



# Vision Coalition of Delaware

## *Statewide Survey of Public Opinion on Education in Delaware*

June 2016

# Methodology

- Survey conducted May 17-19, 2016 via landlines and cell phones
- Total of 400 Delaware registered voters (500 unweighted)
- Oversamples:
  - City of Wilmington (30 interviews weighted, 85 interviews unweighted)
  - New Castle Non-Wilmington (206 interviews unweighted, 205 interviews weighted)
  - Kent County (70 interviews weighted, 104 interviews unweighted)
  - Sussex County (95 interviews weighted, 105 interviews unweighted)
- Margin of error:
  - **Weighted**: 400 interviews +/-4.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level

## Key Findings – Views of Public Schools

- Voters give DE public schools mixed ratings, and most feel things haven't changed in recent years – for better or worse. At the same time, there is no sense of crisis or urgency. There is a clear danger of voters moving toward acceptance of an average (or worse) public education as the new normal in Delaware.
- There are clear concerns about the state of public education across the state, but Sussex residents and parents with kids in public schools are more likely to offer positive assessments while voters in the City of Wilmington and self-ID Republicans are most likely to give public schools a failing grade.
- Voters believe Delaware schools are not meeting the needs of students in several areas (particularly preparing them for college or a career) , as well as not meeting the needs of key groups (parents, teachers, minority students, students living in poverty).
- By more than 2-to-1, voters believe DE schools are failing to meet students individual needs, instead relying on a one-size fits all approach.

## Key Findings – Policies and Politics

- Majorities believe we spend too little on public education in Delaware and that elected officials need to pay more attention to public schools.
- There is strong support for a broad range of policies to improve public education in Delaware. Proposals to hold back students who don't meet academic standards and to make voluntary pre-kindergarten available for all students receive the strongest support.
- Voters believe it is critical that schools in high-need communities provide non-academic supports (counselors, social workers, etc.) and strongly support proposals to boost these schools with extra funding and expert teachers.
- With projected deficits in the state budget hanging over all legislative discussions, it is important to note that broad majorities support raising taxes on individuals making more than \$250,000 a year, sharing support services across school districts, and using technology to employ open resources over textbooks in the classroom.

## Key Findings – Vision Coalition Core Areas

- The core areas for achieving academic success identified in the Student Success 2025 report all attract broad support, but three clearly emerge as the most effective and most convincing across geographic and demographic lines:
  - Postsecondary Success
  - Early Learning
  - Personalized Learning
- Postsecondary success scores highest overall and across most of the state, but early learning is top priority for core Democratic audiences – self-ID Democrats, African Americans, and City of Wilmington.
- When asked what will ultimately have the greatest impact on improving public education, access to high quality early learning is the top choice, followed by personalized, learning, higher standards for teachers and fair and efficient funding.



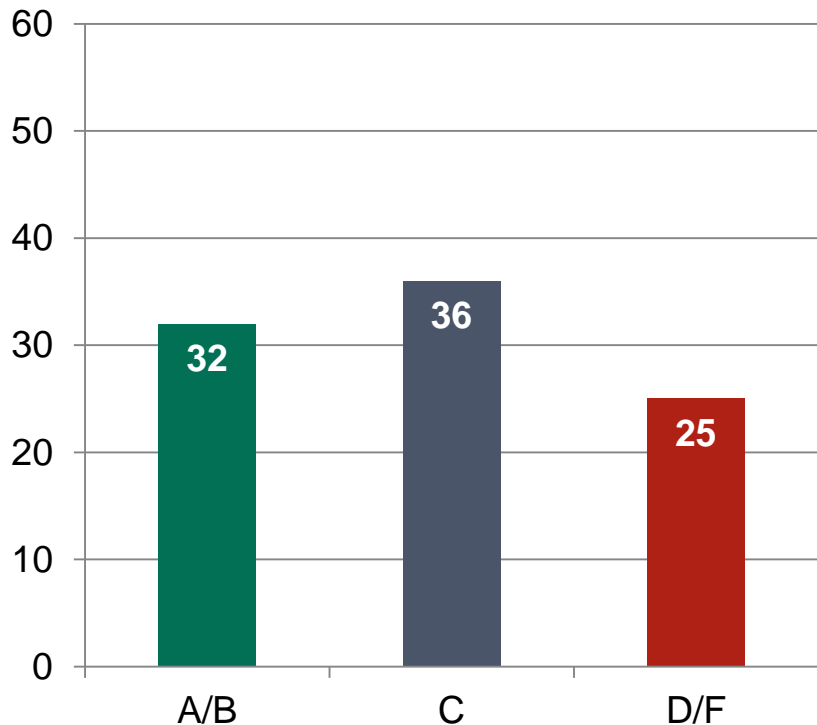
## Views of Public Schools

# Geographic, Partisan Differences Emerge on Public Schools in DE



On a traditional scale of A to F, what grade would you give **public schools in Delaware**?

## Statewide Grading

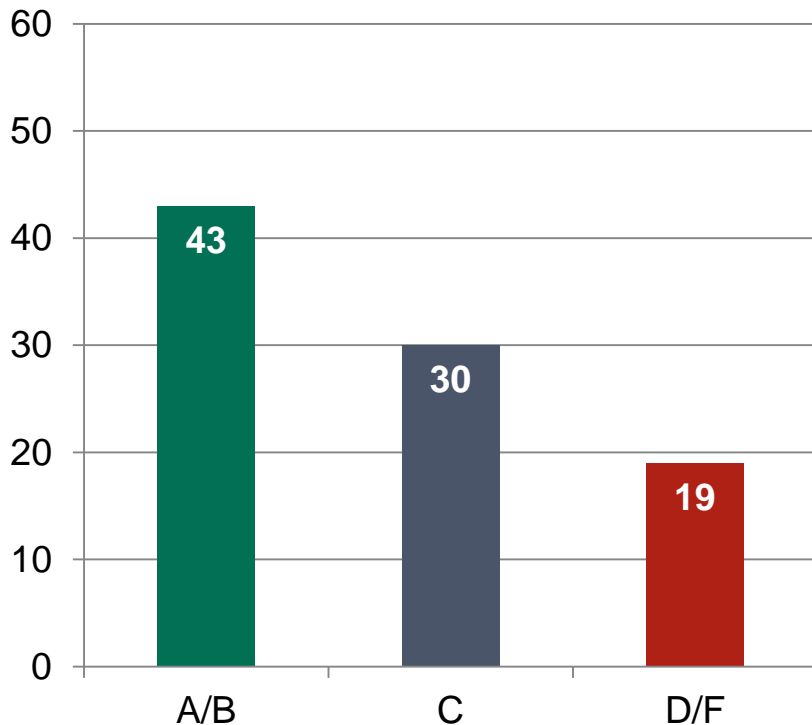


	A/B Grade	C Grade	D/F Grade
Wilmington	22	39	33
Rest of New Castle	27	40	26
Kent	39	39	16
Sussex	43	25	28
Parents	36	36	24
Non-Parents	31	36	26
Public School Parents	39	37	18
Democrats	38	34	21
Independents	31	39	23
Republicans	28	34	36
White	32	37	25
AA	31	39	26

