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## Are We Beginning To See The Light?

**Public And Parents Buy Into The Need To Ramp Up Math And Science Education But Most Still Think Their Local Schools Are Doing Fine**

By [Jean Johnson](#), [Jon Rockkind](#) and [Amber Ott](#)



NEW YORK, June 2, 2010 – Americans are convinced that math and science skills are crucial for the future, with strong majorities who say there will be more jobs and college opportunities for students with those skills, according to a new Public Agenda survey. But while there's broad support from parents and the general public for K-12 national standards, more than half of parents (52%) say the math and science their child is getting in school is "fine as it is."

These are just some of many surprising realities facing science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education in public schools, according to "Are We Beginning to See the Light?," a new Public Agenda survey exploring the views of more than 1,400 individuals nationwide, including 646 parents of children grades K-12. The national survey was underwritten by the [GE Foundation](#).

### Preparing For Tomorrow's Jobs

While only 3 in 10 Americans see a demand for science and math-focused jobs in the current economy, 84% agree that there will be a lot more jobs in the future that require math and science skills. And 9 in 10 Americans say studying advanced math and science is useful even for students who don't pursue a STEM career. Additionally, 88% of the public agrees that students with advanced math and science skills will have an advantage when it comes to college opportunities.

Overall, the general public favors a "national curriculum" as one way of improving STEM education: 8 in 10 Americans say establishing a national curriculum in math would improve STEM education, with more than half (53%) saying it would improve it "a lot." And 78% say the same about a national curriculum in science, with 48% saying it would improve it "a lot."

"Giving today's students a world class science and math education is the key to maintaining our country's economic prowess," said Alan Leshner, Chief Executive Officer of The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). "Parents are beginning to envision the opportunities for their children in the STEM fields, and I am especially heartened by their receptivity to having high national standards in these critical subjects."

### Strategies For Improvement

At the same time, parents agree with the general public on the value of STEM education. Most parents surveyed want their own children to take advanced math and science courses in high school (60% and 54% respectively). Parents would also like to see their local schools spend more money on up-to-date and well-equipped science labs (70%), more equipment for hands-on learning (69%) and more equipment to help students learn computer and technology skills (68%). A plurality of parents with children in grades 6-12 say they want to see more emphasis in their child's school on STEM topics such as computer programming (65%), basic engineering principles (52%), and statistics and probability (49%).

"The public is open to many different strategies for improving STEM education, and they're enthusiastic about the overall goal, but much more has to be done to help them understand what's needed for kids in their local schools to have a world-class science and math education," said Jean Johnson, director of Education Insights at Public Agenda. "The problem is particularly acute in science. Many parents don't realize the importance of starting children in science early on. Many think it can easily wait until high school."



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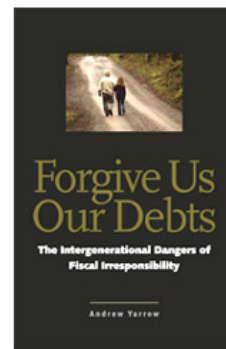
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Finally, an entertaining, irreverent and absolutely essential nonpartisan look at the energy crisis, from the authors of Where Does the Money Go?



**Our legacy can be so much more than deficits and debt. In this book, Andrew Yarrow talks about what we'll all have to do to pay Uncle Sam's bills.**

## National Competitiveness

There is a growing body of research suggesting Americans are [falling behind](#) in math and science education. U.S. students [rank 25th](#) in math and 21st in science skills internationally, according to a recent OECD report, and the [2007 ACT College Readiness Report](#) points out that only 43% of graduating seniors are ready for college math and 27% are ready for college science.

Last November, President Obama launched an "Educate to Innovate" campaign to improve the participation and performance of America's students in STEM fields. "[Are We Beginning to See the Light](#)" provides insight into how Americans perceive the problem and how they identify solutions that could help solve the nation's STEM education problem.

For example, 71% of those surveyed believe in [having local businesses provide internships and other business partnership programs](#), so high school students can gain practical job skills.

While parents and the public understand the value of STEM skills, there's still a gap between the way the leaders and public see the problem.

