

PDK/Gallup Poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools

THE 2015 PDK/GALLUP POLL REPORT

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Testing doesn't measure up for Americans



Americans look beyond testing when they evaluate schools.

Student engagement at school and whether students feel hopeful about

their future are far better factors to consider when evaluating schools than using standardized test scores, according to the results of the 47th annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools.

Overall, most Americans believe there's too much emphasis on standardized testing in public schools, and they rank standardized testing lower than other approaches to measuring student progress such as examples of student work, grades awarded by the teacher, or written observations by the teacher. But, when the results are broken out by demographics, two important groups of Americans — blacks and Hispanics — are somewhat more likely than whites to say that results of standardized tests are very important to improve schools and compare school quality.

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Americans across the board once again named lack of financial support as the biggest problem facing their local schools — the 10th consecutive year in which that issue has landed at the top of the list.

This year's PDK/Gallup poll is a nationally representative web survey of 3,499 Americans, ages 18 and older with Internet access and an additional telephone survey of 1,001 Americans, ages 18 and older. Both surveys were conducted in May 2015. The addition of the web survey allows PDK and Gallup to report in greater detail about racial/ethnic groups for the first time. We point to responses from specific groups when we deem them to be significantly different from the total responses. (See sidebar for details about changes in this year's poll and for a complete methodology statement. The phone survey included some of the questions that PDK/Gallup have been tracking for many years and allows for unprecedented trending. The web survey addresses additional topics of interest and, because it is the first year the web survey has been conducted, these estimates are presented without comparisons to earlier responses.

This year's PDK/Gallup poll shows that Americans more often agree than disagree, even when you consider occasional differences between political parties and races/ethnicities. This poll also demonstrates once again that Americans, especially public school parents, pay closer attention to the details than policy makers may believe they do, often providing very nuanced responses to questions about education.

Among other findings of this year's report:

- Americans split on whether parents should have the right to excuse their child from taking a standardized test, but a majority of public school parents said they would not excuse their own child from such an exam.

work?

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- A majority of Americans oppose using standardized test scores in teacher evaluations.
- A majority of public school parents oppose having teachers in their community use the Common Core State Standards to guide what they teach.
- Half or less of public school students are receiving a high-quality education, according to a majority of Americans surveyed, a response that is consistent among blacks, whites, and Hispanics.
- Only about one in five Americans believes the federal government should play a role in holding schools accountable, paying for schools, deciding the amount of testing in schools, or deciding what textbooks and materials should be used in schools. Instead, Americans put greater trust in the states with slightly more indicating that local authorities should select textbooks and teaching methods.

READ Testing lacks public support



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