



# University of Delaware Education Research & Development Center

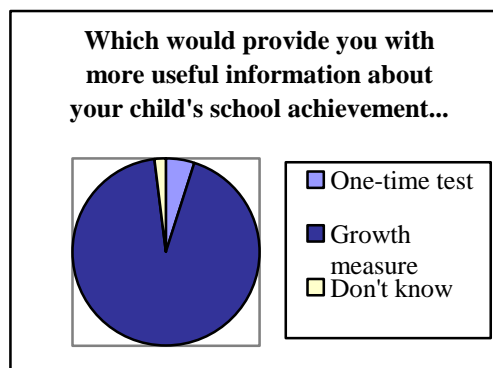
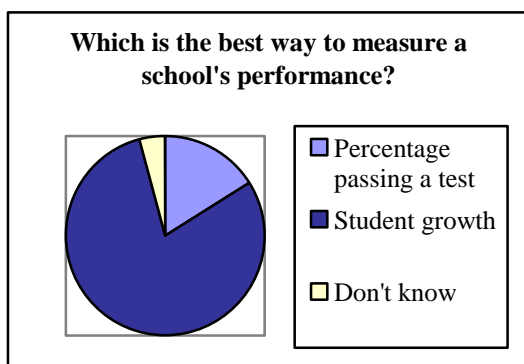


## PUBLIC OPINION OF EDUCATION: EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

### Highlights of the 2006 Statewide Public Poll on the Condition of Education in Delaware

June 2007

Delawareans strongly support using growth measures in lieu of one-time testing on an annual basis for two reasons. First, 79% believe it is a better way to measure a school's performance. The second reason, according to 91% of parents, is that growth measures would provide more useful information about their children's school achievement.



Delawareans are not alone in their views about using student improvement as an indicator of school success. In a national sample, 81% of participants thought using improved student performance over time was a better measure of a school's performance than the percentage of students passing a single test.<sup>1</sup>

For more information or questions regarding the Public Poll, contact:

**Cheryl M. Ackerman, Ph.D.**

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE EDUCATION RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Phone: 302-831-4433 E-mail: [cma@udel.edu](mailto:cma@udel.edu)

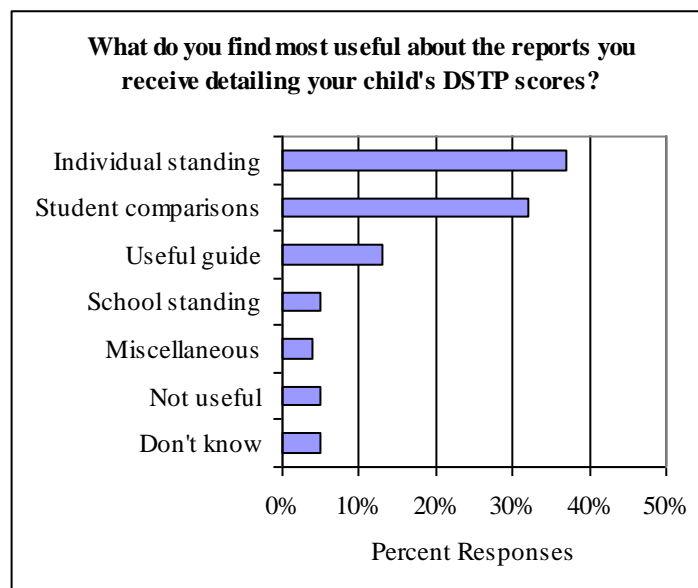
This poll is a collaborative effort of the College of Human Services, Education and Public Policy at the University of Delaware. The author extends special thanks to the Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research for conducting the telephone interviews, and to Delaware Education Research and Development Center staff members Qinghua Nian for her assistance with the literature review; and Kelly Sherretz and Joan Buttram for their editing assistance.

