

To: Interested Parties

From: GBAO

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## **Poll Results: Post-Election Research on Voters' Opinions on Issues Facing Public Education**

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A new post-election national survey of voters—including parents of school-aged children and nonparents—confirms that right-wing “culture war” attacks on public education and educators fell flat in the midterms. Despite spending tens of millions of dollars on ads focused on topics like Critical Race Theory (CRT), “grooming,” and anti-LGBTQ “indoctrination,” these issues were neither top turnout motivators nor top factors in one’s vote outside the Republican base; and Democrats rejected these topics completely. Among many voters, other education topics such as reducing gun violence in schools and increasing practical skills training are issues of focus instead. Further—despite years of extreme rhetoric and millions of dollars invested in anti-public school ads—public schools and public school teachers continue to be viewed favorably by voters and especially by parent-voters.

These findings confirm one of the clear lessons from the 2022 midterms—candidates highlighting investment in public schools (examples include, but are not limited to, Governors Tony Evers, Laura Kelly, and Gretchen Whitmer, Governor-elect Katie Hobbs, and Senator Raphael Warnock) bested opponents in races where culture-war divisions were a focus.

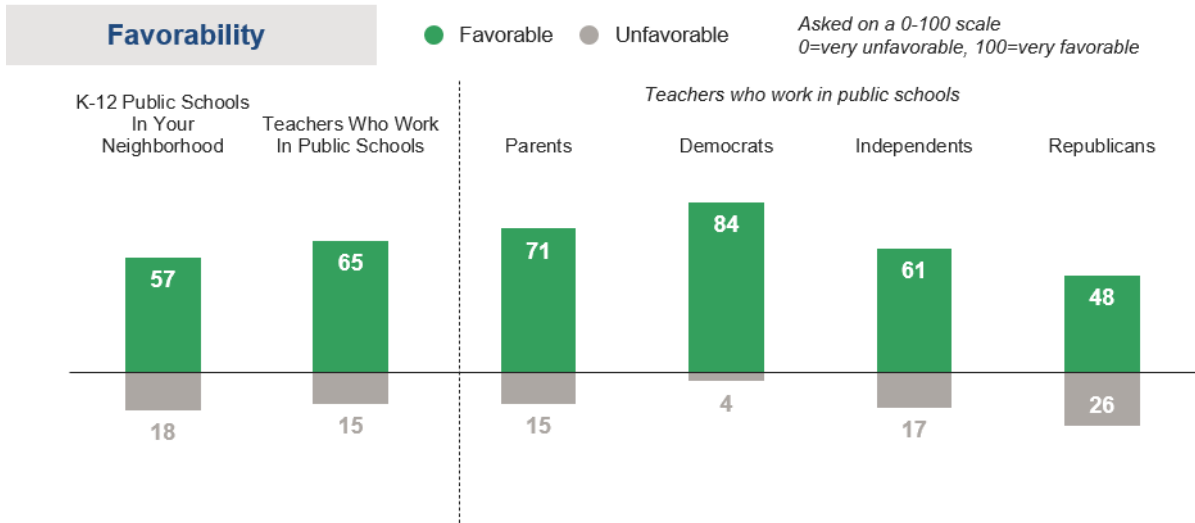
The following are key findings from a nationwide poll of 1,200 November 2022 voters including oversamples of Black and Hispanic voters totaling 215 Black voters and 202 Hispanic voters. The results are weighted to be nationally representative of the overall electorate.

