

PDK/Gallup poll in two parts

This issue of *Kappan* carries only the second part of this year's PDK/Gallup poll. You can read the entire 2014 PDK/Gallup poll by visiting pdkpoll.org.

■ See more

Visit pdkpoll.org to see a more visual presentation of the 2014 PDK/Gallup poll results and one that you can easily share with others through social media.

Bill Bushaw conducted two webinars on the 2014 PDK/Gallup poll results. Watch them at pdkpoll.org.

■ Support the PDK/Gallup poll

The PDK/Gallup poll has become one of the most respected polls about American public opinion on education because it has remained independent. For 46 years, the PDK Foundation has been the sole source of funding for the poll.

PDK would like to continue to remain independent as well as to deepen our look at various groups of Americans, especially African-American and Hispanic adults. This will add value to the poll results by allowing us to deliver more insight on American values and preferences.

We're asking for your help in this effort. Donate today to support this independent voice by contributing to the PDK Foundation's PDK/Gallup Poll fund. pdkpoll.org

■ Join the conversation

We'll be posting PDK/Gallup poll questions on the PDK Facebook page every day during October. Hop over there, and add your voice to the conversation at [Facebook/pdkintl](https://www.facebook.com/pdkintl).





The 46th Annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

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PART II

Last month, we reported that Americans were wary and skeptical about public education initiatives that they believe were created or promoted by federal policy makers. A majority said they didn't support the Common Core State Standards, an initiative that has become controversial in many state capitals. Americans said they like their local schools, want local school boards to have more influence than the federal government in deciding what schools should teach, and don't believe standardized tests help teachers figure out what to teach.

This month, in the second part of our report from the 46th annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, we see some of the specific ways that Americans believe state governments, local districts, and schools of education can improve teacher quality and student experiences.

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As always, some of the findings were surprising — others were not.

For example:

Six of 10 Americans said entrance requirements into teacher preparation programs should be more rigorous.

61% of Americans opposed using student standardized test scores to evaluate teachers.

For the first time in the five years that we asked the question, American trust and confidence in teachers declined; nonetheless a majority of Americans (64%) said they trust teachers.

A majority of Americans (58%) said the curriculum used in their community's schools needs to change.

More Americans agree than disagree that students should have shorter summer breaks and longer breaks at other times of year — akin to a year-round school scenario.

Fewer Americans than before said a college education is very important.

The 2014 PDK/Gallup Poll

Results from this study are based on a Gallup Panel telephone study completed by 1,001 national adults, age 18 and older. Because it is conducted annually and revisits many questions asked in prior years, the poll results track how American opinion about education changes or stays the same over time. The poll also poses new questions developed by a panel of advisers convened to identify emerging issues.

As in the past, Phi Delta Kappa reports results for every question asked in the poll and publishes all questions exactly as they were asked during telephone polling in May and June 2014. While we present interpretations, we encourage readers to decide for themselves whether the responses support our analysis. Please join us on Facebook (Facebook/pdkintl) or Twitter (#pdkpoll) to express your opinions.



America's teachers: Their preparation and evaluation

Recognizing that teachers are at the core of the education enterprise, we continue to probe American opinion of the more than 3 million teachers who serve in U.S. classrooms. We're particularly interested in American perceptions of teacher preparation and how teachers should be evaluated.

»FINDINGS

Only 38% of Americans favor using student performance on standardized tests to evaluate teachers, with parents even less supportive (31%).

Of three reasons proposed for evaluating a teacher's performance in the classroom, 77% of Americans said helping teachers improve their ability to teach is a very important reason for evaluating them. But fewer Americans (65%) said documenting ineffectiveness that can lead to dismissal is a very important reason to evaluate their performance, and 46% said using teacher performance to determine salaries and bonuses is very important.

More than 70% of Americans said new teachers should spend at least a year practice teaching under the guidance of a certified teacher before assuming responsibility for their own classrooms.

More than 80% of Americans said teachers should pass board certification in addition to being licensed to practice, similar to professions like medicine and law.

60% of Americans said entrance requirements into teacher preparation programs should be more rigorous.

64% of public school parents have trust and confidence in the men and women who are teaching children in the public schools, but this percentage declined from 72% in 2013.

57% of Americans would like their child to take up teaching in the public schools as a career. This proportion was lower than when the question was last asked in 2005, when 62% supported teaching as a profession for their child.

