

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Guy Molyneux, Hart Research
DATE: May 11, 2021
RE: National Survey of Public School Parents

On behalf of AFT, NAACP, AROS, LULAC, and NAKASEC, Hart Research Associates conducted a national survey of 1,107 public school parents, including samples of 202 Black parents, 200 Latino parents, and 200 Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) parents. The survey was conducted online from April 22 to May 3, 2021, and has a margin of error of ± 3.47 percentage points.

SAFE RETURN TO SCHOOLS: Parents feel more comfortable with in-person learning than they did last year and they are more confident in schools to keep children and staff safe. However, many continue to worry about the risk of infection in schools and say that the top criteria for making reopening decisions should be the safety of students and staff. Parents believe that strong safety protocols in schools are very important, and 94% say they would be comfortable having their child's school operate fully in-person in the fall if such measures were adopted.

- Parents are highly satisfied with the job their children's schools have done dealing with the coronavirus pandemic: 85% are satisfied, a nine-point gain over last summer when 76% were satisfied.
- 81% of parents say their child's school is providing in-person instruction, either exclusively (33%) or in a hybrid system (48%). Just 18% are remote learning only.
- Parents whose schools are open either fully or in a hybrid approach are feeling more comfortable with in-person learning: 71% have been comfortable, compared with 58% last September.
- Many parents continue to worry about the possibility that their child will be infected at school (69% fairly or very worried). However, this proportion has declined by eight points since September (77%), and the proportion who are very worried has dropped 11 points (from 44% to 33%).
- Parents say the biggest factor in making reopening decisions should be protecting the health of students and staff (54%), even ahead of meeting educational and social needs of students and improving learning (31%).
- Looking ahead to the 2021-2022 academic year, 73% of parents say they would be comfortable with full in-person learning in the fall, and 10% say they would not be comfortable (another 17% are unsure).
- Fully 90% of parents feel very or fairly confident that their school district will take the steps necessary to keep students safe in the fall, up from 73% last year.
- At least three-quarters of parents feel that each of the following safety measures is essential or very important to open schools safely:
 1. Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly to filter air and increase circulation of outdoor air (88% essential/very important)
 2. Make full-time remote learning available to students in high-risk medical categories (85%)

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3. Provide personal protective equipment and training for staff and students (83%)
 4. Allow teachers and other staff in high-risk medical categories to stay at home (82%)
 5. Require that students and teachers wear face masks at all times when they are indoors (78%)
 6. Provide training for staff and students in physical distancing and use of protective equipment (78%)
 7. Require staff and students to maintain physical distancing to the maximum degree feasible in classrooms, hallways, buses, cafeterias, and other common areas (78%)
 8. Make voluntary vaccines available at school buildings for students and their families (77%)
 9. Reopen schools only in communities with low infection rates and adequate levels of COVID-19 testing (75%)
- If these safety measures were adopted, fully 94% say they would be comfortable with their child returning for full in-person learning in the fall (compared with 73% who are now comfortable).

If your child's school took those steps, would you then feel comfortable with your child returning for in-person learning at the beginning of the next school year, this fall?

	All Parents	Black Parents	Hispanic Parents	AAPI Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	94	87	94	95
No	6	13	6	5
<i>Initially Comfortable</i>				
Yes	73	59	72	67
No	10	12	12	15
Not sure	17	29	16	18

RECOVERING FROM THE PANDEMIC: Public school parents express high levels of satisfaction with the schools serving their children, even higher than four years ago. At the same time, COVID-19 has created new challenges for schools, and parents identify students' falling behind during the pandemic as the single biggest problem facing schools today. Parents identify several policies they feel will be effective in helping students and schools to recover.

- Fully 78% of parents report that the quality of education at their child's school is excellent or good, up from 73% in 2017. Just 4% say the quality is not good or poor.
- Parents are highly satisfied (82%) with the job public schools are doing helping their children to achieve their full potential. That represents an increase of three points over 2017, including a nine-point gain in the proportion who are "very satisfied."
- At the same time, remote learning is clearly not working well for many children. Just 23% of parents report that it has worked as well as in-person teaching, and 52% say it has worked somewhat or much less well.
- The education challenge at the forefront of parents' minds is students falling behind during the pandemic. A 53% majority say this is one of the top three problems facing schools, far ahead of all others.

