

My name is Arthur Weidner. I am self-employed and my wife is a stay-at-home mom. We have two children in middle school grades who attend a small private Christian school in Fargo. I was able to attend this same school as a child for K-8 grades. My wife attended Moorhead public schools during her childhood. We both moved away from the Midwest to start our careers and when we began to have children moved back to the area to raise our children.

My wife was against sending our children to private school, mostly for financial reasons, until she saw the outcomes of the graduates. She was a director of youth education at a large church for 5 years and knows very well the level of maturity, knowledge and wisdom that the average teenager has. What she came to see in the teenage graduates of private schools as compared to graduates of public schools completely won her over to a private education for our children even though I was unemployed at that time.

I have been aware of the benefits of a private Christian education throughout my life as I compared the stories of my friends', colleagues' and neighbors' educational experiences with my own. I became a member of the Board of Education at my children's school and have kept myself informed on the matter of school choice for several years now. I would like to recommend that you gain some understanding of the matter by reviewing the information available through the organization known as EdChoice. A good place to start is at this page on their website.

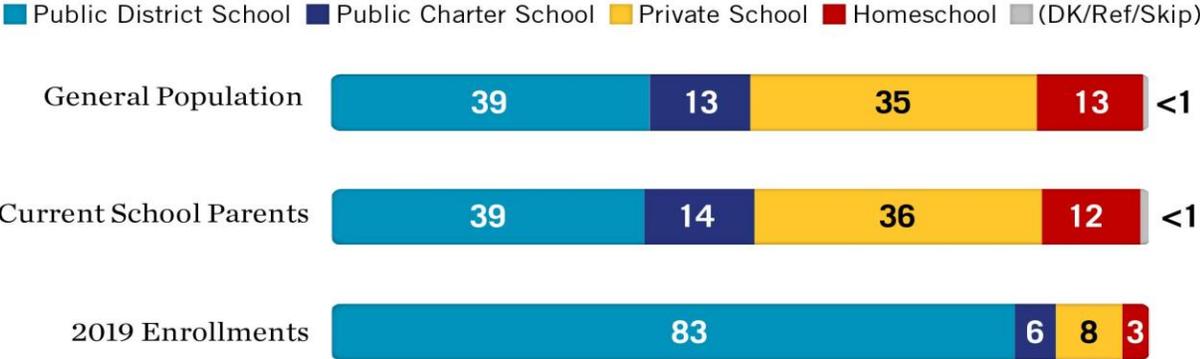
<https://www.edchoice.org/what-we-do/research/schooling-in-america-polling-dashboard-2/>

The following graph is a comparison of the schooling preferences of the general population of the US and those of current US parents and then compares these preferences against the actual enrollments of US students. You will see that there is more than a 4:1 ratio of parents who wish to send their children to private schools or homeschool and those that actually do.

SCHOOL TYPE PREFERENCE, COMPARED TO ACTUAL ENROLLMENT

Actual enrollment patterns do not reflect the diversity of parents' schooling preferences.

% of Respondents



Notes: The percentages in this chart reflect a composite that averages split samples' responses to two slightly different versions of this question. Responses within parentheses were volunteered; "DK" means "Don't Know," "Ref" means "Refusal." For the online survey, the respondent was permitted to skip the question.

Sources: Authors' calculations; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); EdChoice, 2021 Schooling in America Survey (conducted June 14–July 8, 2021), Q12

One reason that parents don't send their children to private schools is due to lack of availability. In North Dakota, if you don't live in one of the larger metropolitan areas you simply don't have access to a private school and even in the larger cities of ND your choices may be limited. The graph below shows that another impediment is cost. When financial costs are eliminated as a barrier in the survey question, parents' preference rises an additional 10% for both private school and homeschool options.

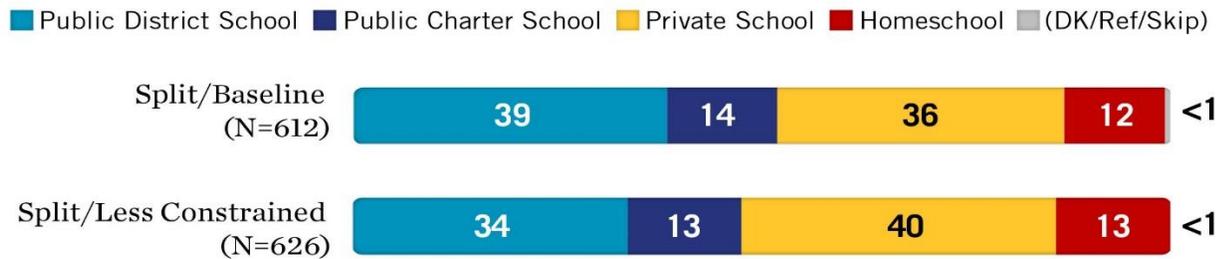
Since parents in ND do not receive any state or local assistance to help cover the cost of a private education, either at a private school or at home, they are forced to pay thousands of dollars in tuition or lost wages and educational material cost to achieve their preferred educational outcomes for their children.

