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# *New Education Majority:*

## *Attitudes and Aspirations of Parents and Families of Color*

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**[www.NewEducationMajority.org](http://www.NewEducationMajority.org)**

**#NewEdMajority**

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## About the Organizations

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### About The Leadership Conference Education Fund

The Leadership Conference Education Fund builds public will for laws and policies that promote and protect the civil and human rights of every person in the United States. In so doing, we also seek to promote an appreciation for the rich diversity of the country, and attitudes that are accepting of our differences and similarities. We were founded in 1969 as the education and research arm of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (then called the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights), the nation's premier civil and human rights coalition of more than 200 national organizations.

### About Anzalone Liszt Research

Anzalone Liszt Grove Research (ALG) is a public opinion research firm specializing in message development and strategic consulting. For nearly 20 years, we have helped clients ranging from President Obama, to EMILY'S List, to Microsoft achieve their goals. During that time, our work has been successful, strategic and accurate, with polling guru Nate Silver dubbing us one of the three most accurate pollsters in America.

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## Methodology

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This summary is based on the results of a national survey of N=400 African-American and N=400 Latino or Hispanic parents or family members actively involved in the upbringing of a child between the ages 5-18 conducted by Anzalone Liszt Grove Research on behalf of The Leadership Conference Education Fund. The survey was conducted by telephone, including both landlines and cell phones, using bilingual professional interviewers in both English and Spanish. Interviews were conducted March 14-20, 2016. The margin of error for each sample is plus or minus 4.9 percent at the 95 percent level of confidence. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher. All quotes cited in this report are verbatim responses from the poll or the focus groups conducted Feb 2-3, 2016 in Chicago (Latinos) and Philadelphia (African Americans) among the same audiences.

The results of this poll can be found at [NewEducationMajority.org](http://NewEducationMajority.org).

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## Introduction

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K-12 public education has reached a critical juncture for our nation.

For the first time in American history, the majority of students in the public school system are students of color. These students are the “new education majority.”

At the same time, the federal government, state governments, and school districts are about to implement a major rewrite of federal education policy, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which gives tremendous power back to states to build, maintain, support and hold accountable public schools that will educate all children to be ready for college and a career that will provide them a living wage.

ESSA creates new opportunities and incentives to fully and adequately address the failure of our schools to educate all children, but only if we can build the public and political will to do so. We cannot continue to sustain two separate and unequal education systems – one that educates White and middle-class children fairly well and one that absolutely fails children of color – and hope to maintain our status as the most powerful and diverse economy in the world.

We believe that education policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must vigorously drive toward equity. Decisionmakers have to recognize that policy must reflect the perceptions, needs, desires and beliefs of communities of color to be able to effectively address the actual educational needs of the majority of students.

A high-quality education is the single most important factor in determining whether a person in the United States is able to move up the economic ladder and obtain a living-wage job. Education is also inextricably linked to the likelihood that a person will or will not enter the justice system and whether or not that person will en-

gage in civil society through voting or political participation. Perhaps most importantly, educational equity is critical to the future of the United States, its economy, and all of its institutions. Without a well-educated populace, America cannot hope to maintain its status as the most advanced and dynamic industrialized country in the world.

As such, the stakes for reforming an education system that fails millions of students of color are incredibly high for all of us. By nearly every measure, students of color attend schools that are substantially deficient compared to the schools their White, higher-income peers attend. As a result, too many are falling behind with very little chance of making up ground in a system that is woefully unfair.

Despite these facts, education policy conversations fail to take seriously the impact that inequities in our system have on children of color. Too often, the prevailing dialogue faults families of color for bad educational outcomes instead of grappling meaningfully and seriously with the need for the system to make different policy choices that are in the best interest of all children.

In our work in communities, we have found that the education debates conducted inside the Beltway—from testing and No Child Left Behind to Common Core and the appropriate role of the federal government—don’t resonate with new education majority parents or reflect the priorities they have for their own families. The truth is, these debates have simply failed them. New education majority parents and families know what schools are and are not doing for their children, and they have very clear beliefs about what should be done.

The “New Education Majority” poll seeks to capture the beliefs of new education majority parents and fami-

lies<sup>1</sup> so that decisionmakers can make better choices about the education our children receive. It provides quantitative and qualitative data that reveals the actual perspectives, aspirations, and concerns that new education majority parents and families have of their children's education and of the education system itself. As annual research, we believe this important data will be useful to all decisionmakers who have a responsibility for educating all children as well as advocates seeking to engage and empower communities of color in education policy reform.

