Local Public School Ratings Rise, Even as the Teaching Profession Loses Ground

Local ratings are at nearly a five-decade high and a majority have trust and confidence in teachers, yet there’s wide recognition that the challenges they face make their jobs broadly undesirable.

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA (August 25, 2022) – The 54th annual PDK Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools finds record-high ratings for local public schools -- but record low support among parents for their children becoming teachers. Only 37% of respondents say they would want a child of theirs to become a public school teacher in their community. This is the lowest level of support the profession has seen since 1969, when support for teaching as a career choice peaked at 75%.

Overall, 54% of adults give an A or B grade to the public schools in their community, the highest percentage in PDK Polls since 1974, up 10 points since the question was last asked in 2019.

The lack of support for children becoming educators comes at a time when more teachers report that they are considering leaving the profession, according to a 2021 RAND study and a 2022 poll of National Education Association members. The reasons PDK Poll respondents do not want their children to become teachers vary. Poor pay and benefits, the demands and stress of the job, and the lack of respect for the profession are each cited by at least a fifth of respondents.

Other notable findings include:

- In keeping with past PDK Poll results, local schools are rated far more positively than the nation’s schools as a whole, which receive As and Bs from 23% of all adults and 30% of public school parents.
- Overall, 63% of adults express trust and confidence in the public school teachers in their community, increasing to 72% of public school parents.
- A majority of parents report that they trust teachers to appropriately handle topics related to U.S. history, civics, social/emotional growth, racial/ethnic diversity, media literacy, and racism. Trust is generally lower among all adults. Gender and sexuality is the issue about which both parents and all adults express the least trust and confidence.
- Levels of trust and confidence in public school teachers flows along political and ideological lines, with general trust at 73% among Democrats vs. about 6 in 10 independents and Republicans alike.
- Trust in teachers to handle specific topics follows a similar pattern on most questions asked.

These final results of the PDK Poll come after the preliminary release of results centered on school security, which indicate that a majority of Americans support metal detectors, mental health screenings, and armed police in schools, but not arming teachers.
Access the complete results of the 2022 PDK Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools by visiting pdkpoll.org/2022-pdk-poll-results.

About the PDK Poll
The PDK Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools has been a steady reflection of U.S. opinion about public education since 1969. PDK produces the annual poll as part of its mission to engage educators and serve schools so every student thrives. The PDK Poll results provide researchers with some of the finest longitudinal data on how the public feels about the nation’s schools and education policies. Education policy makers use the poll’s findings to inform their decisions, and educators across the country use the results to guide planning and action in their communities. Since 2016, Langer Research Associates has produced the poll for PDK.

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