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PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY

CALIFORNIA

Public
Policy
Institute of
California

Californians & education

in collaboration with
The William and Flora Hewlett
Foundation

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The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) is a private operating foundation established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett. The Institute is dedicated to improving public policy in California through independent, objective, nonpartisan research.

PPIC's research agenda focuses on three program areas: population, economy, and governance and public finance. Studies within these programs are examining the underlying forces shaping California's future, cutting across a wide range of public policy concerns: California in the global economy; demography; education; employment and income; environment, growth, and infrastructure; government and public finance; health and social policy; immigrants and immigration; key sectors in the California economy; and political participation.

PPIC was created because three concerned citizens—William R. Hewlett, Roger W. Heyns, and Arjay Miller—recognized the need for linking objective research to the realities of California public policy. Their goal was to help the state's leaders better understand the intricacies and implications of contemporary issues and make informed public policy decisions when confronted with challenges in the future. PPIC does not take or support positions on any ballot measure or on any local, state, or federal legislation, nor does it endorse, support, or oppose any political candidates for public office.

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ABOUT THE SURVEY

The PPIC Statewide Survey series provides policymakers, the media, and the general public with objective, advocacy-free information on the perceptions, opinions, and public policy preferences of California residents. Inaugurated in April 1998, this is the 76th PPIC Statewide Survey in a series that has generated a database that includes the responses of more than 158,000 Californians.

This survey is the sixth in a three-year PPIC survey series funded by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the third survey of the series focusing on education issues. The series' intent is to inform state, local, and federal policymakers, encourage discussion, and raise public awareness about a variety of education, environment, and population issues.

The education series, begun in April 2005, focuses on California's kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) public education system, which, according to the California Department of Education's *Education Data Partnership* website, served 6.3 million students in 1,054 school districts and 9,553 public schools during 2005-06. The student population is diverse (48% Latino, 30% white, 11% Asian, 8% black), with many English language learners.

K-12 public education is the single largest component of the state budget, and voters passed Proposition 98 in 1988 to provide schools with a minimum funding guarantee. State policymakers have implemented a variety of efforts to improve education quality, including class size reduction, teacher training, student standards and testing, and construction projects. Californians in our surveys consistently rank K-12 public education among the most important issues in the state and a top priority for the governor and legislature.

This survey presents the responses of 2,500 multilingual adult residents throughout the state. We asked about the following topics:

- Perceptions of California's public schools, including the quality of K-12 education today and over time; whether changes are needed to improve the K-12 system and what most needs improvement; approval ratings of the governor and legislature on their handling of K-12 education; perceptions of the adequacy and efficiency of school funding, and of student and teacher issues; rankings of California's per-pupil spending and student test scores compared to other states; ratings of local schools and perceptions of their funding levels; and preferences about who should handle resource allocation to improve student performance.
- Attitudes and policy preferences, including support for the high school exit exam; perceived concerns about the high school drop-out rate and programs to improve it; English language learners; teacher quality; curriculum preferences, including the importance of arts and music, career technical, and college preparatory education; the importance of a data system to track information about resources and student performance; support for proposals to increase local and state funding for schools; and equity issues involving resources for schools in lower-income areas.
- Variations in perceptions, attitudes, and preferences regarding California's K-12 public education system across the five major regions of the state (Central Valley, San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles County, Inland Empire, and Orange/San Diego Counties), among Asians, blacks, Latinos, and non-Hispanic whites, and across socioeconomic and political groups.

Copies of this report may be ordered online (www.ppic.org) or by phone (415-291-4400). For questions about the survey, please contact survey@ppic.org. View our searchable PPIC Statewide Survey database online at <http://www.ppic.org/main/survAdvancedSearch.asp>.

PRESS RELEASE

Para ver este comunicado de prensa en español, por favor visite nuestra página de internet:
<http://www.ppic.org/main/pressreleaseindex.asp>

SURVEY ON CALIFORNIANS AND EDUCATION

Frustrated By Little Progress and Lack of Faith in Process, Californians Lose Focus on K-12 Education

**NO BLANK CHECK: RESIDENTS WANT MORE ACCOUNTABILITY, MORE RESOURCES
GROWING PERCEPTION THAT GOAL OF K-12 IS COLLEGE PREP**

SAN FRANCISCO, California, April 25, 2007 — Is frustration with California's faltering education system so profound that residents are simply disengaging from the vital issue? Although they continue to be deeply critical of the quality of K-12 education in the state, and of state leadership on the issue, the number of residents ranking education and schools as the most important issue facing California has fallen to its lowest point in three years, according to a survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) with funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

The number of Californians who say education is the most important issue facing the state has dropped to 9 percent – fewer than at any time since August 2004. A sign that state residents have seen progress on K-12 education? Far from it: Most Californians today (80%) still believe the quality of the state's K-12 education is at least somewhat of a problem, with about half (52%) calling it a big problem. This number is virtually unchanged from January 2000, when 53 percent viewed K-12 education quality as a big problem. Moreover, nearly seven in 10 residents (69%) say the quality of education has gotten worse or stayed the same during the past two years, similar to 2000 when 73 percent held this view. And many Californians believe the K-12 system is in need of major changes (57%); 30 percent say it needs at least minor changes; only 9 percent say it is fine the way it is.

In the past decade, voters have faced education related measures on just about every ballot and have passed nearly \$45 billion in school related state bonds. Perhaps as a result of this spending, a majority of Californians (56%) today believe that the state ranks at or above the national average when it comes to spending per pupil (in reality California ranks 29 out of 50 states). In April 1998, only 42 percent of Californians believed that the state ranked at or above average in per pupil spending. Is a perception of greater investment changing views about education quality? Residents today (53%) are about as likely as they were in 1998 (49%) to say that test scores for California students rank below average or near the bottom compared to other states. "While education remains a critical issue for most Californians, they clearly see a lack of progress and appear to be questioning the return on all the investment and activity of recent years," says PPIC President and CEO Mark Baldassare. "The Governor has declared 2008 the 'Year of Education Reform'. The question is, does the public have the will – and the faith in state leaders – to tackle this complex and controversial issue?"

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT: RESIDENTS DING STATE LEADERS ON EDUCATION

State leaders have three steep challenges to overcome if they hope to rally support for additional education funding and reform: First, majorities of state residents are critical of the way the governor and state legislature are handling the issue. Second, residents clearly lack confidence in the state to allocate resources to schools. And third, residents are reluctant to increase spending on education without fiscal accountability.

An otherwise popular governor sees his approval rating plummet to 36 percent when it comes to his handling of education issues, while his overall approval stands at 53 percent. The same general pattern holds true for the state legislature: While 38 percent of California adults approve of the overall job the legislature is doing, just 29 percent approve of their handling of education issues. One ray of hope for them: Residents today are less likely than they were last year to *disapprove* of the performance of the governor (37% today, 51% in April 2006) and the state legislature (46% today, 55% in April 2006) on education issues.

Some of the critical views of state leaders on education issues may stem from the fact that Californians view the issue as one best handled at the local level, rather than in Sacramento where the power to allocate school resources actually resides. Most state residents (78%) would prefer to see local players – specifically teachers (34%) and local school districts (31%) – make decisions about how to allocate resources to improve student performance. Thirteen percent choose school principals. Only 14 percent say they prefer to see the state make those decisions. The clear preference for local authority and autonomy might explain why residents seem to feel more positive about their local schools than about the system as a whole. For example, although they are negative about K-12 education in California overall, a strong majority of state residents (80%) give their neighborhood schools passing grades of A (16%), B (36%), or C (28%). Public school parents are even more favorable than are residents generally: Sixty-one percent give their neighborhood schools a grade of A or B.

SPENT! VOTERS SAY NO TO MORE SPENDING WITHOUT REFORM

Still, with their overall confidence depleted, many Californians are no longer willing to ante up more dollars for the K-12 system. Surprisingly high numbers – 44 percent of all adults and 39 percent of public school parents – say their local schools have just enough, or more than enough, funding. While a majority of public school parents (57%) say local schools do not have enough funding, that margin fades among all Californians (48%). By comparison, 63 percent of Californians in August 2000 said their local public schools lacked adequate funding.

At this point, residents are unwilling (47% yes, 48% no) to increase property taxes to provide more funds for local schools. Although most Californians (66%) would support a bond measure to pay for local school construction projects, they are less likely than they were in December 1999 to support such a measure (66% today, 77% in 1999). At the state level, a majority of residents (64%) reject the notion of raising state sales taxes to provide additional funding for K-12 public schools. Is there a tax Californians will support? One that someone else will pay: More than two-thirds (68%) favor raising the state's income tax rate on the wealthiest Californians to provide additional funding for K-12 education.

In general, Californians today are demanding accountability to go along with their spending. Slightly less than half (48%) say the state needs to spend more wisely *and* increase the amount it spends, while 37 percent think the state can improve educational quality by just making better use of existing funds. A mere 11 percent of Californians say increased funding alone is the answer. But if residents were assured that funds would be used efficiently, a full 75 percent say they would support increasing money for K-12 public education. Where would they want the additional education dollars to go? Majorities of Californians favor the following policies, even if they cost the state more money:

- Providing students who fail the high school exit exam with smaller classes and fully credentialed teachers until they pass the test (72%);
- Hiring more counselors and social workers in lower-income areas to help increase graduation rates (72%);

- Providing teachers who work in lower-income areas with additional training and professional development (76%), and attracting and retaining teachers in those areas by paying them higher salaries (67%);
- Developing a statewide database system to track school resources and student performance (66%);
- Providing more money for school facilities in lower-income areas than in other areas (79%).

PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY, GOALS OF K-12 EDUCATION DIFFER BY RACE/ETHNICITY

While there is little ambivalence among all Californians about the poor quality of the state's K-12 education system, the level of concern among racial and ethnic groups differs dramatically. For example, blacks (65%) and whites (61%) are far more likely than Latinos and Asians (36% each) to say the quality of education in the state is a big problem. But when it comes to K-12 quality, the pessimism of black residents stands out: 44 percent of blacks say the quality of education has worsened in the past two years compared to just 28 percent of whites, 21 percent of Latinos, and 20 percent of Asians.

Significantly more blacks are also “very concerned” about a slew of education related problems in lower-income areas. On the issue of high school drop-out rates, for example, concern is higher among blacks (77%) than among other groups (Latinos 54%, Asians 53%, whites 51%). When it comes to worrying about students in lower income areas failing the state's High School Exit Exam, the differences are also stark (blacks 64%, Latinos 53%, Asians 39%, whites 37%). Moreover, three in four blacks (75%) – compared to 61 percent of Latinos, 49 percent of whites, and 46 percent of Asians – say they are very concerned that lower-income areas suffer from a shortage of good teachers.

Blacks (86%) are more likely than Latinos (79%), whites (75%), and Asians (56%) to say that lower-income areas should receive a larger share of resources – such as teachers and classroom materials – as a result of any new funding that might become available. This view is strongly supported by residents across the board (74%), by likely voters (70%), and by majorities in all major political parties (Democrats 79%, Independents 73%, Republicans 64%).

Striking racial and ethnic differences also emerge on the goal of K-12 education. Latinos (56%) are more likely than blacks (34%), Asians (28%), and whites (20%) to say preparing students for college is the most important goal. On the other hand, preparing students for the workforce is less important to Latinos (7%) than it is to whites (21%), blacks (20%), and Asians (16%). Nine in 10 Latinos (91%) and nearly as many blacks (89%) say it is very important that local schools prepare students for college, while fewer Asians (77%) and whites (76%) agree.

Despite their intense focus on college, more Latinos (74%) think it is very important to include career technical, or vocational, education as part of K-12 curriculum than do blacks (65%), whites (64%), or Asians (61%). Overall, more Californians say the premier goal of K-12 education should be preparing students for college (32%), followed by preparing students for the workforce (16%), teaching students life skills (16%), preparing students to be good citizens (15%), and teaching students the basics (13%).

MORE KEY FINDINGS

- **Where to Begin? Little Consensus About Biggest Education Problem** — Page 9
Californians have very different views about what aspect of K-12 public schools most needs improvement. Seventeen different topics were volunteered by at least 2 percent of survey respondents, the most common being teacher quality (11%), followed closely by class size and overcrowding (10%), teaching the basics (9%), discipline and values (8%), insufficient funding (6%), and safety and crime (5%).

■ **Drop-Out Rate A Bigger Problem than Teacher Quality** — Page 12

Residents were asked to rate the seriousness of three issues affecting California's K-12 education system: the high school drop-out rate, teaching children with limited English language skills, and teacher quality. While majorities say that each of these issues is at least somewhat of a problem, two in three (66%) call the drop-out rate a big problem, and half (50%) say teaching English learners is a big problem. Only 28 percent say the same about teacher quality.

■ **Extra Boost For English Learners** — Page 20

A strong majority (73%) of residents favor providing English language learners with extra educational support, even if it means that they receive more assistance than other students.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

This edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey is the third in a series of surveys funded by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation focusing on education in California. This survey is intended to raise public awareness, inform decisionmakers, and stimulate public discussions about a variety of education issues facing the state. Findings are based on a telephone survey of 2,500 California adult residents interviewed between April 3 and April 17, 2007. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese), Vietnamese, and Korean. The sampling error for the total sample is +/- 2%. The sampling error for subgroups is larger. For more information on methodology, see page 29.

Mark Baldassare is the President and CEO of PPIC, where he holds the Arjay and Frances Fearing Miller Chair in Public Policy. He is founder of the PPIC Statewide Survey, which he has directed since 1998.

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This report will appear on PPIC's website (www.ppic.org) after 10 p.m. PDT on April 25.

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All of us at the Public Policy Institute of California mourn the tragic loss of Dennis Hunt, a member of the advisory committee for our statewide survey. Our hearts go out to his family, friends, and colleagues at this difficult time. Dennis was a remarkable and gifted individual. He was my trusted advisor and friend for nearly twenty years. He will be greatly missed.

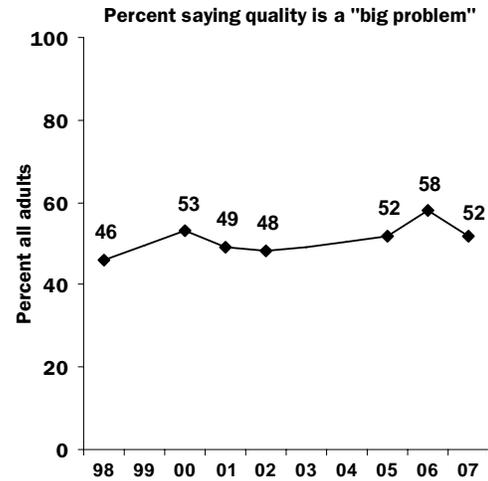
Mark Baldassare

PERCEPTIONS OF CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

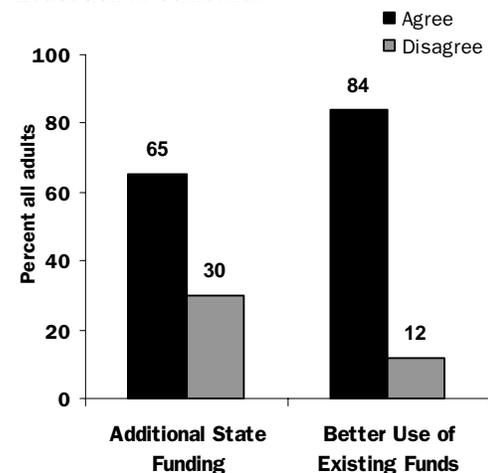
KEY FINDINGS

- Half of all adult residents believe the quality of K-12 public education in California is a big problem. Few say quality has improved in the last two years, and a majority say that major changes are needed to improve the system. Teacher quality, class size, and teaching the basics top the list of what most needs improvement. (pages 8, 9)
- Nearly half of residents believe that more funding and better use of existing funds are both needed to improve K-12 school quality. Only 11 percent say more funding alone would lead to improvement. Three in four residents would favor increasing K-12 funding if a better fiscal management system were in place. (page 11)
- When asked about three K-12 issues, residents are more likely to rate the high school drop-out rate as a big problem (66%) than teaching English language learners (50%) or teacher quality (28%). (page 12)
- The state's per-pupil spending is below the national average, but only one in three residents realizes this fact. Half of residents do know that student test scores are below the national average. (page 13)
- The governor and legislature receive low approval ratings for their handling of K-12 education, but these ratings have improved since last year (up seven points for the governor, eight points for the legislature). (page 10)
- Despite concerns about the K-12 system, half of residents give their local public schools a grade of A or B. Half also believe their local schools are lacking in state funding. Residents trust teachers and local school districts the most to make resource allocation decisions. (pages 14, 15)

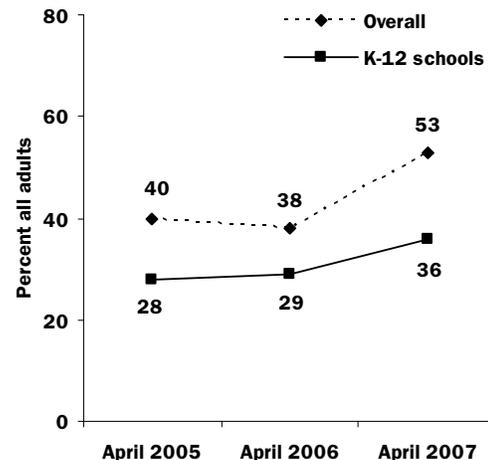
Quality of California K-12 Public Education



What Would Lead to Higher Quality Education in California?



Governor's Approval Ratings



OVERALL CONDITIONS

Education consistently ranks high when Californians are asked to name the most important issue facing the state. Over most of the past year, education has been second only to the issue of immigration. The proportion naming education and schools has declined since last April, but the issue still ranks third (9%) today, behind immigration (18%) and jobs and the economy (15%). Last April, about one in four named immigration (27%) and education (24%), while 7 percent mentioned the economy.

Although fewer residents today name schools as their top concern, about half of adults (52%) and four in 10 public school parents (43%) continue to see the quality of K-12 public education as a big problem. This perception is highest among Democrats (64%), but majorities of Republicans (55%) and independents (51%) agree. Many hold this perception across all regions, but residents in the San Francisco Bay Area (58%) and the Inland Empire (57%) are more likely to do so than those in Los Angeles (50%), the Central Valley (48%), or Orange/San Diego Counties (44%). Among racial/ethnic groups, blacks (65%) and whites (61%) are far more likely than Asians or Latinos (36% each) to say K-12 school quality is a big problem. This perception increases with age, education, and income.

