UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION

RESULTS OF A GALLUP-*EDUCATION WEEK* SURVEY OF K-12 SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS – SURVEY 2

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EDUCATION WEEK

GALLUP®

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ABOUT GALLUP

Gallup has studied human nature and behavior for more than 70 years. Gallup's reputation for delivering relevant, timely, and visionary research on what people around the world think and feel is the cornerstone of the organization. Gallup employs many of the world's leading scientists in education, management, economics, psychology, and sociology, and Gallup's consultants assist leaders in identifying and monitoring behavioral economic indicators worldwide. Gallup consultants help organizations maximize their growth and achieve objectives by improving employee productivity, incorporating development and coursework, and providing strategic advisory services. With more than 40 years of experience in the field of education, Gallup also provides consulting services that improve schools, campuses, and nonprofit organizations. Gallup's 2,000 professionals deliver services at client organizations, through the Internet, at Gallup University campuses, and in 40 offices around the world.

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ABOUT GALLUP EDUCATION

Gallup experts work with leaders in education to hire and develop talented educators, identify the strengths of each individual student, and create engaging learning environments — fostering long-term student success in the classroom and in future careers. The best educators know that for students to achieve meaningful, lasting success in the classroom and beyond, they must be emotionally engaged in the educational experience. This means educators must focus on students' hope, engagement, and well-being — the predictors Gallup has discovered matter the most. Measuring and moving the needle on these outcomes transforms educational institutions into places where students — and educators — thrive.

For more information, visit education.gallup.com, follow @GallupEducation, or contact education@gallup.com.

ABOUT *EDUCATION WEEK*

Since its founding in 1981, *Education Week* has been recognized as America's preeminent source of news and information in pre-collegiate education. With an editorial purview that spans local, state, and national news, and issues from preschool through the transition to high school, *Education Week* strives to be a one-stop source for news, information, analysis, and services essential to driving critical changes in K-12 policy and practice. The paper, published 37 times a year, has a print readership of 225,000 and reaches an audience of 1.1 million users through the edweek.org website. *Education Week* is published by Editorial Projects in Education, a nonprofit organization based in Bethesda, Maryland.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Gallup research study of K-12 superintendents in the U.S. was developed to track and understand their opinions on important topics and issues facing education. The survey is the second in a series of three planned for 2014. The following are key findings from the study.

PARENT AND STUDENT FEEDBACK

- Approximately three in 10 (27%) superintendents strongly agree and another 79% agree that they regularly consider parent feedback in the decisions they make for their school district.

- Two in 10 (19%) strongly agree and 38% agree they regularly consider student feedback when making district decisions.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

- A little more than one-third (38%) of superintendents strongly agree that they have sufficient data on student outcomes to make strategic school district decisions.

- One-third (33%) of superintendents also strongly agree that principals in their district have access to sufficient data on student outcomes needed to inform instruction strategies for students.

- Only 16% of superintendents strongly agree that teachers in their district are prepared to support students who may need more help, such as English as a second language students and those with disabilities.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION COMPARISONS

- One-third (33%) of superintendents strongly agree that school systems around the world are too different to rely on international test comparisons for school improvement. Few superintendents (4%) strongly agree that international test comparisons are critical to helping improve schools in this country, and even fewer (2%) strongly agree that international comparison tests such as PISA accurately measure student achievement across nations.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

- A wide majority (73%) of superintendents believe that the Common Core State Standards are just about right for most students.

- About two-thirds (64%) of superintendents feel that states should not pull back from their Common Core Consortia.

BOARD GOVERNANCE

- Four in 10 (44%) superintendents strongly agree that their school district is well governed at the board level, but only 5% strongly agree that school districts in the U.S. are well governed at the board level.

- Half (52%) of superintendents say that their state's board of education affords too little autonomy to local school districts.

