2003 STATEWIDE EDUCATOR POLL ON THE CONDITION OF EDUCATION IN DELAWARE

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

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DELAWARE EDUCATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

2003 Educator Poll:
Summary of Results on the Condition of Education in Delaware

INTRODUCTION

On alternating years the Delaware Education Research and Development Center (R&D Center) of the University of Delaware conducts a telephone poll surveying educators on their impressions regarding the condition of education in Delaware. This report summarizes the results from the statewide educator poll conducted in the fall of 2003. Highlights of key findings in four areas of educational reform are reported and include the following:

Quality of Education Grading the Schools Postsecondary Preparation Funding Needs	**Special Needs Student Education** Teacher Preparedness Program Diversity and Flexibility Teacher Practices Teacher Beliefs
Reading Education Self-Assessment Reading Educators Influence of Phoneme Awareness Theory Reported Practices	**Accountability** Quality and Suitability of Student Assessment Impact on Schools, Teachers, and Students Entrance into Higher Education

In addition to a summary of the findings, this report includes the following:

- Full length copies of the educator poll results (white pages)
- Trend analyses of the statewide poll on the condition of education in Delaware (blue pages)
- Background information on the poll, survey design, data collection techniques, and
- A list of references (peach pages)

Putting the Results in Context

This year's summary of the poll results includes a section entitled "putting it in context" for each topic addressed. Information concerning related research and trends across polling years in Delaware provides a context for the poll results.

For more information on the 2003 educator poll, please contact the staff of the R&D Center by email at ud-rdc@udel.edu or by phone at (302) 831-4433.

HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Grading the Schools

Poll Results	*Putting it in Context*
Most educators surveyed (72%) gave public elementary schools a grade of "A" or "B." However, less than half of the educators gave public middle schools (39%) and public high schools (44%) a grade of "A" or "B."	The grades given to public elementary schools and public high schools are the same as those given in 2001 (Brown, 2002a).
The majority of educators (60%) felt that public schools in their districts have improved, compared to five years ago. Half of the educators (50%) felt that the quality of education in Delaware was comparable to the rest of the nation, and a little more than a third (38%) felt that it was better.	A positive trend has emerged in response to the question of whether schools have improved compared to 5 years ago. In the 1996 statewide educator poll , less than a third of the educators (27%) thought that the quality of education had improved; this increased to 44% in 1997 and 60% in 2003 (Brown 1996, 1998). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) periodically assesses student achievement throughout the nation. It is interesting to note that in both 1997 and 2003, about one-third of Delaware educators felt that Delaware's schools are better than the nation's schools , but the NAEP results indicate that educators' perceptions are only correct with regard to 2003. The assessment of Delaware students in mathematics, reading, writing, and science conducted in 1996 and 1998 indicated that Delaware performed below the national average in these subjects, whereas the assessments conducted in 2002 and 2003 show Delaware students performing above the national average (Brown, 1998; The National Center for Education Statistics).

Postsecondary Preparation

Poll Results	*Putting it in Context*
Most educators polled felt that it is very important for public schools to prepare students for college (90%), for work (93%), for active involvement in their community and society (79%), and to provide a well-rounded education to students (94%).	Even though most educators polled (93%) feel that preparing students for work is very important, around 60% of U.S. public school teachers believe most students have the skills to succeed in the work world (Public Agenda Online, 2002). However, nationally, 59% of U.S. employers believe that graduates of public schools lack the skills they need to succeed in the work world (Public Agenda Online, 2002). In addition, only 47% of professors believe that public school graduates have the skills to succeed in college. Finally, 74% of employers and 84% of professors felt that most students would benefit if they were pushed harder in school (Duffett, 2003).

QUALITY OF EDUCATION, CONT'D

Funding Needs

Poll Results	*Putting it in Context*
Educators were divided on what should be the top priority of the Legislature for funding public education in Delaware. While educators cited many areas such as resources (15%), special needs children (15%), teachers' salaries (12%), specific subjects (11%), special programs and populations (6%), physical facilities (4%), and training and professional development (4%), hiring more teachers to reduce class size (22%) was mentioned most often.	In 1995 and 1996, 54% and 48% of Delawareans, respectively, felt that reduction of class size was very important (Brown, 1996; LeMahieu, 1995). Additionally, in 2001, class size was the second most important factor (59%) in selecting a public school after the quality of the teaching staff (79%) (Brown, 2001; 2002b). Nationally, more than half of the Americans polled (59%) thought that salaries for teachers in their community were too low (Public Agenda Online, 2003).

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Teacher Preparedness

Poll Results	*Putting it in Context*
Nearly all of the teachers surveyed reported being very well prepared (46%) or somewhat prepared (46%) to teach students of varying abilities. In addition, most reported being very well prepared (41%) or somewhat prepared (42%) to teach students who are gifted and talented. When asked how informed educators were regarding the unique social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students, 25% indicated that they were well informed, while 20% of the educators surveyed felt that gifted and talented students have the same social and emotional needs as other students.	An absence of courses focused on educating gifted and talented students and very varied requirements for coursework in the area of special education became apparent during an examination of the course requirements for undergraduate degrees in education at the four institutions of higher education in Delaware that confer degrees in education. A comprehensive review of the research on social and emotional needs of gifted students concluded that "*there is no research evidence to suggest that gifted and talented children are any less emotionally hardy than their age peers* [emphasis in original]. There are, however, aspects of their life experiences due to their differences from other children. . . .that may put them at risk for specific kinds of social and emotional difficulties if their needs are unmet" (Neihart, Reis, Robinson, & Moon, 2002, p. xv).
The majority (59%) of educators surveyed were not at all familiar with the concept of Universal Design for Learning.	Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a theoretical framework that guides the development and use of curricula that are flexible and supportive of all students (Rose & Meyer, 2002). It is teaching and assessment orientation that recognizes the diversity in today's classrooms, not a special education approach or strategy. Curricula are designed with all students in mind, so materials, methods, and assessments are usable by all. Goals, methods, assessments, and materials are selected to minimize barriers and maximize flexibility, and access to digital materials is an essential component of comprehensive UDL implementation. UDL is a cornerstone for the Delaware Department of Education State Improvement Grant and its implementation will be monitored over the next four years.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, CONT'D

