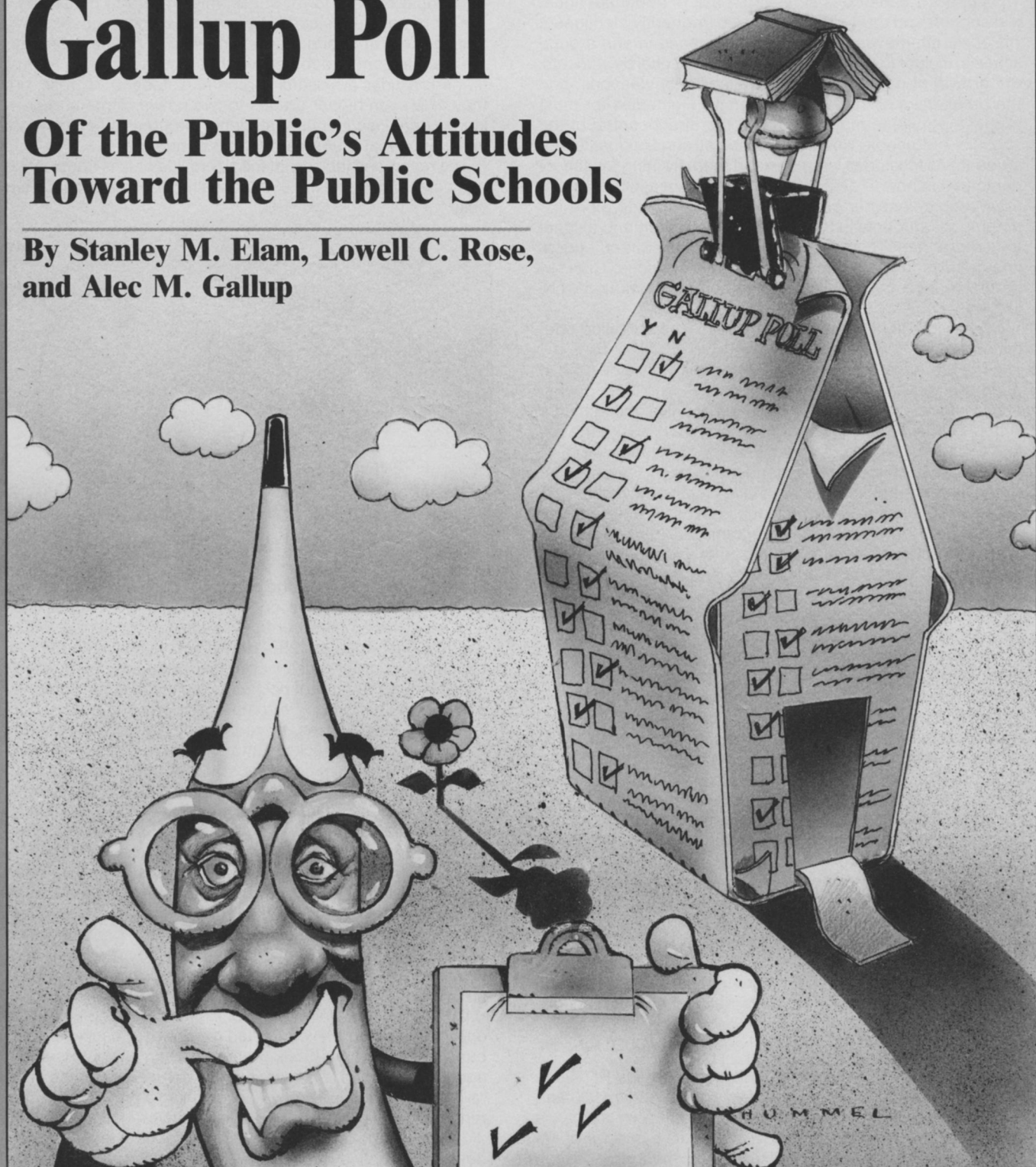


The 26th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/ Gallup Poll

Of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

By Stanley M. Elam, Lowell C. Rose,
and Alec M. Gallup



TWO PROBLEMS — the growth of fighting/violence/gangs and poor discipline — are by far the most serious problems facing U.S. public schools today, according to the 26th annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. Each of these problems was mentioned by 18% of the 1,326 adults surveyed. Lack of adequate financial support and drug abuse were also frequently mentioned.

People cited a web of causes for violence in and around schools, including the abuse of drugs and alcohol by students, the growth of gangs, the easy availability of weapons, and the breakdown of the American family. Remedies for most of these problems may be beyond the direct control of the schools, but people would like to see stronger penalties for student possession of weapons and more training for school personnel in how to deal with student violence. Other measures people consider potentially effective include more job training for students in the public schools, drug and alcohol abuse programs, courses in values and ethics, and education in ways to reduce racial and ethnic tensions. Courses in how to be a good parent and in conflict resolution were judged less likely to be effective.

Other highlights of the 26th Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup education poll:

- People gave the school attended by their eldest child good grades — 70% gave it an A or a B, and 92% gave it a passing grade. But they continue to give the nation's schools considerably lower grades: only 22% award the nation's schools an A or a B, while 49% give them a C.

- The vast majority of respondents looked favorably on such Clinton Administration initiatives as financial help with college expenses in return for public service; efforts to improve school-to-work transition programs; full funding of Head Start and concentration of the program in schools with the highest proportions of poor children; and the establishment of academic achievement goals for children, with financial help from the federal government so that states and districts can meet these standards.

- Americans reaffirmed their historic opposition to government assistance (in the form of vouchers) for those who choose nonpublic schools for their children's education. The 1991 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup education poll showed majority support for the voucher idea for the first time since 1983.

- The trend in opinion favoring character education in the public schools continues. Moreover, Americans also approve nondevotional instruction in the world's religions.

- Americans have decidedly mixed reactions to the recent flurry of interest in contracting with private corporations to operate public schools.

- Americans give mixed signals on Channel One, the plan whereby Whittle Communications provides free television equipment and 10 minutes of news programming to the schools in return for the right to include as much as 2½ minutes of advertising in the program. Those without knowledge of such a program in their community oppose it, while those with knowledge of such a program in their local schools support it.

- By a 3-1 majority, Americans believe that public schools

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should give equal emphasis to a common cultural tradition and to the cultural traditions of growing minorities in the U.S.

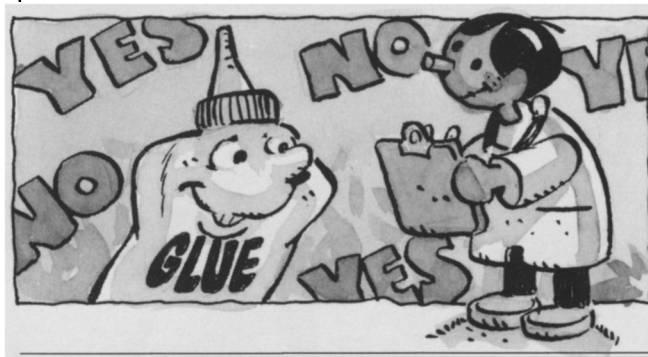
- People generally believe that the existing U.S. system of tax funding for public schools is unfair to the average taxpayer.

