



**PPIC
STATEWIDE
SURVEY**

APRIL 2006

Special Survey on Education

in collaboration with

**The William and Flora Hewlett
Foundation**

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**Public
Policy
Institute of
California**

The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) is a private operating foundation established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett. The Institute is dedicated to improving public policy in California through independent, objective, nonpartisan research.

PPIC's research agenda focuses on three program areas: population, economy, and governance and public finance. Studies within these programs are examining the underlying forces shaping California's future, cutting across a wide range of public policy concerns, including education, health care, immigration, income distribution, welfare, urban growth, and state and local finance.

PPIC was created because three concerned citizens – William R. Hewlett, Roger W. Heyns, and Arjay Miller – recognized the need for linking objective research to the realities of California public policy. Their goal was to help the state's leaders better understand the intricacies and implications of contemporary issues and make informed public policy decisions when confronted with challenges in the future. PPIC does not take or support positions on any ballot measure or on any local, state, or federal legislation, nor does it endorse, support, or oppose any political parties or candidates for public office.

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Preface

The PPIC Statewide Survey series provides policymakers, the media, and the general public with objective, advocacy-free information on the perceptions, opinions, and public policy preferences of California residents. Inaugurated in April 1998, the survey series has generated a database that includes the responses of more than 136,000 Californians.

This special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey—a survey on education—is the fourth in a three-year PPIC survey series made possible with funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The intent of the special series is to inform state, local, and federal policymakers, encourage discussion, and raise public awareness about a variety of education, environment, and population issues facing the state.

The current survey focuses on California’s kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) public education system which, according to the California Department of Education’s *Fact Book 2006*, serves 6.3 million students in 1,053 school districts and 9,372 public schools. The state’s student population is diverse (47% Latino, 31% white, 11% Asian, 8% black), with many English language learners.

K-12 public education is the single largest component of the state budget, and voters passed Proposition 98 in 1988 to provide schools with a minimum funding guarantee. State policymakers have implemented a variety of efforts to improve school quality, including class size reduction, teacher training, standards and testing, and school construction projects. Californians in our survey consistently rank K-12 public education among the most important issues in the state and as a top priority for the governor and legislature.

This special edition presents the responses of 2,501 adult residents throughout the state. Using a large sample size and multilingual interviewing, we examine in detail perceptions of California’s public schools, attitudes toward education policies, and preferences regarding fiscal and political matters. Since public education has continued to be one of the top concerns of state residents in recent years, some of the questions are repeated from earlier PPIC Statewide Surveys. More specifically, we examine the following issues:

- Perceptions of California’s public schools, including the quality of K-12 education and whether or not quality is improving over time, the approval ratings of state elected officials on issues related to K-12 schools, perceptions of the adequacy and efficiency of school funding, student and teacher issues, preferred goals for student achievement, and perceptions of the state’s school spending and student test scores compared to other states.
- Attitudes toward education policies, including support for student testing and the high school exit exam, perceived concerns about and views on programs involving the high school drop-out rate, English language learners, teacher quality, and attitudes about curriculum and standards.
- Fiscal and political preferences, including ratings of respondents’ local public schools and perceptions of the state funding their schools receive, equity issues involving resources for schools in lower-income areas, support for specific proposals to increase state revenues, trust in state government, the role of education issues in the 2006 governor’s election, and support for the preschool education initiative.
- Variations in perceptions of California public schools, state funding preferences, and attitudes toward local public schools across the five major regions of the state (Central Valley, San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles County, Inland Empire, and Orange/San Diego Counties); among Asians, blacks, Latinos, and non-Hispanic whites; and across socioeconomic and political groups.

Copies of this report may be ordered by e-mail (order@ppic.org) or phone (415-291-4400). Copies of this and earlier reports are posted on the publications page of the PPIC web site (www.ppic.org). For questions about the survey, please contact survey@ppic.org.

Regional Groupings Used in This Report



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Press Release

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<http://www.ppic.org/main/pressreleaseindex.asp>

SPECIAL SURVEY ON EDUCATION

CALIFORNIANS RIP STATE OF K-12 EDUCATION BUT WON'T PUT THEIR MONEY WHERE THEIR ANGST IS Alarming Pessimism in Black Community; Education Key Issue In '06 Elections

SAN FRANCISCO, California, April 27, 2006 — Whether it's high school drop-out rates or the quality of workforce preparation, Californians have a starkly negative view of their K-12 public education system, according to a survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) with funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Yet despite grave concerns – and a staunch belief that more funding would boost educational quality – residents are not willing to foot the bill for improving the state's schools.

The share of Californians (58%) who say the quality of education is a big problem is higher now than at any time since 1998, when the PPIC Statewide Survey was launched. In fact, one-third (32%) believe the quality of education has worsened in just the past two years. Nearly every facet of school performance gets poor grades: 60 percent of Californians say schools are not doing a good job preparing students for the workforce, and 53 percent say they are not doing a good job preparing students for college. Astonishingly, 44 percent do not believe schools are doing a good job even in teaching basic reading, writing, and math skills.

“The public's frustration with the state of education is palpable. They see lots of rhetoric but little progress,” says PPIC survey director Mark Baldassare. “There is serious discontent across the board.”

Given the high level of dissatisfaction, it's not surprising that Californians believe their elected representatives are not doing a good job on education. Two-thirds of likely voters (65%) disapprove of the legislature's handling of education issues – only 16 percent approve. Although Governor Schwarzenegger fares better, about half of likely voters (49%) disapprove of his handling of education and only 33 percent approve. And when it comes to making budget choices for K-12 education, a higher percentage of Californians prefers the approach of Democrats in the legislature (37%) to the approach of the governor (17%) or Republicans in the legislature (19%). Disillusionment with state government's handling of education extends to fiscal decision-making. Only one in eight Californians (12%) say they trust state government the most to make spending decisions for local schools. Residents see a host of local authorities – their local school district (36%), teachers (30%), and principals (13%) – as more trustworthy.

Someone Else's Money

So what will Californians do to improve their education system? Very little. Residents evidently want the state to do everything but are unwilling to pay for anything: Only 36 percent of likely voters favor raising the state sales tax and fewer than one-quarter (24%) favor raising property taxes to fund public schools. The story changes dramatically, however, when someone else is paying. Substantial majorities of residents (64%) and likely voters (60%) favor raising the income tax paid by the wealthiest Californians to fund education.

Unwillingness to dip into their own pockets is steadfast, even though large majorities of all Californians (65%) and likely voters (58%) believe additional state funding would lead to higher quality education. This attitude splits along party lines, with Democrats (75%) and independents (66%) much more likely than Republicans (44%) to hold this view. “A lack of trust in government makes people reluctant to pay higher taxes, even for things they wholeheartedly support,” says Baldassare. “They need to believe that their money will be used

efficiently.” That judgment is borne out by the fact that overwhelming majorities of residents (81%) and likely voters (83%) believe better use of existing funds would improve education.

Qualms about Equity

The quality of education in lower-income areas is another cause of high concern for Californians, and support for policies to help schools in these communities is widespread. Eighty-six percent of residents are at least somewhat concerned about students in lower-income areas dropping out of high school, and most (71%) support addressing the problem by increasing the number of support staff in these schools – even if it costs the state more money. Most residents (78%) are also concerned that lower-income students are more likely to fail the high school exit exam. Most (72%) also favor providing those students who fail initially with additional resources such as smaller classes and fully credentialed teachers – even if it costs more. About half of Californians (49%) believe the state should give more funding to schools in lower-income areas, even if it means less funding for other schools. Asians (72%) support this idea far more than any other group (blacks 57%, Latinos 52%, whites 45%).

Perhaps the most troubling finding is the almost desperate concern about education among black Californians. Eighty-seven percent of blacks are very concerned about high school drop-out rates, a much higher percentage than in any other group (Latinos 59%, Asians 51%, whites 50%). Likewise, the percentage of blacks (75%) who are very concerned about low-income students failing the high school exit exam is substantially higher than the percentage of Latinos (54%), Asians (39%), or whites (38%).

“This chasm between blacks and other groups is shocking,” says Baldassare. “Concern among blacks has reached a crisis stage.” An overwhelming belief that lower-income schools lack high quality teachers is one probable cause for this pessimism: Eight in ten blacks (83%) are very concerned that there is a shortage of good teachers in low-income schools, compared to 57 percent of all Californians. Among all residents, teaching children with limited English (47%) and the high school drop-out rate (65%) are more likely than teacher quality (27%) to be seen as a big problem.

The Purpose of Education

Californians also fail to agree on the goal of K-12 education. Although preparing students for college (26%) tops the list, there is support for a host of other goals, including teaching students the basics such as reading and math (19%), teaching students life skills (17%), preparing students for the workforce (14%), and preparing students to be good citizens (14%).

In addition to the overall lack of consensus, there are strong differences of opinion between groups. For example, Latinos and Asians (20% each) are far more likely than whites (10%) or blacks (8%) to believe that public education’s primary goal is preparing students to be good citizens. Parents of public school children (33%) are more likely than Californians as a whole (26%) to say that college preparation is the most important goal. Californians also differ on what schools should emphasize: Younger residents (61%) are more likely than older Californians (35%) to believe schools should offer a wide variety of courses rather than concentrate on fewer basics.

There are, however, public policies that most everyone agrees on – in particular, statewide testing. Majorities of Californians (72%) and public school parents (73%) across all regions think students should have to pass a statewide reading and math test to be promoted to the next grade, even if they have passing grades in their classes. Similar numbers believe that students should have to pass a statewide test to graduate from high school (all residents 73%, public school parents 75%).

