

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 389 681

SP 036 325

TITLE Valuable Views: A Public Opinion Research Report on the Views of AFT Teachers on Professional Issues.

INSTITUTION American Federation of Teachers, Washington, D.C.

PUB DATE Jul 95

NOTE 27p.; Survey conducted by the Peter D. Hart Research Associates.

AVAILABLE FROM American Federation of Teachers, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20001-2079 (single copy free, \$1 each for five or more; item no. 177).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Academic Standards; Behavior Disorders; Discipline; \*Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Inclusive Schools; Opinions; Professional Development; Student Behavior; \*Teacher Attitudes; Unions

IDENTIFIERS \*American Federation of Teachers; Reform Efforts

ABSTRACT

This study sought the opinions of teachers, all members of the American Federation of Teachers, on issues such as student discipline, common academic standards, inclusion, professional development, and school reform. The telephone survey of a sample of 800 teachers from kindergarten through Grade 12 was conducted in Spring, 1995. Findings include the following; (1) 98 percent of respondents were aware of their union membership; (2) 55 percent of the teachers in urban districts gave a negative evaluation of their systems' ability to meet students' educational needs while only 21 percent of those in suburban and small town areas did so; (3) teachers most wanted to see educational reform address parental involvement and classroom discipline; (4) 50 percent of all teachers said they could still improve their teaching a great deal with training and support; (5) more than 6 in 10 teachers had had some kind of experience with inclusion and 75 percent said inclusion was not a good idea including 64 percent who reported strong feelings about this issue; (6) 49 percent of teachers said that they currently had a student who "should really not be there because of the disciplinary problems he or she poses," and two in every three teachers said they had been verbally abused by a student; and (7) teachers registered strong support for national educational standards. A copy of the questionnaire is attached. (JB)

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
 \* from the original document. \*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

# Valuable VIEWS

*A public  
opinion  
research  
report on  
the views  
of AFT  
teachers on  
professional  
issues*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS  
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

*D. Cantu*

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

51036325

# *Valuable Views*

---

**W**hat do our members believe about such major national issues as student discipline, common academic standards, inclusion, and professional development? What do AFT teachers believe will truly aid school reform?

Last spring, we asked Peter D. Hart Research Associates to conduct a survey for us. The survey was conducted by telephone with a sample of 800 AFT teacher members, scientifically selected to represent the views of the full AFT teacher membership—within a margin of error of plus/minus 3.5 percent.

We include here the results of that survey—both the raw numbers and the analysis prepared by the pollsters. Among the salient results is the enormous interest members have in improving the schools, with a majority saying that “working for reforms to improve education and the teaching profession” was the most important task for their national union to pursue. The results include teacher attitudes toward various reforms and also show the levels of student disruption that teachers contend with, the movement toward inclusion they’re facing, and the extent to which their grading and promotion decisions get overturned. The results are fascinating, and we wish you interesting reading.

The Report / Page 2  
The Survey Questions / Page 14

---

*Valuable Views*

1  
3

# Key Findings from a Nationwide Survey of AFT Teacher Members

## A Report from Peter D. Hart Research Associates

From April 15 to 19, 1994, Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted a telephone survey for the American Federation of Teachers Educational Issues Department among 800 union members who teach in grades K-12. The survey focused on teachers' attitudes regarding the state of education today and toward proposals for education reform. The topics of professional development, discipline in the classroom, and inclusion of special education students in regular classrooms were explored, and the issue of educational standards was examined in great depth. This report, prepared by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, presents the key findings from the study.

### Members' View of their Union

As we have found in previous surveys, virtually all AFT teacher members (98%) are aware of their union membership, and a very large majority (91%) identify correctly the name of their union, either unaided (61%) or after a prompt from the interviewer (30%). This recognition level is essentially unchanged from the 88% we found in October of 1991 and, in our experience with surveys among members of various national labor unions, it stands as a very high rate of recognition among rank-and-file members.

Teachers' view of the quality of their union

representation is quite favorable and has held steady since 1991. Asked to rate the representation provided by their local union, 61% of teachers give a positive rating ("4" or "5" on a five-point scale), 25% offer a neutral response, and just 14% give a negative rating—exactly the same scores as were recorded in 1991. Somewhat lesser proportions of teachers offer positive ratings of the AFT at the state (52%) and national (46%) levels, but relatively few give negative ratings (17% and 21%, respectively). These figures also are essentially unchanged over the past two and a half years.

### Teachers Rate Their Local Unions

% rating union as excellent/good\*

All teachers 61%

Type of district:

Urban 55%

Suburban 64%

Small town 70%

Age:

Under 40 53%

40 & over 63%

\*"4" or "5" on five-point scale, with "5" meaning respondent feels very well represented by union. Q. 5a

Favorable ratings of the local union vary according to the respondent's type of school district. Teachers in small towns or rural areas are

A Report from

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.

the most positive (70%), while those in suburban districts are slightly less favorable (64%); teachers in urban districts (who comprise half of all teacher members) are the least positive (55%). As we will discuss later, teachers in urban districts have a distinctly more negative view of many aspects of their job situation, and this in turn appears to affect satisfaction with their union representation. Other subgroups of teachers who are somewhat less favorable than average toward their local union include teachers under age 40 (53% positive) and those who teach in elementary schools (57%, compared to 66% of secondary school teachers).

Teachers were asked to rate the job the national AFT is doing on one specific dimension of particular importance for this survey: "taking the right stands and providing leadership on education reform." A solid 55% majority give the national union ratings of excellent or good—which is up eight percentage points since October 1991—while 37% say the AFT is doing a fair, not so good, or poor job in this area.

We also asked respondents to choose one or two top priorities for the national union from among five activities. A 55% majority select working for reforms to improve education and the teaching profession, making this teachers' top choice by a considerable margin. Significantly, all types of teachers—primary and secondary, urban and non-urban—rank education reform highest, with younger teachers (61%) being especially likely to choose this focus. Three other activities receive a fair amount of support from teachers—lobbying Congress (37%), informing members of trends in education and professional development (33%), and providing support to locals (27%)—but a fourth—providing group rate liability insurance—is a priority for only a handful of members (9%), as the graph at the right reveals.

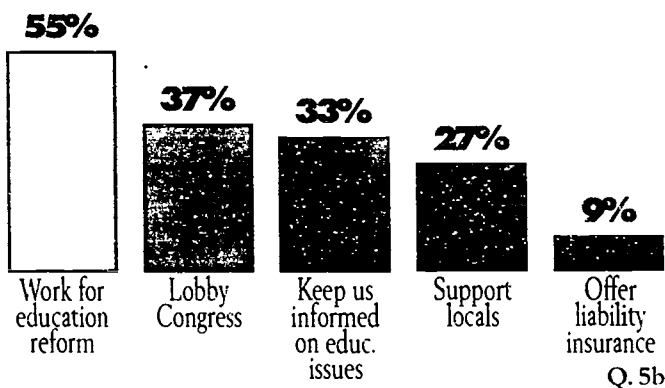
## The State of Schools and Education

Overall, members give their own school systems fairly good marks on meeting the educa-

tional needs of students. Although just 16% say their district is doing an excellent job, a 44% plurality offer a "good" rating; a total of 39% give a more negative judgment (27% fair, and 12% not so good or poor). This general assessment has not changed significantly since late 1991, when 57% responded positively and 42% responded negatively.

### Priorities For National Union

(% selecting each as among one/two most important activities)



Underlying these results among teachers as a whole are two quite different assessments: teachers in urban districts give a very downbeat evaluation of their systems' ability to meet students' educational needs (44% positive to 55% negative), while those in suburban and small town areas are much more upbeat (78% to 21% positive and 75% to 23% positive, respectively). This difference is very substantial and is critical to interpreting many of the survey's results.

In fact, in terms of their daily teaching experiences, AFT teachers are in crucial respects really two different groups: those who teach in urban districts, and those who teach in non-urban districts.<sup>1</sup> The racial makeup of urban and non-urban schools is strikingly different: fully two-thirds (67%) of urban teachers report that most of their students are minorities, compared to just 15% of

<sup>1</sup>On some questions, there also are important differences between teachers in suburban and small town districts, but when it comes to basic satisfaction with the quality of the school system, the urban districts stand out as distinct.

