American Public Opinion and Partisan Conflict: Education’s Exceptionalism?

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Abstract: The increase in partisan conflict in American politics in recent years has been stunning. It has been tracked and debated by political scientists at great length beginning with changes in elite level conflict in the two major American parties. This conflict has penetrated to the level of mass opinion and has become so pervasive that it is important to ask: what issues have not been substantially affected—and have thus been exceptional in this respect? Specifically, to what extent has education been one of them? Is this an issue around which there could be more constructive bipartisan debate and action than for other issues? Or does education policy divide partisans as much or more as do other issues? Analysis of national survey data indicates that the dimensions of education policy related to government spending and social values continue to be entangled in ongoing partisan and ideological conflict, though less strongly than for other national issues. Other dimensions – concerning the availability of quality education, educational standards, and accountability in elementary and secondary schooling—cannot be discussed in purely partisan terms. The emphasis on them has increased noticeably in national politics. While this has made education—and especially implementation during the Obama administration—no less a contentious issue at all levels, policy in this area has become potentially more open to constructive bipartisan policymaking.

(ShapiroKilibardaSinozichPOEducation012116)
Introduction

During the 2016 presidential primaries and debates Republican candidates Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, and Marco Rubio, among others, denounced the Common Core standards that were introduced nationally as part of recent education reform legislation and efforts. Such standards had been promoted by President Barack Obama’s administration, and they had also been strengthened earlier by President George W. Bush with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Trump has stated that they have been a “total disaster” and has promised to abolish them upon taking office as president. Before dismantling the Department of Education, Cruz said he would have the Department end the Common Core (Ujifusa, 2016). Former candidate Rubio also pledged on his first day of office that he would end “any and all work on imposing Common Core on this country” (see Carey, 2016). These statements by January 2016, however—and not surprising in the highly charged partisan conflict of the campaign—misrepresented the issue: there was by that time no such federal, let alone presidential “work” going on imposing the Common Core. The reason: on what was a “surprisingly bipartisan” note, at the end of last year, in December 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which was a law that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that was passed fifty years earlier in April 1965 originally as part of President Lyndon Johnson’s “War on Poverty.” No Child Left Behind had been a previous reauthorization of this by the President George W. Bush’s administration, and going forward the December 2015 Act prohibited the Secretary of Education from requiring or even actively encouraging the states to adopt any uniform state standards, Common Core or other type. These decisions were thus left to the states’ discretion, just as Trump said he wanted (Carey, 2016; Weissman, 2016)
The ranting against the Obama administration of the Republican candidates aside, to what extent has education been a partisan issue--and one that is deeply embroiled in the heightened level of partisan polarization and conflict that has consumed the nation? At the level of political leaders and the mass public? How does it compare with the partisan divides on other major social welfare and related policy issues? Both in the direction, scope, and magnitude of overall aggregate public opinion trends and in any differences in these for self-identified Democrats and Republicans? What are the implications of these trends for American politics and policy making?

Partisan and Ideological Conflict: Leaders and Elite Level Behavior

What made the passage of ESSA in December 2015 “surprisingly bipartisan” was that the House of Representatives and Senate votes reflected unhappiness with parts of No Child Left Behind on the part of both Republicans and Democrats. The votes by party in the House were 181 Democrats and 178 Republicans “for,” and 0 Democrats and 64 Republicans “against”; in the Senate, 45 Democrats and 40 Republicans “for,” and 0 Democrats and 8 Republicans “against.” This echoed the vote on the original No Child Left Behind legislation in the House: 199 Democrats and 182 Republicans “for,” and 8 Democrats and 33 Republicans “against”; and in the Senate, 43 Democrats and 44 Republicans “for,” and 7 Democrats and 3 Republicans “against.” For a more extensive overview of education policy, party politics and congressional activity in recent years, see Wolbrecht and Hartney (2014), which we return to below.

This consensual elite-level behavior by Congress offered a marked contrast to trends in congressional voting since the mid-1970s that have increasingly occurred on along partisan lines. Figures 1-3 provide a widely cited summary of the partisan polarization that has occurred in
American politics. These are the “DW Nominate Score” trends by party and partisan differences in House and Senate roll call voting (see http://voteview.com/political_polarization_2015.html; Poole and Rosenthal, 1997, 2001; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 1997). These trends reflect congressional voting on issues of “big government”/economic welfare and we can now add to this a wide range of policy issues: regulation, environmental protection, social/religious values issues, race-related, crime, gun control, energy, etc. The relevant time period for our discussion here begins in the mid-1970s, which itself was affected by political transformations underway by the 1960s. What we see in Figures 1-3 is that in both the House of Representatives and the Senate Republican votes were more consistently conservative and Democrats overall more liberal. The Democratic shift occurred more among new Democratic senators and members of the House in the South. In Figure 3 we see more starkly the widening ideological gap between Democrats and Republican in both legislative bodies, so that based on DW nominate scores and other similar measures that get at ideological voting and cohesion, we find less bipartisan behavior over time across a range of congressional voting. There has been a decline in the number of moderate members of the House and the Senate, and thus greater partisan polarization. The end result has been a partisan divide in Washington that has made national policymaking and problem solving more difficult; delayed if not stopped the confirmation and appointment of federal judges, including at this writing a Supreme Court justice with the recent death of Antonin Scalia; and overall created an environment that is prone to political gridlock and shows all signs of a breakdown of representation in American politics (see Thurber and Oshinaka, 2015; Fiorina with Abrams, 2009).

How did this come about? We only have space here for a short and somewhat oversimplified summary of the relevant political history that led to such increased partisan
polarization among party leaders. It is now an understatement to say that political conflict in the United States has reached new heights along partisan and ideological lines. The process leading to this started in the 1950s and 1960s when internal Democratic and Republican party politics began to change on issues beyond the big government/economic liberalism/regulation dimension that had divided the parties clearly since the New Deal and the party realignment of the 1930s. It began first and foremost with racial and civil rights issues, as northern liberals were able to capture the high ground in the Democratic Party as the civil rights movement and protests came to the fore, along with the violent response by Southern government officials and the police covered widely in the news media that forcefully raised the salience of the injustice surrounding these issues. This culminated in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 – as part of changes led to slowly by the Kennedy administration and then decisively by the Johnson administration after Kennedy’s assassination and the Democrats’ triumph in the 1964 elections. With the departure over time of conservative southerners in Congress from the Democratic Party’s ranks over the civil rights issues and support for labor unions, the Democratic Party became a more consistently liberal party on both big government, civil rights, and labor issues. This was the end of the moderating force in the party that southern Democrats provided – they left the party or were replaced by Republicans or by southerners who were liberal on these issues and who could get elected. A parallel transition occurred for Republican politicians who had been moderate or liberal on civil rights (the remnants of the party of Lincoln of old): they were replaced by the Republicans who were more consistently conservative on economic welfare, regulation, labor, and race, or by liberal Democrats (see Carmines and Stimson, 1989). This began a shift in the electoral bases of support for the two parties—with the Democratic party attracting now more fully enfranchised African American
voters and the Republicans adopting a strategy to appeal increasingly to white southern voters and also white voters nationally who were put off by the transformation of the Democratic party.

