

Poverty & Education in Philadelphia

Poverty Background

Beyond murals, pop-up parks, and festivities- lurking beneath artfully constructed attempts to revamp Philadelphia’s image, lies a problem that cannot be fixed with surface level Band-Aids. Its roots reach deeper than Philadelphia’s cobblestone streets, and its effects are unhealthier than the sugary drinks the city adamantly taxed. **Poverty** affects a quarter of Philadelphians, with the burden falling heaviest on the city’s minorities (particularly Hispanics) and children at 39% and 38% impoverished respectively¹. To be living in poverty means supporting a family of four on an income of \$24,300. Raising a family in a city, below the level of poverty is difficult, but for 12.2% of Philadelphians these difficulties are compounded below the **deep poverty** line- supporting a family of four on an income of less than \$12,150². This means that 40% of the city’s poor, are actually living in deep poverty. Cities are not necessarily known for their wealth and splendor, but even compared to the top ten cities in the United States Philadelphians only fare better than residents of Cleveland and Detroit, in terms of poverty³. To further put these statistics into perspective, the poverty rate for the United States as a whole is 15.8%, a rate Philadelphia has never approached in the past decade⁴. The country’s median income is \$55,775 while Philadelphia’s median income remains at \$41,233⁵. As a result, it is unsurprising that 10% of Philadelphians ranked poverty as the city’s biggest problem, with only public safety, education, and jobs/economy (all functions of poverty) being ranked as the biggest problem more often⁶.

Only 17.9% of seniors are living in poverty, while the rate is more than double that for children⁷. "Philadelphia has long had the unfortunate distinction of having the highest child poverty rate of any large city in the country," stated a recent report by the Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY)⁸. Thirty-eight percent of children are in poverty, yet only 30% of children eligible for publicly-funded kindergarten were able to enroll in the past fiscal year due to a lack of available seats⁹. "Funds from the recently enacted tax on sugar-sweetened beverages will dramatically expand quality slots, but that alone will

¹ Pew Charitable Trusts (74)

² Pew Charitable Trusts (74)

³ Pew Charitable Trusts (74)

⁴ Pew Charitable Trusts (74)

⁵ Pew Charitable Trusts (19)

⁶ Pew Charitable Trusts (28)

⁷ Philly.Com Report: More Philly Children Living in Poverty

⁸ Philly.Com Report: More Philly Children Living in Poverty

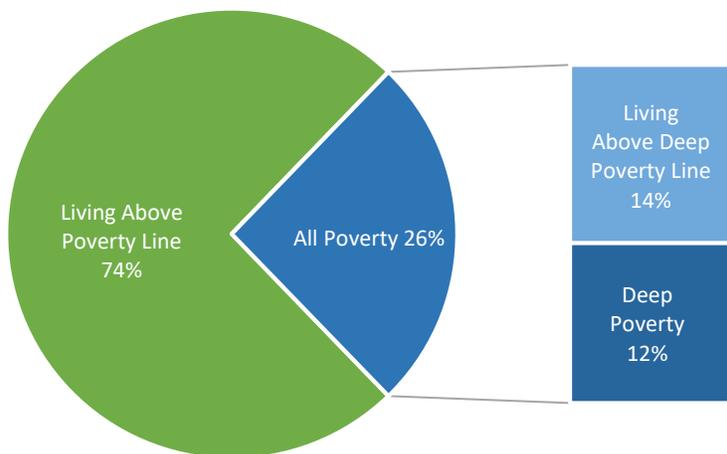
⁹ Philly.Com Report: More Philly Children Living in Poverty

not ensure universal access," continues the report from PCCY¹⁰. The city is leaving their low-income children without access to quality education. The children, the future of Philadelphia, are feeling the effects of poverty the most.

