



# Where We Are Now

12 Things You Need to Know about  
**PUBLIC OPINION** and **PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



**PUBLIC AGENDA**

Prepared by  
Public Agenda



**Washington  
Mutual**

Underwritten by  
Washington Mutual

A Digest of a Decade of Survey Research



**Washington  
Mutual**

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**PUBLIC AGENDA**

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# Where We Are Now

12 Things You Need to Know about  
**PUBLIC OPINION** and **PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



**A Report from Public Agenda**

by Jean Johnson and Ann Duffett

with Jackie Vine and Leslie Moyer

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For full question wording, full responses and original source for each finding cited in this report, please refer to the *Complete Survey Findings for Where We Are Now*, available free of charge in PDF format on [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org). Copies of Public Agenda's education reports from 1998 to the present also can be downloaded from the Web site free of charge.

# Bringing a Decade of Research to Light

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Washington Mutual and Public Agenda—the nation’s premier source of in-depth polling and research on education, children, family and other vital public issues—are pleased to bring you this new report *Where We Are Now: 12 Things You Need to Know about Public Opinion and Public Schools*.

*Where We Are Now*—drawn from a decade of research and evaluation—will be an invaluable resource for public officials, school administrators and business and community leaders. It clearly lays out the opinions of various education stakeholders about issues ranging from student testing and achievement to teacher compensation and parental involvement. It also reveals challenges schools face in their work to equip students with the skills and knowledge they need for success in the workplace and in life.

At Washington Mutual, we continually invest in education because it produces a strong return for students and families. Healthy schools are the cornerstone of healthy communities.

Both Washington Mutual and Public Agenda are committed to listening to those who do the hard work of education every day and making sure that their voices continue to be an important part of the ongoing dialogue.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kerry Killinger".

Kerry Killinger  
Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer  
Washington Mutual



# Introduction

## What Role Should Public Opinion Play?



In essence, *Where We Are Now* is a survey of surveys. It is an analysis of public opinion on public schools drawing on a decade of Public Agenda research and a close reading of polls conducted by other respected organizations. Here, we try to pinpoint the key elements of public thinking about public schools and show how it has

changed over the last few years. Washington Mutual has provided support for this new analysis and for publication of this report.

This retrospective devotes special attention to attitudes on standards and testing. Schools nationwide have adopted new standards for student learning, and all 50 states now use testing to some degree to measure student progress. In 2002, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act, which relies heavily on annual testing and sets out explicit consequences for schools where students repeatedly fail.

The standards movement has enjoyed bipartisan backing for more than a decade, and many strongly support the new federal law. From their perspective, what has long been talked about—setting higher standards and enforcing them—is now becoming reality. But others voice doubts. Is all this testing really beneficial, they ask? Will we fulfill our obligation to help schools and students who fail?

*Where We Are Now* revisits the public's take on standards and testing, along with other issues affecting public schools. But our report is not limited to assessing the broad public's views. In more than a dozen national surveys, Public Agenda has looked at attitudes among parents, teachers, students, principals, superintendents and school board members, and we add their thinking to the mix.

We rely particularly on a series of surveys conducted from 1998 through 2002 with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts and GE Foundation. These *Reality Check* surveys, originally published in *Education Week*, capture the views of students, teachers, parents, employers and college professors just as the standards movement was shifting into high gear. See the Methodology for a list of all the studies covered in *Where We Are Now*.

The attention we give to public opinion in this report naturally prompts the question of what role polls should play in education or any other complex policy arena. Viewing public opinion as a formula for policy change is probably a recipe for disaster. People are not following some important debates in education very closely. They may have a vision of the kind of public schools they want, but few have struggled with the details of precisely how to get there. Parents are understandably more focused on the needs of their own child than on those of children overall.





Context also plays a role. Surveys are useful predictors of how the public may respond, and *Where We Are Now* focuses on findings that capture the fundamental elements of public thinking. But the quality of local schools, the quality of local leadership, local politics, local funding, local press coverage—all of these can affect people’s views. Surveys can give leaders a heads up, but they still have to consider the situation on the ground.

It is also worth remembering that some of the most significant developments in American history have not been led by public opinion. Americans now say that the civil rights movement benefited the country, but that was not always the case. Still,

the public pays for public schools, and most American families send their children to them. It is almost inconceivable to imagine a defensible public school system that does not reflect the values and goals of the community.

So what role should surveys play? They offer a road map of where people agree and where they are divided. They provide clues to what people value and what they understand. They can be an early warning system about policies that may unnerve or alienate people. But in the end, they are a starting point for dialogue, not a substitute for it. They are a guide for leadership, not a replacement for it.



## FINDING ONE:

**The public—including parents, teachers and students—believes that setting standards and enforcing them promotes learning. Social promotion, they say, harms kids.**

The specific provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act may be controversial among educators, but the public’s support for the ideas behind the drive to raise standards is not in doubt. More than a decade ago, the majority of Americans bemoaned the lack of even basic skills among students, and many still complain about low academic standards. Even now, the vast majority of Americans are convinced that most youngsters achieve just a small part of their educational potential. And surveys of students suggest that many of them are far from exerting maximum effort in school.

Surveys that ask Americans about raising and enforcing standards in public schools routinely draw strong majority support. Backing for higher standards extends across different groups in the population, and African American parents seem especially concerned about low standards in their children’s schools. What’s more, support for higher standards remains strong even when researchers ask respondents about trade-offs such as holding children back or forcing them to attend summer school. In fact, majorities of parents, teachers, students, employers and professors say it is much worse for a child to be promoted and passed along without learning what was expected than to be held back a grade.

Most communities have now had a taste of what the standards movement may mean in action. And so far, parents, teachers, employers and professors give their local districts a remarkable thumbs up. Strong majorities say their own district has been careful and reasonable in its drive to raise standards. Mere handfuls believe it would be better for their district to return to the policies of the past.

**NOTE:** Question wording in charts has been edited for space. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding or the omission of some answer categories. Please refer to the *Complete Survey Findings for Where We Are Now* on Public Agenda Online ([www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org)) for complete question wording, full responses and sample size for each finding cited in this report. Unless otherwise noted, “students” are public school students in 6th-12th grade; “teachers” are K-12 public school teachers; “parents” refers to those who have a child in grades K-12 in public school; “employers” refers to those who make hiring decisions for employees recently out of high school or college; and “professors” refers to those who taught freshmen or sophomores in the past two years.

### Where We Started

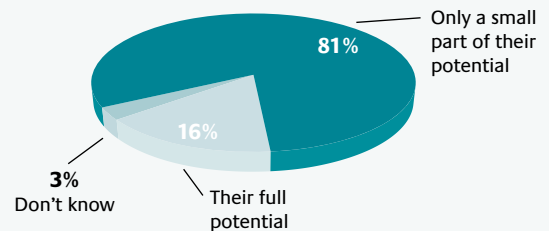
During the 1990s Americans said:

Lack of adequate standards is a problem*	72%
The country’s schools are doing a fair or poor job in teaching students to read, write and reason well**	64%
Not enough emphasis on basics is a serious problem	60%

\* NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Kennedy School of Government 1999  
\*\*School Reform Survey/Louis Harris & Associates 1991

### Kids Can Do More

Americans say most students achieve:\*



% of students who say:

Most students do the bare minimum they need to get by	71%
I could try a little harder in school	56%

\*Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll 2001

### Strong Support for Raising Standards

Having guidelines for what students should learn and know helps improve students’ academic performance



Students should pass a standardized test to be promoted and those who fail should go to summer school or repeat the grade



## The Rubber Hits the Road

Parents would still approve a policy that requires students to pass a standardized test to be promoted even if it meant:

Their own child had to go to summer school **94%**

Their own child had to repeat the grade **87%**

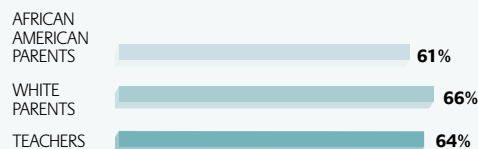
Students say they would be motivated a lot to work harder in school by:

Fear of being left back **67%**

Fear of having to go to summer school **63%**

## Higher Standards for All Children

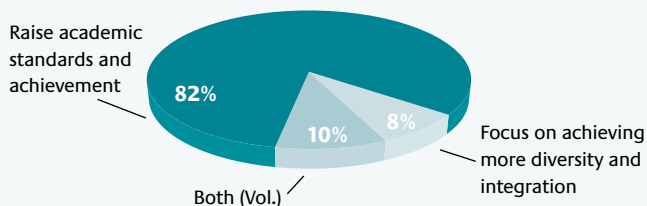
Inner-city kids should be expected to achieve the same standards as kids from wealthy backgrounds



It is absolutely essential to promote kids *only* after they show they have learned what they were supposed to



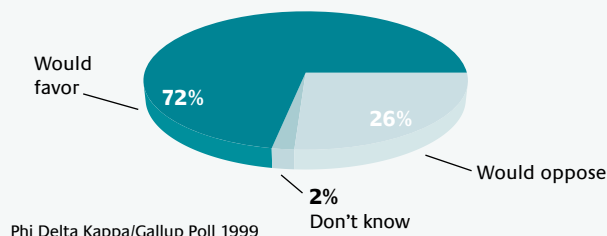
African American parents believe the bigger priority for their children's schools should be to:



## Even If...

Would you favor stricter standards for social promotion even if it meant significantly more students would be held back?

% of Americans who say:



## It's Worse to Pass Children Along

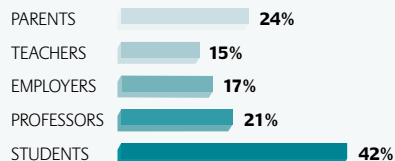
Which is worse for a child struggling in school:

To be promoted to the next grade and be expected to keep up with the work



OR

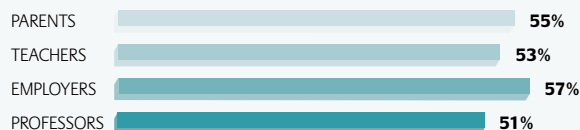
To repeat a grade in order to catch up



## Few Want to Turn Back

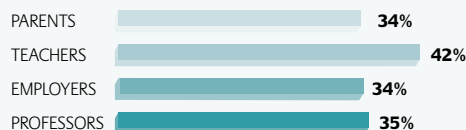
Should the standards initiative:

Proceed as planned



OR

Continue but with some adjustments



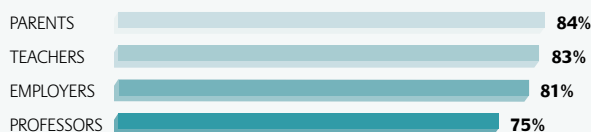
OR

Be stopped and things should go back to the way they were



## So Far, Schools Have Been Reasonable

Schools are being careful and reasonable in putting higher standards in place





## FINDING TWO:

**Standards and promotion policies have changed in recent years, and attitudes about local schools have improved. Even so, many students still move ahead without acquiring needed skills.**

Surveys suggest that standards reform is far more than rhetoric. For example, based on what Public Agenda has learned from teachers about practices in their own schools, social promotion is on the decline. Also, there's evidence that more schools are using summer school as part of a standards reform package.

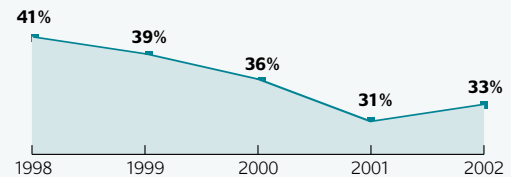
Despite concern that communities resist efforts to raise and enforce standards, the *Reality Check* surveys suggest that attitudes about local public schools have actually improved from 1998 to 2002—at least in the academic arena. Both professors and employers are less likely to say that local schools ask too little of students. And while both of these groups still have strong complaints about students' skills (see Finding 8), they are somewhat more likely than they were five years ago to say that local schools do a good or excellent job. Parents also seem to be seeing some improvement in standards in local public schools compared to standards in local private ones.

Even so, standards advocates probably shouldn't pat themselves on the back quite yet. Nearly half of teachers say many youngsters in their school get a diploma even though they don't have the needed skills. A large number of teachers says some of their colleagues pass students to the next level even though they aren't ready. Indeed, a fairly large number of teachers report having done this themselves.

### Social Promotion Is Declining

% of teachers who say:

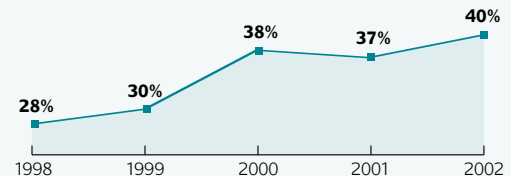
Schools automatically promote students who have reached a maximum age



### Summer School Attendance Is Up

% of teachers who say:

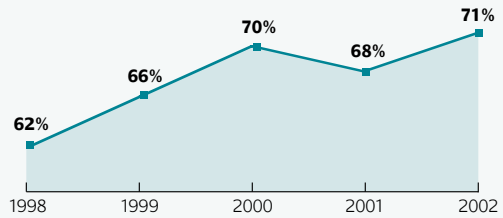
The number of students going to summer school has increased





## And Better Grades from Parents

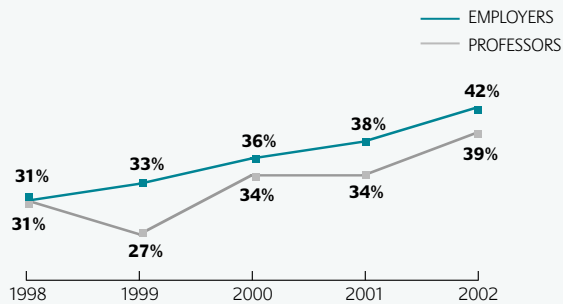
Their child's public school gets a grade of A or B



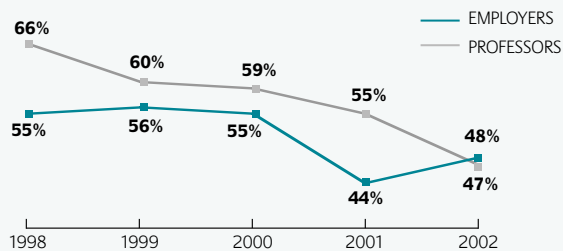
Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll

## Better Marks from Employers and Professors

Local public schools are doing an excellent or good job

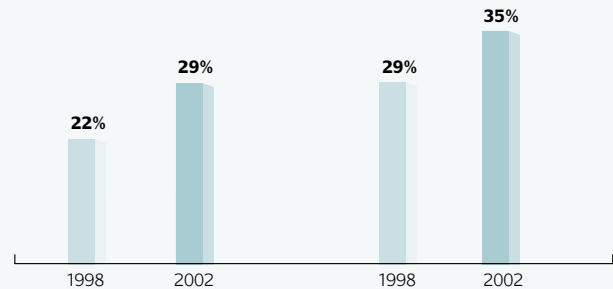


Local schools expect too little from students



## Better Comparisons with Private Schools

According to parents:



Local public schools have higher academic standards than local private schools

Local public schools provide a better education than local private schools

## Still a Way to Go

According to teachers:

Some kids graduate even though they haven't learned what they are supposed to	48%
Teachers pass students to the next grade as long as they try hard and attend class regularly	46%
In the past few years, I have promoted students who should have been held back	44%



## FINDING THREE:

**The vast majority of parents and teachers say standardized tests are useful, and few students are overly anxious about them. But people also think tests can be misused, and many say there's too much emphasis on them.**

Time and again, surveys show Americans calling for tests in public schools, and people see a number of advantages to them. Strong majorities of parents, teachers, employers and professors say students work harder if they know they will be tested, and students themselves acknowledge this is so. Majorities also say standardized tests are a good way to spot struggling students who might need help.

Most parents say their child takes about the right number of tests, and students themselves say test questions are fair. While there has been controversy over cultural or racial bias in standardized tests, many African American parents say they believe tests reveal genuine differences in achievement.

Students seem to take standardized tests in stride. Virtually all say they take these tests seriously, but only a handful report feeling overwhelmed by pressure. Most say that teachers spend time in class preparing for standardized tests, but only small numbers say teachers neglect other important topics to do this.

Findings such as these are strong endorsements for testing, yet there are limits on what people find acceptable. Large majorities of parents, teachers, students, employers and professors say it is not fair to use results from a single test to determine promotion or graduation. Still, there is little evidence to suggest that such practice is common. Just a handful of teachers say their district uses test scores this way.

Nevertheless, there are some warning signs for testing advocates. Parents, teachers, employers and professors say testing has benefits, but majorities also say that it gets “far too much emphasis” today. Students, of course, take many tests, not just the ones required for standards assessment. Tests are frequently part of applying for college, competing for financial aid, monitoring learning disabilities—on top of the time-honored midterm and final exams. And testing and test scores are often a focal point for local news coverage and community debate.

It is not clear what part of this mix feeds concerns about too much emphasis or whether they are the net result of accumulated factors. Whatever the case, they do bear watching. Most Americans believe tests are genuinely useful, and they rely on them to insure that schools do their job. In fact, a sharp turn away from testing might create its own kind of backlash. Still, when it comes to testing, many Americans could come to believe that more is not necessarily better.

### Testing as Insurance

**Before students are awarded a high school diploma:**

**They should be required to pass a basic skills test**



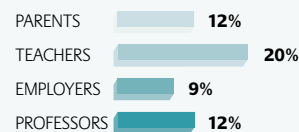
**OR**

**They should pass a more challenging test**



**OR**

**It's a bad idea to require a test for a high school diploma**

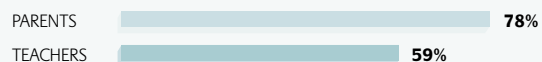


### Other Benefits as Well

**Students work harder if they have to pass a test for promotion**



**Testing at a young age is a good way to identify students who need help**



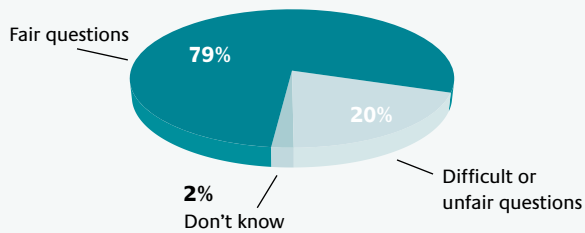
**Standardized test scores are a good way to spot students who need tutoring or summer school**



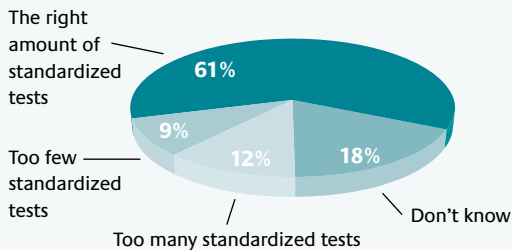
\* High school students

## Tests Are Generally Fair

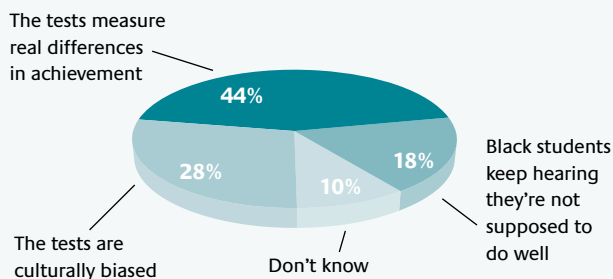
According to students, the standardized tests they take ask:



According to parents, their child is taking:

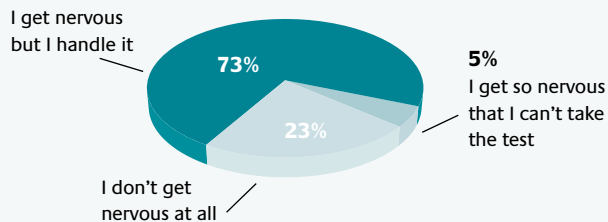


According to African American parents, black students don't do as well as white students on standardized tests because:



## Most Students Don't Panic

How nervous do you get when you take standardized tests?



