to 20% in favor of the proposal.

The results by major groups:

	Good Idea %	Poor Idea %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	77	19	4
Sex			
Men	77	20	3
Women	77	18	5
Race			
White	76	20	4
Nonwhite	84	7	9

	Good Idea %	Poor Idea %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Age			
18 to 29 years	83	13	4
30 to 49 years	79	18	3
50 years and over	70	23	7
Education			
Grade school	70	20	10
High school	77	19	4
College	81	17	2
Community size			
1 million and over	80	13	7
500,000 — 999,999	80	18	2
50,000 — 499,999	80	18	2
2,500 — 49,999	74	24	2
Under 2,500	72	21	7
Region			
East	76	18	6
Midwest	73	23	4
South	82	13	5
West	75	22	3

Citizen Advisory Committees

School board members and teachers often complain about the lack of citizen interest in school matters. Lack of knowledge about the problems of the schools, especially the financial problems, all too often results in the defeat of school budgets and school bonds.

Both school and community gain when citizens take an active interest in the schools, but without a way to engage the interest and to involve citizens in school problems, nothing much happens. A few individuals will attend school board meetings. The fact remains, however, that persons in the community who could make the greatest contribution to education have almost no meaningful way to participate.

School boards are typically too busy dealing with financial and staff problems to spend much time on the many educational matters which must be dealt with today. Appointment of citizen advisory committees by the school board offers a practical way — and judging from the survey results, a popular way — to enlist the interest of an amazing number of persons in the community.

That this plan, now followed in some communities, offers great opportunities to involve citizens in the problems of the schools is fully evidenced by the results of the present survey.

The question asked was:

Some school boards have appointed citizen advisory committees to deal with a number of school problems such as discipline, the curriculum, textbook selection, teacher evaluation, the athletic program, and the like. The committees report their findings to the school board for possible action. If such a plan were adopted here (or exists here), which of these problems would *you* most like to deal with on a citizen advisory committee?

Only 10% of all those questioned said they would *not* like to serve on such a committee or could not make up their minds. While many of the other 90% who chose

committees on which they would like to serve might find it impossible or impractical to carry out their intention still an extraordinary number of persons in a typical community are sufficiently interested to fill places on a score of committees. And, if such committees were appointed, then hundreds of citizens might be involved in local school matters.

Each person interviewed in the survey was handed a card which listed 20 committees. He was asked if he would like to serve on any one; in fact, he could choose as many as he wished.

The following list shows the percentage of respondents selecting each committee as one on which he would like to serve:

Advisory Committees	Percent Who Would Like To Serve on Such a Committee*
1. Discipline and related problems	47
2. Student/teacher relations	31
3. Career education	29
4. Student dropouts	29
5. Teacher evaluation	28
6. The handicapped student	26
7. Educational costs/finances	22
8. The curriculum	21
9. Education for citizenship	19
10. Work-study programs	19
11. Home study and work habits	19
12. Community use of school buildings	16
13. Pupil assessment and test results	15
14. School facilities	14
15. Public relations of schools	13
16. School transportation	12
17. The athletic program	12
18. Educational innovations	12
19. Extracurricular activities	11
20. Progress of recent graduates	9
None	4
Don't know/no answer	6

*Totals more than 100% because of multiple answers.

Qualities Most Important In Development of a Child

In a society that constantly changes, the qualities that should be developed in its children will change also. What qualities do Americans today regard as most important? Which should be given the most attention by parents and schools? Which are the most neglected?

To shed light on these concerns, the following question was included in the survey:

Of course all of the qualities listed on this card are important in the overall development of a child. But which one do you regard as the most important?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. Learning to think for oneself	26	26	26	23

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
2. Ability to get along with others	23	25	20	20
3. Willingness to accept responsibility	21	19	21	26
4. High moral standards	13	11	15	20
5. Eagerness to learn	11	10	13	10
6. Desire to excel	4	6	3	1
Don't know/no answer	2	3	2	-

All respondents were offered the opportunity to make a second choice among these six qualities. When the second choices are added to the first choices, then "willingness to accept responsibility" moves up to second place, displacing "ability to get along with others," which drops to third place.

