



Parents for
Choice in Education

School Vouchers

Uncovering the truth about Utahns' understanding
and opinions

Date: January 29, 2007



Overview

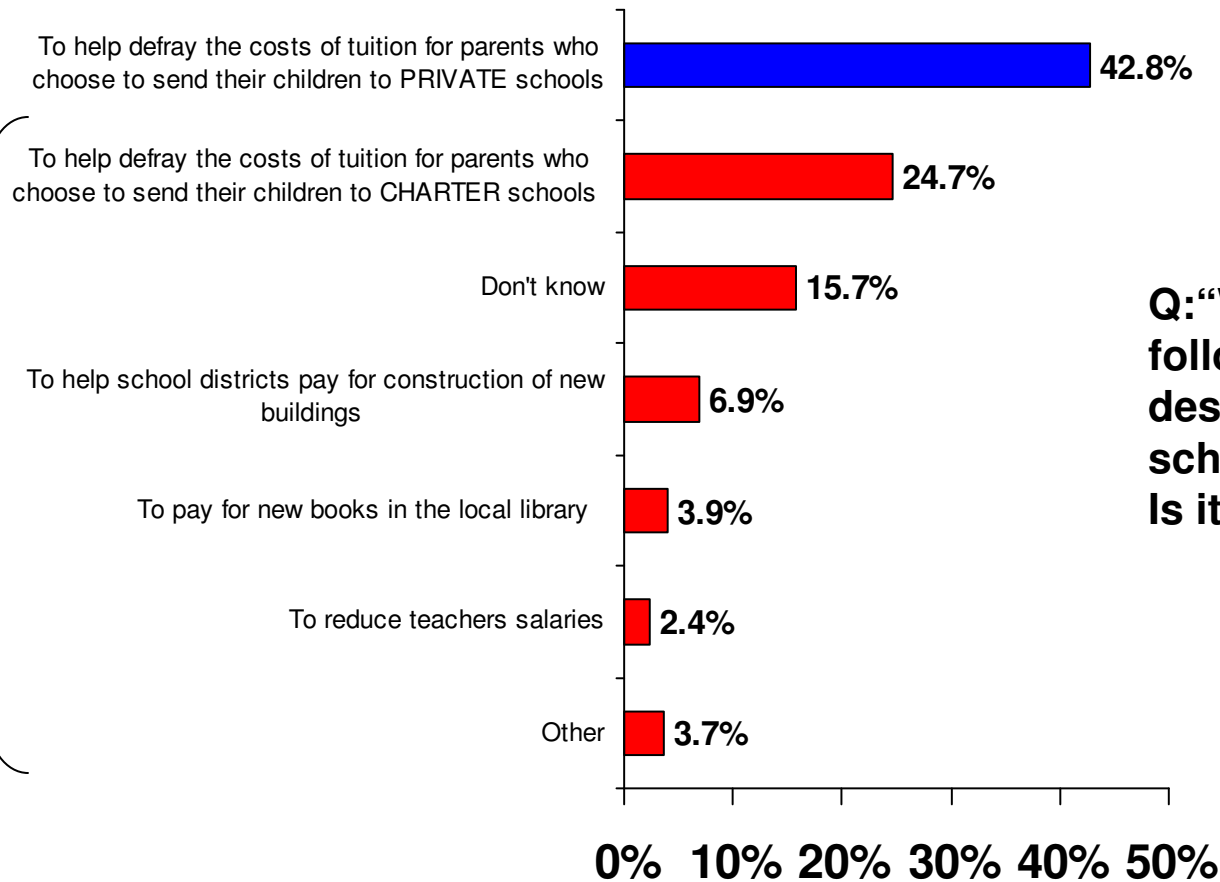
- ▶ Significant controversy has surrounded the issue of school vouchers in Utah
 - Many people – parents, politicians and educators - are talking about this proposal
 - Various interest groups have communicated their opinions; some based on fact, some on fiction, but all of these opinions color the public debate

- ▶ As a result, we reached out to Utahns to find the answers to two questions:
 - 1 What do Utahns **really understand** about vouchers and our state's education system?

 - 2 How do Utahns **really feel** about school vouchers?

A significant portion of Utahns are confused about what school vouchers actually do...