The choice before our nation is simple.

Will states and school districts rise to the occasion and build a K-12 public education system designed to address the educational needs of students of color? Or will states and school districts shirk their duty, as they've done in the past, and condemn a majority of public school students to a future with little to no promise?

In our fast-changing, global economy, we cannot afford to lose another generation of young people. And it's time to include the voices of the new education majority parents in the decision-making about education policy that affects their children. We cannot hope to build the public education system all children deserve without including the parents and families of the students who will most benefit from a truly high-quality education.



Wade Henderson  
President & CEO  
The Leadership Conference Education Fund

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1. Due to resource constraints, Asian American and Native American parents and families were not included in this polling. It is our hope that as this project continues we can expand to encompass the entire "new education majority."

## Poll Summary

On behalf of The Leadership Conference Education Fund, Anzalone Liszt Grove Research recently conducted a survey of “new education majority” parents and families’ views on education. Despite constituting a majority of U.S. public school students, children of color and their families are still largely underrepresented in the debate on educational opportunity and equality. This in-depth study, the first of its kind since President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in December, seeks to enrich discussions on education policy and practice by amplifying the voices of parents and families within African-American and Latino communities.

### KEY FINDINGS

- New education majority parents and families are well aware of the impact that racial inequities in education have on children of color.
- New education majority parents and families want a public education system that provides academic rigor, safety, and great teachers above all.
- New education majority parents and families want schools to set high expectations for African-American and Latino students, and want expectations for students from low-income families to be just as high.
- New education majority parents and families believe they have a great deal of power to change the education system and are willing to do their part, but they also believe that all levels of government must step up to address funding and other disparities that harm African-American and Latino students.

### Well-Aware of Racial Inequities and Their Impact

- **New education majority parents and family members overwhelmingly see racial disparities in school funding.** More than four out of five African Americans (83 percent) and 61 percent of Latinos reject the notion that their communities receive as much funding as schools in White communities.

*“The schools in the Latino communities are run-down, smaller and less funded than those in the White neighborhood.”* – Latino parent/family member

*“I’ve seen it so many times before. They don’t offer to Black schools what they offer to White schools.”* – African-American parent, Philadelphia

- **Racial inequality is seen in the quality of education as well, particularly among African Americans.** Two-thirds of African Americans (66 percent) reject the notion that students in their communities receive as good an education as White students do. Although this sentiment is not quite as strong among Latinos, parents and family members in this community are as likely to believe that Latino students do not receive as good an education as Whites do (45 percent) as they are to believe that they do (45 percent). Among both communities, those with children in schools that are mostly low-income are even more likely to see racial disparities in the quality of education.
- **The lack of funding is seen as the biggest driver of racial inequities in American schools, but racism and a lack of quality teachers are also cited as factors.** Among those who see racial disparities in education quality, both communities cite a lack of funding as the biggest cause. Low quality teach-

ers and racism are seen as the next biggest culprits, especially among African Americans.

*“They don’t have the funding. They cut some programs. They don’t have books and they don’t have highly qualified teachers.”* – African-American parent/family member

*“The quality is not the same due to less funding which equates to less teachers, less technology available, less programs and less overall academic opportunities.”* – Latino parent/family member

*“Schools in the suburbs get better funding.”* – African-American parent/family member

- **These disparities lead a majority of African-American parents and family members to rate U.S. schools negatively when it comes to educating Black children.** By an 11-point margin, African Americans believe U.S. schools do not do a good job preparing Black students for the future (42 percent positive / 53 percent negative) and are nearly four times as likely to say that schools do a poor job (22 percent) than an excellent one (5 percent). A third of African-American parents and family members (33 percent) are especially critical, and believe that U.S. schools are not even “really trying to educate Black students.”

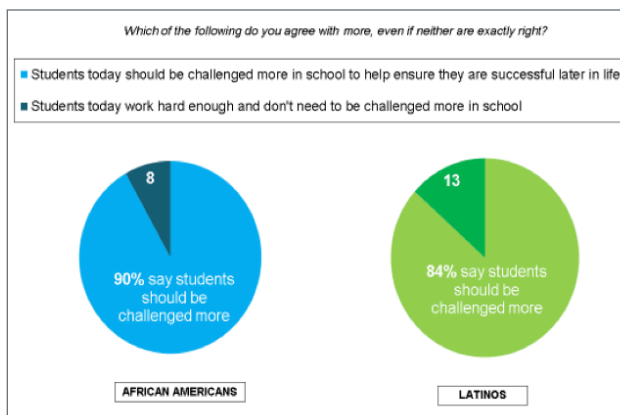
#### Prioritize Great Teachers, Academics and Safety

- **New education majority parents and families see quality teachers as the most important element of a great school.** In response to an open-ended question about the most important characteristic of a great school, majorities of both African Americans and Latinos volunteer teacher quality. No other element exceeded even 16 percent.

