

Summing It Up:

A Review of Survey Data
on Education and the National Education Goals

A Report from Public Agenda

By Jean Johnson
Claire Aulicino
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INTRODUCTION

At the request of the National Education Goals Panel, Public Agenda -- a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization -- analyzed recent public opinion research on education and the public schools, reviewing surveys conducted by a variety of respected national organizations and by Public Agenda itself. In doing so, we have made a special attempt to locate and analyze recent opinion data on the eight national goals developed under the auspices of President Bush, President Clinton and the nation's Governors. These are: helping children start school ready to learn, increasing the school completion rate, enhancing student achievement and raising academic standards, increasing opportunities for teacher education and professional development, improving math and science education, increasing the adult literacy rate and encouraging lifelong learning, making schools safe, disciplined and drug-free, and increasing parental participation

The Breadth of the Research

There is a great body of public opinion polling in the field of education, and this report is necessarily an overview. Public Agenda, for example, has completed a series of in-depth studies looking at the views of the general public, parents, teachers, students, employers, and professors of education among others. These studies have measured attitudes on student achievement, academic standards, curriculum, safety and discipline, integration, teacher quality, school funding, bilingual and multi-cultural education and other areas.

In addition, The Gallup Organization conducts annual studies for the Phi Delta Kappa organization looking at a variety of important education issues, and Louis Harris has completed an interesting series of studies for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. Organizations such as ABC News, NBC News/*Wall St. Journal*, and Princeton Survey Research Associates have also conducted periodic surveys focusing on education and public schools. Additional information about Public Agenda's reports, along with a comprehensive list of organizations that have conducted opinion polls on education can be found on Public Agenda's web site:

www.publicagenda.org

Criteria for Selection

Unless otherwise noted, findings cited in this overview are from national random sample telephone surveys conducted in 1995 or later, although we have occasionally reported older findings to illustrate trends or shifts in public thinking, or when recent data is unavailable. Most findings report the views of the general public, although again, we have reported the views of parents, teachers, and other significant groups when these findings are particularly interesting, and reliable data is available.¹

Public Agenda has made every effort to select representative data from reliable and well-respected sources, and we have tried to emphasize findings where public attitudes are consistent and well-understood. In a few instances, we specifically point out topics where public thinking, based on our analysis, may be volatile, poorly developed, or poorly informed. We have included additional methodological information in endnotes. At the close of the report, we offer some brief suggestions concerning communicating with the public about the national goals and stimulating a more engaging and constructive discussion on ways to achieve them.

¹ In preparing this report, we have benefitted from the collection of data housed in the Roper Center Public Opinion Location Library (POLL), a remarkable resource that gathers data on a variety of public policy issues from many of the nation's most respected opinion research firms. POLL is operated by the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut and can be accessed on NEXIS.

FINDING ONE: PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Surveys of public attitudes suggest a widespread conviction that public schooling in America should be better than it is. The Gallup Organization, for example, has tracked public confidence in a number of important American institutions for over two decades, and their surveys show a significant decline in the number of Americans who express a great deal or a lot of confidence in public schools, and a rise in the number of Americans voicing very little or no confidence in public schools. While confidence in some other institutions -- business and national and local government, for example -- has also declined, the public does not seem to be engaged in making a blanket condemnation of all things contemporary. Confidence levels in the military has increased since the early 1980s¹.

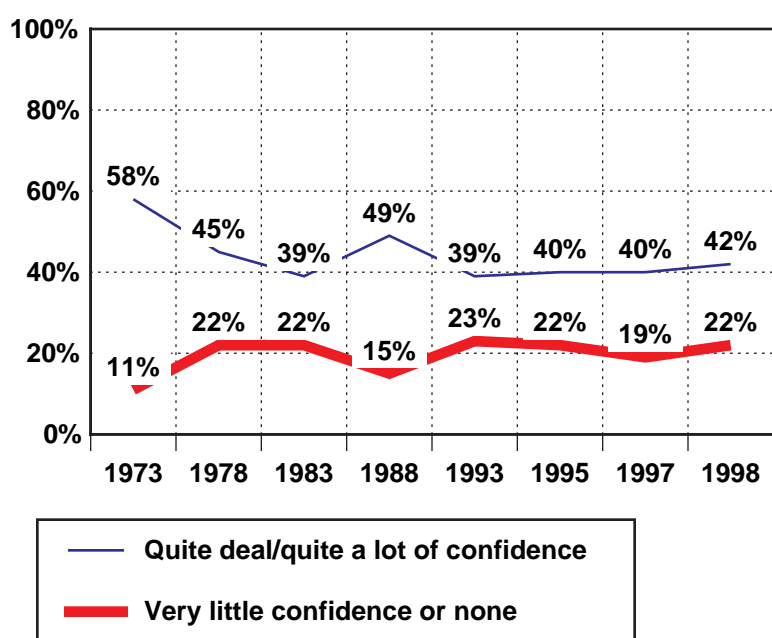
Another indication of public concern is the frequent appearance of “education” in polls identifying the top tier of issues facing the nation. Surveys which ask respondents to name the one issue that concerns them most generally show some twists and turns depending on recent national news events. But most polls show education clearly holding its own with issues such as crime, Social Security, the economy, and the moral tenor of the nation.² A striking 85% of Americans say improving the nation’s education system should be a high priority for Congress in the coming year.³

Surveys show that Americans across the board are concerned about the nation’s school system, but two groups -- employers and college professors -- voice particularly high levels of dissatisfaction with the educational status quo. In late 1997, Public Agenda surveyed these groups asking them to assess the academic skills of recent high school graduates they encounter. Over three-quarters of the employers and professors give recent graduates “fair” or “poor” marks on basics such as grammar and spelling. Ratings are similarly lackluster for skills such as the ability to “write clearly” or to handle basic math.⁴

Some experts have questioned what they see as a preoccupation with “basics” -- especially such particulars as grammar, punctuation, and multiplication tables. They suggest that today’s graduates need new skills -- 21st century skills -- such as working with computers, working in teams, and an interest in life-long learning. Employers and professors actually give recent graduates somewhat better ratings in these “new” areas, although the reviews here are hardly stellar. What is clear, however, is that for employers and professors, a lack of basic skills and traditional academic grounding is a source of widespread frustration.

Falling Public Confidence

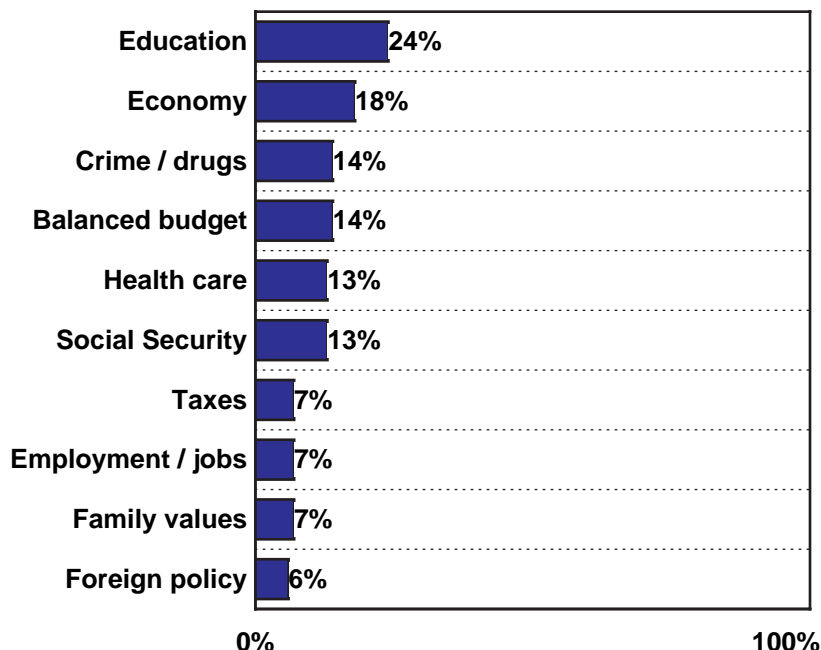
How much respect and confidence do you have in public schools...a great deal, quite a lot, or very little?



Source: Gallup Organization, various years

A National Priority

What do you think are the two most important issues for the federal government to address?

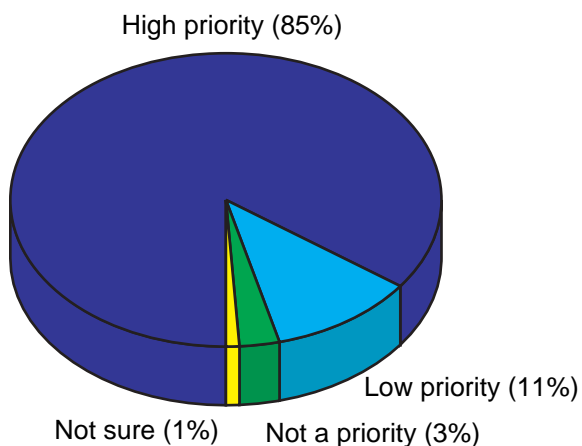


(Note: Multiple answers accepted)

Source: Opinion Dynamics / Fox News 10/98

Leaders Should Act

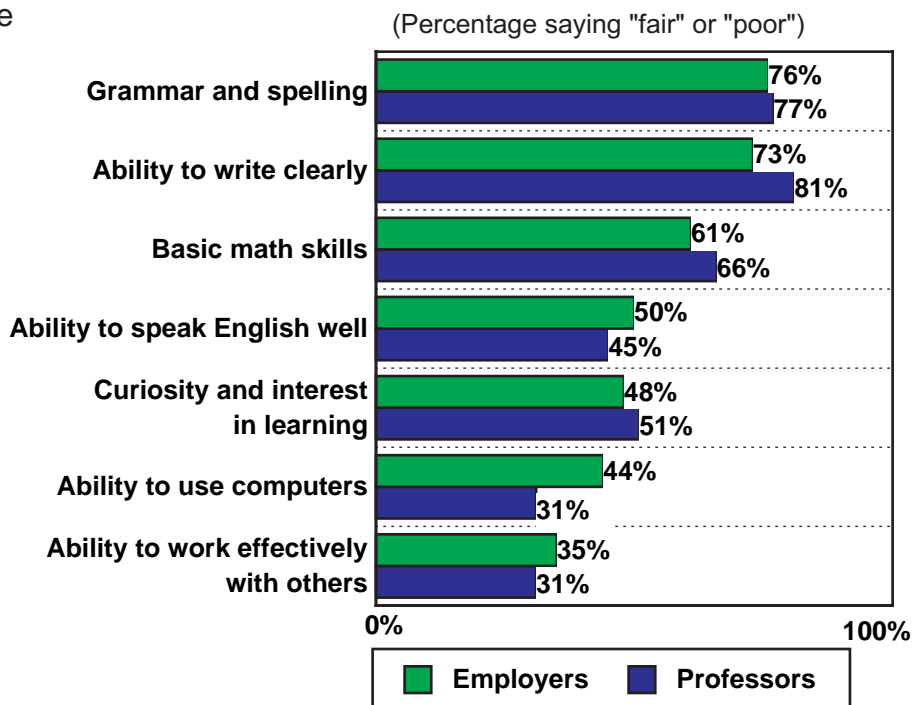
Please tell me whether you think each of the following should be a high priority for Congress to act on next year, a low priority for action, or should not be a priority for Congress at all? Improving the



Source: Yankelovich / Time / CNN 7/98

Business / Higher Education Concerned

How would you rate your recent job applicants / freshmen and sophomore students when it comes to...?



Source: Public Agenda 10/97

FINDING TWO: SCHOOLS HERE OR SCHOOLS NATIONWIDE?

A reasonable question is whether surveys showing dissatisfaction with public schools are picking up a vague, generalized anxiety about education and children -- one driven perhaps by widely publicized failings in some schools in the nation's most troubled inner cities -- or whether Americans are truly dissatisfied with schools where they live. Surveys by Gallup have shown significant differences between attitudes about "local schools" compared to attitudes about schools in general. While 46% of Americans give schools in their own community a grade of "A" or "B," that number plummets to just 18% when people are asked about "schools nationwide."⁵

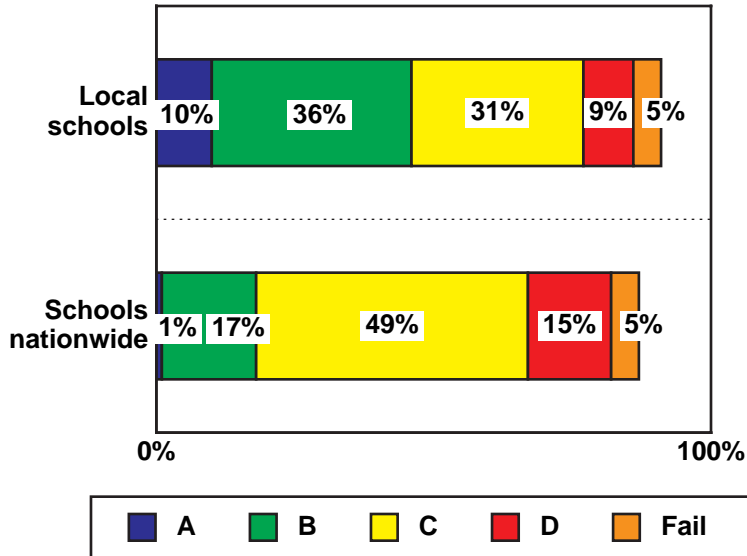
But more detailed questions about local schools paint a picture that is less upbeat. Public Agenda has asked different groups -- parents, teachers, students, employers, and college professors -- about the value of a high school diploma "*from your local schools*" with mixed results. Students (77%), teachers (73%) and parents (62%) say they are convinced that a local high school diploma guarantees that a student has mastered at least basic skills. But for employers and college professors, the numbers plunge into free fall. Just 35% of employers and 22% of college professors give a diploma from their local high schools a vote of confidence.⁶ In fact, the startling difference between what teachers and students believe and what employers and professors say seems to reflect an assessment gap of rather startling proportions.

Surveys are also less reassuring when questions ask people to compare local public schools to local private ones. In a 1997 study, Public Agenda found that employers, college professors, and parents -- by comfortable margins -- say private schools have higher academic standards than public schools. A 1995 Public Agenda study that asked respondents to compare public and private schools in 13 different categories showed that a plurality of the public is convinced that private schools are more likely to have better discipline, smaller classes, higher standards, and do a better job reinforcing mainstream values.⁷

Given these judgments, it is not surprising that substantial numbers of parents -- 50% of white parents and 60% of African-American parents -- say they would send their child to a private school if they could afford to do so⁸. As we point out in Finding 5, these results do not necessarily signal a rejection of the public education system or full-fledged support for dramatically restructuring the way education is provided in most communities. What the research does suggest is a widespread fear among parents that public schools do not consistently provide the top-quality education they want for their children, and that some policies they associate with private schools seem to deliver better results.

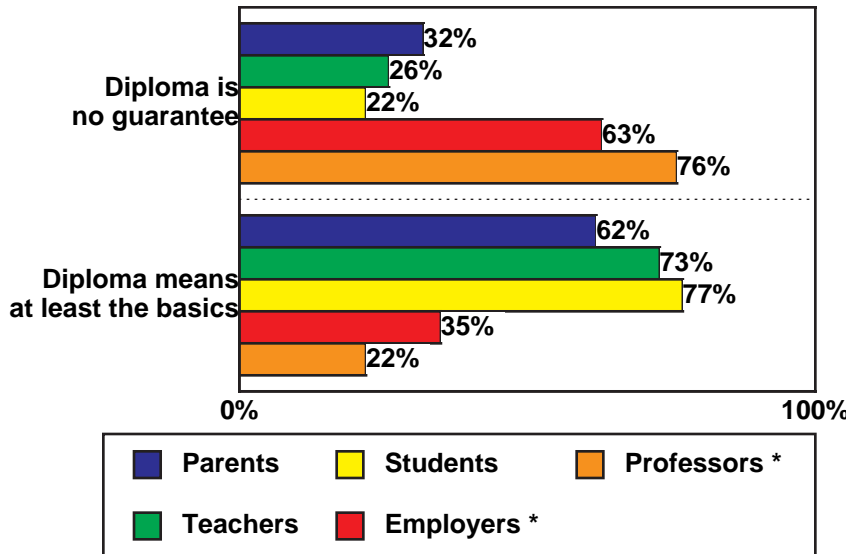
Grading Local Schools

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? What grade would you give the public schools nationally - A, B, C, D, or



Does A Diploma Guarantee Basics?

