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(Excerpt from the *ERS e-Bulletin*, provided by ERS for use by Dr. Joyce J. Valenza.)

## Out of Step: Poll Shows Public Wary of NCLB

A nationwide survey shows that the strategies of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) do not often align with the public's preferred approaches.

Americans voice their opinions on the federal law in *The 37th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*. Most respondents supported the goals of NCLB but rejected the strategies used to accomplish those goals. When surveyed on the law's methods, 68 percent stated they do not believe a single test can provide an accurate picture of how a school is performing, and 80 percent do not believe testing students on only English and mathematics offers a fair assessment of whether a school needs improving. When asked about the transfer option from a school needing improvement, nearly 80 percent said they would prefer seeing more efforts made in their children's current school. Almost 70 percent stated special education students should not be required to meet the same standards as other students.

Respondents revealed additional concerns:

- The public viewed lack of financial support as a key problem facing public schools, citing it among the top issues for 15 straight years.
- The public agreed about the significance of narrowing the achievement gap between White and Asian students and Black and Latino students. Although respondents blamed the gap on non-school-related factors, they looked to public schools to close it.
- Although nearly half of those polled supported charter schools, 65 percent did not want them created at the expense of public schools.
- The public embraced using growth assessments and believed schools should be graded on how their students improve in a given year rather than on the percentage of students passing a state test.

**TO ORDER:** *The 37th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools* (18 pages) is available free online from Phi Delta Kappa (an international association for professional educators) at [www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k0509pol.pdf](http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k0509pol.pdf)

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