

**IN**

**OUT**

# ● HALFWAY OUT THE DOOR

Ohioans Sound Off on  
Public Schooling, with a  
**SPECIAL ANALYSIS** of the  
Views of African Americans  
and Dayton Residents

Conducted by the FDR Group for  
The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation

November 2005



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## Introduction

The past half-decade has been a busy time for public education in Ohio on at least six fronts:

- ▲ The state launched its own results-based accountability system, keyed to new academic standards and tests, including a statewide high school graduation test. This was overtaken and modified by the federal No Child Left Behind Act and is in further flux as the state embarks on a “value-added” analysis of student and school performance.
- ▲ Meanwhile, Ohio’s school-rating and school-report-card systems are yielding high-visibility and attention-getting annual appraisals of every school and school system in the Buckeye state.
- ▲ Changes have been made—and bigger changes are contemplated—in teacher preparation and certification.
- ▲ Ohio’s charter (aka “community”) schools have grown to almost 250 and now enroll upwards of 70,000 children, including a burgeoning “virtual charter school” sector that makes extensive use of technology and intersects with home schooling. Recent changes in the law governing the charter program have introduced new wrinkles pertaining to school sponsorship and accountability.
- ▲ In addition to the long-established voucher program in Cleveland, the General Assembly recently enacted the Ohio Education Choice Scholarship Program—a statewide voucher option whereby children whose public schools have been in “academic emergency” for three or more years may opt for private schooling.
- ▲ Looming over everything else has been nonstop revision of the state’s approach to school financing, partly dictated by the courts, partly crafted by the executive and legislative branches.

Nobody doubts that the “powers that be” in Columbus have been busily tinkering with the K-12 education system. But what do ordinary Ohioans think about all this? How do parents, taxpayers, and citizens view public schooling in 2005? Do they like these reforms? Seek more or less of them? Have confidence that they’ll succeed?

We decided to find out—with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation—and enlisted a respected survey research firm to examine the attitudes of Ohio residents toward their public schools. Nobody does this bet-

ter than the FDR Group, led by expert analysts Steve Farkas and Ann Duffett, who have a combined 25 years of experience in opinion research and social policy. Steve Farkas was research director at Public Agenda—a highly regarded, nonprofit, nonpartisan research firm located in New York City—from 1992 to 2004 and is principal author of more

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than 100 major opinion studies spanning a host of issues. Ann Duffett has been conducting opinion research since 1994, first at Louis Harris & Associates, then for eight years at Public Agenda, where she served as senior vice president and principal investigator on more than 60 qualitative and quantitative opinion studies.

We provided the FDR Group with information about recent education developments in Ohio and outlined some of the issues that we judged were especially important to probe. Beyond this, however, they had complete freedom in designing and conducting this survey (and the two focus groups that preceded it), just as they had complete editorial freedom in formulating the report that follows. (In the Afterword, you’ll find some of *our* interpretations and conclusions.)

We did request of them an oversample in Dayton, the Fordham Foundation’s home town and a place where we have sponsored earlier surveys of public attitudes toward education. (You can find those reports on our website at <http://www.edexcellence.net/foundation/topic/topic.cfm?topic=Dayton%20Projects>.) And we requested an oversample of African Americans, because we felt that the education views of black and white Ohioans might differ. In the pages that follow, you’ll see the results of those additional analyses.

We leave it to the FDR Group to explain their methodology. Suffice to say that we have the utmost respect for their integrity, accuracy, and professionalism, as well as their expertise. In addition to the lead authors, we would like to thank Martin A. Davis, Jr. of the Fordham Foundation for his yeoman work as the report's copy editor. And the layout and design talents of Holli Rathman are evident throughout this report; we appreciate the good work. Thanks also to Fordham's Jennifer Leischer and Kristina Phillips-Schwartz for their work on helping us share the findings of the survey widely, and thanks to Bob Boltz of the Cochran Group in Columbus for his good work on this front as well. T. David Jones of the Center for Urban and Public Affairs at Wright State University provided knowledge on sampling the Dayton metropolitan area. Finally, we'd like to thank the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for its financial assistance and for the wise counsel of Lisa Gray and Jennifer Vranek.

This study was underwritten by Fordham and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation is a private foundation that supports research, publications, and action projects in elementary/secondary education reform at the national level and in Ohio. Further information can be found by surfing to [www.edexcellence.net](http://www.edexcellence.net) or writing us at 1627 K Street, NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20006. (We can also be e-mailed at [backtalk@edexcellence.net](mailto:backtalk@edexcellence.net).) This report is available in full on the website and hard copies can be obtained by calling 888-TBF-7474, or by emailing [fordham@dunst.com](mailto:fordham@dunst.com). The Foundation is neither connected with nor sponsored by Fordham University.

*Chester E. Finn, Jr., President*

*Terry Ryan, Vice President for Ohio Programs & Policy  
November 2005*

## Executive Summary

These are critical times for Ohio's system of educating its young people. Initiatives to reform the public schools have been gaining momentum for some time. Elected officials, organized interest groups, think tanks, and civic leaders are tugging and pulling at the system, trying to move it this way or that. But where do the people of Ohio—the parents and taxpayers—truly stand on the education issues of the day? The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, sensing it was time to check with the public, asked the FDR Group—a national nonpartisan research company with expertise in surveys, focus groups, and program evaluation—to conduct a comprehensive and rigorous study of the attitudes of Ohioans.

The study is based upon 1,001 telephone interviews with randomly selected Ohioans, including 278 parents of students in grades K-12. The sample is augmented so that the views of African Americans (202 were interviewed) and Dayton residents (201 were interviewed) could be reliably reported as well. The survey asks participants for their views on the state of the public schools, academic standards, charter schools, school vouchers, and teacher quality. The FDR Group wishes to thank The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation for trusting our professionalism and expertise and for giving us the freedom to conduct and report this research in a nonpartisan manner.

### *The State of Education in Ohio*

Ohioans worry about the state of their public schools, from the value of a high school diploma, to social promotion, to whether money earmarked for the classroom ever makes it there. Too many parents of public school students signal a willingness to try something new. And African American citizens stand out as consistently more critical of the education system compared with their white counterparts.

- ▲ 42 percent of Ohio residents believe that a high school diploma from their local public schools is “no guarantee that the typical student has learned the basics.” Among African Americans, it is 54 percent.
- ▲ The vast majority of Ohioans (69 percent) believe that if their state decided to put more money into the public schools the money would “actually get lost along the way.”
- ▲ Most (58 percent) believe that the taxpayers in their community are not getting their money's worth from the public schools. Among African Americans, it's 72 percent.

- ▲ 51 percent think that social promotion is the rule in Ohio today; just 27 percent believe that students are promoted “only when they learn what they are supposed to know.”
- ▲ 49 percent of parents with kids in public district schools say they would exit the system and send their kids to an alternative, such as a private school, if money were not an issue.

### *Standards and NCLB*

The Ohio public wants high academic standards in its public schools and strongly endorses the notion of holding students and schools accountable. Although they support many of its core principles, about half of those surveyed do not expect the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to accomplish much. On the whole, Ohioans are less optimistic about NCLB compared with Americans at large.

- ▲ 83 percent of respondents favor Ohio's new requirement for 10<sup>th</sup> graders to pass tests in each of the five major subjects before they can graduate.
- ▲ Ohioans are more than twice as likely to believe that testing students, publicizing the results, and carefully monitoring poor performers calls attention to important problems rather than puts students and educators under unfair pressure (62 percent vs. 28 percent).
- ▲ 40 percent of Ohioans who know something about NCLB think it will help improve student learning in their own community, compared with 51 percent nationally; about half (49 percent) think NCLB will not be helpful, compared with 32 percent nationally.

### *Charter Schools*

Ohioans support many of the key principles that are behind charter schools, especially those principles that involve granting schools more leeway and autonomy. But there is also a strong sense that many people are generally unsettled in their views. African Americans are consistently more likely to support charters, as are parents of public school students.

- ▲ Overwhelming majorities support giving school authorities more freedom.
  - 75 percent favor giving more flexibility to design curriculum.

- 89 percent favor giving more autonomy to fire bad teachers.
- 71 percent favor giving schools more budgetary control.
- More than half (54 percent) say the public schools would improve if principals could choose their teachers and had more say over work rules.
- ▲ Support for charter schools declines or increases depending upon how the survey question describes them. This pattern is similar for African Americans and parents.
  - By a 51 percent to 34 percent margin, Ohioans favor charters described as “public schools that have a lot more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are free from many existing regulations.”
  - But when charters are described more vaguely as “independent public schools that are free from many of the rules and regulations traditional public schools face,” Ohioans are more likely to oppose them (54 percent to 37 percent).
- ▲ While fully 36 percent of African Americans in Ohio think charter schools should be expanded, just 1 in 5 (20 percent) white residents share this view.
- ▲ 39 percent of Ohio parents would definitely or seriously consider sending their child to a charter school if they had a chance, but most (54 percent) would probably or definitely not.

### **School Vouchers**

Ohio public opinion on school vouchers is split, although people are more likely to favor pro-voucher arguments than con. As was the case with charters, African Americans and parents are also more likely to favor school voucher proposals.

- ▲ Generally speaking, about half of Ohio residents are inclined to support vouchers, and about half are not. Interestingly, the voucher proposal garnering the most support is the one with the most details.
  - 55 percent support (and 37 percent oppose) a proposal that “gives parents a voucher of several thousand dollars to help pay tuition if they choose to send their child to a private or church-related school. It will be available only to students whose public school has been failing for three years in a row.”
  - 49 percent support (and 45 percent oppose) a proposal that “would allow parents to send their

school-age children to any public, private or church-related school they choose. For those parents choosing non-public schools, the government would pay all or part of their tuition.”

- 42 percent support (and 51 percent oppose) a proposal that gives “state-funded scholarships to students who attend failing public schools so they can switch to private schools.”
- ▲ Although no choice garners a majority favor, Ohioans lean toward pro-voucher arguments. For example:
  - By a 50 percent to 38 percent margin, Ohioans are more likely to think that vouchers will help public schools by fostering competition rather than hurt them by leaving schools with less money and less-motivated students.
  - By a 47 percent to 37 percent margin, Ohioans are more likely to view vouchers as “a lifeline for kids who can finally escape failing public schools” than to think they will tend to make things worse for students left behind.

### **Beyond Charters and Vouchers**

The survey also asked Ohioans about their views on other public school reforms that may increase the choices parents and students have for improving student learning.

- ▲ **District choice**—Nearly 2 in 3 Ohio residents want parents whose child attends a failing school to have the choice of sending their child to a neighboring district: 28 percent would make it subject to that district’s approval, 37 percent would treat it more like a child’s right.
- ▲ **Home schooling**—Almost 6 in 10 Ohioans (59 percent) support the idea of home schooling, where a parent devotes a lot of time to teaching their child at home and shows evidence of academic progress.
- ▲ **“E-schools”**—Only 1 in 5 (21 percent) think “cyber” schools—schools that “get state funding and allow students to do their work at home over the Internet, under adult supervision”—are an excellent or good idea.

### **Teacher Quality**

Improving teacher quality is a top priority for the Ohio public. On the whole, Ohio’s teachers get mixed reviews, although it’s clear that people are convinced that teacher quality can improve with the right mix of rewards and penalties.

- ▲ 30 percent of Ohioans say teachers are doing a good job, a plurality (42 percent) say they could be doing

somewhat better, and almost 1 in 4 (23 percent) say they could be doing a lot better.

- ▲ 84 percent favor rewarding high quality teachers with higher pay.
- ▲ 77 percent support paying higher salaries to teachers who work in tough neighborhoods with hard-to-reach children.

### ***The Views of Dayton Residents***

Daytonians mirror their non-Dayton counterparts on virtually all of the main findings in this study. Both groups share an overall concern that the public schools are falling short and not getting any better, and far too many have no faith in the value of a high school diploma. There are sev-

eral areas, however, where the Dayton public departs from the rest of the state.

- ▲ 55 percent of Dayton residents believe their local schools “need major change” compared with a smaller 43 percent of other Ohio citizens. Non-Daytonians are more likely to think their schools are “doing pretty well and need little change” (36 percent vs. 23 percent).
- ▲ When it comes to public school choice, 1 in 3 Dayton residents (34 percent) say even parents of children in failing schools should be “required” to send their kids to “a school in their own district,” compared with 1 in 4 other Ohioans (26 percent).



# I. The State of Education in Ohio

## No Progress

Ohioans are worried about the state of their public schools. From standards and testing, to charter schools and vouchers, Ohio may be near the forefront of school reform efforts. Still, its citizens remain disappointed in their public schools. The conviction of the majority of Ohioans is that the public education system must change: 44 percent say that although there are some good things about them, the schools need major change; another 17 percent go further, saying so much is wrong that a whole new system ought to be created. Only 34 percent believe the schools need little change.

It may be disheartening for the state's leaders, given the initiatives they've launched, but relatively few residents think progress has yet been made. Nearly 4 in 10 (38 percent) respondents say the quality of their local public schools has stayed the same over the past two or three years, and the number saying their schools have gotten worse (32 percent) is larger than the number saying they've improved (23 percent).

In focus group discussions—as in the survey—participants were asked to talk about their own experiences and their own local schools.

