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Californians & education



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PPIC

PUBLIC POLICY
INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The PPIC Statewide Survey series provides policymakers, the media, and the public with objective, advocacy-free information on the perceptions, opinions, and public policy preferences of California residents. Inaugurated in April 1998, this is the 116th PPIC Statewide Survey in a series that has generated a database of responses of more than 246,000 Californians. This survey is conducted with funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Its goal is to inform state policymakers, encourage discussion, and raise public awareness about K–12 public education issues; this is the seventh annual PPIC Statewide Survey since 2005 to focus on this topic.

California has the largest K–12 public education system in the nation. During 2009–10, the state taught more than 6 million students in 1,047 school districts and about 9,900 public schools. California also has a highly diverse student population: more than half are economically disadvantaged (55%), a quarter are English learners (24%), and 11 percent have developmental, physical, emotional, or learning disabilities. Latinos (50%) make up the largest racial/ethnic group of students, followed by whites (27%), Asians (12%), and blacks (7%).

This year's survey measures perceptions of the ongoing toll that the economic downturn and the state's budget situation are taking on California's K–12 system, which is the largest portion of the state budget, consuming about 40 percent of general fund spending. Governor Brown has proposed sparing K–12 from cuts in fiscal 2011–12 if voters approve temporary tax and fee increases. But if this tax and fee proposal never makes it to the ballot or if voters reject it, K–12 education will face significant funding reductions. Schools have already been grappling with reduced funding levels. Recent studies of school administrators and principals reflect ongoing teacher and staff layoffs, increased class sizes, a shortened school year, program cuts, and deferred maintenance.

This report presents the responses of 2,504 California adult residents on the following topics:

- General perceptions, including opinions of educational quality in California's K–12 public schools; approval ratings of the governor and legislature overall and on their handling of K–12 education; perceived rankings of California's per pupil spending and student test scores; concerns about students and schools in lower-income areas; perceptions of their local public schools; and opinions of public school parents about their children's schools.
- Fiscal attitudes and policy preferences, including concerns about the budget situation and some of the specific ways schools are dealing with decreased funding levels; attitudes toward other ideas for cutting spending; preferences for raising state revenues to maintain current K–12 funding; preferences for raising revenues for local public schools; and attitudes toward a special election.
- Time trends, national comparisons, and variations in perceptions, attitudes, and preferences across racial/ethnic groups (Asians, blacks, Latinos, and non-Hispanic whites), across five major regions of the state (Central Valley, San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles County, Inland Empire, and Orange/San Diego Counties), across socioeconomic and political groups, and among parents of children attending public schools.

This report may be downloaded free of charge from our website (www.ppic.org). For questions about the survey, please contact survey@ppic.org. Try our PPIC Statewide Survey interactive tools online at <http://www.ppic.org/main/survAdvancedSearch.asp>.

NEWS RELEASE

EMBARGOED: Do not publish or broadcast until 9:00 p.m. PDT on Wednesday, April 27, 2011.

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

PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY: CALIFORNIANS AND EDUCATION

Worried About Budget's Toll on Schools, Most Californians Favor Income Tax Hike—But Only for Wealthiest

MAJORITIES SAY SPECIAL ELECTION ON BROWN'S REVENUE PACKAGE IS A GOOD IDEA

SAN FRANCISCO, April 27, 2011—Most Californians are very concerned that the state's budget deficit will result in cuts to public schools, the area of the budget they most want to protect, according to a statewide survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), with funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. To maintain current funding for K–12 education, a strong majority favor raising income taxes for the wealthiest Californians, but most oppose raising the state sales tax or personal income taxes overall.

With California leaders at a standoff over how to fill the state's \$26 billion budget gap, strong majorities of Californians (68%), likely voters (65%), and public school parents (74%) say the quality of K–12 education will suffer if cuts are made. There are partisan differences, with Democrats (77%) and independents (64%) saying quality will suffer, and Republicans divided over whether it will suffer (49%) or could be maintained (48%).

When Californians are read the major areas of state spending—K–12 public schools, health and human services, higher education, and prisons and corrections—57 percent most want to protect schools. Since PPIC first asked the question in June 2003, a majority have responded this way. Most are very concerned (57%) or somewhat concerned (29%) that the state's budget deficit will result in significant cuts.

"Californians' support for maintaining K–12 spending remains strong. It is a significant factor for the state's leaders to take into account in any proposals that they put before voters this year," says Mark Baldassare, president and CEO of PPIC. "Residents are worried about the toll that reduced spending is having on the quality of K–12 public education, and public school parents are noticing the impact of state budget cuts on their children's schools."

SUPPORT FOR SPECIAL ELECTION, BROWN'S JOB APPROVAL UP SLIGHTLY

Californians are slightly more likely than they were in March to say it is a good idea to hold a special election this year on the temporary tax and fee increases that Governor Jerry Brown has proposed to prevent additional budget cuts. Majorities of adults (58%) and likely voters (56%) favor a special election (54% all adults, 51% likely voters in March). Across parties, 72 percent of Democrats, 53 percent of independents, and 38 percent of Republicans say a special election is a good idea.

Most adults (61%) and likely voters (61%) favor Brown's budget plan to close the budget gap—about half through spending cuts and half through temporary tax increases, with no cuts in K–12 schools. A strong

majority of Democrats (72%) and more than half of independents (54%) favor the plan, and Republicans are split (47% favor, 49% oppose).

These results do not necessarily translate into support for the specifics of the governor's plan. Solid majorities oppose increases in the state sales tax (61% all adults, 62% likely voters) or overall state personal income tax (62% all adults, 66% likely voters) to maintain funding for schools—both components of Brown's proposal. Strong majorities of Republicans (76%) and independents (65%) oppose a sales tax hike, as do about half of Democrats (52%). Opposition to an overall income tax increase is similar (82% Republicans, 66% independents, 52% Democrats).

By contrast, 68 percent of adults and 62 percent of likely voters favor raising the top rate of the state income tax paid by the wealthiest Californians to maintain K–12 funding. There is a partisan divide: Democrats (82%) and independents (63%) are in favor, and Republicans (60%) are opposed.

Brown's own job approval rating (40%) is up slightly from March (34%), with 29 percent disapproving and 31 percent unsure. Likely voters view him more favorably (46% approve, 32% disapprove, 21% don't know). But the governor gets lower marks for his handling of K–12 education (24% adults, 25% likely voters approve). The state legislature fares worse than the governor in both areas. Only 21 percent of adults and 14 percent of likely voters approve of the job the legislature is doing (60% all adults, 74% likely voters disapprove). Just 18 percent of adults and 9 percent of likely voters approve of the way the legislature is handling K–12 education.

When it comes to local school funding, most Californians (60%) would support a local bond measure to pay for school construction projects. A slim majority of likely voters (53%) would vote yes, just short of the 55 percent majority required for school bond passage. This is a record low level among likely voters, whose support has been as high as 72 percent (December 1999). If there were a measure to raise local parcel taxes to benefit local public schools, 59 percent of adults and 54 percent of likely voters would approve—well below the two-thirds vote required to pass. Californians are divided over whether it should be easier to pass local parcel taxes: 48 percent of all adults and 46 percent of likely voters say this is a good idea, while 47 percent of adults and 49 percent of likely voters say it is a bad idea.

TEACHER LAYOFFS TOP LIST OF CONCERNS ABOUT CUTS

Asked how the quality of public schools can be significantly improved, 43 percent of residents and 47 percent of likely voters say existing state funds need to be used more wisely. A similar 41 percent of residents and 42 percent of likely voters say funds need to be used more wisely and the amount of funding needs to be increased. Just 13 percent of adults and 9 percent of likely voters say that increasing state funding alone would significantly improve quality.

Public schools have already taken steps to deal with decreased funding, and the PPIC survey asked about four of them. Residents are most concerned about teacher layoffs (68%), but majorities are very concerned about the other areas as well: a shortened school year (56%), elimination of art and music programs (53%), and increased class sizes (52%).

If the legislature or voters reject tax increases, K–12 public education—which accounts for about 40 percent of the state budget—would face cuts. Among the options that would provide the most cost savings, according to the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), are eliminating funding for K–3 class-size reduction, ending the state requirement that students be provided with transportation to school, and requiring children to be 5 years old before starting kindergarten. (Plans are underway to move this date up from December 2 to September 1 in the future, but the LAO identified this as a way to save money in 2011-2012.) Asked about these ideas, a strong majority of Californians (77%) say eliminating funding for reducing K–3 class sizes is a bad idea, and 61 percent say the same about ending the transportation requirement. By contrast, 66 percent say changing the kindergarten age requirement is a good idea.

SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE SEEN AS BIG CHALLENGE

Californians' support for maintaining K–12 spending levels does not mean they are pleased with the quality of education students are getting. Most Californians (85%) say school quality is at least somewhat of a problem. Over half (55%) call it a big problem, a view held by at least half of residents since April 2005. A majority (54%) say school quality has gotten worse in the past few years, while 29 percent say it has stayed the same and just 11 percent say it has improved.