# Higher Ratings for Local Schools, but Still More Negative Than Positive

**Q** What grade would you give the **public schools in your community?**

## Community School Grading



	A/B Grade	C Grade	D/F Grade
Wilmington	23	29	42
Rest of New Castle	43	32	17
Kent	47	31	13
Sussex	46	24	21
Parents	48	29	20
Non-Parents	41	31	19
Public School Parents	55	26	15
Democrats	45	29	18
Independents	41	32	17
Republicans	42	27	25
White	42	33	18
AA	35	31	24

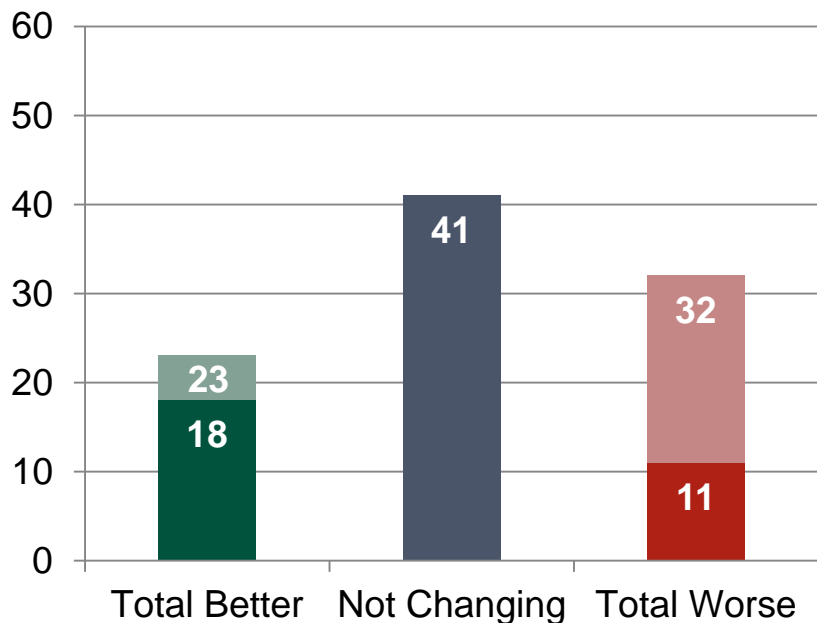


# Most View Public Education in Delaware as Stagnant



Generally speaking, do you think that public education in Delaware is getting better, getting worse or not changing one way or the other?

■ Much Better   ■ Total Better   ■ Not Changing  
 ■ Much Worse   ■ Total Worse



	Total Better	Not Changing	Total Worse
Wilmington	17	48	34
Rest of New Castle	21	43	31
Kent	22	38	40
Sussex	30	37	27
Parents	22	47	32
Non-Parents	24	39	32
Public School Parents	24	47	29
Democrats	34	39	23
Independents	17	43	35
Republicans	15	42	42
White	21	41	34
AA	24	45	27

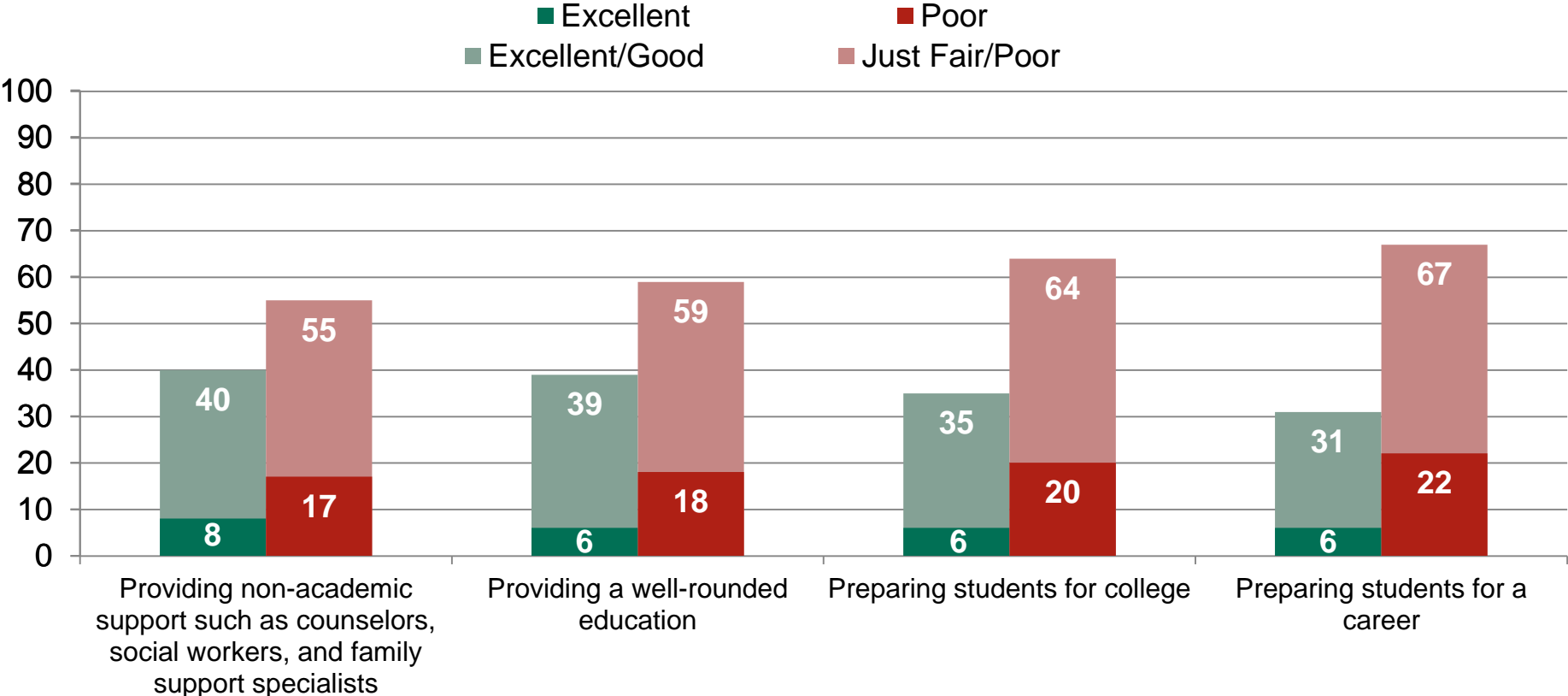


## Performance of Delaware Public Schools

# Delaware Public Schools Underperforming in Preparing Students



Now I am going to read you a few ways public schools can prepare students. For each one, please rate the job Delaware's public schools are doing on that issue.

