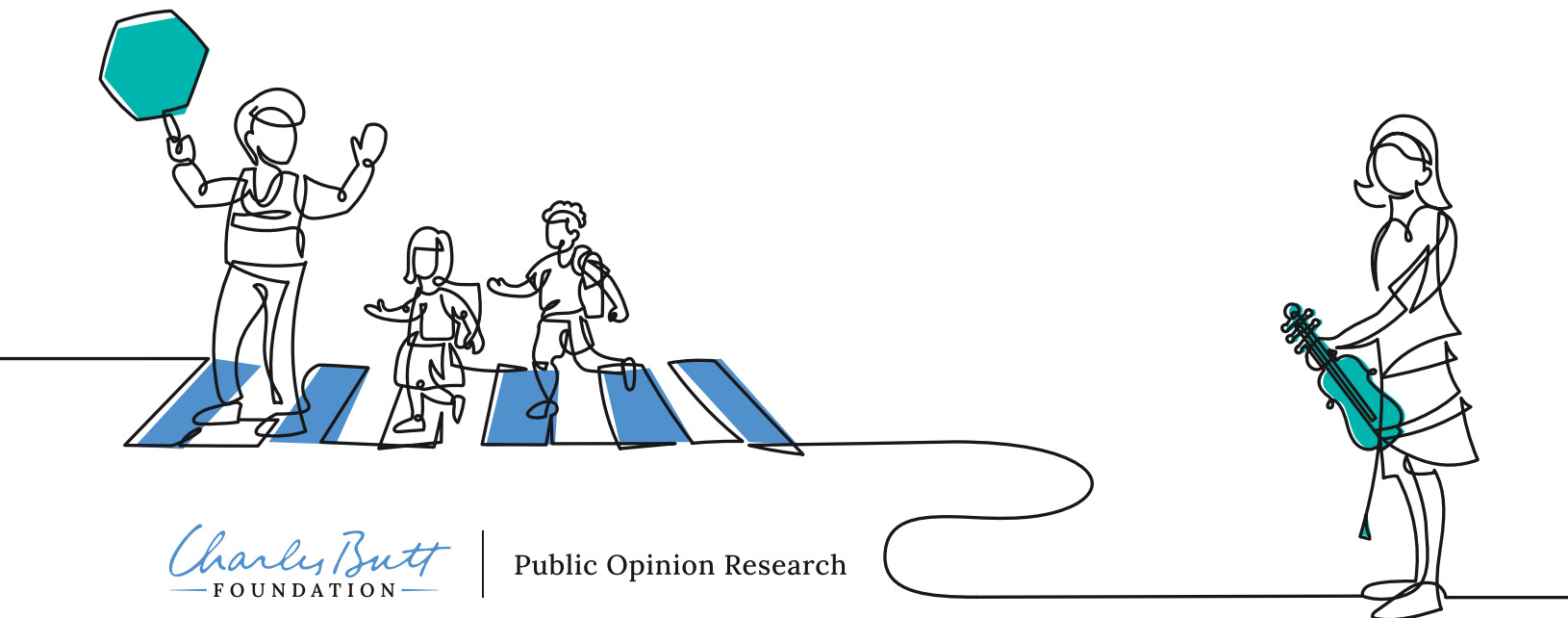




# Connected Through Our Schools

The 2022 poll on Texans' attitudes toward public education



Charles Butt  
FOUNDATION

Public Opinion Research

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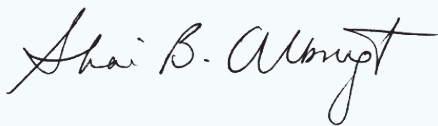
# Letter from the Charles Butt Foundation

Anyone connected to a public school is well aware of the difficulties our schools and educators faced over the past two years as they navigated uncertainty after uncertainty. As we approached this year's survey, we considered deeply what information is most helpful to educators and those who work to support Texas public schools. We chose to explore how Texans view their schools, the long-term implications of adapting to pandemic schooling, and what Texas families value about their connections with public schools and educators. What we found gives us great hope: Texas parents' ratings of public schools and teachers are the highest in the history of our poll.

We are pleased to release our third annual report on Texans' attitudes toward public education, presented by the Charles Butt Foundation, previously published by the Raise Your Hand Texas® Foundation. We value random-sample statewide polling because it reveals Texans' perceptions of public education from all geographic areas, ideologies, and demographics of this great state. At a time when the loudest voices and the headlines don't often reflect the experience of everyday Texans, this data is more important now than ever.

With each survey, we ask Texans to self-identify and share their demographics, including their race and ethnicity. When we identify racial and ethnic data in our report, we categorize Texans in the following ways: Black Texans, Hispanic Texans, White Texans, and Texans of color, who include Texans who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, multiracial, and another racial background or origin. We recognize these are imperfect categorizations and are working to find more inclusive methods of amplifying diverse Texas voices.

Our hope is the Charles Butt Foundation poll report continues to be a valuable resource for researchers, practitioners, and our countless partners working to make public education excellent and equitable for all Texas students. As we look forward and apply these data to catalyze further learning, facilitate authentic conversations, and spark bold ideas, we will keep Texas students and families at the center of our work, as they will drive the future success of our communities and state.



**Shari B. Albright**  
President

# Key findings

Texas public school parents' ratings of their community's public schools have surged since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, signaling broad appreciation of schools' – and teachers' – efforts to respond amid closures and controversy.

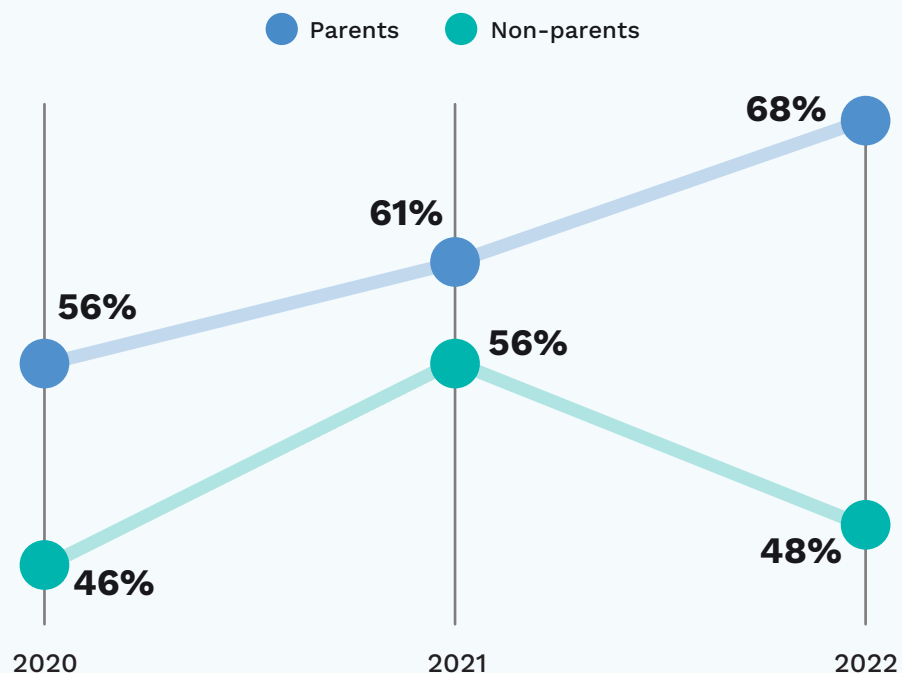
The share of public school parents giving their local public schools an A or B grade is up 12 percentage points in two years to 68 percent in the latest statewide survey on public education by the Charles Butt Foundation. In contrast with the increase among parents, there's a decline in school ratings among those without a child currently enrolled in K-12 schools.<sup>7</sup> Forty-eight percent of non-parents now give their local public schools As and Bs, versus 56 percent a year ago. That makes for a 20-point gap between parents and non-parents in their ratings of the state's public schools.

About three-quarters of public school parents also report that their child has a very or somewhat strong sense of belonging at school. And if other options were available, eight in 10 would choose to keep their child in their current school rather than send them to a different one.

<sup>7</sup> The terms "parents" and "public school parents" are used interchangeably in this report to refer to Texans with a child enrolled in public K-12 schools. "Non-parents" refers to Texans without a child enrolled in K-12 school.

## Gap Between Parent and Non-Parent Perceptions of School Quality Widens

% public school parents and % non-parents who give A or B grades for local public schools





**More Texans trust teachers to make decisions in the best interest of public school students than trust principals, local school boards, district administrators, or state elected officials.**



On teachers, public school parents also are now more likely than Texans overall to give A or B grades to the public school teachers in their community; 76 percent do so. And they're slightly more apt than all Texans to say they'd like a child of theirs to have a career as a public school teacher. These are shifts from the past two years, when views among parents and non-parents were similar.

Other results find substantial confidence in teachers. More Texans trust teachers to make decisions in the best interest of public school students than trust principals, local school boards, district administrators, or state elected officials. Seventy-six percent of Texans trust teachers to assess and monitor students' academic progress; 67 percent, to develop and choose curriculum; and 65 percent, to support students' self-management, interpersonal skills and decision-making skills.

Alongside these results, most Texans recognize an array of obstacles facing teachers today, ranging from a high level of work-related stress to too many administrative burdens. Notably, nine in 10 Texans see pressure to have their students do well on standardized tests as a challenge for teachers. Eighty-four percent say the same about work-related COVID-19 health concerns.

In ongoing concerns, the share of Texans who thinks public school teachers are undervalued in society today remains high, as does the share who thinks their salaries are too low. More than half also think the public schools in their community have too little funding.

Other results underscore Texans' broad preference for public schools that serve diverse needs of students and their communities alike. In terms of what students should learn beyond the basics, large majorities think students should receive all surveyed items from public schools, ranging from critical thinking and problem-solving skills to exposure to different cultures and communities.

# About the Poll

The third annual Charles Butt Foundation poll – previously known as the Raise Your Hand Texas Foundation poll – was produced for the foundation by [Langer Research Associates](#). Data collection was conducted Sept. 24-Oct. 4, 2021, in English and Spanish, among a random statewide sample of 1,154 Texas adults via the Ipsos KnowledgePanel®, a probability-based online survey panel. Results have a margin of error of four points for the full sample; error margins are larger for subgroups. All differences described in this report have been tested for statistical significance.<sup>2</sup>

Detailed results follow in nine sections: The role of public schools, pursuing school quality, belonging and inclusion, rating the schools, attitudes toward teachers, testing and accountability, equity barriers and school funding. A digital download and additional resources are available at [CharlesButtFdn.org/2022TXEdPoll](https://CharlesButtFdn.org/2022TXEdPoll).

The 2022 Charles Butt Foundation poll was directed by Jennifer Jendrzey, vice president of learning and impact; Lauren Cook, senior strategist; and Victoria Wang, research associate. The report and user interface were designed by Joel Goudeau, art director; and Marcela Giraldo, senior designer; with visualization support by Kurt Lockhart, data insights manager; and web development support by Karen Wang. The lead author of this report is Steven Sparks, research analyst at Langer Research Associates; with Allison De Jong, research analyst; Sofi Sinozich, research analyst; and Gary Langer, project director.

Nearly all Texans want their public schools to provide extracurricular opportunities, and roughly nine in 10 support programming such as universal pre-kindergarten and on-site mental health services. Signaling that some pandemic practices may be here to stay, broad majorities support remote parent-teacher meetings and remote instruction when desired for any student in the long term.

When it comes to standardized testing, more than half of Texans lack confidence that the state’s STAAR exams effectively measure how well a student is learning. Among negative perceptions, 70 percent think the tests require students to focus on test answers rather than deeper thinking, and 64 percent think they force teachers to “teach to the test.”