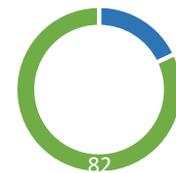
Poverty Background Fast Facts

- 25.8% poverty rate in Philadelphia¹
 - 18% of white population
 - 31% of African-American population
 - 38% of children
 - 39% of Hispanic population
- 12.2% deep poverty rate (\$24,300 vs \$12,150) 40% of poor are in deep poverty²
- Among top ten big cities Philly has third highest rate³
- 10% of Philadelphians rank this as the city's biggest problem⁶
- Median household income \$41,233 in Philly⁵
- 15.8% poverty rate nationally⁴
- Median household income \$55,775 nationally⁵
- 38.3 percent of the city's approximately 342,000 children- 130,800 - are living in poverty compared with 17.9 percent of seniors⁷
- Only 30 percent of children eligible for publicly funded pre-K were able to enroll during the last fiscal year because there were not enough seats⁹

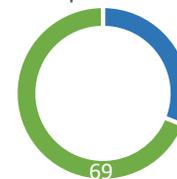
In Philadelphia...



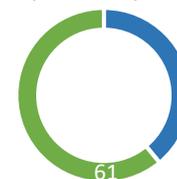
Caucasian Population



African-American Population



Hispanic Population



■ Impoverished ■ Living Above Poverty Line

¹⁰ Phily.Com Report: More Philly Children Living in Poverty

Education Background

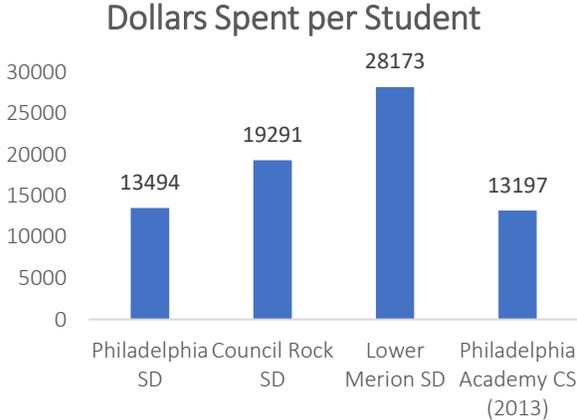
Following three years of steady enrollment, in the past year district-run public school enrollment has dropped by about 2,000 kids. Catholic school enrollment is also down- by 11%; however, this is consistent with a long-term trend of decreased enrollment. Tax-payer funded charter schools, on the other hand, have been steadily growing in popularity and continue to climb¹¹. There are currently 203,402 children enrolled in the Philadelphia School District. This is a fairly large portion of the 1,727, 352 children enrolled in k-12 public school in Pennsylvania¹².

The Philadelphia School District spends \$2,744,759,230 total on education which breaks down to \$13,494 dollars spent per student. This is less than the average statewide with Pennsylvania spending an average of \$17,186 per student¹³.

Compared to local Charter schools, the Philadelphia School District actually spends more per student, but compared to other public schools in the greater Philadelphia area (for example Council Rock South which spends \$19,291 per student), Philly schools are spending far less¹⁴.

The education budget is broken down into four categories, with the majority of the money going towards instruction (\$1,897,485,555), then to support services (\$564,578,395), then to non-instructional expenses (\$14, 873,110), and almost no money going towards facilities acquisition & construction. \$267,822,170 goes to other financing uses. Other public schools in the region tend to spend proportionally more on support services & non-instructional expenses¹⁵.

Whether or not the funds being poured into Philly schools are resulting in any educational payoff is the bottom line. Of the 214 schools listed in the School District of Philadelphia’s open data initiative report on enrollment and demographics, 174 schools were listed as having a student body with a 100% CEP economically disadvantaged rate, which takes the number of students eligible for free lunch multiplied at 1.6 and capped at 100%¹⁶. That comes out to just over 80% of schools in the district. As will be explained in the next section of this report, schools with predominantly low-income students have



¹¹ Pew Charitable Trusts (38)

