



Perceptions of K-12 Education in the State of Indiana

All Schools

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INDIANA
DEPARTMENT of
EDUCATION

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Introduction

In the summer of 2022, the Indiana Department of Education partnered with Gallup to conduct a statewide survey to quantify parents' opinions and attitudes toward the K-12 education system.

Gallup conducted this study by mail using randomly selected addresses to survey 3,042 Indiana parents of school-aged children from August to September 2022. This address-based sampling methodology resulted in a representative sample of Indiana households with school-aged children that provides a statistically accurate picture of the opinions of Indiana parents. Parents provided information about their child's experiences at school as well as their own attitudes and opinions about the school.

In the following report, findings reveal parents' perceptions of Indiana schools' academic quality, school-to-family communication, and other topics such as their child's academic progress and postgraduation plans. The report also shares key indicators of Indiana's progress on statewide initiatives, such as the Indiana 21st Century Scholars program and the Indiana College Core. The information collected from this survey will help to inform the department's ongoing work in order to continue making improvements for Indiana students.

Key Findings

<p>1 The vast majority (88%) of Indiana parents are satisfied with the quality of their child’s school. Satisfaction is even higher among those whose child is enrolled in elementary school (90%) and those in rural and small-town areas throughout the state (96%).</p>	<p>2 Most parents know and approve of the subjects and topics taught at their child’s school. Only 7% of parents say they don’t approve of the subjects and topics taught to their child. Of those who do not approve, about two-thirds acknowledge that they do not know, or are unsure, what subjects and topics are being taught.</p>
<p>3 Concerns about child safety are highest among lower-income parents in micro- and metropolitan areas. About half (47%) of lower-income parents in micro- and metropolitan areas say they worry about their child’s safety at school, compared with 33% of all parents.</p>	<p>4 Parents see post-high school education as available in Indiana but not affordable. Most (72%) parents say education after high school is available in the state to those who need it. However, only 27% say that post-high school education is affordable.</p>
<p>5 Awareness of the Indiana 21st Century Scholars program¹ is inconsistent across parents of students who might benefit the most.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• About six in 10 parents of middle school students (64%) are aware of the Indiana 21st Century Scholars program. Students become eligible for the Scholars program in the seventh and eighth grades. This is similar to the portion (58%) of parents of elementary school students who are aware of the program.• Awareness of the Indiana 21st Century Scholars program is not related to perception of higher education affordability. Even among parents who are aware of the Indiana 21st Century Scholars program, only 27% agree that education beyond high school is affordable to anyone in the state of Indiana who needs it, suggesting concerns about affordability are ingrained and significant.	
<p>6 Just under one-third of parents of seniors say their child is not prepared for life after high school. Among parents of freshmen, roughly half say their child is not prepared for life after high school.</p>	<p>7 According to parents, seven in 10 high school students plan to pursue further education or training after high school. This includes the six in 10 who plan to attend four-year university or two-year college and the one in 10 who say they will pursue training to learn a skill or trade.</p>

¹ The Indiana 21st Century Scholars program provides up to four years of undergraduate tuition to students at participating colleges or universities in Indiana and is available to seventh- and eighth-grade students who meet income eligibility requirements.

Detailed Findings

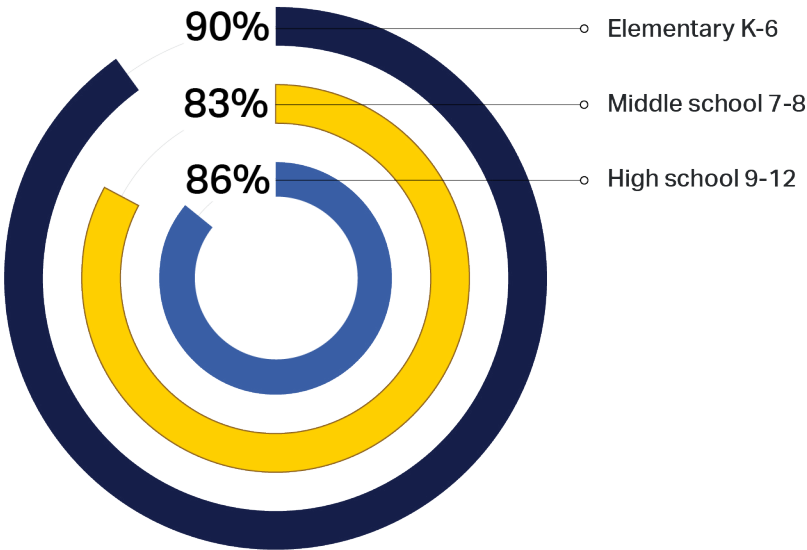
The following sections share detailed findings on parents’ satisfaction, opinions on school climate and culture, school-to-family communication and academic progress. For the purposes of this report, “parent” refers to an adult in a household with a child in any Indiana K-12 school, including schools that are public, private, home schools or other types of schools. Findings from parents with children in all school types have been grouped together to holistically characterize the perspectives of all Indiana parents.²

Majority of Parents Are Satisfied With the Quality of Their Child’s School

Most parents (88%) are satisfied with the quality of education provided by their child’s school. Satisfaction with education quality differs by grade level and geography.³ Parents of elementary and high school students are the most satisfied with the quality of their child’s school, followed by parents of middle school students (Figure 1). Parents living in rural or small-town areas throughout the state are more satisfied than their micro- and metropolitan peers (96% vs. 87%). Parents in households with earnings that are average or above average are more satisfied than parents in households earning less than the average (90% vs. 84%). Satisfaction does not differ significantly between parents of different racial backgrounds.

