College Board Swing State Education Survey

Findings From A Survey Of Registered Voters In Nine Key Swing States

> **Submitted To:** The College Board

By Hart Research Associates and North Star Opinion Research

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About The Research: On behalf of the College Board, the bipartisan polling team of Hart Research Associates and North Star Opinion Research undertook a comprehensive survey among voters in nine key swing states to explore the degree to which they are focusing on the issue of education in this year's election, what specific aspects of education are most important to them, and how they feel about various education policy proposals.

The survey was conducted from March 15 to 20, 2012, and included interviews among 1,839 registered voters across nine key swing states—three in the Southeast, three in Industrial states, and three in the Southwest. Representative samples of approximately 200 interviews were conducted among registered voters in each of the nine states (exact sample sizes are indicated in the table below). For reporting purposes, each state was weighted to reflect its proportion of the electorate across these nine swing states.

	Number Of <u>Interviews</u> #	Weighted Proportion Of Swing State <u>Registered Voters</u> %
Southeast Swing States	601	46.3
Florida	200	23.1
North Carolina	201	12.9
Virginia	200	10.3
Industrial Swing States	606	42
Ohio	204	16.2
Pennsylvania	201	17.4
Wisconsin	201	8.4
Southwest Swing States	632	11.7
Colorado	215	6.6
Nevada	216	2.9
New Mexico	201	2.2

The statistical margin of error associated with a sample size of 1,839 respondents is ± 2.3 percentage points, at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error for each of the three regions is ± 4.0 percentage points, and it is roughly ± 7 percentage points for each individual state.

Highlights Of The Key Findings

1. Education is a top-tier issue for voters in the 2012 elections for president and Congress, even if it does not always get top-tier attention from candidates.

- 67% say education will be extremely important to them personally in this year's elections for president and Congress. Education ranks behind jobs and the economy (82% extremely important) and is on par with government spending (69%), health care (67%), and the federal budget deficit (64%).
- Those most likely to be "education voters" in the 2012 elections are African Americans (91%), Hispanics (81%), Democrats (79%), and women (75%), especially 18- to 49-year-old women (77%).
- Regardless of party, majorities of voters say that education will be extremely important to them, but Democrats (79%) indicate that education will be of greater importance to them than do independents (63%) and Republicans (53%). The gender gap on education as a priority holds across party lines, with women placing a greater priority than men on education no matter their party affiliation. For example, 65% of Republican women and 70% of independent women say education will be extremely important to them in the upcoming federal elections, while only 43% of Republican men and 57% of independent men say the same.

2. Education is important to voters because they see it as one of the priorities for getting the economy back on track, as well as improving job opportunities for young people and making our communities better.

- 34% of voters select "improving education at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels" as one of the top two priorities for getting America's economy back on track, which ranks in the top tier with "reducing our dependence on foreign oil" (39%) and "reducing the federal budget deficit" (32%). These goals rank as higher priorities than reducing taxes and regulations on business, addressing trade issues, or modernizing transportation infrastructure.
- Voters recognize that if the United States puts a higher priority on improving education and making sure students have access to quality education, it would have a big impact on America's ability to compete successfully in the global economy (77% very/fairly big impact), the likelihood that young people can get good jobs in the future (76%), and making our communities better and safer places to live (75%).

3. Voters infer many positive attributes about a candidate whom they hear places a priority on education.

- More than four in five voters make the following positive inferences about a candidate who puts a top priority on education:
 - Is forward-looking (86% associate, including 64% strongly associate)
 - Cares about ensuring opportunities for everyone (83% associate, including 56% strongly associate)
 - Is in touch with the concerns of the average family today (82% associate, including 57% strongly associate)

Understands what it takes to compete in the global economy (82% associate, including 54% strongly associate)

4. A large majority of voters believes that increased funding for education is necessary, including four in nine who say it is *definitely* necessary. More significant, a 55% majority say they would be willing to pay \$200 more per year in taxes to provide increased funding for education.