TABLE 1. Do you have trust and confidence in the men and women who are teaching children in the public schools?

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Yes	64	64	58	70	65
No	35	33	41	27	35
Don't know/refused	1	3	1	3	0

TABLE 2. Would you like to have a child of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

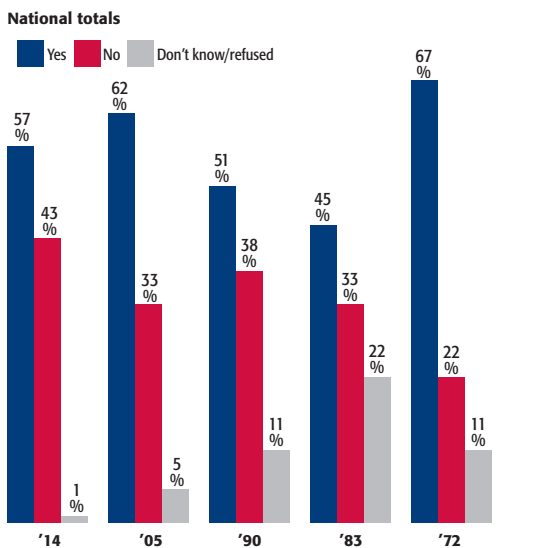


TABLE 3. Thinking about training teachers, should the entrance requirements into college teacher preparation programs be more rigorous, less rigorous, or should they be kept the same as they are now?

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	National totals '12 %
More rigorous	60	61	57
Less rigorous	3	3	2
Kept the same	36	34	37
Don't know/refused	1	2	4

TABLE 4. In your opinion, how much time should a person who is preparing to become a teacher spend practicing teaching under the guidance of a certified teacher before assuming responsibility for his or her own class: Six weeks, six months, one year, or two years?

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Six weeks	4	7	4	3	4
Six months	23	18	27	24	21
One year	44	43	43	44	44
Two years	27	30	22	29	30
More than two years	1	2	2	0	1
Depends on the teacher	1	0	1	0	0
Don't know/refused	0	0	1	0	0

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 5. Some professions, like medicine and law, require individuals to pass board certification in addition to earning a degree in order to be licensed to practice. Do you believe teachers should be required to pass board certification in addition to earning a degree?

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Yes	81	83	78	79	83
No	19	17	22	21	17

TABLE 6. Some states require that teacher evaluations include how well a teacher's students perform on standardized tests. Do you favor or oppose this requirement?

	National totals		
	'14 %	'13 %	'12 %
Favor	38	41	52
Oppose	61	58	47
Don't know/refused	1	1	1

TABLE 7. In your opinion, how important is each of the following reasons for evaluating a teacher's performance in the classroom – very important, somewhat important, not very important, not at all important? How about:

7A. Helping teachers improve their ability to teach.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Very important	77	82	71	86	78
Somewhat important	21	16	27	13	21
Not very important	1	2	2	1	0
Not at all important	1	0	1	1	1

Investing in teachers: It's what Americans support

By William J. Bushaw

We shouldn't be surprised that Americans want great teachers in their classrooms. They support more rigorous entrance requirements for men and women enrolling in teacher preparation programs; they believe the clinical component commonly known as student teaching should be a year long or longer; they overwhelmingly support national board certification for teachers similar to what most doctors earn in their area of specialty; and they support teacher evaluation approaches that emphasize improving professional skills.

Actually, this commonsense approach to improving teacher quality mirrors how other nations have approached the challenge for improving public education in their countries. It's based on long-term investments in those who teach. But can these ideas be implemented in the U.S.? The answer is yes.

Raising the bar for teacher candidates — The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) is implementing new standards — including standards that address teacher candidate quality, recruitment, and selectivity. In order for a teacher preparation program to be nationally accredited, entering students must meet minimum grade point averages and demonstrate other academic abilities. Once implemented, these standards will help ensure that America's prospective teachers will be drawn from the academic top half of our graduating high school classes.

Recruiting — A push to raise entrance requirements must be accompanied by a comprehensive nationwide teacher recruitment program starting in high school. For more than 20 years, PDK International has sponsored the Future Educators Association®, the only national program introducing the teaching profession to high school students. This year, the program was redesigned to provide school districts, in partnership with colleges and universities, an opportunity to attract outstanding high school students to teaching — students who can meet the new rigorous entrance requirements established by CAEP.

