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904.356.7757

904.394.2005

40 East Adams Street
Suite 110
Jacksonville, FL 32202

Poll: Duval County residents, parents have high confidence in public school teachers

Annual survey of education perceptions also reveals public opinion on several policy issues

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., January 31, 2017 — An overwhelming majority of public school parents in Duval County believe their children's schools and teachers are effective, according to several questions — including some new ones — in the Jacksonville Public Education Fund's annual Public Education Perceptions Poll, which measures both general community perceptions and includes several parent-only questions.

When asked to rate their child's school with a grade, parents were far more likely to give schools A's and B's than the state's grading system. Two-thirds of public school parents in the poll rated their child's school as an A or B. By the state's grading system, which is primarily based on student proficiency and growth on state-wide standardized tests, a third of Duval County schools are rated A and B.

Several questions this year asked poll respondents about the effectiveness of teachers in the county. More than three-quarters of respondents felt that DCPS teachers were effective with nearly a third (32.1 percent) citing teachers as the most important factor in deciding where to send their children.

"This poll shows that parents and community members agree: We must do everything we can to unleash the potential of educators in our community," said Trey Csar, president of the Jacksonville Public Education Fund.

Finally, the gap between perception of the graduation rate and reality remained from last year. On average, respondents thought the graduation rate was 62 percent, up from 61 percent last year, but still far behind the advances of the actual graduation rate, which is 79 percent.

Among the other key findings:

- More people would support a small increase in taxes if the funds went to public education, increasing to 74 percent from 70 percent last year.
- There was a significant decrease in the number of people who believe that students need more than a high school diploma to have a good life.
- More people believe that DCPS takes public opinion into account when making decisions, and confidence for school district leadership remains strong.
- The overwhelming majority of poll respondents agreed that parents in Florida should be allowed to enroll their children in any public school in Florida with space available, regardless of where they live. African American respondents agreed more with the statement than Caucasian respondents. Residents on the north and west sides of town agreed with this statement more than residents at the beaches.

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- There was a significant increase in the percentage of respondents who thought the district has made the most progress over the last year in focusing on providing a well-rounded education that includes art, music, physical education, and health services.
- There was an increase in the number of people rating district performance as "poor."

The poll was sponsored, funded, and analyzed by the Jacksonville Public Education Fund, and conducted by the Public Opinion Research Laboratory at the University of North Florida in early January. The sample of 510 adults was selected from the target population of Duval County adults (18 years or older) through the use of Random-Digit-Dialing methodology for both landlines and cell phones. The margin of sampling error for this survey was +/- 4.34 percent.

The full report with survey questions, raw data, graphics and interactive visualizations is available online at jaxpef.org.

***** For interviews and high-resolution graphics, contact Deirdre Conner, Director of Advocacy & Communications, at (904) 345-0597 or Deirdre@jaxpef.org. *****

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About the Jacksonville Public Education Fund

The Jacksonville Public Education Fund is an independent nonprofit organization that works to inform and mobilize the community to advocate for universally high-quality public schools for all children. For more information, visit www.jaxpef.org or call (904) 356-7757.