



MISSOURI PARENT SURVEY



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As part of PRiME's mission to conduct and share research, we worked with YouGov to distribute a survey about various education topics to a sample of 600 Missouri parents of school-aged children. The children of these parents attended public schools (70%), private schools (11%), public charter schools (8%), and public magnet schools (4%). Seven percent of parents reported their child was homeschooled, and less than 1% indicated their child attended a school type not specified. We summarize their perspectives in this report.

The goal of this report is to provide stakeholders and policymakers with an assessment of Missouri parents' opinions on education issues.



MISSOURI PARENT SURVEY

Key Findings

1. Most parents believed the quality of the local school their child attends is better than the quality of schools in the state.
2. A majority (57%) of parents felt their child was learning more in school in 2021–22 than in the previous year (2020–21).
3. Two-thirds (67%) of parents supported charter school operation throughout the state.
4. Nearly all (90%) parents believed career and technical education (CTE) should be emphasized as a postsecondary pathway.
5. Most (80%) parents felt the state should pay for college and career readiness exams for all 11th grade students.
6. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of Missouri parents believed teacher salaries should increase.
7. A plurality (43%) of parents felt Missouri does not spend enough on education.
8. More than three of five (62%) parents believed how racism exists in societies and institutions should be taught in schools.
9. A slight majority (52%) of parents opposed the geographic eligibility provision for the MOScholars program.
10. Less than one in four (22%) parents agreed they would like for one of their children to become a teacher.

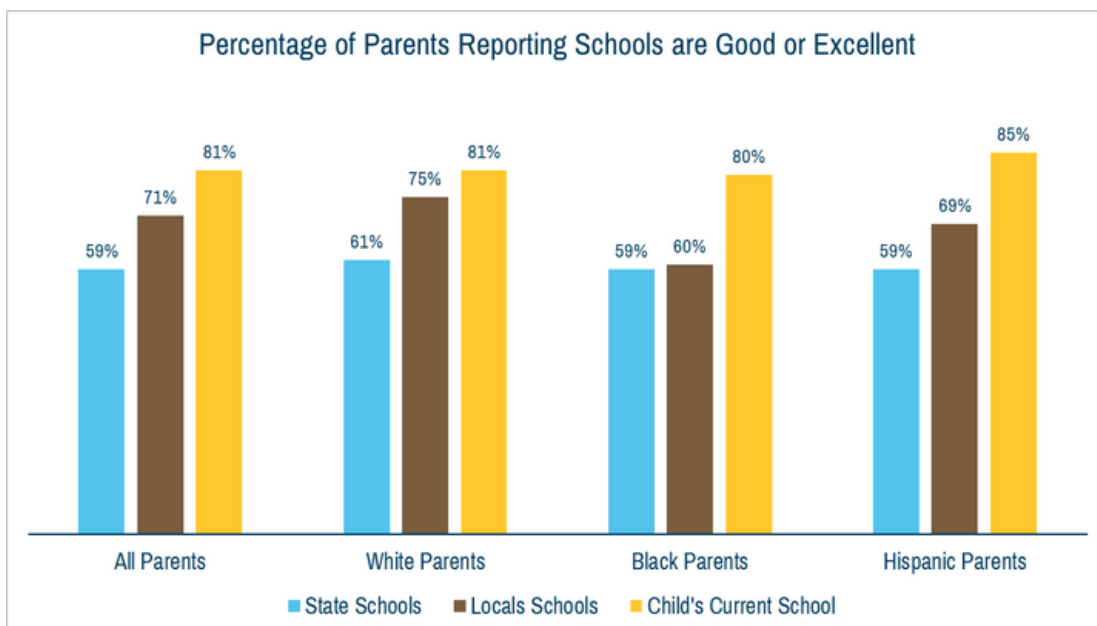


1

Most parents believed the quality of the local school their child attends is better than the quality of schools in the state.

Nearly 3 of 5 (59%) parents ranked the quality of schools in the state as good or excellent. More parents (71%) identified local schools as good or excellent, but most parents—roughly four out of five (81%)—felt the quality of their child’s local school was good or excellent. In contrast, the most recent results of the [February 2023 SLU/YouGov Poll](#) indicated 23% of likely Missouri voters (who may or may not be parents) felt schools in the state were good or excellent, while 37% felt local schools were good or excellent. This may indicate there are differing opinions about school quality across the state and between Missouri parents and likely voters. Notably, the sample of likely voters was representative of the state whereas the parents sampled were not.