“Columbus public [school district], bluntly, it sucks. The teachers don't care. Maybe because they're being underpaid, the classrooms are over stacked... Columbus public is: ‘You want to learn this, fine. You don't want to, oh well, that's your luck.’”

—Columbus Parent

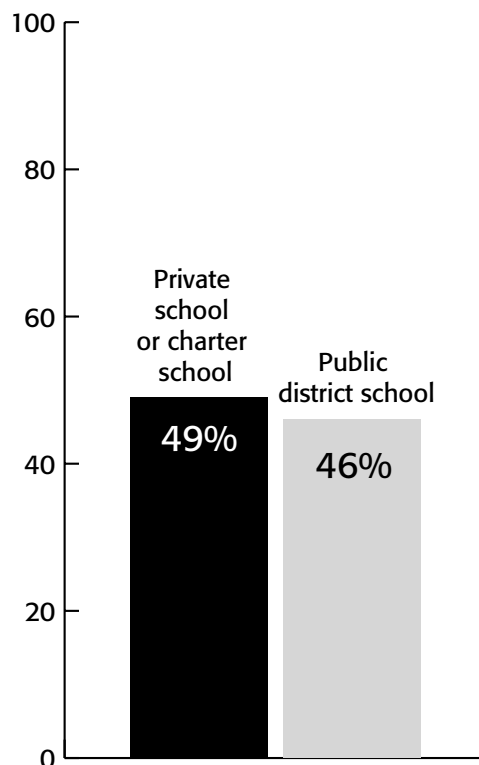
## Halfway Out the Door?

A sense of urgency is just beneath the surface. When asked to pick the most important of three bedrock issues facing Ohio—crime, public education, and the economy—34 percent say it's education, behind the economy (42 percent) but far ahead of crime (13 percent).

But perhaps the most ominous sign for Ohio's present system of public education is that its most direct “consumers”—the parents whose kids attend the public schools—are more than willing to leave it. More than 3 in 4 of the parents responding to this survey (77 percent) currently send their kids to public district schools. But if money were not an

## Willing to Leave

**% of Ohio parents with children currently in public district schools who say that, if money were not an issue, they would prefer their child attend:**



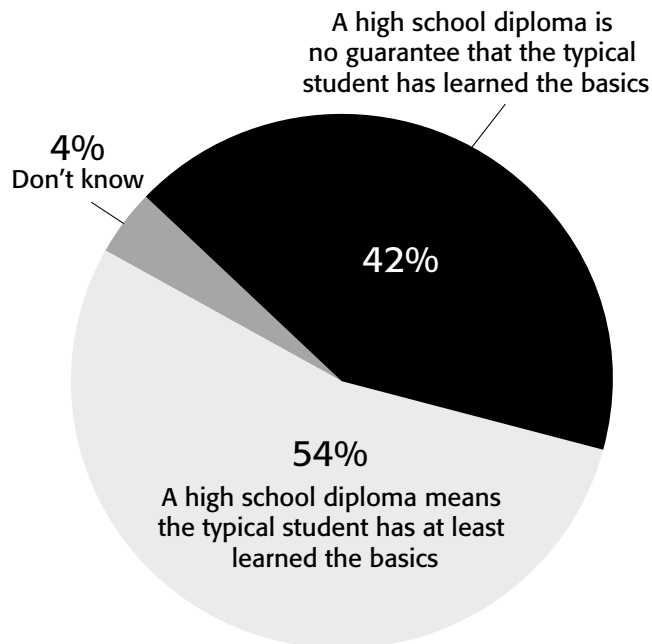
issue, 49 percent of these public district school parents say they would exit the system and send their kids to an alternative, such as a private school. The path from attitudes to action is often a long one, but these attitudes are a warning that the public schools cannot take parents' loyalty for granted. As we will see later, for example, Ohio parents are more supportive of school vouchers compared with other citizens.

## 'I Don't Think They Can Write'

The disappointment runs deep and touches on such core issues as whether the schools are teaching the basics. Many Ohioans don't believe their public schools deliver when it comes to teaching kids how to read, write, and do arithmetic. More than 4 in 10 (42 percent) believe that a high school diploma from their local public schools is “no guarantee that the typical student has learned the basics”; 54 percent say a diploma means students have learned the basics.

## No Guarantee

**Which is more accurate for the students graduating from your local public schools?**



On this question, parents in Ohio are more critical than parents across the nation. Forty percent of parents in Ohio say a high school diploma from a local school is no guarantee of the basics, and 58 percent say it is. In a national survey of parents conducted by Public Agenda for *Education Week* in 2002, 31 percent said it was no guarantee; 67 percent said it was.

“You’re still having to pay for basic math courses in college, basic English, reading comprehension, writing. I don’t think a lot of kids—even in the suburban schools—I don’t think they can write. I’ve seen that in business in memos. I think you should be able to write a proper memo and I don’t think they can do that.”

—Columbus Woman

“You go to the grocery store, you want them to do some quick math—‘Is this a better buy than that?’ They won’t be able to tell you. They do too much of the ‘chat’ where you abbreviate everything. I work with a guy that’s fresh out of school, all his writing is like that, he writes like he would do chat—it’s very choppy.”

—Columbus Man

## Social Promotion Is Alive—and Wrong

Social promotion—defined for purposes of this research as passing kids just for trying or for attending regularly—is a practice that Ohioans, like the rest of the nation, deplore. Nearly 9 in 10 Ohio residents (87 percent) say teachers should pass students to the next grade only if they learn the required material. But half (51 percent) believe that social promotion is the rule in Ohio today, and just 27 percent can say that students are promoted “only when they learn what they are supposed to know.”

In the focus groups, people often talked about social promotion as the clearest sign that the system was giving up on kids.

“It seems like the schools don’t want to hold back the kids. They may know absolutely nothing but they pass them on because they worry that they won’t be in their own age group. They’ll be bigger, they’re more worried about that than the fact that they can’t read and write. And the teachers want to pass them on because they don’t want to deal with them for another year.”

—Columbus Parent

In the Columbus focus group, one of the strongest critics of the public schools was a young father who had himself been shuffled through the system and suffered the consequences. “That’s what happened to me in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I passed on six F’s, I decided I wasn’t going to do nothing the entire school year. The teacher said I was too big to keep in the grade again so they passed me. Straight F’s,” he said with bitterness. He made sure his own youngsters attended private school.

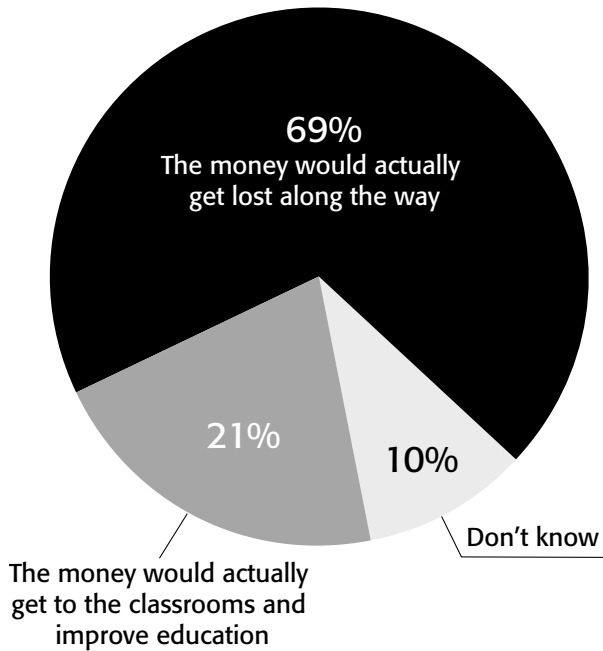
## Throwing Good Money after Bad

Spending more money to improve the public schools is a common feature of policy debates, and opinion surveys generally have little trouble showing a public that’s willing to spend more tax money on socially worthy causes like the schools. But Ohioans have little confidence that extra funding for their local schools would make a difference or find its way into classrooms.

Approximately 7 in 10 (69 percent) say that “if Ohio decided to spend more money on its public schools, the money would actually get lost along the way.” A paltry 21 percent believe the money would “actually get to the class-

# More Money, Better Schools?

**If Ohio decided to spend more money on the public schools:**



rooms and improve education.” Scratch beneath the surface, and you’ll find the public will show its pragmatic side, asking such questions as: Will the money be put to good use? Will it make a difference? Is it money that they really need?

“Would the money get to the classroom? No. It would be soaked up by the bureaucracy, the assistant to the assistant superintendent.”

—Columbus Woman

“If you give them more money, do I think it’s going to get to the right spot? No.”

—Columbus Man

Ohioans are dissatisfied with the performance of their public schools in making productive use of the money they already have. Nearly 6 in 10 (58 percent) say the taxpayers in their communities are not getting their money’s worth from the public schools; only a third (34 percent) say they do. And since many people’s diagnosis of what ails public education has little to do with lack of money, it makes sense that they’d be reluctant to pay more for it.

“The problem I have is that I don’t think it’s the money. If you gave the public schools right now a zillion dollars, it’s not going to fix the problem.”

—Columbus Woman

## African Americans: More Dissatisfied with Public Schools

On a whole series of questions about school quality, Ohio’s African American residents are consistently more critical of the education system than are whites. They are frustrated with the direction their local schools are headed: African Americans are nearly 20 percentage points more likely to say that public schools in their local area have gotten worse. They’re substantially more apt to say taxpayers are not getting their money’s worth from the schools; they’re more concerned that high school students are graduating without the basics. The upshot is that black Ohioans are more eager to seek fundamental changes to the schools. In fact, they are twice as likely as whites to say, “There’s so much wrong with them that we need to create a whole new system.”

The magnitude and consistency of these negative sentiments are eye-opening, but the dissatisfaction itself is probably unsurprising. Ohio’s big cities have been struggling with underperforming public schools for quite a while, and nearly 3 in 4 (74 percent) African Americans surveyed in this study live in urban areas.

	African American n=202 %	White n=847 %
Taxpayers are not getting their money’s worth for the public schools	72	56
A local high school diploma is no guarantee that the typical student has learned the basics	54	41
The quality of local public schools has gotten worse over the past two or three years	49	30
There’s so much wrong that we need to create a whole new public education system	31	15

## II. Standards and NCLB

At several points in this study, Ohioans rallied around the underlying principles of various education reforms, even as they seemed unenthusiastic about the specific reform strategies themselves. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is a case in point. Buckeye state residents do not expect it to accomplish much, yet they endorse many of its core principles.

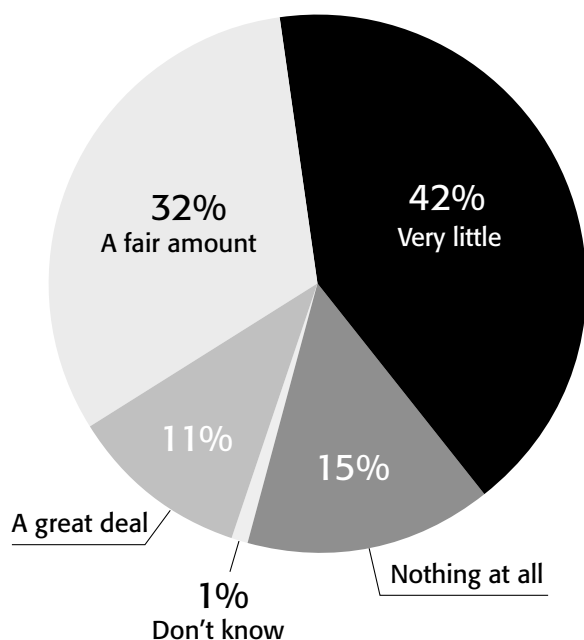
### Lack of Confidence in NCLB...

This is the second decade of the standards movement in the United States, and its most visible recent manifestation has been the federally initiated No Child Left Behind Act, enacted in 2002. Some of that statute's most controversial elements (e.g., replacing school staff in persistently failing buildings) have yet to hit the ground in many places, and some of its more practical requirements (such as testing) piggybacked on pre-existing initiatives at the state level. This might explain why most people, at both the national level and in Ohio, are not too familiar with what the act entails.

Most Ohio residents (57 percent) admit to knowing either "very little" or "nothing at all" about NCLB,

### Ohioans Are Relatively Unfamiliar with NCLB

**How much, if anything, would you say you know about the No Child Left Behind Act?**



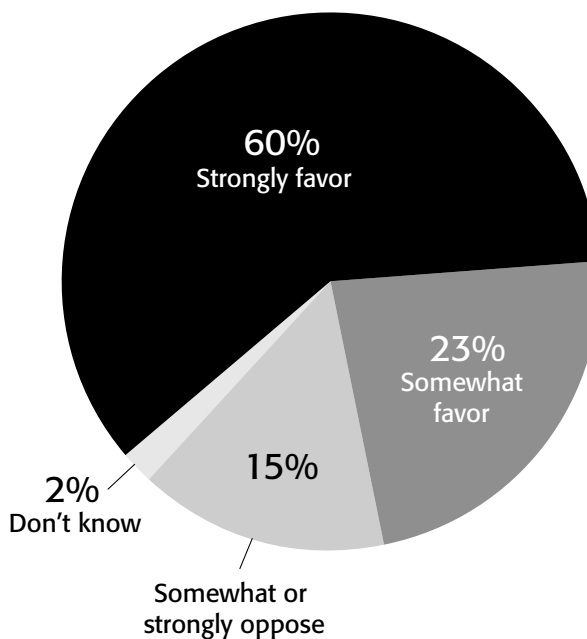
although more than 4 in 10 (43 percent) say they know either "a fair amount" or "a great deal." These findings essentially mirror the national picture. Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup's annual poll conducted in 2005 shows 59 percent knowing "very little" or "nothing at all" and 40 percent saying they know "a fair amount" or "a great deal."

