



The Education Trust–Midwest

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Michigan parents say ‘improving the quality of education’ is most important issue facing the state, in poll released by the Education Trust-Midwest

Royal Oak, Mich. (May 15, 2019) – No matter where Michigan parents live, their race or political affiliation, or how much their family earns, they want a high-quality education for their children, and generally agree on what changes are needed to improve Michigan’s public schools. In fact, “improving the quality of education” ranks as the number one issue on the minds of Michigan parents – well above their concerns about roads, the economy or health care, according to a new telephone poll commissioned by The Education Trust-Midwest.

Michigan parents also clearly understand the importance of effective teachers and high-quality instruction: 94 percent say having good teachers and instruction is important, including 77 percent who say it’s absolutely essential.

Those findings are among the results of a public opinion survey, conducted by the firm EPIC/MRA, of 600 Michigan parents surveyed by phone between Feb. 19 and March 1.

“The poll results show very clearly that addressing Michigan’s educational challenges is a top priority for Michigan parents,” according to [Amber Arellano](#), executive director of the Education Trust-Midwest.

“Over the past several years, widespread reporting on the quality of education in Michigan has helped raise public awareness of the challenges that we face,” Arellano said. “To get better, Michigan needs to adopt evidence-based practices and improvement-oriented systems of support for educators. And parents must be full partners in Michigan’s educational improvement, which is why we wanted to get an up-to-date understanding of what Michigan parents want from our schools.”

In addition, the polling found that:

- **Michigan parents understand that it costs more to meet the learning needs of some students, and support more equitable funding.** Nearly two-thirds of all parents would support a “proposal to provide more state and local funding than average for school districts that serve students with the greatest need, including high rates of low-income and minority students.” This proposal is widely supported by parents of every race, in all parts of the state and across family income levels.
- **Three-quarters of parents support using data on student learning as a significant factor in evaluating teacher performance,** as either “the only factor,” “a major factor,” or “one of several factors.” This includes 77 percent of White parents and 74 percent of Black parents, and 61 percent of respondents who are members of a labor union. The idea also enjoys broad geographic support, with the strongest support in Northern Michigan (83 percent) and the least support in the Bay area region (67 percent).

- **Parents support transparency and accountability for performance.** When asked, 84 percent of parents support the concept of an A-F letter grading system for schools. The idea of an A-F accountability system enjoys the most support among Black parents (93 percent), Republican parents (90 percent) and non-Black parents of color (88 percent). In late 2018, Michigan adopted a system that uses A-F letter grades, but the specifics of that system were not included in the poll.

“This poll makes clear that while the education debates may be polarized in Lansing, parents of diverse backgrounds share much in common about their core values and priorities for improving Michigan’s public schools,” added Arellano.

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The Education Trust-Midwest is a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization dedicated to improving outcomes for all Michigan students, especially for African American, Latino, American Indian, and low-income students. The Education Trust-Midwest believes in the power of intelligent education policy and practices — informed by data, research, and the successes of other states — to make Michigan a top ten education state for all students.

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