



EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNTS

Florida Survey Results

February 2019

SURVEY OVERVIEW

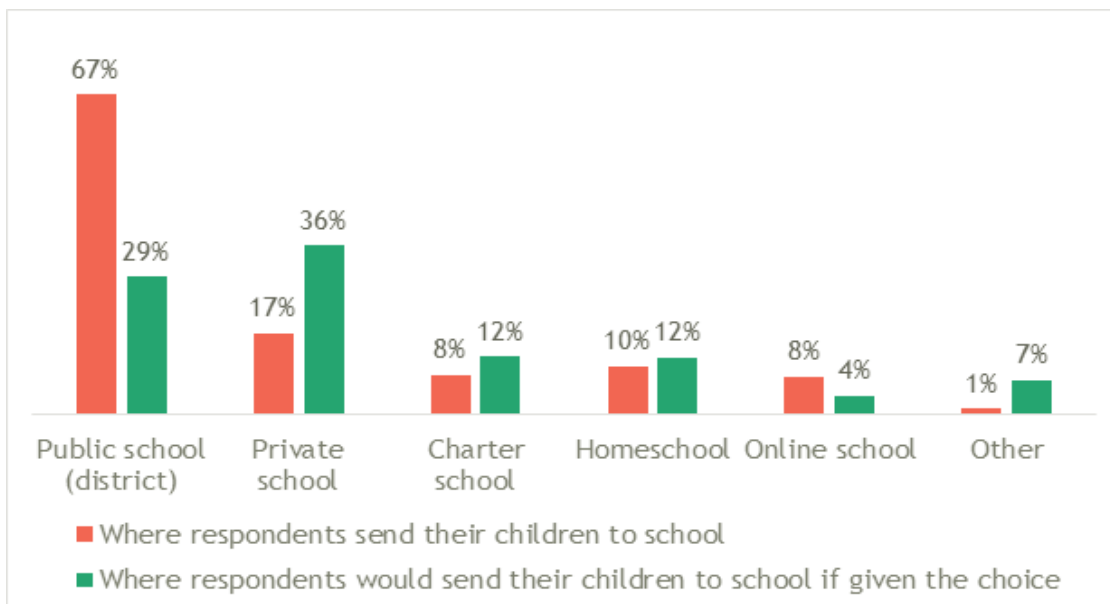
A statewide survey of 800 registered voters in Florida took place between January 23 and 25. The purpose of the survey was to gauge their opinions of private education choice, policy design and other issues related to Florida's system of K-12 education.

This summary details respondents' views related to the policy design of expanded private education choice in the state.

- Three out of four respondents support allowing parents to choose a school instead of sending them to a school based on their zip code.
- If given the chance, 36% of respondents would enroll their child in a private school, yet only 17% of respondents with school-age children enroll their child in a private school.
- 72% support expanding ESAs to serve more students.
- 55% of respondents think all students, regardless of income should be eligible to participate. 31% believe low- and middle-income students should be able to participate. Only 14% believe the program should be limited to low-income students.
- Respondents generally do not want to see caps on how many students may participate in an expanded program (51%). If caps are required, respondents prefer them to grow over time based on student demand (43%).

SCHOOL PREFERENCES

When comparing where respondents send their children to school and where respondents would send their child if they could choose among all options, it is clear that far more Floridians would send their child to a private school if given the chance.