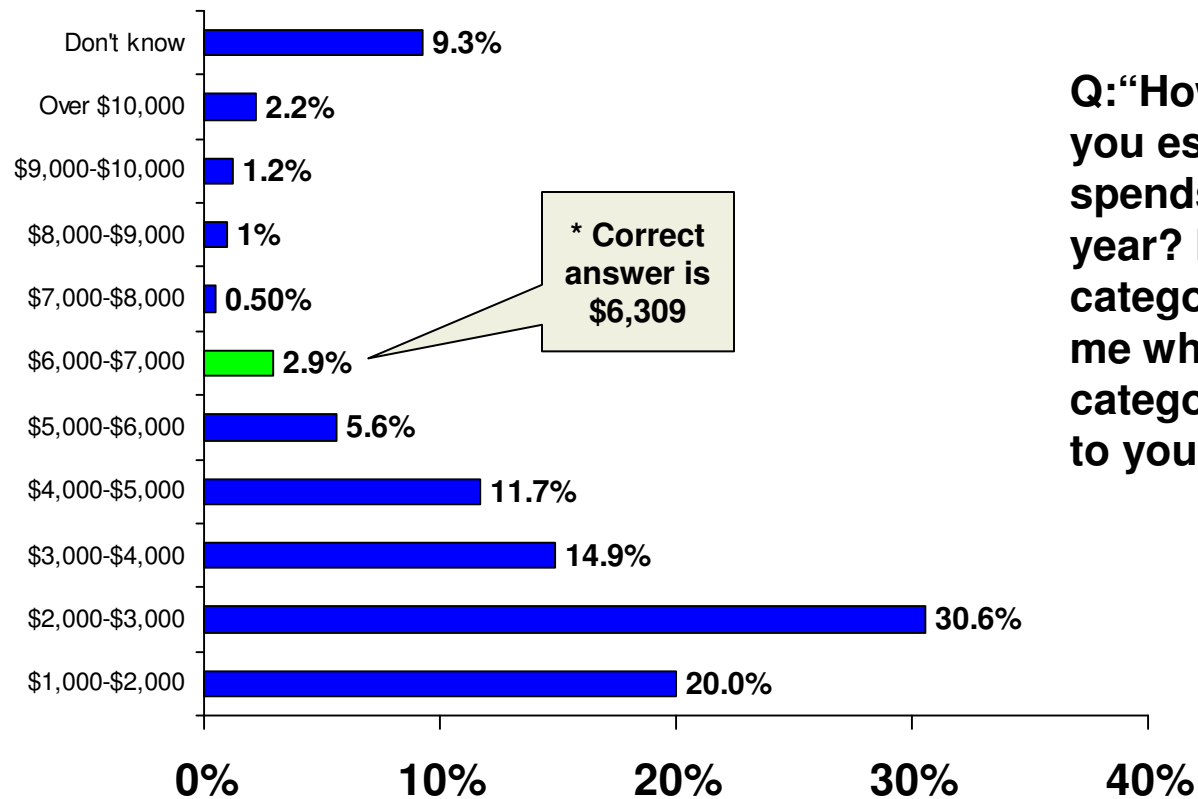
Over 57.3% of Utahns have no concept of what school vouchers actually do



Q: "Which of the following best describes a school voucher? Is it a tool..."

Source: Western Wats, Survey of 409 registered voters, January 15-17, 2007 Margin of error +/- 5%

... and the vast majority of Utahns either underestimate or do not know how much Utah spends on education