There was variation by race in parents' perception of local schools' quality, but little in the perception of the quality of schools statewide or of their child’s current school. Specifically, White parents were 25% more likely than Black parents to rate their local schools as good or excellent (75% vs. 60%).

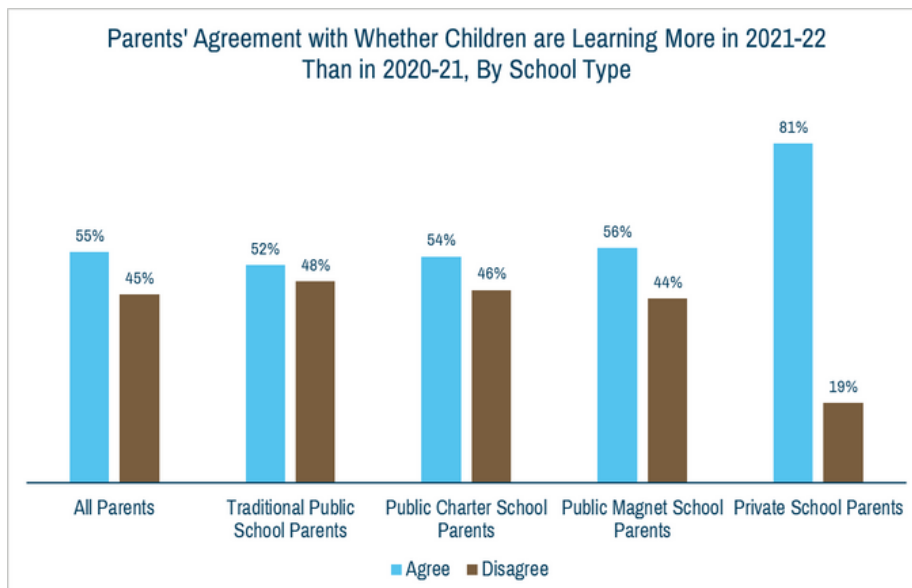


2

A majority of parents felt their child was learning more in school in 2021-22 than in the previous year (2020-21).

A majority (57%) of parents indicated their child was learning more (33%) or much more (24%) in school in 2021–22 than in the previous year (2020–21). District decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic related to instruction were likely factors parents considered when responding about their child's learning. In 2020–21, most Missouri students began with in-person/distanced instruction (41%), followed by fully distanced (25%), hybrid options (23%), and fully in-person (11%).²

Of the 55% of parents who indicated their student's instruction was primarily not in person during the 2020–21 school year, 53% reported their child was learning more or much more in 2021–22. Of the 45% of parents who indicated their students' instruction was primarily in-person during the 2020–21 school year, 60% reported their child was learning more or much more in 2021–22. Parents' views on increased learning in 2021–22 were similar whether their children attended a traditional public school, a public charter school, or a public magnet school. However, parents whose children attended private schools were more likely to believe their children were learning more in 2021–22.