Looking at the same list of qualities, respondents were asked:

Which one do you think is most neglected by parents today?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. High moral standards	32	29	36	44
2. Willingness to accept responsibility	30	33	29	23
3. Learning to think for oneself	14	15	11	14
4. Ability to get along with others	8	7	9	7
5. Eagerness to learn	5	4	5	2
6. Desire to excel	4	3	5	5
Don't know/no answer	7	9	5	5

And as a final question in this series:

And which one do you think is most neglected by schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. High moral standards	26	24	28	26
2. Learning to think for oneself	15	15	14	11
3. Eagerness to learn	13	14	12	15
4. Willingness to accept responsibility	12	13	10	20
5. Desire to excel	9	8	12	11
6. Ability to get along with others	8	9	8	5
Don't know/no answer	17	17	16	12

Local Responsibility for Education

The American public is greatly opposed to giving up local responsibility for the public schools, no matter what the encroachments of the state and federal governments. Of course, the state and federal governments, by tying policies to financial grants, can continue to exert much influence on education. But the public, nevertheless, still holds to the principle that local school policies should be set by local school boards.

The question:

Local school policies are set, not only by the local school board, but also by the state government and the federal government. In the years ahead, would you like to see the local school board have greater responsibility in running the schools, or less, than they do today?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Greater responsibility	67	65	67	70
Less responsibility	10	11	10	7
About the same	15	15	17	14
Don't know/ no answer	8	9	6	9

Personal Qualities Desired in Teachers

Just as the school curriculum should change with changing needs, it could be argued that the qualities required of teachers should also change. What do people today regard as the most important qualities in the ideal teacher?

All respondents were asked the following "open" question:

Suppose you could choose your child's teachers. Assuming they all had about the same experience and training, what *personal* qualities would you look for?

The qualities named by respondents most often, in order of mention:

1. The ability to communicate, to understand, to relate
2. The ability to discipline, be firm and fair
3. The ability to inspire, motivate the child
4. High moral character
5. Love of children, concern for them
6. Dedication to teaching profession, enthusiasm
7. Friendly, good personality
8. Good personal appearance, cleanliness

All major groups list the qualities most desired in a teacher in almost exactly this same order.

The ideal teacher, in effect, is one who becomes a model of behavior for the young. It is not startling to discover this; a survey 100 years ago would probably have revealed the same thing.

How the Public Feels About Unionization of Teachers

Whether teachers should join unions has been a highly controversial issue in many areas of the United States for many years. At present, most U.S. teachers belong to unions or associations that bargain over salaries and working conditions. The question arises as to how the American public currently appraises this situation. Has unionization helped or hurt public school education? This is the question that was put to the public; there was a mixed reaction.

The question:

Most teachers in the nation now belong to unions or associations that bargain over salaries, working conditions, and the like. Has unionization, in your opinion, helped, hurt, or made no difference in the *quality* of public school education in the United States?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Helped	22	22	23	24
Hurt	38	38	36	47
Made no difference	27	26	28	25
Don't know/ no answer	13	14	13	4

Older persons are much more likely to say that unionization has diminished the quality of education. The 18 to 29 age group is almost evenly divided. In the bigger cities, where unions tend to be more militant, a slightly greater number say that unionization has "hurt."

Here are the findings among major groups:

	Helped %	Hurt %	Made No Dif- ference %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	22	38	27	13
Sex				
Men	24	42	25	9
Women	21	34	29	16
Race				
White	21	39	28	12
Nonwhite	26	31	22	21
Age				
18 to 29 years	26	30	34	10
30 to 49 years	24	37	26	13
50 years and over	16	46	23	15
Education				
Grade school	18	39	25	18
High school	20	37	30	13
College	29	40	23	8
Community size				
1 million and over	17	40	34	9
500,000 - 999,999	27	38	26	9
50,000 - 499,999	25	39	27	9
2,500 - 49,999	22	37	26	15
Under 2,500	20	36	24	20
Region				
East	20	43	28	9

	Helped %	Hurt %	Made No Dif- ference %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Midwest	19	40	29	12
South	27	33	23	17
West	23	37	28	12

Extending the Scope of Teacher Bargaining

School boards generally are vested with the responsibility for making decisions with respect to such matters as class size, the curriculum, and teaching methods. The public, in the present survey, has shown its readiness to make these matters subject to bargaining. Whether the school boards will eventually accept this view remains to be seen.