## Don't Judge by Tests Alone

It's wrong to use results of just one test as basis for promotion

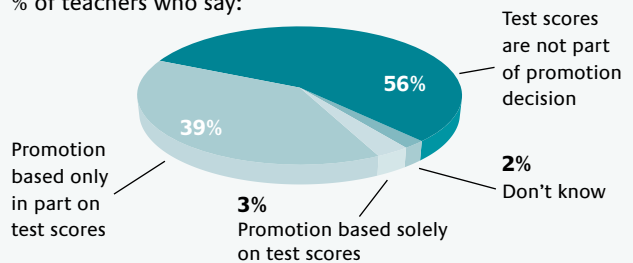


Schools should use standardized test scores *and* teacher evaluations as basis for promotion



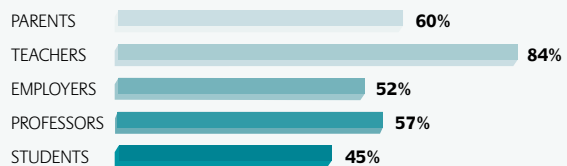
What part do test scores play when it comes to promotion in your school?

% of teachers who say:

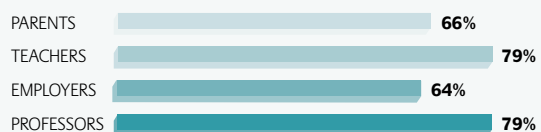


## Too Much Emphasis on Testing?

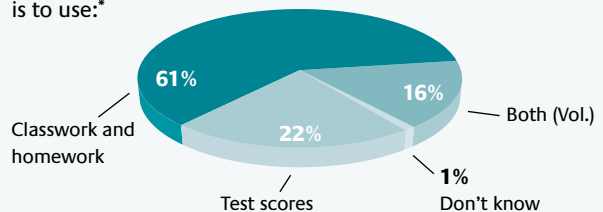
Schools place far too much emphasis on standardized test scores



Teachers will end up teaching to the test



Parents say the best way to measure academic achievement is to use\*:



\*Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll 2002



## FINDING FOUR:

### While teachers support higher academic standards, they have qualms about some aspects of testing.

The vast majority of teachers believe their own district has been “careful and reasonable” in raising standards, and they voice strong support for the principles behind the movement. Like other groups, they endorse having guidelines for what students should learn, and they reject social promotion. Standardized tests, they say, can motivate students and identify those who need help.

There is virtually no support among teachers for returning to the pre-standards policies of the past. Even so, a large number of teachers says some adjustments are needed. And while only modest majorities of parents, employers and professors worry about too much emphasis on testing, the vast majority of teachers sees a problem here.

So far at least, comparatively few teachers say that they themselves spend so much time preparing students for tests that real learning is neglected. But a strong majority says that standardized testing inevitably leads to “teaching to the test,” something other groups say as well. In focus groups, teachers sometimes complain that standardized tests bear little relationship to what youngsters should be learning and that the emphasis on them suctions some of the joy and creativity out of their lessons.

Teachers also seem deeply uncomfortable with the prospect that they (and their schools) might be judged explicitly on how well students perform on standardized tests. A majority rejects the idea of tying their salaries to their students’ test scores. From teachers’ point of view, poorly motivated, poorly prepared students may not succeed no matter how hard the teacher tries. Teachers also are discouraged by learning problems that plague schools in troubled, disadvantaged areas. Asked whether a group of talented, dedicated teachers could “turn things around” at a troubled school, most teachers doubt that they could. Unfortunately, teachers seem to be saying, it takes more than hardworking teachers to truly leave no child behind.

Teachers are not the only group in education with doubts about testing. Most principals voice concerns about what tests really show and whether they are carefully used in the current atmosphere. And like teachers, many balk at the notion of being judged mainly by how well students do on standardized tests.

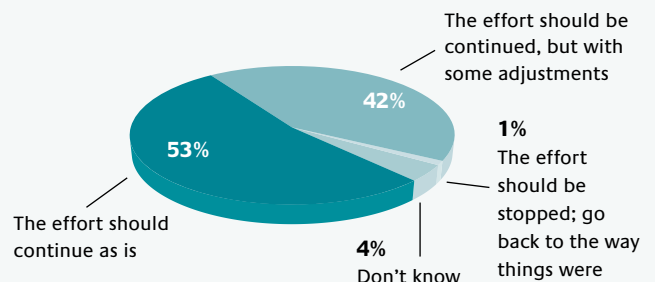
#### Teachers Support Raising Standards

According to teachers:

Students should pass a standardized test before being promoted	87%
Schools are being careful and reasonable in putting higher standards in place	83%
Having guidelines for what students should learn and know helps improve their performance	80%
Students work harder if they have to pass a test for promotion	75%
Standardized test scores are a good way to spot students who need tutoring or summer school	62%

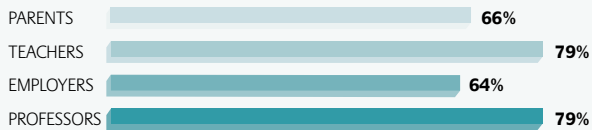
#### Some Adjustments Are Needed

When it comes to the effort to raise standards, teachers say:



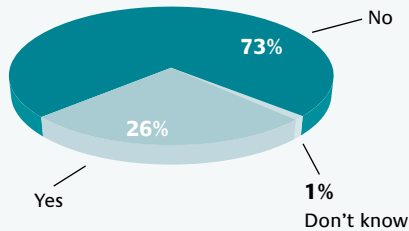
## Teaching to the Test?

Teachers will end up teaching to the test instead of making sure real learning takes place



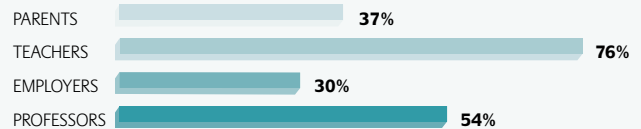
Thinking about your own classroom, do you focus so much on test preparation that real learning is neglected?

% of teachers who say:



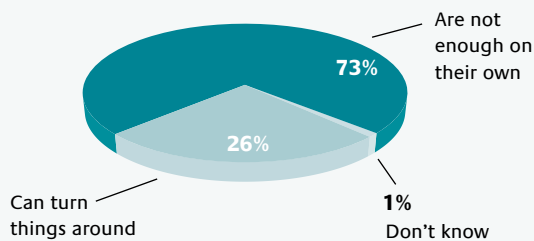
## Should Teacher Pay Be Tied to Student Achievement?

It's a bad idea to tie financial incentives for teachers and principals to student achievement



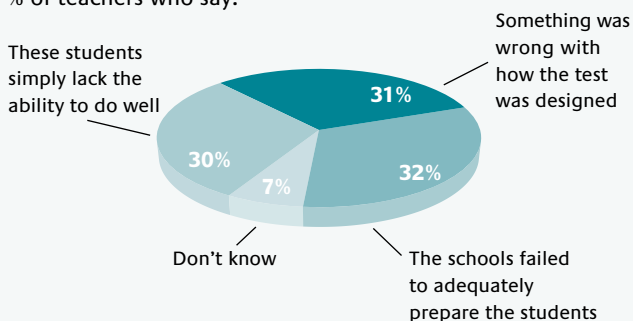
## Can Teachers Guarantee that Youngsters Pass?

Teachers\* believe that in schools with low student achievement and uninvolved parents, talented teachers:



If many students in your district did poorly on a standardized test, which would be your most likely reaction?

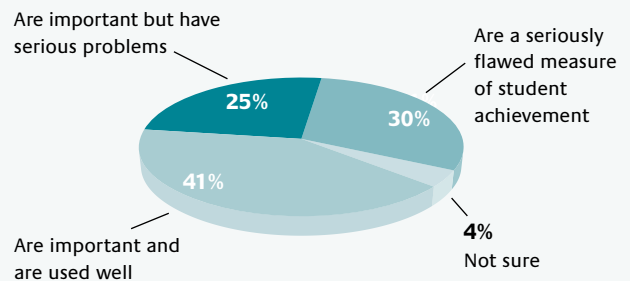
% of teachers who say:



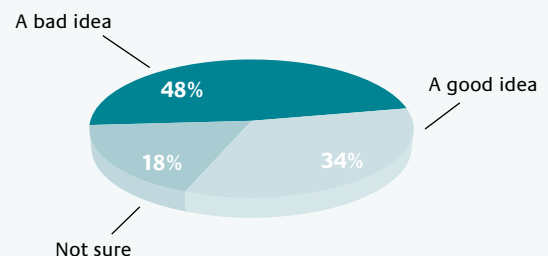
\*Teachers with 5 years or less experience

## The Principal Difference

According to principals, standardized tests:



According to principals, holding principals accountable for student test scores is:





## FINDING FIVE:

**Teachers are troubled by lack of parental support and poor student behavior. Teachers also say their views are generally ignored by decision makers.**

Get a group of teachers together and ask them about the toughest part of their job. Chances are their first comments won't be about testing or low pay or even class size. Instead, they will most likely talk about the dispiriting problems of poor student behavior and lack of parental support.

Large majorities of teachers say that parents who refuse to hold their kids accountable are a serious problem in their school, as are parents who fail to set limits and provide structure at home. More than 4 in 10 say that teachers in their school spend more time trying to keep order than actually teaching, and surveys of students show them reporting pretty much the same thing. Surveys of parents also suggest that teachers are not that far off the mark in their complaints about kids not working hard in class. Just half of parents claim that they have been successful in teaching their own child to do his or her best in school.

The lack of cooperation and effort seems to take its toll. In a recent Public Agenda survey of high school teachers, only a small percentage says teacher morale is high in their school. And in a study of new public school teachers, the vast majority says that they would choose a job in a school with motivated kids and supportive parents over a job in another school with significantly higher pay.

Still, not all of teachers' complaints involve students and parents. Some pertain to their own role in education decision making. Polls suggest that the public has high regard for teachers' views about education, but teachers themselves say they are generally out of the loop when district leaders make their plans. Leaders sometimes approach them to rally support for a predetermined agenda, teachers say, but they seldom ask for their ideas or advice.

Communication seems less than optimal within the schools too. Teachers are divided on the degree to which their own administrators take the issues they care about into account. And they don't seem to have much of a chance to talk about school issues with colleagues either. Just 1 high school teacher out of 5 reports meeting regularly with colleagues to share ideas.

### Can't Get No Satisfaction

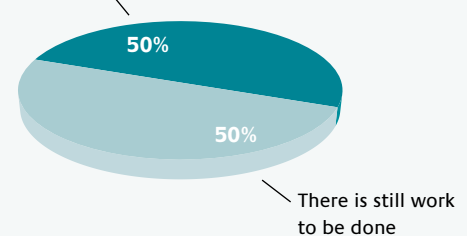
According to teachers:

Parents who fail to set limits and create structure at home for their kids are a serious problem	83%
Parents who refuse to hold their kids accountable for their behavior or academic performance are a serious problem	81%
Teacher morale is high in my high school	15%

### Parents: Half Succeed, Half Don't

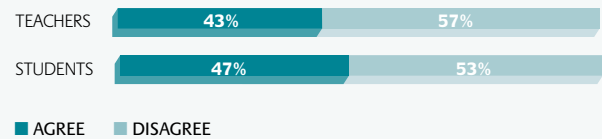
% of parents who say:

I have succeeded in teaching my child to always do their best in school



### Time on Task

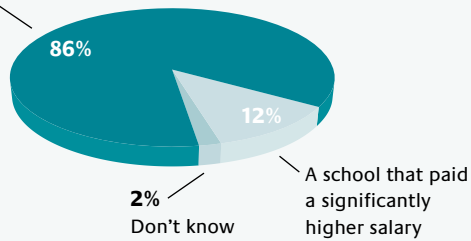
Teachers spend more time trying to keep order in the classroom than teaching students



## Money Can't Buy Me Love

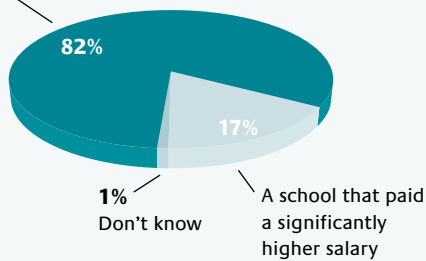
Given the choice, teachers say they would prefer to work in:

A school where student behavior and parental support were significantly better



Given the choice, teachers say they would prefer to work in:

A school where administrators gave strong backing and support to teachers



Note: Teachers with 5 years or less experience

## Are Schools Good Places to Work?

% of teachers who say:

My school puts obstacles in my way when I'm trying to accomplish goals at work



Administrators listen and take into account the issues teachers care about



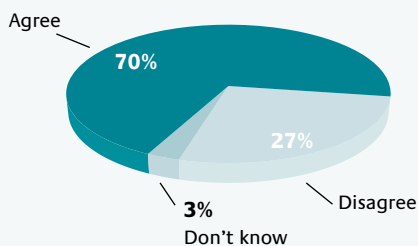
Teachers in my high school regularly meet to share ideas about lesson plans and teaching methods



## Does Anyone Really Care?

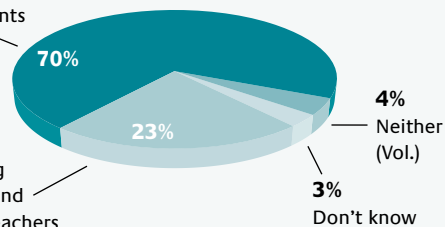
Rank-and-file teachers are often left out of the loop in their district's decision-making process

% of teachers who:



When district leaders talk with teachers about school policy, teachers say it's to:

Help teachers understand and support what the district leadership wants





## FINDING SIX:

**Americans say all students need the basics, and parents want their own children prepared for college. For most, a college diploma is as indispensable as a high school diploma used to be.**

A decade ago, focus groups with the public would often produce outbursts of complaints about lack of basic skills among young people. And reading, writing and basic math continue to comprise the cornerstone of what people want all youngsters to learn. Other subjects are certainly desirable, and parents certainly expect their children to be prepared for higher education. Yet, less than half of parents claim to be knowledgeable about the availability of rigorous courses at their child's school. Parents seem to focus less on the details about curriculum than on the extent to which their child is prepared for a job or college.

Majorities of parents, teachers, employers and professors say youngsters should pass a basic skills test to get a diploma, although fairly significant numbers say the test should cover even more. Americans seem divided on whether all students have the ability to achieve a *high* level of learning. Roughly half say they do, but substantial numbers doubt that this is so.

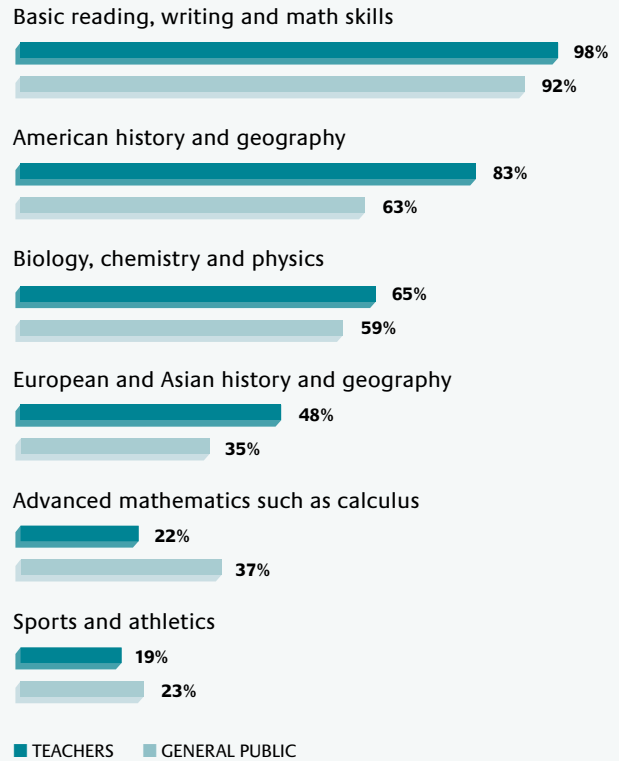
The public also gives mixed signals on whether all youngsters should go to college. Most Americans say a college education is as important now as a high school diploma used to be, and they certainly see the advantages it offers in the job market.

The vast majority of parents expect their own child to attend college, and Hispanic and African American parents are even more committed to this goal. Most high school students also say they expect to attend college, and for them, getting into one is a major reason to work hard in school.

Nevertheless, significant numbers of Americans also say there are too many youngsters in college who do not belong there, and professors say lack of motivation—not money or skills—is the major reason students drop out. Among parents, this discrepancy probably reflects the exceptionalism almost all parents naturally feel about their own child. It may also reflect shifting definitions of “college.” For many people, going to college now signifies any of a number of post-high school options, not just the traditional baccalaureate degree. The public seems persuaded that youngsters need more than what is seemingly taught in high schools today. Whether they believe most high school graduates have the motivation and academic skills to complete a traditional college degree is another question.

### Basics Now and Forever

It's absolutely essential for public schools to teach:



### Limited Knowledge about School Curriculum

% of parents who say they:

Know a lot about curriculum for their child's grade	58%
Know a lot about availability of rigorous courses in their child's high school	45%
Are very comfortable helping plan curriculum	25%
Have helped plan curriculum in the past	15%

## How Far Can Most Kids Go?

Before students are awarded a high school diploma, would you want your district to require students to pass:

A basic skills test in reading, writing and math



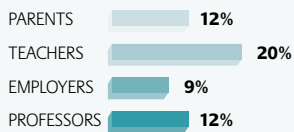
OR

A more challenging test that shows they've learned at higher levels



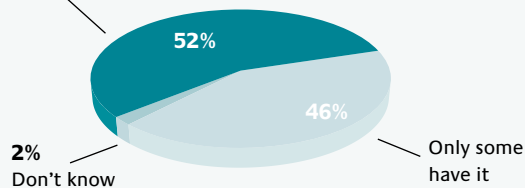
OR

Is requiring kids to pass a test a bad idea?



% of Americans who say:\*

All students have ability to reach a high level of learning



\* Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll 2001

## College as Job 1

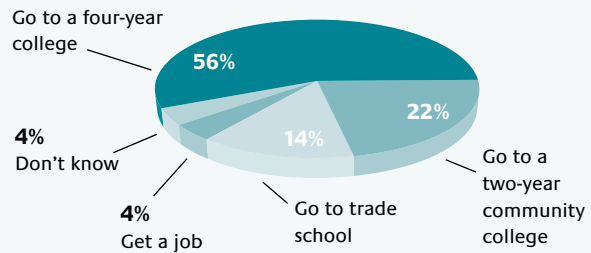
% of Americans who say:

A college education has become as important as a high school diploma used to be	87%
Students will have better job prospects if they go to college	86%
[Their] state needs more college-educated workers so it can attract high-tech jobs and businesses	60%

## Great Expectations

% of high school parents who say:

After graduation, they would like their child to:



A college education is absolutely essential for my child



% of students who say they:

Are definitely planning to go to college



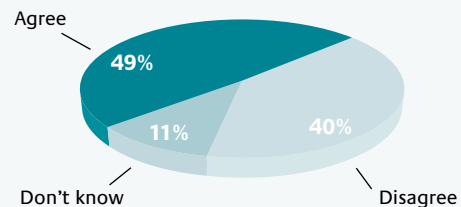
Are motivated a lot by wanting to get into a good college



## College for Everybody?

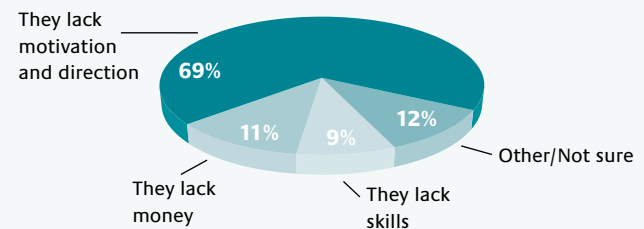
There are too many students in college who don't belong there

% of Americans who:



What is the main reason students drop out of college?

