



The leading advocate for public education

Southern Legislative Conference
Education Committee Session, Sunday, July 11, 2021
*COVID-19 and School Governance:
Lessons for State and Local Policymakers*



The leading advocate for public education

*Chip Slaven
Interim Executive Director and CEO
National School Boards Association*



Working with and through our State Associations to advocate for equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership.

www.nsba.org





Our members are 49 state school board associations and one territory representing the nation's public schools which include:

- *90,000 local school board members*
- *Approximately 13,500 public school districts*
- *51 million students*

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January 2021 Short-term Transition Priorities:

- *Federal investment in public schools*
- *Immediate help to close the Homework Gap*
- *Assistance with students with disabilities and IDEA flexibility for pandemic related issues*
- *Reliable guidance on safe school building reopening*

Transition Recommendations for 2021 and Beyond

- Fully fund IDEA
- Help students from low-income families through increased Title I funding
- Focus on teacher recruitment, retention, and professional training
- Focus on cybersecurity and student privacy
- Pass legislation to protect Dreamers and establish a pathway to citizenship
- Invest in school infrastructure
- Promote public school innovation and oppose diversion of taxpayer funds to private schools





**Findings from a nationwide survey of 1,000 likely 2022 voters
with oversamples of 100 African American, 100 Latinx, 100 AAPI, 100 Native American,
and 100 parents of school-age children who are likely 2022 voters**

Celinda Lake, President

Bob Carpenter, President



Overall Summary Findings



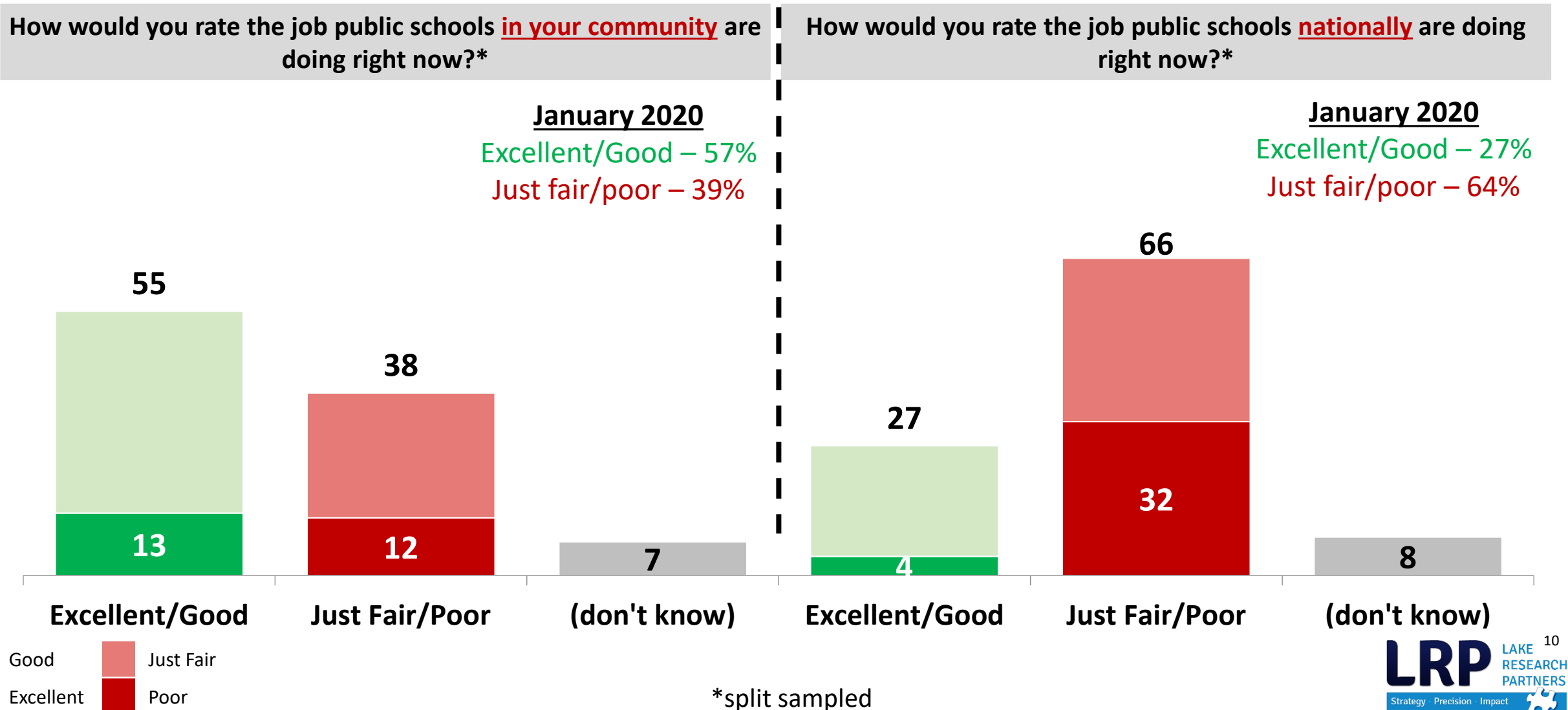
- **Voters are significantly more likely to have a positive view of public education when they think of schools locally as opposed to nationally.** They are also most likely to see their local school board as doing a good job on the issue of public education, as opposed to politicians at the state or national levels.
- **Learning loss among students is a huge issue for voters as we continue to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic,** and it is the biggest problem for nearly every subgroup we break out.
- Additionally, voters say **the top challenge their local public schools have faced during the pandemic is students having quality broadband and internet access at home to attend school online.**
- **Support for increased funding for public education is strong** and there is a political incentive for elected officials to support increased funding.
- **Voters are opposed to taking away taxpayer dollars from public education to go toward private school vouchers,** and there are political consequences for elected officials if they have supported this.
- **There is broad overall support for personalized learning and increasing access to internet and broadband;** support is especially elevated among African American and Latinx voters.

