



## Statewide Education Survey Executive Summary

### February 2004

#### **Orientation**

The TPERF is a non-profit corporation formed in 2001 to advance the cause of education reform in Texas. TPERF is committed to meeting every Texas child's needs for the best and highest quality of education possible so that upon graduation, Texas children will be prepared for higher education and productive citizenship.

The objectives of this survey research were to 1) measure general and specific attitudes about standardized school testing, and 2) measure specific attitudes about the TAKS tests before and after detailed information is communicated.

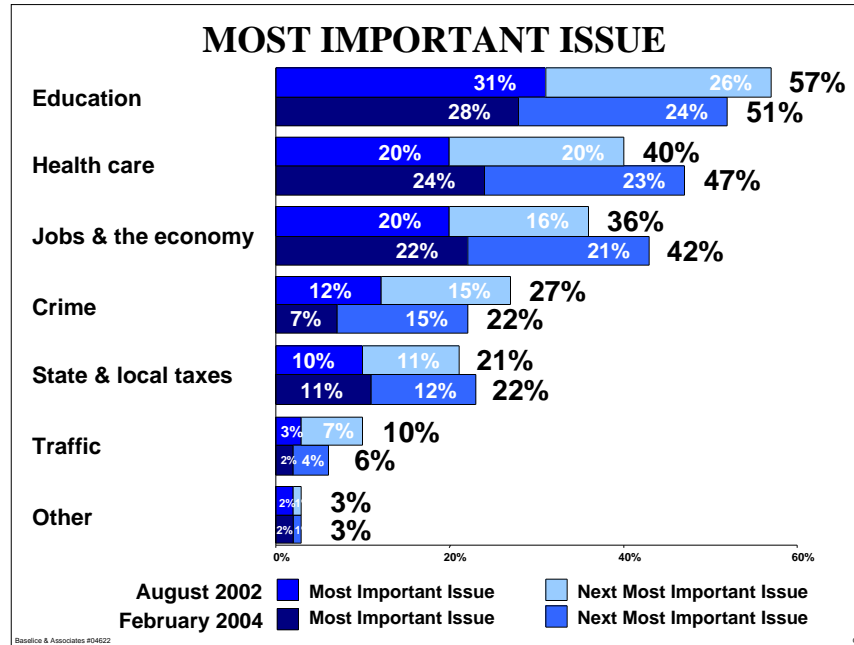
#### **Key Findings**

1. Education is the issue Texans select more than any other issue (51%) for the Texas Legislature to address. Education was also selected in August 2002 as the most important issue.
2. Approximately three out of five adults (59%) favor Texas public schools administering standardized testing such as the TAKS, with 33% of respondents strongly in favor of it. Thirty-two percent (32%) of respondents oppose the use of standardized testing in public schools, with 21% in strong opposition. Support for standardized tests was slightly higher in 2002 than in the current study (64% favor, 30% oppose).
3. After hearing several statements about education and the new TAKS test, the level of voters who favor standardized testing in the Texas public school system increases eight points to 67%, while opposition decreases three points to 29%. More than half of all respondents (54%) remain supportive of standardized testing throughout the survey, 13% switch to favor such tests, and 5% end up undecided. Another 5% switch to oppose the tests, and 24% remain opposed throughout the survey.

Base1ice & Associates, Inc. was retained to conduct survey research for the purpose of studying attitudes and opinions of Texas adults. This survey was conducted among N=806 randomly selected adults on February 12-17, 2004. The margin of error for a sample of this size is  $\pm 3.5\%$  at the .95 test level.