Since this question was first asked in 1998, at least 46 percent of residents have called the quality of K-12 public education a big problem in California. This view peaked last April at 58 percent and has now returned to levels last seen in April 2005 (52%).

“How much of a problem is the quality of education in California’s K-12 public schools today?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Big problem	52%	36%	65%	36%	61%	43%
Somewhat of a problem	28	36	26	31	27	32
Not much of a problem	15	17	7	29	7	22
Don't know	5	11	2	4	5	3

Today, just one in five residents (21%) believes the quality of K-12 public education in California has improved over the past two years, while about four in 10 (42%) say it has stayed the same and about one in four (27%) says it has gotten worse during this time. Although fewer than one in three residents across parties, regions, and demographic groups believes the quality of education has risen, Latinos (32%) are more likely than Asians (22%), whites (16%), or blacks (14%) to hold this view. Forty-four percent of blacks say the state’s quality of education has worsened, compared to fewer than three in 10 whites (28%), Latinos (21%) or Asians (20%). Among parents with children in public schools, only about one in four believes the quality has improved. One positive note? Public school parents today (23%) are less likely than they were in April 2006 (30%) to say the quality of education has gotten worse.

“In the past two years, do you think the quality of education in California’s K-12 public schools has improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same?”

	All Adults	Party			Public School Parents
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Improved	21%	18%	22%	19%	27%
Stayed the same	42	41	42	45	45
Gotten worse	27	31	27	26	23
Don't know	10	10	9	10	5

OVERALL CONDITIONS (CONTINUED)

Governor Schwarzenegger, the legislature, and other leading policymakers commissioned a research project in 2006 to look at California's system of school finance and governance. The report, released last month, found the system to be flawed and in need of fundamental reform. The governor has since declared that 2008 will be the "year of education reform," but where do residents stand?

Most Californians (87%) believe that some kind of change is needed to improve K-12 public education, with nearly six in 10 adults and two in three likely voters saying that major changes are needed. Fewer than one in 10 in each group believes the system is fine the way it is. Although Democrats (65%) are most likely to hold this view, majorities of independents (58%) and Republicans (57%) agree.

At least half of residents in all regions say major changes are needed (60% Los Angeles, 59% San Francisco Bay Area, 58% Inland Empire, 55% Central Valley, 50% Orange/San Diego Counties). The proportion expressing this view increases with age, education, and income, but varies widely across racial/ethnic groups. Most blacks (72%) and a solid majority of whites (61%) see the need for major reform, compared to half of Latinos (51%) and just over one in three Asians (36%). A majority of public school parents (54%) hold this view. Of those who say K-12 school quality is a big problem in California, eight in 10 (81%) believe major changes are needed.

"Overall, do you think the K-12 public education system in California is in need of major changes, minor changes, or that it is basically fine the way it is?"

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Major changes	57%	65%	57%	58%	65%
Minor changes	30	27	33	30	28
Fine the way it is	9	5	6	9	4
Don't know	4	3	4	3	3

Three issues top the list when residents are asked to name the one thing that most needs improvement in California's K-12 public schools: teacher quality (11%), class size and overcrowding (10%), and teaching the basics (9%). These issues were also the top three mentioned in April 2005 and February 2002. Democrats, Republicans, independents, and public school parents also name one of these issues as the one thing that most needs improvement. Latinos are considerably more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to mention school safety as a top concern (11%).

"People have different ideas about California's public schools. Of all the possible things you can think of, what one thing about California's K-12 public schools do you think most needs improvement?"

Issues mentioned by at least 5% of adults	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Teacher quality	11%	12%	16%	12%	9%	11%
Class size, overcrowding	10	9	14	6	13	11
Teaching the basics	9	10	11	8	10	9
Discipline, values	8	9	6	10	6	7
Not enough funding	6	8	2	4	6	6
Safety, crime, gangs, drugs	5	2	4	11	2	7

ELECTED OFFICIALS' APPROVAL RATINGS

Although Governor Schwarzenegger's overall job approval ratings today are slightly lower than his recent high in January, majorities of California adults (53%) and likely voters (62%) continue to approve of his performance as governor. Schwarzenegger's ratings among all adults today are significantly higher than last April (38%). When it comes to his handling of the state's K-12 public education system, however, only about one in three adults (36%) and likely voters (34%) approves. Although his approval among all adults in this area is slightly lower than in January (40%), it is seven points higher than last April (29%).

Approval of the governor's handling of the K-12 system varies across parties (51% Republicans, 28% Democrats, 34% independents). Asians are more likely to approve (41%) than disapprove (26%), while blacks are more likely to disapprove (55%) than approve (18%). Both Latinos (40% approve, 40% disapprove) and whites (35% approve, 35% disapprove) are evenly divided. San Francisco Bay Area and Inland Empire residents are more likely to disapprove than approve, while Orange/San Diego, Los Angeles, and Central Valley residents are more likely to approve than disapprove. Among those who approve of the governor's performance overall, 52 percent approve of his handling of this issue.

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling...”

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>His job as governor of California?</i>	Approve	53%	53%	74%	50%	62%
	Disapprove	34	35	18	36	30
	Don't know	13	12	8	14	8
<i>The state's K-12 public education system?</i>	Approve	36	28	51	34	34
	Disapprove	37	46	23	40	39
	Don't know	27	26	26	26	27

Approval of the California Legislature's overall job performance among all adults continues to hover near 40 percent, as it has in each survey this year (40% January, 41% March, 38% today). Forty-four percent of all adults and half of likely voters (51%) disapprove. Residents are even less generous about the legislature's performance on education: approval (29% all adults, 21% likely voters) is much lower than disapproval (46% all adults, 54% likely voters). Nevertheless, approval ratings of the legislature on this issue have climbed eight points among all adults since last April (21% to 29%). Independents (33%) are more likely than Republicans (25%) or Democrats (24%) to approve of the legislature's handling of K-12 education. Latinos (45%) and Asians (37%) are more likely than blacks (22%) or whites (19%) to do so.

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling...”

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>Its job?</i>	Approve	38%	42%	33%	38%	35%
	Disapprove	44	42	55	48	51
	Don't know	18	16	12	14	14
<i>The state's K-12 public education system?</i>	Approve	29	24	25	33	21
	Disapprove	46	52	50	46	54
	Don't know	25	24	25	21	25

ADEQUACY AND EFFICIENCY OF STATE FUNDING

Most residents agree that more funds (65%) and better use of existing funds (84%) would improve school quality. The best method for improving K-12 quality? Most Californians believe in a two-pronged approach: combining additional funding with better fiscal management to ensure that funds are allocated wisely. Nearly half opt for this approach (48%), surpassing those believing that more prudent use of existing funds would be enough (37%) or that increased funding alone (11%) would bring about significant improvement. Most public school parents and likely voters also believe in the dual approach. However, while majorities of Democrats (59%) and independents (51%) favor a combined approach, Republicans (56%) prefer using existing funds more wisely without increasing funding. Latinos are more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to favor more funding alone.

“To significantly improve the quality of California’s K-12 public schools, which of the following statements do you agree with the most: (1) We need to use existing state funds more wisely, (or) (2) We need to increase the amount of state funding, (or) (3) We need to use existing state funds more wisely and increase the amount of state funding.”

		Use funds more wisely	Increase state funding	Both	Don't know
All Adults		37%	11%	48%	4%
Likely Voters		41	8	49	2
Party	Democrat	29	10	59	2
	Republican	56	6	36	2
	Independent	35	13	51	1
Race/Ethnicity	Asians	37	15	46	2
	Blacks	23	8	68	1
	Latinos	31	20	45	4
	Whites	43	6	48	3
Public School Parents		34	14	49	3

If a system were in place to make sure funds were spent efficiently, at least seven in 10 adults (75%) and likely voters (70%) say they would favor increasing state funding for K-12 public education. Support for increased funding under these conditions is high across political and demographic groups.

“If there were a system in place to make sure funds were spent efficiently, would you favor or oppose increasing state funding for K-12 public education?”

		Favor	Oppose	Don't know
All Adults		75%	21%	4%
Likely Voters		70	26	4
Party	Democrat	82	14	4
	Republican	61	35	4
	Independent	76	19	5
Race/Ethnicity	Asians	83	12	5
	Blacks	79	17	4
	Latinos	84	12	4
	Whites	68	27	5
Public School Parents		82	14	4

ASSESSING CHALLENGES

Residents were asked to rate the seriousness of three issues affecting the state’s K-12 public education system: the high school drop-out rate, teaching children with limited English language skills, and teacher quality. While majorities of Californians say that each of these issues is at least somewhat of a problem, two in three (66%) call the drop-out rate a big problem, and half (50%) say teaching English learners is a big problem. Only 28 percent say the same about teacher quality. These findings are nearly identical to those in last April’s survey.

“I’m going to read you a list of issues people have mentioned when talking about California’s K-12 public schools today. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not really a problem. How about...”

