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INTRODUCTION

Between America's long-standing national objective of improving the strength of the public school system to prepare students for college and careers and the focus of the Obama administration on education as a pathway to economic security for the middle class and improving the economy, education issues and policy are in the spotlight. A central focus of the policy discussion is the measurement of quality and the utilization of quality data to improve student outcomes. This quality-focused policy agenda covers a range of high-profile issues, from standardized testing to teacher evaluation to early childhood education, and involves a range of stakeholders.

While regular survey research is conducted with a variety of stakeholders, including teachers, very few nationally representative surveys of parents have been conducted recently. Often cited as a key determinant of student outcomes, parents represent an important perspective that policymakers need to understand in the design, articulation, and implementation of quality-focused education initiatives. This study provides a comprehensive description of parents' perspectives on education in America today, with a specific focus on understanding what quality education and teaching means to parents and how it should be measured and rewarded.

With funding from the Joyce Foundation, the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research conducted a national survey of 1,025 parents or guardians of children who

completed a grade between kindergarten and 12th during the 2012-2013 school year. The key findings from the study, summarized below, provide much-needed information for policymakers and school officials across the country to better understand the perspectives and opinions of one of their key constituencies—parents.

- Parents report generally favorable views of their local schools, but when asked specifically about outcomes, less than half think the schools do a good job preparing students for the workforce or giving students the practical skills they will need as adults. Just over half of parents believe that their local schools are doing a good job preparing students for college and to be good citizens.
- Parents generally believe their child's teachers are high quality, and they rate teachers who are passionate, effective, and caring especially high. Significantly fewer parents rate a teacher's experience and expertise as important characteristics for a teacher.
- Not all parents are satisfied with the quality of teaching at their child's school. Significant minorities report that finding and retaining good teachers is a serious problem, as is the overall quality of instruction. And 17 percent of parents report that their child had a poor performing teacher in at least one subject this past year. Additionally, nearly three-quarters of parents favor making it easier for school districts to fire teachers for poor performance.

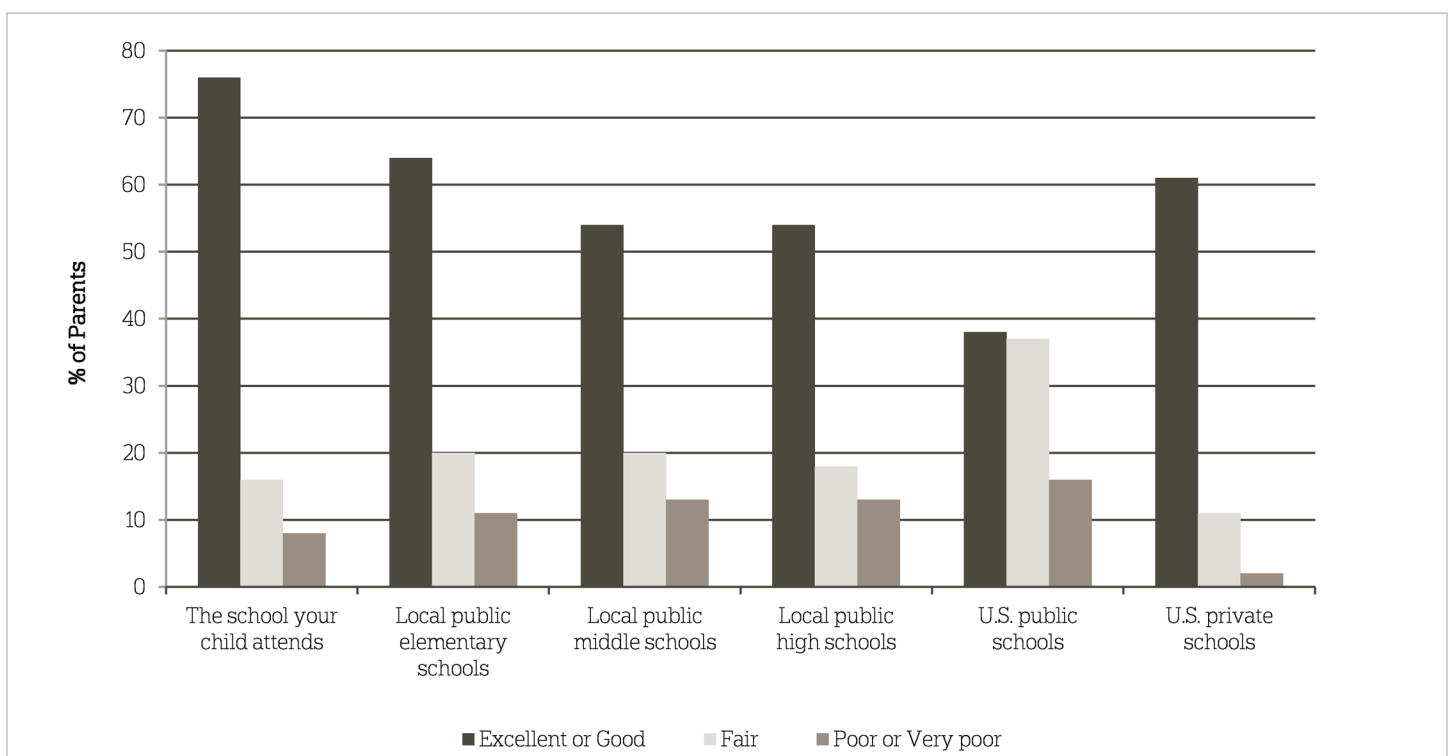
- Parents support a balanced approach to evaluating and compensating teachers, including classroom observations, student test scores, and student input.
- Overall, three in four parents believe it is very important for schools to regularly assess children's performance, and three in five believe the number of standardized tests their child takes is appropriate. A majority of parents believe that standardized tests measure both school-wide and individual performance well, although less than half believe test scores should be used for allocating funding, and 58 percent think they should be used to determine a student's grade-level promotion.
- Just over half of parents report that they have not heard much about the Common Core State Standards, and three in ten are not sure if the Common Core is used in their state. Just under half of parents believe that implementation of the Common Core will improve the quality of education, and another quarter says it will have no effect.
- Eight in 10 parents believe that preschool programs improve student performance in later years of school. A majority of parents, 76 percent, strongly or somewhat favor a plan to use public funds to make preschool available to all four-year-olds in the United States. However, rates of preschool attendance vary considerably by socioeconomic status.

THE MAJORITY OF PARENTS PERCEIVE HIGH-QUALITY LOCAL SCHOOLS AS PROVIDING A BETTER EDUCATION THAN THEY RECEIVED AS CHILDREN.

The vast majority (76 percent) of parents rate the quality of education at their child's current school as good or excellent, 16 percent rate it as fair, and just 8 percent rate it as poor or very poor. When asked about the overall quality of education in local public schools, parents' ratings remain positive, with majorities rating their local elementary, middle, and high

schools positively. Sixty-four percent of parents say the quality of education at local public elementary schools is good or excellent. For both local public middle schools and high schools, 54 percent of parents say the quality of education is good or excellent. For U.S. public schools, 38 percent of parents say the quality of education is good or excellent. For U.S. private schools, 61 percent of parents say the quality of education is good or excellent.

How would you rate the quality of education in... ?



Parents' quality ratings vary significantly based on a number of factors, including having a child with a learning disability, living in an urban area, and having a child in private school.

- Parents of children with diagnosed physical or learning disabilities rate the quality of education their child receives as good or excellent at significantly lower levels than parents of children without such diagnoses (63 percent vs. 80 percent). A similar pattern exists for quality ratings of good or excellent for local public elementary schools (53 percent vs. 68 percent). No significant differences exist for quality ratings of local public middle or high schools.
- Urban parents are less likely to rate local public schools as high quality. Seventy percent of urban parents compared with 81 percent of suburban parents say the quality of education in the school their child attends is good or excellent. Rural parents fall in the middle with 76 percent reporting their child's school is high quality. Sixty-seven percent of rural parents and 68 percent of suburban parents say the quality of education in local public elementary schools is good or excellent compared with 54 percent of urban parents. Fifty-six percent of rural parents and 59 percent of suburban parents say the quality of education in local public middle schools is good or excellent compared with 42 percent of urban parents. Sixty percent of suburban parents say the quality of education in local public high schools is good or excellent compared with 42 percent of urban parents.
- Parents whose children attend private schools are more likely than parents of public school children to say their child's school (91 percent vs. 75 percent) and private schools in the United States (88 percent vs. 57 percent) are good or excellent. Parents who send their children to public

school consistently say the quality of local public schools is good or excellent at higher rates (69 vs. 41 percent for elementary schools, 57 vs. 34 percent for middle schools, and 57 vs. 40 percent for high schools) than parents who send their children to private school.

As is typical in public opinion surveys, parents rate the quality of education in public schools across the United States significantly less positively than the quality of education their own child receives, the quality of education in local public schools, and the quality of education in U.S. private schools. Just 38 percent of parents rate the quality of education in U.S. public schools as good or excellent, while 37 percent of parents rate it as fair, and 16 percent rate it as poor or very poor. Parents give higher marks to the education in U.S. private schools, with 61 percent saying it is good or excellent, 11 percent saying that it is fair, and just 2 percent saying that it is poor or very poor.

