

Attitudes Toward Science Education: Key Findings From A National Survey

America's position as the world leader in innovation is increasingly being challenged by competitor nations that are stepping up their efforts in science and technology—and ensuring that they have an educated workforce up to the task. For too long we have known American students are falling behind in math and science, performing at levels far below students in competitor nations on international tests. Moreover, fewer students are pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines at the same time there is a greater demand for the jobs requiring advanced science education or training—from one year post-secondary certificate programs to PhD's.

Business leaders, teachers and the science community have long understood the correlation between improving science education and keeping the United States workforce strong and competitive.

But what does the general (voting) public think? How will the United States maintain its position in a global economy? What changes to science education do voters support? A new poll¹ from Achieve reveals voters' overall attitudes about science education and its significance.

VIEWS ON KEEPING THE US COMPETITIVE THROUGH IMPROVING SCIENCE EDUCATION

- Voters are **virtually unanimous** — 97% — in believing that improving the quality of science education is important to the United States' ability to compete globally.
- A majority of voters give the quality of science education a grade of "C" or below – both nationally (67%) and in their local schools (50%).
- Most voters (56%), believe science education in the United States ranks behind most other countries. This includes majorities across all major sub-groups, including gender, education, region or political affiliation.

Voters believe a quality science education is critical to our country's ability to compete globally. They are underwhelmed by the quality of science education in public schools today, with most viewing it as lagging other nations.

VIEWS ON IMPROVING SCIENCE EDUCATION IN THE CLASSROOM

- Similar to voters' views on English and mathematics standards, by a **margin of almost 2 to 1** (62% to 36%), voters prefer for states to have the same science standards so that students across the country have to meet the same expectations.
- When informed that a group of states are leading the effort to develop new standards that are internationally-benchmarked, more challenging, and will require students to apply their science knowledge and understand how science concepts fit together, voters show **broad support** (87%) for the new standards.

The poll findings demonstrate that state leaders—and their supporters-- who have undertaken developing new science standards together do so with solid support from a majority of voters who believe that the United States could strengthen its position in the global economy through improving science education.

¹On behalf of Achieve Inc., Public Opinion Strategies and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research conducted a national survey February 22-26, 2012 of N=800 registered voters. The poll has a margin of error of $\pm 3.46\%$.