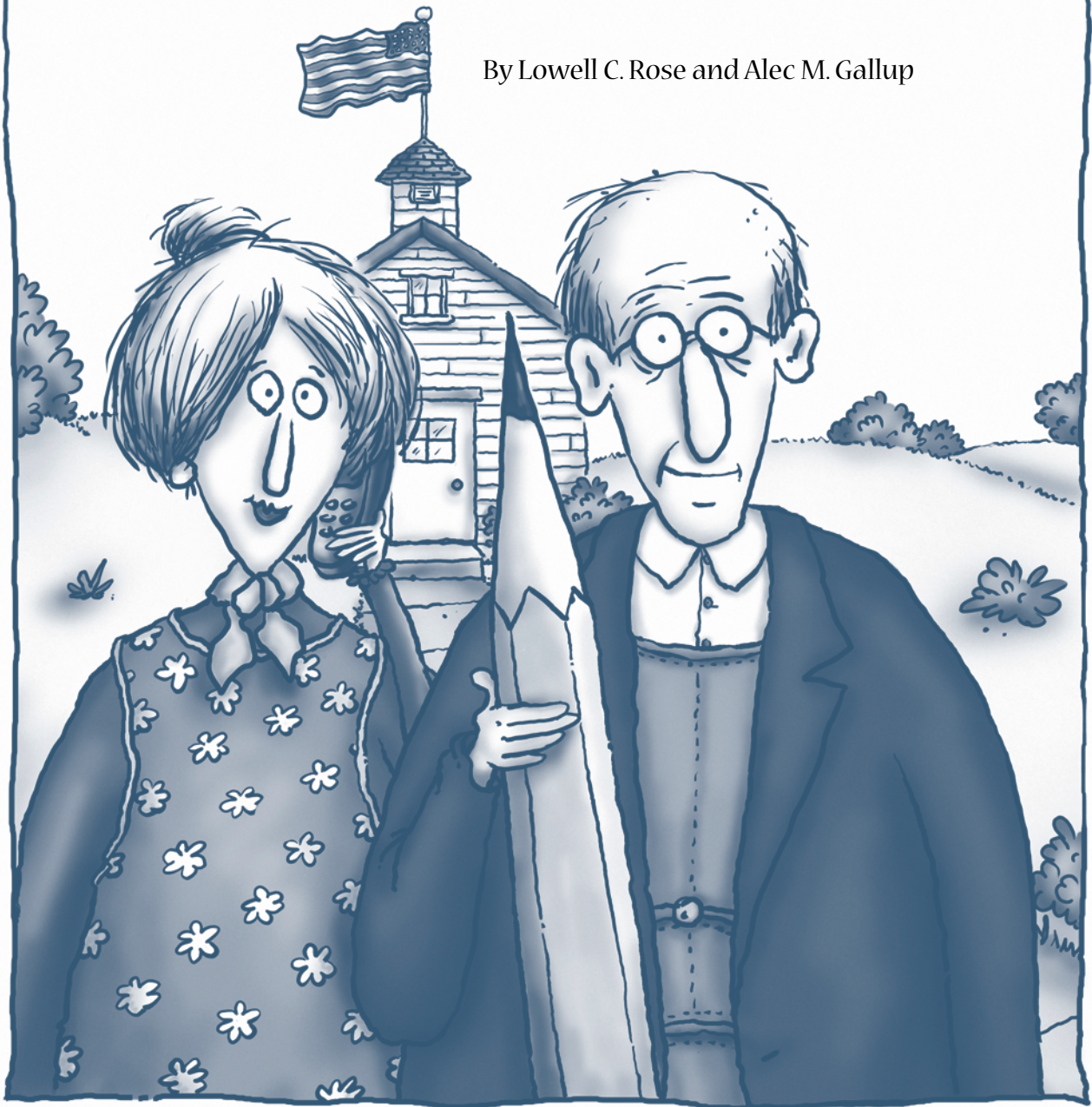
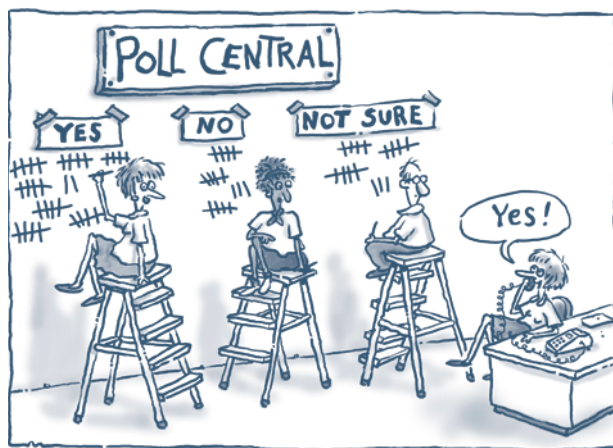


The 36<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll  
Of the Public's Attitudes  
Toward the Public Schools

By Lowell C. Rose and Alec M. Gallup



**T**HE 36TH ANNUAL Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools continues the previous poll's focus on the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act because of that act's potential for improving student achievement and because of last year's finding that the strategies employed by NCLB at that time lacked the public support necessary to bring success. While some critics may question the appropriateness of the expanded federal presence in the area of K-12 education and others may believe that the federal mandate of NCLB is inadequately funded, this poll focuses on whether the public supports the strategies used in NCLB, strategies that are crucial to its primary goals of improving student achievement and simultaneously closing a minority achievement gap that has plagued our society for years. Without public support for these strategies, the goals of NCLB are not likely to be accomplished.



## Executive Summary

The public's attitudes toward the public schools shape the initiatives and strategies that can be brought to bear to improve those schools so that they can meet the changing needs of our society. As this poll has evolved over 35 years, its primary purpose has become that of tracing and interpreting the public's view of its schools. This, the 36th poll in the series, continues that effort. However, readers are encouraged to do their own take on the data, to measure the authors' interpretations of the data against their own, and to draw their own conclusions. If the information provided here advances the discussion of the issues, the poll's purpose will have been served.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act dominates the public education scene. It is inextricably linked to the effort to improve overall student achievement while simultaneously moving to close the achievement gap. Closely tied to this effort is the debate over the appropriate role of standardized testing. The poll addresses these issues against the background of the public's assessment of the public schools. It then turns to questions about the appropriate venue for pursuing change and how the public views selected proposals for change. Fi-

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nally, the poll explores the public's opinion of the two political parties' relationship to public education and how that thinking is likely to affect the November election.

We begin this report with 16 conclusions that the authors believe capture the poll's most significant findings. Rationales are provided, and the tables containing the data on which the conclusions are based are referenced by number.

**1. The trend line showing that the public in general gives reasonably high marks to the public schools continues. Those marks go higher when parents do the rating and even higher when parents rate the school their oldest child attends.** This year 47% of all respondents give the schools in their community an A or a B; 61% of parents give the schools in their community an A or a B; and 70% of parents give the school attended by their oldest child an A or a B. (See Tables 1 and 3.)

**2. It is important to distinguish between the schools in the community and the schools nationally, since the marks vary greatly. It is the latter schools that traditionally receive low grades.** Schools nationally receive a total of 26% A's and B's in this year's poll. (See Table 2.) Respondents have no direct knowledge of these schools, and it would seem that public policy should be based on judgments of schools that are familiar to those doing the assessing.

