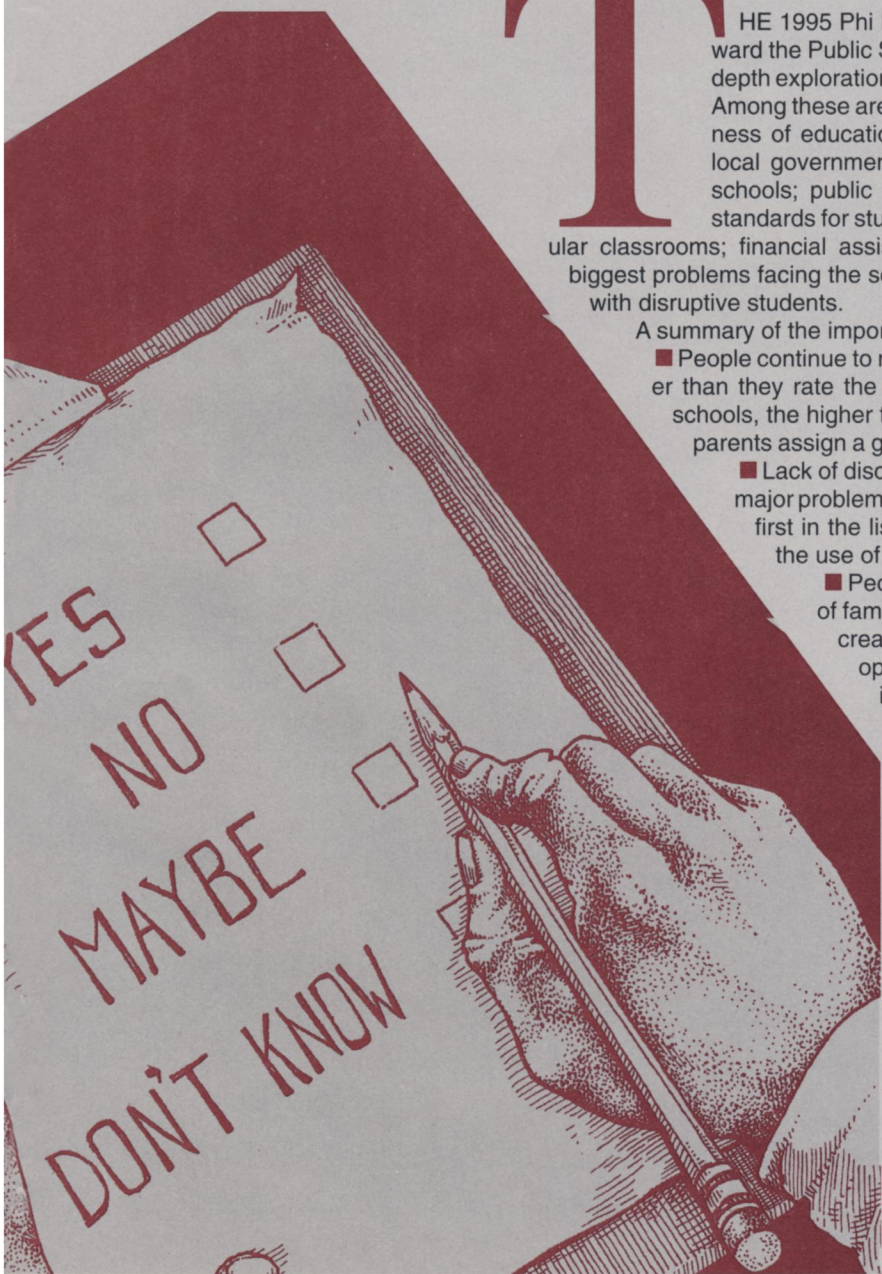

THE 27TH ANNUAL

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll

Of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

By Stanley M. Elam and Lowell C. Rose



THE 1995 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, number 27 in the annual series, features in-depth exploration of a number of significant national education issues. Among these are the public's grading of its schools; its level of awareness of educational issues; participation by the federal, state, and local governments in policy and financial decisions involving local schools; public and nonpublic school choice; higher achievement standards for students; inclusion of special education students in regular classrooms; financial assistance for college attendance; school prayer; the biggest problems facing the schools; violence in the schools; and ways of dealing with disruptive students.

A summary of the important findings follows:

■ People continue to rate the schools in their own communities much higher than they rate the nation's schools. And the closer people get to the schools, the higher the ratings. Almost two-thirds (65%) of public school parents assign a grade of A or B to the school their oldest child attends.

■ Lack of discipline and lack of financial support are viewed as the major problems facing the schools. Fighting/violence/gangs, tied for first in the list of problems a year ago, is now third, followed by the use of drugs.

■ People view lack of parental control and the breakdown of family life as the major causes of what they see as an increase in school violence. Interestingly, however, public opinion follows the same pattern with regard to violence in schools as it does with regard to grading the schools. The closer people are to the schools in question and the more contact they have with them, the less likely they are to view violence as a serious problem.

■ People do not generally believe that students who are guilty of disruptive behavior or violence in school should be expelled. Instead, a majority opts for transfer to separate facilities where students can be given special attention.

■ The poll results call into question the extent of public support for inclusion programs. The clear preference is for placing students with learning problems in special classrooms.

■ There continues to be strong public support for the introduction of higher academic standards

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into the public schools, something the public has favored for many years. Higher standards as a requirement for graduation are also favored — even if this means that fewer students would graduate.

■ The desire for a constitutional amendment permitting spoken prayer in the schools continues to be strong. The public is surprisingly ecumenical with regard to the nature of such prayer, believing that all religions should be accommodated. However, the strongest support is for a moment of silence to be used as each individual chooses.

■ Support for choice within the public schools is strong; however, choice whereby students attend private schools at public expense is opposed. Moreover, people believe that private schools that accept public funds should be subject to regulation by public authorities.

■ The public favors the kind of devolution of authority from federal to state to local governments that the Republican-controlled Congress is now trying to bring about — even if the transferring of authority means that less federal money would be available for local schools.

■ Americans place a high value on a college education, with most expressing the hope and the belief that their oldest child will attend college. However, a significant number are concerned about their ability to pay for that college education in light of increasing costs.

■ The public strongly supports government financial assistance for those with the ability but not the money to attend college. This assistance includes scholarships and grants, work-study programs, and low-interest loans.

■ The public is opposed to providing educational services at public expense for the children of illegal immigrants.

■ Parents indicate considerable involvement with the schools.

Almost three-fourths of the 55 questions in this year's poll are new. The responses to each question are presented and discussed in the following pages.

