

Parent Attitudes About Education in Arizona: 2004

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Introduction

Arizona public education has been transformed over the past twenty years by legislation, litigation, and ballot initiatives. These changes have affected virtually every aspect of public education in Arizona and no one has a larger stake in the condition of Arizona's schools than parents. Therefore, parental opinions about the quality of Arizona's schools and the extent to which parents support major reform initiatives are important to consider when shaping future education policies.

The Arizona Education Policy Initiative (AEPI), a collaboration of Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Arizona, conducted a statewide telephone survey to get parents' perspectives on the condition of education in the state. From March 17 to March 27, 2004, a statewide random sample of 400 Arizona parents and an additional statewide sample of 355 Hispanic Arizona parents with children attending a traditional public, charter, or private school were interviewed. The results offer a snapshot of Arizona parent opinion in 2004.

AEPI will conduct the survey annually, making it possible to identify trends in parent opinion over time. The annual snapshot of Arizona parent opinion will be useful to policy makers as the state continues its efforts to improve the quality of education available to Arizona students.

Overview of Results

Since 1990, Hispanics have been the fastest growing racial/ethnic group in Arizona.¹ There is considerable speculation about how the increasing number of

Hispanic families and students will influence Arizona schools. One of the most significant findings of the survey is the degree to which Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents agree about educational issues. There are very few differences between the statewide sample of all parents and the statewide sample of Hispanic parents.

Survey results suggest that parents are, in general, pleased with their children's schools and teachers, which could explain why parents favor supportive actions to assist low-performing schools. Parents support school accountability and testing, but they prefer to provide assistance, such as improvement plans, to low-performing schools instead of imposing punitive consequences such as replacing school personnel. They also favor providing additional financial and educational support rather than withholding funding from schools that do not meet state academic standards.

This is consistent with their view that the biggest challenge facing Arizona's schools is inadequate funding. The perceived lack of adequate resources for public schools may in part explain why parents, despite rating private schools highly, are firmly opposed to spending tax dollars on either tuition tax credits or vouchers to send children to private schools.

With regard to charter schools and their impact on other public schools, parents are inclined to view charter schools favorably. Almost a quarter of all respondents, however, have no opinion of charter schools. In addition, more parents regard charter schools as either having a negative effect or no effect on traditional public schools. These findings suggest that although Arizona has one of the most expansive charter school laws in the country, parents are not well informed about charter schools and may not consider them a significant factor in the state's education system.

Interestingly, most parents cite non-school factors as the reasons for the lack of student academic success. They tend to regard family factors as the primary cause of low test scores and student dropout rates, which is another potential explanation for why parents do not favor punitive actions toward low-performing schools. This perspective places parents at odds with policy makers who regard school policies and practices as the most important factors in student performance and who favor imposing punitive sanctions on schools that do not perform adequately.

On the issue of early education, survey responses suggest that parents may soon apply increasing pressure on policy makers to expand early education programs in the state.

Parents' views about schools are strongly shaped by their direct experiences. They are most likely to get information about schools from the schools themselves via school meetings, school communications, or from their children. Schools also encourage parental involvement, which creates additional opportunities for the type of contact that influences parental opinion.

Print media is another important source of information. It is likely, however, that media reports play a larger role in shaping parental views toward schools their children *do not* attend. This might help explain why parents view the schools their children attend as being of higher quality than schools in general. Parental views of their children's schools are likely a more accurate picture of the perceived quality of education in the state than their view of the quality of schools in general.

Survey Results

The 2004 Arizona parent opinion survey consisted of forty-eight questions covering a variety of key education policies and practices. The complete survey, including respondent demographic information, is contained in the technical appendix (available on the web at: <http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps1/AEPI/EP1-0404-101-AEPI-app.doc>). For presentation purposes, the survey results have been grouped into eight categories:

1. Educational Quality
2. Standardized Testing
3. School Accountability
4. School Choice
5. Minority Student Achievement
6. Language Acquisition
7. Early Education
8. Information Sources/Parent Involvement

In the tables that follow, all numbers represent percentages.

Educational Quality

Arizona parents perceive the schools that their children attend more favorably than Arizona public schools in general. This dichotomy is consistent with national

studies of parental opinion.² Nearly three-fourths of Arizona parents grade the school their oldest child attends an “A” or a “B”. Only twenty-eight percent of Arizona parents grade all Arizona public schools a “B” or better and only four percent grade them an “A”.

Table 1: Grading Arizona Schools

	A	B	C	D	F
What grade would you give to the school your oldest child attends?	30	42	19	4	2
What grade would you give to the job public schools in Arizona are doing?	4	24	43	13	4

Notes: (1) There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples. (2) Ratings are presented excluding the “don’t know” category.

Additionally, parents hold a highly favorable opinion of their oldest child’s teacher(s). Approximately eighty-two percent of parents grade their oldest child’s teacher(s) an “A” or “B”.

Table 2: Grading Arizona Teachers

	A	B	C	D	F
What grade would you give the teacher or teachers who are teaching your oldest child?	44	38	14	2	1

Notes: (1) There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples. (2) Ratings are presented excluding the “don’t know” category.

Parents were asked to identify one area in which Arizona public schools are doing a particularly good job. The format of the question was open-ended, meaning that parents were not provided pre-determined options to guide their response. The open-ended format helps to uncover patterns of parental opinion and could be a factor in the substantial percentage of parents who did not provide a response to this question. Since parents could identify any area they wished, the consistency of the responses is a sign of a cohesive parental opinion. Those parents who gave a response other than “no opinion” to the open-ended question were most likely to indicate that “teaching the basics” is the area in which public schools are doing a particularly good job.

