



**2018 PDK POLL
TOOLKIT**
for chapters

PDKPoll
50 YEARS OF AMERICAN VOICES



The annual PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools is the most trusted source of public opinion about K-12 education because of its rigor, its depth, and its commitment to capturing all voices and viewpoints. This year, as always, PDK has taken great care to frame poll questions as objectively as possible and to share the full and unvarnished results. Rather than offering a partial or restricted view of the data, PDK is committed to allowing the public to speak for itself.

The national PDK poll is financed solely by the PDK Educational Foundation, which permits PDK to offer an independent and unbiased report of American public opinion. PDK produces the annual poll as part of its mission to engage educators and serve schools so every student thrives. The PDK poll results provide researchers with some of the finest longitudinal data on how the public feels about the nation's schools and education policies. Education policy makers use the poll's findings to inform their decisions, and educators across the country use the results to guide planning and action in their communities.

We've designed a protocol that will allow you to have a robust discussion about the 2018 poll results during a 90-minute chapter meeting or several focused conversations over a longer period of time. In addition, we have included a section on "How to move these poll results into action" that will help guide informed action in your community.

WHAT'S IN YOUR POLL TOOLKIT?

- » Highlights of the 2018 PDK poll report (PDF)
- » An overview infographic from AZEd News
- » The full 2018 PDK poll report (PDF)
- » The topline of data from the 2018 PDK poll report (PDF)
- » A PowerPoint presentation of the highlights of the 2018 PDK poll report (PowerPoint and PDF)
- » Suggested questions for discussion (included in this PDF)
- » How to move these poll results into action (included in this PDF)

PDK POLL TALK

STEP #1: INTRODUCE THE POLL TO YOUR GROUP

Time: 5–20 minutes

Expecting everyone to read the poll deeply would be ideal, but that may be unrealistic so we offer two options for introducing the poll to your group.

Option #1. Use the PowerPoint presentation to introduce the key points of the 2018 poll results.

Provide participants with either a PDF of the full 2018 PDK poll report or the highlights sheet to allow them to follow along and make notes as they hear the presentation. The infographic from AZEd News is another helpful way to share the main points of the 2018 results, but it does not cover all of the results.

Time: 20 minutes

After your presentation is complete, use the PowerPoint presentation to focus the group's attention on the relevant questions during the discussion.

Option #2. Ask participants to read the executive summary for the report (pages K3 and K4 in the supplement) or the highlights sheet.

Time: 5 minutes

STEP #2: BEGIN A DISCUSSION WITH SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS

Time: 20 minutes

After everyone has had time to read the results, use the PowerPoint presentation to bring the group together again and focus the group's attention on the relevant questions.

- » Which result surprised you the most?
- » Which result could you have predicted?
- » Do you believe the adults in your community would respond in similar ways to these questions? Where would they be the same? Where would they differ and why?
- » Do you believe students in your community would respond in similar ways to these questions? Where would they be the same? Where would they differ and why?

- » Do you believe teachers in your community would respond in the same way as other adults? Where would they be the same? Where would they differ?
- » Which of these questions/results has the greatest implications for your community? Why do you think that?

STEP #3: GO DEEPER INTO THE POLL QUESTIONS

You could easily have a chapter conversation that ends with Step #2. Your members may be so engaged in this conversation that Step #3 is not necessary.

However, if your group wants to go deeper, we recommend two ways to do this.

Option #1. Use your conversation in Step #2 to identify one or two questions that are of most interest to your members or your community OR preselect the questions based on the knowledge you already have about this group and your community.

Time: 30 minutes

- Look through all of the questions — the 2018 poll has 45 questions — and identify the topics that you believe are most significant for your group or your community.
- Ask participants to locate the summary about those questions in the full PDK poll report. *Time: 2 minutes per section*
- Locate the relevant questions in the topline of data. (The questions are not in the same order as they are published in the PDK poll report. If you are reading the PDF online, try first to search on a keyword in the question.) NOTE: This step works best if the facilitator identifies the topics before the meeting and prepares the relevant chunk of the topline to share with the group.

Option #2. Do a jigsaw reading and presentation.