Grading the Public Schools

Beginning in 1974, respondents to the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup education polls have been asked to rate the public schools on a scale of A to F. At first only the "local public schools" were rated. After 1981, people were also asked to rate the "nation's public schools." In 1986 parents were asked to grade the public school their oldest child was attending. Last year still another question was added, this one asking respondents to grade the public schools attended by children "in your neighborhood."

The pattern of responses over the years is enlightening. The closer respondents are to the schools they are asked to grade, the higher the grades they give them. This has been true in every year since 1986. This year, 65% of parents award their oldest child's school either an A or a B. The grades given neighborhood schools are also high, but lower than those given by parents to their oldest child's school. Meanwhile, only 20% of the public award the *nation's* schools a grade of A or B.

Over the years these ratings of the local schools have been surprisingly stable, despite largely negative media coverage of the public schools and frequent charges that they are failing. Approval ratings hold up even though the percentage of parents with children in school, the group likely to give the highest ratings, has dropped from 41.5% in 1974 to about 27% today.

(This factor could well explain a drop of five percentage points, between 1984 and 1995, in the number of A's and B's awarded the *nation's* public schools.)

This year poll planners decided to shed new light on the phenomenon of high local ratings and low national ratings; 517 of the 1,311 respondents rated the nation's schools lower than their local schools. Given a list of 11 possible reasons for the differences, these 517 made a significant number-one choice: *the local schools place more emphasis on high academic achievement*. Not far behind were the perceptions that local schools have fewer disciplinary problems and less racial and ethnic conflict. The last table in this section lists all the reasons why respondents distinguished between local school quality and quality of schools in the nation as a whole.

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	41	38	49	23
A	8	6	12	6
B	33	32	37	17
C	37	38	34	40
D	12	11	12	23
FAIL	5	5	4	10
Don't know	5	8	1	4

Ratings Given the Local Public Schools

	1995 %	1994 %	1993 %	1992 %	1991 %	1990 %	1989 %	1988 %	1987 %	1986 %	1985 %
A & B	41	44	47	40	42	41	43	40	43	41	43
A	8	9	10	9	10	8	8	9	12	11	9
B	33	35	37	31	32	33	35	31	31	30	34
C	37	30	31	33	33	34	33	34	30	28	30
D	12	14	11	12	10	12	11	10	9	11	10
FAIL	5	7	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	4
Don't know	5	5	7	10	10	8	9	12	14	15	13

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	20	21	18	8
A	2	2	2	*
B	18	19	16	8
C	50	51	47	63
D	17	17	18	18
FAIL	4	4	4	4
Don't know	9	7	13	7

*Less than one-half of 1%.



Ratings Given the Nation's Public Schools

	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986	1985
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A & B	20	22	19	18	21	21	22	23	26	28	27
A	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	3
B	18	20	17	16	19	19	20	20	22	25	24
C	50	49	48	48	47	49	47	48	44	41	43
D	17	17	17	18	13	16	15	13	11	10	12
FAIL	4	6	4	4	5	4	4	3	2	5	3
Don't know	9	6	12	12	14	10	12	13	17	16	15

The third question (asked of parents with children in the public schools):

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

	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A & B	65	70	72	64	73	72	71	70	69	65
A	27	28	27	22	29	27	25	22	28	28
B	38	42	45	42	44	45	46	48	41	37
C	23	22	18	24	21	19	19	22	20	26
D	8	6	5	6	2	5	5	3	5	4
FAIL	3	1	2	4	4	2	1	2	2	2
Don't know	1	1	3	2	*	2	4	3	4	3

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The fourth question:

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

Ratings Given Neighborhood Schools

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	'95	'94	'95	'94	'95	'94	'95	'94
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A & B	48	50	47	46	52	60	31	39
A	12	12	9	10	18	16	6	11
B	36	38	38	36	34	44	25	28
C	30	30	28	30	32	29	47	35
D	9	9	10	10	8	7	14	12
FAIL	4	6	4	7	4	3	7	8
Don't know	9	5	11	7	4	1	1	6

The fifth question (asked of the 517 respondents who graded the schools in their community higher than the public schools nationally):

To indicate why you grade the public schools in your

community higher than the public schools nationally, would you say whether you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Reasons for Rating Local Schools Higher	National Totals*		No Children In School*		Public School Parents*	
	Agree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Disagree %
The local schools:						
Place more emphasis on high academic achievement	79	15	80	13	77	19
Have better discipline and less crime and violence	74	22	75	20	74	24
Have fewer racial and ethnic disturbances involving students	74	22	75	21	72	25
Provide better programs for slow learners and the physically handicapped	70	19	70	17	69	21
Send a higher percentage of their graduates to college	69	18	70	17	66	19
Have better, more varied academic courses	68	21	68	21	69	20
Have fewer dropouts	68	22	70	22	65	23
Have better teachers	67	22	67	21	66	24
Offer better sports and athletic and extracurricular programs	67	24	70	21	62	28
Provide better programs for the gifted and talented	64	27	64	26	64	29
Have more money to spend per pupil	44	44	46	41	39	50

*To find the percentage of "don't knows" or refusals, add agree and disagree columns and subtract from 100%.

Awareness of National Education Issues

To determine the public's awareness of current issues in education, poll respondents were offered a list of nine education issues that have been accorded considerable attention by the media in recent years and then were asked to indicate how much they had heard or read about each issue.

Judging by the responses, the public is distressingly uninformed about the education scene in America today. Student violence and ways to deal with it was by far the issue about which the public had heard or read the most. The table below lists the nine issues in order of familiarity to the public.

The issue about which the public had heard or read the least was charter schools, which are already being tested in more than a dozen states. And despite long exposure to the issue, the public does not feel knowledgeable about school choice.

The question:

Here are some national education issues that are currently being discussed and debated. As I read off each issue, would you tell me whether you have heard or read about that issue a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or not at all?

	How Much Heard or Read				
	A Great Deal	A Fair Amount	Not Very Much	Not at All	Don't Know
The amount of student violence in the public schools, including possible ways to deal with it	56	27	11	6	*
A proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution permitting spoken prayer in the public schools	44	33	16	7	*
National testing programs to measure the academic achievement of public school students	25	38	23	14	*
Public school choice; that is, allowing public school children to attend any public school of their own or their parents' choice	23	30	25	22	*
Private school choice; that is, allowing parents to send their children to private or church-related schools at taxpayers' expense	22	29	22	27	*
The federal and state governments' efforts to raise achievement standards of public schools nationwide	20	36	28	16	*
Providing federal funds for education to the states in the form of "block grants"	19	26	27	27	1
The debate over what should be taught in U.S. history courses in the public schools	12	24	33	30	1
Charter schools, which would permit some public schools to operate independently, free from certain state restrictions	6	17	31	46	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

School-Based Health and Social Services

In 1993 people told Gallup interviewers that they would like the public schools to provide health and social services to students. In most cases, these sometimes costly programs were approved by overwhelming margins. Exams to detect sight and hearing defects were approved by 92% of respondents; free or low-cost lunches, by 87%; inoculations, by 84%; and after-school care for children of working parents, by 62%.