- A majority of respondents like the idea of charter schools that would be free to try out promising reform measures.

- More people are currently involved in local school activities and reform efforts than at any time in the past decade.

- People continue to believe that the traditional A to F or numeric grades are useful in reporting student progress, but they give even higher grades to two newer forms of reporting: written descriptions of students' progress and checklists indicating what students can and cannot do.

The report and tables that follow provide details about these and other findings of the 26th annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll.



Biggest Problems Facing Local Public Schools

For the first time ever, the category "fighting, violence, and gangs" shares the number-one position with "lack of discipline" as the biggest problem confronting local public schools. Why has this happened in 1994, only a year after inadequate financing and drug abuse were most frequently mentioned?

Is the current uproar about violence in the schools merely a media phenomenon? To some extent, yes. For all the hoopla in the national press, there is no crime wave in America — except among blacks. Although one-third of Americans rate crime as the nation's most important problem, crime statistics have been declining steadily since 1981, according to the Bureau of Justice. But not in the black community. Between 1968 and 1994 murder rates for whites actually decreased. By contrast, the rate among blacks increased by 65%. A black person is now seven times as likely as a white person to be murdered, four times as likely to be raped, three times as likely to be robbed, and twice as likely to be assaulted or to have his or her car stolen. The total number of murders in the U.S. — about 22,000 last year — has remained constant since 1980, but murder now disproportionately affects the black community.

Contrary to popular perceptions, cities with populations of one million or more experienced the greatest decline in serious crimes last year (5%), while suburban law enforcement agencies reported 3% fewer serious crimes and police in rural areas reported a 2% drop, according to a preliminary crime report issued by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in March.

A Louis Harris survey of U.S. public school teachers, students, and police department officials, conducted for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in the fall of 1993,

showed 77% of the teachers feeling "very safe" in their schools, 22% feeling "somewhat safe," 1% feeling "not very safe," and less than 1% feeling "not at all safe."* A somewhat smaller majority of teachers (60%) in schools with all or many minority students felt very safe. Students felt less safe than teachers: 50% very safe, 40% somewhat safe, 4% not very safe, 3% not at all safe, and 3% not sure.

Among teachers and students overall, only small pluralities felt that violence has increased in the past year. However, among some schools dominated by minority and low-income students, the perception that violence had increased was considerably stronger. Law enforcement officers, especially those in urban areas, thought violence in schools had increased.

A majority of teachers and law enforcement officers believe that the major factors contributing to violence in the public schools include lack of supervision at home, lack of family involvement in the schools, and exposure to violence in the mass media. Students see a wider variety of sources, many related to peer relations.

The accompanying tables present 1994 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll findings on the biggest problems facing the schools and compare the frequency with which certain problems have been mentioned in these polls over the past decade.

The question:

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

Problems	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Fighting/violence/gangs	18	19	16	17
Lack of discipline	18	18	17	22
Lack of proper financial support	13	12	16	9
Drug abuse	11	11	13	7
Standards/quality of education	8	8	5	11
Overcrowded schools	7	5	11	10
Lack of family structure/problems of home life*	5	5	3	4
Crime/vandalism	4	5	4	3
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy/poor attitudes	3	3	3	5
Parents' lack of support/interest	3	4	2	3
Difficulty in getting good teachers	3	4	2	2
Poor curriculum/low curriculum standards	3	2	3	2
Lack of respect	3	2	3	1
Integration/segregation, racial discrimination	3	3	2	2
There are no problems	1	1	2	2
Miscellaneous**	9	9	8	13
Don't know	11	12	9	11

*New category.

**A total of 33 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 big-

*A summary of the Metropolitan Life survey results can be obtained by writing MetLife, P.O. Box 807, New York, NY 10159-0807. Ask for *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Violence in America's Schools*.

gest problems facing local public schools have fluctuated over the past decade, a period when four different problems have ranked number one at least once.

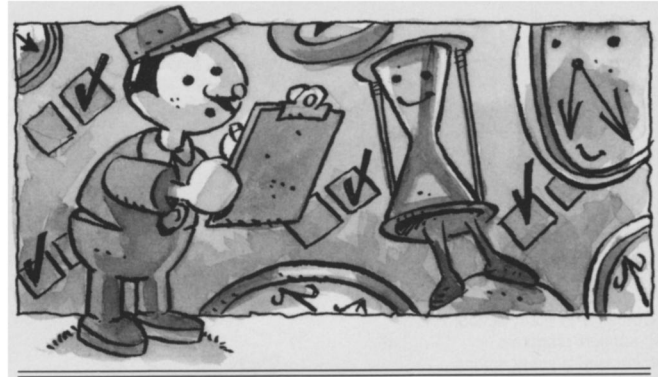
Percentages Mentioning Each Major Problem

	1994 %	1993 %	1992 %	1991 %	1990 %	1989 %	1988 %	1987 %	1986 %	1985 %
Fighting/violence/gangs	18*	13	9	3	2**	1**	1**	1**	2**	1**
Lack of discipline	18*	15	17	20	19	19	19	22	24	25*
Lack of proper financial support	13	21*	22*	18	13	13	12	14	11	9
Drug abuse	11	16	22*	22*	38*	34*	32*	30*	28*	18

*Indicates first rank (or tie)

**Category was "fighting."

There was considerable uniformity among demographic groups as to the nature of local public school problems. However, these differences stood out: fighting/violence/gangs was mentioned more often by residents of urban areas (27%), by nonwhites (31%), by 18- to 29-year-olds (28%), and by people living in the West (23%) and South (21%).



Causes of and Cures for Violence

Note that if one combines "lack of discipline" with "fighting/violence/gangs," the figure for total "net" mentions reaches 35% in 1994, whereas it was 27% in 1993. Something appears to have happened, and it was most likely a media creation. There is no gainsaying, however, that Americans live in a violent culture — four times more violent, some experts say, than that of Western Europe.

By coincidence, poll planners decided to ask 1994 respondents two questions: the first to judge the importance of several putative causes of violent behavior among schoolchildren and the second to make judgments about the effectiveness of certain measures the schools might take to combat or ameliorate violence.

To determine what the public believes to be the main causes for increased violence in the nation's public schools, respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of 13 possible causes of school violence. At least 70% of respondents rate the increased use of drugs and alcohol, the growth of youth gangs, the easy availability of weapons, and a general breakdown in the American family as very important causes of violence in the nation's schools.

The first question:

As you probably know, there has been an increase in violence in the nation's public schools over the last decade. How important do you con-

sider each of the following as a cause for this increased violence — very important, quite important, not very important, or not at all important?

