

THE 15TH ANNUAL GALLUP POLL OF THE PUBLIC'S ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by George H. Gallup

THE FIRST annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools was summarized in the November 1969 *Kappan* (pp. 128 and 157). A full (100-page) report, *How the Nation Views the Public Schools*, was published by I/D/E/A, the education arm of the Kettering Foundation. Since then, the *Kappan* has had the privilege of initial full publication of the annual reports.

Beginning in 1981, Phi Delta Kappa has had full control of and financial responsibility for the project. For two years the Lilly Endowment of Indianapolis helped with generous grants. Starting with this 15th poll, however, the fraternity has assumed the full financial burden as well as administrative control. The Phi Delta Kappa Board of Directors has assured the education community of a continuing 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 can 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 nearly 100 educators and education writers. We wish to thank them for their cooperation. We are also grateful to the panel that assembled last January to discuss poll questions with George Gallup and members of his staff. The 1983 panel included Alonzo Crim, superintendent of schools, Atlanta; Bessie Gabbard, chairperson, Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, North Lewisburg, O.; Nell Lewis, principal, Tropical Elementary School, Plantation, Fla.; Don Park, associate executive secretary, program, Phi Delta Kappa; Arliss Roaden, president, Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville; Lowell Rose, executive secretary, Phi Delta Kappa; and Ray Tobiason, superintendent of Puyallup, Wash., schools and president of Phi Delta Kappa. — Stanley Elam, coordinator, Gallup-Phi Delta Kappa Education Poll.



Purpose of the Study

THIS SURVEY, which measures the attitudes of Americans toward their public schools, is the 15th 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 those who contributed their ideas to this survey.

Research Procedure

The Sample. The sample used in this survey embraced a total of 1,540 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 13-22 May 1983.

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 in

which relatively few respondents were interviewed, e.g., nonpublic 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.

Impact of the Report of the President's Commission on Excellence in Education

This year's survey was conducted shortly after the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education was released. Thus it was possible to obtain some indication of the initial reaction of the public to the report.

The survey results reflect only the first reactions of the public, however. The debate over the Commission's findings is sure to continue and may become part of the campaign rhetoric in the 1984 Presidential race.

At the time this survey was conducted, the Commission report was only two weeks old. At that time only 28% of those interviewed in the national sample had heard or read about the report. Of those, 79% could cite some of the facts and conclusions of the report. In short, at the time of the survey, the report had reached an audience of approximately one person in five in the U.S. adult population.

Examination of the survey results indicates that the Commission report had not substantially changed the views of the public about public education. One reason, perhaps, is that the public already agreed with many of the Commission's main conclusions.

The survey results that follow will point out how the views of those familiar with the report differ from the views of other groups in those instances in which the Commission report deals with issues covered in this survey.

Figure 1. Major Problems Confronting The Public Schools, 1981, 1982, and 1983

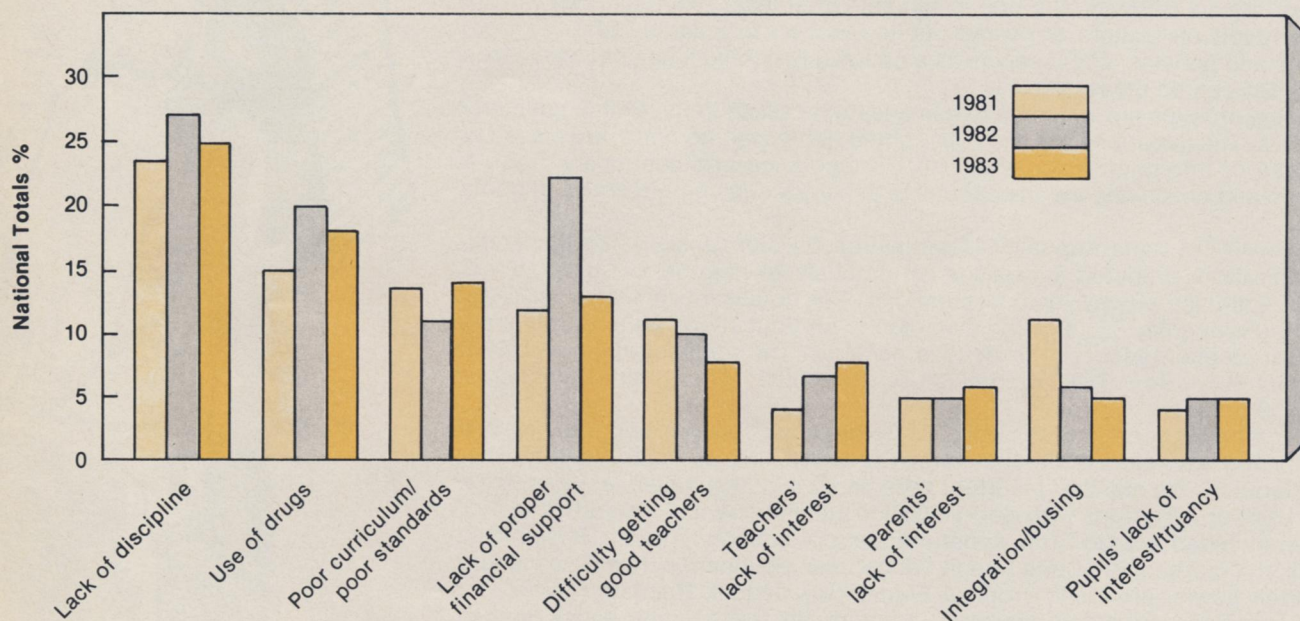


Illustration by Charmaine Dapena

Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools in 1983

When respondents in this year's survey were asked to name the biggest problems facing their local public schools, the answers were quite similar to those recorded in earlier surveys. The top four problems cited continue to be "discipline," "use of drugs," "poor curriculum/poor standards," and "lack of proper financial support." Parents who have children now attending public schools cite the same four problems and in the same order as the public at large.

Although discipline continues to be regarded as the number one problem, the frequency with which other problems or concerns have been recorded has changed. For example, "integration/busing" and "lack of proper facilities" were named frequently in earlier surveys; they are now far down the list of major concerns.

Because discipline is so frequently cited as a major problem in the public schools, this year's survey has sought to shed further light on underlying causes that may contribute to the perceived lack of discipline. These will be described later in this report.

