

**OHIOANS' VIEWS ON EDUCATION 2007**  
**FDR Group for the Thomas B. Fordham Institute**  
**May 24, 2007**

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Between April 29<sup>th</sup> and May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the FDR Group conducted a telephone survey of 1,000 randomly selected Ohio residents (margin of error +/-3 percentage points). The survey covers such topics as school quality and funding, academic standards, school reforms, proposals to improve how the public schools are run, teacher quality, charter schools and school vouchers. Additional interviews were conducted with residents from five of Ohio's largest cities to enable a reliable comparison of their views. This survey is a follow-up to one conducted in 2005 and many of the questions are repeated, allowing us to gauge whether attitudes have shifted over time.

Some general observations:

- Lingering dissatisfaction with district public schools exists.
- There is steady support for charter schools and school vouchers – and scant support for doing away with them.
- There are stubbornly low levels of familiarity with charters, vouchers and even the No Child Left Behind law (NCLB).
- Considerable openness exists for a host of reforms in school operations, staffing, management and accountability.
- Few sizable differences are evident across demographic groups, with the exception of political party identification.
- Attitudes from 2005 to 2007 are stable, with no dramatic shifts in trends.

**Discontent with Ohio's Public Schools**

Significant signs of the public's discontent with its public schools abound in Ohio, and the trends since 2005 have failed to improve. A little more than 4 in 10 residents (43 percent) believe that a high school diploma from their local public school "is no guarantee that the typical student has learned the basics." [Q1] In 2005, the number was virtually identical – 42 percent. A focus on the responses of residents from five of Ohio's largest cities (Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Toledo) shows an even larger 53 percent majority saying a high school diploma does not guarantee basic skills.

Another ominous sign for the public schools is that their most important consumers – parents with kids in school – would send their children some place other than a district public school if they could. Well over half (57 percent) say they would opt for private schools or other options "if

money were not an issue”; only 41 percent of parents say the district public schools would be their first preference (in 2005, it was 37 percent). [Q38]

Q1	Ohio 2007 %	Ohio 2005 %	5 Cities 2007 %
<b>Which statement is more accurate for the students graduating from your local public schools? A high school diploma:</b>			
Is no guarantee that the typical student has learned the basics	43	42	53
Means that the typical student has at least learned the basics	54	54	42
Don't know	4	4	5

Q38	Ohio 2007 Parents %	Ohio 2005 Parents %
<b>If money were not an issue, would you prefer that your child attend:</b>		
Private non-religious school	16	13
Private religious school	34	40
Public charter school	5	4
Public district school	41	37
[Vol.] Something else/Depends	2	3
Don't know	3	3

## School Funding and Trust

Surface support exists for increasing spending on Ohio's public schools, but this support is weak and easy to misread. Forty-six percent of Ohioans do say they would support increased funding, but another 41 percent would leave funding levels as they are (nine percent would opt for cuts). [Q8] Most telling, however, is the public's conviction that extra money won't make a difference – fully 71 percent think if Ohio were to spend more money it “would actually get lost along the way” (69 percent in 2005); only 21 percent believe it would get to the classroom and improve education. [Q9] And, in the focus groups, cynical stories about how the state lottery was supposed to fund schools popped up.

The bottom line: residents of the Buckeye state display a continued wariness of how their tax money is spent on the schools and whether promises are kept. This wariness is consistent with voters' rejection of close to 70 percent of all new school operating and capital levies on the ballot earlier this month.

Q8	Ohio 2007 %
<b>Keeping in mind that the money for public education has to be paid by taxes, do you think that government funding for public schools in your district should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?</b>	
Greatly increase	16
Increase	30
Stay about the same	41
Decrease	7
Greatly decrease	2
Don't know	4

Q9	Ohio 2007 %	Ohio 2005 %
<b>If Ohio decided to spend more money on the public schools, do you think:</b>		
The money would actually get to the classrooms and improve education	21	21
The money would actually get lost along the way	71	69
Don't know	8	10

Ohio residents are far more apt to trust the decision-makers closest to the schools to decide how to spend tax money allocated to education: 43 percent would “most” trust local school districts for spending decisions and another 25 percent the individual schools. [Q10] Only five percent would “most” trust the State Legislature or Governor. While a proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot would give the State Board of Education the power to determine school spending levels, only 18 percent of Ohioans give the Board their nod.