Table 3: Areas Where Arizona Public Schools Do Well

Is there one area where you think the public schools in Arizona are doing a particularly good job?	
Teaching the basics	34
Providing high quality teachers	10
Quality arts and fine arts programs	9
Motivating students	6
Good physical education and athletic programs	5
No opinion	35

Notes: (1) There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples. (2) Percentages do not equal 100 because only the six most often cited responses are listed.

Parents have well-formed opinions about the challenges facing Arizona public schools. Parents identified “lack of funding, resources” and factors associated with lack of funding such as overcrowded schools, large classes, and low pay for teachers as the biggest challenges facing Arizona public schools. Taken together, these factors were by far the most often cited challenge for schools.

Table 4: Challenges Facing Arizona Schools

What do you think is the biggest single challenge that the schools in your community face?	
Lack of funding, resources*	59
Lack of discipline	9
Keeping good teachers	8
Lack of parental involvement	6
No opinion	1

Notes: (1) There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and Statewide Hispanic-parent samples. (2) Percentages do not equal 100 because only the four most often cited reasons are listed.³ (3) *Overcrowded schools, large classes, and low pay for teachers are combined under this heading.

Standardized Testing

Standardized tests are the central academic performance indicator in both the state and federal school accountability systems (Arizona LEARNS and the No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act). The prevalence and significance of standardized tests in the school accountability system is evidence that policy makers consider test results as perhaps the most important indicators of school academic performance. Arizona parents agree; they are strongly in favor of using standardized test results to judge school performance.

Table 5: Using Standardized Tests to Evaluate Schools

	Favor	Oppose	No Opinion
Do you favor or oppose using statewide tests to determine how schools are performing?	70	20	10

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

Beginning with the Class of 2006, Arizona students must pass Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) to graduate from high school. The majority of Arizona parents approve of using AIMS to determine whether students should receive a diploma. They are, however, somewhat less supportive of using tests as a graduation requirement than they are of using tests to assess the overall quality of schools.

Table 6: Using AIMS as a Graduation Requirement

	Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
Do you approve or disapprove of requiring students to pass the AIMS test before they can graduate from high school?	58	33	9

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

School Accountability

State and federal school accountability policies require that schools classified as “low-performing” because of low student test scores take certain actions to improve student performance. Sanctions of increasing severity are applied if schools continue to be classified as “low performing.” In general, parents prefer to help rather than to punish low-performing schools. For example, parents approve of providing more state funds to low-performing schools and are opposed to withholding funds from these schools. Parents clearly support the policy of requiring low-performing schools to implement an improvement plan. They are, however, opposed to more punitive actions such as removing teachers or principals.

Table 7: Actions Directed Toward Low-Performing Schools

If a school one of your children is attending scored low on the statewide tests, would you favor or oppose each of the following:			
	Favor	Oppose	No Opinion
Require the school to develop and implement an improvement plan	86	8	6
Provide more state funds to the school	66	16	18
Replace the principal	30	41	29
Replace the teachers	30	50	20
Withhold funds from the school if they don't improve	23	66	11

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

School Choice

Arizona has implemented school choice options in the form of public charter schools and private school tuition tax credits. In addition, legislators have, at various times, proposed private school vouchers. Tuition tax credits and private school voucher plans provide public-funding for students to attend private schools.⁴

Overall, parents grade charter schools favorably and think highly of private schools. The most noteworthy finding, however, is that slightly over half of Arizona parents have no opinion about the quality of charter or private schools. Parents are either not knowledgeable about these schools or have not formed a judgment. Since Arizona’s charter school initiative has been in place and widely publicized for almost a decade, the lack of parental opinion about charter schools may indicate that Arizona parents do not consider charter schools a significant factor in the state’s public education system.

Table 8: Grading Charter and Private Schools

	A	B	C	D	F	No Opinion
What grade would you give to charter schools?	7	19	12	4	3	55
What grade would you give to private schools?	20	23	4	1	0	52

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

Forty-one percent of parents believe charter schools either have no effect or a negative effect on other public schools while thirty-six percent feel they have a positive effect. Twenty-three percent expressed no opinion. These findings suggest that parents do not likely view charter schools as a mechanism for improving other public schools.

Arizona parents have a clear opinion about the effect of providing public funds to private schools. Forty-six percent of parents think that providing public funds for private schools will have a negative effect on public schools. The remaining parents who expressed an opinion are roughly split between the opinion that there is no effect on public schools or that the effect is positive.

Table 9: Perceived Effect of Charter and Private Schools on Public Schools

	Positive	Negative	Little or None	No Opinion
The effect of setting up charter schools	36	15	26	23
The effect of providing public dollars to private schools	23	46	20	11

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

Considerably more parents oppose providing public money for private schools than favor providing it. The sentiment against providing public money for private education is consistent across two different types of public policies: tuition vouchers and tuition tax credits.

Table 10: Support for Tuition Vouchers and Tuition Tax Credits

Do you favor or oppose:	Favor	Oppose	No Opinion
Using tax dollars to provide tuition vouchers to students who want to attend private schools?	38	50	12
Using public money in the form of tax credits to support sending children to private schools?	38	49	13

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

Minority Student Achievement

The gap in achievement between minority and majority students is one of the most persistent problems in American public education. It is, therefore, of interest to learn if Arizona parents believe there is an achievement gap in Arizona and what the reasons for it may be. A considerable percentage of parents have no opinion about the performance of minority students on the state tests, an indication that these parents may not have adequate information to make a determination.

