



2024

15th Annual Volume

The Great Work of Montana's Public Schools

October 2024

coalitionofmtk12advocates.org

A VISION FOR THE SUCCESS OF MONTANA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Montana's public schools are on a bold mission: to unlock the full potential of every child in our state. This vision is not just a goal; it's a profound commitment shared by the Montana Association of School Business Officials (MASBO), the Montana Rural Education Association (MREA), the Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA), the Montana Quality Education Coalition (MQEC), and School Administrators of Montana (SAM). Together, we stand united, driven by our passion for shaping brighter futures for every child and community.

The K-12 Vision Project is infused with renewed energy and a deep understanding of the vital role our public schools play in the heartbeat of Montana. In today's world, strong, capable, and innovative public education is more critical than ever before. We are at the forefront of a resurgence of hope and optimism, passionately advocating for the future of our great state and the children we serve.

This dynamic project is the culmination of collaborative efforts from over 500 educators, elected officials, superintendents, principals, and school business professionals from every corner of Montana. Together, we have crafted an inspiring vision that aligns with the rights guaranteed to our children under the Constitution. Our actionable steps are designed to strengthen the bonds between schools and communities, ensuring that trustees, staff, families, and students are united in a shared commitment to nurturing the best interests of every child.

This publication is a testament to the trust Montanans place in their public schools and those who tirelessly dedicate themselves to this mission. We honor that trust and are resolute in our commitment to earn it every day in every school across Montana.

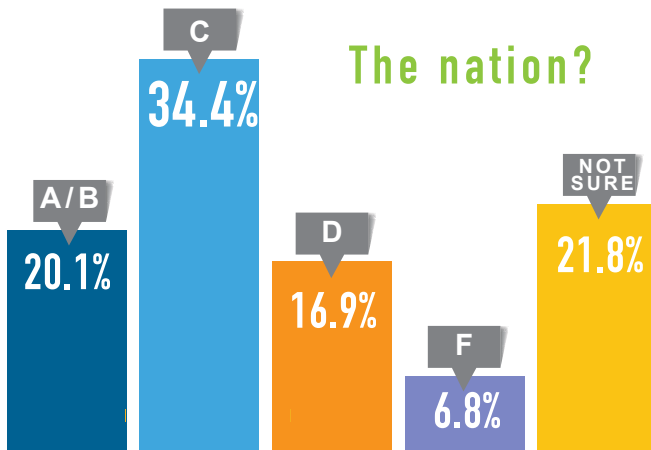
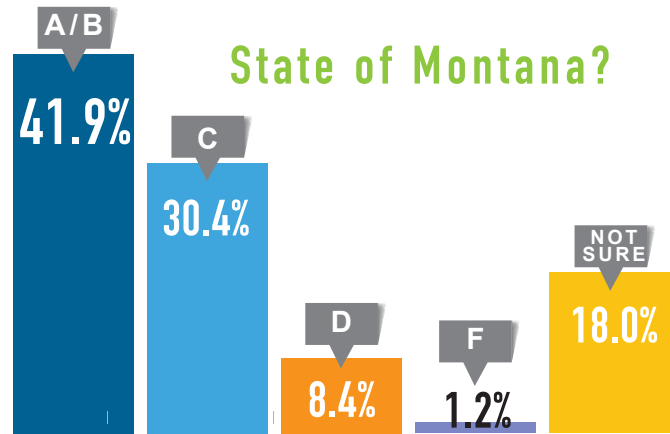
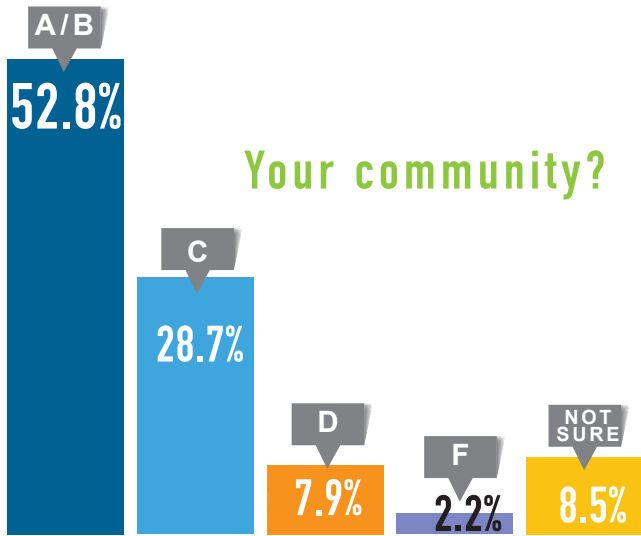
Safety is at the forefront of our priorities, ensuring secure and nurturing learning environments for the more than 150,000 children and their families we serve. Our local school boards are committed to protecting the health and safety of over 22,000 dedicated educators and leaders who work diligently to create supportive spaces for learning throughout our state.