### **Key Findings**

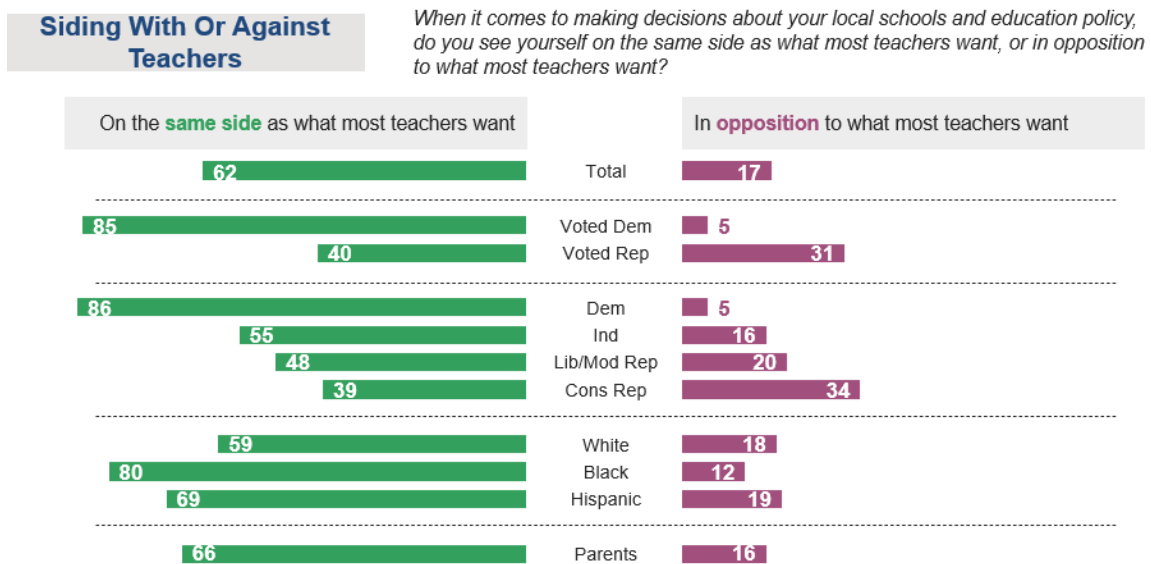
- **The mood about the country, schools, and teachers changed little since August. Teachers are viewed favorably, including by Republicans.**

Views about teachers and public schools remain as favorable now as in a similar poll conducted in August. Voters are very positive toward schools in their neighborhoods (57% favorable, 18% unfavorable) and toward public school teachers (65% favorable, 15% unfavorable). Parents are overwhelmingly favorable toward teachers (71%) and most Democrats (84%), independents (61%), and just about half of Republicans (48%) are favorable toward teachers as well (26% unfavorable).



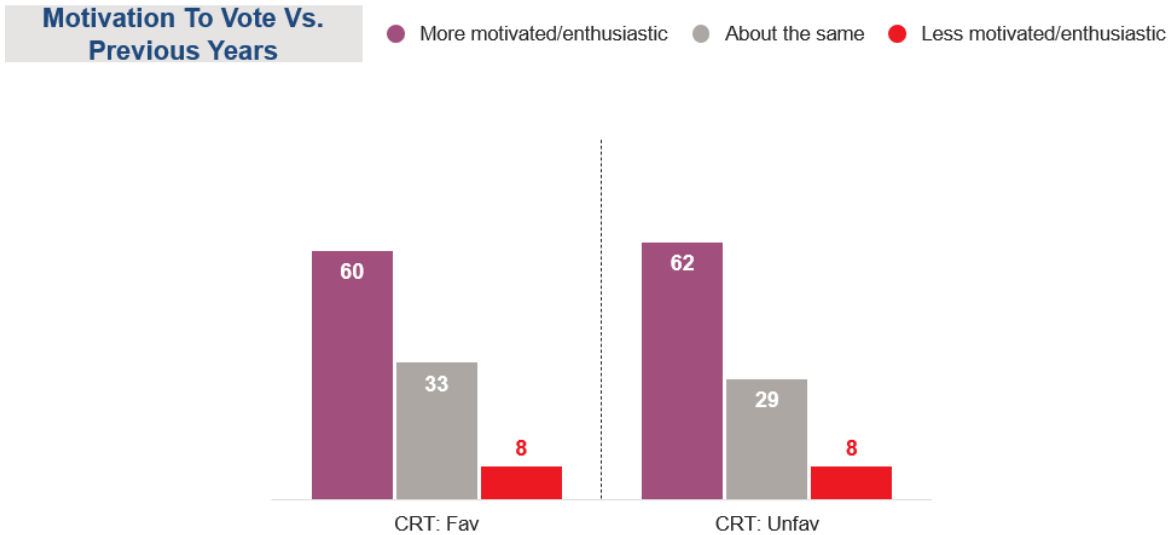


Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that nearly two-thirds (62%) of voters overall say they are on “the same side as what most teachers want” when it comes to making decisions about local schools and education policy.” Democratic voters (+81), Black voters (+68), and parents (+50) see themselves on teachers’ side by even wider margins. Even conservative Republicans are more likely to see themselves with teachers than in opposition to them by 5 points (39% to 34%). While Republican politicians and media tried to create a wedge between their base and public school teachers, Republican voters themselves say they are aligned with teachers.



