



**EDUCATIONAL TESTING SERVICE  
Communications & Public Affairs  
Princeton, New Jersey 08541-0001**

ETS Contact: Tom Ewing  
+1 (609) 683-2899  
[mediacontacts@ets.org](mailto:mediacontacts@ets.org)

## **ETS Poll: Americans Say High Schools Aren't Challenging Our Students**

Princeton, New Jersey (June 22, 2005) - Survey Reveals Americans Believe U.S. Will Be Less Competitive in 25 Years Unless High Schools Are Overhauled

In a major new opinion survey on education reform, only nine percent of Americans said they believe that most high school students are being challenged by their schoolwork. If not addressed, 76 percent of adults polled believe the U.S. will be less competitive 25 years from now.

The results are from "Ready for the Real World: Americans Speak on High School Reform," ETS's fifth annual "Americans Speak," public opinion poll conducted by Democratic pollster Peter Hart and Republican pollster David Winston.

"Americans view our public education system as central to our country's success in the world," says ETS President and CEO Kurt Landgraf. "But they also believe that after nearly two decades of reform efforts, the key to success continues to reside in rigorous learning for all students and improved teacher quality. Americans believe in standards and accountability. And, they want reform efforts expanded to address pressing quality issues with our nation's high schools."

The survey showed a broad range of support for various high school reform measures:

- 74 percent of the public strongly favor measures to ensure teachers are experts in the subjects they teach.
- 80 percent strongly or somewhat agree we should increase teacher salaries to hire and retain more well-qualified teachers even if it means increased taxes.
- 64 percent strongly favor emphasizing real world learning opportunities in high school through work study, community service, and vocational courses.
- 80 percent favor requiring students to pass a statewide graduation test before they can receive a diploma.
- Four in 10 (42 percent) strongly favor extending the No Child Left Behind reforms to high schools in order to raise standards and hold high schools accountable. An additional 29% somewhat favor such action.
- All groups overwhelmingly favor a rigorous course of study that all students should have before graduation. This includes support for computer science (95%), four years of English (85 percent), three years of history and civics (81 percent), four years of mathematics (73 percent), at least three years of science (69 percent), and two years of foreign language (63 percent).

### **Awareness of NCLB continues to grow**

"The survey also showed that public awareness of the federal No Child Left Behind education reforms has nearly doubled from, 31 percent in 2001 to 61 percent in 2005," explains Pollster David Winston. "Yet, while a plurality (45 percent) of all adults and K-12 parents (46 percent) favorably view the

legislation, 75 percent of high school teachers have unfavorable opinions of NCLB. This disconnect on such an important issue is worrisome."

Another finding indicated that only 6 percent of adults say that a great deal has been done towards making the reforms necessary to improve K-8 education, and 50 percent believe additional major reform efforts should focus on elementary schools.

"Education is so critical and the public desire for improvement so strong that people offer strong support for a broad range of proposed reform solutions," says pollster Peter Hart. "What is also clear is that while the public supports measures to create more individualized approaches to learning that take into account each student's needs and abilities, they also favor reforms with the goal of raising standards and holding both schools and students accountable."

From April 5-17, 2005, Peter D. Hart Research Associates and The Winston Group conducted a national survey among 2,250 adults, including a national sample of 1,009 adults. Additional groups were oversampled to provide statistically significant results, specifically, an additional 180 parents of K-12 students to bring the total to 666 parents of K-12 students, an additional 150 parents of high school students to bring the total to 371 parents of high school students, 300 adults in California for a total of 439, 302 adults from New Jersey for a total of 319, and 309 adults in Ohio for a total of 393. In addition, telephone surveys among 300 high school administrators (superintendents, school board members, principals and vice principals) and 300 high school teachers were conducted. At the 95 percent confidence level, the data's margin of error is  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points among all adults and larger for the subsamples of parents of K-12 students ( $\pm 3.8$  percent), parents of high school students ( $\pm 5.1$  percent), California adults ( $\pm 5.6$  percent), New Jersey adults ( $\pm 6.7$  percent), Ohio adults ( $\pm 6.1$  percent), high school teachers ( $\pm 5.7$  percent), and high school administrators ( $\pm 5.7$  percent). Sample tolerances for other subgroups are larger.

## **About ETS**

ETS is a nonprofit institution with the mission to advance quality and equity in education by providing fair and valid assessments, research, and related services for all people worldwide. In serving individuals, educational institutions, and government agencies around the world, ETS customizes solutions to meet the need for teacher professional development products and services, classroom and end-of-course assessments, and research-based teaching and learning tools. Founded in 1947, ETS today develops, administers and scores more than 24 million tests annually in more than 180 countries, at over 9,000 locations worldwide.

# # #