

For the eighth 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 nine-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, seventh, and eighth polls, as well as reprints of this poll, 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 at least 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

NINTH 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

This survey, ninth in the annual series, has sought to measure the attitudes of American citizens toward their public schools. Funding this year was provided by /I/D/E/A/, the Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc., an affiliate of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation.

Each year an effort is made to deal with new issues — as well as with certain perennials from earlier studies — that are of greatest concern to both educators and the public. To accomplish this, letters were sent to educators nationwide, asking for their ideas. In addition, a selected panel of citizens met with staff members of Gallup and /I/D/E/A/ to pinpoint issues for inclusion in this year's survey.

The group of panel members included: Terrel H. Bell, commissioner, Utah System of Higher Education, Salt Lake City, Utah (and former U.S. commissioner of education); Edward Brainard, chairman, Colorado State Committee, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado; B. Frank Brown, director, /I/D/E/A/ Information and Services Program, Melbourne, Florida; Alonzo A. Crim, superintendent, Atlanta Public Schools, Atlanta, Georgia; Joseph M. Cronin, superintendent of public instruction, State Department of Public Instruction, Springfield, Illinois; Stanley Elam, director of publications, Phi Delta Kappa, Bloomington, Indiana; Nolan Estes, general superintendent, Dallas Independent School District, Dallas, Texas; Jack D. Gordon, senator, Thirty-fifth District, Florida, Miami Beach, Florida; Samuel Halperin, director, Institute for Educational Leadership, Washington, D.C.; James E. Kunde, director of urban affairs, Charles F. Kettering Foundation, Dayton, Ohio; Sidney P. Marland, Jr., president, College Entrance Examination Board, New York, New York; Helen Moore, teacher, Detroit, Michigan; Samuel G. Sava, executive director, /I/D/E/A/, Dayton, Ohio.

We wish to thank these individuals for their valuable help.

Research Procedure

The Sample. The sample used in this and every survey in this series is described as a modified probability sample. A total of 1,506 adults (18 years and older) comprised the national cross section. Personal, in-home interviews were conducted in all areas of the nation and in all types of communities. A complete analysis of the sample appears at the end of this report.

Time of Interviewing. The fieldwork for this study was conducted from April 28 through May 2, 1977.

The Interviewing Form. All questions included in the survey were pretested by the 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 areas. Local surveys, using the same questions, can be conducted in order to compare local communities with the national norm.*

*Suggestions for such a local survey are outlined in *The Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969-1973*, Ch. 7: "A Look into Your School District." Available from Phi Delta Kappa, Eighth & Union, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47401, \$2.25.

Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools in 1977

Discipline continues to top the list of major problems facing the public schools of the nation, as it has during eight of the last nine years. In fact, the percentage who cite discipline as the major problem is the highest found during the period in which these annual surveys have been conducted.

Parents of children now attending public school, perhaps the group best suited to judge the schools, cite discipline as the number one problem and by the highest percentage yet recorded.

The problem that seems near solution is the problem of adequate facilities. Nine years ago "lack of proper facilities" drew enough votes to place it second on the list of major problems facing the schools. In this year's survey, for the second straight year, only 2% of the sample cite this as the major problem.

The list of problems remains substantially the same as in previous years, with integration/segregation/busing being in second place, and lack of proper financial support in third.

The problem of drug usage is mentioned by fewer persons than last year, going from 11% in 1976 to 4% this year.

Below, in order of mentions, is the list of top problems:

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

1977 Ratings of the Public Schools

The quality of education, as perceived by U.S. adults, has declined during the last year. The 1977 ratings show a significant drop since 1974, when the present rating method was first employed.

The five-point scale used to measure the public's perceptions of the quality of public school education in their own communities is one that is widely used by the schools themselves. It reads as follows:

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?

Here are the national ratings given the public schools by residents for the last four years:

Ratings Given the Public Schools	1977 %	National Totals		
		1976 %	1975 %	1974 %
A rating	11	13	13	18
B rating	26	29	30	30

Ratings Given the Public Schools	National Totals			
	1977	1976	1975	1974
C rating	28	28	28	21
D rating	11	10	9	6
FAIL	5	6	7	5
Don't know/ no answer	19	14	13	20

It may bring some comfort to public school educators to know that the ratings given by parents who have children now enrolled in public schools have shown no decline since last year. In fact, if the top two ratings — A and B — are combined, the rating is 54%, which compares with a score of 50% in 1976.

The lowest ratings come from persons who have no children attending school and from those parents whose children are enrolled in parochial and private schools. These two groups are responsible for the decline in the national scores.

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
A rating	11	9	18	6
B rating	26	22	36	29
C rating	28	28	26	31
D rating	11	11	9	16
FAIL	5	5	4	10
Don't know/ no answer	19	25	7	8

The number of U.S. families with children of school age has declined. Consequently, the drop in the national ratings of the schools can be explained in part by this fact.

Analysis of the findings by socioeconomic groups reveals that the following groups give the lowest ratings to their local schools:

1. young adults (18 to 29 age group);
2. residents of cities over one million;
3. persons living in the Western states;
4. blacks, particularly those living in the Northern states.

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	11	26	28	11	5	19
Sex						
Men	11	25	30	11	5	18
Women	11	28	26	12	4	19
Race						
White	12	27	28	11	5	17
Nonwhite	8	23	25	14	5	25
Age						
18 to 29 years	5	25	38	16	4	12
30 to 49 years	15	28	28	10	6	13
50 years and over	13	26	20	9	4	28
Community size						
1 million and over	10	20	28	13	10	19
500,000 — 999,999	11	26	30	11	4	18
50,000 — 499,999	12	27	25	11	4	21
2,500 — 49,999	11	32	26	9	4	18
Under 2,500	12	27	31	11	3	16
Education						
Grade school	17	17	20	5	8	33
High school	10	27	31	12	4	16
College	10	30	26	14	5	15

Region	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
East	15	25	31	8	5	16
Midwest	10	29	28	11	3	19
South	13	28	25	10	3	21
West	6	21	28	17	9	19

What's Particularly Good About the Local Schools?

