

Learning to Write, Writing to Learn: Americans' Views of Writing in Our Schools

A Report of a National Public Opinion Survey

**Conducted for
The National Writing Project**

April 2005

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Appendix A: Questionnaire with response totals

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I. Introduction and Executive Summary

A. Introduction

The National Writing Project commissioned Belden Russonello & Stewart (BRS) to conduct public opinion research to learn how Americans view writing and the teaching of writing in public schools. BRS developed a research plan that included two phases. First, BRS conducted four focus groups – two each among parents and teachers. The focus group discussions were followed by a national survey among 1,000 adults across the country, conducted by telephone. Interviewing occurred from February 10 to 27, 2005. This report discusses the results of the national survey; a summary of the focus group sessions has been reported separately.

B. Executive Summary

If writing in schools is the “neglected R” in the old expression, “reading, writing, and arithmetic,” it is not because the American public thinks it should be a low priority. A new survey for the National Writing Project reports that the public wants writing to be taught early and often in schools.

Americans want writing to be taught at young ages and throughout many disciplines because a person needs to know how to write well, no matter what type of career an individual has after high school or college. They recognize that teachers may need more training to improve how well students learn to write, but they think it is a worthy investment.

In the focus groups, Americans expressed the value they placed on writing as the belief that the act of writing – putting thoughts on paper or on a computer screen – helps a person to think more deeply about a topic and learn in a more meaningful way. This reverberates in the survey responses, as the top benefits of learning to write include learning to communicate, read and analyze.

The survey identifies over six in ten Americans who believe writing should be taught across all subjects and grade levels and it should happen immediately. These Writing Enthusiasts represent Americans from every income and education level, every political and ideological persuasion, and across every region of the country. They tend to represent a slightly higher proportion of African-Americans than the nation as a whole.

What sets them apart from others is their stronger support for proposals to help teachers and students improve writing in schools, their acknowledgement of the links between writing and critical thinking and their view that writing as an essential ingredient to advancement in “almost any career or job.”

Another key predictor of a Writing Enthusiast is the belief that it is realistic to expect teachers of all different subject areas to have the ability to teach writing. This means that if a person thinks writing instruction is not a realistic goal for all teachers, this can be a serious barrier to support for writing programs in schools.

Therefore, the message challenge for the National Writing Project is two-fold. First remind Americans what many of them already believe – that writing well is part of thinking, learning, communicating, and succeeding in life. Second, include a practical message that articulates the idea that enhanced writing instruction in schools is doable.

Other highlights of the survey include:

- For the American public, reading, math and writing top the list of skills and subjects students should be required to master before high school graduation.
- Learning to write well is valued not simply for its own sake. Americans believe learning to write well enhances other skills, most notably reading, communication, grammar, vocabulary, critical thinking and analytical skills.
- With the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act and increased testing in public schools, the need to promote student achievement and performance in the classroom and on standardized tests has taken a major role in education policy. Most Americans believe learning to write well will help students' performance in all subject areas, performance on standardized tests, and ultimately improve career advancement.
- While most say an appropriate emphasis is already placed on writing in their community schools, the public wants writing instruction to begin earlier. Only a slight majority feels schools do a good job teaching writing.
- The public also believes writing should be taught more holistically. Besides wanting writing instruction in all subjects and at all grade levels, the public believes writing assignments should be given to all students in high school, regardless of their college aspirations. Also, the public says students in their first year of college should be required to take a writing class, thus extending the teaching of these skills past grades K-12 and into the college experience.
- Helping teachers teach writing is a priority for most Americans. The public advocates providing additional resources for teachers and offering workshops and additional training for current and future teachers to help them teach writing.

II. Methods

The public opinion research was conducted in two phases: first, BRS conducted four focus groups – two each among parents and teachers – to inform the national survey. A summary of the focus group sessions has been reported separately.

The focus group discussions were followed by a national survey, conducted by telephone. Interviewing occurred from February 10 to 27, 2005. This report provides analysis of the survey findings.

The questionnaire for the survey was written by BRS and approved by the National Writing Project. The national survey was carried out among a representative probability sample of 1,000 adults in the U.S.

Professional fully-trained and supervised telephone interviewers, using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing system, conducted the fieldwork. A briefing session was conducted to familiarize the interviewers with the sample specifications and the instrument for this study. The sampling frame was a list of randomly created telephone numbers (a technique known as random digit dial or RDD) for telephone exchanges across the U.S. Survey Sampling, Inc. provided the sampling frame. Interviewers randomly selected respondents by requesting to speak with the adult 18 or older in the household who had the most recent birthday.

The demographic characteristics of the sample were matched to the most recent Census estimates. The data have been weighted statistically in order to bring race and age into their proper proportions. The margin of sampling error (or sampling tolerance) for the national survey is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points at the .95 confidence level. Tables in the report use many cross tabulations, based on smaller subgroups and the margin of error for these is higher.

Reading this report: Tables and graphs included in the text of this report highlight selected relevant survey findings and are expressed in percentages. The base for each table is all respondents (n = 1,000) unless otherwise noted. In reading these data, when the percent sign (%) appears at the top of a column, the numbers add vertically; when % appears at the left of a row, the numbers add horizontally. An asterisk (*) indicates less than 1%; a double hyphen (-) indicates zero.

Due to weighting, rounding, omission of “don’t know,” “refused,” and other responses, or, in the case of multiple response questions, percentages may add to more than or less than 100%.

Description of Banner Points: Most of the banner points in the tables are self-evident; however, a few points should be noted.

Age: In order to take a closer look at the youngest adults in America – those ages 18-24 – they received their own banner category; they are also included in the larger banner point “18-29.”

Region: The banner points are as follows:

Northeast (18%)	Midwest (23%)	South (19%)	South Atlantic (18%)	West (22%)
Connecticut	Illinois	Alabama	Delaware	Alaska
Maine	Indiana	Arkansas	District of Columbia	Arizona
Massachusetts	Iowa	Kentucky	Florida	California
New Hampshire	Kansas	Louisiana	Georgia	Colorado
New Jersey	Michigan	Mississippi	Maryland	Hawaii
New York	Minnesota	Oklahoma	Virginia	Idaho
Pennsylvania	Missouri	Tennessee	North Carolina	Montana
Rhode Island	Nebraska	Texas	South Carolina	Nevada
Vermont	North Dakota		West Virginia	New Mexico
	Ohio			Oregon
	South Dakota			Utah
	Wisconsin			Washington
				Wyoming

Writers: The survey asked Americans: “In your paid job or as a volunteer, do you sometimes have to write reports, correspondence, email or other text?” We divided the responses into three categories:

- Does not write – Those who say they do not write at work or as a volunteer.
- Write < 5 pages – Those who between one and five pages at work.
- Write 5+ pages at work – Those who write more than five pages at work.

III. Detailed Findings

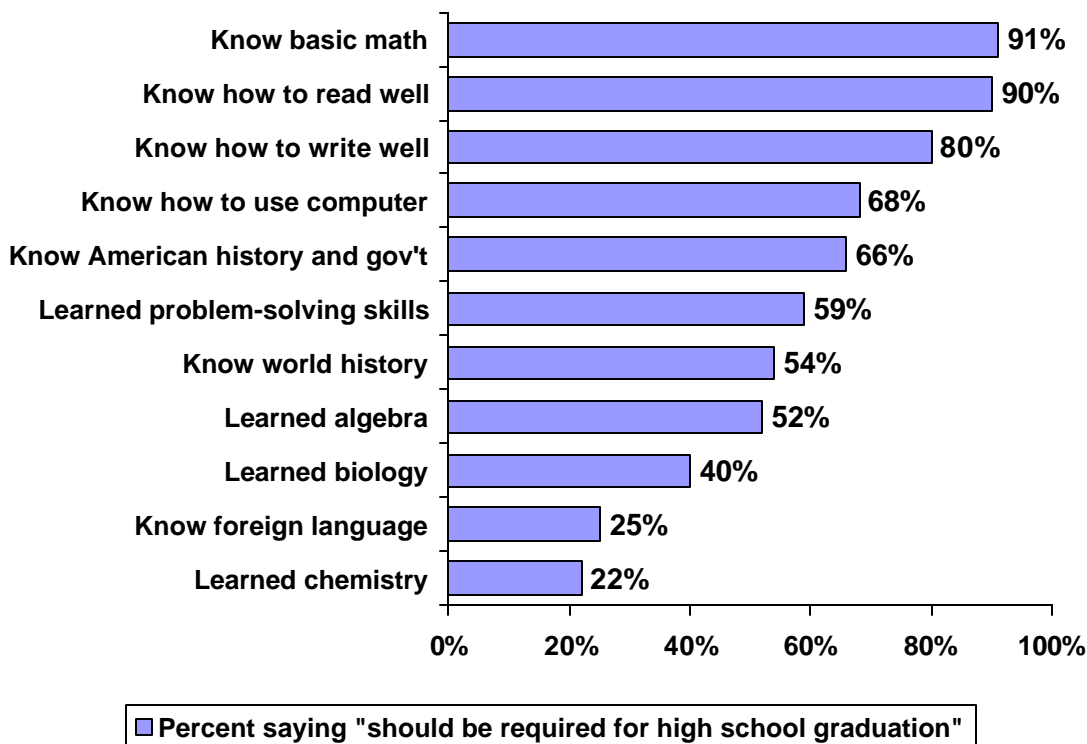
A. The value of learning to write

1. Reading, writing and arithmetic

Learning to write well is a skill the American public believes is essential and wants schools to teach students. Eighty percent of the public says knowing how to write well is a skill that should be required for graduation from high school. Only basic math skills (91%) and knowing how to read well (90%) are identified more often than writing as skills the public believes should be necessary for high school graduation.

Possible graduation requirements that receive less – but still a majority – of support from the public include knowing how to use a computer (68%); having knowledge of American history and government (66%); possessing problem-solving skills (59%); knowing world history (54%); and having learned algebra (52%).

Requirements for High School Graduation



Q4-14. Thinking about what students learn in high school, please tell me if you think each of the following skills should be: required for high school graduation, is very important but should not be a graduation requirement, is only somewhat important, or is not very important. Let's start with...the student should:

Closer examination of the public's view of writing as a graduation requirement reveals that those who are most supportive of this proposal include:

- Americans who have completed at least some graduate work (90%) and college graduates (87%); and
- Americans who write between one and five pages per day at work or as a volunteer (84%).

Writing as a Graduation Requirement

Q11. Thinking about what students learn in high school, please tell me if you think each of the following skills should be: required for high school graduation, is very important but should not be a graduation requirement, is only somewhat important, or is not very important. . . the student should: Know how to write well.