Cause	Very Important %	Quite Important %	Not Very Important %	Not at All Important %	Don't Know %
Increased use of drugs and alcohol among school-age youth	78	17	3	2	.
Growth of youth gangs	72	19	4	3	2
Easy availability of weapons (guns, knives)	72	15	6	6	1
A breakdown in the American family (e.g., an increase in one-parent and dysfunctional families)	70	20	7	2	1
Schools do not have the authority to discipline that they once had	65	22	9	3	1
Increased portrayal of violence in the media (especially in movies and on TV)	60	20	14	5	1
Inability of school staff to resolve conflicts between students	59	26	11	3	1
Shortages in school personnel	52	26	15	5	2
Trying to deal with troubled or emotionally disturbed students in the regular classroom instead of in special classes or schools	51	27	16	4	2
A school curriculum that is out of touch with the needs of today's students	48	28	17	4	3
Cutbacks in many school support programs	45	27	18	6	4
Increased poverty among parents	44	29	20	6	1
Increased cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity among the public school student population	43	26	22	7	2

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Obviously, such a list of causes ignores the relationships between various causes and makes no attempt to distinguish between root causes and immediate causes of violence among young people. But the strength of the responses indicates that the public sees youth violence as part of the larger problem of social breakdown in America, a breakdown that is the subject of countless seminars, sermons, and sociological studies.

The role of the schools in combating or ameliorating this breakdown is being sorted out by policy makers in thousands of settings. However, considering just the causes of school violence deemed most important by the public, we must go to the seventh on the list before we find one that attributes responsibility to the school. The schools have little control over the first six.

Analysis of the findings by population group reveals that public school parents are about as likely as are other groups to rate these causes of school violence very important. However, blacks are substantially more likely than whites to judge the following causes very important: easy availability of weapons (88% to 69%); shortages in school personnel (76% to 49%); increased cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity among

student populations (63% to 39%); cutbacks in school support programs (67% to 42%), and increased poverty among parents (65% to 41%). There is little difference between blacks and whites with regard to the importance of drug and alcohol use and the growth of youth gangs.

The second question:

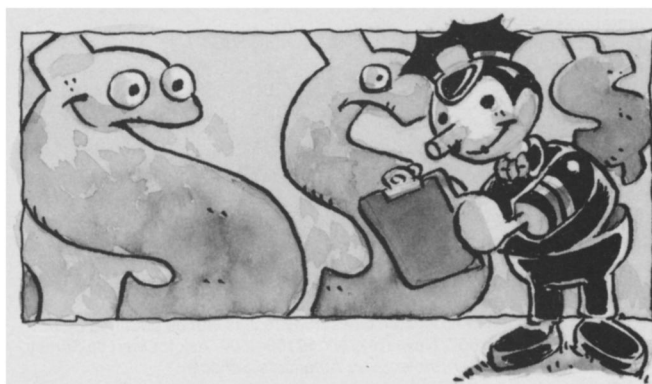
How effective do you think each of the following measures would be in reducing violence in the public schools — very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective, or not at all effective?

Measure	Very Effective %	Somewhat Effective %	Not Very Effective %	Not at All Effective %	Don't Know %
Stronger penalties for possession of weapons by students	86	8	3	2	1
Training school staffs in how to deal with student violence	72	20	5	2	1
More vocational or job-training courses in public schools	67	25	7	1	.
Drug and alcohol abuse programs for students	66	23	7	3	1
Values and ethics education for students	60	27	9	3	1
Education designed to reduce racial and ethnic tensions	57	27	10	4	2
Courses offered by the public schools in how to be a good parent	51	28	15	5	1
Conflict education for students	45	35	11	3	6

*Less than one-half of 1%.

People tended to be hopeful about all the measures proposed. Not a single one was judged likely to be "not very effective" or "not at all effective" by a majority of respondents. In fact, majorities rated all but one of the remedies likely to be "very effective."

There were virtually no differences in the responses of public school parents and those with no children in schools. It is interesting to note that better-educated respondents were somewhat more skeptical of the likely success of every measure proposed than were the less-educated respondents. In addition, by an average margin of about 20 percentage points, more blacks than whites felt that the following measures would be very effective ways to curb school violence: courses in how to be good parents (70% to 48%), more vocational



Illustrations by Jim Hummel

or job-training courses (85% to 64%), conflict education to reduce racial and ethnic tensions (65% to 42%), and drug and alcohol abuse programs (82% to 64%).

The People Grade Their Schools

Ever since 1974 respondents to the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup education poll have been asked to rate their local public schools' performance on a scale of A to F. Over the years related questions have been added, including one that secures judgments about the performance of public schools nationally. The most revealing question, however, was one first asked of public school parents in 1982: What grade would you give the school your oldest child attends? Parents' responses made it clear that the more one knows about a school, the more likely one is to think well of its performance. (Certainly, parents have more direct information than non-parents.)

In 1994 more than four Americans in 10 (44%) give the public schools in their community an A or a B, about the same proportion as reported in every Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup survey since these ratings were introduced two decades ago. Three-quarters of the public (74%) award their local public schools at least a grade of C. Only 7% say their local schools deserve a grade of F. These relatively high grades are awarded despite the fact that the grading is strongly based on the views of the large majority of the public (70%) with no children in school or with children enrolled in nonpublic schools.

The first 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?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A & B	44	39	57	28
A	9	8	12	4
B	35	31	45	24
C	30	30	30	39
D	14	16	9	16
FAIL	7	8	3	13
Don't know	5	7	1	4

Ratings Given the Local Public Schools

	1994 %	1993 %	1992 %	1991 %	1990 %	1989 %	1988 %	1987 %	1986 %	1985 %	1984 %
A & B	44	47	40	42	41	43	40	43	41	43	42
A	9	10	9	10	8	8	9	12	11	9	10
B	35	37	31	32	33	35	31	31	30	34	32
C	30	31	33	33	34	33	34	30	28	30	35
D	14	11	12	10	12	11	10	9	11	10	11
FAIL	7	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	4
Don't know	5	7	10	10	8	9	12	14	15	13	8

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?



	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A & B	22	23	19	18
A	2	2	2	4
B	20	21	17	14
C	49	50	48	45
D	17	14	22	23
FAIL	6	8	4	6
Don't know	6	5	7	8

Ratings Given the Nation's Public Schools

	1994 %	1993 %	1992 %	1991 %	1990 %	1989 %	1988 %	1987 %	1986 %	1985 %	1984 %
A & B	22	19	18	21	21	22	23	26	28	27	25
A	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	2
B	20	17	16	19	19	20	20	22	25	24	23
C	49	48	48	47	49	47	48	44	41	43	49
D	17	17	18	13	16	15	13	11	10	12	11
FAIL	6	4	4	5	4	4	3	2	5	3	4
Don't know	6	12	12	14	10	12	13	17	16	15	11

When respondents likely to be most familiar with the schools — i.e., public school parents — are asked to grade the school their oldest child attends, seven in 10 (70%) would award that school a grade of A or B. This has been true for the last decade. More than nine in 10 public school parents (92%) give the school their oldest child attends at least a passing grade of C. Public school parents' tendency to rate their children's schools high extends to their perceptions of local schools. For example, 57% of public school parents give the local public schools a grade of A or B, and 87% give the local public schools at least a C.