Less than half of Californians (43%) say schools are doing a good or excellent job preparing students for college, and only 36 percent are happy with the schools' performance in preparing students for the workforce.

Asked about some of the challenges in the state's K–12 education system, residents are most likely to view the high school dropout rate (74%) as a big problem, followed by student achievement (46%) and teacher quality (44%). The proportion of adults who view the dropout rate as a big problem is at a new high. Strong majorities of public school parents (73%) and adults across parties, regions, and demographic groups hold this view. Blacks (85%) and Latinos (83%) are much more likely than whites (68%) and Asians (67%) to do so.

MOST WANT TEACHER SALARIES CLOSELY TIED TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The share of Californians who say teacher quality is a big problem is also at a record high. Most Californians say a teacher's salary should be very closely tied to student achievement (29%) or somewhat closely tied (40%). Solid majorities across regions and parties (69% independents, 68% Republicans, 65% Democrats) say the two should be closely tied. Among racial and ethnic groups, Latinos (75%) are the most likely and blacks the least likely (56%) to say so.

Most residents (65%) are very concerned that students in lower-income areas have a shortage of good teachers compared to schools in wealthier areas, up 11 points since April 2008 (54%). When asked about the distribution of resources, such as good teachers and classroom materials, 79 percent of residents say schools in lower-income areas of the state do not have the same amount. And 67 percent say that if new state funding were available, schools in lower-income areas should get more of it.

LOCAL SCHOOLS GET GOOD GRADES

Although most Californians (56% all adults, 66% public school parents) say local public schools do not get enough funding, they have generally positive views of their own schools. Half of adults (51%) give their schools a grade of B or higher, as they have each year since 2005. There are differences across racial and ethnic groups: Latinos (59%), Asians (49%), and whites (48%) are more likely than blacks (39%) to give their local school an A or B. Blacks (45%) are more likely than others to give their schools C grades.

MORE KEY FINDINGS

- **Many unaware how state ranks in spending, student achievement**—page 9

Just one in four Californians (23%) know that both student test scores and spending per pupil are below average compared to other states.

- **Public school parents see impact of cuts**—page 15

More than half of public school parents say they have noticed furloughs or layoffs of support staff (52%) or cuts to programs such as art, music, summer school, or extracurricular activities (58%).

- **Most prefer local control of state money for schools**—page 21

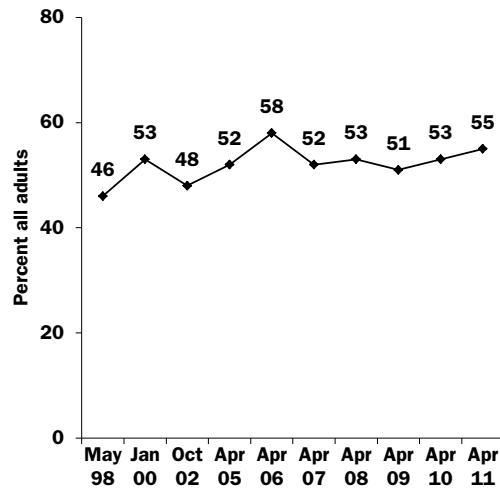
An overwhelming majority of residents (83%) prefer control at the local level, either by school districts (49%) or schools (34%). Just 13 percent prefer that state government make these decisions.

GENERAL PERCEPTIONS

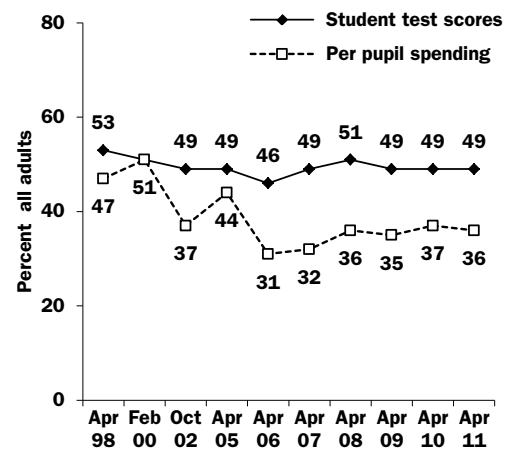
KEY FINDINGS

- Over half of Californians continue to say the quality of K–12 education is a big problem. Most believe educational quality has worsened recently and will suffer if additional budget cuts are made. *(page 7)*
- Governor Brown’s job approval ratings are up slightly since last month (34% to 40%). On his handling of the state’s K–12 system, Californians are more likely to disapprove than approve, and a third are unsure. Six in 10 disapprove of the legislature’s overall job performance and its handling of the K–12 system. *(page 8)*
- Just 36 percent correctly state that California’s per pupil spending is below average compared to other states; about half are aware that student test scores are lower than in other states. *(page 9)*
- A strong majority (69%) say teacher salaries should be very or somewhat closely tied to student achievement. *(page 10)*
- Democrats are far more likely than Republicans to say that if new funding becomes available, schools in lower-income areas should get more of it than other schools. *(page 12)*
- Three in four public school parents say their child’s school has been affected by state budget cuts; at least half have noticed support staff reductions and program cuts and have been asked to contribute money, time, or supplies. *(page 15)*

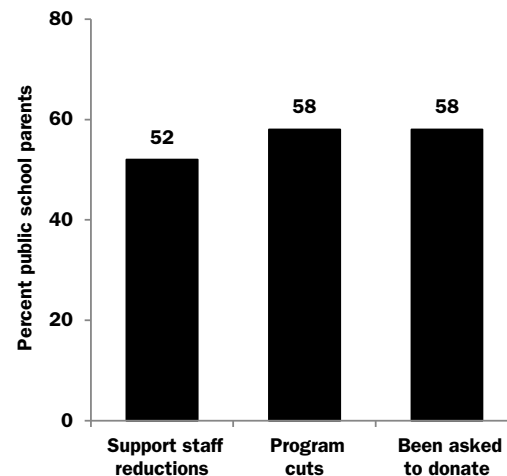
Percent Calling K–12 Quality a Big Problem



Percentages Saying California Ranks Below Average Compared to Other States



Children’s Schools and Budget Cuts: What Parents Have Noticed



QUALITY OF K–12 EDUCATION

Most Californians (85%) believe the quality of education in California’s K–12 public schools is at least somewhat of a problem, with over half calling it a big problem (55%). At least half of Californians have called the quality of K–12 education a big problem since April 2005. Public school parents (48%) are slightly less likely than all adults to say quality is a big problem. Blacks (81%) are by far the most likely racial/ethnic group to say quality is a big problem, while Latinos (44%) are the least likely. Half of Asians and six in 10 whites hold this view. San Francisco Bay Area (59%) and Los Angeles (57%) residents are the most likely to view quality as a big problem and half in other regions agree. Residents 55 and older, those with at least some college education, and those in households with incomes of \$40,000 or greater are more likely than others to perceive the quality of education as a big problem. Majorities across parties agree. Californians in our November survey were much less negative about the quality of education in the state’s public colleges and universities (22% big problem, 36% somewhat).

“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?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Big problem	55%	50%	81%	44%	60%	48%
Somewhat of a problem	30	38	15	33	28	33
Not much of a problem	11	6	3	20	9	17
Don’t know	4	6	–	4	3	2

Californians are also pessimistic about changes in the quality of K–12 education over the past few years, with a majority saying the quality has gotten worse (54%); 29 percent say it has stayed the same and only 11 percent say the quality has improved. In April 2007, only 27 percent said the quality had worsened in the previous two years. Today, half of public school parents (50%) say the quality of education has gotten worse. Majorities across parties and most regional and demographic groups say quality has worsened; Los Angeles residents (49%), Latinos (44%), those with a high school diploma or less (49%), and those in households with incomes less than \$40,000 (47%) are less likely to hold this view. Of those who say the quality of K–12 education is a big problem, 70 percent say the quality has gotten worse.

With the governor and legislature looking for ways to close the state budget gap, major cuts to K–12 public education have not yet been made. But if they are, strong majorities of Californians (68%), likely voters (65%), and public school parents (74%) think the quality of education will suffer. Partisan differences emerge—Democrats (77%) and independents (64%) say quality will suffer, while Republicans are divided (49% quality will suffer, 48% quality could be maintained). More than six in 10 across regions and nearly all demographic groups say quality would suffer. In our November survey, Californians held similar views about higher education (66% quality will suffer, 29% could be maintained).

“Which comes closer to your view? If the state government makes budget cuts in K–12 public education, the quality of education will suffer, or, the state government could make budget cuts in K–12 public education and still maintain the quality of education.”