A Report from

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.

suburban and 9% of small town teachers. Urban teachers also are far more likely than are others to work in schools where most children come from low-income economic backgrounds

Differences in evaluations, though much less substantial ones, also occur according to which level of school respondents teach. Elementary school teachers are the most favorable in their assessments (64% excellent/good), while middle school (58%) and high school (54%) teachers are somewhat less so. There are no significant differences among age groups, although newer teachers (those who have 10 years of service or less) are a bit less favorable (56%) than are more senior teachers (61%).

In addition to the overall evaluations, the survey asked respondents their degree of satisfaction with specific aspects of their school. These results are presented in the form of a differential that represents the percentage who are very or fairly satisfied with that specific item, minus the percentage who are only somewhat or not that satisfied.

Teachers express a fair degree of satisfaction with the personal safety of students and staff (a net positive rating of +49%). This overall finding, however, again masks a substantial urban/non-urban split: teachers in urban districts offer ratings on personal safety that result in a net positive differential of only +25% (62% positive, 37% negative), while those in suburban (+69%) and small town (+72%) districts are far more satisfied with the level of personal safety.

Members voice more satisfaction than dissatisfaction with the academic standards in their school (+39%). This finding should not be taken to suggest that teachers have no concerns regarding standards, however; indeed, a majority of teachers say elsewhere in the survey that academic standards are too low today. What this may indicate instead is that discontent with academic standards is not the label teachers immediately attach to their dissatisfactions with education today. The problem of student motivation, for example, stands out as a major area of concern for teachers—only 40% are satisfied and 59% are dissatis-

fied with the level of student motivation, for a differential of -19%—and, as we will report later, the single most appealing aspect of a proposal for common standards is its potential for improving students' motivation and performance.

In addition to student motivation, two other items emerge as sources of significant dissatisfaction for AFT teacher members: student discipline (a differential of -15%) and—most strongly—the level of parental involvement in students' education (-37%, with 45% of teachers offering the most negative response). Disappointment with parental involvement, in fact, is universal; teachers in every significant subgroup—those in urban and non-urban districts, those who teach at the primary and secondary levels—voice a more negative than positive evaluation.

Primary school teachers are generally more satisfied with the individual elements of their job than are secondary school teachers. This is especially true regarding the issue of student motivation, on which 49% of elementary teachers are satisfied, compared to just 30% of teachers in the upper schools. The one exception to this pattern is teachers' salaries and benefits, on which elementary teachers' satisfaction (53%) trails that of other teachers (59%).

Urban teachers' greater dissatisfaction extends beyond the personal safety issue. Indeed, these teachers voice less satisfaction than do non-urban teachers on every one of the eight specific dimensions tested. The most pronounced differences appear on the issues of safety, academic standards, and parental involvement.

## **Education Reform**

Chief among teachers' priorities for education reform are two issues that are sources of deep dissatisfaction: parental involvement and classroom discipline. When we asked teachers to rate the importance of nine possible approaches to improving public education, using a scale of 1 (little importance) to 10 (the greatest importance), 69% rate improving discipline in the classroom as a "9" or "10," and 67% give the same scores to increasing parental involvement. In a prior open-ended

*A Report from*

**Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.**



question, the same two items also were the most frequently volunteered suggestions for reform, standing far ahead of all other responses.

Reducing class size and increasing government funding for education occupy the next tier—62% rate each as very important—of reform proposals.<sup>2</sup> Another step down, but still considered quite important, are the issues of giving teachers more say in running schools (53%) and establishing rigorous educational standards (52%). Interestingly, improving teachers' professional development opportunities (42%) and raising salaries (39%)—arguably the two most self-interested proposals from the point of view of teacher members—are ranked at the bottom.

Teachers offer a somewhat divided assessment of the prospects for future improvement in public education. When they think about education over the next five to ten years, in fact, teachers are about as likely to say they believe that education will improve (36%) as to indicate they feel it either will not change much (31%) or will decline (30%).

When asked to explain their answer in their own words, far more members offer negative comments about the prospects for education (67%) than volunteer reasons for optimism (30%). The top reasons for pessimism mirror the areas of teacher dissatisfaction revealed earlier: lack of parental involvement, family breakdown, inadequate funding, and student discipline problems. Interestingly, some of the most frequently voiced reasons for expecting improvement are phrases such as "it has to get better" or "it has gotten so bad that people have realized something needs to be done"; this suggests that the positive responses may be as much an expression of hope as they are true expectations of improvement.

Teachers also give a somewhat mixed grade to past reform efforts. Four in ten (41%) feel that

the national movement for education reform has been a positive force for education, but an equal number (40%) say it has been neither a positive nor a negative force, and 12% feel it has had a negative impact. Middle school teachers (32%) are somewhat less upbeat about the reform movement than are elementary (43%) and high school (41%) teachers, but in general there are not significant differences on this question among various types of teachers. There is, however, a strong relationship between attitudes on this question and optimism or pessimism about education's future: those teachers who are optimistic are more than twice as likely as are the pessimistic teachers—by 56% to 25%—to express a positive view of the reform movement. Some teachers are favorably inclined toward reform and upbeat about the future, while others are far more skeptical, and both types of teachers can be found at all levels and types of schools.

## **Professional Development**

AFT teachers generally feel that with proper support and training they could improve their teaching, and this is true, surprisingly, even of very senior teachers (though less so than for the less experienced teachers). Fifty percent of all teachers say they could still improve their teaching a great deal, and another 36% feel they could improve their teaching somewhat, but probably not a great deal, with the right training and support; only 12% choose the statement asserting that "to be honest, I'm satisfied with the quality of my teaching skills." More than two-thirds (68%) of members with 10 years or less of teaching experience say they could improve a great deal, and this feeling is nearly as strong among members under age 40. Even among members who have been teaching for more than 20 years and those age 50 and over, this answer receives plurality support (41% and 47%, respectively), however. Women (54%) seem more willing to acknowledge room for improvement than do men (42%).

While teachers are not actively dissatisfied

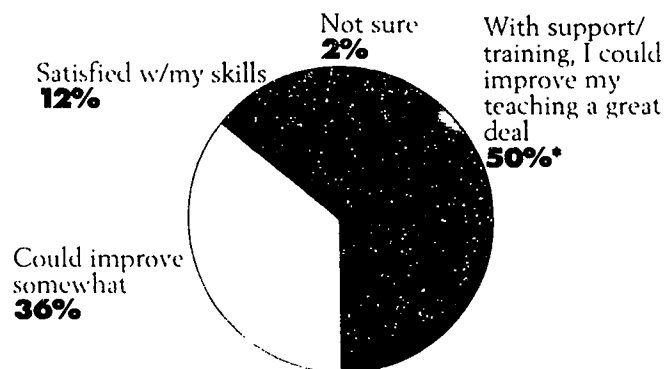
*A Report from*

**Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.**

with their opportunities for professional development, these results suggest that there would be considerable interest in and receptivity to quality programs designed to help members become better teachers. When it comes to the in-service programs with which they are familiar, however, teachers express limited enthusiasm: 53% consider them very or fairly worthwhile, but nearly as many, 45%, give a more negative rating. The higher a teacher's grade level, the less worthwhile such programs seem: for example, 62% of elementary teachers say in-service programs are worthwhile, but the proportion drops to 55% among middle school teachers and to just 40% among high school teachers. The most senior teachers also are less approving than are their less experienced colleagues. Suburban teachers are quite affirmative about such programs (64% positive), but both urban (49%) and small town (48%) teachers give a mixed review. As we might expect, teachers who feel positive toward the education reform movement give these programs much higher marks (63%) than do those who are negative regarding reform (44%).

