

Carnegie's SNS Polling Project Final National Results

This summary provides all questions and answers from a telephone poll completed at the end of January 2006 for Carnegie Corporation of New York by Widmeyer Research and Polling of Washington, DC. All findings from the poll of 518 American adults are representative of U.S. residents 18 years of age and older. The margin of error is +/- 4.3%)

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1. Perceptions About Quality of Education

What do you think are the major drawbacks if someone does NOT receive a high school diploma? (Total exceeds 100%)	ALL (%)
Difficulty finding a basic, entry-level job	60
Trouble advancing in a career/profession	29
Earn less money	26
Viewed as a negative by the community	11
Difficulty to succeed/limited opportunities	6
Diminished intellect/will be unlearned, ignorant, uncultured (Leading to an emptier life)	3
More likely to turn to crime/gangs/end up in jail	2
Low self-esteem	2
Difficulty pursuing higher education	2
Diminished social skills (interpersonal skills)	2

How would you rate the quality of education offered by public high schools in your city: excellent, good, fair or poor?	ALL (%)
Excellent	12
Good	34
Fair	31
Poor	17
Don't know	6

Do you think that all, many, some, few or none of the public high schools in your city are possibly failing to properly educate students?	ALL (%)
All	8
Many	14
Some	40
Few	13
None	20
Don't know	5

Do you think the quality of education offered students at your city's public high schools has improved, declined or stayed the same compared to several years ago?	ALL (%)
Improved	30
Declined	27
Stayed the same	31
Don't know	12



Are you aware of any recent program or initiatives in your city’s public high schools that are designed to improve teaching and learning?	ALL (%)
Yes	26
No	70
Don’t know	4

IF YES: What can you tell me about these programs or initiatives?	ALL (%)
Teacher training programs	13
Tutoring/after school tutoring programs	11
The Gate program/nurturing gifted students	7
Magnet schools	6
Programs designed to help at risk students	5
Programs designed to enhance learning	4
Programs to prepare children for college	4
The ‘no child left behind’ program	4
Character training/life training	3
Smaller schools/classrooms	3
Programs to get parents more involved	2
MCAS/students are required to take tests in order to advance to the next grade	2
More vocational training/professional schools for the child to attend	2
Programs that cater to special needs students	2
Various after school programs	2
Extended school days	2
Propagate technology in the classroom/more computers, laptops, etc.	2
Homework centers/resource learning facility	2
The schools have contracted with private companies to help teaching	0
Teen pregnancy program	0
Pay increase to teachers	0
State intervenes until school improves	0
Foreign language programs	0



2. Barriers to Providing a Quality Education

Which problems stand in the way of having urban high schools in your city be more successful in providing a quality education?	ALL (%)
Lack of resources and money	29
The class sizes in high schools are too large	12
Students don't get enough personalized attention	10
Lack of family involvement with schools	10
Students lack an adult role model or mentor	9
Many students have poor reading and writing skills	7
Behavioral (discipline) problems/disruptive students	7
Many students cannot read, write or understand English	6
High turnover in teachers	5
Schools are too large	5
Funds are allocated unfairly and some schools in a community get more than others	5
Teachers are not properly trained	5
Difficulty in attracting and keeping good teachers	5
Students don't see the link between academic achievement and success in higher education and career	5
High turnover in top leadership or district administration	4
Lack of motivation on the part of students/student's poor attitudes	4
Lack of engaging courses or classes	4
Schools are too old or are in disrepair	3
Lack of community involvement with schools	3
Students feel disconnected from their schools/teachers	3
Inadequate compensation for teachers	3
School district staff are not qualified to teach	3
Violence/security/weapons	3
Students do not take enough difficult or rigorous courses	2
Lack of accountability for student achievement	2
Poor quality of teachers/unmotivated teachers/teachers that are indifferent to their students	2



Do you think failing urban public high schools in your city can get better on their own or do they need extra help from a community-based group involved in education?	ALL (%)
Better on their own	15
Need outside help	76
Don't know	9

Every public high school should be as good as the community's very best.	ALL (%)
Strongly agree	71
Somewhat agree	20
Somewhat disagree	6
Strongly disagree	2
Don't know	1