Current State of Public Education



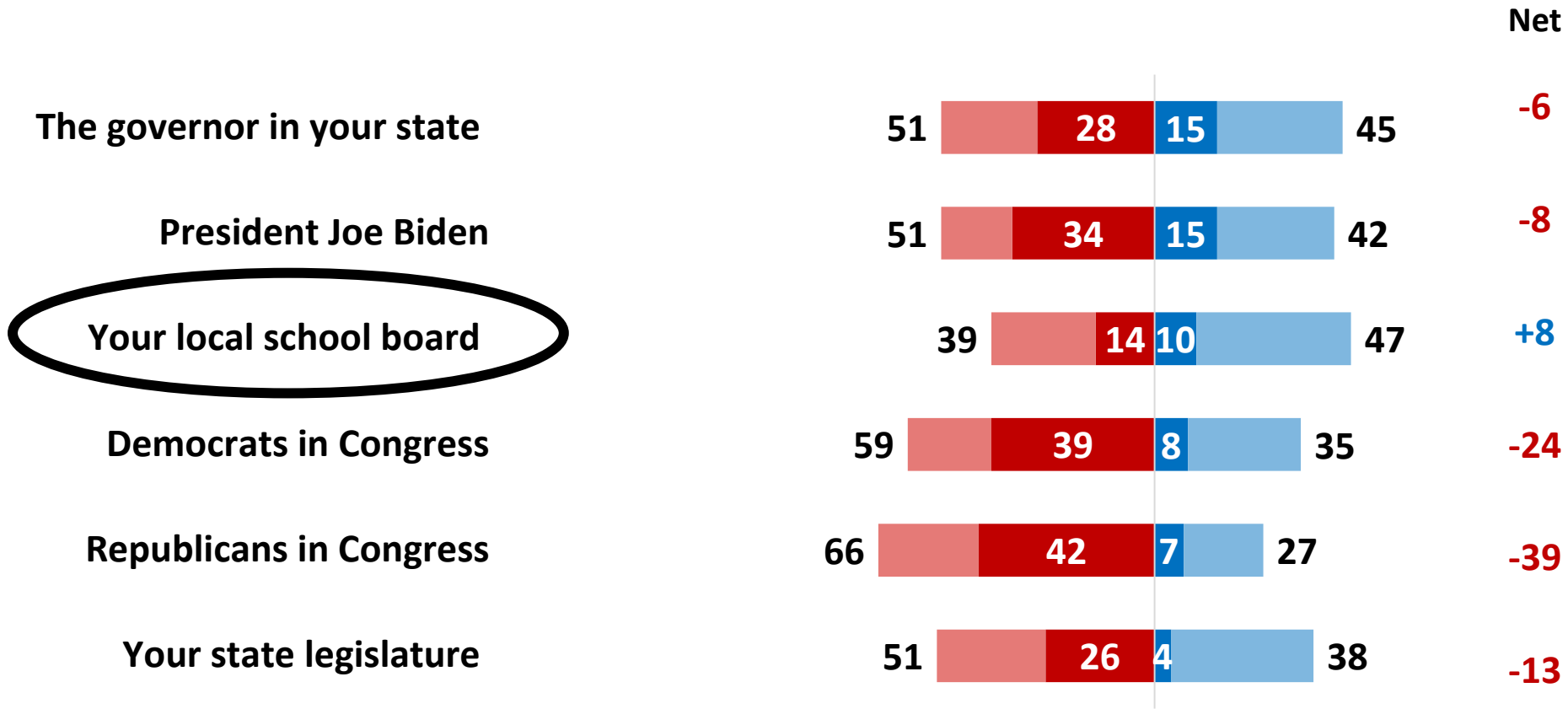
- A plurality (43%) of parents of school-aged children say their children are currently attending school in-person. A third (33%) say their children are attending school both online and in-person and 22% say they are attending school online through a video conferencing tool.
 - Those most likely to say their children are attending school in-person include battleground voters (52%), Republicans (59%), voters in rural areas (59%), and voters in the South (50%).
 - Independents (48%) and voters in urban areas (44%) are most likely to say their children are attending school both online and in-person.
 - African American voters (32%) and voters in the Northeast (31%) are most likely to say their children are attending school online.
- A solid plurality (46%) of parents say their children do not like attending school online and struggle with not being in a classroom setting. Sixteen (16) percent say their children like attending school online and benefit from the virtual platform at home. A quarter (25%) say their children like attending school in-person but benefit from the increased online content. About one-in-eight (13%) say online schooling does not have either a positive or negative impact on their children's experience attending school. Parents in both urban and rural areas are likely to say their children do not like attending school online.