The concept often termed “weighted school funding” elicits a positive response from the majority of the Ohio public – 63 percent would favor making the money Ohio spends on children’s education differ according to each child’s individual needs and to have all of that money follow children to the schools they attend. [Q11] It’s difficult to know how steadfast the support will be because this may have been the first time folks heard about it, but what they heard, they liked.

### **Support for Testing, Standards and the No Child Left Behind Act**

Ohio’s residents have consistently supported standards and accountability for their public schools, and this year’s survey results are in line with that sensibility. Requiring 10<sup>th</sup> graders to pass subject tests before they can graduate still garners strong support, with 82 percent in favor this year (in 2005, it was 83 percent). [Q12] What’s more, parents with school-age kids are as likely to support the policy as other Ohioans.

In fact, the vast majority (89 percent) say they would continue to favor the policy even if their own child failed the tests and would not get a high school diploma; only 10 percent would have second thoughts as a result. [Q14] One might expect that in real life there would be widespread protests if large numbers of kids failed to get their high school diploma. But the willingness to stick with the policy in the face of bad news – even if it’s only in response to a hypothetical survey question – is not meaningless.

Q12	Ohio 2007 %	Ohio 2005 %
<b>All of Ohio’s 10<sup>th</sup> graders are required to pass tests in each of the major subjects before they can graduate from high school. Students who fail will get help and get more chances to pass, but they MUST pass in order to get a diploma. Do you favor or oppose this policy?</b>		
Strongly favor	62	60
Somewhat favor	20	23
Somewhat oppose	5	5
Strongly oppose	11	9
Don’t know	2	2

Ohio’s citizens approve of the state’s use of standardized tests to systematically evaluate schools and districts. When told that “the results are publicized. Schools that do very badly are identified, watched carefully, and must put an improvement plan into action,” a 63 percent to 27 percent margin thinks this is “mostly good because it calls attention to problems that need to be addressed.” [Q15]

Like Ohio, the nation also has been struggling to realize standards and accountability. The No Child Left Behind Act is up for renewal this year and nearly half of Ohioans (48 percent) think it should be renewed as is or with minimal changes. [Q20] Another 29 percent would renew it with major changes while 15 percent would not renew it at all. One possible change to the law gathers support from Ohioans: By a 57 percent to 38 percent margin, Ohio residents prefer the idea of a single national standard (and test) over different standards and tests in different states. [Q21]

Q21	Ohio 2007 %
<b>Under No Child Left Behind, should there be a single national standard and a single national test for all students in the United State? Or do you think that there should be different standards and tests in different states?</b>	
One test and standard for all students	57
Different tests and standards in different states	38
Don’t know	5

Knowledge of NCLB appears to have crept up over the past two years. More Ohioans say they are familiar with the Act: 51 percent say they know a great deal or a fair amount about it, up from 43 percent in 2005. [Q19]

Q19	Ohio 2007 %	Ohio 2005 %	National 2006 %*
<b>How much, if anything, would you say you know about the No Child Left Behind Act – the federal education bill that was passed by Congress in 2001?</b>			
A great deal	14	11	8
A fair amount	37	32	37
Very little	37	42	40
Nothing at all	11	15	15
Don't know	1	1	-

\* The 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, September 2006

The public is a stalwart believer in academic standards, but it is even more insistent that standards of behavior are critical to successful schools. Nine in 10 (91 percent) favor “enforcing strict school rules on discipline regarding how students behave, talk and dress,” with 76 percent saying they are strongly in favor. [Q6] This is a perennial issue for the public.