	Required for Graduation	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	DK/REF
Total	80%	16	3	1	*
Male	79%	16	4	1	*
Female	81%	15	3	1	*
18-29	78%	18	4	1	--
18-24	74%	20	5	1	--
30-39	81%	14	4	1	--
40-49	81%	16	2	1	--
50-59	81%	14	4	1	--
60+	78%	16	4	1	1
< HS to HS	73%	19	6	2	--
Some college	79%	16	3	*	1
College graduate	87%	12	1	--	--
Graduate work	90%	9	--	1	--
Write 5+ pages at work	75%	22	3	--	--
Write < than 5	84%	13	2	1	--
Does not write	75%	17	6	2	1

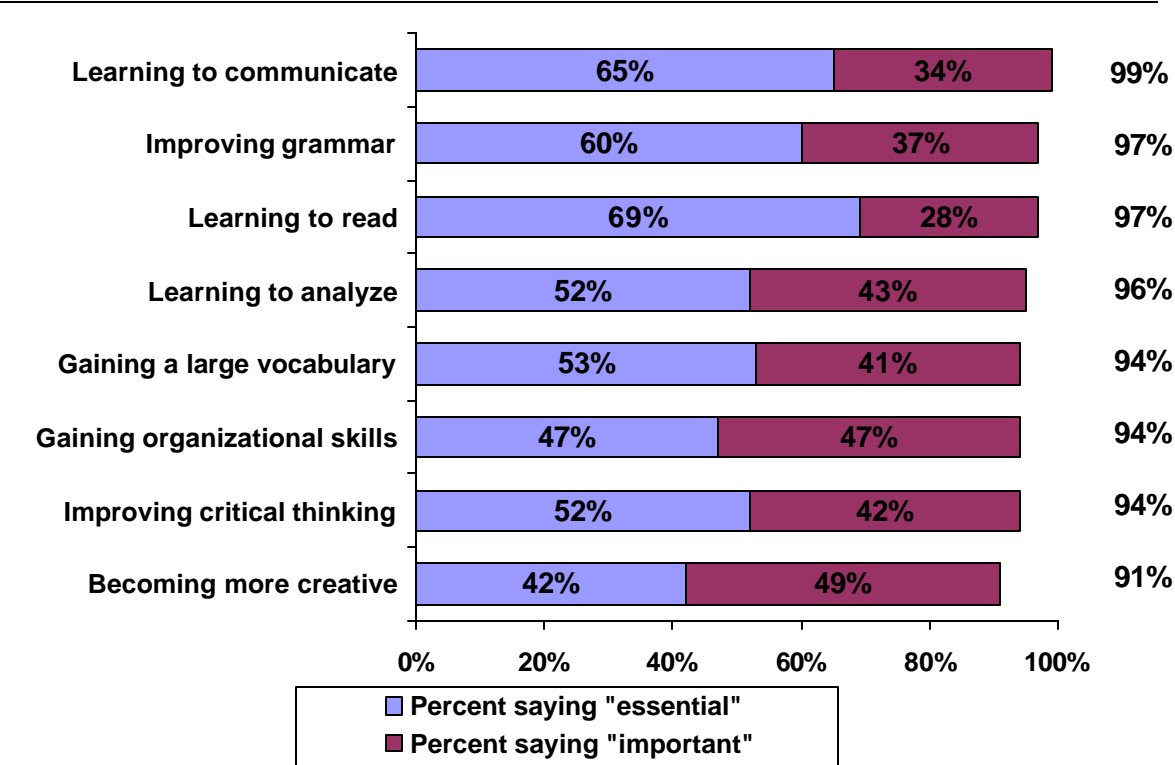
2. Impact of writing on other skills

As we heard in the focus groups, the survey demonstrates that the public views writing as a skill that enhances development of many other abilities. Over 90% of the public says learning to write well is “essential” or “important” for the eight skills we tested. In order to better understand what skills the public perceives are impacted the most by writing, we can look at the percentage of people that say writing is essential for developing each skill.

The public is most likely to believe that learning to write well is essential for developing reading (69% say “essential”) and communication skills (65%), followed by improving grammar (60%). Majorities also believe it is essential to build vocabulary (53%) as well as for more abstract development such as critical thinking (52%) and learning to analyze (52%).

Less than a majority feel learning to write well is essential to gain organizational skills (47%) or to become more creative (42%).

Writing’s Impact on Other Skills



Q23-30. Now I would like you to tell me if, in your view, learning to write well is essential, important, not very important, or not at all important for each of the following.

Skills most associated with learning to write well: As noted above, the skills that the public believes most strongly are enhanced by writing include: helping students learn to read (69% call it “essential”), learning to communicate (65%) and improving grammar (60%).

While the belief that writing influences learning to read is held by Americans across the board – regardless of demographic differences – women and higher socioeconomic segments of the population are generally more likely to believe writing impacts communication and grammar skills.

Skills Highly Associated with Learning to Write

Q28, 24, 26. Now I would like you to tell me if, in your view, learning to write well is essential, important, not very important, or not at all important for each of the following.

% saying “essential”	Learning to read	Learning to communicate	Improving grammar
Total	69%	65%	60%
Male	65%	61%	55%
Female	73%	69%	65%
18-29	70%	63%	59%
18-24	66%	54%	52%
30-39	61%	64%	60%
40-49	70%	64%	59%
50-59	72%	70%	65%
60+	74%	66%	60%
White	70%	67%	61%
African American	67%	59%	60%
Hispanic	67%	64%	58%
< HS to HS	66%	55%	49%
Some college	72%	67%	64%
College graduate	73%	74%	70%
Graduate work	66%	76%	70%
<\$25K household income	65%	55%	52%
\$25-50K	72%	67%	61%
\$50-75K	68%	68%	65%
\$75K+	71%	69%	62%
Write 5+ pages at work	69%	76%	72%
Write < 5 pages	70%	66%	63%
No writing at work	69%	59%	51%

Other skills enhanced by learning to write well: Fewer people believe writing influences other skills, such as building a large vocabulary (53% say “essential”), improving critical thinking (52%) and learning to analyze (52%). For each of these skills, only a slight majority believes writing is essential for development.

Americans with higher education levels are more likely to say each of these three skills is essential.

For instance:

- Sixty-five percent of Americans with graduate-level experience and 60% of college graduates say learning to write well is essential for improving critical thinking.
- Sixty-two percent of Americans with graduate experience and 59% with college degrees say writing well is essential for developing analytical skills.
- Sixty-two percent of college graduates and 59% of Americans with graduate-level experience say learning to write well is essential for building a large vocabulary.

Other Skills Enhanced by Learning to Write

Q29, 23, 30. Now I would like you to tell me if, in your view, learning to write well is essential, important, not very important, or not at all important for each of the following.

% saying “essential”	Gaining Vocabulary	Improving Critical Thinking	Learning to Analyze
Total	53%	52%	52%
Male	50%	47%	48%
Female	56%	56%	56%
18-29	55%	48%	52%
18-24	47%	44%	44%
30-39	48%	50%	47%
40-49	52%	55%	50%
50-59	57%	58%	60%
60+	55%	49%	55%
White	54%	51%	53%
African American	52%	50%	55%
Hispanic	53%	60%	53%
< HS to HS	45%	42%	45%
Some college	56%	52%	54%
College graduate	62%	60%	59%
Graduate work	59%	65%	62%
<\$25K household income	47%	45%	47%
\$25-50K	54%	51%	55%
\$50-75K	56%	59%	58%
\$75K+	57%	56%	50%
Write 5+ pages at work	58%	61%	56%
Write < 5 pages	56%	53%	56%
No writing at work	48%	45%	46%

Skills less associated with learning to write: Less than half believe learning to write well is “essential” for gaining organizational skills (47%) and becoming more creative (42%). There are only slight differences within segments of the population concerning these skills.

Skills Least Associated with Learning to Write

Q27, 25. Now I would like you to tell me if, in your view, learning to write well is essential, important, not very important, or not at all important for each of the following.

% saying “essential”	Gaining Organizational Skills	Becoming More Creative
Total	47%	42%
Male	42%	37%
Female	51%	46%
18-29	42%	43%
18-24	30%	40%
30-39	44%	39%
40-49	47%	40%
50-59	53%	47%
60+	51%	40%
White	47%	42%
African American	46%	40%
Hispanic	50%	44%
< HS to HS	40%	37%
Some college	47%	45%
College graduate	55%	44%
Graduate work	58%	44%
<\$25K household income	39%	38%
\$25-50K	52%	43%
\$50-75K	52%	46%
\$75K+	45%	41%
Write 5+ pages at work	47%	42%
Write < 5 pages	52%	45%
Does not write	40%	35%

3. Student performance

The push to improve student achievement in a variety of areas has put pressure on educators and students to increase performance in schools. Particularly with the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act and the increase of standardized testing in public schools, student performance as measured on tests has become a major issue in education.

Generally, the public believes learning to write well will improve student performance and advancement in a variety of areas. A sizeable majority strongly agrees that learning to write well helps students perform in all subjects (78%) and improves students' standardized test scores (68%).

Although there are some differences within these demographic groups, most people, regardless of their demographic characteristics, strongly agree with the benefits writing well has for student performance.

