ESSA Online Survey Results

The passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in December 2015 provides each state the chance to review important parts of our education system and identify ways in which our state can improve opportunities and outcomes for all Ohio's students. A key part in the process of developing the state plan is the meaningful engagement of a wide range of stakeholders.

As part of the ESSA stakeholder engagement plan, the Ohio Department of Education posted a survey online from Aug. 24 through Oct. 7, 2016.

In addition to responding to specific questions, several general themes emerged across all responses. Survey respondents generally referenced a preference for:
- A reduction in testing;
- More stability and consistency; reduce the rate of change;
- More "wraparound" services, including mental health services;
- Additional art, music and physical education offerings;
- Additional services for students with disabilities and students identified as gifted;
- More decision making at the local level; and
- Greater accountability and less funding for charter schools.

Who Did We Hear From? (Questions 1-4)

There were 11,287 responses to the ESSA online survey, with responses received from each of Ohio's 88 counties. Respondents were asked to identify their primary roles:

Role Reported	Percentage
Ohio student (K-12)	3.3%
Student at an Ohio college or university	0.5%
Parent or family member of an Ohio student	22.0%
Ohio employer	0.6%
Member of the Ohio public	2.0%
Representative of an advocacy or civil rights organization	0.3%
Representative of a community organization	0.7%
Educator or education-related professional	55.1%
Non-teaching school employee	3.7%
Ohio school principal or superintendent	5.4%
Employee at an Ohio college or university	1.5%
Other	5.0%

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Responses to Specific Questions

Question 5
What do you like best about your school or district?

The most frequently cited answers included students, teachers and staff, cohesiveness of the community and small size of schools and classes.

Representative comments include:
"The students are enthusiastic and excited about learning when they can see how it impacts their lives."

"The teachers I work with are amazing and work hard to meet the needs of all of their students."

"We have open communication between staff, parents, and community members. This helps everyone know what's going on and make the best choices for the students. "

"I like the small class sizes. It enables teachers, staff, and administrators to really ""know"" the students -- both from an academic as well as personal perspective."

"Our staff and personnel are like family. Our teachers work hard at what they do. We recognize that the circumstances in our community have an impact on our students' attitudes, achievement, learning, and behaviors. We try to educate the whole child and partner with our community members to help provide a better education for our students."

Question 6
Is there anything you would change about your local school or district?

Most frequently cited answers included the amount of testing students are subjected to, amount of funding available, the condition of buildings, lack of certain curricular and extracurricular offerings such as music, art, and physical education, and lack of technology.

Representative comments include:
"The amount of testing that students have to endure!"

"We would have more money to provide more electives to students and so class sizes wouldn't be so large."

"Our buildings are old and at times uncomfortable. New facilities would be beneficial to this community."
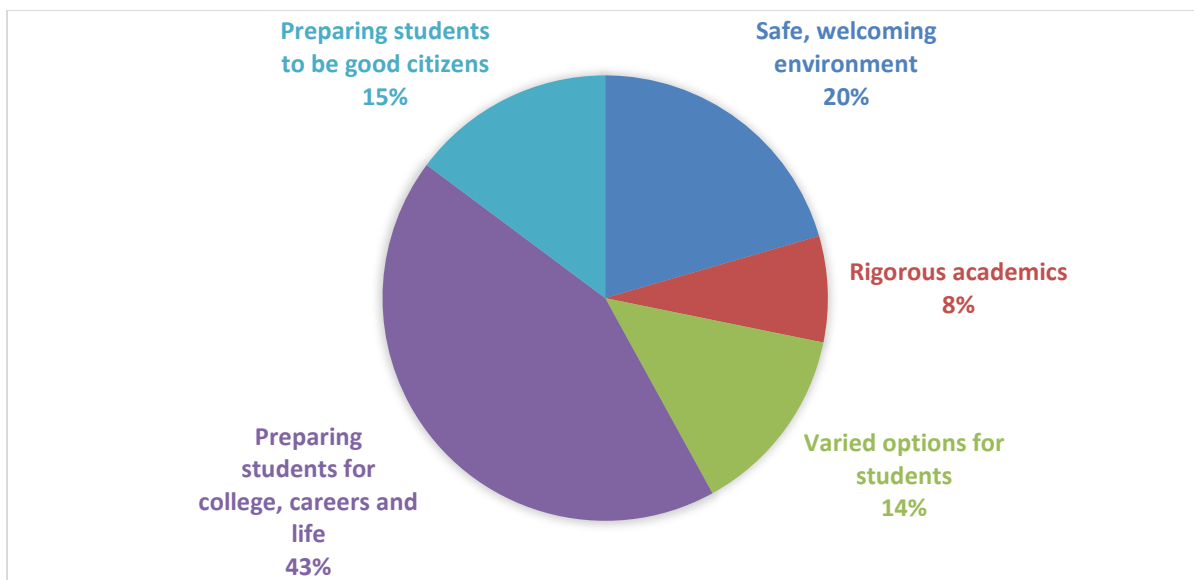
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"Give all the buildings air conditioning. How are students supposed to learn when it's over 100 degrees in their classroom? "

"We need more administrative support for the arts and music."