Which statement is more accurate for the students graduating from your local schools: a high school diploma is no guarantee that the typical student has learned the basics, or a high school diploma means that the typical



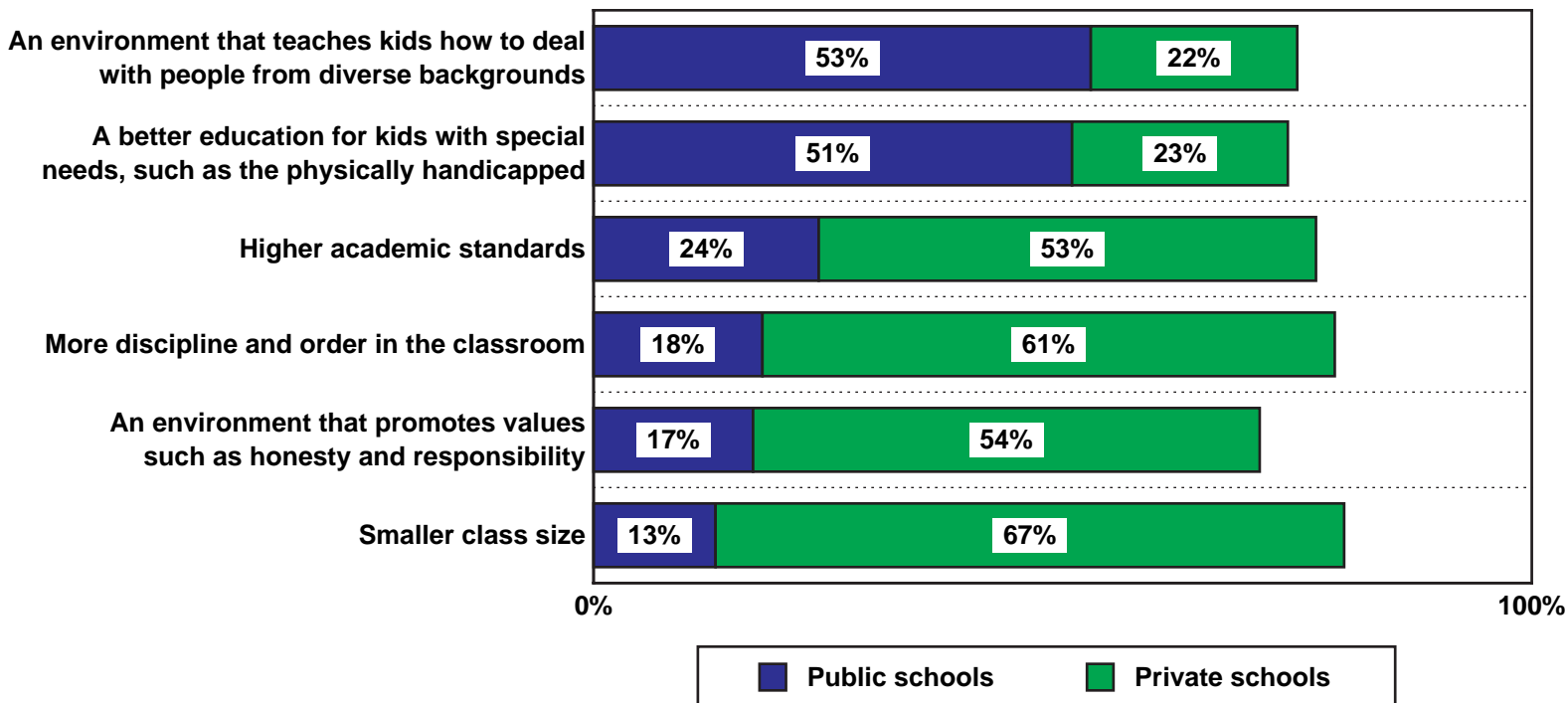
(* Note: Employers and professors were asked "Which statement is more accurate based on your experience with "recent job applicants" / "new students")

Source: Gallup Organization / Phi Delta Kappa 6/98

Source: Public Agenda 10/97

Private Schools Outperform Public Schools in Most Categories

I'm going to ask you to compare your community's public schools and the [private schools]. In your area, which schools are generally more likely to provide:...



Source: Public Agenda 5/95

FINDING THREE: WHAT DO PARENTS WANT?

The soundness of the education system should be important to any American, but parents with children of school age are more immediately affected and, some observers suggest, more likely to base their views on first-hand knowledge of local schools. Past surveys have indicated that parents are generally more satisfied with schools than the public as a whole. The most recent Gallup poll for Phi Delta Kappa shows that a little less than half of the general public (46%) would give schools in their community a grade of “A” or “B.” For parents, the number is somewhat better at 52%.⁹

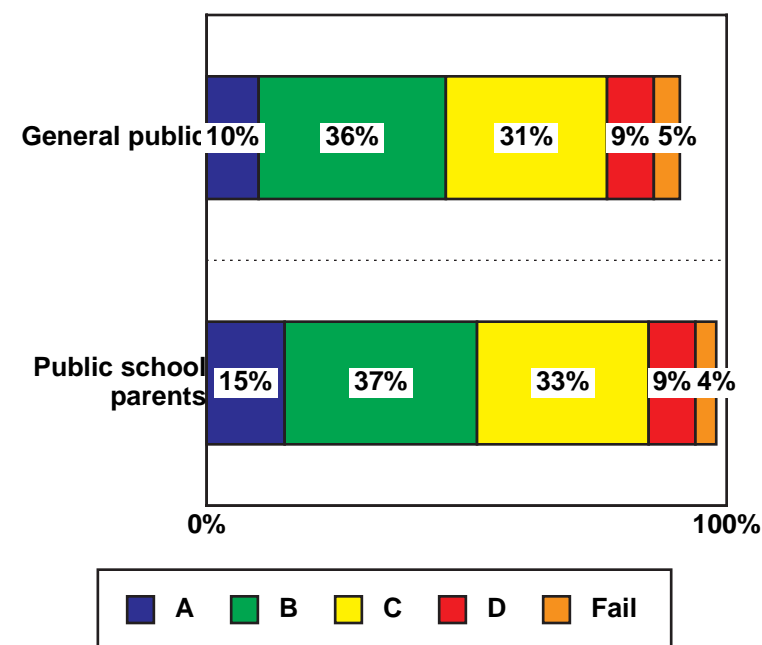
Public Agenda has looked closely at parents’ views in a number of recent studies. In some areas -- notably communications and responsiveness -- schools earn strong positive ratings from parents. Eighty percent, for example, say their child’s school does an excellent or good job of sending home progress reports; nearly as many give their child’s school good marks for informing them “quickly if a child is late or absent” (73%) or if a child is “having problems.” (70%). Seven in ten say their child’s school does a good of “requiring kids to demonstrate basic knowledge in key subjects before allowing them to be promoted.”¹⁰

But other findings from the same study raise questions about what criteria parents apply and what they actually know about their own child’s academic progress. While 45% of parents say they have “a lot” of information about how their child’s academic skills compare to those of other children in the same grade, only 23% say they know a lot about how their child’s skills compare to those of children statewide. Mere handfuls of parents know how their child’s skills measure up nationally (15%) or internationally (7%).¹¹

The most important message emerging from surveys of parents – including white, African-American, and Hispanic parents, traditional Christian parents, parents born in the U.S. and parents who have immigrated here – is the remarkable amount of agreement on what they expect from public schools.¹² Parents want safe, orderly schools that effectively teach at least basic skills to all children. They also expect schools to reinforce mainstream values such as working hard and being respectful toward others.¹³ As we show in the following sections, many features that parents want most are captured in the National Education Goals.

Parents' Views

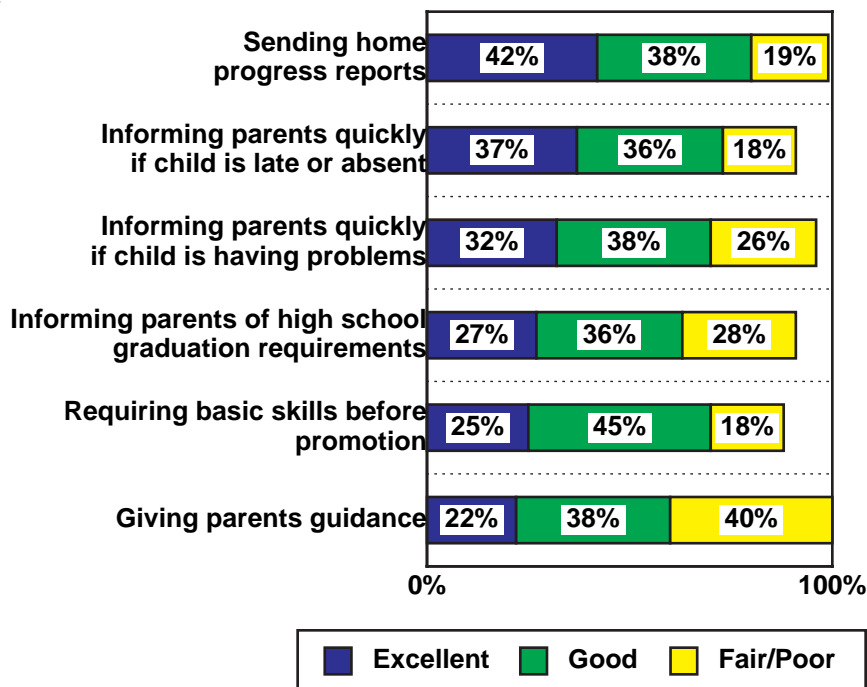
Students are often given the grades, A, B, C, D and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public



Source: Gallup Organization / Phi Delta Kappa 6/98

Good Communications

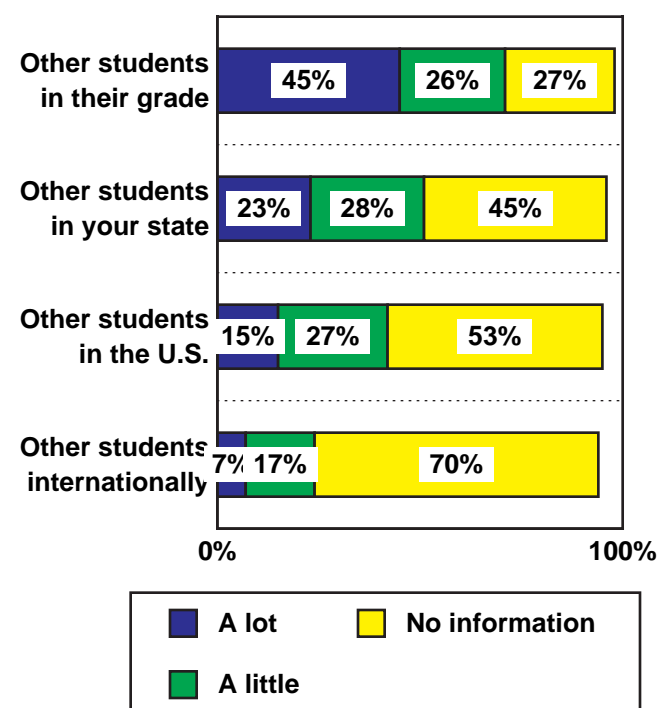
(Asked of parents) How good a job does your child's school do in each of the following areas. A excellent job, a good job, a fair job or a poor job?



Source: Public Agenda 10/97

Limited Knowledge

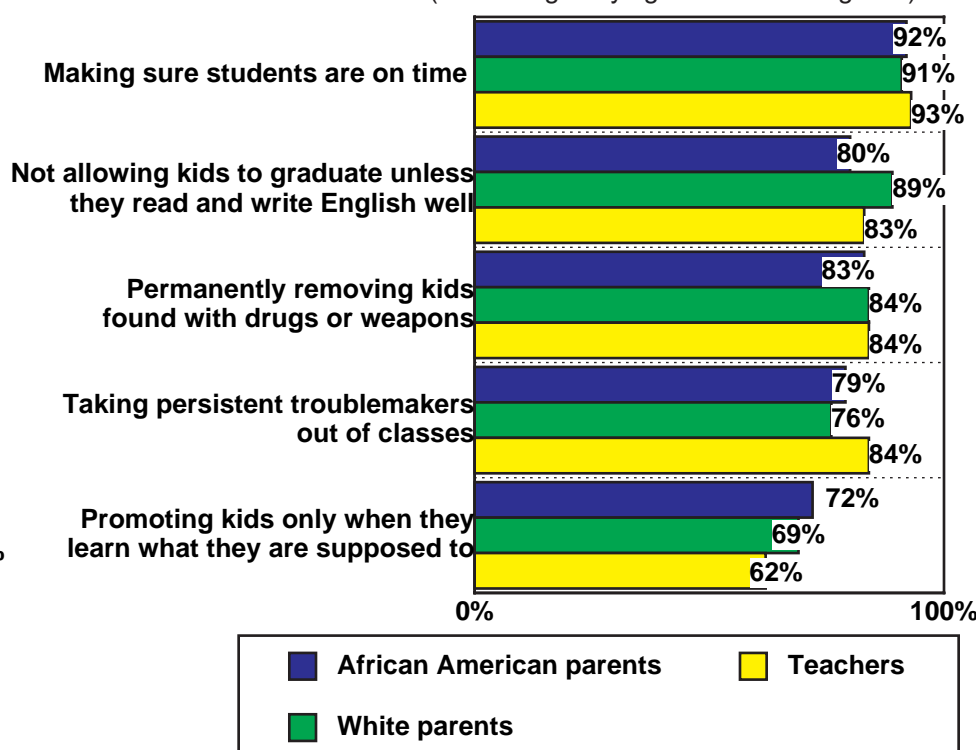
(Asked of parents) How much do you know about where your child stands academically compared to the following groups? A lot, a little, or don't you have any



Source: Public Agenda 10/97

Parents Often Agree

Now I'm going to talk about different ways to try to help students do better in school. After I read each one, I want you to tell me if you think it's an excellent, good, fair or poor idea for your own (Percentage saying "excellent" or "good")



Source: Public Agenda 8/94, 10/95, 11/96

FINDING FOUR: ATTITUDES ABOUT THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS

Public Agenda has examined findings from a wide variety of sources looking at public attitudes on each of the eight National Education Goals: 1) helping children start school ready to learn; 2) increasing school completion; 3) enhancing student achievement; 4) improving professional development and teacher education; 5) improving math and science education; 6) increasing adult literacy and participation in adult and higher education; 7) making schools safe and orderly; and 8) increasing parental participation.

There is strong research to suggest that the public views each of these purposes in a favorable light. The goals, in effect, reflect a broad consensus on measures that would improve public schools and help individual young Americans build constructive and satisfying lives for themselves. It is also true, as we point out in the following discussion of each of the goals, that some are viewed as urgent issues -- springing readily to the public's mind in any discussion of children and schools. Others are less likely to emerge spontaneously, although people may react favorably to them when asked about them. There are also several instances in which people respond positively to one of the goals -- or some aspect of it -- but have not thought carefully about what might be required to achieve it.

We should also note that an extensive search of databases housing opinion data uncovered no recent data on public attitudes about the National Education Goals Panel as an entity or about the Goals as a specific strategic document. The 1992 Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa survey included questions about the goals, but few respondents recognized them even though the items described each one specifically.¹⁴ In more than 200 focus groups Public Agenda has conducted on education issues over the last few years, we have observed no particular awareness of the National Goals, although, as we demonstrate in the sections below, there is significant public interest in the ideas behind this work.

