The 25th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/ GALLUP POLL

Of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

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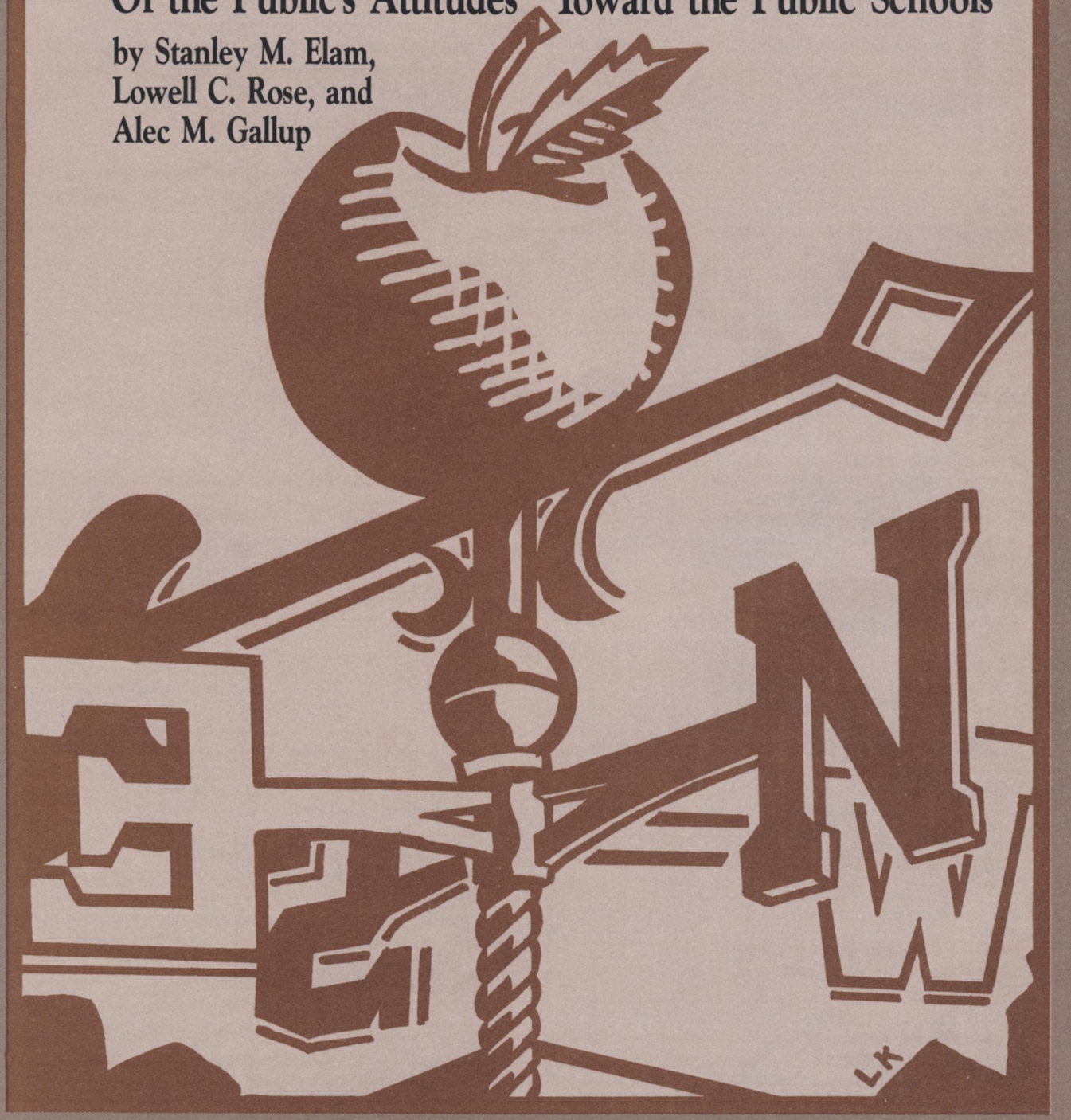

Illustration by Les Kanturek

AMERICANS ARE well aware of the "savage inequalities" that characterize the funding of U.S. public schools. The public agrees with professionals that differences in funding from state to state and from district to district are largely responsible for the uneven quality of public education in America, and a 2-1 majority states a willingness to pay more taxes to bring schools in poorer states and communities up to standard.

These are among the major findings of the 25th annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. Other significant poll results:

- For the first time since 1971, "inadequate funding" is clearly number one among the "biggest problems" people perceive in their local public schools.
- Asked to grade the local public schools as teachers grade students, almost half (47%) of the poll's respondents awarded A's or B's, a gain of 7 percentage points since last year and the highest percentage since the 48% recorded when the question was first asked in 1974.
- Previous Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup surveys have shown that substantial majorities of Americans would welcome more attention to values and character education in the public schools. The 1993 poll shows that about seven in 10 respondents also believe that it is possible to achieve local consensus on a set of basic values to be taught in the public schools. However, as responses to a sample set of values show, the trick will be to find an acceptable set.
- The public disagrees by a 3-1 margin with last year's U.S. Supreme Court ruling that declared government-sanctioned prayer at public school commencement ceremonies unconstitutional.
- The public is enthusiastic about the Clinton Administration proposal to give young people an opportunity to earn up to $10,000 in credit toward a college education through a year or two of public service; 81% approve, 14% disapprove.
- President Clinton edges former President Bush by 38% to 33% as likely to do a better job of school improvement, while 16% of respondents see no difference. Clinton's lead of 5 percentage points matches his margin of victory in the Presidential election.
- Two out of three Americans (67%) would like to see their children take up teaching as a career — up from 51% in 1990 and the highest percentage recorded in 20 years. The percentage rises to 80% among blacks.
- Americans believe lack of money for a college education is keeping minorities out of the teaching profession, while the minority student population is exploding and the percentage of minority teachers is no larger than a decade ago.
- About two out of three Americans (65%) support choice in the public schools, virtually the same proportion as reported support for public school choice in previous years — but 74% oppose allowing parents to send their children to private schools at public expense.

The report that follows provides details about these and other findings of this 25th annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll.

Grading the Public Schools

This year's Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll registered the largest one-year improvement in the grades given by the public to their local public schools since the question was first asked in 1974. The percentage of respondents awarding A's or B's jumped from 40% in 1992 to 47% in 1993, after nearly a decade of relative stability. College graduates in particular gave high ratings (54% A or B).