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	25	23	29	31
Use of drugs	18	17	20	16
Poor curriculum/poor standards	14	14	14	19
Lack of proper financial support	13	12	17	8
Difficulty getting good teachers	8	8	9	7
Teachers' lack of interest	8	9	6	9
Parents' lack of interest	6	6	9	5
Integration/busing	5	6	8	4
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	5	6	4	1
Moral standards	4	4	4	6
Drinking/alcoholism	3	3	4	5
Large schools/overcrowding	3	2	5	6
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	3	3	2	6
Mismanagement of funds	2	2	1	1
Problems with administration	1	2	1	-
Crime/vandalism	1	1	1	-
Teachers' strikes	1	1	1	6
Communication problems	1	1	2	1
Lack of proper facilities	1	1	1	3
Parental involvement with school activities	1	1	1	1
Lack of needed teachers	1	1	2	1
Fighting	1	1	*	1
Non-English-speaking students	1	1	1	-
Government interference	1	1	*	1
There are no problems	1	1	3	1
Miscellaneous	2	2	3	3
Don't know/no answer	16	19	7	15

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

*Less than one-half of 1%.

1983 Rating of the Public Schools

The public's rating of the local public schools in 1983 follows the downward trend reported in the years since 1974, when this question was instituted. In 1974, 48% gave local public schools a rating of A or B. This year, the comparable figure is 31%. (The 1974 ratings were: A, 18%; B, 30%; C, 21%; D, 6%; FAIL, 5%; and Don't know, 20%.)

More significant, perhaps, is the rating given their local public schools by parents with children attending public schools. In 1974, 64% of the parents gave the schools their children attended an A or B rating. This year, the comparable figure is 42%.

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 Local Public Schools	National Totals									
	1983	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
A rating	6	8	9	10	8	9	11	13	13	
B rating	25	29	27	25	26	27	26	29	30	
C rating	32	33	34	29	30	30	28	28	28	
D rating	13	14	13	12	11	11	11	10	9	
FAIL	7	5	7	6	7	8	5	6	7	
Don't know	17	11	10	18	18	15	19	14	13	

Rating of the Local Public Schools						
By Adults with:	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
Children in public schools	11	31	36	10	7	5
Children in nonpublic schools	5	22	24	23	9	17
No children in school	5	23	31	13	6	22

Further breakdowns:

Rating of the Local Public Schools						
	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	6	25	32	13	7	17
Sex						
Men	7	26	33	13	7	14
Women	6	24	31	14	6	19
Race						
White	7	26	33	12	6	16
Nonwhite	4	16	29	19	9	23
Age						
18 - 29 years	3	24	40	18	6	9
30 - 49 years	7	26	34	14	8	11
50 and over	9	24	24	9	5	29
Community Size						
1 million and over	5	20	36	15	7	17
500,000 - 999,999	10	20	29	17	6	18
50,000 - 499,999	7	25	30	15	8	15
2,500 - 49,999	8	29	34	6	5	18
Under 2,500	5	27	32	12	6	18
Central city	5	20	32	16	10	17
Education						
Grade school	6	28	16	5	7	38
High school	8	21	36	14	7	14
College	5	28	33	15	6	13
Region						
East	7	24	30	13	8	18
Midwest	9	27	34	11	5	14
South	7	25	30	12	6	20
West	2	21	36	18	8	15

Rating of Public Schools Nationally

Respondents in the survey gave their local schools higher ratings than they gave the public schools nationwide.

It appears that the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education had some influence on the ratings of the public schools nationally. Those respondents who were familiar with the findings of the report were more critical of U.S. schools than was the public at large.*

Only 12% of the group familiar with the Commission report gave the public schools nationally a rating of A or B; at the same time, 30% gave them a rating of D or Fail. By contrast, 19% of the general public gave the schools a rating of A or B, and 22% gave them a rating of D or Fail.

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	6	25	32	13	7	17
Public schools in the nation	2	17	38	16	6	21

*One must also consider the possibility that those individuals who are already strongly critical of the schools would be more likely than others to pay attention to media reports that say that "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity..."

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A rating	2	2	3	2
B rating	17	17	16	14
C rating	38	38	42	35
D rating	16	15	17	18
FAIL	6	6	6	7
Don't know	21	22	16	24

	Public Schools in the Nation		
	1983 %	1982 %	1981 %
A rating	2	2	2
B rating	17	20	18
C rating	38	44	43
D rating	16	15	15
FAIL	6	4	6
Don't know	21	15	16

Further breakdowns:

	Public Schools in the Nation					
	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	2	17	38	16	6	21
Sex						
Men	3	15	38	17	7	20
Women	2	18	39	15	5	21
Race						
White	2	16	40	17	6	19
Nonwhite	4	20	32	8	6	30
Age						
18 - 29 years	2	26	42	15	4	11
30 - 49 years	2	13	43	18	7	17
50 and over	4	14	32	13	6	31
Community Size						
1 million and over	2	19	38	14	5	22
500,000 - 999,999	3	11	44	20	5	17
50,000 - 499,999	2	15	41	15	7	20