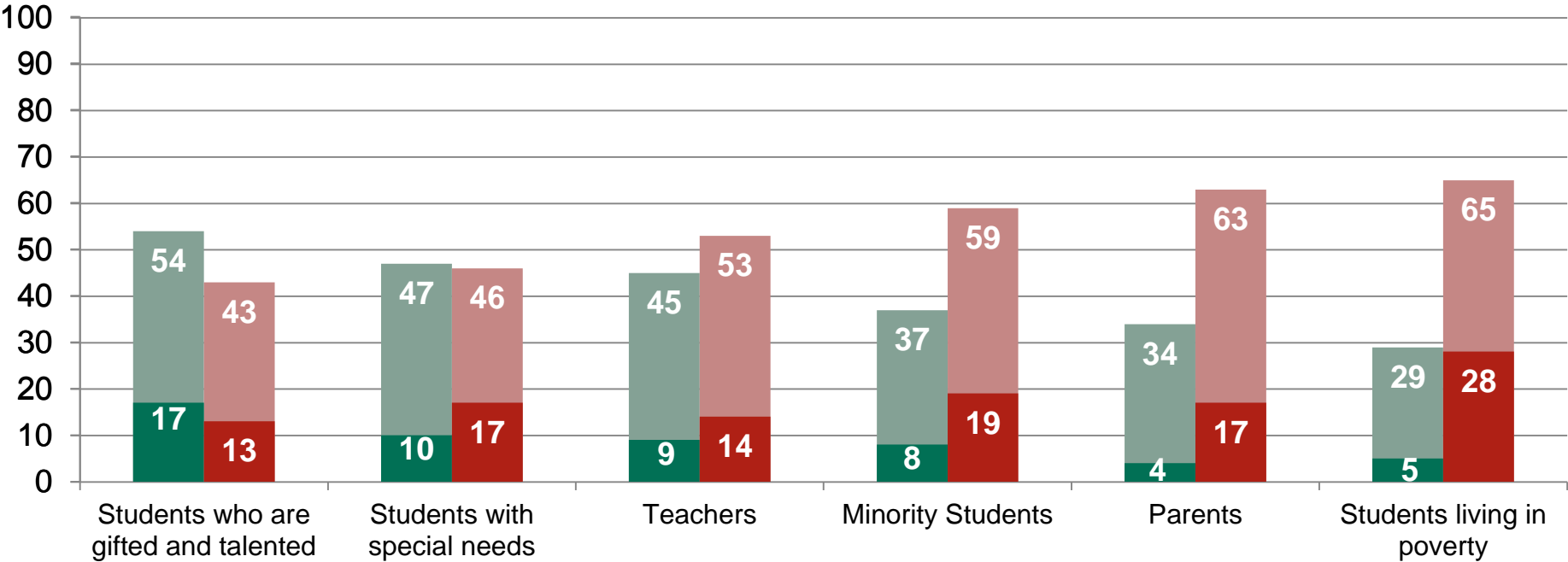


# Delaware Public Schools Failing at Meeting Needs of Key Groups



Now I am going to read you some groups of people who are involved in Delaware's public schools. For each one, please rate the job Delaware's public schools are doing in meeting that group's needs as a whole.

■ Excellent                      ■ Poor  
■ Excellent/Good              ■ Just Fair/Poor



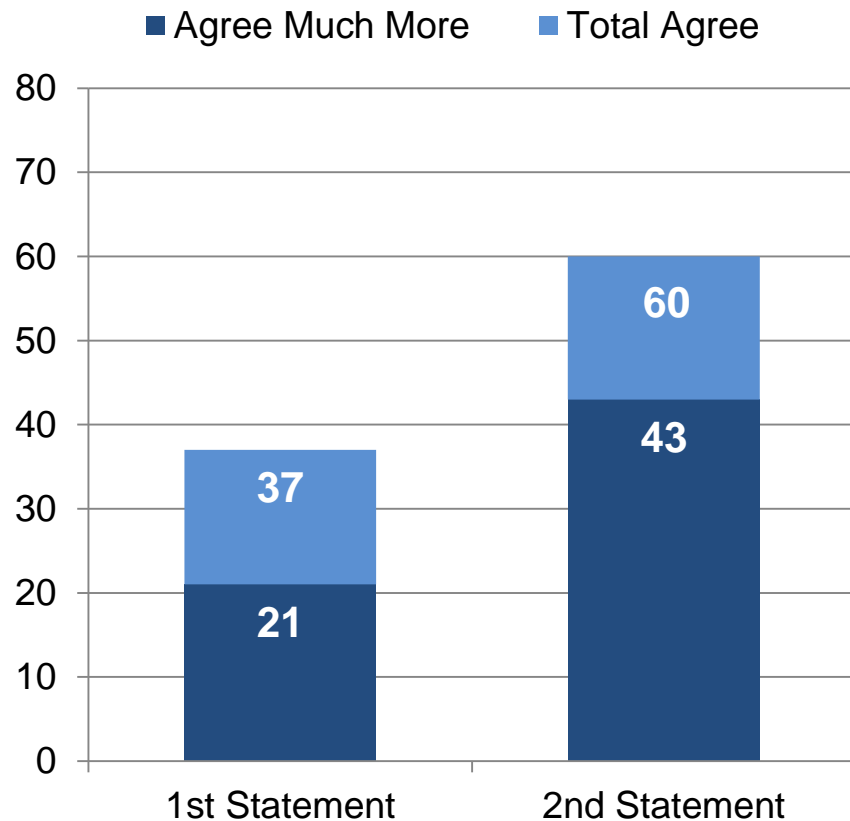
# Voters See Delaware Schools Failing to Meet Individual Needs



Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

**(1<sup>st</sup> Statement)** Delaware schools do a **good job of focusing on students as individuals** and trying to meet their unique needs.

**(2<sup>nd</sup> Statement)** Delaware schools **rely too much on one-size-fits-all solutions** and do not focus enough on students' individual needs



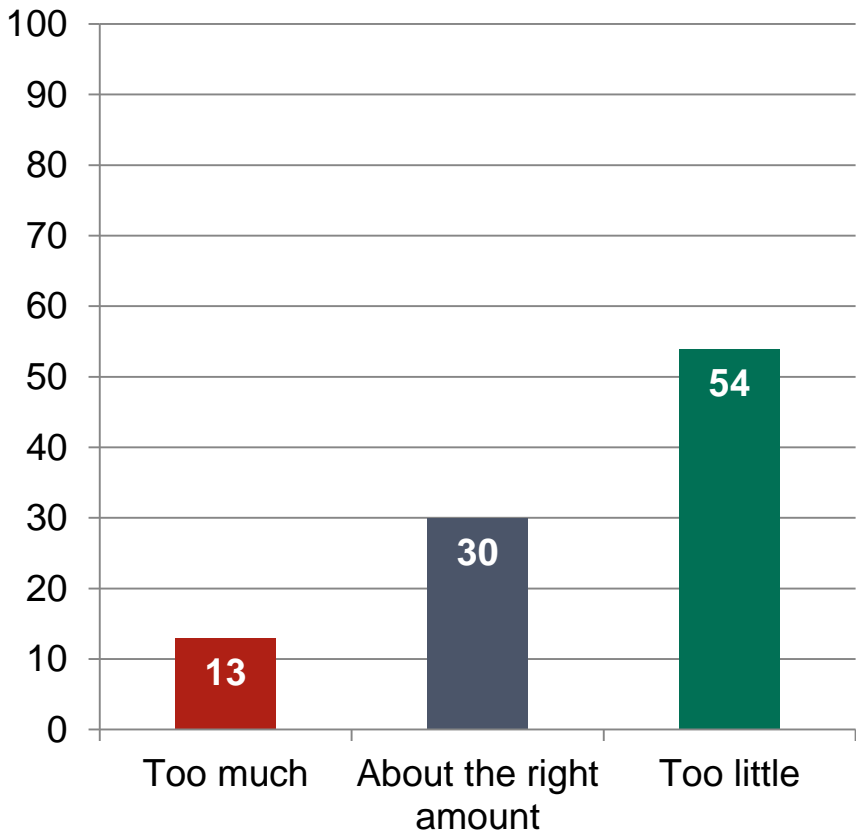


## Policies and Government

# Majority Believe We Spend Too Little on DE Public Education...



In your view, do you think we spend too much, too little, or about the right amount on public education in Delaware?