## Most Important Issue

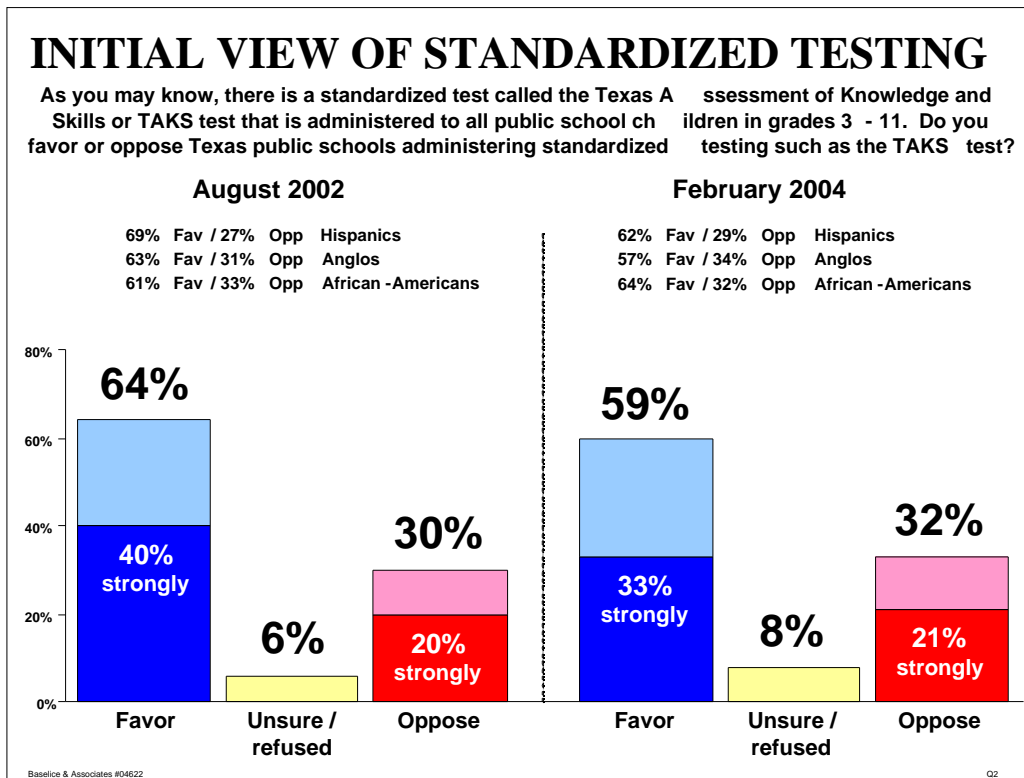
Respondents select education (51% combined) from a list of six issues as the most important issue for the Texas Legislature to address. Health care (47%) and jobs and the economy (42%) are chosen as most important issues next. Crime (22%) and state and local taxes (22%) are selected fourth and fifth most often, followed by traffic at 6%. The results from the August 2002 survey displayed similar findings in that the issues had the same importance ranking.



- Adults in the Austin/Waco/Bryan media markets choose state and local taxes (29%) and jobs and the economy (52%) as most important issues at above average rates, while respondents in the Houston (56%) and East Texas media markets (58%) are more apt to be concerned with health care.
- College graduates (60%) and adults under 50 with some college experience (59%) choose education as their biggest concern at higher than average rates while females without college experience (56%) choose health care and males without college experience (48%) choose jobs and the economy.
- Republican males (29%), male ticket-splitters (35%), Republicans 50 or older (35%), ticket-splitters 50 or older (31%) and Anglo males (28%) believe state and local taxes are a priority issue at above average rates. Adults concerned with jobs and the economy are male Democrats (50%), Democrats under 50 (52%) and Hispanic males (52%).
- African-American females (73%), Hispanic females (59%), Democrat females (64%), females 50 or older (57%) and Democrats 50 or older (63%) choose health care at above average rates as the most important issue facing them.

## Administering Standardized Tests

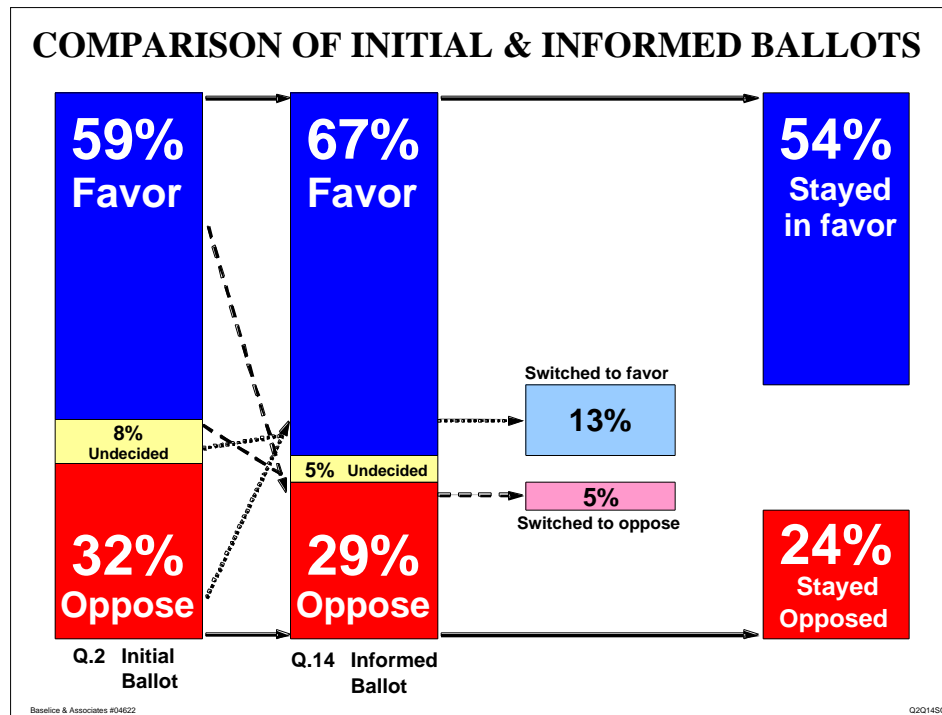
Approximately three out of five adults (59%) favor Texas public schools administering standardized testing such as the TAKS, with 33% of respondents strongly in favor of it. Thirty-two percent (32%) of respondents oppose the use of standardized testing in public schools, with 21% in strong opposition. The slight decline in support over the past year might be partially attributable to the new TAKS test replacing the TAAS test, and adults needing to become more familiar with the new test.