About half of all teachers express a great deal of interest in each of two alternative types of professional development programs: those that focus on general classroom strategies (50%) and those that focus on a specific academic subject (49%). Interestingly, these appeal to somewhat different groups of teachers; interest in one program has no

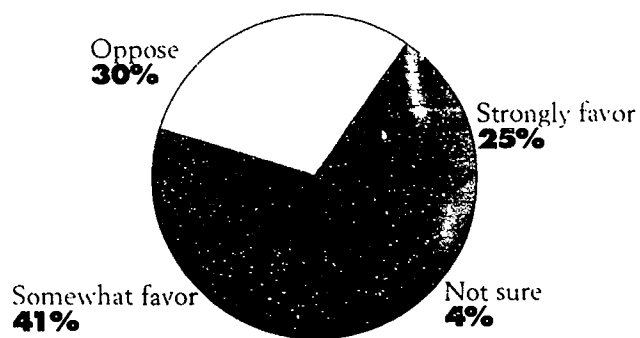
### Teachers Believe They Can Improve



\*Including a 41% plurality of teachers with over 20 years' experience. Q. 11

### Teachers Express Tentative Support

For National Teacher Certification\*



\*When pro & con statements are presented, support narrows to 50%-39%, with older teachers evenly split. Q. 19a

correlation with interest in the other. Elementary (58%), female (55%), black/Latino (69%), and urban (54%) teachers are especially drawn to the general classroom approach; high school teachers (59%), teachers age 50 and over (54%), black and Latino teachers (55%), and teachers without graduate training (59%) have a particular interest in programs that emphasize an academic subject.

In contrast to their responses to in-service programs, teachers generally feel that graduate courses, which often qualify them for pay increases, are worthwhile. Three-quarters of all members (74%)—including 78% of women, 80% of less experienced teachers, and 79% of elementary school teachers—say that such advanced courses have been very or fairly worthwhile.

On a related topic, we asked respondents how they would feel about a proposal for a system whereby teachers would be nationally certified in their field, based on their performance on a rigorous set of assessments. The system was described as voluntary, and it was asserted that the credential could "help qualify teachers for higher salaries and for new roles and responsibilities, such as mentoring beginning teachers." Based on this description, two-thirds of members (66%) say they favor such a proposal, though just 25% express strong support.

We followed this basic question with one that

A Report from

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.



offered the following arguments both for and against the proposal:

*Supporters* of such a certification system say that it will provide teachers with opportunities for career advancement without having to enter administration, and will bring deserved recognition to many talented and hard-working teachers. *Opponents* say that the system will encourage competition among teachers instead of cooperation, and therefore will hurt teacher morale and hinder professional improvement.

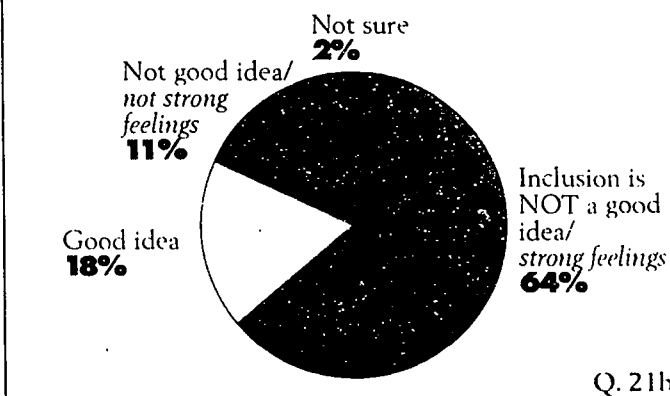
Then we asked with which of these two views teachers agree more. In this case, just 50% of respondents agree with the supporters' arguments, while 39% say they side more with the opponents' reasoning. In effect, initial support for the proposal drops 16 points in the face of the criticism. While supporters outnumber opponents by five to four, our view is that support for a credentials system should be considered very soft at best, and that this is an issue on which the devil is very much in the details.

## Inclusion Policy

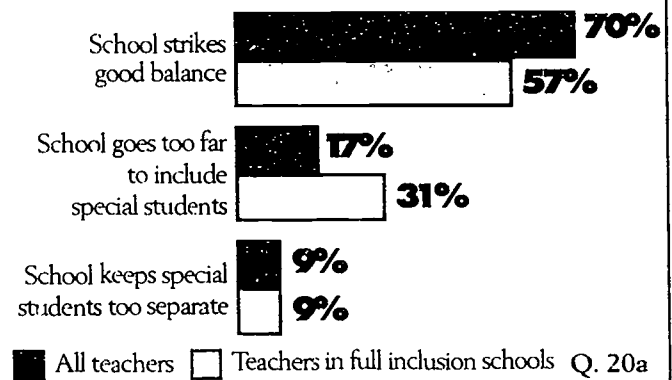
The survey briefly explored teacher members' experience with and attitudes toward the policy of "inclusion," which was defined as "placing all special education students, regardless of their disability, in regular classrooms on a full-time basis."

Movement toward inclusion, at least in some form, appears to be a broad-based phenomenon: more than six in ten teachers have had some kind of experience with inclusion, with 14% reporting

### Teachers Strongly Oppose Inclusion



### Teachers Express General Acceptance Of Their School's Current Inclusion Level



that their school has adopted full inclusion and another 48% saying that it has taken some steps in that direction. Urban teachers report inclusion at a lower rate (55%) than do suburban (69%) or small town (72%) teachers.

In addition, fully four in five respondents who teach in regular classrooms (81%) say that they personally have a special education student in a regular class. One potentially troubling finding is that among these teachers, only 45% indicate that they have received special training for teaching the special education student(s), while a 54% majority say they have not received such training. High school teachers (62%), suburban teachers (61%), and more senior teachers (67%) are most likely to say they have not been trained to work with special education students.

Teachers render an overwhelming "thumbs down" verdict on the wisdom of a full inclusion policy. Three-quarters say it is not a good idea—including a very large proportion (64%) who express strong feelings—while just 18% feel that full inclusion is a good idea. Teachers in urban districts (68%) and middle schools (69%) are particularly likely to voice a strongly negative view, while black and Latino teachers' objections are somewhat more muted (53%).

Teachers' objection to the proposed adoption of a full inclusion policy, however, is not necessarily indicative of strong dissatisfaction or anger with the extent of inclusion teachers have experi-

A Report from

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.

enced thus far. In fact, teachers do not appear to have such feelings at this point. Before introducing the concept of inclusion, we asked respondents whether their school keeps special education students more separate from other students than is educationally necessary, or whether it goes too far in including these students in regular classes when they really need special attention, or whether their school strikes a good balance in this area. A solid 70% of teachers say their school strikes a good balance, while just 9% say it keeps special education students too separate, and 17% feel it has gone too far in including them. Notably, teachers who identify themselves as being in full inclusion districts are significantly less satisfied—31% feel their school has gone too far in including special education students—but even among this group, a majority (57%) say their school has struck a good balance.

We would summarize our findings on the issue this way: most teachers currently do not object to the overall balance struck by their school regarding the inclusion of special education students in regular classes, but they would strongly object to pursuing a policy of full inclusion. This issue will be the subject of more in-depth research in the near future.

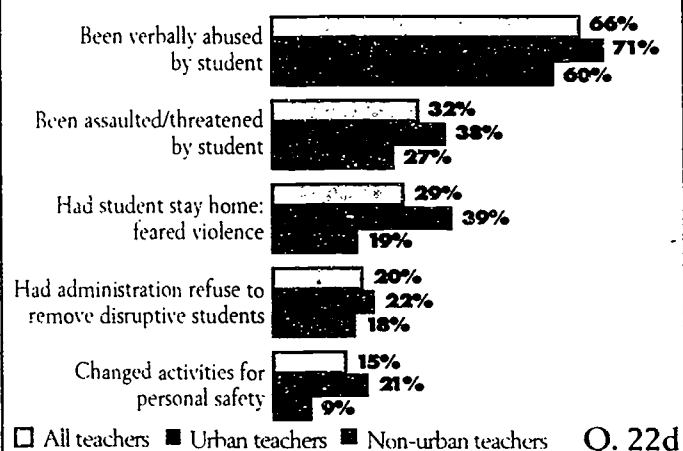
## Discipline in the Classroom

As reported earlier, teachers express substantial dissatisfaction with the level of student discipline in their schools, especially if they teach in urban districts or secondary schools. Additional questions on discipline reveal this as a very serious problem for teacher members.