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 %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A & B	47	44	56	37
A	10	10	12	5
B	37	34	44	32
C	31	32	28	41
D	11	10	12	9
FAIL	4	4	4	11
Don't know	7	10	*	2

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Ratings Given the Local Public Schools

	1993 %	1992 %	1991 %	1990 %	1989 %	1988 %	1987 %	1986 %	1985 %	1984 %	1983 %
A & B	47	40	42	41	43	40	43	41	43	42	31
A	10	9	10	8	8	9	12	11	9	10	6
B	37	31	32	33	35	31	31	30	34	32	25
C	31	33	33	34	33	34	30	28	30	35	32
D	11	12	10	12	11	10	9	11	10	11	13
FAIL	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	7
Don't know	7	10	10	8	9	12	14	15	13	8	17

Poll respondents were also asked to grade the *nation's* public schools. As has been true in all past years, the "nation's schools" came off a poor second to "local schools" in the current poll. Whereas 47% of the public thought their own schools merit either an A or a B, only 19% awarded these grades to schools of the nation as a whole.

The second 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?

Illustrations by Les Kanturek

Ratings Given the Nation's Public Schools

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A & B	19	20	19	15
A	2	1	3	6
B	17	19	16	9
C	48	47	49	48
D	17	16	17	15
FAIL	4	4	4	12
Don't know	12	13	11	10

Finally, public school parents were again asked to rate the public school attended by their oldest child. Seventy-two percent of these parents gave the school their oldest child attends an A or a B, and among parents whose oldest child is doing above-average academic work the figure rises to 83%. The differences between these grades and the national rankings suggest that the better people know the public schools, the higher their opinion of school quality.

The third question:

Using the A, B, C, D, FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?

	1993 %	1992 %	1991 %	1990 %	1989 %	1988 %	1987 %	1986 %
A & B	72	64	73	72	71	70	69	65
A	27	22	29	27	25	22	28	28
B	45	42	44	45	46	48	41	37
C	18	24	21	19	19	22	20	26
D	5	6	2	5	5	3	5	4
FAIL	2	4	4	2	1	2	2	2
Don't know	3	2	*	2	4	3	4	3

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Biggest Problems Facing Local Public Schools

In the 25-year history of the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup education poll, three school problems uppermost in the minds of respondents have been discipline, drugs, and finances. Between 1969 and 1985, discipline was the most frequently mentioned problem each year except 1971, when finances were identified as a major problem by 23% of the public. Drug abuse by students then became the most frequently mentioned problem for six years, 1986 through 1991. In 1992 drugs and lack of proper financial support were each mentioned by 22% of the respondents.

In 1993 lack of proper financial support has clearly emerged as the number one public school problem. Twenty-one percent of poll respondents named it, while 16% cited drug abuse and 15% mentioned lack of discipline. Significantly, the respondents who most clearly recognized the inadequacy of school financing were college graduates, upper-income and professional and business groups, and public school parents.

Concern about the problem of financial support was considerably greater in the West (30%) and the Midwest (29%) than in the South (13%) and East (15%). In the South and East, concern about drug abuse was mentioned more often (by 18% and 19% respectively) than was lack of financial support.

The question:

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

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Lack of proper financial support	21	19	24	13
Drug abuse	16	17	14	9
Lack of discipline	15	15	15	19
Fighting/violence/gangs	13	12	14	17
Standards/quality of education	9	9	8	18
Overcrowded schools	8	6	11	10
Difficulty in getting good teachers	5	4	7	3
Parents' lack of support/interest	4	5	4	3
Integration/segregation, racial discrimination	4	4	4	4
Pupils' lack of interest, poor attitudes, truancy	4	3	4	4
Low pay for teachers	3	4	3	2
Moral standards, dress code, sex/pregnancy	3	3	3	9
There are no problems	1	1	3	2
Miscellaneous**	3	3	2	*
Don't know	14	17	10	16

*Less than one-half of 1%.

**A total of 36 different kinds of problems were mentioned by 2% or fewer respondents.

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

The table below shows how public perceptions of the three public school problems most often mentioned have fluctuated over the past decade.

Percentages Mentioning Each Major Problem

	1993 %	1992 %	1991 %	1990 %	1989 %	1988 %	1987 %	1986 %	1985 %	1984 %
Lack of proper financial support	21	22	18	13	13	12	14	11	9*	14**
Drug abuse	16	22	22	38	34	32	30	28	18	18
Lack of discipline	15	17	20	19	19	19	22	24	25	27

*Ranked fifth among problems

**Ranked fourth among problems

Will Clinton Improve Schools More Than Bush Did?

In recent years thousands of officials at all levels of government have publicly committed themselves to school improvement. Last year's Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll asked respondents to grade these officials on their success to date. Dissatisfaction was rampant. These figures are illustrative: President Bush, 15% A or B, 46% D or Fail; members of the U.S. Congress, 7% A or B, 52% D or Fail; state governors, 19%

A or B, 41% D or Fail; and state legislators, 14% A or B, 40% D or Fail.

In the current poll, we asked only whether people believe President Clinton will do a better or worse job of school improvement than President Bush did. The poll was taken when Clinton's approval ratings were particularly low for a recently inaugurated President, yet Clinton edged Bush by 5 percentage points (38% to 33%) on potential to bring about school improvement — his exact margin of victory in the November election. The region most strongly for Clinton in November — the East — was also his best in terms of the public's response to this question. In the East, 46% said they believe that Clinton will do better than Bush did, while 28% said they believe that he will do worse.

Further evidence of how political this question is comes from breakdowns of responses by respondents' political affiliation. By a wide margin, Democrats said that Clinton will do a better job than Bush; Republicans supported Bush by almost as wide a margin.

The question:

Do you believe that President Clinton will do a better job of school improvement than President Bush or a worse job?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Clinton better job	38	39	38	34
Clinton worse job	33	32	34	42
No difference (volunteered)	16	17	15	16
Don't know	13	12	13	8

		Political Affiliation		
	National Totals %	Rep. %	Dem. %	Ind. %
Clinton better job	38	17	68	29
Clinton worse job	33	59	9	33
No difference (volunteered)	16	16	10	23
Don't know	13	8	13	15

Prioritizing the Six National Goals

Since the six national goals for education (to be reached by the year 2000) were announced early in 1990 by President Bush and the 50 state governors, these polls have tracked opinion about various aspects of the goals, including levels of public awareness and approval of the goals, the priority that should be given to achieving each of them, levels of public confidence that the goals can be reached in this decade, and public perceptions of progress toward meeting the goals. Public approval of all six goals has always been high, and people have assigned a high priority to reaching each of them. For example, in 1990 every goal but one was given either a "very high" or "high" priority by more than 80% of the respondents. Even the goal that "American students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement" gained 76% of the "very high/high" vote.

However, people were very skeptical about the possibility of realizing the goals by the year 2000, and public awareness of the goals was still low as recently as last year. Only about a quarter of respondents said they had heard of each of the goals. And, in 1992, majorities said they believed that little progress had been made toward realizing the goals. But — as might be expected — many answered "don't know" to that question.

