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Findings from a Nationwide Survey Among Likely Voters¹

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Strategic Summary

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The majority of voters 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.

Robert G. Meadow,
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Partner

Voters recognize the importance of incorporating building capacities of the imagination that lead to innovation in core courses. They believe that focusing on the imagination and the arts will better address the demands of a 21st century workforce and success in a global, knowledge-based economy.

Daniel R. Gotoff
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Partner

There is a distinct “imagination” constituency that not only overwhelmingly attaches importance to building the capacities of the imagination, but also shows greater dissatisfaction with public schools today than voters overall.²

Rick Johnson
Vice President

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Vice President

Notwithstanding the value voters place on building capacities of the imagination, less than half of voters nationwide say that schools today are doing a good job teaching students imagination and creative skills. Voters also feel that America devotes less attention than other nations to developing imagination and creative and innovation skills. There is a sense that teaching skills of the imagination has decreased in the past decade, and voters are worried about this decline. Part of this decline can be attributed to the focus on more standardized testing that voters see as discouraging the imagination and creative skills in students.

¹ Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached 1,000 likely voters and was conducted between December 15th and December 20th, 2007. Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn using random digit dial (RDD). The data were weighted slightly by gender, age, race, education, union membership, parental status, and party identification in order to ensure that it accurately reflects the demographic configuration of these populations. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.1%.

² The “imagination” constituency represents voters who, when asked initially, say that incorporating building the capacities of the imagination into core courses is extremely critical. The “imagination” constituency makes up 30 percent of the voters. They are men and women, live on the coasts and in the heartlands, and are all ages and education levels. They are engaged voters and over half are swing voters – not identifying as a strong Republican or Democrat (54 percent).

Voters, and the “imagination” constituency in particular, reject that the basics and technology alone prepare students for success in the 21st century. Imagination and creative skills are part of the basics. However, there is some caution around language that talks about a “primary” focus rather than “sole” focus around the basics, as there can be some buy-in around an argument that basics should be the primary focus.

Voters push back strongly on leaving the imagination for outside the classroom. Voters feel an education in the arts makes a major contribution to participating in a group or being a team player, developing the imagination, learning to set goals, and respecting multiple values and perspectives.

Voters show some willingness to hold elected officials accountable. They are more willing to punish officials for negative action around this issue, than to reward for positive action, but both receive similar overall support. A majority of voters say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who came out in support of building the capacities of the imagination among students in public schools, with the “imagination” constituency being much more likely than voters, overall, to say this would impact their vote. Voters feel more intensely about punishing a candidate who has voted to cut funding for building capacities of the imagination in schools, and, again, intensity is greatest among the “imagination” constituency.

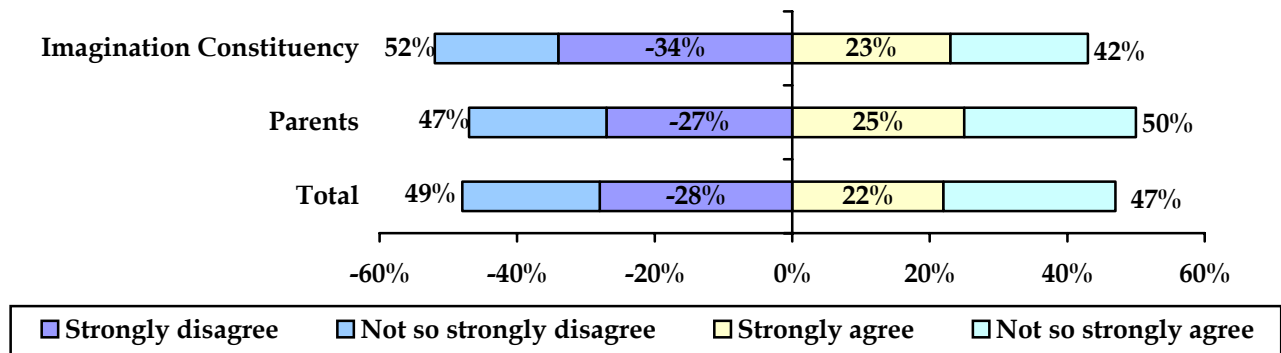
Messaging around how developing the imagination and creative skills will help prepare students for a life of success and also strengthen our community and democracy proves effective. Parents are especially persuaded by this argument. In addition, voters respond to how the capacity to be creative and imagine what is possible serves as a catalyst for momentous advances in science, medicine and other fields. The “imagination” constituency especially responds to the message that imagination is required to be innovative and creative, creating a potential to envision advances in science, medicine, or other fields in the 21st century. The larger narratives work better. This is not just icing on the cake, it is an essential part of education. Even in an engaged debate, investing in an education that encourages imagination, creativity and innovation beats a call for sticking with the basics.