Replacing student teaching — In the September 2014 issue of *Kappan* magazine, Ron Thorpe, president and CEO of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, thoughtfully outlined his ideas for a teacher residency ("Residency: Can it transform teaching the way it did medicine?", p. 30). He proposed establishing a one-year residency program for new teachers in the U.S. Such residencies would replace student teaching and provide a more supportive and comprehensive ramp before a new teacher takes full responsibility for his or her classroom.

Board certification — National board certification for teachers is already available, and over 100,000 educators have met the demanding requirements to be a National Board Certified Teacher. This program requires applicants to demonstrate their teaching knowledge and skills and has served the profession well. It is currently under an important redesign that will make it even better in the future.

Teacher evaluation — How teachers are evaluated is an important component to teacher quality, so it's not surprising that Americans have opinions about teacher appraisal. A plan popular among some state and federal policy makers uses student standardized test results as a significant component in evaluating teachers, in some places comprising up to 50% of the evaluation. However, more than 60% of Americans do not support this approach, and their opposition is trending upward.

At the same time, Americans said they believe teacher evaluation should be primarily designed to help teachers improve their ability to teach. If we listen carefully to the opinions of Americans, we need to research better ways to evaluate teachers and principals that are not overly reliant upon how students perform on standardized tests.

Upon analyzing the PDK/Gallup poll results each year, I'm always impressed by Americans' approach to public education. Once again, Americans have identified a blueprint to support public education, and it is centered on investments in classroom teachers. That is not a quick fix, but other countries have had success with this strategy, resulting in unmistakable gains in student achievement. Many programs designed to help teachers improve their skills already exist. We just need the determination to implement these programs that Americans support.

7B. Using teacher performance to determine salaries or bonuses.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Very important	46	43	51	41	44
Somewhat important	36	38	34	39	35
Not very important	13	15	12	16	13
Not at all important	5	4	4	4	7

7C. Documenting ineffectiveness that could lead to a teacher's dismissal.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Very important	65	66	75	61	62
Somewhat important	29	30	21	33	30
Not very important	5	4	4	5	6
Not at all important	1	0	1	1	1
Don't know/refused	1	0	0	0	1

Changing America's schools

We asked several questions to tap public opinion relative to various school reform issues and opportunities. Do Americans believe public schools should change, or are they content with how they currently operate? Do they believe change is needed more at elementary schools or secondary schools (middle/junior high level and high schools)? What about the school calendar? We asked these questions to better understand American opinion but, more important, to gauge American support for change.

» FINDINGS

A majority of Americans (58%) said the school curriculum used in their community needs to change, and this proportion is trending upward from when the question was asked in the past. However, parents were less enthusiastic about changing the school's curriculum in their community.

Americans are divided on the need for their community's elementary schools to change. Many (42%) said elementary schools are not changing quickly enough while an equal percentage said they do not need to change. The divide is less pronounced when it comes to perceptions of change in middle/junior and high schools. About half of Americans say those schools are not changing quickly enough, and about one-third say they do not need to change. Just 1 of 10 said they're changing too quickly.

About four of 10 Americans agree that the school calendar should include a shorter summer break with longer breaks at other times of the year. About three of 10 Americans support a longer school day and an extended calendar year.

Over six of 10 Americans said students should be required to participate in at least one volunteer or paid internship during high school, that students should be allowed to earn credits toward graduation from instruction they receive outside school, and that high school students should have more opportunities to earn credits through online courses.

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Over half of Americans agree that all high school students should have their own computer or tablet to use at school.

Overwhelmingly (87%), Americans agree that high school students should receive more education about possible career choices. Most (77%) also feel there should be more emphasis on preparing students for career fields with better employment opportunities. Americans are somewhat less supportive of encouraging high school students to specialize in a career area during high school. Just half agree with this statement, and about half say high schools should place more emphasis on preparing all students to attend college.