Montana's public schools not only educate — they safeguard our communities by providing effective and secure environments tailored to meet the unique needs of each community. By collaborating with students and families, we ensure that opportunities to learn, grow, and thrive together are not just maintained but flourish.

Together, let us celebrate and champion our public schools as the heart of our communities. With unwavering commitment, we will continue to inspire greatness in our children and foster a future filled with hope and possibility for all Montanans!

The closer people are to their schools, the more they trust and like them.

WHAT GRADE, A through F, would you give public schools in:



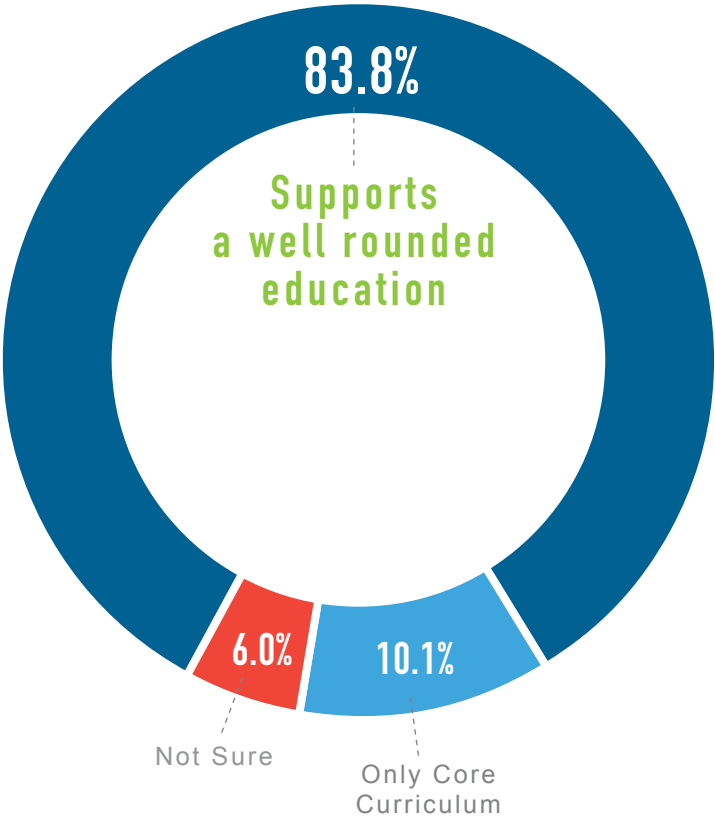
LEADING A PATH OF SUCCESS

"When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it." - Henry Ford

Montanans recognize and appreciate the value of Montana's public schools. We are proud to have consistently maintained that support over the course of the last decade, and we are intent on continuing to further build support and earn the trust of Montanans into the future.

In your opinion, should public schools provide a well-rounded education to all children, including

items such as early childhood education beginning at age 4, gifted and talented, music, art, physical education, technology, career and technical education and advanced placement courses or should public schools provide only core curriculum (math, English, science, social studies)?