Separately, more parents say the pandemic had a positive rather than a negative impact in three areas – their child’s technology skills, their own communication with teachers, and their knowledge of their child’s educational progress. Parents are roughly divided between seeing positive or negative impacts in other areas, ranging from their child’s emotional health and well-being to engagement in coursework.

On equity gaps, fewer Texans perceive various barriers to learning for low-income students, or on the basis of students’ race or ethnicity, than did so a year ago, with declines somewhat more concentrated among Republicans and White residents of the state.

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<sup>2</sup> Differences that are significant at the 95 percent confidence level (or higher) are reported without qualification. Those that are significant at 90-94 percent confidence are described as “slight” differences. Those that are significant at less than 90 percent confidence are not reported as differences.

# The role of public schools

Among Texans overall, large majorities see it as highly important for their local K-12 public schools to serve diverse roles for students and the community alike. These views were tested in two questions, one asking about the importance of several items for students to receive from their school, beyond educational basics; and another asking about the importance of other items that public schools may provide for their communities.

In the student-focused question, each of the surveyed items is seen widely as either essential or highly desirable for students to receive. At the most, nine in 10 Texans say this about critical thinking and problem-solving skills (92 percent), preparation to succeed in the workforce (91 percent) and self-management, interpersonal skills and decision-making skills (also 91 percent).

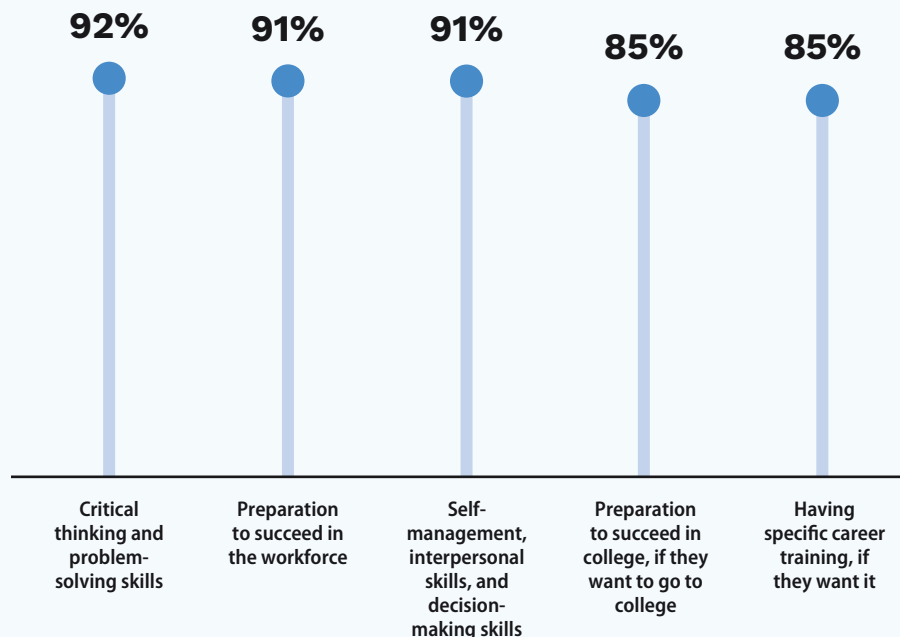
Following closely are preparation to succeed in college and specific career training, if students want them (85 percent apiece). Roughly three-quarters see resources and support to follow their dreams (78 percent) and opportunity to participate in extracurriculars such as sports, music, arts and clubs (75 percent) as essential or highly desirable. Two-thirds say the same about encouragement to take an active role in their community (67 percent) and exposure to different cultures and communities (66 percent).

Underscoring broad-based expectations that public schools serve diverse roles, substantial shares give the highest rating, “essential,” on each item. Majorities – from 56 percent to 70 percent – say so for critical thinking skills, self-management, interpersonal and decision-making skills and preparation to succeed in the workforce and college. Thirty-three percent to 46 percent consider remaining items as “essential” as well.

Public school parents are similar to Texans overall in these views, though they’re more apt to cite resources and support for students to follow their dreams (88 percent versus 78 percent)

## Texans Value Opportunities Beyond the Basics

% Texans who rate opportunities for students as essential or highly desirable



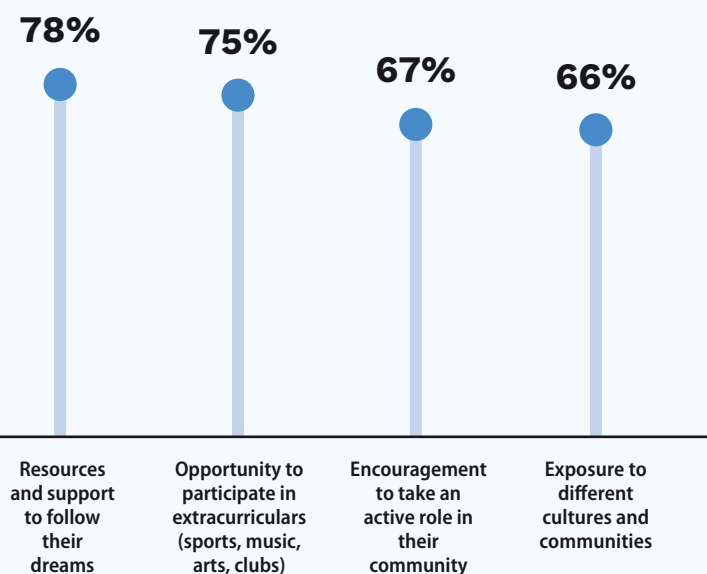


and exposure to different cultures and communities (74 percent versus 66 percent) as essential or highly desirable.

Among group differences, women are more likely than men to consider resources for students to follow their dreams as essential or highly desirable, 85 percent versus 71 percent. It's 89 percent on this item among people with annual household incomes less than \$50,000 compared with three-quarters of those in higher-income households. On another item, Texans of color<sup>3</sup>, are more likely than White residents to see exposure to different cultures and communities as essential or highly desirable, 76 percent versus 55 percent. It's 81 percent among Democrats and 68 percent among political independents, versus 45 percent among Republicans.

In areas of agreement, results are similar across racial and ethnic groups in citing critical thinking and problem-solving skills as essential or highly desirable. There's general agreement by race or ethnicity and urbanicity on the desirability of teaching self-management, interpersonal skills and decision-making skills. And on preparation to succeed in the workforce, results are similar regardless of race or ethnicity, educational attainment or political partisanship.

<sup>3</sup> This includes Texans who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, multiracial, and another racial background or origin.



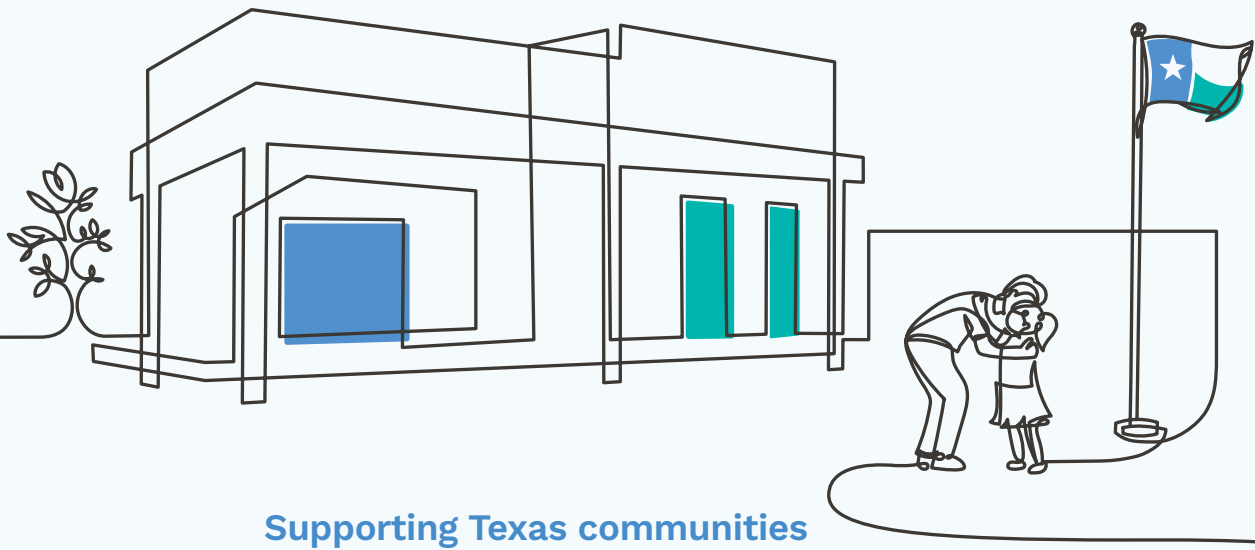
## Survey questions

Q. Beyond being educated in the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic, how important is it for students/your (oldest) child to receive each of these from a K-12 public school education? Critical thinking and problem-solving skills; preparation to succeed in college, if they want to go to college; opportunity to participate in extracurriculars (sports, music, arts, clubs); preparation to succeed in the workforce; having specific career training, if they want it; self-management, interpersonal skills, and decision-making skills; resources and support to follow their dreams; exposure to different cultures and communities; encouragement to take an active role in their community.

Q. Now thinking about the things that public schools may do for their communities, how important is each of these? Supporting the well-being of students and their families by connecting them with services such as family resource centers and health or mental health services; encouraging civic engagement in the community; contributing to the Texas economy by developing a well-prepared workforce; connecting people from different backgrounds and cultures.

Q. Would you support or oppose your community's public schools doing the following in the long term? Offering remote tutoring via video conference; offering remote parent-teacher meetings via video conference; using education technology in the classroom so students can work independently at their own pace at times; offering fully remote instruction for students who want it; providing on-site health services for students; providing extracurricular programs (sports, music, arts, clubs); providing on-site mental health services for students; providing on-site resource centers that offer job training and placement, health services, transportation, housing and food assistance programs for students and their families; offering pre-kindergarten classes for any student whose family wants it.





## Supporting Texas communities

As noted, beyond the importance of serving students' varied needs, the survey evaluated the perceived importance of schools providing services to the community at large. Broad majorities view each of four items as important for public schools to provide for their communities.

Eighty-two percent of Texans think it's essential or highly desirable for public schools to contribute to the state's economy by developing a well-prepared workforce, including similar shares across partisan political groups. Seventy-three percent also consider supporting the well-being of students and their families by connecting them with services such as family resource centers and health or mental health services as essential or highly desirable, and about two-thirds think the same about connecting people from different backgrounds and cultures (65 percent) and encouraging civic engagement in the community (64 percent).

Public school parents are more apt than Texans overall to see connecting people from different backgrounds and cultures as essential or highly desirable (74 percent versus 65 percent); it's a slight difference on connecting students and their families with services (80 percent versus 73 percent). The groups are similar on contributing to the Texas economy and encouraging civic engagement.

Unlike views on services to students, none of these four items reaches a majority in the share calling them essential. Still, pluralities say contributing to the Texas economy (45 percent), connecting students and their families to services (39 percent) and connecting people from different backgrounds and cultures (33 percent) are essential. Fewer, 27 percent, see encouraging civic engagement in the community as such.

Among groups, women (80 percent) are especially likely to call it essential or highly desirable for schools to connect students and their families with services, compared with 65 percent of men. This view also is higher among Hispanic Texans (85 percent) and Black Texans (82 percent) than White Texans (65 percent).