Benefits of Writing Well

Q33, 34. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

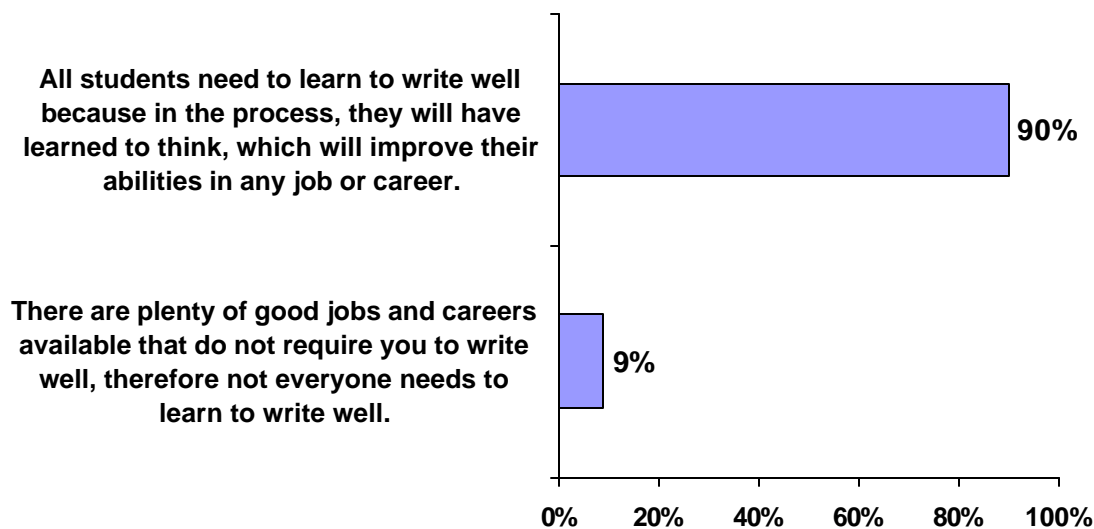
% saying “strongly agree”	Learning to write well helps students in all subjects	Learning to write well improves standardized test scores
Total	78%	68%
Male	76%	65%
Female	80%	70%
18-29	72%	61%
18-24	76%	59%
30-39	73%	65%
40-49	76%	71%
50-59	84%	75%
60+	87%	68%
White	79%	67%
African American	69%	70%
Hispanic	83%	73%
< HS to HS	77%	68%
Some college	79%	69%
College graduate	79%	67%
Graduate work	79%	64%
<\$25K household income	77%	67%
\$25-50K	77%	64%
\$50-75K	82%	76%
\$75K+	79%	70%
Liberal	75%	65%
Moderate	78%	68%
Conservative	82%	71%
Write 5+ pages at work	82%	67%
Write < 5 pages	78%	70%
Does not write	77%	64%

4. Influence on career advancement

The public believes learning to write well strongly influences student performance while they are in school, but Americans also say that learning to write benefits individuals in future careers.

The survey shows that an overwhelming majority (90%) is more likely to believe that all students need to learn to write well to improve their thinking and job skills than to believe that there are enough good jobs that do not require writing skills (9%).

Value of Writing Skills in Future Career



Q38. Please tell me who you agree with more: Mr. Green, who says there are plenty of good jobs and careers available that do not require you to write well, therefore not everyone needs to learn to write well; or Mr. Blue, who says all students need to learn to write well because in the process, they will have learned to think, which will improve their abilities in any job or career. (*Options were rotated.*)

Similarly, seven in ten (69%) Americans strongly agree that a person needs to be able to write well to advance in almost any career or job today. Seventeen percent somewhat agree, 10% somewhat disagree and 4% strongly disagree.

Subgroups most likely to strongly agree with this statement include:

- Hispanics (79%);
- Americans 60 or older (78%);

- Women over 50 (78%);
- Writers of more than 5 pages per day at work (76%); and
- Men over 50 (74%).

Writing and Career Advancement

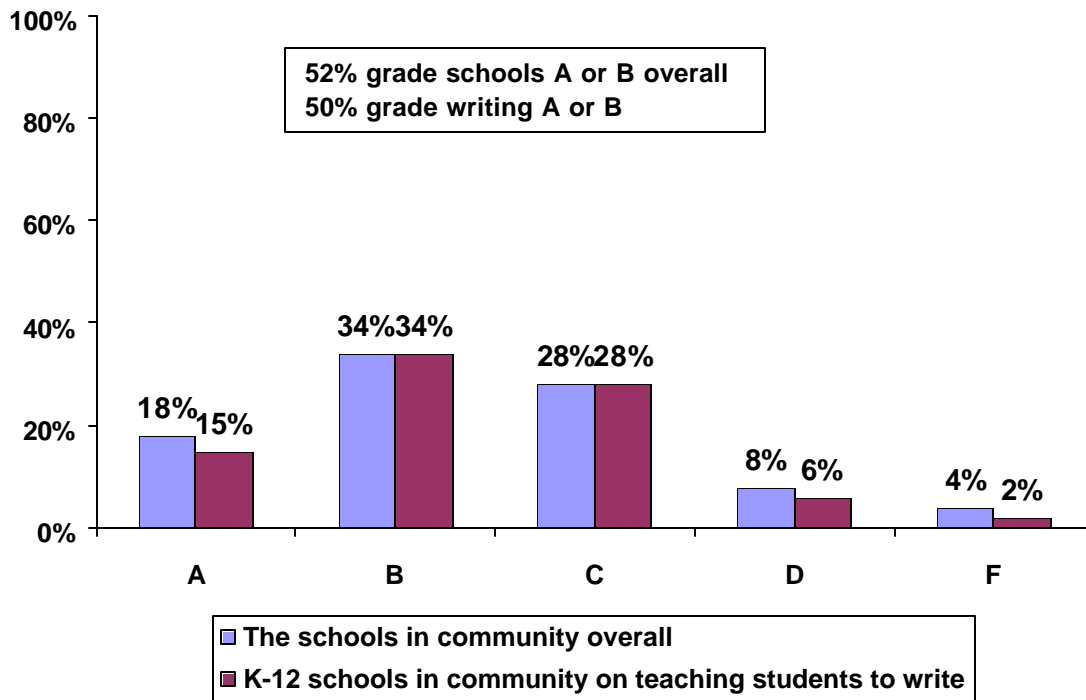
Q32. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statement: A person needs to be able to write well to advance in almost any career or job today.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	DK/REF
Total	69%	17	10	4	*
Male	66%	17	11	5	1
Female	72%	17	9	2	*
18-29	65%	17	10	7	--
18-24	67%	19	9	6	--
30-39	64%	20	12	4	--
40-49	65%	19	12	4	*
50-59	74%	16	7	2	*
60+	78%	13	7	1	1
Women < 50 years old	68%	20	10	2	--
Women over 50	78%	12	7	2	1
White	67%	19	11	3	*
African American	73%	12	7	7	1
Hispanic	79%	10	6	4	1
< HS to HS	70%	16	9	4	*
Some college	69%	15	10	6	1
College graduate	71%	19	8	1	--
Graduate work	66%	20	12	1	1
<\$25K household income	73%	18	6	4	--
\$25-50K	68%	16	11	4	*
\$50-75K	69%	17	9	5	--
\$75K+	67%	19	11	2	--
Liberal	67%	17	9	6	*
Moderate	69%	16	12	3	*
Conservative	71%	16	9	3	*
Write 5+ pages at work	76%	13	6	4	--
Write < 5 pages	69%	18	10	4	1
Does not write	68%	17	10	4	1

B. Educational system performance

Overall, the public's perceptions of the quality of schools and the quality of writing instruction closely mirror one another. Fifty-two percent give their community schools a grade of A or B overall and 50% give writing instruction a grade of A or B.

Grading the Schools



Q3. How would you grade the schools in your community overall? Q15. How would you generally grade the K-12 schools in your community on teaching students to write, by learning to compose sentences, paragraphs and longer pieces?

Public opinion overall is similar for quality of writing and education in general, but examination of cross-sections of the population suggests that enthusiasm for schools overall and enthusiasm for writing instruction come from different sources. Many segments of the population give lower grades for writing instruction in schools than they do for overall school performance.

For instance:

- As a person's education level increases, the person is more likely to grade community schools an A or B, but is less likely to give writing instruction an A or B. For example, 58% of Americans with graduate experience grade their schools an A or B but only 45% give writing instruction an A or B.
- Forty-seven percent of Americans with household incomes of less than \$25,000 give school performance overall an A or B while 54% give writing instruction an A or B.
- Forty-five percent of Americans who live in the West grade their schools A or B; 36% grade writing A or B – making the West the most pessimistic region concerning school performance and the quality of writing instruction.

The opposite trend occurs among younger Americans and African Americans:

- Younger people are least positive about school generally, but they are the most likely to grade writing instruction in schools an A or B. For instance, only 49% of 18 to 24 year olds grade their community schools an A or B, but 63% grade writing instruction an A or B.
- Similarly, forty-two percent of African Americans give overall school performance an A or B, but more – 51% – give writing instruction an A or B.

Grading schools and grading writing instruction

Q3. How would you grade the schools in your community overall? Q15. How would you generally grade the K-12 schools in your community on teaching students to write, by learning to compose sentences, paragraphs and longer pieces?

% giving grade of "A" and "B"	Schools in community overall	Schools in community on teaching students to write
Total	52%	50%
Male	51%	49%
Female	52%	51%
18-29	46%	55%
18-24	49%	63%
30-39	49%	47%
40-49	53%	52%
50-59	60%	54%
60+	52%	43%
White	55%	50%
African American	42%	51%
Hispanic	42%	47%
< HS to HS	50%	57%
Some college	53%	48%
College graduate	48%	43%
Graduate work	58%	45%
<\$25K household income	47%	54%
\$25-50K	50%	49%
\$50-75K	50%	47%
\$75K+	57%	52%
With school-aged child	55%	56%
No school-aged child	50%	47%
Liberal	52%	46%
Moderate	54%	54%
Conservative	51%	50%
Northeast	53%	53%
Midwest	58%	55%
South	53%	55%
South Atlantic	47%	51%
West	45%	36%
Write 5+ pages at work	50%	42%
Write < 5 pages	54%	53%
Does not write	49%	48%

Another question that probes this issue asks respondents how “good a job” their community schools are doing teaching writing. The results mirror the previous grading question closely.

Twenty-three percent agree strongly and 29% agree somewhat that schools “do a good job of teaching writing.” However, 18% somewhat disagree and 11% strongly disagree with this statement; 19% do not have an opinion.

Some interesting variations within subgroups occur, as opinions of teaching quality are influenced by certain characteristics.

For example:

- Unlike the public at-large, 31% of people with school-aged children strongly agree that schools are doing a good job teaching writing.
- Young adults under 25 and individuals with only a high school degree or less are also quite a bit more likely than others to say they strongly agree that schools are doing a good job (30% in both groups).

Quality of Writing Instruction

Q31. Schools in your community already do a good job of teaching writing.

