

# Trends & Leaders

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Keeping you informed of current topics in youth and education research.

## Contents

Are America's Schools Customer-Friendly? .....1-2  
 Editorial: Our Take On It.....2-3  
 Recent Research for Public Release .....3  
 Ask A Question .....4  
 Contact Us .....4

## Are America's Schools Customer-Friendly?

Harris Interactive has been interviewing students, teachers and parents on behalf of K-12 school districts since 1993. The CSMpact<sup>SM</sup> for Schools research program has been conducted for more than 200 school districts and has interviewed more than a million respondents. This project helps local school districts consider the opinions of their customers and employees when planning and making decisions.

For this issue, we reviewed some of the top-level data from this project. We asked various school stakeholders to grade their schools, and as the table below shows, America's schools receive passing grades. Elementary students tended to be the most satisfied, while parents tended to be the least satisfied with their schools. The median rating for our schools is an "A" among elementary students and a "B" for secondary students, parents, and teachers. Many national polls have shown that parents and teachers will rate their own school much higher than they will rate the nation's schools as a whole.

| REPORT CARD:                                                                     |                     |                    |         |                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|
| Please give an overall satisfaction rating for your school for this school year. |                     |                    |         |                    |
| Grade                                                                            | Elementary Students | Secondary Students | Parents | Teachers and Staff |
| A                                                                                | 56%                 | 30%                | 18%     | 32%                |
| B                                                                                | 30%                 | 44%                | 44%     | 47%                |
| C                                                                                | 11%                 | 19%                | 30%     | 18%                |
| D                                                                                | 2%                  | 4%                 | 5%      | 2%                 |
| F                                                                                | 1%                  | 3%                 | 3%      | 1%                 |
| GPA                                                                              | 3.38                | 2.94               | 2.69    | 3.07               |

Source: Harris Interactive CSMpact for Schools Study

Student satisfaction starts high in the elementary years but falls consistently during their time in the school system. (The A to F scale has been converted to a 10-point scale for the chart seen on the top of page 2.) Parental involvement in schools and teacher motivation show similar declines based on the grade level of the child. The "system" becomes less customer-friendly as children move through it.

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YOUTH & EDUCATION  
 Harris Heritage. Interactive Power.

## Editorial: Our Take On It

by John Geraci

VP Youth & Education Research

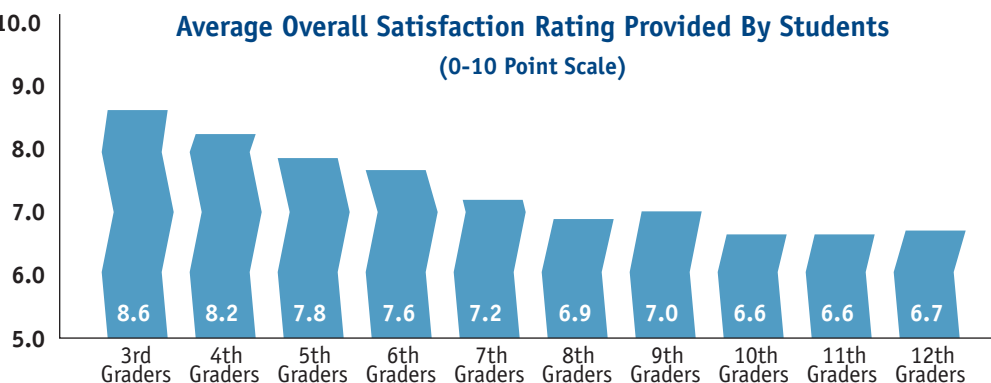
Since 1993, our research team has traveled throughout the United States to work with many of the nation's public schools. Clients have ranged from small rural districts with just a few schools to urban districts with thousands of students. Over the past nine years, we have been very impressed with the commitment and the professionalism of the administrators and teachers we have met, and our data show that they are an incredibly motivated group of people.

It has been interesting to be business people in an educational environment. We've learned a lot about the strengths and weaknesses of both settings. We are convinced that educators and business people can learn a lot from each other.

Schools are experts at creating and implementing new programs. They are not as adept at measuring the impact of these programs to understand if they are working. So, many districts wind up in an endless cycle of reform with pressure to implement the latest educational improvement at the expense of the tried-and-true. A superintendent once told us that there is no problem that exists in our schools that has not been solved by someone, somewhere. Unlike in business, where competitive pressures force a rapid diffusion and copying of business model innovations, educational innovations can live in isolation.