Table 11: Perception of Minority Student Academic Achievement

	Same	Better	Worse	No Opinion
When minority students take statewide academic tests, do you know how they perform compared to non-minority students?	23	1	36	40

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

Most parents expressing an opinion believe that minority students perform worse than non-minority students. This perception is consistent with state test results; minority students as a group score lower than non-minority students.⁵

Table 12: Reasons for Test Score Differences Between Minority and Non-Minority Students: Academic vs. Other Reasons

Minority students sometimes do not perform as well on academic tests as non-minorities.			
	Academic Factors	Other Factors	Don't Know
Do you feel this difference is due mainly to differences in the quality of education they receive or to other factors?	8	78	14

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

Parents who expressed an opinion feel strongly that the difference in test scores between minorities and non-minorities is due mainly to non-academic factors. Overall, Arizona parents attribute academic achievement differences between minority and non-minority students to home background factors.

Table 13: Non–Academic Reasons for Minority and Non–Minority Test Score Differences

What is the main reason for the difference between minority and non-minority student academic achievement?		
	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic-parent
Home background, lack of parental involvement	37	39
Language barriers	25	29
Cultural differences	17	11
Socio-Economic disadvantages	12	8

Notes: (1) This question was asked only to respondents who felt differences in test scores were due to non-academic factors. (2) Percentages do not equal 100 because only the four most often cited reasons are listed.⁶

Parental opinion about the achievement gap is contrary to the underlying assumptions of current educational policy. Legislators and administrators at all levels tend to consider the school as the sole or central agent responsible for closing the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students and have embedded these views in Arizona laws and policies.

Parents also identified non-academic factors, such as home background, as the main reasons that students drop out of school.

Table 14: Reasons Why Students Drop Out of School

What do you think is the single biggest reason high school students drop out of school before finishing their education?	
Home background, lack of parental involvement	30
Student lacks interest in school	11
Lack of motivation	11
Need to make money	10
Drug use/abuse	5

Notes: (1) There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples. (2) Percentages do not equal 100 because only the five most often cited reasons are listed.⁷

A large majority of parents feel that minority students are treated the same or better than non-minority students in school.

Table 15: Treatment of Minority Students in School

	Same	Better	Worse	No Opinion
How do you think minority students in the school your oldest child attends are treated compared to non-minority students?	70	10	10	10

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

Language Acquisition

English is not the primary language for almost seventeen percent of Arizona public school students. These students are referred to as English Language Learners. In 2000, Arizona voters passed Proposition 203, requiring that after one year virtually all English Language Learners be placed in classrooms where only English is spoken. Thirty-nine percent of parents do not know the requirements of this law, and twenty percent of parents incorrectly believe that instruction for English Language Learners is to be conducted in both English and Spanish. Forty-one percent correctly responded that the law requires English Language Learners to be put in classes where only English is spoken.

Table 16: Awareness of Legal Requirement for English in the Classroom

	Both English and Spanish	English Only	Don't Know
Do you know which system the law in Arizona requires?	20	41	39

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

Contrary to the legal requirements, however, most parents prefer to have English Language Learners in classrooms where both English and the students' native language

are spoken. This suggests that state policy may be out of alignment with parental opinion on this issue.

Table 17: Preference of Language Use in the Classroom

	Both English and Native Language	English Only	Don't Know
Which do you prefer: putting students in classrooms where both English and the student's native language are spoken or classrooms where only English is spoken?	56	31	13

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

Early Education

Governor Napolitano's advocacy of universal, voluntary full-day kindergarten has propelled early education into the headlines. Given the visibility of this issue, several questions were framed to gauge parental opinion about early education. The sample does not represent all Arizona parents because only parents with children under six years old were asked to respond. Therefore, the results are suggestive and not definitive. Nevertheless, parental opinion on early education suggests that this issue is worthy of investigation in a future statewide survey. Of the parents with children under six, eighty-one percent indicated that their eligible Arizona children either attend part-day kindergarten or do not attend at all.

Table 18: Kindergarten Attendance

	Full-day	Part-day	Does not attend
Do any of your children attend kindergarten? (statewide all-parent sample)	19	18	63
Do any of your children attend kindergarten? (statewide Hispanic-parent sample)	12	18	70

Note: Results are suggestive only.

Of the parents who currently do not enroll their children in kindergarten or enroll their children in a part-day kindergarten program, eighty percent would enroll their children in a free full-day kindergarten program if one were available.

Table 19: Likelihood to Enroll Child in Kindergarten

	Yes	No	Not sure
Would you enroll your child or children in full-day kindergarten if it were available at no cost to you?	80	12	8

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

Similarly, most parents who currently do not enroll their children in a preschool program would do so if such a program were available at no cost.

Table 20: Likelihood to Enroll Child in Pre-School

	Yes	No	Not sure
Would you enroll your child or children in a pre-kindergarten early education program if it were available at no cost to you?	86	6	8

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

Information Sources

Parents rely upon varied sources to get information to develop their opinions of public schools in their communities. The most cited sources of information about schools are related to the schools themselves. The most common primary sources of information are contact with schools and communications from the school. The newspaper is the most common secondary source of information. Interestingly, few parents rely on television as a source of information. These communication patterns should be of particular note to policy makers who may consider press contacts, such as print coverage and news conferences, as an effective means of communicating public policy to parents. Survey findings suggest that policy makers should build school-based mechanisms for

communicating with parents and that they should be aware that schools have an opportunity to shape how messages are communicated to parents.