Consistent with 2020 findings, voters are much more likely to rate the public schools in their own community positively than they are public schools nationally, although intensity is low.



Voters are most willing to say their local school board is either doing an excellent or good job on the issue of public education, although intensity is weak. Voters are net negative in their perception of national and state-level elected officials on the issue of public education, especially Democrats and Republicans in Congress.

Now let me read you a list of people and groups. For each one, please tell me if you think that person or group is doing an excellent, good, just fair, or poor job on the issue of public education.*



■ Good
■ Excellent
■ Just fair
■ Poor

*all entities split sampled

Education Priorities



- Of the public education issues tested, voters are most likely to say that **learning loss among students due to the COVID-19 pandemic** and **not teaching real-world skills** are very big problems in public education today.
 - **Learning loss among students due to COVID-19 pandemic:** 65% very big problem, 88% say it is a problem; 51% extremely important that we address it, 83% say it is important. Voters across party identification see this as a very big problem including 61% of Democrats, 64% of Independents, and 71% of Republicans.
 - **Not teaching real-world skills:** 53% very big problem, 81% total problem; 45% extremely important that we address it, 80% say it is important.
- Nearly three-quarters of voters (74%) say **lack of personalized learning focused on individual needs** is a problem, including 38% who say it is a very big problem. Voters also see this as an important issue to address (32% say extremely important issue, 72% say either an extremely or very important issue).
- Though voters are less likely to see **ensuring public schools are safe** and the **lack of quality teachers** as very big problems in public education today, these issues rise to the top as being important to address.
 - **Ensure public schools are safe:** 54% say it is extremely important to address, 88% say it is important.
 - **Lack of quality teachers:** 48% say it is extremely important to address, 83% say it is important.



Support for Increased Access to Internet and Broadband

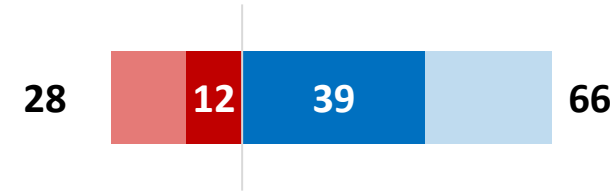
- **A solid majority of voters see lack of adequate broadband and internet access outside of school buildings as a problem** – 65% say it is a problem, including 34% who say it is a *very big* problem.
 - African American voters (47%), voters in the South (40%), and Democrats and Independents (40%) are most likely to say it is a *very big* problem. Sixty-two (62) percent of voters in rural areas see this as a problem and 38% see it as a *very big* problem.
- A solid majority of voters also see the lack of adequate broadband and internet access outside of school building as an important issue to address as well – 64% say it is important, including 33% who say it is *extremely* important to address.
 - African American voters (49%), Democrats (44%), Latinx voters (43%), and mothers of school-aged children (42%) are most likely to say it is an *extremely* important issue to address.
- Nearly four-in-five voters (79%) think it is either extremely (42%) or very (36%) important that **students have easier access to technology and broadband, both in school and out.**
 - Voters across demographics think it is important that students have easier access to technology and broadband by wide margins. Rural voters respond more strongly when technology and broadband are defined as “necessary for real-world learning.”
 - Voters across party identification also think it is important that students have easier access to technology and broadband (89% of Democrats say it is either extremely or very important compared to 70% of Independents and 73% of Republicans). A straightforward ask without making the connection to real-world learning is stronger among Republicans.