Public Education – Good Public Schools a Necessity, but Schools may not be Teaching the Right Skills

Other issues aside, **the overwhelming majority of voters say that it is important to them personally to have good public schools in the nation (94 percent important, 64 percent extremely important).** Not surprisingly, parents and the “imagination” constituency are more likely to say that having good public schools in the nation is extremely important to them (parents: 70 percent extremely important; “imagination” constituency: 73 percent).

While education is personally important to most voters, there is also a widespread sense that public education in the United States is falling behind what is offered to students in other parts of the world. Voters are almost three times as likely to say that public education in this country is falling behind than they are to say it is ahead of what is offered in places like Europe or China (ahead: 19 percent; behind: 56 percent; 13 percent same).

Voters split around whether or not schools today teach students the skills they need to be competitive in the workforce once they graduate (47 percent agree; 49 percent disagree). Intensity leans slightly on the side of those who strongly disagree, with 28 percent saying they strongly disagree that students today have the skills they need to be competitive in the workforce (22 percent strongly agree). When it comes to preparation for the workforce, parents prove similar to voters overall while the “imagination” constituency are more likely to express dissatisfaction with how well schools today teach students the skills they need to be competitive.



Among those who do not think that schools today teach the skills necessary to be competitive in the workforce, voters split, but lean toward saying that the problem is schools not teaching the right skills over schools not doing a good job teaching the skills (not teaching right skills: 44 percent; not doing a good job: 38 percent). Parents are even more likely than voters overall to say that the problem stems from schools not teaching the right skills while the “imagination” constituency tends to be split on the source of the problem (parents – not teaching right skills: 47 percent, not doing a good job: 35 percent; “imagination” constituency – 43 percent, 41 percent).

Public Education Curricula – Imagination Critical to Core Courses

Voters believe it is critical to include imagination and innovation skills in core courses -- over half of voters believe that it is extremely or very critical to incorporate building capacities of the imagination that lead to innovation into core courses (62 percent “8-10”, 30 percent “10”; mean 7.9 on a 0-10 scale where 0 is not at all critical and 10 is extremely critical), and only five percent say that it is not very critical to incorporate this into core courses. At the end of the survey, voters prove even more willing to see this as a critical element. Support remains strong, and intensity actually increases, with

66 percent giving it an 8-10 rating to incorporate these skills into core courses (35 percent “10”; mean 8.1). In addition, almost two-thirds voters think that is extremely or very important for imagination and creative skills to be taught in school (mean 8.0 on a 0-10 scale where 0 means not at all important and 10 means extremely important; 66 percent give it an “8-10”, 34 percent give it a “10”). This sentiment is especially strong among the “imagination” constituency, with 94 percent saying it is extremely or very important (82 percent give it a “10”).