"More access to technology for all students in all classes."

Question 7
Which of the following expectations of schools is most important to you?

Question 8
Is there anything else that you expect of Ohio's schools that you would like to share?

Most frequently cited answers included fair assessments, preparing students to be good citizens, the importance of safety and increase parental involvement.

Representative comments include:
"Increased emphasis on understanding and diverse ways of demonstrating this and less emphasis on being able to pick "correct" answers out on multiple choice tests."

"Maintain high student expectations with a realization that they need to be ready to work and live in the community."

*"Get kids ready to be successful in life. That's it."*

"All of the above are priorities BUT nothing works and students cannot learn and teachers cannot teach if they do not feel safe."

"Educate parents on how to help at home."

"Increased parental involvement in child's education"

Question 9
Understanding that many factors contribute to school quality, please choose what you feel are the three most important factors in determining school quality.
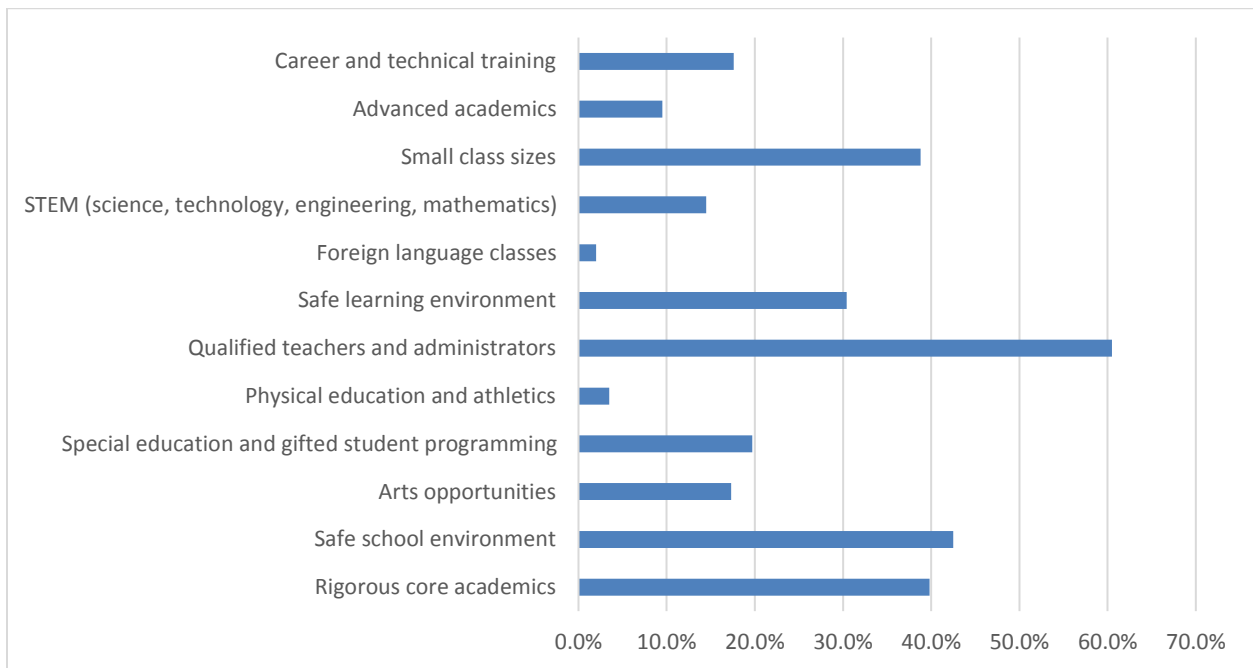
Question 10
Is there anything else that you feel is necessary for a high-quality school?

Most frequently cited answers included less emphasis on testing; supportive and engaged parents; varied opportunities to meet diverse student needs; caring, supportive educators; and less homework.

Representative comments include:

"That the teachers and administrators place the student's needs above the scores on testing."

"Parental involvement. Hold parents accountable for their children's success or failure."

"Parent engagement is key to successful schools and we need tools and approaches to achieve a strong level of engagement."

"Variety of opportunities for students with different needs."