¹² Open PA Gov: School Spending

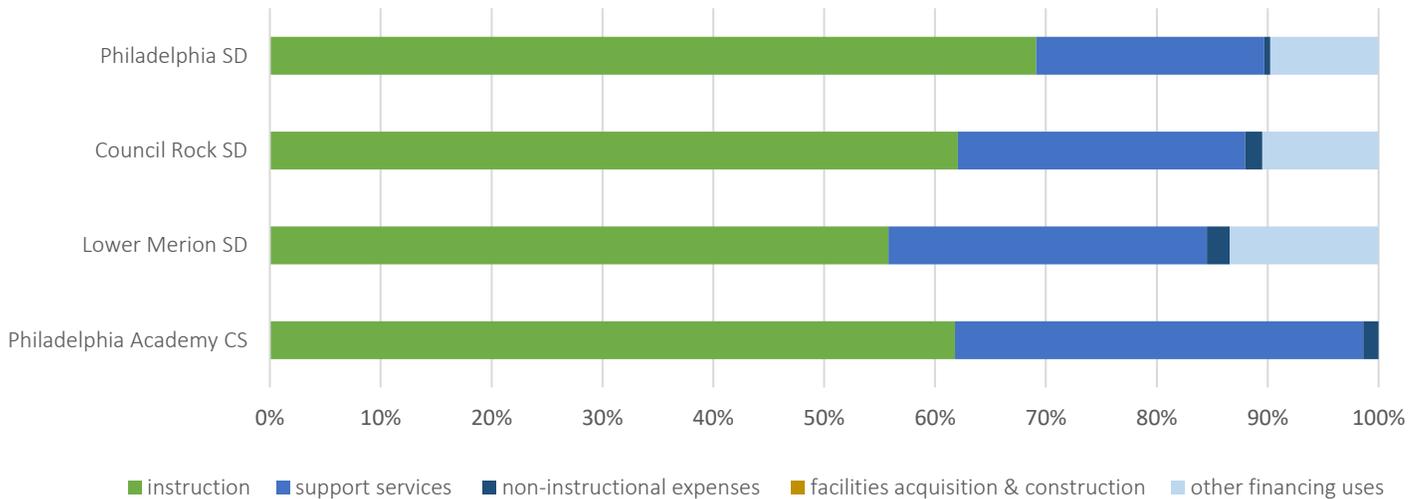
¹³ Open PA Gov: School Spending

¹⁴ Open PA Gov: School Spending

¹⁵ Open PA Gov: School Spending

¹⁶ SD of Philadelphia Open Data Initiative: Enrollment & Demographics SY 09-10 to 16-17

How School Funds are Being Spent



obstacles to overcome that other schools do not have to face. It seems as though Philadelphia public schools may be failing to scale these hurdles. Only 18% of students scored proficient or above on the PSSAs in math, and 31% scored proficient or above in reading in 2015¹⁷. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress- the only standardized test given consistently to urban regions across the country- Philadelphia ranked 17th out of the 21 large urban districts¹⁸. Of students in grades K-2, only 45% are reading at grade level¹⁹. Students are not shown to be ready to tackle academics while they are enrolled in the school district, and they are also not shown to be prepared to continue their academics after their K-12 schooling. The four-year high school graduation rate is 66%, compared to 82% nationwide²⁰. The first-fall college matriculation rate for high school graduates is 51%. In a survey released by the Philadelphia school district asking students to rate their college and career readiness, only 27% of responses were positive²¹. This jaded view of Philadelphia schools seems to be the general public climate. In fact, 73% of Philadelphians rated their school systems “fair” or “poor.”²² A fifth of Philadelphians see education as the biggest problem facing the city. Which puts

¹⁷ Pew Charitable Trusts (39)

¹⁸ Pew Charitable Trusts (39)

¹⁹ SD of Philadelphia Open Data Initiative: District Scorecard

²⁰ Pew Charitable Trusts (41)