	All Adults	Party			Public School Parents
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Quality will suffer	68%	77%	49%	64%	74%
Quality could be maintained	27	19	48	31	22
Don’t know	4	4	3	4	4

APPROVAL RATINGS

As Governor Brown seeks support for his approach to closing the budget gap, his approval ratings (40%) have improved slightly since March (34%), but six in 10 either disapprove (29%) or are unsure (31%) how to rate his performance. Likely voters are more approving (46%). Democrats (54%) are much more likely than independents (39%) and Republicans (31%) to approve. San Francisco Bay Area residents (50%) are the most likely—and Orange/San Diego residents (33%) least likely—to approve of the governor. Whites (44%) and blacks (43%) are the most likely to approve, followed by Latinos (38%) and Asians (32%). Approval is higher among older, more educated, and more affluent Californians.

When it comes to Governor Brown’s handling of K–12 education, only one in four Californians (24%) and likely voters (25%) approve; 41 percent disapprove and 34 percent are unsure. Democrats (31%) are more likely than independents (22%) and Republicans (14%) to approve. Fewer than three in 10 across regions and demographic groups approve of his handling of the state’s K–12 public education system.

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

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>His job as governor of California?</i>	Approve	40%	54%	31%	39%	46%
	Disapprove	29	21	45	29	32
	Don't know	31	24	23	32	21
<i>The state's kindergarten through 12th grade public education system?</i>	Approve	24	31	14	22	25
	Disapprove	41	34	53	41	41
	Don't know	34	35	33	37	34

Just 21 percent of Californians approve of the legislature’s job performance and 60 percent disapprove. Likely voters are more disapproving (74% disapprove, 14% approve). Approval ratings among all adults are similar to earlier this year and approval has not reached 30 percent since March 2008. Disapproval is much higher among Republicans (81%) than independents (63%) and Democrats (61%). Two in three residents of the Central Valley (66%) disapprove and about six in 10 in other regions agree. Whites (70%) are the most likely to disapprove, followed by blacks (62%), Asians (50%), and Latinos (48%).

Californians are equally disapproving of the legislature’s handling of K–12 education (60%); just 18 percent approve. Approval ratings are similar to record lows reached last April. Today, Californians across parties, regions, and demographic groups are far more likely to disapprove than approve of the legislature’s handling of K–12 education.

“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	21%	21%	10%	19%	14%
	Disapprove	60	61	81	63	74
	Don't know	19	18	10	18	12
<i>The state's kindergarten through 12th grade public education system?</i>	Approve	18	14	6	15	9
	Disapprove	60	62	72	67	69
	Don't know	22	24	21	18	22

PERCEPTIONS OF CALIFORNIA’S RELATIVE EDUCATION RANKINGS

Fewer than four in 10 Californians (36%) think that the state’s per pupil spending for K–12 public education is below average compared to other states; 25 percent say it is near the top or above average and 27 percent say it is average. According to the National Education Association’s *Rankings and Estimates* report (December 2010), California is ranked near the bottom—42nd among 50 states and the District of Columbia—in per pupil spending in the 2009–10 school year. Perceptions among Californians about per pupil spending have been similar since 2008, but adults were more negative in the late 1990s (47% April 1998) and early 2000s (51% February 2000). Democrats (46%) and independents (40%) are more likely than Republicans (29%) to say per pupil spending is below average. Orange/San Diego residents (28%) are least likely to say funding is below average, followed by those in the Central Valley (36%), Los Angeles (37%), the San Francisco Bay Area (40%), and the Inland Empire (42%). Across racial/ethnic groups, blacks (53%), by a wide margin are most likely to say per pupil spending is below average, with Asians (31%) least likely.

“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?”

	All Adults	Race/ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Near the top/above average	25%	21%	15%	22%	31%	16%
Average	27	36	30	27	24	29
Near the bottom/below average	36	31	53	37	35	42
Don’t know	11	13	2	14	10	12

More Californians are aware of how California actually ranks in student test scores. Half of adults (49%) say scores are below average compared to other states, 33 percent say they are average, and only 11 percent say they are above average. According to 2009 test scores compiled by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics, California ranked near the bottom in both math and reading scores in fourth and eighth grades. Perceptions of student test scores in California have been fairly similar since we first asked this question in 1998. Democrats (51%) are less likely than independents (60%) and Republicans (62%) to say test scores are lower than average. Orange/San Diego residents (42%) are the least likely—and San Francisco Bay Area residents (53%) are most likely—to say test scores are below average. Blacks (58%) and whites (57%) are much more likely than Latinos (40%) and Asians (32%) to hold this view. Negative perceptions increase with age and education and are higher among those with annual incomes of \$40,000 or more than among lower-income residents.

Just one in four Californians (23%), likely voters (27%), and public school parents (24%) correctly state that both per pupil spending and test scores in California are below average compared to other states.

“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?”

	All Adults	Race/ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Near the top/above average	11%	16%	11%	15%	8%	14%
Average	33	39	28	37	30	37
Near the bottom/below average	49	32	58	40	57	41
Don’t know	8	13	3	9	5	9

CHALLENGES IN THE K–12 SYSTEM

When it comes to three potential challenges in the state’s K–12 education system, residents are most likely to view the high school dropout rate as a big problem (74%), followed by student achievement (46%) and teacher quality (44%). The proportion viewing the high school dropout rate as a big problem has reached a new high (65% 2006, 66% 2007, 69% 2008, 70% 2009, 69% 2010, 74% today). The percentage calling student achievement a big problem has been similar since we first asked this question in 2009 (43% 2009, 48% 2010, 46% today), while the share calling teacher quality a big problem has reached a record high today (27% 2006, 28% 2007, 28% 2008, 29% 2009, 36% 2010, 44% today).

The perception that teacher quality is a big problem is highest in the Inland Empire (52%), followed by the San Francisco Bay Area (45%), Orange/San Diego Counties (44%), Los Angeles (43%), and the Central Valley (39%). Asians (49%), blacks (48%), and whites (46%) are more likely than Latinos (36%) to hold this view. Among public school parents, 37 percent say teacher quality is a big problem.

When it comes to student achievement, residents in the Inland Empire (54%) are the most likely—and Central Valley residents (39%) the least likely—to consider student achievement a big problem. Blacks (53%) are more likely than Latinos (45%), whites (45%), and Asians (42%) to agree. Among public school parents, 40 percent consider student achievement to be a big problem.

Strong majorities of public school parents (73%) and Californians across parties, regions, and demographic groups say the dropout rate is a big problem, but blacks (85%) and Latinos (83%) are much more likely than whites (68%) and Asians (67%) to say this.

“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...?”

	Teacher quality	Student achievement	The high school dropout rate
Big problem	44%	46%	74%
Somewhat of a problem	34	35	18
Not really a problem	19	15	4
Don’t know	3	4	3

Seven in 10 Californians say a teacher’s salary should be very (29%) or somewhat (40%) closely tied to student achievement. Solid majorities across regions and parties (65% Democrats, 68% Republicans, 69% independents) say the two should be closely tied. Latinos (75%) are the most likely—and blacks (56%) the least likely—to hold this view. In a June 2010 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll, adults nationwide (19% very closely, 54% somewhat closely) also said teacher salaries should be closely tied to student achievement, but Californians are more likely to say they should be very closely tied (29% to 19%).

“In your opinion, how closely should a teacher’s salary be tied to his or her students’ academic achievement?”

	All Adults	Region					Public School Parents
		Central Valley	San Francisco Bay Area	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	Inland Empire	
Very closely tied	29%	28%	26%	26%	31%	40%	33%
Somewhat closely tied	40	38	38	42	38	36	40
Not very closely tied	11	10	12	13	11	6	8
Not at all tied	18	21	22	16	18	16	17
Don’t know	3	2	2	4	2	2	2

LOWER-INCOME STUDENTS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Six in 10 Californians (62%) are very concerned that students in lower-income areas have a higher dropout rate from high school than other students. Concern has grown slightly since April 2006 (55%). Democrats (73%) are much more likely than independents (60%) and Republicans (49%) to hold this view. Majorities across regions and demographic groups agree, but blacks (95%) are far more likely than Latinos (63%), Asians (61%), and whites (58%) to say the dropout rate is a big problem.

Six in 10 Californians (61%) are also very concerned that students in lower-income areas are less likely than other students to be ready for college when they finish high school. Concern was the same last April. Democrats (73%) are the most likely to hold this view, followed by independents (56%) and Republicans (47%). Los Angeles residents (68%) are the most likely and Orange/San Diego residents (53%) the least likely to agree. Nearly all blacks (93%) are very concerned, as are majorities of Latinos (69%), whites (55%), and Asians (53%). Men (55%) are much less likely than women (67%) to hold this view.

A majority of Californians (56%) are very concerned that English language learners in California’s schools today score lower on standardized tests than other students. The share saying they are very concerned has increased 14 points since we last asked this question in 2008 (42%). Democrats (57%) are the most likely to hold this view, compared to about half of independents (51%) and Republicans (48%). Blacks (69%) and Latinos (65%) are much more likely than whites (50%) and Asians (49%) to be very concerned about English learners scoring lower than other students on standardized tests.

