

A Kansas poll shows different results than the national Gallup Poll on public education.

Education in Kansas receives good marks

by Fred A. Markowitz and Jack D. Skillett

In the spring of 1980, the School of Education and Psychology at Emporia State University conducted an intensive survey of the attitudes of Kansans toward the public schools in their communities. Patterned after the national Gallup Poll on public education, the Emporia State project was named KATE (Kansans' Attitudes Toward Education).

The response of the general public and special interest groups to the report of the KATE project was such that university officials decided to repeat the study periodically. Thus KATE II was undertaken in the fall of 1981.

Funding for the survey is currently being provided by the School of Education and Psychology at Emporia State and the State Department of Education. The cooperation of the State Department of Education deserves special mention; without that agency's encouragement and financial support, it is doubtful that the first or second poll could have been completed.

The researchers in this study also acknowledge the significant contribution of the Gallup Poll toward their project. Similarity with Gallup's annual nationwide survey on public education is most evident in the general areas of (1) conceptualization and (2) the replication and modification of certain questions. The KATE II poll does depart significantly with regard to (1) interviewing methodology and (2) several of the questions employed in the poll. Specifically, the KATE II survey utilized a telephone interviewing technique to ascertain attitudes while the Gallup poll employed a personal interview technique. Also, several of the questions in the KATE II poll were developed to focus on specific Kansas issues.

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Research Procedures

Sample Selection

The procedures employed in determining the sample consisted of (1) identifying all telephone directories serving residents in the state of Kansas and (2) establishing a systematic procedure for selecting at random from the telephone listings the residents to be included in the poll. All telephone directories serving Kansas residents were located in the Tele-Communication Center of the State of Kansas.

A total of 999,152 telephone listings was identified as the total population. A systematic random sampling procedure was used by researchers to select 882 listings. Also, a procedure for the selection of replacement listings was established.

The sample used in this survey involved a total of 882 adults (18 years of age and older). Four sample grids were developed to enhance the randomization of individuals within each household.

Alerting the Sample Population

Letters to alert potential interviewees of the survey and to encourage their cooperation and assistance were mailed to the 882 households in the state. This prior explanation was designed to improve the cooperation of individuals surveyed and to reduce the number of contacts needed to reach the total sample size.

Time of Interviewing

Interviews were conducted from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Mondays through Thursdays and on Saturday mornings from Oct. 26 through Nov. 12, 1981. Callbacks were made during the day in order to contact those who could not be reached during the evening hours. Completed interviews for each three-hour calling session averaged 61. The length of each interview averaged approximately 12 minutes.

Results of the Study

The 1981 survey encompassed 17 questions. Three of the questions sought to obtain the opinions of Kansans regarding the quality of (1) the schools themselves, (2) the teaching faculty and (3) the school curriculum. The focus of this report is on these three areas.

Ratings of Kansas Public Schools

Public education receives markedly higher ratings in Kansas than it does nationwide. Survey results indicated this in 1980 and they did so again in 1981. The margins of difference in both years are similar. Ratings in both the Kansas and the national Gallup Poll are based on the public's response to the following question:

Students are usually given the grade of A, B, C, D or Fail to denote the quality of their school work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in your community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools in your community? A, B, C, D or Fail?

More than half (56 percent) of those polled in the 1981 Kansas survey rated the public schools of their community in the A-B range. Nationally, only 36 percent of those surveyed by Gallup gave public education one or the other of these grades. It should be noted, though, that Kansans

gave their public schools fewer As and more Bs in 1981 than they did in 1980. Thirteen percent gave their schools an A in 1981. Nineteen percent did so in 1980.

In 1981 as in 1980, the public schools in Kansas got their best marks from parents who have children in those schools. Sixty-four percent of the respondents in the 1981 KATE poll who had children in school rated their schools A or B. That figure is down, though, from 1980 when 69 percent of those with children in school gave their schools one of the top two grades. Results also show that schools in suburban communities were rated higher than those in rural areas or cities.

Now, what grade would you give the teachers in the public schools of your community—A, B, C, D or Fail?

	Teacher Ratings %	School Ratings %
A	16	13
B	41	43
C	19	25
D	2	3
Fail	1	1
Don't Know	21	15