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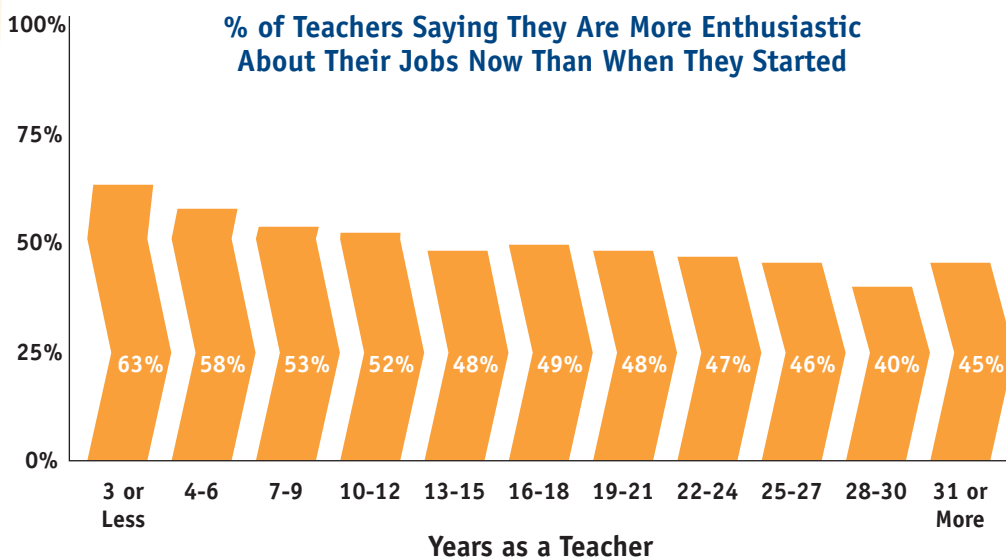
**Average Overall Satisfaction Rating Provided By Students**  
(0-10 Point Scale)



Source: Harris Interactive CSMpact for Schools Study

Our polls also indicate that teacher satisfaction does not vary by level of experience as a teacher—new teachers and experienced teachers seem equally motivated and satisfied. As the chart below shows, the enthusiasm teachers show for their jobs falls quickly in the first few years on the job, but many long-term teachers still feel more excited about their jobs than when they first started. We suspect that teacher enthusiasm would compare favorably with the career satisfaction for employees of equal stature in most professions.

**% of Teachers Saying They Are More Enthusiastic About Their Jobs Now Than When They Started**



Source: Harris Interactive CSMpact for Schools Study

Our work with schools shows that each school environment is unique, but that key drivers of satisfaction show some commonality across districts. For instance, our regression models indicate that student satisfaction is often predicted by physical and environmental issues, such as the condition of the building and classrooms, the school bus, and the atmosphere of the school. Students tend to rate their teachers highly. Parents are apt to be most dissatisfied with the level and quality of communications they receive from the school and teachers. Teachers are inclined to react most strongly to the level of support they receive or don't receive from parents and administrators.

For more information on Harris Interactive's work in K-12 education, contact **Larry Brown** at 585.214.7135 or [lbrown@harrisinteractive.com](mailto:lbrown@harrisinteractive.com)

Continued from Page 2

*The federal government has little control over the nation's schools as funding and governance of schools is constitutionally left to individual states. What better role for the federal government than to act as a clearinghouse of innovations—to help districts learn from the success and failure of other school systems?*

*School administrators' and teachers' motivations are pure. If you want to sell educators on an idea or a product you will be successful if you begin by showing how your concept will benefit the student. Financial considerations matter, but only after the educator has been convinced of how the idea will work to the betterment of children.*

*As business people, we learn from this approach. Too often as youth marketers we get focused on the pressures we have to increase sales or share and fail to see the big picture of how our products fit into the lives of children. Most long-term "hits" in youth marketing happen because a marketer understood the needs of children—independent of the needs of their own organization. Educators are our role models in this respect. They are immersed in the world of children. They understand their needs.*

## Recent Research for Public Release

From time to time, the Harris Interactive youth team is fortunate enough to work with media, leading foundations and non-profit organizations, and we often are able to release the results of these studies publicly.