**3. Lack of financial support is now firmly established in the public's mind as the major problem facing the public schools.** Issues related to discipline and drugs dominated the poll as the major concern until 2000, when lack of financial support rose to the top. In 2001, it was tied for first place; in each subsequent year it has stood alone at the top. Twenty-one percent in this year's poll mention finance as the number-one problem. (See Table 4.) No other problem exceeds 10%.

**4. As it has indicated in every poll since 1999, the public expects change in the public schools to come through reforming the existing system, not through seeking an alternative.** Given the choice of reforming the existing system or finding an alternative system, 66% choose reform of the existing system while 26% point to seeking an alternative. (See Table 5.)

**5. The public lacks the information it believes it would need to form an opinion about NCLB.**

- Last year, 76% of respondents said they knew little or nothing about NCLB; this year, that figure is 68%. (See Table 6.)
- Last year, 78% of public school parents said they knew little or nothing about NCLB; this year, that figure is 62%. (See Table 6.)
- Last year, 69% of respondents said they did not know enough about NCLB to say whether their view was favorable or unfavorable; this year, that figure is 55%. (See Table 7.)

**6. The public disagrees with the major strategies NCLB uses to determine whether a school is or is not in need of improvement. Unless these strategies are modified, there is little reason to change last year's conclusion that greater familiarity with NCLB is unlikely to bring approval.**

- Sixty-seven percent say the performance of a school's students on a single test is not sufficient for judging whether the school is in need of improvement. (See Table 8.)
- Eighty-three percent say testing in English and math only will not yield a fair picture of a school. (See Table 9.)
- Seventy-three percent say it is not possible to judge a

student's proficiency in English and math on the basis of a single test. (See Table 10.)

- Eighty-one percent are concerned that basing decisions about schools on students' performance in English and math only will mean less emphasis on art, music, history, and other subjects. (See Table 11.)
- If a school is found to be in need of improvement, 80% would favor keeping students in that school and making additional efforts to help them, while 16% would favor permitting students to transfer to a school not in need of improvement. (See Table 12.)
- If a school is found to be in need of improvement, 55% would prefer to have students tutored by teachers in that school as compared to 40% who would prefer tutoring to be provided by an outside agency. (See Table 13.)

**7. At this time the public does not support the separate reporting of test data mandated by NCLB and does not support the inclusion of special education students on the same basis as all other students.** Fifty-two percent of respondents oppose separating test scores by race and ethnicity, disabled status, English-speaking ability, and poverty level; 61% oppose requiring special education students to meet the same standards as other students; 57% oppose including special education scores in determining whether a school is in need of improvement; and 56% oppose designating a school as in need of improvement based on special education scores alone. (See Tables 14-17.)

**8. There is still time to make the changes that must be made in NCLB if it is to improve student achievement while**

**contributing to closing the achievement gap.** Despite the problems NCLB has encountered, 56% of respondents believe the goal of having a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by the end of 2005-06 is likely to be met, and 51% believe the act will improve student achievement in their local schools. (See Tables 18 and 19.)

**9. Despite the controversy that has accompanied the increasing use of standardized tests for high-stakes purposes, there is majority support for at least the current level of testing.** Forty percent say there is about the right amount of emphasis on standardized tests, 32% say there is too much emphasis, and 22% say there is too little emphasis. The percentage saying there is too much emphasis is up 12% since 1997. (See Table 20.)

**10. The public is divided regarding the use of standardized tests for high-stakes purposes.** This poll queried respondents about the use of standardized tests for deciding whether to grant a high school diploma and for judging the quality of teachers and principals.

- Fifty-one percent of respondents favor using a single standardized test as the basis for awarding a diploma; 47% oppose. (See Table 21.)
- Forty-nine percent say students' performance on standardized tests should be one of the measures used in judging teacher quality; 47% say student test scores should not be used. (See Table 22.)
- As to judging principals, 47% say standardized test scores of students in the school should be one measure of quality; 50% say test scores should not be used for this purpose. (See Table 23.)

**11. The public believes strongly that the achievement gaps that separate white students from black and other minority students must be closed. Though respondents do not attribute the gap to schools, they believe the schools must close it.** Eighty-eight percent say that it is important that the achievement gap be closed. Although 74% attribute the gap to factors other than schooling, 56% say it is the responsibility of the schools to close it. (See Tables 24-26.)

**12. The public gives strong support to a variety of measures mentioned as possibilities for closing the gap.** Six strategies that are among those frequently mentioned as possibilities for closing the gap all draw strong support. Strategies supported by more than 90% of respondents include encouraging more parent involvement, providing more instructional time for low-performing students, and strengthening remedial programs for low-performing students. (See Table 27.)

**13. The idea of allowing parents to choose a private school for their child to attend at public expense continues to lack majority support.** Fifty-four percent of respondents oppose this choice option, as compared to 42% who favor it. (See Table 30.) The other choice-related questions suggest that religious reasons would be the major factor in causing people to use a voucher to attend a nonpublic school. This conclusion applies whether the voucher covers all or half of the tuition. (See Tables 31 and 32.)

**14. The public supports adding rigor to the high school curriculum and supports mandatory attendance until age 18.** Seventy-eight percent of respondents favor requiring students to complete four years of English, math, and science in order to receive a diploma, and 66% would increase the mandatory attendance age to 18. (See Tables 34 and 35.)

**15. While a plurality of respondents believe the Demo-**

## Outside Analysts Weigh In

### Encouraging Results



As a proponent of NCLB, I am heartened that, on the most important question — whether the law will improve student achievement — public school parents believe (by a 2-to-1 margin) that it will. It is also encouraging that the more people know about the law, the more likely they are to favor it. These findings show that NCLB is gaining support and momentum.

However, two-thirds of the respondents still know little about the law. Their views may depend on whether they receive accurate facts or misinformation. The language used in this poll's questions on testing leads to negative results; other polls have produced more positive responses, especially among African American and Hispanic parents. I would have expected more favorable attitudes in this poll had respondents been given the facts about testing, including the percentages of students who cannot perform at even the basic level in reading and math.

As NCLB moves all students toward proficiency, the public's support will continue to grow, especially as people come to realize that a full curriculum is completely consistent with NCLB. Indeed, because NCLB supports learning in reading and math, the gateways to all other learning, NCLB enhances achievement in all other subjects.

— **Susan L. Trawman, director, Education and Workforce Policy, Business Roundtable.**



cratic Party is more interested in improving public education, the Republican Party continues to narrow the gap. Forty-two percent of respondents identify the Democratic Party as more interested in education, while 35% identify the Republican Party. The gap narrowed by 5 percentage points from 1996 to 2000 and by 5 percentage points from 2000 to 2004. (See Table 38.)

**16. A dead heat results when respondents are asked which of the Presidential candidates they would support if they were voting solely on education issues.** John Kerry and George Bush each draw support from 41% of respondents. (See Table 39.)

## Assessment, Problems, and Change

### Grading the Public Schools

Tables 1, 2, and 3 report the trend questions used to track the public's assessment of the public schools. Adding this year's 33% of respondents who give the schools a C to the 47% who give the schools an A or a B brings the total to 80%. For public school parents, the percentage who assign the top three grades is 85%.

**TABLE 1. Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in your 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	
	'04 %	'03 %	'04 %	'03 %	'04 %	'03 %
A & B	47	48	42	45	61	55
A	13	11	11	8	17	17
B	34	37	31	37	44	38
C	33	31	37	30	24	31
D	10	10	9	10	10	10
FAIL	4	5	3	7	5	3
Don't know	6	6	9	8	*	1

\*Less than one-half of 1%.