Program Diversity and Flexibility

Poll Results	*Putting it in Context*
The vast majority (90%) of educators polled believe the general education curriculum in Delaware schools should be flexible enough to meet the needs of nearly all students, including students with mild to moderate disabilities. However, nearly one-quarter (23%) did not believe that their own school could meet the needs of such a diverse student body. Most teachers surveyed (92%) indicated that barriers exist limiting their success in addressing the diverse learning needs of students in their classrooms. The three barriers most frequently cited were large numbers of students in class (32%), not enough time, for example, for preparation (16%), and not enough appropriate instructional materials (16%).	According to Lovitt (1993), many educators believe students with mild disabilities should be exposed to the same curricula as regular education students, but that students with special needs may require support from a consulting teacher, modified instruction, or assistance with study skills. However, these recommended practices are not widespread. Lovitt further discusses the need for flexibility in evaluating the performance of students with special needs, and cites individualized education plans (IEP), curriculum-based measures, portfolios, and a dynamic assessment approach. Rosenfeld and Gravois (1994) emphasize that "the critical issue is the adaptability of the instruction to the individual learner" (p. 4), which holds true for students at all grade and ability levels.
Many educators (72%) feel the public schools should be doing more to challenge the very smartest children in Delaware. Seventy percent of educators surveyed reported having a program for gifted and talented students at their schools. However, the percentage of students that educators feel would benefit from some form of programming for gifted students varied greatly. One-fourth (25%) reported that very few (1% - 5%) of their students would benefit, 23% felt more than one-fifth of their students would benefit, and 14% indicated that none of their students would benefit from special programming for gifted and talented students.	While the Delaware Department of Education has published guidelines for meeting the educational needs of high-ability students, which are based on those provided by the National Association for Gifted Children, there is no state mandate requiring schools to provide programming for gifted and talented students. Typically, programs for the gifted and talented include the top 1-20% of students, and vary widely in both their design and who they serve (Colangelo & Davis, 2003). A national study of elementary teachers by Moon, Brighton, and Callahan (2003) showed that one effect of emphasizing standardized testing is that the resultant changes in teacher practices may lead to a "one size fits all" curriculum.

Teacher Practices

Poll Results	*Putting it in Context*
When classroom teachers were asked about the instructional materials they use in their classrooms, two patterns emerged. First, materials requiring visual or hands-on use were employed most often by teachers. Many teachers reported using textbooks (75%) printed materials (87%), and manipulatives (74%) at least a few times a week. Second, instructional materials requiring technology were used least frequently. Software with an audio component was reportedly used no more than a few times a month by many (62%) teachers. Teachers were also asked about the instructional activities in which their students engage. Most teachers reported that the following activities happened every day: work on assignments individually (68%), engage in hands-on learning activities (62%), and work in cooperative learning groups (54%). Fewer teachers reported using calculators or computers (27%) or solving real-world problems (35%) every day.	"Goodlad notes that one of the most disturbing findings in their study of schooling was the narrow range of instructional techniques they observed, particularly at the secondary level" (cited in Lovitt, 1993, p. 57).

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, CONT'D

Teacher Beliefs

Poll Results	*Putting it in Context*
About one-third (31%) of teachers reported that most teachers feel they should not be expected to work with children with disabilities.	According to Lovitt (1993), many teachers are unable or unwilling to modify their instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the regular classroom.
A proposal has been made to assess all Delaware students in the 7th and 8th grades to recommend one of three career tracks in high school – a general academic setting, a college preparatory setting, or a vocational education setting. This recommendation would be based on students' academic performance, interests, abilities, and skills. When educators were asked how much they support this proposal, responses varied greatly: approximately one-third (30%) support it to a great extent, another third (37%) support it to some extent, and one-third (31%) support the proposal to either a small extent or do not support it at all.	"The adjustment of curriculum to pupil ability in within-class and cross-grade programs may be the key to [program] effectiveness" (Kulik & Kulik, 1997, p. 240). For more than 100 years, researchers have been publishing conflicting results about the effectiveness of educational tracking that support and discredit this educational philosophy. Research methods, student characteristics, and program characteristics all contribute to the mixed results (Kulik, 2003). Therefore, research shows that no single tracking or grouping method is beneficial to the academic performance and social-emotional well-being of all students. Because the research does not specify a definitive program or approach to tracking, care must be taken when deciding whether implementing some form of tracking is appropriate and in the best interest of all students.

READING EDUCATION (K-3 TEACHERS ONLY)

Self-Assessment Reading Educators

Poll Results	*Putting it in Context*
More than half of the K-3 educators (57%) stated that they felt very proficient at teaching struggling readers how to read. When asked about specific components of Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR), most (59%) felt very proficient at designing strategies to teach comprehension. Fewer (39%) felt very proficient at teaching poor readers to read with fluency.	Public policy and educational funding at the national level have now embraced the concept of Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR), mandating its use in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and the Reading First funding initiative. Five critical components of SBRR instruction have been identified: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Of these five components, the area of reading fluency has historically been neglected and/or devalued in teacher education programs (Rasinski, 2003). Research has consistently shown that at-risk students who are assigned to highly effective teachers show the greatest gains in achievement, regardless of poverty and language background (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Conversely, students assigned to poor quality teachers for several years score significantly lower than expected by their own previous achievement testing. This effect carries over into subsequent years, regardless of the later presence of an effective teacher (Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

Influence of Phoneme Awareness Theory

Poll Results	*Putting it in Context*
The theory that phonemic awareness instruction leads to future success in reading was rated as very important by 87% of K-3 educators surveyed, and 92% reported using this theory to a great extent or to some extent to guide their instruction of early readers. Eight percent were unfamiliar with the concept or replied they don't know if it is important to future reading success. Nine percent do not use it at all, are unfamiliar with, or don't know if phonemic awareness affects their instruction of reading.	The National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) has concluded that phoneme awareness (PA) is fundamental to learning to read and write in an alphabetic system and that it has enormous importance in the prevention and treatment of reading disabilities. PA is consistently the best predictor of future reading success, and it has been shown that PA can be taught directly (Learning First Alliance, 1998; NICHD, 2000).

READING EDUCATION, CONT'D

Reported Practices

Poll Results	*Putting it in Context*
When asked to estimate how frequently practices associated with SBRR were used, a majority of K-3 teachers responded that they use phonics every day (72%) and comprehension (meaning-based) strategies every day (69%). About half (52%) reported the use of direct vocabulary instruction on a daily basis. The utilization of assessment-guided instruction, a critical component of SBRR, was estimated at a few times a week or every day by 82% of respondents.	In a nation wide study, Baumann, Hoffman, Moon and Duffy-Hester (1998), note that teachers do not adhere to an "either-or" approach to teaching reading, but rather adapt and adopt practices representing phonics skills instruction **and** the enriched literacy practices often associated with whole language instruction. These two approaches are both compatible with, but not sufficient for, instruction within the SBRR model. In their reported use, Delaware's educators are consistent with those educators surveyed nationally. In the SBRR classroom, instruction is informed by assessment and follows scientifically researched schedules and sequences of skills and strategies that support students' acquisition of reading and writing (Simmons & Kame'enui, 2001). Delaware educators currently report using assessment to guide reading instruction, although the extent to which this assessment conforms to the SBRR model is unclear.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Quality and Suitability of Standardized Assessments

Poll Results

School and school district accountability ratings, part of a system designed to meet NCLB requirements, were released for the first time in 2003. Almost all of the educators polled—91%—answered that they saw their schools' ratings. Of those who saw their schools' ratings, about half (48%) said that their schools' ratings were about right, while another 41% said their schools' ratings were too low or much too low. Forty-five percent of educators answered that the ratings represent the knowledge level of students at their schools somewhat accurately. Another 41% thought that the ratings of their students' knowledge were not very accurate or not at all accurate.