Ohioans have modest expectations of the good that NCLB will do for the schools in their communities—and they are less optimistic than the national public. Only 40 percent of Ohio residents who know something about NCLB think it will help improve student learning in their own community "a great deal" or "a fair amount"—a tepid endorsement at best. In contrast, the 2004 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll showed 51 percent holding this point of view nationwide. And while about half in Ohio (49 percent) think NCLB will not be helpful, the comparable national number is 32 percent.

### High-Stakes Testing Is Valued

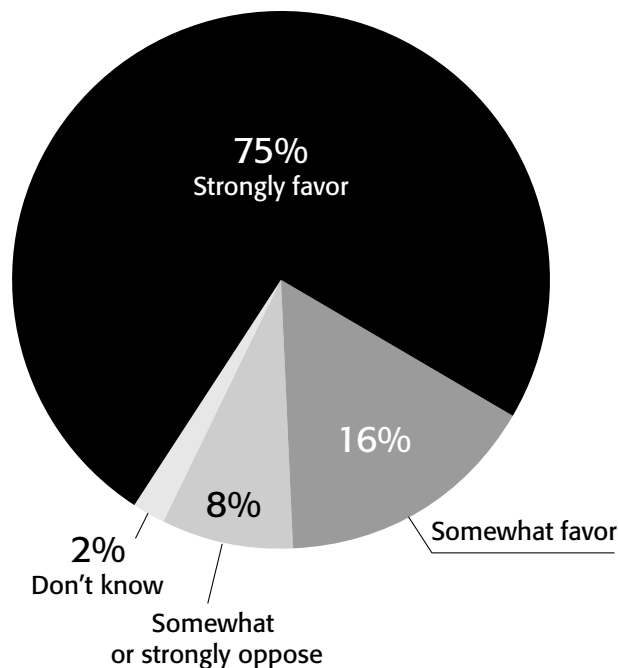
**Starting this year, all of Ohio's 10<sup>th</sup> graders are required to pass tests in each of the major subjects before they can graduate from high school. Students who fail will get help and get more chances to pass, but they MUST pass in order to get a diploma.**

**% of Ohioans who:**



# Call for Discipline

**How much do you favor or oppose the following idea for improving Ohio's public schools? Enforcing strict school rules on discipline regarding how students behave, talk and dress**



## *...But Support for Underlying Principles*

On the other hand, even as NCLB fails to attract widespread hope, there is strong and broad support among Ohioans for the fundamental elements on which NCLB is based: testing students, publicizing test scores, and holding students and schools accountable for the results. Asked to name one thing that would improve the city's public schools, a woman in the Dayton focus group spoke for many others when she said simply, "Stop social promotion. Meet the standard."

For example, an overwhelming 83 percent favor Ohio's new requirement for 10<sup>th</sup> graders to pass tests in each of the major subjects before they can graduate. Sixty percent strongly endorse it, indicating that there is some intensity behind that support. The clear-cut endorsement of holding students accountable is linked to the public's aversion to social promotion. In essence, taxpayers are looking to this type of testing to serve as a guarantee of the value of a high school diploma. One focus group participant said, "They need to make sure the children truly can read and write at least at the level into which they are passing...You actually have to fight to hold your child back."

The Ohio public strongly endorses the notion of hold-

ing schools accountable as well. The survey asked respondents what they thought of the following: "In Ohio, schools and districts are evaluated by how well students do on standardized tests, and the results are publicized. Schools that do very badly are identified, watched carefully, and must put an improvement plan into action." Ohioans are more than twice as likely to believe this is "mostly good because it calls attention to problems that need to be addressed" than to say it is "mostly harmful because it puts students and educators under unfair pressure" (62 percent vs. 28 percent).

## *Unfair Pressure?*

One of the more controversial elements of NCLB is its requirement that schools and districts report standardized test scores separately by race, disability, English-speaking ability, and income. But Ohio residents are apt to endorse this principle as well, with more than half (53 percent) saying this is "mostly good because it calls attention to problems that need

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Even as NCLB fails to attract widespread hope, there is strong and broad support among Ohioans for the fundamental elements on which NCLB is based: testing students, publicizing test scores, and holding students and schools accountable for the results.

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to be addressed" and only 35 percent saying it's "mostly harmful because it puts students and educators under unfair pressure." It is noteworthy that black residents are less likely than white to say this is "mostly good" (45 percent vs. 55 percent).

## *Resistance to Closing Down Schools*

One measure imbedded in NCLB is that it could call for persistently failing schools to be "reconstituted," an intervention that ranges from relatively contained changes, such as replacing personnel, to more severe measures, such as shutting down and reopening a school. On the whole, the American public doesn't like the idea of closing down public schools. In Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup's 2002 education survey, 77 percent of Americans opposed and 21 percent favored "closing the school" as a measure to

take if a public school in their community did not show progress toward meeting state-approved academic standards. Most in Ohio (54 percent) don't want to close down public schools either—even persistently failing ones—but a relatively high 35 percent of Ohioans say they should.

### Standards of Behavior

The Ohio public would be immensely interested in broadening school standards to incorporate more than just academics—they'd like to see enforcement of standards of behavior, too. Nine out of ten (91 percent) say they would

favor a school policy that enforces strict school rules regarding how students behave, talk, and dress in school. Three out of four (75 percent) say they strongly favor this measure. A Columbus man described the students he sees when he is off to work in the mornings: "I don't see kids that are on their way to school to learn, I see kids that are on their way to school to have a good time. You can see by the way they dress." Although leaders and education reformers rarely couple standards of behavior with standards of academic achievement, the public finds it difficult to imagine how the schools can achieve the latter without the former.

## III. Charter Schools

### Give the Schools Autonomy

Ohio is the sixth-largest charter school state in the nation, and Ohioans strongly support many of the key principles that are behind charter schools, especially those that involve granting schools more leeway and autonomy. Three in four (75 percent), for example, favor "giving local public schools more flexibility to design curriculum." Virtually 9 in 10 (89 percent) favor "giving local public schools more freedom to fire teachers that aren't performing." Another 7 in 10 (71 percent) support giving the schools "more control over their budgets." One focus group participant said, "Sometimes you have to have flexibility in the way you teach and what you teach—different things to different children—so kids will do better."

In a nationwide survey of registered voters conducted by The Glover Park Group in the Spring of 2005, majorities of respondents also favored these measures. For example, 84 percent of registered voters support more flexibility in designing curriculum (vs. 75 percent of Ohioans) and 82 percent more control over budgets (vs. 71 percent of Ohioans). Almost 9 in 10 of both groups favor schools having more freedom to let go of poor-performing teachers (86 percent of registered voters vs. 89 percent of Ohioans).

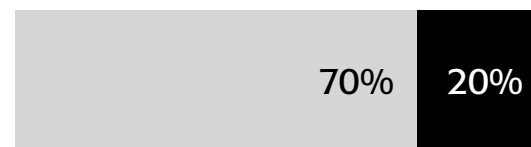
### Let the Principal Run the School

There's a consistent, bottom-line sentiment emanating from these results: to Ohioans, the more authority and control invested at the school level, the better. This notion carries over to giving school leaders more authority over their building. Asked what they thought would happen "if principals in public district schools could choose which teachers work in their buildings and had more say over work

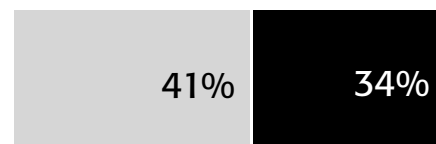
rules," more than half (54 percent) say the public schools would improve. Only 8 percent say the schools would get worse, and 26 percent say they would stay the same.

### Give the Schools Autonomy

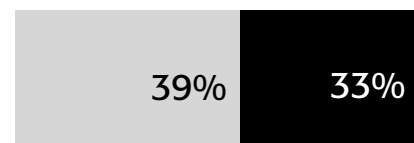
**% of Ohioans who favor the following ideas for improving Ohio's public schools:**



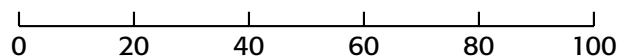
Giving local public schools more freedom to fire teachers that aren't performing



Giving local public schools more flexibility to design curriculum



Giving local public schools more control over their budgets



Strongly favor (Gray) Somewhat favor (Black)

To many, strengthening the control principals have over their schools is simply a matter of common sense and reflects a desire for accountability.

“The principal needs to be able to run the school. They need to have control over the school and the teachers—with the superintendent looking over him [sic].”

—Columbus Woman

“On any given day, you go in the building, kids are not doing anything, they are not being challenged. The principal can’t do much to make the teachers do what they are supposed to do. There’s no accountability. They have tenure; they’ve been there 30-plus years.”

—Dayton Woman

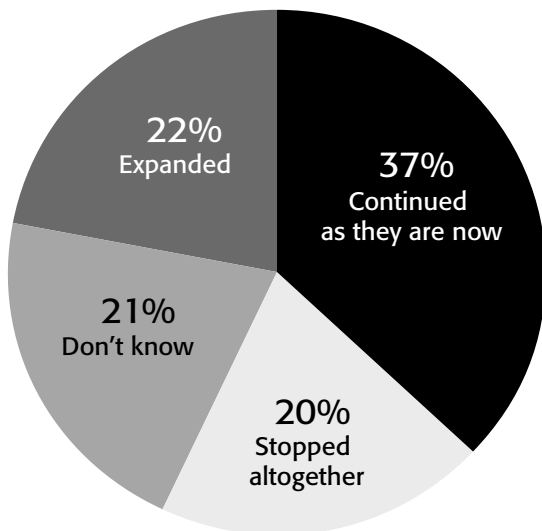
### Favor, Oppose, or Don’t Know?

With such strong support for the principles at the heart of charter schools, one might presume that public support for charter schools themselves would be robust. But the story is more complicated. There is some support among Ohioans, but people are generally divided and hesitant about charters, not well informed, and unclear about which direction to take.

For example, asked what they would like to see happen to charter schools in Ohio, only 20 percent say they should be stopped altogether, 37 percent say continued as they are, and 22

### More, Less, or the Same?

**Do you believe that charter schools should be:**



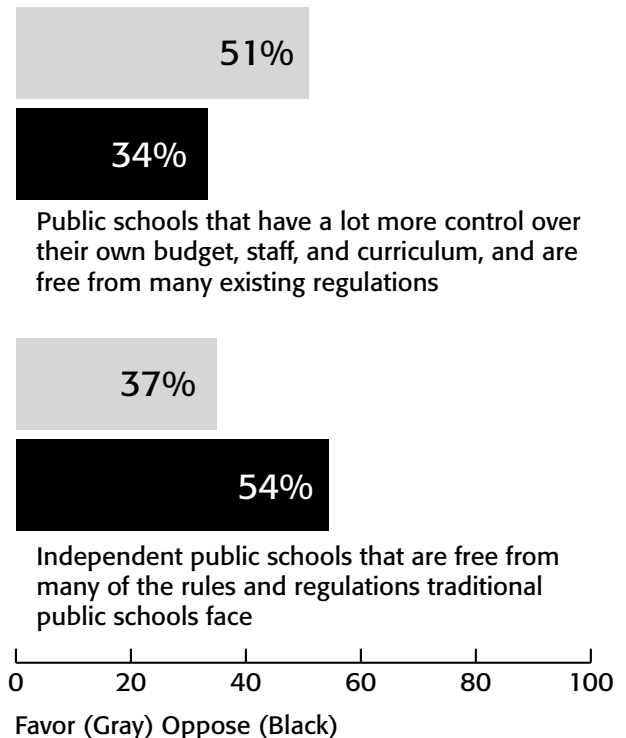
percent favor expanding them (21 percent don’t know). About 4 in 10 (39 percent) Ohio parents would definitely or seriously consider sending their child to a charter school if they had a chance; 54 percent would probably or definitely not. Nationally, larger proportions of parents express interest in using charter schools. In 1999, Public Agenda asked the identical question of a national sample of parents, and 54 percent said they would definitely or seriously consider a charter school for their child; 33 percent that they would probably or definitely not.

Support for charter schools declines or increases depending upon how the survey questions describe charter schools, a strong indication that the public is not at all settled in its views. When the survey depicts a charter proposal in its broadest terms—“creating independent public schools that are free from many of the rules and regulations traditional public schools face”—opponents outnumber supporters by a 54 percent to 37 percent margin. But when charters are described more specifically as “public schools that have a lot more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are free from many existing regulations,” the results reverse, with supporters outnumbering opponents by a 51 percent to 34 percent margin.

Pro-charter sentiments were substantially stronger when these two questions were asked in nationwide sur-

### An Unsettled Public

**% of Ohioans who favor/oppose charter school proposals described as:**



veys. Glover Park's survey found half of registered voters (50 percent) in favor of the idea of charters as "independent public schools" free from typical rules and regulations.