²¹ SD of Philadelphia Open Data Initiative: District Scorecard

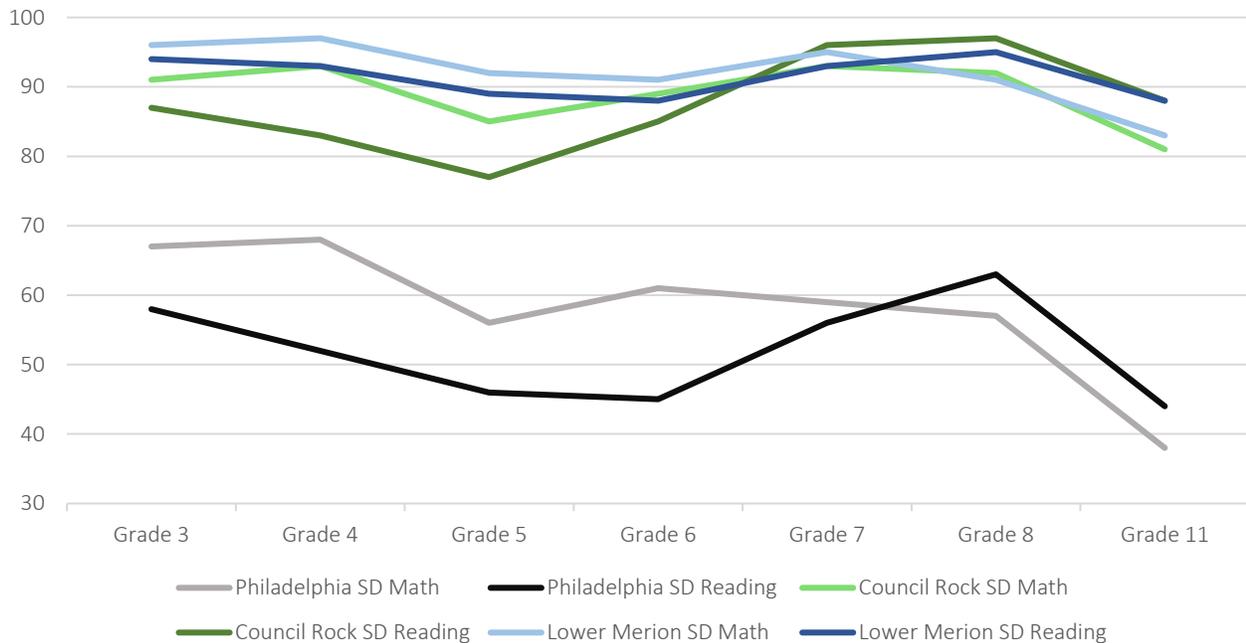
²² Pew Charitable Trusts (43)

education as the second biggest perceived issue, after public safety which had the vote of 44% of residents²³.

Resources are slim, and one issue is that teachers in the Philadelphia school district are paid less, meaning the district often can only afford to hire less experienced teachers. When observed, only 21% of teachers received a score of “distinguished” in instruction. Even fewer, 10%, received a “distinguished” score for being effective²⁴.

In the city, 17% of adult residents did not graduate high school. 27.4% have college degrees, just under the national average of 30%²⁵. Education has clearly been an issue for a long time, and is showing in both the adult and child populations. To fix the problem at its root, and give children access to education at the very beginning would ultimately lead to both populations becoming more educated, and open up an entire educated generation to come.

Percentage of Students Proficient in Math and Reading



²³ Pew Charitable Trusts (28)

²⁴ SD of Philadelphia Open Data Initiative: District Scorecard

²⁵ Pew Charitable Trusts (4) (44)

