

# 2006 Michigan Education Poll

Hello, I'm calling from Public Sector Consultants in Lansing, Michigan. We are conducting a survey about Michigan education policy and your local schools. The survey is not being conducted for any candidate or political party. The survey will only take about 15 minutes of your time.

Are you eighteen years of age or older and a resident of Michigan?

Yes.....Continue  
No ..... Terminate

Before we begin, let me tell you that this interview is completely voluntary. If we come to a question that you don't want to answer, just let me know and we'll go on to the next question.

Let me also assure you that all your responses will be confidential.

## GENERAL ATTITUDE

First let me begin by asking you a general question about education.

1. Overall, how important do you think having a good education is for getting ahead in life?

a) Very important	96%
b) Fairly important	4
c) Not very important	—
d) Not at all important	—
e) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	—
f) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	—

## EARLY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about when children begin school.

2. In general, do you think there are enough opportunities in your community for children under the age of 5 that help prepare them to succeed in school?

a) Yes	68%
b) No	20
c) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	11
d) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	1

3. Off the top of your head, what percentage of children in your community would you say enter kindergarten prepared to succeed in school? Would you say....[READ LIST]

a) All children, 100 percent	7%
b) Most children, around 75 percent	48
c) About half of the children (50 percent)	28
d) Only some children, about 25 percent	9
e) None	1
f) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	8
g) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	1

Now I would like to ask you about the quality of education provided by the public schools in your community.

## QUALITY

4. During the past few years, would you say that the quality of education provided in the public schools in your community has been getting *better*, getting *worse*, or staying *about the same*?

a) Getting better	32%
b) Getting worse	23
c) Staying same	40
d) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	5
e) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	–

5. I will now read a few statements that people make about education. For each statement that I read, please tell me if you *strongly agree*, *somewhat agree*, *somewhat disagree*, or *strongly disagree* with that statement. [ROTATE]

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral/ no opinion [VOL]	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know [VOL]	Refused/ other [VOL]
a) Private schools provide a better education than public schools.	25%	25%	7%	24%	16%	1%	–%
b) Investing more money in schools improves the quality of education provided	36	33	3	14	12	1	–

6. Students often are given the grades A, B, C, D, or F to describe the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools in your community were “graded” in the same way. What grade would you give your local public school system, an A, B, C, D, or F?

a) A	20%
b) B	40
c) C	27
d) D	7
e) F	2
f) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	4
g) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	–

7. Using this grading system, how would you grade your local public schools on graduating students with the following skills? Would you give them an A, B, C, D, or F for ...

	A	B	C	D	F	Don't know [VOL]	Refused/other [VOL]
a) The academic skills of graduating seniors, such as mathematics, reading and writing, and science skills	12%	43%	30%	6%	2%	6%	—%
b) The employability skills of graduating seniors, such as good work habits and the ability to solve problems	11	34	32	13	2	6	—
c) How well prepared graduating seniors are to become active and engaged citizens in their communities	12	34	36	10	3	5	—

8. How would you grade your local public schools on the following aspects of the education process? Would you give your local public school district an A, B, C, D, or F for... [ROTATE]

	A	B	C	D	F	Don't know [VOL]	Refused/other [VOL]
a) Providing special programs to students most at risk of failure	16%	32%	23%	11%	4%	13%	—%
b) Providing a safe environment	34	42	14	5	2	3	—
c) Maintaining the involvement of parents	19	41	22	9	4	5	1
d) Managing its finances and budget effectively and responsibly	16	29	28	14	7	6	—
e) Establishing high standards for student performance	19	41	27	7	2	3	—

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

9. How important do you think it is that your local schools do a good job of preparing students to compete in a global economy?

a) Very important	78%
b) Fairly important	18
c) Not very important	2
d) Not at all important	1
e) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	1
f) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	—

10. In general, how well prepared are students from your local schools *to compete for jobs in a global economy*? Would you say they are . . . ?

a) Very prepared	11%
b) Somewhat prepared	57
c) Not very prepared	22
d) Not at all prepared	6
e) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	4
f) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	–

11. How well prepared do you think students from your local schools are to *enter college or some other type of educational program* after high school?

a) Very prepared	31%
b) Somewhat prepared	54
c) Not very prepared	10
d) Not at all prepared	2
e) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	2
f) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	1

## CURRICULUM

I would now like to ask you some questions about the classes that students take in high school.

