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A Citizen Deliberation on Education Policy

October 24, 2005

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
PUBLIC POLICY CENTER

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Acknowledgements **Making the Nebraska Citizen Deliberations Possible**

The Nebraska *By the People* citizen deliberations would not have been possible without the support of numerous individuals and organizations.

Nebraska Educational Television (<http://mynptv.org/nptv/>) serves as the primary link with the national *By the People* effort (<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/btp/>), and it is thanks to NET Television that the Public Policy Center has been involved in Nebraska's *By the People* deliberations. The deliberations were held at the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK) (<http://www.unk.edu/>), and UNK faculty, staff, and students were indispensable in its success. In particular, we appreciate the leadership of Bill Kelly (NET Television), Dr. Peter Longo (UNK Department of Political Science), and Dean Marilyn Hadley and Dr. Ed Scantling (UNK College of Education). We also thank the many other individuals from NET Television and UNK who assisted in a variety of roles with orchestrating this event. We gratefully extend sincere thanks, too, to the many people who took the time to take our surveys and travel to UNK to participate in this *By the People* deliberation and to the policymakers who offered their expert input. Our thanks also go to MacNeil/Lehrer Productions, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund for providing funding support for Nebraska's *By the People* deliberations. The MacNeil/Lehrer Productions staff was also instrumental in their support of the event.

Key Findings from the *By the People* Deliberations Held in Kearney, Nebraska, October 2005

- ❖ Participants give Nebraska K-12 public schools high marks for performance.
- ❖ Participants are trusting of Nebraska school boards and school administrators to do what is right and not waste much money.
- ❖ Participants are only moderately supportive of increasing their tax support for public schools, but more willing to make donations.
- ❖ Teachers and school administrators are significantly more supportive than citizens of a number of proposals to increase support for public schools.
- ❖ Participants are most supportive of a policy proposal for the state of Nebraska to assume more responsibility for funding K-12 public schools through an increase in state aid.
- ❖ Participants are not supportive of proposals to institute statewide academic achievement tests or deliver the services of Nebraska schools through larger, consolidated school districts.
- ❖ By participating in the *By the People* event, citizens, in particular, increased their knowledge about education policy issues. Teachers and school administrators already have a considerable amount of education policy knowledge and, therefore, did not increase their knowledge in the same way.
- ❖ Participating in the *By the People* event increased citizen awareness of the problems public schools face and, thereby, decreased their evaluation of public school performance.
- ❖ Participants give highly positive evaluations of their entire experience in the *By the People* community discussion.



INTRODUCTION

***By the People* 2005—A Citizen Deliberation Event**

On Monday, October 24th, 2005, 130 Central Nebraskans gathered at the University of Nebraska at Kearney to participate in the MacNeil/Lehrer Productions' *By the People* citizen deliberation project (see <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/btp/>). *By the People*, an effort to bring the opinions of informed citizens into debates on public policy, was launched in 2002 and has supported more than 100 citizen deliberations around the country. The October 2005 *By the People* included citizen deliberations in 15 cities, from San Diego,

California, to New Haven, Connecticut, focusing on either healthcare or education policy issues. **The Nebraska *By the People* focused on K-12 education policy issues, including a discussion of adequate educational services, standards and testing, and education finance in Nebraska.** The Kearney event was a collaborative effort of Nebraska Educational Telecommunications, the University of Nebraska at Kearney, and the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center.

Education Policy in Nebraska—Complex Issues and Multiple Challenges

Nebraska public education has had many successes in the past decade. In fact, Nebraska students rank in the top ten in almost every national measure of student achievement.¹ Despite these achievements, Nebraska education policymakers, school administrators, teachers and parents are confronting a variety of issues critical to the structure and performance of Nebraska public schools.

The introduction of the federal No Child Left Behind achievement standards and rigorous state standards have caused educators to consider what material needs to be taught to students in order for them to both meet standards and prepare them for the future. Also at issue is which level of government (federal, state or local) should make decisions about what educational services are offered, what standards should be set, and how students should be assessed.

The issue of how to adequately and equitably pay for all these educational

services has become a focus of Nebraska education policymakers, as evidenced by two lawsuits filed by close to 50 Nebraska school districts against the State of Nebraska charging that the state aid to education formula is inadequate and inequitable and, therefore, unconstitutional.² In an effort to deliver educational and other services in the most efficient and effective manner, education policymakers are not only considering changes to how Nebraska schools are funded but also how they are organized. The 2005 passage of Legislative Bill 126 in the Nebraska Unicameral which will force the merger of many small rural school districts with larger K-12 districts strongly signals a move toward district consolidation. Further evidence of this consolidation trend are efforts by Omaha Public Schools and Bellevue Public Schools to adopt a one city/one school district policy, and in doing so absorb schools from neighboring districts.

