



COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION POLL 2012-2013

*A survey of Virginians conducted by the
Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute*

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VCU Commonwealth Education Poll Finds Majority of Virginians Support Pre-Labor Day School Opening and Homeschool Sport Participation

This year's poll indicated the public's support for providing more choices in the provision of education. More than two-thirds of respondents (67%) favored allowing students who are homeschooled to participate on local public school sport teams and 68% favored allowing localities to have the option to start the public school calendar before Labor Day. There were regional differences on the issue of homeschooler participation in public school sports; however, all had majority support. The Northwest and Northern Virginia were the most supportive with 73% and 72% and Tidewater was the least supportive of the option, with 56%. Income played a role in opinion on the issue of local choice on the school calendar. Of respondents making \$100,000 or more last year, 80% favored localities having the choice to start school before Labor Day. Only 59% of those making less than \$50,000 felt the same; although in either case, a majority supported localities having the option.

This year saw a modest increase in majority support for charter school programs in Virginia. Sixty-one percent of respondents indicated supporting the program, an increase of five percent over the last time the question was asked in 2009-10. There were significant regional differences on this issue. South Central Virginia was the most likely to support the concept of charter schools with 70%. Tidewater and Northern Virginia also had clear majorities in support, with 64% and 60%, respectively. The Northwest and the West regions were the least likely to support, with 54% and 53% respectively. There was a similar increase in support for changing the Virginia Constitution in order to give charter schools greater independence from local school boards; however, there was still no clear majority. Forty-two percent of respondents support changing the Constitution, which is an increase of five percent from the last time the question was asked in 2009-10. A sizable percentage, 41%, was opposed to making the change.

When respondents were asked to select which type of school they thought would provide the best education, 47% indicated regular public school as their choice. Almost one-third (32%) said private school. A much smaller percentage indicated a charter school (8%), home school (6%) and virtual school (1%). Public school employees and retirees and parents of public school students were the most likely to choose public school with 57% and 55%, respectively, indicating the option.

“Virginians are very supportive of providing local school divisions with greater options for how they do business, specifically control over their school calendars,” said William C. Boshier, Jr., executive director, Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute and distinguished professor of public policy in the Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs. “While surprising and not without challenges, strong majorities support homeschool participation in public school athletics.”

“An increase in support over the past three years indicates that a solid majority of Virginians (61%) now favor charter school programs,” said Farrah Stone Graham, Ph.D., assistant professor in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs and director of the survey.

