How Californians Feel about Public Education: Results from the PACE/USC Rossier August 2012 Poll

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California has long been viewed by the rest of the nation as a leader in many areas, including education. The state's K-12 and higher education systems were once the envy of other states. Of late, though, the news from the Golden State has not been so rosy. For the last three decades California has faced increased demands on public services while suffering through economic cycles that have had exaggerated effects on the state budget. The result has been increased competition for limited resources, budget uncertainty and steadily eroding state dollars for local schools.[1] At the same time, demands on schools to produce better educated students have increased. In 1999 the state introduced its own standard-based accountability system (the Public Schools Accountability Act), which was then overlaid by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. As expectations for students and schools have risen, however, and budgets have fluctuated wildly, relatively little systemic education reform has taken place.[2] California faces major challenges that the state seems unable to tackle.

Given this backdrop, how does the public view California's schools and education policy effectiveness? Do voters understand the challenges that California faces, and are they prepared to make the tough choices and tradeoffs that potential solutions entail? This brief presents the findings from recent polling directed by Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) and the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California, and conducted by M4 Strategies/ Tulchin Research. The PACE/USC Rossier poll is a new attempt to learn in more detail about how Californians perceive and understand the challenges now facing California's education system.

The PACE/USC Rossier Education Polls

Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) is a collaboration among the University of Southern California, Stanford University and the University of California at Berkeley, established in 1983. Over the past thirty years PACE has worked to bring academic research to bear in order to improve education policymaking in Sacramento. PACE organizes seminars that bring policymakers and practitioners together with leading academics, publishes policy briefs that translate research on key education policy topics into accessible formats, and compiles re-

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[1] See Heather Rose, in *Getting Down to Facts: Five Years Later*, PACE, May 2012, pp.16-24.

[2] See Richard O. Welsh and Dominic J. Brewer, in *Getting Down to Facts: Five Years Later*, PACE, May 2012, pp.6-15.

ports that assess the general condition of education in the state. This work supports the design and implementation of effective educational policies, but on the biggest issues facing California's education system the impact of academic research is necessarily limited. On these questions-- fiscal instability, fragmented governance and the lack of an effective data system—change in Sacramento will come about only when the public demands it. We therefore decided to explore in depth how voters perceive California's education system, and how they view the difficult choices and trade-offs facing voters and their representatives in the Capitol.

PACE and USC Rossier plan to conduct several polls each year, examining how the public perceives the broad "condition of education" as well as addressing specialized topics. In this brief, for example, we focus on two policy areas – (i) the use of technology in schools and (ii) career and technical education. Our May poll focused on teacher issues and Governor Brown's proposal for a weighted pupil funding system.

An overview of how the PACE/USC Rossier polls are conducted can be found at the end of this brief. More detail, including the full set of results with cross tabulations, can be found at http://edpolicyinca.org/polls. Taken together, our May and August PACE/USC Rossier Polls present a clear and in some ways encouraging picture. Californians appear to have come on their own to many of the same conclusions as the 'Getting Down to Facts' study about the most important steps necessary to improve the state's public schools. For now, though, they remain skeptical that the changes they would like to see can in fact be accomplished. We hope that our new polling data will inform policy discussions in Sacramento and help to move California's schools and students closer to the high expectations that voters hold for them.

The Condition of Education in California

Low grades given to schools

Overall, voters give California's public schools a "C-,"with local schools faring slightly better than the state as a whole. Forty-two percent of voters give state public schools a "D" or "F," while 26 percent of voters give their local public schools a "D" or "F" (see Table 1). These results are fairly consistent across demographic groups (including parents and non-parents), but males, middle-aged adults (presumably with school-aged children), whites, and those with more education tend to give lower grades.

A majority of voters (57 percent) believe that the state's public schools have gotten worse in the past few years, and 45 percent say the same of their local schools. Republicans are more critical of both local and state public schools. Fifty-three percent of Republicans say local schools are in worse shape than they once were, as compared to 40 percent of Democrats, and 63 percent of Republicans say state schools have gotten worse in the last few years versus 55 percent of Democrats. Older voters are more likely to give state schools poor grades. Among voters 65 and older 54 percent give the state a "D" or "F," compared with 30 percent of 18-29 year olds. African-Americans and whites are more likely to give state schools a "D" or "F," (53 percent and 46 percent, respectively), compared with 27 percent each of Latinos and Asians. Finally, it is striking to note that voters with more than a high school education generally view the state's education system more negatively and their local schools more positively than voters with only a high school diploma.

Table 1. School Grades

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D and F to rate the quality of their work at school. Suppose the California public schools were graded in the same manner. In the past few years, what grade would you give California public schools?

In the past few years, would you say California public schools have gotten better, worse or have stayed about the same?

School Grades		All	Party			Age				
		Overall	Rep	Dem	DTS	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
State Schools	A-C	51%	50%	55%	44%	68%	52%	52%	52%	35%
	D&F	42%	44%	38%	47%	30%	43%	38%	41%	54%
	Getting Better	7%	6%	9%	4%	8%	7%	8%	3%	9%
	Getting Worse	57%	63%	55%	55%	53%	60%	58%	58%	58%
Local Schools	A-C	65%	63%	68%	62%	75%	74%	58%	59%	66%
	D&F	26%	29%	22%	30%	23%	16%	34%	29%	22%
	Getting Better	11%	8%	15%	5%	11%	16%	11%	10%	8%
	Getting Worse	45%	53%	40%	44%	49%	35%	54%	41%	48%