On connecting people from different backgrounds and cultures, Hispanic Texans (78 percent) and Black Texans (74 percent) again are more apt than White Texans (51 percent) to call this essential or highly desirable. It's nearly twice as high among Democrats as among Republicans, 81 percent versus 43 percent, with independents in-between (66 percent).

## Supporting Texas families

Texans' support for public schools serving diverse roles also extends to specific services offered in the long term. Large majorities support public schools in their community providing each of nine items, from on-site health services and pre kindergarten to several pandemic-era practices.

In broad agreement, nearly all Texans (97 percent) support providing extracurricular programs such as sports, music, arts and clubs, including about half who strongly support this. Nine in 10 Texans also support schools providing pre-kindergarten classes for any student whose family wants it. Eighty-five percent to 89 percent support six of the remaining seven

**90%**

of Texans **strongly support or support offering pre-k classes** for any student whose family wants it.

items, with strong support in a range from 30 percent to 41 percent:

- Remote parent-teacher meetings by videoconference;
- Education technology in the classroom so students can work independently at their own pace at times;
- On-site health services for students;
- On-site mental-health services for students;
- Remote tutoring via videoconference; and
- On-site resource centers for job training and placement, health services, transportation, housing and food assistance programs for students and their families.

Last on the list, albeit still supported by seven in 10, is offering fully remote instruction for students who want it.

On five of the nine items, support among public school parents is slightly higher than among Texans overall. These include a 5-point gap on mental health services, remote tutoring and on-site resource centers, and 4 points on pre-kindergarten and remote parent-teacher meetings.

Notably, each of the nine items is supported by a majority across demographic groups, including by race or ethnicity, political partisanship, ideology, geographic region, educational attainment, income and urbanicity.

# Pursuing school quality

Even if other options were available, the vast majority of public school parents, 80 percent, say they'd keep their oldest child in their current school. Even among those who give their local schools a C or lower grade, 68 percent say they'd prefer to keep their child in their current school, rising to 86 percent of those giving an A or B grade.<sup>4</sup>

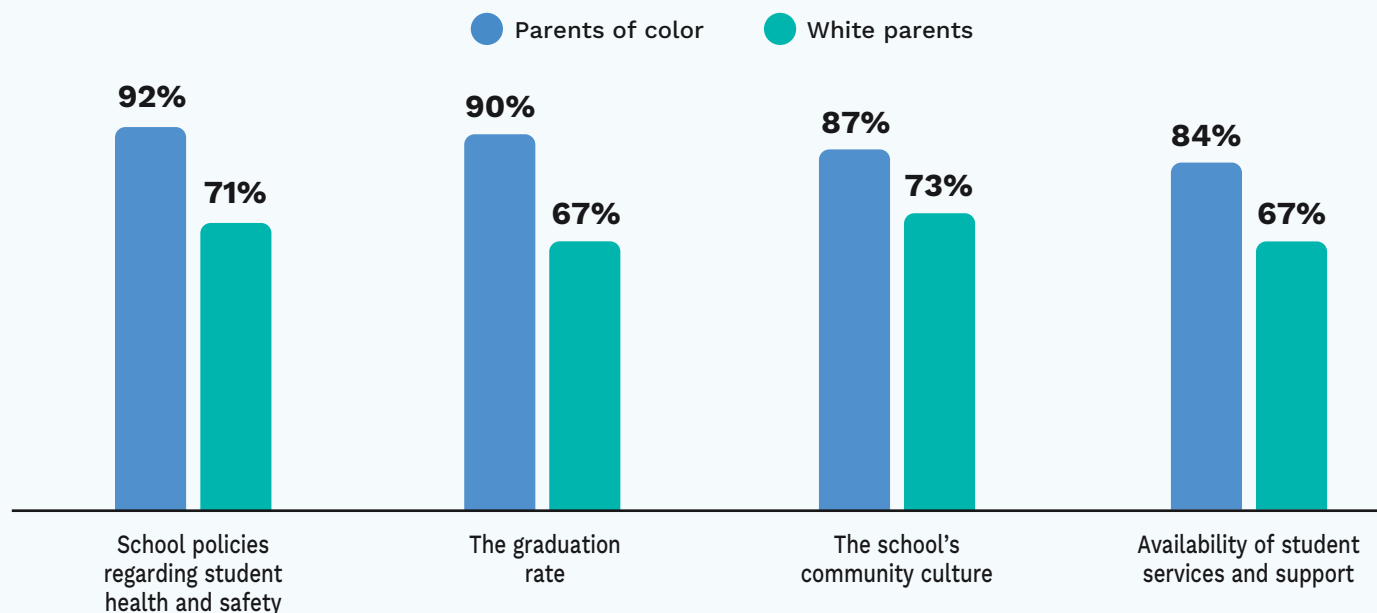
In another question, nearly all of those who would keep their child at their current school cite the quality of the school's teachers as a factor or major factor, and, further marking the importance of academics, 91 percent mention the availability of advanced classes. Other factors mentioned by roughly nine in 10 include the location of the school, the condition of its facilities and its policies regarding student health and safety.

**80%**  
of parents **would keep their child in their current school** if other options were available.

<sup>4</sup> Here and elsewhere, parents with multiple children were asked about their oldest child.

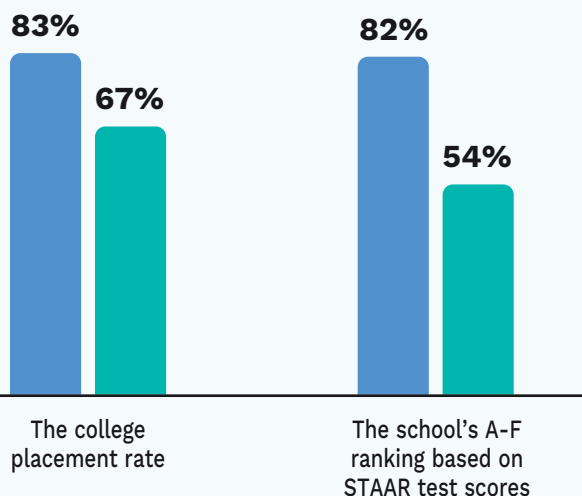
## Parents of Color See Certain Factors as More Important When Selecting a School than White Parents

% public school parents of color and % White public school parents who rate the following as major factors or factors in keeping their child at their current school



Among other items, 83 percent cite the school’s graduation rate and its community culture, and 79 percent mention class sizes and the availability of student services and support. About three-quarters cite the availability of extracurriculars and the school’s STAAR test score rankings, and 61 percent call racial or ethnic diversity in the school population a factor in keeping their child in their current school.

When it comes to seeing each as a major factor, the quality of the school’s teachers (63 percent) stands above the rest. That’s followed distantly by the availability of advanced academic classes (50 percent), the school’s location (46 percent) and the graduation rate (44 percent). It’s 31 percent to 40 percent for eight of the nine remaining items, with racial or ethnic diversity in the school population (24 percent) again rounding out the list.



Though there’s generally consensus on the most frequently selected items, there are some gaps on less-popular factors, with more parents of color selecting each item as a major factor or factor. In the largest divide, parents of color are far more likely than White parents to call STAAR test score rankings a factor in their preference, 82 percent versus 54 percent. Other differences appear in ratings for the graduation rate, health and safety policies, community culture, student services and college placement.

In a related result, parents who don’t have college degrees are more likely to identify graduation rates, school policies about health and safety and college placement rates as factors in their preference to stay at their child’s current school, 16 to 21 points more than among parents with college degrees. (Nearly half of White public school parents have college degrees, compared with a quarter of parents of color.)

Wanting to stay at the same school isn’t universal. Parents who rate their community schools lower and feel their child doesn’t have a very strong sense of belonging are less likely to want to stay at their current school, though broad majorities still prefer it.

Another question asked parents whether the quality of local schools affected their decision on where to live. Most public school parents, 74 percent, say that the quality of local schools was a major factor (42 percent) or a factor (32 percent) in this decision.

About three-quarters of public school parents call school quality a factor in where they live regardless of whether or not they feel they have a choice of what school their child attends – the local zoned school or another option. Ultimately, more than

## Survey questions

- Q. How much of a factor, if at all, was the quality of the local schools in deciding where you live?
- Q. Does your (oldest) child go to the public school that's zoned for your neighborhood, or do you send him/her/ them to a different public school?
- Q. How did you find out about the school that your (oldest) child attends? (Select all that apply) Recommended by family or friends; recommended by a school counselor or teacher; billboard or other advertising; letter or flyer in the mail; social media; in church; other (write in).
- Q. If other options were available, which of these would be your preference? Keep your (oldest) child in his/her/their current school; send your (oldest) child to a different school; other (write in).
- Q. Which of these is the most important reason you'd keep your (oldest) child in his/her/their current school? Good academics; good extracurriculars (sports, music, arts, clubs); good social environment; good teachers; good facilities; convenient location; good health and safety policies; other (write in).
- Q. Thinking now about the following items, in preferring to keep your (oldest) child in his/her/their current school, how big of a factor is each of these? The graduation rate; the college placement rate; the school's A-F ranking based on STAAR test scores; availability of advanced academic classes; availability of extracurriculars (sports, music, arts, clubs); class sizes; a racially/ethnically diverse school population; the school's location; availability of student services and support; the quality of the school's teachers; the condition of the school facilities; the school's community culture; school policies regarding student health and safety.
- Q. Do you feel you have a choice in where you send your (oldest) child to school, or does he/she/they attend the only school that's available?

two-thirds of parents say their child attends the school zoned for them, including 59 percent of those who say they have alternatives.

Still, parents who send their child to their zoned school are more likely than those who send their child to a different school to prioritize local school quality in house-hunting. Eighty percent of those who send their oldest child to the school zoned for them call local school quality a major factor or factor in where they live, compared with 62 percent of those who send their child to a different school.

A final item evaluates how public school parents find out about schools they aren't zoned for. There is a wide variety of ways, though personal connections are cited most frequently. About half of parents whose child attends such schools say it was recommended by family or friends. Twenty-four percent say a school counselor or teacher made the referral; 16 percent found out about the school through social media.

About one in six attributes their awareness at least in part to explicit advertising, with 11 percent saying they found out about the school through a mailing and 6 percent by seeing a billboard or other type of advertisement. Other avenues mentioned included knowing someone who worked at the school, doing online research and living near the school.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Unless noted, the minimum size for subgroup analysis in this report is approximately  $n=100$ . In this case,  $n=94$ .

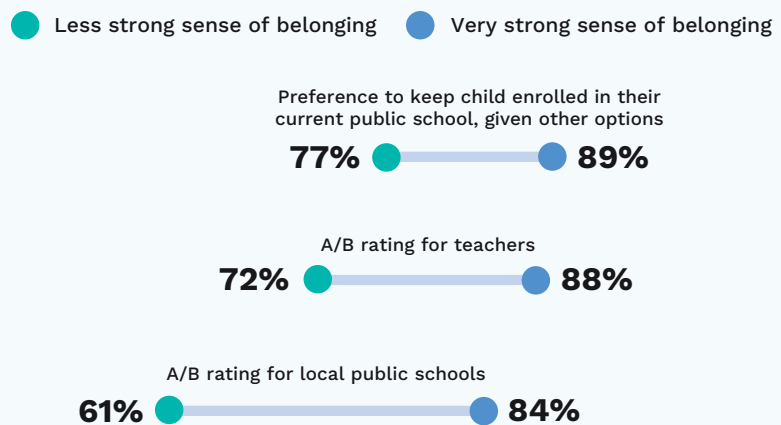


# Belonging and inclusion

The survey included measures of inclusion in Texas public schools. In one, 77 percent of public school parents describe their child's sense of belonging at their school as very or somewhat strong. There's room for improvement: Thirty percent call it very strong; 47 percent, somewhat; and 22 percent, less than that.

