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CTE Programs, Student Belonging, School Safety, and Addressing Teacher Shortages are Priorities Supported by the Majority of the American Public for America's Public Schools

Arlington, VA—August 19, 2025—PDK International today is releasing the results of the 57th *Annual PDK Poll on the Public Attitudes Toward Public Education*. This poll has been conducted annually since 1969 and looks at issues of interest to policy makers, parents, school leaders, and those with an interest in America's public schools.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Student Cell Phone Policies

In the 2024 PDK Poll, we surveyed Americans about how they felt about specific use-cases for AI in schools. We asked the same question this year and found that support for the use of AI in schools has waned. For helping teachers prepare lesson plans, support this year was at 49% (vs. 62% in 2024), for tutoring students via interactive computer applications this year was at 60% (vs. 65% in 2024), for having students practice taking standardized tests was at 54% (vs. 64% in 2024), and for students to use in preparing homework was at 38% (vs. 43% in 2024). 68% of respondents did not support sharing student data with AI software, which could include personal information, grades, or assessment data.

While policy makers have been busy enacting new policies to curb student use of cell phones during the school day, we wanted to gauge support for these policies among the American public. 86% of Americans support some type of cell phone ban (40% support a ban throughout the school day, and 46% support a ban during class time), and 11% opposed a ban.

Attitudes Around the Elimination of the U.S. Department of Education

The Trump administration campaigned on eliminating the U.S. Department of Education. However, only 12% of the American public strongly supports eliminating the federal agency. Strong support for eliminating the Department was 37% for Republicans but 0% from Democrats. 53% of Americans strongly oppose elimination of the Department.

19% of Americans feel that dismantling the Department would have a positive effect on public education, versus 65% believing it would have a negative impact on public education. 15% of independents believe that dismantling the Department would have no impact on public education.

Grading the Public Schools

We looked at how Americans felt about the public schools by asking them to assign a letter grade (A-F) on the schools in their community and the nation's public schools at-large. Looking back to 2004, the American public hasn't changed its mind dramatically about assigning the public schools an 'A' or 'B' grade, but attitudes were highest about community schools in 2013 (with 53% giving their community's schools an 'A' or 'B') and highest about the nation's schools in 2016 and 2017 (with 24% giving the schools an 'A' or 'B'). Since 2004, where we have asked this question 17 times, this year's support of the public schools has been lowest (43% would give their community's schools an 'A' or 'B' and 13% would give the nation's schools the same grades).

Attitudes about Charters, Lab Schools, and Private and Religious Schools

The national dialog around school choice has been part of conservative agenda, and this year we asked questions around public school alternatives. 46% of the American public supports using public funding to allow parents to send their children to charter or lab schools. Support was highest among Democrats (51%). By comparison, 68% of the American public supported charter schools in 2013.

We also asked our parent respondents if they would support taking public funding to partially or fully fund their child's experience at a private or religious school. 59% of our parent respondents would send their child to a private or religious school if funding was provided. Among those preferring to keep their children in public school, Democrats supported this at 53%, independents at 14%, and Republicans at 27%.

We asked a similar question in 2020, where 56% of parents supported the use of public funds to send their children to private school and 50% of parents supported the use of public funds to send their child to a religious school.

Teacher Salaries and the Teacher Shortage

97% of Americans feel that addressing the teacher shortage is important and 92% of Americans support improving teacher compensation. 64% of Americans believe that teacher salaries are too low; 20% believe teacher salaries are "just about right." This is a mild shift from when we asked the same question in 2018: then, 66% felt that salaries were too low, 27% felt they were "just right," and 6% felt they were too high.

What Resonates with the American Public

Other issues in public education garnered strong support:

- Improving security measures to keep students and teachers safe (99%),
- Initiatives to make students feel like they belong as part of the school community (98%),
- Providing career and technical education programs in the schools (97%).

Less universal support was agreed upon for:

- Educating students about technology, such as AI and responsible social media use (84%),

- Providing more control to states and individual districts over education policy and funding (82%),
- Diversity, Inclusion and Equity (DEI) initiatives (61%).

We also asked parents how satisfied they were with the amount of say they have in their child's education. 70% were satisfied (30% very satisfied and 40% somewhat satisfied). By comparison, 50% of Republican parents felt satisfied with the amount of say they had in their child's education vs. 73% for independents and 80% for Democrats.

Visit [PDKpoll.org](https://pdkpoll.org) for More Details

The full 57th Annual PDK Poll report will be published in the fall edition of *Kappan* magazine. The general public can also visit pdkpoll.org for a full analysis and topline data from this year's poll.

This year's PDK Poll was administered by the [Wason Center for Civic Leadership at Christopher Newport University](#). The survey was conducted by phone in late June 2025 to 1,005 respondents.

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About PDK International

Established in 1906, PDK International supports P-20 educators, researchers, and policy makers by strengthening their commitment to the profession throughout the entire arc of their careers. We are committed to elevating the profession through the intersection of research and practice. Through our core values of excellence, service, community, optimism and leadership we encourage educators and stakeholders to elevate the discourse and change the narrative around teaching and learning to ensure that every student has a high-quality education. www.pdkintl.org

About The Wason Center for Civic Leadership

The Wason Center for Civic Leadership provides citizens and lawmakers unbiased, nonpartisan insight into the policy issues shaping the future of Virginia and the nation. Headquartered at Christopher Newport University, a highly ranked regional public university in Newport News, Virginia, the Wason Center focuses on the hearts and minds of CNU students, preparing them to be values-driven, evidence-based leaders who know how to solve real problems. www.cnu.edu/wasoncenter