This year we again asked the public to assign priorities to each of the goals. The priorities assigned this year are, generally, even higher than they were in 1990. For example, 71% assigned a "very high" priority to the goal that "every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning." The comparable figure for 1990 was 55%.

The question:

Now, some questions about the national education goals that have been recommended for attainment by the year 2000. How high a priority do you think each goal should have for the remainder of the decade — very high, high, low, or very low?

	Priority Assigned					National Totals	
	Very High %	High %	Low %	Very Low %	Don't Know %	Very High 1993 %	High 1990 %
By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.	41	48	8	1	2	41	44
By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%.	54	38	6	1	1	54	45
By the year 2000, American students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography. In addition, every school will insure that all students will learn to use their minds well so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in a modern economy.	59	33	6	1	1	59	46
By the year 2000, American students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.	45	43	9	2	1	45	34
By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.	54	37	7	1	1	54	45
By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.	71	19	7	2	1	71	55

Exploring Equal Funding

In at least 26 states, the long-standing American tradition of spending tax money on schools in the community where the money is raised has collided violently in recent years with a principle of fairness that is also traditional. This principle of fairness is not usually stated explicitly, but it might read as follows: All children deserve an equal opportunity, through education, to reach their full potential; to achieve this end, greater equality in school funding is essential.

In most cases, the fairness principle is winning. The issue was settled long ago in California. Four years ago the Kentucky Supreme Court ruled the entire school system of the Bluegrass State unconstitutional, and the legislature built a new system, with equal funding for every school. A Kansas judge has ruled that property taxes must be spent equally across that state, regardless of where they are collected. And last spring an Alabama court declared that state's entire school system unconstitutional, and state officials are reinventing the system.

In Texas, after voters rejected a court-ordered redistribution plan last spring, the legislature sought to reduce funding disparities by effectively transferring property wealth from rich to poor school districts. The law will be in effect in the 1993-94 school year, though an appeal is likely and the law itself may be changed.

In a series of seven questions, this poll explores public opinion on several of the issues involved in the debate over equal funding. The responses should hearten educators who have fought for the fairness principle. People appear to understand the problems, and they support fairness in funding. They are even willing to pay higher taxes in order to achieve fairness — or so they tell pollsters.

Specifically, people are aware that the quality of public schools varies greatly from district to district and that in most states the amount of money spent on schools differs considerably from district to district. A sizable majority (68%) believes that the quality of schooling depends a great deal or quite a lot on the amount of money spent, and an overwhelming majority (90% yes, 8% no) believes more should be done to improve the quality of public schools in the poorer states and poorer communities. People also believe, by a large majority, that the amount of money allocated to public education from all sources should be the same for all students, whether they live in wealthy or poor districts.

The first question:

Just your impression, how much would you say the quality of the education provided by the public schools in your state differs from school district to school district — a great deal, quite a lot, not too much, or not at all?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A great deal	33	31	35	44
Quite a lot	29	30	27	28
Not too much	30	30	33	22
Not at all	1	1	1	1
Don't know	7	8	4	5

The second question:

Again, just your impression, how much would you say the amount of money spent on the public schools in your state differs from school district to school district — a great deal, quite a lot, not too much, or not at all?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A great deal	28	28	26	31
Quite a lot	26	24	32	32
Not too much	33	34	32	29
Not at all	3	3	3	5
Don't know	10	11	7	3

The third question:

In your opinion, how much does the amount of money spent on a public school student's education affect the quality of his or her education — a great deal, quite a lot, not too much, or not at all?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A great deal	38	37	40	33
Quite a lot	30	30	30	31
Not too much	25	25	25	30
Not at all	5	6	2	5
Don't know	2	2	3	1

The fourth question in this series gave respondents the generally accepted view of educators: that differences in money spent on schools make a real and measurable difference in the quality of education. It then asked about correcting in-

"You can't be serious!"

equities. Because the same question was asked in 1989, it is possible to check for change over time.

The fourth question:

The quality of the public schools varies greatly from community to community and from state to state because of differences in the amount of taxes taken in to support the schools. Do you think more should be done to improve the quality of the public schools in the poorer states and in the poorer communities or not?

	National Totals %		No Children In School %		Public School Parents %		Nonpublic School Parents %	
	'93	'89	'93	'89	'93	'89	'93	'89
Yes	90	83	89	82	93	86	86	85
No	8	9	10	9	5	8	12	7
Don't know	2	8	1	9	2	6	2	8

The responses to this question show that the public is almost unanimous in believing that more should be done to improve the quality of public schools in the poorer states and communities. Respondents seem to agree with the premise that inequality is largely a result of uneven funding. Even parents of students in nonpublic schools were overwhelmingly in favor of doing more for the poorer public schools. Interestingly, 100% of blacks answered yes to this question. Ninety-five percent of Democrats and 85% of Republicans answered yes.

The fifth question (asked of those who answered yes):

Would you be willing or not willing to pay more taxes to improve the quality of the public schools in the poorer states and poorer communities?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Willing	68	66	71	60
Not willing	30	31	27	35
Don't know	2	3	2	5

About six out of 10 Americans (61%) think that more should be done to improve the quality of the public schools in poorer states and communities *and* are willing to pay more taxes to improve these schools — an increase of 10 percentage points over the 51% who felt that way in 1989.

Support for higher taxes to improve poor schools is fairly consistent among all demographic groups. Nonwhites are especially supportive; they favor the idea of paying more taxes to improve quality in poorer schools by a 73% to 25% margin. People in the West and South are most likely to approve additional taxes to improve schools in poor states and communities.

Answers to the final two questions in this series on funding show clearly that an overwhelming majority of people believe that the amount of money allocated to public education should be the same for all students, regardless of whether they live in wealthy or poor districts. Moreover, Americans feel just as strongly that money allocated for public education should be the same for all students even if that means taking money from wealthy districts and giving it to poor districts. Interestingly, responses to both these questions were consistent across income levels.

The sixth question:

Do you think that the amount of money allocated to public education in your state, from all sources, should or should not be the same for all students, regardless of whether they live in wealthy or poor school districts?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should	88	87	89	88
Should not	10	11	10	10
Don't know	2	2	1	2

The seventh question:

Do you think that the amount of money allocated to education in your state should or should not be the same for all students, even if it means taking funding from some wealthy school districts and giving it to poor districts?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should	85	85	86	79
Should not	12	12	12	14
Don't know	3	3	2	7

Support for Improving Inner-City Schools

Alarm about the condition of America's inner-city schools has been growing rapidly in recent years, as many of these schools continue to deteriorate. The concerns of educators who are familiar with the problem have been graphically described in Jonathan Kozol's most recent book, *Savage Inequalities*. The poll shows that this concern is widely shared by the lay public. A large majority (81%) views it as very important to improve inner-city schools, and another 15% regard it as fairly important. Only 3% of respondents say it is

Illustrations by Les Kanturek

not very important or not important at all to improve these schools. This represents an increase in concern since the question was first asked in the 1989 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll, when 74% said the problem was very important.

