

Subject: FW: Both Prop 30 Extension and K-14 School Facilities Bond Initiative Polling Well for November

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Seeing Need for School Funding, Most Favor Proposition 30 Extension, Construction Bond

MAJORITY WOULD USE BUDGET SURPLUS FOR PRESCHOOL RATHER THAN PAYING DOWN DEBT

SAN FRANCISCO, April 20, 2016—Most Californians say state funding for their local public schools is inadequate, and most favor two proposals that are likely to be on the November ballot to increase it: an extension of the Proposition 30 tax increase on higher incomes and a bond measure to pay for school construction projects.

These are among the key findings in the 12th annual statewide survey on Californians and Education released today by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC).

Although state spending on local schools has recently increased, 61 percent of adults and 60 percent of likely voters say the current level of funding is not enough. Democrats (73%) and independents (65%) are far more likely to hold this view than are Republicans (42%).

Majorities of adults (64%) and likely voters (62%) favor extending for 12 years the Proposition 30 tax increase on earnings over \$250,000 to fund education and health care, as an initiative now circulating for the November ballot would do. Asked how they would vote on a state bond measure to pay for school construction projects, most (76% adults, 63% likely voters) would vote yes. A

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bond measure for school construction projects has already qualified for the ballot.

"Six in 10 Californians say that state government funding for their local schools is inadequate," said Mark Baldassare, PPIC president and CEO. "In this election-year context, solid majorities favor a Proposition 30 tax increase extension and state and local school bonds."

Asked about potential local school measures, majorities (74% adults, 62% likely voters) would vote yes on a local school district bond for school

construction projects—more than the 55 percent majority required for passage of local school bonds. Support for a local parcel tax falls short of the required two-thirds majority: 62 percent of adults and 52 percent of likely voters would vote yes. Should the two-thirds majority threshold be lowered for parcel taxes for local schools? Again, support falls short among likely voters, with 44 percent saying it is a good idea (53% all adults).

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Most Prefer Using Budget Surplus for Preschool to Paying Down Debt

Californians' concerns about school funding extend to preschools. Three-quarters of adults (76%) say state government should fund voluntary preschool programs in California. And there is solid support for using some of the projected state budget surplus of several billion dollars to fund public preschool. Given a choice, 63 percent of adults say they would prefer to use the surplus this way, compared to 34 percent who would prefer to pay down the state debt and build up a reserve. (See related [Just the Facts: Californians and Early Childhood Education](#) for more findings. Enter the code **PUB946**.)

Job Approval for Brown, Legislature Holds Steady

Asked how they view their state's elected leaders, 54 percent of adults and 56 percent of likely voters approve of Governor Jerry Brown's job performance. Fewer approve of the way he is handling the K–12 public education system (45% adults, 36% likely voters). The legislature has a job approval rating of 48 percent among adults and 40 percent among likely voters, but it is also rated lower for its handling of the K-12 system (42% adults, 29% likely voters).

Concerned about Preschool Affordability, K-12 Teacher Shortage

When they are asked about the quality of education in California's K-12 schools, 40 percent of adults say it is a big problem—a record low since PPIC began asking the question in 1998. Notably, public school parents (27%) are much less likely than adults without school-age children (43%) to say quality is a big problem. Among racial/ethnic groups, blacks (58%) and whites (55%) are far more likely to say educational quality is a big problem than are Asians (25%) and Latinos (22%).

When asked about preschool education, there is more concern about

affordability than quality. Just 20 percent of adults view the quality of preschool education as a big problem. Nearly three-quarters of Californians say affordability is a big problem (42%) or somewhat of a problem (32%). ([See survey questions 33–38.](#))

Fewer than a third of adults (30%) and public school parents (29%) say teacher quality is a big problem in public schools. Concern about a shortage of teachers is higher. Majorities (53% adults, 55% public school parents) say it is a big problem. Given a set of choices for how the government can attract new teachers, adults (45%) and public school parents (47%) are most likely to say they would prefer to increase minimum starting salaries. Fewer choose providing forgivable loans for teacher education (21% adults), housing assistance (11% adults), or reducing the requirements needed to get a teaching credential (8%).

A majority of adults (53%) are very concerned that schools in lower-income areas have a shortage of good teachers compared to schools in wealthier areas (31% somewhat concerned, 8% not concerned, 7% not at all concerned).

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Local Public Schools Get Good Grades

Most adults give the quality of public schools in their neighborhoods grades of A (20%) or B (37%). Ratings are generally similar across parties and regions. Among racial/ethnic groups, blacks (33%) are much less likely to give A's or B's to their schools than are whites (51%), Latinos (67%), or Asians (69%).