Educators are divided in their opinions about achievement standards for students: 50% said that standards are about right, but 38% expressed concern that standards are too high. Furthermore, only 7% of educators believe that student achievement should be mostly or entirely based on comparison to an absolute benchmark (such as a defined passing grade on a standardized test). Almost four-fifths (79%) believe that student achievement should be based on a combination of a student's improvement over time and comparison with an absolute benchmark (39% believe they should be weighed equally and 40% believe that improvement over time should comprise most of the measure), and 11% believe that achievement should be based **only** on a student's improvement over time.

Putting it in Context

Research seems to underscore this ambivalence about how well test scores reflect school performance and student knowledge. Studies have shown that one test cannot fulfill different functions, such as measuring individual student achievement, measuring teacher efficacy, and assessing school wide performance (Goertz & Duffy, 2003), and the many studies done about the relationship between high-stakes testing and improved student and school performance have failed to clearly demonstrate that testing improves performance (Amrein & Berliner, 2003).

Researchers Kane and Staiger (2001) have questioned the ability of standardized test scores to accurately gauge school performance. They estimate that, in an average-sized elementary school, similar to the ones they studied, as much as 38% of the variance in school wide fifth-grade reading scores is due to chance factors, such as the presence of a few very good or very poor students, or a few good guesses on the part of a few students.

The ability of standardized tests to accurately reflect student achievement is also questioned by many educational researchers. For example, Sanders and Horn (1995) note that unless tests are revised annually, "teaching to the test" can skew scores: there is no way to tell whether students fully understood the question asked and the answer they provided, or simply responded with the answer they had been practicing. Sanders and Horn go on to caution that this could hold true for performance-based individual assessments that are not revised regularly. Similarly, Popham (2000) notes that the questions that most students answer correctly are deleted from standardized tests because if all students answer a certain question correctly, that question cannot help distinguish between students.

Impact on Schools, Teachers, and Students

Poll Results	*Putting it in Context*
Most educators (67%) are skeptical that every student will pass the state proficiency test by 2013, as mandated by the new national legislation, saying achievement of this goal is not very likely or not likely at all. Similarly, 57% of Delaware educators believe that the federal accountability plan will lead to no or small improvement of Delaware's schools, while 42% believe that the plan will lead to great or some improvement of Delaware's schools.	In the 2001 edition of this poll, a higher percentage of Delaware educators, about 53%, answered that they thought that Delaware's (original, pre-NCLB) DSTP program would lead to some or a great deal of improvement in Delaware schools. When considering the measurement error involved in polls with this number of participants, this is only slightly different than this year's results (see the peach section of this report for more information on measurement error).
A large majority of educators indicated that they were concerned a great deal (50%) or a fair amount (37%) that judging schools' performances only on English and math Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP) scores will cause less emphasis on other subjects such as science, history, art, and music. Additionally, when asked an open-ended question about how high-stakes testing has affected or will affect their classroom instruction, 20% of educators responded that there has been or will be a negative effect. This skepticism related to the federal accountability plan's effectiveness emerged again when educators were asked about the extent to which NCLB will reduce the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students and between economically advantaged and economically disadvantaged students. In both cases, about 30% of educators polled answered that NCLB will reduce the achievement gap to some or a great extent, while 68% answered that it would reduce each gap by a small extent or not at all. Indeed, 89% of educators polled thought that the achievement gaps between white and black students and between white and Hispanic students are due to factors outside school.	Some authors, including Meier (2002), have noted that reliance on standardized tests that focus on a few subjects, results in a narrowing of the curriculum and hinders creativity in teaching and learning. NCLB requires that schools begin testing students in science three times between grades 3 and 12 by the 2007–2008 school year. NCLB also provides grants in other subjects, such as American History, although it does not currently require testing in those subjects, either now or in the future.

Entrance into Higher Education

Poll Results	*Putting it in Context*
About half of educators agreed (and about half disagreed) with the proposed bill that would require Delaware Technical and Community College to automatically admit students who earn 3s and above on each section of the 10th-grade DSTP. About 35% of educators agreed that Delaware State University should be required to admit these students, and about 36% agreed that the University of Delaware should admit these students.	Delaware Technical and Community College already has open admissions: according to DelTech's Web site, everyone who can "benefit from instruction" is welcome to attend classes. Therefore, a requirement that public colleges and universities admit all students who earn 3s and above on their 10th-grade DSTP would only affect Delaware State University and the University of Delaware. Currently, both universities use multiple indicators, including (but not limited to) high school grade point average, SAT or ACT scores, class rank, and participation in extracurricular activities, to make admissions decisions. There are several possible consequences of implementing a reform requiring these institutions to admit this group of students. For example, changes in and differential admissions requirements for some students, an increase in enrollment, and increases in the capacity to accommodate these students should they decide to attend, may all need to be addressed if this reform is passed. Since the University of Delaware and Delaware State University are both public universities, the money for these expansions would most likely have to come from the state or from students' pockets. Finally, most researchers have concluded that high school grade point average is a better predictor of college persistence and college grade point average than the SAT (e.g., Reynolds & Weagley, 2003; Rothstein, 2003). Thus far, research has not addressed how well performance on the DSTP predicts success in college.

DELAWARE EDUCATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER
of the
University of Delaware

Statewide Educator Poll on the Condition of Education in Delaware
General 2003 Results Analysis – Delaware Educators (n = 415)

I. Quality of Education

Question	Responses					
	A	B	C	D	F	Don't know
Students in Delaware are often given the grades A, B, C, D, or F to denote the quality of their work. What grade would you give the public elementary schools in Delaware?	**19%**	**53%**	**12%**	**2%**	**<1%**	**13%**
What grade would you give the public middle schools in Delaware?	**5%**	**34%**	**36%**	**6%**	**1%**	**16%**
What grade would you give the public high schools in Delaware?	**10%**	**34%**	**30%**	**5%**	**2%**	**19%**
	Worse	About the same	Improved			Don't know
Compared to five years ago, would you say that the public schools in your district have gotten worse, stayed about the same, or improved?	**14%**	**19%**	**60%**			**7%**
Where would you say Delaware's schools stand in relation to the nation?	**7%**	**50%**	**38%**			**5%**

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important at all	Don't Know
How important is it for the public school system to prepare students for college?	**90%**	**9%**	**1%**	**0%**
How important is it for the public school system to prepare students for work?	**93%**	**6%**	**<1%**	**0%**
How important is it for the public school system to prepare students to be actively involved in their community and society?	**79%**	**20%**	**1%**	**0%**
How important is it for the public school system to provide a well-rounded education to students?	**94%**	**5%**	**1%**	**<1%**

Think about what the state legislature's top priority for funding public education in Delaware should be. What one area in public education would you tell the legislature most needs funding?