In the 2005 survey, the exact same percentage of Ohioans were in favor, and questions asked in national surveys validate these findings. For example, in a 2006 survey, Public Agenda found that 60 percent of parents of public school students nationwide pointed to “too many kids lack[ing] respect and us[ing] bad language” as a serious problem in their local public schools – and 64 percent of public school students themselves agreed. [*Reality Check 2006: Is Support for Standards and Testing Fading?*]

### **Steady Support for Charter Schools**

Support for charter schools has held steady across the years – 52 percent are in favor this year, 51 percent in 2005. [Q23] Support among residents of the five large cities is even higher (59 percent). That might be considered pretty good news for charters given the political environment and the spate of bad coverage some of them have gotten. What is more, nearly 3 in 4 (74 percent) would give public charter schools the same funding and resources as district public schools. [Q28]

Q23	Ohio 2007 %	Ohio 2005 %	5 Cities 2007 %
<b>Charter schools are public schools that have a lot more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are free from many existing regulations. In general, do you favor or oppose this idea?</b>			
Strongly favor	23	18	30
Somewhat favor	29	33	29
Somewhat oppose	17	18	13
Strongly oppose	21	16	19
Don't know	10	16	11

Q28	Ohio 2007 %
<b>When it comes to funding and resources, do you think that public charter schools should get higher, lower, or the same funding and resources as public district schools?</b>	
Higher	3
Lower	17
Same	74
Don't know	7

Ohioans bring a commonsense approach to the policy questions of whether to open new charter schools and whether to close old ones. They do want the worst charter schools closed, and they are open to the idea of new ones, with conditions. Only 11 percent think all of Ohio's charter schools should be closed; instead, a 63 percent majority would shut down only the worst (18 percent would not close any). [Q27]

Most, however, want new charter schools opened only by organizations with a track record of success: a 68 percent majority would allow new charter schools, but only if they are run by proven organizations; just 15 percent would not allow new charters at all (nine percent would "allow as many as possible"). [Q26] Historically, the public has been reluctant to close public schools – even when they are described as failing – and more interested in fixing them.

Q26	Ohio 2007 %
<b>Which of these approaches do you think Ohio should take toward creating NEW public charter schools?</b>	
Allow no new ones	15
Allow as many as possible	9
Allow new ones, but only if they are run by organizations with a proven track record of success	68
Don't know	9

Q27	Ohio 2007 %
<b>Some of Ohio's public charter schools are doing a good job of teaching kids and some are doing a poor job. Do you think that Ohio:</b>	
Should close only the worst ones	63
Should close all of them	11
Should close none of them	18
Don't know	8

Remarkably, Ohioans' self-proclaimed knowledge and familiarity with charter schools show virtually no gains over time. Only 19 percent in this survey say they know a great deal or quite a bit about charters, compared with 17 percent in 2005. [Q22] Still, almost half (49 percent) say they know very little or nothing at all about charter schools this year, compared with 55 percent in 2005 (indicating an incremental improvement in knowledge). One might have fairly expected greater awareness given all the press coverage, political furor, legislative proposals and the reality of charter schools in communities, but it just didn't happen. Residents of Ohio's five large cities, where most charter schools are found, are more likely than the Ohio public at large to say they know a great deal or quite a bit about charters (30 percent versus 19 percent).

We also gave Ohioans a true-or-false quiz about charter schools, and they seem to be slightly more knowledgeable than the national public, but only slightly: 39 percent correctly say charter schools *cannot* charge tuition, compared with 29 percent of a national sample [Q24]; and 34 percent of Ohioans know that charter schools *cannot* select students on the basis of ability, compared with 29 percent nationally [Q25]. [*The 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Phi Delta Kappa/ Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*, September 2006]

Still, it is interesting to note that there is very little association between how much respondents know about charter schools – and how accurate that knowledge is – and whether or not they favor them. For example, 53 percent of respondents who answered both true-or-false questions correctly favor charter schools, compared with 49 percent of respondents who answered both questions incorrectly. And both groups (68 percent and 64 percent) think Ohio should allow new public charter schools only if they are run by organizations with a proven track record of success. Knowledge appears to be unrelated to sentiment.

### **Steady Support for School Vouchers**

As with charter schools, support for vouchers has held steady among Ohioans. More than half (57 percent) favor the state's school voucher program which "gives parents a voucher of \$3,000 to \$5,000 to help pay tuition if they choose to send their child to a private or church-related school" (37 percent oppose it). [Q30] In 2005, when the program was being seriously considered but had not yet been implemented, 55 percent favored and 37 percent opposed it.