K-12 COLLABORATION WITH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

- One quarter (24%) of superintendents report strong collaboration between their school district and local higher education institutions.
- A large majority (83%) of superintendents state they collaborate the most on dual enrollment, and 76% say they collaborate on tours or visits.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Almost half of superintendents (47%) say their principals take an active role in determining professional development priorities.
- One-third (32%) believe their school district has a comprehensive development plan for new teachers.
- About nine in 10 superintendents say that informal dialogue to improve teaching (91%), courses and workshops (90%), and education conferences and seminars (89%) are professional development activities offered to teachers within their school district.
- Superintendents say educational conferences and seminars (93%) and informal dialogue to improve teaching (92%) are professional development activities offered to principals within their school district.
- Presented with a variety of professional development topics for teachers explored within the last two years, nearly all school district superintendents (94%) mention the use of technology in instruction.

METHODOLOGY

Gallup used a purchased sample list of 12,538 K-12 school districts across the U.S. The list contained email addresses of superintendents of U.S. public school districts. Data are not weighted, and the sample is not nationally representative of U.S. school districts. Gallup conducted 1,663 Web surveys August 4-18, 2014.

KEY FINDINGS

PARENT AND STUDENT FEEDBACK

When making school district decisions, superintendents place more emphasis on feedback given from parents than students. Approximately half (52%) of superintendents agree and 27% strongly agree that they regularly consider parent feedback in the decisions they make for their school district. About four in 10 (38%) say they agree and 19% strongly agree they regularly consider student feedback when making district decisions.

On a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.						
	%5 Strongly Agree	%4	%3	%2	%1 Strongly Disagree	% Don't Know
I regularly consider student feedback in the decisions I make for the school district.	19	38	30	10	1	1
I regularly consider parent feedback in the decisions I make for the school district.	27	52	18	3	0	0

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Timely and applicable student data is important for superintendents to have in making decisions. Thirty-eight percent of superintendents strongly agree that they have sufficient data on student outcomes to make strategic school district decisions. However, only 15% strongly agree that the student data is received fast enough to inform instruction strategies for students. One-third (33%) of superintendents also feel that principals in their district have access to sufficient data on student outcomes needed to inform their instruction strategies.

On a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.						
	%5 Strongly Agree	%4	%3	%2	%1 Strongly Disagree	% Don't Know
I have sufficient data on student outcomes to make strategic decisions for my school district.	38	45	14	3	1	0
I receive data on student outcomes fast enough to inform instruction strategies for students.	15	33	29	18	4	0
Principals in my district have access to sufficient data on student outcomes needed to inform instruction strategies for students.	33	43	16	5	1	1
Principals in my district receive sufficient training in the analysis of data on student outcomes used to inform instruction strategies for students.	20	41	26	10	2	1

Only 16% of superintendents strongly agree that teachers in their district are prepared to support students who may need more help, such as English as a second language students and those with disabilities.

On a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.						
	%5 Strongly Agree	%4	%3	%2	%1 Strongly Disagree	% Don't Know
Teachers in my district are prepared to support students who may need more help, such as English as a second language students and those with disabilities.	16	39	32	10	1	1

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION COMPARISONS

Nearly half (48%) of superintendents strongly agree or agree that understanding how students are taught in other countries could help improve schools in their community. Six in 10 (61%) strongly agree or agree that school systems around the world are too different to rely on international test comparisons for school improvement. A small proportion (4%) strongly agree that international test comparisons are critical to helping improve schools in this country. Generally, superintendents have a low view of international standardized tests such as PISA with only 2% strongly agreeing that international comparison tests accurately measure student achievement across nations.

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about international test comparisons.						
	%5 Strongly Agree	%4	%3	%2	%1 Strongly Disagree	% Don't Know
International comparison tests such as PISA accurately measure student achievement across nations.	2	11	30	26	17	15
Understanding how students are taught in other countries could help improve schools in my community.	12	36	32	13	4	2
International test comparisons are critical to helping improve schools in this country.	4	12	31	29	21	3
School systems around the world are too different to rely on international test comparisons for school improvement.	33	28	20	12	4	3

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The majority (73%) of superintendents believe that the Common Core State Standards are just about right for most students. Fewer than one in 10 (8%) feel the standards are too challenging for most students, and 15% of superintendents responded that they do not know.