More than four in ten teachers (41%) say that they lose a lot or a fair amount of teaching time because of student discipline problems. This is especially true for urban teachers (48%), but appears to be a significant problem as well in suburban (35%) and small town districts (34%). Teachers of both genders and all seniority levels respond similarly to this question. In addition, half of all teachers (49%)—including 58% of mid-

### How Widespread Is The Problem?

(% saying each situation has occurred)

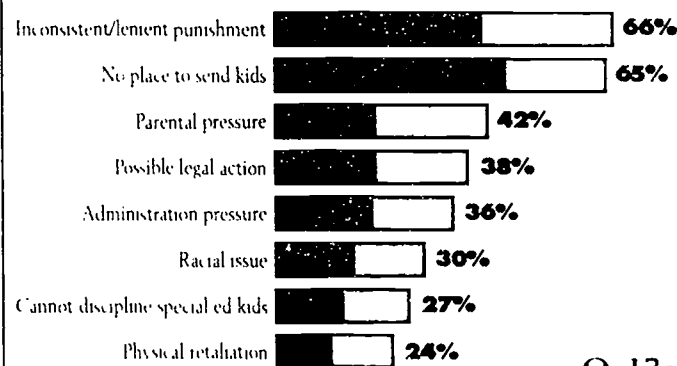


dle school teachers—say that they currently have a student who “should really not be there because of the disciplinary problems he or she poses.”

We also asked teachers whether they personally have experienced specific types of discipline-related problems, and the results paint a disturbing picture. Two in every three teachers say they have been verbally abused by a student. Worse still, one-third of teachers (32%) report that they themselves have “been assaulted or physically threatened by a student”; this figure climbs to nearly four in ten among urban teachers (38%). Teachers are not the only victims of school vio-

### Teachers Identify Two Chief Obstacles To Discipline

(% saying each is major/medium obstacle)



A Report from

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.

lence: three in ten (29%)—including 39% of urban teachers—say they actually have had a student stay home for fear of violence.

Teachers identify two major obstacles to their maintaining better discipline in the classroom: inconsistent or lenient punishments for disruptive students (66% say this is an obstacle), and a lack of alternative settings in the school in which to place disruptive students (65%). A number of other possible obstacles appear to be much less serious problems, including fear of physical retaliation by students, rules against disciplining special education students, and discipline becoming a racially charged issue. Perhaps surprisingly, pressure from either administrators or parents not to punish students is not seen by most teachers as posing as great an obstacle to maintaining discipline.

## National Educational Standards

The survey explored the issue of current educational standards, as well as the proposal to establish rigorous national standards, in some depth. Teachers register strong initial support for this AFT priority, and that support holds steady even after respondents hear a series of arguments, both pro and con, related to implementing these standards.

Teachers are fairly evenly divided on whether the academic standards in their school today are too low (51%) or not too low (47%). Significantly, though, this second group includes virtually no teachers who feel that standards are already too high (just 4%); instead, they say that standards are "about right."

Concern over the level of standards is concentrated among secondary school teachers (59% say standards are too low) much more than among elementary school teachers (41%). Interestingly, older teachers are no more likely than are younger teachers to feel that current standards are too low.

Contrasts by type of school district form a different pattern on the standards issue than we see

### Do You Feel Pressure?

(% saying they feel pressure to:)

Give higher grades than students' work deserves

30%

Pass students who are really not ready on to the next grade

46%

Reduce the difficulty and amount of work you assign

30%

Q. 13c

elsewhere in the survey: urban and suburban teachers tend to have similar responses (55% and 51%, respectively, say their schools' standards are too low), while small town teachers hold somewhat different views (just 39% think standards are too low).

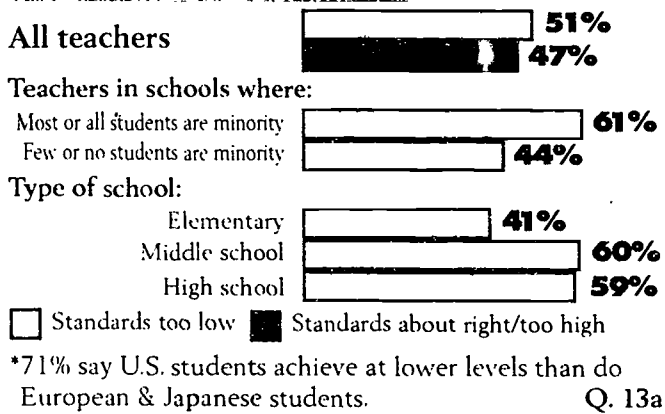
One-third of all teachers (33%) report feeling pressured to lower academic standards in their classroom. Similar numbers indicate that they specifically feel pressured to give higher grades than students' work deserves (30%) or to reduce the amount and difficulty of work assigned (30%). And nearly half of all teachers (46%) say they experience pressure to pass students who really are not ready to the next grade. It seems, then, that more significant pressure is brought to bear when teachers actually try to hold back a student because of poor performance. Urban, suburban, and small town teachers are equally likely to cite these kinds of pressures to reduce standards.

Although they are of mixed minds regarding current academic standards, teachers warmly embrace the proposal to "establish rigorous, world-class educational standards that would define what a student is expected to know and be able to do at different grade levels." A solid 68% majority say that this is a good idea, with 47% feeling strongly, while just 26% feel that such a standards proposal is not a good idea (17% are strongly negative). Even among those teachers who feel that current standards are not too low, an impressive

A Report from

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.

## Half Say Academic Standards Are Too Low



65% favor the proposal.<sup>3</sup>

Significantly, support for the proposal holds up even after respondents are provided more detailed information about it and are read a series of arguments both for and against it. When we asked teachers, "Overall, which do you agree with more—the arguments for establishing common standards or the arguments against establishing common standards," once again, two-thirds (67%) give the proposal a thumbs up.

There are some interesting differences in intensity of support among subgroups of teachers. Just as small town teachers are less dissatisfied with the current level of standards than are urban and suburban teachers, so too are they less supportive of the standards proposal: half of teachers in urban (49%) and suburban (51%) districts strongly support the proposal, but just one-third (34%) of small town teachers do. Teachers without graduate school training are less strongly supportive (39%) than are those with more education, while black and Latino teachers are especially enthusiastic (60%).

If we reverse this analysis, however, we can see a potential weakness for the standards proposal. A 59% majority of those opposed to the proposal feel current standards are about right or too high. Teachers who favor setting standards, but not strongly, are closer in their views to opponents: 57% say current standards are acceptable. So the "swing voters" on this issue, although they favor standards, are not actively unsatisfied with the status quo.

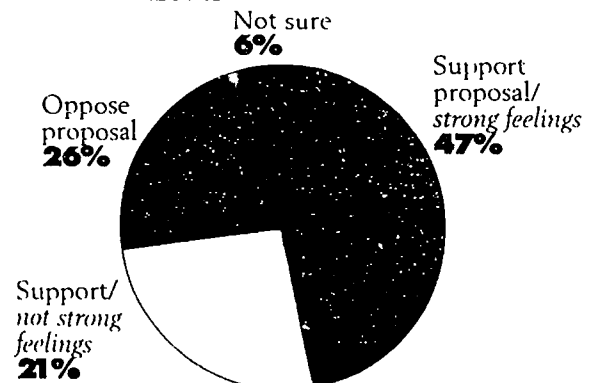
What is much more striking than these differences, though, is the broad-based nature of support for the standards proposal. For example, no substantial variations appear along the lines of gender, years of service, or grade level of school. A solid majority of teachers in every subgroup voice support for the proposal.

The survey provides some evidence that describing standards as being "world class" diminishes their appeal among teachers. In responding to the list of general education reforms presented early in the survey, 52% of teachers rate "rigorous educational standards" as a very important reform, but only 37% give a similarly high rating to "rigorous, world-class educational standards." On the other hand, a solid majority of members (63%) believe that it is important that the U.S. have standards as high as those in Europe and Japan.

The survey went beyond describing the general standards concept to explore the impact of several specific provisions or related policies on teachers' attitudes toward the standards proposal. Respondents were asked whether each provision makes them more inclined or less inclined to favor the overall proposal, or whether it has no effect on their opinion. The results are summarized in the following table, in which the "differential"

## Teachers Support Proposal

Establishing Rigorous Standards  
For Each Grade Level\*



\*80% of black and Latino teachers support the proposal, 60% strongly.

Q. 21b

A Report from

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.



represents the net positive or negative impact of each provision.

These results are encouraging for advocates of the standards proposal; all but one of the provisions have a strongly positive net impact. Particularly well-received are the provisions that assure consistency of grading, give standards-setting responsibility to independent non-governmental bodies, and permit teachers and schools flexibility in developing curricula. The one provision that *reduces* support for the standards proposal is a call for evaluation of individual schools and districts based on their success in having students meet the standards; 46% of teachers say this makes them less inclined to favor standards, compared to 36% who say this would enhance their support.

