

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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MAINE EDUCATION SURVEY

Prepared by:

Education Delivery System Subcommittee

of the

Joint Standing Committee on Education

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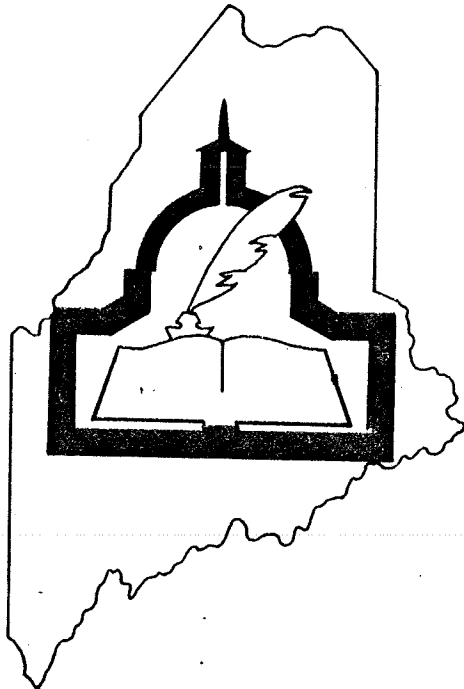
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December, 1982



## FOREWORD

Questionnaire surveys are not the ultimate source of information. They do provide a quick summarization of the attitudes and opinions of a broad population group at a particular point in time. With this goal and caution in mind, the Joint Standing Committee on Education of the 110th Legislature conducted a survey of the attitudes and opinions of a broad cross section of Maine citizens toward public education as a first step in its plan to study Maine's Education Delivery Systems. The questionnaire tried to provide a general overview of public perceptions, concerns and expectations about education. It is hoped that the the accompanying report from this phase of the Committee's study will provide legislators, education professionals, parents and the general public with useful information and also stimulate the development of ideas as to how the present structure can be improved and new and continuing problems addressed.

In the original planning of the Committee's study, it was anticipated that the findings of the questionnaire would be used as the basis for a series of public hearings held across the state. The hearings in each area would provide for individual meetings with town and school officials, teachers, parents and the general public. This format would allow each group a chance to react to the general issues raised by the survey as well as to particular problems of concern to individuals in the local area. Hearings would also provide for a more indepth presentation of the problems and accomplishments of the present system which would complement the overview provided by the survey.

In the final phase, the Committee hoped that the information gleaned from the questionnaire and public hearings would enable the Committee and the Legislature to develop and assess legislative initiatives for education in the coming session of the Legislature.

Rep. Mavourneen Thompson  
Subcommittee Chair  
December, 1982

## INTRODUCTION

The Joint Standing Committee on Education of the 110th Legislature conducted a state-wide survey of Mainers' attitudes toward public education. In developing the questionnaire for the survey, the Committee solicited the opinions and suggestions for questions from groups and individuals interested in education across the state and examined questions from national Gallup polls on education. In order to obtain representation from all parts of the state questionnaires were sent to a random sample of Maine drivers' license holders 18 years or older. Where possible the results of the Maine survey are compared with comparable data from national Gallup polls.

## SUMMARY

### I. General Assessment.

The respondents to the Maine survey had generally more favorable attitudes toward public school teachers in their communities than were registered in the national poll. On grade rankings from A to F, approximately 50% gave teachers honor grades of A or B and only 6% gave them unsatisfactory grades of D or F. The national poll registered only 39% honor grades and 15% unsatisfactory grades. Both the Maine survey and the national poll indicated that respondents had more favorable attitudes toward elementary school teachers than junior or senior high school teachers. There are undoubtedly numerous reasons for this difference in rankings. However, the committee felt there were three main ones. First, elementary teachers routinely send communications in the form of notes and student school papers and drawings home to parents. Second, the single classroom organization of elementary schools provides a common focus of one teacher, one group of students, and one set of parents. The departmental organization of classes and the specialization of secondary school teachers splinters the common focus and means parents must communicate with 4 to 5 different teachers and that teachers must relate to approximately 100 or more students and parents. Third, high school students are much more independent and perhaps much more critical of their surroundings than elementary students.

Respondents were concerned about increasing communication between schools and parents. They strongly supported the concepts of the schools encouraging and aiding the development of parent-teacher organizations and encouraging parents to visit and observe in their children's classrooms. They also supported a greater role for teachers in developing school curricula.

The subcommittee felt that one possible mechanism for both increasing communication and giving teachers more control over the curriculum at the secondary school level would be for schools to develop a modular organization of teachers and students. This would give teams of 2 or 3 teachers with different backgrounds major responsibility for the educational program for a sub-group of the school's students. There would continue to be some specialization in instruction but teachers would have a more general responsibility for organizing and integrating a core program for their students. The modular organization would also channel teachers', parents', and students' attention to a greater extent toward a common focus instead of splitting it up into separate single subject

classrooms.

## II. Discipline.

The areas most often cited as major problems with public schools were the failure of teachers to maintain proper discipline, disrespectful and disruptive students, and drug use. On related questions, respondents felt teachers should have greater authority in disciplining students and that parents expect the schools to assume too much responsibility for discipline. This indicates a general consensus that discipline is a problem and that a solution depends on the active involvement of both parents and teachers.

On the teacher's side of the equation, the committee recognized that a teacher's inability to maintain proper discipline may reflect inadequate training in behavior control or classroom discipline, or it could represent an improper career choice. To address this part of the problem, the committee felt that greater emphasis needs to be placed on classroom discipline and behavior management techniques in both the pre-service and in-service training of teachers. In addition, more opportunity for internships or practice teaching, particularly early in a prospective teacher's training, would provide an opportunity for the individual to assess whether teaching is a good career choice. Early practical exposure should also be coupled with adequate screening and career counseling for prospective education majors.

## III. Class size.

A majority of the respondents felt reducing class size would improve education at all grade levels. The greatest support for the reduction was for the elementary grades. In addition, the overwhelming majority of those who supported smaller class sizes would support such a change even if it cost more money.