The parties evolved further as new issues arose or became partisan ones through *intra-party* politics and competition. These issues ranged from women’s rights (the GOP had originally supported the Equal Right Amendment but by 1980 withdrew it from its platform), social/religious values issues (such as abortion, gay rights, etc.), law and order (including capital punishment), gun control, the environment and energy policy (and later climate change), and most recently immigration. Partisan politics no longer stopped at the water’s edge, as partisan differences regarding foreign policy became clearer, with Democrats more supportive than Republicans in preferring diplomacy over unilateral military actions in recent years after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, especially in connection with the invasion of Iraq and the debacle that occurred during the U.S. occupation of Iraq and aftermath (see Snyder, Shapiro, and Bloch-Elkon, 2009; Shapiro and Bloch-Elkon, 2006). This has extended to the Middle East, in which the Republicans are more vocally supportive of Israel in their struggle with the Palestinians, Iran, and other opponents. This partisan divide has become more strident and emotional, then, as the parties differ on so many more issues than in the past. This is amplified further by the fact that the two parties are highly competitive today for control of both Congress and the presidency compared to the general norm from the 1930s to 1980, when the GOP won the Senate with Ronald Reagan’s election and became competitive for it ever since; and the same for the House of Representatives beginning with the major defeat the Democrats suffered in the 1994 midterm elections. Thus the possibility of unified Republican or Democratic government became increasingly at stake (along with control of the Supreme Court and the rest of the federal judiciary; control of state governments have been at issue too), which has made twenty-first
century partisan and ideological politics highly conflictual and emotional. And the emergence of
niche markets for partisan media on talk radio, cable television, and the internet, and most
recently with social media, has amplified the existing lines of conflict. (One irony here is that
this type of clear demarcation between the two parties and their attendant politics is what the
American Political Science Association (1950) sought in its report, *Toward a More Responsible
Two-Party System: A Report of the Committee on Political Parties of the American Political
Science Association*, which lamented that the American political system lacked this important
characteristic found in parliamentary ones such as in Britain.)

The academic debates about this transformation that remain concern, for one, whether the
American public has become polarized ideologically in the way partisan leaders have been: that
is, whether the ideological middle, so to speak, in American public opinion has also been
disappearing (see Fiorina with Abrams and Pope, 2011; Fiorina with Abrams, 2009; cf.
Abramowitz 2010); or whether the divergence in policy opinions between Republicans and
Democrats in the mass public indicates only that they are better “sorted,” that self-identified
Democrats and Republicans (even if the proportion of people in the partisan and ideological
middle has not changed) have increasingly and consistently held, respectively, liberal and
conservative positions on a wide—and expanding—range of issues (see Levendusky, 2009).
This partisan sorting itself, however, has nonetheless reflected heightened and emotion-laden
political conflict. The other disagreement is a debate regarding whether this partisan conflict
has been top-down – elite-driven—versus bottom-up or mass driven (see Hetherington, 2001;
Shapiro and Bloch-Elkon, 2006). While the most persuasive evidence is that it was initially elite
driven, now that this conflict has penetrated fully into an electorate that can now hold leaders’
feet to fire—e.g., with the threat of challenges in party primary elections)—there is now
substantial pressure from each party’s base as well. Thus a good case can be made that partisan conflict today is both elite and mass-driven. The politics of the 2016 presidential election has borne this out – on steroids.

All of this is indicative of a major change in the meaning of partisanship or “party identification” as had been found in voting and public opinion studies of the mid-twentieth century. Partisanship and its strength were strongly related to voting and political activity, but party identification was largely a brand or team identification that came about through ones parents and processes of political socialization. It had not deep and strong issue or ideological basis. Fast-forward to the present, partisanship has become increasingly associated with the policy opinions of the American public (see Bafumi and Shapiro, 2009; Layman and Carsey, 2002a, 2002b; Carsey and Layman, 2006; Layman, Carsey, and Horowitz, 2006; Pew Research Center, 2012, 2014). This can be most easily seen, as will be apparent below, in the divergence of the opinions of self-identified Republicans and Democrats. This is a major departure from the dominant pattern that Page and Shapiro (1992, Chapter 7) found of what they called “parallel publics,” in which opinion changes, when they occurred, did so in the same way for all population subgroups, including Republicans versus Democrats. Today this pattern has changed in one respect: while “parallel publics” still largely holds for all standard demographic subgroups (age, race, gender, education, income, religiosity, region, etc.; see Pew Research Center, 2012), partisan opinions have diverged since the time of the Page and Shapiro (1992) study—comparing opinion trends since the late 1980s—in tandem with the more polarized elite level politics that has occurred. This divergence can be explained by related psychological processes, including “motivated reasoning” or skepticism, selective partisan information exposure, and heightened emotions in politics (which are beyond the scope of this paper; e.g., see Zaller, 1992, especially
his “two-message” model; Lord, Ross, and Lepper, 1979; Redlawsk, Civettini, and Emmerson, 2010; Golec et al., 2010; Lebo and Cassino, 2007; Tabor and Lodge, 2006; Taber, Cann, Tucsova, 2009; Shapiro and Bloch-Elkon, 2008).

How then has partisan conflict penetrated to the level of public opinion on specific issues? What dominant patterns do we see in dynamics of public opinion on policy issues? To what extent has public opinion moved in a conservative or liberal on particular type of issues. How widespread have there been partisan divergences in public opinion. Most important for this paper, how has this played out in public opinion toward education issues and policies? Last, as both early and recent voting and public opinion research has suggested, do these divergences go beyond the public’s positions on policy issues to include perceptions bearing on partisan politics and real world conditions—the economic, social and political environs – that are connected to these opinions?

The National Survey Data

We draw on extensive survey data to track the overall national and partisan trends on a wide range of policies including education issues. We rely substantially on NORC-General Social Survey (GSS) data for our own tabulations and have assembled trend and other data made directly available by the Pew Research Center, the Gallup Organization (including the Phi Delta Kappa [PDK] data), and other survey organizations as noted in the many figures that we have included in this paper (and many others not included). For data on education issues, we rely substantially on the 2007-2015 surveys conducted by the Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) at Harvard University (for other descriptions of these data and recent
analyses of them, see Peterson, Henderson, and West, 2014; Scheuler and West, 2016). The Appendix of this paper contains the wordings of the survey questions that we draw on in our analysis.

Except where noted, all the surveys are based on probability samples and were conducted by telephone. The PEPG survey data were obtained from a probability based online panel provided by Knowledge Networks. The trend data we report are largely based on responses to identically worded questions, unless otherwise indicated. We insert breaks in the trend lines in our graphs when there are large gaps in the trends or when the question wordings or response categories have varied in ways in which they might affect survey responses.

Mass Public Opinion: Trends and Partisan Differences

First: Patterns of Opinion Change

During this period of partisan conflict, then, what changes do we see in public opinion concerning government policy issues? The possibilities that we look for are liberal or conservative opinion trends, fluctuating movements on some issues, or opinion stability. With the advantage now of having available long-term public opinion data, thanks to the expansion of opinion polling and with survey archives (most notably that of The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, which we searched as well) and survey organization making reporting their “topline” and trend data, researchers have been able to observe these and other patterns. While there are cases of opinion stability to be sure (see Page and Shapiro, 1992), when it comes to issues salient enough to be asked about in national surveys by different types of survey organizations, there are more notably three important patterns of opinion changes that have
occurred. For a wide range of issues pertaining to government spending and expanded activity, researchers have identified cyclical patterns or swing in which liberal opinion movements occur during Republican presidencies, and they precede the election of Democratic presidents; and conservative opinion trends occur after the election of Democratic administrations and precede the election of Republican presidents. As odd as it might seem, this is a recurrent pattern. It was originally described as a “thermostat” type process (see Wlezien, 1995; Stimson, Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson, 2002; Panagopoulos and Shapiro, 2011) in which, for example, the public moved in a conservative direction after the election of President Jimmy Carter in 1976 consistent with the perception that government policies were or would be moving in a too liberal Democratic direction. This appeared to contribute to the election in 1980 of President Ronald Reagan. Then, beginning as early as 1981, the public appeared to perceive policies moving in too conservative a direction (and indeed some policies did), and its opinion became more liberal. In contrast to this repeated cycle, or as part of it during certain long periods, some opinions exhibit sustained liberal or conservative trends for long periods, and we most notice those that have persisted through the present.