Q30	Ohio 2007 %	Ohio 2005 %
<b>Ohio's school voucher program, the EdChoice Scholarship Program, gives parents a voucher of \$3,000 to \$5,000 dollars to help pay tuition if they choose to send their child to a private or church-related school. It is available only to students whose public school has been failing for three years in a row. Do you favor or oppose this program? Is that strongly or somewhat?</b> <i>[Note: In 2005, the question wording did not include the actual name of the program or the precise dollar amounts.]</i>		
Strongly favor	30	31
Somewhat favor	27	24
Somewhat oppose	14	13
Strongly oppose	23	24
Don't know	6	8

Overall, Ohioans are more positive than negative about the effects of vouchers: by a 55 percent to 31 percent margin, they are more likely to view vouchers as “a lifeline for kids who can finally escape failing public schools” than to say vouchers “will help only a few kids and make things worse for most students who are left behind.” [Q33] A virtually identical 55 percent to 32 percent majority believes “vouchers will force public schools to get better because they’ll have to compete” rather than to say they “will make the public schools worse because they’ll be left with less money and less motivated students.” [Q34] On both of these survey items, pro-voucher sentiments have grown since 2005, from 47 percent to 55 percent who view vouchers as a lifeline and from 50 percent to 55 percent who think vouchers will force the public schools to improve.

There appears to be widespread opposition to Governor Strickland’s proposal to eliminate the statewide school voucher program except in Cleveland. Almost 7 in 10 (69 percent) oppose the proposal, with 52 percent strongly opposing. [Q31] In fact, if the majority (60 percent) of Buckeye residents had their way, they would “expand Ohio’s school voucher program to make ALL children in Ohio eligible for it, not just those who are in failing public schools.” [Q32] Interestingly, by a 47 percent to 68 percent margin, college educated adults are less supportive of expanding school vouchers than respondents with a high school education or less.

Q31	Ohio 2007 %
<b>Governor Strickland has proposed eliminating Ohio's school voucher program, the EdChoice Scholarship Program, except for low-income children in Cleveland. Do you favor or oppose this proposal?</b>	
Strongly favor	15
Somewhat favor	9
Somewhat oppose	18
Strongly oppose	52
Don't know	7



Q32	Ohio 2007 %
<b>A different idea would be to expand Ohio's school voucher program to make ALL children in Ohio eligible for it, not just those who are in failing public schools. Do you favor or oppose this idea?</b>	
Strongly favor	40
Somewhat favor	21
Somewhat oppose	12
Strongly oppose	23
Don't know	5

Again, just as with charter schools, there's the sobering reminder that most people still don't know much about vouchers. Sixty-nine percent say they know very little or nothing at all about Ohio's school voucher program, the EdChoice Scholarship Program. [Q29] In 2005 when the survey asked a generic question – “How much do you know about school vouchers” – 54 percent said they knew very little or nothing at all. There may be a technical explanation for the apparent decline in knowledge. This year's survey question named the voucher program while the earlier survey did not (because, at the time, it had not yet been implemented). The concrete reference might have forced even more people to admit they did not recognize it.

On the whole, the Ohio public leans in favor of school-choice initiatives such as charters and vouchers. A solid majority of 54 percent are of the view that charters and vouchers provide more choices to parents and help “push district schools to improve,” compared with a smaller 35 percent who are more inclined to view these initiatives as draining resources from and undermining district public schools. [Q35]

### **A More Flexible, Nimble School System**

Even as Ohioans believe in holding educators and students accountable for learning, they broadly support giving the schools more flexibility and autonomy over such issues as staffing and work rules. In this vein, as we reported earlier, 43 percent would entrust local school districts with spending decisions while another 25 percent would trust the individual schools. And support for charter schools is probably related to the fact that they are described as having “a lot more control over their own budget, staff and curriculum.”