Response	Percent Response
More teachers to reduce class size	22%
Resources (includes books and technology)	15%
Special needs children (including at-risk students and those needing academic help)	15%
Salaries (including the equalization of funding across the state)	12%
Specific subjects	11%
Special programs and populations (for example, early years, advanced coursework, vocational programs)	6%
Physical facilities/buildings	4%
Teacher training/professional development	4%
Curriculum/instruction	3%
Other	10%
Don't Know	2%

II. Special Needs Students

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
The general education curriculum used in Delaware schools should be flexible enough to meet the needs of nearly all students, including students with mild to moderate disabilities.	**42%**	**48%**	**8%**	**2%**	**<1%**
The curriculum at my school is flexible enough to meet the needs of all students including those with mild or moderate disabilities.	**25%**	**51%**	**19%**	**4%**	**2%**
To what extent do you agree that most teachers feel they should not be expected to work with children with disabilities?	**6%**	**30%**	**46%**	**15%**	**2%**

	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Slightly familiar	Not at all familiar	Don't know
How familiar are you with the concept of Universal Design for Learning - very familiar, somewhat familiar, slightly familiar, or not at all familiar?	**6%**	**19%**	**16%**	**59%**	**0%**

	Very well prepared	Somewhat prepared	Not very well prepared	Not at all prepared	Don't know
How well prepared do you feel to teach children of varying abilities?	**46%**	**46%**	**7%**	**<1%**	**<1%**

	Yes	No	Don't know
Is there an educational program for gifted and talented students at your school?	**70%**	**28%**	**2%**

	Very well prepared	Somewhat prepared	Not very well prepared	Not at all prepared	Don't know
How well prepared do you feel to teach students who are gifted and talented?	**41%**	**42%**	**13%**	**4%**	**<1%**

	More	About the same	Less			Don't know
To challenge the very smartest children, should public schools in Delaware do more, about the same, or less than they are currently doing?	**72%**	**25%**	**2%**			**1%**

	Well informed	Somewhat informed	Not very well informed	Not informed at all	Same social-emotional needs	Don't know
How informed are you regarding the unique social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students – Are you well informed, somewhat informed, not very well informed, not at all informed, OR, do you feel gifted and talented students have the same social-emotional needs as other students?	**25%**	**39%**	**12%**	**3%**	**20%**	**<1%**

	0%	1%-5%	6%-10%	11%-20%	>20%	Don't know
Approximately what percentage of your students would benefit from some form of programming for gifted and talented students?	**14%**	**25%**	**22%**	**17%**	**23%**	**1%**

About how frequently are the following instructional materials used by students in your classroom?	Every day	A few times a week	A few times a month	Less than once a month	Don't know
Grade-level textbook.	**49%**	**26%**	**3%**	**14%**	**6%**
Supplemental textbook or printed materials.	**53%**	**34%**	**8%**	**3%**	**1%**
Audio or video cassettes, or DVD.	**11%**	**25%**	**40%**	**23%**	**2%**
Software that has an audio component.	**14%**	**21%**	**28%**	**34%**	**3%**
Manipulatives or other tactile materials.	**48%**	**26%**	**16%**	**10%**	**<1%**

How often do you allow students in your class to participate in the following types of instructional activities?	Every day	A few times a week	A few times a month	Less than once a month	Don't know
Work in cooperative learning groups.	**54%**	**30%**	**13%**	**3%**	**<1%**
Engage in hands-on learning activities.	**62%**	**26%**	**10%**	**3%**	**0%**
Work on assignments individually.	**68%**	**26%**	**3%**	**2%**	**<1%**
Use calculators or computers as tools.	**27%**	**38%**	**17%**	**15%**	**4%**
Work on solving a real-world problem.	**35%**	**34%**	**20%**	**8%**	**2%**

Please list any barriers that may limit your success in addressing the diverse learning needs of students in your classroom.

Response	Percent Response
Large number of students in class	**32%**
Not enough time for example, not enough time for preparation)	**16%**
Not enough appropriate instructional materials	**16%**
Negative student behavior	**13%**
Lack of parental involvement	**11%**
Academic and language barriers	**11%**
Classrooms are ill-equipped technologically	**8%**
Insufficient funding for class supplies	**8%**
Insufficient number of instructional staff (for example, paraprofessionals)	**6%**
Problems with facilities	**4%**
Little administrative support	**4%**
Lack of appropriate teacher training	**3%**
Other barriers	**5%**
No Barriers	**8%**

	Great extent	Some extent	Small extent	Not at all	Don't know
A proposal has been made to assess all students in grades 7 and 8 in Delaware to recommend one of three career tracks in high school - a general academic setting, a college preparatory setting, or a vocational education setting. This recommendation will be based on academic performance, interests, abilities, and skills. To what extent do you support this proposal?	**30%**	**37%**	**12%**	**19%**	**2%**

III. Reading Education (Teachers of students in grades K to 3 only; n = 75)*

	Very proficient	Moderately proficient	Somewhat proficient	Not very proficient	Not applicable	Don't know
How proficient are you at teaching struggling readers how to read?	**57%**	**27%**	**12%**	**1%**	**3%**	**0%**

*Because of the small sample size, the measurement error is much greater. See the peach section of this report for more information on measurement error and interpretation.

	Great extent	Some extent	Small extent	Not at all	Unfamiliar with concept	Don't know
To what extent does phonological awareness guide your teaching of early reading?	**76%**	**16%**	**0%**	**3%**	**3%**	**3%**

	Every day	A few times a week	A few times a month	Less than once a month	Not applicable	Don't know
How often do you use guided reading when teaching early reading?	**64%**	**28%**	**2%**	**<1%**	**3%**	**2%**
How often do you use assessment data to improve your instruction?	**34%**	**48%**	**15%**	**2%**	**0%**	**1%**
How often do you use assessment data to meet the needs of individual students?	**40%**	**42%**	**15%**	**2%**	**0%**	**1%**
How often do you use assessment data to form "fluid groupings" within your classroom?	**26%**	**32%**	**30%**	**8%**	**4%**	**1%**
How often do you use "before, during, and after reading strategies" that explicitly focus on comprehension?	**69%**	**23%**	**2%**	**2%**	**3%**	**1%**
How often do you use phonics to teach early reading?	**72%**	**16%**	**3%**	**0%**	**7%**	**3%**
How often do you use direct teaching of vocabulary for reading comprehension?	**52%**	**40%**	**3%**	**2%**	**3%**	**0%**

