

1998–99 Michigan Education Poll

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Prepared by
Public Sector Consultants, Inc.
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Underwritten by
Michigan Association of School Boards
Michigan Business Leaders for Education Excellence
Michigan Department of Education
Michigan Education Association
W. K. Kellogg Foundation

1998–99 Michigan Education Poll

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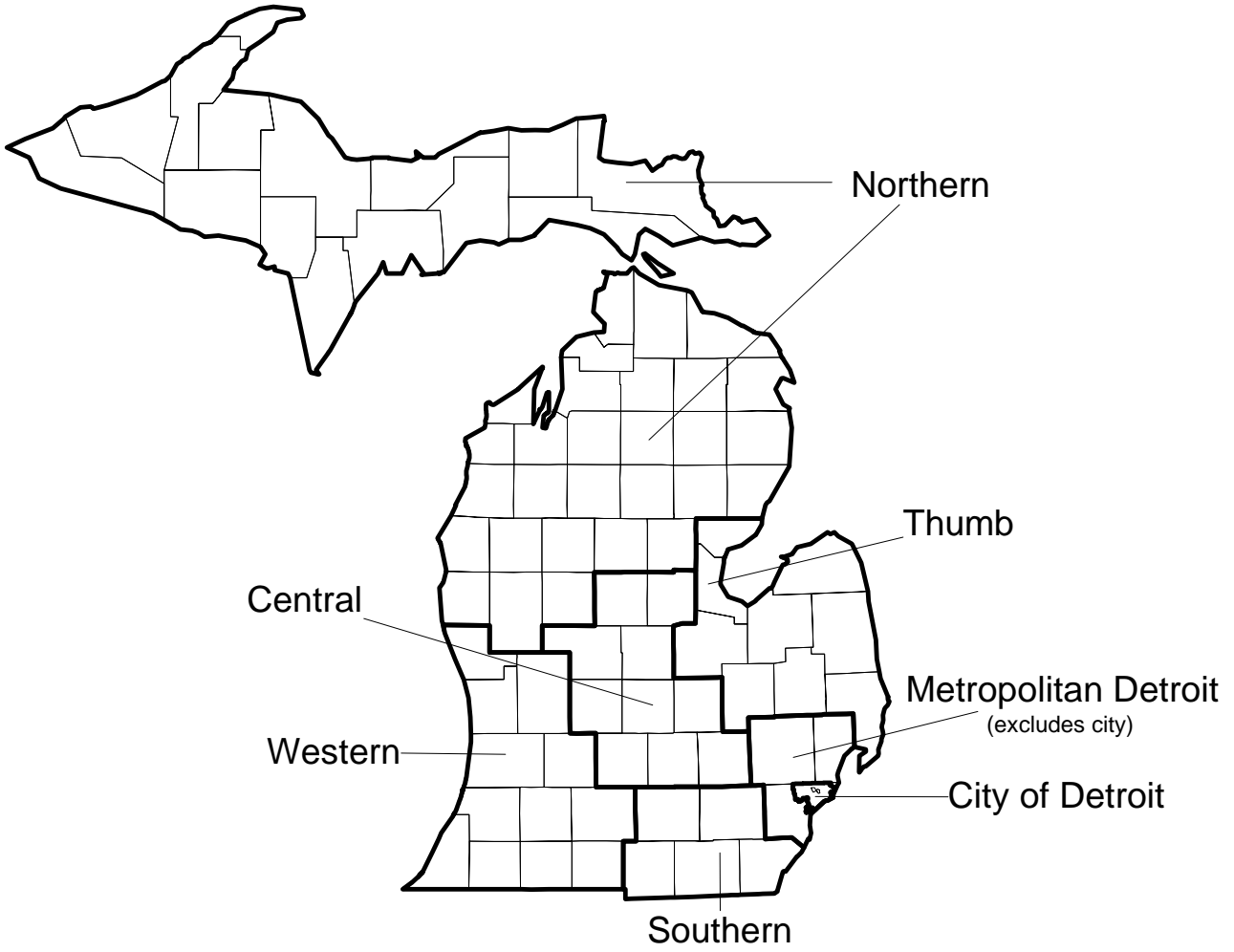
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SUMMARY

The Michigan Education Poll began in 1982 as a project of the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Project Outreach program. The 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll is the 13th survey in this series and was conducted for the MDE by Public Sector Consultants, Inc. This year’s poll marks the fifth year that private sponsors have underwritten the survey; the 1998–99 sponsors are the following:

- Michigan Association of School Boards
- Michigan Business Leaders for Education Excellence
- Michigan Department of Education
- Michigan Education Association
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Overall, the grades that respondents give schools are similar to those awarded in 1996, the year in which the survey last was conducted. The percentage of respondents giving public schools an A or B grade is statistically unchanged: 53 percent in both 1996 and 1998–99. When results are compared over time, this year’s grades remain in line with those given through most of the 1990s. (See Exhibit 1.)

There are demographic differences in people’s perception of their local schools.

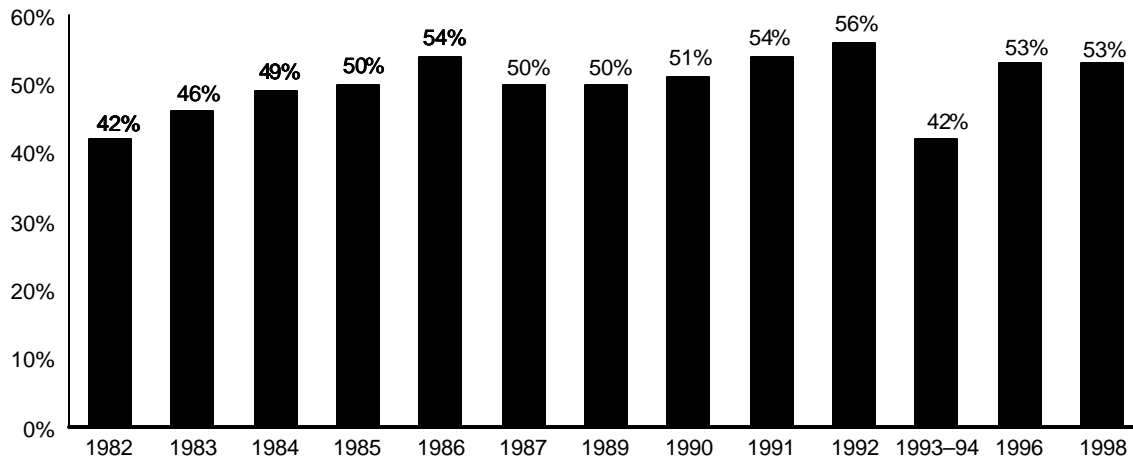
- African-American respondents are much less likely than Caucasians to give their local public schools an A/B grade; the percentage of African-American and Caucasians assigning a high grade are 32 percent and 58 percent, respectively.
- Regionally (see map), respondents in central Michigan express the most satisfaction their schools, with 64 percent awarding an A/B grade.
- Those in the City of Detroit and the Thumb express the least satisfaction, with only 31 and 51 percent, respectively, giving an A/B grade.

The public views the skills and abilities of graduating seniors somewhat more favorably this year than in 1996.

- Forty-five percent (compared to 39 percent in 1996) give A/B grades for students’ math, science, reading and writing, and science skills.
- Seventy percent (compared to 63 percent in 1996) believe students are very or somewhat prepared to compete in a world economy.

EXHIBIT 1

How Do You Grade Your Local Schools?: Percentage Awarding A or B, 1982–98



SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

Southern Michigan's view of its schools has improved. Until this year, the percentage of respondents in southern Michigan giving their schools high grades had been steadily dropping: The percentage giving an A/B grade was 66 percent in 1992, 51 percent in 1993–94, and 45 percent in 1996. In the current survey, the percentage is back up to 59 percent, but southern Michigan residents still express strong dissatisfaction in other areas. For example, in comparison with other regions, southern Michigan residents give low grades for graduating seniors' academic skills, and more of them believe that there are drug and alcohol problems in their schools.

Fewer than half of those surveyed say that they support using public tax dollars to support nonpublic education. Thirty-nine percent say that public monies—via vouchers, tax credits, or other ways—should be given to support nonpublic schools, while 53 percent said that they should not.

While many respondents feel that violence is a problem in their local schools, far more feel that drugs and alcohol are serious problems.