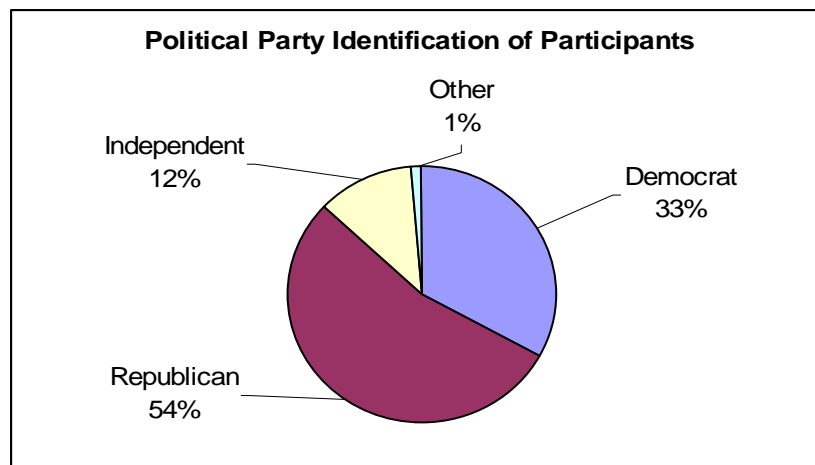
Deliberative Polling—A Method of Civic Engagement

Policymakers can be aided by public input on complex policy issues. The *By the People 2005* event provides Nebraska policymakers with this input through the use of deliberative polling. This method of citizen engagement begins by giving people an opportunity to express their opinions about particular public policy issues (pre-event survey). Then individuals learn more about

those issues through briefing materials, followed a few weeks later by face-to-face, small group discussions and then a question and answer session with a panel of policy experts. Finally, citizens are given an opportunity to express their now more informed opinions on the issues (post-event survey). For more detail on what the *By the People* event entailed, see Appendix A.

Who Attended the Event?

Three groups of people from a six-county area surrounding Kearney, Nebraska were invited to attend the *By the People* event, including: 1) citizens, 2) K-12 public school teachers and administrators, and 3) special invitees (individuals from the Kearney Chamber of Commerce and others referred by the Nebraska Association of School Boards and the Mexican American Commission). One-hundred thirty people participated in the event.³ The detailed demographics of the event participants are



presented in Appendix B. There were 55 citizens, 58 teachers/school administrators, and 17 special invitees. The majority of teachers/administrators and special invitees were female. The majority of citizen participants were male. Most participants ranged in age between 45 and 64 years old. Participants were mostly white (94%) and most (70%) had at least a college degree. Generally, the participants were middle-class (65% of participant incomes were reported as being between \$30,000 and \$99,999). Fifty-four percent of participants identified themselves as Republicans, 33% as Democrats, 16% as Independents, and 1% as “other.”



By the People participants complete their pre-event surveys and prepare to listen to opening remarks by Dean Marilyn Hadley of the University of Nebraska at Kearney College of Education.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Survey data details are presented in Appendix C. Below is an overview of the highlights.

🔗 How Supportive are Central Nebraskans of their Public Schools?

On the whole, the participants gave their local schools an average grade of B (1.9 on a scale of 1-5), whereas participants gave public schools nationally an average grade of C (2.8 on a scale of 1-5). Most other opinion polls also reveal a lower grade given to the national schools relative to one’s local schools. Teachers and school administrators as a group gave every element of the public schools asked about a slightly higher B grade than did the citizens. The difference was statistically significant overall for local schools ($p < .01$), local teachers ($p < .01$), and local school administrators ($p < .05$). The results from these questions also show that **post-deliberation participants gave local and national schools worse grades**

compared to their assessments on the pre-event survey. The high B average pre-event assessment of local schools turned into a

Grading the Schools

Local Public Schools: B

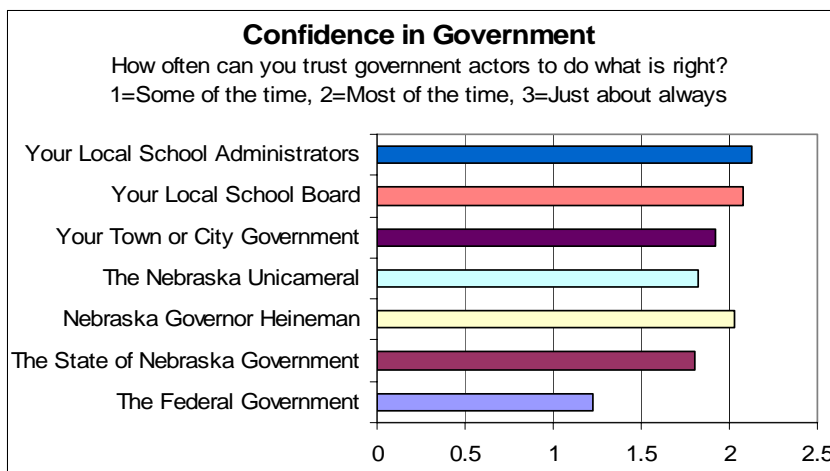
National Public Schools: C

low B post-event assessment. This might indicate that for many participants **the deliberation event raised concerns about the performance of Nebraska’s and the nation’s K-12 public schools.**

🔗 Do Central Nebraskans Trust their Lawmakers to Do What’s Right and Not Waste Taxpayer Money?

