

OHIOANS' VIEWS ON EDUCATION 2007

**A survey conducted for The Thomas B. Fordham
Institute by the FDR Group**



**THOMAS B. FORDHAM
INSTITUTE**

FDR GROUP
When Research Matters.

Methodology

- **Statewide random sample telephone survey**
- **Many questions repeat from 2005 survey**
- **1,000 Ohio adults (+/-3):**
 - Includes 104 African-Americans
 - Includes 340 parents (K-12)
- **Oversamples:**
 - 200 residents of five large cities (+/-7)
 - 200 Dayton residents (+/-7)
- **Fielded April 29-May 8th, 2007**
- **Two focus groups: Columbus and Dayton**

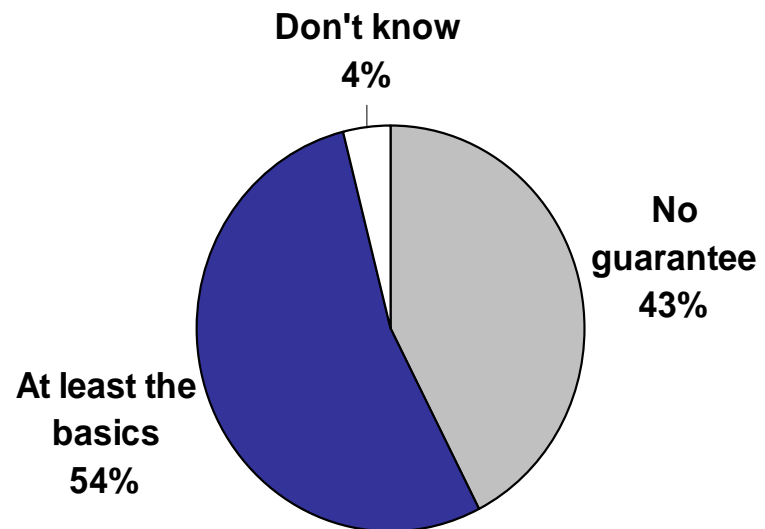
Uncertain that students are learning the basics

Q. Which is more accurate for the students graduating from your local public schools?

A high school diploma is no guarantee that the typical student has learned the basics

OR

A high school diploma means the typical student has at least learned the basics



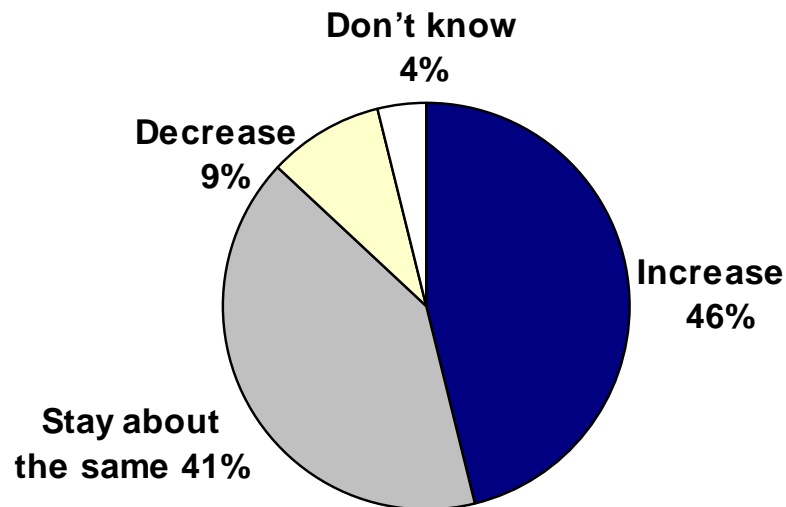
- For residents of 5 large cities: 53% "no guarantee"
- 2005 survey: 42% statewide "no guarantee"

Halfway out the door

- Only 41% of parents say public district schools would be their first choice if money were not an issue (compared with 37% in 2005 survey)
- 57% of parents would prefer other options (e.g., private, religious, charter schools)

On the surface, some Ohioans support additional school spending

Q. Keeping in mind that the money for public education has to be paid by taxes, do you think that government funding for public schools in your district should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?



