

The 14th Annual

Gallup Poll Of the Public's Attitudes Toward The Public Schools

by George H. Gallup

Since 1970 the *Kappan* has had the privilege of initial full publication of the annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. Until 1981, other groups sponsored and financed the poll. Now, with the assistance of the Lilly Endowment of Indianapolis, Phi Delta Kappa has full control of and financial responsibility for the poll.

The Gallup education poll will continue to be a source of reliable information concerning trends in opinion about significant school questions. For school officials, the poll is valuable in at least two important ways: It alerts decision makers to overall public reaction to a variety of school programs and policies, and it serves as a national benchmark against which local attitudes may be measured.

Local officials are welcome to use questions asked in the Gallup education surveys. The questions are not copyrighted. Moreover, no limits are placed on the use of information contained in this report, beyond customary credit to source and observance of the canons of accuracy and completeness of quotation.

In 1980 Phi Delta Kappa's Dissemination Division, assisted by the Gallup Organization, prepared a package of materials to help school districts and other agencies survey local populations. For details of this service, called PACE (Polling Attitudes of the Community on Education), write or telephone Wilmer Bugher, associate executive secretary for administration, Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402. The phone number is 812/339-1156.

In preparing for this year's poll, Phi Delta Kappa obtained suggestions from more than 100 educators and education writers. We wish to thank them for their excellent cooperation. We are also grateful to a number of major education associations for sending representatives to a meeting in Washington, D.C., at which poll questions and policies were discussed. Individuals and the organizations they represented were: William G. Carr, retired executive director, National Education Association; Benjamin Ebersole, past president, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; Jeremiah Floyd, associate executive director, National School Boards Association; Roy Forbes, director, Education Commission of the States; Anne Kahn, consultant, Commission on Education, National PTA; John Martin, director of federal/state relations, Council of Chief State School Officers; Frank Masters, director of research, and Bonnie Bartholomew, his assistant, National Education Association; Paul Salmon, executive director, American Association of School Administrators; and Jim Ward, director of research, American Federation of Teachers. Special guests were Nancy Kober, legislative specialist, representing Carl Perkins, House Committee on Education and Labor; and Riki Poster, professional staff member, representing Mark Hatfield, Senate Appropriations Committee. Representing Phi Delta Kappa were Ray Tobiason, president; Lowell Rose, executive secretary; and Pauline Gough, managing editor, *Kappan*. — Stanley Elam, coordinator, Gallup Education Poll.

Purpose of the Study

This survey, which measures the attitudes of Americans toward their public schools, is the 14th annual survey in this series. Funding for this survey was provided by Phi Delta Kappa, Inc. Each year the poll attempts to deal with issues of greatest concern both to educators and to the public. New as well as trend questions are included in this and every survey.

To be sure that the survey would embrace the most important issues in the field of education, Phi Delta Kappa organized a meeting of various leaders in the field of education to discuss their ideas, evaluate proposed questions, and suggest new questions for the survey.

We wish to thank all persons who contributed their ideas to this survey.

Research Procedure

The Sample. The sample used in this survey embraced a total of 1,557 adults (18 years of age and older). It is described as a modified probability sample of the United States. Personal, in-home interviewing was conducted in all areas of the U.S. and in all types of communities. A description of the sample can be found at the end of this report.

Time of Interviewing. The fieldwork for this study was carried out during the period of 14-23 May 1982.

The Report. In the tables that follow, the heading "Nonpublic School Parents" includes parents of students who attend parochial schools and parents of students who attend private or independent schools.

Due allowance must be made for statistical variation, especially in the case of findings for small groups where relatively few respondents were interviewed, e.g., non-public school parents.

The findings of this report apply only to the U.S. as a whole and not to individual communities. Local surveys, using the same questions, can be conducted to determine how local areas compare with the national norm.

Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools in 1982

"Lack of discipline" again heads the list of major problems confronting the public schools in 1982. The problem that gained most in mentions since the 1981 survey, however, is the problem of "lack of proper financial support." In 1981 a total of 12% of those interviewed cited this as a major problem; in 1982, 22% mentioned it.

Because many educators have asked for more information on just what people have in mind when they cite discipline as a major problem, two additional questions were included in this year's survey to shed light on the public's perceptions. These will be reported later in this study.

The American public continues to regard the use of drugs as a major problem; the number of mentions of this problem rose from 15% to 20% during the past year. A significant increase was recorded in the number of parents of schoolchildren who cited use of drugs as a major problem.

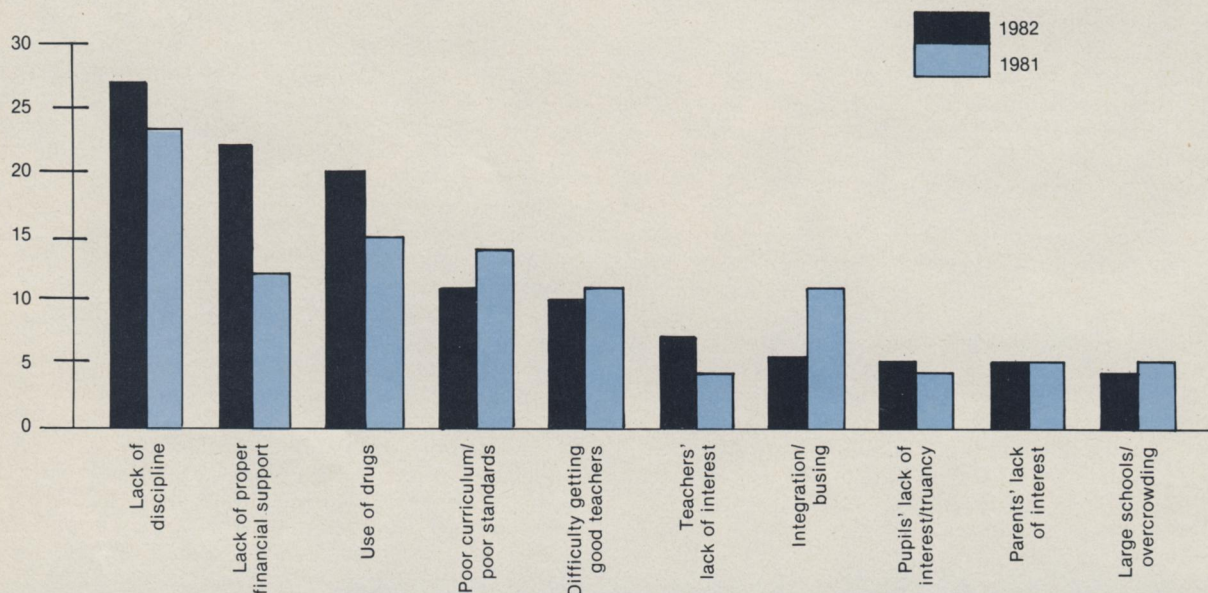
Here is the question:

