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# ▶ WORK TRENDS

AMERICANS' ATTITUDES ABOUT WORK,  
EMPLOYERS AND GOVERNMENT

## ▶ Making the Grade?:

What American Workers  
Think Should Be Done  
to Improve Education

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***A Joint Project of the***

*John J. Heldrich Center for  
Workforce Development  
at Rutgers, The State  
University of New Jersey*

*Center for Survey Research  
and Analysis at the  
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*Work Trends* is the multi-year public opinion series that explores the attitudes of the U.S. workforce on the challenges faced by workers, families, and employers in the changing global economy. To date the series contains data from 6,000 worker interviews on a range of trends and national workplace and policy issues. *Work Trends* is providing a new voice in the national policy debate about economic change. The surveys provide:

- Comprehensive national surveys of 1,000 American workers in each report;
- Analysis of key workforce trends;
- New developments in the workplace;
- Tools to shape public policy;
- Observations by Dr. Carl E. Van Horn, Professor of Public Policy and Director of the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers University, and Dr. Ken Dautrich, Professor of Political Science and Director of the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut.

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# Background

## *The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development*

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers was founded as a research and policy organization devoted to strengthening New Jersey's and the nation's workforce during a time of global economic change. The Heldrich Center researches and puts to work strategies that increase worker skills and employability, strengthen the ability of companies to compete, create jobs where they are needed, and improve the quality and performance of the workforce development system.

The need to improve worker skills has become a crosscutting issue in the information age. Whereas in the 1950s, six in ten workers were unskilled, today, more than 60 percent of the workforce is skilled and less than 20 percent unskilled. According to Coopers and Lybrand, in 1997 nearly 70 percent of growth company CEOs pointed to the lack of skilled workers as the number one barrier to growth—a figure that had doubled since 1993. Despite this need, U.S. investment in workforce education and training trails other leading democracies.

The transformation to a new economy driven by knowledge and its application has thrust workforce investment strategy to the forefront of domestic policy. In globally competitive labor markets, workers who lack basic skills and literacy are in greater danger than ever before. Urban planning and redevelopment strategies cannot ignore the role of education and work skills in preparing young adults to compete for new jobs in the emerging service, retail, and technology sectors. Similarly, the nation's long debate over

public school reform must acknowledge that our nation's "forgotten half" of young people not attending college need help now to access the economic and social mainstream.

While workers with skills and the determination to keep them sharp are in heavy demand, huge numbers of adults still cannot read, write, or perform basic math functions effectively. A fifth of working Americans have a zero or minimal literacy level in reading and math. Job seekers and young people entering the workforce need solid literacy and numeracy skills, and they need to use them to acquire the job-specific and career-building skills that will give them access to good jobs.

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The transformation to a new economy driven by knowledge and its application has thrust workforce investment strategy to the forefront of domestic policy.

The Heldrich Center is the first university-based organization devoted to transforming the workforce development system at the local, state, and federal levels. We identify best practices and areas where government performance should be improved, and provide professional training and development to the community of professionals and managers who run the system and are responsible for making it work. The Center provides an independent source of analysis for reform and innovation in policy making and is engaged in significant partnerships with the private sector to design effective education and training programs.

## *The Center for Survey Research and Analysis*

Three years ago, the University of Connecticut announced the formation of its new **Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA)**, thus strengthening its focus on conducting original survey research. The Center is an outgrowth of the tremendous success of original survey research conducted under the aegis of the Roper Center/Institute for Social Inquiry. For twenty years, Roper Center/ISI had conducted high quality, high profile original research; this tradition is being continued and expanded.

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To better understand the public's attitudes about work, employers and the government, and improve workplace practices and policy, the Heldrich Center and the CSRA produce the *Work Trends Survey* on a quarterly basis.

The Center, a nonprofit, non-partisan research and educational facility, is a leader in conducting important public opinion research in the public and private sectors. CSRA staff have completed more than 300 survey projects, for a wide variety of clients, in the twenty years of survey research at UConn.

The Center for Survey Research and Analysis has extensive experience in surveying special populations, including studies of Members of Congress, journalists, business

owners and managers, parents, teen-agers, college seniors, and university faculty.

In addition to quantitative research, CSRA also conducts in-depth qualitative research, including nationwide focus groups, one-on-one interviewing, and case studies. The staff has worked with clients to develop strong secondary research programs in support of on-going research in a variety of fields. Expert statisticians are also available for additional analysis of original and secondary data.

CSRA strictly adheres to the code of ethics published by the American Association of Public Opinion Research, which, among other things, requires us to fully divulge our research methods, treat all respondents with respect and honesty, and insure that our results are not presented in a distorted or misleading manner.

During the past three years staff now affiliated with CSRA have conducted more than seventy national, regional and local survey projects.

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To better understand the public's attitudes about work, employers and the government, and improve workplace practices and policy, the Heldrich Center and the CSRA produce the *Work Trends Survey* on a quarterly basis. The survey polls the general public on critical workforce issues facing Americans and American businesses, and promotes the survey's findings widely to the media and national constituencies.

# 1. Executive Summary

*In Making the Grade? What American Workers Think Should Be Done to Improve Education*, working Americans express their views on how well their schools, colleges and universities are performing, what changes would improve the education students receive, and who is responsible for ensuring that students learn the skills they need to succeed at work. *Making the Grade?* finds that American workers are deeply concerned about the preparation of young Americans for the workforce. These views are striking because they follow two decades of education reform initiatives, and during times when the American economy is leading the world in economic growth, and more Americans are working than at any time in modern history.

The majority of American workers believe that the primary purpose of high school is to provide students with basic skills and prepare them for college. They give high schools nothing better than a grade of “C” on how well they are preparing students with the skills they will need to succeed in the workplace of the New Economy:

- 40% of workers give high schools a “C”; 10% a “D”, and 5% an “F,” for how well they are preparing students to succeed in today’s workforce. One-third (32%) of workers give high schools a “B.”
- Blacks and other minority groups are more likely to give high schools a favorable grade, with 44% of Blacks and 42% of other racial groups giving high schools a grade of “B” or better, compared to 37% of Whites.
- Younger workers are most likely to give high schools a passing grade, with 41% of workers age 18-29 giving high schools a grade of “B” or better. Only 34% of workers age 50 and older give high schools a grade of “B” or better.

Workers express more consensus regarding the purpose and quality of the nation’s

colleges and universities. Many believe that the primary purpose of a college education is to prepare students for specific careers, and are more satisfied with how colleges and universities are doing their job.

- Almost two-thirds (64%) of Americans believe that the primary purpose of a college education is to prepare students for specific careers, and 16% indicate that college should prepare students for work in general;
- The majority (70%) of workers give colleges and universities a grade of “B” or better on how they are preparing students to succeed in their careers.

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*Making the Grade?* finds that American workers are deeply concerned about the preparation of young Americans for the workforce.

Despite their concern regarding the current quality of education, many workers are still optimistic about progress in the schools, and believe that the quality of education students receive today is better or the same as when they went to school.

- Slightly more than half (51%) of workers believe students are receiving a better education; 11% believe educational quality to be about the same;
- People with the least formal education are the most likely to say that today’s students are receiving a better quality education. More than half (58%) of those with up to a high school education report that high school students today are getting a better education than they did, compared to 38% of those with a post-graduate education;
- 60% of Democrats and 48% of Republicans believe that students today receive a better education.

## *Workers Speak Out On Skills Needed in Today's Workforce*

*Making the Grade?* provides a worker “reality check” on how well schools are getting Americans ready for work and success in their careers. They believe the job skills and behaviors needed to succeed in today's workplace are different than those needed in the past. Workers recognize the importance of a range of skills required to perform their jobs, and are willing to enroll in additional education and training opportunities beyond high school or college to get them. But they say that the right attitudes and behaviors are most important, and they want public schools to do more to instill those attitudes and skills in their children and future generations.

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Workers recognize the importance of a range of skills required to perform their jobs, and are willing to enroll in additional education and training opportunities beyond high school or college to get them.

- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of workers have participated in further education and training;
- Education and training is most likely to consist of college courses (47%), structured classroom training given by their employers (22%), on-the-job training (26%), training provided by a private consultant or trainer (21%), and self-directed training (12%), or a combination of these;
- Almost all (92%) workers report that maintaining honesty and integrity at work is very important, and 90% report that taking individual responsibility and having a good work ethic is very important.
- Workers rate general skills as more important than specific skills or computer skills. The majority of workers report that communication skills, basic literacy, and critical thinking skills are very important (87%,

81%, and 81%, respectively), while only 50% say that computer skills are very important.

Workers believe that the way students are educated and prepared for work must change if students are to succeed in their careers. However, workers are evenly divided about the best way to improve education. These differences in philosophy illuminate the tensions in the national debate over school reform, and the need for national leadership.

- Half (50%) of workers believe that the best way to improve education is to implement new practices and policies in place of the current system of education, without spending more money. Less than half (43%) believe that providing more money and resources to support the current system of education is the best way to improve education.
- Among a number of initiatives that enjoy the support of the majority of American workers, vouchers to help parents send their children to private schools receive the support of significantly less than half (39%) of workers.
- Nine in ten American workers favor high school exit exams to ensure that students have basic skills, and support the idea that schools should require students in the third through eighth grade to take yearly tests in math and reading to evaluate schools.

## *Responsibility and Accountability for What We Learn*

The majority of workers believe that on-the-job training is the most effective method of preparing for work. Workers believe that individuals, and not institutions, are most responsible for preparing students for work, but lack consensus on who should be responsible for reforming the education system.

- More than two-thirds (66%) of workers report that on-the-job training was the most effective method of preparing them

for their current job, compared to only 16% who say that their formal school education most effectively prepared them for their current job.

- Nearly three-fourths of White workers report on-the-job training as the most effective method of preparing for work, compared to 60% of Blacks who share this perception.
- Nearly half (45%) report that parents should be most responsible and 18% report that students are most responsible for preparing students for work. Only 20% report that high school, colleges, and universities are most responsible.
- According to 29% of workers, local school districts and local governments are most responsible for reforming the education system. The remainder believe that state government, federal government, or parents are most responsible (19%, 18%, and 14%, respectively).

Despite the limited role that the federal government plays in education, workers consider education to be an important

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If the 2000 presidential election were held today, 41% of those surveyed say they would vote for Bush, while 35% say they would vote for Gore.

presidential election issue. Although more workers report that they would vote for Bush, they believe that Vice President Al Gore is more likely than Texas Governor George W. Bush to improve education and training.

- Among workers, 79% say that education is an important campaign issue, although 55% say it is only one among many important issues.
- If the 2000 presidential election were held today, 41% of those surveyed say they would vote for Bush, while 35% say they would vote for Gore.
- Although workers say they are more likely to vote for Bush, 39% believe that Gore will do a better job of improving education, compared to 31% who believe that Bush will do the better job.

## 2. Introduction

### *A Nation Still At Risk*

In this sixth in the series of national *Work Trends* surveys, working Americans express their views on how well their schools, colleges and universities are performing, what changes would improve the education students receive, and who is responsible for ensuring that students learn the skills they need to succeed at work. *Making the Grade?: What American Workers Think Should Be Done to Improve Education*, analyzes a survey of 1,014 adult members of the U.S. labor force, interviewed between May 10 and May 29, 2000. *Work Trends* is a research project funded and sponsored by the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, and the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut. Comprising over 6,000 interviews to date, *Work Trends* is among the most comprehensive explorations of the views of American workers ever undertaken.

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As the ultimate consumers of the education system, today's workers provide important evidence in evaluating how well schools are performing and meeting society's expectations in a time of rapid change.

The survey reflects the importance of hearing from working Americans on education and its role in our economy. As the ultimate consumers of the education system, today's workers provide important evidence in evaluating how well schools are performing and meeting society's expectations in a time of rapid change. Similarly, workers at various levels of responsibility are meeting, training, mentoring or working with the waves of fresh high school and college

graduates entering the workforce for the first time. With as much as ten percent of the nation's gross domestic product directed toward education and training in the public and private sectors, more attention and debate is needed on how secondary and higher education translates into results for customers—the students—in the workforce.

This survey is released as schools recess for the first summer break of the 21st century. This year, over 2.8 million students graduated from high school, and more than 1.1 million bachelor degrees were awarded by the nation's colleges and universities. It is nearly twenty years since the publication of *A Nation At Risk*, the landmark national report that warned in the strongest terms of a crisis in American education, with devastating consequences for our future. For two decades after the report, business leaders, presidents, governors, educators, and critics have complained about the quality of education, and made proposals for change. This focus intensified in recent years, as a booming, high-tech economy and the forces of globalization have increased the demand for highly skilled workers. Schools and universities continue to receive massive new funding in support of an array of changes; school reform continues to dominate media coverage of education and is a focal point of the Presidential and other elections.

Despite these investments, despite living in the world's dominant economy, with a dazzling record of technological innovation, low jobless rates and good standards of living, Americans are still deeply disappointed with how well their schools are performing. They express solid reasons for their disappointment. The survey finds that Americans believe the most important purpose of schools is to provide students with basic skills by high school graduation, prepare them for college, and ensure they are taught career-specific skills in college. On this

score, American workers do not believe our schools are making the grade.

The National Center for Education Statistics at the Department of Education recently released a survey that paints a more positive picture, suggesting that high schools have improved substantially, setting higher expectations and sending more students directly to college than in the past. While a federal agency gives our nation's high schools an "A" for improvement, the typical American gives them a "C" for results.

Workers in large numbers (56%) said they would give America's high schools nothing better than a "C" in how they prepare students for success in the workplace. Colleges and universities are doing a better job of meeting worker expectations, with 54% of workers giving colleges and universities a "B" in how well they prepare graduates for success in the workplace. While a majority of Americans believe education is improved since they went to school, less than 40% were very satisfied with how effectively their own education prepared them for their jobs and careers. Americans believe schools need to do more to prepare people with the skills and attitudes that are important to workplace success—critical thinking skills, communications skills, and approaches to work including having integrity, a good work ethic, working well in teams, and taking individual responsibility.

*Making the Grade?* not only describes how workers view school performance, but also explores the policy changes that workers believe would actually improve education at all levels. Clearly, Americans have not given up on the public schools: nearly 6 in 10 Americans are against providing vouchers to assist parents who want to send their children to private schools. However, Americans strongly support new spending and policy reforms, such as hiring new teachers, reducing class size, improving facilities, and providing more accountability and testing at every level of the education system.

The survey illuminates two broad

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Americans believe schools need to do more to prepare people with the skills and attitudes that are important to workplace success—critical thinking skills, communications skills, and approaches to work including having integrity, a good work ethic, working well in teams, and taking individual responsibility.

approaches to improving education: additional spending to support the current system of education versus implementing new practices that change the current system. When forced to choose one path or another, American workers are about equally divided between these two approaches—the "Funders" and the "Reformers." These divisions about strategies for improving education capture and illuminate how conflicting value systems have affected the school reform debate.

In *Making the Grade?*, American workers also evaluate the proposals of the Presidential candidates and whether they believe the candidates can provide effective leadership to improve the classroom. This year both major party Presidential candidates have staked out education as a key issue, even though federal spending represents only a small portion of total education spending. The results of this *Work Trends* survey provide insight into public attitudes on key elements of the candidates' education proposals. Of interest to the campaigns and observers is the fact that most Americans believe education reform is primarily a state and local responsibility, not a federal one.

Initially criticized for proposing new money but no new reforms for improving schools, Vice President Gore has outlined an education investment package that includes \$115 billion in new spending over 10 years, \$25 billion in bonds to pay for new school construction, expanded tuition tax credits for higher education, and new funding for teacher recruiting and teacher salaries.

Gore's accountability agenda includes new state tests to end social promotion, penalties for failing schools, and 'second chance' schools for children with disciplinary problems or caught with guns. He opposes vouchers to assist parents in sending their children to private schools.

Governor George Bush of Texas proposes to increase spending by \$13.5 billion over five years, about a fifth as much as the Gore plan. He would increase funding for reading programs, character education, and charter schools. On the accountability side, Bush would require universal testing for students in grades three through eight, provide vouchers for students in low-performing schools that fail to improve, and promote

legislation to shield teachers from federal civil rights lawsuits for disciplinary actions they take against students.