	Very proficient	Moderately proficient	Somewhat proficient	Not very proficient	Not at all proficient	Don't know
How proficient are you at designing "before, during, and after reading strategies?"	**59%**	**30%**	**5%**	**1%**	**3%**	**0%**
How proficient are you at effectively managing "fluid groupings" of students?	**43%**	**45%**	**5%**	**1%**	**0%**	**5%**
How proficient are you at teaching poor readers how to read with fluency?	**39%**	**40%**	**13%**	**2%**	**0%**	**7%**

	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not important at all	Unfamiliar with concept	Don't know
How important is direct teaching of phonemic awareness to future reading success?	**87%**	**6%**	**0%**	**0%**	**4%**	**4%**
How important is it for teachers to demonstrate to struggling readers how to segment words into phonemes when reading and spelling?	**82%**	**6%**	**0%**	**0%**	**3%**	**2%**

IV. Educational Accountability

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not likely at all		Don't know
The new national legislation requires that a public school guarantee that every student in that school pass the state proficiency test by the end of the school year 2013-2014. How likely do you think it is that this goal could be achieved in the public schools in your district?	**4%**	**28%**	**32%**	**35%**		**<1%**

	A great extent	Some extent	A small extent	Not at all	Don't know
To what extent do you think the federal accountability plan will lead to improvement in all of Delaware's schools?	**7%**	**35%**	**37%**	**20%**	**1%**

	Yes	No	Don't know
This was the first year the national legislation rated the Delaware public schools using the Delaware Student Testing Program results. Did you see your school's ratings?	**91%**	**7%**	**2%**

	Much too high	Too high	About right	Too low	Much too low	Don't know
What did you think of the rating your school was given?	**2%**	**5%**	**48%**	**27%**	**14%**	**3%**

	Very accurate	Somewhat accurate	Not very accurate	Not at all accruate	Don't know
To what degree do you think the rating given to your school under the new federal legislation accurately represents the knowledge level of the students in your school?	**13%**	**45%**	**26%**	**15%**	**2%**

Consider these two ways to measure student achievement performance. One way is to examine student improvement over time and the other is by comparing student performance to an absolute benchmark. Which of the following best describes how you think these two measurement systems should be used to measure student achievement performance?

Response	Percent Response
About 100% should be based on improvement over time	**11%**
Most should be based on improvement over time	**40%**
Improvement over time and an absolute benchmark should be weighted about equally	**39%**
Most should be based on an absolute benchmark	**5%**
About 100% should be based on an absolute benchmark	**2%**

	Very well	Somewhat well	Not very well	Not well at all	Don't know
How well do your students' scores on the state test reflect how much they have learned?	**12%**	**50%**	**19%**	**10%**	**6%**

Research has shown that teachers often adjust their instruction in different ways when high stakes testing programs are in place. Please list the ways in which using a single test score for student advancement has or will influence your classroom instruction.

Categories	Responses	Percent Response*
Will influence (or has influenced) classroom instruction in a **negative** way	General negative influence comments	**23%**
	Less emphasis on art, music, and other subjects	**13%**
	Limited opportunities for creative teaching and learning	**3%**
	Limited opportunities for tailoring lessons to needs of individual students and classes	**4%**
Will influence (or has influenced) classroom instruction in a **positive** way	General positive influence comments	**5%**
	Use tests to gather information about students and structure teaching around that	**4%**
	Requires teachers to adhere to established curriculum	**4%**
Will (or has) required specific focus on the test itself	Test content—the topics covered by the DSTP	**21%**
	Test-taking strategies—actual practice tests, using old DSTP questions in class, descriptions of how test is scored	**18%**
	Test process—practice reading and writing, using standards to create lessons, creating classroom activities similar to questions on the DSTP	**10%**
No change in classroom instruction		**9%**
Additional comments critical of the testing program and accountability standards		**11%**
Additional commentary that praises the testing program and accountability standards		**2%**
Unclear answers		**4%**
Question is not applicable; educator is in administration, kindergarten, special education, or a subject that isn't tested on the DSTP		**12%**

*The percentages do not total to 100 because many respondents provided answers that included more than one idea.

	A great deal	A fair amount	Not much	Not at all	Don't know
How much, if at all, are you concerned that relying on testing for English and math only to judge a school's performance will mean less emphasis on art, music, history, and other subjects?	**50%**	**37%**	**10%**	**2%**	**<1%**

	Too high	About right	Too low		Don't know
In your opinion, are student achievement standards in the public schools in Delaware too high, about right, or too low?	**38%**	**50%**	**6%**		**4%**

	Quality of schooling	Other factors			Don't know
In your opinion, is the achievement gap between white and black and Hispanic students mostly related to the quality of schooling received or mostly related to other factors?	**7%**	**89%**			**4%**

	A great extent	Some extent	A small extent	Not at all	Don't know
To what extent do you think the federal accountability plan will reduce the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students?	**4%**	**25%**	**38%**	**30%**	**3%**
To what extent do you think the federal accountability plan will decrease the achievement gap between economically advantaged and economically disadvantaged students?	**3%**	**26%**	**39%**	**29%**	**3%**

	Should be tested	Should not be tested			Don't know
Before being licensed, do you think the teachers in the public schools in your district should or should not be required to take a statewide competency test in the subjects they will teach?	**84%**	**14%**			**1%**

Legislation has been proposed to require public institutions of higher education in Delaware to admit all Delaware high school graduates who meet the standard on the state testing program and the requirements to receive a "standard diploma."	Yes	No	Don't know
Should Delaware State University be required to accept all of these students?	**35%**	**58%**	**6%**
Should Delaware Technical and Community College be required to accept all of these students?	**48%**	**47%**	**4%**
Should the University of Delaware be required to accept all of these students?	**36%**	**58%**	**5%**

V. Demographics

	New Castle	Kent	Sussex
In what county do you work?	**50%**	**21%**	**27%**

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Mode	Range
Including this year, how many years have you been an educator in Delaware?	**14.2**	**9.9**	**11.5**	**4**	**39**

	Bachelors	Masters	Doctorate	Other (specify)
What is your highest level of education completed – bachelors degree, masters degree, or doctoral degree	**35%**	**60%**	**3%**	**2%**

	Male	Female
What is your gender?	**24%**	**76%**

	Classroom Teacher	Building Administrator	District Administrator	Other (guidance counselor, teacher's aide, reading specialist, etc.)
What is your current position as a Delaware educator – are you a classroom teacher, school administrator, district administrator, or do you have a different position?	**61%**	**1%**	**1%**	**37%**

What grade levels are you teaching this year?

	Percent responding*		Percent responding
Pre-K	**2%**	6th	**10%**
K	**7%**	7th	**13%**
1st	**10%**	8th	**13%**
2nd	**12%**	9th	**21%**
3rd	**9%**	10th	**22%**
4th	**12%**	11th	**22%**
5th	**13%**	12th	**21%**

* The total percent is greater than 100 because many teachers work with more than one grade level.