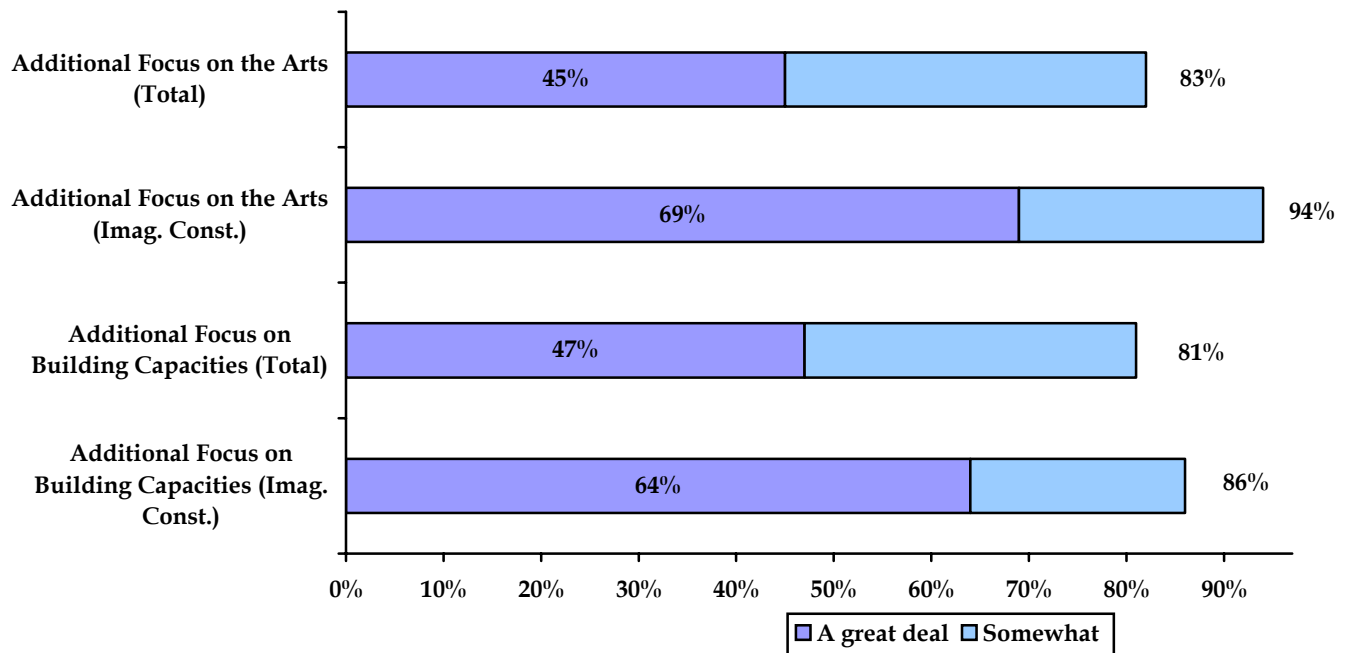
Although voters recognize the value of having imagination and creative skills taught in schools, the majority of voters do NOT see schools teaching these skills well (mean 5.4 on a scale that goes from 0-10 where 0 is not well at all and 10 is extremely well; 28 percent “0-4”; 18 percent “8-10”). Voters also see teaching skills of the imagination on the decline, with 56 percent saying that teaching these skills has decreased over the past ten years (31 percent decreased a lot). The “imagination” constituency is even more likely to see this type of teaching on the decline, with 62 percent saying it has decreased over the last decade (41 percent decreased a lot). This is of concern to many voters, with 80 percent of those who see teaching skills of the imagination as decreasing saying they are worried about the decline, and over one third saying they are very worried (35 percent). Fifty five percent of the “imagination” constituency says they are very worried about the decrease in teaching skills of the imagination (91 percent worried).

While voters split on whether public education today encourages or discourages developing the imagination and creative skills in students (34 percent encourages; 38 percent discourages; 9 percent both; 7 percent neither; 13 percent don’t know), they prove more decisive on the role of standardized testing. Voters are more than two times as likely to say that standardized testing discourages developing the imagination and creative skills than they are to say it encourages developing the imagination and creative skills (22 percent encourages; 56 percent discourages). The “imagination” constituency is more likely than voters overall to see public education as discouraging the development of the imagination and creative skills, though they are no more critical of standardized testing than voters nationwide (public education – 32 percent encourages, 40 percent discourages; standardized testing – 22 percent encourages, 60 percent discourages).

Voters, especially those in the “imagination” constituency, think it is both possible to teach imagination and creative skills and imagination and innovation in schools (total – imagination and creative skills: 84 percent yes, imagination and innovation: 82 percent yes; “imagination” constituency – imagination and creative skills: 92 percent yes, imagination and innovation: 92 percent yes). Parents, however, feel schools are better equipped to teach imagination and creative skills than imagination and innovation (86 percent yes and 78 percent yes respectively).

When compared to other nations, the electorate thinks America devotes less attention to developing the imagination and innovation and developing the imagination and creative skills. However, voters feel even stronger about innovation (imagination and creative skills: -8, 42 percent less attention, 16 percent much less attention; imagination and innovation –21, 50 percent, 19 percent).

