

## **Poll: Involve parents in decisions about what subjects are taught in N.J. schools**

*For immediate release*

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**Galloway, N.J.** — Two-thirds of New Jersey adults believe parents should be more involved in local decisions about what curriculum is taught in the schools, according to a Stockton University Poll released today.

Only 5% of the 600 state residents interviewed said parents should be less involved in deciding what gets taught, and 26% said the involvement level should stay the same as it is now.

More respondents identified curriculum (24%) as their top education concern than any other issue, with bullying next at 9% and students falling behind in core subjects at 8%.

Majorities considered it “very important” that noncore subjects be taught in the schools, including racism and its impact (66%) and sex education (57%). But only 30% considered it very important to teach about gender identity and sexuality and 35% on gender issues and stereotypes. Republican respondents, for the most part, did not think it was important to teach about gender identity issues.

Overall, one in five said gender and sexuality issues should never be taught at any level of school, according to the poll sponsored by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.

More than one in four (28%) supported the banning of certain books from school classrooms and libraries, including 19% of Democrats and 54% of Republicans. Sixty-one percent opposed book banning and 9% were unsure. Meanwhile, 73% were concerned about book censorship, but 22% were not.

“Gender issues being taught in schools has been a hot-button topic for parents in many states and has become part of the culture wars in our politically polarized nation,” said John Froomjian, director of the Hughes Center.

“New Jersey adults support teaching sex education and material about racism and its impact, which have been controversial elsewhere. But the poll shows many in the Garden State still have qualms over teaching about sexual identity and gender norms, especially in the earlier grades,” Froomjian said.

Overall, New Jersey residents are satisfied with the state’s schools and teachers. A majority (60%) are satisfied with the quality of K-12 education in the state and the vast majority (85%) have at least some trust in New Jersey school teachers.

Anywhere from 81-83% of K-12 parents, in particular, said their children are either on track or ahead of where they should be in core subjects like math, science, reading and writing, as well as social and communication skills. A minority of 14-16% said their child is behind.

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of various curricula, assuming the topics are being introduced and taught at an age-appropriate level.

Financial literacy was considered important to school curriculum by the highest rate of residents (97%) followed by social and emotional well-being (91%), sex education, media literacy, and racism (all 85%). Gender-related topics ranked last with lessons on gender issues and stereotyping deemed important by 62% and gender identity and sexuality by 59%.

When asked at what grade level these topics should be introduced, a majority (51%) said social and emotional well-being should be introduced in elementary school. A plurality (44%) said racism and its impact should also be introduced at this level. When it comes to sex ed, most (55%) said it should be introduced in middle school. A plurality of one-third said gender issues, and gender identity and sexuality should be introduced in middle school as well.

Views toward topics of gender were divided sharply along partisan lines, with Republicans less supportive.

	At least somewhat important to incorporate into curriculum		
	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Media literacy	91%	69%	91%
Financial literacy	99%	98%	97%
Gender identity and sexuality	84%	20%	58%
Gender issues e.g. sexism, stereotypes	85%	29%	60%
Sex education	97%	70%	84%
Race, racism, and its impact	97%	73%	83%
Social and emotional well-being	96%	83%	94%

“For the most part, K-12 parents are generally satisfied with New Jersey schools’ handling of potentially controversial topics,” said Hughes Center Research Associate Alyssa Maurice.

Of those with children in grades K-12, a majority (62%) said their children’s school does a good job of keeping parents informed about what is being taught, including potentially controversial topics. A plurality said their children’s school gives parents the option to opt-out of potentially controversial lessons while 29% said the school did not and 27% were not sure.

Those who did not have any children in grades K-12 currently think that schools should keep parents informed about what is being taught at a rate of 71%, while 21% do not think schools should do so.

An area of consensus among New Jersey residents is supporting students' mental health, with 90% in support of offering more mental health resources in schools.

For full poll results, visit <https://stockton.edu/hughes-center/polling/polling-results-2023.html>

## Methodology

The poll of New Jersey adult residents was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy from Feb. 24-Mar. 10, 2023. Stockton University students texted cell phones with invitations to take the survey online and Opinion Services supplemented the dialing portion of the fieldwork, which consisted of cell and landline telephone calls. Overall, 92% of interviews were conducted on cell phones and 8% on landline phones. In terms of mode, 75% were reached via dialing and 25% were reached via text-to-web. A total of 600 New Jersey adult residents were interviewed. Both cell and landline samples consisted of random digit dialing (RDD) sample from MSG. Data are weighted based on U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey data for New Jersey on variables of age, race, ethnicity, education level, sex, and region. The poll's margin of error is +/- 4 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. MOE is higher for subsets.

## About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy ([stockton.edu/hughescenter](http://stockton.edu/hughescenter)) at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. The center is named for the late William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton. The Hughes Center can be found on [YouTube](#), and can be followed on Facebook [@StocktonHughesCenter](#), Twitter [@hughescenter](#) and Instagram [@stockton\\_hughes\\_center](#).

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