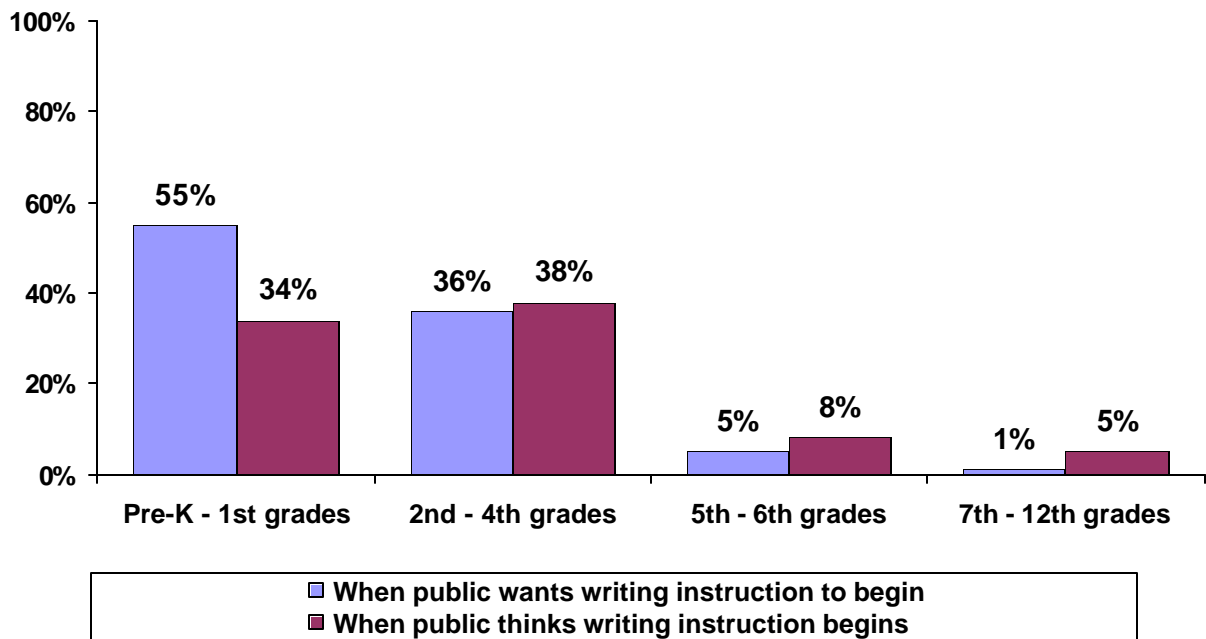
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DK/REF
Total	23%	29	18	11	19
Male	23%	29	19	11	18
Female	23%	30	17	11	19
18-29	24%	33	16	12	15
18-24	30%	34	15	12	9
30-39	24%	37	21	9	10
40-49	23%	34	19	9	16
50-59	29%	22	22	12	15
60+	17%	20	14	12	36
White	24%	30	17	8	21
African American	23%	21	22	22	13
Hispanic	23%	33	18	13	13
< HS to HS	30%	28	17	9	16
Some college	20%	31	18	12	19
College graduate	16%	31	21	11	21
Graduate work	18%	29	20	13	20
<\$25K household income	27%	27	16	14	15
\$25-50K	23%	28	21	10	19
\$50-75K	21%	33	20	10	18
\$75K+	23%	34	19	9	16
With school-aged child	31%	32	22	9	6
No school-aged child	19%	28	16	11	25
Northeast	27%	26	13	11	23
Midwest	28%	31	15	7	19
South	25%	33	19	9	15
South Atlantic	21%	30	19	12	17
West	15%	28	23	14	19

C. Teaching writing: when to begin and how much it should be emphasized

1. Beginning writing instruction

The public's perceptions of when writing instruction *should* begin and when it *actually* begins are quite different. Generally, the public wants writing instruction to begin earlier. A majority (55%) believes that writing instruction should begin between pre-Kindergarten and first grade. However, only 34% believe writing instruction actually begins during these early years. Sixteen percent say they do not know when writing instruction actually begins.

What Grade Writing Instruction Should and Does Begin



Q17. What grade in school do you think is the right grade to start teaching children to write?

Q18. Thinking about the schools that you are most familiar with, what grade in school do you think teachers do start teaching children to write?

Those who believe writing instruction should begin between pre-Kindergarten and first grade tend to be:

- African American (65%) or Hispanic (63%);
- Parents of school-aged children (62%);
- Southerners (61%);
- People who write the most at work (61%);
- Americans in their thirties (61%);
- Women (60%), particularly women under 50 (66%); and
- Liberals (60%).

What Grade Writing Instruction Should Begin

Q17. What grade in school do you think is the right grade to start teaching children to write?

	Pre-K – 1st grade	2nd – 4th grade	5th – 6th grade	7th – 12th grade	DK/Ref
Total	55%	36	5	1	2
Male	50%	39	6	2	2
Female	60%	33	4	1	2
18-29	57%	30	8	2	3
18-24	56%	31	6	4	3
30-39	61%	32	5	1	1
40-49	58%	37	3	1	2
50-59	47%	46	6	1	*
60+	52%	37	5	2	4
Women < 50 years old	66%	29	3	1	1
Women over 50	52%	40	5	*	3
White	53%	38	5	2	3
African American	65%	31	4	--	--
Hispanic	63%	26	7	1	3
< HS to HS	57%	35	4	2	2
Some college	52%	36	8	1	2
College graduate	56%	36	3	1	3
Graduate work	56%	38	3	1	2
<\$25K household income	56%	37	5	1	1
\$25-50K	54%	35	7	*	3
\$50-75K	58%	33	6	1	2
\$75K+	51%	43	2	2	1
With school-aged child	62%	33	4	*	1
No school-aged child	52%	37	6	2	3
Liberal	60%	33	5	1	2
Moderate	53%	38	6	1	2
Conservative	54%	38	5	1	2
Northeast	56%	31	9	1	2
Midwest	49%	43	3	2	2
South	61%	32	6	1	1
South Atlantic	53%	39	5	--	3
West	59%	33	3	2	3
Write 5+ pages at work	61%	32	3	1	2
Write < 5 pages	56%	37	5	1	1
Does not write	52%	36	7	2	4

Considerably lower percentages of these populations believe writing does begin between pre-Kindergarten and first grade.

For instance:

- Parents of school-aged children (43%);
- African American (40%) or Hispanic (37%);
- Women (38%), particularly women under 50 (42%);
- Southerners (37%);
- People who write the most at work (37%);
- People in their 30's (36%); and
- Liberals (31%).

Sixteen percent of Americans say they do not know when writing instruction begins in schools and most notably, 35% of those 60 and older say they do not know when writing instruction starts.

What Grade Writing Instruction Does Begin

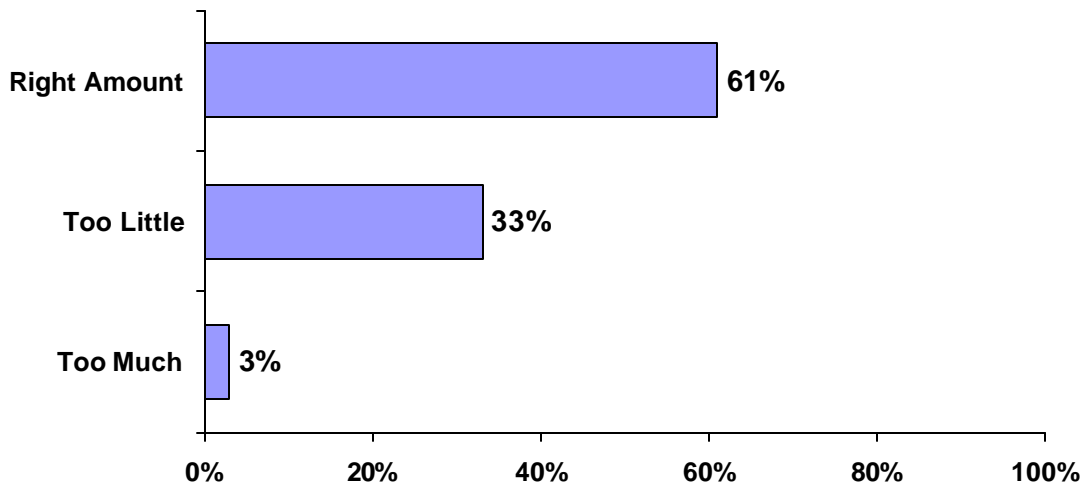
Q18. Thinking about the schools that you are most familiar with, what grade in school do you think teachers do start teaching children to write?

	Pre-K – 1st grade	2nd – 4th grade	5th – 6th grade	7th – 12th grade	DK/Ref
Total	34%	38	8	5	16
Male	29%	37	10	7	18
Female	38%	39	6	3	14
18-29	32%	42	10	6	10
18-24	28%	49	6	8	9
30-39	36%	42	10	4	8
40-49	37%	41	7	3	12
50-59	35%	35	11	7	12
60+	29%	30	3	4	35
Women < 50 years old	42%	42	7	3	7
Women over 50	32%	35	4	4	25
White	32%	38	8	5	18
African American	40%	40	6	4	9
Hispanic	37%	38	10	3	12
< HS to HS	37%	38	7	4	14
Some college	29%	40	8	7	16
College graduate	33%	35	8	4	19
Graduate work	36%	37	11	3	14
<\$25K household income	33%	36	10	4	17
\$25-50K	36%	39	7	6	12
\$50-75K	34%	39	6	4	17
\$75K+	29%	41	11	5	14
With school-aged child	43%	39	10	3	5
No school-aged child	29%	37	7	5	21
Liberal	31%	36	10	6	17
Moderate	32%	39	8	5	17
Conservative	35%	39	7	4	14
Northeast	34%	35	9	5	17
Midwest	35%	40	7	6	13
South	37%	44	3	6	11
South Atlantic	29%	38	8	4	21
West	34%	33	12	3	18
Write 5+ pages at work	37%	41	8	3	11
Write < 5 pages	34%	40	9	5	12
Does not write	32%	33	6	6	23

2. Emphasis on writing

Despite the criticism that writing instruction does not begin as early as desired, a majority of parents with school-aged children feels their children’s own schools place the “right amount” of emphasis on writing (61%). Thirty-three percent say there is “too little” emphasis on writing and only three percent say there is “too much” emphasis.

Emphasis on Writing



Q22. In your own view, does that child’s school emphasize writing too much, too little, or about the right amount? (Base: N = 309 respondents who have a child or children in elementary, middle or high school.)

Mirroring the findings above, there is little agreement among the general public that there is too much emphasis on writing in schools, taking away from other topics and subjects students should be focusing on in schools. Fully eight in ten (79%) disagree (either “strongly” or “somewhat”) that “too much emphasis in schools today on writing is taking away from other things students need to learn.”

Those that strongly disagree with this statement tend to be:

- Individuals with more than a high school degree, but particularly those with graduate-level experience (67%). As education level increases, so does disagreement that “too much emphasis in schools today on writing is taking away from other things students need to learn.”
- Those who write at their jobs. Sixty-four percent who write more than five pages a day and 52% who write between one and five pages per day strongly disagree.
- Upper-income Americans. Fifty-one percent of individuals with household incomes of \$50,000 to \$75,000 and 59% of the public with incomes of over \$75,000 strongly disagree.

Too Much Emphasis on Writing?