- 78% of voters say that increased funding for education is necessary, including 44% who say it is definitely necessary. Just 21% say it is not necessary.
 - While there are variations in intensity, majorities of <u>all</u> demographic groups feel that increased funding is necessary. Nonetheless Democrats (94% necessary, including 64% definitely necessary) feel more strongly about this than independents (75% necessary, including 40% definitely necessary) and Republicans (62% necessary, including 24% definitely necessary).
- 55% say they would be willing to pay \$200 more per year in taxes to provide increased education funding, while 36% say they would NOT be willing to do this. The proportion who would *definitely* be willing (43%) is notably higher than the proportion who would *definitely* NOT be willing (28%).
 - The groups most open to paying this additional tax for education include African Americans (76%), individuals with a post-graduate education (72%), Democrats (70%), those with annual household incomes greater than \$80,000 (67%), and 18- to 49-year-old women (65%).

5. Voters' priorities for increased funding emphasize a) the affordability of a post-secondary education, b) ensuring that the elementary and secondary schools offer well-rounded curricula that include arts, music, and physical education, and c) providing more vocational education programs in high schools.

- The four priorities that at least half of voters feel are extremely important include the following:
 - $_{\odot}$ To make sure schools continue to provide arts, music, and physical education classes for all students (59% extremely important)
 - To help hold down tuition at community colleges and state colleges and universities (56% extremely important)
 - To provide Pell grants and other grants to help moderate-income students pay for college (52% extremely important)
 - To provide more vocational and technical education training programs in high schools (51%)

6. While voters want and expect elected officials to treat education as a priority, they believe that parents—not public office holders—have the greatest responsibility for improving education in the United States today.

 When asked which one or two of seven groups have the greatest responsibility for improving education, slightly more than half (52%) of voters hold parents of students most accountable. This notably surpasses the proportion who place responsibility on the shoulders of teachers (31%), elected officials (26%), and society in general (22%). School administrators (15%), students (13%), and teachers unions (5%) are cited least often.

7. There is broad consensus that state government officials should address education as a state priority, while attitudes about the federal government's role are more complex.

- 90% of voters feel it is extremely (69%) or fairly (21%) important for their governor and state legislature to address the issue of education as a matter of state policy.
- A lower (but significant) majority (76%) feel it is important for the president and Congress to address education as a matter of national policy, including nearly half (49%) who think it is extremely important.
- Against this sentiment however, 57% feel that the federal government already is too involved in education and should leave it up to states and localities to deal with, while only 37% think the federal government should be doing more.
 - The groups most critical of the federal government for being too involved in education include Republicans (79%), seniors (67%), and whites (64%). Supporters of the federal government doing more to improve education include African Americans (75%), Hispanics (52%), Democrats (58%), and 18- to 34-year-olds (51%).

8. Whatever ambivalence voters may have about the role of the federal government in education today, majorities of voters endorse a variety of education goals as important, particularly goals related to college affordability and the basic quality of elementary and secondary education.

- Six education goals stand out as particularly important to voters:
 - $_{\odot}$ Making college affordable for Americans from all walks of life (68% extremely important)
 - $_{\odot}$ Ensuring students graduate from high school rather than dropping out (67%)
 - Improving the quality and performance of public elementary and secondary schools (61%)
 - Ensuring that all students have access to rigorous high school course work (60%)
 - Improving the performance of colleges to ensure graduates have the skills to get good jobs (56%)

• Providing more adult education and job retraining programs for workers to improve their skills (54%)

9. Voters give higher marks to their local public schools than to public schools nationwide.

- Nearly half (49%) of voters rate the quality of education and level of student achievement at their local schools as excellent (14%) or good (35%), 31% say it is just adequate, and 18% rate their local schools as not so good (11%) or poor (7%). Comparatively, 27% give a rating of excellent (2%) or good (25%) to public schools nationwide, while a plurality (45%) say the nation's public schools are just adequate, and 26% say they are not so good (18%) or poor (8%).
- 26% of voters rate their local schools as excellent or good, but rate schools nationwide as adequate or worse.

10. A post-secondary degree or credential is recognized as critical to workplace success.

• Three in four voters believe that a post-secondary degree or credential is important to achieving success in the workplace, including 30% who say it is absolutely essential and 46% who say it is very important. Another 22% of voters say it is somewhat important, and just 2% think it is not important.

11. The most popular education positions that candidates can take address the issue of college affordability. Voters also have a strong positive reaction to candidates who emphasize the importance of making America a leader again in post-secondary degrees.