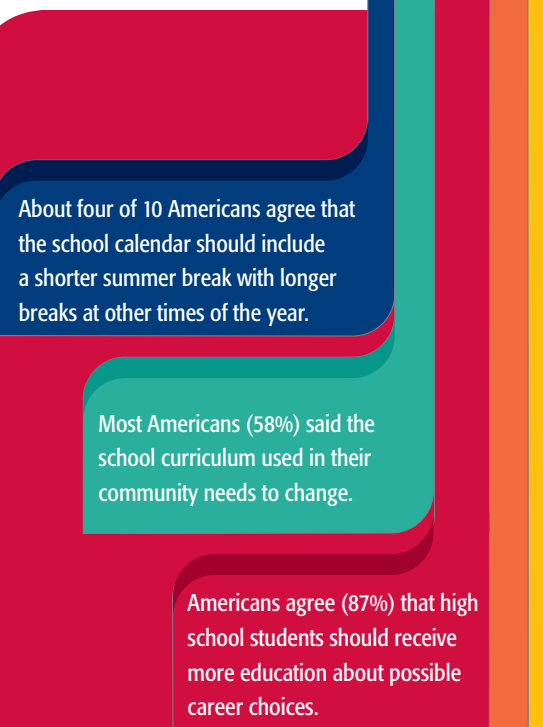
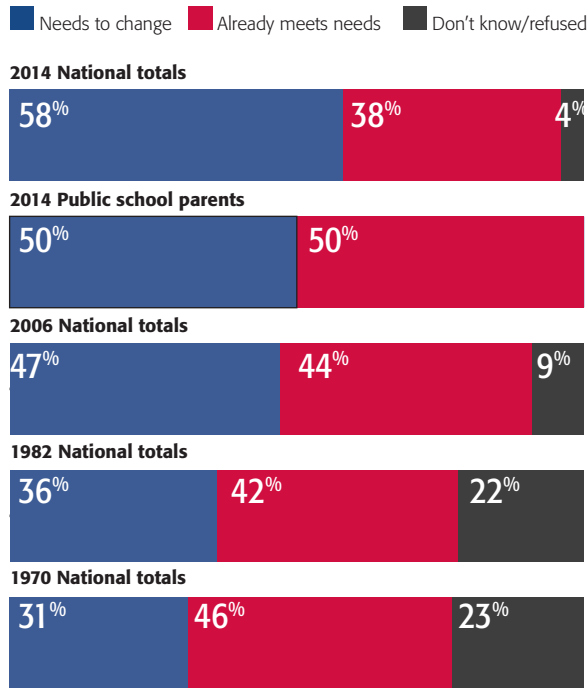


TABLE 8. Do you think the school curriculum in your community needs to be changed to meet today's needs, or do you think it already meets today's needs?



Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 9. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the elementary schools in your community?

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %
Elementary schools are not changing quickly enough.	42	44
Elementary schools are changing too quickly.	12	10
The elementary schools in my community do not need to change.	42	44
Don't know/refused	5	2

TABLE 10. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the middle/junior high schools and high schools in your community?

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %
Secondary schools are not changing quickly enough.	49	45
Secondary schools are changing too quickly.	14	13
The secondary schools in my community do not need to change.	32	36
Don't know/refused	5	6

TABLE 11. Now, using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about public schools in this country.

