

A+ Parent Satisfaction Survey: 2008

Prepared for the Arizona State Board of Education

By

**David R. Garcia
Assistant Professor
Arizona State University**

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Arizona Policy Education Initiative
A Collaborative Project of Arizona State University,
the University of Arizona, and Northern Arizona University

**Arizona State University
Mary Lou Fulton College of Education**
P.O. Box 872411, Tempe, AZ 85287-2411
Telephone: (480) 965-7413
Fax: (480) 965-1880
E-mail: d.garcia@asu.edu

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Introduction

The *A+ Parent Satisfaction Survey* has been conducted since 1999. The 2008 survey was commissioned by the Arizona State Board of Education (State Board) and conducted by David R. Garcia, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at the Mary Lou Fulton College of Education at Arizona State University. Dr. Garcia is also the Director of the Arizona Education Policy Initiative (AEPI), a collaboration of Arizona State University, the University of Arizona, and Northern Arizona University. The purpose of the survey is to measure parental satisfaction with Arizona K-12 public schools. In addition, the survey contains questions to measure parental awareness and opinion of key State Board policies.

Methods

Survey Instrument

In an effort to maintain consistency over time, the wording of the 2008 *A+ Parent Satisfaction Survey* questions is identical or nearly identical to the parent satisfaction questions in previous *A+ Parent Satisfaction Surveys*. In addition, many questions from previous *A+ Parent Satisfaction Surveys* were retained in the current survey and new questions have been added. When possible, the report includes the survey results for the most recent three years (2006-2008).

The full survey instrument was designed by Dr. David R. Garcia with input from Dr. Bruce Merrill of Arizona State University.

Survey Administration

The survey results in this report are based on 400 telephone interviews with a statewide random sample of adult heads of household living in Arizona. The sample generalizes to all adult heads of household living in Arizona with children attending public schools, including charter schools. The samples were stratified by county to ensure they were representative of all adults living in Arizona.¹

The interview schedule was pre-tested and the interviews conducted by professional interviewers at the Summit Group in Phoenix. The survey was administered from April 15-25, 2008. The surveys were conducted using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system.

If an interview was not successfully completed after eight callbacks, random substitution was allowed with telephones numbers in the same prefix. Seventy-two percent of the respondents were interviewed successfully. Respondents were given the option of taking the survey in Spanish or English. The sample demographics are contained in the final section of the report.

The sampling error for the statewide sample is plus or minus 4.9 percent, given a response to a question of 50 percent and assuming a 95 percent level of significance. Sampling error varies based on the distribution of the responses. Sampling errors for various percentages when the sample size is 400 are shown below:

	Sampling Error
50%	4.9%
40% or 60%	4.8%
30% or 70%	4.5%
20% or 80%	3.9%
10% or 90%	2.9%

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). All of the following tables reflect the percent of respondents. In all the preceding tables, the percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Findings

Parent Satisfaction with Public Schools

Arizona parents perceive the schools that their children attend more favorably than Arizona public schools in general.² However, parent ratings of Arizona public schools in general increased significantly over the past year. The 2008 parent ratings of the school their oldest child attends are statistically identical to the 2007 results. Thirty-six percent of parents rated the school their oldest child attends as “A+” or “A” and 79 percent of parents rated their public school a “B” or higher (Table 1).

After a period of declining parent satisfaction ratings in recent years, the percentage of parents rating their school with an “A+” or “A” has returned to the level of the original *A+ Parent Satisfaction Survey* results. In 1999, 37 percent of Arizona parents rated the school their oldest child attended with an “A+” or “A” and 80 percent of parents rated their public school a “B” or higher (Table 2).³

Table 1: Grading *Your* Public School (2006 – 2008)

		A+	A	B	C	D	F	No Opinion
What grade would you give to the school your oldest child attends?	2008	8	28	43	16	3	1	1
	2007	7	29	41	17	4	1	<1
	2006	5	27	40	20	5	2	<1

Table 2: Grading *Your* Public School (1999)

	A+	A	B	C	D	F	No Opinion
What grade would you give to the school your oldest child attends?	7	30	43	15	3	1	1