Overall, parents do perceive that education is improving over time. Six in 10 parents say the education their child is receiving is much better or somewhat better than the education they received as a child, 16 percent say it is about the same, and 21 percent say it is somewhat worse or much worse. Parents with less than a high school education are more likely than parents with a college degree to say the education their child is receiving is much better or somewhat better than the education they received as a child (78 to 55 percent). Seventy-three percent of black parents and 71 percent of Hispanic parents say their child is receiving a much better or somewhat better education than they received as a child, compared with 56 percent of white parents.

A MAJORITY OF PARENTS THINK PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE PREPARING STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE AND TO BE GOOD CITIZENS, BUT NOT FOR WORK OR LIFE AS AN ADULT.

Public schools in the United States are tasked with not only teaching a curriculum to students, but also with preparing students for life after high school. In terms of preparing students for college, 57 percent of parents say that local public schools are doing a good or excellent job, 28 percent say that local public schools are doing a fair job, and 13 percent say that local public schools are doing a poor or very poor job. And most think students leave school well prepared to be good citizens: 55 percent of parents say that local public schools are doing a good or excellent job, 24 percent a fair job, and 19 percent say that local public schools are doing a poor or very poor job.

Fewer say that their local public schools prepare students well for the workforce: 45 percent of parents say that local public schools are doing a good or excellent job, 31 percent say that local public schools are doing a fair job, and 19 percent say that local public schools are doing a poor or very poor job. Most rate their local schools as fair or poor on giving children the practical skills they will need to survive as adults: 46 percent of parents say that local public schools are doing a good or excellent job, 30 percent say that local public schools are doing a fair job, and 22 percent say that local public schools are doing a poor or very poor job.

Perception of how well local public schools are preparing students for life after high school varies significantly for parents of children enrolled in public school and for parents of children enrolled in private school, with public school parents almost twice as likely as private school parents to rate their local schools well on preparing students for college or the workforce or to be good citizens. Sixty-one percent of parents who enroll their children in public school say that public schools are doing a good or excellent job at preparing students

for college, compared with just 34 percent of parents who enroll their children in private school. A similar pattern exists for assessments of how well public schools are preparing students for the workforce (49 percent vs. 23 percent), giving children the practical skills they will need to survive as adults (49 percent vs. 33 percent), and preparing students to be good citizens (60 percent vs. 28 percent).

A LARGE MAJORITY OF PARENTS BELIEVE PRESCHOOL IMPROVES LATER ACADEMIC OUTCOMES AND SUPPORT PUBLICLY FUNDED PRESCHOOL, BUT ACTUAL PRESCHOOL ATTENDANCE VARIES CONSIDERABLY BY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS.

Eight in 10 parents believe that preschool programs improve student performance in later years of school. A majority of parents, 76 percent, strongly or somewhat favor a plan to use public funds to make preschool available to all four-year-olds in the United States, while 8 percent neither favor nor oppose the plan, and 16 percent somewhat or strongly oppose it. Democrats are more likely to see preschool programs as effective (86 percent compared with 76 percent of independents and 75 percent of Republicans) and to favor using public funds for universal preschool (86 percent vs. 74 percent of independents and 61 percent of Republicans).

Urban parents (86 percent) are more likely to favor the plan compared with 71 percent of suburban parents and 73 percent of rural parents who support it. Parents with a household income of less than \$50,000 are more likely to strongly or somewhat favor the plan (82 percent) than parents with a household income of more than \$100,000 (71 percent). Hispanic parents and black parents are more likely to strongly or somewhat favor the plan (90 percent and 88 percent,

respectively) than white parents (70 percent). Parents of a child for whom English is not their primary language are also more likely to favor publicly funded preschool in the United States.

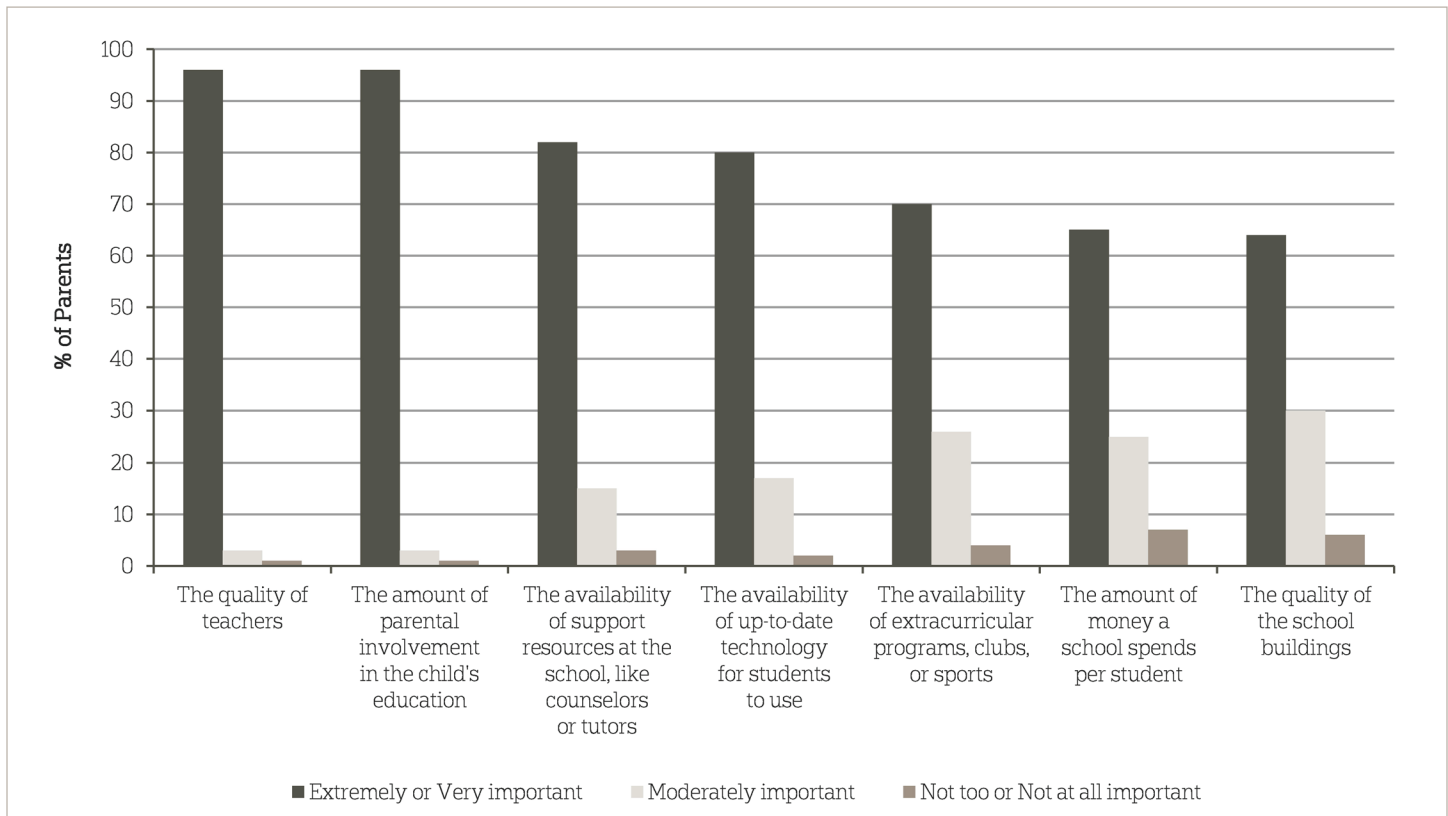
Three-quarters of parents (75 percent) report that their children attended a preschool program prior to entering kindergarten, yet there are large differences by socioeconomic status. This number falls to 49 percent for parents with less than a high school education, which is 35 percentage points less than parents with a college degree who say their children attended a preschool program (84 percent). Parents with a household income of \$100,000 or more are more likely to report that their children attended a preschool program than parents with a household income of \$50,000 or less (87 to 66 percent). And parents in rural (79 percent) and suburban (77 percent) areas are more likely to have a child who attended preschool than parents in urban areas (67 percent).

PARENTS REPORT THAT PEOPLE—TEACHERS AND PARENTS—ARE THE LARGEST CONTRIBUTORS TO SCHOOL QUALITY, WITH BUDGETARY RESOURCES RANKING MUCH LOWER.

The vast majority of parents, 96 percent, cite teacher quality, as well as parental involvement, as extremely or very important factors that contribute to the quality of a student's education. Eighty-two percent of parents say the availability of support resources at the school, such as counselors or tutors, is an extremely or very important factor. Up-to-date technology for students to use rates as extremely or very important for 80 percent of parents. Seventy percent say that

the availability of extracurricular programs, clubs, or sports is an extremely or very important factor. About two-thirds (64 percent) call the quality of the school buildings an extremely or very important factor in the quality of a student's education.

How would you rate the following...