Table 21: Sources of Information About Public Schools

Where do you get most of your information about what goes on in the public schools in your community?	
First hand experience, meeting at school	21
Communication from school	18
Newspapers	17
Talking with children, other students	16
Communication with teacher or administrator	8
Television	3

Notes: (1) There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples. (2) Percentages do not equal 100 because only the six most often cited reasons are listed.⁸

Parents reported that schools encourage their involvement. The interactions among school personnel, students, and parents create additional opportunities for the type of contact that influences parental opinion.

Table 22: School Encouragement of Parental Involvement

	Very involved	Somewhat involved	Not very involved	No opinion
Does the school your oldest child attends encourage you to be involved in his or her education?	63	28	8	1

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between the statewide all-parent and statewide Hispanic-parent samples.

Summary

Arizona parents think the schools their children attend and the teachers who teach their children are doing a good job. They report schools encourage them to be involved. When students don't succeed academically, parents don't tend to lay the blame at the school house door.

Accountability gets high marks from parents and they support the AIMS testing program. When schools don't succeed, parents want them to be helped not punished. They support school improvement plans and additional resources but not the removal of principals and teachers.

The biggest challenge facing Arizona schools is lack of money, according to parents. Perhaps that is why they do not favor spending tax dollars to support students attending private schools.

In the controversial area of English language instruction, parents support providing instruction in both a child's native language and in English. This puts them at odds with current Arizona policy.

Although too few parents of children under six were surveyed to allow for a definitive conclusion, the results suggest that parents would utilize early education and all-day kindergarten if they were available.

It is especially noteworthy that Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents hold very similar views about public education in Arizona.

Notes and References

- ¹ U.S. Census Bureau, United States Census 2000 and Census 90, January and March 2002. Retrieved January 21, 2004, from <http://www.census.gov/>
- ² Rose, L. C. & Gallup, A. M. (2001, September). The 33rd Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. Phi Delta Kappa International. Retrieved February 10, 2004, from <http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kimages/kpoll83.pdf>
- ³ See the technical appendix for complete data (<http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/ AEPI/EP SL-0404-101-AEPI-app.doc>).
- ⁴ Arizona also has a public school tuition tax credit program. It was not included in the survey.
- ⁵ Arizona student assessment results are available online at <http://www.ade.az.gov/standards/>
- ⁶ See the technical appendix for complete data (<http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/ AEPI/EP SL-0404-101-AEPI-app.doc>).
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ *Ibid.*

APPENDIX

ARIZONA EDUCATION POLICY INITIATIVE

Arizona Education Policy Initiative (AEPI), a collaborative project of Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Arizona, was launched in September 2003. AEPI utilizes the expertise of faculty at Arizona's public universities to provide policy makers and the public with high quality information about Arizona education policy and practice.

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TECHNICAL APPENDICES

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TECHNICAL APPENDIX A SURVEY METHODS

The information in this report is based on telephone interviews with two statewide random samples of adult heads of household living in Arizona. The first sample, based on 400 interviews, generalizes to all adult heads of household living in Arizona with children attending public, private, or charter schools. The second sample is comprised of 355 adult heads of households with Hispanic surnames with children attending public, private, or charter schools in Arizona. Both samples were stratified by county to insure that they were representative of all adults and all Hispanic adults living in Arizona.

If an interview was not successfully completed after five-callbacks, random substitution was allowed with telephones numbers in the same prefix. Seventy-four percent (74%) of the statewide sample of adult heads of household and seventy-eight (78%) of those selected in the Hispanic sample were successfully interviewed. In both samples Hispanic respondents were given the option of giving the interview in Spanish or English.

The sampling error for the statewide sample when the proportion giving a response to a question is 50% and assuming the 95% level of significance is plus or minus 4.9%. The sampling error for the Hispanic sample when the proportion answering a question is 50% is plus or minus 5.2%. Sampling error varies based on the percentage of the sampling answering a question in a particular way. Sampling errors for various percentages when the sample size is 400 are shown below:

	Sampling Error
50%	4.9%
40% or 60%	4.8%
30% or 70%	4.5%
20% or 80%	3.9%
10% or 90%	2.9%

The questions were designed by Dr. Alex Molnar and Dr. Bruce Merrill of Arizona State University with input from Arizona Education Policy Initiative steering committee members. The interview schedule was pre-tested and the interviews conducted by professional interviewers at the Summit Group in Phoenix, Arizona during the period March 17 – 27, 2004. A CATI system was used to conduct the interviews. The data were analyzed using SPSS.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Hello, my name is XXXXX and I am calling for the Education Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University. We are doing a very important survey on how people feel about public education in Arizona.

Are you the (male/female) head of your household?

IF NO: Is either the male or female head of the household at home?

IF NO: Thank and end the interview

Do you have children living in your household attending school either in pre-school or grades K-12?

IF NO: Thank and end interview

IF YES: This survey is very important and you have been randomly selected to represent other parents in Arizona. Your answers will be completely confidential. Will you please help us with this survey?

Sometimes people really don't have opinions about some of the questions I will ask. If you don't have an opinion just tell me and I'll go onto the next question.

