

To: Interested Parties

From: GBA Strategies

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New Poll Results on Colorado Charter Schools

Introduction

With the number of charter schools rapidly increasing across the country, a new survey shows that Colorado voters embrace proposals to reform the way charter schools are authorized and managed. The public overwhelmingly supports initiatives to prevent fraud, strengthen charter school accountability and transparency, improve teacher training and qualifications, serve high-need students and ensure that neighborhood public schools are not adversely affected.

The poll also shows strong support for the concept of Community Schools, which would serve as community hubs integrating high-quality curriculum with after-school and summer enrichment programs.

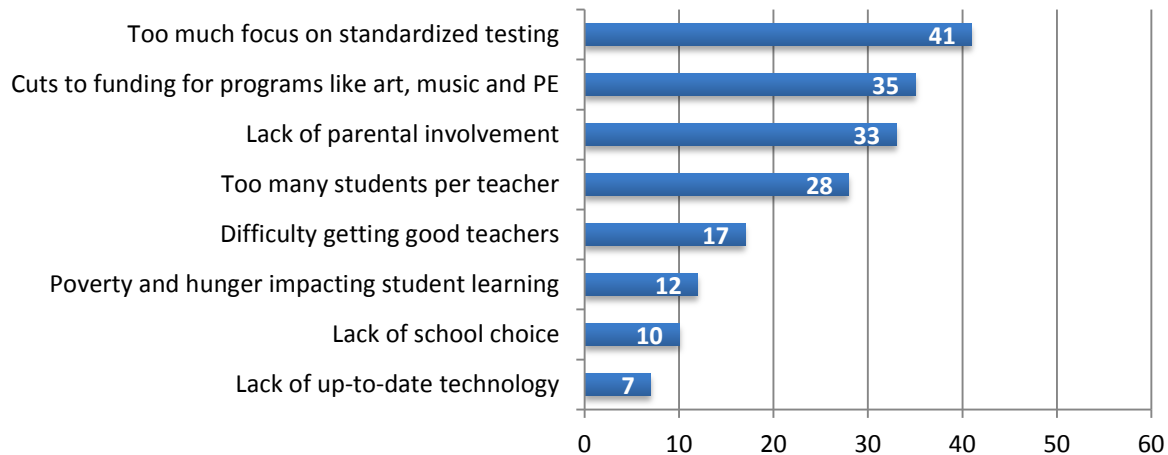
The following are key findings from a statewide poll in Colorado of 500 registered voters, which was conducted January 10th – 13th, 2016:

Key Findings

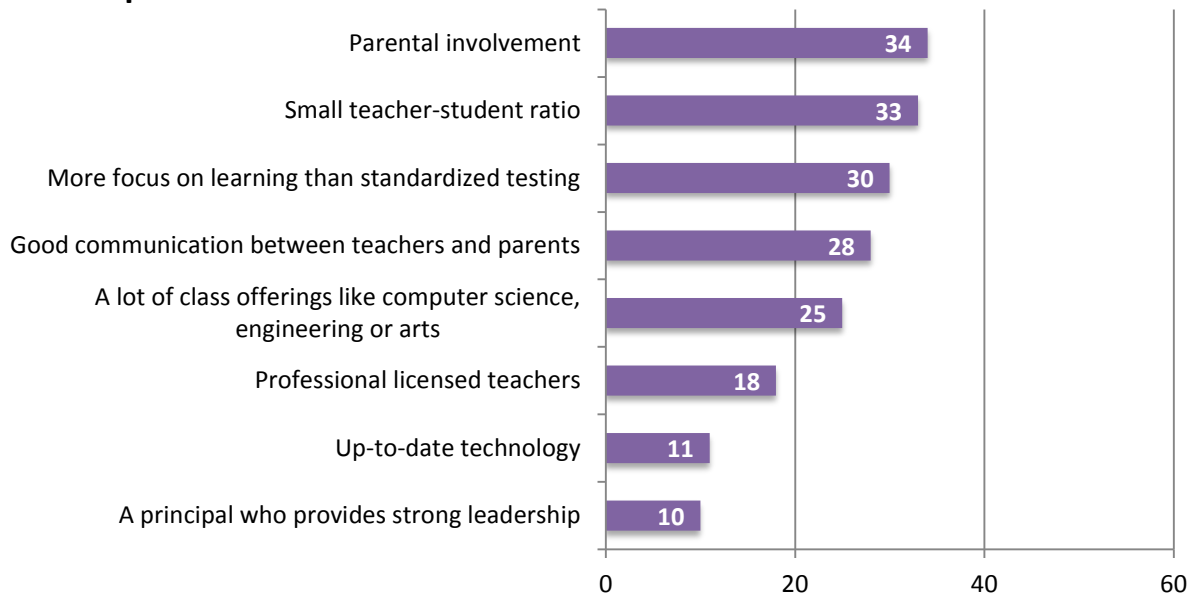
- **Voters offer public schools and public school teachers very high ratings.** Sixty-nine percent of voters rate the quality of education at public schools in their neighborhood excellent or good, while just 26 percent rate them fair or poor. Voters are more likely to say public schools in their neighborhood are getting better (29 percent) than getting worse (14 percent), while a 47 percent plurality are not seeing much change either way. By nearly 7:1, voters are more likely to have favorable than unfavorable views of public school teachers (67 percent favorable – 12 percent unfavorable).
- **School Concerns: the over-reliance on standardized testing, cuts to programs like music, arts and PE and lack of parental involvement and are top concerns, but lack of school choice does not register as a top concern.** Voters focus on over-reliance on standardized tests, cuts to school funding, lack of parental involvement, and class size as the biggest problems facing K-through-12 education.