## IV. Funding and Taxation.

Although as indicated above, while respondents were willing to spend more money on policies they felt would improve education, there was general skepticism to the idea that more money would mean better quality education. While they did not favor a general increase in spending, they did favor a reallocation of the source of funding. A majority favored increasing the state (sales or income tax) share of education funding and decreasing the local (property tax) share. Only a small minority favored increasing the local share or extending the local taxing authority to include a local income tax.

The survey did not present alternative methods for shifting the tax burden. However, two alternatives would be either to increase the overall percentage of the state's share or to provide a more targeted tax relief through a homestead exemption. The former would apply the relief to industrial and commercial properties and the vacation homes of Maine non-residents as well as to residential properties. The second alternative would target the relief specifically to individual

home owners and renters.

#### V. Vouchers.

The respondents did not favor a voucher system of providing support to public and private schools. The opposition was overwhelming, if the system would reduce the money available to public schools. The voucher system is similar in effect to the tax credits for private schools proposed by the present national administration.

#### VI. Teacher Training.

The majority of respondents felt that teachers were adequately trained to teach basic skills. However, they felt that teacher training was inadequate in the area of dealing with the social problems of students and in relating to parents. In spite of the generally favorable rating of teacher training, the respondents felt that prospective teachers should have more practice teaching experience before they are certified; they also favored a formal written certification examination for teachers. This public support for higher standards is particularly relevant in light of the State Board of Education's current review of teacher certification standards.

#### VII. Administrator Training.

Only 25% of the respondents felt that school administrators were adequately trained. The main areas which they felt should receive greater attention, and in which administrators were perhaps less well-versed, were personnel management and educational leadership. The majority also favored formal written certification examinations for administrators.

#### VIII. Parent Involvement.

A majority of the respondents felt that parents were not participating enough in the education of their children and that parents expected schools to assume too great a responsibility for their children in the area of discipline. However, the problem was not perceived as totally the parents' failure to take the initiative. They felt that schools should organize parent-teacher organizations and that they should encourage parents to visit their children's classes during school hours. A significant minority (45%) also were of the opinion that schools presently do not encourage parents to visit.

The survey did not ask for other methods of increasing parental involvement. One suggestion discussed by the subcommittee was to develop advisory committees for principals of each school. These could be composed of parents, community representatives, and a school board member. The advisory committee would provide a formal mechanism for parents and others to be involved and to keep informed about school policies. It would also put school board members in closer contact with at least one school in their administrative unit.

## IX. School Boards.

There was strong support for better training for school boards in educational policy and for a greater involvement in, or familiarity with, schools in their school administrative unit. The committee felt that the Department of Educational and Cultural Services, in cooperation with the Maine School Management Association, the Maine Teachers' Association and the Maine Municipal Association, should develop programs in school policy and law for school board members. To encourage attendance and to limit the financial burden on individual school board members, participating in these programs, travel and per diem costs could be paid and included as allowable costs in the state funding formula.

## X. Curricula.

There was overwhelming support for a broad variety of course offerings. These included not only the basic subjects of English, mathematics, American and Maine history, but also foreign languages, consumer education, art, music, and values and ethics. There was also support for special programs for gifted and talented students and for innovative and experimental programs. While there was support for a wide variety of subject offerings and special programs, there was an interest in providing the average students with more attention in school. In general, this seems to reflect an interest in providing an appropriate program to meet the individual needs and interests of all students.

The number and range of subject offerings vary from high school to high school. However, the large majority of schools have been reviewed and approved by either a New England or State Department of Education accreditation team and offer music, art, 4 years of science and math, and at least one foreign language in addition to the statutorily required courses.

A wide range of subjects are also offered in most elementary schools, but vary in breadth and depth and often depend on the training of the individual classroom teacher where specialized teachers are not employed.

## XI. Competency Testing and Education in the Basics.

The majority of respondents favored state-wide competency testing for graduation from high school. This support is consistent with their apparently conflicting opinions that while teachers are adequately trained to teach basic skills, students are not receiving a good education in reading, writing and math. Competency could be a mechanism for both teachers and students to be accountable for attaining educational goals.

As a result of a legislative initiative, the Department of Education conducted a statewide basic skills test in 1977. Based on the report from this survey, the State Board of Education established a policy which placed responsibility on local school administrative units to "adopt a comprehensive plan of goals, objectives and performance standards and to design an evaluative system which responds to those standards." To date, only a handful of units have actually implemented the policy. However, the department is providing assistance to others. The intent of the policy is for all schools to develop plans.

### XII. Personnel Policy.

There were several questions that concerned personnel policies for teachers. On the one hand, respondents were not favorably disposed toward collective bargaining in general, or toward strengthening the teachers' position in contract negotiations. On the other hand, they favored giving teachers a greater role in the determination of curriculum, the evaluation and hiring of teachers, and even in the development of school budgets.

A substantial minority felt that it was difficult or impossible to fire a bad teacher. A slight majority favored retaining the two-year probationary period for teachers entering a new school system even if the teacher had successfully completed a probationary period in another school system.

On the question of teachers' and administrators' salaries, a majority felt that members of each category were adequately paid. However, while this was the overwhelming judgement for principals, a substantial minority felt that teachers were underpaid and an even greater minority felt that superintendents were overpaid.

### XIII. Goals of Education.

In addition to the basic goal of teaching people skills to earn money, a large majority favored the broader liberal education goals of making a person a well-rounded citizen, teaching children to think creatively, and instilling a love of learning.

### XIV. Dropping Out of School.

In rating the reasons why students drop out of school, the respondents indicated that the problem has both a student component and a school component. The factor rated most often as a major reason was lack of motivation of the student. This was followed in a close second by students not being able to see classes as helpful in getting a job. Other factors of relative importance were marriage or pregnancy, parent or teacher/principal indifference, and the school preventing, obtaining or keeping a job.