1. First, students are given the grades A, B, C, D and F or failing to indicate how they are doing in their school work. What grade would you give to the school your oldest child attends? A, B, C, D or F 6. no opinion (Table 1)

2. Next, what grade would you give to the job public schools in Arizona are doing?
A, B, C, D or F. 6. n.o. (Table 1)

3. What grade, A, B, C, D or F would you give to charter schools? 6. n.o. (Table 8)

4. What grade, A, B, C, D or F would you give to private schools? 6. n.o. (Table 8)

5. What grade would you give to the teacher or teachers who are teaching your oldest child? A, B, C, D or F? 6. n.o. (Table 2)

6. Is there one area where you think the public schools in Arizona are doing a particularly good job? ASK OPEN-ENDED AND CODE BELOW (Table 3)

1. teaching basics
2. extracurricular programs
3. drug education
4. providing high quality teachers
5. vocational education
6. motivating students
7. motivating parents
8. use of computers/technology
9. promoting racial harmony

10. valuing cultural diversity
11. reducing drop-outs
12. keeping order in the classroom
13. providing small classes
14. providing individual attention
15. providing good physical education and athletic programs
16. providing high quality programs in the arts and fine arts/music, art, etc.
17. Other: specify

7. What do you think is the biggest single challenge that the schools in your community face? ASK OPEN-ENDED AND CODE ALL BELOW (Table 4)

1. funding/lack of financial support/money
2. lack of discipline/controlling students
3. overcrowded schools
4. use of drugs/dope
5. difficulty getting or keeping good teachers/student teacher ratio
6. low pay for teachers standards/quality/basics
7. violence/gangs
8. academic standards/quality of education/teaching basics
9. condition of schools/need for repairs
10. curriculum problems
11. overcrowding
12. lack of support/interest of parents
13. drop-out rate
14. racism
15. cultural diversity
16. problems associated with administrators/too many
17. non-English speaking kids in classrooms
18. lack of help or opportunity for non-English speaking students
19. Other: specify _____

8. Where do you get most of your information about what goes on in the public schools in your community? (ASK OPEN ENDED) (Table 21)

1. newspapers
2. television
3. first hand experiences/meetings/contact at school
4. friends/family
5. my children/students
6. from the school/letters/mail/newsletter
7. media/press
8. teacher/sub/ex-teacher/administrators
9. word of mouth/community
10. internet
11. Other: specify _____

9. Where else do you learn about what is happening in the schools? (Table 21)

1. newspapers
2. television
3. first hand experiences/meetings/contact at school
4. friends/family
5. my children/students
6. from the school/letters/mail/newsletter
7. media/press
8. teacher/sub/ex-teacher/administrators
9. word of mouth/community
10. internet
11. Other: specify _____

10. Does the school your oldest child attends encourage you to be 1. very involved, 2. somewhat involved or 3. not very involved in his or her education? 4. n.o. (Table 22)

11. Do you have a child or children under the age of 6?

1. yes – continue
2. no – GO TO Q 16

12. Do any of your children attend kindergarten? IF YES: Does he or she attend full day or part day? 1. full day 2. part day 3. no (Table 18)

13. IF CHILD DOES NOT ATTEND OR ATTENDS PART DAY ASK:

Would you enroll your child in full day kindergarten if it were available at no cost to you?

1. yes
2. no
3. not sure (Table 19)

14. Do any children five years or younger living at home? IF YES: Do any of them attend a pre-kindergarten early education program? 1. no kids under 6 2. yes 3. no (Table 14)

15. IF NO: Would you enroll your child or children in a pre-kindergarten early education program if it were available at no cost to you? 1. yes 2. no 3.dk (Table 20)

16. Do you think setting up charter schools will have a 1. positive effect, 2. have a negative effect or 3. little or no effect on public schools? 4. n.o. (Table 9)

17. Do you think providing public dollars to private schools will have a 1. positive effect, 2. have a negative effect or 3. little or no effect on public schools? 4. n.o. (Table 9)

18. All schools in Arizona are tested each year, using a standard, statewide, test to determine how students are performing academically. Do you 1. favor or 2. oppose using statewide tests to determine how schools are performing? 3. n.o. (Table 5)

If a school one of your children is attending scored low on the statewide tests, would you favor or oppose each of the following – (Table 7)

19. require the school to develop and implement an improvement plan
1. approve 2. oppose 3. n.o.
20. withhold funds from the school if they don't improve
1. approve 2. oppose 3. n.o.
21. provide more state funds to the school
1. approve 2. oppose 3. n.o.
22. replace the principal
1. approve 2. oppose 3. n.o.
23. replace the teachers
1. approve 2. oppose 3. n.o.
24. In Arizona, before they can graduate from high school, students must demonstrate basic academic competence by passing a test called the AIMS test. Do you
1. approve or
2. disapprove requiring students to pass the AIMS test before they can graduate from high school?
3. n.o. (Table 6)
25. Do you think minority students in the school your oldest child attends are treated the
1. same treatment as non-minorities, 2. better or 3. are treated worse than non-minorities?
4. n.o. (Table 15)
26. When minority students take statewide academic tests, do you know if they perform
1. about the same as non-minorities, 2. better or 3. worse than non-minority students?
4. n.o. (Table 11)
27. Minority students sometimes do not perform as well on academic achievement tests as non-minorities. Do you feel this difference is due mainly to differences in the quality of education they receive or to other factors?
1. academic 2. other 3. dk/n.o. (Table 12)
28. IF OTHER FACTORS ASK: If the difference isn't due to the quality of education they receive, what do you think is the main reason for the difference? (OPEN-ENDED) (Table 13)
29. In Arizona, some students do not speak English when they enter school. Some people feel the best way to teach them is to put them in classrooms with bi-lingual teachers until they learn English well enough to be placed in regular classrooms. Others believe that it is best to put students who do not speak English immediately into classes where only English is spoken. Do you know which system the law in Arizona requires?
1. Both English and Spanish 2. English only 3. Don't know (Table 16)
30. Which do you prefer, putting students in bi-lingual classrooms where both English and the student's native language are spoken or classrooms where only English is spoken?
1. Both English and Spanish 2. English only 3. Don't know (Table 17)