Q35. There is too much emphasis in schools today on writing, which is taking away from other things students need to learn.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DK/REF
Total	7%	8	32	47	6
Male	8%	9	33	44	6
Female	6%	7	31	50	6
18-29	7%	9	36	46	1
18-24	10%	13	41	35	1
30-39	6%	12	34	42	6
40-49	6%	7	32	51	4
50-59	6%	5	25	58	7
60+	10%	5	30	42	12
White	5%	6	33	48	7
African American	12%	9	26	49	4
Hispanic	12%	14	31	40	3
< HS to HS	12%	10	35	38	5
Some college	6%	9	32	48	6
College graduate	2%	4	32	53	10
Graduate work	3%	5	22	67	3
<\$25K household income	14%	9	30	42	5
\$25-50K	5%	8	38	42	6
\$50-75K	6%	7	31	51	5
\$75K+	5%	6	27	59	2
Liberal	7%	5	28	55	5
Moderate	7%	8	35	45	5
Conservative	7%	9	31	47	7
Write 5+ pages at work	3%	6	24	64	3
Write < 5 pages	5%	7	32	52	5
Does not write	12%	11	35	34	9

3. Expectations for teachers

Expecting too much of teachers was a concern for our focus group participants and many in the survey echo that sentiment. Four in ten (44%) agree that it is not realistic to expect teachers of all different subject areas to have the ability to teach writing. A slight majority disagrees (53%).

Those most likely to disagree include:

- Writers of five or more pages per day (66%); and
- Women (57%).

Realistic For Teachers?

Q36. It is not realistic to expect teachers of all different subject areas to have the ability to teach writing.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DK/REF
Total	23%	22	19	34	3
Male	25%	25	18	30	2
Female	21%	19	20	37	3
18-29	17%	28	25	31	--
18-24	21%	29	20	29	--
30-39	18%	18	25	37	2
40-49	27%	19	14	37	3
50-59	22%	21	13	42	2
60+	28%	22	18	26	6
White	20%	23	20	35	2
African American	29%	20	16	33	2
Hispanic	30%	17	17	29	6
< HS to HS	24%	24	19	28	4
Some college	22%	20	20	35	2
College graduate	20%	17	20	41	2
Graduate work	23%	25	16	37	--
<\$25K household income	21%	24	21	31	3
\$25-50K	25%	25	18	29	3
\$50-75K	24%	20	16	39	2
\$75K+	19%	21	21	38	1
Write 5+ pages at work	21%	11	18	49	2
Write less than 5 pages	21%	24	18	36	1
Does not write	25%	22	21	25	6

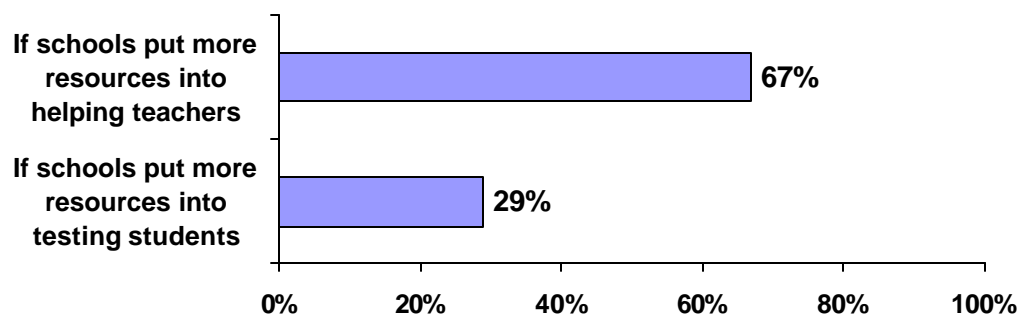
D. Making improvements in writing: resources, testing and teacher training

1. Additional resources versus testing

Schools are hard pressed these days to keep up with the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act and other measures requiring standardized testing. We presented respondents with two possible ways to improve student writing: having schools provide more resources for teachers or provide more resources for testing.

When it comes to writing, two-thirds of Americans would opt for putting more resources into helping teachers instruct students in writing in order to help them become better writers (67%). Alternatively, only three in ten (29%) say putting more resources into testing students' writing is the better route.

Students Would Become Better Writers:



Q16. Which of these two options do you think would help students become better writers: If schools put more resources into testing students at various grade levels to see how well they are learning to write; or if schools put more resources into helping teachers teach writing to their students. (*Options were rotated.*)

Support for additional resources for teachers is strongest among upper socioeconomic groups, women and parents with children in school.

For instance:

- College graduates (73%), Americans with graduate-level experience (71%) or those with some college experience (69%);

- Women under 50 years old (72%);
- Americans with household incomes of \$50,000-\$75,000 (72%) and more than \$75,000 (71%); and
- Parents of school-aged children (72%).

The argument for testing is most strongly felt by:

- Members of the public with a high school degree or less (35%); and
- Those who do not write on their jobs (35%).

Students Would Become Better Writers

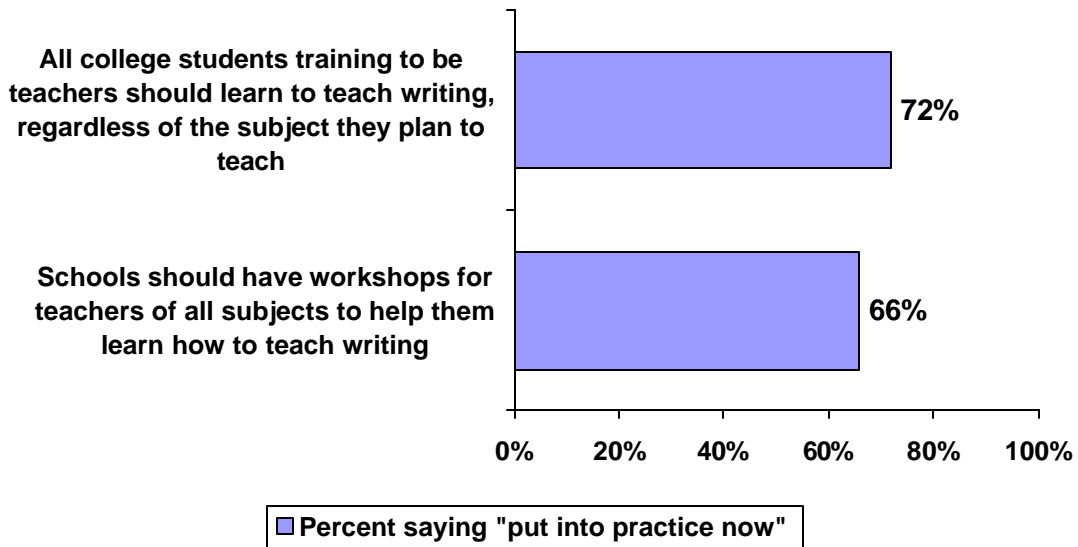
Q16. Which of these two options do you think would help students become better writers: If schools put more resources into testing students at various grade levels to see how well they are learning to write; or if schools put more resources into helping teachers teach writing to their students. (*Options were rotated.*)

	If schools put more resources into helping teachers	If schools put more resources into testing students	DK/REF
Total	67%	29	3
Male	66%	30	4
Female	69%	28	3
18-29	65%	33	2
18-24	64%	34	1
30-39	77%	22	2
40-49	66%	30	4
50-59	72%	24	3
60+	59%	34	7
Women < 50 years old	72%	26	2
Women older than 50	63%	32	5
White	69%	28	4
African American	67%	29	5
Hispanic	62%	36	1
< HS to HS	61%	35	3
Some college	69%	28	3
College graduate	73%	24	3
Graduate work	71%	22	7
<\$25K household income	63%	35	2
\$25-50K	66%	29	4
\$50-75K	72%	26	2
\$75K+	71%	27	2
With school-aged child	72%	26	2
No school-aged child	65%	31	4
Liberal	72%	26	3
Moderate	66%	31	3
Conservative	67%	29	4
Northeast	67%	30	3
Midwest	62%	33	4
South	71%	26	3
South Atlantic	71%	26	3
West	67%	29	4
Write 5+ pages at work	68%	25	7
Write less than 5 pages	71%	27	2
Does not write	61%	35	5

2. Teacher training

Several proposals to improve the training of teachers were presented in the survey in order to gauge public support. Overall, Americans are very supportive of additional training for future teachers (72%) and teachers who are already in the profession (66%).

Proposals to Improve Teacher Training



Q43. All college students training to be teachers should learn to teach writing, regardless of the subject they plan to teach. Q39. Schools should have workshops for teachers of all subjects to help them learn how to teach writing.

Requiring all future teachers to receive training in the teaching of writing is a very popular proposal across the board; there are only very slight differences within subgroups.

Teachers in Training

Q43. All college students training to be teachers should learn to teach writing, regardless of the subject they plan to teach.

	Put Into Practice Now	Study More	Not a Good Idea	DK/REF
Total	72%	19	8	1
Male	71%	18	9	1
Female	73%	20	6	1
18-29	73%	19	7	1
18-24	68%	21	10	1
30-39	74%	17	8	1
40-49	74%	18	6	2
50-59	72%	19	9	*
60+	70%	22	7	2
White	72%	19	8	1
African American	71%	19	8	1
Hispanic	76%	17	6	1
< HS to HS	74%	18	7	1
Some college	75%	16	9	1
College graduate	69%	23	6	1
Graduate work	66%	24	9	2
<\$25K household income	71%	21	7	2
\$25-50K	72%	21	7	1
\$50-75K	79%	14	7	--
\$75K+	72%	19	8	1

Significant differences in the public's opinion of providing workshop training for teachers are evident among:

- African Americans (74%) and Hispanics (74%); and
- Southerners (73%).