For more information on the 2006 Public Poll, please contact the R&D Center by email at [ud-rdc@udel.edu](mailto:ud-rdc@udel.edu) or by phone at (302) 831-4433. The briefs and full report will also be available on the web as they are produced at <http://www.rdc.udel.edu>

## USEFULNESS OF TEST SCORES

### Poll Results

For this poll, parents were asked about the usefulness of different types of test scores and information they are provided along with their children's test scores. When asked about the reports they receive detailing their children's Delaware State Testing Program (DSTP) scores, 68% of parents whose children took the DSTP believe the reports are very or somewhat useful. These results are similar to those from the 2005 Delaware poll<sup>2</sup> where 63% of parents said the DSTP reports were useful. Parents who indicated that the reports were useful were asked to describe what they found most useful about them (see figure on the right). The most common responses were that the DSTP reports provide information about their child's individual standing (37%) and student comparisons (32%). A small percentage of parents (5%) said the reports were not useful at all.



Since there are different ways to test children, parents were asked whether a growth measure or a yearly test would provide more useful information about their children's academic achievement. The overwhelming majority of parents (91%) indicated that a growth measure would provide more useful information than a test administered once a year.

### Putting it in Context

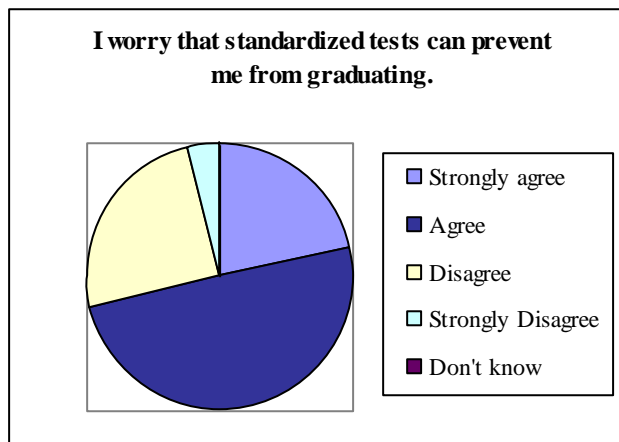
Tests that measure growth are useful to both parents and educators. At present, there are many schools throughout the United States that are using growth measures to help teachers provide better instruction for their students. For example, the *Measures of Academic Progress* (MAP) are tests designed for several states based on their educational standards.<sup>3</sup> The results of these tests show how children improved throughout the school year because the test is administered more than once.

While parents and teachers can benefit from the use of growth measure tests, so can school administrators. One difficulty school administrators are having with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is that it does not count student improvement unless children meet their state standards. Therefore, even if there is a great deal of improvement, students and schools are considered unsuccessful because they have not met the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals set by NCLB.<sup>4</sup> In response to these issues, the United States Department of Education began a pilot program offering states the opportunity to propose changes to their existing accountability systems that would include growth measures as part of their AYP. Delaware's proposal was one of a few to receive approval from the federal government to implement their new assessment plan that will capture student growth over time.<sup>5</sup> According to Secretary of Education Woodruff, the "Delaware's growth model is based on individual student achievement over time and will allow Delaware to look at individual student growth from year to year rather than comparing one class to another."<sup>6</sup> When student report cards are sent to parents, individual student growth information will be included along with the traditional accountability test results.<sup>7</sup>

## SPECIAL FEATURE: STUDENT VOICE ON TESTING AND NCLB

### Poll Results

Students were included in the 2006 Public Poll to provide a perspective from those affected by the education laws in Delaware. They were asked how much their school emphasized preparing for standardized tests. Eighty-four percent (84%) said their school emphasized test preparation very much or quite a bit. In addition, most students (88%) indicated that they would try to do their best on standardized tests. Although one-fourth (25%) of the students were not worried that standardized tests could prevent them from graduating, most (71%) said they were worried. Finally, when asked if the No Child Left Behind policy would improve the education of students in their school, 32% said yes and 27% said no. Large proportions of student were either unsure (18%) or didn't know enough about the law to say (22%).



