

MISSOURIANS SPEAK OUT ON CHARTER SCHOOLS

Summary of Findings from the Latest Survey Research

February 2005

In January 2005, The Center for Education Reform (CER) conducted a survey of Missouri residents* to gauge their perceptions of charter schools and other education reform tools. Key findings are highlighted below.

Support for Charter Schools

- **Missouri residents overwhelmingly support the charter school concept.** 73 percent of Missourians say they support "allowing communities to create new public schools, called charter schools, that would be held accountable for student results and would be required to meet the same academic standards as other public schools, but not cost taxpayers any additional money."
- **Missouri parents support the concept of charter schools.** 80 percent of parents with school-age children support the charter school concept. That number boosts to 87 percent among parents who sent their children to private schools and 88 percent among single moms.

Knowledge of Charter Schools

- **Missourians know little about charter schools.** When asked what a charter schools is, a full 16 percent knew so little about the issue that they declined to take a guess.
- **Missouri residents have slightly less knowledge of charters than other Americans.** Approximately 22 percent of Missourians are able to identify charter schools as public schools. In addition, 30 percent of Missourians incorrectly identified charter schools as private schools, 24 percent as magnet schools.
- **Missourians do not affiliate charter schools with religious schools.** Only six percent of Missouri residents believe that charter schools are religious schools.

Innovative Education Reforms

- **Missourians want teachers to be paid based on performance.** More than half of Missouri residents (53 percent) supported “considering student performance when deciding how to compensate teachers” and nearly one-third (30 percent) supported this idea with intensity.
- **Missourians are tired of a “one size fits all” approach to education.** More than two-thirds (67 percent) of Missourians agreed that “as long as the school still meets the standards set by the state, schools should have the opportunity to select their education programs based on what might be best for the students, even if it differs from other schools in the area,” with 43 percent feeling “strongly” about this statement.
- **Missourians demand public school options.** Over half (56 percent) of Missouri residents believe that, “allowing the parent to choose from among a number of public schools” is the best option. By comparison, 38 percent thought “assigning children to one public school based solely on where they live” was the best way to go. Single parents were among those Missourians most likely to support a choice.

The Center for Education Reform partnered with The Polling Company – a leading national research organization – to conduct a statewide telephone survey of 500 adults in Missouri and a nationwide survey of 800 adults across the country. The margin of error for the Missouri survey is +/- 4.38%, or at a 95% confidence interval.

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