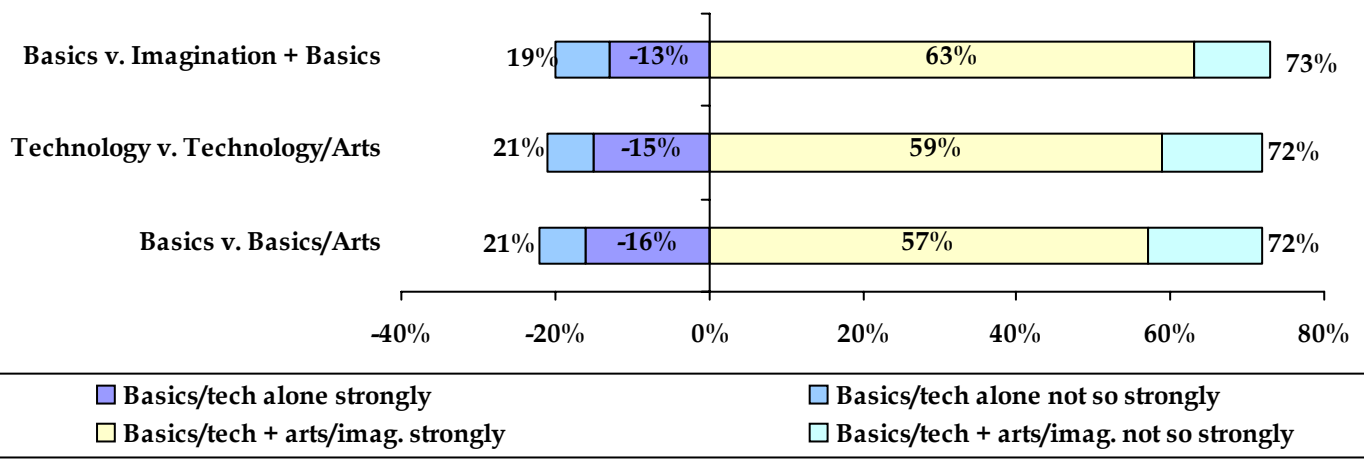
Voters see imagination as contributing to the demands of the 21st century workforce, both when framed as focusing on the arts and building capacities. When asked how a greater focus on the arts or building capacities of the imagination alongside science, technology and math would better address the demands of the 21st century workforce, voters see both as contributing a great deal or somewhat to meeting the demands of today’s workforce. Thus the language of either building capacities of the



imagination or a focus on the arts, such as music, visual arts, theater, and dance work equally well on the surface. Once again, the “imagination” constituency is more likely than the full electorate to recognize the importance of the arts and building the capacities of the imagination alongside more traditional subjects, but they respond slightly better to the language of “focus on the arts.”

Voters strongly believe that education in and through the arts is part of the basics. Comparing a series of statements on instruction of just the basics for students versus instruction of an education of the arts alongside the basics, voters are more than three times as likely to prefer the latter. More than half of voters say they strongly favor the statements that blend technology and the basics with an education in the arts or one that encourages developing the imagination.³ Fifteen percent or less say they strongly agree with the statements that focus solely on instruction of the basics for students. While parents prove similar to voters overall in their support for the statements that combine the basics with arts and developing the imagination, the “imagination” constituency shows the greatest intensity in their choice of the combined statements.

³ See Appendix A for text of statements.



Arts and the Imagination in Education – Imagination Needed for Success

Voters are most responsive to statements that link imagination to success in today’s knowledge economy and the 21st century, with more than half strongly agreeing with these statements. In total, almost nine in ten agree that using the imagination is important to innovation and one’s success in a global knowledge-based economy (89 percent agree, 59 percent strongly) and essential to success in the 21st Century (86 percent agree, 58 percent strongly). Parents prove similar to the nationwide electorate, while two thirds of the “imagination” constituency strongly agrees with each of these statements.

Statements that discuss combining the basics with the arts or the cultivation of the imagination are also compelling, with over half of voters strongly agreeing. Further, the majority of the electorate strongly agrees that an education in and through the arts provides students with the opportunity to develop their imagination. Just under half of voters strongly agree with statements that identify how standardized testing inhibits full development of the imagination in students⁴ and that connect the arts with the ability to adapt in a global economy. And, while voters do reveal strong support for an education that balances the basics with developing the imagination and inclusion of the arts, there is a more pronounced divide among the electorate, including the “imagination” constituency, when asked if basic competence, such as reading and math, should be the “primary focus” of learning without regard to skills that develop the imagination. Forty nine percent of voters agree with this statement, and one in four strongly agree with it.