Thus it was no surprise that 91% of respondents to this year's poll considered "serving the emotional and health needs of students" very important or somewhat important. Only 3% considered this role for the schools not important at all. Women (69%), nonwhites (80%), those aged 18-29 (74%), and Democrats (74%) were somewhat more likely to view this role for the schools as very important than were men (59%), whites (61%), those aged 50 and over (59%), and Republicans (56%).

The question:



In addition to their educational role, how important do you think it is for the public schools to serve the emotional and health needs of students?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Very important	64	63	69	52
Somewhat important	27	28	24	35
Not very important	5	6	4	3
Not important at all	3	2	2	6
Don't know	1	1	1	4

Federal, State, and Local Roles

Americans have been consistently skeptical of centralized government power. This skepticism seems to lie behind answers to a number of poll questions related to the locus of authority in public education. The responses show that public sentiment strongly favors local control over federal or even state control.

The first three questions:

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

How about the state government? Would you like the state government to have more influence or less influence in determining the educational programs of the local schools?

How about the local government? Would you like the local government to have more influence or less influence in determining the educational programs of the local schools?

	Federal Government			State Government			Local Government		
	1995 %	1987 %	1986 %	1995 %	1987 %	1986 %	1995 %	1987 %	1986 %
More influence	28	37	26	52	55	45	64	62	57
Less influence	64	39	53	37	21	32	24	15	17
Same amount	5	14	12	8	15	16	8	15	17
Don't know	3	10	9	3	9	7	4	8	9

This year 36% of Democrats but only 19% of Republicans favored more federal influence. Nonwhite respondents (51%) were much more in favor of greater federal influence than were whites (23%). Nonwhites were also more favorable toward in-

creased influence for other levels of government. For example, 62% of nonwhites, but only 49% of whites, favored more state influence, and 72% of nonwhites, compared with 62% of whites, want to see local government have more influence in school matters. Urban dwellers were more likely (34%) than suburbanites (24%) and rural residents (23%) to favor more federal influence.



Financing Education

The next five questions had to do with federal and state relations in the expenditure of federal education funds, an issue with which Congress is now wrestling.

The first question:

In your opinion, should your state have more say in the way money from federal education programs is spent in your state, less say, or about the same as now?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
More say	48	48	46	47
Less say	12	11	15	11
About the same as now	37	38	36	40
Don't know	3	3	3	2

The second question (asked of those who said the state should have more say):

What if giving your state more say means that less money from the federal government would be available to the state for education? Do you think your state should have more say in the way money from federal education programs is spent, if it means less money would be available, or not?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes, more say	64	67	58	54
No	30	27	37	27
Don't know	6	6	5	19

Party affiliation was the only striking demographic difference in the responses to this question. Seventy percent of Republicans were willing to give up some federal money if it meant more say for the state. Only 52% of Democrats felt the same way.

The third question:

When the federal government appropriates money for educational programs, it usually requires the schools that receive this money to spend it as the federal government directs. Should or should not this be changed to permit local school authorities to decide how the money is to be spent?

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	'95 %	'77 %	'95 %	'77 %	'95 %	'77 %	'95 %	'77 %
Yes, should be changed	70	62	71	60	70	65	72	67
No, should not be changed	26	29	24	29	27	29	19	27
Don't know/ no answer	4	9	5	11	3	6	9	6

Again, it was Republicans rather than Democrats who most strongly supported this change: Republicans, 77% in favor; Democrats, 63% in favor.

Although the public generally supports greater say at the local level, its response to a question dealing with a specific "block grant" proposal shows deep division.

The fourth question:

When federal money is turned over to the states with no strings attached as to how it should be spent, it is called a "block grant." One proposed block grant would, over time, reduce the amount of money in the federal school lunch program in exchange for giving the states more say in how the money is spent. Are you in favor of or opposed to this block grant?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	45	46	42	32
Oppose	47	45	51	57
Don't know	8	9	7	11

Demographic categories in which there were significant differences of opinion are summarized below:

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
National Totals	45	47	8
Race			
White	47	44	9
Nonwhite	34	61	5
Politics			
Republicans	59	30	11
Democrats	33	60	7
Independents	41	51	8

The fifth question:

Last year, federal aid-to-education programs were changed to give the local public schools more say, in exchange for bringing students to higher levels of academic achievement. Do you favor or oppose this change?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	86	86	85	85
Oppose	10	10	11	9
Don't know	4	4	4	6

Public and Private School Choice

Beginning in 1989, these polls have tracked public opinion on the issue of giving parents a choice of the public school their children attend, regardless of where they live. Sentiment has consistently favored this form of choice. By 1990 several states had begun experimenting with choice plans involving the public schools, and the idea had the backing of President Bush and the U.S. Department of Education. Today, more than half of the states have passed laws permitting some form of public school choice, and others are considering such laws.

Plans that include choice of a private school to attend at public expense are an entirely different matter, however. This year's poll shows that approximately two-thirds of the public opposes such plans. While this figure represents strong opposition, it is not as strong as it was in 1993, when 74% of the public expressed opposition.

However, among the 13 different demographic groups routinely tracked in this poll, not one shows a majority favoring private school choice at public expense. Even Roman Catholics and nonpublic school parents oppose the idea: Catholics 54% to 44% and nonpublic school parents 51% to 44%.

The first question:

Do you favor or oppose allowing students and their parents to choose which public schools in the community the students attend, regardless of where they live?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	69	69	69	78
Oppose	28	28	29	21
Don't know	3	3	2	1

	National Totals				
	1995 %	1993 %	1991 %	1990 %	1989 %
Favor	69	65	62	62	60
Oppose	28	33	33	31	31
Don't know	3	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	33	30	38	44
Oppose	65	68	59	51
Don't know	2	2	3	5

	National Totals		
	1995 %	1993 %	1991 %
Favor	33	24	26
Oppose	65	74	68
Don't know	2	2	6

Answers to the next question probably explain the reluctance of Roman Catholics and nonpublic school parents to approve the idea of private school choice at public expense.