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

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Lack of discipline	27	27	26	25
Lack of proper financial support	22	21	26	18
Use of drugs	20	20	20	19
Poor curriculum/poor standards	11	13	11	12
Difficulty getting good teachers	10	9	11	8
Teachers' lack of interest	7	6	9	10
Integration/busing (combined)	6	7	5	10

National Totals %

Figure 1. Major Problems Confronting The Public Schools, 1982 and 1981



	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Pupils' lack of interest/ truancy	5	5	4	4
Parents' lack of interest	5	4	5	7
Large schools/ overcrowding	4	5	4	2
Mismanagement of funds	3	3	3	6
Crime/vandalism	3	3	2	2
Drinking/alcoholism	3	3	3	2
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	2	2	2	3
Lack of needed teachers	2	2	2	1
Moral standards	2	2	1	7
Lack of proper facilities	2	1	3	-
Problems with administration	2	1	2	2
Too many schools/de- clining enrollment	2	1	2	4
Transportation	1	1	1	2
School board policies	1	1	1	2
Communication prob- lems	1	1	2	1
Teachers' strikes	1	1	1	-
Fighting	1	1	2	2
Non-English-speaking students	1	1	*	-
Government inter- ference	1	*	1	1
There are no problems	1	1	3	2
Miscellaneous	2	2	4	1
Don't know/no answer	11	14	3	6

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

*Less than one-half of 1%.

1982 Rating of the Public Schools

In recent years, no significant change has occurred in the rating that the public gives to the public schools. If the A and B ratings are combined, then the figure has remained fairly constant since 1976; slightly more than one-third of those questioned have given the schools high ratings, and one-sixth to one-fifth of those interviewed have given the public schools a rating of D or Fail.

The same patterns found in recent years also hold when the ratings of subgroups are examined. Those who have no children in the public schools tend to give the schools a lower rating than do those who have children now attending school. Young adults tend to give the schools a lower rating than older persons. Residents of small communities rate their schools more highly than do the inhabitants of large cities.

The question:

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?

Ratings Given The Public Schools	National Totals									
	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	
A rating	8	9	10	8	9	11	13	13	18	
B rating	29	27	25	26	27	26	29	30	30	
C rating	33	34	29	30	30	28	28	28	21	
D rating	14	13	12	11	11	11	10	9	6	
FAIL	5	7	6	7	8	5	6	7	5	
Don't know	11	10	18	18	15	19	14	13	20	

Rating of the Public Schools						
By Parents with:	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
Children in public schools	11	38	31	13	6	1
Children in nonpublic schools	13	25	39	13	9	1
No children in school	7	25	34	14	5	15

Further breakdowns:

Rating of the Local Public Schools						
	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	8	29	33	14	5	11
Sex						
Men	8	29	35	13	5	10
Women	8	29	32	14	6	11
Race						
White	8	31	33	13	4	11
Nonwhite	11	17	33	16	11	12
Age						
18 - 29 years	4	23	44	17	2	10
30 - 49 years	8	34	30	14	7	7
50 and over	11	29	28	11	6	15
Community Size						
1 million and over	7	25	32	19	6	11
500,000 - 999,999	4	29	37	16	7	7
50,000 - 499,999	6	26	39	15	5	9
2,500 - 49,999	12	38	26	8	6	10
Under 2,500	11	28	31	12	4	14
Central city	4	20	37	22	8	9
Education						
Grade school	16	17	30	11	5	21
High school	7	29	35	15	5	9
College	6	33	32	13	6	10
Region						
East	8	29	36	13	6	8
Midwest	9	36	29	13	4	9
South	9	22	33	14	5	17
West	6	26	37	17	6	8

Rating of Public Schools Nationally

Citizens rate their own schools higher than they rate the public schools nationally. Since parents with children now attending the public schools give the public schools higher ratings than do those who have no children in school, the conclusion can be drawn that those who know most about the schools hold a better opinion of them than do those who do not have firsthand knowledge. The public schools, as an American institution, have an image problem.

The question:

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
Public schools in this community	8	29	33	14	5	11
Public schools in the nation	2	20	44	15	4	15

Public Schools in the Nation				
	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A rating	2	2	3	-
B rating	20	20	20	21
C rating	44	44	44	48
D rating	15	15	15	15
FAIL	4	3	5	2
Don't know	15	16	13	14

Public Schools in the Nation		
	1982	1981
	%	%
A rating	2	2
B rating	20	18
C rating	44	43
D rating	15	15
FAIL	4	6
Don't know	15	16

Further breakdowns:

Public Schools in the Nation						
	A	B	C	D	FAIL	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	2	20	44	15	4	15
Sex						
Men	2	20	47	15	4	12
Women	3	20	42	14	3	18
Race						
White	1	20	46	16	3	14
Nonwhite	8	22	37	9	6	18
Age						
18 - 29 years	2	24	47	14	2	11
30 - 49 years	2	18	47	15	5	13
50 and over	4	18	40	14	4	20
Community Size						
1 million and over	1	20	44	12	5	18
500,000 - 999,999	1	22	44	14	6	13
50,000 - 499,999	3	23	43	17	2	12
2,500 - 49,999	4	21	45	14	4	12
Under 2,500	3	15	45	14	4	19
Central city	3	23	39	15	4	16
Education						
Grade school	9	17	33	10	6	25
High school	2	24	43	14	3	14
College	1	15	52	18	3	11
Region						
East	2	22	46	12	4	14
Midwest	2	16	51	16	3	12
South	3	22	39	14	3	19
West	3	19	41	18	4	15

Federal Funds for Education

If Congress listened to the American people, public school education would receive far more money from the federal government than it now does.

Seven years ago, in the 1975 survey, respondents were asked how federal funds should be distributed if and when more federal money became available. Health care headed the list in that survey with 18% of the first choices; a total of 53% ranked health care either first, second, or third. Public school education ranked second among the 11 areas listed on the card that was handed to respondents. Public school education received 16% of the first choices and 48% of first, second, and third choices combined.

In this year's survey, when the same list of needs was handed to respondents and the same question asked, public school education topped the list with 21% of the first choices and with a combined vote of 55%. Health care received almost exactly the same number of choices as it did in the 1975 survey.

Military defense ranked fourth in this year's survey; it placed eighth in the 1975 study.

