PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS EDUCATION IN ONTARIO 2000

The 13th OISE/UT Survey

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THE 13TH OISE/UT SURVEY

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Overview of the 13th OISE/UT Survey of Educational Issues

The OISE/UT Survey of Educational Issues in Ontario has published regular readings of the views of the general public on major policy questions since 1978. It has also profiled the views of corporate executives on education issues over this period. The OISE/UT Survey is the longest running, publicly accessible opinion survey on education in Canada.

The 2000 survey addresses public satisfaction with schools, funding issues, governance, curricular re-organization, teacher education, access to post-secondary education, education and work relations, and adult learning and Internet access. Trends in public attitudes on many of these issues are also presented. For the first time, the 2000 survey also provides profiles of the attitudes of Ontario teachers.

Some of the key findings include:

- General satisfaction with schools are now at a low point although there is more satisfaction with teachers' performance.
- Support for increased funding of public education is now higher than ever before, and a small majority of Ontarians are now prepared to pay more taxes to fund education.
- There is clear support for continuing to fund both the public and the separate school systems but very little support for extending public support to other religious schools.
- Ontarians are strongly opposed to private businesses operating public schools but appear to be more open to the creation of private universities.
- While teachers strongly support their right to refuse extra-curricular duties, corporate executives are strongly opposed and the general public is split down the middle.
- There is strong support for early childhood education, with two-thirds of the public wanting universal schooling from age four.
- Teacher testing is strongly supported by the general public but strongly opposed by teachers themselves.
- The vast majority thinks university costs are too high, especially for youths from low-income families, but is less aware of the under-representation of aboriginals, blacks, and disabled people in higher education.
- The public now values college credentials in technical areas at least as much as university science degrees.
- A lifelong learning culture has arrived, with most Ontario adults wanting to take more continuing education courses and adults in general spending over 12 hours a week on informal learning activities.
- Use of the Internet for learning purposes appears to be growing very rapidly but there is a large digital divide excluding the socially disadvantaged.

The report offers an analysis of significant differences in attitudes by age, sex, education, ethnicity, occupational class, political party preference, and other social background variables. Comparable findings from other Ontario, Canadian, and international surveys are also cited wherever relevant.

All Canadians are encouraged to make use of this report to inform public debate about current educational policy choices. The more detailed findings are available on the Survey's website: www.oise.utoronto.ca/OISE-Survey.

Introduction

[The new grade 11 and 12 curriculum] completes the most comprehensive overhaul of education since Egerton Ryerson set up the place [in the 1871 Education Act which established universal and compulsory schooling in Ontario].

Janet Ecker, Minister of Education¹

The past four years have seen one of the largest educational reform agendas in Ontario's history. The aim of these reforms...has been to improve the accountability, effectiveness, and quality of Ontario's school system....We believe the strength of any public education system is built on public confidence. Members of the public need to know that all the partners...are working together to see that students are able to reach the highest standard possible.... Notwithstanding the many accomplishments we've seen in schools across Ontario...some unresolved conflicts continue to compromise our students' education. We're extremely concerned about the corrosive climate that persists among the Ministry of Education, the district school boards, and board staff, particularly teachers.

Education Improvement Commission²

[T]here is an emergency happening in our education system....There is no blood in the emergency in public education, so it doesn't make the front page, but for the students going without services and for parents fighting for their children it is just as important as those front page stories. The emergency has been caused, for the most part, by a lack of funding.

Annie Kidder, People for Education³

Rumour has it that education reform has been taking place in Ontario. Could have fooled me. All I have seen is a deliberate plan to create a crisis that has been implemented and characterized by disrespect for the teaching profession, a funding formula that is anti-quality in practice, and over-all reductions in funding.

Charles Pascal, former deputy minister of education⁴

"Rumour has it that education reform has been taking place in Ontario. Could have fooled me. All I have seen is a deliberate plan to create a crisis."

Virtually all opinion leaders agree that there have been an exceptional number of efforts to change education policy and practice in Ontario in the past five years. Provincial government initiatives have included:

- amalgamation of many school boards;
- elimination of the fifth year of high school;
- revised funding rules that establish more standard spending limits across school boards;
- introduction of a new elementary and high school curriculum;
- standardized tests in certain grades;
- legislated changes in teachers' working conditions; and
- introduction of legislation to permit private universities.

In addition, the government has received a major report calling for more resources for early childhood education, while the issue of funding for religion-based public schooling has been heightened by a United Nations Human Rights Commission report which found

When the two major agents of the public educational system are so visibly opposed, it is more relevant than ever to find out what the public itself thinks about educational policy and practice.

Ontario funding of only Catholic religious schools to be discriminatory. Our analysis of press reports during the 1999-2000 period indicates that the education subject receiving greatest media attention has been teachers' working conditions. These discussions have included government efforts to increase teachers' classroom time and compulsory extra-curricular duties and as well as to introduce competency tests for teachers, teacher federations' negative reactions to these efforts, and continuing campaigns by both the government and the federations to put their cases to the public. When the two major agents of the public educational system are so visibly opposed, it is more relevant than ever to find out what the public itself thinks about educational policy and practice.

The OISE/UT Survey of Educational Issues began in 1978 and has been conducted and published biennially since 1980.⁵ The basic purpose of the OISE/UT Survey has been from the beginning to provide regular representative readings of the public's views on pertinent policy issues in order to enhance public self-awareness and informed participation in educational policy-making. A comparable survey has been conducted annually in the United States since the 1960s.⁶

Both private corporations and governments have been accused of using "push polls" with biased questions to support prior agendas through the mass media.⁷ Yet less powerful people often hold policy opinions that are firmly grounded in their own experience and just as coherent and valid as elite views.⁸ Accurate readings of the views of all citizens are a necessary first step for democratic policy-making in any large, modern society. The OISE/UT Survey is unique in assessing the educational views of both the general public and one of the most powerful social groups, corporate executives. In addition, the current survey has been able to assess the views of a representative sample of teachers, as the U.S. Gallup Poll has done since the mid-1980s.⁹

In periods of uncertainty, accurate readings of public opinion can be especially helpful aids to democratic policy-making.¹⁰ Techniques for reading public opinion accurately and in direct interaction with policy making (such as electronic referendums and deliberative polling) are increasingly available.¹¹ But both the Ontario and Canadian publics in general remain poorly served, with widely accessible readings of public opinion on educational policy issues appearing irregularly with little attention to comparability between polls or over time. The OISE/UT Survey remains the only regular, publicly disseminated survey of public attitudes toward educational policy options in Canada.¹² Our published reports offer both trend data and current profiles of public support for educational policy options, drawing on both the prior OISE/UT Surveys and other available survey data.

Survey Design

The 2000 OISE/UT Survey involves a random sample of 1002 adults across Ontario, 18 years of age and older, who were interviewed by telephone in their residences between October 17, 2000 and December 19, 2000. The survey was administered by the Institute for Social Research, York University (ISR) and achieved a response rate of 60 percent.

As in all prior OISE/UT Surveys, a supplementary random sample of 402 corporate executives was drawn from the 2000 Financial Post *Directory of Directors*; 95 replies were received to a mailed questionnaire during the same October-December time period, an effective response rate of about 25 percent. This part of the survey was conducted by OISE/UT staff.

In 2000, the OISE/UT Survey included a comparable survey of Ontario teachers. The teacher survey was conducted with the co-operation of the newly established Ontario College of Teachers. This survey of a random sample of College registrants was also

conducted by ISR using a mailed questionnaire and telephone follow-up to reach 584 respondents. This represents a response rate of 66 percent.

A description of the general sample composition and guidelines for interpreting statistical differences appear in the Appendix. Question wordings are presented in most of the tables; the full questionnaire is available from the survey website: www.oise.utoronto.ca/OISE-Survey. Much of the distinctive value of the OISE/UT survey stems from the capacity to track opinion trends in an increasing number of issue areas, by periodically repeating the same questions. Responses to each question have been analyzed in relation to various social background variables. These include: age, sex, contact with schools, schooling, religion, mother tongue, ethnicity, family income, occupational class and geographical region. Only statistically significant differences on these factors are reported in the text, mainly in Section 10. More detailed analyses of the social background differences for each issue may be found on the survey website. The reported findings should not be generalized to specific localities beyond the regional analysis. Local groups who wish to replicate any part of the survey are encouraged to do so.

We are grateful for the research assistance of Milosh Raykov, Brenda Spencer, and Susan Stowe. Heather Berkeley has provided constructive editorial help. We would like to acknowledge the variety of Ontario interest group representatives and individual citizens who have made suggestions to us over the past two years about relevant issues for the survey. The survey is funded primarily through internal research grants from OISE/UT. The Ontario College of Teachers provided supplementary funding for the teacher survey. While all of this assistance has been very valuable, the authors remain solely responsible for the final design of items and for the interpretations of findings presented here.

The OISE/UT Survey is unique in assessing the educational views of both the general public and one of the most powerful social groups, corporate executives.

We invite comments and suggestions on this survey and suggestions for the next survey scheduled for 2002 from interested readers to:

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1.0

Satisfaction with Schools

Support for increased funding of public education is now higher than ever before, and a small majority of Ontarians are now prepared to pay more taxes to fund education.

General satisfaction with schools is now at a low point although there is more satisfaction with teachers' performance.

1.1 Public Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction has long been accepted as an important indicator of how well a firm is doing. But with the wholesale adoption of Total Quality Management, client approval has become a key performance indicator. With the spread of private sector management practices to public agencies and institutions, popular opinions about school performance have taken on increasing significance. High (or increasing) levels of satisfaction are taken as evidence of good performance.¹³ More importantly, low (or declining) levels of satisfaction are offered as a mandate for policy change. This tendency is most advanced in Alberta, where “business plans” for education incorporate poll data on public, parent, and student satisfaction with school performance.

Opinion research tracking public satisfaction with schools pre-dates the current Accountability Movement. The Canadian Gallup Poll has, since 1973, intermittently surveyed Canadians on satisfaction with children's education.¹⁴ The OISE/UT Survey of Educational Issues has tracked public satisfaction with Ontario schools, beginning in 1979. We have asked about satisfaction in nine polls over two decades. These historical series provide benchmarks from our own past as guides to interpreting current levels of satisfaction with schools.

1.1.1 The School System in General

Over the past two decades in Ontario, public satisfaction with the school system in general has followed a cyclical pattern (see Table 1.1). We again find ourselves at a low point in the cycle. As in 1998, 40 percent of respondents are satisfied with the school system in general; almost as many are dissatisfied.

In the initial years of the OISE surveys, we documented high and growing satisfaction with schools, peaking in 1982 when those satisfied outnumbered those dissatisfied by more than 2:1. In the four years that followed, satisfaction plummeted, bottoming out in 1986 when the ratio of those satisfied to those dissatisfied was 1:1. Between 1988 and 1996,

satisfaction levels again improved substantially but failed to reach the benchmark set in 1982. In 1996, the ratio of those satisfied to those dissatisfied was about 1.5:1. It has since declined to fewer than 1.2:1. In other words, those satisfied now (and since 1998) only narrowly outnumber those dissatisfied.

If the 1996 peak in satisfaction remained below that in 1982, the current dip (assuming we have, in fact, hit bottom) is shallower than in 1988. It is notable that satisfaction levels in 2000 show virtually no effect of the further two years of change and conflict in the system since 1998.

Public's Views	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Neither/not stated %	N
The school system in general				
1979	50	30	20	1084
1980	51	29	20	1050
1982	55	24	21	1050
1986	42	33	25	1042
1988	36	37	28	1011
1990	47	29	25	1032
1996	50	34	16	1000
1998	44	39	17	1007
2000	44	37	20	1002
The value obtained for taxpayers' money				
1980	40	40	20	1108
1982	40	39	21	1050
1996	40	39	21	1000
1998	36	43	21	1007
2000	39	36	25	1002
The job teachers are doing				
1998	62	23	15	1007
2000	63	21	16	1002

Table 1.1
"How satisfied are you with the current situation in Ontario elementary and high schools with regard to...?"¹

¹ Scale: very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, don't know.

1.1.2 Satisfaction with Value for Tax Money

In five surveys over the past two decades we have asked respondents about their satisfaction with the value obtained for tax money for schools. Responses in each case, including our current survey, reveal a public almost equally divided between those who are satisfied and those who are dissatisfied. In 2000, views on this issue are thus very similar to the division of opinion over satisfaction with the school system in general (see *Table 1.1*). Both those satisfied and those dissatisfied make up just under 40 percent of respondents. Views on value obtained for tax money are considerably more stable than satisfaction with the schools in general. There is little evidence of the cyclical pattern we find in general satisfaction ratings. Results for 1980, 1982, and for 1996, when we re-instituted the value for tax money question, are virtually identical. This is in contrast to the pattern for satisfaction with the school system in general where the upswing in satisfaction in 1996 did not regain the heights of the early 1980s. Moreover, after 1996, satisfaction with value for taxes declines only modestly and then recovers, while satisfaction with the schools in general drops more substantially and remains low.

1.1.3 Satisfaction with the Job Teachers are Doing

In 1998, for the first time, we asked respondents how satisfied they were with the job teachers were doing. The results showed that the public was much more satisfied with

teachers' performance than with the school system in general (see Table 1.1). Our findings in 2000 confirm this pattern. In both years, almost two-thirds indicate that they are satisfied with the job teachers are doing, while only 44 percent are satisfied with the school system in general.

1.2 Parents' Satisfaction with Schools

Whether we see parents as direct clients of the schools or clients at one remove (through their children), their level of satisfaction with schools carries particular significance. We typically assume parents have both a stronger interest in and a greater awareness of school issues than the public in general. But in which schools—those that their children attend, schools in their community, or schools in the province as a whole? The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll in the U.S. has regularly asked respondents to give letter grades (A, B, C, etc.) to public schools in the nation as a whole—"public schools" referring here to either the local community school, or, for parents, the school "your oldest child attends." Those with and without children in school hold similar views of schools nationally. Parents, however, are more likely to offer higher grades to their local schools. They are also more likely to offer higher grades to the school their oldest child attends than to local schools as a whole. In other words, parents' views of schools appear more distinct from those of non-parents—and more favourable—the more "local" the focus of the question. In 1996, we asked respondents about their satisfaction both with Ontario schools and with schools "in your community." As in the U.S., differences between parents with children in school and those without were greater for local schools, with parents offering more favourable views.¹⁵ In 2000, for the first time we asked parents about their satisfaction with the school their oldest child attends.

Table 1.2 compares the views of parents with those of the public as a whole regarding satisfaction with Ontario schools. It also shows how parents' satisfaction with the school their oldest child attends compares to their satisfaction with schools in Ontario overall. (Parents of elementary and high school students make up just over a quarter of our sample.) Two patterns are evident. First, parents are more likely than the public as a whole to report satisfaction with Ontario schools and less likely to be undecided. This pattern applies to satisfaction with the school system in general and satisfaction with value obtained for taxpayers' money. However, parents and the public as a whole hold similarly favourable views of teachers' performance.

Table 1.2
Satisfaction with Schools:
Views of Teachers, Parents and
the Public

	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Neither/not stated %	N
The school system in general				
Public's views	44	37	20	1002
Parents' views	55	37	8	271
Teachers' views	33	53	15	584
The value obtained for taxpayers' money				
Public's views	39	36	25	1002
Parents' views	50	37	13	271
Teachers' views	43	29	28	584
The job teachers are doing				
Public's views	63	21	16	1002
Parents' views	67	24	9	271
Teachers' views	84	6	10	584

Second, it is also evident from Table 1.3 that parents hold more positive views of the school their oldest child attends compared to their opinions of Ontario schools overall. Differences are very large in the case of satisfaction in general, where over 80 percent of parents hold favourable views of the school their child attends but just over half are similarly positive about Ontario schools as a whole. Differences are narrower, but in the same direction, in the case of satisfaction with value for taxes and with teachers' performance. Again, this result is consistent with earlier findings from the Phi Delta Kappa survey in the U.S.

Public's Views	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Neither/not stated %	N
The school (system) in general				
Ontario schools	55	37	8	271
School oldest child attends	82	12	6	271
The value obtained for taxpayers' (your tax) money				
Ontario schools	50	37	13	271
School oldest child attends	65	21	14	271
The job teachers are doing				
Ontario schools	67	24	9	271
School oldest child attends	77	14	9	271

Table 1.3
Comparison of Parents' Views of
Ontario Schools and the School
Attended by Their Oldest
School-Age Child¹

¹ Parents were asked "How satisfied are you with the elementary or high school your oldest school-age child attends when it comes to ...?"
Scale: very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, don't know.

1.3 Teachers' Satisfaction with Schools

Teachers are more dissatisfied with the school system in general than parents and the general public. They are no more satisfied with value obtained for tax money than these groups, but much more likely to be satisfied with the job teachers are doing (see Table 1.2). About half of teachers are dissatisfied with the school system in general compared to just over a third of parents and the general public. Views on value for tax money are broadly similar among the public, parents, and teachers. However, teachers are almost unanimous in approving the job teachers are doing while 20 to 25 percent of the public and parents have reservations.