- Overall, there has been a 5-point decrease in overall support among the total sample and 6 to 7-point decrease in support among the Hispanics and Anglos observed in the 2002 survey. However, among African Americans, there is a 3-point increase in support of administering standardized tests.
- Respondents in the San Antonio/South/El Paso media markets (66%) are currently more likely than average to favor standardized testing, whereas respondents in the Houston media market (39%) are more likely to oppose the issue.
- Males under 50 (68%) favor standardized testing at higher than average rates while females under 50 (43%) oppose it at higher than average rates. Republican males (69%) favor such tests at higher than average rates, whereas Republican females (38%) and female ticket-splitters (40%) oppose the issue at higher than average rates.

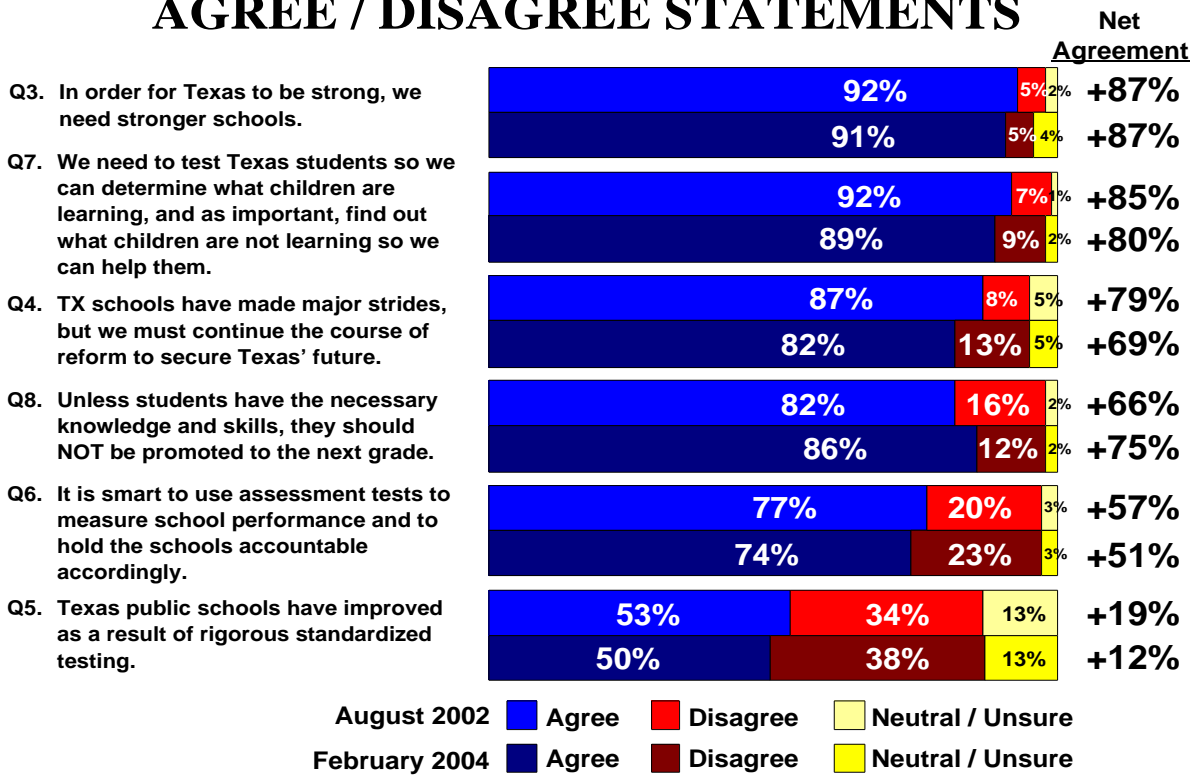
## Standardized Testing Ballot Comparison

After hearing several statements about education and the new TAKS test, the level of voters who favor standardized testing in the Texas public school system increases eight points to 67%, while opposition decreases three points to 29%. More than half of all respondents (54%) remain supportive of standardized testing throughout the survey, 13% switch to favor such tests, and 5% end up undecided. Another 5% switch to oppose the tests, and 24% remain opposed throughout the survey.