GOAL ONE: Helping Children Start School Ready to Learn

Surveys show conclusively that Americans believe that how families raise children -- and what happens to them before they start school -- plays a pivotal role in whether they achieve academic success. By large margins, for example, parents and teachers say that a child who comes from a stable, supportive family but attends a poor school has a better chance of success than a student who comes from a troubled family, but attends a good school.¹⁵

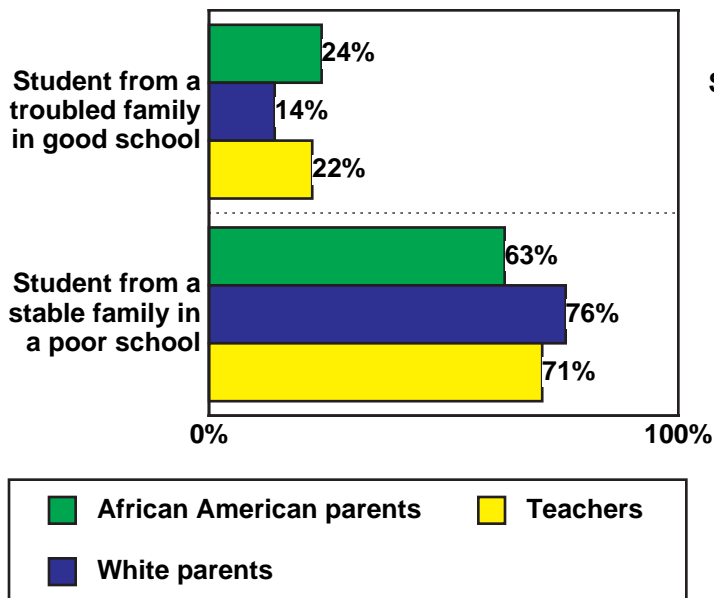
Surveys also show high levels of public support for expanding preschool programs (70%), making sure all children have health insurance (80%), providing tax credits for child care (71%), providing more money for child care in welfare programs (73%), and for guaranteeing at least food and basic shelter for every citizen (61%).¹⁶ In particular, parents believe that more preschool and parental training programs are particularly effective ways to help poor, minority children who are at risk.¹⁷ These ideas make sense to most Americans, and appeal to their desire to give every child a good start in life.

But the research also raises serious questions about just how important these goals are to people and whether they are really ready to shoulder the costs of accomplishing them. Although most Americans say they would like to see better preschool, health care and child care programs, they also have other priorities. Majorities, for example, also want to put more government funds into public schools, battling crime, AIDS, and homelessness.¹⁸ Asked in 1996 to choose among a number of different proposals Congress might act on, Americans picked balancing the budget and cutting taxes over providing health coverage for uninsured children by margins of two to one.¹⁹

Public Agenda's work for The Advertising Council also shows that proposals focusing exclusively on children's economic and physical well-being actually bypass the public's most intense concern - whether children are receiving the discipline and moral guidance that will help them grow into compassionate, responsible, respectable adults. People fear that this problem is more widespread, and they consider it equally damaging to a child's prospects to thrive and learn. While 27% of Americans say a shortage of government programs that support kids is a very serious problem, over half say kids failing to learn values such as honesty and respect is a very serious problem.²⁰ And when people were asked to choose among 12 different proposals for helping children today, more funding for child care and health care and improved welfare and Food Stamps programs placed 11th and 12th on the list.²¹

Families Count

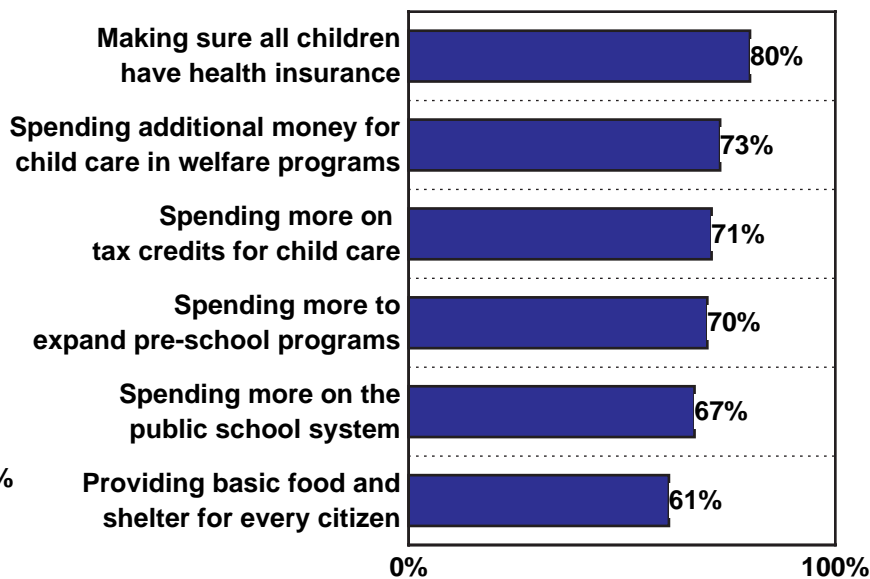
Which student do you think is more likely to succeed?
The student from a troubled family who goes to a good school or the student from a stable and supportive family who goes to a poor school?



Source: Public Agenda 10/95, 4/98

Programs for At-Risk Kids

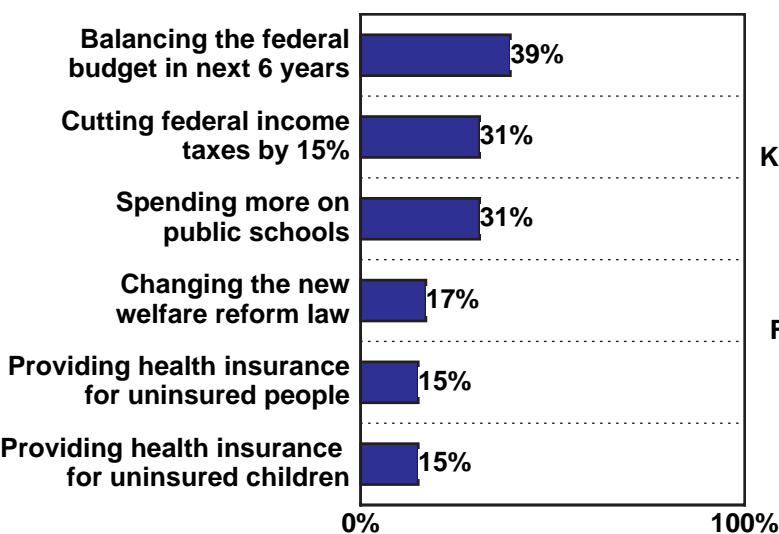
Various items asking whether the respondent supports the proposal or would spend more money on the proposal.



Source: The Tarrance Group and Lake Research / Coalition for America's Children 12/96 Princeton Survey Research Associates / Kaiser Foundation/ Harvard 11/96, Louis Harris / Kaiser / Commonwelath Fund 3/97, Princeton Survey Research Associates/ Pew Research Center 5/97,1/98

But Other Priorities

Which proposals would you most like to see the next Congress do something about?

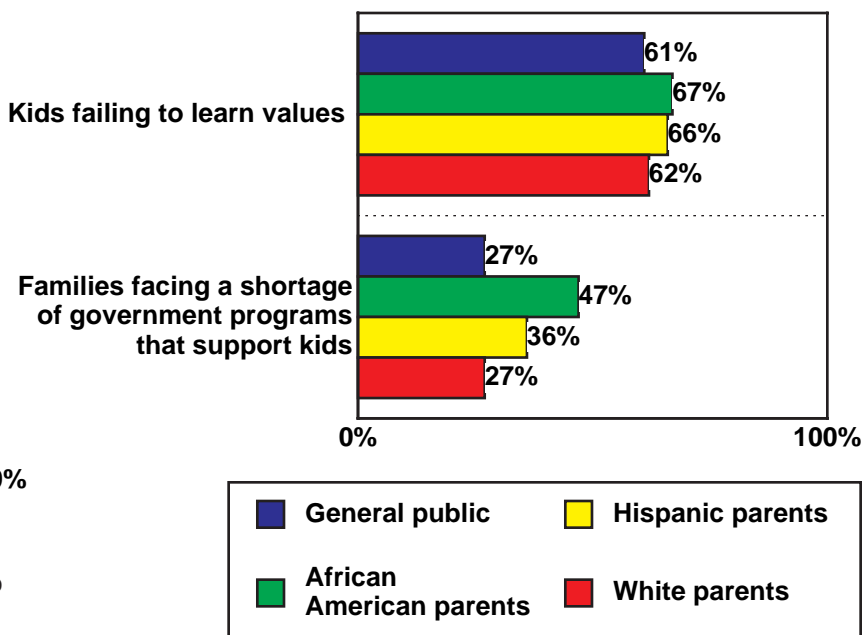


(Note: Up to two responses accepted, therefore columns add to more than 100%)

Source: Princeton Survey Research Associates / Kaiser Foundation / Harvard 11/96

Values Count More

I'm going to describe different problems and ask if you think each is a serious problem facing today's kids. Is it a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not serious at all for today's kids?
(Percentage saying "very serious")



Source: Public Agenda 12/96

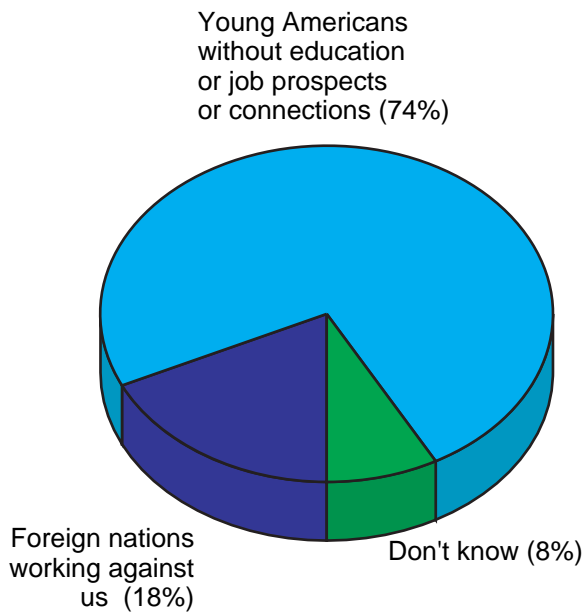
GOAL TWO: Increasing School Completion

Public Agenda's search located relatively few survey findings specifically focusing on school completion. Two that did emerge, however, suggest that this issue is important to large numbers of Americans. Almost three-quarters of Americans say that young people without education or job prospects are a greater threat to the United States than foreign nations working against us.²² The most recent Gallup survey for Phi Delta Kappa shows that 82% of Americans say that the percentage of students who complete high school is a "very important" measure of their local schools' effectiveness.²³

While school completion is an important issue for the public, many Americans are actually focused on education beyond high school. Eighty-three percent of parents say they expect their children to attend college, and over 7 in 10 (72%) high school students also say college is in their plans.²⁴ And African-American parents are more likely than white parents to say it is "absolutely essential" for a school to expect all kids to go on to college (by a margin of 51% to 31%).²⁵ Ironically, half of college professors say that the young people they see in their classes are not well prepared for college work.²⁶

Unskilled Youngsters a Threat

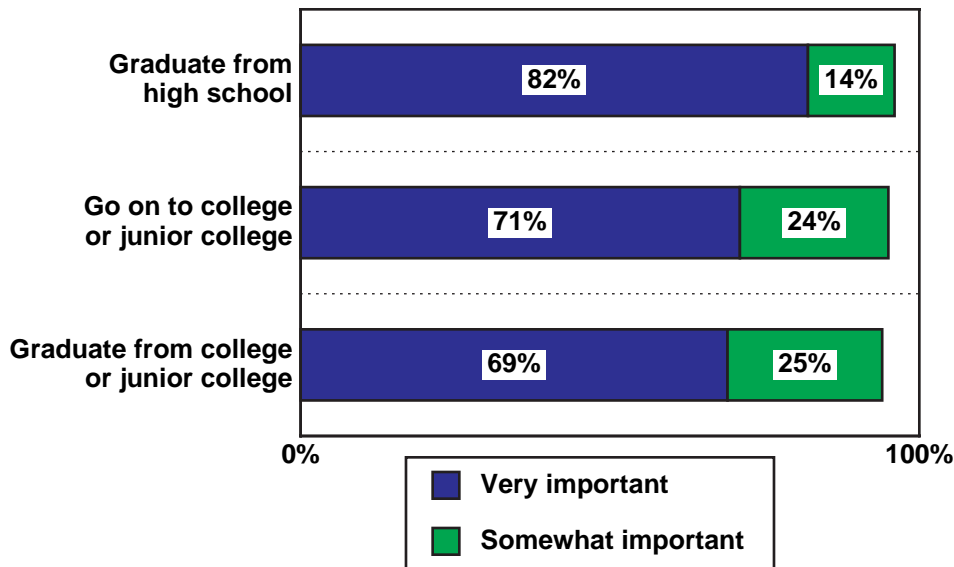
Which of the following is a bigger threat to the United States...Foreign nations working against us or young Americans without education, job prospects or connections



Source: Princeton Survey / Newsweek 4/97

A Measure of Effectiveness

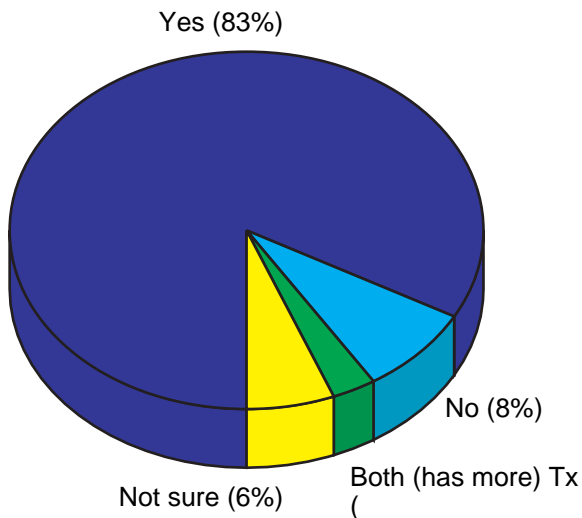
How important do you think each of the following is for measuring the effectiveness of the public schools in your community? Would you say very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important? How about the percentage of students



Source: Gallup Organization / Phi Delta Kappa 6/98

Parents Focused on College

Do you expect your child to go to college?

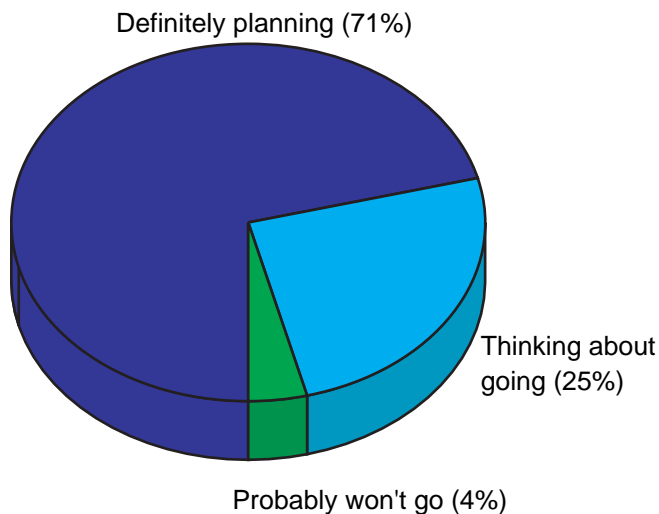


Parents

Source: Public Agenda 5/95

So Are Students

Are you definitely planning to go to college, are you thinking about going to college, or do you think you probably won't go to college?



Students

Source: Public Agenda 11/96

GOAL THREE: Enhancing Student Achievement.