	Too Much	About the Right Amount	Too Little
Wilmington	8	18	69
Rest of New Castle	17	27	54
Kent	14	35	49
Sussex	7	35	52
Under 50	9	27	62
50+	17	32	46
Public School Parents	12	30	57
Democrats	5	24	67
Independents	14	34	49
Republicans	24	32	41
White	14	30	52
AA	4	23	71

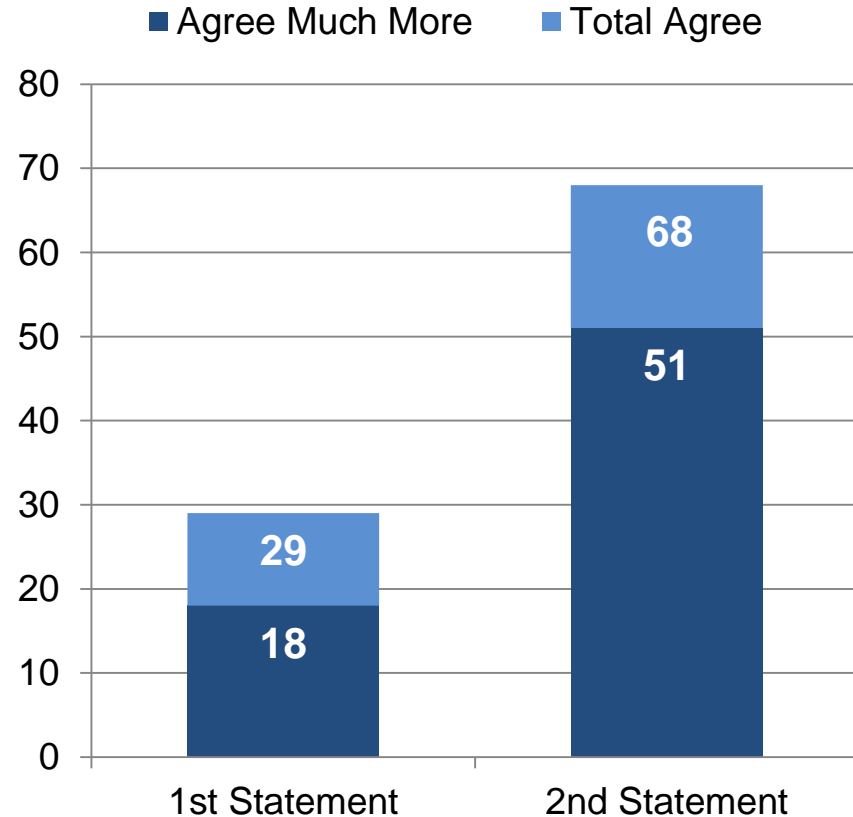
# ...And that Elected Officials Need to Focus More on Education



Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

**(1<sup>st</sup> Statement)** Our **elected officials** in Dover understand the importance of public education in Delaware and **give it the attention it deserves**.

**(2<sup>nd</sup> Statement)** Our next Governor and state legislature **must do more to focus on improving public education** in Delaware.