Challenges in the COVID-19 Environment



- The top challenge for local public school districts during the pandemic has been students having quality broadband and internet access at home to attend school online. African American voters (65%) and Democrats (52%) are most likely to say this has been very challenging.

Students having quality broadband and internet access at home to attend school online



- Other top challenges voters say public schools have faced during the pandemic include: retaining teachers and preventing them from leaving the profession, teachers having access to adequate resources and support to effectively teach their students virtually, and students, teachers, and other school employees having access to counseling and mental health resources.

Retaining teachers and preventing teachers from leaving the profession



Teachers having access to adequate resources and support to effectively teach their students virtually



Students having access to counseling and mental health resources



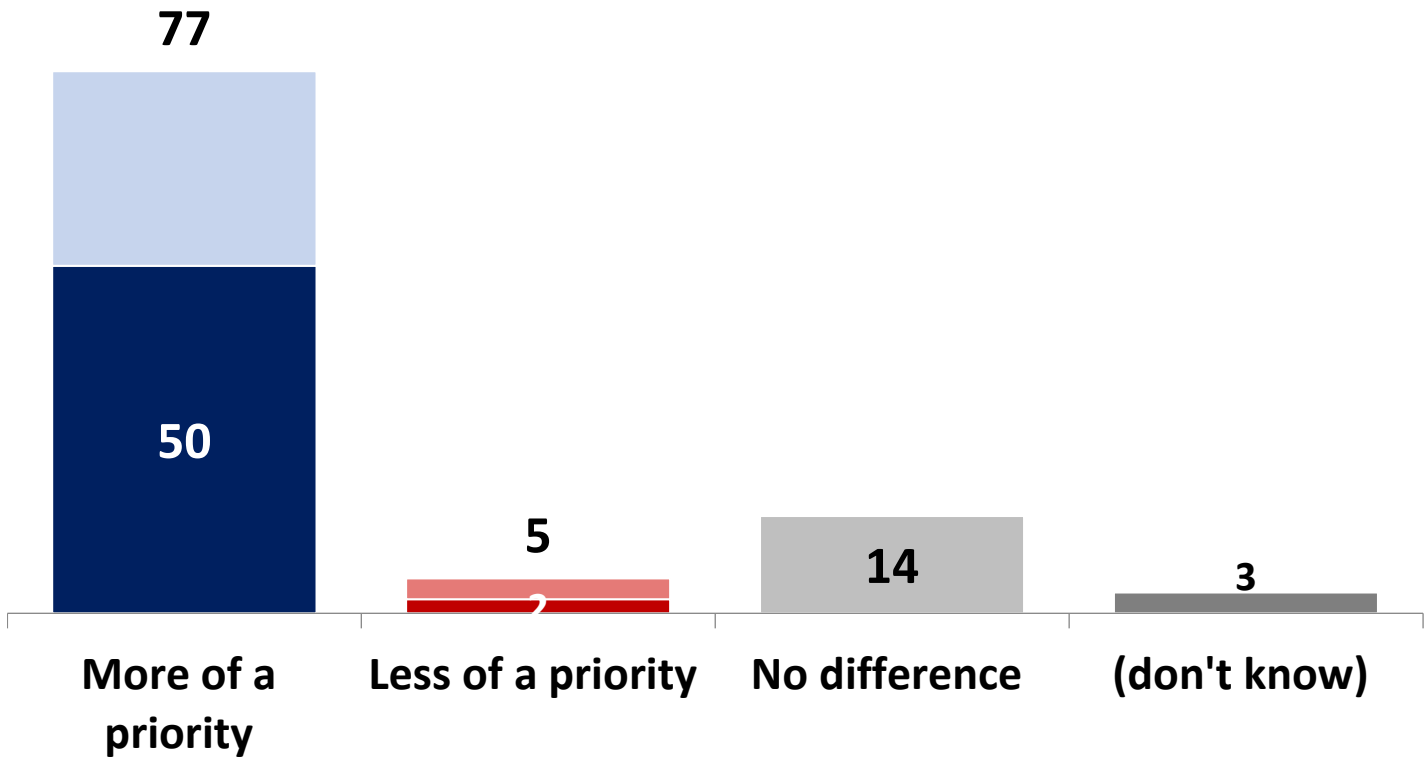
Teachers and other school employees having access to counseling and mental health resources



*All statements split sampled

Over three-quarters of voters say that the COVID-19 pandemic makes them think ensuring students have easier access to technology and broadband should be more of a priority, and half say it should be much more of a priority. Every demographic and political group think it should be more of a priority. Those most likely to say it should be much more of a priority include subgroups of Democrats and voters of color.