A number of specific arguments for and against the standards proposal were tested in order to determine which lines of reasoning may attract teachers to the standards proposal, as well as to reveal which criticisms may raise concerns or hesitations among teachers. The following section summarizes the key pros and cons in the debate.

## Reasons for Favoring Standards Proposal

*Many of the arguments tested on behalf of common standards meet with strong agreement from teachers, and four main themes emerge as components of a compelling case for standards:*

■ **Increasing student motivation and achievement.** As we reported earlier, teachers see the level of student motivation as a major problem area. For teachers, the most persuasive argument for standards is that they will give students a clearer reason to work hard, and this in turn will improve achievement. Teachers feel that students will only perform if they are asked to, and 82% say "we have not asked enough of students." Large majorities agree that establishing standards means "achievement will go up" and that students would "be more motivated and would learn more."

■ **Raising educational standards.** Maintaining high academic standards is seen as a value in its own right by many teachers, who feel that established common standards will help prevent

	Differ- ential +_%	More Inclined %	Less Inclined %	No Effect %
All class grades would be based on students' attainment of the standards, so that parents, teachers, and students would all know the meaning of a given grade.	+59	75	16	7
Standards would be set by independent committees of educators and representatives of the public, not by government officials.	+55	69	14	13
Schools and teachers could choose their own curricula and methods, as long as students met the standards.	+53	71	18	9
Students would be tested periodically, and those who did not meet the standards would receive extra educational assistance, but would not advance to the next grade level.	+53	69	16	13
Colleges and employers would base admissions and hiring decisions in part on students' success at meeting the standards.	+45	65	20	12
Student success at meeting the standards would be determined by sophisticated assessments, including written essays, rather than multiple-choice tests.	+41	63	22	12
Students would be tested periodically, and those who did not meet the standards would not advance to the next grade level.	+31	58	27	11
Individual schools and school districts would be evaluated based on their success in having students meet the standards.	-10	36	46	14

*A Report from*

**Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.**



erosion of academic ideals. Many teachers feel it is wrong for students to advance a grade level before they have mastered the skills and knowledge expected at that level. More than seven in ten (72%) agree that common standards "would give teachers leverage to maintain academic standards."

**■ Improving consistency in education.**

Teachers often feel a severe lack of consistency in their work lives, and common standards are appealing because they offer the possibility that there will be constant rather than shifting educational goals. A 79% majority of teachers agree that "education is often disrupted by new fads and changing priorities," and that standards will yield "consistent academic goals."

**■ Uniting teachers, parents, and students behind the same goals.** Another benefit related to consistency is that teachers, principals, and parents would all come to share the same expectations of the students. The single most popular

specific standards provision is, in fact, the standardization of grading so that "parents, teachers, and students would all know the meaning of a given grade." Three-quarters of all teachers (75%) agree that common standards will help teachers resist pressure to lower standards because "parents and principals would have a stake in children passing the standards-based assessments."

## Doubts about Standards Proposal

*Overall, arguments in favor of the standards proposal tend to garner more support than do arguments in opposition. The survey does reveal some concerns and doubts in the minds of teacher members, however, despite their general support for standards. The following are the four most important ones:*

**■ Distracting attention from more critical concerns.** Many teachers feel that establishing common standards is far less important than is achieving other reforms—such as expanding education funding or reducing class sizes—and they may fear that an emphasis on standards will distract public (or union) attention from these other pressing concerns: 63% agree that "the problem with our education system is not the lack of standards, but the lack of resources and support; standards are a distraction from the real problems."

**■ Imposing rigid or unfair standards.** A number of teachers voice a concern that common standards are too rigid, pointing out that "kids learn at different rates," while others worry that common standards will be too difficult and will put "too much pressure on the children." Two-thirds (66%) agree that "students from disadvantaged backgrounds will be held back and unjustly penalized." Many teachers also express the specific concern that tests will assume too much importance: 67% agree that "parents and the public will care only about how students perform on the tests, not what they actually learn."

**■ Evaluating individual districts and schools.** As reported earlier, the one potential provision of the common standards proposal that reduces support for the overall proposal is the

### Most-Supported Arguments For Standards Proposal

	Proportion Of Teachers Who Agree %
You only get what you ask for, and we have not asked enough of students. If we set high standards and teach to them, achievement will go up.	82
Education is often disrupted by new fads and changing priorities. Standards will force everyone in the school system to focus on consistent academic goals.	79
Rigorous standards will help teachers to resist pressure to lower academic standards, since parents and principals would have a stake in children passing the standards-based assessments.	75
If students knew what was expected of them and that promotion from grade to grade depended on it, they would be more motivated and would learn more.	74

A Report from

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.

evaluation of districts and schools. A number of teachers fear that districts with many students from poor backgrounds will be at a considerable disadvantage when judged against other districts, and they may worry that those schools will be subject to unfair criticism or scapegoating.

■ **Imposing uniformity on a diverse society.** A major concern for teachers is that having a single national set of standards will interfere with schools' ability to respect and adapt to students' cultural differences: 64% of teachers agree that "national standards are not appropriate in a country as diverse as ours."<sup>4</sup> The scenario of a national curriculum, and the consequent loss of local autonomy, also worries teachers: 77% of teachers agree that "national standards would inevitably lead to a national curriculum, which is a bad idea."

In our view, the debate over common standards boils down in large part to the question of whether it advances or undermines the goal of **educational equity**. This is what most divides supporters and opponents of the standards proposal, as is illustrated by our finding that there is only one pro-standards argument that is rejected by a majority of standards opponents: "Today a student's education depends too much on where they live and what school they attend; with common standards, all students would get the same high-quality curriculum." Seventy-seven percent of standards supporters agree with this statement, but a 55% majority of standards opponents reject this claim.

After presenting all the arguments, we asked respondents—in an open-ended format—why they favor or oppose the standards proposal. Significantly, *both* supporters and opponents cite equity concerns in explaining their position: supporters maintain that common standards will yield more equal allocation of educational resources, and thus educational outcomes; opponents fear that the disadvantaged will suffer and that students will be penalized because of their background.

<sup>4</sup>Teachers from small town districts—who support standards less strongly than others—are especially likely to agree (80%) with this criticism.

It is important to note that seven in ten teachers say that at most only three-quarters of their students could meet world-class standards; teachers seem to expect a significant number of students to need assistance in meeting these new standards. They strongly favor provisions to hold back—but also provide extra assistance to—students who fail to meet the standards. The carrot and the stick are both important here. Programs that assist students who are in danger of being left behind will be critical to maintaining teacher support for a system of common standards.

In the end, the decisive question will be whether common standards are seen as lifting up disadvantaged students to greater educational equity, or as unfairly stigmatizing them for not "measuring up." Today most teachers feel that a system of common standards will do the former, and the proposal thus enjoys widespread support among the AFT membership.

## Conclusion

Throughout this survey, as in other research we have conducted among AFT members, teachers consistently give insightful and thoughtful answers to questions about education and how it can be improved. They clearly both care about and think about these issues a great deal. Teachers are, of course, keenly aware of the serious problems facing education today, and are not always optimistic about the immediate prospects for improvement. Despite the challenges they face, however—or perhaps because of them—teachers express a strong commitment to change and improvement in education.

AFT teachers want their national union to continue making education reform a top priority. They strongly support the idea of adopting common academic standards, and very much want to see improvements in the area of classroom discipline. Far from being the obstacle to educational progress that some outside commentators would suggest, these union members are ready for change and willing to do their part to make it happen.

A Report from

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.

# The Survey Questions

- 1a. First, are you currently employed?  
 Yes, currently employed . . . . .100  
 No, not currently employed  
 Not sure

- 1b. What kind of work do you do?  
 Teacher . . . . .85  
 Special education teacher . . . . .8  
 Guidance counselor . . . . .2  
 Speech therapy . . . . .2  
 Administrator . . . . .1  
 Don't know; no response . . . . .—

- 1c. What kind of school do you work in?  
 Preschool . . . . .2  
 Elementary school . . . . .47  
 Junior high school . . . . .8  
 Middle school . . . . .15  
 Senior high school . . . . .28

(Ask only of respondents who say they work at a junior high, middle, or senior high school in q. 1c.)