In 1996, Public Agenda conducted a comprehensive review of public opinion survey data on student academic achievement and standards for the National Governors' Association's National Educational Summit. That report concluded that support for raising academic standards is at consensus level among the general public, and that all groups in the population voice strong backing for a variety of measures to accomplish this goal. Moreover, Public Agenda's analysis concluded that support for higher academic standards grows out of deep-seated public concerns and values and is not easily shaken, even when people are presented with possible risks and trade-offs.²⁷

Our more recent work suggests that public commitment to enforcing and raising standards remains as strong as ever. In Public Agenda's 1997 "Reality Check" surveys conducted for *Education Week*, majorities of parents, teachers, employers, and college professors say students should be passed to the next grade only when they have mastered the knowledge and skills that were expected, not just because they have made an effort and attended class regularly.²⁸ All groups agree that it is better to hold youngsters back in order to learn needed skills than to promote them when they have not learned what was expected.²⁹ All groups also agree that high school students would be better off taking tougher classes where expectations are higher, and teachers, employers, and professors in particular say students would benefit from being pushed harder.³⁰

Public Agenda's extensive work in this area -- in surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews with parents and members of the general public -- suggests that Americans support standards because they are convinced that almost all children could learn more and because they are appalled that some are allowed to drift through school without acquiring even minimal basic skills. Tougher standards should apply across the board, people say, for children in impoverished urban areas just as for youngsters in more privileged suburbs.³¹ Strong majorities of both white and African-American parents say that raising and enforcing standards is a very effective way to help underachieving minority youngsters.³²

Since raising standards is a pervasive issue -- one now under discussion in virtually every school district in the country -- a few words of elaboration may be helpful. It is important to point out that most people define standards, not as the content standards experts focus on, but in the terms they know and understand. People talk about making a high school diploma "mean something," about making sure kids have learned certain skills before moving from grade to grade, about making sure that an "A" means an "A." People are primarily thinking about performance

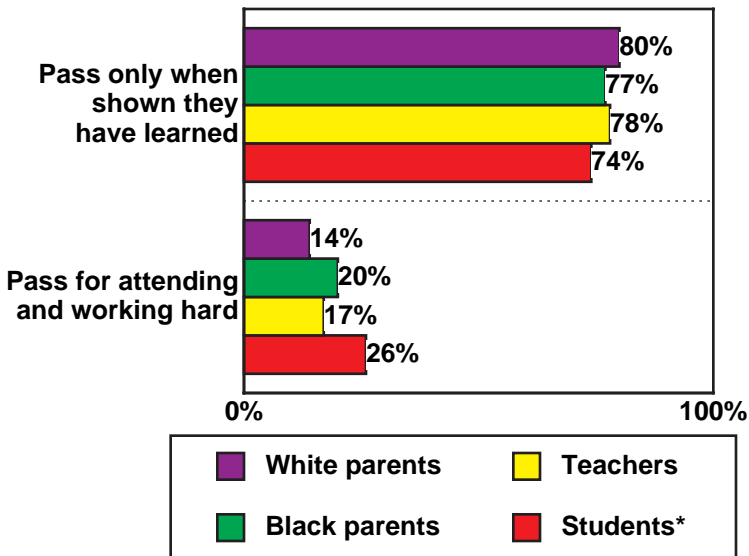
standards that will motivate kids to do their best and clearly warn parents when learning is not taking place.

It is also essential to recognize that the urgency people voice about standards erupts mainly from their conviction that too many children are not mastering basic skills such as reading, writing, grammar, spelling, and arithmetic. People do not necessarily have limited aspirations for children, but they are convinced, in overwhelming numbers, that basics are absolutely essential for every child and that basics must come first before higher levels of learning are possible.³³ Indeed, much of the public's concern focuses on the need for youngsters to have a strong command of the English language and large majorities of the public and parents say this should be required for high school graduation.³⁴ As we reported in Finding One, concern about a lack of basic skills and command of the language is also pervasive among employers and professors.

One last note concerns teachers as a somewhat distinctive group. Although they endorse most proposals to raise standards, their level of support is often less intense than that of the public or other groups. Public Agenda's surveys of teachers offer two possible reasons for these differences which occur over a number of findings.³⁵ While teachers support raising standards, most name other issues -- better resources, smaller classes, and better classroom discipline -- as higher priorities for them in their own schools.³⁶ Teachers are also more likely to be satisfied with the status quo in public schools: they routinely give public schools higher grades than other groups. They are much more likely to say that public schools outperform private schools in a number of areas, and, as mentioned earlier, they (along with their students) are already convinced that a high school diploma signifies at least mastery of basic skills.³⁷

Skills, Not Effort

Should the public schools pass students to the next grade if they make an effort by attending classes regularly and working hard, or should they pass students only when the students show they have learned the knowledge and skills they are expected to

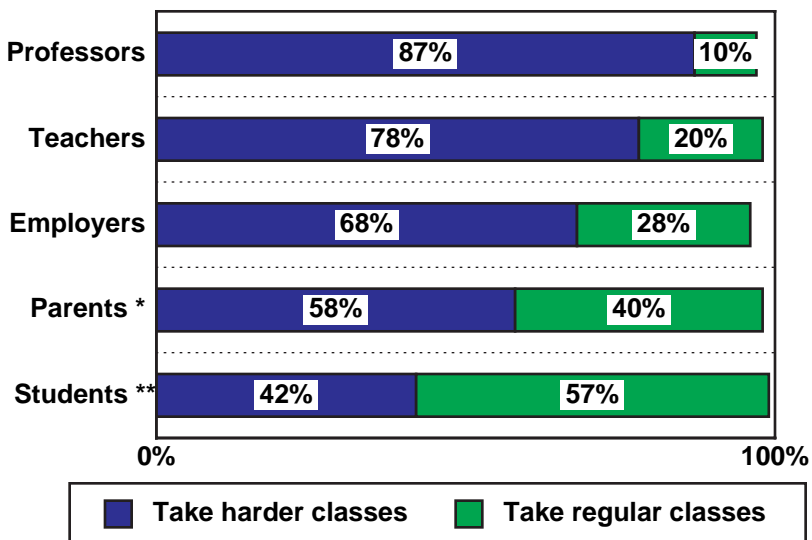


(* Note: Students were asked if teachers usually pass students to the next grade only when they learn everything they are supposed to is an excellent, good, fair or poor idea. Percentage shows those saying "excellent" or "good")

Source: Public Agenda 8/94, 10/95, 10/96

Tougher Classes

Which comes closer to your own view? Most students are better off taking tougher classes where expectations are higher, even if it means they might get a lower grade or students are better off taking regular classes with average expectations but where



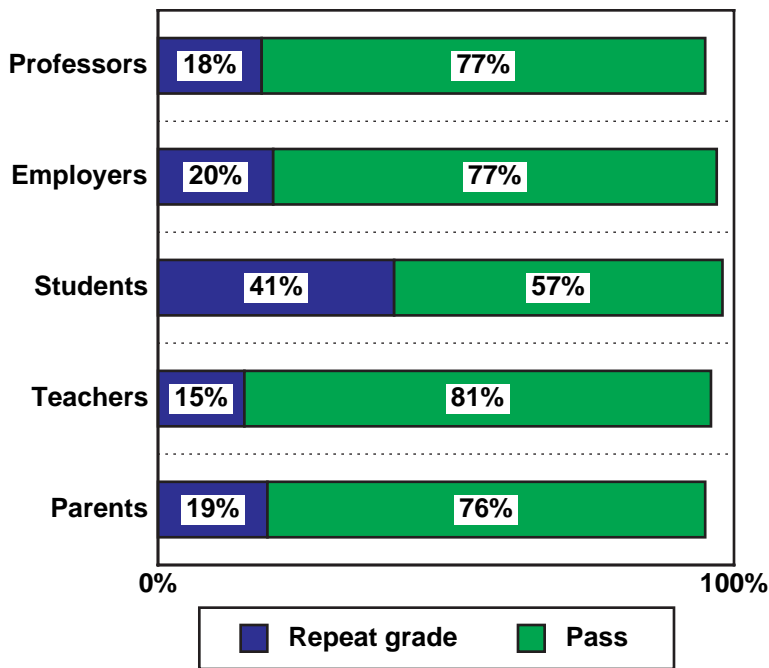
* Parents were asked if their child would be better off

** Students were asked if they, personally, would be better off

Source: Public Agenda 10/97

Worse To Pass, Better To Repeat

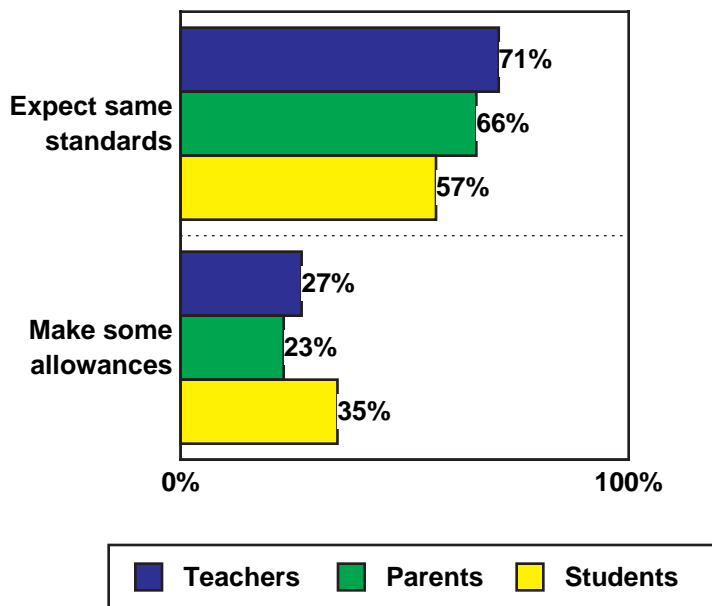
What do you think is worse for a child who is struggling in school - to have to repeat a grade, or to be passed to the next grade and be expected to keep



Source: Public Agenda 10/97

Standards For All

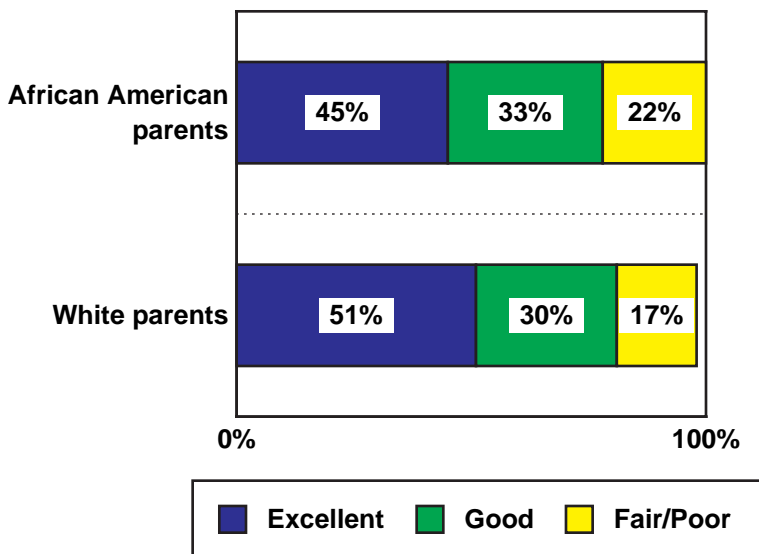
Should public schools expect inner-city kids to achieve academic standards that are as high as standards for kids from wealthy backgrounds or should they make some allowances because inner-



Source: Public Agenda 10/97

Standards Help Minority Kids

Would raising and enforcing academic standards in failing schools so that kids pass only when they learn what they are supposed to be an excellent, good, fair, or poor idea for dealing with failing schools and black students

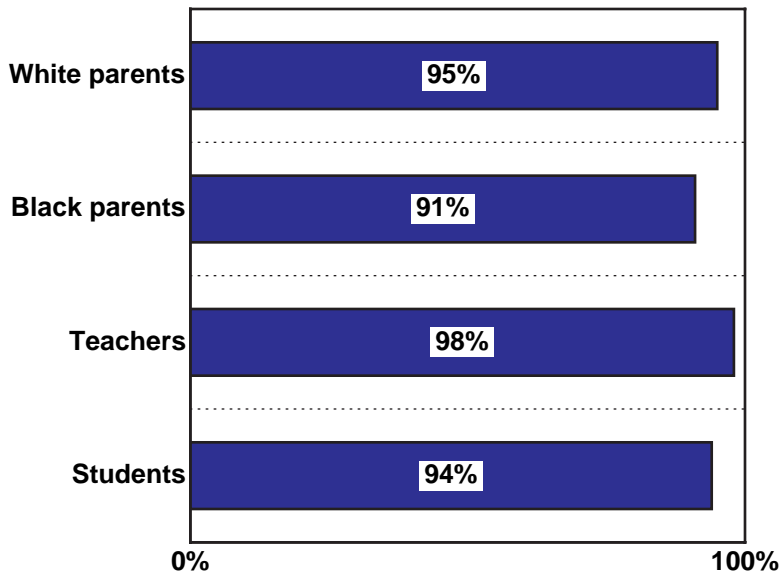


Source: Public Agenda 4/98

Basics Essential

How important is it for a school to teach basic reading, writing and math skills?

(Percentage saying "absolutely essential")

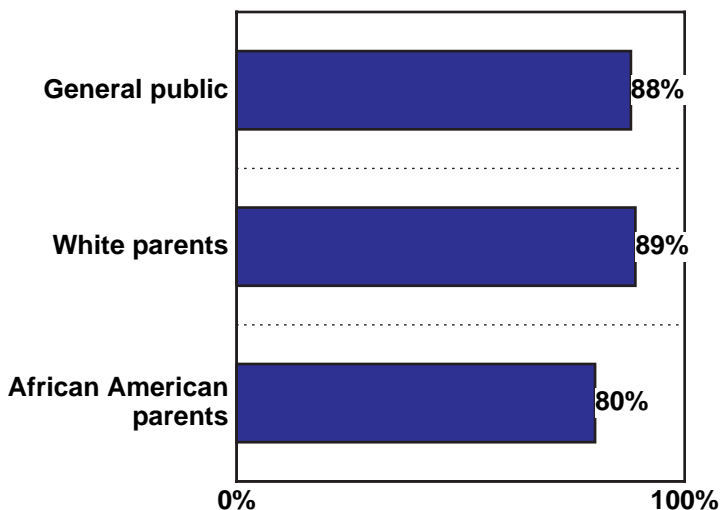


Source: Public Agenda 10/95, 11/96 4/98

English A Priority

I'd like you to tell me if you think the following would improve kids' academic achievement. Use a 5 point scale where 5 means that it would improve it a great deal and 1 means it would not improve it at all? What about not allowing kids to graduate from high school unless they clearly demonstrate they can write and

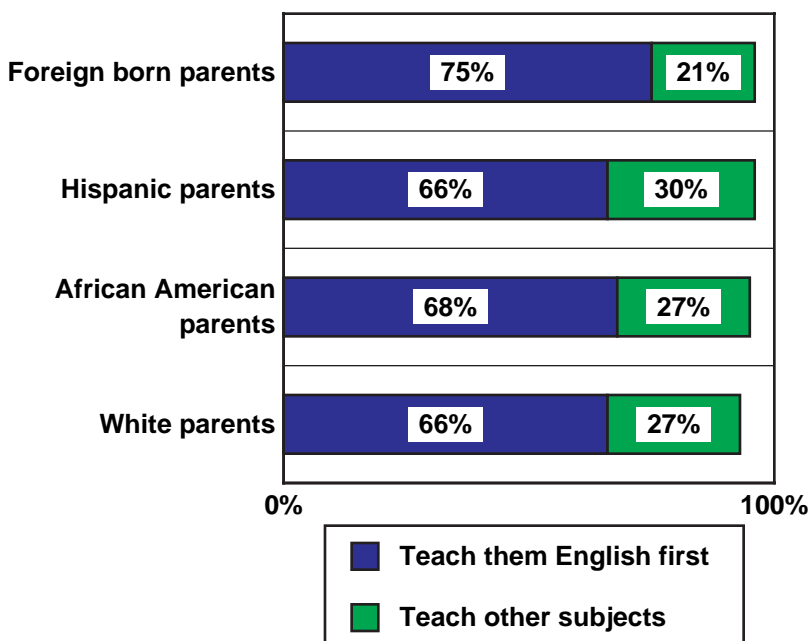
(Percentage rating 4 or 5)