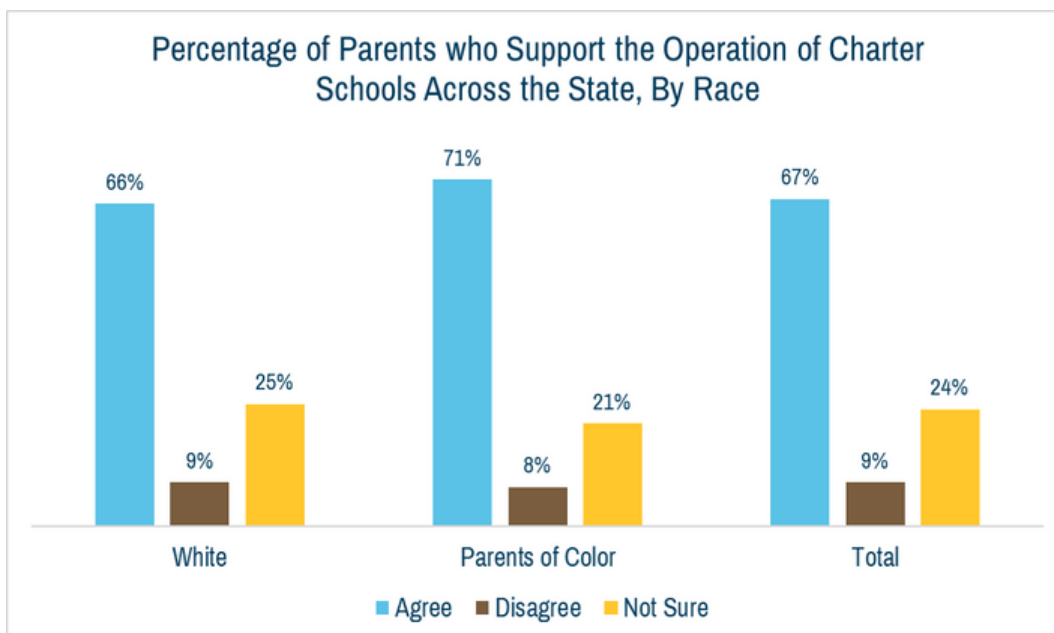


3

Two-thirds of parents supported charter school operation throughout the state.

In Missouri, charter schools currently operate in three school districts in the state—St. Louis City, Kansas City Public Schools, and most recently in 2022, a single charter school opened in Normandy School District.³ Missouri state law allows charter schools to operate in SLPS, KCPS, unaccredited school districts, districts provisionally accredited for three years in a row, and accredited districts if sponsored by a local school board.⁴ The legislature has repeatedly introduced bills to expand charter school operations including SB 304 and HB 158 this session.⁵

Despite Missouri’s history of having charter schools in primarily two districts, the majority (67%) of all parent respondents supported charter schools operating in all parts of the state. Opposition was at a mere 8% and roughly a quarter (24%) of parents were unsure. This question also received bipartisan support from parents, with support from 62% of Democrat and nearly 3 of 4 Republican respondents. There were also high levels of support from White parents and Parents of Color respondents, as two-thirds of White parents and 70% of Parents of Color supported allowing increased charter school operations.



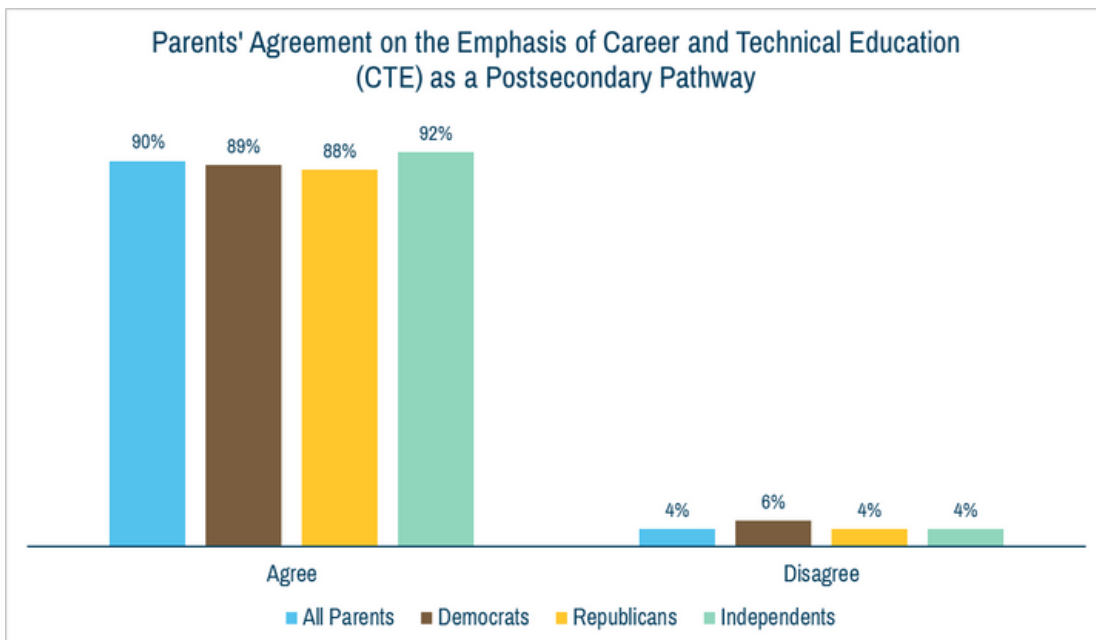


4

Nearly all parents believed career and technical education (CTE) should be emphasized as a postsecondary pathway.

