

MEMORANDUM

TO: TN SCORE
FROM: ROBERT BLIZZARD & JAMIE WADOVICK GENTLE
DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 2021
RE: TENNESSEE POLL DATA



The purpose of this memo is to review some of the key findings from our recent Tennessee statewide survey that was conducted on behalf of TN SCORE. This survey of 500 registered voters and 300 public school parents was conducted between September 1st-5th, 2021, and has a margin of error of +/- 4.38% for registered voters and +/- 5.66% for public school parents.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Nearly half of Tennessee parents believe their own children are starting the school year academically behind, and there's even stronger concern about all Tennessee students.**
Nearly half of parents (45%) say their children are starting the school year academically behind. This is especially true among suburban parents (53%) and among those with children in grades 9-12 (51%) who say their children are starting behind this year.

When parents are asked about all Tennessee school children, there is even more concern. Fully 79% of parents believe children across Tennessee are beginning the school year academically behind.

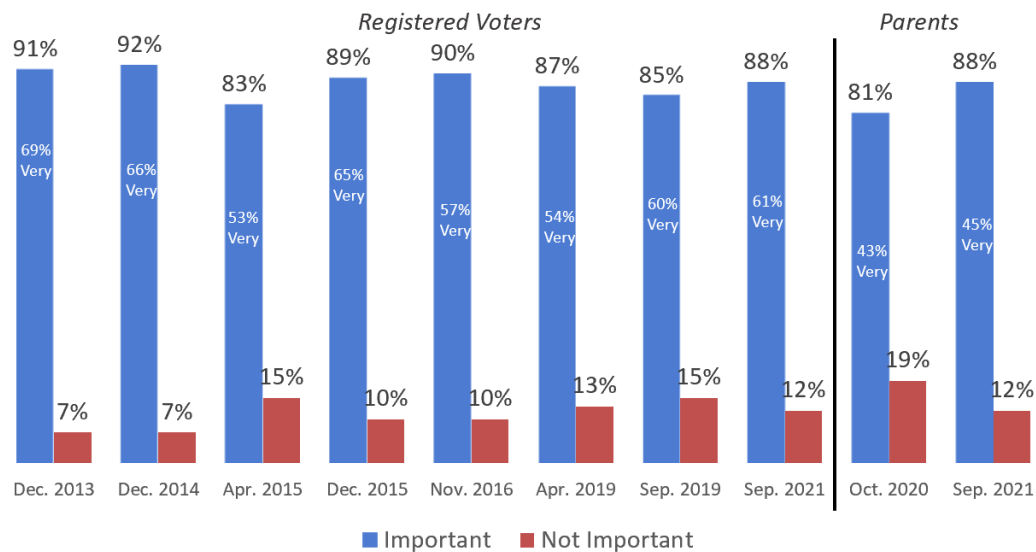
- **Still, most parents believe the current school year is going well so far.**
More than three-quarters (77%) of parents believe the current school year is going well so far, while just 22% think it is not going well. Further, most parents (69%) say their children feel safe back in-person at school.
- **Most believe the purpose of post-secondary education is to "prepare students for a career" yet many do not think that high school graduates are prepared for college or a job post-high school.**
Most believe the purpose of college or post-secondary education is to "prepare students for a career." Still, fully 59% of both voters and parents do not believe Tennessee's high school graduates are properly prepared for college and 62% of both voters and parents do not think high school students are properly prepared to enter the workforce upon graduation.

As a result, a plurality of parents believes the most important priority for the Governor and State Legislature to fund is "improved workforce readiness for high school students."

By a 73%-19% margin among voters and a 79%-19% margin among parents, there's strong support for a system that connects "student data like K-12 course enrollment with college data and employment data to better understand how students make progress through their education and into the workforce." And, fully 91% of parents say it would be "helpful to have more information on the Tennessee job market to support their child as they make post-high school decisions."

- **As we have seen previously, voters and parents place high importance on testing students — particularly to evaluate how well teachers and schools are performing.**
By an 88%-12% margin, voters believe it is important "to test students from grades 3-11 each year to know if they are meeting the state's education standards in reading, writing, and math."

Tennessee parents agree with this statement by the same 88%-12% margin:



A strong majority (58%) of voters support the state’s policy that *“uses the year-to-year academic growth of students in part to measure a teacher’s achievement and use it as part of the teacher’s annual review.”*

Moreover, nearly three-quarters of both voters (74%) and parents (73%) support the state’s policy that *“uses year-to-year student academic growth for school accountability so that parents and communities know how well schools are performing.”*

- ***Tennesseans across the board strongly believe public schools do NOT receive enough funding***
Across nearly every demographic and geographic group, Tennesseans agree public schools do not receive enough funding (65%). Once they learn how school funding breaks down by jurisdiction, most voters (62%) and parents (52%) agree the state’s share of funding should increase.