

Assessing Education in California: The Views of Students, Parents, and Teachers

Question: What do you think is the most important problem facing...[California schools] today?* Is there another problem... that is almost as important? [Up to two replies were accepted.]

	Students	Parents	Teachers
Administrative	6	31	35
Budget cuts/lack of funds	4	18	23
Parents' Role		9	31
Parents not involved in children's schoolwork/homework	-	4	15
Parents not involved in school activities	-	4	10
Students' Preparation	18	10	26
Students not fluent in English/bilingual education/many languages	1	2	11
Students' undisciplined behavior in classes	7	4	6
Curriculum	9	31	23
Classes too large/overcrowded classrooms	6	22	16
Infrastructure	13	11	13
School facilities generally run down	3	3	4
Not enough textbooks/teaching materials	5	2	4
Teachers' Performance	10	18	9
Teachers without enough training	1	6	5
Teachers who don't care/are burnt out	4	8	1
Crime	32	19	3
Gangs on campus	8	11	2
Drug use on campus	15	4	1
Violence/fights on campus	13	5	
Other	11	7	14
Poverty in families	-	-	3
Multi-cultural/ethnic differences	4	2	3

*Question wording varies slightly for each sample.

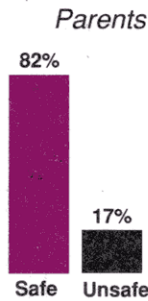
Note: The *Los Angeles Times* conducted three surveys on Education in California in late 1997, and results are shown on this page and the next three pages. One sample was of 2,804 California adults, including 1,281 parents of schoolchildren, November 18-December 12, 1997. Here, we show responses of parents only. Another sample was of 1,091 California teachers' union members, currently teaching in grades K through 12. The survey was conducted November 13-16, 1997. And, finally, 545 children between 12 and 17 years of age were interviewed November 18-December 12, 1997.

How Safe Are The Schools?

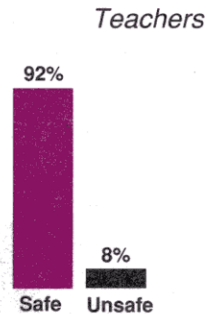
Question: In general, how safe do you feel you are from the threat of crime and violence on your campus...?



Question: How safe do you think your child is in his or her school from crime or violence...?

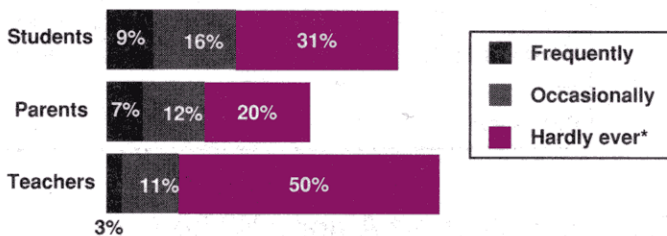


Question: ...[H]ow safe do you feel on your school campus...?



Note: Responses of "Safe" = very/somewhat safe combined, and "Unsafe" = somewhat/very unsafe combined.

Question: Have you ever seen or heard of a student who has brought a weapon, such as a gun or a knife, to school? [If yes] Do you think students bring weapons to school frequently, occasionally, or hardly ever?*



Those responding "No weapons"

Students - 44%
Parents - 60%
Teachers - 36%

Note: Question varies slightly for parents and teachers.

Why Do Some Kids Do Better Than Others?

Question: What do you think best explains why some students do better in school than other students...?

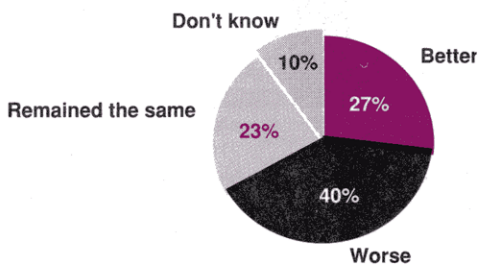
	Students	Parents	Teachers
Work harder	52%	10%	6%
Parent involvement with schoolwork	15%	46%	43%
More stable home life	5%	13%	24%
Natural ability	11%	6%	4%
Better teachers	3%	5%	2%
Stable home life and parental involvement	-	-	2%
Preferential treatment	1%	2%	-

California Parents Of All Ethnic Backgrounds Fault Public School Performance

Parents of Asian and Latino Backgrounds Are Much Less Critical of Recent Developments Than White and African-American Parents

Question: In your opinion, would you say that the overall quality of public school education in California has gotten better over the last ten years, or has it gotten worse, or has the quality of public schools remained about the same over the last ten years?

