

August 15, 2004

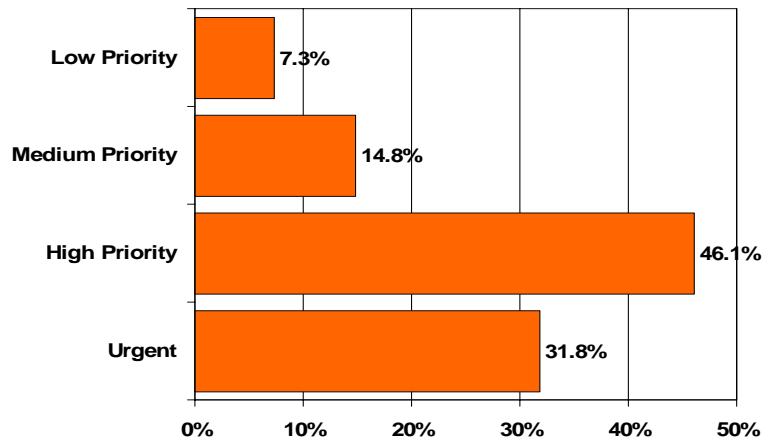
Alabamians and K-12 Education:

- **Concerned About Funding for Public Education**
- **Supportive of a Lottery for Public Education**
- **Satisfaction with the Quality of Local Public Education**

(Auburn, August 24) The Center for Governmental Services at Auburn University announces the results of a statewide public opinion survey on the perceptions and attitudes of Alabamians regarding the quality, performance, and funding of public school education in the State¹. The *Ask-Alabama* poll underscores that improving the quality of education is a high concern for most Alabamians. The poll also indicates a general awareness that the level of funding support for public education in the State is inadequate, but that the local community is doing all that it can. Overall, Alabamians are generally satisfied with the quality of their local public schools, teachers, and curricula.

Public School education is an important issue for Alabamians. Seventy-eight percent of the public characterized the quality of the public school system as an *urgent* or *high priority*, and only 7% assessed this issue as a *low priority*. In addition, 78% followed the performance of public school education *closely* or *very closely*, while less than 6% paid no attention to the performance of public school education.

The Quality of Public School Education is an Important Issue for Alabamians



¹ The survey of a random telephone sample of 609 Alabamians was conducted during June 2004. The estimated margin of error is +/- 4%.

Among Alabamians, there is an acknowledgement that K-12 public education is short of funds, but there is also reluctance to increase the funding burden at the level of the local school district. A large majority of Alabamians (87%) *agree* or *strongly agree* that there is a need to increase funding for public education in their community, while 65% believe that that their local community is supporting the schools as well as it can.

There is a Need to Increase Funding Support for Public Education in Your Community Today

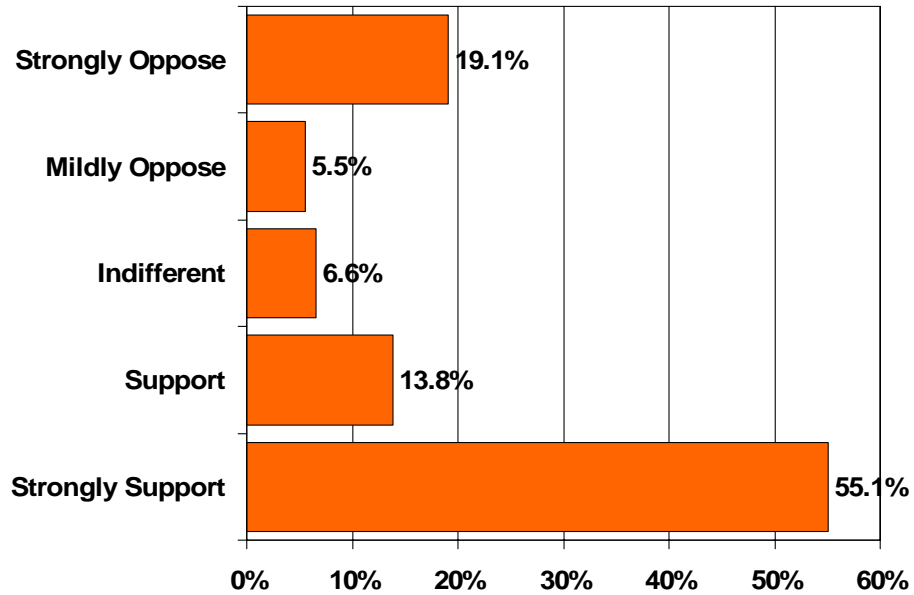
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 307 | 50.4 | 51.8 | 51.8 |
| | Agree | 208 | 34.2 | 35.1 | 86.8 |
| | Neither Agree nor Disagree | 16 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 89.5 |
| | Disagree | 45 | 7.4 | 7.6 | 97.1 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 17 | 2.8 | 2.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 593 | 97.4 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 16 | 2.6 | | |
| Total | | 609 | 100.0 | | |

