

**Date:** May 9, 2012  
**To:** All Interested Parties  
**From:** Paul DiPerna  
**RE:** Findings from the National Moms and Schools Survey

---

## Overview

The “Moms and Schools Survey” project, commissioned by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and conducted by Braun Research, Inc. (BRI), measures Americans’ views on area schools (district, charter, or private), school type preferences, and school vouchers. In this paper, released just ahead of Mother’s Day, we present data specific to “Moms” and “Non-Moms,” as well as national and regional response averages. We report response *levels* of public opinion. For some questions, we also expand discussion to examine *differences* of voter opinion (sometimes using the terms “net” or “spread”) and the *intensity* of responses.

How do moms – and the general adult public – grade the different types of schools in their communities? Where do they stand on the reform issue of school vouchers in K-12 education? We make an effort to provide some observations and insights.

Our methodology is in line with polling industry standards. A randomly selected and statistically representative sample of Americans recently responded to a questionnaire including seven substantive items and 11 demographic items. Our methodology included probability sampling and random-digit dial. A total of 1,078 telephone interviews were completed in English (with available Spanish option) from April 17 to 24, 2012, by means of both landline and cell phone. The national sample includes 803 adults living in the United States. BRI oversampled to reach an additional 275 interviews with mothers of school-age children to complete, combined with the nationwide sample, 401 interviews with mothers of at least one child in elementary or secondary school. Based on U.S. Census data,

statistical results were weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the national sample is  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points. The margin of sampling error for the “moms” sample is approximately  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points.

This polling paper has four sections. The first section summarizes key findings. We call the second section “Survey Snapshots,” which offers charts highlighting the core findings of the project. The third section describes the survey’s methodology, summarizes response statistics, and presents additional technical information on call dispositions for landline and cell phone interviews. The fourth section presents our questionnaire and results (“topline numbers”), essentially allowing the reader to follow the actual interview as it was conducted, with respect to question wording and ordering. We set out to give a straightforward analysis, going light on editorial commentary, and letting the numbers and charts communicate the major findings.

## **Key Findings:**

### **Comparing Mom and Non-Mom Responses**

#### *Grading Area Schools*

- ▶ Moms are more likely than non-moms to have an opinion about area public schools and grade them. Mothers of school-age children – like other Americans – are less inclined to judge charter schools and private schools.
- ▶ About 62% of moms give either A or B grades to their area public schools, which is a significantly higher proportion than non-moms (52%) giving the same grades. By a greater than five-to-one margin, mothers issue their local public schools “high grades” (A or B) over “low grades” (D or F) to their local district schools. Just 1 of 10 moms (11%) give D or F grades to their district schools.
- ▶ About 6 of 10 mothers (62%) do not have an opinion one way or the other about charter schools, which is significantly higher than the national average (52%).
- ▶ One-fourth of moms (25%) give either A or B grades to their local charter schools, which is a significantly lower proportion than non-moms (31%). By a nearly

seven-to-one margin, mothers prefer giving higher grades instead of lower grades to area charter schools. Only 4% of moms give D or F grades to charters.

- ▶ Nearly 4 of 10 mothers (39%) do not have an opinion one way or the other regarding area private schools, the same percentage as the national average.
- ▶ A slight majority of moms (51%) give either A or B grades to their local private schools, statistically the same as non-moms (50%). By a 20-to-1 margin, mothers give high grades instead of low grades to private schools. Just 3% of moms give D or F grades to private schools.

### *School Type Preferences*

- ▶ Moms and non-moms reflect statistically similar school preferences. We did not detect any significant differences in the survey response data. Though moms are significantly more likely to state their school preference compared to non-moms.
- ▶ When asked for a preferred school type, mothers are most likely to prefer a regular public school (45%). However, more than one of three moms (37%) would want to send their child to a private school. The data point to a wide disconnect between mothers' school preferences and actual enrollment patterns across the country. Nationally, just 10% of all school-age children attend private schools. About 90% of students attend public district/regular or charter schools.
- ▶ Among mothers, 8% would choose a charter school.
- ▶ Among mothers, 7% would like to homeschool their child.

### *School Vouchers*

- ▶ Among moms, 6 of 10 (61%) say they support school vouchers. About 55% of non-moms say they support school vouchers. Differences are not significant. Nearly 3 of 10 moms (28%) say they oppose vouchers.
- ▶ One-third of moms (33%) say they “strongly favor” school vouchers, which is more than double the percentage (15%) saying they “strongly oppose” vouchers. The net result reflects a substantial amount of intensity supporting vouchers among mothers.

## *Access to School Vouchers and Scholarships*

- ▶ American adults – and mothers in particular – overwhelmingly prefer universal access to vouchers and scholarships, compared to access solely based on financial need.
- ▶ Among mothers, 7 of 10 (71%) say they agree with the statement that “school vouchers or scholarships should be available to all families, regardless of incomes and special needs.” Half of all moms (50%) “strongly agree” with this statement, which is significantly higher than the proportion of non-moms (43%). About one-fourth of mothers (25%) disagree with this statement; 14% say they “strongly disagree.”
- ▶ Among mothers, 3 of 10 (30%) say they agree with the statement that “school vouchers or scholarships should only be available to families based on financial need.” Only 17% of all moms “strongly agree” with this statement. Nearly two of three moms (65%) disagree with means-testing vouchers, and 40% say they “strongly disagree” – both figures are statistically different and higher than non-moms.