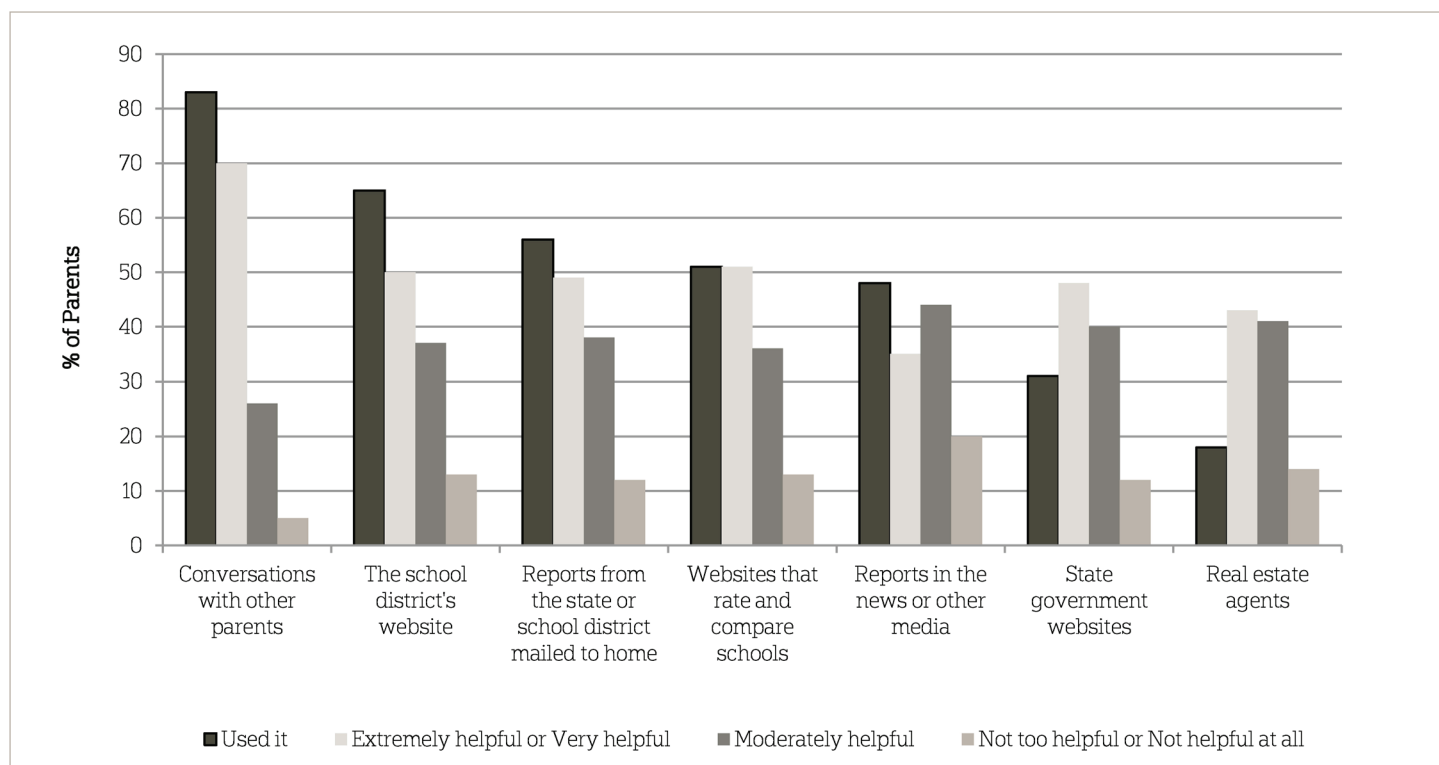
Parents were also asked about the types of information they would find helpful for assessing the quality of their child's school. Seventy-three percent of parents say information about teachers' ability to improve student outcomes would be an extremely or very helpful way to determine the quality and performance of a school. Seventy percent say the school's safety and security record would be extremely or very helpful, and 66 percent say information about teachers' academic and training backgrounds would be extremely or very helpful. Sixty percent of parents say information on the school's budget and spending, as well as changes in student test scores over time, would be extremely or very helpful. Fifty-nine percent of parents say average student test scores would be an extremely or very helpful way to determine the quality and performance of a school, and 51 percent say student dropout rates would be extremely or very helpful.

Parents report utilizing a variety of resources to get additional information about the quality of their child's school. Parents are most likely to use conversations with other parents (83 percent) to help determine the quality of their child's school, followed by the school district's website (65 percent), reports from the state or school district mailed to their home (56 percent), and websites that rate and compare schools (51 percent). Parents with a college degree are more likely than

parents with less than a high school education to use websites that rate and compare schools (59 vs. 27 percent), reports in the news or other media (53 vs. 34 percent), state government websites (38 vs. 20 percent), the school district's website (74 vs. 36 percent), conversations with other parents (90 vs. 64 percent), and real estate agents (21 vs. 9 percent) to help determine the quality of their child's school.

Among the parents who report using these resources, conversations with other parents proved to be the most helpful for parents determining the quality of their child's school. Of the parents who used conversations with other parents to help determine the quality of their child's school, 70 percent say these conversations were extremely or very helpful. Fifty-one percent of parents who used websites that rate and compare schools saw them as extremely or very helpful. Fifty percent of parents who used the school district website say it was extremely or very helpful. Less than half of parents found the remaining resources to be very helpful.

In the past, have you used any of the following resources to help determine the quality of your child's school or not? If so, how helpful was it for determining the quality of your child's school?



TWO-THIRDS OF PARENTS REPORT INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL, BUT HAVE MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT HOW MUCH INFLUENCE THEY HAVE OVER THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION.

Overall, parental involvement in children's education is high. Two-thirds of parents report volunteering at or donating to their child's school in the past year. Parents get involved most frequently by helping their child with his or her homework, 80 percent say they do so at least weekly. Just 6 percent report never helping their child with homework. Parents also frequently review their child's grades, something 57 percent of parents report doing at least weekly. About 1 in six parents

report meeting with teachers (17 percent) or taking on a leadership role in extracurricular activities (18 percent) weekly or more. Seventy-eight percent of parents donated money and 83 percent donated supplies to their child's school at least once over the past year. Sixty percent volunteered in their child's classroom.

How often did you... this past year?

	Daily/ Weekly %	Monthly %	Once or Twice a Semester %	Never %
Help your child with his or her homework	80	7	7	6
Review your child's grades	57	27	15	1
Take on a leadership role in any of your child's extracurricular activities	18	16	32	34
Meet with child's teachers	17	22	55	5
Volunteer in your child's classroom	10	15	35	40
Donate supplies for the school	7	21	55	17
Donate money to the school	5	20	53	22

Parents' rates of volunteering at or donating to their child's school were highest among college graduates (80 percent). Sixty-one percent of parents with some college or technical school and 42 percent of parents with less than a high school diploma volunteered at or donated to their child's school. Seven out of 10 parents in suburban or rural areas volunteered at or donated to their child's school over the past year compared with just over half of parents in urban areas. White parents (76 percent), black parents (66 percent), and parents of other racial identification (68 percent) were all significantly more likely than Hispanic parents (40 percent) to volunteer at or donate to their child's school. Although stay-at-home parents were more likely than employed parents to volunteer in their child's classroom on a daily or weekly basis (18 percent to 8 percent), meet with child's teacher daily (12 percent to 3 percent), and help with homework daily (64 percent to 47 percent), there were no clear differences between men and women in rates of involvement with their children's schools. Employed parents were, however, more likely to donate supplies once or twice a semester (58 percent to 41 percent).

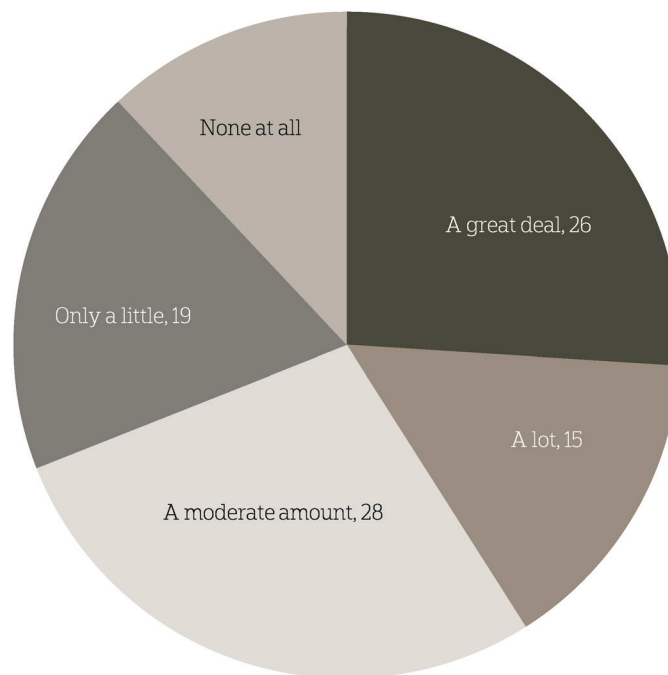
Rates of engagement decrease as students get older. Seventy-three percent of parents with children in elementary school volunteered at or donated to their child's school compared

with just 62 percent of parents with children in high school. Just 26 percent of parents of elementary school children have not volunteered in the classroom compared with 50 percent of parents of middle school children and 56 percent of parents of high school children.