FIGURE 1
Please rate your level of satisfaction with the quality of education provided by your child’s school.

Portion of parents who say they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied”



² While findings are likely to be different between and within school types, those differences were not the focus of this report.
³ Population density is defined by the Primary Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) Code, which incorporates measures of population density, urbanization and daily commuting. Ten codes have been collapsed into three categories for this report: a) rural and small town, b) micropolitan and c) metropolitan.

Parents Know and Approve of the Content Taught at Their Child’s School

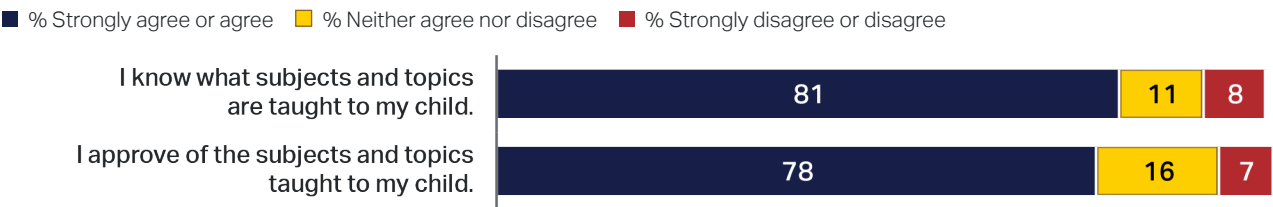
Indiana parents report high levels of familiarity with the subjects and topics taught at their child’s school.

Eighty-one percent of parents say they know what subjects and topics are being taught to their child, and 78% approve of those subjects and topics (Figure 2). Parents of different backgrounds (race, student’s grade or the geographic area in which they live) have a similar opinion on both questions, but there is a difference in perception by income. Parents in households with below-average income are less likely to approve of the subjects and topics taught to their child (74%) compared with parents in households with average income or more (81%). However, there is no significant difference based on income in whether parents know what subjects and topics are taught to their child.



FIGURE 2

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1 percentage point.

For those who disapprove of the subjects and topics taught to their child (7% of parents), it is unclear whether their opinion is based on the actual subjects and topics in their child’s classroom. Among parents who disapprove of the subjects and topics taught to their child, about two-thirds indicate they don’t know or are unsure of what subjects and topics are taught to their child.

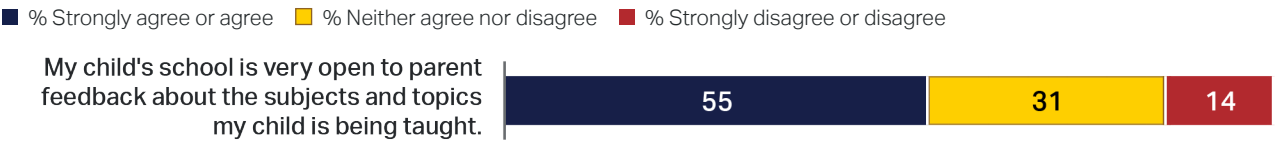
While most parents in Indiana know and approve of the content taught, they are less likely to agree that their child’s school is very open to parent feedback about those subjects and topics.

Just over half of parents agree their child’s school is very open to feedback (Figure 3). However, 31% of parents say they neither agree nor disagree. Given the relatively large proportion of parents who report a neutral opinion on openness to parent feedback, it is possible that they have not attempted to give the school feedback and therefore have little on which to base their opinion.



Very few Indiana parents (2%) indicate they are both knowledgeable of the subjects and topics being taught and disapprove of those subjects and topics. This “2% group” is not statistically different from the rest of parents in terms of race, population density, income, education or whether the household has internet. However, this group is more likely to say that a college education today is “not too important” or “completely unimportant” (49%) than the rest of parents (20%).

FIGURE 3
Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement.



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1 percentage point.

Among those who do *not* believe their child’s school is very open to parent feedback (14% of all parents), only around 31% also say they disapprove of the subjects and topics taught. For parents who are not critical of the curriculum, it is unclear what other factors might contribute to their perception that their child’s school is *not* very open to parent feedback about the subjects and topics their child is being taught.



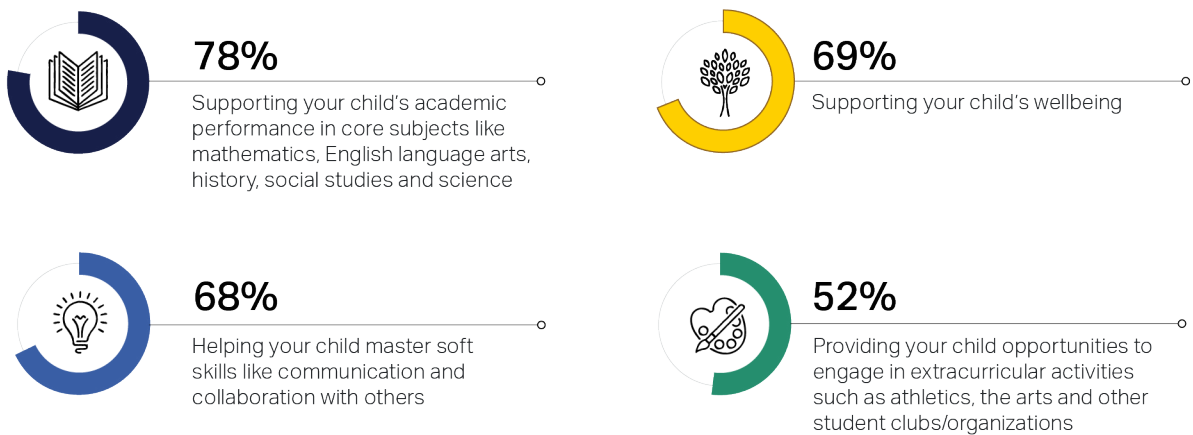
Academic Performance Ranks Highest Among Parents' Priorities