12. I am going to read you a list of subjects that are usually taken by students in high school. For each subject, I want you to tell me how necessary you feel these classes are for preparing students for their future. Do you think they are very necessary, only somewhat necessary, or not necessary at all for helping prepare students for jobs in a global economy? [ROTATE A–L; RESPONSES: VERY NECESSARY=1, ONLY SOMEWHAT NECESSARY=2, NOT AT ALL NECESSARY=3, DON'T KNOW=8 [VOLUNTEERED], REFUSED/OTHER=9 [VOLUNTEERED]]

	Very necessary	Only somewhat necessary	Not at all necessary	Don't know [VOL]	Refused [VOL]
a) Biology	58%	39%	2%	1%	–
b) Advanced science, for example, chemistry and physics	61	37	1	1	–
c) Algebra	75	22	2	1	–
d) Advanced mathematics, for example, algebra II, trigonometry, or calculus	63	33	3	1	–
e) Civic education, for example, U.S. history, government, or law	72	26	1	1	–
f) Technology and computer classes	91	7	–	1	–
g) English	90	8	–	1	–
h) Social studies	60	37	2	1	–
i) Foreign language	52	40	6	2	–
k) The arts, such as drama, music, or art	35	57	7	1	–
l) Physical education or gym	40	48	11	1	–

13. Currently, the only class required by state law for graduation from high school in Michigan is one semester of civics. All other requirements are decided by individual school districts. This means that there can be great variation among school districts in what is required for graduation. Do you think that this should be changed so that there is a single, statewide set of requirements for all high school students?

a) Yes	77%
b) No	18
c) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	4
d) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	1

Now I would like to go over some of the things that people say about this change.

[ROTATE Q14 AND Q15]

14. Some people say that expanding the graduation requirements for high school students could make it harder to graduate because students would be required to take more academically demanding courses, such as algebra II or chemistry. According to them, this means that more students could have difficulty doing well in school, or even graduating. Hearing this, would you be more or less likely to support increasing graduation requirements for all high school students? [IF R ANSWERS MORE OR LESS LIKELY, PROBE FOR “Would that be much more or just somewhat likely/unlikely?”]

a) Much more likely	46%
b) Somewhat more likely	21
c) No difference [VOLUNTEERED]	8
d) Somewhat less likely	14
e) Much less likely	7
f) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	2
g) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	1

15. Some people say that expanding the graduation requirements would make Michigan high school seniors more competitive with students in other states and countries. According to them, it would better prepare them to pursue advanced educational opportunities after high school and to make them more competitive for jobs in the global economy. Hearing this, would you be more or less likely to support increasing graduation requirements for all high school students? [IF R ANSWERS MORE OR LESS LIKELY, PROBE FOR “Would that be much more or just somewhat likely/unlikely?”]

a) Much more likely	61%
b) Somewhat more likely	21
c) No difference [VOLUNTEERED]	5
d) Somewhat less likely	5
e) Much less likely	5
f) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	2
g) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	1

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Now let's talk about some of the factors that can affect how well schools perform and students learn.

16. I am now going to read you a list of factors that can affect student achievement and school performance. For each factor, I would like you to tell me how great an impact you feel each has on student achievement, using a scale of 1 to 5, where "1" means "no impact" and "5" means the "greatest impact." [READ AND ROTATE; CODE "DON'T KNOW" AS "88" AND "REFUSED/OTHER" AS "99"]

