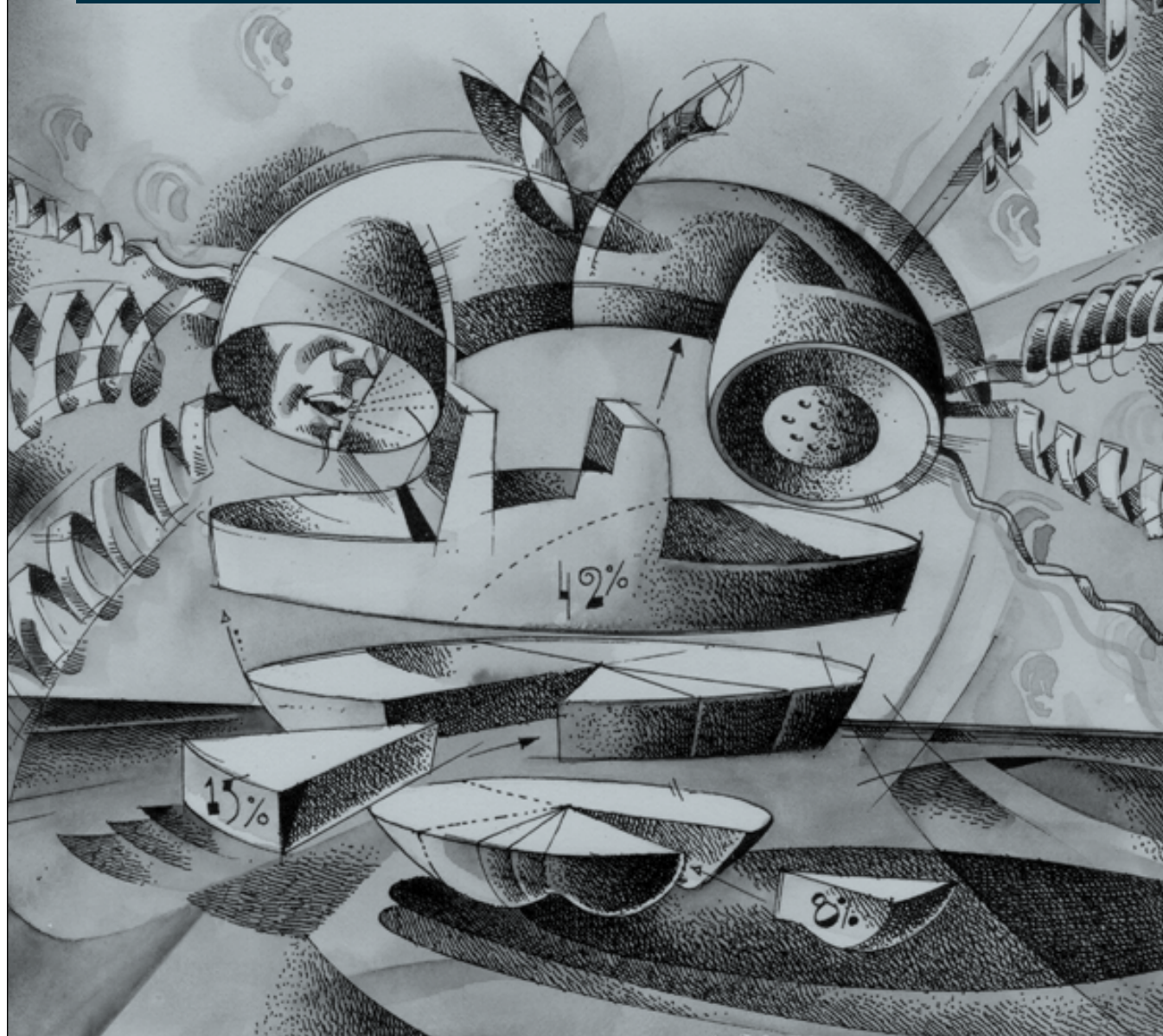


The 32nd Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll Of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

BY LOWELL C. ROSE AND ALEC M. GALLUP



THE 2000 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools documents significant trends in public attitudes and, at the same time, explores new areas that are important in light of current efforts at school improvement. The results should be of interest to school planners at all levels. The turning away from high-stakes testing; the leveling off and the downward trend in support for choice involving private or church-related schools; the fact that lack of financial support has jumped into first place as the biggest problem; the preference for balance in the curriculum over a focus on "the basics"; and the clear support for public schools that is evident throughout the poll are all good news for public school advocates.

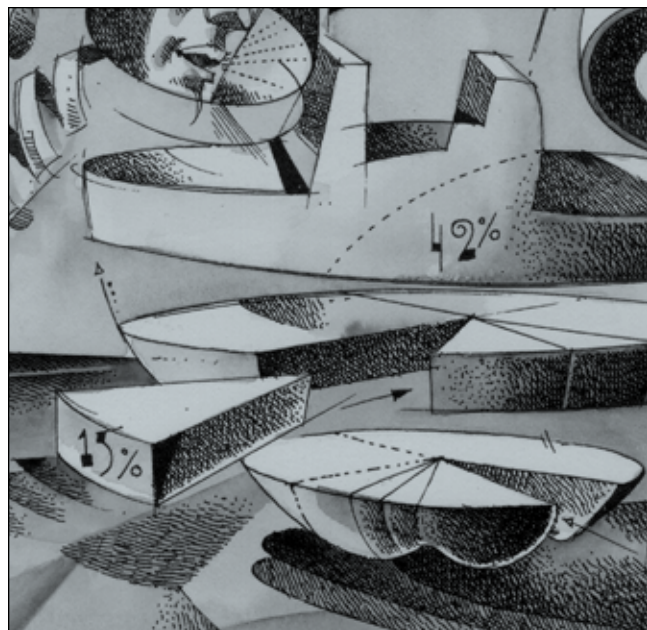
This year's Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll shows again what previous polls have shown: the notion that the public is dissatisfied with its public schools is based on myth instead of fact. Respondents continue to indicate a high level of satisfaction with their local schools, a level of satisfaction that this year approaches its all-time high among the parents whose children attend those schools. Seven in 10 public school parents now assign the school their oldest child attends an A or a B.

Public satisfaction is also evident in the fact that 59% of Americans believe that reforming the existing system of public schools, rather than seeking an alternative system, is the best way to bring about school improvement. When given the specific choice, 75% would improve and strengthen existing public schools while just 22% would opt for vouchers, the alternative most frequently mentioned by public school critics.

These polls have frequently explored the relationship between public and private schools with regard to government funding. Last year's poll suggested that support for choice programs that include private schools had peaked and might be starting to decline. This year's poll continues to point in that direction, with a majority of 52% now opposed to allowing parents to send their children to a public, private, or church-related school with the government paying all or part of the tuition. Even more significant in relation to choice are the unwavering public beliefs that private schools that accept public funds should be accountable to the state in the same way public schools are accountable and that they should accept students from a wider range of backgrounds and academic ability levels than is now generally the case. Since these questions were first asked, the percentages holding these views have remained constant (in the mid-70s).

Today's accountability efforts are directed toward the schools' role in improving achievement. However, in questions new to the poll, the public indicates that parents have a greater effect than the schools, teachers, or students themselves on student achievement. These findings may go a long way toward explaining why the public does not seem inclined to blame the public schools when students have difficulty achieving satisfactory levels of learning.

The poll also explores, to a greater extent than past polls, the idea of charter schools. The most interesting finding is that half of those surveyed have neither read nor heard about such schools. Told that charter schools operate under a charter or



contract that frees them from many state regulations imposed on public schools and permits them to operate independently, a plurality of respondents oppose them. However, respondents indicate a willingness to approve exemptions for charter schools in such areas as textbooks and teacher licensing but to deny exemptions related to curriculum. The public would not limit the right to issue charters to local school boards but strongly believes that any charter school must be accountable to the state in the same way other public schools are accountable.

Throughout the 32 editions of this poll, respondents have been asked to identify the most pressing educational problem with which the local public schools must deal. In a significant change, lack of financial support jumps to the top in this year's poll, while lack of discipline moves into second place. Issues involving overcrowding, violence, and drugs remain in the top five.