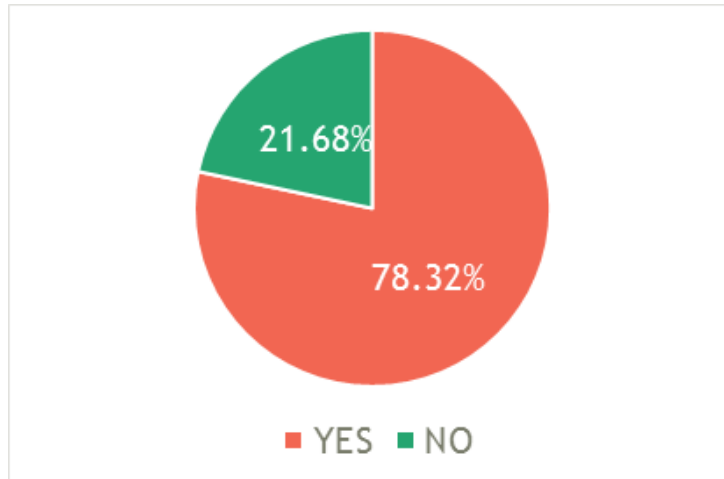




OVERALL SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION CHOICE

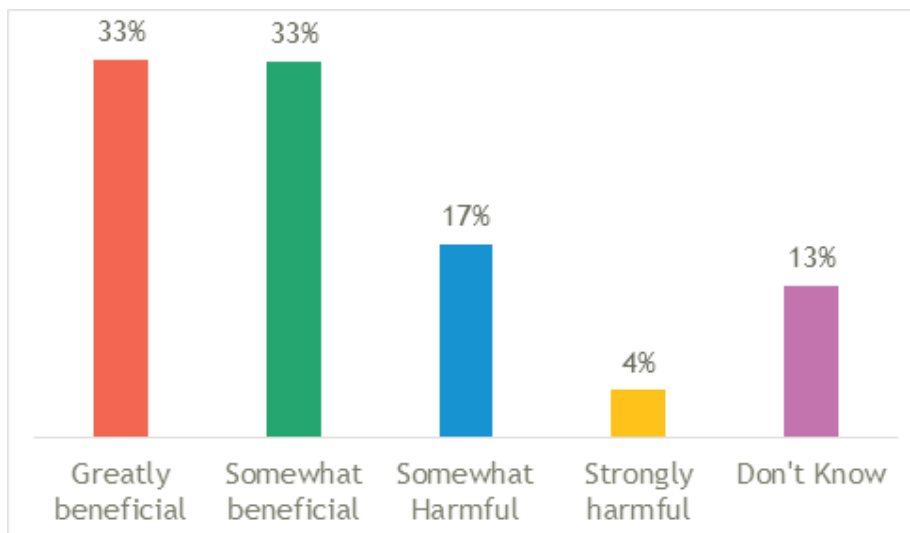
Support for the concept of educational choice remains high.

Question: *Generally speaking, do you support giving parents the opportunity to choose where they send their child to school rather than assigning children to schools based on zip code?*



Question: *There are approximately 3.7 million PreK-12 students in Florida. In the 2016-17 school year, 46.4 percent of those students attended a school of their choice via open enrollment public schools, magnet programs, public charter schools, publicly-supported scholarship programs (Florida Tax Credit Scholarships, Gardiner Scholarships, McKay Scholarships), private schools, career and professional academies, home education, full-time virtual instruction and voluntary pre-k (VPK) programs.*

That means nearly 1.7million PreK-12 students in Florida attended a school other than the one to which they are residentially assigned by their zip-code. In general, do you believe that allowing students to attend a school other than the one which they are residentially assigned is beneficial or harmful to the state's education system?





SUPPORT FOR EXISTING CHOICE PROGRAMS

Support for Florida’s existing choice programs remains high.

