

Contacts: Ashley Kincaid, PDK International  
Robert Johnston, The Hatcher Group

703-988-4037  
301-656-0348

## AMERICAN PUBLIC SEES NEED FOR CHANGE IN HOW TEACHERS ARE PREPARED

### ***46<sup>TH</sup> Annual PDK/Gallup Poll Shows Strong Support for Teacher “Bar Exam”***

ARLINGTON, Va., Sept. 16, 2014 – With stunning unanimity, the American public has concluded the nation must demand more of its future teachers and those who prepare them, a new survey shows.

By margins ranging from 60-to-40 percent up to 80-to-20 percent, the public believes college entrance requirements for would-be teachers should be more rigorous; that practice teaching should last a year or even two, and that teacher candidates should be required to pass a type of national “bar exam” before being allowed into the profession.

For existing teachers, the public believes that performance evaluations are important both to help teachers improve as well as to weed out those educators who are ineffective. But the public does not believe those evaluations should turn on the standardized test scores of a teacher’s students.

Those and many other findings are contained in the second release of information from the 46<sup>th</sup> edition of the PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. Conducted annually by PDK International in conjunction with Gallup, the poll is the longest-running survey of American attitudes toward education and thus provides an extensive and trusted repository of data documenting how the public’s viewpoint on public education has changed over the decades.

“We shouldn’t be surprised that Americans want great teachers in their classrooms,” said William Bushaw, chief executive officer of PDK International and co-director of the PDK/Gallup poll. “But it appears we’ve reached a real turning point in public attitudes. While we can speculate about all the factors that brought us here, there’s no longer any question about whether the public supports a major overhaul in the preparation and evaluation of teachers.”

The emergence of such clearly defined public opinion comes at a time when state and local officials, university educators and teacher unions already are taking some steps to address the issue of how best to ensure a young college grad is ready to teach and inspire K-12 students.

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation recently began implementing new rules that will set minimum academic standards for students wishing to enter a university's school of education. More than 100,000 U.S. teachers already have earned national board certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education has endorsed a performance assessment developed by Stanford University -- built on national board certification and likened to a bar exam -- to determine whether teacher candidates really are ready to teach on Day 1.

"Many programs designed to help teachers improve their skills already exist," added Bushaw. "But this year's results show that more work, study and action by district, state and federal leaders is needed to implement these programs that Americans support."

Among the key findings:

- By a margin of 81-to-19 percent, the public said teachers "should be required to pass board certification in addition to earning a degree."
- When asked if entrance requirements to education schools should be raised, 60 percent said "yes" and 36 percent said they should be left where they are today.
- Asked then how long a student teacher should practice with a certified teacher before getting his or her own classroom, only 4 percent said they supported the most common practice today of six weeks of student teaching. An astonishing 44 percent said student teaching should last one year and another 27 percent said two years.

The second and final section of this year's poll also asked questions about the public school calendar and curriculum and educating undocumented children. About 44 percent of the American public generally supports the idea of adding more days of instruction to the school calendar, while 45 percent say the number of instructional days shouldn't change but vacations should be spread through the year instead of concentrated in the summer. Only 31 percent generally support the idea of adding more hours to each school day.

Depending on how the question is phrased -- using, or not using, the word "illegally" -- support for educating undocumented children ranges from 49 percent to 56 percent.

Meantime, a majority of the public believes the curriculum used in their local schools needs to change to meet today's needs and that local high schools need to provide more career counseling. Interestingly, while 91 percent of those questioned say a college education is "fairly important" or "very important," the 2014 poll found an unexpected shift between those two categories. In 2010, 75 percent of those question said it was "very important" compared to 21 percent who said it was "fairly important." This year, the split was 43 percent who said "very important" compared to 48 percent who said "fairly important."

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“We were genuinely surprised by the divided response on the importance of college,” added Bushaw. “Americans seem to be rethinking the idea that a college education is essential for success in the U.S. economy, perhaps in part because parents are less certain they will be able to pay for it.”

PDK, a global association of education professionals, has conducted this poll with Gallup every year since 1969. The poll serves as an opportunity for parents, educators and legislators to assess public opinion about public schools. The latest findings are based on telephone interviews conducted in May and June 2014 with a national sample of 1,001 American adults, including a sub-sample of parents.

Additional poll data is available at [www.pdkpoll.org](http://www.pdkpoll.org). The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.6 percent.

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