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- Three-quarters or more of parents feel that each of the following measures would be effective in helping schools address the impact of the pandemic.
 - Provide learning recovery programs to help students who need more support academically (88% effective)
 - Give teachers more flexibility in what and how they teach, to adjust for the specific needs of students in each class (86% effective)
 - Focus on the social, emotional, and health needs of children so they can be engaged and ready to learn (82% effective)
 - Give schools more flexibility in decisions about student promotion and graduation, rather than having these determined by standardized test scores (80% effective)
 - Increase summer school, camps, and tutoring opportunities (76% effective).

REIMAGINING EDUCATION AFTER THE PANDEMIC: Parents believe that having strong neighborhood public schools available to all children is extremely important, and more important than increasing choice of schools. They favor a “whole child” educational approach over a narrow academic focus. They also believe that it is important to invest in education, and support a sweeping policy agenda for making K-12 education stronger.

- Fully 95% say that having strong neighborhood public schools is extremely or quite important for the country. By 72% to 28% they say having a good neighborhood school available to their children is more important than having more school choice.
- Fully 91% of parents agree (61% strongly) that “this is an opportunity to reimagine public education to meet children’s academic, social, and emotional needs and ensure that all children can thrive.”
- Topping parents’ list of goals for public schools are two priorities: “ensuring that all children, regardless of background, have the opportunity to succeed” (75% extremely important) and “providing a safe and welcoming environment for children” (74%).
- Looking beyond pandemic recovery, parents say the top long-term problems facing public education are inadequate funding, lack of support for teachers, and too much standardizing testing. The problem of least concern to parents is lack of school choice.
- By 63% to 37%, parents prefer the “whole child” approach to education that includes emotional and social development, over a focus only on teaching basic academics.
- By 65% to 35%, parents say it is more important to invest in schools rather than finding ways to reduce education spending and increase efficiency.
- There is generally very strong support for policies designed to improve and strengthen public agendas. These five proposals received especially strong approval (see table):
 1. Expand access to career and technical education and other vocational programs that prepare students for jobs
 2. Increase project-based learning to build students’ critical thinking skills, relationship building and self-confidence
 3. Provide health and nutrition services to low-income children through their school
 4. Improving and modernizing school buildings, including ventilation systems, to create safe and healthy environments for students and educators
 5. Reduce class sizes, especially in the early grades, to allow more individualized instruction and attention.

SUPPORT FOR MEASURES TO IMPROVE PUBLIC EDUCATION

	<u>All Parents</u> %	<u>Black Parents</u> %	<u>Hispanic Parents</u> %	<u>AAPI Parents</u> %
Expand access to career and technical education and other vocational programs that prepare students for jobs	96	98	97	97
Provide teachers more latitude to meet the individual needs of children in their classrooms	96	94	94	97
Provide a curriculum that includes civics, science, and the arts, as well as core academic subjects	96	99	95	96
Increase project-based learning to build students' critical thinking skills, relationship building and self-confidence	95	95	93	97
Increase availability of after-school programs	95	93	97	93
Provide health and nutrition services to low-income children through their public school	94	96	96	92
Improving and modernizing school buildings, including ventilation systems, to create safe and healthy environments for students and educators	94	98	95	98
Reduce class sizes, especially in the early grades, to allow more individualized instruction and attention	94	91	91	95
Increase parents' engagement with their child's schools	94	97	93	94
Expand and improve mentoring programs for new and struggling teachers	92	93	87	93
Helps parents to provide proper home learning conditions	92	93	92	95
Create more community schools that serve as neighborhood hubs, stay open longer, provide extra academic enrichment for students, offer health services for families, and increase engagement between schools and families	91	93	91	91
Provide high-quality preschool for all three- and four-year-olds	89	94	92	89
Adopt discipline policies that support racial equity and don't have disproportionate impact on Black, Latino, Indigenous, and other students of color	83	97	88	90
Teach students using anti-racist curriculum and teaching practices that build on the varying cultures of students and their families	82	94	83	92
Increase racial diversity in the teacher workforce	82	91	86	89