School Grades		Gender		Children <18		Teacher			
		M	F	Yes	No	Yes, self	Yes, family member	Yes, both	No
State Schools	A-C	50%	52%	60%	48%	80%	56%	74%	48%
	D&F	45%	39%	36%	43%	17%	38%	26%	45%
	Getting Better	7%	6%	8%	7%	20%	5%	0%	6%
	Getting Worse	58%	57%	58%	55%	47%	58%	60%	58%
Local Schools	A-C	66%	64%	68%	64%	84%	71%	100%	63%
	D&F	26%	26%	28%	26%	16%	18%	0%	28%
	Getting Better	12%	10%	15%	10%	32%	9%	35%	9%
	Getting Worse	41%	50%	44%	44%	27%	35%	0%	49%

School Grades		Education				
		High School Grad	Post High School/ Tech School	Some college	Four-year college grad	Grad degree
State Schools	A-C	48%	40%	53%	55%	48%
	D&F	39%	47%	44%	38%	47%
	Getting Better	6%	3%	8%	5%	8%
	Getting Worse	50%	60%	58%	62%	57%
Local Schools	A-C	63%	61%	62%	70%	64%
	D&F	30%	30%	28%	19%	28%
	Getting Better	11%	10%	9%	10%	12%
	Getting Worse	52%	49%	48%	45%	36%

Spending Has Been Cut Too Much, More Resources are Needed – But there is also too much waste

One way to increase the quality of schools in voters' minds is to increase funding for education (or at least prevent further cuts). Only 19 percent of voters believe the state funds education well (i.e., score a "7" or greater on a 10-point scale from 0 "terrible funding" to 10 "excellent funding") (see Table 2). But views on the issue of funding are somewhat split along party lines.

Sixteen percent of Republicans believe current funding is adequate to excellent, compared with 27 percent of Democrats. A surprisingly low number of Republicans believe school funding is adequate – indeed, a clear majority of them believe that funding is inadequate. Approval for current levels of funding decreases with age. Fifteen percent of 18-29 year olds believe funding is adequate to excellent, compared to 21 percent of 50-64 year olds. More educated and higher income voters

tend to have a dimmer view of the funding picture.

While they do not believe that there is enough money in the educational system, voters also continue to believe that much education spending is wasted, despite multiple rounds of cutbacks. In our May poll we asked voters what percentage of spending on education is wasted, and more than half of the respondents (53 percent) replied that the amount of waste is "greater than 20 percent."

Table 2. Funding Adequacy of California's Public Schools

Rating of funding adequacy for CA's public schools	All	Party			Age				
	Overall	Rep	Dem	DTS	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
7 thru 10	19%	16%	27%	15%	15%	19%	20%	21%	19%
4 thru 6	38%	38%	41%	36%	40%	38%	29%	38%	46%
0 thru 3	42%	47%	32%	49%	45%	43%	51%	41%	36%

Rating of funding adequacy for CA's public schools	Gender		Children <18		Teacher			
	M	F	Yes	No	Yes, self	Yes, family member	Yes, both	No
7 thru 10	24%	14%	22%	18%	16%	14%	7%	20%
4 thru 6	39%	37%	31%	41%	31%	41%	66%	38%
0 thru 3	37%	49%	47%	41%	53%	45%	26%	42%

Rating of funding adequacy for CA's public schools	Education					Income				
	High School Grad	Post High School/ Tech School	Some college	Four-year college grad	Grad degree	Less than $30k	$30k to under $75k	$75k to under $150k	$150k to under $500k	$500k and over
7 thru 10	25%	29%	18%	18%	16%	21%	19%	23%	8%	4%
4 thru 6	43%	33%	37%	38%	35%	44%	37%	34%	39%	9%
0 thru 3	32%	38%	46%	44%	49%	35%	45%	43%	53%	49%

We asked voters about several aspects of school performance, and they were most critical of the state for spending too much on bureaucracy. Voters said the most important areas to spend any new education money are, in order of importance: restore cuts in programs and services at local schools, prevent more budget cuts to local schools, and reduce class sizes.

These findings reinforce a major finding from "Getting Down to Facts," which concluded that increases in spending on the state's public schools should be accompanied by reforms that would ensure that money is spent more effectively. In our May poll, we asked this question directly: two-thirds of Californians said the state should increase education spending to improve school performance. But an even larger percentage of Californians – 76 percent - said any increase in spending should be accompanied by changes in the way resources are used.

Proposition 30 is vulnerable, Proposition 38 is failing and Proposition 13 is still popular

Proposition 30 is an initiative on the November 2012 ballot. Proposition 30 reflects Governor Brown's desire to restore funding to California public schools. Proposition 30 increases sales taxes in California by a quarter percent for four years and increases personal income taxes from 10.3 percent to 12.5 percent progressively starting at $250,000 per year for 7 years. These temporary revenues from Proposition 30 will be split with 89 percent going to fund K-12 schools and 11 percent going to fund Community Colleges. Proposition 30 also guarantees funding to localities for prison realignment that took place earlier in this year. Finally, Proposition 30 bars the use of new funds for administrative costs, yet grants local school boards more flexibility in how funds are to be used in their districts. If the Proposition fails spending cuts of $6 billion would take effect primarily in education in the 2012-2013 fiscal year.

Proposition 30 is supported by Governor Brown, the California Teachers Association and the American Federation of Teachers, as well as the State School Boards Association and Association of California School Administrators.

With less than three months before the November election and messaging ramping up on both sides, 55 percent of voters support Proposition 30, while 10 percent of voters say they are undecided. Based on previous experience with ballot propositions the measure looks vulnerable to defeat. Support for the measure is weak due to the fact that as many voters *strongly* oppose the measure as *strongly* support it (23 percent).

Table 3 shows attitudes towards Proposition 30. The first row shows the percentage of respondents who supported or opposed the proposition after being provided with the Ballot Label, Official Title and Summary of the proposition, as produced by the Attorney General's office. The second row shows the percentage of respondents who supported or opposed the proposition after viewing or listening to advertisements for and against the proposition. Finally, the third row shows the percentage of respondents who expressed agreement with either of two statements summarizing the underlying arguments for and against Proposition 30.