Figure 2. Rating of Public Schools Nationally

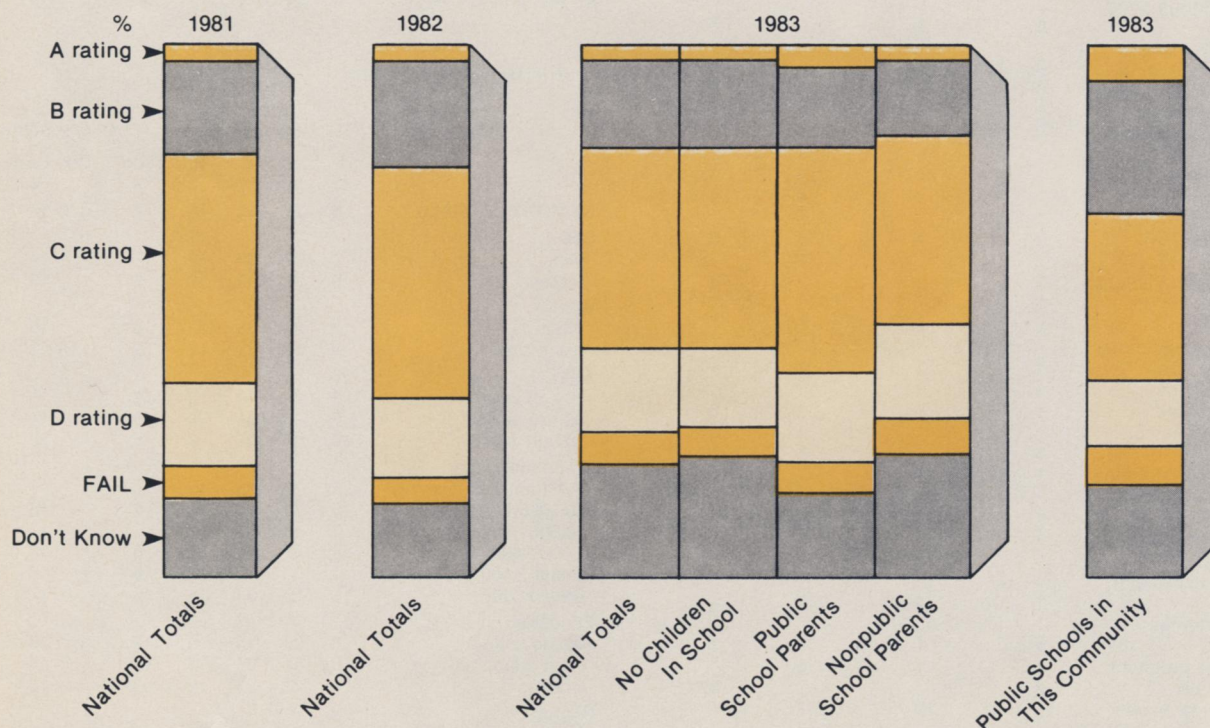


Illustration by Charmaine Dapena

Public Schools in the Nation						
	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
2,500 - 49,999	3	20	39	13	7	18
Under 2,500	2	18	34	17	6	23
Central city	2	15	39	15	7	22
Education						
Grade school	6	16	21	11	4	42
High school	3	20	37	14	6	20
College	1	12	48	19	6	14
Region						
East	3	17	39	13	7	21
Midwest	2	16	41	17	7	17
South	3	19	34	15	4	25
West	1	15	41	20	5	18

How Parents of Public School Children Rate Various Aspects of Their Schooling

The consultants who planned the questions included in this year's survey thought that it would be instructive if parents of children in the public schools were to rate various aspects of their children's schooling, in addition to rating the schools overall. Listed here, in order of favorable votes (A and B), are the 11 aspects of schooling rated.

The question:

Using the A, B, C, D, and FAIL scale again, please grade the public schools in this community for each of the following.

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
The physical plants and facilities	30	35	21	5	2	7
The curriculum, that is, the subjects offered	24	37	25	4	3	7
The handling of extracurricular activities — sports, theater, etc.	20	33	26	8	4	9
Books and instructional materials	19	33	32	6	2	8
Quality of teaching	13	35	29	12	4	7
Education students get	14	32	29	15	4	6
The way schools are administered	11	28	29	17	8	7
Preparing students for college	12	26	27	17	4	14
The way discipline is handled	11	21	22	20	19	7
Preparing for jobs those students not planning to go to college	7	19	29	20	9	16
Behavior of students	5	19	27	19	22	8

Why Is There a Discipline Problem?

The problem of discipline continues to loom large in the public's mind. Thus, this year we attempted to find out who or what is chiefly to blame for the lack of discipline that the public says is a major problem in the local public schools. A card listing 11 reasons for a lack of discipline was handed to each respondent included in the survey.

The question:

Many people say that discipline is one of the major problems of the public schools today. Would you please look over this list and tell me which reasons you think are most important to explain why there is a discipline problem?

Those identified with the public schools can take comfort from the fact that the chief blame is laid on the

home, with disrespect for law and order throughout society ranking second in frequency of mention.

The percentage of votes given each of the 11 statements are as follows, listed according to frequency of mention:

1. Lack of discipline in the home (72%)
2. Lack of respect for law and authority throughout society (54%)
3. Students who are constant troublemakers often can't be removed from school (42%)
4. Some teachers are not properly trained to deal with discipline problems (42%)
5. The courts have made school administrators so cautious that they don't deal severely with student misbehavior (41%)
6. Viewing television programs that emphasize crime and violence (39%)
7. Punishment is too lenient (39%)
8. Decline in the teaching of good manners (37%)
9. Teachers themselves do not command respect (36%)
10. Failure on the part of teachers to make classroom work more interesting (31%)
11. One-parent families (26%)

Voting on Tax Increases

Although only a minority of the respondents (39%) say that they would vote to raise school taxes at this time, the report of the National Commission may help persuade more citizens to favor a tax increase. Those familiar with the report favor raising taxes by a margin of 48% to 46%.

The question:

Suppose the local public schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose, or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose?

Financial Support of the Public Schools			
	Favor Raising Taxes %	Opposed to Raising Taxes %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL RESULTS			
1983 survey	39	52	9
1981 survey	30	60	10
1972 survey	36	56	8
1971 survey	40	52	8
1970 survey	37	56	7
1969 survey	45	49	6

	Favor Raising Taxes %	Opposed to Raising Taxes %	Don't Know %
1983 Survey			
Parents of children attending public school	48	45	7
Parents of children attending nonpublic school	40	55	5
Adults with no children in school	36	53	11

Further breakdowns:

	Favor Raising Taxes %	Opposed to Raising Taxes %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	39	52	9
Sex			
Men	40	51	9
Women	37	53	10

	Favor Raising Taxes %	Opposed to Raising Taxes %	Don't Know %
Race			
White	37	54	9
Nonwhite	50	40	10
Age			
18 - 29 years	46	44	10
30 - 49 years	44	48	8
50 and over	28	62	10
Community Size			
1 million and over	38	51	11
500,000 - 999,999	50	42	8
50,000 - 499,999	44	48	8
2,500 - 49,999	31	59	10
Under 2,500	33	57	10
Central city	44	48	8
Education			
Grade school	24	70	6
High school	35	55	10
College	49	41	10
Region			
East	31	60	9
Midwest	35	57	8
South	40	48	12
West	53	39	8

The Voucher System

The idea of the voucher system — a plan whereby the federal government allots a certain amount of money for the education of each child, regardless of whether the child attends a public, parochial, or independent school — is favored today by a clear majority of the public (51% to 38%). Significantly, public school parents favor the voucher system by a margin of 48% to 41%.