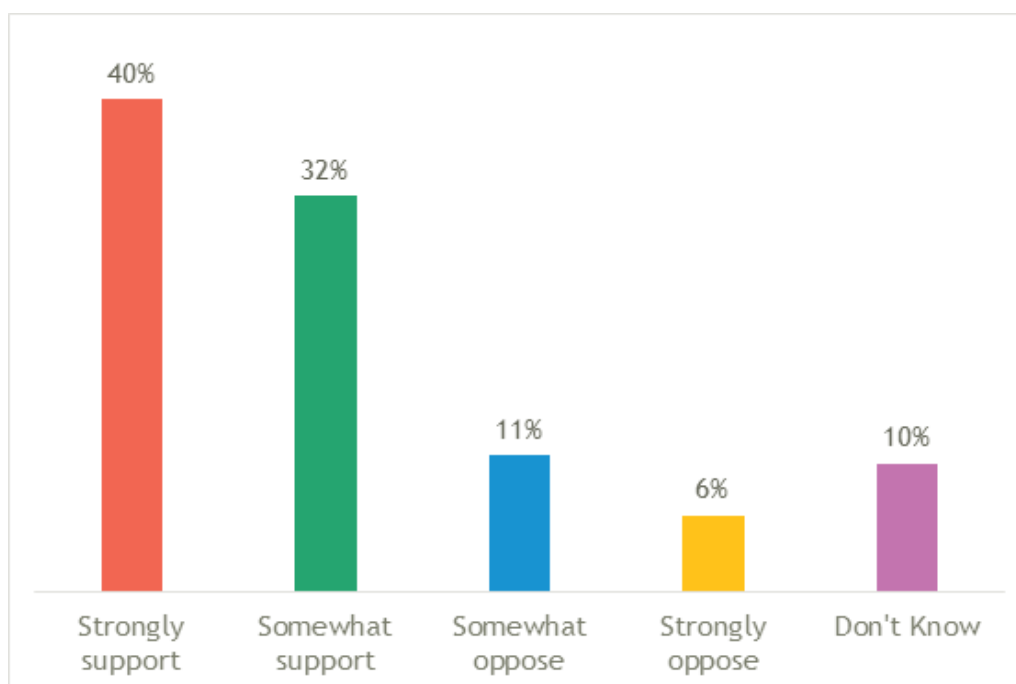
<u>Policy</u>	<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>
Gardiner Scholarships	84%	7%
FL Tax Credit Scholarships	75%	16%
Voluntary Pre-K	88%	7%

SUPPORT FOR AN EXPANDED ESA PROGRAM

Seventy two percent (72%) of respondents support the concept of an expanded education scholarship program, with only 17% opposing the idea.

Question: Florida lawmakers are considering expanding the state’s Education Scholarship Account program, such that many more students would be eligible to participate. Instead of sending a child’s share of education funding directly to a public school, under this program participating parents could elect to have their child’s funds deposited into an education scholarship that parents could use to pay for a variety of uses, including private school tuition, tutoring, online education, curriculum, therapy and other state-approved educational services.

In general, do you support or oppose the expansion of Florida’s Education Scholarship Account program such that many more students would be eligible to participate?





When asked **why** respondents **support** an expanded ESA (72% of respondents), the top reasons for expressing support were:

- Equal opportunity for all students (27%)
- More focus and attention to individual student needs (26%)
- Access to better academic options (24%)
- Flexibility for student learning needs (9%)
- More freedom for parents (8%)

When asked **why** respondents **oppose** an expanded ESA (17% of respondents), the top reasons for expressing opposition were:

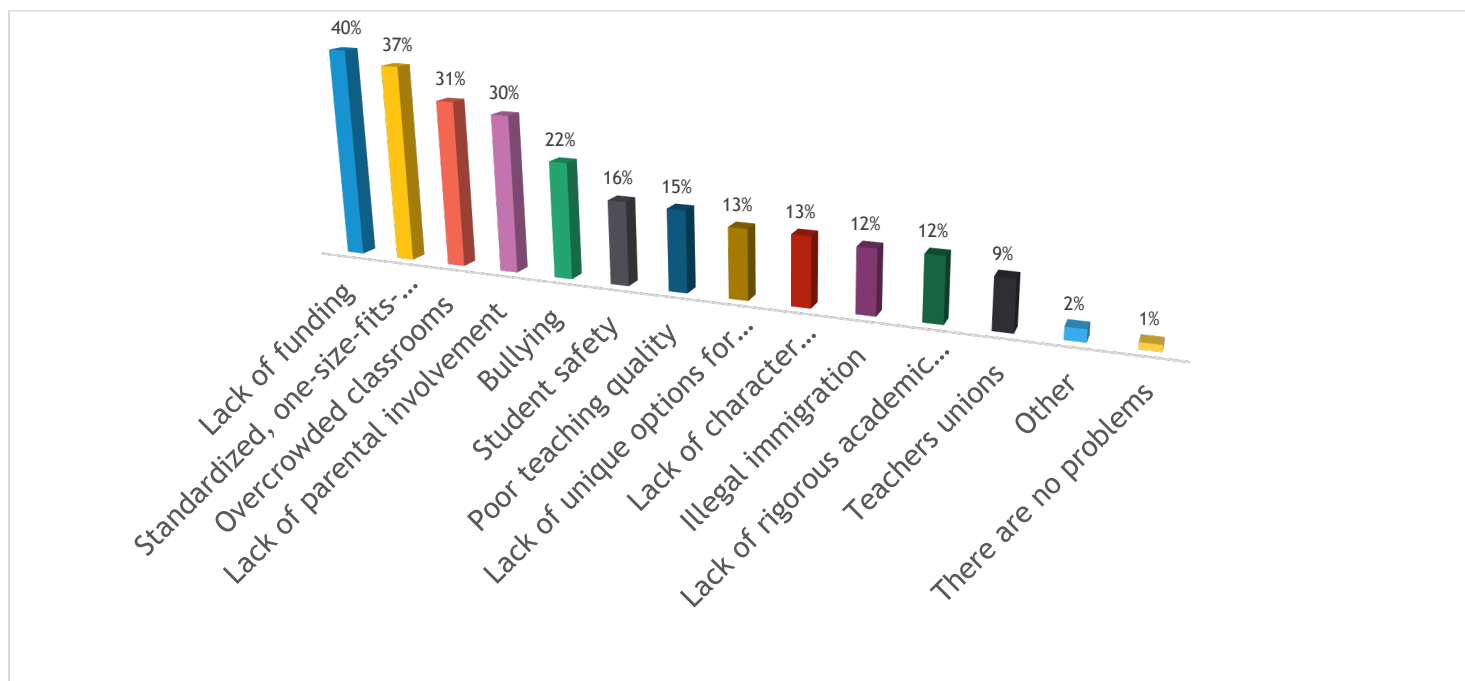
- Diverts funding/students away from public schools (40%)
- Benefits unaccountable private providers (20%)
- Leads to fraudulent behavior (13%)
- Not enough oversight of participating parents/students (10%)
- Doesn't benefit your child or children you know (9%)

OBSTACLES TO IMPROVING K-12 EDUCATION

When asked what they believed were the biggest obstacles to improving K-12 education in Florida, respondents' top choices were lack of funding (40%); Standardization, one-size-fits-all (37%); Overcrowded classrooms (31%); Lack of parental involvement (30%); Bullying (22%); Student safety (16%); Poor teaching quality (15%); Lack of unique options for... (13%); Lack of character... (13%); Illegal immigration (12%); Lack of rigorous academic... (12%); Teachers unions (9%); Other (2%); There are no problems (1%).

In a state with a continuously-growing student population (overcrowded classrooms), where citizens want customization (standardization, one-size-fits-all), there is a question as to whether providing choices to students that is less than Florida's annual level of student growth results in less funding for schools - or less need to build new classrooms or rent portable buildings.