Table 3. Attitudes Toward Proposition 30

Proposition 30		All	Party			Age				
		Overall	Rep	Dem	DTS	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
Support/Oppose initiative after reading ballot language	Support	55%	35%	73%	45%	72%	65%	52%	49%	44%
	Oppose	36%	59%	17%	42%	23%	18%	37%	42%	48%
Support/Oppose initiative after exposure to ads	Support	52%	35%	69%	43%	71%	60%	54%	46%	41%
	Oppose	34%	53%	18%	38%	17%	22%	28%	42%	47%
Personal view on underlying issues: "support schools" versus "cut waste"	Support Schools*	35%	20%	49%	27%	46%	41%	31%	31%	33%
	Cut Waste**	49%	67%	35%	51%	35%	42%	46%	56%	56%

Proposition 30		Ethnicity				Income				
		White/ Non Hispanic	Latino Hispanic	Black/ African American	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Less than $30k	$30k to under $75k	$75k to under $150k	$150k to under $500k	$500k and over
Support/Oppose initiative after reading ballot language	Support	51%	66%	65%	55%	53%	63%	49%	56%	100%
	Oppose	41%	24%	23%	28%	33%	31%	41%	37%	0%
Support/Oppose initiative after exposure to ads	Support	48%	69%	63%	46%	51%	59%	47%	54%	100%
	Oppose	40%	17%	26%	26%	33%	30%	38%	32%	0%
Personal view on underlying issues: "support schools" versus "cut waste"	Support Schools*	34%	40%	43%	34%	38%	38%	31%	37%	54%
	Cut Waste**	53%	39%	45%	41%	40%	47%	54%	50%	31%

Proposition 30		Education				
		High School Grad	Post High School/Tech School	Some college	Four-year college grad	Grad degree
Support/Oppose initiative after reading ballot language	Support	53%	46%	52%	56%	58%
	Oppose	38%	44%	35%	34%	37%
Support/Oppose initiative after exposure to ads	Support	49%	57%	51%	52%	56%
	Oppose	32%	33%	34%	34%	36%
Personal view on underlying issues: "support schools" versus "cut waste"	Support Schools*	30%	23%	34%	36%	42%
	Cut Waste**	47%	60%	49%	50%	47%

When provided with official ballot language, Democrats strongly favor the measure (73 percent to 17 percent) and Republicans oppose it (59 percent to 35 percent). Republicans 18-49 are split on Proposition 30 (48 percent support to 47 percent oppose), while Republicans 50+ are much more likely to oppose the measure (26 percent support to 67 percent oppose). Overall, there is a close correlation between support for the Governor's initiative and age. Younger voters offer higher levels of support, while older voters are less supportive of the measure; 18-29 year olds support Proposition 30 overwhelmingly (72 percent to 23 percent) whereas seniors (65+) are more likely to oppose it (44 percent support to 48 percent oppose). Latinos offer the highest level of support of any ethnic group (66 percent to 24 percent) with African Americans a close second (65 percent support to 23 percent oppose).

We tested reactions to the ballot initiative by presenting voters with a TV advertisement arguing in favor of Proposition 30 and a radio spot arguing against it.[3] After viewing and listening to these, Proposition 30 retained a tenuous lead, with 52 percent in support and 34 percent

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[3]At the time the poll was conducted a television ad was available for the pro-Proposition 30 side, but only a radio spot was available for the anti-Proposition 30 side.

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opposed. Following review of the ads, the number of undecided voters *increased* from 10 percent to 14 percent. Support remained soft, with virtually equal numbers of intense opponents (22 percent) and intense supporters (21 percent).

We further tested support for Proposition 30 by presenting voters with two written arguments of equal length representing each side's point of view.

- (*) "Supporters of Proposition 30 say that after years of deficit spending, Governor Brown has cut billions in spending. We have made progress but we still have serious budget problems. We should take a stand against further budget cuts to schools and public safety, make the wealthy pay their fair share, and help balance the budget."

  Or

- (**) "Opponents of Proposition 30 say that Sacramento politicians need to cut wasteful spending before raising our taxes. The State Legislature just voted to spend billions of dollars on a high-speed train to nowhere, raised salaries for their senior staff, and just found millions of dollars in unspent funds."

Worryingly for supporters of the Governor's ballot initiative, 49 per-

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cent of voters agree with the opponents' argument that "Sacramento politicians need to cut wasteful spending before raising our taxes" while only 35 percent of California voters share the supporters' view that "after years of deficit spending, Governor Brown has cut billions in spending; we should take a stand against further budget cuts to schools and public safety". Republicans, older voters, white voters, those with less education, and parents (51 percent parents to 48 percent total) especially were in favor of cutting waste before raising taxes to fund education and public safety.

Most voters want the funding for Proposition 30 to go to education (52 percent) or to both education and public safety (38 percent) while a small percentage wants it to go to public safety alone (8 percent). In terms of where the money should go within the education system, a clear pattern emerges as voters strongly prefer an approach that protects or restores the status quo, preferring to "prevent more budget cuts to local schools" (45 percent) and to "restore cuts in programs and services at local schools" (47 percent). New or expansive programs rank as lower priorities. If cuts have to be made, voters would rather see cuts to transportation of students to school (33 percent), shortening the school year (31 percent), increasing class sizes (32 percent), and eliminating

extra-curricular programs (23 percent). Reducing teacher salaries (17 percent) and teacher lay-offs (9 percent) are the least popular options.

In addition to Proposition 30, there is a second ballot initiative before voters that would raise taxes to provide additional revenue for schools. Proposition 38 would raise about $10 billion annually with 60 percent of the money going towards schools. It would progressively raise the income tax rate on Californians who earn over $7,316 annually. The rate would begin at .4 percent for the lowest individual earner to 2.2 percent for those earning over $2.5 million. The tax revenue would be split into three funding streams for the first 4 years with 30 percent going to reduce state debt, 60 percent going to K-12 schools and 10 percent going to fund early childhood education. Starting in 2017, through the sunset date of 2025, 85 percent of the revenue would be directed to K-12 schools and 15 percent to early childhood education programs. This proposition specifically prohibits the state from diverting these funds for other purposes. The revenue cannot be used for increased salaries or pensions of school personnel and school districts are responsible for reporting how they spend the funds they receive.