In the U. S., the Phi Delta Kappa Poll of teachers' attitudes¹⁶ has revealed another instance of more positive ratings increasing with proximity. Teachers are somewhat more likely (75 versus 64 percent in 1999) to award A or B grades to the schools in which they teach than community schools in general. But they are much less likely (24 percent) to award similarly high grades to "public schools in the nation as a whole" than to community schools. In the U. S., teachers are typically more positive than the public in their views of community schools. Until recently, this was also the case for the nation's schools; however, in 2000, views of teachers and parents were virtually identical. The U. S. poll, since its inception in 1984, has never found a situation such as we now find in Ontario, where teachers' views of public schools are more negative than those of the public.¹⁷

2.0

Education Funding

There is clear support for continuing to fund both the public and the separate school systems but very little support for extending public support to other religious schools.

Ontarians are strongly opposed to private businesses operating public schools but appear to be more open to the creation of private universities.

People's support for government spending on education should be a basic consideration in government policy decisions. We will first consider the public's overall budget preferences for education by assessing the following:

- preferences for government spending on education and other services
- willingness to pay higher taxes for education

Then we will summarize public opinion on several aspects of funding for private schools that have recently been proposed in Ontario, namely:

- public funding of other religious and private schools as well as Catholic schools
- tax credits for sending children to private schools
- allowing private businesses to run public schools
- allowing private universities to receive public funding

2.1 Support for Education Funding

Trends in the Ontario public's views on the desired sized of government spending for all purposes, for education in general, and for specific types of education are summarized in **Table 2.1**. Since the mid-1990s, Ontarians along with other Canadians have expressed increasing support for spending on social programs including health and education rather than tax cuts or debt reduction.¹⁸ As **Table 2.1** shows, there is now majority public support in Ontario for increased government spending for all programs, the highest level of support the OISE/UT Survey has ever recorded. Support for increased government spending has doubled since 1996.

Support for government spending on education has always been greater than support for government spending in general. Nearly three-quarters of Ontarians now support increased spending for all levels of education. This is also the highest level of support for increased spending ever recorded in the OISE/UT Survey, with very significant increases since 1996.

Public's Views	Increase %	Keep up with inflation ¹ %	Decrease %	Neither/not stated %	N
Total spending for all purposes					
1984	26	42	29	3	1046
1986	25	40	28	6	1042
1988	38	45	15	3	1011
1990	25	43	29	3	1032
1992	28	41	28	4	1000
1994	22	35	38	6	1070
1996	27	41	26	6	1000
1998	42	41	11	6	1007
2000	53	33	8	7	1002
For all levels of education					
1979	35	43	17	5	1084
1980	36	50	10	4	1108
1982	35	53	11	2	1050
1984	46	40	11	3	1046
1986	52	34	11	3	1042
1988	61	32	5	1	1011
1990	50	38	10	2	1032
1992	54	35	9	2	1000
1994	54	31	12	4	1070
1996	48	34	14	4	1000
1998	61	30	5	4	1007
2000	73	20	3	5	1002
For elementary and high schools					
1975 ²	20	51	18	10	1294
1980	38	48	10	4	1108
1982	37	50	11	3	1050
1984	45	42	10	3	1046
1986	50	36	9	5	1042
1988	61	31	5	3	1011
1990	51	39	8	2	1032
1992	55	35	8	2	1000
1994	53	33	11	4	1070
1996	47	35	13	5	1000
1998	61	31	4	4	1007
2000	71	21	2	7	1002
For community college					
1975 ²³	25	45	15	14	1294
1980	37	47	10	6	1108
1982	38	48	11	4	1050
1984	48	38	10	4	1046
1986	48	35	10	7	1042
1988	55	35	6	4	1011
1990	52	35	9	4	1032
1992	55	34	8	3	1000
1994	50	33	10	8	1070
1996	45	33	13	9	1000
1998	55	29	4	11	1007
2000	59	26	2	13	1002

Table 2.1

“What would you like to see happen to government spending for the following purposes?”

¹ In 1979, the middle option read, "Maintain at about the same level"; in later surveys, this was replaced by, "Just keep up with inflation".

² Source: D. Auld, "Public Sector Awareness and Preferences in Ontario," *Canadian Tax Journal* 27(2), (March - April 1979), p. 178.

³ Community colleges and universities combined.

⁴ The wording of this item has varied over the years: adult training in reading and writing (1986), adult training in reading (1988-1992), teaching adults to read (1994-1998), adult literacy (2000).

Table 2.1 (cont'd)

“What would you like to see happen to government spending for the following purposes?”

Public's Views	Increase %	Keep up with inflation ¹ %	Decrease %	Neither/not stated %	N
For universities					
1975 ²³	25	45	15	14	1294
1980	31	49	12	8	1108
1982	34	49	14	4	1050
1984	44	41	11	4	1046
1986	49	34	10	7	1042
1988	57	33	6	4	1011
1990	52	35	9	4	1032
1992	54	36	8	3	1000
1994	50	32	12	7	1070
1996	47	32	13	8	1000
1998	57	28	6	9	1007
2000	65	23	4	9	1002
For job retraining					
1984	70	19	7	3	1046
1986	73	16	8	3	1042
1988	68	24	6	3	1011
1990	66	24	7	3	1032
1992	72	19	6	3	1000
1994	64	22	10	4	1070
1996	64	19	12	6	1000
1998	69	21	5	5	1007
2000	69	19	4	9	1002
For adult literacy ⁴					
1986	71	19	6	4	1042
1988	70	22	5	3	1011
1990	68	24	5	3	1032
1992	64	28	5	4	1000
1994	63	22	8	7	1070
1996	60	24	8	8	1000
1998	67	21	4	8	1007
2000	64	23	4	10	1002

Similar patterns are found for elementary and high schools, community colleges and universities, with all reaching historic highs in majority spending support in 2000. Support for increased spending on job retraining and adult literacy has previously been greater than for education spending in general but still remains strong.

Several empirical studies have documented substantial real reductions in education spending in Canada and Ontario over the past decade.¹⁹ In other countries that have experienced substantial reductions in public educational services, particularly the United Kingdom and New Zealand, public support for increased educational funding has subsequently become very strong.²⁰ Other opinion surveys have also recently found very strong majority support for increased education funding both in Canada and other advanced industrial countries.²¹ In stark contrast, an Ontario government poll in 2000 found over 60 percent support for the statement: “to improve education we don’t need to spend more, we need to use the money better”.²² This appears to be a clear instance of a

leading question and, particularly in light of the weight of contrary evidence, should probably be discounted. There is little doubt that the majority of Ontarians would now like to see increased real spending on public education at all levels.

This growing consensus is confirmed by a convergence in the views of social groups that have previously held very different views on education spending. Corporate executives and people over 55 have been strongly opposed to increased education funding in the past but have now become majority supporters along with other occupational groups and younger people. These patterns are examined in Section 10. As **Table 2.2** shows, parents with children in school are even more strongly supportive of increased education spending than the general public, with nearly 80 percent wanting increases. Teachers, as the most direct and immediate beneficiaries of education spending, are the strongest supporters, with nearly 90 percent wanting to see increased funding. While few would disagree with trying to spend education dollars wisely, there is now a consensus in virtually all major social groups that more dollars are needed.

Public's Views	Increase %	Keep up with inflation ¹ %	Decrease %	Neither/not stated %	N
Public's views	71	21	2	7	1002
Parents' views	78	17	2	4	271
Teachers' views	88	8	1	3	584

Table 2.2
Government Spending for
Elementary and High Schools:
Views of Teachers, Parents and
the Public

2.2 Paying Education Taxes

Paying more taxes to the government is not something that most people generally want to do. However, as Table 2.3 shows, the proportion of Ontarians who are willing to pay higher taxes to support education has very gradually increased since 1984. Finally, in 2000, we can say that there are significantly more people willing to pay more taxes for education than those who are opposed, 52 percent versus 45 percent. We have previously found that willingness to pay more taxes for local community schools is somewhat higher than general willingness, a difference similar to that between satisfaction with schools locally and province-wide.

Public's Views	Yes %	No %	Don't know/ Not stated %	N
1984 ²	45	47	8	753
1988	48	48	4	1011
1990	49	46	5	1032
1994	51	47	2	1070
1996	50	47	3	1000
1998	49	46	4	1007
2000	52	45	4	1002

Table 2.3
"Would you be willing to pay
more taxes to support
education in Ontario?"¹

¹ Up to 1998, the wording was "in support of education in Ontario."

² From the 1984 CEA poll of Canadian opinion on education; see George Flower, *Speaking Out*. (Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1984).

Our further analyses find a strong association over the past decade between general expressions of support for education funding and personal willingness to pay more education taxes. That is, people are prepared to "put their money where their mouth is." Comparable surveys in other countries suggest strong recent increases in personal willingness to pay more taxes for education as cutbacks in services have been directly experienced.²³ However, there is little evidence that the strong desire for increased education spending is strongly related to opposition to governments responsible for prior cost cutting in provinces like Ontario and Alberta.²⁴

As **Table 2.4** shows, parents and teachers are both less likely than the general public to oppose paying more taxes to support education. But even among these groups with the greatest direct interests in education there are still large minorities opposed to paying more taxes.

Table 2.4
Willingness to Pay More Taxes
to Support Education: Views of
Teachers, Parents and the Public

Public's Views	Yes %	No %	Don't know/ Not stated %	N
Public's views	52	45	4	1002
Parents' views	57	39	4	271
Teachers' views	54	33	13	584

2.3 Religious School Funding

Since public funding was extended to the final years of Catholic high school in 1984, the OISE/UT Survey has regularly assessed Ontarians' views on the full range of options for public, religious, and other private school funding. The major findings are summarized in **Table 2.5**. Support for extending public funding to all private schools has grown slightly since 1984 from under 20 percent to around 25 percent in more recent surveys. Support for extending public funding to all religious schools only appears to have declined from about 10 percent to around 5 percent during this period. So, total public support for funding private schools has remained around 30 percent since the mid-1980s. Support for the other extreme option of funding only non-religious public schools grew from around 20 percent to nearly 40 percent between 1984 and 1996 but has since declined to around 30 percent. Support for what is now the status quo option of funding public and Catholic schools declined from a high of about 50 percent in 1984 when full Catholic funding was implemented to around 35 percent in 1992 where it has remained since. There is clearly only minority support for extending public funding beyond Catholic schools. But advocates of funding only non-religious schools should recognize that public support for funding Catholic schools has retained the support of over 60 percent of Ontarians throughout this period and now stands at nearly 70 percent.

Table 2.5
"What schools do you think
should be given government
funding, provided that they
meet province-wide standards?"

	Public %	Public and Catholic as now %	Public Catholic and private religious %	Public Catholic and all private %	Don't know %	N
Public's Views						
1984	21	51	9	17	2	1046
1986	28	40	7	23	2	1042
1988	24	41	7	21	8	1011
1992	33	36	10	18	3	1000
1994	36	31	4	24	5	1052
1996	38	33	4	23	3	1000
1998	26	39	5	26	4	1007
2000	31	35	5	26	3	1002
Religion						
Protestant	36	33	5	23	3	380
Catholic	14	49	5	29	3	309
Other	36	19	10	33	3	113
No religion	49	28	3	18	2	168
Parents' views						
- Public system	42	35	3	19	2	167
- Catholic system	3	58	7	26	5	78
Teachers' views						
- Public system	49	35	7	6	4	339
- Catholic system	6	72	8	12	3	127

Table 2.5 also summarizes the main current differences by religious affiliation. Those with no religion are most likely to favour funding only non-religious schools, but approximately half of this group is willing to fund religious schools. Catholics are most likely to favour funding Catholic and public schools, and well over 80 percent of this large group would oppose funding only public schools. Even among Protestants, the other large religious grouping, about two-thirds support funding Catholic schools. Among parents, these views are somewhat more pronounced, with virtually no support by Catholic parents for funding only public schools. But nearly 60 percent of parents with children in the public schools also support continued funding of Catholic schools, either alone or with other private schools. Among teachers, the views are even more pronounced. Nearly three-quarters of Catholic teachers support funding Catholic and public schools and very few support funding only public schools. Public system teachers express the greatest support for funding only public schools. But even they are evenly split between funding only public schools, or funding Catholic schools alone or in combination with private schools. Any move toward funding only public schools would face very strong opposition from Catholics and only mixed support among those groups that might be expected to be the strongest supporters.

In November 1999, the United Nations Human Rights Committee ruled on the appeal of an Ontario Jewish parent with children in private school, finding that Ontario's policy of funding Catholic schools but not funding other private denominational schools is discriminatory under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Committee noted that Canada is obligated to eliminate this discrimination. The effective remedies to this ruling would be either to implement full public funding of all denominational schools in Ontario or to eliminate public funding of Catholic schools. The current OISE/UT Survey asks which of these two options Ontarians would choose. The findings are summarized in **Table 2.6**. The Ontario public is very evenly divided between support for funding all denominational schools and funding none, with very few expressing uncertainty about such a forced choice. Predictable differences occur among social groups. Majorities of Protestants and those of no religion would favour no religious funding, while majorities of Catholics and those of other minority religions would favour funding all religious groups. The views of parents and teachers are again more pronounced. About 70 percent of Catholic system parents would favour funding all religious schools while around 60 percent of public system parents would support no religious funding. Public system teachers would strongly favour no religious funding while Catholic system teachers would support extending funding to all religious schools.

	Fund schools for all religious groups %	Don't fund schools for any religious group %	Don't know/ Not stated %	N
Public's views	46	47	7	1002
Religion				
Protestant	40	54	7	379
Catholic	59	32	9	310
Other	52	45	4	114
No religion	30	64	6	168
Parents' views	48	46	6	271
- public system	35	59	7	167
- Catholic system	70	24	6	78
Teachers' views	26	57	17	584
- public system	16	70	14	339
- Catholic system	54	16	31	127

Table 2.6
"If you had to choose between publicly funding schools for all religious groups or not funding schools for any religious groups (including Catholics), which would you choose?"

In this potentially divisive context, it is important to understand the current constitutional and financial status of denominational schools in Canada. Canada's original constitution, the British North America Act of 1867, preserved the denominational school rights existing at that time, including Catholic schools in Ontario and Protestant schools in Quebec. The full funding of Catholic schools in Ontario in 1984 has been upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada as an extension of this existing right. Beyond the constitutionally protected separate (Catholic or Protestant) school systems, no other religious schools across Canada are funded as religious schools. As Johnston and Smart summarize:

Other religious schools which receive funding do so as a result of the jurisdiction's policy toward independent schools (which may or may not be denominational); no province funds non-Roman Catholic schools as *religious schools*. Moreover, and again generally, all religious schools that are funded as independent schools receive a fraction of the funding that public (or separate) schools receive. If Ontario were to respond to the UN Committee's report by extending funding to all denominational schools on the basis of their religious affiliation or mission, it would be doing something no other province currently does.²⁵

As we have seen, popular support for extending public funding to all religious schools in Ontario is minuscule. Support for extending funding to all private schools has been stuck at about 30 percent since 1984. On both constitutional and political grounds, for the foreseeable future, Ontario governments are probably best advised to reaffirm support for funding only public and Catholic schools.

2.4 Support for Privatization

While extension of direct public funding to private schools would be very unpopular in Ontario, several other initiatives to encourage the expansion of private interests in education have recently been proposed. The current OISE/UT Survey assesses three of these: tax credits for sending children to private schools; allowing private businesses to run public schools; and allowing private universities to receive public funding.

As Table 2.7 shows, the Ontario public is quite divided on providing tax credits to parents who choose to send their children to private schools, with slightly more opposition than support. Only those with minority religious affiliations show majority support for a tax credit tuition recovery scheme. The majority of public school teachers are clearly opposed. There is stronger support in the U. S. for tax credits among parents who choose private or church-related schools for their children, but in the U. S. such a provision includes many Catholic parents.²⁶

Table 2.7
"Parents who send their children to private religious schools or other private schools should get a tax credit for what it would cost to educate their child in a public school."

	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither/ Not stated %	N
Public's views	42	46	12	1002
Religion				
Protestant	39	53	8	381
Catholic	45	42	13	310
Other	52	34	14	113
No religion	35	49	16	168
Parents' views	45	45	10	271
- public system	42	48	10	167
- Catholic system	44	45	11	78
Teachers' views	30	61	9	584
- public system	23	68	9	339
- Catholic system	39	44	17	127

Another funding option that is being considered by education authorities across Canada is contracting out school services to private firms. In the U. S., private profit-making businesses are now operating schools in several cities. In Canada, charter schools run by private enterprises have been approved in Alberta.²⁷ A few years ago, the Ontario Minister of Education expressed interest in letting school boards enter private-sector partnerships to deliver early childhood education.²⁸ In the past two surveys, we asked about public support for allowing private businesses to operate public schools. The results appear in Table 2.8.

	Favour %	Oppose %	Neither/ Not stated %	N
Public's views				
1998	22	59	18	1007
2000	23	55	22	1002
Parents' views	24	52	24	271
Teachers' views	9	79	12	584

Table 2.8
"Would you favour or oppose, and how strongly, allowing private profit-making businesses to operate public schools in your community?"