**TABLE 2. 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	
	'04 %	'03 %	'04 %	'03 %	'04 %	'03 %
A & B	26	26	28	26	22	26
A	2	2	2	1	3	5
B	24	24	26	25	19	21
C	45	52	45	52	44	49
D	13	12	13	11	13	13
FAIL	4	3	3	4	6	2
Don't know	12	7	11	7	15	10

**TABLE 3. Using the A, B, C, D, FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?**

	Public School Parents	
	'04 %	'03 %
A & B	70	68
A	24	29
B	46	39
C	16	20
D	8	8
FAIL	4	4
Don't know	2	*

\* Less than one-half of 1%.

### The Biggest Problem


Table 4 provides responses to an open-ended question for which the public initiates the answers. The question is also the only one to have appeared in all 35 previous polls. The major problem has varied with the times and has included discipline, use of drugs, lack of financial support, and gangs and violence. For the moment, the public is firmly settled on lack of financial support as the biggest problem.

**TABLE 4. What do you think are the biggest problems the public schools of your community must deal with?**

	National Totals			No Children In School			Public School Parents		
	'04 %	'03 %	'02 %	'04 %	'03 %	'02 %	'04 %	'03 %	'02 %
Lack of financial support/funding/money	21	25	23	22	26	23	20	24	23
Lack of discipline, more control	10	16	17	10	17	18	8	13	13
Overcrowded schools	10	14	17	9	12	14	13	16	23
Use of drugs/dope	7	9	13	7	10	14	7	7	11
Fighting/violence/gangs	6	4	9	6	3	9	6	5	9

## Outside Analysts Weigh In

### Two Messages for Policy Makers



Overall, I thought the poll results reflect what we have heard consistently for some time: that the public, by and large, does not have a strong understanding of the details of NCLB. At the same time, there are key policy issues that must be taken into account as we move forward.

First, public opinion about single-shot testing and the content being tested is certainly an “eye opener.” The credibility of assessment and accountability systems throughout the nation is critical to success. These survey results indicate a real need for policy makers to think carefully about what is being planned and implemented.

Second, the results indicate that the respondents (and especially parents) overwhelmingly support additional efforts in the child’s present school as opposed to transferring out of a school needing improvement. The transfer concept may seem appropriate on paper, but without strong public (and parental) support, this aspect of NCLB may need closer examination. — **G. Thomas Houlihan, executive director, Council of Chief State School Officers.**



## The Means of Improving Public Education

Starting in 2000, the poll began to ask the public how it expected improvement in schooling to come about. The choices offered were reforming the existing system or finding an alternative system. The public has consistently opted for improving the existing system.

**TABLE 5. 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				
	'04	'03	'02	'01	'00	'04	'03	'02	'01	'00	'04	'03	'02	'01	'00
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Reforming existing system	66	73	69	72	59	63	73	69	73	59	72	73	69	73	60
Finding alternative system	26	25	27	24	34	28	24	26	23	34	21	25	27	25	34
Don't know	8	2	4	4	7	9	3	5	4	7	7	2	4	2	6

## No Child Left Behind Act

### Information and Attitudes

More than two years after the passage of NCLB and despite the publicity it has received, the public continues to regard itself as insufficiently informed to comment on the law. The data in Table 6 indicate that public school parents have gained the most knowledge in the past year: the percentage saying they know very little or nothing at all about NCLB has dropped from 78% to 62%. Table 7, which reports on attitudes toward NCLB, summarizes separately the results for those saying they know "a great deal" or "a fair amount" about the law and those saying they know "very little" or "nothing at all" about it. In the groups claiming knowledge, a greater number of respondents indicate a favorable attitude toward NCLB, while a somewhat smaller number indicate an unfavorable atti-

tude. The division between favorable and unfavorable opinions is smaller among those saying they know "very little" or "nothing at all." Note, however, that a large percentage of those in this group do not feel they know enough to express an opinion.

**TABLE 6. Now, here are a few questions about the No Child Left Behind Act. How much, if anything, would you say you know about the No Child Left Behind Act — the federal education bill that was passed by Congress in 2001 — a great deal, a fair amount, very little, or nothing at all?**

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents	
	'04	'03	'04	'03	'04	'03
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Great deal + fair amount	31	24	28	25	37	22
A great deal	7	6	6	5	8	7
A fair amount	24	18	22	20	29	15
Very little	40	40	41	37	38	44
Nothing at all	28	36	30	38	24	34
Don't know	1	*	1	*	1	*
Very little + nothing at all	68	76	71	75	62	78

\* Less than one-half of 1%.

**TABLE 7. From what you know or have heard or read about the No Child Left Behind Act, do you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of the act — or don't you know enough about it to say?**

	National Totals		Those Knowing Great Deal	Those Knowing Fair Amount	Those Knowing Very Little	Those Knowing Nothing At All
	'04	'03	'04	'04	'04	'04
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very favorable+ somewhat favorable	24	18	50	47	19	5
Very favorable	7	5	27	9	5	2
Somewhat favorable	17	13	23	38	14	3
Somewhat unfavorable	12	7	10	26	11	1
Very unfavorable	8	6	31	11	6	3
Don't know enough to say	55	69	8	14	64	89
Don't know	1	*	1	2	*	2
Somewhat unfavorable + very unfavorable	20	13	41	37	17	4

\* Less than one-half of 1%.

### Reaction to NCLB Strategies

Tables 8 through 13 focus on specific NCLB strategies, some of which are used to determine if a school is in need of improvement and others that come into play after such a determination has been made. In Table 8 respondents reject the use of a single statewide test for determining a school's status. In Table 9 they reject basing that decision on English and math only. In Table 10 they reject using a single test as the basis for judging student proficiency in English and math. Table 11 data reflect the public's concern over the negative impact the emphasis on English and math will have on other subjects. The data in Table 12 show that parents prefer helping students in the school over allowing students to transfer out. Table 13 indicates that parents prefer tutoring by teachers in their child's school over tutoring by an outside agency. And those claiming knowledge of NCLB are as critical of its strategies as those

claiming little knowledge and in some cases more critical.

**TABLE 8. According to the NCLB Act, determining whether a public school is or is not in need of improvement will be based on the performance of its students on a single statewide test. In your opinion, will a single test provide a fair picture of whether or not a school needs improvement?**

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Those Knowing Great Deal/Fair Amount	Those Knowing Very Little/Nothing At All
	'04	'03	'04	'03	'04	'03	'04	'04
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	31	32	33	32	28	31	28	32
No	67	66	64	67	70	66	71	65
Don't know	2	2	3	1	2	3	1	3

**TABLE 9. According to the NCLB Act, the statewide tests of students' performance will be devoted to English and math only. Do you think a test covering only English and math would provide a fair picture of whether a school in your community is or is not in need of improvement, or should the test be based on other subjects also?**

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Those Knowing Great Deal/Fair Amount	Those Knowing Very Little/Nothing At All
	'04	'03	'04	'03	'04	'03	'04	'04
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Test covering only English and math would provide a fair picture of whether a school is in need of improvement	16	15	15	14	18	18	20	14
Test should be based on other subjects also	83	83	84	84	81	81	79	85
Don't know	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1

**TABLE 10. In your opinion, is it possible or not possible to accurately judge a student's proficiency in English and math on the basis of a single test?**

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Those Knowing Great Deal/Fair Amount	Those Knowing Very Little/Nothing At All
	'04	'03	'04	'03	'04	'03	'04	'04
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, possible	25	26	26	27	24	22	27	24
No, not possible	73	72	72	71	75	77	72	74
Don't know	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2

**TABLE 11. How much, if at all, are you concerned that relying on testing for English and math only to judge a school's performance will mean less emphasis on art, music, history, and other subjects? Would you say you are concerned a great deal, a fair amount, not much, or not at all?**

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Those Knowing Great Deal/Fair Amount	Those Knowing Very Little/Nothing At All
	'04	'03	'04	'03	'04	'03	'04	'04
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal plus a fair amount	81	80	81	80	85	82	84	81
A great deal	37	40	35	38	43	45	42	35
A fair amount	44	40	46	42	42	37	42	46
Not much	13	14	13	13	11	15	10	14
Not at all	4	6	4	7	3	3	4	5
Don't know	2	*	2	*	1	*	2	0

\* Less than one-half of 1%.