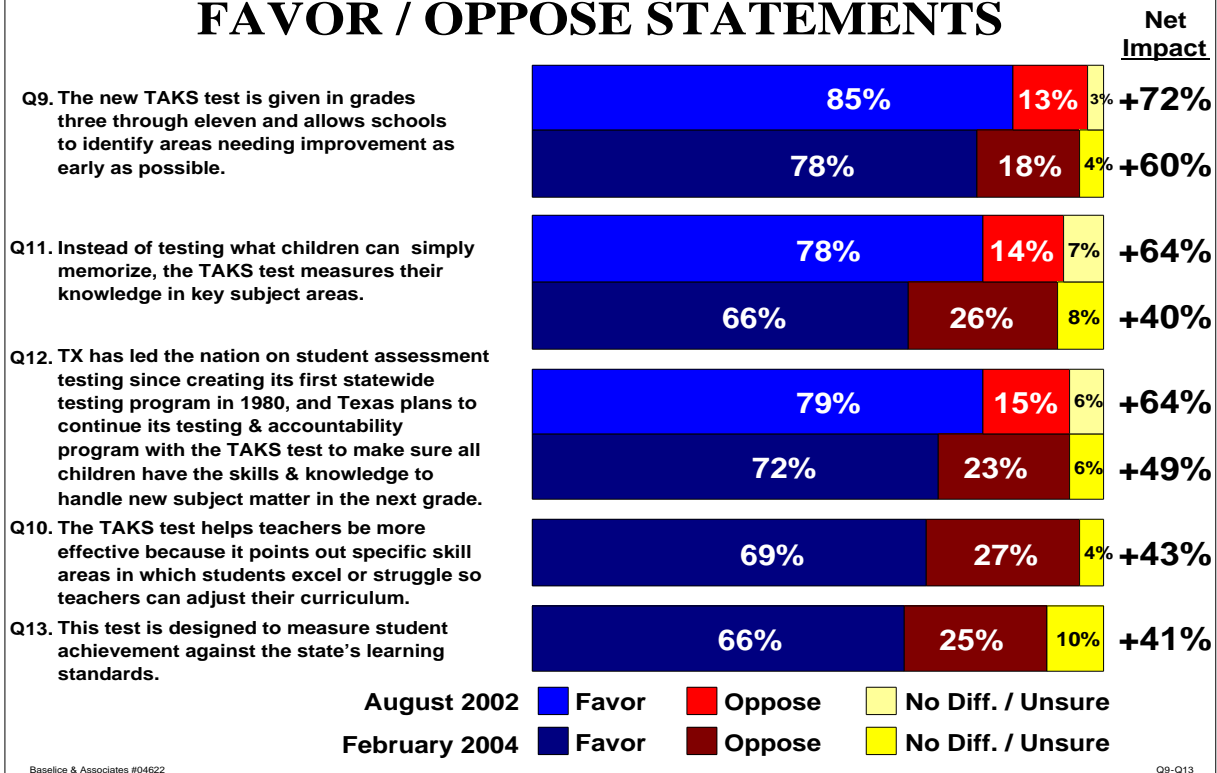


- Adults in the West Texas media market (73%) favor standardized testing on the informed ballot at above average rates and are among the subgroups who display the highest increase (+14) in favor of the issue from the initial to the informed ballot. Other subgroups who display a significant increase in favor of standardized testing from the initial to the informed ballot are respondents in the East Texas media market (+15), and Republican females (+14).
- Subgroups who remain in favor of standardized testing within the public school system on both the initial and informed ballot tests at above average rates include employed males (63%), males under 50 (63%), Republican males (64%), and Hispanic males (62%).
- Subgroups who are the most apt to stay opposed to standardized testing are adults in the Houston media market (30%), employed females (34%), females under 50 (33%), Republican females (32%), Democrats under 50 (34%), and Hispanic females (31%).
- Adults in the East Texas media market and adults over 50 without a college degree (19% each) switch to favor testing at above average rates.