- Critical Race Theory did not drive turnout or persuade voters outside the Republican base.** Overall, nearly half of voters (47%) are unfavorable toward CRT, driven mostly by conservative Republicans (79%) and non-conservative Republicans (66%). Those favorable toward CRT overwhelmingly voted Democratic (89%) in their Congressional race by a larger margin than those unfavorable toward CRT voted Republican (74% Republican). Majorities of those neutral or unsure on CRT voted for Democrats (58%, 53%, respectively).

Campaign spending and conservative earned media focus on CRT failed to drive more voters to the polls. Voters favorable toward CRT were just as likely to be more motivated to vote compared to previous elections (60%) as those unfavorable toward CRT (62%).



- School shootings, teaching “a complete, honest history,” school funding, and book banning were top factors driving the vote.** Not only did culture war topics not drive vote-motivation, voters say other education issues were “major factors” in their vote. From a list of 18 education topics, over half considered school shootings, a lack of “complete, honest” history, inadequate school funding, and book and topic bans to be major factors in their vote. Culture war issues such as CRT, indoctrination, “grooming,” negativity toward America, and making white students feel ashamed of being white rank toward the bottom as factors in voters’ choices. “Parental control” issues and school vouchers are at the bottom of the list, and they are bottom-tier even among parents.

Please tell me if this issue was or was not a factor in your vote in this election.	Major factor
There are too many shootings in schools making our students unsafe.	60
Students do not get a complete, honest history of our country, including on topics like slavery, the civil rights movement, and Native American history.	55
Schools don't receive enough funding for the basics - like teacher pay, school supplies, and building repairs.	55
Too many politicians are banning books or topics that don't align with their personal beliefs, like Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and the Holocaust.	55
Too many students fell behind during the pandemic and don't have the school support they need to catch up.	54
Low teacher salaries have created a major educator shortage crisis leaving schools short-staffed and students without the resources and support they need.	54
Students do not receive enough instruction in practical skills or technical training.	53
Students don't graduate prepared for college or good careers.	51
There is not enough mental health support for students who need it.	49
Too many classrooms are overcrowded with too many students per teacher.	44
Too many schools are teaching Critical Race Theory to be politically correct.	43

Students are being indoctrinated by radical left-wing teachers.	42
Teachers are grooming students and pushing the radical LGBTQ agenda.	42
Students are too often being taught the negative of America's history instead of the positive.	39
Students are being taught that white students should be ashamed of being white.	39
School vouchers allow taxpayer funding to be taken from public schools and given to private and religious schools instead.	38
Parents do not get enough of a say in the kinds of books students are required to read.	34
Parents do not have enough options for school choice, like private or charter schools.	29

- The culture war mainly appeals to the Republican base.** Culture war topics fall flat overall because they generally only appeal to Republicans. This audience is most likely to rate culture war topics as “major factors” in their vote, ahead of other education issues. When looking at “total factor” in one’s vote (major and minor), non-conservative Republicans have more wide-ranging education motivations—like teaching practical skills and pandemic learning loss (83% and 76% total factor, respectively).

Culture war issues do not resonate with independent voters much at all. In fact, independents say book bans, pandemic learning loss, “complete, honest” history, and the teaching of practical skills were all major factors in their vote.