	The high school drop-out rate?	Teaching children with limited English language skills?	Teacher quality?
Big problem	66%	50%	28%
Somewhat of a problem	21	29	41
Not really a problem	5	17	26
Don’t know	8	4	5

The perception of the high school drop-out rate as a big problem varies dramatically across racial/ethnic groups. About eight in 10 Latinos and blacks call it a big problem, compared to six in 10 whites and fewer than half of Asians. Solid majorities in all regions call the drop-out rate a big problem, with residents in Los Angeles (76%) the most likely to hold this view. Democrats (69%) and independents (66%) are more likely than Republicans (57%) to call it a big problem. Concern about the high school drop-out rate is greater among those with less education and income, and the perceptions of public school parents are comparable to all adults on this issue (67% big problem).

“How about the high school drop-out rate?”

	All Adults	Race				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Big problem	66%	48%	78%	80%	60%	67%
Somewhat of a problem	21	26	14	16	26	20
Not much of a problem	5	14	4	2	5	6
Don’t know	8	12	4	2	9	7

The perception that teaching English learners is a big problem has increased six points since April 2005 (44%). Republicans (61%) are more likely than Democrats (53%) and independents (44%) to say this is a big problem. Across racial/ethnic groups, whites (57%) and blacks (52%) are more likely than Asians and Latinos (40% each) to call it a big problem. Inland Empire residents (55%) are most likely to hold this view, followed by Los Angeles (52%), Central Valley (50%), Orange/San Diego (48%), and San Francisco Bay Area (46%) residents. This perception increases with age, education, and income. Among public school parents, 42 percent agree that it is a big problem.

Californians are less likely to see teacher quality as a big problem. In fact, about as many say it is not really a problem (26%) as say it is a big problem (28%). Another 41 percent say it is somewhat of a problem. Public school parents have similar views. Although the perception of teacher quality as a big problem is fairly similar across parties (30% Democrats, 30% Republicans, 26% independents), it varies widely between blacks (41%) and other racial/ethnic groups (28% whites, 27% Latinos, 25% Asians).

STATE'S RELATIVE RANKINGS

Many Californians continue to hold the view that California is below the national average in both per-pupil spending and student performance.

One in three residents today believes California's per-pupil spending is below average or near the bottom nationally, one in four says it is above average or near the top, and 31 percent think it is about average. Over the past decade, there has been a gradual decrease in the proportion that believes spending is below the national average, although there has been no change in the past year. According to *Rankings & Estimates* (National Education Association, 2006), California ranks 29th out of 50 states and the District of Columbia in per-pupil spending. Democrats (42%) are more likely than independents (32%) and Republicans (27%) to think California's per-pupil funding is below average. This perception is more widely held by blacks (46%) than by whites (36%), Asians (28%), or Latinos (24%).

"Where do you think California currently ranks in..."

<i>All Adults</i>		Apr 98	Feb 00	Jan 02	Oct 02	Apr 05	Apr 06	Apr 07
Per pupil spending for K-12 public schools? Compared to other states, is California's spending...?	Near the top	5%	6%	6%	9%	9%	11%	12%
	Above average	9	10	9	11	10	13	13
	Average	28	24	24	31	25	29	31
	Below average	27	29	28	23	26	20	19
	Near the bottom	20	22	20	14	18	11	13
	Don't know	11	9	13	12	12	16	12
Student test scores for K-12 public schools? Compared to other states, are California's student test scores...?	Near the top	2	–	2	3	3	3	2%
	Above average	8	–	6	8	8	8	8
	Average	32	–	29	33	31	32	34
	Below average	39	–	39	36	35	33	34
	Near the bottom	14	–	16	13	14	13	15
	Don't know	5	–	8	7	9	11	7

Perceptions of the state's relative ranking on student test scores are much more negative. About half of residents (49%) say California student test scores are below average or near the bottom, while one in three (34%) says they are average, and just one in 10 (10%) puts them above the national average. Perceptions have been similar since this question was first asked in 1998. According to the *Nation's Report Card, 2006* (National Assessment of Educational Progress), California ranks near the bottom on student reading and math scores.

Sizeable numbers of Republicans (59%), Democrats (56%) and independents (48%) share negative perceptions of the state's student test scores. Across racial/ethnic groups, whites (60%) and blacks (54%) are much more likely than Asians (37%) or Latinos (33%) to think California's scores rank below the national average. This perception increases with age, education, and income.

The perceptions of public school parents are similar to those of all Californians on both of these issues: 21 percent say per-pupil spending is above average, 33 percent say it is average, and 33 percent say it falls short of the national average. As for student test scores, 12 percent of public school parents say California students rank above average, 37 percent say they are about average, and 46 percent say they are below average.

LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Despite concern over educational quality in the state, eight in 10 residents give their local public schools passing grades of C or higher. About half (52%) give local schools an above-average grade (A or B), while three in 10 give them a C (28%). Just over one in 10 (13%) gives their local schools a D or an F.

The percentage of adults giving A's and B's was highest last April (55%), while today's levels are similar to April 2005 (51%) and October 2002 (49%). These ratings reflect a marked improvement from August 2000 (39%), when nearly one in four Californians gave their local public schools a D (15%) or an F (8%). Public school parents are more positive about their local public schools than adults overall. Six in 10 (61%) give their children's schools an A or a B.

Across California's regions, residents of Orange/San Diego Counties (61%) and the Central Valley (56%) are more likely than others to give local public schools a grade of A or B.

Latinos (58%) are the most likely to give an A or a B, followed by Asians (51%) and whites (50%), while blacks are the least likely to give their local public school a positive assessment (38%).

Republicans (58%) and independents (50%) are more likely than Democrats (45%) to give their local schools a grade of A or B. This marks an eight-point drop among Democrats since last April (53%).

“Overall, how would you rate the quality of public schools in your neighborhood today? If you had to give your local public schools a grade, would it be A, B, C, D, or F?”

	All Adults	Region					Public School Parents
		Central Valley	San Francisco Bay Area	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	Inland Empire	
A	16%	18%	14%	15%	19%	17%	23%
B	36	38	33	34	42	32	38
C	28	28	31	29	28	24	25
D	9	9	8	10	5	14	8
F	4	2	4	5	2	8	4
Don't know	7	5	10	7	4	5	2

Although most Californians look favorably upon their neighborhood schools, about half of all adults (48%) and 57 percent of public school parents think the level of state funding for their local public schools is inadequate. Forty-four percent of Californians and 39 percent of public school parents think there is more than enough or just enough funding for their local schools. Today, perceptions of inadequate funding are similar to April 2006 (49%) and April 2005 (51%). However, prior to 2005, the percentage of Californians perceiving funding inadequacies was much higher, with at least six in 10 saying that funding was inadequate between September 1999 and January 2004.

Today, Democrats (59%) and independents (48%) are considerably more likely than Republicans (30%) to say funding is inadequate. By region, about half in Los Angeles (52%), the San Francisco Bay Area (51%), and the Inland Empire (50%) believe their local schools do not receive enough state funding, compared to 45 percent in the Central Valley and 42 percent in Orange/San Diego Counties.

LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS (CONTINUED)

Racial/ethnic differences are also evident in perceptions of school funding, with blacks (58%) and Latinos (55%) more likely than whites (45%) and Asians (40%) to think funding for their local schools is too low.

“Do you think the current level of state funding for your local public schools is more than enough, just enough, or not enough?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
More than enough	11%	5%	9%	8%	12%	6%
Just enough	33	39	25	32	34	33
Not enough	48	40	58	55	45	57
Don't know	8	16	8	5	9	4

CONFIDENCE IN DECISION-MAKING

Whom do Californians trust to allocate resources at local schools? Residents are divided, with 34 percent saying teachers and 31 percent saying local school districts. Fewer residents place their confidence in the state government (14%) or school principals (13%).

Both public school parents and residents across regions place the most trust in teachers and local school districts. Across political parties, confidence in teachers is somewhat higher among Democrats (40%) than Republicans or independents (34% each).

Across racial/ethnic groups, blacks and whites (40% each) are more likely than Asians (31%) and Latinos (24%) to trust teachers to make decisions about resources. Latinos are much more likely than other groups to trust the state government on this issue (25% Latinos, 14% Asians, 8% whites, 5% blacks).

“Who do you trust the most to make decisions about how to allocate resources to improve student performance at your local public schools?”