% of professors who say:





## FINDING SEVEN:

**There is a dramatic gap between the way employers and college professors rate high school graduates and the way parents and teachers view them.**

As we saw in Finding 2, employers' and professors' perceptions of the nation's public schools have improved in recent years. But both groups do see substantial room for improvement, and their views are far more negative than those of parents, teachers or students.

In the most recent *Reality Check* surveys, less than half of employers and professors characterize their local schools as either excellent or good. Significant majorities believe that most students would benefit from being pushed harder in school, and almost half say schools expect students to learn too little. On the other hand, a large majority of parents give schools positive ratings, and most parents believe that academic expectations are about right rather than too high or too low.

The value of a high school diploma—in terms of whether its recipient has mastered at least the basics—is questionable, according to most employers and professors. In stark contrast, most teachers, parents and high school students do believe a high school diploma implies mastery. Only a small number of professors puts a great deal of stock in the grades youngsters get on their school report cards, but majorities of teachers and parents think report cards are an accurate reflection of student learning.

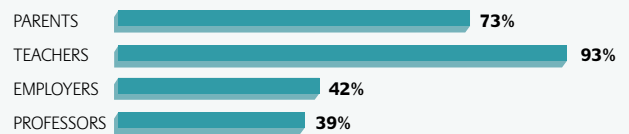
Employers are far less likely than high school parents or teachers to say that public school graduates have what it takes to succeed in the world of work. And although most parents of high school students expect their own youngster to flourish in college, only about half of college professors or high school teachers report that students are adequately prepared for college level work.



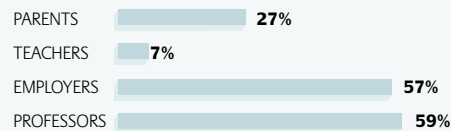
### Employers and Professors Dissatisfied with Local Public Schools

Based on your experience, how would you rate the public schools?

% who say "excellent" or "good":

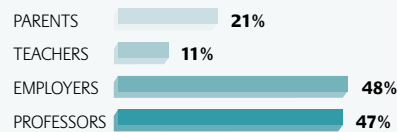


% who say "fair" or "poor":

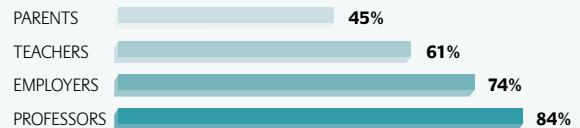


### Employers and Professors Want Schools to Ask for More

In terms of academics, public schools generally expect kids to learn too little

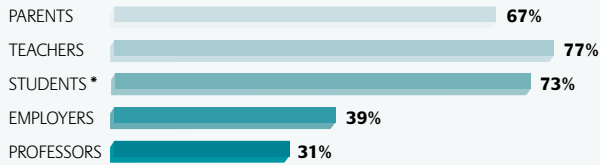


In terms of academics, most students would benefit if they were pushed harder in school



## What Does a Diploma Guarantee?

A high school diploma means that the typical student has at least learned the basics

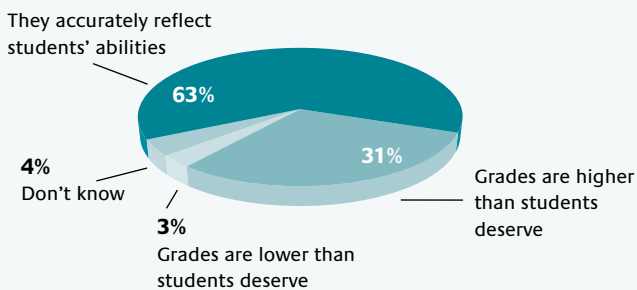


\* High school students

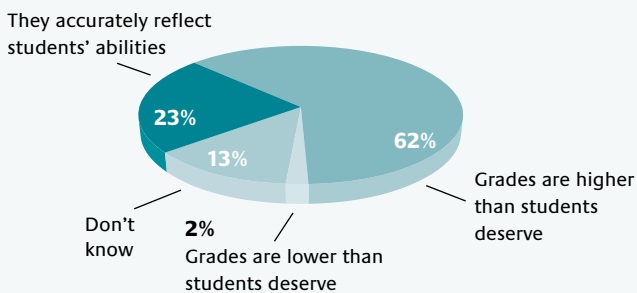
## Are Grades Inflated?

How would you describe the grades students get on their report cards?

% of high school teachers who say:

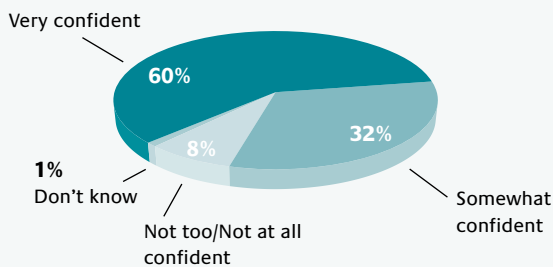


% of professors who say:



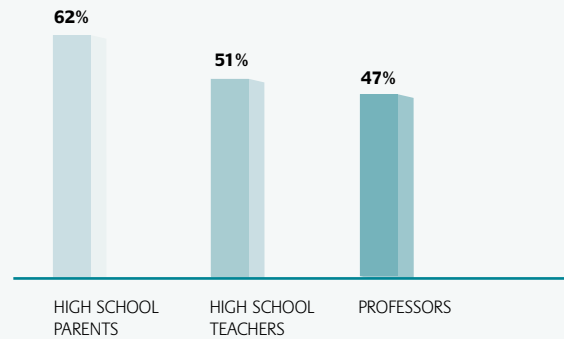
How confident are you that report cards accurately describe your child's progress and abilities?

% of parents who say:

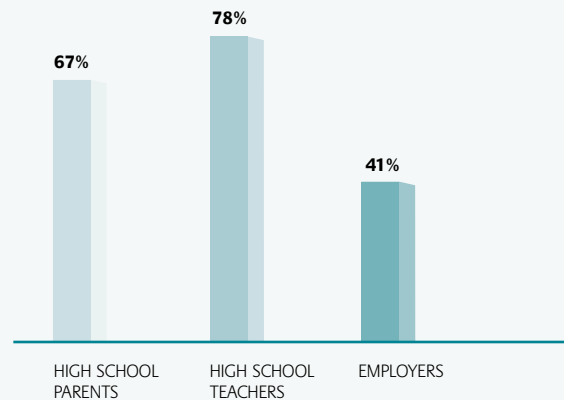


## Are Students Prepared for the Future?

Public school graduates [will] have the skills to succeed in college



Public school graduates [will] have the skills to succeed in the work world





## FINDING EIGHT:

**The vast majority of employers and professors continue to have serious doubts about public school graduates' basic skills—especially when it comes to writing.**

For five consecutive years between 1998 and 2002, large majorities of employers and professors have been reporting profound dissatisfaction with the skills of recent public school graduates. They are especially critical of youngsters' command of grammar and spelling, their ability to write clearly and their capacity to do simple math. And professors and employers are not alone when it comes to these concerns. Just 1 high school teacher out of 5 says students in his or her own school typically learn "to speak and write well, with proper pronunciation and grammar."

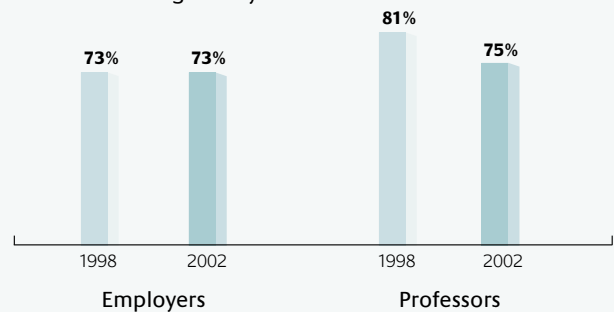
What's more, the dissatisfaction is not limited to academics. Most employers and professors see substantial room for improvement in graduates' work habits such as organization and punctuality and in their motivation and interest in learning new things. The one consistent bright spot for today's public school graduates: computer knowledge. Very large majorities of both employers and professors rate the computer skills of the young people they come in contact with as excellent or good.

Public Agenda research does reveal a significant gap between the concerns of employers and professors about student skills and the priorities in the nation's schools of education. While the vast majority of those who teach in schools of education think it is absolutely essential for prospective teachers to be "lifelong learners," a far smaller number says it is absolutely essential to produce teachers who "stress correct spelling, grammar and punctuation."

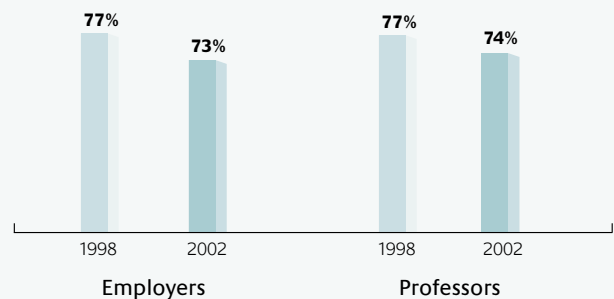


### Profound Concern about Graduates' Basic Skills

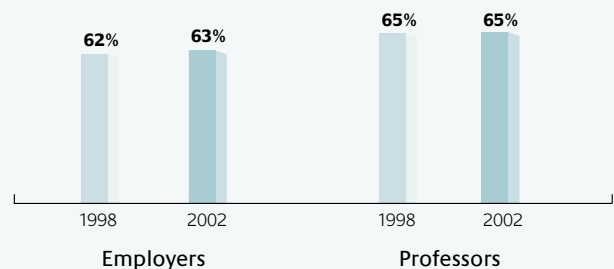
Public school graduates have "fair" or "poor" skills when it comes to writing clearly



Public school graduates have "fair" or "poor" skills when it comes to grammar and spelling

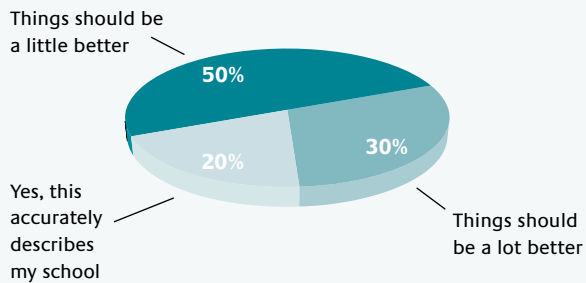


Public school graduates have "fair" or "poor" basic math skills



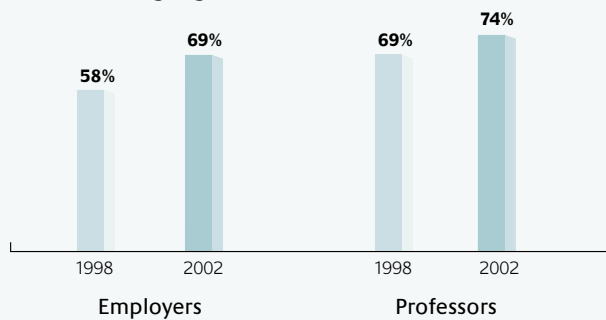
## High School Teachers: Too Many Students Don't Speak or Write Well

Do students in your school learn to speak and write well, with proper pronunciation and grammar?

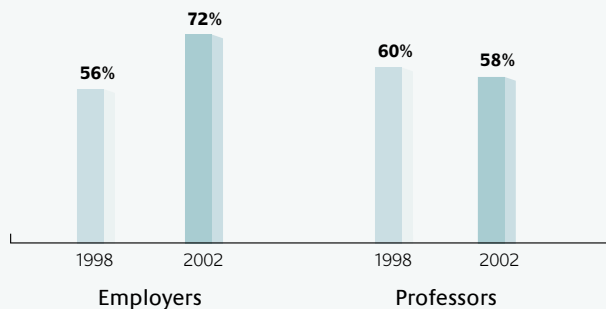


## Will They Get to Work or Class on Time?

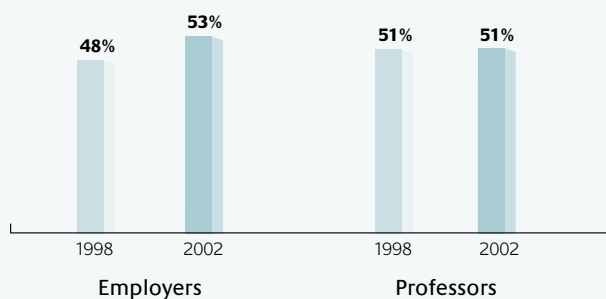
Public school graduates have "fair" or "poor" skills when it comes to being organized and on time



Public school graduates have "fair" or "poor" skills when it comes to being motivated and conscientious



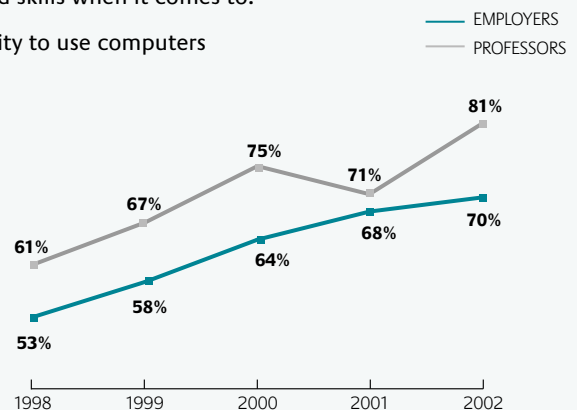
Public school graduates have "fair" or "poor" skills when it comes to being curious and interested in learning new things



## Computer Skills Are the Bright Spot

% who say public school graduates have excellent or good skills when it comes to:

Ability to use computers



## For Schools of Education, Stressing Grammar and Spelling Is Low Priority

% of professors of education who say it is "absolutely essential" to:

Encourage prospective teachers to be lifelong learners



Produce teachers who stress correct spelling, grammar and punctuation





## FINDING NINE:

**Teachers say lack of parental involvement is a serious problem. According to both teachers and parents, parental involvement should focus on what goes on at home rather than on school management issues.**

Few teachers give parents good grades for participating in their child's education. A vast majority reports that it is always the same group of parents who come to help out, and only about 1 in 5 high school teachers describes parental involvement in their school as strong. Most teachers say more parental involvement would increase students' chances of success in school, yet an even larger majority points out that too many parents don't know what's going on with their child's education. Overwhelming majorities say they have serious problems with parents who refuse to hold kids accountable for their behavior or school work and who don't set limits or create structure at home.

The best way for parents to be involved, according to majorities of both teachers and parents, is to pay attention to what's going on at home. Checking homework and encouraging kids to care about school are far more important, they say, than volunteering in the school or getting involved with curriculum or personnel issues.

Neither group wants parents more heavily involved in day-to-day school decisions. Parents, for their part, would much rather chaperone a class trip than help design curriculum. They would also be far more comfortable helping with a career day than interviewing prospective teachers. In fact, few parents report that they have participated in any school management decisions.

One cautionary note: there is a strong belief—among parents, teachers and even school officials—that children whose parents are not involved in school get shortchanged. Most parents think kids with less active parents sometimes fall through the cracks, and many suspect these kids end up with the less-than-desirable teachers. And although most teachers believe that all children get equal treatment regardless of their parents' involvement, more than a third are of the impression that “active parents know how the system works, so their kids tend to get better treatment by the school.” Among superintendents and school board members, overwhelming majorities report that their schools are most responsive to active, vocal parents.

### Too Many Parents Are AWOL

% of teachers who say:

It's always the same group of parents who are helping out at school	98%
Too many parents don't know what's going on with their child's education	78%
More parental involvement would help my students be more successful in school*	65%
Parental involvement in my school is excellent or good	34%
Parental involvement is strong in my high school	19%

\* The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher 2002

% of teachers who say they have a serious problem with:

Parents who fail to set limits and create structure at home for their kids	83%
Parents who refuse to hold their kids accountable for their behavior or academic performance	81%

### Take Care of Business at Home

The best way for parents to be involved with their child's education is to:

Check homework and encourage learning



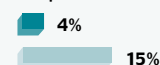
OR

Volunteer to raise money and help at school



OR

Help choose staff and develop curriculum

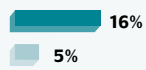


■ PARENTS ■ TEACHERS

## Let Educators Manage Schools

Which is the better approach?

To get parents directly involved in running the school, with input in hiring, budgeting and curriculum



OR

To get parents more involved in their children's education at home by such things as limiting TV and checking homework



## What Parents Prefer

% of parents who say they would feel more comfortable:

Volunteering to chaperone class trips or parties	68%
<b>VERSUS</b>	
Helping to design curriculum	22%
<b>VERSUS</b>	
Interviewing potential teachers or principals	26%
<b>VERSUS</b>	
Helping with career day or book sale	65%

## What Parents Do

% of parents who have done the following in recent years:

Volunteered to chaperone class trip or party	57%
Helped school decide its policy on behavior and discipline	20%
Helped decide how to spend school's money	19%
Helped plan curriculum	15%
Served on committee to hire new teachers or principal	7%

## Are Kids with Uninvolved Parents Shortchanged?

Kids whose parents are not involved at school sometimes get shortchanged and fall through the cracks

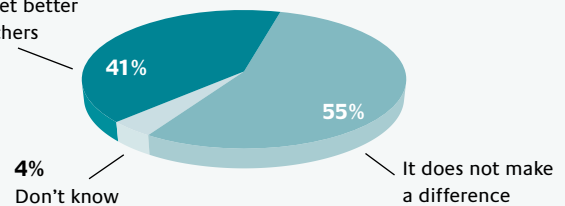


Schools are most responsive to active, vocal parents



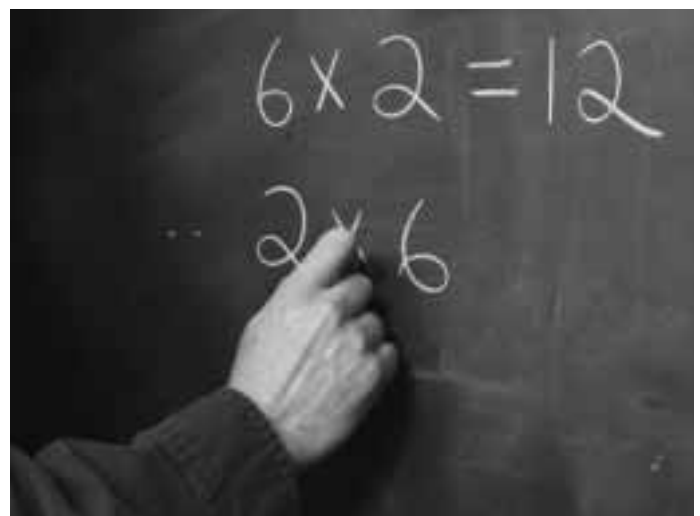
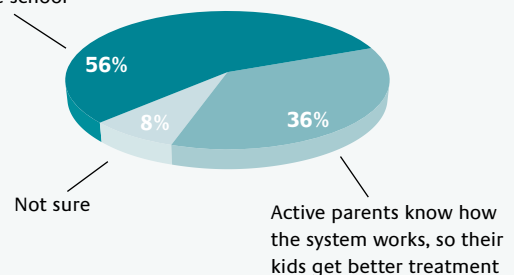
According to parents, children with active and involved parents:

Are more likely to get better teachers



According to teachers:

Regardless of how active parents are, all kids are treated equally by the school





## FINDING TEN:

**Teachers, parents and students continue to voice concern about the rough-edged, uncivil atmosphere in many high schools. Few see high schools as places of respect or civility.**

Only a handful of Americans say that the kids they come across in public are respectful towards adults. And according to high school teachers, students and parents, disrespectful behavior among youngsters is commonplace in our nation's public schools as well.