The third question:

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

	National Totals	
	1995 %	1993 %
Yes, should be accountable	73	63
No, should not be accountable	24	34
Don't know	3	3

Higher Standards

Republicans and Democrats in the federal government, along with state governors of both parties, have embraced the need for higher standards of academic achievement in the nation's schools.

A dozen associations representing the academic disciplines have spent long hours and millions of dollars drafting a mountain of standards. Most of these groups had completed their work by the end of the 1994-95 school year.

But the national standards movement is not proceeding as swiftly now as anticipated. There are increasing questions and controversy. *Education Week* has summarized these as follows: Who should set standards, and who has the right to say whether they are good enough? Are the proposed standards really for all children, from the gifted and talented to those with special needs? Will all students have access to the instruction and resources they need to meet the standards? Will the standards dictate a national curriculum in a country that has a strong tradition of local control in education? What role, if any, should the federal government have played in developing standards? And are the emerging documents both politically balanced and academically rigorous?

These polls have dealt with the standards issue on several occasions. In 1989 and 1991, for example, people were asked whether they favored or opposed requiring their local schools to conform to national achievement standards and goals. By a margin of 70% to 19% in 1989 and 81% to 12% in 1991, they favored this strategy. In both years 77% also favored using standardized national tests to determine whether students were meeting these national standards. It is no surprise, then, that the vast majority of respondents in this year's poll (87%) favor setting higher standards in the basic subjects than are now required in order to move from grade to grade. Nearly as many (84%) favor setting higher standards for high school graduation.

The questions:

Would you favor or oppose setting higher standards than are now required about what students should know and be able to do in the basic subjects — that is, math, history, English, and science — for promotion from grade to grade?

Would you favor or oppose requiring the students in the public schools in your community to meet higher standards than are now required in math, English, history, and science in order to graduate from high school?

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	For Promotion	For Graduation	For Promotion	For Graduation	For Promotion	For Graduation	For Promotion	For Graduation
Higher Standards	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Favor	87	84	88	85	84	82	89	94
Oppose	10	13	8	12	14	17	5	6
Don't know	3	3	4	3	2	1	6	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.



Possible Effects of Higher Standards

The possible effects of raising standards are being widely debated today. Such leaders as Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers have fought for a get-tough attitude, saying children need to understand that the quality of their school achievement has serious consequences for later life. In order to sample public opinion on various questions related to the possible effects of higher standards, four questions were asked in this poll.

The first question:

Some people say that raising achievement standards will encourage students from low-income backgrounds to do better in school. Others say that raising standards will put these students at such a disadvantage that they will become discouraged about school or will even drop out. Do you think that raising achievement standards will encourage students from poor backgrounds to do better in school, or will it cause them to become discouraged or to drop out?

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	'95	'87	'95	'87	'95	'87	'95	'87
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, encourage	60	52	63	52	53	51	67	60
No, discourage	29	30	27	27	36	37	26	28
Don't know	11	18	10	21	11	12	7	12

Nationally, a surprising 60% of the respondents thought that raising standards would encourage low-income students to do better in school, but there were many doubters, particularly among parents of public school children. Moreover, one-tenth of the respondents didn't venture an answer. There were no statistically significant differences by race in the responses to this question.

The second question:

Would you favor stricter requirements for high school graduation, even if it meant that significantly fewer students would graduate than is now the case?

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	'95	'86	'95	'86	'95	'86	'95	'86
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	65	68	67	68	59	68	78	77
No	29	23	27	22	34	26	21	18
Don't know	6	9	6	10	7	6	1	5

There were no significant differences by race on this question, and other demographic differences were small.

The third question:

Thinking about kindergarten through grade 3, would you favor or oppose setting standards for what students in these grades should know and be able to do in various subjects?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	78	78	76	83
Oppose	20	19	22	16
Don't know	2	3	2	1

Three times before, the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup polls have asked respondents if they approve of promoting students to the next grade only if they can pass examinations. In 1978, 68% were in favor; in 1983, 75% were in favor; in 1990, 67% were in favor. This year people were asked a similar question, but this time the examinations were described as "standardized" and "national." Support remained strong.

The fourth question:

Do you favor or oppose requiring students in the public schools in this community to pass standardized, national examinations for promotion from grade to grade?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	65	65	64	66
Oppose	32	31	34	33
Don't know	3	4	2	1

	National Totals			
	1995	1990	1983	1978
	%	%	%	%
Favor	65	67	75	68
Oppose	32	29	20	27
Don't know	3	4	5	5

Is U.S. History Adequately Taught?

Standards for the teaching of U.S. history, released late in 1994, illustrate some of the difficulties of the standards movement. A storm of controversy greeted the release of the history standards. Yet the schools bear much of the burden of acquainting the younger generation with their national historical heritage. Commercial television has devoted more time to the O.J. Simpson trial this year than to the entire history of America. Even PBS has devoted little time to American history recently, beyond a few such programs as Ken Burns' Civil War series.

While poll designers felt it would be futile to try to explore popular feeling about the controversy over history standards — after all, it was confined mainly to professional ranks — two questions were asked.

The first question:

In your opinion, is U.S. history being taught more accurately and realistically than when you were in school, or not?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
More accurately	33	31	39	27
Less accurately	37	37	36	39
No difference	8	8	8	9
Don't know	22	24	17	25

The results show that people are almost evenly divided on the issue of whether history teaching is more or less accurate than in the past, with a sizable number saying that they don't know. There were some interesting differences in demographic groups.

	More Accurately %	Less Accurately %	No Difference %	Don't Know %
National Totals	33	37	8	22
Race				
White	31	37	8	24
Nonwhite	45	38	5	12
Age				
18-29 years	38	30	9	23
50-64 years	27	45	6	22
65 and older	20	55	4	21

The second question:

In your opinion, is U.S. history being taught with too much emphasis on the positive aspects of the nation's history and its successes, too much emphasis on the negative aspects of the nation's history and its failures, or with about the right balance?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Too positive	17	17	17	19
Too negative	18	18	17	25
Right balance	48	46	52	44
Don't know	17	19	14	12

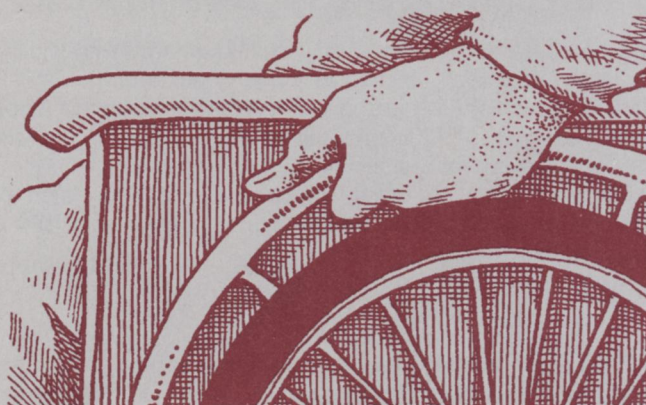
Half of the public feels that the current balance is about right, while groups of almost equal size feel that the teaching of history is too positive or too negative. Once again, a few demographic differences surfaced.

