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Toronto, ONTARIO – According to a new study conducted by Ipsos-Reid on behalf of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, just under nine in ten (86%) Ontarians feel that parents are most important in the development in children of proper social values such as respect, tolerance, discipline and work ethic. Asked to further rank a number of other influencers, school teachers were viewed by 53% of Ontarians as the second most important, while friends and acquaintances (34%) top the list as third most important.

Parents are also viewed as being an important factor in a child's educational success. In fact, half (52%) of Ontarians rank parental encouragement and involvements as the most important factor. Teacher motivation and skills (28%) comes in second spot, followed by the overall school environment (12%), class size (7%), and homework assignments (1%).

Half (52%) of Ontarians agree with the view that "if parents could freely choose the school for their children, all schools would improve." Further, on the issue of choice in schools, eight in ten (84%) Ontarians agree that "parents should have the right to choose a school for their child that best reflects their personal values and beliefs", while three-quarters (76%) believe

that “parents’ satisfaction with education would increase if they were able to freely choose the school that their child attends.”

So what do parents expect of their children’s schools? When asked how important a number of outcomes are to them, the top ranked outcome is “an education that builds the self-confidence of students to work to his/her potential” (46%), followed by “an education that provides students with a general, well rounded education which prepares them to participate and contribute to society” (36%). Seventeen percent of Ontarians expect “an education the prepares students for the job market. When the first and second rankings are combined the an education that builds self-confidence at the top (77%; most important 46% + second most important 31%) and an education that prepares students to participate and contribute to society (76%; most important 36% + second most important 40%) are in a virtual tie, followed by preparation for the job market (46%; most important 17% + second most important 28%).

But how are Ontario schools doing in providing these outcomes? Asked to rate schools for each of these outcomes using a 1 to 10 scale, with 1 meaning not at all well and 10 meaning excellent, it appears that schools are rated highest (mean score 6.2 out of 10) on providing an education that prepares students to participate and contribute to society. On providing an education that builds the self-confidence of each student, Ontarians on average give schools a score of 5.8 out of 10. And while, preparing students for the job market is not viewed as the most important outcome of education, Ontarians give schools a 5.7 out of 10 on this factor.

Personal interaction between parent and teacher appears to be the most effective of various ways to provide parents with information on how their child is doing in school. In fact, the top rated method is regular contact with the teacher (mean score 8.0 out of 10 on a 10 point scale), followed closely by formal teacher-parent interviews (mean score 7.8). Report cards (mean score 7.6), grades on all in-class tests and assignments (mean score 7.4) and homework

completion rates (mean score 7.0) trail. The least effective method tested appears to be results from standardized tests (mean score 6.5).

And finally, when told that current government funding levels for education provides approximately \$7,500 per student per year, just over half (54%) feels that this level is not enough, while four in ten (41%) hold the opposite view, that it is enough.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools between August 11th and August 17th, 2003. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 1,000 adult Ontarians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Ontario population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Ontario population according to the 2001 Census data.

Just under nine in ten (86%) Ontarians feel that parents are most important in the development in children of proper social values such as respect, tolerance, discipline and work ethic. Asked to further rank a number of other influencers, school teachers were viewed by 53% of Ontarians as the second most important, while friends and acquaintances (34%) top the list as third most important.

- Ranking as most important is as follows: Parents (86%); school teachers (6%); friends and acquaintances (4%); religious leaders (2%); community representatives (1%); celebrity role-models (1%).

- Residents of Northern Ontario (94%) are significantly more likely than those in Southwestern Ontario (85%) or the GTA (83%) to name parents as the most important factor. Those in the Greater Toronto Area significantly more likely to name friends and acquaintances (7%) or celebrity role-models (3%) as the most important factor than are those in any other part of the province.
- Middle-aged (88%) and young adult (87%) Ontarians are more likely than are older Ontarians (80%) to cite parents as the most important factor in the development of proper social values in children. Older Ontarians are significantly more likely than are young adults to feel that school teachers (10% versus 4%) or religious leaders (4% versus 0%) are the most important. Young adults (3%) are significantly more likely than their middle aged (0%) or older (0%) counterparts to feel that celebrity role-models are the most important factor in the development in children of social values such as respect, tolerance, discipline or work ethic.
- Ontarians with children 18 years of age or younger in their home (90%) are significantly more likely than those without (83%) to believe parents are the most important factor. Those without children (8%) are significantly more likely than are those with children (4%) to feel that school teachers are the most important factor.

Parents are also viewed as being an important factor in a child's educational success. In fact, half (52%) of Ontarians rank parental encouragement and involvements as the most important factor. Teacher motivation and skills (28%) comes in second spot, followed by the overall school environment (12%), class size (7%), and homework assignments (1%).