“For each of the following issues, please tell me if you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned. How concerned are you that...”

	Schools in lower-income areas have a shortage of good teachers compared to schools in wealthier areas?	Students in lower-income areas have a higher dropout rate from high school than other students?	Students in lower-income areas are less likely than other students to be ready for college when they finish high school?	English language learners in California’s schools today score lower on standardized tests than other students?
Very concerned	65%	62%	61%	56%
Somewhat concerned	24	27	28	27
Not too concerned	5	5	6	9
Not at all concerned	5	5	4	8
Don’t know	1	1	1	1

Two in three Californians (65%) are very concerned that schools in lower-income areas have a shortage of good teachers compared to schools in wealthier areas. This concern is similar to last April (60%), but 11 points higher than April 2008 (54%). Democrats (76%) are much more likely than independents (57%) and Republicans (49%) to hold this view. Blacks (88%) are the most likely—and whites (57%) the least likely—to hold this view among racial/ethnic groups. Concern decreases as income rises.

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

	All Adults	Household Income			Public School Parents
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	
Very concerned	65%	71%	64%	56%	68%
Somewhat concerned	24	22	25	28	24
Not too concerned	5	3	4	9	4
Not at all concerned	5	3	6	7	4
Don’t know	1	1	1	1	–

EQUALITY OF RESOURCES

When asked about the distribution of resources in California’s K–12 public schools, nearly eight in 10 adults (79%) and parents of public school students (77%) say that schools in lower-income areas do not have the same level of resources—including good teachers and classroom materials—as schools in wealthier areas. Overwhelming majorities hold this perception across parties, regions, and demographic groups. Californians have expressed similar views since 2005, with at least 75 percent of adults saying that schools in lower-income areas and wealthier areas have differing amounts of resources.

“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, or not?”

	All Adults	Household Income			Public School Parents
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	
Yes, same	16%	17%	12%	17%	17%
No, not same	79	78	83	78	77
Don’t know	5	5	5	5	6

To address this perceived inequality, 67 percent of adults and 60 percent of likely voters believe that if new state funding becomes available, schools in lower-income areas should get more of it than other schools, to help pay for teachers and classroom materials. Since we first asked this question in 2007, more than two in three respondents have supported this idea, but support is down 7 points since that time (74% April 2007 to 67% today). Three in four parents of public school students (74%) hold this view. Opinion on new funding going to schools in lower-income areas differs across party lines. Democrats (74%) are much more likely than independents (59%) and far more likely than Republicans (44%) to say that lower-income area schools should get more funding than other schools when it becomes available. Latinos (84%) and blacks (72%), more than Asians (66%) and especially whites (57%), favor new funding going towards schools in lower-income areas.

Majorities across regions think that more of any new funding should go to schools in lower-income areas, with residents of Los Angeles (74%) the most likely to hold this view, followed by those in the San Francisco Bay Area (67%), Inland Empire (66%), Central Valley (61%), and Orange/San Diego Counties (59%). Non-citizens (88%) are much more likely than naturalized Californians (69%) and U.S.-born Californians (60%) to believe that more of new state funding should go to lower-income area schools. Support for allocating a larger portion of new funding to schools in lower-income areas declines with rising age and income levels.

Californians who perceive an unequal allocation of resources across the state’s K–12 public schools express strong support for allocating new funding to lower-income areas. Among those who believe that schools in lower-income areas do not have the same amount of resources as those in wealthier areas, 72 percent think a larger portion of new funds should go towards schools in lower-income areas.

“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, or not?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes	67%	74%	44%	59%	60%
No	29	23	51	36	35
Don’t know	4	4	6	5	5

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE

Fewer than half of Californians (43%) are happy with the job that K–12 public schools are doing to prepare students for college. They are more likely to say that the public schools are doing a not so good (35%) or poor (17%) job than an excellent (5%) or good (38%) job. These ratings were similar in April 2010 (4% excellent, 37% good, 39% not so good, and 14% poor). Public school parents rate the state’s public schools better than adults in general do, with a majority saying they do an excellent (8%) or good (47%) job in preparing students for college.

Across racial/ethnic groups, blacks (70%) are much more likely than whites (57%), and are far more likely than Asians (48%) or Latinos (41%) to say that California’s public schools are doing a not so good or poor job in preparing students for college; a majority of Latinos (57%) give positive ratings. Inland Empire residents (59%) are the most likely to give negative ratings to schools on college preparation, followed by those in the San Francisco Bay Area (54%), Central Valley (51%), Los Angeles (50%), and Orange/San Diego Counties (47%). Californians with at least some college education and household incomes of \$40,000 or more are more likely than others to give not so good or poor job ratings to public schools.

“Are California’s K–12 public schools doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job in preparing students for college?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Excellent	5%	2%	6%	10%	2%	8%
Good	38	43	21	47	35	47
Not so good	35	35	45	31	36	32
Poor	17	13	25	10	21	11
Don’t know	5	6	2	2	6	3

Californians also say that the K–12 public schools do a not so good (38%) or poor (20%) job in preparing students for jobs and the workforce. Only 36 percent give an excellent or good rating. Since April 2006, only about one in three adults have given excellent or good ratings. Public school parents are divided; 49 percent give excellent or good ratings and 45 percent not so good or poor ratings.

Across racial/ethnic groups, only Latinos (57% excellent or good) hold mostly positive views of schools’ performance in jobs and workforce preparation. Blacks (71%) and whites (66%) are much more likely than Asians (53%) or Latinos (40%) to rate schools negatively on workforce preparedness. Six in 10 across regions give negative ratings, except in Los Angeles (50%). Negative ratings increase with income and are much higher among those with at least some college education.

“Are California’s K–12 public schools doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job in preparing students for jobs and the workforce?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Excellent	4%	2%	6%	11%	1%	7%
Good	32	33	19	46	26	42
Not so good	38	39	35	30	42	34
Poor	20	14	36	10	24	11
Don’t know	6	11	2	3	7	5

RATING LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Californians continue to express generally positive opinions of the quality of their local public schools despite their concern about the overall quality of the state’s K–12 system. Half of Californians (51%) give a grade of B or higher. Thirty-one percent give their local school a grade of C and 15 percent give a D or F grade. At least half of Californians have given their local schools an A or B grade each year since 2005. Public school parents are even more approving of their local schools. Sixty-two percent of public school parents give their local public schools an A or B grade while just half of all adults do.

Across regions, majorities of residents in Los Angeles (57%), Orange/San Diego Counties (54%), and the Inland Empire (53%) give grades of A or B; slightly fewer than half in the San Francisco Bay Area (48%) and the Central Valley (44%) give such positive ratings. Differences arise across racial/ethnic groups in the assessment of local public schools. Latinos (59%), Asians (49%), and whites (48%) are more likely than blacks (39%) to give their local school an A or B, while blacks (45%) are more likely than others to give their local schools a C grade.

**“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	17%	17%	18%	18%	17%	15%	23%
B	34	27	30	39	37	38	39
C	31	36	33	27	31	30	26
D	11	12	11	9	10	13	9
F	4	5	3	4	3	4	2
Don't know	3	3	4	3	2	1	–

A majority of Californians (56%) think that the current level of state funding for their local public schools is inadequate. Parents of public school children are even more likely than Californians in general to hold this view (66% to 56%). The share of Californians saying funding is not enough is down slightly since last April (62%). About half held this view between April 2005 and April 2009. Between September 1998 and October 2002, at least six in 10 Californians said their local schools’ funding was not enough. Democrats (64%) are much more likely than independents (50%) or Republicans (42%) to say that state funding for local public schools is insufficient. Women (62%) are more likely than men (50%) to hold this view and blacks (78%) and Latinos (63%) are much more likely than whites (50%) and Asians (48%) to agree. Of those who give positive ratings (A or B) for the quality of their local public schools, 54 percent of adults and 62 percent of public school parents still say that the current level of state funding for their local public schools falls short.

“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	7	6%	2%	4%	9%	3%
Just enough	31	31	19	30	34	27
Not enough	56	48	78	63	50	66
Don't know	6	14	–	3	6	3

PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Parents of public school students continue to say that their child's public school has been affected either a lot (35%) or somewhat (41%) by recent state budget cuts. Only 19 percent say their child's school has been unaffected. Since April 2009, more than seven in 10 parents have said their child's public school has been affected by budget cuts. The percentage of public school parents saying their child's public school has been affected a lot was 28 percent in 2009, 43 percent in 2010, and is 35 percent today. Similar shares of white (39% a lot, 40% somewhat) and Latino (34% a lot, 39% somewhat) public school parents today say their child's school has been affected by state budget cuts. (Sample sizes for Asian and black public school parents are not large enough for separate analysis.) More than seven in 10 parents across income levels say that their child's school has been affected by state budget cuts. Women (43%) are much more likely than men (28%) to say that their child's school has been affected a lot by state budget cuts.