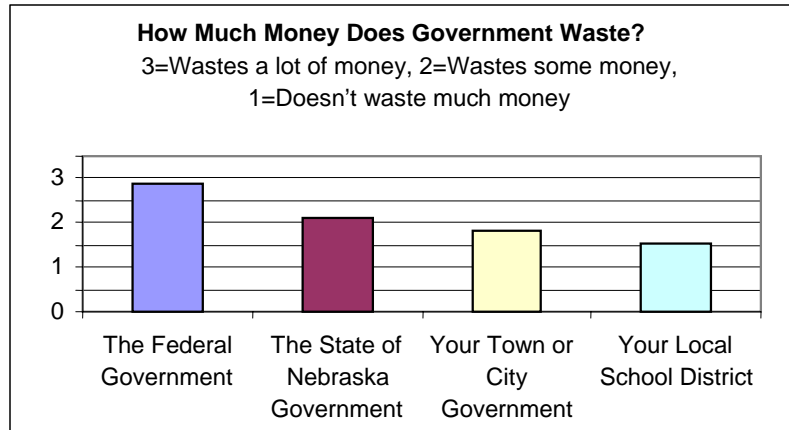
By the People participants were asked to indicate how much of the time they thought they could trust different government actors to do what is right. **Participants were most trusting of Nebraska Governor**

Heineman, their local school board, and their local school administrators to do what’s right most of the time. They had the least confidence in the federal government in Washington. There was no statistical difference between citizens’ level of trust in government and teachers/administrators’ level of trust. The moderately high levels of trust in public schools are a strength that education policymakers could potentially leverage to garner more support for K-12 school districts.



The effect of participating in a citizen deliberation, such as *By the People*, on individuals' confidence in government is unclear. While some researchers have found engaging citizens in this way enhances trust in government, others have found these types of interactions have the opposite effect. Participating in the *By the People* deliberation event had little significant impact on individuals' trust in government beyond reducing their confidence in the federal government and the state's government.

Participants were also asked to indicate how much money they believe a number of government actors waste. Overall, **participants found local school districts to be least wasteful of funds compared to local governments, state**



government, and the federal government. The more distant the government from the participants, the more money respondents seemed to think the government actor wasted. **Among citizens, the deliberation event had a significantly positive impact on their views of local government and school district frugality.**

Do Central Nebraskans Trust Other People to Do What's Right?

Aside from their views regarding government officials, both citizens and teachers/administrators were most trusting

of their neighbors and least trusting of people who recently moved to the United States. Citizens were significantly ($p < .01$)

less trusting than teachers/administrators of immigrants. **The lack of trust in immigrants could spell problems for Nebraska school districts whose student populations are rapidly becoming more ethnically diverse.**



A *By the People* participant poses a question to the plenary panel of education policy experts.

Are Central Nebraskans Willing to Increase their Financial Support of K-12 Schools?

There appears to be some willingness among Central Nebraskans to increase their financial support of their K-12 public schools. Generally speaking, participants were more supportive of a proposal to allow

of a \$.10 levy override ($p < .01$) and a 1% property tax increase ($p < .05$). Participants were more willing to make a financial donation to public schools than to have their property taxes raised. In fact, 57% of

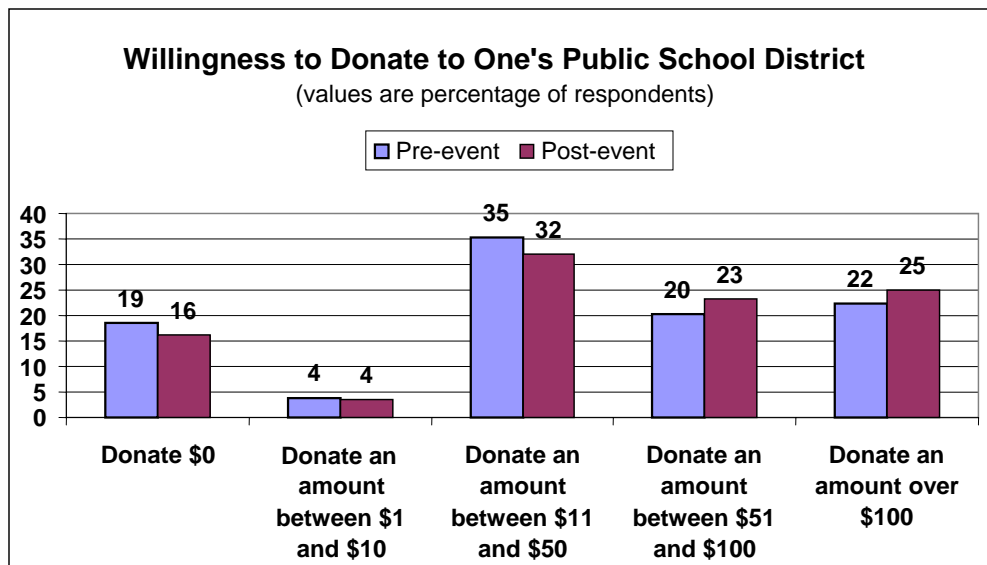
Funding Proposal	Citizens	Teachers/ Administrators
A \$.10 levy override	Moderately Supportive	Very Supportive
1% property tax increase	Moderately Supportive	Moderately Supportive
5% property tax increase	A little Supportive	A little Supportive

citizens and 80% of teachers/administrators were willing to donate an amount over \$10 to their local K-12 school district.