Education and the 2006 Election

Education issues are poised to factor heavily in the 2006 gubernatorial campaign. Nearly all likely voters say candidates’ positions on K-12 education are very important (60%) or somewhat important (32%). And the campaign is beginning to attract interest: Six in 10 likely voters say they are currently following the news about

the governor's race at least fairly closely – up from 52 percent in March. Democratic primary voters currently favor State Controller Steve Westly (26%) over State Treasurer Phil Angelides (20%) in the race to challenge incumbent Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger this November. Still, over half of these likely voters remain undecided or say they would vote for someone else.

Proposition 82 – which would fund voluntary preschool education for all four-year-olds in California through a tax on wealthy state residents – is currently supported by 51 percent of likely voters, with 40 percent opposed. Democrats (64%) are more likely than independents (50%) and Republicans (38%), and Latinos (63%) are more likely than whites (47%), to back the measure. Is access to preschool perceived as a problem in the state today? Seven in 10 likely voters express at least some concern that children in lower-income areas may not be able to attend preschool.

More Key Findings

- **Immigration a Top Concern** (page 1)

Californians (27%) now rank immigration as the most important issue for the governor and legislature to work on in the coming year, followed by education and schools (24%).

- **State Rankings** (page 6)

Many more state residents believe California ranks below the average or near the bottom in student test scores (46%) than in per pupil spending (31%).

- **Music to Their Ears...** (page 12)

A majority of Californians (58%) say art and music are an important part of the public school curriculum. Blacks (79%) overwhelmingly support these programs.

- **Paradox of Proximity** (page 13)

In contrast to their pessimistic view of education quality in the state, most Californians (55%) – and especially parents of public school children (64%) – give their own neighborhood schools marks of A's or B's, while far fewer give D's or F's (11%).

About the Survey

This survey on education in California – made possible by funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation – is a special edition of the PPIC Statewide Survey. This is the second survey in a series intended to raise public awareness, inform decisionmakers, and stimulate public discussion about education-related issues facing the state. Findings of this survey are based on a telephone survey of 2,501 California adult residents interviewed between April 4 and April 19, 2006. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, or Chinese. The sampling error for the total sample is +/- 2%. The sampling error for subgroups is larger: For the 1,137 likely voters it is +/- 3% and for the 496 Democratic primary voters it is +/- 4.5%. For more information on methodology, see page 19.

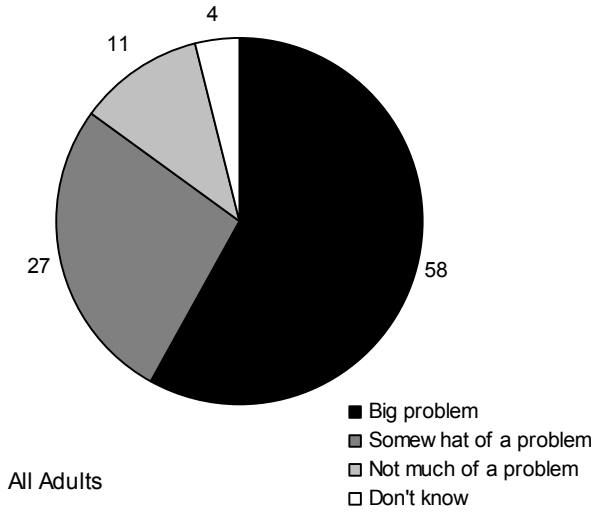
Mark Baldassare is research director at PPIC, where he holds the Arjay and Frances Fearing Miller Chair in Public Policy. He is founder of the PPIC Statewide Survey, which he has directed since 1998.

PPIC is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving public policy through objective, nonpartisan research on the economic, social, and political issues that affect Californians. The institute was established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett. PPIC does not take or support positions on any ballot measure or on any local, state, or federal legislation, nor does it endorse, support, or oppose any political parties or candidates for public office.

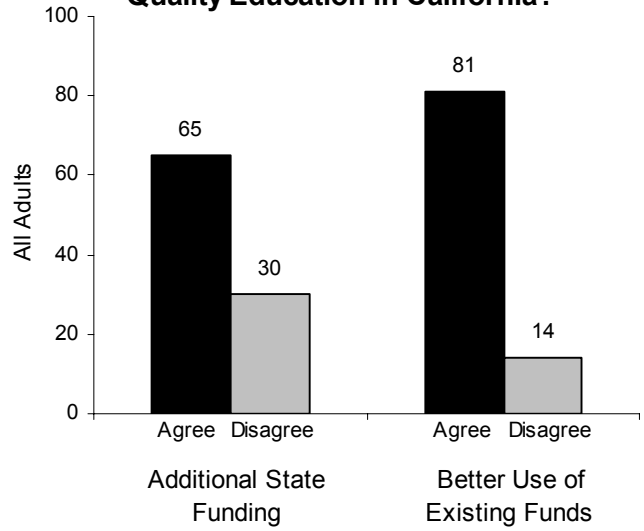
This report will appear on PPIC's website (www.ppic.org) on April 27.

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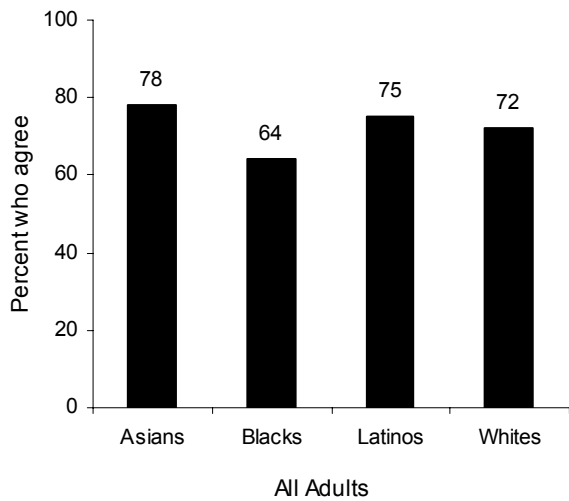
How Much of a Problem Is the Quality of Education in California's K-12 Public Schools?



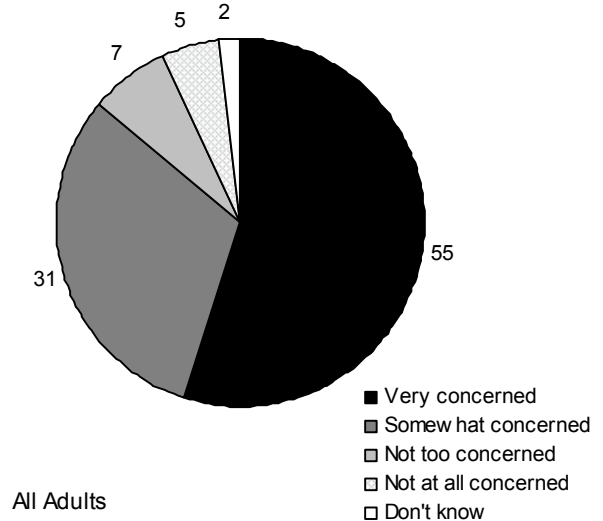
What Would Lead to Higher Quality Education in California?



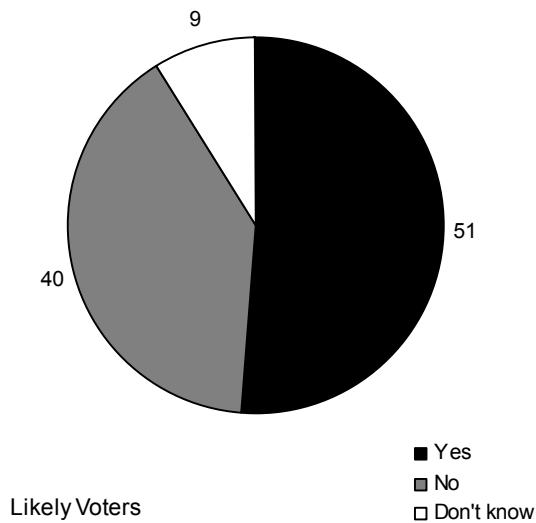
Students Should Pass Statewide Tests Before Graduating High School



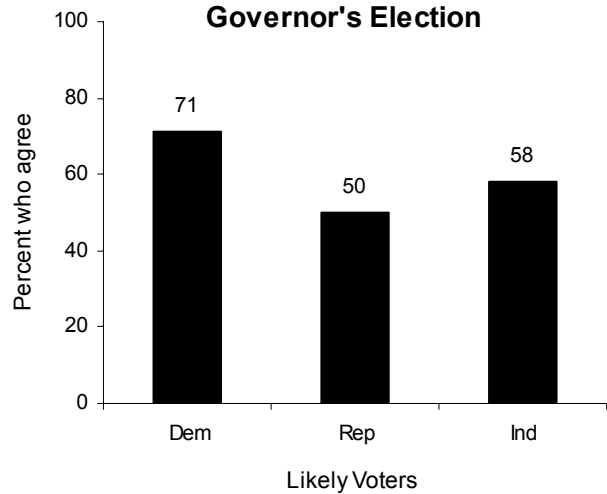
Concern Over Drop-Out Rate in Lower-Income Areas



Proposition 82—Preschool Initiative



Candidates' Positions on Education Are "Very Important" in 2006 Governor's Election



Perceptions of California's Public Schools

Overall Conditions

Californians have consistently named K-12 public education as one of their top concerns when they think about the state's most important issues. When asked in the current survey to name the one issue facing California today that is most important for the governor and legislature to work on in 2006, residents ranked only immigration (27%) ahead of schools and education (24%). In January, 25 percent named education as their top issue, followed by the state budget (12%). Today, education is ranked as one of the top two issues across regions, and across political, racial/ethnic, and demographic groups.