Question: *In your view, what are the biggest obstacles to improving Florida's K-12 system? (Select up to 3)*



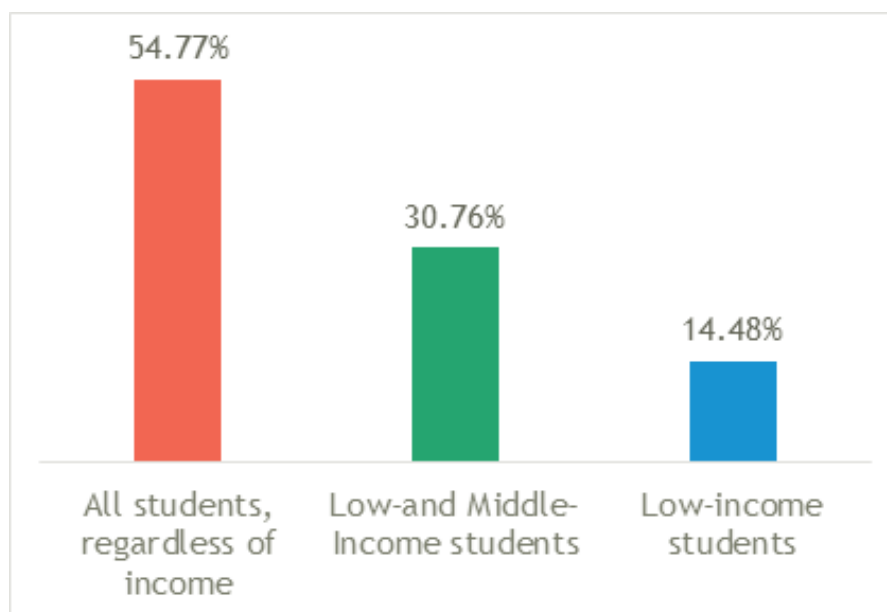


POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR AN EXPANDED ESA PROGRAM

Income Caps

When asked what income brackets should be allowed to participate in an expanded program, most respondents (55%) prefer that “all students, regardless of income” be eligible to participate. A smaller, but still large amount (31%) would like to see the program available to low- and middle-income students. Only 14% of respondents would want a program limited to low-income students.

Question: *If Florida’s Education Scholarship Account program were to be expanded, which group of students would you make eligible to participate?*



To add more context to what these income terms mean, we asked follow-up questions to those who selected that they would like the program to be limited to certain income brackets. They were asked: “*Imagine a family of four (parents and two children), what is the highest annual income you would allow to participate in this program?*”

Among the 31% of respondents who selected “**low- and middle-income students**”:

- 43% said \$75,000 per year
- 41% said \$50,000 per year
- 11% said \$100,000 per year

Among the 14% of respondents who selected “**low-income students**”:

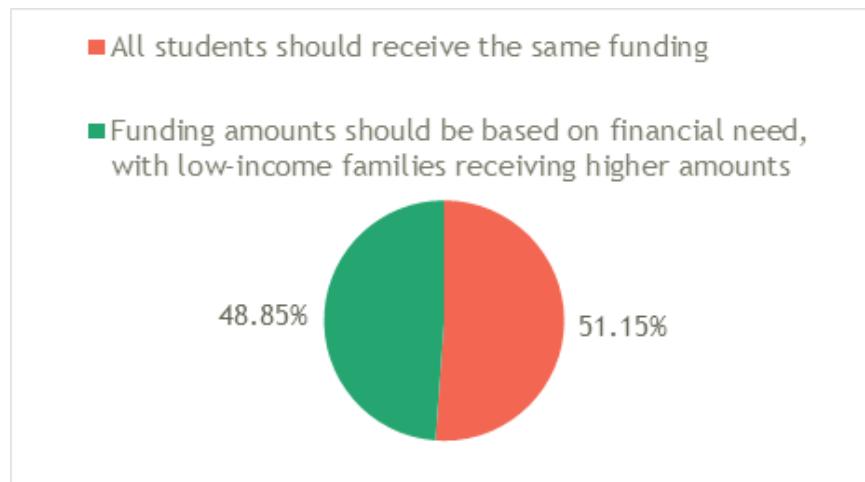
- 48% said \$50,000 per year
- 33% said \$25,000 per year
- 10% said \$75,000 per year