This poll makes a considerable effort to determine what the public considers to be the purposes of the public schools and what it expects from these schools. The public sees the most important purposes as preparing students to become responsible citizens and helping people to become economically self-sufficient. These are purposes that are frequently mentioned as reasons why public schools were first created.

In a series of questions designed to force difficult choices, the public chooses providing a balanced education over teaching the basic subjects. In findings that give support to those who take a more pragmatic view of the purposes of schooling, the public chooses preparing students for college or work over preparing them for effective citizenship and believes that extracurricular activities should be viewed as only supplements to academic subjects.

The school improvement effort has fostered a national debate on the question of whether all students have the ability to attain high levels of learning. A majority of the public believes they do. On the other hand, a significant minority believes that only some students are able to achieve at high levels. The most important finding in this area is the strong public consensus that most students achieve only a small part of their full academic potential in school.

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In another area new to the poll, respondents, by a margin of 65% to 25%, indicate that the public schools should give more emphasis to teaching about environmental issues. However, this objective is not as strongly supported as is giving more emphasis to teaching about drug and alcohol abuse or teaching about racial and ethnic understanding and tolerance.

The responses in this poll offer warning signals for those states that are placing an increased emphasis on the importance of standardized tests. The percentage of respondents who believe that there is too much emphasis on testing is increasing, while the percentage who believe that the amount of emphasis is appropriate is declining. The public sees work in class and homework as significantly more important than tests in measuring student achievement and would use standardized tests not to determine how much students have learned, but to determine the kind of instruction they need.

There is a willingness on the part of respondents to see teacher salaries tied to the academic achievement of their students, but the idea of judging this achievement on the basis of a single standardized test is strongly rejected. The public divides almost evenly between basing the judgment on portfolios of student work and other demonstrations of academic competence and basing it on a combination of both standardized and teacher-designed tests.

Respondents were not asked whether they support requiring students to pass a test as a condition of graduation; however, if a test is to be used, the public believes that all students, including those in bilingual, vocational, and special education, should be required to pass it. Even among those willing to exclude some students, the only group suggested for exclusion is special education students.

The use of technology is, of course, generally regarded as one way to bring about school improvement. Respondents to this poll believe that technology is currently used a great deal or a fair amount in their local schools. They also believe that such use has improved the quality of instruction and that their local schools should invest more money in technology.

Finally, this poll is occurring in a Presidential election year. With this in mind, the poll asks where and by whom the public believes decisions regarding local schools should be made and then poses a series of questions designed to shed light on how the public assesses the views of the two national parties on education. The responses affirm the principle of local control. The public would like to see the federal government have less influence and the state government have somewhat less influence. It views local boards of education as having the right amount or too little say in decisions that affect the local schools. The public seems reasonably satisfied with the role of principals and superintendents, it is ambivalent about the role of local teacher unions, and it would like to see more decisions made by students, parents, and teachers.

Looking to the political arena, the public sees the Democratic Party as more interested in improving public education in this country. It also views the Republican Party as more likely to propose actions favorable to private schools. However, when asked which Presidential candidate they would select if they based the decision solely on a desire to strengthen the public schools, respondents are almost equally divided in choosing between Al Gore and George Bush. In a finding that raises the stakes for all candidates, a small plurality indicates that it would be less likely to vote for a candidate who supports vouchers.

In what may be the most interesting question in the politi-

cal area, respondents were asked whether they favor distributing federal funds for specific program activities or giving the states flexibility in determining how federal money should be spent. Those surveyed were told that each of these positions is generally favored by one of the national parties; however, neither position was identified with a particular party. About seven in 10 indicate that they favor giving flexibility to the states. Surprisingly, both Republicans and Democrats share that view.

Attitudes Regarding the Public Schools

Grading the Public Schools

Without exception, past polls have shown that the closer the people get to the public schools, the higher the grades they assign those schools. This year's poll is no exception. The schools nationally (which the public knows only through the media) are assigned a grade of A or B by 20% of respondents, a percentage that is down four points from one year ago. For the schools in the community, 47% of respondents assign a grade of A or B, and when the question is focused on the school a parent's oldest child attends, the figure rises to 70%. It is interesting to note that the proportion of respondents giving the community schools an A or a B is 53% in the East and 51% in the Midwest. The overall percentage is pulled down by the fact that the proportion of respondents giving community schools an A or a B falls to 35% in the West.

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	
	'00 %	'99 %	'00 %	'99 %	'00 %	'99 %
A & B	47	49	44	47	56	56
A	11	11	10	10	14	15
B	36	38	34	37	42	41
C	35	31	35	31	33	31
D	8	9	8	10	6	8
FAIL	3	5	3	4	3	4
Don't know	7	6	10	8	2	1

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	
	'00 %	'99 %	'00 %	'99 %	'00 %	'99 %
A & B	20	24	19	26	22	21
A	2	2	2	1	2	3
B	18	22	17	25	20	18
C	47	46	47	43	47	50
D	14	16	14	16	12	17
FAIL	5	4	6	4	4	5
Don't know	14	10	14	11	15	7

The third question:

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

	Public School Parents	
	'00	'99
	%	%
A & B	70	66
A	26	24
B	44	42
C	21	21
D	5	7
FAIL	2	5
Don't know	2	1

Seeking Improvement in Our Schools

Three questions in the poll offered respondents the opportunity to express an opinion regarding the means of seeking improvement in the education students receive. The first gave a choice between reforming the existing system and finding an alternative system. This question was first asked in 1997, and 71% of respondents chose reforming the existing system. The percentage remained the same in 1999 and drops to 59% this year.

The second question offered a choice between strengthening and improving the existing public schools and providing vouchers that would allow parents to choose their children's schools. Last year, 70% selected improving and strengthening existing public schools. This year that percentage rises to 75%, while the percentage choosing vouchers drops from 28% to 22%.

The changes from last year in the responses to these two questions appear contradictory. The percentage decline in the first question seems to point to a decline in confidence in the public schools, while the percentage increase in the second points to an increase in confidence. Nevertheless, the responses to both questions this year make it clear that a majority of the public expects improvement in student achievement to come through the public schools.

The first question:

In order to improve public education in America, some people think the focus should be on reforming the existing public school system. Others believe the focus should be on finding an alternative to the existing public school system. Which approach do you think is preferable — reforming the existing public school system or finding an alternative to the existing public school system?

	National Totals			No Children In School			Public School Parents		
	'00	'99	'97	'00	'99	'97	'00	'99	'97
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Reforming existing system	59	71	71	59	73	70	60	68	72
Finding alternative system	34	27	23	34	24	23	34	30	24
Don't know	7	2	6	7	3	7	6	2	4

The second question:

Which one of these two plans would you prefer — improving and strengthening the existing public

schools or providing vouchers for parents to use in selecting and paying for private and/or church-related schools?

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents	
	'00	'99	'00	'99	'00	'99
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Improving existing public schools	75	70	74	72	78	68
Providing vouchers	22	28	21	26	21	30
Neither	*	1	*	1	*	1
Don't know/refused	3	1	5	1	1	1

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The third question asks respondents to choose the one of four strategies most likely to improve the schools. For the public, the choice seems to be an easy one. Fifty-two percent select putting a qualified, competent teacher in every classroom. Choice among private, church-related, and public schools and rigorous academic standards — the strategies being pushed at the national level — attract 19% and 17% respectively.

The third question:

Of the following four possibilities, which one do you think offers the most promise for improving the public schools in your community: rigorous academic standards; a qualified, competent teacher in every classroom; the elimination of social promotion (that is, moving students from grade to grade to keep them in their own age group); or free choice for parents among a number of private, church-related, and public schools?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents
	%	%	%
Aqualified, competent teacher in every classroom	52	49	59
Free choice for parents among a number of private, church-related, and public schools	19	18	15
Rigorous academic standards	17	21	15
The elimination of social promotion	10	10	10
Don't know	2	2	1

Choice and Private Schooling at Public Expense

Two questions in the poll deal directly with private school attendance at public expense. The first, included in every poll since 1993, simply asks whether students and parents should be able to choose a private school to attend at public expense. The percentage favoring such a choice started at 24% in 1993, moved upward to 33% in 1995, rose to 36% in 1996, and rose again to 44% in 1997. It remained at 44% in 1998 and then dropped to 41% in 1999 and to 39% this year. Fifty-six percent are opposed.

