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# A Year into the Pandemic:

Parents' Perspectives on Academics,  
State Assessments, and Education

MARCH 2021



Research conducted by:



# Research Objectives

**This survey was designed to:**

**Explore parents' perspectives on their children's education this year**

**Determine how parents' perceptions of their child's performance changed a year into the pandemic**

**Gauge parents' positions on administering state assessments this spring and the role of assessments in helping parents support their children's education**

# Key Insights

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## Increased Engagement Does Not Equate to Increased Confidence

Fewer parents have a clear understanding of their child's achievement compared to previous years.



## Parents Question Their Child's Academic Achievement and Preparedness for the Next Grade

Only a slim majority of parents believe their children are well-prepared for the next grade.



## A Majority of Parents Support Giving End-of-Year Tests

Yet, most parents see both the benefits and challenges unique to this school year.

# Methodology



## National Online Parent Survey:

**Nationwide sample of 1,550 parents and guardians with children in public school, grades K-12, including**

- 666 elementary school parents
- 364 middle school parents
- 520 high school parents
- 453 Black parents
- 440 Hispanic parents representing a mix of acculturation levels



- Fielded January 21- February 2, 2021
- Offered in both English and Spanish
- Data were weighted to be representative of public-school parents in the U.S.
- Research design was informed by past qualitative (focus groups) and quantitative research conducted for National PTA and Learning Heroes

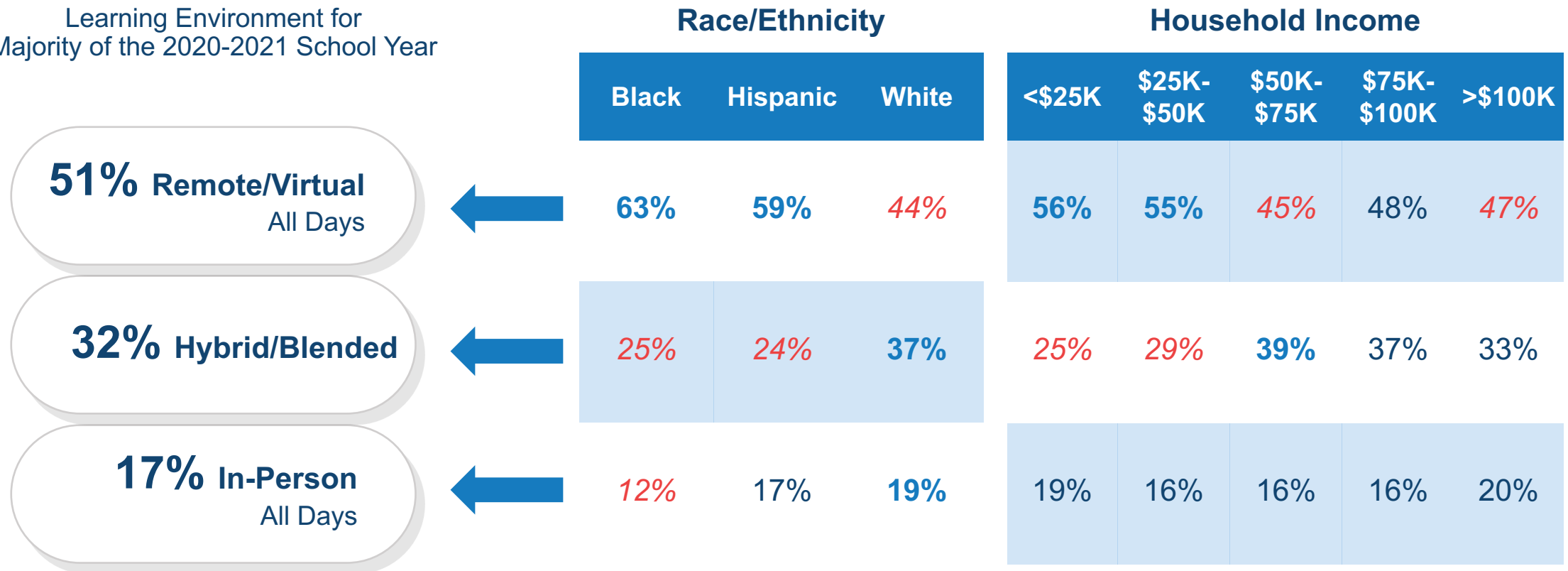
**To gauge parent mindset trends over time, the report includes data from past Learning Heroes national studies in April 2020, 2019, and 2018.**

**▲ ▼ indicate statistically significant differences from past data.**

Throughout this report, **blue/red** indicates statistically **higher/lower** differences between audiences