Source: Public Agenda 8/94

Foreign-Born Parents Agree

When it comes to students who are new immigrants, is it important for the public schools to teach them English as quickly as possible even if they fall behind in other subjects, or teach them other subjects in their native language even if it takes them longer



Source: Public Agenda 9/98

GOAL FOUR: Teacher Education and Professional Development

While parents are undoubtedly the influential adults in a child's life, teachers, by many accounts, come in a respectable second. Numerous surveys have shown that the public and parents view teachers as a chief component in quality education. Public Agenda surveys show that teens, too, value teachers as an exceptionally important factor in learning.³⁸

In general, teachers earn good marks from the public and parents, with most viewing them as caring, well-intentioned professionals doing a tough and important job. But surveys also report some anxieties beneath the surface. Over half of Americans (54%) voice concerns over how teachers handle problems related to discipline.³⁹ Studies of public and private school students provide another indicator of possible problems. Although school environment, peer attitudes, and family influences undoubtedly play a role in the teens differing viewpoints, the differences between the two groups are jolting. Private high school students are more likely than public high school students to say that most of their teachers know their subjects well (by an 63% to 46% margin) and that their teachers care about them personally (by an 58% to 30% margin).⁴⁰

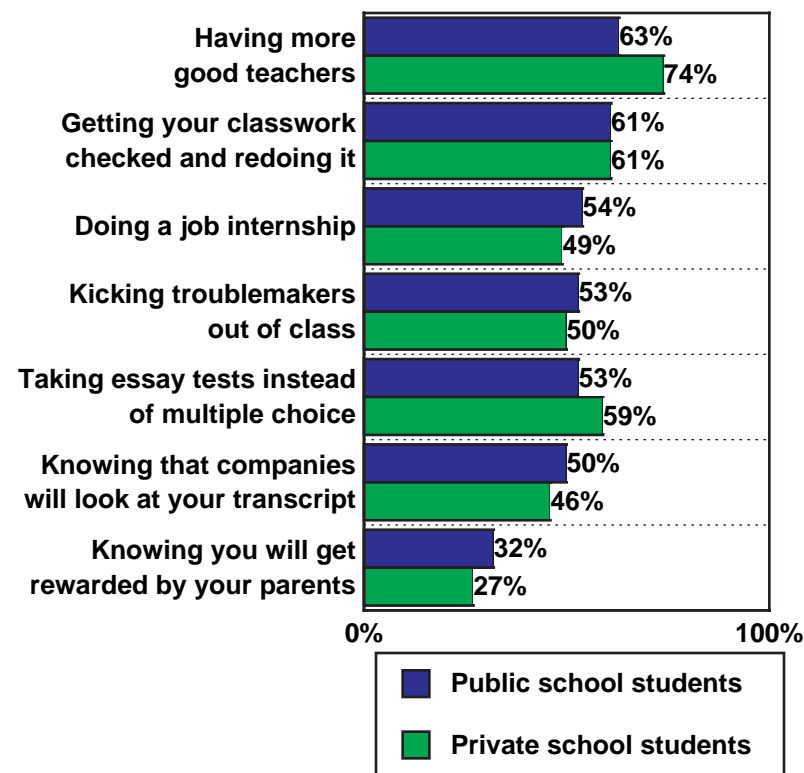
Another call of warning comes from Public Agenda's study of the attitudes of professors of education, the teachers of teachers, who express some reservations about their students' ability to live up to expectations. Three in four (75%) say too many of their prospective teachers have trouble writing essays free of mistakes in grammar and spelling, and 7 in 10 (72%) say they often or sometimes come across a student whom they seriously doubt has what it takes to be a teacher.⁴¹

The general public broadly supports teacher competency tests and 67% of professors of education endorse requiring teachers to pass tests demonstrating proficiency in key subjects before they are hired.⁴² These judgments, of course, do not answer the question of what kind of training teachers need and what measures would make better teacher education possible. Professors of education provide one important clue to some problems that may exist in current teacher training programs. They, themselves, worry that they may be too isolated from the classroom. In fact, 17% report they have never been a K-12 classroom teacher, and of the remaining 83%, half (51%) have not been a K-12 teacher in 16-plus years.⁴³

Teachers Count

Now I'm going to read a list of things that might get you to learn more and ask if you think they'll really work. Do you think that the following will

(Percentage saying "learn a lot more")

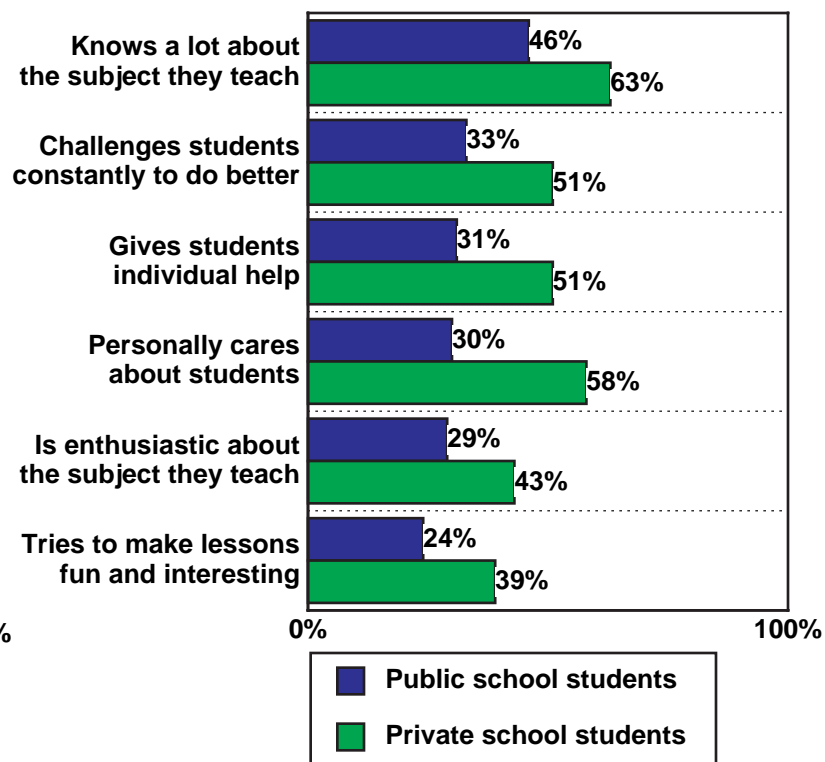


Source: Public Agenda 11/96

Public Schools vs. Private Schools

Now I'm going to talk about different kinds of teachers and ask you if you think they lead you to learn more or not. About how many of your teachers are like that now? Would you say most, some or very few?

(Percentage saying "most" teachers)

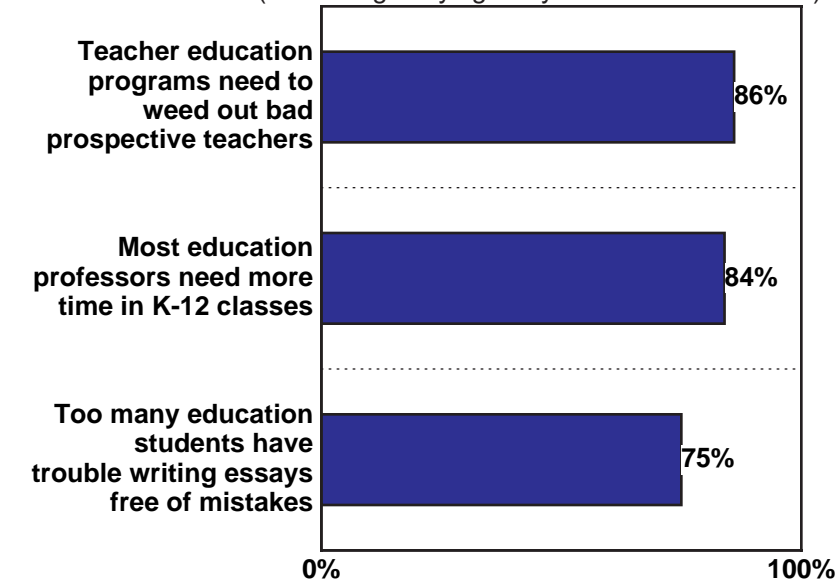


Source: Public Agenda 11/96

Professors of Education Concerned

(Asked of Professors of Education): Please tell me how close each comes to your own view. Is that very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all

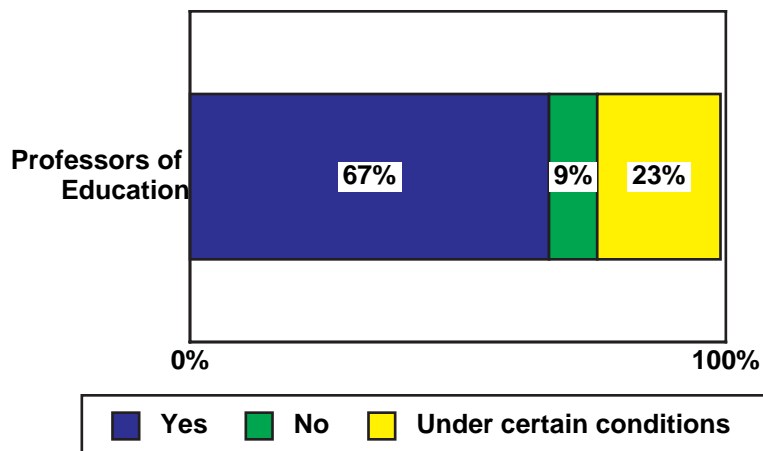
(Percentage saying "very" or "somewhat" close)



Source: Public Agenda 9/97

Calls For Accountability

Now I am going to ask how you feel about different education reforms. Do you approve of the following, disapprove, or approve but only under certain conditions? Requiring teachers to pass tests demonstrating proficiency in key subjects



Source: Public Agenda 9/97

GOAL FIVE: Improving Math and Science Education

Public Agenda has asked parents, students, teachers, and other groups what kinds of lessons and courses are most essential for every American child. Not unexpectedly, the basics – basic reading, writing, and math – soar to the top of the top of the list, and learning about computers appears in the top tier of priorities with well over 7 in 10 of each group saying education in this area is “extremely important” for every child. The sciences, described as “biology, chemistry, and physics,” and “advanced math such as calculus” hold a respectable middle ground in a list of 16 possible areas. Math and science actually rank much higher than areas such as classic literature and “the history and geography” of the world.⁴⁴

The Horatio Alger Association has also shown that students rank math and science among the most important subjects they study. Nine in ten (92%) say math is “very” or “somewhat” important and 79% say the same for science. In contrast, fewer than half say music, art and drama are “very” or “somewhat” important.⁴⁵

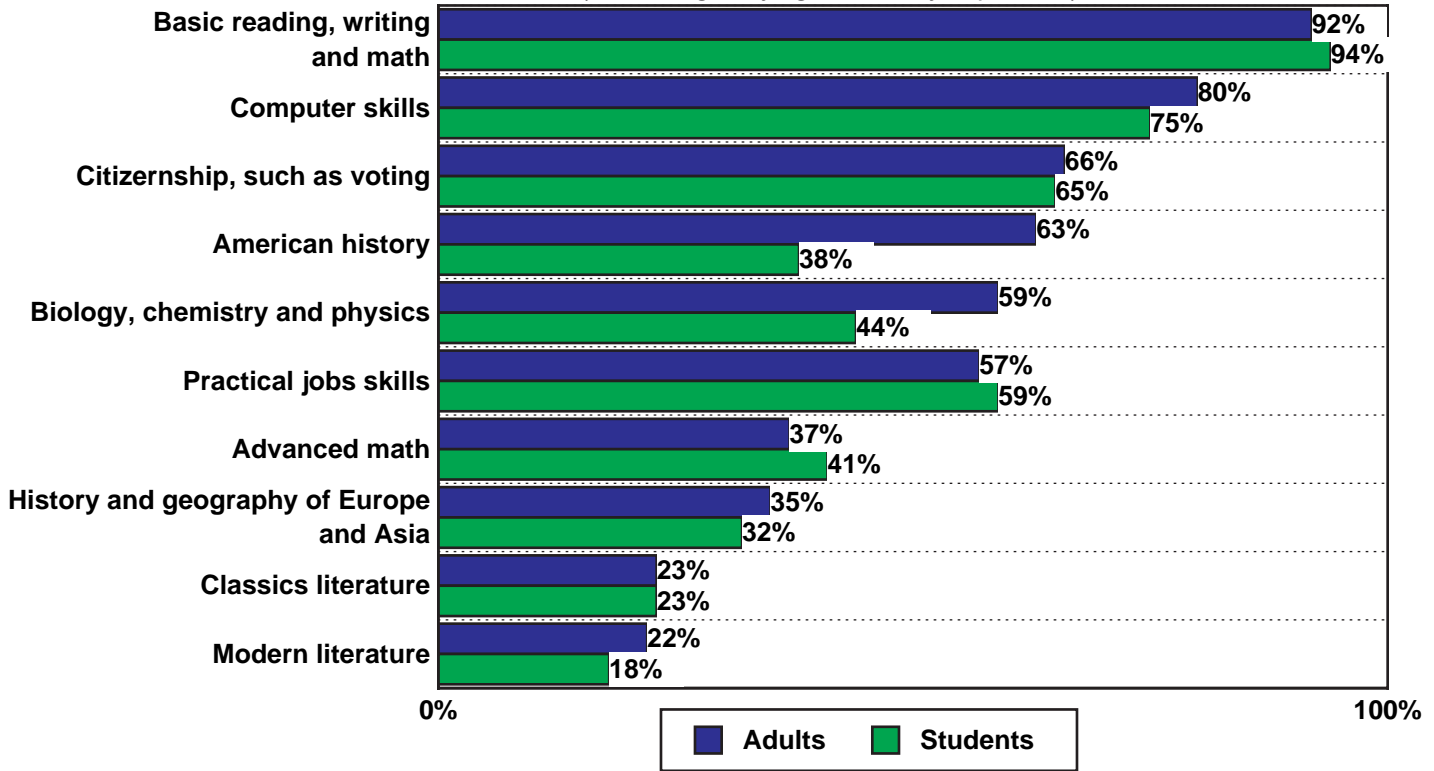
Two cautionary notes should be added. People support math education, but they are skeptical about use of calculators by grade school students -- a view that puts them at odds with math specialists and professors of education studied by Public Agenda.⁴⁶ Focus groups suggest that people are not convinced that “new teaching techniques” -- such as using calculators early -- are a step forward in math, science, or any other area. In a sense, the public comes to the table soured by past innovations (ridiculing “the new math” is a staple of focus group conversations), and wondering if traditional methods aren’t better than what often replaces them.

It is also not clear that Americans, as a group, envision the highly advanced levels of knowledge in science and math that some experts are shooting for. Americans carry some reservations about “the highly educated,” with many believing that these individuals sometimes lack common sense.⁴⁷

Science In The Middle

Now I'm going to read a list of things a student can learn in school and ask how important it is learn each one by the time a student finishes high school. How important is it to learn...?