Teachers/administrators were again significantly ($p < .01$) more willing than citizens to donate money to schools. Participating in the deliberation event had little impact on participants'

a levy override for their school district than proposals to increase property taxes. Furthermore, teachers/administrators were significantly more supportive than citizens

willingness to pay for public schools, aside from a slight, yet statistically significant ($p < .05$), decrease for support of a proposal to increase property tax levies by 1%.



Where Do Central Nebraskans Stand on the Issues of...

• Adequacy of Nebraska’s K-12 Educational Offerings?

There is debate in Nebraska about whether or not the current educational offerings in some school districts provide students with an adequate education. Currently, schools are not required to provide what the Nebraska State Board of Education has deemed an “essential education.” **By and large, participants of *By the People* thought that the educational offerings in Nebraska public schools were adequate.** They agreed that Nebraska schools provide educational opportunities that produce high school graduates that make Nebraska economically

competitive with other states and enhance the sustainability and vitality of rural Nebraska. Teachers/administrators were significantly ($p < .01$) more supportive than citizens of the adequacy of academic offerings in Nebraska’s K-12 schools.

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Educational offerings in NE public schools produce high school graduates that make NE economically competitive with other states	72.4%	15.7%	11.8%
Educational offerings in NE public schools produce high school graduates that enhance the sustainability and vitality of rural NE	72.4%	16.5%	11.0%

• Nebraska School Finance?

Although there seemed to be satisfaction among participants with Nebraska’s K-12 educational offerings, there was a general agreement that the Nebraska State Board of Education’s Policy on Essential Education should be fully funded. Teachers/administrators were significantly ($p < .01$) more supportive than citizens of this policy. **Participants also agreed that the**

state of Nebraska should assume greater responsibility for funding Nebraska public schools through an increase in state aid. Again, teachers/administrators were significantly ($p < .01$) more supportive of this proposal than citizens. When asked about their support of proposals to increase state aid to K-12 education through an increase in income or sales taxes,

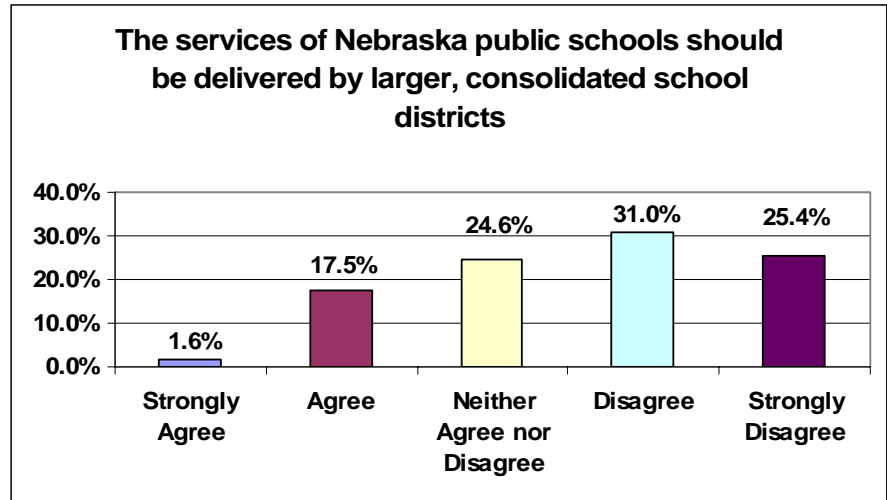
participants were more supportive of a sales rather than income tax increase.

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
The State of Nebraska should assume greater responsibility for funding Nebraska public schools through an increase in state aid	86.6%	7.1%	6.3%

• **The Size and Structure of Nebraska School Districts?**

The size and structure of Nebraska public school districts is both a recent and recurring point of debate for state and local education policymakers. Citizens solidly disagree, just as much as teachers/administrators, with a proposal to deliver the services of Nebraska K-12 public schools through larger, consolidated school districts. *By the People* participants' dislike of school district consolidation paired with their support of proposals for a larger state role in

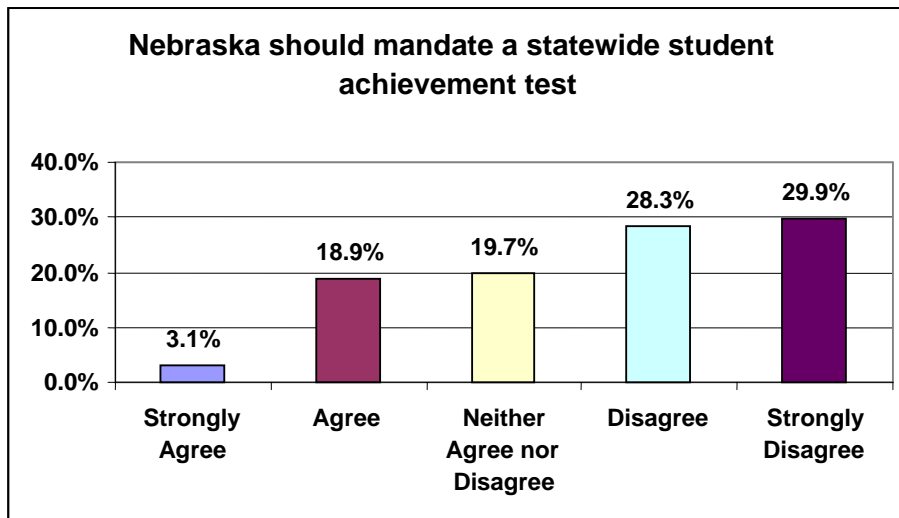
funding public schools suggests a desire to maintain local decision making authority while getting financial assistance from beyond the local district.