The number of parents who help their child with homework daily or weekly decreases as students progress as well. Nearly all parents of elementary school students (96 percent) help with homework daily or weekly. This percentage dips to 83 percent for parents of middle school students and to 57 percent for parents of high school students.

Parents are divided in how much influence they feel they have over their child's education. Forty-one percent say they have a great deal or a lot of influence, while 28 percent say they have a moderate amount and 31 percent say they have only a little or none at all. At the extremes, 26 percent of parents feel they have a great deal of influence compared with 12 percent who say they have no influence at all. More involved parents are more likely to think they have a great deal of influence over their child's education (32 percent) than parents who do not get involved with volunteering at or donating to their child's school (20 percent).

How much influence do you think you have over the education your child receives at school?



A majority of stay-at-home parents (54 percent) think they have a great deal or a lot of influence over their child's education compared with 40 percent of employed parents. Hispanic parents (54 percent) and black parents (50 percent) are significantly more likely than white parents (34 percent) to think that they have a great deal or a lot of influence over their child's education. Parents who report their child speaks a language other than English at home are also slightly more

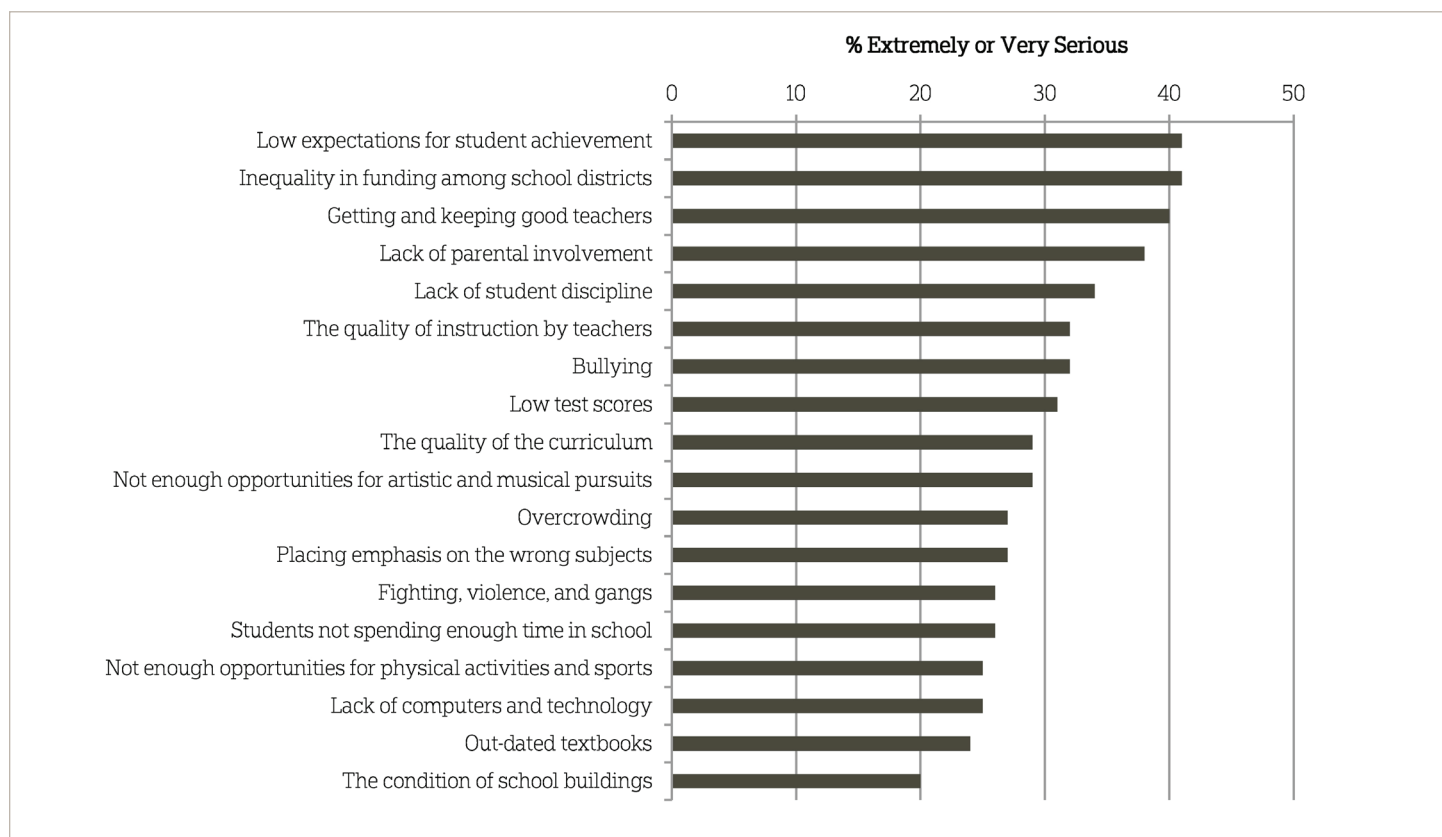
likely to feel they have an influence over their child's education. Feelings of influence seem to decrease as students get older, with 48 percent of elementary school parents reporting they have a great deal or a lot of influence over their child's education. This falls to just 33 percent of middle school parents and 37 percent of high school parents who think they have that level of influence.

PARENTS REPORT A VARIETY OF PROBLEMS FACING THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL, BUT ARE DIVIDED ON THE SEVERITY OF PROBLEMS.

Many parents report few serious problems at their child's school, but for some socioeconomic and racial groups, concerns are deeper. Overall, 39 percent of parents say that none of the problems tested rate as very serious or extremely serious problems facing their child's school. The most frequently cited concerns include low expectations, inequality in funding, getting and keeping good teachers, and lack of parental involvement. Forty-one percent of parents say low expectations for student achievement are a very serious or extremely serious problem facing their child's school today, while 44 percent say this is a not too serious or not at all serious problem. Forty-one percent of parents say inequality

in funding among school districts is a very serious or extremely serious problem facing their child's school today, while 30 percent say it is a not too serious or not at all serious problem. Forty percent of parents say getting and keeping good teachers is a very serious or extremely serious problem facing their child's school today, while 42 percent say getting and keeping good teachers is a not too serious or not at all serious problem facing their child's school today. Thirty-eight percent of parents say lack of parental involvement is a very serious or extremely serious problem facing their child's school today, while 36 percent say it is a not too serious or not at all serious problem facing their child's school today.

Now I'm going to ask you about several of the problems facing schools today. For each one, please tell me whether it is an extremely serious, very serious, moderately serious, not too serious, or not at all serious problem at your child's school.



A parent's socioeconomic status and race or ethnicity is a significant predictor of how he or she views the severity of problems facing their child's school today.

- Parents with a household income of less than \$50,000 most often cite low expectations for student achievement as a very or extremely serious problem facing their child's school, while parents with a household income of more than \$100,000 most often cite inequality in funding among school districts as a very or extremely serious problem. Additionally, parents with a household income of less than \$50,000 are more likely than parents with a household income of more than \$100,000 to view each problem asked about as very or extremely serious.

- Hispanic parents most often cite getting and keeping good teachers as a very or extremely serious problem facing their child's school, while white parents and black parents most often cite inequality in funding among school districts as a very or extremely serious problem.
- Parents with less than a high school education most often cite low expectations for student achievement as a very or extremely serious problem facing their child's schools, while parents with at least a college degree most often cite inequality in funding among school districts as a very or extremely serious problem facing their child's schools.

PARENTS REPORT HIGH LEVELS OF TEACHER QUALITY AND RATE TEACHERS WHO ARE PASSIONATE, EFFECTIVE, AND CARING ESPECIALLY HIGH, WITH LESS EMPHASIS ON EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE.

Generally, American parents feel that their children attending kindergarten through 12th grade are taught by high-quality teachers. A large majority of parents (82 percent) say that, overall, their children's teachers are good or excellent. Among parents of children in grades six or higher whose children have different teachers for different subjects, at least 75 percent rate their English, science, social studies, and math teachers as good or excellent. Similarly, majorities of these parents rate teachers of health and fitness, computer science, foreign language, and creative arts as high quality.