Proposition 38 is principally funded by California lawyer Molly Munger, who has contributed $18.8 million dollars to support the passage of the proposition. Other groups that have stated support include the California State PTA.

According to our poll (see Table 4), nearly a majority of voters currently oppose Proposition 38 (49 percent) with 40 percent in favor and 11 percent undecided. Almost three times as many voters strongly oppose Proposition 38 as strongly support it (30 percent strongly oppose to 11 percent strongly support). A slim majority of Democrats supports the measure (53 percent) while a majority of Republicans (64 percent) opposes it. A larger percentage of voters say they will vote against both tax initiatives (47 percent) than vote for both (40 percent).

Table 4. Attitudes Toward Proposition 38

Proposition 38		All	Party			Age				
		Overall	Rep	Dem	DTS	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
Do you support or oppose this ballot initiative	Support	40%	25%	53%	33%	57%	51%	38%	30%	34%
	Oppose	49%	64%	37%	52%	34%	34%	49%	59%	56%
How likely are you to support both Prop 30 and Prop 38?	Support	40%	25%	55%	31%	55%	49%	39%	34%	33%
	Oppose	47%	65%	32%	50%	31%	33%	45%	55%	57%

Proposition 38		Ethnicity				Income				
		White/ Non Hispanic	Latino Hispanic	Black/ African American	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Less than $30k	$30k to under $75k	$75k to under $150k	$150k to under $500k	$500k and over
Do you support or oppose this ballot initiative	Support	35%	54%	57%	42%	38%	34%	39%	42%	40%
	Oppose	54%	37%	32%	40%	51%	52%	46%	46%	53%
How likely are you to support both Prop 30 and Prop 38?	Support	34%	60%	53%	41%	39%	36%	39%	42%	40%
	Oppose	53%	30%	30%	35%	50%	53%	44%	44%	51%

Proposition 38		Education				
		High School Grad	Post High School/Tech School	Some college	Four-year college grad	Grad degree
Do you support or oppose this ballot initiative	Support	80%	82%	79%	75%	76%
	Oppose	15%	16%	16%	18%	21%
How likely are you to support both Prop 30 and Prop 38?	Support	73%	78%	74%	69%	71%
	Oppose	18%	20%	19%	22%	24%

Finally, we asked voters about their attitudes towards Proposition 13. Proposition 13 is an amendment to the California Constitution passed by voters in 1978. During that time in California there was a population boom and a subsequent dramatic inflation in housing costs. As a result property taxes increased dramatically each year. At this same time there were also bribery scandals in the state involving property tax assessors. These issues combined to promote an anti-tax movement in California. Proposition 13 passed with 63 percent of the vote. This popular tax reform measure set property tax values at 1976 assessed values. Proposition 13 caps property taxes at 1 percent of the purchase price and allows for no more than 2 percent per year increase, unless the property is sold.

Proposition 13 continues to receive support from voters, though they are open to some reforms of the landmark property tax measure including a "split roll" that would tax commercial properties at their current market value. More than 70 percent of voters express support for Proposition 13, but nearly 60 percent would favor a split roll. Two thirds of Democrats (66 percent) support taxing commercial properties at current market value, along with a plurality (48 percent) of Republicans. When presented with brief arguments for and against reform, however, voters are evenly divided. Forty percent favor the argument of reform proponents, and 42 percent the argument of Proposition 13 defenders, with 18 percent remaining undecided.

The first row of Table 5 shows support for and against Proposition 13. The second row shows support for and against a split roll. The third row shows voter attitudes on two characterizations of proposition 13 reform:

- (*) Supporters say reforming Proposition 13 will make big corporations pay their fair share. Many highly profitable businesses, like Apple and Chevron, are paying property taxes based on assessed values from over 30 years ago. Also, corporations use loopholes to avoid re-assessing their property even when the property changes ownership. This reform will bring in needed additional revenues for local schools and services.

Or

- (**) Opponents say California already has the highest taxes in the country. The last thing we should do is raise taxes on businesses by billions of dollars. Many businesses will likely move to Nevada or other places where taxes are lower, taking jobs with them. We should cut wasteful spending before raising taxes.

Table 5. Attitudes Toward Proposition 13

Proposition 13		All	Party			Age				
		Overall	Rep	Dem	DTS	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
Proposition 13	Support	73%	84%	67%	70%	59%	71%	72%	75%	83%
	Oppose	16%	9%	20%	17%	24%	15%	15%	17%	12%
Split Roll split roll = "support or oppose prop 13 while leaving prop 13 in place for residential"	Support	59%	48%	66%	59%	56%	59%	60%	58%	61%
	Oppose	24%	33%	17%	24%	19%	23%	21%	27%	25%
Personal view on underlying issues: "corporations pay their fair share" versus "cut wasteful spending"	Support Schools*	38%	24%	51%	42%	48%	48%	36%	38%	36%
	Cut Waste**	45%	60%	31%	39%	34%	34%	45%	44%	49%

Proposition 13		Ethnicity				Income				
		White/ Non Hispanic	Latino Hispanic	Black/ African American	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Less than $30k	$30k to under $75k	$75k to under $150k	$150k to under $500k	$500k and over
Proposition 13	Support	75%	71%	72%	67%	76%	74%	70%	72%	72%
	Oppose	17%	15%	17%	14%	11%	16%	21%	23%	28%
Split Roll split roll = "support or oppose prop 13 while leaving prop 13 in place for residential"	Support	56%	65%	55%	78%	62%	61%	59%	49%	49%
	Oppose	26%	15%	25%	12%	13%	27%	25%	34%	0%
Personal view on underlying issues: "corporations pay their fair share" versus "cut wasteful spending"	Support Schools*	38%	41%	49%	54%	34%	44%	40%	47%	36%
	Cut Waste**	45%	41%	29%	28%	46%	40%	43%	42%	34%