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## The Ohio public's hesitant and divided responses also reflect its lack of knowledge and familiarity with the issue.

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And in Public Agenda's 1999 study, 68 percent favored charters when described as having "a lot more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum."

### African Americans:

#### Stronger Support for Charter Schools

Since African Americans are much more frustrated with the performance of their local schools, it makes sense that they are also more open to different ways of doing business in public education. Charter schools are a prime example of their pro-reform orientation. Blacks are consistently more likely to support charter schools, to say that charter schools should be expanded, and to resist closing them down if they are persistently failing.

	African American n=202 %	White n=847 %
Favor "creating independent public schools that are free from many of the rules and regulations traditional public schools face"	46	36
Strongly favor a proposal that describes charter schools as "public schools that have a lot more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are free from many existing regulations"	30	17
Want to close persistently failing charter schools	62	76
Say charter schools should be expanded	36	20

The Ohio public's hesitant and divided responses also reflect its lack of knowledge and familiarity with the issue. In fact, the majority (55 percent) of Ohioans admit to knowing "very little" or "nothing at all" about charter schools. Only 17 percent say they know "a great deal" or "quite a bit." The survey numbers are comparable to registered voters nationally—65 percent know little or nothing, 12 percent know a lot—which is a surprise given the formidable presence of charter schools in Ohio and the heated debate they've sparked.

In the focus groups, silence and confusion were typical reactions to the topic.

"I've got a grandchild in a charter school and I don't know exactly what it is... I trust my son and my daughter-in-law because they had the opportunity to put him in a very good Catholic school, but they chose the charter school."

—Dayton Man

"I guess it's like privatization... I really don't know."

—Columbus Man

### A Divided Public

The public's divided mind-set carries over to its response to the pro and con debates over charters, though it seems to slightly favor the pro-charter-school side. A large part of the debate over charters, for example, is the charge that they siphon off public school dollars. Told in the survey that, "When students leave a public district school to attend a charter school, part of the money that pays for their education follows them," 48 percent say this is "only reasonable" while 38 percent say it "unfairly punishes public district schools."

Another aspect of the debate over charter schools is that Ohio law allows them to open in districts where schools have been persistently failing. When told this by the survey, 48 percent of respondents say this "gives parents more choice and rescues kids from failing public schools," while 37 percent say it's "a major distraction from investing more resources in the traditional public school system."

### Close Down Failing Charter Schools

But when charter schools persistently fail, 74 percent of the public believes they should be closed down. This is an overwhelming number. It's also dramatically different from what Ohioans want to happen to persistently failing traditional public schools—only 35 percent believe they should be closed.



That strong difference may be driven by several factors. For one thing, there is an abiding loyalty to public schools, which have longer histories in communities than their newer charter school cousins. It might reflect the success of charter school advocates, who've touted as a strength the notion that charter schools that don't work can be closed—though the public's general unfamiliarity with charter schools suggests this is too sophisticated an explanation. Finally, people might be driven by more practical considerations, thinking: If charter schools close down, youngsters can always go to the public district schools, but if public district schools close, where would all those kids go?

“Once charter schools start up and they have problems with the kid, they kick the kid out. Number one I think the state sends them the money per kid, and when they kick the kid out, the public school has to take that child in but they don't get the money. So, it puts the public school behind the eight ball, so to speak.”

—Dayton Woman

### More Choices

Large numbers of Ohioans do support other ways of increasing the choices parents and students have, such as allowing kids to attend schools outside of their district or to be home schooled. But another option—“virtual schools” or “e-schools”—generates a fair amount of opposition.

Nearly 2 in 3 want parents whose children attend failing schools to have the choice of sending their kids to a neighboring district—28 percent would make it subject to that district's approval, 37 percent would treat it more like a child's right. (One in four [26 percent] would require children to attend a school in their own district.) There is also support for home schooling, described in the survey as when a parent takes a child out of school, devotes a lot of time to teaching the child at home, and shows evidence that the child is learning. This garners 59 percent of Ohioans in support and 34 percent opposed. When Public Agenda asked the same question of the general public (1999), the results were virtually the same: 59 percent in favor, 32 percent opposed.

In contrast to the receptivity to home schooling and inter-district choice, there is a fair amount of opposition to the concept of virtual schools. The survey described “cyber” schools or “e-schools” that “get state funding and

allow students to do their work at home over the Internet, under adult supervision.” Only 21 percent say this is an excellent or good idea; 71 percent call the idea poor or fair.

#### Parents:

#### Stronger Support for Charter Schools

Parents with school-age children are arguably the most immediate consumers of education. So it is noteworthy that, even though they are no better informed than non-parents about charter schools, they are more apt to voice positive sentiments about them. Parents are more likely to favor charter school proposals, to say that they should be expanded, and to pick the pro-charter-school view in the survey questions that try to capture the debate over the issue.

	Parents n=278 %	Non-Parents n=723 %
Favor “creating independent public schools that are free from many of the rules and regulations traditional public schools face”	44	34
Favor the proposal that describes charter schools as “public schools that have a lot more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are free from many existing regulations”	57	49
Believe “it's only reasonable” for money to follow students to charter schools	57	44
Say opening charter schools in districts that are persistently failing “gives parents more choice and rescues kids from failing public schools”	55	45
Know “very little” or “nothing at all” about charter schools	55	55
Say charter schools should be expanded	29	20

## IV. School Vouchers

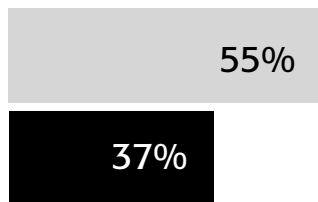
Despite recent legislation and press coverage of school vouchers, relatively few Ohioans are highly informed about the measure. Although the evidence suggests that public opinion on school vouchers is basically split, proposals with more details garner greater support.

As with charter schools, Ohioans have generally low knowledge levels regarding vouchers—this despite the

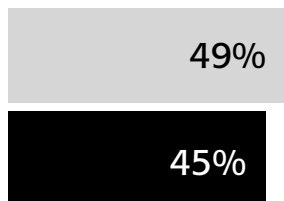
recent legislation greatly expanding the scope of their state’s program, and despite the accompanying press coverage and debate. Most residents (54 percent) say they know “very little” or “nothing at all” about school vouchers—virtually the same percentage said this of charter schools (55 percent). Focus group discussions also revealed that people generally don’t know much about what is going on with vouchers in Ohio—confusion and vagueness about the topic are the rule.

### Support for Voucher Proposals

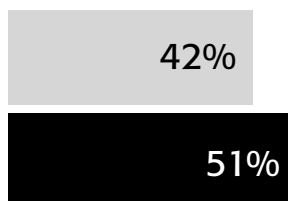
**% of Ohioans who favor/oppose school voucher proposals described as:**



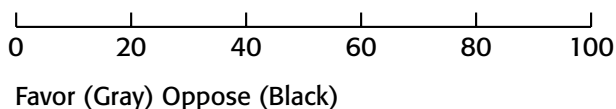
Giving parents a voucher of several thousand dollars to help pay tuition if they choose to send their child to a private or church-related school. It will be available only to students whose public school has been failing for three years in a row.



Allowing parents to send their school-age children to any public, private or church-related school they choose. For those parents choosing nonpublic schools, the government would pay all or part of the tuition.



Giving state-funded scholarships to students who attend failing public schools so they can switch to private schools



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The focus group discussions revealed something different and refreshing: ordinary people able to see and talk about the pluses and minuses of both sides of the argument.

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### Three Questions

Of the three favor-or-oppose questions asked about vouchers in this survey, the proposal receiving the highest degree of support was the most specific, and it was also the one that explicitly describes Ohio’s newly enacted voucher program. By a 55 percent to 37 percent margin, a majority of Ohioans supports the state’s voucher initiative, described as giving parents “a voucher of several thousand dollars to help pay tuition if they choose to send their child to a private or church-related school. It will be available only to students whose public school has been failing for three years in a row.”

Ohioans essentially split over a second voucher proposal that “would allow parents to send their school-age children to any public, private, or church-related school they choose. For those parents choosing non-public schools, the government would pay all or part of their tuition” (49 percent in favor to 45 percent opposing). This identical question was asked of a national sample by Gallup for Phi Delta Kappa in 2002, and the results were virtually the same: 52 percent in favor to 46 percent opposing. Finally, a proposal that describes the concept of

vouchers—“giving state-funded scholarships to students who attend failing public schools so they can switch to private schools”—received the least support, with 42 percent in favor and 51 percent opposed.

### Thinking on It

On the state and national level, the debate over school vouchers is often drawn in stark, “you’re either for us or against us,” terms. But the focus group discussions revealed something different and refreshing: ordinary people able to see and talk about the pluses and minuses of both sides of the argument. This, coupled with the reality that the focus group was the first time most people had given thought to the issue, suggests that the public doesn’t land squarely in either camp.

“It’s nice as a guarantee. If you’re stuck in a bad situation you can get out of it. But what’s it do to the school? It makes a bad situation worse, right? You failed over three years, you didn’t meet your

requirements, so now we’re going to take people away from you and money away from you.”

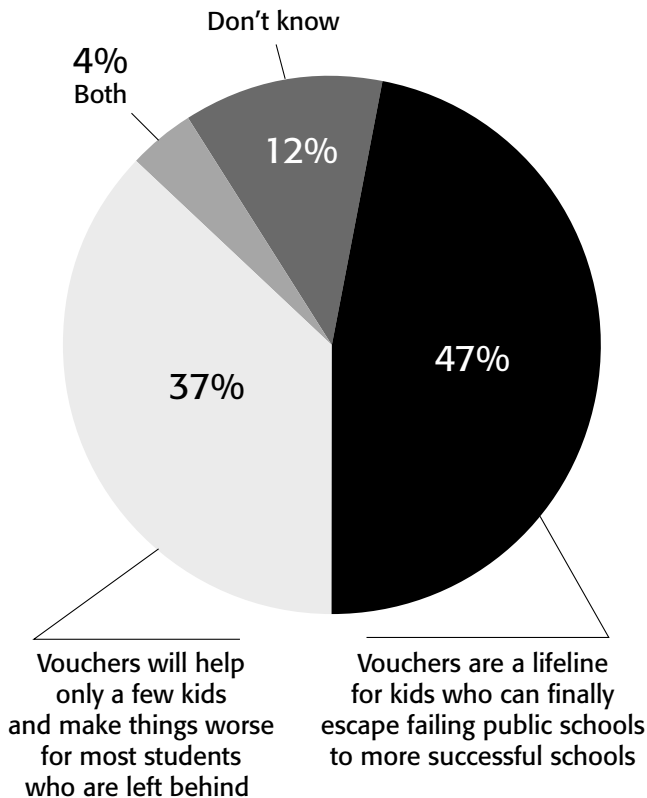
—Columbus Man

By a 50 percent to 38 percent margin, Ohioans are more likely to think “vouchers will force public schools to get better because they have to compete with other schools to hold on to students,” than to think that vouchers “will make the public schools worse because they’ll be left with less money and less-motivated students.” By a 47 percent to 37 percent margin, Ohioans are more likely to view vouchers as “a lifeline for kids who can finally escape failing public schools” than to think they “will help only a few kids and make things worse for most students who are left behind.”

One focus group participant anticipated that the effort to give all students a way out of failing schools destined some kids to be left behind, but another participant thought it better to save some than none.

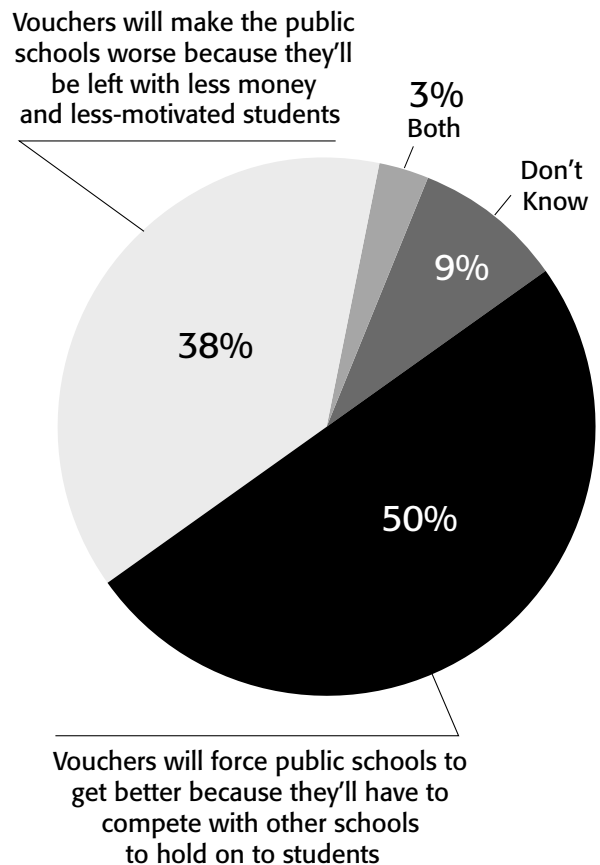
## Vouchers Are a Lifeline

**Which comes closer to your own view about school vouchers?**



## Vouchers Foster Competition

**Which comes closer to your own view about school vouchers?**



### African Americans:

#### Stronger Support for School Vouchers

Just as they are more strongly in favor of charter schools, African American residents of Ohio are also more likely to favor school vouchers. A quick look shows more blacks in support of each of the three school voucher proposals—and by increasingly large margins. The strongest support emerges for the most specific, Ohio version of school vouchers, which fully 7 in 10 favor. African Americans are also more prone to believing that vouchers will foster competition and press the public schools to improve.