- Making a Good School:** Parental involvement and smaller classrooms are the most important to creating a great K-through-12 school. More focus on learning than standardized testing, good communication between teachers and parents, and a wide range of class offerings are also important.

Biggest Concerns in K-12 Schools in Community



Most Important for K-12 Schools



- Voters overwhelmingly favor charter school reform proposals.** Large majorities of voters back proposals to strengthen transparency (disclose outside funding and to disclose they are exempt from certain laws), teacher training and qualifications, implement anti-fraud measures, ensure high-need students are served and making sure neighborhood public schools are not adversely affected.

Top Charter School Reform Proposals	Total Support %
Transparency & Accountability	
Require state officials to conduct regular audits of charter schools' finances to detect fraud, waste or abuse of public funds	88
Require charter schools to publicly disclose that they are exempt from some state or school district laws including the law requiring public school teachers to be licensed to teach.	76
Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to disclose outside funding including gifts, grants, and donations.	74
Protect Neighborhood Schools	
Ensure that neighborhood public schools do not lose funding when new charter schools open in their area	72
Before any new charter school is approved, conduct an analysis of the impact the school will have on neighborhood public schools	69
Protect Taxpayer funds	
Require charter schools to return taxpayer money to the school district for any student that leaves the charter school to return to a neighborhood public school during the school year	76
Stop the creation of new charter schools if charter school authorizers have not shown the ability to prevent fraud and mismanagement	74
Prohibit charter school board members and their immediate families from financially benefiting from their schools.	67
Require new charter schools to be operated by non-profit organizations , not for-profit companies	63
High quality education for every child	
Require all teachers who work in taxpayer funded schools, including neighborhood public schools and charter schools, to meet the same training and qualification requirements	83
Require charter schools to use enrollment and registration policies that encourage special needs students to enroll at the same level as neighborhood public schools.	75
Require charter schools to serve high-need students such as special education students, at the same level as neighborhood public schools.	73

Many charter school reform proposals receive majority support across party lines and by supporters and opponents of charter schools.

Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to disclose outside funding including gifts, grants, and donations		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	79	13
Independents	76	20
Republicans	71	25
People Who Favor Charter Schools	63	32
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	91	4
Require state officials to conduct regular audits of charter schools' finances to detect fraud, waste or abuse of public funds		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	92	8
Independents	87	11
Republicans	84	10
People Who Favor Charter Schools	85	13
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	94	6
Require charter schools to publicly disclose that they are exempt from some state or school district laws including the law requiring public school teachers to be licensed to teach.		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	85	11
Independents	77	17
Republicans	64	30
People Who Favor Charter Schools	72	23
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	85	9
Ensure that neighborhood public schools do not lose funding when new charter schools open in their area		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	87	10
Independents	72	21
Republicans	58	37
People Who Favor Charter Schools	57	37
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	97	3
Before any new charter school is approved, conduct an analysis of the impact the school will have on neighborhood public schools		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	86	13
Independents	65	27
Republicans	58	39
People Who Favor Charter Schools	60	39
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	78	16
Require charter schools to return taxpayer money to the school district for any student that leaves the charter school to return to a neighborhood public school during the school year		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	86	10
Independents	74	19
Republicans	71	27
People Who Favor Charter Schools	67	28
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	92	5
Stop the creation of new charter schools if charter school authorizers have not shown the ability to prevent fraud and mismanagement		