Large numbers of these groups think it's at least somewhat likely that a "serious violent incident—an act that causes severe physical harm" will occur in their high school in the near future. Perceptions among the general public also are pessimistic. In 2002, a Gallup poll found large majorities of Americans under the impression that student discipline, as well as fighting, violence and gangs, are serious problems in the schools in their community.

High school students themselves report that violence in school is a fact of life, with many saying that they have seen "serious fights" in their school at least monthly since they've been there. A majority also says their school has serious problems with too many students abusing alcohol or drugs. Most indicate that the hallways are crowded places where cursing is all too common. Many report a serious problem with bullying. Only about a third say students treat one another with respect, and even fewer say most students treat teachers respectfully. According to Public Agenda's annual *Reality Check* surveys, almost half of high school students say teachers spend more time trying to keep order in the classroom than teaching students—and many high school teachers agree.

Despite broad concern about these problems, they do not appear to be addressed much in teacher education programs. Only about a third of education professors say that their program places a lot of emphasis on teaching future teachers how to manage a rowdy classroom or that maintaining discipline and order is an absolutely essential skill to impart to prospective teachers. Most education professors believe that when a teacher faces a disruptive class, it probably means they have failed to make lessons engaging enough to the students. In the meantime, most principals report that too many of the new teachers they see fall short on classroom management and student discipline.

### Falling Short on Respect

% of Americans who say:

The kids I see in public are respectful towards adults

9%

Things should be somewhat better

39%

Things should be a lot better

52%

Students treat each other with respect in [my] high school

PARENTS 39%

TEACHERS 18%

STUDENTS 30%

### Lack of Discipline, Violence Seen as Problems

% of Americans who say their local schools have serious problems with:\*

Lack of student discipline

76%

Fighting, violence and gangs

63%

A violent incident causing severe bodily harm is likely to occur in [my] high school in the next two years

PARENTS 40%

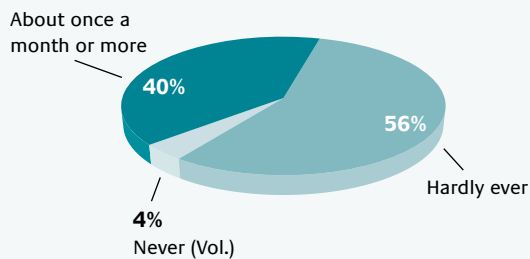
TEACHERS 40%

STUDENTS 25%

\* Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll 2002

## Fights Are Not Uncommon

According to high school students, serious fights in school occur:



## Should Schools of Education Do More?

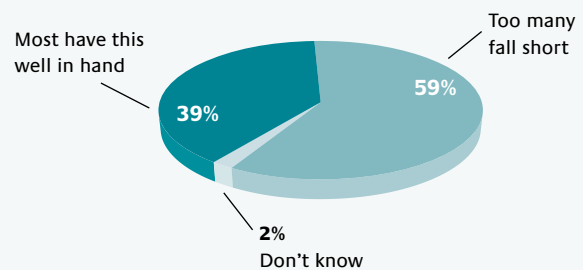
According to education professors:

A lot of emphasis is placed on teaching prospective teachers how to manage a rowdy classroom	30%
Maintaining discipline and order in the classroom is an absolutely essential skill to impart to prospective teachers	37%
When teachers face a disruptive class, it probably means they have failed to make lessons engaging enough	61%

## Principals Say Too Many New Teachers Are Unprepared

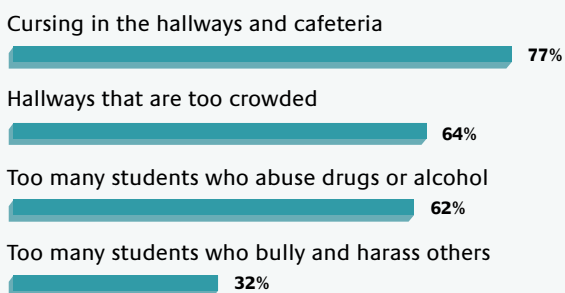
How many new teachers have an ability to maintain discipline and order in the classroom?

% of principals who say:



## Profanity, Drugs and Bullies

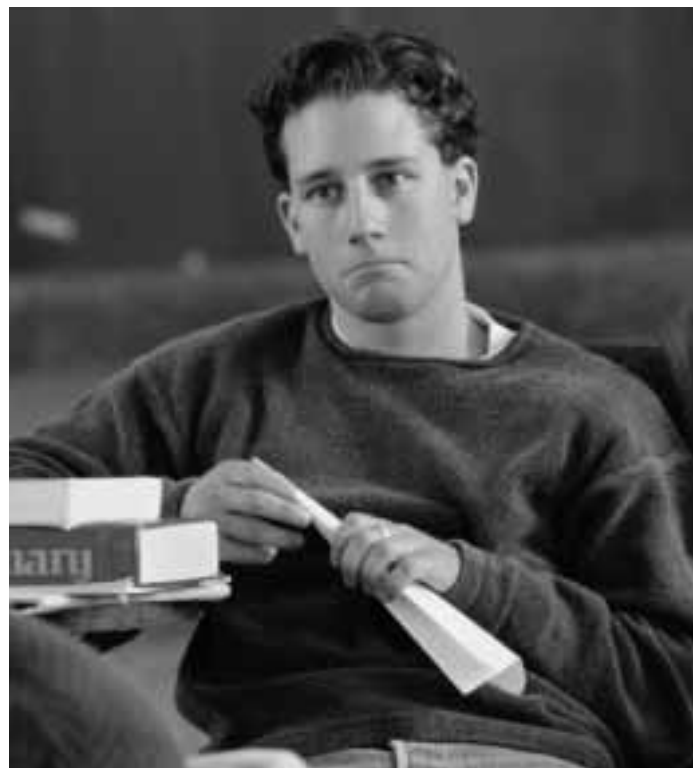
According to students, their high school has problems with:



## Troubled Classrooms

% of high school students who say:

Teachers spend more time trying to keep order in the classroom than teaching	49%
In my high school, most students treat teachers with respect	19%





## FINDING ELEVEN:

**Superintendents and principals say their biggest problems are politics and bureaucracy. Most want more autonomy over their own schools.**

Undoubtedly, the standards movement has had an impact on the way district superintendents and school principals do their jobs. But according to them, it is the relentless frustration of dealing with politics and bureaucracy that makes their work especially tough, not the push for higher standards and accountability. Majorities indicate their time is taken up with paperwork and putting out fires, and relatively few say the system is set up to help them accomplish their goals.

Given these concerns, superintendents and principals say they want more freedom and autonomy—especially when it comes to personnel decisions. Although most say they have enough freedom to hire teachers and other staff, relatively few say they have enough to reward outstanding teachers or to remove ineffective ones. According to approximately 9 out of 10 superintendents and principals, “giving administrators far more autonomy to run the schools while holding them accountable for getting results” would be an effective way to improve leadership in the public schools.

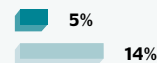
Student achievement may be the issue in the headlines, but superintendents and principals say their energy typically goes to other things. Overwhelming numbers complain that keeping up with government mandates takes up too much of their time and resources. For superintendents in particular, sizable numbers say too much of their attention goes to dealing with legal issues, union issues and complaining parents, and that meddling school boards are not uncommon. Large majorities of both groups also point out that dealing with harsh public criticism and political heat has become routine.

But despite the myriad of challenges they face, most superintendents and principals say they would choose the same line of work if they had the chance to do it all again.

### Politics and Bureaucracy Are the Greatest Frustrations

Why are talented leaders most likely to leave the field?  
Because they are frustrated by:

Low pay and prestige



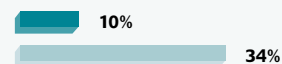
OR

Politics and bureaucracy



OR

Unreasonable demands brought about by higher standards and accountability

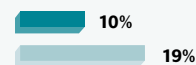


■ SUPERINTENDENTS ■ PRINCIPALS

### Having to Work around the System

When trying to get things done, superintendents and principals say:

They often feel like their hands are tied



OR

They must work around the system



OR

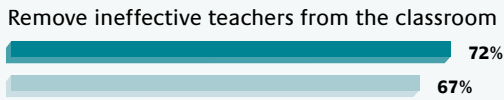
The system helps them get things done



■ SUPERINTENDENTS ■ PRINCIPALS

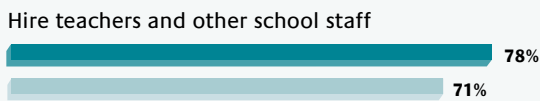
## School Leaders Want More Autonomy

% who say they need *more* freedom and autonomy to:

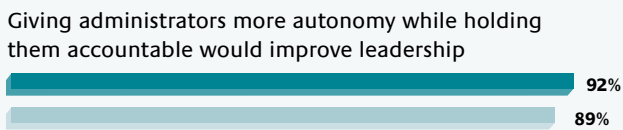


■ SUPERINTENDENTS ■ PRINCIPALS

% who say they have *enough* freedom and autonomy to:



■ SUPERINTENDENTS ■ PRINCIPALS



■ SUPERINTENDENTS ■ PRINCIPALS

## Litigation and Complaints

Superintendents say too much of their attention goes to:

Legal issues and litigation	50%
Parents with complaints or special interests	48%
Collective bargaining or other union issues	43%
Dealing with funding and budgeting	43%
District politics	37%

## A Difficult Job...

The district has experienced an enormous increase in responsibilities and mandates without needed resources



Administrators are obligated to spend a disproportional amount of resources on special education



Managing harsh public criticism and political heat has become routine



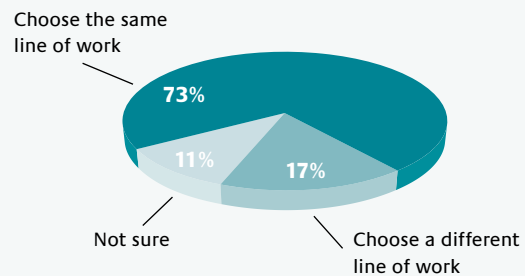
The school board sometimes interferes in areas best left to the administrator's discretion



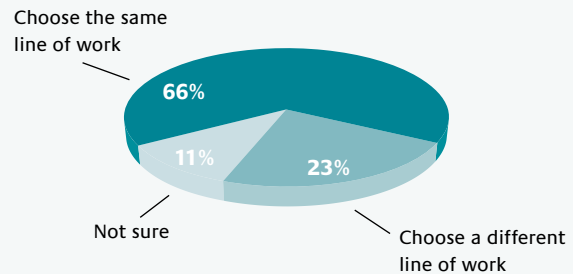
■ SUPERINTENDENTS ■ PRINCIPALS

## ...But a Job to Love

Superintendents say if they were just starting out they would:



Principals say if they were just starting out they would:





## FINDING TWELVE:

**Holding schools and educators directly accountable for student achievement is still uncommon. Teachers and principals have doubts about it, while parents and the public tend to support it.**

The drive to raise student achievement nationwide has prompted a number of proposals that would hold schools, teachers and principals directly accountable for how much their students learn. Some are included in No Child Left Behind, but for the most part, this is an area of the movement where consequences have yet to be seen. And while many educators are intensely focused on this legislation, more than 4 in 10 members of the public admit that they never heard of it.

Few teachers report that their district ties teacher pay or evaluation to student achievement. Very few say principal tenure has been eliminated in favor of contracts based on specific goals. Hardly any say they know of schools that have been “reconstituted” because of persistently poor student academics.

Perhaps not surprisingly, relatively small numbers of teachers or principals think pay-for-performance and similar initiatives are a good idea. When Public Agenda asked new teachers what they thought would improve teacher quality, pay-for-performance was near the bottom of their list—although this group does voice support for paying more to teachers working in troubled schools.

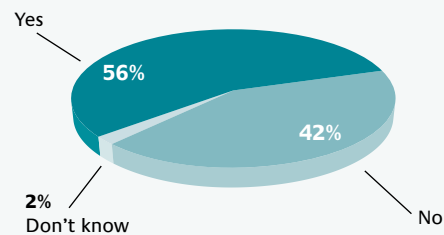
Among parents and the public, there is broader support for almost all these ideas, including most of the provisions of No Child Left Behind. Most Americans favor letting parents of youngsters in consistently low-performing schools switch their child to another school in the district. Majorities also favor removing teachers or principals whose students routinely fail to meet state standards. At the same time, there is a sharp negative reaction among the public to the idea of closing down failing schools. In fact, most people say failing schools should get additional tax dollars.

Although researchers have asked Americans about the provisions of No Child Left Behind and related accountability measures, it would be a mistake to accept opinion survey results as the public’s final word. Very few Americans have any direct experience with how these measures would work in real-life schools and districts.

At this juncture, it is almost impossible to predict how communities will respond if a local school receives a failing grade or if one is penalized or perhaps even closed because of poor student test scores. Much may depend on local circumstances and how local leaders address the situation.

### Have You Heard about the No Child Left Behind Act ?

% of registered voters who say:



Public Education Network 2003

### Judging Educators on Student Performance Is Fairly Unusual

% of teachers who say their district:

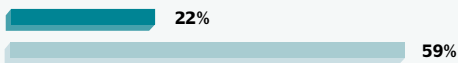
Ties financial incentives to student academic performance	24%
Evaluates teachers based on student statewide test scores	18%
Has overhauled persistently failing schools by replacing staff	10%
Has eliminated tenure for principals and replaced with contracts	10%



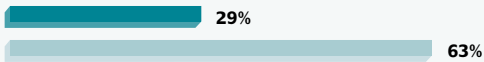
## Parents Approve, but Educators Are Doubtful

% who say it's "a good idea" to:

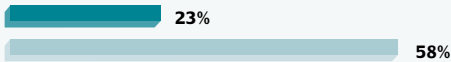
Tie financial incentives to student academic performance



Eliminate tenure for principals and replace with contracts



Overhaul persistently failing schools by replacing staff



■ TEACHERS ■ PARENTS

Hold principals accountable for standardized test scores



## Strong Support for Tutoring and Transfers

If a school doesn't show progress toward meeting standards, Americans would favor:

Offering tutoring by private providers 90%

Offering the choice to transfer to another school in the district 86%

Not renewing contracts of the principal or teachers 56%

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll 2002

## But Closing Schools Strikes a Raw Nerve

If a school doesn't show progress toward meeting standards, Americans would favor:

Closing the school\* 21%

Supporting tax increases to improve funding in the school\*\* 52%

Obtaining more money from the local district\* 77%

\* Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll 2002

\*\*Public Education Network 2003

## For New Teachers, Other Measures Help More

% of new teachers who say this is a "very effective" way to improve teacher quality:

Reduce class size 86%

Require high school teachers to major in their subject 59%

Increase professional development 57%

Increase teacher salaries 52%

Require new teachers to spend more time under supervision in the classroom 51%

Require graduate degree in education 20%

Require teachers to pass subject-area tests 16%

Eliminate teacher tenure 12%

Tie teacher rewards or sanctions to student performance 12%

Rely on alternative certification 8%

Reduce requirements for teacher certification 7%

Note: Teachers with 5 years or less experience

## Pay More for Working in Tough Circumstances

% who say it's "a good idea" to pay higher salaries to teachers who:

Work in difficult schools with hard-to-educate children 84%

Prove to be highly effective in improving academic performance 77%

Teach subjects where there are severe teacher shortages, like math and science 48%

■ NEW TEACHERS\* ■ PRINCIPALS

\* Teachers with 5 years or less experience

# Methodology

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*Where We Are Now* draws upon findings from more than a dozen national public opinion studies conducted by Public Agenda and others over the past decade. Many topics about public education are covered, including student achievement, academic standards, standardized testing, accountability, curriculum, safety and discipline, parental involvement and the status of the teaching profession, among others. In addition, the findings culled for *Where We Are Now* capture the opinions and perceptions of virtually all of the stakeholders in public education today—parents, students, teachers, principals, superintendents, school board members, college professors, employers and taxpayers.

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Typically, Public Agenda's studies begin with in-depth interviews with experts with diverse points of view, as well as focus groups with members of the populations under investigation. The information gathered from the interviews and focus groups is used to craft questionnaires, which are rigorously pre-tested and then administered to nationally representative random samples of respondents.

Full copies of Public Agenda education reports since 1998 can be downloaded free of charge in PDF format from [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org). Print copies of all Public Agenda studies referred to in this report can be purchased by contacting Public Agenda directly (212-686-6610). Bulk purchases are available by arrangement.

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***Reality Check*** Johnson, Jean, Steve Farkas and Ann Duffett (Public Agenda, 1998-2002). Sample: 2002: 600 K-12 public school teachers; 610 parents of K-12 public school students; 600 public school students in middle or high school; 251 employers who make hiring decisions for employees recently out of high school or college; and 252 college professors who taught freshmen or sophomores in the past two years. 2001: 601 teachers; 602 parents; 600 students; 251 employers; and 254 professors. 2000: 604 teachers; 615 parents; 605 students; 260 employers; and 251 professors. 1999: 700 teachers; 708 parents; 702 students; 252 employers; and 257 professors. 1998: 700 teachers; 700 parents; 700 students; 250 employers; and 250 professors. Funding provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts, with additional support from the GE Fund.

***Just Waiting to Be Asked?: A Fresh Look at Attitudes on Public Engagement*** Farkas, Steve, Patrick Foley and Ann Duffett with Tony Foleno and Jean Johnson (Public Agenda, 2001). Sample: 686 superintendents; 475 school board members; 404 K-12 public school teachers; and 809 adults. Funding provided by the American Federation of Teachers, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, The George Gund Foundation, the National School Boards Association and the U.S. Department of Education.

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***Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership*** Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, Ann Duffett and Tony Foleno, with Patrick Foley (Public Agenda, 2001). Sample: 853 public school superintendents and 909 public school principals. Funding provided by the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds.

***A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why*** Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson and Tony Foleno, with Ann Duffett and Patrick Foley (Public Agenda, 2000). Sample: 664 K-12 public school teachers with 5 years or less experience. Funding provided by The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the Open Society Institute.

***Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents—White, African American and Hispanic—View Higher Education*** Immerwahr, John with Tony Foleno (Public Agenda, 2000). Sample: 1,015 adults; 202 African American, 202 Hispanic and 201 white parents of children in high school. Funding provided by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, Consortium for Policy Research in Education and the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement.

***Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools*** Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson and Ann Duffett, with Claire Aulicino and Joanna McHugh (Public Agenda, 1999). Sample: 1,220 parents of K-12 public school students and 1,000 K-12 public school teachers. Funding provided by Kraft Foods.

***Taking Responsibility: Leaders' Expectations of Higher Education*** Immerwahr, John (Public Agenda, 1999). Sample: 130 college professors; 163 college administrators and deans; 146 business leaders; and 162 government legislators and advisors. Funding provided by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

***The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education*** Immerwahr, John (Public Agenda, 1998). Sample: 700 adults. Funding provided by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

***Time to Move On: African American and White Parents Set an Agenda for Public Schools*** Farkas, Steve and Jean Johnson, with Stephen Immerwahr and Joanna McHugh (Public Agenda, 1998). Sample: 800 White and 800 African American parents of children in grades K-12 in public or private school. Funding provided by W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Surdna Foundation, Inc. and Rockefeller Foundation. This study was conducted as part of a joint project of Public Agenda and the Public Education Network.

***Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education*** Farkas, Steve and Jean Johnson with Ann Duffett (Public Agenda, 1997). Sample: 900 college professors of education. Funding provided by The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.

***Assignment Incomplete: The Unfinished Business of Education Reform*** Johnson, Jean with Steve Farkas, Will Friedman, John Immerwahr and Ali Bers (Public Agenda, 1995). Sample: 1,200 adults, including oversamples of 200 parents of public school students and 200 public school teachers. Funding provided by Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Proctor & Gamble Fund, TRW Inc. and The George Gund Foundation.

***First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools*** Johnson, Jean and John Immerwahr (Public Agenda, 1994). Sample: 869 members of the general public, 320 White parents, 200 African American parents and 204 traditional Christian parents. Funding provided by The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Ashland Oil Foundation, BellSouth Foundation, The Business Roundtable, Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Danforth Foundation, General Mills Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation.

**In addition, Public Agenda relied on many valuable survey findings from the following highly respected public opinion studies on public education:**

***Demanding Quality Public Education in Tough Economic Times: What Voters Want from Elected Leaders*** (2003). Public Education Network (P.E.N.). Sample: 1,050 registered voters. [www.publiceducation.org](http://www.publiceducation.org)

***The MetLife Survey of The American Teacher 2002*** by Dana Markow, Ph.D. and Marc Scheer, Ph.D., of Harris Interactive, Inc. Sample: 2,308 public school students in grades 7-12 and 1,111 public school teachers in grades 7-12. [www.metlife.com](http://www.metlife.com)

***Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*** (1998-2002) by Lowell C. Rose and Alec M. Gallup. Sample: 2002: 1,000 adults. 2001: 1,108 adults. 2000: 1,093 adults. 1999: 1,103 adults. 1998: 1,151 adults. [www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kappan.htm](http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kappan.htm)

***NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Kennedy School Education Survey*** (June 1999). Sample: 1,422 adults. [www.npr.org/programs/specials/poll/education/education.front.html](http://www.npr.org/programs/specials/poll/education/education.front.html)

***School Reform Survey*** (October 1991). *Agenda Magazine*/ Louis Harris & Associates. Sample: 1,252 adults. [www2.irss.unc.edu/data\\_archive/catsearch.html](http://www2.irss.unc.edu/data_archive/catsearch.html)

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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The staff at Public Agenda, whose commitment to excellence, professionalism and general good humor over the years helped make this research possible;

And the thousands of educators, students, parents, employers and others who generously gave of their time to answer our questions and share their views.

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COMPLETE SURVEY FINDINGS

# Where We Are Now

12 Things You Need to Know about  
**PUBLIC OPINION** and **PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



Based on a Report  
from Public Agenda



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## Methodology

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The *Complete Survey Findings for Where We Are Now* provides full question wording, sample size and complete responses for each finding cited in the report. Results of less than .5% are signified by an asterisk. Results of zero are signified by a dash. All findings have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Combining answer categories may produce slight discrepancies between the numbers in these survey results and numbers in the report. Unless otherwise noted, “students” are public school students in 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade; “teachers” are K-12 public school teachers; “parents” refers to those who have a child in grades K-12 in public school; “employers” refers to those who make hiring decisions for employees recently out of high school or college; and “professors” refers to those who taught freshmen or sophomores in the past two years.

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***Aggravating Circumstances: A Status Report on Rudeness in America*** Farkas, Steve and Jean Johnson with Ann Duffett and Kathleen Collins (Public Agenda 2002). Sample: 2,013 adults. Funding provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

***Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools*** Johnson, Jean, Steve Farkas, Ann Duffett and Kathleen Collins (Public Agenda, 2002). Sample: 801 parents of public high school students; 920 public high school teachers; and 1,008 public high school students. Funding provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

**Reality Check** Johnson, Jean, Steve Farkas and Ann Duffett (Public Agenda, 1998-2002). Sample: 2002: 600 K-12 public school teachers; 610 parents of K-12 public school students; 600 public school students in middle or high school; 251 employers who make hiring decisions for employees recently out of high school or college; and 252 college professors who taught freshmen or sophomores in the past two years. 2001: 601 teachers; 602 parents; 600 students; 251 employers; and 254 professors. 2000: 604 teachers; 615 parents; 605 students; 260 employers; and 251 professors. 1999: 700 teachers; 708 parents; 702 students; 252 employers; and 257 professors. 1998: 700 teachers; 700 parents; 700 students; 250 employers; and 250 professors. Funding provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts, with additional support from the GE Fund.

**Just Waiting to Be Asked?: A Fresh Look at Attitudes on Public Engagement** Farkas, Steve, Patrick Foley and Ann Duffett with Tony Foleno and Jean Johnson (Public Agenda, 2001). Sample: 686 superintendents; 475 school board members; 404 K-12 public school teachers; and 809 adults. Funding provided by the American Federation of Teachers, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, The George Gund Foundation, the National School Boards Association and the U.S. Department of Education.

**Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership** Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, Ann Duffett and Tony Foleno, with Patrick Foley (Public Agenda, 2001). Sample: 853 public school superintendents and 909 public school principals. Funding provided by the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds.

**A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why** Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson and Tony Foleno, with Ann Duffett and Patrick Foley (Public Agenda, 2000). Sample: 664 K-12 public school teachers with 5 years or less experience. Funding provided by The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the Open Society Institute.

**Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents—White, African American and Hispanic—View Higher Education** Immerwahr, John with Tony Foleno (Public Agenda, 2000). Sample: 1,015 adults; 202 African American, 202 Hispanic and 201 white parents of children in high school. Funding provided by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, Consortium for Policy Research in Education and the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement.

**Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools** Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson and Ann Duffett, with Claire Aulicino and Joanna McHugh (Public Agenda, 1999). Sample: 1,220 parents of K-12 public school students and 1,000 K-12 public school teachers. Funding provided by Kraft Foods.

**Taking Responsibility: Leaders' Expectations of Higher Education** Immerwahr, John (Public Agenda, 1999). Sample: 130 college professors; 163 college administrators and deans; 146 business leaders; and 162 government legislators and advisors. Funding provided by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

**The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education** Immerwahr, John (Public Agenda, 1998). Sample: 700 adults. Funding provided by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

**Time to Move On: African American and White Parents Set an Agenda for Public Schools** Farkas, Steve and Jean Johnson, with Stephen Immerwahr and Joanna McHugh (Public Agenda, 1998). Sample: 800 White and 800 African American parents

of children in grades K-12 in public or private school. Funding provided by W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Surdna Foundation, Inc. and Rockefeller Foundation. This study was conducted as part of a joint project of Public Agenda and the Public Education Network.

***Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education*** Farkas, Steve and Jean Johnson with Ann Duffett (Public Agenda, 1997). Sample: 900 college professors of education. Funding provided by The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.

***Assignment Incomplete: The Unfinished Business of Education Reform*** Johnson, Jean with Steve Farkas, Will Friedman, John Immerwahr and Ali Bers (Public Agenda, 1995). Sample: 1,200 adults, including oversamples of 200 parents of public school students and 200 public school teachers. Funding provided by Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Proctor & Gamble Fund, TRW Inc. and The George Gund Foundation.

***First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools*** Johnson, Jean and John Immerwahr (Public Agenda, 1994). Sample: 869 members of the general public, 320 White parents, 200 African American parents and 204 traditional Christian parents. Funding provided by The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Ashland Oil Foundation, BellSouth Foundation, The Business Roundtable, Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Danforth Foundation, General Mills Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation.

**Studies conducted by other research organizations:**

***Demanding Quality Public Education in Tough Economic Times: What Voters Want from Elected Leaders*** (2003). Public Education Network (P.E.N.). Sample: 1,050 registered voters. [www.publiceducation.org](http://www.publiceducation.org)

***The MetLife Survey of The American Teacher 2002*** by Dana Markow, Ph.D. and Marc Scheer, Ph.D., of Harris Interactive, Inc. Sample: 2,308 public school students in grades 7-12 and 1,111 public school teachers in grades 7-12. [www.metlife.com](http://www.metlife.com)

***Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*** (1998-2002) by Lowell C. Rose and Alec M. Gallup. Sample: 2002: 1,000 adults. 2001: 1,108 adults. 2000: 1,093 adults. 1999: 1,103 adults. 1998: 1,151 adults. [www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kappan.htm](http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kappan.htm)

***NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Kennedy School Education Survey*** (June 1999). Sample: 1,422 adults. [www.npr.org/programs/specials/poll/education/education.front.html](http://www.npr.org/programs/specials/poll/education/education.front.html)

***School Reform Survey*** (October 1991). Agenda Magazine/ Louis Harris & Associates. Sample: 1,252 adults. [www2.irss.unc.edu/data\\_archive/catsearch.html](http://www2.irss.unc.edu/data_archive/catsearch.html)

**FINDING ONE: The public—including parents, teachers and students—believes that setting standards and enforcing them promotes learning. Social promotion, they say, harms kids.**

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**Q1 Here is a list of problems schools might face. For each one, please tell me how big a problem you think it is—a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem for the public schools in your community. How about...lack of adequate academic standards?**

<i>Base: Asked of half the sample</i>	General Public n=1,422
Major	32%
Minor	40%
Not a problem	25%
Don't know	3%

*Source: NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Kennedy School (June 1999)*

**Q2 Let me read you some things that employers and educators say are important for students to learn in elementary and high school to have employees who can be competitive in the world and to turn out students who can be properly educated in college. How would you rate the job the schools of this country are doing in teaching and helping their students...to read, write, and reason well...excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor?**

	General Public n=1,252
Excellent	5%
Pretty good	31%
Only fair	41%
Poor	23%
Not sure	*

*Source: School Reform Survey, Louis Harris & Associates (October 1991)*

**Q3 Here are some problems different public schools may or may not have. Please tell me how serious a problem each is in your own community's public schools. There is not enough emphasis on the basics, such as reading, writing and math.**

	General Public n=869
NET Serious	60%
Very serious	36%
Somewhat serious	25%
NET Not serious	36%
Not too serious	15%
Not at all serious	21%
Don't know	4%

*Source: First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools, Public Agenda 1994*

**Q4 Which more accurately reflects your own views of students' ability to achieve their academic potential in school? Do you think most students achieve their full academic potential in school, or do you think most students achieve only a small part of their academic potential in school?**

	General Public n=1,108
Most students achieve their full potential	16%
Most achieve only a small part of their potential	81%
Don't know	3%

*Source: Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools 2001*

**Q5 Now I am going to read some statements and ask you to tell me how close they come to describing your school. Most students do the bare minimum they need to get by.**

	Students n=600
NET Close	71%
Very close	24%
Somewhat close	48%
NET Not close	27%
Not too close	18%
Not close at all	10%
Don't know	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q6 Right now, would you say you are trying your best to do well in school, or do you think you could try a little harder?**

	Students n=600
Trying best to do well in school	45%
Could try a little harder	56%
Don't know	-

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q7 Do you think having guidelines for what students are expected to learn and know helps improve students' academic performance, or not?**

	Parents n=608	Teachers* n=594	Employers n=250	Professors n=253
Yes	82%	80%	90%	88%
No	12%	19%	8%	9%
Don't know	6%	1%	2%	3%

\*Question wording for teachers: Do you think having guidelines for what students are expected to learn and know helps improve students' academic performance, or doesn't it make much difference?

*Source: Reality Check 2001 (Teachers, Employers, Professors); Reality Check 2002 (Parents), Public Agenda*

**Q8 Some school districts require students to pass a standardized test in order to be promoted. Students who fail the test must either go to summer school or repeat the grade. Do you favor or oppose this policy? Is that strongly or somewhat?**

	Parents n=601	Teachers n=590	Employers n=259	Professors n=249	Students* n=598
NET Favor	92%	87%	87%	79%	74%
Strongly favor	75%	52%	66%	49%	36%
Somewhat favor	17%	35%	21%	30%	38%
NET Oppose	7%	12%	11%	19%	25%
Somewhat oppose	3%	8%	4%	11%	14%
Strongly oppose	4%	4%	7%	7%	11%
Don't know	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%

\*Question wording for students: Some school districts now require students to meet higher standards in order to be promoted or to graduate. If they can't meet the higher standards, they have to go to summer school to catch up. Would you favor or oppose having your own school district adopt this policy? Is that strongly or somewhat?

*Source: Reality Check 2000 (Employers, Professors); Reality Check 2001 (Parents, Teachers, Students), Public Agenda*

**Q9 Now suppose your school decided that your child was among the students who should go to summer school in order to catch up. Do you think you would approve or oppose the decision? Is that strongly or somewhat?**

	Parents n=598
NET Approve	94%
Strongly approve	82%
Somewhat approve	12%
NET Oppose	6%
Somewhat oppose	3%
Strongly oppose	3%
Don't know	1%

*Source: Reality Check 2001, Public Agenda*

**Q10 Now suppose your child finished summer school but still failed to meet the academic standards. Do you think you would approve or oppose holding him or her back a grade?**

	Parents n=593
NET Approve	87%
Strongly approve	66%
Somewhat approve	21%
NET Oppose	11%
Somewhat oppose	5%
Strongly oppose	6%
Don't know	3%

*Source: Reality Check 2001, Public Agenda*

**Now I am going to read you several things that may or may not motivate you to work hard at school:**

**Q11 How about fear of being left back—would that motivate you a lot, a little, or not at all?**

	Students n=600
A lot	67%
A little	21%
Not at all	11%
Don't know	*

**Q12 How about avoiding summer school—would that motivate you a lot, a little, or not at all?**

	Students n=599
A lot	63%
A little	24%
Not at all	13%
Don't know	*

*Source: Reality Check 2001, Public Agenda*

**Q13 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-city kids come from disadvantaged backgrounds?**

	African American Parents n=69	White Parents n=458	Teachers n=590
Achieve academic standards that are as high	61%	66%	64%
Make some allowances	33%	28%	33%
Don't know	6%	6%	3%

*Source: Reality Check 2000, Public Agenda*

**Q14 How important is it for a school to promote kids to the next grade only after they show they have learned what they were supposed to?**

	African American Parents n=401	White Parents n=401
Absolutely essential	83%	82%
Important but not essential	15%	17%
Not too important	3%	1%
Don't know	-	1%

*Source: Time to Move On: African American and White Parents Set an Agenda For Public Schools, Public Agenda 1998*

**Q15 What should be a bigger priority for your own children’s schools:**

	African American Parents n=799	White Parents n=796
To focus on achieving more diversity and integration	8%	6%
To focus on raising academic standards and achievement	82%	87%
Both (VOL.)	10%	6%
Don’t know	*	1%

*Source: Time to Move On: African American and White Parents Set an Agenda For Public Schools, Public Agenda 1998*

**Q16 Social promotion means moving children from grade to grade in order to keep them with others in their own age group. Would you favor stricter standards for social promotion in school even if it meant that significantly more students would be held back?**

	General Public n=1,103
Favor	72%
Oppose	26%
Don’t know	2%

*Source: Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools 1999*

**Q17 Which do you think [is/would be] 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 up with the work?**

	Parents n=606	Teachers n=587	Employers n=249	Professors n=247	Students n=600
To have to repeat a grade	24%	15%	17%	21%	42%
To be passed to the next grade and be expected to keep up with the work	73%	80%	80%	75%	56%
Don’t know	3%	5%	3%	5%	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q18 And when it comes to this effort toward higher academic standards, do you think [your school district/the district where you work/teach] should:**

<i>Base: Respondents who say their schools are making an effort to put in higher standards</i>	Parents n=392	Teachers n=565	Employers n=134	Professors n=158
Continue the effort	55%	53%	57%	51%
Continue the effort, but make some adjustments	34%	42%	34%	35%
Stop the effort and go back to the way things were	2%	1%	2%	1%
Don't know enough to say	9%	4%	8%	13%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q19 Overall, would you say that the schools are careful and reasonable in putting in place the higher academic standards, or are they being too careless and unreasonable?**

<i>Base: Respondents who say their schools are making an effort to put in higher standards</i>	Parents n=390	Teachers n=567	Employers n=134	Professors n=156
Careful and reasonable	84%	83%	81%	75%
Too careless and unreasonable	10%	14%	8%	9%
Don't know	6%	3%	11%	16%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**FINDING TWO: Standards and promotion policies have changed in recent years, and attitudes about local schools have improved. Even so, many students still move ahead without acquiring needed skills.**

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**Q20 Does your school automatically promote students who have reached a maximum age, or not?**

<b>TEACHERS</b>	1998 n=674	1999 n=675	2000 n=594	2001 n=584	2002 n=583
Yes	41%	39%	36%	31%	33%
No	45%	48%	50%	53%	53%
Don't know	14%	13%	14%	16%	14%

*Source: Reality Check 1998-2002, Public Agenda*

**Q21 Compared to the past few years, has the number of kids at your school going to summer school for remedial purposes increased, decreased, or remained about the same?**

<b>TEACHERS</b>	1998 n=610	1999 n=599	2000 n=543	2001 n=542	2002 n=549
Increased	28%	30%	38%	37%	40%
Decreased	14%	7%	7%	9%	7%
Remained about the same	45%	54%	48%	44%	47%
Don't know	12%	9%	8%	9%	6%

*Source: Reality Check 1998-2002, Public Agenda*

**Q22 Based on your experience with [recent job applicants/new students], are the public schools doing an excellent, good, fair, or poor job?**

<b>EMPLOYERS</b>	1998 n=246	1999 n=252	2000 n=259	2001 n=250	2002 n=251
Excellent	2%	3%	5%	3%	3%
Good	29%	30%	32%	35%	39%
Fair	49%	45%	46%	44%	39%
Poor	20%	21%	17%	16%	18%
Don't know	1%	*	*	1%	1%

<b>PROFESSORS</b>	1998 n=248	1999 n=256	2000 n=251	2001 n=253	2002 n=251
Excellent	3%	2%	4%	2%	5%
Good	28%	25%	30%	32%	34%
Fair	50%	54%	51%	49%	50%
Poor	18%	17%	14%	15%	10%
Don't know	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%

*Source: Reality Check 1998-2002, Public Agenda*

**Q23 First, in terms of academic achievement, do you think the public schools in the community where you [work/teach] generally expect kids to learn too much, too little, or are the expectations about right?**

<b>EMPLOYERS</b>	1998 n=247	1999 n=251	2000 n=259	2001 n=250	2002 n=250
Too much	3%	4%	2%	4%	4%
Too little	55%	56%	55%	44%	48%
About right	39%	37%	38%	47%	42%
Don't know	3%	3%	5%	5%	6%

<b>PROFESSORS</b>	1998 n=249	1999 n=256	2000 n=250	2001 n=248	2002 n=251
Too much	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%
Too little	66%	60%	59%	55%	47%
About right	28%	33%	38%	35%	44%
Don't know	4%	6%	2%	7%	6%

*Source: Reality Check 1998-2002, Public Agenda*

**Q24 Using the A, B, C, D, FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?**

<b>PARENTS</b>	1998 n=1,151*	1999 n=1,103*	2000 n=1,093*	2001 n=1,108*	2002 n=1,000*
A & B	62%	66%	70%	68%	71%
A	22%	24%	26%	28%	27%
B	40%	42%	44%	40%	44%
C	25%	21%	21%	22%	20%
D	8%	7%	5%	6%	6%
FAIL	3%	5%	2%	3%	2%
Don't know	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%

\*Sample size for general public; these findings based on subgroup of public school parents: 1998=29%; 1999=33%; 2000=30%; 2001=32%; 2002=26%.