	African American n=202 %	White n=847 %
Favor “giving state-funded scholarships to students who attend failing public schools so they can switch to private schools”	50	41
Favor allowing “parents to send their school-age children to any public, private or church-related school they choose. For those parents choosing non-public schools, the government would pay all or part of the tuition”	62	47
Favor giving “parents a voucher of several thousand dollars to help pay tuition if they choose to send their child to a private or church-related school. It will be available only to students whose public school has been failing for three years in a row”	70	53
Think vouchers will force public schools to compete and thus get better	59	49

“The parents that are caring about their children and get involved, they’re going to be the ones that take advantage of it. The ones that aren’t paying attention anyway, well those are the kids that you’re going to leave behind. It’s abandonment.”

—Columbus Man

“It is sad for the children left behind. . . [but] I think the voucher is great, because it’s giving half those children maybe the opportunity to get out. It’s better than having none of the children be able to get out. The more that can get educated the better.”

—Columbus Woman

### Worrying about the Kinks and Glitches

People are also much more concerned about trying to figure out whether and how vouchers will work than with staking ideologically clear-cut positions on the fate of the public schools as an institution. The wrestling with the “How will it work?” question was clearly in play in the focus groups.

“In theory it sounds like a good idea, but I would worry about the kinks, especially the money, about how you assign the dollar amount and then the other school is left without that. There’s so many glitches in the system.”

—Columbus Woman

“It sounds good, but what if there’s a transportation problem, what if you get to the school and the fee is more than four thousand dollars? Is it all oiled out and smooth or is it going to be choppy? It sounds to me like it’s a good idea, but there might be a lot of factors that still need to be worked out.”

—Columbus Woman

### You Save Who You Can

Some of the discomfort with school vouchers also stems from people’s sense that vouchers don’t get at the root of the public schools’ problems. Said one Columbus parent:

“How about the problems that still exist in the school system? We still have to fix that problem. I could see the Columbus public schools, they’re going to self-destruct. Is it all their fault? I don’t think so. Is it the state’s fault? A little bit. Is it the parents’ fault? Yes. We have to take a lot of responsibility on ourselves.”

It may be instructive that at the end of a somewhat lengthy conversation about school vouchers, there was little new enthusiasm or conversion among the doubtful. Once people got the concept, they didn’t seem to snap to its side.

“I think of vouchers as a first answer? No, I think it’s a bad idea. But I can see vouchers as an act of last resort. If everything else has been tried with the school, you save who you can.”

—*Columbus Man*

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People are also much more concerned about trying to figure out whether and how vouchers will work than with staking ideologically clear-cut positions on the fate of the public schools as an institution.

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**Parents:**

**Stronger Support for School Vouchers**

Parents with school-age kids are more enthusiastic about school vouchers than are non-parents. Growing majorities favor each of the three voucher proposals the survey asks about—again, the most popular being the program actually enacted in Ohio. Parents are more likely than non-parents to think of vouchers as a lifeline to help kids escape failing public schools.

	Parents n=278 %	Non-Parents n=723 %
Favor “giving state-funded scholarships to students who attend failing public schools so they can switch to private schools”	51	38
Favor a proposal to “allow parents to send their school-age children to any public, private, or church-related school they choose. For those parents choosing non-public schools, the government would pay all or part of the tuition”	60	45
Favor giving “parents a voucher of several thousand dollars to help pay tuition if they choose to send their child to a private or church-related school. It will be available only to students whose public school has been failing for three years in a row”	63	52
View vouchers as “a lifeline” for kids escaping failing public schools to more successful ones	54	44

## V. Teacher Quality

Whereas focus group conversations about such initiatives as NCLB and charter schools rarely provoke passion and usually require explanation to get going, teachers are a natural conversation starter. It is easy for people to visualize the crucial role teachers play in either raising student achievement or holding it back—indeed, outside of parents (and complaints about them), the public is focused on teacher quality as probably the most important issue facing the schools. One focus group participant said, “Start first with the teachers. I’m not putting the blame on the teachers, but the teachers need to be backed, if you give them incentives, respect, power in the classroom, [make it] where what the teacher says, goes.”

### Teachers Need Improvement

While 3 in 10 Ohioans (30 percent) say public school teachers today are doing a good job, a plurality (42 per-

cent) say they could be doing somewhat better, and almost 1 in 4 (23 percent) say they could be doing a lot better. African Americans in Ohio are more likely than their white

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Outside of parents (and complaints about them), the public is focused on teacher quality as probably the most important issue facing the schools.

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counterparts to think teachers could be doing a lot better (32 percent vs. 23 percent). Mixed reviews about the current teaching corps were evident in the focus groups.

“It varies from building to building. That’s the truth of the matter. You can go into building A and find tons of wonderful teachers who love their jobs, who love kids and want to do nothing but see kids succeed. You can go into another building and find a ton of teachers who just don’t care and who are there because ‘I’m getting paid and this is a job’ and that’s it.”

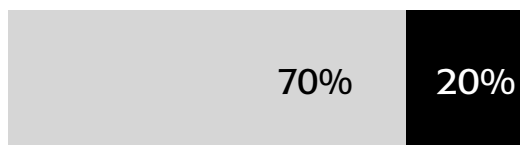
—Dayton Woman

“If you’re going to take a school and say that’s a poor school, it can’t be just the students, it also has to be the teachers who are teaching the students. There must be a way to govern who teaches, period, the level of the teachers, their quality.”

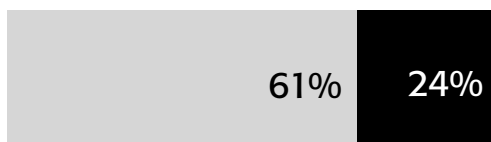
—Columbus Man

## The Right Mix of Incentives

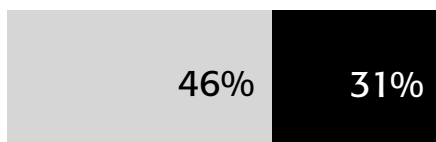
% of Ohioans who favor:



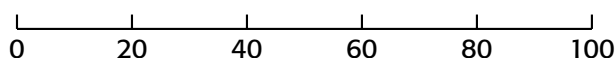
Giving local public schools more freedom to fire teachers that aren’t performing



Rewarding high quality teachers with higher pay



Paying higher salaries to teachers who work in tough neighborhoods with hard-to-reach students



Strongly favor (Gray) Somewhat favor (Black)

### Getting Better Teachers

Measures to improve teacher quality are therefore a top priority for the Ohio public. And whereas conversations about parents typically run into insoluble dilemmas (after all, how do you improve parents?) people believe that, with the right mix of incentives—rewards and penalties—teacher quality can go up.

For example, approximately 9 in 10 Ohioans (89 percent) favor a proposal to give schools more freedom to fire teachers who aren’t performing (70 percent strongly

favor). In The Glover Park Group's nationwide survey, fully 86 percent of registered voters favored this proposal. It's no mystery, most people seem to be saying: Get rid of the bad teachers and the schools will get better.

"If you have bad teachers, like I said earlier, get rid of them. Try to hire the best and the brightest."

—*Dayton Woman*

At the same time, Ohio residents also support the idea of differential pay for teachers who are exceptionally good at what they do. An overwhelming majority of 84 percent favors rewarding high quality teachers with higher pay; Glover Park found virtually the same majority (85 percent) among registered voters.

How to measure exceptionally good teachers—and whether test scores could be used that way—triggered interesting focus group comments.

A Columbus man said:

"If you're going to have incentive pay you're going to have to have standards. How do you evaluate the teachers to say 'You're doing a better job?' You're going to have to have some kind of standardized measurement."

A Dayton woman had a slightly different take:

"Teachers do need to be evaluated. In some instances, the [standardized] test does speak to that. But it can also speak to 'Are you teaching to the test or not?'"

But another Dayton participant brought it back to testing:

"If a whole raft of certain teachers turn out with bad scores, [then] they are missing something, and...that [should not be allowed] to happen.... Tests are almost more important measurements of what the teacher's doing than the kids."

## **Combat Pay**

Teachers who agree to take on more challenging assignments also deserve extra compensation for doing so, according to a majority of the Ohio public, both as a reward and as an incentive. In the current survey, more than 3 in 4 (77 percent) support paying higher salaries to teachers who work in tough neighborhoods with hard-to-reach children. Some in the focus groups who live in tougher neighborhoods suspect that they don't get their share of top classroom talent.

"How about stocking the schools evenly? When my kids are going to schools, I want to know that they're going to have the same type of teachers, the same type of guidance that you're going to get anywhere else in the city."

—*Columbus Man*

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**People believe that, with the right mix of incentives—rewards and penalties—teacher quality can go up.**

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A typical complaint was about too many teachers who don't seem to care about kids. The effort and motivation seemed to be missing.

"You have teachers who want the paycheck but don't want to do what they are supposed to do. Teachers don't always want to point the students in the right direction. They don't care. And the kids sense that."

—*Dayton Woman*

"If the teacher can tell me that they've given their best, then I'm okay with that. But I believe there's a lot of educators that are not giving their best because 'I'm not getting paid to give my best.'"

—*Dayton Man*

## VI. The Views of Dayton Residents

Daytonians mirror their non-Dayton counterparts on virtually all of the main findings in this study. Both groups share an overall concern that the public schools are falling short and not getting any better, and far too many lack faith in the value of a high school diploma. Alarming high numbers—more than 4 in 10—think a diploma from a high school in their community is no guarantee that a typical student has learned the basics, let alone the skills necessary for college.

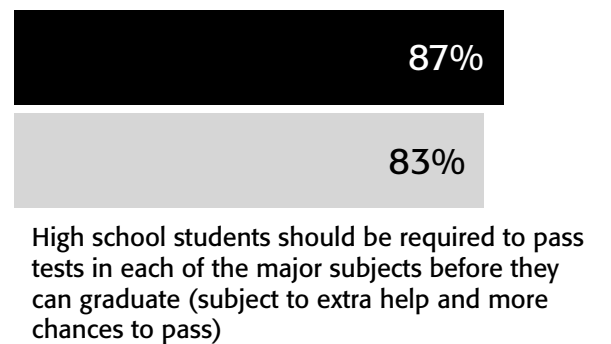
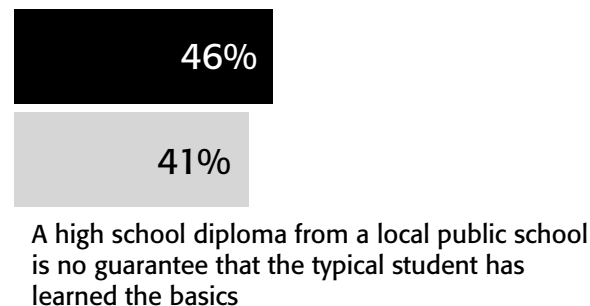
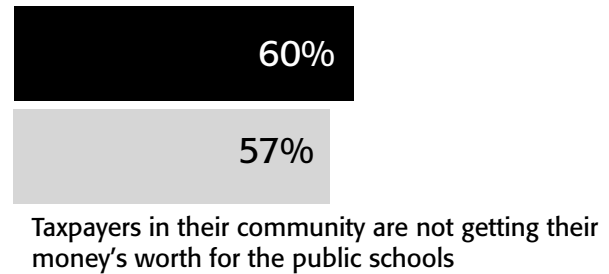
Statewide, citizens believe that taxpayers are not get-

ting their money's worth from the public schools (60 percent Dayton; 57 percent non-Dayton). And among parents—the adults who are most likely to interact with the school system—the percentages have held steady over the past several years. Back in 2003, Fordham's survey of Dayton-area parents showed that 53 percent felt taxpayers were not getting their money's worth from Dayton's schools; in the current survey, it's 64 percent.\*

Yet all indications are that the Dayton public supports high academic standards for their public schools, and—

### The Schools Fall Short

**% of Dayton vs. Non-Dayton Residents who say:**

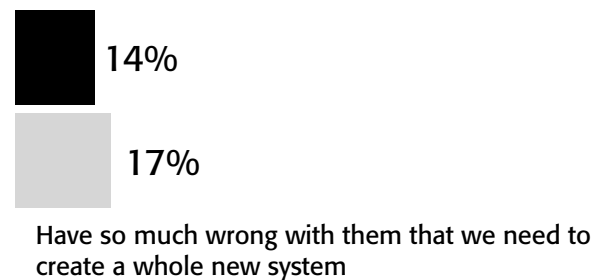
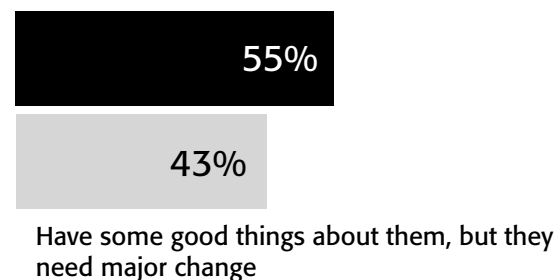
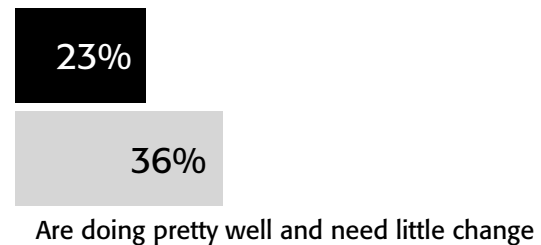


0 20 40 60 80 100

Dayton (Black) Non-Dayton (Gray)

### Dayton More Likely to Want Major Change

**% of Dayton vs. Non-Dayton Residents who say their local public schools:**



0 20 40 60 80 100

Dayton (Black) Non-Dayton (Gray)

\* This difference is not statistically significant; the sample size of Dayton-area parents in the current survey is rather small (n=58) and thus has a large margin of error.



similar to other citizens across the state—Daytonians show a determined willingness to hold schools and students accountable to make sure standards are reached. Teachers earn relatively positive assessments, and large majorities are receptive to a mix of rewards and incentives for improving teacher quality.