"Large and diverse opportunities for students to choose from with many different paths to success in high school."
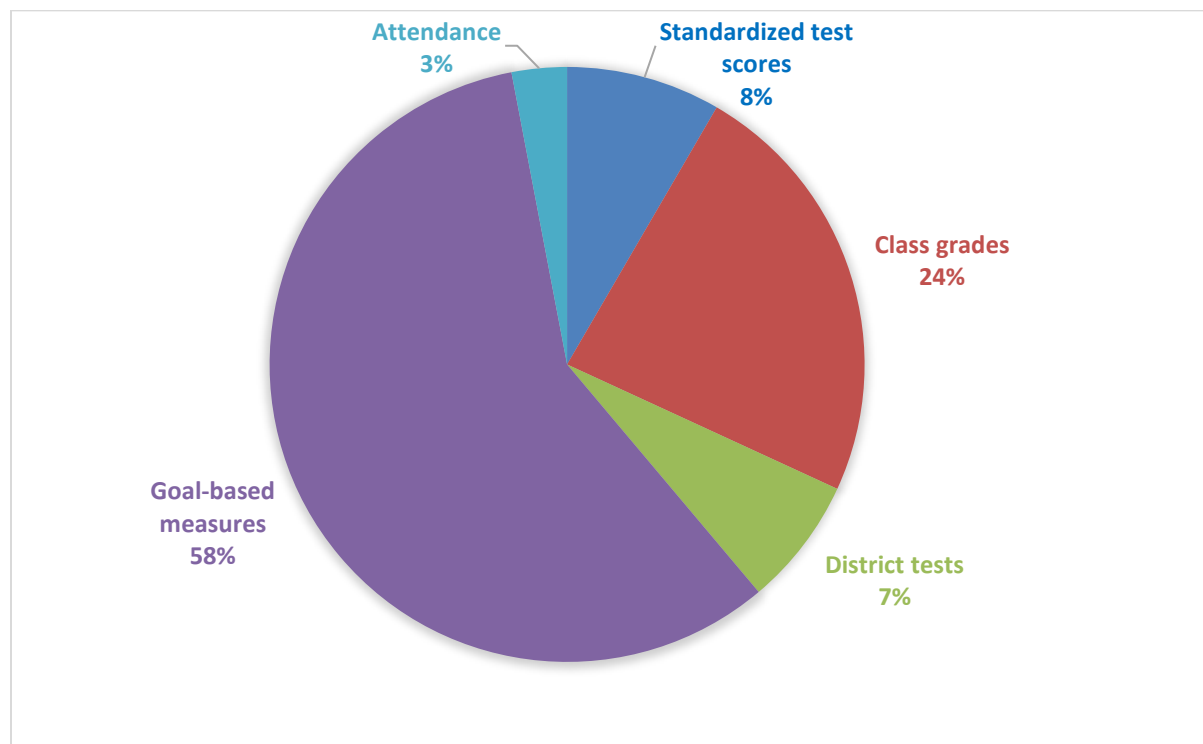
"Caring teachers who have the opportunity to be creative!"

"Administrators that put students first and have staff support."

"Less homework, more leisure time to explore. Give them a love of learning."

Question 11

Understanding that there are many ways to measure the success of our students, what do you feel is the best measure of STUDENT success?

Attendance 3%
Standardized test scores 8%
Class grades 24%
District tests 7%
Goal-based measures 58%

Question 12

How else would you measure student success?

Most frequently cited answers included portfolios and projects, graduates' postsecondary success (follow-up surveys), attendance, children's happiness and class grades.

Representative comments include:
"Portfolios that show growth and performance over time."

"Student achievement after graduation--placement in the workforce, post-secondary education, and community leadership"

"Graduate as a productive citizen with the opportunity to be whatever they want, comfortable with the skills to do whatever they want, and prepared for the ever-changing needs of society."

"Attendance and perhaps project-based learning options."

"A happy child that enjoys learning and the joy that comes from seeing that success in a child's eye."