Education Background Fast Facts

- 20% of Philadelphians thought Education was the biggest issue the city faced²³
- Enrollment in Philly's district-run schools have dropped by about 2,000¹¹
- Enrollment in tax-payer funded charter schools continued its long-term rise¹¹
- Catholic school enrollment down by 11%, consistent with recent trend of decline¹¹
- 18% of students scored proficient or above on the PSSAs in math, 31% in reading¹⁷
- Ranked 17th out of 21 urban districts¹⁸
- Four-year graduation rate 66%, national is 82%²⁰
- 73% of Philadelphians rated their school systems fair or poor²²
- 27.4% of adults have college degrees, national stat is 30.6%²⁵
- 17% of adults did not graduate HS²⁵
- 80% (174/215) of schools in the Philly SD have a student body that have an 100% CEP economically disadvantaged rate¹⁶
- First-fall college matriculation rate 51%¹⁹
- College and career readiness student survey positive responses 27%¹⁹
- Percentage of teachers receiving an observation score of distinguished in instruction 21%¹⁹
- Percentage of teachers receiving an Effectiveness score of distinguished 10%¹⁹
- Students K-2 reading at grade level 45%¹⁹
- Pennsylvania spending per student \$17,186¹³
- Philadelphia City School District spending per student \$13,494¹³
- Even less in Charter Schools¹³
- Local suburban high school CR SD \$19,291 per student¹⁴
- Philly SD total education spending \$2,744,759,230¹³
- Philly SD enrollment 203,402¹³
- Pennsylvania total k-12 enrollment 1,727,352¹²

Poverty and Education, Cause and Effect

On the Programme for International Student Assessment, the United States ranked 12th in reading, 17th in science, and 25th in math. However, when adjusted for poverty concentration, the United States scored first in reading and science, third in math²⁶. What does this reveal? The United States is not failing to educate its students- just its students that are considered poor.

Recent research has revealed that family income has become more determinative than race in predicting student achievement- as the race gap continues to close the wealth gap continues to widen²⁷. This may be due to the fact that living in poverty involves certain predicaments that often translate into academic, attention, and behavioral problems in the class room. These difficult situations include insecurity, homelessness, hunger, unsafe communities, health problems, and domestic violence²⁸. This is certainly not to say that low-income students are inherently doomed to academic struggle. All it takes to remedy harmful stimuli that students could potentially face at home is a little attention and care in the classroom. However, when the majority of a school's student body is living in poverty, the challenges of poverty are felt exponentially. It has been determined that 50% is the tipping point- if half of the school is impoverished then children will feel the amplified effect of group poverty²⁹. As mentioned in the preceding section, 80% of Philadelphia schools have a student body that is completely low-income. This means the struggles of poverty are intensified in a great majority of those schools. The statistics support this idea. When comparing the reading and math proficiency of low-income students in Philadelphia School District to low-income students in greater Philadelphia Area School Districts Council Rock South and Lower Merion (which have student bodies with <50% impoverished and therefore do not deal with aggravated symptoms of a poverty crisis), the low-income students in the Philadelphia School District have consistently lower rates of proficiency. Additionally, in Philadelphia, 18.5% of male and 11.7% of female high school students have been in a physical fight at school- compared to 9.2% and 4.6% respectively statewide. Subsequently, 8.3% of males and 11% of females did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or going to and from school, compared to 8.3% and 6.7% statewide³⁰. Philadelphia youth were also more likely than the national average in these categories to-- have sexual intercourse before the age of 13; not use birth control; not eat fruit, vegetables, or drink milk; not play on a sports team; not exercise for 60 minutes a day; not have at least 8 hours of sleep at

²⁶ PCCY Trickle Up: The Impact of Increasing Poverty on Educational Outcomes (3)

²⁷ PCCY Trickle Up: The Impact of Increasing Poverty on Educational Outcomes (1)

²⁸ PCCY Trickle Up: The Impact of Increasing Poverty on Educational Outcomes (2)

²⁹ PCCY Trickle Up: The Impact of Increasing Poverty on Educational Outcomes (4)

³⁰ Center for Disease Control Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance 2015

night³¹. All of these factors are functions of poverty that effect school performance. When a family is struggling to afford food, expensive fruits and vegetables may be neglected, and unsafe home environments could certainly lead to expressive violence. Each statistic is a reason that a low-income student may not be able to be fully present in school, or apply themselves to their fullest potential.