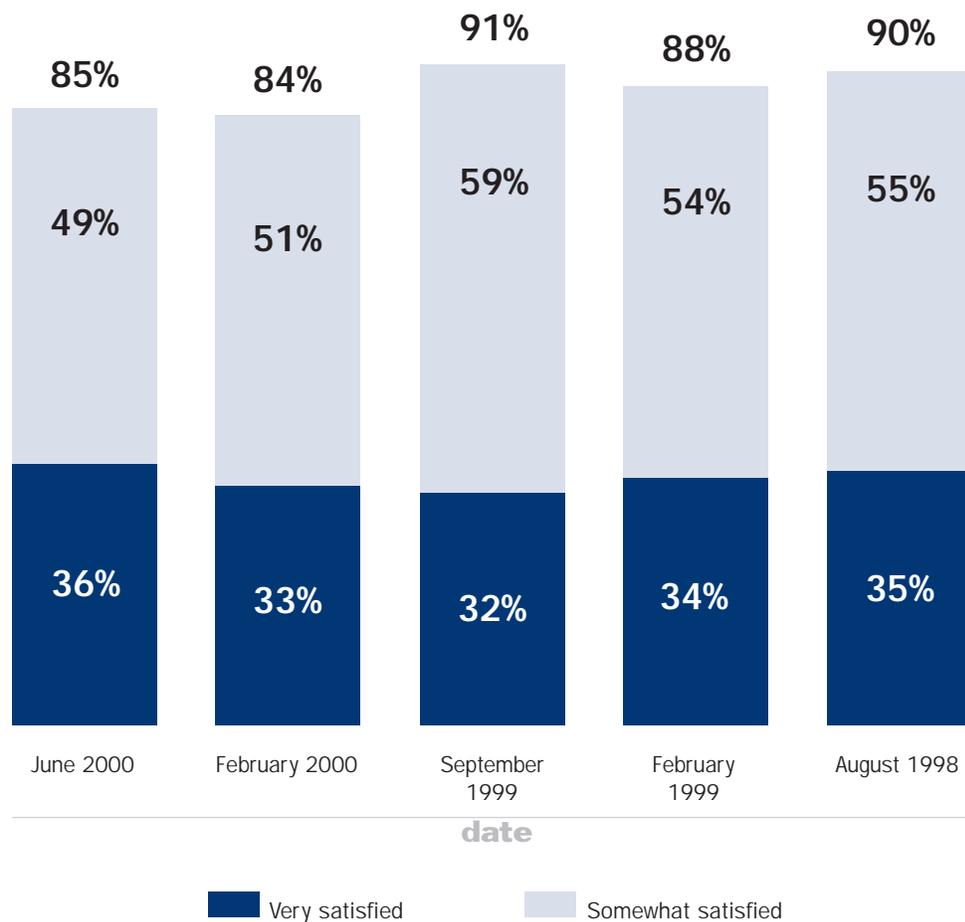
With potentially large surpluses to distribute, both the candidates and many other Republicans and Democrats seem to agree that more money should be spent and that big changes must be made. As in the society at large, the candidates disagree on the emphasis and direction of these changes. No one is offering proposals for evaluating how and to what extent these massive investments and reforms affect student careers or incomes—to find out which of these changes actually work. In *Making the Grade*, America's workers make it clear that they want change that *works*.

### 3. Views on Job Satisfaction and the Economy

As the nation's strong economic growth continues, American workers continue to report high levels of job satisfaction. The majority (85%) of respondents indicate they are satisfied with their jobs, a level that has remained steady since the February 2000 *Work Trends*, when 84% of workers said they were satisfied with their jobs. However, workers report less job satisfaction in this study than in previous surveys in the *Work Trends* series. In September 1999, 91% of workers reported that they were satisfied with their job, with 59% reporting they were

very satisfied. In contrast, only 49% of today's workers report being very satisfied with their job. A number of factors may contribute to this decline. As noted in the February 2000 *Work Trends*, job satisfaction may be affected by 'boom fatigue.' Americans continue to work longer hours, commute further, and sleep less than they would like, while the continuing boom has made more Americans complacent about basic job and economic prospects and concerned about quality of life issues such as education, personal growth, and opportunity.

Fig. 3-1: Job Satisfaction of American Workers



## Demographic Comparisons

The survey found a number of significant differences when making comparisons by income, age, and education regarding attitudes toward job satisfaction:

- Workers earning over \$40,000 per year are more likely to be satisfied with their job than those that earn less than \$40,000 (89% vs. 79%), a result consistent with previous *Work Trends* surveys.
- Workers with the most education are most likely to report being satisfied with their job, with 92% of those with a post-graduate education, and 86% of college graduates saying they are satisfied. Workers with some college education, or a high school education or less, are not as likely to say they are satisfied with their jobs (82% and 84%, respectively). These levels are in contrast to the February 2000 *Work Trends* survey, in which workers with the least amount of formal education had the highest levels of job satisfaction.
- As in previous *Work Trends* surveys, among racial groups Blacks report the lowest levels of job satisfaction (80%). In contrast, 86% of Whites and 84% of other racial groups say they are satisfied with their jobs. However, this represents an increase in the level of Black job satisfaction from February 2000, when only 70% of Blacks reported being satisfied with their jobs.
- As the age of workers increases, so does their level of job satisfaction. Among workers age 18-29, 81% report being satisfied with their job, with 40% saying they are very satisfied. Among workers age 39-49, 85% report being satisfied with their job, with 49% very satisfied. Among workers age 50-64, 88% report being satisfied with their job, with 57% saying they are very satisfied. Among the oldest workers of age 65 or more, 93% say they are satisfied with their job, with 71% saying they are very satisfied.

## 4. American Workers Grade the Schools and Universities

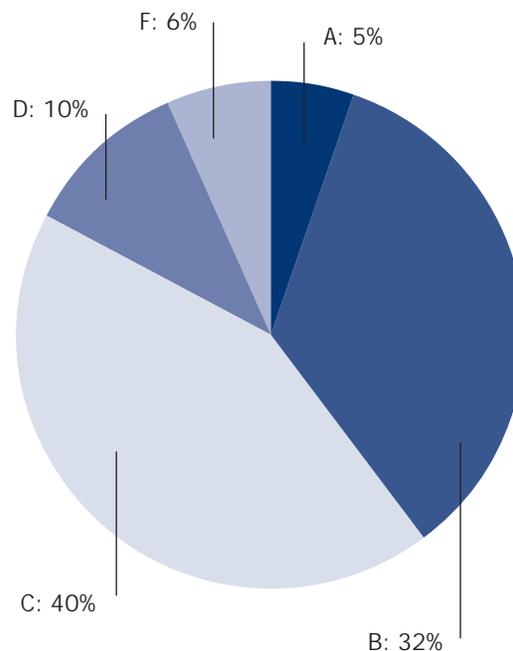
Education is an enduring problem in the minds of American workers, even during times of economic prosperity. Despite the booming economy and our position as the world's dominant economic power, Americans have serious reservations about the preparation of students graduating from our nation's high schools, colleges, and universities. At the same time, Americans recognize the critical role education plays in preparing students for work. Americans understand that high-quality education creates the high-skilled, high quality workforce that fuels economic growth and maintains the nation's prosperity. However, as this survey makes clear, there is a performance gap between the tasks that American workers believe schools should be accomplishing, and how well they are accomplishing those tasks.

### *Making the Grade: High Schools and Colleges*

American workers are concerned that our nation's high schools are not doing enough to prepare workers for their careers. When asked to grade high schools on how well they are preparing graduates with the skills and attitudes necessary to succeed in the workplace, only 5% give high schools an "A." One-third (32%) give high schools a "B" and 40% give high schools a "C." In short, the majority of American workers think that our nation's high schools are doing only an average job or less of preparing the next generation of workers to succeed in the workplace.

Workers of different race, age, and political affiliation have varying assessments of confidence in high schools. Blacks and other minority groups are slightly more likely than Whites to give high schools a passing grade, with 44% of Blacks and 42% of other racial groups giving high schools a grade of "B" or better, and 37% of Whites doing the same.

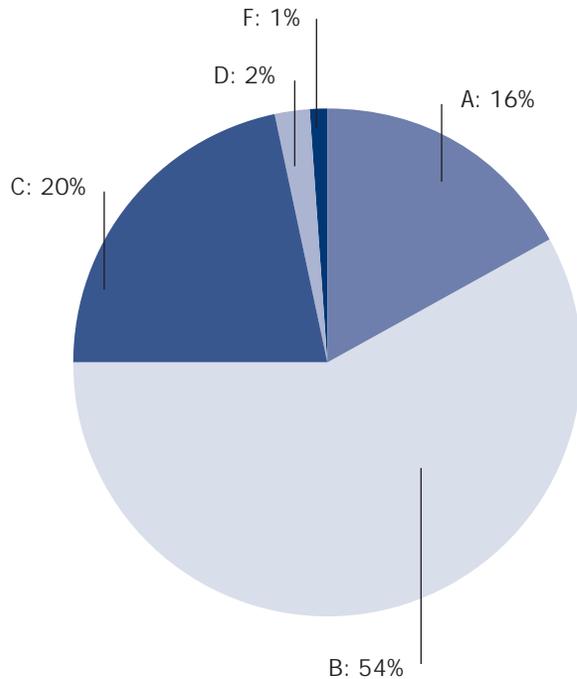
Fig. 4-1: Grading the High Schools



Younger workers are also more likely than older workers to view high schools favorably. Among workers age 18-29, 41% give high schools a grade of "B" or better. Among workers age 30-49, 39% give high schools a grade of "B" or better. Fewer workers age 50-64 and those 65 and older, give high schools a grade of "B" or better on how well they are preparing graduates with the skills and attitudes necessary to succeed in the workplace (32%, respectively). Finally, Democrats appear to have more faith than Republicans in high school's ability to prepare students for work, with 42% of Democrats giving high schools a grade of "B" or better. In comparison, one-third (33%) of Republicans give high schools' similar high marks.

Colleges and universities fare significantly better in the court of public opinion. The majority (80%) of workers indicate that the primary goal of colleges and universities is to

Fig. 4-2: Grading Colleges and Universities



prepare students for specific careers or work in general, and workers have more confidence in how colleges and universities are preparing graduates with the skills and attitudes they need to succeed in the workplace. The majority of workers (70%) give colleges and universities a grade of “B” or better, with 16% giving colleges and universities an “A.” One-fifth (20%) gives colleges and universities a grade of “C,” while only 3% give colleges and universities a grade of “D” or “F.”

Again, race, age, and political affiliation influence the confidence with which workers view colleges and universities in their attempts to prepare graduates for work. The majority (83%) of Blacks give colleges a grade of “B” or better, compared to 69% of Whites and 71% of other racial groups. Likewise, younger workers are most likely to view colleges favorably. The majority (82%) of workers age 18-29 give colleges and universities a “B” or “A” grade. In contrast, 68% of those age 30-49, 62% of those age 50-64, and 60% of those over the age of 65, express similar support. As with high school,

Democrats are more likely to approve of how well colleges and universities are preparing graduates with the skills and attitudes necessary to succeed in the workplace. Almost three-fourths (74%) of Democrats give them a grade of “B” or better, compared to 67% of Republicans.

### *Quality of Education for Today's Students*

Despite considerable concern regarding how well high schools and, to a lesser extent, colleges and universities, are preparing graduates for the workplace, many workers retain optimism about the potential for progress. A majority of respondents believe the quality of education that today's students receive is better or the same as it was when they went to school. Slightly more than half (51%) of workers believe today's students are receiving a higher quality education, and 11% believe educational quality to be about the same as they received. Less than one-third (31%) report that today's students are receiving a lower quality education than before.

People with the least formal education are more likely to say that today's students are receiving a better quality education than past students. More than half (58%) of those with a high school education or less report that today's students are getting a better education than they did, compared to 38% of those with a post-graduate education. Across racial groups, Blacks are the most likely to express confidence in the quality of education today's students are receiving. Whereas only 51% of Whites say that today's students are receiving a better education than they did, 61% of Blacks say the same.

Likewise, older workers are less likely than younger workers to believe that the quality of education is better today, with less than half (45%) of those age 50-64 believing that today's students are getting a better education than they did, compared to 51% of workers age 30-49, and 58% of those age 18-29. Finally, in keeping with their support of how well high schools and colleges are

preparing students for work, 60% of Democrats believe that today's students are receiving a better education than they did. Less than half (48%) of Republicans express similar support for the quality of today's education.

### The Role of Schools

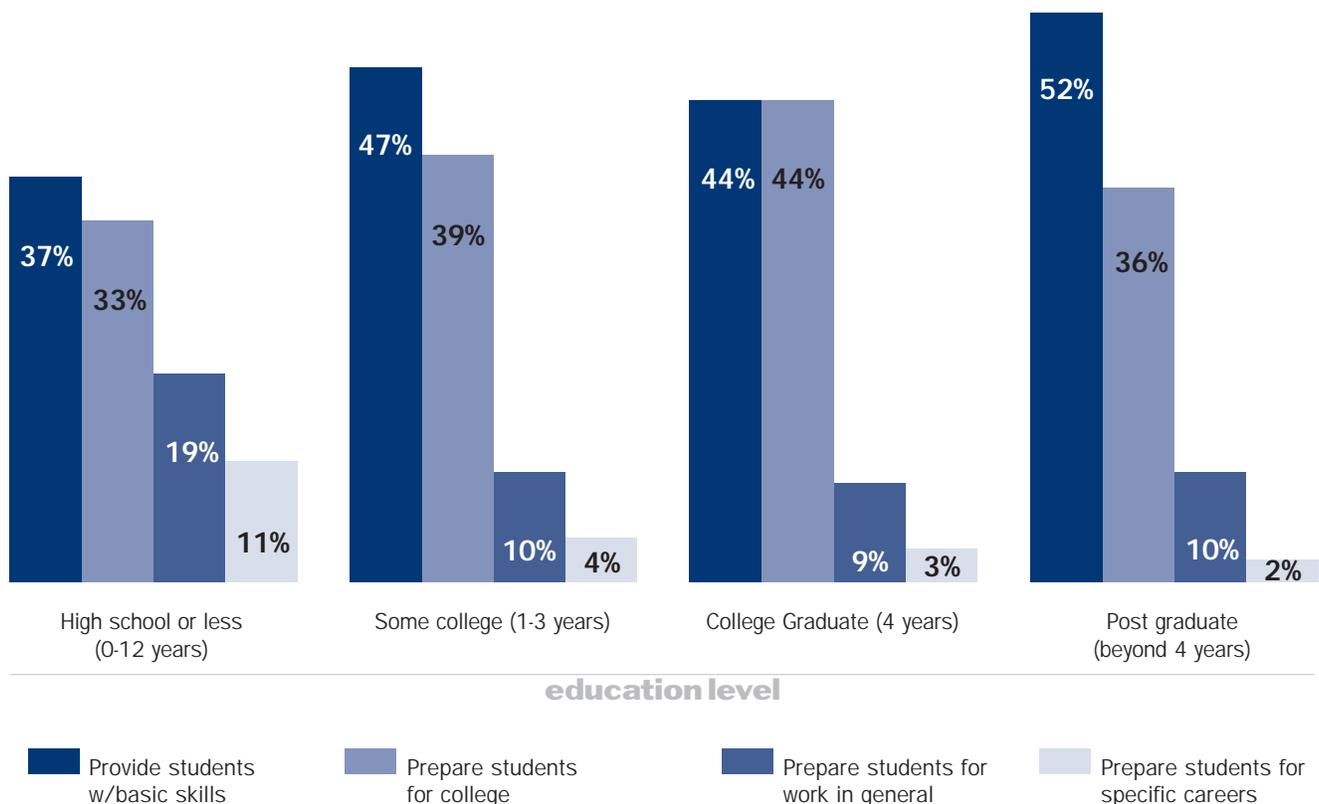
Although survey respondents say that high schools are not performing at an acceptable level, they do not always agree on what schools should be accomplishing. American workers are divided about the primary purpose of a high school education. Less than half (42%) believe that teaching students basic skills is high school's primary goal. Slightly more than one-third (36%) indicate that the primary purpose of a high school education is to prepare students for college. Only a small minority believe that high school should ready students for the work world, with 13% believing high school

People with the least formal education are more likely to say that today's students are receiving a better quality education than past students. More than half (58%) of those with a high school education or less report that students today are getting a better education than they did, compared to 38% of those with a post-graduate education.

students should be prepared for work in general, and 6% believing that high school students should be prepared for specific careers.