# AGREE / DISAGREE STATEMENTS

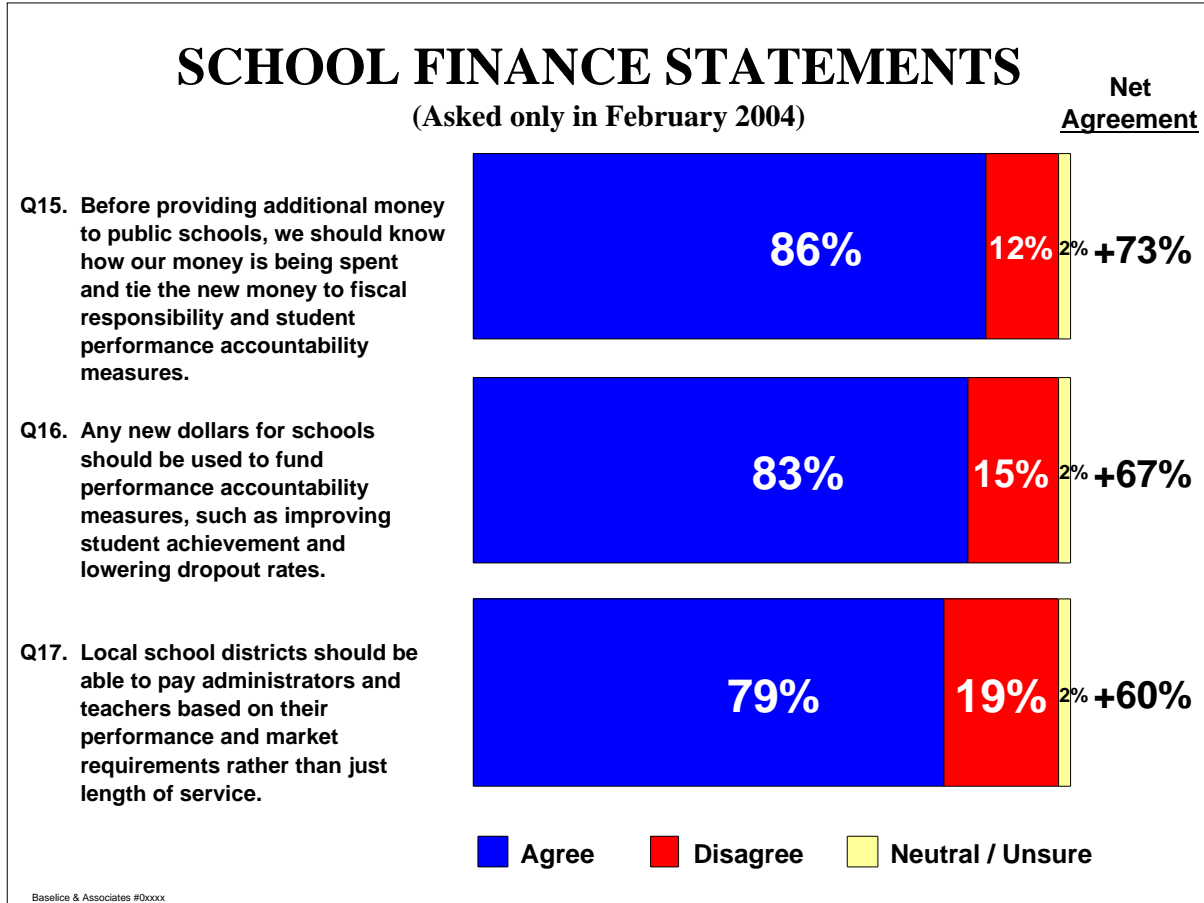


# FAVOR / OPPOSE STATEMENTS



## School Finance Statements

Three statements regarding school finance statements were also presented to respondents in this survey. Each statement generated a positive Net Agreement Score (agree % minus disagree %). Question 15 generated the highest Net Agreement Score (+73%) followed by Question 16 (+67%) and Question 17 (+60%).



- Question 15 is significant among adults in the West Texas media market (+96%), East Texas media market (+92%), males without college experience (+83%), Republican males (+84%), and Republicans 50 or older (+91%).
- Question 16 generated high scores among respondents in the West Texas media market (+84%), East Texas media market (+83%), unemployed males (+79%), respondents with no college experience (+82%), Republicans 50 or older (+79%), and Hispanic males (+85%).
- Respondents in the West Texas media market (+77%), unemployed males (+77%), males 50 or older (+71%), respondents 50 or older without a college degree (+76%), Republican males (+80%), Republicans 50 or older (+87%), and Anglo males (+70%) are most apt to agree with Question 17.