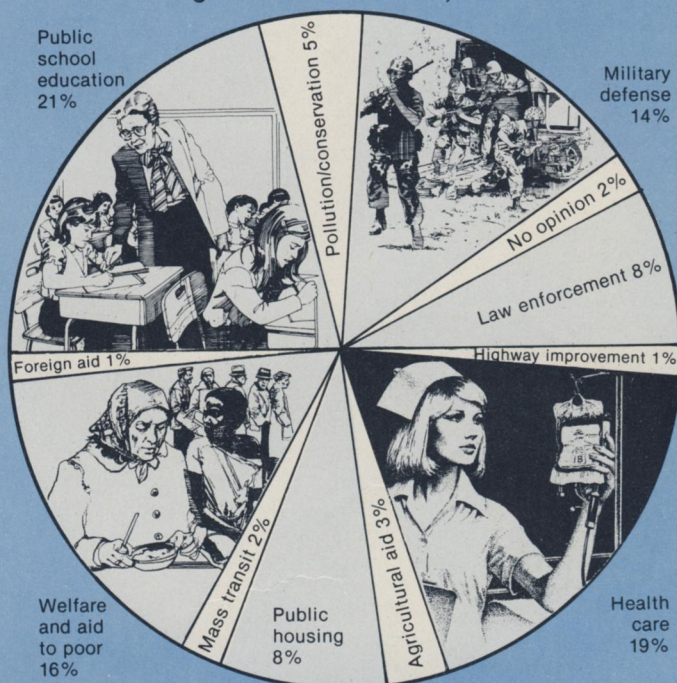
The question:

If and when more federal money from Washington is available, which *one* of the areas on this card do you think should be given first consideration when these funds are distributed? And which *one* of these areas do you think should be given second consideration? And which *one* of these areas do you think should be given third consideration?

National Totals				
1982 Results	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Combined Choices
	%	%	%	%
Public school education	21	17	17	55
Health care	19	19	15	53
Welfare and aid to poor	16	15	11	42
Military defense	14	9	10	33
Law enforcement	8	11	13	32
Public housing	8	9	10	27
Pollution/conservation	5	7	6	18
Agricultural aid	3	4	6	13
Mass transit	2	3	4	9
Highway improvement	1	3	3	7
Foreign aid	1	1	1	3
No opinion	2	2	4	8

National Totals				
1975 Results	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Combined Choices
	%	%	%	%
Health care	18	19	16	53
Public school education	16	15	17	48
Law enforcement	11	14	16	41
Welfare and aid to poor	14	11	7	32
Public housing	10	9	7	26
Pollution/conservation	8	8	8	24
Mass transit	6	7	6	19
Military defense	6	5	5	16
Agricultural aid	4	4	7	15
Highway improvement	4	4	5	13
Foreign aid	1	1	1	3
No opinion	2	3	5	10

Figure 2. Federal Funds, 1982



Where Should Savings Be Made In the School Budget?

With tax revenues from all levels of government sharply curtailed and with costs spiraling, school boards are faced with a continuing problem of where to save money. Here the views of the public are important but not necessarily compelling, since the public probably does not know as much as educators about how best to meet educational goals and requirements.

Questions dealing with schools' costs and savings have been included in three of the annual surveys in this series: in 1971, in 1976, and now in 1982.

The public's views show little change since 1971. As

pointed out in the 1971 report, the public shows a great reluctance to take drastic cost-cutting measures. Strongest support is found for cutting administrative personnel. This reaction on the part of the public is undoubtedly a generalized one that springs from the belief that all institutions are subject to Parkinson's Law and acquire unneeded personnel unless halted.

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 School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
1. Reduce the number of administrative personnel				
Favorable	71	71	71	72
Unfavorable	22	21	25	26
No opinion	7	8	4	2
2. Reduce the number of counselors on the staff				
Favorable	49	48	51	50
Unfavorable	42	40	44	47
No opinion	9	12	5	3
3. Reduce the number of subjects offered				
Favorable	35	34	38	37
Unfavorable	58	57	57	57
No opinion	7	9	5	6
4. Cut out the 12th grade by covering in three years what is now covered in four				
Favorable	31	32	29	25
Unfavorable	62	60	67	68
No opinion	7	8	4	7
5. Cut out after-school activities such as bands, clubs, athletics, etc.				
Favorable	29	28	33	26
Unfavorable	64	65	63	70
No opinion	7	7	4	4
6. Reduce the number of teachers by increasing class sizes				
Favorable	18	20	13	29
Unfavorable	76	73	84	69
No opinion	6	7	3	2
7. Cut all teachers' salaries by a set percentage				
Favorable	17	18	15	14
Unfavorable	76	74	81	80
No opinion	7	8	4	6
8. Reduce special services such as speech, reading, and hearing therapy				
Favorable	11	13	9	7
Unfavorable	83	80	88	91
No opinion	6	7	3	2
9. Reduce instruction in the basics — reading, writing, and arithmetic				
Favorable	3	3	2	3
Unfavorable	93	92	96	95
No opinion	4	5	2	2

Curriculum Changes to Meet Today's Needs

When respondents are asked if they think that the school curriculum should be changed to meet today's needs, slightly more than one-third answer in the affirmative. Those who think that changes are needed are more likely to be persons in the young adult group (18 to 29 years of age), the college educated, those who live in the largest cities, and residents of western states.

When the same question was asked in the 1970 survey, a slightly higher percentage said that they were satisfied with the curriculum. In the intervening years, the number of those who would like changes to be made has risen from 31% to 36%.

Those who believe changes are needed were asked to tell what changes they think are needed. Heading the list of changes, in the answers that relate directly to curriculum, is the need to give more emphasis to the basics. Next, in order of mention, is "more practical instruction," followed by "more vocational classes." A total of 8% offered the generalized comment, "raise academic standards."

Parents of children not enrolled in the public schools hold views that are very much the same as those of other groups in the population.

The question:

Do you think the school curriculum in your community needs to be changed to meet today's needs, or do you think it already meets today's needs?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
1982 Results				
Needs to be changed	36	33	42	46
Already meets needs	42	38	50	44
No opinion	22	29	8	10
1970 Results				
Needs to be changed	31	31	33	28
Already meets needs	46	36	59	57
No opinion	23	33	8	15

Further breakdowns:

	Needs To Be Changed %	Already Meets Needs %	No Opinion %
NATIONAL TOTALS	36	42	22
Sex			
Men	38	42	20
Women	34	41	25
Race			
White	35	43	22
Nonwhite	40	36	24
Age			
18 - 29 years	41	41	18
30 - 49 years	39	42	19
50 and over	29	41	30
Community Size			
1 million and over	28	43	29
500,000 - 999,999	45	35	20
50,000 - 499,999	42	38	20
2,500 - 49,999	30	46	24
Under 2,500	34	44	22
Central city	41	36	23
Education			
Grade school	27	38	35
High school	35	43	22
College	42	40	18
Region			
East	34	45	21
Midwest	35	48	17
South	33	36	31
West	44	35	21

Those who said that they thought the curriculum needs to be changed were asked the following question:

In what ways do you feel it needs to be changed?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
More emphasis on basics	26	26	27	29
More practical instruction	14	15	12	9
More vocational classes	11	13	10	5
Raise academic standards	8	8	7	7
Greater variety of classes	5	5	5	3
More computer courses	4	4	4	3
More math courses	3	2	6	7
More foreign language	3	3	4	2
Upgrade textbooks	3	3	4	-
Stress religion more	3	2	*	2
More English courses	2	2	2	7
More science courses	2	2	3	9
Remove sex education	1	1	1	2
More for gifted students	1	1	1	2
More arts	1	1	2	-
Better college preparation	1	1	2	-
Add health classes	1	1	-	-
Miscellaneous	5	5	6	11
Don't know	7	7	8	2

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

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Appropriating Funds for Special Instruction of Students with Learning Problems and the Gifted and Talented

Arguments can be advanced for devoting special efforts to help students at both extremes of the scale of scholastic ability — those who have learning problems and those who are gifted and talented. Judging from the responses to questions asked about each of these two groups of students, the American public would apparently prefer to spend more school funds helping those with learning problems than those who are gifted and talented. In both cases, however, the largest percentage of persons in the survey say that the same amount of money should be spent on each of these groups as is spent on "average" students.

