The 49th Annual PDK Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

Academic achievement isn’t the only mission
2017 PDK Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

Joshua P. Starr, Ed.D., CEO, PDK International
@JoshuaPStarr
pdkpoll.org
• A trusted and independent source of information since 1969
• Conducted each May
• Published in September issue of Kappan magazine
• Financed solely by the PDK Educational Foundation, which permits PDK to offer an independent and unbiased report of American public opinion
• Designed, managed, analyzed, and reported by Langer Research Associates of New York, N.Y., in consultation with PDK
• All results described in this report were tested for statistical significance
2017 national and state polls covered:

- Life after high school
- Choice
- Diversity
- Wraparound services
- Indicators of school quality
2017 national and state polls

Main themes that emerged:

• Expectations and opportunities gap
• Policy and discourse based on dichotomies

What’s the problem we’re trying to solve?
Expectations for oldest child after high school

Public school parents, 2017

- **College full time:** 61%
- **Job full time:** 7%
- **Both part time:** 22%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of college</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four-year</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-year</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Career-related courses in public high schools

National totals, 2017

- 82% should offer job or career skill classes
- 13% should not offer job or career skill classes
- 86% should offer certificate or license programs
- 11% should not offer certificate or license programs
Expectations for college and desire for more CTE courses

Public school parents, 2017

52%
Parents who expect their child to attend college full time respond that schools should offer more job/career skills courses

62%
Parents who expect their child to work part or full time respond that schools should offer more job/career skills courses
Extremely/very important items in school quality

National totals, 2017

- Interpersonal skills 82%
- Technology & engineering classes 82%
- Advanced academic classes 76%
- Art & music classes 71%
- Extracurricular activities 70%
- Standardized tests 42%
Most important factor in school quality

National totals, 2017

- 36% Teach cooperation, respect, problem solving
- 25% technology and engineering classes
- 14% Advanced academic classes
- 11% Art and music classes
- 8% Extracurricular activities
- 6% Standardized test performance
Support for wraparound services

National totals, 2017

- After-school programs: 92%
- Mental health services: 5%
- Health services: 87%
- Dental services: 11%

Asking for extra public funding to pay for these services is justified: 76%
Importance of standardized tests and interpersonal skills

National totals, 2017

- **<$50K**: 50% Standardized tests, 80% Interpersonal skills
- **$50-$100K**: 37% Standardized tests, 87% Interpersonal skills
- **$100K+**: 27% Standardized tests, 78% Interpersonal skills

- **White**: 33% Standardized tests, 80% Interpersonal skills
- **Black**: 59% Standardized tests, 80% Interpersonal skills
- **Hispanic**: 61% Standardized tests, 89% Interpersonal skills

@JoshuaPStarr #pdkpoll
What standardized tests measure

Public school parents, 2017

- More confident: 58%
- Less confident: 39%

Do a good job measuring how well your child is learning

- Feel they do: 46%
- Feel they don’t: 49%

Measure the things that are important to me
Attitudes About CTE

Percentage who think public high schools should offer more job or career skills classes, 2017

- Whites: 50%
- Blacks: 60%
- Hispanics: 49%
- <$100K: 54%
- $100K+: 44%
- 18-64: 53%
- 65+: 42%
- Boys: 64%
- Girls: 49%
More than half of parents surveyed say public high schools in their community should provide more career skills classes than they do now. Less than 5% say schools should offer fewer such classes.
Views on Career & Technical Education

National totals, 2016

- Prepare students to be good citizens: 26%
- Prepare students academically: 45%
- Prepare students for work: 25%

- 74% prefer more career-technical or skills-based classes
- 59% prefer more career-technical or skills-based classes
- 84% prefer more career-technical or skills-based classes
Support for School Improvement Alternatives

National totals, 2016

- More career-technical or skills-based classes: 68%
- More honors classes: 21%
- Smaller classes: 51%
- Larger classes: 40%
- Raise teacher salaries: 50%
- Hire more teachers: 40%
- Have more traditional teaching: 43%
- Use more technology: 43%

Support for offering more career-technical or skills-based classes (68%) far exceeds preference for more honors or advanced academic classes (21%), including 51% who strongly prefer more vocational classes.
A & B grades for public schools

- Oldest child's school: 71% in 2001, 49% in 2017
- Local schools: 48% in 2001, 20% in 2017
- Nation's schools: 20% in 2001, 24% in 2017