3. Successful High Schools

What makes a high school successful?	ALL (%)
Great/strong teachers	48
High level of parent involvement	26
High standards/expectations; all students	15
Focused professional development and support for teachers	14
Strong leadership/clear sense of vision	12
Personalization of student learning	12
Partnerships with community	12
Rigorous curriculum	9
Engaging instructional strategies/classes	8
High levels of collaboration and communications among all parties	8
Focused professional development and support for principals	6
Extra-curricular activities (besides sports)	7
Attention to student engagement and healthy adolescent development	6
Student commitment/ motivation/willingness to learn	4
Involved teachers/caring/willing to help	3
Discipline	3
Graduation rates	3
Funding	2
Administration/superintendent/principal/schools board members	2
Security/stable environment/lack of violence	2
Student-teacher relationship	2
Diverse academic programs/curriculum	2
Moral values/spirituality/religion	1
Government funding	1
Student/teacher ratio	1
Attendance	1
Facilities/good buildings and equipment	1
Winning sport teams	1
College acceptance rate	1



Do you think teachers do a better job when they have fewer students to teach?	ALL (%)
Yes	91
No	6
Don't know	3

4. Small Learning Communities

Some communities are building smaller high schools than what we typically see in urban areas. Others are taking large high schools and breaking them up into what are called small learning communities, which are designed for more personalized student attention. What do you think are the benefits of smaller high schools or small learning communities?	ALL (%)
All students learn better	41
Increase student achievement	24
Students are better prepared for the future	14
Close achievement gap	10
Completion of more courses	8
Safer environments	8
Lower drop out rates	8
Improved attendance rates	7
Better relationship between students and teachers	7
Less disruptive classrooms/better behavior	3
Easier to teach	3
Fosters a greater sense of community	3
Better student-teacher ratio	3
Size does not matter/smaller schools will have no noticeable benefits	2



5. Change Agents & School Districts

Which person or organizations do you think should be involved in helping improve urban high schools in your community?	ALL (%)
Parents	41
Teachers	28
School boards	24
Local elected officials	22
State elected officials	20
Grassroots or community organizations	19
Students	17
Business and civic leaders	15
Principals	15
The school district administration	14
Administrators such as Superintendents	13
Elected leaders who serve at the federal level	12
Entire community/everybody	5
Churches/church leaders/clergy	4
PTA	2
Colleges & Universities	2
Police/law enforcement	2

Are you familiar with the term “school district”?	ALL (%)
Yes	91
No	8
Don't know	1



What is the first word or image that comes to mind when you hear the term school district? Anything else?	ALL (%)
Geographic area/zoning	21
Group of schools	10
Superintendent	8
School board	8
Negative perception/failure	5
Community/neighborhood	4
Child attends the school in which district she/he resides	4
Central office	3
Bureaucracy	3
Administration/group of people that run the schools	3
Large	2
Disparity/division between rich and poor	2
Politics	2
School busses/bussing	2
City	2
Education	2

In your opinion, is your city's school district doing an excellent job, a good job, a fair job or a poor job at in ensuring that all public high schools in your city offer quality education to all students?	ALL (%)
Excellent job	8
Good job	32
Fair job	35
Poor job	16
Don't know	9

Do you think the school district needs to have a vision for how to improve or change high schools?	ALL (%)
Yes	92
No	5
Don't know	3



Do you think the school district's administration-- which includes the superintendent, the school board and the central office staff -- has a major role, a minor role or no role at all in reforming public education and ensuring that all high schools in your city offer quality education to all students?	ALL (%)
Major role	78
Minor role	17
No role at all	3
Don't know	2

Would you . . . making changes to school districts so that their primary mission was to create a collection of different kinds of good schools?	ALL (%)
Strongly support	54
Somewhat support	26
Neither support nor oppose	5
Somewhat oppose	5
Strongly oppose	3
Don't know	7

Do you think a school district should allow high schools more flexibility or freedom to achieve reform in ways principals and teachers believe would work?	ALL (%)
Yes	80
No	12
Don't know	8