Career and technical education (CTE) provides secondary, postsecondary, and adult students with academic and technical skills, knowledge, and training required for future careers in a variety of fields.⁶ High school students in Missouri have the opportunity to engage in CTE through local education agencies (LEAs). Activities include specific career-oriented classes, internships, apprenticeships and other in-school programs designed to foster work readiness. In total, more than 40% of Missouri high school students engaged in some form of CTE in 2022.⁷

Parents, including those who identified as Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, overwhelmingly endorsed the emphasis of career and technical education (CTE) as a postsecondary pathway. Nearly all (90%) parents agreed career and technical education (CTE) should be emphasized as a viable path to employment after high school.



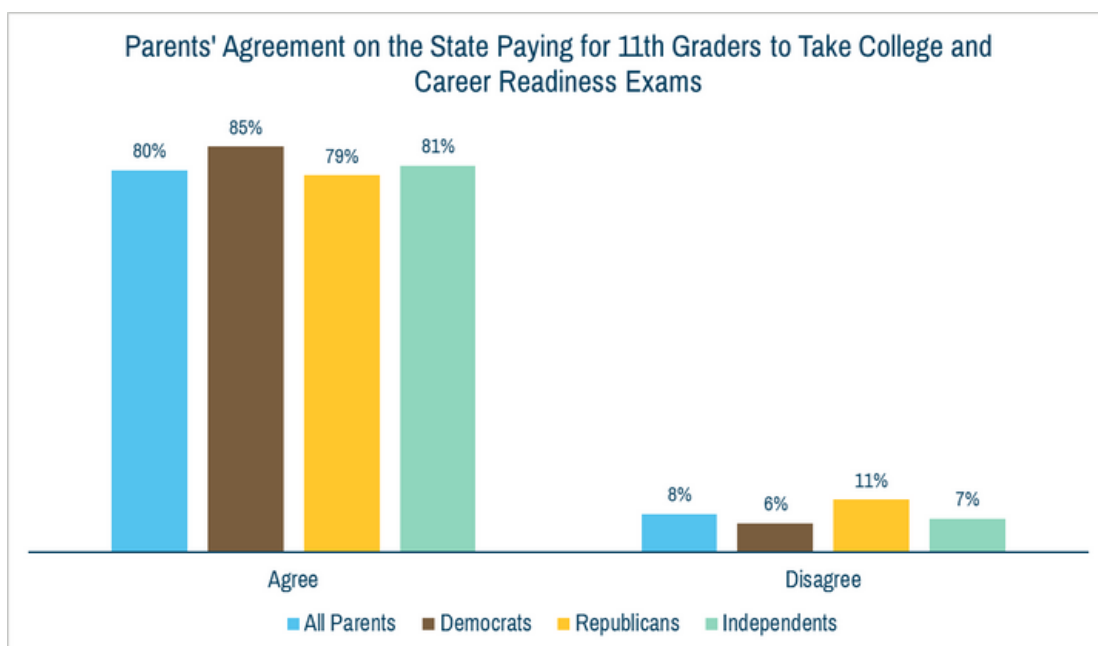


5

Most (80%) parents felt the state should pay for college and career readiness exams for all 11th grade students.

The statewide ACT participation rate has been sensitive to state policy changes. The ACT participation rate increased to 92% for the classes of 2016, 2017, and 2018 when Missouri paid for all 11th graders to participate in the ACT.⁸ After the state ended funding, the statewide ACT participation rate decreased to 77% in 2019. While this rate was still higher than pre-policy trends when participation rates ranged from 65–68%, it likely signals that some students lost access to the ACT as a result of funding being discontinued.⁹

Four out of five (80%) of parents agreed the state should pay for all 11th graders to take college and career readiness exams such as the ACT. Similar levels of support for this policy approach were seen from parents identifying as Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. Notably, this approach to increase access to postsecondary education has become increasingly popular, as 17 states reported 90–100% participation in the ACT.¹⁰