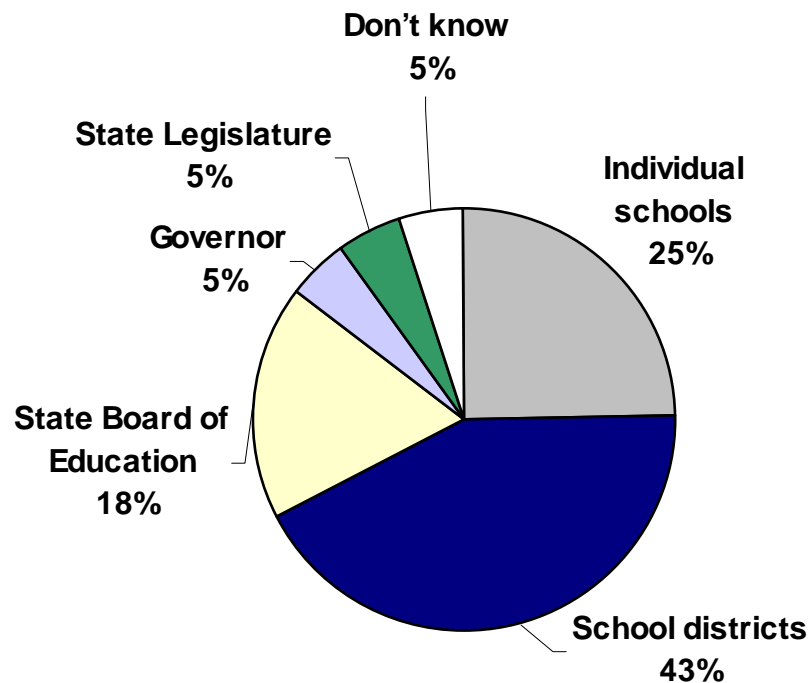
But most believe school money would get lost along the way

Q. If Ohio decided to spend more money on the public schools, do you think:

	2007	2005
The money would actually get to the classrooms and improve education	21%	21%
The money would actually get lost along the way	71%	69%
Don't know	8%	10%

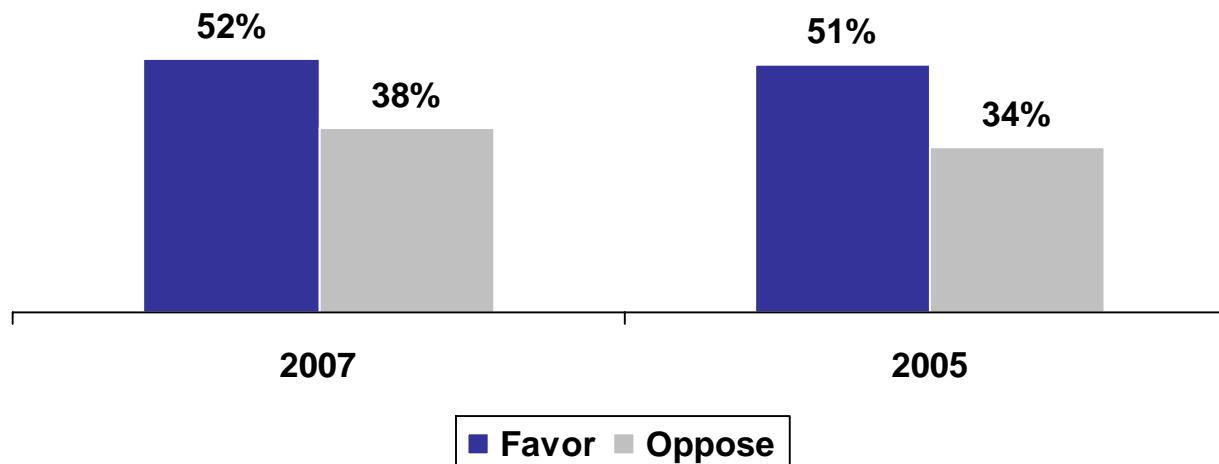
Ohioans most trust schools and districts to decide how to spend tax dollars