31. Do you 1. favor or 2. oppose using vouchers to fund students going to private schools?
3. dk/n.o. (Table 10)

32. Do you 1. favor or 2. oppose using public money in the form of tax credits to support sending children to private schools? 3. dk/n.o. (Table 10)

33. Many high school students in Arizona drop out before graduating. What do you think is the single biggest reason high school students drop-out of school before finishing their education? (ASK OPEN-ENDED -BE SPECIFIC) (Table 14)

(The results for the demographic questions are in Table 24 of the Technical Appendix.)

34. How many children currently live in your household? _____

35. How many school age children live in your household? _____

36. Does your oldest child attend a 1. elementary school, a 2. middle school or
3. a high school?

37. Does your oldest child attend a 1. public or 2. private school?

38. How long have you lived in Arizona? READ 1-3: 1. less than 10 years, 2. 11-20 years,
3. over 20 years?

39. Which of the following best characterizes your household:

1. We only speak English in our household
2. We speak mainly English but another language as well
3. We speak little or no English in our household

40. In terms of race or ethnicity, which of the following do you most identify with?

ASK OPEN-ENDED AND CODE BELOW

1. White or Anglo
2. Hispanic or Latino
3. Native American
4. Two or more races mentioned
5. other

41. Is there 1. both a male and female head of your household, 2. only a male head or
3. only a female head? 4. refused

42. IF MALE HEAD: How much education has the male head of the household completed?
(READ 1-3)

1. High school or less
2. Some college or trade school
3. Graduated from a four year college or university

43. IF FEMALE HEAD: How much education has the male head of the household completed? (READ 1-3)

1. High school or less
2. Some college or trade school
3. Graduated from a four year college or university

44. Were you born in the United States? 1. yes 2. no

45. How many generations has your family been in America? _____

46. Are you registered to vote in Arizona? 1. yes 2. no

47. gender: 1. female 2. male

48. Was this interview conducted in:

1. English only
2. Spanish only
3. both English and Spanish

TECHNICAL APPENDIX C
SURVEY REPORT TABLES

Table 1: Grading Arizona Schools (Survey Questions 1–2)

The school oldest child attends	A	B	C	D	F	N.O.	Average
Statewide All-parent	30%	42	19	4	2	3	2.6
Statewide Hispanic	26%	45	18	8	2	1	2.8
Statewide Non-Hispanic	30%	42	20	4	2	2	3.0
The job public schools are doing	A	B	C	D	E	N.O.	Average
Statewide all-parent	4%	24	43	13	4	12	2.1
Statewide Hispanic	11%	29	42	8	3	8	2.4
Statewide Non-Hispanic	5%	24	43	12	5	11	2.1

- (1) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.
(2) Ratings were calculated excluding the “no opinion” category.

Table 2: Grading Arizona Teachers (Survey Question 5)

Your oldest child’s teacher	A	B	C	D	F	N.O.	Average
Statewide All-parent	44%	38	14	2	1	2	3.2
Statewide Hispanic	42%	39	14	2	2	1	3.3
Statewide Non-Hispanic	42%	40	13	2	1	2	3.2

- (1) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.
(2) Ratings were calculated excluding the “no opinion” category.

Table 3: Areas Where Arizona Public Schools Do Well (Survey Question 6)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Teaching the basics	34%	39%	31%
Providing High Quality Teachers	10	5	9
Quality arts and fine arts programs	9	4	9
Motivating Students	6	10	7
Good physical education and athletic programs	5	1	4
Provide individual attention to students	4	4	4
Keeping order, discipline in the classroom	3	4	3
Extra-curricular activities	3	5	3
Use of computers and technology	3	1	3
Valuing cultural diversity	3	5	3
Reducing the drop-out rate	2	*	2
Keeping classrooms small	2	*	2
Vocational education classes	1	1	2
Math and science classes	1	1	2
Motivating parents	1	*	1
Drug education, reducing drug use	*	5	*
Promoting racial harmony	*	1	*
Use of English only classes	1	1	*
After School programs	*	1	*
Meeting needs of special kids, handicapped	1	1	1
No area, not doing a good job	3	5	5
Just overall good job	1	1	1
Other single comments	5	4	6
	100%	100%	100%

(1) Thirty-five percent of those in the statewide all-parent sample, twenty-three percent in the Hispanic sample, and thirty percent of those in the non-Hispanic sample had no opinion.

(2) * Indicates less than one percent.

(3) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

(4) Individuals could give more than one comment and all comments were coded.

(5) Percentages were calculated excluding missing and “no opinion” responses.