# At Least 2-in-3 in Every Region Say Elected Officials Must Do More

Agree Much More

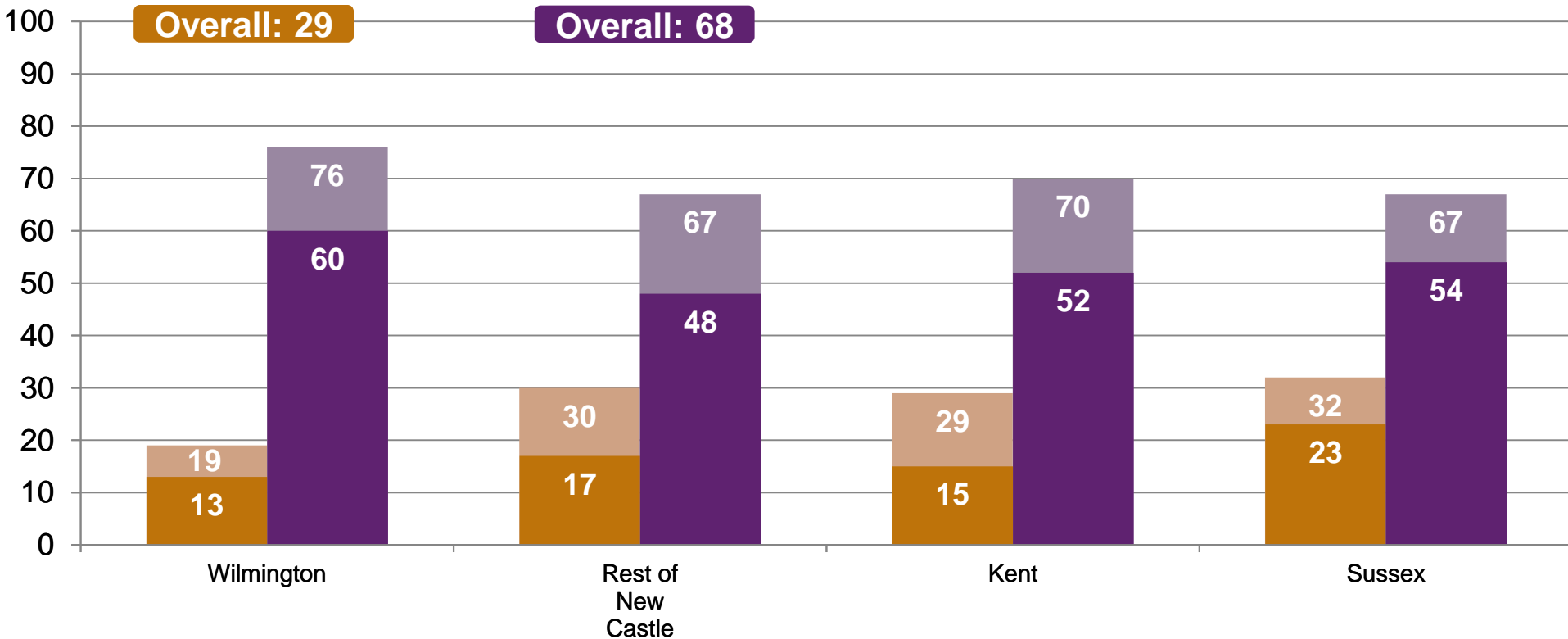
Electeds Doing Well

Electeds Must Do More

Agree Total More

Electeds Doing Well

Electeds Must Do More



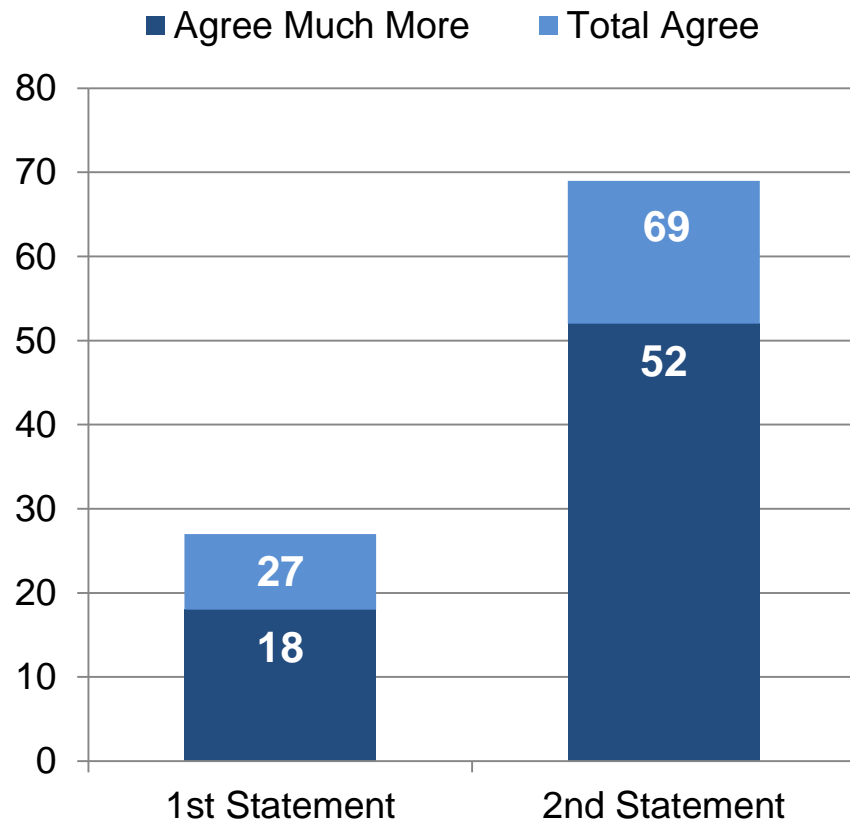
# Voters Decry Lack of Information on Education Funding



Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

**(1<sup>st</sup> Statement)** As a Delaware voter, **I can find the information I need about how tax dollars are spent in our education system** so I can make an informed decision when I vote.

**(2<sup>nd</sup> Statement)** It is **too hard to find information about how tax dollars are spent in our education system**, and we need to do more to make information available so voters can make informed decisions.

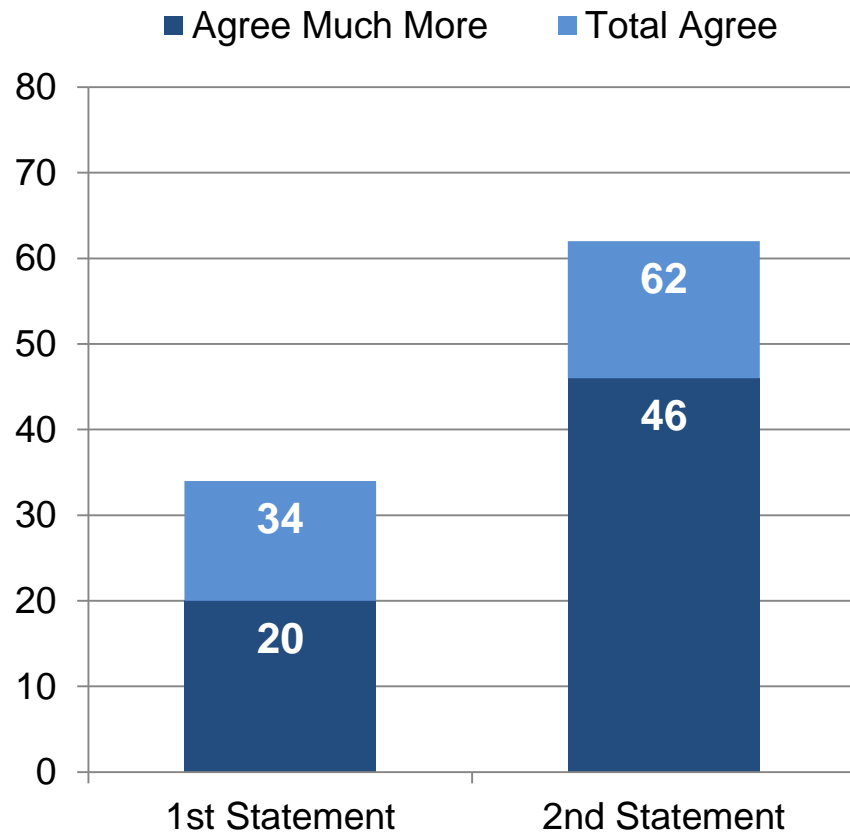


# Voters See Need for More Support for Students in High-Need Communities

**Q** Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

**(1<sup>st</sup> Statement)** Schools in high-need communities should focus their resources on **traditional academic support** for students rather than trying to meet students' non-academic needs.

**(2<sup>nd</sup> Statement)** It is important that schools in high-need communities **provide non-academic supports** for students such as counselors, social workers, health services, and family support specialists.





**Policy Prescriptions**

# Broad Support for Range of Policies to Improve Public Education

Prevent students from advancing to the next grade until they meet academic standards or attend summer school



Make voluntary pre-kindergarten available for all students



Give high-needs schools extra support in the form of teams of expert teachers



Raise starting salaries for teachers and provide more opportunities for them to advance their careers without leaving the classroom to go into an administrative role



Provide extra funding to schools dealing with students from low-income families



Require higher levels of education and practical experience for child care and early childhood providers



Make a major new investment in wireless and broadband technology in Delaware



Reassess statewide property values to ensure more consistent and accurate funding for schools



Provide extra funding to schools dealing with students whose first language is not English