The statements below show voters’ broad-based and intense agreement. Voters truly and robustly support the incorporation of arts in education and the inclusion of creative skills to develop the imagination.

⁴ The language of “perform beyond the average” or “perform at minimum skill levels” engenders no difference in response among voters overall.

Arts and the Imagination in Education	
	% Agree (% Strongly Agree)
Using the imagination is important to innovation and one's success in a global, knowledge-based economy.*	89% (59%)
Imagination is essential to success in the 21 st Century.*	86% (58%)
An education in and through the arts provides students with the opportunity to develop their imagination.*	91% (55%)
When integrated with the arts, science, engineering, technology, and math provide students with a set of skills and values necessary to promote innovation.	87% (55%)
The basics alone are not adequate for the 21 st century workforce without the skills and ability to be imaginative, creative, and innovative.*	85% (54%)
Innovation through the cultivation of the imagination is a sound educational investment.*	85% (54%)
An education in and through the arts is essential to cultivating the imagination.*	88% (53%)
The arts develop imagination and the critical, intellectual and personal skills needed to create, innovate and adapt in a global economy.*	80% (48%)
Standardized testing today does not encourage students to perform beyond the average and does not fully develop the imaginations of students.*	78% (47%)
Standardized testing today encourages students to perform at minimum skill levels and does not fully develop the imaginations of students.*	75% (47%)
Teaching students innovative skills is increasingly a missing element in education today.*	75% (45%)
Cultivating the capacities of the imagination is a largely forgotten but essential task of public education today.*	79% (42%)
Schools today are not building capacities of the imagination.	71% (38%)
Basic competence, such as reading and math, should be the primary focus of learning without regard to skills that develop the imagination.*	49% (25%)

*Split sampled questions.

Skills and Habits that Come Through an Education in the Arts - Team Players, Goal Setting, and Respect for Multiple Values

When asked to rate skills and habits that are influenced by the arts, voters say that the arts make a major contribution to participating in a group and being a team player.⁵ Forty-one percent of voters overall say the arts make a major contribution to learning this skill. The “imagination” constituency is even more likely to say the arts make a major contribution here, with two-thirds of these voters rating this skill a 10 (67 percent) -- across all of the skills and habits tested, the “imagination” constituency is more likely than voters overall to say that the arts make a major contribution to each skill or habit. Voters also believe that the arts make a significant contribution to learning how to set goals and achieve them, respecting multiple values and perspectives, and developing the imagination. Not surprisingly, the “imagination” constituency holds particularly intense views. Voters overall, parents, and the “imagination” constituency are more likely to say that the arts make a major contribution to developing the imagination than they are to say the arts make a major contribution to visualizing new possibilities for thought and action. Less than one in four think the arts make a major contribution to visualizing new possibilities for thought and action (23 percent).

One third of voters nationwide say that the arts make a major contribution to managing challenges and overcoming frustration and failure, as well as being able to concentrate on a task. However, over half of the “imagination” constituency believes that these skills and habits are affected by the arts in a major way. Thirty percent of voters find that the arts make a major contribution to using multiple ways of learning and communicating experiences and information.

	Total (Mean/% Rating 10)	Parents (Mean/% Rating 10)	Imagination Constituency (Mean/% Rating 10)
Participating in a group and being a team player	8.1/41%	8.3/45%	9.0/67%
Learning how to set goals and achieve them	7.8/36%	7.9/40%	8.7/59%
Respecting multiple values and perspectives	8.0/35%	8.2/39%	8.9/58%
Developing the imagination*	8.0/34%	8.2/38%	9.1/65%
Managing challenges and overcoming frustration and failure	7.9/33%	8.0/35%	8.9/58%
Being able to concentrate on a task	7.8/33%	7.7/33%	8.7/54%
Using multiple ways of learning and communicating experiences and information	7.9/30%	8.0/33%	8.9/56%
Visualizing new possibilities for thought and action*	7.5/23%	7.5/24%	8.9/53%

* Split-sampled question

⁵ Skills and habits rated on a scale of 0-10, where 10 means the arts make a major contribution and 0 means the arts do not contribute at all to learning this skill.