Among four possible priorities for their child's school to focus on, academic performance is most likely to be rated as "very important" by Indiana parents, while providing opportunities for extracurricular activities ranks lowest (Figure 4). Although it ranks last with 52% saying it is "very important," 88% of parents still say that supporting opportunities for extracurricular activities is at least somewhat important, indicating that parents generally see all topics as important for their child's school to focus on.


FIGURE 4

How important, if at all, is it to you that PK-12 schools focus on the following?

Portion of parents who say "very important"



School Climate and Culture Is Generally Viewed Positively

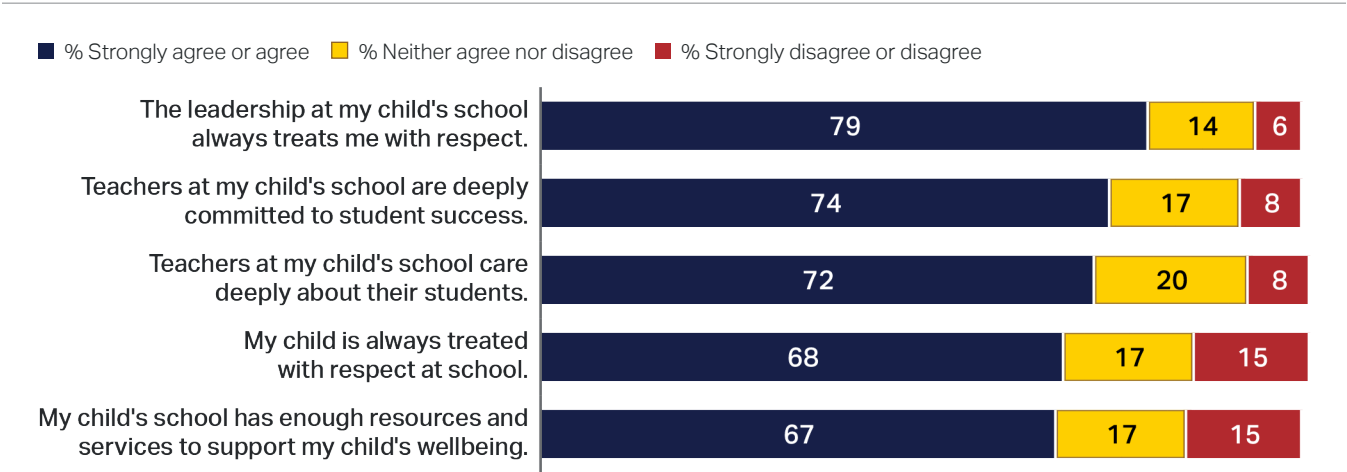


Parents generally agree that leadership and staff at their child’s school are respectful, caring and deeply committed to student success.

Roughly eight in 10 parents report that leadership at their child’s school always treats them with respect (Figure 5). Similarly, just over seven in 10 parents say teachers at their child’s school care deeply about their students and are deeply committed to student success.

Elementary school parents are more positive than middle and high school school parents about most climate and culture topics. For example, 83% of parents with elementary students say that leadership at their child’s school always treats them with respect, compared with 76% of parents with middle and high school students.

FIGURE 5
Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1 percentage point. Parents with students of all grade levels are represented in the figure.

Parents’ perception of respectful treatment of students does differ based on the student’s grade level and race. Parents of students in middle and high school (grades seven to 12) are less likely to say their child is always treated with respect (61%) than those with children in elementary school (74%). For students in middle and high school, Black children are perceived by parents to be treated with respect less often than their peers. Among parents with middle and high school students, 50% of parents with a child who is Black agree that their child is always treated with respect at school, compared with 63% of parents with a child who is white and 62% of parents with a child who is Hispanic, Asian or another race.

Communication With School Rated Highest by Parents With Elementary Students

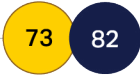
Most parents say they are receiving high-quality communication from their child’s school regarding both their child’s academic performance and their wellbeing. Parents of elementary students are even more positive about the quality of the feedback than parents of middle and high school students (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6
Which of the following best describes the quality of communication you receive from your child’s school on the following topics?