42.8% Local School Boards

32.4% State Board of Public Education

9.3% Not Sure

7.6% State Superintendent

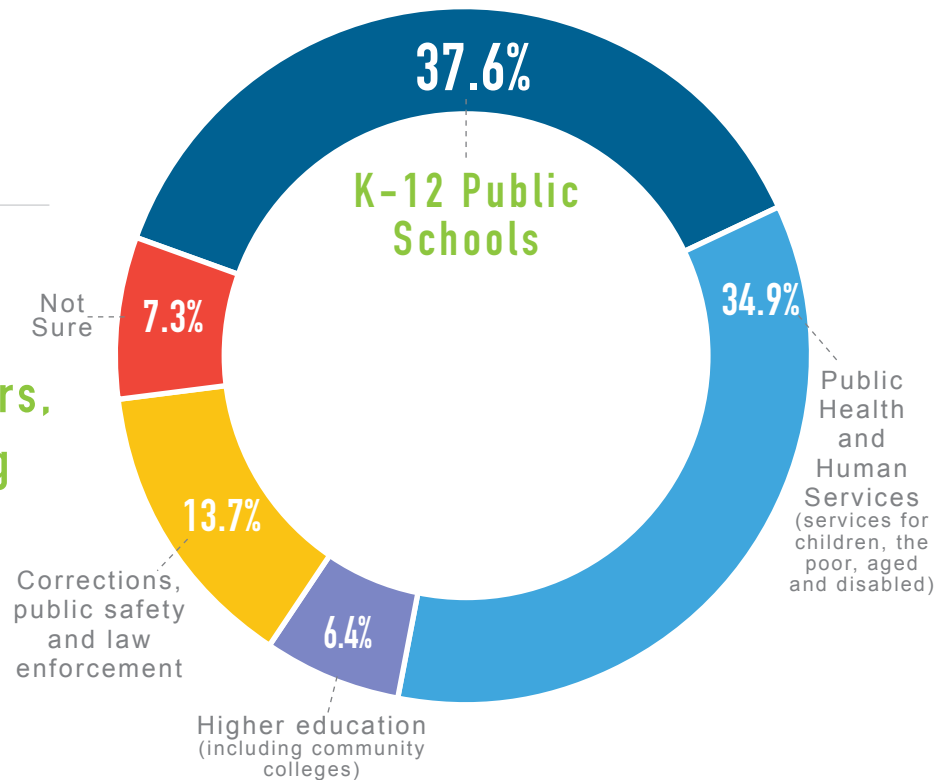
3.1% Governor

2.4% Federal Government

2.3% Legislature

Which of the following do you think should have the MOST AUTHORITY to determine how public schools are operated?

When it comes to how state government spends your tax dollars, which of the following areas do you think should be the HIGHEST PRIORITY?



55.6%
Teachers,
locally
elected
school
boards,
principals,
superintendents

Who among the following
public employees and
officials **DO YOU TRUST**
the most when it comes
to deciding what is best
academically for
students in Montana's
public schools?

17.0%
State
Board
of
Public
Ed

10.8%
Not
Sure

6.8%
U.S.
Dept.
of ED

5.1%
State
Superintendent

3.0%
Governor

1.0%
Congress

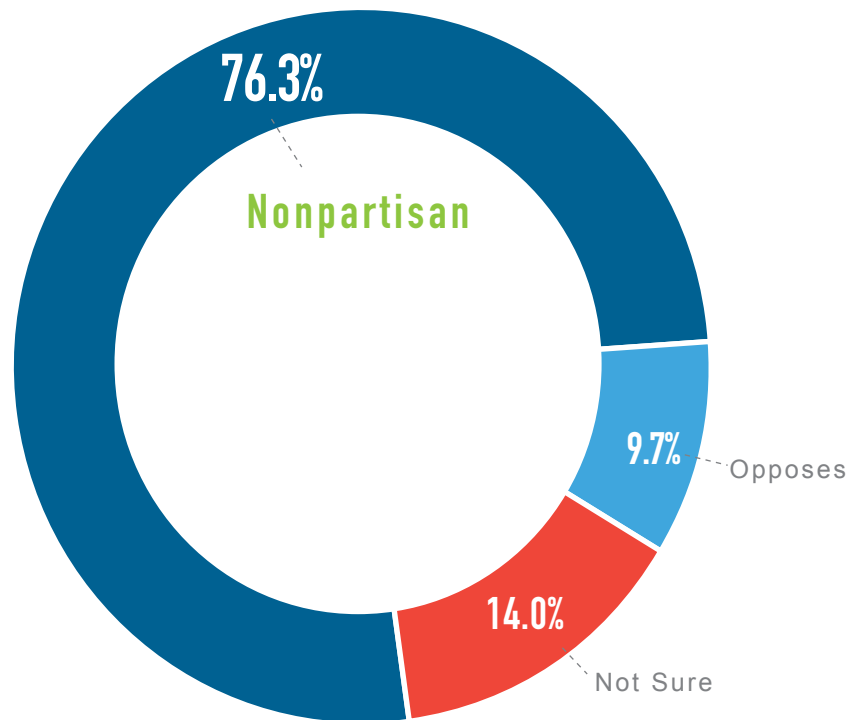
.6%
Legislature

VOTERS AGREE

ELECTED TRUSTEES AND LOCAL VOTERS SHOULD
BE MAKING KEY DECISIONS ABOUT CHILDREN

WORKING TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE THAT HAPPEN

Do you believe an elected school board member should make nonpartisan decisions or do you believe an elected school board member should make decisions that reflect the school board member's political party affiliation?