Q. Which of these do you trust most to make decisions about how to spend tax money allocated to Ohio's public schools?



Steady support for charter schools

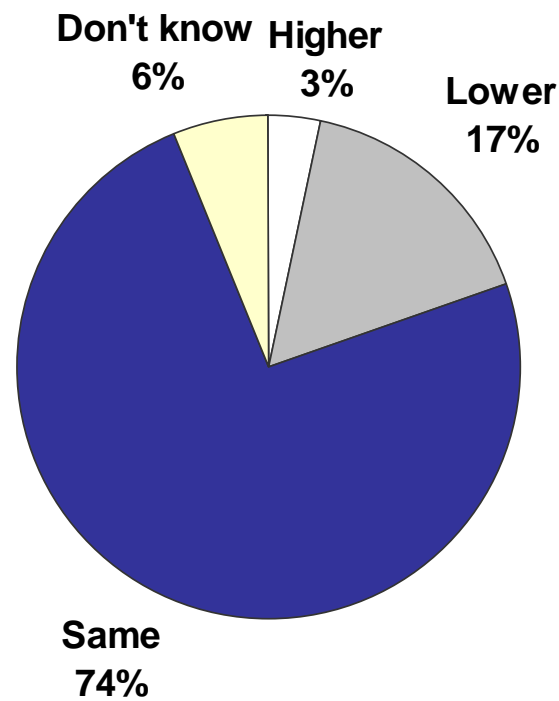
Q: Charter schools are public schools that have a lot more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are free from many existing regulations. In general, do you favor or oppose this idea?



- 2007 survey: 59% of large city residents favor charters

Give charter schools same funding as district public schools

Q: When it comes to funding and resources, do you think that public charter schools should get higher, lower, or the same funding and resources as public district schools?



A common sense approach to the future of charter schools

Q: Which of these approaches do you think Ohio should take toward creating NEW public charter schools?

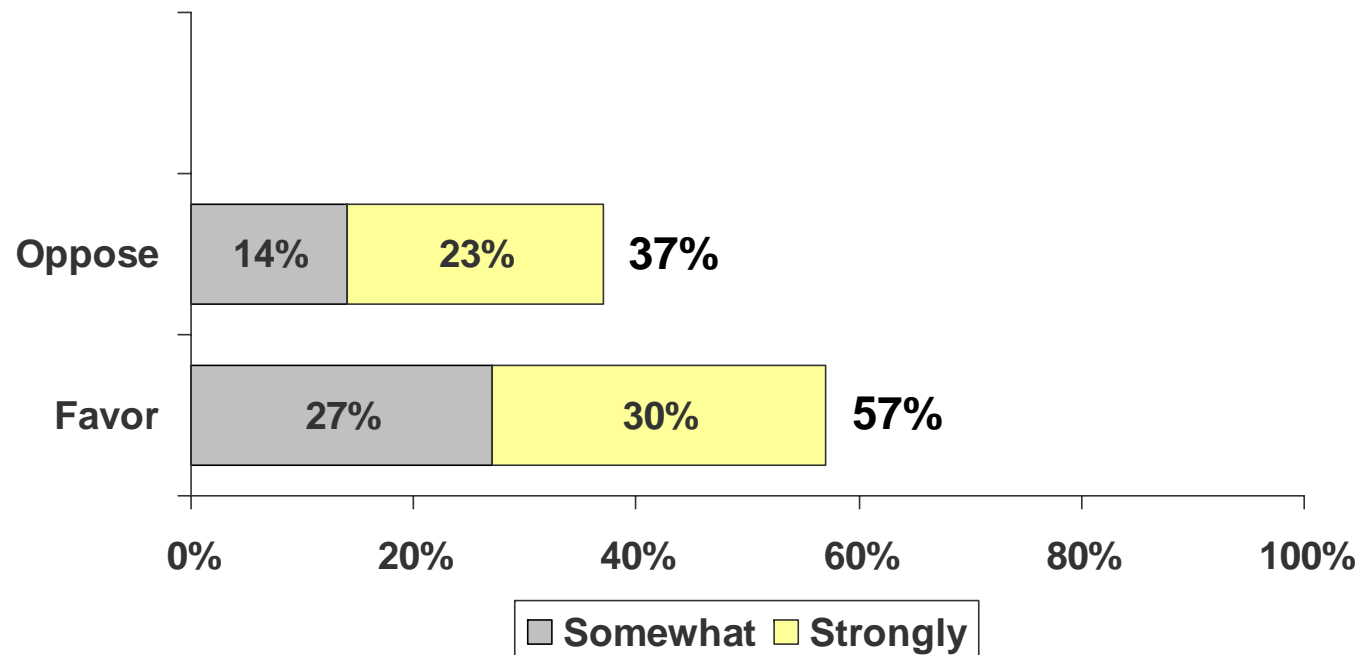
Allow new ones, but only if they are run by organizations with a proven track record of success	68%
Allow no new ones	15%
Allow as many as possible	9%
Don't know	9%