More significantly, 1993 respondents also expressed a willingness to pay more federal taxes to improve the quality of the nation's inner-city schools. The margin here was 60% to 38%. This willingness is evident among virtually every demographic and geographic group.

The first question:

How important do you think it is to improve the nation's inner-city schools — very important, fairly important, not very important, or not important at all?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Very important	81	80	81	79
Fairly important	15	15	16	13
Not very important	2	2	2	3
Not important at all	1	1	*	4
Don't know	1	2	1	1

*Less than one-half of 1%.

	National Totals	
	1993 %	1989 %
Very important	81	74
Fairly important	15	19
Not very important	2	2
Not important at all	1	*
Don't know	1	5

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The second question:

Would you be willing or not willing to pay more federal taxes to improve the quality of the nation's inner-city schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes, willing	60	59	62	52
No, not willing	38	38	37	47
Don't know	2	3	1	1

Preschool Programs: Value and Means of Financing

As the general public increasingly recognizes how important a good start in school is for future success, preschool programs have become more and more popular. At least part of this popularity is no doubt associated with the growing percentage of mothers of young children who work outside the home.

Head Start, established by Congress under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, was initially aimed at poor children and helped to prepare them for elementary school. Later, it was extended to children above the poverty level, whose parents then paid for it according to income. Although some recent research suggests that the advantages gained by Head Start children tend to disappear in later grades, other research shows that the better programs are enormously cost-effective. The usual figure quoted is a $3 return for every dollar spent on Head Start.

In the 1992 poll, the public affirmed that early care and education are valuable. Thirty-nine percent said they believed that preschool programs would help low-income youngsters perform a great deal better in their teenage years, and 35% said they would help such youngsters perform quite a lot better. Moreover, a plurality (49% yes, 42% no) said they would be willing to pay more taxes to fund free preschool programs for children from low-income and poverty-level households.

The current poll asked two questions about early child care which show that public support for these programs continues — and, in fact, suggests that it may be increasing slowly. In response to a trend question asked previously in 1976, 1981, and 1985, taxpayers for the first time this year, by a comfortable margin of 59% to 38%, state that they would be willing to pay for child-care centers within the public school system for all preschool children.

The second question asks whether the public would approve of the idea of using tax money for preschool programs *only* when parents are unable to pay for them. This question elicited marginally more support, 61% to 36%, than the previous one, although somewhat less support than might have been expected given the implied lower cost to taxpayers.

The first question:

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

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	59	56	67	47
Oppose	38	40	32	52
Don't know	3	4	1	1

	National Totals			
	1993 %	1985 %	1981 %	1976 %
Favor	59	43	46	46
Oppose	38	45	47	49
Don't know	3	12	7	5

The second question:

Let's assume that preschool programs are to be paid for only by those parents whose children use the programs. Would you be willing, or not willing, to pay more taxes for funding free preschool programs for those children whose parents are unable to pay for them?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Willing to pay	61	62	62	46
Not willing to pay	36	35	34	51
Don't know	3	3	4	3

Health and Social Services as Part Of the Public School Program

The 1992 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll showed considerable public support (77% in favor, 16% opposed) for using public school buildings and facilities for the delivery of health and social services to students. That question specified, however, that these services at school sites would be administered and coordinated by various other governmental agencies. This year poll respondents were asked to indicate approval or disapproval of six specific services that might be offered by the public schools in their communities. In some schools several of these services are already being provided at taxpayer expense, but consensus has not been reached on most of them. No reference was made to administration or coordination by other governmental agencies.

In almost every case, the public strongly favored the provision of these services by their local public schools, as the table below shows. Only dental exams did not get overwhelming support. In most cases, there was very little variation in support among different demographic groups. It may be worth noting, however, that Republicans were generally less supportive than Democrats. Also, 87% of nonwhites, but only 57% of whites, favored after-school care for children of working parents.

The question:

I am going to read a list of health and social services that the public schools in your community might provide to students. As I read off each service, one at a time, please indicate whether you think the local schools should provide this service to students, or not.

Should Provide	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Examinations to detect sight and hearing defects	92	91	94	83
Free or low-cost luncheons	87	84	93	86
Inoculations against communicable diseases	84	85	83	77
Free or low-cost breakfasts	74	70	80	73
After-school care for children of working parents	62	59	69	55
Examinations to detect dental needs	58	57	61	50

The Curriculum: Broad and Shallow, Or Narrow and Deep?

Although it waxes and wanes over the years, there appears to be a perennial "back to the basics" movement in American education; it coexists with constant pressures for a wide range of new subject matter, from computer use to AIDS prevention. Today, "less is more" is the rallying cry for a powerful set of school reformers, and many secondary schools have reduced the scope of their curricula in order to concentrate on what the third national goal calls "challenging subject matter" in English, mathematics, science, history, and geography. Believers say it is better for all children to learn a few essential subjects thoroughly than to elect from a broad but sometimes trivialized curriculum. To get some sense of the public's views on this issue, the current poll revived a question first asked in 1979.

The question:

Public high schools can offer students a wide variety of courses, or they can concentrate on fewer, basic courses, such as English, mathematics, history, and science. Which of these two policies do you think the local high schools should follow in planning their curricula — a wide variety of courses or fewer but more basic courses?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Wide variety of courses	48	44	55	54
Basic courses	51	54	44	43
Don't know	1	2	1	3

	National Totals	
	1993 %	1979 %
Wide variety of courses	48	44
Basic courses	51	49
Don't know	1	7

Illustration by Les Kanturek

Values Education: Time for Greater Emphasis?

Since 1975 the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup polls have been sampling public attitudes toward values or ethics/morals education as a function of the public schools. In 1975, 79% of the public favored instruction in the public schools that would deal with morals and moral behavior. In the 1976 poll, 67% of the respondents said that the public schools should "take on a share of parents' responsibilities for the moral behavior of their children." The same poll rated "high moral standards" among the top four qualities to be developed in children. Respondents to the 1984 poll identified "to develop standards of right and wrong" as second only to "developing the ability to speak and write correctly" as the most important goal for the public schools.

After Secretary of Education William Bennett made character education one of his prime emphases in 1986, the 1987 poll asked respondents whether they thought courses aimed at helping students develop personal values and ethical behavior should be taught in the public schools or left to the students' parents and the churches. Forty-three percent said the schools should teach such courses, but 36% thought the task should be left to parents and churches. However, another 13% volunteered that both (schools *and* churches/parents) should teach values and ethical behavior. In the same 1987 poll, 62% of respondents thought it would be possible "to develop subject matter for a character education course that would be acceptable to most people in the community," while 23% disagreed and 15% said that they did not know.