- Five positions that aim to make college more affordable engender support, with the most popular two being to allow employers to offer tuition assistance to employees tax free (82% more likely to support candidate) and to increase the amount that families can contribute to tax-free college savings accounts (77% more likely to support candidate).
- There also is broad support for making America the world leader again in the proportion of people with a post-secondary degree or credential (75% more likely to support candidate).
- Additionally, 65% would be more likely to support a candidate who backs the Dream Act, allowing children of undocumented immigrants who have grown up in America to attain legal residency status if they complete college or serve in the U.S. military.

12. Education is an issue that is very much up for grabs in the 2012 elections. Democrats are just slightly better positioned than Republicans, but the reality is that neither party enjoys the broad support of swing state voters when it comes to education in the 2012 elections.

- 44% of voters say that the Democratic Party reflects their priorities on the issue of education very or fairly well, while 31% feel the same way about the Republican Party.
 - Among the crucial bloc of independent voters, 40% feel that the Democratic Party reflects their priorities, while 26% feel that way about the Republican Party.

Education: A Significant Issue In The 2012 Elections, Though Notable Cleavages Exist Among The Electorate

Swing state voters indicate that education is high on their agenda for the upcoming presidential and Congressional elections. There is broad agreement that more funding is necessary for education and support for a variety of funding goals, and most voters recognize the importance of obtaining a post-secondary degree or credential to achieve workplace success. Additionally, the majority of voters are willing to pay higher taxes to increase education funding. A look at priorities and attitudes among subgroups of the electorate reveals some notable cleavages, however, most notably by party, race, and gender.

Democrats place a higher priority on education in the 2012 federal elections than Republicans, with independents in between. This pattern of Democrats most focused on education proposals holds when it comes to the belief that more funding is needed for education and a willingness to pay higher taxes to support this goal, as well as support for specific funding goals and various education-related proposals. The elements that exacerbate the partisan divide are proposals to expand the role of the federal government and increase funding for education—approaches that Republicans are less likely to support. Nonetheless, large majorities of Republicans recognize that the country putting a higher priority on education will have a beneficial affect for the country, communities, and individuals.

There also is a notable gender gap among voters who place an importance on education in the 2012 elections for president and Congress. Women place a higher priority on education generally and on specific education goals than men, and they are more likely to think that increased funding for education is necessary and support various education funding goals. The gender gap dissipates, however, when it comes to

a willingness to pay \$200 more per year in taxes to increase education funding, with majorities of both men and women willing to pay more. Men and women both recognize the benefits of improving education for the success of individuals and the country, and they are mostly likely to say they would be more likely to support a candidate who takes various education positions.

Variations in priorities and attitudes by race and ethnicity hold throughout the survey, with African Americans most focused on education in the upcoming federal elections, most supportive of various proposals and increased funding, and most willing to pay more in taxes to fund education. Hispanics' attitudes are more aligned with African Americans than whites, with whites consistently registering a lower intensity of focus on education in the elections and less supportive of various proposals.

Education Is A Top Tier Issue On Voters' Agenda

A candidate who places a priority on education in the 2012 election will be in sync with the swing state electorate. Education (67% extremely important) ranks third on voters' issue agenda for this year's elections for president and U.S. Congress. It is behind jobs and the economy (82%), and it is on par with government spending (69%), health care (67%), and the federal budget deficit (64%). Education is well ahead of taxes (52%), terrorism (48%), and the environment (38%) in terms of importance on voters' agenda.

The importance voters place on education in this year's elections for president and Congress varies most notably by gender, race, and party identification.

Education is extremely important to me in this year's elections for president and U.S. Congress:

Men	58%	Southeast states	72%	
Women	75%	Industrial states	62%	
Men age 18 to 49	61 %	Southwest states	64%	
Men age 50/over	54 %	Democrats	79%	
Women age 18 to 49	77 %	Independents	63%	
Women age 50/over	73 %	Republican	53%	
High school or less	70%	Democratic men	71 %	
Some college	66%	Democratic women	84 %	
Four-year college grad	60%	Independent men	57 %	
Postgraduate work	71%	Independent women	70 %	
Whites African Americans Hispanics	62% 91% 81%	Republican men Republican women	43% 65%	

Majorities of all demographic groups say that education is extremely important in this year's elections, but notable cleavages by gender, race, and party identification emerge in the survey. African Americans (91%), Hispanics (81%), and women (75%), especially 18- to 49-year-old women (77%), place the greatest priority on education, while men (58%), especially men over age 50 (54%), and whites (62%) are the least likely to say it is extremely important.

