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Education Needs...Back to Basics!

Published by [Lee S. Gliddon, Jr.](#) on Jun 27th, 2008 in [Commentary](#), [Education](#), [Unions](#) with [No Comments](#)

Public schools condemned for wrong emphasis

Nancy Zuckerbrod and Trevor Thompson - Associated Press Writers - 6/27/2008

WASHINGTON - A large majority of Americans think schools are placing too much emphasis on the wrong subjects, and more than half think they're doing just a fair job in preparing children for the work force or giving them the practical skills they need to survive as adults, according to an Associated Press poll released Friday.

So what do people think the schools should focus on?

More than a third said math. English was a distant second, at 21 percent. A tiny fraction picked art, music and the sciences, such as biology and chemistry.

"I don't think math is getting nearly enough attention," said Larry Michalec of San Diego, who has a grown daughter. "When was the last time you added up something without a calculator?"

Parents may want more math in school because they feel unprepared to help at home, said Janine Remillard, who teaches math-related courses at the University of Pennsylvania's education school.

"Math is the subject that parents are often intimidated by," she said. "We've allowed a lot of kids to just say, 'I'm not good at math,' ... and those kids become parents."

The economy and gas prices are the most important issues facing the country, according to those surveyed. Education was rated after those issues, generally viewed to be as important as health care. It was rated slightly ahead of the Iraq war.

Among minority parents, education is just as important an issue as the economy.

Minorities and whites rate schools differently. Fifty-nine percent of whites rate their local school as good or excellent, compared with 42 percent of minorities.

Minority parents are more likely to think their children are getting a better education than they received as children. Overall, the majority of those surveyed said the quality of U.S. schools has declined over the past 20 years.

Most think the United States is just keeping up or falling behind the rest of the world in education. On some recent international tests, U.S. students have posted flat scores and landed in the middle to bottom of the pack when compared with other nation's children.

Nearly all those surveyed say the quality of a country's education system has a big impact on a country's overall economic prosperity.

Americans have mixed views about standardized tests, which have grown in importance in recent years. The 2002 federal No Child Left Behind law judges schools based on math and reading tests taken by their students. Schools face increasingly tough consequences for scores that miss the mark.

About half of those polled said standardized tests measure the quality of education offered by schools well, while the rest disagree.

The vast majority think classroom work and homework - not standardized tests - are the best ways to measure how well students are doing.

"I think the time spent doing all those exams could be better spent in additional class time," said Jamie Norton of Gridley, Calif., a dad to 5-year-old twins.

School districts are increasingly tying student performance to teacher pay. Americans seem to support that trend. Sixty percent said the amount of pay teachers receive should be based at least in part on the performance of their



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students.

The nation is split over whether teachers should be allowed to strike, with half thinking strikes should be allowed. Whether strikes are allowed is governed by state law.

The AP survey of 833 adults and 854 parents of school-aged children was conducted June 18-23 and had a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.4 percentage points for each sample.

The poll was conducted over the Internet by Knowledge Networks, which initially contacted people using traditional telephone polling methods and followed with online interviews. People chosen for the study who had no Internet access were given it for free.

The research was financially supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Associated Press had sole editorial responsibility for the design of the survey questionnaire and the analysis of the survey results.

Lee ADDS: Too much emphasis is given to new and improved math. This is due to the extreme amounts of money that must be spent on new books instead of teaching tried and true math subjects. Math, reading and writing will be needed throughout the lifetime of every student. Any subject that falls outside of those realms must be closely examined before being considered!

Additionally, there is entirely too much union involvement in our school systems.

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