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Majority of Americans Support Local Public Schools on Ongoing Pandemic Response

53rd Annual PDK Poll finds high support for the pandemic response in America's public schools and local preparedness to handle the 2021-2022 school year

ARLINGTON, VA, Sep. 2, 2021 — The 53rd annual [PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools](#) reveals that despite the challenges of the pandemic, Americans continue to have high opinions of their local schools and teachers in particular. Similarly, respondents are highly confident overall in their local school's ability to handle potential challenges in the new school year.

The poll found that about two-thirds of adults overall, and as many K-12 public school parents, give their community's public school teachers an A or B grade for their pandemic response. 63% of parents, and 54% of all adults, give their local public schools an A or B grade. When asked how well the public schools nationally have performed during the pandemic, only about 4 in 10 adults give an A or B grade — this is consistent with past PDK Polls, which have always found that American adults have much more favorable opinions of their local public schools than of public schools in general.

"The results offer a rare glimmer of hope at a difficult time. Not only have the nation's educators persevered through the hardest school year in memory, but most Americans — especially parents with children in the public schools — remain confident in their local schools' ability to provide effective instruction and leadership. Educators ought to keep in mind just how well-regarded they are in their community," said Dr. Joshua P. Starr, CEO of PDK International.

Other findings include that eight in 10 adults are very or somewhat confident that their community's public schools will be prepared to reopen fully this fall. 67% of the public feel that their community's public schools will be prepared to help students catch up on the academics they missed — a number that rises to 74% among public school parents — and 63% of the public feel their community's public schools will be prepared to help students deal with the social-emotional impacts of the pandemic.

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Partisan divides are reflected in the poll on many issues. For example, Republicans are 16 points more apt than Democrats to be confident that it will be safe for students, teachers, and staff to return to in-person school this fall (90% to 74%) and seven points more apt to be confident that their schools will be prepared to fully reopen.

The longest running public opinion poll in the United States, this year's poll was conducted from June 25-July 5, 2021. Based on a random representative sample of 1,018 adults, including 190 parents of children in K-12 public schools, the survey was conducted in English and Spanish via the probability-based Ipsos KnowledgePanel®, which randomly recruits participants via address-based sampling to take surveys online.

Other notable findings from this year's poll include:

- People whose community's public schools maintained chiefly in-person instruction are more apt than those whose schools went fully remote to give an A or B rating to their schools and teachers alike.
- Confidence about the year ahead is higher among K-12 public school parents than the general public. They are a slight 7% more confident that their community's schools will be prepared to help students catch up on academics (74% to 67%) and 12 points more likely than adults overall (46% to 34%) to be very confident that their community's public schools will be prepared to open fully.
- When given three options to select as the biggest challenge for local public school students in the year ahead, a plurality of adults (47%) cite catching up academically. Three in 10 think it'll be readjusting to regular school schedules and routines and about 2 in 10 select dealing with the social-emotional impacts of the pandemic.
- Conservatives (54%) and moderates (49%) are more apt than liberals (38%) to cite catching up academically as the biggest challenge facing schools this fall. Liberals (31%) are more likely than conservatives (19%) and moderates (17%) to see social-emotional impacts as the top challenge.
- People whose public schools mainly used a hybrid model in the 2020-2021 school year are 7 to 17 points more apt than those with fully remote schools to be confident in their schools' preparedness to reopen this fall, to help students catch up on academics, and to deal with social-emotional impacts.

About PDK International

Established in 1906, PDK International has worked to strengthen the teaching profession by providing evidence-based resources, services, and supports to the current generation of educators and encouraging young people to consider and plan for a career in education.

Today, through our Educators Rising program, PDK is changing the narrative about public education by helping communities develop the next generation of their own teachers. We encourage educators and stakeholders to elevate the discourse around teaching and learning to ensure that every student has a high-quality equitable education.

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