**TABLE 12. Assume you had a child attending a school identified as in need of improvement by the NCLB Act. Which would you prefer, to transfer your child to a school identified as NOT in need of improvement or to have additional efforts made in your child's present school to help him or her achieve?**

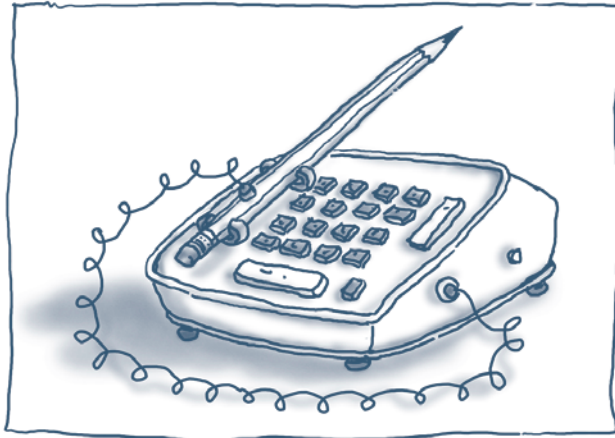
	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Those Knowing Great Deal/Fair Amount	Those Knowing Very Little/Nothing At All
	'04	'03	'04	'03	'04	'03	'04	'04
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
To transfer child to school identified as not in need of improvement	16	25	16	24	14	25	18	15
To have additional efforts made in child's present school	80	74	79	75	85	74	81	80
Don't know	4	1	5	1	1	1	1	5

**TABLE 13. Now, let's assume that your child was failing in his or her school. Which kind of tutoring would you prefer — tutoring provided by teachers in your child's school or tutoring provided by an outside agency that you would select from a state-approved list?**

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents		Those Knowing Great Deal/Fair Amount	Those Knowing Very Little/Nothing At All
	'04	'03	'04	'03	'04	'03	'04	'04
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Tutoring provided by teachers in child's school	55	52	53	52	60	54	53	56
Tutoring provided by outside agency	40	45	42	46	34	42	41	39
Don't know	5	3	5	2	6	4	6	5

## Reaction to NCLB's Separate Reporting of Data

The findings in Table 14 are the most surprising and should be of most concern for the supporters of NCLB. The separate reporting of test data would appear to have brought much-needed attention to the existing achievement gap. Nonetheless, Table 14 data indicate that a divided public rejects this strategy. The data in Tables 15 through 17 may be part of the prob-



lem, since they indicate that the public rejects holding special education students to the same grade-level standards as other students, rejects their inclusion in the base for determining if a school is in need of improvement, and rejects deciding a school's status on the basis of special education students' performance alone. This issue may prove difficult to resolve, since many in the special education community believe special education students should be included and judged according to the same standards as all other students.

**TABLE 14. The No Child Left Behind Act requires that test scores be reported separately by students' race and ethnicity, disability status, English-speaking ability, and poverty level. Do you favor or oppose re-**

## Outside Analysts Weigh In NCLB Concerns



This poll shows that, when the nation pays serious attention to an issue, people believe that improvement will occur: a strong majority of respondents believe that student achievement will rise as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act. This may reflect the optimism that is considered a peculiarly American trait, and it may also show a fundamental belief in the ability of the public schools to educate all children. However, this optimistic attitude is tempered by reservations that Americans have about important aspects of NCLB's approach to school reform.

The poll reveals concerns about many NCLB requirements, including holding all disabled and limited-English-proficient students to the same academic expectations as other students and offering transfers to students in schools in need of improvement *before* implementing extra efforts to improve achievement within those schools. Our reports monitoring the implementation of NCLB have found similar concerns among state and local educators.

The President and the Congress need to address these and other troubling provisions if they want to retain the public's initial optimism about NCLB. — **Jack Jennings and Diane Stark Rentner, Center on Education Policy.**

## porting test scores in this way in your community?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Those Knowing Great Deal/ Fair Amount %	Those Knowing Very Little/ Nothing At All %
Favor	42	41	45	47	41
Oppose	52	53	53	51	53
Don't know	6	6	2	2	6

**TABLE 15. In your opinion, should students enrolled in special education be required to meet the same standards as all other students in the school?**

	National Totals '04 %	'03 %	No Children In School '04 %	'03 %	Public School Parents '04 %	'03 %
Yes, should	36	31	37	31	35	31
No, should not	61	67	59	66	63	68
Don't know	3	2	4	3	2	1

**TABLE 16. In your opinion, should the standardized test scores of special education students be included with the test scores of all other students in determining whether a school is in need of improvement under NCLB or not?**

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Yes, should	39	40	40
No, should not	57	56	57
Don't know	4	4	3

**TABLE 17. In your opinion, should a school be designated in need of improvement if the special education students are the only group in that school that fails to make state goals or not?**

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Yes, should	39	40	39
No, should not	56	54	58
Don't know	5	6	3

## Some Good News About NCLB

The findings in Table 18 indicate that a majority of respondents believe that the NCLB goal of having a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by the end of the 2005-06 school year is likely to be achieved. The findings in Table 19 show that 51% believe NCLB is likely to improve achievement in schools in the community, while 32% believe it will not. Given the fact that so many have not made up their minds about NCLB, these findings suggest that there is still time to deal with the strategy issues that appear, at this time, to be hampering NCLB.

**TABLE 18. NCLB requires that there be a highly qualified teacher in each classroom by the end of the 2005-06 school year. What do you think is the likelihood of this happening in the public schools in your community by that time?**



	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Those Knowing Great Deal/ Fair Amount %	Those Knowing Very Little/ Nothing At All %
Very likely	19	17	24	26	17
Somewhat likely	37	36	41	37	37
Not very likely	31	33	25	25	34
Not at all likely	11	11	10	12	10
Don't know	2	3	*	*	2

\* Less than one-half of 1%.