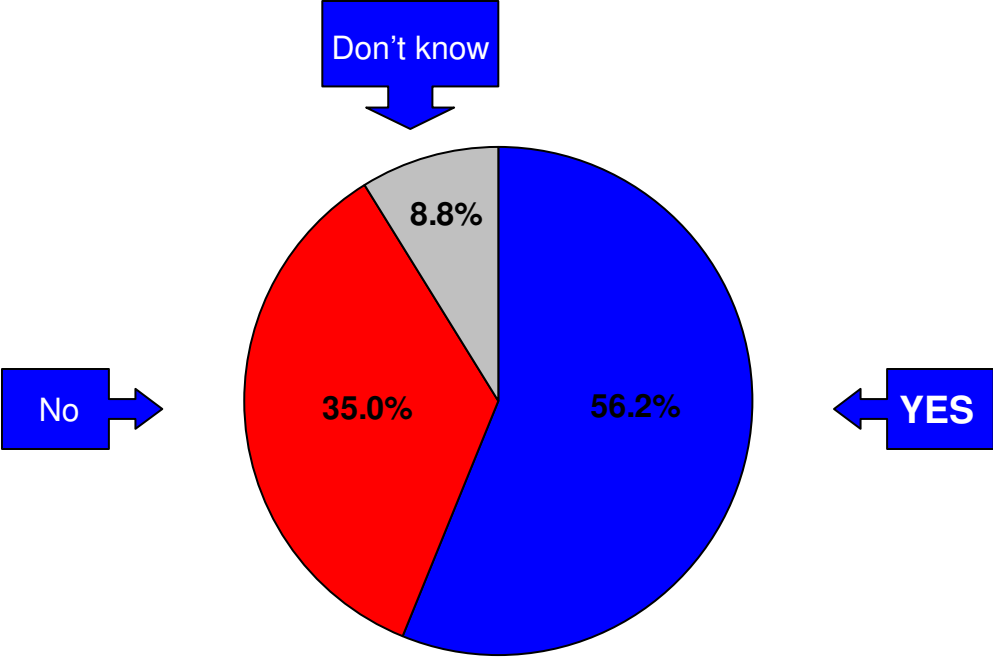
Q: "How much would you estimate that Utah spends per student per year? I'll read you some categories; please stop me when I read the category that is closest to your estimate."

Source: Western Wats, Survey of 409 registered voters, January 15-17, 2007 Margin of error +/- 5%

* Source: Utah Taxpayers Association (this figure includes capital, debt service, and food service, excludes non K-12 programs)

But when it comes to their opinion, the majority of Utah voters favor school choice...

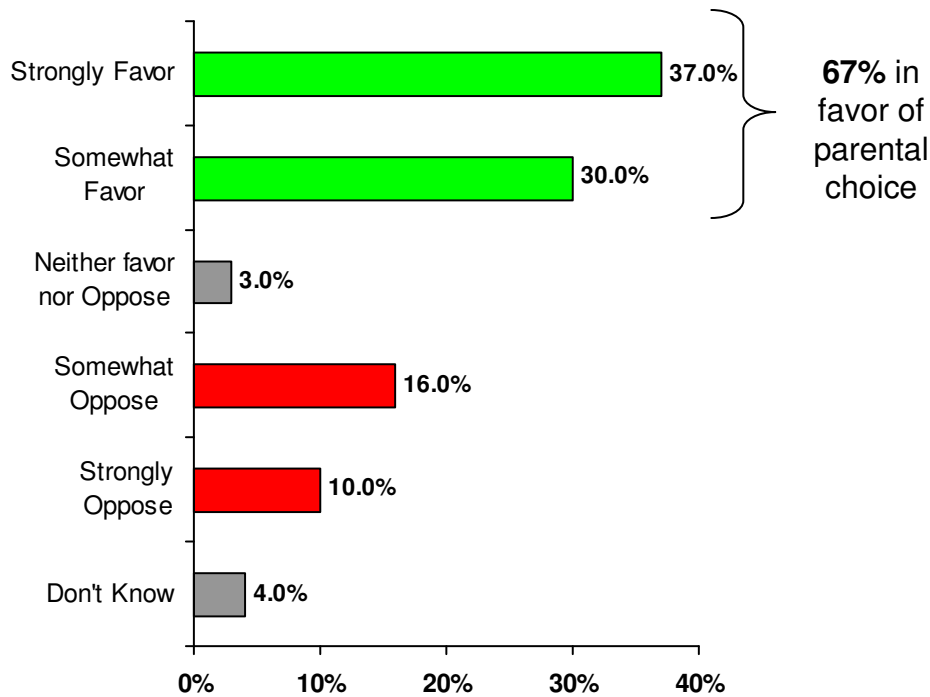
Q: “Do you favor or oppose allowing students and parents to choose a school, public or private, to attend using public funds?”