The current support for the voucher system represents a substantial shift in the public's attitude. Between 1970 (when the question was first asked) and 1981, the idea elicited a mixed reception. In 1970 a slightly higher percentage opposed the idea than favored it. This was also true in 1971. In the 1981 survey those in favor held a slight majority over those opposed.

The question:

In some nations, the government allots a certain amount of money for each child for his or her education. The parents can then send the child to any public, parochial, or private school they choose. This is called the "voucher system." Would you like to see such an idea adopted in this country?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor voucher system	51	51	48	64
Oppose voucher system	38	37	41	30
No opinion	11	12	11	6
NATIONAL TOTALS	Favor %	Oppose %	No Opinion %	
1970 survey	43	46	11	
1971 survey	38	44	18	
1981 survey	43	41	16	
1983 survey	51	38	11	

Promotion Based on Examinations

Promotion from grade to grade based on examinations and not "social" promotion is favored by a substantial majority of the survey respondents. This view is shared by parents of schoolchildren and by those who

have no children in school — and by almost the same percentages.

The question:

In your opinion, should children be promoted from grade to grade only if they can pass examinations?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	75	75	73	71
No	20	19	23	27
Don't know	5	6	4	2
NATIONAL TOTALS		1983 %	1978 %	
Yes		75	68	
No		20	27	
Don't know		5	5	

National Test Scores Used for Comparison Purposes

The results of the question about the use of national tests as a way of judging the local schools reveals the public's faith in tests and, at the same time, the public's desire to have another measure of the quality of education in their own local schools.

One important provision should be added, however. Earlier survey reports have pointed out that comparisons should take full account of the composition of the school population. Comparisons are only valid if the local school population reflects the national population. Schools that draw students from poor neighborhoods where parents have had little education and where language barriers exist obviously cannot be expected to achieve the same levels of test scores as schools in high-income communities.

The question:

Would you like to see the students in the local schools be given national tests, so that their educational achievement could be compared with students in other communities?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	75	72	80	79
No	17	17	16	18
Don't know	8	11	4	3
NATIONAL TOTALS	1983 %	1971 %	1970 %	
Yes	75	70	75	
No	17	21	16	
Don't know	8	9	9	

Too Much or Too Little Schoolwork for Students?

Are students in elementary schools or high schools made to work too hard? Widespread agreement exists on this issue among parents of schoolchildren and those without children in the public schools.

Two-thirds of all respondents, in both the case of elementary school children and of high school students, agree that the workload given students is too light. An

earlier survey of students found that students themselves say that they are not given enough homework.

A significant change has been recorded since the 1975 survey when the same questions were asked of the public. At that time 49% said that students in elementary school were not required to work hard enough. In this year's survey the percentage has increased to 61%. In 1975, 54% said that high school students were not required to work hard enough; now that percentage is 65%.

The 1983 survey includes another question related to this issue. When respondents were asked if they thought that what is now covered in the first two years of college could be covered before graduation from high school, a total of 65% predicted that this would happen by the year 2000.

The question:

In general, do you think *elementary* school children in the public schools here are made to work too hard in school and on homework, or not hard enough?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Too hard	4	3	6	4
Not hard enough	61	62	60	70
About right amount	19	15	27	16
Don't know	16	20	7	10
NATIONAL TOTALS		1983 %		1975 %
Too hard		4		5
Not hard enough		61		49
About right amount		19		28
Don't know		16		18

Further breakdowns:

	Too Hard %	Not Hard Enough %	About Right Amount %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	4	61	19	16
Sex				
Men	3	64	17	16
Women	5	58	20	17
Race				
White	4	60	19	17
Nonwhite	4	71	12	13
Age				
18 - 29 years	6	61	22	11
30 - 49 years	4	62	21	13
50 and over	3	60	14	23
Community Size				
1 million and over	2	65	20	13
500,000 - 999,999	4	68	14	14
50,000 - 499,999	2	66	16	16
2,500 - 49,999	6	54	19	21
Under 2,500	7	54	22	17
Central city	1	66	16	17
Education				
Grade school	6	49	17	28
High school	5	59	22	14
College	2	69	15	14
Region				
East	3	60	22	15
Midwest	6	64	16	14
South	3	52	22	23
West	4	72	12	12

The question:

What about students in the public high school

here — in general, are they required to work too hard or not hard enough?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Too hard	3	3	4	-
Not hard enough	65	66	63	69
About right amount	12	11	14	9
Don't know	20	20	19	22
NATIONAL TOTALS		1983 %		1975 %
Too hard		3		3
Not hard enough		65		54
About right amount		12		22
Don't know		20		21

Further breakdowns:

	Too Hard %	Not Hard Enough %	About Right Amount %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	3	65	12	20
Sex				
Men	2	69	11	18
Women	3	63	13	21
Race				
White	3	65	12	20
Nonwhite	3	71	8	18
Age				
18 - 29 years	6	67	15	12
30 - 49 years	3	65	11	21
50 and over	1	66	10	23
Community Size				
1 million and over	1	70	14	15
500,000 - 999,999	2	71	9	18
50,000 - 499,999	3	67	12	18
2,500 - 49,999	5	60	11	24
Under 2,500	4	60	13	23
Central city	2	69	11	18
Education				
Grade school	2	55	13	30
High school	4	64	13	19
College	1	71	11	17
Region				
East	3	65	14	18
Midwest	3	68	11	18
South	3	55	15	27
West	3	77	6	14

Increasing the Length of the School Year

Although more individuals oppose than approve increasing the length of the school year in their communities by one month, more respondents favor a 10-month school year in this year's survey than in last year's. Moreover, those who were familiar with the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education are strongly in favor of such a change. More of those parents with children in nonpublic schools approve than disapprove of extending the school year. Individuals who have no children attending school show the least enthusiasm for increasing the school year from the present 180 days.