■ Strongly Support

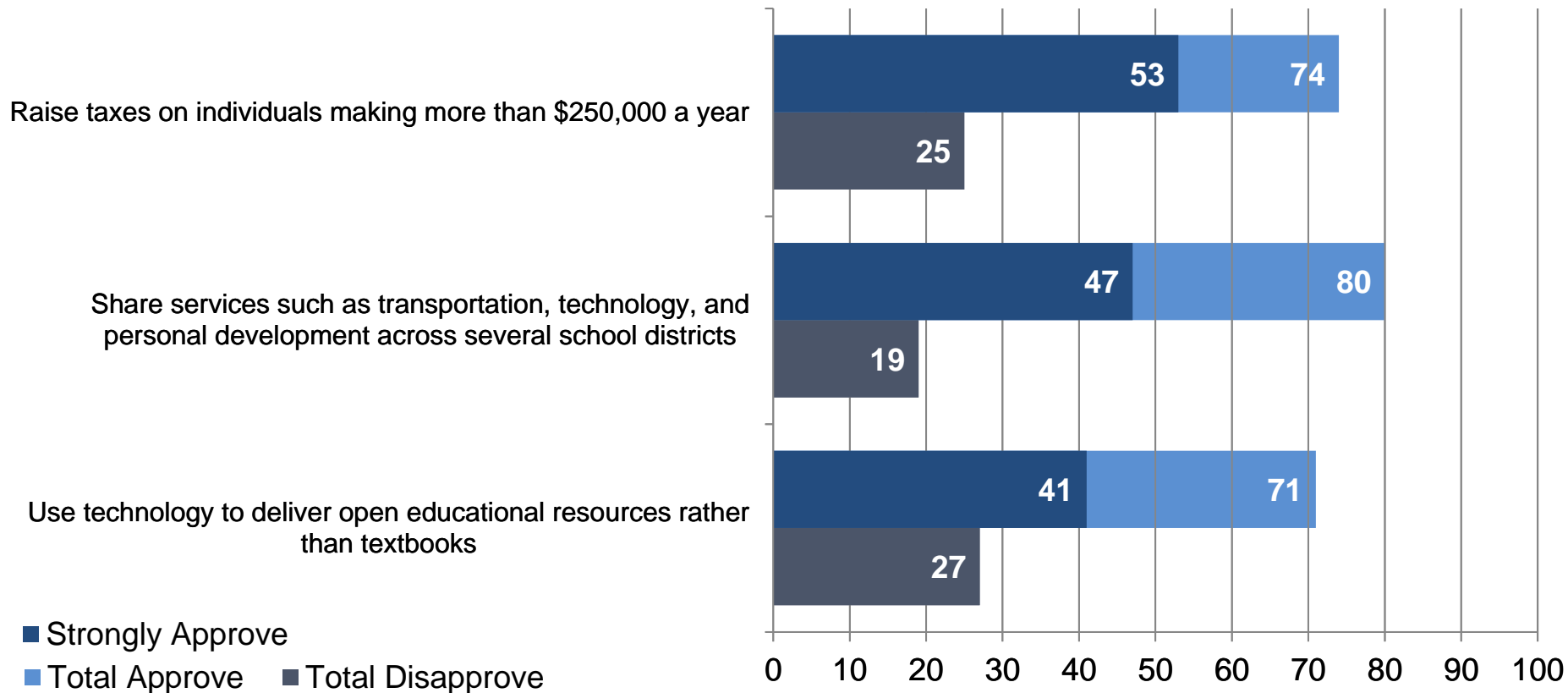
■ Total Support

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

# Broad and Intense Support for Top Revenue Proposals



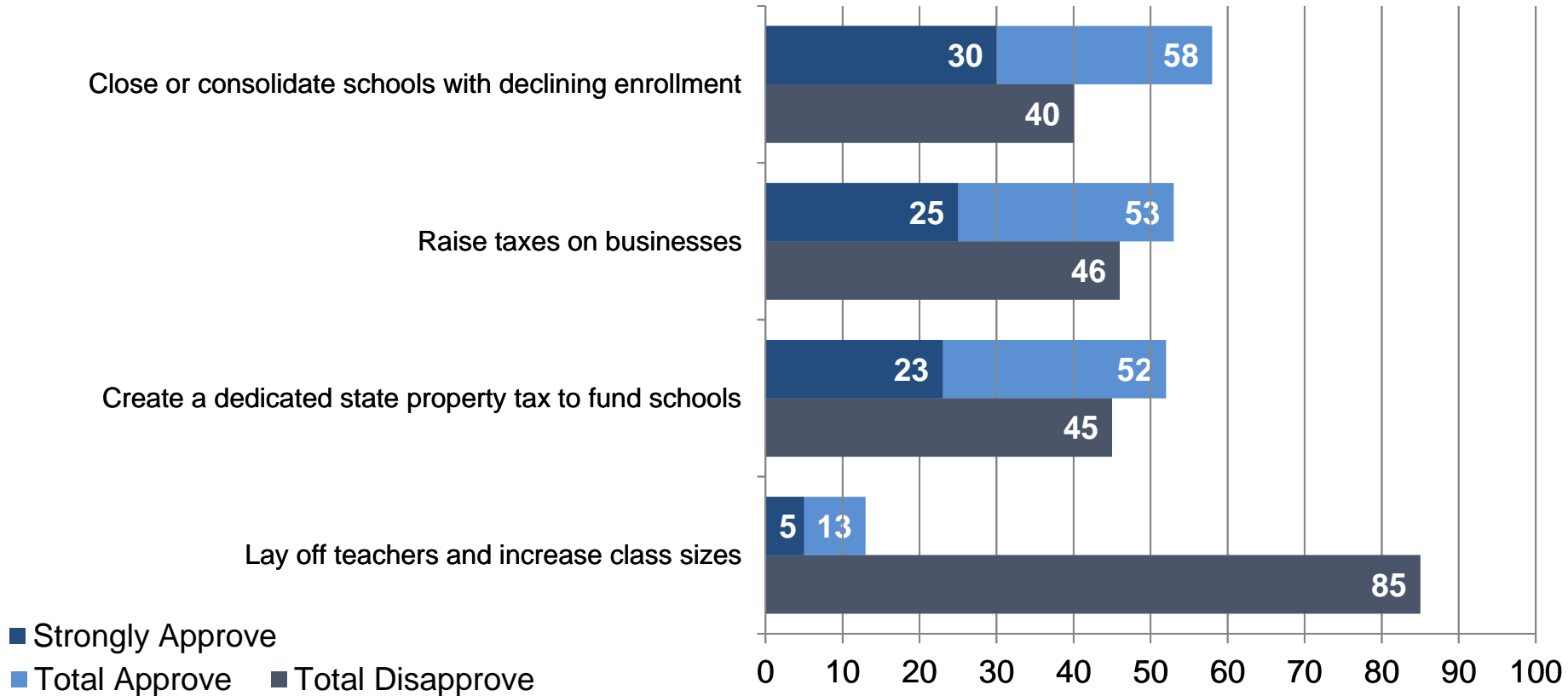
As you may know, the State of Delaware currently faces a budget deficit and must cut spending, increase revenue, or find some combination of the two to balance the state budget. Please tell me whether you would approve or disapprove of each of the following proposals to help balance the state budget.



## Less Intense Majority Support for Other Proposals – And Overwhelming Rejection of One



As you may know, the State of Delaware currently faces a budget deficit and must cut spending, increase revenue, or find some combination of the two to balance the state budget. Please tell me whether you would approve or disapprove of each of the following proposals to help balance the state budget.





## **Student Success 2025 - Core Areas**

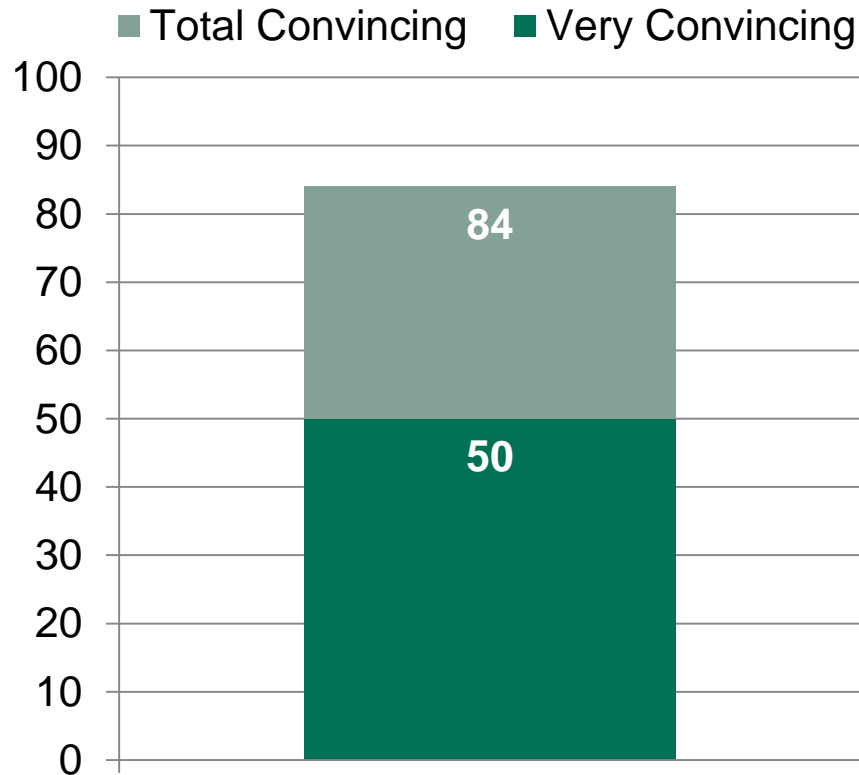


## Postsecondary Success Scores Highest Among Core Issues



For each statement, please tell me whether you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, a little convincing, or not at all convincing strategy for improving public education in Delaware.