Portion of parents who say quality of communication is “excellent” or “good”

■ % Elementary K-6 ■ % Middle and high school 7-12

Communication regarding
“your child’s academic performance”



Communication regarding
“your child’s wellbeing”

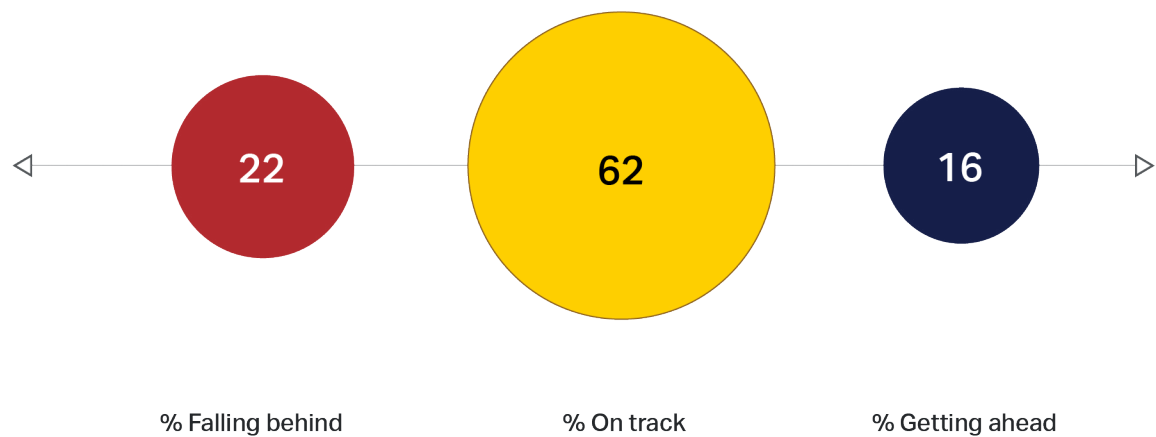


Other indicators of parents’ relationship with their child’s school also show a positive perception, with little negativity reported: Only 10% of parents disagree that their child’s school is responsive to concerns shared by parents, and just 9% disagree that their child’s school provides a variety of ways for parents to become involved.

Most Parents Feel Their Child Is on Track or Getting Ahead

Seventy-eight percent of parents say their child was either on track or getting ahead with their learning during the 2021-2022 school year (Figure 7). Parents’ perspectives on their child’s learning in the last school year are similar across grade levels and among parents of different racial backgrounds. However, parents’ income and their child’s race did impact parents’ responses. Parents in a household earning more than \$52,159 are more likely to say their child is getting ahead or on track than those in households with earnings of \$52,159 or less (81% vs. 69%). Additionally, 71% of parents who have a child of color say their child is on track or getting ahead compared with 81% of parents who have a white child.

FIGURE 7
Thinking about your child’s learning during the 2021-2022 school year (last year), do you feel like your child is getting ahead, falling behind or is on track?

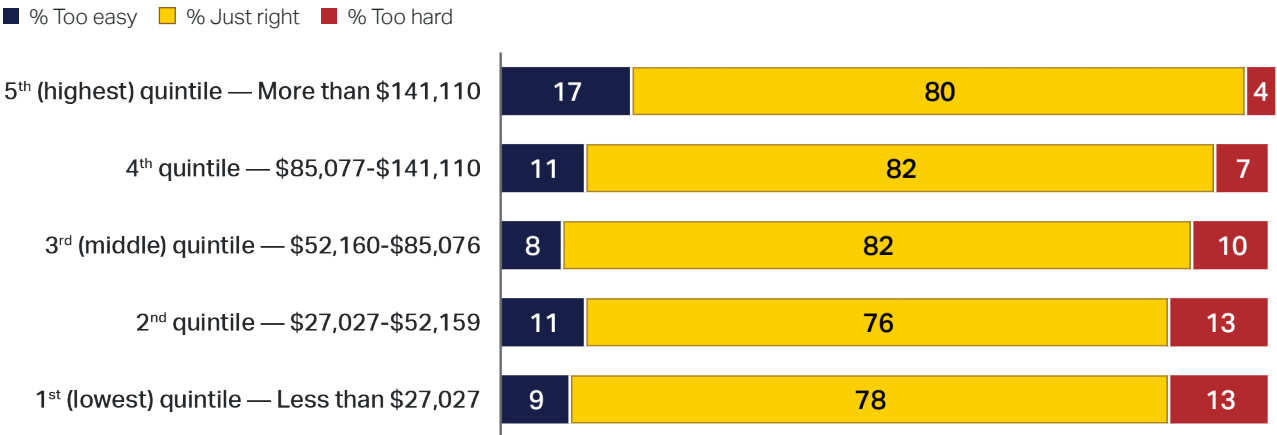


Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1 percentage point.



While most parents believe the coursework assigned to their child is at the right level, agreement varies by income. Overall, 80% of parents say coursework assigned to their child is just right. However, among households whose earnings are below average (e.g., the first and second quintiles), parents are twice as likely to say coursework is *too hard* compared with higher-income households.

FIGURE 8
Coursework assigned to my child is ...



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1 percentage point.

Sixty-nine percent of parents agree their child’s school is providing students with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful. Eighteen percent of parents are neutral, and 13% disagree that their child’s school is providing students with the necessary knowledge and skills. Agreement is higher among parents in households earning average or above average income than among lower-income parents (73% vs. 62%). Parents with elementary students are also more likely to agree their child’s school provides the necessary knowledge and skills compared with those with middle and high school students (75% vs. 63%).