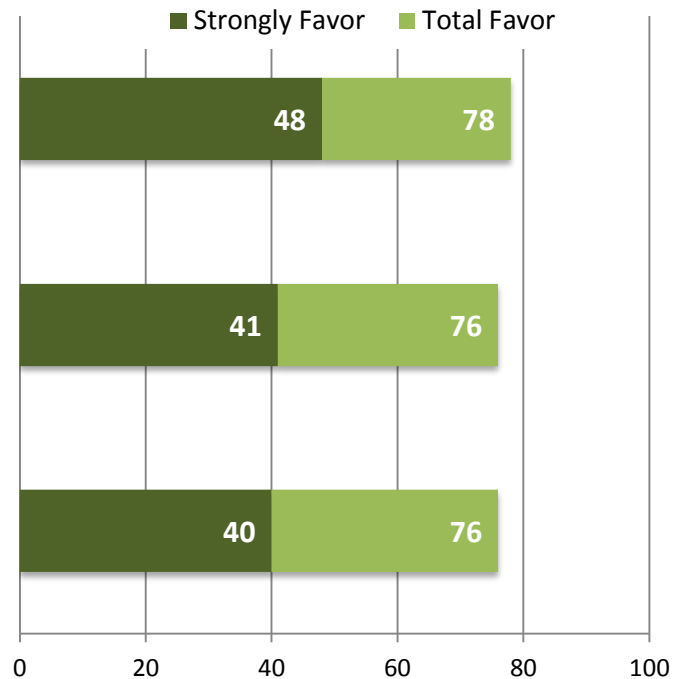
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	84	12
Independents	75	19
Republicans	62	32
People Who Favor Charter Schools	67	27
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	89	9
Require new charter schools to be operated by non-profit organizations, not for-profit companies		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	80	16
Independents	60	31
Republicans	48	38
People Who Favor Charter Schools	60	36
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	72	18
Prohibit charter school board members and their immediate families from financially benefiting from their schools.		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	74	21
Independents	66	26
Republicans	61	34
People Who Favor Charter Schools	64	31
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	83	14
Require all teachers who work in taxpayer funded schools, including neighborhood public schools and charter schools, to meet the same training and qualification requirements		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	90	9
Independents	82	17
Republicans	79	19
People Who Favor Charter Schools	80	20
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	93	7
Require charter schools to serve high-need students such as special education students, at the same level as neighborhood public schools.		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	84	14
Independents	70	26
Republicans	63	30
People Who Favor Charter Schools	60	37
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	90	10
Require charter schools to use enrollment and registration policies that encourage special needs students to enroll at the same level as neighborhood public schools.		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	85	11
Independents	74	19
Republicans	66	25
People Who Favor Charter Schools	68	25
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	95	3

- **Community School concept receives strongest support from voters.** Voters like the concept of community schools that would integrate a dynamic curriculum with after school and summer enrichment programs. Other ideas for innovating public school options, such as specialty curricula, also generate significant support.

Under this proposal, schools would serve as community hubs, providing health and social services, youth and community development, parental education, as well as academics for students. Community schools integrate high-quality dynamic curriculum with after-school and summer enrichment programs, ensuring that every student and their family gets the opportunity to succeed no matter what zip code they live in

Under this proposal, school districts would receive grants to establish and operate new schools that offer a special curriculum or program capable of attracting students from different backgrounds. Examples include schools that emphasize specific subjects such as math, science, technology, or arts. Other schools may emphasize a certain instructional approach such as bilingual schools

Under this proposal, instead of automatically attending a school in the neighborhood where a family lives, students can apply to various schools in their city or county. Students rank the schools that they want to attend, and they are assigned to a school based on different criteria, including where they live, if they have a sibling at the school, if their neighborhood school is failing, or the results of a lottery



Methodology

GBA Strategies conducted a statewide poll of 500 registered voters in Colorado January 10th – 13th, 2016 on behalf of In the Public Interest and the Center for Popular Democracy. The sample is subject to a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

The sample was pulled from a national voter file and phone numbers were selected randomly, providing a statistically representative sample. The poll was administered by professional interviewers via telephone with respondents being reached on cell phones and landlines.