Figure 4 present a composite measure aggregating opinion toward a large number of government spending and other issues compiled by James Stimson (1999) in his liberal-conservative “Policy Mood” measure. Here we can see the cyclical pattern of swing in opinion from the 1950s to 2012. What we can see is a liberal swing leading into the more liberal (than the Eisenhower administration) Kennedy and Johnson years, with the expansion of civil rights and liberties and the enactment and implementation of liberal economic welfare policies (especially the passage of Medicare and Medicaid; the payment of Social Security benefits that became due when retirees became eligible to collect benefits; federal activism in education,
urban policies, immigration, and other areas). This was followed by the reversal of opinion in a conservative direction leading into the Nixon White House years. There was then a liberal shift leading into the Carter presidency, and then the conservative movement leading to Reagan’s ascendancy. Opinion then reversed course again into a liberal direction during the George H. W. Bush presidency, leading into the election of President Bill Clinton. Opinion then became more conservative. During George W. Bush’s time in the White House, opinion moved in a liberal direction once more, and then reversed course noticeably after President Barack Obama took office.

Next: Swings, Trends, and Partisan Divergence

To move this discussion along we can look all together at how public opinion has played out on a wide range of issues, showing the cyclical pattern of swings described above along with conservative trends that have occurred for some issues and liberal trends for others. In addition we can also compare these patterns of change for Democrats versus Republicans. This makes for a lot of moving parts in this discussion, but it is worth looking at them at the same time. What we can see, overall, in a rather striking fashion is that partisan differences have increased on a wide range of economic welfare and big government issues, racial issues, social and religious values issue, attitudes toward labor, gun control, capital punishment, regulation, the environment, energy, immigration, and national security-related areas of foreign policy.

Figures 5 to 10 show examples of the cyclical swings in opinion for specific policy issues: spending more on health care (see also Corman and Levin, 2016, and Jacobs and Shapiro, 2000, on health care reform) welfare (“too much” is graphed), environmental protection, and national
defense, along with public opinion toward the size of government. Unless otherwise noted, the data are taken from the NORC-General Social Surveys (GSS). The question wordings, again, can be found in the Appendix at the end of the paper. In looking closely for the opinion shifts during particular presidential administrations, the predictable swings described above are often clearer for Republicans or Democrats, if not for both. Most notably, the opinion difference between Republicans and Democrats often diverge to more than double in size. These are only a small sample of the available trend data from the NORC-GSS, Pew Research Center, and other surveys that show this striking increase in partisan differences (see Bafumi and Shapiro, 2009; Layman and Carsey, 2002a, 2002b; Carsey and Layman, 2006; Layman, Carsey, and Horowitz, 2006; Shapiro and Bloch-Elkon, 2006; Snyder, Shapiro, and Bloch-Elkon, 2009). With regard to levels of support, note the substantial overall public support for spending on health care and environmental protection, though there are some noticeable fall-offs at different points. This will be relevant below in comparing support for spending on education.

In Figures 10 to 14 we see conservative trends in recent years in public opinion toward regulation of business and industry and the environment, as well as increasing support for gun rights and anti-labor union opinions. In these cases as well, we see the percentage point differences of opinion between Republicans and Democrats also doubling or more on important matters.

Public opinion has moved in a liberal direction on other issues, particularly ones related to social or religious values, race and immigration. The decline in support for capital punishment still reflects substantial support for the death penalty for murder, but the partisan gap, again, more than doubled. Figure 16 and 17 shows the striking liberalization in recent year of public support for the legalization of marijuana and for same sex marriage. The opinions of Democrats
and Republicans toward legalizing marijuana started out in 1970 as hardly different at all, and this increased to about 25 percentage points 40 years later. Partisan differences toward gay marriage increased from 22 to 32 percentage points from 2001 to 2013. Most strikingly, in Figure 18, immigration was not a partisan issue in public opinion in 2002 but by 2015 Democrats’ opinions differed from those of Republicans for the issues shown by fully 30 points or more! And in Figure 19 we see from 1987 to 2012 an overall increase in support – though still divided opinion – toward preferential treatment of minorities, with partisan differences increasing again by more than a factor of two, from 18 to fully 40 percentage points.

**Education Issues I: Social Welfare and Values**

The swings and trends that we described above provide a vantage point for comparing the dynamics of public opinion concerning education policies. How, then, does public opinion toward education issues compare to opinions on other issues in terms of political cycles and conservative and liberal trends?

To start, we focus first on education as a general social welfare issue, with an emphasis implicit if not explicit on elementary and secondary education (leaving higher education aside). Second, there are also aspects of education policy that touch on social and religious values. We then devote further attention to issues and policies concerned with educational quality, standards, and accountability in elementary and secondary education in the United States, which have risen in importance and salience in education policymaking.

Figures 20, 21, and 22 report trends in public opinion toward government spending on education, which we can compare with the other areas of policymaking reported on above.
Figure 20 shows trends in public support for spending more on “Improving the Nation’s Education System” from the NORC-GSS. First, we do not find here the political cycle pattern that we saw for the “public mood” measure nor for support for spending in other policy areas. Rather, we find liberal opinion trends that have leveled off at the 60-70% range for both Democrats and Republicans. There is some appearance of increasing partisan differences in the expected direction but not a striking divergence of the sort that we saw for other spending issues. This reflects, we think, the widespread perception of education as a consensus/consensual or valence issue – that everyone supports a policy area that promotes opportunity and equality, but with Republicans supporting this somewhat less in terms of government spending and of the need for constraints on the resources of big government. This is not breaking news to researchers who have examined these data before, especially those who have noted that this support is found among all subgroups, with no age or generational differences that would reflect the interests of young people who have just completed or are completing their education, versus older tax payers, including those without children to benefit from government funded education (see Plutzer and Berkman, 2005; Page and Shapiro, 1992).

Figure 21 shows recent trends in support for spending on local schools from surveys conducted by the Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG). This particular survey question (see Appendix) provides information on how much is spent on schooling, so respondents have more knowledge available to them in answering a question about support for government spending (see Peterson, Henderson, and West, 2014; Scheuler and West, 2016). We see less, though still substantial, support for increasing spending, compared to the differently worded GSS question. The partisan difference is larger and also appears to be increasing a bit. Figure 22 reveals much less support for – indeed, stable-looking opposition to— raising taxes to
fund education, especially and not surprisingly once again among Republicans, with a steady partisan difference of about 15 points for the limited 2010-2014 period that is covered by these data.