[Few Americans think it is absolutely essential for students to understand advanced sciences like physics](#) (28%) and advanced math like calculus (26%). When it comes to their own child, [few parents want more emphasis on advanced math and science like physics](#) (42%) and calculus (42%). Additionally, [nearly 7 in 10 Americans say science can wait until middle and high school](#).

## Methodology And Full Survey Results

"[Are We Beginning to See the Light?](#)" is based on a nationally-representative sample of more 1,406 adults, with oversamples to achieve interview with 646 parents of children grades K-12. Telephone interviews were conducted from December 1 – 15, 2009, and respondents had the choice of completing the interview in English or Spanish. The margin of error for the report is plus or minus 2.8 percentage points. However, it is higher when comparing subgroups or question items that weren't asked of all respondents.

Survey data were weighted to (1) adjust for the fact that not all survey respondents were selected with the same probability, and (2) account for gaps in coverage and nonresponse biases in the survey frame. Weights were applied to balance region, race, Hispanic ethnicity, income and marital status.

Results of less than 0.5 percent are signified by an asterisk. Results of zero are signified by a dash. Responses may not always total 100 percent due to rounding. Combining answer categories may produce slight discrepancies between numbers in these survey results and numbers in the report.

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
<b>Q1. Thinking about the U.S. economy, what do you think is the most important thing the United States can do to make sure its economy is healthy. Please tell me the first thing that comes to mind. (Only top responses are listed.)</b>		
Create more/better paying jobs	37%	35%
Need healthcare/healthcare insurance/reform	10%	8%
Stop spending/giving money	6%	7%
Taxes	6%	7%
Need better education system	6%	5%
Don't know	10%	11%

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
<b>Q2. Thinking now about job opportunities for people where you live, would you say there are plenty of good jobs available or are good jobs difficult to find?</b>		
Plenty of good jobs available	11%	8%
Good jobs are difficult to find	83%	84%
Lots of some jobs, few of others (Vol.)	3%	4%
Don't know	2%	4%

*There is no Q3*

Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
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**Q4. And are there more jobs available for people who have good math and science skills than there are other jobs, are there fewer jobs for people who have good math and science skills than other jobs, or are there about the same number of jobs available for people with strong math and science skills as there are other jobs?**

More math/science jobs	33%	31%
Other jobs	13%	15%
About the same number of jobs	44%	40%
Don't know	10%	13%

**QD5. Does your job require you to use a lot, a little or no math at all? [Base: Asked of those employed full- or part-time]**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
A lot	33%	36%
A little	56%	53%
None	11%	10%
Don't know	-	1%

**Q5. Do you think the most pressing problems facing the high schools in your local community more likely come from...?**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Social problems and kids who misbehave	63%	56%
Low academic standards and outdated curricula	27%	31%
Don't know	9%	13%

**Q6. Suppose your community got extra money to spend on its schools and you were asked to help decide how to spend that money. Would you prefer the money go toward...?**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Reducing class size	35%	33%
Making pre-school available to all children	15%	15%
Improving math and science education	28%	27%
Paying teachers more	19%	20%
Don't know	3%	5%

**Q7. Would you say that generally speaking, the schools in your community are doing a good job preparing students for the following?**

**For college level ENGLISH courses?**

Doing a good job preparing students	55%	46%
They need to be doing a lot better	38%	43%
Don't know	7%	11%

**For college level MATH courses?**

Doing a good job preparing students	52%	45%
They need to be doing a lot better	41%	45%
Don't know	7%	10%

**To be successful as adults?**

Doing a good job preparing students	53%	44%
They need to be doing a lot better	41%	48%
Don't know	6%	8%

**For college level SCIENCE courses?**

Doing a good job preparing students	50%	44%
They need to be doing a lot better	41%	45%