- 1d. What field do you teach in?  
 Guidance counselor/social worker . . . . .2  
 Social studies/history . . . . .14  
 English/writing . . . . .11  
 Math/science . . . . .28  
 Vocational . . . . .4  
 Physical education . . . . .7  
 Other . . . . .34  
 Not sure . . . . .—

(Ask everyone)

- 2a. How good a job would you say the nation's schools are doing in terms of meeting the educational needs of students—  
 excellent, good, fair, not so good, or poor?

- Excellent . . . . .6  
 Good . . . . .45  
 Fair . . . . .32  
 Not so good . . . . .8  
 Poor . . . . .4  
 Not sure . . . . .5

- 2b. How good a job would you say your own school system is doing in terms of meeting the educational needs of students—  
 excellent, good, fair, not so good, or poor?

- Excellent . . . . .16  
 Good . . . . .44  
 Fair . . . . .27  
 Not so good . . . . .6  
 Poor . . . . .6  
 Not sure . . . . .1

3. Now I would like you to tell me how satisfied you are with each of the following aspects of your school. For each one, please tell me if you are very satisfied, fairly satisfied, just somewhat satisfied, or not that satisfied with this aspect of your school.

	Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Just Somewhat Satisfied	Not That Satisfied	Not Sure
Academic standards	32	37	18	12	1
The level of personal safety for students and staff	47	27	12	13	1
Teachers' salary and benefits	20	37	20	23	—
Opportunities for teachers to develop their skills/methods	35	29	21	15	—
The level of student motivation	11	29	26	33	1
The amount of input teachers have in professional decision-making	20	32	24	23	1
The state of student discipline and behavior	13	29	19	38	1
The level of involvement by parents in students' education	10	21	23	45	1

- 4a. Are you a member of any union or employees organization at your job?

- Yes, union member . . . . .98  
 No, not union member . . . . .1  
 Not sure/refused . . . . .1 [Skip to Q.6a]

(Ask only of respondents who say they are union members in q.4a.)

4b. Do you happen to know the name of the **national** union or employees organization to which you belong? Can you tell me with which national union your local employees organization is affiliated?

- American Federation of Teachers (AFT) . . . . .61 [Skip to Q.5a]
- AFL-CIO . . . . .6
- National Education Association (NEA) . . . . .7
- Other . . . . .20
- Not sure/don't know . . . . .6

(Ask only of respondents who do not say they belong to the AFT in q.4b.)

4c. Most of the people we are interviewing for this survey have said they are members of the American Federation of Teachers, which is also known as the AFT. Now that I mention this, do you happen to recall whether your local union is affiliated with the AFT on the national level?

- Recall AFT affiliation . . . . .30
- Do not recall AFT affiliation . . . . .5 [Skip to Q.6a]
- Not sure . . . . .4
- Unaided recall (Q.4b.) . . . . .61

(Ask only of respondents who recall AFT affiliation in q.4b or q.4c.)

5a. On a scale from one to five, on which a "5" means you are very well represented and a "1" means you are not represented well at all, how well do you feel you are represented by

	Very Well Represented			Not Well Represented		
	(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	Cannot Rate*
Your local union	31	30	25	9	5	(1)
Your AFT organization on the state level	21	31	31	11	6	(11)
The AFT on the national level	17	29	33	13	8	(16)

\*Proportions who say "cannot rate" have been excluded from the base.

(Ask only of respondents who recall AFT affiliation in q.4b or q.4c.)

5b. Let me read you some things people might want their national union to do for them and then get you to tell me which one or two of these activities for the national AFT you consider most important.

- Lobbying Congress on important issues . . . . .37
- Providing support and assistance—such as bargaining, training, and research—to local affiliates . . . . .27
- Working for reforms to improve education and the teaching profession . . . . .55
- Providing group rate liability insurance and legal defense protection . . . . .9
- Keeping members informed about trends in education and professional development issues . . . . .33
- All (VOL) . . . . .6
- None/other (VOL) . . . . .1
- Not sure . . . . .1

(Ask only of respondents who recall AFT affiliation in q.4b or q.4c.)

5c. How good a job do you feel the national American Federation of Teachers is doing in terms of taking the right stands and providing leadership on education reform—excellent, good, fair, not so good, or poor?

- Excellent . . . . .11
- Good . . . . .44
- Fair . . . . .29
- Not so good . . . . .5
- Poor . . . . .3
- Not sure . . . . .8

(Ask only of respondents who recall AFT affiliation in q.4b or q.4c.)

5d. Can you think of any time in the past few years when someone from your union spoke to you personally about issues of education policy or practice, or the union's work in that area?

- Yes, have been spoken to . . . . .70
- No, have not been spoken to . . . . .28
- Not sure . . . . .2

A Report from

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.

(Ask everyone.)

6a. Overall, would you say you strongly approve, mildly approve, mildly disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job Bill Clinton is doing as president?

Strongly / mildly approve .....75  
 Mildly / strongly disapprove .....22  
 Not sure .....3

6b. How would you rate President Clinton's performance on the issue of education—do you strongly approve, mildly approve, mildly disapprove, or strongly disapprove of Bill Clinton's performance on education?

Strongly / mildly approve .....64  
 Mildly / strongly disapprove .....27  
 Not sure .....3

7a. In the next five to ten years, do you think public education in the United States will improve, will decline, or will not change much?

Public education will improve .....36  
 Public education will decline .....30  
 Public education will not change much .....31  
 Not sure .....3

7b. Why do you feel that way about the future prospects for education?

What are the major factors that you think will lead education to improve or not to improve?

<u>Net Positive Comments</u>	<u>30%</u>	<u>Net Negative Comments</u>	<u>67%</u>
Parents and community getting more involved, showing more interest in children	9	Lack of parental support, involvement	16
It has to get better, it has gotten so bad that people have realized something needs to be done; things need to change	9	Breakdown of families, not enough attention paid to children	11
New programs are being implemented	4	Need more funding	10
Government more concerned about education, President Clinton trying to help	3	Discipline problems	6
Leaning towards computers, more technology	2	Society getting worse, declining morally	6
		Don't know; no response	5

7c. What are the most important reforms or changes you would like to see in education and the teaching profession?

If you were designing an education reform program, what are the most important things you would try to accomplish?

More parental involvement .....28%  
 Address discipline problems .....22  
 Teachers salaries .....12  
 Higher standards for students .....11  
 Class size too large .....11  
 Don't know; no response .....2

8. Over the past ten years or so, a national movement has developed on the idea of educational reform. Do you generally feel that this has been a positive force in public education, a negative force, or neither a positive nor negative force?

Positive force in public education .....41  
 Negative force in public education .....12  
 Neither a positive nor negative force in public education .....40  
 Not sure .....7



9. Here are some approaches to improving public education. For each one, please tell me on a scale from one to ten, how important this type of reform is. A "10" means it is the single most important reform, a "1" means it is not an important reform, and a "5" means it is in the middle.

	(9-10)	Mean
Giving teachers more say in how schools are run	53	8.4
Having rigorous, world-class educational standards	37	7.3
Having rigorous educational standards	52	8.3
Raising teachers' salaries	39	7.8
Improving discipline in the classroom	69	8.9
Reducing class size	62	8.6
Improving professional development opportunities for teachers	42	7.9
Increasing parental involvement in education	67	8.7
Increasing government funding for education	62	8.5

10. I'm going to read a statement about education reform and teachers unions, and I'd like you to tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.

If public education does not improve soon, taxpayer support for schools will decline, voters will support private school voucher schemes, and more parents will move their children to private schools. Improvement will require dramatic changes, some of which may be hard on teachers. But to strengthen public education in the long run, teachers unions should support major educational reform today.

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with this statement?

Strongly agree	34
Somewhat agree	40
Somewhat disagree	13
Strongly disagree	7
Not sure	6

Now turning to another topic...

11. I am going to read you three statements. Please tell me which one best describes your own view of your teaching skills today.

With more support and training, I could still improve my teaching a great deal	50
I could improve my teaching somewhat, but probably not a great deal	36
I'm satisfied with the quality of my teaching skills, and don't really need to improve them much	12
Not sure	2

12a. Thinking about the various staff development and in-service programs offered by your school system, how worthwhile would you say they have generally been—very worthwhile, fairly worthwhile, only a little worthwhile, or not that worthwhile?