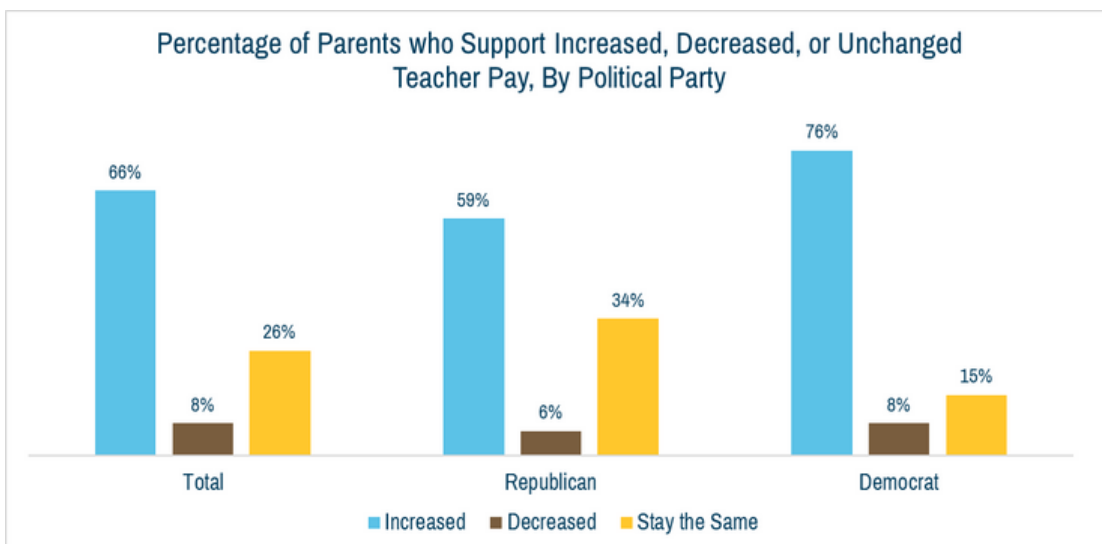


6

Two-thirds of parents believed teacher salaries should increase.

Increasing teacher salaries is a proposal that frequently comes up in Missouri, especially since Missouri is often cited as a state with one of the lowest teacher salaries in the media.¹¹ According to DESE, the average base teacher pay in the state is around \$52,000 and the minimum starting teacher salary is \$25,000.^{12, 13}

The majority (66%) of parents supported increasing teacher salaries in the state. Just over a quarter of parents believed teacher salaries should stay the same and the remaining 8% believed teacher salaries should be decreased. By party affiliation, democrats expressed the highest level of support at 76%, while 59% of Republicans expressed support. There was a higher percentage of Republicans who believed teacher salaries should stay the same (34%) compared to Democrats (15%).



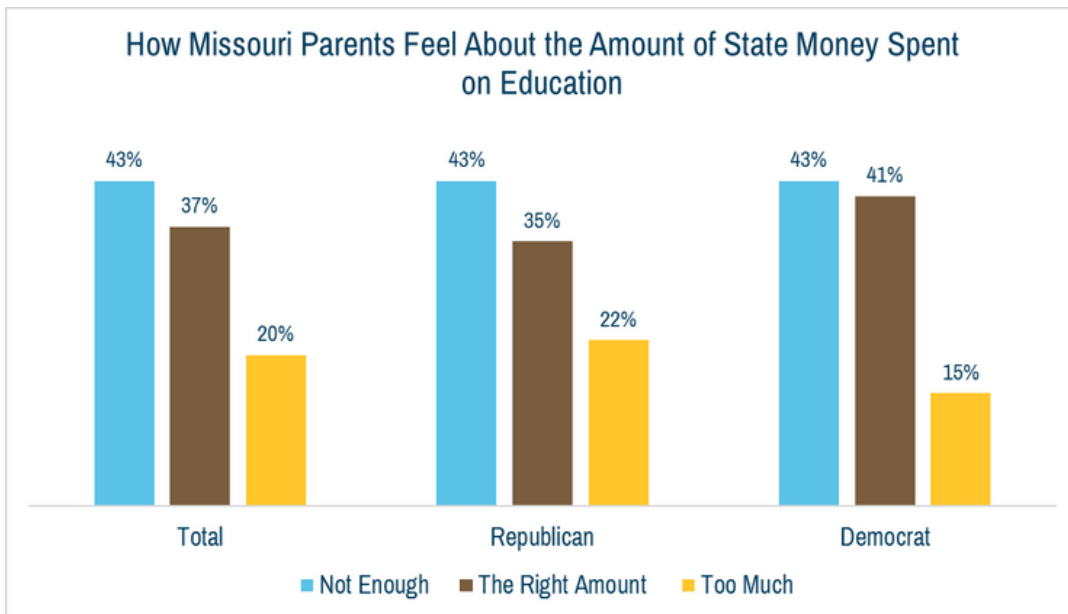


7

A plurality (43%) of parents felt Missouri is not spending enough on schools.