Table 4: Challenges Facing Arizona Schools (Survey Question 7)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Lack of funding, resources	35%	29%	33%
Overcrowded schools, large class size	18	11	10
Lack of discipline in classrooms, schools	9	9	10
Keeping good teachers	8	8	7
Low pay for teachers	6	6	6
Lack of parental support or involvement	6	6	6
Drug use in the schools	3	3	3
Lack of opportunity for non-English speakers	3	6	4
Low academic standards, expectations	3	3	2
Non-English speakers in the classrooms	3	4	2
Administrators, too many	2	3	2
Problems with respecting cultural diversity	2	2	2
Violence, gangs	1	5	1
Keeping kids from dropping out	1	1	1
Inadequate curriculum, not enough variety	*	1	1
Schools in despair	*	*	*
More math and science classes	*	*	*
Testing, AIMS test	*	*	*
After school programs	*	1	*
Racism	0	1	*
Other comments	*	1	7
	100%	100%	100%

- (1) One percent of all three samples (statewide all-parent, Hispanic, and non-Hispanic) had no opinion.
- (2) * Indicates less than one percent.
- (3) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.
- (4) Individuals could give more than one comment and all comments were coded.
- (5) Percentages were calculated excluding missing and “no opinion” responses.

Table 5: Using Standardized Tests to Evaluate Schools (Survey Question 18)

Support for Statewide Test to Measure Student Performance			
	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Favor	70%	75%	70%
Oppose	20	14	21
No Opinion	10	11	9

(1) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

Table 6: Using AIMS as a Graduation Requirement (Survey Question 24)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Favor	58	53	59
Oppose	33	35	31
No Opinion	9	12	10

(1) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

Table 7: Actions Directed Toward Low-Performing Schools (Survey Questions 19–23)

	Approve	Oppose	No Opinion
<i>Schools must develop and implement improvement plan</i>			
Statewide All-parent	86%	8%	6%
Statewide Hispanic	90	5	5
Statewide Non-Hispanic	85	8	7
<i>Provide more state funds</i>			
Statewide All-parent	66%	16%	18%
Statewide Hispanic	74	12	14
Statewide Non-Hispanic	66	17	17
<i>Principal should be replaced</i>			
Statewide All-parent	30%	41%	29%
Statewide Hispanic	32	40	28
Statewide Non-Hispanic	31	41	28
<i>Teachers should be replaced</i>			
Statewide All-parent	30%	50%	20%
Statewide Hispanic	30	50	20
Statewide Non-Hispanic	30	48	22
<i>Withhold funds if they don't improve</i>			
Statewide All-parent	23%	66%	11%
Statewide Hispanic	25	64	11
Statewide Non-Hispanic	24	66	10

(1) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

Table 8: Grading Charter and Private Schools (Survey Questions 3–4)

	A	B	C	D	F	N.O.	Average
Charter schools in Arizona							
Statewide All-parent	7%	19	12	4	3	55	2.5
Statewide Hispanic	10%	18	13	4	2	53	2.7
Statewide Non-Hispanic	6%	17	13	5	3	56	2.4
Private Schools							
Statewide All-parent	20%	23	4	1	0	52	3.3
Statewide Hispanic	25%	22	4	1	1	47	3.3
Statewide Non-Hispanic	19%	24	4	1	0	52	3.3

Table 9: Perceived Effect of Charter and Private Schools on Public Schools (Survey Questions 16–17)

Effect of Charter Schools			
	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Positive effect	36%	39%	35%
Negative effect	15	14	15
Little or no effect	26	24	26
No Opinion	23	24	24
Effect of Private Schools			
	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Positive effect	23%	24%	23%
Negative effect	46	41	47
Little or no effect	20	17	19
No Opinion	11	18	11

(1) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

Table 10: Support for Tuition Vouchers and Tuition Tax Credits (Survey Questions 31–32)

Support for Tuition Vouchers			
	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Both	38%	33%	38%
English Only	50	45	51
No Opinion/Don't Know	12	22	11
Support for Tax Credits			
	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Both	38%	31%	39%
English Only	49	49	49
No Opinion/Don't know	13	20	12

(1) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

Table 11: Perception of Minority Student Academic Achievement (Survey Question 26)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Perform Same	23%	26%	23%
Perform Better	1	5	1
Perform Worse	36	36	35
No Opinion/Don't Know	40	33	41

(1) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

Table 12: Reasons for the Minority/Non-Minority Achievement Gap (Question 27)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Academic Factors	8%	20%	7%
Other Factors	78	64	79
No Opinion/Don't Know	14	16	14

Table 13: Reasons for Test Score Differences Between Minority and Non-Minority Students (Survey Question 28)

	Statewide All-Parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Home background, lack of parental involvement	37%	39%	42%
Language barriers	25	29	23
Cultural differences, differences in how they learn	17	11	14
Social, economic, education backgrounds, income	12	8	12
Tests are biased	2	*	3
Low expectations	2	1	1
Poor teachers, teachers not motivating students	*	3	2
Students not working hard enough	*	1	2
Failure of schools, teachers and administrators	*	3	*
Lack of confidence, self-esteem	*	3	*
Other comments	2	1	1

(1) Thirteen percent of those in the statewide all-parent and Hispanic samples had no opinion. Fourteen percent of those in the non-Hispanic sample had no opinion.

(2) * Indicates less than one percent.

(3) Hispanics were more likely than those in the statewide all-parent sample to cite quality of education or pre-education as the reason for differences in test scores between minorities and non-minorities.

(4) Individuals could give more than one comment and all comments were coded.

(5) Percentages were calculated excluding missing and “no opinion” responses.