The question asked was:

Some teacher groups want to extend their bargaining powers beyond pay and working conditions. They would like to have the right to negotiate about class size, the curriculum, and teaching methods. Would you favor or oppose giving them these added rights?

This is one of the few survey questions in which a significant difference is found between the views of men and women. Men were almost evenly divided on the issue and women favored the change by a vote of 56% to 33%.

Age also makes a great difference. The youngest adult group voted 73% to 21% for extending the scope of teachers' bargaining powers; those over 50 oppose it by a vote of 50% to 38%.

Persons living in the West are almost evenly divided on this issue; those in the Midwest are most in favor of granting wider bargaining rights to teachers.

The findings among major groups:

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	52	39	9
Sex			
Men	47	45	8
Women	56	33	11
Race			
White	51	41	8
Nonwhite	62	21	17
Age			
18 to 29 years	73	21	6
30 to 49 years	49	42	9
50 years and over	38	50	12
Education			
Grade school	47	34	19
High school	49	42	9
College	59	37	4
Community size			
1 million and over	54	38	8
500,000 — 999,999	57	36	7
50,000 — 499,999	56	36	8
2,500 — 49,999	49	44	7
Under 2,500	46	41	13
Region			
East	51	39	10
Midwest	55	39	6
South	52	34	14
West	48	46	6

Reducing School Costs

With city budgets being squeezed everywhere in the nation, school budgets are being examined critically to see where costs can be cut.

To see which, if any, reductions meet with public acceptance, a list of eight different ways by which budgets could be cut was presented in this survey. Respondents were asked to give their opinion about each one.

The results are quite similar to those yielded by the 1971 survey. In that year, the public voted in favor, 50% to 32%, of reducing the number of administrative personnel. This year the vote is overwhelmingly in favor, 72% to 19%.*

In fact, parents of children attending public and parochial schools, as well as those with no children in school, all give their approval to reducing the number of administrative personnel.

The question:

Suppose your local school board were "forced" to cut some things from school costs because there is not enough money. I am going to read you a list of many ways that have been suggested for reducing school costs. Will you tell me, in the case of each one, whether your opinion is favorable or unfavorable.

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. Reduce the number of administrative personnel				
Favorable	72	71	71	80
Unfavorable	19	18	21	15
No opinion	9	11	8	5
2. Reduce the number of counselors on the staff				
Favorable	52	51	54	50
Unfavorable	38	36	38	45
No opinion	10	13	8	5
3. Reduce the number of subjects offered				
Favorable	39	39	38	49
Unfavorable	53	52	56	50
No opinion	8	9	6	1
4. Cut out the twelfth grade by covering in three years what is now covered in four				
Favorable	36	38	34	43
Unfavorable	58	54	63	56
No opinion	6	8	3	1
5. Cut out after-school activities like bands, clubs, athletics, etc.				

*Gallup's interviewers do not venture information to respondents. For example, they were not permitted to explain that teacher salaries typically constitute some 80% of a district's total operating expenses. In many larger districts, increasing class size by only one student could "save" more money than the elimination of 60% of the administrative staff. — *The Editor*

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favorable	31	29	33	38
Unfavorable	63	64	63	58
No opinion	6	7	4	4
6. Reduce the number of teachers by increasing class sizes				
Favorable	23	26	21	16
Unfavorable	70	66	74	80
No opinion	7	8	5	4
7. Cut all teachers' salaries by a set percentage				
Favorable	18	19	17	16
Unfavorable	74	72	77	78
No opinion	8	9	6	6
8. Reduce special services such as speech, reading, and hearing therapy				
Favorable	10	8	12	7
Unfavorable	85	86	84	89
No opinion	5	6	4	4

Declining School Enrollments

Many school districts have found that, because of decreasing birthrates, school enrollments are down and may decline even further in the decade ahead.