- Statewide, 41 percent of those surveyed this year strongly or somewhat strongly believe that physical violence is a serious problem in their local schools. The results vary regionally: Among City of Detroit residents, 63 percent believe that physical violence is a serious school problem; among central and northern Michigan residents, the percentage is only 31 percent.
- Eighty-nine percent believe that students who bring weapons to school should be expelled automatically.
- Sixty-three percent believe that drugs and alcohol are a serious problem in their local schools.

The survey finds that the public generally is pleased with their local schools' computer education. Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) say that their local district adequately prepares students to use computers and other technology. A large share (80 percent) believe that increased use of computers in the classroom will substantially improve the schools.

This report is available on the Public Sector Consultants Web site (*www.pscinc.com*).

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND

In 1982 the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) created Project Outreach to conduct statewide public opinion surveys measuring public attitudes about K–12 education. A statewide, 800-resident survey has been conducted every year since then except in 1988, 1995, and 1997. The methodology for the poll has been the same since 1982, creating an excellent longitudinal database that educators and state policymakers may use to track public attitudes toward education over time. The 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, 13th in the series, adds important data to this growing collection of information about K–12 education in the state.

Prior to 1991, the MDE Project Outreach conducted the poll, but budget reductions lead the MDE to Public Sector Consultants, Inc., (PSC) to find sponsors to underwrite the survey. This year’s underwriters are the following:

- Michigan Association of School Boards
- Michigan Business Leaders for Education Excellence
- Michigan Department of Education
- Michigan Education Association
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation

The demographic information gathered from respondents enables us to analyze responses by sub-groups, including the following:

- Respondent age
- Respondent gender
- Respondent race
- Respondent education level
- Presence or absence of school-age children in the home
- Public/private school enrollment of child(ren)
- Feeling “ownership” in one’s public school system
- Feeling that schools treat one as a “customer”

- Region of residence
- Urban/rural/suburban residence
- Presence of technology in the home

The survey asked respondents to indicate their income level, but because a large number did not respond, we were unable to use the answers to this question.

Although the majority of the questions in 1998–99 survey have been used in previous years, a few new questions were added (pertaining to school choice and vouchers, school violence, countywide millage elections, and useful means of communicating about public schools), and the questions about technology in the schools were different.

Each section of this report begins the survey question(s) or portion of the questions(s) that elicited the responses described and is followed by exhibits and analysis.

The interpretation and analysis of data found in this report are that of Public Sector Consultants and may not represent the opinions and interpretation of sponsors and others.

METHODOLOGY

The 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll is a statewide survey of 800 Michigan residents, conducted by PSC. The survey was carried out September 19–24, 1998. Participants were chosen using randomly selected telephone numbers. This survey used sampling and interviewing procedures similar to that of previous years.

A sample of 800 from a population of more than 9 million (Michigan’s total population) yields an accuracy rate of plus or minus 3.5 percent, with 95 percent confidence. In other words, 95 of every 100 responses will be accurate within 3.5 percent. The sampling error is slightly greater within subgroups, depending on the size of the subgroup. Public Sector Consultants believes that the results of this poll accurately reflect public opinion at the time the survey was taken.

QUALITY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

QUESTION 1: *During the past few years, would you say that the public schools in your community have been getting better in the quality of education they provide, getting worse, or staying about the same?*

EXHIBIT 2
Perception of Quality of Local Public Education, Selected Years

Percentage Saying	1998	1996	1994	1992	1991
Getting better	33%	30%	19%	25%	25%
Getting worse	20	22	25	21	18
Staying same	38	35	35	37	43
Both	2	2	9	5	1
Don't know	8	11	13	11	11

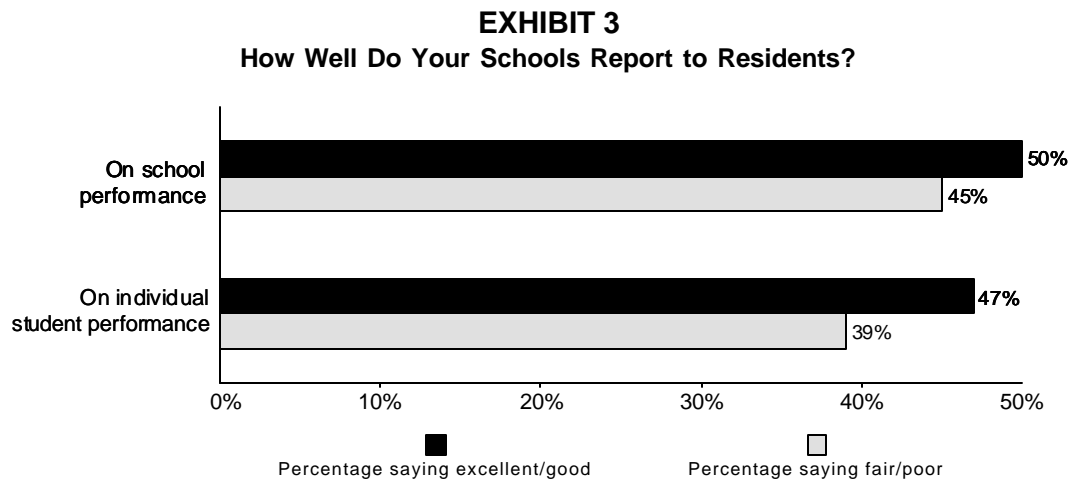
SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

- Over the last 8 years, the percentage believing that quality has become better has risen 8 percentage points, from 25 percent in 1991 to 33 percent in 1998–99. The percentage who believe education quality has not changed during the past few years has fallen 5 points, from 43 percent in 1991 to 38 percent in 1998–99. The share of respondents believing that public schools are becoming worse in the quality of education they provide remains very close to 1991 levels.
- Respondents with school-age children and those without agree in about equal proportion—32 percent and 33 percent, respectively—that schools are getting better.
- Thirty-six percent of women but only 30 percent of men are of the opinion that schools are getting better.
- The more education a respondent has, the more likely s/he is to think that school quality is improving: 42 percent of respondents who have a four-year college degree or more believe that school quality has improved, but this opinion is shared by only 25 percent of those with no education beyond high school.
- Of Caucasian respondents, 35 percent feel that their public schools have improved. Only 26 percent of African-Americans feel the same.
- Responses vary by region. Believing that their schools are improving are about one-fifth (21 percent) of Detroiters, 40 percent of respondents in western Michigan, and 32–35 percent of the residents in the remaining five regions.

STAYING INFORMED ABOUT SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

QUESTION 2. *Do you think your local schools do an excellent, good, fair, or poor job of keeping people informed about the performance of schools in the district?*

QUESTION 3. *Do you think your local schools do an excellent, good, fair, or poor job of keeping parents informed about the performance of individual students?*



SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

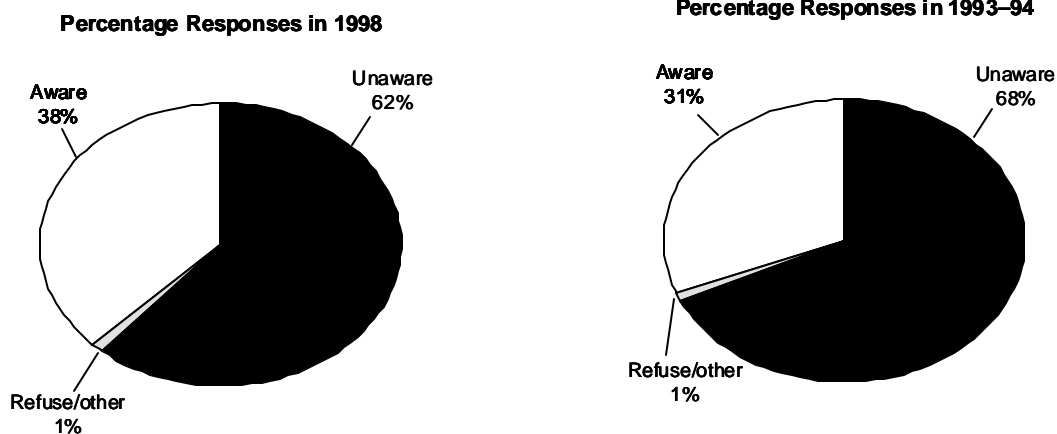
- The percentage who consider schools to be doing an excellent or good job of keeping the public informed about school performance has increased from 46 percent in the 1993–94 poll to 50 percent in 1996 and 50 percent in the current one. However, in regard to informing parents about student performance, the percentage who feel schools do an excellent/good job remains the same as last year (47 percent). (This question was not asked in the 1993–94 poll.)
- Respondents who believe that the local school district treats them as a customer are more inclined than are those who think otherwise (68 percent and 39 percent, respectively) to be of the opinion that schools do an excellent/good job of keeping the public informed.