Moreover, nearly six in 10 Californians perceive the quality of education in California's K-12 public schools today as a big problem. This perception is widely held by residents across the regions of the state, with San Francisco Bay Area residents leading other areas. Strong majorities across political parties share in this belief. Just over half of public school parents hold this view, and the perception that the quality of education is a big problem increases with age, education and income.

How have perceptions of school quality changed over time? The percentage of residents today who say the quality of education in K-12 public schools is a big problem is higher now than at any time during the eight years of the PPIC Statewide Survey (46% in May 1998, 53% in January 2000, 52% in January 2001, 49% in July 2001, 51% in December 2001, 48% in October 2002, 52% in April 2005, 58% today).

“How much of a problem is the quality of education in California's K-12 public schools today?”

	All Adults	Region					Public School Parents
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	Inland Empire	
Big problem	58%	51%	67%	60%	52%	58%	53%
Somewhat of a problem	27	31	24	26	29	27	29
Not much of a problem	11	15	6	10	15	10	16
Don't know	4	3	3	4	4	5	2

In the current survey, we also asked residents if the quality of education in K-12 public schools has improved in the past two years. One in six adults (17%) says that the quality has improved, while seven in 10 say it has stayed the same (40%) or gotten worse (32%). The belief in K-12 improvement is held by less than one in four across regions and in every age, education, income, and racial/ethnic group. About one in five public school parents says the quality of education in K-12 schools has improved. While the overall patterns across political groups are similar, Democrats and independents are more likely than Republicans to say that the quality of education has gotten worse in the past two years.

“In the past two years, do you think the quality of education in California's K-12 public schools has improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same?”

	All Adults	Party			Public School Parents
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Improved	17%	15%	18%	11%	21%
Stayed the same	40	37	44	43	43
Gotten worse	32	41	29	37	30
Don't know	11	7	9	9	6

Approval Ratings

Given the priority that Californians place on K-12 public education for the work of the governor and legislature this year, how do they rate the current performance of their state elected officials?

Governor Schwarzenegger has a higher approval rating for his overall job performance (38%) than for his handling of K-12 education (29%). Half of Californians say they disapprove of both his overall job performance (50%) and his handling of K-12 education (51%). One in five has no opinion about his handling of education. Opinions of the governor's handling of K-12 education vary sharply along party lines (64% of Democrats disapprove, 49% of Republicans approve), and whites and Asians give him higher approval ratings than blacks and Latinos on this issue. Still, only one in three likely voters says they approve of the way the governor is handling the K-12 public school system.

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling...”

		All Adults	Party			Race/Ethnicity				Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
<i>His job as governor of California?</i>	Approve	38%	25%	71%	41%	39%	19%	21%	50%	46%
	Disapprove	50	65	21	44	36	73	70	38	44
	Don't know	12	10	8	15	25	8	9	12	10
<i>The state's kindergarten through 12th grade public education system?</i>	Approve	29	18	49	28	30	15	23	33	33
	Disapprove	51	64	28	52	34	71	64	43	49
	Don't know	20	18	23	20	36	14	13	24	18

The state legislature's ratings on handling K-12 education are much lower than the governor's ratings. Solid majorities of adults (55%) and likely voters (65%) say they disapprove of the legislature's handling of K-12 education, while approval stands at 21 percent for adults and 16 percent for likely voters. Unlike the ratings of the governor, disapproval ratings across parties are similar. Latinos and Asians offer higher approval ratings than whites and blacks. As for State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, who is up for re-election this year, more than four in 10 adults (45%) and likely voters (41%) have no opinion when asked to rate his performance. While just one in five adults (21%) and likely voters (19%) say they approve of O'Connell's handling of K-12 schools, his disapproval ratings among adults (34%) and likely voters (40%) are well below those of the governor and legislature for K-12 public schools. There is little partisan difference in the approval ratings of O'Connell. Latinos (31%) give him more positive ratings than other racial/ethnic groups.

“Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that _____ is handling the state's K-12 public education system?”

		All Adults	Party			Race/Ethnicity				Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
<i>The California State Legislature</i>	Approve	21%	18%	17%	17%	25%	16%	31%	17%	16%
	Disapprove	55	62	61	60	37	69	50	58	65
	Don't know	24	20	22	23	38	15	19	25	19
<i>California Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell</i>	Approve	21	19	20	16	23	17	31	17	19
	Disapprove	34	36	37	38	20	53	33	34	40
	Don't know	45	45	43	46	57	30	36	49	41

Adequacy and Efficiency of State Funding

Large majorities of California adults (65%) and likely voters (58%) believe that additional state funding would lead to higher quality K-12 education in California. However, there is also a deep partisan divide on this issue, with solid majorities of Democrats (75%) and independents (66%) agreeing with this view but half of Republicans (51%) disagreeing. Whites are much less likely than other racial/ethnic groups to believe that more state funding would result in higher quality education. The belief that more money would have a positive effect on public school quality tends to decline with age, homeownership, income, and years at the current residence. However, 71 percent of public school parents say that additional state funding would lead to higher quality K-12 education.

“Additional state funding would lead to higher quality K-12 education in California?”

	All Adults	Party			Race/Ethnicity				Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Agree	65%	75%	44%	66%	82%	74%	75%	57%	58%
Disagree	30	21	51	31	15	23	20	37	38
Don't know	5	4	5	3	3	3	5	6	4

Eight in 10 California adults (81%) and likely voters (83%) believe that better use of existing funds would lead to higher quality K-12 education in the state—reflecting the fact there is more consensus about the effects of greater efficiency than about the effects of additional funding. In this case, there are no significant differences across political parties. About eight in 10 residents in all racial/ethnic groups believe that better use of existing state funds would lead to higher quality education. Moreover, residents across all regions and age, income, and education groups agree with this view, as do 81 percent of public school parents.

“Better use of existing state funds would lead to higher quality K-12 education in California?”

	All Adults	Party			Race/Ethnicity				Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Agree	81%	83%	80%	82%	82%	86%	78%	82%	83%
Disagree	14	13	15	13	13	11	17	13	14
Don't know	5	4	5	5	5	3	5	5	3

More than half of Californians (57%) agree with both statements—that is, additional state funding and better use of existing funds would lead to higher quality K-12 education. One in five residents (21%) believes in the better use of existing funds but not the use of in additional state funding. Six percent believe in additional state funding but not in the better use of existing funds. Only 8 percent disagree with both statements—saying that neither additional state funds nor the better use of existing funds would lead to higher quality education in California.

Findings on a separate question are consistent with these responses. When asked to choose between two options, residents are more likely to say that we can improve the quality of K-12 education by using the money we now spend more wisely, rather than saying that we will have to spend more money (59% to 27%). There are political divisions on the question of whether improvements can be achieved solely by spending money more wisely (73% of Republicans, 58% of independents, 50% of Democrats). These results were similar to those in PPIC's April 2005 survey.

Teachers and Students

We asked residents to rate the seriousness of three issues affecting K-12 public education—the high school drop-out rate, teaching children with limited English language skills, and teacher quality. Two in three adults describe the high school drop-out rate as a big problem, nearly half say teaching children with limited English is a big problem, and about one in four identifies teacher quality as a big problem. Still, majorities of Californians describe each issue as at least somewhat of a problem. They are most likely to say that teacher quality is not really a problem in K-12 public schools.

“I’m going to read you a list of issues people have mentioned when talking about California’s K-12 public schools today. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not really a problem. How about...”

	The high school drop-out rate?	Teaching children with limited English language skills?	Teacher quality?
Big problem	65%	47%	27%
Somewhat of a problem	21	33	41
Not really a problem	5	16	26
Don't know	9	4	6

While many residents across all regions and demographic groups rate the high school drop-out rate as a big problem today, there are strong racial/ethnic and regional differences. Blacks (86%) and Latinos (76%) are far more likely than whites (60%) or Asians (50%) to say the high school drop-out rate is a big problem. Residents in Los Angeles (74%) are the most likely to say this while those in the San Francisco Bay Area (59%) are the least likely to hold this view. The perception that the drop-out rate is a big problem declines somewhat with income but not with age. Solid majorities of Democrats (69%), Republicans (61%), and independents (61%) say this is a big problem.

“How about the high school drop-out rate?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Big problem	65%	50%	86%	76%	60%	65%
Somewhat of a problem	21	25	8	17	25	22
Not really a problem	5	9	1	4	6	6
Don't know	9	16	5	3	9	7

Likely voters (58%) are more likely than all adults (47%) to say that teaching children with limited English language skills is a big problem. Partisan differences exist, with more Republicans (61%) saying this is a big problem than Democrats (50%). This perception increases with age, and is higher among those born inside than outside the U.S. (53% to 32%). About half of residents in the Inland Empire (51%) and Orange/San Diego Counties (50%) say that teaching English language learners is a big problem, while fewer in the Central Valley (48%), Los Angeles (45%), and San Francisco Bay Area (44%) hold this view.

Californians differ along racial/ethnic lines when asked about teacher quality in K-12 public schools. Blacks (47%) are far more likely than Asians (26%), whites (26%), and Latinos (25%), to say teacher quality is a big problem. Republicans (33%) and conservatives (31%) are somewhat more likely than Democrats (28%) and liberals (25%) to agree. Still, fewer than half of Californians across all regional, age, education, and income groups say teacher quality is a big problem.