Don't know

10%

11%

**Q8. Here are some things the schools may or may not need to teach students before they are done with high school and go out into the real world. Do you think this is absolutely essential, important but not essential or not important (for schools to teach students)?**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
<b>Basic reading and writing skills</b>		
Absolutely essential	90%	91%
Important, but not essential	9%	8%
Not important	1%	1%
<b>Basic math skills</b>		
Absolutely essential	87%	87%
Important, but not essential	13%	12%
Not important	1%	1%
<b>Being able to work well as part of a team</b>		
Absolutely essential	80%	74%
Important, but not essential	19%	24%
Not important	1%	2%
<b>Basic scientific ideas and principles</b>		
Absolutely essential	60%	56%
Important, but not essential	36%	38%
Not important	3%	4%
<b>Being able to use concepts taught in algebra</b>		
Absolutely essential	55%	50%
Important, but not essential	40%	41%
Not important	4%	7%
<b>Knowing how to speak a foreign language</b>		
Absolutely essential	36%	31%
Important, but not essential	49%	52%
Not important	14%	16%
<b>Understanding advanced sciences, like physics</b>		
Absolutely essential	31%	28%
Important, but not essential	55%	56%
Not important	12%	13%
<b>Advanced math, like calculus</b>		
Absolutely essential	28%	26%
Important, but not essential	58%	54%
Not important	12%	17%

**Q9. In your own words, what does the phrase "21st century skills" mean to you? Just tell me the first thing that comes to mind.**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Computer literacy	27%	27%
Technology/More technologically savvy	24%	20%
Having a better education	8%	11%
Other	8%	10%
Communication and teamwork skills	5%	5%
Innovation/Modernization	6%	5%
Reading & writing skills	2%	5%
Math/Math literacy	3%	5%
More & better job skills	2%	4%
Being able to adapt & compete in a global environment	4%	4%
Science/Science literacy	3%	3%

More skills (general)	4%	3%
No/None/Nothing	3%	3%
Electronics	2%	2%
Survival & life skills	1%	1%
English/English literacy	*	1%
Having better problem solving/critical thinking skills	1%	1%
Don't know	14%	13%

**Q10. Thinking about the schools in your community, as far as you know who is responsible for setting the academic standards? Is it...**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
The school district,	32%	32%
The state, or	49%	47%
Is it set by the federal government?	11%	11%
Don't know	7%	10%

**Q11. Would you say the standards in your local schools are higher than the standards of most of the United States, lower than the standards of most of the United States, or about the same? [Base: Asked of those who said that the school district or the state were responsible for academic standards]**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Higher	28%	26%
Lower	18%	18%
About the same	51%	52%
Don't know	3%	4%

**Q10A. Thinking more specifically about your child, do you think that his/her school should be teaching him/her a lot more math and science, less, or are things fine as they are? [Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children]**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
More math and science	45%	--
Less math and science	2%	--
Things are fine as is	52%	--
Don't know	1%	--

**Q10B. Do you think the public schools should be teaching children a lot more math and science, less, or are things fine as they are? [Base: Asked of those who are not parents of K-12 grade children]**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
More math and science	--	68%
Less math and science	--	1%
Things are fine as is	--	26%
Don't know	--	5%

**Q11K. Please tell me if you think the following statements are true or false. If you don't know, please tell me. Would you say the following is true or false?**

**In order to teach science in high school you have to have either majored in science or passed a test that shows you are qualified to teach it.**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
TRUE	77%	78%
FALSE	13%	13%
Don't know	10%	9%

**Most students studying math in middle and high school are taught by teachers who either majored in math or passed a test that shows they are qualified to teach it.**

TRUE	75%	71%
FALSE	15%	19%
Don't know	10%	10%

**The majority of students who finish a graduate program in engineering in the United States are from other countries.**

TRUE	58%	52%
FALSE	27%	30%
Don't know	16%	17%

**On nationwide tests, most eighth graders score "proficient" or better in math.**

TRUE	41%	35%
FALSE	44%	47%
Don't know	15%	18%

Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
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**Q12. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

**Students with advanced math and science skills will have a big advantage when it comes to college opportunities.**

Strongly agree	67%	66%
Somewhat agree	21%	22%
Somewhat disagree	7%	8%
Strongly disagree	3%	2%
Don't know	2%	2%

**Even if students don't use advanced math and science after school, the subjects can teach them critical thinking skills that will help them following graduation.**

Strongly agree	63%	63%
Somewhat agree	25%	26%
Somewhat disagree	6%	4%
Strongly disagree	4%	4%
Don't know	3%	3%