# Majorities of Black and Hispanic Children Were Remote

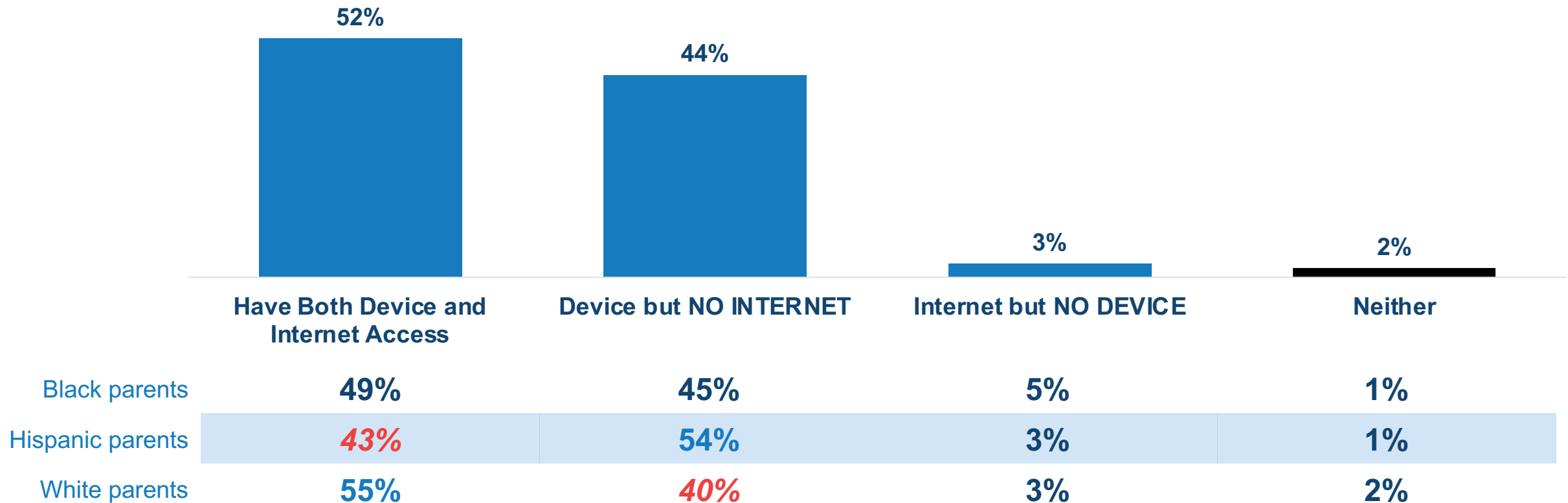
Learning Environment for  
Majority of the 2020-2021 School Year



63% Changed between  
modes at least once

# The Digital Divide Remains

Hispanic parents are most likely to say their children do not have reliable internet access at home.