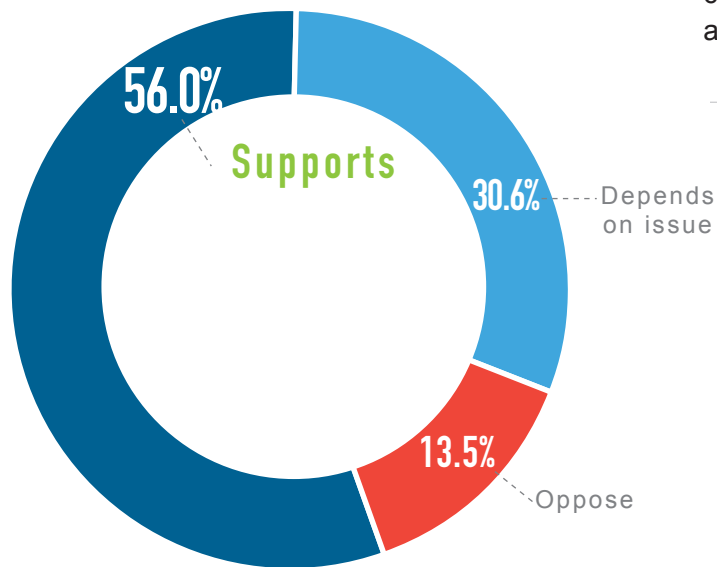


As we stand on the threshold of 2025, we are confronted with pivotal moments and profound changes in our environment that demand our immediate attention. Whether provoked by the expiration of COVID relief funds, inflationary pressures, increasingly complex needs of families with children, or the upcoming decennial study of our system of funding Montana's public schools, this is a time for us to pause, reflect, regroup, and renew our unwavering commitment to the quality of public education in Montana.

It has been two decades since our state enacted the current school funding formula, a response born from the Montana Supreme Court's order requiring reform. The Court's ruling highlighted the inadequacies in the state's approach to funding public education at that time — and required a legislative response that resonated in communities throughout Montana.

In that moment, the Legislature was tasked with a monumental responsibility: to define a foundational system of free, high-quality education, to ascertain the true costs of delivering such an essential service, and to construct a funding mechanism robust enough to empower our schools to deliver on the promises made in that definition. This was not merely an exercise in policy-making; it was a fundamental promise to ensure that every child in Montana has access to an education that embodies excellence and equity.

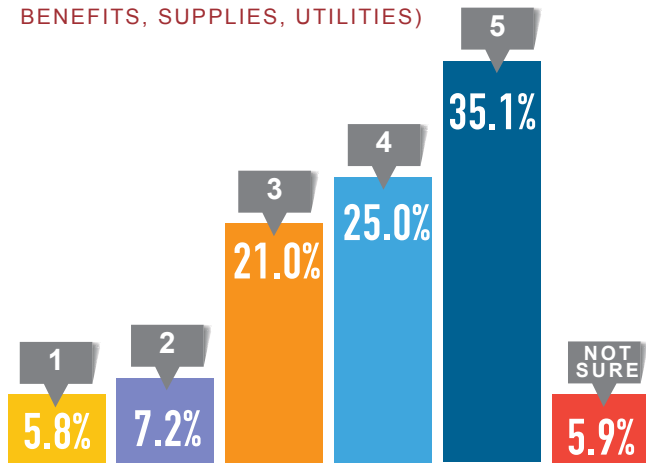
Now, as we look toward the future, we must once again rise to the occasion. Let us summon our collective strength and determination to safeguard and enhance our public schools. Together, we can ensure that the vision of a truly equitable education for every student in Montana becomes not just a dream, but a transformative reality. The time has come for us to recommit ourselves to this vital cause, for the stakes have never been higher, and our children's futures depend on it.



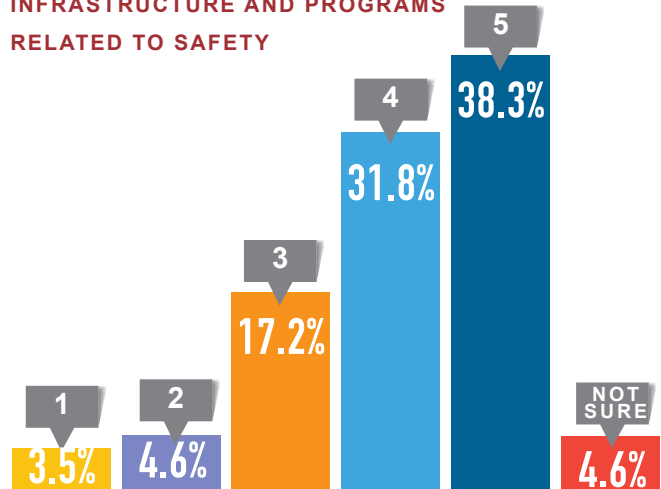
How do you view local school levy elections as a general principle?

Which of the following types of levies are you likely to support on a scale of 1-5, where 1 being not supportive at all and 5 being very supportive?

