KEY TAKEAWAYS

Nationwide polling shows that voters – especially Democratic primary voters and voters of color – believe we need to use every tool to improve our public schools. Voters want new investments, new ideas, and real changes, not just a return to the way things used to be. And by large margins, they believe it will take more than just money to improve schools. As a result, voters support a range of education reforms to promote public school choice, teacher quality, accountability, funding equity, and higher education affordability. Democratic candidates have an opportunity to connect with voters by owning the need for real change that goes beyond just financial investment and includes bold, new ideas for our kids.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Voters, especially Democratic primary voters and voters of color, believe we have a responsibility to do <u>everything we can</u> to give every child a great education, and that means we need <u>faster change</u> in our schools to prepare students for the future.

- 78% of voters *strongly* agree that "we need to do everything we can to ensure every child has a fair shot to succeed, no matter where they're from."
    - ✓ This belief is even more intense among key Democratic constituencies:
        - ▪ 93% of Democratic primary voters *strongly* agree
        - ▪ 99% of African-American voters *strongly* agree
        - ▪ 72% of Latino voters *strongly* agree
- In a forced choice, 54% of voters say they are more worried that "public schools aren't changing fast enough, leaving our students unprepared for the challenges ahead."
    - ✓ On the other hand, only 34% say instead that they're more concerned that "public schools across the country are changing too fast, making it impossible for teachers to do their jobs and leaving students unable to keep up."
    - ✓ This desire for faster change in schools is even more pronounced among key audiences for Democratic candidates:
        - ▪ Democratic primary voters: 63% not changing fast enough / 27% too fast
        - ▪ African-American voters: 64% not changing fast enough / 31% too fast
        - ▪ Latino voters: 58% not changing fast enough / 36% too fast

Key Democratic constituencies believe strongly that we can't go back to the way things used to be in schools. We need to keep bringing in new ideas and finding <u>new ways to improve schools</u>.

- In a forced choice, 63% of Democratic primary voters, and 50% of voters overall, agree that "we can't fix the problems in our schools by going backward – we need to keep finding new ways to improve the things that aren't working in schools today."
    - ✓ Just 33% of Democratic primary voters, and 45% of voters overall, agree instead that "change doesn't always mean improvement – we need to go back to the way things used to be, when teachers cared about teaching and students cared about learning."
    - ✓ Voters of color agree that we need to find new ways to improve schools rather than go backward:
        - ▪ African-American voters: 55% find new ways to improve / 42% go back
        - ▪ Latino voters: 51% find new ways to improve / 43% go back

Voters strongly believe that we need more funding to improve public schools, but <u>funding alone is not enough</u> to give our children the education they deserve. Voters also want to see new ideas and real changes to the way public schools operate.

- When given three options for how to improve America's public schools, voters across partisan and demographic lines say we need more funding along with new ideas and real changes:
    - ✓ Just 12% say that "we just need to fully fund public schools, not make major changes to how they work."
    - ✓ 56% of all voters say that "we need to not only provide more funding for public schools, but also bring in new ideas and make real changes to how schools operate."
    - ✓ Just 29% say that "there's already enough money going toward public schools, we just need to spend it more effectively."
- Even larger majorities of key Democratic constituencies agree that we not only need more funding, but also new ideas and real changes in schools:
    - ✓ 69% of Democratic primary voters
    - ✓ 73% of African-American voters
    - ✓ 61% of Latino voters

In keeping with this desire for real changes and improvements in schools, voters strongly support a range of education reforms which make up DFER's policy agenda.

- **Funding Equity:** 89% of voters say "making sure that every public school gets the funding it needs, even in disadvantaged areas" is a very important priority (6 or 7 on a 7-point scale).
    - ✓ This includes 90% of African-American voters and 88% of Latino voters.
- **School Choice:** 65% of voters say "ensuring parents have a variety of public school options for their kids - including charter schools, magnet schools, and career academies - no matter where they live or how much money they have" is a very important priority (6 or 7 on a 7-point scale).
    - ✓ This includes 86% of African-American voters and 67% of Latino voters.
- **Teacher Quality and Preparation:** 76% of voters strongly agree that "we need to do more to identify and reward great teachers who make a difference."
    - ✓ This includes 90% of African-American voters and 80% of Latino voters.
- **Accountability:** 66% of voters say "holding schools accountable for making decisions based on what works to educate kids" is a very important priority (6 or 7 on a 7-point scale).
    - ✓ This includes 75% of African-American voters and 73% of Latino voters.
- **Higher Education:** 68% of voters say "increasing the availability of financial aid for college" is a very important priority (6 or 7 on a 7-point scale).
    - ✓ This includes 83% of African-American voters and 84% of Latino voters.

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Methodology: In May – July 2018, Benenson Strategy Group, in consultation with 270 Strategies, conducted two nationwide phone polls on behalf of Democrats for Education Reform to explore voter attitudes on education. The first poll was conducted among 1004 presidential voters. The second poll was conducted among 1009 presidential voters. The margin of error for each poll is ±3.1. It is higher among subgroups.