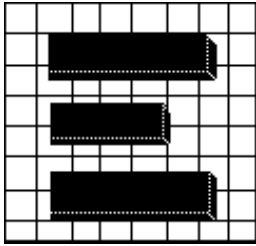


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Voters leery of strings attached to Race to the Top funds

According to a recent statewide poll, many voters have concerns about several of the key school reforms linked to the federal “Race to the Top” funding program.

In a 600 sample survey of Michigan voters conducted by EPIC-MRA for the Michigan Education Association, several RTTT reforms were lacking public support, most notably the concept of relying mainly on student test scores to evaluate and compensate Michigan teachers.

Only 6 percent of voters surveyed believed that teachers are mostly responsible for the scores students receive – 92 percent said other factors are involved in how a student performs on tests. Two percent were undecided.

On a related topic, 62 percent of voters opposed the idea of having a teacher’s performance and pay be evaluated mostly on how well their students perform in standardized testing.

“These results clearly show that voters don’t want to see the performance of students or teachers judged solely on test scores,” said Bernie Porn, President of EPIC-MRA. “When it comes to many RTTT-related school reforms being discussed in Lansing, voters are skeptical.”

While there is solid support for the decision to compete for the RTTT federal funding, support does drop by nearly 20 points when voters learn about some of the strings attached to the federal funding program. A 77 to 15 percent majority in support slips to a 60 to 31 percent majority when supporters and undecided voters learn that the funding will require Michigan to lift the limit on charter schools, as well as including some version of an alternative teacher certification program.

Voters are evenly split on whether they support or oppose the idea of “fast track” teacher certification, with 47 percent saying they support it (23 percent strongly), and 46 percent saying they oppose it (34 percent strongly). When supporters and undecided voters hear about some of the concerns about “fast track” certification, support slips drastically, with a 57 percent solid majority now opposing the idea (36 percent strongly), with 37 percent supporting it (18 percent strongly).

- Educational
- Political
- Industrial
- Consumer

- Market
- Research
- Analysis

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When asked to compare the quality of charter schools to traditional public schools, a 48 percent plurality said that they were the same, 26 percent said they are better, 12 percent said they are worse, and 14 percent are unsure. Said Bernie Porn, “These results demonstrate that the public has enough doubts about the value of charter schools. The absence of a majority saying that charter schools are better suggests that there is not the kind of support to warrant a major policy change.”

In other results, only 21 percent said that improving student achievement scores on standardized tests should be a top priority in trying to improve education. Sixty percent said it should be a top priority to place more of an emphasis on “teaching the basics of reading, writing, math and science.”

Fifty eight percent said it should be a top priority to get parents more involved, and to prepare students for college by giving them the knowledge they need to succeed.

The survey of 600 active Michigan voters was conducted between November 23 to 25, 2009. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 4 percent.

A separate attached document includes the questions and responses.

Statewide Voter Survey on Education Issues – November 2009
[FREQUENCY REPORT of SURVEY RESPONSES – TOTAL 600 SAMPLE – ERROR ±4.0%]
Conducted from November 23 to 25, 2009

__Overall, how would you rate the quality of education that is provided in the kindergarten through 12th grade schools in Michigan public schools as a whole – would you give a positive rating of excellent or pretty good, or a negative rating of only fair or poor?

7%	Excellent
43%	Pretty good
34%	Only fair
12%	Poor
4%	Undecided/Don't know/Refused

__Over the past few years, has the quality of education in your local public school district improved, gotten worse, or remained about the same?

16%	Improved
25%	Worse
52%	About the same
7%	Undecided/Don't know/Refused

__Overall, how would you rate the quality of education that is provided in Michigan's four-year public colleges and universities – would you give a positive rating of excellent or pretty good, or a negative rating of only fair or poor?

17%	Excellent
59%	Pretty good
17%	Only fair
1%	Poor
6%	Undecided/Don't know/Refused

__Overall, how would you rate the quality of education that is provided in Michigan's community colleges – would you give a positive rating of excellent or pretty good, or a negative rating of only fair or poor?

17%	Excellent
59%	Pretty good
16%	Only fair
1%	Poor
7%	Undecided/Don't know/Refused

Now I would like to read several statements that describe some of the things people say are important priorities needed to improve the quality of education in Michigan. For each statement I read, please tell me if you think what I describe should be a top priority to improve public education, important but not a top priority, only a little important, or not important at all. The first one is...

	Top Prior	Impt	Slight Impt	Not Impt	TOTAL Slight/Not	DK/ Undec
Requiring high academic standards for students to graduate	45%	43%	8%	3%	11%	1%
Finding new ways to encourage parents to be more involved in their children's education	58%	29%	9%	2%	11%	2%
Offering enough pay and benefits to encourage young people to choose teaching as a profession	24%	42%	20%	13%	33%	1%
Having more teachers and classroom space to reduce the student/teacher ratio	43%	32%	14%	9%	23%	2%
Providing more funding from the state for the operations of local public schools	44%	33%	11%	10%	21%	2%
Placing more of an emphasis on teaching the basics of reading, writing, math and science	60%	31%	7%	2%	9%	--
Finding ways to dramatically reduce truancy and the number of students who drop-out of school	49%	33%	13%	5%	18%	--
Teaching students about values, trust and honesty in their interactions with others	46%	35%	11%	7%	18%	1%
Improving student achievement scores on standardized tests	21%	39%	26%	12%	38%	2%
Preparing students for college by giving them the knowledge, skills, and study habits they need to succeed at the college level	58%	36%	5%	1%	6%	--
Providing a quality pre-school program to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for Kindergarten	28%	40%	21%	11%	32%	--
Increasing access to technology in classrooms to ensure students can compete in the global economy.	37%	46%	13%	3%	16%	1%
Preparing students to compete for the kind of good paying jobs Michigan needs to attract	46%	44%	6%	2%	8%	2%

