



Selected Survey Results

The findings in "Reality Check 2006: Is Support for Standards and Testing Fading?" are based on telephone interviews with a national random sample of: (A) 1,379 parents of children now in public school, (B) 1,342 public school students in grades 6 through 12, (C) 721 public school teachers and (D) 254 school district superintendents and 252 school principals. Interviews with parents were conducted between October 30 - December 18, 2005, interviews with students were conducted between October 30 - December 29, 2005 and interviews with teachers, principals and superintendents were conducted between November 19, 2005 - March 7, 2006. The margin of error for the sample of parents is plus or minus 3.8 percentage points; the margin of error for the sample of students is plus or minus 3.4 percentage points; the margin of error for the sample of teachers is plus or minus 4 percentage points; and the margin of error for principals and superintendents is plus or minus 6 percentage points. It is higher when comparing percentages across subgroups. The survey was preceded by two focus groups each with parents and teachers.

Results of less than 0.5 are signified by an asterisk (*). Results of zero are signified by a dash (-). Responses may not always total 100% due to rounding. Combining answer categories may produce slight discrepancies between the numbers in these survey results and numbers in the report.

Reality Check 2006 – Parent Survey

		Total %				
P2	Thinking about the education your child is getting at his/her current school, do you think it's better, worse or about the same as the education you got at his/her age?					
	Better	61				
	Worse	14				
	The same	23				
	Don't know	2				
P3	And in general, do you think the material he/she is learning is harder, easier or about the same as when you were in school?					
	Harder	65				
	Easier	9				
	Things are about the same	24				
	Don't know	2				
P4	Here are some problems different public schools may or may not have. Please tell me how serious a problem each is in your own community's public schools. [Randomize]	Very %	Some-what %	Not too %	Not at all %	Don't know %
	Schools are not getting enough money to do a good job	39	25	11	21	5
	Academic standards are too low, and kids are not expected to learn enough	15	23	15	45	2
	There's not enough emphasis on basics, such as reading, writing and math	20	16	13	49	2
	Too many kids lack respect for teachers and use bad language	34	26	14	22	4

		Total %
P7	Suppose you were voting in a local school board election. Which of the following candidates would you be most likely to support? [randomize]	
	A Candidate who believes if the public schools finally got more money and smaller classes, they could do a better job	45
	A Candidate who believes that charter schools revitalize public education and we need more of them	9
	A Candidate who believes school vouchers give parents the power to choose the best school for their children	19
	A Candidate who believes more testing and higher standards will ensure kids will master the skills they need	22
	Don't know	5
P11	And when it comes to this effort toward higher academic standards, do you think your school district should:	
	<i>Based on those whose public schools are making an effort to raise standards</i>	
	Continue its effort	65
	Continue its effort but make some adjustments	31
	Should it stop its effort and go back to the way things were?	2
	Don't know	2
P12	Overall, would you say that the schools are careful and reasonable in putting in place the higher academic standards, or are they being too careless and unreasonable?	
	<i>Based on those whose public schools are making an effort to raise standards</i>	
	Careful and reasonable	86
	Too careless and unreasonable	9
	Don't know	5
P13	Would you say that your child is required to take too many standardized tests, too few, are things about right or don't you know?	
	Too many	17
	Too few	10
	About right	54
	Don't know	20
P16	Please tell me which comes closest to your view: [randomize]	
	Standardized tests are necessary and valuable – they are a reliable yardstick for measuring student performance	47
	Standardized tests are a necessary evil – ultimately, the schools need some kind of standardized assessment	37
	Standardized tests do much more harm than good – the schools would be better off if they were completely abandoned	12
	Don't know	3
P18	Now, thinking just about high schools, do you think that the most pressing problems facing the high schools in your local community come from? [Randomize]	
	Social problems and kids who misbehave	73
	Low academic standards and outdated curricula	15
	Don't know	11

P20	Next, please tell me how much, if at all, you think each of the following proposals will do to improve high school education in the United States? [Randomize]	A lot %	Quite a bit %	Only a little %	Not at all %	Don't know %
	Updating high school classes to better match the skills employers want	43	28	21	5	2
	Making sure that our nation's high schools expect as much from students as high schools in Europe and Japan	32	24	18	11	15
	Greatly increasing the number and quality of math and science courses students take in the high schools	35	32	24	7	2

	Total %
P32 Overall, do you feel that he/she is getting too much homework, too little or about the right amount?	
Too much	11
Too little	20
Right amount	68
Don't know	1
P43 How much, if anything, would you say you know about the No Child Left Behind Act -- the federal education bill that was passed by Congress in 2001?	
A great deal	17
A fair amount	38
Very little	33
Nothing at all	11
Don't know	2
P44 From what you have heard or read about public schools in your community, is the No Child Left Behind Act improving local public education or causing problems, or don't you know enough to say?	
Improving	24
Causing problems	21
Don't know enough to say	54