MAINE EDUCATION SURVEY  
- Responses to Individual Questions -

QUALITY

1. Teachers use grades (A, B, C, D, F) to denote the quality of students' work. What grade would you give:	A	B	C	D	F	Don't Know
a. Public school teachers in your community?	11%	38%	31%	5%	1%	15%
b. Elementary school teachers in your community?	13	43	21	4	1	17
c. Junior high school teachers in your community?	7	35	27	8	1	21
d. High school teachers in your community?	9	33	26	8	2	22

QUALITY

Q1. Forty to fifty percent of the respondents gave honor grades (A or B) to teachers in their community and less than 10% gave unsatisfactory or failing grades (D or F). A substantially greater number gave elementary teachers honor grades, (56% A or B) than for either junior or senior high school teachers (42% A or B).

The national poll asked respondents to grade separately public schools, administrators, parents, and teachers in their community. In the first 3 categories, the distribution of responses was very similar. Thirty-six percent assigned honor grades of A or B and 20-21% assigned unsatisfactory grades of D or F. Teachers were rated slightly higher at 39% honor grades and only 15% unsatisfactory.

In comparison with the Maine survey, respondents to the national poll were considerably less favorable toward their teachers than Maine respondents. However, in analyzing the gradings of schools by size of community, the national poll found less favorable attitudes in larger cities and the most favorable attitudes (43% honor grades) in communities of 2,500 to 50,000. Since, the majority of Maine communities fall into this category, the size of community may be the major factor leading to higher ratings in Maine rather than any unique quality of Maine teachers or schools. The national poll also asked respondents to rate public schools in the nation in general. The responses on this question were considerably less positive (20% honor grades).

Similar to the questions used in the Maine survey, the national poll asked separate questions on grading of elementary, junior high and senior high schools. The same trend appeared as in Maine with substantially more respondents assigning honor grades to elementary schools than high schools. The higher ratings of elementary schools or elementary teachers may be due to the greater contact between parents and their children's teachers. Elementary school teachers, for example, more routinely sent

papers and notes home. The fact that elementary schools are still organized by classroom with one teacher, one group of students and one set of parents may also affect ratings. The departmental organization of high schools, on the other hand, breaks this central focus and means parents must relate to 4 to 5 teachers and teachers to 100 or more students and parents.

The committee felt that one possible mechanism for both increasing communication and giving teachers more control over the curriculum at the secondary school level would be for schools to develop a modular organization of teachers and students. This would give teams of 2 or 3 teachers with different backgrounds major responsibility for the educational program for a sub-group of the school's students. There would continue to be some specialization in instruction but teachers would have a more general responsibility for organizing and integrating a core program for their students. The modular organization would also channel teachers', parents', and students' attention to a greater extent toward a common focus instead of splitting it up into separate single subject classrooms.

2. What do you think are the problems with which the public schools in your community must deal?	Big Problem			Not a Problem		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	Don't Know
a. Teachers do not maintain proper discipline	21%	16%	31%	17%	6%	9%
b. Students are disrespectful and disruptive	26	21	27	14	4	9
c. Use of drugs	26	21	24	13	4	12
d. Poor curriculum/poor standards	8	16	23	23	20	9
e. Lack of proper financial support	11	13	17	20	28	11
f. Difficulty of getting and keeping good teachers	18	15	22	16	19	10
g. Large schools/overcrowding	11	10	15	19	37	8

Q2. Disrespectful and disruptive students, use of drugs, and teachers not maintaining discipline were three issues which a substantial majority of respondents considered major or moderate problems (74%, 71% and 68% respectively). Disrespectfulness of students and lack of discipline by teachers are intertwined and difficult to separate as cause and effect. Parents and community involvement and attitudes are also important. However, teachers play a crucial role in maintaining discipline and respect. This ability is an important skill which should be given greater emphasis in teacher training.

About half the respondents (55% and 47%) felt getting and keeping good teachers and poor curriculum and standards were problems. Lack of proper financial support and large or over-crowded schools were considered a problem by only 41 and 37% respectively. Some interesting variations occur when these last two categories are examined by education of the respondent and region of the state. While in general,

55% and 47% felt getting and keeping good teachers, and offering poor curricula are a problem, among respondents with a partial college education the percentages increased to 68% and 59%. On the question of whether large schools are a problem, while in most of the state the range was between 30 and 40% who felt it was a major or moderate problem, fully 49% of those in the northern corridor and only 22% in the western area responded this way.

The national poll provided similar results on the rank ordering of problems. On the questions covered in the Maine survey the rankings on the national poll divided into three groups. Lack of discipline was the problem most often cited. In the next group came drug use, poor curricula, difficulty in getting good teachers and lack of proper financial support. Finally, in the third group of minor importance were large schools. The only difference between the Maine survey and the national poll is the greater concern placed on drug use in Maine. This greater emphasis is probably not because drug use is actually a greater problem in Maine. The emphasis placed on the issue, in fact, may be because it is a relatively newer phenomenon or because Maine respondents have a more conservative attitude towards drug use than other parts of the nation.

CLASS SIZE

3. Do you think lowering class size to a maximum of 18-20 students would improve education in:	Yes	No	Don't Know
a. Grades K - 3?	71%	25%	4%
b. Grades 4 - 6 ?	70	26	4
c. Junior high school ?	65	31	5
d. High school?	59	35	6
4. If you answered YES for any of the grades levels in question 3, would you support this effort even though it would cost more money?	79	8	13

Q3&4. An overwhelming majority (70%) felt that lowering class sizes to 18-20 students would improve education in elementary schools. Slightly fewer, but still a significant majority, felt smaller classes would improve education in junior and senior high schools (65% and 59%). Of those who answered yes, 79% would support reducing class sizes even if it cost more money.

Responses to the questions on class size varied substantially by educational background of the respondent. The differences were greatest for the junior and senior high school classes. Of those with partial college or college education, 71% and 66% felt that junior and senior high school classes should

be smaller, compared with 57% and 51% for those with trade school education or less. The differences were much smaller and not statistically significant for the elementary grades. The college educated group was more likely to respond favorably but so did at least 65% of those with high school or less education. On the question of whether they would be willing to pay more for small classes the spread was 85% for the college graduates to 50% for those with partial high school or less. The remainder were around 70%.

There was a slightly greater tendency for respondents with children in school to respond favorably than those with no children. However, this tendency was only statistically significant on the question of lowering class size for grades 4 through 6 and even there, 65% of the respondents without children in school favored smaller classes compared to 75% with children.