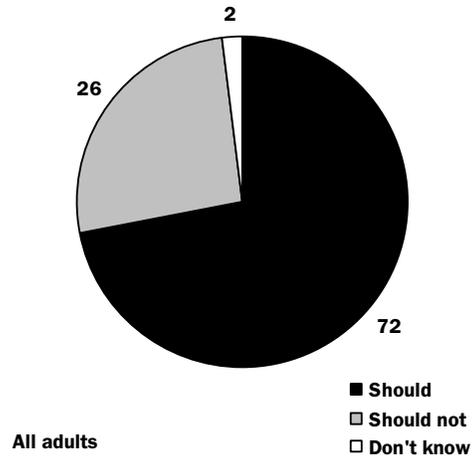
	All Adults	Region					Public School Parents
		Central Valley	San Francisco Bay Area	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	Inland Empire	
The teachers	34%	30%	36%	32%	34%	36%	30%
Your local school district	31	30	33	31	30	34	31
The state government	14	14	11	16	13	13	17
The principals	13	15	12	13	14	9	13
Someone else	5	7	3	3	5	4	5
Don't know	3	4	5	5	4	4	4

ATTITUDES AND POLICY PREFERENCES

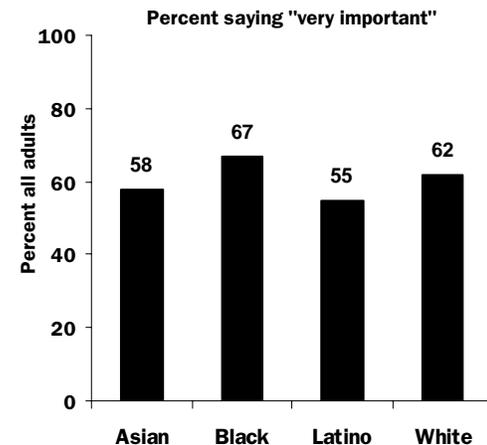
KEY FINDINGS

- An overwhelming majority of residents support the idea of a high school exit exam, but many are concerned about the failure rate in lower-income areas. (page 18)
- Most residents are concerned about the high school drop-out rate in lower-income areas, the achievement gap between English learners and other students, and teacher quality in lower-income areas. While perceptions between racial/ethnic groups are starkly different, solid majorities of residents favor proposals to make improvements in all these areas. (pages 19, 20, 21)
- Many residents rate college preparation (81%), career technical education (67%), and art and music curriculum (60%) as very important for their local schools. (page 22)
- More than half of residents say it is very important for the state to collect and make available information about K-12 schools and two in three would favor state investment in data collection. (page 23)
- Although solid majorities of adults and likely voters would vote yes on a local school construction bond measure, about half would vote no to increase property taxes for local school funding. To boost state K-12 revenues, most residents and likely voters favor raising the income tax rates of top earners, but only about three in 10 favor raising the state sales tax. (pages 24, 25)
- Solid majorities think schools in lower-income areas have fewer resources and are more likely to be in need of repair than schools in other areas. If new state funds become available, support is strong for giving more funds to schools in lower-income areas. (page 26)

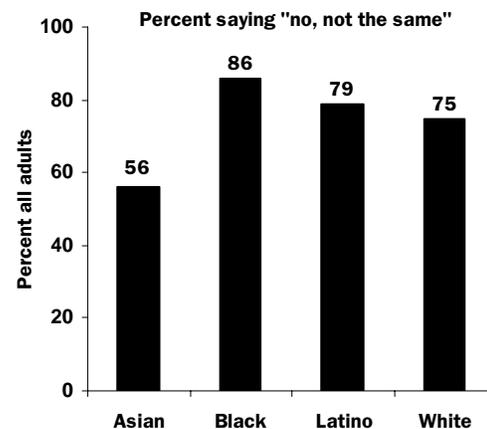
Should Students Have to Pass Statewide Tests Before Graduating From High School?



Importance of Including Art and Music in K-12 Curriculum



Do Schools in Lower-Income Areas Have the Same Amount of Resources as Schools in Wealthier Areas?



CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM

This spring, the second class of seniors faces the requirement of passing the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to receive a diploma. About seven in 10 residents (72%) and public school parents (73%) think students should have to pass a statewide test before they can graduate. Majority support is found across demographic groups. A similarly high proportion of Californians has supported this requirement when this question was asked in the past (74% 2002, 72% 2005, 73% 2006, 72% today).

Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell recently announced that as of February, more than 90 percent of the class of 2007 had passed the exit exam. However, differences across racial/ethnic groups persist, and economically disadvantaged students are much less likely than other students to have passed the exam.

How do Californians perceive these different passing rates? Strong majorities of residents (79%) and public school parents (85%) are at least somewhat concerned that students in lower-income areas will have higher failure rates than others; almost half are very concerned. Results are similar to last April’s survey, when about eight in 10 adults were at least somewhat concerned.

Across racial/ethnic groups, majorities are at least somewhat concerned, but blacks (64%) and Latinos (53%) are most likely to be very concerned about the higher failure rates in lower-income areas, followed by Asians (39%) and whites (37%). Across California’s major regions and parties, 70 percent or more are at least somewhat concerned, with residents of Los Angeles (85%) and members of the Democratic party (84%) being most concerned. Concern is higher among women (83%) than men (75%).

“How concerned are you that students in lower-income areas will have a higher failure rate on the California High School Exit Exam than other students?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Very concerned	44%	39%	64%	53%	37%	47%
Somewhat concerned	35	43	26	34	37	38
Not too concerned	11	11	7	8	13	9
Not at all concerned	8	5	3	5	10	6
Don’t know	2	2	-	-	3	-

How to address the problem of students failing the exit exam? One proposal would require high schools to provide smaller English and math classes, taught by fully credentialed teachers, for students who initially fail the exam. Most adults (72%), likely voters (68%), and public school parents (74%) are in favor of this policy, even if it costs the state more money. Support is strong in all regional, political, and demographic groups, but is higher among Democrats (76%) and independents (67%) than among Republicans (58%). The percent in favor is highest among Latinos (83%), followed by Asians and blacks (74% each), and it is lowest among whites (64%). Support decreases with age, education, and income.

“For students who initially fail the California High School Exit Exam, would you favor or oppose requiring their local schools to provide them with smaller English and math class sizes taught by fully credentialed teachers until they pass the test, even if it costs the state more money?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor	72%	76%	58%	67%	68%
Oppose	25	21	37	30	29
Don’t know	3	3	5	3	3

HIGH SCHOOL DROP-OUT RATE

Nearly nine in 10 Californians and public school parents are at least somewhat concerned that students in lower-income areas are more likely than others to drop out of high school. Majorities in each group are very concerned. Concern regarding the drop-out rate is similar to last year's, when nearly nine in 10 adults were at least somewhat concerned about the drop-out rate of students in lower-income areas.

Most residents across the major geographic regions are at least somewhat concerned, with more than half in each region saying they are very concerned. Concern about the drop-out rate in lower-income areas is also high across racial/ethnic groups, but blacks (77%) are more than 20 points more likely than other groups to be very concerned.

More than eight in 10 in all party groups are at least somewhat concerned, with Democrats (65%) much more likely than others to be very concerned. Most women (91%) and men (85%) express at least some concern, while women are more likely than men to be very concerned (59% to 49%).

“How concerned are you that students in lower-income areas have a higher drop-out rate from high school than other students?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Very concerned	54%	53%	77%	54%	51%	55%
Somewhat concerned	34	39	16	36	35	34
Not too concerned	7	4	2	6	8	7
Not at all concerned	4	3	5	3	5	3
Don't know	1	1	-	1	1	1

One idea for improving the graduation rate among students in lower-income areas is to increase the number of school support staff, such as counselors, mentors, and social workers. Seventy-two percent of adults, 68 percent of likely voters, and 79 percent of public school parents favor this idea, even if it costs the state more money. Last April, similar proportions of adults and public school parents were in favor of this proposal, while support among likely voters has increased six points (62% to 68% today).

Although majorities in all party groups favor this policy option, Democrats (79%) and independents (72%) are much more likely than Republicans (56%) to support it. A strong majority of residents across California's regions favor this plan, with support highest in Los Angeles (78%).

Across racial/ethnic groups, favor is highest among Latinos (85%), followed by blacks (79%), Asians (77%) and whites (64%). Women (76%) are more likely than men (68%) to favor this proposal. Favor decreases with age, education, and income.

Among residents who are very concerned that students in lower-income areas are more likely than other students to drop out of high school, 81 percent favor increasing the number of school support staff.

“One idea that has been suggested for improving the graduation rate among students in lower-income areas is to increase the number of school support staff, such as counselors, mentors, and social workers. Would you favor or oppose this idea, even if it cost the state more money?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor	72%	79%	56%	72%	68%
Oppose	25	18	42	24	30
Don't know	3	3	2	4	2

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Although Californians have historically supported the concept of statewide standardized testing in public schools, majorities of adults (81%) and public school parents (84%) are at least somewhat concerned that English language learners score lower on standardized tests than other students. Many are very concerned about this issue (44% adults, 45% likely voters). Concern today is similar to April 2006 when eight in 10 adults and public school parents were at least somewhat concerned.

Across regional, political, and demographic groups, at least three in four are concerned about the achievement gap between English language learners and other students. Differences do exist across groups in terms of the level of concern. Blacks (51%) and Latinos (50%) are more likely than Asians (44%) and whites (40%) to be very concerned. Across regions, Los Angeles (48%) and Central Valley (47%) residents express more concern than residents elsewhere. Democrats (47%) are more likely than independents and Republicans (40% each), and women (47%) are more likely than men (41%) to be very concerned about the lower test scores of English language learners.

“How concerned are you that English language learners in California’s schools today score lower on standardized tests than other students?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Very concerned	44%	44%	51%	50%	40%	45%
Somewhat concerned	37	42	37	39	37	39
Not too concerned	10	9	6	7	12	9
Not at all concerned	7	3	5	4	8	7
Don’t know	2	2	1	-	3	-

More than two in three California adults (73%) and likely voters (67%) favor providing extra assistance to English language learners to improve their academic performance even if it means they receive more assistance than other students. Democrats (76%) are more likely than independents (68%) and Republicans (60%) to favor this proposal. While favor is high across all regions, it is highest among Los Angeles residents (78%) and lowest among Inland Empire residents (68%).

The percent in favor of providing extra assistance to English language learners is higher among Latinos (87%) and Asians (79%) than among blacks (66%) and whites (65%). Support for this proposal decreases with age and income. Among those who are very concerned about the scores of English language learners, 80 percent favor providing them with extra assistance.