Parents are divided on whether the state is spending enough on schools. Overall, 43% of parents said Missouri is not spending enough on schools, nearly one fifth (19%) said Missouri spends too much, and 37% said Missouri spends the right amount on education. These responses were similar across party lines, with 43% of both Democrats and Republicans saying Missouri does not spend enough. However, a slightly higher percentage of Democrats than Republicans said Missouri spends the right amount (41% and 35%, respectively) and a slightly lower percentage of Democrats than Republicans said Missouri is spending too much (15% and 22%, respectively). There were similar opinions between White and Parents of Color respondents.

Results from the [February 2023 SLU/YouGov Poll](#) indicated education is a top priority, with nearly one of five (18%) likely Missouri voters indicating it is the most important priority.¹⁴ Overall results indicated likely Missouri voters felt education was the second-highest priority behind the economy.¹⁵ Taken together, the results from the Missouri Parent Survey and SLU/YouGov Poll indicate school spending will likely continue to be a point of discussion in the future.

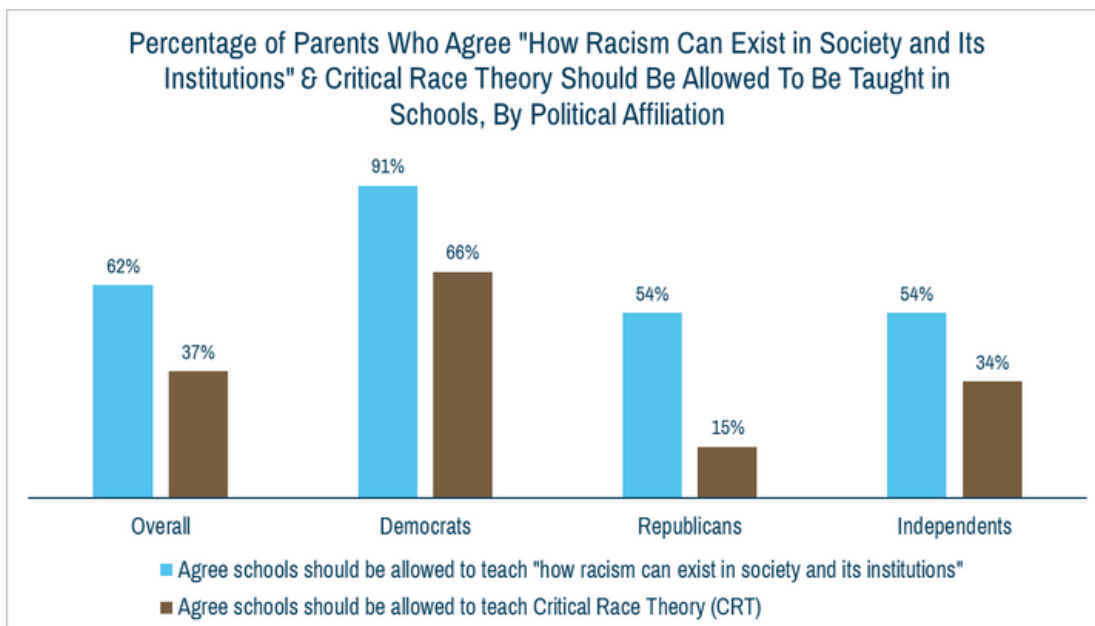




More than three of five (62%) parents believed how racism can exist in societies and institutions should be taught in schools.