As a result, children coming from low-income families are more likely than children from high-income families to enter school with lower reading and math skills, and increased chance of attention and behavioral issues³². In the 1960's a "war on poverty" began to close the education gap over the next 15 years. However, in the 1990s, the gap began to widen again, and it was correlated to decreased per-pupil spending and growing enrollments³³. Philadelphia school are not spending as much as their nationwide, or suburban counterparts, and they are over-enrolled as demonstrated by the kindergarten shortage. Both of these factors leave the gap wide open for classes of students to fall into. The poorest schools are also often lacking consistent leadership and a safe environment, as well as having inexperienced teachers³⁴. Strong leaders, strong instructional programs, smaller class-size, and professional development are qualities found in public schools that have many low-income students but are high-achieving³⁵. Children are the most impressionable, it is crucial to give students this foundation while they are young. It is crucial to set by example, a love and care for education. Children rapidly absorb new skills and information, so now is the time to inform and empower.

Schools also provide opportunities to students that go beyond classroom academics. Extracurricular activities are not just resume builders for higher education. For many schools that are suffering from the concentrated effects of poverty, extracurricular activities and summer programs that fill downtime offer supervision, guidance, and future directedness to their participants. Extracurriculars have been found to strongly complement a child's learning by cultivating the "soft skills" that prepare children for lifelong success i.e. leadership, grit, self-discipline, and endurance.³⁶ Additionally, participating in organized activity outside of the classroom gives children a chance to connect with an adult mentor, having a positive role model and learning to interact with adults in their daily lives.³⁷ Unfortunately, a study in 2010 found that among the public schools they studied in North Carolina, the percentage of students receiving free/reduced-price lunch in the overall student body is negatively associated with the

³¹ Center for Disease Control Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance 2015

³² PCCY Trickle Up: The Impact of Increasing Poverty on Educational Outcomes (4)

³³ PCCY Trickle Up: The Impact of Increasing Poverty on Educational Outcomes (3)

³⁴ PCCY Trickle Up: The Impact of Increasing Poverty on Educational Outcomes (5)

³⁵ PCCY Trickle Up: The Impact of Increasing Poverty on Educational Outcomes (7)

³⁶ Voices in Urban Education

³⁷Voices in Urban Education

total number of extracurricular activities, sports teams, and service opportunities offered by the school.³⁸ To compensate for the shortcomings of the school's budget, some schools opt for pay-to-play programs, where the brunt of the cost falls on the families whose students want to participate.³⁹ These character-building programs that are essential to forming strong civic-minded future-citizens are not accessible to everyone.

Poverty and Education, Cause and Effect Fast Facts

- 18.5% of males, 11.7% of female Philly HS students have been in a physical fight at school, compared to 9.2% and 4.6% respectively statewide³⁰
- 8.3% of males and 11% of females did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or going to and from school, compared to 8.3% and 6.7% statewide³⁰
- Philadelphia youth more likely than national youth to-- have sexual intercourse before the age of 13; not use birth control; not eat fruit, vegetables, or drink milk; not play on a sports team; not exercise for 60 minutes a day; not have at least 8 hours of sleep at night.³¹
- family income has become more determinative than race in predicting student achievement²⁷
- students living in poverty may face insecurity, homelessness, hunger, unsafe communities, health problems, and domestic violence²⁸
 - these challenges can be made exponentially worse when poverty's impact is felt by at least 50% of students²⁹
- Children coming from low-income families are more likely to enter school with lower reading and math skills than students from higher income households as well as having a higher likelihood to have issues paying attention and behaving in the classroom
- Poorest schools are often lacking consistent leadership and a safe environment, and have inexperienced teachers³⁴
- Learning and achievement trajectories are steepest in childhood, when children rapidly absorb new skills and information³⁵
- Extracurricular Activities teach students "soft skills" necessary for success such as leadership, grit, self-discipline, and endurance³⁷
- Negative correlation between students receiving free/reduced lunch and number of extracurricular activities offered by the school³⁸

³⁸ Voices of Urban Education

³⁹ Voices of Urban Education

School Choice

As Philadelphians struggle to come up with a way to better the education opportunities for low-income students, one option is to implement a system of school choice. This gives parents the financial power to choose the best education for their children. This could come in the form of school vouchers, tax-credit scholarships, or education savings accounts. But do school choice programs actually empirically improve student achievement? Studies done in Milwaukee; New York City; Dayton, Ohio; Charlotte, N.C.; and Washington, D.C., have used random assignment- giving students in low-income, heavily minority urban areas school choice ability by random lottery- to determine the outcomes. The general outcome is: modest improvement throughout the population in small increments in math and reading scores. None of the studies reported negative outcomes⁴⁰.