To provide an opportunity for the respondents in the present survey to tell what they thought was particularly good about the local schools, the following question, asked in some of the earlier surveys in this series, was repeated:

In your own opinion, in what ways are your local public schools particularly good?

The two responses offered most frequently were "the curriculum" and "the teachers." These have been the two most frequently mentioned in earlier surveys. Here are the top 10 responses, in order of mention:

1. The curriculum
2. The teachers
3. Extracurricular activities
4. School facilities
5. Equal opportunity for all students
6. Good administration
7. Parental interest/participation
8. Good student/teacher relationships
9. Good discipline
10. Small school or small classes

The Back-to-Basics Movement

The decline in national test scores and frequent media reports of illiteracy among high school graduates have given impetus to what is now widely referred to as the back-to-basics movement.

To discover how widely known this movement is and to obtain evidence of its popularity, three questions were included in the survey. The first asked simply:

Have you heard or read about the back-to-basics movement in education?

Understandably, the better educated and those with children now attending school are more familiar with the movement.

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, have heard of the term	41	38	47	62
No, have not	57	60	52	36
Don't know/no answer	2	2	1	2

Many laymen interested in education, as well as educators, think of other subjects as "basic" besides the traditional three Rs. But does the general public?

This question was asked, therefore, of those who said that they were aware of this movement:

When this term is used, do you think of anything besides reading, writing, and arithmetic?

The responses to this question, on the whole, indicate that the public regards the basics largely in terms of the traditional three subject areas.

Other subjects are mentioned — history, geography, spelling, citizenship, science, music, art, physical education — but not frequently.

However, many respondents think of the term, not in relation to subjects or courses, but in relation to the educational process itself. Thus, "back to basics" is interpreted as meaning a return to schooling of earlier years. To many respondents it means "respect for teachers," "good manners," "politeness," "obedience," "respect for elders," "structured classrooms," "back to the old ways of teaching."

A third question asked of those familiar with the term was this:

Do you favor or oppose this back-to-basics movement?

All groups in the population express overwhelming approval of the movement.

Results Based on Those Aware of Term

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	83	11	6
Sex			
Men	83	10	7
Women	83	11	6
Race			
White	84	10	6
Nonwhite	75	20	5
Age			
18 to 29 years	79	14	7
30 to 49 years	82	12	6
50 years and over	87	7	6
Community size			
1 million and over	78	12	10
500,000 — 999,999	77	13	10
50,000 — 499,999	85	12	3
2,500 — 49,999	88	5	7
Under 2,500	85	9	6
Education			
Grade school	93	6	1
High school	84	9	7
College	81	13	6
Region			
East	77	15	8
Midwest	89	6	5
South	85	11	4
West	81	11	8

Early Graduation from High School

Although the traditional in education always exerts a strong influence in shaping the public's views, wide support is shown for a proposal to permit some high school students to graduate early.

This question was asked:

If high school students can meet academic requirements in three years instead of four, should they, or should they not, be permitted to graduate early?

Nationally, 74% of those sampled said that students should be permitted to graduate early; 22% said they should not. All groups in the population widely favor this proposal — especially those under 30 years of age.

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Should be permitted to graduate early	74	77	68	67
Should not	22	18	31	27
Don't know/ no answer	4	5	1	6

The results by major groups:

	Yes, They Should %	No, They Should Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	74	22	4
Sex			
Men	73	22	5
Women	74	22	4
Race			
White	73	23	4
Nonwhite	81	13	6
Age			
18 to 29 years	82	16	2
30 to 49 years	68	29	3
50 years and over	73	20	7
Community size			
1 million and over	76	18	6
500,000 — 999,999	78	18	4
50,000 — 499,999	73	22	5
2,500 — 49,999	75	21	4
Under 2,500	69	29	2
Education			
Grade school	75	14	11
High school	72	25	3
College	76	21	3
Region			
East	74	23	3
Midwest	74	21	5
South	73	22	5
West	75	21	4

College Courses in Fourth Year of High School

A related proposal also wins favorable support among respondents.

The following question was asked:

Should high school courses be arranged to make it possible for some students to finish one year of

college work while they are still in high school, so that these students can graduate from college in three years instead of four?

The findings show that 63% of the total sample say that courses should be arranged to allow college work; 31% say no. Young people in particular favor this proposal. The greatest opposition is found in the small communities — those which would have the greatest difficulty in providing staff or facilities to add college courses for high school seniors.

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, courses should be arranged to allow college work	63	62	66	63
No, they should not	31	30	31	36
Don't know/ no answer	6	8	3	1

By socioeconomic groups:

	Yes, Courses Should Be Arranged to Allow Col- lege Work %	No, They Should Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	63	31	6
Sex			
Men	60	34	6
Women	65	29	6
Race			
White	62	33	5
Nonwhite	68	19	13
Age			
18 to 29 years	68	29	3
30 to 49 years	61	35	4
50 years and over	61	29	10
Community size			
1 million and over	69	24	7
500,000 — 999,999	65	27	8
50,000 — 499,999	67	28	5
2,500 — 49,999	55	37	8
Under 2,500	59	37	4
Education			
Grade school	68	16	16
High school	60	35	5
College	65	31	4
Region			
East	66	29	5
Midwest	59	34	7
South	63	29	8
West	66	30	4

Absenteeism

Few school systems have found adequate ways to cope with the thorny problem of absenteeism. In one city (New York), only 71% of enrolled high school students are in school on a given day.