### Putting it in Context

Students at the national level are clearly concerned about the emphasis placed on standardized tests. In a recent report detailing the results of the 2006 High School Survey of Student Engagement<sup>8</sup> administration, students offered additional comments about their survey responses such as, “All our school really cares about is getting good grades on the standardized tests not about life after high school,” and “We spend way too much time preparing for our state tests we should instead be learning more productive material” (p. 9). In addition, Students in Delaware and around the country have a reason to be concerned that testing will hamper their ability to graduate from high school. Currently there are 22 states implementing graduation exit exams, of which Delaware is one.<sup>9</sup> However, students are willing to put forth effort in school and are able to see the value of rigorous standards. In the 2006 Reality Check<sup>10</sup> national student survey, 51% of students said they worked as hard as they could in school. This survey also reported that 80% of students in 2005 and 71% in 2002 said requiring students to meet higher standards in order to be promoted or graduate was a good idea. In a recent national poll of middle school students, many students reported that their teachers are more concerned about standardized testing than they or their parents are, and most believe the grades their teachers give them are a more accurate reflection of their abilities.<sup>11</sup>

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR EDUCATIONAL CONTENT AND PEDAGOGY

### Poll Results

Delawareans were asked two questions about how much responsibility the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) and classroom teachers should have over what happens in Delaware classrooms. Sixty-five percent of Delaware residents said the DDOE and classroom teachers should have equal responsibility in deciding what children should learn in school. Delawareans had a somewhat different opinion about who should decide the teaching methods used in Delaware classrooms: While just over half (51%) of residents said classroom teachers and DDOE should share the responsibility equally, 38% believe classroom teachers should be either solely responsible for determining the teaching methods in their classrooms, or have a greater role than the DDOE.

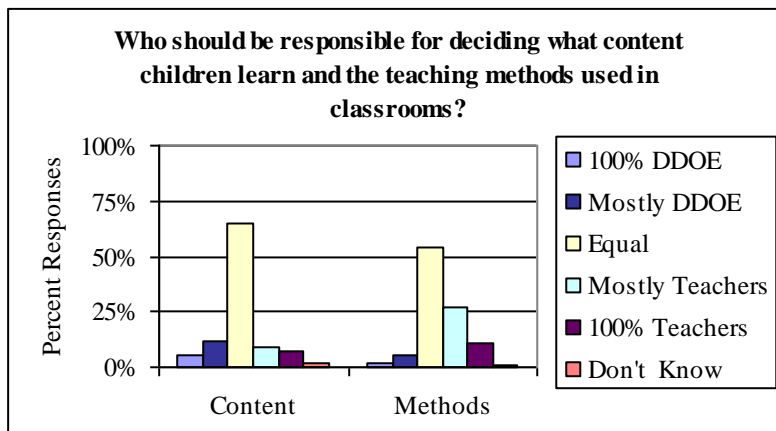
### Putting it in Context

There appears to be limited research available addressing the issue of control over classroom activities such as content and pedagogy and how this relates to student achievement.

However, one national study showed that there are large differences in the degree to which teachers have control over the content and teaching methods in their classrooms throughout the country.<sup>12</sup> In an exploratory study of middle school science and math

classes, student achievement tended to

be higher in classes where teachers had control of teaching methods, but lower when teachers had control over course content.<sup>13</sup> Delaware currently has specific state standards to guide instruction at all grade levels and some districts provide pacing guides that provide more explicit direction on when content should be taught throughout the year.



### Design, Data Collection, and Sampling Error

From February 13 to April 24, 2006, telephone interviews were conducted with 941 residents throughout the state, 302 parents or school-age children and 639 non-parents. The data collection procedure for the poll was scientifically developed and random digit dialing was employed to obtain a random sample of citizens. All analyses conducted by the R&D Center for the Public Poll involved weighting the data to reflect the statewide population more accurately. Ninety-three students' were interviewed after their parents gave consent for them to participate and they assented to participate.

When using a sample, all measurements are subject to sampling error; that is, the extent to which the results may differ from what would be obtained if the entire population of Delaware residents had been surveyed. It is important to remember that small differences may not be statistically significant. The size of the sampling error primarily depends on the number of people surveyed and the response percentage. The sampling error for the poll<sup>1</sup> ranges from approximately  $\pm 1.9\%$  -  $3.2\%$  for the total adult sample,  $\pm 2.3\%$  -  $3.9\%$  for the non-parent sample,  $\pm 3.4\%$  -  $5.6\%$  for the parent sample, and  $\pm 6.2\%$  -  $10.4\%$  for the student sample.



