



## **For Immediate Release**

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## **NEW POLL REVEALS STIFLING IMAGINATION IN SCHOOLS UNDERLIES INNOVATION AND SKILLS DEFICIT**

### ***Evidence Points To New Values Coalition Of Swing Voters Ready to Act to Keep America Competitive***

**Washington, D.C. (Jan. 24)** – Results from a national poll were released today by Lake Research Partners identifying a new strand of swing voters poised to support candidates and policy that ensures building capacities of the imagination in schools.

The new national survey of 1,000 likely voters, with a 3.1% margin of error, identifies that 30% of American voters are not only dissatisfied with public education’s narrow focus on the “so-called” basics but that they also believe developing the imagination is a critical, but missing, ingredient to student success in 21<sup>st</sup> century schools and moving students beyond average.

“These are surprising results that indicate a strong set of shared public values are not being detected by public leaders,” said Celinda Lake, president of Lake Research Partners. “A significant number of voters believe that today’s educational approaches are outdated, impair critical capacities of the imagination, and stifle teachers and students alike, blocking potential for innovation and cost-effective educational opportunities. These data show a large population we call the ‘imagine nation’ are hungry for imagination in education and are going to take action accordingly—both in their local schools and at the voting booth, so that children are prepared for the world in which they will live.”

The majority of voters surveyed believe that it is extremely important to have good public schools nationwide, but there is also concern that public education in the United States is behind what is offered to students in other parts of the world and that we devote less attention to developing the imagination, creative skills, and innovation than other nations.

Among the key findings of the poll:

- Almost nine in ten voters (89%) say that using the imagination is important to innovation and one's success in a global knowledge-based economy and essential to success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- 69% of American voters believe that, when compared to other nations, America devotes less attention to developing the imagination and innovation.
- 88% of respondents indicated that an education in and through the arts is essential to cultivating the imagination.
- 63% of voters strongly believe that building capacities of the imagination that lead to innovation is just as important as the "so called" basics for all students in the classroom and that an education in and through the arts helps to substantiate imaginative learning (91%) and should be considered a part of the basics.

Lake's data suggest that a new "imagination constituency" will take action to ensure support for building the capacities of the imagination among students in public schools. In particular,

- 56% of voters say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who came out in support of more funding.
- The electorate is even more willing to punish a candidate who votes to cut funding for building capacities of the imagination. 57% of voters say they would be less likely to vote for such a candidate, and 36% percent of voters say they would be much less likely. Independent voters prove especially reactive to a candidate's decision to cut funding for building the capacities of the imagination.

Richard J. Deasy, director of the Arts Education Partnership, offered, "What is very clear in recent public opinion polling and our own research is that people across the country want a much more engaging and broadened education for students. They want schools to help students set high standards for themselves, have ambition and aspirations for success, and develop the skills to fulfill their dreams and meet the demands of the 21st century world in which we live. And, the majority of voters (88%) believe that an education in and through the arts is essential to developing the capacities of the imagination that empower students to achieve these goals. We have never seen this clear or strong an indication of public support for arts education."

"Voters react very strongly to the idea of combining the basics with the arts for the cultivation of the imagination. They also feel an education in the arts makes a major contribution to participating in a group or being a team player, learning to set goals and respecting multiple values and perspectives," said Lake.

Results from this poll echo findings from current research and poll data. According to a national poll released in November 2007 by the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, a majority of survey respondents indicated that schools need to do a better job of keeping up

with changing educational needs. This mirrors earlier findings released by the Conference Board in 2006 citing that nearly three-fourths of business leaders surveyed ranked “creativity/innovation as among the top five applied skills projected to increase in importance for future graduates...”

Other key findings of the poll include:

- More than half of voters think that it is extremely or very critical to incorporate building capacities of the imagination that lead to innovation into core courses.
- While almost two thirds of voters think that it is extremely or very important to have imagination and creative skills taught in school, most do not think that these skills are being taught very well.

“Americans are concerned that we are falling behind as a nation and that imagination, innovation, and creativity have been the foundation that moved the United States into a world leadership role,” said John Wilson, executive director of the National Education Association. “In today’s economy, an education focused only on the ‘so-called’ basics may not be providing students with the skills essential for success and continued world leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To maintain our competitive edge, we need to balance instruction, encouraging our children to be creative and develop their imaginations.”

A broad coalition of national leaders has joined with national, state, and local organizations on an agenda to restore imagination and innovation as key outcomes of learning. This coalition includes the National Education Association, the National Association of Manufacturers, NAMM, the International Music Products Association, the Ford Foundation, the George Gund Foundation and the Arts Education Partnership, representing over 100 educational and arts related national organizations.

The growing coalition also includes three successful models for building capacities of the imagination that lead to innovation with an education in and through the arts: The Dallas Arts Learning Initiative, the Ohio Department of Education initiatives to strengthen innovation along with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) through imaginative learning, and the Oklahoma Creativity Project. Each of these initiatives is successfully engaging all levels of leadership and mobilizing public support for a new vision of education that will put imagination at the core of learning in all subjects taught in schools.

Support for national research to gain better access to information is provided by the National Education Association (NEA), the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), and NAMM, the International Music Products Association. Support for site development work is provided by The George Gund Foundation.

For additional resources and more information on the poll, please visit [www.theimagination.net](http://www.theimagination.net).

*About the survey: Lake Research Partners (LRP) designed and administered this survey,*

*which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1, 000 likely registered voters nationwide. The survey was conducted December 15th to 20th, 2007. The margin of error for the sample is +/- 3.1%.*

*Characteristics of the “imagine nation:” Fifty four percent of these voters are women. Their geographic distribution is similar to voters overall. Over half of voters in the imagination constituency are swing voters, that is voters not identifying strongly with either party. Seventy four percent are under the age of 65. The majority of these voters are married (59 percent). Thirty percent of voters in the imagination constituency have children ages eighteen or younger. Among parents in the imagination constituency, more than half have children 12 or younger. The majority will vote in upcoming elections.*

*About the Arts Education Partnership: The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) is a national coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic and government organizations that demonstrate and promote the essential role of the arts in the learning and development of every child and in the improvement of America's schools. AEP was founded and is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and U. S. Department of Education in cooperation with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. The Partnership includes over 140 organizations that are national in scope and impact. [www.aep-arts.org](http://www.aep-arts.org)*

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