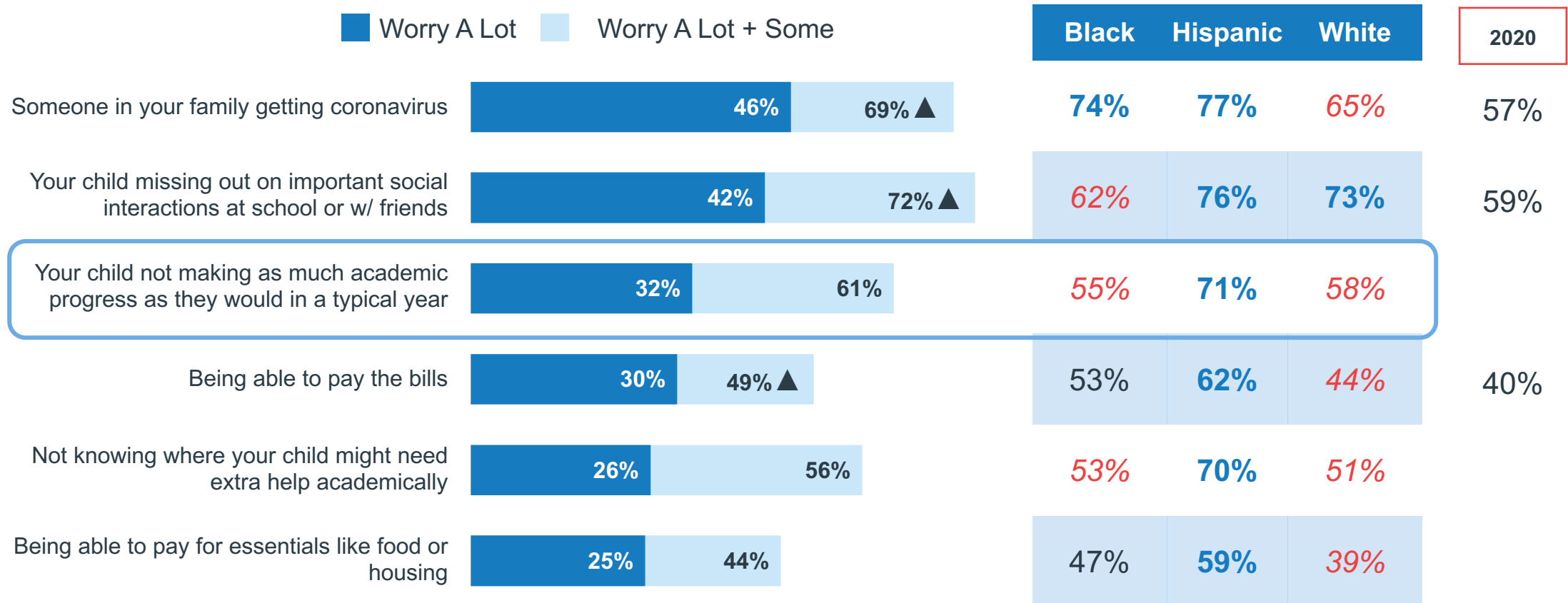




# One Year In - Parents Worries' Increased

Over six-in-ten parents worry about their child not making academic progress this year.

Regarding the coronavirus situation, how much do you worry about...?



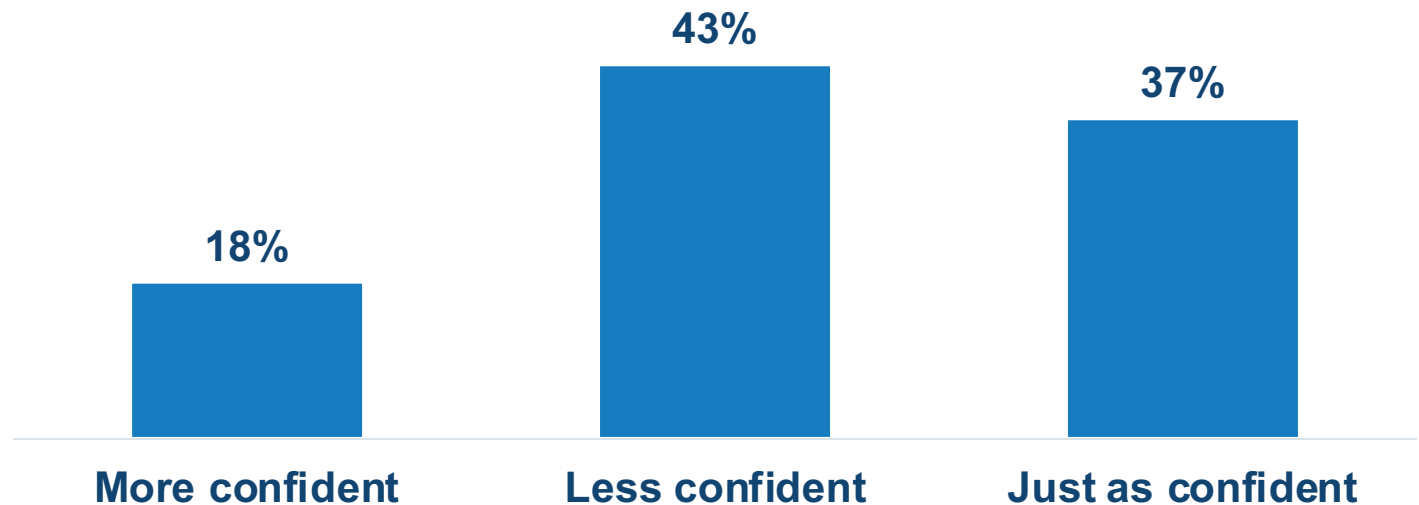


# Yet, More Connection Doesn't Translate into More Confidence

**67% Agree**

I am more connected with my child's day-to-day education now than ever before

Comparing this school year to a typical year, are you more/less/just as confident that you have a clear understanding of how well your child is achieving academically?



HH Income \$100K+ (25%)  
Dads (24%)

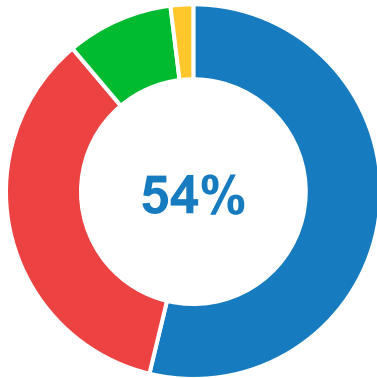
Hispanics (47%)  
Moms (47%)  
In-Person Learning (33%)

# Half of Parents Report Improvement in Learning in Last Year

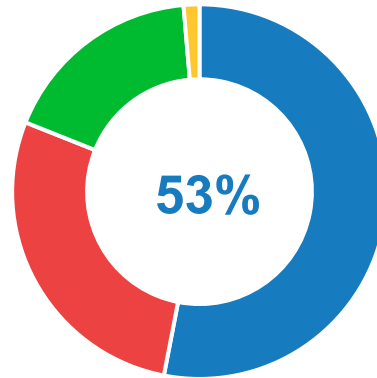
How has \_\_\_\_'s handling of learning during the pandemic changed since last spring?