FUNDING

5. Do you feel more money for schools means better quality education?	Yes 30%	No 62%	Don't Know 8%
6. The State, using broad-based taxes such as the state income tax and sales tax pays a little less than 50% of the cost of public education statewide. (The actual percentage may be well below 50% in property-wealthy communities and above 50% in less well-off communities.)	Yes	No	Don't Know
a. Do you think the <u>State</u> through its income and sales taxes should <u>pay more</u> and <u>local municipalities</u> through their property tax <u>pay less</u> ?	57%	28%	15%
b. Do you think the <u>State</u> through its income and sales taxes should <u>pay less</u> and <u>local municipalities</u> through their property tax <u>pay more</u> ?	12	73	5
c. Do you think <u>towns</u> should be allowed to collect a local income tax to help pay for the costs of schools?	20	68	13

Q5&6. In spite of the general feeling that smaller class sizes would improve education quality and a willingness to spend more money to accomplish a reduction, a substantial majority (62%) did not feel more money for education, in and of itself, would mean better quality education compared to 30% who felt it would improve quality. The percentage who felt money would improve quality, however, increased to 43% in the northern region of the state and dropped to 19% in the western region. In regard to the state and local sharing of education costs, a majority (57%) felt the State should increase its share and that the municipal share should be reduced. Concurrently, substantial majorities (73% and 63%) did not want the local share to be increased and did not want the local taxing authority to be expanded to allow for a

local income tax.

In comparing these last four questions with each other and with a question on the national poll on whether respondents were willing to raise taxes to increase support for public schools, some interesting patterns appear. The national poll indicates that 45% of the respondents in the 1969 survey favored increasing taxes. In 1981 this support had dropped to 30%. The degree of support in 1981 is identical to the percent of respondents in the Maine survey who felt more money would mean better schools. More money, therefore, does not currently appear to be perceived as the solution. The Maine survey, however, indicates that while there is a general caution against spending more money on schools, there is a willingness to spend money on specific changes respondents considered desirable. Seventy-nine percent of those who favored smaller classes would favor the change even if it cost more money. There is also an interest in shifting the burden for education from local property taxes to statewide taxes.

7. In some nations, the government allots a certain amount of money for each child for his/her education. Parents can then choose. This is called the "voucher system." Would you like to see such an idea adopted in this State?	Yes 38%	No 46%	Don't Know 16%
8. Would you support a voucher system even if it meant less money going to the public education system?	26	56	17

Q7&8. A voucher system to fund schools and to give parents a choice of which school to which they would send their child was not generally supported. Only 38% supported the idea itself and this dropped to 26% if its implementation would take funds away from public schools. Responses on the nationwide poll indicated a slightly greater tendency to favor a voucher system. However, when the national poll is analyzed by community size the results are almost identical to Maine's.

#### TRAINING OF EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL

9. Do you think there is adequate training for teachers in:	Yes	No	Don't Know
a. Elementary school?	67%	19%	14%
b. Junior high school?	59	24	17
c. High school?	52	29	19

Q9. A majority felt that there is adequate training for teachers. This positive assessment ranged from a substantial majority of 67% for elementary teachers and 59% for junior high school teachers to 52% for high school teachers. When responses were analyzed by the educational background of the respondent, those with some post-high school education had less favorable assessments of teacher training than those respondents with high school or less. The range here was from 70% of those with high school or less who felt that elementary teachers were adequately trained to 45% of those with post-high school education who felt high school teachers were adequately trained. Respondents with children in school were also more likely to be critical of teacher training than respondents without children. This difference was only statistically significant with regard to elementary school teachers. Sixty-two percent of respondents with children felt elementary school teachers were adequately trained compared to 68% of those without children.

As a partial explanation of the general trend, it is suggested that parents have greater direct contact with, and hence, understanding and trust of, elementary school teachers than with teachers in the upper grades. In contrast it was suggested that the more limited direct contact of parents with high school teachers and the difficult nature of the transitional adolescent years in general give parents a more critical view of the training of high school teachers.

10. Do you think teachers are adequately trained in terms of:	Yes	No	Don't Know
a. Teaching basic skills?	73%	19%	7%
b. Relating to the social and family problems of students?	23	64	12
c. Relating to parents?	30	56	14

Q10. In terms of the area of training, the overwhelming majority of respondents (73%) felt that teachers were adequately trained to teach basic skills. In contrast, a majority (64% and 56%, respectively) felt that teachers were inadequately trained in relating to the family and social problems of students and in relating to parents.

It is perhaps of interest to relate the responses to questions 9 and 10 to certain other questions. First, as indicated below in question 14, substantially fewer respondents rate the training of administrators as adequate. Second, even though respondents felt teachers were adequately trained to teach basic skills, a much reduced number indicated that students were receiving an adequate education in the basic skill areas of reading, writing and mathematics (see question 35). Third, in spite of the generally large percent who felt the training of teachers was adequate, responses to questions 11 and 12 indicate support for more practice teaching experience for teachers before they become certified and for the establishment of a written and oral certification examination for teachers.

11. Do you think the education courses such as methods and philosophy of education are a necessary part of a teacher's undergraduate training?	Yes	No	Don't Know
	74%	16%	11%
12. Do you think prospective teachers should have more experience with students in the classroom before becoming certified as teachers?	78	15	7
13. Do you think prospective teachers should be required to pass written and oral exams (similar to the process followed by prospective lawyers) before becoming certified as teachers?	74	19	7

Q11-13. An overwhelming majority of respondents (70% plus) felt that methods and educational philosophy courses are necessary, that more in-classroom experience should be required for certification, and that a written and oral certification exam should be required for teachers. The national poll also indicates overwhelming support for teacher certification exams.

14. Do you think administrators are adequately trained?	Yes	No	Don't Know
	25%	46%	30%

Q14. In contrast to question 9, where a majority felt teachers were adequately trained, only 25% felt administrators were adequately trained, and 46% felt they were not adequately trained. The definition of administration was undefined and it is not known whether the responses referred to superintendents, principals, or both. It was felt that the responses, when coupled with the following three questions, indicated respondents' opinions that the training for administrators should be improved and redirected.