“To try to improve the academic performance of English language learners, would you favor or oppose providing extra assistance to these students, even if it means they receive more assistance than other students?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor	73%	76%	60%	68%	67%
Oppose	23	20	36	28	28
Don't know	4	4	4	4	5

TEACHER QUALITY

Overwhelming majorities of all adults and public school parents (85% each) are at least somewhat concerned that schools in lower-income areas have fewer good teachers than those in wealthier areas. Similarly, more than eight in 10 adult residents and public school parents were concerned about this issue in our survey last April.

Concern is high across all regional, political, and demographic groups, with about eight in 10 or more in all groups voicing at least some concern about teacher quality in lower-income areas. Still, there are differences across groups. Across racial/ethnic groups, blacks (75%) and Latinos (61%) are much more likely to be very concerned than whites (49%) and Asians (46%). Democrats (62%) are more likely than independents (50%) and Republicans (44%) to be very concerned. Women more often than men, renters more often than homeowners, and lower-income residents more often than higher-income residents say they are very concerned that schools in lower-income areas have shortages of good teachers.

“How concerned are you that schools in lower-income areas have a shortage of good teachers compared to schools in wealthier areas?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Very concerned	54%	46%	75%	61%	49%	57%
Somewhat concerned	31	38	16	28	34	28
Not too concerned	7	8	5	6	8	9
Not at all concerned	6	6	1	4	7	5
Don't know	2	2	3	1	2	1

Support for giving teachers incentives, such as additional training and development, to work in lower-income areas is overwhelming, with three in four Californians (76%), and 71 percent of likely voters in favor. Support is greater among Democrats (85%) than independents (74%) and Republicans (61%). Support for additional training is high across all racial/ethnic groups. Across regions, support for giving teachers incentives to work in lower-income areas is greatest among residents of Los Angeles (81%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (79%), but about seven in 10 in other regions are also in favor. Support for this proposal is higher in younger and lower-income groups.

Many Californians also support the idea of paying higher salaries to attract and retain teachers in lower-income areas, even if it costs the state more money. About two in three adults (67%) and likely voters (64%) favor this plan. Democrats (72%) are more likely than independents (60%) and Republicans (59%) to support this idea. At least six in 10 across regions and in racial/ethnic groups favor higher salaries. Support for this idea decreases with age and income.

“Should local schools in lower income areas...”

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
Provide additional training and professional development to teachers, even if it costs the state more money?	Yes	76%	85%	61%	74%	71%
	No	22	14	37	23	27
	Don't know	2	1	2	3	2
Pay higher salaries to attract and retain teachers, even if it costs the state more money?	Yes	67	72	59	60	64
	No	29	24	39	37	32
	Don't know	4	4	2	3	4

CURRICULUM

Californians are divided over what should be taught in public school classrooms. Residents and likely voters (49% each) prefer that a wide variety of courses be taught, while similar numbers of residents and likely voters (48% each) would prefer fewer but more basic courses, including English, mathematics, history, and science. Last year, similar responses were given by all adults while likely voters leaned more toward a variety of courses (53% variety, 44% basics). Among public school parents, a variety of courses is preferred (54%) over teaching the basics (43%). Nationwide, 58 percent of all adults favor a variety of courses while 41 percent prefer teaching the basics, according to a Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll.

When asked how important it is for their local public schools to prepare students for college, eight in 10 California adult residents and nearly nine in 10 public school parents say it is very important. However, many residents also believe that it is very important that their local public school include vocational or career technical education (67%). Career technical education is more likely to be considered very important by Latinos (74%) than other racial/ethnic groups. Six in 10 adults say it is very important to include art and music as part of the curriculum. Last year, findings about the importance of including art and music as part of the curriculum were similar (58% very important).

“How important to you is it that your local public schools...”

		All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
			Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Prepare students for college?	Very important	81%	77%	89%	91%	76%	88%
	Somewhat important	15	18	9	7	20	10
	Not too important	3	5	2	2	4	1
	Don't know	1	-	-	-	-	1
Include vocational or career technical education as part of the curriculum?	Very important	67	61	65	74	64	71
	Somewhat important	26	31	30	23	27	24
	Not too important	6	8	4	3	8	5
	Don't know	1	-	1	-	1	-

When asked to choose from a list, residents (32%) and public school parents (44%) say preparing students for college is the most important goal of the state’s K-12 system. College preparation is rated first across political parties. Latinos (56%) are much more likely than blacks (34%), Asians (28%), and whites (20%) to say college; this choice is also higher among the younger, less educated, and less affluent. Since last year, mention of college prep has increased among adults (26% to 32%) and public school parents (33% to 44%).

“In your opinion, what is the most important goal of California’s K-12 public education system?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Preparing students for college	32%	28%	34%	56%	20%	44%
Preparing students for the workforce	16	16	20	7	21	12
Teaching students life skills	16	18	17	9	20	15
Preparing students to be good citizens	15	17	7	18	13	15
Teaching students the basics	13	17	13	6	17	9
Other/All of the above (volunteered)	6	3	8	3	7	5
Don't know	2	1	1	1	2	-

DATA AND INFORMATION

The California Department of Education currently collects and maintains basic demographic, fiscal, and student achievement data that is available for public use. Some experts believe these current data systems are insufficient, and that access to more information would allow policymakers and others to identify best practices and determine which programs and reforms are having positive effects.

What do Californians think about the importance of collecting and making available additional education data? Nine in 10 residents say the collection and distribution of information on the state's K-12 local public schools is at least somewhat important, and 56 percent say it is very important. Likely voters are similar. Democrats (58%) are more likely than independents (53%) and Republicans (51%) to say this is very important. Across regions, residents in Los Angeles (62%) and Orange/San Diego Counties (59%) are the most likely to say it is very important, although more than half in other regions agree. Among racial/ethnic groups, blacks (73%) are more likely than Asians (65%), Latinos (63%), and whites (49%) to say data collection and information on local public schools is very important. Among public school parents, 65 percent say it is very important.

“How important to you is it that the state collect and make available information about local K-12 public schools, including resources and student performance?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Very important	56%	58%	51%	53%	54%
Somewhat important	34	32	36	39	34
Not too important	9	8	12	8	10
Don't know	1	2	1	-	2

As a further indication of public support, 66 percent of adult residents and 57 percent of likely voters would favor increasing state funding for the development of a data system that maintains this type of resource and student performance information. Strong majorities of Democrats (70%) and independents (65%) favor increasing funding to develop a data system, while half of Republicans (51%) agree. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (83%), Asians (72%), and blacks (69%) are more likely than whites (55%) to favor increased funding for this type of K-12 data system. Regionally, support is highest in Los Angeles (71%) although more than six in 10 in each of the other regions also favor this idea. Support is also particularly high among public school parents (74%) and among the foreign born (81%). Majorities of residents in all age, education, gender, and income groups support increasing funding for a data system. Among residents who say the collection of K-12 data is very important, 78 percent favor increasing funding for the development of a data system.

“Would you favor or oppose increased state funding for the development of a data system that maintains this type of information about the K-12 education system?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor	66%	70%	51%	65%	57%
Oppose	29	24	44	31	38
Don't know	5	6	5	4	5

LOCAL SCHOOL FUNDING

Most Californians would support a bond measure to pay for local school construction projects: 66 percent of residents and 58 percent of likely voters would vote yes if their local school district had this type of bond measure on the ballot, which requires a 55 percent majority to pass. Across political groups, support is higher among Democrats (73%) and independents (62%) than among Republicans (51%).

Support is high in all of the major regions, with nearly two-thirds or more in each region saying they would vote yes on a local school construction bond measure. Latinos (82%), blacks (75%), and Asians (71%) are far more likely than whites (56%) to vote yes. Men and women are similarly likely to vote yes on a school construction bond measure, while support decreases with age, education, and income. Among residents who say that local school spending is insufficient, 79 percent would vote yes on this measure. Among public school parents, 74 percent would vote yes.

“If your local school district had a bond measure on the ballot to pay for school construction projects, would you vote yes or no?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes	66%	73%	51%	62%	58%
No	28	22	43	32	37
Don't know	6	5	6	6	5

A measure that would increase property taxes to provide more funds for local public schools receives considerably less support: residents are divided (47% yes, 48% no) on this measure, while a majority of likely voters (53%) would vote no. Partisan differences can be seen in levels of support for this measure. While a majority of Democrats (57%) would vote yes, half of independents (51%) and a strong majority of Republicans (66%) would vote no.

Regionally, residents in Orange/San Diego Counties and the Inland Empire (52% each) would vote no to increase property taxes for local public schools while residents in Los Angeles, the Central Valley, and the San Francisco Bay Area are more divided in their support. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (57%) are most likely to vote yes on this measure, while at least half of blacks (50%), whites (52%) and Asians (53%) would vote no. Younger residents (55% for 18-34 year olds), the less affluent (54%), and residents who rent (57%) are more likely to vote yes on this measure. Men (53%) are more likely to vote no on this measure than women (44%). Among residents who would vote yes on a bond for local school construction projects, 62 percent would also vote yes to increase property taxes to provide more funding for local public schools.