"Are children happy, enjoying learning, feeling successful? Are teachers accessible? At all levels, are parents informed & engaged?"
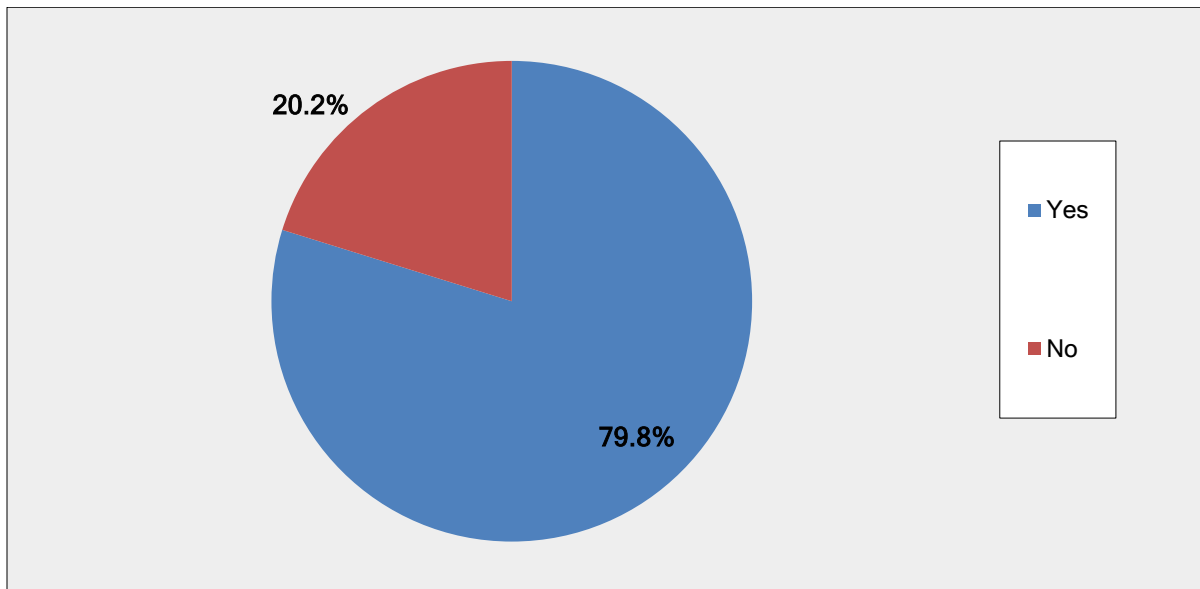
"Growth and citizenship. Is that child able to become employed and be a productive member of society?"

"Good citizenship, emotional health, and preparation for college and life should be the measure of success."

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Question 13

Have you had the opportunity to view your local school district's report card?

Question 14

How could Ohio improve its current school report cards?

Most frequently cited answers included similar grading scales, consistent growth measure, avoid switching assessments so frequently, eliminate standardized test measures, eliminate "rankings" and make it easier to compare similar districts. There also were suggestions to eliminate Value-Added and make greater use of growth as the primary measure, make the report card more "parent friendly" and have results available more quickly.

Representative comments include:
"Stop changing the testing and come up with one that actually works so we aren't changing the preparation for the kids every year like we have the past three years."

"Make the scoring of each section similar."

"Being consistent with the assessment process it is using for evaluation and analysis."

"It would be helpful to stick with an assessment for a longer period of time. Switching standardized assessments every year or two makes it hard to measure success from year to year."

"A more well-rounded approach and not just based on standardized testing results."

"Only comparing districts with similar demographics would make it a little friendlier to districts like mine. Maybe a section that shows, "compared to similar districts"? The general public doesn't see the whole picture and makes uninformed judgements about schools based on this report card. Comparing an affluent, wealthy district to a low-income, urban school is just not fair. All that is shown is that we get D's and F's and everyone else gets A's and B's."

"Make them more user-friendly for someone who is a non-educator."

"Get rid of value added! There are a lot of other factors that contribute to student growth besides a standardized test score for a test given on a specific day."

"Student growth is very important in the fact that it shows that students are learning from year to year. Value added should be linked to state indicators based on a ranked measure of where the students begin. The school and district can then be rated from year to year on their progress with moving students forward."

"Faster turn-around time so they are more relevant. One of the key components of testing is timely feedback. The information in these report cards is outdated by the time it is received - the school year is over, the kids who took the test have moved on to the next year - each grade of students is totally different than every other year, what works for one may or may not work for the following so last year's report card should not be compared to this year's kids."

Question 15

What is the best measure of SCHOOL success?
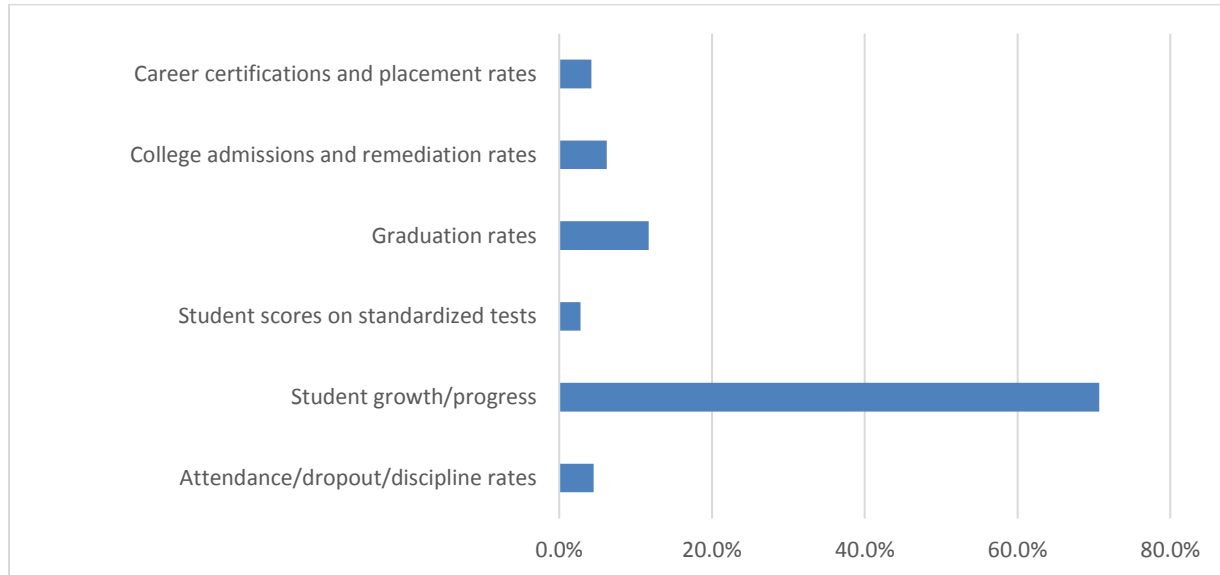
Question 16