Poll data indicate a relationship between a very strong sense of belonging and other positive school outcomes. A very strong sense of reported belonging is associated with a stronger preference to keep a child in their current public school (89 percent versus 77 percent with a less strong sense of belonging); higher ratings for teachers (88 percent giving A/B grades versus 72 percent); and higher ratings for public schools (84 percent giving A/B grades versus 61 percent).

## A Student's Strong Sense of Belonging Is Connected to Additional Positive Outcomes for Schools



Perceptions of school choice inform parents' views on belonging. Sixty-four percent of public school parents feel they have a choice in where they send their child to school; in this group, 83 percent call their child's sense of belonging very or somewhat strong. That falls to 67 percent among parents whose child attends the only school available. Also, in a broader impact of the STAAR tests, parents whose child had a positive experience in taking the tests are much more likely than those whose child's experience was neutral or negative to report a very strong sense of belonging (50 percent of parents who report a positive experience in STAAR also reported a very strong sense of belonging, compared to 21 percent who reported neutral and 15 percent who reported negative experiences).

In a separate question on inclusion, large majorities of public school parents report that they'd be comfortable approaching each of five groups at their child's school. About nine in 10 would be very or somewhat comfortable approaching their child's teacher, school support staff, a counselor or the principal or another administrator; that includes majorities

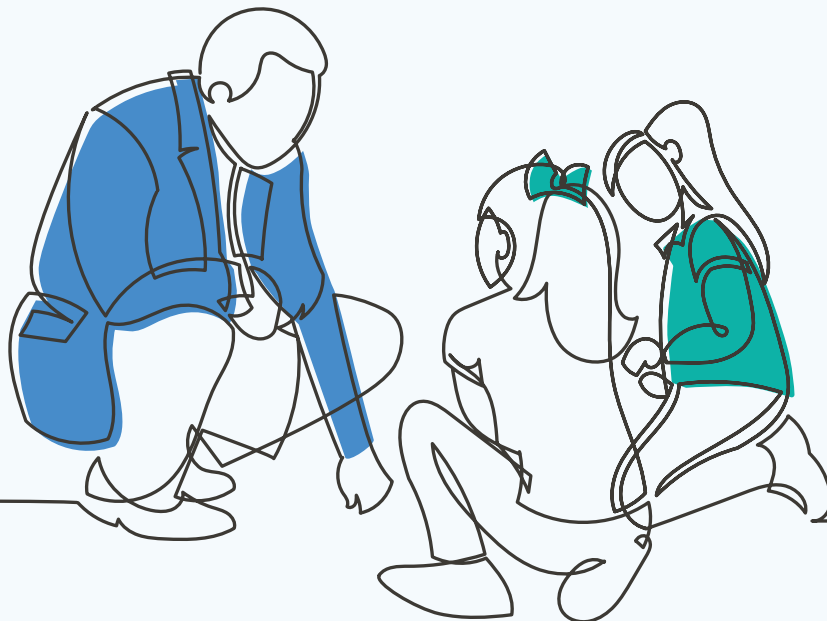
## Survey questions

- Q. How strong is your (oldest) child's sense of belonging at his/her/their school?
- Q. How comfortable, if at all, would you feel approaching each of these at your child's school? Your child's teacher; the principal or another school administrator; a school counselor; the parent-teacher association; school support staff.

who'd be very comfortable approaching each. Eight in 10 would be very (41 percent) or somewhat (38 percent) comfortable approaching the parent-teacher association. Men tend to be more apt than women to be very or somewhat comfortable approaching each group.

The two measures of inclusion are related: Public school parents whose child has a very strong sense of belonging are 22 to 31 points more likely than those whose child has a weaker sense of belonging to be very comfortable approaching each group.

Again, perceptions of school choice matter. Parents who feel they have a choice in where they send their child to school are 15 to 25 points more likely than those who send their child to the only school available to be very comfortable approaching each. (The narrowest gap, 15 points on approaching school counselors, is slight, given the sample size.)





# Rating the schools

As noted, 68 percent of public school parents give the public schools in their community an A or B grade, up 12 points since 2020<sup>6</sup>, a few months before the pandemic took hold. This includes a 5-point gain in 2021<sup>7</sup> over 2020 and a 7-point gain this year (neither statistically significant in itself). There are fewer Texans, 52 percent, who give their schools an A/B grade compared with parents. That number is essentially steady from 2020.

In addition to the increase among parents, this year's 16-point gap is also partially driven by a decline in school ratings among non-parents. Forty-eight percent now give their local public schools As and Bs, versus 56 percent a year ago. That marks an approximate return to 2020 levels after a gain last year.

Among public school parents, inclusion again matters. Those whose child has a very strong sense of belonging at school are more apt than others to rate their local schools highly, 84 percent versus 61 percent. As and Bs, further, are 37 points higher among parents who are very comfortable approaching each of five types of staff (or PTAs) at their child's school, compared with those who say so about four or fewer, 78 percent versus 41 percent.<sup>8</sup>

As was the case last year, views on testing and funding also matter. Among Texans who are very or somewhat confident that STAAR tests effectively measure student learning, 63 percent give an A or B rating to schools in their community, and for those less confident, it's 44 percent. Among other factors, As and Bs are twice as prevalent among those who think their public schools have the right amount of funding compared with those who think they have too much, 65 percent versus 33 percent. Those who think they have too little funding fall in-between, at 48 percent.

Regionally, the shares giving A or B ratings reach a majority – 51 percent to 56 percent – in all but one region, West Texas, at 44 percent. (The difference, however, is not statistically significant, given sample sizes.) The top rating, an A grade, peaks in East Texas (16 percent) and Houston (15 percent) and is lowest in Central, South/Southwest and West Texas (5 percent to 6 percent apiece); Dallas/Fort Worth falls in-between, 9 percent. (Some of these differences are slight, given sample sizes.)

Among other groups, the shares giving their schools A or B ratings are similar across race or ethnicity, political party, urbanicity and educational attainment.

<sup>6</sup> Here and throughout, the year 2020 refers to the survey that was administered in November of 2019 and published in January of 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Here and throughout, the year 2021 refers to the survey that was administered in November of 2020 and published in January of 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Here, n=93 public school parents whose child has a very strong sense of belonging; n=90 who are very comfortable approaching four or fewer types of staff.

## Open-ended responses

In addition to the data reported here, more than 300 respondents were invited to explain their choice of school grade in their own words. Responses are wide-ranging.

Among Texans who rate their local public schools highly – an A or B grade – resources are one common theme, albeit on both sides of the coin. Some note an abundance of local resources; others acknowledge relative successes despite few resources:

*“La escuela de mis hijos es buena, y hace mucho con los pocos recursos que tienen.”  
[My children’s school is good, and it has been doing so a long time with the few resources they have.]*

*“The reality is that high school taxes and living in areas with wealthy people makes the difference, unfortunately.”*

*“We have many resources available in our district.”*

In another common thread, other respondents mention standardized tests and test scores. As with resources, some note that their local schools’ success came despite standardized testing:

*“They do an okay job, but they don’t challenge the kids that actually need to be challenged. Too much time is spent on preparing for the upcoming statewide exams.”*

*“I feel that they do pretty well, but these kids are tested to death! It’s all about standardized testing scores.”*

*“They do very well with test scores.”*

Still others cite teacher quality and the work that teachers do as the reasons for their A-B ratings:

*“They have excellent teachers and many programs to challenge kids and give them ways to develop their talents.”*

*“My son’s school is very dedicated to shaping children for a bright future. It’s work intensive, but I know it’ll pay off for my son’s future.”*

*“I appreciate the work the teachers do and my children are able to succeed for as much effort as they choose to put in.”*

*“Good teachers, involved parents, community involvement.”*

Additional responses are varied, with examples including schools’ pandemic responses to perceptions of school choice in the district:

*“They have been doing everything they can to keep my children safe in school from COVID-19.”*

*“We offer a wide range of schools of choice for students living in and outside of our district.”*

*Reasons likewise vary widely among Texans who gave their schools a C, D or Fail. Several respondents again cite standardized tests, noting their broader consequences:*

*“They don’t perform well or prepare kids for the future. They teach them how to take tests, and that’s about all.”*

*“They focus solely on teaching how to take tests and putting extracurricular sports first instead of actually teaching kids how to be competent adults.”*

*“The district has failed the education of our children by teaching the STAAR test.”*

*“Teachers are forced to focus on standardized testing instead of teaching.”*

In another theme among those giving low ratings, several respondents note a broad range of equity gaps facing their community’s public schools:

*“They do a fairly decent job of educating and motivating the top tiers of students and a really inadequate job of educating the bottom tiers and students with learning disabilities.”*

*“It could be better to be more inclusive with people from different backgrounds.”*

*“No one cares about where low-income people live, so poor schools.”*

Still others highlight the narrow scope of their local schools’ curriculum and underscore the need for broader offerings and services:

*“Schools only teach what’s needed to go to another school. They need to teach life skills.”*

*“The thinking that everyone needs to go to college and the demise of trade-type learning.”*

Further responses again cover a range of topics, ranging from concerns about the quality of teacher training at public charter schools to perceptions about district politics and problems with overcrowding:

*“There is an abundance of charter schools with policies that allow for teachers without expertise to teach courses. For instance, teachers without certification to teach upper-level math courses are able to provide instruction in charter schools without the credentials that teachers in non-charter public schools must have.”*

*“Because it’s government indoctrination at its finest. Teachers are having to quit because they don’t believe what school material they are told to teach.”*

*“The overcrowded classrooms foster poor discipline and demoralize the classroom teacher. Word spreads and no one wants to be a substitute in that kind of atmosphere.”*

## Problems facing schools

Pandemic-related concerns retain their number one spot among the biggest problems facing Texas public schools. In an open-ended question, 28 percent of public school parents mention the coronavirus, masking, vaccines or remote learning as a top problem for the schools in their community, about even with pandemic-related mentions last year (25 percent). These also are cited as a top problem by 23 percent of Texans overall, down from 29 percent last year but still the most-mentioned issue.

Second on the list is educational quality, raised as a top concern by 16 percent of parents and all Texans alike – both essentially unchanged since last year. Among all Texans, this includes 10 percent who are critical of the school curriculum, up 5 points since last year; fewer parents, 5 percent, raise this specifically, again essentially unchanged.

Twelve percent in both groups next mention school funding, down 4 points among all Texans from last year; among parents, it's down 7 points, a slight difference given sample sizes.

Eleven percent of all Texans (but fewer parents, 5 percent) raise ideological issues, such as the teaching of liberal ideologies, government overreach in K-12 education, political indoctrination or lack of religion. Mentions of ideological issues are up 5 points among all Texans while about the same as last year among parents. (Up to three answers were accepted.)

About one in 10 Texans and parents alike also mention teacher workforce issues, including teacher shortages and difficulty getting good teachers. As many Texans (but fewer parents, 5 percent) mention issues related to student well-being, ranging from lack of discipline and drugs in school to student mental health and apathy.

Regionally, pandemic concerns are least cited in West Texas, by 11 percent, versus 22 percent to 26 percent elsewhere. Among other groups, the pandemic is raised as a top issue by 30 percent of Democrats compared with about two in 10 independents and Republicans; by 30 percent of liberals (and 24 percent of moderates) versus 17 percent of conservatives; and by about a quarter in cities and suburbs compared with 16 percent of rural residents. It's higher, 29 percent, among Texans with incomes of less than \$50,000, versus two in 10 of those in higher-income households.