In 2008, parent ratings all Arizona public schools increased markedly from the 2007 survey administration. In 2007, 6 percent of parents rated all Arizona public schools an “A+” or “A.” In 2008, the percent of parents rating all public schools an “A+” or “A” is 12 percent. The nearly 6 percentage point increase from 2007 to 2008 is statistically significant.⁴

Table 3: Grading *A*// Arizona Public Schools (2006 – 2008)

		A+	A	B	C	D	F	No Opinion
What grade would you give to the job public schools in Arizona are doing?	2008	3	9	26	38	13	3	8
	2007	<1	6	28	36	17	4	8
	2006	1	7	27	42	13	5	6

School Accountability

The State Board of Education sets policy for both of Arizona’s school accountability systems, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Arizona LEARNS. In order to assess parental opinions of school accountability policies accurately, parents were first asked their level of familiarity with NCLB and Arizona LEARNS prior to seeking parental opinion on each system. The purpose of the familiarity questions was to gather the opinions of only those parents who stated they are familiar enough with the respective school accountability systems to provide an informed opinion.

As in the previous two years, a substantial majority of parents are familiar with the federal NCLB accountability system. Sixty eight percent of parents are either very or somewhat familiar with NCLB, compared to seventy percent in 2007 (Table 4). Over the past year, parent opinion of NCLB has become more positive. In 2008, 50 percent of parents rated NCLB either “favorable” or “very favorable” an increase of 5 percentage points from 2007. Conversely, the

percentage of parents rating NCLB as either “unfavorable” or “very unfavorable” decreased by 2 percentage points (Table 5).

Table 4: Knowledge of NCLB

		Very Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Not Very Familiar	Not at all Familiar	No Opinion
How familiar would you say you are with the No Child Left Behind Act - the federal education bill passed by Congress in 2001?	2008	25	43	19	12	3
	2007	26	44	18	11	1
	2006	27	40	24	9	<1

Table 5: Opinion of NCLB

		Very Favorable	Generally Favorable	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	No Opinion
From what you have heard or read about NCLB, what is your opinion of the act?	2008	16	34	28	19	3
	2007	12	33	31	18	5
	2006	20	38	25	15	3

Note: This table includes only respondents who were either “very” or “somewhat” familiar with NCLB. The total number of respondents equaled 269 in 2008, 283 in 2007, and 272 in 2006.

Parents were also asked to rate their familiarity and opinion of Arizona’s accountability system, AZ LEARNS. The questions about AZ LEARNS were asked in the 2006 *A+ Parent Satisfaction Survey* but were not included in 2007 due to the small percentage of parents familiar enough with AZ LEARNS to provide an informed opinion. The questions were re-introduced in the 2008 *A+ Parent Satisfaction Survey* in order to gauge how perception of the system has changed over time. In 2008, only 22 percent of parents were either “very familiar” or “familiar” with AZ LEARNS, an almost identical percentage to the 21 percent of parents in 2006 that were

equally familiar with the state accountability system (Table 6). Of those parents familiar with AZ LEARNS, 58 percent are “very” or “generally” favorable of the state accountability system. The 2008 ratings are statistically identical to the 2006 results (Table 7).

Table 6: Knowledge of AZ LEARNS (2006 & 2008)

		Very Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Not Very Familiar	Not at all Familiar	No Opinion
How familiar would you say you are with AZ LEARNS, Arizona's school accountability system?	2008	10	12	15	48	15
	2006	10	11	26	53	0

Table 7: Opinion of AZ LEARNS (2006 & 2008)

		Very Favorable	Generally Favorable	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	No Opinion
From what you have heard or read about AZ LEARNS, what is your opinion of it?	2008	26	32	23	13	6
	2006	26	34	26	11	5

Note: This table includes only respondents who were either “very” or “somewhat” familiar with AZ LEARNS. The total number of respondents equaled 86 and 87 in 2006 and 2008 respectively.

AIMS and Academic Performance

The Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test is Arizona’s standard, statewide test used to determine how well elementary and high school students are meeting academic standards in Reading, Mathematics, Writing and Science. Sixty-six percent of parents favor using statewide tests as an indicator of school performance (Table 8).

