



American Public and Head Start Director's Perceptions toward Head Start

The Trust for Early Education (TEE) commissioned Peter D. Hart Research Associates to conduct a national poll examining public perceptions about pre-kindergarten and other early learning programs, of which Head Start is an important part. This poll of adults during February 19-20, 2003 reveals that 80 percent of those knowledgeable about Head Start had favorable feelings toward the Head Start program; seven percent of those knowledgeable about Head Start had unfavorable feelings.

A second TEE poll, conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates and given specifically to 207 Head Start directors from March 26-April 1, 2003, found that 64 percent of these directors feel that the Head Start program is fine as it is and does not need to be changed, but 66 percent report that current funding levels for Head Start are inadequate. Other key findings of this study are:

- When asked about the idea of giving Head Start to the states, 86 percent of Head Start directors said that they would disapprove of such a measure. (80 percent reported that they would strongly disapprove).
- When all Head Start directors were asked about what they would use additional funding for if the money could *not* be used to increase the number of children that they serve, the majority of directors (57 percent) reported that they would use additional funding to increase teachers' salaries.
- Fifty-five percent of Head Start directors agreed that children 3-4 years old are too young to be given assessments to measure their literacy skills.
- When asked if measuring children's literacy skills is the best way to ensure that a Head Start program is doing its job, 70 percent said that they disagreed with that statement. Seventy-one percent of directors agreed that since Head Start provides many other services in addition to teaching children academic skills, measuring children's literacy skills is *not* a good way to determine whether a Head Start program is doing its job.
- Eighty-nine percent of directors felt that Head Start teachers should be required to have a college degree, but 51 percent said that a two-year degree would be adequate.

For more information about the results of this study, contact TEE at www.trustforearlyed.org.