Among other differences, educational quality is raised as a concern by 24 percent of Texans with postgraduate degrees; this declines to 14 percent among those without college degrees. It's also higher among independents and Republicans (cited by two in 10) versus Democrats (12 percent).

Issues of student well-being such as lack of discipline, drugs in school and mental health, for their part, are twice as likely to be called a top concern by conservatives and Republicans (13 percent apiece) than by liberals and Democrats (6 percent apiece). Within ideological issues, concerns relating to liberal ideology, “political correctness” or critical race theory are mentioned by one in 10 conservatives and Republicans alike, versus 4 percent of independents and 1 percent in other political or ideological groups.

## Pandemic impacts

The survey measured pandemic impacts across nine items. As noted, topping the list in positive impacts, public school parents by a wide margin are more apt to report a positive than a negative impact of the pandemic on their child's technology skills, 58 percent versus 11 percent.

Public school parents are 14 points more likely to say the pandemic had a positive rather than negative impact on their own knowledge of their child's educational progress, 39 percent versus 25 percent, and on their communication with their child's teachers, 38 percent versus 24 percent.



## Survey questions

- Q. What do you think are the biggest problems facing the public schools in your community?
- Q. Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Using the same scale, what grade would you give the public schools in your community?
- Q. What's the main reason you give the public schools in your community a(n) A, B, C, D, or Fail grade?
- Q. What kind of impact, if any, has the pandemic impacted each of these areas? Your child's educational progress; your child's emotional health and well-being; your child's organizational and time-management skills; your child's engagement in coursework; your child's technology skills; your child's relationships with other students; your child's relationships with teachers; your communication with your child's teachers; your knowledge of your child's educational progress.

Parents are divided on the remaining six items. Similar percentages of parents report positive and negative impacts on their child's relationships with teachers, engagement in coursework, educational progress, organizational and time-management skills, relationships with other students, and emotional health and well-being. Twenty-six percent to 36 percent say the pandemic had no impact on each of the nine items.

Connectedness to school is a factor. Thirty percent of public school parents say their child has a very strong sense of belonging at their school; those in this group are 14 to 26 points more likely than parents of children with a weaker sense of belonging to report positive impacts on seven of the nine items. (On two items, 14- and 15-point differences are slight, given sample sizes. There's no significant difference on two others, their child's emotional health and well-being or their child's relationships with teachers.)<sup>9</sup>

In other group differences, public school parents whose oldest child is a boy are 15 to 17 points more apt than those whose child is a girl to report positive impacts on their child's relationship with their teachers, technology skills, emotional health and well-being and parents' knowledge of their child's educational progress.

Public school parents with household incomes less than \$50,000 are 14 to 23 points more likely than those in higher-income households to report positive impacts on eight of nine items, all but their child's technology skills.

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<sup>9</sup> The sample size for parents whose child has a very strong sense of belonging at their school is n=93.

# Attitudes toward teachers

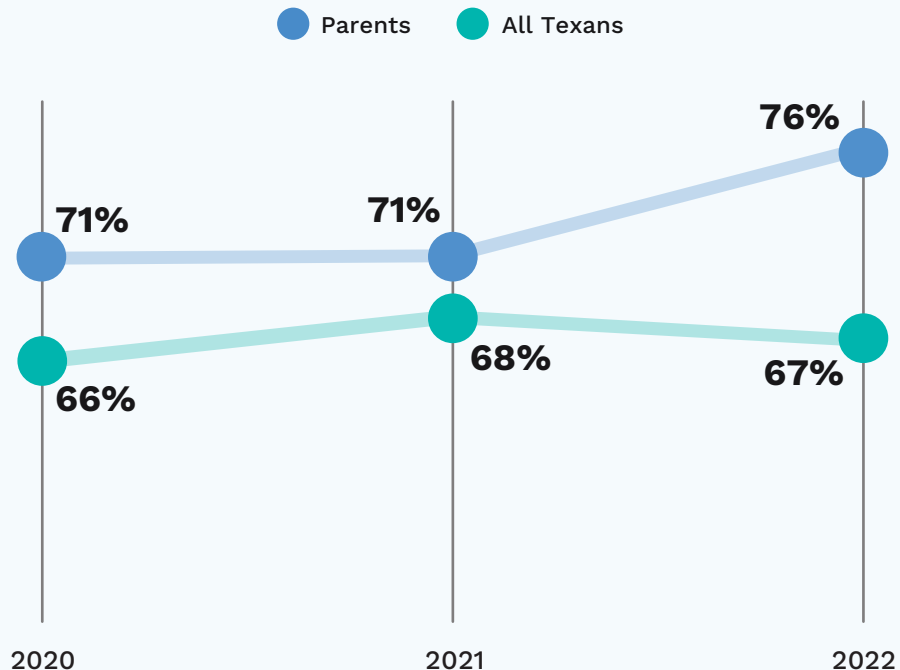
Though 52 percent of Texans rate their public schools highly, more, 67 percent, give A or B grades to the public school teachers in their community, essentially unchanged the past two years. In one shift, public school parents are now more apt than Texans overall to give their teachers A or B ratings; 76 percent do so. The ratings from the two groups were similar in the past two annual surveys.

As and Bs for local public school teachers peak among residents of East Texas (76 percent), Democrats (73 percent), liberals (73 percent), rural Texans (71 percent) and college graduates (71 percent). It's seven in 10 among Texans who think their local public schools have too little or the right amount of money, falling to 46 percent of those who think they have too much.

In a related question, 69 percent think public school teachers are undervalued in society today, essentially unchanged since 2020. Twenty-two percent think they're valued appropriately; 7 percent, overvalued. Public school parents are similar to Texans overall on this measure.

## Parents Give Teachers Higher Grades Than Texans Overall Do

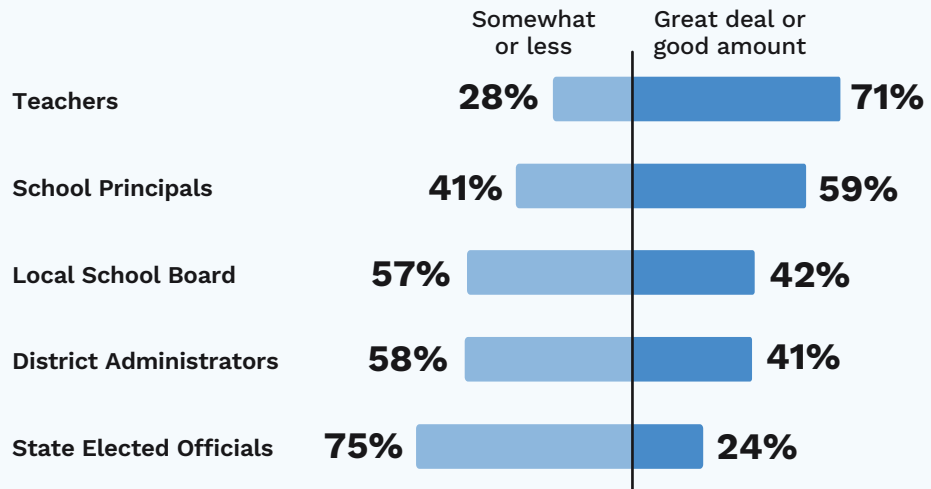
% public school parents and % all Texans who give A or B grades for public school teachers





## Texans Trust Teachers Most to Make Decisions Supporting Students

% Texans trust various entities



Underscoring these views, 63 percent of Texans think salaries for teachers in their community are too low, including majorities across partisan political lines; still, this is down 7 points overall since 2020. Thirty-two percent think salaries are about right, up 5 points; 2 percent think they're too high, unchanged.

Texans divide on whether they'd like to have a child of their own take up teaching in the public schools as a career, 49 percent say yes and 50 percent say no, essentially steady since 2020. Parents are slightly more likely to say they'd like to have a child teach in public schools, 57 percent; parents and Texans overall were essentially even two years ago. This view peaks at about six in 10 in several groups – those who give their public schools an A rating, Hispanic Texans, those in the South/Southwest region, Texans who haven't gone beyond high school and Democrats.



## Trust in teachers

When Texans are asked how much they trust various groups to make decisions that are in the best interests of public school students, teachers are rated the highest, trusted a great deal or good amount by seven in 10 Texans. It's six in 10 for school principals, dropping to about four in 10 for local school boards and district administrators alike and falling further, to 24 percent, for state elected officials.

Far fewer place the highest level of trust in each group. Thirty percent trust teachers a great deal; 16 percent say the same for school principals, with top-level trust in remaining groups in the single digits. Public school parents are more apt than the public overall to trust district administrators (51 percent versus 41 percent) and state elected officials (35 percent versus 24 percent); parents are similar to the general public in trusting teachers, principals and local school boards.

Logically, trust also is associated with Texans' ratings of their community's public schools. Those who give their community's public schools an A or B rating are 21 to 41 points more likely than others to trust each group a great deal or good amount.

Among public school parents, sense of belonging again matters: Those whose child has a very strong sense of belonging at their school are 21 to 25 points more likely to trust four of the five groups a great deal or good amount. (There's no difference on trusting state elected officials.) And parents who are very comfortable approaching their child's teacher, principal or administrator, school counselor, support staff and the PTA are 23 to 32 points more likely to trust each, compared with those who are very comfortable approaching four or fewer.<sup>10</sup>

Partisanship also informs these views. Democrats are 11 to 19 points more apt than Republicans to trust teachers, principals, district administrators and the local school board; there's no significant difference between the two on trusting state elected officials a great deal or good amount. Independents are similar to Republicans on each.

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<sup>10</sup> The sample size for public school parents who are comfortable approaching four or fewer of these groups is n=90.

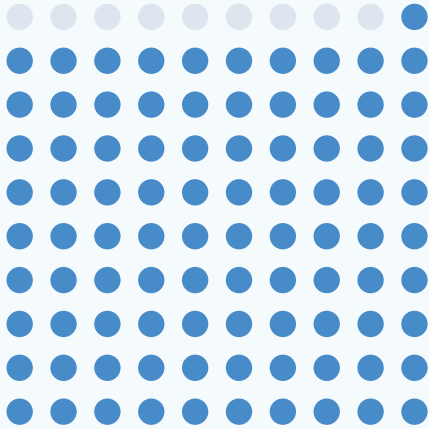
In a related question, Texans are broadly confident in their teachers, with majorities trusting them to handle each of six items tested. Among them: Three-quarters trust teachers a great deal or a good amount to assess and monitor students' academic progress. About two-thirds trust teachers to develop and choose curriculum (67 percent) and support students' self-management, interpersonal skills and decision-making skills (65 percent). Fifty-nine percent trust teachers to discuss current events; 57 percent, to create a classroom that is responsive to students' cultural backgrounds; and 54 percent, to plan for all students' individual needs. Public school parents are similar to Texans overall in trusting teachers on each.

Again, trust is broad, but not deep: Just 16 percent to 26 percent of Texans trust teachers a great deal on each item. Here differences emerge between public school parents and all Texans, with parents 12 points more apt to trust teachers a great deal in terms of planning for all students' individual needs (28 percent versus 16 percent), 11 points on assessing and monitoring academic progress (37 percent versus 26 percent) and a slight 7 points on developing and choosing curriculum (30 percent versus 23 percent).