Time: 27 minutes

- Divide the content into easily consumed sections. This year's poll includes 11 sections. If you have enough participants, you could assign one section to each person. If you have fewer than 11 participants, however, identify sections that are most significant for your group or your community and assign one per participant. *Time: 5 minutes*



- After each person has read their assigned section, go round-robin and have each participant present the results to the group. Emphasize that the reader should present the finding in a straight-forward manner. No editorializing! *Time: Allow 2 minutes per section. Maximum time: 22 minutes*

Each option has advantages and disadvantages. By focusing on just one or two questions, your group will develop a deeper understanding of those

questions. Reading just the summary or the highlights will take less time.

STEP #4. WHAT DO YOU SEE IN THESE RESULTS?

Use the Discussion Questions on p. 4-7 in this packet to launch your discussion. Of course, add your own questions as well!

VARIATIONS

You may want to know how Americans have responded over time to a particular question. PDK does not ask the same questions every year, but we do repeat many questions. As you read the PDK poll report, look at questions (listed below) that have been asked previously. Look at the topline to see each year's responses broken out. Do you see a trend in those responses? What events may have contributed to trends or shifts in public attitude?

2018 QUESTIONS ASKED IN EARLIER POLLS

- » Do you think the salaries for teachers in your community are too high, too low, or just about right? (*Asked first in 1969*)
- » Would you like to have your child take up teaching in the public schools? (*Asked first in 1969*)
- » Do you have trust and confidence in public school teachers? (*Asked first in 2010*)
- » Thinking again about your oldest child in K-12, when he/she is at school, do you fear for your child's physical safety? (*Asked first in 1977*)
- » Which approach do you think is preferable in order to improve public education in America — reforming the existing public school system or finding an alternative to the existing public school system? (*Asked first in 1997*)
- » How likely do you think it is that you or your family will be able to pay for college for your child in K-12? (*Asked first in 1995*)
- » What do you think are the biggest problems that the public schools of your community must deal with? (*Asked first in 1969*)
- » Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves in your community were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or Fail? (*Asked first in 1974*)
- » Using the A, B, C, D, and Fail scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends? (*Asked first in 1985*)
- » How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A, B, C, D, or Fail? (*Asked first in 1981*)

PDK POLL TALK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

TEACHER PAY. Two-thirds of Americans say teachers are underpaid, just 6% say teacher pay is too high. Supplement P. K5

- » What is the average teacher starting salary in your community? What is the average overall teacher salary in your community? Do you believe most of the adults in your community are aware of teacher salaries and benefit packages? For students with aspirations of becoming teachers: Does teacher salary concern you?
- » Teacher pay is a locally determined issue. Is it realistic to ever think that teacher pay will increase substantially enough to attract more people to the profession?
- » Many of the comments posted after publication of the 2018 results indicated that the public has little understanding of what teachers actually earn. What could you do in your community to improve community understanding about teacher salaries — without compromising the privacy of individual teachers?
- » Do you know the average starting salary for other professions in your community? The average home price? If you were going to improve public understanding about teacher salaries, what other information would you need to do that?
- » How do you explain the regional differences in support for teacher pay increases?

TEACHER STRIKES. An overwhelming 78% of public school parents say they would support teachers in their community if they went on strike for more pay. Among the general public, 73% say they would support a teacher job action related to pay. Supplement P. K5

- » Why do you think the public supports strikes? Do strikes work?
- » Have you ever been on strike — whether as a teacher or in another line of work? How did that experience shape your view of this issue?

- » What would support for a teachers strike look like in your community? What could you do now to help teachers in your community avoid a strike?
- » Support for a teachers strike on behalf of higher pay was higher in the South than in other parts of the country. What explains this difference?

