



Parents for  
*Choice* in Education

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **56% of Utahns Support School Choice According to New Survey**

Over 50% Believe State Spending Less on Education Than Figures Actually Show

**SALT LAKE CITY, UT — January 30, 2007** — A new survey commissioned by Parents for Choice in Education (PCE) and conducted by Western Wats shows strong support for school choice. When asked “Do you favor or oppose allowing students and parents to choose a school, public or private, to attend using public funds?” over 56% were in favor. This data underscores a recent Dan Jones/Deseret News poll showing increased numbers in favor of school choice.

Most significantly support for choice jumped to 67% for those with children in school; those who are consuming the service are the most interested in having more options. The survey also found that nearly 18% of households include individuals who are employed in the public education system. When their responses are removed, support for choice is 60%.

“It’s obvious—parents want options,” said Elisa Peterson, PCE Executive Director. “Public education, despite offering their definition of “choice” within the system, can’t meet the full spectrum of needs that Utah children have. It’s only fair that we let parents choose the best education for their kids.”

The survey also revealed a surprising level of ignorance regarding in-state K-12 education spending. Over 50%, or 207 of 409 respondents believe that Utah is spending less than half of what is actually being spent per student per year (approximately \$6,309\*). When asked, less than 3% of those surveyed identified the correct amount (between \$6,000-\$7,000 ) highlighting that Utahns may know the price of groceries and gas but through no fault of their own, are solidly in the dark on education.

“Our education funding system is overly complex and driven by arcane formulas covering multiple sources few understand,” said, Doug Holmes, Chairman of PCE. “The result? Special interest groups can manipulate funding data to drive their own agendas. This lack of system transparency not only provides little tax payer understanding but creates a system extremely vulnerable to fraud and manipulation.”

#### **Results**

The survey utilized a random sample of voters in Weber, Davis, Salt Lake, Utah and Washington counties and posed the following questions:

—more—

“Do you favor or oppose allowing students and parents to choose a school, public or private, to attend using public funds?”

|                          |         |
|--------------------------|---------|
| 1 - Strongly favor       | 31.05 % |
| 2 - Somewhat favor       | 25.18 % |
| 3 - Neither favor nor op | 3.67 %  |
| 4 - Somewhat oppose      | 15.16 % |
| 5 - Strongly oppose      | 19.80 % |
| 6 - Don't know           | 5.13 %  |

Another survey question revealed these startling results when interviewees were asked the following:

“How much would you estimate that Utah spends per student per year?”  
(Interviewees were asked to stop the interviewer at the amount of their choosing)

|                              |         |
|------------------------------|---------|
| 1 - \$1,000-\$2,000 per year | 20.05 % |
| 2 - \$2,000-\$3,000          | 30.56 % |
| 3 - \$3,000-\$4,000          | 14.91 % |
| 4 - \$4,000-\$5,000          | 11.74 % |
| 5 - \$5,000-\$6,000          | 5.62 %  |
| 6 - \$6,000-\$7,000          | 2.93 %  |
| 7 - \$7,000-\$8,000          | .49 %   |
| 8 - \$8,000-\$9,000          | .98 %   |
| 9 - \$9,000-\$10,000         | 1.22 %  |
| 10 - Over \$10,000           | 2.20 %  |
| 11 - Don't know              | 9.29 %  |

“I was stunned,” said Lauri Lund, mother of three children currently attending public schools. “I’ve always heard that we weren’t spending enough on public education. We’re certainly spending a lot more than I thought we were—where’d it all go?”

\*Calculations compiled by Utah Taxpayers Association based on USOE data

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