Why haven't the public schools responded more positively to the evident public desire for character education? Kevin Ryan of Boston University's Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character points to many problems and changes that keep schoolpeople from pursuing more vigorously what was once a tradition of teaching core values. There is increasing diversity and lack of consensus in the larger society, and character education has become a gray area in the curriculum, Ryan says.

The current poll asked two questions about values in the public schools, the first a repeat of the 1987 question on whether local communities could agree on a set of basic values to be taught in the public schools. Again, as in 1987, a solid majority (69%) said yes. The second question, which sought opinion on a sample set of 12 specific values, showed considerable agreement on a number of them but demonstrated the potential for conflict in this area.

The first question:

Do you think it would be possible, or not possible, to get people in your community to agree on a set of basic values, such as honesty and patriotism, that would be taught in the local public schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes, possible	69	67	73	73
No, not possible	27	28	25	26
Don't know	4	5	2	1

The second question:

I am going to read a list of different values that might be taught in the public schools. For each one, please tell me whether you think it should be taught, or should not be taught, to all students in the public schools of your community.

Should Be Taught	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Honesty	97	97	97	95
Democracy	93	92	93	98
Acceptance of people of different races and ethnic backgrounds	93	92	96	92
Patriotism, love of country	91	91	93	89
Caring for friends and family members	91	90	93	90
Moral courage	91	91	94	83
The golden rule	90	90	89	88
Acceptance of people who hold different religious beliefs	87	87	87	86
Acceptance of people who hold unpopular or controversial political or social views	73	73	75	70
Sexual abstinence outside of marriage	66	66	67	69
Acceptance of the right of a woman to choose abortion	56	56	57	38
Acceptance of people with different sexual orientations: that is, homosexuals or bisexuals	51	52	50	43

The respondents strongly approved (at least 87% in favor) the teaching of eight values in the public schools. Indeed, the level of endorsement for the teaching of honesty reached 97% — an almost unanimous vote of approval.

However, on four values that are more controversial there was significant disagreement by category of respondent. For example, younger people (ages 18-29) were much more likely than persons 50 and older (61% yes to 46% yes) to favor teaching acceptance of persons with different sexual orientations. Similar differences appear between whites (48% yes, 49% no) and nonwhites (63% yes, 36% no). Southerners were much less likely to approve of teaching this value than people in other regions: South 40%, East 63%, West 54%, and Midwest 49% yes. Public school parents are also divided: 50% for, 47% against. Only 46% of men would teach acceptance of homosexuals and bisexuals, compared with 55% of women who would do so.

Sexual abstinence outside of marriage was favored as a topic for public school instruction by a 2-1 margin (66% to 32%). Acceptance of the right of women to choose abortion was approved as a topic for instruction by rather small margins in most demographic groups. Oddly, 61% of men but only 52% of women approved it. Democrats approved (62% to 35%), while Republicans were slightly opposed (45% yes, 54% no).

Required Community Service

When a question on offering high school credit for community service was first asked in these polls in 1978, it was framed to imply that community service would be an option, not a requirement. As a result, public approval was very high (87% for, 8% against). In 1984 the same question brought a slightly lower approval rating (79% for, 16% against).

In 1989, the public was asked if community service should be made a *requirement* for high school graduation. Although there was less support for the requirement than for the elective, a majority of respondents still approved (61% in favor, 30% opposed).

In the current poll, approval of community service as a requirement showed some gain (70% in favor, 29% opposed). There was little variation in support among demographic categories.

The question:

Would you favor or oppose a requirement that all students in the local public schools perform some kind of community service in order to graduate?

	National Totals %		No Children In School %		Public School Parents %		Nonpublic School Parents %	
	'93	'89	'93	'89	'93	'89	'93	'89
Favor	70	61	70	60	69	63	70	69
Oppose	29	30	28	30	30	32	29	25
Don't know	1	9	2	10	1	5	1	6

National Service to Pay for College

One of the more popular education policies advocated by candidate Bill Clinton was that young people who might not otherwise be able to afford a college education be offered the opportunity to earn up to $10,000 in credit toward college by public service over a period of one or two years. Although President Clinton appears to have been forced by budget considerations to reduce the scope of his proposal, the idea remains very popular. Respondents nationwide approved of the idea by an 81% to 14% margin. Almost all demographic groups favored it overwhelmingly, even Republicans.

The question:

President Clinton has proposed a national service program to help young people pay for college. Under this program, anyone over age 17 could work in a public service position for one or two years and earn up to $10,000 credit toward the cost of a college education. Do you favor or oppose such a program?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	81	81	83	71
Oppose	14	15	12	23
Don't know	5	4	5	6

Bilingual Education

Public school people have long debated the best ways of dealing with students from homes where English is not spoken, or not spoken well. Debate over the problem heated up this year as Congress considered reauthorizing the Bilingual Education Act first passed 25 years ago.

In recent years, with new waves of immigration from many countries, but particularly from Spanish-speaking nations and Asia, bilingual education has become more perplexing and expensive than ever. For example, how many teachers can teach in Tagalog, a language spoken by nearly one million U.S. residents over age 5? In all, one in seven U.S. residents speaks a language other than English at home, according to the Census Bureau. That's 31.8 million people, up from 23.1 million a decade ago.

The 1968 bilingual education program authorized by Congress embodies the theory that students with limited English-speaking skills lose ground in traditional academic subjects unless they are taught in their native tongue. Some educators have challenged the federally mandated bilingual education program as "fraudulent, designed to keep kids trapped in the program."

The 1980 poll in this series found that 82% of the lay public at that time thought children who cannot speak English should be required to learn English in special classes before they are enrolled in public schools. (The question did not specify whether these special classes would be a part of the tax-supported public school system.) In the current poll we have asked respondents to choose one of three options in handling students with limited ability in English. The results suggest that the public supports the advocates of English instruction first.

The question:

Many families who come from other countries have school-age children who cannot speak English. Which one of the following three approaches do you think is the best way for the public schools to deal with non-English-speaking students?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Require children to learn English in special classes at their parents' expense before they are enrolled in the public schools	25	27	23	20
Provide public school instruction in all subjects in the students' native languages while they learn English	27	26	30	29
Require students to learn English in public schools before they receive instruction in any other subjects	46	45	45	47
Don't know	2	2	2	4

National Testing and Its Purposes

The public has repeatedly endorsed the use of standardized national tests to measure the academic achievement of U.S. students. As early as 1976, 65% of poll respondents thought all high school students should be required to pass a standard examination in order to get a high school diploma; 31% were opposed. The same question produced similar results in 1984 (65% yes, 29% no), but by 1988 the level of support had risen to 73% for, 22% against. The public also has a long history of support for national tests that would allow comparisons of the educational achievement of students in different communities. The following table displays responses from previous years to the question, Would you like to see students in the local schools given national tests so that their educational achievement could be compared with students in other communities?