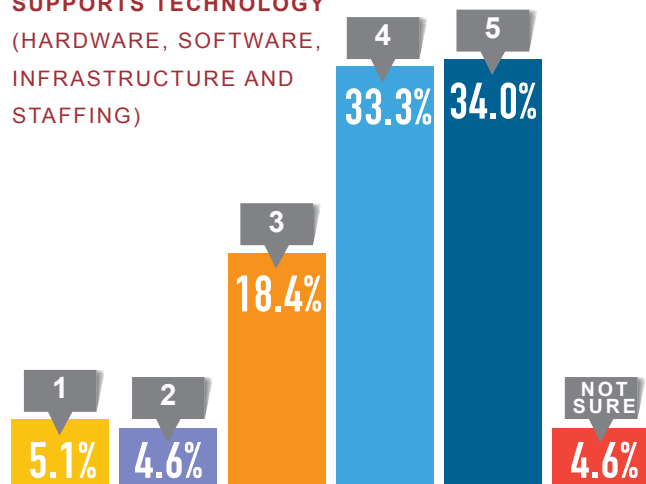
A SCHOOL LEVY THAT **SUPPORTS OPERATIONS** (SALARIES, BENEFITS, SUPPLIES, UTILITIES)



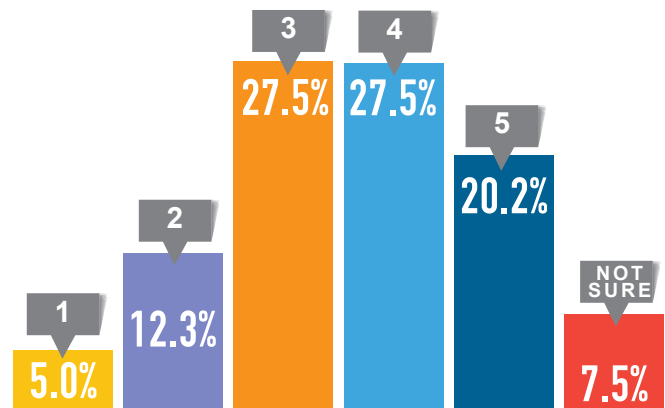
A SCHOOL LEVY THAT **SUPPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROGRAMS RELATED TO SAFETY**



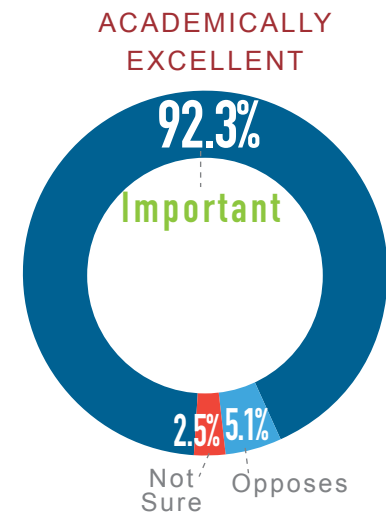
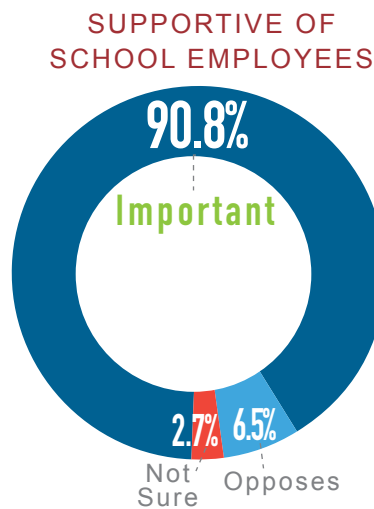
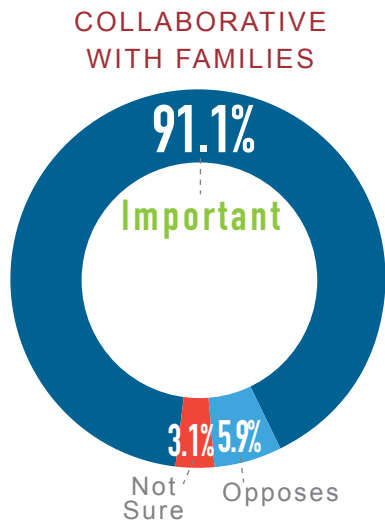
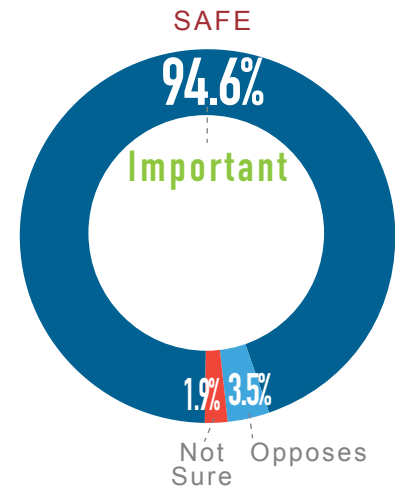
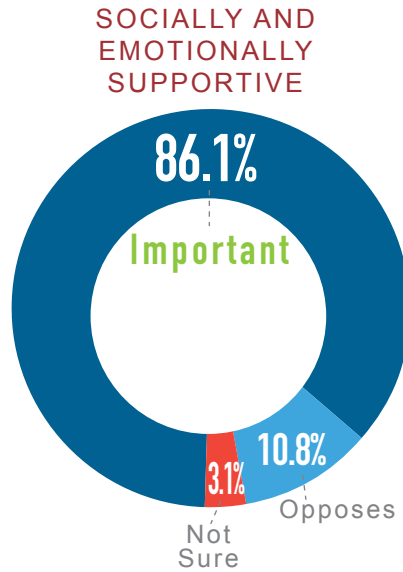
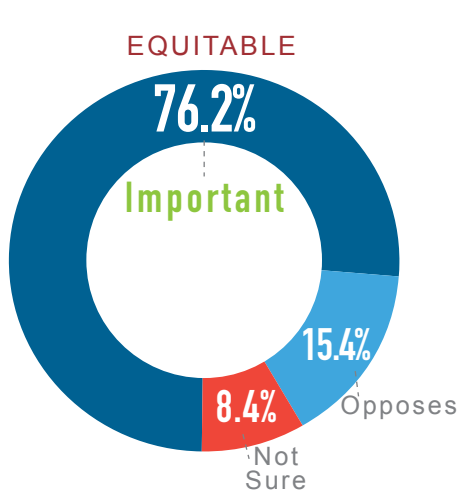
A SCHOOL LEVY THAT **SUPPORTS TECHNOLOGY** (HARDWARE, SOFTWARE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND STAFFING)