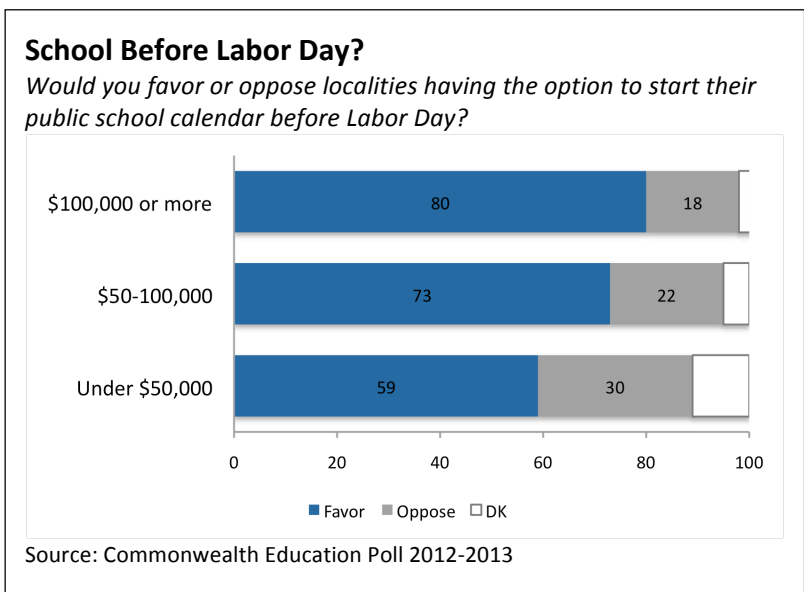
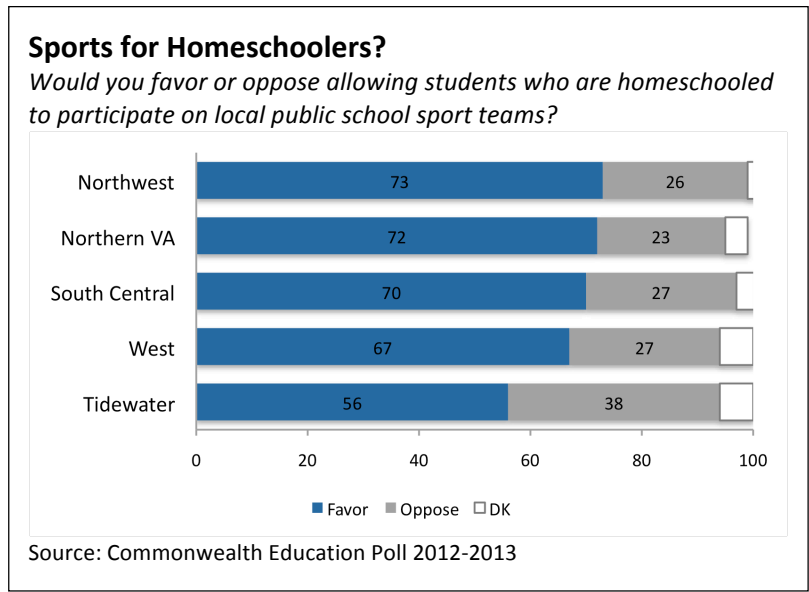
These findings are part of a new statewide survey conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University. The Commonwealth Education Poll was conducted by landline and cell telephone from December 27, 2012 to January 3, 2013 with a random sample of 827 adults in Virginia. The margin of error for the poll is plus or minus 4.3 percentage points. This poll is conducted annually by VCU’s Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI).

For a PDF of the 13-page report including complete question wording and detailed tables of results see http://www.cepi.vcu.edu/comm_ed_poll.html

New Options for Local School Divisions

This year, respondents were asked their opinion regarding two issues for local school divisions, setting the school calendar and opening participation on school sport teams. Large majorities were in favor of each. More than two-thirds of respondents (67%) favored allowing students who are homeschooled to participate on local public school sport teams and 68% favored allowing localities to have the option to start the public school calendar before Labor Day.

There were significant differences in support by region, with the Northwest, Northern Virginia and South Central being the most supportive. At least seven-in-ten respondents in each region favored allowing participation. The least supportive region was Tidewater, where only 56% of respondents favored allowing participation.



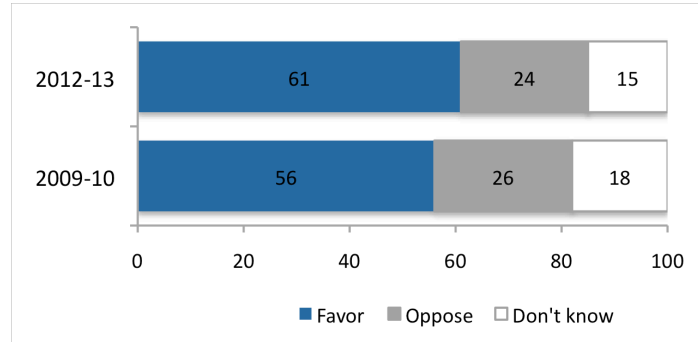
There were differences of opinion on changing the school calendar as well, with income playing a role. Respondents that made \$100,000 or more last year were significantly more supportive of allowing localities to start school before Labor Day with 80% favoring. Those making less than \$50,000 were less likely to favor starting school earlier, with 59%.