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	40	39	43	50
Oppose	49	47	52	44
Don't know	11	14	5	6

NATIONAL TOTALS

	1983 %	1982 %
Favor	40	37
Oppose	49	53
Don't know	11	10

Further breakdowns:

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	40	49	11
Sex			
Men	40	48	12
Women	41	49	10
Race			
White	39	50	11
Nonwhite	51	35	14
Age			
18 - 29 years	37	55	8
30 - 49 years	40	52	8
50 and over	42	41	17
Community Size			
1 million and over	52	37	11
500,000 - 999,999	45	44	11
50,000 - 499,999	47	44	9
2,500 - 49,999	31	56	13
Under 2,500	28	59	13
Central city	50	38	12
Education			
Grade school	32	45	23
High school	36	53	11
College	50	43	7
Region			
East	41	49	10
Midwest	36	52	12
South	35	50	15
West	54	38	8

Lengthening the School Day by One Hour

The same general pattern of opinion regarding the lengthening of the school year by one month is found when respondents are asked about lengthening the school day by one hour. Younger persons are most opposed to such a change, as are those who live in small communities and those who live in the Midwest and South. Those most in favor tend to be nonwhites and residents of the West.

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	41	42	40	46
Oppose	48	46	54	40
Don't know	11	12	6	14

NATIONAL TOTALS

	1983 %	1982 %
Favor	41	37
Oppose	48	55
Don't know	11	8

Further breakdowns:

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	41	48	11
Sex			
Men	43	45	12
Women	40	50	10
Race			
White	40	49	11
Nonwhite	52	38	10
Age			
18 - 29 years	36	56	8
30 - 49 years	42	50	8
50 and over	45	39	16
Community Size			
1 million and over	47	43	10
500,000 - 999,999	46	44	10
50,000 - 499,999	48	43	9
2,500 - 49,999	37	49	14
Under 2,500	30	57	13
Central city	48	42	10
Education			
Grade school	41	38	21
High school	38	52	10
College	46	46	8
Region			
East	46	45	9
Midwest	37	53	10
South	33	52	15
West	53	37	10

Figure 3. Increasing the Length Of the School Year

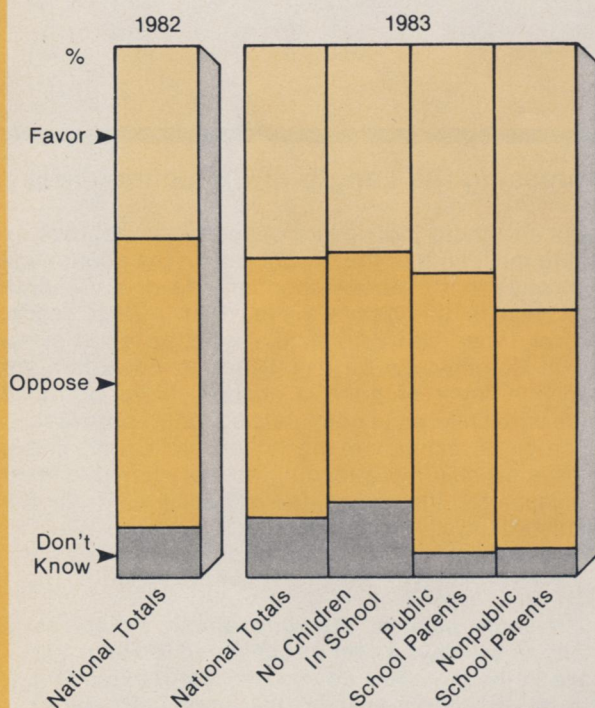


Illustration by Charmaine Dapena

Satisfaction of Parents with Subjects Taught

Parents who are sending their children to nonpublic schools are more satisfied with the learning that takes place there — and with the general curriculum — than are parents who are sending their children to the public schools. The difference is not great, however, and a high degree of satisfaction is found among both groups. Both groups have registered some decline in satisfaction with the general curriculum since 1973.

The question:

Do you think your child is learning the things you believe he or she should be learning?

	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%
Yes	74	82
No	20	9
Don't know	6	9

	Public School Parents	
	1983	1973
	%	%
Yes	74	81
No	20	14
Don't know	6	5

Subjects the Public Would Require in High School

A majority of the American public would require high school courses in mathematics and English, regardless of whether students plan to continue their education in college or to get jobs following graduation. For those students who plan to go on to college, the public would require courses in history/U.S. government, science, business, and foreign language. For those who plan to end their education with high school, the public would require vocational training, business, history/U.S. government, and science.

Those respondents who would require a foreign language were asked, Which foreign language(s)? The pre-

ferred language, by a large margin, is Spanish, followed by French and German, in that order. A surprising number of parents with children in school (12%) would require that the Russian language be taught.

The question:

Would you look over this card which lists high school subjects. If you were the one to decide, what subjects would you require every public high school student who plans to go on to college to take?

	1983	1981
	%	%
Mathematics	92	94
English	88	91
History/U.S. government	78	83
Science	76	76
Business	55	60
Foreign language	50	54
Health education	43	47
Physical education	41	44
Vocational training	32	34
Art	19	28
Music	18	26

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

The question:

What about those public high school students who do not plan to go to college when they graduate? Which courses would you require them to take?

	1983	1981
	%	%
Mathematics	87	91
English	83	89
Vocational training	74	64
Business	65	75
History/U.S. government	63	71
Science	53	58
Health education	42	46
Physical education	40	43
Foreign language	19	21
Art	16	20
Music	16	20

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

The question (asked of those who would require foreign language for high school graduates):

What foreign language or languages should be required?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Spanish	56	58	54	44
French	34	35	32	34
German	16	16	14	20
Latin	8	6	11	12
Russian	8	7	12	7
Japanese	6	6	5	7
Other	4	4	5	10
Don't know	24	23	21	30

