School Funding Reform and Parent Engagement:

*Key Findings From a Statewide Survey of Public School Parents*

November 5-12, 2013

*Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates - FM3*

Public Opinion Research & Strategy

*Santa Monica • Oakland • Madison • Mexico City*
Methodology

1,003 telephone interviews with parents of public school children in California

- Interviews conducted between November 5-12, 2013
- Interviews on both landlines and cell phones
- Random sample of 601 parents statewide, plus oversamples of 202 parents with household incomes of $30,000 or below and 200 parents of children in ESL programs
- Data weighted to reflect the true demographic characteristics of public school parents in California

Margin of sampling error of +/- 4.0%

Some percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding
Context for Parental Engagement in Schools
Most parents grade their school’s overall performance as an “A” or “B.”

How would you grade the overall quality of public schools in your community – would you grade it an A, B, C, D, or F, with an “A” grade being excellent, and “F” being poor?

- **A (Excellent)**: 30%
- **B**: 42%
- **C**: 20%
- **D**: 5%
- **F (Poor)**: 2%
- **DK/NA**: 1%

- **Total A/B**: 72%
- **Total D/F**: 7%
Evaluations of school quality are generally good, but vary somewhat by household income level.

**How would you grade the overall quality of public schools in your community – would you grade it an A, B, C, D, or F, with an “A” grade being excellent, and “F” being poor?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>&lt;$30,000</th>
<th>$30,000-$50,000</th>
<th>$50,000-$100,000</th>
<th>$100,000+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (Excellent)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total A/B</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (Poor)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total D/F</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/NA</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three-quarters of parents get information from their child’s school at least weekly.

More specifically, how often does your child’s school contact you with information about what is going on there:

- Once a week: 34%
- Several times per week: 40%
- Once a month: 15%
- A few times a year: 6%
- Less often: 3%
- Never: 2%
Parents most frequently get information through their children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Information</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>DK/NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with your child</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information sent home with students*</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School newsletters</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with your child’s teacher</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emails from the school</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorded telephone calls from the school</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from a parent-teacher association</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with other parents</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line networks or e-mail newsgroups of parents</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from a community group</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text messages from the school</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Not Part of Split Sample
Use of a few information sources varies notably by income level.

*(Percent Who Responded “Frequently”)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>&lt;$30,000</th>
<th>$30,000-$50,000</th>
<th>$50,000-$100,000</th>
<th>$100,000+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with your child</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information sent home with students*</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School newsletters</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with your child’s teacher</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emails from the school</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorded telephone calls from the school</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from a parent-teacher association</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with other parents</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line networks or e-mail newsgroups of parents</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from a community group</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text messages from the school</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current Levels of Parental Engagement in Public Schools
Three-quarters of parents characterize themselves as “involved” in their child’s school.

And how involved would you say you are with activities at your children’s schools:

- Very involved: 30%
- Somewhat involved: 46%
- Not too involved: 17%
- Not at all involved: 7%
- Don’t know: 1%

Very/Somewhat Involved: 76%
Not Too/At All Involved: 24%
Parent participation is high, but typically directly related to their child’s education.

- Attending parent teacher conferences: 83% (Yes, Rewarding) 87% (Yes, Not Rewarding)
- Attending school assemblies, or sporting or performing arts events: 73% (Yes, Rewarding) 76% (Yes, Not Rewarding)
- Volunteering at school events: 58% (Yes, Rewarding) 60% (Yes, Not Rewarding)
- Accompanying your child’s class on a field trip: 55% (Yes, Rewarding) 56% (Yes, Not Rewarding)
- Attending fundraising events, like walkathons or silent auctions: 52% (Yes, Rewarding) 56% (Yes, Not Rewarding)
- Volunteering in your child's class: 52% (Yes, Rewarding) 53% (Yes, Not Rewarding)
- Participating in a parent group such as the PTA: 48% (Yes, Rewarding) 51% (Yes, Not Rewarding)
- Attending school board meetings: 23% (Yes, Rewarding) 7% (Yes, Not Rewarding) 30% (No)
- Participating in a school site council or other school or district committees: 21% (Yes, Rewarding) 24% (Yes, Not Rewarding)
Work schedules and lack of time are the primary obstacles to participation for most parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacle</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Minor</th>
<th>Not an Obstacle</th>
<th>DK/NA</th>
<th>Total Obstacle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work hours make it difficult to attend</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having enough time</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having child care for your children</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is not interested in what you have to offer</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack transportation or other difficulties getting to the school</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td></td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You don’t feel welcome at the school</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td></td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having translation services at events</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. I am going to read you a list of factors that some people say prevent them from becoming more involved at their child’s school. Please tell me whether you consider each to be a major obstacle, minor obstacle, or not an obstacle to spending more time at your child’s school:
A substantial number of lower-income parents says only a small group is offered the chance to participate in decision-making.