Additionally, studies in Florida, Milwaukee, Maine, Ohio, San Antonio, Vermont, and Washington, D.C., have reported that associated with the implementation of voucher programs is the improvement of test scores from the effected public schools⁴¹. This supports a commonly made pro-school-choice argument that vouchers will incentivize public schools to improve due to increased competition. A study done in the Chicago Public school system reported that aside from academic effects, the disciplinary effects of school choice are important. Random school-choice lottery winners reported fewer incidents of disciplinary action, fewer arrests, and lower incarceration rates. Attendees of high-achieving schools reported an 8.7 percentage point drop in disciplinary action⁴². All of this seems good, but is it practical? The net impact of school choice programs on state and local budgets has never been found to be negative⁴³.

Aside from vouchers, tax-credit scholarships are another way to give parents a choice. The majority, 55%, of Americans say that they support tax-credit scholarship programs, with 25% of Americans **strongly** favoring. Of current school parents, 67% answered in favor of TC scholarships⁴⁴. Politically, both Democrats (58%) and Republicans (62%) favor TC scholarship programs⁴⁵. Urbanites are more likely to favor than small town residents⁴⁶. Another question asked to Americans when surveyed was where they would enroll their child if they could enroll them anywhere. The most popular choice by far was private school, chosen by 42% of those polled, followed by public school chosen by 28%

⁴⁰ American Enterprise Institute: What Research Says about School Choice

⁴¹ American Enterprise Institute: What Research Says about School Choice

⁴² Poverty Action Lab: The Effect of School Choice on Student Outcomes in the United States

⁴³ American Enterprise Institute: What Research Says about School Choice

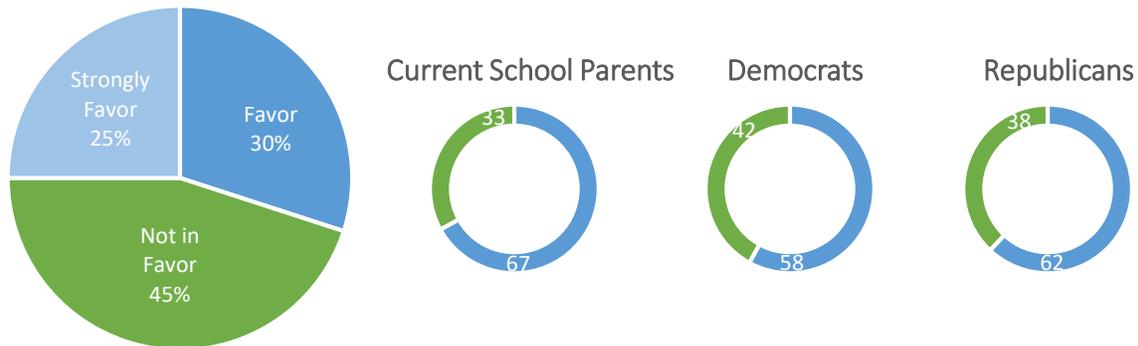
⁴⁴ EdChoice: Public Opinion on K-12 Schooling and School Choice (60)

⁴⁵ EdChoice: Public Opinion on K-12 Schooling and School Choice (62)

⁴⁶ EdChoice: Public Opinion on K-12 Schooling and School Choice (8)

of people⁴⁷. A large portion of Americans would opt to exercise school choice if they had the opportunity.