There are several areas, however, where the Dayton public departs from the rest of the state, or where their views have changed significantly in recent years.

### Assessing Dayton’s Schools

On one measure of school satisfaction, residents of Dayton are notably less satisfied than their contemporaries statewide. More than half (55 percent) indicate that their local schools “need major change” compared with 43 percent of other Ohio citizens. Non-Daytonians, on the other

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All indications are that the Dayton public supports high academic standards for their public schools, and—similar to other citizens across the state—Daytonians show a determined willingness to hold schools and students accountable to make sure standards are reached.

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hand, are more likely to say that the schools are “doing pretty well and need little change” (36 percent), compared with just 23 percent of Dayton residents.

### Supporting Charter Schools

Lack of knowledge, general confusion, and factual misperceptions about charter schools are evident in the data from both the random sample survey and focus group of Dayton residents. This is especially interesting, because Dayton is arguably the epicenter of charter schooling in Ohio. Still, for all their confusion and lack of knowledge, Dayton residents tend to support the principles underlying the charter school movement. Dayton and non-Dayton residents hold similar views on charter schools

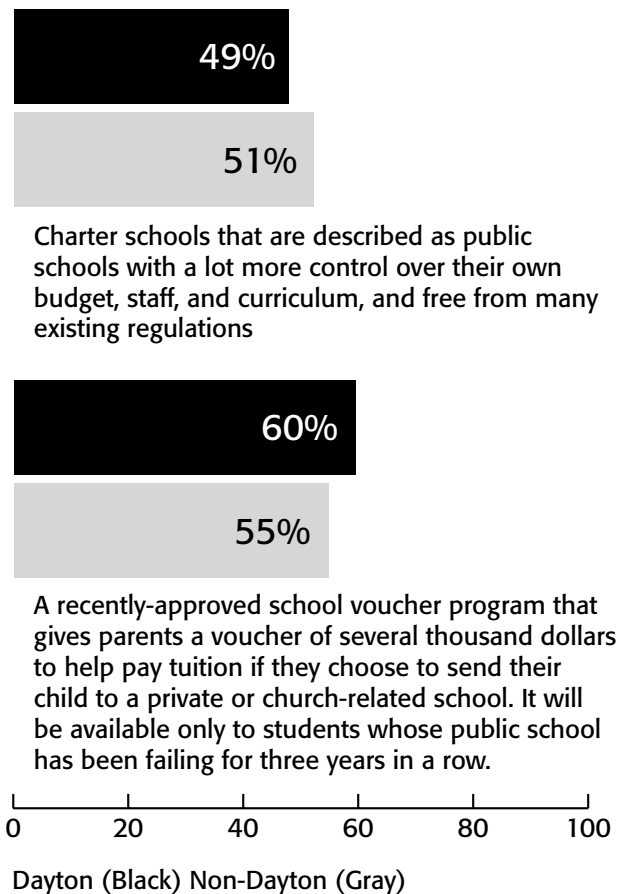
Still, there is a hint of evidence that support for charter schools among Dayton residents may have declined in recent years. The number of parents in Dayton who feel charter schools should be “expanded” has dropped from 35 percent in 2001 to 21 percent today—although the two samples are not strictly comparable.\*

### Supporting School Vouchers

For the most part, the data on school vouchers suggest a conflicted city. The general pattern of opinion shows Dayton residents slightly more likely to favor rather than oppose specific voucher proposals and their underlying principles. Still, there are sizable numbers that hold contrary points of view.

## Similar Views on Charters and Vouchers

**% of Dayton vs. Non-Dayton Residents who favor:**



\* The 2001 survey of Dayton residents—conducted on behalf of The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation—combined responses of public school parents, charter school parents, private school parents and non-parents; it was not based on a random sample of Dayton residents.

The more specific a voucher proposal becomes, the more likely Dayton citizens are to like it. For example, 43 percent favor a proposal for “giving state-funded scholarships to students who attend failing public schools so they can switch to private schools”; 53 percent favor a proposal “that would allow parents to send their school-age children to any public, private or church-related school they choose” with the government contributing to tuition costs; and 60 percent favor a proposal outlining the specifics of Ohio’s current school voucher program.

Dayton residents tend to lean more toward pro-voucher arguments than con. By a 10-percentage-point margin, Dayton residents are more likely to see vouchers as a lifeline than as making things worse for the students left behind (45 percent vs. 35 percent). And by a 15-percentage-point margin, they view vouchers as improving the public schools through competition rather than as a force that will make the public schools worse (50 percent vs. 35 percent). These findings are mirrored by the non-Dayton public.

### ***Openness to Other Reforms***

Daytonians are no more or less likely than other Ohioans to favor reform initiatives such as vouchers and

charter schools. In the same vein, both groups tend to hold similar views on home schooling—majorities favor it (58 percent and 59 percent, respectively)—and on virtual schools—majorities think it’s only a fair or poor idea (63 percent and 72 percent).

But when it comes to the issue of public school choice—that is, whether parents of students who attend failing schools should have the option of sending their kids to public schools in neighboring districts—Daytonians are more parochial. Fully 1 in 3 Dayton residents (34 percent) say even parents of children in failing schools should be “required” to send their kids to “a school in their own district” compared with 1 in 4 other Ohioans (26 percent). Sixteen percent of Daytonians and 28 percent of non-Daytonians choose the middle ground on this issue, saying they support choice only if the neighboring district gives its approval. Pluralities of both groups (35 percent and 36 percent) support the broadest alternative: Parents of children in failing public schools should always have the option of sending their children to schools in a neighboring district.

## **VII. Summing Up: Who Needs to Be Doing a Better Job?**

This study has shown that Ohioans are clearly dissatisfied with the performance of their public schools. They think those schools face serious problems, not least their capacity to graduate students who’ve mastered basic academic skills. African Americans and parents are even more disappointed. The Buckeye state’s citizens are palpably eager for major progress on this issue.

Yet ordinary folks don’t know what to make of Ohio’s most visible and dramatic initiatives—charter schools and vouchers. There is widespread uncertainty about what these programs are trying to achieve and how they work, even at the most basic level. Plainly, there’s lots to be done when it comes to explaining and engaging the people of Ohio with the state’s educational agenda.

### ***A Call for Statewide Leadership***

The irony is that, at this crucial time, when leadership might bring clarity and purpose to education reform, public trust in Ohio’s leaders is wanting. When asked to rate

the job that their state’s elected officials are doing when it comes to improving education, almost 7 in 10 (69 percent) say they could be doing a lot better; a mere 4 percent say they are doing a good job. “They don’t know what the right hand is doing from the left hand,” one Columbus citizen told us. “They have no right to dictate anything about the education system.” Another group of higher-ups that come up short, as far as the Ohio public is concerned, are school district administrators—41 percent say they, too, could be doing a lot better. Recall also that almost 7 in 10 Ohioans (69 percent) believe that if more money were spent on the public schools it would not get to the classrooms, but lost along the way.

### ***‘The Person Who’s on the Front Line’***

One might argue that this lack of trust is indiscriminate and reflexive, simply reflecting the prevailing skepticism toward all leaders that is the fashion of the day. There may be merit to this point. But note that public school teachers and principals get

much better marks from the public. Only 23 percent and 26 percent, respectively, say they could be doing a lot better. In the focus groups, the comments indicated that the professionals in education's trenches still garner widespread trust and respect. As one Columbus resident told us: "The person who's going to have the best idea of what's going on and what's needed is the person who's on the front line of the issue—the teacher."

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The irony is that, at this crucial time, when leadership might bring clarity and purpose to education reform, public trust in Ohio's leaders is wanting.

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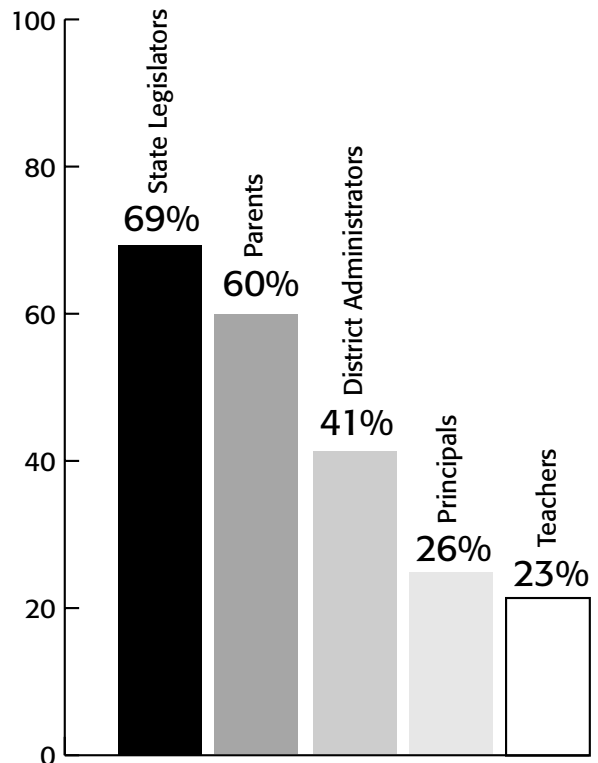
Meanwhile, the public—and parents themselves—are more than willing to hold parents responsible for the lack of student academic performance. Six in 10 Ohioans (60 percent)—and 58 percent of parents—say Ohio's parents could be doing a lot better when it comes to improving public education. So the public is making some distinctions; not everyone is reflexively held suspect.

### *An Opportunity for Leadership*

Ohio's leadership has sought to improve public education with different programmatic initiatives. How else can one understand the growth in the number of charter schools open across the state, the expansion of the voucher program and the persistent pursuit of standards, testing, and accountability? But there's a different kind of work that still needs to be done. So many of the state's residents know so little about the design and purposes of vouchers and charter schools that

## Lack of Faith in Leadership

**% of Ohioans saying each of the following "could be doing a lot better" when it comes to public education in Ohio:**



the baseline of public understanding is at a low point. Ohio's leaders thus have an opportunity to engage citizens at a most fundamental level, to explain reform initiatives so that the public can make better sense of them. The payoff will be a reservoir of goodwill that will sustain these initiatives over time. The payoff may also be increased trust and credibility in Ohio's elected officials.



Ohio's leaders should heed these findings—beginning with the one indicating that state residents don't have much confidence in their leaders in this domain. Just 4 percent of survey respondents say that state elected officials and legislators are "doing a good job" when it comes to public education.

This is a problem. Serious education reform demands strong, competent leadership, for two reasons. First,

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because kids don't have lobbyists to look after their interests, the inertia and resistance to change manifested by the education system and its myriad adult interest groups are so powerful that, absent first-rate leadership, one must expect nothing to change, at least not much. This is particularly dangerous in a state with weak job growth, anemic economic growth, and signs of a brain drain.

Second, because Ohioans substantially agree about many of the problems and reforms of public education, but on some key issues they split right down the middle. (Example: what, exactly, to do about school choice.) Absent a pre-existing public consensus, effective leadership is mandatory, else it's certain nothing will change.

Which would be okay if nothing needed to change, but Ohioans surely don't think that—and plenty of objective evidence says they are correct. Only a third of survey respondents—and fewer than one in five African Americans—believe their local public schools are "doing pretty well and need little change." Virtually all others want "major change" (44 percent) or "a whole new system" (17 percent). This is no surprise in a state where close to half of respondents also see the economy as a serious issue. Ohioans know that education and economic opportunity are connected, and they're worried about both.

But there's good news, too. On many important education issues and reform ideas, Ohioans manifest broad agreement as to what's wrong, what's important, and what ought to happen.

Here are five key education topics where we see something akin to consensus:

- ▲ **Money alone won't accomplish much.** 69 percent of respondents believe it would "get lost along the way" to classroom improvement.
- ▲ **Stop social promotion and automatic graduation.** Teachers should pass kids to the next grade "only if they learn what they are supposed to know" (87 percent), and high school students should pass tests "in each of the major subjects before they can graduate" (83 percent).
- ▲ **Free-up the front-line educators.** Local schools ought to have considerably greater freedom and control over curriculum, budgets, and, especially, firing "teachers that aren't performing" (89 percent).
- ▲ **Reward good teachers.** Good teachers should be rewarded with higher pay (84 percent) and paid more if they "work in tough neighborhoods with hard-to-reach students" (77 percent).
- ▲ **Enforce discipline.** Schools should enforce strict discipline with regard to student behavior, dress, and speech (91 percent).