Candidate Support - Willingness to Hold Candidates' Accountable

Voters nationwide see building capacities of the imagination as politically salient: they are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports more funding for this and less likely to vote for a candidate who would cut funding for this effort. They prove more likely to punish a candidate who cuts funding, with higher intensity among those who say they would be much less likely to vote for a candidate who cut funding than those who say they would be much more likely to vote for a candidate who supports more funding for building capacities of the imagination. This is especially true among both parents and the “imagination” constituency. Not surprisingly, a candidate’s position on the fact that funding builds capacities of the imagination in public schools is more likely to influence the voting behavior of the “imagination” constituency. Conversely, voters overall and parents are more likely than this subgroup to say that a candidate’s stance on this issue would make no difference in how they voted.

MORE/LESS LIKELY TO VOTE FOR A CANDIDATE WHO CUT FUNDING FOR BUILDING CAPACITIES OF THE IMAGINATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOL S			
	% More Likely (% Much More Likely)	% Less Likely (% Much Less Likely)	No Difference
Total	19% (7%)	57% (36%)	20%
Parents	21% (11%)	56% (40%)	20%
Imagination Constituency	14% (8%)	73% (54%)	9%

MORE/LESS LIKELY TO VOTE FOR A CANDIDATE WHO CAME OUT IN SUPPORT OF FUNDING FOR BUILDING CAPACITIES OF THE IMAGINATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOL S			
	% More Likely (% Much More Likely)	% Less Likely (% Much Less Likely)	No Difference
Total	57% (29%)	10% (5%)	27%
Parents	64% (31%)	8% (6%)	24%
“Imagination” Constituency	72% (48%)	5% (2%)	16%

Education Funding Priorities - Complementing the Basics with Imagination

Engaged Debate			
	Basic Skills	Well-Rounded Knowledge	Workforce Skills
Total	30%	53%	55%
Parents	29%	57%	52%
“Imagination” Constituency	26%	58%	57%

Voters overwhelmingly favor a comprehensive approach to education that includes imagination even in an engaged debate.

Some/other people say that the crisis facing public schools across the country requires that we focus our attention and public spending on fixing crumbling infrastructure, increasing teacher salary, providing students with books and computers, and, ultimately, making sure that our students are fully competent in the basic skills, such as reading, math, and writing, necessary to succeed in the workforce.

[Well-Rounded Knowledge] Some/other people say that Americans expect new results from education, including developing the basic skills and the ability to be imaginative, creative and innovative. One way of developing these skills is an education that stimulates creativity, builds capacities of the imagination that lead to innovation, and provides the ability to adapt to ever changing circumstances.

OR

[Workforce Skills] Some/other people say that an education focused only on basic skills, such as reading, writing and math, may not be providing students with the essential skills to succeed in the 21st century. Americans expect new results from education, including developing these basic skills and the ability to be imaginative, creative and innovative.

education funding on the basics and complementing the basics with an education that encourages students to be imaginative, creative and innovative, voters support the more comprehensive approach. Among voters overall and the “imagination” constituency, the arguments in favor

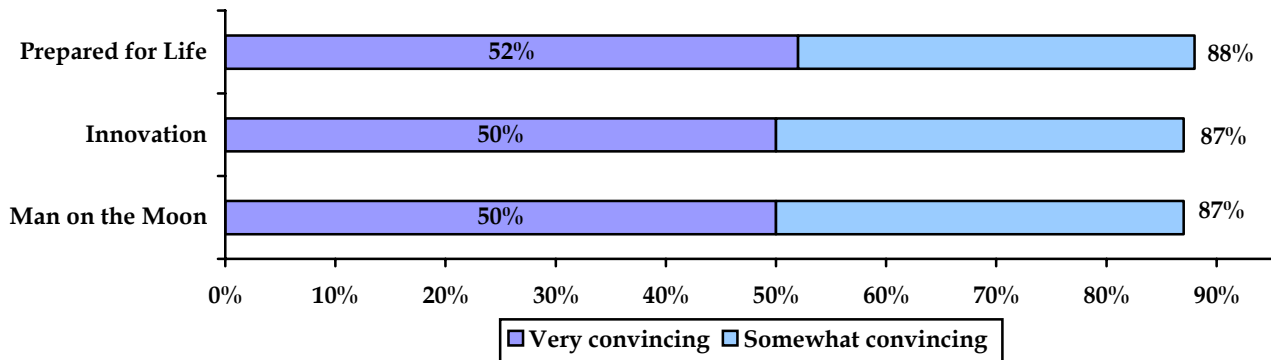
of well-rounded knowledge and developing comprehensive workforce skills prove equally compelling (total - basic skills: 30 percent, well-rounded knowledge: 53 percent/basic skills: 30 percent, workforce skills: 55 percent; “imagination” constituency - basic skills: 27 percent, well-rounded knowledge: 58 percent/basic skills: 25 percent, workforce skills: 57 percent.) Parents, however, find the former argument slightly more convincing (basic skills: 28 percent, well-rounded knowledge: 57 percent/basic skills: 30 percent, workforce skills: 52 percent).