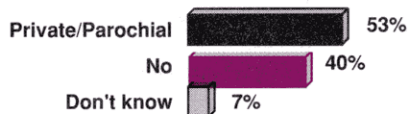
All Parents



	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Better	21%	18%	33%	39%
Worse	46	55	34	22
Remained the same	24	25	24	16
Don't know	9	2	9	23

Question: Would you prefer to send your children to a private or parochial school instead of public school, or not?

All Parents



	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Private/Parochial	48%	63%	55%	60%
No	45	32	37	31
Don't know	7	5	8	9

Yes to Vouchers in All Groups—But Much Less Support Among White Parents

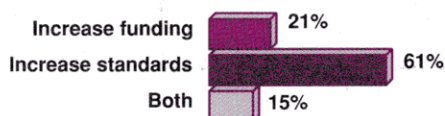
Question: Do you favor or oppose establishing a school voucher program that would allow parents to use tax funds to send their children to the school of their choice, even if it were a private school?

	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Favor	63%	64%	68%	64%
Oppose	31	33	22	24
Don't know	6	3	10	12

All Groups of Parents Say That More Spending Is Not the Answer to School Problems

Question: Which statement comes closer to your point of view: "The best way to improve California's public schools is to increase funding" or "The best way to improve California's public schools is to increase academic standards"?

All Parents

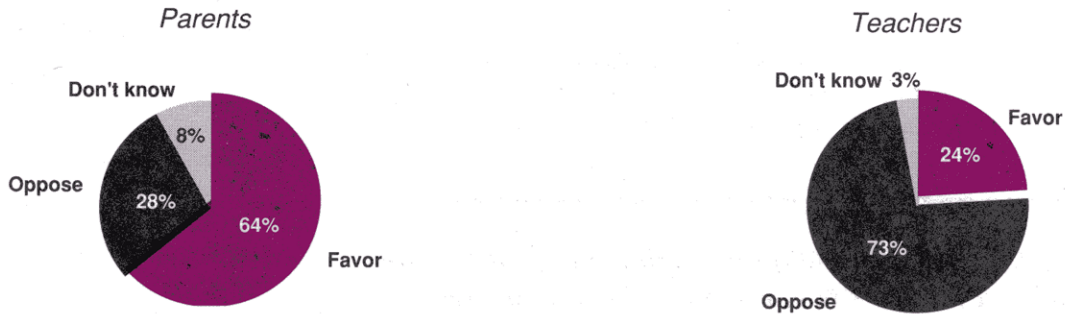


	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Increase funding	19%	24%	24%	25%
Increase standards	60	53	68	52
Both	19	22	7	16

California Parents and Teachers: Allied and at Odds

On Many Issues Affecting the Teachers' Guild—Like School Vouchers— Teachers and Parents Often Differ Sharply

Question: Do you favor or oppose establishing a school voucher program that would allow parents to use tax funds to send their children to the school of their choice, even if it were a private school?



But, Surprisingly Perhaps, Parents and Teachers Differ Little in Their Responses Overall to "Bilingual" and "English Immersion" Programs

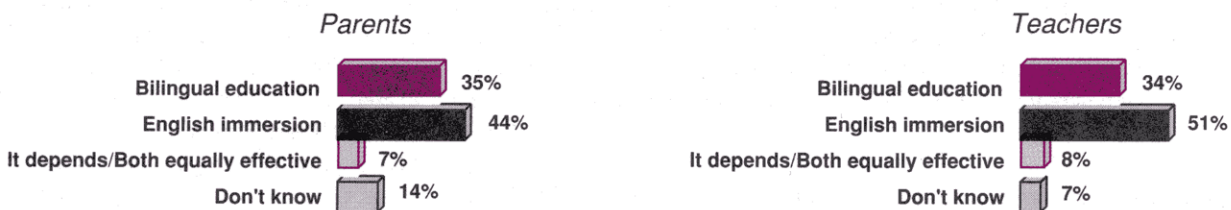
Question: ...[W]hat is your impression of bilingual education in California's public schools? Is it very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, very unfavorable—or haven't you heard enough about it to say?



Question: Are you in favor of English immersion programs in public schools, or are you opposed to them?



Question: Generally speaking, based on what you know, which of the two programs do you feel is a more effective method of teaching children who are not fluent in English: bilingual education or English-immersion?



Source: Surveys by the *Los Angeles Times*, November 13-16 (teachers' union members) and November 18-December 12, 1997 (students, adults and parents).