- Residents of Northern Ontario (63%) are significantly more likely to cite parental encouragement and involvement is the factor that contributes most to a child's educational success than are those in the GTA (48%) and Hamilton/Niagara (45%).

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Residents of Hamilton/Niagara (35%) and the GTA are significantly more likely than are those in Northern Ontario (18%) to feel that teacher motivation and skills is the most important factor. Meanwhile, residents of the GTA (15%) are significantly more likely than are those in the rest of Ontario (10%) to feel that the most important factor is the overall school environment.

- The effect of the overall school environment on a child's educational success is viewed as most important by a significantly larger proportion of young adult (16%) and middle-aged (12%) Ontarians than by older Ontarians (7%).
- Ontarians from middle (56%) and upper (53%) income households are significantly more likely to feel that the most important factor in a child's educational success is parental encouragement and involvement than are their lower income household (43%) counterparts.
- University graduates (64%) are significantly more likely than are those with a post-secondary education/some university (46%) or with a high school diploma or less education (44%) to feel that parental encouragement and involvement is the most important factor in a child's educational success. Middle-age (34%) Ontarians are significantly more likely than are university graduates (22%) to say that teacher motivation and skills is the most important factor. Young adults are significantly more likely than are university graduates to feel that the overall school environment (14% versus 8%) or class size (10% versus 5%) is the most important factor.
- While men and women are equally as likely to feel that parental encouragement and involvement (men 51%, women 52%) and teacher motivation/skills (men 26%, women 29%) as the factor that contributes most to a child's educational success, when it comes to

overall school environment, men (14%) are significantly more likely than women (9%) to feel this contributes the most to a child's educational success.

Half (52% - 23% strongly) of Ontarians agree with the view that "if parents could freely choose the school for their children, all schools would improve." In total 47% disagree with this position.

- Residents in Hamilton/Niagara (60%) and Eastern Ontario (60%) are more likely than are the residents of the Southwest (49%) or the GTA (47%) to agree with this position.
- This view is also more likely to be held by those from lower income households (63%) than by those in middle (52%) or upper (49%) income households.
- Ontarians with a high school or less education (58%) are statistically more likely than are university graduates (47%) to agree with this position.

Further, on the issue of choice in schools, eight in ten (84% - 53% strongly) Ontarians agree "parents should have the right to choose a school for their child that best reflects their personal values and beliefs." Sixteen percent of Ontarians disagree with this position.

- Residents of Eastern Ontario (90%) are significantly more likely than are residents of Hamilton/Niagara (80%) or the GTA (80%) to agree with this position.
- Young adult (89%) and middle aged (85%) Ontarians are significantly more likely to agree with this position than are older (75%) Ontarians.
- This position is also more likely to be held by Ontarians with a high school or less education (88%) than by those with a university degree (80%).
- Women (87%) are significantly more likely than are men (80%) to agree with this view.

- Ontarians with children 18 or younger (88%) are more likely than are residents without children 18 or younger (81%) to agree with this viewpoint.

Three-quarters (76% - 41% strongly) agree that “parents’ satisfaction with education would increase if they were able to freely choose the school that their child attends.” In comparison, one in four (23%) disagree with this view.

- Resident of Eastern Ontario (84%) are significantly more likely than are those in the Southwest (74%), Hamilton/Niagara (72%) and the GTA (72%) to agree with this position.
- Ontarians in the lowest household income bracket (83%) are significantly more likely than are those in the highest household income bracket (74%) to hold this position.
- Parents with children, 18 years of age or younger in the household (80%) are more likely than those without children in the household (73%) to agree with this position.

So what do parents expect of their children’s schools? When asked how important a number of outcomes are to them, the top ranked outcome tested is “an education that builds the self-confidence of students to work to his/her potential” (46%), followed by “an education that provides students with a general, well rounded education which prepares them to participate and contribute to society” (36%). Seventeen percent of Ontarians expect “an education the prepares students for the job market. When the first and second rankings are combined the an education that builds self-confidence (77%; most important 46% + second most important 31%) and an education that prepares students to participate and contribute to society (76%; most important 36% + second most important 40%) are in a virtual tie, followed by preparation for the job market (46%; most important 17% + second most important 28%).

- Building self-confidence and working towards students full potential as the most important outcome of education is more likely to be chosen by women (50%) than men (42%). Men (37%) and women (35%) are equally likely to select a well rounded education that prepares students to participate and contribute to society as the most important. As for preparing students for the job market, men (20%) are significantly more likely than are women (14%) to feel that this is the most important outcome of an education.
- University graduates (42%) are significantly more likely than are those with a post-secondary education/some university (32%) to feel that a well rounded education that prepares students to participate and contribute to society is the most important outcome. Meanwhile, Ontarians with a high school or less education (21%) and those with a post-secondary education/some university (20%) are significantly more likely than their university graduate (11%) counterparts to feel that job preparation is the most important outcome of an education. All three groups are statistically as likely to choose building self-confidence of students as the most important outcome (university graduates 47%; post-secondary/some university 48%; high school or less 44%).