**In the future, there will be a lot more jobs that require advanced math and science skills.**

Strongly agree	53%	54%
Somewhat agree	31%	30%
Somewhat disagree	8%	8%
Strongly disagree	5%	5%
Don't know	3%	4%

**Too many students today are not really learning basic math.**

Strongly agree	43%	48%
Somewhat agree	29%	25%
Somewhat disagree	14%	12%
Strongly disagree	11%	9%
Don't know	4%	6%

**The U.S. economy would improve if many more students had college degrees.**

Strongly agree	43%	40%
Somewhat agree	24%	21%
Somewhat disagree	18%	22%
Strongly disagree	12%	13%
Don't know	3%	4%

**It is more important for students to graduate high school with strong reading and writing skills than it is to have strong math and science skills.**

Strongly agree	39%	38%
Somewhat agree	26%	26%
Somewhat disagree	19%	17%
Strongly disagree	11%	12%
Don't know	5%	7%

**Many more companies would move into your area if it had a reputation for workers with great science and math skills.**

Strongly agree	29%	31%
Somewhat agree	24%	23%
Somewhat disagree	23%	20%
Strongly disagree	17%	17%
Don't know	8%	9%

**Q13. Do you think that ability in math and science is something kids are mostly born with, or is it mostly something kids can learn in school and develop with experience?**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Something kids are mostly born with	14%	13%
Something kids can learn in school and develop with experience	80%	81%
Don't know	5%	5%

**Q14. There are many reasons that students might do poorly in math and science. Of these two statements, please tell me which better explains why students may do poorly in math and science.**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
There are not enough really good math and science teachers	31%	33%
Students think the subject is irrelevant to their lives	61%	58%
Neither	4%	4%
Don't know	4%	6%

**Q15. Which comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Elementary schools need to focus more on science; children need to understand basic scientific principles before they enter 6th grade	31%	28%
It is more important for elementary school students to focus on reading, writing and mathematics, there is plenty of time to learn science in middle and high school	65%	68%
Don't know	5%	4%

**Q16. Please tell me how much each of the following would improve math and science education in your local schools. Would you say that this would improve math and science education a lot, a little or would it do nothing at all?**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
<b>Have local businesses provide internships and other business partnership programs, so high school students can gain practical job skills</b>		
A lot	69%	71%
A little	24%	22%
Nothing at all	5%	5%
Don't know	2%	3%
<b>Requiring all students to take four years of math in high school</b>		
A lot	68%	68%
A little	23%	22%
Nothing at all	6%	8%
Don't know	1%	2%
<b>Requiring students who are struggling with math or science to spend extra time after school or during the summer to catch up</b>		
A lot	59%	61%
A little	32%	28%
Nothing at all	9%	10%
Don't know	1%	2%

**Putting math and science ideas in television, video games and other media directed towards children**

A lot	61%	60%
A little	30%	29%
Nothing at all	8%	9%
Don't know	*	2%

**Attracting better math and science teachers by providing full college scholarships to people who major in math or science and agree to teach these subjects in public school for at least five years**