In your opinion, are the Common Core State Standards too challenging for most students, not challenging enough, or are the Common Core State Standards just about right for most students?	
Too challenging	8%
Not challenging enough	5%
Just about right	73%
Don't know	15%

About two-thirds (64%) of superintendents feel that states should not pull back from their Common Core Consortia. While just two in 10 (20%) say they should pull back, an important 16% of respondents say they don't know whether they should pull back or not.

As you may know, some states have left their Common Core Assessment Consortia. In your opinion, should more states pull back from their Common Core Consortia, or not?	
Yes, states should pull back from their Consortia	20%
No, states should not pull back from their Consortia	64%
Don't know	16%

BOARD GOVERNANCE

A disconnect exists between the confidence of superintendents in their board's governance versus the governance of U.S. school districts. Four in 10 (44%) superintendents strongly agree that their school district is well governed at the board level, but only 5% strongly agree that school districts in the U.S. are well governed at the board level.

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about international test comparisons.	%5 Strongly Agree	%4	%3	%2	%1 Strongly Disagree	% Don't Know
I am confident that my school district is well governed at the board level.	44	33	12	6	3	1
I am confident that school districts in U.S. are well governed at the board level.	5	26	34	21	7	7

About half (52%) of superintendents say that their state's board of education affords too little autonomy
to local school districts. Just one in 10 (11%) say their state board affords too much autonomy to local
school districts.

Would you say that your state's board of education affords too much autonomy, too little autonomy, or just the right amount of autonomy to local school districts?	
Too much autonomy	11%
Too little autonomy	52%
Just the right amount of autonomy	33%
Don't know	4%

K-12 COLLABORATION WITH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

One-quarter (24%) of superintendents report strong collaboration between their school district and local higher education
institutions. About two-thirds (68%) say they have some collaboration with local higher education institutions; just 8% say
they have no collaboration at all.

How would you rate the degree of collaboration between your school district and local higher education institutions?	
Strong collaboration	24%
Some collaboration	68%
No collaboration at all	8%
Don't know	1%

Superintendents were asked to rate nine collaborative activities their district may engage in with higher education
institutions. A large majority (83%) say that they collaborate on dual enrollment, and 76% state they collaborate on tours
or visits. A little more than one-third (37%) mention they collaborate on course alignment and on higher education
faculty and K-12 faculty collaboration (36%). One-third (33%) say they engage in student tutoring or mentoring programs
and summer on-campus programs with local higher education institutions.

What collaborative activities do you engage in with local higher education institutions? (*Select all that apply.*)	
Dual enrollment	83%
Tours or visits	76%
Course alignment	37%
Higher education faculty and K-12 faculty collaboration	36%
Student tutoring or mentoring programs	33%
Summer on-campus programs	33%
Testing and assessment	22%
Another activity	21%
No collaborative activities	5%
Don't know	0%

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Superintendents were asked to rate their agreement with each of several statements about professional development in their school district. Almost half (47%) say that their principals take an active role in determining professional development priorities. One-third (32%) believe their school district has a comprehensive development plan for new teachers. A little more than one-quarter (27%) strongly agree that and 47% agree that teachers take an active role in determining professional development priorities.

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about professional development in your school district.						
	%5 Strongly Agree	%4	%3	%2	%1 Strongly Disagree	% Don't Know
My school district has a comprehensive professional development plan for new teachers.	32	39	20	8	1	0
My school district has a comprehensive professional development plan for new principals.	17	33	29	15	4	2
Teachers take an active role in determining professional development priorities.	27	47	21	5	0	0
Principals take an active role in determining professional development priorities.	47	43	8	2	0	1
My district has sufficient professional development time allocated for teachers.	21	32	22	17	8	0
My district has sufficient professional development time allocated for principals.	19	33	22	18	8	1

Superintendents cite a variety of professional development activities offered to teachers in their district. Approximately nine in 10 reference the following activities: informal dialogue to improve teaching (91%), courses and workshops (90%), and education conferences and seminars (89%). They also mention mentoring and peer observation (83%), reading professional literature (75%), observation visits to other schools (66%), and professional development network (61%). The professional development activities receiving the fewest mentions are individual and collaborative research (42%) and qualification programs (17%).