A SCHOOL LEVY THAT **SUPPORTS A SPECIFIC BUILDING, CONSTRUCTION OR MAINTENANCE PROJECT**



Please indicate your opinion of the importance of the following characteristics of public schools:



THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

THE BENEFITS OF A STRONG PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM IN EACH COMMUNITY

Vibrant public schools provide invaluable benefits in each community. In addition to developing the full potential of each child and creating a bright future for Montanans everywhere, quality schools provide tangential benefits for each community.

Montana's public schools employ over 22,000 full-time equivalent staff who serve over 150,000 children in schools throughout Montana each day, developing students for a lifetime of success as Montana's future labor force. In addition to the direct benefits to children and their families, expenditures of each public school provide reverberating benefits to each community.

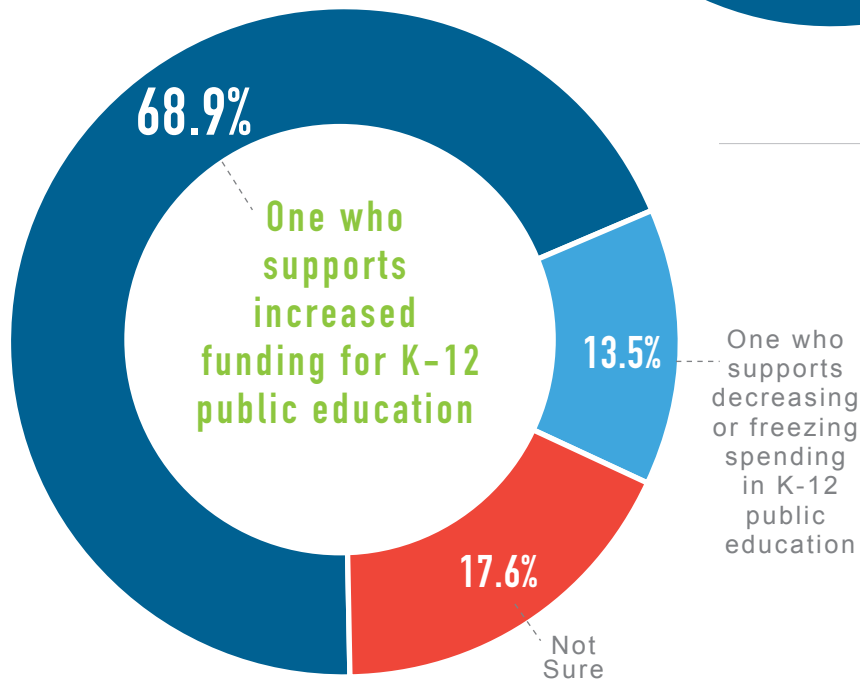
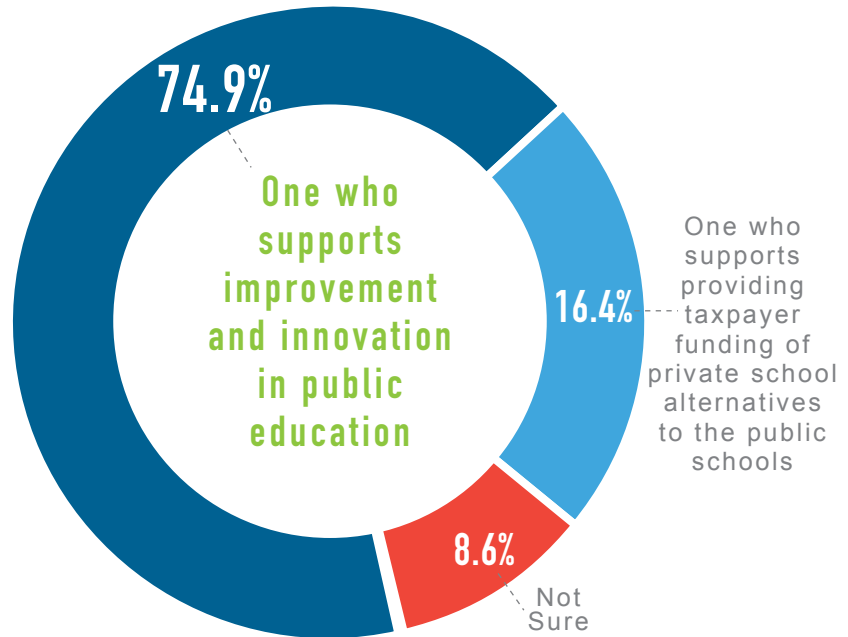
The National Bureau of Economic Research has found for every dollar spent on public schools in an area, home values increased by \$20. These benefits accrue to all homeowners in a community, regardless of whether they have children in the public school system.