The second question, which first appeared in 1994, asks respondents whether they would support allowing parents to choose nonpublic schools with the government paying part or all of the tuition. The percentage in favor rose to 51% in 1998 and 1999. This year it drops to 45%, and the percentage opposed is

once again a majority. Taken together, the responses to these two questions suggest that support for the use of public funds to pay for students to attend private schools may have peaked and has begun to trend downward.

The first question:

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

National Totals							
	'00 %	'99 %	'98 %	'97 %	'96 %	'95 %	'93 %
Favor	39	41	44	44	36	33	24
Oppose	56	55	50	52	61	65	74
Don't know	5	4	6	4	3	2	2

The second question:

A proposal has been made that 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				
	'00 %	'99 %	'98 %	'97 %	'96 %	'00 %	'99 %	'98 %	'97 %	'96 %	'00 %	'99 %	'98 %	'97 %	'96 %
Favor	45	51	51	49	43	43	45	48	46	38	47	60	56	55	49
Oppose	52	47	45	48	54	54	52	48	51	59	51	38	40	43	49
Don't know	3	2	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	2	2	4	2	2

Two questions have been asked in recent polls to determine how the public feels about the obligations that should be assumed by private schools that accept public funds. The first asks whether schools that accept public funds should be required to accept students from a wider range of backgrounds and academic ability levels than is now generally the case. The second asks whether such schools should be accountable to the state in the same way that public schools are accountable. The public has been unwavering in its support both for expanding access to these schools and for enforcing their accountability.

The first question:

Do you think nonpublic schools that receive public funding should or should not be required to accept students from a wider range of backgrounds and academic ability levels than is now generally the case?

	National Totals				No Children In School				Public School Parents			
	'00 %	'99 %	'98 %	'97 %	'00 %	'99 %	'98 %	'97 %	'00 %	'99 %	'98 %	'97 %
Yes, should	74	74	70	78	74	74	69	78	76	73	76	80
No, should not	21	21	23	18	21	21	23	17	20	23	20	17
Don't know	5	5	7	4	5	5	8	5	4	4	4	3

The second question:

Do you think private or church-related schools

that accept government tuition payments should be accountable to the state in the way public schools are accountable?

	National Totals			No Children In School			Public School Parents		
	'00 %	'99 %	'98 %	'00 %	'99 %	'98 %	'00 %	'99 %	'98 %
Yes, should	76	77	75	74	77	74	82	79	80
No, should not	21	21	20	23	21	22	16	18	16
Don't know	3	2	5	3	2	4	2	3	4

Charter Schools

Charter schools represent the alternative strategy that has had the most success across the United States. Such schools are public schools, most of which are chartered by local school boards. The distinguishing characteristic of charter schools is that they are freed from some of the regulations that apply to public schools. Half of the respondents indicate they have not heard or read about charter schools. When given information about such schools, 47% say they oppose the idea, while 42% say they approve. A different question, asked in 1994, showed 54% favoring charter schools.

The first question:

Have you heard or read about so-called charter schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Yes	49	49	44
No	50	49	55
Don't know	1	2	1

The second question:

As you may know, charter schools operate under a charter or contract that frees them from many of the state regulations imposed on public schools and permits them to operate independently. Do you favor or oppose the idea of charter schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Favor	42	42	40
Oppose	47	47	47
Don't know	11	11	13

Three additional questions regarding charters were then asked. A majority of the public is willing to see exemptions granted from rules regarding use of prescribed textbooks, use of licensed teachers, length of the school day and year, and state testing programs. Half would grant an exemption from rules related to accounting for state funds. The only exemption clearly opposed is that related to curriculum requirements. The public believes that charter schools should be accountable to the state in the same way public schools are accountable, but it would not limit the chartering authority to school boards.

The first question:

Charter schools are, as indicated, usually freed from many of the regulations that govern public schools. As I read each of the following areas, would you tell me whether or not you would be willing to grant an exemption to charter schools in that area?

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents	
	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No
Curriculum requirements	42	53	41	54	44	51
Use of prescribed textbooks	59	37	60	36	58	38
Use of licensed teachers	57	40	59	38	54	43
Length of the school day	57	37	56	37	59	36
Length of the school year	58	38	57	39	60	35
State testing program	54	43	53	44	57	40
Accounting for state funds	50	45	49	46	52	42

The second question:

Do you think that charter schools should be accountable to the state in the way regular public schools are accountable?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Should be accountable	79	78	81
Should not	17	18	14
Don't know	4	4	5

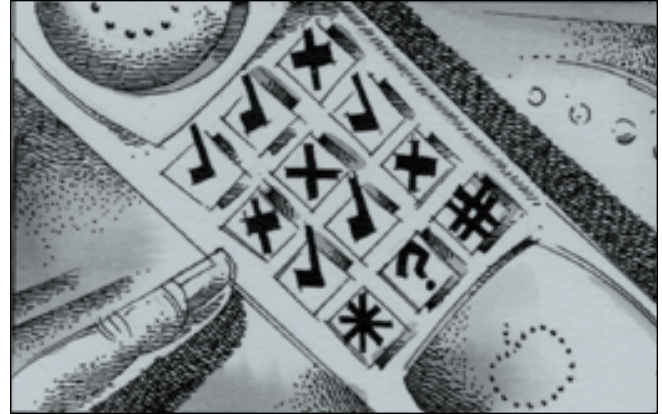
The third question:

In most states, the authority to establish a charter school is limited to local school boards. In your opinion, should the authority to establish charter schools be limited to the local school boards or not?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Should be limited	41	41	44
Should not	52	52	50
Don't know	7	7	6

Problems Facing the Public Schools

The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup polls have typically provided respondents an open-ended opportunity to identify the biggest problems facing their local public schools. In this year's poll, lack of financial support/funding/money has made its way to the top of the list, with 18% of those surveyed saying it's the biggest problem. Lack of discipline, mentioned by 15% of respondents, is second, with overcrowded schools third at 12%. Fighting/violence/gangs and use of drugs/dope fill out the top five spots on the list of problems. Interestingly, the first issue in the list that is generally associated with efforts at school improvement, concern about standards/quality, is mentioned by only 5% of respondents.



The question:

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

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents	
	'00 %	'99 %	'00 %	'99 %	'00 %	'99 %
Lack of financial support/funding/money	18	9	17	9	19	9
Lack of discipline/more control	15	18	17	18	9	15
Overcrowded schools	12	8	10	6	14	12
Fighting/violence/gangs	11	11	11	10	11	12
Use of drugs/dope	9	8	10	9	9	6
Concern about standards/quality	5	2	6	3	5	1
Crime/vandalism	5	5	5	5	4	4
Parents' lack of support/interest	4	4	5	4	3	5
Low pay for teachers	4	2	4	2	3	1
Difficulty getting good teachers/quality teachers	4	4	4	4	4	5
More teachers/not enough help	4	1	4	1	3	1
Taxes too high	3	*	3	*	2	*
Lack of attention/understanding of students	3	1	2	1	4	1
Religious education	3	2	4	2	1	1
Poor curriculum/low standards	2	2	2	1	1	2
Lack of respect	2	2	3	2	1	1

*Less than one-half of 1%.

No attempt was made to find out how the public would like schools to deal with the problems related to student control. However, one question was asked to determine whether the support for "zero tolerance" policies for bringing weapons to school has wavered in light of publicity given to situations in which the policy seems to have resulted in unreasonable penalties. In 1997, when the question was first asked, 93% of those surveyed favored such policies. This year, support drops slightly, to 87%.

The question:

Some public schools have a so-called zero tolerance weapons policy, which means that students

found carrying weapons of any kind in school will be automatically suspended. Would you favor or oppose such a policy in the public schools in your community?