What professional development activities are offered to teachers within your school district? (Select all that apply.)	
Informal dialogue to improve teaching	91%
Courses and workshops	90%
Education conferences and seminars	89%
Mentoring and peer observation	83%
Reading professional literature	75%
Observation visits to other schools	66%
Professional development network	61%
Individual and collaborative research	42%
Qualification programs	17%
Other	12%

Superintendents also cite a variety of professional development activities offered to principals in their district. A little more than nine in 10 cite education conferences and seminars (93%) and informal dialogue to improve teaching (92%). A majority of superintendents also mention courses and workshops (85%), reading professional literature (84%), professional development network (74%), observation visits to other schools (65%), and mentoring and peer observation (62%). Less than half mention opportunities for individual and collaborative research (46%) and qualification programs (21%).

What professional development activities are offered to principals within your school district? (Select all that apply.)	
Education conferences and seminars	93%
Informal dialogue to improve teaching	92%
Courses and workshops	85%
Reading professional literature	84%
Professional development network	74%
Observation visits to other schools	65%
Mentoring and peer observation	62%
Individual and collaborative research	46%
Qualification programs	21%
Other	12%

Superintendents say that in the last two years their school district explored a variety of professional development topics for their teachers. The vast majority (94%) mention the use of technology in instruction. Around eight in 10 mention curriculum training (84%), use and interpretation of data (83%), Common Core State Standards (81%), and bullying and harassment (80%).

What professional development topics were explored within the last two years for teachers within your school district? *(Select all that apply.)*	
Use of technology in instruction	94%
Curriculum training	84%
Use and interpretation of data	83%
Common Core State Standards	81%
Bullying and harassment	80%
Content-specific pedagogy	79%
Student engagement	70%
School improvement	68%
Classroom management	59%
Assessing learning	59%
Team building	56%
Standardized tests	52%
Personal growth	47%
Social media	41%
Social-Emotional learning	34%
Cognitive/Learning disorders	31%
Mental health	28%
Child development	17%

Superintendents also say that in the last two years their school district explored a variety of professional development topics for their principals. They most often mention the use of technology in instruction (86%), the use and interpretation of data (84%), and leadership development (79%). Many say they also explored curriculum training, Common Core State Standards, bullying and harassment, and school improvement
(77% each).

What professional development topics were explored within the last two years for principals within your school district? *(Select all that apply.)*	
Use of technology in instruction	86%
Use and interpretation of data	84%
Leadership	79%
Curriculum training	77%
Common Core State Standards	77%
Bullying and harassment	77%
School improvement	77%
Team building	69%
Assessing learning	65%
Personal growth	64%
Student engagement	63%
Standardized tests	56%
Content-specific pedagogy	52%
Social media	51%
Budget and finances	48%
Classroom management	39%
Mental health	32%
Social-Emotional learning	31%
Cognitive/Learning disorders	27%
Child development	16%

CONCLUSION

Currently, superintendents are reasonably committed to the idea of the Common Core State Standards with a majority suggesting states should stick with their consortia. Though, one-third of responding superintendents either say that districts should exit their consortia or say that they don't know. Superintendents are not, however, convinced that international standardized tests, such as PISA, provide a reasonable means for understanding the level of success of students in U.S. public schools relative to other nations. Very few trust that the tests have merit in providing accurate comparisons, though this study does not delve into the reasons district leaders have such low confidence in their value for comparability across nations.

According to superintendents, a variety of professional development topics are explored for both teachers and principals in most school districts; however, just half feel their teachers have what they need to adequately support students who require special help. School districts will continue to face the challenges of projecting the needs of current and future student populations and finding ways to support teachers who work with students who have a variety of learning needs.