



# PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

## Memorandum

To: EAnews.org  
Fr: Gene Ulm  
Date: January 9, 2013  
Re: Recent survey data on Wisconsin education attitudes

*The following data are from a survey of 500 likely voters completed in Wisconsin, January 6-7, 2013, by Public Opinion Strategies. The survey replicates November, 2012 turnout: Democrats have a five-point advantage; 49% of voters are under 44 years of age (note that 2014's midterm elections will likely be significantly less Democratic and significantly older). The margin of error on the survey is plus or minus 4.38%.*

### Grading Public Schools

- **Wisconsin voters believe children in their local public schools are doing better than other schools in the state.** Sixty-two percent (62%) gave their local school an A or a B grade. This figure dropped to 51% when voters were asked to grade the quality of education children in Wisconsin are receiving statewide.
- **The 'like my school/less sure about schools statewide' dynamic does not hold true in Milwaukee County:** only 32% gave their schools an A or B grade – nearly the same grade for all schools (30% said A or B).

### Testing Potential School Reforms

- **Expanding public/religious School Choice.** Sixty-one percent of the voters support “Expanding Wisconsin’s school choice program to allow every Wisconsin child to attend the public or private, including religious schools, of their choice.”
- **Eliminating public/religious School Choice.** We tested alternative language and received a nearly identical result: 58% OPPOSED “Eliminating Wisconsin’s parental school choice program which allows some parents to use taxpayer dollars to send their child to the public or private school, including religious schools, of their choice.”
- **Grading Schools.** Eighty percent support “Using a report card for schools and grading them on a scale of A, B, C, D or F.”

- **Changing teacher and principal evaluation.** Seventy-two percent support “Changing Wisconsin’s teacher and principal evaluation system to include measurements of growth in student learning, performance and achievement and compensate employees based on student progress.”
- **Changing last in/first out.** Eighty-five percent of the voters support (actual question wording) “Changing Wisconsin’s last in/first out policy from one based on seniority to one based on teacher performance; so in times when teachers are laid off, poorer performing teachers are laid off first while better performing teachers are kept.” Sixty-four percent strongly support.

#### **Related Points Regarding Wisconsin’s Political Environment**

- **Governor Walker’s job approval is well above 50%.** Fifty-five percent of the voters approve of the job the Governor is doing while 44% disapprove. Importantly a full 38% strongly approve of the Governor, six-in-ten (61%) independents approve of the Governor, and the only region in which the Governor’s job approval drops below 50% is in the Madison media market, and then just marginally (46%).
- **These numbers coincide with the more positive mood of the state** (51% right direction - 42% wrong track).
- **A plurality (46%) continue to approve of Governor Walker’s public employee union reforms.** A majority (51%) of independents approve.
- **Teachers Unions have only marginal favorability (46% favorable - 40% unfavorable using “Teachers Unions in Wisconsin; 28%-22% using “WEAC”).** To put this in perspective, the National Rifle Association’s favorables are marginally higher (50%-39%).
- **Tony Evers.** Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers has only 39% name identification (16% favorable - 6% unfavorable). Evers is a blank slate going into the Spring election.

Please do not hesitate to call or write with any questions.