	Too Positive %	Too Negative %	Right Balance %	Don't Know %
National Totals	17	18	48	17
Race				
White	16	18	48	18
Nonwhite	21	19	47	13
Age				
18-29 years	28	13	49	10
50 and older	7	23	45	25
Politics				
Republicans	11	28	44	17
Democrats	19	16	47	18
Independents	21	12	51	16
Education				
Total college	21	18	44	17
Total high school	12	18	53	17

Special Education

Since 1975, when Congress passed the first version of what is now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, special education has come under attack from various sources. State and local districts are hard put to meet the staggering costs of a "free and appropriate education" for all of the 5.2 million U.S. students now classified as being in some way handicapped or disabled. More recently, the merits of inclusion — placing handicapped students in classes with nonhandicapped students — have been hotly debated.

Four questions in the current poll explored public attitudes on these issues. Well-informed or not, most respondents were



willing to express an opinion on them. The first question, on who should pay, was first asked in 1977, shortly after the disabilities act became law. Some eight of 10 respondents said then (and a similar number say today) that the federal government should pay the attendant costs. These costs have escalated as more and more students have been classified as "disabled."

The next three questions explored public attitudes toward including students with learning problems in the same classes with other students and asked what the likely effects would be on other students and on the students with learning problems themselves. Two-thirds of the respondents believed that children with learning problems should be placed in special class-

es. If students with learning problems are included in the same classrooms with other students, 37% of the respondents believed that the effect of their inclusion on other students would be negative, while 36% thought that it would not make much difference. A plurality of respondents (40%) thought that inclusion would have a negative effect on the students with learning problems themselves. Clearly, the proponents of greater inclusion have a public relations problem.

The first question:

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

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	'95	'77	'95	'77	'95	'77	'95	'77
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, should	84	82	82	80	89	85	89	84
No, should not	12	11	14	12	9	9	10	14
Don't know	4	7	4	8	2	6	1	2

The second question:

In your opinion, should children with learning problems be put in the same classes with other students, or should they be put in special classes of their own?

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	'95	'89	'95	'89	'95	'89	'95	'89
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, same classrooms	26	25	29	25	29	25	29	25
No, special classes	66	68	62	66	62	66	62	66
Don't know	8	7	9	9	9	9	9	9

There were very few significant differences in responses by category of respondent. However, the older the person interviewed, the less likely he or she was to approve of inclusion. Only 15% of persons over age 65 favored the idea, while 34% of 18- to 29-year-olds did.

The third question:

Do you think that including children with learning problems in the same classrooms with other students would have a positive effect on the other students, a negative effect, or would it not make much difference?

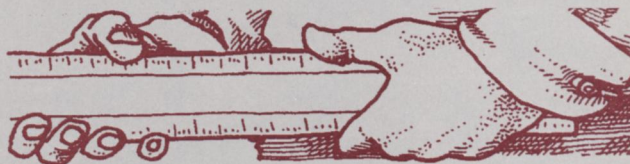
	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	'95	'89	'95	'89	'95	'89	'95	'89
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Positive effect	23	21	25	26	25	26	25	26
Negative effect	37	38	35	39	35	39	35	39
Would make little difference	36	37	35	34	35	34	35	34
Don't know	4	4	5	1	5	1	5	1

The fourth question:

How about children with learning problems them-

selves? Do you think including them in classes with other students would have a positive effect on the children with learning problems, a negative effect, or would it not make much difference?

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	'95	'89	'95	'89	'95	'89	'95	'89
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Positive effect	38	35	44	42	38	35	44	42
Negative effect	40	43	35	43	40	43	35	43
Would make little difference	17	17	16	11	17	16	16	11
Don't know	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4



Paying for a College Education

Economist Richard Hokenson predicts a 33% increase in the number of young people who will enter college by the year 2010. This will tend to hold down tuition increases, he says, because many college operating costs are fixed. Still, by 2010 the cost of tuition for one year at a state university may well be more than \$15,000 per student — and the average tuition at private schools more than \$66,000 — in today's dollars. That increase may well price many families out of the market.

The new AmeriCorps program promoted by President Clinton to give moderate-income students an opportunity to trade public service for some college aid now has only about 20,000 members because of inadequate funding, and it may experience further cuts by the Republican-controlled Congress.

Five questions in the current poll probed public attitudes toward college education and the difficulties of paying for it.

The first question:

Many high school graduates cannot afford to attend college, although they may have the ability and desire to do so. When students have the ability and desire to attend college but not enough money, would you favor or oppose more state or federal assistance to enable them to attend?

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	'95	'89	'95	'89	'95	'89	'95	'89
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Favor	86	83	83	82	92	87	87	83
Oppose	12	13	15	14	7	11	11	14
Don't know	2	4	2	4	1	2	2	3

The second question:

There are several forms of state or federal assistance that might be provided to a student who has the ability but not enough money to attend college. As I read off each form of assistance, one at a time, would you tell me whether you would favor or oppose this form of assistance?

	National Totals		No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	'95	'89	'95	'95	'95
	%	%	%	%	%
More scholarships and grants					
Favor	89	94	88	91	89
Oppose	10	4	11	8	7
Don't know	1	2	1	1	4
More work-study programs					
Favor	93	94	93	94	88
Oppose	5	3	5	5	12
Don't know	2	3	2	1	*
More low-interest loans					
Favor	90	93	89	93	94
Oppose	9	5	10	7	6
Don't know	1	2	1	*	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

In 1995, as in 1982, an overwhelming majority of respondents wanted their children to attend college, as the figures below suggest. Indeed, the desire is almost universal today: 98% state that they would like their oldest child to attend college, a figure that includes at least 90% of every demographic group. Despite increases in college costs in recent years, the vast majority of parents believe their children will indeed attend college; some two-thirds believe that it is very likely or somewhat likely that they can pay the costs themselves.

The third question:

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

	Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	1995	1982	1995	1982
	%	%	%	%
Yes	98	87	98	84
No	1	5	*	6
Don't know	1	8	2	10

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The fourth question:

Do you think he or she will go to college?

	Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	1995	1982	1995	1982
	%	%	%	%
Yes	82	57	85	67
No	12	19	8	15
Don't know	6	24	7	18

The fifth question:

How likely do you think it is that you or your family will be able to pay for college for your oldest child?

	National Totals	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%
Very likely	30	29	43
Somewhat likely	39	39	37
Not too likely	17	17	14
Not at all likely	12	13	5
Don't know	2	2	1

Should Spoken Prayer be Allowed?

Nine questions in this poll, including several never previously asked in the series, probed aspects of the issue of prayer in the public schools. The responses add a great deal to our knowledge of public opinion on this currently important topic.

For the first time in many years, Congress is seriously considering action. The Christian Coalition, credited by *Time* magazine with "providing the winning margin for perhaps half of the Republicans' 52-seat gain in the House of Representatives last fall and a sizable portion of their nine-seat pickup in the Senate," supports a constitutional amendment "to protect religious expression."



The 1984 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll asked two questions about a then-proposed constitutional amendment that would allow prayer in the public schools. The first question revealed that 93% of the public at that time were aware of the proposed amendment — exactly the same proportion who said this year that they had heard or read about the issue. When asked in 1995 whether they favored or opposed such an amendment, the responses closely paralleled those of 1984. This was true even though *only* those claiming awareness of the proposed amendment were asked the question in 1984, while all respondents were asked the question this year.

The first question:

An amendment to the U.S. Constitution has been proposed that would permit prayers to be spoken in the public schools. Do you favor or oppose this amendment?

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Nonpublic School Parents	
	'95	'84	'95	'84	'95	'84	'95	'84
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Favor	71	69	68	68	75	73	74	68
Oppose	25	24	28	25	20	21	23	21
Don't know	4	7	4	7	5	6	3	11

In 1995, as in 1984, those with at least some college (65% in favor), those 18 to 29 years of age (63%), and those living in the West (58%) supported the amendment least, though they, too, supported it. It received highest support in the South (80%) and among those in the lowest income group (88%).

The current poll revealed that a majority (65%) of people favoring the amendment felt very strongly about it, and 30% felt fairly strongly. A smaller majority (54%) of those who opposed

the amendment also felt very strongly about the issue, and 34% felt fairly strongly. Although 74% thought that only a small percentage of parents with children in the local public schools would be offended by an amendment permitting spoken prayer, 55% thought such prayer should not be permitted in a community where a large percentage of parents *would* be offended.

Interestingly, those who supported an amendment allowing spoken prayer were only about one-third as likely (13% to 44%) as those who opposed the amendment to feel that a large percentage of parents would be offended if spoken prayer were allowed in the schools. In addition, by a close margin (53% to 44%) those who favored the amendment would allow prayer in the schools *even if* it were to offend a large percentage of parents.

The most interesting finding, perhaps, was the opinion, held by more than half of the respondents (including those who opposed public school prayer), that the introduction of spoken prayer would *improve the behavior of students*; 24% said "a great deal," and 31% said "somewhat."

A sizable majority (70%) of respondents said that they would prefer a moment of silence or silent prayer to spoken prayer (24%).* Somewhat surprisingly, even advocates of the amendment preferred a moment of silence to spoken prayer. Of those who favored the amendment, 64% preferred a moment of silence, and 32% preferred spoken prayer. Furthermore, even those who strongly favored the amendment preferred a moment of silence to spoken prayer (55% preferred silence, whereas 41% preferred spoken prayer).

Asked if school prayers should be basically Christian, a large majority (81%) said no. A majority (73%) favored allowing Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu prayers as well as Christian prayers, by students professing those faiths.

*A CBS News/New York Times poll taken recently showed that "the majority of Americans — 55% — did not know that a child's right to pray privately in school is constitutionally protected. Many probably do not know, either, that the Supreme Court struck down Alabama's moment-of-silence law in 1985, terming it a constitutional establishment of religion."



"... and 23.4% lived happily ever after, 21.2% lived moderately happily ever after, 41.1% lived marginally happily ever after, and 14.3% lived below the poverty level ever after."

The second question (asked only of those who favored an amendment):

How strongly do you favor this amendment?

	National Totals	
	1995 %	1984 %
Very strongly	65	61
Fairly strongly	30	34
Not at all strongly	5	5
Don't know	*	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The third question (asked only of those who opposed an amendment):

How strongly do you oppose this amendment?

	National Totals	
	1995 %	1984 %
Very strongly	54	49
Fairly strongly	34	38
Not at all strongly	12	12
Don't know	*	1

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The fourth question:

Thinking about the local situation, what percentage of parents of students in the local public schools do you think would be offended if spoken prayer were permitted?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A large percentage	21	21	23	16
A small percentage	74	74	72	73
Don't know	5	5	5	11

The fifth question:

Do you think spoken prayer should be permitted in the local public schools if it offends a large percentage of parents?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes, should be permitted	41	41	41	40
No, should not be permitted	55	56	55	49
Don't know	4	3	4	11

The sixth question:

Do you think that the introduction of spoken prayer in the local public schools would improve the behavior of the students a great deal, somewhat, very little, or not at all?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A great deal	24	22	26	25
Somewhat	31	30	34	42
Very little	20	21	19	17
Not at all	24	26	21	16
Don't know	1	1	*	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The seventh question:

If you had a choice, which would you prefer in the local public schools — spoken prayer, a moment of silence for contemplation or silent prayer, neither, or both?

	National Totals %	Public No Children In School %	Nonpublic School Parents %	School Parents %
Spoken prayer	24	22	27	25
A moment of silence	70	72	67	65
Neither	3	3	3	3
Both	2	2	3	6
Don't know	1	1	*	1

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The eighth question:

Suppose spoken prayers were allowed in the local public schools. Do you believe that the prayers should be basically Christian, reflecting Christian beliefs and values, or should the prayers reflect all major religions, including Christianity?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should reflect Christian beliefs and values	13	11	17	28
Should reflect all major religions	81	82	78	65
Neither of these	4	5	3	5
Don't know	2	2	2	2

The ninth question:

Again, suppose spoken prayers were allowed in the public schools in this community. In addition to Christian prayers, would you favor or oppose allowing spoken Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu prayers by students of these faiths?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	73	72	73	71
Oppose	20	20	21	25
Neither	4	4	4	2
Don't know	3	4	2	2

Benefits for Children of Illegal Immigrants

Whether the children of illegal immigrants should receive such public benefits as free education is a sharply divisive issue in many states. Whether denying such benefits is constitutionally permissible is currently being tested in court in California.