Education Goals and Student Achievement

There is a lack of consensus about the most important goal of the state's K-12 education system. While one in four adults (26%) believes the goal should be preparing students for college, 19 percent say teaching them the basics and 17 percent say teaching life skills. Fewer adults say preparing students for the workforce (14%) or to be good citizens (14%) should be the main goal of the K-12 education system.

Public school parents (33%) are more likely than all adults to say that college preparation should be the most important goal of public education. Residents of Orange/San Diego Counties and Los Angeles (30% each) are more likely than residents in other regions of the state to say college preparation is the most important goal. There are significant racial/ethnic differences, with more Latinos (36%) than blacks (27%), Asians (26%), and whites (20%) saying that preparing students for college should be the primary goal. While 36 percent of 18-to-34-year-olds say college preparation is most important goal, only 13 percent of those 55 and older agree. By contrast, adults 55 and older are most likely to say that teaching the basics should be the main goal of the K-12 public education system.

"In your opinion, what is the most important goal of California's K-12 public education system?"

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Preparing students for college	26%	26%	27%	36%	20%	33%
Teaching students the basics	19	20	18	12	22	16
Teaching students life skills	17	19	22	14	18	15
Preparing students for the workforce	14	11	13	10	16	12
Preparing students to be good citizens	14	20	8	20	10	15
All of the above (volunteered)	6	3	7	5	7	5
Other/Don't know	4	1	5	3	7	4

How do Californians rate the performance of the state's K-12 system in terms of achieving some of these goals? Just over half of adults (52%) say the state's K-12 system does an excellent or good job in teaching the basics. When it comes to preparing students for college, more than half (53%) say the state's education system is doing a not-so-good or poor job. Only one in three adults says the state's K-12 schools are doing an excellent or good job in preparing students for the workforce. Fewer than half of public school parents give excellent or good ratings for preparing students for college (48%) and the workforce (41%), but 63 percent give these ratings for teaching the basics. Across racial/ethnic groups, blacks are more likely than others to say the education system is doing a not-so-good or poor job for all three goals.

"Please tell me how you would rate California's K-12 public education system overall in achieving the following goals. How about in..."

	Teaching students the basics, such as reading, writing, and mathematics?	Preparing students for college?	Preparing students for jobs and the workforce?
Excellent	8%	6%	4%
Good	44	35	29
Not so good	29	36	40
Poor	15	17	20
Other/Don't know	4	6	7

State's Relative Rankings

Many Californians continue to believe that the state's per pupil spending and student test scores lag behind the rest of the nation. Public perceptions that the state's spending per pupil is below average have declined somewhat over time, but their views about lagging student test scores have not changed.

When comparing California to other states, one in four Californians believes that per pupil spending is near the top or above average, three in 10 say it is average, and three in 10 say it is below average or near the bottom. Comparing current findings to those of PPIC's Statewide Surveys over eight years, there is a recent decline in the percentage of adults who say that spending is below average or near the bottom (47% in April 1998; 51% in February 2000; 48% in January 2002; 37% in October 2002; 44% in April 2005; 31% today). The belief that spending is below par increases with education and income. As for political groups, Democrats (45%) are more likely than Republicans (26%) to say that state per pupil spending is lower than average. According to *Rankings & Estimates* published by the National Education Association in 2005, California ranks 29th out of the 50 states and Washington, D.C. in per pupil spending.

When asked to rank California student test scores against those in other states, 46 percent of residents say the state is below average or near the bottom, 32 percent say that it is about average, and 11 percent say it is above average or better. Negative perceptions of California test scores have declined somewhat since April 1998; however, in all five PPIC education surveys over the past eight years, around half of all adults say the state is below par in student test scores. Today, there are no differences between Democrats (54% below average or near the bottom) and Republicans (53% below average or near the bottom). The perception that student test scores in California are lower than the national average increases with age, education, and income. Whites (54%) and blacks (69%) are more likely than Latinos (29%) and Asians (34%) to hold this view. According to the *Nation's Report Card, 2005*, published by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, California's students score below the national average on reading and math tests.

For per pupil spending, 20 percent of public school parents say that spending in California is higher than average, 30 percent say it is average, and 34 percent say it is lower than average. For student test scores, 12 percent of this group believes that California is higher than average, 36 percent say average, and 42 percent say lower than average.

"Where do you think California currently ranks in..."

		Apr 98	Feb 00	Jan 02	Oct 02	Apr 05	Apr 06
Per pupil spending for K-12 public schools? Compared to other states, is California's spending...	Near the top	5%	6%	6%	9%	9%	11%
	Above average	9	10	9	11	10	13
	Average	28	24	24	31	25	29
	Below average	27	29	28	23	26	20
	Near the bottom	20	22	20	14	18	11
	Don't know	11	9	13	12	12	16
Student test scores for K-12 public schools? Compared to other states, are California's student test scores...	Near the top	2	–	2	3	3	3
	Above average	8	–	6	8	8	8
	Average	32	–	29	33	31	32
	Below average	39	–	39	36	35	33
	Near the bottom	14	–	16	13	14	13
	Don't know	5	–	8	7	9	11

Attitudes Toward Education Policy

Student Testing

Californians continue to be highly supportive of statewide student testing in public schools. Seven in 10 residents believe that students should have to pass statewide tests before they are promoted from grade to grade (72%) and before they can graduate from high school (73%). About one in four opposes requiring statewide tests for both grade promotion and high school graduation. These results are similar to those found in January 2002 (grade promotion 76%, high school graduation 74%) and April 2005 (grade promotion 72%, high school graduation 72%).

Equal proportions of all adults and public school parents believe that students should have to pass statewide tests in both reading and math before being promoted to the next grade. Support for this policy tends to increase with age, but decrease with level of education. Support is higher among Asians (78%) and Latinos (76%) than among whites (69%) and blacks (64%). Republicans (76%) and independents (72%) show more support than Democrats (64%). Still, more than six in 10 in all regional, political, and demographic groups say students should have to pass statewide tests before being promoted to the next grade.

“Do you think that students should or should not have to pass statewide tests in reading and math before they can be promoted to the next grade, even if they have passing grades in their classes?”

	All Adults	Region					Public School Parents
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	Inland Empire	
Should	72%	72%	66%	75%	77%	74%	73%
Should not	24	24	29	21	20	24	24
Don't know	4	4	5	4	3	2	3

Support for a statewide high school exit exam is also strong across all regional, political, and demographic groups. Nevertheless, there are differences in the level of support for this policy. Regionally, support is lowest in the San Francisco Bay Area (68%). Among demographic groups, support is greater among Asians (78%), Latinos (75%), and whites (72%) than among blacks (64%), and is stronger among those born outside than inside the U.S. (81% to 69%). Republicans (76%) and independents (74%) are somewhat more likely than Democrats (68%) to support a high school exit exam. Support declines somewhat as education level increases. Seventy-five percent of public school parents support a high school exit exam.

Still, it is important to note that only 14 percent of adults are very confident that standardized tests are an accurate indicator of a student's progress and abilities, while 49 percent are somewhat confident.

“Do you think that students should or should not have to pass statewide tests before they can graduate from high school, even if they have passing grades in their classes?”

	All Adults	Region					Public School Parents
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	Inland Empire	
Should	73%	73%	68%	74%	76%	78%	75%
Should not	24	23	29	23	21	20	22
Don't know	3	4	3	3	3	2	3

California High School Exit Exam

In 1999, legislation was passed that created the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). The 2005-06 school year is the first year that high school seniors must pass the CAHSEE to receive a diploma. Despite the high level of support for an exit exam, nearly eight in 10 Californians say they are very (45%) or somewhat concerned (33%) that students in lower-income areas will have a higher failure rate than other students. Public school parents show a similar level of concern about this issue.

Among racial/ethnic groups, concern about higher failure rates is highest among blacks (75%), followed by Latinos (54%), Asians (39%), and whites (38%). Democrats (54%) and independents (48%) are far more likely than Republicans (30%) to be very concerned about this issue. Half of those earning less than \$40,000 a year are very concerned about it (51%). Concern is higher among residents in Los Angeles (52%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (51%) than elsewhere. Among those who oppose a high school exit exam, 54 percent are very concerned that students in lower-income areas will have higher failure rates.

“Students are first required to take the California High School Exit exam in 10th grade and, if they fail, can take the exam up to five more times. How concerned are you that students in lower-income areas will have a higher failure rate on the California High School Exit Exam than other students?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Very concerned	45%	39%	75%	54%	38%	47%
Somewhat concerned	33	41	14	33	34	33
Not too concerned	11	9	4	6	15	10
Not at all concerned	9	6	7	6	10	8
Don't know	2	5	0	1	3	2

How to address the problem of low pass rates? One proposal would require high schools to provide smaller English and math classes, taught by fully credentialed teachers, for students who initially fail the exam. Strong majorities of adults (72%) and likely voters (67%) say they favor this policy, even if it costs the state more money. Support is strong in all regional, political, and demographic groups, although it is lower among Republicans (60%) than independents (70%) or Democrats (80%); it is also lower among whites (68%) than Latinos (79%), blacks, or Asians (80% each). Men (69%) are slightly less in favor of this policy than women (76%), and support decreases with age and income.

Of those who are very concerned about the failure rates on the high school exit exam in lower-income areas, 84 percent favor this proposal.