There is widespread opposition to allowing private profit-making businesses to operate public schools in Ontario. In both 1998 and 2000, small majorities in nearly all social groups express opposition while less than a quarter indicate support and approximately 20 percent are uncertain. Teachers, the vast majority of whom are in either the public or Catholic system, express the strongest opposition. Only corporate executives are more likely to express support (48 percent) than opposition (42 percent). U. S. surveys have similarly found only a third of respondents support private businesses running entire schools.²⁹

In the fall of 2000, the Ontario government introduced legislation to allow private universities, including for-profit and not-for-profit institutions, to be established. The government argues that these new universities will expand student choice and the competition will make existing universities more responsive to student demand, while opposition critics claim that the government should instead restore funding to the public university system to improve its quality.³⁰ In both the 1996 and 2000 surveys, we have asked the public about their support for private universities. In 1996, about 60 percent of the Ontario public supported allowing private universities to be established and a bare majority supported their establishment even if tuition fees were much higher than those for publicly-funded universities. But the majority opposed establishing private universities if they were eligible for public funding for student aid and research. In the wake of the fall 2000 legislation, the most relevant issue became whether new private universities should be eligible for limited public aid for student funding and research. The results for this question appear in Table 2.9.

	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither/ Not stated %	N
Public's views				
1996 ¹	30	59	11	1007
2000	52	38	10	1002

Table 2.9
"Private universities in Ontario should be eligible for public funding for student aid and research."

While about 60 percent of Ontarians expressed opposition to giving public funding for student aid and research purposes to yet to be established private universities in 1996, by the fall of 2000 public opposition had declined significantly. In fact, a small majority now indicate a willingness to allow public funds to be provided to support student aid and research at private universities. Support is strongest among corporate executives (60 percent) but there does not appear to be strong opposition in any major social group. It should be emphasized here that private universities have still not begun any extensive operation in Ontario. We will continue to assess public support once such institutions are operational.

¹ In 1996, respondents were asked first whether Ontario should allow private universities. Those that said yes were then asked if private universities should be allowed "...even if they are eligible for public funding for student aid and research." The figure in the "agree" column for 1996 is the % who said yes. The figure in the disagree column is the % who said no to the initial question and/or no to second question with the qualification regarding public funding.

3.0

Governing Elementary and Secondary Schools

While teachers strongly support their right to refuse extra-curricular duties, corporate executives are strongly opposed and the general public is split down the middle.

Our 1998 survey was conducted during a three-week province wide strike in September 1998 over Bill 160 and the consequences of the new provincial funding formula for negotiations with local district boards. Bill 160 removed taxing authority from local boards while at the same time legislating aspects of teachers' working conditions which had previously been matters of negotiation between the teachers' federations and local boards. The continuing tensions among the provincial government, the district boards, and the teachers' federations have as much to do with how decisions are reached and by whom, as with the content of those decisions. Our 2000 survey took place against a backdrop of acrimonious contract negotiations. The provincial government working at a distance attempted to contain negotiations. District boards that spent above the provincial funding formula were threatened with legal action and fines. In the case of the federations, the province armed itself with legislation which, if proclaimed, would outlaw work to rule and boycotts of extra-curricular activities by teachers. The federations, on the other hand, sought to evade provincial strictures on working conditions through local negotiations and workload formulas. While only one district strike occurred over the course of the survey, work to rule was implemented or threatened in a number of districts. Strike votes were taken but also the occasional settlement was reached. As the survey was ending, the Minister of Education returned to a little heard theme, school-parent councils, by imposing a new regulation making it mandatory for principals to consult their school-parent councils on a specified set of issues including selection of principals, codes of conduct, implementation of new education initiatives, and action plans based on school results on province-wide tests.³¹

3.1 Provincial Control, Public Influence, and School Councils

3.1.1 Views of the Public and Parents on Governance

In 1998, we asked respondents for the first time about whether the province had too little, too much, or about the right amount of control over how schools operate. This issue was, and remains, at the core of the ongoing struggles over governance within the school

system. In 1998, just under half thought the province had too much control. Those holding this view outnumbered respondents who thought the province had too little control by more than 2:1. In 2000, we find virtually the same pattern (see **Table 3.1**). Two further years of debate, labour action, and political maneuvering have failed to produce a clear consensus on governance issues. Opposition to centralization is widespread but does not represent a majority view except, narrowly, among parents. While a somewhat smaller group than in 1998, well over a third of the public (including almost 40 percent of parents) either supports the status quo or would actually favour more centralization.

	About the right				N
	Too little %	amount %	Too much %	Can't say %	
Public's views					
1998	20	23	48	10	1007
2000	16	21	48	14	1002
Parents' views	17	22	53	9	271
Teachers' views	3	10	85	2	584

Table 3.1
"Do you think that the provincial government now has, overall, too little, about the right amount or too much control over how schools operate?"

While opinion remains divided over provincial versus local control, a large majority now supports greater public input into how schools are run (see **Table 3.2**). In our 1990 survey, we adopted a question on public say in schools that the Canadian Educational Association (CEA) had used nationally in 1979 and 1984 polls.³² We repeated the item in three subsequent OISE/UT surveys. Our own results and those of the CEA in Ontario provide a record, over the past two decades, of growing support for greater public say in how schools are run. There is now a strong consensus for greater public input. What seems to be missing, however, is similar consensus on the extent to which input means having a share in decisions and on the form(s) effective public input might take.

	Don't know/ not stated				N
	Too much %	Enough say %	Too little %		
Public's views					
1979 ¹	6	41	49	5	758
1984 ¹	6	32	53	10	753
1990	6	29	60	5	1032
1994	5	25	64	6	1070
1996	7	23	64	6	1000
2000	7	16	71	7	1002
Parents' views	5	18	73	5	271
Teachers' views	14	50	33	4	584

Table 3.2
"Do you feel the public has, overall, too little, about the right amount, or too much control over how schools are run?"

¹ From 1979 and 1984 Canadian Education Association (CEA) polls of Canadian opinion on education: CEA Task Force on Public Involvement in Educational Decisions Toronto: CEA, 1979; G.E. Flower Speaking Out: The 1984 CEA Poll of Canadian Opinion on Education Toronto: CEA, 1984.

The school-parent council might appear as the obvious vehicle for greater public input. However, the councils are assigned a purely advisory role—a fact emphasized by the Minister at the same time that the government made consultation with school councils mandatory for principals. While this restriction has been subject to criticism, our surveys in 1994, 1996, and 1998 all revealed a pervasive cautionary attitude about transferring authority from either district boards or school administration to school-parent councils. In 1998, opinion was sharply divided over whether school-parent councils should have the power to hire and fire school principals; though those opposed outnumbered supporters.

Also at issue is the willingness of parents and other members of the public to take on the responsibilities of becoming council members. Currently about 40 percent of the public and just over half of parents indicate a willingness to serve on school-parent councils (see Table 3.3). (Membership is not restricted to parents.) When we first asked, in 1994, about personal willingness to serve on school-parent councils, we found almost half would “probably” or “definitely” agree if asked to serve. In 1996, over half indicated a willingness to serve, including two-thirds of parents. These rates are considerably higher than those the CEA found in 1979 when it asked similar questions about willingness to serve on school advisory committees or home and school committees. Personal willingness to take on the responsibilities of committee membership had grown in tandem with support for greater public input into how schools are run. Our current results, however, suggest a partial reversal of this trend. While support for more public say in education has increased since the mid-1990s, willingness to serve on a school-parent council has declined, even among parents.

Table 3.3

“If asked today, would you or would you not serve on a local school parent council?”

	Definitely %	Probably %	Probably not %	Definitely not %	Not stated %	N
Public's views						
1994	17	32	28	22	2	1070
1996	18	34	23	21	3	1000
2000	12	28	27	29	4	1002
Parents' views	18	35	24	17	5	271
Teachers' views	19	33	24	18	6	584

3.1.2 Teachers' Views on Governance

The overwhelming majority of teachers think that the provincial government has too much control over how schools operate, compared to about half of the general public and parents (see Table 3.1). While teachers are clearly alienated by the centralization of power at the provincial level, there is little support for greater popular influence. Only a third of teachers think the public has too little say in how schools are run while over 70 percent of parents and the public hold this view (see Table 3.2). Teachers are, however, as willing as parents to serve on school parent councils. Just over half of each group indicates that they would probably or definitely serve if asked (see Table 3.3).³³

3.2 Labour Relations: The Right to Strike and Work to Rule

3.2.1 Views of the Public and Parents on Labour Relations

In 2000, the public, and parents in particular, were sharply divided over both teachers' right to strike and their right to refuse extra-curricular activities (see Tables 3.4 and 3.5). On both questions, few respondents were undecided. The general public and parents divided almost equally on the right to strike. Parents were also equally divided on the right to refuse extra-curricular activities. Among the public as a whole, the balance is somewhat more favourable to the right to refuse extra-curricular activities.

During the 1997 province-wide teachers' strike, poll results contradicted a prevalent expectation that if teachers actually resort to the strike weapon, this reduces popular support for teachers' right to strike. Public support for teachers' right to strike actually appeared to increase when the three-week strike began, in spite of government charges that the strike was illegal.³⁴ Public reaction in 1998 was undoubtedly influenced by the specific circumstances of the strike. Yet it now appears that support for the right to strike may have been growing since 1994, increasing from 36 to 47 percent (see Table 3.4). While this is good news for the teachers' federations, the news is less reassuring when it comes to work to rule.

Work to rule, and particularly withdrawal from extra-curricular activities, has been used effectively by the federations at the local level. While the provincial government has passed legislation to make extra-curricular activities mandatory, it has not yet brought this provision into effect. While work to rule is generally seen as less costly of public support than strike action, our 2000 survey indicates that the public is as divided on this issue as on the right to strike (see Table 3.5).

A recent poll sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Education suggests that attitudes have “hardened” on the issue.³⁵ In the Ministry survey respondents were presented with four questions. The first asked whether they agreed or disagreed that extra-curricular activities should be voluntary. A majority (57 percent) agreed with the voluntary approach; a sizeable minority (41 percent) disagreed. Respondents were next asked two questions which might be viewed as providing inducements for taking the opposite view. They were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that “Some extra-curricular activities should be required of each teacher.” Two-thirds agreed to this “sharing the load” statement. They were next asked whether “The loss of extra-curricular activities will adversely affect education of children.” This time an overwhelming majority (83 percent) agreed. Finally, respondents were asked whether “work to rule” was not acceptable or acceptable. On this item, respondents split almost equally: 43 to 42 percent. Thus after two questions which might be seen as inducements to disagree to work-to-rule, opinion is still equally divided.

	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither/ Not stated %	N
Public's views				
1980	35	56	9	1108
1982	29	63	9	1050
1984	30	55	15	1046
1986	34	54	12	1042
1988	33	58	9	1011
1990	33	58	9	1032
1992	34	56	10	1000
1994	36	57	7	1070
1996	42	52	6	1000
2000	47	47	6	1002
Parents' views	46	48	6	271
Teachers' views	81	10	9	584

Table 3.4

"Teachers in Ontario should have the legal right to strike."

	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither/ Not stated %	N
Public's views	49	41	9	1002
Parents' views	46	46	8	271
Teachers' views	86	8	6	584

Table 3.5

"Teachers in Ontario should have the right to refuse extra-curricular activities such as managing clubs and coaching sports."

3.2.2 Teachers' Views on Labour Relations

While public support for teachers' right to strike has increased sharply over the past six years of labour unrest, the public remains divided on the issue. Among teachers, however, 80 percent favour the right to strike (see Table 3.4).

Views on teachers' right to refuse extra-curricular activities are similar. The public is split down the middle on this issue, but the overwhelming majority of teachers support the right to work to rule (see Table 3.5).

4.0

Re-Organizing Schools

There is strong support for early childhood education, with two-thirds of the public wanting universal schooling from age four.

4.1 Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education (ECE) has received very widespread support among educators as one of the most effective means of raising student achievement levels, in large part by narrowing the gap between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who are from more advantaged backgrounds. In Ontario, the “Mustard” Report³⁶ represented a landmark in advocacy for early childhood education. More recently, the final report of the Education Improvement Commission has called on the government to make “a bold investment in early childhood education programs which will pay huge dividends in the future.”³⁷ The Commission made this the first “cornerstone” for improving student achievement, recommending a stronger commitment to “affordable, high-quality child care programs and to full-time junior and senior kindergarten.” Finally, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth has begun to yield measurable benefits from early childhood education.³⁸ Yet effective action has been long in coming, from either the provincial or federal governments.

In 2000, respondents were asked whether it would be a good or a bad thing if all children began school at age 4. Almost two-thirds indicate that universal schooling from age 4 would be a good thing. Parents offer the same level of support as the general public (see Table 4.1). The public and parents in particular are broadly supportive of an early school start. But there is some evidence that ECE may not be a strong public priority. As noted below, public opinion is divided over whether an earlier starting age would have any important effect on student achievement. Moreover, results from our 1994 and 1996 surveys raise questions about the fiscal priority the public assigns to ECE. In 1994, while half of respondents were willing to pay higher education taxes in general, over three-quarters rejected higher taxes specifically for the purpose of funding universal junior kindergarten. In 1996, the public divided almost equally on the issue of whether parents should be charged fees for junior kindergarten, again indicating relatively weak support for public funding.³⁹

	Very good %	Somewhat good %	Somewhat bad %	Very bad %	Not stated %	N
Public's views	27	35	23	14	2	1002
Parents' views	31	31	22	14	2	271
Teachers' views	30	37	16	10	8	584

Teachers are also supportive of starting formal schooling at age 4, but no more so than the general public (see Table 4.2). Only a third of teachers rate early childhood education as a “very good” thing. As we show in section, 4.3, for teachers the priority is smaller class sizes in the early grades of elementary school rather than an earlier school starting age.

	Very good %	Somewhat good %	Somewhat bad %	Very bad %	Not stated %	N
Public's views	8	28	33	25	6	1002
Parents' views	11	31	28	26	5	271
Teachers' views	2	13	31	43	12	584

Table 4.1

“Would it be a very good thing, a somewhat good thing, a somewhat bad thing or a very bad thing: All children begin school at age 4?”

Table 4.2

“Would it be a very good thing, a somewhat good thing, a somewhat bad thing or a very bad thing: A large number of parents teach their children at home with supervision from their local school board rather than send them to school?”

4.2 Home Schooling

Home schooling has been defined as “instruction and learning that takes place at home, ‘in a family setting with a parent acting as teacher or supervisor of the activity, and with one or more pupils who are members of the same family and who are doing kindergarten to 12 work’.”⁴⁰ Home schooling, which is in some ways an alternative to private and public schooling, has gained increasing attention as an option. Actual participation rates, while increasing quite rapidly, remain quite low. In 1996/97, the registered home schooling population represented one half of a percent of the total Canadian elementary/secondary school enrolment.⁴¹ However, many home schoolers do not register and advocacy groups claim at least 1 percent of total enrolment. While home schoolers have created their own advocacy and support organizations, teachers associations have generally been critical of the movement.

In 2000, for the first time, we asked respondents if it would be a good thing or a bad thing if a large number of parents were to teach their children at home, under supervision of their local school board, rather than send them to school. Almost 60 percent of the general public and over half of parents indicated that home schooling on a large scale would be a bad thing (see Table 4.2). Our Ontario results are similar to those of the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll in the U.S. In 1997, 57 percent of American respondents indicated that the “movement toward home schooling” was a “bad thing for the nation.”⁴² However, in 1985 when the question was first asked, the percentage was 73 percent. Thus, public resistance to home schooling has declined in a period when the number of children being home schooled has increased.

Ontario teachers are more likely to be strongly opposed to home schooling than the public or parents (see Table 4.2). Almost three-quarters think that it would be a bad thing for large numbers of parents to adopt this alternative.⁴³

4.3 Improving Student Achievement at the Elementary Level

In 1998, for the first time, we asked respondents to rate a selection of possible educational changes in terms of how much each would improve student achievement in elementary

schools. The results showed that a small number of possible changes were almost universally regarded as likely to be highly effective. A second, larger group of options attracted high ratings from about half of respondents. A few changes received less support. Results in 2000, using a slightly modified version of the question, are similar.

4.3.1 A Comparison of Views in 1998 and 2000

In both 1998 and 2000, three factors are almost universally regarded as likely to have the most impact on student achievement. These are getting parents more involved in reading to their children and helping with homework, devoting more class time to teaching basic skills, and providing more special education teachers for students with learning difficulties (see Table 4.3 and 4.4). In 2000, reducing class size in the early grades is more widely viewed as effective than in 1998. Among parents, class size achieves similar ratings to spending more time on basics and providing more special education teachers. Class size is, in fact, the only listed factor where parents' views are distinct from the public as a whole: 77 percent of parents compared to 68 percent of the public as a whole expect reducing class size will have a substantial impact on student achievement.

In contrast, ratings of the impact of computers on improving student achievement have declined since 1998; however, this may in part reflect a change in the survey's wording such that the question in 2000 read "putting *more* computers in every classroom." More computers in the classroom now appears as one of a number of middle-range factors, including getting parents more involved in school councils, implementing province-wide tests, and starting all children in junior kindergarten. All these options are viewed by about half of the respondents (including about half of parents) as likely to make a great deal or quite a lot of difference.

Table 4.3

"There are many ideas for how we can help Ontario elementary students do better at school. How much do you think each of the following would improve student achievement?"