Regardless of party, majorities of voters say that education will be extremely important to them, but Democrats (79%) indicate that education will be of greater importance to them than do independents (63%) and Republicans (53%). While Democrats rank education on par with health care and ahead of fiscal issues, the issue ranks well behind government spending and the federal budget deficit among Republicans.

Women, regardless of their party identification, place a higher priority on education in the 2012 federal elections than men, with Democratic women the placing the greatest priority on it.

Voters Link Improving Education To Individual And National Success

Swing state voters recognize improving education as central to the success of the nation, of individual communities, and of young people.

When asked to select the one or two objectives that will be the most important for getting America's economy on the right track, three goals rise to the top tier: reducing our dependence on foreign oil (39%), improving education at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels (34%), and reducing the federal budget deficit (32%). Reducing taxes and regulations on business (21%), cracking down on the unfair trade practices of other countries (19%), modernizing America's transportation infrastructure (12%), and expanding free-trade agreements with other countries (7%) rank as less important.

Voters who have the greatest confidence in improving America's economic situation by improving education include strong Democrats (53%), African Americans (52%), and those with a post-graduate education (49%). On the other hand, strong Republicans (15%) and voters with a high school education or less (24%) are least likely to think this approach will improve the economy; they place notably more weight on reducing our dependence on foreign oil (44% of voters with high school education or less

and 48% of strong Republicans) and reducing the federal budget deficit (44% of strong Republicans).

Voters recognize that if the United States puts a higher priority on improving education and making sure students have access to quality education, it would have a big affect on the nation, communities, and individuals. Three in four say it would have a very or fairly big impact on America's ability to compete successfully in the global economy (77%), on the likelihood that young people can get good jobs in the future (76%), and in making our communities better and safer places to live (75%). While Democrats are more likely than independents and Republicans to anticipate positive impacts in each of these areas, majorities of voters, regardless of party affiliation, anticipate these positive outcomes from improving education.

Voters Make Positive Inferences About Candidates Who Put Top Priority On Education

A candidate focused on education yields many benefits with few downsides. Large majorities of voters associate positive attributes with a candidate who puts a top priority on education, and comparatively few associate negative attributes.

Voters infer many positive attributes about a candidate whom they hear places a priority on education.

I strongly or somewhat associate this phrase with a candidate who puts a top priority on education:



An education-focused candidate is seen by large majorities of swing state voters as forward-looking, caring about ensuring opportunities for everyone, in touch with the concerns of the average family, and understanding what it takes to compete in the global economy.

Half of voters associate putting a top priority on education with the likelihood that a candidate is a tax-and-spend liberal, including only one in five who strongly associates it. Few link a focus on education with the concepts that a candidate has misplaced priorities or is being unrealistic.

There are notably few downsides to placing a priority on education. While education-focused voters are more likely than others to make positive inferences about a candidate who puts education high on his/her agenda, the opposite does not hold. There are not remarkable differences in the share of education-focused voters and noneducation focused voters who make negative inferences about a candidate.

Voters Support More Education Funding And The Majority Are Willing To Pay More For It Through Increased Taxes

Swing state voters broadly believe that more education funding is needed. Nearly four in five (78%) voters say that increased funding for education is necessary, including 44% who say it is *definitely* necessary. Importantly, majorities of all demographic subgroups perceive a need for increased funding for education, as well as 58% of voters for whom education is not an extremely important issue in the upcoming elections. Nearly all (94%) Democrats think more funding is necessary, as do three in four (75%) independents and more than three in five (62%) Republicans.

Nonetheless, there are some notable variations in the certainty with which key segments discern that more funding is necessary. "Education voters" are the most certain, including African Americans (78% definitely necessary), Democrats (64%), Democratic women (69%), Hispanics (57%), and women (51%).