**Factor In Vote**      ✓ Top issue    ● Second/ third most important issue

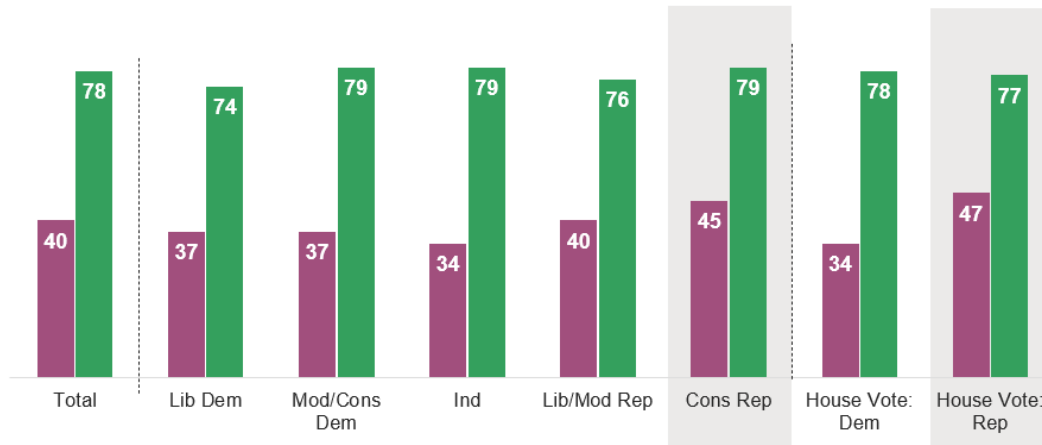
% Major Factor	Dem	Ind	Rep	White	Black	Hispanic	Parents	Non-Parents
School shootings	75 ✓			56 ✓		68 ✓		62 ✓
Honest history		51		51	76			57
School funding	71			51			57	
Politicians banning books		53 ✓		54			57	55
Students fell behind		51		51		65	59 ✓	
Teacher pay/shortages	70				76		57	
Practical/Technical skills		52						
Mental health					77 ✓	65		
CRT			72					
Students indoctrinated			79 ✓					
Grooming/LGBTQ Agenda			73					

- Turnout in school board elections was also not driven by right-wing culture war attacks on public education.** Nearly four-in-ten voters (37%) say there were school board elections on their ballot, and most of these voters say they voted in these contests (78%, and 29% of voters overall). While conservative Republicans are more likely to report school board elections were more important to them this year compared to previously, they are no more likely to say they voted in these contests than other groups.

**School Board Elections  
(When On Ballot)**

Among the 37% who said there were school board contests on their ballot

● School board elections more important ● Voted in school board elections

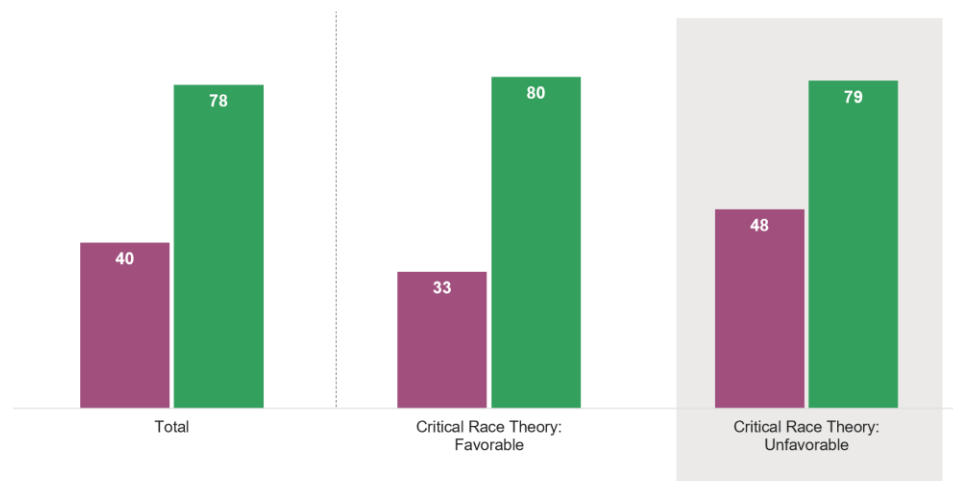


Similarly, nearly half (48%) of voters unfavorable toward CRT said school board elections were more important to them this year, yet they were no more likely to vote in them than voters favorable toward CRT.

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**Methodology**

*On behalf of the National Education Association, GBAO conducted the nationally representative survey of 1,200 November 2022 voters including oversamples totaling 215 Black voters and 202 Hispanic voters. The survey was conducted through landlines and cell phones November 10-19, 2022. The sample is subject to a 2.8 percentage point margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level. Margin of error for Black voters is 6.7 percent and 6.9 percent for Hispanic voters.*