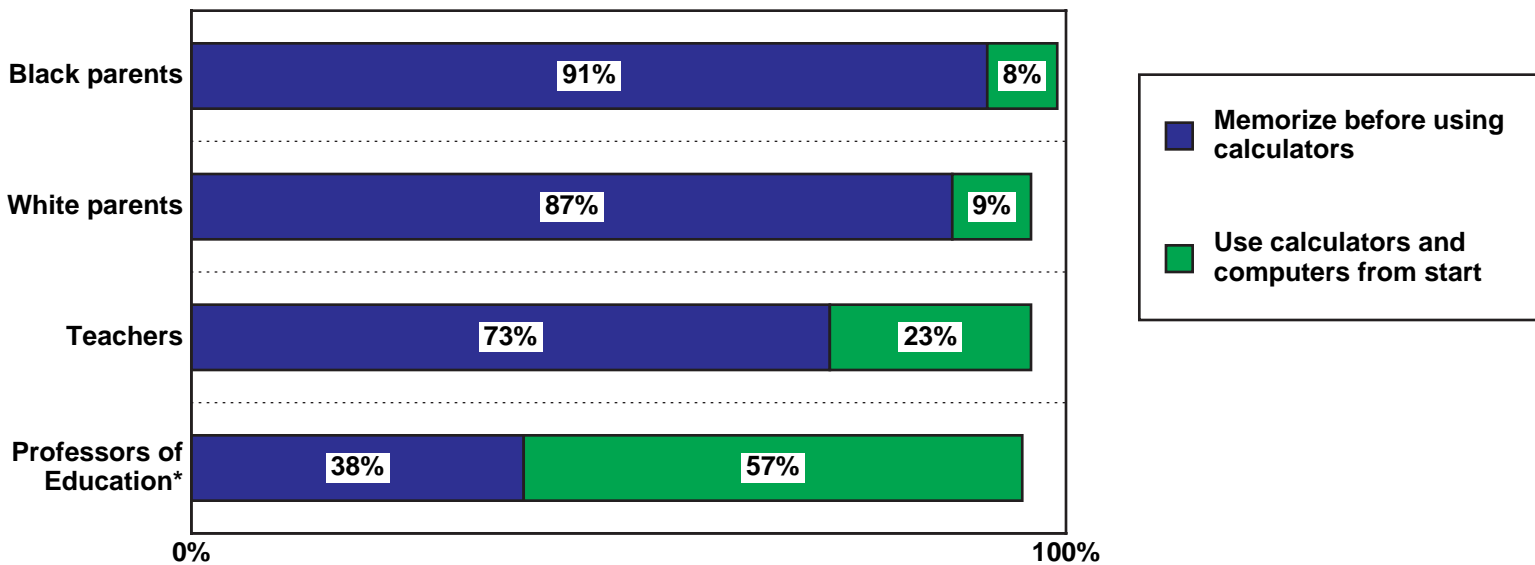
(Percentage saying "extremely important")



Source: Public Agenda 5/95, 11/96

Skeptical About Calculators

How should public schools teach math? Should they teach kids to memorize the multiplication tables and learn to do math by hand before they use calculators or computers, or teach kids to use calculators and computers from the start instead of memorizing tables and doing math by hand.



(* Note: Professors of Education were asked if they think calculator use in elementary school hampers learning basic arithmetic skills or if it improves kids' problem solving skills and not prevent learning basic math)

Source: Public Agenda 8/94, 10/95, 9/97

GOAL SIX: Adult Literacy

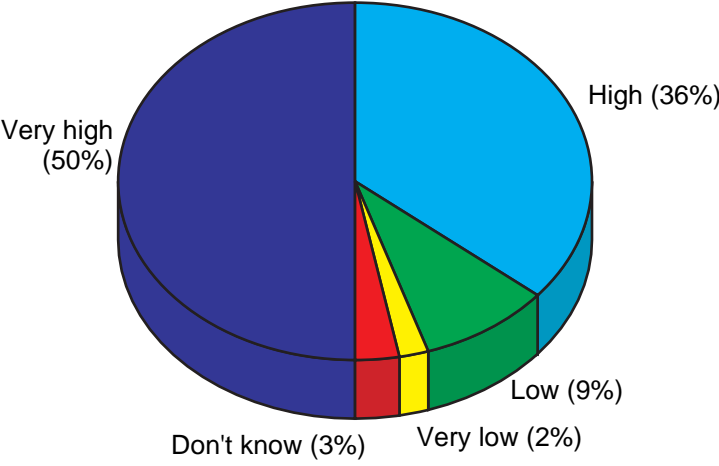
Public Agenda's review of the research uncovered relatively few recent findings focusing directly on adult literacy. Gallup's 1991 Phi Delta Kappa survey showed that half of Americans (50%) consider the National Education Goal of making sure that every adult is literate a "very high" priority for the country; another 36% rate this a "high" priority.⁴⁸ In a Roper survey conducted just a year later, 82% of Americans said that they would feel more positively toward local businesses who conduct literacy programs.⁴⁹

While there is a paucity of information on how the public views illiteracy, attitudes cited earlier hint at a significant levels of concern about the problem. Americans' laser-like focus on basics, their interest in reducing drop-out rates, and their fears about young people without job skills suggest that people recognize that illiteracy can be tragic for individuals and devastating for communities.

Despite this broad concern however, it is not clear from the research that people think about the problem of illiteracy frequently, or turn their attention to it without prompting. Indeed, the shortage of survey findings itself is a warning. Policymakers and news media -- the groups that sponsor and develop most surveys -- generally want to know what people are thinking about topics and issues that "have arrived." The lack of current data provides a rough indicator of the urgency the country assigns to the problem.

A High Priority

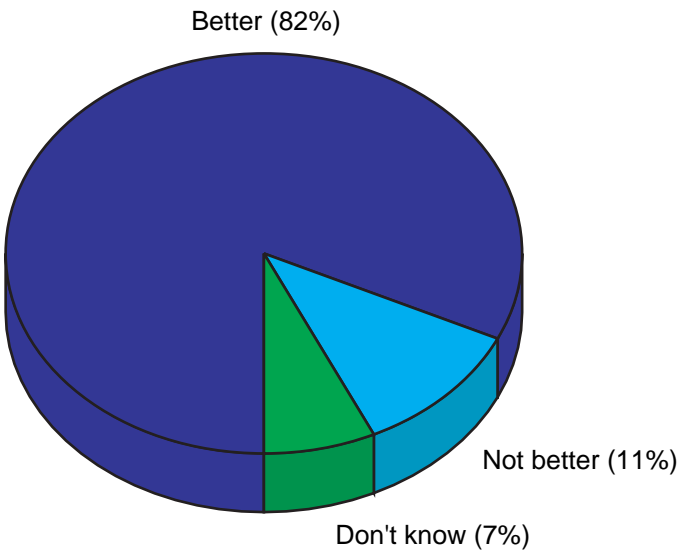
As I read off each goal, please tell me how high a priority you feel that goal should be given in the coming decade - very high, high, low, or very low? By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the skills necessary to compete in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of



Source: Gallup Organization / Phi Delta Kappa 5/91

A Good Thing To Do

There are many ways businesses can be involved with the local community. Please tell me whether having a company involved in this way in the local community would make you feel better about the company or not. If it provides assistance to literacy programs.



Source: Roper / National Rural Electric Coop. 1/92

GOAL SEVEN: Safe, Disciplined Schools

Gallup's annual survey for Phi Delta Kappa shows both that the public and parents name "fighting and violence" and "lack of discipline" as problems that immediately spring to mind when they are asked about issues facing their local schools.⁵⁰ The survey numbers -- and others like them -- reinforce what researchers see routinely in focus groups. Convene a group of parents, teachers, or members of the public -- in a large city, leafy suburb, or even in rural America -- and ask them how schools in their area are doing. Within minutes, respondents will begin to bring up problems related to drugs, fights, gangs, truancy, disrespect, intimidation, petty theft, or more. Concerns about safety and order in schools range across geographic and demographic lines.⁵¹

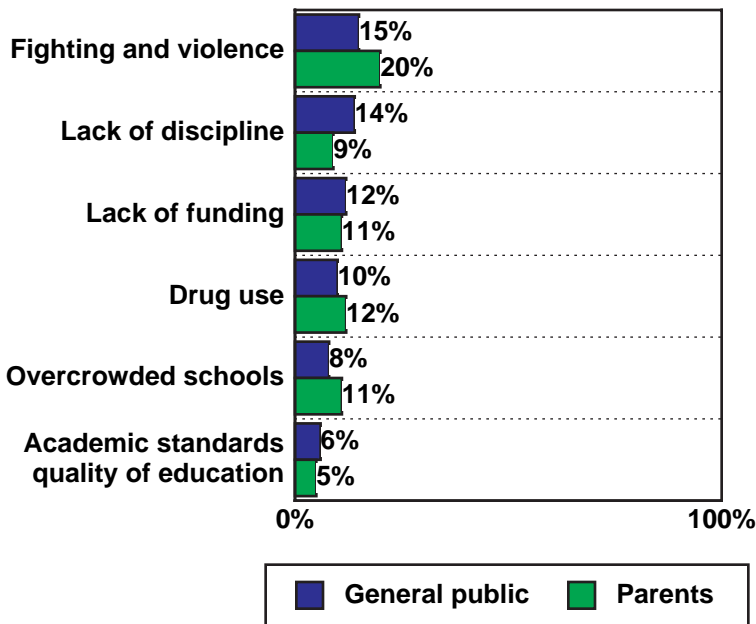
Some experts believe that public and parental fears about safety are inflamed by news coverage of disturbing, but mercifully rare crimes of violence in schools, and opinion research offers some confirmation for this idea. But surveys of teachers and students -- who have day-to-day knowledge of what happens in their own schools -- are not especially reassuring. Nearly half of both groups say there is too much drugs and violence in their own schools.⁵² Surveys of teenagers show that many have quick access to drugs and everyday familiarity with both sellers and users of hard drugs in their own schools.⁵³

Public Agenda's in-depth study of high schools students also shows strong majorities concerned about disruptive youngsters in their classes, with minority teens even more likely to say this is a serious problem in their schools. Studies of teachers also show frustration and a sense of beleaguerment about unruly, undisciplined youngsters.

Given the high level of concern, it is not surprising that there is strong support for tough measures to remove dangerous youngsters from schools and disruptive kids from regular classrooms — support among the public, white and African-American parents, teachers, and among teens themselves⁵⁴ The available survey data is not as informative about what schools (or society) should do with youngsters who, in the public mind, need to be separated from the general school population. But Public Agenda's research has also revealed a strong belief among adults that even the most troubled youngsters can be retrieved by intensive guidance from strong, caring adults.⁵⁵

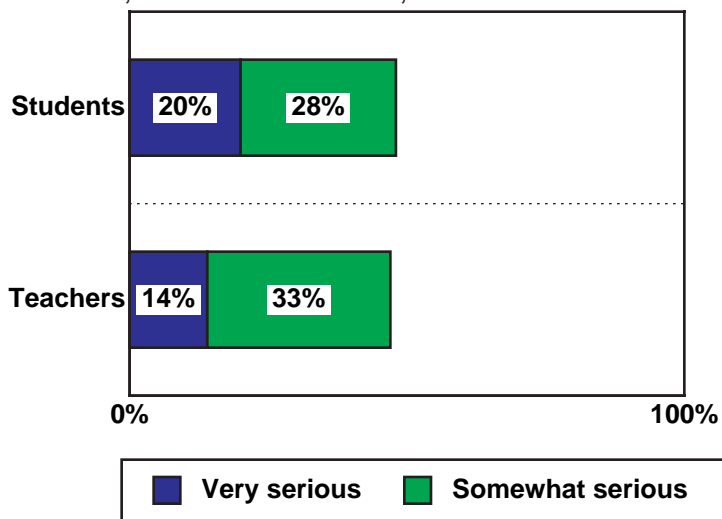
Problems with Safety and Order

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



Students and Teachers Concerned

Here are some problems different public schools may or may not have. Please tell me how serious a problem the following is in your own community's public schools? How about too much drugs and violence in the schools, is that problem very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious or not a

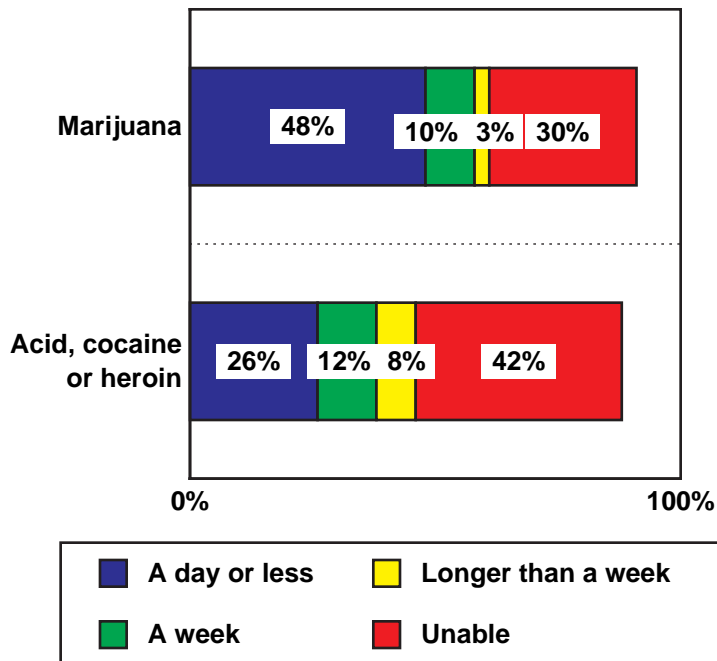


Source: Gallup Organization / Phi Delta Kappa 6/98

Source: Public Agenda 10/95, 11/96

Easy Access to Drugs

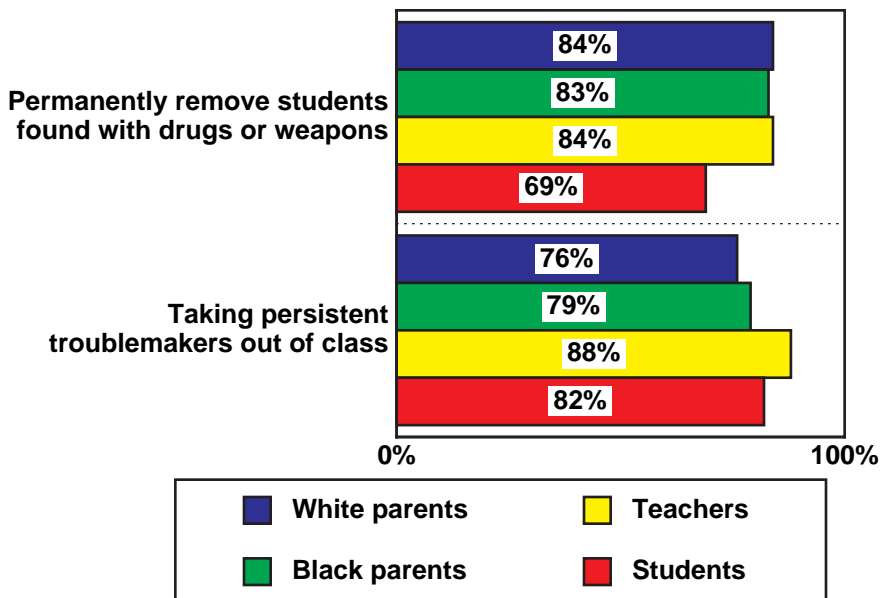
If you wanted to buy drugs right now, how long would it take you: 30 minutes or less, an hour or less, a few hours, a day, a week, longer than a week, or would you be unable



Tougher Measures Supported

Now I'm going to read you some ideas for changing the way public schools teach. Do you the following proposals would improve kids' academic achievement. Use a 5 point scale, where 5 means that it would improve achievement a great deal and 1 means it would not

(Percentage rating proposal a 4 or 5)



Source: Luntz /CASA / Robert Wood Johnson 5/98

Source; Public Agenda 8/94, 10/95, 11/96 4/98

GOAL EIGHT: Parental Participation

Increasing parental involvement has become an important initiative in school districts nationwide, reflecting agreement among the public, teachers, and numerous education experts that families are central to a child's academic success. Not only is parental participation important, most Americans say educational progress is not likely to take place without it. In fact, over two-thirds of Americans say they "agree strongly" with this sentiment.⁵⁶

Although everyone agrees that parental involvement is necessary, surveys offer a mixed picture on how much is actually taking place and what is actually meant by this phrase? In studies by Public Agenda and others, a solid majority of school parents say they attend parent-teacher meetings, and over half say they go to at least one meeting of the PTA each year.⁵⁷ Survey questions that ask about people's personal behavior - as opposed to their opinions - can show inflated numbers for socially desirable or expected actions. Survey respondents, being human, sometimes report what they intend to do or think about doing, rather than the literal truth.