Are there any report card measures you don't understand?

Most frequently cited answers included that the Value-Added, Gap Closing, and K-3 Literacy measures were difficult to understand and interpret. Prepared for Success and the gifted education performance indicator also were referenced as difficult to understand or unfair.

Representative comments include:

"Every year, I have to re-educate myself on the difference between value added, gap closure and achievement."

"Value Added is always difficult. Mainly it is trying to explain these items to public that is challenging."

"Gap closing - too many factors outside the school that impact students' ability to learn."

"Including disability seems not a standard measurement to compare an entire student body. The entire Gap Closing measurement as a whole is insignificant and puts focus and attention in unnecessary areas."

"How do you measure and report whether someone is prepared for success? Students learn, achieve and mature at different levels."

"What are some of the quantitative measures of "Prepared for Success""?

"How is the K-3 Literacy section "graded"?" Based on students that are on RIMPs? This appears to be a poor way to measure K-3 Literacy because students who speak little English may make huge gains, but still be on a RIMP for several years."

"The difference between achievement and progress. Progress must mean that my child grew and achievement must mean that my child has achieved whatever the goal on the test was even if they didn't grow."

"How is "progress" determined? Is it based on state test scores, SLOs, or other data?"

Question 17

What should be done to ensure the success of students and/or schools?
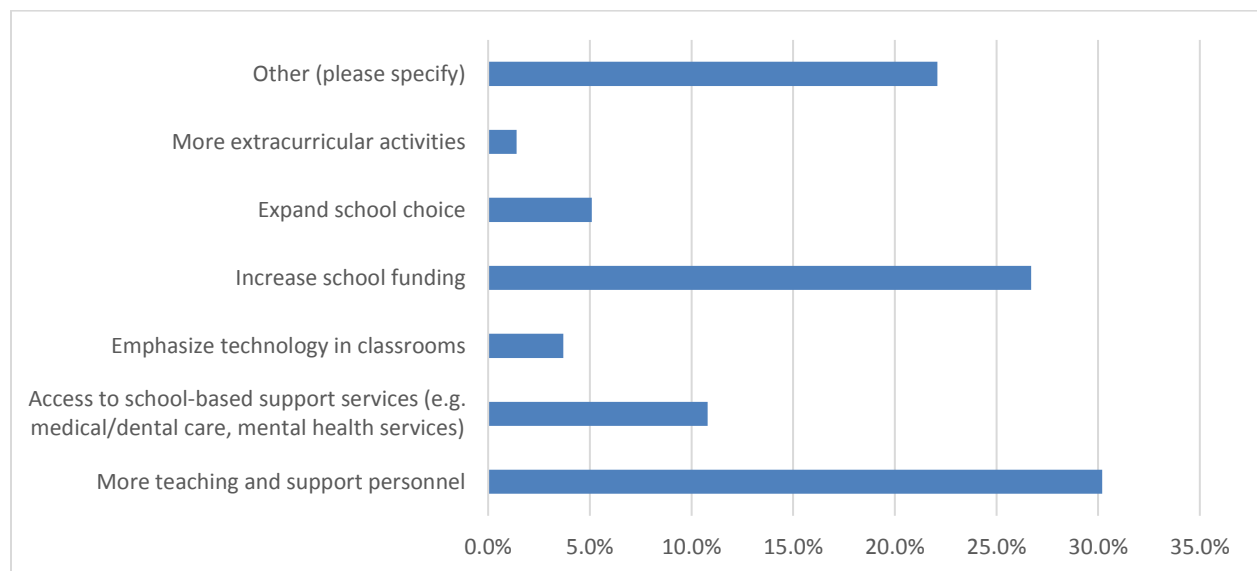
Most frequently cited answers included quality teachers and teacher training, eliminate poverty, additional funding, reduce testing, and engage and hold parents accountable.

