

# Ty Ankrom's Here's What I Think ...

**A**s a lifelong educator, I am admittedly — and proudly — biased in my belief that public schools are great places for students.



And for many years, I was also a parent of public school students and I believe parents' opinions of public education are valid.

So I was pleased when I saw Phi Delta Kappan's annual poll results on the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools.

For nearly 50 years, Phi Delta Kappan (PDK) has surveyed U.S. adults with the following goals:

"PDK produces the annual poll as part of its mission to engage educators and serve schools so every student thrives. The PDK poll results provide researchers with some of the finest longitudinal data on how the public feels about the nation's schools and education policies (<http://pdkpoll.org/about>)."

A few highlights from the 49th poll that I find particularly rewarding are:

- Sixty-two percent of public school parents gave the public schools in their community a B or higher, compared with far fewer non-parents (45 percent).
- Forty-nine percent gave the schools in their own community a B or higher. That includes 15 percent A's, the highest on record in surveys asking this question since 1974 when the response was 18 percent. While not significantly different from the past few years, it's advanced from 9 percent in 2007, a six-point gain in local school ratings in the past decade.

An interesting result from the poll is that parents

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continue to value career preparation as much or more than academics.

Fifty-one percent of those surveyed said that schools should offer more job/career skills classes and 86 percent said public schools should offer classes that award certificates or licenses qualifying students for employment in specific fields.

Eighty-two percent said public high schools should offer job or career skills classes in place of academic classes. And an equal number see technology and engineering classes to prepare students for careers in those fields as extremely or very important in school quality.

A result that should come as no surprise is that students and teachers aren't the only ones who see little value in standardized testing. Two findings from the survey on this topic:

- Student performance on standardized tests ranks last — by a very wide margin — among six indicators of school quality tested in PDK's study.
- Among public school parents, fewer than six in 10 are very or somewhat confident that standardized tests measure how well their child is learning.

Other areas covered in the survey were the use of public money for private schools, valuing diversity and providing wraparound services.

Read the full report at <http://pdkpoll.org/results>.

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