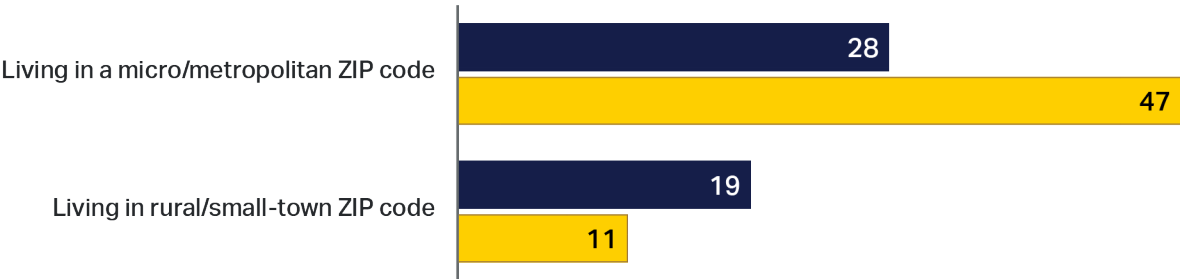
Worry About Child’s Safety Is Highest Among Lower-Income Parents Who Live in Micro/Metropolitan Areas

Overall, 33% of parents say they worry often or very often about their child’s safety at school. However, worry is greater among parents in a household earning \$52,159 or less who also live in a micro/metropolitan area (Figure 9).

FIGURE 9
How often, if at all, do you worry about your child’s safety at school?

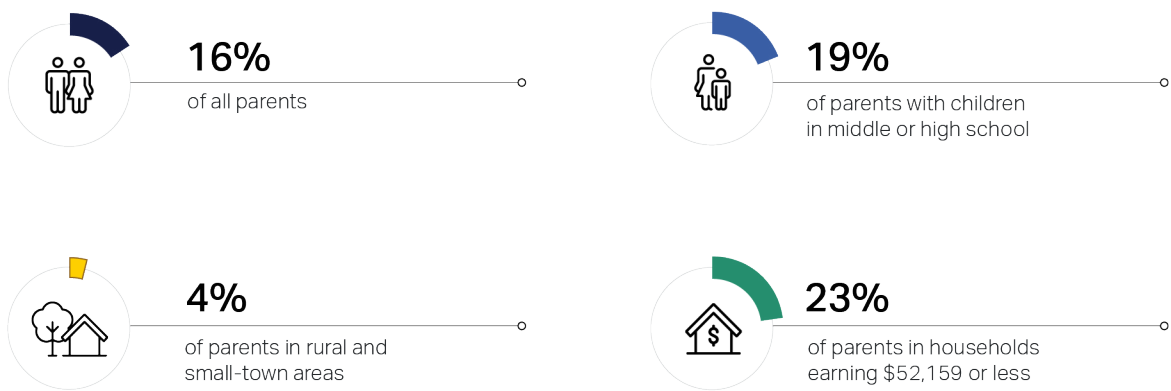
Portion of parents who say they worry “often” or “very often”

■ % Income above \$52,159 ■ % Income at or below \$52,159



Additionally, 16% of all parents say their *child* has expressed worry or concern about feeling unsafe at school. However, the portion of children who have expressed worry or concern fluctuates greatly by the student’s grade level, household income and ZIP code population density. Parents report that their child worries more often when they live in a micro/metropolitan area, in a lower-income household, or when they attend middle or high school.

FIGURE 10
Percentage of parents who say their child has expressed worry or concern about feeling unsafe at school



While 33% of parents worry about their child’s safety at school, many more feel positively about schools’ commitment to student safety. Seventy-eight percent of parents say that their child’s school is committed to student safety.

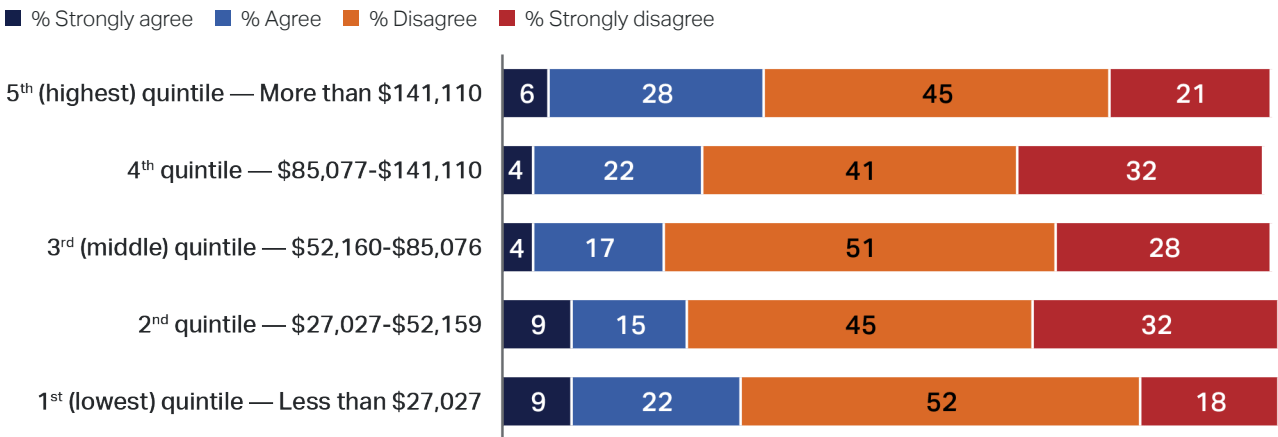
Indiana Statewide Initiatives

Post-High School Education Appears Available in Indiana, but Not Affordable

Seventy-two percent of parents believe education beyond high school is *available* to anyone in the state of Indiana who needs it. Yet only 27% of parents believe education beyond high school is *affordable* to anyone in the state of Indiana who needs it.