Earnings, level of education, and age influence workers' opinions regarding the role of high schools. For example, lower income workers are more likely to say that high school should prepare students for work. Slightly more than one-third (36%) of those earning less than \$40,000 per year say

Fig. 4-3: Purpose of High School



that the primary purpose of high school education is to provide students with basic skills, compared to 47% of those earning more than \$40,000 per year. In contrast, only 11% of those earning more than \$40,000 per year believe that high school should primarily prepare students for work in general, compared to 18% of those earning more than \$40,000 per year.

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Almost two-thirds (64%) of workers believe that the primary purpose of a college education is to prepare students for specific careers. An additional 16% indicate that college should prepare students for work in general. Less than one-fifth (19%) of those surveyed believe that college should concentrate on providing students with general knowledge.

Workers with different amounts of formal education express varying opinions about the purpose of a high school education. Among workers with a high school degree or less, 37% believe that the primary purpose of high school is to teach students basic skills. Among workers with higher levels of education, 47% of those with some college education, 44% of college graduates, and 52% of those with post-graduate educations also believe that teaching basic skills should be the primary goal of high schools. Perhaps not surprisingly, people with a high school education or less are most likely to believe that high schools should primarily prepare students for the workplace, with slightly less than one-fifth (19%) reporting that high school students should primarily be prepared for work in general, and 11% saying high school students should be prepared for specific careers.

In contrast, only 10% or less of those with some college education or higher indicate that the primary purpose of high school is to prepare students for work in general, or

specific careers. However, people with higher levels of education are more inclined to believe that high school should prepare students for college. Whereas one-third (33%) of those with a high school education or less think high school should primarily prepare students for college, 39% of those with some college education, 44% of college graduates, and 38% of those with a post-graduate education believe that high school students should be prepared for college.

Workers of different ages have varying opinions regarding the primary function of high school. Among respondents, 38% of those age 18-29, and 42% of those age 30-49, say that the primary purpose of a high school education is to provide students with basic skills. In contrast, more than half (55%) of those age 50-64 think that teaching basic skills is the primary job of high schools. Likewise, only 28% of these workers say that the primary purpose of high school is to prepare students for college, compared to 44% of those age 18-29, 37% of those age 30-49, and 39% of those age 65 and older.

American workers express a clearer consensus on the main function of the nation's colleges and universities. Almost two-thirds (64%) of workers believe that the primary purpose of a college education is to prepare students for specific careers. An additional 16% indicate that college should prepare students for work in general. Less than one-fifth (19%) of those surveyed believe that college should concentrate on providing students with general knowledge.

Again, workers with varying levels of education and earnings express different opinions about the primary purpose of college. As a worker's level of education increases, so does the likelihood that he or she believes that the primary function of college is to provide students with general knowledge. Although only 11% of those with a high school education or less, and 15% of those with some college education say the primary purpose of college is to provide students with general knowledge, 21% of college

graduates, and 38% of those with post-graduate education, believe the same. Similarly, those with a high school or some college education (72%, respectively) are most likely to say that college is for preparing students for specific careers, than either college graduates (61%), or those with a post-graduate education (45%).

Just as workers who have less formal education are more likely to believe that college should prepare students for work in specific careers, lower income workers express similar opinions. About one-fifth (21%) of those earning more than \$40,000 per year say that college is primarily for providing students with general knowledge, compared to 15% of those earning less than \$40,000 per year. Similarly, 70% of those earning less than \$40,000 per year believe colleges should concentrate on preparing students for specific careers, compared to 64% of those earning more than \$40,000 per year.

Despite disagreeing on the actual purpose of a high school and college education, American workers express a high level of satisfaction with their own formal education. The majority (79%) are satisfied that their highest level of formal education prepared them to get a good job. However, among those satisfied, only 38% report being very satisfied, and 41% say they are only somewhat satisfied.

Differences in satisfaction exist across racial groups, education levels, age cohorts, and income. Overall, Whites express the most overall satisfaction with their education, with 83% believing their formal education prepared them to get a good job, compared to 76% of Blacks and 75% of other racial groups. Differences are also evident across age cohorts, with older workers most frequently expressing satisfaction with their education. The majority (92%) of respondents over the age of 65 say they are satisfied that their highest level of formal education prepared them to get a good job, compared to 86% of workers age 50-64, 79% of those age 30-49, and 80% of those age 18-29.

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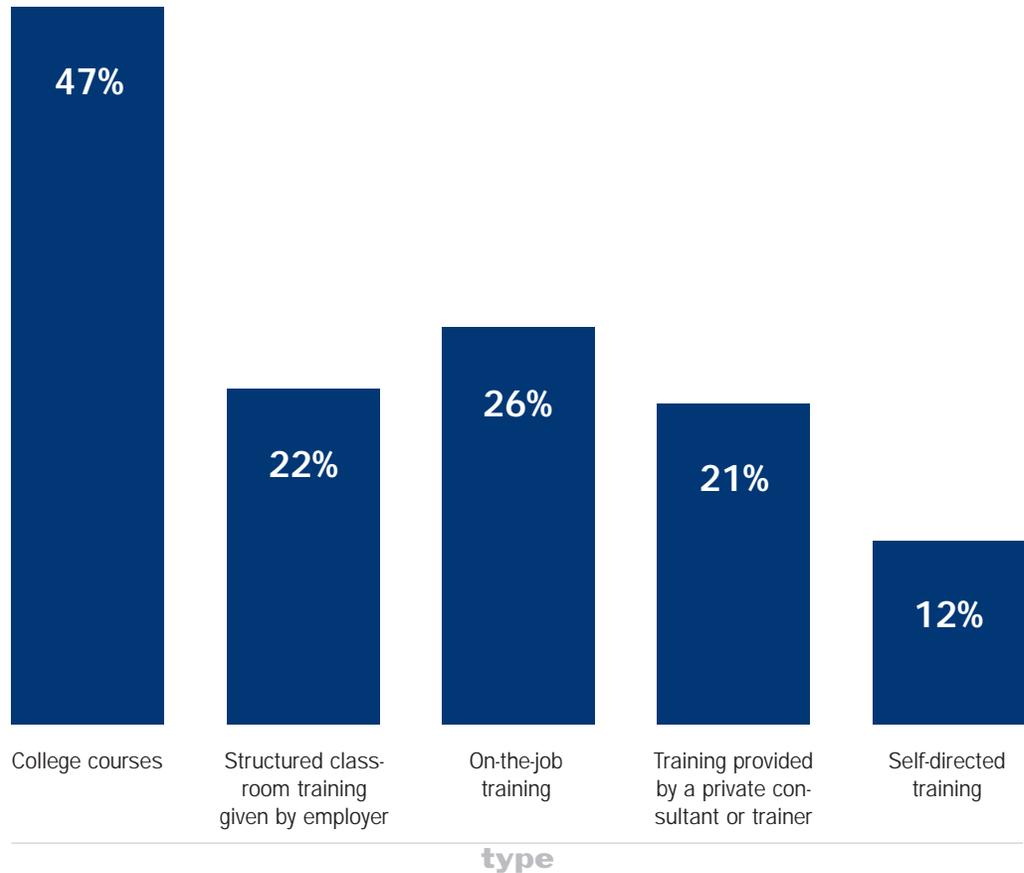
Higher income earners are more satisfied than lower income earners with their formal education. Less than three-fourths (71%) of respondents earning less than \$40,000 per year say they are satisfied, compared to 85% of respondents earning more than \$40,000 per year. Again, not surprisingly, workers with a higher level of formal education are more likely to express satisfaction with how their formal education prepared them for the work world. The majority of workers with a post-graduate education or a college degree are satisfied that their education prepared them to get a good job, (94% and 92%, respectively). In contrast, only 77% of workers with some college education and 70% of those with a high school education or less express similar levels of satisfaction.

### *Continuing Education*

Although satisfied with their formal education, a sizable number of American workers enroll in additional education and training opportunities beyond high school or college. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of workers have participated in further education and training. Among those who have pursued additional education, 47% have taken college courses, 22% have participated in structured classroom training given by their employers, 26% have participated in on-the-job training, 21% have received training provided by a private consultant or trainer, and 12% have engaged in self-directed training. Many workers have taken advantage of more than one type of training, in an effort to enhance their skills.

Income, level of education, age, and race

Fig. 4-4: Training and Education After Completing Formal Education



influence the likelihood that a worker will obtain further education or training. Among workers earning less than \$40,000 per year, 55% pursued education and training after completing their formal education, compared to 65% of those earning more than \$40,000 per year. Likewise, people with higher levels of formal education are more likely to have engaged in further training opportunities. The majority (85%) of workers with a post-graduate education have received additional training and education, whereas less than half (46%) of those with a high school education or less have done the same. Workers with a college education fall in the middle, with 69% of college graduates, and 66% of those with some college education receiving education and training after

completing their formal education.

As workers approach the traditional age of retirement, they are more likely to have pursued additional education and training experiences. Among workers age 50-64, 75% have participated in further education and training, as have 66% of workers age 30-49. In contrast, less than half (48%) of those age 18-29 have pursued additional training and education opportunities. This can be attributed, in part, to the fact that older workers have simply had more time to engage in other education and training opportunities. Finally, Whites are more likely than Black or other racial groups to engage in training and education (65%, 55%, and 56%, respectively).

## 5. Workplace Demands Shaping Education Reform

The global and technological changes in the economy today increase demands on American workers who are expected to use information technology, work in teams, work more hours, and manage their own careers. The knowledge and skill levels required in today's workplace are far higher than at any time in modern history—and will only increase. More than two-thirds (68%) of workers use a computer each day and rapid changes in technology make it difficult for workers to keep apace.<sup>1</sup> Respondents to our national survey of American workers echo the oft-heard complaint of political and business leaders who say that workers are not well prepared for the workforce and that the schools must better prepare students for the world of work.

This survey provides important insights into the skills and attitudes that American workers believe are needed in the early 21st century workplace. It also identifies areas of strength and weakness in the educational system, as seen by the consumers of the system. In the array of research and policy proposals surrounding the education reform debate, the American worker is rarely asked what skills and attitudes he or she believes matter for prospering in our changing New Economy.

### *Skills vs. Attitudes*

What does the American workplace demand of employees? According to American workers, the road to success is paved foremost with honesty, hard work, and individual responsibility. Workers say skills are important in their jobs, but the right attitudes and behaviors are more important. Almost all (92%) workers report that maintaining honesty and integrity at work is very important

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Almost all (92%) workers report that maintaining honesty and integrity at work is very important and 90% report that taking individual responsibility and having a good work ethic is important.

and 90% report that taking individual responsibility and having a good work ethic is very important. Reflecting business trends toward flatter organizational structures and employee work teams, 93% of workers indicate that working well in teams is at least somewhat important in their current job. Fewer (76%) workers believe that working in teams is very important.

Strong support for these work attitudes varies little by demographic characteristics including income, education level, and race. In fact, the only significant variation exists when examining the importance of working in teams by race with 70% of White workers reporting this attitude to be extremely important as compared to 82% of Black workers.

Simply possessing valuable workplace attitudes cannot ensure success in the high skilled workplace, however. American workers recognize the importance of a range of skills required to perform their jobs. Workers rate general skills necessary to complete a variety of common tasks as more important than specific occupation skills or even computer skills. The vast majority (87%) of workers report that communication skills are very important, and 81% say that basic literacy and critical thinking skills as very important. Somewhat surprising in today's computer dominated workplace, 79% of workers believe that computer skills are at least somewhat important; however, only half (50%) state

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<sup>1</sup> *Work Trends: Nothing But Net*. John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University. New Brunswick, NJ. February 2000.

that computer skills are very important. In addition, workers place less significance on specific occupation skills with only 57% of workers reporting that they are very important

The importance placed on these various skills varies considerably when analyzing the opinions of workers from different education levels, ages, and races. In general, older and more educated workers place a higher value on both workplace skills. Nearly all workers with some post-graduate education and 92% of workers with a college degree indicate that communication skills are very important. In

comparison, 82% of workers with a high school education or less agree that communications skills are very important. Similar comparisons are found when workers are asked about the importance of basic skills: 90% of workers with some post-graduate education believe that basic skills are very important to succeeding in the workplace, compared to 74% of those with a high school education or less. In evaluating the importance of basic literacy skills, workers 65 and older report higher levels of importance (86%) than younger workers between 18-25 (74%).