A significant find, given today's economic climate, is that a 55% majority of voters say they would be willing to pay \$200 more per year in taxes to provide increased funding for education, while 36% say they would NOT be willing to do so. More voters say they would definitely be willing (43%) than say they would definitely NOT be willing (28%).



Would you personally be willing to pay \$200 per year in higher taxes in order to provide increased funding for education?



African Americans (76%), individuals with a post-graduate education (72%), those with annual household incomes greater than \$80,000 (67%), and 18- to 49-year-old women (65%) are the groups most willing to pay this additional amount in taxes to help fund education, while voters with a high school education or less (42%), those from lower-income households (47%), and whites (52%) are the least willing. There is no demographic group among which a majority says they would *not* be willing, however.

Nonetheless, a clear partisan divide exists when it comes to this tax question, with 70% of Democrats willing to pay \$200 more in taxes for education (including 56% who are definitely willing) and only 21% who are unwilling to pay. A slight majority of Republicans are unwilling to pay this (40% willing, 52% not willing.) Independents fall in between, but with a majority willing to pay this additional tax (55% willing, 36% not willing).

Interestingly, while women place a higher priority on education than men and are even more likely to say that increased funding for education is definitely necessary, there is no gender gap when it comes to this additional tax for education. Men are willing to pay more by 55% to 38%, and women are willing to pay more by 55% to 34%.

In an open-ended question, among the reasons voters give for not being willing to pay more are that they already pay too much in taxes (11%), they are concerned the money is wasted and not well spent (9%), and they cannot afford the additional taxes (7%).

Voters Have Clear Priorities For Increased Funding

When it comes to how they would like to see increased funding for education deployed, swing state voters have some clear priorities for both K-12 and post-graduate education. Their top goals for elementary and secondary schools are to make sure they continue to provide arts, music, and physical education for all students (59% extremely important) and that they provide more vocational and technical education training programs (51%). Voters' top priorities for post-secondary education relate to the goal of making it more affordable, by helping to hold down tuition at community colleges and state colleges and universities (56%), and by providing Pell grants and other grants to help moderate-income students pay for college.

Voters' priorities for funding emphasize affordability of post-secondary education and ensuring that elementary/ secondary schools offer well-rounded curricula.



Extremely important way to use increased funding for education:

Private school vouchers, merit pay bonuses for effective teachers, and giving parents more school choice (e.g., charter schools) are voters' lowest priorities for increased funding, with fewer than one in three voters rating any of them as extremely important.

Democrats—who are more likely to think increased funding for education is necessary—also are more supportive of various funding goals than are independents or Republicans. There is little difference by party, however, in the level of support for the three lowest-scoring priorities.

Voters Make Distinctions Between State Government's And Federal Government's Role In Education

While they want and expect elected officials to treat education as a priority (as is detailed in the paragraphs below), swing state voters place the greatest responsibility for improving education squarely on the shoulders of parents. Fifty-two percent of voters select parents as the most responsible, placing them well ahead of teachers (31%), elected officials (26%), and society in general (22%). While some groups (especially Republicans and members of upper-income households) focus on parents' role to a larger degree than others groups, voters across all demographic subgroups and regardless of party affiliation are most likely to hold parents accountable for improving education. School administrators (15%), students (13%), and teachers unions (5%) are viewed as least responsible across the board.

Despite voters' focus on parental responsibility for improving education, they clearly believe that government, particularly state government, has an important role to play in this regard.

Majorities of voters believe it is important that both state and federal government address the issue. Fully nine in 10 voters feel it is extremely (69%) or fairly (21%) important for their governor and state legislature to address the issue of education as a matter of state policy.

A lesser but still significant three in four voters feel it is important for the president and Congress to address education as a matter of national policy, including nearly half (49%) who think it is extremely important. Nonetheless, there is a notable gap between the importance that key electoral groups place on the role of state government and federal government.

	Extremely important for governor/ state legislature to <u>address education</u> %	Extremely important for president/ Congress to <u>address education</u> %
Men	65	45
Women	73	53
Whites	65	42
African Americans	88	79
Hispanics	83	71
Democrats	79	68
Independents	71	46
Republicans	53	29

Not only is there less breadth and intensity of support for the federal government addressing education, but voters express more complex views about the federal role. While many feel that it is important for the president and Congress to address education, by 57% to 37% voters think that the federal government already is too involved in education and should leave it up to states and localities to deal with rather than thinking that the federal government should be doing more to improve education in this country.