Respondents who have a college education are more likely to favor special instruction and programs for gifted children and less likely than others to favor special instruction for those who have learning problems. In both instances, however, a majority of the college-educated respondents favor spending the same amount on each of these groups as is spent on average students.

Special Instruction for Students With Learning Problems

The question:

How do you feel about the spending of public school funds for special instruction and homework programs for students with *learning problems*? Do you feel that more public school funds should be spent on students with learning problems than on average students — or the same amount?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
More spent	42	41	47	29
Same amount spent	48	47	48	60
Less spent	4	4	3	7
Don't know	6	8	2	4

Further breakdowns:

	More Spent %	Same Amount Spent %	Less Spent %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	42	48	4	6
Sex				
Men	43	46	4	7
Women	42	49	4	5
Race				
White	40	50	5	5
Nonwhite	53	35	1	11
Age				
18 - 29 years	44	47	4	5
30 - 49 years	45	47	4	4
50 and over	37	50	4	9
Community Size				
1 million and over	47	43	3	7
500,000 - 999,999	42	52	3	3
50,000 - 499,999	40	51	5	4
2,500 - 49,999	44	47	4	5
Under 2,500	40	46	4	10
Central city	47	44	4	5
Education				
Grade school	45	38	2	15
High school	43	48	4	5
College	39	51	5	5
Region				
East	45	47	4	4
Midwest	38	52	4	6
South	47	40	3	10
West	37	53	5	5

Special Instruction for Students Who Are Gifted and Talented

The question:

How do you feel about the spending of public school funds for special instruction and homework programs for *gifted and talented students*? Do you feel that more school funds should be spent on gifted and talented students than on average students — or the same amount?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
More spent	19	18	21	17
Same amount spent	64	64	63	72
Less spent	11	10	13	7
Don't know	6	8	3	4

Further breakdowns:

	More Spent %	Same Amount Spent %	Less Spent %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	19	64	11	6
Sex				
Men	18	65	11	6
Women	19	63	11	7
Race				
White	19	64	12	5
Nonwhite	19	62	7	12

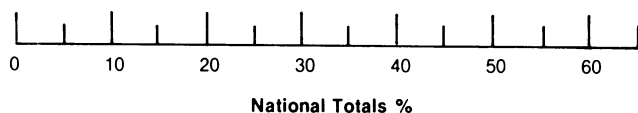
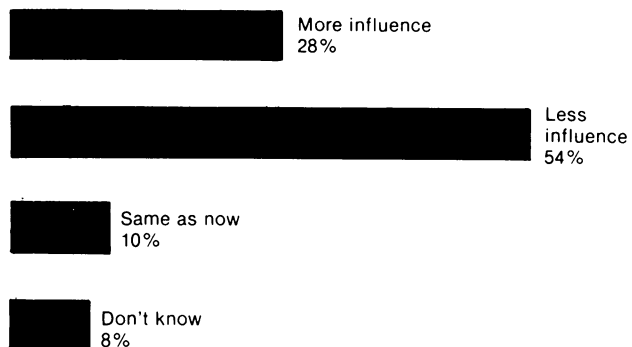
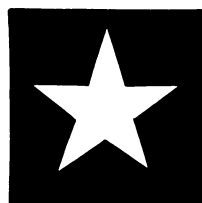
	More Spent %	Same Amount Spent %	Less Spent %	Don't Know %
Age				
18 - 29 years	20	65	10	5
30 - 49 years	22	63	10	5
50 and over	14	65	12	9
Community Size				
1 million and over	25	62	7	6
500,000 - 999,999	19	65	12	4
50,000 - 499,999	19	63	13	5
2,500 - 49,999	17	67	11	5
Under 2,500	15	64	10	11
Central city	22	59	13	6
Education				
Grade school	12	62	11	15
High school	15	68	12	5
College	28	59	9	4
Region				
East	21	63	11	5
Midwest	16	69	11	4
South	19	57	12	12
West	18	68	10	4

Federal Influence on The Educational Program

In most nations the central government determines the educational program for the whole country. The United States represents an important exception to this rule. And, judging from the findings of this year's survey, a majority of U.S. citizens would like the federal government to have even less influence in the future.

Although all major groups in the population take this same position, some groups would like to have the federal government play a more important role in setting programs to be followed by local schools. Nonwhites would like the federal government to have more influence on educational programs, and, generally speaking, those who hold liberal political views are inclined to be more receptive to federal control than those who hold conservative political views.

**Figure 3. Should the Federal Government
Have More Influence on the
Public Schools?**



The question:

Thinking about the future, would you like the federal government in Washington to have more influence, or less influence, in determining the educational program of the local public schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
More influence	28	28	29	28
Less influence	54	51	60	63
Same as now	10	12	5	4
Don't know	8	9	6	5

Further breakdowns:

	More Influence %	Less Influence %	Same As Now %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	28	54	10	8
Sex				
Men	27	57	10	6
Women	29	52	10	9
Race				
White	24	60	10	6
Nonwhite	51	26	9	14
Age				
18 - 29 years	40	47	8	5
30 - 49 years	27	58	8	7
50 and over	20	56	13	11
Community Size				
1 million and over	31	37	19	13
500,000 - 999,999	32	58	6	4
50,000 - 499,999	33	53	8	6
2,500 - 49,999	26	60	11	3
Under 2,500	22	61	7	10
Central city	39	44	9	8
Education				
Grade school	29	39	12	20
High school	31	52	10	7
College	22	65	9	4
Region				
East	32	45	13	10
Midwest	24	61	9	6
South	32	51	8	9
West	23	64	8	5

Selection of Books For School Use

Many communities in the U.S. are involved in controversies over the books that are selected for class use and for the school library. The question arises as to which group — teachers, parents, school administrators, or school boards — should have the most influence in the selection process.

Findings from the present survey indicate that, if the public's views were followed, teachers would have the most influence. Parents, who are the ones who usually initiate legal action to remove books from school libraries, do not think that they themselves should have the most influence in book selection.