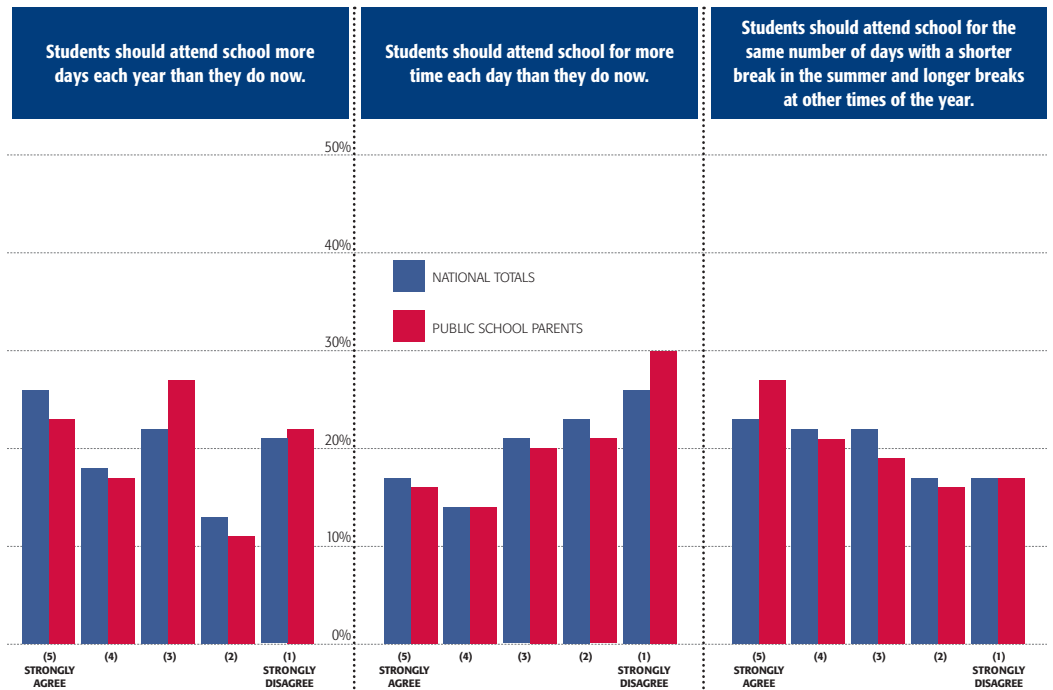


TABLE 12. Now, using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about public schools in this country.