“For students who initially fail the California High School Exit Exam, would you favor or oppose requiring their local schools to provide them with smaller English and math class sizes taught by fully credentialed teachers until they pass the test, even if it costs the state more money?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor	72%	80%	60%	70%	67%
Oppose	23	16	36	26	28
Don't know	5	4	4	4	5

High School Drop-Out Rate

Californians are highly concerned that students in lower-income areas are more likely than other students to drop out of high school. Nearly nine in 10 residents say they are either very (55%) or somewhat concerned (31%) about this problem. Public school parents have levels of concern similar to the general public. All demographic groups express concern about this issue, but blacks (87%) are significantly more likely than Latinos (59%), Asians (51%), or whites (50%) to say they are very concerned. More Democrats (70%) and independents (58%) are very concerned than Republicans (40%), and residents in the San Francisco Bay Area (62%) and Los Angeles (60%) are more likely to be very concerned than residents elsewhere. Concern with the drop-out rate increases somewhat with higher education levels.

“How concerned are you that students in lower-income areas have a higher drop-out rate from high school than other students?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Very concerned	55%	51%	87%	59%	50%	53%
Somewhat concerned	31	38	7	32	33	35
Not too concerned	7	6	2	4	10	6
Not at all concerned	5	3	2	5	5	5
Don't know	2	2	2	0	2	1

One idea for improving the graduation rate among students in lower-income areas is to increase the number of school support staff, such as counselors, mentors, and social workers. Seventy-one percent of Californians, 62 percent of likely voters, and 76 percent of public school parents favor this idea, even if it costs the state more money. Majorities in all political and demographic groups express support, but Republicans (54%) are far less supportive than Democrats (78%) or independents (68%). Support is lower among whites (62%) than blacks (81%), Asians (81%), or Latinos (84%). Increasing school support staff is favored more in Los Angeles (76%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (74%) than in the Central Valley (68%), the Inland Empire (66%), or Orange/San Diego Counties (66%). Women show more support for this idea than men (74% to 68%); support decreases with age and income.

Among residents who are very concerned about the drop-out rate among students in lower-income areas, 81 percent favor increasing the number of support staff.

“One idea that has been suggested for improving the graduation rate among students in lower-income areas is to increase the number of school support staff, such as counselors, mentors, and social workers. Would you favor or oppose this idea, even if it cost the state more money?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor	71%	78%	54%	68%	62%
Oppose	25	19	41	29	34
Don't know	4	3	5	3	4

English Language Learners

Californians support the concept of statewide standardized testing in the public schools, but a majority worry that the state’s students who are not proficient in English will score lower on the tests than other students. Eight in 10 residents are concerned about the performance of English language learners, with 43 percent saying they are very concerned. Concern is similarly high among public school parents. A strong majority in all racial/ethnic groups are at least somewhat concerned, but blacks (56%) and Latinos (51%) are more likely to be very concerned than Asians (43%) or whites (38%). Those who say they are very concerned increase with age; concern is higher among women than men (48% to 39%). Those born outside the U.S. are somewhat more likely than those born in the U.S. to be very concerned (48% to 41%) about this issue, while concern decreases with education and income.

“How concerned are you that English language learners in California’s schools today score lower on standardized tests than other students?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Very concerned	43%	43%	56%	51%	38%	44%
Somewhat concerned	37	48	28	38	37	37
Not too concerned	10	5	8	6	13	10
Not at all concerned	7	2	7	4	10	8
Don't know	3	2	1	1	2	1

Eight years after the passage of Proposition 227, which restricted the use of bilingual education in the state’s K-12 public schools, two in three Californians (66%) and 58 percent of likely voters now say they favor giving teachers greater flexibility in using bilingual instruction to improve the academic performance of English language learners. Among public school parents, 70 percent favor this idea. Flexibility is favored by strong majorities of Democrats (70%) and independents (66%), but by only 46 percent of Republicans. Latinos (81%), blacks (75%), and Asians (67%) are much more in favor of giving teachers this flexibility than are whites (57%). A majority in all regions support this idea, and support is highest in Los Angeles (72%). Support is higher for those born outside than inside the U.S. (77% to 61%) and declines with age and income.

Among residents who are very concerned about the scores of English language learners on standardized tests, 73 percent favor greater flexibility in bilingual instruction.

“To try to improve the academic performance of English language learners, would you favor or oppose giving teachers more flexibility about when to use bilingual instruction and when to use English-only instruction in the classroom?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Favor giving teachers more flexibility	66%	70%	46%	66%	58%
Oppose giving teachers more flexibility	29	24	48	31	36
Don't know	5	6	6	3	6

Teacher Quality

The distribution of quality teachers in California’s schools is a significant problem, according to state residents. Fifty-seven percent say they are very concerned that schools in lower-income areas have fewer good teachers than do schools in wealthier areas. Among public school parents, a similar six in 10 are very concerned about this issue and almost nine in 10 are at least somewhat concerned. In all racial/ethnic groups, at least half of all respondents say they are very concerned, but blacks (83%) and Latinos (64%) express greater concern than do Asians (52%) and whites (50%). Concern is considerably higher among Democrats (68%) and independents (54%) than Republicans (40%), and is greater in Los Angeles (64%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (61%) than elsewhere. Women are more likely than men to be very concerned about this issue (61% to 53%) and concern decreases with age and income.

“How concerned are you that schools in lower-income areas have a shortage of good teachers compared to schools in wealthier areas?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Very concerned	57%	52%	83%	64%	50%	60%
Somewhat concerned	29	41	12	25	34	29
Not too concerned	6	3	1	4	8	4
Not at all concerned	5	2	3	5	6	6
Don't know	3	2	1	2	2	1

Californians overwhelmingly support giving teachers additional incentives to work in lower-income areas, with 76 percent in favor of providing additional training and professional development and 66 percent in favor of paying higher salaries to attract and retain teachers, even if these measures cost the state more money. Likely voters also strongly support these policies (training 69%, higher salaries 64%). Although majorities in all parties support both of these proposals, support is higher among Democrats and independents than Republicans. Public school parents are highly supportive of these proposals, with 80 percent favoring additional training and 71 percent backing higher salaries. Strong majorities in all regions and demographic groups support both proposals, although support for both declines as age increases.

Among residents who are very concerned about shortages of good teachers in lower-income areas, 85 percent favor additional training and 75 percent support raising salaries to attract and retain teachers.

“Should local schools in lower-income areas...”

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
Provide additional training and professional development to teachers, even if it costs the state more money?	Yes	76%	80%	60%	75%	69%
	No	21	17	36	22	27
	Don't know	3	3	4	3	4
Pay higher salaries to attract and retain teachers, even if it costs the state more money?	Yes	66	73	57	66	64
	No	31	25	40	31	33
	Don't know	3	2	3	3	3

Curriculum and Standards

Californians are divided in their views about what should be taught in the state’s public schools. Half favor providing a wide variety of courses, while 47 percent favor concentrating on the “basics,” such as English, mathematics, history, and science. Public school parents are more likely to favor a wide variety of courses (53%) over concentrating on the basics (44%). Curriculum preferences vary sharply by age: Six in 10 older residents say schools should focus on the basics, but a majority of younger people favor offering a variety of courses. Across political groups, a slight majority of Democrats (52%) support a varied curriculum, while a majority of Republicans (56%) favor fewer, more basic courses. Among likely voters, the basics are somewhat favored over variety (52% to 45%). Nationwide, 61 percent of all adults favor variety, while 37 percent prefer the basics, according to a recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll (September 2005).

When asked how important it is for their local public schools to include art and music as part of the curriculum, six in 10 adults (58%) and likely voters (61%) say it is very important. Art and music are more likely to be considered very important by blacks (79%) than whites (60%), Latinos (54%) or Asians (48%). Among the adults who favor a varied curriculum, 69 percent say art and music are very important.

“Public schools can offer students a wide variety of courses, or they can concentrate on fewer basic courses, such as English, mathematics, history, and science. Which of these two policies do you think your local public schools should follow in planning the curriculum?”

	All Adults	Age			Public School Parents
		18-34	35-54	55+	
Wide variety of courses	50%	61%	51%	35%	53%
Fewer but more basic courses	47	37	45	61	44
Don't know	3	2	4	4	3

Californians are divided on actions to be taken when a school district consistently fails to meet minimum standards for student achievement. Forty-three percent think the state should take over the failing district, 42 percent say that additional federal or state funds should be provided to help improve the district’s performance, and 15 percent are undecided. Among likely voters, 46 percent prefer the state to take over and 37 percent opt for additional funding. Democrats are more likely to favor additional funding, while Republicans say a state take-over would be more effective; independents are somewhat divided. Among public school parents, 46 percent favor additional funding, while 41 percent prefer a state take-over.

“If a local school district fails to meet the minimum standards of student achievement over a set number of years, what do you think would be the most effective solution?”

	All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
The state should take over the school district	43%	36%	53%	47%	46%
Additional federal or state funds should be provided	42	51	28	41	37
Don't know	15	13	19	12	17

Fiscal and Political Preferences

Local School Quality

Although most Californians believe that the quality of education in the state's K-12 public schools is a problem, eight in 10 residents give their local public schools passing grades of C or higher. Over half (55%) offer relatively high (A or B) grades, while about one in four gives a C grade. About one in ten gives out D's or F's.

The proportion of A's and B's given today by all adults (55%) is similar to April 2005 (51%), somewhat higher than October 2002 (49%), and much higher than August 2000 (42%). In August 2000, 21 percent of all adults were rating their local public schools with a D (13%) or an F (8%).

Public school parents are more generous than adults overall in grading local public schools, with nearly two in three parents giving A or B grades. About one in four parents gives an A grade.

Across the state's regions, residents of the San Francisco Bay Area (51%) and Los Angeles (50%) are the least likely to give grades of A or B, while about six in 10 adults in the other major regions give A's and B's. Very few residents in any of the five major regions give their local public schools an F.