Public's views	Great deal/ Quite a lot	
	1998 %	2000 %
Getting parents more involved in reading to their children and helping with homework.	83	84
Devoting more class time to teaching basic skills like language and mathematics.	82	81
Providing more special education teachers to help students with learning difficulties.	76	79
Reducing class sizes in the first few years of elementary school.	58	68
Putting (more) computers in every classroom. ¹	57	48
Getting parents more involved in school councils and the running of the school.	51	50
Using province-wide tests to measure how students are doing.	50	48
Starting all children in junior kindergarten.	46	48
Increasing the amount of time students spend in school each year.	40	33
Spending more money per student.	29	43
Providing more training for teachers.	56	.
Lengthening teacher education programs for teachers in training.	.	49
Increasing the amount of practice teaching that teachers in training do before getting their teaching certificate.	.	59
Improving the quality of professional learning programs for experienced teachers.	.	57
N	1007	1002

¹ In 2000, wording of the question was changed to "...putting more computers..."

Between 1998 and 2000, the proportion of respondents who think that spending more money per student would make a substantial difference to achievement increased from 29 to 43 percent. In 2000, about half of parents hold this view. And only a third think that extending the time students spend in school would make much difference. There is even less support for this policy option than two years ago.

As we noted in our 1998 report, public perceptions of what would make for more effective schools offer a mixed message to participants in current educational debates. The public clearly sees the role of parents as key in helping students to succeed.⁴⁴ However, two school changes (more time on basics, more special education) receive essentially the same high ratings. (Smaller class size also receives high ratings from parents.) Thus there is a widespread belief in the effectiveness of school-based strategies. But several strategies favoured in current educational debates receive lukewarm support: more computers in classrooms, province-wide testing, early childhood education. However, smaller class size is now attracting greater attention than two years ago, as a means of improving student achievement. This is also the case for spending more money per student, though spending remains near the bottom of the list in terms of perceived effectiveness.

4.3.2 Teachers' Views on Improving Student Achievement in Elementary School

Teachers, parents, and the public as a whole share broadly similar views on what would be most effective in improving student achievement in elementary schools (see Table 4.4). Teachers are virtually unanimous in thinking that more parental involvement in reading to children and helping with homework would make a substantial difference to student success. Devoting more time to classroom instruction and providing more special education teachers are also broadly supported. However, teachers are more likely than the public or parents to see class size in the early grades as critically important. Smaller class size ranks in importance with greater parental involvement in children's education. In contrast, teachers are much less likely than the general public to think that using province-wide tests will improve student achievement, and somewhat less likely to put their faith in computers, parent involvement in school councils, or increasing the time students spend in school.

	Great deal/ Quite a lot		
	Public %	Parents %	Teachers %
Getting parents more involved in reading to their children and helping with homework.	84	84	91
Devoting more class time to teaching basic skills like language and mathematics.	81	81	67
Providing more special education teachers to help students with learning difficulties.	79	81	84
Reducing class sizes in the first few years of elementary school.	68	77	92
Putting computers in every classroom.	48	52	36
Getting parents more involved in school councils and the running of the school.	50	49	25
Using province-wide tests to measure how students are doing.	48	46	12
Starting all children in junior kindergarten.	48	49	52
Increasing the amount of time students spend in school each year.	33	34	7
Spending more money per student.	43	49	69
Lengthening teacher education programs for teachers in training.	49	52	19
Increasing the amount of practice teaching that teachers in training do before getting their teaching certificate.	59	59	48
Improving the quality of professional learning programs for experienced teachers.	57	60	55
N	1002	271	584

Table 4.4
“What would improve student achievement in Ontario Elementary Schools: Views of Parents and Teachers”

4.3.3 The Impact of Teacher Education

In 1998, our list of options for improving student achievement at the elementary level included providing more training to teachers. Teacher training was rated as likely to have a great deal or quite a lot of impact on achievement by 56 percent of respondents. In 2000, we included a more detailed set of policy options on teacher preparation: lengthening teacher education programs, increasing the amount of practice teaching in teacher education, and improving the quality of professional development programs available to experienced teachers.

In general, responses to our three detailed options confirm the middle rank status of teacher education as a means of improving student achievement (see **Table 4.3 and 4.4**). There are, however, notable differences in public reaction to the different options. Increasing the amount of practice teaching is more often seen as effective than simply lengthening teacher education programs.⁴⁵ Improving professional development programs for experienced practicing teachers is also more highly rated than simply lengthening initial teacher education.

While about half of the public (including parents) think lengthening teacher education programs would have a great deal or quite a lot of impact on student achievement, only one in five teachers hold this view. However, views among the public, parents, and teachers are more similar on the positive effects of increasing the amount of practice teaching in teacher training programs, and virtually identical on the benefits of improving the quality of professional learning programs for established teachers.

Changes in teacher education are not highly rated as a means of improving student achievement because, as noted earlier, teacher performance is generally not a main source of dissatisfaction with schools. Moreover, a recent Angus Reid survey suggests that the public impressions of teacher preparation have become more positive. Between 1993 and 1999, the proportion of Ontarians who thought teachers were adequately trained increased from 43 to 59 percent.⁴⁶

4.4 Social Promotion and Streaming

Both social promotion and streaming are practices which involve choices about what to do about differences in the academic performance of students. “Social promotion” allows students who have not completely mastered material at one grade level to proceed to the next so as to stay with their age group. Streaming essentially segregates students by academic performance, although such policies are typically justified in terms of appropriateness for assumed destinations (university, college, the workforce) and divergent student interests and aptitudes. The academically strongest students end up in the high status stream leading to university.

Social promotion and streaming thus represent divergent approaches to differences in academic performance. Social promotion accommodates differences to preserve age-group cohorts in a way which tends to produce mixed performance groupings. Streaming accommodates differences by segregating students into groups of more similar performance. Recent policy changes have laid considerable stress on making standards explicit and testing outcomes. Teachers continue to make final judgments about promoting students from grade to grade; however, the tenor of current policies is at odds with “social promotion.” In the case of streaming, the Conservative government reversed the destreaming of grade 9 by the former NDP government. It introduced a new streaming policy with some built-in mechanisms for later student transfers among streams. The OISE/UT survey has tracked attitudes toward streaming since 1980. In the current survey, for the first time, we also asked about social promotion.

Social promotion receives little support from the public as a whole or from parents in particular. Approximately two-thirds disagree with passing students who haven't quite mastered the material in order to keep them with their classmates (see **Table 4.5**). This question originated in a recent poll sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, and was asked only with regard to high school students. The Ministry survey found that, excluding those not stating an opinion, 79 percent disagree with social promotion for high school students; 54 percent strongly disagree.⁴⁷ (If we exclude those without a definite opinion from the OISE/UT survey, 68 percent disagree with social promotion, 39 percent strongly.)

	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither/ Not stated %	N
Public's views	25	66	8	1002
Parents' views	29	64	6	271
Teachers' views	26	65	9	584

Table 4.5
“Even if they haven’t quite mastered the materials, it is important for the social development of students that they be passed from grade to grade along with their classmates.”

In 1980, well over half of the public supported early streaming—that is, at grade 9 or 10 (see **Table 4.6**). By 1998, just over a third favoured early streaming. However, our 2000 survey reveals some reversal of this trend. The general public is now almost evenly divided between those who favour streaming at grade 11 or later and others who support earlier streaming. Parents are similarly divided.

Since the Hall-Dennis Report became the touchstone of educational reform in the late sixties and the seventies, teachers have frequently been seen as more oriented to “soft” outcomes such as higher student self-esteem than the “hard” outcomes of literacy and subject mastery. Yet views expressed in the teachers’ survey offer no hint of this. Teachers are as opposed as parents and the public to social promotion.⁴⁸ Moreover, a clear majority, in contrast to either the public or parents, support early streaming of students at or before grade 10. On this issue, teachers and the government of the day appear to find common ground.

	Not at all %	Grade 12 or 13 %	Grade 11 %	Grade 10 %	Grade 9 or earlier %	Don't know/ not stated %	N
Public's Views							
1980	5	12	18	21	39	5	1108
1982	7	19	16	17	36	5	1050
1988	10	16	17	20	30	8	1011
1990	13	15	15	20	32	5	1032
1992	21	20	18	14	25	2	1000
1994	13	13	14	19	32	9	1070
1996	15	25	17	16	21	6	1000
1998	14	23	20	17	20	6	1007
2000	12	19	17	17	27	8	1002
Parents' views	9	19	19	19	29	5	271
Teachers' views	7	10	20	27	33	4	584

Table 4.6
“At which grade, if at all, should the schools stream or separate students into different programs intended to prepare some students directly for the world of work, and other students for entry into community college or university?”

4.5 Testing and Standards at High School

Testing and standards, the mandate and activities of the Education Quality and Accountability Office, are two closely related themes in recent educational reforms. Prior OISE/UT Surveys have shown strong public support for province-wide testing at both the

elementary and secondary level, but often divided opinion on how much impact test results should have on students' progress compared to the assessments of their teachers.⁴⁹ In 2000, we asked respondents whether high school students should have to pass a provincial examination in each compulsory subject in order to graduate, and whether students' final grades should mainly reflect their teachers' assessments or the results of province-wide tests. Both questions had been asked once before in OISE/UT Surveys.

In 1995, the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll asked respondents whether they would favour higher standards for high school graduation if it meant that many fewer students would graduate. In our 1996 survey, we asked a version of this question and found that almost two-thirds still supported higher graduation standards—almost the same proportion as in the U.S.⁵⁰ But to what extent is the public's apparent willingness to trade lower graduation rates for higher standards based on a belief that the trade-off will prove unnecessary? The 1995 Phi Delta/Kappa/Gallup Poll included a prior question asking whether higher standards would encourage or discourage students from low-income backgrounds. Almost two-thirds thought higher standards would encourage low-income students. In 2000, we asked respondents the more general question of whether they thought almost all students could meet higher standards for high school graduation. We also adopted a question on current standards from a recent poll sponsored by the Ministry of Education regarding whether current students had the knowledge and skills to succeed whether their destination was university, college, apprenticeship, or the workplace.

4.5.1 Testing

In 2000, as in 1998, an overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that students should have to pass provincial examinations in each compulsory subject to graduate from high school (see Table 4.7). In 1998, opinion was almost equally divided on whether high school students' final grades should reflect their teachers' assessments rather than the results of province-wide tests. Two years later, the balance has tilted toward relying on teachers' assessments. There is no necessary contradiction in these views. They might be translated into a system where teachers' assessments govern passing from grade to grade up to graduation, at which point provincial examinations become decisive. This is, in fact, very similar to the Ontario system for university-bound students up to the mid 1960s.

Table 4.7
Public Views on Assessment and Standards at the High School Level

Public's views	Agree %	Disagree %	Can't say %	N
High school students' final grades should mainly reflect their teachers' assessments, not the results of province-wide tests.				
1994	45	47	8	1070
2000	50	38	12	1002
Students should have to pass a provincial examination in each compulsory subject in order to graduate from high school.				
1996	77	18	5	1000
2000	77	17	5	1002
Almost all students could meet higher standards for high school graduation.	72	12	16	1002
High school students in Ontario today have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in university, college, apprenticeship programs or in the workplace.	55	32	13	1002

There is, however, another way of reading these results which is also consistent with our previous findings on attitudes toward testing. The apparent consensus on provincial testing may mask a sharp division over whether such tests should be decisive in determining the progress of students. At issue is how the public would react to a standard test for graduation which threatened to substantially lower the graduation rate from current levels based on teachers' assessments.

4.5.2 Standards

The public and parents are divided over whether high school students currently have the skills and knowledge to succeed in university, college, apprenticeship, or in the workplace. About half think students are adequately prepared while just under a third disagree. The remainder are uncertain (see Table 4.7). However, the overwhelming majority of both parents and the public as whole believe that almost all students could meet higher standards for high school graduation (see Table 4.7). It appears that support for higher standards is underpinned by a belief that these will not make things worse for those already challenged by current standards.

Since the OISE/UT Survey was administered, the results of the province-wide grade 10 literacy test have been made public. While the literacy test in 2001 is a "dry run," which will not affect students' eligibility to graduate from high school, beginning next year, no student will graduate without passing the test. In 2001, only about two-thirds who took the test passed both the literacy and numeracy sections.⁵¹ This result is open to different interpretations. It has been argued, for example, that the high failure rate is due to students not trying their best on a test which "doesn't count."⁵² Nevertheless, the grade 10 literacy results raise the specter that a substantial proportion of students cannot, in fact, readily adapt to higher standards. The OISE/UT Survey shows that those who think students are not adequately prepared for their destinations after high school also believe that these students could do better if standards were raised. If this turns out not to be the case for a substantial proportion of students, then we can expect debates over testing and standards to become even more intense.

4.5.3 Teachers' Views on Testing and Standards

There is a strong consensus among teachers (compared to a narrow majority among parents) that high school students' final grades should mainly reflect their teachers' assessments rather than the results of province-wide tests.⁵³ While three-quarters of parents think students should have to pass province-wide tests in all compulsory subjects to graduate from high school, only about a third of teachers hold this view (see Table 4.8).

About half of teachers agree that high school students have the skills and knowledge to succeed whether their immediate destination is the workforce or continued education. In this, their views are similar to those of parents. However, while three-quarters of parents think almost all students could meet higher standards for high school graduation than apply at present, teachers are both more divided and more unsure on this issue. About a third of teachers think most students could meet higher standards; slightly more disagree. Over a quarter of teachers were unwilling to state an opinion.

Table 4.8

Parents' and Teachers' Views on
Assessment and Standards at
the High School Level

Public's views	Agree %	Disagree %	Can't say %	N
High school students' final grades should mainly reflect their teachers' assessments not the results of province-wide tests.				
Parents' views	52	38	11	271
Teachers' views	70	19	11	497
Students should have to pass a provincial examination in each compulsory subject in order to graduate from high school.				
Parents' views	76	20	4	271
Teachers' views	35	53	12	497
Almost all students could meet higher standards for high school graduation.				
Parents' views	75	15	10	271
Teachers' views	34	39	27	497
High school students in Ontario today have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in university, college, apprenticeship programs or in the workplace.				
Parents' views	57	31	12	271
Teachers' views	64	26	19	497

Teacher testing is strongly supported by the general public but strongly opposed by teachers themselves.

5.0

Professional Assessment of Teachers

Most respondents (including parents) are satisfied with the job teachers are doing. Satisfaction with teachers' performance far outstrips satisfaction with the school system in general (see section 1). Yet despite this, public attitudes toward certifying and evaluating teachers are strongly tilted toward accountability. There is almost universal support for requiring student teachers to pass province-wide tests in addition to meeting university requirements before obtaining a teaching certificate (see Table 5.1). This is the provincial policy to be implemented in 2001.⁵⁴

	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither/ Not stated %	N
Public's views	87	8	5	1002
Parents' views	86	10	4	271
Teachers' views	34	51	15	584

Table 5.1
“In addition to meeting university requirements, students in teacher education programs should have to pass province-wide tests to obtain a teaching certificate.”

The introduction of new curricula for both elementary and high school has focused attention on teachers' need to keep up with changing requirements. Less than a quarter of respondents were willing to rely on teachers' own professional judgment about what they needed to learn; most respondents favoured requiring teachers to submit accounts of their learning activities to their principals (see Table 5.2). In this regard, it is interesting to note that a recent national survey found that both Ontario teachers and Canadian teachers in general are already involved voluntarily in extensive job-related informal learning, in addition to their very high level of course participation in continuing education.⁵⁵ Among the majority who are in favour of submitting learning accounts to principals, over 80 percent think principals should use provincial guidelines rather than making locally-based independent judgments in evaluating teachers (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.2

“Which one of the following is the best way to ensure that teachers keep up to date in the subjects they teach?”

	Allow teachers to use their own professional judgement %	Require teachers to submit accounts of their learning activities to their principals %	Can't say %	N
Public's views	23	71	6	1002
Parents' views	19	75	6	271
Teachers' views	61	36	3	584

Table 5.3

“Should principals make their own independent decisions about how to evaluate their teachers or should all principals be required to use the same provincial guidelines and methods?”¹

	Make their own independent decisions %	Use same provincial guidelines and methods %	Can't say %	N
Public's views	13	82	5	770
Parents' views	12	83	5	219
Teachers' views	31	65	4	584

¹ Asked of those who favored teachers submitting accounts to their principals re: keeping up to date in the subjects they teach.

5.1 Teachers' Views on Professional Assessment

As noted above, teachers are less likely than the public to think lengthening teacher education programs will improve student achievement at the elementary level. However, their views on the effectiveness of requiring more practice teaching for trainee teachers and better quality in-service programs for experienced teachers are similar to those of the general public and parents. A majority of teachers, however, are opposed to requiring student teachers to pass province-wide tests in addition to meeting the graduation requirements of their university programs (see **Table 5.1**).

Almost two-thirds of teachers think teachers should be allowed to use their own professional judgment in keeping up-to-date in their subject in contrast to parents and the public who, by a large majority, favour principals monitoring teachers' learning activities (see **Table 5.2**). However, the public, parents, and teachers are in agreement that if principals do monitor teachers' learning activities, this should be on the basis of provincial guidelines and methods (see **Table 5.3**).

The vast majority thinks university costs are too high, especially for youths from low-income families, but is less aware of the under-representation of aboriginals, blacks, and disabled people in higher education.

