Californians and Public Education
— VIEWS FROM THE 2020 PACE/USC ROSSIER POLL —

PACE Annual Conference
February 7, 2020
Sacramento, California
Panelists

Morgan Polikoff, Associate Professor of Education, USC Rossier School of Education

Julie Marsh, Professor of Education Policy, USC Rossier School of Education; Faculty Director, PACE

Michal Kurlaender, moderator, Professor of Education Policy, University of California, Davis; Faculty Director, PACE

Karen Symms Gallagher, Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education
The PACE/USC Rossier poll

- Registered California voters.
- Annually (mostly) since 2012.
- Online poll conducted by Tulchin Research.
- Mixture of new and legacy questions on state and national education policy issues.
Five key findings
1. There is growing pessimism about the direction of California and its public schools.

Figure 1. Voters’ Perceptions of California Public Schools Over Time

Note: “Don’t know” responses are not reported here. Poll was not administered in 2017.
... and parents’ pessimism increased sharply

**Figure 3.** Parents’ Perceptions of California Public Schools, 2019 vs. 2020

Note: “Don’t know” responses are not reported here.
2. Voters have strong concerns about both gun violence in schools and the affordability of higher education and prioritize K-12 and higher education over early childhood.
Gun violence looms large

Figure 7. Importance of Education Issues for California Voters

- Reducing gun violence (mean 8.63) - 59 28 6 6
- Making college more affordable (mean 8.46) - 48 41 6 5
- Reducing teacher shortages (mean 8.32) - 39 48 7 4
- Supporting struggling schools (mean 8.26) - 38 49 7 4
- Improving education funding (mean 8.08) - 39 45 6 8
- Improving school discipline (mean 8.04) - 34 50 6 6
- Holding charter schools accountable (mean 7.96) - 34 46 8 6
- Increasing the number of students who finish college (mean 7.94) - 33 50 7 7
- Improving services for students with disabilities (mean 7.94) - 33 50 8 5
- Increasing access to early education (mean 7.77) - 32 48 9 8
- Improving services for English learners (mean 7.42) - 25 52 11 10
- Increasing the diversity of the public school teaching workforce (mean 6.92) - 24 46 10 18

Note: “Don’t know” responses are not reported here.
K-12 and higher education are top priorities

Figure 8. Voter Budget Priorities from Cradle-to-Career

- Improving quality in K-12 education programs for children ages 5-18
  - 1st Priority: 42%
  - 2nd Priority: 27%
- Making college more affordable for young people ages 18-25
  - 1st Priority: 32%
  - 2nd Priority: 26%
- Expanding vocational education and skilled trades training for young people ages 18-25
  - 1st Priority: 25%
  - 2nd Priority: 28%
- Expanding and improving pre-natal care, early childhood, and pre-K programs for children ages 0-5
  - 1st Priority: 20%
  - 2nd Priority: 22%
- Expanding education and training programs for adults ages 25 and older
  - 1st Priority: 16%
  - 2nd Priority: 19%

Note: “Don’t know” responses are not reported here.
3. Voters express negative opinions about higher education, especially the fairness of private college admissions.

**Figure 9.** Voter Perspectives on the Fairness of College Admissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Universities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally stacked in favor of wealthy students</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally fair</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Four-Year Universities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally stacked in favor of wealthy students</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally fair</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: “Don’t know” and “Neither” responses are not reported here.
Voters are increasingly skeptical of admissions preferences for certain groups

Figure 10. Voters’ Opinions on Giving Preference in College Admissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Strongly Support</th>
<th>Somewhat Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children from rural communities or other under-served areas</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children from unrepresented populations, such as communities of color</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite athletes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of alumni of that college or university</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of donors of that college or university</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Other response options are “Strongly Oppose”, “Somewhat Oppose”, and “Don’t know.”
4. Voters support an increase in educational spending and multiple approaches to paying for that spending.

Figure 12. Voters’ Opinions on School Spending by Group, 2018 vs. 2020

- The State of California spends enough on schools
- The State of California should be spending more on schools

Note: “Don’t know” and “Neither” responses are not reported here.
Strong support for a proposed bond measure

Figure 13. Voters’ Support of $15 Billion School Bond, by Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Strongly Support</th>
<th>Somewhat Support</th>
<th>Somewhat Oppose</th>
<th>Strongly Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: “Don’t know” responses are not reported here.
Weaker support for the split roll

**Figure 14.** Voters’ Views on the Proposition 13 “Split-roll” Ballot Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Definitely Yes</th>
<th>Probably Yes</th>
<th>Lean Yes</th>
<th>Lean No</th>
<th>Probably No</th>
<th>Definitely No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Democrat</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Republican</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: “Don’t know” responses are not reported here.
5. Voters are concerned about teacher shortages and are strongly supportive of increasing teacher salaries.

**Figure 16.** Voters’ Views on Raising Teacher Salaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Strongly Support</th>
<th>Somewhat Support</th>
<th>Somewhat Oppose</th>
<th>Strongly Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase the starting salary for new teachers</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase salaries for all teachers</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay teachers more if they teach a subject where there are shortages, such as mathematics, science, and special education</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay teachers more if they work in schools serving more disadvantaged children</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay teachers more if they receive high scores based on the quality of their instruction</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay teachers more if their students demonstrate greater knowledge gains on state tests</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: “Don’t know” responses are not reported here.
Salary is a main reason voters would discourage young people from being teachers

Figure 17. Why Voters Discourage Young People from Becoming Teachers

- Salary/compensation: 47%
- Undisciplined/out-of-control students: 8%
- Overcrowded classrooms: 24%
- Too much teaching to the test: 4%
- Lack of professional autonomy: 4%
- Lack of respect from the community: 4%
- Inability to make a difference in the lives of children: 3%
- Low job security: 2%
- Other: 1%
- Poor retirement and benefits: 1%
Panel Discussion

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Up Next...!

Breakouts 1:15-2:45

Supporting Schools and Districts in Continuous Improvement
Magnolia Ballroom (Here)

Part 2: Developing Systems to Serve Students with Disabilities
Sycamore (Upstairs)

Making College Affordability a Reality for California Students
Alder (Upstairs)