Direct expenditures by schools on local businesses for services, goods, and supplies necessary to operate the school are estimated at over \$360 million annually.

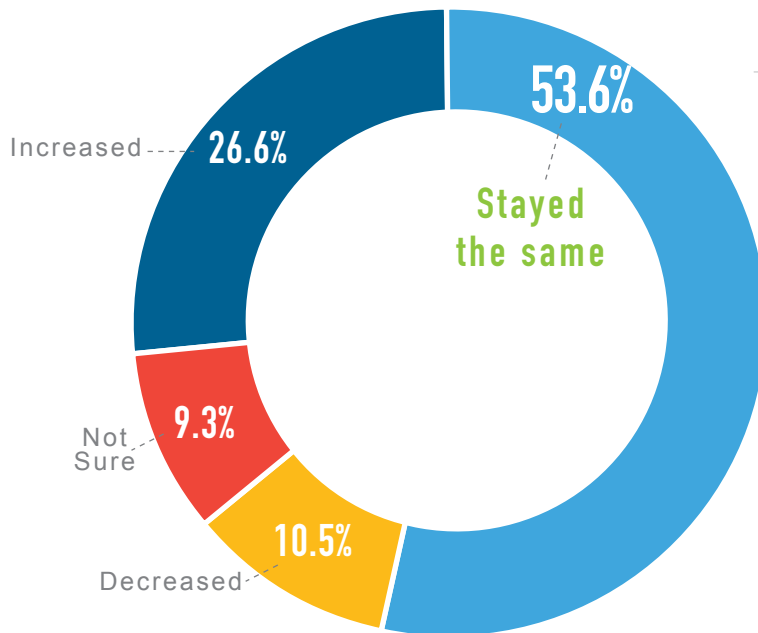
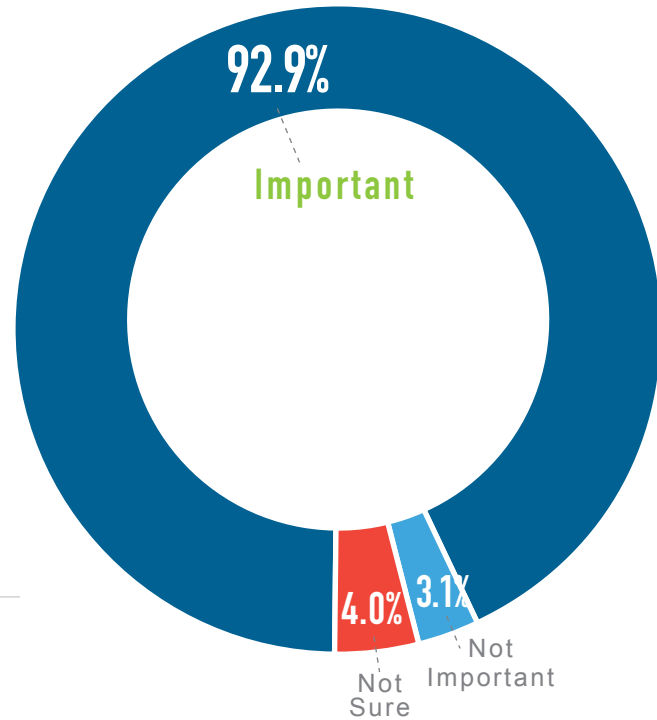
Wages paid to school employees are spent within the community, becoming income for businesses who then invest that revenue into worker wages and services, building, and distributing economic stability.

