



Memorandum

To: Children NOW
Fr: Gene Ulm and Ruth Bernstein
Date: November 21, 2006
Re: Recent survey results

The following memorandum details several highlights from a scientific statewide survey using a random sample of 1300 voters completed in California by Public Opinion Strategies. The telephone study was completed November 8-9, 2006 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.7%.

Voters in California clearly want to see significant reforms in the state's public education system, and they believe additional education funding would lead to better educated students. More than eight out of ten voters believe every public school should have the materials and teachers it needs to implement standards-based education, even if it means an increase in funding. Although voters show an interest in increased funding for education, they also express a strong desire for better management of existing educational resources. In short, voters believe reforming California's education system is a two-prong attack – more funding AND more accountability.

Key findings:

- **Education reform is a two-prong attack: Voters believe more accountability and more funds would improve the public education system.** Four-in-ten voters (40%) believe California's public education system needs better management AND more funding; 39% say the system needs to do a better job of managing the existing money.
- **These "reform twins" are important.** Whether it be providing more sunshine on education spending, more school and classroom information, more accountability or paying teachers more for more difficult work, EVERY measure tested that addressed these reform twins received broad-based support. A sampling of voters' opinions:
 - Requiring better and more accessible information so that we can understand where our education tax dollars are being spent (92% favor);
 - Making sure every public school has the materials and teachers needed to implement standards-based education EVEN if it means increasing education funding (84% favor);
 - Paying higher salaries to teachers that have students that need extra educational help or teach subjects that require additional training (77% favor);

- Requiring better and more accessible information so we can understand how specific classrooms are performing (85% favor); and
- Requiring better and more accessible information so we can understand how well our own local schools are performing (91% favor).
- **Voters believe that more money and money better spent equals a better education.** Specifically,
 - By a 60%-37% margin, voters agree that “additional state funding would lead to better educated students in California.”
 - By an 87%-10% margin, voters agree that “better use of existing funds would lead to better educated students in California.”
- **Voters believe these two priorities should also be priorities for the Governor and State Legislature.** When asked to rate the importance on a one-to-ten scale, 57% gave “increasing funding for California public schools” an eight or higher. Importantly, if you were a PARENT (64%) or GRANDPARENT (75%) with a K-12 child or grandchild, you placed an even higher priority for Gubernatorial or State Legislative action increasing funding for public schools.
- **The Third Leg of Reform: Do better at the basics; do more than the basics.** Voters are overwhelmingly in favor of increasing educational focus on reading, writing, math, and learning English (91% favor; 71% strongly so).

However, voters are equally supportive of providing instruction that goes beyond state standards in math, science, reading, and history to include the arts, physical education, foreign language and community service (91% favor; 68% strongly so).

- **Voters want BIG reforms, not just minor changes.** Nearly eight-in-ten voters want either a “complete dismantling and re-design of our public education system” (27%) or “comprehensive reforms that make significant changes to the system (52%). In contrast, only 16% supported “minor changes in our public schools.”

Importantly, this is a matter of public consensus: similar levels of support for change were measured in every region of the state and across the political and ideological spectrum. The bottom line is that it doesn't matter where you live or what party you support. Voters want reform in public schools.

- **Californians believe that the public system in their backyard is fine, but that the rest of the state's quality of public education is poor.** Overall quality of public schools in your area 62% Excellent/Good and quality of public schools in California 28% Excellent/Good, in fact 23% rated California schools in general poor. This rings true across the regions:
 - Bay Area/Northern California: Your school 54% Excellent/Good - CA schools 23% Excellent/Good
 - Central/Sacramento: Your school 58% Excellent/Good - CA schools 32% Excellent/Good
 - Inland Empire: Your school 54% Excellent/Good - CA schools 32% Excellent/Good
 - Los Angeles: Your school 54% Excellent/Good - CA schools 27% Excellent/Good
 - San Diego: Your school 54% Excellent/Good - CA schools 35% Excellent/Good
- **Lastly, voters believe public education is a problem they know plenty about and that it has economic consequences.** Eighty-one percent of California's voters think of themselves as very informed about education issues. Moreover, 85% believe there are too many students in California leaving school without enough education to make it in today's economy.

This level of knowledge, awareness and impact makes it a matter of public consensus: They see obvious problems and show support for obvious solutions.

Please do not hesitate to call with any questions.