Successful high school reform must include changes in how the school district manages its high schools.	ALL (%)
Strongly agree	60
Somewhat agree	32
Somewhat disagree	3
Strongly disagree	1
Don't know	4



6. District Priorities

Priorities 1 st # - % Very Important; 2 nd # - % Important (very + somewhat)	ALL (%)
Creating a sense that high school is a community where learning is valued and supported.	95/99
Make a commitment to vastly improved reading instruction in all high schools.	93/98
Encouraging schools to reach out to parents and get them more involved with their children's education.	91/99
Having literacy coaches work with teachers to assist students with their reading skills.	89/97
Make all high schools free of violence and bullying.	89/96
Taking the steps necessary to ensure all schools are in good physical condition and not in a state of deterioration.	87/98
Make sure that all school offer tutoring to those students who need it.	87/98
Teach all students challenging material so they are prepared for success in life.	86/99
Implementing policies so every single school within a district receives the resources and support it needs to offer students a quality education.	82/97
Make sure that students in large and often over-crowded urban high schools interact one-on-one with caring adults every day.	78/94
Encouraging and supporting partnerships between businesses, universities, parents and student groups and community organizations committed to improving high schools.	76/98
Better prepare and encourage students to attend a college or university.	76/97
Building more engaging curriculum for students.	74/94
Ensuring that schools have greater flexibility and authority to use money and resources to address problems unique to their schools.	71/95
Ensuring all schools are held accountable for results.	71/91
Providing support that is tailored to the needs of individual schools.	70/96
Promoting business partnerships that connect students with job and training opportunities.	69/96
Encouraging schools to become much more involved with the local community.	68/98
Create teams experienced with redesigning high schools to work with principals/teachers to improve quality.	66/94
Creating opportunities for principals to meet and learn more from each other.	66/92
Creating student advisory councils so students can have input into making high schools better.	65/94
Giving teachers professional time away from the classrooms so they can learn how to do their jobs better.	63/89
Have expert coaches go into high schools to work with teachers.	58/89
Make a commitment to vastly improved science instruction.	57/95
Allowing teachers to work as teams as they teach students.	57/92
Create smaller learning communities of teachers and students in already existing large high schools.	56/91
Breaking up large, impersonal high schools into small learning communities or small schools in order to personalize education.	51/83
Encourage students to take leadership classes.	50/95
Raising graduation requirements to ensure all students take rigorous courses.	45/86
Have a single path to graduation, not one track for students who will go to college and another track for those who will go directly into a full-time job or the military.	40/71



7. Community and Parental Involvement

Do you think community members and organizations should share some of the accountability or responsibility for reforming or improving urban public high schools?	ALL (%)
Yes	85
No	10
Don't know	5

IF YES: How much responsibility or accountability should community members and organizations have: a great deal, some, not much or none?	ALL (%)
Great deal	32
Some	51
Not much	3
None	0
Don't know	14

Which of the following community members and organizations do you think should be actively involved in helping school districts reform urban public high schools?	ALL (%)
Community not-for-profit organizations that focus on education and children	82
Colleges or universities	75
Teachers' unions and professional teacher organizations	72
Local government agencies or departments	68
Local businesses	67
Cultural organizations	63
Local foundations	62
Minority interest or advocacy groups	60
Local churches, ministries or other houses of worship	51
Faith-based institutions	42
Other	10

How important a role do you think the larger community, outside of the school district, should play in helping improve the quality of education offered by urban high schools in your city?	ALL (%)
Very important	40
Somewhat important	45
Not very important	10
Not at all important	4
Don't know	1



Do you think getting the community to support excellent education for all students will be . . . in improving public high schools in your city?	ALL (%)
Very helpful	71
Somewhat helpful	25
Not very helpful	1
Not at all helpful	1
Don't know	2

Do you think parents and other adults should share some of the accountability or responsibility for reforming or improving urban public high schools?	ALL (%)
Yes	94
No	4
Don't know	2

