What Voters and Teachers Think About Excellent Schools Now Coalition’s Priorities for Improving Education in Washington

HIGHLIGHTS FROM A STATEWIDE SURVEY

In late December 2012/early January 2013, in order to determine where the public stands on key education reform issues, Excellent Schools Now (ESN) polled 500 registered voters and 500 public school teachers in Washington.

The poll sought feedback on the general health of Washington’s education system and ESN’s 2013 policy priorities. Whether Washington teachers and voters agree or not, it’s important that we all work together to improve our schools and to ensure all students are better prepared ready for college, work and life.

KEY FINDINGS:

STUDENT AND SCHOOL DATA
Collect and report financial and student performance data in one easy-to-understand format for all audiences: parents, public, community and lawmakers.

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY
Collect and use data to determine which schools are not serving students well and to determine appropriate supports and consequences.

WA’s K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM
Washington’s K-12 public education system is headed in the right direction.

COLLEGE-AND-CAREER READINESS
U.S. public education results are where they need to be to help the economy grow and for American students to remain competitive in the global workplace.

- **VOTERS**
- **TEACHERS**
- **% AGREE**

**VOTERS**
- 69%
- 63%
- 44%
- 63%

**TEACHERS**
- 63%
- 47%
- 63%
- 60%

**Additional results found**
- VOTERS: 34% agree, 22% don’t know
- TEACHERS: 25% agree, 12% don’t know

**About the Sample Size:** Any sampling of opinions or attitudes is subject to a margin of error, which represents the difference between a sample of a given population and the total population (here, voters or teachers in Washington). For a sample size of 500, the margin of error is +/- 4.4%, at the 95% confidence level.

**About DHM Research:** Davis, Hibbitts & Midgall, Inc. has been providing opinion research and consultation throughout the Pacific Northwest and other regions for over three decades. The firm is non-partisan and independent and specializes in research projects to support public policy making.
COMMON LEARNING STANDARDS AND SCIENCE
• 68% of voters and 71% of teachers agree: Common learning standards (Common Core State Standards) in English and math will improve student learning and achievement.
• 81% of voters and 79% of teachers agree: Common learning standards allow for better comparability and monitoring between different states.
• 61% of voters and 63% of teachers agree: Common learning standards allows the state to pool resources with other states and save money on textbooks and testing.
• 72% of voters and 65% of teachers agree: An initial drop in test scores because of higher learning standards are worth it to ensure that Washington students are better prepared for college, career and the global workplace.
• 73% of voters and 61% of teachers agree: A greater focus on K-12 science (Next Generation Science Standards) will help Washington students secure family-wage jobs.

IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF WASHINGTON K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM
• 65% of voters and 48% of teachers agree: Schools should have greater autonomy and budget control for consistently performing above standard.
• 58% of voters and 54% of teachers agree: Washington should use common statewide measures of student growth as a factor in teacher and principal evaluation.
• 64% of voters and 14% of teachers agree: Washington should adopt a letter-grade ‘A-F’ system on reporting which schools are not serving students well.
• 59% of voters and 32% of teachers agree: Washington should offer a dashboard featuring a common set of indicators, like letter grades, for every school and district.

EARLY LEARNING
• 58% of voters and 76% of teachers agree: Implementation of full-day kindergarten for all the state’s most at-risk children.
• 60% of voters and 55% of teachers agree: Increase support of early childhood education and assistance program (ECEAP).

STATE TESTING GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS
Students should be required to pass an end-of-course exam in order to graduate:
• 91% of voters and 83% of teachers agree: Math
• 90% of voters and 81% of teachers agree: English
• 87% of voters and 76% of teachers agree: Science

K-12 EDUCATION FUNDING
• 45% of voters and 70% of teachers agree: Washington should increase funding for K-12, even if it requires an increase in taxes.
• 71% of voters and 66% of teachers agree: Washington has the people, resources and innovative spirit to create the best education system in the world, but it’s going to take tough decisions to make it a reality.