“Would you say your child's public school has or has not been affected by recent state budget cuts? (if it has: Has it been affected a lot or somewhat?)”

Public school parents only	All Public School Parents	Household Income			Race/Ethnicity	
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	Latinos	Whites
Affected a lot	35%	35%	37%	31%	34%	39%
Affected somewhat	41	41	37	46	39	40
Not affected	19	18	22	20	22	16
Don't know	4	5	3	3	5	5

Public school parents were asked about different steps that schools have been taking due to budget cuts. More than half of public school parents say they have noticed furloughs and layoffs of support staff such as counselors, librarians, or teacher aides (52%) and cuts to programs such as art, music, summer school, or extracurricular activities (58%). Latino parents (42%) are less likely than white parents (64%) to have seen furloughs or layoffs of support staff in their child's public school. The proportion of parents observing furloughs and layoffs increases with rising income and education levels. The percentage of parents seeing cuts in programs rises slightly with income. White parents (73%) are much more likely than Latino parents (48%) to have noticed cuts to programs.

Fifty-eight percent of public school parents say that they have been asked to contribute money, time, or supplies to their child's public school as a result of budget cuts. White parents (81%) are far more likely than Latino parents (38%) to have been asked to make these types of contributions. Public school parents with household incomes of \$80,000 or more (83%) are much more likely than those parents with annual incomes between \$40,000 and \$80,000 (65%) and under \$40,000 (43%) to say that they have been asked to contribute money, time, or supplies to their child's public school. Parents with at least some college education (81% college graduates, 77% some college) are twice as likely as those with a high school diploma or less (38%) to say they have been asked to contribute to their child's school.

“Have you been asked to contribute money, time, or supplies to your child's public school, or not?”

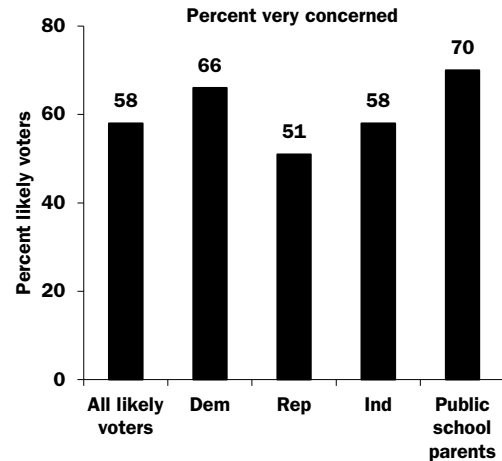
Public school parents only	All Public School Parents	Household Income			Race/Ethnicity	
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	Latinos	Whites
Yes	58%	43%	65%	83%	38%	81%
No	41	55	35	17	60	19
Don't know	1	2	–	–	2	–

FISCAL ATTITUDES AND POLICY PREFERENCES

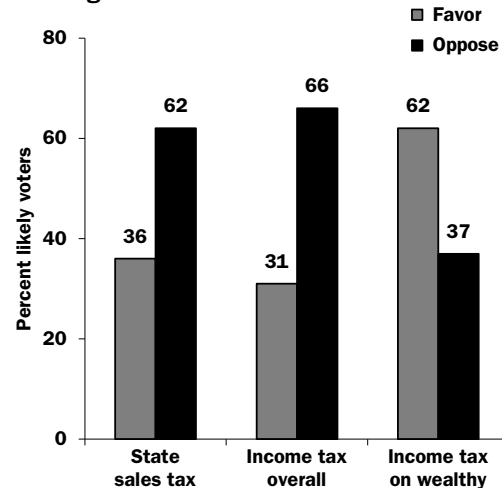
KEY FINDINGS

- Most Californians are very concerned that the state deficit will cause significant spending cuts in K–12 education, although there are partisan differences. *(page 17)*
- Californians are worried about some of the measures schools are taking to deal with less funding; they are most concerned about teacher layoffs. *(page 18)*
- To deal with potential budget cuts this year, most say requiring children to be five years old to enter kindergarten is a good idea; majorities say eliminating funding for K–3 class size reduction or eliminating the requirement to provide home-to-school transportation are bad ideas. *(page 19)*
- To raise state revenues to maintain current K–12 funding, solid majorities oppose raising the sales tax or overall personal income taxes. A solid majority favor raising income taxes on the wealthy, but there is a partisan divide. *(page 20)*
- At the local level, just over half of likely voters would vote yes on a school construction bond or parcel tax; they are divided about lowering the vote threshold to pass parcel taxes to 55 percent. The vast majority prefer spending decisions in local schools to be made locally, not by the state. *(page 21)*
- Majorities of adults (58%) and likely voters (56%) say Governor Brown’s proposal to hold a special election this year is a good idea; six in 10 favor his proposal to close the deficit with both spending cuts and temporary tax increases, thus avoiding more cuts to K–12 spending. *(page 22)*

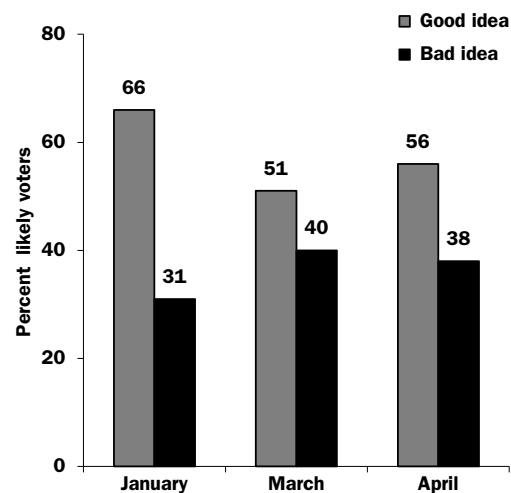
Concern about the State Budget Situation Causing Significant Cuts to K–12 Education



Raising Taxes to Maintain Current Funding for K–12 Education



Proposal to Hold a Special Election



STATE BUDGET SITUATION

When read the four major areas of state spending—K–12 public education, health and human services, higher education, and prisons and corrections—a majority of Californians (57%) say K–12 public education is the area they would most like to protect from spending cuts. Since this question was first asked in June 2003, a majority of Californians have said K–12 education is the area they would most like to protect. Across parties, regions, and demographic groups, K–12 education is the top choice. Among public school parents, 68 percent most want to protect K–12 public education.

Most Californians are very (57%) or somewhat (29%) concerned that the state’s budget gap will cause significant spending cuts in K–12 public education. Throughout the economic downturn, majorities have been very concerned about cuts in K–12 (56% 2008, 56% 2009, 62% 2010, 57% today). Democrats (65%) and independents (58%) are more likely than Republicans (49%) to be very concerned. Across regions, San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles residents (60% each) are most likely to be very concerned, followed by Orange/San Diego (55%), Inland Empire (55%), and Central Valley (49%) residents. Two in three public school parents (66%) are very concerned.

“How concerned are you that the state’s budget gap will cause significant spending cuts in K–12 public education?”

	All Adults	Region					Public School Parents
		Central Valley	San Francisco Bay Area	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	Inland Empire	
Very concerned	57%	49%	60%	60%	55%	55%	66%
Somewhat concerned	29	35	26	30	25	27	25
Not too concerned	8	10	7	5	11	11	6
Not at all concerned	5	5	5	4	6	7	2
Don’t know	1	1	2	1	2	1	1

To improve the quality of California’s K–12 public schools significantly, about four in 10 residents (43%) say existing state funds need to be used more wisely, while a similar proportion (41%) say that funds need to be used more wisely and the amount of funding needs to be increased; just 13 percent say that increasing state funding alone would significantly improve educational quality. Findings were similar last April (45% use funds more wisely, 8% increase funding, 45% do both). In April 2007, there was a greater preference for a dual approach (48%) than for only using funds more wisely (37%). Likely voters today do not have a clear preference: 47 percent say funds should be used more efficiently and 42 percent say both things need to happen. Differences emerge across party lines: a slim majority of Democrats (53%) believe a dual approach is needed, while a solid majority of Republicans (61%) think that using existing funds more wisely would alone improve K–12 educational quality. Independents are divided.

“To significantly improve the quality of California’s K–12 public schools, which of the following statements do you agree with the most? We need to use existing state funds more wisely; we need to increase the amount of state funding; or we need to use existing state funds more wisely and increase the amount of state funding.”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Use funds more wisely	43%	32%	61%	44%	47%
Increase state funding	13	13	6	11	9
Use funds more wisely and increase state funding	41	53	30	40	42
Don’t know	3	2	3	4	2

CONCERNS ABOUT SPECIFIC SPENDING CUTS

California’s public schools have taken numerous steps to deal with decreased funding levels in recent years. Our surveys have asked Californians about four such steps. Nearly seven in 10 adults (68%) are very concerned about schools laying off teachers as a way to deal with decreased funding; over half are very concerned about schools having fewer days of instruction (56%), eliminating art and music programs (53%), and increasing class sizes (52%). Last year, concern was slightly higher regarding increasing class sizes (59% April 2010, 52% today); on other measures, levels of concern were similar last year.