- Respondents with school-age children in their homes are less inclined than those without (46 percent and 55 percent, respectively) to be of the opinion that schools do an excellent/good job of keeping people informed about school performance.
- More Caucasian than African-American respondents (55 percent and 32 percent, respectively) conclude that their schools do an excellent/good job of keeping them informed about school performance.

QUESTION 22. *State government releases “school reports” that provide the public with information about each school in the state. Are you aware or unaware of the school reports?*

- The percentage saying they are aware of school reports is statistically unchanged: 40 percent in the 1996 poll and 38 percent in the 1998–99 poll.

EXHIBIT 4
Awareness of School Reports, 1998 and 1993–94

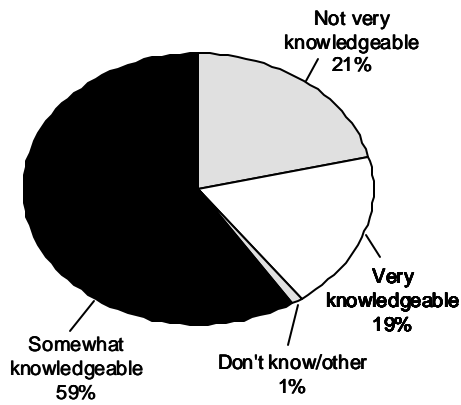


SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

QUESTION 23. *How knowledgeable are you about what happens in your local public schools?*

- Perhaps not surprisingly, more respondents with than without school-age children (88 percent and 69 percent, respectively) say they are very or somewhat knowledgeable about their local public schools.
- Southern Michigan respondents currently are the least knowledgeable about their local public schools: 67 percent feel that they are very/somewhat knowledgeable. The high is 82 percent, in northern Michigan, and the statewide figure is 78 percent.

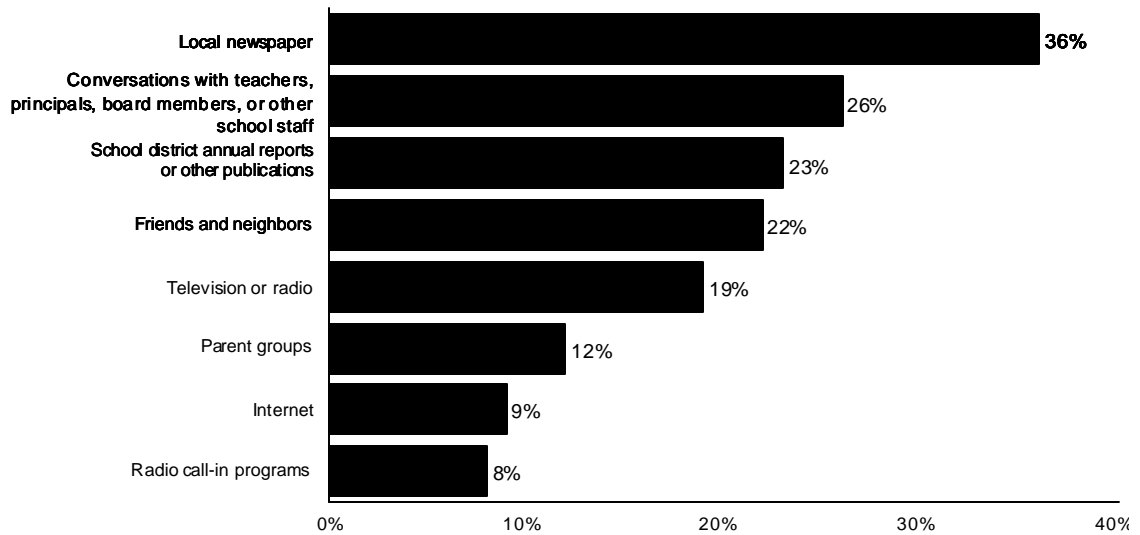
EXHIBIT 5
Respondent Knowledge about Local Public Schools



SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

QUESTION 24. *How often do you use the following means of communications for learning about your local schools?*

EXHIBIT 6
Percentage Using Various Means to Communicate about Schools



SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

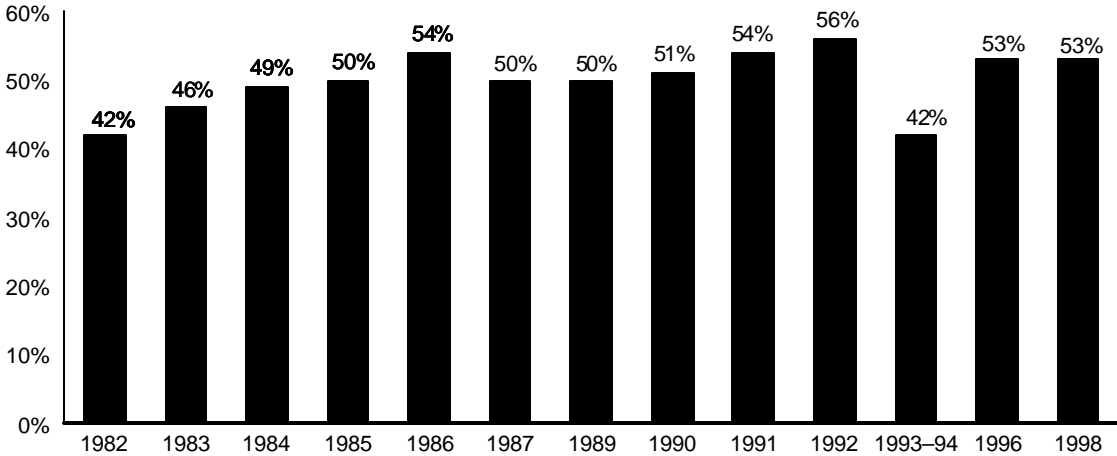
GRADING THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

QUESTION 5. *Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, or E 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 E?*

Public schools receive a grade of A or B from

- 60 percent of respondents who oppose public funding to support private-school education and 32 percent of respondents who support it;
- 52 percent of respondents with school-age children and 55 percent without;
- 64 percent of respondents with a four-year college degree or more and 43 percent of high school graduates;
- 54 percent of women and 53 percent of men;
- 32 percent of African-Americans; and
- 31 percent of Detroit residents.

EXHIBIT 7
Grading the Schools: Percentage Awarding A/B, 1982–98



SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

EXHIBIT 8

Grading the Schools: Percentage of A/B Grades Awarded, by Subgroup, 1998 and 1996

	1998 Survey	1996 Survey
All respondents	53%	53%
Traditional public-school parents	61	65
African-Americans	32	31
Caucasians	58	57
City of Detroit residents	31	34
Residents of small cities/towns	57	60
Education-sector employees	62	77
For-profit sector employees	56	52
4-year college graduate or more	64	61
High school graduates	43	53

SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

GRADING PUBLIC SCHOOL OUTCOMES

QUESTION 6. *Using this [same] grading system, how would you grade your local public schools on graduating students with the following skills?*

Academic skills . . . such as mathematics, reading and writing, and science
Employability skills . . . such as good work habits and the ability to solve problems

EXHIBIT 9

Grading the Schools: Perceived Student Proficiency, Selected Years

	Percentage of Respondents Awarding A/B		
	1998	1996	1993–94
Mathematics, reading/writing, and science ^a	45%	39%	32%
Employability	40	35	31

SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

^aThe three academic skills are combined for this exhibit.

- The grades are higher than in previous years. The combined A/B grade awarded for academic skills exceeds those of all previous years. Employability skills also are receiving higher grades each year: in 1993–94, 1996, and 1998–99, the percentage awarding an A/B rating has risen from 31 percent to 35 percent to 40 percent, respectively.
- Among the regions, Detroit and southern Michigan respondents express the least satisfaction with student academic skills: only 32 percent and 40 percent, respectively, deem their schools worthy of an A/B grade in this regard.
- Among all regions, for academic skills the highest percentages of A/B grades are given by western Michigan and the Thumb (50 percent and 49 percent, respectively); for employability skills the highest percentages of A/B grades are given by central Michigan (56 percent), followed by the western and northern regions (44 percent and 43 percent, respectively).