6.0

Post-Secondary Access and Equity

Equal opportunity for access to higher education is a strong value in Canadian society. During the 1980s, the OISE/UT Survey found widely shared perceptions among the Ontario public that students from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and both boys and girls actually had equal chances of getting a higher education.⁵⁶ However, a substantial body of social scientific research has documented systemic and increasing inequities in access to higher education on both socio-economic and racial grounds in Canada.⁵⁷ Even during the 1980s, there was strong popular opposition to tuition fee increases as a threat to equal access. During the 1990s, tuition fees have more than doubled in Ontario and most other provinces.⁵⁸ So what are the current public perceptions of accessibility to higher education for those from different social backgrounds? In this section, we will consider perceptions of the general costs of attending university and community college, and perceptions of inequities in access to post-secondary education related to family income, racial origin, and physical disability. We will also look at general support for government affirmative action initiatives.

6.1 Access Costs

The current survey asks Ontarians to assess the personal financial costs of attending university or community college today. The results appear in **Table 6.1**. A very large majority, 80 percent of all respondents, believe that the financial costs of attending university are too high. A smaller majority, just under 60 percent, think that community college costs are too high. A recent Ministry poll similarly found that 87 percent of Ontarians think that university tuition fees are too high. There is now a widespread consensus among nearly all social groups that the personal financial costs of attending either university or college are too high.⁵⁹ The only notable exception is corporate executives, over 70 percent of whom believe that both university and college costs are either about right or too low. According to various measures of accessibility, Ontario now has one of the lowest rankings in Canada.⁶⁰ Current public opinion appears to be expressing great concern about this situation.

Table 6.1

“Do you think the personal financial costs of attending university these days are too high, about right, or too low? What about the costs of attending college?”

* The Ministry question read “Thinking about the cost of a university (college) education in Ontario right now, do you think the tuition fees students must pay are much too high, somewhat too high, somewhat too low or much too low?” The survey was conducted between 1997 and 1999.

	OISE/UT		Ontario Ministry of Education*	
	Universities %	Colleges %	Universities %	Colleges %
Much too high	50	29	39	27
Somewhat too high	30	28	48	54
About right	13	26	--	--
Somewhat too low	1	1	5	6
Much too low	1	<1	2	1
Can't say	4	15	6	12
N	1002	1002	1000	1000

6.2 Equity for Lower Income Students

In the past three surveys, we have asked whether students from low-income families are perceived to have a better or worse chance of getting a higher education than students from upper-income families. The research documents that the actual differences are very substantial and getting wider in Canada. According to a recent Statistics Canada report, in 1986 less than 14 percent of 18 to 21 year olds from the lowest family income group were enrolled in university, compared to 33 percent of those from the highest income group; by 1994, 18 percent from the lowest income group were enrolled, compared with 40 percent from the highest income group.⁶¹ The differences are probably greater in Ontario and have also probably been widening since 1994 in light of continuing rapid increases in tuition fees.⁶² Recent public perceptions in Ontario are summarized in **Table 6.2**.

Table 6.2

“Do you think students from low-income families now have a better, the same or worse chance of getting a postsecondary education as students from upper-income families?”

	1996 %	1998 %	2000 %
Better chance	8	15	12
About the same chance	20	13	16
Worse chance	67	68	68
Can't say	5	4	4
N	1000	1007	1002

In contrast to the optimism about equal opportunities for higher education expressed in the early 1980s, the majority of Ontarians now recognize that those from lower income groups have a worse chance of obtaining a post-secondary education. In all three surveys since 1996, over two-thirds of respondents have indicated they believe that lower income youths have a worse chance, while less than 30 percent think they have the same or a better chance. Although corporate executives accept current post-secondary costs as about right, the vast majority (79 percent) admits that students from lower income families now have a worse chance of getting a higher education. The provision of increased government scholarship and loan programs in the past few years does not appear to have lessened either actual participation inequalities by family income or the related perceptions of inequality.

6.3 Equity by Racial Origins

According to Statistics Canada, aboriginal people face significant barriers to equitable participation in higher education. In 1996, just 4 percent of aboriginals had a university degree compared to 19 percent of non-Aboriginal people. In the past two surveys, we have asked respondents to assess aboriginal students chances of getting a post-secondary education. The results are shown in **Table 6.3**.

	1998 ¹ %	2000 %
Better chance	29	28
About the same chance	25	28
Worse chance	37	31
Can't say	9	14
N	1007	1002

Table 6.3

“Do you think aboriginal (that is First Nations, North American Indian and Inuit) students now have a better, the same or worse chance of getting a post-secondary education than white students?”

In both surveys, a majority of Ontarians say they think that aboriginal students have either about the same or better chance of getting a higher education than white students. Only around a third think that aboriginals have a worse chance. Even among the most highly educated, only a minority perceive that aboriginals have a worse chance than whites of getting a higher education. The gap between the reality and public perceptions on this issue is immense. Without concerted efforts by governments, the mass media, and aboriginals themselves to challenge the reality and implement the recommendations of the recent Royal Commission,⁶⁴ movement toward educational equality for aboriginals is likely to be very slow.

¹ In 1998, the question did not include the alternative terms for “aboriginal”.

The Royal Commission on Learning in Ontario recognized the systemic barriers that black students often face in school settings and recommended that demonstration schools for black students be established.⁶⁵ The current survey asks respondents to state their perception of black students' chances of getting a higher education compared with white students. The results appear in **Table 6.4**.

	2000 %
Better chance	17
About the same chance	61
Worse chance	13
Can't say	9
N	1002

Table 6.4

“Do you think black students now have a better, the same or worse chance of getting a postsecondary education than white students?”

A majority of Ontarians think that black students have about the same chance as white students of getting a higher education. Only about 15 percent think that black students have a worse chance. Again, these views are widely shared, including by those with the highest levels of education. Once more, without concerted effort by government, media, and black people themselves, these erroneous perceptions are likely to block progress toward educational equality for blacks.

6.4 Equity for the “Disabled”

Students who are identified as “disabled” experience a wide array of discriminatory practices in conventional educational settings at all levels of schooling.⁶⁶ Many actually have a much greater capacity for learning than they are ever encouraged to use in such settings.⁶⁷ The current survey asks respondents whether or not physically disabled students have an equal opportunity to get a higher education. The findings appear in **Table 6.5**.

Table 6.5

“Do you think physically disabled students now have a better, the same or worse chance of getting a postsecondary education than able-bodied students?”

	2000 %
Better chance	30
About the same chance	35
Worse chance	26
Can't say	9
N	1002

The general public is about equally divided among those who view physically disabled people as having a better, the same, or a worse chance of getting a higher education. About two-thirds believe that the physically disabled have either the same or a better chance for higher education as the able-bodied. In this regard as well, a wide gap between the perception and the reality is widely shared among social groups, and concerted educational efforts will be needed to overcome discriminatory attitudes toward those designated as disabled.

6.5 Support for Affirmative Action

Indeed, to overcome prior discriminatory practices against disadvantaged groups, whether on the basis of lower socio-economic status, racial origins, or imputed disability, government involvement in affirmative action will probably be needed to significantly alter existing conditions. We have also, therefore, asked about public willingness to support government intervention to achieve more equal representation for social groups who are under-represented in post-secondary education rather than leaving it up to the efforts of individuals. The findings are shown in **Table 6.6**.

Table 6.6

“If some social groups were underrepresented in postsecondary education, should governments try to achieve more equal representation or leave it up to the efforts of individuals?”

	%
Governments should try to achieve more equal representation.	39
Governments should leave it to the efforts of individuals.	52
Can't say	10
N	1002

A small majority of Ontarians would now prefer to leave improvements in equal representation up to the efforts of individuals. Only about 40 percent think that governments should try to achieve more equal representation. This may not be too surprising given that majorities of the Ontario public inaccurately perceive aboriginals, blacks, and the physically disabled as having either about the same or better chances of getting a higher education as more dominant groups. Even those who accurately perceive some of these educational inequalities are frequently divided over trying to achieve greater equality through individual initiative or relying on state intervention. Corporate executives are again distinctive in their support for individual initiative (over 70 percent).

The public now values college credentials in technical areas at least as much as university science degrees.

**63
7.0**

Education and Work

As in past OISE/UT surveys, in 2000, we examined both the public's general perceptions of linkages between education and work and their own personal experiences of these linkages. In the case of general perceptions, we examined three issues. First, overall, how well are employees' educational credentials seen to match the requirements of their jobs? Second, what educational credentials does the public expect to be most valuable in the labour market of the future? Third, does the public see returns on personal investment in education as equal for men and women?

7.1 Perceptions of the Education-Jobs Fit

Since 1994, we have tracked public perceptions of the match between the education people have and the educational requirements of their jobs. Since 1994, progressively fewer respondents have thought that in general people have more education than their jobs require. In 2000, as 1998, just over a quarter hold this view (see Table 7.1). Between 1994 and 1998, the proportion who thought people had too little education for their jobs grew from a quarter to a third, while few respondents saw a match between employees' credentials and the educational requirements of their jobs. In 2000, however, we find a reversal of this pattern. As in 1994, only a quarter think people have too little education while almost 40 percent see a match between credentials and requirements.

	1994 %	1996 %	1998 %	2000 %
More	40	35	26	26
Right amount	27	26	32	39
Too little	25	30	33	25
Can't say	8	9	10	10
N	1070	1000	1007	1002

Table 7.1

"Do you think that people generally have more education than their jobs require, the right amount or too little?"

7.2 Educational Credentials for the Labour Market

In 1998, an Angus Reid Poll conducted for the consulting firm, Ernst & Young,⁶⁸ suggested that the public now regarded job-oriented college credentials as more valuable in the future labour market than university degrees. More specifically, the poll found that college diplomas in technical occupations were favoured over university science degrees by almost 2:1 as “the most valuable type of education to have in the workplace 10 years from now.” We adopted this question in our 2000 survey. Our findings provide support for the more modest claim that the public values college credentials in technical areas at least as much as university science degrees (see Table 7.2). Apprenticeship in a skill trade ranked after these post-secondary options, as was the case in the earlier poll. That university degrees in arts fare poorly in public ratings is unsurprising; however, we also confirm the finding of the Angus Reid Poll that professional degrees are out of favour.⁶⁹

Table 7.2

“What do you think would be the most valuable type of education to have in the workplace 10 years from now?”

	Public 1998 ¹ %	Public 2000 %	Parents 2000 %	Teachers 2000 %
University degree in science	18	24	27	16
University degree in arts	3	5	6	8
College diploma in a technical occupation	35	27	30	22
Professional graduate degree, such as law or social work	5	5	3	7
Apprenticeship in a skilled trade	24	18	17	17
High school education and lots of on the job training	13	11	11	9
Can't say	2	10	7	22
N	1000	1002	271	497

¹ Ernst and Young survey conducted by Angus Reid (May, 1998).

7.3 Returns to Education for University-Educated Women

Over the past two decades, participation rates for men and women in higher education and particularly in university programs have converged. Overall participation rates are now approximately equal or favour women although some specialties, notably the physical sciences and engineering, remain largely male preserves.⁷⁰ A continuing issue, however, is whether returns on personal investments in higher education are similar for men and women. Findings from Statistics Canada's follow-up studies of graduates (the National Surveys of Graduates) suggest that while male graduates retain an earnings advantage, this has narrowed in recent years.⁷¹

In our 2000 survey, we repeated a question first asked in 1990: Do most female university graduates get jobs which pay as much as jobs obtained by their male colleagues? A narrow majority agree that female graduates obtain jobs with salaries as high as those of male graduates; just under a third disagree (see Table 7.3). This represents a reversal of views from 1990 when almost half thought female did less well than male graduates. While in both years men are more likely than women to think that there is no salary differential, in 2000 almost half of women (48 percent) hold this view, compared to 60 percent of men. However, only 38 percent of women with university degrees agree that female graduates obtain the same salaries, compared to 49 percent of men with degrees. In 1990, only 18 percent of university educated women (and 36 percent of university-educated men) held this view.

	Agree %	Disagree %	Neither/ Not stated %	N
1990	36	48	16	1032
2000	54	30	16	1002

Table 7.3

“Most women graduating from university or community college now actually get jobs with salaries that are as high as those of male graduates.”

7.4 Education and Job Requirements: The Personal Experiences of Respondents

Since the mid-1980s, the OISE/UT Survey has asked respondents about their highest level of education and about the level of education now required by their employers for their current job. From this information, we construct an index of under/overemployment. While based on self-reports, this is an “objective” measure in the sense that it refers to specific types of educational credentials (high school diploma, college diploma or certificate, university degree). In addition, beginning in 1994, we have also asked respondents for their subjective opinion as to whether they are overqualified or underqualified for their jobs.

Our credential-based under/overemployment measure suggests that the match between the education people have and the educational credentials required for their jobs has become somewhat better over the past decade and a half (see Table 7.4). The proportion reporting that they had less education than the credential now required by their employers has declined. In all years a majority report a match between their own education and employer requirements.

	1986 %	1988 %	1990 %	1992 %	1994 %	1996 %	1998 %	2000 %
Underemployed								
Two or more credentials above requirement	5	5	9	8	6	8	6	6
One credential above requirement	16	19	17	19	14	14	14	15
Match	57	55	56	58	61	58	61	63
Overemployed								
One credential below requirement	17	17	15	12	14	14	14	11
Two or more credentials below requirement	5	4	4	3	5	7	5	5
N	498	499	495	433	499	487	499	510

Table 7.4

Under/overemployment Based on Self-Reported Educational Requirements for Job [Full-Time Workers]

In the case of subjective assessments of over/underqualification, a large majority report being adequately qualified—a larger proportion than report a strict match of credentials (see Table 7.5). However, respondents are much more likely to assess themselves as overqualified than underqualified and, since 1998, the proportion who report being overqualified for their jobs may have increased somewhat.⁷²

	1994 %	1998 %	2000 %
Overqualified	16	16	22
Adequately qualified	78	75	69
Underqualified	5	8	7
Can't say	2	2	2
N	543	520	568

Table 7.5

“On terms of your schooling, do you feel you are overqualified, adequately qualified, or underqualified for your current job?” [Full-Time Workers]

8.0

Lifelong Learning

A lifelong learning culture has arrived, with most Ontario adults wanting to take more continuing education courses and adults in general spending over 12 hours a week on informal learning activities.

This section reports data concerned with participation in both formal adult education courses and informal learning activities. The OISE/UT Survey in 2000 included questions on:

- Participation in continuing education courses in the past year
- Credit received for the courses taken
- Reasons for taking adult education courses
- Mode of course delivery
- Hours of informal learning
- Interest in and barriers to taking courses in the future

Learning in formal and/or informal settings remains an important part of nearly every adult person's life in Ontario. Nearly a third of all employed people participate in formal adult education courses. In addition, people are engaged in informal learning for an average of approximately 12 hours a week and are spending increasing amounts of time on the Internet in both course work and informal learning.

8.1 Participation in Adult and Continuing Education

Table 8.1 displays the data for participation in formal courses. As it has for the past 14 years, the 2000 OISE/UT Survey asked questions about adult education and training courses taken during the past year. The participation rate has increased from 25 percent to 29 percent in 1998. Thus, participation has returned to the levels that were found throughout most of the nineties, reversing the decrease that was found in the OISE/UT Survey in 1998. These data are similar to the most recent data collected by Statistics Canada in the 1998 Adult Education and Training Survey which reported the total percentage of the adult Canadian population involved in adult education or training activities to be 28 percent.⁷³

	1986 %	1988 %	1990 %	1992 %	1994 %	1996 %	1998 %	2000 %
Public's Self-reports	20	24	31	36	27	28	25	29
Labour force status								
Working full-time	27	29	37	38	31	35	31	34
Working part-time	24	38	41	43	38	33	23	36
Not working	9	13	20	28	17	15	17	16
N	1042	1011	1032	1000	1070	1000	1007	1002

Table 8.1

"In the past year have taken an adult or continuing education course?"

Table 8.1 shows that over a third of adults working full-time reported taking a course, while those working part-time had an even larger participation rate at 36 percent. The Statistics Canada Adult Education and Training Survey of 1998, which measured 1997 participation, had similar participation rates for the full-time employed. Statistics Canada indicated that 29 percent of all employed workers participated in job-related adult education and training.⁷⁴ While participation in adult or continuing education courses for the full-time worker has remained fairly constant since 1994, the part-time worker rate has declined throughout most of the nineties, only returning approximately to its 1994 rate this year. As in all previous surveys, those who have higher levels of formal education are much more likely to take courses and those who are older are less likely.

8.2 Credit for Adult and Continuing Education Courses

Since 1994, we have asked if adults received credit for the courses they had taken. Fifty seven percent of the participants indicated that they had received credit for their course. This is an increase in the proportion of courses taken for credit over previous years. Table 8.2 indicates that 28 percent received a community college credit, which is a decrease from 1998. At the same time, there was an increase in the number of adults gaining credits for university courses, with approximately one-fourth taking courses for credit. Approximately one in ten participants received a high school credit. Taking the population as a whole, almost one in five adults took a credit course during the past year.

	1994 %	1996 %	1998 %	2000 %
Kind of credit				
Community college	31	32	33	28
University	15	24	17	24
High school	12	12	10	12
Apprenticeship	--	--	--	9
No credit indicated	51	44	49	43
N	294	284	252	287

Table 8.2

"Did any of the courses provide credit for a diploma, certificate or degree?"