**TABLE 19. From what you have seen or heard about the No Child Left Behind Act, how much do you think it will help to improve student achievement in the public schools in your community?**

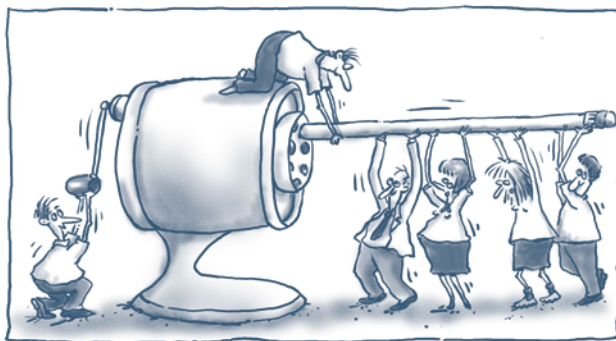
	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Those Knowing Great Deal/ Fair Amount %	Those Knowing Very Little/ Nothing At All %
<b>Great deal + fair amount</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>51</b>
A great deal	21	19	25	20	21
A fair amount	30	30	32	33	30
Not very much	23	23	21	32	19
Not at all	9	11	7	13	8
Don't know	17	17	15	2	22
<b>Not very much + not at all</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>27</b>

## Appropriate Uses of Standardized Tests

### How Much and for What Purpose

Standardized tests have become a flash point as they are used more frequently to support high-stakes decisions related to efforts to improve achievement and close the achievement gap. The data in Table 20 indicate that, while a good majority continue to believe that the amount of testing is about right or not enough, the percentage saying "too much" has gone up 12% since 1997. Tables 21 through 23 may help to explain this since they show a public that is divided regarding the use of standardized tests to make high-stakes decisions related to graduation and the quality of educators.

**TABLE 20. Now, here are some questions about test-**



## Outside Analysts Weigh In

### Biased and Leading

Polls consistently indicate strong public support for the policies embedded in NCLB. Surveys commissioned by organizations as diverse as the Pew Hispanic Center, the Business Roundtable, and even the National Education Association document strong public support for the accountability policies at the heart of the law.

This year's PDK/Gallup poll reinforces that sentiment: a majority of the public and a larger majority of public school parents believe NCLB will help improve student achievement. But the support in this poll appears to erode when respondents are asked their reactions to specific characterizations of the law. Why? Because, in place of the impartial questions one expects from reputable pollsters, this poll employs questions that are clearly designed to produce particular responses. Nowhere is this more obvious than with the repeated suggestion that NCLB requires that schools be judged only on a "single test" (not true) and the suggestion that the law's focus on ensuring that students can demonstrate reading and math skills leaves states and schools no options but to narrow the curriculum (also not true).

It is disappointing that, instead of measuring public opinion regarding NCLB, the PDK/Gallup poll seeks to affect public opinion with biased and leading questions. — **Ross Wiener, policy director, The Education Trust.**

**ing. In your opinion, is there too much emphasis on achievement testing in the public schools in this community, not enough emphasis on testing, or about the right amount?**

	National Totals					No Children In School					Public School Parents				
	'04	'02	'01	'00	'97	'04	'02	'01	'00	'97	'04	'02	'01	'00	'97
Too much	32	31	31	30	20	30	30	29	28	20	36	32	36	34	19
Not enough	22	19	22	23	28	23	20	22	26	28	20	14	20	19	26
About the right amount	40	47	44	43	48	40	46	45	41	46	43	54	43	46	54
Don't know	6	3	3	4	4	7	4	4	5	6	1	*	1	1	1

\* Less than one-half of 1%.

**TABLE 21. Do you favor or oppose using a single standardized test in the public schools in your community to determine whether a student should receive a high school diploma?**

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Favor	51	50	52
Oppose	47	47	45
Don't know	2	3	3

**TABLE 22. In your opinion, should one of the measurements of a teacher's ability be based on how well his or her students perform on standardized tests or not?**



	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Yes, should	49	50	49
No, should not	47	45	49
Don't know	4	5	2

**TABLE 23. How about school principals? In your opinion, should one of the measurements of a principal's quality be based on how well the students in his or her school perform on standardized tests or not?**

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Yes, should	47	47	48
No, should not	50	50	51
Don't know	3	3	1

## The Achievement Gap

### Closing the Achievement Gap

The data in Table 24 indicate that the public has consistently given high priority to closing the achievement gap between white students and minority students. The public is equally consistent, as indicated in Table 25, in its belief that the gap results from factors other than schooling. In last year's poll, respondents indicated that the three most important factors in creating the gap were lack of parent involvement, home life and upbringing, and lack of interest on the part of the students themselves. Although the public does not believe that the gap is related to schooling, the data in Table 26 indicate that the public believes the schools must close it. The data in Table 27 reflect strong public support for six strategies for closing the gap. A 1978 question found 80% expressing the view that educational opportunities for whites and minorities were the same. The data in Table 28 indicate that this view is unchanged. The data in Table 29 suggest that the public places the responsibility for how well students learn primarily on parents. This view is in line with last year's finding that a lack of parent involvement is crucial to creating the gap.

**TABLE 24. Black and Hispanic students generally score lower on standardized tests than white students. In your opinion, how important do you think it is to close this academic achievement gap between these groups of students?**

	National Totals				No Children In School				Public School Parents			
	'04	'03	'02	'01	'04	'03	'02	'01	'04	'03	'02	'01
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very plus somewhat important	88	90	94	88	89	91	93	89	89	88	96	87
Very important	64	71	80	66	65	70	80	66	63	73	80	67
Somewhat important	24	19	14	22	24	21	13	23	26	15	16	20
Not too important	5	5	2	5	4	5	2	5	3	4	2	5
Not at all important	5	4	3	5	5	3	4	4	7	7	1	6
Don't know	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	2

**TABLE 25. In your opinion, is the achievement gap between white students and black and Hispanic students mostly related to the quality of schooling received or mostly related to other factors?**



	National Totals				No Children In School				Public School Parents			
	'04	'03	'02	'01	'04	'03	'02	'01	'04	'03	'02	'01
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Mostly related to quality of schooling received	19	16	29	21	19	15	31	20	20	18	22	22
Mostly related to other factors	74	80	66	73	73	80	64	72	76	80	75	74
Don't know	7	4	5	6	8	5	5	8	4	2	3	4

**TABLE 26. In your opinion, is it the responsibility of the public schools to close the achievement gap between white students and black and Hispanic students or not?**

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents	
	'04	'01	'04	'01	'04	'01
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, it is	56	55	56	56	56	53
No, it is not	40	41	39	39	41	45
Don't know	4	4	5	5	3	2

**TABLE 27. Numerous proposals have been suggested as ways to close the achievement gap between white, black, and Hispanic students. As I mention some of these proposals, one at a time, would you tell me whether you would favor or oppose it as a way to close the achievement gap.**

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
Encourage more parent involvement	97	2	1
Provide more instructional time for low-performing students	94	5	1
Strengthen remedial programs for low-performing students	92	6	2
Provide free breakfast and free lunch programs as needed	84	15	1
Provide state-funded preschool programs	80	18	2
Provide in-school health clinics	76	21	3

**TABLE 28. In your opinion, do black children and other minority children in your community have the same educational opportunities as white children?**

	National Totals			No Children In School			Public School Parents		
	'04	'01	'78	'04	'01	'78	'04	'01	'78
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, the same	78	79	80	76	78	78	82	80	86
No, not the same	20	18	14	22	17	15	16	18	11
Don't know	2	3	6	2	5	7	2	2	3

**TABLE 29. In your opinion, who is most important in determining how well or how poorly students perform in school — the students themselves, the students' teachers, or the students' parents?**

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Students themselves	22	23	21
Students' teachers	30	31	29
Students' parents	45	42	48
Don't know	3	4	2

## Vouchers and Other Proposals

We have already noted that the public expects improvement in the public schools to come through reforming the existing public school system. That does not preclude the consideration of alternatives such as vouchers. The following tables provide an update regarding public opinion on vouchers and other proposals for change.