Workshops for Teachers

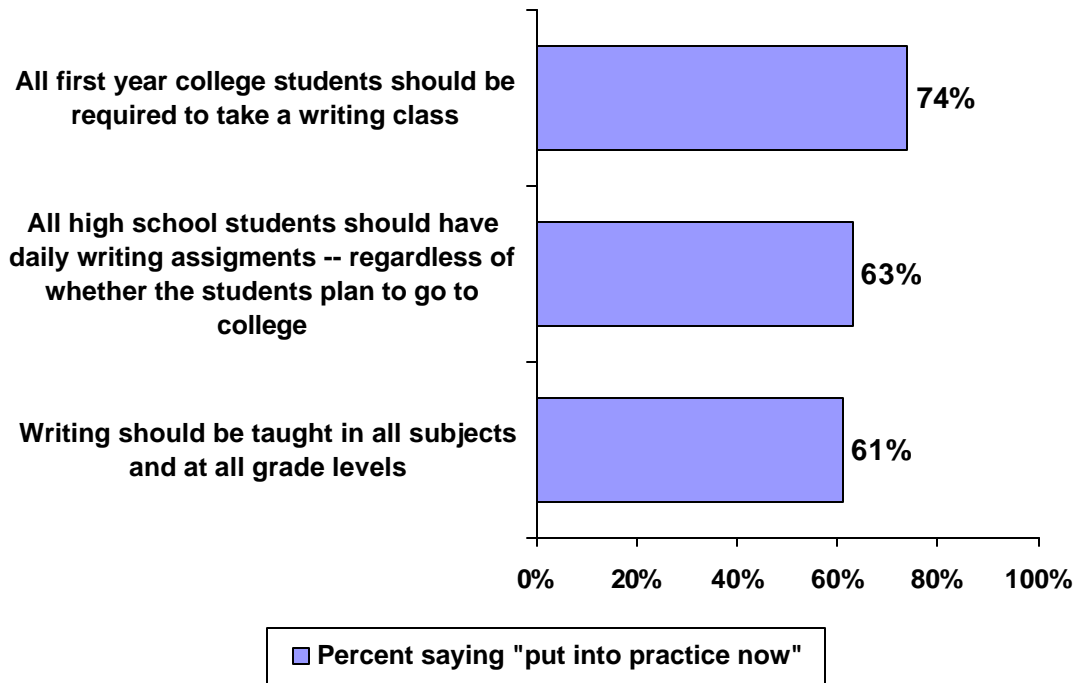
Q39. Schools should have workshops for teachers of all subjects to help them learn how to teach writing.

	Put Into Practice Now	Study More	Not a Good Idea	DK/REF
Total	66%	25	8	2
Male	63%	25	10	2
Female	68%	24	6	2
18-29	67%	27	6	1
18-24	63%	31	6	--
30-39	71%	24	5	1
40-49	63%	25	10	2
50-59	70%	18	10	1
60+	60%	28	8	5
White	63%	27	8	2
African American	74%	19	6	1
Hispanic	74%	20	6	1
< HS to HS	66%	26	6	2
Some college	63%	25	10	2
College graduate	65%	26	7	2
Graduate work	70%	18	10	2
<\$25K household income	70%	21	8	2
\$25-50K	62%	29	7	2
\$50-75K	71%	23	4	2
\$75K+	63%	22	12	2
Northeast	67%	22	9	2
Midwest	60%	32	8	1
South	73%	19	6	2
South Atlantic	68%	23	8	1
West	63%	25	9	3

3. Teaching writing

Americans are in favor of broadening and expanding the teaching of writing including requiring college freshman take a course in writing (74%), giving high school students writing assignments everyday (63%), and teaching writing throughout grades K-12 and in all subjects (61%).

Proposals to Improve the Teaching of Writing



Q40. Writing should be taught in all subjects and at all grade levels. Q42. All first year college students should be required to take a writing class. Q41. All high school students should have daily writing assignments – regardless of whether the students plan to go to college.

The proposal to teach writing at all grade levels and throughout all subjects receives considerable support overall and from particular segments of the population. This proposal is an important measurement of opinion about writing instruction. For our analysis we have termed those who say this proposal should be put into effect immediately as the “Writing Enthusiasts.” This subgroup will be analyzed in more depth in a later section.

Sixty-one percent of Americans believe writing should be taught at all grade levels and throughout all subjects and this should be put into practice now. Only 28% of Americans feel the concept should be studied more before acting on it.

Across the board, Americans agree that providing additional training in college will improve writing skills of students overall. Seventy-four percent of the public thinks all first year college students should be required to take a writing class. Seventeen percent say this idea should be studied more and seven percent say it is not a good idea.

The enthusiasm for requiring college students to take writing holds up across all subgroups, but the strongest support is among these segments of the population:

- Writers of more than five pages (86%) and one to five pages (78%) per day;
- Those with higher incomes (83% with incomes of \$50,000 to \$75,000 and 80% with incomes of more than \$75,000 per year); and
- Americans with some college experience, especially those with graduate experience (82%).

Writing Class for First Year College Students

Q42. All first year college students should be required to take a writing class.

	Put Into Practice Now	Study More	Not a Good Idea	DK/REF
Total	74%	17	7	2
Male	75%	16	7	2
Female	73%	17	7	2
18-29	74%	19	6	1
18-24	69%	21	10	--
30-39	81%	13	5	1
40-49	74%	17	7	2
50-59	80%	12	8	*
60+	64%	21	10	5
White	75%	16	7	2
African American	71%	19	8	2
Hispanic	75%	19	4	2
< HS to HS	66%	23	9	2
Some college	79%	14	5	2
College graduate	79%	14	5	2
Graduate work	82%	8	9	1
<\$25K household income	68%	20	9	2
\$25-50K	71%	21	7	1
\$50-75K	83%	12	4	1
\$75K+	80%	12	7	1
Write 5+ pages at work	86%	7	7	1
Write less than 5 pages	78%	15	6	1
Does not write	63%	23	10	4

Additional support for expanding exposure to writing is evidenced by the response to the proposal to give all high school students daily writing assignments in high school; 63% of the public say this should be put into practice now. Twenty-seven percent say this idea should be studied more and 10% say it is not a good idea.

Americans who give the highest levels of support for this proposal include:

- African Americans (80%) and Hispanics (72%);
- Writers of five or more pages per day at work (72%);
- Residents of the Northeast (70%) and South Atlantic (69%); and
- Those over age 25 – nearly sixty percent or more in each older age category say the proposal should be put into practice now.

Daily Writing Assignments in High School

Q41. All high school students should have daily writing assignments – regardless of whether the students plan to go to college.

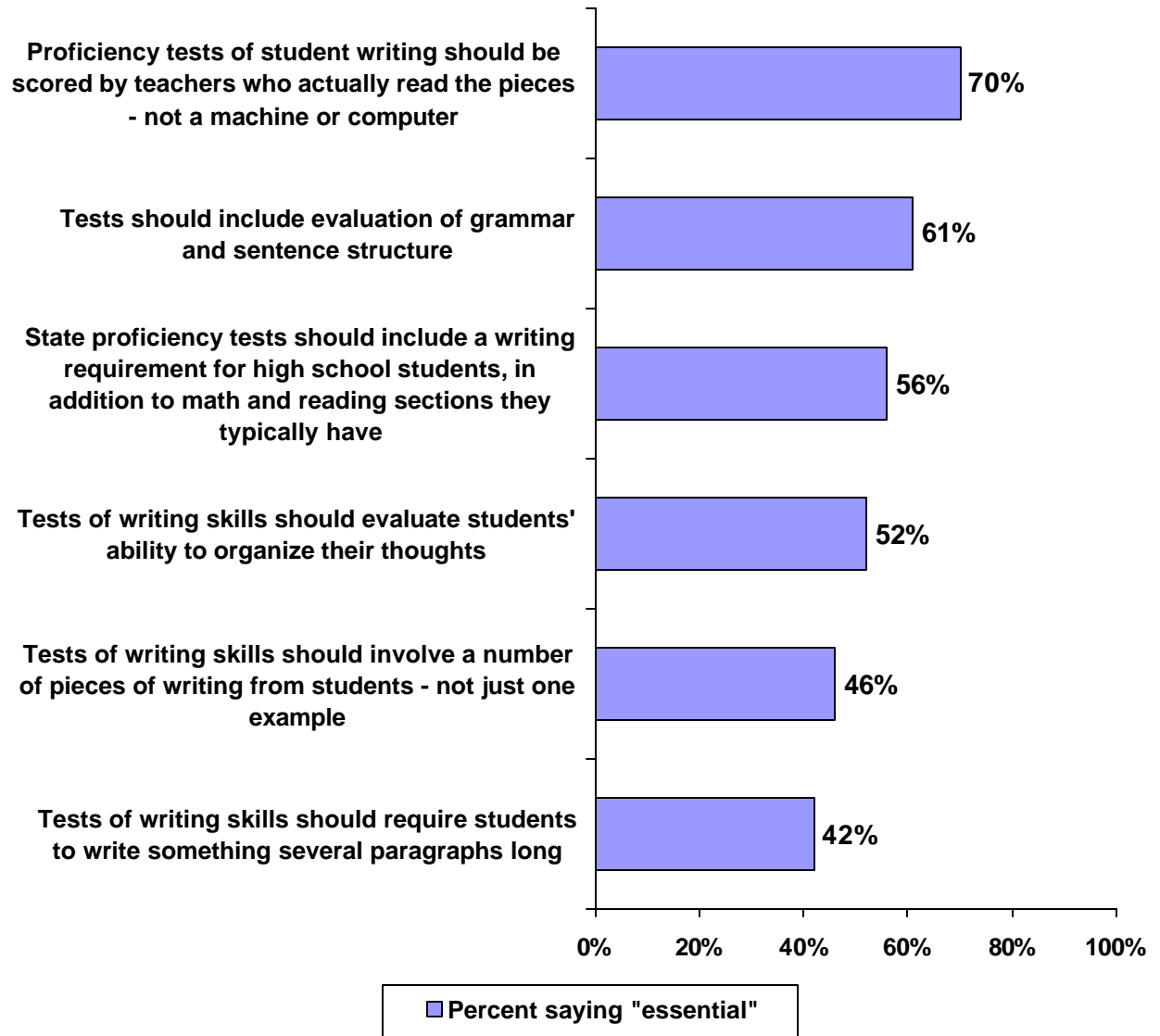
	Put Into Practice Now	Study More	Not a Good Idea	DK/REF
Total	63%	27	10	1
Male	59%	28	12	*
Female	65%	26	7	2
18-29	59%	26	14	1
18-24	48%	33	19	1
30-39	61%	29	9	1
40-49	64%	28	8	*
50-59	64%	24	11	*
60+	65%	27	6	2
White	58%	30	10	1
African American	80%	14	5	1
Hispanic	72%	19	8	1
< HS to HS	62%	27	10	1
Some college	64%	27	8	1
College graduate	58%	29	13	1
Graduate work	70%	24	6	*
<\$25K household income	68%	24	7	2
\$25-50K	63%	25	11	1
\$50-75K	64%	29	7	*
\$75K+	59%	28	12	*
Northeast	70%	26	4	--
Midwest	57%	31	12	*
South	59%	28	12	1
South Atlantic	69%	21	8	2
West	60%	27	10	2
Write 5+ pages at work	72%	22	6	1
Write less than 5 pages	61%	27	10	1
Does not write	62%	28	10	1

4. Testing students' writing

The first wave of high school juniors to take the new SAT with its required writing section recently received their scores, and the push to include writing skills in state and national tests continues to pick up steam. Our poll asked for reactions to six proposals about testing writing. The six proposals, which aim to improve the testing of writing, receive a range of support from the public.