In situations such as this, the question arises as to whether to reduce educational expenditures accordingly. The public, as the results show here, votes in favor of reducing expenditures.

The question:

School enrollments in many parts of the nation have declined because of a lower birthrate. If this were to happen here, would you suggest that school expenditures be reduced accordingly?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	55	58	52	51
No	35	31	38	42
Don't know/ no answer	10	11	10	7

When those who said that expenditures should be reduced accordingly were asked to give their views as to what expenditures could be cut in this situation, the greatest number suggested that "the number of teachers should be reduced." Next in number of mentions was "close schools and combine classes." Others gave a miscellany of suggestions, including reducing athletic programs, extracurricular activities, and supplies.

Responsibility for Moral Behavior

The American people have reached the conclusion that many parents either won't or can't control the behavior of

their children. They are ready, therefore, to turn over part of the responsibility to the schools. In the 1975 survey it was reported that 79% of all those questioned favored instruction in morals and moral behavior in the schools. Only 15% opposed the idea. It was also pointed out in the same report that parents of children now in school were, of all groups, most in favor of this instruction.

In the present survey, a sizable majority of those questioned want part of the responsibility for moral behavior turned over to the schools. Just how this can be done raises many issues. A hundred years ago, McGuffey's Readers pointed up a moral in almost every paragraph. Thousands of years ago, parables and folk stories performed this service. The modern equivalent may be the "case history," as discussed in the 1975 report.

The question:

Parents now have responsibility for the moral behavior of their children. Do you think that the schools should take on a share of this responsibility, or not?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, schools should take on share of responsibility	67	65	69	69
No, they should not	30	31	29	26
Don't know/ no answer	3	4	2	5

Attitudes Toward Juvenile Courts

The American public is dissatisfied with the workings of juvenile courts. Only 6% say these courts are doing an "excellent" job; on the other hand, 41% say they are doing a "poor" job.

In cities of over one million population, a majority — 53% — say the job being done by juvenile courts is "poor." Both whites and nonwhites register dissatisfaction with these courts.

Overhaul of the laws dealing with juvenile delinquency is going on in many states, and these reforms may, in time, not only bring a halt to the increasing amount of juvenile crime but improve the teaching climate of the public schools.

The question:

In your opinion, how good a job do the juvenile courts do here in dealing with young people who violate the law — an excellent job, a fair job, or a poor job?

	Excel- lent Job %	Fair Job %	Poor Job %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	6	37	41	16
Sex				
Men	5	37	46	12
Women	7	37	36	20
Race				
White	6	36	40	18

	Excel- lent Job %	Fair Job %	Poor Job %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Nonwhite	8	40	43	9
Age				
18 to 29 years	4	45	39	12
30 to 49 years	6	35	41	18
50 years and over	7	32	42	19
Education				
Grade school	10	29	45	16
High school	6	39	39	16
College	4	38	41	17
Community size				
1 million and over	8	29	53	10
500,000 – 999,999	6	39	40	15
50,000 – 499,999	5	39	39	17
2,500 – 49,999	7	43	31	19
Under 2,500	5	35	41	19
Region				
East	6	30	54	10
Midwest	8	45	33	14
South	5	42	31	22
West	4	27	48	21

Live-in Boarding Schools For Children with Bad Home Conditions

Lack of parental interest and responsibility is blamed for the failure of many children to perform in a satisfactory manner in school. In fact, home conditions can be so bad today that children from these homes are almost certain to present a great and continuing problem to the schools.

One proposal for dealing with this problem is to put such children, who cannot function in a regular school setting, in live-in boarding schools. Here more attention could be given to them and to their educational needs.

While this proposal is approved by nearly four persons in 10, the public is not ready to take on the added financial burden which it thinks would be involved.

The question asked:

Some children have such bad home conditions that they run away or are unable to function in the regular public school. Should live-in boarding schools be provided at public expense for these children?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, should be provided	39	41	38	35
No, should not be provided	50	46	54	60
Don't know/ no answer	11	13	8	5

Child-Care Centers As Part of the Public School System

The public is not yet ready to have the public school system embrace child-care centers, although the vote on this proposal is close – 46% in favor, 49% opposed, with 5% having no opinion.