### The Public View of Vouchers

Support for vouchers ranged from 41% to 44% in the late 1990s but dropped to 39% in 2000 and 34% in 2001. Fluctuations in support are now the norm, with a jump of 12% between 2001 and 2002, followed by a decline of 8% in 2003 and an increase of 4% this year.

**TABLE 30. Do you favor or oppose allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense?**

	National Totals						
	'04 %	'03 %	'02 %	'01 %	'00 %	'99 %	'97 %
Favor	42	38	46	34	39	41	44
Oppose	54	60	52	62	56	55	52
Don't know	4	2	2	4	5	4	4

**TABLE 31. Suppose you had a school-age child and were given a voucher covering full tuition that would permit you to send that child to any public, private, or church-related school of your choice. Which kind of school do you think you would choose?**



	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents	
	'04 %	'03 %	'04 %	'03 %	'04 %	'03 %
A public school	37	35	38	35	38	39
A church-related private school	36	38	33	37	40	38
A non-church-related private school	20	24	22	25	17	21
Don't know	7	3	7	3	5	2

**TABLE 32. What if the voucher covered only half of the tuition, which do you think you would choose?**

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents	
	'04 %	'03 %	'04 %	'03 %	'04 %	'03 %
A public school	46	47	46	45	50	55
A church-related private school	32	34	29	34	34	29
A non-church-related private school	16	17	18	19	11	15
Don't know	6	2	7	2	5	1

### Other Proposals for Change

The next four tables report public opinion on a variety of suggestions for change that have surfaced at the state level this year. The data in Table 33 show that the public believes that an increased emphasis on English, math, and science will benefit a great many students. The data in Table 34 document strong support for requiring students to complete four years of English, math, and science in order to graduate from high school. The data in Table 35 show strong support for increasing the mandatory attendance age to 18. As reported in Table 36, the idea of eliminating the senior year of high school is soundly rejected. (This idea surfaced in a state facing a financial crisis.) Finally, Table 37 reports respondents' views on criteria that might be used to determine whether teachers should receive extra pay.

**TABLE 33. Some states are now requiring the public schools to place greater emphasis at all grade levels on English, math, and science. Thinking about the needs of the public school students in your community, do you think this increased emphasis will serve all, most, some, or only a few of these students' needs?**

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
All	29	28	29
Most	32	30	37
Some	28	30	25
Only a few	9	10	6
Don't know	2	2	3

**TABLE 34. Some states are now requiring that high school students complete four years of English, math, and science in order to graduate from high school. Would you favor or oppose this requirement in the public schools in your community?**

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Favor	78	79	76
Oppose	20	20	22
Don't know	2	1	2

**TABLE 35. Some people have proposed increasing the mandatory attendance age to 18 as a way to deal with the school dropout problem. Would you favor or oppose increasing the mandatory attendance age to 18 in your state?**

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Favor	66	66	68
Oppose	30	31	28
Don't know	4	3	4

**TABLE 36. Some people have proposed eliminating the senior year of high school so that students could get an earlier start on getting a college education or on entering the work force. Would you favor or oppose using this plan in the high schools in your community?**

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
Favor	24	23	25
Oppose	74	75	73
Don't know	2	2	2

**TABLE 37. I am going to mention some possible reasons for awarding extra pay to a public school teacher. As I read each reason, would you tell me whether you think it should be used to determine whether or not a teacher receives extra pay?**

	Should Be Used %	Should Not Be Used %	Don't Know %
Having an advanced degree such as a master's or a Ph.D.	76	23	1
High evaluations of the teacher by his or her principal and other administrators	70	28	2
Length of his or her teaching experience	71	28	1
High evaluations by other teachers in the teacher's school district	65	33	2
High evaluations by his or her students	64	34	2
High opinions from the parents of his or her students	59	39	2

## The Political Component

### Election-Year Issues

K-12 education has moved close to the top of the political agenda at both the state and federal levels, thereby adding importance to the political questions that this poll reserves for Presidential election years. The data in Table 38 show that the Republican Party has made progress in closing a gap that had Democrats enjoying a 17% advantage in 1996 as the party more interested in improving public education. The gap is now 7%. Table 39 shows John Kerry and George Bush in a dead heat when voters are asked to choose between them based on education issues alone. Four years ago, Al Gore and George Bush were also in a dead heat in this poll. Table 40 tends to

verify the conventional wisdom regarding policies that the two major parties would be inclined to support. And Tables 41 and 42 suggest that supporting vouchers would give a slight edge to candidates nationally, while supporting NCLB would be a major plus.

**TABLE 38. 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		
	'04 %	'00 %	'96 %	'04 %	'00 %	'96 %	'04 %	'00 %	'96 %
Democratic Party	42	41	44	45	41	45	37	41	41
Republican Party	35	29	27	35	29	26	34	28	29
No difference volunteered	*	*	15	*	*	15	*	*	14
Don't know	23	30	14	20	30	14	29	31	16

\* Less than one-half of 1%.

**TABLE 39. Suppose you were voting solely on the basis of a desire to strengthen the public schools. Who would you vote for in the Presidential election this November — John Kerry or George W. Bush?**

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
John Kerry	41	42	37
George W. Bush	41	41	41
Don't know	18	17	22

**TABLE 40. I am going to mention several policies pertaining to the public schools in this country. As I mention each policy, would you tell me which political party — the Democratic Party or the Republican Party — you feel would be more sympathetic to that policy?**

	Democratic Party %	Republican Party %	Don't Know %
Providing financial support for private or church-related schools	31	55	14
Privatizing such school services as transportation, food, maintenance, etc.	34	50	16
Improving student achievement in the nation's public schools	45	39	16
Closing the achievement gap between white students and black and Hispanic students	55	30	15

**TABLE 41. Would knowing that a candidate for national office supports vouchers for parents to use to pay for private schools make you more likely or less likely to vote for that candidate?**

	National Totals		No Children In School		Public School Parents	
	'04 %	'00 %	'04 %	'00 %	'04 %	'00 %
More likely	43	41	43	41	43	40
Less likely	37	44	37	45	36	44
Makes no difference	15	12	15	11	15	12
Don't know	5	3	5	3	6	4



**TABLE 42. Would knowing that a candidate for national office supports the No Child Left Behind Act make you more or less likely to vote for that candidate?**

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %
More likely	53	53	53
Less likely	25	26	23
Makes no difference	15	15	14
Don't know	7	6	10

## Closing Statement

Polling is now a high-stakes component in the effort to improve the public schools. The issues explored herein are shaping the daily decisions made in K-12 schools. Poll findings have taken on added importance, and, given the inexact nature of data analysis, it is not surprising that this report and the interpretations we provide are always subject to a critical review. That is as it should be. The poll is intended to contribute to the ongoing debate regarding the public schools, and disagreement fuels that debate. The public does, however, have a way of getting it right with issues that are both complex and puzzling. And, right or wrong, public attitudes determine, over the long haul, how those issues can be addressed.

## Research Procedure

*The Sample.* The sample used in this survey embraced a total of 1,003 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 28 May to 18 June 2004.

Due allowance must be made for statistical variation, especially in the case of findings for groups consisting of relatively few respondents.

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. For details and tables showing the confidence intervals for the data cited in this poll, please visit the Phi Delta Kappa website at <http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kpoll0409sample.htm>.