Proposition 13		Education				
		High School Grad	Post High School/Tech School	Some college	Four-year college grad	Grad degree
Proposition 13	Support	77%	75%	78%	71%	65%
	Oppose	10%	15%	12%	17%	27%
Split Roll split roll = "support or oppose prop 13 while leaving prop 13 in place for residential"	Support	53%	29%	62%	56%	65%
	Oppose	25%	35%	18%	26%	27%
Personal view on underlying issues: "corporations pay their fair share" versus "cut wasteful spending"	Support Schools*	29%	28%	41%	44%	47%
	Cut Waste**	55%	57%	41%	39%	38%

There should be more local control and more resources for poorer districts

"Getting Down to Facts" identified two key problems in California's financing of education – the state's failure to target resources to the schools and students who need them most, and the heavy burden placed on local educators by the state's rules about how resources can be used. Governor Brown's proposal to reform California's system for funding schools by adopting a "weighted pupil funding" policy marks an important effort to address these problems.[4] Our poll findings suggest that Californians are broadly supportive of this approach to funding schools.

With regard to targeting resources, a majority of Californians (52 percent) agrees that the state should provide additional resources to schools that educate large percentages of economically disadvantaged children, while only 26 percent disagree (see Table 6). The margins are especially large among Latinos (70 percent support, 10 percent oppose), African Americans (82 percent support, 10 percent oppose), and Asians (53 percent support, 17 percent oppose). A plurality of whites (45 percent) also supports targeting additional resources to schools educating poor children. Among those who agree that the state should target resources, strong majorities (73 percent and 71 percent) would support this policy even if it meant less spending in their own communities or higher taxes for themselves.

The findings are quite different when voters are asked about targeting resources to schools that educate large percentages of children who do not speak English as their first language. A majority (52 percent) opposes targeting resources to English learners, while only 31 percent support it. Voters between the ages of 18 and 29 are the only age group to support this kind of targeting, with voters over 65 opposing it by more than two to one (61 percent to 25 percent). A majority (56 percent) of Latinos support spending more money in schools that educate large percentages of English learners, while a majority of whites (61 percent) is opposed.

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[4]See Heather Rose, in *Getting Down to Facts: Five Years Later*, PACE, May 2012, pp.16-24.

Table 6. Targeting School Funding

Targeting School Funding		All	Party			Age				
		Overall	Rep	Dem	DTS	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
Support/Oppose targeting funds to low-income children	Support	52%	34%	68%	44%	65%	55%	50%	48%	47%
	Oppose	26%	41%	14%	29%	13%	24%	24%	30%	33%
Support/Oppose targeting funds to English learners	Support	31%	20%	42%	24%	44%	41%	28%	26%	25%
	Oppose	52%	68%	38%	58%	35%	44%	55%	57%	61%
Support/Oppose more local control	Support	69%	80%	63%	65%	65%	65%	68%	67%	77%
	Oppose	23%	15%	28%	26%	26%	27%	23%	26%	16%
Support/Oppose more local flexible spending for local needs	Support	84%	86%	82%	86%	79%	84%	83%	83%	90%
	Oppose	11%	10%	12%	7%	13%	10%	12%	12%	7%

Targeting School Funding		Ethnicity				Income				
		White/ Non Hispanic	Latino Hispanic	Black/ African American	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Less than $30k	$30k to under $75k	$75k to under $150k	$150k to under $500k	$500k and over
Support/Oppose targeting funds to low-income children	Support	45%	70%	82%	53%	62%	52%	43%	57%	55%
	Oppose	32%	10%	10%	17%	21%	22%	32%	29%	34%
Support/Oppose targeting funds to English learners	Support	24%	56%	35%	37%	31%	33%	29%	33%	74%
	Oppose	61%	25%	42%	40%	47%	53%	52%	58%	15%
Support/Oppose more local control	Support	70%	67%	62%	67%	68%	69%	69%	71%	57%
	Oppose	23%	26%	26%	23%	23%	23%	23%	27%	43%
Support/Oppose more local flexible spending for local needs	Support	86%	77%	77%	82%	83%	86%	84%	81%	66%
	Oppose	9%	17%	11%	12%	10%	10%	10%	16%	34%

Targeting School Funding		Education				
		High School Grad	Post High School/Tech School	Some college	Four-year college grad	Grad degree
Support/Oppose targeting funds to low-income children	Support	50%	50%	49%	51%	55%
	Oppose	23%	38%	28%	24%	30%
Support/Oppose targeting funds to English learners	Support	29%	28%	25%	31%	40%
	Oppose	54%	54%	61%	47%	47%
Support/Oppose more local control	Support	67%	56%	70%	68%	72%
	Oppose	24%	37%	23%	22%	24%
Support/Oppose more local flexible spending for local needs	Support	81%	74%	84%	86%	86%
	Oppose	12%	25%	10%	8%	12%

Voters would also like to give local officials more control over the use of educational resources. Nearly three in four voters (74 percent agree, 14 percent disagree) believe state officials have too much control over local decisions. Republicans are more likely to believe that state officials have too much control over schools (84 percent agree to 8 percent disagree, compared to 70 percent of Democrats who agree and 17 percent who disagree). Older voters are stronger supporters of local control than younger voters. Of those over 65 years old, 78 percent believe the state has too much control, as compared with 71 percent of 18-29 year olds. Whites are most likely to believe that the state has too much control (76 percent agree to 13 percent disagree), followed by Latinos (74 percent to 14 percent), Asians (68 percent to 16 percent), and African-Americans (60 percent to 21 percent).