	National Totals				
	1988 %	1986 %	1983 %	1971 %	1970 %
Yes	81	77	75	70	75
No	14	16	17	21	16
Don't know	5	7	8	9	9

The reform movement of recent years has brought pressure for establishing higher national standards of student achievement. A series of questions asked in the 1989 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll found that the public not only understands that there is no single set of national achievement standards and goals for all public schools, but that people also favor, by a 70% to 19% margin, requiring the public schools to conform to national achievement goals and standards. In that same year people approved, 77% to 14%, requiring U.S. public schools to use standardized national tests to measure the academic achievement of students.

In 1992 the poll repeated the 1989 question about requiring local schools to use standardized national tests to measure student achievement, but it also asked how else the results of those tests should be used. The latter question was asked again this year. In both years, the public placed highest value on identifying areas in which students need extra help and on identifying areas in which teachers need to improve their teaching skills. Respondents placed less value on ranking schools in terms of student achievement, determining if a student advances to the next grade, determining how much teachers should be paid, and determining the level of funding for each local school.

The question:

In addition to measuring the academic achievement of students, do you think standardized national tests should be used or should not be used in the public schools in this community for the following purposes?

Should Be Used	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
To identify areas in which students need extra help	91	91	92	92
To identify areas in which teachers need to improve their teaching skills	87	88	87	82
To rank the local public schools in terms of student achievement	72	74	68	69
To determine if a student advances to the next grade level of schooling	70	72	66	64
To determine the level of funding each local school should receive	49	52	45	44
To determine how much teachers should be paid	46	48	43	34

Longer School Day and Year

Over a 25-year period, these polls have shown that the U.S. public usually favors a change or innovation in the public schools if the change promises improvement.* But it has taken the public nearly a decade to recognize that the traditional nine-month school year may no longer suffice in a post-industrial, knowledge-driven, and increasingly global society.

Beginning in 1982, the following question was periodically asked in the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup polls: In some nations, students attend school as many as 240 days a year as compared to about 180 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?

The proposal finally gained majority approval in 1991, as the table below shows:

	Extend School Year 30 Days				
	1992 %	1991 %	1984 %	1983 %	1982 %
Favor	55	51	44	40	37
Oppose	35	42	50	49	53
Don't know	10	7	6	11	10

In the current poll, the question was put differently.

*See Stanley Elam, ed., *The Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa Polls of Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, 1969-88* (Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa, 1989), pp. 7-8, in which the approval/disapproval ratings of 53 suggested changes are summarized. Forty of the 53 won public approval by sizable margins.

Illustration by Les Kanturek

The question:

Some public schools in the nation have increased the amount of time students spend in school by extending the school year or the school day. Do you favor or oppose increasing the amount of time students spend in the public schools in your community?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	52	53	50	54
Oppose	47	45	49	43
Don't know	1	2	1	3

The current poll asked respondents which way they would prefer to increase the amount of time children spend in school: increasing the number of days in the school year, increasing the number of hours in the school day, or holding Saturday morning classes. A plurality (47%) favored more days in the year, but 33% favored increasing the number of hours in the school day. Saturday classes ran a poor third, gaining a favorable vote from only 5% of the respondents.

The question:

Which one of these plans for increasing the amount of time students spend in school would you prefer — increasing the number of days in the school year, increasing the number of hours in the school day, or having classes on Saturday morning?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Increasing number of days in school year	47	46	50	45
Increasing number of hours in school day	33	34	33	31
Saturday morning classes	5	5	6	1
A combination of these (volunteered)	2	2	1	5
None of these (volunteered)	12	12	10	18
Don't know	1	1	*	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Attractiveness of Teaching as a Career

For the past quarter century, these polls have tracked the attractiveness to parents of teaching as a career for their children. The popularity of teaching as a profession has apparently rebounded from its doldrums during the 1970s and 1980s. In the current survey, two out of three Americans say they would like a child of theirs to take up teaching in the public schools, an increase of 16 percentage points since the question was last asked in 1990. At that time only about half of the respondents (51%) wanted a child of theirs to enter the teaching profession.

Public perceptions of the desirability of teaching as a career have been measured eight times since the initial reading taken in the first poll in the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup series in 1969. During the ensuing quarter century, the attractiveness of the profession to the public has fluctuated greatly (by 30 percentage points) depending on impressions at the time regarding teacher salaries and the state of the public schools. The high was recorded in 1969, when 75% of the respondents said that they would like a child of theirs to become a teacher; the low came in 1983, when the figure was only 45%.

The question:

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

	National Totals							
	1993 %	1990 %	1988 %	1983 %	1981 %	1980 %	1972 %	1969 %
Yes	67	51	58	45	46	48	67	75
No	29	38	31	33	43	40	22	15
Don't know	4	11	11	22	11	12	11	10

Minorities and the Teaching Profession

Approximately 70% of students in U.S. public schools today are white non-Hispanics. Minorities account for roughly the following percentages of the student population: blacks, 16%; Hispanics, 12%; Asians and Pacific Islanders, 3%; and American Indians, 1%.* At the same time, the Education Information Branch of the U.S. Department of Education reports that 86.8% of the public school teaching force is white, 8% black, and 5.3% other.

The disproportion between the percentage of minorities in the student population and the percentage of minorities in the teaching force is likely to grow rapidly in the future, because the number of minority students is increasing very rapidly, and the minority component of the teaching force is not. These disparities are troublesome because of the need for teachers to be conscious of and sympathetic to the cultural backgrounds that minority students bring to school. Critics argue that even well-prepared white teachers often fail to understand these differences. Why does the disproportion exist? In a question asked in this year's poll, the public was invited to choose among five plausible explanations. Respondents felt that "not being able to afford the college preparation required for teachers" was the most important factor.

*Conversation with Vance Grant, National Center for Education Statistics.

Illustrations by Les Kanturek

Seventy-three percent identified this factor as "very important" (46%) or "quite important" (27%). Minorities themselves confirmed this impression: 80% of nonwhites judged inability to pay for college "very important" or "quite important."

The question:

As you may know, a relatively small percentage of people from minority groups enter the teaching profession. As I read off possible reasons for this, one at a time, please tell me how important you think that reason is in keeping minorities out of teaching. Do you think it is very important, quite important, not too important, or not at all important?

