

AUGUST 25, 2015

To: Interested Parties
From: Jeff Harrelson, MFour Mobile Research
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Re: **PACE/USC Rossier School of Education California Survey Results**

MFour Research and Tulchin Research recently conducted a survey among 2,411 registered California voters statewide on behalf of Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) and the University of Southern California Rossier School of Education.

This is the latest in a series of polls assessing the attitudes of California voters towards public schools and education policy. Our survey covers a lot of ground on a broad range of education issues, including measuring evolving general attitudes toward public schools, school funding and the state's Local Control Funding Formula.

Here we present our analysis and key takeaways extending from the survey findings.

California voters continue to see a need for additional school funding and are more likely to support extending Prop 30 than making changes to the state's property tax system.

- California voters continue to see public schools as underfunded, with six in ten voters (60%) saying the state should be spending more on schools compared to just 26% who say public schools have enough money. This belief is particularly pronounced among parents with students in K-12 schools, with 74% of these voters saying the state should be spending more on schools to just 17% who believe public schools have enough money. The poll finds significant consistency in these attitudes among voters across the political spectrum, as the belief that schools need additional funding is shared by strong majorities of Democrats (73% to just 14% who believe schools are adequately resourced) and Independents (55%-26%) and by a plurality of Republicans (47%-40%). Two-thirds of female voters (66%) believe the state should be spending more on schools and male voters believe schools need additional funding by a 19-point margin (54%-35%).

Q21. Do you think California public schools currently have the money needed to provide students with a quality education, or do you think the state should be spending more on schools?	2015 Voters	2015 K-12 Parents	2014 Voters
California public schools have enough money	26%	17%	23%
The state of California should be spending more on schools	60%	74%	64%
Unsure	14%	9%	13%

Q21. Do you think California public schools currently have the money needed to provide students with a quality education, or do you think the state should be spending more on schools?	2015 Republicans	2015 Democrats	2015 Independents
California public schools have enough money	40%	14%	26%
The state of California should be spending more on schools	47%	73%	55%
Unsure	13%	12%	19%

Q21. Do you think California public schools currently have the money needed to provide students with a quality education, or do you think the state should be spending more on schools?	2015 Males	2015 Females
California public schools have enough money	35%	17%
The state of California should be spending more on schools	54%	66%
Unsure	11%	17%

Despite the state’s improving budget situation, including a record \$54 million in state funds allocated to K-12 education and an increase in per pupil spending to \$9,067 per student (a 29% increase from 2011-2012 and a 5% increase from 2013-2014), few voters report seeing more resources devoted to public schools. Just a third of California voters (33%) surveyed – and just 30% of parents of K-12 students – say that California public schools have had more money to spend in the classroom than they have had in recent years. Still this represents a modest uptick since 2014, when just 26% of voters perceived an increase in state education spending.

Q22. Over this past year, would you say that California public schools have had more money to spend in the classroom than they have had in recent years, less money, or about the same amount of money?	2015 Voters	2015 K-12 Parents	2014 Voters
Much more/A little more money	33%	30%	26%
About the same	26%	26%	25%
A little less/A lot less money	26%	32%	37%
Unsure	16%	14%	13%

While voters broadly support increased education funding, they also demonstrate a clear preference for one of the two leading proposals currently being considered by policymakers.

Q3. In 2012, California voters approved Proposition 30, authorizing a temporary one-quarter percent increase in the sales tax and temporary income tax increases on individual incomes above \$250,000 a year or joint filers above \$500,000. The money is primarily allocated to K-12 schools and generates about \$6 billion per year. The sales tax increase is due to expire in 2016 and the income tax increase is due to expire in 2018. Should California extend these tax increases to fund education, or should they let the tax increases expire as planned?	2015 Voters	2015 K-12 Parents
Extend both the income tax increase on those earning more than \$250,000 and the sales tax increase	29%	28%
Extend the income tax increase on those earning more than \$250,000, but let the sales tax expire	26%	26%
Extend the sales tax increase but let the tax increase on those earning more than \$250,000 expire	8%	12%
Let both tax increases expire	28%	22%
Unsure	9%	12%

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Extend both the income tax increase on those earning more than \$250,000 and the sales tax increase	17%	38%	30%
Extend the income tax increase on those earning more than \$250,000, but let the sales tax expire	17%	30%	29%
Extend the sales tax increase but let the tax increase on those earning more than \$250,000 expire	8%	10%	4%
Let both tax increases expire	48%	14%	28%
Unsure	9%	8%	10%

In all, 63% of voters support some form of extending Proposition 30, including 55% who support extending tax increases on those earning more than \$250,000 per year. Just 28% of voters support letting the Prop 30 tax increases expire entirely.