Table 8: Using Statewide Tests to Measure Performance

		Favor	Oppose	No Opinion
Do you favor or oppose using statewide tests to determine how schools are performing?	2008	66	30	4

AIMS as a Graduation Requirement

This spring, the class of 2008 was the third cohort of Arizona students required to pass AIMS to graduate from high school. Parental opinion of AIMS as a graduation requirement is volatile. For example, only 40 percent of parents in 2008 approved of AIMS as a graduation requirement, a 21 percentage point decline from 2007 (see Table 9 and Figure 1).⁵

Parental opinion of AIMS as a graduation requirement appears influenced by the status of the state “AIMS Augmentation” law (Chapter 202, Forty-eighth legislature – second regular session), which allows students to graduate without passing AIMS if they meet specified grade requirements. The AIMS Augmentation law was first put into effect for the class of 2006 and coincides with the increase of parental approval of AIMS as a graduation requirement from 2005 to 2006. When the 2008 *A+ Parent Satisfaction Survey* was administered, the legislature had not yet passed legislation to re-enact the AIMS Augmentation law. Given that nearly two-thirds of parents approve of the AIMS Augmentation law (see Table 10), the uncertainty about the role of AIMS for the Class of 2008 may explain the sharp decline. The 2009 survey will provide an opportunity to test the influence of the AIMS Augmentation law on parental opinion of AIMS as

a graduation requirement. If parental approval of AIMS as a graduation requirement is coupled with the AIMS Augmentation law, parental approval should increase in the next survey.

Table 9: AIMS as a Graduation Requirement (2006–2008)

		Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
Do you approve or disapprove of requiring students to pass the AIMS test before they graduate from high school?	2008	40	55	5
	2007	61	28	11
	2006	61	33	6

Figure 1: AIMS as a Graduation Requirement, by Year

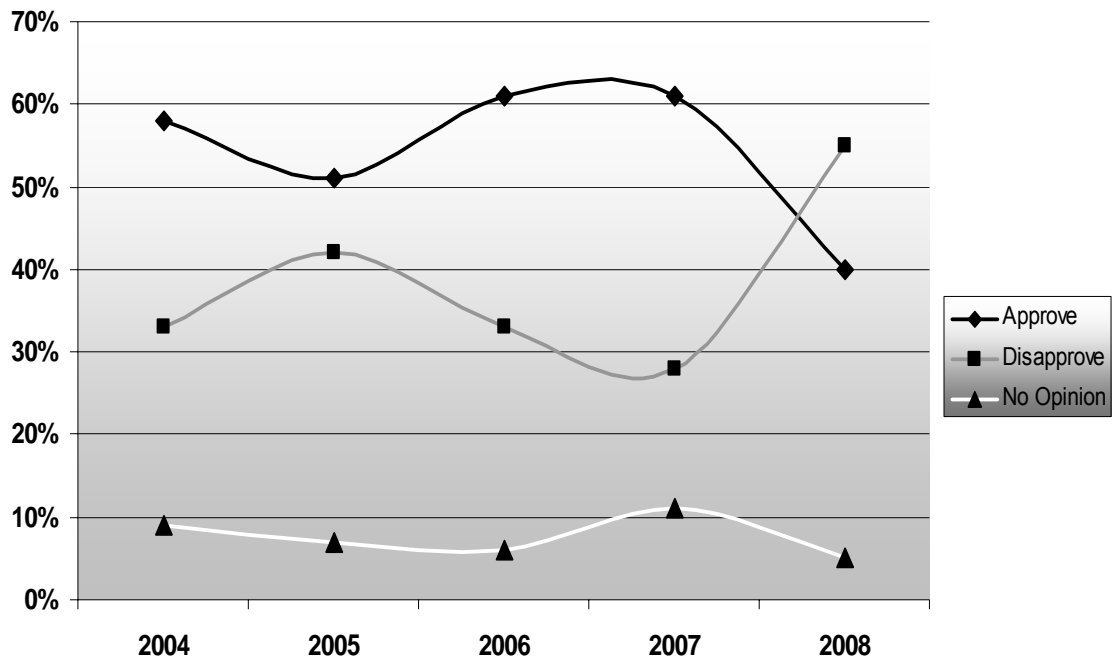


Table 10: AIMS Augmentation

	Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
Do you approve or disapprove of students graduating from high school if they don't pass AIMS but have passing grades in other courses?	64	29	8