“What if there was a measure on your local ballot to increase property taxes to provide more funds for the local public schools? Would you vote yes or no?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes	47%	57%	30%	46%	44%
No	48	39	66	51	53
Don't know	5	4	4	3	3

STATE REVENUES

Most Californians believe increasing funding would improve the quality of public education in the state. But whether residents are willing to increase revenues for K-12 public education depends on who pays. For example, a solid majority of adults (68%) and likely voters (64%) favors increasing the state income tax paid by the wealthiest Californians. Support for this approach has increased four points among all adults (64% to 68%) and likely voters (60% to 64%) since last April.

Today, Democrats (78%) and independents (70%) strongly support raising the highest income tax rate to fund public education, while half of Republicans (51%) are opposed. Among public school parents, 71 percent support increasing the tax on the wealthiest Californians, and 26 percent are opposed.

This proposal receives majority support across all regional and demographic groups, although favor is lower among whites than among other racial/ethnic groups and declines with higher age, income, and education.

“Here are some ideas that have been suggested to raise state revenues to provide additional funding for California’s K-12 public schools. For each of the following, please say if you favor or oppose the proposal. How about...”

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
Raising the top rate of the state income tax paid by the wealthiest Californians?	Favor	68%	78%	47%	70%	64%
	Oppose	29	20	51	29	34
	Don't know	3	2	2	1	2
Raising the state sales tax?	Favor	32	38	24	31	31
	Oppose	64	58	74	67	66
	Don't know	4	4	2	2	3

In contrast, a solid majority of residents (64%) and likely voters (66%) oppose raising the state sales tax to provide additional funding for California’s public schools. These findings are similar to last April’s, when 63 percent of residents and likely voters were opposed.

Across political groups, nearly six in 10 Democrats, two in three independents, and nearly three in four Republicans are opposed. There is majority opposition to raising the sales tax in each of the major regions and demographic groups. Opposition is stronger among Asians (69%) and whites (67%) than among blacks and Latinos (58% each). Among public school parents, 35 percent support an increase in the state sales tax while 60 percent are opposed. Opposition is higher among the more affluent.

In examining the public’s response to these two school revenue questions, we find that 26 percent of residents favor both approaches to increasing taxes for additional school funding, while a similar 23 percent are opposed to both types of tax increases. Four in 10 residents favor raising taxes on the wealthiest Californians but oppose increasing the sales tax, while 6 percent support a sales tax hike but oppose raising taxes on the wealthiest. Five percent are undecided on at least one of these measures.

RESOURCE EQUITY

Californians express high levels of concern about the distribution of resources across the state’s schools. Seventy-five percent believe that schools in lower-income areas have fewer resources—such as teachers and classroom materials—than schools in wealthier areas. This perception is held by majorities in all regions and demographic and political groups, but is considerably higher among blacks (86%), Latinos (79%), and whites (75%) than Asians (56%). Among public school parents, 73 percent agree these schools have fewer resources than schools in wealthier areas.

How should the state address this inequity? If new state funding becomes available, 74 percent of adults, 70 percent of likely voters, and 75 percent of public school parents would like to see more money go to schools in lower-income areas to help pay for teachers and classroom materials. Strong majorities across political and demographic groups and regions agree. Latinos (87%) and blacks (80%) express more support for this approach than whites (68%) and Asians (69%). Support for this additional funding, however, appears to depend on its consequences for other schools. Last April, when asked if schools in lower-income areas should receive more funding from the state to pay for teachers and classroom materials even if it meant less funding for other schools, support was much lower (49% yes, 44% no).

“If new state funding becomes available, should schools in lower-income areas get more of this funding than other schools to help pay for teachers and classroom materials?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes	74%	79%	64%	73%	70%
No	21	16	31	23	26
Don't know	5	5	5	4	4

Californians are even more likely to perceive inequity in school facilities, with 84 percent of adults saying that schools in lower-income areas are in greater need of repair and replacement than schools in wealthier areas. More than three in four residents in all regional, political and demographic groups, and 83 percent of public school parents, agree. Again, blacks are especially likely to hold this view (93%), compared to Latinos (86%), whites (84%), and Asians (77%).

If new state funding became available, 79 percent of residents, 74 percent of likely voters, and 78 percent of public school parents would support giving more of this funding to schools in lower-income areas. Strong majorities across political groups support additional funding for these schools, and support is high in all regions and demographic groups. Support is highest among blacks (90%) and Latinos (89%) followed by Asians (77%) and whites (73%). Last April, we found that when asked if schools in lower-income areas should receive more funding from the state to improve school facilities even if it meant less funding for other schools, public support was once again much lower (53% yes, 41% no).

“If new state funding becomes available, should schools in lower-income areas get more of this funding than other schools to improve their school facilities?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes	79%	83%	68%	77%	74%
No	17	13	27	19	21
Don't know	4	4	5	4	5

REGIONAL MAP



METHODOLOGY

The PPIC Statewide Survey is directed by Mark Baldassare, president and CEO and survey director at the Public Policy Institute of California, with assistance from Sonja Petek, project manager for this survey, and survey research associates Dean Bonner and Jennifer Paluch. This survey was conducted with funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation as part of a three-year grant on education, environment, and population issues. We benefited from discussions with Hewlett program staff and others; however, the survey methods, questions, and content of the report were determined solely by Mark Baldassare.

Findings in this report are based on a telephone survey of 2,500 California adult residents interviewed from April 3rd to 17th, 2007. Interviewing took place on weekday nights and weekend days, using a computer-generated random sample of telephone numbers that ensured that both listed and unlisted numbers were called. All telephone exchanges in California were eligible. Telephone numbers in the survey sample were called up to six times to increase the likelihood of reaching eligible households. Once a household was reached, an adult respondent (age 18 or older) was randomly chosen for interviewing using the “last birthday method” to avoid biases in age and gender. Interviews took an average of 20 minutes to complete. Interviewing was conducted in English, Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese), Vietnamese, and Korean. We chose these languages because Spanish is the dominant language among non-English speaking adults in California, followed in prevalence by the three Asian languages. *Accent on Languages* translated the survey into Spanish, with assistance from Renatta DeFever. Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc. translated the survey into Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean, and conducted the telephone interviewing. We used recent U.S. Census and state figures to compare the demographic characteristics of the survey sample with characteristics of California’s adult population. The survey sample was closely comparable to the census and state figures. The survey data in this report were statistically weighted to account for any demographic differences.

The sampling error for the total sample of 2,500 adults is +/- 2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 2 percentage points of what they would be if all adults in California were interviewed. The sampling error for subgroups is larger: For the 1,899 registered voters, it is +/- 2.5 percent; for the 1,410 likely voters it is +/- 3 percent. Sampling error is only one type of error to which surveys are subject. Results may also be affected by factors such as question wording, question order, and survey timing.

Throughout the report, we refer to five geographic regions accounting for approximately 90 percent of the state population. “Central Valley” includes Butte, Colusa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Yolo, and Yuba Counties. “San Francisco Bay Area” includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. “Los Angeles” refers to Los Angeles County, “Inland Empire” includes Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, and “Orange/San Diego” refers to Orange and San Diego Counties. Residents from other geographic areas are included in the results reported for all adults, registered voters, and likely voters. However, sample sizes for these less populated areas are not large enough to report separately in tables and text.

We present specific results for respondents in four self-identified racial/ethnic groups: Asian, black, Latino, and non-Hispanic white. We also compare the opinions of registered Democrats, Republicans, and independents (i.e., registered as “decline to state”). We also analyze the responses of likely voters—those who are the most likely to participate in the state’s elections. We compare current survey responses both to responses in earlier PPIC Statewide Surveys and to responses in a national survey conducted by the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll.

QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESULTS

CALIFORNIANS AND EDUCATION

April 3-17, 2007

**2,500 California Adult Residents:
English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese**

MARGIN OF ERROR +/-2% AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE

1. First, thinking about the state as a whole, what do you think is the most important issue facing people in California today?

[code, don't read]
18% immigration, illegal immigration
15 jobs, economy
9 education, schools
7 crime, gangs, drugs
7 gasoline prices
7 health care, health costs
5 environment, pollution
5 housing costs, housing availability
4 traffic, transportation, infrastructure
3 state budget, deficit, taxes
2 population growth, development
12 other
6 don't know
2. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling his job as governor of California?

53% approve
34 disapprove
13 don't know
3. Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Governor Schwarzenegger is handling the state's kindergarten through 12th grade public education system?

36% approve
37 disapprove
27 don't know
4. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling its job?

38% approve
44 disapprove
18 don't know
5. Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling the state's kindergarten through 12th grade public education system?

29% approve
46 disapprove
25 don't know
6. Next, how much of a problem is the quality of education in California's K-12 public schools today? Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem?

52% big problem
28 somewhat of a problem
15 not much of a problem
5 don't know
7. In the past two years, do you think the quality of education in California's K-12 public schools has improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same?

21% improved
27 gotten worse
42 stayed the same
10 don't know

8. People have different ideas about California's public schools. Of all the possible things you can think of, what one thing about California's K-12 public schools do you think most needs improvement?

[code, don't read]

- 11% teacher quality
- 10 class size, overcrowding
- 9 teaching the basics
- 8 discipline, values
- 6 not enough funding
- 5 safety, crime, gangs, drugs
- 4 bureaucracy, inefficiency
- 4 student testing, accountability
- 3 achievement of immigrants/English language learners
- 2 teaching art and music
- 2 teaching vocational/career technical education
- 2 too many immigrants/English language learners
- 2 parents, parental involvement
- 2 not enough resources, materials
- 2 school facilities, need to build more schools or repair existing schools
- 2 teachers' salaries
- 2 teacher shortage
- 15 other
- 9 don't know

9. Overall, do you think the K-12 public education system in California is in need of major changes, minor changes, or that it is basically fine the way it is?