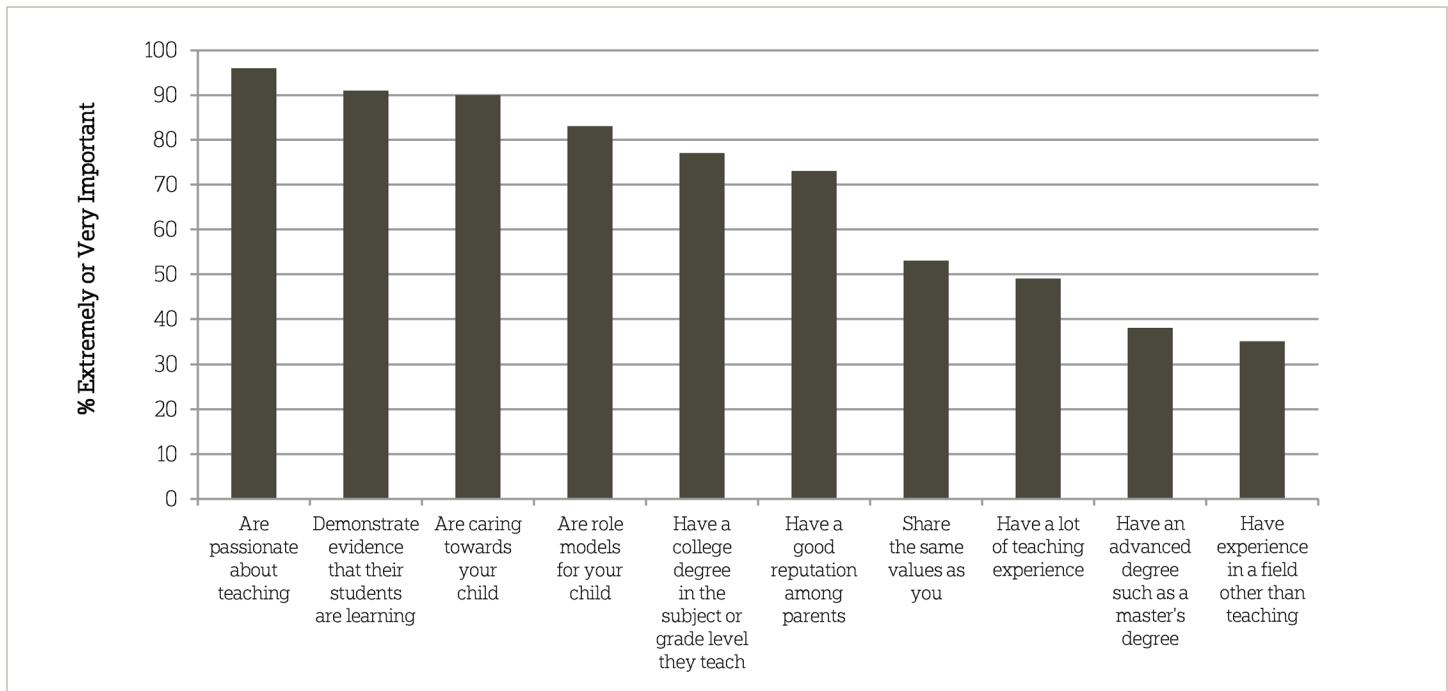
Parents weigh many factors when assessing teacher quality. When asked to consider a set of teacher characteristics, 96 percent of parents say that it is extremely or very important to them that their children's teachers are passionate about teaching. Parents place a similar level of importance on teachers demonstrating evidence that children are learning (91 percent) and that teachers are caring towards their children (90 percent). Other teacher characteristics that parents rate as important include being role models for children (83 percent), having a college degree in the subject or grade level they teach (77 percent), and having a good reputation among parents (73 percent). Fewer parents place a high level of importance on

teachers sharing their own values (53 percent), having a lot of teaching experience (49 percent), having an advanced degree such as a master's degree (38 percent), or having experience in fields other than teaching (35 percent).

Parents who report that they themselves are teachers or that they live with another person who is a teacher place lower importance on some of these factors than those who do not have any teachers in their households. These include having a good reputation among parents (62 percent vs. 75 percent) and demonstrating evidence that students are learning (86 percent vs. 92 percent).

When asked to volunteer the most important factor they would use to select the best possible teachers for their children, parents most often respond that a teacher should be passionate about teaching (21 percent). Other characteristics volunteered by at least 5 percent of parents include being caring towards students (12 percent), demonstrating evidence that the teacher's students are learning (9 percent), and having a lot of teaching experience (8 percent).

How important is it to you personally that your child's teachers...



Less educated parents consider teachers' credentials more important than more highly educated parents. While the number of parents who are not high school graduates is relatively small, this group gave particularly high ratings for several characteristics, especially having an advanced degree, experience outside the classroom, or having a lot of time in the classroom. Eighty-nine percent of those without high school diplomas and 80 percent of high school graduates think it is very or extremely important for teachers to have a college degree in the subject or grade level they teach, as compared with 68 percent of parents who are college graduates themselves. Higher numbers of those without high school diplomas place the same level of importance on having an advanced degree like a master's degree than those who are high school graduates (77 percent vs. 39 percent), and high school graduates, in turn, rate this more highly than college graduates (24 percent). The same pattern exists for having a lot of teaching experience (80 percent vs. 52 percent vs. 35 percent), sharing parents' values (78 percent vs. 55 percent vs. 42 percent), and having experience in a field other than teaching (75 percent vs. 35 percent vs. 23 percent). Also, those with less than a college degree place more value on having a good reputation among parents than others (87 percent for those who did not graduate from high school and 78 percent of high school graduates vs. 62 percent of college graduates).

Parents with lower incomes (under \$50,000 per year) tend to see a number of these factors as more important than those with higher incomes. This includes having a college degree in the subject or grade level they teach (86 percent vs. 70 percent and 68 percent), having a good reputation among parents (82 percent vs. 73 percent vs. 60 percent), sharing the same values

(71 percent vs. 44 percent and 39 percent), having a lot of teaching experience (67 percent vs. 45 percent vs. 28 percent), having an advanced degree such as a master's degree (56 percent vs. 28 percent and 24 percent), and having experience in fields other than teaching (52 percent vs. 28 percent and 22 percent).

There are consistent racial and ethnic differences in the qualities parents rate as important. Hispanics and blacks place greater emphasis on teachers' educational backgrounds and teaching experience than whites, as well as a number of other factors. Ninety percent of Hispanics and 85 percent of blacks say that it is very or extremely important that teachers have a college degree in the subject or grade level they teach, compared with 71 percent of whites. Seventy-seven percent of Hispanics and 51 percent of blacks think it is very or extremely important for teachers to have advanced degrees such as master's degrees, as opposed to 22 percent of whites. When it comes to having a lot of teaching experience, 71 percent of Hispanics and 68 percent of blacks assign this high importance, compared with 37 percent of whites. The pattern is slightly different for experience in fields other than teaching, with Hispanics placing higher importance on this than both blacks and whites (63 percent for Hispanics, compared with 34 percent for blacks and 24 percent for whites). In terms of teachers' values, Hispanics and blacks consider it more important for teachers to share the same values as they have themselves (73 percent and 60 percent, respectively) than do whites (43 percent).

Based on their level of engagement and volunteerism with their child's school, parents differ in what qualities they value in their child's teachers. Parents who participate in six or more engagement activities are more likely than those who are less involved in their child's classroom to see it as extremely important that their child's teachers are passionate about teaching (67 percent vs. 57 percent) and caring toward their child (55 percent vs. 46 percent), and they are less likely than those who are less involved in their child's classroom to place an emphasis on whether a teacher has an advanced degree such as a master's degree (28 percent vs. 45 percent) or has a lot of teaching experience (44 percent vs. 52 percent).

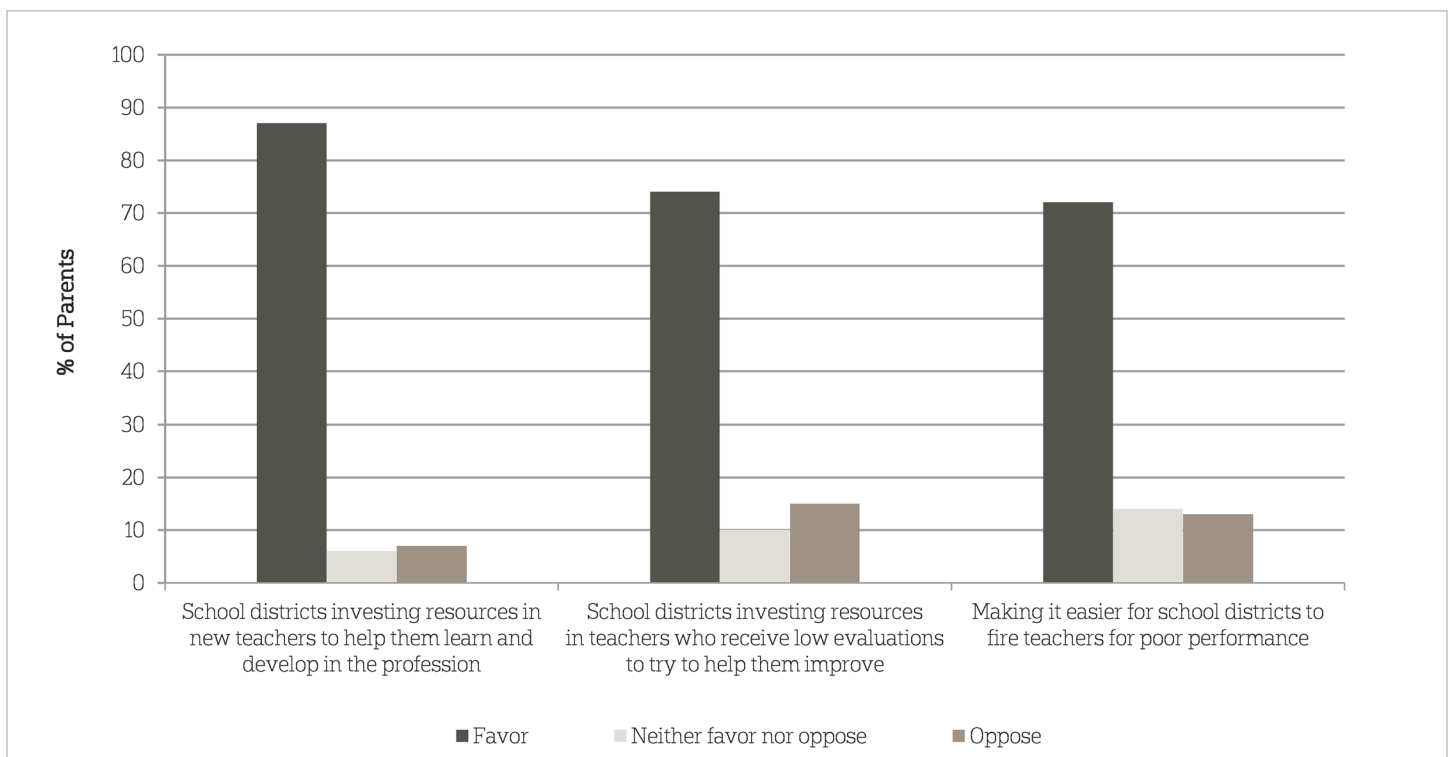
Parents of children who speak a language other than English at home place higher importance on many teacher qualities than those whose children do not. These include being passionate about teaching (100 percent vs. 95 percent), having a college degree in the subject or grade level they teach (86 percent vs. 73 percent), having a good reputation among parents (85 percent vs. 68 percent), having a lot of teaching experience (72 percent vs. 40 percent), sharing the same values as the parents (71 percent vs. 46 percent), having an advanced degree such as a master's degree (69 percent vs. 26 percent), and having experience in a field other than teaching (64 percent vs. 24 percent).