• **Academic Testing?**

Nebraska school districts are allowed to develop and administer their own tests of academic standards, rather than using a single statewide test. Citizens, and significantly ($p < .01$) more so teachers/administrators, preferred the status quo with regard to academic testing over a

proposal to mandate a statewide test to assess student achievement relative to state academic standards. The **preference for locally developed and administered tests** is consistent with participants' opposition to consolidating school districts.



☞ Effects of the *By the People* Deliberation Event

There were a number of notable effects on participants after taking part in the *By the People* deliberation event. **For citizens, the deliberation event served as an opportunity to increase their knowledge about education policy issues** (see Appendix C for more details on knowledge gain). Knowledge gain was not an element of the event for teachers and school administrators largely because as primary stakeholders, they already had quite a bit of knowledge about the policy issues discussed at the event. **Some overall policy opinions changed between pre- and post-event surveys.** The change in policy opinions was sporadic, however, in that support for some policy proposals increased, support for other

proposals decreased, and for yet other proposals there was no significant change in the level of support. Whatever the level of support on particular issues, policymakers can consider the policy opinions on the post-survey to be the informed input of citizens and stakeholders who have conscientiously engaged the issues.

Beyond affecting education policy knowledge and opinions, **the deliberation event served as a satisfying way for citizens and stakeholders to engage in the public policymaking process.** Participants gave high ratings of the value of their experience in this civic engagement endeavor.

Participant Experience Rating (1=Not Valuable at All, 5=Very Valuable)				
	Overall Experience	Briefing Documents	Group Discussion	Panel Discussion
Mean Rating	4.5	4.2	4.5	4.2



By the People participants listen to education policy experts discuss issues ranging from the changing demographics of Nebraska schools to ideas for improving the educational offerings for Nebraska's K-12 students.

Issues for the Future

The 2005 *By the People* event provided an opportunity for citizens and education stakeholders to learn about a number of education policy issues. The event also supplied policymakers with citizen input regarding education policy challenges they face. It should be noted, however, that the sample of individuals who participated in *By*

the People were more likely to be white, educated, and middle-aged than the population of Central Nebraska. Future community discussions on Nebraska education policy could be used to collect more representative citizen input, as well as to shed light on issues such as:

- ***Local Control vs. Increased State Aid.*** Many citizens, teachers and school administrators wish to maintain local control of their school district's decisions regarding testing, standards, and district structure. At the same time, they want increased state aid. The way the system is currently structured, increased state aid also means increased state authority over education. Thus, these potentially contradictory policy preferences raise the question as to which policy direction citizens and education stakeholders prefer: 1) Local decision making control and minimal increases in state aid, or 2) More dramatic increases in state aid with less local decision making power?
- ***Maximizing the Effect of Community Policy Discussions.*** Participation in *By the People* 2005 appears to have heightened citizen awareness regarding the challenges public schools face. In doing so, citizen assessment of school performance declined. Furthermore, participating in *By the People* did not garner more support for public schools in the way of increasing participants' willingness to financially support their school districts. In order to maximize the usefulness for policymakers of these types of community discussions, future research might look to uncover how one might simultaneously raise awareness of policy issues *and* generate increased general and financial support for policymakers' efforts.



By the People participants check-in with Public Policy Center staff and pick up their registration materials.



By the People participants listen to final comments from the education policy plenary panel and prepare to take the post-event survey.

Appendices

APPENDIX A

What Did the *By the People* Event Entail?

The *By the People* civic deliberation event was modeled after the Deliberative Opinion Poll format developed by Professor James S. Fishkin, currently director at Stanford University's

***By the People* Plenary Panel**

Education Policy Experts

Doug Christensen

Commissioner
Nebraska Department of Education

James Griess

Executive Director
Nebraska State Education Association

Marilyn Hadley

Dean of the College of Education
University of Nebraska at Kearney

Joel Johnson

Senator
Nebraska Unicameral

Matt Schnell

President-Elect
Nebraska School Board Association

Center for Deliberative Polling (<http://cdd.stanford.edu/>; see also <http://www.la.utexas.edu/research/delpol/>).⁴ The first step in this deliberative polling methodology was for all participants to complete a pre-event survey including questions designed to assess their knowledge of education policy and their opinions on a number of education policy issues. After completing the survey, participants were provided background materials regarding education policy and instructed to read these before attending the October 24th event.

Upon arriving at the event, participants were randomly assigned to small discussion groups of 10 to 12 individuals. Ten individuals were randomly selected to participate in a special small group discussion to be taped and televised by NET Television. Under the guidance of a

moderator, participants then spent 70 minutes with their small group discussing the education policy issues covered in the briefing materials. As part of their discussions, each small group developed questions they had which they wanted to pose to a panel of education policy experts. Next, all participants gathered together for the expert panel discussion. The plenary panel included education policy experts and stakeholders listed in the figure on this page. During this portion of the event, individuals were able to ask the questions they had developed with their groups and get an expert from the panel to answer their inquiry. In addition to the plenary panel, there was also a concurrent expert panel of state senators who discussed education policy issues with the group being taped by NET Television. After the conclusion of the question and answer session, all participants took a post-event survey. Finally, each participant was compensated with \$40 (and dinner) for their participation.