To see what suggestions parents of schoolchildren and others might have, this "open" question was asked:

In your opinion, what can be done by the schools to reduce student absenteeism (truancy)?

The suggestions offered tend to fall in about equal numbers into three broad categories.

Category 1 — Persons who, in general, believe that the schools and the teachers are chiefly to blame for absenteeism.

These typical direct quotations indicate how persons in this category would deal with the problem: "The courses should be made more interesting. Few teachers ever bother to make what they are teaching exciting or important to the students." "Teachers should spend more time with students, be more dedicated, and avoid being clock watchers." "Courses should be more practical, more 'to-day'-related." "Get the students who stay away from school most often to sit down and talk over their school problems and make their own suggestions about solving the problem." "Incentives should be devised. . . . Have each class compete with other classes. The one with the highest attendance gets a half-day off."

Category 2 — Persons who, in general, start with the conviction that parents are chiefly to blame for absenteeism.

Some of their suggestions follow: "Parents, whether they are at home or work, should be immediately notified if their child fails to show up at school." "Parents in many cases do not realize how important attendance is. They should be brought together and told exactly why attendance is so important." "When a child stays away from school the parents should be made to confer with the teachers, with the child present, to find out why." "The schools and the local authorities should get after the parents. Put them on the block and make them see that they are responsible."

Category 3 — Persons who, in general, regard truancy as a matter for the police and local authorities.

Some typical suggestions: "More truant officers should be hired and local laws should be strictly enforced." "The police should be ordered to stop any child of school age who is on the streets during school hours. If the child doesn't have a written excuse, he or she should be taken into custody."

Other suggestions: "Children who are frequently absent should have to obey earlier curfew laws." "They should have to make up their schoolwork on Saturdays or during summer vacation." "They should be put to work cleaning up the parks and playgrounds."

Punishing Parents For Student Absenteeism

Since many people hold the view that parents are responsible for their children's absenteeism from school, the proposal has been made that parents be brought into court and fined if their children continually fail to attend.

To learn how much support this proposal might have throughout the nation, the following question was included in the survey:

In your opinion, should, or should not, parents be brought into court and given a small fine when a child of theirs is frequently absent without excuse (truant) from school?

A slight majority of all respondents vote for such a penalty. Parents of children who are now attending school, and who would be affected by such a ruling, are more evenly divided, but still more favor the proposal than oppose it.

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, should fine	51	52	48	46
No, should not	40	39	44	48
Don't know/ no answer	9	9	8	6

Analysis of the vote by groups brings to light these facts: Older citizens favor the proposal; young adults oppose. The only region of the nation where a majority opposes the plan is the West. Both blacks and whites favor the proposal, as do those in the lowest educational level.

By socioeconomic groups:

	Yes, Should Fine %	No, Should Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	51	40	9
Sex			
Men	52	40	8
Women	50	41	9
Race			
White	52	40	8
Nonwhite	46	40	14
Age			
18 to 29 years	39	56	5
30 to 49 years	51	40	9
50 years and over	60	29	11
Community size			
1 million and over	56	33	11
500,000 – 999,999	39	50	11
50,000 – 499,999	50	45	5
2,500 – 49,999	51	42	7
Under 2,500	53	37	10
Education			
Grade school	65	25	10
High school	48	43	9
College	48	44	8
Region			
East	55	38	7
Midwest	48	41	11
South	53	37	10
West	44	50	6

Rearranging School Hours For Working Fathers and Mothers

With an increasing number of mothers having jobs outside the home, the question arises as to whether school hours should be changed so that children will not be left unsupervised in the afternoons while they await the return of their parents.

The question:

Most people who have jobs today do not get home from work until 5:00 p.m. or later. In your opinion, should the schools arrange the afternoon school schedule so that children would get home at about the same time as their parents, or not?

Taking all respondents into account, this proposal fails to win majority approval. Nationally, the vote is nearly 2-1 opposed. The proposal wins a higher favorable response among those persons who do not have children in school than it does from those who do. Persons in the lowest education group also favor the plan.

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, should change schedule	33	38	22	17
No, should not	59	52	73	76
Don't know/ no answer	8	10	5	7

By socioeconomic groups:

	Yes, Should Change Schedule %	No, Should Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	33	59	8
Sex			
Men	32	58	10
Women	33	61	6
Race			
White	32	60	8
Nonwhite	38	54	8
Age			
18 to 29 years	29	65	6
30 to 49 years	24	69	7
50 years and over	43	46	11
Community size			
1 million and over	32	59	9
500,000 – 999,999	30	64	6
50,000 – 499,999	37	55	8
2,500 – 49,999	31	59	10
Under 2,500	31	62	7
Education			
Grade school	50	38	12
High school	30	64	6
College	29	62	9
Region			
East	33	58	9
Midwest	30	62	8
South	34	58	8
West	35	60	5

Advantages of Schools in Small Communities

Two to three decades ago it was widely believed that big-city schools, with their large enrollments, were better suited to provide quality education than the schools in small communities. In fact, it was this belief that to a great extent powered the movement for regionalization and for consolidating schools into still larger units.

Today bigness in almost every field is out of vogue. Decentralization is popular in government, business, and (judging from results of this survey) in education as well. The vast majority of persons throughout the nation believe that students get a better education in schools located in small communities than they do in the big cities.

Size alone, obviously, cannot account fully for the disfavor in which many big-city schools are held. The racial mix has changed greatly in the last two decades, with the migration of upper- and middle-class white families to the suburbs.

Apart from the question of quality of education, the fact that most people today believe that education in the small communities is better will almost certainly induce more families with children of school age to leave the city for the suburbs or other small communities.

In general, do you think that students today get a better education in schools that are located in small communities or in schools located in big cities?