PARENTS SUPPORT INVESTING IN TEACHERS, BUT ALSO SUPPORT THE FIRING OF POOR PERFORMERS.

Nearly three-quarters of parents (72 percent) say they would favor making it easier for school districts to fire teachers for poor performance, including 45 percent who strongly favor this approach. Whites are more supportive (with 80 percent saying they favor it) than blacks (58 percent) or Hispanics (59 percent). However, parents report similar levels of support for school districts investing resources in teachers who receive low evaluations to try to help them improve (74 percent,

including 42 percent who strongly favor the idea). Parents also recognize that new teachers should receive support and training. Eighty-seven percent say they favor school districts investing resources in new teachers to help them learn and develop in the profession, including 63 percent who say they strongly favor this. There are no significant partisan differences on any of these three policy options.

Would you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose...?



PARENTS FAVOR A BALANCED APPROACH TO EVALUATING AND COMPENSATING TEACHERS.

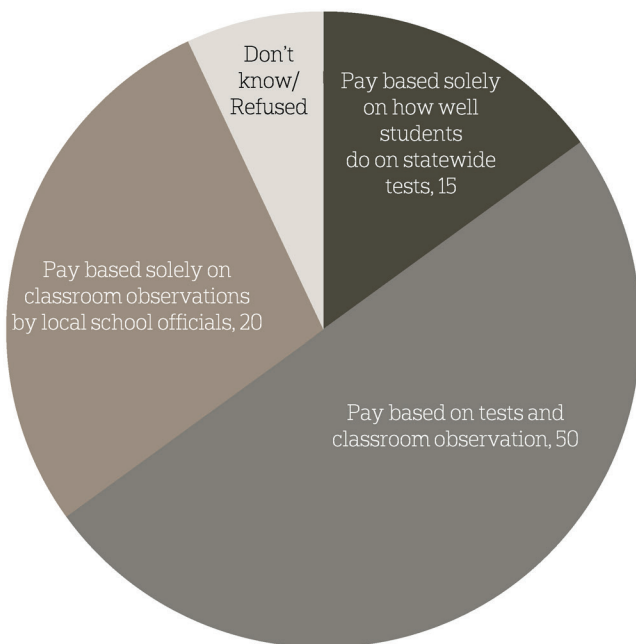
When asked about how teachers should be evaluated, parents report that classroom observations by local school officials and changes in students' statewide test scores over time should count the most (with 56 percent and 53 percent, respectively, saying these factors should count quite a bit or a great deal). They place slightly less weight on input from parents and students, with 43 percent and 41 percent, respectively, reporting that these factors should count quite a bit or a great deal toward teacher evaluations.

The opinions of the nearly 200 parents who are also teachers included in the survey differ from those of other parents when it comes to methods for evaluating teachers. Nearly half of these teachers say that changes in students' statewide test scores and input from parents should count only a little or not at all toward evaluating performance compared with less than 1 in five non-teacher parents.

A random half of the surveyed parents were asked about the appropriate balance between tests and classroom observations for determining teacher pay. Half of parents think that the amount of pay teachers receive should be based in part on standardized tests and in part on how well they do

in classroom observations by local school officials. Of the remaining half, more parents say that pay should be based solely on classroom observations (28 percent) than solely on standardized tests (15 percent). Parents who are college graduates are more likely to favor a balanced approach for determining teacher pay (61 percent), while those with less education are more divided. Those without high school diplomas are almost evenly divided on the question, with 37 percent behind a balanced approach and 27 percent each saying that classroom observations or standardized tests should be the driving factor, while those who have graduated high school tilt toward classroom observations (44 percent balanced, 33 percent observations, and 17 percent testing). A similar pattern exists for parents in different income brackets. Those who earn \$100,000 or more tend to support a balanced evaluation strategy (60 percent) over solely using classroom evaluations (26 percent) or standardized test scores (8 percent), while those earning less than \$50,000 per year are more divided (with 40 percent saying both should be considered, 28 percent saying pay should be solely based on classroom observations, and 26 percent saying it should be based solely on standardized test scores).

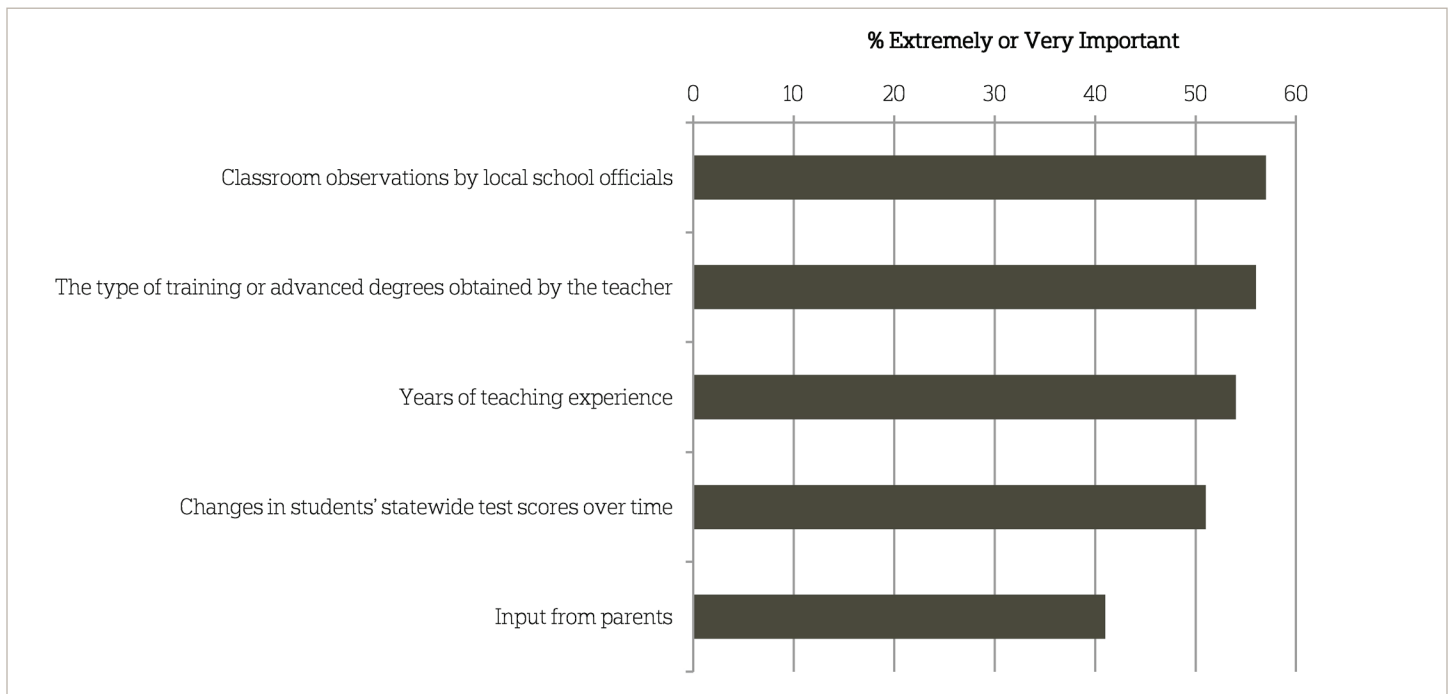
Which comes closest to your view on what teacher pay should be based on?