Empowering local decision-makers and educators, such as building-level principals, is appealing to people for pragmatic reasons – they are close to the action, the public reasons, so they ought to know who is good, what works and how to make things happen. Two in three respondents (66 percent) favor a proposal that would give principals “far more freedom to run the schools but terminating their contracts if their schools fail to reach specific goals.” [Q7]

Half (50 percent) think the public schools would improve if principals “could choose which teachers work in their buildings and had more say over work rules” (54 percent in 2005). [Q16] The vast majority (85 percent) would give “local public schools more freedom to fire teachers

that aren't performing" (89 percent in 2005). [Q3] Almost 8 in 10 (79 percent) favor "giving local public schools more flexibility to design curriculum" (75 percent in 2005). [Q2]

	Ohio 2007 %	Ohio 2005 %
<b>% of OH residents who:</b>		
Favor giving local public schools more freedom to fire teachers that aren't performing	85	89
Favor giving local public schools more flexibility to design curriculum	79	75
Favor giving principals far more freedom to run the schools but terminating their contracts if their schools fail to reach specific goals	66	Not asked
Believe public schools would improve if principals could choose which teachers work in their buildings and had more say over work rules	50	54

### Insuring Teacher Quality

The Ohio public is open to reconsidering how teacher pay is determined. A solid 61 percent majority thinks that teachers' pay "should be based on their performance and how effectively they teach"; only 16 percent think it should be "their years of service and the degrees they've earned" (21 percent say both). [Q17] How to determine teacher effectiveness and the role that student test scores should play are natural follow-up questions, and here the public is split. While 49 percent favor "basing a teacher's salary, in part, on students' academic progress on state tests," 47 percent oppose it. [Q4]

Ohioans do not shy away from tougher measures intended to insure teacher quality – as noted earlier, strong majorities favor giving public schools more freedom to fire low-performing teachers. And, as past surveys in Ohio have documented, the public is also drawn to rewards to insure teacher quality. More than 8 in 10 (85 percent) favored "rewarding high quality teachers with higher pay" in 2005, and more than 3 in 4 (77 percent) favored paying them more "when they work in tough neighborhoods with hard-to-reach students."

Q17	Ohio 2007 %
<b>Do you think that teachers' pay should be based on:</b>	
Their performance and how effectively they teach	61
Their years of service and the degrees they've earned	16
Both	21
Don't know	2

Q4	Ohio 2007 %
<b>Do you favor or oppose basing a teacher's salary, in part, on students' academic progress on state tests?</b>	
Strongly favor	23
Somewhat favor	26
Somewhat oppose	21
Strongly oppose	26
Don't know	4

The Ohio public is split on the supply pool from which the schools ought to draw applicants, divided between a certification-based approach and a content-based one. While 39 percent say public schools should only hire teachers who have finished a university-based professional training program in education, 44 percent think schools should “be free to hire college graduates who have demonstrated their knowledge and skills in their subject-areas” (13 percent say both). [Q18] Judging by the focus group discussions on teachers, public attitudes on this particular issue are probably unsettled and not well thought out.

### **Pre-school and Extending the School Year**

One of the new policy initiatives probed in this survey is the notion of expanding state-funded pre-school for Ohio's poorest children. Other surveys have shown huge public support for pre-school in general. In this survey, we tested the degree to which Ohioans simply like the idea or whether they want such programs to promise quality academic preparation especially for Ohio's most needy children. Not surprisingly, only 13 percent think pre-school is “a bad idea all around.” [Q36] Half (50 percent) say it's “a good idea all around,” and another 33 percent think it would be a good idea “only if it helps underprivileged kids get academically ready for school.”

Q36	Ohio 2007 %
<b>As you may know, there's a proposal to expand state-funded pre-school for Ohio's poorest children. In your view, is this:</b>	
A good idea all around	50
A good idea ONLY if it helps underprivileged kids get academically-ready for school	33
A bad idea all around	13
Don't know	4

A majority supports a proposal to increase the number of hours students spend inside the public schools. Fifty-three percent of Ohioans are in favor of extending the school day or the school year, compared with a smaller 42 percent who are not. [Q5] Residents from the five large cities are more likely to support the idea (62 percent). Nationally, 48 percent favor and 49 percent oppose it. [*The 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Phi Delta Kappa/ Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*, September 2006]

African Americans in Ohio are more likely than their white counterparts to support both of the above proposals. They are more likely to believe pre-school for Ohio's poorest children is a good idea all around (63 percent to 49 percent) and to *strongly* favor extending the school year or the school day (43 percent to 26 percent). Similarly, higher levels of education are correlated with greater support for extending the school year or day (60 percent of college educated Ohioans favor this proposal compared with 45 percent of those with a high school diploma or less support this proposal).