Charter School Programs

This year saw a modest increase in majority support for charter school programs in Virginia. Sixty-one

Support for Charter Schools?

The charter school program exempts some public schools from certain state regulations and permits them to function independently from the local school district as long as they meet state standards. Do you favor or oppose such a program?



Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2012-2013

percent of respondents indicated supporting the program, an increase of five percent over the last time the question was asked in 2009-10.

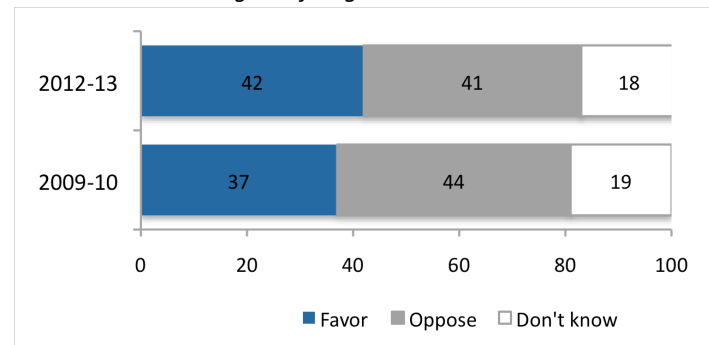
There were significant regional differences on this issue. South Central Virginia was the most likely to support the concept of charter schools with 70%. Tidewater and Northern Virginia also had clear majorities in support, with 64% and 60%, respectively. The Northwest and the West regions were the least likely to

support, with 54% and 53% respectively.

There was a similar increase in support for changing the Virginia Constitution in order to give charter schools greater independence from local school boards; however, there was still no clear majority. Forty-two percent of respondents support changing the Constitution, which is an increase of five percent from the last time the question was asked in 2009-10. A sizable percentage, 41%, was opposed to making the change. There were partisan differences in support with Independents and Republicans being most likely to support change, with 48% and 45% respectively. Only 33% of Democrats indicated support.

Changing the State Constitution?

Would you favor or oppose changing the VA Constitution in order to give charter schools more independence from local school boards on decisions about hiring and firing teachers in charter schools?



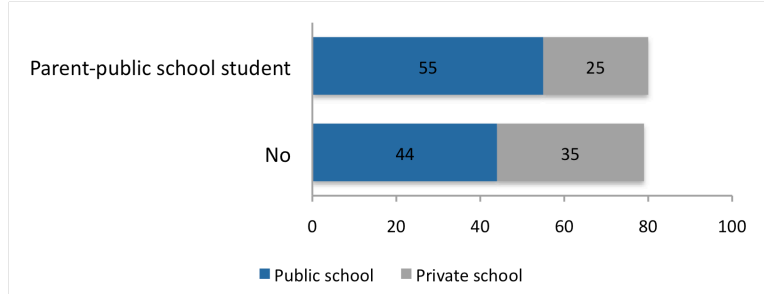
Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2012-2013

Choice of Educational Options

When respondents were also asked to select which type of school they thought would provide the best education, 47% indicated regular public school as their choice. Almost one-third (32%) said private school. A much smaller percentage indicated a charter school (8%), home school (6%) and virtual school (1%). Public school employees and retirees and parents of public school students were the more likely to choose public school with 57% and 55%, respectively, indicating the option.

Which type of school is best?

If it was your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?



Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2012-2013

Which type of school is best?

If it was your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?

