



September 8, 2016

To: Interested Parties
From: Ben Tulchin, Ben Krompak, and David Kornahrens; Tulchin Research
Bob Moore; Moore Information
Re: [PACE/USC Rossier School of Education California Survey Results](#)

Tulchin Research and Moore Information recently conducted a survey among 1,202 registered voters in California on behalf of Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) and the University of Southern California Rossier School of Education. This is the latest poll conducted in a series assessing voter attitudes toward public schools and education policy. The poll covered a variety of education-related issues, including measuring general attitudes toward local public schools and teachers. Here we present some of the key survey findings.

Voters Perceive Public Schools Having Improved Over the Past Few Years

As this is our 5th edition of this survey, we have collected some longitudinal data on voters' perceptions of public schools over time. One finding that stands out when looking at this trend data is that voters' perceptions of local public schools have gradually improved over that time. Our poll finds a majority of Californians (58%) believe that their local public schools have either "gotten better" (23%) over the past few years or "stayed the same" (35%) while just 30 percent say their local schools have "gotten worse." This reflects a continuation of a trend we've seen over the past several years, with more voters seeing improvement in their local public schools and fewer seeing their local schools in decline. In fact, the share of California voters who indicate they believe local public schools have "gotten better" reached its highest level yet in the five-year history of this poll and, conversely, the percent of voters who say schools have "gotten worse" is at an all-time low. As a point of contrast, just four years ago fewer than half as many voters (11%) felt their schools had gotten better in recent years while nearly half (45%) believed they had gotten worse.

<i>"In the past few years, have your local public schools..."</i>					
	Aug 2012	Aug 2013	Jun 2014	Aug 2015	Aug 2016
<i>Gotten better</i>	11%	12%	21%	17%	23%
<i>Gotten worse</i>	45%	37%	34%	34%	30%
<i>Stayed the same</i>	33%	41%	35%	38%	35%
<i>Can't say/Don't know</i>	11%	10%	10%	11%	11%

Respect for Teachers Due to Their Impact on Students' Lives

Despite challenges facing the teaching profession, California voters hold the teaching profession in high esteem. Specifically, most voters (71%) say that they would “definitely” (34%) or “probably” (37%) encourage a young person they knew who was considering becoming a teacher. Few voters (only 9%) indicated they would *not* encourage a younger person to get into teaching.

<i>“If a young person you know was considering becoming a teacher, would you encourage that person to become a teacher or not?”</i>	
<i>Definitely Encourage</i>	34%
<i>Probably Encourage</i>	37%
Total Encourage	71%
<i>Neither Encourage nor Discourage</i>	19%
<i>Probably Discourage</i>	7%
<i>Definitely Discourage</i>	2%
Total Not Encourage	28%
<i>Don't Know</i>	1%

Nearly all (95%) of those who say they would encourage young people to become teachers cite the “ability to make a difference in the lives of children” as a primary reason. This was the dominant response among voters as a secondary reason of “respect from the community” garnered 42 percent followed by “good retirement and benefits” at a more distant 31 percent and “job security” at 27 percent.

<i>“What aspects of teaching make you want to encourage a young person to become a teacher? Select as many reasons as you want that apply.”</i>	
Ability to make a difference in the lives of children	95%
<i>Respect from the community</i>	42%
<i>Good retirement and benefits</i>	31%
<i>Job security</i>	27%
<i>Professional autonomy</i>	18%
<i>Salary/compensation</i>	14%
<i>Other</i>	5%

Among those who say they would *not* encourage a young person they knew from becoming a teacher, most (72%) cite “salary/compensation” as a primary reason with “undisciplined/out of control students” ranking as the second most-cited reason (61%), followed by “overcrowded classrooms” (50%) and “a lack of respect from the community” (44%).

Voters Perceive Teacher Shortage; Favor Raising Teacher Pay to Help Address It

A majority of California voters believes there is currently a shortage of teachers in the state. Specifically, two-thirds of California voters (66%) say there is a shortage of teachers in California public schools to one out of five voters (19%) who say there is not. Notably, the perception of a public school teacher shortage is more pronounced among people of color (71%) than among Caucasians (62%) and particularly pronounced among African American (78%) and Asian American (76%) voters.

Among those who say there is a teacher shortage in the state, a majority (51%) say that “paying teachers more” is the most important thing the state can do to address this problem, with another 26 percent ranking “improving teachers’ working conditions” as the best remedy.

We asked voters about a range of policy options related to changing the way that teachers in California are paid and found strong majorities favor virtually any effort to improve teacher compensation. Three-quarters of voters (76 percent) support “increasing salaries for all teachers,” including 40 percent of voters who *strongly* support this. Overwhelming majorities also support “paying teachers more if they teach in subjects where there are shortages such as mathematics, science, and special education” (79%); “increasing the starting salary for new teachers” (77%); and “paying teachers more if they work in schools serving more disadvantaged students” (76%). While voters broadly favor policies that would link pay increases for teachers to their performance evaluations (71%) and to improved student scores on state standardized tests (63%), the poll finds a small but perceptible drop-off in both overall support and intensity of support (“strongly support”) for these measures.

<i>“Here are some policies that have been proposed to change how we pay teachers in California...” – Total Support</i>		
	Strongly Support	Total Support
<i>Pay teachers more if they teach in subjects where there are shortages such as mathematics, science, and special education</i>	33%	79%
<i>Increase the starting salary for new teachers</i>	33%	77%
<i>Increase salaries for all teachers</i>	40%	76%
<i>Pay teachers more if they work in schools serving more disadvantaged students</i>	30%	76%
<i>Pay teachers more if they receive high scores based on the quality of their instruction</i>	28%	71%
<i>Pay teachers more if their students demonstrate greater knowledge gains on state tests</i>	25%	63%

Survey Methodology: The PACE/USC Rossier Poll was conducted August 23-30, 2016 by Tulchin Research and Moore Information and surveyed 1,202 registered California voters. The poll was conducted online and allowed respondents to complete the survey on a desktop or laptop computer, tablet or smartphone. The poll was conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 2.83 percentage points.