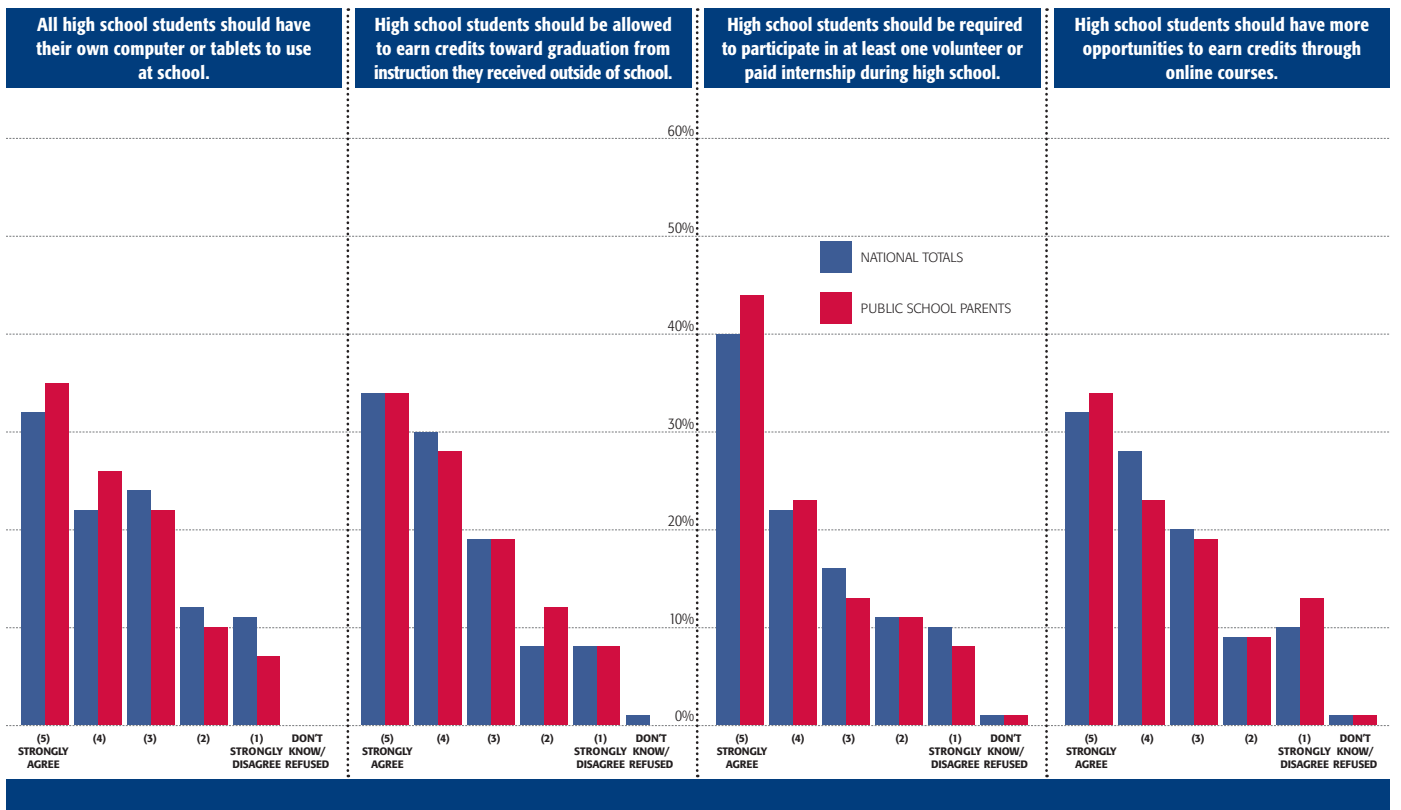
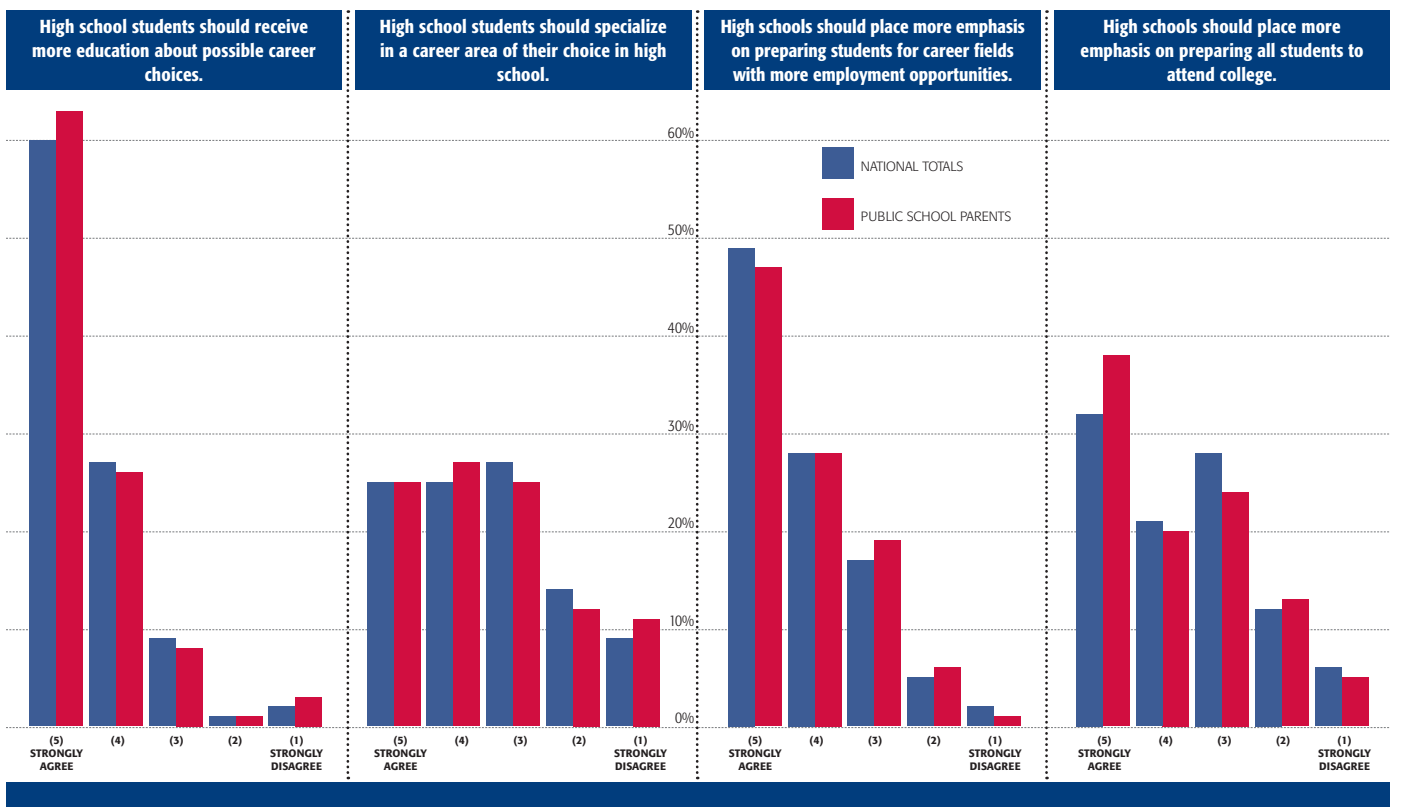


TABLE 13. Now, using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about public schools in this country.



Is college still important?

Given the extensive media coverage about college affordability and student loan debt, we added questions from our archive to determine if American opinions of the importance of attending college and college affordability have changed. We continue to ask Americans if they believe high school dropouts and graduating seniors are prepared for success after high school, whether they go on to college or directly to a career, and we asked a series of questions this year hoping to better understand which factors Americans believe are most important in helping high school students get a good job one day.