GRADING THE EDUCATION PROCESS

QUESTION 7. *How would you grade your local public schools on the following aspects of the education process?*

- Providing special programs to students most at risk of failure*
 - Providing a safe environment*
 - Gaining the support of parents*
 - Setting high standards for learning*
-

EXHIBIT 10 Grading the Schools: Special Tasks

	Percentage of Respondents Awarding Various Grades					
	A	B	C	D	F	Don't Know
Providing special programs	12%	25%	29%	13%	6%	15%
Providing safe environment	24	38	19	8	8	4
Gaining support of parents	18	37	24	9	5	7
Setting high standards	21	35	26	8	6	5

SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

- The responses of respondents with K–12 children are very similar to those without.
- Detroit residents are becoming much more positive than in the past. This year, 43 percent of Detroiters award schools an A/B for gaining the support of parents (the 1996 and 1993–94 figures were 40 percent and 16 percent, respectively), and 38 percent are equally pleased with the schools' setting high standards for learning (the 1996 and 1993–94 figures were 35 percent and 16 percent, respectively).
- Among the regions, the highest percentage of A/B scores are awarded by the
 - central and northern regions (75 percent and 69 percent, respectively), for providing a safe environment;
 - central and western regions (61 percent and 60 percent, respectively), for gaining parent support; and

- central region and Thumb (63 percent and 62 percent, respectively), for setting high standards.
- Among the regions, the lowest percentage of A/B scores are given by
 - Detroiters, for the schools' success in providing a safe environment (44 percent), gaining parent support (43 percent), and setting high standards (38 percent); and
 - all regions, for school provision of programs for at-risk students; in none do more than 42 percent of respondents think the schools do well in this regard.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE

QUESTION 8. *In general, how well prepared are students from your local schools to compete for jobs in a world economy?*

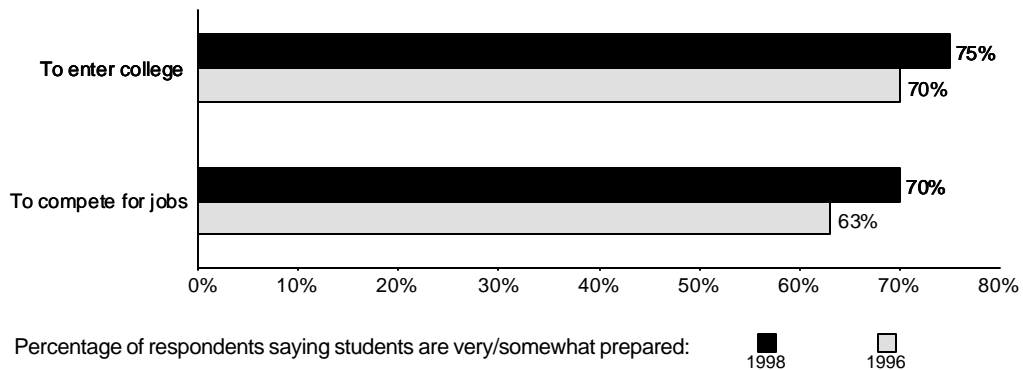
QUESTION 9. *In general, how prepared are students from your local schools to enter college ready to learn?*

EXHIBIT 11
Student Preparedness for Jobs or Higher Education

	Percentage Saying Students Are . . .			
	Very/Somewhat Prepared	Not Very/Not Prepared	Don't Know	Other
Ready to compete in a world economy	70%	24%	5%	1%
Able to enter college ready to learn	75	17	7	0

SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

EXHIBIT 12
Student Preparedness: 1998 and 1996



SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

- Grades are higher this year than in 1996: The percentage believing students are very/somewhat prepared to compete for jobs rose from 63 percent in 1996 to 70 percent. The segment that feels that students are very/somewhat prepared to enter college is up from 70 percent in 1996 to 75 percent in 1998–99.
- Unlike in 1996, a majority of African-Americans surveyed now judge students to be very/somewhat prepared for jobs. The figure is up from 41 percent in 1996 to 58 percent in 1998–99.
- Of large-city residents, only 63 percent feel that students are very/somewhat prepared for work upon graduation; in suburban areas, 75 percent believe so.

PROPOSED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

QUESTION 10. *Which of the following do you believe would be the most effective way for local school boards to improve education?*

Work to increase public financial support for the schools

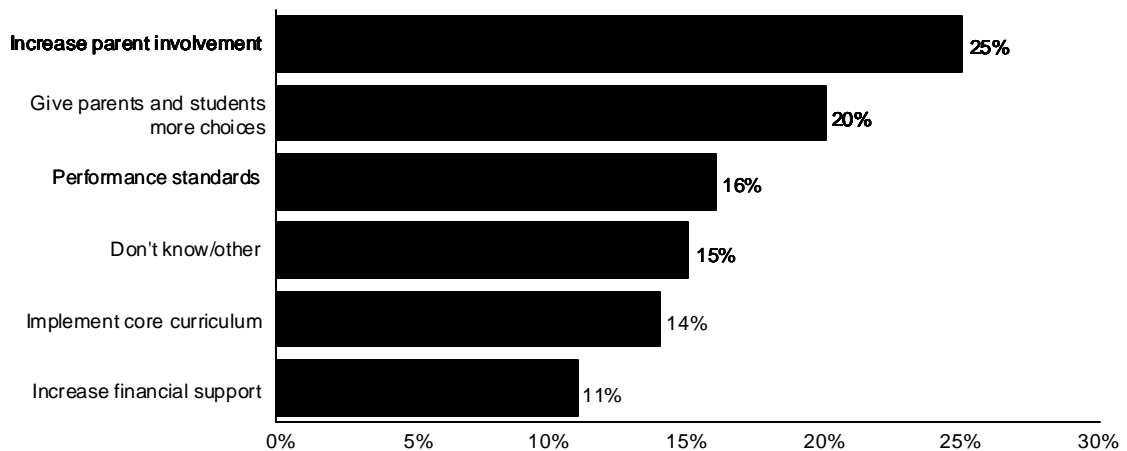
Require that schools implement the state's suggested core curriculum and create school improvement plans

Concentrate on meeting student performance standards

Give parents and students more choices in the types of courses offered

Work to increase parental involvement in education and the classroom

EXHIBIT 13
Most Effective Way for Local School Boards to Improve Education



SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

QUESTION 11. *Several changes in the way schools operate are being considered. For each possible change I read, please tell me if you would agree or disagree with your local schools adopting the change.*

Schools should teach students about values, such as honesty, perseverance, compassion, and loyalty.

Public school students should wear school uniforms.
Students should be allowed to attend any public school they choose, even if they don't live in the district.
Schools should extend the school year beyond the current number of 180 days per year.

EXHIBIT 14
Proposed School Changes

	Percentage of Respondents Who Agree/Disagree with Proposed Change		
	Strongly/Somewhat Agree	Strongly/Somewhat Disagree	Don't Know
Teach values in school	91%	8%	1%
Require school uniforms	45	51	5
Permit school choice across districts	58	39	3
Extend school year	46	50	4

SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

- Increased parent involvement is the option favored among those who feel “ownership” in their public schools and also in most other subgroups.
- Slightly more respondents without school-age children than with (28 percent and 23 percent, respectively) feel that increased parent involvement is the key to improving education.

QUESTION 4 . *I will now read a few statements that people make about education. Please tell me if you agree or disagree.*

In general, private schools provide a better education than public schools.
A good way to improve schools is to give parents vouchers to enroll their children in the public school of their choice.
A good way to improve schools is to develop partnerships between schools and businesses to teach students job skills.
Giving schools more money improves the quality of education provided.

- In regard to teaching values in school, in all subgroups a majority of respondents are strong or somewhat strong supporters of this practice, and in most, the majority is at least 75 percent.
- In regard to permitting students to attend their public school of choice, the practice is strongly or somewhat strongly supported
 - by more people who do not feel that they are treated as customers of the public schools than by those who do (62 percent and 53 percent, respectively);
 - by more respondents with school-age children than without (63 percent and 54 percent, respectively);
 - by more respondents having children in private than in public schools (69 percent and 61 percent, respectively); and
 - most in the City of Detroit and least in southern Michigan (66 percent and 50 percent, respectively).

