

Center for Education Reform



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**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL
September 23, 1997**

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AMERICANS EMBRACE EDUCATION REFORM AS PREVALENT SCHOOL CHOICE, CHARTER SCHOOLS & A QUALITY EDUCATION WANTED AS OPTIONS

Washington, DC — Jeanne Allen, President of the Center for Education Reform [CER], today released data from the 1997 National Survey of Americans' Attitudes Toward Education and School Reform which confirm for the second year in a row that over 80% of Americans want more options and a better education for their children.

"This survey illustrates that a **solid majority** of Americans embrace education reform as a cross-cutting, mainstream issue," said Allen, "and with that type of overwhelming plurality, reform shouldn't be marginalized by the media when these issues are being debated in the real world every day."

"The results are consistent with what we found last year," continued Allen, "and illustrate a continuing concern among Americans from all walks of life that children are not getting the education they need and that parents are not getting the options they want."

The CER-commissioned poll was conducted by International Communications Research, Inc. [ICR] of Media, Pennsylvania. The telephone survey of 1003 adults, conducted between August 20-24, 1997, represents a scientific sampling of a cross section of Americans and is 95 percent accurate to within ± 3 percent. The ten-question survey focused on issues of education quality, school choice, teacher compensation, charter schools and the federal role in education.

"What distinguishes this poll from many of the other education-related polls is the nature of our questions," said Allen, "we avoid the biased phrasing that is so common — in addition to providing the context in which issues are being debated in the real world."

In an effort to be as open as possible, the CER poll questioned respondents on the school choice issue three different ways: as an option for parents; a legislative policy issue tied to failing schools; and, as a means for allowing poor parents to use their tax dollars to send their children to the school of their choice. Responses included 82% of adults support offering parents a choice in where their children attend school; 66% favor a legislative choice policy and 72% support allowing poor parents to use tax dollars to send their children to the school of their choice.

Of equal importance, there is little-to-no difference in terms of race in how respondents view school choice, as better than eight-in-10 blacks and whites support school choice.

In other key findings from this year's survey: 92% of respondents said they felt the quality of their public school could be improved a great deal; 65% of respondents said they believed the federal government should play only a minor role, or no role at all, in setting education policy; and 78% said that they did not think that all of America's children, particularly those in the inner cities, were receiving the education they deserve.

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