The third question:

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

Ratings Given School Oldest Child Attends

	1994 %	1993 %	1992 %	1991 %	1990 %	1989 %	1988 %	1987 %	1986 %
A & B	70	72	64	73	72	71	70	69	65
A	28	27	22	29	27	25	22	28	28
B	42	45	42	44	45	46	48	41	37
C	22	18	24	21	19	19	22	20	26
D	6	5	6	2	5	5	3	5	4
FAIL	1	2	4	4	2	1	2	2	2
Don't know	1	3	2	*	2	4	3	4	3

*Less than one-half of 1%.

There were few demographic differences in parental ratings. However, parents of children in elementary school were more likely to give high grades than parents of children in high school. This is consistent with poll reports in other years.

This year the poll planners added another question to the series on grading the public schools. People were asked to grade the public schools "in their neighborhood." The ratings of neighborhood schools were higher than those for the nation's schools and for schools in the community. While 44% of respondents gave schools in the local community a grade of A or B, 50% of respondents gave schools in their neighborhood similarly high grades. These results should not be too surprising, because a "community" may have a great many schools about which respondents know little more than they do about the nation's schools, whereas respondents are most likely to be familiar with the schools attended by children from the more limited area of their own neighborhood.

The question:

How about the public schools attended by children from your neighborhood? What grade would you give them — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A & B	50	46	60	39
A	12	10	16	11
B	38	36	44	28
C	30	30	29	35
D	9	10	7	12
FAIL	6	7	3	8
Don't know	5	7	1	6

The most significant demographic differences in responses to this question were found in the category of community size. More than 50% of people living in suburban and rural communities give schools attended by neighborhood children a grade of A or B, while only 43% of those living in urban areas give similarly high grades.

Have Schools Improved or Deteriorated?

In three of the last seven Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup education polls, people have been asked whether they think that their local public schools have improved, deteriorated, or



stayed about the same over the previous five years. This year, as was the case when the question was last asked in 1990, more people perceived deterioration (37%) than saw improvement (26%); in 1988, more people saw improvement than deterioration.

The question:

Just your own impression, would you say that the public schools in your community have improved from, say, five years ago, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Improved	26	23	32	20
Gotten worse	37	39	30	43
Stayed about the same	33	33	34	33
Don't know	4	5	4	4

	National Totals		
	1994 %	1990 %	1988 %
Improved	26	22	29
Gotten worse	37	30	19
Stayed about the same	33	36	37
Don't know	4	12	15

Poll interviewers followed the question about improvement/deterioration of *local* public schools with the same question about the *nation's* schools. The findings were far more negative. For every individual who believed that the nation's public schools have improved (16%), there were three (51%) who thought they have deteriorated.

The question:

What about public schools in the nation as a whole? Would you say they have improved from five years ago, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Improved	16	15	18	18
Gotten worse	51	51	51	55
Stayed about the same	26	28	24	20
Don't know	7	6	7	7

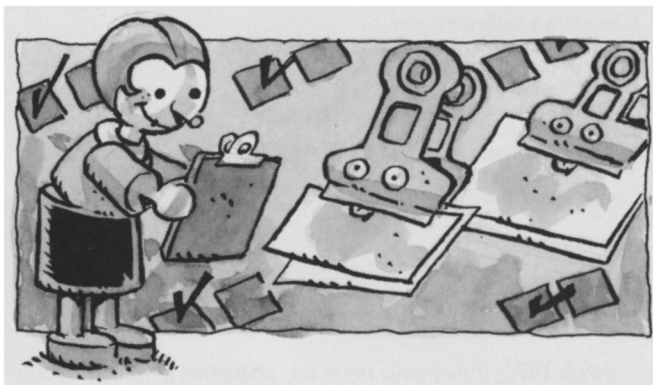
But when *parents* were asked the same question about public schools their children attended, the findings were nearly reversed. For every parent who believed that the school attended by his or her oldest child had gotten worse in the past five years (15%), there were more than two (36%) who thought it had improved.

The question:

Would you say the public school your oldest child attends has improved from five years ago, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?

	Local Schools %	Nation's Schools %	School Attended By Oldest Child %
Improved	26	16	36
Gotten worse	37	51	15
Stayed about the same	33	26	41
Don't know	4	7	8

What can one make of these responses? It seems likely that the general public has come to believe public education's critics regarding the state of the nation's schools, which have been blamed for everything from ignorance of geography to economic recession. Parents with children in school know better; a comfortable majority of them believe that the schools their children attend are improving.



Clinton's Education Initiatives

When President Clinton signed his education reform strategy into law in March 1994, he called the Goals 2000: Educate America Act a "new and different approach for the federal government." He said that the measure would establish "world class" national education standards and rely on school districts at the grassroots to help students achieve them.

The centerpiece of Goals 2000 is a new program, authorized at \$400 million a year (appropriations to come later) that would provide grants to states and districts that adopt reform plans consistent with the legislation. The plans must call for setting high standards for curriculum content and student performance, as well as opportunity-to-learn standards or strategies for insuring adequate school services.

Enactment of Goals 2000 was the culmination of a process begun in 1989 when the National Governors' Association and President Bush agreed at an education summit to set six national goals for education. Clinton, then governor of Arkansas, was a key player in drafting the goals. The current version of this ambitious strategy includes two additional goals, dealing with teacher training and parent participation.

Three major initiatives of the Clinton Administration were already in place: increases in Head Start funding, with more of it targeted directly to children living in poverty; a modest program that will allow a limited number of students to earn money for college by performing public service; and a school-to-work bill authorizing \$300 million a year to help high schools create work-based learning programs for students who do not go to college.

Respondents to the current poll were asked to indicate approval or disapproval of four of the Clinton Administration initiatives. All four proved highly popular.

The question:

Here are some education programs currently being advanced by the federal government. As I read off each program, would you tell me whether you favor or oppose it?

	National Totals		
	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
Assistance with high school students' college expenses in return for performing some kind of public service	81	17	2
Greater emphasis on, including additional money for, work-study vocational programs for high school students who do not plan to go to college	79	20	1
A large increase in funds for early childhood education in those public schools with the highest percentage of children living in poverty	74	22	4
More effort to reach agreement on academic achievement goals for children at various stages of school, without specifying how the schools should reach these goals	63	32	5

	Those Who Favor These Initiatives			
	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Assistance with high school students' college expenses in return for performing some kind of public service	81	80	83	83
Greater emphasis on, including additional money for, work-study vocational programs for high school students who do not plan to go to college	79	78	82	74
A large increase in funds for early childhood education in those public schools with the highest percentage of children living in poverty	74	74	75	66
More effort to reach agreement on academic achievement goals for children at various stages of school, without specifying how the schools should reach these goals	63	62	66	56

Strong majority support for these initiatives was registered in all demographic groups. Young adults (aged 18-29) and blacks were particularly enthusiastic about improved funding for early childhood education. The percentages in favor were 90% and 84%, respectively. There was even considerable bipartisan support for all four of the measures.