■ Better ■ No Change ■ Worse ■ Not Sure

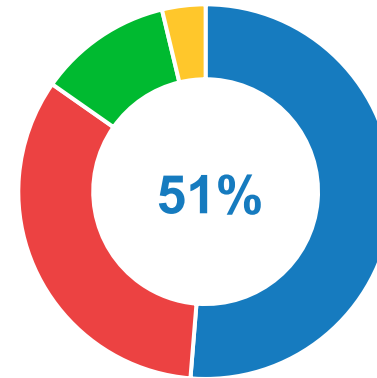
You/Other Guardians



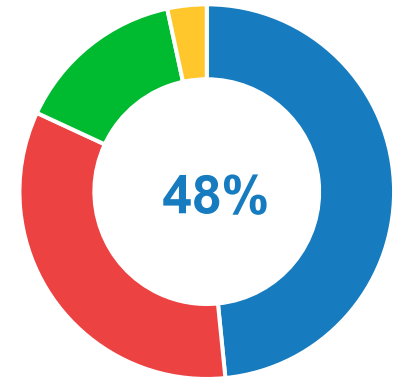
Child



Teacher(s)



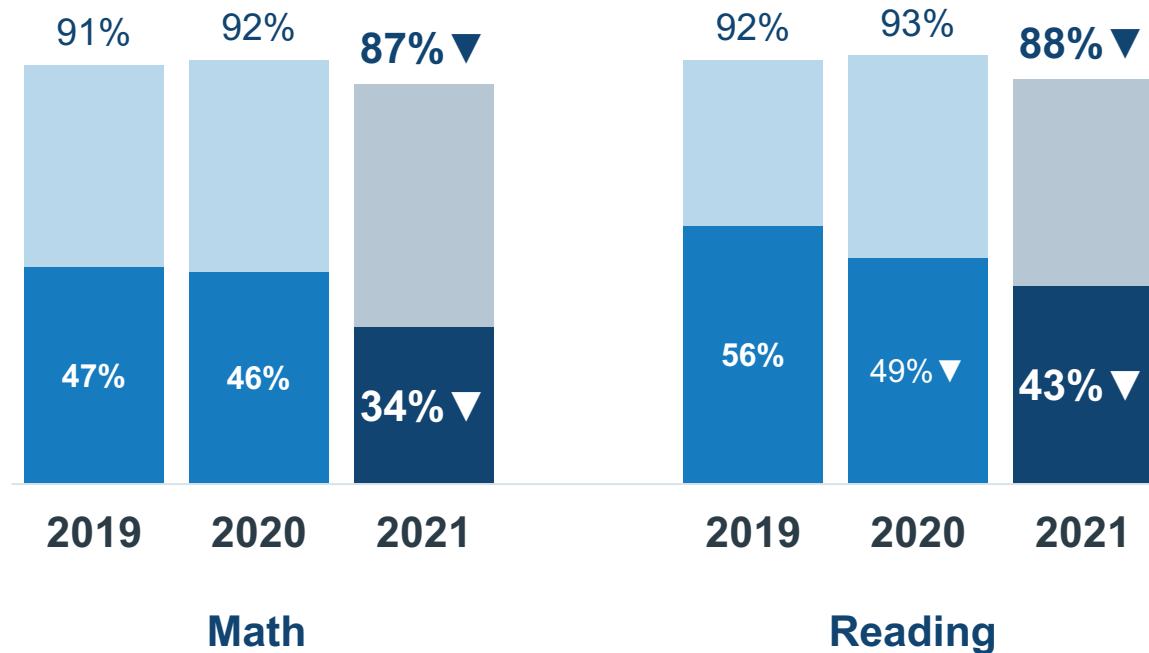
School



Those **missing all technology** are **less likely** to indicate improvement across all areas.  
Those with **HH incomes \$100k+** are **more likely** to indicate improvement across all areas.

