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IN NATIONAL POLL, STUDENTS SET CLEAR SIGHTS ON COLLEGE BUT REVEAL UNFOCUSED VIEWS ON PLANNING, PREPARATION AND SCHOOL SUPPORTS

***“Voice from the Middle”* Poll Suggests Students Lack the Resources Needed To Realize Their College Dreams**

Washington, D.C.—Nine out of 10 middle school students (92%) say that it is likely that they will attend college, but nearly seven of 10 (68%) indicate that they have little or no information about how to choose high school classes that will prepare them for college, according to a nationwide survey of middle-level students released today by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and Phi Delta Kappa International (PDK).

Conducted by Harris Interactive, the survey of 1,814 students in grades seven and eight reveals several stark contrasts between students’ educational goals and their beliefs about how they will achieve them. The poll may be the very first national snapshot of the aspirations and school experiences of middle-level students.

“The findings of this poll suggest that the middle grades are a key transition point for students and can determine their future. Policymakers need a renewed commitment on these critical years to help practitioners fulfill the promise of high school graduation and college expressed by the respondents,” stated NASSP executive director Gerald N. Tirozzi.

This survey of seventh and eighth graders reveals these startling findings:

- 93 percent of students say there is “no chance” that they will drop out of high school and not graduate. (This compares to the nearly 500,000 students who drop out annually as estimated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the NCES.)
- 83 percent of students know little or nothing about the classes they need to take to graduate from high school.
- Only 32 percent say that they have “quite a bit” or “a great deal” of information about the classes they need to prepare for college.

“These poll findings show us that our nation’s middle school students have high hopes for their futures and high expectations for themselves. That is great news,” said William J. Bushaw, PDK International executive director. “Our challenge is for us to accept and act on these findings — to help all students succeed in high school so that they graduate prepared for postsecondary education and the jobs of the future.”

(MORE)

The poll highlights the importance of having high-quality caring teachers in our nation's classrooms. When asked how many teachers have been helpful to them in school, 72 percent indicated that throughout their school career only one to five teachers have been helpful. However, the students polled gave somewhat more positive reactions when asked to rate how well their teachers gave them a chance to learn the subject matter, with slightly over 50 percent (51%) giving a rating of excellent or very good, 41 percent giving a rating of good, and 8 percent giving a poor rating.

The poll results are embargoed until 9:30 a.m. (EDT), Tuesday, May 22, 2007. If you would like access to the poll findings, to interview the authors of the report, or more information on *A Voice from the Middle*, please contact Delaine McCullough at dmccullough@pdkintl.org or Shana Kemp at kemps@principals.org.

Harris Interactive® conducted the *A Voice from the Middle* Middle School Student Poll on behalf of the NASSP and PDK from February 14 – March 7, 2007 among 1,814 U.S. residents in grades seven and eight. Figures for gender, grade level, race/ethnicity, parents' highest level of education, region, and urbanicity were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions of 7th and 8th grade students in the population. With pure probability samples of this size, one could say with a 95 percent probability that the results would have a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. Sampling error for data based on sub-samples would be higher and would vary. However, that does not take other sources of error into account. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

NASSP is the preeminent organization and the national voice for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals and aspiring school leaders. NASSP provides its members with the professional resources to serve as visionary leaders. NASSP promotes the intellectual growth, academic achievement, character development, leadership development, and physical well being of youth through its programs and student leadership services. NASSP administers the National Honor Society™, National Junior Honor Society™, and National Association of Student Councils™. For more information, visit www.principals.org.

PDK International is a leading association of education professionals that has been advocating for high-quality education for all since 1906. Currently, PDK has more than 50,000 members, including university faculty and administrators, school superintendents, principals, and teachers. Today, as it has for the past 100 years, PDK strives to prepare the next generation of educators as well as to serve practicing teachers, administrators, and college educators through a wide range of innovative programs. PDK also sponsors the Future Educators Association (FEA), the only nationally recognized organization promoting education as a career. FEA currently has more than 1,000 clubs in middle schools and high schools across the nation and abroad. For more information on PDK and its programs, visit www.pdkintl.org.

The poll was funded by Lumina Foundation for Education as part of its KnowHow2GO campaign. This national public service campaign is designed to inform young people about the actual steps they need to make their college dreams a reality. Sponsored nationally by Lumina Foundation, the American Council on Education, and the Ad Council, the campaign includes television, radio, print, outdoor and interactive advertising. For more information, visit KnowHow2GO.org.

Harris Interactive is the 12th largest and fastest-growing market research firm in the world. The company provides innovative research, insights and strategic advice to help its clients make more confident decisions, which lead to measurable and enduring improvements in performance. Harris Interactive is widely known for The Harris Poll, one of the longest running, independent opinion polls and for pioneering online market research methods. More information about Harris Interactive may be obtained at www.harrisinteractive.com. To become a member of the Harris Poll Online and be invited to participate in online surveys, register at www.harrispollonline.com.