However, there are significant differences among racial/ethnic groups, with Asians (62%), Latinos (60%), and whites (54%) more likely than blacks (31%) to give their local public schools a grade of B or higher. Moreover, residents born outside the U.S. (62%) are more likely than those born inside the U.S. (52%) to give a B or better.

The public's rating of neighborhood schools improves somewhat as income increases; however, ratings vary only slightly by age, education, homeownership, or the number of years at the current residence.

There are no major differences across voter groups in local school ratings. For instance, 55 percent of likely voters give out grades of A or B, and Democrats (53%) and liberals (57%) are about as likely as Republicans (57%) and conservatives (56%) to offer grades of B or better.

**“Overall, how would you rate the quality of public schools in your neighborhood today?
If you had to give your local public schools a grade, would it be A, B, C, D, or F?”**

	All Adults	Region					Public School Parents
		Central Valley	SF Bay Area	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	Inland Empire	
A	19%	20%	19%	15%	25%	20%	24%
B	36	38	32	35	38	38	40
C	27	26	28	29	23	27	24
D	7	6	9	8	5	6	6
F	4	4	4	6	2	5	4
Don't know	7	6	8	7	7	4	2

Local School Funding

Most Californians have positive impressions of the quality of their neighborhood schools, but about half of all adults (49%) and over half of public school parents (56%) believe that the current level of state funding for local schools is inadequate. This assessment is similar to PPIC’s survey findings in April 2005 (51% all adults; 59% public school parents). By comparison, at least six in 10 or more adults said that funding was inadequate in five earlier PPIC surveys, from April 1998 to January 2004.

Today, the perception of inadequate state funding is more widely held among public school parents than all adults. This belief declines with age and income, and is lower among whites (45%) and Asians (41%) than blacks (62%) and Latinos (56%). More than half of residents in the San Francisco Bay Area (56%) and Los Angeles (54%) say state funding is inadequate, compared to about four in 10 in other regions. Democrats and independents are more likely than Republicans to say this.

“Do you think the current level of state funding for your local public schools is more than enough, just enough, or not enough?”

	All Adults	Party			Public School Parents
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
More than enough	10%	6%	20%	10%	7%
Just enough	32	26	41	30	32
Not enough	49	61	32	53	56
Don't know	9	7	7	7	5

The April 2005 PPIC survey found that three in four Californians perceive schools in lower-income areas as having fewer resources—good teachers and classroom materials—than those in wealthier areas. Californians today are divided (49% yes, 44% no) when asked if schools in lower-income areas should get more state funding to pay for these resources, even if it means less funding for other schools. There are sharp differences across parties, with a majority of Democrats (54%) in favor of this idea and a majority of Republicans (57%) opposed to it. Whites are divided on this issue, while majorities in other racial/ethnic groups support it.

“Should schools in lower-income areas get more funding from the state to pay for teachers and classroom materials, even if it means less funding for other schools?”

	All Adults	Party			Race/Ethnicity			
		Dem	Rep	Ind	Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites
Yes	49%	54%	37%	50%	72%	57%	52%	45%
No	44	39	57	45	22	38	43	49
Don't know	7	7	6	5	6	5	5	6

Funding to improve facilities in lower-income areas is more popular, with 53 percent in support of this idea, even if it means less funding for other schools; forty-one percent are opposed. Public support is higher in the San Francisco Bay Area (57%) and Los Angeles (56%) than in other regions. Solid majorities of Asians, blacks, and Latinos support this idea, while whites are divided. Once again, there are sharp differences between Democrats (58% yes) and Republicans (52% no). Parents of public school children are equally in favor of giving more resources to lower-income areas for school facilities (52% yes, 44% no) and for teachers and classroom materials (51% yes, 44% no).

State Revenues

Many Californians complain about the lack of state funding for their local schools and believe that more funding would lead to higher quality education. However, willingness to increase state taxes for public schools depends on who will be paying those taxes. Residents were asked about three proposals to increase state revenues for California’s K-12 public schools: raising the income tax rate on the wealthiest Californians, raising the state sales tax, and increasing property taxes.

Raising the income tax rate on the wealthiest Californians is the only proposal that enjoys majority support: Sixty-four percent of all adults and 60 percent of likely voters favor this proposal. Democrats and independents strongly support this type of tax increase, while a majority of Republicans are opposed to it. Still, a majority in all regional, racial/ethnic, and demographic groups support this idea. Across income categories, seven in 10 of those with incomes under \$80,000 support raising the top rate for the wealthy, compared with six in 10 of those earning \$80,000 or more. Support declines with age. Among public school parents, 64 percent support a tax on the wealthy and 33 percent are opposed to it.

In contrast, a solid majority of residents strongly oppose raising the state sales tax to provide additional public school funding. Opposition comes both from all adults and from likely voters (63% each). Across voter groups, six in 10 Democrats and independents are opposed, as are seven in 10 Republicans. There is majority opposition across regions and among age, education, income, and racial/ethnic groups, with little variation within these categories. Among public school parents, 33 percent support a state sales tax increase and 65 percent are opposed.

An even greater percentage of all adults (72%) and likely voters (74%) oppose raising property taxes to provide additional funding for California’s schools. Two in three Democrats, seven in 10 independents, and eight in 10 Republicans are against this proposal. There is majority opposition among both renters (67%) and homeowners (76%) and across age, education, income, racial/ethnic and regional categories, with little support found in any group. Among public school parents, 24 percent support raising property taxes and 74 percent are opposed.

“Here are some ideas that have been suggested to raise state revenues to provide additional funding for California’s K-12 public schools. For each of the following, please say if you favor or oppose the proposal. How about...”

		All Adults	Party			Likely Voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
<i>Raising the top rate of the state income tax paid by the wealthiest Californians?</i>	Favor	64%	79%	41%	69%	60%
	Oppose	33	19	56	30	38
	Don't know	3	2	3	1	2
<i>Raising the state sales tax?</i>	Favor	34	39	28	36	36
	Oppose	63	59	70	62	63
	Don't know	3	2	2	2	1
<i>Increasing property taxes?</i>	Favor	25	31	15	27	24
	Oppose	72	67	83	71	74
	Don't know	3	2	2	2	2

Trust in State Government

In state government, who should make budget choices regarding California’s K-12 public schools? A higher percentage of Californians prefer the Democrats in the legislature (37%) over Governor Schwarzenegger (17%) or the Republicans in the legislature (19%), while one in four are not sure. Likely voters express the same preferences. However, preferences are sharply divided along party lines. Over six in 10 Democrats prefer to have legislators from their own party making budget choices on this issue, while Republicans are somewhat divided between their members in the legislature (39%) and the governor (33%). Meanwhile, 33 percent of independents favor Democratic legislators over the governor (20%) and GOP legislators (14%), while three in 10 are undecided. Residents of Democratic-leaning Los Angeles (44%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (41%) express stronger preferences than residents in other regions for the approach of the Democratic legislators. Across racial/ethnic groups, preference for Democratic legislators is higher among blacks (57%) and Latinos (44%) than among Asians (33%) and whites (31%). Parents of public school children choose Democratic legislators (37%) over GOP legislators (21%) and the governor (15%) in making budget choices for California’s public schools.

“When it comes to making budget choices this year for California’s K-12 public schools, both in deciding how much Californians should pay in taxes and how much funding to provide for specific programs, whose approach do you most prefer?”

	All Adults	Party			Public School Parents
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Democrats in the legislature	37%	63%	8%	33%	37%
Republicans in the legislature	19	6	39	14	21
Governor Schwarzenegger	17	9	33	20	15
Other (<i>volunteered</i>)	3	2	3	5	3
Don’t know	24	20	17	28	24

Still, it is important to note that only one in eight Californians (12%) say they trust state government the most when it comes to making spending decisions at their local schools. For such decisions, the local school district is preferred over the state government by all adults, by public school parents, in all the major regions, and across age, education, income, political, and racial/ethnic groups. Californians also trust teachers over the state government when it comes to making fiscal decisions.

“Who do you trust the most to make decisions about how to spend money at your local public schools?”

	All Adults	Race/Ethnicity				Public School Parents
		Asians	Blacks	Latinos	Whites	
Your local school district	36%	31%	25%	39%	37%	39%
The teachers	30	29	50	23	32	26
The principals	13	14	8	12	15	16
The state government	12	14	9	18	8	12
Someone else (<i>volunteered</i>)	3	0	2	2	3	2
Parents (<i>volunteered</i>)	1	6	1	1	1	2
Don’t know	5	6	5	5	4	3

2006 Governor's Election

The governor's race is beginning to attract interest among those most likely to vote in the state's upcoming elections. Six in 10 likely voters say they are currently following the news about the governor's election very closely (16%) or fairly closely (44%)—up from 52 percent paying close attention in March. More than half of the likely voters in all regional, age, income, and political groups are now closely following election news.

Californians are saying that the state's K-12 public schools will be one of the leading campaign issues in the governor's election. In PPIC's March survey, education was named most often when likely voters were asked to pick one issue they would like to hear candidates talk about. In this current survey, nine in 10 likely voters say that the candidates' positions on K-12 public schools are at least somewhat important to them. Six in 10 likely voters say this is very important, including seven in 10 Democrats, about six in 10 independents, and half of Republicans. Likely voters in Los Angeles (71%) and the San Francisco Bay Area (64%) are more likely than those in other regions to rate education as very important. Latinos are more likely than whites to do so (72% to 56%). Education is a more important campaign topic for women than men (64% to 56%), and while importance increases with level of education, it varies little across age and income groups.