		5 Greatest impact	4	3	2	1 No impact	Don't know	Refused
a)	The quality of teachers in the district	74%	18%	5%	3%	1%		–%
b)	The condition of school buildings and technology available to students and teachers	39	37	17	4	3	–%	1
c)	The amount of money that a school district has available	32	31	25	5	5	2	–
d)	The level of parental involvement and support for their child's education	73	17	6	2	1		–
e)	The leadership of the school district, including principals, the district superintendent, and the school board	51	30	12	4	2	–	–
f)	The level of motivation for learning that the student brings into the classroom	62	22	11	2	2	1	–
g)	Increased testing requirements	25	26	29	10	9	1	–

17. Under current law, student performance is assessed using a standardized test, like the MEAP exam. Their scores on this test help determine whether a public school is in need of improvement. In general, how accurately do you think student performance on standardized tests reflects how well a school district is educating its students? Would you say that test performance is a *very accurate* reflection, a *somewhat accurate* reflection, a *somewhat inaccurate* reflection, or a *very inaccurate* reflection of how well a district is performing?

a)	Very accurate	10%
b)	Somewhat accurate	49
c)	Somewhat inaccurate	27
d)	Very inaccurate	13
e)	Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	1
f)	Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	–

18. If a school fails to meet current standards for student achievement and school performance, who do you think is *most* responsible? Would you say ...? [READ LIST]

a) The district superintendent and the school board	18%
b) The school's principal	6
c) The classroom teachers	21
d) The parents of the children	24
e) The children themselves	15
f) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	12
g) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	4

## SCHOOL FINANCE

The next questions are about the way schools are funded.

19. Voters in Michigan are sometimes asked by their local school districts or regional education body (i.e. an ISD or RESA) [IF RESPONDENT ASKS—ISD=INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND RESA=REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AREA] to consider proposals that would increase property taxes to improve or enhance the public schools.

I am now going to read some of the reasons given for requesting these tax increases. For each one, please tell me—knowing that the additional funds would be used for the purpose cited—would you be likely to support or oppose that proposal? [ROTATE A-F; PROBE: "WOULD THAT BE STRONGLY OR JUST SOMEWHAT SUPPORT/OPPOSE?"; VOLUNTEERED RESPONSES: NEED MORE INFORMATION=77; DON'T KNOW=88; REFUSED=99]

		Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Need more information	Don't know	Refused
a)	To fund early childhood education programs	49%	27%	11%	9%	1%	1%	2%
b)	To fund special education programs	53	30	7	6	2	1	2
c)	To improve technology	57	26	5	7	2	1	2
d)	To fund vocational and technical education	53	29	8	6	2	1	1
e)	To replace or repair buildings that are unsafe	67	20	4	6	2	2	1
f)	To maintain or enhance programs	49	32	5	6	5	2	1

## CORE MISSION OF SCHOOLS

20. Thinking about your community, how much of a role do you feel your local public schools play in the overall quality of life in your community? Do you think the schools play a *major role*, a *minor role*, or *no role at all*?

a) Major role	70%
b) Minor role	24
c) No role at all	4
d) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	2
e) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	–

21. What do you see as the main function or purpose of public education in Michigan?

Main Function or Purpose	
Prepare kids for future/life	26%
Prepare kids for job market/become productive	25
To educate/learn/basics	21
Prepare kids for higher education	9
Provide equal opportunity to all students	4
Babysitting	2
Other	9
Don't know	4
Refused	1

NOTE: Proportions do not total 100 percent because respondents could mention more than one function or purpose.

## GENERAL ATTITUDE TOWARD FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Now I am going to ask you your opinion of the financial environment for schools.

22. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “My tax dollars that support my local schools are a good buy when you consider the quality of education and the importance of education to this community.” Would you say you...?

a) Strongly agree	47%
b) Somewhat agree	32
c) Somewhat disagree	9
d) Strongly disagree	9
e) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	2
f) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	1



23. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: [FOR AGREE/DISAGREE, PROBE FOR “WOULD THAT BE SOMEWHAT OR STRONGLY AGREE/DISAGREE?” CODE RESPONSES: STRONGLY AGREE=1, SOMEWHAT AGREE=2, SOMEWHAT DISAGREE=3, STRONGLY DISAGREE=4, DON’T KNOW=8, REFUSED/OTHER=9]

