

Respect at school in decline, survey shows

By Greg Toppo, USA TODAY, January 23, 2014

Compared with when they were students, Americans today believe that there's a lot less respect in the hallways of the nation's schools. A new Harris Poll out Thursday finds that fewer adults believe teachers respect parents or students — and that fewer believe parents and students respect teachers. In other words, just about every relationship in a school has soured a bit.

In a first-of-its-kind survey, Harris asked 2,250 adults last fall to compare their memory of "school dynamics" when they were students with today. The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement "students respect teachers" dropped from 79% to 31%. The findings on student respect for teachers are nearly identical for adults who are parents of school-age children and those who aren't.

"We have gone from a time when parents believed what the teacher said in regards to their child's behavior and reacted accordingly to the present, where parents stare in disbelief and think of a million excuses as to why their child misbehaves," says Marybeth Harrison, a public school speech therapist in Hunterdon County, N.J. She said teachers are "sadly the first to be blamed," as parents cite poor classroom management or a lack of patience. "It's time for parents to start 'parenting' and teach manners, respect, etc. ... at [home](#). Let teachers teach."

Linda Schulz, Harris' senior vice president for research, says the survey was "a way to be able to have at least some kind of [benchmark](#)" on how people feel about schools. Harris plans to conduct the survey annually. **Among the biggest drops: respondents' impressions of the percentage of parents who respect teachers, which has plummeted, in their minds, from 91% to 49%. Students' respect for teachers also dropped, from 79% to 31%.**

The findings don't surprise Arnold Fege, president of Public Advocacy for Kids, a Washington, D.C.-based group focused on [education](#) and child advocacy policy. A veteran of many political battles surrounding schools, he has noticed "a lack of respect for public education over the years," whether the issue is testing, teacher evaluations or school choice. "I think the community really feels that they've lost control of large parts of the institutions that are important to their life," Fege says.

Source: <http://www.freep.com/article/20140123/FEATURES01/301230061/Respect-at-school-in-decline-survey-shows>