- 57% major changes
- 30 minor changes
- 9 fine the way it is
- 4 don't know

In general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? First,

[rotate questions 10 and 11]

10. Additional state funding would lead to higher quality K-12 education in California.

- 65% agree
- 30 disagree
- 5 don't know

Next,

11. Better use of existing state funds would lead to higher quality K-12 education in California.

- 84% agree
- 12 disagree
- 4 don't know

12. To significantly improve the quality of California's K-12 public schools, which of the following statements do you agree with the most? **[rotate responses 1 and 2]** (1) We need to use existing state funds more wisely, **[or]** (2) We need to increase the amount of state funding, **[or]** (3) We need to use existing state funds more wisely and increase the amount of state funding.

- 37% use funds more wisely
- 11 increase state funding
- 48 both
- 4 don't know

13. If there were a system in place to make sure funds were spent efficiently, would you favor or oppose increasing state funding for K-12 public education?

- 75% favor
- 21 oppose
- 4 don't know

Next, I'm going to read you a list of issues people have mentioned when talking about California's K-12 public schools today. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not really a problem.

[rotate questions 14 to 16]

14. How about teacher quality?

- 28% big problem
- 41 somewhat of a problem
- 26 not really a problem
- 5 don't know

15. How about the high school drop-out rate?

- 66% big problem
- 21 somewhat of a problem
- 5 not really a problem
- 8 don't know

16. How about teaching children with limited English language skills?

- 50% big problem
- 29 somewhat of a problem
- 17 not really a problem
- 4 don't know

On another topic,

[rotate questions 17 and 18]

17. Where do you think California currently ranks in per-pupil spending for K-12 public schools? Compared to other states, is California's spending near the top, above average, average, below average, or near the bottom?

- 12% near the top
- 13 above average
- 31 average
- 19 below average
- 13 near the bottom
- 12 don't know

18. Where do you think California currently ranks in student test scores for K-12 public schools? Compared to other states, are California's student test scores near the top, above average, average, below average, or near the bottom?

- 2% near the top
- 8 above average
- 34 average
- 34 below average
- 15 near the bottom
- 7 don't know

Next,

[rotate blocks: 19-21; 22-23; 24-25; 26-28]

19. Do you think that students should or should not have to pass statewide tests before they can graduate from high school, even if they have passing grades in their classes?

- 72% should
- 26 should not
- 2 don't know

20. Students are first required to take the California High School Exit Exam in 10th grade and, if they fail, can take the exam up to five more times. How concerned are you that students in lower-income areas will have a higher failure rate on the California High School Exit Exam than other students?

- 44% very concerned
- 35 somewhat concerned
- 11 not too concerned
- 8 not at all concerned
- 2 don't know

21. For students who initially fail the California High School Exit Exam, would you favor or oppose requiring their local schools to provide them with smaller English and math class sizes taught by fully credentialed teachers until they pass the test, even if it costs the state more money?

- 72% favor
- 25 oppose
- 3 don't know

22. How concerned are you that students in lower-income areas have a higher drop-out rate from high school than other students?

- 54% very concerned
- 34 somewhat concerned
- 7 not too concerned
- 4 not at all concerned
- 1 don't know

23. One idea that has been suggested for improving the graduation rate among students in lower-income areas is to increase the number of school support staff, such as counselors, mentors, and social workers. Would you favor or oppose this idea, even if it cost the state more money?

- 72% favor
- 25 oppose
- 3 don't know

24. How concerned are you that English language learners in California's schools today score lower on standardized tests than other students?

- 44% very concerned
- 37 somewhat concerned
- 10 not too concerned
- 7 not at all concerned
- 2 don't know

25. To try to improve the academic performance of English language learners, would you favor or oppose providing extra assistance to these students, even if it means they receive more assistance than other students?

- 73% favor
- 23 oppose
- 4 don't know

26. How concerned are you that schools in lower-income areas have a shortage of good teachers compared to schools in wealthier areas?

- 54% very concerned
- 31 somewhat concerned
- 7 not too concerned
- 6 not at all concerned
- 2 don't know

[rotate questions 27 and 28]

27. Should local schools in lower-income areas pay higher salaries to attract and retain teachers, even if it costs the state more money?

- 67% yes
- 29 no
- 4 don't know

28. Should local schools in lower-income areas provide additional training and professional development to teachers, even if it costs the state more money?

- 76% yes
- 22 no
- 2 don't know

29. Changing topics, public schools can offer students a wide variety of courses, or they can concentrate on fewer basic courses, such as English, mathematics, history, and science. Which of these two policies do you think your local public schools should follow in planning the curriculum—a wide variety of courses or fewer but more basic courses?

- 49% wide variety of courses
- 48 fewer but more basic courses
- 3 don't know

[rotate questions 30 to 32]

30. How important to you is it that your local public schools include art and music as part of the curriculum?

- 60% very important
- 27 somewhat important
- 12 not too important
- 1 don't know

31. How important to you is it that your local public schools include vocational or career technical education as part of the curriculum?

- 67% very important
- 26 somewhat important
- 6 not too important
- 1 don't know

32. How important to you is it that your local public schools prepare students for college?

- 81% very important
- 15 somewhat important
- 3 not too important
- 1 don't know

Next, please think about California's K-12 public education system more generally.

33. In your opinion, what is the most important goal of California's K-12 public education system?

[read list, rotate responses]

- 32% preparing students for college
- 16 preparing students for the workforce
- 16 teaching students life skills
- 15 preparing students to be good citizens
- 13 teaching students the basics
- 4 all of the above (*volunteered*)
- 2 other (*specify*)
- 2 don't know

34. Changing topics, how important to you is it that the state collect and make available information about local K-12 public schools, including resources and student performance?

- 56% very important
- 34 somewhat important
- 9 not too important
- 1 don't know

35. Would you favor or oppose increased state funding for the development of a data system that maintains this type of information about the K-12 education system?

- 66% favor
- 29 oppose
- 5 don't know

36. Next, overall, how would you rate the quality of public schools in your neighborhood today? If you had to give your local public schools a grade, would it be A, B, C, D, or F?

- 16% A
- 36 B
- 28 C
- 9 D
- 4 F
- 7 don't know

37. Do you think the current level of state funding for your local public schools is more than enough, just enough, or not enough?

- 11% more than enough
- 33 just enough
- 48 not enough
- 8 don't know

[rotate questions 38 and 39]

38. If your local school district had a bond measure on the ballot to pay for school construction projects, would you vote yes or no?

- 66% yes
- 28 no
- 6 don't know

39. What if there was a measure on your local ballot to increase property taxes to provide more funds for the local public schools? Would you vote yes or no?

- 47% yes
- 48 no
- 5 don't know

40. And who do you trust the most to make decisions about how to allocate resources to improve student performance at your local public schools:

[read list, rotate order]

- 34% the teachers
- 31 your local school district
- 14 the state government
- 13 the principals
- 3 parents (*volunteered*)
- 2 someone else (*specify*)
- 3 don't know

Changing topics,

[rotate blocks: 41-42 and 43-44]

41. Do you think that schools in lower-income areas of the state have the same amount of resources—including good teachers and classroom materials—as schools in wealthier areas?

- 19% yes
- 75 no
- 6 don't know

42. If new state funding becomes available, should schools in lower-income areas get more of this funding than other schools to help pay for teachers and classroom materials?

- 74% yes
- 21 no
- 5 don't know

43. Do you think that school facilities in lower-income areas of the state are more likely to be in need of repair and replacement than school facilities in wealthier areas?

- 84% yes
- 11 no
- 5 don't know

44. If new state funding becomes available, should schools in lower-income areas get more of this funding than other schools to improve their school facilities?

- 79% yes
- 17 no
- 4 don't know

Here are some ideas that have been suggested to raise state revenues to provide additional funding for California's K-12 public schools. For each of the following, please say if you favor or oppose the proposal.

[rotate questions 45 and 46]

45. How about raising the top rate of the state income tax paid by the wealthiest Californians?

- 68% favor
- 29 oppose
- 3 don't know

46. How about raising the state sales tax?

- 32% favor
- 64 oppose
- 4 don't know

[questions 47 to 50 not asked]

51. On another topic, some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you absolutely certain that you are registered to vote?

- 76% yes [ask q51a]
- 23 no [skip to q52c]
- 1 don't know [skip to q52c]

51a. Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or as an independent?

- 42% Democrat [skip to q53]
- 32 Republican [skip to q53]
- 5 another party (specify) [skip to q53]
- 21 independent [ask q52c]

[questions 52 to 52b not asked]

52c. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?

- 23% Republican party
- 39 Democratic party
- 28 neither (volunteered)
- 10 don't know

53. Generally speaking, how much interest would you say you have in politics?

- 26% great deal
- 37 fair amount
- 28 only a little
- 8 none
- 1 don't know

54. Would you consider yourself to be politically:

[read list, rotate order]

- 10% very liberal
- 19 somewhat liberal
- 31 middle-of-the-road
- 25 somewhat conservative
- 10 very conservative
- 5 don't know

[d1-d11: demographic questions]

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