## **Comparing National and Regional Responses**

### *Grading Area Schools*

- ▶ Americans are much more likely to have an opinion about their area district schools and grade them, compared to grading charter schools and private schools. Only 16% of adults said they had no opinion for regular public schools (i.e. district schools), but much larger proportions declined grading charter schools and private schools (52% and 39%, respectively). None of the four regions differed from one another in a substantial way, except that Midwesterners (66%) were more likely to have no opinion on charter schools than Southerners (47%) and Westerners (49%).
- ▶ About 54% of Americans give either A or B grades to their area public schools. By a nearly five-to-one margin, Americans gave their local public schools A or B grades rather than D or F grades. About 1 of 10 Americans (12%) give D or F grades to their district schools. Midwesterners (59%) were significantly more likely than Westerners (49%) to give high grades to these schools.

- ▶ One-third of Americans (33%) give either A or B grades to their local charter schools. By a nearly seven-to-one margin, American adults give A or B grades instead of D or F grades to area charter schools. Only 5% give D or F grades to charters. The Midwest looks different than the other three regions, less inclined to give high grades to charters (22%), though adults in the Midwest are not any more likely to give low grades.
- ▶ A slight majority of Americans (51%) give either A or B grades to their local private schools, statistically similar to all four regions. By a 13-to-1 margin, Americans give high grades instead of low grades to private schools. Just 4% of adults give D or F grades to private schools. The Northeast (57%) is statistically more likely to give A or B grades than Midwesterners (44%).

### *School Type Preferences*

- ▶ The national average and the four regional averages reflect statistically similar school type preferences.
- ▶ When asked for a preferred school type, Americans are most likely to prefer a regular public school (42%). However, more than one of three adults (37%) would want to send their child to a private school. Also, 8% of Americans would choose a charter school, and 7% would like to homeschool their child.

### *School Vouchers*

- ▶ A solid majority of Americans (56%) say they support school vouchers, and 28% say they oppose vouchers. Those who say they “strongly favor” (29%) nearly double the proportion of adults who say they “strongly oppose” school vouchers (16%).
- ▶ The four regions exhibit similar response levels as the national sample. We did not detect any statistically significant differences between regions.

### *Access to School Vouchers and Scholarships*

- ▶ American adults definitely prefer universal access to vouchers and scholarships, compared to access solely based on financial need.

- ▶ Among adults, 68% say they agree with the statement that “school vouchers or scholarships should be available to all families, regardless of incomes and special needs.” More than 4 of 10 Americans (43%) “strongly agree” with this statement, and one-fourth (25%) disagree; 15% say they “strongly disagree.” The intensity is strong in the direction of universal vouchers (+28).
- ▶ Adults in the South (44%) and West (50%) were significantly more likely than those living in the Midwest (36%) to say they “strongly agree” with universal vouchers and scholarships; 39% of Northeast adults stated strong agreement.
- ▶ By contrast, 37% of Americans say they agree with the statement that “school vouchers or scholarships should only be available to families based on financial need.” One of five adults (20%) “strongly agree” with this statement. Nearly 6 of 10 respondents (57%) disagree with means-testing vouchers, and 35% say they “strongly disagree.”
- ▶ Adults in the Northeast (41%) and South (41%) are more likely than those in the Midwest (31%) to agree that school vouchers should have a means-test. Nearly two of three Midwesterners (63%) disagree with the financial need rule, which is significantly greater than the proportion in the South (53%) who disagree. Westerners (43%) are most likely to “strongly disagree” with the means-testing statement.

# Survey Project & Profile

---

<b>Title:</b>	Moms and Schools Survey
<b>Survey Organization:</b>	Braun Research, Inc. (BRI)
<b>Survey Sponsor:</b>	The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice
<b>Interview Dates:</b>	April 17 to 24, 2012
<b>Interview Method:</b>	Live Telephone   67% landline and 33% cell phone
<b>Interview Length:</b>	7 minutes (average)
<b>Language(s):</b>	English; Spanish (option)
<b>Sample Frame:</b>	Adults (18+)
<b>Sampling Method:</b>	Dual Frame; Probability Sampling; Random Digit Dial (RDD)
<b>Sample Sizes:</b>	NATIONAL = 803 Moms = 401; Non-Moms = 677 Northeast = 145; South = 295; Midwest = 177 ; West = 185
<b>Margins of Error:</b>	NATIONAL = $\pm 3.5$ percentage points Moms = $\pm 4.9$ percentage points; Non-Moms = $\pm 3.8$ percentage points Northeast = $\pm 8.1$ percentage points; South = $\pm 5.7$ percentage points Midwest = $\pm 7.4$ percentage points; West = $\pm 7.2$ percentage points
<b>Response Rates:</b>	Landline (LL)=18.7% Cell Phone=18.2%
<b>Weighting?</b>	Yes (Age, Gender, Region, Education, Race, and Hispanic origin)
<b>Oversampling?</b>	Yes (Moms)

**Project Contact:**  
Paul DiPerna | Research Director | [paul@edchoice.org](mailto:paul@edchoice.org)

The author is responsible for overall polling design; question wording and ordering; this paper's analysis, charts, and writing; and any unintentional errors or misrepresentations.