Messages - Skills to be Prepared for Life, 21st Century, Innovation⁶

All of the tested messages work well among voters, with over three-quarters of voters finding all of the messages convincing. Importantly the top tier messages for voters overall are also the top tier messages for voters in the “imagination” constituency. The most persuasive messages emphasize making sure students are prepared for life, and that the capacity to be innovative and creative is essential to major advances in science, medicine, and other fields in the 21st century. The “Prepared for Life” message discusses how students who develop their imaginations will have fulfilling lives and strengthen communities. The “Innovation” and “Man on the Moon” messages discuss how the capacity to envision advances is a precursor to making progress and reaching our full potential. The

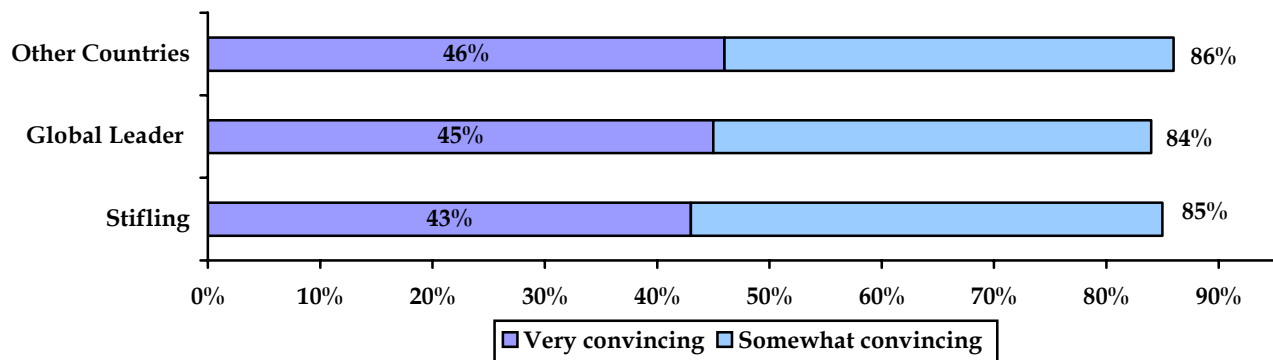
⁶ See Appendix B for text of messages.

majority, if not more, of voters find these messages very convincing, with almost nine in ten saying they are very or somewhat convincing.

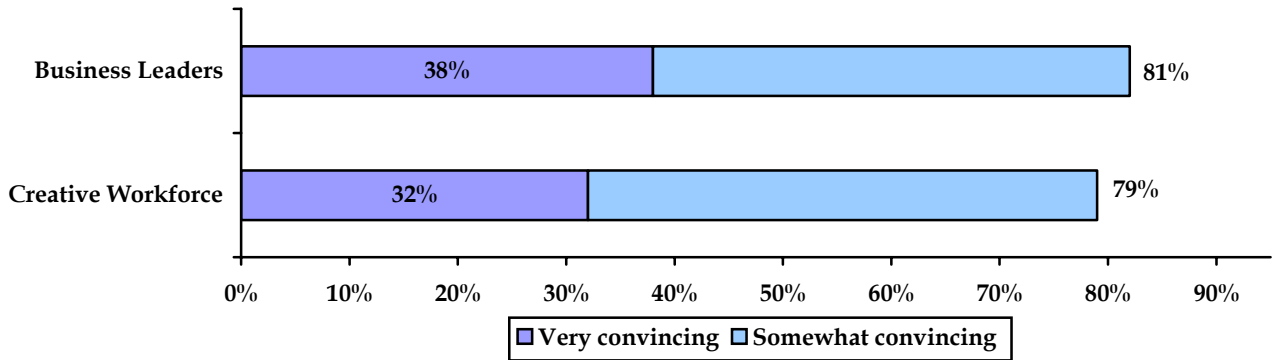


The strongest message among parents is “Prepared for Life” (90 percent convincing, 58 percent very convincing). Among the “imagination” constituency, the most compelling message is “Innovation,” with almost two thirds of these voters finding it very convincing (94 percent convincing, 65 percent very convincing). Overall, the “imagination” constituency is more likely than voters overall to say that each of the messages is very convincing.

