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**Contact:** Delaine McCullough • [dmccullough@pdkintl.org](mailto:dmccullough@pdkintl.org)  
Office: 800/766-1156 • Cell: 812/340-1803

## **Public Worried That Narrowed Curriculum Will Leave Children Behind**

BLOOMINGTON, IN — Americans worry the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act is pushing art, science, health, and social studies out of the classroom. According to this year's PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, one in two Americans believe that NCLB is limiting what children are taught, and a large majority of Americans believe that their schools must do more to prepare young people to succeed in our increasingly interconnected world.

"Although 67% of parents give the school their oldest child attends an A or a B, a very high percentage, both parents and the public have sent a clear message that we need to make sure students are ready to compete," said William J. Bushaw, executive director of PDK International, a worldwide association of education professionals. "The reauthorization of NCLB provides an opportunity for our nation's policy makers to improve how we measure learning and how we support our most vulnerable students. There couldn't be a more critical time to do this than now."

Five years ago, NCLB was signed into law to hold schools more accountable for student achievement. Congress is scheduled to reauthorize the law this year, and many expect the debate to be contentious. As the only source for yearly data on the public's views on NCLB, the PDK/Gallup Poll provides critical information for this debate.

Annual standardized testing is a cornerstone of NCLB, and there is solid evidence that Americans are increasingly rejecting the use of standardized tests. When asked about the amount of testing in the schools, 43% of the public believe that there is too much, which is a 12 percentage point increase since 2002. Parents are even more concerned, with 52% saying there is too much testing, a 20 percentage point increase since 2002.

"The public's concern over standardized testing is justified," said Bushaw. "Holding schools accountable based on how students perform on a single test given on a single day is wrong. It's pushing important subjects out of the curriculum, and Americans are concerned."

(MORE)

Americans' concerns about the breadth of the curriculum are also evident in their support for studying international cultures and foreign languages. Eight in 10 Americans believe that all children in the U.S. should learn a second language in addition to English, and 7 in 10 want foreign language instruction to start in elementary school.

“The public is clearly concerned that NCLB is narrowing the school curriculum right when our students will need more knowledge and skills to compete in the global marketplace,” said Lowell Rose, co-author with Alec Gallup of this year's PDK/Gallup poll.

Other findings include that the public overwhelmingly supports having teachers spend some part of their workday learning how to help their students achieve at higher levels; that the biggest problem facing the public schools is lack of financial support; that public opinion is becoming more favorable toward charter schools; and that Americans are evenly split on whether states should establish their own curriculum standards or whether our nation should have a single set of national standards.

**PDK International** is a leading association of education professionals that has been advocating for high-quality education for all since 1906. Currently, PDK has more than 40,000 members, including university faculty and administrators, school superintendents, principals, and teachers. For more information on PDK and its programs, visit [www.pdkintl.org](http://www.pdkintl.org).

**The Gallup Organization** has studied human nature and behavior for more than 70 years. Gallup employs many of the world's leading scientists in management, economics, psychology, and sociology.