Although the public is ambivalent about whether a writing section should be included on state standardized tests (56%), Americans broadly feel that any tests of writing should be scored by teachers rather than machines (70%) and should include evaluation of grammar and sentence structure (61%).

Proposals to Improve Standardized Testing of Writing



Q44-49. Please tell me how important you think each of the following proposals is for schools to follow when testing what students are learning in school.

Including writing on tests: The benchmark measure of public opinion concerning writing assessments on standardized tests asks whether “state proficiency tests should include a writing requirement for high school students, in addition to the math and reading sections they typically have.” A majority of the public (56%) says it is essential for state proficiency tests to include a writing requirement for high school students.

Segments of the population giving a high level of support for this proposal include:

- Americans who write five or more pages at work or as a volunteer (67%);
- College graduates (66%) and those who have some graduate-level experience (65%); and
- Middle to upper income Americans (63% of those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more and 62% with incomes of \$50,000-\$75,000).

Should State Tests Include a Writing Assessment?

Q44. State proficiency tests should include a writing requirement for high school students, in addition to the math and reading sections they typically have. [Please tell me how important you think each of the following proposals is for schools to follow when testing what students are learning in school]

	Essential	Helpful	Not Very Helpful	Not At All Helpful	DK/REF
Total	56%	37	3	2	2
Male	55%	40	2	2	1
Female	57%	35	3	2	2
18-29	51%	41	5	2	*
18-24	48%	45	4	2	--
30-39	55%	41	1	3	--
40-49	58%	38	1	2	1
50-59	61%	32	3	2	1
60+	57%	34	3	3	4
White	59%	35	3	2	1
African American	54%	38	3	4	1
Hispanic	49%	44	3	2	3
< HS to HS	47%	46	3	3	1
Some college	58%	37	1	2	2
College graduate	66%	28	4	1	1
Graduate work	65%	29	2	2	2
<\$25K household income	49%	43	3	3	2
\$25-50K	53%	42	2	1	1
\$50-75K	62%	34	2	2	--
\$75K+	63%	31	2	3	1
With school-aged child	56%	39	1	4	1
No school-aged child	56%	37	3	2	2
Liberal	58%	37	2	2	1
Moderate	52%	41	4	2	1
Conservative	58%	36	2	3	2
Northeast	61%	32	1	3	3
Midwest	51%	44	2	2	1
South	61%	34	2	3	--
South Atlantic	56%	39	4	*	1
West	54%	36	4	4	2
Write 5+ pages at work	67%	28	3	2	--
Write less than 5 pages	58%	37	2	2	1
Does not write	48%	43	3	3	3

Evaluation proposals: Proposals concerning the evaluation of writing receive a range of responses.

Those that are in favor of the proposal to have teachers, not machines, score writing assessments:

- Americans with higher household incomes (78% of those making \$75,000 or more);
- Those with some graduate experience (78%);
- Residents of the Northeast (78%); and
- Whites (75%).

Forty-six percent say the proposal, “tests of writing skills should involve a number of pieces of writing from students – not just one example” is “essential.”

- Fifty-eight percent of Americans who write more than five pages per day at their jobs say this proposal is “essential” when testing what students are learning.

Forty-two percent say the proposal “tests of writing skills should require students to write something several paragraphs long” is “essential.”

- Fifty-four percent of Americans with graduate-level experience say this proposal is “essential.”

Evaluation Methods

Q45, 46, 47. Please tell me how important you think each of the following proposals is for schools to follow when testing what students are learning in school.

% Saying “Essential”	Writing tests should be scored by teachers	Tests should involve a number of pieces of writing	Tests a piece of writing several paragraphs long
Total	70%	46%	42%
Male	70%	45%	45%
Female	70%	47%	39%
18-29	66%	41%	41%
18-24	67%	41%	34%
30-39	70%	52%	45%
40-49	72%	46%	38%
50-59	72%	52%	44%
60+	72%	41%	42%
White	75%	48%	44%
African American	60%	48%	36%
Hispanic	59%	39%	38%
< HS to HS	64%	42%	34%
Some college	72%	48%	42%
College graduate	75%	52%	50%
Graduate work	78%	46%	54%
<\$25K household income	64%	44%	32%
\$25-50K	68%	44%	45%
\$50-75K	74%	50%	40%
\$75K+	78%	52%	48%
With school-aged child	70%	49%	40%
No school-aged child	70%	45%	43%
Liberal	75%	53%	43%
Moderate	72%	43%	41%
Conservative	67%	45%	41%
Northeast	78%	45%	45%
Midwest	71%	44%	37%
South	68%	42%	43%
South Atlantic	70%	52%	41%
West	65%	48%	44%
Write 5+ pages at work	67%	58%	55%
Write less than 5 pages	73%	48%	44%
Does not write	67%	39%	34%

Areas of evaluation: Sixty-one percent of Americans say it is essential for tests of writing skills to include evaluation of grammar and sentence structure. Those most supportive of this proposal include:

- Americans with graduate experience (76%);
- 50-59 year olds (62%); and
- Americans who write more than five pages per day (67%) and those who write less than five pages per day at work (66%).

Fifty-two percent say requiring tests to measure organization of the student's thoughts is essential. Those supportive of this proposal include:

- Americans with graduate experience (72%);
- 50-59 year olds (62%);
- Writers of more than five pages per day (62%); and
- Americans with household incomes of \$75,000 or more (60%).

Areas of Evaluation When Testing Writing

Q48, 49. Please tell me how important you think each of the following proposals is for schools to follow when testing what students are learning in school.

% Saying “Essential”	Tests should include evaluation of grammar and sentence structure	Tests should evaluate organization of thoughts
Total	61%	52%
Male	57%	48%
Female	65%	55%
18-29	55%	42%
18-24	49%	41%
30-39	64%	52%
40-49	59%	53%
50-59	70%	62%
60+	62%	53%
White	62%	54%
African American	56%	53%
Hispanic	61%	43%
< HS to HS	50%	42%
Some college	65%	51%
College graduate	69%	58%
Graduate work	76%	72%
<\$25K household income	52%	41%
\$25-50K	62%	51%
\$50-75K	65%	54%
\$75K+	66%	60%
With school-aged child	62%	51%
No school-aged child	61%	52%
Liberal	59%	51%
Moderate	64%	52%
Conservative	62%	53%
Northeast	62%	52%
Midwest	62%	51%
South	60%	49%
South Atlantic	59%	51%
West	63%	54%
Write 5+ pages at work	67%	62%
Write less than 5 pages	66%	54%
Does not write	51%	43%

E. The Writing Enthusiasts

A sizeable subset of the population, sixty-one percent of Americans, believe that writing should be taught in all subjects and at all grade levels. They also believe this approach to writing instruction should be put into practice now.

We have labeled these individuals “Writing Enthusiasts” for their belief in teaching writing throughout K-12 education and their widespread support for instructing all students in writing as well as a number of other issues.

As the National Writing Project develops a messaging campaign, the Writing Enthusiasts will be an important audience. These Americans support writing and understand the benefits of writing for students.

The Writing Enthusiasts generally look like the nation as a whole demographically; however, they are more likely to be writers of five or more pages at work (68%) or African Americans (66%).

Writing Enthusiasts

Q40. Writing should be taught in all subjects and at all grade levels.

	Put Into Practice Now	Study More	Not a Good Idea	DK/REF
Total	61%	28	10	1
Male	57%	28	14	1
Female	64%	28	8	1
18-29	61%	28	11	--
18-24	58%	23	18	--
30-39	65%	25	10	1
40-49	54%	33	12	*
50-59	62%	23	15	--
60+	62%	30	5	2
White	58%	29	11	1
African American	66%	24	9	1
Hispanic	67%	25	8	--
< HS to HS	63%	26	10	1
Some college	60%	28	11	1
College graduate	58%	33	9	*
Graduate work	60%	28	12	--
Northeast	67%	23	9	--
Midwest	63%	29	8	--
South	56%	32	10	2
South Atlantic	56%	30	13	1
West	61%	26	12	1
Write 5+ pages at work	68%	19	13	--
Write less than 5 pages	60%	28	11	1
Does not write	61%	31	8	1

1. Attitudes of Writing Enthusiasts

The Writing Enthusiasts hold some opinions that set them apart from the public and are instructive for NWP's messaging work.

Improving learning:

- Writing Enthusiasts are more likely to say writing well is essential for development of certain skills, including: learning to read; improving a person's grammar; and improving critical thinking.

Improving teaching:

- The Writing Enthusiasts are more supportive of a number of proposals to improve the teaching of writing, including: having college students training to be teachers learn to teach writing; writing classes for first year college students; providing workshops for all teachers; and daily writing assignments for students.

Improving testing:

- Five in ten Writing Enthusiasts believe writing tests should involve a number of pieces of writing.

Regression analysis reveals that opinions on four issues are strong predictors of an individual's belief that writing instruction should take place in all grades and in all subjects. These key ideas and statements include:

- A person needs to be able to write well to advance in almost any career or job today;
- Learning to write well improves a person's critical thinking;
- It is realistic to expect teachers of all different subject areas to have the ability to teach writing.

These statements represent the most decisive opinions that predict a person feeling strongly that learning to write well in school is important.

Writing Enthusiasts vs. the Nation

	Writing Enthusiasts	Nation
Percent saying writing is “essential” for development of skills:		
Learning to read	76%	69%
Improving a person’s grammar	67%	60%
Improving critical thinking	59%	52%
Percent saying proposal should be “put into practice now”:		
College students training to be teachers learn to teach writing	82%	72%
Writing classes for first year college students	81%	74%
Providing workshops for all teachers	75%	66%
Daily writing assignments for high school students	74%	63%
Percent rating proposal “essential” for testing students writing:		
Tests should involve a number of pieces of writing	53%	46%

**Appendix A:
Questionnaire with Response
Totals**

Survey for National Writing Project

Interviewing conducted February 10 to 27, 2005.

N = 1,000 Americans, age 18 and older

Margin of sampling error for each state is ± 3.1 percentage points.

The data have been weighted by age and race.

Percents may add to 99% or 101% due to rounding.

* indicates less than 1% , -- indicates zero.

Hello, my name is _____ and I am an interviewer with PDS. We are conducting a public opinion research survey and your telephone number was selected at random. We are not selling anything. May I please speak to the person 18 years old or older in your household who had a birthday most recently?