Middle-income parents (annual household incomes between \$52,160 and \$85,076) are the least positive about the affordability of postsecondary education. Just 22% say education after high school is affordable to anyone who needs it (Figure 11). In contrast, 34% of parents from households earning more than \$141,110 say that education after high school is affordable.

FIGURE 11
Education beyond high school is AFFORDABLE to anyone in the state of Indiana who needs it.



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1 percentage point. Totals of combined categories presented in this report may also differ by ±1 percentage point due to rounding.

The perception of the affordability of post-high school education does appear to improve as students reach high school. Parents of high school students are more likely than parents of middle and elementary students to agree that education beyond high school is affordable to anyone in the state who needs it (31% vs. 24% and 25%, respectively).



Six in 10 Parents With Middle School Students Are Aware of the Indiana 21st Century Scholars Program

The Indiana 21st Century Scholars program provides up to four years of undergraduate tuition to students at participating colleges or universities in Indiana and is available to seventh- and eighth-grade students who meet income eligibility requirements.

About six in 10 (64%) parents of middle school students are aware of the Indiana 21st Century Scholars program, similar to the 58% of parents of elementary students. A higher percentage (72%) of parents of high school students are aware of the program.

Parental education, race and ethnicity are also related to awareness of the Indiana 21st Century Scholars program. Parents with at least a two-year degree are more likely than those without a two-year degree to be aware of the program (71% vs. 59%). Among Black parents, 83% say they are at least partially aware of the Indiana 21st Century Scholars program. Fewer white parents (63%) and parents who are Hispanic, Asian or another race (56%) are aware of the program.



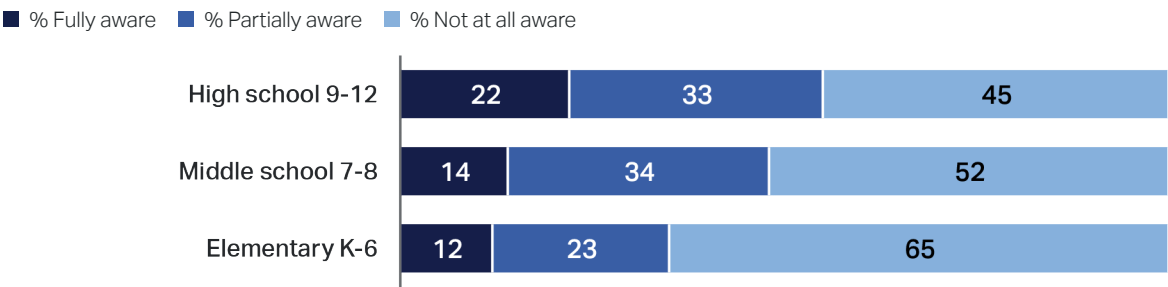
Awareness of the Indiana Scholars Program Fails to Improve Perception of Affordability of Postsecondary Education

One of the goals of the Scholars program is to increase the availability and affordability of post-high school education to those who need it. However, awareness of the Indiana 21st Century Scholars program is not related to parents' perception that education is affordable or available. Among parents who are partially or fully aware of the Scholars program, 27% agree that education beyond high school is affordable to anyone who needs it, and 72% say that education beyond high school is available to anyone who needs it. These rates of agreement are not statistically different than the rates among those who are not at all aware of the Scholars program.

Parents' Awareness of Indiana College Core Higher Among Those With High School Students

The Indiana College Core is a block of 30 credit hours of general education college-level coursework that transfers seamlessly among all Indiana public colleges and universities. Research conducted by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education confirms students who complete the Indiana College Core are likely to attend college and meet benchmarks for early success in college.⁴ Yet, only about half of parents with middle and high school students are aware of the Indiana College Core (Figure 12).

FIGURE 12
How aware are you of the Indiana College Core?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1 percentage point.

4 Indiana Commission for Higher Education. (n.d.). Indiana College Core. Retrieved from https://www.in.gov/che/files/2021_ICC_Info_One-Pager_03_11_21.pdf

Post-High School Preparation and Plans

The Indiana Department of Education has invested in initiatives to prepare young Hoosiers for lifelong success after graduation and continually works toward this goal by measuring students’ academic and career outcomes. Parents’ perspectives add to student data by providing context and new insights into how students’ families perceive their preparation.

Preparation for Life After High School Highest Among Juniors and Seniors, but 32% of Seniors’ Parents Say Their Child Is Still Not Prepared

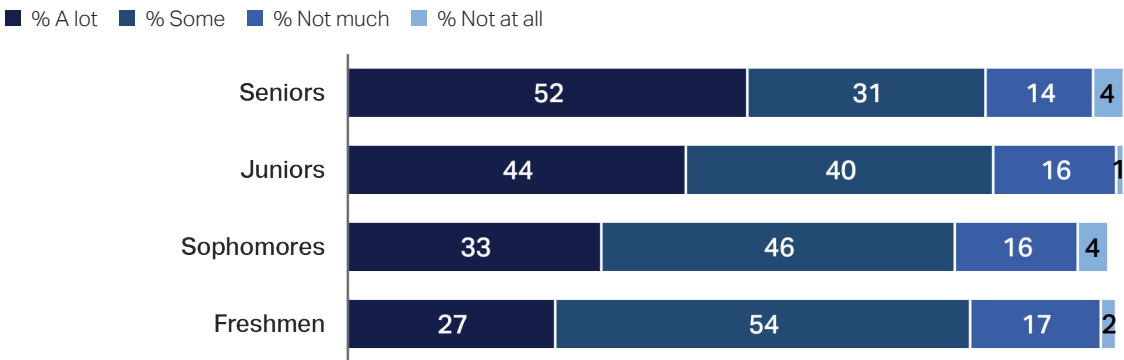
As they get closer to graduation, parents report that students become better prepared and more vocal about their plans.