National Curriculum and National Assessment

The question about federal initiatives was followed by another focusing on the idea of a national curriculum and national assessment of achievement. Once again, as in earlier polls, people made clear their approval of a basic curriculum of subject matter for all schools (read "national curriculum") and of standardized national examinations that students must pass for grade promotion and high school graduation.

Although most respondents probably do not understand the full implications of such a significant change in U.S. tradition, every poll in this series that has explored the idea shows strong support for it. In 1989, for example, poll respondents favored national standards and goals for schools by a 70% to 19% margin. In the same poll, 69% said that they favored the use of a standardized national curriculum in the local public schools, while only 21% opposed the idea. The same questions asked in 1991 yielded similar results.

The current poll examined these issues using questions that were worded somewhat differently, but the results only confirm the earlier findings. For example, instead of being asked whether they favored or opposed a national curriculum and standardized national exams for grade promotion and high school graduation, respondents were asked how important they considered each factor to be as a way to improve the nation's public schools.

More than eight in ten (83%) responded that a standardized national curriculum was either very important or quite important; similarly, about seven in ten (73%) thought standardized national exams were either very or quite important.

The question:

How important do you think each of the following is as a way to improve the nation's public schools: 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 %
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Establishing a basic curriculum of subject matter or program of courses for all schools	49	34	12	4	1
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Establishing standardized national examinations, based on a national curriculum, that students must pass for grade promotion and for high school graduation	46	27	18	7	2
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Those Who Said 'Very Important'

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
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Establishing a basic curriculum of subject matter or program of courses for all schools	49	47	54	58
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Establishing standardized national examinations, based on a national curriculum, that students must pass for grade promotion and for high school graduation	46	46	45	44
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School Choice and Vouchers

Since 1970, these polls have traced trends in opinion about government financial aid to parochial schools, about the use of government-issued vouchers that would help parents finance a private or church-related school for their children, and about public school choice proposals. People have consistently opposed any form of government aid to nonpublic schools and have favored public school choice by sizable margins. But no consensus has developed on the voucher question.

Here in table form is the history of responses to a question worded as follows: "In some nations the government allots a certain amount of money for each child for his education. The parents can 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							
	1991 %	1987 %	1986 %	1985 %	1983 %	1981 %	1971 %	1970 %
Favor	50	44	46	45	51	43	38	43
Oppose	39	41	41	40	38	41	44	46
Don't know	11	15	13	15	11	16	18	11

Over the past two or three years, Oregon, Colorado, and California have held referendums on various forms of vouchers. Although all three referendums were defeated by sizable majorities, voucher proponents vow to keep trying. Californians may vote on the proposition again as soon as next year.

In the current poll the issue was presented again, without mentioning the word *vouchers* but making clear that government money would pay "all or part" of a child's tuition if the parents chose to send the child to a nonpublic school.

Presented with this somewhat different question, the public opposes the voucher idea by a 54% to 45% majority. The response to this year's question suggests that opinion for and against the voucher idea has begun to crystallize. For example, when the long-term trend question was asked most recently (in 1991), 11% of the public had no opinion. In response to the new question, however, only 1% of respondents expressed no opinion.

In only two demographic groups did majorities favor the voucher idea as stated. Not surprisingly, nonpublic school parents (representing 9% of Americans) supported vouchers by more than a 2-1 margin (69% to 29%). In addition, Catholics (24% of Americans) approved the idea by a 55% to 44% majority.

The question:

A proposal has been made which would allow parents to send their school-age children to any public, private, or church-related school they choose. For those parents choosing nonpublic schools, the government would pay all or part of the tuition. Would you favor or oppose this proposal in your state?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	45	42	48	69
Oppose	54	57	51	29
Don't know	1	1	1	2

Support for Character Education

"The fundamental tragedy of American education is not that we are turning out ignoramuses but that we are turning out savages," says Frederick Close, director of education for the Ethics Resource Center in Washington, D.C. Close would institute moral education or character education in the schools in an effort to counteract what he calls "a continuously rising crime wave among the younger generation." He echoes the sentiments found in a growing body of literature that includes the best-selling *Book of Virtues*, by William Bennett, who used his office as secretary of education in the late Eighties to campaign for "moral literacy" in the public schools. (*The Book of Virtues* is subtitled *A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* and is intended for home and school use.) Like many of his fundamentalist backers, Bennett believes that we must recover paradigms that we once shared as a nation "before the triviality of television absorbed most of children's attention and before a prevailing cynicism made virtue seem laughable."

Kevin Ryan, a professor of education at Boston University, points out that public schools have bent over backwards in their efforts not to offend anyone about anything. To make themselves inoffensive and studiously neutral, they have all but cleansed the curriculum of religious and ethical content. He speaks of schools as "morally dangerous places for children."^{*}

^{*}Quoted by John Merrow in "Don't Offend: Our High-Level Policy of Cowardice," *Education Week*, 16 February 1994, p. 56.

It was Thomas Jefferson who first used the phrase "the wall of separation between church and state" in 1802, and it describes one of the most settled doctrines in American constitutional law. In his majority opinion in *Everson* (1947), Justice Hugo Black repeated Jefferson's phrase in a case that blocked out some of the last vestiges of religion in the public schools. Has the doctrine designed to protect the individual from tyranny diminished the role of virtues and values in civic life? Many people are beginning to think so.

In last year's poll Americans said that they believe their local communities could agree on a set of basic values, such as honesty and patriotism, that could be taught in the public schools. This year poll planners framed three questions related to issues of character education and the teaching of moral values in the schools.

The first question, repeated from the 1987 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup education poll, asked respondents whether ethics should be taught in the public schools or left to parents and religious institutions. As in 1987, when 43% favored ethics and character education courses and 36% opposed them, in 1994 a small plurality of the public supported such courses (49% in favor, 39% opposed). Support was a good deal stronger among public school parents, however (57% in favor, 34% opposed).

The first question:

It has been proposed that the public schools include courses on "character education" to help students develop personal values and ethical behavior. Do you think that courses on values and ethical behavior should be taught in the public schools, or do you think that this should be left to the students' parents and/or the churches?

	National Totals %		No Children In School %		Public School Parents %		Nonpublic School Parents %	
	'94	'87	'94	'87	'94	'87	'94	'87
Yes, schools	49	43	44	42	57	45	54	54
No, parents and/or churches	39	36	42	36	34	38	38	31
Both (volunteered)	12	13	14	13	8	13	8	11
Don't know	*	8	*	9	1	4	*	4

*Less than one-half of 1%.

To find out what personal traits or virtues the public believes should be taught as part of character education courses, survey respondents were asked to indicate whether each of nine virtues should or should not be included in such courses. The vote in favor of teaching these virtues was practically unanimous, with the single exception of "thrift" — and even this old-fashioned virtue was judged worthy of inclusion by 74% of respondents.

The second question:

Now, here is a list of personal traits or virtues that might be taught in the public schools in your community. As I read off each item, would you tell me whether you think it should be taught or should not be taught in the local public schools?

