



MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties

From: Matthew Shelter
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Date: December 2, 2016

RE: Key Findings from Statewide Survey of Public School Parents

Introduction

This memo summarizes key findings from our recently completed survey of 1,002 parents of children attending grades K-12 in public schools in New York State. Trained professionals, working from a central, monitored location, conducted the interviews by telephone during the evening hours between November 17-23, 2016. The average interview required 16 minutes to complete. The sample of respondents was selected randomly from an up-to-date file of all households in New York State, and was contacted using a mix of both landline and cell phone telephone numbers. The data was statistically adjusted by region, race and ethnicity to conform to the current population of public school students in New York State. The margin of error for the survey is plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

Key Findings

- 1. Three-in-four school parents believe that a high school graduate today should be ready for college, but fewer than half believe current graduates meet that standard.**
 - New York public school parents believe that a high school graduate today should be ready for college (52%), a career (6%), vocational or trade school (8%), to get a job and live independently (6%) or all of the above (23%).

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- However, only 43% of parents believe that current high school graduates are in fact ready for college. More than a quarter (27%) of all parents say current grads are not ready for any of the above (college, career, vocational school or a job).

- *56% of parents in the Suburbs believe most high school graduates are ready for college, compared to 38% of New York City parents and 38% of Upstate parents.*

- *Among white parents, 44% feel current grads are ready for college, while 42% of Latino parents and 38% of African-American parents feel the same. More than half (54%) of Asian parents believe most high school grads are ready for college.*

2. An overwhelming majority of New York parents have a positive reaction to the term *higher academic standards*.

- 86% of public school parents have a favorable reaction to the term “higher academic standards.”

- Positive reaction to the concept extends across racial and ethnic lines; 93% of African-American parents, 88% of Asians, 85% of whites and 82% of Latinos all have a favorable opinion of the term.

3. Nearly three-quarters of New York school parents – and higher percentages in African-American, Latino and lower-income households – believe that public schools in the state should be graded in some fashion.

- 74% of parents agree with the following statement: “Schools should be graded just as students are graded and evaluated.”

- *Agreement ranges from a high of 78% in the Suburbs, to 75% in New York City and 70% Upstate.*

- *60% of white parents, 80% of Latinos, 83% of African-Americans and 74% of Asians agree with the need to grade schools.*

- *By income level, agreement ranges from 83% among parents in households making under \$50,000 agree; 73% among those in the \$50,000-\$150,000 bracket; and 67% among those making over \$150,000.*
- 57% of parents believe that “it is important to measure school performance so we can tell how individual schools are doing,” while 40% feel “there’s been too much focus on measuring school performance.”
- *Among white parents, 55% believe it is important to measure school performance, compared to 57% among Latino parents, and 62% among both African-American and Asian parents.*
- *Lower income parents are among the most likely to see performance measurements as important; 63% of those making under \$50,000 say it is important to measure school performance, compared to 51% of those in the \$50,000-\$150,000 bracket; and 61% of those making over \$150,000.*

4. Parents of color and lower-income parents attach greater importance than do white or wealthier parents to changes aimed at improving school performance.

- When asked to rate the relative importance (on a scale of 1 to 10) of possible changes the state could make to the way it measures school performance and helps schools that are not succeeding, there are significant differences between the responses of Latino, African-American and lower-income parents and their white or wealthier counterparts.
- African-American and Latino parents are significantly more likely than whites to rate these potential changes as important.

	% rating 9 or 10		
	<u>White</u>	<u>Latino</u>	<u>Afr-Am</u>
— <i>Expanding access to courses that prepare students for college, such as A.P. courses and advanced math and science.</i>	46%	74	78
— <i>Identifying schools that are not meeting expectations so they can receive extra attention, support and resources.</i>	41	71	77

— <i>Creating a school report card that gives parents clear information about how their school is doing in a variety of areas.</i>	35	63	71
— <i>Requiring schools to improve the performance of all groups of students, including those from ethnic or racial minorities, in order to improve their overall rating.</i>	35	60	69
— <i>Giving parents a strong voice in the decisions a school makes about how to improve when it is not meeting expectations.</i>	36	54	68
— <i>Requiring districts to allow students to transfer if current school is performing poorly.</i>	34	52	76

- Similarly, lower-income parents attach more importance to these changes than do wealthier parents.

	% rating 9 or 10		
	<\$50K	\$50K-150K	>\$150K
— <i>Expanding access to courses that prepare students for college, such as A.P. courses and advanced math and science.</i>	64%	63	55
— <i>Identifying schools that are not meeting expectations so they can receive extra attention, support and resources.</i>	64	57	49
— <i>Creating a school report card that gives parents clear information about how their school is doing in a variety of areas.</i>	60	50	41
— <i>Requiring schools to improve the performance of all groups of students, including those from ethnic or racial minorities, in order to improve their overall rating.</i>	60	48	40
— <i>Giving parents a strong voice in the decisions a school makes about how to improve when it is not meeting expectations.</i>	57	48	33
— <i>Requiring districts to allow students to transfer if current school is performing poorly.</i>	62	45	33

5. A substantial proportion of African-American parents believe public schools do a better job for students of other races than they do for black students.

- 42% of African-American parents believe that public schools in New York do a better job for non-black students than for blacks.
- African-American parents differ sharply from parents of other races, who are much more apt to say there is “no difference” in how public schools treat different groups of students.
 - *Among white parents, for instance, 64% say there is no difference in how schools treat different students, while 23% think they do a better job for whites and 5% feel they do better for non-whites.*
 - *Among African-American parents, by comparison, only 39% see no difference in how students of different races are treated, while another 10% believe the public schools do a better job for black students than others.*
 - *Among Latino parents, 23% think schools favor students of other races, while 11% believe they do a better job for Latinos and 62% feel there is no difference.*
 - *Among Asian parents, 5% think schools favor other students, 12% think they do a better job for Asian students and 77% believe there is no difference.*
- There is some sense among upper-income parents that public schools in the state do a better job for wealthier students, but the differences are less sharp than by race.
 - *35% of parents with household incomes of \$100,000 or above say schools do a better job for students at their income level, compared to 14% of those making under \$50,000.*
 - *Among parents making under \$30,000, one-in-four (24%) believe schools favor other students rather than those at their income level.*

6. Parents overwhelmingly favor giving poorly performing schools a chance to improve before transferring students or replacing the staff.

- 77% of parents believe that badly underperforming schools should be given time to improve before more drastic steps are taken, compared to just 16% who favor replacing the administration and teachers, and 4% who support closing the school and transferring students elsewhere.
- If a school continues to underperform even after receiving help for multiple years, close to half of all parents support replacing the teachers and staff (34%) or replacing the principal (17%) as the best means of addressing the situation, while another 20% advocate transferring the students to a new school, and 11% support having the city or state take over the failing school.