

NEWS RELEASE

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New Poll Shows Ohio Parents Support Letter Grades on State Report Card System

COLUMBUS, OH – A new poll shows that parents of children in Ohio’s public K-12 schools believe that A-F letter grades are an easy to understand and appropriate way to rate districts and schools. When selecting from multiple ways to evaluate schools, more parents chose letter grades, followed closely by a 0-100 scale, as the best ways for parents to understand how well schools and districts are doing to help their students learn.

Policymakers are currently debating ways to improve Ohio’s report card for districts and schools. This is the first public poll during this debate that has been conducted to gauge the feedback of Ohio parents and the public – the intended audience for the report cards. Since the 2012-2013 school year, the state has rated school performance with letter grades, A through F. The system was adopted to help give parents and the public an easily understandable way to measure their schools’ performance compared to the previous system, which used ambiguous text descriptions.

The poll was commissioned by Ohio Excels, a nonprofit, statewide education advocacy group created by a coalition of business leaders. The organization was created just over one year ago to help improve educational outcomes for all Ohio students by focusing on early childhood, K-12 and post-secondary education experiences.

Among highlights of the survey:

- 91% of parent respondents agreed that letter grades are easy to understand.
- 87% of parent respondents believe that letter grades are appropriate for expressing the overall performance of a school or district.
- Nearly 70% of parents prefer a letter grade system or a 0-100 numerical score on the report card over text descriptions or a star rating system.
- 38% of parent respondents ranked letter grades as the best measure of performance over alternatives such as a numerical score (30%), text descriptions (24%) and star rating system (8%).

- 66% of parent respondents preferred seeing a summary of the most important measures rather than seeing all the data at once.
- Nearly all parents (95%) value a rated measure of reading proficiency on report cards.
- 91% of parents value a rated measure on report cards that addresses student success after graduation.

Over the last six months Ohio Excels has been working with education and advocacy partners to identify ways to help improve Ohio's report card system. During that period Ohio Excels realized that there were many important voices at the table, but perhaps the most critical voice – that of parents – was missing. This poll is intended to ensure that the views and opinions of Ohio's public school parents are front and center in the discussions on how to improve Ohio's report cards.

“Ohio business leaders understand the importance of maintaining a report card system that clearly, honestly and fairly evaluates schools and school districts, while giving parents and communities insight into how well their schools are helping students learn,” said Lisa Gray, president of Ohio Excels.

“We know there are changes that need to be made to certain components to make the report cards more transparent and honest depictions of how schools and districts are performing,” Gray said. “Our goal is to ensure that Ohio maintains a system that helps highlight successful schools, encourages underperforming schools to continue to improve and drives increased student performance for all Ohio students. Findings from this poll should help to inform those discussions and help direct resources and supports to the students that need it most.”

The poll was conducted for Ohio Excels by Saperstein Associates, a Columbus-based market research company with significant experience in the education industry. A total of 655 parents from across the state were surveyed through an online panel from December 30, 2019 - January 15, 2020. Results have a margin of error of +/- 4.4%.

The full poll results can be found [here](#).

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