A lot	58%	60%
A little	32%	29%
Nothing at all	7%	7%
Don't know	3%	4%

**Requiring all high school students to take a science class that includes lab work**

A lot	55%	59%
A little	35%	31%
Nothing at all	9%	8%
Don't know	1%	2%

**Requiring all students to take four years of science**

A lot	56%	54%
A little	33%	32%
Nothing at all	9%	10%
Don't know	2%	4%

**Requiring all 8th grade students to take algebra**

A lot	55%	54%
A little	31%	30%
Nothing at all	12%	13%
Don't know	2%	3%

**Establishing a national curriculum in MATH so that schools everywhere teach the same topics**

A lot	52%	53%
A little	31%	27%
Nothing at all	15%	16%
Don't know	3%	3%

**Requiring students to pass challenging tests in math and science in order to graduate**

A lot	48%	50%
A little	34%	31%
Nothing at all	16%	16%
Don't know	1%	3%

**Grouping fast learners together in one class and slower learners together in another**

A lot	46%	49%
A little	26%	24%
Nothing at all	25%	24%
Don't know	3%	3%

**Establishing a national curriculum in SCIENCE so that schools everywhere teach the same topics**

A lot	50%	48%
A little	31%	30%
Nothing at all	16%	18%
Don't know	3%	4%

**Requiring all high school students to take at least one engineering class**

A lot	44%	39%
A little	38%	38%
Nothing at all	15%	20%
Don't know	3%	4%

**A science fair held by schools nationwide, and winning students will get to visit the White House**

A lot	39%	36%
A little	38%	37%
Nothing at all	22%	25%
Don't know	1%	3%

**Allowing experts in math and science to teach in public schools, even if they do not have a teaching certificate**

A lot	36%	36%
A little	34%	30%
Nothing at all	25%	29%
Don't know	5%	5%

**Paying math and science teachers more than English and social studies teachers because those positions are hardest to fill**

A lot	28%	27%
A little	35%	31%
Nothing at all	33%	38%
Don't know	3%	5%

*There is no Q17*

*There is no Q18*

**Q19. How likely is it that your child will attend college after graduating high school? Would you say that it is...? [Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children]**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Very likely	73%	--
Somewhat likely	21%	--
Not too likely	1%	--
Not at all likely	2%	--
Don't know	2%	--

**Q20. When your child graduates from high school, will he/she have the skills needed to succeed in the WORKPLACE, will he/she lack these skills, or are you not sure? [Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children]**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Yes, child will have skills to succeed in the work world	69%	--
No, child will not	5%	--
Not sure	24%	--
Don't know	2%	--

**Q21. When your child graduates from high school, will he/she have the college-level MATH skills needed to succeed in COLLEGE, or will he/she lack these skills or are you not sure? [Base: Asked of parents with high school children likely to attend college]**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Yes, child will have skills to succeed in college	62%	--
No, child will not	5%	--
Not sure	17%	--
Don't know	2%	--

**Q22. When your child graduates from high school, will he/she have the college-level SCIENCE skills needed to succeed in COLLEGE, or will he/she lack these skills or are you not sure? [Base: Asked of parents with high school children likely to attend college]**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Yes, child will have skills to succeed in college	61%	--
No, child will not	7%	--
Not sure	18%	--
Don't know	1%	--

**Q23. Would you say your child does better in math, in English, or about equal in both subjects?**  
*[Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children]*

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Math	29%	--
English	16%	--
Equal in both	52%	--
Don't know	2%	--

**Q24. And which subject would you say your child enjoys more - math, English, or both equally?**  
*[Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children]*

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Math	35%	--
English	30%	--
Equal in both	30%	--
Don't know	5%	--

**Q25. Do you think that with the right math teacher your child will ever be as good in math as in English or do you think that your child will always be better in English than in math?** *[Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children who do better in English]*

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Math	20%	--
English	41%	--
Equal in both	32%	--
Don't know	6%	--

**Q26. Do you think that with the right English teacher your child will ever be as good in English as in math, or do you think that your child will always be better in Math than in English?** *[Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children who do better in math]*

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Math	61%	--
English	13%	--
Equal in both	22%	--
Don't know	4%	--

**Q27A(1). And would you say your child is better at science than at Math?** *[Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children who did better in Math than English]*

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Math	69%	--
English or Reading/Writing	6%	--
Science	15%	--
Don't know	11%	--

**Q27A(2). And would you say your child is better at science than at English?** *[Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children who did better in English than Math]*

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Math	6%	--

English or Reading/Writing	70%	--
Science	20%	--
Don't know	5%	--

**Q28. In general, do you think the MATH your child is learning is harder, easier or about the same as when you were in school? [Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children]**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Harder	61%	--
Easier	8%	--
About the same	26%	--
Don't know	4%	--

**Q29. In general, do you think the SCIENCE your child is learning is harder, easier or about the same as when you were in school? [Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children]**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
Harder	49%	--
Easier	8%	--
About the same	38%	--
Don't know	5%	--

**Q30. Keeping in mind there is a limited amount of time in the school day, do you think the elementary school should be teaching your child a lot more of the following, should there be less emphasis, or is he/she learning enough as is? [Base: Asked of parents with elementary school children]**

**Computer and technology skills**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
More	59%	--
Less	3%	--
The same	32%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	2%	--
Don't know	*	--

**Reading and writing skills**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
More	54%	--
Less	*	--
The same	41%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	*	--
Don't know	1%	--