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents	
	'00 %	'97 %	'00 %	'97 %	'00 %	'97 %
Favor	87	93	87	92	86	95
Oppose	12	5	12	6	12	4
Don't know/refused	1	2	1	2	2	1

Expectations for the Public Schools

Purposes of the Public Schools

The Phi Delta Kappa publication *Do We Still Need Public Schools?* offers seven reasons why the early leaders of the United States created publicly funded schools. This poll sought to determine whether those seven purposes are still seen as important and whether the public believes the schools are effective in achieving them. The public assigns a high level of importance to each of the purposes, with top priority being placed on preparing students to become responsible citizens and helping people become economically self-sufficient. On a 10-point scale — with 10 being highly effective — the mean average rating on the schools' effectiveness in achieving the seven purposes ranges from 5.7 to 6.2. Interestingly, the two purposes selected as most important also enjoy the highest rankings on effectiveness.

The two questions:

I am going to read you a list of purposes that have been offered to explain why America needs a system of public schools. As I read each purpose, please indicate how important you think it is by selecting a number between one and 10 — with 10 meaning of the highest importance and one meaning not at all important.

Now, as I read off each of these purposes, would you indicate how effective you think the local public schools have been in achieving this purpose? To do this, please select a number between one and 10, with 10 meaning highly effective and one meaning not at all effective.

	Importance Of Purpose		Effectiveness of Schools in Meeting Purpose	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
To prepare people to become responsible citizens	9.0	1	6.1	2-4
To help people become economically self-sufficient	8.6	2	6.2	1
To ensure a basic level of quality among schools	8.5	3	6.1	2-4
To promote cultural unity among all Americans	8.0	4	6.1	2-4
To improve social conditions for people	7.8	5	5.9	5-6
To enhance people's happiness and enrich their lives	7.5	6-7	5.9	5-6
To dispel inequities in education among certain schools and certain groups	7.5	6-7	5.7	7

Two final questions that relate to the purposes of the public schools were also asked. In the first, 69% of the respondents select providing a balanced education over teaching the basic subjects. This finding is interesting, given the emphasis now placed on teaching the basics. In a finding that seems consistent with the emphasis on a balanced education, 42% of respondents believe that extracurricular activities are as important as academic subjects. This proportion rises to 46% for public school parents.

The two questions:

In your opinion, which is the primary purpose of the schools — to teach the basic subjects, such as English, math, and science, or to provide a balanced education in which the basics are only one factor?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Teach the basic subjects	29	29	28
Provide a balanced education	69	69	70
Don't know	2	2	2

Do you consider extracurricular activities as important as the academic subjects, or do you consider them as only a supplement to the academic subjects?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
As important as academic subjects	42	40	46
As supplement to academic subjects	56	58	52
Don't know	2	2	2

Priorities Related to Purposes

One question was aimed at determining how the public feels about the school's responsibility for teaching all students about protecting the environment. Seventy-five percent believe that this is a responsibility of the public schools. When asked about the emphasis that should be placed on environmental issues, 65% indicate that those issues should receive more emphasis in the local public schools. By way of comparison, 85% of respondents suggest that more emphasis be placed on drug and alcohol abuse, and 76% suggest that more emphasis be placed on racial and ethnic understanding and tolerance.

The first question:

In your opinion, is it the responsibility of the public schools to teach all students about protecting the environment?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Yes	75	73	78
No	23	25	19
Don't know	2	2	3

The second question:

In addition to regular academic courses, high schools offer instruction in other areas. As I read off these other areas, one at a time, would you tell me whether you think this area should receive more emphasis or less emphasis in the public schools?

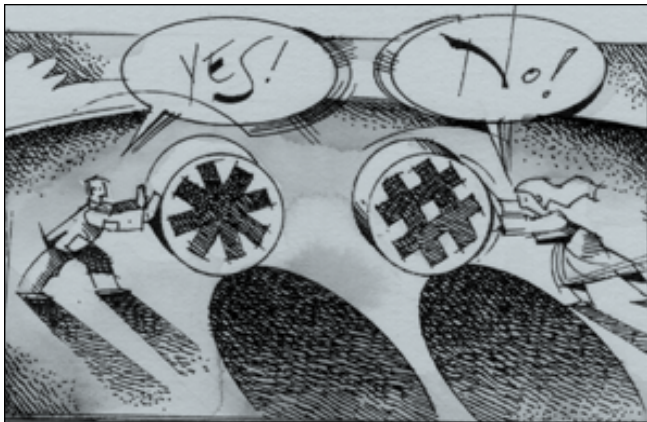
	More Emphasis %	Less Emphasis %	Same Emphasis %	Don't Know %
Drug and alcohol abuse	85	8	6	1
Racial and ethnic understanding and tolerance	76	15	8	1
Environmental issues, such as global warming, habitat destruction, etc.	65	25	8	2

Given the choice between having schools prepare students for college or work or having them prepare students for effective citizenship, respondents choose preparation for college and work by 59% to 34%.

The question:

In your opinion, which is more important for the schools — to prepare students for college or work, or to prepare students for effective citizenship?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Prepare students for college or work	59	58	61
Prepare students for effective citizenship	34	34	33
Don't know	7	8	6



Potential for Reaching High Levels of Learning

Two questions new to the poll deal with the public's views regarding the potential students have for reaching high levels of learning and the extent to which they now do so. With regard to the first question, 55% of respondents believe that all students have the ability to reach high levels of learning. The follow-up question produces a finding that must concern all those who are stakeholders in the education of students: 80% of respondents believe that most students achieve only a small part of their academic potential in school.

The first question:

In your opinion, do all students have the ability to reach a high level of learning or do only some have the ability to reach a high level of learning?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
All have the ability to reach a high level of learning	55	53	60
Only some have the ability	43	45	38
Don't know	2	2	2

The second question:

Which more accurately reflects your own views of students' ability to achieve their academic potential in school? Do you think most students achieve their full academic potential in school or do you think most students achieve only a small part of their academic potential in school?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Most students achieve their full potential	17	16	18
Most achieve only a small part of their potential	80	80	79
Don't know	3	4	3

Given the public belief that so few students achieve to their full potential, it would be reasonable to ask why the public's views of the public schools remain so positive. The answer seems to be that the public does not consider the school to have the primary responsibility for student learning. Two of the questions in this poll deal with the accountability for student learning. The responses indicate that the public places most of the responsibility for students' learning on parents.

The first question:

In your opinion, who has the greatest effect on a student's level of achievement in school — the student, the student's teachers, or the student's parents?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Parents	53	51	55
Teachers	26	26	27
Student	17	19	15
Don't know	4	4	3

The second question:

In your opinion, which is a more important factor in determining whether students learn in school — the school or the students' parents?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
The school	30	27	36
The students' parents	60	63	55
Don't know	10	10	9

(Continued on page 53)

Policy Implications

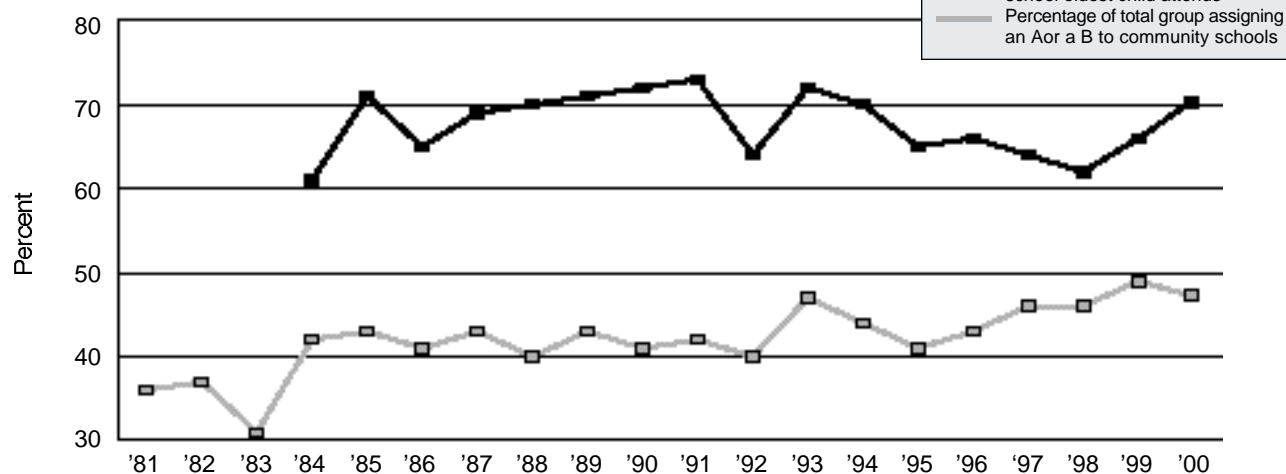
OF THE 32nd ANNUAL PHI DELTA KAPPA/GALLUP POLL

One major reason for conducting the annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll is to provide policy makers with information that will be of use in making the decisions that shape the future of the public schools. The 32nd poll is rich in findings that are helpful for this purpose. Some conclusions and the data to support them follow. The complete poll is available at www.pdkintl.org. This summary was made possible through a generous contribution from Bessie F. Gabbard.