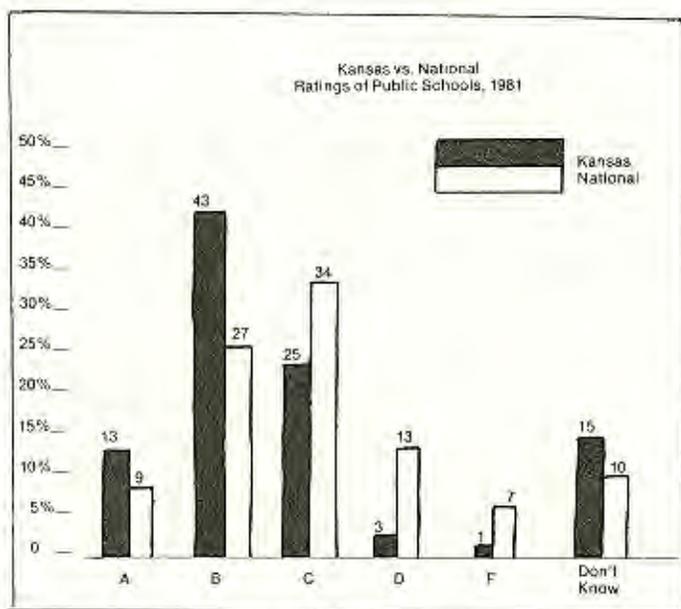
Parents with children in the public school system gave the teachers well above average grades, just as they did the schools themselves. Sixty-six percent of the Kansas respondents in this category graded the teachers of their children A or B. College graduates were even more generous in their teacher ratings. More than 70 percent of the Kansas respondents holding a college degree graded the public school teachers in their community in the A-B range. Among those who did not finish high school, though, As and Bs for teachers were significantly fewer. Only 43 percent of the non-graduates rated the teachers A or B; however, a large number of those in this category did not answer the question.

	A %	B %	C %	D %	F %	Don't Know/No Answer %
Kansas Totals	16	41	19	2	1	21
Respondents with—						
Children in School	19	47	20	4	0	10
No Children in School	15	39	18	2	1	25
Education						
Non High School Graduate	19	24	15	3	1	38
High School Graduate	18	39	21	2	0	20
College (No Degree)	12	46	22	3	1	16
College (Degree)	18	53	12	2	0	15

How Well Are the Kansas Schools Teaching Different Subjects?

Respondents with children in school would seem to be in a better position than the general public to pass judgment on this question which covers nine subject matter areas. The large majority of those Kansas parents who were interviewed expressed the opinion that the public schools in their community are providing instruction of good or better quality in eight of the nine subjects, particularly in physical education, music and mathematics. In the case of written composition, parental judgment was not as favorable.

A similar question was asked in the Gallup 1981 nationwide poll. How the opinions of Kansas parents with children in the public schools compared to the judgments of the same subgroup across the nation is shown in the table below. Since it seems clear that the A-B and D-Fail ranges convey the stronger judgments, only those ranges were compared. The question:



	A %	B %	C %	D %	F %	Don't Know %
Kansas Totals, 1981	13	43	25	3	1	15
Respondents with—						
Children in School	15	49	26	3	0	7
No Children in School	13	40	25	3	2	17
Type of Community						
City	11	45	24	4	2	14
Suburban	20	42	26	0	0	12
Rural	18	36	28	3	1	14

How Kansans Graded the Teachers In Their Community

After being asked to grade the public schools in their community A, B, C, D or Fail, Kansans were asked to rate the teachers in their schools using the same scale. The teachers received slightly better grades than the schools. The question:

Using the A, B, C, D and Fail scale again, please grade the job you feel the public schools in your community are doing in providing education in each of the following areas?

The interviewer then reads a list of nine subject areas, asking the respondents to rate each subject in turn.

Kansas-National Comparisons	A or B Rating		D or Fail Rating	
	Kansas %	National %	Kansas %	National %
Physical Education	72	61	4	6
Music	69	49	2	11
Mathematics	69	47	4	14
Reading	65	48	6	16
Social Studies	57	42	4	11
Science	56	44	4	10
Art	55	42	3	11
Vocational Training	53	35	6	21
Writing	46	46	9	18

Perhaps of more than casual interest to many is the pattern of opinions obtained on this question from Kansas respondents with different educational backgrounds, especially with regard to the so-called basic subjects of the school curriculum, e.g., reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies. Ratings given the five subjects by these subgroups and the total state population interviewed are tabled below.

	A %	B %	C %	D %	F %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
						%
Reading						
Kansas Totals	17	30	25	9	2	17
Education						
Non High School						
Graduate	12	22	17	9	5	35
High School						
Graduate	22	31	29	6	1	11
College (No Degree)	14	31	28	12	1	14
College (Degree)	18	35	23	7	2	15
Writing						
Kansas Totals	11	27	31	10	4	17
Education						
Non High School						
Graduate	11	24	16	9	5	35
High School						
Graduate	15	27	32	8	4	14
College (No Degree)	9	26	37	11	4	13
College (Degree)	8	31	35	12	2	12

Mathematics						
Kansas Totals	18	32	25	5	2	18
Education						
Non High School						
Graduate	15	23	17	3	4	38
High School						
Graduate	20	37	25	6	1	11
College (No Degree)	17	31	29	6	2	15
College (Degree)	20	33	28	2	2	15
Science						
Kansas Totals	13	36	23	3	1	24
Education						
Non High School						
Graduate	11	22	11	4	1	51
High School						
Graduate	15	38	23	3	1	20
College (No Degree)	10	39	28	3	1	19
College (Degree)	18	37	26	3	1	15
Social Studies						
Kansas Totals	13	37	25	3	1	21
Education						
Non High School						
Graduate	10	24	17	3	1	45
High School						
Graduate	16	40	24	3	1	16
College (No Degree)	7	39	31	4	1	18
College (Degree)	16	41	25	1	1	16

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