“Only a small group of parents are offered the opportunity to participate in school decision-making, while most are excluded.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&lt;$30,000</th>
<th>$30,000-$50,000</th>
<th>$50,000-$100,000</th>
<th>$100,000+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Agree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Disagree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DK/NA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Local Control Funding Formula and Opportunities for Further Engagement
Only one in four have heard anything about the LCFF.

As you may know California recently changed the way it funds public schools, through something called the Local Control Funding Formula. How much have you heard about this new way of funding schools:

**Total Aware: 24%**

- Nothing at all: 57%
- A great deal: 9%
- Just a little: 15%
- Not very much: 19%
- Don’t know: 1%
The local control funding formula will be phased in over eight years, and changes the ways that California public schools are funded:

• It increases funding for nearly all districts, with extra funds for low-income and English language learners;
• It measures school success in a way that goes beyond just test scores; and
• It gives local school districts more options on how to best use funds.

The new funding formula requires active parent involvement in decision-making on how funds will be spent.
More than three-quarters of parents support the LCFF.

Having heard this, would you say you generally support or oppose the Local Control Funding Formula?

- Strongly support: 45%
- Somewhat support: 32%
- Somewhat oppose: 5%
- Strongly oppose: 5%
- DK/NA: 14%

Total Support: 77%

Total Oppose: 10%
“Given the opportunities that the new law provides for parents to get involved in school funding decisions, do you think you would be willing to spend some time at your child’s school helping to guide decisions about how local funds will be used?”

Three-quarters of parents would be willing to give time to participate in LCFF decisions.

“And about how many hours per week would you be willing to spend at the school helping guide decisions about how funds will be used?”

- Yes: 75%
- No: 18%
- Don’t know: 7%

- 1 hour or less: 33%
- 2-3 hours: 48%
- 4-5 hours: 10%
- 6-7 hours: 2%
- 8-9 hours: 0%
- 10 or more hours per week: 2%
- Don’t know: 5%
Schools can enhance participation in LCFF through better communications and other means.

- Giving lots of advance notice of when meetings will be held: 60% Much More Lkly, 23% Smwt. More Lkly, 18% No Diff./Less Lkly./DK/NA. Total More Likely: 83%
- Making it clear that parents will have a meaningful voice in the decision-making process: 56% Much More Lkly, 23% Smwt. More Lkly, 20% No Diff./Less Lkly./DK/NA. Total More Likely: 80%
- More frequently communicating with parents about the new funding formula: 50% Much More Lkly, 26% Smwt. More Lkly, 24% No Diff./Less Lkly./DK/NA. Total More Likely: 76%
- Holding meetings in the evenings or on weekends: 52% Much More Lkly, 22% Smwt. More Lkly, 25% No Diff./Less Lkly./DK/NA. Total More Likely: 74%
- Providing classes or training for parents on how they can participate: 38% Much More Lkly, 27% Smwt. More Lkly, 35% No Diff./Less Lkly./DK/NA. Total More Likely: 64%
- Providing child care at meetings: 29% Much More Lkly, 16% Smwt. More Lkly, 55% No Diff./Less Lkly./DK/NA. Total More Likely: 45%
- Offering more communications in languages other than English: 24% Much More Lkly, 9% Smwt. More Lkly, 67% No Diff./Less Lkly./DK/NA. Total More Likely: 33%
- Providing transportation to meetings: 17% Much More Lkly, 10% Smwt. More Lkly, 73% No Diff./Less Lkly./DK/NA. Total More Likely: 27%

20. Here are some ways that schools might encourage parents to get involved in the decision-making process around this new way of funding schools. Please tell me whether you would be more likely to get involved if your school took that step. If it would make no difference to you, you can tell me that too.
For more information:

http://edsource.org/today/parent-engagement

or contact:

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