	Small Com- muni- ties %	Big Cities %	Makes No Differ- ence %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	68	11	12	9
Sex				
Men	67	12	12	9
Women	68	10	13	9
Race				
White	68	11	13	8
Nonwhite	61	12	10	17
Age				
18 to 29 years	70	15	10	5
30 to 49 years	67	11	12	10
50 years and over	67	7	15	11
Community size				
1 million and over	71	10	12	7
500,000 – 999,999	52	16	19	13
50,000 – 499,999	67	12	12	9
2,500 – 49,999	70	10	11	9
Under 2,500	73	8	11	8
Education				
Grade school	61	8	17	14
High school	71	10	12	7
College	66	13	12	9
Region				
East	73	7	13	7
Midwest	69	10	12	9
South	61	16	12	11
West	68	9	14	9

Meeting Energy Shortages

The very cold winter of 1976-77 closed many schools for varying periods of time. With the prospect of energy shortages in the future, the question arises as to whether schools should close during the coldest weeks of winter.

To get the public's reaction, and especially the reaction of those parents with children now of school age, this question was asked:

In order to save energy (fuel oil, gas), it has been suggested that the schools be closed in the middle of the winter. Children would make up lost school time by starting the school year in late August and ending the school year around the first of July. Would you favor or oppose adopting this plan here?

The results, nationally, show that the public is opposed to this proposal by the ratio of 56% to 36%, with 8% having no opinion. Parents of children now attending public schools are even more generally opposed. They vote against the plan 64% to 32%.

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favor closing	36	38	32	26
Oppose closing	56	51	64	67
Don't know/ no answer	8	11	4	7

Although no group or section of the nation votes in favor of the plan, many observers of the public scene, knowing the reluctance of the public to accept changes in the educational system, may be surprised at the size of the minority who favor the proposal.

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	36	56	8
Sex			
Men	37	56	7
Women	35	55	10
Race			
White	36	57	7
Nonwhite	34	50	16
Age			
18 to 29 years	39	55	6
30 to 49 years	33	60	7
50 years and over	37	51	12
Community size			
1 million and over	35	54	11
500,000 – 999,999	36	56	8
50,000 – 499,999	36	56	8
2,500 – 49,999	41	46	13
Under 2,500	33	62	5
Education			
Grade school	37	50	13
High school	34	58	8
College	39	55	6

Region	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
East	37	55	8
Midwest	37	55	8
South	39	53	8
West	29	61	10

Media Coverage of Education

Many educators complain that the news media give too much play of a negative character to happenings in the public schools. At the same time, they say the media pay too little attention to what the schools are achieving or trying to achieve.

To determine how the public stands on this issue, the following question was asked:

Do you think the news media (newspapers, TV, and radio) give a fair and accurate picture of the public schools in this community, or not?

While many persons agree with the educators who hold this view, a greater number disagree.

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, give fair and accurate picture	42	39	48	41
No, do not	36	34	39	42
Don't know/ no answer	22	27	13	17

Significantly, more parents of children now attending the public schools say that the media are fair and accurate than hold the opposite view. Only in the Western states do more respondents say that the media are unfair.

Nationally, the results show that 42% say the media are fair and accurate; 36% say they are not; and 22% have no opinion on this issue.

The results by major groups in the population follow:

	Yes, Give Fair and Accurate Picture %	No, Do Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	42	36	22
Sex			
Men	43	35	22
Women	41	37	22
Race			
White	42	36	22
Nonwhite	40	35	25
Age			
18 to 29 years	45	37	18
30 to 49 years	46	37	17
50 years and over	37	32	31
Community size			
1 million and over	36	36	28
500,000 — 999,999	46	32	22

	Yes, Give Fair and Accurate Picture %	No, Do Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Community size			
50,000 — 499,999	44	38	18
2,500 — 49,999	42	34	24
Under 2,500	43	36	21
Education			
Grade school	32	27	41
High school	42	40	18
College	47	33	20
Region			
East	45	33	22
Midwest	45	35	20
South	40	35	25
West	36	42	22

Improving Media Coverage

To find out what the news media could do to better report on local education, all respondents included in the survey were asked:

In your opinion, how could the media (newspapers, TV, and radio) improve their reporting of education in the local schools?

The answers elicited by this question often referred to the paucity of news about the schools reported in many communities. But the most frequent response dwelt on the need for more positive news — interesting things the schools are doing to achieve their educational goals.

Many specific suggestions were offered which the media might well consider. Among these were:

"Reporters should be sent into the school rooms to see what goes on there. They should put themselves in the teacher's place, and in the student's place."

"It would be interesting to find out about all the different courses that are offered."

"Reporters should be sent into the schoolrooms to see lems."

"Why don't they [the media] tell us about the standing of the local schools — how well they do in comparison with the private schools, and with other schools in nearby cities."

"I should like to know more about the changes that are being introduced and why. There should be more background information about education and about new programs."

"Outstanding students should be written up and praised the way top athletes are."

"An interesting series could be built around the idea of a typical day at school with a typical seventh-grader, ninth-grader, etc. I can remember what went on in my day. I wonder if it is the same now."

"I hear a lot about the gadgets now used in the schools and in the classrooms to teach different subjects such as foreign language and I would like to know more about them."

"The media report on the school budget, but they never tell, in detail, just where the tax dollars are spent."

"In the magazines I read about 'open' classrooms, 'team teaching,' and such things, and I wonder if our local schools go in for these new ideas."

Decision-Making Authority Of Advisory Committees

One of the most useful and popular means of increasing citizen participation in school and civic affairs and of taking advantage of the training and expertise of these citizens is to create citizen advisory groups.

The question arises as to how much authority these citizen advisory groups should have. Should final decision-making authority be left with the advisory groups, or should it remain with the school board?