»FINDINGS

One of the more surprising findings was the declining belief that a college education today is very important. Just four years ago, 75% of Americans held that belief. Now, less than 50% said a college education is very important today.

Similarly, in 2010, 77% of parents said it was somewhat or very likely that they would be able to pay for college for their oldest child. That percentage declined to 69% this year.

On the whole, Americans are doubtful about students' career readiness. Just 3% of Americans say a high school dropout is ready for the world of work, and just 13% say a high school grad is ready. Thirty-seven percent of Americans agree that college grads are ready for the work world, and fewer (31%) agree high school grads are ready for college.

In order of importance, Americans believe the most important factor in helping a high school student get a good job one day is: learning skills like dependability, persistence, and teamwork; having a mentor or adviser; earning a B or higher grade point average; and working on a real-world project that takes at least six months to complete. Performing well on standardized tests, such as the ACT and SAT, was rated lowest in importance for getting a good job.



14B. Earning a B or higher grade point average on completed coursework.

TABLE 14. Would you say each of the following factors is a very important, somewhat important, not very important, or a not at all important factor in helping a high school student get a good job one day? How about:

14A. Performing well on standardized tests, such as ACT or SAT.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %
Very important	24	22
Somewhat important	44	36
Not very important	23	29
Not at all important	9	14

14B. Earning a B or higher grade point average on completed coursework.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %
Very important	44	50
Somewhat important	45	39
Not very important	9	10
Not at all important	1	2

14C. Having a mentor or adviser.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %
Very important	59	61
Somewhat important	37	36
Not very important	4	3
Not at all important	0	0

14D. Working on a real-world project that takes at least six months to complete.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %
Very important	42	42
Somewhat important	42	47
Not very important	11	9
Not at all important	4	3

14E. Learning skills like dependability, persistence, and teamwork.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %
Very important	86	87
Somewhat important	13	10
Not very important	1	1
Not at all important	0	1

TABLE 15. Here are some questions about students and their future. On a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following items.

15A. Today's high school dropout is ready for the world of work.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %
(5) Strongly agree	1	2
(4)	2	0
(3)	10	11
(2)	25	25
(1) Strongly disagree	62	62

15B. Today's high school graduate is ready for the world of work.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %
(5) Strongly agree	2	3
(4)	11	8
(3)	38	40
(2)	31	31
(1) Strongly disagree	18	17

15C. Today's college graduate is ready for the world of work.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %
(5) Strongly agree	5	5
(4)	32	28
(3)	36	34
(2)	19	19
(1) Strongly disagree	9	14

15D. Today's high school graduate is ready for college.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %
(5) Strongly agree	4	6
(4)	27	27
(3)	46	43
(2)	16	17
(1) Strongly disagree	7	7

TABLE 16. How important is a college education today?

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	National totals		
			'10 %	'83 %	'78 %
Very important	43	41	75	58	36
Fairly important	48	48	21	31	46
Not too important	9	10	3	8	16
Don't know/refused	1	1	1	3	2

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 17. How likely do you think it is that you or your family will be able to pay for college for your oldest child?

	Public school parents		
	'14 %	'10 %	'95 %
Very likely	28	36	30
Somewhat likely	41	41	39
Not too likely	12	16	17
Not at all likely	19	7	12
Don't know/refused	--	0	2

Educating children of undocumented immigrants

Last year, we asked Americans if they favored or opposed providing free public education benefits to children of immigrants who are in the United States illegally. Some challenged this question, saying that it included two words that could affect the results. Public education was described as “free” and inclusion of the descriptor “illegally” was thought to bias responses. In order to maintain trend data, we asked exactly the same question this year that we asked last year, but this time we asked it of only half of the survey’s respondents, selected randomly. We then asked the other half of the sample a slightly different version of the question, eliminating the word “free” and replacing “illegally” with “undocumented.” The results of both versions of the questions are important. To set the context, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that children of undocumented immigrants must be admitted to public schools in the United States.

»FINDINGS

Using the original question, more Americans favor providing public education to children of undocumented immigrants than last year. About half (49%) favor providing benefits.

The alternate question that removed “free” and replaced “illegally” with “undocumented” increases American support to a majority of 56%. Support for this is stronger among Democrat and Independent voters than it is among Republicans.

