

# 1996 Michigan Education Poll

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## 1996 MICHIGAN EDUCATION POLL

*NOTE: Due to rounding, percentages quoted in report may vary slightly from the response percentages presented below.*

Hello, I'm calling from Public Sector Consultants in Lansing, Michigan. With cooperation from the Department of Education, 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.

[Random selection of respondent at household level]

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. Should 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 remain 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 ..... 30%
  - b. Getting worse ..... 22%
  - c. Staying same ..... 35%
  - d. Some ways better, other ways worse ..... 2%
  - e. Can't say ..... 10%
  - Refused/other ..... 1%
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 ..... 13%
  - b. Good ..... 37%
  - c. Fair ..... 28%
  - d. Poor ..... 16%
  - Don't know ..... 6%
  - Refused/other ..... 1%

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 ..... 13%
  - b. Good ..... 34%
  - c. Fair ..... 22%
  - d. Poor ..... 14%
  - Don't know ..... 17%
  - Refused/other ..... 1%
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]

|  | <b>Strongly<br/>Agree</b> | <b>Somewhat<br/>Agree</b> | <b>Neutral/No<br/>Opinion</b> | <b>Somewhat<br/>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly<br/>Disagree</b> | <b>Don't<br/>Know</b> |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| a. In general, private schools provide a better education than public schools.   | 33%                       | 20%                       | 6%                            | 17%                          | 16%                          | 8%                    |
| b. A good way to improve schools is to allow students to enroll in schools of their choice or their parents' choice.                           | 41                        | 27                        | 6                             | 8                            | 12                           | 5                     |
| c. A good way to improve schools is to develop partnerships between schools and businesses to teach students job skills.                       | 63                        | 24                        | 4                             | 4                            | 3                            | 2                     |
| d. Fundamental changes in teaching, learning, testing, and school management call for new approaches to educating teachers and administrators. | 49                        | 33                        | 5                             | 5                            | 3                            | 5                     |
| e. Services such as busing and school lunches should be provided by private companies if money can be saved.                                   | 34                        | 25                        | 7                             | 13                           | 14                           | 7                     |
| f. Giving schools more money improves the quality of education provided.   | 29                        | 25                        | 4                             | 19                           | 21                           | 3                     |
| g. Increased use of computers in the classroom will substantially improve the schools.   | 53                        | 25                        | 4                             | 8                            | 7                            | 3                     |

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 .....         | 12% |
| B .....         | 41% |
| C .....         | 26% |
| D .....         | 9%  |
| E .....         | 4%  |
| Can't say ..... | 8%  |

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 failing grade for the . . . of graduating seniors?

|   | <b>A</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>C</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>E</b> | <b>Don't Know</b> |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| a. mathematics skills   | 10%      | 28%      | 30%      | 9%       | 5%       | 18%               |
| b. reading and writing skills   | 10       | 29       | 29       | 12       | 5        | 15                |
| c. science skills   | 10       | 29       | 29       | 11       | 5        | 18                |
| d. employability skills, such as<br>good work habits and the ability<br>to solve problems | 9        | 26       | 29       | 13       | 8        | 15                |
| e. technology skills  | 12       | 26       | 30       | 10       | 5        | 17                |

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 failing grade for . . .

|  | <b>A</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>C</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>E</b> | <b>Don't Know</b> |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| a. providing special programs to<br>students most at risk of failure   | 11%      | 27%      | 26%      | 10%      | 8%       | 19%               |
| b. providing a safe environment that<br>allows for successful learning | 23       | 34       | 20       | 8        | 6        | 10                |
| c. attempting to make large gains in<br>student learning               | 14       | 32       | 27       | 9        | 5        | 14                |
| d. gaining the support of parents                                      | 18       | 34       | 24       | 9        | 5        | 10                |
| e. setting high standards for learning                                 | 18       | 34       | 24       | 9        | 6        | 9                 |

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

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| a. Very prepared .....       | 13% |
| b. Somewhat prepared .....   | 50% |
| c. Not very prepared .....   | 18% |
| d. Not at all prepared ..... | 10% |
| Don't know .....             | 8%  |
| Refused .....                | 1%  |

9. In general, how prepared are students from your local schools to enter college ready to learn?
- a. Very prepared ..... 22%
  - b. Somewhat prepared ..... 48%
  - c. Not very prepared ..... 13%
  - d. Not at all prepared ..... 8%
  - Don't know ..... 8%
  - Refused ..... 1%
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 ..... 9%
  - b. Implement the state's suggested core curriculum and create school improvement plans ..... 13%
  - c. Concentrate on meeting student performance standards.. .....18%
  - d. Give parents and students more choices in the types of courses offered .....16%
  - e. Work to increase parental involvement in education and the classroom .....23%
  - Combinations ..... 13%
  - Don't know/can't say ..... 6%
  - Refused/other ..... 2%

### School Reform

The next few questions are about things that have been and can be done to improve the quality of education in Michigan.