- Two-thirds (66%) of parents of K-12 students support extending Proposition 30 in some form to just 22% of parents who say it should be allowed to expire.
- Extending Proposition 30 in some form is backed by 78% of Democratic voters and 63% of independent voters, while Republicans are divided on the question with 42% supporting some form of extension to 48% who say we should allow it to expire.

But while voters broadly wish to see additional funding for public schools and support extending Proposition 30 in some form, a proposal to alter California’s property tax law, commonly known as Proposition 13, proves more divisive. This proposal - often referred to as “split roll” - was described to survey respondents as an adjustment to the state’s property tax formula for businesses that would generate \$6 to \$10 million per year in new revenue with 40% of that dedicated to public schools. Based on that description, a slight majority (51%) said they would support the proposal. Given such a proposal would likely face vocal and well-funded opposition from state business interests, such lukewarm early support from voters suggest a ballot measure in this format would face an uphill battle.

<p>Q4. Next year, California voters may be asked to vote on a measure to change the state’s property tax law, often called Proposition 13. Under this proposal, property taxes for businesses would be recalculated each year to reflect the current estimated property value or fair market value instead of being based on the purchase price as they are now.</p> <p>Property taxes for homeowners would continue to be based on the purchase price. It is estimated the proposal will generate between \$6-10 billion in new revenue, which would be allocated toward state and local government, including at least 40% dedicated to public schools.</p> <p>Do you support or oppose this proposal?</p>	<p>2015 Voters</p>	<p>2015 K-12 Parents</p>	<p>2015 Hispanic Voters</p>
Strongly support	18%	18%	14%
Somewhat support	32%	35%	38%
Somewhat oppose	18%	15%	19%
Strongly oppose	21%	18%	16%
Unsure	10%	14%	13%

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Strongly support	11%	27%	14%
Somewhat support	25%	38%	33%
Somewhat oppose	19%	14%	21%
Strongly oppose	37%	12%	18%
Unsure	9%	9%	15%

- Parents with K-12 kids are most likely to support this proposal, with 53% registering support.
- Support for the proposal is deeply divided along party lines, with Democrats favoring it by a margin of 65% to 26% (+39), independents favoring it by a margin of 47%-39% (+8), and Republicans rejecting it by a 20-point margin (36% support to 56% opposed).

Local Control Funding Formula Public Policy is virtually unknown among California voters, but increasingly gains positive feedback among voters who are aware.

Despite a mandate for local school districts to seek out and engage community input into public school funding plans, just 14% of voters say they have read or a heard a “little bit or “good deal” about the Local Control Funding Formula. Just 20% of voters with children in K-12 schools report reading or reading a “good deal” or a “little bit.” In fact, 65% of voters say they have never heard of LCFF.

It should be noted that some districts may have marketed participation opportunities to parents using alternative language.

Q70. In the past six months, have you heard or read anything about a policy called the Local Control Funding Formula, which changes the way California K-12 public schools are funded?	2015 Voters	2015 K-12 Parents	2014 Voters
I have heard or read a good deal about it	3%	5%	4%
I have heard or read a little bit about it	11%	15%	20%
I have not heard or read much about it	21%	27%	31%
I have never heard or read about it	65%	53%	45%

Impressions among those aware of the LCFF policy have improved since 2014, as 54% of voters report a positive impression, compared with 47% in 2014. Fifty-four percent of voters with children in K-12 schools also report a positive impression, indicating the more voters know about the policy, the more positive their impression.

Q71. Based on what you know, do you have a positive or negative impression of the Local Control Funding Formula approach? (n=336)	2015 Voters	2015 K-12 Parents	2014 Voters
Positive	54%	54%	47%
Negative	22%	14%	30%
Not sure/Don't know	24%	32%	23%

Not surprisingly, voters remaining highly supportive of the “local control” portion of the policy, even while most chose not to participate in the process.

Q73. The new Local Control Funding Formula policy requires that school districts work with parents and community members to determine the allocation of district education resources and accountability standards. How important do you think it is for parents and community members to be involved in this process?	2015 Voters	2015 K-12 Parents
Very important	49%	51%
Somewhat important	30%	30%
Not too important	7%	6%
Not at all important	3%	1%
Unsure	11%	11%

However, the portion of the policy dictating the allocation of education dollars proves far less appealing to voters in an engaged debate on the issue.