SCHOOL TYPE PREFERENCE

Split - If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?

Split - If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, **and financial costs and transportation were of no concern**, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?

% of Current School Parents



Notes: The percentages in this chart reflect a composite that averages split samples' responses to two slightly different versions of this question. Responses within parentheses were volunteered: "DK" means "Don't Know," "Ref" means "Refusal." For the online survey, the respondent was permitted to skip the question.

Sources: Authors' calculations; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); EdChoice, 2021 Schooling in America Survey (conducted June 14–July 8, 2021), Q12

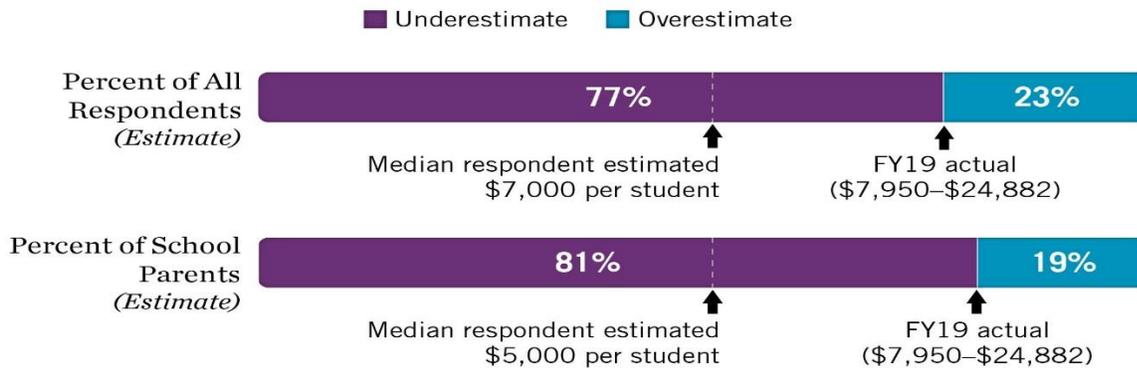
I know at our school we work extremely hard to eliminate finances as a barrier to student attendance. We raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for financial aid and dispense it on a financial need basis. We have students in attendance from all socio-economic strata though we always require some amount of tuition. I have analyzed the annual per student cost of our school and compared it to those of the public schools in our area for the past twenty years and find that we consistently spend approximately 25% less to educate a student at our school and produce superior results that parents prefer.

The next graph below shows that most Americans are unaware of the per student spending of public schools and grossly underestimate it. Taking into account the state where each respondent resides, 77 percent of Americans and 81 percent of school parents underestimated how much public schools actually spend. When Americans are made aware of the spending amount in their state their opinions change on its suitability as illustrated by the bottom graph of responses to a split-sample question asking whether current school spending was too low, too high or about right.

SCHOOL SPENDING ESTIMATE, COMPARED TO ACTUAL SPENDING

Most Americans and parents drastically underestimate public school spending. The median parent respondent said spending is significantly less than the lowest state average.

% of Respondents



Note: Percentages based on those offering estimates

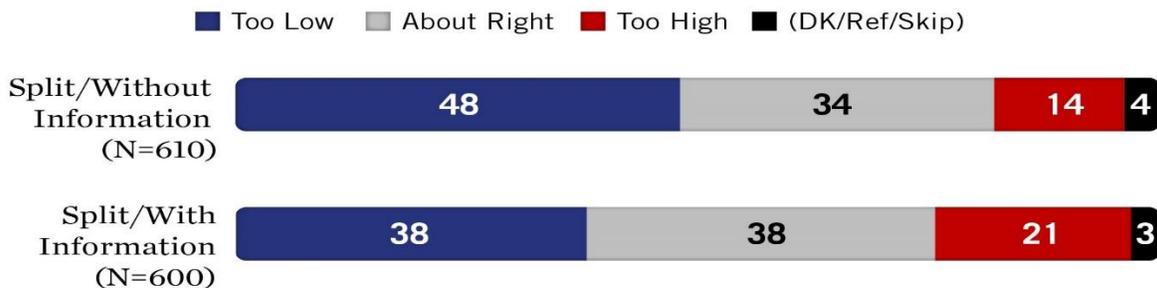
Source: EdChoice, 2021 Schooling in America Survey (conducted June 14–July 8, 2021), Q9