Career and Technical Education

California schools are focused on preparing all students for college, but with dropout rates at approximately 24 percent[5] and "estimates of incoming college students underprepared for college-level work often around 30-40 percent,"[6] the state's schools are falling far short of this goal. Our poll shows that California voters want students to learn basic skills, but also to achieve workforce readiness in a more flexible and technologically advanced learning environment. This is an interesting finding in light of the historical role of vocational education and the widespread belief, which our poll confirms, that it is for less-academically able children rather than an important aspect of preparing students for careers.

There are a growing number of high-school reform initiatives in California that aim to prepare students for both college and careers, many of which come together under the banner of Linked Learning. Linked Learning seeks to integrate challenging academics with a demanding career and technical curriculum. Our poll suggests that California voters are strongly supportive of educational initiatives like Linked Learning that provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the workforce along with strong academic preparation.

The California education system needs to do a better job of preparing students for "real world" work

There is a clear belief among California adults that while teaching the "basics" (i.e., reading, writing, and math) is important, there needs to be more emphasis on preparing students with the skills they need to obtain good jobs out of high school or with a community college or technical school degree. California's K-12 education system has lately focused on preparing all young people for a four-year college education, but voters overwhelmingly would like to see more emphasis placed on having marketable skills upon graduating from high school. In fact, 93 percent of voters agreed "students should graduate from high school with the skills they need to get a job."

Older voters (65 or older) are more likely to endorse the importance of having marketable skills on graduating from high school (97 percent to 2 percent), compared with 18-29 year olds (84 percent to 11 percent). African-American and Latino voters are more likely to believe that high school grads should have marketable skills (72 percent and 70 percent *strongly* agree, respectively), compared to whites and Asians (65 percent and 48 percent *strongly* agree, respectively).

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[5]California Department of Education (2012), State Schools Chief Tom Torlakson Reports; Climb in Graduation Rates for California Students, Release #12-65.

[6]Wiseley, C. (2011). Effective Basic Skills Instruction: The Case for Contextualized Developmental Math. PACE Policy Brief 11-1.

The "basics" are important, but voters want more emphasis on career-technical education

Traditionally, career and technical education has been regarded as a second tier education when compared to college preparation courses. This stigma persists among current California voters. Almost half of all voters (and Republicans more than Democrats) view career-technical education as an academic path for students who "don't do well in school." Democrats are more likely to support the idea that a college education is necessary for students to get a "good job," while Republican voters are more likely to support the notion that "there are many good jobs that don't require a college education." Across the political spectrum voters support the connection between academic subjects and workforce readiness. Table 7 shows the breakdown of voter attitudes towards various statements regarding career and technical education.

Table 7. Career and Technical Education

Career and Technical Education		All	Party			Age				
		Overall	Rep	Dem	DTS	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
To get a good job a student needs to go to college	Agree	70%	64%	76%	65%	75%	80%	76%	67%	58%
	Disagree	27%	34%	21%	31%	22%	15%	21%	31%	40%
There are many good jobs that don't require a college education	Agree	73%	77%	71%	72%	57%	67%	66%	74%	91%
	Disagree	24%	22%	25%	23%	39%	28%	30%	22%	8%
Some students just aren't good at academic subjects	Agree	80%	84%	77%	80%	74%	65%	80%	83%	89%
	Disagree	7%	13%	21%	16%	20%	30%	19%	14%	10%
Career-technical education is for students who don't do well in school	Agree	48%	53%	47%	44%	42%	48%	48%	48%	54%
	Disagree	45%	42%	45%	48%	51%	40%	47%	46%	40%
Students should graduate from high school with the skills they need to get a job	Agree	92%	91%	92%	91%	84%	87%	94%	92%	97%
	Disagree	5%	6%	4%	5%	11%	6%	4%	5%	2%

Career and Technical Education		Ethnicity				Income				
		White/Non Hispanic	Latino Hispanic	Black/African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Less than $30k	$30k to under $75k	$75k to under $150k	$150k to under $500k	$500k and over
To get a good job a student needs to go to college	Agree	68%	76%	62%	79%	62%	72%	71%	79%	36%
	Disagree	29%	20%	36%	16%	33%	25%	26%	21%	65%
There are many good jobs that don't require a college education	Agree	75%	62%	80%	69%	71%	77%	72%	70%	57%
	Disagree	22%	33%	19%	26%	22%	21%	26%	26%	43%
Some students just aren't good at academic subjects	Agree	83%	70%	82%	75%	74%	84%	78%	82%	100%
	Disagree	15%	28%	18%	17%	21%	13%	20%	17%	0%
Career-technical education is for students who don't do well in school	Agree	48%	48%	47%	51%	45%	51%	46%	50%	69%
	Disagree	45%	49%	49%	35%	47%	41%	48%	47%	31%
Students should graduate from high school with the skills they need to get a job	Agree	92%	91%	95%	87%	94%	93%	88%	92%	100%
	Disagree	5%	5%	5%	8%	2%	4%	8%	6%	0%

Career and Technical Education		Education				
		High School Grad	Post High School/Tech School	Some college	Four-year college grad	Grad degree
To get a good job a student needs to go to college	Agree	58%	77%	73%	73%	66%
	Disagree	36%	23%	26%	23%	32%
There are many good jobs that don't require a college education	Agree	70%	80%	74%	73%	74%
	Disagree	19%	19%	23%	24%	25%
Some students just aren't good at academic subjects	Agree	81%	91%	80%	78%	79%
	Disagree	14%	9%	17%	18%	19%
Career-technical education is for students who don't do well in school	Agree	50%	57%	48%	45%	50%
	Disagree	39%	41%	45%	48%	47%
Students should graduate from high school with the skills they need to get a job	Agree	94%	93%	96%	88%	89%
	Disagree	2%	5%	3%	7%	8%

Californians across party lines agree that the education system is doing a mediocre to poor job both in teaching basic skills and in linking those skills to workforce preparedness. Table 8 shows the grades.