Fig. 5-1: Importance of Skills, Attitudes, & Behaviors Needed to Perform Jobs

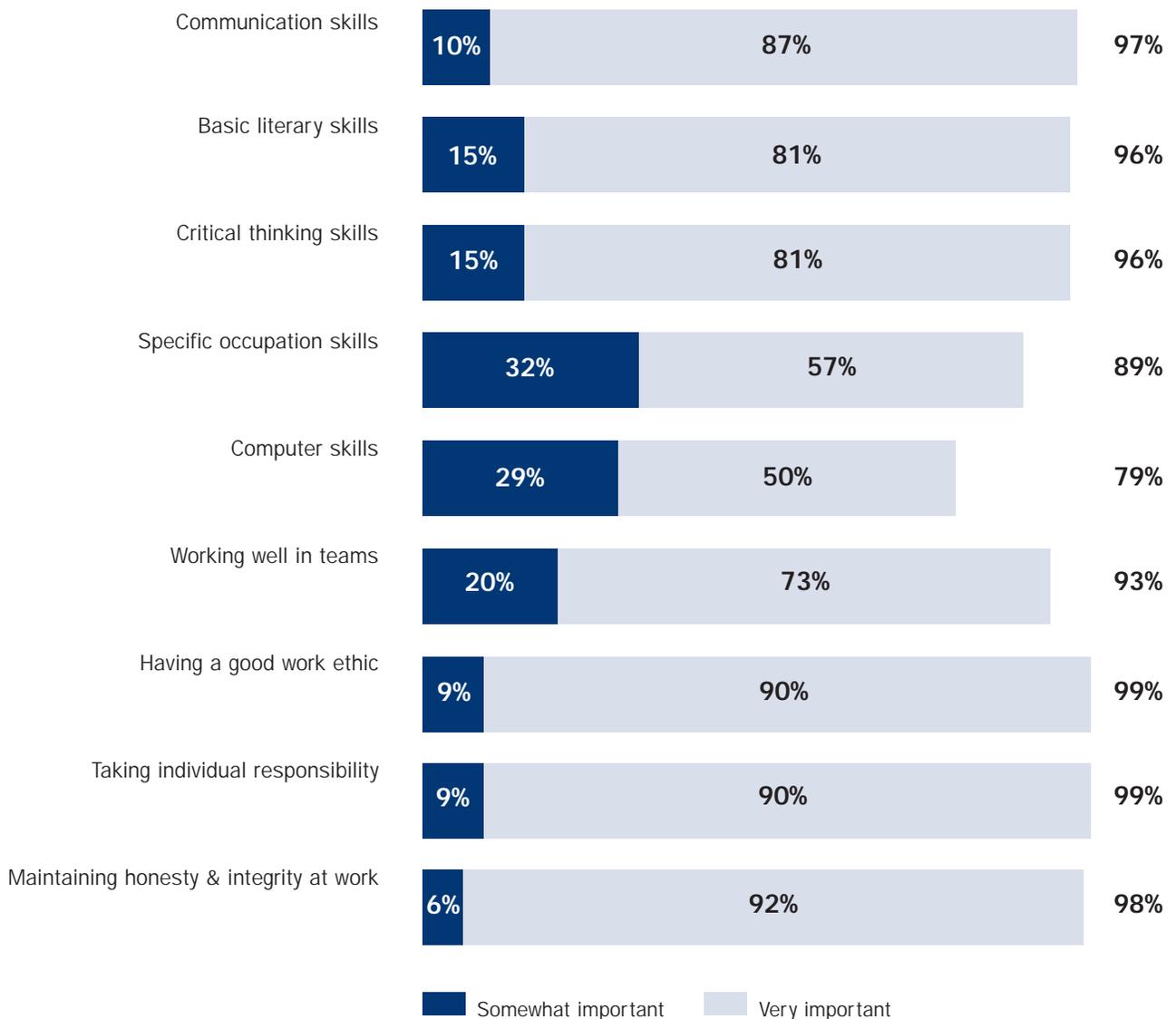
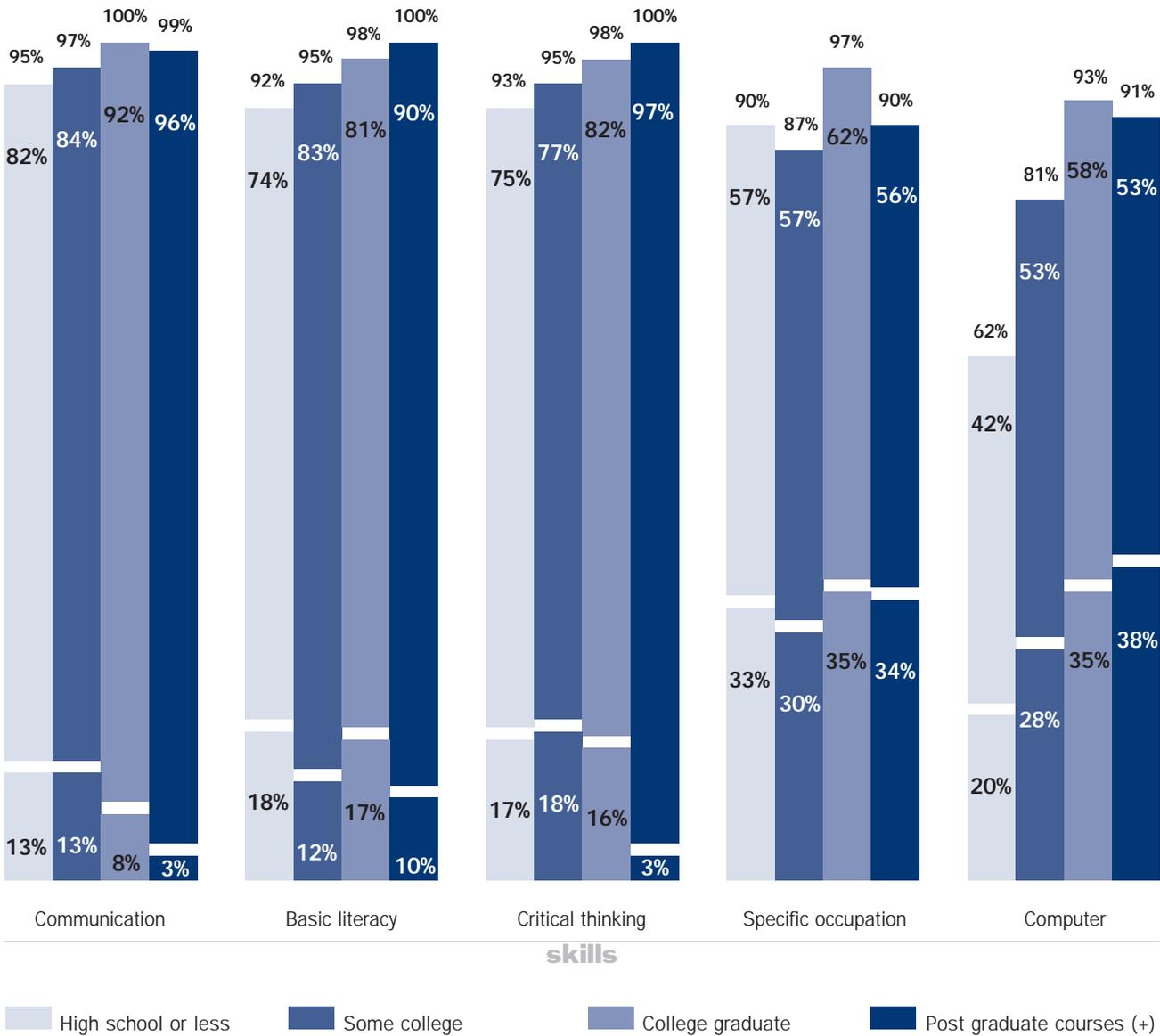


Fig. 5-2: Importance of Skills for Work

Top bars = Very important

Bottom bars = Somewhat important



Looking at the importance of computer skills by demographic characteristics yields interesting results. Interestingly, Black workers place much more importance on computer skills than White workers with 61% of Black workers indicating that computer skills are important for their work as compared to less than half (48%) of White workers. The *Work Trends* survey conducted in February 2000

— *Nothing But Net* — found that Black workers were less likely to use a computer at work and less likely to have access to a computer at home. The lower levels of computer access among Black workers provide an explanation. Many African Americans believe they have been left behind in the information technology economy without computer skills, and they will not fully

benefit from the opportunities in this New Economy without them. In addition, people with more formal education are more likely than those with less education to say that computer skills are very important.

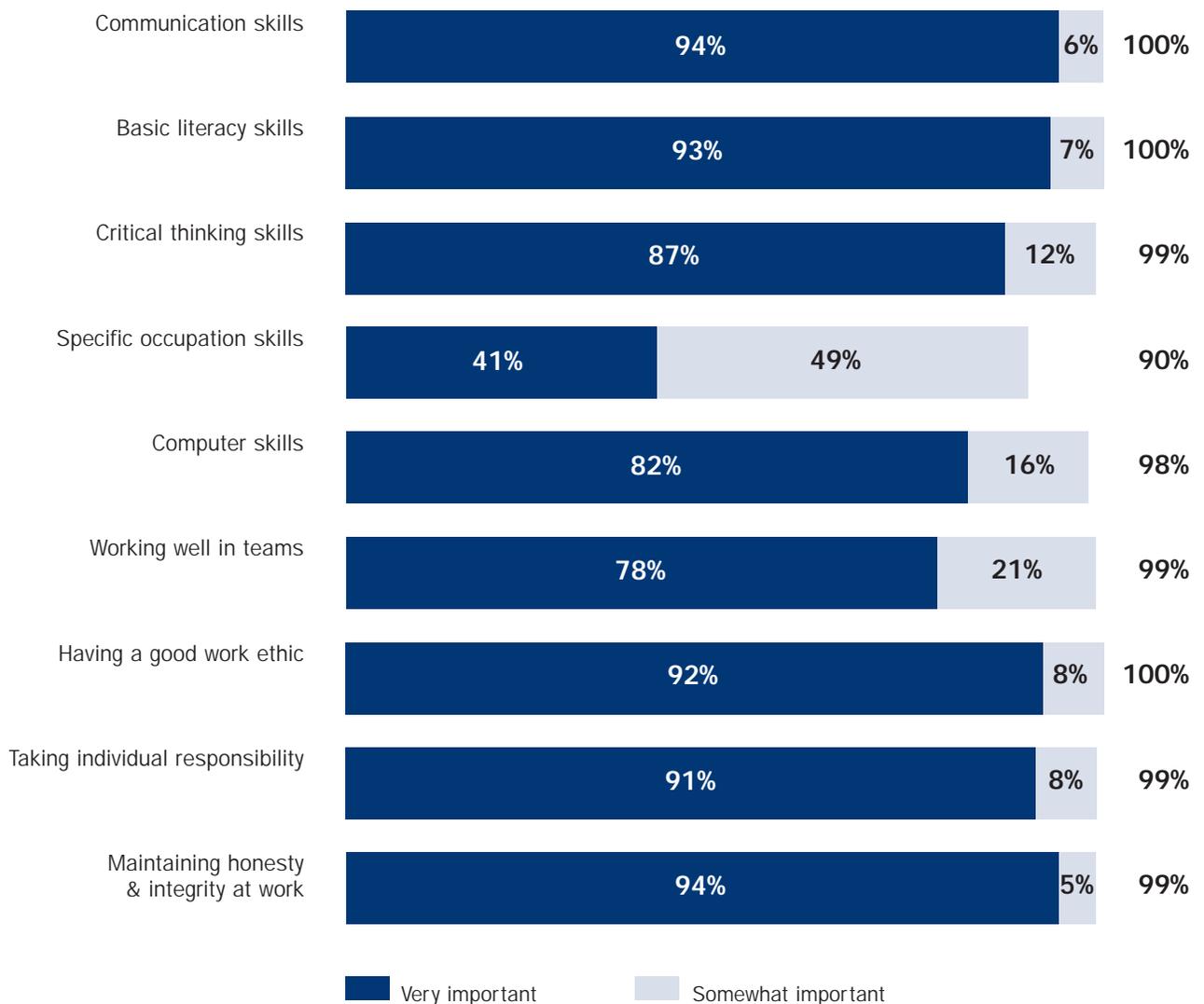
### *Expectations for Schools*

Nearly all Americans attend school at some point in their lives. Nearly all adults hold jobs. These common experiences and the connections between education and work made by American workers are a compelling case for policy makers to pay attention American workers as they shape education reform. American workers have valuable workplace experience and practical knowledge

about what is needed to succeed in the workplace. They have valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the education system due to their own experiences and those of their children. What do American workers believe is most important for school children to learn?

Workers' opinions about the skills and attitudes for children to learn in school closely parallel their opinions about the skills and attitudes necessary to succeed at work. Workplace attitudes top the list. Nearly all respondents (94%) indicate that honesty and integrity are very important attitudes for workplace success. Similarly, almost all indicate that a strong work ethic (92%) and taking

Fig. 5-3: Importance of Skills, Attitudes, & Behaviors Students Should Learn in School



individual responsibility (91%) are very important.

This strong support for having children learn these *attitudes* in school holds true among workers from all different education levels, income levels, ages, and those from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Education reform proposals that include educating students in these skills are likely to receive broad and strong support from American workers.

When thinking about needed *skills*, however, American workers cast their recommendations around what tools and abilities their children will need in the future. Almost all (98%) workers believe that it is important for their children to learn computer skills, with 82% reporting that computer skills are very important. Conversely, only 50% of respondents say that computer skills are essential in today's workplace. Workers age 65 and older are more likely than workers from any other age cohort to believe that computer skills are very important, with 93% of these older workers saying that computer skills are very important, compared to less than 84% of workers from any other age cohort.

American workers also feel strongly that school children should learn communication skills, basic literacy skills, and critical thinking skills. All workers report that communication skills, critical thinking skills, and basic literacy skills are important for children to learn. They also believe that communication skills and basic literacy skills are *very important*, by 94% and 93%, respectively.

While foundational skills deemed important for work and school, specific occupation skills receive only tepid support among American workers. Only 41% said that they are very important for school children to learn. This perception is consistent with American workers' opinions about the primary purpose of high schools and colleges. Workers ages 65 and older place higher importance on occupation skills, however, with more than half (52%) reporting

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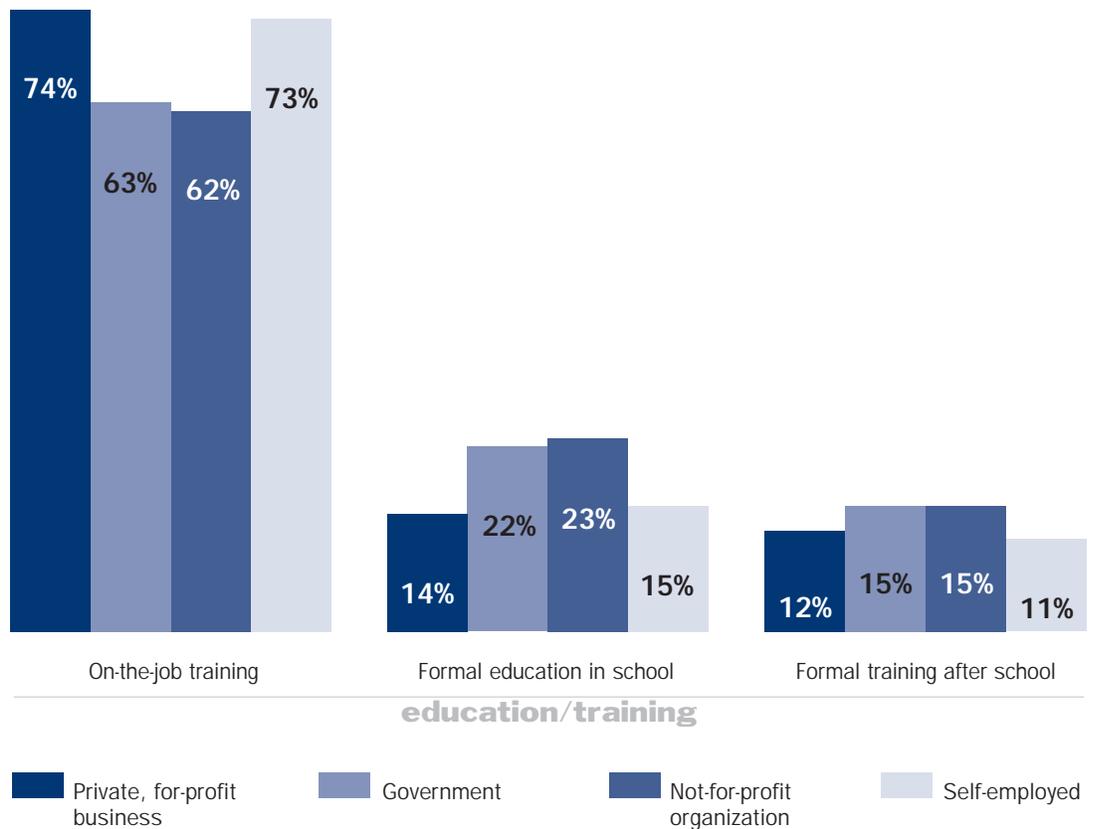
occupation skills as very important as compared to only 39% of younger workers ages 18-29. Workers with less formal education are more likely to believe that occupation skills are very important with more than half (55%) of workers with a high school education or less stating that occupation skills are very important for school children to learn compared to less than a third of workers with a college education or more. In addition, Black workers are almost twice as likely as White workers to believe occupational skills are very important with 63% of Black workers stating they are very important compared to 36% of White workers.

### *Preparing for the Job*

The strong opinions held by American workers about what should be taught in school may be derived from their own educational experiences. When asking workers what the most effective method of preparing them for their current job, most (68%) report "on-the-job-training" as the most effective method as compared to only 16% who report that formal education in school and only 12% who report that formal education since completing school is most effective.

Black and White workers, workers from varying sectors of the economy, and older workers perceive the effectiveness of on-the-job training differently, however. While 73% of White workers report on-the-job training as the most effective method of preparing for work, only 60% of Blacks share this perception. Compared to the roughly 70% of workers from all other age cohorts, older workers are much less likely to choose on-the-job training as the most effective method, with slightly more than half (57%)

Fig. 5-4: Effectiveness of Work Preparation Methods



choosing on-the-job training, 27% choosing formal education in school, and 15% formal training after school. Self-employed workers and workers from for-profit companies are more likely to report that on-the-job training is the most effective than workers from the government or no-for-profit organizations. It may be the case that the greater resources and the profit motive of the private sector increase the chance of a more structured on-the-job training experience.

Although workers assert that on-the-job training is the most effective means of providing them with important work skills and attitudes, most workers also believe that high schools and colleges should prepare students for specific careers. As indicated previously, most workers believe that colleges and high schools should play a role in preparing students for the world of work. Given this gap between worker hopes for the education system and their own experi-

ence, how can students become better prepared for the world of work?