Does the COVID-19 pandemic make you think that ensuring students have easier access to technology and broadband should be more of a priority, less of a priority, or does it not make a difference?



- Most likely to say much more of a priority (50%)**
- Strong Democrats – 73%
 - College-educated Latinx voters – 69%
 - Democratic women – 69%
 - African American voters – 68%
 - Parents of color – 66%
 - Women of color – 64%

- Most likely to say no difference (14%)**
- Parents of children in private/religious schools – 29%
 - Independent men – 26%
 - Republican men – 25%
 - West South Central residents – 25%
 - Strong Republicans – 23%
 - Residents who live in a rural area – 23%

■ Somewhat of a priority
 ■ Somewhat less of a priority
■ Much more of a priority
 ■ Much less of a priority



Support for Increased Funding

- **A solid majority (59%) of voters think funding for public schools should be increased.** Of those who believe it should be increased, more than eight-in-ten (86%) would support an increase in funding *even if it meant they would pay more in taxes*. Voters across demographics support increasing funding for public schools by wide margins – especially voters of color and Democrats.
- Over two-in-five voters (44%) are more likely to vote for an elected official if they support increasing funding for public schools. About one-third (34%) say it would not make a difference in their vote.
 - Probing a tax increase does increase opposition, but still more people would vote for the candidate who supports increased funding.

Personalized Learning

“Personalized learning is a student-centered approach to education. It focuses on each child as a distinct individual by offering enhanced opportunities for him or her to become more engaged and motivated to perform well in school and to maximize their learning potential. Personalized learning allows each child to learn in their own style and manner, and at their own pace, in the way best suited for them individually to master through demonstrated performance and competency each academic unit and subject necessary for them to ultimately graduate from high school and succeed in college, a career, and life.”

C. Slaven, Esq. “Each Child Learns Act,” Alliance for Excellent Education, August 1, 2012.



PUBLIC SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION NOW!

Access, Equity, & Innovation for Each Child

#EdTransformation



- Public School Transformation NOW! is an NSBA initiative that serves as the framework for our Advocacy Agenda.
- Now is the time for public schools to transform learning for each student by providing a more student-centered and personalized learning approach that better promotes real world and twenty-first century learning skills.
- This includes reinventing schools, closing the digital divide, personalized learning, meeting the needs of students with disabilities, and the role of teachers and professional learning.

NSBA's 'Public School Transformation Now!' Campaign

- The aim of the initiative is to bring together national education leaders who support the long-term transformation of our public schools to meet the needs of each child