*What do you think is the most important characteristic to make a great school?*



- **School qualities related to academics are prioritized.** When asked to rate different school characteristics by importance, academic options such as having the right teaching materials and students leaving the school



prepared for what’s next join teacher quality at the top, with over 90 percent of both communities rating each as very important (see Appendix A). Although over three-quarters of these parents and family members rated a wide range of extracurricular activities and afterschool programs as very important, such qualities were seen as less integral to a great school than more academic-based ones by double digit margins.

A similar trend is evident when it comes to the best uses for additional funding. Among both audiences, needs that directly address academics such as attracting and retaining quality teachers and ensuring that students have access to computers and tutoring are top funding priorities, well-ahead of more funding for extracurriculars, after school programs or vocational classes.

- **School safety is also a priority.** In addition to the focus on academics, there is also a great deal of emphasis placed on school safety among both African-American and Latino parents and family members, with 96 percent of each rating it as very important. Black millennials see school safety as especially important.

#### Want More Academic Rigor and High Expectations for All Students

- **New education majority parents and families overwhelmingly believe that students should be challenged more in school.** Nine out of ten African Americans and 84 percent of Latinos disagree that students today work hard enough and instead believe that students should be challenged more to help ensure they are successful later in life.
- **These communities also strongly reject the notion that students from low-income families should be held to lower standards.** Ninety percent of both African Americans and Latinos believe that expectations for low-income students should be either the same or higher than those of other students. Both audiences are at least three times as likely to believe that low-income

students should be held to higher expectations rather than lower ones, and low-income parents and family members are even more likely to believe expectations for low-income students should be higher.

*“The advanced learning opportunity is not available for Black students...Whenever White students go to school, people assume they are smart and they are given advanced learning right away. If Black students go to school, they are just given basic learning information.”* – African-American parent/family member

*“I believe that the teachers underestimate these kids’ level of knowledge and that they are not being challenged enough. They’re not given the opportunity to express themselves openly without being misjudged of who they are and where they come from. We live in a low economic area yet these kids have a lot of knowledge and yet the teachers do not believe in their potential.”* – Latino parent/family member

- **Both communities believe that when low-income students of color succeed in school it is much more likely due to support from family than from school.** When asked to choose the most important factor to a low-income student of color’s success from three options: support from family, education from school, or the student’s own hard work, both African Americans and Latinos are most likely to cite support from home as the key factor. Both communities are about three times more likely to identify family support than the education they received from school as the most important element of success for low-income students of color.

**Parents Recognize Their Power to Drive Change but Also Believe Government Must Step Up**

- **Black and Latino parents recognize their power to help change schools in the U.S.** Strong majorities of both African-American (55 percent) and Latino (56 percent) parents and family members believe parents have “a lot of power” to bring change to schools in the U.S.

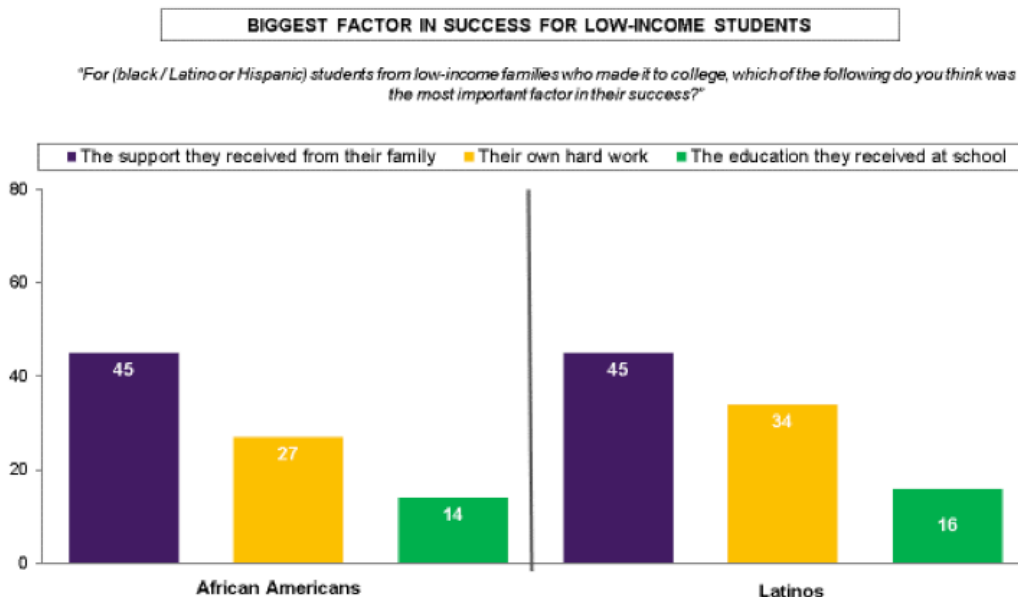
*“When you have parents that get together and say they want to do this – it’s the unity of the parents. It’s just not the teachers. It’s becoming involved and getting other people to be involved. One voice isn’t enough.”* – Latino parent, Chicago