American workers favor dramatic policy changes to engage the private sector in helping improve how schools educate and prepare high school and college students for work. These policies include mandatory internships, engaging employers in curricula reform, and requiring employers to provide more education and training as an alternative to educational institutions. Two of these policies favor placing *requirements* on the school systems and on employers—requiring internships and employer-provided training. Perhaps reflecting the value they place on training, most (87%) workers support requiring students to participate in internships at workplaces as part of their education. Fewer workers, 65%, favor requiring companies to provide education and training, and three-fourths (76%) of all workers support soliciting and implementing ideas from businesses

to change the curriculum of educational programs.

Older workers are considerably less likely to support these requirements than other age groups. Only 71% of workers age 65 or older support participation in internships at workplaces compared to 86% of workers ages 50-64, 87% of workers ages 30-49, and 92% of workers ages 18-29. Similarly, less than half (48%) of older workers support requiring companies to provide more education and training compared to more than 60% of workers from all other age groups.

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American workers favor dramatic policy changes to engage the private sector in helping improve how schools educate and prepare high school and college students for work.

Younger workers age 18-29, who stand to gain the most from employer-provided education and training, show the highest levels of support for this requirement with almost three-fourths (73%) in favor.

## 6. Two Approaches to Change: Funders vs. Reformers

American workers express widespread concern with the preparation of people for work and the performance of American high schools. When asked to consider a broad range of potential reforms, American workers supported every single proposal, except one—providing vouchers to help parents to send their children to private schools.

When looking deeper into these findings, it is clear that the strategy that has the strongest support among Americans is testing students during school and at graduation. Survey respondents are no longer convinced that obtaining a high school diploma is sufficient. They want students to prove through tests that they have obtained the basic skills needed to succeed in the workplace. And, they see tests as a strategy for holding schools accountable for doing the jobs they are supposed to do.

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Testing of students at various points in their academic careers enjoys universal support among workers. Nine in ten American workers contacted in this survey favor high school exit exams to ensure that students have basic skills, and about the same number also support requiring students in the third through eighth grades to take yearly tests in math and reading. Governors and state legislatures have begun to heed this demand for more testing. Forty-nine states currently require testing of students to evaluate school performance, and twenty-six states require or plan to require high school

exit exams to ensure that students have basic skills.

### *Money vs. Policy*

Political leaders, educators, business people and policy analysts have proposed a broad array of initiatives to improve education, from school vouchers, to Internet access, to smaller class size. Vouchers, in particular, have generated controversy, with proponents arguing that vouchers force schools to improve their performance to stay competitive, and opponents contending that vouchers will seriously weaken the public school system.

Overall, education reform strategies can be grouped into two categories: more funding, or policy reform. Examples of funding initiatives include improving physical facilities, connecting every school to the Internet, reducing class sizes by hiring more teachers, paying for pre-school education for all four year olds, and increasing tax credits and deductions for the cost of higher education. Examples of the policy reform approach include initiatives such as providing vouchers to help parents send their children to private schools, ending the practice of promoting failing students to the next grade, requiring high school exit exams to ensure that students have basic skills, requiring students from the third to the eighth grade to take yearly tests in math and reading to evaluate school performance, and closing failing schools and reopening them with new leadership. Each of these initiatives asks the question of whether more money or new policy is the key to improving education.

### *Funders vs. Reformers*

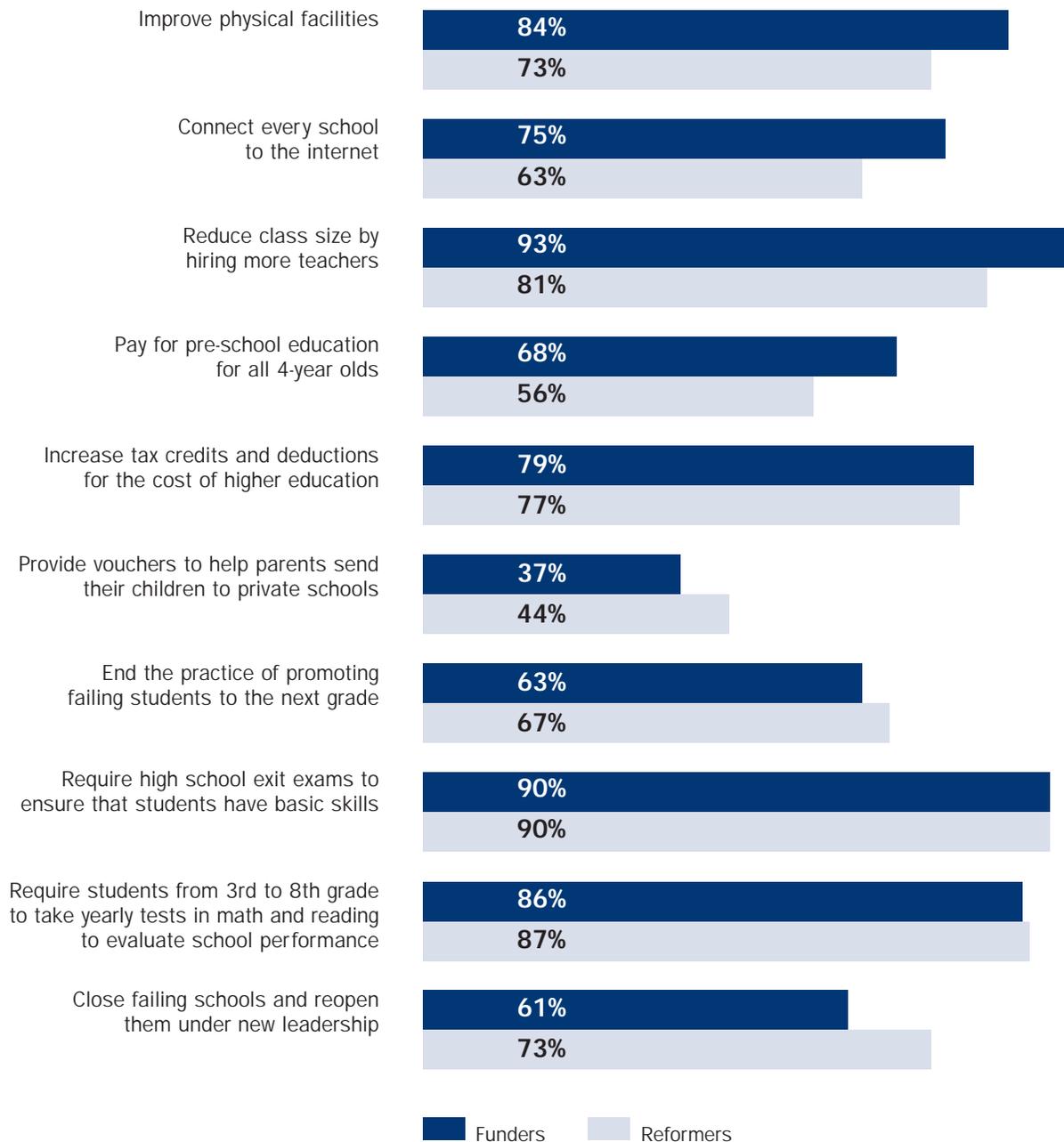
When asked to choose whether educational improvement is more likely to be accomplished with more funding or through policy

reforms, Americans are almost evenly divided. Workers who support providing resources to the current system are called Funders. Those who think education policy change is more important to educational improvement are labeled Reformers.

Funders are more likely to be women who identify themselves as Democrats or Independents and say they would vote for Vice-President Al Gore if the 2000

presidential election were held today. Funders are more likely to believe that Gore is the candidate that would do the most to improve education. More than half of Black workers (57%), and workers age 18-29 (51%) support more funding for the public school system, as opposed to replacing the current system. The majority (58%) of Funders believe that students today are receiving a better quality of education than they did.

Fig. 6-1: Funders and Reformers—Support for Funding Initiatives and Reform Policies



Reformers are more likely to be White men who earn more than \$40,000 per year, and, if the 2000 presidential election were held today, would vote for Texas Governor George W. Bush. Reformers are more likely to identify themselves either as Republicans or Independents, and more likely to think that Bush would do the most to improve education. Workers over the age of 30 are more likely to be Reformers, with 52% of those in the 30-49 age group, 59% of those age 50-64, and 75% of those age 65 and over, supporting new practices to replace the current system. Reformers are equally divided on whether students today receive a better quality of education than they did, or if they receive a worse or about the same quality of education (47%, respectively).

### *Support for Education Initiatives*

In keeping with their respective viewpoints, when asked about various initiatives, in all cases Funders were more likely than Reformers to support more federal funding. For example, 84% of Funders favor spending more money to improve physical facilities,

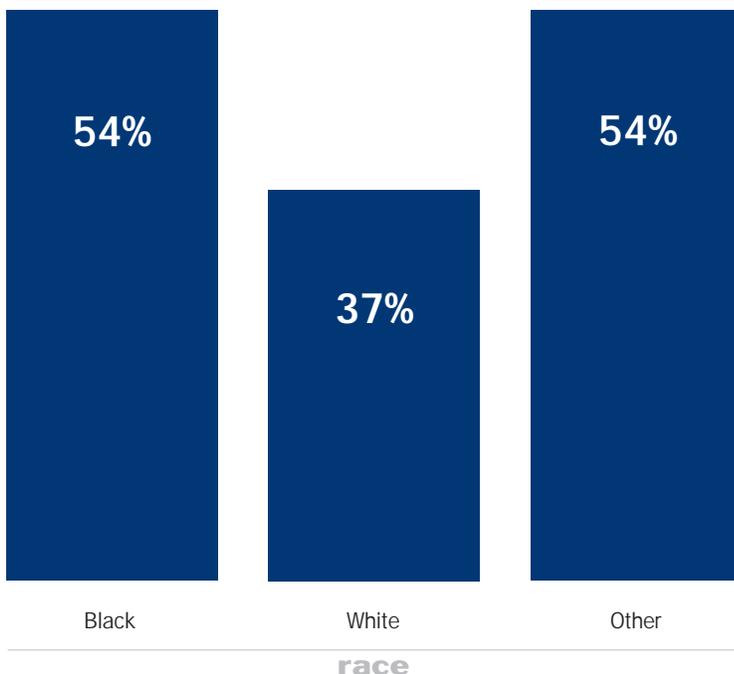
compared to 73% of Reformers who favor such funding. Likewise, three-fourths (75%) of Funders support spending more federal money to connect every school to the Internet, compared to the 63% of Reformers who say they support such funding. When asked about increasing funding to reduce class size by hiring new teachers, pay for pre-school education for all four year olds, and increase tax credits and deductions for the cost of higher education, in each instance Funders are more likely to voice support than Reformers.

In contrast, Reformers are more likely than Funders to favor policy initiatives that seek to change the current educational system, such as ending the practice of promoting failing students to the next grade or closing failing schools. For example, among Reformers, 73% favor closing failing schools and reopening them under new leadership, compared to 61% of Funders who favor such a policy. Among Reformers, more than two-thirds (67%) support ending the practice of promoting failing students to the next grade, compared to 63% of Funders who say they same.

### *Concerns about Vouchers for Private Schooling*

Among all these initiatives, there was one that the majority of American workers did not support: vouchers to help parents send their children to private schools. More than half (57%) of those surveyed oppose providing vouchers to help parents send their children to private school, compared to 39% who favor such a policy. Vouchers failed to find favor among the majority of workers, even among those who advocate reforming the current system of education. Less than half (44%) of Reformers, and only 37% of Funders, favor providing vouchers to help parents send their children to private school. It may be that, despite concerns regarding the ability of schools to educate and prepare students for work, American workers are not yet ready to give up on the public education system.

Fig. 6-2: Support for Vouchers



Across racial and age groups, and political parties, there are varying levels of support for vouchers. More than half (54%) Blacks and other racial minorities favor providing parents with vouchers to send their children to private schools, compared to 37% of Whites who offer similar support. Likewise, younger workers are more likely than older workers to favor vouchers. Almost half (49%) of workers age 18-29 favor vouchers, compared to 40% of those age 30-49, and 36% of workers age 50-64. Finally, Republicans and Independents are more likely than Democrats to favor vouchers (44%, 45%, and 35%, respectively).

### *A Challenge for Policy Makers*

Although support for initiatives can be divided among Funders and Reformers, this survey makes clear that, with the notable exception of vouchers, workers support a mix of both new funding initiatives and new policies to improve education. For instance, the majority of Funders and Reformers alike support funding to reduce class size by hiring more teachers (93% and 81%, respectively), and support policies that

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This uncertainty about how to best improve education presents a challenge to elected officials and policy makers. Because workers have different opinions on how to improve education, it will be difficult for policy leaders to build consensus around the direction of change. The next president, the nation's governors, and local elected officials have their work cut out for them as they move ahead and try to achieve reform.

require high school exit exams to ensure that students have basic skills (90%, respectively). This uncertainty about how to best improve education presents a challenge to elected officials and policy makers. Because workers have different opinions on how to improve education, it will be difficult for policy leaders to build consensus around the direction of change. The next president, the nation's governors, and local elected officials have their work cut out for them as they move ahead and try to achieve reform.

## 7. Who is Responsible?

American workers do not believe that the current education system sufficiently prepares people for work in this competitive labor market. On-the-job training is cited by most workers as the most effective means of preparing for work. The majority of Americans enroll in further education and training after their formal education is complete. While survey respondents want the education system to help itself, they embrace strategies to increase business involvement in education reform. Each of these issues—workforce preparation, continuing education and training and reforming educational institutions is related. Yet, American workers recognize that the responsibility for addressing each issue may be different.

### *Preparing for Work*

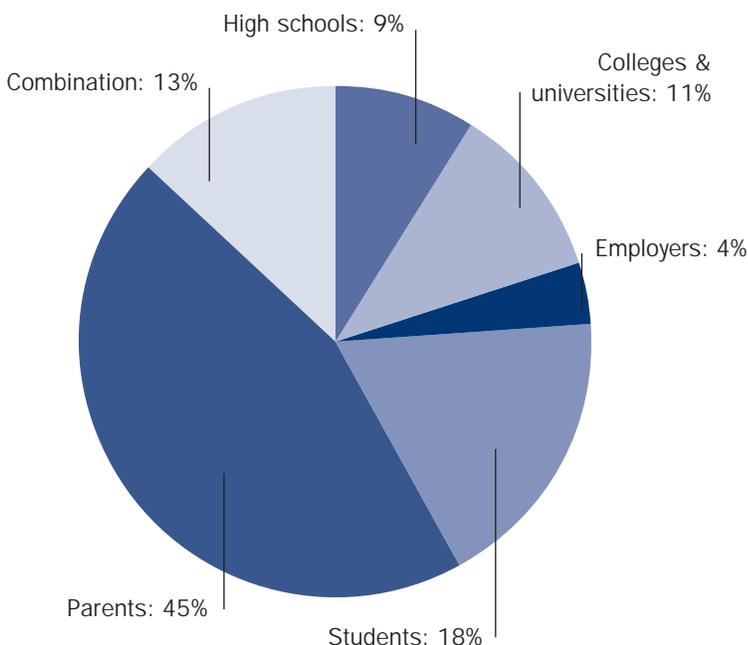
The majority of workers believe that the purpose of education is to prepare students for work, but they do not think the education

system is the *most* responsible entity for this task. American workers believe in self-reliance, placing the responsibility for workforce preparation with individuals rather than institutions. Nearly half (45%) report that parents should be most responsible and 18% report that students are most responsible. Only 9% say that high schools are most responsible, and only 11% believe that colleges and universities are most responsible. These responses reflect the strong American value on individual responsibility and may indicate a greater faith in the institution of the family over civil institutions such as the education system. It also is consistent with workers' emphasis on getting the right work attitudes and behaviors, such as a strong work ethic and honesty. American workers are saying that these important attributes are best learned from parents rather than from the school system.

The New Economy requires workers to upgrade their skills to keep pace with technology and changing workplace demands. Nearly two of every three workers (63%) participate in some form of education or skills training beyond their highest level of formal education. As noted above, such skills training and education comes in many different forms: college courses, employer sponsored classroom training, on-the-job training, self-directed training, distance education, and training by a consultant or professional trainer. Given the growing demand for continuing education and plethora of options for providing such training, who should be responsible for paying for these much needed services?