Table 14: Reasons Why Students Drop Out of School (Survey Question 33)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Home background, lack of parental involvement	30%	28%	31%
Don't see how school benefits them, lack of interest	11	9	10
Not motivated, lazy, no goals, don't care	11	7	10
Leave to make money, support families, need money	10	9	10
Drug use and abuse	5	7	5
Teen pregnancies	4	6	4
Not prepared academically, get behind and never catch up	6	4	4
Students not challenged, bored	3	6	4
Poor teachers, teachers not motivating students	3	4	3
Negative peer group influence, get in with the wrong crowd	3	6	3
Get in trouble with legal system, jail, gangs	3	4	1
Problems with not speaking English	2	1	2
Low self esteem, disillusioned, lack of confidence	3	*	3
Cultural differences	*	*	*
Poor school system, schools let them down	*	2	2
Overcrowding, big classes, not enough individual attention	2	*	2
Testing, AIMS test	*	*	*
Other comments	2	4	5

(1) Twelve percent of statewide all-parent and Hispanic samples had no opinion.

(2) * Indicates less than one percent.

(3) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

(4) Individuals could give more than one comment and all comments were coded.

(5) Percentages were calculated excluding missing and no opinion responses.

Table 15: Treatment of Minority Students in School (Survey Question 25)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Treated same	70%	70%	68%
Treated better	10	4	11
Treated Worse	10	17	11
No Opinion	10	9	10

(1) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

Table 16: Awareness of Legal Requirement for English in the Classroom (Survey Question 29)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Both English and Spanish	20%	14%	19%
English Only	41	38	41
Don't Know	39	48	40

(1) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

Table 17: Preference of Language Use in the Classroom (Survey Question 30)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Both	56%	67%	54%
English Only	31	24	32
Don't Know	13	9	14

(1) Hispanics were more likely than non-Hispanics to support teaching in both English and the native language than English only.

Table 18: Kindergarten Attendance (Survey Question 12)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Attends Full-Day	19%	12%	20%
Attends Part-Day	18	18	21
Does Not Attend	63	70	59

(1) Asked only to parents with children under six years of age. The sub-sample size in this table is very small. Thirty-three percent of Hispanics and thirty percent of the non-Hispanics indicated they had children under the age of six.

(2) Hispanics were less likely to have children attending kindergarten than non-Hispanics.

Table 19: Likelihood to Enroll Child in Kindergarten (Survey Question 13)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Yes	80%	80%	82%
No	12	13	11
Not Sure	8	7	7

(1) Asked only to parents with children six years of age or younger.

(2) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

Table 20: Likelihood to Enroll Child in Pre-School (Survey Question 15)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Yes	86%	83%	87%
No	6	12	5
Not Sure	8	5	8

(1) Asked only to parents with children five years of age or younger. Twenty-five percent of parents in the Hispanic sample and twenty-four percent of those in the statewide all-parent sample indicated they had children five or younger.

(2) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

Table 21: Sources of Information About Public Schools (Survey Question 8–9)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
First hand experience, meetings at school	21%	16%	21%
Communication from school, flyers, letter	18	22	18
Newspapers	17	16	17
Talking with children, other students	16	21	17
Communication with teacher or administrator	8	6	9
Friends or family members	7	7	7
Word of mouth in community	4	4	5
Internet	3	1	1
Television	3	4	2
Media or press in general	2	1	1
Other comments	1	3	2

(1) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

Table 22: School Encouragement of Parental Involvement (Survey Question 10)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Very involved	63%	61%	61%
Somewhat involved	28	29	28
Not very involved	8	10	9
No Opinion	1	0	2

(1) There were no statistically significant differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples.

Table 23: Attendance in Pre-School (Survey Question 14)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
Attends	48%	39%	52%
Does not attend	52	61	48

(1) Asked only to parents with children five years of age or younger. The sub-sample size in this table is very small. Twenty-five percent of Hispanics and twenty-four percent of non-Hispanics indicated they had children five years of age or younger.

(2) Hispanics were less likely than non-Hispanics to have children attending pre-school.

Table 24: Demographics (Survey Questions 34–47)

	Statewide All-parent	Statewide Hispanic	Statewide Non-Hispanic
<i>Number of Children</i>			
1	26%	33%	26%
2	36	39	35
3	22	15	22
4 or more	16	13	17
<i>Number of School Age Children</i>			
1	38%	33%	37%
2	38	39	38
3	13	15	13
4 or more	11	13	12
<i>Type of school attended by oldest child</i>			
Elementary	42%	44%	40%
Middle	20	19	20
High School	38	37	40

<i>Type of school</i>			
Attends Public School	88%	90%	91%
Private or Charter School	12	10	9
<i>Length of Residence</i>			
Less than 10 years	24%	22%	24%
10 to 20 years	25	27	26
21 or more years	51	51	50
<i>Language in the home</i>			
Only English	83%	35%	88%
Mainly English	16	59	12
Little or No English	1	6	*
<i>Self Identified Ethnicity</i>			
Anglo	76%	12%	88%
Hispanic	14	81	0
Native American	3	2	4
Mixed Ethnicity	4	2	4
Other	3	3	4
<i>Family Structure</i>			
Both male and female	85%	84%	86%
Male head only	4	3	3
Female head only	11	13	11
<i>Male Education</i>			
High School or less	16%	32%	12%
Some college/trade	33	29	34
College graduate	51	39	54
<i>Female Education</i>			
High School or less	17%	38%	14%
Some college/trade	36	39	39
College graduate	47	23	47
<i>Born in United States</i>			
	93%	74%	95%
<i>Generations in United States</i>			
One	6%	16%	4%
Two	10	13	9
Three or more	84	71	87
<i>Registered to vote in Arizona</i>			
Yes	93%	78%	94%
No	7%	22%	6%
<i>Gender of Interviewee</i>			
Male	44%	41%	45%
Female	56%	59%	55%

Note: Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.