



Resolved for 2014 – Listen to Parents!

Parents oppose excessive, high-stakes testing, school closings and “choice”

Surveys consistently show that most parents want *less testing, charter school expansion and school closings* and *more support for neighborhood public schools*. The 2013 Gallup/PDK poll of public opinion about public education (http://pdkintl.org/noindex/2013_PDKGallup.pdf) showed some of the strongest public support in decades for public schools and teachers while rejecting many of the current education reform practices like high stakes testing, vouchers, and de-funding of schools. Parents Across America founding member Helen Gym, a Philadelphia public school parent, was a guest analyst for the PDK poll. She concluded that

Parents overwhelmingly believe in public schools. We want financial support and smaller class sizes. We want a focus on teaching and learning, not just test scores. Since education policy makers say parent support is a top indicator of school success, they would do well to **act on what parents are saying**.

Another 2013 poll (<http://www.aft.org/newspubs/press/2013/072213b.cfm>) found that:

Most parents with children in public schools do not support recent changes in education policy, from closing low-performing schools to shifting public dollars to charter schools to private school vouchers... Support for strong public schools over expanded vouchers and charters is widespread, with **77 percent** supporting this approach, and that support cuts across political and class lines....And a **57 percent** majority feel there is too much emphasis on testing today.

PAA's position: This survey reinforces PAA's approach as detailed in our position paper on ESEA reauthorization, “What Public School Parents Want in a New Federal Education Law”
<http://parentsacrossamerica.org/paa-reforming-esea/>.

Overall, PAA opposes efforts to privatize public education through the expansion of charters, vouchers or other privately-run programs at the expense of regular public schools. We oppose the misuse and overuse of standardized tests to evaluate teachers, students or schools.

PAA recommends that Congress *listen to parents* and support policies and practices that have a track record of improving schools, and more reliable accountability and assessment practices. Specifically we suggest that a new ESEA include:

- a focus on providing sufficient and equitable resources in all public schools, so that every child can receive a high-quality education,
- improving schools rather than closing them, using evidence-based solutions backed by parents and other stakeholders,
- less standardized testing and more reliable accountability and assessment practices,
- programs that encourage the retention of professional, experienced teachers,
- a full range of parent involvement opportunities, including a stronger, democratically-elected parent voice in decision making at the school, district, state, and national levels, and
- the right of parents to opt their children out of standardized tests.

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