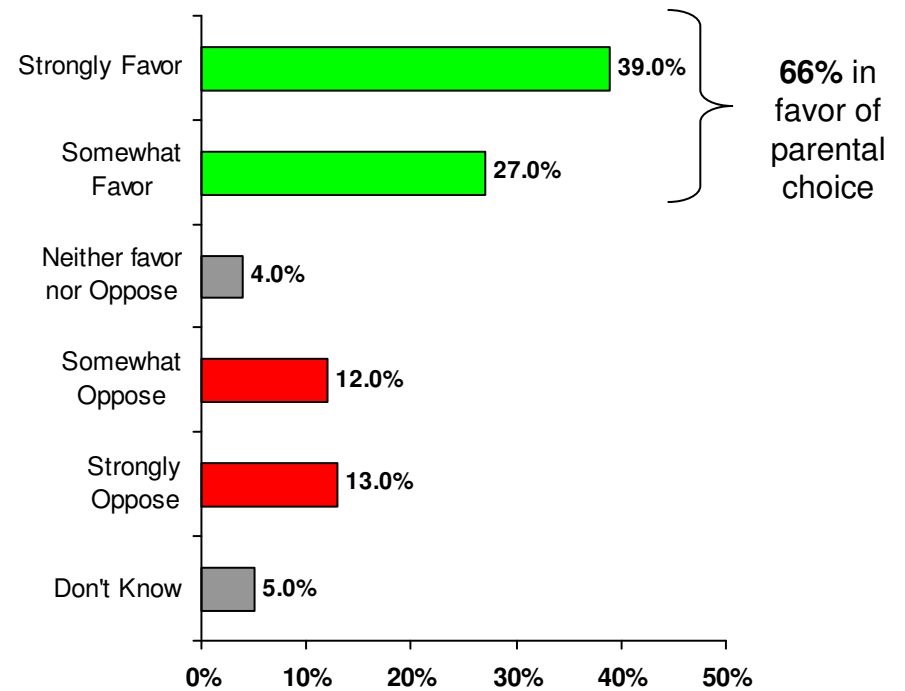
Source: Western Wats, Survey of 409 registered voters, January 15-17, 2007 Margin of error +/- 5%

...and among respondents with children in school (K-12), the response is even more overwhelming

Parents of Elementary School children



Parents of Middle and High School children



Source: Western Wats, Survey of 409 registered voters, January 15-17, 2007 Margin of error +/- 5%

.... and nearly every voter agrees that parents should be able to choose the educational situation that is best for their children

- ▶ 78.7% - **Agree** that children who **struggle** academically should not be required to attend their assigned public school if their educational needs can be better met in another school.
- ▶ 77.4% - **Agree** that academically **gifted** children should NOT be required to attend their assigned public school if their educational needs can be better met in another school.
- ▶ 86.2% - **Agree** that that every parent **deserves** the chance to choose between public or private school, whichever works best for their child.
- ▶ 81.3% - **Agree** that parents are **best-suited** to make decisions about their children's education and they should be free to do so.

Source: Poll of 600 registered voters conducted November 2006 by NSON margin of error +/- 4%



Moreover, voters have expressed support for taxpayer funding of a school voucher program...

- ▶ 49.4% - **Favor** a proposal that would allow parents to send their children to private schools using a **taxpayer-funded voucher** worth a maximum of 65% of the allotted education funding for that student, with the remaining 35% staying within the local school district. (44% oppose; 6.6% Don't know/undecided)
- ▶ 47.7% - **Agree** that education funding should be **attached to the student** and should follow the child to whatever school- public or private – that best meets his/her needs. (46.5% disagree; 5.8% Don't know)

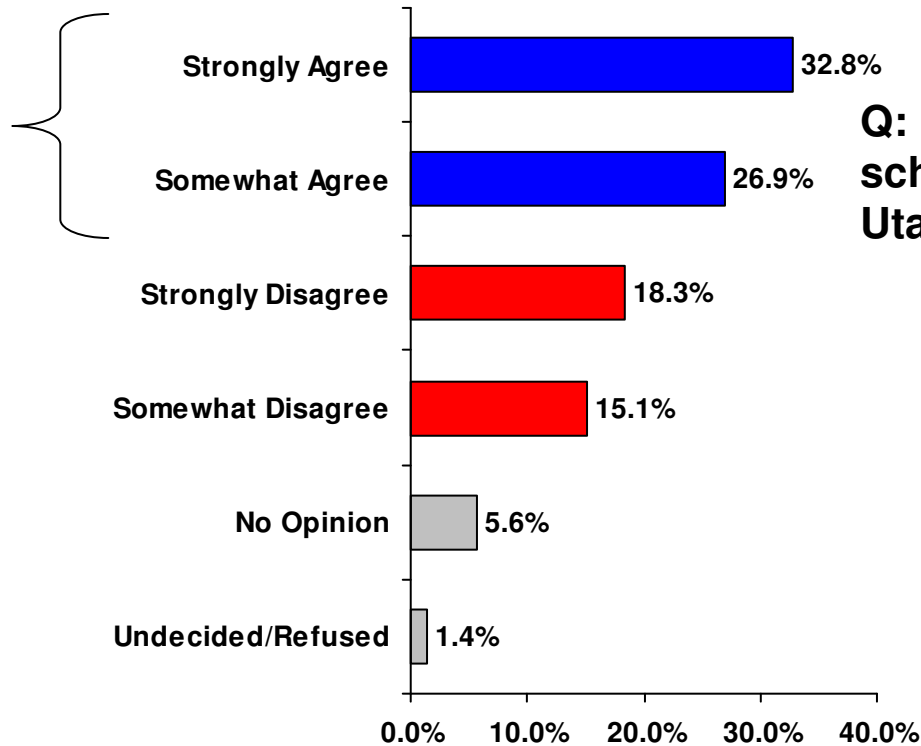
Source: Western Wats, Survey of 409 registered voters, January 15-17, 2007 Margin of error +/- 5%

