

**Annette Sykora**  
*Slaton High School*  
*Slaton ISD*

Annette Sykora, dealer-principal of Smith Ford Mercury in Slaton and Smith South Plains Ford Lincoln-Mercury Dodge Chrysler and Jeep in Level-land, is 2009 immediate past chairman of the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA). She represents the franchised new car dealers of North Texas on the association's board of directors.

A third-generation new car dealer since 1989 and a member of the NADA Board since 1999, Sykora continues to serve on the executive committee. Sykora is also a trustee on the National Automobile Dealers' Charitable Foundation Board. Previously, she chaired NADA's Public Affairs Committee and has been a member of the Finance Committee.

Active in her community, Sykora is the former chair of the Finance Committee of the First United Methodist Church of Slaton and a former board member of the Slaton Chamber of Commerce. Sykora was appointed by the Texas Workforce Commission to serve on the board of directors of WorkSource of the South Plains from 2005 to 2007. While on the WorkSource Board, she served on the Oversight and Strategic Planning committees.

In 2005, Sykora was named Slaton Chamber Member of the Year. In 2007, she received the Association of Women in Communications' Distinguished Headliner Award. She was also named *Ward's Magazine's Dealer of the Year* in 2007. In 2008, Sykora received the Distinguished Woman Award from Northwood University and was included in the *Forbes.com* 2008 list of most influential women in the auto industry.



**"I have very fond memories of my time at Slaton ISD. As I reflect back on my education, I realize that many teachers (even those I wasn't fond of at the time) inspired, encouraged, and prodded me to expect more of myself. In the seventh grade, I had a teacher who realized my reading level was above the level of the majority of the class. I thought I was going to just breeze through that year, but instead Miss Johnson expected more of me and even gave me additional lessons. It made me realize the importance of improving my potential and performing at a higher level instead of just getting by. I consider myself a lifelong learner, and I thank all my teachers for giving me a love of learning."**

**"I am fortunate to have a business in the same community in which I went to public school. Our school does not have the facility for its auto technician program, but we have been proud to allow them to use our facilities and personnel to complement this curriculum."**

# Good Vibrations

## Local Schools Get Two Thumbs Up, According to Pair of Education Polls

Americans on the whole—and Texans in particular—view their local public schools in a very positive manner, according to the findings of two recent polls.

### Texas Education Survey

In the Texas Education Survey, conducted for the Friends of Texas Public Schools, a telephone survey performed in March by The Reuel Group, Inc., found that Texans overwhelmingly give their local public school districts and Texas public schoolteachers a passing grade.

According to the survey, 89.8 percent of respondents give Texas public schoolteachers a passing grade, while 61.6 percent give A's and B's to their work with Texas students. Similarly high marks are given to local public school district performance, with local districts receiving a passing grade by 80.2 percent, with 50.5 percent awarding A's and B's to local districts.

Though confidence is high for respondents' own districts, the overall performance of the state in preparing students for college/workforce is lower, with 38.2 percent giving grades of A or B. A comparable 39.5 percent give above-average grades to districts in managing tax dollars.

In the Texas Education Survey, 933 completed questionnaires were obtained from a sampling of likely

voters. The sampling design employed a random selection by geographic area and reflects citizen opinion and demographic characteristics of likely voters in Texas.

After completion of interviewing, the computer data file was analyzed by The Reuel Group, Inc. All response cross-tabulations and statistical interpretations were performed by Russell Autry, Bill Barnhouse, and Julie Ahonen. The margin of error based on the sample size of 933 is +/- 3.3 percent, with a confidence rating of 95 percent.

The Reuel Group, Inc., is a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research and subscribes to its Code of Professional Ethics and Practices.

### Texas Education Survey Sample Questions

*How would you grade the performance of your local public school district in preparing students for college or the workforce? A, B, C, D, F?*

A	196	21.0%
B	275	29.5%
C	277	29.7%
D	133	14.3%
F	52	5.6%

*How would you grade the overall performance of the teachers in local public schools? A, B, C, D, F?*

A	185	19.8%
B	390	41.8%
C	263	28.2%
D	63	6.8%
F	32	3.4%



*How would you grade your local public school district's overall performance in the use of your tax dollars? A, B, C, D, F?*

A	113	12.1%
B	256	27.4%
C	279	29.9%
D	163	17.5%
F	122	13.1%

### Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll

In the most recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the

Public Schools, Americans continue to view their community schools positively, with 46 percent assigning grades of A and B. This is in contrast to how Americans view the nation's schools, with 22 percent of respondents giving the nation's schools A's and B's.