11. The Michigan Legislature adopted several school reforms in 1993 and 1994. After I read each change, please tell me if you believe the change will improve the quality of education in your local public schools a great deal, improve it some, or not affect it very much?

|  | <b>Improve<br/>a Great<br/>Deal</b> | <b>Improve<br/>Some</b> | <b>Not Affect<br/>It Much</b> | <b>Don't<br/>Know</b> | <b>Other</b> |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| a. Each student is given an opportunity to pass a state test certifying his or her competence in reading, math, and science. Students who pass the test receive state endorsed diplomas. | 28%                                 | 45%                     | 19%                           | 7%                    | 2%           |
| b. The state accredits each school building in the state. The state can assume control of nonaccredited schools.   | 18                                  | 33                      | 30                            | 18                    | 2            |
| c. Increased authority is given to the principal and teachers in each school.  | 38                                  | 34                      | 18                            | 8                     | 2            |
| d. Increased student-related professional development is provided for teachers and administrators.   | 37                                  | 43                      | 10                            | 9                     | 1            |

|   |     |     |     |     |    |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| e. Public School Academies, also known as “charter schools,” have been created to provide students and parents alternatives to existing public schools. | 29% | 38% | 21% | 11% | 2% |
| f. Students now can attend any school within their intermediate school district.  | 35% | 34% | 22% | 6%  | 2% |

12. Several more 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]?

|   | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Somewhat Agree</b> | <b>Somewhat Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Don't Know</b> |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| a. Schools should teach students about values, such as honesty, perseverance, compassion, and loyalty.          | 72%                   | 17%                   | 3%                       | 5%                       | 3%                |
| b. Boys and girls should be separated for certain subjects, such as math and science, to limit distractions.    | 12                    | 12                    | 21                       | 51                       | 4                 |
| c. Public school students should wear school uniforms.  | 25                    | 20                    | 16                       | 34                       | 6                 |
| d. Schools should help students develop good character traits.  | 68                    | 21                    | 4                        | 4                        | 3                 |
| e. Students should be allowed to attend any public school they choose, even if they don't live in the district. | 30                    | 25                    | 18                       | 23                       | 4                 |
| f. Parents should be expected to volunteer in their child's school or classroom.                                | 49                    | 31                    | 10                       | 7                        | 3                 |

## School Finance

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

13. With the passage of Proposal A in 1994, funding for schools was shifted from the local property tax to the state sales tax. I will now 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]?

|  | <b>Strongly<br/>Agree</b> | <b>Somewhat<br/>Agree</b> | <b>Somewhat<br/>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly<br/>Disagree</b> | <b>Don't<br/>Know</b> |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| a. The shift from the property tax to the sales tax for funding the schools has helped improve the quality of education. | 13%                       | 26%                       | 22%                          | 20%                          | 20%                   |
| b. School districts now have fewer millage elections than they had before.   | 20                        | 29                        | 15                           | 19                           | 17                    |
| c. The gap in the amount that rich and poor school districts have to spend has narrowed.                                 | 16                        | 26                        | 16                           | 19                           | 24                    |
| d. The sales tax is a fairer way to pay for schools than the property tax.   | 41                        | 30                        | 9                            | 10                           | 10                    |
| e. Schools now are more financially secure.  | 14                        | 24                        | 20                           | 25                           | 18                    |
| f. Schools now have more money to spend.   | 11                        | 19                        | 22                           | 25                           | 24                    |

## Technology

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

14. How satisfied are you with the extent to which computers are used in the instruction of students in your local public schools. Would you say you are . . .
- a. Very satisfied ..... 21%
  - b. Somewhat satisfied ..... 43%
  - c. Somewhat dissatisfied ..... 13%
  - d. Very dissatisfied ..... 9%
  - Don't know ..... 15%
15. How important is it that every student in every grade level has access to a computer at school? Would you say it is . . .
- a. Very important ..... 67%
  - c. Somewhat important ..... 21%
  - d. Not very important ..... 4%
  - e. Not at all important ..... 5%
  - Don't know ..... 3%

16. Which of the following statements most closely reflects your thoughts about funding classroom technology for your local schools.
- a. My local public school should upgrade its use of technology in the classroom, even if it means higher taxes. .... 32%
  - b. Money should be taken from other school programs and redirected to improve the use of technology in the classroom. .... 25%
  - c. The current use of technology in the classroom is satisfactory, and no immediate improvements are needed. .... 27%
  - d. None of the above. .... 16%

### ***Customer and Owner Satisfaction***

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

17. As a taxpayer, do you view yourself as an owner of the public schools?
- a. Yes ..... 52%
  - b. No ..... 45%
  - Don't know ..... 2%
  - Refused ..... 2%
18. Do you believe that your local school district treats you as a customer?
- a. Yes ..... 40%
  - b. No ..... 51%
  - Don't know ..... 8%
  - Refused ..... 2%
19. 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 ..... 33%
  - b. Somewhat agree ..... 39%
  - c. Somewhat disagree ..... 13%
  - d. Strongly disagree ..... 10%
  - Don't know ..... 4%
  - Refused ..... 1%



## Information Needs

Local public schools are required by state law to issue school reports. The next set of questions is about those reports.