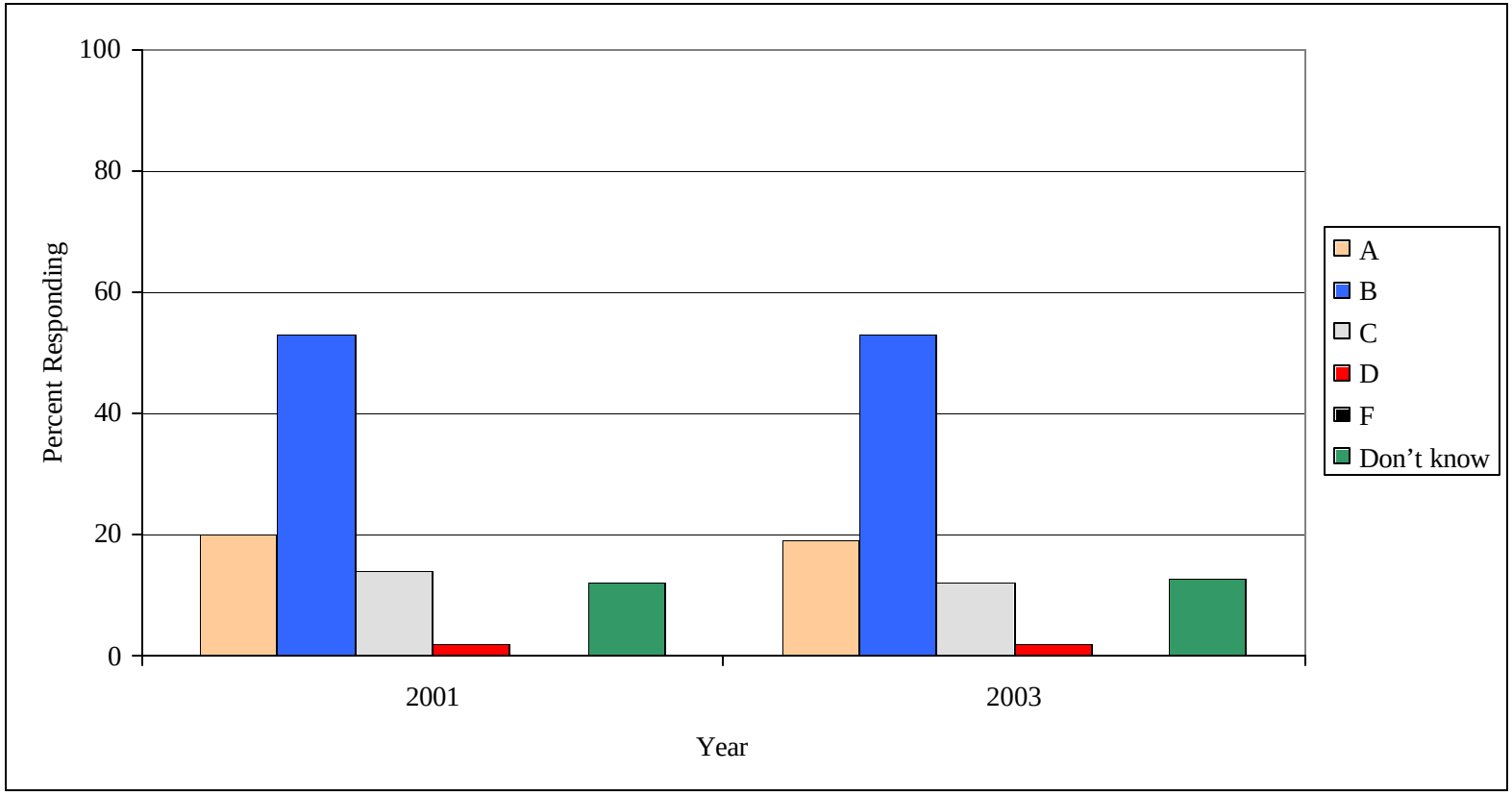
DELAWARE EDUCATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER
of the
University of Delaware

Trend Analyses of the Statewide Educator Poll on the Condition of Education in Delaware

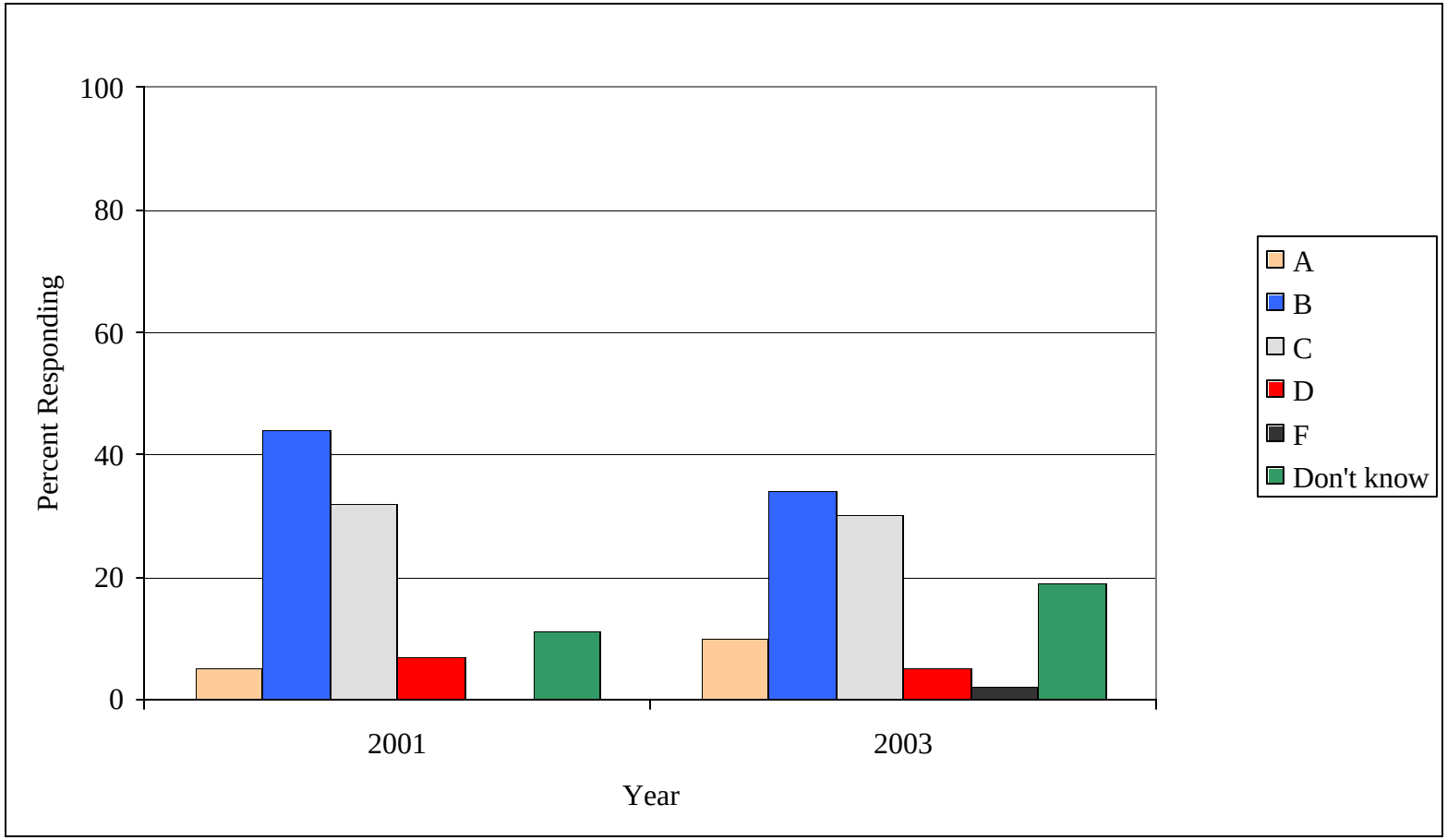
The following pages present information comparing the 2003 poll to previous years.