To get a further sense of partisan differences regarding general attitudes toward education, we have included Figures 23 and 24 addressing the public’s confidence in institutions. While confidence in major companies (Figure 24) is overall less than for education institutions, it also reveals a persistent partisan difference with Republican, as the proponents of free enterprise, having more confidence than Democrats. A partisan differences in confidence in education barely existed through 2008, with the widest difference occurring in recent years during the Obama administration. This has apparently emerged owing to the debate over the administration’s activism and concomitant criticism of it in this policy area over the Common Core, educational testing and other issues. Looking at data (not shown) on public confidence in other institutions, we find that the education is among the institutions with the smallest overall partisan differences. A further note on the performance of schools nationally and also as perceived by individuals in their local communities, the Phi Delta Kappa surveys (conducted by Gallup) have tracked the “letter grade” that survey respondents have been asked to give schools. The percentage of “A or B” grades for schools nationally has hovered at a level about the same as that shown for a “great deal of confidence” in Figure 23—roughly in the 20-25% range. In contrast, these high A or B grades for the respondents’ local community schools have risen from about 35% in 1982 to the 50% range in 2014, possibly the result of perceived and real progress in education (see Bali, 2016). Unfortunately, Phi Delta Kappa does not make its data sets available nor does it report these trends by partisanship.
Turning next to public opinion toward social or religious values aspects of education-related policies, we find cases of liberal trends and conservative ones, along with some partisan differences which appear to have widened a bit. Racial segregation in schools had once been a major national civil rights issues. While schools in the United States are hardly fully integrated today, \textit{de jure} school desegregation is no longer an issue but a norm and hence rarely asked about any more in national polls (see Frankenberg and Jacobsen, 2011, for past trend data). The level of support for racial integration in schools rose to over 90% by the mid-1980s (95% in a 2007 Pew poll), so that there is little apparent partisan difference in opinion (or differences between the South and other regions; see Page and Shapiro, 1992). School busing to achieve greater integration of schools had subsequently also been a hot-button issue, but it has not been a salient one in recent years. As shown in Figure 25, the percentage of Democrats and Republicans supporting busing increased noticeably from the 1970s, a heyday of busing controversies, to the mid-1990s, though still with less than 50% overall support nationally. This is a relevant liberal trend in any case. But note that the increase in support for busing occurred with a widening partisan gap in the 1990s.

Figure 26 shows how opinions have changed concerning the rights of teachers who are gay or lesbian: a fully 33 percentage point increase, to 75%, in those disagreeing that school boards should have the right to terminate the employment of such teachers. Figure 27 shows the longstanding high level of public support for sex education in schools, which has increased even further by 2014 to more than 90 percent since the time that it reached the 75 percent level in the 1970s. With this increase we also see that a significant, but not enormous, partisan difference emerged of 10-15 percentage points.
In contrast to these liberal attitudes and trends, we find conservative opinions on the issues of teaching creationism in schools and allowing school prayer, even though the latter has long been held unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. A June 2013 YouGov survey (based on a nonprobability panel sample) found the following in response to the question, “Do you favor or oppose the teaching of creationism or intelligent design in public schools?”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Republican</th>
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<tr>
<td>Favor</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such a high percentage of the public supporting the teaching of creationism in school in addition to evolution has been found widely in other surveys (Plutzer and Berkman, 2008), reflecting the religiousness of Americans, particularly among Republicans much more so than Democrats as seen in the partisan opinions reported above (a 27 point difference). We see this even more so in Figure 28 that shows the enduring public support for allowing prayer in public schools, holding steady at more than 60 percent, with the appearance of a small and slowly, somewhat widening partisan difference since the mid-1980s.

To sum up at this point, in examining the “big government” and social values aspects of education policy, what we see is the increasing liberal consensus for national action in support of education, with clearly observable but not strongly increasing partisan differences; we also see some liberalizing opinions regarding liberties, rights, and sex education, but also persistent conservative opinions regarding school activities related to religious values.
Education Issues II: Quality, Standards, and Accountability

While the above issues have been visible and important ones concerning the scope and responsibility of the national government in the area of education and concerning the tensions involving individuals’ rights and values, other issues today have come further to the fore that have been of increasing concern for elementary and secondary education in the United States. This has been closely related to developments in party politics. Specifically, this has involved policies that bear on provision of quality education, educational standards, and accountability in elementary and secondary schooling. This policy and political debate has gotten translated more concretely into the emphasis on curricular requirements, educational testing, evaluating teachers, school choice, and so forth.

How has party politics surrounding these issues changed? How has this affected the national visibility and importance of these issues--and the framing and priorities of educational policies? Christina Wolbrecht and Michael T. Hartney (2014) have ably summarized the changes that have occurred in an article aptly titled “‘Ideas about Interests’: Explaining the Changing Partisan Politics of Education.” Wolbrecht and Hartney focus front and center on the importance of changes in “issue definition”, which we would associate directly with changes in issue framing (see Baumgartner and Jones, 2009; Jacobs and Shapiro, 2000). Other researchers and writers have echoed this view in emphasizing similar developments and related themes regarding changes in the focus of educational policymaking, the way in which particular types of policies created or otherwise affected politics, and the role of coalitions of civil right organizations and conservative forces (see Rhodes, 2011; Jaiani and Whitford, 2011; Mehta, 2013; McGuinn, 2010, 2012).
The historical context for the changes goes back to 1965 when the federal government affirmed its commitment to promote equality. As noted at the beginning of this paper, in December 2015 President Obama signed the ESSA which was a bipartisan law that reauthorized the ESEA that was passed fifty years earlier in April 1965 as part of President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty. Seen as echoing the nation’s longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students, the ESEA provided funds (through what was a special source in Title I of the law) especially for poor and minority children to help meet their need for education. It led to a change from general federal government educational assistance to categorical aid, connecting federal funds to specific policy concerns including poverty and economic growth. Federal action had been stalled by religious conflict over aiding parochial schools, and the ESEA danced around this by tying federal aid to educational programs directly assisting poor children, through compensatory programs, who might be enrolled in parochial schools, and not the institutions themselves which attended. The 1965 Act’s reliance on state educational departments to administer federal funds (which attempted to avoid criticisms of federal control) resulted in the even larger involvement of state governments and bureaucracies versus local ones in educational decision-making. The linchpin here was what the federal government was willing to spend in the direction of having the desired impact. Thus Democrats were committed to elementary and secondary school policymaking that led to increased financial resources for schools attended by minority and poor children.

The ESEA was reauthorized at various times as the years went by. Fast-forwarding to the 2015 law, as noted earlier the previous version of it was the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act which was enacted and implemented in 2001-2002. President Bush spear-headed this most
expansive education act since the 1965 legislation. The NCLB represented a significant step in attempting to advance the nation’s children in a number of respects, particularly in focusing on where students had made progress and where they needed additional support, regardless of race, income, community of residence, disability, language spoken at home, or other background. It moved the Republicans into activist policymaking of the sort associated with Democrats and also got government into the weeds of what makes for quality education, which moved it further into issues of educational standards and testing, school choice, and charter schools. The law was slated to be revised starting in 2007, and over time the NCLB’s prescriptive requirements became increasingly intractable for schools and educators. Recognizing this the Obama’s administration joined in a call from educators and families to develop and enact a better law that focused solidly on the goal of fully preparing all students for success in college and in their livelihood and careers. His policy initiative, the Race to the Top Program moved toward Republican policies emphasizing accountability and school choice. Responding to criticisms of NCLB and the Race to the Top Program, the subsequent 2015 legislations ostensibly built on important areas of progress in recent years involving the strivings of educators, communities, parents, and students nationwide. The Obama administration and others could point to evidence that high school graduation rates were reaching all-time highs, dropout rates were at historic lows, and more students were attending college. These were not enormous improvements but could arguably provide a basis for further efforts to advance educational opportunity and student achievements. But the big story here was what looked like considerable partisan convergence on education policy—though not the end of conflict over education policy and its implementation.