Representative comments include:

"Quality training for teachers and support staff."

"Better teacher training and accountability."

"Increase school funding but in a fair way-schools that are failing should get more $ to improve their programs and train their teachers to meet the needs of the school population."

"Rid districts of poverty. I understand that is an unlikely goal. To me the next best option is to put more state dollars, time and effort into early childhood education."

"Decrease the current quantity of tests/time testing to increase instructional time."

"Parents are the key to school success. Programs that educate parents and hold them accountable."

"Educate parents on the importance of education and an ongoing effort to enroll parents on the importance of education."

"Hold parents accountable for the role with helping their child succeed in school."

Question 18

Are there specific types of tools, training or support services that you think the Ohio Department of Education could provide to help schools and districts improve student achievement?

Most frequently cited answers included school-based mental health services and improved understanding of mental health issues for educators, additional nurses and counselors, training and support for parents, curricular resources, access to technology, STEM resources, professional development opportunities and extracurricular activities.

Representative comments include:
"In-service and school-based education on mental health issues would alleviate a great deal of misunderstanding, anger and fear about issues such as depression."

"More understanding of mental health, such as AD/HD, depression, anxiety, and others. We are learning more each year however; I still feel that these are not as well believed to be the problems that they really are. These can be debilitating, and some people do not accept them as such."

"Mental health services and basic social/emotional support that wraps around from school to home."

"Additional counselors to lower student-counselor ratios."

"There should be tools, trainings, and support services for the parents to help us help our child and their teachers."

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"A database of links to quality web-based resources for teachers and parents that support the content being taught in the classroom, as well as opportunities for teachers to share ideas and lesson plans with having to purchase."

"The state should provide the technology for each student. It's not right that some districts have the ability to utilize technology and some do not."

"Students need more mental health services within the schools. Teachers need more training in working with students with disabilities in the classroom."

"Better understanding of learning disabilities that are not black and white (i.e. Disabilities that don't fit neatly into criteria for services but are interfering with classroom success)."

"Specially Designed Instruction for Students with disabilities."

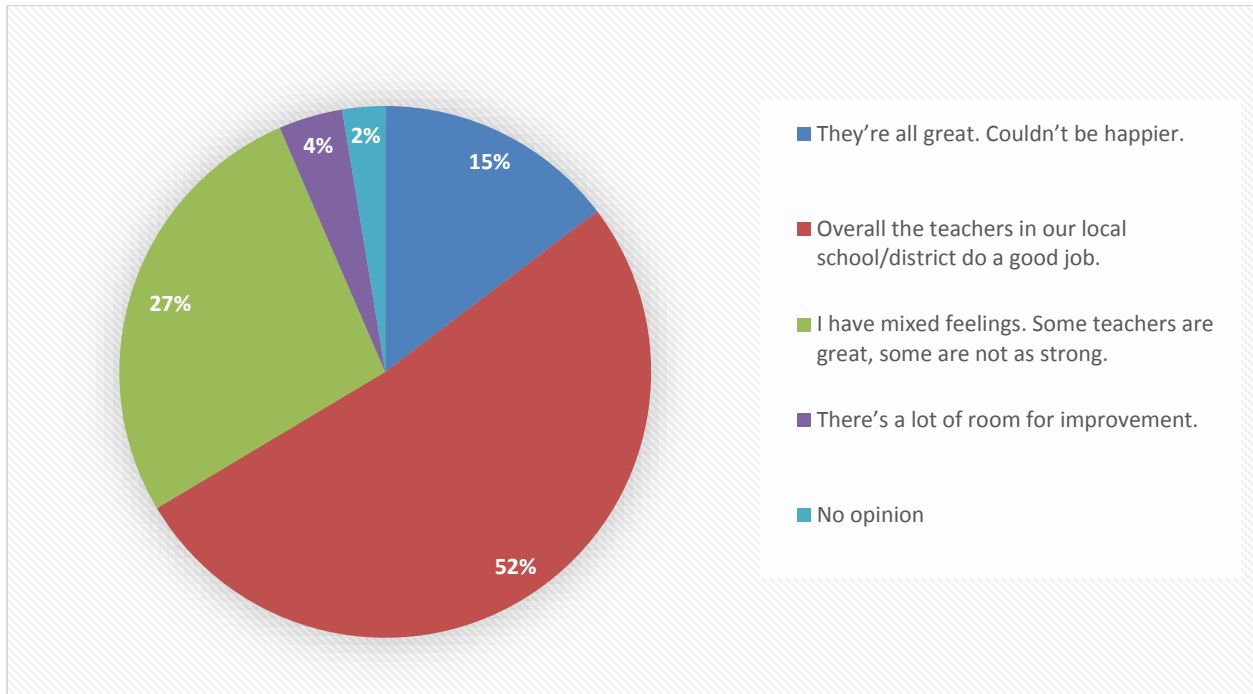*"More training in technology and STEM topics."*

"There are students in Ohio - particularly in the southern counties that barely have access to a meal and decent health care, let alone the resources for extracurricular activities. Children who are healthy (physically and mentally) and not hungry can then learn."

