

## Alabamians and K-12 Education Media Release Points

### Ask-Alabama Poll, Summer 2004

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### Significant Findings

#### 1. Alabamians pay attention to and are concerned about K-12 public education

- a. 78% follow or closely follow the performance of public school education in their school district.
- b. 78% consider that the quality of the public school system is an *urgent* or *high priority* public issue.
- c. 73% do not think that State-level officials are giving sufficient attention to the quality of public school education.

*Alabamians have not abandoned their public schools. They care deeply about how well their schools perform and the quality of education that their children receive. Although K-12 education is considered to be a major priority by more Alabamians than any other public policy issue, nearly three quarters also perceive that the issue is given short shrift by our State officials.*

#### 2. Alabamians recognize that the schools need more money, but also that the local area is not able to provide these funds.

- a. 87% of respondents strongly agree or agree that there is a need to increase funding for public education in their community. Less than 10% disagree.
- b. 65% believe that their local community is financially supporting their school district to the best of their ability. 67% do not think that State elected officials are giving enough attention to the problem of funding our school systems.

*Voters in Alabama understand that the public schools must have additional financial support to compete in the global marketplace. The issue for many Alabamians is that the local community does not have enough financial wherewithal to carry this burden alone, and that State officials need to work on an approach that would benefit all the children in our state.*

**3. There is strong support for a lottery that is tied to public school education.**

- a. 55% of Alabamians would *strongly support* a lottery in Alabama if the proceeds were earmarked to support education in the State. An additional 14% *mildly support* an education-based lottery and only 25% *mildly* or *strongly oppose* an education lottery.

*More than two thirds of voters are predisposed to support a lottery in Alabama today. However, a favorable vote for a lottery is not pre-ordained; the electorate will want assurances that the proceeds from the lottery will go to education and that other sources of funding would not be cut.*

**4. Alabamians have confidence in how the schools use their funds.**

- a. 55% agree or strongly agree that their local school district uses its funds wisely and efficiently.

*Alabamians still trust their local schools. In fact, the local school may be the only public institution in the State where the taxpayer feels that the money they receive is well spent.*

**5. Alabamians consider their public school teachers to be of high quality, but underpaid.**

- a. Only 8% believe that the overall quality of their school teachers is *poor* or *very poor*.
- b. 71% believe that school teachers are currently underpaid, while only 3% believe that teachers are being paid too much.

*We value our teachers as a treasured resource in the State as well as the heart and soul of the school system. For most Alabamians, it seems that improving schools and raising the salaries of our teachers go hand in hand.*

**6. Alabamians are divided in how they perceive the quality of their schools statewide.**

- a. About a third of Alabamians (36%) believe that the overall quality of public education in the State has worsened during the last few years; about a third (35%) perceive that educational quality has not changed; and a little less than a third (29%) believe that it has improved.
- b. Alabamians divide 50 – 50 between those who think that the public schools in Alabama are as good as or better than in neighboring states and those who think that Alabama education is worse than that found in neighboring states.

**7. Evaluation of the quality of local schools is more favorable than for the State as a whole.**

- a. 3 out of 4 Alabamians (77%) perceive that their local schools are at least as good, if not better, than schools in neighboring areas.
- b. 74% agree that the quality of their local schools has stayed the same or improved in recent years.

*Generally, Alabamians are satisfied with the performance of their local schools. This is not unusual since it is common for people to be predisposed to support those institutions with which they have greater familiarity and knowledge.*

**8. We perceive the quality of instruction in public schools in particular subjects to be at least satisfactory, if not better.**

- a. At least 70% of respondents give a satisfactory or higher evaluation to the quality of instruction in each major subject matter area.
- b. Instruction in the arts and music receives the lowest evaluation (70% satisfactory or higher).
- c. Competitive interscholastic sports receive the highest evaluation (94% satisfactory or higher).

*This study highlights the importance of public school education for Alabamians. We are eager to support our schools, and we have confidence and pride in the schools, in the teachers, and with the quality of instruction. Nevertheless, we are frustrated by the lack of available local resources to accomplish the task at hand, as well as the lack of attention given to public education by State elected decision-makers. Alabamians are ready to support their schools and have confidence that the schools can get the job done. What appears to be lacking now is a plan and the leadership to carry out that plan.*

**Poll Facts**

Dates of Survey: June 12 - June 27, 2004  
Sample Size: 609  
Estimated Margin of Error: +/- 4%  
Type of Survey: Random telephone survey of Alabamians 19 or older