About eight in 10 parents of all high school grade levels report that their child has talked about their post-high school plans at least some, but the percentage that has talked “a lot” rises steadily from 27% of freshmen to 52% of seniors (Figure 13).



The portion of parents who say their child talks with them about their plans for life after high school differs by parents’ race. Seventy-two percent of parents of color say their child has talked to them at least “some” about post-high school plans, compared with 85% of white parents.

FIGURE 13
How much, if at all, has your child talked to you about their plans for life after high school?

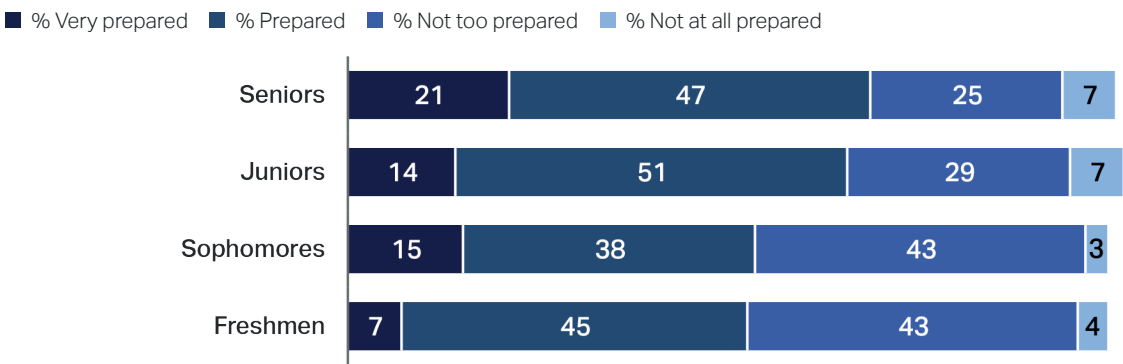


Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1 percentage point.



At the same time, the gains in preparedness from freshmen to senior year are modest, as two-thirds of parents of seniors (68%) say their child is prepared or very prepared for life after high school, compared with 53% of parents of freshmen (Figure 14). About one-third of parents with seniors (32%) say their child is not too prepared or not at all prepared for life after high school.

FIGURE 14
How prepared, if at all, is your child for life after high school?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1 percentage point. Totals of combined categories presented in this report may also differ by ±1 percentage point due to rounding.

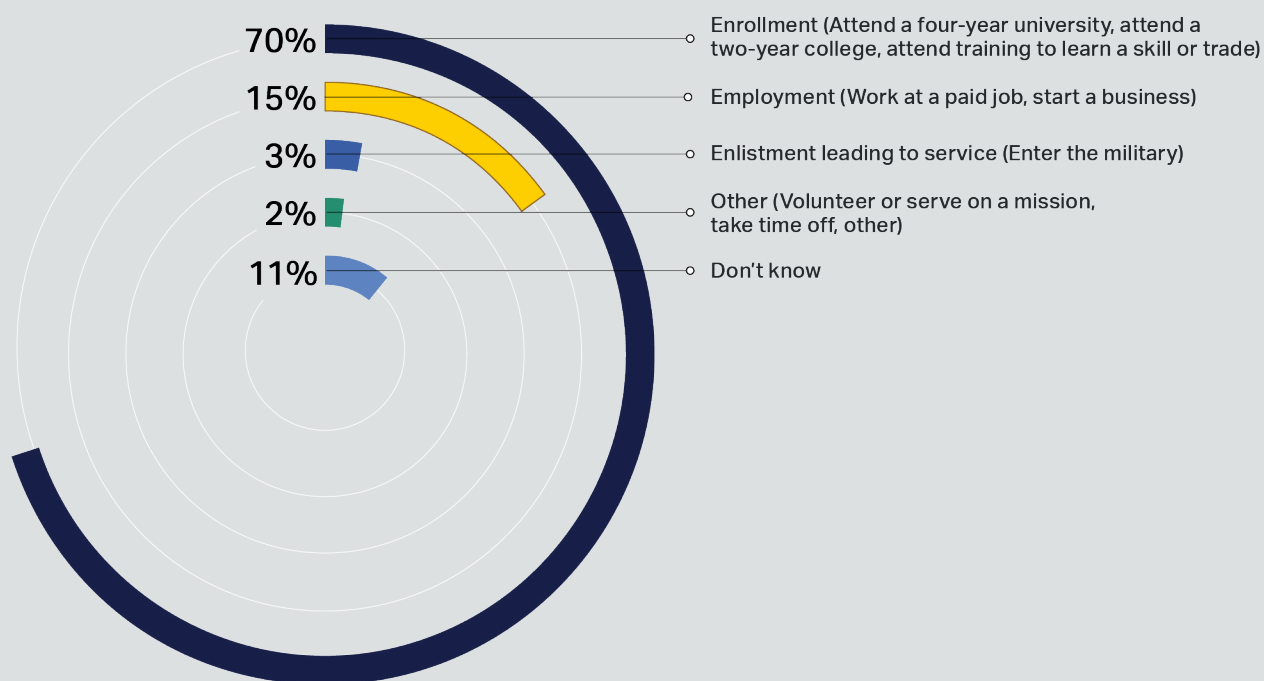
A parent’s education level may have more of a relationship to their child’s perceived preparedness than the child’s grade. Among parents of students in all high school grade levels, 74% of parents with a four-year college degree or more say their child is prepared for life after high school, compared with 63% of parents with a two-year degree or some post-high school training and 50% of parents who do not have post-high school education or training.