The greatest vote of approval comes from nonwhites. They vote 76% in favor to 15% opposed. Persons in the 18 to 29 age group also favor the plan by a vote of 64% to 32%. Most opposed are older persons and those who live in the small communities.

The question:

A proposal has been made to make child-care centers available for all preschool children as part of the public school system. This program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

The response by major groups:

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	46	49	5
Sex			
Men	46	49	5
Women	46	49	5
Race			
White	42	53	5
Nonwhite	76	15	9
Age			
18 to 29 years	64	32	4
30 to 49 years	43	52	5
50 years and over	35	59	6
Education			
Grade school	45	46	9
High school	47	49	4
College	46	51	3
Community size			
1 million and over	57	40	3
500,000 – 999,999	50	44	6
50,000 – 499,999	48	48	4
2,500 – 49,999	43	51	6
Under 2,500	36	57	7
Region			
East	48	47	5
Midwest	38	59	3
South	52	40	8
West	45	51	4

FURTHER BREAKDOWNS

Detailed or different breakdowns of some of the responses to the 1976 poll questions are provided in this section as a supplement to tables already presented.

The Major Problems

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Lack of discipline	22	20	25	30
Integration/segregation/busing	15	16	13	19

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Lack of proper financial support	14	14	14	11
Poor curriculum	14	14	13	18
Use of drugs	11	11	12	7
Difficulty of getting "good" teachers	11	9	14	9
Parents' lack of interest	5	5	4	4
Size of school/ classes	5	4	5	4
School board policies	3	2	3	3
Pupils' lack of interest	3	4	2	1
Lack of proper facilities	2	1	14	2
Crime/vandalism	2	3	2	1
Communication problems	1	1	1	3
There are no problems	3	2	6	1
Miscellaneous	8	9	8	2
Don't know/ no answer	12	16	7	10

(Totals add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

National Test for Graduation

Should all high school students in the United States be required to pass a standard examination in order to get a high school diploma?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, they should	65	65	66	64
No, they should not	31	30	30	35
Don't know/ no answer	4	5	4	1

National Test Scores

Do you believe that a decline in national test scores of students in recent years means that the quality of education today is declining?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, is declining	59	60	58	64
No, is not	31	30	32	28
Don't know/ no answer	10	10	10	8

Extending the Scope of Teacher Bargaining

Some teacher groups want to extend their bargaining powers beyond pay and working conditions. They would like to have the right to negotiate about class size, the curriculum, and teaching methods. Would you favor or oppose giving them these added rights?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favor	52	51	54	53
Oppose	39	38	38	43
Don't know/ no answer	9	11	8	4

Juvenile Courts

In your opinion, how good a job do the juvenile courts do here in dealing with young people who violate the law — an excellent job, a fair job, or a poor job?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Excellent job	6	5	6	10
Fair job	37	35	40	38
Poor job	41	44	38	34
Don't know/ no answer	16	16	16	18

Child-Care Centers

A proposal has been made to make child-care centers available for all preschool children as part of the public school system. This program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favor	46	47	44	39
Oppose	49	46	53	59
Don't know/ no answer	5	7	3	2

COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE

No children in schools	57%
Public school parents	38%*
Parochial school parents	8%*

*Totals exceed 43% because some parents have children attending more than one kind of school.

	%
Sex	
Men	48
Women	52
Race	
White	88
Nonwhite	12
Religion	
Protestant	56
Roman Catholic	30
Jewish	2
Others	12

Age	%
18 to 24 years	17
25 to 29 years	11
30 to 49 years	39
50 years and over	33
Occupation	
Business & professional	22
Clerical & sales	10
Farm	3
Skilled labor	20
Unskilled labor	22
Non-labor force	18
Undesignated	5
Income	
\$20,000 and over	22
\$15,000 to \$19,999	18
\$10,000 to \$14,999	23
\$ 7,000 to \$ 9,999	9
\$ 5,000 to \$ 6,999	9
\$ 3,000 to \$ 4,999	10
Under \$3,000	7
Undesignated	2
Political Affiliation	
Republican	21
Democrat	45
Independent	32
Other	2
Region	
East	27
Midwest	27
South	28
West	18
Community size	
1 million and over	19
500,000 – 999,999	12
50,000 – 499,999	25
2,500 – 49,999	17
Under 2,500	27
Education	
Elementary grades	16
High school incomplete	16
High school complete	33
Technical, trade, or business school	6
College incomplete	14
College graduate	15
Undesignated	*
* Less than 1%	

