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**For further information:**

Michael Vaughn, Director of Communications

303-921-9350

mvaughn@educationpost.org

## **School Parents See Need for Education Improvements**

*National Survey Shows Most Parents Want Schools to Get Better; Nearly 3 out of 4 Worried that Their Child Isn't Being Prepared for 'Success in Today's World'*

Only 3% of American parents and guardians of school-aged children believe our school system is “fine as is,” according to a new survey that shows strong support for efforts to improve the quality of public education through higher standards, accountability, and choice. Driving the desire for school improvement is widespread concern that the education system is not tailored to the needs of children in a way that will help them succeed in today’s changing and more competitive world.

The national survey of 1800 school parents was commissioned by Education Post and conducted by Douglas E. Schoen, LLC in August and September of this year. Specifically, the survey found:

- 84% of parents were either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with their child’s school, but 61% agreed that their own school “needs to get better.”
- 73% said they are “very” or “somewhat” worried that their child’s education won’t prepare them for “success in today’s world.”
- When asked about the education system broadly, 60% think there are “some changes” that need to be made, while 33% think that the system needs a “complete overhaul.” Only 3% think the system is “fine as is.”
- Moreover, 85% think America is “falling behind in competitiveness” and 94% think that schools should use more “personalized learning and teaching.”

“Even as they express high levels of satisfaction with their schools, parents know we need to get better. Anyone arguing for standing still or retreating is completely at odds with the majority of parents,” said Peter Cunningham, Executive Director of Education Post.

When asked about specific changes to improve the system,

- 88% support, “Higher standards and a more challenging curriculum.”
- 78% support, “Expanding the number of charter schools so parents have more options.”
- 93% support, “More accountability for teachers and principals.”
- 84% support, “Teacher evaluations that use test scores, classroom observations, and surveys from parents and students to help teachers improve.”

According to the survey, 82 percent of parents also felt that the education system is inherently unequal for disadvantaged children, agreeing that, “Schools need to be more equal. Some kids get to go to good schools, with good teachers and resources, while others--often low-income, disadvantaged students--are forced to go to schools to schools with less funding and less effective teachers.”

## **Leading Voices for Improving Schools**

“Parents understand that some schools are better than others and want to see more fairness in the system,” said Antonio Villaraigosa, the former Los Angeles Mayor and the Chairman of Education Post’s Advisory Network. “It’s not right that some students go to schools with excellent instruction and more resources while others don’t.”

UNCF President and CEO Michael Lomax, who is a member of the Education Post Advisory Network added: “These polling results clearly show that parents want better schools for their children now, and they want those schools to deliver more rigorous academics. I’m heartened that parents are becoming better education consumers because their active involvement in demanding better schools is needed to keep the pressure on all educators to ensure that we produce high school graduates who compete with the best in the world.”

“Whether you live in cities, suburbs or rural communities, you want the best for your kids,” said Bev Perdue, the former North Carolina governor and a member of the Education Post Advisory Network. “In today’s world, that means a school with high standards, great teachers and a strong curriculum tailored for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

“Parents know that the world is changing and that schools need to change with it. There is a clear desire for more assurance that the education their child is receiving will put them on a path to success,” said Paul Pastorek, the former Louisiana State Education Commissioner and a member of Education Post’s Advisory Network.

## **Respect for Teachers Goes Hand-in-Hand with Accountability**

Parents place tremendous trust and faith in principals and teachers, but they also want an honest, respectful conversation about accountability and helping teachers improve. By a margin of 95-4, parents agreed that, “Every child has the right to learn from a highly effective teacher, and have an equal opportunity to succeed in school.”

While “lack of respect and support for teachers,” was a top concern expressed by parents, more than 90% also agreed with the following two statements:

- “While we need to respect, reward and retain the teachers who are effective, we also need to acknowledge our responsibility to hold accountable the teachers who are ineffective and not helping children learn.”
- “Every child learns differently. Implementing fair, balanced and regular teacher evaluations will allow parents to trust that their child has a teacher who is passionate about her craft, knows how to engage students with creative lessons, and connects with students as individual learners.”
- And, by a 71-24 margin, parents agreed with the following: “Let’s give teachers a raise, and reward the most effective educators, while also extending the trial period before teachers receive tenure, and reforming laws that force schools to let teachers go based on seniority, rather than effectiveness. Together we can work to both give the teaching profession the respect it deserves, and make sure that our children are receiving a high quality education from effective and passionate educators.”

## **Collaboration and Results**

While the education debate often pits teacher unions and education reformers on opposite sides, parents strongly want them to work together to improve schools. Specifically, 82% of parents agreed that, “Unions should be partners in education reform—helping lead reform rather than fighting it.”

The survey shows people are closely split between those who believe that unions are, “Fighting to get schools resources and protect education,” (37%) versus those who believe that, “Teacher unions put the interests of teachers first, not the interests of students (41%).”

At the same time, a majority of parents (59%) believe that “Groups and individuals trying to change our education system,” are “working to make schools more results-driven and accountable.” Just 15% believe reformers are, “Anti-teacher, anti-public schools and are trying to make a profit off of education.”

Finally, parents reject political posturing around education, with 86% finding the following argument convincing: “Let’s stop playing politics with education and focus on getting the best results for every student. We don’t have time for name-calling and excuses. We just want all students to make the most of their potential.”

“Parents don’t want politics in the classroom, and they are turned off by the negative debate,” Cunningham added. “They just want schools to get better. And that’s where we should focus the conversation.”

Additional survey results can be found at [www.educationpost.org](http://www.educationpost.org). The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3% for the national sample and +/- 5% for the subgroups.

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*Education Post is a non-partisan, non-profit communications organization dedicated to building support for student-focused improvements in public education.*