Should Be Taught	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Respect for others	94	94	93	91
Industry or hard work	93	93	93	95
Persistence or the ability to follow through	93	92	94	94
Fairness in dealing with others	92	93	92	90
Compassion for others	91	91	91	89
Civility, politeness	91	91	90	91
Self-esteem	90	90	92	80
High expectations for oneself	87	87	88	82
Thrift	74	73	74	71

In the 1993 poll, a different list of character traits (some better described as attitudes) was offered, with the following results: honesty, 97%; democracy, 93%; acceptance of people of different races and ethnic backgrounds, 93%; patriotism or love of country, 91%; caring for friends and family members, 91%; moral courage, 91%; the golden rule, 90%; acceptance of people who hold different religious beliefs, 87%; acceptance of people who hold unpopular or controversial political or social views, 73%; sexual abstinence outside of marriage, 66%; acceptance of the right of a woman to choose abortion, 56%; acceptance of people with different sexual orientations (i.e., homosexuals or bisexuals), 51%.

The third question:

The public schools in America are constitutionally prohibited from teaching any particular religion. Would you favor or oppose nondevotional instruction about various world religions in the public schools in your community?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	66	65	67	61
Oppose	33	33	32	39
Don't know	1	2	1	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

There were few significant demographic differences in the responses to this question. However, respondents living in the South (71%) and Midwest (69%) were slightly more likely to favor nondevotional religious instruction than those in the East (59%) or those in the West (62%).

Jury Still Out on Privatization

In a development reminiscent of the ill-fated experiments with performance contracting in the early 1970s, public school boards in several U.S. cities have recently contracted with private companies to manage some of their schools. For example, nine Baltimore schools are now being run by Educa-

tion Alternatives, Inc., of Minneapolis. The same company was hoping to operate as many as 15 schools in Washington, D.C., but that plan has been put on hold for further study. The Baltimore and Washington superintendents have said that they sought contracts with private firms because they were frustrated by bureaucracies so complex and cumbersome that they could not get leaking roofs repaired or teachers transferred from under- to overenrolled schools in a timely way.

The Edison Project, established in 1991 by Whittle Communications, Inc., and now based in New York City, expects to begin operating the first of several hundred public schools in the fall of 1995, investing its own capital. Meanwhile, former Yale University President Benno Schmidt, Jr., who heads the Edison Project, hopes to contract with the board of education in Chicago to operate a number of that city's public schools. Schmidt has hinted that Edison schools will have a student/teacher ratio of about 17 to 1, that students will be organized in "houses" of about 100 each with a team of teachers to stay with them for three years, and that schools will be open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., including an optional 1½ hours at the beginning and end of the day for families who need child-care services.

To determine public acceptance of the concept of privatization of some facets of the public school system, respondents were asked whether they favored or opposed the idea of private, profit-making companies operating the schools. Opinion is almost evenly divided on the privatization idea.

The question:

Do you favor or oppose an idea now being tested in a few cities in which private, profit-making corporations contract to operate schools within certain jurisdictions?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	45	46	43	50
Oppose	47	46	49	41
Don't know	8	8	8	9

There were few significant demographic differences in the responses. However, younger respondents and Republicans show considerably more support for this form of privatization than do older respondents and Democrats. Among those under 50 years of age, 50% support the idea, while only 39% of those older than 50 do. Fifty-one percent of Republicans favor the idea, while 38% of Democrats do.

More 'Basics' but Broader Curriculum

In several previous Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup education polls, a majority of respondents favored more emphasis on curriculum "basics," which people generally conceive to be "reading, writing, and arithmetic," often with science and history/U.S. government included. Generally, people do not think that the public schools pay enough attention to these subjects. Nevertheless, the 1990 poll (whose results for the "basics" are reported in the accompanying table) showed that people also want more emphasis on computer training (79%), voca-

tional education (65%), health education (62%), business (60%), and even physical education (32%).

To determine the public's preferences concerning curriculum content, respondents to this year's poll were asked whether they would favor more, less, or about the same emphasis in eight subject areas. Music, art, and foreign language have posted remarkable gains since 1990. Nonwhites are more likely than whites to say they desire more emphasis on most of the subjects listed. The differences are largest in the case of music and art.

The first question:

As I read off each high school subject, would you tell me if you think that subject should be given more emphasis, less emphasis, or the same emphasis it now receives in high school, regardless of whether or not you think it should be required?

	More Emphasis %	Less Emphasis %	Same Emphasis %	Don't Know %
Mathematics	82	1	17	*
English	79	2	19	*
Science	75	3	22	*
History/U.S. government	62	6	31	1
Geography	61	7	31	1
Foreign language	52	16	32	*
Music	31	22	46	1
Art	29	24	46	1

*Less than one-half of 1%.

	1990 Results			
	More Emphasis %	Less Emphasis %	Same Emphasis %	Don't Know %
Mathematics	80	3	14	3
English	79	3	15	3
Science	68	11	18	3
History/U.S. government	65	9	23	3
Geography	53	18	25	4
Foreign language	37	34	25	4
Music	13	39	43	5
Art	12	42	40	6

Are Students Capable of Learning More Math and Science?

Do some students avoid math and science simply because they don't want to invest the effort to master these subjects? Or does mastery elude them despite their efforts? To ascertain whether Americans believe that public school students can learn more about these subjects, survey respondents were asked two questions.

The questions:

Do you believe that most public school students have the capacity to learn more math than they generally do today?

Do you believe that most public school students have the capacity to learn more science than they generally do today?

Yes, Have Capacity	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Math	89	88	90	94
Science	88	88	88	92

The answers reveal that virtually the entire U.S. public believes that most students are capable of learning more math and more science than they generally do.

Support for and Opposition to Channel One

Channel One, the 12½-minute news and information program (with commercials) produced by Whittle Communications, Inc., for the past four years, is the subject of considerable debate in educational circles. But it has gained only modest media attention.

To determine how the public feels about the Whittle experiment, survey respondents were first read a description of the Whittle program and asked whether they were aware of any such arrangement in their own communities. Those who thought the Whittle experiment was in effect in their local public schools were then asked whether they were in favor of or opposed to it.

Those respondents who thought the experiment was not in operation in their communities or who did not know whether or not it existed there were asked whether they would be in favor of or opposed to having such an arrangement in their local schools.

The survey findings reveal that the relatively few (11% of respondents) who are aware of the use of the Whittle program in their local schools favor it by more than a 2-1 margin. (Channel One is now employed in more than 12,000 schools, most of these with high concentrations of poor students.) By contrast, those who are unaware of such a program in their communities oppose the introduction of the experiment into their schools by a substantial 57% to 38% margin.

The first question:

A company has been loaning TV sets and satellite dishes to public schools that agree to show their students daily 10-minute news and feature broadcasts from this company. Each broadcast includes two to 2½ minutes of commercial advertising directed to the students. The company makes money by selling this television time to advertisers. Do you happen to know whether any of the public schools in your community have entered into an arrangement of this kind, or not?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes, have arrangement	11	11	13	10
No, do not have	48	46	51	55
Don't know	41	43	36	35

The second question (asked of those who indicated awareness of the arrangement):

Are you in favor of this arrangement in the local public schools or opposed to it?