I. Quality of Education

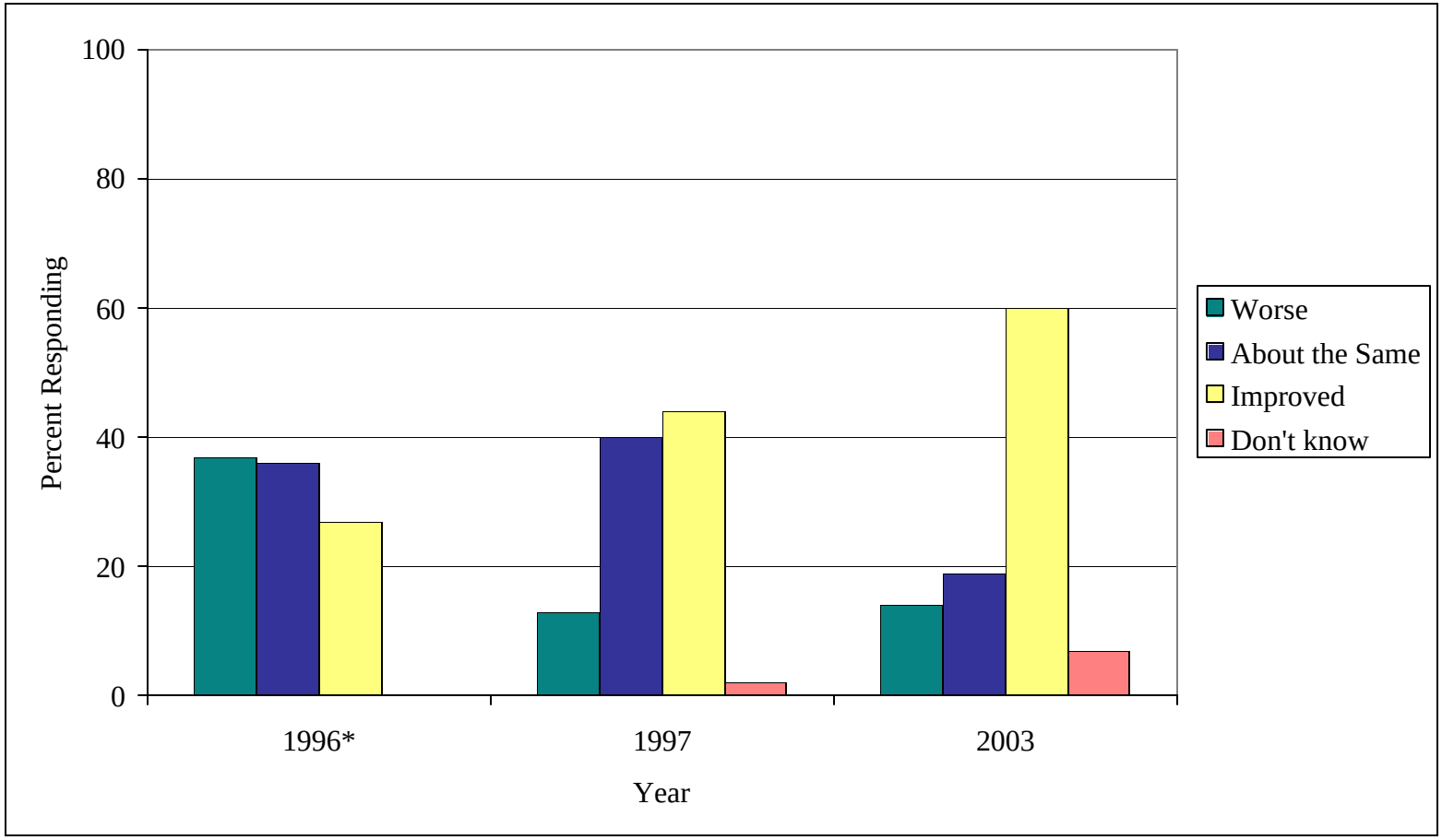
Students in Delaware are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, or F to denote the quality of their work. What grade would you give the public <u>elementary</u> schools in Delaware?



Students in Delaware are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, or F to denote the quality of their work. What grade would you give the public high schools in Delaware?