*Source: Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools 1998-2002*

**Q25 In your community, is it the public schools or the private schools that have higher academic standards?**

<b>PARENTS</b>	1998 n=672	2002 n=591
Public schools	22%	29%
Private schools	42%	35%
Both equally (VOL.)	12%	10%
Don't know	24%	26%

*Source: Reality Check 1998 and 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q26 In your community, is it the public schools or the private schools which generally provide a better education?**

<b>PARENTS</b>	1998 n=670	2002 n=593
Public schools	29%	35%
Private schools	37%	32%
Both equally (vol.)	12%	12%
Don't know	22%	22%

*Source: Reality Check 1998 and 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q27 Next I am going to read some statements and ask you how close they come to describing your school. Some kids graduate from my school even though they haven't learned what they were supposed to.**

	Teachers n=593
NET Close	48%
Very close	17%
Somewhat close	31%
NET Not close	49%
Not too close	29%
Not close at all	20%
Don't know	3%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q28 In general, which comes closer to what you think usually happens at your school:**

	Teachers n=562
Teachers pass students to the next grade as long as they try hard and attend class regularly	46%
Teachers pass students to the next grade ONLY if the students learn what they are supposed to know	52%
Don't know	3%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q29 In the past few years, have there been any students you promoted even though you felt they should have been held back?**

	Teachers n=550
Yes	44%
No	55%
Don't know	1%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**FINDING THREE: The vast majority of parents and teachers say standardized tests are useful, and few students are overly anxious about them. But people also think tests can be misused, and many say there's too much emphasis on them.**

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**Q30 Sometimes kids take standardized tests at school—these are tests that all the students in the district have to take, but don't count toward your grades. When you take these tests at school, do you take them very seriously, somewhat seriously, not too seriously, or not seriously at all? If you've never taken this kind of test, please say so.**

	Students n=600
NET Seriously	92%
Very seriously	56%
Somewhat seriously	36%
NET Not seriously	7%
Not too seriously	5%
Not seriously at all	3%
Never taken this kind of test	1%
Don't know	-

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q31 Before students are awarded a high school diploma, would you want [your/the] school district [where you work/teach] to require students to:**

	Parents n=608	Teachers n=595	Employers n=250	Professors n=251
Pass a basic skills test in reading, writing and math	54%	58%	61%	53%
Pass a more challenging test showing they have learned at higher levels	32%	21%	28%	32%
Requiring kids to pass a test is a bad idea	12%	20%	9%	12%
Don't know	2%	1%	2%	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q32 Here are some views about requiring students to pass standardized tests before they are promoted. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each. How about...Students pay more attention and study harder if they know they must pass a test to get promoted or to graduate.**

	Parents n=610	Teachers n=596	Employers n=251	Professors n=252
NET Agree	85%	75%	79%	79%
Strongly agree	57%	40%	49%	42%
Somewhat agree	27%	36%	30%	38%
NET Disagree	14%	23%	18%	16%
Somewhat disagree	9%	14%	10%	8%
Strongly disagree	5%	10%	8%	8%
Don't know	1%	2%	3%	5%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q33 Does knowing you have to pass an exit exam in order to graduate make you work harder in school, or does it not make much difference?**

<i>Base: High school students who must take an exit exam</i>	H.S. Students n=152
Work harder	61%
Does not make much difference	39%
Don't know	1%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q34 When it comes to giving students in the elementary grades standardized tests, which of the following comes closer to your view?**

	Parents n=604	Teachers n=588
Testing students at a young age is good because struggling students can be identified and helped	78%	59%
Testing students at a young age is wrong because it puts too much pressure on them	20%	39%
Don't know	2%	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q35 Here are some views about requiring students to pass standardized tests before they are promoted. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each. How about...Standardized test scores are a good way to spot struggling students who need tutoring or summer school.**

	Teachers n=599	Employers n=251	Professors n=252
NET Agree	62%	79%	78%
Strongly agree	25%	49%	36%
Somewhat agree	38%	30%	42%
NET Disagree	37%	20%	19%
Somewhat disagree	15%	11%	10%
Strongly disagree	22%	9%	10%
Don't know	1%	1%	3%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q36 From your experience, would you say these tests ask fair questions that you should be able to answer, or are the questions so difficult or unfair that you cannot be expected to answer them?**

	Students n=592
<i>Base: Have taken standardized tests</i>	
Fair questions	79%
Difficult or unfair questions	20%
Don't know	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q37 Would you say that your child is required to take too many standardized tests, too few, are things about right, or don't you know?**

	Parents n=598
Too many	12%
Too few	9%
About right	61%
Don't know	18%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q38 On average, (black/African American) students don't do as well as whites on standardized achievement tests. Do you think this is mostly because:**

	African American Parents n=766
The tests are culturally biased against black/African American students	28%
Because the tests measure real differences in educational achievement	44%
Because black/African American students keep hearing they're not supposed to do well so they don't	18%
Don't know	10%

*Source: Time to Move On: African American and White Parents Set an Agenda For Public Schools, Public Agenda 1998*

**Q39 Which best describes how nervous you get when you take standardized tests:**

	Students n=598
I don't get nervous at all	23%
I get nervous but I handle it	73%
I get so nervous that I can't take the test	5%
Don't know	-

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q40 Here are some views about requiring students to pass standardized tests before they are promoted. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each. How about...It's wrong to use the results of just one test to decide whether a student gets promoted or graduates.**

	Parents n=610	Teachers n=600	Employers n=250	Professors n=252	Students n=600
NET Agree	75%	89%	81%	83%	62%
Strongly agree	55%	78%	64%	69%	45%
Somewhat agree	21%	11%	16%	14%	17%
NET Disagree	23%	11%	19%	16%	37%
Somewhat disagree	12%	4%	12%	8%	17%
Strongly disagree	11%	7%	7%	8%	20%
Don't know	1%	*	*	2%	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q41 Here are some views about requiring students to pass standardized tests before they are promoted. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each. How about...The schools should use standardized test scores along with teacher evaluations to decide if students should be promoted or graduate.**

	Parents n=610	Teachers n=598	Employers n=251	Professors n=251	Students n=599
NET Agree	83%	80%	86%	82%	71%
Strongly agree	52%	53%	59%	47%	38%
Somewhat agree	31%	27%	27%	35%	33%
NET Disagree	16%	20%	12%	17%	27%
Somewhat disagree	10%	8%	8%	8%	15%
Strongly disagree	6%	12%	4%	9%	11%
Don't know	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q42 At your school, are students promoted based solely on their standardized test scores, only in part, or are the scores not part of the promotion decision?**

	Teachers n=595
Students promoted solely on standardized tests	3%
Only in part	39%
Scores not part of decision	56%
Don't know	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q43 Here are some views about requiring students to pass standardized tests before they are promoted. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each. How about...The schools today place far too much emphasis on standardized test scores.**

	Parents n=608	Teachers n=597	Employers n=250	Professors n=251	Students n=599
NET Agree	60%	84%	52%	57%	45%
Strongly agree	33%	58%	35%	30%	17%
Somewhat agree	27%	26%	18%	27%	28%
NET Disagree	36%	16%	42%	38%	52%
Somewhat disagree	27%	11%	21%	17%	37%
Strongly disagree	9%	5%	22%	21%	15%
Don't know	4%	*	5%	6%	3%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q44 Here are some views about requiring students to pass standardized tests before they are promoted. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each. How about...Teachers will end up teaching to the test instead of making sure real learning takes place.**

	Parents n=608	Teachers n=599	Employers n=251	Professors n=252
NET Agree	66%	79%	64%	79%
Strongly agree	37%	50%	40%	50%
Somewhat agree	29%	30%	24%	29%
NET Disagree	30%	20%	33%	18%
Somewhat disagree	20%	10%	19%	8%
Strongly disagree	10%	10%	14%	10%
Don't know	4%	1%	3%	3%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q45 Do your teachers focus so much on preparing for these standardized tests that they neglect other important topics, or does this usually not happen?**

	Students n=590
Focus so much on preparing that they neglect other important topics	20%
This usually does not happen	78%
Don't know	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q46 In your opinion, which is the best way to measure student academic achievement—by means of test scores, or by classroom work and homework?**

	Parents n=260
By means of test scores	22%
By classroom work and homework	61%
Both combined (VOL.)	16%
Don't know	1%

*Source: Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools 2002*

**FINDING FOUR: While teachers support higher academic standards, they have qualms about some aspects of testing.**

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**Q47 Some school districts require students to pass a standardized test in order to be promoted. Students who fail the test must either go to summer school or repeat the grade. Do you favor or oppose this policy? Is that strongly or somewhat?**

	Teachers n=590
NET Favor	87%
Strongly favor	52%
Somewhat favor	35%
NET Oppose	12%
Somewhat oppose	8%
Strongly oppose	4%
Don't know	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2001, Public Agenda*

**Q48 Overall, would you say that the schools are careful and reasonable in putting in place the higher academic standards, or are they being too careless and unreasonable?**

<i>Base: Respondents who say their schools are making an effort to put in higher standards</i>	Teachers n=567
Careful and reasonable	83%
Too careless and unreasonable	14%
Don't know	3%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q49 Do you think having guidelines for what students are expected to learn and know helps improve students' academic performance, or doesn't it make much difference?**

	Teachers n=594
Helps improve performance	80%
Doesn't make much difference	19%
Don't know	1%

*Source: Reality Check 2001, Public Agenda*

**Q50 Here are some views about requiring students to pass standardized tests before they are promoted. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each. How about...Students pay more attention and study harder if they know they must pass a test to get promoted or to graduate.**

	Teachers n=596
NET Agree	75%
Strongly agree	40%
Somewhat agree	36%
NET Disagree	23%
Somewhat disagree	14%
Strongly disagree	10%
Don't know	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q51 Here are some views about requiring students to pass standardized tests before they are promoted. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each. How about...Standardized test scores are a good way to spot struggling students who need tutoring or summer school.**

	Teachers n=599
NET Agree	62%
Strongly agree	25%
Somewhat agree	38%
NET Disagree	37%
Somewhat disagree	15%
Strongly disagree	22%
Don't know	1%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q52 And when it comes to this effort toward higher academic standards, do you think your school district should:**

<i>Base: Respondents who say their schools are making an effort to put in higher standards</i>	Teachers n=565
Continue the effort	53%
Continue the effort, but make some adjustments	42%
Stop the effort and go back to the way things were	1%
Don't know enough to say	4%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q53 Here are some views about requiring students to pass standardized tests before they are promoted. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each. How about...Teachers will end up teaching to the test instead of making sure real learning takes place.**

	Parents n=608	Teachers n=599	Employers n=251	Professors n=252
NET Agree	66%	79%	64%	79%
Strongly agree	37%	50%	40%	50%
Somewhat agree	29%	30%	24%	29%
NET Disagree	30%	20%	33%	18%
Somewhat disagree	20%	10%	19%	8%
Strongly disagree	10%	10%	14%	10%
Don't know	4%	1%	3%	3%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q54 Thinking about your own classroom, do you find you have to spend so much class time preparing students for standardized tests that real learning is neglected or is this not the case?**

	Teachers n=540
Focus so much on preparing that real learning is neglected	26%
This is not the case	73%
Don't know	1%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q55 Think of a school with low student achievement and parents who are not involved. Do you think bringing in exceptionally talented teachers could turn things around, or would this not be enough on its own?**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=664
Talented teachers could turn things around	26%
Talented teachers are not enough on their own	73%
Don't know	1%

*Source: A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q56 If you heard that many students in your school district did poorly on a standardized test, which of the following would be your most likely reaction?**

	Teachers n=570
That these students simply lack the ability to do well	30%
That something was wrong with how the test was designed	31%
That the schools failed to adequately prepare the students	32%
Don't know	7%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q57 Some communities with underachieving kids are considering proposals to make educators more accountable by tying improvements in students' academic performance to financial incentives for teachers and principals. Generally speaking, do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea?**

	Parents n=607	Teachers n=604	Employers n=250	Professors n=252
Good idea	59%	22%	66%	42%
Bad idea	37%	76%	30%	54%
Don't know	5%	2%	4%	4%

*Source: Reality Check 2000 (Teachers); Reality Check 2002 (Parents, Employers, Professors), Public Agenda*

**Q58 Which of these comes closest to your own view about standardized testing in your district?**

	Principals n=903
Standardized tests are important, and my district is using them well	41%
Standardized tests are important, but there are serious problems in how they are currently used in my district	25%
Standardized tests are a seriously flawed measure of student achievement—we use them because there's no choice	30%
Not sure	4%

*Source: Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership, Public Agenda 2001*

**Q59 Generally speaking, do you think it is a good idea or a bad idea to hold principals accountable for student standardized test scores at the building level?**

	Principals n=901
Good idea	34%
Bad idea	48%
Not sure	18%

*Source: Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership, Public Agenda 2001*

**FINDING FIVE: Teachers are troubled by lack of parental support and poor student behavior. Teachers also say their views are generally ignored by decision makers.**

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**Based upon your experiences and observations at your school, how serious a problem are each of the following:**

**Q60 Parents who fail to set limits and create structure at home for their kids.**

	Teachers n=851
NET Serious	83%
Very serious	36%
Somewhat serious	47%
NET Not serious	16%
Not too serious	15%
Not serious at all	1%
Don't know	1%

**Q61 Parents who refuse to hold their kids accountable for their behavior or academic performance.**

	Teachers n=851
NET Serious	81%
Very serious	31%
Somewhat serious	50%
NET Not serious	19%
Not too serious	16%
Not serious at all	3%
Don't know	1%

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q62 Would you say the morale of the teachers at your school is currently:**

	H.S. Teachers n=911
High	15%
Moderate	52%
Low	33%
Not sure	*

*Source: Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools, Public Agenda 2001*

**Q63 And when it comes to teaching your own child [to always do their very best in school,] do you think you have succeeded, or is there still work to be done?**

<i>Base: Asked in sequence of parents who responded "absolutely essential" when asked how important it is to teach their child to always do their very best in school</i>	Parents n=1,310
I have succeeded	50%
There is still work to be done	50%
Don't know	*

*Source: A Lot Easier Said Than Done: Parents Talk about Raising Children in Today's America, Public Agenda 2002*

**Q64 Now I am going to read some statements and ask you to tell me how close they come to describing your school. Teachers spend more time trying to keep order in the classroom than teaching students.**

	Teachers n=599	Students n=600
NET Close	43%	47%
Very close	16%	21%
Somewhat close	27%	27%
NET Not close	57%	53%
Not too close	30%	28%
Not close at all	27%	25%
Don't know	-	-

*Source: Reality Check 2001, Public Agenda*

**Q65 Given a choice between two schools in otherwise identical districts, which would you prefer to work in:**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=662
The school which paid a significantly higher salary	12%
The school where student behavior and parental support were significantly better	86%
Don't know	2%

*Source: A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q66 Given a choice between two schools in otherwise identical districts, which would you prefer to work in:**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=663
The school which paid a significantly higher salary	17%
The school where administrators gave strong backing and support to teachers	82%
Don't know	1%

*Source: A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q67 I'm going to read you a few statements about the relationship between public schools and their communities. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each statement. How about...Rank-and-file teachers are often left out of the loop in their district's decision-making process.**

	Teachers n=403
NET Agree	70%
Strongly agree	43%
Somewhat agree	27%
NET Disagree	27%
Somewhat disagree	16%
Strongly disagree	11%
Don't know	3%

*Source: Just Waiting to Be Asked?: A Fresh Look at Attitudes on Public Engagement, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q68 When district leaders communicate with teachers about school policy, do you think they are usually:**

	Teachers n=400
Trying to gain a better understanding of the issues and concerns of the teachers	23%
Trying to help teachers understand and support what the district leadership wants to accomplish	70%
Neither (VOL.)	4%
Don't know	3%

*Source: Just Waiting to Be Asked?: A Fresh Look at Attitudes on Public Engagement, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q69 When it comes to trying to accomplish your goals at work, how often does it seem to you that your school puts obstacles in your way—often, sometimes or rarely?**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=664
Often	21%
Sometimes	46%
Rarely	32%
Never (VOL.)	1%
Don't know	*

*Source: A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q70 Do you think the officials and administrators in your school district really listen and take into account the issues that teachers care about, is this not happening, or don't you know enough to say?**

	Teachers n=394
They listen and take into account issues teachers care about	49%
This is not happening	44%
Don't know enough to say	6%

*Source: Just Waiting to Be Asked?: A Fresh Look at Attitudes on Public Engagement, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q71 For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you think it is an accurate description of the way things are at your school, if things should be a little better, or if things should be a lot better: Teachers regularly meet to share ideas about lesson plans and methods of instruction.**

	H.S. Teachers n=912
Accurate description of my school	19%
Should be a little better	37%
Should be a lot better	44%
Not sure	1%

*Source: Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools, Public Agenda 2002*

**FINDING SIX: Americans say all students need the basics, and parents want their own children prepared for college. For most, a college diploma is as indispensable as a high school diploma used to be.**

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**Now here are some things the local public schools in your community could concentrate on teaching. Please tell me whether you think each is absolutely essential, important but not essential, or not too important for your local schools to be teaching.**

**Q72 How about teaching...Basic reading, writing and math skills?**

	Teachers n=237	General Public n=800
Absolutely essential	98%	92%
Important but not essential	2%	8%
Not too important	-	*
Not sure	-	1%

**Q73 How about teaching...American history and American geography?**

	Teachers n=237	General Public n=800
Absolutely essential	83%	63%
Important but not essential	17%	34%
Not too important	*	3%
Not sure	-	1%

**Q74 How about teaching...Biology, chemistry and physics?**

	Teachers n=237	General Public n=800
Absolutely essential	65%	59%
Important but not essential	34%	37%
Not too important	*	3%
Not sure	-	1%

**Q75 How about teaching...The history and geography of such places as Europe and Asia?**

	Teachers n=237	General Public n=800
Absolutely essential	48%	35%
Important but not essential	50%	53%
Not too important	2%	11%
Not sure	-	2%

**Q76 How about teaching...Advanced mathematics such as calculus?**

	Teachers n=237	General Public n=800
Absolutely essential	22%	37%
Important but not essential	71%	51%
Not too important	7%	11%
Not sure	-	2%

**Q77 How about teaching...Sports and athletics?**

	Teachers n=237	General Public n=800
Absolutely essential	19%	23%
Important but not essential	64%	58%
Not too important	18%	18%
Not sure	-	1%

*Source: Assignment Incomplete: The Unfinished Business of Education Reform, Public Agenda 1995*

**Q78 How much do you know about the curriculum and academic goals for your child's grade—a lot, a little, or don't you have any information about that?**

	Parents n=610
A lot	58%
A little	35%
Don't have any information	7%
Don't know	1%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q79 How much do you know about the availability of rigorous courses in your child's high school—a lot, a little, or don't you have any information about that?**

	Parents of H.S. Students n=254
A lot	45%
A little	35%
Don't have any information	18%
Don't know	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q80 How comfortable would you feel doing each of the following: Helping to plan the school curriculum?**

	Parents n=1,213
NET Comfortable	61%
Very comfortable	25%
Somewhat comfortable	36%
NET Uncomfortable	38%
Somewhat uncomfortable	24%
Very uncomfortable	13%
Don't know	2%

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q81 Have you personally helped to plan the school curriculum during this school year or the last one?**

	Parents n=1,214
Yes	15%
No	85%
Don't know	*

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q82 Before students are awarded a high school diploma, would you want [your/the] school district [where you work/teach] to require students to:**

	Parents n=608	Teachers n=595	Employers n=250	Professors n=251
Pass a basic skills test in reading, writing and math	54%	58%	61%	53%
Pass a more challenging test showing they have learned at higher levels	32%	21%	28%	32%
Requiring kids to pass a test is a bad idea	12%	20%	9%	12%
Don't know	2%	1%	2%	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q83 In your opinion, do all students have the ability to reach a high level of learning, or do only some have the ability to reach a high level of learning?**