The 2008 survey also includes two questions that gauge parents' opinions on the difficulty of the AIMS test and whether the test covers the skills and academic tasks that are most important for their child to learn. Parents were asked if they thought the AIMS test was "too easy," "about right," or "too hard" for their oldest child to pass. In 2008, 63 percent of parents believe that the AIMS test is "about right" in terms of difficulty for their oldest child, compared with 67 percent in 2007 (Table 11). The most noteworthy trend is the statistically significant increase (8 points) in the percentage of parents who consider the AIMS test "too easy."

On AIMS content, the percentage of parents who believed that the AIMS test covers important material increased from 38 in 2007 to 49 in 2008, a statistically significant increase of 11 percentage points (Table 12).

Table 11: AIMS Difficulty

		Too Easy	About Right	Too Hard
Do you think the AIMS test is too easy, about right, or too hard for your oldest child to pass?	2008	25	63	13
	2007	17	67	16

Table 12: AIMS Content

		Yes	No	No Opinion
In your opinion, does AIMS cover the skills and academic tasks that you think are most important for your oldest child to learn?	2008	49	27	24
	2007	38	32	31

The 2008 survey included a new set of questions to measure parent perceptions about how well students are prepared for college and the workforce after graduating high school (Table 13). Forty seven percent of parents “strongly agreed” or “somewhat agreed” that most high school students were adequately prepared for college and 44 percent of parents hold the opinion that most high school students were adequately prepared for skilled jobs after leaving high school. The overwhelming majority of parents (86 percent) believe that most students leave high school adequately prepared for non-skilled jobs. When measured against public opinion nationwide, fewer Arizonans believe that high school students are adequately prepared for college or skilled jobs, but are more confident in students being prepared for non-skilled jobs after leaving high school. Nationwide, 60 percent strongly or somewhat agree that students leave school adequately prepared for college, 50 percent believe they are adequately prepared for skilled jobs, and 75 percent believe students are prepared for non-skilled jobs.⁶

Table 13: Preparation Beyond High School

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Most public school students leave high school adequately prepared for college?	11	36	29	21	4

Most public school students leave high school adequately prepared to do skilled jobs?	12	32	27	24	6
Most public school students leave high school adequately prepared to do non-skilled jobs?	38	48	7	4	4

School Report Cards

The Arizona Department of Education publishes School Report Cards (SRCs) as an information source for parents about school policies and academic performance. In 2008, 72 percent of parents have reviewed an SRC, a two percentage point increase compared to 2007 (Table 14). Of the parents who have viewed a SRC, 72 percent consider the SRCs as either “very informative” or “generally informative.” In 2008, parental opinions of the SRCs increased sharply. In 2008, the percentage of parents who rated the SRCs as “very informative” increased 17 percentage points from 2007 (Table 15). In spring 2008, the ADE updated the public interface for the SRCs. The change in parental opinion coincides with these changes and is a likely explanation for the increased percentage of parents who consider the SRCs as informative.

Table 14: Review of School Report Cards

		Yes	No
The Arizona Dept. of Education publishes School Report Cards. Have you ever reviewed a School Report Card?	2008	73	28
	2007	71	29

Table 15: Opinion of School Report Cards

		Very Informative	Generally Informative	Somewhat Informative	Not Informative	No Opinion
In your opinion, how informative are the School Report Cards?	2008	35	37	19	6	3
	2007	18	39	33	7	2

Note: This table only includes respondents who have reviewed a School Report Card. The total number of respondents equaled 290 and 287 in 2008 and 2007, respectively.

