

THE WISCONSIN PUBLIC RADIO- ST. NORBERT COLLEGE SURVEY CENTER POLL

EMBARRGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL APRIL 27, 2001

"WISCONSIN CITIZENS GIVE PUBLIC SCHOOLS POSITIVE GRADES"

TOPIC: Education Issues

Release Date: April 27, 2001

Sample: 391 ADULTS Statewide in Wisconsin

EDUCATION IN WISCONSIN

"Suppose that the following were graded the same way students are: A for Excellent, B for Above Average, C for Average, D for Below Average and F for Failure. In terms of quality, how would you rate each of the following for your community?"

Quality of Education in Wisconsin

	<u>October 1991</u>	<u>March 1997</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>National</u>
A - Excellent	12%	9%	13%	11%
B - Above Average	41	44	42	36
C - Average	30	29	31	35
D - Below Average	8	4	6	8
F - Failure	3	3	2	3
Not Sure	7	12	6	7

National survey data is from the most recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll conducted nationally in June 2000 with a random sample of 1,093 adults.

	Parent's Participation	Quality of Teaching
A - Excellent	8%	12%
B - Above Average	26	44
C - Average	36	31
D - Below Average	16	6
F - Failure	3	1
Not Sure	10	7

"Over the past five years do you think the quality of education provided by the public schools in your community has gotten better, worse, or remained about the same?"

Better	20%
Remained the Same	49
Worse	23
Not Sure	8

"Generally speaking, would you say the quality of education provided by public schools here in Wisconsin is better, worse, or about the same as in most other states?"

Better	45%
Remained the Same	35
Worse	7
Not Sure	13

"There is always a lot of discussion about the best way to finance the public schools. Which do you think is the best way to finance public schools: by means of local property taxes, by state taxes or by taxes from the federal government in Washington?"

Local Taxes	22%
State Taxes	43
Federal Taxes	24
Not Sure	11

"Should the government spend money to assist families who want to send their children to private or religious schools, or should government money only be spent on children who attend public schools?"

Assist Private and Religious Schools	44%
Spend on Public Schools Only	54
Not Sure	2

"Now I'd like to read you a list of some ways in which money can be spent in education. Please tell me which ONE of these you think is the MOST in need of ADDITIONAL funding?"

Updating Instructional Materials and Books	15%
Improving School Staff Development and Training	15
Improving Technology in the Classrooms	13
Keeping Teacher's Salaries Competitive	21
Reducing the Number of Students in Each Classroom	33
Not Sure	4

SUMMARY

Wisconsin citizens give the quality of education in public schools positive grades according to the latest Wisconsin Public Radio-St. Norbert College Survey Center Poll released today. Thirteen percent of Wisconsin citizens give public school education a grade of A (Excellent), 42% give a grade of B (Above Average), 31% a C (Average), 6% a D (Below Average), 2% an F (Failure) and 6% say they are not sure how to grade public education in Wisconsin. These grades here in Wisconsin are slightly higher than a recent national Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll in which citizens nationally gave schools in their community grades of A (11%), B (36%), C (35%), D, (8%), F (3%) and Not Sure (7%). The Wisconsin public's evaluation of schools has not changed much over the past ten years. This same question was asked in October of 1991 and March 1997 with similar grades being given by Wisconsin citizens.

Citizens were also asked to grade the teaching in public schools and parents' participation in their children's education. The quality of teaching received grades of 12% A, 44% B, 31% C, 6% D, 1% F and 7% were Not Sure; the parent's participation in their children's education received somewhat lower grades of 8% A, 26% B, 36% C, 16% D, 3% F and 10% Not Sure.

Wisconsinites generally think that the quality of education in Wisconsin public schools is Better than in other states with 45% saying public education is Better here in Wisconsin, 35% saying it is about the same, 7% saying it is Worse and 13% say Not Sure. These findings are also similar to past survey results and may reflect how well Wisconsin student do in comparison to students from other states in national standardized tests such as the college entrance exams.

The public also thinks that federal government taxes should play a much greater role in financing education in the U.S. Twenty-two percent of citizens think that local taxes are the best way to finance public school, 24% think federal taxes are the best way, 43% say state taxes are the best way and 11% are not sure which is the best way to finance public schools. Currently federal taxes play a very small role in the overall funding of public education. Most public school are funded by state and local taxation.

The Public is somewhat split on the issue of whether public money should be used to assist families who want to send their children to private or religious schools or whether public money should only be used to support children who attend public schools. Over half (54%) of Wisconsin citizens say that public money should support students in public schools only, 44% say public money should also be used to support children attending private or religious schools and 2% are not sure. Naturally those who students in private schools are much more supportive of the use of public money to support those schools, 82% think public money should support students in private schools compared with only 33% among those with students in public schools. Republicans are also more likely to support the use of public funds in private school (56%) compared to Democrats (38%).

The survey also asked citizens for what purpose additional funding in education is most needed. A third (33%) say additional funding is most needed to reduce the number of students in each classroom, 21% say to keep teachers' salaries competitive, 15% say for improving staff development, 15% say for updating instructional materials and books, 13% say for improving technology in the classrooms and 4% are not sure.

HOW THE WISCONSIN SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

The Wisconsin Survey is a statewide survey of Wisconsin residents conducted by the St. Norbert College Survey Center and Wisconsin Public Radio. The Wisconsin Survey has been conducted biannually since 1984. For this survey telephone interviews were conducted with 391 citizens in the state of Wisconsin between March 26 and April 19, 2001. The sample was a random digit dial sample selected in such a way to include both listed and unlisted phone numbers. Respondents at the household level were selected using the Troidahl-Carter random selection procedure. Up to eight attempts were made on each telephone number to reach someone at each household. With this sample size we can be 95% sure that the sample percentages reported will not vary by more than $\pm 5\%$ from the actual percentage in the population. The margin of error will be larger for smaller subgroups.

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