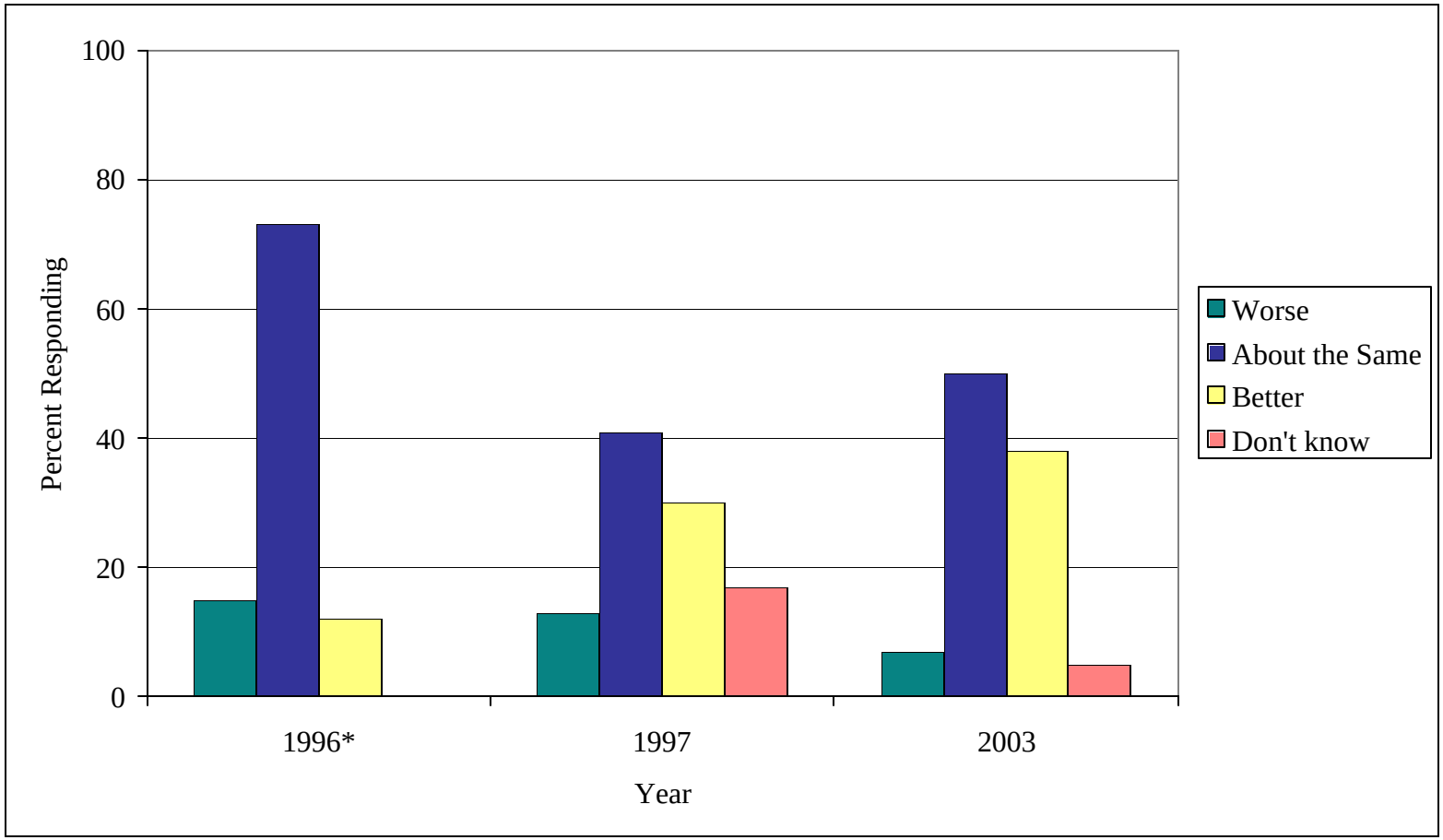


Compared to five years ago, would you say that the public schools in your district have gotten worse, stayed about the same, or improved?



*These responses are for teachers only, and "Don't know" was not a response option this year.

Where would you say Delaware's schools stand in relation to the nation?



*These responses are for teachers only, and "Don't know" was not a response option this year.

Background, Design and Data Collection, and Sampling Error

Background

As one major aspect of its mission, the Delaware Education Research and Development Center (R&D Center) serves as a "trustworthy source of information about the condition of education in the state" to Delawareans. It accomplishes this goal through three related activities. The first is gathering, organizing, and promoting access to a wide range of existing data describing education in the state. The second is by conducting analyses and studies to identify priorities, describe conditions, and anticipate courses of action and evaluate their consequences. The third is through collecting and analyzing new data on the state's schools as they relate to educational research and national views.

In keeping with this aspect of its work scope, the R&D Center initiated a program of annual public surveys on the condition of education in Delaware that began in 1994. The original survey was developed by the R&D Center with the advice and under the direction of a special workgroup on statewide polls on the condition of education. That review panel included representatives of the American Association of University Women, Delaware Chief State Officers Association, Delaware Association of School Administrators, Delaware School Board Association, Delaware State Education Association, Advisory Council on Careers and Vocational Education, Delaware Department of Public Instruction, and the Education Advisor for the Governor's Office, as well as selected legislators, members of the business community, the Business/Public Education Council, and the Delaware State Board of Education.

Each year the survey is reviewed widely and revised to address timely education issues and provide information sought by various state constituents. A core of the original survey is also included and has been repeated annually since then. Beginning in 1996, the views of educators (teachers and administrators) were added to this program of research. The educator poll included many items from the Public poll assessing the general condition of education. It is envisioned that core topics will be repeated regularly, while questions that examine public and educator attitudes and opinions regarding time-sensitive topics will be included when they are appropriate. The public poll is an annual survey, and the educator poll is conducted every other year.

Design and Data Collection

From October 6, 2003, to November 9, 2003, telephone interviews were conducted with 423 educators (teachers, administrators, and other teaching-related professionals) throughout the state. After cleaning the data, eight cases were removed because they were not appropriate for the sample. All analyses conducted by the R&D Center for the Educator poll involved adjusting data from the sample to reflect the statewide population. This year the sample of

educators included disproportionate numbers of respondents who were neither teachers nor administrators, but served in other educational roles. In addition, the distribution of levels of education achieved by respondents was also very different compared to the population. Therefore, a weighting scheme was applied so the sample would more accurately reflect the statewide population on these demographic variables.

Not all percentages listed in response to each item total to 100%. This may be due to rounding all figures to the nearest whole percent, or because some participants refused to answer a question. While items with refusal rates of 10% or greater are typically indicated throughout the report, this year no items had this large a refusal rate. Other analyses that address particular questions or interests are also available, upon request.

Sampling Error

In interpreting survey results, one should take into account that all surveys using a sample are subject to sampling error; that is, the extent to which the results might differ from what would be obtained if the entire population of Delaware educators had been surveyed. The size of the sampling error depends largely on the number of individuals surveyed. The table below shows how much allowance should be made for the sampling error for this year's survey (adapted from the Polling Attitudes of Community on Education Manual, p.5-5).

Amount of Sampling Error in Percentage Points
at the 95% Confidence Interval Level

	n = 415 Total	n=254 Teachers	n=75 K-3 Teachers Only
Percentage near 10%	2.9%	3.8%	6.9%
Percentage near 20%	3.9%	5.0%	9.2%
Percentage near 30%	4.5%	5.8%	10.6%
Percentage near 40%	4.8%	6.1%	11.3%
Percentage near 50%	4.9%	6.3%	11.5%
Percentage near 60%	4.8%	6.1%	11.3%
Percentage near 70%	4.5%	5.8%	10.6%
Percentage near 80%	3.9%	5.0%	9.2%
Percentage near 90%	2.9%	3.8%	6.9%

The table would be used in the following way: The percentage of teachers who believe they are *very well prepared* to teach children of varying abilities is 46%. We go to the row for "percentages near 50%" in the table and across to the column for n=254. The number at this point is 6.3%, which means that the 46% obtained in the sample is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 6.3 points. In other words, the odds are 95 in 100 that repeated samplings, using the same procedures and the same sample size, would have an average result somewhere between 40% and 52%, with the most likely value being 46%.

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