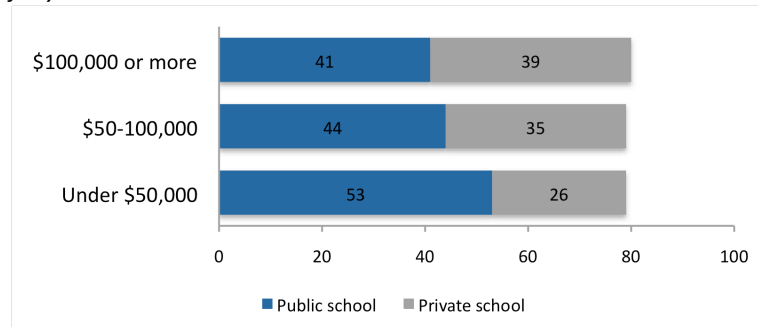
	%
Regular public school	47
Private school	32
Charter school	8
Home school	6
Virtual school	1
Don't know/Refused	6
	100

Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2012-2013

Income is also significant with respondents making under \$50,000 last year being more likely to indicate public schools as the best educational option with 53%. Those making \$100,000 or more had a significantly higher percentage indicating private school as the best option with 39%.

Which type of school is best?

If it was your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?



Source: Commonwealth Education Poll 2012-2013

METHOD OF THE COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION POLL

The Commonwealth Education Poll 2012-2013, sponsored by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), obtained telephone interviews with a representative sample of 827 adults living in Virginia. Telephone interviews were conducted by landline (558) and cell phone (269, including 95 without a landline phone). The survey was conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI). Interviews were done in English by Princeton Data Source from December 27, 2012 to January 3, 2013. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ± 4.3 percentage points.

A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in Virginia who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) according to PSRAI specifications. Numbers for the landline sample were drawn with probabilities in proportion to their share of listed telephone households from active blocks (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained three or more residential directory listings. The cellular sample was not list-assisted, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers.

The data are weighted to adjust for unequal probabilities of selection due to multiple adults living in landline households and for frame size of the landline and cell phone sampling frames. In addition, the data are weighted on sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region of residence and population density to reflect the demographic composition of the adult population in Virginia. Percentages reported in the text and tables are weighted, while the number of cases shown in the tables for various subgroups is the actual number of respondents.

Questions answered by the full sample of adults are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 4.3 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples like the one used here, the results obtained should be no more than 4.3 percentage points above or below the figure that would be obtained by interviewing all Virginian residents with telephones. Where the answers of subgroups are reported, the sampling error would be higher. Because of non-response (refusals to participate, etc.), standard calculations of sampling error are apt to understate the actual extent to which survey results are at variance with the true population values. Surveys are also subject to errors from sources other than sampling. While every effort is made to identify such errors, they are often difficult or impossible to measure. Readers making use of the results are urged to be mindful of the limitations inherent in survey research.

Commonwealth Education Poll 2012-2013State-wide survey of Virginians¹

December 27, 2012-January 3, 2013

Number of Respondents: 827

Q1 THROUGH Q13 HELD FOR SEPARATE RELEASE

Q13. The charter school program exempts some public schools from certain state regulations and permits them to function independently from the local school district as long as they meet state standards for student achievement. Do you favor or oppose such a program?

	12-13	09-10
	%	%
Favor	61	56
Oppose	24	26
Don't Know/Refused	15	18

Q14. Would you favor or oppose changing the Virginia constitution in order to give charter schools more independence from local school boards on decisions about hiring and firing teachers in charter schools?

	12-13	09-10
	%	%
Favor	42	37
Oppose	41	44
Don't Know/Refused	18	19

Q15. Would you favor or oppose allowing students who are homeschooled to participate on local public school sport teams?

	12-13
	%
Favor	67
Oppose	28
Don't Know/Refused	5

Q16. Would you favor or oppose localities having the option to start their public school calendar before Labor Day?

	12-13
	%
Favor	68
Oppose	24
Don't Know/Refused	8

¹ Percentages may add to 99 or 101 due to rounding. Cells that are blank contain no cases. Cells with a zero percent entry contain cases, but the percentage is less than 0.5%.

Q17. If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child? Would you select [INSERT ITEMS; RANDOMIZE] a charter school, home school, private school, regular public school, or virtual school?

[IF NEEDED: Virtual schools can be run publicly or privately, allowing students to work with their curriculum and teachers over the internet- in combination with, or in place of, traditional classroom learning.]