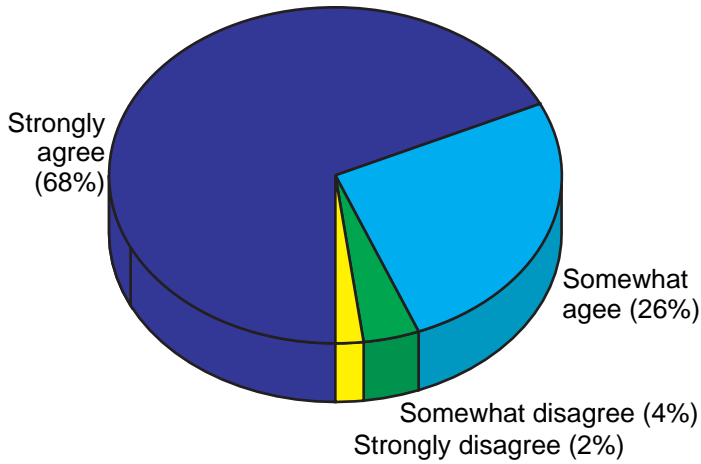
But Public Agenda's survey of high school students, *Getting By*, offers some additional informative insights. While roughly 8 in 10 teens say their parents know how they are doing in class and what they are studying, just over half say their parent knows the name of their favorite teacher. Seventy percent of teens say their parents pressure them to get good grades, and focus groups suggest that family discussions - at least for teenagers - often revolve around report cards. Indeed, many teenagers report that grades are a source of considerable tension in their families.⁵⁸

Another caveat on the extent and quality of parental participation comes from teachers. Only about one in five teachers would give the parents in their local schools an "A" or "B" for the way they bring up their children.⁵⁹ And finally, there is the question of what exactly is meant by "parental involvement." A Louis Harris study of teachers suggests that, for this group, not all parental involvement is equally welcome. While 70% like the idea of parents doing volunteer work in school, just 25% say it's very valuable to have parents involved in deciding what should be in the curriculum.⁶⁰

The subject of parental involvement is, by all accounts, supremely important, and Public Agenda is currently fielding an in-depth study of both parents and teachers on this issue. Additional findings will be available in early 1999.

Parents Are Important

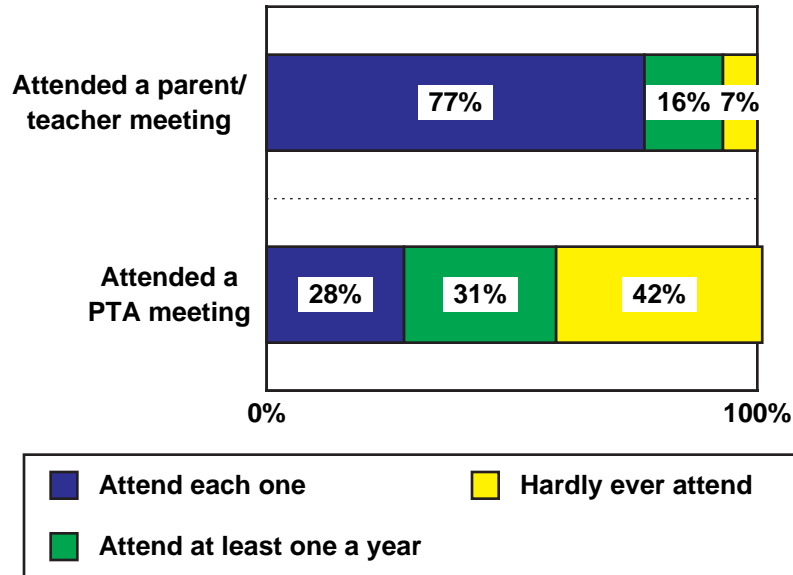
Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement. We cannot make any progress on greater educational success for children without getting greater parental



Source: The Tarrance Group and Lake Research / Coalition for America's Children 12/96

Good Self Evaluation

When it comes to the parent-teacher conferences and PTA meetings, do you make sure to attend each one, attend at least one every year or do you hardly

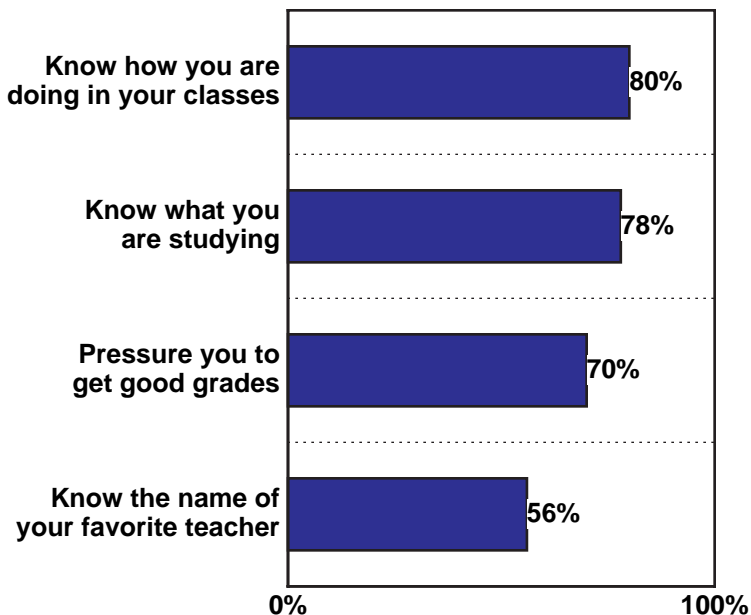


Source: Public Agenda 10/97

Mixed Views From Teens

Do your parents or guardians...?

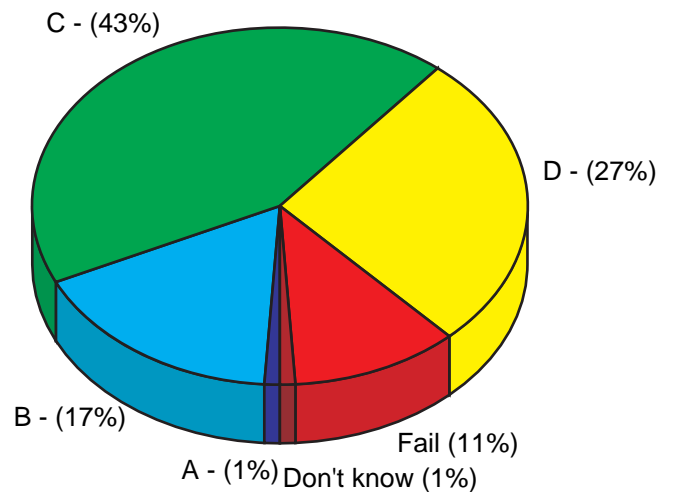
(Percentage saying "yes")



Source: Public Agenda 11/96

Low Marks From Teachers

What grade would you give the parents in the local public schools for bringing up their children?



Source: Gallup Organization / Phi Delta Kappa 5/97

FINDING FIVE: Who Decides?

Public Agenda's review of the opinion research on education shows widespread public support for all eight National Goals -- albeit at somewhat different levels of urgency -- and a conviction that achieving these goals would benefit the nation and their own communities. But agreement on what to do has not automatically translated into agreement on how these goals can be accomplished or who should be in charge.

Most surveys show a preference for local rather than national decision-making. When Public Agenda asked Americans how much they trust different groups to make decisions about public schools in their community, most gave strong votes of confidence to parents (67%) and teachers (64%), and about half said they trust local principals, school boards and taxpayers. In contrast, just 14% said they place a great deal of trust in elected officials in Washington.⁶¹ But other findings show that people do not reject a national role in education out-of-hand, and several current surveys indicate that Americans want Congress and/or the President to address education issues.

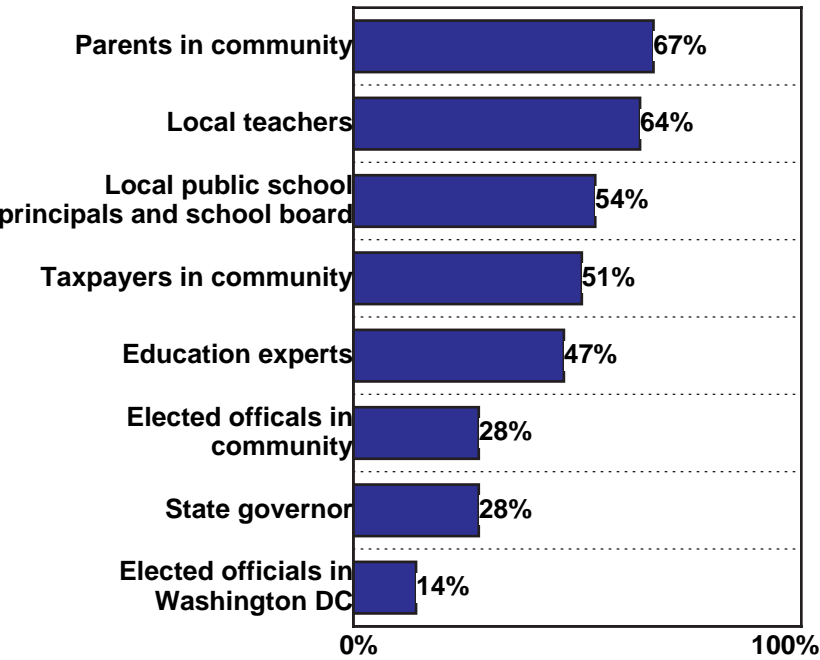
Some surveys also show positive responses to questions about "national" academic standards and achievement tests, although these should probably be viewed with some caution.⁶² Public support for "national" proposals, for example, may not be a literal endorsement for federal action, but rather an indication that people feel strongly about standards and accountability and want the entire country to make progress in this area. Public Agenda focus groups suggest that parents are often of two minds about the prospect of national standards and tests. They recognize that families often move from place to place and like the idea of insuring that education has a consistently high quality nationwide. At the same time, people express fears about arcane layers of regulation, bureaucratic "nitpicking," and micro-management -- features they associate (fairly or not) with the federal role in education.

Similar mixed signals emerge in the debate over whether ideas such as vouchers, for-profit schools, and charter schools would improve education for large numbers of American children. Responses to voucher questions show some inconsistencies depending on whether survey items emphasize the concept of choice for parents (which appeals to people), or the notion that tax dollars will be invested in private schools (an idea that discomfits some Americans).⁶³ Gallup's Phi Delta Kappa survey has shown a slight increase in the last few years for a proposal that would allow parents to send children to any public, private, or church-related school with the government paying all or part of the tuition. Americans are now essentially divided on that question.⁶⁴

Public Agenda's recent survey of white and African-American parents shows that over half of black parents support a voucher-type proposal as a means to help minority youngsters achieve at higher levels. But even higher numbers of both black and white parents endorse measures to improve public schools.⁶⁵ Both groups support charter schools at similar levels (55% for white parents and 56 % for black parents), but few parents in focus groups talked about charters with either great understanding or urgency.⁶⁶ In an earlier study, Public Agenda asked Americans what should be done when a school system repeatedly fails to give students a sound education, and provided a variety of alternatives as possible responses — vouchers, more money, reorganization, for-profit schools, or a state takeover. The results were basically “all over the lot” with no single approach winning majority support.⁶⁷

Support for Local Decision Making

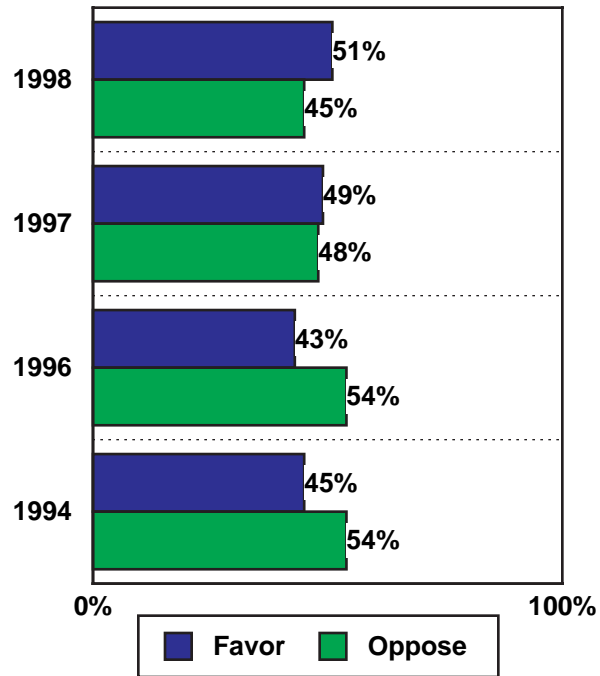
I'm going to name some people and I'd like you to tell me how much you would trust each of them to make decisions about how the public schools in your community should be run. Please use a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 means that you would trust them a great deal and 1 means you would not trust them at all.
(Percentage rating trust a 4 or 5)



Source: Public Agenda 8/94

Mixed Signals on Vouchers

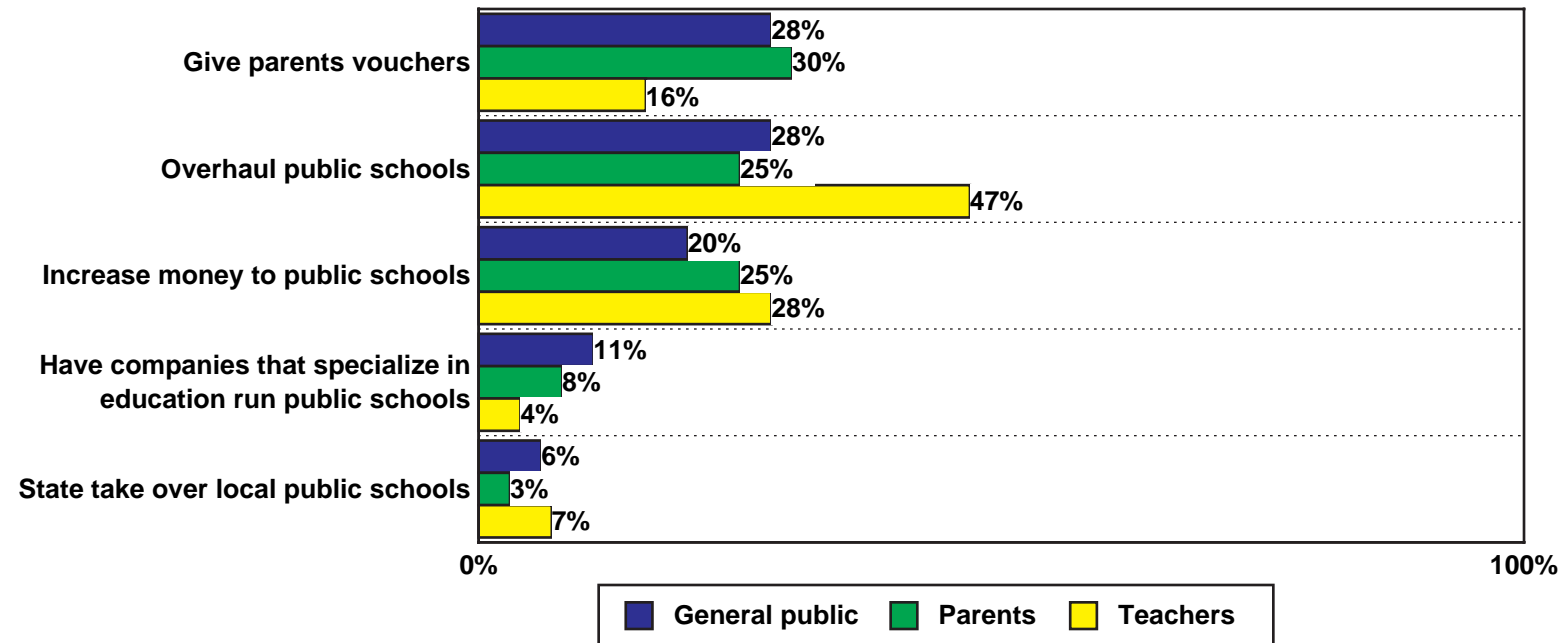
A proposal has been made that would allow parents to send their school-age children to any public, private, or church-related school they choose. For those parents choosing nonpublic schools, the government would pay all or part of the tuition. Would you favor or oppose?