### Talking About September 11: A new *TIME for Kids* poll reveals how American kids feel one year later

A new poll reveals how much the worst terrorist attack in American history still affects the nation's kids. The poll, conducted by Harris Interactive for *TIME* magazine, *TIME For Kids* and Nickelodeon, asked 1,176 kids, ages 8-18, questions including how often they think about September 11, how safe they feel today, and how they prefer to pay tribute to that anniversary.

While kids aren't thinking about September 11 as often as they did a year ago, 41 percent of the kids surveyed said they still think about September 11 "a few times a month," 25 percent think about it more often, and 34 percent think about it less often.

More than half of the kids, 59 percent, said they feel that fighting terrorism is President Bush's most important problem to solve, followed by keeping the economy strong and protecting the environment. Eight out of 10 rate the President's response so far as "good" or "very good." About the same number believe that Osama bin Laden will be captured or killed.

More information on this poll can be found at [www.timeforkids.com](http://www.timeforkids.com)

### One Year After 9-11 Attacks, America's Youth Say "Individual Rights and Freedoms" Is Top Social Concern

America's youth say individual rights and freedoms is their top social concern, a new poll by the youth leadership organization, Do Something, reports. The nationwide study of more than 1,100 students ages 8-18, performed by Harris Interactive, also finds youth are extremely optimistic about their future, believing they will reach their personal goals, live a long life and to do the things they want despite the terrorist attacks of one year ago.

America's youth say individual rights and freedoms (70%), guns at school (64%), drunk driving (63%), self-esteem (60%) and improving schools (60%) are their top social concerns, with drugs (59%), discrimination (58%), terrorism (57%), depression and teen suicide (53%) and abuse at home (52%) rounding out the top 10 issues that are extremely or very important to them personally.

More information on this poll can be found at [www.dosomething.org](http://www.dosomething.org)

## Contact Us:

To discuss this newsletter or your upcoming research project, call

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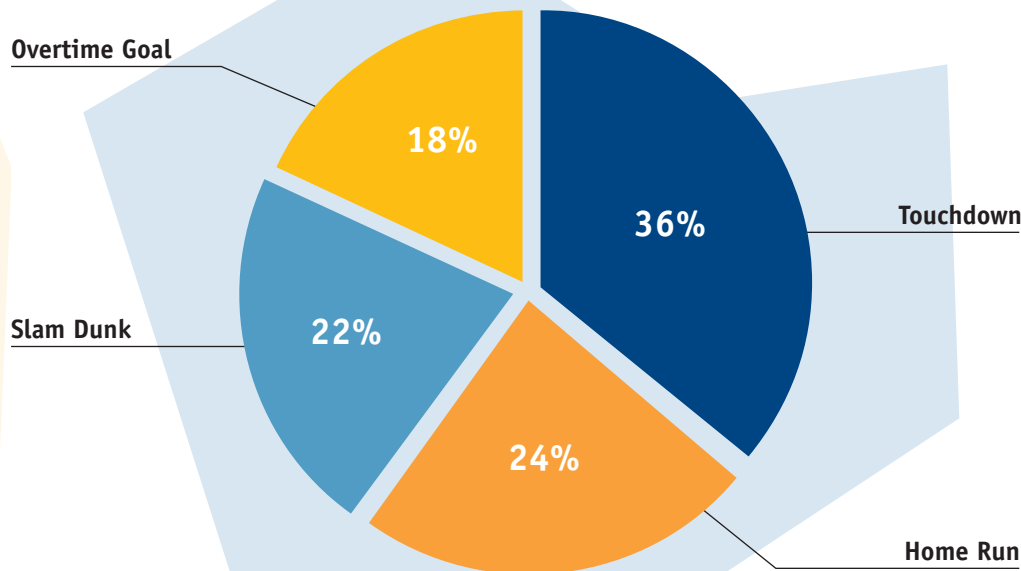
## Ask a Question...

Have a burning question you would like to ask kids and teens? Here's your chance to submit a free question for our upcoming YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup> youth omnibus. Just send us an email with your suggestion. We will select one question each month from the group of questions received. The selected question and its results are published in the next issue of this newsletter.

### ...Get an answer

Sarah McEvily from ESPN submitted the following question...

### Which sporting feat do you enjoy most?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery Monthly Omnibus