People differ on this issue by race, by political party affiliation, and by income level. A sizable national majority (67%) opposed providing such benefits, but a significant percentage (47%) of nonwhites were in favor, while 46% were opposed. (This poll did not attempt to discover whether respondents knew that the children of illegal immigrants born in the U.S. are automatically U.S. citizens and therefore eligible for free public education and other social benefits.)

The question:

Are you in favor of or opposed to providing free public education, school lunches, and other benefits to children of immigrants who are in the United States illegally?

	In Favor %	Opposed %	Don't Know %
National Totals	28	67	5
Race			
Whites	24	72	4
Nonwhites	47	46	7
Politics			
Republicans	17	78	5
Democrats	37	57	6
Independents	30	66	4
Income			
\$50,000 and over	24	72	4
Under \$10,000	43	52	5

Biggest Problems Facing Local Public Schools

As in 18 of the 26 prior Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup polls, "lack of discipline" was judged this year to be the biggest problem faced by local public schools. Fifteen percent of all respondents mentioned discipline or lack of student control, while 9% listed fighting/violence/gangs as a major problem. Last year fighting/violence/gangs was mentioned by 18%, tying with discipline. Lack of proper financial support came in second as a problem this year; it was mentioned by 11% of respondents. Financial problems have topped the list twice, in 1971 and in 1993. Drug abuse headed the list from 1986 through 1991.

Other problems in order of frequency of mention in the current poll were drug abuse, 7%; standards or quality of education offered, 4%; overcrowded schools, 3%; lack of respect for teachers/authority/students, 3%; and lack of family structure and problems of home life, 3%. No other problem was listed by more than 2% of those polled.

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	
	'95	'94	'95	'94	'95	'94	'95	'94
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Lack of discipline	15	18	17	18	11	17	18	22
Lack of proper financial support	11	13	10	12	12	16	3	9
Fighting/violence/gangs	9	18	9	19	8	16	8	17
Drug abuse	7	11	7	11	7	13	8	7
Standards/quality of education	4	8	4	8	4	5	4	11
Overcrowded schools	3	7	3	5	5	11	3	10
Lack of respect	3	3	3	2	4	3	6	1
Lack of family structure/problems of home life	3	5	3	5	1	3	5	4
Crime/vandalism	2	4	2	5	2	4	2	3
Integration/segregation, racial discrimination	2	3	2	3	2	2	*	2
Difficulty in getting good teachers	2	3	2	4	3	2	*	2
Management of funds/programs	2	*	2	*	2	*	3	*
Parents' lack of support/interest	2	3	2	4	2	2	3	3
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy/poor attitudes	2	3	2	3	1	3	2	5
Poor curriculum/low curriculum standards	2	3	2	2	1	3	1	2
There are no problems	3	1	2	1	6	2	2	2
Miscellaneous**	4	9	5	9	3	8	3	13
Don't know	11	11	12	12	10	9	6	11

*Less than one-half of 1%.

**A total of 29 different kinds of problems were mentioned by fewer than 2% of the 1995 respondents.

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

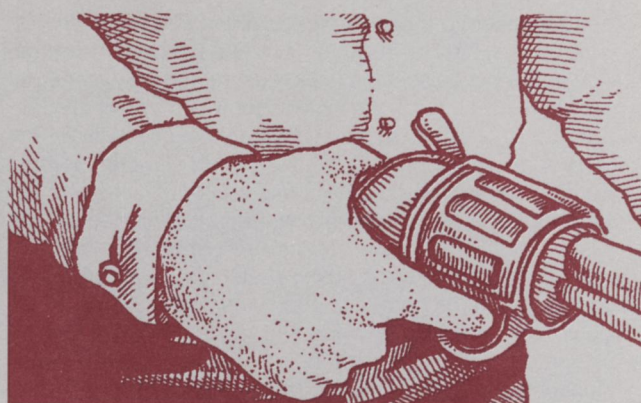
This year a variation on the "biggest problems" question was put to parents of public school children. In addition to identifying problems of the "local public schools," these parents were asked what they considered to be the biggest problems of the school *attended by their oldest child*. Answers were not dramatically different from those to questions seeking perceptions of problems of local community schools. For example, fighting/violence/gangs led the list, and discipline was tied for second with peer pressure and drug abuse. Lack of proper financial support got fewer mentions, however.

The question (asked of public school parents):

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public school attended by your oldest child must deal?

Public School Parents	
	%
Fighting/violence/gangs	9
Peer pressure	8
Drug abuse	8
Lack of discipline/control	8
Lack of proper financial support	7
Overcrowded schools	4
Lack of respect	4
There are no problems	9
Don't know	10

No other problem accounted for more than 2% of responses.



The Incidence of Student Violence in School

The causes of an undeniable spurt in crime and violence perpetrated by young people and the nature of effective treatment of this pathology constitute one of the most complex, puzzling, and intractable problems of our time. While a poll of the public is unlikely to help much in the quest for answers, it can alert educators to prevailing attitudes and perhaps suggest information campaigns to counter misinformation or misunderstanding.

Building on earlier poll findings, the current poll asked respondents to speculate on six questions related to student violence and its possible causes and cures. The questions and the findings follow.

The first question:

Just your impression — would you say that student violence in the public schools in your community has increased a great deal in recent years, increased some, declined some, declined a great deal, or remained about the same?

The second question:

How about in the public schools nationwide? Is it your impression that student violence in the public schools nationwide has increased a great deal in recent years, increased some, declined some, declined a great deal, or remained about the same?

The third question (asked of public school parents):

How about the public school attended by your oldest child? Is it your impression that student violence in this school has increased a great deal, increased some, declined some, declined a great deal, or remained about the same?

	In Local Public Schools	In the Nation's Public Schools	In School Attended by Oldest Child
	%	%	%
Increased a great deal	37	68	15
Increased some	30	21	26
Declined some	5	2	7
Declined a great deal	1	1	4
Remained about the same	25	6	43
Don't know	2	2	5

The responses to these three questions suggest two obvious conclusions. First, a vast majority of the public believes that violence in the public schools is increasing, not only in the nation's schools (89%) but in the local schools (67%) as well. Second, the closer one is to the public schools, the less likely one is to believe there has been a great increase. (Eleven percent of parents even believe that there has been at least some decrease in violence in the school attended by their oldest child, and a surprising 43% see no change.) People living in urban areas (47%) and in the West (48%) were most likely to think violence has increased greatly in their local schools.

People with children in *private* or *church-related* schools were much more likely than others to perceive a great increase in violence in the *public* schools locally (50%) and nationally (77%).

The National Association of Secondary School Principals reported last May that "three million crimes occur in or near school property each year. Such violence deprives students of their rights to quality education." Irrespective of rate increases or decreases, this is far too much crime for a civilized society to tolerate among its youth.