The University of Delaware is committed to assuring equal opportunity to all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, ancestry, national origin, sexual orientation, veteran status, age, or disability in its educational programs, activities, admissions or employment practices as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Executive Orders 11246 and 11375 and other applicable statutes. Inquiries concerning Title IX, Section 503 and 504 compliance, Executive Order 11246 and information regarding campus accessibility and Title VI should be referred to the Affirmative Action Director, 305 Hullihen Hall, 302-831-2835, 302-831-4552 (TDD).

<sup>1</sup> Rose, L. C., & Gallup, A. M. (2006). *The 38<sup>th</sup> Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools*. Retrieved on October 25, 2006 from [http://www.pdkmembers.org/e-GALLUP/kpoll\\_pdfs/pdkpoll38\\_2006.pdf](http://www.pdkmembers.org/e-GALLUP/kpoll_pdfs/pdkpoll38_2006.pdf)

<sup>1</sup> These error ranges used a 95% confidence interval for response percentages between 5% and 95%.

- 
- <sup>2</sup> Ackerman, C. M. (2005). *Public opinion of Education: Educational accountability*. (Tech. Rep. No. T2005.004.2). Newark: University of Delaware, Delaware Education Research and Development Center. Available at [http://www.rdc.udel.edu/PublicPoll/Final\\_Accountability\\_Brief\\_Update\\_2005.pdf](http://www.rdc.udel.edu/PublicPoll/Final_Accountability_Brief_Update_2005.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> Northwest Evaluation Association. (2005). *Resource portfolio*. Lake Oswego, OR: Northwest Evaluation Association. More information available at [www.nwea.org](http://www.nwea.org)
- <sup>4</sup> Wallis, C., & Steptoe, J. (2007, May 24). How to fix No Child Left Behind. *Time*. Retrieved on June 8, 2007 from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1625192,00.html>
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Education. (2006, November). *Secretary Spellings approves additional growth model pilots for 2006-2007* [Press Release]. Retrieved on May 3, 2007 from, <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2006/11/11092006a.html>
- <sup>6</sup> Woodruff, V. A. (2006, November 9). *Delaware's Growth Model Approved By USDOEd*. [Press Release]. Retrieved on May 3, 2007 from <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/news/2006/1109.shtml>
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> Yazzie-Mintz, E. (2006). *Voices on students on engagement: A report on the 2006 High School Survey of Student Engagement*. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. Retrieved April 10, 2007 from [http://ceep.indiana.edu/hssse/pdf/HSSSE\\_2006\\_Report.pdf](http://ceep.indiana.edu/hssse/pdf/HSSSE_2006_Report.pdf)
- <sup>9</sup> Education Commission of the States. (2007). *High school-level assessments: Purpose(s) of exams*. [Last updated April 10, 2007]. Retrieved on June 7, 2007 from <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=1163>
- <sup>10</sup> Johnson, J., Arumi, A., Ott, A., & Remaley, M. H. (2006). *Reality Check 2006*. Public Agenda. Available at <http://www.publicagenda.org/research/pdfs/rc0601.pdf>
- <sup>11</sup> Markow, D., Liebman, M., & Dunbar, J. (2007). *Middle school poll*. Phi Delta Kappa International. Retrieved on June 7, 2007 from [http://www.pdkintl.org/ms\\_poll/07ms\\_poll.pdf](http://www.pdkintl.org/ms_poll/07ms_poll.pdf)
- <sup>12</sup> Anderson, J. (1995). *Who's in charge? State differences in public school teachers' perceptions of their control over determining curriculum, texts, and course content*. Washington, DC: National Institutes on the Education of At-Risk Students. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 387 860). Retrieved on May 17, 2007 from [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content\\_storage\\_01/0000000b/80/22/fc/ad.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/22/fc/ad.pdf)
- <sup>13</sup> Gamoran, A., Porter, A. C., & Gahng, T. (1994). *Teacher empowerment: A policy in search of theory and evidence*. Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 372 032). Retrieved on June 7, 2007 from [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content\\_storage\\_01/0000000b/80/27/08/a8.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/27/08/a8.pdf)