

National Survey: Parents' Attitudes on the Quality of Education in the United States

Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs research reveals the views of parents on a wide range of issues central to the education of their children in American schools.

Chicago, August 17, 2013-- [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#) announces the publication and availability of a major survey exploring the attitudes and views of parents with children in United States schools. It reveals new information on an array of issues directly related to the education of their children including the quality of schools, teaching, evaluation, funding, and management.

“While regular research is conducted with a variety of stakeholders, including teachers, it is especially important to capture the views of parents,” said [Trevor Tompson](#), director of the AP-NORC Center. “This survey provides valuable information to policymakers and school officials across the country from this key constituency. It will help those responsible for designing, explaining, and carrying out education in America today.”

With funding from the [Joyce Foundation](#), the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research conducted a national survey of 1,025 parents or guardians of children who completed a grade between kindergarten and 12th grade during the 2012 - 2013 school year.

Key findings of the survey include:

- Parents believe that people—teachers and parents—play a bigger part in school quality than the amount of money spent for education. Two-thirds of parents report volunteering or donating to their child’s school in the past year, with engagement going down as a child gets older.
- Homework support is significant, with 80 percent of parents saying they help on at least a weekly basis and only six percent saying they never do.
- More than 90 percent of parents believe that it is important for a teacher to be passionate about teaching and caring for the children while fewer than half say that having a lot of teaching experience is vital.
- More than three-quarters of respondents favor a plan to use public funds to make preschool available to all four-year-olds with 80 percent believing preschool programs improve performance in later years.

- Less than half of parents believe that their local schools are doing a good job preparing students for the workforce or giving them the practical skills they will need as adults. Just over half believe their local schools are doing a good job of preparing students for college and to be good citizens.
- Parents believe evaluation and pay should be based on a balanced approach that includes classroom teacher observations, student test scores, and student input. Three quarters of parents favor making it easier for school districts to fire teachers for poor performance.
- A majority of parents believe standardized tests do a good job of measuring school-wide and individual performance though less than half believe test scores should be the basis for allocating funding.
- More than half of parents have not heard much about Common Core State Standards and about one-third say they don't know if the Common Core is used in their state. Less than half say implementation of the Common Core will improve the quality of education and 27 percent assert it will have no effect at all.

Overall, the survey provides a comprehensive description of parents' perspectives on education in America today, with a specific focus on understanding what quality education and teaching means to parents and how it should be measured and rewarded. "Parents play a vital role in their children's success in school, and our survey shows they have an important and well-informed perspective on it," said Tompson.

About the Survey

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research survey titled "Parents' Attitudes on the Quality of Education in the United States" was conducted from June 21 through July 22, 2013. It was done by telephone with 1025 American adult parents of children in kindergarten through 12th grade. Of the total, 624 respondents were interviewed on landlines and 401 on cellphones. The overall margin of error for the survey was +/- 4.1 percentage points.

Additional information, including the Associated Press stories based on the survey results and the survey's complete topline findings can be found on the AP-NORC Center's website at www.apnorc.org.

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***The Joyce Foundation** supports the development of policies that both improve the quality of life for people in the Great Lakes region and serve as models for the rest of the country. The Joyce Foundation's grant making supports research into Great Lakes protection and restoration, energy efficiency, teacher quality and early reading, workforce development, gun violence prevention, diverse art for diverse audiences, and a strong, thriving democracy. The Joyce Foundation's Education Program supports public policy and systemic changes to close the achievement gaps that separate low-income and minority children from their peers by improving the quality of teachers they encounter in school, enhancing early reading policies, and exploring education innovations, particularly charter schools. The Foundation's top priority is to improve teacher evaluation and effectiveness policies so that high-need schools in Chicago, Indianapolis, and Minneapolis can attract, develop, and retain first-rate educators.*

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