TEACHING PROFESSION. Even as most Americans continue to say they have high trust and confidence in teachers, a majority (54%) also say they don't want their own children to become teachers, most often citing poor pay and benefits as the primary reason for their reluctance. Supplement P. K7

- » What do you think explains this drop in interest in having one's child become a teacher? Do you believe this change is driven by poor pay and benefits, or do you believe there are other reasons for this? For students, have you been discouraged from pursuing a career in education? If so, why?
- » What efforts are underway in your community to encourage high school students and others to consider teaching as a profession? For students, what more can be done to encourage young people to pursue a teaching career?
- » What could you do personally to encourage interest in teaching?
- » Some have said that teachers' complaints about low pay and working conditions have contributed to a negative view of the profession? Do you agree with this?
- » If you are an educator, what do you say to others about the teaching profession? Do you recommend it? Or do you encourage others to consider other professions?
- » Most Americans have trust and confidence in their child's teacher, yet there's been a policy push over the past 15 to 20 years to isolate the effect of the teacher on student achievement which has resulted in blaming teachers. Why is there such a disconnect between what Americans say about teachers and what policy makers, pundits, and funders say and do?



SCHOOL SECURITY. Parents lack strong confidence that schools can protect their children against a school shooting but favor armed police, mental health screenings, and metal detectors more than arming teachers to protect their children. *Supplement P. K9*

- » Do you believe your local schools are safe?
- » How does this finding match what you hear in your own community? Are parents fearful when their children are at school? Are teachers fearful when they go to work in the schools in your community? How do students perceive their safety while at school?
- » What do you think local communities and educators should be doing about school safety? Since there isn't likely to be a significant increase in capital funds to pay for infrastructure upgrades, how should parents fears be addressed?
- » Is addressing school safety an issue of infrastructure or mental and emotional security? Can you address one without the other? If yes, which should come first?
- » Parents are more supportive of arming teachers when teachers have 80 hours or more of training in “the use of force, weapons proficiency, legal issues, and first aid.” Thinking about a school or district

you know best, how would such preparation for educators occur? Is there support among parents and/or teachers for such an intensive PD effort in the school or district you know best? For students, how do you feel about these types of measures?

- » Parents overwhelmingly supported spending more money on mental health services rather than armed guards. Has there been a conversation in your community about this issue? What has been the result of that conversation?

SCHOOL GRADES. 70% of public school parents give their oldest child's school an A or B grade. Among the broader public, only four in 10 give similar grades. In results that are typical across the years, far fewer give top grades to the public schools nationally, just 19%. *Supplement P. K21*

- » Every year for decades, the PDK poll has asked Americans to assign grades to the public schools. As in past years, parents rate their own child's school quite highly — 70% give them an A or B. But, overall, just 43% of the public at large gives their local schools A's or B's and even fewer — 19% — give the nation's schools A's or B's. What explains that difference?

- » Public opinion about the three types of schools — your child’s school, local schools, and the nation’s schools — has not changed much over time. Given that, why do you believe the rhetoric about the quality of schools is so much more heightened today than it was when PDK began asking these questions?
- » One of the creators of the PDK poll (Ed Brainard) told poll director Joan Richardson that his only regret about the poll was introducing the grading questions. (You can read more about Brainard at pdkpoll.org/history) What do you think about that?

THEN AND NOW. 55% say today’s students receive a worse education than today’s adults experienced as students. U.S. adults see job preparation as particularly weak.

Supplement P. K17

- » Answer this question yourself: How do you believe today’s education compares to the education you received as a student? What differences do you see?
- » Educators have been focused on social-emotional learning for a few years, yet respondents said schools used to be better at teaching interpersonal skills than they are today. Why do you think that is?
- » In the 2017 poll, we saw that the public has overwhelming support for schools to prepare students for more career-oriented courses in school, although not necessarily at the expense of college preparation. This year, respondents said the schools of yesteryear were better at preparing kids for work and that today’s schools do a better job of preparing kids for college. States and school districts have adopted college- and career-ready standards in the past few years, while there’s also an increase in a push for “not everyone needs to go to college.” How do we move away from the dichotomous perspective that many Americans seem to have about this issue?

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT. Nearly 8 in 10 Americans prefer reforming the existing school system rather than finding an alternative approach — more than in any year since the question was first asked two decades ago. There’s no difference closer to home: 78% say they’d rather reform than replace the local schools. *Supplement P. K12*

- » This question has been asked several times since 1997, and public opinion on it has changed very little over time. Considering the stability of the responses, how do you interpret the overwhelming support for reforming rather than replacing the public school system?
- » Do you regard charter schools as part of an effort to reform the existing public school system, or are charter schools an alternative to the existing public school system?
- » Do you regard vouchers as part of an effort to reform the existing public school system, or are vouchers an alternative to the existing public school system?