* Percentages total slightly more than 100 as a some respondents selected more than one option indicating multiple credits

8.3 Reasons for Taking Adult Education Courses

Table 8.3 shows that the reasons reported for taking adult education courses are quite similar to those given in 1998. Adult course participation in Canada is primarily a job-related phenomenon, with 60 percent of the respondents indicating that the course was taken either to prepare the person for a new job or to help them with their current job. It is not possible to say whether the reasons for taking the courses that lead to a diploma, certificate, or degree are likely to also be job related; however, many may be. Consequently,

we can say that between 60 and 75 percent of all courses taken may relate to economic activity. This estimate relates closely to the Statistics Canada finding that 75 percent of adults participating in an education or training activity in 1997 did so as a means to remain competitive on the labour market.⁷⁵ **Table 8.3** indicates that the pattern of reasons for taking courses has changed little, except for an increase in total job-related reasons between 1994 and 1998.

Table 8.3

“Which one of the following best captures your main reason for taking adult education courses?”

	1994 %	1996 %	1998 %	2000 %
To help me do my present job better	35	36	44	43
To prepare me for a new job	21	21	19	17
Out of general interest	21	19	18	17
To obtain a diploma, certificate or degree	15	12	9	14
To meet other practical needs unconnected with work	7	12	9	9
Can't say	1	1	1	0
N	294	284	252	287

8.4 Arrangements for Courses

Table 8.4 displays the method by which courses were taken. We asked this question for the first time in 2000. The percentages do not add to 100 percent since many respondents reported multiple responses, either for arrangements within a single course, or for different courses. Over 80 percent of courses included face-to-face teaching as either the primary method or one of the methods used. The second most popular method reported was self-study materials, followed closely by correspondence courses.

With all of the publicity about courses now being offered through the Internet, it is interesting to note that only 9 percent of respondents who had taken a course reported that this included Internet-based work. For the population as a whole (including those not reporting courses), this represents a participation rate of less than 3 percent. Statistics Canada found nationally that 9 percent used the Internet for all forms of formal education or training in 1997. Among regular Internet users, the rate of educational use rose to 32 percent.)⁷⁶ With a rapid rise in Internet usage found by Statistics Canada, it is likely that the Internet will become a major site for adult education and training in the future.

Table 8.4

“Which of the following describes the arrangements for the course(s)?” [Multiple responses accepted.]

	%
Face-to-face classroom instruction	83
Correspondence course by mail	15
Internet	9
Educational television	5
Self-study materials	19
Other methods	9
Not stated	7
N	287

* Percentages total more than 100 as a some respondents selected more than one option indicating multiple credits

8.5 Hours of Informal Learning

Informal learning includes all activities we engage in on our own or with others, outside of organized courses, to gain new knowledge or skills.⁷⁷ Since 1996, we have asked how many hours per week the respondents spent in informal learning in both work-related and general interest categories. **Table 8.5** indicates that there may have been a modest decline of about two hours per week in the average time Ontarians report spending in informal learning, with a current average of over 12 hours a week. The work-related category is fairly constant at about 7 hours a week, while there appears to have been a decline of about 1.5 hours in the general interest category. The total is lower than the 15 hours a week reported in both the 1998 OISE/UT Survey and the first Canadian Survey of Informal Learning Practices also conducted in 1998.⁷⁸ If we compare changes in the incidence of informal learning with participation rates in adult education courses, there is a suggestion of substitution effects: informal learning appears to decline when course participation increases, and vice versa.

	Work-related	General Interest	General Interest & work-related ¹	
	Average hours/week	Average hours/week	Average Hours/week	N ²
1996	5.7	6.2	11.6	935
1998	7.8	7.2	14.6	984
2000	7.1	5.8	12.4	975

8.6 Interest in Taking Courses

In 2000, we asked if there were courses that people would have liked to take, but didn't for one reason or another. **Table 8.6** shows that 61 percent of the respondents indicated that they would like to have taken a course. This is a major increase over the 40 percent response to the same question in the NALL study in 1998. Interestingly enough, relative to the general population, much larger proportions of both corporate executives (75 percent) and teachers (81 percent) indicated that they would like to have taken a course.

	%
Yes	61
No	38
Not stated	1
N	1002

Table 8.5

"Please think of any learning you do on your own or with others that is NOT part of organized schooling or continuing education courses. This includes ANY activities in which your main purpose is to gain specific knowledge or skills."

Not counting coursework, about how many hours in a typical week do you spend trying to learn anything related to your paid or household work, or work you do as a volunteer. Just give your best guess.

Not counting coursework about how many hours in typical week do you spend trying to learn anything of general interest to you? Just give your best guess.

¹ Includes learning for general interest and work-related learning.

² Excludes non-respondents.

Table 8.6

"Now thinking about all your learning activities in the past year, were there areas where you would like to have taken a course but did not?"

When asked what the main reason was for not taking a course, we find that over half of the respondents reported not having enough time. **Table 8.7** shows that limited time was the most common reason, while cost and other reasons were much less frequently cited. This is especially true for corporate executives.

Table 8.7
“What was the main reason you did not take a course?”

	%
Too expensive	16
Family responsibilities	6
Not enough time	54
Couldn't find the right course	3
Did not have the qualifications for the course	1
Other	20
Not stated	<1
N	614

Use of the Internet for learning purposes appears to be growing very rapidly but there is a large digital divide excluding the socially disadvantaged.

9.0

Internet Access and Usage: The Digital Divide

In 2000, we asked if people had an Internet connection in their home as we felt that the Internet might provide enhanced potential access for both formal and informal learning. **Table 9.1** shows that more than half (56 percent) of the respondents had access to the Internet from their homes. Not surprisingly, larger proportions of both corporate executives (89 percent) and teachers (80 percent) reported having Internet access. Internet access from home has been increasing rapidly since its inception scarcely a decade ago. Statistics Canada found that in 1997 40 percent had home access and by 1998 45 percent reported having home access.⁷⁹

We also asked how often respondents accessed the Internet from any location. **Table 9.2** indicates that over 70 percent of the adults in Ontario have access to the Internet and that half of the respondents accessed the Internet at least several times a week in the past year. These data compare closely with Angus Reid's results of the mid-2000 survey where 70 percent of the Canadian population have access to the Internet.⁸⁰ Although a Statistics Canada survey in 2000 yielded a lower figure of 53 percent, this is still three times the rate found in 1994.⁸¹ It is clear that the Internet plays an important role in the information and communication needs of adults in the year 2000. Statistics Canada found that the largest use of the Internet was for the sending of e-mail, with 92 percent of the regular home-use households sending and receiving e-mail. Seeking information was the next largest use of the Internet. Fifty-four percent of Statistics Canada respondents sought medical/health information, 44 percent sought government information, and 85 percent sought other specific information.⁸² These rates compare favourably with the 72 percent of adults who reported using the library in 1998.⁸³

	%
Yes	56
No	44
N	1002

Table 9.1

"Do you have an Internet connection from your home?"

Table 9.2
“How often do you access the Internet yourself from any location?”

	%
Every day	36
Several times a week	14
Once a week	6
A few times a month	6
Once a month	3
Less than once a month	5
Never	29
Not stated	<1
N	1002

The implications of these data are startling. With the rapid increase in Internet access in the home, and the large proportion of Internet users seeking information on the Internet, it is clear that the Internet has become an important centre for informal adult learning. While use of the Internet for formal training has increased significantly in the past few years, it is the informal use of the Internet for learning that has far outstripped formal training. Formal learning institutions (e. g., colleges and universities) appear to be slow at meeting the interest and demand of the general population for flexible access to knowledge. As the Internet becomes an increasingly important mode of access to formal and informal knowledge, there are growing concerns about inequities in access to the Net itself. **Table 9.3** suggests that while generational differences may be waning, those with lower incomes and lesser educational attainments continue to be seriously underrepresented among Internet users. These groups are already disadvantaged in terms of their access to and participation in continuing education; their comparatively low level of Internet use may further reinforce this pattern.

Age continues to be a significant factor in Internet use. Younger age groups have very similar rates of regular Internet use and are about equally likely to have an Internet connection in their homes while those over 55 are very low users (see **Table 9.3**). Statistics Canada surveys have shown that the rising tide of Internet use has in large part left behind those 55 and older. While usage rates increased sharply in all age groups under 55, only small gains are registered for this oldest age group.⁸⁴

Educational attainment and family income, however, remain important predictors of engagement with the Internet. Three-quarters of those with university education have a home Internet connection and comprise an even higher proportion of regular users. In contrast, less than a third of those without a high school diploma have a home connection and less than a quarter use the Internet at least once a week. Differences by family income are similarly large. Over 80 percent of those in households with a total income of \$100,000 or more have a home connection and are regular users, in each case over double the rate for those with family incomes under \$40,000. Statistics Canada surveys have documented similarly large differences in Internet use by education and income.⁸⁵

As noted above, participation in Internet courses, as yet, involves only a small minority of learners. It is thus too early to discern whether predicted differences by income and education will emerge.

Table 9.3
Internet Activity by Background

	Have Internet connection at home %	Use Internet at least once a week %	Have taken course using Internet %	N
Age				
18-24	68	72	3	117
25-34	63	72	2	205
35-44	65	66	5	213
45-54	66	63	4	164
55-64	45	37	3	112
65+	22	20	0	160
Education				
Elementary	20	9	0	35
High school incomplete	31	25	0	101
High school complete	42	39	3	253
Non-university postsecondary	56	62	2	249
University	75	79	4	351
Family income				
Under \$20,000	37	41	2	91
\$20,000 to \$29,999	37	40	1	80
\$30,000 to \$39,999	35	42	4	101
\$40,000 to \$59,999	52	57	3	163
\$60,000 to \$79,999	65	61	3	131
\$80,000 to \$99,999	74	74	4	79
\$100,000 or more	84	85	6	115
Child attending educational institution				
Yes	70	63	4	313
No	49	53	2	689

10.0

Background Differences

The distinct views of corporate executives in comparison to other educational groups overshadow all other differences in views on education by occupation.

In the preceding sections, we have looked mainly at patterns of consensus or disagreement among the public (and parents) as a whole. In this section, we examine differences in views across social groupings defined by age, sex, ethnicity, educational attainment, occupational class, and political party preference. A wide variety of factors shape people's attitudes toward educational institutions: their own interests and direct experiences, the perspectives advanced by those they talk to and respect, the pervasive messages from the media and public figures. Attitude formation is complex and any individual's views are likely to be idiosyncratic in some way. Nevertheless, people who share important social characteristics are, on some issues at least, more likely to think alike than do others.

10.1 Age

As in our prior surveys, we find systematic differences among age groups in views of elementary and secondary schooling (see **Table 10.1**). Satisfaction with the school system generally declines with age, though differences are narrower than in our 1998 survey. Over half of those 18–24 are satisfied with schools compared to just over a third of those 55 and older. Age differences are not significant in the case of satisfaction with the job teachers are doing. A majority in all age groups indicates that they are satisfied with teachers' performance.

Younger respondents are more supportive of increased spending for elementary and high schools. Willingness to pay more taxes for education declines with age. Yet even among those 55 and older, 50 percent support increased spending and almost 40 percent would be willing to pay higher taxes in support of education. However, those 18–24 are twice as likely to support funding schools for all religious groups (if the choice were between this and funding no groups) than those 55 and over. Opposition to allowing private profit-making businesses to operate public schools is more widespread among those in age groups 45 and older, than among younger respondents.

As in 1998, younger respondents are more likely than older respondents to think putting more computers in every classroom would have a great deal or quite a lot of impact on elementary student achievement. In general, different age groups hold quite similar views on what can be done to improve student achievement at the elementary level. However, younger respondents are much more likely to think that starting all children in school at age 4 would be “a good thing.”

Issues positions	18-24 %	25-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55-64 %	65+ %
% satisfied with the school system in general	56	44	46	41	36	37
% favoring increased spending on schools	84	77	79	69	62	50
% willing to pay more taxes in support of education	62	58	57	48	49	38
% willing to fund schools for all religious groups rather than none	62	52	47	44	38	31
% opposed to allowing private profit-making businesses to operate public schools	37	47	54	63	63	63
% who think student achievement can be improved a great deal/quite a lot by putting more computers in classes	57	53	51	49	41	39
% who think having all children begin school at age 4 would be a good thing	74	75	63	59	61	41

Table 10.1
Differences in Attitudes by Age Group

10.2 Sex and Ethnic Group

There are few substantial differences between the views of women and men. Women are somewhat more likely to favour funding schools for all religious groups (50 versus 41 percent) and to support government intervention if some groups are underrepresented in post-secondary education (43 versus 34 percent). Women are also more likely than men to think smaller class sizes will make a difference for student achievement (73 versus 63 percent for men) and less supportive of teachers' right to refuse extra-curricular activities (43 versus 56 percent for men).

Differences in views associated with ethnic group are mainly concerned with student achievement (see **Table 10.2**). Non-European groups are more likely than other groups to think that almost all students could meet higher standards for high school graduation. They are most likely to expect that having all children attend junior kindergarten would have a substantial impact on achievement. They are also more likely than other groups to think starting all children in school at age 4 would be a good idea. Finally, non-Europeans and those of French origin more often see lengthening teacher training programs as an effective means of improving student achievement at the elementary level.

Issues Positions	British %	French %	Other European %	Non- European %
% who think almost all students could meet higher standards for high school graduation	64	75	71	80
% who think student achievement can be improved by starting all children in junior kindergarten	43	48	52	58
% who think having all children begin school at age 4 would be a good thing	56	61	62	72
% who think student achievement can be improved by lengthening teacher education programs	40	59	52	63

Table 10.2
Differences in Attitudes by Ethnicity

10.3 Educational Attainment

Views on a wide range of issues differ by the educational attainment of respondents. Those with elementary schooling only included an exceptionally high proportion of respondents unable or unwilling to offer an opinion on many questions. On a smaller range of issues, educational attainment is associated with more systematic differences in policy preferences. In particular, education groups differ in their views on educational funding and on access to university education (see Table 10.3). Support for increased spending on schools and willingness to pay more taxes for education both increase with education. Those with university education are more opposed than other educational groups to allowing profit-making businesses to operate schools.

As in 1998, those with university education are more likely to identify the kinds of inequities in access to higher education. Perceptions that students from low-income families have less chance of getting a higher education than those from high-income backgrounds become more common with increasing education. Among the university-educated, over 75 percent hold this view compared to about 40 percent of those with elementary schooling. The university-educated are also more likely than others to think aboriginal students have less opportunity than whites to continue to post-secondary education.

University-educated respondents are somewhat more likely to think that college or university credentials will be the most valuable in the labour market ten years from now. The proportion who cite either apprenticeship or high school graduation (with job training) as likely to be most valuable declines sharply with education. About half of respondents with less than high school completion see these forms of training as most valuable, compared to less than a quarter of those with post-secondary education.

Table 10.3
Differences in Attitudes by
Educational Attainment

Issues positions	Educational Attainment				
	elementary	high school incomplete	high school complete	non-university post-secondary	university
% favoring increased spending on schools	65	59	60	77	76
% willing to pay more taxes in support of education	40	42	48	53	57
% opposed to allowing private profit-making businesses to operate public schools	43	55	51	48	65
% who think student achievement can be improved a great deal/quite a lot by province-wide tests	57	59	52	51	38
% who think students from low-income families have a worse chance of getting a higher education than high-income families	44	62	63	67	77
% who think aboriginal students have a worse chance of getting a higher education than white students	27	20	28	24	43
% who think an apprenticeship or high school graduation with job training will be the most valuable education for work 10 years from now	53	46	43	24	15

10.4 Occupational Class

The distinct views of corporate executives in comparison to other occupational groups overshadow all other differences in views on education by occupation. Corporate executives are less likely to be satisfied with the school system in general than many other occupational groups; however, they are particularly distinct in being unhappy with the job teachers are doing (see **Table 10.4**). Well under a third of corporate executives indicates that they are satisfied with teachers' performance, compared to over half of most other groups.

Corporate executives are now less resistant to both increased spending on schools and paying higher taxes in support of education than in previous years, while still less supportive than other occupational groups. In 2000, just over half favour increased spending on schools and almost a third would accept higher taxes for education. Executives are no more supportive of funding private schools than others; they are less likely to favour funding all religious schools if the choice is between funding all or none.

Less than a quarter of corporate executives think that the provincial government now has too much control over schools compared to about half of other occupational groups (and over two-thirds of professional employees). Executives are much less likely to support either teachers' right to strike or their right to refuse extra-curricular activities.

There are few systematic differences by occupational class in rating the likely effectiveness of various measures to improve student outcomes at the elementary level. However, executives are notably more skeptical than other occupational groups about improving student achievement through providing more special education teachers or by increasing the practice teaching component in teacher education programs. They are also less optimistic about the ability of almost all high school students to meet higher graduation standards, and about current graduates' level of preparedness. This pessimism about the capacity of the system to deliver on higher standards may account for the fact that corporate executives are much more supportive of relying on province-wide test results rather than teachers' assessments in assigning student grades.

Over 40 percent of industrial workers rate an apprenticeship or high school graduation with subsequent job training as the education likely to be most valuable 10 years from now. In contrast, only about 10 percent of professional employees and corporate executives hold this view. It may be because they attach a high market value to university credentials that executives are virtually alone in thinking that the cost of attending university is not too high. They are, however, more likely than most other occupational groups to acknowledge that aboriginal students are particularly disadvantaged in gaining access to post-secondary education.

