



To: Interested Parties
From: Kristen Soltis Anderson, Echelon Insights
Shannon Currie, Benenson Strategy Group
Re: Polling K-12 Parent Voters on K-12 Education Funding
Date: May 8, 2023

Parent voters believe we should expect more out of our public schools, and they think leaders should be accountable for using education funds to produce meaningfully positive outcomes for our students.

From March 21-23, 2023, we surveyed 2,049 registered voters nationwide, and as part of that survey we also spoke to 390 K-12 parents. We find parents hold high expectations for our schools and are supportive of a wide range of reforms and resources for students.

Parents have high expectations for schools and support bold reform to get us there.

- Some 81% of parents say, “we should expect more out of our public schools and hold them more accountable for educating students,” while only 19% say “we can’t reasonably expect our public schools to do much better at educating students.”
- When asked to choose whether the biggest problem schools face is lack of funding or whether fundamental reforms are needed before funding can solve the problem, a majority of parents (56%) opt for the view that “the biggest problem our schools face is that they need big changes to how they educate students, and just putting more funding into a broken system doesn’t ultimately help students.”

Parents are worried that schools aren’t getting the basics right and need to make sure students are getting the skills they need to put students onto a path for success after graduation.

- Seven in ten (70%) say it is at least a “big problem” that schools are not focusing on ensuring students are proficient at important basic skills like reading and math. Some 28% view this as a “crisis.”
- Two-thirds (66%) say it is a big problem or a crisis that “schools today aren’t helping students get onto a path that will lead to success after graduation,” and 68% say “too many students struggle today because they don’t learn in the ways that lessons are being taught in schools.”

Parents are not sure that their schools are seeing benefits from any recent influx of funding and want to make sure there is accountability for using such funds in a manner that will yield real results.

- Only 24% of parents say they “believe their school district has received an increase in funding in recent years, and this funding has improved the quality of students’ education.” More – 33% – say they think their district has received more money, but it has not yielded results.
- Meanwhile, most (52%) parents do believe that a one-time influx of funding would improve the quality of education students receive, while only 27% say it would not (and 21% are unsure).
- Given the choice between the view that ESSER funds are “filling in gaps in chronically underfunded areas...but we can’t expect too much to change because more is always needed,” versus the view that these funds “gave schools an important chance to make real, lasting improvements in how they educate students, and we should hold them accountable for having used these funds effectively,” parents opt for the latter by a 26-point margin (33-59).

Parents want to see resources go toward building an education system that meets individual student needs and provides information about where students are on their learning journey.

- When parents are given a choice between spending additional funding on “hiring more personnel, including teachers, and raising district salaries” or being “creative and re-imagining how we educate students,” parents opt for the latter by a ten-point margin (42-52).
- Among the items parents think would do the most to help improve the quality of education in their area a lot, the top two items are to “make it easier for teachers to personalize how each student is taught to best meet their needs” (59%) and to “give teachers and parents better information about whether student learning is on track” (56%).