SPENDING AND FUNDING. The public says spend more on students who need extra support (60%) rather than spending the same amount on every student (39%). But half say raise taxes; half say spend less on students needing fewer resources. The biggest problem facing schools is still the lack of funding, they say. *Supplement P. K13*

- » There seems to be pretty clear support for schools to spend more on students with greater needs. What would this look like in a school or district you know best?
- » Beyond the allocation of Title and IDEA dollars, how should school systems approach this with their communities?
- » The public supports spending more for needier students. But the public is also evenly divided on whether districts should spend less on students with fewer needs or raise taxes to generate new revenue for this work. How do we overcome this divide?

OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPECTATIONS. The public says lower-income, rural, and black and Hispanic students have fewer opportunities. Many Americans also say schools expect less from these students. *Supplement P. K15*

- » What gaps do you see in your community? Which groups of students have the greatest opportunities? The fewest opportunities? Which groups of students face the greatest expectations? The lowest expectations? Are those gaps a problem? How is a school or district you know best trying to close those gaps?

- » Why do you think Americans see a significant expectations gap for low-income students but not as much for black and Hispanic students? Would you find the same response in your community?
- » If your community is not a low-income community, how could you still contribute to providing greater opportunities for children living in low-income areas?

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY. 75% of Americans favor free community college tuition — up sharply in the past few years — while 68% support increasing federal funding to help students pay tuition at four-year colleges. *Supplement P. K18*

- » In an earlier question, Americans were divided about whether to reduce spending for students with more needs or to raise taxes to provide more funding for those students. What do you expect the public would say if the PDK poll had asked about where to find the dollars to cover free community college tuition?
- » In many locations, community college tuition is already free. What is the situation in your state? If community college tuition is not free, are you aware of efforts to move in that direction? Do you support such changes?
- » If community college tuition becomes free, how does that change access to college in your community?
- » If community college tuition becomes free, how should that change the way schools prepare students for their postsecondary life?

VALUE OF A DEGREE. The public also sees value in educational attainment. 82% see a four-year degree as good preparation for a good-paying job — though only 22% say it's "very" good preparation. *Supplement P. K19*

- » Parents clearly see a connection between a degree and earning potential, yet they're more concerned than ever about being able to pay for college. What do you think should be done about this?

- » In the 2017 PDK poll, Americans overwhelmingly supported having K-12 schools offer job or career skills classes even if that meant students might spend less time in academic classes. In the 2018 PDK poll, Americans are convinced that a college degree is good preparation for a good-paying job. Is there a disconnect between those views?
- » If you have an advanced degree, do you believe it's made a difference in your earning potential? In improving the overall quality of your life? Do you recommend advanced degrees to others? Why or why not?

SCHOOL HOURS. Parents are largely satisfied with their child's current school schedule.

Supplement P. K20

- » How has the issue of school hours surfaced in a school or district you know well?
- » Do you perceive a need to change the school schedule?
- » Nearly all parents — 92% — say the start and end times at their child's school work very or somewhat well with their family's schedule. Given that finding, why do you think the issue of school hours continues to be such a perennial topic of debate?

BIGGEST PROBLEM. The lack of financial support was identified as the biggest problem facing the local public schools this year.

Supplement P. K22

- » In every poll since the first poll in 1969, the first question asked has been about the biggest problem facing the public schools in your community. Since 2002, the number one response to this open-ended question has been lack of financial support for the schools. If there is such widespread public recognition about the biggest challenge facing local schools, why has there been so little political response on this issue? What could change this in the state where you live?

PDK POLL CALL TO ACTION

You have many choices about how you can respond to the results of the 2018 PDK poll.