Table 10.4
Differences in Attitudes by
Occupational Group

Issues positions	Corp. exec.	Small employer	Self- employed	Manager	Super- visor	Prof. Employee	Service worker	Industrial worker
% satisfied with the school system in general	22	46	34	49	44	49	50	52
% satisfied with the job teachers are doing	27	48	67	63	63	74	63	54
% favoring increased spending on schools	53	76	71	74	76	85	76	56
% willing to pay more taxes in support of education	31	58	49	57	51	57	53	46
% willing to fund schools for all religious groups rather than none	20	35	45	55	55	43	48	46
% who think the provincial government has too much control over schools	22	51	48	48	50	68	49	51
% who agree that teachers should have the right to strike	20	39	52	31	45	68	58	42
% who agree that teachers should have the right to refuse extra-curricular activities	28	46	53	48	48	56	43	58
% who think student achievement can be improved a great deal/quite a lot by providing more special education teachers	48	72	82	83	78	85	82	83
% who think student achievement can be improved a great deal/quite a lot by more practice teaching in teacher education	41	66	55	63	62	53	58	71
% who agree that high school students grades should mainly reflect teachers' assessments not province-wide tests	16	35	47	43	44	57	57	59
% who think almost all students could meet higher standards for high school graduation	53	88	77	71	77	58	79	77
% who think most high school students have knowledge/skills for university, college, apprenticeships or work	25	53	51	53	56	68	55	54
% who think an apprenticeship or high school graduation with job training will be the most valuable education for work 10 years from now	8	24	28	24	33	12	27	42
% who think cost of attending university are too high	27	83	87	76	86	87	81	81
% who think aboriginal students have a worse chance of getting a higher education than white students	55	35	39	41	24	36	21	23

Categories: corporate executive, small employer (firms with under 50 employees), self-employed, manager, supervisor, professional employee, service worker, industrial worker.

10.5 Political Party Preference

Respondents' political party preferences are related to their views on a range of educational issues. Differences between groups are aligned with the policy positions of their favoured parties. Conservative and Alliance/Reform supporters tend to hold similar views; the positions of NDP supporters offer the sharpest contrast to these views. Liberal supporters fall somewhere in between. However, it is by no means the case that supporters rigidly follow the "party line." In some instances, less than half of those citing a preference for a given party will take the party position on a particular issue (see **Table 10.5**).

Liberal and NDP supporters are more likely to be satisfied with the job teachers are doing than are Conservatives and Alliance/Reform Party identifiers; however, even among the latter groups, half indicate they are satisfied with teachers' performance.

Spending preferences for education show a divide between Liberal and NDP supporters on one side and PC and Alliance/Reform supporters on the other. Liberals and NDP supporters are more supportive of spending on schools; NDP supporters are also more often willing to pay more taxes for education than PC and Alliance/Reform supporters. (Liberals are more likely to accept higher taxes than Alliance/Reformers.)

On other issues, differences by party identification reveal contrasts between Conservatives and Alliance/Reformers as well as the more familiar left-right continuum. Public funding of schools for all religious groups finds little favour with any political party group except Alliance/Reform. Alliance/Reformers are also the only group where less than half are opposed to private profit-making groups being allowed to operate public schools. However, the opposition is stronger among NDPers than Liberals or Conservatives.

NDP identifiers are also more likely to support both teachers' right to strike and the right to refuse extra-curricular activities than Liberals, who in turn offer more support to teachers' rights than Conservatives and Alliance/Reformers. Only about a third of Conservatives and Alliance/Reformers but over half of Liberal and almost three-quarters of NDP supporters think that the provincial government now has too much control over schools.

Alliance/Reform and NDP supporters hold strongly opposed views on equity issues. While majorities of all groups acknowledge that children from low-income families have less chance of getting a higher education than those from high income families, just over half of Alliance/Reformers hold this view compared to over 80 percent of NDP supporters. We find a similar pattern of party differences in the case of aboriginal students; however, even among NDPers, less than half are prepared to acknowledge that aboriginal students are disadvantaged. A majority of NDP supporters think that the government should intervene if some groups are found to be underrepresented in post-secondary education. Less than half of other any other political groups take this position, with Alliance/Reformers being the least supportive.

Table 10.5
Differences in Attitudes by
Party Preference

Issues positions	Party Preference					
	PC	Reform	Lib.	NDP	Other	None
% satisfied with the job teachers are doing	50	53	69	65	56	56
% favoring increased spending on schools	64	56	79	89	72	72
% willing to pay more taxes in support of education	48	33	56	65	54	44
% supporting public funding of private school (all or religious schools)	26	51	35	32	33	29
% opposed to allowing profit-making business to manage public schools	51	40	55	68	60	54
% who agree that teachers should have the right to strike	33	33	48	70	69	51
% who agree that teachers should have the right to refuse extra-curricular activities	40	34	52	68	46	55
% who think the provincial government has too much control over schools	31	34	51	71	58	51
% who think students from low-income families have a worse chance of getting a higher education than high-income families	63	55	67	82	64	77
% who think aboriginal students have a worse chance of getting a higher education than white students	34	20	29	45	47	34
% who think the governments should intervene if some groups are underrepresented in postsecondary education	36	25	39	55	37	40

The Ontario public at the turn of the millennium remains generally dissatisfied with the performance of the school system, greatly concerned about inaccessibility of advanced education because of high cost to students, and more prepared than ever to spend more tax dollars on public education.

Conclusion:

Education in the New Millennium

Prior OISE/UT Surveys have documented the increasing importance of education in the public mind and a widespread commitment to ensuring both the accessibility and the quality of public education.⁸⁶ While there is strong support for some of the wide array of recent government educational reform initiatives, the Ontario public at the turn of the millennium remains generally dissatisfied with the performance of the school system, greatly concerned about inaccessibility of advanced education because of high cost to students, and more prepared than ever to spend more tax dollars on public education. The strong support for ensuring a high quality, accessible public education system is clearly expressed not only in the highest ever support for increased spending on elementary-secondary and post-secondary education, but also in strong opposition to private businesses operating public schools. There appears to be public support for establishing and providing some public funding for private universities; but it remains to be seen whether this support will continue once such institutions actually begin competing with public universities.

Since the 1984 extension of full funding to the separate Catholic school system, there has been continuing discussion of extending public funding to other religious schools and other private schools. Both Newfoundland and Quebec have now obtained constitutional amendments to eliminate religious school boards. The 1999 United Nations Human Rights Committee recommendation that Ontario either extend full public funding to all denominational schools or eliminate Catholic school funding has provoked more intense debate. But the general views of the Ontario public have remained quite consistent throughout this period. The majority clearly wish to continue to fund both the public and Catholic school systems. There is only minority support for eliminating the Catholic system and very little popular support for funding other religious schools. Those who wish to strengthen public education in Ontario are now best advised to promote fuller co-operation between the public and Catholic systems, a principle which has found very strong popular support over the years.⁸⁷

The Ontario public has never been more interested in increasing public say in education policy-making. There is a strong shared consensus with teachers on some measures to improve school performance. These include: more parental involvement in helping their children learn; smaller class sizes; more class time on the basics; and more special education teachers. Public support for teachers has generally increased in recent years, with majority satisfaction with teacher performance and increasing support for teachers' right to strike. But the public still remains equally divided between supporting and opposing the right to strike, as well as supporting or opposing the right to refuse extra-curricular duties. The general public and teachers are even more divided on some other program issues, including teacher testing and the use of province-wide tests to decide graduation from high school. Further teacher-public dialogue is urgently needed on such issues to ensure effective programming.

With regard to access and equity issues, while Ontarians now commonly think that the personal costs of higher education are too high and that students from lower income families tend to face greater barriers to getting a higher education, they are much less likely to perceive accurately the real barriers faced by aboriginal, black, and disabled students. In any case, there is generally only minority support at present for government initiatives to achieve greater educational equality. The general public, influential groups such as corporate executives, and teachers themselves need to become increasingly aware of the extent of barriers faced by disadvantaged social groups in order to make significant progress toward more equal opportunities for higher education.

A growing public commitment to nurturing a learning society throughout the life course is evident in clear majority support for early childhood education through universal junior kindergarten programs and for adult literacy and job retraining program funding, as well as the majority interest in taking more adult education courses. Use of information technologies such as the Internet for both informal learning and organized courses is also likely to contribute to continuing growth of a culture of lifelong learning - although there is an imminent danger of lower income people being denied fair access.

During the past 20 years in Ontario, there has generally been gradually increasing support for increased spending on public education across all social groups. The most dramatic increases have been in the past five years, especially among those groups previously least supportive. In 1996, only about one-third of those over 50 years of age favoured increased spending on universities; by 2000, this had grown to over two-thirds. In 1996, over half of corporate executives wanted general education spending to decrease and less than 20 percent supported increased spending; by 2000, over half supported increased education spending. These rapid shifts within the groups traditionally most opposed to increased education funding, along with the overall increase in general public support, suggest that a threshold in the real reduction of educational service provision may now have been reached, a level of support below which even those with the strongest contending priorities for financial resources (i. e., health care spending for older people; tax cuts for corporate executives) do not wish to go.

In any case, educational reform initiatives remain very much on the agenda as we proceed into the 21st century. The central question on the minds of most of the public and teachers alike is whether governments will commit sufficient increased resources to address accessibility and quality concerns effectively while attempting to implement such changes in public education.

The Main Sample of the Adult Population of Ontario

The 2000 OISE/UT Survey involved a representative random sample of 1002 adult Canadian citizens, 18 years of age and over, who were interviewed by telephone in their residences across Ontario between October 17 and December 19, 2000. The survey was administered by the Institute for Social Research at York University. Respondents entered the survey through a two-stage sampling procedure. Random digit dialling procedures were used to produce a sample of phone numbers. (In this procedure, phone numbers are computer-generated rather than relying on telephone directories which exclude non-listed numbers.) Non-residential numbers were eliminated as ineligible when contacted.) Within the households contacted, the adult resident was selected who was next to have a birthday. Up to 10 call-backs were made in attempts to reach respondents. A response rate of 60 percent was obtained.

As has been done in previous OISE/UT surveys, the 2000 sample of respondents has been weighted to remedy slight imbalances in age and sex groups. The weighted sample continues to somewhat under-represent those with less than high school completion, and over-represent those with post-secondary education. **Table A.1** shows the distribution of the weighted sample by selected background characteristics.

	%	N
Age		
18-24	12	117
25-34	21	205
35-44	21	213
45-54	16	164
55-64	11	112
65+	16	160
Unclassified	3	31
Sex		
Male	48	480
Female	52	522
Contact with schools		
Child at private elementary/high school	1	10
Child at Catholic elementary/high school	8	78
Child at public elementary/high school	17	167
Mixed contact (public/Catholic/private)	1	16
Child at postsecondary only	4	43
No child in school	69	688
Education		
Elementary	4	35
High school incomplete	10	101
High school complete	25	253
Non-university postsecondary	25	249
University	35	351
Unclassified	1	14
Religion		
Protestant	39	388
Catholic	31	311
Other	11	105
No religion	17	168
Unclassified	3	32

APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

Table A.1
Demographic Breakdown of the
Sample

Table A.1 (cont'd)
Demographic Breakdown of the Sample

	%	N
Mother tongue		
English	73	734
French	5	54
Other	20	204
Unclassified	1	9
Ethnic Group		
British	42	422
French	6	64
Other European	23	224
Non-European	14	141
Unclassified	15	152
Family income		
Under \$20,000	9	91
\$20,000 to \$29,999	8	80
\$30,000 to \$39,999	10	100
\$40,000 to \$59,999	16	164
\$60,000 to \$79,999	13	131
\$80,000 to \$99,999	8	78
\$100,000 or more	12	115
Unclassified	24	243
Occupational class		
Corporate executives ¹	---	95
Small employers	5	46
Self-employed	10	98
Managers	8	75
Professional employees	7	68
Supervisors	11	110
Service workers	9	90
Industrial workers	6	57
Homemakers	3	34
Unemployed	3	25
Retired	18	180
Student	9	85
Unclassified	13	133
Region		
Metro Toronto	25	248
Metro outskirts	27	266
Eastern Ontario	14	143
Western Ontario	22	215
Northern Ontario	13	130
Political Party Preference ²		
Progressive Conservative	12	124
Alliance/Reform	8	80
Liberal	41	405
NDP	8	76
Minor parties	4	35
None	12	116
unclassified	17	167
Total	100 ³	1002

¹ Special survey of corporate executives
² Percentages may not add to 100 for all variables due to rounding.
³ This distribution corresponds to federal rather than provincial party preferences although the question was not explicit. An Ipsos-Reid poll in September 2000 on voting preferences if an election were held "tomorrow" yielded the following results for Ontario: Liberals 51 percent, Alliance 19 percent, NDP 10 percent, PC 9 percent, other parties 2 percent, none/not stated 8 percent. Provincial (Source: Ipsos-Reid Media Release "Federal Political Scene September 2000" October 1, 200.)

The Supplementary Sample of Corporate Executives

A special survey of corporate executives has been conducted in each year of the survey, in view of the fact that individuals in this small but important occupational class would be unlikely to appear in sufficient numbers within the main population sample. The sample survey of corporate executives has been drawn from corporate directors resident in Ontario and engaged in managing corporations based in the province as listed in the *Financial Post Directory of Directors*, 2000. From this, a sample of 402 was drawn by simple random selection.

The special survey was conducted using a mailed questionnaire, this being the most financially feasible method. We received 95 usable responses and 28 returns-to-sender due to out-of-date addresses or changes in employment. Subtracting the returns-to-sender from the original sample size, our response rate was 25.4 percent. The number of respondents we did not reach was probably higher than the returns indicate due to questionnaires being discarded rather than sent back to us. Due to the publication date of the *Directory of Directors*, we had to rely on addresses which were a year old at the time we drew our sample. In these turbulent times, a year is a long time in corporate Canada. Thus we suspect that our real return rate, based on respondents we actually reached, was substantially higher than the figure we have stated.

The Survey of Teachers

The survey of teachers was conducted in partnership with the Ontario College of Teachers. The College provided the Institute for Social Research with a random sample of 800 college members in English and French language boards and schools. Members included in the sample received two mailings of the questionnaire and follow-up reminder cards and a telephone reminder (where needed). Mailings were conducted at the end of November and in mid-January. Telephone reminders were made in the second week of February. We received 584 useable returns in time for this publication, a response rate of 66 percent.

Sampling Tolerances

In this study, the opinions and preferences of 1002 respondents are taken to represent those of all adult residents in Ontario. In the case of findings for subgroups, the numbers are smaller—271 parents represent all parents in the province, 167 respondents represent all parents with children in the public school system. (These are in fact the weighted totals.) For any sample survey, it can be expected that there will be differences between the findings for these relatively small numbers of representatives and the results which would have been obtained if the entire population had been surveyed.

Table A.2 provides estimates of error for any percentage taken by itself. The estimate itself indicates that the actual percentage for the population might be the stated number of percentage points either greater or less than the percentage actually shown in the table. For example, in Table 2.7, we see that 42 percent of all respondents in 2000 indicated that they favoured tax credits for parents who send their children to private schools. The estimate of the possible sampling error for this statistic is found in **Table A.2** at the intersection of the row for “percentages near 40” and the column for sample size of 1000 (since the percentage is based on the entire sample of 1,002).⁸⁸

Table A.2
Recommended Allowance for
Sampling Error of a Percentage

Sample size		1000	600	400	200	100
Percentages near	10	2	4	4	5	7
	20	3	4	5	7	9
	30	4	5	6	8	10
	40	4	5	6	9	11
	50	4	5	6	9	11
	60	4	5	6	9	11
	70	4	5	6	8	10
	80	3	4	5	7	9
	90	2	4	4	5	7

The estimate of the general population sampling error is 4 percent; that is, if the survey had covered the entire population of Ontario, chances are 95 in 100 that the percentage favouring tax credits for private school parents would have fallen between 38 percent and 46 percent.

Table 2.7 also shows that 42 percent of parents with children in the public school system agree with tax credits to parents to offset the costs of sending their children to private religious schools. The percentage is the same as in the example above but in this case the (sub)sample size is somewhat under 200. (The number of public system parents in our sample is 167.) The sampling error estimate shown in **Table A.2** is correspondingly larger at 9 percent. Thus, if all public school parents were polled, the table says the actually support for tax credits would found to be between 33 percent and 51 percent, 95 percent of the time.

Sampling error must also be taken into account for the differences between two percentages for different groups. Again the error estimates become larger, the smaller the groups involved. Differences among groups reported in the text have passed this test.

Further Information

A more detailed description of the methodology of the OISE/UT Surveys and a copy of the questionnaire used in 2000 can be obtained from our website (www.oise.utoronto.ca/OISE-Survey) or from the authors on request (dlivingstone@oise.utoronto.on.ca; dhart@oise.utoronto.on.ca; or ldavie@oise.utoronto.on.ca).