	12-13	<i>National trend for comparison Friedman Foundation 2012²</i>
	%	%
Charter school	8	8
Home school	6	6
Private school	32	37
Regular public school	47	42
Virtual school	1	0
Don't Know/Refused	6	7

QUESTIONS 18 THROUGH 21 HELD FOR SEPARATE RELEASE

² The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, April 17-24, 2012, N= 803 adults.

Tables of Results by Selected Subgroups³

		Q13. The charter school program exempts some public schools from certain state regulations and permits them to function independently from the local school district as long as they meet state standards. Do you favor or oppose such a program?			
		Favor	Oppose	Don't know	Number of cases
All adults		61%	24%	15%	827
VA Region	Northwest	54%	29%	17%	112
	Northern VA	60%	23%	17%	243
	West	53%	31%	15%	144
	South Central	70%	14%	16%	142
	Tidewater	64%	25%	11%	186
Gender	Men	58%	25%	17%	420
	Women	63%	23%	14%	407
Age	18-34	61%	20%	20%	131
	35-44	64%	20%	16%	131
	45-64	61%	30%	9%	335
	65 and older	58%	22%	20%	202
Education	H.S. or less	60%	23%	18%	183
	Some college	61%	22%	17%	220
	College grad or more	61%	27%	12%	419
Family Income	Under \$50,000	64%	21%	15%	252
	50K to under \$100,000	54%	29%	17%	217
	\$100,000 or more	66%	25%	9%	217
School employee or retiree?	Yes	56%	27%	17%	181
	No	62%	24%	15%	643
Parent of public school student?	Yes	59%	25%	15%	222
	No	61%	24%	15%	605
Party identification	Democrat	59%	21%	20%	246
	Republican	63%	24%	13%	205
	Independent	64%	26%	10%	309

³ In the following tables, cells that are blank contain no cases. Cells with a zero percent entry contain cases, but the percentage is less than 0.5%. Percentages may add to 99 or 101 due to rounding.

Q14. Would you favor or oppose changing the VA Constitution in order to give charter schools more independence from local school boards on decisions about hiring and firing teachers?

		Favor	Oppose	Don't know	Number of cases
All adults		42%	41%	18%	827
VA Region	Northwest	40%	46%	14%	112
	Northern VA	43%	39%	19%	243
	West	38%	41%	21%	144
	South Central	42%	38%	20%	142
	Tidewater	43%	41%	15%	186
Gender	Men	40%	46%	14%	420
	Women	43%	39%	19%	407
Age	18-34	48%	33%	19%	131
	35-44	50%	34%	16%	131
	45-64	38%	47%	15%	335
	65 and older	29%	45%	26%	202
Education	H.S. or less	37%	43%	19%	183
	Some college	41%	39%	20%	220
	College grad or more	46%	39%	15%	419
Family Income	Under \$50,000	39%	40%	21%	252
	50K to under \$100,000	40%	39%	20%	217
	\$100,000 or more	48%	40%	12%	217
School employee or retiree?	Yes	34%	49%	16%	181
	No	43%	39%	18%	643
Parent of public school student?	Yes	36%	46%	19%	222
	No	44%	39%	18%	605
Party identification	Democrat	33%	45%	22%	246
	Republican	45%	36%	18%	205
	Independent	48%	39%	13%	309

Q15. Would you favor or oppose allowing students who are homeschooled to participate on local public school sport teams?

