

In state survey

Adults give good grades to schools

Asked to rate the quality of their local public schools, four out of every 10 Michigan adults (42 percent) gave the schools an "A" or "B" on a report card rating scale.

Another 33 percent rated the public schools a "C", while 14 percent gave schools a "D" or "E."

The ratings were part of an extensive public opinion survey with 802 adults in the state, conducted last Dec. 7-10 by the staff of the State Board of Education's "Project Outreach" program.

RESULTS of the survey were relayed by Phillip E. Runkel, state superintendent of public instruction, State Board of Education President Barbara Dumouchelle and Project Outreach Director Ned S. Hubbell.

Michigan residents rated the schools significantly higher than a nationwide sample of adults did in the 1981 Gallup poll, according to Runkel. Michiganans also gave significantly fewer "failing grades" to schools than those found by Gallup pollsters.

Compared to other state-supported services, eight out of every 10 people (82 percent) opposed reducing state allocations to public schools, the state Michigan survey revealed.

The typical Michiganian both praised and criticized the public schools, but praise exceeded criticism. Those interviewed praised school curriculum,

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teachers, school facilities and special programs or services.

DISLIKES focused chiefly on school discipline, some teachers, some curriculum weaknesses and school financial need.

The latter — school financial need — was named the biggest problem facing local school boards last year.

Forty-seven percent felt public schools have enough money to provide a good school program, while another 38 percent believe the schools need more funds. Only 6 percent of the survey respondents feel the schools have too much money.

Asked to rate how public schools spent available funds, 5 percent said "excellent," 35 percent said "good," and 32 percent said "fair." One out of every five adults in the state (19 percent) gave schools a "poor" rating in school spending practices.

The opinion survey found a vast majority (89 percent) favored changing

the school tax collection period from December to mid-March.

SURVEY participants also were asked to react to a list of 10 possible ways school districts could save money.

Only two of these cost-cutting procedures were favored: reducing the number of school administrators (72 percent favored this) and reducing bus transportation costs by increasing the walking distance of students (53 percent support).

Most vigorously opposed suggestions were reductions in special reading services (84 percent opposed), reducing student counseling services (78 percent opposed), and increasing class sizes by reducing the number of teachers (71 percent opposed).

OTHER SURVEY findings:

• 70 percent favor having students pay for driver education in public schools.

• Majority support was evident for sending students in low-enrollment vocational education classes to a nearby school that offers the classes, and for sending students in low-enrollment, advanced high school classes to a nearby school, rather than dropping those courses entirely.

Residents are nearly equally divided between the options of school district consolidation vs. voting more mil-

lage to remain a separate school district. Some 48 percent of those polled favored consolidation, and 41 percent were opposed. Forty-four percent would pay more millage to remain as a separate school district, but 46 percent are opposed.

• Overwhelming support was given to the concept of more citizen involvement in public schools, with volunteers serving as aides in classrooms, libraries, lunchrooms and on playgrounds. One out of every three people polled said he or she would like to become such a volunteer in the schools.

• 83 percent of adults favored public schools' providing retraining and job skill classes for unemployed adults; 68 percent also endorsed the idea of permitting adults who have not completed high school to enroll in regular, daytime high school classes, if there is room.

• 57 percent favored the use of schools as public meeting places for senior citizens, even though students occupy part of the building. However, Michigan adults strongly opposed, by a margin of 2-1, having public schools provide child care services for preschool children.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS were asked what a student graduating five years from now will need to know and be able to do to be successful.

Top curriculum priorities named were basic skills — the three R's, vocational-technical skills, and "life survival" skills, such as how to apply for a job, compute an income tax form, balance a checking account, etc.

Project Outreach is a program of the state board aimed at improving public confidence in education. The program has three components — student leadership forums, public opinion surveys and public meetings.

Senior citizens invited to U-M summer school

Interested in exploring buffalo ranching, folk medicine, the golden days of radio, the history of Mississippi showboats or life in contemporary China?

The 88-page summer catalogue for the 1982 Elderhostel lists 1,192 such varied courses being presented on some 500 college and university campuses throughout the United States, Canada and parts of Europe.

"You don't need a bachelor's degree or even a high school diploma to participate. All it takes is a spirit of adventure and an interest in life-long learning," according to Lila Green, director of the Elderhostel program to be held at the University of Michigan this summer.

There's one catch: you must be at least 60 years of age to participate or attend with a spouse or companion who is at least 55.

Elderhostels are one of the fastest growing educational movements in the country, Green says. They began with five New Hampshire colleges enrolling 220 participants in 1975, spread to 21 colleges with 2,000 participants in six New England states the next year, and have continued to multiply at a similar pace annually.

"By 1980, 316 colleges in all 50 states provided space for over 20,000 participants. This summer, over 55,000 students will attend 'mini courses' on 500 campuses throughout the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland," Green reports.

Fifty men and women will attend the program at U-M June 27-July 3, sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa professional fraternity in education and the U-M Institute of Gerontology. The courses offered are "Learning Through Games," "Making Membership Organizations More Effective" and "The Break through in Life-Long Learning."

Green also plans trips to local museums, the Arboretum and Botanical Gardens, historic walking tours and a do-it-yourself cultural activities. "Ann Arbor combines all of the advantages of a small town college atmosphere, with the diversity of activities you'd expect to find in a large metropolitan city," she observes.

Inspired by the youth hostels and folk schools of Europe, Elderhostels are designed to meet older citizens' need for educational stimulation and physical adventure. "It is for older people 'on the move,' not just in terms for travel but intellectual outreach," explains Green, who is a former program director with U-M's Institute of Gerontology.

Registration for all Elderhostel programs is conducted through a central national office: Elderhostel, Inc., 100 Boylston St., Suite 200, Boston, Mass. 02116; telephone (617) 426-0056. A complete catalogue of all courses offered throughout the United States is available upon request.

For further information on the program at U-M, contact Lila Green, director, Elderhostel Program, 1228 School of Education, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

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