Putting that guidance into practice would be good for Ohio education. In our view, though, it's only part of what needs to happen, indeed only part of what is happening today across the Buckeye state. We learn from this survey, however, that the public hasn't made up its mind about such other promising reform initiatives as charter schools, the No Child Left Behind Act, interventions in low-performing schools, public-school choice, virtual schooling, and vouchers.

That's no big surprise, either. All these reforms are new and as yet have incomplete or conflicting evidence as to how they're faring. Some charter schools, for example, are doing a superb job of educating the state's neediest children, but others are dismal. No Child Left Behind has only been in force for a few years and most of the actions it is supposed to trigger have not yet happened. The statewide voucher program has not even begun. So there's no reason to expect the public to have made up its mind about these efforts.

Knowing that the jury is out, opponents of such reforms will doubtlessly intensify their efforts to persuade people that these are bad (or even failed) ideas. Nonsense. They're innovations that need honest implementation and fair-minded evaluation. Their supporters must recognize,

however, that because the public hasn't made up its mind about them, much hinges on how successfully these reforms are put into place and how well they work.

But state officials also have a weighty obligation in this regard. Once they place Ohio's education system on a

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• • •

reform track, they need to ensure that it's properly implemented, not undone by bureaucrats or nibbled away at the edges. At Fordham, for example, where we've recently shouldered responsibility for "sponsoring" some charter schools, we're reminded every day of how little freedom

"to be different" these schools actually enjoy, how heavily they're still regulated, and how meagerly they're funded. That's no fair test of this promising idea, which means policymakers haven't really done their job.

Maybe that's what the public had in mind when 69 percent said that elected officials "could be doing a lot better"!

At day's end, however, observers and participants in the Ohio public education scene need, above all, to keep in mind the depth of the public's discontent with what they're being provided today. That's why this report is titled *Halfway Out the Door*. Its single starkest finding is that "if money were not an issue," only 46 percent of white public school parents and 30 percent of black parents would prefer that their child continue to attend a district-operated public school. A staggering 48 percent of white (public school) parents and 68 percent of black parents would opt instead for private (or charter) schools. Everyone who wants public education to succeed in Ohio needs to pay attention. There is profound frustration with the state's K-12 education system, and the cry for leadership is loud.

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Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. *Having Their Say: The Views of Dayton-Area Parents on Education*. 2003. A total of 1,400 telephone interviews with parents of students in Dayton public district schools, public charter schools and private schools, as well as in Miami Valley public schools.

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## Methodology

### *Survey of the General Public*

*Halfway Out the Door* is based on 1,001 interviews conducted by telephone with a statewide representative sample of adults 18 and older residing in Ohio. The fielding took place between August 8 and August 23, 2005. The interviews were approximately 15 minutes in length. The margin of error for a survey of this size (n=1,001) is plus or minus 3 percentage points; the margin of error increases for sub-groups within the sample.

For example, the statewide random sample generated 278 completed interviews with parents of students in grades K-12. When the study reports the views of parents—a sub-group of the total sample—the margin of error to take into account is plus or minus 6 percentage points.

### *African American Sample*

The 202 interviews with Ohio African Americans breaks down as follows: A total of 96 telephone interviews with African Americans came from the statewide representative sample of adults. For the remaining 106 interviews, Census data were used to target telephone exchanges in areas with an 8 percent or higher incidence of African American households, for an average incidence of 27 percent. These exchanges cover 82 percent of the African American households in Ohio. The margin of error for a sample of this size (n=202) is plus or minus 7 percentage points.

### *Dayton Sample*

In an effort to garner meaningful data about the views of Dayton residents, an oversample survey of Dayton adults aged 18 and older was conducted to bring the total sample of Dayton residents to 201. A total of 47 Dayton respondents came from the statewide representative sample of adults. For the remaining 154, telephone exchanges were targeted to include only those within the Dayton city limits. The margin of error for a sample of this size (n=201) is plus or minus 7 percentage points.

### *Sample Design*

To ensure a random sample of households, a standard-random-digit-dialing technology was used. Every household in the state had an equal chance of being contacted, including those with unlisted numbers. To minimize non-response bias, interviews were conducted on different days of the week, including weekends, and at different times of the day. If a respondent indicated a better time for the interview, callbacks were made accordingly. Typically, at least six attempts were made on each piece of sample.

Non-sampling sources of error could also have an impact on survey results. The survey instrument used in this study was extensively pre-tested to ensure that the language was accessible and appropriate to members of the general public, both those who may be familiar with Ohio's public schools and those not. Questions were randomized and answer categories rotated in an effort to minimize non-sampling sources of error.

Sample was purchased from Survey Sampling, Inc., of Fairfield, Connecticut. The telephone interviews and data collection were provided by Robinson and Muenster Associates, Inc., located in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

### *Focus Groups*

Two focus groups were conducted prior to the fielding of the survey, one in Dayton and one in Columbus. The focus group participants were carefully recruited to represent the socioeconomic demographics of the respective cities, and they included both men and women, mothers and fathers, blacks and whites, as well as those familiar with Ohio's public schools and those not. The purpose of the focus group discussions was to gauge the public's understanding of the issues at hand and the energy they tap. They were also useful in testing and developing the survey instrument, especially for avoiding question wording that was too wonkish or heavy-handed. We use quotes from the focus groups to give voice to attitudes captured statistically through the survey interviews.

### *Characteristics of the Sample*

The following table shows the characteristics of the Ohio sample compared with its comparable Census data.

## Characteristics of the Sample

	Sample [n=1,001] %	Census 2000 [Ohio] %
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	47	48
Female	53	52
<b>Household Income</b>		
Less than \$25,000	17	29
\$25,000 to <\$50,000	30	31
\$50,000 to <\$75,000	26	20
\$75,000 or more	25	20
<b>Race</b>		
African American	10	11
White	87	85
Other	3	4
<b>Education+</b>		
	<b>(18+)</b>	<b>(25+)</b>
Less than High School	7	11
High School Graduate	30	24
Some College	29	17
4-Years or More College	33	14
<b>Age</b>		
18-34	16	22
35-44	18	22
45-54	21	20
55-64	22	14
65+	23	22
<b>Urbanicity<sup>z</sup></b>		
Rural	21	21
Suburban	53	57
Urban	27	22
<b>Grade of Child*</b>		
Elementary	57	
Middle School	30	
High School	43	

+ The Ohio sample includes adults 18 and older; the Census 2000 breakdown by education is based on Ohio adults 25 and older. Thus these two groups are not strictly comparable.

<sup>z</sup> The percentages for Ohio come from Survey Sampling International.

\* Parents of students in grades K-12 (n=278); totals to >100 percent because some parents had children in more than one type of school.



## Final Survey Results

The complete survey instrument is attached. It includes full question wording and the final results for the total sample of Ohio residents as well as the following subgroups: Dayton and Non-Dayton residents; African Americans and Whites; and Parents and Non-Parents. The results that follow are reported in percent-

ages: results of less than .5 percent are signified by an asterisk (\*); results of zero are signified by a dash (-). Responses may not always total to 100 percent due to rounding. Combining answer categories may produce slight discrepancies between the numbers in the survey results and numbers in the report.

	OHIO (n=1,001)	DAYTON (n=201)	NOT DAYTON (n=954)	BLACK (n=202)	WHITE (n=847)	PARENT (n=278)	NON PARENT (n=723)
<b>1. Which of the following do you think is the most important issue facing Ohio today? Is it:</b>							
Public education	34	30	35	32	34	39	33
The economy	42	37	43	38	44	39	44
Crime	13	20	13	15	13	11	14
[Vol.] None / Equally important	9	11	9	14	9	10	9
Don't know	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>2. Which comes closest to your view about the public schools in your local area?</b>							
They're doing pretty well and need little change	34	23	36	19	37	36	34
There's some good things about them, but they need major change	44	55	43	45	44	43	44
There's so much wrong with them that we need to create a whole new system	17	14	17	31	15	19	16
Don't know	5	8	5	6	5	2	6
<b>3. Is it your sense that over the past two or three years, the quality of the public schools in your local area has:</b>							
Gotten better	23	26	23	21	24	24	23
Stayed the same	38	38	39	23	39	37	39
Gotten worse	32	28	32	49	30	37	30
Don't know	6	10	6	7	7	3	8
<b>4. Based on the current taxes you are paying, do you believe the taxpayers in your community:</b>							
Are getting their money's worth for the public schools	34	29	35	22	36	33	34
Not getting their money's worth for the public schools	58	60	57	72	56	64	56
Don't know	8	11	8	5	8	4	10

	OHIO (n=1,001)	DAYTON (n=201)	NOT DAYTON (n=954)	BLACK (n=202)	WHITE (n=847)	PARENT (n=278)	NON PARENT (n=723)
<b>5. If Ohio decided to spend more money on the public schools, do you think:</b>							
The money would actually get to the classrooms and improve education	21	21	21	22	21	21	21
The money would actually get lost along the way	69	66	70	71	69	70	69
Don't know	10	13	10	7	10	9	11
<b>6. Which statement is more accurate for the students graduating from your local public schools? A high school diploma:</b>							
Is no guarantee that the typical student has learned the basics	42	46	41	54	41	40	43
Means that the typical student has at least learned the basics	54	50	55	43	55	58	53
Don't know	4	4	4	4	4	2	5
<b>7. Do you think teachers should pass students to the next grade:</b>							
As long as they try hard and attend class regularly	8	7	8	15	8	7	9
Only if they learn what they are supposed to know	87	88	87	84	87	90	86
Don't know	5	6	5	2	5	3	6
<b>8. And what do you think ACTUALLY happens these days? Are students in Ohio passed on:</b>							
Just for trying hard and attending class regularly	51	55	51	54	51	56	49
Only when they learn what they are supposed to know	27	24	27	29	26	29	26
[Vol.] They are passed on because the standards are so low	4	7	4	5	4	3	4
Don't know	18	15	18	12	19	11	21
<b>Next, I'm going to read you ideas some people have suggested for improving Ohio's public schools. Please tell me for each of the following proposals whether you would strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose.</b>							
<b>9. Giving local public schools more flexibility to design curriculum?</b>							
Strongly favor	41	37	41	52	40	43	41
Somewhat favor	34	34	33	25	35	33	34
Somewhat oppose	11	11	11	7	11	14	10
Strongly oppose	8	9	8	10	8	8	9
Don't know	6	9	6	6	6	2	7

	OHIO (n=1,001)	DAYTON (n=201)	NOT DAYTON (n=954)	BLACK (n=202)	WHITE (n=847)	PARENT (n=278)	NON PARENT (n=723)
<b>10. Giving local public schools more freedom to fire teachers that aren't performing?</b>							
Strongly favor	70	70	69	65	71	75	67
Somewhat favor	20	18	20	16	21	20	20
Somewhat oppose	4	6	4	7	3	3	5
Strongly oppose	4	4	4	9	3	3	5
Don't know	2	3	2	3	2	*	3
<b>11. Giving local public schools more control over their budgets?</b>							
Strongly favor	39	36	39	44	39	39	39
Somewhat favor	33	32	33	27	33	31	33
Somewhat oppose	10	14	10	10	10	10	10
Strongly oppose	11	10	11	13	11	14	10
Don't know	7	10	7	6	7	6	8
<b>12. Creating independent PUBLIC schools that are free from many of the rules and regulations traditional public schools face?</b>							
Strongly favor	15	13	14	21	14	19	13
Somewhat favor	22	19	22	25	22	24	21
Somewhat oppose	24	22	25	17	25	26	24
Strongly oppose	29	32	29	27	29	22	32
Don't know	10	15	10	9	10	8	11
<b>13. Rewarding high quality teachers with higher pay?</b>							
Strongly favor	61	59	60	69	59	61	61
Somewhat favor	24	25	24	16	25	25	23
Somewhat oppose	7	8	7	3	7	7	6
Strongly oppose	7	5	7	9	7	6	7
Don't know	2	4	2	3	2	1	3
<b>14. Enforcing strict school rules on discipline regarding how students behave, talk and dress?</b>							
Strongly favor	75	67	75	73	76	73	75
Somewhat favor	16	19	16	12	16	18	16
Somewhat oppose	4	7	4	4	4	3	5
Strongly oppose	4	4	4	9	3	5	3
Don't know	2	4	2	3	1	2	2