Table 8. Grades on Career and Technical Education

How well are California schools preparing students for both work and further education?	Frequency	
	Mean	Standard Deviation
Teaching students the "basics" (i.e. reading, writing & math)	5	2.6
Preparing students for a four year university	4.3	2.6
Preparing students for well paying jobs	4	2.5
Offering career-technical & vocational Education programs so students graduate High School ready for employment	3.9	2.5

When faced with a choice (see Table 9), a majority of California voters (51 percent) affirm that we should "fundamentally change our approach to education… so our students can compete for good paying jobs," while 42 percent argue that "we need to maintain our approach to education but do a better job of educating students in the basics." Younger voters (18-29) clearly prefer a shift in direction (60 percent to 30 percent), while senior citizens (voters 65+) want to stick to the basics (54 percent to 42 percent). Whites (52 percent to 41 percent) and Latinos (53 percent to 41 percent) prefer a change of course, while African-Americans want to focus on the basics (54 percent to 42 percent). Asians are closely split, but lean towards change (45 percent to 40 percent).

Table 9. Two Approaches to Education

Which of these two choices is closer to how you feel?	All	Party			Age				
	Overall	Rep	Dem	DTS	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
We need to fundamentally change our approach to education. We need to make our students competitive in an increasingly global economy. We spend too much time taking standardized tests and "teaching to the test." Instead, we need a new approach where we focus more on real-world work skills so our students can compete for good-paying jobs.	51%	48%	47%	46%	60%	51%	50%	52%	42%
We need to maintain our approach to education but do a better job of educating students in the basics. Too many students are graduating high school without the ability to read, write or do math well enough to succeed. Students simply can't be trained for real-world work skills unless they can read and write.	42%	44%	39%	43%	30%	38%	41%	41%	54%

Which of these two choices is closer to how you feel?	Ethnicity				Income				
	White/ Non Hispanic	Latino Hispanic	Black/ African American	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Less than $30k	$30k to under $75k	$75k to under $150k	$150k to under $500k	$500k and over
We need to fundamentally change our approach to education. We need to make our students competitive in an increasingly global economy. We spend too much time taking standardized tests and "teaching to the test." Instead, we need a new approach where we focus more on real-world work skills so our students can compete for good-paying jobs.	52%	53%	42%	45%	43%	57%	49%	62%	40%
We need to maintain our approach to education but do a better job of educating students in the basics. Too many students are graduating high school without the ability to read, write or do math well enough to succeed. Students simply can't be trained for real-world work skills unless they can read and write.	41%	41%	54%	40%	48%	37%	42%	32%	60%

Career and Technical Education	Education				
	High School Grad	Post High School/Tech School	Some college	Four-year college grad	Grad degree
We need to fundamentally change our approach to education. We need to make our students competitive in an increasingly global economy. We spend too much time taking standardized tests and "teaching to the test." Instead, we need a new approach where we focus more on real-world work skills so our students can compete for good-paying jobs.	44%	51%	52%	53%	53%
We need to maintain our approach to education but do a better job of educating students in the basics. Too many students are graduating high school without the ability to read, write or do math well enough to succeed. Students simply can't be trained for real-world work skills unless they can read and write.	46%	42%	41%	40%	40%

Technology and Schools

The rapid development of new technologies including computers, personal communications devices and digital media has transformed virtually all aspects of our economy and society. In many industries, adoption of new technologies has led to increased productivity. Schooling, however, remains a labor-intensive enterprise, organized around graded classrooms instructed by a full time teacher. In recent years, however, funding pressure on schools has led to increased class sizes and the elimination of many curricular and extracurricular opportunities for students. Increased reliance on new technologies might help to alleviate some of these cost pressures.

There are signs of change in both K-12 and higher education. In post-secondary institutions there has been a huge growth in online learning options over the past decade. In K-12 schools, in contrast, most classrooms look relatively unchanged, although online learning is beginning to establish itself. For example, increasing numbers of students enrolled in "credit recovery" and Advanced Placement programs are taking these courses online. A handful of schools in California and around the country (including Rocketship, School of One, High Tech High, and USC Hybrid High) are attempting more fundamental changes in the mix of teachers and technology. At School of One, for example, new technologies make it possible for all students to follow personalized daily schedules. Assessment data, academic history, technology and staffing information are analyzed daily along with teacher observations to produce a schedule for each student. The daily schedule allows pupils to move along at their own pace using the best resources and learning models available each day. These innovative schools are gaining attention and inspiring imitators.

Better incorporate technology into the classroom but not at the expense of teachers

California voters want more technology in the classroom. Table 10 shows voters' attitudes towards technology in schools. Voters believe "greater use of technology will improve the quality of education in California schools" (72 percent agree to 21 percent disagree). This finding applies across most sub-groups with minimal differences among voters of different ethnicities, education levels, income categories, and (perhaps surprisingly) teachers versus non-teachers. Interestingly, voters over 65 years of age support technology at higher rates (76 percent to 18 percent) than voters between the ages of 18 and 29 (63 percent to 26 percent). Democrats are more likely to agree that greater use of technology in the classroom will improve education (78 percent agree to 15 percent disagree) compared to Republicans (70 percent to 25 percent). Men have a stronger preference for an increased role for technology in education across the board. Both men and women agree that teachers need training to integrate new technology into their classrooms. By an overwhelming margin (86 percent agree) voters do not think that technology can replace teachers.