EXHIBIT 15
Statements about Education

	Percentage of Respondents Who Agree/Disagree with Statement		
	Strongly/ Somewhat Agree	Strongly/ Somewhat Disagree	Don't Know
Private schools provide a better education	52%	35%	14%
Vouchers that may be used at any <i>public</i> school of choice are a good way to improve schools	60	31	9
Partnerships with businesses are a good way to improve schools	88	9	3
Giving schools more money improves quality of education	55	39	6

SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

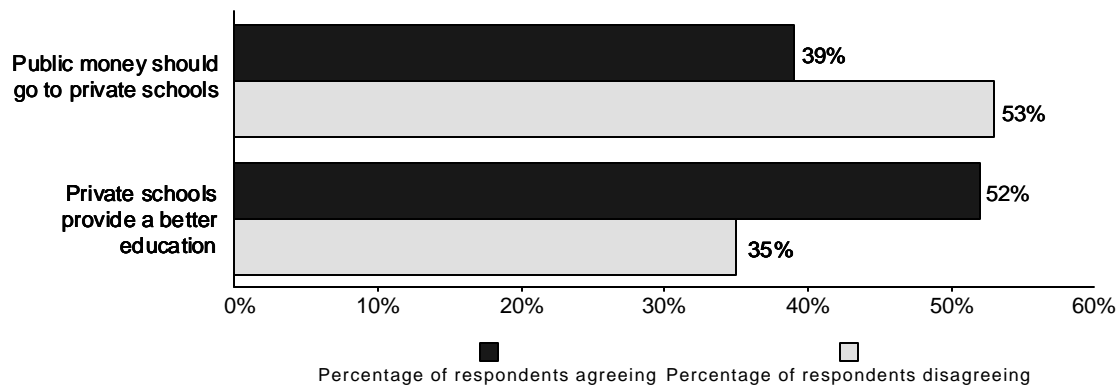
SCHOOL CHOICE AND VOUCHERS

QUESTION 4a. *In general, private schools provide better education than public schools.*

QUESTION 4b. *A good way to improve schools is to give parents vouchers to enroll their children in the public school of their choice.*

QUESTION 12. *There has been some controversy about the use of public tax dollars to support private and parochial K–12 education. Some feel that public funding should be available to parents who choose nonpublic schools. Others feel that public money should be used only for public schools. Others feel that it depends on whether the money is available to religious schools. Do you think that public monies in the form of vouchers, tax credits, or other forms should be given to support nonpublic schools?*

EXHIBIT 16
School Funding and Vouchers



SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

- The number believing that private schools are better than public schools is statistically unchanged from 1996.
- Among subgroups, private schools are believed to be superior to public schools by
 - 46 percent of respondents with school-age children and 56 percent of respondents without;

- 64 percent of African-Americans and 50 percent of Caucasians; and
 - 66 percent of people in Detroit, 40 percent in central Michigan, and 39 percent in northern Michigan.
- Among subgroups, vouchers that may be used at any *public* school are believed to be a way to improve public schools by
- a majority of respondents both with and without school-age children (62 percent and 59 percent, respectively);
 - a majority of residents in all regions (the range is 32–35 percent in all regions except southern Michigan and metropolitan Detroit, where the majorities are smaller—only 55 percent and 57 percent, respectively); and
 - 64 percent of men and 57 percent of women.
- With regard to providing public money in any form to *private* schools,
- satisfaction with local public schools is a factor: of respondents who support public funds for private schools, only 32 percent give their local public schools an A/B grade; of respondents in opposition, 59 percent give their local public schools an A/B grade;
 - a majority of parents of students attending private schools, both nonreligious and religious, support this practice—in no other subgroup is there majority support for public money for private schools;
 - the practice is supported by less than a majority in all other subgroups: parents of traditional public school students (35 percent), western and southern Michigan residents (44 percent and 43 percent, respectively), northern Michigan and Detroiters (34 percent and 38 percent, respectively), suburban and small city/town residents (42 percent and 38 percent, respectively), respondents who do not feel ownership in the schools (39 percent), respondents who do not feel as if they are treated as a customer of schools (43 percent), and high school and college graduates (32 percent and 40 percent, respectively).

QUESTION 13. *[If yes to question 12], I will ask two questions about tax credits for parents who pay tuition to nonpublic schools. For each of the following two statements, please tell me if you would agree or disagree.*

The state should give a tax credit to parents who pay tuition to nonpublic schools, including religious schools.

The state should give a tax credit to parents who pay tuition to nonpublic schools, except religious schools.

QUESTION 14. *[If yes to question 12], I will now ask three questions about vouchers, which parents could redeem to the state to pay for their children's public or private school education. For each of the following statements, please tell me if you agree or disagree.*

The state should issue vouchers to parents to allow them to send their children to any public school in the state.

The state should issue vouchers to parents to allow them to send their children to any public or private school in the state, including religious schools.

The state should issue vouchers to parents to allow them to send their children to any public or private school in the state, excluding religious schools.

EXHIBIT 17
Reaction to Statements about Expending Public Money for Private Schooling
(supported by 39 percent of respondents)

	Percentage of Supporters of Public Funds for Private Schooling Who		Percentage of All Respondents Who	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Income tax credits should				
–be permitted for private schooling, <i>including</i> religious schooling expenses	82%	16%	33%	67%
–be permitted for private schooling <i>but not</i> religious schooling expenses	28	64	14	86
Vouchers should				
–be given to attend public and private schools, <i>including</i> religious schools	70	25	29	71
–be given to attend public and private schools <i>but not</i> religious schools	28	66	13	87

SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

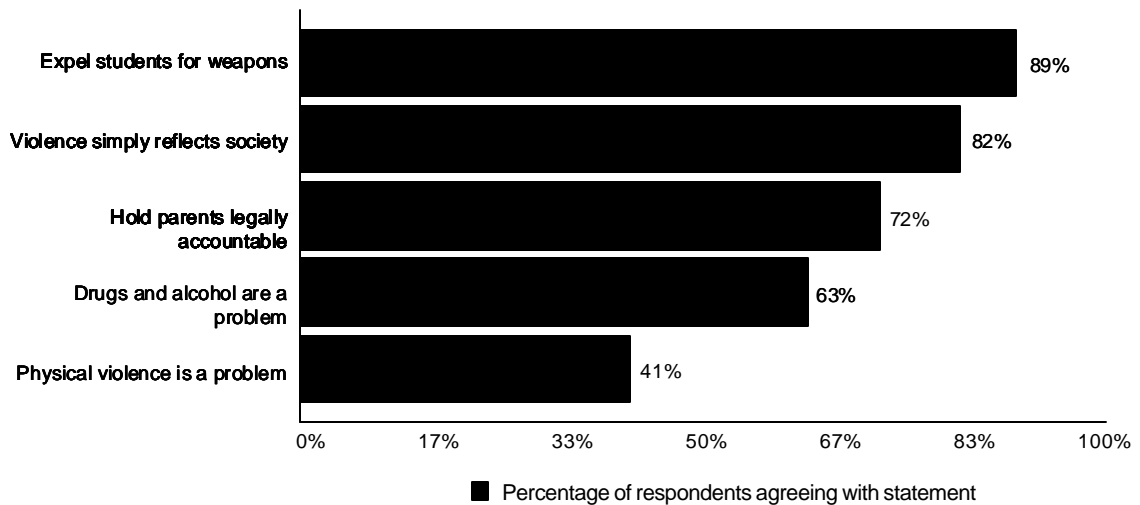
- Among those who feel that public money should support nonpublic schools, the preferred way is to permit parents of private-school students (including those attending a religious school) to claim a state income tax credit.
- Whether public monies are allocated through tax credits or vouchers, those who support public funding for private schooling overwhelmingly want religious schools to be included.
- By margins of two to one, the public does not support income tax credits or vouchers that may be used for private schooling.

VIOLENCE, DRUGS, AND ALCOHOL IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

QUESTION 15. *Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about school violence.*

- Physical violence is a serious problem in my local schools.*
- Use of drugs and alcohol is a serious problem in my local schools.*
- Students should be expelled automatically for bringing weapons to school.*
- Parents should be held legally accountable when their children bring weapons to school.*
- Violence in the schools is simply a reflection the violence in our society.*

EXHIBIT 18
Views about School Violence



SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

- In regard to physical violence,
 - more Detroiters than other Michigianians say that it is a problem in their schools, with 63 percent agreeing that it is a serious problem; in both central and northern Michigan the percentages drop to 31 percent, and

- more Caucasian than African-American respondents feel that school violence reflects society's violence (83 percent and 74 percent, respectively).
- In regard to drugs and alcohol, sentiment that this is a problem in schools is high in all regions of the state: at least 59 percent of respondents in every region indicate that drugs and alcohol are a serious problem, and the figure is as high as 70 percent in southern Michigan.
- Whether one has school-age children or not makes little or no difference in the response to this question: 61 percent of those with and 66 percent of those without believe drugs and alcohol are problems in school; 43 percent of those with and 41 of those without say that violence, drugs, and alcohol are problems.

FINANCING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

QUESTION 16. *With the passage of Proposal A in 1994, funding for schools shifted largely from the local property tax to the state sales tax and other state taxes. I now will read a few statements that people make about the effect this change has had on schools. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each.*

The shift from the property tax to the sales tax for funding the schools has helped to improve the quality of education.