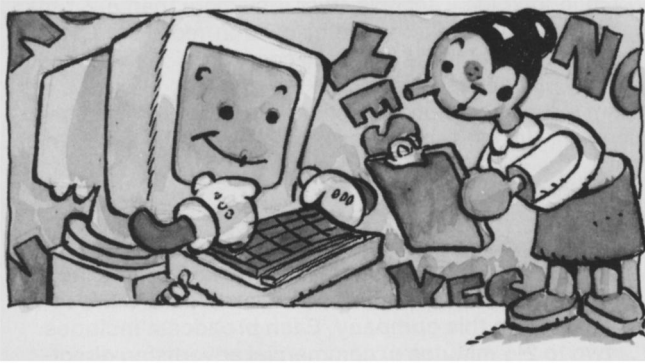
	National Totals %
Yes, favor	66
No, opposed	30
Don't know	4

The third question (asked of those "not aware" of any local arrangement):

Would you be in favor of your local public schools' entering into this kind of arrangement, or opposed to it?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes, favor	38	39	36	34
No, opposed	57	56	58	54
Don't know	5	5	6	12

Those *unaware* of the Whittle experiment registered opposition by substantial majorities in most demographic groups. However, there were two notable exceptions: young adults (ages 18-29) favored the Whittle experiment (60% to 37%), whereas those 30 and older opposed it (63% to 31%); and nonwhites were evenly divided between support and opposition (48% to 49%), whereas whites were opposed to the program (36% in favor, 58% opposed).



Unmotivated High School Students

Educators often speculate about reasons for the lack of academic motivation that afflicts many high school students. There appears to be no consensus among them about causes.

To obtain some idea of the public's perceptions on this topic, respondents were presented with a question offering three possible explanations. Respondents were asked how important they considered each explanation. The public considered *all of them* important; between seven and eight in 10 respondents felt that each of the three explanations was either very important or somewhat important.

The question:

Many high school students are not motivated to do well academically. To indicate why you think this is the case, would you rate each of the following reasons as very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?

	Very Important %	Somewhat Important %	Not Very Important %	Not at All Important %	Don't Know %
The negative attitudes of fellow students about high academic performance	63	25	7	3	2
The fact that employers of high school graduates seldom seem to care about high school records	49	29	15	5	2
The fact that many colleges will admit any student with a high school diploma, regardless of his or her high school record	49	28	15	6	2

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Rated Very Important				
The negative attitudes of fellow students about high academic performance	63	64	61	59
The fact that employers of high school graduates seldom seem to care about high school records	49	50	49	44
The fact that many colleges will admit any student with a high school diploma, regardless of his or her high school record	49	52	45	47

Monoculturalism or Multiculturalism?

The long-running debate over multiculturalism in the schools has heated up in recent years, as some groups protest a tendency to abandon the melting-pot metaphor in favor of "tossed salad" and as the number and size of racial and ethnic minority groups increase. In Lake County, Florida, for example, fundamentalists holding a 3-2 edge on the school board voted in May 1994 to teach students that American culture and institutions are "superior to other foreign or historic cultures."

Answers to the following two questions in the current poll suggest that there is a commodious middle ground on the issue of multiculturalism, and, as the first table shows, three out of four Americans choose to occupy it.

The first question:

In your opinion, which should the public schools in your community promote — one common, predominant cultural tradition only, or both a common cultural tradition and the diverse cultural traditions of the different population groups in America?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Promote one common tradition only	18	18	19	19
Promote both one common tradition and diverse traditions of different populations	75	74	76	72
Don't know	7	8	5	9

The second question (asked of the 75% who said that schools should promote both one common tradition and diverse traditions of different peoples):

Which one do you think should receive more emphasis — one common cultural tradition, diverse cultural traditions, or should both receive the same emphasis?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
More emphasis on one common cultural tradition	10	10	9	11
More emphasis on diverse cultural traditions	11	11	11	9
Equal emphasis on both	53	53	56	51
Don't know	8	8	5	10

(Figures add to 100% when those who believe that the schools should promote one common culture *only* — see responses to the first question in this series — are included.)

As the first table above shows, about one citizen in five (18%) would agree that the public schools should promote only a single common cultural tradition. (Those most in favor of monoculturalism are Republicans [23%] and those 65 years of age and older [24%.]) The great majority of Americans think that the public schools should advocate a diversity of traditions — although with varying emphases. One American in 10 believes that, while diverse traditions should be taught, the common cultural tradition should be emphasized; a similar number (11%) believe that, while both the common culture and diverse cultures should be taught, diversity should be given more emphasis. Roughly half (53%) of those polled believe that a common cultural tradition and diverse traditions should be given equal attention.

Tax System for Schools

Many questions in past Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup polls have shown that people are unhappy with the forms of taxation used to support U.S. public schools, and they are par-

ticularly disturbed by the inequalities in funding that result from features of the tax system in most states. Tax revolts occur with some regularity. Among the most recent was last year's upheaval in Michigan, which led to the virtual abandonment of the local property tax, backbone of school finance in most states for generations, in favor of a massive state sales tax increase and new mechanisms to equalize funding among districts.

A question in the current poll shows that the U.S. public, by a 54% to 43% majority, regards tax policies that fund education in the U.S. as unfair to taxpayers.

The question:

In your opinion, is the existing system of funding public education in this country fair or unfair to the average taxpayer?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Fair	43	48	36	30
Unfair	54	50	61	65
Don't know	3	2	3	5

Bare Majority for Charter Schools

A charter school is a tax-funded school given broad freedom from state regulations in exchange for such favorable "outcomes" as improved test scores, attendance rates, dropout rates, and the like. Most charter contracts provide for the loss of the charter, typically granted by a public school board, if results aren't evident within a specified period.

In Minnesota, whose pioneering legislation was passed in 1991, charter schools include one with a year-round program for 35 students between the ages of 13 and 21, a private Montessori school, and a school for deaf students. In California, where 1992 legislation authorized 100 charter schools, one will have an English-as-a-second-language curriculum, and two will be resource centers for home schooling.

Despite growing support for charter schools among state governing bodies, some people fear that the movement is a step on the road to vouchers for private schools, which many believe would create a two-tiered education system that would shut out the poor, since private schools would raise tuition beyond the value of the vouchers.

The current poll shows that a 54% to 39% majority of the public favors charter schools.

The question:

A number of states have passed, or are considering, legislation that frees some public schools from certain state regulations and permits them to function independently. Some people say that these charter schools would be a good thing because, with fewer regulations, they would be able to try out new ideas for improving education. Others say charter schools would be a bad thing because regulations are necessary to guard against inferior or poor educational practices. Which position do you agree with more — that charter schools are a good thing for education or that they are a bad thing for education?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Charter schools are a good thing for education	54	53	55	60
Charter schools are a bad thing for education	39	39	39	32
Don't know	7	8	6	8

Majorities in virtually every demographic group support the idea of charter schools. Age is a key determinant, however. Those between the ages of 18 and 29 favor the idea (66% to 31%), as do those between the ages of 30 and 49 (57% to 37%). But those over age 50 oppose charter schools (47% to 42%).