Conclusion 1. Thirty-two years of Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll results establish as myth the idea that public support for the public schools has declined. To the contrary, that support, especially among public school parents, is approaching its all-time high. This is why school reform strategies that propose di-

minishing or dismantling the public schools have failed and will continue to fail. Those seeking to improve student achievement will do well to focus on the public schools, building their improvement efforts on the strong base of support these schools already enjoy.

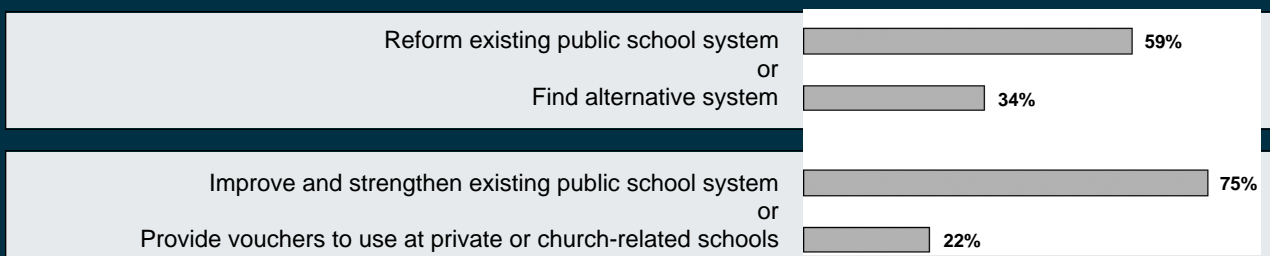
FIGURE 1.
Parents Show Strong Support for Local Schools



Conclusion 2. The public is not seeking an alternative to the public schools, does not view choice programs and voucher

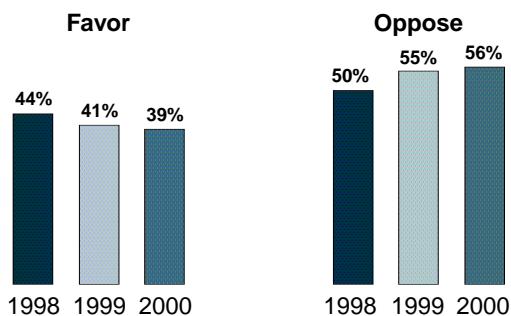
plans in this light, and is focused on improving the public schools.

FIGURE 2.
The Public Strongly Supports the Public School System

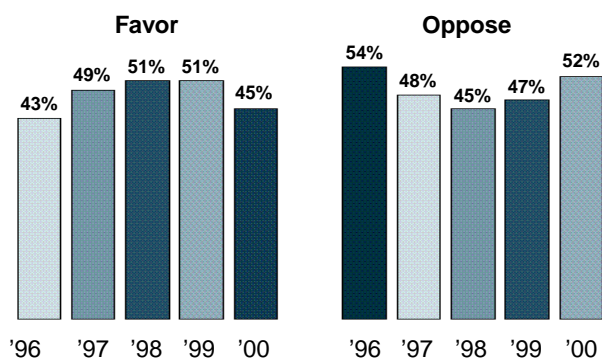


Conclusion 3. Public willingness to experiment with attendance at private or church-related schools at public expense, which increased in the late 1990s, has now peaked and seems to be declining.

FIGURE 3.
Private School Attendance at Public Expense

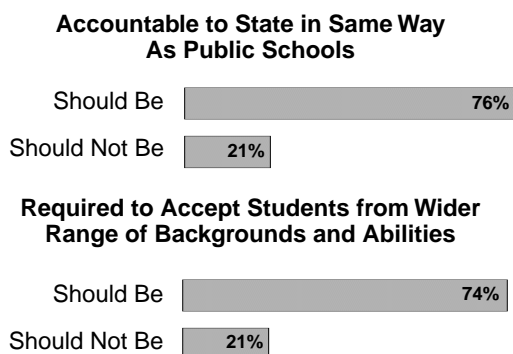


Public, Private, or Church-Related School Choice with Government Paying All or Part of the Tuition for Nonpublic Schools



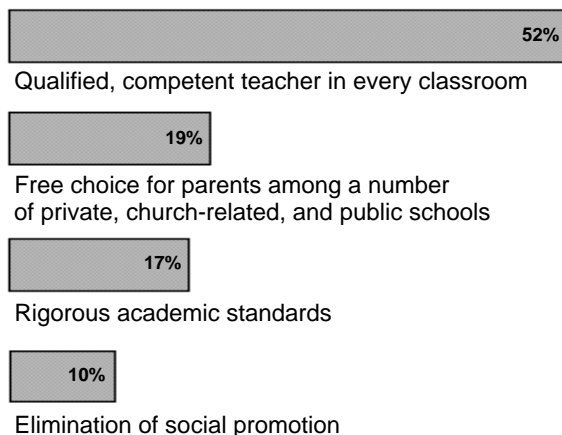
Conclusion 4. The public believes strongly that private schools that accept public funds must be accountable to the state and must be more open in their enrollment policies. Providing public funds to private schools under these conditions would be tantamount to making such schools public schools.

FIGURE 4.
Private Schools Must Meet Conditions for Public Funds



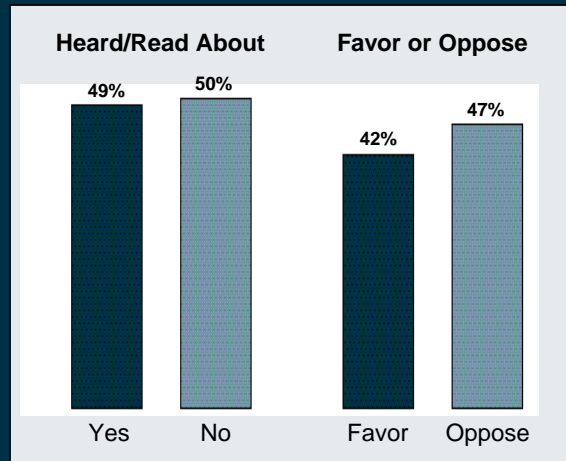
Conclusion 5. The public's belief in the importance of qualified, competent teachers is strong. This makes teachers a key element in school improvement efforts.

FIGURE 5.
Strategies with the Most Promise for Improving Public School Achievement



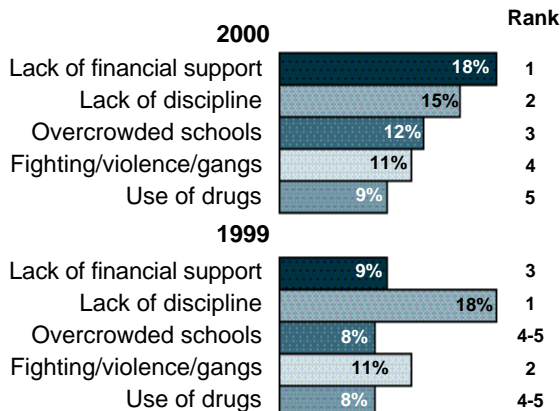
Conclusion 6. The public is generally uninformed about charter schools. Given a definition, more oppose than favor such schools. Without a serious effort to educate the public, policy makers should not assume public support for charter schools.