	OHIO (n=1,001)	DAYTON (n=201)	NOT DAYTON (n=954)	BLACK (n=202)	WHITE (n=847)	PARENT (n=278)	NON PARENT (n=723)
<b>15. Giving state-funded scholarships to students who attend failing public schools so they can switch to private schools?</b>							
Strongly favor	19	22	19	29	18	24	17
Somewhat favor	23	21	23	21	22	27	21
Somewhat oppose	21	18	21	17	21	19	21
Strongly oppose	30	32	30	28	31	25	32
Don't know	7	8	7	5	7	4	9
<b>16. Paying higher salaries to teachers who work in tough neighborhoods with hard-to-reach students?</b>							
Strongly favor	46	46	46	59	44	44	47
Somewhat favor	31	30	31	19	33	32	30
Somewhat oppose	10	10	10	8	10	12	9
Strongly oppose	9	7	9	12	8	8	9
Don't know	4	7	4	2	5	4	5
<b>17. Starting this year, all of Ohio's 10th graders are required to pass tests in each of the major subjects before they can graduate from high school. Students who fail will get help and get more chances to pass, but they MUST pass in order to get a diploma. Do you favor or oppose this policy?</b>							
Strongly favor	60	63	60	65	60	58	61
Somewhat favor	23	24	23	16	23	25	22
Somewhat oppose	5	5	6	5	5	4	6
Strongly oppose	9	6	10	12	9	12	8
Don't know	2	2	2	1	2	1	3
<b>18. In Ohio, schools and districts are evaluated by how well students do on standardized tests, and the results are publicized. Schools that do very badly are identified, watched carefully, and must put an improvement plan into action. Do you think that using test scores this way:</b>							
Is mostly HARMFUL because it puts students and educators under unfair pressure	28	24	29	34	28	26	29
Is mostly GOOD because it calls attention to problems that need to be addressed	62	64	61	56	62	66	60
[Vol.] Both	4	4	4	3	4	3	4
Don't know	6	8	6	7	6	6	7

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<b>19. Are you currently the parent or guardian of any school-age children in grades Kindergarten through 12th, or not?</b>							
Yes	28	29	28	33	27	100	
No	72	71	72	67	73	-	
Don't know	*	1	-	-	*	-	
<b>20. How much do you know about charter schools?</b>							
A great deal	7	7	7	11	6	8	7
Quite a bit	10	12	9	8	10	11	9
Only some	28	27	28	22	29	27	28
Very little	34	36	33	33	34	34	33
Nothing at all	21	18	22	25	20	21	21
Don't know	1	-	1	1	1	*	1
<b>21. Charter schools are public schools that have a lot more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are free from many existing regulations. In general, do you favor or oppose this idea?</b>							
Strongly favor	18	21	18	30	17	21	17
Somewhat favor	33	28	33	24	34	35	32
Somewhat oppose	18	19	18	13	17	16	18
Strongly oppose	16	19	16	19	17	11	18
Don't know	16	14	16	14	15	17	15
<b>22. When students leave a public district school to attend a charter school, part of the money that pays for their education follows them. Do you think:</b>							
That it's only reasonable for the money to follow students to charter schools	48	44	48	54	47	57	44
That this unfairly punishes public district schools	38	37	39	35	39	32	40
[Vol.] Both	3	5	3	2	3	3	3
Don't know	11	16	11	9	11	8	13
<b>23. In Ohio, charter schools can only open in districts where the schools have been persistently failing. Do you think that opening charter schools in this way:</b>							
Gives parents more choice and rescues kids from failing public schools	48	48	48	54	47	55	45
Is a major distraction from investing more resources in the traditional public school system	37	34	37	36	38	33	39
Don't know	15	19	15	10	15	12	16

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<b>24. Do you believe that charter schools should be:</b>							
Stopped altogether	20	24	20	14	21	18	21
Continued as they are now	37	37	37	37	38	36	37
Expanded	22	21	22	36	20	29	20
Don't know	21	17	21	13	21	17	22
<b>Parents Only</b>							
<b>25. Do your children currently attend:</b>							
Private non-religious school	4	4	4	3	3	4	
Private religious school	16	16	15	11	17	16	
Public charter school	3	11	3	11	2	3	
Public district school	77	75	78	77	79	77	
[Vol.] Something else	5	7	5	5	4	5	
Don't know	1	-	1	-	1	1	
<b>Parents who don't currently send child to charter school</b>							
<b>26. If you had the chance to send your child to a charter school, do you think you would:</b>							
Definitely do so	7	4	7	12	6	7	
Seriously consider it	32	25	32	41	31	32	
Probably not do it	22	21	22	17	23	22	
Definitely not do it	32	39	32	29	32	32	
[Vol.] Depends	3	6	3	2	4	3	
Don't know	4	6	4	-	4	4	
<b>Parents Only</b>							
<b>27. If money were not an issue, would you prefer that your child attend:</b>							
Private non-religious school	13	14	14	20	12	13	
Private religious school	40	33	39	40	42	40	
Public charter school	4	5	4	11	3	4	
Public district school	37	36	37	28	37	37	
[Vol.] Something else/Depends	3	7	3	-	4	3	
Don't know	3	5	3	2	3	3	
<b>28. How much do you know about school vouchers?</b>							
A great deal	7	8	7	7	7	7	7
Quite a bit	9	8	9	9	9	9	9
Only some	30	28	30	22	31	28	30
Very little	32	29	33	36	32	34	32
Nothing at all	22	25	21	24	21	23	21
Don't know	1	3	1	2	*	-	1

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<b>29. A proposal has been made that would allow parents to send their school-age children to any public, private or church-related school they choose. For those parents choosing nonpublic schools, the government would pay all or part of the tuition. Would you favor or oppose this proposal in your state?</b>							
Strongly favor	27	29	27	39	26	37	24
Somewhat favor	22	24	22	23	21	24	21
Somewhat oppose	15	12	15	11	15	9	17
Strongly oppose	30	28	30	21	31	24	32
Don't know	6	8	6	5	6	7	6
<b>30. A school voucher program has recently been approved in Ohio. It will give parents a voucher of several thousand dollars to help pay tuition if they choose to send their child to a private or church-related school. It will be available only to students whose public school has been failing for three years in a row. Do you favor or oppose this program?</b>							
Strongly favor	31	34	30	48	28	37	28
Somewhat favor	24	25	25	22	25	26	24
Somewhat oppose	13	9	13	8	14	12	13
Strongly oppose	24	25	24	18	25	19	26
Don't know	8	7	8	5	8	5	9
<b>31. Which of these two views about school vouchers comes closer to your own?</b>							
Vouchers are a lifeline for kids who can finally escape failing public schools to more successful schools	47	45	47	49	47	54	44
Vouchers will help only a few kids and make things worse for most students who are left behind	37	35	38	35	39	35	38
[Vol.] Both	4	5	4	2	4	3	4
Don't know	12	15	12	14	11	8	13
<b>32. Which of these two views about school vouchers comes closer to your own?</b>							
Vouchers will force public schools to get BETTER because they'll have to compete with other schools to hold on to students	50	50	50	59	49	54	49
Vouchers will make the public schools WORSE because they'll be left with less money and less motivated students	38	35	38	32	39	36	38
[Vol.] Both	3	5	3	2	3	2	3
Don't know	9	10	9	6	10	9	10

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<b>33. How much, if anything, would you say you know about the No Child Left Behind Act – the federal education bill that was passed by Congress in 2001?</b>							
A great deal	11	10	11	17	10	14	9
A fair amount	32	29	32	23	34	35	31
Very little	42	40	42	40	42	41	42
Nothing at all	15	21	15	20	14	10	17
Don't know	1	1	1	2	1	*	1
<b>Knows about NCLB</b>							
<b>34. From what you have seen or heard about the No Child Left Behind Act, how much do you think it will help to improve student achievement in the public schools in your community?</b>							
A great deal	12	14	12	14	10	15	11
A fair amount	28	26	29	27	29	29	28
Not very much	34	30	34	33	35	36	33
Not at all	15	18	15	19	15	13	16
Don't know	11	12	10	6	11	7	12
<b>35. The No Child Left Behind Act requires that standardized test scores be reported separately by students' race, disability status, English-speaking ability and poverty level. Do you think that reporting test scores this way:</b>							
Is mostly HARMFUL because it puts students and educators under unfair pressure	35	30	35	41	34	35	34
Is mostly GOOD because it calls attention to problems that need to be addressed	53	50	53	45	55	55	52
[Vol.] Both	4	5	3	5	3	4	4
Don't know	9	16	8	9	8	6	10
<b>37. Do you think that parents whose children attend failing schools should:</b>							
Have choice to send children to public schools in a neighboring district	37	35	36	43	36	42	34
Have choice only with neighboring district's approval	28	16	28	18	29	32	26
Children should be required to attend a school in their own district	26	34	26	28	26	21	27
Don't know	10	15	10	12	10	5	12
<b>One suggestion to improve Ohio's public schools is to close down the ones that persistently fail and don't show adequate academic progress over several years. I am going to ask your opinion about closing down certain types of schools.</b>							



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<b>38. How about public district schools that are persistently failing – do you think they should be closed down, or not?</b>							
Yes, should be closed down	35	39	35	32	37	38	35
No, should not	54	51	54	61	53	54	54
Don't know	11	10	11	7	11	9	11
<b>39. How about charter schools that are persistently failing – do you think they should be closed down, or not?</b>							
Yes, should be closed down	74	71	74	62	76	78	73
No, should not	16	23	16	31	14	16	16
Don't know	10	6	10	7	10	7	11
<b>40. Home-schooling is when a parent takes a child out of school and teaches them at home. The parent is expected to devote a lot of time teaching the child, and state officials require the parent to show that the child is learning. Do you favor or oppose this idea?</b>							
Strongly favor	34	30	34	30	34	38	32
Somewhat favor	25	27	25	19	26	25	25
Somewhat oppose	12	13	12	13	11	10	12
Strongly oppose	22	21	22	28	21	22	22
[Vol.] It depends	4	4	4	5	4	3	5
Don't know	3	4	4	5	3	3	4
<b>41. More and more “virtual schools,” sometimes called “cyber-schools” or “e-schools,” are opening in Ohio. These schools get state funding and allow students to do their work at home over the Internet, under adult supervision. Generally, do you think virtual schools are an excellent, good, fair or poor idea?</b>							
Excellent	5	6	5	7	5	9	3
Good	16	19	16	18	16	20	14
Fair	24	23	24	18	25	22	25
Poor	47	39	47	46	47	43	49
Don't know	8	12	8	11	8	6	9
<b>43. If principals in public district schools could choose which teachers work in their buildings and had more say over work rules, do you think the public schools would:</b>							
Improve	54	58	54	50	55	55	54
Get worse	8	4	8	11	7	8	8
Stay the same	26	28	26	31	27	30	25
Don't know	12	11	12	8	11	7	13

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<b>44. How good a job do you think district administrators are doing when it comes to public education in Ohio?</b>							
Doing a good job	10	11	10	8	11	12	10
Could be doing somewhat better	37	30	38	34	38	40	36
Could be doing a lot better	41	46	41	51	39	42	41
Don't know	11	14	11	7	12	6	14
<b>45. How good a job do you think parents are doing when it comes to public education in Ohio?</b>							
Doing a good job	7	5	7	7	7	9	6
Could be doing somewhat better	28	29	28	22	28	30	27
Could be doing a lot better	60	63	60	68	60	58	62
Don't know	5	3	5	3	5	4	6
<b>46. How good a job do you think public school principals are doing when it comes to public education in Ohio?</b>							
Doing a good job	21	22	22	15	22	25	20
Could be doing somewhat better	43	39	43	42	43	43	43
Could be doing a lot better	26	31	26	37	25	28	26
Don't know	9	9	9	6	9	4	11
<b>47. How good a job do you think public school teachers are doing when it comes to public education in Ohio?</b>							
Doing a good job	30	27	30	22	31	29	30
Could be doing somewhat better	42	38	42	42	42	41	42
Could be doing a lot better	23	30	23	32	23	28	22
Don't know	5	5	5	5	5	2	6
<b>48. How good a job do you think state elected officials and legislators are doing when it comes to public education in Ohio?</b>							
Doing a good job	4	8	4	5	4	5	3
Could be doing somewhat better	23	24	23	20	23	26	21
Could be doing a lot better	69	63	69	71	69	66	70
Don't know	5	6	5	4	5	3	6
<b>Parents Only</b>							
<b>49. During the school year that just ended, were your children in:</b>							
Elementary school	57	55	57	58	58	57	
Middle school	30	38	30	27	31	30	
High school	43	43	43	36	43	43	
[Vol.] Something else	2	-	2	-	2	2	

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<b>51. What is the highest level of school you have completed?</b>							
Less than high school	7	14	7	9	7	5	8
High school graduate	30	24	31	33	31	30	30
Some college or trade school, no degree	19	18	19	18	19	16	20
Associates degree/2 year degree	10	12	10	13	10	15	8
Bachelors degree/4 year degree	18	17	18	19	18	18	18
Graduate/Professional degree	16	14	15	8	16	16	15
<b>52. What is your age?</b>							
18-34	16	16	16	22	15	18	15
35-44	18	19	18	20	18	43	9
45-54	21	18	21	25	21	31	18
55-64	22	17	22	20	22	6	28
65+	23	31	23	13	24	3	31
<b>53. Do you consider yourself to be:</b>							
White	87	65	88	-	100	84	88
Black or African American	10	32	9	100	-	13	9
Hispanic	1	-	1	-	-	*	1
Asian	*	-	*	-	-	-	1
Something else	1	3	1	-	-	2	1
[Vol.] Native American	1	1	1	-	-	1	1
<b>54. I'm going to read some ranges of annual household income. Please stop me when I read the one that best describes your total household income in 2004.</b>							
Under \$25,000	17	20	17	28	16	12	19
\$25,000 to less than \$50,000	30	32	30	39	29	28	31
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	26	25	25	18	27	30	24
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	12	10	12	7	13	14	11
\$100,000 or more	13	10	14	5	14	16	12



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