School districts now have fewer millage elections than they had before.

The gap in the amount that rich and poor school districts have to spend has narrowed.

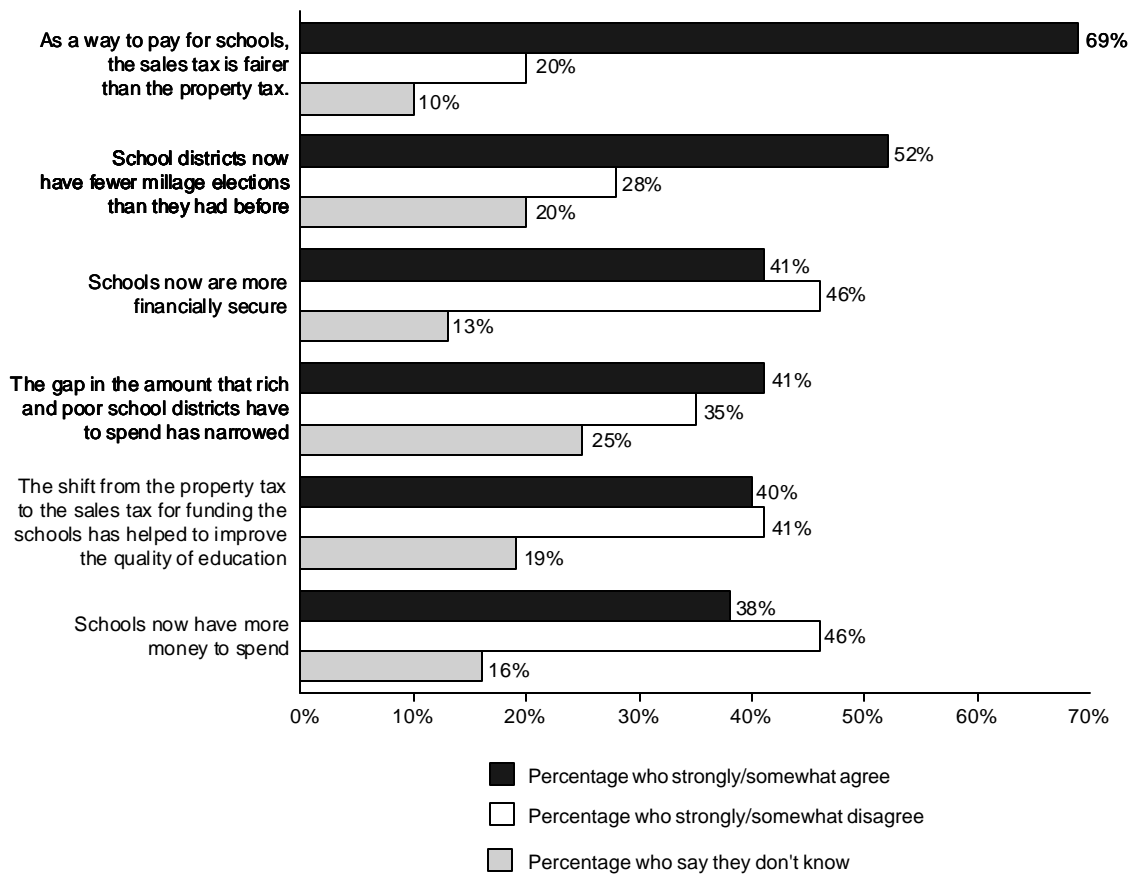
The sales tax is a fairer way to pay for schools than is the property tax.

Schools now are more financially secure.

Schools now have more money to spend.

- The belief that schools have more money to spend since passage of Proposal A has increased, from 30 percent in 1996 to 38 percent in 1998–99;
- Among respondents with and without K–12 children,
 - 39 percent with and 40 percent without believe that the tax shift has improved school quality;
 - 72 percent with and 67 percent without believe that the sales tax is fairer than the property tax as a school-finance mechanism; and
 - 39 percent with and 42 percent without believe that the funding gap between rich and poor districts has narrowed.
- Among the regions,
 - in none do the majority of respondents feel that the tax shift has improved school quality;
 - in none do the majority feel that the funding gap has narrowed;
 - in all, the majority believe the sales tax is a fairer way to pay for schools; and
 - in all except southern Michigan, the majority think that there are fewer millage elections now than before.
- In every employee subgroup, only a minority feel that Proposal A

EXHIBIT 19
Views about School Finance



SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

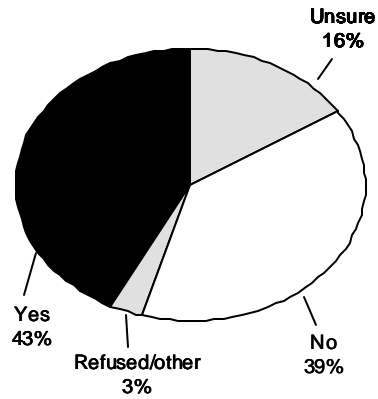
- narrowed the funding gap between rich and poor districts (for people working for non-profit organizations and in education, the affirmative response figures are 32 percent and 39 percent, respectively); and
- improved the quality of education (subgroup responses vary little in this regard).

QUESTION 17. *If schools wish to ask voters for additional millage for education programs and/or additional staff, they now must hold a joint millage election with all of the other school districts in their county. If passed, the millage will be levied on all taxpayers in the county and shared among the districts on a per pupil bases. If asked to vote in such a millage election, how would you respond?*

- In regard to yes votes in countywide millage election, majorities are hard to come by:
 - whether one has school-age children seems to matter little—43 percent of the those with and 42 percent of those without indicate that they would cast an affirmative vote in a countywide millage election;
 - the youngest voters (aged under 25) are most receptive to a countywide millage (61 percent indicate a willingness to vote yes);

- among older voters, only 35 percent of those aged 65–74 and 39 percent of those aged over 75 say they would vote yes; and
- among regions, only in metropolitan Detroit do a majority of respondents (51 percent) indicate that they would vote yes.

EXHIBIT 20
Countywide Millage Election: Probable Votes



SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

TECHNOLOGY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

QUESTION 18. *Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about technology.*

In 20 years, most students will learn at home, via the Internet or other electronic means, instead of a school building.

My local school district adequately prepares students to use computers and other technology.

Increased use of computers in the classroom will substantially improve the schools.

EXHIBIT 21 Views about Technology

	Percentage Agreeing	Percentage Disagreeing
Most students will learn at home	42%	52%
My district adequately uses computers	74	17
Increased computer use will improve the schools	80	16

SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

- There is little difference in the responses by people who do and do not use a computer at home.
- With the following important exceptions, there are few differences of opinion among the subgroups with regard to the statements presented in question 18.
 - The youngest respondents—those younger than age 25—are more likely than others to believe in the future of technology in education: 61 percent of this group (but only 40 percent of other respondents) think that in the future students will learn at home via the Internet; 93 percent (and 79 percent of others) believe that computers will improve schools.
 - African-Americans are less likely than Caucasians (67 percent and 77 percent, respectively) to say that students are adequately prepared to use technology. However, the former feel more strongly than the latter (93 percent and 78 percent, respectively) that computers will improve classroom education. More African-American than Caucasian respondents (59 percent and 40 percent, respectively) also are of the opinion that students will learn at home in the future via the Internet.

- Opinion on student preparedness to use computers and on other technology ranges from 67 in Detroit to 80 percent in northern Michigan. (Northerners are less likely than those in all other regions but one to say that computers will improve classroom education, thus they may be inclined to believe that a lower level of preparedness is adequate.)