## **The Views of Dayton Residents**

Overall, the story of how Dayton residents respond to the survey essentially mirrors both the results from the five-cities sample, and the overall statewide sample.

While 52 percent of Daytonians believe a high school diploma guarantees the typical student has learned the basics, 44 percent say it's no guarantee – the statewide results are virtually identical (54 percent to 43 percent); the five-cities sample is only slightly different (42 percent to 53 percent). On school funding, 73 percent of Dayton residents believe if Ohio spends more money on the public schools “the money would get lost along the way” rather than improve education (statewide, 71 percent; five-cities, 71 percent). More than 8 in 10 (84%) Daytonians favor requiring Ohio's 10<sup>th</sup> graders to pass tests in each of the major subjects in order to get a diploma (statewide, 82 percent; five-cities, 80 percent).

Daytonians are generally as likely to favor charter schools and vouchers as the rest of Ohio. Nearly half (49 percent) of Dayton residents are in favor of charter schools, compared with 52 percent of the statewide sample and 59 percent of the five-cities sample. About 2 in 3 (67 percent) would allow new charter schools to open if they are run by organizations with a record of success – both the statewide sample and the five-cities sample are at 68 percent. In Dayton, well over half (58 percent) favor Ohio's school voucher program – Ohioans' statewide (57 percent) and in the five-cities (58 percent) concur. About seven in 10 Daytonians (69 percent) would expand vouchers to make all children in Ohio eligible – across the state it's 60 percent and in the five-cities sample it's 66 percent.

Dayton residents are as interested as other Ohioans in creating a more flexible school system. For example, they are as likely to favor giving the schools more freedom to fire teachers that aren't performing (87 percent) as Ohioans across the state (85 percent) and in the five-cities sample (84 percent). To take another example: they are as interested in giving local public schools more flexibility to design curriculum (83 percent) as Ohioans across the state (79 percent) and in the five-cities sample (81 percent).

## **A Note on Demographic Differences**

Sometimes, demographic differences appear to drive the views of Ohioans, and these differences are noted above when they are important. But, on the whole, the most interesting conclusion to draw from comparing the views of different subgroups of the population is that so few

meaningful differences actually emerge. Respondents who are parents with school-age children pretty much answer the way non-parents do; the response patterns of low income and high income respondents are much more similar than they are different; and the same goes for African American and white Ohioans. What's more, when differences do occur they are differences of degree, not of kind. For example, majorities of both African American and white respondents favor giving schools more freedom to fire low-performing teachers, but at 74 percent and 87 percent, respectively, they are hardly at opposite ends of the spectrum.

There is one big, and perhaps unsurprising, exception to the pattern of consistency across groups. Ohio's self-described Republican and Democratic residents often differ by percentages that are statistically and substantively significant, with Independents typically falling in between. For example, while 69 percent of Republicans favor school vouchers only 47 percent of Democrats do so, a difference of 22 percentage points (Independents are at 56 percent). While 64 percent of Republicans favor charter schools only 41 percent of Democrats do so, a difference of 23 percentage points (Independents are at 54 percent). And while 60 percent of Republicans would renew NCLB as is or with minor changes, only 35 percent of Democrats concur (47 percent of Independents take this view).

These are sizable differences and they recur throughout most of the survey. On the other hand, the fact that substantial minorities of Democrats and Republicans sometimes end up agreeing with the opposing party is also noteworthy. For example, more than 4 in 10 Democrats favor charter schools (41 percent) and school vouchers (47 percent), and more than a third of Republicans (35 percent) indicate a willingness to pay more in taxes for the public schools in their districts.

