



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: James S. Lanich, President
(916) 498-8980

Californians Distressed with Public Education: Support Reforms to Hold Schools Accountable

SACRAMENTO — Californians place education at the top of public policy concerns, along with the economy and jobs, according to a survey released today by the California Business for Education Excellence Foundation (CBEE). But at the same time, they believe that schools are getting worse, not better.

In a statewide survey conducted earlier this year, by a 54% to 33% margin, more Californians believe the problems in the state's education system are due to a lack of accountability, rather than a lack of funding. Voters identified the most serious problems facing the schools as:

- Too many students not performing at grade level (75%)
- Too much money being spent on bureaucracy and administration (70%)

"These survey results finally answer the chicken and egg question, which comes first: accountability or more money?" This is another wake-up call to education leaders and state policy makers that the main problem with our schools is not money but the lack of accountability," said James S. Lanich, CBEE Foundation President. "California already spends \$67 billion a year on education, yet our students are not prepared for academic success."

Californians are keenly aware of an "achievement gap" between students of different ethnicities and economic backgrounds:

- 74% of voters see the achievement gap as a serious problem that must be addressed.
- Voters are optimistic, however, that high poverty schools with large minority populations can close the achievement gap.

Californians want clear-cut ways to evaluate the success or failure of schools, and they want parents to have more information available to them about school performance. In this regard, voters see testing as a valuable tool in evaluating the performance of students, teachers and schools:

- 75% of voters believe that student testing is extremely or very important in giving students and parents information about how well teachers and schools are doing.
- 76% agree that testing is extremely or very important in holding students and parents accountable.

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Voters strongly support a number of recommendations for improving K-12 public education in California:

- 74% strongly support setting expectations for all schools to get all students to attain a minimum of grade level proficiency each year in reading, writing and mathematics.
- 72% strongly support making school performance data such as overall student assessment test scores and grade level performance, available and understandable to the public, so parents can better understand what is happening within schools.
- 68% strongly support giving parents clear options for when their local school is chronically low-performing, including easy to access tutoring services for their children, transfers to another school, and charter school options.

“This data confirms that parents miss the one measurement that matters the most: Is my child attaining grade level proficiency in reading, writing, math and science? Whether or not the student is at grade level in these subjects will determine whether he or she will ever be ready for college or ready for work -- or if he or she will even survive school without dropping out. Yet this type of clear straightforward information is not readily available for the parents,” Lanich added.

Methodology

This statewide telephone survey of 1,000 registered voters was conducted from February 4 to 10, 2008, by the national research firm Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, Inc. The margin of error is +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence level.

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California Business for Education Excellence Foundation

California Business for Education Excellence Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan Foundation whose mission is to raise student academic achievement and close achievement gaps in California's public schools. This is done by providing a voice to high performing schools so that all schools can replicate their best practices and get all students to a minimum or grade level proficiency every year. Please visit our website at www.cbefoundation.org.

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