Regionally, trust is higher in South/Southwest Texas compared with the rest of the state on several items – developing and choosing curriculum (77 percent versus 64 percent); supporting students' self-management, interpersonal skills and decision-making skills (74 percent versus 62 percent); planning for all students' individual needs (62 percent versus 51 percent); and creating a classroom that is responsive to students' cultural backgrounds (67 percent versus 53 percent).

Texans of color are 10 to 17 points more apt than White Texans to trust teachers on five of the items, all but assessing and monitoring students' academic progress. Hispanic Texans are 12 to 20 points more apt than White Texans to trust teachers on these five items. Black Texans are more likely than White Texans to trust teachers on three of them (supporting students' self-management, interpersonal skills and decision-making skills, slightly; planning for all students' individual needs; and discussing current events).

## Standardized Test Pressure Tops List of Teacher Challenges



# 9 in 10

Texans say standardized test pressure is a challenge for teachers

## Challenges facing teachers

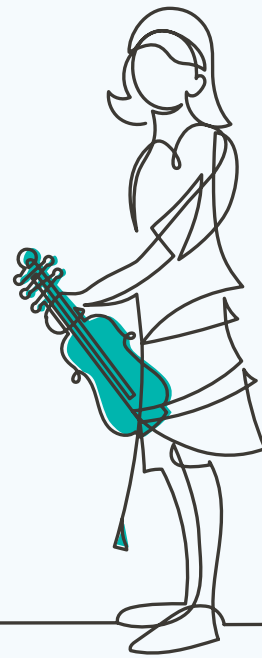
In measures that underscore the significance of Texans' trust in their teachers, large majorities see each of 14 items as challenges for teachers today. Topping the list, nine in 10 call pressure to have their students do well on standardized tests a major challenge or a challenge for teachers, including similar shares across racial and ethnic groups. Remaining items are seen as a challenge by 72 percent to 85 percent.

In seeing each as “major” challenges, views again peak with standardized test pressure (54 percent), followed by work-related COVID-19 health concerns (49 percent), disciplinary issues (47 percent), poor pay and benefits (44 percent) and feeling undervalued (43 percent). About four in 10 cite lack of supplies and equipment, high levels of work-related stress and level of training for pandemic learning as major challenges.

Rounding out the list of major challenges are excessive workloads and long hours (37 percent), too-large class sizes (37 percent), too many administrative burdens (36 percent), communication with students' families or caregivers (30 percent), supporting students' well-being and lack of opportunities for career advancement (28 percent apiece).

Each of the 14 items is seen as a major challenge or a challenge by large majorities across demographic groups, including by race or ethnicity, political partisanship, ideology, geographic region, educational attainment, income and urbanicity.





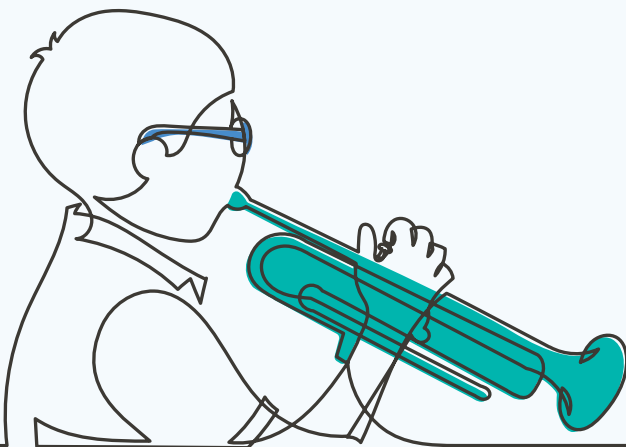
Still, notable differences emerge on some items. Regionally, seeing lack of supplies and equipment as a major challenge or challenge peaks in South/Southwest Texas (86 percent) and is lowest in Central (65 percent) and East (64 percent) Texas. On poor pay and benefits, it's highest again in the South/Southwest (82 percent) and Dallas/Fort Worth (80 percent), compared with 62 percent in East Texas.

Democrats are 11 to 29 points more apt than Republicans to see all but three items as major challenges. Conversely, Republicans are 18 points more likely than Democrats to see disciplinary issues as a major challenge. The two groups are similar on standardized test pressure and administrative burdens. Independents generally fall in between.

Six of the 14 items also were asked in 2020. Shifts, albeit modest, are apparent in perceiving poor pay and benefits (-7 points), too-large class sizes (-6), disciplinary issues (-5) and lack of supplies and equipment (a slight -4) as challenges; views on standardized test pressure and administrative burdens are essentially unchanged. In seeing each as a major challenge, views on five of the six items held virtually steady, with one, disciplinary issues, down sharply (-19) among public school parents and a slight -5 points among Texans overall.

There are differences in assessing teachers' challenges between Texans in this survey and Texas public school teachers themselves in previous surveys for the Charles Butt Foundation. Compared with Texans today, teachers surveyed last May were less likely to report challenges in work-related COVID-19 health concerns (70 percent versus 84 percent), training for pandemic learning models (70 percent versus 83 percent) and communication with families (73 percent versus 79 percent). It's the opposite direction on extra workload and hours, 83 percent versus 76 percent. Teachers and the public are similar in perceived challenges of work-related stress and supporting students' well-being.

Compared with other items asked of Texas public school teachers a year earlier, in March 2020, teachers also were less apt than Texans overall today to see challenges for teachers in terms of disciplinary issues (71 percent versus 85 percent), lack of supplies and equipment (64 percent versus 78 percent), too-large class sizes (69 percent versus 79 percent) and standardized test pressure (82 percent versus 91 percent). Views are similar between these groups on pay/benefits and administrative burdens.



## Survey questions

- Q. Thinking about public school teachers in your community, using the A, B, C, D, Fail scale, what grade would you give them as a group?
- Q. How much, if at all, do you trust each of these groups to make decisions that are in the best interests of public school students in your community? Teachers; school principals; district administrators; the local school board; state elected officials.
- Q. Do you feel that public school teachers are undervalued, overvalued, or valued appropriately in society today?
- Q. Do you think salaries for teachers in your community are too high, too low, or just about right?
- Q. Would you like to have a child of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?
- Q. How big of a challenge do you think these are for teachers today? Pressure to have their students do well on standardized tests; lack of supplies and equipment; too-large class sizes; too many administrative burdens; disciplinary issues; communication with students' families or caregivers; poor pay and benefits; high level of work-related stress; excessive workload/long hours; feeling undervalued; lack of opportunities for career advancement; their level of training for new pandemic learning models; work-related health concerns associated with COVID-19; supporting students' well-being.
- Q. How much, if at all, do you trust teachers to do each of these? Develop and choose curriculum; support students' self-management, interpersonal skills, and decision-making skills; plan for all students' individual needs; discuss current events; assess and monitor students' academic progress; create a classroom that is responsive to students' cultural backgrounds.

# Testing and accountability

**E**ighty-six percent of public school parents say their child has taken the STAAR test, with mixed experiences: Thirty-six percent describe the test as a positive experience for their child, 30 percent say it was a negative experience, and 34 percent describe it as neutral.

Hispanic parents are more likely than White parents to describe the STAAR exam as a positive experience for their child, 41 percent versus 20 percent. Those who rate their community's public schools highly also are more apt to report positive experiences, compared with those who give poor ratings to their community's schools."

Conversely, reported negative experiences with the tests are higher among public school parents whose child is a girl, 37 percent versus 22 percent among those with boys, a slight difference given sample sizes. Parents of boys instead are more apt to describe the test experience as neutral, 43 percent versus 26 percent.

## Open-ended responses

Parents were invited to describe their child's experiences with the STAAR exam in an open-ended question. Among those who say their child had a positive experience, many say it was because their child excelled or performed better than expected; others call it a good way for their child to learn about their academic strengths and weaknesses; and some call the test motivational, requiring their child to take responsibility, prepare and study.

*"It was positive in the sense that it made my son concentrate on doing well on the test and study and prepare for it."*

*"Learning and being able to recall what was learned throughout the school year to better themselves for the next school [year]."*

*"Se dio cuenta de las fortalezas en las materias así como las que debe poner más empeño." [He realized his strengths in subjects as well as the ones he should put more effort into.]*

*"My daughter likes the challenge in this type of testing."*

*"Él sacó muy buenos resultados y le ayudó a tener más confianza en*

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<sup>11</sup> The sample size is  $n=87$  for White public school parents with a child that has taken the STAAR tests. The sample size of Black public school parents is too small for reliable analysis,  $n=19$ .



*sí mismo. Pero si no le hubiera ido bien, tal vez las cosas serían diferentes.” [He got very good results and it helped him to have more confidence in himself. But if it hadn’t gone well, maybe things would be different.]*

*“She was able to see where she stood amongst her peers and was doing quite well.”*

Conversely, nearly half of public school parents whose child had a negative experience with the STAAR test say it was because they felt some sort of distress over the exam, including anxiety, nervousness, stress or worry. Others say their child lost self-esteem because they underperformed, and some consider the tests a poor benchmark of student learning or say too much time is spent on rote test preparation.

*“He is a (A honor roll) student in honors classes, he didn’t do well on one of the STAAR tests. It killed his self-confidence and had him question himself.”*

*“My daughter struggles with dyslexia. Reading and writing are already stressful, high-pressure activities and the added stress of test performance makes those struggles more difficult.”*

*“It provides no real measurement of what the child may or may not have learned. It does not follow the curriculum and the pattern that a child recognizes, the teachers are forced to try to teach the children and then teach to the test because they are not aligned.”*

*“She felt pressured, scared, and very nervous. The test is too long for little kids.”*

*“Preparation forced teachers to do repetitive activities that rarely allowed time for ‘why’ questions.”*

*“It made her so anxious she threw up and started crying over a pencil. She’s a good student who works hard but there was so much pressure from teachers and administrators to do well. She thought if I didn’t do well then I’m stupid and it undermines her and makes her second guess.”*

## Perceptions of the STAAR test

A majority of Texans overall are skeptical that STAAR effectively measures how well a student is learning, with 56 percent saying they're not so or not at all confident in this. Parents of public school children are slightly less skeptical; about half have confidence in STAAR's ability to measure student learning effectively. (Twenty percent of parents are "very" confident in the tests' ability to measure student learning, up from one in 10 in 2020 and 2021 alike.)

Views vary among groups. Women are more likely than men to say the STAAR exams undermine students' self-esteem, cause too much pressure and disregard individual students' differences. White Texans are more likely than Texans of color to think the STAAR exams force teachers to "teach to the test" and express greater skepticism in the exams' ability to measure student learning effectively.

By region, Central Texans are most critical of STAAR, with about two-thirds or more siding with negative descriptions of the test across the six questions asked; views among those in other regions of the state are more varied. Having little or no confidence in the exams to measure student learning effectively also peaks at 68 percent among Central residents, compared with a low of 46 percent among those in the South/Southwest region of the state.

To explore views on STAAR further, the survey asked a series of paired questions, asking respondents whether positive or negative descriptions best described the exam.

On five of six questions asked, majorities of Texans side with negative descriptions of the test. Among public school parents, majorities align with negative descriptions of the exam on three questions, and parents

divide evenly between positive and negative views on three others.