**Hands-on science activities**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
More	52%	--
Less	4%	--
The same	38%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	1%	--
Don't know	1%	--

**Handwriting and penmanship**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
More	52%	--
Less	3%	--
The same	40%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	1%	--
Don't know	*	--

**Learning how to cooperate, share and work with other classmates**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
More	50%	--
Less	1%	--
The same	45%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	*	--

Don't know	*	--
<b>General math concepts like estimation and word problems</b>		
More	49%	--
Less	3%	--
The same	40%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	4%	--
Don't know	1%	--
<b>Basic math like multiplication and long division</b>		
More	49%	--
Less	3%	--
The same	36%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	8%	--
Don't know	1%	--
<b>Physical education</b>		
More	41%	--
Less	4%	--
The same	49%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	1%	--
Don't know	*	--
<b>Social studies and geography</b>		
More	39%	--
Less	3%	--
The same	50%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	3%	--
Don't know	1%	--
<b>Art or music</b>		
More	34%	--
Less	10%	--
The same	49%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	2%	--
Don't know	*	--

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
<b>Q31. Keeping in mind there is a limited amount of time in the school day, do you think the high school should be teaching your child a lot more of the following, should there be less emphasis, or is he/she learning enough as is? [Base: Asked of parents with middle or high school children]</b>		
<b>Computer programming</b>		
More	65%	--
Less	3%	--
The same	27%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	*	--
Don't know	1%	--
<b>Practical math skills like figuring out sales tax and balancing a checkbook</b>		
More	65%	--
Less	3%	--
The same	26%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	1%	--
Don't know	1%	--
<b>Teaching students to work well as part of a team</b>		
More	62%	--
Less	2%	--
The same	29%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	1%	--
Don't know	1%	--
<b>Basic reading and writing skills</b>		
More	55%	--

Less	1%	--
The same	38%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	*	--
Don't know	1%	--
<b>Basic engineering principles</b>		
More	52%	--
Less	5%	--
The same	32%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	3%	--
Don't know	3%	--
<b>Basic scientific ideas and principles</b>		
More	51%	--
Less	4%	--
The same	40%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	*	--
Don't know	1%	--
<b>Statistics and probability</b>		
More	49%	--
Less	7%	--
The same	35%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	2%	--
Don't know	3%	--
<b>Concepts taught in algebra</b>		
More	47%	--
Less	6%	--
The same	41%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	1%	--
Don't know	1%	--
<b>Foreign language skills</b>		
More	45%	--
Less	9%	--
The same	39%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	1%	--
Don't know	1%	--
<b>Civics and social studies</b>		
More	45%	--
Less	5%	--
The same	43%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	1%	--
Don't know	2%	--
<b>Advanced sciences, like physics</b>		
More	42%	--
Less	7%	--
The same	41%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	3%	--
Don't know	2%	--
<b>Advanced math, like calculus</b>		
More	42%	--
Less	7%	--
The same	39%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	4%	--
Don't know	4%	--
<b>Fine arts, such as painting, music and drama</b>		
More	40%	--
Less	10%	--
The same	42%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	2%	--
Don't know	2%	--

**Sports and physical education**

More	34%	--
Less	9%	--
The same	50%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	-	--
Don't know	2%	--

Parents (n=646) All respondents (n=1406)

**Q32. Keeping in mind the fixed budget that schools operate on, do you think the schools should SPEND more, less or about the same on the following? [Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children unless otherwise noted]**

**Having science labs that are up-to-date and well-equipped [Base: Asked of parents with middle or high school children only]**

More	70%	--
Less	1%	--
The same	22%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	1%	--
Don't know	1%	--

**Having materials and equipment for students to practice hands-on learning in science [Base: Parents with elementary school children only]**

More	69%	--
Less	4%	--
The same	22%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	*	--
Don't know	1%	--

**Having equipment that can help students learn all the newest and most important computer and other advanced technology skills**

More	68%	--
Less	6%	--
The same	25%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	-	--
Don't know	*	--

**Hiring teachers who are highly knowledgeable about teaching math**

More	65%	--
Less	3%	--
The same	31%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	-	--
Don't know	2%	--