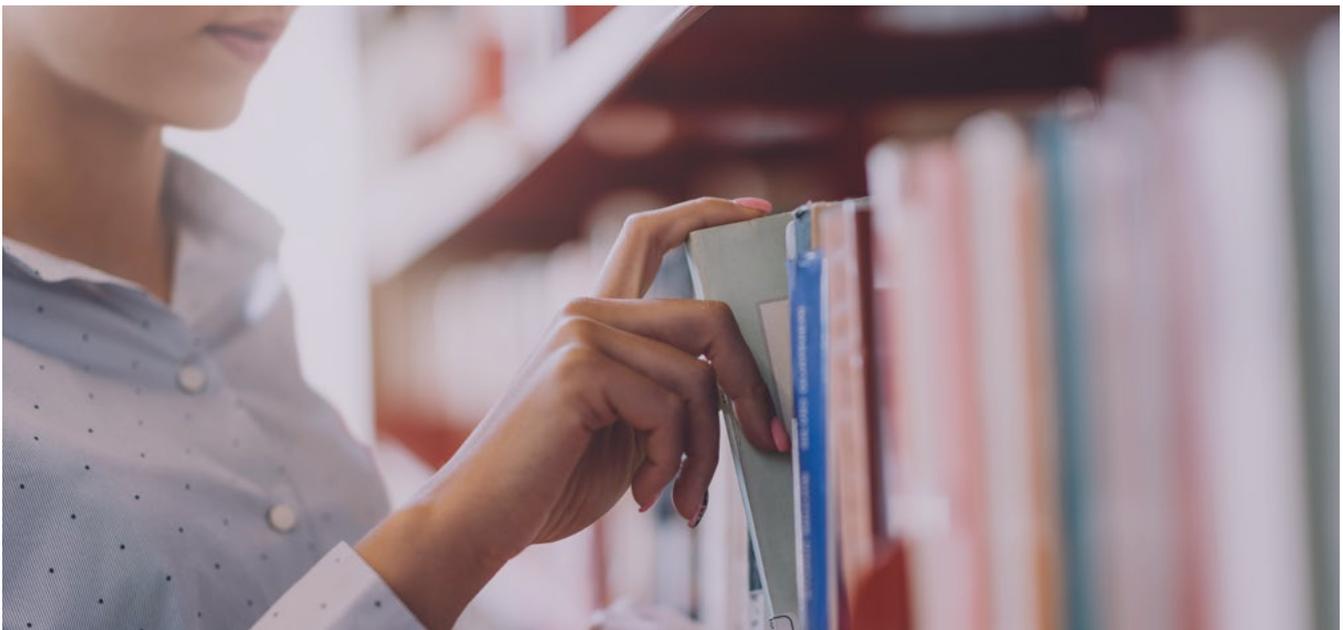
Here are just a few ideas to get you started.

- » Convene a community conversation about one set of questions — or many sets of questions. Invite teachers, administrators, parents, and students to join the conversation.
- » Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about one finding in this year's poll results that you believe is especially relevant in your state or community.
- » Add a comment to pdkpoll.org about one set of findings — or each set of findings!
- » Borrow one of our charts or infographics and post a comment about it on your Facebook or Twitter page. Kindly link to our web site — pdkpoll.org — when you do that!
- » Blog about one set of findings for pdkpoll.org — we'd love to add your voice to the conversation!
- » Send a copy of this year's poll results to your state department of education — along with your letter advising them about how you want your state to use these results

- » Use questions from the PDK poll to develop your own local poll to measure your community's responses to key questions. Ask your local school district if they have an online survey tool that you can use for this purpose.

How would you like to act on the responses to these questions? How could you use the responses to these questions to make a difference in your community or state?

- » Ensure that your state representative or state senator knows about these results — and what you want him or her to do about them.
- » Visit the resources page at pdkpoll.org/resources and download infographics that you can use in your local presentations.
- » Use the PowerPoint slide show we've created for you at a local PDK chapter meeting or with any group of educators or interested citizens.
- » If you're a member of another professional association, share these results with them. Again, tell them how you want them to use the PDK poll findings.
- » All of our resources are free – Use them!



NEED MORE INFORMATION? HAVE QUESTIONS?

PDK staff is ready to help you locate resources that will aid you in these conversations. And we want to know how you used this toolkit and what actions you took as a result.

If you have a question about poll results or poll resources, contact pdkpoll@pdkintl.org

If you're a PDK member and have questions about chapter support, contact Kate Stephens, kstephens@pdkintl.org

If you're working with an Educators Rising group, contact Shayla Cornick, scornick@educatorsrising.org



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