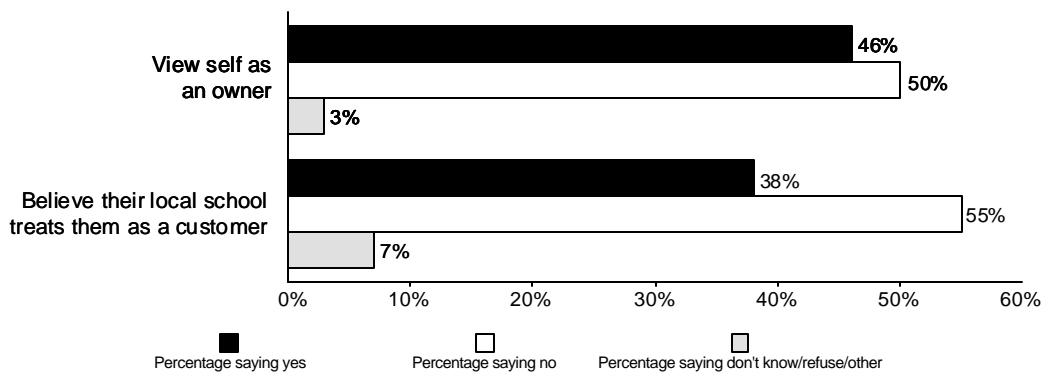
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

QUESTION 19. *As a taxpayer, do you view yourself as an “owner” of the public schools?*

QUESTION 20. *Do you believe that your local school district treats you as a “customer”?*

QUESTION 21. *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.”*

EXHIBIT 22
Perceived Ownership in and Customer Orientation of Public Schools

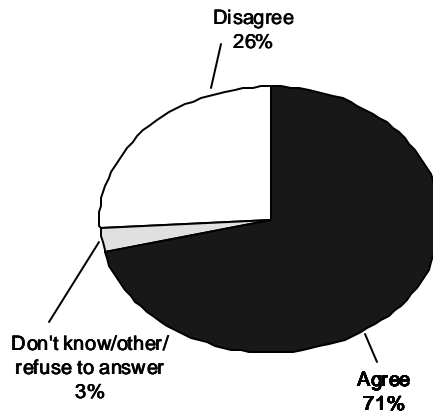


SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

- The percentage of respondents saying they feel like owners of the public schools has dropped—the 1996 and 1998–99 figures are 52 percent and 46 percent, respectively.
- Among parents and nonparents of school-age children,
 - there is little difference in feelings of public school ownership—47 percent of those with school-age children and 46 percent without feel like owners;
 - parents of school children are somewhat less likely than others (29 percent and 34 percent, respectively) to feel that their tax dollars for education are a good buy.
- Among the regions, feelings of ownership vary widely, ranging from a high of 58 percent in northern Michigan to a low of 38 percent in Detroit.

- Among subgroups,
 - 45 percent of parents of children in traditional public schools, 44 percent of private-school parents, and 71 percent of charter-school parents feel like owners of their schools;
 - 43 percent of public-school parents, 19 percent of private-school parents, and 46 percent of charter-school parents feel that their public school system treats them like customers;
 - public-school parents' feeling of ownership has declined (from 60 percent in 1996 to 47 percent in 1998–99) as has their belief that they are treated as customers (from 48 percent in 1996 to 43 percent in 1998–99); and
 - fewer African-Americans than Caucasians feel like owners (39 percent and 48 percent, respectively), customers (29 percent and 39 percent, respectively), or that their tax dollars for schools are a good buy (26 percent and 32 percent, respectively).

EXHIBIT 23
Local Schools Are a Good Buy: Respondent Agreement/Disagreement



SOURCE: 1998–99 Michigan Education Poll, conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc.

APPENDIX

**1998 Michigan Education Survey Instrument,
with Percentage Responses**

1998–99 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.

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 any 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.

Quality

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

a. Getting better	33%
b. Getting worse	20%
c. Staying same	38%
d. Some ways better, other ways worse	2%
e. Can't say (volunteered)	8%
Refused/other (volunteered)	0%

2. Do you think your local schools do an *excellent*, *good*, *fair*, or *poor* job of keeping people informed about the performance of schools in the district?

a. Excellent	11%
b. Good	39%
c. Fair	28%
d. Poor	17%
Don't know (volunteered)	4%
Refused/other (volunteered)	0%

3. Do you think your local schools do an *excellent*, *good*, *fair*, or *poor* job of keeping parents informed about the performance of individual students?

a. Excellent	12%
b. Good	35%
c. Fair	24%
d. Poor	15%
Don't know (volunteered)	14%
Refused/other (volunteered)	0%

4. I will now read a few statements that people make about education. Please tell me if you agree or disagree. If (agree/disagree), would that be *strongly* (agree/disagree), or just *somewhat* (agree/disagree)? [ROTATE]

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know (volunteered)
a. In general, private schools provide a better education than public schools.	33%	19%	8%	18%	17%	6%
b. A good way to improve schools is to give parents vouchers to enroll their children in the public school of their choice.	33%	27%	6%	14%	17%	3%
c. A good way to improve schools is to develop partnerships between schools and businesses to teach students job skills.	60%	28%	2%	4%	5%	1%
d. Giving schools more money improves the quality of education provided.	32%	23%	4%	21%	18%	2%

5. Students often are given the grades A, B, C, D, or E 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 E?

A	10%
B	43%
C	27%
D	10%
E	6%
Can't say (volunteered)	4%

6. 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 E for the . . . ?

	A	B	C	D	E	Don't Know/Other (volunteered)
a. academic skills of graduating seniors, such as mathematics, reading and writing, and science skills	12%	33%	31%	8%	4%	12%
b. employability skills of graduating seniors, such as good work habits and the ability to solve problems	8%	32%	32%	10%	5%	13%

7. 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 E for . . .

	A	B	C	D	E	Don't Know/other (volunteered)
a. providing special programs to students most at risk of failure	12%	25%	29%	13%	6%	15%
b. providing a safe environment	24%	38%	19%	8%	8%	4%
c. gaining the support of parents	18%	37%	24%	9%	5%	7%
d. setting high standards for learning	21%	35%	26%	8%	6%	5%

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

a. Very prepared	10%
b. Somewhat prepared	60%
c. Not very prepared	17%
d. Not at all prepared	7%
Don't know (volunteered)	5%
Refused (volunteered)	1%

9. In general, how prepared are students from your local schools to enter college ready to learn?

- a. Very prepared 19%
- b. Somewhat prepared 56%
- c. Not very prepared 13%
- d. Not at all prepared 4%
- Don't know (volunteered) 7%
- Refused (volunteered) 0%

School Reform

The next set of questions is about school reform.

10. Which of the following do you believe would be the most effective way for local school boards to improve education? [ROTATE.]

- a. Work to increase public financial support for the schools 11%
- b. Require that schools implement the state's suggested core curriculum and create school improvement plans 14%
- c. Concentrate on meeting student performance standards 16%
- d. Give parents and students more choices in the types of courses offered 20%
- e. Work to increase parental involvement in education and the classroom 25%
- Combinations (volunteered) 8%
- Don't know/can't say (volunteered) 6%
- Refused/other (volunteered) 1%

11. Several changes in the way schools operate are being considered. For each possible change I read, please tell me if you would agree or disagree with your local schools adopting the change. If [agree/ disagree], would that be *strongly* [agree/disagree] or just *somewhat* [agree/disagree]? [ROTATE]

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Other (volunteered)
a. Schools should teach students about values, such as honesty, perseverance, compassion, and loyalty.	74%	17%	1%	4%	4%	0%
b. Public school students should wear school uniforms.	27%	18%	4%	16%	35%	1%

- c. Students should be allowed to attend any public school they choose, even if they don't live in the district. 37% 21% 2% 17% 22% 1%
- d. Schools should extend the school year beyond the current number of 180 days per year 28% 18% 3% 18% 32% 1%

12. There has been some controversy about the use of public tax dollars to support of private and parochial K–12 education. Some feel that public funding should be available to parents who choose nonpublic schools. Others feel that public money should be used only for public schools. Others feel that it depends on whether the money is available to religious schools. Do you think that public monies in the form of vouchers, tax credits, or other forms should be given to support nonpublic schools?

- a. Yes [continue] 39%
- b. No [go to question 17] 53%
- c. Depends (volunteered) [continue] 3%
- d. Don't know (volunteered) [continue] 5%

13. Next, I will ask two questions about tax credits for parents who pay tuition to nonpublic schools. For each of the following two statements, please tell me if you would agree or disagree. If [agree/disagree], would that be *strongly* [agree/disagree] or just *somewhat* [agree/disagree]?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Other (volunteered)
a. The state should give a tax credit to parents who pay tuition to nonpublic schools, <i>including</i> religious schools	59%	23%	1%	9%	7%	1%
b. The state should give a tax credit to parents who pay tuition to nonpublic schools, <i>except</i> religious schools	15%	13%	5%	21%	43%	3%

14. I will now ask three questions about vouchers, which parents could redeem to the state to pay for their children’s public or private school educations. For each of the following statements, please tell me if you agree or disagree. If [agree/ disagree], would that be *strongly* [agree/disagree] or just *somewhat* [agree/disagree]?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don’t Know/Other (volunteered)
a. The state should issue vouchers to parents to allow them to send their children to any <i>public</i> school in the state	40%	21%	7%	14%	16%	1%
b. The state should issue vouchers to parents to allow them to send their children to any public or private school in the state, <i>including religious schools</i>	49%	21%	3%	13%	12%	2%
c. The state should issue vouchers to parents to allow them to send their children to any public or private school in the state, <i>excluding religious schools</i>	16%	12%	6%	24%	42%	1%

Standards and Testing

The next two questions are about standards and testing.