“There are a number of ways for the state’s K–12 public schools to cut spending to deal with decreased state and local funding. For each of the following, please tell me if you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned. How about...”

	Laying off teachers	Having fewer days of instruction	Eliminating art and music programs	Increasing class sizes
Very concerned	68%	56%	53%	52%
Somewhat concerned	23	28	31	29
Not too concerned	5	10	9	13
Not at all concerned	4	5	7	6
Don’t know	1	1	1	1

Of these four issues, public school parents are the most likely to say they are very concerned about laying off teachers (73%); about six in 10 are very concerned about shortening the school year (61%) or increasing class sizes (60%), while about half are very concerned about cutting art and music programs (52%). Across political parties, Democrats are the most likely to be very concerned about each issue; they are particularly concerned about teacher layoffs (78%), as are a majority of independents (60%) and Republicans (55%). About six in 10 Democrats are very concerned about the other issues—shortening the school year, cutting art and music, and increasing class sizes—compared to less than half or about half of Republicans and independents. Across racial/ethnic groups, blacks are the most likely to be very concerned about each of these possible methods. Solid majorities across racial/ethnic groups are very concerned about teacher layoffs. On cutting art and music and increasing class sizes, Asians are much less likely than others to be very concerned. Women are more likely than men to be very concerned about each of these issues.

<i>Percent saying very concerned</i>	Laying off teachers	Having fewer days of instruction	Eliminating art and music programs	Increasing class sizes	
All Adults	68%	56%	53%	52%	
Likely Voters	65	57	58	52	
Public School Parents	73	61	52	60	
Party	Democrat	78	61	62	59
	Republican	55	51	52	47
	Independent	60	51	47	45
Race/Ethnicity	Asians	61	49	38	37
	Blacks	82	73	62	63
	Latinos	72	61	51	54
	Whites	65	53	57	52
Gender	Men	62	51	45	45
	Women	74	61	60	58

PREFERENCES FOR ADDITIONAL SPENDING CUTS

Earlier this spring, state Senator Mark Leno asked the California Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) to identify possible spending cuts that could be made if the governor is unable to convince the legislature or voters to pass tax increases. Most other areas of state spending have already been cut, so many additional cuts would come from K–12. Among the cuts that would provide the most savings, the LAO identified eliminating funding for K–3 class size reduction, requiring children to be five years old to enter kindergarten, and eliminating the state requirement that schools provide home-to-school transportation services.

A strong majority of Californians (77%) think it is a bad idea to eliminate funding for K–3 class size reduction. Strong majorities of likely voters (72%), voters across parties (77% Democrats, 75% independents, 68% Republicans), and residents across regions and demographic groups say it is a bad idea to eliminate funding for K–3 class size reduction. Eighty-one percent of public school parents agree.

“To deal with potential budget cuts this year, please say if you think each of the following is a good idea or a bad idea. How about eliminating funding for kindergarten through third grade class size reduction?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Good idea	18%	21%	16%	16%	19%	17%
Bad idea	77	74	84	80	74	81
Don't know	5	5	–	4	6	3

But two in three Californians (66%) think it is a good idea to require children to be five years old before entering kindergarten. Currently, children can enter kindergarten at age four as long as they turn five by December 2 of the school year. Plans are already underway to shift the cutoff date forward to September 1 by 2014–15, but the LAO recommended making this change by 2011–12 as a way to save money. This idea is considered a good one by 73 percent of likely voters, 77 percent of Republicans, 71 percent of Democrats, and 60 percent of independents. At least six in 10 across regions and most demographic groups say it is a good idea. Across racial/ethnic groups, whites (76%) are much more likely than blacks (64%), Asians (58%), and Latinos (57%) to say changing this age requirement is a good idea. The percentage holding this view increases with age. Among public school parents, 63 percent say this is a good idea.

“How about requiring children to be five years of age prior to entering kindergarten?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Good idea	66%	58%	64%	57%	76%	63%
Bad idea	29	32	31	41	19	33
Don't know	5	9	4	1	6	4

When it comes to the idea of eliminating the state requirement that schools offer home-to-school busing and transportation services, six in 10 adults (61%) and likely voters (59%) say this is a bad idea. Majorities across parties, regions, and demographic groups say this is a bad idea. Blacks (73%) are much more likely than Latinos (61%), whites (61%), and Asians (56%) to say eliminating the requirement to provide transportation is a bad idea. Among public school parents, 61 percent say it is a bad idea.

RAISING STATE REVENUES

To maintain current funding for K–12 education, at least six in 10 California adults and likely voters favor raising the top rate of the state income tax paid by the wealthiest Californians. At least six in 10 adults and likely voters oppose raising the state sales tax or overall personal income taxes for this purpose.

Support among adults (37%) and likely voters (36%) is low for raising the state sales tax to maintain current K–12 funding, while opposition is high (61% adults, 62% likely voters). Findings among all adults were similar in 2008, 2007, and 2006; support was lower in 2005 (28% favor, 70% oppose). (Until 2007, the question asked about raising revenues to provide *additional* funding for education, while in 2008 it was revised to ask about raising revenues to *maintain current* funding.) Strong majorities of Republicans (76%) and independents (65%) oppose a sales tax hike, compared to half of Democrats (52%). Majorities across regions oppose raising sales taxes. Most blacks (70%), Asians (66%), and whites (64%) oppose raising sales taxes to maintain funding, while Latinos are divided (46% favor, 51% oppose). Among public school parents, 42 percent are in favor and 56 percent are opposed.

About one in three Californians (35%) and likely voters (31%) favor raising state personal income taxes overall to maintain current funding for K–12 public education, while 62 percent of Californians and 66 percent of likely voters oppose this idea. This is the first time we have asked about raising personal income taxes to benefit K–12 education. Republicans (82%) are much more likely than independents (66%) and far more likely than Democrats (52%) to oppose raising personal income taxes; 45 percent of Democrats are in favor. About six in 10 or more across regions are opposed. Majorities across racial/ethnic groups are opposed to raising personal income taxes, but Latinos (54%) are the least likely to express this view. Among public school parents, 35 percent are in favor and 62 percent are opposed.

By contrast, 68 percent of adults and 62 percent of likely voters favor raising income taxes on the wealthy to maintain current funding for K–12 public education. Support was similar in April 2008 (67%), April 2007 (68%), April 2006 (64%), and April 2005 (63%). (This question was also revised slightly in 2008 to reflect the budget situation.) There is a deep partisan divide, with most Democrats (82%) and independents (63%) in favor and most Republicans (60%) opposed. At least six in 10 across regions and demographic groups favor raising taxes on the wealthy to benefit schools. Blacks (80%) are most in favor, followed by Latinos (76%), Asians (72%), and whites (62%). Support declines with rising income, but still, 61 percent of those with annual household incomes of \$80,000 or more favor the idea. Among public school parents, 76 percent express support.

“Here are some ideas that have been suggested to raise state revenues to maintain current funding for K–12 public education. 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 state sales tax to maintain current funding for K–12 public education?	Favor	37%	46%	23%	33%	36%
	Oppose	61	52	76	65	62
	Don't know	2	2	1	3	1
Raising state personal income taxes to maintain current funding for K–12 public education?	Favor	35	45	16	32	31
	Oppose	62	52	82	66	66
	Don't know	3	3	2	2	3
Raising the top rate of the state income tax paid by the wealthiest Californians to maintain current funding for K–12 public education?	Favor	68	82	39	63	62
	Oppose	30	16	60	35	37
	Don't know	2	1	1	2	1

LOCAL SCHOOL FUNDING

Six in 10 Californians would support a local bond measure to pay for school construction projects. A slim majority of likely voters (53%) would also vote yes, which is just shy of the 55-percent vote requirement for school bonds. Although similar to last year, support among likely voters (53%) is at a record low; support was as high as 72 percent in December 1999. Today, Democrats (68%) and independents (59%) are much more likely than Republicans (42%) to support a local bond measure.

If there were a ballot measure to increase local parcel taxes to provide more funds for the local public schools, six in 10 adults (59%) would vote yes. Among likely voters, 54 percent would vote yes, falling well below the two-thirds vote threshold for new parcel taxes. Likely voters expressed similar preferences last April (52% yes, 44% no), but were divided in April 2009 (49% yes, 47% no). Seventy percent of Democrats and 52 percent of independents would vote yes; 59 percent of Republicans would vote no.

Among those who say state funding for their local public schools is not enough, 70 percent would support a local school bond and 71 percent would support a local parcel tax.