Q79. Please read the following statements about the Local Control Funding Formula policy and indicate which is closer to your own opinion.	2015 Voters	2015 K-12 Parents
Mary says the Local Control Funding Formula policy is a good idea because those California public school districts with the highest concentrations of high-needs students get additional funds to spend as they need. Concentrating funds on those school districts will have the greatest impact.	29%	27%
Sally says the Local Control Funding Formula is a bad idea because only some school districts benefit while other districts don't get any of the additional funds, even if they have high-needs students or serve middle class communities that saw substantial cuts during the recession. California education dollars should be shared equally among all school districts, not disproportionately distributed to a select few.	32%	36%
Neither	14%	15%
Unsure	26%	22%

California voters showing increasingly positive view of state education system, but still see room for improvement.

Overall, voters have a positive perception of the direction of California schools, awarding higher grades and more positive marks than we have seen in years past.

Voters award higher grades to California public schools, with voters continuing to give their own local public schools even higher grades.

Q9a 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?	2012 Voters	2013 Voters	2014 Voters	2015 Voters	GPA: 1.52
A	2%	1%	1%	2%	
B	13%	9%	11%	16%	
C	36%	45%	38%	43%	
D	28%	25%	28%	22%	
F	14%	14%	15%	10%	
D/K	7%	6%	6%	7%	

Q9b. Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D and F to rate the quality of their work at school. Suppose your local public schools were graded in the same manner. In the past few years, what grade would you give your local public schools?	2012 Voters	2013 Voters	2014 Voters	2015 Voters GPA: 1.63
A	6%	5%	8%	8%
B	22%	25%	22%	26%
C	37%	38%	34%	33%
D	16%	16%	17%	12%
F	16%	8%	9%	9%
D/K	10%	8%	10%	12%

Conversely, our research finds a steady decrease over time in the number of voters who perceive the quality of California public schools broadly, or their own local school specifically, to be getting worse.

Q10a. In the past few years, would you say California public schools have gotten better, worse or have stayed about the same?	2012 Voters	2013 Voters	2014 Voters	2015 Voters
Gotten better	7%	13%	11%	17%
Gotten worse	57%	48%	48%	39%
Stayed the same	27%	30%	33%	36%
Don't know	9%	9%	8%	9%

Q10b In the past few years, would you say your local public schools have gotten better, worse or have stayed about the same?	2012 Voters	2013 Voters	2014 Voters	2015 Voters
Gotten better	11%	12%	21%	17%
Gotten worse	45%	37%	34%	35%
Stayed the same	33%	41%	35%	38%
Don't know	11%	10%	10%	11%

Though Governor Brown’s overall approval numbers have seen a slight decrease, his approval rating on education policy remains consistent with the previous year.

Q5. Next you are going to read the names of some elected leaders. Please indicate whether you approve or disapprove of how that person is handling his or her job. If you've never heard of that person, you can indicate that as well. President Barack Obama	2013 Voters	2014 Voters	2015 Voters
Approve	57%	53%	53%
Disapprove	42%	46%	44%

Q6. Next you are going to read the names of some elected leaders. Please indicate whether you approve or disapprove of how that person is handling his or her job. If you've never heard of that person, you can indicate that as well. Governor Jerry Brown	2013 Voters	2014 Voters	2015 Voters
Approve	56%	59%	55%
Disapprove	36%	33%	35%

Q7. Would you say you approve or disapprove of how President Barack Obama is handling education in the U.S.?	2013 Voters	2014 Voters	2015 Voters
Approve	51%	45%	46%
Disapprove	40%	43%	41%

Q8. Would you say you approve or disapprove of how Governor Jerry Brown is handling education in California?	2013 Voters	2014 Voters	2015 Voters
Approve	42%	45%	45%
Disapprove	46%	38%	38%

Q8. Would you say you approve or disapprove of how Governor Jerry Brown is handling education in California?	2015 Republicans	2015 Democrats	2015 Independents
Approve	29%	60%	40%
Disapprove	56%	25%	39%

Survey Methodology: The PACE/USC Rossier Poll was conducted August 3-23, 2015 by MFour Research and Tulchin Research and surveyed 2,411 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 overall sample is +/- 2.9 percentage points.