# Parents Reconsider Their Child's Grade Level Achievement

## Believe Child is Achieving At/Above Grade Level



**81%** Of parents say their child is getting “mostly Bs” or higher

Black Hispanic White

75%

79%

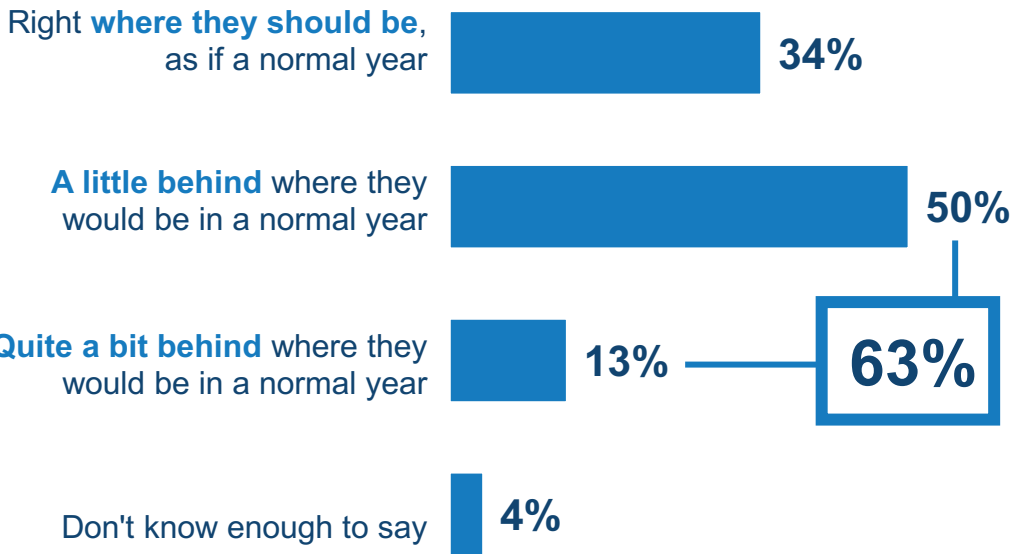
82%

Have All Tech (90%)  
HH Income <\$25K (79%)

HH Income \$100+ (94%)  
Dads (90%)  
Hispanic (83%)

# And Are Less Confident Their Children Will Be Ready for Next Year

As you think about how your child has done this school year, where do you think your child is academically?



Learning Mode		
In-Person	Hybrid	Remote
50%	28%	32%
42%	54%	50%
7%	15%	14%
2%	3%	5%

52% of parents are **Extremely/Very Confident** that their child will be well prepared for the next grade they start in Fall 2021

# Discussion

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**Despite parents being more engaged, their confidence in their understanding of their child's achievement is at an all time low. What do you think are some reasons for this?**

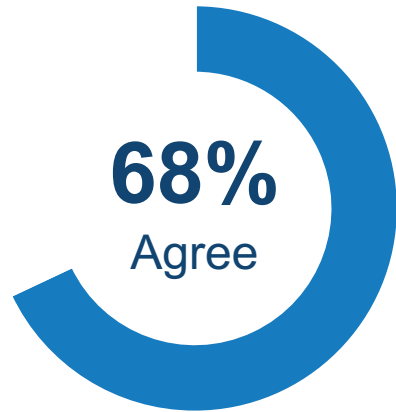


# Parent Views on End of Year State Assessments





# End Of Year Assessments Help Paint the Picture



My child's results from the year-end tests help me know if my child is on track for the next grade

A majority of parents across all key demographic groups (E.g., race, ethnicity, income, gender, online/tech access) agree.

## **MOST Likely to Agree:**

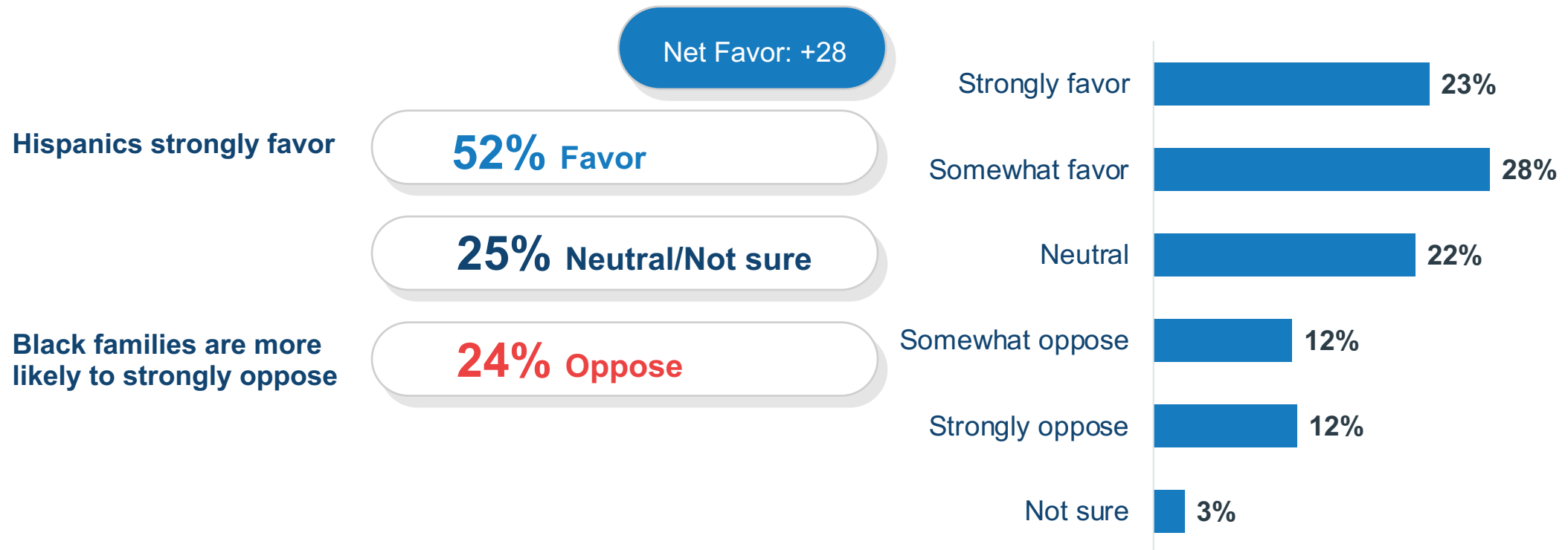
- Hispanic parents (**72%**)
- Urban parents (**72%**)
- PTA-involved parents (**77%**)
- Democrats (**73%**)