A second random half sample of parents was asked about the relative importance of different factors for determining teacher pay. Parents give several factors similar weight, including classroom observations by local school officials (with 57 percent reporting that this should be very important or extremely important), the type of training or advanced degrees obtained (56 percent), years of teaching experience (54 percent), and changes in students' statewide test scores (54 percent), and changes in students' statewide test scores

over time (51 percent). Parents place slightly lower importance on their own input, with 41 percent saying that input from parents should be very important or extremely important in determining teacher salary. Parents in lower income households place higher importance on all of these factors for determining teacher salaries than those in higher income households, as do Hispanic parents.

How important do you think each of the following factors should be in determining a teacher's salary?



Half of parents would favor paying teachers more money if their students perform better on standardized tests, while 38 percent would oppose this policy. Hispanics and blacks are more likely to support this approach than whites, with 70 percent of Hispanics and 57 percent of blacks reporting they favor this idea, compared with 39 percent of whites. Parents with less education are more supportive of this idea, with 76 percent of those without a high school diploma favoring it, compared with 53 percent of high school graduates and 38 percent of college graduates. A slight majority (57 percent) of parents who are teachers themselves oppose this approach compared with 35 percent of parents who are not teachers themselves.

When asked to provide their best guesses about yearly teacher salaries for teachers in their local school districts, a majority of parents give estimates that fall below the national average of \$56,643¹, with an average estimate of just over \$43,000. Three in 10 parents estimate annual salaries at \$35,000 or less, 27 percent say between \$35,000 and \$45,000, 13 percent say between \$45,000 and \$55,000, and 17 percent

say over \$55,000, including 5 percent who estimate 75,000 or more. Two-thirds of parents think public school teachers are paid too little, including 38 percent who say they are paid far too little. Even among those parents who estimate a teacher's annual earnings at \$55,000 or more, 40 percent believe that teachers are paid too little.

Equal percentages of Democrats and Republicans underestimate teacher salaries (82 percent for both), but Democrats are more likely to think teachers are underpaid than Republicans, with 73 percent saying that public school teachers are paid too little as compared with 60 percent of Republicans. Suburban parents are more likely to feel that pay is too low than are both urban and rural parents, with 73 percent saying teacher pay is too little as compared with 60 percent for urban parents and 61 percent for rural parents. Parents with higher levels of education are more likely to report that teachers are underpaid (70 percent among college grads vs. 52 percent among parents with less than a high school diploma).

1 National Center for Education Statistics data from the 2011-2012 school year published at: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_091.asp.

NEARLY TWO-THIRDS BELIEVE THEIR CHILDREN HAVE AN EXCELLENT TEACHER WITH ATTENTIVENESS AND TEACHING STYLE MOST OFTEN CITED AS THE DEFINING FACTOR.

Sixty-five percent of parents report that their children have an excellent teacher in at least one subject. When asked to describe the most important quality that made these teachers great, 35 percent mention attentiveness to student needs, including working with students one on one, developing relationships with students, and understanding individual needs. The next most popular category, with 22 percent, focuses on teachers' presentation style, including the way teachers inspire, engage, motivate, and challenge students. Another 12 percent of parents feel the most important quality is good communication, and 10 percent cite the teachers' positive attitudes and personality traits.

In contrast, only 17 percent of parents report that their children have a poor or very poor teacher in at least one subject. Parents who report poor teachers say that the qualities that are most important in defining bad teachers are poor presentation style (22 percent), not being attentive to student needs (20 percent), lack of communication (12 percent), and poor attitude or undesirable personality traits (11 percent).

Only 4 in 10 parents who have low opinions of their children's teachers report that they have complained about the teachers' performance. A majority of those who have complained say they have directed complaints to the principal or another administrator (87 percent). Smaller numbers of parents report complaining to the teacher in question directly (31 percent) or to the school board (21 percent).

Parents who are involved with their child's education through activities like meeting with teachers, helping with homework, or volunteering at or donating to their child's school have stronger opinions about poor performing teachers and are more likely to take action when their own child has a poor teacher. Fifty-six percent of the more engaged parents who say their child has had a poor teacher report complaining about the teacher, while just 27 percent of the least engaged parents complained. Additionally, 3 out of 4 parents who participated in at least one engagement activity are strongly or somewhat in favor of making it easier for school districts to fire teachers for poor performance. Just 63 percent of the least engaged parents favored such a policy at all.

PARENTS GENERALLY HAVE A POSITIVE OUTLOOK REGARDING THE ROLE STANDARDIZED TESTING PLAYS IN THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION.

A large majority of parents think it is important that their child's school regularly assesses whether or not their child is meeting statewide expectations for his or her grade level. Overall, nearly three out of four parents think such assessment is very important or extremely important. More than half (61 percent) of parents think their child takes the appropriate number of standardized tests, while 26 percent think their child takes too many standardized tests. Only 11 percent of parents think their child takes too few.

Parents also view standardized tests as effective ways to measure both their child's performance and the quality of education offered by schools. Seventy-five percent of parents say that standardized tests measure their child's performance somewhat well or very well, with only 24 percent saying they measure performance not too well or not well at all. Parents are slightly less favorable when assessing how standardized tests measure the quality of education provided by schools, but still a majority (69 percent) say that the tests measure the quality of education offered by schools somewhat well or very well, and just 30 percent say they do so not too well or not well at all.

Parents who rate the quality of education at their child's school as fair, poor, or very poor are more likely to say that their child takes too few standardized tests. Those same parents who rate their child's school as poor or very poor are

also more likely to say that tests measure the quality of education offered by schools not too well or not well at all (60 percent compared with 27 percent of parents who rate their child's school as excellent or good). The same pattern holds true for attitudes on how well standardized tests measure their child's performance, with 51 percent of parents who rate their child's school as poor or very poor saying tests capture this not too well or not well at all versus just 21 percent of parents who rate their child's school as good or excellent.

Eighty-five percent of Hispanic parents and 82 percent of black parents think it is very important or extremely important to regularly assess whether or not children are meeting statewide expectations. Just 69 percent of white parents feel this way. Black and Hispanic parents also have a more positive outlook on how well standardized tests measure their child's performance and the quality of education offered by schools. Forty-two percent of Hispanic parents and 36 percent of black parents feel that standardized tests measure the quality of education offered by schools very well, compared with just 12 percent of white parents. Fifty percent of black parents and 42 percent of Hispanic parents say that standardized tests measure their child's performance very well. Just 20 percent of white parents agree.

Looking at parents' attitudes toward standardized tests based on income level produces a fairly consistent pattern, where those with lower incomes view testing more positively than those with higher incomes. Eighty-five percent of parents earning less than \$50,000 a year say regular assessment of their child is very important or extremely important, significantly more than the 73 percent earning \$50,000–\$100,000 and the 63 percent earning over \$100,000 a year. Significantly more parents earning less than \$50,000 a year—79 percent—say that standardized tests measure the quality of education at a school somewhat well or very well. Only 66 percent of parents earning \$50,000–\$100,000 and 65 percent earning over \$100,000 feel that way.

When looking at attitudes toward standardized tests broken down by education level, patterns similar to those based on income level emerge. Parents who are college graduates less frequently cite regular assessment of children as very important or extremely important (63 percent) compared with those with some college or technical school (80 percent) and those with less than a high school diploma (90 percent). College graduates (34 percent) are more likely than parents with some college (23 percent) and those with less than a high school diploma (14 percent) to say their child takes too many