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

Figure 4. Lengthening the School Day by One Hour

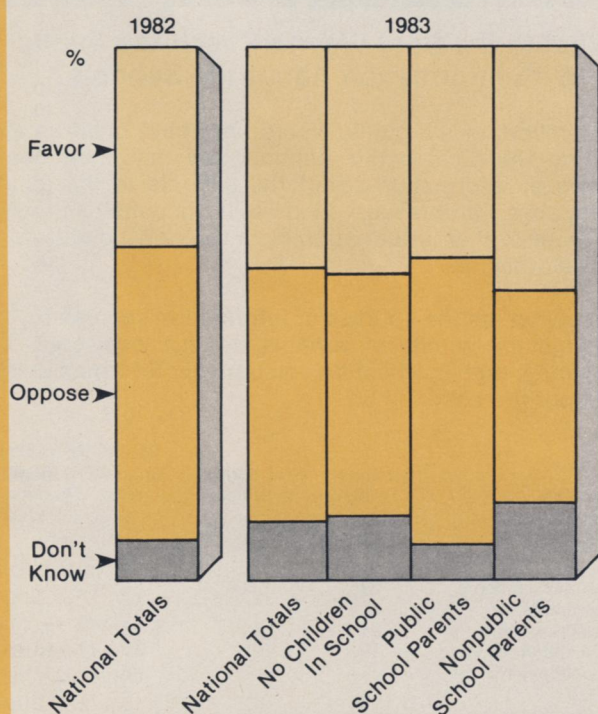


Illustration by Charmaine Dapena

Instruction in Special Areas

In addition to traditional school subjects, the public would like the schools to give special instruction in many other fields, presumably because other institu-

tions, including the home, have not been notably successful in dealing with these areas of instruction. This is especially true in the case of education about the abuse of drugs and alcohol.

More than seven in 10 adults would require driver education. A majority would also require instruction in the use of computers, as well as training in parenting.

This year's survey included several additional subject areas; all of these except the dangers of nuclear war were approved by a slight majority.

The question:

In addition to regular courses, high schools offer instruction in other areas. As I read off these areas, one at a time, would you tell me whether you feel this instruction should be required or should not be required for all high school students?

	Should Be Required %	Should Not Be Required %	No Opinion %
Drug abuse	81	14	5
Alcohol abuse	76	18	6
Driver education	72	23	5
Computer training	72	21	7
Parenting/parent training	58	32	10
Dangers of nuclear waste*	56	33	11
Race relations*	56	33	11
Communism/socialism*	51	38	11
Dangers of nuclear war*	46	42	12

*These topics were not included in the 1981 survey.

	Should Be Required	
	1983 %	1981 %
Drug abuse	81	82
Alcohol abuse	76	78
Driver education	72	71
Computer training	72	43
Parenting/parent training	58	64

Availability of Computers in the Schools

Computers are now available to students in a surprisingly large number of U.S. schools. Nearly half of the parents of children attending the public schools and the nonpublic schools say that these schools now have computers that their children can use. And eight in 10 of the parents with children in schools that do not have computers say they would like to have computers available for their children.

Schools in the East and in the Midwest are much more likely to have computers that are available to students than are schools in the West and South.

The question:

Does the school your child attends have a computer that students can use?

	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	45	47
No	32	33
Don't know	23	20

The following question was asked of those whose children do not have access to a computer in school:

Would you like the school your child attends to install a computer that students could use?

	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	81	56
No	10	30
Don't know	9	14

The Public Appraises Its Knowledge Of the Local Schools

Although there has been a slight increase in the number of individuals throughout the U.S. who say that they know "quite a lot" or "some" about their local schools, the fact remains that more than a third say that they know "very little" or "nothing" about them. In the 14-year span between 1969 and 1983, the increase in the number who say that they know "quite a lot" has been only four percentage points.

These percentages indicate that the public relations efforts of schools have not been very successful in reaching members of the public who do not have children attending the schools but who, nevertheless, can and do vote in school bond elections.

The question:

How much do you know about the local schools — quite a lot, some, or very little?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Quite a lot	22	19	31	21
Some	42	38	55	47
Very little	29	34	13	24
Nothing	7	9	1	8
NATIONAL TOTALS		1983 %		1969 %
Quite a lot		22		18
Some		42		40
Very little		29		42
Nothing		7		-

What Is the Best Way to Reach the Public With Information About the Schools?

Members of the public who do not have children attending the local public schools say that their best source of information about the schools is the local newspaper. Parents with children in the public schools get most of their information from their own children.

The question:

What are the sources of information you use to judge the quality of schools in your local community; that is, where do you get your information about the schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Newspapers	42	44	37	51
Students	36	28	59	30
Parents of students	29	24	41	33
Other adults	27	25	28	34
School board/faculty	24	19	38	23
Radio and/or television	19	22	12	13
Personal experience	8	7	8	9
Other	4	3	5	2
Undesignated	7	9	1	4

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

	Sources of Information	
	1983 %	1973 %
Newspapers	42	38
Students	36	43
Parents of students	29	33
Other adults	27	23
School board/faculty	24	33
Radio and/or television	19	20
Personal experience	8	-
PTA	-	3
Other	4	12
Undesignated	7	4

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

The Public's Involvement With the Local Schools

When citizens included in this year's survey were asked about their involvement with the local schools, their answers indicated that the schools nationally are failing to reach a large segment of the adult population. In fact, more than half of those with no children in schools say that they have had no direct contact or relationship with their local schools since the opening of school last September (the question was asked in May). This may help explain why more than 40% — in answer to another question — said that they know little or nothing about the local schools.

The question:

Since September, which of the following, if any, have you yourself done?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Received any newsletter, pamphlet, or any other material telling what the local public schools are doing	32	22	58	38
Attended a local public school athletic event	25	18	42	28
Attended a school play or concert in any local public school	24	16	42	36
Met with any teachers or administrators in the local public school about your own child	21	4	62	44
Attended a PTA meeting	14	4	36	46
Attended any meeting dealing with the local public school situation	10	7	18	13
Attended a school board meeting	8	4	16	24
Written any letter to the school board, newspaper, or any other organization about the local school situation	4	3	6	5
None of the above	43	56	14	22
Don't know	4	4	2	6

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

Importance of a College Education

It will come as good news to college administrators that in the last five years the public has changed markedly in its view about the importance of a college education. Since a question about the importance of a college education was first asked (1978), the percentage of individuals who say that a college education is "very important" has increased from 36% to 58%. Those with

children now attending school are even more convinced of the importance of a college education.

