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**44th Annual PDK/Gallup Poll Shows a Nation Divided Over Public Education Issues**  
*Poll reveals conflicts over educating children of illegal immigrants, school vouchers, teacher evaluations, and which presidential candidate will most positively influence public education*

ARLINGTON, Va. — Americans have a number of conflicting viewpoints in their preferences for investing in schools, going head-to-head on issues like paying for the education of the children of illegal immigrants, according to the 2012 annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools.

There are clear partisan divides over whether children of illegal immigrants should receive free public education, school lunches, and other benefits, with 65 percent of Democrats versus 21 percent of Republicans favoring it. Overall, support for providing public education to these children is increasing. Forty-one percent of Americans favor this, up from 28 percent in 1995.

Americans are also more divided across party lines than ever before in their support for public charter schools, with Republicans more supportive (80 percent) than Democrats (54 percent). However, approval declined overall to 66 percent this year from a record 70 percent last year. Additionally, the public is split in its support of school vouchers, with nearly half (44 percent) believing that we should allow students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense, up 10 percentage points from last year.

Though Americans clearly have opposing stances on many education issues, when the poll — conducted annually by Phi Delta Kappa International (PDK) in conjunction with Gallup — asked Americans whether they believe common core state standards would provide more consistency in the quality of education between school districts and states, 75 percent said yes. In fact, more than half of Americans (53 percent) believe common core state standards would make U.S. education more competitive globally.

Ninety-seven percent of the public also agrees that it is very or somewhat important to improve the nation's urban schools, and almost two of three Americans (62 percent) said they would pay more taxes to provide funds to improve the quality of urban schools. Eighty-nine percent of Americans agree that it is very or somewhat important to close the achievement gap between white students and black and Hispanic students.

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And though Americans are almost evenly split in their support for requiring that teacher evaluations include how well students perform on standardized tests, with 52 percent in favor, they are in agreement about increasing the selectivity of teacher preparation programs. In fact, at least three of four Americans believe that entrance requirements into teacher preparation programs need to be at least as selective as those for engineering, business, pre-law, and pre-medicine.

“While Americans are divided on many issues regarding the direction of our education system, they stand united in agreement on some very important issues,” said William Bushaw, executive director of PDK International and co-director of the PDK/Gallup poll. “Most important, it is reassuring to know that, despite the recognition that our schools need improvement, more than 70 percent of Americans do have trust and confidence in our public school teachers.”

The 2012 poll also reveals that President Barack Obama holds a slight lead (49 percent) over Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney (44 percent) as the candidate who would strengthen public schools. Overall, 50 percent of Americans view the Democratic party as more interested in improving public education in the U.S., while 38 percent view the Republican party as more supportive.

#### **Other key findings:**

- **Balancing the federal budget is more important than improving the quality of education.** Sixty percent of Americans believe balancing the federal budget is more important, even though they said funding is the biggest problem facing public schools.
- **Schools should discipline children for bullying.** Three of four Americans believe that bullying prevention should be part of a school’s curriculum, and 58 percent believe schools should investigate and discipline students when bullying occurs outside of school, including over the Internet.
- **Parents want more control over failing schools.** Seventy percent of Americans favor giving parents whose children attend a failing school the option to mount a petition drive requesting that the teachers and principal be removed.
- **Americans view their local schools more favorably than the nation’s schools as a whole.** Consistent with recent years, almost half of Americans give the schools in their community a letter grade of A or B, while almost 50 percent give a C to the nation’s schools.

PDK, a global association of education professionals, has conducted this poll with Gallup annually since 1969. The poll serves as an opportunity for parents, educators, and legislators to assess public opinion about public schools. The 2012 findings are based on telephone interviews conducted in May and June 2012 with a national sample of 1,002 American adults.

More poll data will be available at [www.pdkpoll.org](http://www.pdkpoll.org) on Aug. 22.

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