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Statewide Poll of Parents Highlights Challenges Massachusetts Faces in Addressing Students' COVID Recovery Needs

BOSTON – Seven out of 10 (73%) Massachusetts parents believe their child's school has enough resources to help students in need, but fewer (56%) parents who see their children as behind grade level say the same. As Massachusetts decision-makers decide how best to tackle students' unfinished learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic, [a new poll released today by The Education Trust in Massachusetts](#) sheds light on parents' thoughts on the necessary supports and resources to help students recover academically.

"We know all too well how often families, especially families of color and from low-income backgrounds, get left out of the decision-making process," said Genesis Carela, state policy associate for [The Education Trust in Massachusetts](#). "We urge new state and local leaders to support districts by putting in place pandemic recovery plans that uplift family and community voices and prioritize proven strategies that work, including targeted and intensive tutoring, professional learning and support for teachers and staff, and mental health services for students."

According to the statewide poll, conducted by [The MassINC Polling Group](#), when it comes to extra support, parents prefer activities that occur on days when school is already in session. Small-group tutoring during school days was most popular, with 38% of parents saying they would be "very likely" to send their children, followed by the option of after-school tutoring (30%, very likely). While summer school (19%) and school during vacation (11%) were the least popular, parents of color are generally more interested than White parents in having students receive additional academic support during vacations and breaks.

"This poll series is a one-of-a-kind resource offering state leaders precise information about what parents are seeing from the ground level," said Steve Koczela, President of [The MassINC Polling Group](#), which oversaw the poll.

Key Poll Findings:

Academic

- A majority of parents (81%) grade their child's school with an overall positive rating of an A (40%) or B (41%).
- Overall, 24% of parents see their child as behind grade level. Parents of students with an IEP (37%) and parents making less than \$50,000 annually (29%) are particularly likely to say so.

- Parents of students who need the most academic help are more likely to say they would use extra learning time. Parents of color are also more likely to express interest: 52% of Black parents and 47% of Latino parents express interest in small-group tutoring.

Well-being

- In all, 44% of parents say they are either somewhat or very concerned about their child's mental health. Mental health and safety concerns are greater among parents who see their child as behind grade level (65% concerned) compared to those who see their child as at or ahead of grade level (37% concerned).
- Just over half of parents (56%) report their schools have enough mental health resources, while nearly a quarter of parents are unsure if their schools have enough.
- Most parents feel their children are at least somewhat safe from racial discrimination (83%), bullying (78%), and violence (86%). Yet, 16% of Black parents and 20% of Latino parents feel their child is not too safe or not at all safe from violence.

Postsecondary Readiness

- Most high school parents (76%) offer A's or B's to their children's schools when it comes to providing advanced classes and helping students develop post-high school plans (64%). Yet, parents report mixed reviews when it comes to assisting families in completing FAFSA and financial aid applications.
- About two-thirds of high school parents (68%) say their child's school adequately prepares students for life after graduation.

“The findings from the poll align with what we have been hearing from many parents in Springfield,” said LaTonia Naylor, President and CEO of [Parent Villages](#). “After years of students being home due to the pandemic, parents are grateful to have their children back in the classroom and are aware of the new and existing challenges schools are facing.

“As a parent and advocate, I know the social component is important for student success. Still, parents need to understand how the pandemic impacted students, and how their own children have been affected, especially underserved students. These results highlight the need for districts to facilitate collaboration with local community organizations who have, for years, provided guidance and resources to equip families with critical information and resources,” Naylor continued.

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BACKGROUND: 1,519 parents of K-12 students in Massachusetts, including oversamples of Black, Latino, and Asian parents, were polled (live telephone interviews and online interviews) in English and Spanish from November 17 – December 4, 2022.

This poll is the latest in a series of seven waves of polling going back to mid-2020, made possible by support from The Barr Foundation. It is the first in a new series focusing on pandemic recovery. The poll will be highlighted at a virtual event, followed by a panel discussion with Massachusetts parents from 5:30 - 7:00 PM on January 11, 2023. [Registration is free](#), and the event is open to the public.

About The MassINC Polling Group: The MassINC Polling Group (MPG) is a nonpartisan public opinion research firm serving public, private, and social-sector clients. MPG elevates the public's voice with cutting-edge methods and rigorous analysis. Based in Boston, MPG serves a nationwide client base. Learn more at massincpolling.com.

About The Education Trust: The Education Trust is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to eliminate inequities in early through postsecondary education across the country. Its Massachusetts team serves as the convener for the Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership, a collective effort of social justice, civil rights, and education organizations from across the Commonwealth who are working together to advance education equity in the state. Learn more at edtrust.org/massachusetts.