

Stride Survey: National Parental Attitudes Regarding Public Schools & Public Education

Since 2000, Stride K12 has been a leader in K–12 online education, putting quality hands-on and online curriculum directly into the homes of the students and families we support. Stride K12-powered learning offers a personalized approach for students through a variety of education experiences. Every family is unique and has different requirements for their child’s learning environment.

Stride K12 offers multiple resources for students and families: a vibrant online school community, academic support, and extracurricular activities help students connect, stay motivated, and succeed with online learning. With Stride, families can find answers, information, and inspiration to begin their learning journey or continue it.

This research report, commissioned by Stride and conducted by Pinkston, provides insights into parents’ priorities and concerns as they enter the new school year. Interviews for this research were conducted July 7-13, 2022, from a sample of 1,382 parents or guardians that have children in public school in the United States, regarding their attitudes towards their child(ren)’s school/education.

Key Findings:

Only 60 percent of parents claim to support public education. Nearly half of parents (45 percent) say they would prefer to send their child to a private school, if that was an option.

A vast majority of parents want more insight into their child(ren)’s education. 81 percent of parents say they want to have a better idea of what their children are doing at school. Only 1 percent indicate they do not want more insight.

There is strong support for virtual learning among parents. Half of parents (50 percent) say they would be likely to enroll their child in a virtual school program in the Fall if that was an option, with one-quarter (24 percent) saying virtual schooling is very likely.

A majority of parents cite teacher quality as the most important factor when choosing a school for their child (not accounting for financial cost). From a list of potential characteristics that parents could use to choose the best school for their child, 72 percent of parents say that Quality of teachers is the most important. This is followed closely by Safety (65 percent), Learning support (60 percent), Academic excellence (59 percent), and Good community (51 percent).

National Parents Survey – Results

About the Research: Pinkston conducted a survey of 1,382 parents (or guardians) who have kids in public school, grades K-12. The sample was recruited from a panel and is demographically representative of U.S. parents; surveys were conducted in English and administered online, July 7–13, 2022.

On the whole, parents are satisfied with their child(ren)’s public school, yet only four in 10 are very satisfied, indicating some unmet needs.

How satisfied are you with your child(ren)’s public school?	
Base: 1,373	
Very satisfied	40%
Somewhat satisfied	43%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	8%
Somewhat dissatisfied	7%
Very dissatisfied	2%

SECTION QUESTION: Do you agree or disagree with these statements?

More than half (54%) of parents express some concern about the quality of education their children receive in public school.

I am concerned about the quality of education my kids get in public school.	
Base: 1,382	
Agree completely	23%
Agree somewhat	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	17%
Disagree somewhat	19%
Disagree completely	10%

Nearly half (45%) of parents across the nation would prefer to send their child(ren) to a private school.

I would prefer to send my child(ren) to a private school if I could.	
Base: 1,382	
Agree completely	21%
Agree somewhat	24%
Neither agree nor disagree	22%
Disagree somewhat	18%
Disagree completely	15%

One-third (34%) of parents report that their kids struggle in a public school environment.

My child(ren) finds it hard to function well in a typical public school setting.	
Base: 1,382	
Agree completely	11%
Agree somewhat	23%
Neither agree nor disagree	19%
Disagree somewhat	24%
Disagree completely	22%

Most parents (73%) recognize that their kids learn better at their own pace.

My child(ren) learns better when working at their own pace.	
Base: 1,382	
Agree completely	34%
Agree somewhat	39%
Neither agree nor disagree	19%
Disagree somewhat	7%
Disagree completely	1%

Additionally, the vast majority of parents (81%) want more insight into their kids' education.

I want to know more about what my child(ren) are doing in school.	
Base: 1,382	
Agree completely	44%
Agree somewhat	37%
Neither agree nor disagree	15%
Disagree somewhat	3%
Disagree completely	1%

Parents feel relatively good about the way schools are preparing their kids for success, with two-thirds (66%) in agreement.

My child(ren)'s school is adequately preparing them to succeed after they graduate in college or career.	
Base: 1,382	
Agree completely	29%
Agree somewhat	37%
Neither agree nor disagree	20%
Disagree somewhat	10%
Disagree completely	4%

Most parents (74%) believe public school gives their children good developmental support.

My kid(s) can get the developmental support they need in public school.	
Base: 1,382	
Agree completely	32%
Agree somewhat	42%
Neither agree nor disagree	15%
Disagree somewhat	9%
Disagree completely	3%

Two-thirds of parents (64%) agree with school and district policies, though only one-quarter (23%) feel very positive.

I support the policies and decisions my child(ren)'s school or district makes.	
Base: 1,382	
Agree completely	23%
Agree somewhat	41%
Neither agree nor disagree	21%
Disagree somewhat	12%
Disagree completely	3%

Six in 10 parents (60%) believe in and support public education.

I am a proponent of public education.	
Base: 1,382	
Agree completely	30%
Agree somewhat	30%
Neither agree nor disagree	34%
Disagree somewhat	4%
Disagree completely	2%

While many parents are satisfied with public school curriculum, just under a third (29%) are very satisfied.