20. 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 ..... 40%
  - b. Unaware ..... 58%
  - Other ..... 1%
  - Refused ..... 2%
21. 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 ..... 20%
  - b. Somewhat knowledgeable ..... 52%
  - c. Not very knowledgeable ..... 25%
  - Don’t know/other ..... 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.

22. Do you currently have children of school age (K–12) or younger? (Circle one.)
- Yes (continue) ..... 46%
  - No (go to question 24) ..... 54%
23. From what kind of school did your children receive most of their education: public, private, or parochial schools? *[NOTE: This question was asked only of respondents with school-age children.]*
- a. Local public schools ..... 76%
  - b. Private/parochial schools ..... 14%
  - c. Both public and private ..... 3%
  - d. Neither: oldest child is in preschool ..... 1%
  - e. Children taught at home ..... 1%
  - f. Children not enrolled for other reasons ..... 2%
  - Refused/other ..... 2%
24. What is your age as of your last birthday?
- a. <25 ..... 9%
  - b. 25 to 34 ..... 17%
  - c. 35 to 44 ..... 24%
  - d. 45 to 54 ..... 19%
  - e. 55 to 64 ..... 11%
  - f. 65 to 74 ..... 11%
  - g. 75 plus ..... 4%
  - Refused/other ..... 3%

25. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- a. Grade school or less (grades 1–7) ..... 1%
  - b. Some high school ..... 7%
  - c. Graduated from high school ..... 28%
  - d. Vocational technical school ..... 4%
  - e. Some college ..... 28%
  - f. College graduate ..... 21%
  - g. Postgraduate study or degree ..... 9%
  - Others ..... 2%
26. Which of the following income groups includes your total family income last year? (READ GROUPS.)
- a. Less than \$10,000 ..... 6%
  - b. \$10,000 to \$20,000 ..... 10%
  - c. \$21,000 to \$30,000 ..... 14%
  - d. \$31,000 to \$45,000 ..... 19%
  - e. \$46,000 to \$60,000 ..... 15%
  - f. Over \$60,000 ..... 19%
  - Refused/other ..... 17%
27. 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 ..... 2%
  - b. Asian-American ..... 1%
  - c. African-American ..... 10%
  - d. Hispanic ..... 1%
  - e. Native American ..... 2%
  - f. White ..... 78%
  - Other ..... 2%
  - Refused ..... 4%
28. In what type of community do you live—large city, suburban area, small city or town, village or rural area? (Get name of community.) (If township, get name of county.)
- a. Detroit ..... 10%
  - b. Other large city [ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ] ..... 9%
  - c. Suburban area [ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ] ..... 27%
  - d. Small city/town [ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ] ..... 25%
  - e. Village/rural area [ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ] ..... 19%
  - Don't know/others [ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ] ..... 11%

29. Which of the four groups best describes your employment?
- a. For-profit private business ..... 39%
  - b. State, federal, or local government ..... 7%
  - c. Not-for-profit organization ..... 6%
  - d. Education ..... 8%
  - e. None of the above ..... 35%
  - Refused/other ..... 4%
30. Which of the following technologies do you have in your home?
- |   | <b>Yes/No</b> |
|---|---------------|
| a. Cable television .....   | 70/30%        |
| b. Personal computer [If 'Yes,' ask question 31, otherwise SKIP to question 32] ..... | 54/46%        |
| c. Modem .....  | 35/65%        |
| d. CD-ROM .....   | 38/62%        |
| e. FAX machine .....  | 23/77%        |
31. Do you have an on-line service such as America Online or Prodigy? *[NOTE: This question was asked only of respondents having a modem.]*
- a. Yes ..... 37%
  - b. No ..... 60%
  - Don't know ..... 1%
  - Refused ..... 1%
32. Sex of respondent
- a. Female ..... 52%
  - b. Male ..... 48%
33. What county do you live in?
- 1. City of Detroit ..... 15%
  - 2. Metro Detroit ..... 28%
  - 3. Southeast ..... 8%
  - 4. Western ..... 19%
  - 5. Central ..... 9%
  - 6. Thumb ..... 12%
  - 7. North ..... 10%