The question:

Who do you feel should have the most influence in the selection of books for use in public school classrooms and school libraries — the parents, the school board, the teachers, or the principals and school administrators?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Teachers	42	41	45	51
Parents	18	19	15	14
Principals and school administrators	15	14	16	17
School boards	13	13	13	8
Don't know	12	13	11	10

Further breakdowns:

	Teachers %	Parents %	Principals And Admins. %	School Boards %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	42	18	15	13	12
Sex					
Men	39	18	16	16	11
Women	45	18	13	11	13
Race					
White	43	19	14	13	11
Nonwhite	41	12	17	14	16
Age					
18 - 29 years	53	18	10	11	8
30 - 49 years	44	16	14	15	11
50 and over	33	20	18	14	15
Community Size					
1 million and over	43	12	13	19	13
500,000 - 999,999	48	21	14	14	3
50,000 - 499,999	40	17	18	14	11
2,500 - 49,999	49	22	12	10	7
Under 2,500	38	20	14	10	18
Central city	44	16	16	15	9
Education					
Grade school	27	23	20	9	21
High school	40	20	15	14	11
College	53	11	12	15	9
Region					
East	48	18	12	13	9
Midwest	40	20	17	13	10
South	38	13	18	14	17
West	45	23	9	13	10

Settling Teacher Strikes

This year, as in the 1975 survey, the public strongly supports compulsory arbitration as a way to settle teacher strikes.

Complete agreement exists on this point among all major groups in the population. The highest vote in favor of compulsory arbitration is recorded among individuals with a college education.

Results of the 1982 survey show 79% in favor of compulsory arbitration. In 1975 the comparable figure was 84%. It should be noted that slightly more people say they have no opinion on this proposal in 1982 than did so in the 1975 study.

The question:

In case an agreement cannot be reached between a teacher union (or association) and the school board, would you favor or oppose a plan that would require the dispute to be settled by the decision of an arbitrator or a panel acceptable to both the union and school board?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	79	76	84	90
Oppose	7	8	6	5
Don't know	14	16	10	5
	National Totals			
	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %	
1982 results	79	7	14	
1975 results	84	7	9	

Further breakdowns:

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	79	7	14
Sex			
Men	79	8	13
Women	78	6	16
Race			
White	80	7	13
Nonwhite	69	10	21
Age			
18 - 29 years	79	8	13
30 - 49 years	80	7	13
50 and over	77	6	17
Community Size			
1 million and over	76	5	19
500,000 - 999,999	85	8	7
50,000 - 499,999	80	8	12
2,500 - 49,999	81	6	13
Under 2,500	74	8	18
Central city	80	6	14
Education			
Grade school	67	5	28
High school	77	9	14
College	87	4	9
Region			
East	79	6	15
Midwest	85	7	8
South	70	9	21
West	82	6	12

How Serious Is the Problem of Discipline in the Local Schools?

In every survey in this series, an open-ended question has been included that seeks to learn what people regard as the major problem facing their local schools. In all but one of these surveys, the greatest number of respondents have cited discipline as the major problem.

Once again discipline, although named by only 27% of those interviewed, achieves first place among a score of problems mentioned. The question then arises as to how serious a problem discipline is in the typical school.

To shed further light on this question, respondents were asked: Do you regard discipline in your local schools as a "very serious" problem, a "fairly serious" problem, "not too serious," or "not at all serious"?

The findings reveal that approximately seven persons in 10 regard discipline as a "very serious" or "fairly serious" problem. Only two in 10 say it is "not too serious" or "not at all serious." It is significant that parents of children attending school — presumably those who are in the best position to know — hold virtually the same views as the general public.

The question:

How serious a problem would you say discipline is in the public schools in this community — very serious, fairly serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Very serious	39	39	37	46
Fairly serious	31	31	32	31
Not too serious	20	18	25	18
Not at all serious	2	2	4	2
Don't know	8	10	2	3

Further breakdowns:

	Very Serious %	Fairly Serious %	Not Too Serious %	Not At All Serious %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	39	31	20	2	8
Sex					
Men	39	31	21	2	7
Women	39	32	18	3	8
Race					
White	37	31	22	2	8
Nonwhite	50	31	10	2	7
Age					
18 - 29 years	36	38	19	2	5
30 - 49 years	40	30	22	3	5
50 and over	40	28	19	1	12
Community Size					
1 million and over	49	23	15	3	10
500,000 - 999,999	42	35	16	1	6
50,000 - 499,999	44	32	17	1	6
2,500 - 49,999	33	35	19	2	11
Under 2,500	29	32	28	3	8
Central city	52	28	13	1	6
Education					
Grade school	36	21	24	3	16
High school	41	32	19	2	6
College	37	35	19	2	7
Region					
East	39	31	21	3	6
Midwest	31	35	25	2	7
South	41	31	14	2	12
West	45	27	21	2	5

How the Public Views 'Discipline'

Studies indicate that school administrators apparently differ from the general public in their understanding of discipline. They are more likely to think of discipline problems as absenteeism, vandalism, and similar behavior. The general public, however, tends to associate discipline with observance of rules and regulations and respect for authority.

In the 1972 survey in this series, respondents, when asked to choose from a list of nine goals of education, cited "teaching students to respect law and authority" as the top goal for students in grades 7 through 12.

The 1982 question:

