

To: Interested Parties

From: GBAO

Date: August 9, 2023

## Poll Results: Parents And The Public Continue To Prioritize Education Over Culture War

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Going into the new school year, a new national survey shows voters—both parents and non-parents of school-aged children—are very concerned about a wide range of challenges facing schools, including a lack of funding, school safety and shootings, teacher shortages, students falling behind academically, and insufficient mental health support. By comparison, the issues that right-wing elected officials, candidates, and media are focused on — so-called “culture war” issues such as “Critical Race Theory” (“CRT”), or “grooming” by “radical” teachers — are not top-tier worries. These findings echo last year’s report, which showed that Republicans’ focus on far-right fights fell flat with 2022 midterm voters.

Additionally, despite attempts by the right-wing to drive a wedge between educators and parents, voters across party lines have very positive views of their public schools and teachers, and voters overwhelmingly feel that teachers should be paid more for their work.

And as Republicans across the country are pursuing legislation to ban books and curricula about race, the survey results show that majorities prefer a Democratic candidate who supports an honest and complete history education over a Republican candidate focused on limiting curriculum.

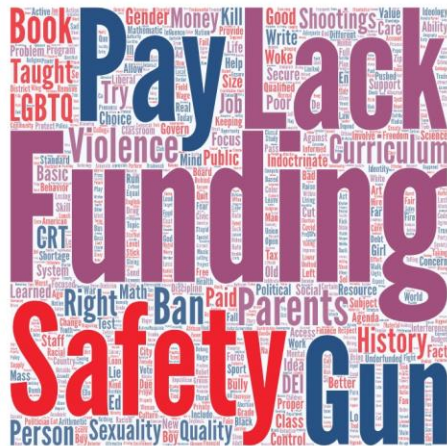
The following are key findings from a nationwide poll of 1,400 likely November 2024 voters. The results are weighted to be nationally representative, including an evenly divided partisan environment (29 percent Democrat, 40 percent Independent, 28 percent Republican).

### Key Findings

- **Lack of funding, teacher pay, and school shootings are voters’ top-of-mind concerns about education.** These issues clearly rise to the top, as the following word cloud demonstrates, when voters are asked about the most important issue facing schools (before respondents were given a list of issues to assess).



In your view, what is the most important issue facing schools today?

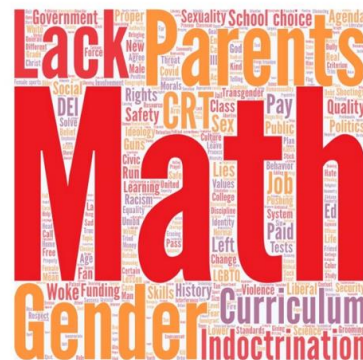
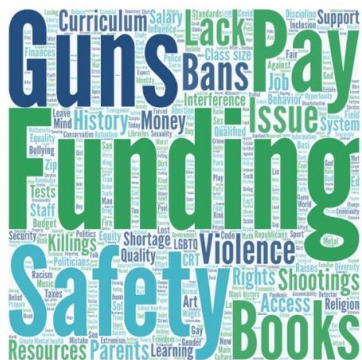


Democrats and Independents are more concerned about safety and funding, while Republicans are concerned about parental control and gender. Many Republicans see a connection between those issues and the concern that schools are not teaching the basics, like math. As one respondent said, "Schools are not teaching mathematics, history, and science. They are teaching woke ideology." Another said, "Rather than focusing on reading, writing, and arithmetic like schools should, schools are pushing the agenda that is contrary to God's design and what we teach our children."