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>If your local school district had a bond measure on the ballot to pay for school construction projects, would you vote yes or no?</i>	Yes	60%	68%	42%	59%	53%
	No	35	26	53	37	43
	Don't know	6	6	5	4	4
<i>What if there was a measure on your local ballot to increase local parcel taxes to provide more funds for the local public schools? Would you vote yes or no?</i>	Yes	59	70	39	52	54
	No	36	25	59	45	42
	Don't know	4	5	3	3	4

Californians and likely voters are divided about making it easier to pass local parcel taxes for public schools. For all adults, 48 percent say it is a good idea and 47 percent a bad idea to replace the two-thirds vote requirement with a 55-percent majority vote. Findings among likely voters are similar (46% good, 49% bad idea). In April 2009, likely voters were more likely to say this was a bad idea (55%) than a good idea (40%). More than half of Democrats (55%) think it is a good idea, while 52 percent of independents and 63 percent of Republicans say it is a bad idea.

“As you may know, the California state constitution requires a two-thirds vote at the ballot box to pass any local special taxes. Do you think it’s a good idea or a bad idea to replace the two-thirds vote requirement with a 55-percent majority vote for voters to pass local parcel taxes for the local public schools?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Good idea	48%	55%	32%	43%	46%
Bad idea	47	40	63	52	49
Don't know	5	5	5	5	5

Who do Californians think should have the most control in deciding how money from the state government is spent in local public schools? An overwhelming majority (83%) prefer local control either by local school districts (49%) or local schools (34%); just 13 percent prefer that the state government make these decisions. Results have been similar since this question was first asked in April 2008. Strong majorities across parties, regions, and demographic groups prefer local control of spending decisions, with pluralities across nearly all groups opting for local school district control.

SPECIAL ELECTION

Governor Brown has proposed holding a special election this year on a tax and fee package to prevent additional budget cuts. Majorities of adults (58%) and likely voters (56%) think having a special election this year is a good idea. In March, 51 percent of likely voters said this was a good idea, while in January, 66 percent held this view (in January and March, the question referred to an election “this June.”)

Voters are divided along partisan lines, with 72 percent of Democrats saying a special election is a good idea and 56 percent of Republicans saying it is a bad idea. Independents are more likely to say it is a good (53%) than bad (37%) idea. Most residents in the Central Valley (54%), Orange/San Diego Counties (55%), Los Angeles (61%), and the San Francisco Bay Area (63%) say a special election is a good idea. Support is lower in the Inland Empire (47% good, 41% bad idea). At least half across racial/ethnic groups call it a good idea, with Latinos (66%) most likely to hold this view. The share calling it a good idea is lower among residents age 55 and older and those with household incomes of at least \$40,000. Among public school parents, 63 percent say a special election is a good idea.

“Governor Brown has proposed having a special election this year for voters to vote on a tax and fee package to prevent additional state budget cuts. In general, do you think the special election is a good idea or bad idea?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Good idea	58%	72%	38%	53%	56%
Bad idea	35	21	56	37	38
Don't know	7	6	5	10	5

The governor has proposed closing the \$26 billion state budget gap with a mix of spending cuts and tax increases. The legislature and governor have already reduced the deficit by about \$11 billion, mostly through spending cuts. The governor does not plan to cut K–12 spending if temporary tax increases are passed. In general, six in 10 adults and likely voters (61% each) favor the governor’s budget plan. A strong majority of Democrats (72%) and more than half of independents (54%) are in favor, while Republicans are divided (47% favor, 49% oppose). About six in 10 across regions and racial/ethnic groups favor this plan, except in the Inland Empire (47% favor, 46% oppose) and among blacks (51% favor, 40% oppose). Two in three public school parents (67%) favor the governor’s plan for a mix of cuts and tax increases. Among those who think a special election is a good idea, 74 percent favor the governor’s plan; among those who say a special election is a bad idea, 43 percent favor and 52 percent oppose his proposal. Among those who oppose raising the sales tax, 53 percent favor the plan for a mix of cuts and taxes. Of those who oppose raising personal income taxes, 53 percent favor the plan.

“Governor Brown had proposed closing the \$26 billion state budget deficit with the following plan—about half through spending cuts and about half through temporary tax increases. Thus far, the governor and legislature have reduced the deficit by about \$11 billion, mostly through spending cuts to many state agencies. If temporary tax increases are passed, the governor does not plan to cut spending to K–12 education. In general, do you favor or oppose the governor’s budget plan?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor	61%	72%	47%	54%	61%
Oppose	33	22	49	39	34
Don't know	7	6	5	7	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 Jui Shrestha. This survey was conducted with funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation as part of a grant on K–12 education. We benefited from discussions with Hewlett program staff, PPIC staff, and others; however, the methods, questions, and content of this report were determined solely by Mark Baldassare and the survey team.

Findings in this report are based on a survey of 2,504 California adult residents, including 2,001 interviewed on landline telephones and 503 interviewed on cell phones. Live interviewing took place on weekday nights and weekend days from April 5–19, 2011. Interviews took an average of 19 minutes to complete.

Landline interviews were conducted using a computer-generated random sample of telephone numbers that ensured that both listed and unlisted numbers were called. All landline telephone exchanges in California were eligible for selection and the sample telephone numbers were called as many as 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.

Cell phone interviews were included in this survey to account for the growing number of Californians who use them. These interviews were conducted using a computer-generated random sample of cell phone numbers. All cell phone numbers with California area codes were eligible for selection and the sample telephone numbers were called as many as eight times to increase the likelihood of reaching an eligible respondent. Once a cell phone user was reached, it was verified that this person was age 18 or older, a resident of California, and in a safe place to continue the survey (e.g., not driving). Cell phone respondents were offered a small reimbursement to help defray the potential cost of the call. Cell phone interviews were conducted with adults who have cell phone service only and with those who have both cell phone and landline service in the household.

Landline and cell phone interviewing was conducted in English, Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese), Vietnamese, and Korean, according to respondents’ preferences. 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, Inc. translated the survey into Spanish, with assistance from Renatta DeFever. Abt SRBI Inc. translated the survey into Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean, and conducted all telephone interviewing.

With assistance from Abt SRBI we used recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2006–2008 American Community Survey (ACS) for California to compare certain demographic characteristics of the survey sample—region, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and education—with the characteristics of California’s adult population. The survey sample was comparable to the ACS figures. Abt SRBI used data from the 2008 National Health Interview Survey and data from the 2006–2008 ACS for California, both to estimate landline and cell phone service in California and to compare the data against landline and cell phone service reported in this survey. We also used voter registration data from the California Secretary of State to compare the party registration of registered voters in our sample to party registration in the state. The landline and cell phone samples were then integrated using a frame integration weight, while sample balancing adjusts for any differences across regional, age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, telephone service, and party registration groups.

The sampling error, taking design effects from weighting into consideration, is ± 3 percent at the 95 percent confidence level for the total sample of 2,504 adults. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 3 percentage points of what they would be if all adults in California were interviewed. The sampling error for subgroups is larger: For the 1,634 registered voters, it is ± 3.2 percent; for the 1,209 likely voters, it is ± 3.5 percent; for the 763 public school parents, it is ± 5.5 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 that account 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” refers to 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, but sample sizes for these less populated areas are not large enough to report separately.

We present specific results for non-Hispanic whites and for Latinos, who account for about a third of the state’s adult population and constitute one of the fastest growing voter groups. We also present results for non-Hispanic Asians, who make up about 13 percent of the state’s adult population, and non-Hispanic blacks, who comprise about 6 percent. Results for other racial/ethnic groups—such as Native Americans—are included in the results reported for all adults, registered voters, and likely voters, but sample sizes are not large enough for separate analysis. We compare the opinions of those who report they are registered Democrats, Republicans, and decline-to-state or independent voters; the results for those who say they are registered to vote in another party are not large enough for separate analysis. We also analyze the responses of likely voters—so designated by their responses to survey questions on voter registration, past voting, and current interest in politics.

The percentages presented in the report tables and in the questionnaire may not add to 100 due to rounding.

We compare current PPIC Statewide Survey results to those in our earlier surveys and to results from a survey conducted by Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup in June 2010. Additional details about our methodology can be found at <http://www.ppic.org/content/other/SurveyMethodology.pdf> and are available upon request through surveys@ppic.org.

QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESULTS

CALIFORNIANS AND EDUCATION

April 5–19, 2011

2,504 California Adult Residents:

English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese

MARGIN OF ERROR $\pm 3\%$ AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE

PERCENTAGES MAY NOT ADD TO 100 DUE TO ROUNDING

1. First, overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Jerry Brown is handling his job as governor of California?
40% approve
29% disapprove
31% don't know
2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Governor Brown is handling the state's kindergarten through 12th grade public education system?
24% approve
41% disapprove
34% don't know
3. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling its job?
21% approve
60% disapprove
19% don't know
4. Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling the state's kindergarten through 12th grade public education system?
18% approve
60% disapprove
22% don't know
5. As you may know, the state government has an annual budget of around \$85 billion and currently faces a multibillion-dollar gap between spending and revenues. Some of the largest areas for state spending are: **[rotate]** [1] K–12 public education, [2] higher education, [3] health and human services, **[and]** [4] prisons and corrections. Thinking about these four areas of state spending, I'd like you to name the one you most want to protect from spending cuts.
57% K–12 public education
15% higher education
17% health and human services
7% prisons and corrections
4% don't know
6. How concerned are you that the state's budget gap will cause significant spending cuts in K–12 public education—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?
57% very concerned
29% somewhat concerned
8% not too concerned
5% not at all concerned
1% don't know

7. 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?