FIGURE 6.
Knowledge of Charter Schools and Current Level of Support



Conclusion 7. Awareness of the relationship between school funding and improvement in student achievement is increasing. Policy makers must not shy away from emphasizing the need for funding.

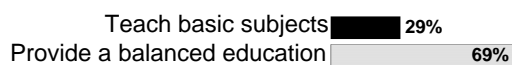
FIGURE 7.
Biggest Problems Facing the Public Schools



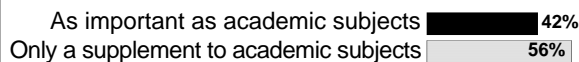
Conclusion 8. The public expects students to receive a balanced education. Policy makers should anticipate and prepare for the negative public reaction that is almost sure to come if school improvement efforts focus on the basics to the exclusion of other subjects.

FIGURE 8.
The Public Values Balance in Schools

Primary Purpose of the Public Schools



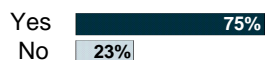
Role of Extracurricular Activities



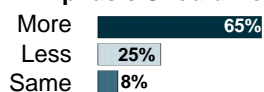
Conclusion 9. The public believes that teaching all students about protecting the environment is the responsibility of the public schools and should receive more emphasis.

FIGURE 9.
The Public Supports Teaching About Protecting the Environment

Public School Responsibility

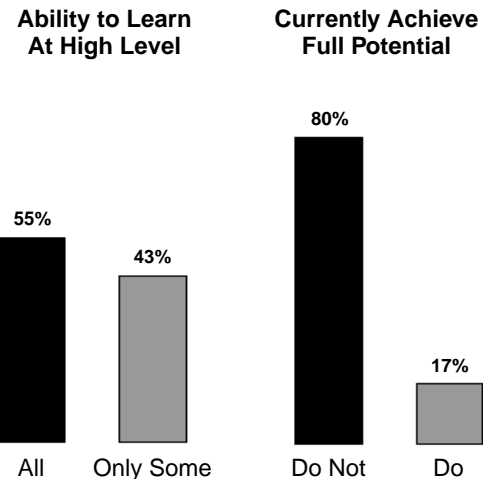


Emphasis Should Be



Conclusion 10. The public, while divided on whether all students can learn at a high level, is almost unanimous in the belief that students do not achieve their full potential in school. This suggests that helping students reach their full potential could become a rallying cry for the public schools.

FIGURE 10.
Students Can Learn but Many Do Not

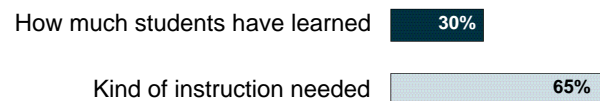


Conclusion 11. The public believes that student achievement should be judged on the basis of classroom work and homework, with tests serving as only one measure. Policy makers should be prepared for the negative public reaction that high-stakes testing and an increased reliance on standardized tests are certain to produce.

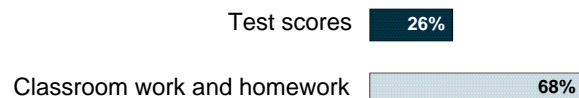
FIGURE 11.
How Much Testing and for What Reasons

	Amount	
	1997 %	2000 %
Too much	20	30
Not enough	28	23
About the right amount	48	43

Use to Determine

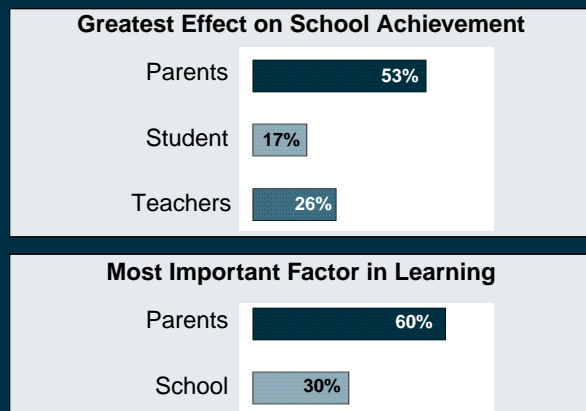


Measure Student Achievement



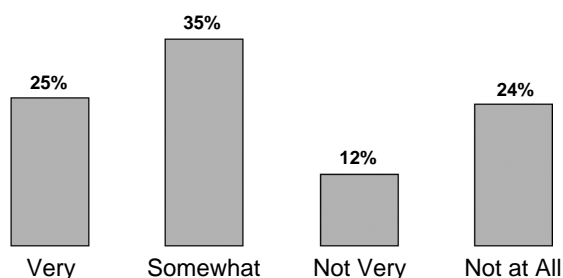
Conclusion 12. The public believes that parents have a greater impact on student progress than do schools and teachers and are the most important factor in student learning. This suggests that parents are key to school improvement strategies.

FIGURE 12.
Parents Are Central to Learning

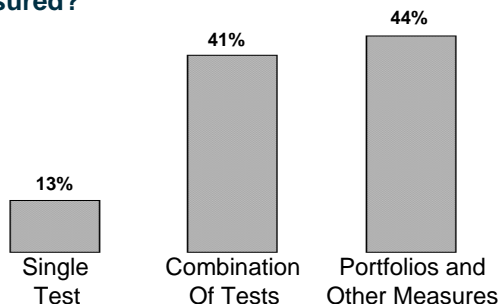


Conclusion 13. The public accepts tying teacher salaries to student achievement. However, the public wants academic achievement to be judged by portfolios of student work and a combination of teacher-made and standardized tests, not by standardized tests alone.

FIGURE 13.
How Closely Should Teacher Salaries Be Tied to Student Achievement?



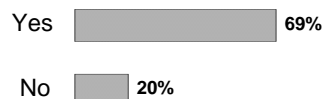
How Should Student Achievement Be Measured?



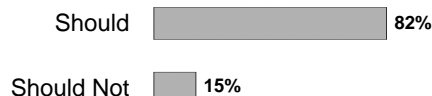
Conclusion 14. The public believes that using computers in instruction improves student achievement and would like to see schools invest more in this area. Policy makers can assume that expanding the use of computer technology is likely to receive public support.

FIGURE 14.
Technology Receives Strong Backing

Has Technology Improved Instruction?



Invest More in Technology?



Conclusion 15. Regarding decisions about the local schools, the public would prefer a lesser voice for the federal and state governments; feels satisfied with the role of the local board of education, superintendent, and principals; is ambivalent about the local teacher union; and would like a greater voice for students, parents, and teachers.

FIGURE 15.
Amount of Say in Decisions Made About Local Schools

Too Much	
Group	%
Federal government	49
State government	43
Local teacher union	21
Too Little	
Group	%
Students	56
Parents	66
Teachers	57
Local teacher union	32
About the Right Amount	
Group	%
Local board of education	49
School superintendent	51
Principals	51
Local teacher union	35

HOW TO ORDER

Copies of this four-page "Policy Implications" summary are available at a cost of \$6 (prepaid) for 25 reprints (the minimum order). This price includes postage for delivery (at the library rate). To order, phone the Phi Delta Kappa Shipping Department, 800/766-1156.

Poll of the Public's Attitudes

(Continued from page 48)

Standardized Testing And School Improvement

Most of the current school improvement efforts rely on standardized tests to measure student learning. Such tests are also being used to determine the extent to which curricular objectives are being realized, and the results often lead to curriculum revision and changes in the instructional process. Some states are even moving to the use of a single test to determine whether individual students should receive diplomas. Given the increased emphasis on testing, this year's poll focuses a number of questions on this issue.

When asked about the emphasis on testing in local schools, 43% of respondents indicate that there is about the right amount of emphasis on testing. That figure represents a drop of five percentage points since the question was asked in 1997. In the same period, the percentage of respondents feeling there is too much emphasis on testing increased from 20% to 30%.

The question:

Now, here are some questions about testing. In your opinion, is there too much emphasis on achievement testing in the public schools in your community, not enough emphasis on testing, or about the right amount?

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents	
	'00	'97	'00	'97	'00	'97
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Too much emphasis	30	20	28	20	34	19
Not enough emphasis	23	28	26	28	19	26
About the right amount	43	48	41	46	46	54
Don't know	4	4	5	6	1	1

Poll planners asked a number of questions regarding the uses of standardized tests. In response to the first such question, 65% of respondents indicate that these tests should be used primarily to determine the kind of instruction needed. In response to a question regarding the best means of measuring academic achievement, 68% indicate it should be done by classroom work and homework.