THE DESIGN OF THE SAMPLE

The sampling procedure is designed to produce an approximation of the adult civilian population 18 years of age and older, living in the United States, except for those persons in institutions such as prisons or hospitals.

The design of the sample is that of a replicated probability sample, down to the block level in the case of urban areas and to segments of townships in the case of rural areas. Approximately 300 sampling locations are used in each survey. Interpenetrating samples can be provided for any given study when appropriate.

The sample design included stratification by these four size-of-community strata, using 1970 census data: 1) cities of population 1 million and over, 2) 250,000 – 999,999; 3) 50,000 – 249,999; 4) all other population. Each of these strata was further stratified into seven geographic regions: New England, Middle Atlantic, East Central, West Central, South, Mountain, and Pacific. Within each city-size/regional stratum, the population was arrayed in geographic order and zoned into equal-sized groups of sampling units. Pairs of localities were selected in each zone, with probability of selection of each locality proportional to its population size in the 1970 census, producing two replicated samples of localities.

Within localities so selected for which the requisite population data are reported, subdivisions were drawn with the probability of selection proportional to size of population. In all other localities, small definable geographic areas were selected with equal probability.

Separately for each survey, within each subdivision so selected for which block statistics are available, a sample of blocks or block clusters is drawn with probability of selection proportional to the number of dwelling units. In all other subdivisions or areas, blocks or segments are drawn at random or with equal probability.

In each cluster of blocks and each segment so selected, a randomly selected starting point is designated on the interviewer's map of the area. Starting at this point, interviewers are required to follow a given direction in the selection of households until their assignment is completed.

Interviewing is conducted at times when adults, in general, are most likely to be at home, which means on weekends, or if on weekdays, after 4:00 p.m. for women and after 6:00 p.m. for men.

Allowance for persons not at home is made by a "times-at-home" weighting procedure rather than by "call-backs." This procedure is a standard method for reducing the sample bias that would otherwise result from underrepresentation in the sample of persons who are difficult to find at home.

The prestratification by regions is routinely supplemented by fitting each obtained sample to the latest available Census Bureau estimates of the regional distribution of the population. Also, minor adjustments of the sample are made by educational attainment by men and women separately, based on the annual estimates of the Census Bureau (derived from their Current Population Survey) and by age.

In interpreting survey results, it should be borne in mind that all sample surveys are subject to sampling error; that is, the extent to which the results may differ from what would be obtained if the whole population surveyed had been interviewed. The size of such sampling errors depends largely on the number of interviews.

Readers interested in determining the approximate size of sampling error for any percentage given in this report should obtain a copy of *The Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969-1973*, which provides tables and instructions permitting such calculations for all the Gallup polls published in the *Kappan*. (Order from Director of Administrative Services, Phi Delta Kappa, Box 789, Eighth and Union, Bloomington, IN 47401. Price, \$2.25 each or \$2 each for five or more copies.)

REPRINTS AVAILABLE

Reprints of this eighth annual Gallup survey of public attitudes toward the public schools may be ordered from Phi Delta Kappa. The minimum order is 25 copies for \$5. Additional copies are 10 cents each. This price includes postage for parcel post delivery. Where possible, a check or money order should accompany orders.

If faster delivery is desired, do not include a remittance with your order. You will be billed at the above rates plus any additional cost involved in the method of delivery.

Copies of the first five Gallup surveys are available only in the form of a volume published in 1973 by Phi Delta Kappa: *The Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969-1973*. These are priced at \$2.25 each, or \$2 each for five or more copies. Reprints of the 1974 and 1975 polls are available at the prices noted above for 1976 reprints.

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