Table 10. Attitudes Toward Technology in Schools

The use of technology to improve student performance		All	Party			Age				
		Overall	Rep	Dem	DTS	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
Schools should invest more in computers and other technology	Agree	78%	73%	84%	72%	69%	79%	79%	81%	79%
	Disagree	18%	23%	11%	22%	24%	17%	17%	15%	17%
Greater use of technology will improve the quality of education	Agree	72%	70%	78%	66%	63%	73%	74%	72%	76%
	Disagree	21%	25%	15%	25%	26%	21%	19%	21%	18%
Schools should invest in new technologies, even if it means hiring fewer teachers	Agree	36%	39%	35%	33%	27%	38%	38%	33%	42%
	Disagree	55%	52%	58%	55%	65%	55%	51%	56%	52%
Computers can never replace teachers	Agree	82%	79%	88%	82%	80%	88%	80%	83%	86%
	Disagree	13%	18%	9%	14%	17%	7%	16%	13%	12%
Greater use of technology will reduce the cost of education	Agree	48%	46%	50%	46%	48%	44%	49%	46%	52%
	Disagree	34%	38%	30%	35%	33%	38%	31%	34%	34%

The use of technology to improve student performance		Ethnicity				Income				
		White/ Non Hispanic	Latino Hispanic	Black/ African American	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Less than $30k	$30k to under $75k	$75k to under $150k	$150k to under $500k	$500k and over
Schools should invest more in computers and other technology	Agree	77%	82%	86%	76%	77%	81%	73%	82%	100%
	Disagree	19%	15%	13%	13%	17%	16%	21%	16%	0%
Greater use of technology will improve the quality of education	Agree	71%	76%	75%	75%	71%	80%	73%	75%	74%
	Disagree	22%	19%	22%	12%	21%	19%	24%	22%	0%
Schools should invest in new technologies, even if it means hiring fewer teachers	Agree	35%	32%	35%	47%	31%	37%	36%	37%	40%
	Disagree	56%	59%	62%	39%	57%	55%	54%	60%	60%
Computers can never replace teachers	Agree	83%	83%	92%	82%	83%	84%	83%	89%	55%
	Disagree	14%	15%	8%	10%	11%	14%	14%	11%	45%
Greater use of technology will reduce the cost of education	Agree	46%	50%	55%	58%	48%	49%	44%	45%	84%
	Disagree	35%	34%	40%	22%	34%	32%	38%	37%	16%

The use of technology to improve student performance		Education				
		High School Grad	Post High School/Tech School	Some college	Four-year college grad	Grad degree
Schools should invest more in computers and other technology	Agree	80%	82%	79%	75%	76%
	Disagree	15%	16%	16%	18%	21%
Greater use of technology will improve the quality of education	Agree	73%	78%	74%	69%	71%
	Disagree	18%	20%	19%	22%	24%
Schools should invest in new technologies, even if it means hiring fewer teachers	Agree	34%	58%	33%	33%	40%
	Disagree	51%	38%	58%	56%	56%
Computers can never replace teachers	Agree	79%	72%	88%	83%	83%
	Disagree	15%	28%	10%	13%	15%
Greater use of technology will reduce the cost of education	Agree	50%	62%	47%	47%	45%
	Disagree	28%	24%	36%	32%	41%

Given the relative newness of the idea it is striking that a majority of voters favor a hybrid instructional model, which is often referred to as "blended" learning. In "blended" classrooms students spend part of their day working with a teacher and part of the day learning on line. Our findings suggest that voters are supportive of further experimentation, and hopeful that it will produce improved results for students.

Conclusions

The results from the PACE/USC Rossier polls indicate that Californians remain ambivalent when it comes to the state's public schools. They are critical of the direction they see the education system now moving, and they are ready for significant changes. Notably, they are convinced that schools need to give greater priority to preparing young people for the world of work, and they are sympathetic to the idea that schools should make more and better use of new technologies. At the same time, though, they are clearly worried that conditions in the state's schools can get even worse, and distrustful of the state's ability to use resources well or deliver better education to the state's young people. They are lukewarm in their support for the Governor's tax initiative, and if it passes they believe that any new resources should be used first to protect or restore the status quo (undo-

ing budget cuts, reducing class sizes) rather than to fund new initiatives. Overall, the results suggest that Californians have a clear understanding of what's needed to move the state's education system in a better direction, but that they lack confidence that this goal can be attained.

Acknowledgments

PACE/USC Rossier Poll August 2012

Full details on the polls and their results may be found at http://ed-policyinca.org/polls. The PACE/

USC Rossier polls are conducted by M4 Strategies/Tulchin Research. For the August poll, the details are as follows.

- We surveyed 1,041 likely registered California (550 parents, 491 non-parents) voters using an online format.

- We controlled and weighted the data based on party, age, ethnicity, gender, geography, and education to obtain percentages for these demographics that matched the population of likely registered California voters.

- Six percent of California adults opted to complete the phone survey in Spanish compared to 94 percent who completed it in English.

- The survey was administered from August 3 to August 7, 2012.

- We used an online panel provider to obtain our sample. Panelists were recruited from a reputable panel provider and invited to complete surveys typically by email notification in exchange for minimal monetary compensation (i.e., $0.50-$0.75), in the form of redeemable points.

- The panel provider ensures panelist identity and that IP addresses are legitimate from people wishing to become panelists.

- Also, panelists are screened for completing a large number of surveys and showing undesirable

behavior such as inconsistent re-sponding or "speeding" through surveys.

- The margin of error for the entire survey is +/- 3.0 percent at a 95th percent confidence interval.

- Some questions in the poll were administered to roughly equal haves of the samples, i.e., split samples, which produces larger margins of error.

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Policy Analysis for California Edu-cation (PACE) is an independent, non-partisan research center based at Stanford University, the Univer-sity of California, Berkeley, and the University of Southern California. PACE seeks to define and sustain a long-term strategy for comprehen-sive policy reform and continuous improvement in performance at all levels of California's education sys-tem, from early childhood to post-secondary education and training. PACE bridges the gap between research and policy, working with scholars from California's leading universities and with state and local policymakers to increase the impact of academic research on educational policy in California.

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