## Design of the Sample

For the 2004 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 household member who had the most recent birthday. This frequently used method of respondent selection provides an excellent approximation of statistical randomness in that it gives all members of the household an opportunity to be selected.

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.

## Composition of the Sample

Adults	%	Education	%
No children in school	67	Total college	57
Public school parents	29	College graduate	24
Nonpublic school parents	4	College incomplete	33
		Total high school	42
		High school graduate	35
		High school incomplete	7
Gender	%	Income	%
Men	45	\$50,000 and over	34
Women	55	\$40,000-\$49,999	10
		\$30,000-\$39,999	12
Race	%	\$20,000-\$29,999	12
White	81	Under \$20,000	17
Nonwhite	15	Undesignated	15
Black	11	Region	%
Undesignated	3	East	22
		Midwest	24
Age	%	South	32
18-29 years	20	West	22
30-49 years	40	Community Size	%
50 and over	38	Urban	27
Undesignated	2	Suburban	47
		Rural	26

## Conducting Your Own Poll

The Phi Delta Kappa Center for Professional Development and Services makes available PACE (Polling Attitudes of 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 \$60. For information about using PACE materials, write or phone Jeanne Storm at 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 309-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.

# Policy Implications

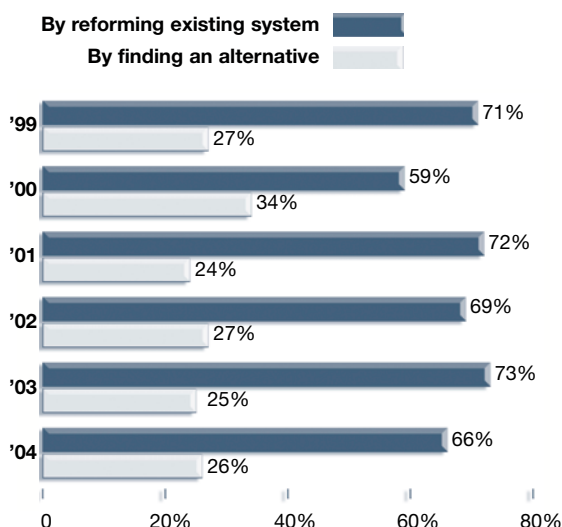
## Of the 36th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll

**P**olling should not drive policy decisions. It can, however, help to determine what the public expects, how existing policies and programs are viewed, and how changes or new initiatives are likely to be received. Education has moved close to the top of the agenda for government at all levels, and the focus is clearly on improving student achievement. These four pages use the findings from this and past polls to draw implications related to improving student achievement in our schools. While supporting data are offered, they do not provide the depth afforded by a thorough study of the poll results. You are encouraged to dig into the poll itself.

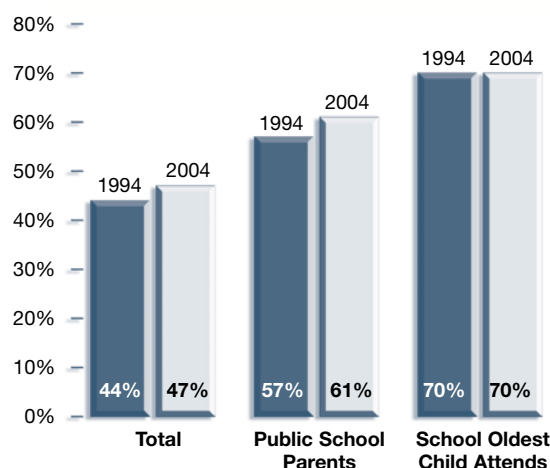
### The Foundation for Improving Schooling

**Findings and implications:** The public is consistent in its belief that improvement should come through the existing public schools. That belief is grounded in the high levels of satisfaction that people express for schools in their own community, levels that rise the closer people are to those schools. This suggests to policy makers at all levels that efforts at improving schooling should start with and build on the foundation that community schools provide.

#### Improve Public Education



#### A's and B's for Schools In the Community



**Comment:** K-12 educators, in particular, can draw satisfaction from approval levels that are reasonably high and stable. Indeed, the percentage of public school parents assigning A's and B's to the school their oldest child attends has been consistently high — ranging from the mid-60s to the mid-70s — since this question was first introduced in the mid-1980s.

Yet educators need not feel complacent about the way public schools are viewed. After all, the fact that one-third of respondents assign grades that are only average, combined with an achievement gap that the public wants closed, presents challenges that the public schools must meet. And the percentage assigning A's and B's to the nation's schools has always been abysmally low. This year, just 26% of the public awarded the nation's schools a grade of A or B.

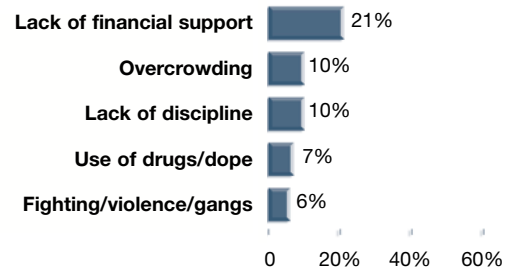


## The Problems Schools Face

**Findings and Implications:** Given the opportunity to develop its own list of problems without prompting, the public is realistic in identifying lack of financial support for schools as the major problem. Overcrowded schools and lack of discipline are a distant second. Academic standards/quality of education is mentioned by only 1%.

**Comment:** While the public's answers do not seem to show an awareness of the achievement gap per se, many of the problems mentioned contribute directly to that gap. In the context of questions specifically about the achievement gap, the public acknowledges the connection.

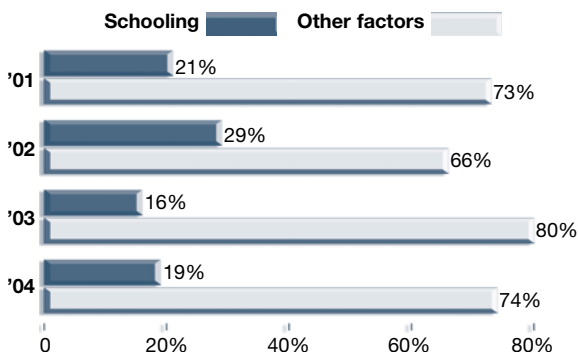
### Problems the Public Mentions



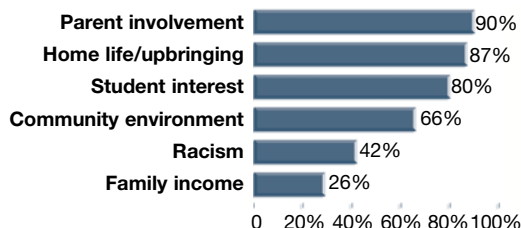
## The Achievement Gap

**Findings and Implications:** The achievement gap and efforts to close it underlie virtually every issue explored in this poll. The gap between whites and blacks and other minorities is significant, and the public is strong in its belief that the gap must be closed. It is also consistent and strong in its belief that the gap is related to factors other than schooling, it links those factors to the home and the community, and it recognizes that parents and students themselves play key roles in closing the gap. Nevertheless, the public believes that the public schools must take responsibility for closing the gap.