The question:

How important is a college education today — very important, fairly important, or not too important?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Very important	58	57	60	60
Fairly important	31	31	32	30
Not too important	8	8	7	6
Don't know	3	4	1	4

NATIONAL TOTALS

	1983 %	1978 %
Very important	58	36
Fairly important	31	46
Not too important	8	16
Don't know	3	2

Further breakdowns:

	Importance of College			
	Very Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Too Important %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	58	31	8	3
Sex				
Men	57	31	9	3
Women	60	30	7	3
Race				
White	56	32	9	3
Nonwhite	68	24	5	3
Age				
18 - 29 years	53	34	11	2
30 - 49 years	60	31	7	2
50 and over	60	28	7	5
Community Size				
1 million and over	64	28	6	2
500,000 - 999,999	63	26	6	5
50,000 - 499,999	59	30	8	3
2,500 - 49,999	54	34	10	2
Under 2,500	52	34	10	4
Central city	64	25	7	4
Education				
Grade school	61	24	9	6
High school	54	33	10	3
College	63	29	5	3
Region				
East	61	29	7	3
Midwest	50	37	10	3
South	63	28	7	2
West	58	28	10	4

Teaching as a Career

In five surveys, beginning in 1969, respondents have been asked if they would like a child of theirs to take up teaching as a career. This year, substantially more respondents were undecided than in earlier years when the same question was asked. The percentage giving a definite yes answer this year is slightly lower than in 1981 and substantially lower than in 1969, when 75% of all respondents said that they would like a child of theirs to take up teaching in the public schools as a career. The comparable figure today is 45%.

To help explain this marked change, respondents were asked why they would, or would not, like a child of theirs to become a public school teacher. The answers to this question from those who said no, listed in order of frequency of mention, are: 1) low pay; 2) discipline problems; 3) unrewarding, thankless work; and 4) low

prestige of teaching as a profession. Those who said that they would like a child of theirs to enter the teaching profession said that teaching: 1) is a worthwhile profession, 2) contributes to society, 3) is a challenging job, and 4) can make a real difference in a child's life.

The question:

Would you like to have a child of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	45	42	51	40
No	33	33	33	39
Don't know	22	25	16	21

	1983 %	1981 %	1980 %	1972 %	1969 %
Yes	45	46	48	67	75
No	33	43	40	22	15
Don't know	22	11	12	11	10

Personal Qualities Most Desired in Teachers

When respondents were asked in an "open" question about the personal qualities they would look for if they could choose their child's teacher, their responses indicate that they would seek a model of perfection — someone who is understanding, patient, friendly, intelligent, and who has a sense of humor and high moral character. Farther down the list the public would seek out a person who has the ability to motivate and inspire children and possesses enthusiasm for the subject being taught.

The question:

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

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

1. Ability to communicate, to understand, to relate
2. Patience
3. Ability to discipline, to be firm and fair
4. High moral character
5. Friendliness, good personality, sense of humor
6. Dedication to teaching profession, enthusiasm
7. Ability to inspire, motivate students
8. Intelligence
9. Caring about students

Teachers' Salaries

About one person in four of those questioned in this year's survey registers no opinion about whether teachers' salaries are "too high," "too low," or "just about right." Of those who do have an opinion, many more say that salaries are too low than too high.

When the "no opinion" group is eliminated and percentages are based on those with opinions, a sharp increase in the number saying that salaries are "too low" has been registered in the last two years.

The question:

Do you think salaries for teachers in this community are too high, too low, or just about right?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Too high	8	8	9	5
Too low	35	33	37	42
About right	31	30	35	32
No opinion	26	29	19	21

NATIONAL TOTALS	1983 %	1981 %	1969 %
Too high	8	10	2
Too low	35	29	33
About right	31	41	43
No opinion	26	20	22

NATIONAL TOTALS (with "no opinion" group eliminated)	1983 %	1981 %	1969 %
Too high	11	13	3
Too low	47	36	42
About right	42	51	55

Further breakdowns:

	Too High %	Too Low %	About Right %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	8	35	31	26
Sex				
Men	9	36	34	21
Women	7	33	30	30
Race				
White	9	33	32	26
Nonwhite	4	42	28	26
Age				
18 - 29 years	5	45	28	22
30 - 49 years	7	39	32	22
50 and over	12	22	33	33
Community Size				
1 million and over	9	34	30	27
500,000 - 999,999	4	42	26	28
50,000 - 499,999	6	39	30	25
2,500 - 49,999	10	37	32	21
Under 2,500	10	25	36	29
Central city	7	43	28	22
Education				
Grade school	16	18	32	34
High school	8	31	33	28
College	5	45	29	21

Figure 5. Teachers' Salaries

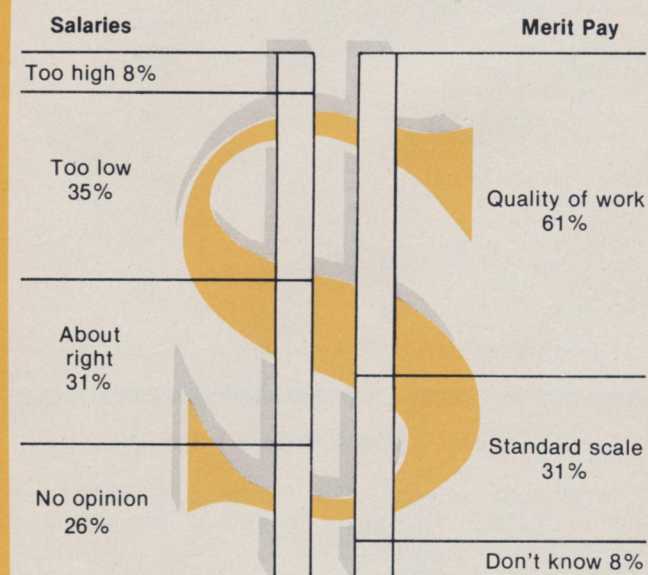


Illustration by Charmaine Dapena

Region	Too High %	Too Low %	About Right %	Don't Know %
East	11	29	35	25
Midwest	10	32	37	21
South	5	41	26	28
West	6	37	25	32

More Pay for Math and Science Teachers

The public is evenly divided on the question of giving higher wages to math and science teachers and to those who teach technical and vocational subjects than to teachers of other subjects because of the present shortage of teachers in these fields. When those who have "no opinion" are eliminated, however, more respondents say that they favor paying these teachers higher wages than that they would oppose such a move. Widespread agreement on this question exists among those with children now attending public and nonpublic schools and those who have no children in school.