- 55% big problem
- 30 somewhat of a problem
- 11 not much of a problem
- 4 don’t know

8. Over the past few years, do you think the quality of education in California’s K–12 public schools has improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same?

- 11% improved
- 54 gotten worse
- 29 stayed the same
- 6 don’t know

9. 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.

- 43% use funds more wisely
- 13 increase state funding
- 41 use funds more wisely and increase funding
- 3 don’t know

10. Which comes closer to your view? **[rotate]** [1] If the state government makes budget cuts in K–12 public education, the quality of education will suffer, **[or]** [2] the state government could make budget cuts in K–12 public education and still maintain the quality of education.

- 68% quality will suffer
- 27 quality could be maintained
- 4 don’t know

There are a number of ways for the state’s K–12 public schools to cut spending to deal with decreased state and local funding. For each of the following, please tell me if you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned.

[rotate questions 11 to 14]

11. How about laying off teachers as a way to deal with decreased funding?

- 68% very concerned
- 23 somewhat concerned
- 5 not too concerned
- 4 not at all concerned
- 1 don’t know

12. How about eliminating art and music programs as a way to deal with decreased funding?

- 53% very concerned
- 31 somewhat concerned
- 9 not too concerned
- 7 not at all concerned
- 1 don’t know

13. How about having fewer days of school instruction as a way to deal with decreased funding?

- 56% very concerned
- 28 somewhat concerned
- 10 not too concerned
- 5 not at all concerned
- 1 don’t know

14. How about increasing class sizes as a way to deal with decreased funding?

- 52% very concerned
- 29 somewhat concerned
- 13 not too concerned
- 6 not at all concerned
- 1 don’t know

To deal with potential budget cuts this year, please say if you think each of the following is a good idea or a bad idea.

[rotate questions 15 to 17]

15. How about eliminating funding for kindergarten through third grade class size reduction?

- 18% good idea
- 77 bad idea
- 5 don't know

16. How about requiring children to be five years of age prior to entering kindergarten?

- 66% good idea
- 29 bad idea
- 5 don't know

17. How about eliminating the state requirement that schools offer home-to-school busing and transportation services?

- 35% good idea
- 61 bad idea
- 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 18 to 20]

18. How about teacher quality?

- 44% big problem
- 34 somewhat of a problem
- 19 not really a problem
- 3 don't know

19. How about the high school dropout rate?

- 74% big problem
- 18 somewhat of a problem
- 4 not really a problem
- 3 don't know

20. How about student achievement?

- 46% big problem
- 35 somewhat of a problem
- 15 not really a problem
- 4 don't know

Next, for each of the following issues, please tell me if you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned. First...

[rotate questions 21 to 24]

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

- 65% very concerned
- 24 somewhat concerned
- 5 not too concerned
- 5 not at all concerned
- 1 don't know

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

- 62% very concerned
- 27 somewhat concerned
- 5 not too concerned
- 5 not at all concerned
- 1 don't know

23. How concerned are you that students in lower-income areas are less likely than other students to be ready for college when they finish high school?

- 61% very concerned
- 28 somewhat concerned
- 6 not too concerned
- 4 not at all concerned
- 1 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?

- 56% very concerned
- 27 somewhat concerned
- 9 not too concerned
- 8 not at all concerned
- 1 don't know

On another topic,

[rotate questions 25 and 26]

25. 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
- 27 average
- 22 below average
- 14 near the bottom
- 11 don't know

26. 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
- 9 above average
- 33 average
- 32 below average
- 17 near the bottom
- 8 don't know

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

- 29% very closely tied
- 40 somewhat closely tied
- 11 not very closely tied
- 18 not at all tied
- 3 don't know

Next,

[rotate questions 28 and 29]

28. Are California's K–12 public schools doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job in preparing students for jobs and the workforce?

- 4% excellent
- 32 good
- 38 not so good
- 20 poor
- 6 don't know

29. Are California's K–12 public schools doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job in preparing students for college?

- 5% excellent
- 38 good
- 35 not so good
- 17 poor
- 5 don't know

30. 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?

- 17% A
- 34 B
- 31 C
- 11 D
- 4 F
- 3 don't know

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

- 7% more than enough
- 31 just enough
- 56 not enough
- 6 don't know

[rotate questions 32 and 33]

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

- 60% yes
- 35 no
- 6 don't know

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

59% yes
36 no
4 don't know

34. As you may know, the California state constitution requires a two-thirds vote at the ballot box to pass any local special taxes. Do you think it's a good idea or a bad idea to replace the two-thirds vote requirement with a 55 percent majority vote for voters to pass local parcel taxes for the local public schools?

48% good idea
47 bad idea
5 don't know

35. Who do you think should have the most control in deciding how the money from state government is spent in local public schools—**[rotate order]** [1] the local schools, [2] the local school districts, **[or]** [3] the state government?

34% the local schools
49 the local school districts
13 the state government
1 other (*specify*)
3 don't know

36. Changing topics, 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, or not?

16% yes, same amount
79 no, not same amount
5 don't know

37. 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, or not?

67% yes
29 no
4 don't know

Next, here are some ideas that have been suggested to raise state revenues to maintain current funding for K–12 public education. For each of the following, please say if you favor or oppose the proposal.

[rotate questions 38 to 40]

38. How about raising state personal income taxes to maintain current funding for K–12 public education?

35% favor
62 oppose
3 don't know

39. How about raising the state sales tax to maintain current funding for K–12 public education?

37% favor
61 oppose
2 don't know

40. How about raising the top rate of the state income tax paid by the wealthiest Californians to maintain current funding for K–12 public education?

68% favor
30 oppose
2 don't know

41. Governor Brown has proposed having a special election this year for voters to vote on a tax and fee package to prevent additional state budget cuts. In general, do you think the special election is a good idea or bad idea?

58% good idea
35 bad idea
7 don't know

42. Governor Brown had proposed closing the \$26 billion state budget deficit with the following plan—about half through spending cuts and about half through temporary tax increases. Thus far, the governor and legislature have reduced the deficit by about \$11 billion, mostly through spending cuts to many state agencies. If temporary tax increases are passed, the governor does not plan to cut spending to K–12 education. In general, do you favor or oppose the governor’s budget plan?

- 61% favor
- 33 oppose
- 7 don’t know

43. Next, some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you absolutely certain that you are registered to vote in California?

- 66% yes [ask q43a]
- 34 no [skip to q44b]

43a. Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or are you registered as a decline-to-state or independent voter?

- 44% Democrat [ask q44]
- 31 Republican [skip to q44a]
- 4 another party (specify) [skip to q45]
- 20 independent [skip to q44b]

44. Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat?

- 53% strong
- 46 not very strong
- 2 don’t know

[skip to q45]

44a. Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?

- 54% strong
- 45 not very strong
- 1 don’t know

[skip to q45]

44b. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?

- 21% Republican Party
- 45 Democratic Party
- 29 neither (volunteered)
- 6 don’t know

45. Would you consider yourself to be politically:

[read list, rotate order top to bottom]

- 9% very liberal
- 20 somewhat liberal
- 31 middle-of-the-road
- 24 somewhat conservative
- 13 very conservative
- 3 don’t know

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

- 23% great deal
- 38 fair amount
- 30 only a little
- 9 none
- don’t know

d4b. [public school parents only] Would you say your child’s public school has or has not been affected by recent state budget cuts? (if it has: Has it been affected a lot or somewhat?)

- 35% affected a lot
- 41 affected somewhat
- 19 not affected
- 4 don’t know

Please tell me if you’ve noticed any of the following at your child’s public school as a result of budget cuts. If you have more than one child attending public school, please think about your oldest child’s school.

[rotate questions d4c to d4e]

d4c. [public school parents only] Have there been furloughs or layoffs of support staff, such as counselors, librarians, or teacher aides at your child’s public school, or not?

- 52% yes
- 37 no
- 11 don’t know

d4d.**[public school parents only]** Have there been cuts to programs such as art and music, summer school, or extracurricular activities at your child's public school, or not?

58% yes
37 no
5 don't know

d4e.**[public school parents only]** Have you been asked to contribute money, time, or supplies to your child's public school, or not?

58% yes
41 no
1 don't know

[d1-d4a and d5-d16: demographic questions]

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Mark Baldassare is President and CEO of PPIC.

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