### Gap Mostly Related To

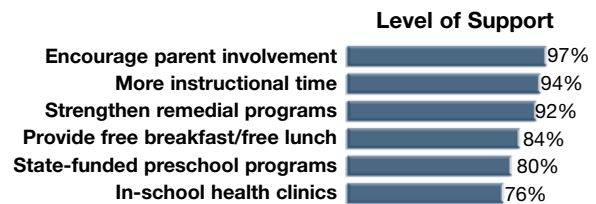


### Factors Judged Very Important In Contributing to the Achievement Gap (2003)

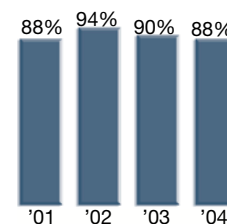


**Comment:** Policy makers and K-12 educators would be well advised to accept closing the gap as a major challenge, acknowledge that the schools are central to that effort, and move forward with plans to meet the challenge. At the same time, they need to test whether the expressed public support extends to providing the necessary funding.

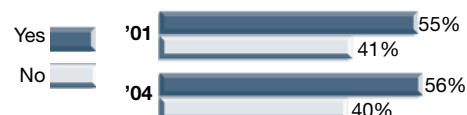
### Proposals for Closing the Gap



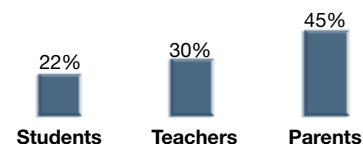
### Importance of Closing the Gap Very Important + Somewhat Important



### Closing the Gap Are Public Schools Responsible?



### Most Important For Student Performance

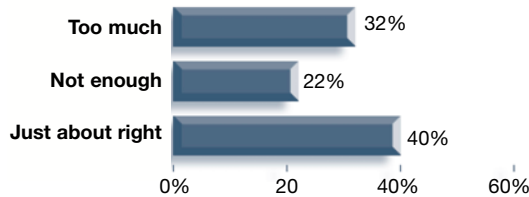




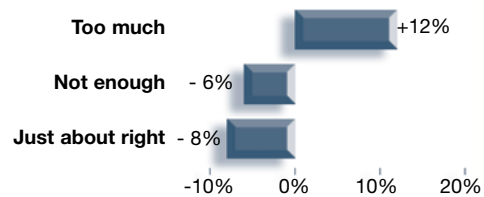
## The Role of Standardized Tests In Improving Schooling

**Findings and Implications:** Knowing how students are progressing is key to improving student achievement. This means that standardized test data become more important. Support for the use of standardized tests to assess student progress has been strong in previous polls, and those believing that there is just the right amount or not enough of such testing remain a solid majority. To the extent that support is slipping — and there is some evidence it may be — disagreement over the use of such tests for high-stakes decisions is probably a factor.

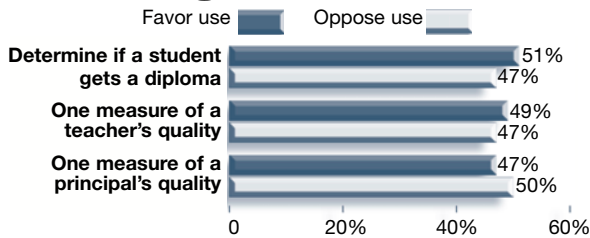
### Amount of Testing



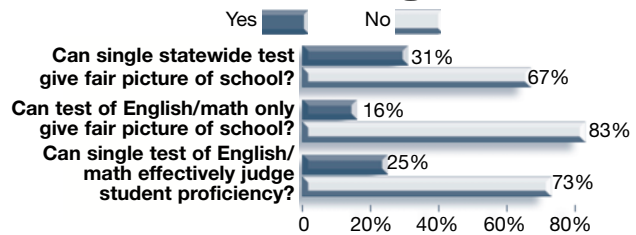
### Percentage Changes 1997-2004



### High-Stakes Uses



### NCLB Use of a Single Test

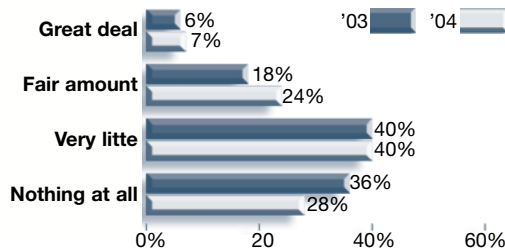


**Comment:** Policy makers and K-12 educators will want to monitor the public's response to the uses of standardized tests to be certain that they are understood and have public support.

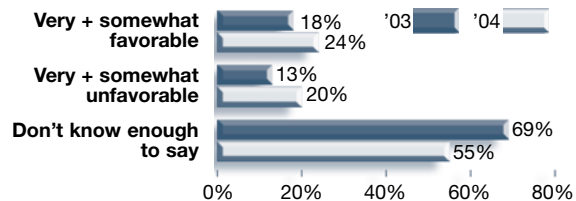
## Knowledge and Views of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

**Findings and Implications:** NCLB is the school improvement effort that is gaining the most attention and having the greatest current impact. The public sees itself as uninformed regarding NCLB and does not believe that it can decide whether it views the act favorably or unfavorably. Still, at this time, the public is inclined to believe that NCLB will improve achievement in local schools.

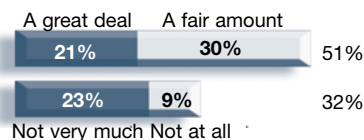
### What the Public Knows About NCLB



### Opinions of NCLB



### How Much Will NCLB Improve Achievement in Local Schools?



**Comment:** The public is undecided as to NCLB's effectiveness. This suggests that the final judgment will be based on results that could be affected by midcourse corrections.

## NCLB Strategies

**Findings and Implications:** The key element in whether or not NCLB will work is the ability of its system for measuring Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) to accurately identify schools in need of improvement. In this context, the public does not believe that a single statewide test can give a fair picture of a school, does not believe that testing in math and English only can accurately measure school performance or student proficiency, is concerned that the emphasis on English and math will diminish attention given to other subjects, and prefers offering assistance to students in a school in need of improvement over permitting students to transfer out or to receive tutoring from outside. Moreover, the public is opposed to reporting test scores separately by subgroups.

**NCLB strategy:** Determine whether a school is in need of improvement using a single standardized test given annually.

**Public view:** A single test will not give a fair picture of a school.



**NCLB strategy:** Measure students' proficiency using a test covering English and math only.

**Public views:**

1. Getting a fair picture requires including subjects other than math and English.



2. Student proficiency in English and math cannot be judged by a single test.



3. Testing English and math only may mean less emphasis on art, music, history, and other subjects.



**NCLB strategies:** When a school is designated as needing improvement, give students the opportunity to transfer out the first year. In the second year, continue the transfer option and give Title I students the option of tutoring by an outside agency.

**Public views:**

1. Give additional help to students in the school in lieu of the transfer option.



2. Have tutoring done by teachers in the school.



**NCLB strategy:** Report test scores separately by students' race and ethnicity, disability status, English-speaking ability, and poverty level.

**Public view:** Do not separate the data.



**NCLB strategies:** Require special education students to meet the same standards as other students and include their scores when determining school improvement status.

**Public views:**

1. Special education students should not be required to meet the same standards.



2. Scores of special education students should not be part of the school improvement decision.



3. A school should not be designated in need of improvement solely because of special education students' scores.



**Comment:** While the public is undecided about NCLB at this time, its lack of support for the strategies used can be taken as an implication that greater familiarity is more likely to lead to opposition than to support. It is especially troublesome that reporting test scores separately, a measure essential to addressing the achievement gap, does not draw public support. Policy makers would be well advised to align the NCLB strategies with approaches that have public support and then explain to the public why the strategies are needed.