15. How big a part of a school administrator's job are the following tasks:	Major Part	Minor Part	Not a Part	Don't Know
a. To manage money?	52%	23%	4%	21%
b. To manage school personnel?	68%	14%	1%	17%
c. To exercise educational leadership?	53%	23%	6%	18%
d. To be a disciplinarian?	45%	26%	4%	18%

16. How big a part of a school administrator's job do you feel the following tasks should be:

a. To manage money?	50%	30%	10%	10%
b. To manage school personnel?	83%	10%	2%	6%
c. To exercise educational leadership?	77%	13%	3%	7%
d. To be a disciplinarian?	52%	27%	13%	8%

Q15 & 16. A majority of respondents felt that administrative tasks do, and should, cover each of the four areas listed -- money, personnel management, educational leadership and discipline. The biggest difference in the perceptions of what is, and what should be, concerned managing personnel and exercising educational leadership. In both of these areas, there was a substantial increase in the percent who felt that these two areas should be a part of the administrator's role, while the percent who felt managing money and discipline should be a major part of the administrator's role remained at approximately 50%. Respondents with children (88%), were slightly more likely to feel the administrator's job should include personnel management as compared to 80% of respondents without children. These responses perhaps reflect the public's feeling that schools are large enterprises and, just as in any private business, the administrators should exercise leadership and particularly be able to manage personnel.

17. Do you think prospective administrators should be required to pass written and oral exams before becoming certified as administrators?	Yes	No	Don't Know
	80%	13%	7%

Q17. Following the pattern of the preceding three questions, the overwhelming majority (80%), felt that administrators should be required to pass written and oral examinations before becoming certified. Interestingly, this percentage was higher among respondents with high school or less education and fell to 69% among those with a college education.

#### PARENTS/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

18. Do you think parents are participating enough in the education of their children?	Yes	No	Don't Know
	10%	82%	8%

Q18. While the responses indicate that an overwhelming majority (92%) felt that the parents were not participating enough in their children's education, the question remains as to how much of this lack of involvement is the result of parents' lack of interest or teachers' and administrators' lack of encouragement. As indicated in question 22, a substantial minority felt the schools did not encourage parents to become involved.



19. Do you think the responsibility society places on the schools is	Too Much?	Just Right?	Not Enough?	Don't Know?
	43%	20%	24%	13%

Q19. Forty-three percent of the respondents felt that society placed too much responsibility on schools, 20% felt it was just right, and 24% not enough. Among respondents with different educational backgrounds, college-educated respondents were most likely to feel there was too much responsibility placed on schools (55%), and least likely to feel that not enough responsibility was placed on schools (18%). Respondents with high school (or less) education, on the other hand, were considerably less likely to feel that too much responsibility was placed on schools (31%), while a slightly greater than average portion felt that it was just right (24%) or too little (27%).

	Yes	No	Don't Know
20. Should the schools organize parent-teacher organizations?	86%	10%	4%
21. Should the schools encourage parents to visit their children's classes during school hours?	76	22	2

Q20 & 21. An overwhelming majority felt that schools should be more active in involving parents. Eighty-six percent felt the school should organize parent-teacher organizations and 76% felt schools should encourage parents to visit their children's classes during school hours. On the question of schools encouraging visits during school hours, there was a clear increase in the percent favoring parental visits with increased education of the respondent. While only 64% of respondents with less than a high school education favored encouraging visits, 82% of those with a post-high school education favored visits. It was suggested that parents may want the school to encourage parental involvement partially because the schools have greater resources to carry out the organizational work and partly because of the fear that parents who try to stimulate things on their own may be stereotyped as radicals.

22. Do you think the schools encourage parents to visit and become involved in their children's school experiences?	Yes 43%	No 45%	Don't Know 12%
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Q22. On the question of whether schools actually do encourage parents to visit and become involved in their child's education, respondents were evenly split with 43% responding affirmatively and 45% responding negatively. The percent responding yes increases to 49% among respondents with children in school.

23. Should teachers visit the homes of their students?	Yes 40%	No 47%	Don't Know 14%
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Q23. As to whether teachers should visit their students' homes, respondents were again evenly split, 40% favoring visits and 47% opposed. It was suggested that visits could work either to the student's benefit or detriment. It could provide a teacher with a greater understanding of a child's needs and the constraints imposed by his or her family. On the other hand, it could prejudice the teacher's judgment of the student if the teacher was not trained in or sensitive to dealing with the impact of different family situations on a student's ability to do school work.

24. Should teachers be given more authority or freedom with regard to discipline in the classroom?	Yes 72%	No 21%	Don't Know 7%
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25. Do parents expect schools to assume too great a responsibility for disciplining students?	56	37	7
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Q24 & 25. Supporting the response to question 19, substantial majorities (72% and 56%, respectively) felt that teachers should be given more authority for disciplining students and that parents expect schools to assume too much responsibility for discipline. Interestingly, the number of positive responses increased with the respondent's education to both questions. Sixty percent of respondents with less than a high school education felt that teachers should have more authority, but fully 83% of respondents with a college education held that opinion. On the question of schools having too much responsibility for discipline, the positive responses increased from 48% among respondents with less than a high school education to 67% among those with a college education. Respondents with no children in school were more likely to feel parents expect the school to assume too much responsibility (63%) than respondents with children, whereas only 50% felt parents expected too much. The questions did not specify what was meant by discipline. It was suggested that teachers need training in non-physical means of behavior control, and that greater authority for discipline should not necessarily mean expanded use of physical punishment.

26. Should school board members spend more time observing what goes on in schools?	Yes 90%	No 4%	Don't Know 7%
27. Should school board members attend workshops to learn about their responsibilities as educational policy-makers and financial managers?	92	2	5

Q26 & 27. On the questions relating to school boards, there was almost a unanimous agreement that board members should spend more time observing what goes on in school (90%), and that board members should attend workshops to learn about their responsibilities (92%).