Wolbrecht and Hartney (2014, p.609-610) offered an interpretive and quantitative analysis of the positioning of the parties on education that has led quality education, accountability, and
standards, along with ways of evaluating them and promoting them, to the forefront of elementary and secondary education policymaking. For our purposes we pick up the story during the period after the mid-1970s when partisan polarization began. In the 1970s the Democrats, on the big government front, pushed to expand support for bilingual and special education and to establish the Department of Education. In the 1980s President Ronald Reagan wanted to abolish the new Department and favored school choice and the reintroduction of prayer in school. President George H. W. Bush wanted to be the “education president” and began the push toward national standards and accountability. In the 1990s Bush and President Bill Clinton supported major legislation, the unsuccessful America 200 bill in the case of Bush and the successful Goals 2000 Act in 1994 in the case of Clinton. These bills pushed for standards and accountability but were at odds on the federal government’s role and options for private school choice. The second President Bush’s No Child Left Behind introduced accountability and standards reforms and a substantial expansion of the national government’s activism in education. Republicans led the call for national standards, while President Obama led the Democrats’ Race to the Top effort to provide federal funds as incentives for states to engage in accountability and school choice reforms, including ones that Republicans had promoted. During the 2012 election there were observable areas of agreement for many Republicans and Democrats on issues including merit pay for teachers and charter schools. There emerged, however, disagreements within each party on these issues and the giving of priority to funding traditional resource-intensive policies. Wolbrecht and Hartney (2014, p.610) observed that by the early twenty-first century the parties appeared to converge on supporting “similar changes: a rigorous set of academic content standards, greater school accountability, and a transformation of policies that govern the teaching profession in particular.” As a result, there
was “a shift form significant polarization on education policy (prior to 1980) to some (but not complete) convergence on the most salient education policy proposals by the 2000s.” While the convergence was far from complete – there were still visible conflicts on certain issues, in particular partisan dispositions toward labor unions—there was a major change on what education issues would be emphasized and how they would be defined or framed, and in the overall degree of partisan conflict over them at the leadership level. Figures 29 to 35 track these changes quantitatively.

Figure 29 taken from Wolbrecht and Hartney (2014) shows that by 2008 the nature of the relevant problem definitions picked up in news media coverage had shifted from an emphasis on resources and efforts to promote equality to an emphasis on promoting educational excellence. Figures 30 to 32 show the same for problem definitions and policy alternatives found in party platforms and Congressional Quarterly’s “Key Votes.” Note that “values” and discipline/morality continued to be ways in which problems and alternatives were defined. In summing up this transformation, Wolbrecht and Hartney emphasized the distinction between the “new” versus the “old” problem definitions and alternatives – that is, distinguishing the promotion of educational excellence and values (through school choice, standards, and accountability) versus the emphasis on devoting resources to deal with poverty and inequality (though funding and the targeting of particular groups). Figure 33 shows the clear change that occurred for the emergence of the “new” versus the “old” issue and policy framings.

The question that follows, then, is: to what extent did this change at the level of party politics have consequences for public support for particular policies that were on the ascendance, and also for partisan differences in public opinion. The available data – from the PEPG (and limited data from other sources)--suggest that this occurred to some observable extent.
Starting with the issue of support for school choice and looking specifically at the use of universal versus means tested vouchers, we see by 2015 in Figures 34 and 35 an overall plurality of support among Democrats and Republicans, with no partisan differences for universal vouchers but greater support for means tested ones among Democrats, which was wider in 2013-2015 than during 2007-2010. Data from the Phi Delta Kappa surveys (PDK; not presented in our figures) show more opposition to vouchers (with no reference to means testing) when the question does not refer to “school choice” and gives the impression of government offering to pay fully rather than “helping” pay (see Appendix). In this case Republicans are 20 percentage points more supportive than Democrats, at just over the 50% level of support (we do not have partisan trend data for the full PDK series).

Regarding the school curriculum and testing, we see in Figures 36 to 38 majority support for the Common Core Curriculum, but this support declined for Republicans to below 50 percent from 2013 to 2015, leading to a partisan divergence of about 15 points. Support for educational testing for graduation and promotion remained high and steady at the 75 percent level or better, with no partisan differences in opinion. The PDK trend data available for the period before and after the enactment of NCLB show a steady increase from 20 percent to approximately 45 percent in those responding that there was “too much” emphasis on testing in public schools; this leaves ambiguous, however, what tests might still be deemed useful. And from 2012 to 2014 there was an increase in opposition, reaching the 60% level, to having students’ standardized test results be taken into account in evaluating teachers; this does not, however, speak to the usefulness of such tests for tracking educational progress. No partisan breakdowns were available to us for these PDK data.
Turning to efforts to recruit and keep high quality teachers, in Figure 39 and 40 we see steady or slightly increasing support for merit pay for teachers and for tenure based on merit, with no partisan differences. In contrast, while there is also steady or slightly increasing support for increasing teacher salaries from 2009 to 2015, as shown in Figures 41 and 42 (comparing questions with and without providing information on teacher salaries), we see partisan differences of 15 to 25 points, which reflects Republicans’ greater concern for limiting government spending and taxes as we saw more directly earlier.

In Figure 43 we see more of the same in the plurality support for charter schools, with overall support increasing at least slightly among both Republicans and Democrats, though more so among Republicans, leading to a larger partisan gap for the 2012-2015 period compared to 2007-2011. The available PDK trend data for 2000 to 2014 also show an increase in support for charter schools, though a larger one, with support reaching about 70% by 2014. The partisan difference for these data is about the same as in the PEPG data but it appears earlier, prior to 2005.

Last, Figures 44 and 45 reveal that in recent years there have been persistently less positive overall opinions concerning teacher tenure in general (without reference to merit, as reported above) and the effect of labor unions. There are also significant partisan differences here, with a particularly large one (about 25 points) for attitudes toward labor unions whom Democrats are more likely to see as having a positive effect.

**Education III: Partisanship and Perceptual Biases**

In addition to producing widening gaps in public opinion between Republicans and Democrats, what partisan polarization and conflict has also amplified for some issues, if not
caused, are differences in perceptions of seemingly objective conditions, reality, and facts (see Shapiro and Bloch-Elkon, 2008; Hochshild and Einstein, 2015; Achen and Bartels, 2016, Chapter 10; see also motivated reasoning-related works cited above). From the standpoint of evaluating the capability of the public and the role it should play in democratic politics, if the public does not obtain and perceive information about issues with some degree of accuracy, this can raise questions about the quality of its opinions. When any striking misperceptions occur, however, it is necessary to determine—which may not be easy—the extent to which they have occurred because of the public’s own cognitive and intellectual limitations, or because it has been misinformed or misled by political leaders, the mass media, or other information sources that it depends on (especially leaders or other partisans caught in “epistemic closure”; see Shapiro and Jacobs, 2011).

For example, in an analysis of public support for The Affordable Care Act, for which there is a substantial partisan divide in public opinion with Republicans greatly opposed to the health care reform law, Shaw (2017) found that Republicans are more familiar with the Act’s individual mandate requirement, which they most strongly oppose, than with other provisions that provide substantial benefits to Americans. There are more striking examples of misperceptions related to other issues that have sharply divided the parties. Figure 46 and 47 show the much more widespread Republican than Democrat misbelief that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (Iraq had no such weapons), which was the rationale for the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, leading to the debacle that followed. As the two figures show, education did not make much difference toward reducing these misperceptions to close to zero among Republicans, compared to Democrats.