"In thinking about the California governor's election in 2006, how important to you are the candidates' positions on California's K-12 public schools?"

<i>Likely Voters Only</i>	All Likely Voters	<u>Party</u>			Public School Parents
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Very important	60%	71%	50%	58%	63%
Somewhat important	32	24	39	37	32
Not too important	7	5	9	5	5
Don't know	1	0	2	0	0

In the June 6th Democratic gubernatorial primary, among likely Democratic primary voters (i.e., registered Democrats, those registered as "decline to state", and independents who say they would choose a Democratic primary ballot), 26 percent say they would vote for State Controller Steve Westly and 20 percent would vote for State Treasurer Phil Angelides. Over half are undecided or say they would vote for someone else (54%). In March, Westly and Angelides were tied (23% to 22%), with 55 percent undecided or naming someone else. Today, women are much more likely than men to be undecided. Among those saying the candidates' positions on K-12 schools are very important, 29 percent favor Westly and 20 percent support Angelides; half are undecided or would vote for someone else.

"If the Democratic primary for governor were being held today, and these were the candidates, who would you vote for?"

<i>Democratic Primary Likely Voters Only</i>	All Democratic Primary Likely Voters	<u>Gender</u>		Those who say the candidates' positions on K-12 public schools are very important
		Male	Female	
Phil Angelides, State Treasurer	20%	25%	17%	20%
Steve Westly, State Controller	26	29	25	29
Someone else/Don't know	54	46	58	51

Proposition 82 – Preschool Education

One of two measures on the June ballot, Proposition 82 is a citizens’ initiative that would raise state income taxes by 1.7 percent on incomes over \$400,000 for individuals and \$800,000 for couples to fund voluntary preschool education for all four-year-olds in California. After hearing the title and text that will appear on the June ballot, 51 percent of likely voters say they would vote yes on this initiative and 40 percent would vote no. In PPIC’s March survey, likely voters had similar responses (52% yes, 41% no).

There is a sharp partisan divide over this initiative: A strong majority of Democrats (64%) are in favor of it, a solid majority of Republicans (56%) are opposed, and independents are divided (50% yes, 41% no). Majorities of likely voters in the San Francisco Bay Area (57%) and Los Angeles (54%) would vote yes on Proposition 82, while likely voters in other regions are divided. Support is higher among Latinos (63%) than whites (47%), and among renters (65%) than homeowners (47%). While support for Proposition 82 declines with age, it increases slightly with education. Public school parents (54% yes, 39% no) currently favor this initiative.

“Proposition 82 is called the Preschool Education, Tax Increase on Incomes Over \$400,000 for Individuals; \$800,000 for Couples Initiative Constitutional Amendment and Statute... If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on Proposition 82?”*

<i>Likely Voters Only</i>	All Likely Voters	Party			Public School Parents
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes	51%	64%	38%	50%	54%
No	40	23	56	41	39
Don’t know	9	13	6	9	7

Is access to preschool considered a problem in California today? Seven in 10 likely voters express at least some concern that children in lower-income areas may not be able to go to preschool. Over four in 10 likely voters are very concerned about this issue, and more Democrats (58%) and independents (42%) than Republicans (27%) say they are very concerned. Latinos (67%) are more likely than whites (35%) to be very concerned. Concern declines with age and income. Homeowners (39%) are much less likely than renters (60%) to be very concerned. Among those who would vote yes on Proposition 82, 63 percent are very concerned about preschool access in lower-income areas. As for those who would vote no on Proposition 82, half say they are either not too concerned or not at all concerned about this issue.

“How concerned are you that children in lower-income areas may not be able to go to preschool—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?”

<i>Likely Voters Only</i>	All Likely Voters	Party			Prop 82	
		Dem	Rep	Ind	Yes	No
Very concerned	43%	58%	27%	42%	63%	17%
Somewhat concerned	28	26	32	27	26	30
Not too concerned	15	9	20	18	7	26
Not at all concerned	12	4	21	11	3	26
Don’t know	2	3	0	2	1	1

* For complete question wording, see question 50 in the survey questionnaire, page 26.

Survey Methodology

The PPIC Statewide Survey is directed by Mark Baldassare, research director at the Public Policy Institute of California, with assistance in research and writing from Sonja Petek, project manager for this survey, and Dean Bonner, Lunna Lopes, and Jennifer Paluch, survey research associates. This survey was conducted with funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation as part of a three-year grant on education, environment, and population issues. We benefited from discussions with Hewlett program staff and their grantees and with colleagues at other institutions; however, the survey methods, questions, and content of the report were determined solely by Mark Baldassare.

The findings of this survey are based on a telephone survey of 2,501 California adult residents interviewed between April 4 and April 19, 2006. Interviewing took place mostly on weekday and weekend evenings, using a computer-generated random sample of telephone numbers that ensured that both listed and unlisted numbers were called. All telephone exchanges in California were eligible for calling. Telephone numbers in the survey sample were called up to six times to increase the likelihood of reaching eligible households. Once a household was reached, an adult respondent (age 18 or older) was randomly chosen for interviewing by using the “last birthday method” to avoid biases in age and gender. Interviews took an average of 20 minutes to complete. Interviewing was conducted in English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, or Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese). We chose these languages because Spanish is the dominant language among non-English speaking adults in California, followed in prevalence by the three Asian languages noted above. *Accent on Languages* translated the survey into Spanish, with assistance from Renatta DeFever. Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc. translated the survey into Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese, and conducted the telephone interviewing. We used recent U.S. Census and state figures to compare the demographic characteristics of the survey sample with characteristics of California’s adult population. The survey sample was closely comparable to the census and state figures. The survey data in this report were statistically weighted to account for any demographic differences.

The sampling error for the total sample of 2,501 adults is +/- 2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 2 percentage points of what they would be if all adults in California were interviewed. The sampling error for subgroups is larger: For the 1,818 registered voters, it is +/- 2.5 percent; for the 1,137 likely voters it is +/- 3 percent; for the 496 Democratic primary likely voters it is +/- 4.5 percent. Sampling error is only one type of error to which surveys are subject. Results may also be affected by factors such as question wording, question order, and survey timing.

Throughout the report, we refer to five geographic regions accounting for approximately 90 percent of the state population. “Central Valley” includes Butte, Colusa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Yolo, and Yuba Counties. “SF Bay Area” includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. “Los Angeles” refers to Los Angeles County, “Inland Empire” includes Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, and “Orange/San Diego” refers to Orange and San Diego Counties. Residents from all other areas (e.g., north coast, mountains) are included in the total sample; however, sample sizes for these less populated areas of California are not large enough to report separately.

We present specific results for respondents in four self-identified racial/ethnic groups: Asian, black, Latino, and non-Hispanic white. We also compare the opinions of registered Democrats, Republicans, and independents (i.e., registered as “decline to state”). We also analyze the responses of likely voters—those who are the most likely to participate in the state’s elections. We compare current survey responses both to responses in earlier PPIC Statewide Surveys and to responses in a national survey conducted by the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll.

PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY: SPECIAL SURVEY ON EDUCATION
APRIL 4-19, 2006
2,501 CALIFORNIA ADULT RESIDENTS:
ENGLISH, SPANISH, CHINESE, KOREAN, AND VIETNAMESE
MARGIN OF ERROR +/-2% AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE

1. First, which one issue facing California today do you think is the most important for the governor and state legislature to work on in 2006?

[code, don't read]

- 27% immigration
- 24 education, schools
- 7 economy, jobs
- 7 state budget, taxes, deficit
- 3 health care, health costs, insurance
- 2 infrastructure, levees
- 2 traffic, transportation
- 16 other (*specify*)
- 12 don't know

2. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Arnold Schwarzenegger is handling his job as governor of California?

- 38% approve
- 50 disapprove
- 12 don't know

3. Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Governor Schwarzenegger is handling the state's kindergarten through 12th grade public education system?

- 29% approve
- 51 disapprove
- 20 don't know

4. Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California legislature is handling the state's K-12 public education system?

- 21% approve
- 55 disapprove
- 24 don't know

5. Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jack O'Connell, is handling the state's K-12 public education system?

- 21% approve
- 34 disapprove
- 45 don't know

6. Next, how much of a problem is the quality of education in California's K-12 public schools today? Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem?

- 58% big problem
- 27 somewhat of a problem
- 11 not much of a problem
- 4 don't know

7. In the past two years, do you think the quality of education in California's K-12 public schools has improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same?

- 17% improved
- 40 stayed the same
- 32 gotten worse
- 11 don't know

In general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? First,

[rotate questions 8 and 9]

8. Additional state funding would lead to higher quality K-12 education in California.

- 65% agree
- 30 disagree
- 5 don't know

Next,

9. Better use of existing state funds would lead to higher quality K-12 education in California.

- 81% agree
- 14 disagree
- 5 don't know

10. Do you believe that we can significantly improve the quality of California's K-12 public schools by using the money we now spend more wisely, or are we going to have to spend more money to improve the quality of K-12 public schools?

- 59% spend money more wisely
- 27 spend more money
- 9 both (*volunteered*)
- 5 don't know

Next, I'm going to read you a list of issues people have mentioned when talking about California's K-12 public schools today. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not really a problem for California's K-12 public schools today.

[rotate questions 11 to 13]

11. How about teacher quality?

- 27% big problem
- 41 somewhat of a problem
- 26 not really a problem
- 6 don't know

12. How about the high school drop-out rate?

- 65% big problem
- 21 somewhat of a problem
- 5 not really a problem
- 9 don't know

13. How about teaching children with limited English language skills?

- 47% big problem
- 33 somewhat of a problem
- 16 not really a problem
- 4 don't know

Next, please tell me how you would rate California's K-12 public education system overall in achieving the following goals. For each one, please tell me if California's K-12 public education system is doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job.