But how are Ontario schools doing in providing these outcomes? Asked to rate schools for each of these outcomes using a 1 to 10 scale, with 1 meaning not at all well and 10 meaning excellent, it appears that schools are rated highest (mean score 6.2 out of 10) on providing an education that prepares students to participate and contribute to society. On providing an education that builds the self-confidence of each student, Ontarians on average give schools a score of 5.8 out of 10. And while, preparing students for the job market is not viewed as the most important outcome of education, Ontarians give schools a 5.7 out of 10 on this factor.

- Regionally, the average rating of residents of Northern Ontario (average score 6.6) and the Southwest (average score 6.4) are significantly higher than the score from GTA residents

(average score 6.1) regarding how well the schools are providing an education which prepares students to participate and contribute to society. The only other significant difference regionally is regarding how well schools are at providing an education that builds the self-confidence of each student to work to his/her potential. In this area, residents of Northern Ontario are more likely to rate schools higher (average score of 6.2) than are residents of the GTA (average score 5.8).

- The job schools are doing in preparing students to participate and contribute to society is on average rated higher by young adults (6.4) than by middle aged (6.0) Ontarians. The average score of older (6.1) Ontarians is significantly higher regarding the job that schools are doing in providing an education that builds the self-confidence of students to work to his/her potential than is the average score of their middle aged (5.7) or young adult (5.8) counterparts. Meanwhile, young adults (5.9) are significantly more likely than are their middle aged (5.6) or older (5.5) counterparts to rate schools better at providing an education that prepares each student for the job market.
- Ontarians from middle income households are more likely than those in upper income households to rate the schools higher on providing a well-rounded education which prepares students to participate and contribute to society (middle 6.4; upper 6.1) and in providing an education that prepares each student for the job market (middle 5.9; upper 5.6).

Personal interaction between parent and teacher appears to be the most effective of various ways to provide parents with information on how their child is doing in school. In fact, the top rated method is regular contact with the teacher (mean score 8.0 out of 10 on a 10 point scale), followed closely by formal teacher-parent interviews (mean score 7.8). Report cards (mean score 7.6), grades on all in-class tests and assignments (mean score 7.4) and homework

completion rates (mean score 7.0) trail. The least effective method tested appears to be results from standardized tests (mean score 6.5).

- Regular contact is rated higher by university graduates (8.3 versus 8.0 for those with a post-secondary education/some university and 7.8 for those with a high school or less education). Women (8.2) on average rate regular contact as the most effective method than men (7.8).
- Formal parent teacher interviews is rated, on average, higher by women (7.9) than by men (7.6).
- Report cards are on average rated higher by those without a university degree (7.8) than by those with a university degree (7.3).
- The average ratings on the effectiveness of knowing the grades on all in-house class tests and assignments are statistically consistent across all regions and socio-economic groups.
- Knowing the homework completion rate is rated higher, on average, by older (7.4 versus 6.9 for young adults and 6.8 for middle aged) Ontarians, by those in middle income households (7.2 versus 6.7 for those in upper income household) and by women (7.1 versus 6.8 for men).
- Older (7.1) Ontarians are more likely to rate standardized test results higher in effectiveness on average than do young adult (6.3) or middle aged (6.2) Ontarians. Higher average ratings on the effectiveness of this measure are recorded by those with a high school or less education (6.8 versus 6.2 for university graduates) and by those in the lowest income households (6.8 versus 6.4 from those in upper income households).

- In general, Ontarians who have children, but that are not yet in school, and in those with children in primary school are more likely to rate each measure higher than are those with children in high school.

And finally, when told that current government funding levels for education provides approximately \$7,500 per student per year, just over half (54%) feels that this level is not enough, while four in ten (41%) hold the opposite view, that it is enough.

- Regionally, residents of Northern Ontario (64%) are significantly more likely than those in Eastern Ontario (48%) to feel that \$7,500 per student per year is not enough for public education. In comparison, 54% of those in the Southwest and in the GTA hold this position, while, 52% in Hamilton/Niagara agree with this position. Residents of Eastern Ontario (45%) and the GTA (42%) are significantly more likely than those in Northern Ontario (30%) to say that \$7,500 is enough money.
- Young adult (62%) and middle aged (56%) Ontarians are significantly more likely than are their older (41%) counterparts to feel that \$7,500 per year per student is not enough. Older (49%) Ontarians are significantly more likely to say that \$7,500 per student per year is enough than are middle aged (40%) or young adult (36%) Ontarians.
- There are not statistical difference on this question between gender, education or household income groups.



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