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Refused
a) There's a need to maintain educational services and programs in my local school district, even if it means higher taxes.	46%	34%	10%	8%	2%	1%
b) There's a need for my local school district to work creatively to manage its finances and control costs.	71	21	4	1	2	1
c) There's a need to keep taxes as low as possible, even if it means reducing the educational services and programs of my local school district.	9	13	23	50	3	2

24. Considering everything, do you feel that your family's financial situation will be better, worse, or the same one year from now?

a) Better	34%
b) Worse	15
c) The same	48
d) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	3
e) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	1

## TRUST IN GOVERNMENT AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

Next, I would like to ask you about your attitudes toward **state government** in general.

25. How much of the time do you think you can trust people who run our state government to do what is right?

a) Just about always	10%
b) Some of the time	57
c) Not very often	25
d) Never	6
e) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	1
f) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	–

26. When state government leaders make statements to Michigan residents on television or in newspapers, how often do you think they are telling the truth?

a) Just about always	10%
b) Some of the time	62
c) Not very often	21
d) Never	6
e) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	1
f) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	–

27. Do you think the people we elect to state offices usually try to keep the promises they have made during the election or do they forget those promises once the election is over?

a) Yes, they try to keep their promises	34%
b) No, they forget their promises after the election	46
c) Sometimes [VOLUNTEERED]	17
d) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	1
e) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	2

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The final set of questions is for statistical purposes only. Your answers will be kept confidential, and you will not be personally identified with your answers.

28. Do you have children of any age?

a) Yes [CONTINUE]	85%
b) No [GO TO QUESTION 32]	15
c) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	0
d) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	0

29. Do you currently have children of school age (K–12) or younger?

a) Yes [CONTINUE]	54%
b) No [CONTINUE]	46
c) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	0
d) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	0

30. In general, when you think about your child's or grandchild's future, do you think that they will be better off than you are now, about the same as you are now, or worse off than you are now?

a) Better	53%
b) The same	25
c) Worse	22
d) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	0
e) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	0

31. Again, thinking about your child's or grandchild's future, do you think that they will be living and working in Michigan, or do you see them living and working somewhere other than in Michigan?

a) Living and working in Michigan	40%
b) Living and working somewhere other than in Michigan	60
c) Don't know [VOLUNTEERED]	0
d) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	0

32. In what year were you born? [RECORD 4-DIGIT YEAR; RECORD REFUSED AS 9999]

a) 18–24 years	4%
b) 25–34	8
c) 35–44	24
d) 45–54	25
e) 55–64	24
f) 65 and older	12
g) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	2

33. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

a) Less than high school	3%
b) High school graduate or GED	21
c) Some college or vocational/technical school	30
d) 4-year college degree	20
e) Graduate degree	25
f) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	1

34. Which of the following income groups includes your total family income last year? [READ GROUPS]

a) Less than \$25,000	10%
b) \$25,000 to \$49,999	20
c) \$50,000 to \$74,999	24
d) \$75,000 and over	31
e) Refused/other [VOLUNTEERED]	15

35. Would you mind telling me if you are white, black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian American or Pacific Islander, Native American or Alaskan Native, or some other ethnic group?

a) White	83%
b) Black or African American	7
c) Hispanic or Latino	1
d) Asian American or Pacific Islander	1
e) Native American or Alaskan Native	1
f) Other	1
g) Multi- or bi-racial [VOLUNTEERED]	1
h) Refused [VOLUNTEERED]	6

36. In what county do you live? \_\_\_\_\_

35a. [IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS, “WAYNE COUNTY”] Do you live within the City of Detroit?

a) Yes	33%
b) No	67%
c) Refused	0

37. What is your ZIP code? \_\_\_\_\_

a) Metro Detroit	40%
b) Southern	7
c) Western	18
d) Central	10
e) Thumb	12
f) Northern Lower	10
e) Upper Peninsula	3

38. Gender [CODE BY OBSERVATION]

a) Female	51%
b) Male	49