America's Opinions on Tax-Credit Scholarships

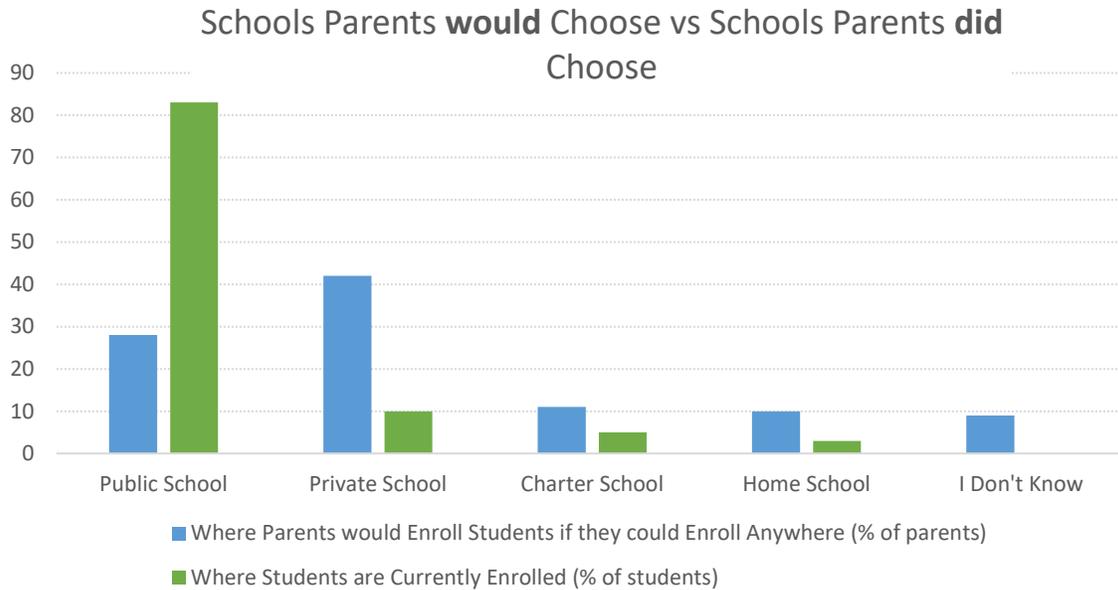


School choice is the norm for older students: college-age kids are not expected to matriculate to their closest public university, and even incoming high school students have a fairly expansive pool of resources to draw from in choosing what path to take for their education. Why does childhood education often not receive the same support? Early education is the essential foundation to creating lifelong learners. Childhood proficiency in reading is a strong indicator of success. By fourth grade, subjects taught in school rely on a mastery of reading- to not be proficient by fourth grade means not only frustration in the moment, but a much stronger chance of dropping out of school, and having low earning potential/ career success as an adult.⁴⁸ Highly educated parents are often able to provide more resources and support to their children to make sure they meet this expectation⁴⁹. As mentioned in the poverty section of this report, adult Philadelphians have fewer college degrees than the national average. Students in Philadelphia must rely on their schools to support their success at a young age. This makes finding the right school for every child even more crucial at a young age.

⁴⁷ EdChoice Public Opinion on K-12 Schooling and School Choice (29)

⁴⁸ Annie E Casey Foundation

⁴⁹ Annie E Casey Foundation



School Choice Fast Facts

- 55% of Americans support Tax-Credit scholarship programs⁴⁴
- 25% of Americans *strongly* favor TC scholarship programs⁴⁴
- 67% of current school parents favor TC scholarship programs⁴⁴
- 58% of Democrats and 62% of Republicans favor⁴⁵
- Urbanites (11%) are more likely to say that education is the biggest problem facing the nation than small town residents (4%)⁴⁶
- When asked if you could enroll your child anywhere where would you enroll your child 42% of respondents said Private School with the next most popular choice being 28% for public school⁴⁷
- Overall- modest improvement in small increments in math and reading scores.⁴⁰
- None of the studies reported negative academic outcomes.⁴⁰
- Random school-choice lottery winners reported fewer incidents of disciplinary action, fewer arrests, and lower incarceration rates.⁴²
- General positive/ neutral effect on budget⁴³
- Associated increase in affected public schools⁴¹
- Fourth grade reading proficiency can be indicative of career success as an adult⁴⁸
- Parents with higher levels of education are able to provide more support to their children⁴⁹

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