	Very Important %	Quite Important %	Not Too Important %	Not at All Important %	Don't Know %
Unable to afford college preparation	46	27	13	11	3
Low salaries	37	23	22	16	2
Little chance for advancement	31	25	23	19	2
Believe they will face discrimination in the profession	27	21	27	22	3
Low prestige or status of teaching	26	19	29	21	5

Those Responding "Very Important"

	National %	Whites %	Nonwhites %	Hispanics %	Blacks %
Unable to afford college preparation	46	44	59	58	67
Low salaries	37	33	55	56	65
Little chance for advancement	31	27	54	38	60
Believe they will face discrimination in the profession	27	23	56	48	61
Low prestige or status of teaching	26	24	34	43	34

Parent Involvement

Teachers are quick to point out that children are far more likely to do well in school if their parents are actively engaged in the children's education. A recent National PTA survey found that parents themselves also understand this very well. Ninety-five percent of parents surveyed by the PTA said they favor written plans for parent involvement because they believe such involvement is crucial to school success. They want guidance in how they can help.

The current poll reveals almost total unanimity in every demographic group on the importance of encouraging parent involvement. Ninety-six percent of the public said parent involvement is very important.

The question:

How important do you think it is to encourage parents to take a more active part in educating their children — very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Very important	96	97	95	95
Fairly important	3	2	5	5
Not too important	1	1	*	*
Not at all important	*	*	*	*
Don't know	*	*	*	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Prayers at Public School Graduation Ceremonies

Last June the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling in Texas that approved student-initiated and student-led invocations and benedictions at graduation ceremonies. The circuit court held that a senior class could vote on whether to include prayers at graduation, so long as the prayers were delivered by student volunteers and were "nonsectarian and nonproselytizing in nature." The court said a majority of students can do what the state cannot do, referring to the Supreme Court's 5-4 decision last year in *Lee* v. *Weisman*. That decision ruled unconstitutional a Providence, Rhode Island, school district policy of inviting local clergy to deliver graduation prayers.

But the long battle over prayer at graduations has probably not been settled. For one thing, the Fifth Circuit ruling is legally binding only in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Prayer advocates say the Supreme Court "affirmed" the student-initiated approach. Meanwhile, Gwendolyn Gregory, deputy counsel for the National School Boards Association, which asked the Court to review the Fifth Circuit's ruling, said, "We needed some help and we didn't get it." The American Civil Liberties Union, the American Jewish Congress, and Americans United for Separation of Church and State have also maintained that the appeals court ruling was wrong.

The American Center for Law and Justice, a public interest law firm associated with religious broadcaster Pat Robertson, has sent letters to 15,000 U.S. school administrators urging

them to allow student-led prayers at graduation ceremonies. Rev. Robertson said the Supreme Court's action in the Texas case and the Court's recent unanimous decision giving religious groups after-hours access to school facilities on the same basis as other community groups have "opened a wide and effective door for Christian people of this country to proclaim their faith." (See Larry Barber, "Prayer at Public School Graduation: A Survey," page 125, this *Kappan*, for information about a Phi Delta Kappa study of school districts' responses to the Court's decision in *Lee* v. *Weisman*.)

The current Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll was conducted before the Supreme Court decided to let stand the Fifth Circuit ruling that approved student-led prayers. But a question referring to the *Lee* v. *Weisman* decision outlawing officially sponsored prayers was asked. The response shows how generally public sentiment favors prayer at graduation ceremonies. The margin is approximately 3-1 in favor. People in the South were particularly positive. Other interesting differences by respondent category are shown in the second table below.

The question:

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that conducting religious prayers at any public school graduation ceremony is unconstitutional because it violates the First Amendment, which concerns the separation between church and state. Do you, yourself, believe that prayers should or should not be part of public school graduation ceremonies?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should be allowed	74	71	79	82
Should not be allowed	23	26	19	17
Don't know	3	3	2	1

		Age			Religion		
	National Totals %	18-29 %	30-49 %	50 & Older %	Protestant %	Roman Catholic %	Jews/ Others %
Should be allowed	74	61	73	83	82	72	58
Should not be allowed	23	36	24	14	16	27	35
Don't know	3	3	3	3	2	1	7

School Choice

President Bush made school choice the centerpiece of his education reform strategy, campaigning for tuition tax credits and other voucher-like plans that would give at least some parents public money to use for private schools. Thirteen states and many more school districts have adopted some kind of choice plan involving public schools but not private schools in the past five years. However, the public has not generally accepted the voucher idea. Three populous states — Pennsylvania, California, and Colorado — have turned thumbs down on voucher plans since December 1991 — Colorado by a 67% majority in the November 1992 election.

Last spring the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching released a 118-page report, *School Choice*, based on a yearlong study. It questions claims about the benefits of school choice, saying "they greatly outdistance the evidence, thus far." The report praises some districtwide choice programs but argues that statewide plans have failed to demonstrate any educational impact and could increase disparities among districts. Moreover, according to Foundation President Ernest Boyer, most public school parents have little desire for such a system. In states where choice has been adopted, the report states that fewer than 2% of eligible parents participate. Moreover, parents who transfer their children to other schools do so mostly for nonacademic reasons.

The Carnegie report has had its critics. Joe Nathan, director of the Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota, claims he found "64 significant misstatements of fact or distortions in one chapter." But Richard Rothstein of the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C., says the report "confirms what most people who have studied the issue have observed. And that is that there's no reason to believe that choice in itself will be a force for inspiring schools."

The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup polls have dealt extensively with the choice issue.* This year four questions on choice were asked. All four have been asked before in the series. Few changes in opinions have occurred.

The first question:

Do you favor or oppose allowing students and their parents to choose which public schools in this

*For details, see the poll reports in the September issues for 1987, 1989, 1990, and 1991.

Acknowledgments

A 12-member panel of distinguished educators and others interested in education helped frame the questions for the 1993 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. After editing and compilation, these questions were rated for appropriateness by the same panel. The authors of this report chose the final set of questions from the panel-approved list.

Panelists: Gregory R. Anrig, president, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J.; Gerald W. Bracey, education writer and consultant, Alexandria, Va.; Edward A. Brainard, former president, CFK Ltd. (originator of the Gallup education poll), now retired from the assistant superintendency, Aurora (Colo.) Public Schools; Anne Campbell, former commissioner of education, Nebraska; David L. Clark, professor of education, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Luvern Cunningham, partner, Leadership Development Associates, Columbus, Ohio, and Fawcett Professor of Educational Administration (emeritus), Ohio State University; Joseph Cronin, president, Bentley College, Waltham, Mass.; Lowell C. Rose, executive director, Phi Delta Kappa, Bloomington, Ind.; Sam Sava, executive director, National Association of Elementary School Principals, Alexandria, Va.; M. Donald Thomas, partner, School Management Study Group, Salt Lake City, Utah; Ray Tobiason, director of programs, Washington State Association of School Administrators, Fox Island, Wash.; and Carolyn Warner, president, Carolyn Warner and Associates, Phoenix, Ariz. — SME

Illustrations by Les Kanturek

community the students attend, regardless of where they live?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	65	65	68	61
Oppose	33	33	31	38
Don't know	2	2	1	1

	National Totals			
	1993 %	1991 %	1990 %	1989 %
Favor	65	62	62	60
Oppose	33	33	31	31
Don't know	2	5	7	9

The second question:

Do you favor or oppose allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	24	21	27	45
Oppose	74	76	72	55
Don't know	2	3	1	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

	National Totals	
	1993 %	1991 %
Favor	24	26
Oppose	74	68
Don't know	2	6

The third question:

Do you think private schools that accept government tuition payments for these students should be accountable to public school authorities or not?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes, should	63	62	67	40
No, shouldn't	34	35	31	57
Don't know	3	3	2	3

Of the 24% who said they favored allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense, 54% said that these private schools should be accountable to public school authorities — a drop of 9 percentage points since 1991.