In a second tier, with just under half of voters saying they are very convincing, are messages that compare the United States to other countries and describe the importance of imagination, innovation and creativity to our world leadership role. These messages outline how encouraging children to be creative and develop their imagination is necessary to maintain our competitive edge and ensure we do not fall behind other countries. Voters find convincing language around how education is losing children and, therefore, arts, music and similar courses represent a way to re-engage these students in learning and in school.



Messaging around business leaders and analysts’ claims about the importance of imagination, innovation, and creativity, and language around developing a creative workforce proves least persuasive to voters and generate considerably less intensity, though still over three quarters of voters find these messages convincing. Thirty eight percent of voters find the “Business Leaders” message very convincing, while just under one third say that “Creative Workforce” is very convincing.



Noticeably, the larger frame messages work best. Voters are strongly engaged with the idea that an education in and through the arts contributes to imagination and creative skills and see this as a key to success for education in the 21st century. Many of these answers show a core set of shared values, not just a policy agreement. Intriguingly, there is a third of the electorate, called here the “imagination constituency” made up largely of swing voters, who feel particularly intensely about these values.

Appendix A
(Text of Basics/ Technology v. Basics/Technology + Arts/Imagination Statements)

Basics alone v. Imagination + basics

It is more important to teach the basics to all students and leave imagination for outside the school environment
OR
Building capacities of the imagination that lead to innovation is just as important as the basics for all students in the classroom

Technology alone v. Technology + arts

Science, technology, engineering, and math are the only subjects that teach students the skills and values necessary to promote innovation.
OR
An education in and through the arts, along with science and math, is critical to provide students with the opportunity to develop imagination and promote innovation.

Basics alone v. Basics + art

Being taught the basics alone adequately prepares students for success in the 21st century.
OR
The basics in conjunction with the arts, such as music, visual arts, theater, and dance, help prepare students for success in the 21st century.

Appendix B **(Text of Messages)**

[PREPARED FOR LIFE] Education should not just prepare students for the workforce, it should also help them succeed and be fulfilled in their lives, including being active members of their communities and our democracy. Students who develop their imaginations and creative skills will be rewarded throughout their lives and strengthen our community and democracy.

[INNOVATION] Imagination is what is required to be innovative and creative. Unless we develop and train capacities of the imagination, we cannot reach our full innovative and creative potential, which includes the potential to envision advances in science, medicine and other fields in the 21st century.

[MAN ON THE MOON] Advances in science and technology helped put a man on the moon, but it was creativity and imagination that were behind the vision to even consider such a momentous idea. The capacity to be creative and imagine what is possible, even in space, is critical to ensure even more momentous advances in science, medicine and other fields in the 21st century.

[OTHER COUNTRIES] Success in a knowledge-based economy will depend on the ability to create, to innovate, and to think beyond the basics. Countries in Asia and Europe are already incorporating imaginative learning methods and using the arts as a mechanism to drive innovation. If we neglect the imagination, we will fall behind these other countries.

[GLOBAL LEADER] Imagination, innovation, and creativity have been the foundation that moved the United States into a world leadership role. 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 21st century. To maintain our competitive edge, we need to balance instruction of the basics with encouraging our children to be creative and develop their imaginations.

[STIFLING] Often today, education is stifling and losing children. Arts, music and similar courses can engage a number of children who will be missed otherwise in learning and in school. Through these courses, we can help a number of children stay in school and learn a variety of skills and habits they need for life.

[BUSINESS LEADERS] Business leaders and analysts tell us that imagination, innovation, and creativity are the primary skills that will keep America competitive in the global economy. But the arts, which are crucial to developing these skills, are considered the frills in the curriculum. Their role in developing the imagination must be restored to schools.

[CREATIVE WORKFORCE] Developing the skills of the imagination provides students with the workforce skills to be innovative and creative, skills essential to a knowledge-based economy. In an era of insurmountable progress and discovery, a static foundation of facts and material skills no longer suffices. Instead, our economy rewards ingenuity