Democrats

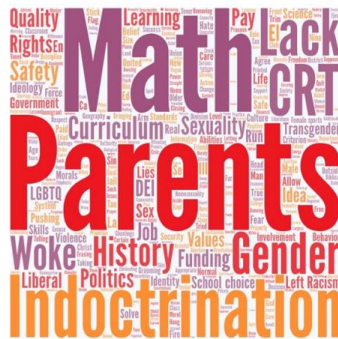
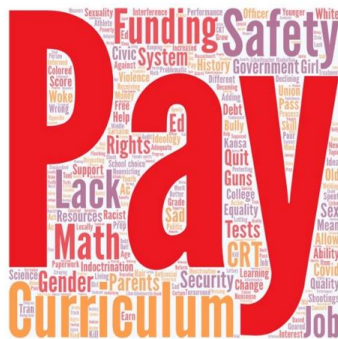
Independents

Republicans



Mod/Liberal Republican (13%)

Conservative Republican (27%)



- **When given a list, voters rank pandemic learning recovery, lack of school funding, lack of technical training, insufficient mental health support, and educator shortages as the most serious problems facing K-12 public education.** A battery of questions about problems facing schools shows similar results to the open-ended question. Overall, the biggest concerns are pandemic learning loss (+77 net serious concerns – not serious concerns), the lack of funding for schools’ basic needs (+76), students not receiving enough instruction in practical skills (+74), students not having enough mental health support (+74), and low teacher salaries (+73). School shootings (+67), students graduating unprepared for college (+67), and overcrowded classrooms (+66) are also serious concerns.

On issues of history and curriculum specifically, voters are concerned about bans and restrictions. Voters are far more concerned about politicians banning books (+68) and students not getting a complete, honest history of our country (+59) than students being taught the negative of America’s history (+24), CRT in the classroom (+24), and parents not having enough say in required books (+20).

Culture war issues like teachers “grooming” students or pushing an LGBTQ+ agenda fall to the bottom of the list, and are only considered serious problems by Republicans. Particularly, conservative Republicans prioritize these issues over all others, while moderate Republicans are concerned about a wider variety of topics.

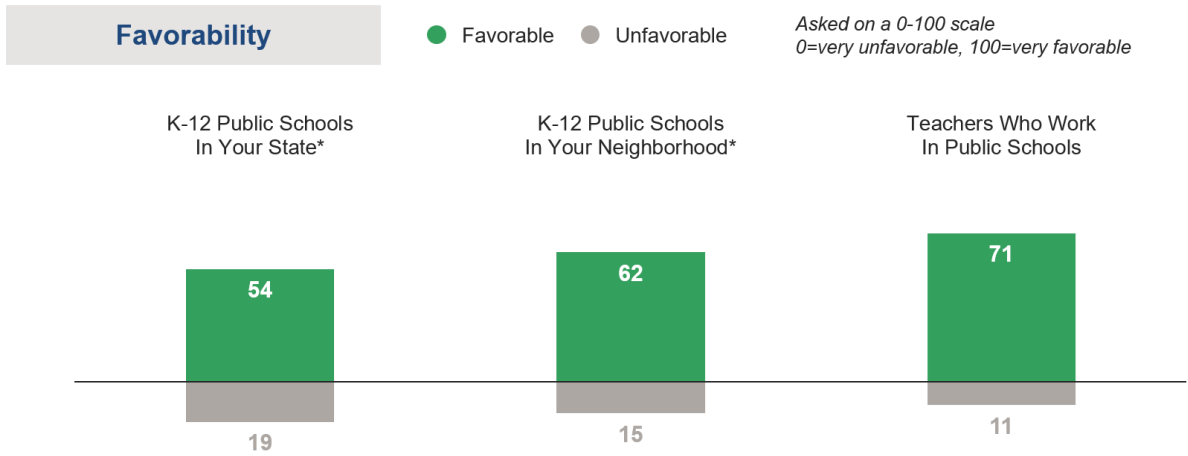
Independents are most concerned about pandemic learning loss, the lack of funding for basic needs, insufficient mental health support, and the lack of instruction on practical/technical skills.

Among parents, the top concerns include insufficient mental health support, inadequate instruction on practical/technical skills, the lack of funding for the basics, and pandemic learning loss.

