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**California voters attach highest importance to creating a safe and positive environment when evaluating public schools**  
*Place much less importance on achieving higher standardized test scores*

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Registered voters in California endorse the recent change in state education policy, which puts less emphasis on relying mainly on standardized test scores, and attach greater importance to creating a safe and positive school environment when evaluating the performance of the public schools.

This is one of the main findings from a *Berkeley IGS/EdSource Poll* about K-12 schools. Results from the survey are being presented today, Thursday, October 5, as part of EdSource's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary symposium at the Oakland Convention Center.

The poll also demonstrates strong voter support for school districts to devote more funds and resources to address the needs of the state's most vulnerable students, a central theme of this year's symposium.

"California voters care about making sure that the state's most vulnerable students are given a chance to succeed," said EdSource Executive Director Louis Freedberg. "The future of the state depends on ensuring that all children reach their full potential."

The statewide survey was administered in English and Spanish among 1,200 registered voters, including an oversampling of parents with school-age children in late August and early September 2017.

The following are some of the principle findings from the survey:

- By a two-to-one margin (57% to 29%) California voters endorse the recent change in state education policy that puts less emphasis on standardized test scores when evaluating the performance of the public schools.

- When evaluating the public schools, three in four voters (74%) attach high importance to creating a safe and positive school environment. This is more than double the proportion (33%) that rates achieving higher scores on standardized tests as highly important in this setting. Other factors that majorities of voters consider to be of high importance when evaluating schools are increasing graduation rates (65%), preparing students to enter the workforce (62%), and preparing students for college (61%).
- Sixty percent of the state’s voters and 67% of the parents of school-age children are very or somewhat concerned about the federal government’s stricter immigration enforcement policies and the impact they are having on students whose families are threatened with deportation. By a 55% to 32% margin, voters favor public schools devoting more resources -- such as counseling, trauma and mental health referrals, assistance in getting health care, and translation or legal services -- to support these students. Parents are even more likely to endorse this policy, with 64% in favor and 23% opposed.
- Greater than six in ten voters consider it “very important” for the schools to provide greater funding to address the needs of homeless students (64%) and special education students (63%), and half say this in relation to foster children (50%) and English-learners (49%). Another 27% to 36% consider it “somewhat important” to provide more funds to each of these vulnerable student populations.
- There is broad agreement among voters that when giving school districts greater decision-making powers over how they spend state funds, the state should require them to provide more detailed reporting of how they spend these funds, especially with regard to the additional funds that some districts receive to improve the academic performance of the state’s low-income students and English-learners. Three in four voters (75%) agree with this approach, while just 11% disagree.
- About four in ten voters (38%) and parents of school-age children (42%) feel that bullying, school fights and other forms of intimidation or violence are a “very serious” problem for the students attending the public schools in their community, and another four in ten consider this a “somewhat serious” problem. Similar proportions also feel that online harassment through social media is a serious problem for the students in their local schools.
- Seven in ten voters (69%) believe low-income families don’t have much choice over which schools their kids can attend. This is leading many voters (55%) to support the idea of providing government subsidies, such as tax credits or vouchers, to low-income families to enable them to send their kids to a private or religious school if they don’t like their public school. Support for offering low-income families subsidies to send their kids to a private or religious school is bipartisan, and increases to 69% among the parents of school-age children.

- Opinions are much more divided, and become more partisan, when voters are asked whether government subsidies, such as tax credits or vouchers, should be offered to all parents, regardless of income. Statewide, 46% favor this policy, but 43% are opposed. While Republicans are highly supportive of this idea, pluralities of Democrats and non-partisans are opposed.
- Having the schools put greater emphasis on preparing high school students who may not end up going to college to be successful in the workforce is considered “very important” by 69% of the state’s voters.
- About half of voters (48%) and the parents of school-age children (50%) also believe it is “very important” for the state to offer more financial aid to qualified students from low-income families to attend state colleges and universities.

A more detailed examination of these findings can be found at the following link:

<https://edsources.org/documents/Educating-Californias-Children-Survey-Report-2017.pdf>

## **About the Survey**

The findings in this report are based on a survey of California registered voters by the *Berkeley IGS Poll*, housed within the Jack Citrin Center for Public Opinion Research at the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at the University of California, Berkeley. All questions about K-12 schools were included in the survey on behalf of EdSource. IGS and EdSource were jointly responsible for developing each of the questions about K-12 schools included in the poll.

The survey was administered online August 27-September 5, 2017 in English and Spanish using the YouGov Internet panel. A total of 1,200 California registered voters completed the survey, including a statewide sample of 1,000 registered voters and an oversampling of 200 voters who were the parents of children under age 18. According to YouGov, results from the overall sample have an estimated margin of error of +/- 4%.

YouGov administered the survey by inviting California registered voters included in its online panel of over 1.5 million Americans to participate in the poll. Panelists are recruited using a variety of methods, including telephone-to-web and mail-to-web recruitment, partner-sponsored solicitations, web-based advertising and email campaigns, as well as through past telephone and mail surveys. Eligible voters were selected using a proprietary sampling technology frame that establishes interlocking demographic and regional targets, so that the characteristics of those polled approximate the profile of the state's overall registered voter population. After survey administration, YouGov also applied statistical weights to align the statewide voter sample and the parent oversample to their proper population proportions, and to a wide range of political, demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

### **About EdSource**

EdSource is an independent, non-profit organization established in 1977 to engage Californians on key education challenges and to highlight strategies that promote student success. EdSource's team of education reporters, the largest in the state, produce regular reports on education innovations and reforms underway in California and the nation on a range of education issues from pre-kindergarten through higher education. For more information and to sign-up to receive EdSource's daily email newsletter and weekly podcast, go to its website at [www.edsource.org](http://www.edsource.org).

### **About the Institute of Governmental Studies**

The Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) is an interdisciplinary organized research unit that pursues a vigorous program of research, education, publication and public service. A component of the University of California (UC) system's flagship Berkeley campus, it is the oldest organized research unit in the UC system and the oldest public policy research center in the state. IGS conducts periodic surveys of California public opinion on matters of politics, public policy and public issues through its *Berkeley IGS Poll*, housed within its newly established Jack Citrin Center for Public Opinion Research. A complete listing of recent poll stories issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* can be found at <https://igs.berkeley.edu/research/berkeley-igs-poll>.