The groups most critical of the federal government for being too involved include Republicans (79%), seniors (67%), and whites (64%). Those most supportive of the federal government doing more to improve education include African Americans (75%), Democrats (58%), Hispanics (52%), and 18- to 34-year-olds (51%). Notably, even voters who say education will be extremely important in the upcoming presidential and Congressional elections are divided about the federal government's role: 47% think it should be doing more and 47% think it already is doing too much.

While they may be ambivalent about the role the federal government should play in education today, voters endorse several education goals as important for the president and Congress to address. Ensuring college affordability surfaces once again as a top priority (68% extremely important), as do goals related to the quality and

performance at the K-12 level, including ensuring students graduate from high school rather than dropping out (67%), improving the quality and performance of public elementary and secondary schools (61%), and ensuring that all students have access to rigorous course work in high school (60%). Even among the majority of voters who think the federal government already is too involved in education, majorities think that it is extremely important that the president and Congress make sure that college is affordable and ensure that students graduate from high school.

Other goals that a majority of voters rank as extremely important include improving the performance of colleges (56%) and providing more adult education and job retraining programs for workers to improve their skills (54%). While not unimportant, expanding access to quality, affordable preschool and pre-kindergarten (46%), increasing the number of Americans who complete a post-secondary degree (41%), and improving colleges' performance on completion (41%) rank as lower priorities for the president and Congress to address.

Voters' ratings of public schools nationwide suggest they believe there is room for improvement. Just 27% of swing state voters rate the quality of education and level of student achievement in public schools nationwide as excellent (2%) or good (25%), while 71% say it is just adequate or worse. When it comes to their local schools, voters are more sanguine, with nearly half rating them as excellent (14%) or good (35%), and 49% describing them as just adequate or worse.

Voters in the industrial states give a slightly higher rating to the nation's public schools than in other swing states. Thirty-two percent say the nation's public schools are excellent or good, while favorable ratings among voters in the Southeast (25% excellent/good) and Southwest (21% excellent/good) are slightly lower. At the local level, more than half (56%) of voters in the Industrial states say the quality of public education in their communities is excellent (17%) or good (39%), compared with 45% of Southeast swing state voters, and 42% of voters in Southwest swing states.

A Post-Secondary Degree Or Credential Is Recognized As Important For Workplace Success

Fully three in four (76%) swing state voters think that to achieve success in the workplace it is absolutely essential (30%) or very important (46%) to gain a post-secondary degree or credential. Additionally, 22% think it is somewhat important, and a mere 2% say it is not important.

African Americans (88% absolutely essential or very important), Hispanics (86%), and women (81%)—particularly college-educated women (83%)—are the groups most likely to say that a post-secondary degree is very important to workplace success. More important is that large majorities of all subgroups think that completing a post-secondary education and receiving a degree or credential is very important, with 70% of men, 73% of whites, 75% of independents, and 69% of Republicans deem it absolutely essential or very important.

Candidates Have Potential To Benefit From Positive Reaction To Several Education Proposals

There are many education positions that candidates could take that generate a positive response among swing state voters. The most popular education positions are those that address the issue of college affordability and emphasize the importance of making America a leader again in post-secondary degrees.

Five positions that aim to make college more affordable engender high levels of support:

- Allowing employers to offer tuition assistance to employees tax free (82% more likely to support candidate)
- Increase the amount that families can contribute to tax-free college savings accounts (77% more likely to support candidate)
- Forgive student loan debt for teachers, nurses, and members of the armed forces who work in their field for 10 years or more after graduating from college (70% more likely to support candidate)
- Limit payments on college loans to no more than 10% of a person's income (64% more likely to support candidate)
- Double funding for Pell grants, which are college tuition grants given by the federal government (63% more likely to support candidate)

Voters also broadly support two similar goals for increasing post-secondary attainment: making America the world leader again in the proportion of people with a post-secondary degree or credential (75% more likely to support candidate) and increasing the proportion of young people who receive a post-secondary degree or credential from 42% today to 55% by 2025 (70% more likely to support candidate).