Three questions, probing views in respect to advisory group authority concerning curriculum, staff selection, and the budget, were included in the survey instrument to obtain the views of the public.

The results show that people want the final decision-making authority to remain where it is: with the school board.

Although there is slightly more sentiment for giving advisory groups authority over the budget than over the curriculum or staff selection, the overwhelming majority believe that the school board should retain its present authority.

These findings should not be taken to mean that school boards should not listen to advisory groups on all three matters. However, if the public believes that school boards are making wrong decisions, it has the right to elect new board members.

The first question asked:

Many school systems have committees made up of citizens who serve in an advisory capacity. Do you think these advisory groups should have the final decision-making authority over the curriculum, or should the final authority remain with the school board?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Authority with citizen groups	17	18	15	23
Authority with school board	71	68	78	71
Don't know/ no answer	12	14	7	6

The second question:

How about decisions regarding staff selection — should the final authority be given to these citizen committees or should the final authority remain with the school board?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Authority with citizen groups	15	15	13	18
Authority with school board	75	73	80	76
Don't know/ no answer	10	12	7	6

The third question:

And decisions about the budget — should the final authority be given to these citizen committees or should the final authority remain with the school board?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Authority with citizen groups	19	20	19	32
Authority with school board	70	68	72	65
Don't know/ no answer	11	12	9	3

Courses for Parents on How To Deal With Their Children's Problems

Throughout the nation there is wide acceptance of the view that parents must work closely with the schools if students are to reach their full educational potential.

Problems of discipline, motivation, poor work and study habits, drug and alcohol addiction, and many others normally have their origin in the home. Unless something is done to correct the home situation, the best efforts of teachers will fail.

It is probably no exaggeration to say that the next great advance in education will come when parents and teachers work as a team, with parents taking full responsibility for problems that arise in the home.

The 1976 survey revealed that more than three in every four U.S. adults approve of the idea of offering courses to parents as a regular part of the public school educational system. And parents of schoolchildren in the public schools voted nearly 4-1 for this plan. As further evidence of their approval, they said they were willing to pay additional taxes to support such a program.

In fact, in every survey in which this proposal to help parents, through a course of instruction, to help their children in school has been asked, sizable majorities have voted in favor of such courses.

In the present survey an effort was made to discover the specific subjects that might be included in such a course for parents. Presumably, if the plan were to be carried out by a school, then the parents of children in a given grade would meet together to discuss the problems of children of that age.

From a total of 16 suggested topics, parents of children

now attending school were asked to choose those that interested them most.

The question was worded in this manner:

The subjects listed on this card are some that could be covered in a special course for parents offered by the local schools. Which of these subjects would interest you the MOST?

(A card was then given to each respondent, with 16 suggested topics.)

Listed below in order of mention are the 16 suggested topics for parents whose eldest child is 13 to 20 years of age.

1. What to do about drugs, smoking, use of alcohol
2. How to help the child choose a career
3. How to help the child set high achievement goals
4. How to develop good work habits
5. How to encourage reading
6. How to increase interest in school and school subjects
7. How to help the child organize his/her homework
8. How to improve parent/child relationships
9. How to improve the child's thinking and observation abilities
10. How to deal with the child's emotional problems
11. How to use family activities to help the child do better in school
12. How to improve the child's school behavior
13. How to reduce television viewing
14. How to help the child get along with other children
15. How to improve health habits
16. How to deal with dating problems

Ranked below in order of mention are the 16 suggested topics for parents whose eldest child is 12 years or younger.

1. What to do about drugs, smoking, use of alcohol
2. How to help the child set high achievement goals
3. How to develop good work habits
4. How to improve the child's school behavior
5. How to improve the child's thinking and observation abilities
6. How to deal with the child's emotional problems
7. How to increase interest in school and school subjects
8. How to help the child organize his/her homework
9. How to improve parent/child relationships
10. How to help the child choose a career
11. How to use family activities to help the child do better in school
12. How to encourage reading
13. How to help the child get along with other children
14. How to reduce television viewing
15. How to deal with dating problems
16. How to improve health habits

Experience in carrying out such a program of instruction would undoubtedly uncover other areas to include in future courses.

Significantly, the topics selected as most interesting by parents who have attended college are not markedly different from the topics regarded as most interesting by

those who have had little schooling. This would indicate that home problems are very much the same in the best-educated, highest-income families and those farther down on the socioeconomic scale.

In short, virtually all parents freely admit that they need help, and they would like to have the local schools offer this help and guidance by regular courses and by discussion.

Government-Mandated Programs

Public school and college administrators are becoming more and more vexed by rules and regulations promulgated by Washington that require certain actions to be taken without regard to the additional time and cost entailed.

Making provision for physically and mentally handicapped students is one of these. Local schools are required to bear the added costs of special programs without help, in most instances, from the federal government.

To measure the public's views on this issue, the following question was included in the survey:

Services for the physically and mentally handicapped student cost more than regular school services. When the local schools are required to provide these special services by the federal government, should the federal government pay the extra cost, or not?

The overwhelming majority of those interviewed say the federal government should pay the extra cost of such programs. In fact, every important group in the population and every region of the nation supports the idea that the federal government should pay the extra costs.

	Yes, Govern- ment Should Pay Extra Cost %	No, Should Not % %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	82	11	7
Sex			
Men	80	13	7
Women	83	9	8
Race			
White	82	11	7
Nonwhite	81	10	9
Age			
18 to 29 years	83	11	6
30 to 49 years	81	11	8
50 years and over	81	11	8
Community size			
1 million and over	83	11	6
500,000 — 999,999	77	16	7
50,000 — 499,999	81	13	6
2,500 — 49,999	78	10	12
Under 2,500	86	8	6
Education			
Grade school	81	8	11
High school	83	10	7
College	79	15	6

Region	Yes, Govern- Ment Should Pay Extra Cost %	No, Should Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
East	85	11	4
Midwest	80	13	7
South	81	9	10
West	79	14	7

Local Control of Federal Programs

Another source of concern is the federal government's insistence that local school authorities follow strict regulations when funds are awarded. Oftentimes, local authorities have different ideas about how best to spend these funds.