Once again, American workers are most likely to place this responsibility on the individual. Thirty-seven percent of American workers say that individuals are primarily responsible for the costs of further education and skill training. Significant blocks of Americans believe that government should

Fig. 7-1: Who Should be Most Responsible for Preparing Students for Work?



also provide funding: 18% said the federal government should fund continuing education and 9% said this is a state government responsibility. Finally, 17% think that employers should bear the primary financial burden for workers' further education.

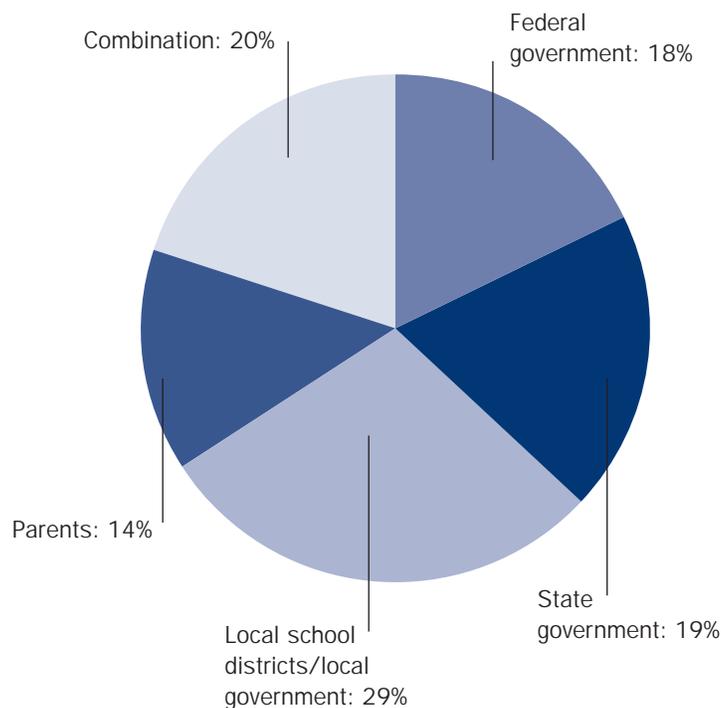
Younger workers are more likely to believe that some level of government should pay for continuing education and skills training with close to half (45%) of workers age 18-29 indicating that either state or federal government should pay, compared to only 24% of workers age 30-49, 21% of workers age 50-64, and only 10% of workers age 65 or older. Workers with less education are also more likely to place responsibility on the government with 38% of workers with a high school education or less reporting that either state or federal government should pay as compared to 19% of those with a college degree.

When examining this notion of fiscal responsibility for continuing education by political party affiliation, workers who belong to the Republican Party are much more likely than Democrats or Independents to place the responsibility for payment on individuals who receive training. Keeping with the Republican ideal of less government, almost half (48%) of Republicans report that individuals who receive training should be responsible for payment compared to 33% of Democrats and 33% of Independents.

### Reforming Education

American workers are divided on who should be responsible for reforming the education system. About 30% of those surveyed said local school districts/local government should be responsible; state government should be responsible according to 19% of respondents, while 18% said the federal government. Fourteen percent think that parents should handle this task. The confusing maze of education funding, education requirements, and education oversight may contribute to the lack of consensus on this

Fig. 7-2: Who Should be Responsible for Improving Education?



issue. Although local districts continue to fund and oversee the vast majority of education services, states are increasingly involved in setting education standards and providing state aid to assist in achieving parity among school districts. In addition, the focus on education reform by the presidential candidates heightens awareness about the federal government's potential in reforming education.

Younger workers are more likely to believe that some level of government should pay for continuing education and skills training with close to half (45%) of workers age 18-29 indicating that either state or federal government should pay, compared to only 24% of workers age 30-49, 21% of workers age 50-64, and only 10% of workers age 65 or older.

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These findings present one clear conclusion: education reform needs further discussion in the public domain.

The fragmented structure of funding, standard setting, and oversight makes it difficult to know who truly is responsible for reforming education. As mentioned previously, about half of workers believe that improving education should come in the form of increased funding and half in the form of reforms. Since funding comes from local taxes as well as state and federal subsidies, it is possible to look to any one of these levels of government to support efforts

to increase funding of different initiatives. Similarly, since local districts are responsible for their curricula while also subject to meeting state standards, the appropriate level of responsibility is difficult to judge.

These findings present one clear conclusion: education reform needs further discussion in the public domain. As candidates and policy-makers at all levels of government from school boards to the President grapple with the issues of education reform, they should be aware of two important points: 1) that at least some of their constituents believe they are responsible for reforming the education system, and 2) that most of their constituents believe someone else is responsible for reforming the education system.

## 8. Presidential Leadership

Education and training are emerging as prominent issues on the campaign trail of the upcoming presidential election. Both Vice President Al Gore and Texas Governor George W. Bush are pledging to improve the nation's public educational system. Both candidates have outlined ambitious agendas to accomplish this task. The result is a serious debate about the best way to ensure that all students receive a high-quality education.

### *Education as a Presidential Election Issue*

In previous presidential election years, Americans have expressed varying levels of concern regarding education as an important problem. In May 1982, 16% of Americans reported that education was one of the three most important problems facing the country today. In May 1996, that number dropped to 14% (Source: Public Opinion Location Library (POLL); Roper Center for Public Opinion Research). Although a direct comparison cannot be made with the results of this survey (due to sample and question wording), it appears that Americans are growing increasingly concerned about the issue of education. In addition, concerns with economic matters, including both the general state of the economy and the federal budget deficit, have dramatically declined across the last two elections. Moreover, concern about crime is relatively low. Thus, in the absence of immediate economic concerns and fears of crime, education has increased in relative importance, and has emerged as one of the most important issues to Americans today.

This debate about education is taking place at an opportune time. The majority (79%) of workers report that education is an important issue to them, although more than half (55%) say it is only one among many important issues. Just 6% say that education is the most important issue to them and 18%

indicate that education is one of the most important issues. Less than one-fifth (19%) consider education to be not very or not at all important.

Across gender and party lines, opinion varies regarding the importance of education. Republicans and Democrats are almost equally divided on the question, with 78% of Democrats saying it is an important or one of the most important issues, compared to 75% of Republicans who think the same. However, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to report that education is one of the most important issues (24% and 14%, respectively), and Republicans are more likely than Democrats to report that education is one important issue among many (61% and 55%, respectively). Women are more likely than men to identify education as an important issue, with 85% saying it is the most important, one of the most important, or one among many important issues, compared to 76% men who think that education is important.

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Thus, in the absence of immediate economic concerns and fears of crime, education has increased in relative importance, and has emerged as one of the most important issues to Americans today.

### *The Influence of Education Policy on the Election*

The survey makes clear that education is an important issue to the majority of Americans, and could potentially influence voters' support for the candidates. If the 2000 presidential election were held today, Republican George W. Bush would edge out Democrat Al Gore by a small margin. Among American workers, 41% of those surveyed say they would vote for Bush, while 35% say they would vote for Gore. However,

a significant number of workers say that they either do not know whom they would vote for, or that they would not vote for either candidate (11%, respectively).

In addition, differences in candidate support are evident among racial groups, gender, labor groups, and political parties. If the 2000 election were held today, the vote would fall, in large part, along party lines, although Bush appears to enjoy stronger support among his party than Gore does among his party. Among workers who identify themselves as Democrats, 68% say they would vote for Gore. However, 83% of workers who identify themselves as Republicans intend to vote for Bush. Among workers who identify themselves as Independents, 31% would vote for Gore, while 39% would vote for Bush.

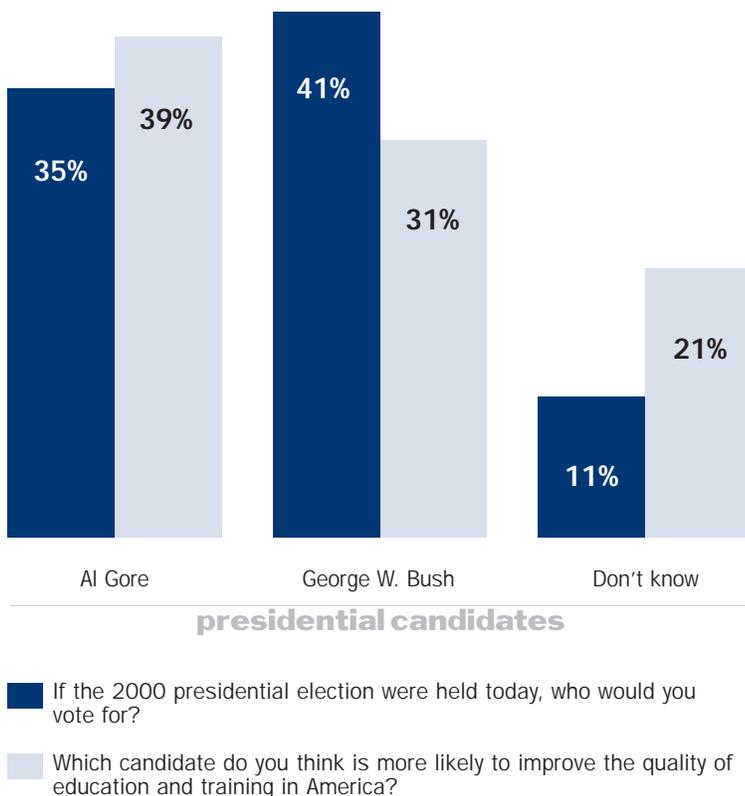
Some traditional Democratic constituents indicate that they intend to support their party's candidate. For example, members of

labor unions are more likely to support Gore, with 44% of unionized workers saying they would vote for Gore if elections were held today, compared to 37% who say they would vote for Bush. Similarly, Al Gore enjoys greater support among Black and other minorities workers, with 59% of Black workers and 45% of other racial minorities saying they would vote for Gore, compared to 31% of Whites who say they would do the same. In contrast, George W. Bush enjoys the support of male workers, with 46% of men saying they would vote for Bush if the election were held today, compared to 36% of women. Women are almost equally likely to vote for Gore as for Bush (37% and 36%, respectively), with more women than men undecided between the candidates (15% and 8%, respectively).

### Who Can Improve Education?

Although workers indicate that they are more likely to vote for Bush than Gore if the 2000 presidential election were held today, workers in our survey are more likely to say that Democrat Al Gore will improve the quality of education and training in America. Among those surveyed, 39% believe Gore will do more to improve education, compared to the 31% who believe Bush will do the better job. Not surprisingly, the majority (65%) of Democrats believe that Gore is more likely to improve education, while the majority (63%) of Republicans believe Bush is more likely to improve education. The majority (58%) of Black voters, and 43% of other minority workers believe that Gore is more likely to improve education, compared to 36% of White workers who believe the same. Once again, many workers are on the fence. More than one-fifth (21%) of workers are undecided, and report that they do not know who will do a better job. Candidates have until November to convince these undecided voters that they are the best man for the job.

Fig. 8-1: Bush vs Gore



## *Funders And Reformers Evaluate the Candidates*

Just as differences in voting preferences exist among racial groups and political parties, the Funders and Reformers identified here have varying assessments of the candidates. In general, workers tend to support that candidate whose philosophy regarding education matches their own. For example, 43% of Funders say they would vote for Gore if the 2000 presidential election were held today, compared to 33% who would say they would vote for Bush. Almost half (49%) of Reformers voiced their intent to vote for Bush, while one-third (33%) say they would vote for Gore. Half (50%) of all Funders believe that Gore is the candidate more likely to improved education, double that of

---

Almost half (49%) of Reformers voiced their intent to vote for Bush, while one-third (33%) say they would vote for Gore.

the 25% of Funders who say Bush will do the better job. Among those who favor policy changes over increased funding, 39% say that Bush will do a better job of improving education, while 34% say that Gore is most likely to succeed at improving education. It is important to note that, again, a significant number of workers remain undecided, with 22% of Funders, and 18% of Reformers reporting that they “don’t know” which candidate will do the better job.

## 9. Conclusion

An important voice is missing from the national discussion about education reform: American workers. Their experiences in the workplace, their experiences in school, and the experiences of their children in the education system make workers the unheard experts of education reform and work preparation policies. Workers know what skills and attitudes are necessary for success in the workplace, and they express deep concern about the effectiveness of the education system in preparing students for the challenges of the workplace.

---

Effectively preparing students for work is an economic and social imperative. American workers believe strongly that parents and students must take responsibility for their own workforce preparation; however, they also believe that schools can and should do a better job preparing students for work.

The fast-paced, rapidly changing economy constantly places new demands on workers who must frequently learn new skills and adapt to a constantly changing work environment. Recognizing that they learn and be prepared to continue to learn new skills, American workers report that “soft skills” are more important than specific occupation skills or even computer skills. Workers cite maintaining honesty and integrity, taking individual responsibility, and having a good work ethic as the most important ingredients for workplace success.

Reflecting on the different ways in which they were prepared for their jobs, most workers believe that on-the-job-training was more effective than either formal education in school or formal training after school. In

addition, most workers received some sort of training since leaving school. Nonetheless, workers believe that the education system should play an important role in preparing students for work by giving students basic skills (in high school) and preparing students for specific occupations (in college). According to American workers, high schools are not making the grade, as the majority gives high schools no higher than a “C.” Colleges/universities fare somewhat better, however, with the majority giving them a “B” or better.

What should be done to improve the education system to better prepare students for work? Workers believe that schools should focus on those attitudes and skills necessary in the workplace today and in the future. In particular, workers cite communication skills, literacy skills, maintaining honesty and integrity, and having a good work ethic as most important for school children to learn. Recognizing the increasing use of computers in the workplace, the vast majority of workers assert that computer skills are very important for children to learn despite only half reporting them as important for their current job.

Although workers seem to possess a common voice about the content of what should be taught in schools, they are divided by the means of education reform and which political party offers the most effective proposals for change. Half of workers believe the best way to improve education is to implement new practices and policies in place of the current system of education without spending more money. Slightly less than half believes that providing more money and resources to support the current system of education is the best means of improving the system.

Regardless of their preference for spending money or implementing new practices,

the majority of American workers rally around a few key education reform policies: 1) high school exit exams to ensure students have learned basic skills, 2) requiring third and eighth grade students to take yearly tests in math and reading, and 3) requiring students to participate in internships at workplaces. Still, workers have not given up on public schools, as less than 40% support vouchers to help students pay for private education.

Although workers believe the education system should do a better job of preparing students for work, they do not believe that the education system is solely responsible for this effort. In fact, workers believe that individuals—parents and students—are most responsible for preparing students for work, not institutions like high schools and universities. This belief may reflect the emphasis placed on workplace attitudes and the notion that attitudes are primarily taught within a family. In addition, most workers believe that individuals and employers—not government—should be responsible for paying for their ongoing training and education beyond high school and college.

American workers still want education reform, however. Given the confusing maze of funding and oversight responsibilities between different levels of government, there is no clear consensus among workers about who should be responsible for leading this effort. One third of workers believe that education reform should be the work of local school districts, the entity most responsible for funding and oversight of schools. However, close to one-fifth believe the federal government should be responsible and a

different fifth believe that state government should be responsible.

Despite the importance placed on education in the presidential campaigns, workers do not believe that school reform is the sole responsibility of the federal government. The majority of workers believe that it is an important campaign issue, although about half report that it is one among many important issues. American workers report that Vice President Al Gore would do a better job improving education; however, if the election were held today, more workers would be likely to vote for Governor George W. Bush than for Gore.

Effectively preparing students for work is an economic and social imperative. American workers believe strongly that parents and students must take responsibility for their own workforce preparation; however, they also believe that schools can and should do a better job preparing students for work. Sorting through the complex maze of education reform—from content to funding—requires strong leadership on the part of both the public and private sectors. While the President and other chief executives in states and cities can set the education reform agenda through their efforts, it will take strong leadership from those sitting on school boards and those running schools at the local level to take the actions necessary to better prepare our students to meet the needs of a 21st Century workplace. Regardless of the level of leadership, it is clear that listening to the unheard experts—American workers—can and will make all the difference.

# Appendix 1: Methodology

The survey was conducted from May 10 through May 29, 2000 by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA) at the University of Connecticut. This report is based on a total of 1,015 telephone interviews completed with adult members of the workforce in the contiguous United States.