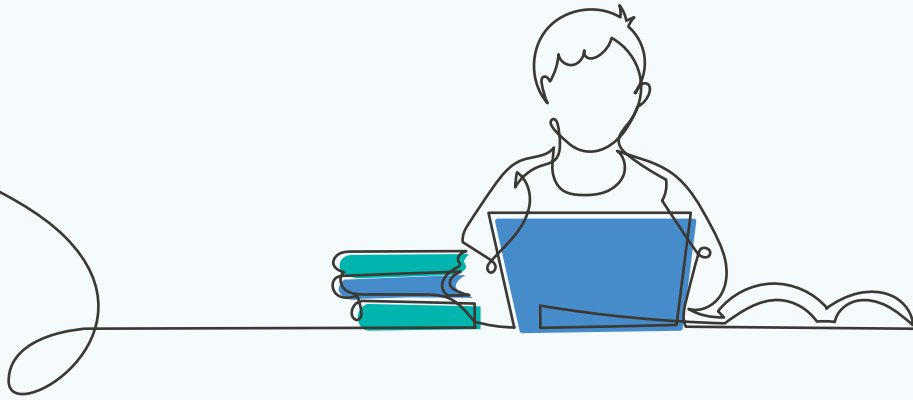
Among the top criticisms, 70 percent of Texans and 69 percent of public school parents think STAAR requires students to focus on test answers rather than deeper thinking; roughly three in 10 in each group instead think the tests encourage an important basis in factual information.

Sixty-four percent of adults overall and 57 percent of parents side more with the criticism that STAAR exams force teachers to "teach to the test," while 34 percent overall and four in 10 parents instead think they standardize what's taught in the public schools.

Most agree that the STAAR tests put too much pressure on students – 56 percent of all adults and 61 percent of public school parents. Fewer, 40 percent and 36 percent, instead align more with the statement "they prepare students for the pressures of life after school."

Among other concerns, 57 percent of Texans overall say the exams disregard individual students' differences as learners, while 41 percent side more with the description "they provide a standard measure of student achievement." Public school parents are essentially split on this, 48 percent versus 50 percent. Similarly, more Texans think the tests undermine students' self-esteem than give them helpful motivation, 55 percent versus 41 percent; this narrows to 50 percent versus 45 percent among parents.

In the final item, Texans are divided on whether the exams undermine students' enjoyment of learning; 50 percent say they do, while 47 percent instead think they give students an opportunity to show what they know. Public school parents are similarly split between these views.



## Texans Identify More With Negative Perceptions of the STAAR Test

% Texans who think one option better describes the STAAR tests

● Negative ● Positive

They undermine students' enjoyment of learning

They give students an opportunity to show what they know

50% VS 47%

They undermine students' self-esteem

They give students helpful motivation

55% VS 41%

They disregard individual students' differences as learners

They provide a standard measure of student achievement

57% VS 41%

They put too much pressure on students

They prepare students for the pressures of life after school

56% VS 40%

They force teachers to "teach to the test"

They standardize what's taught in the public schools

64% VS 34%

They require students to focus on answers rather than deep thinking

They encourage an important basis in factual information

70% VS 27%

## The role of STAAR

Given these doubts, just 17 percent of Texans think the Texas Education Agency should base its A-F letter grades for Texas public schools entirely on student scores on STAAR tests, though that is up 5 points since 2021. Most, 68 percent, think the public schools should be graded partially on how their students perform on the tests and partially on the programs and services schools offer, unchanged since last year. Twelve percent think standardized tests should not be a factor at all, down 5 points.

Half of public school parents use their students' STAAR scores as a major source of information. That substantially trails other items as major sources of information on student progress: talking with their child (cited by 83 percent), reading their child's report card (80 percent), parent-teacher conferences (68 percent) and communication with teachers outside of conferences (65 percent).

Performance on the STAAR exams is seen as more useful than two other items: communication with the principal or other school administrators, a major source of information for 42 percent; and talking with other parents, 27 percent.



There are differences among groups in which sources parents find most valuable. Sixty-two percent of Hispanic parents say their child's STAAR test scores are a major source of information about their progress in school, compared with 24 percent of White parents. Parents without a college degree and those with household incomes less than \$50,000 also are more apt than others to say the standardized exam is a major source of information.

Among other differences, half of mothers say that communicating with the principal or other school administrators is a major source of information, compared with 31 percent of fathers. Hispanic parents also are more likely than White parents to rely on school leadership, 52 percent versus 22 percent, and on communication with teachers outside of parent-teacher conferences, 75 percent versus 53 percent. Differences are similar for parent-teacher meetings.

## Survey questions

- Q. The Texas Education Agency gives an A-F letter grade to each public school in the state. How do you think this grade should be determined? Entirely on student scores on state standardized tests; partly on student scores on state standardized tests and partly on other factors, such as the range of school programs and services for students and families; entirely on non-test factors, such as the range of school programs and services for students and families.
- Q. How much is each of these a source of good information in learning about your (oldest) child's progress in school? Talking with your child; parent-teacher conferences; communicating with your child's teachers beyond parent-teacher conferences; your child's report cards; your child's STAAR test scores; talking with other parents; communicating with the principal or other school administrators.
- Q. Thinking about the state standardized test known as STAAR, how confident are you that the STAAR test effectively measures how well a student is learning?
- Q. As far as you are aware, has your (oldest) child ever taken the STAAR tests?
- Q. The STAAR test determines a school's A-F score and influences whether a student is promoted to the next grade. In the pairs below, please pick which item better describes the STAAR tests in your opinion. If you think both may apply to some extent, pick the one that fits best. They put too much pressure on students/they prepare students for the pressures of life after school; they undermine students' enjoyment of learning/they give students an opportunity to show what they know; they provide a standard measure of student achievement/they disregard individual students' differences as learners; they require students to focus on test answers rather than deeper thinking/they encourage an important basis in factual information; they standardize what's taught in the public schools/they force teachers to "teach to the test"; they undermine students' self-esteem/they give students helpful motivation.
- Q. Overall, were the STAAR tests a (positive) or (negative) experience for your (oldest) child?
- Q. Briefly, in your own words, describe in what ways the STAAR tests were a (positive/negative) experience for your (oldest) child?

# Equity barriers

**M**ajorities of Texans see a variety of barriers to learning for low-income students, and, albeit to a lesser extent, on the basis of students' race or ethnicity.

Regarding low-income students, lack of access to additional tutoring and academic supports tops the list, seen as a significant barrier or barrier by 71 percent. Essentially as many, 69 percent, say the same about lack of resources and support around early childhood development best practices.

About two-thirds apiece see barriers for low-income students in not consistently being placed with experienced or well-trained teachers, ineffective or biased disciplinary practices, lack of access to social-emotional and/or mental health supports and food insecurity. Roughly six in 10 say the same about lack of access to medical care and lack of access to advanced classes. Results are similar among public school parents.

## Lower-Income Texans Identify More With Challenges for Low-Income Students

% Texans who see each item as a barrier or significant barrier to learning for low-income students

	All Texans	<\$50,000	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000+
Lack of access to additional tutoring and academic supports	71%	78%	71%	64%
Lack of resources and support around early childhood development best practices	69%	73%	73%	62%
Students not consistently being placed with experienced or well-trained teachers	67%	72%	71%	59%
Lack of access to social-emotional and/or mental health supports and programming	66%	75%	68%	56%
Ineffective or biased disciplinary practices	66%	74%	66%	59%
Food insecurity	65%	71%	67%	58%
Lack of access to medical care	63%	68%	66%	55%
Lack of access to advanced classes/gifted and talented programs	60%	67%	61%	53%

<50%
60%
>70%

Among group differences, as elsewhere, partisanship informs these attitudes. Republicans are 21 to 35 points less apt than Democrats to see each item as more than a minor barrier; independents either fall in between or come closer to Democrats on each. In further gaps, those with household incomes less than \$100,000 per year are 11 to 15 points more likely than higher-income Texans to see each item as barrier.

Even as sizable majorities see each as more than a small barrier, far fewer call each item a “significant” barrier for low-income students. Lack of resources and support around early childhood development tops the list (38 percent) in the share saying so; remaining items are seen as major barriers by 25 percent to 32 percent of Texans.

Shifts from 2021 are especially pronounced in perceiving items as significant barriers – the top of the scale – with fewer Texans saying so about seven of the eight items than did a year ago:

- Students not consistently being placed with experienced or well-trained teachers (-9 points);
- Lack of access to medical care (-8);
- Lack of access to social-emotional and/or mental health supports and programming (-8);
- Food insecurity (-7);
- Ineffective or biased disciplinary practices (-7);
- Lack of access to advanced classes/gifted and talented programs (a slight -5); and
- Lack of resources and support around early childhood development best practices (a slight -5).

Views are essentially steady on the final item, lack of access to tutoring and academic supports.

Partisanship factors prominently in shifts since 2021. Perceptions of seeing each as a significant barrier or barrier are down on six of the eight items among Republicans, from a slight 9 to 21 points. (They’re essentially unchanged on the remaining two, lack of access to medical care and tutoring.) They’re down a slight 9 points among independents on three items – food insecurity, access to medical care and early childhood development best practices. Among Democrats, perception of barriers is down on just one item, early childhood development (-12 points).

In terms of barriers on the basis of race or ethnicity, about 60 percent alike see ineffective or biased disciplinary practices and students not consistently being placed with experienced or well-trained teachers as a significant barrier or barrier. Forty-nine percent to 56 percent say the same about a school or district environment where teachers or students can’t speak up about racism, access to social-emotional and/or mental health supports, access to advanced classes and curriculum that’s not reflective of students’ cultural backgrounds. It’s 39 percent with respect to access to teachers of the same race or ethnicity. Again, public school parents are similar to Texans overall in seeing each as a barrier.



There are broad gaps by race or ethnicity. Black Texans are 24 to 38 points more likely than White Texans to see each as more than a minor barrier; that includes at least two-thirds of Black adults on each of the seven items. Hispanic Texans, similarly, are 20 to 25 points more likely than White Texans to say the same on each.

As with a variety of other attitudes, partisanship strongly shapes these perceptions. Democrats are a wide 32 to 48 points more likely than Republicans to see each as a significant barrier or barrier, with independents in between. (Seventy-six percent of Democrats are Texans of color, compared with 27 percent of Republicans.)

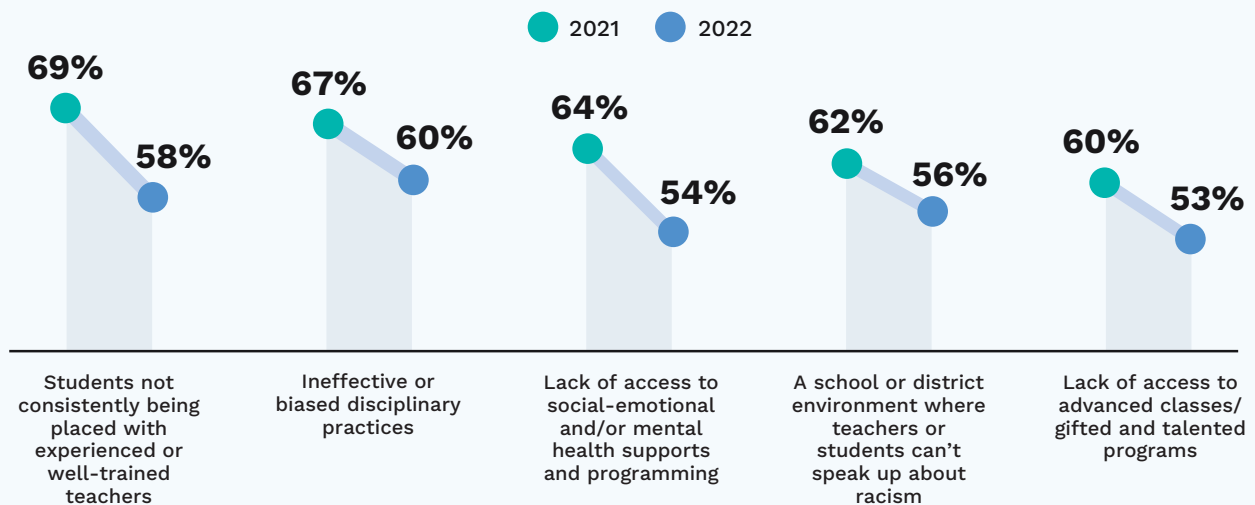
Similar to barriers facing low-income students, there are declines since 2021 in views of several items as significant

barriers or barriers based on students' race or ethnicity:

- Students not consistently being placed with experienced or well-trained teachers (-11 points);
- Lack of access to social-emotional and/or mental health supports and programming (-10);
- Ineffective or biased disciplinary practices (-7);
- Lack of access to advanced classes/ gifted and talented programs (-7).
- A school or district environment where teachers or students can't speak up about racism (-6); and

## Texans Less Apt in 2022 to See Learning Barriers Based on Race or Ethnicity

% Texans in 2021 and 2022 who see each item as a significant barrier or barrier to learning for students on the basis of race or ethnicity



Views on curriculum that is not reflective of students' cultural backgrounds and lack of access to teachers who are the same race/ethnicity as their students are essentially unchanged the past year.