	General Public n=1,108
All have the ability to reach a high level of learning	52%
Only some have the ability	46%
Don't know	2%

*Source: Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools 2001*

**Q84 Now I'm going to read you a few statements about a college education and ask if you agree or disagree with them. A college education has become as important as a high school diploma used to be. Do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?**

	General Public n=1,006
NET Agree	87%
Strongly agree	68%
Somewhat agree	19%
NET Disagree	11%
Somewhat disagree	8%
Strongly disagree	4%
Don't know	2%

*Source: Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents—White, African American and Hispanic—View Higher Education, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q85 Which statement comes closer to your own view?**

	General Public n=685
High school graduates should go on to college because in the long run they'll have better job prospects	86%
High school graduates should take any decent job offer they get because there are so many unemployed people already	9%
Don't know	5%

*Source: The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education, Public Agenda 1998*

**Q86 Which statement comes closer to your own view?**

	General Public n=690
(Insert State) needs more college-educated workers so that the state can attract high-tech jobs and businesses.	60%
(Insert State) already has too many college graduates who are competing for scarce jobs.	30%
Don't know	10%

*Source: The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education, Public Agenda 1998*

**Q87 Which of the following do you think would be best for your own child after they finish high school:**

	Parents of H.S. Students n=160
To get a job	4%
To go to a trade school	14%
To go to a two-year community college	22%
To go to a four-year college	56%
Don't know	4%

*Source: Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents—White, African American and Hispanic—View Higher Education, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q88 [When it comes to your own child/Thinking of your oldest child,] do you think a college education is something absolutely necessary to get, something helpful but not necessary, or not that important?**

<i>Base: Parents of high school students</i>	White Parents n=200	African American Parents n=202	Hispanic Parents n=201
Absolutely necessary	57%	67%	78%
Helpful but not necessary	40%	31%	19%
Not that important	4%	1%	2%
Don't know	-	1%	1%

*Source: Great Expectations How the Public and Parents—White, African American and Hispanic—View Higher Education, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q89 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 n=600
Definitely	76%
Thinking about	20%
Probably won't go	3%
Definitely won't go (VOL.)	*
Don't know	1%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q90 Now I am going to read you several things that may or may not motivate you to work hard at school. How about wanting to get into a good college—would that motivate you a lot, a little, or not at all?**

	H.S. Students n=318
A lot	84%
A little	12%
Not at all	5%
Don't know	-

*Source: Reality Check 2001, Public Agenda*

**Q91 Now I'm going to read you a few statements about a college education and ask if you agree or disagree with them. There are too many students in college today who don't belong there. Do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?**

	General Public n=1,006
NET Agree	49%
Strongly agree	27%
Somewhat agree	22%
NET Disagree	40%
Somewhat disagree	22%
Strongly disagree	18%
Don't know	11%

*Source: Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents—White, African American and Hispanic—View Higher Education, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q92 What do you think is the main reason people drop out of college?**

	Professors n=130
A lack of motivation and direction	69%
A lack of money	11%
A lack of skills	9%
Other	7%
Not sure	5%

*Source: Taking Responsibility: Leaders' Expectations of Higher Education, Public Agenda 1999*

**FINDING SEVEN: There is a dramatic gap between the way employers and college professors rate high school graduates and the way parents and teachers view them.**

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**Q93 Overall, would you say the public schools in your community are doing an excellent, good, fair or poor job?**

	Parents n=610	Teachers n=600	Employers n=251	Professors n=251
NET Excellent/Good	73%	93%	42%	39%
Excellent	28%	51%	3%	5%
Good	44%	42%	39%	34%
NET Fair/Poor	27%	7%	57%	59%
Fair	21%	6%	39%	50%
Poor	6%	2%	18%	10%
Don't know	*	-	1%	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q94 In terms of academic achievement, do you think that [your child's school/your school/the public schools in the community where you work/teach] generally expect[s] kids to learn too much, too little or are the expectations about right?**

	Parents n=609	Teachers n=600	Employers n=250	Professors n=251
Too much	10%	9%	4%	3%
Too little	21%	11%	48%	47%
About right	67%	80%	42%	44%
Don't know	3%	1%	6%	6%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q95 When it comes to academics, would [your child/most of your students/most students] benefit from being pushed harder in school, would they suffer, or wouldn't it make much difference?**

	Parents n=694	Teachers n=591	Employers n=250	Professors n=250
Would benefit	45%	61%	74%	84%
Would suffer	20%	14%	4%	3%
Wouldn't make much difference	30%	24%	18%	9%
Don't know	5%	1%	3%	4%

*Source: Reality Check 1998 (Parents); Reality Check 2002 (Teachers, Employers, Professors), Public Agenda*

**Q96 Which statement is more accurate [based on your experience]?**

	Parents n=593	Teachers n=595	H.S. Students n=312	Employers n=251	Professors n=251
A high school diploma is no guarantee that the typical student has learned the basics	31%	22%	25%	58%	68%
A high school diploma means that the typical student has at least learned the basics	67%	77%	73%	39%	31%
Neither [VOL.]	N/A	N/A	N/A	1%	1%
Don't know	2%	1%	2%	2%	-

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q97 In general, would you say that report card grades [at your school/that public high school students receive] ACCURATELY reflect students' accomplishments and abilities, that grades tend to be HIGHER than students deserve, or that grades tend to be LOWER than students deserve?**

	H.S. Teachers n=159	Professors n=249
Grades accurately reflect accomplishments and abilities	63%	23%
Grades tend to be higher	31%	62%
Grades tend to be lower	3%	2%
Don't know	4%	13%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q98 How confident are you that your child’s report card is an accurate description of your child’s progress and abilities—very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident or not confident at all?**

	Parents n=610
NET Confident	91%
Very confident	60%
Somewhat confident	32%
NET Not confident	8%
Not too confident	6%
Not confident at all	2%
Don’t know	1%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q99 When your child graduates from high school, do you think they will have the skills needed to succeed in college, do you think they will lack these skills, or are you not sure?**

	Parents of H.S. Students n=256
Child will have skills to succeed in college	62%
Child will lack these skills	20%
Not sure	18%
Don’t know	*

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q100 How many of your students have the skills to succeed in college—all, most, some, a few, or none?**

	H.S. Teachers n=159
All	3%
Most	48%
Some	35%
A few	14%
None	-
Don’t know	-

*Source: Reality Check 2001, Public Agenda*

**Q101 Do the graduates coming from the public schools have the skills needed to succeed in college, or do they really lack these skills?**

	Professors n=244
Have the skills	47%
Really lack the skills	43%
Don't know	11%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q102 When your child graduates from high school, do you think they will have the skills needed to succeed in the work world, do you think they will lack these skills, or are you not sure?**

	Parents of H.S. Students n=253
Child will have skills to succeed in the work world	67%
Child will lack these skills	19%
Not sure	14%
Don't know	*

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q103 How many of your students have the skills to succeed in the work world—all, most, some, a few, or none?**

	H.S. Teachers n=160
All	14%
Most	63%
Some	18%
A few	4%
None	-
Don't know	-

*Source: Reality Check 2001, Public Agenda*

**Q104 Do the graduates coming from the public schools have the skills needed to succeed in the work world, or do they really lack these skills?**

	Employers n=251
Have the skills	41%
Really lack the skills	53%
Don't know	5%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**FINDING EIGHT: The vast majority of employers and professors continue to have serious doubts about public school graduates' basic skills—especially when it comes to writing.**

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**Q105 How would you rate [recent job applicants/freshman and sophomore students] when it comes to their ability to write clearly? Would you say excellent, good, fair, or poor?**

<b>EMPLOYERS</b>	1998 n=246	2002 n=248
NET Excellent/Good	27%	27%
Excellent	3%	3%
Good	24%	23%
NET Fair/Poor	73%	73%
Fair	45%	45%
Poor	28%	28%
Don't know	*	*

<b>PROFESSORS</b>	1998 n=247	2002 n=251
NET Excellent/Good	18%	25%
Excellent	2%	2%
Good	16%	23%
NET Fair/Poor	81%	75%
Fair	48%	49%
Poor	33%	26%
Don't know	1%	*

*Source: Reality Check 1998 and 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q106 How would you rate [recent job applicants/freshman and sophomore students] when it comes to their grammar and spelling? Would you say excellent, good, fair, or poor?**

<b>EMPLOYERS</b>	1998 n=247	2002 n=248
NET Excellent/Good	23%	26%
Excellent	3%	2%
Good	20%	25%
NET Fair/Poor	77%	73%
Fair	47%	45%
Poor	29%	28%
Don't know	1%	*

<b>PROFESSORS</b>	1998 n=247	2002 n=252
NET Excellent/Good	22%	25%
Excellent	3%	2%
Good	19%	24%
NET Fair/Poor	77%	74%
Fair	45%	46%
Poor	32%	27%
Don't know	1%	1%

*Source: Reality Check 1998 and 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q107 How would you rate [recent job applicants/freshman and sophomore students] when it comes to their basic math skills? Would you say excellent, good, fair, or poor?**

<b>EMPLOYERS</b>	1998 n=239	2002 n=246
NET Excellent/Good	35%	32%
Excellent	5%	2%
Good	30%	30%
NET Fair/Poor	62%	63%
Fair	41%	42%
Poor	20%	21%
Don't know	3%	5%

<b>PROFESSORS</b>	1998 n=220	2002 n=246
NET Excellent/Good	17%	15%
Excellent	3%	2%
Good	14%	13%
NET Fair/Poor	65%	65%
Fair	36%	38%
Poor	30%	26%
Don't know	18%	20%

*Source: Reality Check 1998 and 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q108 For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you think it is an accurate description of the way things are at your school, if things should be a little better, or if things should be a lot better: Students learn to speak and write well, with proper pronunciation and grammar.**

	H.S. Teachers n=916
Accurate description of my school	20%
Should be a little better	50%
Should be a lot better	30%
Not sure	1%

*Source: Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools, Public Agenda 2002*

**Q109 How would you rate [recent job applicants/freshman and sophomore students] when it comes to their work habits, such as being organized and on time? Would you say excellent, good, fair, or poor?**

<b>EMPLOYERS</b>	1998 n=250	2002 n=251
NET Excellent/Good	42%	30%
Excellent	8%	4%
Good	35%	27%
NET Fair/Poor	58%	69%
Fair	38%	38%
Poor	20%	32%
Don't know	-	*

<b>PROFESSORS</b>	1998 n=250	2002 n=252
NET Excellent/Good	31%	25%
Excellent	4%	2%
Good	27%	24%
NET Fair/Poor	69%	74%
Fair	48%	54%
Poor	21%	20%
Don't know	*	*

*Source: Reality Check 1998 and 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q110 How would you rate [recent job applicants/freshman and sophomore students] when it comes to being motivated and conscientious? Would you say excellent, good, fair, or poor?**

<b>EMPLOYERS</b>	1998 n=249	2002 n=251
NET Excellent/Good	44%	27%
Excellent	8%	5%
Good	35%	22%
NET Fair/Poor	56%	72%
Fair	39%	47%
Poor	17%	25%
Don't know	1%	1%

<b>PROFESSORS</b>	1998 n=248	2002 n=252
NET Excellent/Good	39%	41%
Excellent	9%	6%
Good	30%	36%
NET Fair/Poor	60%	58%
Fair	51%	47%
Poor	9%	12%
Don't know	1%	*

*Source: Reality Check 1998 and 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q111 How would you rate [recent job applicants/freshman and sophomore students] when it comes to being curious and interested in learning new things? Would you say excellent, good, fair, or poor?**

<b>EMPLOYERS</b>	1998 n=249	2002 n=250
NET Excellent/Good	52%	46%
Excellent	10%	8%
Good	43%	39%
NET Fair/Poor	48%	53%
Fair	36%	38%
Poor	12%	15%
Don't know	-	*

<b>PROFESSORS</b>	1998 n=249	2002 n=252
NET Excellent/Good	48%	49%
Excellent	10%	7%
Good	39%	42%
NET Fair/Poor	51%	51%
Fair	40%	39%
Poor	11%	12%
Don't know	1%	-

*Source: Reality Check 1998 and 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q112 How would you rate [recent job applicants/freshman and sophomore students] when it comes to their ability to use computers? Would you say excellent, good, fair, or poor?**

<b>EMPLOYERS</b>	1998 n=223	1999 n=217	2000 n=242	2001 n=233	2002 n=239
NET Excellent/Good	53%	58%	64%	68%	70%
Excellent	11%	8%	17%	22%	18%
Good	42%	50%	46%	46%	52%
NET Fair/Poor	44%	40%	33%	28%	26%
Fair	27%	29%	24%	23%	18%
Poor	17%	11%	9%	6%	7%
Don't know	3%	2%	3%	4%	5%

<b>PROFESSORS</b>	1998 n=238	1999 n=248	2000 n=249	2001 n=251	2002 n=247
NET Excellent/Good	61%	67%	75%	71%	81%
Excellent	13%	12%	20%	18%	26%
Good	48%	55%	55%	54%	55%
NET Fair/Poor	31%	28%	20%	24%	16%
Fair	29%	24%	18%	21%	15%
Poor	2%	4%	2%	2%	2%
Don't know	8%	5%	6%	5%	3%

*Source: Reality Check 1998-2002, Public Agenda*

**Q113 Teacher education programs can impart different qualities to their students and I want to ask which qualities you think are most essential and which are least essential. Please use a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 means it is least essential: Teachers who are themselves lifelong learners and constantly updating their skills.**

	Professors of Education n=899
1-Least essential	*
2	1%
3	2%
4	13%
5-Absolutely essential	84%

*Source: Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education, Public Agenda 1997*

**Q114 Teacher education programs can impart different qualities to their students and I want to ask which qualities you think are most essential and which are least essential. Please use a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 means it is least essential: Teachers who stress correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.**

	Professors of Education n=897
1-Least essential	3%
2	12%
3	33%
4	34%
5-Absolutely essential	19%

*Source: Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education, Public Agenda 1997*

**FINDING NINE: Teachers say lack of parental involvement is a serious problem. According to both teachers and parents, parental involvement should focus on what goes on at home rather than on school management issues.**

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**How close do the following statements come to describing your experiences with the parents at your school:**

**Q115 It is always the same group of parents who are helping out at the school.**

	Teachers n=872
NET Close	98%
Very close	76%
Somewhat close	22%
NET Not close	1%
Not too close	1%
Not close at all	*
Not sure	1%

**Q116 Too many parents have little idea of what is going on with their kids' school and education.**

	Teachers n=872
NET Close	78%
Very close	35%
Somewhat close	43%
NET Not close	21%
Not too close	16%
Not close at all	5%
Not sure	1%

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q117 Which two of the following would most help your students be more successful at school?**

	Teachers n=1,111
More parental involvement with child's education	65%
More one-on-one time with teachers	32%
Better sleep habits	29%
More frequent parent-teacher communication	18%
Later school start in morning	14%
More time with family	12%
Mentoring by community members	9%
Regularly scheduled meetings between students and guidance counselor/teacher	7%
Better eating habits	7%

*Source: The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher 2002*

**Q118 Overall, how would you rate the following: The parents at your school in terms of their involvement with their children's education.**

	Teachers n=996
NET Excellent/Good	34%
Excellent	6%
Good	28%
NET Fair/Poor	66%
Fair	42%
Poor	24%
Not sure	*

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q119 For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you think it is an accurate description of the way things are at your school, if things should be a little better, or if things should be a lot better: Parental involvement is strong.**

	H.S. Teachers n=916
Accurate description of my school	19%
Should be a little better	35%
Should be a lot better	46%
Not sure	*

*Source: Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools, Public Agenda 2002*

**Based upon your experiences and observations at your school, how serious a problem are each of the following:**

**Q120 Parents who fail to set limits and create structure at home for their kids.**

	Teachers n=851
NET Serious	83%
Very serious	36%
Somewhat serious	47%
NET Not serious	16%
Not too serious	15%
Not serious at all	1%
Not sure	1%

**Q121 Parents who refuse to hold their kids accountable for their behavior or academic performance.**

	Teachers n=851
NET Serious	81%
Very serious	31%
Somewhat serious	50%
NET Not serious	19%
Not too serious	16%
Not serious at all	3%
Not sure	1%

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q122 People often refer to education as a “partnership” between parents and school. What is MOST important for parents to do in this partnership:**

	Parents n=1,178
To do their job at home by checking homework and encouraging their kids to learn	83%
To volunteer to raise money and help at school	2%
To help choose staff and develop the curriculum for the school	4%
Neither (VOL.)	1%
Combination (VOL.)	10%
Don't know	*

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q123 People often refer to education as a “partnership” between parents and school. Which description of this partnership comes closest to your own? For parents to:**

	Teachers n=836
Do their job by checking homework and encouraging kids to learn	53%
Do their job at home and volunteer to do fundraising and to help at school	28%
Do their job at home, volunteer at school, and help make decisions about staffing and curriculum	15%
Not sure	5%

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q124 Which of the following two approaches to involving parents in their children's education do you prefer:**

	Parents n=1,216	Teachers n=940
Get parents directly involved in running the school so that parents have some say over who the schools hire, how they spend money and what they teach	16%	5%
Get parents to be more involved in their children's education at home by such things as limiting television and checking homework	72%	87%
Neither (VOL.)	1%	N/A
Both (VOL.)	11%	N/A
Don't know	1%	8

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q125 Which would you personally feel more comfortable doing:**

	Parents n=1,217
Volunteering to chaperone class trips or class parties	68%
Helping to design the school curriculum	22%
Neither (VOL.)	1%
Both (VOL.)	9%
Don't know	*

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q126 Which would you personally feel more comfortable doing:**

	Parents n=1,217
Interviewing teachers or principals the school is thinking about hiring	26%
Helping with school events such as career day or book sale	65%
Neither (VOL.)	3%
Both (VOL.)	6%
Don't know	1%

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q127 Have you personally chaperoned a trip or party during this school year or the last one?**

	Parents n=1,214
Yes	57%
No	43%
Don't know	*

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q128 Have you personally helped the school design its policy on student behavior and discipline during this school year or the last one?**

	Parents n=1,214
Yes	20%
No	80%
Don't know	*

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q129 Have you personally helped decide how to spend your school's money during this school year or the last one?**

	Parents n=1,216
Yes	19%
No	81%
Don't know	*

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q130 Have you personally helped to plan the school curriculum during this school year or the last one?**

	Parents n=1,214
Yes	15%
No	85%
Don't know	*

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q131 Have you personally served on a committee to decide which new teachers or principal to hire during this school year or the last one?**

	Parents n=1,213
Yes	7%
No	93%
Don't know	*

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q132 Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statement...Kids whose parents are not involved at school sometimes get shortchanged and fall through the cracks.**

	Parents n=608
NET Agree	72%
Strongly agree	38%
Somewhat agree	35%
NET Disagree	25%
Somewhat disagree	18%
Strongly disagree	7%
Don't know	3%

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q133 How close do the following statements come to describing your experiences with the parents at your school: Kids whose parents are not involved at school sometimes get shortchanged and fall through the cracks.**

	Teachers n=870
NET Close	48%
Very close	14%
Somewhat close	35%
NET Not close	50%
Not too close	29%
Not close at all	21%
Not sure	2%

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q134 Here are some statements about the relationship between public schools and their communities. How much do you agree or disagree with each? The schools are most responsive to parents who are very active and vocal.**

	School Board Members n=475	Superintendents n=683
NET Agree	88%	87%
Strongly agree	43%	27%
Somewhat agree	45%	60%
NET Disagree	12%	12%
Somewhat disagree	10%	10%
Strongly disagree	3%	2%
Not sure	*	*

*Source: Just Waiting to Be Asked?: A Fresh Look at Attitudes on Public Engagement , Public Agenda 2001*

