Public attitudes toward education in Ontario 2015
The 19th OISE Survey of Educational Issues

The OISE Survey of Educational Issues has been designed to track trends in public views over time on key dimensions of public opinion (satisfaction, quality of education, taxing and spending, equity, economic relevance), and to capture public reaction to emerging policy issues. The OISE Surveys began in 1978 and are the only regularly administered survey of public attitudes toward education in Canada. Only the U.S. Phi Delta Kappa Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools has a longer history. Since 2007, the OISE Survey has been distributed almost exclusively online. The URL for the Report on release is emailed to media and stakeholder groups. Survey Reports can be downloaded without charge here.

A UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATIONAL DEBATES
The unique contribution of the OISE Surveys is to situate current public views on educational issues in the context of historical opinion trends. The Surveys allow policy makers and other stakeholders to distinguish areas where opinions show long term stability from those where public views have moved in response to recent conditions. An example of the former is the quarter-century gridlock in public preferences on funding religious and other private schools. Political campaigns for a single public system, or alternatively, for extending funding to currently private schools have repeatedly failed to produce any consensus in this area. Conversely, public support for greater spending on schools has proven highly responsive to changing perceptions of how well or poorly schools are funded.

OISE Surveys have tracked public reaction to key policy initiatives. For example, the 2012 OISE Survey included a Policy Initiatives and a Student Achievement section examining opinions of the effectiveness of interventions in four areas: province-wide testing, class size in the early grades, universal junior kindergarten and lengthened teacher education. For areas where policies have been implemented, the time series reveal the extent to which this has impacted public views. The data show positive results for smaller class sizes in the early grades but little impact in the case of province-wide testing or, to date, introduction of universal junior kindergarten.

AN INDEPENDENT SURVEY
The OISE Survey is a non-partisan, independent research initiative of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. While the survey’s funding has varied over the years, OISE researchers have retained in all cases the final say on question wording, and required that results for all questions, including sponsored items, be publicly reported. Initially the OISE Survey was financed as part of the Ministry of Education’s Transfer Grant to OISE. Educational stakeholders from outside were invited to participate from 1992 usually in the form of sponsored questions. Major sponsors have included the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture and Communications, the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, the Council of Ontario Universities, TV Ontario, and the Education Quality and Accountability Office. In 2000, we partnered with the Ontario College of Teachers to conduct parallel surveys of the general public and a sample of OCT members. In 2007, we partnered with the Canadian Education Association to conduct a national CEA/OISE Survey of Educational Issues. The Ontario
Ministry of Education funded the 17th and 19th Surveys, and provided partial support for the 18th survey.

METHODS
The OISE Survey is a general population survey, designed to be representative of adult (18+) Ontario residents. From 1979 to 1982, the Survey was administered by Gallup Poll, with personal, in-home interviews. Since 1984, it has been administered by telephone with the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at York University. Survey results are based on responses of 750-1000 responses in all years. The Survey is typically in the field for 2-3 months in order to obtain the highest response rate possible and minimize bias due to self-selection.

RESEARCHERS
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CONSULTANTS
Dr. Doug Hart was Principal Investigator for the 18th OISE Survey and has been associated with the Survey since its inception in 1978.

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