Programs have been very worthwhile	20
Programs have been fairly worthwhile	33
Programs have been only a little worthwhile	23
Programs have been not that worthwhile	19
Not at all worthwhile (VOL)	3
Not sure	2

12b. There are generally two types of professional development programs—those that focus on general classroom strategies, such as using cooperative, small groups, and those that focus on teaching a specific academic subject. How much interest do you personally have in each—a great deal of interest, some, or not that much interest?

	A Great Deal Of Interest	Some Interest	Not That Much Interest	Not Sure
Programs that focus on general classroom strategies, such as using cooperative, small groups	50	36	14	—
Programs that focus on teaching a specific academic subject	49	35	14	2

12c. Many schools offer teachers additional pay for taking courses toward a master's degree or doctorate. How worthwhile would you say these kinds of courses have generally been—very worthwhile, fairly worthwhile, only a little worthwhile, or not that worthwhile?

Courses have been very worthwhile	.40
Courses have been fairly worthwhile	.34
Courses have been only a little worthwhile	.14
Courses have been not that worthwhile	.07
Not at all worthwhile (VOL)	.01
Not sure	.04

12d. In general, what kinds of help would be most useful to you in continuing your professional development? What kinds of training or information would you find helpful?

More instruction for teachers, training sessions; learn new trends in teaching; materials, literature more accessible	.19%
Workshops	.12
More meetings, conventions, opportunities to meet with other teachers and share ideas; more in-service meetings	.10
Continued professional development, incentives to go back to school, financial assistance for master's degree	.08
More help with discipline, how to handle discipline, classes on behavioral problems	.08
Don't know; no response	.08

Now I have a few questions on the issue of academic standards.

13a. Thinking about your school today, would you say that the academic standards for students are too high, are too low, or are about right?

Standards too high	.04
Standards too low	.51
Standards about right	.43
Not sure	.02

13b. Do you feel there is pressure on you and other teachers to lower academic standards, to raise academic standards, or don't you feel there is any pressure either way?

Pressure to lower standards	.33
Pressure to raise standards	.31
No pressure either way	.32
Not sure	.04

13c. Specifically, do you feel any pressure to:

	Feel Pressure	Do Not Feel Pressure	Not Sure
Give higher grades than students' work deserves	30	65	5
Pass students on to the next grade who really are not ready	46	48	6
Reduce the difficulty and amount of work you assign	30	65	5

14a. Compared to students in Europe and Japan, would you say that American students generally achieve academically at a lower level, at about the same level, or at a higher level?

Lower level	.71
About the same level	.15
Higher level	.02
Not sure	.12

14b. In your opinion, is it important that the U.S. has academic standards as high as those in Europe and Japan, or isn't that really important as long as we are satisfied with our standards?

Important to have standards as high as Europe and Japan	.63
Not important as long as we are satisfied	.31
Not sure	.06

15a. There is now a proposal to establish rigorous, world-class educational standards that would define what a student is expected to know and be able to do at different grade levels. In general, would you say such standards are a good idea or not a good idea? And do you feel strongly about that, or not that strongly?

- Standards are a good idea—feel strongly . . . . .47
- Standards are a good idea—do not feel that strongly . . .21
- Standards are not a good idea—do not feel that strongly .9
- Standards are not a good idea—feel strongly . . . . .17
- Not sure . . . . .6

15b. Why do you feel that way about establishing educational standards?

What are the major advantages of having such standards?

What are the major disadvantages of having such standards?

<u>Net Advantages Of Educational Standards</u>	<u>62%</u>	<u>Net Disadvantages Of Educational Standards</u>	<u>45%</u>
Students should be able to compete; give everyone an equal opportunity to compete, children should be ready and able to compete in this world	20	Too much diversity, different cultures require different standards of education	13
Need a change, standards are good, guidelines are useful	19	Kids learn at different rates, develop at different levels, hard to set guidelines on kids	10
Will motivate students to do better; more motivation to achieve, goals; no goals means no accomplishments	11	Hard to get students accustomed to rigorous standards, European students attend school most of the year	7
Kids should not be passed on unless they achieve the goals and standards of the level they are on	7	Too much pressure on the children, if they don't meet standards they will feel like failures	5
Better this way, students will know what is expected	6	Not good to put so much emphasis on a single test	5
		Don't know; no response	5

16. Here are some policies that could be part of establishing a system of educational standards. For each one, please tell me whether including this policy would make you more inclined to support standards, less inclined to support standards, or would have no effect on your view of standards.

	<u>More Inclined</u>	<u>Less Inclined</u>	<u>No Effect</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
Students would be tested periodically, and those who did not meet the standards would receive extra educational assistance, but would not advance to the next grade level.	69	16	13	2
Students would be tested periodically, and those who did not meet the standards would not advance to the next grade level.	58	27	11	4
Individual schools and school districts would be evaluated based on their success in having students meet the standards.	36	46	14	4
All class grades would be based on students' attainment of the standards, so that parents, teachers, and students would all know the meaning of a given grade.	75	16	7	2
Schools and teachers could choose their own curricula and methods, as long as students met the standards.	71	18	9	2
Student success at meeting the standards would be determined by sophisticated assessments, including written essays, rather than multiple-choice tests.	63	22	12	3
Standards would be set by independent committees of educators and representatives of the public, not by government officials.	69	14	13	4
Colleges and employers would base admissions and hiring decisions in part on students' success at meeting the standards.	65	20	12	3



17. If rigorous, world-class standards were adopted, how many of the students in your school do you think would meet the standards—virtually all, more than 90 percent, between 75 and 90 percent, between 50 and 75 percent, or less than 50 percent?

Virtually all	.1
More than 90%	.5
Between 75% and 90%	.21
Between 50% and 75%	.32
Less than 50%	.35
None/almost none (VOL)	.3
Not sure	.3

18a. Here are some reasons people have given for *supporting* a system of standards. For each one, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with this reason for supporting standards.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
Schools would be held accountable only for outcomes, rather than being forced to follow rigid government regulations.	30	42	13	11	4
Today a student's education depends too much on where they live and what school they attend; with common standards, all students would get the same high-quality curriculum.	38	29	15	15	3
You only get what you ask for, and we have not asked enough of students. If we set high standards and teach to them, achievement will go up.	50	32	8	8	2
If students knew what was expected of them and that promotion from grade to grade depended on it, they would be more motivated and would learn more.	31	43	14	11	1
Rigorous standards will help teachers to resist pressure to lower academic standards, since parents and principals would have a stake in children passing the standards-based assessments.	37	38	12	10	3
Many parents and principals undermine standards because they just want students to get good grades. Standards would give teachers leverage to maintain academic standards.	31	41	19	7	2
Higher standards are a prerequisite for other improvements in education, because until we know what we are trying to achieve, more reforms and money won't help.	32	39	18	9	2
Education is often disrupted by new fads and changing priorities. Standards will force everyone in the school system to focus on consistent academic goals.	42	37	11	8	2

A Report from

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.

18b. Here are some concerns that people have expressed about establishing a system of standards. For each one, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with this reason for *opposing* standards.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
Because parents will not stand for students getting low test scores or being held back, common standards will not be effective.	14	34	28	21	3
A system of standards will generate lots of meetings, guidebooks, and tests, but will not provide any resources or training that could actually help our schools.	24	37	19	16	4
The problem with our education system is not the lack of standards, but the lack of resources and support. Standards are a distraction from the real problems.	31	32	21	15	1
National standards are not appropriate in a country as diverse as ours. We need to be free to use different methods and materials for students from different backgrounds.	36	28	19	15	2
Parents and the public will care only about how students perform on the tests, not what they actually learn. Teaching will be entirely driven by the tests, and education will suffer.	37	30	17	14	2
National standards would inevitably lead to a national curriculum, which is a bad idea. Local schools and teachers should have a major say in teaching methods and curricula.	47	30	14	8	1
National standards assumes the problem is that we do not know what students should learn, when in fact we do know. Standards are the wrong solution because they focus on the wrong problem.	23	26	32	15	4
Poor schools will not have the resources to help their students meet the standards. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds will be held back and unjustly penalized.	35	31	17	15	2

18c. Overall, which do you agree with more—the arguments for establishing common standards or the arguments against establishing common standards?