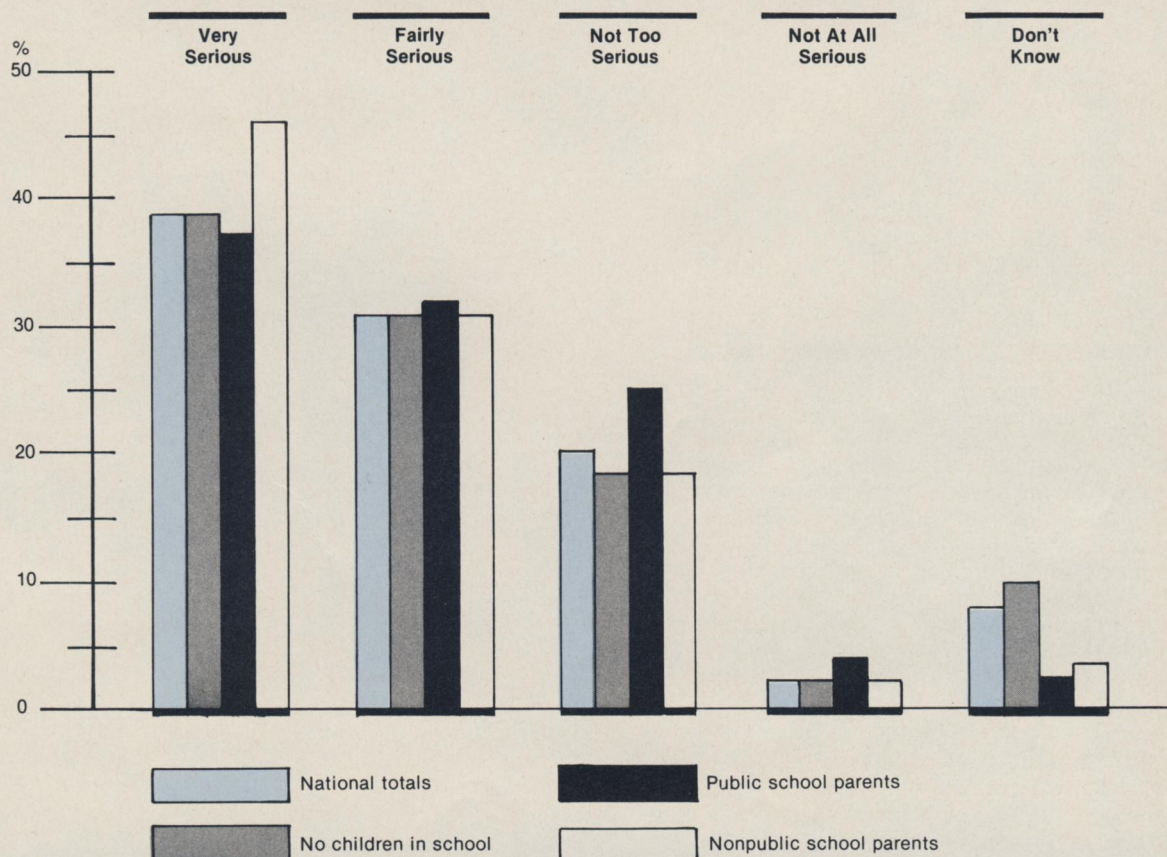
When we talk about "discipline" in the schools, just what does this mean to you?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Obedience rules/regulations	54	55	50	44
Authority/control by teachers	31	29	35	48
Respect for teachers	18	17	20	24
Students' lack of willingness to learn	7	7	6	7
Fighting/violence	3	3	3	1
Smoking/drugs	2	2	1	1
Miscellaneous	1	*	3	1
Don't know	5	6	4	1

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

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Figure 4. How Serious a Problem Is Discipline in the Public Schools?



Teacher Burnout

In educational circles in recent years, "burnout" has been offered as the reason why so many teachers are leaving the profession. The committee that selects questions to be included in these annual surveys thought it would be enlightening to discover the *public's* views as to why this is happening. Nine reasons were presented on a card, and respondents were asked to select three of these.

The reason selected by the greatest number of respondents was "discipline problems in the schools." The reason selected by the next highest number of respondents was "low teacher salaries." The most instructive answers should come from parents who have children now attending school. Discipline ranks even higher with this group than with those who have no children now attending school. Otherwise, opinions across subgroups are very much the same.

The question:

Public school teachers are leaving the classroom in great numbers. Here are some reasons that are sometimes given. Which *three* of these do you think are the main reasons why teachers are leaving their jobs?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Discipline problems in the schools	63	59	70	74
Low teacher salaries	52	49	59	53
Students are unmotivated/uninterested in school	37	39	31	40
Parents don't support teachers	37	37	39	35
Parents are not interested in children's progress	25	26	21	23
Lack of public financial support for education	24	23	27	17
Low standing of teaching as a profession	15	16	13	17
Difficulty of advancement	14	13	15	14
Outstanding teacher performance goes unrewarded	13	14	13	18
Don't know	4	5	2	2

Education and America's Future

Faith in America's future, in the opinion of those sampled in this year's survey, rests more on developing the best educational system in the world than on developing the best industrial system or the strongest military force.

An amazing amount of agreement is found on this question. Every major group in the population places education first, our industrial system second, and military strength third in the importance assigned to each in determining America's future place in the world.

The question:

In determining America's strength in the future — say, 25 years from now — how important do you feel each of the following factors will be — very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important?

National Totals

	Very Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Too Important %	Not At All Important %	Don't Know %
1. Developing the best educational system in the world	84	13	1	*	2
2. Developing the most efficient industrial production system in the world	66	26	3	1	4
3. Building the strongest military force in the world	47	37	11	2	3

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Education's Contribution to Success

The drop in enrollment in many colleges and universities has prompted the question of whether America's commitment to education is as strong today as it was a few years ago. The answer, clearly, is that the public has not changed its opinion about education. Four of every five persons interviewed in this year's survey say that education is extremely important to one's future success. In fact, there has been no statistically significant change in recent years. And every major group in the population — rich and poor, old and young, well educated and poorly educated — agrees on the importance of education.

The question:

How important are schools to one's future success — extremely important, fairly important, or not too important?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Extremely important	80	78	85	83
Fairly important	18	20	13	16
Not too important	1	1	2	-
No opinion	1	1	-	1

National Totals

	Extremely Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Too Important %	No Opinion %
1982 results	80	18	1	1
1980 results	82	15	2	1
1973 results	76	19	4	1

Further breakdowns:

	Extremely Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Too Important %	No Opinion %
NATIONAL TOTALS	80	18	1	1
Sex				
Men	76	21	2	1
Women	84	14	1	1
Race				
White	79	19	1	1
Nonwhite	85	13	*	2
Age				
18 - 29 years	77	21	1	1
30 - 49 years	82	16	2	*
50 and over	80	17	1	2
Community Size				
1 million and over	81	17	1	1
500,000 - 999,999	82	16	2	*
50,000 - 499,999	81	17	1	1
2,500 - 49,999	83	14	2	1
Under 2,500	75	22	2	1
Central city	81	17	1	1

	Extremely Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Too Important %	No Opinion %
Education				
Grade school	77	18	2	3
High school	82	16	2	*
College	78	20	1	1
Region				
East	79	19	1	1
Midwest	81	17	1	1
South	80	17	2	1
West	79	19	2	-

Parents' College Hopes and Plans for Their Children

The importance that parents attach to a college education is reflected in their hopes and plans for their children. A total of 87% of all parents with children now enrolled in the public schools say that they hope their children will go on to college.

But, of course, these are only hopes. When parents are asked (in the case of their eldest child) whether he or she will actually attend college, the figure drops to 57% in the case of public school parents. For parents of children who attend nonpublic schools, the comparable figure is 67%.

The increasing cost of a college education will almost certainly reduce further the number who will actually enter college unless a vigorous campaign is waged to induce students to continue their education beyond high school.

When parents are asked why they want their children to go to college, better job opportunities and a better income far outweigh other reasons. The nonfinancial, non-materialistic reasons for continuing one's education have obviously not influenced the thinking of most Americans.

The question:

Would you like to have your eldest child go on to college after graduating from high school?

	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	87	84
No	5	6
Don't know	8	10

Reasons Offered for Attending College

More job opportunities/better income	48%
Need more education today to cope with problems	27
Have a better life	20
College allows more time to mature	4
Miscellaneous	11

(Total equals more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

The question:

Do you think he/she will go to college?