Q: Some of Ohio's public charter schools are doing a good job of teaching kids and some are doing a bad job. Do you think that Ohio:

Should close only the worst ones	63%
Should close none of them	18%
Should close all of them	11%
Don't know	8%

More than half support Ohio's voucher program

Q: Ohio's school voucher program, the EdChoice Scholarship Program, gives parents a voucher of \$3,000 to \$5,000 to help pay tuition if they choose to send their child to a private or church-related school. It is available only to students whose public school has been failing for three years in a row. Do you favor or oppose this program?

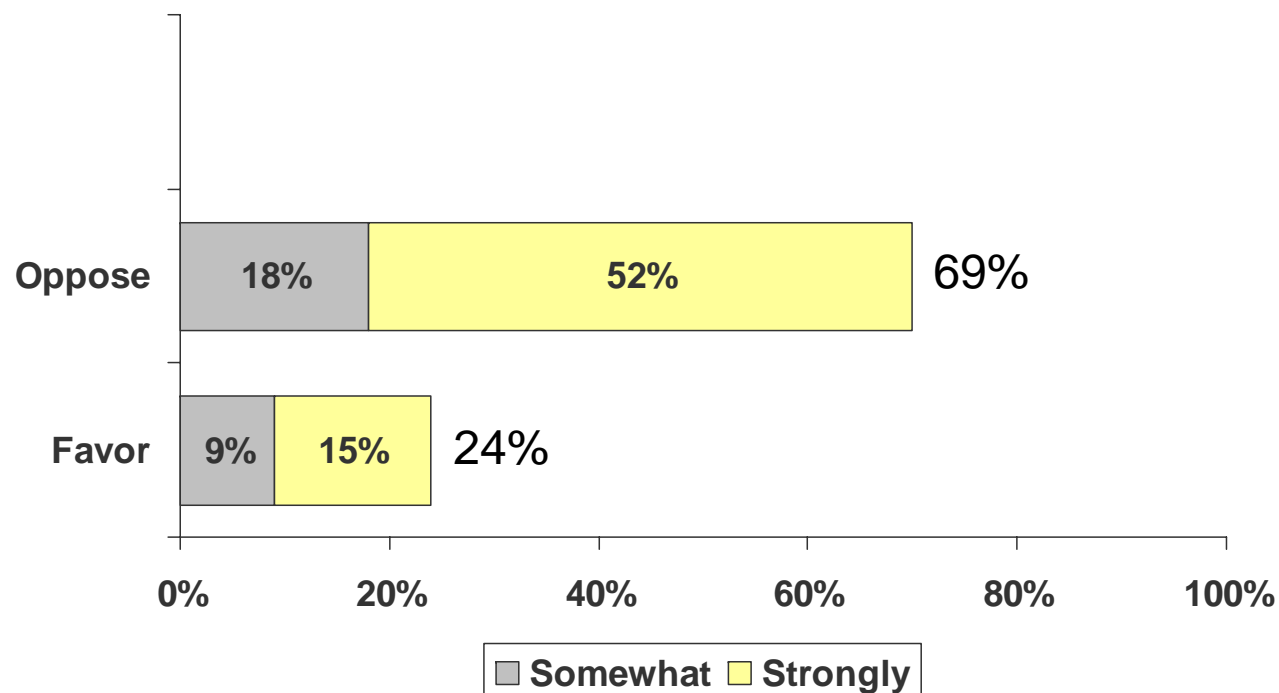