Conclusion

The *A+ Parent Satisfaction Survey* is an informative measure of parental satisfaction with Arizona K-12 public schools. The general public and state organizations rely on the annual ratings as an independent assessment of the overall state of Arizona public schools and as a means of benchmarking the impact of state initiatives. For example, the 2008 report provides the State Board with the insight that parental opinion of all public schools has increased over the past year, parental opinion of AIMS as a graduation requirement may be related to the status of the AIMS Augmentation policy, and that parents likely acknowledge the improvements to the School Report Cards by their increased opinion of the SRC as an informative source about their public schools. The State Board should continue to use the *A+ Parent Satisfaction Survey* to solicit feedback from parents about its policies and rely on its findings to help inform future decision making.

Sample Demographics

The following tables detail the demographic characteristics of the statewide sample of survey respondents. All tables reflect the percent of Arizona parents.

Table 16: Child's School Level

Does your <u>oldest</u> child attend a...			
	2006	2007	2008
Elementary	42	50	40
Middle school	20	18	24
High school	37	32	37
Refused	1	0	0

Table 17: Child Attends a Charter School

Does your oldest child attend a charter school?			
	2006	2007	2008
Yes	16	12	14
No	84	88	85
No opinion	N/A	N/A	1

Table 18: Child under Age 6

Do you have a child or children under the age of 6?			
	2006	2007	2008
Yes	37	38	33
No	63	62	68

Table 19: Language Spoken in Household

Which of the following best characterizes your household?			
	2006	2007	2008
We speak only English in our household	79	80	74
We speak mainly English, but another language as well	18	19	24
We speak little or no English in our household	3	<1	2
Refused to answer	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 20: Race/Ethnicity of Surveyed Parents

In terms of race or ethnicity, which of the following do you <u>most</u> identify with?			
	2006	2007	2008
White or Anglo	67	67	69
Hispanic or Latino	18	16	18
Native American	4	2	2
African American	3	5	1
Two or more races	5	8	7
Other	4	2	3
Refused to answer	N/A	<1	1

Table 21: Parents' Education

How many years of formal education have you completed?			
	2006	2007	2008
High school or less	19	15	17
Some college or trade school	42	39	40
Graduated college	39	45	42
Refused to answer	1	<1	1

Table 22: Access to the Internet

Do you have access to the Internet?			
	2006	2007	2008
Yes	88	92	91
No	12	8	9

Table 23: Born in United States

Were you born in the United States?			
	2006	2007	2008
Yes	91	95	89
No	10	5	11

Table 24: Registered to Vote in Arizona

Are you registered to vote in Arizona?			
	2006	2007	2008
Yes	91	95	89
No	9	5	11

Table 25: County of Residence

In what county do you reside?			
	2006	2007	2008
Maricopa	59	60	50
Pima	20	24	23
Other	21	16	27

Table 26: Gender of Parent Surveyed

	2006	2007	2008
Male	42	34	33
Female	59	66	67

Table 27: Language Used for Survey

	2006	2007	2008
English	96	99	97
Spanish	3	<1	2
Both English and Spanish	1	1	1

Notes & References

¹ In 2004, the *A+ Parent Satisfaction Survey* was administered via the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) website. Due to a number of limitations associated with the parent sample, the 2004 results are not generalizable to the statewide population of Arizona parents and the 2004 results are not comparable to the results from previous years or to the 2005 results. The 2008 results for the parent satisfaction items are comparable to the 2007 results and comparable to the results from previous years, except 2004.

² For national results on a similar question see Rose, L.C. & Gallup, A.M. (September, 2007). *The 39th annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools*. Princeton, N.J. Phi Delta Kappa Retrieved June 10, 2008 from http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k_v89/k0709pol.htm

³ Behavior Research Center. (May, 2000). *A+ Program Parent Satisfaction Survey*. Phoenix, AZ: Author.

⁴ Differences are considered statistically significant when $p \leq 0.05$.

⁵ Parental support for AIMS as a graduation requirement is consistent across parents with students at all grade levels. Parents with their oldest student in elementary, middle and high school grades hold similar opinions of AIMS as a graduation requirement.

⁶ Rose, L.C. & Gallup, A.M. (September, 2007). *The 39th annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools*. Princeton, N.J. Phi Delta Kappa Retrieved June 10, 2008 from http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k_v89/k0709pol.htm