We as parents need to see where our children stand academically...Allowing them to take these tests will allow us as parents or teachers to know and address any issues our children have on learning [as a result of] this stressful time. -- **Open-end response.**

# Parents Favor End-of-Year State Testing this Spring

Overall support is higher among Hispanic parents (57%) than Black (49%) or white (51%) parents.

Do you favor or oppose schools conducting year-end state testing this Spring (Spring 2021) to measure the pandemic's impact on student learning?



# Parents Want Timely and Actionable Information

Lowering the stakes is especially important to those initially opposed to testing this year and parents of color. To parents, it is more important to lower the stakes for students than schools or teachers.

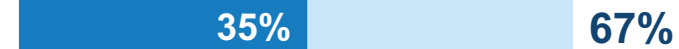
## How important is each change for this year's state test?

■ Extremely Important   ■ Extremely + Very Important

Results from this year's state tests would include resources parents can use at home with their child to review concepts where their child may have struggled



Results from this year's year-end state tests **would not affect student grades** nor promotion to the next grade level



Parents and schools would receive their child's scores before the end of this school year



Results from this year's year-end state tests would not be used to grade schools



Results from this year's year-end state tests would not be used to evaluate teachers



This year's year-end state tests would be shorter than they are in a typical year



# While Parents See the Benefits of State Tests, They Question Test Accuracy Given This Past Year

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about year-end state tests?

## Benefit Statements

■ Somewhat Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Results...should be used to identify which schools need additional support to ensure all students succeed academically

44% 79%

Results...should be used to measure students' **learning loss** resulting from pandemic (SSC)

42% 77%

Results...should help ensure school funds will be used to support students who need it most next school year

41% 78%

Results...should be used to help teachers tailor instruction to their students' specific needs

40% 79%

Results...should be used to measure students' **unfinished learning** resulting from the pandemic (SSD)

40% 75%

Top 3 Statements

## Challenge Statements

■ Somewhat Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Results will not accurately reflect student abilities b/c every student has had different learning experiences during the pandemic

42% 77%

The year-end state tests add additional stress for students

37% 70%

This year, schools will not be able to cover all content that is on the year-end state tests

31% 66%

The year-end state tests place an additional burden on teachers

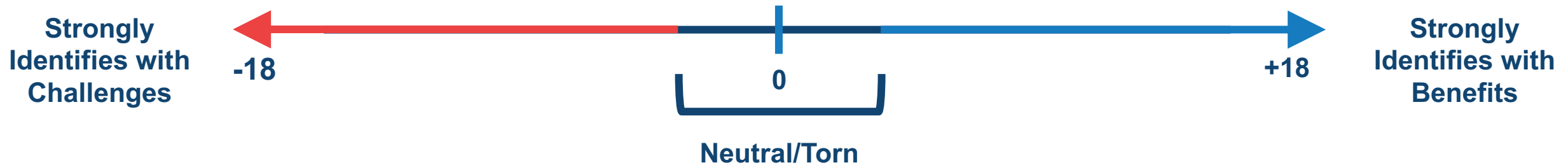
27% 58%

With school budgets strained this year, year-end state tests will waste money that schools could use in other ways to help students

26% 56%

# Perception Index

Looking across statements about potential benefits and potential challenges, we created an index to form a more realistic picture of where parents might land when given more information.