**Q135 Do you think that children are more likely to get the better teachers and avoid the worst ones if their parents are active and involved at the school or do you think that it does not make a difference?**

	Parents n=1,214
More likely to get the better teachers	41%
Does not make a difference	55%
Don't know	4%

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**Q136 Which comes closer to your own view:**

	Teachers n=988
Regardless of how active their parents are, all children are treated equally by the school	56%
Active parents know how the system works, so their kids tend to get better treatment by the school	36%
Not sure	8%

*Source: Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools, Public Agenda 1999*

**FINDING TEN: Teachers, parents and students continue to voice concern about the rough-edged, uncivil atmosphere in many high schools. Few see high schools as places of respect or civility.**

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**Q137 How about the kids you see in public? Would you say that they are respectful toward adults, should things be somewhat better, or should things be a lot better?**

	General Public n=2,010
Kids [I see] in public are respectful toward adults	9%
Things should be somewhat better	39%
Things should be a lot better	52%
Don't know	1%

*Source: Aggravating Circumstances: A Status Report on Rudeness in America, Public Agenda 2002*

**Q138 For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you think it is an accurate description of the way things are at your [child's] high school, if things should be a little better, or if things should be a lot better: Students are civil and respectful toward each other.**

	Parents of H.S. Students n=799	H.S. Teachers n=908
Accurate description of [child's/my] school	39%	18%
Should be a little better	31%	49%
Should be a lot better	26%	33%
Don't know	4%	-

*Source: Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools, Public Agenda 2002*

**Q139 Please tell me if the following statements about school are true at your high school, if things should be a little better, or if things should be a lot better. Students treat each other with respect.**

	H.S. Students n=1,007
True at your high school	30%
Things should be a little better	49%
Things should be a lot better	21%
Don't know	*

*Source: Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools, Public Agenda 2002*

**Q140 I am going to read off several of the problems facing the public schools, nationally, one at a time. For each problem, please tell me how serious you think that problem is in the public schools in your community—is it very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?**

GENERAL PUBLIC n=1,000	Very Serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not at all serious	Don't know
Lack of student discipline	43%	33%	17%	4%	3%
Getting good teachers	40%	33%	17%	9%	1%
Overcrowding	38%	33%	16%	10%	3%
Fighting, violence, gangs	37%	26%	24%	12%	1%

*Source: Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools 2002*

**Q141 How likely do you think it is that a serious violent incident—an act that causes severe physical harm—will occur at [your child's/your] high school in the next two years? Would you say very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?**

	Parents of H.S. Students n=801	H.S. Teachers n=915	H.S. Students n=1,007
NET Likely	40%	40%	25%
Very likely	13%	9%	6%
Somewhat likely	28%	31%	19%
NET Not likely	57%	58%	74%
Not too likely	42%	45%	48%
Not at all likely	15%	12%	26%
Don't know	3%	3%	1%

*Source: Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools, Public Agenda 2002*

**Q142 Since you have been in this high school, about how often have you seen students get into a serious fight? Would you say hardly ever, about once a month, or about once a week or more?**

	H.S. Students n=1,007
Hardly ever	56%
About once a month	30%
About once a week or more	10%
Never (VOL.)	4%
Don't know	1%

*Source: Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools, Public Agenda 2002*

**Q143 How often do you hear kids cursing in your school's common areas such as the hallways and cafeteria? Would you say often, sometimes, or hardly ever?**

	H.S. Students n=1,007
Often	77%
Sometimes	19%
Hardly ever	4%
Don't know	*

*Source: Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools, Public Agenda 2002*

**Now, here are some problems that high schools could have. Please tell me how serious a problem each is in your high school.**

**Q144 Hallways are too crowded—is this a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not a problem at all in your school?**

	H.S. Students n=1,007
NET Serious	64%
Very serious	36%
Somewhat serious	29%
NET Not serious	35%
Not too serious	19%
Not a problem at all	16%
Don't know	*

**Q145 Too many students abuse drugs or alcohol—is this a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not a problem at all in your school?**

	H.S. Students n=1,006
NET Very/somewhat serious	62%
Very serious	25%
Somewhat serious	36%
NET Not serious	35%
Not too serious	23%
Not a problem at all	12%
Don't know	3%

**Q146 Too many students bully and harass other students—is this a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not a problem at all in your school?**

	H.S. Students n=1,007
NET Serious	32%
Very serious	11%
Somewhat serious	21%
NET Not serious	67%
Not too serious	39%
Not a problem at all	28%
Don't know	1%

*Source: Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools, Public Agenda 2002*

**Q147 How close does the following statement come to your own view: Teachers spend more time trying to keep order in the classroom than teaching students.**

	H.S. Students n=318	H.S. Teachers n=160
NET Close	49%	38%
Very close	23%	16%
Somewhat close	26%	21%
NET Not close	51%	63%
Not too close	27%	32%
Not close at all	24%	31%
Don't know	-	-

*Source: Reality Check 2001, Public Agenda*

**Q148 Would you say that most students in your school treat teachers with respect, should things be a little better, or should things be a lot better?**

	H.S. Students n=987
Most students treat teachers with respect	19%
Things should be a little better	60%
Things should be a lot better	21%
Don't know	*

*Source: Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools, Public Agenda 2002*

**Q149 How much emphasis do you or does your teacher education program place on teaching prospective teachers how to do the following: Teaching prospective teachers to manage a rowdy classroom.**

	Education Professors n=898
A lot	30%
Some	50%
A little	15%
None at all	2%
Don't know	3%

*Source: Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education, Public Agenda 1997*

**Q150 Teacher education programs can impart different qualities to their students and I want to ask which qualities you think are most essential and which are least essential. Please use a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 means it is least essential. Teachers who maintain discipline and order in the classroom.**

	Education Professors n=896
1-Least essential	1%
2	3%
3	21%
4	38%
5-Absolutely essential	37%
Don't know	*

*Source: Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education, Public Agenda 1997*

**Q151 Please tell me how close each comes to your own view: When a public school teacher faces a disruptive class, it probably means he or she has failed to make lessons engaging enough to the students.**

	Education Professors n=897
NET Close	61%
Very close	17%
Somewhat close	44%
NET Not close	39%
Not too close	27%
Not close at all	12%
Don't know	*

*Source: Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education, Public Agenda 1997*

**Q152 Thinking about the new teachers coming into the profession, do most have this well in hand or do too many fall short? An ability to maintain discipline and order in the classroom.**

	Principals n=256
Most have this well in hand	39%
Too many fall short	59%
Don't know	2%

*Source: A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why, Public Agenda 2000*



**FINDING ELEVEN: Superintendents and principals say their biggest problems are politics and bureaucracy. Most want more autonomy over their own schools.**

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**Q153 If you had to pick one of the following, which comes closest to your own view? Talented [superintendents/principals] who leave the field are most likely to leave because they are frustrated by:**

	Superintendents n=844	Principals n=868
Low pay and prestige	5%	14%
Politics and bureaucracy	81%	47%
Unreasonable demands brought about by higher standards and accountability	10%	34%
Not sure	4%	4%

*Source: Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership, Public Agenda 2001*

**Q154 Which of these best describes your typical experience when trying to get things done the way you want them to be done?**

	Superintendents n=842	Principals n=900
You often feel like your hands are tied by the way things are done in this school system	10%	19%
You can usually get things done the way you want, but you must work around the system	54%	48%
The system helps you get things done the way you want	33%	30%
Not sure	3%	3%

*Source: Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership, Public Agenda 2001*

**In each of the following areas, would you say that you have enough freedom and autonomy, that you need a little more, or that you need a lot more?**

**Q155 Having the capacity to reward outstanding teachers and staff**

	Superintendents n=838	Principals n=888
Have enough freedom and autonomy	24%	32%
Need a little more	30%	32%
Need a lot more	46%	35%
Not sure	1%	1%

**Q156 Removing ineffective teachers from the classroom**

	Superintendents n=847	Principals n=893
Have enough freedom and autonomy	28%	32%
Need a little more	25%	26%
Need a lot more	46%	41%
Not sure	*	1%

**Q157 Hiring teachers and other school staff**

	Superintendents n=843	Principals n=902
Have enough freedom and autonomy	78%	71%
Need a little more	17%	22%
Need a lot more	6%	8%

*Source: Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership, Public Agenda 2001*

**Here are some approaches for improving educational leadership in the public schools. Please indicate how effective you think each would be to improve leadership in the nation's schools.**

**Q158 Giving administrators far more autonomy to run the schools while holding them accountable for getting results.**

	Superintendents n=833	Principals n=898
NET Effective	92%	89%
Very effective	45%	38%
Somewhat effective	47%	51%
NET Not effective	7%	10%
Not too effective	6%	10%
Not effective at all	1%	1%
Not sure	1%	1%

*Source: Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership, Public Agenda 2001*

**Thinking back over the last school year, please indicate how much of your attention each of the following items got.**

**Q159 Legal issues and litigation**

	Superintendents n=828	Principals n=782
Got more attention than it deserved	50%	26%
Got less attention	7%	8%
Got about right amount	43%	62%
Not sure	1%	4%

**Q160 Parents with complaints or special interests**

	Superintendents n=835	Principals n=891
Got more attention than it deserved	48%	45%
Got less attention	2%	1%
Got about right amount	50%	54%
Not sure	1%	*

**Q161 Collective bargaining or other union issues**

	Superintendents n=658	Principals n=522
Got more attention than it deserved	43%	21%
Got less attention	6%	9%
Got about right amount	51%	63%
Not sure	1%	7%

**Q162 Dealing with funding and budgeting**

	Superintendents n=835	Principals n=878
Got more attention than it deserved	43%	21%
Got less attention	8%	15%
Got about right amount	49%	64%
Not sure	*	1%

**Q163 District politics**

	Superintendents n=833	Principals n=857
Got more attention than it deserved	37%	27%
Got less attention	9%	13%
Got about right amount	53%	58%
Not sure	1%	3%

*Source: Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership, Public Agenda 2001*

**Here are some problems or challenges that school administrators may face. Please indicate how close each comes to describing your own experiences in your district.**

**Q164 My district has experienced an enormous increase in responsibilities and mandates without getting the resources necessary to fulfill them.**

	Superintendents n=839	Principals n=898
NET Close	88%	83%
Very close	52%	50%
Somewhat close	37%	33%
NET Not close	11%	16%
Not too close	9%	12%
Not close at all	2%	4%
Not sure	*	1%

**Q165 Too often, administrators are obligated to spend a disproportional amount of money and other resources on special education issues.**

	Superintendents n=839	Principals n=897
NET Close	84%	65%
Very close	45%	32%
Somewhat close	39%	34%
NET Not close	16%	34%
Not too close	12%	23%
Not close at all	4%	11%
Not sure	-	1%

**Q166 Managing harsh public criticism and political heat has become a routine part of being a school administrator these days.**

	Superintendents n=839	Principals n=897
NET Close	81%	70%
Very close	46%	37%
Somewhat close	35%	34%
NET Not close	19%	29%
Not too close	15%	20%
Not close at all	4%	9%
Not sure	-	*

*Source: Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership, Public Agenda 2001*

**Q167 Are there times when you feel that there is too much interference from the [SUPE: school board/PRIN: central office] in areas that are best left to your discretion, or does this not happen?**

	Superintendents n=839	Principals n=899
There is too much interference at times	69%	55%
This does not happen	29%	42%
Not sure	2%	3%

*Source: Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership, Public Agenda 2001*

**Q168 If you were just starting out and could choose your life's work all over again, would you:**

	Superintendents n=848	Principals n=901
Choose the same line of work	73%	66%
Choose a different line of work	17%	23%
Not sure	11%	11%

*Source: Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership, Public Agenda 2001*

**FINDING TWELVE: Holding schools and educators directly accountable for student achievement is still uncommon. Teachers and principals have doubts about it, while parents and the public tend to support it.**

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**Q169 Have you seen, heard or read anything recently about the national education law called the No Child Left Behind Act or, like many, have you not heard of it?**

	Registered Voters n=1,050
Yes, seen	14%
Yes, heard	35%
Yes, read	7%
Not heard of	42%
Don't know	2%

*Source: Demanding Quality Public Education in Tough Economic Times: What Voters Want from Elected Leaders, Public Education Network (P.E.N.) 2003*

**Q170 Some communities with underachieving kids are considering proposals to make educators more accountable by tying improvements in students' academic performance to financial incentives for teachers and principals. Has this happened in your district, or not?**

	Teachers n=598
Yes	24%
No	74%
Don't know	2%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q171 Are the teachers at your school evaluated according to how well their students do on statewide tests, or is that not part of their evaluation?**

	Teachers n=594
Evaluated according to how well their students do	18%
Not part of their evaluation	77%
Don't know	5%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q172 Another proposal would overhaul persistently failing schools by replacing the teachers and principals with new staff and keeping them under strict observation. Has this happened in your district, or not?**

	Teachers n=598
Yes	10%
No	87%
Don't know	3%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q173 Another proposal would make principals more accountable for improving their schools. Principals would no longer have tenure; instead they would have contracts that would be terminated if their schools failed to reach specific goals. Has this happened in your district, or not?**

	Teachers n=584
Yes	10%
No	86%
Don't know	4%

*Source: Reality Check 2002, Public Agenda*

**Q174 Some communities with underachieving kids are considering proposals to make educators more accountable by tying improvements in students' academic performance to financial incentives for teachers and principals. Generally speaking, do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea?**

	Teachers n=604	Parents n=607
Good idea	22%	59%
Bad idea	76%	37%
Don't know	2%	5%

*Source: Reality Check 2000, Public Agenda*

**Q175 Another proposal would make principals more accountable for improving their schools. Principals would no longer have tenure; instead they would have contracts that would be terminated if their schools failed to reach specific goals. Generally speaking, do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea?**

	Teachers n=594	Parents n=606
Good idea	29%	63%
Bad idea	69%	29%
Don't know	2%	8%

*Source: Reality Check 2000, Public Agenda*

**Q176 Another proposal would overhaul persistently failing schools by replacing the teachers and principals with new staff and keeping them under strict observation. Generally speaking, do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea?**

	Teachers n=600	Parents n=607
Good idea	23%	58%
Bad idea	74%	35%
Don't know	3%	7%

*Source: Reality Check 2000, Public Agenda*

**Q177 Generally speaking, do you think it is a good idea or a bad idea to hold principals accountable for student standardized test scores at the building level?**

	Principals n=901
Good idea	34%
Bad idea	48%
Not sure	18%

*Source: Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership, Public Agenda 2001*

**Q178 If a public school in your community does not show progress toward meeting state-approved standards for student learning, would you favor or oppose each of the following measures?**

<b>GENERAL PUBLIC</b> n=1,000	Favor	Oppose	Don't know
Offering after-school tutoring by state-approved private providers	90%	9%	1%
Offering students the opportunity to transfer to another school in the district	86%	14%	-
Obtaining additional money from the local district to address the school's problems	77%	22%	1%
Not renewing the contract of the principal	56%	40%	4%
Not renewing the contract of the teachers	56%	40%	4%
Closing the school	21%	77%	2%

*Source: Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools 2002*

**I am going to read you a list of actions some people have said they would take if a school in their community were designated as failing under this new law [No Child Left Behind]. For each one, please tell me if you would be very willing, somewhat willing, a little willing, or not at all willing to take that action if a school in your community was designated as failing under the new law?**

**Q179 Support tax increases to improve school funding in the failing school**

	Registered Voters n=1,050
NET Willing	52%
Very willing	24%
Somewhat willing	28%
NET Not willing	43%
A little willing	22%
Not at all willing	21%
Don't know	6%

*Source: Demanding Quality Public Education in Tough Economic Times: What Voters Want from Elected Leaders, Public Education Network (P.E.N.) 2003*

**Now I'm going to ask you how effective you think each of the following proposals would be in terms of improving teacher quality.**

**Q180 Reducing class size.**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=663
NET Effective	99%
Very effective	86%
Somewhat effective	13%
NET Not effective	1%
Not too effective	1%
Not effective at all	*
Don't know	*

**Q181 Requiring teachers at the secondary school level to major in the subjects they are teaching.**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=662
NET Effective	93%
Very effective	59%
Somewhat effective	34%
NET Not effective	7%
Not too effective	6%
Not effective at all	2%
It depends (VOL.)	*
Don't know	*

**Q182 Increasing professional development opportunities for teachers.**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=663
NET Effective	95%
Very effective	57%
Somewhat effective	38%
NET Not effective	4%
Not too effective	4%
Not effective at all	1%
It depends (VOL.)	1%
Don't know	*

**Q183 Increasing teacher salaries.**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=662
NET Effective	94%
Very effective	52%
Somewhat effective	42%
NET Not effective	6%
Not too effective	4%
Not effective at all	1%
It depends (VOL.)	*
Don't know	1%

**Q184 Requiring new teachers to spend much more time teaching in classrooms under the supervision of experienced teachers.**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=663
NET Effective	89%
Very effective	51%
Somewhat effective	37%
NET Not effective	11%
Not too effective	8%
Not effective at all	3%
It depends (VOL.)	1%
Don't know	*

**Q185 Requiring teachers to earn graduate degrees in education.**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=662
NET Effective	64%
Very effective	20%
Somewhat effective	44%
NET Not effective	36%
Not too effective	25%
Not effective at all	10%
It depends (VOL.)	*
Don't know	-

**Q186 Requiring teachers to pass tough tests of their knowledge of the subjects they are teaching.**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=663
NET Effective	62%
Very effective	16%
Somewhat effective	46%
NET Not effective	36%
Not too effective	26%
Not effective at all	10%
It depends (VOL.)	1%
Don't know	1%

**Q187 Eliminating teacher tenure.**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=662
NET Effective	46%
Very effective	12%
Somewhat effective	35%
NET Not effective	50%
Not too effective	33%
Not effective at all	18%
It depends (VOL.)	1%
Don't know	3%

**Q188 Tying teacher rewards and sanctions to their students' performance.**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=662
NET Effective	45%
Very effective	12%
Somewhat effective	33%
NET Not effective	54%
Not too effective	29%
Not effective at all	25%
It depends (VOL.)	1%
Don't know	1%

**Q189 Relying more heavily on alternative certification programs.**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=661
NET Effective	52%
Very effective	8%
Somewhat effective	45%
NET Not effective	40%
Not too effective	26%
Not effective at all	14%
It depends (VOL.)	*
Don't know	8%

**Q190 Reducing the regulations and requirements for teacher certification.**

<i>Base: Teachers with 5 years or less experience</i>	New Teachers n=662
NET Effective	25%
Very effective	7%
Somewhat effective	18%
NET Not effective	74%
Not too effective	34%
Not effective at all	40%
It depends (VOL.)	1%
Don't know	*

*Source: A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q191 And generally speaking, do you think it is a good idea or a bad idea to pay higher salaries to teachers who agree to work in difficult schools with hard-to-educate children?**

	New Teachers (5 years or less) n=662	Principals n=256
Good idea	84%	81%
Bad idea	15%	17%
Don't know	1%	2%

*Source: A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q192 And generally speaking, do you think it is a good idea or a bad idea to pay higher salaries to teachers who prove to be highly effective in improving student academic performance?**

	New Teachers (5 years or less) n=661	Principals n=209
Good idea	69%	77%
Bad idea	28%	21%
Don't know	3%	2%

*Source: A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why, Public Agenda 2000*

**Q193 And generally speaking, do you think it is a good idea or a bad idea to pay more money to teachers in subjects like math and science, where there are severe shortages?**

	New Teachers (5 years or less) n=661	Principals n=252
Good idea	44%	48%
Bad idea	54%	50%
Don't know	2%	2%

*Source: A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why, Public Agenda 2000*