Arguments for common standards . . . . .	.67
Arguments against common standards . . . . .	.27
Not sure . . . . .	.6

18d. Why do you feel that way about establishing standards?

What are the best reasons you have heard for common standards?

And what are your most important concerns about common standards?

<u>Net Best Reasons For Common Standards</u>	<u>59%</u>	<u>Net Concerns About Common Standards</u>	<u>37%</u>
Everyone should be equal; if everybody is getting the same education the results will be more equal	16	Disadvantaged will suffer, students will be penalized because of their background, burden on poorer rural districts	10
Everybody working towards one goal	14	Unfair procedure, unless it is equalized it won't work; finding common standards would be impossible	5
Something needs to be done, have to start somewhere; good thing, standards are needed	14	Against standards	4
We need to be competitive	7	Too much cultural diversity	4
Children will benefit, turn out better educated children	4	Should be local; too many; each individual school system should decide, too many variations within each school	4
		Don't know; no response	9

A Report from

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.



Now turning to another topic....

19a. There is now a proposal for a voluntary credentials system, in which teachers who passed a rigorous set of national assessments would receive board certification in their educational field. In some school districts, this credential could help qualify teachers for higher salaries and for new roles and responsibilities, such as mentoring beginning teachers. Would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose such a system?

Strongly favor	.25
Somewhat favor	.41
Somewhat oppose	.14
Strongly oppose	.16
Not sure	.4

19b. **Supporters** of such a certification system say that it will provide teachers with opportunities for career advancement without having to enter administration, and will bring deserved recognition to many talented and hard-working teachers. **Opponents** say that the system will encourage competition among teachers instead of cooperation, and therefore will hurt teacher morale and hinder professional improvement. Which of these two views do you agree with more?

Will provide opportunities for advancement and bring deserved recognition to many talented and hard-working teachers	.50
Will encourage competition among teachers instead of cooperation, hurt morale, and hinder professional improvement	.39
Both/some of both (VOL)	.8
Not sure	.3

On another topic, I'd like you to think about the learning disabled students who may be in your school, referred to as "special education students" in many districts.

20a. First, would you say that your school keeps special education students more separate from other students than is educationally necessary, that it goes too far in including these students in regular classes when they really need special attention, or that your school strikes a good balance in this area?

Keeps special education students more separate than necessary	.9
Goes too far in including special education students	.17
Strikes a good balance	.70
Not sure	.4

20b. Do you currently have any students in your regular classes who have been formally identified as special education students?

Yes, have special education students	.76
No, do not have special education students	.17
Does not apply/do not teach in regular classroom (VOL)	.6 [Skip to Q 21a]
Not sure	.1

(Ask only of respondents who say they have special education students in q.20b.)

20c. Did you receive any kind of special training for teaching (this student/these students)?

Yes, received special training	.45
No, did not receive special training	.54
Not sure	.1

(Ask everyone)

21a. As you may know, some schools have adopted a policy called "full inclusion," which involves placing all special education students, regardless of their disability, in regular classrooms on a full-time basis. Has your school adopted full inclusion, taken some steps to move in the direction of inclusion, or hasn't it taken any such steps?

School has adopted full inclusion	.14
School has taken steps to move in direction of full inclusion	.48
School has not taken steps to set up full inclusion policy	.33
Not sure	.5

A Report from

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.

21b. In your opinion, would you say that full inclusion of all special education students in regular classes is a good idea or is not a good idea? And do you feel strongly about that, or not strongly?

- Full inclusion is a good idea—feel strongly . . . . . 11
- Full inclusion is a good idea—do not feel strongly . . . . . 7
- Full inclusion is not a good idea—do not feel strongly . . 11
- Full inclusion is not a good idea—feel strongly . . . . . 64
- Not sure . . . . . 7

Now, getting to the end of the survey, I have a few questions about discipline in the schools.

22a. In your own classroom, how much teaching time is lost as a result of student discipline problems—a lot, a fair amount, just a little, or not much at all?

- A lot of time . . . . . 18
- A fair amount of time . . . . . 23
- Just a little time . . . . . 26
- Not much time at all . . . . . 30
- Not sure . . . . . 3

22b. Do you currently have a student in any of your classes who you feel should really not be there because of the disciplinary problems he or she poses?

- Yes, have students with discipline problems . . . . . 49
- No, do not have students with discipline problems . . . . 49
- Not sure . . . . . 2

22c. For each of the following, please tell me whether this is a major obstacle, a medium obstacle, or a minor obstacle to teachers' ability to discipline disruptive students in your school.

	Major Obstacle	Medium Obstacle	Minor Obstacle	Not An Obstacle (VOL)	Not Sure
Pressure from parents not to punish students	19	23	41	16	1
A lack of alternative settings within the school to place disruptive students	45	20	23	11	1
Discipline becoming a racially sensitive issue	15	15	39	30	1
Possible legal action by students or their parents	19	19	43	18	1
Concern over physical retaliation by students who are punished	11	13	48	27	1
Rules against disciplining special education students	13	14	40	28	5
Punishments that are inconsistent or not tough enough to deter bad behavior	41	25	22	11	1
Pressure from administrators not to punish students	19	17	36	27	1

22d. As a teacher, have you ever?

	Yes, Has Occurred	No, Has Not Occurred	Not Sure
Changed your after-school or other activities because of concerns for your personal safety at school	15	85	—
Been assaulted or physically threatened by a student	32	67	1
Asked to have a disruptive student removed from your class, but had that request denied by the school administration	20	79	1
Had a student stay home from school because of fear of violence	29	67	4
Been verbally abused by a student	66	34	—

These last few questions are for statistical purposes only.

**F1. In what age group are you—(READ LIST)?**

18-24	.1	45-49	.22
25-29	.5	50-54	.17
30-34	.7	55-59	.8
35-39	.14	60-64	.3
40-44	.22	65 and over	—
		Refused	.1

**F2. How many years have you worked in the field of education?**

1 year or less	.1
2 to 3 years	.4
4 to 5 years	.4
6 to 10 years	.13
11 to 15 years	.17
16 to 20 years	.18
21 to 25 years	.21
More than 25 years	.21
Not sure	.1

**F3. How would you describe the type of area in which your school is located—urban, suburban, small town, or rural?**

Urban	.50
Suburban	.29
Small town	.13
Rural	.7
Not sure	.1

**F4a. Which of the following best describes the proportion of minority students in your school—most are minorities, many are minorities but not most, just a few are minorities, or hardly any are minorities?**

Most are minorities	.37
Many are minorities, but not most	.19
Just a few are minorities	.20
Hardly any are minorities	.18
All are minorities (VOL)	.3
None are minorities (VOL)	.1
Not sure	.2

**F4b. Which of the following best describes the economic background of most of the students in your school—poor, working class or lower middle class, middle class, or upper middle class?**

Poor	.28
Working class/lower middle class	.38
Middle class	.20
Upper middle class	.7
Wealthy/affluent/upper class (VOL)	.1
All/mixed (VOL)	.5
Not sure	.1

**F5a. Do you have easy access to a computer at school?**

Yes, have easy access	.79
No, do not have easy access	.20
Not sure	.1

**F5b. Do you personally own a home computer? (IF YES: Does your home computer have a modem?)**

Own a computer with a modem	.26
Own a computer without a modem	.33
Do not own a computer	.40
Not sure	.1

**F6a. Could you please tell me which category best represents your total household income for last year?**

Below \$25,000	.2
\$25,000-\$35,000	.8
\$35,000-\$45,000	.13
\$45,000-\$60,000	.27
\$60,000-\$80,000	.18
Above \$80,000	.25
Not sure/refused	.7

**F6b. And could you please tell me the highest level of education you have completed?**

High school graduate	—
Some college	—
College graduate/B.A.	.11
Graduate courses, no degree	.12
Master's degree	.45
Courses beyond master's/not doctorate	.28
Doctorate/PhD	.3
Not sure/refused	.1

**F7. Finally, what is your race or ethnic group—white, black, Hispanic, Asian, or something else?**

White	.82
Black	.11
Hispanic	.3
Asian	.1
Other	.1
Refused	.2



555 NEW JERSEY AVENUE, NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20001-2079

ASK FOR ITEM NO. 177  
SINGLE COPY FREE / \$1 EACH FOR 5 OR MORE  
7/95