An increasing number of jobs require at least one year of education after high school, plus concrete work experience, and our schools must do a better job of **helping students identify and prepare for the path that is right for them**. We must deeply **integrate our public schools with local colleges and employers**, allowing students to gain professional experience and build relationships before they graduate high school.

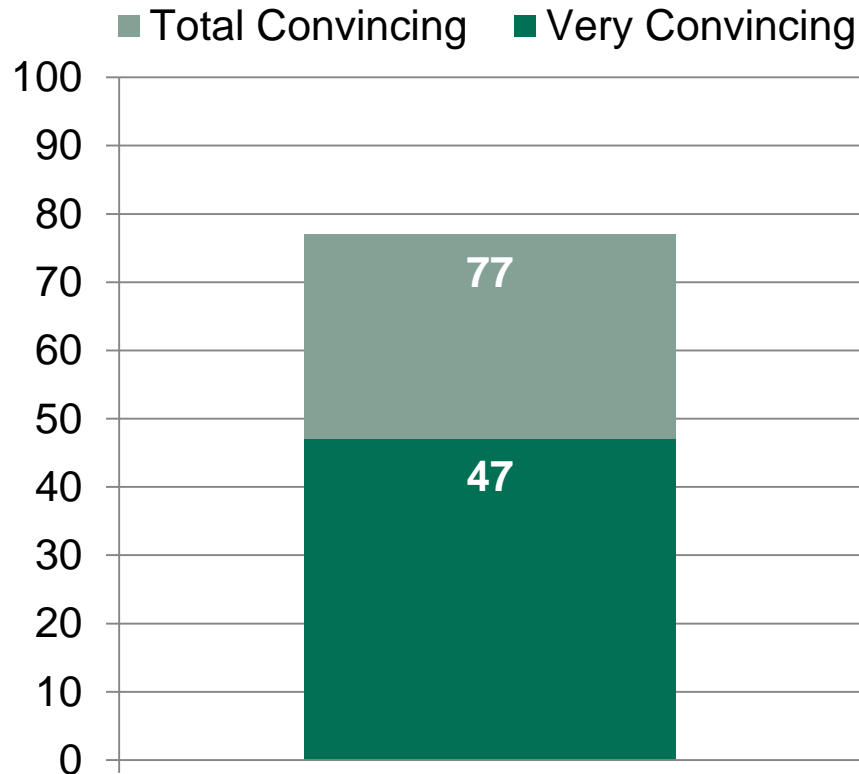


# Early Learning Viewed As Highly Effective, Essential to Academic Success



For each statement, please tell me whether you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, a little convincing, or not at all convincing strategy for improving public education in Delaware.

**Effective early childhood education is essential to academic success.** By the time a child celebrates his or her fifth birthday, nearly 90 percent of intellect, personality, and social skills are already developed. That's why it's so important to **identify issues and address them early.** When children arrive in kindergarten ready to learn, they are more likely to thrive in school and future endeavors. Delaware has built a quality system and must **continue to invest** to ensure children succeed later in life.

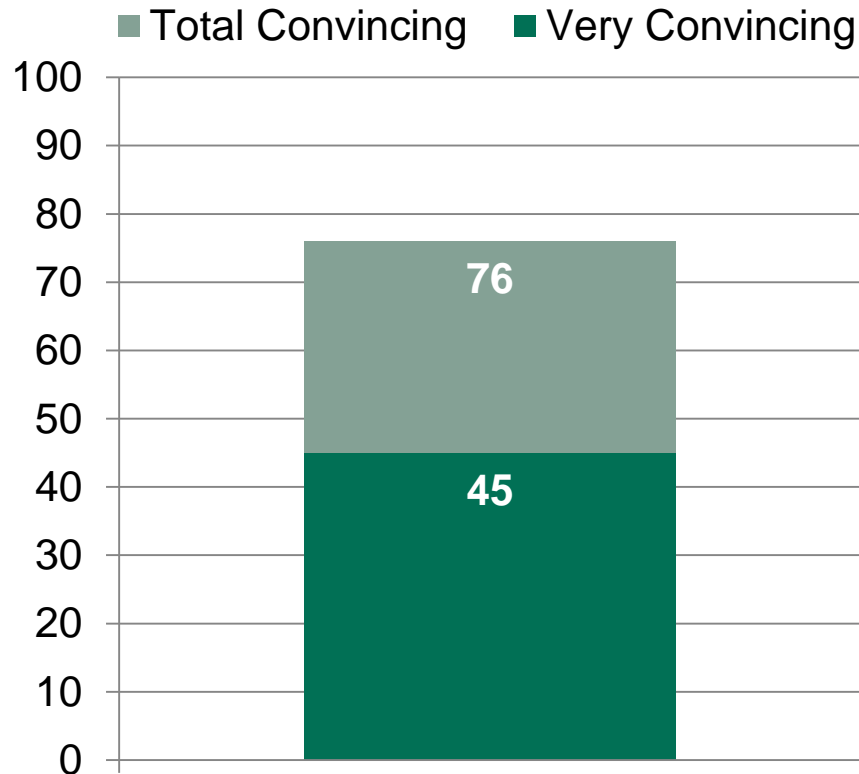


# Personalized Learning Addresses Concerns About One-Size-Fits-All Approach



For each statement, please tell me whether you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, a little convincing, or not at all convincing strategy for improving public education in Delaware.

Research proves what parents already know - every child learns in a different way. Advancements in technology play a key role in allowing students to drive their own learning at a pace that works for them and **equipping teachers** with tools to provide support. We need to create a curriculum and teaching approach that puts **more focus on individualized learning and outcomes instead of a one-size-fits-all approach**.