Parents' perception of the school attended by their oldest child is very positive in the poll, with 72 percent assigning grades of A and B, the highest

recorded in 15 years.

Lack of funding for schools tops the list of "biggest problems facing schools" for the sixth year in a row, according to the poll. After inadequate funding, their second largest concern is discipline. Parents don't consider lack of discipline in schools as a problem and are instead more concerned with overcrowding, according to poll results.

Other poll findings:

- Americans believe that U.S. high school students compare favorably to students in other developed countries in terms of their creativity and problem-solving abilities. However, Americans are less confident that the reading and writing skills of American high school students compare favorably to students globally, and they believe that high school students in other countries rank higher in

mathematics and science skills.

- Americans are warming to the idea of national education standards, but they believe state-level education leaders should work together to develop these standards. Fifty percent said they prefer national standards, and 46 percent said they prefer state standards.

- Americans favor an increased use of federal funds to finance public schools and support young people who have the desire and academic ability to attend college. Thirty-seven percent said they would like to see federal taxes fund public schools, 35 percent said state taxes, and 20 percent said local taxes. Eighty-six percent favored more state and federal assistance for students who have the ability and desire to attend college but not enough money.

- Americans increasingly believe that our young people

**Americans increasingly believe that our young people should not only finish high school, but that many of them will need some college instruction—instruction they believe can and should begin in high school. Eighty-seven percent said they favor allowing students to earn college credits while still in high school.**

should not only finish high school, but that many of them will need some college instruction—instruction they believe can and should begin in high school. Eighty-seven percent said they favor allowing students to earn college credits while still in high school.

- Americans are losing faith in standardized tests and believe there are better ways to measure a child's academic and other skills. Thirty-two percent believe that examples of student work are the most accurate measure of a student's achievement, and 25 percent believe teacher observations are most accurate.

- Americans favor national teacher certification, teacher career ladders, and incentives for teaching in "high need" schools, but they are almost equally split on whether teachers' salaries should be linked to student standardized test scores. Seventy percent said teachers should be paid higher salaries to teach in schools that are in need of improvement.

Poll survey findings are based on 1,002 completed interviews. Fieldwork (data collection) for this study was administered during the period of June 14 to July 3, 2008. Due allowance must be made for statistical variation, especially in the case of findings for groups consisting of relatively few respondents. The findings of this report apply only to the United States as a whole and not to individual communities.

**PDK/Gallup Poll**

**Sample Questions**

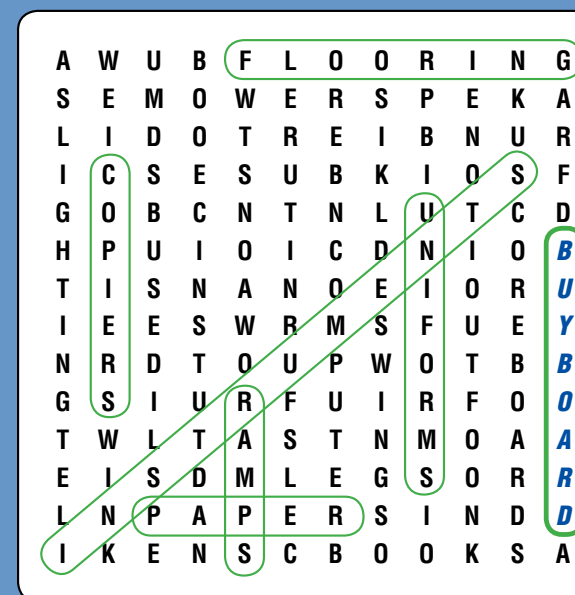
Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves in your community were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here—A, B, C, D, or Fail?

	'08	'07	'06	'05	'04
A & B	46	45	49	48	47
A	12	9	13	12	13
B	34	36	36	36	34
C	30	34	32	29	33
D	11	14	9	9	10
Fail	5	5	5	5	4
Don't Know	8	2	5	9	6

Using the A, B, C, D, and Fail scale, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?

	'08	'07	'06	'05	'04
A & B	72	67	64	69	70
A	30	19	26	31	24
B	42	48	38	38	46
C	14	24	24	21	16
D	5	5	5	6	8
Fail	4	3	4	4	4
Don't Know	5	1	3	0	2

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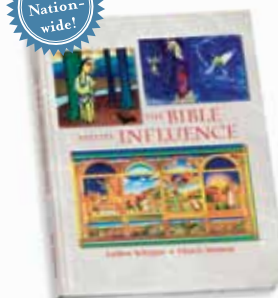
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