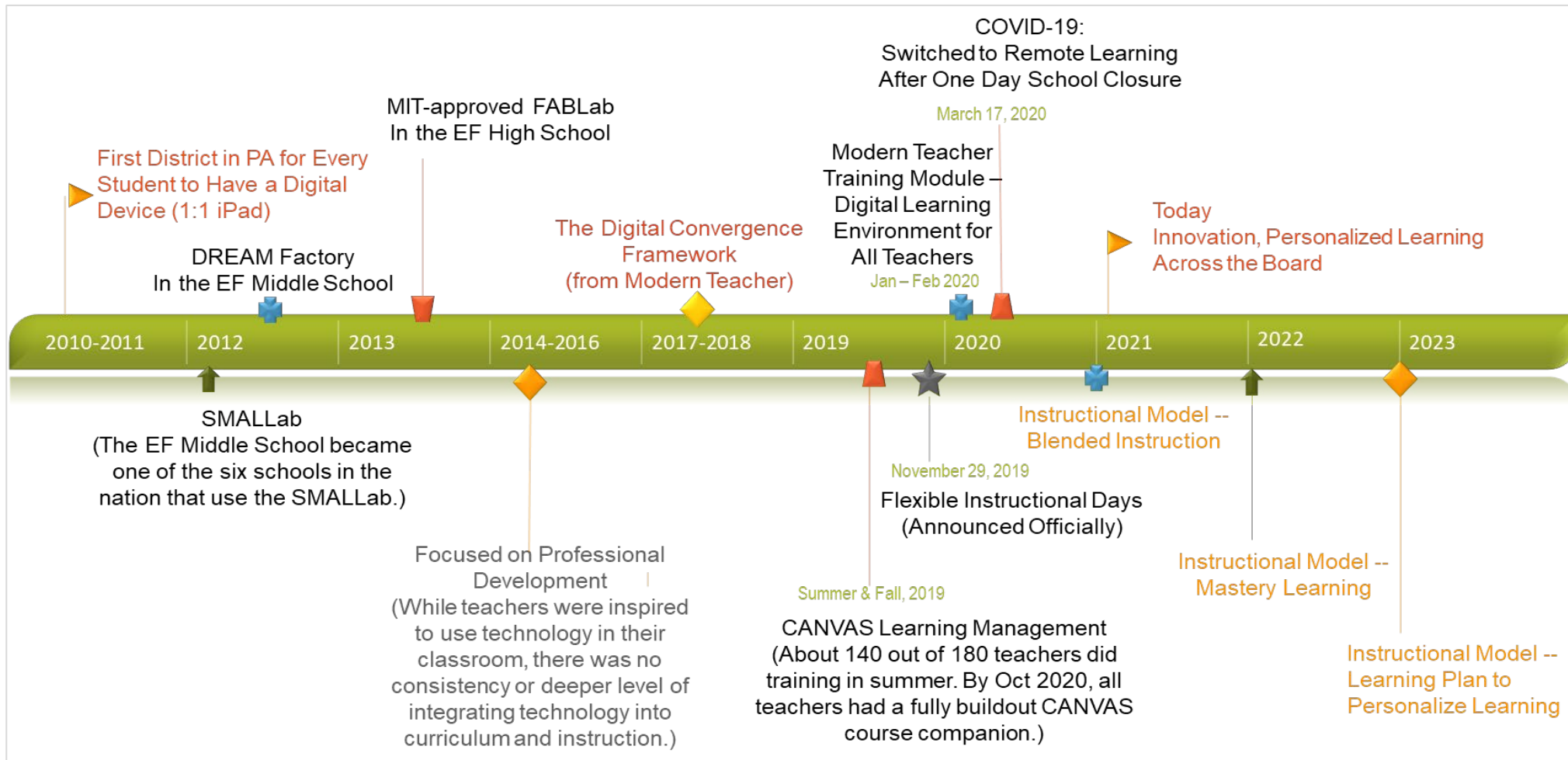
Focus Areas

1. Personalized Learning
2. Rethinking professional learning
3. Special education services
4. Bridging the homework gap

- Visit our website for more details about the campaign:
nsba.org/schooltransformationnow



School Transformation in the Elizabeth Forward School District (EFSD): A Journey from “Backward” to “Forward”



Switch from In-Person to Remote Learning — One Day Lost: 3 Keys to One School District's Successful Transformation

- Forward-Thinking Vision and Leadership
- Developing a Framework for a Focused, Dynamic Digital Learning System (including Educators' Professional Learning)
- Creating a Culture of Risk Taking and Innovation

“Personalized learning could not happen without technology; technology is definitely a barrier for schools to customize learning for students.” (From Superintendent Dr. Todd Keruskin)

Team, Trust, Transparency: 3 Keys for the EFSD Board to Lead School Transformation Successfully

- Teams up with the administration (superintendent, principals).
- Trust educators. The board members have been buying in what the administration decided to do for the best of students and supporting the professional decisions made by the administration.
- “Overcommunicate” with parents and among board members.

“I firmly believe you have to have a great administration team in that great district, and you need great teachers. You need to get the board to back your administration to make those changes. ... But this is a team.” (From the President of EFSD school board, Mr. Thomas Sharkey Jr.)

Challenges for School Boards:

- Public education has changed dramatically, and school boards are responsible for more services.

“Schools used to just educate kids, but now you provide a lot of additional services that you did not provide in the past. How do you pay for these services? How do you support your district and pay for the salaries, and communicate to the public what they’re getting for that? That’s always struggles. That hasn’t changed, compared with prior to the pandemic.” (From Mr. Sharkey)

- The driving force to be a board member is critical for a board to act like a team and function collectively.

“You have to have a leadership on the board to bring the board together. Board is very difficult; we have nine folks. I always say my job is to manage these nine folks and get those folks behind what we’re trying to do in EF.” (From Mr. Sharkey)