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Michigan Parents Culture of Education Survey

Conducted for YOUR CHILD and The Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians

Preliminary Summary of Findings

April 25, 2005

Overview

Michigan parents say education is important—but not essential.

Only about one-fourth of all parents (27%) say a good education is “essential” for getting ahead in life.

The lack of a strong commitment to the importance of education shows up in several key ways:

- Almost half of all parents (46%) don’t agree that everybody should have a college education.
- About one-third of all parents (34%) don’t agree that people with college education are usually better off.
- Almost half of all parents (47%) don’t trust the judgment of teachers and professors.
- Three-fifths of all parents (60%) define the success of their children without reference to education or the ability to support themselves.

Michigan’s cultural diversity is a strength.

Some groups place greater importance on education than others. In particular, groups defined by race or ethnicity including Arab Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans and African Americans are out in front of the base population in the following ways:

- They are more likely to agree that everybody should get a college education.
- They are more likely to agree that people with college educations are usually better off (with the exception of Hispanic Americans and African Americans).
- They are more likely to trust the judgment of teachers and professors (with the exception of African Americans).
- They are more likely to define success in terms of educational attainment and the ability to support oneself.
- They are more likely to want their children to not merely attend college but obtain an advanced or professional degree (with the exception of Native Americans).

Key Findings

Michigan parents who are not identified with the majority racial and ethnic groups outpace the base sample in the importance attached to a college education.

Almost nine out of ten (88%) Arab Americans agree that everybody should get a college education. This rate compares with 76% among Hispanic Americans, 73% among Asian Americans, 64% among Native Americans and 63% among African Americans—but only 54% in the base sample.

Parents not identified with the majority racial and ethnic groups are more likely than others to believe that those with college educations are usually better off.

Almost nine out of ten (88%) Asian Americans think people with a college education are usually better off than people without a college degree. By comparison, the base rate for this belief is 63%. Arab Americans are not far behind Asian Americans at 84%. Native Americans are a little above the base rate at 68%. The exceptions are Hispanic Americans (57%) and African Americans (47%), who lag the base rate.

Parents not identified with the majority racial and ethnic groups are more likely than others to trust the judgment of schoolteachers and professors.

Compared to the base rate of 53%, Arab Americans (64%) and Native Americans (63%) are much more likely to trust the judgment of the teachers and professors who decide what high school and college students should be reading. Hispanic Americans (58%) and Asian Americans (55%) are slightly more likely to trust teachers and professors than the base rate, but African Americans (45%) are somewhat less likely to trust them than the base rate.

African Americans outpace all groups in defining success in terms of education.

Compared to the base rate of just 12%, African Americans are almost three times as likely to define success for their children in terms of getting a good education (34%). Arab Americans (22%) and Hispanic Americans (21%) are almost twice as likely to do so, while Native Americans (15%) are a little more likely to do so. Asian Americans (11%) are slightly less likely to do so than the base rate.

Parents not identified with the majority racial and ethnic groups are more likely than the base sample to believe people used to care more about their children's future than they do today.

Compared to the base rate of 34%, African Americans (62%) are almost twice as likely to believe that people used to care more about their children's future than they do today. Other groups range from 39% - 53% in sharing this belief.

Parents not identified with the majority racial and ethnic groups are more likely than the base sample to regard having well educated parents as being essential for getting ahead in life.

Compared to the base rate of 12%, African Americans (25%) are more than twice as likely to regard having well educated parents as being “essential” for getting ahead in life. Asian Americans are not far behind at 23%, while Arab Americans (18%), Hispanic Americans (17%) and Native Americans (13%) all exceed the base rate.

Parents not identified with the majority racial and ethnic groups are more likely than the base sample to regard being well educated oneself as being essential for getting ahead in life.

Compared to the base rate of 27%, African Americans (39%) are almost half-again more likely to believe that being well educated oneself is “essential” for getting ahead in life. Asian Americans (37%) and Hispanic Americans (33%) are not far behind, while Arab Americans (28%) and Native Americans (25%) closely mirror the base sample in this regard.

Despite valuing education more, parents not identified with the majority racial and ethnic groups are *less* likely than the base sample to have done something specific in order to afford college for their children.

Almost three-fourths (74%) of the base sample parents say they’ve done something specific in order to have some money for their childrens’ education after high school. However, among the ethnic and racial groups only Asian Americans (74%) match that rate of preparedness. African Americans lag slightly at 67%. Hispanic Americans (61%), Native Americans (56%) and Arab Americans (54%) lag the base rate of preparedness by substantial margins.

Questions to be Answered

How will Michigan create multi-generational continuity in its culture of education?

The education of children does not take place in a vacuum. Households where the parents are well educated tend to value higher levels of education for the children, support children who want higher levels of education, and have the resources to make it possible. Success begets success, but the converse is also true. How will Michigan create a generation of college-educated *parents*, so that future generations will be more and more likely to be college educated as well?

How will Michigan persuade parents to save now for college later?

As state subsidies for higher education decline, college tuition rates rise at the public universities which have traditionally shouldered most of the responsibility for post-secondary education in this state. About half of all parents believe, possibly with good reason but possibly not, that college will be “affordable one way or another” when it comes time; most say they’re saving now. However, Michigan’s non-majority ethnic and racial groups lag the majority in this respect. How will the state communicate to these parents in particular the importance of saving now for the expense of college later?

How will Michigan double the rate of college attendance?

Today, some 40% of Michigan’s children attend college or acquire other post-secondary education or training. If that figure is to increase to 80%, many Michigan parents will need an attitude adjustment, given that only about 54% believe everybody should get a college education, 63% believe people with a college education are usually better off, and 53% trust the schools to do their jobs. How will Michigan grow the stock of pro-education parents so critical to raising a generation of college-bound children?

Sample and Selected Demographics

- The survey is based on six separate samples of randomly selected Michigan parents or other caregivers of school age children. A *base* sample of 794 was drawn from the population at large, and five oversamples of 150 were drawn, one each, from the following groups: Arab Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans and African Americans.
- A majority (58%) of the respondents in the base sample are females. In the oversamples, females account for from 57% - 71% of the respondents.
- The median age of the respondents is 45 years (base and oversamples).
- The median educational attainment for the base sample and the oversamples of Arab Americans, Native Americans and African Americans is “some college,” i.e., college coursework without a college degree. Among Hispanic Americans, the median educational attainment is non-college technical training post high school. Among Asian Americans, the median educational attainment is a college degree.
- The median annual household income for the base sample is \$67,500. Among African Americans, the median income is \$40,000. Among Arab Americans, it is \$45,000. Among Native Americans and Hispanic Americans, it is \$52,500. Among Asian Americans, it is \$87,500.