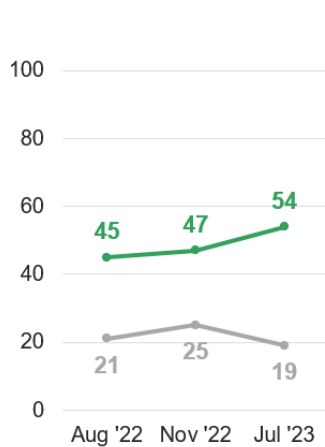
<b>Issues In Schools</b>		
		<i>Please tell me how serious of a problem you think it is for public K-12 schools in your area – very serious, somewhat serious, not that serious, not at all serious.</i>
* = 1/2 sample		<b>Serious – Not Serious</b>
Too many students fell behind during the pandemic and don't have the school support they need to catch up		+77
Schools don't receive enough funding for the basics-like teacher pay, school supplies, and building repairs*		+76
Students do not receive enough instruction in practical skills or technical training*		+74
There is not enough mental health support for students who need it		+74
Low teacher salaries have created a major educator shortage crisis leaving schools short-staffed and students without the resources and support they need		+73
Too many politicians are banning books or topics they don't like, like Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and the Holocaust*		+68
There are too many shootings in schools making our students unsafe		+67
Students don't graduate prepared for college or good careers*		+67
Too many classrooms are overcrowded with too many students per teacher		+66
Schools don't receive enough funding to provide students a well-rounded education, including classes like art, music, and P.E.*		+61
Students do not get a complete, honest history of our country, like Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks and the Holocaust*		+59
School vouchers allow taxpayer funding to be taken from public schools and given to private and religious schools instead		+36
Students are being taught that white students should be ashamed of being white*		+25
Students are too often being taught the negative of America's history instead of the positive*		+24
Too many schools are teaching Critical Race Theory in order to be politically correct*		+24
Teachers are grooming students and pushing the radical LGBTQ agenda		+21
Parents do not get enough of a say in the kinds of books students are required to read*		+20
Students are being indoctrinated by radical left-wing teachers*		+19
Politicians are passing laws that prevent schools and teachers from talking about LGBTQ people and families		+18
Parents do not have enough options for school choice, like private or charter schools		+11

- **Voters across party lines have positive views of public schools and teachers.** More than 70 percent of voters (both parents and non-parents) have a favorable view of public school teachers, and voters’ views of public schools and teachers have improved since last

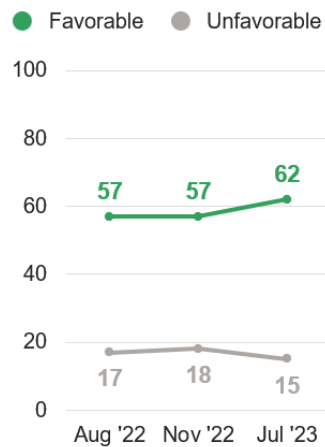
year. Public school teachers receive positive ratings across partisan lines, with Independents 70 percent favorable and 13 percent unfavorable and Republicans 60 percent favorable and 16 percent unfavorable.



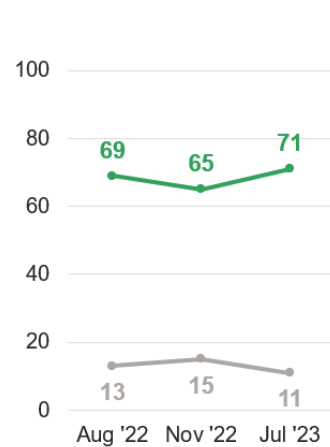
**State Public Schools\***



**Local Public Schools\***



**Public School Teachers**



*\*Split sample*

- A Democratic candidate focused on giving students an honest and complete education bests a Republican focused on Critical Race Theory.** When presented with arguments from both Democratic and Republican candidates about school curriculum, voters side with the Democrat's position 54 percent to 34 percent. Independents and those undecided in the 2024 race for Congress break for the candidate focused on providing an honest and complete history. After hearing the messages, non-conservative Republicans are not consolidated, with fewer than half (49 percent) voting for the Republican.