28. How many hours do your children watch television on school days?	Less than 1 hour 14%	1-2 47%	2-3 27%	3-4 10%	4+ 2%
29. Do you set limits on how much television your children watch	Yes 65%	No 35%			
30. Do you set limits on what types of programs your children watch?	75%	25%			

Q28-30. A majority of the respondents with children (61%) reported their children watch 2 or fewer hours of television a day. Sixty-five percent reported setting limits on the time their children watched and 75% set limits on the types of programming. These responses are somewhat difficult to analyze since parents may have different rules for children of different ages. The national poll indicated that only 35% of the respondents set limits on their oldest child. However, the percentage increased to 51% when the child was 12 years old or younger.

Television has become a major presence in the lives of children. Concern over television includes both how much and what types of programs children watch and what effect watching has on the development of academic, interpersonal and other skills. From the research conducted on its effects, television appears to be both a benefit and hindrance to a child's development. While it appears that watching television, and perhaps particularly the educationally oriented programs, improves a preschool and early elementary school child's academic performance, the effects may not be as beneficial in other areas or for other age groups. Good educational programming can be provided via television which makes good use of visual and auditory learning processes. It may also stimulate an interest in drama and literature. However, it can also inhibit the development of interpersonal skills and the ability for independence in developing and carrying out activities. Among older students it may provide an escape which sidetracks the student's attention from school work. Research findings indicate that this may be a particular problem with otherwise intellectually capable students whose academic performance is lagging. Television watching here, however, is more likely a symptom of an underlying problem.

Other research, particularly on violence in television programming, has suggested a link between television and behavior problems. This is another indication that the consideration of the type of programming is crucial in assessing the impact of television. The cautious approach would, perhaps, be to monitor the type and number of programs watched but also to recognize its potential as an instructional medium.

INSTRUCTION/CURRICULA

31. Should the school day be extended to allow more time for instruction?	Yes	No	Don't Know
	28	61	11

Q31. A majority (61%) felt the school day should not be extended while only 28% felt it should. Respondents were not asked to indicate their reasons. However, they could include concern for younger children, the weather, time for extra curricular activities and after school jobs.

32. Should the curriculum in the schools offer:

a. English?	100	0	0
b. Mathematics?	100	0	0
c. Science?	99	1	0
d. American history?	98	1	0
e. World history?	95	4	1
f. Physical education?	91	7	1
g. Foreign languages?	89	7	4
h. Music?	88	9	3
i. Art?	83	12	5
j. Health?	92	6	2
k. Consumer education/Life skills?	85	10	5
l. Values and ethics?	77	17	6
m. Parenting skills?	66	26	9

Q32. The question of which subjects which should be covered in the curriculum included almost unanimous support for foreign languages, world history, art, music, health, consumer education, as well as the more central or statutorily required curricula of English, science, American and world history, mathematics and physical education. Slightly fewer, but still substantial, majorities favored offering courses in values and ethics (77%) and parenting skills (66%). A slight majority (54%) favored offering courses in philosophy.

The high percentages clearly indicate that respondents are interested in providing a diversity of educational offerings which includes non-academic subjects like art and music and life-skill subjects such as consumer education and parenting. This support contradicts, to some extent, the recent emphasis on the 3R's and getting back to basics. The two perspectives may, however, only appear to represent opposite philosophies of education and the public may want more attention placed on, or an improved quality of instruction in, the basic education program at the same time as they wish to retain a diversity in subject offerings.

While Maine's specific statutory requirements are basically limited to English, history, and physical education, the school accreditation processes conducted by the Maine Department of Educational and Cultural Services or by regional New England accrediting bodies include a wider range of program offerings. The large majority of Maine high schools meet these accreditation standards and at the high school level offer at least one foreign language, art, music and 4 years of science and math. The actual depth and breadth of programs, however, varies considerably from school unit to school unit. Provision is sometimes made for students to attend a neighboring high school if a subject is not offered at the school in their unit. A wide range of subjects are also offered in most elementary schools, but vary in breadth and depth and depend on the training of the individual classroom teacher especially where specialized teachers are not employed or are responsible for covering several schools within a district.

In comparing the responses to the Maine survey on this question with the national poll, a major difference in the questions should be kept in mind. The Maine survey asked whether subjects should be offered while the national poll asked whether they should be required. The national poll also had separate questions for students planning to go to college and for those not planning to go to college. Similar to the Maine survey response, the national poll respondents overwhelmingly felt mathematics, English, and history should be required. Science was also supported by a majority for both groups of students but with a greater percentage supporting it for those going on to college. Foreign languages were supported as a required subject by a slight majority for the college bound students but only by a small minority for those not planning to continue their education. Art and music were only supported as a required subject by a small minority. Physical education was supported by slightly less than half for both groups.

Mirroring the Maine results, 64% felt that instruction should be required on parenting/parent training and 70% favored instruction in "values and ethical behavior." The national poll also included a question on sex education. Seventy percent favored it for high school students and 45% for elementary school students. While not directly parallel, the category on health contained in the Maine survey could include topics on sex education.

33. Should there be a state-wide competency test for graduation from high school?	Yes 60%	No 31%	Don't Know 9%
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Q33. Competency testing for graduation of students was favored by a majority (60%) of the respondents. Respondents with some post high school education were more likely to favor competency testing (65%) than those with high school or less (51%). The national poll recorded very similar results with 69% favoring testing.

Based on the 1977 study of basic skills initiated by the Legislature, the State Board of Education adopted a policy for local school administrative units to "adopt a comprehensive plan of goals, objectives and performance standards and design an evaluation system which responds to those standards." Only a handful of school units have fully implemented the policy to date, but a number of others are in the process of doing so. The intent is for all units to have such a plan.

34. Some observers say the United States is losing its lead in science and technology to Japan and Germany. Do you think this is true?	Yes 52%	No 21%	Don't Know 26%
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Q34. The perception that the United States is losing its lead in technology to Germany and Japan was shared by 52% of the Maine respondents and 48% of the national poll. The Maine survey, however, had a large percentage of "don't knows" (26%).