Ohioans more hopeful about voucher impact

Q. Which is closer to your own view:	2007	2005
Vouchers will force public schools to get BETTER because they'll have to compete with other schools to hold on to students OR	55%	50%
Vouchers will make the public schools WORSE because they'll be left with less money and less motivated students	32%	38%
Both	6%	3%

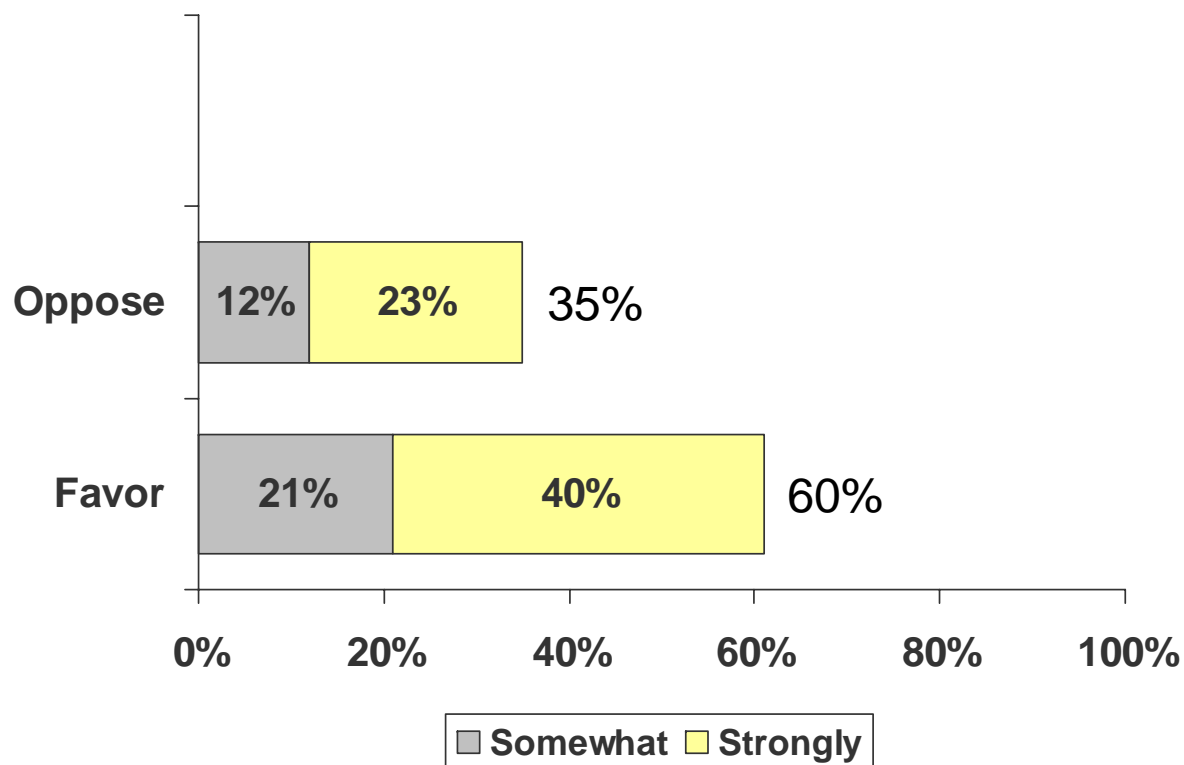
Opposition to eliminating school vouchers

Q. Governor Strickland has proposed eliminating Ohio's school voucher program, the EdChoice Scholarship Program, except for low-income children in Cleveland. Do you favor or oppose this proposal?