**Hiring teachers who are highly knowledgeable about teaching science**

More	62%	--
Less	5%	--
The same	32%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	-	--
Don't know	2%	--

**Hiring teachers who are highly knowledgeable about teaching reading and writing**

More	61%	--
Less	4%	--
The same	34%	--
Course is not offered / not necessary	-	--
Don't know	1%	--

Parents (n=646) All respondents (n=1406)

**Q33. For each that I read, please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement:**

**It is very important to me that my child takes some advanced math classes in high school [Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children]**

Strongly agree	60%	--
Somewhat agree	24%	--
Somewhat disagree	10%	--
Strongly disagree	4%	--
Don't know	2%	--
<b>It is very important to me that my child takes some advanced science classes in high school [Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children]</b>		
Strongly agree	54%	--
Somewhat agree	27%	--
Somewhat disagree	11%	--
Strongly disagree	6%	--
Don't know	3%	--
<b>Most good colleges expect students to have advanced math and science courses like calculus or physics on their high school transcripts [Base: General public]</b>		
Strongly agree	45%	40%
Somewhat agree	32%	28%
Somewhat disagree	12%	16%
Strongly disagree	5%	10%
Don't know	7%	7%
<b>My child's school has classes in technology, engineering or other applied math and science subjects [Base: Asked of parents with middle or high school children]</b>		
Strongly agree	37%	--
Somewhat agree	33%	--
Somewhat disagree	10%	--
Strongly disagree	8%	--
Don't know	8%	--
<b>It would make my job or everyday life easier if I knew more advanced math and science [Base: General public]</b>		
Strongly agree	35%	30%
Somewhat agree	27%	26%
Somewhat disagree	18%	20%
Strongly disagree	18%	21%
Don't know	3%	3%
<b>For what my child wants to do with their career they really only need to know basic math skills [Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children]</b>		
Strongly agree	22%	--
Somewhat agree	14%	--
Somewhat disagree	15%	--
Strongly disagree	37%	--
Don't know	12%	--
<b>My child would be really unhappy if they ended up in a job or career that required doing a lot of math or science. [Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children]</b>		
Strongly agree	19%	--
Somewhat agree	12%	--
Somewhat disagree	23%	--
Strongly disagree	32%	--
Don't know	13%	--
<b>I worry that some of what the schools are teaching in science may not be compatible with my religious beliefs [Base: General public]</b>		
Strongly agree	18%	19%
Somewhat agree	14%	13%
Somewhat disagree	19%	19%
Strongly disagree	44%	43%
Don't know	5%	6%
<b>I know my child will not have a career that involves advanced math and science [Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children]</b>		
Strongly agree	18%	--
Somewhat agree	13%	--
Somewhat disagree	19%	--
Strongly disagree	31%	--
Don't know	19%	--

**Q34. In the last school year, what were most of your child(ren)'s grades? [Base: Asked of parents with K-12 grade children]**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
A	51%	--
B	36%	--
C	7%	--
D or below	1%	--
Don't know	4%	--

**Characteristics of the sample**

	Parents (n=646)	All respondents (n=1406)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	48%	49%
Female	52%	51%
<b>Age</b>		
18-24	8%	13%
25-34	24%	18%
35-44	40%	19%
45-54	21%	19%
55-64	5%	14%
65+	2%	17%
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	75%	61%
Living as married	5%	3%
Divorced	6%	7%
Separated	5%	3%
Widowed	2%	8%
Never married/Single	8%	19%
Don't know	-	1%
<b>Current Employment</b>		
Full-time	69%	51%
Part-time	11%	12%
Retired	3%	20%
Not employed	11%	12%
Homemaker	4%	3%
Student	1%	2%
Disabled	1%	1%
Don't know	-	-
<b>Education</b>		
None, or grade 1-8	3%	2%
High school incomplete	7%	7%
High school graduate	35%	35%
Business, technical, or vocational school AFTER high school	4%	4%
Some college, no 4-year degree	22%	24%
College graduate	20%	17%
Post-graduate training or professional schooling	8%	10%
Don't know	1%	1%
<b>Annual household income</b>		
Under \$15,000	5%	8%
\$15,000 to under \$25,000	11%	11%
\$25,000 to under \$35,000	17%	16%
\$35,000 to under \$50,000	17%	16%
\$50,000 to under \$75,000	20%	16%
\$75,000 or more	19%	19%