It is not entirely clear what the question mean's although it has been used in the national poll for several years. Responses may refer as much to the quality of consumer goods as to scientific instruments and high technology products. Comparisons among countries are also difficult, and even if there are differences, it is not necessarily fair to place the full responsibility for any perceived differences on the educational system alone. The quality of technological products like cars, computers, sound equipment and televisions have as much to do with management practices and organization of industry as they do with the training of students. However, the question may reveal a recognition of an underlying problem with our educational system. Science and mathematics are not offered in all grades in all schools and there appears to be a growing problem with training and attracting science and mathematics teachers. College enrollments in science have not kept pace with demand, and school systems have difficulty in competing with the salaries offered by private industry.

35. Do you think students are receiving a good education in:	Yes	No	Don't Know
a. Reading?	36%	58%	6%
b. Writing?	30	64	6
c. Math skills?	47	46	8

Q35. On the question of whether students are receiving a good education in the 3R's, the Maine survey indicated respondents had serious doubts. Fifty-eight percent felt students were not receiving a good education in reading and 64% felt they were not receiving a good education in writing. Responses on mathematics were evenly split with 47% who felt students were receiving a good education and 46% who felt the opposite.

There was a substantial relationship between answers to this question and the previous one. Those who felt the United States was falling behind Japan and Germany were also likely to feel students were not getting a good education in the 3R's.

36. Do you think gifted and talented students should have special programs for them in the schools?	Yes	No	Don't Know
	71%	22%	6%

Q36. Seventy-one percent were in favor of special programs for gifted and talented students. Over 60% of the respondents in each of the educational groupings favored special programs but the major support group was college educated respondents with 82% in favor. The college educated group may also see this as a means of providing accelerated academic programs for the college bound student. The committee feels gifted and talented should include not only academic skills and music and art abilities but should also include carpentry and mechanics so that talents are recognized and special programs provided in a wide range of areas.

37. Do you think innovative and/or experimental programs in the schools have value?	Yes	No	Don't Know
	60%	24%	16%

Q37. A majority (60%) felt that innovative and experimental programs have value. This support increased to 68% among college-educated respondents but is also supported by 50% of respondents with less than a high school education. The percentage of respondents who indicated they didn't know was higher among those respondents with less education.

There was a strong tendency for respondents who supported programs for gifted and talented to also support innovative programs.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
38. Does the "average" student need more attention in school?	63%	27%	10%

Q38. A majority of respondents (63%) also felt that the average student needed more attention in school. There is perhaps no clear definition of what "average" means but the answers probably reflect a concern that the child without exceptional needs or abilities is allowed to "plod" along without any special individual attention.

There was no relationship between support for more attention being given to the average student and for gifted and talented or innovative programs.

Taking these last three questions together, there seems to be general support for providing appropriate programs to meet the individual needs and interests of all students.

#### PERSONNEL POLICY

	Pos. Effect	Neg. Effect	No Effect	Don't Know
39. Does collective bargaining between school personnel and school boards have a positive or negative effect on education?	19%	39%	7%	35%

Q39. A substantial percentage (35%) either didn't have an opinion on the effect of collective bargaining, or didn't know what effect it has. Thirty-nine percent of the total felt the effect is negative and 26% felt it is positive or has no effect. This distribution of opinions parallels responses to the question on the national poll as to whether unionization had hurt or helped education. Thirty-seven percent felt it has a negative effect and 19% felt it has a positive effect on education.

The reasons for this negative opinion could be the failure of teachers and teachers' associations to present their broad educational concerns. They appear to focus too much on salary issues. The committee discussed several possible reasons for the results. Starting salaries of teachers are low and teachers' salaries, in general, have lagged behind inflation. Some feel that certain fringe benefits may compensate for lower salaries. Teachers work for 185 days and then face what some consider to be "forced unemployment" for the summer. Many respondents may feel teachers do and can get summer jobs. Teachers, on the other hand, may find it hard to find summer employment in their district or may have to take summer courses to retain certification.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
40. Do you think too much time and money is spent by school boards and teachers in negotiating contracts and grievances?	53%	23%	24%
41. Should school employees be allowed to strike?	26	61	12
42. Should school employees be granted binding arbitration in financial matters of their contracts?	43	21	36



Q40-42. A slight majority (53%) felt too much time was spent on negotiating contracts and grievances, and 61% felt teachers should not have the right to strike. On the question of binding arbitration, a large percentage, 36%, said they didn't know whether school employees should be granted binding arbitration. Of those who did have an opinion, 68% (43% of the total) felt they should be granted binding arbitration. This slight tendency (although not supported by a majority) to give more bargaining rights is compatible with a willingness to give teachers more professional responsibility for school operations (see questions 44-46).

43. How do you feel about the level of salaries of the following educational personnel in your community?	Overpaid	Adequate	Underpaid
a. Teachers	5%	55%	40%
b. Principals	16	74	10
c. Superintendents	33	61	6

Q43. The question on the adequacy of salary levels for teachers, principals and superintendents revealed a majority who felt all three categories were adequately paid. However, a significant minority felt that teachers were underpaid (40%) and superintendents overpaid (33%).

Respondents from different regions of the state and educational backgrounds varied in their tendency to consider teachers underpaid. The differences may relate to the general wage scale in the area or the income of the educational group. While 48% of those from the southern corridor felt teachers were underpaid and only 47% adequately paid, less than 30% from the mid-coast/downeast and western areas felt teachers were underpaid. A greater percentage of college-educated respondents (53%) felt teachers were underpaid than those with trade school or partial college (34%), high school graduates (30%), or respondents with less than a high school education (21%).

	Yes	No	Don't Know
44. Should teachers have more say in developing school budgets?	58%	29%	13%
45. Should faculty committees help to determine the curriculum in the schools, as is the practice in colleges?	79	8	12
46. Should faculty committees participate in the evaluation of new teachers, before granting job security, as is the practice in colleges?	62	22	16

Q44-46. The questions on teacher involvement in school budgets, curriculum, and evaluating new teachers all indicate a majority in favor of greater involvement and more responsibility for teachers. The percentage in favor was overwhelming (79%) in the case of involvement in determining curriculum. The percentage of respondents in favor of each question varied by educational background. The percent of those with a high school or less education in favor of each question was 10 percentage points less than

the average on each question and 10 percentage points higher among those with college degrees.