Interviews were conducted at the CSRA's interviewing facility in Storrs, Connecticut, using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. All CSRA surveys are conducted by professional survey interviewers who are trained in standard protocols for administering survey instruments. All interviewers assigned to this survey participated in special training conducted by senior project staff. The draft survey questionnaire and field protocols received extensive testing prior to the start of the formal interviewing period. Interviews were extensively monitored by center staff to insure CSRA standards for quality were continually met.

The sample for this survey was stratified to insure that regions, as

defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, were represented in proportion to their share of the total U.S. workforce. Within each of these regions, telephone numbers were generated through a random-digit-dial telephone methodology to insure that each possible residential telephone number had an equal probability of selection. Telephone banks which contain no known residential telephone numbers were removed from the sample selection process. The sample was generated using the GENESYS sampling database under the direction of a CSRA survey methodologist. Once selected, each telephone number was contacted a minimum of four times to attempt to reach an eligible respondent. Households where a viable contact was made were called up to 25 additional times. Within each household one adult was randomly selected to complete the interview.

A total of 1,962 adults received full screening interviews to determine if they were eligible for inclusion in the survey. Respondents were included if they worked full or part time, or if they

were unemployed and looking for work. A total of 923 adults were not interviewed because they did not meet the screening criteria. An additional 24 respondents completed partial interviews and asked that the interview be completed after the field period had ended. The results of this report are based on a total of 1,015 complete interviews with members of the workforce. The final results were weighted to match U.S. Department of Labor estimates for age, gender, and employment status for the U.S. workforce.

The sample error associated with a survey of this size is +/- 3%, meaning that there is less than one chance in twenty that the results of a survey of this size would differ by more than 3% in either direction from the results which would be obtained if all members of the workforce in the contiguous U.S. had been selected. The sample error is larger for sub-groups. CSRA also attempted to minimize other possible sources of error in this survey.

## Appendix 2: Survey Results

00/05/16 10:31

19: QS1

QS1. Are you currently employed, are you unemployed and looking for work, or are you not employed and not looking for work?

( 1/ 126)

N= 1014 100%

Employed

01 94%

Unemployed and looking for work

02 => IQ4 6%

Unemployed and not looking for work

03 => INT3 --

Don't know

98 =>

THANK

--

Refused 99 =>

THANK

--

«QS1 »

00/05/10 15:55

20: QS2

QS2. Which statement best describes your current employment situation: (READ CHOICES 1-5)

( 1/ 128)

N= 955 100%

I work full-time for only one employer

01 74%

I work full time for one employer and part-time for another employer

02 6%

I work one part-time job

03 8%

I work two or more part-time jobs

04 2%

I am self-employed

05 11%

Don't know

98 --

Refused 99 --

«QS2 »

21: QS3

QS3. How many hours do you work in a typical week? (ENTER 2 DIGITS 00-80)

( 1/ 130)

SE 0 80

N= 955 100%

0 -20 hours

5%

21-30 hours

6%

31-35 hours

4%

36-40 hours

38%

41-45 hours

10%

46-50 hours

12%

51 or more hours

18%

80 OR MORE

80 3%

Don't know

98 2%

Refused 99 \*

Median

(40.00)

Mean

(43.53)

St. Deviation

(13.33)

«QS3 »

00/05/10 9:21

24: Q3

Q3. Now, I'd like to find out how satisfied you are with your job overall. Please tell me whether you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with your job overall?

( 1/ 136)

N= 955 100%

Very Satisfied

01 49%

Somewhat Satisfied

02 36%

Neither 03

3%

Somewhat Dissatisfied

04 7%

Very Dissatisfied

05 5%

Don't know

98 \*

Refused 99 \*

«Q3 »

00/05/10 9:17

25: IQ4

IQ4. Now I am going to ask you some questions about education and why it is important...

( 1/ 138)

N= 1014 100%

Continue 01

1014 100%

«IQ4 »

00/05/10 16:36

26: Q4

Q4. What do you think is the primary purpose of a high school education? I am going to read you a list, please tell me which one is the most important purpose. Is it to: (CHOICES WILL ROTATE. READ TOP 4)

Rotation => 4

( 1/ 140)

N= 1014 100%

Provide students with basic skills

01 42%

Prepare students for college

02 36%

Prepare students for work in general

03 13%

Prepare students for specific careers

04 6%

Don't know (DO NOT READ)

98 2%

Refused (DO NOT READ)

99 1%

«Q4 »

00/05/10 16:37

27: Q5

Q5. What do you think is the primary purpose of a college education? I am going to read you a list, please tell me which one is the most important purpose. Is it to: (CHOICES WILL ROTATE. READ TOP 3)

Rotation => 3

( 1/ 142)

N= 1014 100%

Provide students with general knowledge

01 19%

Prepare students for work in general

02 16%

Prepare students for specific careers

03 64%

Don't know (DO NOT READ)

98 2%

Refused (DO NOT READ)

99 --

«Q5 »

**00/05/16 10:31**  
**28: IQ6**  
**IQ6. Now I am going to ask you some questions about the education that you received.**  
**( 1/ 144)**

N= 1014 100%  
 Continue 01 1014 100%

«IQ6 »

**00/05/10 15:59**  
**29: Q6**

**Q6. How satisfied are you that your highest level of formal education prepared you to get a good job? Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not too satisfied or not at all satisfied?**

**( 1/ 146)**

N= 1014 100%

Very satisfied  
 01 38%

Somewhat satisfied  
 02 41%

Not too satisfied  
 03 12%

Not at all satisfied  
 04 7%

Don't know  
 98 1%

Refused 99 1%

«Q6 »

**00/05/11 13:43**  
**30: Q7**

**Q7. Since completing your highest level of formal education have you participated in any further education and training?**

**( 1/ 148)**

N= 1014 100%

Yes 01 63%

No 02 => IQ8 37%

Don't know  
 98 => IQ8 - -

Refused 99 => IQ8 \*

«Q7 »

**00/05/11 13:44**  
**31: Q7A**

**Q7. What kind of training or education did you receive? (ASK AS OPEN ENDED-DO NOT READ LIST) (ACCEPT UP TO 6 RESPONSES)**

**( 1/ 150 - 152 - 154 - 156 - 158 - 160)**

N= 637 100%

College courses  
 00 47%

Structured classroom training given by your company 01 22%

On-the-job training at your company 0 2 26%

Training provided by a private consultant or trainer 03 21%

Self-directed training 04 12%

Distance education training or classes 05 2%

Other (SPECIFY) 06 O 6%

Military Training 07 2%

Don't Know 98 \*

Refused 99 - -

**Note: Responses add to more than 100% due to rounding**

**00/05/11 13:45**

**32: IQ8**

=> +1 if QS1==2

**IQ8. I am going to read you a list of skills that people say they need to perform many jobs. For each one, I want you to tell me how important these skills are for your current job: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important.**

**( 1/ 162)**

N= 955 100%

Continue 01 955 100%

«IQ8 »

**00/05/11 13:45**

**33: IQ8U**

=> +1 if QS1==1

**IQ8U. I am going to read you a list of skills that people say they need to perform many jobs. For each one, I want you to tell me how important these skills were for your MOST RECENT job: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important.**

**( 1/ 164)**

N= 59 100%

Continue 01 59 100%

«IQ8U »

**00/05/10 10:45**

**34:Q8A**

Rotation => Q8E

**8a. Communication skills, such as writing, speaking and listening (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**

**( 1/ 166)**

N= 1014 100%

Very important  
 01 87%

Somewhat important  
 02 10%

Not too important  
 03 2%

Not at all important  
 04 1%

Don't know  
 98 \*

Refused 99 - -

«Q8A »

**00/05/10 10:46**

**35: Q8B**

**8b. Basic literacy skills, such as math, reading and writing (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**

**( 1/ 168)**

N= 1014 100%

Very important  
 01 81%

Somewhat important  
 02 15%

Not too important  
 03 3%

Not at all important  
 04 2%

Don't know  
 98 \*

Refused 99 - -

«Q8B »

**00/05/10 10:46**

**36: Q8C**

**8c. Critical thinking skills, such as creative thinking, decision-making and problem solving (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**

**( 1/ 170)**

N= 1014 100%

Very important  
 01 81%

Somewhat important  
 02 15%

Not too important  
 03 3%

Not at all important  
 04 1%

Don't know  
 98 \*

Refused 99 - -

«Q8C »

**00/05/10 10:46**  
**37: Q8D**  
**8d. Specific occupation skills (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**  
**( 1/ 172)**

N=	1014	100%
Very important		
01		57%
Somewhat important		
02		32%
Not too important		
03		8%
Not at all important		
04		2%
Don't know		
98		2%
Refused	99	*
«Q8D »		

**00/05/10 10:46**  
**38: Q8E**  
**8e. Computer skills (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**  
**( 1/ 174)**

N=	1014	100%
Very important		
01		50%
Somewhat important		
02		29%
Not too important		
03		9%
Not at all important		
04		13%
Don't know		
98		*
Refused	99	--
«Q8E »		

**00/05/11 13:45**  
**39: IQ9**  
**=> +1 if QS1==2**  
**IQ9. Next, I am going to read a list of attitudes and behaviors that people say they may need to perform their jobs well. For each one, please tell me how important these attitudes and behaviors are for your current job: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important.**  
**( 1/ 176)**

N=	955	100%
Continue	01	955
«IQ9 »		

**00/05/11 13:45**  
**40: IQ9U**  
**=> +1 if QS1==1**  
**IQ9U. Next, I am going to read a list of attitudes and behaviors that people say they may need to perform their jobs well. For each one, please tell me how important these attitudes and behaviors were for your MOST RECENT job: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important.**  
**( 1/ 178)**

N=	59	100%
Continue	01	59
«IQ9U »		

**00/05/10 10:46**  
**41: Q9A**  
**Rotation => Q9D**  
**9a. Working well in teams (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**  
**( 1/ 180)**

N=	1014	100%
Very important		
01		73%
Somewhat important		
02		20%
Not too important		
03		5%
Not at all important		
04		2%
Don't know		
98		*
Refused	99	--
«Q9A »		

**00/05/10 10:46**  
**42: Q9B**  
**9b. Having a good work ethic (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**  
**( 1/ 182)**

N=	1014	100%
Very important		
01		90%
Somewhat important		
02		9%
Not too important		
03		*
Not at all important		
04		*
Don't know		
98		*
Refused	99	*
«Q9B »		

**00/05/10 10:46**  
**43: Q9C**  
**9c. Taking individual responsibility (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**  
**( 1/ 184)**

N=	1014	100%
Very important		
01		90%
Somewhat important		
02		9%
Not too important		
03		1%
Not at all important		
04		*
Don't know		
98		*
Refused	99	--
«Q9C »		

**00/05/10 10:59**  
**44: Q9D**  
**9d. Maintaining honesty and integrity at work (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**  
**( 1/ 186)**

N=	1014	100%
Very important		
01		92%
Somewhat important		
02		6%
Not too important		
03		1%
Not at all important		
04		1%
Don't know		
98		*
Refused	99	--
«Q9D »		

**00/05/11 13:47**  
**45: IQ10**  
**Q10. Thinking about all the skills and attitudes about work that you now have, what was the most effective method in preparing you for work: (CHOICES WILL ROTATE. READ TOP 3)**  
**Rotation => 3**  
**( 1/ 188)**

N=	1014	100%
On-the-job training		
01		68%
Formal education in school		
02		16%
Formal training you received since		

completing school  
03 12%

Don't Know (DO NOT READ)  
98 3%

Refused (DO NOT READ)  
99 1%

«IQ10 »

00/05/10 16:02

46: IQ11

**IQ11. Now I am going to ask you a few questions about the education children today should receive, and how good a job the current education and training system is doing. First, I am going to read you a list of skills that may be important for today's students to learn in school. For each one, please tell me how important you believe these skills are to today's students: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important.**

( 1 / 190)

N= 1014 100%

Continue 01 1014 100%

«IQ11 »

00/05/10 10:47

47: Q11A

Rotation => Q11E

**11a. Communication skills, such as writing, speaking and listening (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**

( 1 / 192)

N= 1014 100%

Very important  
01 94%

Somewhat important  
02 6%

Not too important  
03 \*

Not at all important  
04 - -

Don't Know  
98 \*

Refused 99 \*

«Q11A »

00/05/10 10:47

48: Q11B

**11b. Basic literacy skills, such as math, reading and writing (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**

( 1 / 194)

N= 1014 100%

Very important  
01 93%

Somewhat important  
02 7%

Not too important  
03 \*

Not at all important  
04 - -

Don't Know  
98 \*

Refused 99 \*

«Q11B »

00/05/10 16:02

49: Q11C

**11c. Critical thinking skills, such as creative thinking, decision-making and problem solving (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**

( 1 / 196)

N= 1014 100%

Very important  
01 87%

Somewhat important  
02 12%

Not too important  
03 \*

Not at all important  
04 \*

Don't Know  
98 \*

Refused 99 \*

«Q11C »

00/05/10 10:47

50: Q11D

**11d. Specific occupation skills (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**

( 1 / 198)

N= 1014 100%

Very important  
01 41%

Somewhat important  
02 49%

Not too important  
03 8%

Not at all important  
04 2%

Don't Know  
98 1%

Refused 99 \*

«Q11D »

00/05/10 10:47

51: Q11E

**11e. Computer skills (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**

( 1 / 200)

N= 1014 100%

Very important  
01 82%

Somewhat important  
02 16%

Not too important  
03 1%

Not at all important  
04 - -

Don't Know  
98 \*

Refused 99 \*

«Q11E »

00/05/11 13:47

52: Q12

**Q12. I am going to read you a list of attitudes and behaviors that may be important for today's students to learn in school. For each one, please tell me how important you believe these attitudes and behaviors are to today's students: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important.**

( 1 / 202)

N= 1014 100%

Continue 01 1014 100%

«Q12 »

00/05/10 10:47

53: Q12A

Rotation => Q12D

**12a. Working well in teams (PROBE: very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important)**

( 1 / 204)

N= 1014 100%

Very important  
01 78%

Somewhat important  
02 21%

Not too important  
03 1%

Not at all important  
04 \*

Don't Know  
98 \*

Refused 99 \*

«Q12A »

00/05/10 10:47  
**54: Q12B**  
**12b. Having a good work ethic**  
**(PROBE: very important, somewhat**  
**important, not too important, not at all**  
**important)**

( 1 / 206)

N=	1014	100%
Very important		
01		92%
Somewhat important		
02		8%
Not too important		
03		*
Not at all important		
04		--
Don't Know		
98		*
Refused	99	--

«Q12B »

00/05/10 10:48  
**55: Q12C**  
**12c. Taking individual responsibility**  
**(PROBE: very important, somewhat**  
**important, not too important, not at all**  
**important)**

( 1 / 208)

N=	1014	100%
Very important		
01		91%
Somewhat important		
02		8%
Not too important		
03		1%
Not at all important		
04		*
Don't Know		
98		*
Refused	99	--

«Q12C »

00/05/10 10:48  
**56: Q12D**  
**12d. Maintaining honesty and integrity**  
**at work (PROBE: very important,**  
**somewhat important, not too impor-**  
**tant, not at all important)**

( 1 / 210)

N=	1014	100%
Very important		
01		94%
Somewhat important		
02		5%
Not too important		
03		*
Not at all important		
04		*

Don't Know		
98		*
Refused	99	--

«Q12D »

00/05/10 16:38  
**57: Q13**  
**Q13. Who do you believe SHOULD BE**  
**most responsible for preparing students**  
**for work (CHOICES WILL ROTATE.**  
**READ TOP 5)**

Rotation => 5  
 ( 1 / 212)

N=	1014	100%
High schools		
01		9%
Colleges and universities		
02		11%
Employers	03	4%
Students	04	18%
Parents	05	45%
Other SPECIFY (Volunteered)		
06	O	*
Combination		
07		13%
Don't Know (DO NOT READ)		
98		1%
Refused (DO NOT READ)		
99		*

«Q13 »