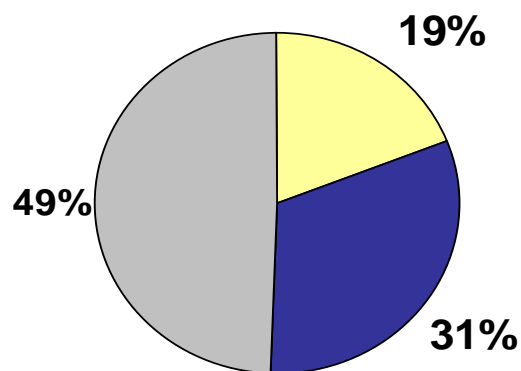
More support for expanding it

Q. A different idea would be to expand Ohio's school voucher program to make ALL children in Ohio eligible for it, not just those who are in failing public schools. Do you favor or oppose this idea?



Lack of knowledge about charters and vouchers

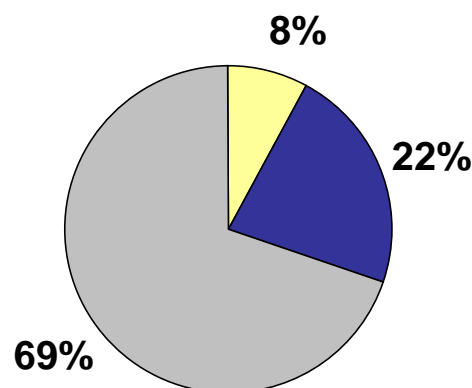
Q. How much do you know about charter schools?



■ Great deal/quite a bit
■ Only some
■ Very little/nothing

- 2005 survey: 55%, very little/nothing

Q. How much do you know about Ohio's school voucher program, the EdChoice Scholarship Program?



■ Great deal/quite a bit
■ Only some
■ Very little/nothing

- 2005 survey: 54%, very little/nothing
Question wording in 2005 survey: "How much do you know about school vouchers?"

Ohioans want a more flexible, nimble public school system

% who favor:

Give schools more freedom to fire teachers who aren't performing

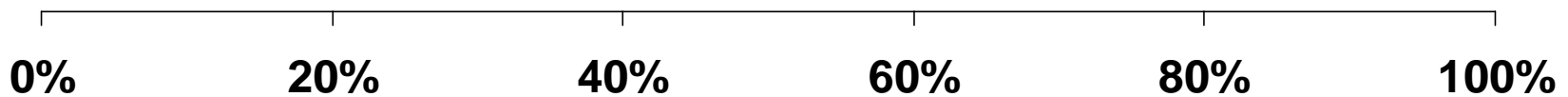
85%

Give schools more flexibility to design curriculum

79%

Give principals far more freedom to run schools but terminate their contracts if they fail to reach specific goals

66%



Ohioans are open to other reforms

Enforce strict school rules on discipline regarding how students behave, talk and dress

91%

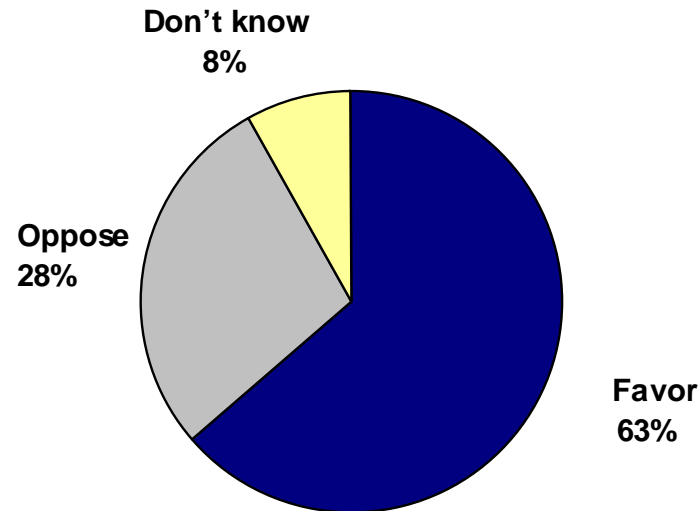
Increase the amount of time students spend in the public schools by extending the school year or the school day