A suggested explanation for the generally favorable responses is that the respondents have a great deal of trust in teachers. They may feel that teachers are closer to the students and would be better advocates for needed programs. They also seem to feel teachers would be good evaluators of new teachers. They may even consider teachers to be better able than administrators to understand the needs and assess the abilities of new teachers. The best situation might be an evaluation committee including both teachers and administrators. The special interests of individuals would be cancelled out, providing a more comprehensive and objective evaluation. Such an evaluation process may also create a more cooperative atmosphere of administration.

47. Under the present structure, do you think a bad teacher can be fired?	Yes	No	Don't Know
	35%	45%	20%

Q47. Forty-five percent felt that bad teachers could not be fired and only 35% felt they could. Though it is not statistically significant, the respondents with college educations were more likely to feel bad teachers could not be fired than respondents with high school or less education.

The process, both legally and practically, of firing a teacher is complex. The statutes allow school boards not to rehire a teacher if the board gives the teacher 6 months' notice. Local school board/teachers' association contracts may include additional provisions for just cause. The chain from parental complaint, to principal, to superintendent, to school board is a long one and the process may delay and even sidetrack action. A principal or a superintendent may feel reluctant to reverse their earlier judgment to hire the teacher. The teacher's rights need also to be considered and problems in dealing with an individual child or parent, or one class group, should not necessarily be grounds for dismissal.

On the other hand, it could be suggested that there do not need to be any bad teachers if there are good administrators providing adequate supervision and effective hiring practices. The administration should help new teachers or other teachers who are having difficulty. Excellent and well-trained administrators are more likely to hire and retain good teachers.

48. Should a teacher who has successfully completed a probationary period in one school system be required to complete another probationary period upon entering a new school system?	Yes	No	Don't Know
	58%	33%	9%

Q48. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents felt school boards should have the option of requiring a teacher who had completed a probationary period in one school system to complete another probationary period upon entering a new system. The Committee feels there are two sides to the issue. One is the interest of the school in having an opportunity to review a teacher's performance and delay in making the decisions as to whether to renew a new teacher's contract up to the end of the school year (i.e. 2-3 months before the start of the next school year). The other side is in protecting the professional teacher and giving her/him the opportunity to change schools or take a few years off without an

additional penalty. Some suggested that a teacher who performed well in one school system, however, may not perform as well in another due to different local conditions. At the same time, the burden may fall unfairly on women teachers who move to follow their families or drop out of teaching for a number of years to raise a family.

GENERAL ISSUES

49. How much importance do you place on the following roles of education in our democracy?	IMPORTANCE				Don't Know
	Major	Moderate	Minor	No	
a. To teach people skills in order to earn money	65%	29%	4%	1%	2%
b. To make a person a well-rounded citizen	68	24	6	0	1
c. To teach children to think creatively	66	26	6	1	1
d. To instill a love of learning	61	27	9	3	1

Q49. A significant majority felt that all 4 roles were of major importance. There may be a general desire to emphasize basic skills and jobs, but this focus has not negated the broader goal of producing well-rounded citizens, teaching creativity, and instilling a love of learning. On each of the last three questions the college-educated respondents were more likely to rate them as important than respondents with less education.

50. Why do students drop out of school?	Major	Minor	No	Don't Know
a. Lack motivation	83%	13%	1%	3%
b. Don't see school classes as helpful in getting a job	60	31	4	5
c. Marriage and/or pregnancy	30	56	7	7
d. School gets in the way of job	20	58	16	6
e. Parental indifference	43	36	13	8
f. Teacher and/or principal indifference	30	44	15	11
g. Responsibilities at home	6	62	22	9
h. Peer pressure to drop out	14	47	29	9
i. Parental pressure to leave school	5	43	38	14

j. Encouraged to leave by teacher and/or principal	8	31	43	18
k. No transportation	1	38	54	7

Q50. The ordering of the causes of students' dropping out indicates several groupings of problems. The overwhelming majority (90% plus) felt lack of motivation and the inability to see school classes as helpful in getting a job as major or minor reasons. In the next group (74 to 86%) are marriage or pregnancy, parent and teacher/principal indifference, and school getting in the way of a job. Peer pressure and responsibilities at home are in a fourth group (61 to 68%). Finally, of concern to only a minority (38% to 48%) are lack of transportation and parental or teacher/principal pressure to leave school.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

51. Do you have children in school?	Maine survey	National poll	Maine 1982 Census
No children	55%	65%	-
Children	45	35	-
Respondent's sex:			
Male	39	48	48
Female	61	52	52
Respondent's Age:			
18-29	27	28	29
30-49	50	36	33
50 +	23	36	38
Educational Background:			
Elementary	2	14	
High school - incomplete	8	16	> 30
High school - complete	29	34	> 41

Technical/trade school	11%	5%	
College - incomplete	19	16	16
College - complete	32	15	13
Occupation Professional/business	32	27	-
Clerical/sales	18	7	-
Skilled worker	11	19	-
Non-skilled worker	11	21	-
Farm	-	3	-
Other	29	23	-

The sample was a random selection of drivers' license holders in the state 18 years of age and older. It was stratified to ensure adequate numbers of responses from both the highly populated Route 95, York County-Portland - Lewiston - Bangor, corridor and the less populated areas to the west, north in Aroostook County and along the coast. For analysis purposes the corridor was further divided into Lewiston and north and south of Lewiston and the coastal region units midcoast (Lincoln, Waldo and Knox Counties) and downeast (Hancock and Washington Counties). The return rate was 35% with no significant variation among regions. In the analysis, the responses were weighted to reflect the actual distribution of individuals in the state.

In comparison with the distribution found in the national poll and the 1980 Census returns for Maine, the respondents to the Maine survey have an over-representation of females, 30 to 49 year olds and college graduates. Males, individuals over 50, and those with less than a high school education are under-represented. There was no comparable occupation data available yet from the census analysis but the occupational distributions in the national poll and Maine survey were not too dissimilar. The percentage of respondents without children was slightly higher in the Maine survey than in the national poll.