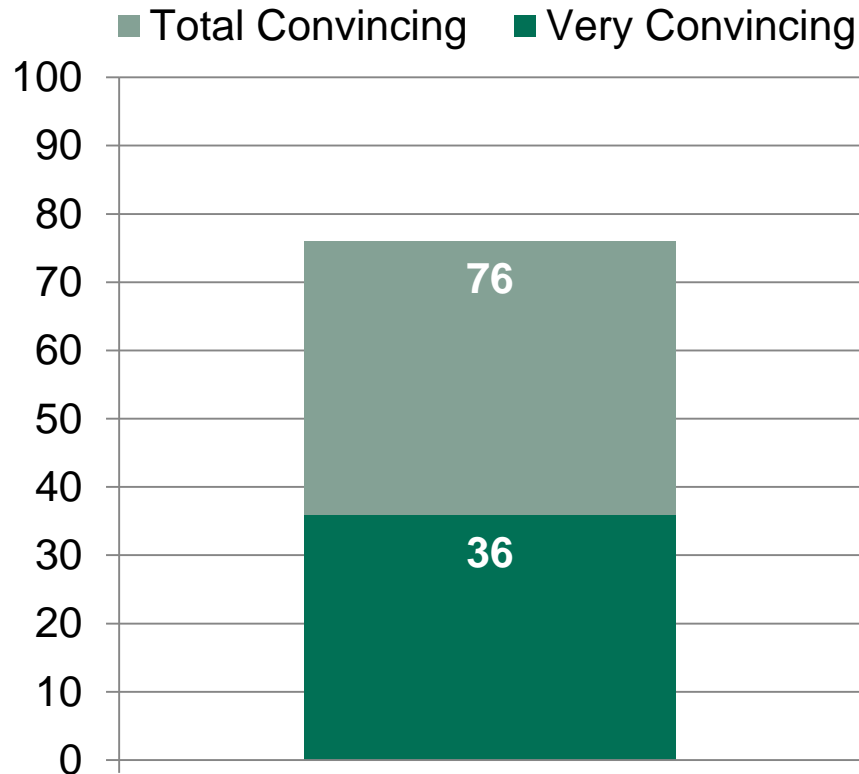


## Broad Support, but Less Intensity, for Educator Support and Development



For each statement, please tell me whether you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, a little convincing, or not at all convincing strategy for improving public education in Delaware.

Research proves that committed teachers and effective school leaders are the two most important in-school factors contributing to student achievement. That's why we need more rigorous training and certification for new teachers, continuing development for current teachers, renewed focus on finding and developing dynamic principals, and an evaluation system that combines student performance with feedback from parents and other teachers.

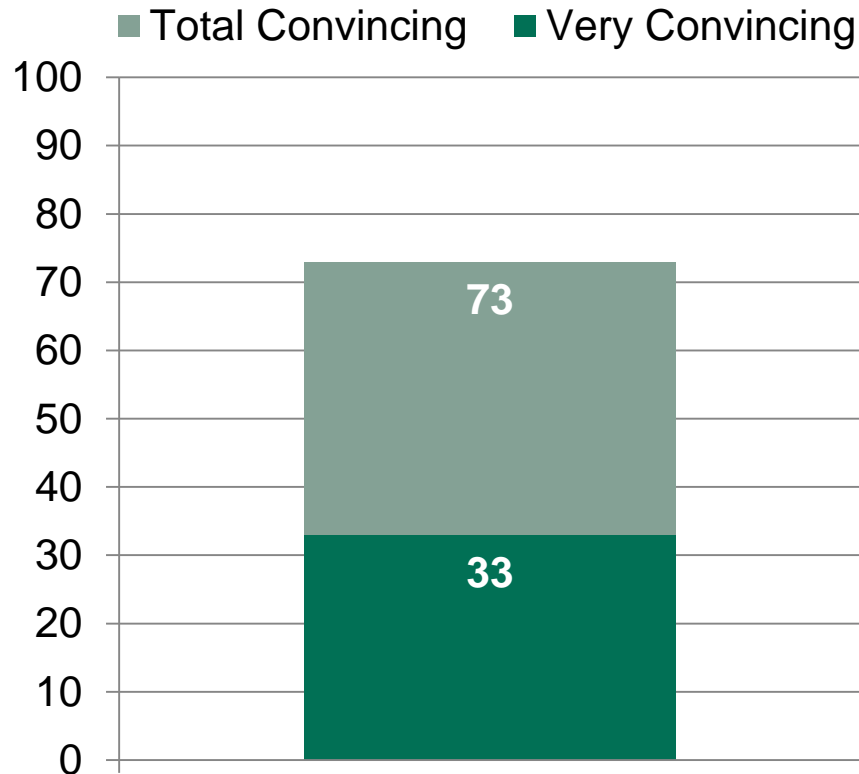


## System Governance, Alignment, & Performance Addresses Broader Concerns w/Government



For each statement, please tell me whether you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, a little convincing, or not at all convincing strategy for improving public education in Delaware.

Decision making in Delaware schools is complicated and divided. The governor, the legislature, state and local boards, all play a role in deciding what happens in our schools. We must **break down these artificial barriers** and take advantage of our small size to measure performance **consistently across all districts and charter schools**, share data and best practices, and ensure those charged with running our schools are **working together to support all students and increase collaboration and performance** across the state.

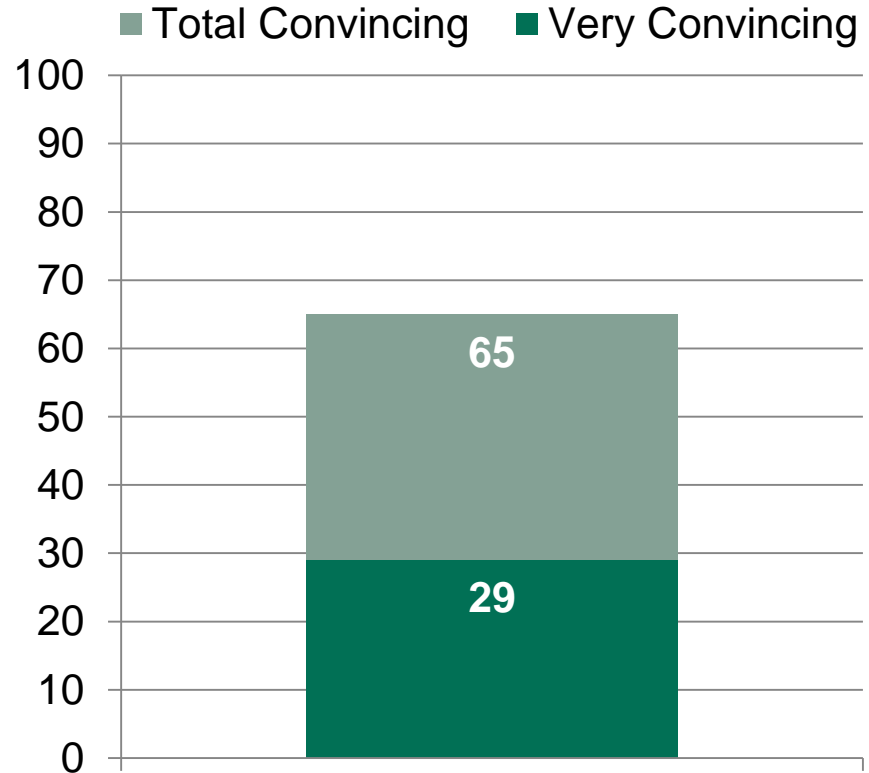


## Fair and Efficient Funding Important but Raises Financial Concerns, Questions



For each statement, please tell me whether you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, a little convincing, or not at all convincing strategy for improving public education in Delaware.

Delaware's funding formula for schools was developed during World War II and doesn't reflect the state's current needs. We should modernize school funding by matching funding to individual students' needs, establishing consistent revenue through rolling property reassessments, giving individual schools more flexibility in how funds are spent, and cutting waste by sharing services across schools and districts.



**g | b | a** **gerstein | bocian | agne**  

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**strategies**