

## 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]

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know (volunteered)</b>
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 . . . ?

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>Don't Know/Other (volunteered)</b>
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 . . .

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>Don't Know/other (volunteered)</b>
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]

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know/Other (volunteered)</b>
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]?

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know/Other (volunteered)</b>
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]?

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Don’t Know/Other (volunteered)</b>
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]

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know/Other (volunteered)</b>
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]

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know/Other (volunteered)</b>
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]

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Neutral/No Opinion (volunteered)</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know/Other (volunteered)</b>
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]

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Refused/ Other (volunteered)</b>
	<b>Always</b>				<b>Never</b>	
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?

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Refused/ other (volunteered)</b>
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%