TABLE 18A. Do you favor or oppose providing free public education benefits to children of immigrants who are in the United States illegally? (Half the sample)

	National totals	
	'14 %	'13 %
Favor	49	44
Oppose	50	55
Don't know/refused	1	1

TABLE 18B. Do you favor or oppose providing public education to children of immigrants who are undocumented? (Half the sample)

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Favor	56	53	27	85	61
Oppose	43	46	73	14	38
Don't know/refused	1	1	0	1	1

The parent perspective

Public school parents are the most important partners in the education enterprise, so we always include questions specifically targeted to them. Not only do they assign high grades to schools, they compliment the schools their children attend but with important exceptions.

»FINDINGS

About six of 10 American public school parents agree that their child's school supports higher levels of well-being, and over half said their child's school encourages their child to build strong relationships with friends and family members.

To a slightly lesser degree, public school parents agree that schools do a good job helping their child become healthier and encouraging their child to be more involved in the community.



On the other hand, few public school parents (18%) said their children learn how to manage their finances more effectively.

About half of public school parents said they are likely to brag about their child's school to friends or relatives who are visiting their community.

TABLE 19-23. For the following questions, please use a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree. You may use any number between 1 and 5.

TABLE 19. My child has substantially higher well-being because of the school he or she attends.

	Public school parents		
	'14 %	'13 %	'11 %
(5) Strongly agree	30	33	38
(4)	29	31	32
(3)	29	24	18
(2)	5	4	8
(1) Strongly disagree	6	3	4
Don't know/refused	1	5	0

TABLE 20. My child's school encourages him or her to build stronger relationships with friends and family members.

	Public school parents		
	'14 %	'13 %	'11 %
(5) Strongly agree	28	32	43
(4)	29	26	25
(3)	27	27	19
(2)	10	8	8
(1) Strongly disagree	5	3	3
Don't know/refused	1	5	2



TABLE 21. My child's school teaches him or her to manage finances more effectively.

	Public school parents		
	'14 %	'13 %	'11 %
(5) Strongly agree	2	7	9
(4)	16	8	17
(3)	30	36	35
(2)	25	21	18
(1) Strongly disagree	25	21	16
Don't know/refused	1	7	4

TABLE 22. My child's school does things to help him or her become healthier.

	Public school parents		
	'14 %	'13 %	'11 %
(5) Strongly agree	20	24	33
(4)	30	32	30
(3)	29	26	23
(2)	12	10	9
(1) Strongly disagree	8	3	6
Don't know/refused	1	6	0

TABLE 23. My child's school encourages him or her to be more involved in the community.

	Public school parents		
	'14 %	'13 %	'11 %
(5) Strongly agree	25	27	36
(4)	26	26	28
(3)	25	25	21
(2)	15	14	8
(1) Strongly disagree	9	4	5
Don't know/refused	1	5	2

TABLE 24. How likely are you to brag about your child's school to friends or relatives who are visiting your community?

	Public school parents
	'14 %
(5) Extremely likely	26
(4)	28
(3)	18
(2)	12
(1) Extremely unlikely	16
Don't know/refused	1

METHODS STATEMENT

Results are based on a Gallup Panel telephone study completed by 1,001 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted May 29 to June 20, 2014. All interviews were conducted in English. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based longitudinal panel of more than 60,000 U.S. adults who are selected using random-digit-dial (RDD) phone interviews that cover landline and cell phones. Address-based sampling methods are also used to recruit panel members. The Gallup Panel is not an opt-in panel, and members are not given incentives for participating. The sample for this study was weighted to be demographically representative of the U.S. adult population, using 2013 Current Population Survey figures. For results based on this sample, one can say that the maximum margin of sampling error is +/- 4.6, at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error accounts for the design effect from weighting. Margins of error are higher for subsamples. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting the survey can introduce error and bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

PK ARCHIVE AND DATABASE

The PDK/Gallup poll archive includes more than 800 questions — organized by topic — asked of Americans since the first PDK/Gallup poll in 1969. Multiple year results are available when the same question was used in subsequent polls.

PDK members can access the PDK/Gallup poll archive by logging in to PDK at www.pdkintl.org. Copies of all PDK/Gallup polls are available to PDK members free at www.pdkintl.org. Nonmembers can buy previous polls for \$4.95 each.