I am satisfied with the quality of my child(ren)'s curriculum at school.	
Base: 1,382	
Agree completely	29%
Agree somewhat	42%
Neither agree nor disagree	16%
Disagree somewhat	10%
Disagree completely	4%

While on balance more than half (57%) of parents feel heard, a sizeable minority (20%) disagree.

As a parent, I believe my voice is being heard in my child(ren)'s school/school system	
Base: 1,382	
Agree completely	23%
Agree somewhat	34%
Neither agree nor disagree	22%
Disagree somewhat	14%
Disagree completely	7%

For the following question, a “virtual school program” is defined as an individualized education experience with responsive, online curriculum that allows students to work at their own pace and is taught by state-certified teachers who differentiate instruction through live virtual sessions. This program is delivered online at home.

Half of parents (50%) across the U.S. believe they would be likely to enroll in virtual school for the upcoming school year, with one-quarter (24%) very likely.

If you had access to a free, virtual school program, how likely would you be to enroll your child(ren) in the upcoming school year?	
Base: 1,373	
Very likely	24%
Somewhat likely	26%
Not sure	22%
Not very likely	38%

Did your child(ren) participate in virtual schooling over the past 2 years?	
Base: 1,373	
Yes	80%
No	20%

More than one-third (36%) of kids who experienced virtual school during the pandemic had a bad experience. However, 41% of parents said their kids' online experience was at least somewhat positive

What was your impression of your child(ren)'s experience in virtual schooling?	
Base: 1,101 (child(ren) experienced virtual schooling in past 2 years)	
Very positive	16%
Somewhat positive	30%
Neither positive nor negative	17%
Somewhat negative	26%
Very negative	11%

Knowing that a virtual school program has strong past experience can change parents' perceptions. Among those with negative experiences over the past two years, at least one-quarter say this would definitely make them more interested, and another quarter are willing to consider.

If a virtual school program was designed and delivered by experienced educators who have been operating a virtual school for over a decade, would you be more interested in virtual school?	
Base: 1,107 (child(ren) experienced virtual schooling in past 2 years)	
Yes, this would make me more interested	45%
No, it wouldn't make a difference	39%
I'm not sure	16%

Over half of parents say the most important features in choosing a school are quality of teachers, safety, and learning support, (top 3), then academic excellence, and good community.

Which of the following features are most important in your choice of a school (assuming cost was not a factor)? (Select all that apply)	
Base: 1,373	
Quality of teachers	72%
Safety	65%
Learning support	60%
Academic excellence	59%
Good community (parents, kids)	51%
Class size	46%
Technology used / taught	46%
Quality of facilities	44%
Location / accessibility	43%
Extracurricular activities	40%
College prep	37%
Shapes kids' character	36%
Career prep	34%
Alignment with my beliefs	21%

Half of parents are concerned about their children's safety, in general, at school.

How concerned are you about your child(ren)'s safety at their school?	
Base: 1,382	
Very concerned	31%
Concerned	19%
Somewhat concerned	27%
Not very concerned	18%
Not at all concerned	5%

Similarly, 54% are concerned about gun violence in school.

How concerned are you about gun violence at your child(ren)'s school?	
Base: 1,382	
Very concerned	35%
Concerned	19%
Somewhat concerned	21%
Not very concerned	19%
Not at all concerned	7%

DEMOGRAPHICS / PROFILE QUESTIONS

Base for all questions: 1,382

What grade(s) will your child(ren) be in for the upcoming school year? (Select all that apply)	
Kindergarten -5th grade	55%
6th -8th grade	35%
9th -12th grade	43%

What type(s) of school do your child(ren) attend? (Select all that apply)	
Public school	100%
Parents with at least one other child in these types of schools:	
Private school	2%
Homeschool	1%

At the end of the most recent school year, did your child(ren) attend school... (Select all that apply)	
In-person	90%
Online	9%
Hybrid	6%

When you vote, which candidates do you tend to vote for?	
Democratic party	35%
Republican party	31%
Other party	5%
It's a mix	15%
Don't typically vote in elections	14%

Region where currently live	
Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)	17%
Southeast (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)	21%
Central South (AL, AR, KY, LA, MS, OK, TN, TX)	23%
Midwest (IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI)	22%
West (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY)	18%

Area where live is	
Suburban	41%
Urban	29%
Rural	21%
Small town	10%

Respondent's relationship to child(ren)	
Mother	52%
Father	43%
Other	5%

Marital status	
Married	57%
Single, never married	24%
Divorced or separated	17%
Widowed	2%
Prefer not to say	1%

Race / ethnicity (respondents could select multiple):	
White / European or Middle Eastern	72%
African American / Black	14%
Latino / Hispanic	12%
Asian American / Asian / Pacific Islander	3%
Native American	3%

Parent's Age	
18 to 24 years old	3%
25 to 34 years old	24%
35 to 44 years old	45%
45 to 54 years old	21%
55+	7%

Highest degree or level of school completed	
Some high school	4%
High school diploma / GED	27%
Associate's or technical degree	14%
Some college	23%
Bachelor's degree	22%
Post-graduate degree	10%

Total household income, before taxes	
Less than \$25,000	17%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	28%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	20%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	13%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	13%
\$150,000 or more	6%
Prefer not to say	2%