The first question:

In your opinion, should the primary use of tests be to determine how much students have learned or to determine the kind of instruction they need in the future?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents
	%	%	%
Determine how much students have learned	30	32	27
Determine the kind of instruction needed	65	63	69
Don't know	5	5	4

The second question:

In your opinion, which is the best way to measure

student academic achievement — by means of test scores or by classroom work and homework?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents
	%	%	%
Test scores	26	28	23
Classroom work and homework	68	66	71
Don't know	6	6	6

As states seek to bring about school improvement, it is not unusual to hear suggestions that a teacher's salary should be tied to his or her students' academic achievement. Sixty percent of the poll respondents indicate that a teacher's salary should be either very closely or somewhat closely tied to students' academic achievement. However, in a follow-up question asked of those willing to link teacher salaries and student achievement, 44% indicate that the judgment of academic achievement should be based on portfolios of students' work and other demonstrations of academic competence. Another 41% indicate that the judgment should be based on a combination of standardized and teacher-designed tests. Only 13% indicate that the judgment should be based on a single standardized test, a finding that should give pause to states that attach high stakes to a single standardized test.



The first question:

In your opinion, how closely should a teacher's salary be tied to his or her students' academic achievement — very closely tied, somewhat closely tied, not very closely tied, or not at all tied?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Very or somewhat closely tied	60	60	59
Very closely tied	25	25	27
Somewhat closely tied	35	35	32
Not very closely tied	12	13	11
Not at all tied	24	23	26
Don't know	4	4	4

The second question (asked of those responding very or somewhat closely tied):

Which one of these do you think is the best way to measure student academic achievement — with a single standardized test, by a combination of both standardized and teacher-designed tests, or by portfolios of students' work and other demonstrations of academic competence?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Single standardized test	13	14	10
Combination of standardized and teacher-designed tests	41	42	43
Portfolios of students' work and other demonstrations of academic competence	44	42	45
Don't know	2	2	2

Finally, respondents were asked whether states that require students to pass a test as a requirement for graduation from high school should administer that test to all students. In a follow-up question to the 33% who indicated that some students should be exempted, 93% say that the exemption should cover students in special education.

The first question:

Many states have instituted tests that must be passed as a requirement for high school graduation. In some states, these tests apply to all students — including those in bilingual, vocational, and special education. Assuming your state requires such a test, do you think all students should be required to pass the test or should some students be exempted?

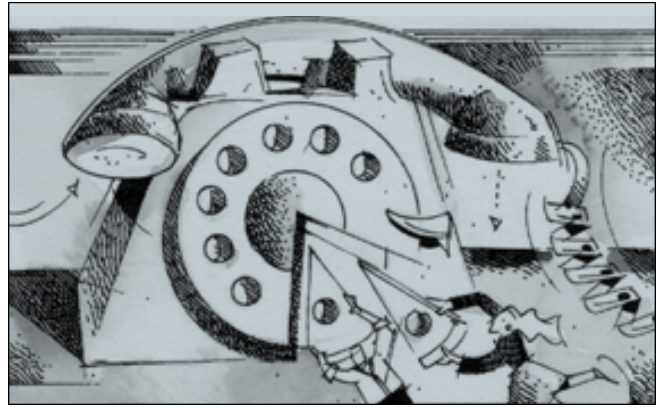
	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
All students should be required to pass the test	63	65	60
Some students should be exempted from the test	33	31	36
Don't know	4	4	4

The second question (asked of those who say some should

be exempted):

As I read off each of the following groups, please tell me whether or not you would exempt that group from this test — students in bilingual education, students in vocational education, students in special education.

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Would Exempt			
Students in bilingual education	31	30	35
Students in vocational education	36	35	39
Students in special education	93	94	90



Use of Computer Technology

This poll set out to discover how widely the public feels computer technology is used in local schools, the extent to which it believes technology has improved the quality of instruction, and whether the public would like to see a greater investment in this area. The results will be pleasing to technology advocates. Seventy-two percent of those surveyed believe that computer technology is being used either a great deal or a fair amount in the local schools. Moreover, 69% believe that the use of computer technology has improved the quality of instruction in the local schools, and 82% believe the schools should invest more in this area.

The first question:

As far as you know, do the public schools in your community use computer technology for instructing students a great deal, a fair amount, not much, or not at all?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
A great deal or fair amount	72	72	75
A great deal	26	26	26
A fair amount	46	46	49
Not much	16	13	22
Not at all	3	3	2
Don't know	9	12	1

The second question:

In your opinion, has the use of computer technology improved the quality of instruction in the public

schools in your community or not?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Yes, has improved instruction	69	67	74
No, has not improved instruction	20	20	21
Don't know	11	13	5

The third question:

Do you think the public schools in your community should or should not invest more in computer technology for instructional purposes?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Should invest more	82	78	89
Should not invest more	15	18	10
Don't know	3	4	1

The Political Aspect of School Improvement

Education has become one of the most important political issues being debated in almost every state in the nation. At the same time, the candidates for President of the two major political parties have stated that they intend to make education a number-one priority if they are elected. This poll sought to determine public attitudes about the governmental level at which decisions that affect the local schools are made and to assess the public's views of the two major parties and their candidates with regard to some major education issues.

The Level at Which Decisions Should Be Made

In a question asked for the first time in this year's poll, 49% of respondents indicate that the federal government has too much of a role in decisions that affect the local public schools. A plurality of 43% feel the same way about the state government. There is general satisfaction with the role of the local board of education, the school superintendent, and principals. There is some ambivalence about the role of the local teacher union. And, in the most significant series of findings, 66% of respondents believe that parents have too little say, 57% feel the same way about teachers, and 56% feel the same way about students. Clearly, the public would prefer to see more decision-making authority vested in the people who are directly affected by the local schools. This is an important finding in that it appears to run counter to many current school improvement efforts, most of which seem to be moving more authority to the state level.

The first question:

Now, let's focus on the decisions made that affect the public schools in your community. As I name a specific group or individual, please tell me whether you think that group or individual has too much, too little, or just about the right amount of say in the decisions that affect the local public schools.

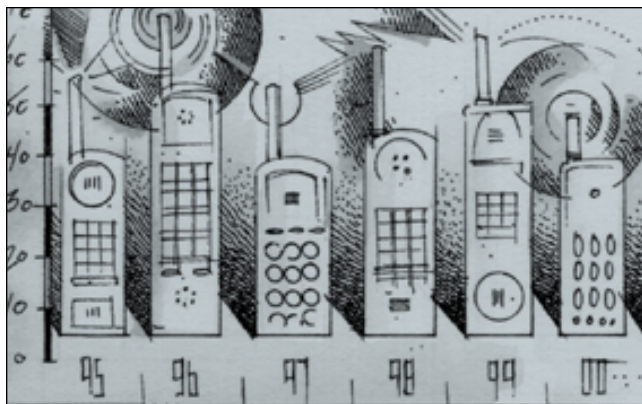
	Too Much %	Too Little %	About the Right Amount %	Don't Know %
Federal government	49	16	29	6
State government	43	15	36	6
Local board of education	29	18	49	4
School superintendent	25	18	51	6
Local teacher union	21	32	35	12
Principals	14	31	51	4
Students	11	56	30	3
Parents	7	66	25	2
Teachers	7	57	33	3

The second question:

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?

	'00 %	'95 %	'87 %	'86 %
More influence	33	28	37	26
Less influence	61	64	39	53
Same amount	*	5	14	12
Don't know	6	3	10	9

*Less than one-half of 1%.



School Improvement and the Political Parties

With Al Gore and George Bush the certain nominees of the two major parties, poll planners decided to explore the impact the election might have on public schools and on the prospects for school improvement. The first two questions in this area deal with the significance for education of the election results and the likely outcome. In the first question, 41% of those surveyed say that the Democratic Party is more interested in improving public education; 29% say the Republican Party. These results are almost identical to those obtained in 1996, the last Presidential election year. However, if respondents were to vote solely on the basis of a desire to strengthen the public schools, the race is virtually even, with 37% selecting Al Gore and 38% selecting George Bush.