«O\_Q13 »

58: Q14  
**Q14. What grade would you give high**  
**schools on how well they are preparing**  
**graduates with the skills and attitudes**  
**necessary to succeed in the workplace,**  
**an A, B, C, D or an F?**

( 1 / 214)

N=	1014	100%
A	01	5%
B	02	32%
C	03	40%
D	04	10%
F	05	6%
Don't Know		
98		6%
Refused	99	*

«Q14 »

00/05/10 17:16  
**59: Q15**  
**Q15. What grade would you give col-**  
**leges and universities on how well they**  
**are preparing graduates with the skills**  
**and attitudes necessary to succeed in**  
**the workplace, an A, B, C, D or an F?**

( 1 / 216)

N=	1014	100%
A	01	16%
B	02	54%
C	03	20%
D	04	2%
F	05	1%
Don't Know		
98		7%
Refused	99	*

«Q15 »

00/05/11 13:48  
**60: Q16**  
**Q16. Do you think the quality of edu-**  
**cation that students today receive is**  
**better or worse that it was when you**  
**went to school?**

( 1 / 218)

N=	1014	100%
Better	01	51%
Worse	02	31%
About the same (volunteered)		
03		12%
Don't Know		
98		6%
Refused	99	*

«Q16 »

00/05/11 14:08  
**61: Q17**  
**Q17. Who do you think should be pri-**  
**marily responsible for paying for fur-**  
**ther education and skill training**  
**beyond high school or college?**  
**(CHOICES WILL ROTATE. READ**  
**TOP 4)**

Rotation => 4  
 ( 1 / 220)

N=	1014	100%
Employers	01	17%
The federal government		
02		18%
State government		
03		9%
Individuals WHO RECEIVE TRAINING		
04		37%
Other SPECIFY (Volunteered)		
05	O	2%
Employers & Federal (Volunteered)		
06		*

Employers & State (Volunteered)		
07	1%	
Employers & Individuals (Volunteered)		
08	4%	
Employers & Federal & State (Volunteered)		
09	1%	
Employers & State & Individuals (Volunteered)		
10	*	
Federal & State (Volunteered)		
11	2%	
Federal & Individuals (Volunteered)		
12	1%	
Federal & State & Individuals (Volunteered)		
13	1%	
State & Individuals (Volunteered)		
14	1%	
All 4 (Volunteered)		
15	3%	
Don't Know (DO NOT READ)		
98	3%	
Refused (DO NOT READ)		
99	--	
«Q17 »		
«O_Q17 »		

**62: IQ18**

Now I'm going to ask you a few questions about the next presidential election

( 1/ 222)

N=	1014	100%
Continue 01	1014	100%
«IQ18 »		

00/05/10 18:22

**63: Q18**

Q18. If the 2000 presidential election were held today who would you vote for if the candidates were Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore?

( 1/ 224)

N=	1014	100%
Al Gore 01		35%
George W. Bush 02		41%
Neither (volunteered) 03		11%
Other (volunteered) 04		1%
Don't Know 98		11%
Refused 99		2%
«Q18 »		

00/05/10 17:16

**64: Q19**

Q19. How important is the issue of work-related education and training to you in determining who you will vote for in the next presidential election? Is it the most important issue, one of the most important issues, important along with many other issues, not very important, or not important at all?

( 1/ 226)

N=	1014	100%
The most important issue 01		6%
One of the most important issues 02		18%
Important along with many others 03		55%
Not very important 04		13%
Not important at all 05		6%
Don't Know 98		2%
Refused 99		1%
«Q19 »		

00/05/10 16:06

**65: Q20**

Q20. Which candidate do you think is more likely to improve the quality of education and training in America, Al Gore or George W. Bush?

( 1/ 228)

N=	1014	100%
Al Gore 01		39%
George W. Bush 02		31%
Neither (volunteered) 03		7%
Both, same (volunteered) 04		1%
Other (volunteered) 05		1%
Don't Know 98		21%
Refused 99		1%
«Q20 »		

**66: IQ21**

Q21. As you may have read or heard, the U.S. government has a large surplus. Some people have suggested using part of this surplus to fund priorities in public education. I am going to read you a list of these funding priorities. For each, please indicate if you favor more funding from the federal govern-

ment, or oppose more funding from the federal government.

( 1/ 230)

N=	1014	100%
Continue 01	1014	100%
«IQ21 »		

00/05/11 13:55

**67: Q21A**

Rotation => Q21E

21a. Improving physical facilities (PROBE: Favor or oppose more funding)

( 1/ 232)

N=	1014	100%
Favor more funding 01		75%
Oppose more funding 02		21%
Don't Know 98		4%
Refused 99		--
«Q21A »		

00/05/10 9:39

**68: Q21B**

21b. Connecting every school to the internet (PROBE: Favor or oppose more funding)

( 1/ 234)

N=	1014	100%
Favor more funding 01		66%
Oppose more funding 02		31%
Don't Know 98		3%
Refused 99		*
«Q21B »		

00/05/10 9:39

**69: Q21C**

21c. Reducing class sizes by hiring new teachers (PROBE: Favor or oppose more funding)

( 1/ 236)

N=	1014	100%
Favor more funding 01		85%
Oppose more funding 02		13%
Don't Know 98		2%
Refused 99		--
«Q21C »		

**00/05/10 9:39**  
**70: Q21D**  
**21d. Paying for pre-school education for all 4 year olds (PROBE: Favor or oppose more funding)**  
**( 1/ 238)**

N=	1014	100%
Favor more funding		
01		59%
Oppose more funding		
02		38%
Don't Know		
98		3%
Refused	99	*

«Q21D »

**00/05/10 9:39**  
**71: Q21E**  
**21e. Increasing tax credits and deductions for the cost of higher education (PROBE: Favor or oppose more funding)**  
**( 1/ 240)**

N=	1014	100%
Favor more funding		
01		76%
Oppose more funding		
02		21%
Don't Know		
98		3%
Refused	99	*

«Q21E »

**72: IQ22**  
**Q22. Now I am going to read you a list of education policies and practices that some suggest will improve public education. For each, please tell me if you favor such a policy or oppose such a policy.**  
**( 1/ 242)**

N=	1014	100%	
Continue	01	1014	100%

«IQ22 »

**00/05/10 17:16**  
**73: Q22A**  
**Rotation => Q22D**  
**22a. Provide vouchers to help parents send their children to private school (PROBE: Favor or oppose)**  
**( 1/ 244)**

N=	1014	100%
Favor	01	39%
Oppose	02	57%
Don't Know		
98		3%

Refused 99 \*  
 «Q22A »

**00/05/12 9:51**  
**74: Q22B1**  
**22b1. End the practice of promoting failing students to the next grade (PROBE: Favor or oppose)**  
**( 1/ 246)**

N=	1014	100%
Favor	01	63%
Oppose	02	35%
Don't Know		
98		2%
Refused	99	*

«Q22B1 »

**00/05/19 8:30**  
**75: Q22B2**  
**22B2. Require high school exit exams to ensure that students have basic skills (PROBE: Favor or oppose)**  
**( 1/ 248)**

N=	1014	100%
Favor	01	89%
Oppose	02	10%
Don't Know		
98		1%
Refused	99	*

«Q22B2 »

**00/05/10 9:40**  
**76: Q22C**  
**22c. Require students from the third to the eighth grade to take yearly tests in math and reading to evaluate school performance (PROBE: Favor or oppose)**  
**( 1/ 250)**

N=	1014	100%
Favor	01	85%
Oppose	02	14%
Don't Know		
98		1%
Refused	99	- -

«Q22C »

**00/05/10 9:41**  
**77: Q22D**  
**22d. Close failing schools and reopen them with new leadership (PROBE: Favor or oppose)**  
**( 1/ 252)**

N=	1014	100%
Favor	01	63%
Oppose	02	31%

Don't Know 98 6%  
 Refused 99 1%  
 «Q22D »

**78: IQ23**  
**Q23. Now I am going to read you a list of policies that some have suggested will help do a better job of preparing high school and college students for work. For each one, please tell me whether you favor such a policy or oppose such a policy.**  
**( 1/ 254)**

N=	1014	100%	
Continue	01	1014	100%

«IQ23 »

**00/05/10 9:41**  
**79: Q23A**  
**Rotation => Q23C**  
**23a. Require students to participate in internships at workplaces as part of their educational experience (PROBE: Favor or oppose)**  
**( 1/ 256)**

N=	1014	100%
Favor	01	87%
Oppose	02	12%
Don't Know		
98		1%
Refused	99	- -

«Q23A »

**00/05/10 9:41**  
**80: Q23B**  
**Q23B. Solicit and implement ideas from businesses to change the curriculum of education programs (PROBE: Favor or oppose)**  
**( 1/ 258)**

N=	1014	100%
Favor	01	76%
Oppose	02	21%
Don't Know		
98		3%
Refused	99	*

«Q23B »

00/05/10 9:41  
**81: Q23C**  
**23c. Require companies to provide more education and training themselves, rather than educational institutions. (PROBE: Favor or oppose)**  
**( 1/ 260)**  
 N= 1014 100%  
 Favor 01 65%  
 Oppose 02 32%  
 Don't Know 98 3%  
 Refused 99 \*
 «Q23C »

00/05/11 13:58  
**82: Q24**  
**Q24. Overall, which do you think is a more effective way of improving education: (CHOICES WILL ROTATE. READ TOP 2)**  
**Rotation => 2**  
**( 1/ 262)**  
 N= 1014 100%  
 Provide more money and resources to support the current system of education 01 43%  
 Implement new practices and policies in place of the current system of education without spending more money 02 50%  
 Neither, education is fine the way it is (Vol.) 03 2%  
 Don't Know (DO NOT READ) 98 5%  
 Refused (DO NOT READ) 99 \*  
 «Q24 »

00/05/11 14:05  
**83: Q25**  
**Q25. Who do you think should be primarily responsible for improving education? (CHOICES WILL ROTATE. READ TOP 4) (PROBE: "WHO SHOULD BE PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE")**  
**Rotation => 4**  
**( 1/ 264)**  
 N= 1014 100%  
 Federal government 01 18%  
 State government 02 19%  
 Local school districts/Local Government 03 29%  
 Parents 04 14%

Other SPECIFY (volunteered) 05 O \*  
 Federal & State (Volunteered) 06 2%  
 Federal & Local (volunteered) 07 1%  
 Federal & Parents (Volunteered) 08 1%  
 Federal & State & Local (Volunteered) 09 1%  
 Federal & Local & Parents (Volunteered) 10 \*
 State & Local (Volunteered) 11 1%  
 State & Parents (Volunteered) 12 2%  
 State & Local & Parents (Volunteered) 13 1%  
 Local & Parents (Volunteered) 14 5%  
 All 4 (Volunteered) 15 6%  
 Don't Know (DO NOT READ) 98 1%  
 Refused (DO NOT READ) 99 --  
 «Q25 »  
 «O\_Q25 »

00/05/10 16:28  
**84: ID1**  
**ID1. Now I am going to ask you some questions about yourself...**  
**( 1/ 266)**  
 N= 1014 100%  
 Continue 01 1014 100%  
 «ID1 »

00/05/10 16:28  
**85: D1**  
**=> D3A if QS1==2**  
**D1. I am going to read you a list of occupations, please tell me the one that most closely corresponds to the work you do for your primary employer.**  
**( 1/ 268)**  
 N= 955 100%  
 Professional 01 37%  
 Managerial 02 13%  
 Service 03 13%  
 Manufacturing 04 6%  
 Processing 05 1%  
 Technical 06 10%

Clerical and sales 0 7 10%  
 Agriculture 08 3%  
 Other 09 O 7%  
 Don't know 98 6 1%  
 Refused 99 0 --  
 «D1 »  
 «O\_D1 »

00/05/10 16:34  
**86: D2**  
**D2. Which best describes your current, primary employer? Is it a... (READ CHOICES 1-4)...**  
**( 1/ 270)**  
 N= 955 100%  
 Private, for profit business 01 56%  
 The government 02 19%  
 A non-profit organization 03 11%  
 Myself-I am self-employed 04 13%  
 Don't know 98 1%  
 Refused 99 --  
 «D2 »

00/05/10 16:29  
**87: D2A**  
**D2A. How many years in total have you been working full or part time? (ENTER 2 DIGITS)**  
**( 1/ 272)**  
**SE 01 80**  
 N= 955 100%  
 0-5 years 17%  
 6-10 years 15%  
 11-20 years 27%  
 21-30 years 23%  
 31-40 years 10%  
 41 or more years 3%  
 Don't know 98 \*  
 Refused 99 6%  
 Median (17.00)  
 Mean (18.03)  
 St. Deviation (11.87)  
 «D2A »

**00/05/10 17:17**  
**88: D3**  
**D3. How many people does the organization or company where you work employ? Is it (READ CHOICES 1-4)**  
**( 1/ 274)**

N=	955	100%
Less than 25 people		
01		28%
25-99 people		
02		17%
100-249 people		
03		12%
250 or more people		
04		43%
Don't know		
98		*
Refused	99	--

«D3 »

**00/05/10 16:15**  
**89: D3A**  
**D3A. Are you a member of a labor union or teacher's association?**  
**( 1/ 276)**

N=	1014	100%
No	01	82%
Labor Union		
02		14%
Teacher's Association		
03		5%
Don't Know		
98		--
Refused	99	*

«D3A »

**00/05/10 16:20**  
**90: D3B**  
**D3B. In politics today, do you consider yourself to be a Democrat, Republican, Independent or something else?**  
**( 1/ 278)**

N=	1014	100%
Democrat	01	34%
Republican		
02		23%
Independent		
03		27%
Other	04	11%
Don't Know		
98		3%
Refused	99	2%

«D3B »

**00/05/10 16:12**  
**91: D4**  
**D4. What was the last grade of school you completed?**

**( 1/ 280)**

N=	1014	100%
Grade school or less (0-8)		
01		1%
Some high school (9-11)		
02		5%
High school (12)		
03		30%
Some college (1-3 years)		
04		24%
College grad (4 years)		
05		22%
Post graduate (beyond 4 years)		
06		18%
Don't know		
98		*
Refused	99	*

«D4 »

**00/05/10 18:08**  
**92: D5**  
**D5. [Age]**  
**( 1/ 282)**

N=	1014	100%
18 -29		25%
30 -49		52%
50-64		18%
65 and over		3%
1900 OR EARLIER		
1900		--
Don't know		
1998		--
Refused		
1999		1%

«D5 »

**00/05/10 16:12**  
**94: D6A**  
**D6A [ Total Household Income]**  
**( 1/ 288)**

N=	1014	100%
Under \$10,000		
01 => D7		2%
\$10,000 to less than \$20,000		
02 => D7		6%
\$20,000 to less than \$30,000		
03 => D7		10%
\$30,000 to less than \$40,000		
04 => D7		11%
\$40,000 to less than \$50,000		
01		13%
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000		
02		22%
\$75,000 or more		
03		27%
Don't know		
98		4%

Refused 99 5%  
«D6B »

**00/05/10 16:12**  
**96: D7**  
**D7. Are you black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American or something else?**  
**( 1/ 292)**

N=	1014	100%
Black	01	11%
White	02	75%
Hispanic	03	6%
Asian	04	3%
Native American		
05		2%
Other-SPECIFY		
06 O		1%
Biracial	07	1%
Don't know		
98		*
Refused	99	2%

«D7 »  
«O\_D7 »

**00/05/10 9:17**  
**100: THANK**  
**Thank you for your time. That's all the questions I have.**  
**( 1/ 300)**

N=	1014	100%
Continue	01	1014 100%

«THANK »

**00/05/10 13:32**  
**101: SEX**  
=> END if Qs1>=3  
**(DO NOT ASK) RECORD GENDER BY OBSERVATION**  
**( 1/ 302)**

N=	1014	100%
Male	01	54%
Female	02	46%

«SEX »

**Notes:**  
Results reported reflect weighted percentages and unweighted sample sizes  
\*% Indicates less than .5% of responses in category  
— Indicates no responses in category  
Percentages of all responses to a question may add to more than 100% because of rounding.