Most Parents Report Their High School Student Plans to Pursue Further Education

Seventy-nine percent of parents say that a college education is important, and what they report about their child's plans reflects that. According to their parents, 70% of Indiana high school students plan to pursue enrollment (attending a four-year university, a two-year college, or training to learn a skill or trade; Figure 15). Fifteen percent of parents report their child will pursue employment (working at a paid job or starting a business), and 3% have a child who plans to pursue enlistment leading to service (e.g., entering the military). The remaining parents selected "volunteer or serve on a mission," "take time off" or "other" (2%), or "don't know" (11%).

FIGURE 15

After your child finishes high school, they will most likely ...

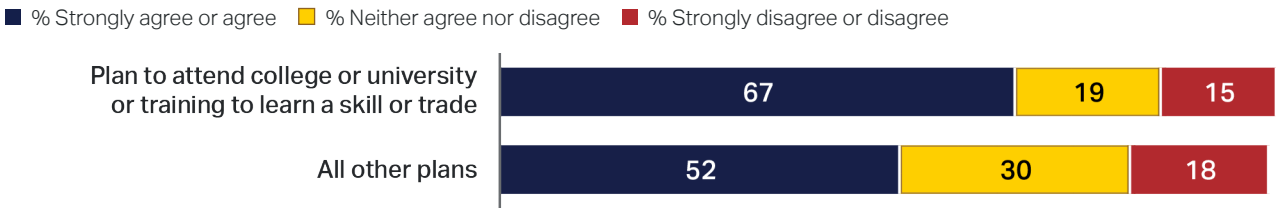


Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ± 1 percentage point.



Parents with a child who plans to pursue higher education (“Enrollment”) are more likely than others to feel that their child’s school meets their educational needs. Among parents of students who are interested in attending a two- or four-year college or university or training to learn a skill or trade, 67% say their child’s school is providing students with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful. For parents with a child who does not plan to pursue further education, only 52% agree their child’s school provides the necessary knowledge and skills (Figure 16).

FIGURE 16
My child’s school is providing students with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful.



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1 percentage point.

Conclusion

Parents with a child in an Indiana school are highly likely to be satisfied with their child's school, and a majority rate their child's school positively on measures of inclusion, communication and academic quality. Postsecondary education is also highly valued in Indiana, as seven in 10 parents say their student plans to attend further education or training, and 79% of parents say a college education is important today. Yet, opportunities for parents' involvement may still have room for improvement: Fewer than half are aware of the Indiana College Core, which could help their student access courses for college preparation, and one in five parents of a high school student say their child doesn't talk to them much about life after high school.

Findings also indicate that perceptions about the affordability and availability of post-high school education are widely ingrained. Just one in four parents say that education beyond high school is affordable to anyone who needs it, and this is true even among parents who are aware of the Indiana 21st Century Scholars program, which provides undergraduate tuition to qualifying students. Encouragingly, many more parents (72%) agree that education is available to anyone in the state of Indiana who needs it.

Most of the topics reported here show some measure of association with one another. In other words, if parents respond positively to one, they tend to respond positively to the others. This may reflect the complexity of experiences that make up a parent's interaction with the K-12 school system and underscores that all topics have a relationship to one another. Nevertheless, the multiple associations also make it difficult to identify one topic or question as a driver of parents' positivity. More likely, diverse arrays of topics interact with one another to form a parent's perception of their child's school.

The parent perspectives reported here provide context for students' academic and career outcomes and will help to inform stakeholders in Indiana as they work to ensure every child has access to a high-quality education.

Methodology

Gallup used address-based sampling (ABS) to randomly invite households throughout the state of Indiana to participate in the survey. Gallup sent an initial survey package, followed by two postcard reminders, to encourage nonresponders to complete the survey. Surveys from 3,042 Indiana parents were collected from August to September 2022.

The total sample is weighted based on major age, sex, education-related, and racial and ethnic subgroups so that estimates reflect the population of Indiana adults who have a school-aged child in the household.

All reported margins of sampling error (and all statistical comparisons) are adjusted to include the design effect of weighting. All statistical differences are at the $p < .05$ significance level unless otherwise noted. The group size and MOE for commonly reported subgroups are as follows.

For results based on the total sample of 3,042 parents, the MOE is ± 3.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the sample of 2,644 white parents, the MOE is ± 3.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the sample of 204 parents who are Hispanic, Asian or selected "other" for their race, the MOE is ± 10.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the sample of 167 Black parents, the MOE is ± 12.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the sample of 1,877 parents with students in middle and high school (seventh to 12th grades), the MOE is ± 4.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the sample of 1,155 parents with students in elementary school (kindergarten to sixth grade), the MOE is ± 5.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

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