53%



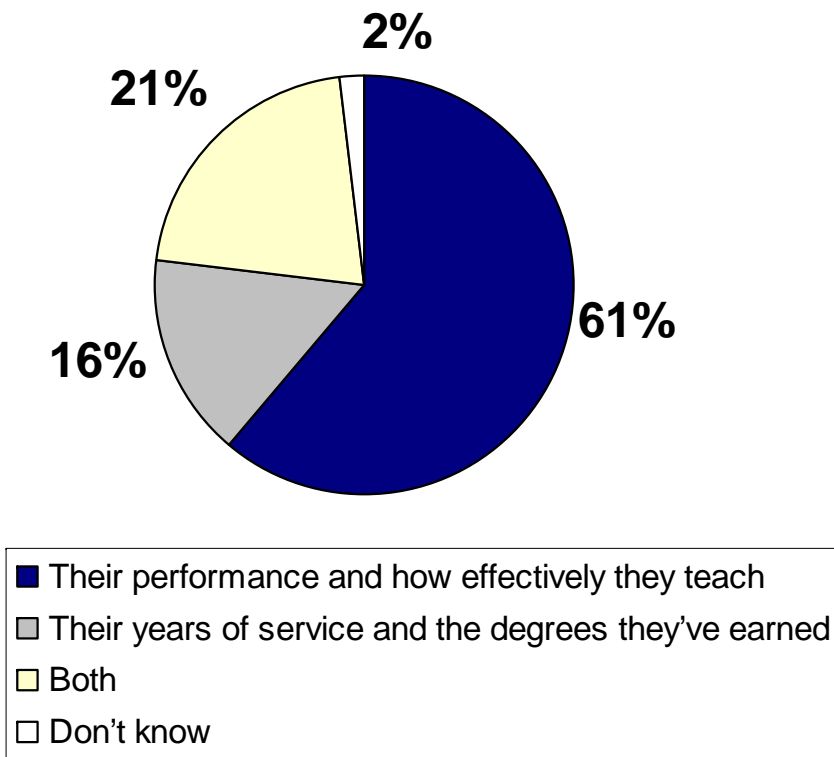
Initial support for money following the child

Q. There's a proposal to make the amount of money that Ohio spends on children's education differ according to each child's individual needs and special circumstances, and to have all of that money follow children to the schools they attend. Would you favor or oppose that approach to paying for public education?



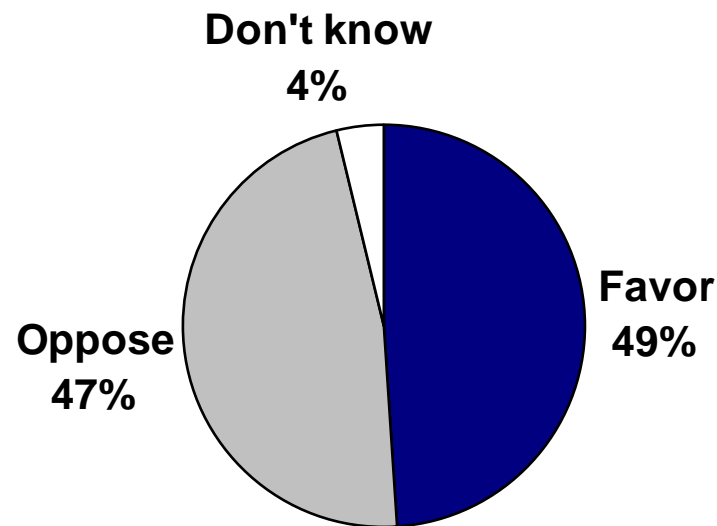
Ohioans want to reward effectiveness, not years on the job