## Index calculation:

### -2 for...

- Strongly agree w/ challenge message
- Strongly disagree w/ benefit message

### +2 for...

- Strongly agree w/ benefit message
- Strongly disagree w/ challenge message

### -1 for...

- Somewhat agree w/ challenge message
- Somewhat disagree w/ benefit message

### +1 for...

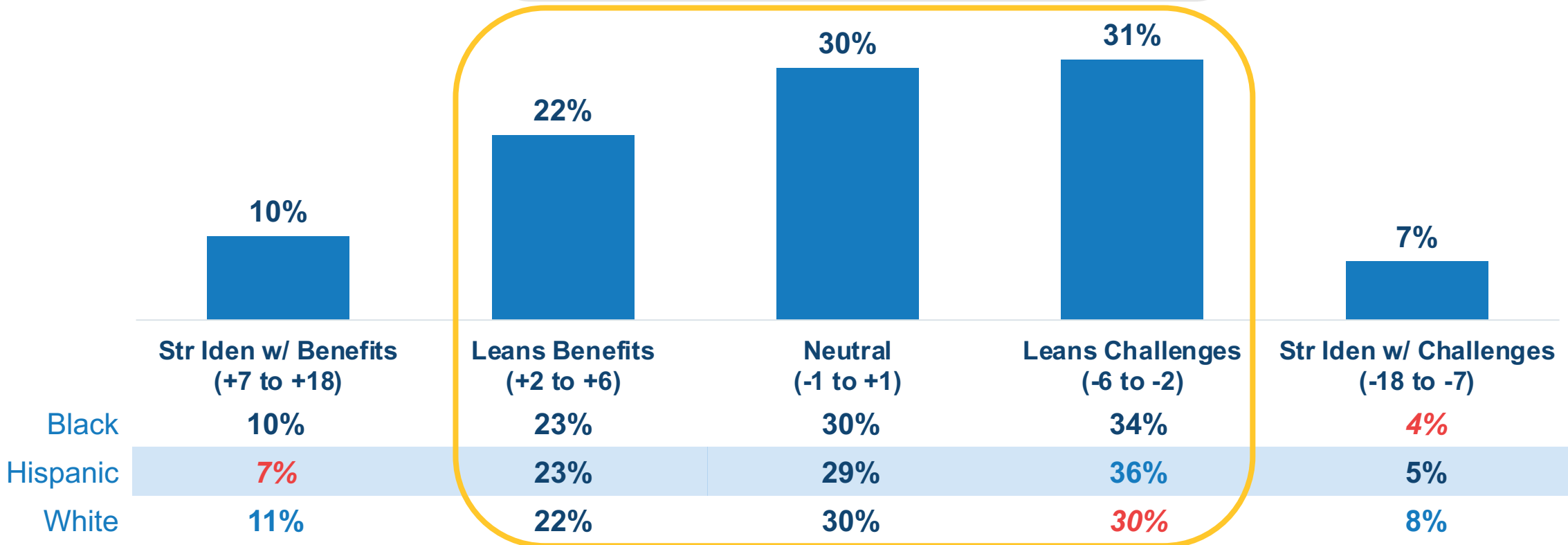
- Somewhat agree w/ benefit message
- Somewhat disagree w/ challenge message

0 for neutral/not sure response

# Parents See Both Sides of the Testing Debate

## Agreement Index Values

**83%** of parents are somewhere in the middle





# To Make Tests Valuable, Parents Want Results Back with Resources Before the End of the Year

How important is each change is for this year's state test?