Respondents again reveal their anti-Washington, anti-red tape attitudes in their answers to the following question:

When federal agencies appropriate money for educational programs, they usually require the schools that receive this money to spend it as these agencies direct. Should, or should not, this be changed to permit local school authorities to decide how the money is to be spent?

The nation's adults vote 2-1 for giving local school authorities jurisdiction over how the money is to be spent to carry out the program locally. Every major group in the population is in agreement on this issue, as the findings show.

By socioeconomic groups:

	Yes, Change To Allow Local People To Decide %	No, Should Not Change %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	62	29	9
Sex			
Men	64	28	8
Women	60	30	10
Race			
White	63	28	9
Nonwhite	53	32	15
Age			
18 to 29 years	61	33	6
30 to 49 years	64	28	8
50 years and over	61	26	13
Community size			
1 million and over	63	27	10
500,000 - 999,999	55	34	11
50,000 - 499,999	66	27	7
2,500 - 49,999	59	29	12
Under 2,500	62	29	9
Education			
Grade school	53	29	18
High school	62	30	8
College	65	27	8
Region			
East	60	31	9
Midwest	62	28	10
South	62	29	9
West	64	26	10

Take Education Out of HEW?

Frequent complaints are made that the present Department of Health, Education, and Welfare is so huge that education is not given the attention that it merits. Some believe that funding of education by the federal government would be increased if it did not have to compete with health and welfare in the same department. Still others believe that public education is so important that it deserves cabinet status in its own right.

For these reasons, the issue was taken to a representative sample of the people of the nation to get their views. The question asked was this:

In your opinion, should *Education* be taken out of the present Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and made a separate department of the federal government, or not?

Sentiment on this issue is fairly evenly divided, with slightly more respondents voting to keep it in the present department rather than make it a separate department.

The results:

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favor making education a separate department	40	40	40	42
Oppose	45	42	49	47
Don't know/ no answer	15	18	11	11

A plurality of voters in cities of one million and over in population, as well as those living in the East and those who are college-educated, favor making education a separate department in the federal government.

	Yes, Should Be Separate Department %	No, Should Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	40	45	15
Sex			
Men	41	45	14
Women	40	44	16
Race			
White	42	43	15
Nonwhite	30	51	19
Age			
18 to 29 years	44	46	10
30 to 49 years	39	48	13
50 years and over	39	40	21
Community size			
1 million and over	46	37	17
500,000 - 999,999	37	48	15
50,000 - 499,999	39	47	14
2,500 - 49,999	37	50	13
Under 2,500	41	42	17
Education			
Grade school	31	43	26
High school	39	47	14
College	48	41	11

Region	Yes, Should Be Separate Department %	No, Should Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
East	43	41	16
Midwest	36	48	16
South	42	45	13
West	41	43	16

Tenure

A recurring issue of recent years has to do with tenure for teachers. During the nine years that these studies dealing with the public's attitudes toward the public schools have been conducted, views on tenure have been probed on three occasions by questions that contained an explanation of the issue.

The point often arises, however, as to how many persons in the general public are familiar with the term "tenure" and how persons who are better informed in this respect view the problem.

In this connection, a question was first asked of all persons included in the survey:

Do you happen to know what the word "tenure" means as it applies to teachers' jobs?

A second question asked of those who replied "yes":

Just as you understand it, what does tenure mean?

A third question, limited to those who gave a correct answer, asked:

Do you favor or oppose tenure for teachers?

A total of 28% of the adults interviewed nationally could give a correct definition of tenure as it applies to teachers' jobs.

When persons who know what the term means are asked whether they favor or oppose tenure, a majority say they oppose tenure. The same conclusion was reached in the three earlier surveys in which tenure questions were asked.

Persons who have no children in the schools are more likely to favor tenure than those who have children in school. Among the former, 44% favor tenure and 45% oppose it; in the case of parents with children in the public schools, 54% oppose and 37% favor it. In the case of parents with children in parochial or private schools, 84% oppose and 16% favor tenure.

(Based on those who know what the term means)	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Favor tenure	40	44	37	16
Oppose	50	45	54	84
Don't know/ no answer	10	11	9	—

Parent/Teacher Conferences

At least in theory, parents should follow the educational progress of their children by holding frequent conferences with their children's teachers. But do they? Obviously, the situation changes from school to school and state to state.

To shed light on the frequency of parent/teacher conferences, this question was asked of those parents who now have children attending school:

Thinking about your eldest child, have you at any time since the beginning of the school year discussed your child's progress, or problems, with any of your child's teachers?

Fieldwork for the present survey was conducted during the period April 28 through May 2, 1977. The figures must, therefore, be interpreted accordingly.

The findings show that 79% of all parents whose children are 12 years of age and under had talked to one or more of their child's teachers about his/her progress since the beginning of the school year. But only 55% of parents whose children are 13 years old and over had talked to any teacher.

A second question, asked of those who had talked to one of their child's teachers, sought to discover how many conferences had been held:

About how often [have you talked to your child's teachers] since the beginning of the school year?

In the case of parents whose eldest child is 12 years of age or younger, the median number of conferences is two.

The same figure — two — is the median for parent/teacher conferences for parents whose eldest child is 13 years of age or older.

From these findings, it appears that during an average period of eight school months, three out of five parents will talk to teachers about the progress of their child. And, on the average, these parents, during a period of eight months, will hold two such meetings.