How can parents and other adults become more involved in helping improve urban public high schools?	ALL (%)
Be more active in child's learning/communicate with kids/spend more time with them	20
Involvement in school activities	17
Communicate with teachers (PTA)	15
Go to school meetings/visit the school	13
Volunteers to help kids or school	11
Discipline the kids at home/teach responsibility and moral family values	5
Parents responsible/accountable for kids actions/performance	5
Communicate with school officials	5
Homework/make sure kids are doing it/help with it	4
Monitor kids/be aware of what kids are doing/where they are	4
Vote/voice your opinion	3
Fund raisers/funding issues/donations	3
Encourage success/challenge kids	2
Tutoring/mentoring for students	2
Know what school offers/curriculum	2



Do you think it is . . . for the school district to be very involved with community members and organizations in improving urban public high schools?	ALL (%)
Very appropriate	66
Somewhat appropriate	29
Not very appropriate	2
Not at all appropriate	1
Don't know	2

Do you think building a working partnership between the school district and a leading community non-profit education organization would be an effective way to improve public high schools in your city?	ALL (%)
Yes	82
No	10
Don't know	8

8. District Reform

Do you think the best way to improve public education is to concentrate on fixing one high school at a time or do you think it is better to concentrate on the district as a whole and improve the entire system of high schools in a community?	ALL (%)
Fix one high school at a time	26
Community of high schools	68
Neither	2
Don't know	4

Do you think school districts should be redesigned to make sure all high schools get adequate resources they need to help them do their jobs?	ALL (%)
Yes	92
No	4
Don't know	4

In many school districts, high schools resources (such as teachers, books, etc.) are not handed equally among schools. To change this situation, political, education and community leaders must work together.	ALL (%)
Strongly agree	67
Somewhat agree	19
Somewhat disagree	4
Strongly disagree	4
Don't know	6



Do you think new and fresh approaches to teaching are needed in your city's urban high schools?	ALL (%)
Yes	76
No	14
Don't know	10

9. Instructional Reform

In the classes high school students take, how important is it that they see the connection between instruction and the real world?	ALL (%)
Very important	96
Somewhat important	1
Not very important	2
Not at all important	1
Don't know	0

In the classes high school students take, how important is it that instruction help students develop problem solving skills?	ALL (%)
Very important	92
Somewhat important	6
Not very important	1
Not at all important	0
Don't know	1

In the classes high school students take, how important is it that instruction helps students become good readers and writers.	ALL (%)
Very important	96
Somewhat important	3
Not very important	1
Not at all important	0
Don't know	0

In the classes high school students take, how important is it that students collaboratively work in teams?	ALL (%)
Very important	69
Somewhat important	27
Not very important	2
Not at all important	1
Don't know	1



In the classes high school students take, how important is it that students use technology, such as computers?	ALL (%)
Very important	84
Somewhat important	14
Not very important	1
Not at all important	0
Don't know	1

In the classes high school students take, how important is it that instruction help students learn effectively on their own??	ALL (%)
Very important	81
Somewhat important	16
Not very important	1
Not at all important	1
Don't know	1

RESPONDENTS READ: I will now read a list of instructional or teaching reforms that are designed to improve the quality of education in urban high schools. Please tell me how effective you think each would be.

Priorities 1 st # - % Very effective 2 nd # - % Effective (very + somewhat)	ALL (%)
Problem-based learning exercises.	68/97
Internships that are coordinated with classes.	60/88
Encouraging the community to visit and interact with high schools.	59/93
Use of senior projects that require a research project and oral presentation.	56/96
Seminar and group discussion classes.	54/92
Project-based learning where students work on projects.	53/92
Team teaching by several teachers.	49/87
Shadowing programs where students watch an adult at his or her place of work.	43/83
Having students help teach.	42/79
Eliminating the grading system.	10/23



How should we measure success of educational reform? In other words how do you know whether changes or new policies are making urban high schools better?	ALL (%)
Higher graduation rate	28
Students are getting better grades/higher G.P.A.	27
More students passing state mandatory test/exit exam	26
More students accepted into college	19
Attendance rates increasing	15
More students entering next grade/fewer repeating grades	12
Less discipline problems in school	10
Higher test scores/SATs/standardized testing	4
Success of students after high school	4
Students survey/feedback from students	2
Quality of employment after high school	2
More erudite students(i.e. higher math skills, higher reading skills, having the basic skills to succeed)	2