1. First, which of these do you think is the biggest need facing the nation? Is it improving the economy and jobs, improving public schools, keeping air and water clean and healthy, reducing crime, improving health care, or lowering taxes? [RANDOMIZE]	IMPROVING THE ECONOMY AND JOBS	27%
	IMPROVING PUBLIC SCHOOLS	20
	KEEPING AIR AND WATER CLEAN	6
	REDUCING CRIME	7
	IMPROVING HEALTH CARE	26
	LOWERING TAXES	8
	DK/REF	6

2. First, which of these do you think is the biggest need facing the community you live in? Is it improving the economy and jobs, improving public schools, keeping air and water clean and healthy, reducing crime, improving health care, or lowering taxes? [RANDOMIZE]	IMPROVING THE ECONOMY AND JOBS	27%
	IMPROVING PUBLIC SCHOOLS	25
	KEEPING AIR AND WATER CLEAN	7
	REDUCING CRIME	9
	IMPROVING HEALTH CARE	12
	LOWERING TAXES	15
	DK/REF	4

3. How would you grade the schools in your community overall? A, B, C, D, or F?	A	18%
	B	34
	C	28
	D	8
	F	4
	DK/REF	9

Thinking about what students learn in high school, please tell me if you think each of the following skills should be: required for high school graduation, is very important but should not be a graduation requirement, is only somewhat important, or is not very important. Let's start with ... the student should:
[RANDOMIZE Q4-Q14]

	Required For Graduation	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	DK/REF
4. Have learned algebra.	52%	25	15	7	1
5. Know a foreign language.	25%	36	23	15	1
6. Know how to read well.	90%	9	1	*	*
7. Know world history.	54%	27	15	4	*
8. Be able to do addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.	91%	7	1	*	*
9. Have learned real-life problem solving skills.	59%	28	8	3	2
10. Have learned chemistry.	22%	34	28	15	1
11. Know how to write well.	80%	16	3	1	*
12. Know how to use a computer.	68%	23	6	3	*
13. Have learned biology.	40%	30	21	9	1
14. Know American history and government.	66%	22	9	2	*

Now I have some questions about writing. We are using the term "writing" to mean composing sentences, paragraphs, and longer pieces. We are **not** referring to penmanship or how one shapes letters.

15. How would you generally grade the K-12 schools in your community on teaching students to write, by learning to compose sentences, paragraphs and	A	15%
	B	34
	C	28
	D	6
	F	2

longer pieces? A, B, C, D or F?	DK/REF	13
16. Which of these two options do you think would help students become better writers: [ROTATE] If schools put more resources into testing students at various grade levels to see how well they are learning to write; or if schools put more resources into helping teachers teach writing to their students.	MORE RESOURCES INTO TESTING	29%
	MORE RESOURCES INTO HELPING TEACHERS TEACH	67
	DK/REF	3

17. What grade in school do you think is the right grade to start teaching children to write? [IF NECESSARY EXPLAIN: Writing means composing sentences, paragraphs, and longer pieces, **not** penmanship or how one shapes letters.]

PRE-KINDERGARTEN	6%	5 th	3
KINDERGARTEN	16	6 th	2
1 st	34	7 th	1
2 nd	14	8 th	*
3 rd	15	10 th	*
4 th	6	DK/REF	2

18. Thinking about the schools that you are most familiar with, what grade do you think teachers **do** start teaching children to write?

PRE-KINDERGARTEN	2%	7 th	2
KINDERGARTEN	11	8 th	1
1 st	21	9 th	1
2 nd	16	10 th	1
3 rd	15	11 th	*
4 th	7	12 th	*
5 th	6	DK/REF	16
6 th	2		

19. Do you have any children under the age of 25? 20. [IF YES IN Q19] If any of your children are currently in school, are they in elementary school, middle or junior high school, high school, college, or graduate school? [MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED]	YES, CHILDREN UNDER 25	47%
	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	21
	MIDDLE OR JUNIOR HIGH	10
	HIGH SCHOOL	12
	COLLEGE	7
	GRADUATE SCHOOL	1
	NOT IN SCHOOL	11
	NO CHILDREN UNDER 25	53
	DK/REF	*

21. [IF ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE OR HIGH SCHOOL IN Q20; N=309] Thinking of just your children in kindergarten through 12th grade, what grade is your [ROTATE: youngest/oldest] child in?

KINDERGARTEN	10%	7 th	6
1 st	10	8 th	8
2 nd	7	9 th	8
3 rd	6	10 th	6
4 th	8	11 th	9
5 th	5	12 th	8
6 th	7	DK/REF	2

22. [IF ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE OR HIGH SCHOOL IN Q20; N=309] In your own view, does that child's school emphasize writing too much, too little, or about the right amount?

TOO MUCH	3%
TOO LITTLE	33
RIGHT AMOUNT	61
DK/REF	4

Now I would like you to tell me if, in your view, learning to write well is essential, important, not very important, or not at all important for each of the following. The first one is: [RANDOMIZE Q23-Q30]

	Essential	Important	Not Very Important	Not At All Important	DK/REF
23. Improving a person's critical thinking.	52%	42	4	1	2
24. Learning how to communicate effectively.	65%	34	1	*	*
25. Becoming more creative.	42%	49	7	1	1
26. Improving a person's grammar.	60%	37	2	1	*
27. Gaining organizational skills.	47%	47	5	1	1
28. Learning to read.	69%	28	2	*	*
29. Gaining a large vocabulary.	53%	41	5	*	*
30. Learning to analyze and bring details together.	52%	43	3	1	1

Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. IF AGREE/DISAGREE: Is that strongly or somewhat? [RANDOMIZE Q31-Q37]

	Strongly Agree	Smwt Agree	Smwt Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DK/REF
31. Schools in your community already do a good job of teaching writing.	23%	29	18	11	19
32. A person needs to be able to write well to advance in almost any career or job today.	69%	17	10	4	*
33. Learning to write well helps students perform better at school in all their subjects.	78%	14	5	2	1
34. When students learn to write well their scores go up on standardized tests – not just in writing.	68%	21	5	2	4
35. There is too much emphasis in schools today on writing, which is taking away from other things students need to learn.	7%	8	32	47	6
36. It is not realistic to expect teachers of all different subject areas to have the ability to teach writing.	23%	22	19	34	3
37. It is not realistic to expect schools to allocate more time on teaching writing, given all the pressures on them already.	15%	21	26	33	5

38. Please tell me who you agree with more: [RANDOMIZE] Mr. Green, who says there are plenty of good jobs and careers available that do not require you to write well, therefore not everyone needs to learn to write well; or Mr. Blue, who says all students need to learn to write well because in the process, they will have learned to think, which will improve their abilities in any job or career.	MR. GREEN	9%
	MR. BLUE	90
	DK/REF	1

Please tell me in each case if you think it is a good idea that should be put into practice now, that it is possibly a good idea but should be studied more, or is not a good idea for the schools in your area. [RANDOMIZE Q39-Q43]

	Put Into Practice Now	Study More	Not A Good Idea	DK/REF
39. Schools should have workshops for teachers of all subjects to help them learn how to teach writing.	66%	25	8	2

	Put Into Practice Now	Study More	Not A Good Idea	DK/REF
40. Writing should be taught in all subjects and at all grade levels.	61%	28	10	1
41. All high school students should have daily writing assignments – regardless of whether the students plan to go to college.	63%	27	10	1
42. All first-year college students should be required to take a writing class.	74%	17	7	2
43. All college students training to be teachers should learn to teach writing, regardless of the subject they plan to teach	72%	19	8	1

Please tell me how important you think each of the following proposals is for schools to follow when testing what students are learning in school. Rate each as essential, helpful, not very helpful, or not at all helpful to measuring what students are learning. The first proposal is: [RANDOMIZE Q44-Q49]

	Essential	Helpful	Not Very Helpful	Not at all Helpful	DK/ REF
44. State proficiency tests should include a writing requirement for high school students, in addition to the math and reading sections they typically have.	56%	37	3	2	2
45. Proficiency tests of student writing should be scored by teachers who actually read the pieces – not a machine or computer.	70%	25	2	1	2
46. Tests of writing skills should involve a number of pieces of writing from students – not just one example.	46%	48	3	2	1
47. Tests of writing skills should require students to write something several paragraphs long.	42%	47	7	3	1
48. Tests of writing skills should include evaluation of grammar and sentence structure.	61%	36	2	*	1
49. Tests of writing skills should evaluate students' ability to organize their thoughts.	52%	44	2	1	1

Now I have a few questions about you.

50. In your paid job or as a volunteer, do you sometimes have to write reports, correspondence, email or other text? 51. [IF YES IN Q50] Thinking about all the things you write, would you say that on an average day you write less than a page, about a page or more than one page? [IF MORE THAN ONE] Is that more than five or less than five pages?	YES LESS THAN A PAGE ABOUT A PAGE MORE THAN 1, LESS THAN 5 MORE THAN FIVE PAGES NO/DON'T WORK DK/REF	68% 16 19 21 12 32 *
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52. [IF ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE OR HIGH SCHOOL IN Q20; N=309] Are any of your children currently home schooled?	YES NO DK/REF	5% 95 --
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53. What was the last grade of school you yourself completed?	LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL GRAD/GED SOME COLLEGE/2-YR COLLEGE GRAD GRAD WORK OR DEGREE DK/REF	7% 31 29 20 13 *
---------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------

54. In terms of your political outlook, do you usually think of yourself as: [REVERSE ORDER] very conservative, somewhat conservative, middle of the road, somewhat liberal, very liberal?	VERY CONSERVATIVE SMWHT CONSERVATIVE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD SOMEWHAT LIBERAL VERY LIBERAL DK/REF	14% 26 30 17 7 6
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------

55. In what year were you born? [IF DK/REF] Are you between 18 and 24 years, 25 and 34 years, 35 and 44 years, 45 to 59 years, or 60 years old or older?	18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+ DK/REF	11% 21 21 18 12 16 *
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56. Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic? [IF NO/DK/REF] Would you say you are white, black or African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American, or something else?	WHITE	72%
	BLACK	12
	HISPANIC	12
	ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER	2
	NATIVE AMERICAN	1
	DK/REF	1

57. Stop me when I come to the category in which your total <u>household</u> income fell before taxes in 2004. Your best estimate is fine.	Less than \$25,000	20%
	\$25,000-\$49,000	29
	\$50,000-\$74,000	20
	\$75,000-\$99,000	10
	More than \$100,000	11
	DK/REF	10

GENDER	MALE	48%
	FEMALE	52

REGION	NORTHEAST	18%
	MIDWEST	23
	DEEP SOUTH	19
	SOUTH ATLANTIC	18
	WEST	22