PARENT DEMOGRAPHICS

	Total %
PD1 Sex	
Male (Father)	43
Female (Mother)	57
PD2 Are you NOW employed full-time, part-time, are you retired or are you not employed for pay?	
Full-time	59
Part-time	15
Retired	4
Not employed	13
[Vol.] Homemaker	5
[Vol.] Student	*
[Vol.] Disabled	2
Don't know	*
PD3 Are you married, living as married, divorced, separated, widowed or have you never been married?	
Married	81
Living as married	1
Divorced	8
Separated	2
Widowed	2
Never married/Single	6
Don't know	-

PARENT DEMOGRAPHICS		Total %
PD4 Is your husband/wife or partner now employed full-time, part-time, retired or not employed for pay?		
<i>Based on parents who are married/living as married</i>		
Full-time		78
Part-time		8
Retired		2
Not employed		8
[Vol.] Homemaker		3
[Vol.] Student		*
[Vol.] Disabled		1
Don't know		-
PD5 What is the last grade or class that you completed in school?		
None, or grade 1-8		2
High school incomplete (grades 9-11)		9
High school graduate (grade 12 or GED certificate)		32
Business, technical, or vocational school after high school		3
Some college, no 4-year degree		23
College graduate		20
Post-graduate training or professional schooling after college		9
Don't know		*
PD6 What is the last grade or class your husband/wife/partner completed in school?		
<i>Based on parents who are married/living as married</i>		
None, or grade 1-8		3
High school incomplete		6
High school graduate (grade 12 or GED certificate)		34
Business, technical, or vocational school after high school		5
Some college, no 4-year degree		23
College graduate		20
Post-graduate training or professional schooling after college		9
Don't know		*
PD7 What is your age?		
18-29		9
30-39		34
40-49		42
50-64		12
65 and older		1
PD8 Last year, in 2004, what was your total household income from all sources, before taxes?		
Less than \$10,000		4
\$10,000 to under \$20,000		6
\$20,000 to under \$30,000		10
\$30,000 to under \$50,000		22
\$50,000 to under \$75,000		20
\$75,000 to under \$100,000		13
\$100,000 or more		12
Don't know		4
PD9 Are you, yourself, of Hispanic or Latino background, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or some other Spanish background?		
Yes		15
No		83
Don't know		*
PD 10 What is your race? Are you white, black, Asian or some other race?		
White		71
Black/African-American		12
Asian		3
Other or mixed race [specify]		11
Don't know		*

PARENT DEMOGRAPHICS		Total %
PD 11	Is any language other than English spoken in your household?	
	Yes	21
	No	77
	Don't know	*
PD 13	Does your child receive free or reduced lunches at school?	
	Yes	28
	No	69
	Don't know	*

Reality Check 2006 – Student Survey

K4 Here are some problems different public schools may or may not have. Please tell me how serious a problem each is in your own school. [Randomize]	Very %	Some-what %	Not too %	Not at all %	Don't know %
Schools are not getting enough money to do a good job	24	28	16	29	3
Academic standards are too low, and kids are not expected to learn enough	14	21	22	41	1
There's not enough emphasis on basics, such as reading, writing and math	9	14	23	52	1
Too many kids lack respect for teachers and use bad language	32	32	19	16	*
There is too much pressure to make good grades in classes and on tests	15	29	24	31	*
					Total %
K11 Right now, would you say you are trying your best to do well in school, or do you think you could try a little harder?					
Trying best to do well					51
Could try harder					49
Don't know					*
K13 Overall, do you feel that you are getting too much homework, too little or about the right amount?					
Too much homework					21
Too little homework					7
About the right amount					72
Don't know					*
K18 Would you say that you are required to take too many standardized tests, too few, are things about right or don't you know?					
<i>Base: Students who have taken standardized tests</i>					
Too many					24
Too few					4
About right					71
Don't know					*
K19 From your experience, would you say these tests ask fair questions that you should be able to answer, or are the questions so difficult or unfair that you cannot be expected to answer them?					
Fair questions					79
Difficult or unfair questions					19
Don't know					2
K20 Which best describes how nervous you get when you take standardized tests:					
I don't get nervous at all					32
I get nervous but I handle it					57
I get so nervous that I don't do as well as I know I could?					11
Don't know					-