Citizen Contact with the Schools

Recent emphasis on the importance of parental knowledge about and involvement in the life of the public schools may be paying off. Over the last decade the frequency of many forms of public contact with the schools has doubled or nearly so. Areas showing the greatest gains are attendance at school board meetings, attendance at meetings dealing with school problems, and attendance at plays, concerts, and athletic events. Even adults with no children in school now claim to participate in the life of the schools to a considerable degree. The question:

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

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Attended a school play or concert in any local public school	54	43	79	51
Attended a local public school athletic event	53	46	70	59
Met with any teachers or administrators in the local public schools about your own child	31	6*	87	48
Attended any meeting dealing with the local public school situation	28	18	51	34
Attended a PTA meeting	21	7	49	50
Attended a meeting to discuss any of the school reforms being proposed	20	13	35	34
Attended a school board meeting	16	10	27	38
Been a member of any public-school-related committee	15	8	31	18

*Parents of a child approaching school age might consult school personnel about enrolling him or her.

	National Totals			Public School Parents		
	1994 %	1991 %	1983 %	1994 %	1991 %	1983 %
Attended a school play or concert in any local public school	54	30	24	79	56	42
Attended a local public school athletic event	53	30	25	70	49	42
Met with any teachers or administrators in the local public schools about your own child	31	27	21	87	77	62
Attended any meeting dealing with the local public school situation	28	16*	10	51	36*	18
Attended a PTA meeting	21	14	14	49	38	36
Attended a school board meeting	16	7	8	27	13	16

*In 1991 this category was worded: "Attended any meeting dealing with the local public schools."



New Formats for Reporting Student Progress

The always-simmering dissatisfaction with time-honored forms of reporting student progress has resulted in much experimentation in recent years. To the discomfiture of college admissions officials, a growing number of high schools have even abandoned calculating rank in class, which depends on letter grades that can be converted to numbers.

To determine which format for reporting students' progress was considered preferable, parents of public school children were asked how useful they found each of the following systems: A to F or numeric grades to denote excellent to failing achievement, A to F or numeric grades to describe the student's efforts, a written description of the student's progress, or a checklist that indicates what the student knows and is able to do. Parents felt that the two newer formats were preferable to the more traditional A to F systems. For example, about seven in 10 called both the written description and the checklist "very useful." Two more traditional A to F grading systems, by contrast, were judged very useful by smaller percentages.

The question (asked of parents of public school children):

Here is a list of different types of reports that the public schools use to inform parents of their children's progress in school. As I read off a description of each type, would you tell me if you consider it very useful, quite useful, not very useful, or not

useful at all for informing you about the progress of your child?

	Very Useful %	Quite Useful %	Not Very Useful %	Not Useful At All %	Don't Know %
A written description of the student's progress in a number of areas	74	20	5	*	1
A checklist which indicates what the student knows and is able to do in each subject	70	22	6	1	1
A to F or numeric grades in each subject to denote excellent to failing achievement	58	32	8	1	1
A to F or numeric grades to describe the student's effort in each subject	56	32	9	1	2

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Interesting Cross Comparisons

Some of the most interesting information in the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup education poll comes from cross comparisons that can be made among the various subgroups in the sample. (Care should be taken, of course, to observe the confidence intervals described in the table of sampling tolerances that appears elsewhere in this report.) A sampling of some interesting cross comparisons follows.

- Of those surveyed, 18% mention fighting/violence/gangs as the biggest problem facing the public schools; however, this figure rises to 31% among nonwhites.

- Of those living in the West, 35% give the public schools in their communities an A or a B. This compares to 52% in the Midwest and 48% in the East.

- Of nonpublic school parents, 69% favor allowing parents to send their school-age children to any public, private, or church-related school (with the government paying all or part of the tuition for those who choose nonpublic schools). This percentage falls to 48% among public school parents and to 42% among those with no children in school.

- Men and women differ over the teaching of "character education" in the schools, with 54% of women — but only 43% of men — in favor.

- Of young respondents — in the 18-29 group — 52% favor private, profit-making corporations contracting to operate schools within a certain jurisdiction. However, only 33% of those 65 and older are in favor.

Cross comparisons of this kind can be produced from the data contained in the 415-page document that is the basis for this report. Persons who wish to order this document should write to Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402. Ph. 800/766-1156. The price is \$95, postage included.

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 error 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	8
Percentages near 20	3	3	4	4	5	7	10
Percentages near 30	3	4	4	5	6	8	12
Percentages near 40	3	4	5	5	6	9	12
Percentages near 50	3	4	5	5	6	9	13
Percentages near 60	3	4	5	5	6	9	12
Percentages near 70	3	4	4	5	6	8	12
Percentages near 80	3	3	4	4	5	7	10
Percentages near 90	2	2	3	3	4	5	8

*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 that a reported percentage is 33 for a group that includes 1,000 respondents. We go to the row for "percentages near 30" in the table and across to the column headed "1,000."

The number at this point is 4, which means that the 33% obtained in the sample is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus four points. In other words, it is very probable (95 chances out of 100) that the true figure would be somewhere between 29% and 37%, 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 lies 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 percentages near 80

Size of Sample	1,500	1,000	750	600	400	200
1,500	4					
1,000	4	5				
750	5	5	5			
600	5	5	6	6		
400	6	6	6	7	7	
200	8	8	8	8	9	10

TABLE B
In Percentage Points
(at 95 in 100 confidence level)*
Percentages near 50

Size of Sample	1,500	1,000	750	600	400	200
1,500	5					
1,000	5	6				
750	6	6	7			
600	6	7	7	7		
400	7	8	8	8	9	
200	10	10	10	10	11	13

*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? Let us consider a sample that 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 7 here. This means that the allowance for error should be seven points and that, in concluding that the percentage among men is somewhere between three and 17 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 three percentage points.

If, in another case, men's responses amount to 22%, say, and women's to 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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Research Procedure

The Sample. The sample used in this survey embraced a total of 1,326 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 10 May to 8 June 1994.

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.

Design of the Sample

For the 1994 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 non-working 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 1994 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	%	Farm	2
No children in school	66	Undesignated	23
Public school parents	30*	Income	%
Nonpublic school parents	6*	\$40,000 and over	34
		\$30,000-\$39,999	15
		\$20,000-\$29,999	16
		\$10,000-\$19,999	17
		Under \$10,000	9
		Undesignated	9
		Region	%
		East	24
		Midwest	25
		South	31
		West	20
		Community Size	%
		Urban	33
		Suburban	35
		Rural	23
		Undesignated	9
		Education	%
		Total College	52
		College graduate	22
		College incomplete	30
		Total high school	47
		High school graduate	33
		High school incomplete	14
		Undesignated	1
		Occupation	%
		(Chief Wage Earner)	
		Business and professional	34
		Clerical and sales	10
		Manual labor	29
		Nonlabor force	2

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

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. The price is \$55.

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.