Source: Gallup / Phi Delta Kappa 6/98

No Consensus on Worst Cases

If the public schools in your community had been failing to give kids a quality education for 10 to 15 years, which of the following would you want done first?



Source: Public Agenda 5/95

COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE NATIONAL GOALS FOR EDUCATION

Public support for the National Education Goals is strong and broadly-based, but that does not mean that it cannot be derailed by cursory or poorly thought-out communications activities. Even more important, support for the goals -- the public's belief that these are good and important ends to pursue -- does not automatically translate into participation in school reform efforts. For reasons that are complex and even tangled, many Americans seem content to sit on the sidelines when it comes to solving problems even within their own communities, and neither policymakers nor opinion researchers completely understand why.

Public passivity about local schools probably grows out of attitudes about government, community, and citizenship in addition to attitudes about education. More concrete concerns such as complicated family lives, lack of time, and a history of less-than-stellar engagement efforts by local and national officials also seem to play a role. Consequently, promoting greater involvement is likely to require long-term efforts with considerable trial and error along the way. Nevertheless, there are some important guidelines to keep in mind:

Lead with people's chief concerns. There is good public support for all the goals, but people feel much more urgency about some of them. Insuring school safety, raising academic achievement, making sure young people complete school, and increasing parental participation all strike an immediate responsive chord with the public. People are thinking about these ideas, and they spontaneously understand why they are important. Consequently, communications efforts should start where people start. Emphasize these goals first and foremost.

Show how "secondary" goals reinforce the ones people are more attuned to. People support better teacher education, adult literacy, preschool programs, and math and science education. It is just that these topics don't immediately spring to mind when people first start thinking about improving schools. Frankly, they just seem less urgent to many Americans. Communications efforts need to emphasize how this second tier of goals is vital to the public's "first things first" agenda. Better teacher education, for example, is the key to making many of the improvements people so eagerly want, so don't talk about it in isolation. Tie it to issues people are already tuned into.

Avoid jargon and policy speak. Like most other professional enterprises, education has developed its own jargon that can prove confusing and disorienting to the uninitiated. "Authentic assessments," "outcomes," "systemic reform," "student capacities" "content standards vs.

performance standards” are just a few of the phrases that are more likely to turn people off than draw them in. In fact, Public Agenda research has shown that some terms such as “bilingual education” and “multi-cultural education” actually have quite different meanings to the public than they do to experts and professionals. Communications materials and approaches should talk about children, teachers, and what happens in the nation’s classrooms in clear, concrete terms.

Be a neutral and fair-minded messenger. People are tired of partisan squabbling, and many are cynical about the motives of decision-makers in all fields. In some senses, people are looking for institutions and individuals that rise above the fray and help them, the citizens, understand more about the choices they face in their communities and the country as a whole. Present information without spin, without manipulation, and without maligning the motives of those with different points-of-view, and you vastly expand your potential audience.

Build credibility by being frank about trade-offs and possible difficulties. Achieving the National Education Goals is ambitious work, and acknowledging the challenge can lend enormous credibility to the message. A lot of Americans believe that policymakers often pander and mislead -- telling people what people want to hear and dancing around the costs and trade-offs that significant change always involves. Candor is a prized asset these days, one that compels attention and respect among a public hungry for substance. A little frankness actually sets a communications campaign apart.

Remember the special audience -- the teachers. In a number of key areas — standards and accountability are prime examples -- teachers have a distinctive point of view. Not only are teachers an important audience in and of themselves, they are influential and credible voices in their own communities and especially with parents. Research suggests that many teachers feel beleaguered and under-appreciated, and many have a “been there, done that” take on education reform. Communications activities should include significant steps to allow teachers to voice their concerns and help them wrestle with the changes likely to be needed in their own roles and training. A major effort will be needed to re-energize this exceptionally important group.

Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. Communicating with the public about the National Goals might benefit from the old adage about speech-making — tell ‘em what you’re going to say; tell ‘em what you have to say; then tell ‘em what you said. People are overloaded with information; demands for their attention flow in from every direction. One shot communications — the big news conference, then silence — are virtually doomed to fail. It takes time to get on the public agenda. It takes time for people to understand unfamiliar ideas. It takes time for people to become realistic and give up wishful thinking. It takes time for people to work through inconsistencies in their own

attitudes. It takes time to get a consensus. Promoting public involvement in tasks as important and challenging as the National Goals just can't be rushed.

Consider public engagement. Public relations promotes specific ideas and champions certain solutions, and it has an important place in the policymaking arena. But there is another approach that the Goals Panel may wish to consider. Public engagement does not attempt to send a message to people or to persuade them about the wisdom of a particular approach. Instead, it presents people with a problem that is important to them, gives them choices to consider, and provides opportunities for communities to reach their own solutions and act on them. Since Americans broadly agree that the National Goals are important, but don't necessarily agree on how to accomplish them, a public engagement campaign could be useful. By considering choices on how to accomplish each goal, people may be more likely to become involved in community discussions and more likely to anticipate (and consequently accept) some "bumps along the road." And, they may be more likely to be committed to the solutions their own communities pursue.

ENDNOTES:

1. For example: a Gallup Organization poll in 1983 shows that 53% of Americans said they had “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the military. A similar Gallup poll in 1998 shows that 64% of Americans said they had “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the military.
2. For example: *Fox News* (conducted by Opinion Dynamics). National telephone survey of 900 registered voters, conducted October 28-29, 1998. See also, *The New York Times* (conducted by Voter News Service). National voters exit poll of 5,008 voters, conducted November 3, 1998.
3. Yankelovich Partners (sponsored by *Time*, Cable News Network). National telephone survey of 1,024 adults, conducted June 30- July 1, 1998.
4. *Reality Check*, Public Agenda. National telephone survey of 700 parents with children in public school in grades Kindergarten - 12th grade, 700 public school teachers, 700 public school students in middle or high school, 250 college professors of freshmen and sophomore students and 250 employers of recent graduates, conducted September 26 - October 24, 1997. Published in Education Week’s *Quality Counts 98*, on January 8, 1998.
5. Gallup Organization (sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa). National telephone survey of 1,151 adults, conducted June 5-23, 1998.
6. *Reality Check*, Public Agenda.
7. *Assignment Incomplete*, Public Agenda. National telephone survey of 1,200 adults, conducted May 12-25, 1995. Also *Reality Check*, Public Agenda.
8. *Time To Move On*, Public Agenda. National telephone survey of 800 White parents and 800 African American parents with children in Kindergarten - 12th grade, conducted March 26 - April 17, 1998: “If you could afford it, would you rather your children attend: a private, non-religious school, a private, religious school, or a public school?” White parents responses: Private, non-religious school (23%), Private, religious school (27%), Public school (47%), Don’t know (3%). African American parents responses: Private, non-religious school (20%), Private, religious school (40%), Public school (38%), Don’t know (1%).
9. Gallup Organization (sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa). National telephone survey of 1,151 adults, conducted June 5-23, 1998.
10. *Reality Check*, Public Agenda.

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11. *Reality Check*, Public Agenda.
 12. *First Things First*, Public Agenda. National telephone survey of 1,198 adults, conducted August 8-14, 1994. *Assignment Incomplete*, Public Agenda. *Time To Move On*, Public Agenda. *A Lot To Be Thankful For*, Public Agenda. National telephone survey of 801 parents of public school students, 200 foreign-born parents, 203 Hispanic parents and 198 African American parents, conducted September 3-16, 1998.
 13. *First Things First*, Public Agenda. *Assignment Incomplete*, Public Agenda. *Kids These Days*, Public Agenda. National telephone survey of 2,000 adults and 600 children aged 12-17, conducted December 3-18, 1996. *Reality Check*, Public Agenda. *Time To Move On*, Public Agenda. *A Lot To Be Thankful For*, Public Agenda.
 14. Gallup Organization (sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa). National telephone survey of 1,306 adults, conducted April 23 - May 14, 1992.
 15. *Given The Circumstances*, Public Agenda. National telephone survey of 1,164 Public school teachers, conducted October 9-26, 1995. *Time To Move On*, Public Agenda.
 16. Princeton Survey Research Associates (sponsored by Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University). National telephone survey of 1,000 voters, conducted November 6-10, 1996. The Tarrance Group and Lake Research (sponsored by Coalition for America's Children). National telephone survey of 800 registered voters, conducted December 4-8, 1996. Louis Harris and Associates (sponsored by Kaiser Family Foundation and The Commonwealth Fund). National telephone survey and personal interviews of 4,001 adults, conducted September 1996 - March 1997. Princeton Survey Research Associates (sponsored by The Pew Research Center). National telephone surveys of 1,228 adults conducted May 15-18, 1997. Princeton Survey Research Associates (sponsored by The Pew Research Center). National telephone surveys of 1,218 adults conducted January 14-18, 1998. Princeton Survey Research Associates (sponsored by The Pew Research Center). National telephone surveys of 1,010 adults conducted November 14-18, 1997.
 17. *Time To Move On*, Public Agenda.
 18. For example: Princeton Survey Research Associates (sponsored by The Pew Research Center). National telephone surveys of 1,228 adults conducted May 15-18, 1997.
 19. Princeton Survey Research Associates (sponsored by Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University). National telephone survey of 1,000 voters, conducted November 6-10, 1996.
 20. *Kids These Days* Public Agenda.
 21. *Kids These Days* Public Agenda.

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22. Princeton Survey Research Associates (sponsored by Newsweek). National telephone survey of 656 Adults, margin of error +/-4%, conducted April 14-15, 1997.
 23. Gallup Organization (sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa). National telephone survey of 1,151 adults, conducted June 5-23, 1998.
 24. *Assignment Incomplete*, Public Agenda. *Getting By*, Public Agenda. National telephone survey of 1,000 public high school students, conducted October 29 - November 20, 1996.
 25. *Time To Move On*, Public Agenda.
 26. *Reality Check*, Public Agenda.
 27. *Americans' Views on Standards*, Public Agenda (sponsored by IBM International Foundation and The National Governors' Association) conducted March 1996.
 28. *Reality Check*, Public Agenda..
 29. *Reality Check*, Public Agenda.
 30. *Reality Check*, Public Agenda.
 31. *Reality Check*, Public Agenda.
 32. *Time To Move On*, Public Agenda.
 33. *Given The Circumstances*, Public Agenda. *Getting By*, Public Agenda. *Time To Move On*, Public Agenda.
 34. *First Things First*, Public Agenda. *Time To Move On*, Public Agenda. *A Lot To Be Thankful For*, Public Agenda.
 35. *Given The Circumstances*, Public Agenda. *Reality Check*, Public Agenda. National telephone survey of 700 K-12 public school teachers, 700 parents with children in public school in Kindergarten-12th grade, 700 middle and high school students in public school, 250 college professors of freshmen and sophomore students and 250 employers of recent graduates, conducted October - November, 1998. To be published in Education Week's *Quality Counts 99*.
 36. *Given The Circumstances*, Public Agenda.
 37. *Given The Circumstances*, Public Agenda. *Reality Check*, Public Agenda.
 38. *Getting By*, Public Agenda. See also Louis Harris and Associates (sponsored by Recruiting New Teachers). National telephone survey of 1,504 adults, conducted August

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- 12 - September 14, 1998.
39. *First Things First*, Public Agenda.
 40. *Getting By*, Public Agenda.
 41. *Different Drummers*, Public Agenda. National telephone survey of 900 professors of education, conducted July 9 - September 5, 1997.
 42. *Different Drummers*, Public Agenda. Princeton Survey Research Associates. National telephone survey of 750 adults, margin of error +/-4%, conducted March 19-20, 1998.
 43. *Different Drummers*, Public Agenda.
 44. *Given The Circumstances*, Public Agenda. *Getting By*, Public Agenda.
 45. NFO Research (sponsored by Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, Inc.) National mail survey of 2,250 children aged 14-18 years old, conducted May 1998.
 46. *Math Leads The Way*, Public Agenda. National mail survey of 779 participants of the October 1993 Math Connection video-conference, conducted April 1993. *First Things First*, Public Agenda. *Given The Circumstances*, Public Agenda. *Different Drummers*, Public Agenda.
 47. *Assignment Incomplete*, Public Agenda.
 48. Gallup Organization (sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa). National personal interviews of 1,500 adults, conducted May 3-17, 1991.
 49. Roper Organization (sponsored by National Rural Electric Cooperative Association). National personal interviews of 1,189 adults, conducted January 25 - February 1, 1992.
 50. Gallup Organization (sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa). National telephone survey of 1,151 adults, conducted June 5-23, 1998.
 51. *First Things First*, Public Agenda. *Time To Move On*, Public Agenda.
 52. *Given The Circumstances*, Public Agenda. *Getting By*, Public Agenda.
 53. The Luntz Research Companies (sponsored by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation). National telephone survey of 1,000 teenagers aged 12-17, 825 teachers, 822 principals, conducted May 1998.
 54. *First Things First*, Public Agenda. *Given The Circumstances*, Public Agenda. *Getting By*,

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- Public Agenda. *Time To Move On*, Public Agenda.
55. *Kids These Days*, Public Agenda.
 56. The Tarrance Group and Lake Research (sponsored by Coalition for America's Children). National telephone survey of 800 registered voters, conducted December 4-8, 1996.
 57. Roper Starch Worldwide (sponsored by Whirlpool Foundation). National personal interview survey of 1,005 adult mothers of children aged 6-17, conducted October 16-24, 1997.
 58. *Getting By*, Public Agenda.
 59. Gallup Organization (sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa). National telephone survey of 1,517 adults, conducted June 3-22, 1997.
 60. Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. (sponsored by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company). National telephone interview of 1,035 teachers of grades 6-12, conducted April 28 - June 11, 1997: "Here are some possible ways that parents might be involved with the school. For each tell me how valuable you think it would be – very valuable, somewhat valuable, not too valuable, or not valuable at all." Having parents do volunteer work to help out at the school? Responses: Very valuable (70%), Somewhat valuable (28%), Not too valuable (2%), Not valuable at all (< .5%). Placing parents on committees that decide the curriculum of the school? Responses: Very valuable (25%), Somewhat valuable (49%), Not too valuable (18%), Not valuable at all (8%).
 61. *First Things First*, Public Agenda.
 62. For example: Hart and Teeter Research Companies (sponsored by NBC News, *Wall Street Journal*). National telephone survey of 2,004 adults, conducted September 11-15, 1997: "I am going to read you some education proposals, and for each one, please tell me whether you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose that proposal...establishing a voluntary national test to measure the reading and math skills of students?" Responses: Strongly favor (54%), Somewhat favor (25%), Somewhat oppose (8%), Strongly oppose (10%), Not sure (3%). Also, American Viewpoint. National telephone survey of 1,000 registered voters, conducted February 10-13, 1997.
 63. Gallup Organization (sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa). National telephone survey of 1,151 adults, conducted June 5-23, 1998.
 64. Gallup Organization (sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa). National telephone survey of 1,151 adults, conducted June 5-23, 1998.
 65. *Time To Move On*, Public Agenda.

66. *Time To Move On*, Public Agenda.

67. *Assignment Incomplete*, Public Agenda.