We see the same thing in Figure 48 regarding the erroneous increase in beliefs among Republicans that Obama is a Muslim (he is not). Figure 49 shows that the gap between
Republicans and Democrats concerning whether global warming has something to do with human activity (for which the widely visible and accepted scientific consensus is that it has) has risen from 20 to 38 percentage points, almost doubling, from 2001 to 2014. And, last, in the case of ostensibly easier to assess information regarding economic conditions and circumstances – both the nation’s and one’s own – Figures 49 and 50 show the quite understandably greater economic pessimism among both Democrats and Republicans during the last 4 years of the Bush administration, as the national economy went south. However, that there were partisan differences in levels of optimism is less easy to explain, since everyone should have perceived the same objective conditions, though their personal circumstances may have varied. More surprisingly, just after Obama was elected and the economy continued to worsen, the declining optimism among Republicans continued to reflect the worsening economy, whereas the perceptions of Democrats dramatically reversed course for the better-- even their perceptions of their personal circumstances which could not have improved substantially so quickly after the election (unless a great many of them got jobs with the Obama administration or related to the administration’s early actions, or won big bets on the election outcome!?).

What do we expect to find, then, regarding partisanship and perceptions of the realities concerning education? The opinion data we have examined do not lead us necessarily, in an obvious way, to expect as great an impact of partisanship concerning the facts relevant to education policymaking compared to the examples just cited or to other highly partisan concerns. We do not have a lot of available data—nor do we arguably have the best data -- to fully examine this question. For some of the opinions that we have reported on, partisanship has appeared to engender sufficient differences in opinion on particular education policies so as to affect some public perceptions relevant to these issues. These data are shown in Figures 51 to 56. In the
figures we see that there are nearly no differences in the beliefs of Democrats versus Republicans regarding whether charter schools teach religion or hold religious services, or whether they charge tuition. In addition there are at most small partisan differences in estimates of how much is spent per child on education in one’s state, average teacher salaries, and the estimated percentage of students finishing high school in 4 years.

Discussion and Conclusion

From the last data presented regarding public perceptions, though they are limited, it does not appear that education issues are as ideologically or emotionally charged as other issues that divide Republican and Democratic leaders and their fellow partisans in the public. There is a chance, then, that partisanship will not lead to any misperception of facts and evidence relevant to education policymaking, to the extent that the public thinks about and becomes aware of such information (cf. Peterson, Henderson, and West, 2014; Scheuler and West, 2016). This might help give evidence based deliberations and policymaking a fighting chance.

Overall, we think the same can be said about how education issues are different, based on the data we have presented which reveal substantial support for government spending and activity to promote public education. Partisan differences in opinion on these issues are noteworthy but they are not as great as for other issues that we have examined and reported on here. Partisan differences concerning racial and social values aspects of education policy are more mixed, though the partisan differences in support for sex education and for allowing prayer in school are quite small compared to more highly conflictual issues such as abortion, gay marriage, gun rights, capital punishment, the legalization of marijuana, and others.
The shift in the education policy agenda toward emphasizing issues and specific policies bearing directly on educational quality in schools, standards, and accountability has led to some muting of the partisanship that drives public opinion on so many other matters in present-day politics. The debates about these education issues appear to drive a wedge into what has been predictable partisan position-taking on an increasing number of policy issues beginning with the internal realignment of the Democratic and Republican parties on civil rights and liberties issues (on wedge issues, e.g., see Hillygus and Shields, 2008). The wedge has come about as the liberal-conservative ideological divide in party politics does not fit the way in which all individuals and groups see educational policies, particularly at the state and local level and in schools themselves. These issues have broken out of the partisan divide, as have others recently such as trade, campaign finance, and certain foreign policy issues (which are beyond the scope of this paper). In the case of Republican presidential candidate Trump’s supporters, that they want government to protect entitlement programs and take action against free trade policies that have adversely affected jobs in the U.S., puts them at odds with the conservative Republican establishment. According to Ellis and Stimson (2012), we could call them “conflicted conservatives.” In a parallel way, the issues of school quality, standards, and accountability have played out in some normally liberal Democratic circles and created, as we see it, “conflicted liberals” who support public schools, labor unions, and broadly liberal policymaking in other areas, but when it comes to education reforms, they are open to school choice, charter schools, changes in teacher tenure, and taking on teachers unions as a way to promote higher quality education (cf. Mulholland, 2015; McGuinn, 2010, 2012).

There is evidence for this in our public opinion data. As we have reported, there has been some increase in support for charter schools, including among Democrats. Support for testing in
graduating and promoting students and for merit-based pay and merit-based tenure for teachers has remained steady or increased, with little if any partisan differences. Support for vouchers in the PEPG and PDK data has been at the 50% level or better, with the PEPG data showing no partisan difference and the PDK surveys showing much less support by Democrats. Other opinions and partisan differences are hard to describe as purely ideological. Means-tested vouchers have less support overall than universal vouchers, but noticeably because Republicans support them less than Democrats. Overall support for the Common Core had originally been and largely remained high; opinion shifted against it as Republicans came to dislike the federal government—the much maligned Obama administration in particular—imposing it. Sentiment for further educational reform was spurred on by increasing opinion that there was too much testing in public schools, and that students’ standardized test results should not be used to evaluate teachers.

From the standpoint of electoral politics, it did make sense for candidates Trump, Cruz, Rubio, and others to use the Common Core as a partisan issue against Democrats defending the Obama administration. But national legislation driving such reforms has had substantial bipartisan support. This support might be reflecting public opinion, or position taking at the elite-level may have penetrated to the level of public opinion, such that in either case there has been less, or less substantial, partisan divergence in public opinion compared to what has happened for a wide range of other policy issues. This state of public opinion may feed back into the political process, making education more open to constructive bipartisan policymaking—and exceptional in this way.

Thus the debate over education quality, standards, and accountability has increased noticeably in national visibility and importance. While not as purely partisan and ideological as
on other issues, these issues, however, have become no less contentious. This applies especially beyond the enactment of policy changes to their implementation and ultimate effectiveness. In addition, to address education further as it bears on promoting opportunity and equality requires action on other fronts that are likely to be embroiled in partisan conflict.

Hess’s (2015) pointed review of “The Real Obama Education Record” demonstrates the persistent difficulties and contentiousness of efforts to improve schooling. While the Obama administration’s “post-partisan” intentions to capitalize on bipartisan support may have been good, the devil was in all the big details of implementing reforms. Writing before the passage of the 2015 Act, Hess, describes the struggle involving federal pressure to implement Common Core standards, and one take-away from this is that the same could occur in the implementation of the new education legislation. Hess argues that had the Obama administration eased up on the pressure, requiring promised for state innovations through waivers, “the Common Core standards would have been a voluntary initiative in 15 or 20 states, with far greater commitment from participating state officials. Absent federal demands, efforts to rethink teacher evaluation, using student test-scores and emphasizing serious differentiation, would be a still nascent effort in dozens states as they worked through options to find the best methods.“ (Hess, 2015, p.7-8). Instead the administration pushed for nationwide adoption on a not well thought out timeline—a political rather than a practical one. Thus potentially promising reforms were bungled, “turning encouraging developments into divisive fads” (p.8). This contribute to the need for a change of course in the new legislation, but Hess’s analysis raises the question of whether more of the same conflicts in federal-state-school implementation efforts will recur. This is to say nothing of disagreements that can be found among the public related to differences in individuals’ knowledge about education issues and policies, attitudes toward federal/state/local control, and
individuals’ perceptions and experiences with elementary and secondary education—as parents or through other points of direct contact or observation; we see this in opinions toward school testing where partisanship matter very little if at all (see Lay and Stokes-Brown, 2009; Peterson, Henderson, and West, 2014; Scheuler and West, 2016).

