



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on August 31, 2012

Gallup Poll Shows Americans Look Down on Public Schools

Among all types of U.S. educational institutions, Americans believe that public schools offer the worst quality of education, according to a new [Gallup poll](#) released Wednesday. In addition to public education, the survey examined four types of U.S. schooling: charter schools, independent private schools, parochial or church-related schools, and homeschooling.



In the nationwide survey, administered August 9-12, interviewers [told](#) participants: "I'm going to read a list of ways in which children are educated in the U.S. today. As I read each one, please indicate — based on what you know or have read and heard — how good an education each provides children — excellent, good, only fair, or poor. How about: public schools, parochial or church-related schools, independent private schools, charter schools, or homeschooling?"

A mere 32 percent of respondents believe public schools provide a "good" education, while only five percent said they deliver an "excellent" education. This combined 37 percent, who gave public schools an "excellent" or "good" education rating, was by far the lowest among all the types of schooling cited in Gallup's survey. "Public schools get a relatively poor rating," the poll stated, "even though the vast majority of American children are educated in public schools." CNSNews.com [reported](#) on the findings:

Americans ranked independent private schools highest, with 31 percent saying they provide an excellent education and 47 percent saying they provide a good education — for a combined 78 percent who say they provide an excellent or good education.

Parochial and church-related schools ranked second, with 21 percent saying they provide an excellent education and 48 percent saying they provide a good education — for a combined 69 percent who say they provide an excellent or good education.

Charter schools came in third, with 17 percent saying they provide an excellent education and 43 percent saying they provide a good education — for a combined 60 percent positive rating.

Home schooling took fourth place, with 13 percent saying the educational practice offers an excellent education and 33 percent asserting that it delivers just a good education — for a combined 46 percent who gave home schooling a favorable rating.

Moreover, a sizable 19 percent of respondents believe public schools offer students a "poor" education, while only two percent said the same about independent private schools, and only five percent said that about charter schools and parochial or church-related schools; 14 percent of Americans believe



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homeschooling delivers students a poor education.

“Americans are much more inclined to believe students in private, parochial, or charter schools receive a high-quality education than to say this about students in public schools and those who are home schooled,” Gallup reported. “Americans in general are not highly satisfied with the state of public schooling in the United States, although that is probably not a commentary on their own child’s school and schools in their local area because Americans have historically been quite satisfied with each of those.”

Quoted in the *Washington Post*’s blog “[The Answer Sheet](#),” author Diane Ravitch says the Gallup poll is part of “an unprecedented, well-funded campaign to demonize public schools and their teachers.” Furthermore, in Ravitch’s perspective, the poll shows that “the corporate reform movement has succeeded in increasing support for vouchers, but the American public continues to have a remarkably high opinion of the schools and teachers they know best despite the concerted efforts of the reformers to undermine those beliefs.”

Critics such as Ravitch seek to preserve the current government-monopolized system, which has imposed burdensome obstacles for private competition. While school vouchers — which offer government funds for disadvantaged students to attend private education institutions — are hardly an ideal solution, studies that examine school choice programs show that parents prefer sending their children to non-public schools.

In an in-depth [study](#) looking at parental satisfaction, the Government Accountability Office surveyed parents in Washington, D.C., New York, and Dayton, Ohio, and found that parents of voucher recipients were far more satisfied with their children’s education:

In all three cities in each year for which data are available, parents of voucher users were more likely than parents of control group students to give their child’s school an “A” on an A to F scales. In all three cities, in at least one study year, when asked about specific aspects of their children’s schools, the parents of voucher users were more likely than the parents of control groups students to say they were “very satisfied” with school safety, teaching, and school curricula. In all three years in New York, and in the second year in Dayton, the parents of voucher users were more likely to report being very satisfied with academic quality of their child’s school than were the parents of students who did not receive a voucher. Parents of voucher users were also more likely to be very satisfied with discipline in their child’s school than were the parents of control group students in all 3 years of the New York study and in the first year of the Dayton and Washington studies.

School vouchers are government-funded, making them hardly the perfect solution to reforming the education system. However, parental satisfaction, along with an exceptional boost in student achievement, of students in private schools — who previously attended public schools — shows why constitutionalists say that a government-monopolized education system has got to go.



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