- ▶ 47.8% - **Support means-tested vouchers**, which would allow low-income families to use a portion of public education funds to send their child to a school of their choice. (41.5% oppose; 10.7% Undecided/refused)
- ▶ 49.6% - **Agree** that if a child goes to a private school a portion of the **tax money** that would have been used in the public school should be able to be used by the family to offset the cost of tuition at a private school. (46.1% disagree; 4.3% Undecided/refused)

Source: Poll of 600 registered voters conducted November 2006 by NSON margin of error +/- 4%

...and feel that a voucher program will serve to improve Utah's *public* school system

59.7% support school choice



Q: "Do you agree that school choice will improve Utah's public schools?"

Source: Poll of 600 registered voters as conducted November 16-21 2006 by NSON. Margin of error +/- 4%

A recent Deseret Morning News poll shows broad support today for vouchers and tax credits

Q: “Do you support or oppose a government voucher or tax credit to use for private school tuition?”

48% Support

46% Oppose

DESERET MORNING NEWS/KSL-TV
POLL

Do you support or oppose a government voucher or tax credit to use for private school tuition?

STRONGLY SUPPORT	24%
SOMEWHAT SUPPORT	24%
SOMEWHAT OPPOSE	14%
STRONGLY OPPOSE	32%
DON'T KNOW	5%

A poll of 400 Utah residents was conducted Jan 2-4, 2007, by Dan Jones & Associates. It has a margin of error of +/-5.0 percent.

©2007 Deseret Morning News / KSL-TV

Source: Deseret Morning News, January 2007 Poll: Dan Jones & Associates of 400 registered voters conducted January 2-4, 2007 Margin of error +/- 5%



That's a 12% increase in support for vouchers and tuition tax credits from previous Dan Jones & Associates surveys

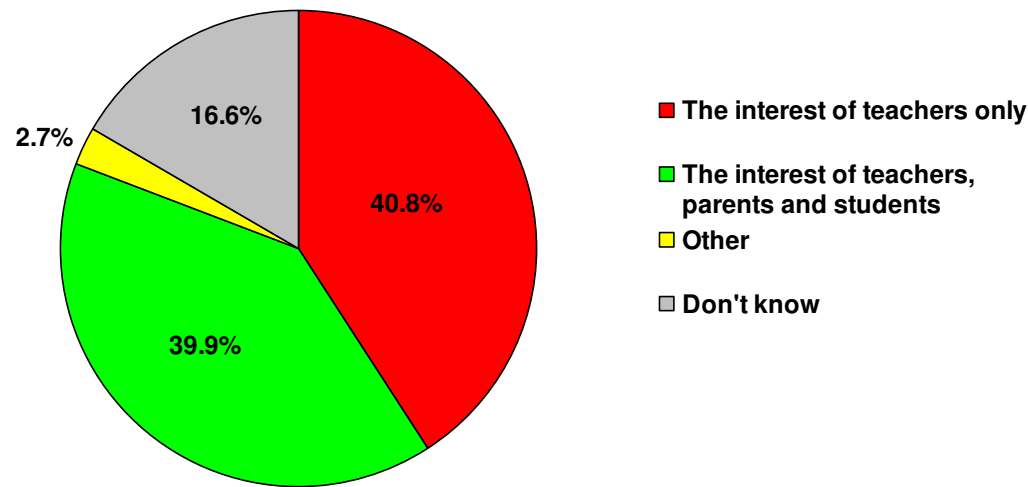
“In December 2005, 40 percent of Utahns polled said they would definitely or probably favor the concept [school vouchers], 54 percent said they would probably or definitely oppose it, and 7 percent didn't know. Past years put support between 36 to 44 percent of those surveyed.”