	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	57	67
No	19	15
Don't know	24	18

Private Schools Versus Public Schools

A question was included in this year's survey that asked parents of children now enrolled in the public schools which they would prefer — public schools or private schools — if the private schools were tuition free.*

The findings indicate that nearly half of those who are now sending their children to public schools would choose private schools under those conditions.

Those parents who selected the private schools over the public schools were asked to explain their choice. The reason offered most often was that private schools have a "higher standard of education." "Discipline" received the next highest number of mentions, followed by "individual attention," "smaller class size," "better curriculum," and "better quality of teachers."

The question:

Suppose you could send your eldest child to a private school, tuition free. Which would you prefer — to send him or her to a private school or to a public school?

	Public School Parents %
Private school	45
Public school	47
Don't know	8

Why do you say that?

Reasons for preferring private school	Public School Parents %
Higher standard of education	28
Better discipline	27
More individual attention	21
Smaller class size	17
Better curriculum	12
Quality of teachers	11
Religious/moral reasons	5
Parents have more input	3
Miscellaneous	10
Don't know	1

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

*Editor's Note — Congress is considering proposals that would give parents tuition tax credits if they send their children to private schools. If passed into law, any of these proposals would have a profound impact on the entire public school system. It should be noted, however, that no tuition tax credit proposal guarantees *free* tuition. Hence answers to the question asked by the Gallup Organization should not be construed as supporting the tax credit idea. It seems likely that many respondents, in indicating a preference for private schools, had in mind elite, expensive schools not realistically available to them under any of the present tax credit proposals.

Extending the Time Spent in School

Although a majority of persons hold deep-seated convictions about the importance of education to the future of young people and to the nation itself, they oppose lengthening the school year by one month or extending the school day by one hour.

A difference is found, however, between the views of residents of large cities and those who live in smaller cities and towns. In fact, sentiment favorable to spending more time in school increases as the size of the city grows. In cities whose population is one million and over, a majority of those respondents who expressed an

opinion favor extending the school year and the school day. The reverse is true of those who live in small cities and towns. One obvious reason for this phenomenon is that many young people in our larger cities have nothing to do when they are out of school, whereas young people in the smaller cities and rural communities tend to be occupied with chores.

Attitudes toward spending more time in school could change if it is proved that industrial nations such as Japan and West Germany — or the Soviet Union — are gaining a marked advantage over the U.S. by following this policy.

Extending the School Year By One Month

The question:

In some nations, students attend school as many as 240 days a year as compared to about 180 days in the U.S. How do you feel about extending the public school year in this community by 30 days, making the school year about 210 days or 10 months long. Do you favor or oppose this idea?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	37	36	38	36
Oppose	53	52	56	56
Don't know	10	12	6	8

Further breakdowns:

Extending the School Year			
	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	37	53	10
Sex			
Men	39	53	8
Women	35	54	11
Race			
White	36	55	9
Nonwhite	42	44	14
Age			
18 - 29 years	30	63	7
30 - 49 years	39	54	7
50 and over	40	46	14
Community Size			
1 million and over	49	35	16
500,000 - 999,999	44	49	7
50,000 - 499,999	39	54	7
2,500 - 49,999	31	61	8
Under 2,500	27	63	10
Central city	44	45	11
Education			
Grade school	32	50	18
High school	35	57	8
College	43	49	8
Region			
East	39	52	9
Midwest	35	57	8
South	32	54	14
West	44	50	6

Extending the School Day By One Hour

The question:

How do you feel about extending the school day in the public schools in this community by one hour? Do you favor or oppose this idea?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	37	38	36	49
Oppose	55	52	61	46
Don't know	8	10	3	5

Further breakdowns:

Extending the School Day			
	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	37	55	8
Sex			
Men	38	54	8
Women	37	55	8
Race			
White	36	57	7
Nonwhite	44	43	13
Age			
18 - 29 years	33	62	5
30 - 49 years	39	54	7
50 and over	39	49	12
Community Size			
1 million and over	48	41	11
500,000 - 999,999	42	54	4
50,000 - 499,999	40	53	7
2,500 - 49,999	31	61	8
Under 2,500	29	62	9
Central city	41	50	9
Education			
Grade school	38	47	15
High school	33	59	8
College	45	49	6
Region			
East	37	54	9
Midwest	35	59	6
South	30	57	13
West	53	43	4

What Do Children Like About the Schools They Attend?

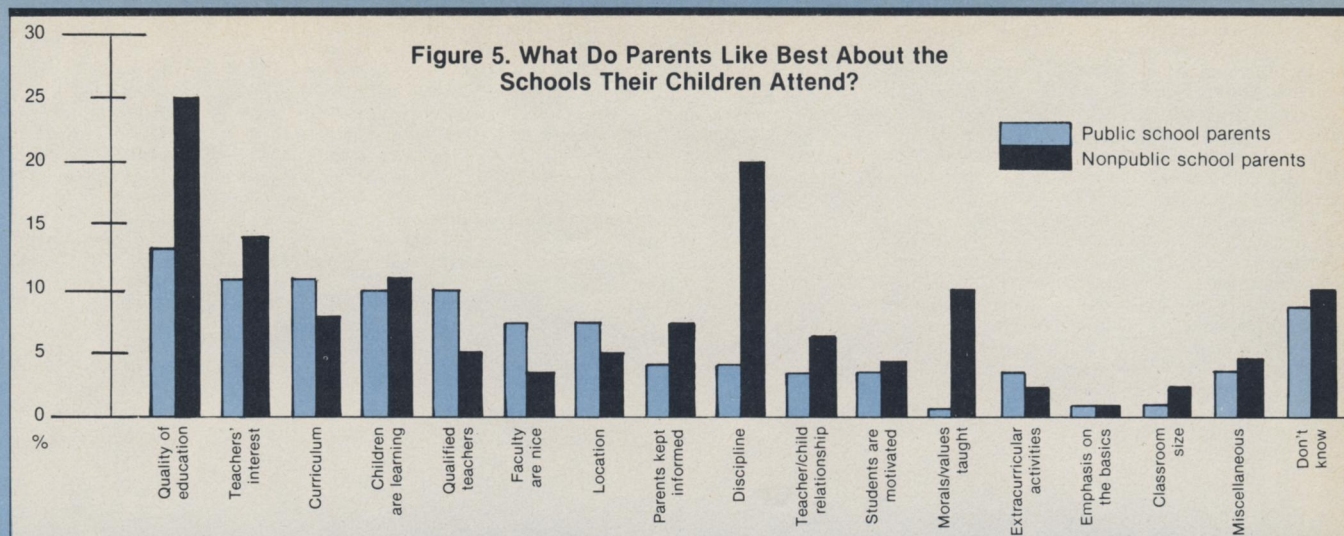
When parents are asked what their children like best about the schools they attend, the answer given most often is "the teachers." Answers differ somewhat depending on whether the children are enrolled in the public schools or in nonpublic schools. In the case of parents whose children attend nonpublic schools, the answer given most often is "the joy of learning."