15. Some believe that we should have national standards, while others believe we should have state or local—school district level—standards. Which one of the following types of standards do you feel is the best?
- a. Standards set at the national level, which all students nationwide are expected to meet 42%
 - b. Standards set at the state level, which all students statewide are expected to meet 30%
 - c. Standards set at the local school-district level that all students districtwide are expected to meet 19%
 - d. No standards at all 4%
 - e. Other (volunteered) _____ 3%
 - f. Combination (volunteered) 3%

16. Should high school students have to pass a comprehensive test in order to receive a diploma?

- a. Yes 80%
- b. No 15%
- c. Unsure/don't know (volunteered) 4%
- Refused (volunteered) 0%

School Violence

The next question is about school violence.

17. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about school violence. If [agree/disagree], would that be *strongly* [agree/disagree] or just *somewhat* [agree/disagree]? [ROTATE]

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Other (volunteered)
a. Physical violence is a serious problem in my local schools.	22%	19%	4%	25%	24%	5%
b. Use of drugs and alcohol is a serious problem in my local schools.	37%	26%	4%	15%	11%	7%
c. Students should be expelled automatically for bringing weapons to school.	81%	8%	3%	5%	3%	1%
d. Parents should be held legally accountable when their children bring weapons to school.	51%	21%	2%	9%	16%	1%
e. Violence in the schools is simply a reflection the violence in our society.	52%	30%	1%	11%	6%	1%

School Finance

The next few questions are about the way schools are funded.

18. With the passage of Proposal A in 1994, funding for schools shifted largely from the local property tax to the state sales tax and other state taxes. I now will read a few statements that people make about the effect this change has had on schools. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each. If [agree/disagree], would that be *strongly* [agree/disagree] or just *somewhat* [agree/disagree]? [ROTATE]

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Other (volunteered)
a. The shift from the property tax to the sales tax for funding the schools has helped to improve the quality of education.	13%	27%	9%	20%	21%	10%
b. School districts now have fewer millage elections than they had before.	21%	31%	8%	16%	12%	12%
c. The gap in the amount that rich and poor school districts have to spend has narrowed.	15%	26%	9%	18%	17%	16%
d. The sales tax is a fairer way to pay for schools than is the property tax.	39%	30%	6%	10%	10%	4%
e. Schools now are more financially secure.	16%	25%	7%	23%	23%	6%
f. Schools now have more money to spend.	16%	22%	6%	22%	24%	10%
19. If schools wish to ask voters for additional millage for education programs and/or additional staff, they now must hold a joint millage election with all of the other school districts in their county. If passed, the millage will be levied on all taxpayers in the county and shared among the districts on a per pupil basis. If asked to vote in such a millage election, how would you respond?						
a. I would vote "yes"						43%
b. I would vote "no"						39%
c. I am unsure how I would vote (volunteered)						16%
d. I would not vote (volunteered)						1%
Refused/other (volunteered)						2%

Technology

The next few questions are about the use of technology in your local schools.

20. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about technology. If [agree/disagree], would that be *strongly* [agree/disagree] or just *somewhat* [agree/disagree]? [ROTATE]

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Other (volunteered)
a. In 20 years, most students will learn at home, via the Internet or other electronic means, instead of a school building.	21%	21%	3%	21%	31%	3%
b. My local school district adequately prepares students to use computers and other technology.	42%	32%	3%	7%	10%	6%
c. Increased use of computers in the classroom will substantially improve the schools.	56%	24%	2%	9%	7%	2%

Customer and Owner Satisfaction

The next set of questions is about how you perceive your relationship with the local public schools.

21. As a taxpayer, do you view yourself as an “owner” of the public schools?

a. Yes	46%
b. No	50%
Don't know (volunteered)	3%
Refused (volunteered)	0%

22. Do you believe that your local school district treats you as a “customer”?

a. Yes	38%
b. No	55%
Don't know (volunteered)	7%
Refused (volunteered)	1%

23. 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 32%
- b. Somewhat agree 39%
- c. Somewhat disagree 12%
- d. Strongly disagree 14%
- Don’t know (volunteered) 3%
- Refused (volunteered) 1%

24. State government releases “school reports” that provide the public with information about each school in the state. Are you aware or unaware of the school reports?

- a. Aware 38%
- b. Unaware 62%
- Refused/other (volunteered) 1%

25. How knowledgeable are you about what happens in your local public schools? Would you describe yourself as *very* knowledgeable, *somewhat* knowledgeable, or *not very* knowledgeable?

- a. Very knowledgeable 19%
- b. Somewhat knowledgeable 59%
- c. Not very knowledgeable 21%
- Refused/other (volunteered) 1%

26. To what extent do you find the following means of communications useful for learning about your local schools? I would like you to tell me how often you use each one. Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means *always*, and 5 means *never*. [ROTATE]

	1	2	3	4	5	Refused/ Other (volunteered)
	Always				Never	
a. School district annual reports or other publications	23%	17%	26%	9%	24%	2%
b. Conversations with teachers, principals, board members, or other school staff	26%	20%	18%	9%	26%	2%
c. Parent groups	12%	12%	19%	10%	44%	2%
d. Friends and neighbors	22%	19%	31%	10%	17%	2%
e. Television or radio	19%	22%	25%	13%	20%	1%
f. Radio call-in programs	8%	8%	11%	11%	61%	2%
g. Your local newspaper	36%	19%	25%	9%	11%	1%
h. The Internet	9%	6%	9%	7%	67%	3%

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.

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

- a. Yes [continue] 46%
- b. No [go to question 31] 54%

28. From what kind of school do your children receive most of their education: public, private, or parochial schools?

- a. Traditional public schools 78%
- b. Charter public schools 6%
- c. Private, nonreligious schools 2%
- d. Private, religious schools 8%
- e. Both public and private 3%
- f. Neither: oldest child is in preschool 0%
- g. Children taught at home 1%
- h. Children not enrolled for other reasons 1%
- Refused/other (volunteered) 3%

29. In what year were you born?

- a. <25 years old 10%
- b. 25-34 years old 17%
- c. 35-44 years old 24%
- d. 45-54 years old 20%
- e. 55-64 years old 11%
- f. 65-74 years old 10%
- g. 75+ years old 5%
- h. refused 2%

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

- a. Grade school or less (grades 1–7) 0%
- b. Some high school 16%
- c. Graduated from high school 32%
- d. Vocational technical school 3%
- e. Some college 25%
- f. College graduate 18%
- g. Postgraduate study or degree 5%
- Others (volunteered) 1%

31. Which of the following income groups includes your total family income last year? (READ GROUPS.)

- a. Less than \$25,000 18%
- c. \$25,000 to \$49,999 31%
- d. \$50,000 to \$74,999 22%
- f. \$75,000 and over 13%
- Refused/other (volunteered) 16%

32. Would you mind telling me if you are white, African-American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian-American, Arab-American, or some other ethnic group?

- a. Arab-American 1%
- b. Asian-American 1%
- c. African-American 11%
- d. Hispanic 3%
- e. Native American 2%
- f. White 77%
- Other (volunteered) 2%
- Refused (volunteered) 4%

33. In what type of community do you live—large city, suburban area, small city or town, village or rural area?

- a. Large city 20%
- b. Suburban area 29%
- c. Small city/town 27%
- d. Village/rural area 23%
- Don't know/others (volunteered) 1%

34. Which of the four groups best describes your employment?

- a. For-profit private business 34%
- b. State, federal, or local government 7%
- c. Not-for-profit organization 6%
- d. Education 9%
- e. None of the above 42%
- Refused/other (volunteered) 2%

35. Do you have any of the following technologies in your home?

	Yes	No	Refused/ other (volunteered)
a. Cable television or satellite dish	78%	21%	1%
b. Personal computer	59%	41%	1%
c. Internet connection	35%	64%	1%
d. CD-ROM	49%	51%	1%
e. FAX machine	22%	77%	1%

36. Sex of respondent [code by observation]

a. Female	52%
b. Male	48%

37. In what county do you live? _____

38. What is your zip code? _____

Region	
a. City of Detroit	15%
b. Metro Detroit	26%
c. Southern	8%
d. Western	19%
e. Central	9%
d. Thumb	12%
e. Northern	11%