Critical race theory (CRT) has been a prevalent topic of debate in news media in the last few years. CRT is an academic and legal framework that maintains racism is inherent to many institutions and laws in America, resulting in persistent discrimination, especially against Black Americans. On the national level, at least 42 states have introduced bills since January 2021 to place restrictions on how racism and sexism is addressed in the classroom.¹⁶ Many have understood these bills to ban the teaching of CRT in the classroom.¹⁷ Missouri Senate Bill 4, introduced in the 2023 legislative session, would prevent teaching that “individuals by virtue of their race, ethnicity, color, or national origin, bear collective guilt and are inherently responsible for actions committed in the past by others.”¹⁸

More than three of five parents agreed (62%) that schools should be allowed to teach about how racism can exist in society and its institutions, while 25.4% of parents disagreed, and 12.6% of parents were unsure. By party affiliation, the majority of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents agreed with this statement. However, when asked if CRT should be taught in schools, the level of support dropped—36.2% of parents did not think CRT should be taught and 27.24% were unsure. While the majority (66%) of Democrats agreed CRT should be taught in schools, only 15% of Republicans and 34% of Independents agreed.



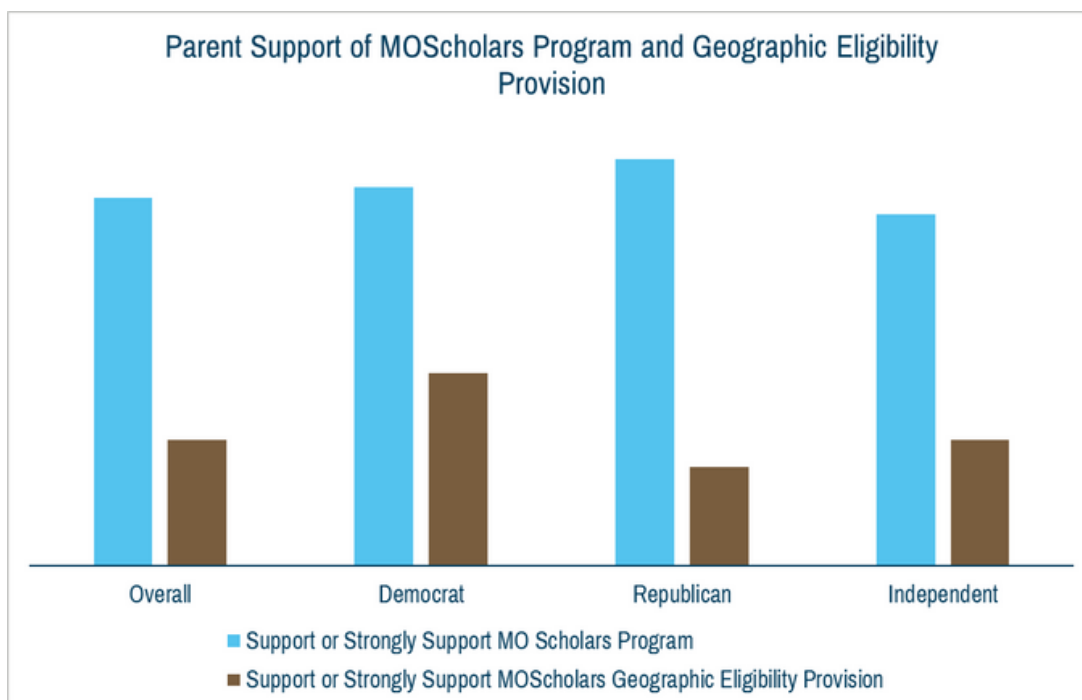


9

A slight majority (52%) of parents opposed the geographic eligibility provision for the MOScholars program.

The Missouri Empowerment Scholarship Program, also known as MOScholars, was established in 2021 and provides tax credits for donations to approved Educational Assistance Organizations (EAOs).¹⁹ EAOs use contributions to award scholarships to Missouri students from low-income families and students with disabilities to access a variety of educational services including private schools and therapeutic services.²⁰ Currently, the MoScholars program has a geographic eligibility provision which limits eligibility to students who live within a county with a charter form of government or a city with at least 30,000 residents.²¹ This excludes many rural areas with high rates of low income students and families, including the counties with the top five highest child poverty rates in Missouri.²²

Most (66%) parents supported the MOScholars Program. The majority of parents (52%) opposed the geographic eligibility provision requiring students to live in a county with over 30,000 residents to be eligible.