***By the People* Concurrent Expert Panel**

Senator Vickie McDonald, District 41

Senator Ron Raikes, District 25

Senator Elaine Stuhr, District 24

Senator Ed Schrock, District 38

Nebraska *By the People* Agenda



**The State of Education
October 24th, 2005
University of Nebraska at Kearney
Nebraska Student Union**

- 4:30 PM+** **Registration Opens**
Nebraskan Union Lobby (1st Floor)
- 4:45 PM+** **Pizza Buffet Opens (Vegetarian available)**
Nebraskan Union Ponderosa Room E (2nd Floor)
- 5:00 PM+** **Pre-Event Survey**
Nebraskan Union Lobby (1st Floor) and Ponderosa Room E (2nd Floor)
- 5:35 PM-5:50 PM** **Remarks and Orientation**
Remarks: Dean Marilyn Hadley, UNK College of Education
Orientation: Bill Kelly, NET Television
Nebraskan Union, 2nd Floor: Ponderosa Room E
- 6:00 PM-7:10 PM** **Small Group Discussions**
Nebraskan Union 2nd Floor and Copeland Hall
- 7:10 PM-7:20 PM** **Break**
- 7:20-8:40 PM** **Plenary Panel:**
Nebraskan Union Ponderosa Room E (2nd Floor)
Remarks: Alan Tomkins, University of Nebraska Public Policy Center
Moderator: Mike Tobias, NET Television
Doug Christensen – Nebraska Commissioner of Education
Jim Griess – Nebraska State Education Association
Marilyn Hadley – Dean of the College of Education, UNK
Senator Joel Johnson – Kearney
Matt Schnell – President Elect, Nebraska Association of School Boards
- 8:40 PM** **Small Group Wrap-Up/Check-out**
Nebraskan Union, 2nd Floor: Ponderosa Room E
Survey completion and compensation

APPENDIX B

Table B1. Participant Demographics.⁵

		Overall	Citizens⁶	Teachers/ Administrators	Special Invitees
Gender	Male	55 (43%)	33 (61%)	21 (36%)	1 (6%)
	Female	74 (57%)	21 (39%)	37 (64%)	16 (94%)
Age	19-24	4 (3%)	3 (6%)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)
	25-34	14 (11%)	6 (11%)	8 (14%)	0 (0%)
	35-44	18 (14%)	9 (17%)	7 (12%)	2 (12%)
	45-54	49 (38%)	14 (26%)	24 (41%)	11 (65%)
	55-64	30 (23%)	8 (15%)	19 (33%)	3 (18%)
	65-74	9 (7%)	9 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	75+	5 (4%)	5 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Race	Hispanic	2 (2%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	African American	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Asian	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)
	Non-Hispanic White	120 (94%)	49 (92%)	55 (95%)	16 (94%)
	Native American	2 (2%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)
	Other	2 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Education	Less than high school	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Some high school	1 (1%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	High school graduate	11 (9%)	9 (17%)	0 (0%)	2 (12%)
	Trade or technical school	7 (5%)	7 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Some college	19 (15%)	15 (28%)	0 (0%)	4 (24%)
	College graduate	19 (15%)	8 (15%)	9 (16%)	2 (12%)
	Graduate school	72 (56%)	14 (26%)	49 (85%)	9 (53%)
Income	Less than \$30,000	14 (12%)	17 (33%)	3 (5%)	3 (18%)
	\$30,000-\$59,999	37 (31%)	13 (25%)	10 (17%)	5 (29%)
	\$60,000-\$99,999	48 (40%)	18 (35%)	27 (47%)	3 (18%)
	\$100,000-\$199,999	20 (17%)	3 (6%)	11 (19%)	6 (35%)
	\$200,000 or more	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)
Political Party	Democrat	42 (33%)	17 (31%)	17 (30%)	8 (47%)
	Republican	70 (54%)	31 (56%)	34 (60%)	5 (29%)
	Independent	16 (12%)	7 (13%)	6 (11%)	3 (18%)
	Other	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)

APPENDIX C: Survey Data

Evaluation of Schools

Individuals' opinions about public policy surrounding K-12 public education are undoubtedly tied to some extent to their evaluation of schools. *By the People* participants were asked both before and after the event to grade the public schools (1=A, 2=B, 3=C, 4=D, 5=F). For these questions a negative difference of means indicates respondents gave the schools a lower grade when taking the post-survey than they did before the event.