K23	Next, please tell me how much, if at all, you think each of the following proposals will do to improve high school education in the United States? [Randomize]	A lot %	Quite a bit %	Only a little %	Not at all %	Don't know %
	Updating high school classes to better match the skills employers want	33	35	24	4	3
	Making sure that our nation's high schools expect as much from students as high schools in Europe and Japan	30	30	25	9	6
	Greatly increasing the number and quality of math and science courses students take in the high schools	24	32	32	9	3
						Total %
K26	Before students are awarded a high school diploma, would you want your school district to require students to:					
	Pass a basic skills test in reading, writing and math					52
	Pass a more challenging test showing they have learned at higher levels					27
	Kids should not be required to pass a skills test					18
	Don't know					2
						Total %
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS						Total %
KD1	What grade are you in?					
	Sixth					15
	Seventh					15
	Eighth					13
	Ninth/Freshman					15
	Tenth/Sophomore					14
	Eleventh/Junior					15
	Twelfth/Senior					15
	Don't know/Not applicable					-
KD2	Do you go to a middle school, junior high school or high school?					
	<i>Based on those in the ninth grade (N=205)</i>					
	Middle					*
	Junior					11
	High School					89
	Don't know/Not applicable					-
KD 46	Are you, yourself, of Hispanic or Latino background, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or some other Spanish background?					
	Yes					16
	No					82
	Don't know					1
KD 47	What is your race? Are you white, black, Asian or some other race?					
	White					67
	Black/African-American					16
	Asian					3
	Other or mixed race [specify]					12
	Don't know					1

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**Total
%**

KD 48 Which of the following best describes you and your family?

I live with both my parents	70
I live with one of my parents	26
I live with someone other than my parents	2
Don't know/Not applicable	-

Reality Check 2006 – Teacher Survey

T4	Here are some problems different public schools may or may not have. Please tell me how serious a problem each is in your own school. [Randomize]	Very %	Some-what %	Not too %	Not at all %	Don't know %
	Schools are not getting enough money to do a good job	54	29	12	5	-
	Academic standards are too low, and kids are not expected to learn enough	10	20	30	39	-
	Classes are too crowded	28	33	24	14	-
	Too many kids lack respect for teachers and use bad language	33	33	26	8	-
						Total %
T7	Suppose you were voting in a local school board election. Which of the following candidates would you be most likely to support? [randomize]					
	A Candidate who believes if the public schools finally got more money and smaller classes, they could do a better job					88
	A Candidate who believes that charter schools revitalize public education and we need more of them					2
	A Candidate who believes school vouchers give parents the power to choose the best school for their children					5
	A Candidate who believes more testing and higher standards will ensure kids will master the skills they need					1
	Don't know					-
T11	And when it comes to this effort toward higher academic standards, do you think your school district should?					
	<i>Based on those whose public schools are making an effort to raise standards</i>					
	Continue its effort					39
	Continue its effort but make some adjustments					59
	Should it stop its effort and go back to the way things were?					2
	Don't know					*
T12	Overall, would you say that the schools are careful and reasonable in putting in place the higher academic standards, or are they being too careless and unreasonable?					
	<i>Based on those whose public schools are making an effort to raise standards</i>					
	Careful and reasonable					77
	Too careless and unreasonable					22
	Don't know					*
T17	Would you say that students are required to take too many standardized tests, too few, are things about right or don't you know?					
	Too many					71
	Too few					1
	About right					27
	Don't know					*
T20	Please tell me which comes closest to your view: [randomize]					
	Standardized tests are necessary and valuable – they are a reliable yardstick for measuring student performance					18
	Standardized tests are a necessary evil – ultimately, the schools need some kind of standardized assessment					62
	Standardized tests do much more harm than good – the schools would be better off if they were completely abandoned					19
	Don't know					-
T21	Before students are awarded a high school diploma, would you want your school district to require students to:					
	Pass a basic skills test in reading, writing and math					62
	Pass a more challenging test showing they have learned at higher levels					24
	Kids should not be required to pass a skills test					13
	Don't know					*

	Total %
T33 From what you have heard or read about public schools in your community, is the No Child Left Behind Act improving local public education or causing problems, or don't you know enough to say?	
Improving	15
Causing problems	70
Don't know enough to say	15

TEACHER DEMOGRAPHICS	Total %
TD1 Sex	
Male	20
Female	80
TD2 How many years have you been a teacher in the public schools?	
Less than 5 years	13
5-10 years	25
11-20 years	26
More than 20 years	36
Don't know	-
TD3 Do you teach at a:	
Elementary School	51
Middle or junior high school	20
High school	25
Something else [specify]	3
Don't know	-
TD4 Do you have tenure at your current teaching position?	
Yes	76
No	24
TD5 Which best describes your level of teacher certification:	
A fully certified teacher	96
Have emergency certification	-
Have provisional certification	3
Otherwise partially certified	1
Have no certification at all	*
Not sure	-
TD6 Are you, yourself, of Hispanic or Latino background, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or some other Spanish background?	
Yes	4
No	95
Don't know	-
TD7 What is your race?	
White	90
Black/African-American	5
Asian	*
Other or mixed race [specify]	4
Don't know	-