High on the list of things that students in both types of schools are reported to like are "friends," "sports," "the social program," and "the library." Many parents, of course, mention specific subjects such as mathematics, science, and industrial arts.

The question:

What is the main thing that *your eldest child* likes about the school he/she attends?

	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Teachers	17	18
Friends	16	14
Sports	13	11
Enjoys learning	13	21
Social program	11	3
Using the library	7	6
Curriculum	6	4
Math	6	1
Art	4	5
Band/choir	4	-
Science class	4	4



	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Feeling of accomplishment	4	6
Industrial arts	2	-
Miscellaneous	9	12
Don't know	9	14
Doesn't like school	5	6

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

What Do Parents Like Best About the Schools Their Children Attend?

When the same parents are asked what *they* like best about the schools their children attend, the answer given most often is "quality of education." This answer comes much more frequently from parents whose children are enrolled in nonpublic schools than from those whose children attend public schools.

Parents of children now attending nonpublic schools are much more likely to cite "discipline," "the teaching of moral values," and "the quality of education" as things they like best than are parents whose children attend the public schools.

The question:

And what is the main thing that *you* like about it [the school he/she attends]?

	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Quality of education	13	25
Teachers' interest	11	14
Curriculum	11	8
Children are learning	10	11
Qualified teachers	10	5
Faculty are nice	7	3
Location	7	5
Parents kept informed	4	7
Discipline	4	20
Teacher/child relationship	3	6
Students are motivated	3	4
Morals/values taught	1	10
Extracurricular activities	3	2
Emphasis on the basics	1	1
Classroom size	1	2
Miscellaneous	3	4
Don't know	10	8

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

COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE

Analysis of Respondents

Adults	%	Political affiliation	%
No children in schools	69	Republican	25
Public school parents	27*	Democrat	45
Nonpublic school parents	5*	Independent	26
		Other	4
*Total exceeds 31% because some parents have children attending more than one kind of school.			
Sex	%	Income	%
Men	48	\$20,000 and over	43
Women	52	\$15,000 - \$19,999	15
		\$10,000 - \$14,999	16
Race	%	\$ 5,000 - \$ 9,999	17
White	84	Under \$5,000	8
Nonwhite	16	Undesignated	1
Religion	%	Region	%
Protestant	61	East	28
Catholic	28	Midwest	26
Jewish	2	South	28
Other	9	West	18
Age	%	Community size	%
18 - 29 years	29	1 million and over	18
30 - 49 years	34	500,000 - 999,999	14
50 and over	37	50,000 - 499,999	26
Occupation	%	2,500 - 49,999	15
Business/professional	26	Under 2,500	27
Clerical/sales	6	Education	%
Manual labor	38	College	31
Non-labor force	20	High school	55
Undesignated	10	Grade school	14

DESIGN OF THE SAMPLE

The sampling procedure is designed to produce an approximation of the adult civilian population, age 18 and older, living in the U. S., 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 one million and over; 2) 250,000 - 999,999; 3) 50,000 - 249,999; 4) all other populations. 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 p.m. for women and after 6 p.m. for men.

Allowance for persons not at home is made by a "times-at-home" weighting procedure rather than by "callbacks." 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.

*A. Politz and W. Simmons, "An Attempt to Get the 'Not at Home' into the Sample Without Callbacks," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, March 1949, pp. 9-31.

SAMPLING TOLERANCES

In interpreting survey results, it should be borne in mind that all sample surveys are subject to sampling error, i.e., 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.

The following tables may be used in estimating the sampling error of any percentage in this report. The computed allowances have taken into account the effect of the sample design upon sampling error. They may be interpreted as indicating the range (plus or minus the figure shown) within which the results of repeated samplings in the same time period could be expected to vary 95% of the time, assuming the same sampling procedure, the same interviewers, and the same questionnaire.

The first table shows how much allowance should be made for the sampling error of a percentage:

Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error of a Percentage

	In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)*						
	Sample Size						
	1,500	1,000	750	600	400	200	100
Percentages near 10	2	2	3	3	4	5	7
Percentages near 20	2	3	4	4	5	7	9
Percentages near 30	3	4	4	4	6	8	10
Percentages near 40	3	4	4	5	6	8	11
Percentages near 50	3	4	4	5	6	8	11
Percentages near 60	3	4	4	5	6	8	11
Percentages near 70	3	4	4	4	6	8	10
Percentages near 80	2	3	4	4	5	7	9
Percentages near 90	2	2	3	3	4	5	7

*The chances are 95 in 100 that the sampling error is not larger than the figures shown.

The table would be used in the following manner: Let us say a reported percentage is 33 for a group that includes 1,500 respondents. We go to the row for "percentages near 30" in the table and across to the

column headed "1,500." The number at this point is 3, which means that the 33% obtained in the sample is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus three points. Another way of saying it is that very probably (95 chances out of 100) the average of repeated samplings would be somewhere between 30 and 36, with the most likely figure the 33 obtained.

In comparing survey results in two samples such as, for example, men and women, the question arises as to how large a difference between them must be before one can be reasonably sure that it reflects a real difference. In the tables below, the number of points that must be allowed for in such comparisons is indicated.

Two tables are provided. One is for percentages near 20 or 80; the other for percentages near 50. For percentages in between, the error to be allowed for is between those shown in the two tables:

Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error
Of the Difference

TABLE A	In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)*			
	Percentages near 20 or near 80			
Size of Sample	750	600	400	200
750	5			
600	5	6		
400	6	6	7	
200	8	8	8	10

TABLE B	Percentages near 50			
	750	600	400	200
Size of Sample	750	600	400	200
750	6			
600	7	7		
400	7	8	8	
200	10	10	10	12

*The chances are 95 in 100 that the sampling error is not larger than the figures shown.

Here is an example of how the tables would be used: Let us say that 50% of men respond a certain way and 40% of women respond that way also, for a difference of 10 percentage points between them. Can we say with any assurance that the 10-point difference reflects a real difference between men and women on the question? The sample contains approximately 750 men and 750 women.

Since the percentages are near 50, we consult Table B, and, since the two samples are about 750 persons each, we look for the number in the column headed "750," which is also in the row designated "750." We find the number 6 here. This means that the allowance for error should be six points and that, in concluding that the percentage among men is somewhere between four and 16 points higher than the percentage among women, we should be wrong only about 5% of the time. In other words, we can conclude with considerable confidence that a difference exists in the direction observed and that it amounts to at least four percentage points.

If, in another case, men's responses amount to, say, 22% and women's 24%, we consult Table A, because these percentages are near 20. We look in the column headed "750" and see that the number is 5. Obviously, then, the two-point difference is inconclusive.

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