Don't know	3%	4%
<b>Race</b>		
White	55%	69%
Black/African-American	16%	12%
Asian	5%	4%
Hispanic	21%	13%
Other or mixed race	3%	2%
<b>Political identification</b>		
Republican	24%	27%
Democrat	39%	35%
Independent	24%	26%
Something else	6%	7%
Don't know	5%	3%
<b>Religious preference or identification</b>		
Protestant	52%	57%
Roman Catholic	29%	23%
Orthodox Christian	4%	3%
Jewish	2%	1%
Muslim	1%	1%
Hindu	1%	1%
Buddhist	*	1%
Other religion	2%	1%
No religion, not a believer, atheist, agnostic [VOL]	7%	10%
Don't know	3%	3%
<b>Born-again or Evangelical Christian [among Protestants, Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians]</b>		
Yes	42%	41%
No	57%	57%
<b>Households with children under 18</b>		
Household with child	93%	36%
Other	7%	64%
<b>Child's gender [in households with K-12 grade children]</b>		
Male	54%	54%
Female	44%	44%
<b>Child's school [in households with K-12 grade children]</b>		
Elementary school	48%	48%
Middle/Junior High School	17%	17%
High School	31%	31%
Not applicable	4%	4%
Don't know	*	1%

## More Education Reform Resources

Education reform is a major focus for Public Agenda's researchers and our [public engagement](#) team. Here are a few other studies and papers which might be of interest to policymakers and others considering the issues examined here:

### Math & Science Education

[Opportunity Knocks: Closing The Gaps Between Leaders And The Public On Math, Science & Technology Education](#)

[Ready For 21st Century Careers: A ChoiceWork Discussion Starter guide and video to help communities work together to provide students with the education they need for tomorrow's jobs](#)

[Out Before The Game Begins: Hispanic Leaders Talk About What's Needed to Bring More Hispanic Youngsters Into Science, Technology, And Math Professions](#)

[A Matter of Trust: Ten Key Insights From Recent Public Opinion Research on Attitudes About Education Among Hispanic Parents, Students and Young Adults](#)

[Important, But Not For Me: Kansas And Missouri Students And Parents Talk About Math, Science And Technology Education](#)

### Other Education Issues (K-12)

[A Great Education Begins At Home](#)

[Nearly Three In Four Americans Say Bullying Is A Serious Problem In Their Local Schools](#)

[A Time To Learn, A Time To Grow: California Parents Talk About Summertime And Summer Programs](#)

[Convergence & Contradictions In Teachers' Perceptions Of Policy Reform Ideas](#)

[Supporting Teacher Talent: The View From Generation Y](#)

[Teaching For A Living: How Teachers See The Profession Today](#)

## College And Access To Higher Education

[Can I Get A Little Advice Here? How An Overstretched High School Guidance System Is Undermining Students' College Aspirations With Their Whole Lives Ahead Of Them](#)

[Squeeze Play 2010: Continued Public Anxiety On Cost, Harsher Judgments On How Colleges Are Run](#)

[Campus Commons? What Faculty, Financial Officers And Others Think About Controlling College Costs](#)

## Media Contact

The pdf version of this [news release](#) and the [Powerpoint slide show](#) illustrating key results of this survey are available for download without charge. For further information about this report, or to schedule an interview with one of our report authors, please contact Melissa Feldsher at [mfeldsher@publicagenda.org](mailto:mfeldsher@publicagenda.org) or (212) 686-6610, extension 50.

## About Public Agenda



Founded in 1975 by social scientist and author [Daniel Yankelovich](#) and former U.S. Secretary of State [Cyrus Vance](#), Public Agenda works to help the nation's leaders better understand the public's point of view and to help average citizens better understand critical policy issues. Our in-depth research on how citizens think about policy has won praise for its credibility and fairness from elected officials of both political parties and from experts and decision-makers across the political spectrum. Our citizen education materials and award-winning web site offer unbiased information about the challenges the country faces. Recognized by Library Journal as

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