Additionally, many voters would be more likely to support a candidate who favors providing federal funds to help states retain elementary and secondary teachers and hire new ones (68%), as well as a candidate who backs the Dream Act to allow children of

undocumented immigrants who have grown up in America to attain legal residency status if they complete college or serve in the U.S. military (65%).

Likelihood	Of Sup	porting	a A Can	didate	With T	his Pos	ition	
	All Swing <u>State Voters</u>		<u>Democrats</u>		Independents		<u>Republicans</u>	
	More Likely	Less Likely	More Likely	Less Likely	More Likely	Less Likely	More Likely	Less Likely
	<u>LIKEIY</u> %	<u>LIKEIy</u> %	%	<u>LIKEIy</u> %	%	<u>LIKEIy</u> %	<u>LIKEIY</u> %	<u>LIKEIy</u> %
Allowing employers to offer tuition assistance to employees tax free Increase the amount	82	7	88	4	80	9	76	11
that families can contribute to tax-free college savings accounts	77	8	76	11	74	10	82	6
Making America be the world leader again in the proportion of people with a post-secondary		-						
degree or credential	75	9	79	9	72	9	73	10
Forgive student loan debt for teachers, nurses, and members of the armed forces who work in their field for 10 years or more after graduating from college	70	10	01	0	<u> </u>	21	61	20
Increasing the proportion of young people who receive a post-secondary degree or credential from 42%	70	19	81	9	68	21	61	28
today to 55% by 2025 Provide federal funds to help states retain elementary and secondary school teachers and hire new	70	13	83	7	70	11	61	20
ones Allowing children of undocumented immigrants who have grown up in America to attain legal residency status if they complete college or serve in the	68	20	84	9	62	24	54	28
U.S. military	65	25	80	15	68	24	48	37

(Continued)	All Swing <u>State Voters</u>		<u>Democrats</u>		Independents		<u>Republicans</u>	
	More Likely %	Less Likely %	More Likely %	Less Likely %	More Likely %	Less <u>Likely</u> %	More Likely %	Less Likely %
Limit payments on college loans to no more than 10% of a person's income Double funding for Pell grants, which are college tuition grants	64	21	77	% 15	58	27	55	22
given by the federal government Base funding for post- secondary education in part on momentum	63	22	78	12	63	22	47	34
toward completion and total completion rates, not solely on enrollment	59	17	65	14	57	16	56	21
Allow people who have professional experience in math or science to teach in public schools even if they do not have degrees in education	57	31	56	38	58	28	61	26
Base teachers' salaries partially upon student performance	51	36	45	43	51	35	58	29
Make it easier for charter schools to open and have no limit on the number of charter schools that can open in a school district	41	38	41	42	38	36	46	34
Give federal government grants to parents to help them pay for tuition for their children to attend private schools, religious schools, or for								
home schooling	40	51	44	50	38	53	39	49

Democrats express more support than independents and Republicans for candidates who would take many of the education positions, but support is high for many positions regardless of party. Indeed, only one position yields a majority who say they would be *less* likely to support that candidate. Some positions garner parallel levels of support from voters across party lines, and there is one item on which Republicans are notably more supportive than Democrats: basing teachers' salaries partially upon student performance.

Education Is Up For Grabs In The 2012 Election

While Democrats are slightly better positioned than Republicans when it comes to reflecting the priorities of swing state voters on the issue of education, neither party enjoys a distinct advantage. Forty-four percent of voters say that the Democratic Party reflects their priorities on the issue of education very or fairly well, 21% say it reflects them somewhat well, and 27% say not that well or not well at all. In comparison, 31% feel that the Republican Party reflects their priorities on education very or fairly well, 25% somewhat well, and 35% not that well or not well at all.

Democrats are notably more supportive of the Democratic Party (74%) than Republicans are of the Republican Party (52%). Two in five (40%) independents feel that the Democratic Party reflects their priorities, and only 26% feel that way about the Republican Party. Among education voters—that is voters who say education will be extremely important to them in the 2012 elections for president and Congress—49% say the Democratic Party reflects their priorities very or fairly well compared with 30% who say the same about the Republican Party.