There is, however, no way to escape partisan conflict in public opinion if the goal is to improve the education of students to promote opportunity and equality. Quality education, standards, and accountability are relevant for what happens in school, but we know that enhancing education, opportunity, and equality requires improving the home and family environments of children young and older. This comes back to dealing with problems that the original 1965 Act and other programs and policies tried to address: improving the economic circumstances and health care of families and children, so that children can get the most benefit from schooling and through the value added that encouraging parents and home fronts can provide. This means that we cannot ignore the much more partisan issues related to jobs, income and in-kind assistance, taxes, and so forth. On these issues, a recent American Enterprise Institute/Brookings Institution Report (AEI/Brookings Institution, 2015) brought together a working group of conservatives, and liberals (progressives) who reached a consensus on twelve general policy recommendations to promote the goals of “Opportunity, Responsibility, and Security.” These recommendations included promoting: a new norm of parenthood and marriage; delayed, responsible childbearing; better access to parenting education; helping the young and less educated prosper in work and family; improved job skills; work that pays more for the less educated; the raising of work levels of the hard-to-employ; the availability of jobs; public investment in pre-school and postsecondary; the education of the whole child, including social-emotional and character development and academic skills; the modernization of the
organization and accountability of education; and the closing of resource gaps to reduce education gaps. Even with this consensus, and with more knowledge today about what works to address poverty and related problems (see Waldfogel, 2016), the resource requirements of these recommendations, should they be taken up formally, will surely become partisan issues. For example, one of the most easy to accept recommendations of promoting public investment in pre-school, is likely to start out with some significant partisan disagreement. While according to an August 2014 Gallup Poll (from The Roper Center/iPOLL Archive) only 28% of the public opposed “using federal money to increase funding to make sure high quality preschool programs are available for every child in America,” the partisan difference was 36 percentage points, with 47% of Republican versus 11% of Democrats opposing this. This underlying conflict is not insuperable, but it will not be easy.

References


**APPENDIX: SURVEY QUESTION WORDINGS AND DATA**

**NORC-General Social Surveys**

**Spending Questions**

We are faced with many problems in this country, not of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I’m going to name some of these problems, and for each one I’d like you to tell me whether you think we’re spending too much on it, too little money, or about the right amount. First (Read Item A)...are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on (Item)?

**Improving the nation’s education system (NATEDUC)**

**Education (NATEDUCY)**

**Confidence in Institutions**

I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them? READ EACH ITEM; CODE ONE FOR EACH.

**Education (CONEDUC)**

**EQWLTH**

A. Some people think that the government in Washington ought to reduce the income differences between the rich and the poor, perhaps by raising the taxes of wealthy families or by giving income assistance to the poor. Others think that the government should not concern itself with reducing this income difference between the rich and the poor. Here is a card with a scale from 1 to 7. Think of a score of 1 as meaning that the government ought to reduce the income differences between rich and poor, and a score of 7 meaning that the government should not concern itself with reducing income differences. What score between 1 and 7 comes closest to the way you feel?

1-3 = Government should reduce differences

5-7 = Government should not concern itself with reducing differences

**HELPPOOR**

I'd like to talk with you about issues some people tell us are important. Please look at CARD BC. Some people think that the government in Washington should do everything possible to improve the standard of living of all poor Americans; they are at Point 1 on this card. Other people think
it is not the government's responsibility, and that each person should take care of himself; they are at Point 5.
A. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you have up your mind on this?

1-2 = Government should improve standard of living

4-5 = People should help themselves

HELP SICK
In general, some people think that it is the responsibility of the government in Washington to see to it that people have help in paying for doctors and hospital bills. Others think that these matters are not the responsibility of the federal government and that people should take care of these things themselves.
A. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you made up your mind on this?

1-2 = Government should provide healthcare

4-5 = People should help themselves

HELP BLK
Some people think that (Blacks/Negroes/African-Americans) have been discriminated against for so long that the government has a special obligation to help improve their living standards. Others believe that the government should not be giving special treatment to (Blacks/Negroes/African-Americans).
A. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you made up your mind on this?

1-2 = Government should help African-Americans

4-5 = Government should not give African-Americans special treatment

PRAYER
The United States Supreme Court has ruled that no state or local government may require the reading of the Lord's Prayer or Bible verses in public schools. What are your views on this--do you approve or disapprove of the court ruling?

Approve=Approve that school prayer should not be required, so coded as opposed to school prayer; Disapprove=Disapprove that school prayer cannot be required, so coded as in favor of school prayer.

SEX EDUC
Would you be for or against sex education in the public schools? Favor/Oppose
BUSING

In general, do you favor or oppose the busing of (Negro/Black/African-American) and white school children from one school district to another? Favor/Oppose

Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) Survey Question Wordings

Specific years in which wording deviations are indicated separately

Education Spending

- 2007: Keeping in mind that the money for public education has to be paid by taxes, do you think that government funding for public schools in your district should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?
- Do you think that government funding for public schools in your district should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?

Education Spending (With Information)

- According to the most recent information available, in your district $XXXX is being spent each year per child attending public schools. Do you think that government funding for public schools in your district should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?

Charter Schools

- Many states allow for the formation of charter schools, which are privately managed under a renewable performance contract that exempts them from many of the regulations of other public schools. Do you support or oppose the formation of charter schools?

Teacher Salaries

- Do you think that teacher salaries in your state should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?
- 2011: Do you think that teacher salaries at your local schools should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?
- 2012 & 2014: Do you think that teacher salaries should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?
- 2015: Do you think that public school teacher salaries should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?

Teacher Salaries (With Information)

- 2008 – 2011: According to the most recent information available, in your state public school teachers receive on average an annual salary of $XX,XXX. Do you think that teacher salaries in your state should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?
- 2012 & 2014: As it turns out, teachers in your state are paid an average annual salary of $XX,XXX. Do you think that teacher salaries should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?
• 2013: As it turns out, public school teachers in your state receive, on average, salaries of $XX,XXX. In your view, should their salaries increase, decrease, or stay about the same?
• 2015: As it turns out, public school teachers in your state are paid an average annual salary of $XX,XXX. Do you think that public school teacher salaries should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?

Merit-Based Pay for Teachers
• Do you favor or oppose basing a teacher’s salary, in part, on students’ academic progress on state tests?
• 2011: Do you favor or oppose basing the salaries of teachers in your local schools, in part, on their students’ academic progress on state tests?
• 2014 & 2015: Do you favor or oppose basing part of the salaries of teachers on how much their students learn?

Tenure for Teachers
• Teachers with tenure cannot be dismissed unless a school district follows detailed procedures. Some say that tenure protects teachers from being fired for arbitrary reasons. Others say that it makes it too difficult to replace ineffective teachers. We want to know what you think of tenure. Do you favor or oppose offering tenure to teachers?
• 2014: Teachers with tenure cannot be dismissed unless a school district follows detailed procedures. Some say that tenure provides teachers with the necessary independence for their work. Others say that it makes it too difficult to replace ineffective teachers. We want to know what you think of tenure. Do you favor or oppose giving tenure to teachers?

Merit-Based Tenure for Teachers
• Another proposal has been made that would require teachers to demonstrate that their students are making adequate progress on state tests in order to receive tenure. Would you favor or oppose such a proposal?
• 2011: A proposal has been made that would require the teachers in your local schools to demonstrate that their students are making adequate progress on state tests in order to receive tenure. Would you favor or oppose such a proposal?