"Funding for professional development and consistency among schools across the state."

Question 19

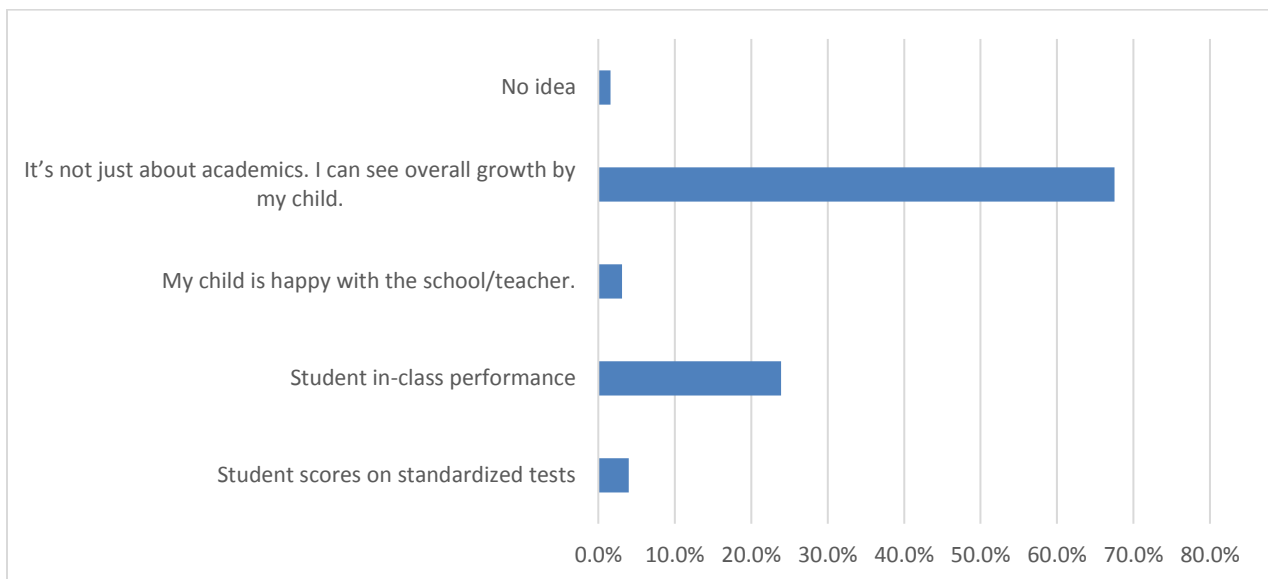**How do you feel about the job teachers are doing in your school or district?**

- They're all great. Couldn't be happier. — 15%
- Overall the teachers in our local school/district do a good job. — 52%
- I have mixed feelings. Some teachers are great, some are not as strong. — 27%
- There's a lot of room for improvement. — 4%
- No opinion — 2%

Question 20

How do you evaluate the quality or effectiveness of a teacher?

Bar chart categories:
- No idea
- It's not just about academics. I can see overall growth by my child.
- My child is happy with the school/teacher.
- Student in-class performance
- Student scores on standardized tests

Axis: 0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0% 40.0% 50.0% 60.0% 70.0% 80.0%

Question 21

If you are a school or district employee, what changes would you recommend to the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES)?

Responses to this question included two major themes: eliminate use of student performance or eliminate OTES entirely.

Representative comments include:
"I am not sure about this, but I feel that using student scores to evaluate a teacher is unfair. I know that it's a good measure, but I feel that some kids will thrive no matter what and others will fail, no matter what. I suppose that an overall picture of some sort should be used...though I do not have an answer."

"I would NOT tie teacher evaluations to student scores on state test."

"Get rid of it. Teachers are making a big deal about the tests because they are afraid of OTES. Stop evaluating them based on student scores. Do what was originally intended with this program - make it a continuous improvement program through which there is no harm to teachers. Let hiring and firing be a local decision and provide some guidelines to help districts figure out how to do that fairly."

Question 22

How can Ohio ensure equitable access to effective teachers for all students?

Responses to this question focus on three areas: better teacher preparation programs that "weed out" less effective teachers, incentives for educators teaching in struggling schools and improved teacher professional development opportunities.