Q. Do you think that teachers' pay should be based on:



But split over basing teacher pay on student results on state tests

Q. Do you favor or oppose basing a teacher's salary, in part, on students' academic progress on state tests?



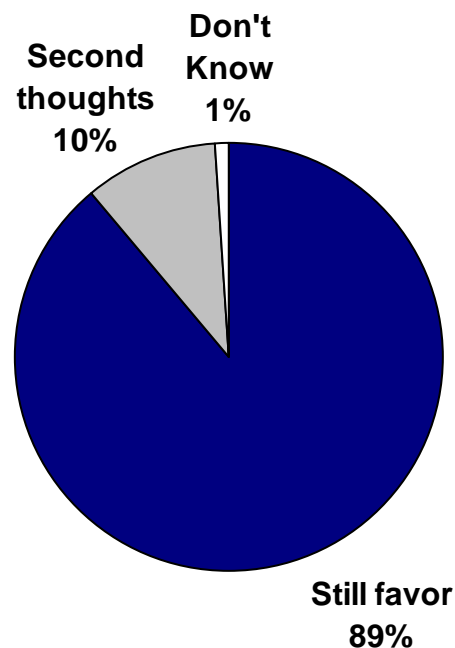
Strong support for testing and standards

Q. All of Ohio's 10th graders are required to pass tests in each of the major subjects before they can graduate from high school. Students who fail will get help and get more chances to pass, but they **MUST** pass in order to get a diploma. Do you favor or oppose this policy?

	2007	2005
Strongly favor	62%	60%
Somewhat favor	20%	23%
Somewhat oppose	5%	5%
Strongly oppose	11%	9%
Don't know	2%	2%

Strong support for standards...even if it means their child would not get a diploma

Q. Now suppose your own child was among the students who would not get a high school diploma because he or she couldn't pass the tests. Would you still favor this policy or would it give you second thoughts? [Asked of parents who favor 10th grade tests]



Main findings

- Lingered dissatisfaction with public schools
- Steady support for charters and vouchers
- Continued lack of knowledge about charters and vouchers
- Openness to a host of reforms
- Wariness of how tax money is spent on the schools
- Support for testing and accountability remains strong
- Attitudes across the 2005 and 2007 surveys are stable
- Few sizable differences across demographic groups

Some context

- **Ohio has enacted several important education reforms over the last decade that focus on standards, accountability and school choice that have helped to move Ohio's K-12 education system forward.**
- **Some of these reforms have been fruitful:**
 - Ohio is above the U.S. average in reading, math and science on NAEP testing in 4th and 8th grade
 - Ohio has been ranked 10th among U.S. states on Education Week's comprehensive achievement index
 - In almost every grade level and subject, average and absolute scores have risen steadily on Ohio statewide tests

Source: Creating a World-Class Education System in Ohio, Achieve, Inc.

Some context

But...the Buckeye State needs more:

- It is not good enough to be ranked highly in the United States. Students must be prepared to compete in a global economy
AND
- Ohio must address the large and persistent achievement gaps that remain.

Implications of survey findings

Policymakers should weigh these findings as they make decisions about:

- Future of charter schools
- Future of EdChoice Scholarship Program
- School finance system
- Standards, testing and accountability
- Principal “empowerment”
- Teacher compensation
- System-wide reforms (e.g., Achieve/McKinsey report)

In summary

Chester E. Finn, Jr.

President, Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and Thomas B. Fordham Institute

“Ohioans are clear-eyed critics of today’s schools. They’re remarkably consistent. They’re well-disposed toward promising reforms, including some that the education establishment rejects. And they want more school options for their kids, not fewer.”