On the five perceived barriers with significant shifts, movement generally is concentrated among White Texans, and to a lesser extent, Republicans. White Texans are a slight 8 to 18 points less apt than they were a year ago to see those five items as more than a small barrier; there are no statistically significant shifts among Black or Hispanic Texans. It's -12 to -17 points on each item for Republicans; views among Democrats are essentially unchanged on three of the five measures, and independents are essentially unchanged on two.

## Survey questions

- Q. How much if at all do you see these as barriers to learning for low-income students? Food insecurity; lack of access to medical care; lack of access to social-emotional and/or mental health supports and programming; lack of access to advanced classes/gifted & talented programs; ineffective or biased disciplinary practices; students not consistently being placed with experienced or well-trained teachers; lack of access to additional tutoring and academic supports; lack of resources and support around early childhood development best practices (such as reading to children, talking with them, regular pediatric visits).
- Q. How much if at all do you see these as barriers to learning on the basis of students' race or ethnicity? Lack of access to advanced classes/gifted & talented programs; a school or district environment where teachers or students can't speak up about racism; lack of access to social-emotional and/or mental health supports and programming; curriculum that is not reflective of students' cultural backgrounds; lack of access to teachers who are the same race/ethnicity as their students; ineffective or biased disciplinary practices; students not consistently being placed with experienced or well-trained teachers.

As before, far fewer see each as a significant barrier. Twenty-eight percent alike say so for ineffective or biased disciplinary practices and a school or district environment where teachers or students can't speak up about racism. About as many, 24 percent, call students not consistently being placed with experienced or well-trained teachers a significant barrier. Other items are seen as such by 15 percent to 22 percent of Texans.



# School funding

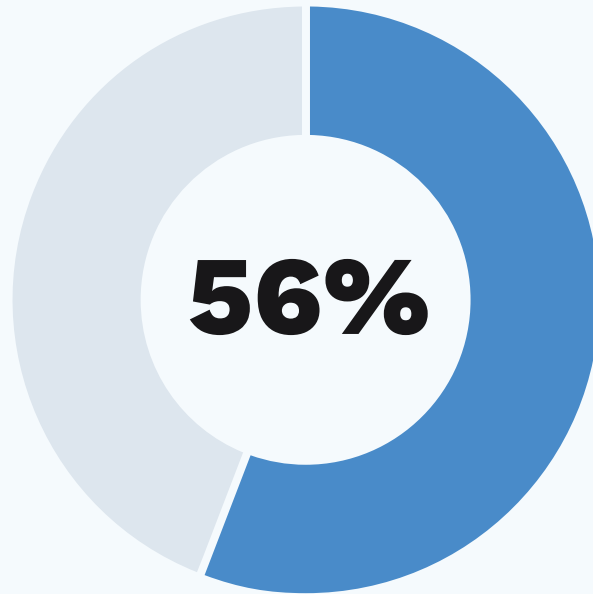
A majority of Texans, 56 percent, say that public schools in their community don't have enough money. About a third say they have the right amount, while one in 10 thinks they're overfunded, results largely unchanged in three years of Charles Butt Foundation polling.

Views among public school parents are similar, though they're 9 points more likely than others to believe their schools have the right amount of funding, primarily because they're less likely to think they're overfunded, 3 percent versus 10 percent.

There are persistent divisions under the surface, including sharp political and ideological divides. Forty-four percent of Republicans and 51 percent of independents think their schools don't have enough money, compared with 66 percent of Democrats. It's 38 percent among conservatives, rising to 62 percent of moderates and 71 percent of liberals.

## Majority of Texans Say Public Schools Are Underfunded

% Texans who believe public schools in their community have too little money



There are sizable gaps along other lines as well. About half of White Texans think their schools have too little money, rising to 61 percent of Hispanic Texans and 74 percent of Black Texans. Texans over the age of 65 are 15 points less likely than those under 40 to see schools as underfunded, 45 percent versus 60 percent.

Regionally, Houston area residents are most likely to see a need for additional funding, 61 percent, compared with 43 percent in East Texas. Seventeen percent in both East and West Texas say their schools are overfunded, more than elsewhere in the state.

## Survey question

Q. What do you think of the funding level for public schools in your community?  
They have the right amount of money; they have too much money; they have too little money.



# Survey methodology

The 2022 Charles Butt Foundation poll was conducted for the foundation by [Langer Research Associates](#) via the nationally representative Ipsos KnowledgePanel®, in which participants are randomly recruited via address-based sampling to respond to survey questionnaires online. Households without internet connections are provided a web-enabled device and service.

The survey was designed to consist of approximately 1,150 Texas adults, including about 1,000 from the general population and an oversample of K-12 parents for more granular analysis of this population.

The questionnaire was pretested Sept. 20-21, 2021, and field work was conducted Sept. 24-Oct. 4, 2021, in English and Spanish. After initial invitations, reminder emails were sent on the third, fifth and seventh days of the field period. Out of 2,397 panel members invited to participate, completed, qualified surveys were provided by 1,179. Participants completed the survey in a median time of 18 minutes.

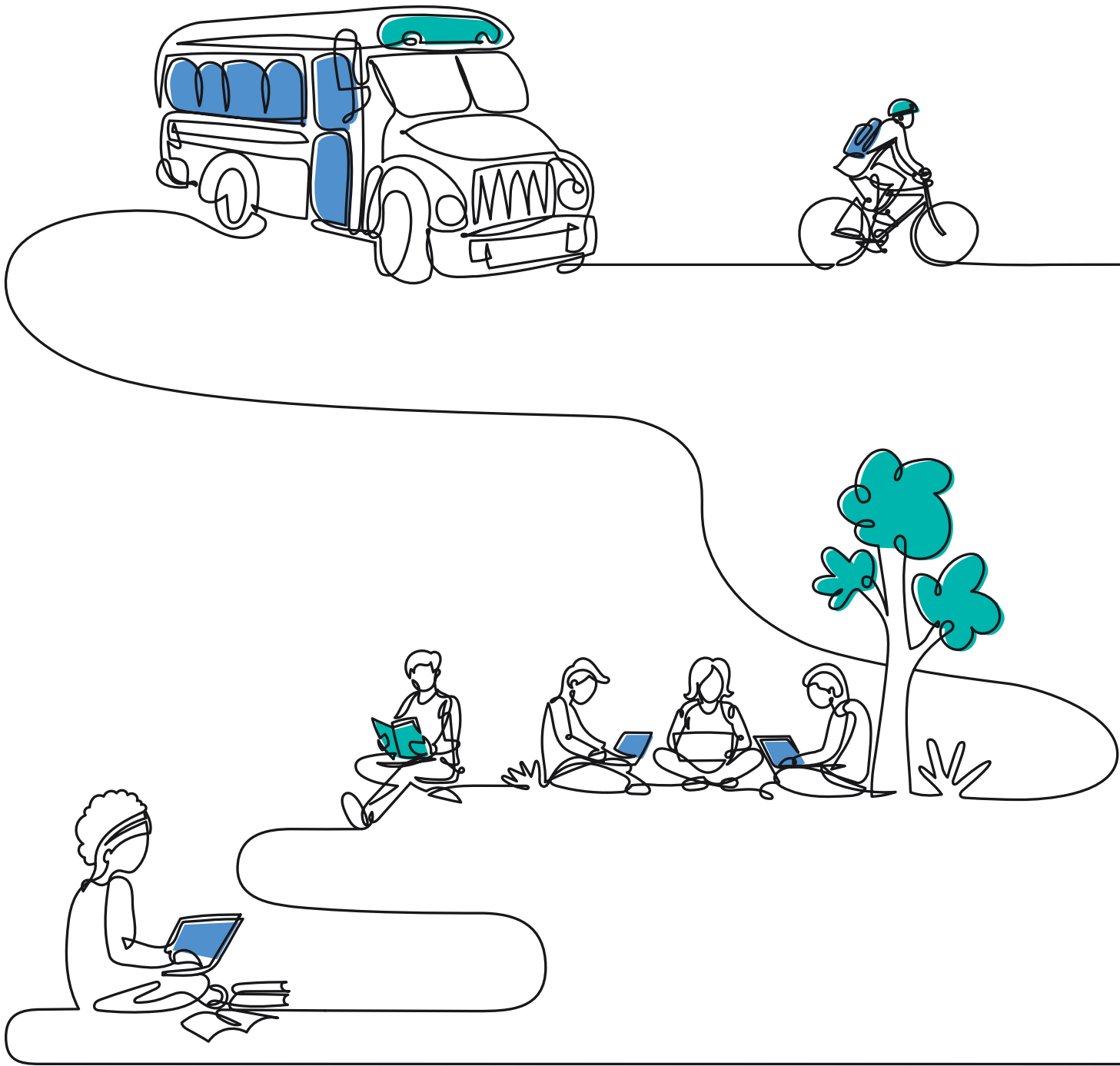
In quality control, the fastest 2 percent of respondents in total completion time within their survey path were flagged for possible inattention; these 25 cases (17 non-parents and 8 K-12 parents) were deleted. The final sample included 1,154 Texas adults, including 1,030 in the general population and an oversample of 124 K-12 parents for a total of 353.

Data were weighted via iterative proportional fitting to the following benchmark distributions of general population Texas adults from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey:

- Gender (male, female) by age (18-29, 30-44, 45-59, 60+)
- Race/ethnicity (White, Black, other, Hispanic, 2+ races)
- Education (less than high school, high school, some college, bachelor's or higher)
- Household income (\$0-\$24,999, \$25K-\$49,999, \$50K-\$74,999, \$75K-\$99,999, \$100K-\$149,999, \$150K+)
- Marital status (married, not married)
- Parent with child age 6-18 (yes, no)
- Language proficiency (English-proficient Hispanic, bilingual Hispanic, Spanish-proficient Hispanic, non-Hispanic)
- Hispanic nativity (U.S.-born Hispanic, not U.S.-born Hispanic, non-Hispanic)

A post-weight to recent estimates of political party identification in the general population was applied (31 percent Democrats, 27 percent Republicans, 35 percent independents or other party and 7 percent don't know or refused). Data also were weighted to correct for the parent oversample.

General population weights were trimmed at 1.03 percent and 98.97 percent of their distribution (minimum 0.098, maximum 5.783). Given oversampling, the survey has a design effect due to weighting of 1.97, for margins of sampling error of plus or minus 4.0 percentage points for the full sample and 7.8 points for public school parents. Error margins are larger for subgroups.



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