Your Community is Supporting the School District as Well as It Can Financially

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 90 | 14.8 | 15.7 | 15.7 |
| | Agree | 285 | 46.8 | 49.7 | 65.3 |
| | Neither Agree nor Disagree | 26 | 4.3 | 4.5 | 69.9 |
| | Disagree | 135 | 22.2 | 23.5 | 93.4 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 38 | 6.2 | 6.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 574 | 94.3 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 35 | 5.7 | | |
| Total | | 609 | 100.0 | | |

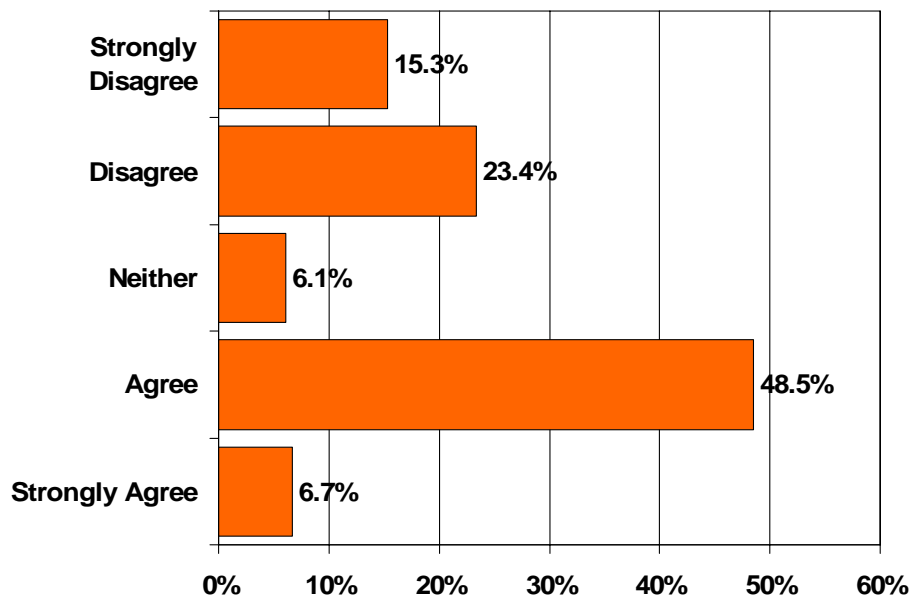
One method to increase funding for education that generates public support is the lottery. Fifty-five percent of the sample stated that they would *strongly support* a lottery to benefit education in Alabama, while less than 20% would *strongly oppose* such a lottery.

Most Alabamians Would Support a Lottery for Education



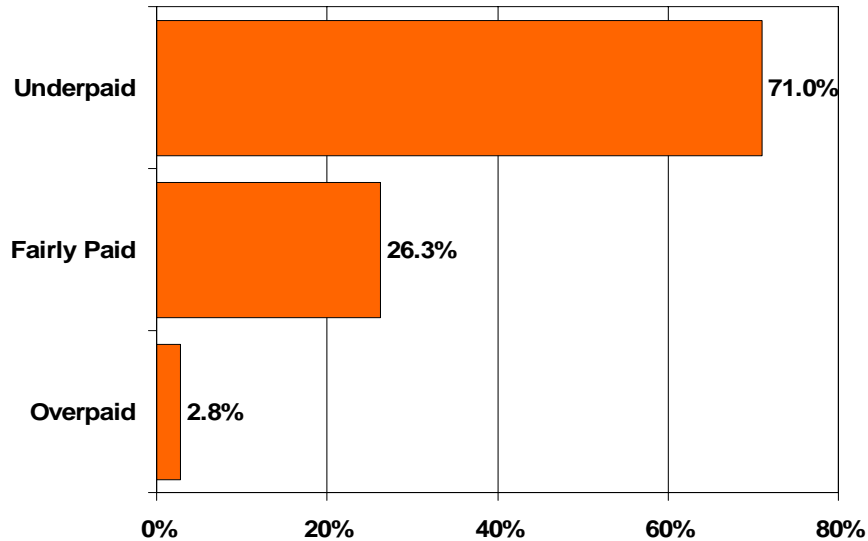
Alabamians do not characterize their local public school system as wasteful with the funds that they receive. A majority of survey respondents (55%) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their school district uses its funds wisely and efficiently.