Parents' Estimates of Time Children Spend On Television, Homework, Reading

Parents who now have children enrolled in the public or parochial and private schools were asked to give an estimate of the time spent, on a typical school day, by their eldest child on television, homework, and reading.

Since time spent is likely to vary with age, the results are reported for those whose eldest child is 12 years of age and younger, and those 13 years of age and older.

The first question:

(For eldest child) About how much time does he/she spend looking at television after school hours and until he/she goes to bed, on a typical school day?

(Based on those responding)	By Children 12 Years of Age And Younger	By Children 13 Years of Age And Older
	%	%
No time	2	5
Up to 1 hour	20	26
Over 1 hour to 2 hours	38	33
Over 2 hours to 3 hours	28	17
Over 3 hours to 4 hours	10	11
Over 4 hours	2	8

The second question:

And about how much time on school homework on a typical school day?

(Based on those responding)	By Children 12 Years of Age And Younger	By Children 13 Years of Age And Older
	%	%
No time	24	15
Up to 15 minutes	3	3
16 to 30 minutes	22	10
Over 30 minutes to 1 hour	29	30
Over 1 hour to 2 hours	17	32
Over 2 hours	5	10

The third question:

And about how much time on reading — not connected with schoolwork — on a typical school day?

(Based on those responding)	By Children 12 Years of Age And Younger	By Children 13 Years of Age And Older
	%	%
No time	12	28
Up to 30 minutes	43	24
Over 30 minutes to 1 hour	33	28
Over 1 hour	12	20

What this adds up to — for children 12 years and younger — is that the typical child spends approximately:

- 2 hours viewing television on a typical school day,
- 30 minutes reading (not schoolwork), and
- 45 minutes doing homework.

Among children 13 years of age and older, the typical child spends approximately:

- 2 hours viewing television,
- 30 minutes reading (not schoolwork), and
- 1 hour doing homework.

Parental Help with Homework

To find out whether parents help their children with homework, the following question was asked of parents with school-age children about their eldest child:

Do you regularly help your child with his/her homework?

Parents who have children in the public schools and parents of children in the parochial/private schools give almost exactly the same amount of help to their children.

	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, regularly	24	17
Yes, when he/she needs help	27	32
No	44	41
Don't know/no answer	5	10

When the age of the eldest child is considered, parents respond in this way:

	Children 12 Years of Age And Under %	Children 13 Years of Age And Older %
Yes, regularly	37	16
Yes, when he/she needs help	34	26
No	27	58
Don't know/no answer	2	*

*Less than 1%

Time Limits on Television Viewing

Because the attraction of television is so great for children in most families, many educators have come to the conclusion that definite limits should be placed on the amount of time that parents permit their children to view television during the school week.

To discover how many parents already impose such rules, this question was asked (about the eldest child):

Do you place a definite limit on the amount of time your child spends viewing television during the school week?

The results:

	National Totals %	Parents Whose Eldest Child Is 12 Years And Under %	Parents Whose Eldest Child Is 13 Years And Over %
Yes, have definite time limit	35	49	28
No	60	50	70
Don't know/no answer	5	1	2

Safety of Children

One of the interesting facts turned up in the present survey is the relatively high percentage of parents (one in four) who fear for the physical safety of their children in school — and 28% fear for the safety of their children in their own neighborhoods. Fewer parents of children who attend parochial school worry about their children's physical safety in school, but still the figure is high — one in five.

The first question asked (about the eldest child):

When he/she is at school, do you fear for his/her physical safety?

	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, fear for safety	25	19
No	69	73
Don't know/no answer	6	8

The second question asked:

When your child is outside at play in your own neighborhood, do you fear for his/her safety?

	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, fear for safety	28	30
No	68	61
Don't know/no answer	4	9

FURTHER BREAKDOWNS

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	26	26	27	29
Integration/segregation/ busing	13	13	11	18
Lack of proper finan- cial support	12	11	14	14
Difficulty of getting "good" teachers	11	10	12	19
Poor curriculum	10	9	12	14
Use of drugs	7	8	6	3
Parents' lack of interest	5	5	6	7
Size of school/classes	5	4	7	11
Teachers' lack of interest	5	4	6	5
Mismanagement of funds/programs	4	4	3	5
Pupils' lack of interest	3	3	4	2
Problems with ad- ministration	3	3	3	5
Crime/vandalism	2	3	1	1
Lack of proper facilities	2	2	3	—
Transportation	2	2	1	1
Parents' involvement in school activities	1	1	1	—
Communication problems	1	1	1	—
Too many schools/ declining enrollment	1	1	1	1
School board policies	1	*	2	—
Drinking/alcoholism	1	1	*	—
There are no problems	4	2	7	3
Miscellaneous	5	4	6	7
Don't know/no answer	16	21	9	3

*Less than 1%

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

Ways in Which Local Schools Are Good

In your own opinion, in what ways are your local PUBLIC schools particularly good?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
The curriculum	23	17	35	28
The teachers	20	18	26	13
Extracurricular activities	10	8	15	9
School facilities	7	6	9	6
Equal opportunity for all students	4	3	5	8
Good administration	3	2	5	3
Parental interest/ participation	3	2	4	1
Good student/teacher relationships	3	1	6	1
Good discipline	2	2	2	1
Small school or small classes	2	2	3	3
Up-to-date teaching methods	2	2	3	2
No racial conflicts	2	1	2	3
Good lunch program	1	1	2	3
Transportation system	1	1	1	1
Kids are kept off the street	1	1	*	—
Close to home	1	1	1	—
Nothing is good	9	9	7	10
Miscellaneous	1	1	1	—
Don't know/no answer	31	39	14	29

*Less than 1%

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

Small Communities vs. Big Cities

In general, do you think that students today get a better education in schools that are located in small communities or in schools located in big cities?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Small communities	68	66	72	59
Big cities	11	11	10	16
Makes no difference	12	13	11	20
Don't know/ no answer	9	10	7	5