[rotate questions 14 to 16]

14. How about in preparing students for college?

- 6% excellent
- 35 good
- 36 not so good
- 17 poor
- 1 other (*specify*)
- 5 don't know

15. How about in preparing students for jobs and the workforce?

- 4% excellent
- 29 good
- 40 not so good
- 20 poor
- 7 don't know

16. How about in teaching students the basics, such as reading, writing, and mathematics?

- 8% excellent
- 44 good
- 29 not so good
- 15 poor
- 4 don't know

17. In your opinion, what is the most important goal of California's K-12 public education system?

[read list, rotate responses]

- 26% preparing students for college
- 19 teaching students the basics
- 17 teaching students life skills
- 14 preparing students for the workforce
- 14 preparing students to be good citizens
- 6 all of the above (*volunteered*)
- 3 other (*specify*)
- 1 don't know

On another topic,

[rotate questions 18 and 19]

18. Where do you think California currently ranks in per pupil spending for K-12 public schools? Compared to other states, is California's spending near the top, above average, average, below average, or near the bottom?

- 11% near the top
- 13 above average
- 29 average
- 20 below average
- 11 near the bottom
- 16 don't know

19. Where do you think California currently ranks in student test scores for K-12 public schools? Compared to other states, are California's student test scores near the top, above average, average, below average, or near the bottom?

- 3% near the top
- 8 above average
- 32 average
- 33 below average
- 13 near the bottom
- 11 don't know

20. Next, do you think that students should or should not have to pass statewide tests in reading and math before they can be promoted to the next grade, even if they have passing grades in their classes?

72% should
24 should not
4 don't know

21. Do you think that students should or should not have to pass statewide tests before they can graduate from high school, even if they have passing grades in their classes?

73% should
24 should not
3 don't know

[question 22 asked of a random half sample of respondents]

22. How confident are you that standardized tests are an accurate indicator of a student's progress and abilities—very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

14% very confident
49 somewhat confident
20 not too confident
13 not at all confident
4 don't know

23. Students are first required to take the California High School Exit Exam in 10th grade and, if they fail, can take the exam up to five more times. How concerned are you that students in lower-income areas will have a higher failure rate on the California High School Exit Exam than other students—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

45% very concerned
33 somewhat concerned
11 not too concerned
9 not at all concerned
2 don't know

24. For students who initially fail the California High School Exit Exam, would you favor or oppose requiring their local schools to provide them with smaller English and math class sizes taught by fully credentialed teachers until they pass the test, even if it costs the state more money?

72% favor
23 oppose
5 don't know

25. On another topic, how concerned are you that students in lower-income areas have a higher drop-out rate from high school than other students—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

55% very concerned
31 somewhat concerned
7 not too concerned
5 not at all concerned
2 don't know

26. One idea that has been suggested for improving the graduation rate among students in lower-income areas is to increase the number of school support staff, such as counselors, mentors, and social workers. Would you favor or oppose this idea, even if it cost the state more money?

71% favor
25 oppose
4 don't know

27. Next, how concerned are you that English language learners in California's schools today score lower on standardized tests than other students—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

43% very concerned
37 somewhat concerned
10 not too concerned
7 not at all concerned
3 don't know

28. To try to improve the academic performance of English language learners, would you favor or oppose giving teachers more flexibility about when to use bilingual instruction and when to use English-only instruction in the classroom?

66% favor
29 oppose
5 don't know

29. Next, how concerned are you that schools in lower-income areas have a shortage of good teachers compared to schools in wealthier areas—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

57% very concerned
29 somewhat concerned
6 not too concerned
5 not at all concerned
3 don't know

[rotate questions 30 and 31]

30. Should local schools in lower-income areas pay higher salaries to attract and retain teachers, even if it costs the state more money?

66% yes
31 no
3 don't know

31. Should local schools in lower-income areas provide additional training and professional development to teachers, even if it costs the state more money?

76% yes
21 no
3 don't know

32. Changing topics, public schools can offer students a wide variety of courses, or they can concentrate on fewer basic courses, such as English, mathematics, history, and science. Which of these two policies do you think your local public schools should follow in planning the curriculum—a wide variety of courses or fewer but more basic courses?

50% wide variety of courses
47 fewer but more basic courses
3 don't know

[question 33 asked of a random half sample of respondents]

33. How important to you is it that your local public schools include art and music as part of the curriculum—very important, somewhat important, or not too important?

58% very important
27 somewhat important
14 not too important
1 don't know

34. On another topic, if a local school district fails to meet the minimum standards of student achievement over a set number of years, what do you think would be the most effective solution—*[rotate]* (1) additional federal or state funds should be provided to help the local school district improve its performance, *[or]* (2) the state of California should take over the failing local school district?

43% the state should take over the school district
42 additional federal or state funds should be provided
15 don't know

35. Next, overall, how would you rate the quality of public schools in your neighborhood today? If you had to give your local public schools a grade, would it be A, B, C, D, or F?

19% A
36 B
27 C
7 D
4 F
7 don't know

36. Do you think the current level of state funding for your local public schools is more than enough, just enough, or not enough?

10% more than enough
32 just enough
49 not enough
9 don't know

Changing topics,

[rotate questions 37 and 38]

37. Should schools in lower-income areas get more funding from the state to improve school facilities, even if it means less funding for other schools?

53% yes
41 no
6 don't know

38. Should schools in lower-income areas get more funding from the state to pay for teachers and classroom materials, even if it means less funding for other schools?

49% yes
44 no
7 don't know

Here are some ideas that have been suggested to raise state revenues to provide additional funding for California's K-12 public schools. For each of the following, please say if you favor or oppose the proposal.

[rotate questions 39 to 41]

39. How about raising the top rate of the state income tax paid by the wealthiest Californians?

64% favor
33 oppose
3 don't know

40. How about raising the state sales tax?

34% favor
63 oppose
3 don't know

41. How about increasing property taxes?

- 25% favor
- 72 oppose
- 3 don't know

42. When it comes to making budget choices this year for California's K-12 public schools, both in deciding how much Californians should pay in taxes and how much funding to provide for specific programs, whose approach do you most prefer—*[rotate]* (1) Governor Schwarzenegger's, (2) the Democrats' in the legislature, *[or]* (3) the Republicans' in the legislature?

- 37% the Democrats'
- 19 the Republicans'
- 17 Governor Schwarzenegger's
- 3 other (*specify*)
- 24 don't know

43. And who do you trust the most to make decisions about how to spend money at your local public schools?

[read list, rotate order]

- 36% your local school district
- 30 the teachers
- 13 the principals
- 12 the state government
- 3 someone else (*specify*)
- 1 parents (*volunteered*)
- 5 don't know

44. On another topic, some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you absolutely certain that you are registered to vote?

- 73% yes [*ask q44a*]
- 27 no [*skip to q52*]

44a. Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or as an independent?

- 43% Democrat [*skip to q47*]
- 33 Republican [*skip to q48*]
- 22 independent [*ask q45*]
- 2 another party [*skip to q48*]

45. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?

- 23% Republican party
- 46 Democratic party
- 26 neither (*volunteered*)
- 5 don't know

[Responses recorded for questions 46 through 51 are from likely voters only. All other responses are from all adults, except where noted.]

46. California voters like yourself will be able to choose between voting in the Republican primary, the Democratic primary, or selecting a nonpartisan ballot on June 6th. All three ballots include state proposition measures. Do you plan to vote in the Republican primary, the Democratic primary, or on the nonpartisan ballot?

- 18% Democratic primary [*ask q47*]
- 14 Republican primary [*skip to q48*]
- 56 nonpartisan ballot [*skip to q48*]
- 12 don't know [*skip to q48*]

47. If the Democratic primary for governor were being held today, and these were the candidates, who would you vote for?

[rotate names and then ask "or someone else"]

- 20% Phil Angelides, State Treasurer
- 26 Steve Westly, State Controller
- 54 someone else/don't know

48. Next, how closely are you following news about candidates for the 2006 governor's election—very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely?

- 16% very closely
- 44 fairly closely
- 29 not too closely
- 11 not at all closely

49. In thinking about the California governor's election in 2006, how important to you are the candidates' positions on California's K-12 public schools—very important, somewhat important, or not too important?

- 60% very important
- 32 somewhat important
- 7 not too important
- 1 don't know

50. Proposition 82 is called the Preschool Education, Tax on Incomes Over \$400,000 for Individuals; \$800,000 for Couples, Initiative Constitutional Amendment and Statute. It establishes voluntary preschool education for all four-year olds and is funded by a 1.7% tax on individual income over \$400,000; couples' income over \$800,000. Fiscal impacts include increased annual revenues of \$2.1 billion in 2007-08, growing with the economy in future years. All revenues would be spent on the new preschool program. If the June 6th election were held today, would you vote yes or no on Proposition 82?

51% yes
40 no
9 don't know

51. How concerned are you that children in lower-income areas may not be able to go to preschool—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

43% very concerned
28 somewhat concerned
15 not too concerned
12 not at all concerned
2 don't know

52. Generally speaking, how much interest would you say you have in politics—a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or none?

25% great deal
41 fair amount
26 only a little
7 none
1 don't know

53. Would you consider yourself to be politically:

[read list, rotate order top to bottom]

8% very liberal
21 somewhat liberal
33 middle-of-the-road
25 somewhat conservative
10 very conservative
3 don't know

[questions D1-D12: demographic questions]

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