The question:

Today there is a shortage of teachers in science, math, technical subjects, and vocational subjects. If your local public schools needed teachers in these subjects, would you favor or oppose paying them higher wages than teachers of other subjects?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor paying them higher wages	50	50	49	45
Oppose	35	34	41	38
Don't know	15	16	10	17

Merit Pay for Teachers

The public votes nearly two-to-one in favor of merit pay for teachers. The percentage favoring merit pay has increased slightly since 1970, when the same question was asked of a similar cross section of U.S. adults. In 1970, 58% of the public favored merit pay and 36% favored a standard scale. Today, the comparable percentages are 61% and 31%.

Parents of schoolchildren favor merit pay by almost the same margin as the general public. Those who were familiar with the report of the President's Commission are more strongly in favor of merit pay, voting 71% to 25% in favor of it.

The question:

Should each teacher be paid on the basis of the quality of his or her work, or should all teachers be paid on a standard-scale basis?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Quality of work	61	61	61	64
Standard scale	31	30	34	30
Don't know	8	9	5	6

NATIONAL TOTALS	1983 %	1970 %
Quality of work	61	58
Standard scale	31	36
Don't know	8	6

Early Reactions to the Report of the President's Commission on Excellence In Education

Only 28% of the respondents included in this year's survey had heard or read about the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education at the time of this survey. Those who said that they had heard or read about it were asked to state the overall findings of the report, as evidence that they had given it some attention. This "informed" group was then asked if, in general, they agreed or disagreed with the conclusions of the report. Among this informed group, nearly nine in 10 agreed with the findings of the Commission.

To obtain some indication of whether those who had *not* read the report would agree with its conclusions, they were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the finding that "the quality of education in the U.S. public schools is only fair and not improving." This group, as in the case of the informed group, expressed overwhelming agreement with the conclusion.

The question:

Have you heard or read anything about the recent report of the President's National Commission on Excellence in Education?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	28	27	31	29
No	68	69	65	69
Don't know	4	4	4	2

The question (informed group *only*):

In general, do you agree or disagree with the report's conclusions?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Agree	87	87	84	90
Disagree	8	8	9	10
Don't know	5	5	7	-

The question (uninformed group *only*):

The Commission concluded that the quality of education in the U.S. public schools is only fair and not improving. Do you agree with this opinion or disagree?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Agree	74	74	77	77
Disagree	13	12	15	10
No opinion	13	14	8	13

Willingness to Pay More Taxes To Raise Educational Standards

The report of the President's Commission may have a positive effect in helping communities increase tax revenues for their local public schools — provided that such increases are aimed at raising educational standards.

In an earlier question, included in this same survey, respondents were asked if they would vote to raise taxes if their schools claimed that they needed much

more money. The vote on this question was 39% yes and 53% no. Although this represents an appreciable increase in the yes vote over 1981, it is far less than the 58% who say that they would be willing to pay more taxes to raise the standard of education throughout the nation.

Two points need to be borne in mind. First, the public would obviously like to have the federal government contribute more to help finance the public schools. And second, respondents see a need for raising the educational standard throughout the nation.

The question:

Would you be willing to pay more taxes to help raise the standard of education in the United States?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	58	54	70	57
No	33	35	24	38
Don't know	9	11	6	5

**Looking Ahead to the Year 2000:
Changes That the Public Foresees
In the Educational System**

Many suggestions for improving the educational system were presented to respondents to determine what chance they think these suggestions have of being carried out between now and the year 2000.

Those respondents who were familiar with the report of the President's Commission differ little in their views from those who now have children attending the public and nonpublic schools.

The question:

As you look ahead to the year 2000 (that's 17 years from now), what do you think the schools will be doing then to educate students?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Do you think that all students will have access to a computer and be trained in its use?				
Yes	86	84	92	90
No	6	6	5	7
Don't know	8	10	3	3
Do you think that more importance will be given to vocational training in high school?				
Yes	76	76	77	69
No	11	11	13	19
Don't know	13	13	10	12
Do you think that more attention will be given to teaching students how to think?				
Yes	70	68	73	72
No	16	16	17	15
Don't know	14	16	10	13
Do you think that what is now covered in the first two years of college will be covered before graduation from high school?				
Yes	65	62	71	67
No	19	20	19	23
Don't know	16	18	10	10

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Do you think that more attention will be given to individual instruction?				
Yes	53	53	51	59
No	32	31	37	28
Don't know	15	16	12	13
Do you think children will start school at an earlier age — such as 3 or 4 years old?				
Yes	51	49	52	55
No	37	37	38	37
Don't know	12	14	10	8
Do you think that taxpayers will be willing to vote more favorably on bond issues and give more financial support to the schools?				
Yes	45	44	47	49
No	36	35	37	38
Don't know	19	21	16	13
Do you think that the school program will cover 12 months of the year — with less time for holidays?				
Yes	33	30	38	40
No	53	53	54	53
Don't know	14	17	8	7

COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE

Analysis of Respondents

Adults	%	Occupation	%
No children in schools	68	Farm	3
Public school parents	27*	Undesignated	8
Nonpublic school parents	6*		
*Total for both starred categories exceeds 32% because some parents have children attending more than one kind of school.			
Sex	%	Political affiliation	%
Men	48	Republican	24
Women	52	Democrat	41
		Independent	30
		Other	5
Race	%	Income	%
White	86	\$40,000 and over	11
Nonwhite	14	\$30,000 - \$39,999	10
		\$20,000 - \$29,999	19
Religion	%	\$10,000 - \$19,999	30
Protestant	54	\$9,999 and under	24
Catholic	30	Undesignated	6
Jewish	3		
Other	13	Region	%
		East	28
Age	%	Midwest	27
18 - 29 years	27	South	27
30 - 49 years	36	West	18
50 and over	37		
		Community size	%
Occupation	%	1 million and over	20
Business/professional	26	500,000 - 999,999	13
Clerical/sales	6	50,000 - 499,999	26
Manual labor	38	2,500 - 49,999	14
Non-labor force	19	Under 2,500	27
		Education	%
		College	30
		High school	56
		Grade school	14

DESIGN OF THE SAMPLE

The sampling procedure for this survey 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 the survey.

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, and 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.

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

In each cluster of blocks and each segment so selected, randomly selected starting points were designated on the interviewers' maps of the areas. Starting at these points, interviewers were required to follow a given direction in the selection of households until their assignments were complete.

Interviewing was conducted at times when adults, in general, were 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 was 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' in to 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 this 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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