- **But they also believe that government at all levels needs to step up to address funding and other inequities that hold Black and Latino students back.** While parents believe they have the power to bring change to schools, they also recognize that it is the responsibility of local, state, and federal governments to address the funding disparity that drives much of the racial inequity in schools.

*“Call your state legislator and those who are responsible for funding.”* – African-American parent/family member

*“The government is always taking money from the schools.”* – Latino parent/family member

*“So much comes down to a lack of funding.”* – Latino parent/family member





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## Conclusion

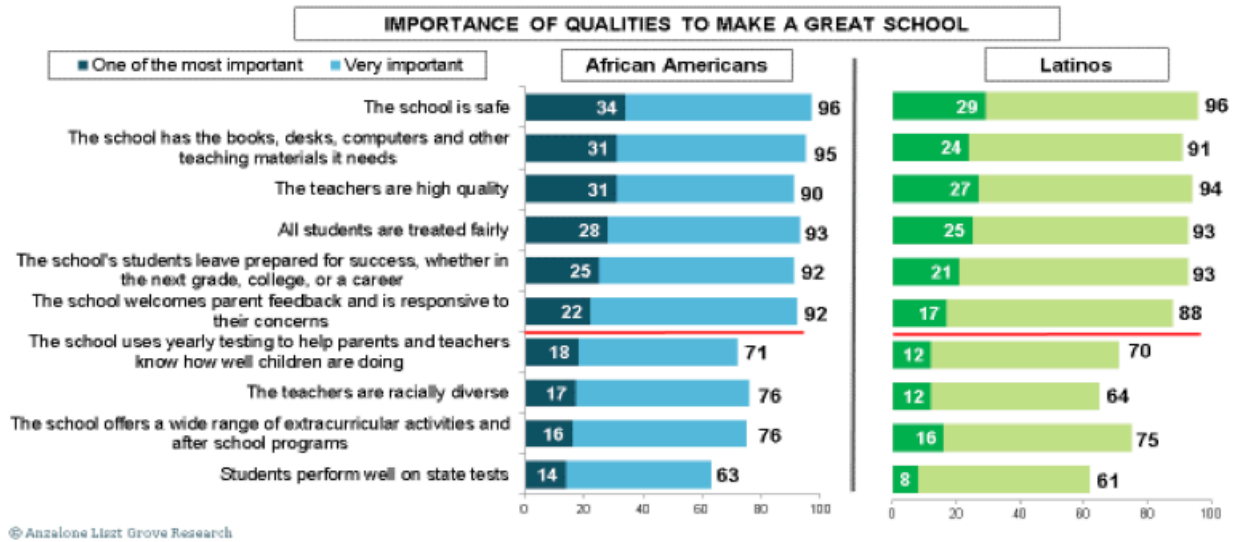
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The “New Education Majority” poll provides information about what parents and families of students of color believe is the experience their children are having in American public schools. These parents and families have high expectations of, and aspirations for, their children. They want American public schools to have them, too, but they know that this isn’t yet the case.

The results of this poll suggest education policymakers and advocates should take into account the perspectives of new education majority parents by:

- Meaningfully engaging them in education policy discussion, debate, and practice to ensure that policy truly reflects the needs of new education majority students and the expectations of communities of color; and
- Developing policy that meaningfully addresses the concerns that new education majority parents and families have about the quality of their children’s school and teachers, the inequitable distribution of resources, and the expectations that the school has of their children’s capacity to excel.

## Appendix A







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