Government-Mandated Programs

**Services for the physically and mentally handi-
capped student cost more than regular school ser-
vices. When the local schools are required to provide
these special services by the federal government,
should the federal government pay the extra cost, or
not?**

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, government should pay extra cost	82	80	85	84
No, should not	11	12	9	14
Don't know/ no answer	7	8	6	2

Region	Education	
East	Elementary grades	16
Midwest	High school incomplete	16
South	High school complete	34
West	Technical, trade, or business school	5
	College incomplete	17
	College graduate	12
	Undesignated	*
		100
Community Size		
1 million & over		20
500,000 to 999,999		12
50,000 to 499,999		26
2,500 to 49,999		16
Under 2,500		26
		100

* Less than 1%

Local Control of Federal Programs

When federal agencies appropriate money for educational programs, they usually require the schools that receive this money to spend it as these agencies direct. Should, or should not, this be changed to permit local school authorities to decide how the money is to be spent?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, change to allow local people to decide	62	60	65	67
No, should not change	29	29	29	27
Don't know/ no answer	9	11	6	6

COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE

No children in schools 66%
Public school parents 30%*
Parochial school parents 6%*

*Totals exceed 34% because some parents have children attending more than one kind of school.

Sex	%	Occupation	
Men	47	Business & professional	27
Women	53	Clerical & sales	8
	100	Farm	2
		Skilled labor	19
		Unskilled labor	21
		Nonlabor force	20
		Undesignated	3
			100
Race		Income	
White	88	\$20,000 & over	22
Nonwhite	12	\$15,000 to \$19,999	18
	100	\$10,000 to \$14,999	23
		\$7,000 to \$9,999	10
		\$5,000 to \$6,999	9
		\$3,000 to \$4,999	10
		Under \$3,000	7
		Undesignated	1
			100
Religion		Political Affiliation	
Protestant	60	Republican	21
Roman Catholic	29	Democrat	45
Jewish	3	Independent	31
Others	8	Other	3
	100		100
Age			
18 to 24 years	18		
25 to 29 years	10		
30 to 49 years	35		
50 years & over	37		
	100		

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 ninth 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, 1975, and 1976 polls are available at the prices noted above for 1977 reprints.

Use this address in ordering: Director of Administrative Services, Phi Delta Kappa, Box 789, Eighth and Union, Bloomington, IN 47401. For phone orders, use 812/339-1156, ext. 24.

A KAPPAN Viewpoints Feature

Ellis Sandoz

More CBE in Texas

Proponents of competency-based education (CBE) in Texas have struck again, this time with a vengeance. The latest ploy is to require CBE of all schools and school districts applying to the Texas Education Agency for accreditation of programs and systems.

New Texas school accreditation regulations containing the detailed demands were promulgated last May by Commissioner M. L. Brockette after a two-year period of formulation. Riding the wave of dissatisfaction with results of public school education and of increased funding of local education from the state treasury, the new regulations demand a so-called "accountability/educational improvement approach" or "system" of all school districts. A careful analysis of the regulations, however, shows them to be merely the CBE concept decked out in new clothes.

Whatever the impact of the regulations when fully implemented, the demands made are, on their face, sweeping. Accreditation is for the first time made mandatory, and it is linked with eligibility to receive funds from the state treasury for local school districts. Under school finance legislation enacted in July by a special session of the Texas legislature, 85 cents out of every dollar spent locally will come from the state

treasury; the remaining 15 cents will come from local property taxes. No CBE operation, then no money — a message any school board and superintendent can grasp.

Opposition to the regulations was belated and scattered. It came mainly from persons outside the education establishment concerned by an evident power grab by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) bureaucracy at the expense of local control and teachers' professional rights and responsibilities. Texas law places "exclusive power to manage and govern the public free schools of the district" squarely in the hands of the local board of trustees. But the prescription of policy guidelines and managerial and governance stipulations in the new regulations seems seriously to infringe on, or disastrously erode, this local control.

Equally serious, teachers' professional rights and autonomy are threatened. For example, "Principle 7" of the regulations bluntly states: "Teachers in the district employ strategies and techniques known to be effective in causing students to learn. Methods and practices likely to have negative effects upon students are not condoned." At the outset, the regulations warn: "Occasionally, an indicator [i.e., specific portion of the regulations] requires a particular methodology."

For reasons best known to themselves (if not to their rank and file membership), such formidable political powers in the state as the Texas Association of School Boards and the Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA) have

acquiesced in the bureaucratic power grab. Their preoccupation has been with how the money is to be allocated, while the long-term implications of the accreditation regulations go largely unrecognized.

Countermeasures have, however, achieved defeat of an effort by the TEA to set the new policy in concrete through legislative enactment of a new "accountability" chapter in the Texas Education Code. The TSTA lent a hand in that. The opposition now has shifted to the Texas attorney general's office. Briefs have been filed there, together with formal requests for an advisory opinion, on various aspects of the legality of the regulations under Texas and federal statutes and constitutional provisions.

The big issues are two: Shall local control of the schools be surrendered to the omniscient bureaucracy become Big Brother in Austin? Shall Texas's professional teachers become second-class citizens, divested without a murmur of their First and Fourteenth Amendment rights, as the CBE ideology is laid down as the law of the land?

At deadline time, those issues still were in the balance. Opponents to the regulations, meanwhile, took heart by recalling Associate Justice Robert H. Jackson's great words from another state board of education encounter: "If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be *orthodox* in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein. If there are any circumstances which permit an exception, they do not now occur to us. . . ." That doctrine applied in West Virginia in 1943, and the Supreme Court applied it again in New Hampshire in 1977. Presumably it has vitality in Texas, too. Time will tell. □

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