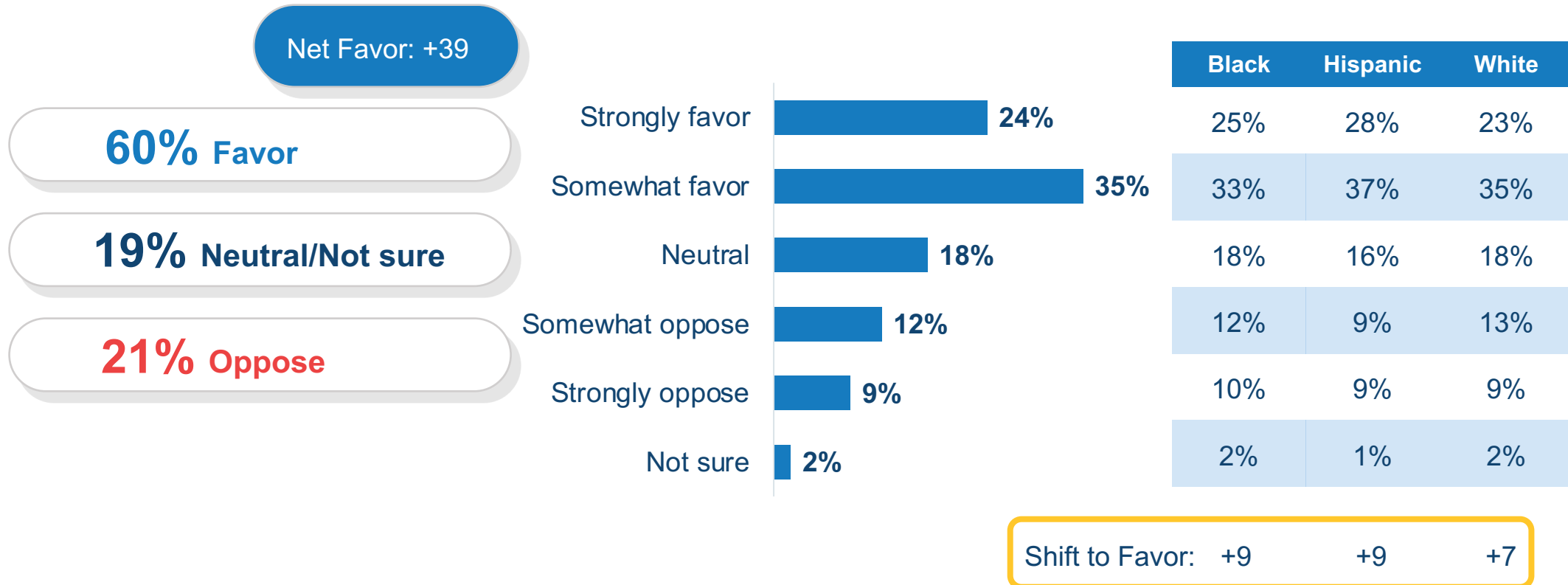
Extremely/Very important

	Total	Leans Challenges	Neutral	Leans Benefits
Results from this year's state tests would include resources parents can use at home with their child to review concepts where their child may have struggled	76%	79%	69%	81%
Parents and schools would receive their child's scores before the end of this school year	69%	70%	63%	76%
Results from this year's year-end state tests would not affect student grades nor promotion to the next grade level	67%	77%	64%	58%
Results from this year's year-end state tests would not be used to grade schools	56%	66%	54%	44%
This year's year-end state tests would be shorter than they are in a typical year	52%	60%	52%	46%
Results from this year's year-end state tests would not be used to evaluate teachers	51%	61%	46%	42%

# Support for State Tests Increases After Exposure to Benefits and Challenges

However, this comes mainly in the form of soft support (somewhat favor).

Now that you've seen some additional thoughts about year-end state testing, do you favor or oppose schools conducting year-end state testing this Spring (Spring 2021) to measure the pandemic's impact on student learning?



# Parents Offer Muted Levels of Support for In-person Summer Learning

How likely would you be to use...?

■ Extremely Likely
 ■ Very Likely

Race/Ethnicity

Learning Mode

Black Hispanic White

In-Person Hybrid Remote

Free resources that you can use at home to help your child continue or review learning over the summer



70% 73% 53%

62% 56% 62%

Free recreational activities for your child to spend time with peers and have fun



58% 62% 51%

61% 56% 52%

In-person review sessions in math & reading, provided by school, to help in areas where child needs more support



61% 66% 43%

55% 52% 49%

Free one-on-one or small group tutoring provided by a trusted local non-profit organization



49% 59% 39%

44% 47% 44%

Extremely + Very Likely

# Discussion

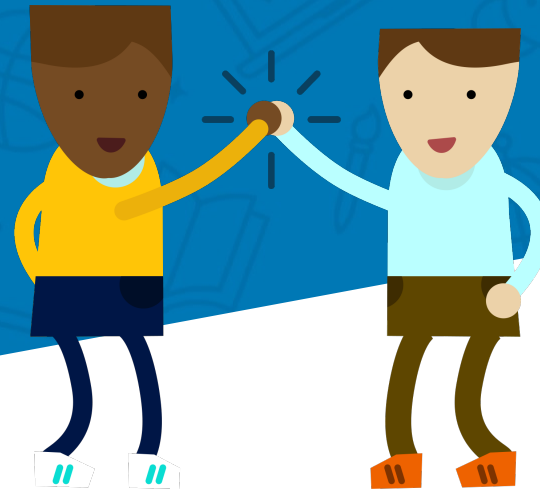
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**How will parent perceptions of learning this year and their view of state tests impact your work?**



# Final Thoughts



# Communications and Strategic Implications

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## Year-end assessments should be about helping children

- ☆ Messaging must include how year-end tests will help children while minimizing stress and will not penalize a child for this difficult year (i.e., lower the stakes).



## Acknowledge the roller coaster ride parents have experienced and keep a consistent drumbeat of communication

- ☆ Parents continue to look for clarity and decisiveness. Continue to communicate important info, especially about the state test.



## Listen to parent needs before creating summer programs

- ☆ Majorities of parents recognize their children are behind, but they want a break from school, but they are more worried about social interactions.





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