Deseret Morning News (January 11, 2007)

Source: A poll of 400 Utah residents was conducted January 2-4 2007 by Dan Jones and Associates. Margin of error +/- 5%

The public is split on whether teacher's unions represents the interests of teachers only, or also parents and students

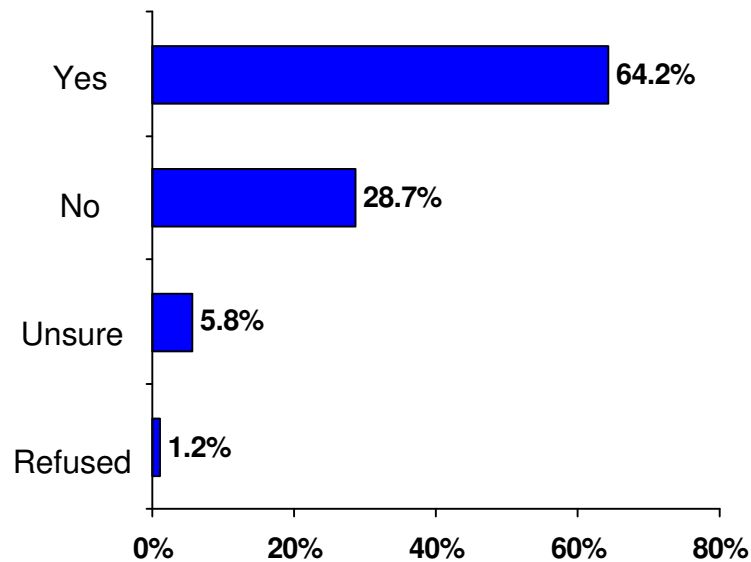
Q: "In your opinion, do teachers' unions primarily represent and support the interests of teachers exclusively, or do they represent the interests of a combination of teachers, parents, and students?"



Source: Western Wats, Survey of 409 registered voters, January 15-17, 2007 Margin of error +/- 5%

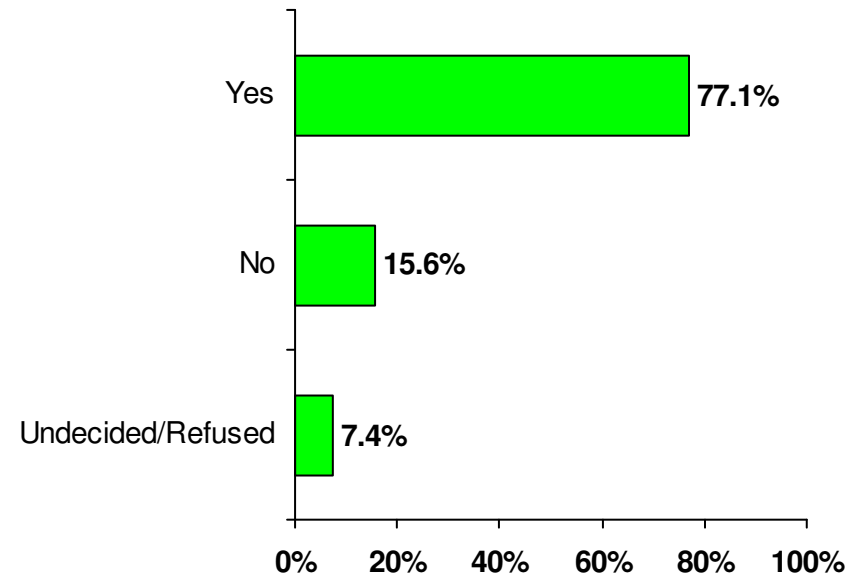
And Utahns agree teachers should be rewarded based on performance

Q: “Merit pay is a bonus awarded to a teacher, if his/her class and students reach certain academic achievements during a school year. Do you support merit pay for teachers?”



Source: A poll of 411 registered voters on January 2007 by NSON. Margin of error +/- 5%

Q: “Do you support paying teachers based on performance?”



Source: Poll of 600 registered voters as conducted November 16-21 2006 by NSON. Margin of error +/- 4%