		Favor	Oppose	Don't know	Number of cases
All adults		67%	28%	5%	827
VA Region	Northwest	73%	26%	2%	112
	Northern VA	72%	23%	4%	243
	West	67%	27%	6%	144
	South Central	70%	27%	4%	142
	Tidewater	56%	38%	6%	186
Gender	Men	66%	29%	5%	420
	Women	68%	28%	4%	407
Age	18-34	70%	29%	1%	131
	35-44	72%	25%	3%	131
	45-64	65%	31%	4%	335
	65 and older	63%	25%	12%	202
Education	H.S. or less	64%	28%	8%	183
	Some college	67%	29%	3%	220
	College grad or more	70%	27%	3%	419
Family Income	Under \$50,000	66%	29%	5%	252
	50K to under \$100,000	70%	25%	4%	217
	\$100,000 or more	72%	27%	1%	217
School employee or retiree?	Yes	62%	31%	7%	181
	No	68%	27%	4%	643
Parent of public school student?	Yes	68%	30%	2%	222
	No	67%	27%	6%	605
Party identification	Democrat	62%	31%	6%	246
	Republican	69%	26%	5%	205
	Independent	73%	24%	3%	309

Q16. Would you favor localities having the
option to start their public school calendar
before Labor Day?

		Favor	Oppose	Don't know	Number of cases
All adults		68%	24%	8%	827
VA Region	Northwest	61%	27%	12%	112
	Northern VA	68%	24%	9%	243
	West	70%	17%	13%	144
	South Central	71%	25%	4%	142
	Tidewater	67%	28%	5%	186
Gender	Men	70%	22%	8%	420
	Women	65%	26%	9%	407
Age	18-34	66%	26%	8%	131
	35-44	72%	23%	5%	131
	45-64	70%	23%	7%	335
	65 and older	60%	25%	15%	202
Education	H.S. or less	61%	28%	11%	183
	Some college	65%	27%	8%	220
	College grad or more	76%	18%	6%	419
Family Income	Under \$50,000	59%	30%	11%	252
	50K to under \$100,000	73%	22%	5%	217
	\$100,000 or more	80%	18%	3%	217
School employee or retiree?	Yes	68%	25%	7%	181
	No	68%	24%	8%	643
Parent of public school student?	Yes	62%	31%	7%	222
	No	70%	21%	9%	605
Party identification	Democrat	67%	25%	8%	246
	Republican	64%	26%	10%	205
	Independent	74%	22%	4%	309

		Q17. If it was your decision and you could select any type of school for your child, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education?						
		Charter school	Home school	Private school	Regular public school	Virtual school	DK/Refused	Number of cases
All adults		8%	6%	32%	47%	1%	6%	827
VA Region	Northwest	6%	9%	31%	49%	0%	5%	112
	Northern VA	9%	3%	34%	48%	1%	5%	243
	West	6%	10%	22%	55%	1%	5%	144
	South Central	10%	3%	40%	41%	0%	6%	142
	Tidewater	9%	8%	31%	44%	2%	7%	186
Gender	Men	9%	7%	31%	45%	1%	6%	420
	Women	7%	5%	32%	49%	1%	5%	407
Age	18-34	11%	6%	31%	44%	1%	6%	131
	35-44	8%	5%	34%	47%	2%	4%	131
	45-64	5%	8%	32%	49%	0%	5%	335
	65 and older	8%	5%	30%	51%	1%	6%	202
Education	H.S. or less	9%	6%	25%	55%	1%	4%	183
	Some college	7%	7%	35%	43%	1%	6%	220
	College grad or more	8%	5%	36%	43%	1%	7%	419
Family Income	Under \$50,000	7%	7%	26%	53%	2%	4%	252
	50K to under \$100,000	9%	7%	35%	44%	0%	5%	217
	\$100,000 or more	12%	5%	39%	41%	0%	2%	217
School employee or retiree?	Yes	9%	3%	26%	57%	0%	5%	181
	No	8%	7%	33%	45%	1%	6%	643
Parent of public school student?	Yes	9%	6%	25%	55%	2%	3%	222
	No	8%	6%	35%	44%	0%	7%	605
Party identification	Democrat	10%	3%	28%	55%	0%	4%	246
	Republican	8%	9%	36%	43%	1%	3%	205
	Independent	8%	5%	34%	43%	1%	8%	309