The first question:

In your opinion, which of the two major political parties is more interested in improving public education in this country — the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?

	National Totals			No Children In School			Public School Parents		
	'00	'98	'96	'00	'98	'96	'00	'98	'96
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Republican Party	29	28	27	29	27	26	28	28	29
Democratic Party	41	39	44	41	42	45	41	38	41
No difference (volunteered)	*	18	15	*	18	15	*	17	14
Don't know	30	15	14	30	13	14	31	17	16

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The second question:

Suppose you were voting based solely on a desire to strengthen the public schools. Who would you vote for in the Presidential election this November — Al Gore or George W. Bush?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents
	%	%	%
Al Gore	37	38	37
George W. Bush	38	36	41
Don't know	25	26	22

One of the issues that tends to divide the parties involves vouchers. Republican Party candidates are generally inclined to support vouchers, while Democratic Party candidates are likely to oppose them. Forty-four percent of respondents say that a candidate's support for vouchers would make them less likely to vote for the candidate, while 41% indicate it would make them more likely to do so.

The question:

Would knowing that a candidate for national office supports vouchers for parents to use to pay for private schools make you more or less likely to vote for that candidate?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents
	%	%	%
More likely	41	41	40
Less likely	44	45	44
No difference (volunteered)	12	11	12
Don't know	3	3	4

The Republican Party is generally thought to be the party most likely to propose actions favorable to private schools; 64% of respondents this year say that the Republican Party is either very likely or somewhat likely to propose actions that favor private schools over public schools. This percentage is up from the 59% of respondents who expressed that view in 1996.

The question:

Suppose the Republican Party takes over the Presidency, as well as the Congress, after the election this fall. How likely do you think the Republicans are to propose actions that favor private schools over public schools — very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?

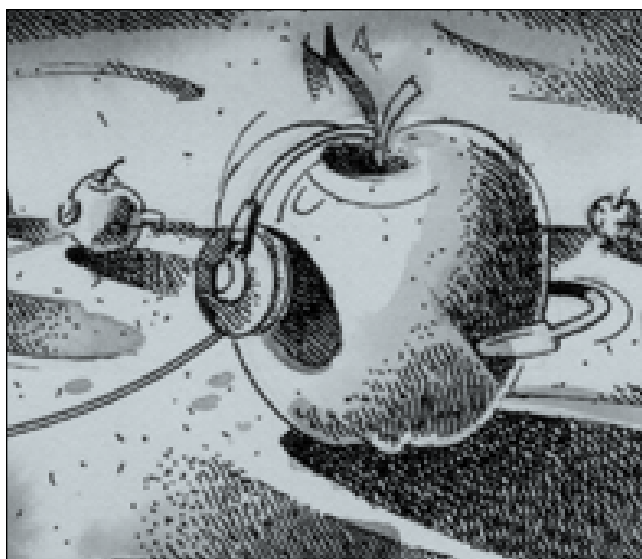
	National Totals	
	'00	'96
	%	%
Very likely or somewhat likely	64	59
Very likely	24	27
Somewhat likely	40	32
Not very likely	18	23
Not at all likely	7	8
Don't know	11	10

Finally, respondents were asked whether they would prefer seeing federal money distributed for specific program activities or given to the states, with the states having the flexibility to decide how it is spent. Distributing the money for specific programs is a position identified with the Democratic Party. Giving the states flexibility in spending it is a position identified with the Republican Party. Seventy-one percent of respondents opt for sending the money to the states and giving them flexibility to decide how it is spent. It is no surprise that this position is supported by 75% of those identifying themselves as Republicans, but it may come as a surprise that it is also supported by 68% of those identifying themselves as Democrats.

The question:

The major political parties currently differ on how federal funds should be distributed. One party generally favors distributing the money for specific program activities, while the other generally favors giving the states flexibility in determining how federal money should be distributed. Which one of the approaches do you favor?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents
	%	%	%
Distributing money for specific program activities	23	20	29
Giving states flexibility in determining how to spend federal money	71	73	66
Don't know	6	7	5



Demographic Breakouts Tell the Complete Story

The findings in the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools are reported according to total group and, in most cases, are broken out according to whether or not respondents have children in the public schools. Other breakouts, though not reported, add interesting perspectives to the results. Some examples follow.

Preferences expressed by those in the poll regarding Presidential candidates show a gender gap, with women supporting Gore 39% (to 35% for Bush) and men giving Bush the edge at 43% (to 36% for Gore). The proportion of nonwhites who believe the Democratic Party is more interested than the Republicans in improving public education exceeds by 21 points the percentage of whites who share that belief. The percentage of 18- to 29-year-olds who approve of charter schools exceeds the percentage for the total group by 15 points. The percentage of suburbanites giving the local schools an A or a B is 11 points higher than the percentage of urban dwellers. Sixty-nine percent of college graduates have read or heard about charter schools, as compared to 37% of high school graduates.

Nonwhites vary most from the norm. The percentage of A's and B's they assign to schools in the community is 12 points below the national figure. Sixty percent of nonwhites indicate support for Al Gore, as compared to 37% of the national total. Twenty-eight percent would prefer to see the federal government have more authority in decisions regarding local schools, as compared to 16% of the total group.

The 18- to 29-year-olds are another group for whom responses tend to vary from those of the general population. The percentage assigning an A or a B to local schools is eight points lower. And 78% — 10% more than for the total group — believe student achievement should be measured by classroom work and homework.

Comparisons between other groups within the poll also show significant differences. Forty-nine percent of Republicans favor using public funds to support attendance at private schools; just 31% of Democrats do. Fifty percent of Republicans are more likely to support a candidate who supports vouchers, but only 37% of Democrats say they would. Thirty-nine percent of Republicans support using standardized tests primarily to measure how much a student has learned, but just 28% of Democrats do so. Sixty-six percent of Republicans and 55% of Democrats would tie teachers' salaries very or somewhat closely to their students' achievement. In an interesting finding, every group in the poll, including Republicans, sees the Republican Party as very or somewhat likely to approve policies favoring private schools.

This is but a sampling of the many interesting findings that can be discovered by studying the complete poll report. Those interested in obtaining the full report — the "tabs" — can do so by contacting Phi Delta Kappa International, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402-0789, ph. 800/766-1156. The price is \$95, postage included. — LCR

Research Procedure

The Sample. The sample used in this survey embraced a total of 1,093 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 5 June to 29 June 2000.

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., non-public school parents.

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

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 Size of Sample	In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)* Percentages near 20 or percentages near 80					
	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 Size of Sample	Percentages near 50					
	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.

Design of the Sample

For the 2000 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 poten-

tial 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.

Composition of the Sample

Adults	%	College incomplete	34
No children in school	66	Total high school	43
Public school parents	30	High school graduate	29
Nonpublic school parents	4	High school incomplete	14
		Undesignated	*
Gender	%	Income	
Men	46	\$50,000 and over	28
Women	54	\$40,000 and over	39
		\$30,000-\$39,999	13
Race		\$20,000-\$29,999	14
White	84	Under \$20,000	23
Nonwhite	14	Undesignated	11
Black	10		
Undesignated	2	Region	
Age		East	24
18-29 years	22	Midwest	24
30-49 years	42	South	31
50 and over	34	West	21
Undesignated	2	Community Size	
Education		Urban	27
Total college	57	Suburban	48
College graduate	23	Rural	25



Conducting Your Own Poll

Phi Delta Kappa International offers a customized opinion polling service to schools, districts, and states. It also 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 the polling service or using PACE materials, write or phone Phi Delta Kappa International, 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 \$15. (Institutional purchase orders, cash, or MasterCard or VISA number required.) Additional copies are 50 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 International, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402-0789. Ph. 800/766-1156.

If faster delivery is desired, phone the Shipping Department at the number listed below. Persons who wish to order the 664-page document that is the basis of this report should contact Phi Delta Kappa International, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402-0789. Ph. 800/766-1156. The price is \$95, postage included.