



“ I am writing to support a proposal by the Learning First Alliance (LFA) to establish the American Education Poll, an annual poll of the American public designed to scientifically determine people's opinions about American public education.

The need for this annual survey is clear. In a democracy, the people's opinions should be known and incorporated into the debate on such important issues as how well the public schools are educating children in general and different groups of children in particular, what would it take to attract the best people into the teaching profession, and how available and affordable is high quality pre-school education.

The Learning First Alliance plans to use the traditional means of disseminating the results from the annual poll through the news media. But then, the Alliance will commit to making a discussion of the findings from the annual polls a matter of great importance every year within each organization. This would mean that more than 10 million teachers, administrators, and parents will be aware of this information as they work to improve education. The Alliance is unique in being able to make such a commitment to effect such a large number of people because its national organizational membership represents nearly all the people involved in education in the country. This commitment will enhance the importance of the annual polls.

Further, LFA chose the very best individuals to lead this effort. I have known Bill Bushaw and Joan Richardson over a long period of time and have worked closely with each of them. Better, more committed, and knowledgeable people cannot be found to carry out the promises of the proposal. They possess the knowledge and skills to launch this effort quickly and guide it during its formative period. The poll must be seen as non-partisan, objective, and focused on the most important issues. Bill and Joan are uniquely qualified for that job.

I am hopeful that once this project receives national support, state and regional philanthropies will recognize the obvious advantages of oversampling residents within their state to provide state results that can be compared to national results. State-by-state information will make the poll more meaningful for people.

My career in Washington DC permitted me, working with Congress, to personally lead policymaking efforts impacting the lives of parents, educators and others. From these many years of experience, I can testify how important scientifically based opinion research is for policymakers, particularly research gathered annually that can document important changes and trends in the public's opinions. For this reason and others, I give this project my unequivocal support.

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