The fourth question:

What effect do you think allowing students and their parents to choose the students' schools would have on the public schools of this community? Do you think it would improve all schools, hurt all schools, or would it improve some and hurt others?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Improve all schools	21	20	24	27
Hurt all schools	6	6	4	4
Improve some, hurt others	69	69	70	66
Don't know	4	5	2	3

	National Totals	
	1993 %	1989 %
Improve all schools	21	21
Hurt all schools	6	14
Improve some, hurt others	69	51
Don't know	4	14

Distribution of Condoms by Schools

The 1992 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll asked two questions about the distribution of condoms by public schools. On a question that was *not* repeated this year, the 1992 poll found that 40% of poll respondents believed condom distribution would increase sexual promiscuity among students, while 13% said it would decrease promiscuity, and 42% volunteered the response that it would make no difference. But by large majorities, 1992 respondents thought these programs would decrease pregnancies among students and decrease the likelihood of students' contracting AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases. The following question was repeated in 1993.

The question:

Which one of the following plans regarding condoms would you prefer in the public schools in this community? Provide condoms for all students who want them, provide condoms only to those students

who have the consent of their parents, or don't provide condoms to any student?

	National Totals % '93	'92	No Children In School % '93	'92	Public School Parents % '93	'92	Nonpublic School Parents % '93	'92
Provide condoms for all students who want them	41	43	41	44	42	41	36	38
Require consent of parents	19	25	17	24	23	27	17	24
Don't provide	38	25	39	23	34	27	45	29
Don't know	2	7	3	9	1	5	2	9

It appears that support for the idea of condom distribution by public schools declined slightly over the past year. Nevertheless, 60% of respondents still approve of condom distribution (though 19% of them would require parental consent), compared with 38% who disapprove.

Research Procedure

The Sample. The sample used in this survey embraced a total of 1,306 adults (18 years of age and older). A description of the sample and methodology can be found elsewhere in this report.

Time of Interviewing. The fieldwork for this study was carried out during the period of 21 May to 9 June 1993.

The Report. In the tables used in this report, "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 groups consisting of relatively few respondents, 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.

For tables showing recommended allowances for sampling error of a percentage and for sampling error of the difference between two percentages, see the September 1992 *Phi Delta Kappan*, page 53.

Design of the Sample

For the 1993 survey the Gallup Organization used its standard national telephone sample, i.e., an unclustered, directory-assisted, random-digit telephone sample, based on a proportionate stratified sampling design.

The random-digit aspect of the sample was used to avoid "listing" bias. Numerous studies have shown that households with unlisted telephone numbers are different in important ways from listed households. "Unlistedness" is due to household mobility or to customer requests to prevent publication of the telephone number.

To avoid this source of bias, a random-digit procedure designed to provide representation of both listed and unlisted (including not-yet-listed) numbers was used.

Telephone numbers for the continental United States were stratified into four regions of the country and, within each region, further stratified into three size-of-community strata.

Only working banks of telephone numbers were selected. Eliminating nonworking banks from the sample increased the likelihood that any sampled telephone number would be associated with a residence.

The sample of telephone numbers produced by the described method is representative of all telephone households within the continental United States.

Within each contacted household, an interview was sought with the youngest man 18 years of age or older who was at home. If no man was home, an interview was sought with the oldest woman at home. This method of respondent selection within households produced an age distribution by sex that closely approximates the age distribution by sex of the total population.

Up to three calls were made to each selected telephone number to complete an interview. The time of day and the day of the week for callbacks were varied so as to maximize the chances of finding a respondent at home. All interviews were conducted on weekends or weekday evenings in order to contact potential respondents among the working population.

The final sample was weighted so that the distribution of the sample matched current estimates derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) for the adult population living in telephone households in the continental U.S.

As has been the case in recent years in the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll series, parents of public school children were oversampled in the 1993 poll. This procedure produced a large enough sample to ensure that findings reported for "public school parents" are statistically significant.

Composition of the Sample

Adults	**%**
No children in school	64
Public school parents	33*
Nonpublic school parents	5*

*Total exceeds 36% because some parents have children attending more than one kind of school.

Sex	**%**
Men	46
Women	54
Race	**%**
White	85
Nonwhite	11
Undesignated	4
Age	**%**
18-29 years	23
30-49 years	42
50 and over	34
Undesignated	1
Occupation	**%**
(Chief Wage Earner)	
Business and professional	34
Clerical and sales	9
Manual labor	32
Nonlabor force	2
Farm	1
Undesignated	22
Income	**%**
$40,000 and over	36
$30,000-$39,999	14
$20,000-$29,999	17
$10,000-$19,999	16
Under $10,000	9
Undesignated	8
Region	**%**
East	24
Midwest	25
South	31
West	20
Community Size	**%**
Urban	37
Suburban	34
Rural	29
Education	**%**
Total College	44
College graduate	22
College incomplete	22
Total high school	55
High school graduate	40
High school incomplete	15
Undesignated	1

Conducting Your Own Poll

The Phi Delta Kappa Center for Dissemination of Innovative Programs makes available PACE (Polling Attitudes of the Community on Education) materials to enable nonspecialists to conduct scientific polls of attitude and opinion on education. The PACE manual provides detailed information on constructing questionnaires, sampling, interviewing, and analyzing data. It also includes updated census figures and new material on conducting a telephone survey.

For information about using PACE materials, write or phone Neville Robertson at Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402-0789. Ph. 800/766-1156.

How to Order the Poll

The minimum order for reprints of the published version of the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup education poll is 25 copies for $10. Additional copies are 25 cents each. This price includes postage for delivery (at the library rate). Where possible, enclose a check or money order. Address your order to Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402. Ph. 800/766-1156.

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

Persons who wish to order the 382-page document that is the basis for this report should write to the Gallup Organization (47 Hulfish St., Princeton, NJ 08542) or phone 609/924-9600. The price is $95 per copy, postage included.