Needs-Based Scholarship Amounts

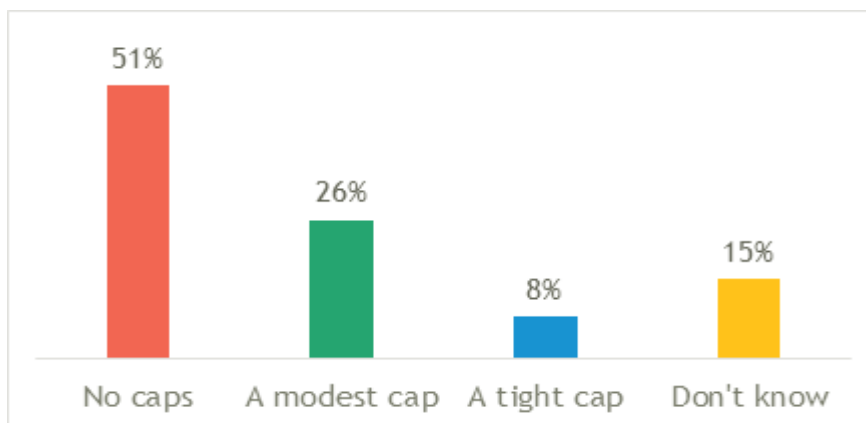
Respondents are split on whether scholarship amounts should be consistent across all groups, or whether they should be scaled based on family need.

Question: *If all students are eligible, should each student receive the same funding amount, or should the funding amount be based on family need? (For example, a low-income student might receive a \$7,000 funding amount, a middle-income student may receive \$5,000, and a high-income student may receive \$3,000).*



Participation/Enrollment Caps

Most respondents do not want to see caps on participation. Those who do want to see caps would rather them be modest. Few respondents want to see a tight cap on participation.



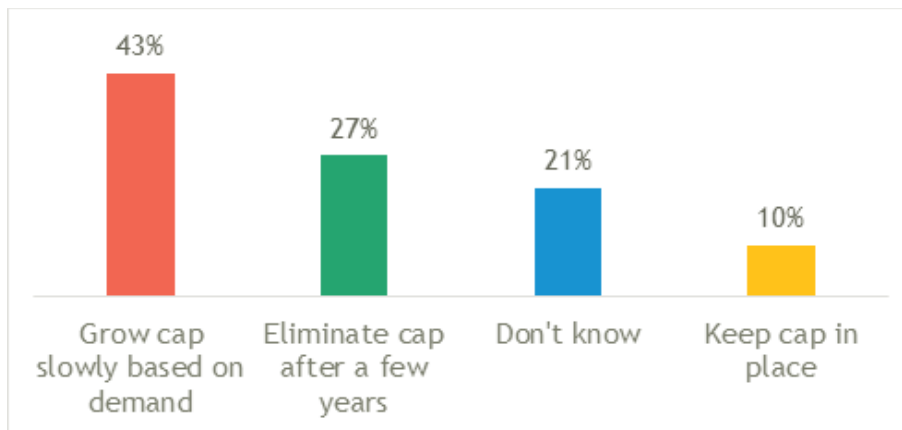
- 51% - “No caps on participation: All students who meet the eligibility criteria would be eligible to participate.”
- 26% - “A modest cap on participation: No more than 30,000 students would be eligible to participate in the first year. This amount is equivalent to 1% of the statewide public school enrollment”



- 8% - “A tight cap on participation: No more than 15,000 students would be eligible to participate in the first year. The statewide public school enrollment grew by nearly 20,000 students”

If a participation cap were put in place, a plurality of respondents (43%) prefer that it gradually rise over time to meet demand. Surprisingly, this is far more than the number of people who would want the cap to be eliminated after a few years (27%), which does not reflect the initial feeling that there should be no cap at all. Perhaps this is due to respondents’ feeling that participation should reflect demand.

Question: *If a cap on participation was put in place, would you support making this cap grow to meet student demand?*



For more information about the survey, visit [full survey results](#) and [survey results crosstabs](#).