Your Local School District Uses Its Funds Wisely and Efficiently



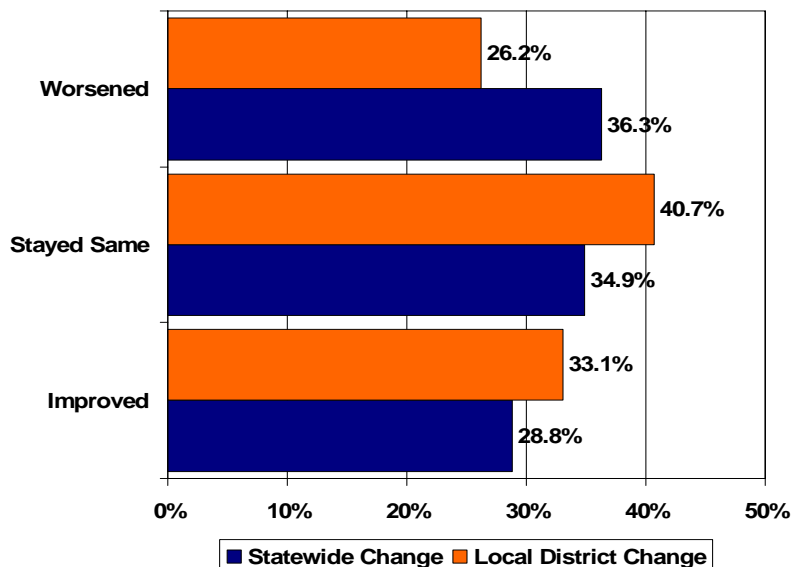
A majority (58%) of the respondents are also satisfied with the quality of the teaching staff in their local schools and assess teacher quality as *excellent* or *good*. In addition, more than 70% of Alabamians believe that their public school teachers are underpaid, while less than 3% consider teacher salaries to be too high.

Are School Teachers Overpaid, Fairly Paid, or Underpaid?



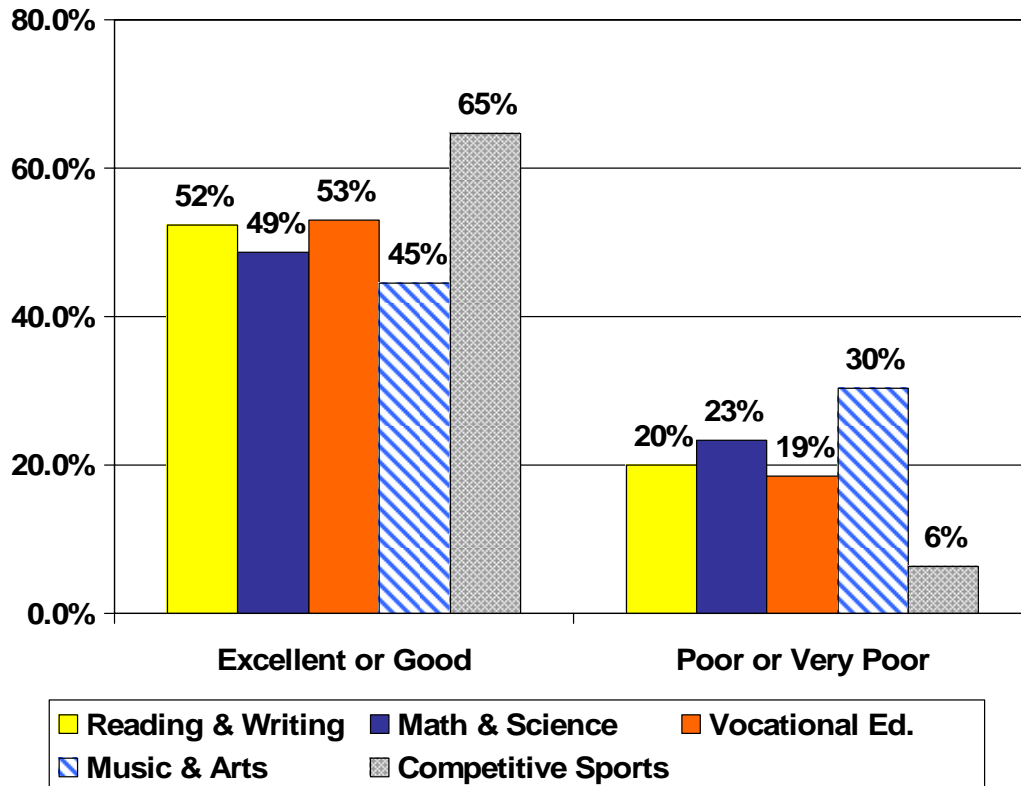
There are relatively equal divisions among Alabamians in their perceptions about the change in quality of public school education over the last few years. Alabamians are slightly more critical of statewide education trends than they are of trends in their own local school systems.

Change in Direction in the Quality of Alabama & Local District Public Schools



Alabamians evaluate the quality of the curricula in their local schools relatively highly. More than half of the respondents assess that the quality of Reading, Writing and Literature, Vocational Education, and particularly Competitive Sports are either *excellent* or *good* in their local school district. Music and the Arts receive the lowest assessment of all the subjects in the curricula. Forty-five percent of the respondents give Music and the Arts an *excellent* or *good* rating, and 30% give this part of the curriculum a *poor* or *very poor* assessment.

Qualitative Assessment of Specific Curricular Subjects in Local Schools



Summary of Major Findings

- Alabamians are deeply concerned about local public school education.
- There is awareness that funding for local schools needs to be increased.
- 69% would favor a lottery dedicated to supporting education in Alabama, and 55% strongly support this position.
- Most have confidence in how local public schools spend public funds.
- Over 70% believe that teachers are underpaid in their district.
- Relatively equal proportions of respondents see the schools improving as see it staying the same or deteriorating.
- A majority of Alabamians perceive that the schools are doing a good job with specific subject matter areas in the curriculum