## **Methodology**

### *Survey of the General Public*

*Ohioans' Views on Education 2007* is based on 1,000 interviews conducted by telephone with a randomly drawn statewide representative sample of adults 18 and older. The fielding took place between April 29 and May 8, 2007. The interviews were approximately 15 minutes in length. The margin of error for the statewide survey (n=1,000) is plus or minus 3 percentage points; the margin of error increases for sub-groups within the sample.

To enable the analysis of urban residents, additional interviews were conducted with adults who reside in five of Ohio's largest cities: Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Toledo. The margin of error for Dayton residents (n=200) and for the five-city sub-group (n=200) is plus or minus 7 percentage points.

This survey is a follow-up to the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation's November 2005 report entitled *Halfway Out the Door: Ohioans Sound Off on Public Schooling, with a Special Analysis of the Views of African Americans and Dayton Residents*. Many of the questions from *Halfway Out the Door* have been repeated in the current survey allowing for an analysis of trends over the past two years.

### Sample Design

To ensure a random sample of households in the statewide sample, a standard random-digit-dialing technology was used. Every household in Ohio had an equal chance of being contacted, including those with unlisted numbers. To minimize non-response bias, interviews were conducted on different days of the week, including weekends, and at different times of the day. If a respondent indicated a better time for the interview, call-backs were made accordingly. Typically, at least six attempts were made on each piece of sample.

Non-sampling sources of error could also have an impact on survey results. The survey instrument used in this study was pre-tested to ensure that the language was accessible and appropriate to members of the general public, both those who may be familiar with Ohio's public schools and those not. Questions were randomized and answer categories rotated in an effort to minimize non-sampling sources of error.

Sample was purchased from Survey Sampling International of Fairfield, Connecticut. The telephone interviews and data collection were provided by Robinson and Muenster Associates, Inc., located in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

### Targeted Sample of Ohio's Large Urban Areas

Targeted telephone exchanges were used to conduct additional interviews with adults living within the city limits of Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Toledo. The purpose of this was to garner sub-group sample sizes that would permit meaningful comparisons about the views of Ohio residents who live in large urban areas – that is, the people who arguably are the most affected by school reform initiatives such as charter schools and vouchers. The “five-city” sub-group consists of a proportionate representation of each city based on U.S. Census data as follows: Cincinnati (n=32), Cleveland (n=48), Columbus (n=75), Dayton (n=14) and Toledo (n=31). Finally, additional targeted interviews were conducted in the city of Dayton to ensure a total sample size of 200 from that city. The final Dayton data are weighted by race to allow comparability between the 2005 and 2007 datasets.

### Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted in April 2007 prior to the fielding of the survey, one in Dayton and one in Columbus. The focus group participants were carefully recruited to represent the socioeconomic demographics of the respective cities, and they included both men and women, mothers and fathers, blacks and whites, as well as those familiar with Ohio's public schools and those not. The purpose of the focus group discussions was to gauge the public's understanding of the issues at hand and the energy they tap. They were also useful in testing and developing the survey instrument, especially for avoiding question wording that was too wonkish or heavy-handed.

### Characteristics of the Sample

Table I below shows the characteristics of the sample compared with Census data.

**Table I: Characteristics of the Sample**

	<b>Sample [n=1,000]</b>	<b>Census 2000 [Ohio]</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	48%	48%
Female	52	52
<b>Household Income</b>		
Less than \$25,000	14%	29%
\$25,000 to <\$50,000	28	31
\$50,000 to <\$75,000	26	20
\$75,000 or more	28	20
<b>Race</b>		
African American	11%	11%
White	87	85
Other	2	4
<b>Education+</b>	<b>(18+)</b>	<b>(25+)</b>
Less than High School	6%	11%
High School Graduate	30	24
Some College	31	17
4-Years or More College	33	14
<b>Age</b>		
18-34	17%	22%
25-44	24	22
45-54	23	20
55-64	19	14
65+	17	22
<b>Urbanicity</b>		
Rural	21%	21%
Suburban	53	57
Urban	26	22

+ The Ohio sample includes adults 18 and older; the Census 2000 breakdown by education is based on Ohio adults 25 and older. Thus, these two groups are not strictly comparable.