__On another topic, to what extent are scores students receive on standardized tests in reading, writing, math and science an accurate measurement of how effective teachers were in teaching students the subject matter? Is it a very accurate measurement, somewhat accurate, only a little accurate, or not really accurate at all? **[READ & ROTATE 1 TO 3 BELOW]**

- 5% Very accurate measurement
- 47% Somewhat accurate measurement
- 27% Only a little accurate
- 17% Not really accurate at all
- 4% Undecided/Don't know

__Is the teacher mostly responsible for the scores students receive on standardized tests, or, are other factors involved that can determine how well students perform on tests, like parental involvement, a student's home life and family situation, socio economic factors, such as where a student lives and household income, diet and sleep?

- 6% Teacher is mostly responsible for the scores students receive
- 92% Other factors are involved in how a student performs on tests
- 2% Undecided/Don't know

__Do you support or oppose the idea of having a teacher's performance and pay be evaluated mostly on how well their students perform in standardized testing? **[IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE, ASK: "Would that be strongly or somewhat?" AND CODE BEST RESPONSE]**

- 13% Strongly support
- 20% Somewhat support
- 33% TOTAL SUPPORT**
- 62% TOTAL OPPOSE**
- 25% Somewhat oppose
- 37% Strongly oppose
- 5% Undecided/ Don't know/Refused

__Based on what you know or have heard or read about the record of charter schools in preparing students for college education or the workplace, overall, do you think charter schools are better than traditional public schools, worse, or, would you say that charter schools are about the same? **[IF BETTER/WORSE, ASK] Would that be much or somewhat?**

- 10% Much better
- 16% Somewhat better
- 26% TOTAL BETTER**
- 48% About the same
- 12% TOTAL WORSE**
- 9% Somewhat worse
- 3% Much worse
- 14% Undecided/Don't know

__In order to increase the number of teachers that can be certified to teach certain subjects where there may be a shortage of teachers, there is a proposal to establish a “fast track” program of teacher certification to fill those subject areas, such as math, science, or business related subjects, or, to enable individuals with special experience in business or industry, to be able to more quickly be certified as teachers than going through the usual and more time consuming process of teacher certification. Based on what you know or have heard or read about this proposal, do you support it or oppose it? **[IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE, ASK: “Would that be strongly or somewhat?” AND CODE BEST RESPONSE]**

23% Strongly support
 24% Somewhat support
47% TOTAL SUPPORT
46% TOTAL OPPOSE
 12% Somewhat oppose
 34% Strongly oppose
 7% Undecided/ Don’t know/Refused

__Opponents of the “fast track” teacher certification proposal question whether there is really as much of a shortage in the subject areas as supporters claim, and also say that we should NOT sacrifice the quality of our teachers by establishing such a fast track system that we put people in the classroom who are not prepared to be there. Just because someone has business or industry experience, does not mean that they would be able to teach children in the classroom. Thinking about the arguments against this proposal, let me ask you again, do you support or oppose the proposal to establish a fast track system of teacher certification? **[IF SUPPORT/ OPPOSE, ASK: “Would that be strongly or somewhat?” AND CODE BEST RESPONSE]**

ONLY AMONG THOSE WHO SUPPORTED OR WERE UNDECIDED

33% Strongly support
 36% Somewhat support
69% TOTAL SUPPORT
20% TOTAL OPPOSE
 16% Somewhat oppose
 4% Strongly oppose
 11% Undecided/ Don’t know/Refused

Combination two questions on fast track legislation

18% Strongly support
 19% Somewhat support
37% TOTAL SUPPORT
57% TOTAL OPPOSE
 21% Somewhat oppose
 36% Strongly oppose
 6% Undecided/ Don’t know/Refused

__The federal economic stimulus funds approved earlier this year includes more than \$4 billion dollars that will be awarded to the states through a program in the Federal Department of Education under a competitive federal program called “Race to the Top,” which is designed to encourage states to implement education reforms to improve student performance and educational achievement. Michigan has decided to compete for the funding, which could result in Michigan getting \$400 to \$600 million to implement reforms to improve education. Thinking about this new federal funding program, do you support or oppose the decision by the State of Michigan to compete for the funding? **[IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE, ASK: “Would that be strongly or somewhat?” AND CODE BEST RESPONSE]**

52% Strongly support
 25% Somewhat support
77% TOTAL SUPPORT
15% TOTAL OPPOSE
 4% Somewhat oppose
 11% Strongly oppose
 8% Undecided/ Don’t know/Refused

__If Michigan were to win the funding available through the “Race to the Top” program, it will have some strings attached. For example, the funding would require that Michigan lift the current limit on the number of charter schools that will be allowed, as well as allow some version of a “fast track” teacher certification program. Knowing this, let me ask you again, do you support or oppose the decision to compete for Race to the Top federal stimulus funding to reform education, even with the strings that are attached to the funding? **[IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE, ASK: “Would that be strongly or somewhat?” AND CODE BEST RESPONSE]**

ONLY ASKED OF SUPPORTERS OF RACE TO THE TOP AND UNDECIDED

40% Strongly support
 31% Somewhat support
71% TOTAL SUPPORT
19% TOTAL OPPOSE
 9% Somewhat oppose
 10% Strongly oppose
 10% Undecided/ Don’t know/Refused

Combination of questions on “race to the top” proposal

34% Strongly support
 26% Somewhat support
60% TOTAL SUPPORT
31% TOTAL OPPOSE
 11% Somewhat oppose
 20% Strongly oppose
 9% Undecided/ Don’t know/Refused