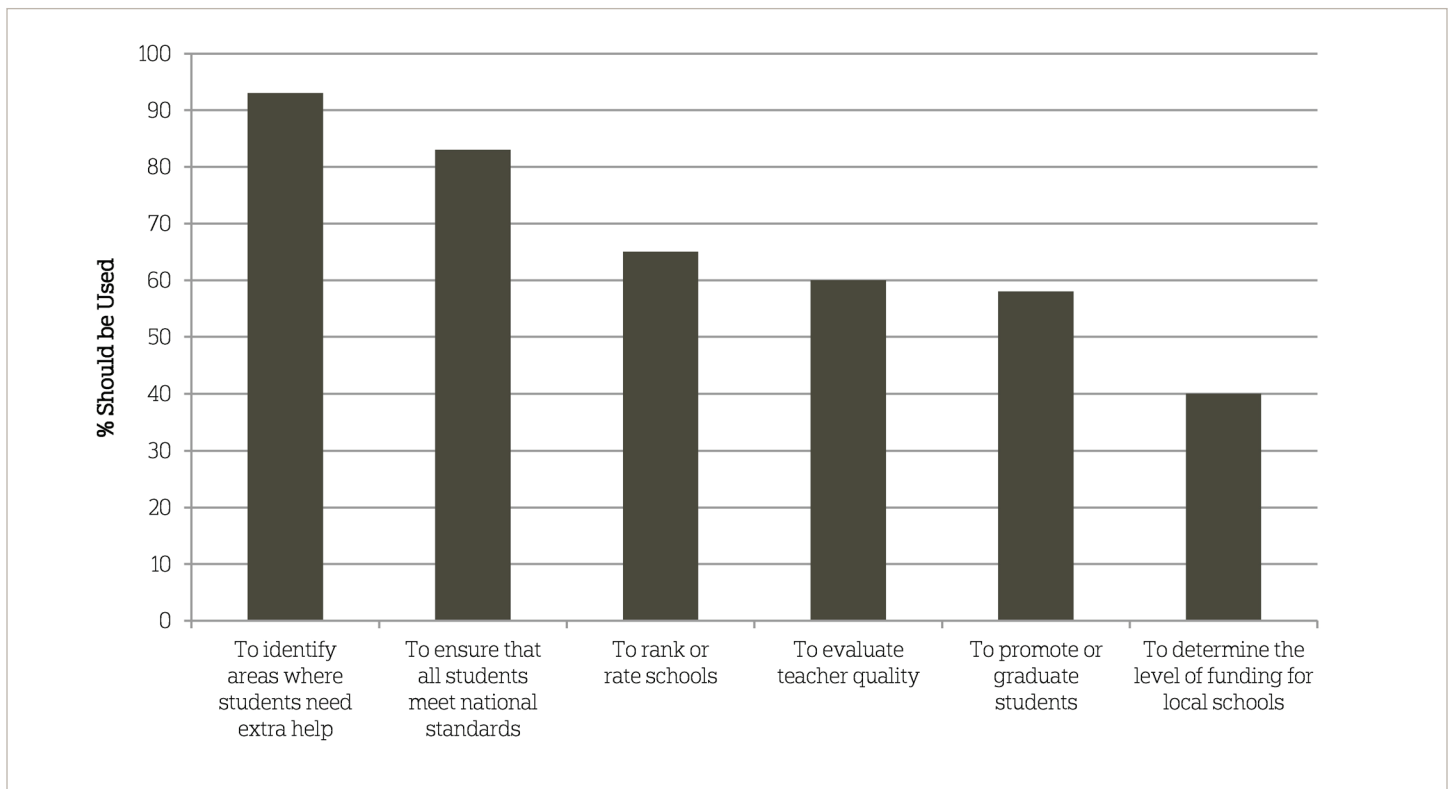
tests. The number of parents who say standardized tests effectively measure their child's performance and the educational quality offered by schools decreases as educational attainment increases. Just 20 percent of college graduates think standardized tests measure their child's performance very well compared with 31 percent with some college or technical school and 49 percent with less than a high school degree. Only 10 percent of college graduates think tests measure the quality of education offered by schools very well. That number increases to 23 percent for parents with some college or technical school and 48 percent for parents who did not graduate high school.

Households where one or more parent teaches are less supportive of testing than households without a teacher. Forty-four percent of households with a teacher think students take too many standardized tests compared with just 22 percent of households without a teacher. Households with a teacher are also less likely than households without a teacher to say standardized tests measure the quality of education at a school very or extremely well (58 percent vs. 72 percent) and to say that standardized tests measure their child's performance very or extremely well (65 percent vs. 78 percent).

PARENTS FAVOR LOCAL CONTROL OF THE TEST CONTENT AND USE OF TEST SCORES FOR A VARIETY OF PURPOSES.

Parents are more likely to favor local school districts than the state government or the federal government when choosing who should determine the subject areas covered in standardized tests. Forty-six percent of parents think this authority should fall to the local school districts compared with 29 percent who favor the state government and 20 percent who favor the federal government. Between 40 and 50 percent of parents in urban, suburban, and rural settings agree that local school districts should have control of the content of standardized tests, with the rest of parents divided between control by the state or by the federal government. Rural parents are least likely to prefer federal control of test content (15 percent vs. 21 percent of suburban parents and 26 percent of urban parents).

Parents were also asked about their attitudes on how standardized tests should be used in schools. Some uses have high levels of support. For example, 93 percent of parents think standardized tests should be used to identify areas where students need extra help. Eighty-three percent think they should be used to ensure that all students meet adequate national standards. Other uses have majority support but not to such an overwhelming degree. Sixty-five percent also think standardized tests should be used to rank or rate schools. Six out of 10 parents think standardized tests should be used to evaluate teacher quality. A similar percentage of parents (58 percent) think they should be used to determine whether or not students are promoted or can graduate. Less than half of parents think standardized tests should be used to determine the level of funding each local school should receive. Just 40 percent of parents support such usage, while 59 percent think standardized tests should not be used in such a way.

Should standardized tests be used for the following purposes?

Parents who are teachers are strongly opposed to using standardized test scores to determine the level of funding each local school receives. Seventy-three percent of such households say this should not be done compared with 57 percent of households without a teacher. A majority (55 percent) of parents who are teachers say standardized test scores should not be used to promote or graduate students

either. Just 37 percent of other parents oppose such a practice. Similarly, 49 percent of parents who are teachers oppose using these test scores to rank or rate schools compared with 32 percent of other parents. Finally, 56 percent of parents who are teachers oppose using standardized test scores to evaluate teacher quality compared with only 36 percent of other parents.

MOST PARENTS ARE UNAWARE OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS AND, WHEN GIVEN A DESCRIPTION, LESS THAN HALF BELIEVE IT WILL IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION.

There exists some uncertainty about the Common Core State Standards (Common Core) and their implementation among parents. Over half of parents (52 percent) say they have heard only a little or nothing at all about the Common Core compared with 22 percent who have heard a moderate amount and 26 percent who have heard a lot or a great deal. Similarly, 34 percent of parents do not know if their state has implemented the Common Core or not. Forty-nine percent report that their state has implemented these standards, while 17 percent say their state has not.

Just under half of parents (47 percent) think the Common Core will improve the quality of education. Eleven percent think the Common Core will decrease the quality of education, and 27 percent think they will have no effect. Sixteen percent of parents volunteered a response to say they do not know what effect the Common Core Standards will have on the quality of

education. Democrats have the most positive outlook on the prospects that the Common Core will improve the quality of education, with 56 percent believing they will do so compared with 41 percent of independents and 40 percent of Republicans.

Thirty-six percent of parents earning over \$100,000 or more a year have heard a lot or a great deal about the Common Core. Just 26 percent of parents earning \$50,000–\$100,000 and 18 percent of parents earning less than \$50,000 a year say they have heard a lot or a great deal about the Common Core. Still, those earning less than \$50,000 a year are most likely to say the Common Core will improve the quality of education. Fifty-eight percent of parents at this income level say as much, while only 46 percent of parents earning \$50,000–\$100,000 and 39 percent of parents earning over \$100,000 think so.

White parents are much more pessimistic about the Common Core's ability to improve the quality of education than are black or Hispanic parents. Sixty-four percent of blacks and 62 percent of Hispanics think the Common Core will improve the quality of education compared with just 40 percent of whites.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The survey was conducted from June 21 through July 22, 2013. The survey was funded by The Joyce Foundation. NORC at the University of Chicago and The Associated Press (AP) staff collaborated on all aspects of the study, with input from NORC's Education and Child Development Studies department and AP's subject matter experts. The authors thank Rebecca Reimer, Emily Alvarez, Dennis Junius, and Daniel Malato for their assistance in the analysis and writing of the report.

This random-digit-dial (RDD) survey of the 50 states and the District of Columbia was conducted via telephone with 1,025 American adult parents of children in kindergarten through 12th grade. In households with more than one parent, we used a process that randomly selected which parent would be interviewed. This group of parents included 624 respondents on landlines and 401 respondents on cell phones. Cell phone respondents were offered a small monetary incentive for participating, as compensation for telephone usage charges. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference. All interviews were completed by professional interviewers who were carefully trained on the specific survey for this study.

The RDD sample was provided by a third-party vendor, Marketing Systems Group. The final response rate was 17 percent, based on the widely accepted Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO) method. Under this method, our response rate is calculated as the product of the resolution rate (67 percent), the screener rate (76 percent), and the interview completion rate (33 percent). The overall margin of error was +/- 4.1 percentage points.

Thirty-one percent of whites think the Common Core will have no effect on education, which is higher than the 19 percent of blacks and 16 percent of Hispanics who feel that way.

The sample design aimed to ensure the sample representativeness of the population in a time- and cost-efficient manner. The sampling frame utilizes the standard dual telephone frames (landline and cell), with a supplemental sample of landline numbers targeting households with children aged 5 to 18 years old. The targeted sample was provided by Marketing Systems Group and was pulled from a number of different commercial consumer databases. Sampling weights were appropriately adjusted to account for potential bias introduced by using the targeted sample. Sampling weights were calculated to adjust for sample design aspects (such as unequal probabilities of selection) and for nonresponse bias arising from differential response rates across various demographic groups. Poststratification variables included age, sex, race, region, education, and landline/cell phone use. The weighted data, which thus reflect the U.S. population of adult parents, were used for all analyses.

All analyses were conducted using STATA (version 12), which allows for adjustment of standard errors for complex sample designs. All differences reported between subgroups of the U.S. population are at the 95 percent level of statistical significance, meaning that there is only a 5 percent (or less) probability that the observed differences could be attributed to chance variation in sampling. Additionally, bivariate differences between subgroups are only reported when they also remain robust in a multivariate model controlling for other demographic, political, and socioeconomic covariates. A comprehensive listing of all study questions, complete with tabulations of top-level results for each question, is available on the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research website: www.apnorc.org.

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