Notes

- ¹ Quoted in L. Brown, "New era spells end of Grade 13," *Toronto Star*, 3 June 2000, p. A2.
- ² Education Improvement Commission, *The Road Ahead-V. A Report on Improving Student Achievement*, Fifth and Final Report (Toronto: Queen's Printer, December 2000), 1-3.
- ³ A. Kidder, "Education System Emergency" (submission to Pre-Budget Hearings of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Ontario, 14 February 2001).
- ⁴ C. Pascal, "Seeking Excellence in the Education System," *Toronto Star*, 16 March 2001, p. A25.
- ⁵ Most of the prior surveys have been published and distributed by the former OISE Press. They are as follows: D.W. Livingstone, *Public Attitudes Toward Education in Ontario* (1978); Livingstone and D. Hart, *Public Attitudes Toward Education in Ontario* (1979 and 1980); Livingstone, Hart, and L. D. McLean, *Public Attitudes Toward Education in Ontario* (1982); Livingstone, Hart, and L. E. Davie, *Public Attitudes Toward Education in Ontario* (1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, and 1994). The 1996 and 1998 surveys were published by University of Toronto Press: see Livingstone, Hart, and Davie, *Public Attitudes Toward Education in Ontario* (1996, 1998).

- 6 See L. Rose and A. Gallup, "The 32nd Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 82, no. 1 (September 2000): 41–57
- 7 Mass media accounts of education have often been misleading and unresponsive to general public interest, as documented by G. Kaplan, *Images of Education: The Mass Media's Version of America's Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1992); and S. Elam, *How America Views Its Schools* (Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappan, 1995). The current Ontario government has been accused of both using "push polls" and only reluctantly releasing poll results inconsistent with its agenda; see L. Papp, "Tories' Anti-Ottawa Ads Backfired, Polls Show," *Toronto Star*, 8 July 2000, p. A2.
- 8 See D. W. Livingstone and D. Hart, "Where the Buck Stops: Class Differences in Support for Education," *Journal of Educational Policy* 13, no. 3 (1998): 351–377.
- 9 See C. Langdon and N. Vesper., "The Sixth Phi Delta Kappa Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappa* 81, no. 8 (April 2000): 607–661.
- 10 For helpful discussions of the formation of democratic consent and the stages in this process, see T. Glasser and C. Salmon, eds., *Public Opinion and the Communication of Consent* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995).
- 11 On deliberative polling, see J. Fishkin, *The Voice of the People: Public Opinion and Democracy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995).
- 12 The most recent major, publicly available, Canada-wide education poll is T. Williams and H. Millinoff, *Canada's Schools: Report Card for the 1990s* (Toronto: Canadian Educational Association, 1990). For a comparative analysis of the OISE/UT, U.S. Gallup, and other international opinion surveys on educational issues, see N. McEwen, "Public Perceptions: Implications for Educational Reform" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, 9 April 1996). Various Canadian commercial polling agencies report occasional surveys on education topics, but with little attention to trends on policy issues.
- 13 See Alberta Education, "Meeting the Challenge II: Three Year Business Plan for Education 1995/96–1997/98"; N. McEwen, "Satisfaction with Education in Alberta," *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* XLIV, no. 1 (spring 1998): 1–19.
- 14 See G. Edwards and J. Mazzuca, "Canadians Divided Over Satisfaction with Education Children Receive," *The Gallup Poll* 60, no. 19 (9 March 2000): 1–2.
- 15 See L. C. Rose and A. M. Gallup, "The 32nd Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 82, no. 1 (September 2000): 41–57; Livingstone, Hart, and Davie, *Public Attitudes* 1996, 13–17. The more favourable views of parents can be seen as an aspect of a more general principle. Rose and Gallup write in their 1999 report ("The 31st Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 81, no. 1 [September 1999]: 41–56): "The 1999 poll reaffirms what every Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll has shown. *The closer people are to the public schools the better they like them* (italics in original)." Both parents and non-parents hold much more positive views of local schools than schools nationally. The 1996 OISE/UT Survey found that Ontarians held more positive views of schools in their communities than of Ontario schools. However, differences were much narrower than for local/national comparisons in the U.S.
- 16 See C. A. Langdon and N. Vesper, "The Sixth Phi Delta Kappa Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappa* 81, no. 8 (April 2000): 607–661 for the latest results.
- 17 See C. A. Langdon, "The Fourth Phi Delta Kappa Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappa* 79, no. 3 (April 1997): 212–221; C. A. Langdon, "The Fifth Phi Delta Kappa Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappa* 80, no. 8 (April 1999): 611–620.
- 18 See G. Edwards and J. Hughes, "Majority Favour Increasing Transfers to Provinces with Federal Government Surpluses," *The Gallup Poll* 58, no. 52 (27 July 1998); R. Mackie, "Health, Education Main Ontario Issues: Poll," *Globe and Mail*, 2 September 1999, p. A8; "Health Care & Education Top List, CAUT Poll Reveals," *CAUT Bulletin* 47, no. 9 (November 2000): A1; A. Wilson-Smith, "A Time to Act," *Maclean's*, 25 December 2000, 44–45.
- 19 See, for example, "Public Investment in PSE: Recent OECD Figures Reveal that Canada Leads in Cutting Post-secondary Education Funding," *CAUT Bulletin* 47, no. 9, November 2000: A7; People for Education, *The Tracking Report 2000: The Effects of Funding and Policy Changes in Ontario's Elementary Schools* (Toronto: People for Education, 2000 [see www.peopleforeducation.com]).

- 20 A continuing British survey of social attitudes cited in *The Economist* (19 November 1994, p.67) found that 87 percent wanted more government spending on health services and 79 percent wanted more education spending. A September 1994 MORI poll cited in *The Economist* 1 October 1994, 72 found that 68 percent of British voters supported increasing income tax to pay for increased spending on education. Data from 1989 and 1993 New Zealand surveys indicate that support for increasing government spending and taxes for the education system increased from 78 percent to 89 percent during this period, as reported in P. Perry and A. Webster, "Value changes from 1989 to 1993 in New Zealand: A Research Note" (Massey University, April 1994, unpublished paper, 2).
- 21 See "76% of Canadians Favour More Education Spending," *CCPA Education Monitor* (summer 2000): 19, a report on an Angus Reid World Poll, which found similarly high levels of support in the U. K., New Zealand and the U.S..
- 22 Ontario Ministry of Education, "Public Supports Ontario's Plans to Improve Education" (Ministry news release, 22 December 2000).
- 23 See sources in note no. 20.
- 24 See K. Hughes, G. Lowe, and A. McKinnon, "Public Attitudes Toward Budget Cuts in Alberta: Biting the Bullet or Feeling the Pain?" *Canadian Public Policy* XXII, no. 3 (1996): 268–284.
- 25 L. Johnston and S. Swift, *Public Funding of Private and Denominational Schools in Canada* (Ontario Legislative Library Background 39, March 2000, 5-6). This report provides an excellent brief overview of denominational school funding across Canada.
- 26 L. Rose and A. Gallup, "The 31st Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 81, no. 1 (September 1999), 41–56.
- 27 See V. Galt, "Innovative Approaches to Education," *Globe and Mail*, 7 September 1996, p. A5.
- 28 J. Lewington and R. Mackie, "Johnson Not Averse to Private-Sector Partnerships," *Globe and Mail*, 25 March 1998, p. A3.
- 29 S. Elam, L. Rose, and A. Gallup, "The 28th Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll on the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 78, no. 1 (1996): 53.
- 30 R. Mackie, "Tories Attacked Over New Legislation," *Globe and Mail*, 20 October 2000, p. A5.
- 31 See Ontario Ministry of Education and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, New Release. Toronto, December 13, 2000.
- 32 CEA Task Force on Public Involvement in Educational Decisions, *Results of a Gallup Poll of Public Opinion in Canada about Public Involvement in Educational Decisions* (Toronto: CEA, 1979); G. E. Flower, *Speaking Out: The 1984 CEA Poll of Canadian Opinion on Education* (Toronto: CEA, 1984).
- 33 In the U.S., the Phi Delta Kappa poll has also documented limited teacher enthusiasm for greater parental influence on how schools operate. In 1997, about a quarter of teachers, compared to over half of parents in a 1989 poll, thought parents should have more say regarding allocation of funds and curriculum. A majority of teachers were satisfied with the status quo. See C.A. Langdon, "The Fourth Phi Delta Kappa Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 79, no. 3 (April, 1997): 212–221.
- 34 See "Metro Folks Back Teachers," *Toronto Sun*, 4 November 1997. The article, however, contrasts pre-strike figures for the province as a whole (42 percent supported the strike) with Metro Toronto results after the strike began (54 percent in support).
- 35 COMPAS, 17 March 2000, 17–21. A summary of this poll sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Training was tabled and released to the Legislative Library in December, 2000.
- 36 M. N. McCain and J. F. Mustard, *The Early Years Study Final Report: Reversing the Real Brain Drain* (Toronto: Ontario Premier's Office, 1999).
- 37 Education Improvement Commission, *The Road Ahead V: A Report on Improving Student Achievement* (Toronto: Queen's Printer, December 2000).
- 38 See Statistics Canada, "National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth: School Component," *The Daily* (14 October 1999; also table correction 19 October 1999).
- 39 Livingstone, Hart, and Davie, *Public Attitudes 1994*, 12; Livingstone, Hart, and Davie, *Public Attitudes 1996*, 54–55.
- 40 J. Luffman, "A Profile of Home Schooling in Canada," *Education Quarterly Review* 4, no. 4 (winter 1997). (This is a publication of Statistics Canada.) The quote within quotes is by P. Lines, "Home

Instruction: The Size and Growth of the Movement,” in J. Van Gallen and M..A. Pitman (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex, 1992).

- 41 J. Luffman, “A Profile of Home Schooling in Canada,” *Education Quarterly Review* 4, no. 4 (winter 1997): 38–39.
- 42 See L. C. Rose, A. M. Gallup, and S. M. Elam, “The 29th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 79, 1 (September 1997): 41–57.
- 43 The U. S. Phi Delta Kappa polls of teachers have not asked directly about whether greater use of home schooling would be a good or bad thing. However, other questions have shown that teachers support parents’ legal right to home school but are concerned about quality control and are more reluctant than the public to allow home schoolers to access the resources of the public school system. See the Fourth and Sixth Phi Delta Kappa polls of teachers referred to in earlier notes.
- 44 In 2000, the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll asked respondents, “Which is a more important factor in determining whether students learn in school—the school or the students’ parents?” Both parents and non-parents opted for students’ parents by a wide margin (L. C. Rose and A. M. Gallup, “The 32nd Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 82, 1 (September 2000): 41–57).
- 45 Student surveys at our own institution (OISE/UT) suggest that this view is shared by student teachers and recent graduates currently in the first year of teaching. See N. Watson, D. Hart, and N. Jacka, *Learning to Teach: The OISE/UT Two-Year Pilot Program* (Report to the Ontario Association of Deans of Education and the Ontario College of Teachers, Toronto: OISE/UT, August 1997); (D. Hart and N. Watson, *One Year Out: Follow-up of 1997 OISE/UT Preservice Graduate* (Toronto: OISE/UT, November 1998).
- 46 Angus Reid Group, *Canadians’ Assessment and Views of the Education System* (Media Center Press Release, 22 June 1999). The question was posed in the negative: “Teachers are not adequately trained to do the job required of them.” In 1993, 50 percent agreed with the statement while 43 percent disagreed. By 1999, the proportions had more than reversed: 40 percent agreed while 59 percent disagree. The proportion that strongly disagreed nearly doubled from 12 to 23 percent.
- 47 Summary of a poll sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Training and released to the Legislative Library in summer, 2000. Undated but conducted between 1997 and 1999.
- 48 This is also the case in the U.S. In 1999, both teachers and the public overwhelmingly favoured stricter standards for social promotion “...even if it meant that significantly more students would be held back.” See C. A. Langdon and N. Vesper, “The Sixth Phi Delta Kappa Poll of Teachers’ Attitudes Toward the Public Schools,” *Phi Delta Kappa* 81, no. 8 (April 2000): 607–661.
- 49 D. Hart. “How Will the Public Respond to Provincial Benchmarks: Some Lessons from Public Opinion on Testing?” *Orbit* 24, no. 2 (1993).
- 50 S. M. Elam, L. C. Rose, and A. M. Gallup, “The 27th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public School,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 77, no.1 (September 1995): 41; Livingstone, Hart, and Davie, *Public Attitudes* 1996, 24–25.
- 51 L. Brown, “Third of Students Fail Test in Literacy,” *Toronto Star*, 7 March, 2001, p. A1.
- 52 See L. Brown, “Grade 10 test results provoke loud calls to focus on writing,” *Toronto Star*, 8 March 2001, p. A3.
- 53 In the U. S., only minorities of both teachers (13 percent) and the public (27 percent) think standardized achievement tests “...provide the most accurate picture of a public school student’s academic progress (see Sixth Phi Delta Kappa poll of teachers). However, 50 percent of the public but only 15 percent of teachers think student scores on standardized tests are “very important” “for measuring the effectiveness of public schools in your community” (see Fifth Phi Delta Kappa poll of teachers).
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- 59 Summary of an Angus Reid poll sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Training and released to the Legislative Library in summer, 2000. Undated but conducted between 1997 and 1999. Poll results are available from the Ontario Legislative Library, Journals and Procedural Research Branch. See "PSE [Post Secondary Education] Issues: Quantitative. Final Results Based on 1000 Completes (Weighted).
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- 65 Royal Commission on Learning, *For The Love of Learning: Report of the Royal Commission on Learning* (Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1994), 78. For later documentation, see G. Dei et al., *Drop Out or Push Out? The Dynamics of Black Students' Disengagement from School: A Report* (Toronto: Department of Sociology in Education, 1995).
- 66 See A. Vlachou, *Struggles for Inclusive Education: An Ethnographic Study* (Milton Keynes, England: Open University Press, 1997).
- 67 See especially J. Snow and R. Gorman, "Class and Disability" (unpublished paper, Department of Adult Education, OISE/UT 2000)
- 68 Ernst & Young, *News* (media release, 14 July 1998); the full Ernst & Young report is *Competitiveness, Jobs and Training: Ontarians Attitudes toward job creation and economic growth* (Toronto: Ernst & Young).
- 69 The Ontario Ministry of Education has used this question on a recent Angus Reid poll (1998 /1999) but with an additional response option reading, "Any type of post secondary education that involves co-op experience." Respondents were asked what was the most valuable type of education "today" and what would be the most value type ten years from now. The co-op option attracts 26 percent of most valuable ratings for today and 19 percent of most valuable rating for ten years from now. The effect is to reduce the numbers rating other options but without substantially changing their relative popularity. Thus for the future, a university science degree or a college diploma in a technical occupation remain the most frequent choices, followed by apprenticeship. These results are unpublished but are available from the Ontario Legislative Library, Journals and Procedural Research Branch. See "PSE [Post Secondary Education] Issues: Quantitative." Final Results Based on 1000 Completes (Weighted).
- 70 See Statistics Canada, "University Enrolment" *The Daily* (9 March 2000).
- 71 R. Finnie, "Holding Their Own: Employment and Earnings of Postsecondary Graduates," *Education Quarterly Review* 7, no. 1 (2000).
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- 73 Statistics Canada, *The Daily* (18 June 1999).
- 74 Statistics Canada, *The Daily* (18 June 1999).
- 75 Statistics Canada, *The Daily* (18 June 1999).
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- ⁷⁷ For further discussion and findings for the first national survey of informal learning in Canada, see D.W. Livingstone, "Exploring the Iceberg of Adult Informal Learning: Findings of the First Canadian Survey of Informal Learning Practices," *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education* 13, no. 2: 49–72.
- ⁷⁸ See D. W. Livingstone, "Exploring the Iceberg of Adult Informal Learning."
- ⁷⁹ Statistics Canada. *The Daily* (13 December 1999).
- ⁸⁰ Angus Reid Group, "Canadian Internet Access Continues to Grow, and Users Say the Net Has Had a Significant Impact on Their Lives" (Ipsos-Reid press release, 26 July 2000).
- ⁸¹ Statistics Canada, "General Social Survey; Internet use," *The Daily* (26 March 2001).
- ⁸² Statistics Canada, "Plugging In: The increase of household internet use continues into 1999," *Connectedness Series*, Table 1 (2000).
- ⁸³ Livingstone, Hart, and Davie, *Public Attitudes 1996*, 67, Table 9.6.
- ⁸⁴ Statistics Canada, "General Social Survey; Internet Use," *The Daily* (26 March 2001).
- ⁸⁵ The latest figures come from Cycle 14 of the General Social Survey. See Statistics Canada, "General Social Survey; Internet use". *The Daily* (26 March 2001).
- ⁸⁶ See especially the previous survey, Livingstone, Hart, and Davie, *Public Attitudes Toward Education in Ontario 1998: Twelfth OISE/UT Survey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
- ⁸⁷ See, for example, Livingstone, Hart, and Davie, *Public Attitudes 1988*.
- ⁸⁸ The error estimates in this table are based on the assumption of simple random sampling (SRS). While the OISE/UT Survey departs from SRS due to the fact that adults in smaller households generally have more chance of being selected than those in larger households (since most homes will have only one phone for adults), the estimates in **Table A.2** should provide generally reliable guides for sampling error estimates for OISE/UT Survey findings. The effect of our departure from SRS is that the sample size for the OISE/UT Survey is equivalent to a somewhat smaller size simple random sample. Readers should thus make conservative judgements in using particular columns of **Table A.2**.

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