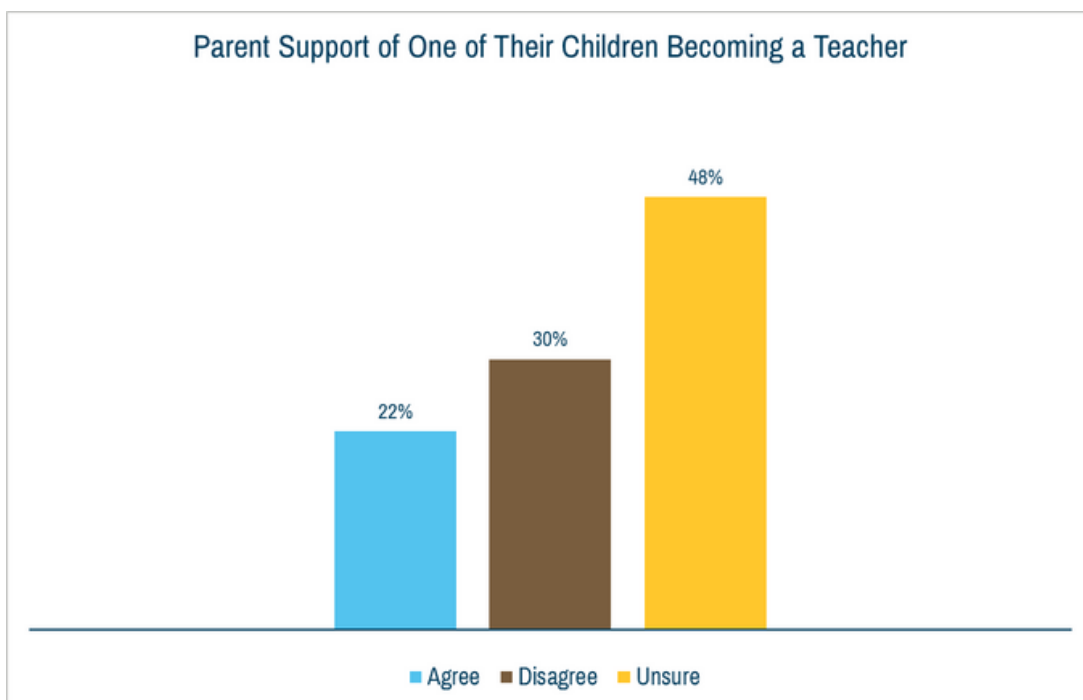


10

Less than one in four (22%) parents agreed they would like for one of their children to become a teacher.

Missouri teacher recruitment and retention has been a growing area of concern amid teacher shortages. Over the past decade, Missouri's educator preparation programs have declined by 24%, while the number of new teacher certificates has remained flat since the 2015-16 school year.²² In the last six years, the average attrition rate for teachers statewide was above 11%, three percentage points higher than the national average.²⁴ In addition, Missouri is home to one of the lowest starting and average teacher salaries in the country.²⁵

When asked if parents would like for one of their children to become a teacher, less than one in four (22%) agreed, almost half (48%) were unsure, and 29% said they disagreed. This result may indicate even if students want to pursue a degree in education they may select another career path due to lack of parental support.



About the Sample (n = 600)

Demographics:

55% Female

45% Male

78% White

13% Black

5% Hispanic

5% Other Races

Political Party Affiliation:

24% Democrat

34% Republican

28% Independent

6% Other

9% Not Sure

Income Levels:

51% Less than \$50K

28% \$50K-\$100K

17% More than \$100K

The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race, and education. The frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year sample with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file). The matched cases were weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frame were combined, and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of education, and region. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post stratified according to these deciles. The weights were then post-stratified on 2016 and 2020 Presidential vote choice, and a four-way stratification of gender, age (4-categories), race (4-categories), and education (4-categories), to produce the final weight.

This Missouri Parent Poll was conducted in fall 2021.



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Better evidence, better policy, better schools

Who We Are

The Policy Research in Missouri Education (PRiME) Center is a non-partisan research center housed in the Saint Louis University School of Education. Opened in the Spring of 2019, we are wholly committed to conducting and sharing research that leads to better policies, educational outcomes, and opportunities for all students.

What We Do

We conduct and share research on education. We help lawmakers, educators, and families in the state of Missouri make decisions about education policy and practice. Our mission is to ensure that the people making decisions and building policies around education have the relevant data and evidence they need to build the best and most equitable educational systems possible.