Effects of Teachers’ Unions
• Some people say that teacher unions are a stumbling block to school reform? Others say that unions fight for better schools and better teachers. What do you think? Do you think teacher unions have a generally positive effect on the schools in your community, or do you think they have a generally negative effect?
• 2011: Some people say that teacher unions are a stumbling block to school reform. Others say that unions fight for better schools and better teachers. What do you think? Do you think teacher unions have a generally positive effect on your local schools, or do you think they have a generally negative effect?
Common Core
• As you may know, all states are currently deciding whether or not to adopt the Common Core standards in reading and math. If adopted, these standards would be used to hold the state’s schools accountable for their performance. Do you support or oppose the adoption of the Common Core standards in your state?

Graduation Tests in High School
• In some states, students must pass an exam before they are eligible to receive a high school diploma. Do you support or oppose this requirement?
• 2011: In some states, students must pass an exam before they are eligible to receive a high school diploma. Do you support or oppose this requirement for the students in your local schools?

Allow Children to Take Online Courses
• Would you be willing to have a child of yours go through high school taking some academic courses over the internet?

Tests for Grade Promotion
• In some states, students in certain grades must pass an exam before they are eligible to move on to the next grade. Do you support or oppose this requirement?
• 2011: In some states, students in certain grades must pass an exam before they are eligible to move on to the next grade. Do you support or oppose this requirement for the students in your local schools?
• 2013: In some states, third grade students are required to pass the state’s reading test to be eligible to move on to the fourth grade. Do you support or oppose this requirement for students?

Increasing Taxes to Fund Education
• According to the most recent information available, in your district $X,XXX is being spent each year per child attending public schools. Do you think that local taxes to fund public schools in your district should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?

Means-Tested Vouchers
• 2007, 2013-2015: A proposal has been made that would use government funds to pay the tuition of low-income students who choose to attend private schools. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?
• 2008 – 2011: A proposal has been made that would use government funds to help pay the tuition of low-income students whose families would like them to attend private schools. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?

Universal Vouchers to Expand Choice
• A proposal has been made that would give families with children in public schools a wider choice, by allowing them to enroll their children in private schools instead, with government helping to pay the tuition. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?
Estimates of Per-Child Education Spending

- Based on your best guess, what is the average amount of money spent each year for a child in public schools in your school district?

Charter Schools Holding Religious Services

- To the best of your knowledge, can charter schools hold religious services?

Charter Schools Teaching Religion

- Based on what you have heard about charter schools, are the following statements true or false? Charter schools are free to teach religion

Charter Schools Charging Tuition

- 2007: Based on what you have heard about charter schools, are the following statements true or false? (2) Charter schools may not charge tuition
- 2010 & 2013: To the best of your knowledge, can charter schools charge tuition?

Question Wordings for Phi Delta Kappa Surveys (conducted by the Gallup Organization)

Support for charter schools: As you may know, charter schools operate under a charter or contract that frees them from many of the state regulations imposed on public schools and permits them to operate independently. Do you favor or oppose the idea of charter schools?

Grading community schools: Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in your community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here -- A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

Grading the nation’s schools: How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally -- A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

Standardized testing and teacher evaluations: Some states require that teacher evaluations include how well a teacher's students perform on standardized tests. Do you favor or oppose this requirement?

Support for teacher tenure: In some states, tenure is granted to a public school teacher after a trial period. Do you favor or oppose teacher tenure?

Emphasis on testing: Now, here are some questions about testing. In your opinion, is there too much emphasis on achievement testing in the public schools in this community, not enough emphasis on testing, or about the right amount?

Private school choice/vouchers: Do you favor or oppose allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense?
Figure 1

Ideological Divergence: U.S. House of Representatives

Figure 2

Ideological Divergence: U.S. Senate
Figure 3

Partisan Polarization in the U.S. House and Senate

Figure 4

One General View: James Stimson’s Liberal/Conservative “Public Mood”

Measure: Partisan Cycles -- “Thermostatic” View

Figure 5

Improving and Protecting the Nations' Health

% Respondents Who Favor Increased Spending

Years

Democrat -- Republican

Figure 6

Welfare

% Respondents Who Favor Decreased Spending

Years

Democrat -- Republican
Figure 7

[Graph showing changes in the percentage of respondents favoring increased spending on improving and protecting the environment over time, with different lines for Democrats and Republicans.]

Figure 8

[Graph showing changes in the percentage of respondents favoring increased spending on the military, armaments, and defense over time, with different lines for Democrats and Republicans.]
Figure 9

Widening partisan gap over size of government

% who prefer a smaller govt providing fewer services...

Rep/Lean Rep

71 82 62 65 72 80

52 39 37 32 33 31

Dem/Lean Dem


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Figure 10

Conservative Shift Driven by Republicans

Americans’ Views on Government Regulation of Business, by Party
In general, do you think there is too much, too little or about the right amount of government regulation of business and industry?

% Too much, Republicans

% Too much, Democrats


GALLUP
Figure 11
Overall Conservative Shift Driven by Republicans

Figure 12
Long-Term Partisan Gap in Views of Labor Unions
% with a favorable view of labor unions

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Figure 13

Labor Unions Are Necessary to Protect the Working Person

Figure 14

Gun Rights by Partisanship
Figure 15

**Wider Partisan Gap on Death Penalty**

% who favor death penalty among...

- **Rep**
- **Dem**
- **Ind**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rep</th>
<th>Dem</th>
<th>Ind</th>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>71</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>77</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


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Figure 16

**Support for Legalizing Marijuana**

Figure 17

Same Sex Marriage

Figure 18

Immigration
Figure 19

More Democrats Favor Preferences to Improve Minorities' Position

We should make every effort to improve the position of minorities, even if it means preferential treatment

- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent


PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2012 Values Survey. Q401.

Figure 20

Improving the Nation's Education System

% Respondents Who Favor Increased Spending

Years

- Democrat
- Republican
Figure 27

Sex Education in Schools

% Respondents Who Favor

Years


- Democrat
- Republican

Figure 28

Requiring School Prayer

% Respondents Who Favor

Years


- Democrat
- Republican
Figure 29


Figure 30

Figure 31


Figure 32

Figure 33


Figure 8

“Old” and “new” education issue definition, problem and alternatives, 1948–2011

Problem: Media

Problem: Party Platforms

Alternatives: Party Platforms

Alternatives: CQ Key Votes


Figure 34

Support for Universal Vouchers

% in Favor

2011 2012 2013 2014 2015

Years

Democrat Republican
Figure 43

Support for Charter Schools

% in Favor

Years


Democrat Republican

Figure 44

Support for Tenure for Teachers

% in Favor

Years


Democrat Republican
Figure 45

Attitudes About the Effects of Teachers’ Unions

% Believing Positive Effect

Years


Democrat Republican

Figure 46

Iraq had WMD: Perceptions of Republicans by education (source: PIPA surveys)

High School or less  Some College College Graduate Some Graduate

Month

Mar-04 May-04 Jul-04 Sep-04 Nov-04 Mar-05 May-05 Jul-05 Sep-05 Nov-05 Jan-06 Mar-06
Figure 47

Iraq had WMD: Perceptions of Democrats by education (source: PIPA surveys)

Figure 48

Belief that Obama is a Muslim, by partisanship and education (source: John Sides, “The Monkey Cage”)

Figure 49

Believe Rise in Earth's Temperature in Last Century Due Mainly to Human Activities
Trend by party ID

Figure 50

Optimism About the Nation’s Economy
ABC News/Washington Post polls
Figure 51

Optimism About Your Family's Finances
ABC News/Washington Post polls

Figure 52

Beliefs About Charter Schools Holding Religious Services

% Correct

2010 2013
Figure 53

Beliefs About Charter Schools Charging Tuition (2007-2013)

Figure 54

Estimates of Amount Spent on Education Per Child