Table C1. School Evaluation
(1=A, 2=B, 3=C, 4=D, 5=F)

Grading the Schools	Entire Sample		Citizens		Teachers/ Administrators	
	PRE- SURVEY MEAN	POST- SURVEY MEAN	PRE- SURVEY MEAN	POST- SURVEY MEAN	PRE- SURVEY MEAN	POST- SURVEY MEAN
Your local schools overall	1.78	1.90*	1.96	2.02	1.65	1.75
The teachers in your local schools	1.60	1.79**	1.67	2.00**	1.54	1.59
The administrators (superintendent, principals, etc.) of your local schools	1.90	2.08**	2.04	2.21	1.81	1.91
The school board of your local schools	2.03	2.21*	2.12	2.22	1.96	2.17
Public schools nationally	2.66	2.81**	2.80	2.94	2.52	2.67

* = $p < .05$ ** = $p < .01$ (p-values based on two-tailed tests)

Confidence in Government and Community

By the People participants were asked to indicate how much of the time they thought they could trust the different actors listed in the table below to “do what is right” (1=Only some of the time, 2=Most of the time, 3=Just about always). For these questions a positive difference of means indicates a drop in confidence in that actor from the pre-event survey to the post-event survey, a negative difference of means indicates an increase in confidence.

Table C2. Confidence in Government and Community.
(1=Only some of the time, 2=Most of the time, 3=Just about always)

Actor	Entire Sample		Citizens		Teachers/ Administrators	
	PRE-SURVEY MEAN	POST-SURVEY MEAN	PRE-SURVEY MEAN	POST-SURVEY MEAN	PRE-SURVEY MEAN	POST-SURVEY MEAN
The federal government in Washington	1.47	1.23**	1.43	1.24*	1.52	1.24**
The government of the state of Nebraska	1.93	1.80**	1.98	1.82*	1.90	1.76
Nebraska Governor Heineman	2.09	2.03	2.06	2.12	2.14	2.00
The Nebraska Unicameral	1.85	1.82	1.84	1.82	1.82	1.79
Your town or city government	1.84	1.92	1.78	1.91	1.88	1.91
Your local school board	2.08	2.08	2.07	2.09	2.09	2.02
Your local school administrators (superintendent, principals, etc.)	2.09	2.13	2.09	2.13	2.07	2.14
Your neighbors	2.29	2.28	2.20	2.17	2.39	2.41
People in your hometown	2.13	2.18	2.09	2.13	2.19	2.23
Other people in the United States	1.74	1.74	1.67	1.67	1.75	1.81
People who have recently moved to the United States	1.65	1.72	1.41	1.53	1.80	1.84

* = $p < .05$ ** = $p < .01$ (p-values based on two-tailed tests)

Participants were asked to indicate how much money each government actor listed below wastes (1=Doesn't waste much money, 2=Wastes some money, 3=Wastes a lot of money). A negative difference of means indicates an increasing belief between the pre-event and post-event surveys that the actor wastes money.

Table C3. Frugality Evaluation.

(1=Doesn't waste much money, 2=Wastes some money, 3=Wastes a lot of money)

Government Actor	Entire Sample		Citizens		Teachers/ Administrators	
	PRE-SURVEY MEAN	POST-SURVEY MEAN	PRE-SURVEY MEAN	POST-SURVEY MEAN	PRE-SURVEY MEAN	POST-SURVEY MEAN
The federal government in Washington	2.79	2.87*	2.81	2.87	2.76	2.86
The government of the state of Nebraska	2.10	2.13	2.21	2.13	2.07	2.10
Your town or city government	1.86	1.82	2.00	1.80*	1.79	1.81
Your local school district	1.57	1.53	1.71	1.53*	1.53	1.53

* = $p < .05$ ** = $p < .01$ (p-values based on two-tailed tests)

Willingness to Pay for Public Schools

Participants were also asked how supportive they would be of a number of proposals to increase financial support for K-12 public schools (1=Not at all supportive, 2=A little supportive, 3=Moderately supportive, 4=Very supportive, 5=Extremely supportive). A positive difference of means indicates a decrease in support of a policy proposal, while a negative difference of means indicates an increase in support of a policy proposal.

Table C4. Education Funding Policy Opinions.
 (1=Not at all supportive, 2=A little supportive, 3=Moderately supportive,
 4=Very supportive, 5=Extremely supportive)

Public K-12 Funding Support Proposals	Entire Sample		Citizens		Teachers/ Administrators	
	PRE-SURVEY MEAN	POST-SURVEY MEAN	PRE-SURVEY MEAN	POST-SURVEY MEAN	PRE-SURVEY MEAN	POST-SURVEY MEAN
A \$.10 levy override for your local K-12 public school district.	3.21	3.16	2.81	2.73	3.59	3.52
An increase of your local property tax levy by 1 percent with the funds going to your local K-12 public school district.	3.14	2.86*	2.77	2.55	3.45	3.09
An increase of your local property tax levy by 5 percent with the funds going to your local K-12 public school district.	2.41	2.25	2.09	2.04	2.67	2.41

* = p < .05 ** = p < .01 (p-values based on two-tailed tests)

Policy Opinions

Participants' opinions on a number of K-12 education policy issues were assessed by asking how strongly they agreed or disagreed with several policy proposals (Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neither Agree nor Disagree=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5). A positive difference of means indicates a decrease in support of a policy proposal, while a negative difference of means indicates an increase in support of a policy proposal.

Table C5. Education Policy Opinions.

(Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neither Agree nor Disagree=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5)

Policy Statements/Proposals		Entire Sample		Citizens		Teachers/ Administrators	
		PRE-SURVEY MEAN	POST-SURVEY MEAN	PRE-SURVEY MEAN	POST-SURVEY MEAN	PRE-SURVEY MEAN	POST-SURVEY MEAN
Educational Offerings & District Structure	The educational offerings in Nebraska public schools produce high school graduates that make Nebraska economically competitive with other states.	3.93	3.77	3.69	3.43*	4.21	4.12
	The educational offerings in rural Nebraska public schools produce high school graduates that enhance the sustainability and vitality of rural Nebraska.	3.69	3.78	3.70	3.54	3.77	4.04
	The services of Nebraska public schools should be delivered by larger, consolidated school districts.	2.30	2.39	2.30	2.39	2.34	2.43
Testing/Standards	The state of Nebraska should mandate a statewide test to assess student achievement relative to state academic standards.	2.78	2.36**	3.34	2.89*	2.29	1.88*
Education Finance	The Nebraska State Board of Education Policy on Essential Education should be fully funded.	3.72	3.96*	3.25	3.71**	4.05	4.12
	The state of Nebraska should assume greater responsibility for funding Nebraska public schools through an increase in state aid.	4.02	4.17	3.76	3.85	4.26	4.40
	I would be willing to support an increase in income taxes in order to provide for more state aid to public schools.	3.31	3.54*	3.17	3.37	3.46	3.67
	I would be willing to support an increase in sales taxes in order to provide more state aid to public schools.	3.78	3.81	3.50	3.54	4.02	4.02

* = $p < .05$ ** = $p < .01$ (p-values based on two-tailed tests)

Knowledge Based Questions

Table D1. Education Knowledge Based Questions.

True/False	Entire Sample % correct answer		Citizens % correct answer		Teachers/ Administrators % correct answer	
	PRE- SURVEY	POST- SURVEY	PRE- SURVEY	POST- SURVEY	PRE- SURVEY	POST- SURVEY
Nebraska school districts are required to offer a standardized curriculum based on the Nebraska State Board of Education Policy on Essential Education. (FALSE)	30.0%	45.4%	9.1%	30.9%	48.3%	62.1%
Nebraska school districts are allowed to develop and administer their own tests of academic standards, rather than using a single statewide test. (TRUE)	66.9%	73.1%	32.7%	47.3%	96.6%	94.8%
Unlike many other states, Nebraska does not have an “education gap” between minority and white students. (FALSE)	83.8%	93.1%	70.9%	87.3%	91.4%	96.6%
State aid to education is based in part on student grade level, poverty, and limited English proficiency. (TRUE)	62.3%	60.0%	47.3%	49.1%	75.9%	62.1%
In 2005 the Nebraska policy regarding school consolidation was changed with the passage of Legislative Bill 126. The new policy will eliminate all schools in elementary only districts. (FALSE)	38.5%	46.9%	23.6%	49.1%	48.3%	44.8%

Participants were also asked a multiple choice question about identifying the biggest source of funding for local public schools. On the pre-survey 85.4% of respondents and on the post-survey 92.3% of respondents correctly answered “local property taxes”. Teachers and school administrators were slightly more likely than random citizens to answer this question correctly on both the pre- and post-survey.

REFERENCES

¹ Nebraska State Education Association. “Investing in Nebraska’s Good Life=Investing in Nebraska’s Public Schools.” Retrieved on November 1, 2005 from <http://nsea.org/voice/Whitepaper.pdf>.

² Glissman, Bob. (2003, July 1). Suit Targets Aid to Schools. *Omaha World Herald*, p. 1a; Glissman, Bob and Bill Hord. (2004, August 28). Rural Schools File Own Suit on Funding. *Omaha World Herald*, p. 1a.

³ Participants, all adults 19 years and older, were solicited by a letter sent through the mail. The participants came from five sources. First, individuals who had been invited and agreed to participate in the 2004 Kearney *By the People* were invited again to participate in the 2005 event. The original sample from which this group was drawn was a random sample of citizens from a six-county area surrounding Kearney, including Adams, Buffalo, Dawson, Hall, Kearney, and Phelps counties. The second source of participants was from a new list of 2000 randomly selected residents from the same six-county area. Third, a randomly selected portion of a list of all K-12 teachers and school administrators from the six-county area, totaling 2,685 individuals, were invited to participate. Fourth, sixteen special invitations were issued to individuals referred to the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center by the Mexican American Commission, the Nebraska Association of School Boards, and other event partners. Finally, invitations were extended to all members of the Kearney Chamber of Commerce. While 4% of those contacted to attend the event registered, an impressive 78% of individuals who registered actually attended the event. Individuals who participated in the *By the People* 2004 were more likely than new random citizens or teachers/administrators to respond to the invitation to participate in *By the People* 2005.

⁴ Deliberative Opinion Polls involve the use of small group discussions among participants about particular public policy or electoral issues. Participants are identified through scientific random sampling to statistically represent voting age members of the public. Deliberative Polling aims to measure changes in attitudes about public policy issues after individuals have an opportunity to discuss and think about them in an informed way. Participants have an opportunity to interact with each other, and experts, about the issues and reflect on the advantages, disadvantages, and trade-offs of policy options.

⁵ Totals may not sum to 130 due to unanswered questions. Due to rounding, some percentages may not equal 100.

⁶ 47% of citizens participated in a *By the People* event in 2004.



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