Because the 1994 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll showed that, for the first time in the poll's history, people viewed violence and poor discipline as overwhelmingly the most serious problems in their local public schools — 18% named each of them — the 1995 poll probed this area with three more questions.

The fourth question:

What, in your opinion, are the major causes of student violence in the public schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Lack of parental control/ discipline/supervision/ involvement/values	24	26	18	21
Lack of family structure/ problems of family life/ poverty	20	22	16	31
Drug related	13	13	13	9
Pupils' attitudes/boredom/ disrespect/lack of self- esteem	6	5	8	6
Gang related	5	5	7	4
Integration/segregation problems; racial disputes	4	3	6	6
TV/movies/pop music/news media	3	3	3	3
Availability of guns/weapons	3	3	2	1

No other category accounted for more than 2% of responses. Only 6% of all respondents failed to answer the question.

Note that none of these so-called causes constitute a criticism of schools or school personnel. The public obviously believes itself to be at fault. While a logician might be able to show that some of the thinking behind these responses is weak, there is no doubt that people — including parents — blame themselves for violence in the schools.

The last questions in this section of the poll had to do with two major strategies for dealing with disruptive or violent students.

The fifth question:

Suppose a student in a public school in this community were guilty of continually disruptive behavior in school. Which one of these two approaches would you prefer — expelling the student from school or transferring the student to a separate facility for special attention?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Expulsion	20	21	18	16
Transfer	77	76	79	82
Neither	2	2	2	1
Don't know	1	1	1	1

The sixth question:

Suppose a student in a public school in this community were guilty of violence against another student or a teacher. Which one of these two approaches would you prefer — expelling the student from school or transferring the student to a separate facility for special attention?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Expulsion	31	33	30	32
Transfer	66	64	67	68
Neither	2	2	2	*
Don't know	1	1	1	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Generally, demographic differences were not statistically significant.



Parent Involvement

One of the two national goals recently added to the original six by the President and the state governors urges parents to become more closely involved in their children's education. Answers to the following question suggest that parent involvement may already be at a fairly high level.

The question (asked of public school parents):

During the past school year — that is, since last September — which of the following, if any, have you yourself done?

	Public School Parents %
Made sure your children attended school	98
Made sure that books were available for your children to read	97

	Public School Parents %
Made sure that homework assigned to any of your children was completed	95
Read and/or discussed a school assignment with any of your children	94
Met with any teacher or administrator about any of your children	90
Read a book to, or with, any of your children	80
Placed definite limits on the kind of TV any of your children watch	79
Placed definite limits on the amount of TV any of your children watch	74
Attended a school board meeting	38

Public school parents were then asked about their willingness to spell out everyone's responsibilities with regard to their children's education.

The question:

Thinking about the public school attended by your oldest child, would you yourself be willing or not willing to sign a contract which would specify everyone's responsibilities — the school's, your child's, and yours as a parent?

An overwhelming 89% answered this question in the affirmative. Only 9% said they would be unwilling to sign such a contract. There were no statistically significant differences among respondent categories. This response suggests that the movement to draw up such formal contracts could expand rapidly.



Conducting Your Own Poll

The Phi Delta Kappa Center for Professional Development and Services 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 Phillip Harris at Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402-0789. Ph. 800/766-1156.

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

	In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)*						
	Percentages near 20 or percentages near 80						
TABLE A 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	

	Percentages near 50						
TABLE B 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.

Research Procedure

The Sample. The sample used in this survey embraced a total of 1,311 adults (18 years of age and older). A description of the sample and methodology can be found at the end of this report.

Time of Interviewing. The fieldwork for this study was conducted during the period of 25 May to 15 June 1995.

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.

Composition of the Sample

Adults	%	Income	%
No children in school	66	\$40,000 and over	39
Public school parents	32*	\$30,000-\$39,999	16
Nonpublic school parents	5*	\$20,000-\$29,999	18
		\$10,000-\$19,999	12
		Under \$10,000	7
		Undesignated	8
*Total exceeds 34% because some parents have children attending more than one kind of school.			
Sex	%	Region	%
Men	45	East	24
Women	55	Midwest	24
		South	32
		West	20
Race	%	Community Size	%
White	81	Urban	39
Nonwhite	18	Suburban	41
Undesignated	1	Rural	19
Age	%	Undesignated	1
18-29 years	21	Education	%
30-49 years	46	Total college	59
50 and over	33	College graduate	23
		College incomplete	36
Occupation	%	Total high school	41
(Chief Wage Earner)		High school graduate	30
Business and professional	33	High school incomplete	11
Clerical and sales	9		
Manual labor	31		
Nonlabor force	1		
Farm	*		
Undesignated	26		

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Design of the Sample

For the 1995 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 sample 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 1995 poll. This procedure produced a large enough sample to ensure that findings reported for "public school parents" are statistically significant.

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 437-page document that is the basis for this report should contact Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402. Ph. 800/766-1156. The price is \$95, postage included.

Acknowledgments

Twelve educators served on a panel that rated and offered comments on questions offered for use in the 1995 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll. They are: Patricia Bolaños, principal, The Key Renaissance School, Indianapolis; John E. Coons, professor of law emeritus, University of California, Berkeley; Leo Freiwald, teacher, Benjamin Franklin Elementary School, Dade County, Fla.; Michael W. Kirst, professor of education, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.; Chris Pipho, division director, Information Clearinghouse/State Relations, Education Commission of the States, Denver; Richard Morland, chairman emeritus, Department of Education, Stetson University, DeLand, Fla.; Diane Ravitch, senior research scholar, New York University; Phillip C. Schlechty, president and CEO, Center for Leadership in School Reform, Louisville, Ky.; Eric Schaps, president, Developmental Studies Center, Oakland, Calif.; Robert Schiller, superintendent of public instruction, Michigan Department of Education, East Lansing; Robert Slavin, co-director, Center for Research on Students Placed at Risk, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore; and Robert F. Sexton, executive director, Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, Lexington, Ky.

Another group met with Alec Gallup in Indianapolis in late February to discuss poll questions. They included the two co-authors of this report and the following persons: Pauline Gough, editor, *Phi Delta Kappan*; John F. Jennings, director, Center on National Education Policy, Washington, D.C.; Arliss Roaden, board member, Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Nashville, Tenn.; and Sandra Weith, director, Phi Delta Kappa Administrative Center.

Phi Delta Kappa is indebted to all of these people for their excellent advice. It should be noted, however, that Lowell Rose and Stanley Elam are responsible for the final form in which the questions were asked and for the way in which answers were interpreted.