The perpetuation of this cycle provides benefits at five-fold the original expenditures attributable to the presence of a public school in the community. Total public school expenditures of approximately \$2.4 billion per year expand into over \$10 billion in total economic benefit to the people of Montana or roughly \$10,000 for each Montanan. Public schools provide value-added benefits while creating our future Montana leaders and entrepreneurs.

Please tell us which type of legislator or other state elected official you most support?



How important is having quality K-12 public schools operating in your community?



Thinking about how important K-12 public schools are to your community. Have your experiences over the last year increased or decreased your perception regarding the importance of having quality K-12 public schools operating in your community?

THE IMPORTANCE OF STRIVING FOR UNITY, COURAGE, AND FOCUS DURING POLARIZED TIMES

In the breathtaking landscapes of Montana, we find not just a place to call home, but a powerful community woven together by the shared values of grit, determination, commitment, and independence. Our public schools stand as beacons of hope, embodying the spirit of our towns and cities, and reflecting the dreams we hold for our children. Together, we are on a mission — an inspiring journey that binds us in purpose and passion.

While our state may stretch across vast open spaces, it is our deep sense of connection that truly defines us. When we stand by one another, fueled by a mutual respect and loyalty that knows no bounds, we cultivate an environment where everyone can thrive. United in our pursuit of excellence, we empower every child to reach their fullest potential, igniting their passion for learning and growth.

In the face of challenges, Montanans display extraordinary resilience, courage, and unity. At a time when the world may seem divided, we choose to bridge those gaps in our communities, embracing respectful discourse and promoting understanding. By listening to one another, we not only honor diverse perspectives but also enrich our collective strength. This collaborative spirit is the heart of what it means to be Montanan.

Together, let us commit to a culture of respect and civility, ensuring that every voice is heard and every individual is valued. This is our promise to ourselves and to each other — the essence of the Montana way. By embodying these principles, we can safeguard our identity as “The Last Best Place” and create a legacy of hope for generations to come.

Let’s rise together, inspire each other, and turn our shared vision for a brighter future into a breathtaking reality.

COALITION OF ADVOCATES FOR MONTANA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS COLLABORATIVE WORK IN MONTANA

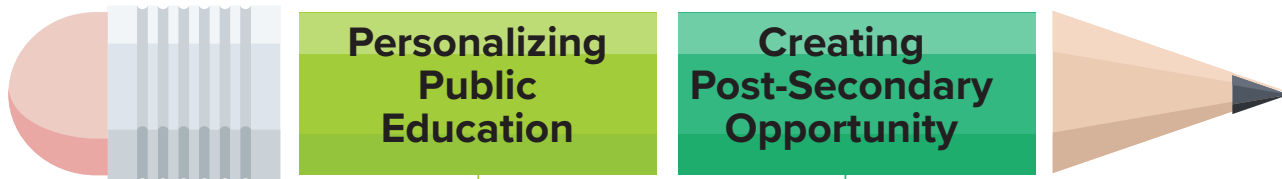


Transforming the Teaching Profession

- Raising Teacher Pay
- Loan Repayment Assistance
- Teacher Residency
- School Health Insurance Trust
- Alternative Teacher Credentialing

Early Literacy Intervention

- Classroom Program for Four Year Olds
- Summer Jump Start Program through Third Grade
- Home-Based Options



Personalizing Public Education

- Proficiency Based Education
- Open Enrollment
- Part-Time and Remote Learning through the Digital Academy
- Indian Language Immersion
- Public Charter Schools

Creating Post-Secondary Opportunity

- Work-based Learning with Stackable Career Certifications
- Dual Credit, Advance Placement and International Baccalaureate Courses

WHO IS THE COALITION OF ADVOCATES FOR MONTANA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

The Coalition of Advocates for Montana's Public Schools is a partnership of public education advocates focused on ensuring success for each child in every public school, in furtherance of the Peoples' goal under Article X, Section 1 "to develop the full educational potential of each person."



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