SCHOOL FUNDING

Question Wording A Do you believe that public school funding in [Your State] is at a level that is:

Question Wording B According to the most recent information available, on average \$[Amount] is being spent per year on each student attending public schools in [Your State]. Do you believe that public school funding in [Your State] is at a level that is:

% of General Population by Split Question Version



Notes: Responses within parentheses were volunteered. "DK" means "Don't Know." "Ref" means "Refusal." For the online survey, the respondent was permitted to skip the question.

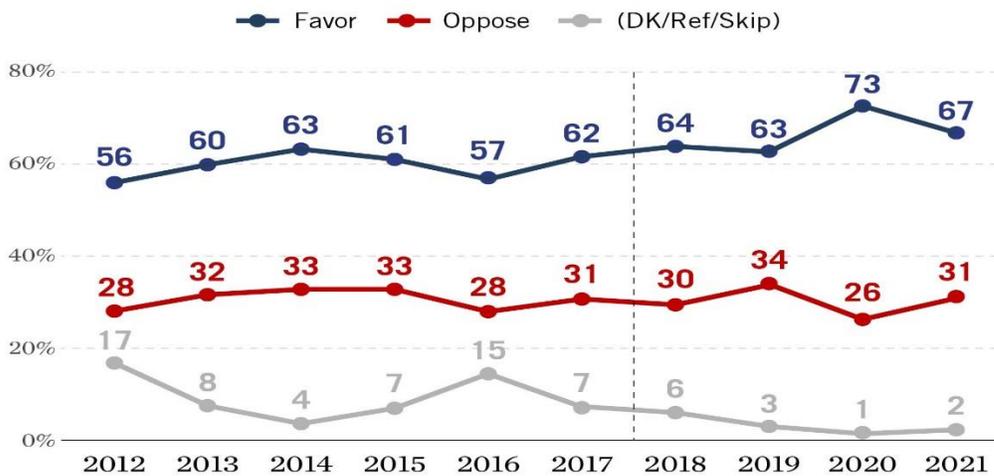
Source: EdChoice, 2021 Schooling in America Survey (conducted June 14–July 8, 2021), Q10

The current proposed method in HB 1532 of reimbursing ND parents for some of the cost of sending their children to non-public schools is most similar to an educational voucher system in other states. According to the annual survey, two-thirds of the public and more than three-quarters of school parents said they support vouchers. Notably, support from lower-income and middle-income parents was substantially higher than that of higher-income parents.

SCHOOL VOUCHERS FAVORABILITY

Two-thirds of the public support school vouchers. The level of overall support has decreased six points since Fall 2020—but remains higher than all years prior to the pandemic.

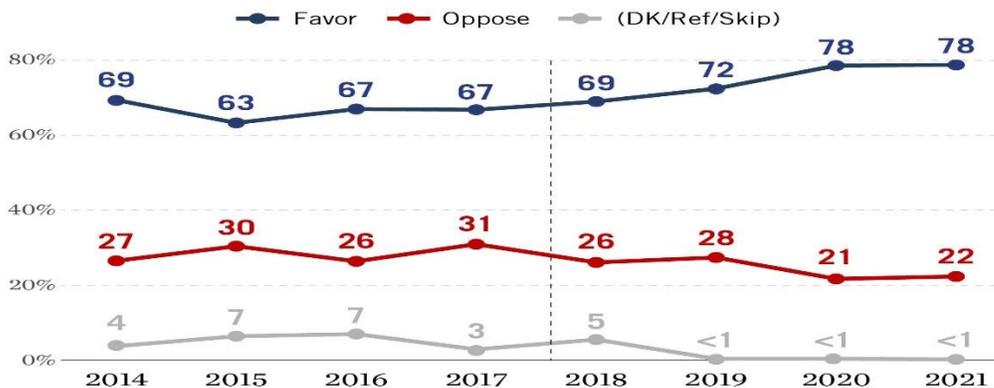
% of General Population



Notes: Phone-only survey results shown for 2013–2017. Mixed-mode results (online and phone) shown for 2018–2021. Responses within parentheses were volunteered. "DK" means "Don't Know." "Ref" means "Refusal." For the online survey, the respondent was permitted to skip the question.
Sources: EdChoice, 2021 *Schooling in America Survey* (conducted June 14–July 8, 2021), Q18; EdChoice, *Schooling in America Survey*, 2016–2020 (partial samples of General Population); Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Schooling in America Survey*, 2013–2015

Nearly 80 percent of parents support school vouchers—unchanged since last year. They are at least two times more likely to support vouchers than oppose such a policy.