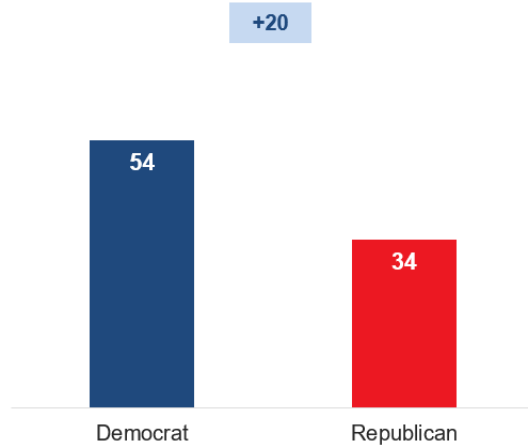
**Democratic Statement:**

A Democrat who says the last thing we should be doing is banning books in schools. Yet some politicians want to do exactly that—ban award-winning books that mention slavery or ban topics like the Trail of Tears, Martin Luther King, Jr. or Rosa Parks. Schools should teach kids an honest and complete history—not ban books that politicians don't like.

**Republican Statement:**

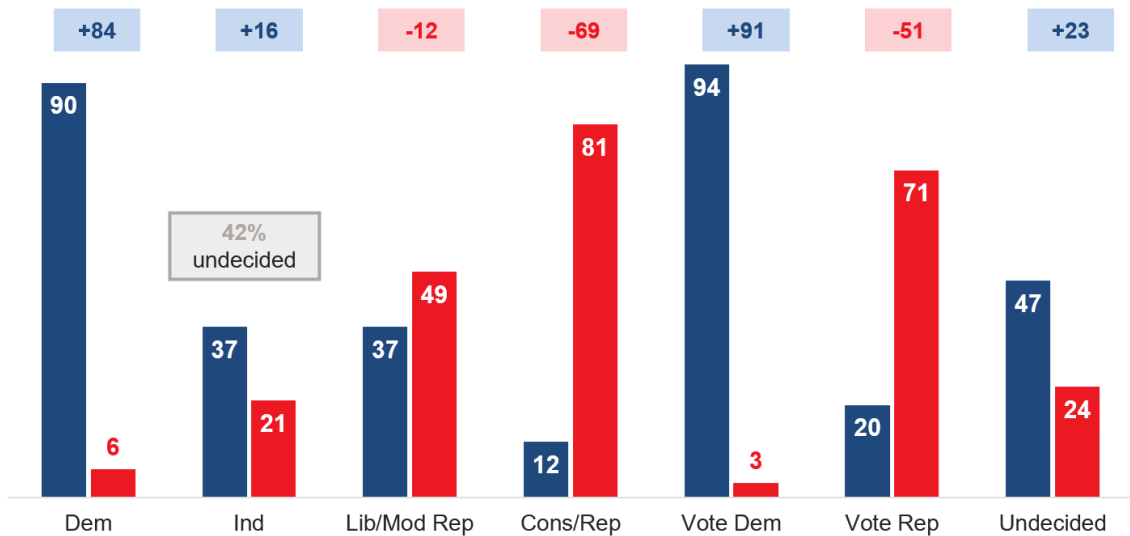
A Republican who says liberal ideology like CRT distracts kids from learning the basics—like math and reading—to focus instead on studying race. We shouldn't be teaching kids about the negatives of our country, making kids feel ashamed of being white, and creating more division.

After hearing this information, would you vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate?



**CRT Messaging**

Would you vote for the **Democratic candidate** or the **Republican candidate**?



**Methodology**

On behalf of the National Education Association, GBAO conducted a nationally representative survey of 1,400 likely November 2024 voters including oversamples totaling 303 Black voters and 284 Hispanic voters. The survey was conducted through landline, cell, and text-to-web between July 11-18, 2023. The sample is subject to a 3.1 percentage point margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level. The margin of error for Black voters is 5.6 percent and 5.8 percent for Hispanic voters.