Representative comments include:
"Teacher college prep programs need to include more actual work experience and less time learning from someone who cannot teach-professors. These people have not been in a classroom for years. Teachers should be taught by other recognized teachers and people making strides in education."

"Start with your colleges of education! We are not counseling out our ineffective pre-service candidates."

"Higher education has to prepare teachers better!!"

"Get rid of tenure, weed out ineffective teachers, attitude of teachers is directly related to attitude of administration & how well they listen to & support teachers."

"Give pay incentives for teachers teaching in poor-performing classes or districts."

"First, anyone without a valid teaching license should not be teaching in the classroom and this includes working as a substitute. Second, the state should support districts with high poverty rates in recruiting, hiring and offering stipends to teachers willing to work in the neediest schools."

"Teachers need additional supports to help them. Teachers should not be treated as an island. They are as good as the school system that supports them. Teachers should be provided with targeted professional development and in-house consultation pinpointed to their individual goals. This consultation could come from a mentor or a specialist, such as a school psych, SLP, or principal/curriculum professional. Teachers need high quality, ongoing PD, from outsiders of the school and insiders that know what is going on in the particular school system. I like the RE mentor system."

Question 23

When you think about your school or district, what challenges do your most vulnerable students face?

Most frequently cited responses included poverty, homelessness, hunger, addiction, unstable homes, lack of foster homes resulting in increased mobility, bullying and mental health issues.

Representative comments include:
"Children in foster care moved from district to district. NOT ENOUGH SURROGATE PARENTS. Any court that puts a child into children services custody or in a relative or other placement should be made to assign a surrogate parent to the child or identify the person already in the child's life that can be their special education advocate. Many, many children have unidentified behavior related disabilities. "

"They face unstable home lives, not just homelessness or foster care placements. Some are hungry, some live with addict parents, some have multiple people living/coming in and out of their home."

"Impossible home environments."

"Poverty and lack of resources. Most basic needs are not being met. Hard to self-actualize if one is starving and on the run. "

"High rates of poverty--lack of proper food, shelter, & medical care. Even adequate transportation."

"Poverty and violence in their homes make it difficult for them to focus on school."

"Adequate safety in their homes/neighborhoods, food."

"Due to mental health issues and poverty, our kids need to learn resiliency and coping skills so they can better focus on their academics."

"Middle school students face a lot of bullying. Parents and students are not always prepared for this and the students are not always strong enough to stand up for themselves. The students get distracted and depressed, and then their learning suffers."

Question 24

Are there certain types of services you would like to see offered through your local school or district to support these vulnerable students?

Services cited most frequently included more special education services and personnel, mental health services, access to food and affordable housing services, tutoring, parent education programs, career exploration and before- and after-school programs.

Representative comments include:
"Intervention specialists for each grade level. Additional funding to explore newly developed, but proven methods to reach vulnerable students."

"More special education personnel, more support, encourage co-teaching. Lower special education workloads. Work with the community and the families."

"Mental Health Services would really help this population of students. Maybe having a social worker in the school to meet the needs of students. Having older students be mentors to the vulnerable students could really benefit both groups."

"Mental health services & counseling. In home visits if necessary. Work with social workers to make sure every student has a safe home."

"Continue to provide state funding for counselors and social workers to help the families and students. Teachers should not have to play the role of these mental health professionals."

"Collaboration with community resources that provide food and housing to students and families in need."

"Food weekend backpacks for low income students that receive free lunches, child advocates that can work with school and home of at risk kids."

"Yes. Develop programs to offer wraparound services like on-site health care check-ups, dental care, adult educational opportunities and job placement, and perhaps a food bank."

"Career exposure and activities starting in kindergarten. Some children need to experience why reading, math, science, etc. are important and how they are useful in daily life."

"Affordable housing, wrap around supports that assist both the student and their parent/guardian, more intentional pathways to technical careers and post-secondary education."

"More early learning opportunities and parent education classes."

"More after school opportunities for advancement, clubs and experiences with bussing available so they can participate. I would also include healthy snacks for these students."

"More after and before school programming focusing on academics."

"After school and before school tutoring, in school study hall academic support, perhaps with higher functioning students/honor roll or gifted students doing some of the tutoring and getting community service credit.""

"I would like to see more after school mentoring and leadership programs for students."

Question 25

Do you have any other thoughts or comments you would like to share?

Responses to this question reinforced many of the same concerns raised elsewhere in the survey. Recommendations included:

- Reduce emphasis on testing;
- Slow the rate of change and provide stability for the education system;
- Increase school funding;
- Maintain existing academic content standards;
- Improve parental and community engagement;
- Expand services for gifted students;
- Support for early childhood education; and
- Expand access to arts education.