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Arizona Education Policy Initiative

******NEWS RELEASE******

**from the Arizona Education Policy Initiative (AEPI)
and the Education Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSSL)
at Arizona State University**

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**ARIZONA PARENTS PLEASED WITH THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS,
CONCERNED ABOUT LACK OF RESOURCES**

TEMPE, Ariz.—The first in what is planned as an annual statewide survey conducted to obtain Arizona parents' opinions about pre-K—12 education in the state suggests that parents are pleased with the schools their children attend and view inadequate funding as the biggest challenge facing Arizona's schools.

“This perception may explain, in part, why despite rating private schools highly, Arizona parents report being opposed to spending tax dollars on either tuition tax credits or vouchers to send children to private schools,” said Alex Molnar professor of educational leadership and policy studies and director of the Education Policy Studies Lab at Arizona State University.

Molnar and ASU Professor of Journalism and Telecommunications Bruce Merrill directed the statewide telephone survey commissioned by the Arizona Education Policy Initiative (AEPI). AEPI is a collaboration of ASU, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Arizona. Launched in September 2003, AEPI utilizes the expertise of faculty at Arizona’s public universities to provide policy makers and the public with high quality information about Arizona education policy and practice. AEPI is administered and coordinated by the ASU Education Policy Studies Laboratory.

The survey was administered in March to a statewide random sample of 400 Arizona parents and an additional statewide random sample of 355 Hispanic Arizona parents with children attending a traditional, public, charter, or private school.

The results, detailed in a report released today entitled “Parent Attitudes about Education in Arizona: 2004,” offer a snapshot of Arizona parents’ opinions in 2004.

The survey results suggest that parents favor supportive actions to assist low-performing schools, and favor school accountability and testing. “Parents clearly prefer assisting low-performing schools rather than imposing punitive consequences such as replacing teachers and principals,” Molnar said.

Providing additional financial and educational support instead of withholding funding from schools that do not meet state academic standards was also favored by Arizona parents, according to the survey.

While the survey findings suggest that parents are inclined to view charter schools favorably, almost a quarter of all respondents have no opinion of charter schools. Further, more parents regard charter schools as either having a negative effect or no effect on traditional public schools than believe that the reform has a positive effect.

“These findings suggest to us that although Arizona has one of the most expansive charter school laws in the country, many parents in our state are either uninformed about charter schools or do not consider their impact to be a significant factor in improving the quality of the state’s education system,” Molnar said.

Most survey respondents cited non-school factors as the reasons for the lack of student academic success, including low-test scores and student dropout rates. With regard to early childhood education, survey responses suggest that parents strongly favor the expansion of state sponsored early education programs.

On the controversial subject of English language learning, parents indicated that they favored teaching non-English speakers in their native language and in English.

The survey report is available on the Education Policy Studies Laboratory web site at <http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/ AEPI/EP SL-0404-101-AEPI.doc>: Survey methods, questions, and technical information about tables in the report are contained in the technical appendices document (available on the web at: <http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/ AEPI/EP SL-0404-101-AEPI-app.doc>).

The Arizona Education Policy Initiative (AEPI), a collaborative project of Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Arizona, was launched in September 2003. AEPI utilizes the expertise of faculty at Arizona’s public universities to provide policy makers and the public with high quality information about Arizona education policy and practice.

The Education Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSL) at Arizona State University offers high quality analyses of national education policy issues and provides an analytical resource for educators, journalists, and citizens. It includes the Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU), the Education Policy Analysis Archives (EPAA), the Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU), and the Language Policy Research Unit (LPRU). The EPSL is directed by Professor Alex Molnar.

Visit the EPSL website at <http://edpolicylab.org>