Reality Check 2006 – Administrator Survey

A4 Here are some problems different public schools may or may not have. Please tell me how serious a problem each is in your own community's public schools. [Randomize]		Very %	Some-what %	Not too %	Not at all %	Don't know %
Schools are not getting enough money to do a good job						
	Principals	52	30	14	4	-
	Superintendents	60	30	7	4	-
Academic standards are too low, and kids are not expected to learn enough						
	Principals	4	17	29	50	-
	Superintendents	2	21	35	42	-
There's too much drug and alcohol abuse						
	Principals	10	38	33	20	-
	Superintendents	9	41	39	11	-
Too many kids lack respect for teachers and use bad language						
	Principals	19	35	30	15	-
	Superintendents	9	35	37	18	-
<hr/>						
					Principals %	Superintendents %
A5 Which one of the following do you think is the most pressing issue facing your school district these days?						
	Insufficient funding				41	57
	Meeting the requirements of No Child Left Behind				22	9
	Too much bureaucracy and paperwork				16	9
	A shortage of really effective teachers				12	11
	A shortage of really effective principals				2	4
	Something else [specify]				7	10
	Don't know				-	-
A7 Suppose you were voting in a local school board election. Which of the following candidates would you be most likely to support? [randomize]						
	A Candidate who believes if the public schools finally got more money and smaller classes, they could do a better job				85	85
	A Candidate who believes that charter schools revitalize public education and we need more of them				3	1
	A Candidate who believes school vouchers give parents the power to choose the best school for their children				3	2
	A Candidate who believes more testing and higher standards will ensure kids will master the skills they need				6	10
	Don't know				-	-
A12 Which one of these comes closest to your view about the ultimate impact NCLB – the No Child Left Behind Act – will have on academic standards in your state?						
	Standards will be raised, and eventually student achievement will go up				42	44
	Standards will be lowered to make it easier to show progress				23	17
	There will be little impact on standards				34	35

	Principals %	Superintendents %
Don't know	-	*
A13 Overall, do you think NCLB's requirement that districts and states break out and publicize students' standardized test scores and achievement by race and other groupings is:		
Helpful, or	52	46
Not helpful	47	52
[Vol.] Neither	*	-
Don't know	-	*
A14 NCLB requires that schools show progress with the standardized test scores of students who are English learners and that schools give these students supplemental services. In your view is this aspect of the law:		
Helpful, or	63	51
Not helpful	36	49
[Vol.] Neither	*	-
Don't know	*	-
A16 Would you say that students are required to take too many standardized tests, too few, are things about right or don't you know?		
Too many	58	59
Too few	2	1
About right	38	39
Don't know	1	-

A36 There are many qualities to being a good leader, and some are more important than others. In your opinion, how important is it for a good leader to be able to do each of the following?	Absolutely essential %	Important but not essential %	Not too important %	Don't know %
Knowing how to use student test data effectively to improve teaching in the school				
Principals	84	16	-	-
Superintendents	90	8	2	-

A39 Here are some approaches for improving educational leadership in the public schools. Please tell me how effective you think each would be to improve leadership in the nation's schools.	Very %	Some-what %	Not too %	Not at all %	Don't know %
Making data from student testing available in a more timely and useful way so that administrators can use it to make better decisions					
Principals	71	26	1	*	-
Superintendents	73	22	2	2	-

ADMINISTRATOR DEMOGRAPHICS	Principals %	Superintendents %
AD1 Sex		
Male	59	82
Female	40	18
AD2 How many years in total have you been an administrator, such as assistant principal, principal, or superintendent in the public schools?		
Less than 5 years	12	2

ADMINISTRATOR DEMOGRAPHICS	Principals	Superin-
	%	tendents
	%	%
5-10 years	31	7
11-20 years	33	33
More than 20 years	23	58
Don't know	-	-

ADMINISTRATOR DEMOGRAPHICS	Principals %	Superin- tendents %
AD3 How many years have you been a principal in your current school?		
Less than 5 years	52	N/A
5-10 years	32	N/A
11-20 years	13	N/A
More than 20 years	2	N/A
Don't know	-	N/A
AD4 Are you the principal of an:		
Elementary School	54	N/A
Middle or junior high school	19	N/A
High school	20	N/A
Something else [specify]	7	N/A
Don't know	-	N/A
AD5 Are you, yourself, of Hispanic or Latino background, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or some other Spanish background?		
Yes	3	1
No	96	98
Don't know	-	-
AD6 What is your race? Are you white, black, Asian or some other race?		
White	86	96
Black/African-American	10	2
Asian	1	*
Other or mixed race [specify]	2	1
Don't know	-	-