% of Current School Parents



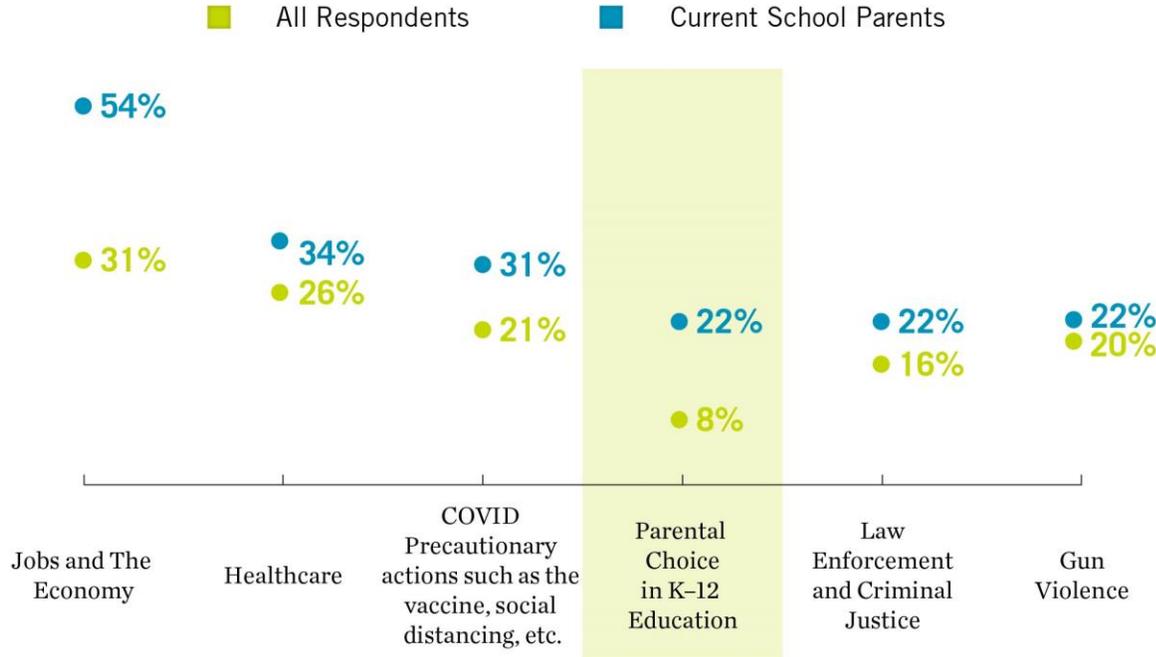
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About one in five parents think parental choice in K–12 education is a very high-priority issue right now. The survey asked a series of questions about what issues parents and the general public thought were most important at the time of the survey in mid-summer: 22 percent of parents placed parental choice among their top-three issues of concern. Eight percent of the general public said the same.

PRIORITIZING ISSUES

Nearly three times as many parents say parental choice in K–12 education is one of the top three issues to them right now when compared to all respondents.

% of Respondents Providing Ranking 1, 2, or 3



Source: EdChoice, 2021 Schooling in America Survey (conducted June 14–July 8, 2021), QISSUES

I and my wife are big proponents of private Christian education since we know personally, anecdotally and objectively from the Cardus Study (a 20-yr longitudinal study of comparative student outcomes) that it will give our children the best outcome in life and provide our best family life. My wife now says that we would have sold our house to provide the education our children received from our private school. Thankfully that has not been necessary so far, but it may indeed be a reality for some parents in ND if they want to realize the same results.

You may not be aware of the fact that the first universal education system was actually a private education system funded by the princes of Saxony in the early 16th century after the pleading of Dr. Martin Luther to allow the reformed churches of Saxony to educate all of the resident children. This is why the US Postal Service wanted to create a stamp for Dr. Martin Luther to recognize him as the father of universal public education. Sadly it was deemed too controversial at the time and never made it to print.