Most Californians (61%) say their local public schools are doing an excellent or good job preparing students for college. Their responses are slightly less positive when asked how schools are doing in preparing students for jobs and the workforce. Just over half of adults (52%) say their local public schools are doing an excellent or good job in this area. Blacks are the racial/ethnic group least likely to say their local schools are doing a good or excellent job preparing students for college (49%) or for jobs and the workforce (36%).

A majority of adults (53%) say they are very concerned that students in lower-income areas are less likely than other students to be ready for college when they finish high school (33% somewhat concerned, 7% not too concerned, 6% not at all concerned).

Partisan Divide on Common Core

Two years after implementation of the Common Core State Standards, most adults (66%) and public school parents (75%) have heard at least a little about these standards for English and math. Among public school parents, 40 percent say their child's school or district provided information about Common Core and that it was adequate. Another 22 percent say they received information but needed more, and 35 percent say they were not given information about Common Core.

Based on what they have read or heard, Californians are somewhat divided in their opinions of Common Core. While 43 percent of adults favor the standards, 39 percent are opposed and 18 percent are undecided. Public school parents are

more likely to favor the standards (51% favor, 36% oppose). Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (55%) and Asians (48%) are more likely than blacks (37%) and whites (34%) to favor Common Core. And Democrats (46%) are more likely than independents (35%) and much more likely than Republicans (23%) to favor Common Core.

Even though views of the standards are mixed, a majority of Californians are confident (15% very, 39% somewhat) that Common Core will make students more college and career ready.

"Reflecting the 2016 presidential campaign dialogue, Common Core is a politically polarizing issue in California today," Baldassare said. "Still, a majority of Californians have confidence that Common Core will lead to positive outcomes for college readiness and workforce skills."

In addition, a majority of adults (57%) say they are confident that Common Core will achieve another of its goals: helping students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Most adults (58%) are also very or somewhat confident that teachers are adequately prepared to teach the skills. Confidence is even higher among public school parents (72%).

Last spring, students took the new Smarter Balanced Assessment, online tests designed to measure whether students meet grade-level standards in math, reading, and writing. While less than half of public school parents had heard about the tests last April, a majority (55%) today have heard at least a little about them (45% heard nothing at all). Asked last April to predict how students would do on the new tests, 42 percent of public school parents said they expected scores to be about the same as those on past tests. As educational policymakers expected, this proved not to be the case. When the results were released in fall 2015, a smaller percentage of California students had met or exceeded standards than had done so on previous tests. However, when public school parents are asked today about the test results, only about a quarter (26%) correctly answer that students scored lower on the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

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Few Know about New School Funding Formula but Most Favor Its Goals

The state enacted the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) to provide school districts with more spending flexibility. However, most adults (55%) think state government has the most control in deciding how state funds are spent in local schools, and nearly half of public school parents (47%) agree. Yet most Californians think it is local districts (45%) or schools (37%) that should have the most control. Just 15 percent say the state government should.

Only about a third of adults (30%) and public school parents (36%) have heard about the LCFF, but after being read a brief description, strong majorities (76% adults, 77% public school parents) favor it. The LCFF provides additional funding to districts with more English Learners and lower-income students. Strong majorities of Californians (65% adults, 73% public school parents) are at least somewhat confident that the additional funding will be spent on these students. Most adults (76%) expect the academic achievement of English Learners and low-income students to improve as a result.

As part of the LCFF, school districts are required to develop, adopt, and annually update a three-year Local Control and Accountability Plan. Districts are required to involve parents and encouraged to seek input from parents of lower-income students and English Learners. How did the districts do? Half of public school parents (51%) say they were provided with information about how to get involved. Half of those with household incomes below \$40,000 (49%) say they were provided with information. Latino public school parents (58%) are slightly more likely than white parents (50%) to have received information. In the end, just 4 percent of public school parents say they were very involved in the development of their school's accountability plan, and 14 percent say they were somewhat involved.

"Parental involvement and knowledge are clearly works in progress as local school districts implement the state's new curriculum, student testing, and funding plans," Baldassare said.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The PPIC Statewide Survey was conducted with funding from the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, The Dirk and Charlene Kabcenell Foundation, the LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment, the Silver Giving Foundation, and the Stuart Foundation. Findings are based on a telephone survey of 1,703 California adult residents—half (851) interviewed on landline telephones and half (852) on cell phones—from April 3-12, 2016. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, according to respondents' preferences.

The sampling error, taking design effects from weighting into consideration, is ± 3.5 percent for all adults, ± 3.8 percent for the 1,384 registered voters, and ± 4.4 percent for the 997 likely voters. It is ± 6.0 for the 507 parents and ± 7.0 for the 375 public school parents. For more information on methodology, see page 23.

Mark Baldassare is president and CEO of PPIC, where he holds the Arjay and Frances Fearing Miller Chair in Public Policy. He is founder of the PPIC Statewide Survey, which he has directed since 1998.

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