# Emerson College



## March 2021 Public Opinion Survey of

### Massachusetts Residents' Perceptions of K-12 Education During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Commissioned by
Pioneer Institute
Conducted by
Emerson College Polling

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#### Methodology

Emerson College Polling, under the supervision of Assistant Professor Spencer Kimball, is pleased to present the Pioneer Institute with the findings from a survey of Massachusetts residents' attitudes toward K-12 education since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. All respondents interviewed in this study were part of a fully representative sample using an area probabilistic sampling method of N=1,500 (sample size).

Data was weighted by Massachusetts general population parameters. The margin of error for the sample is +/- 2.4% in 19 of 20 cases. The survey was administered by contacting landline telephones via IVR, cell phones via text message, and online via a panel, and was conducted between March 19-21st, 2021.

The results presented in this report include univariate and bivariate analysis of the data. Frequency distributions for each item included in the questionnaire are shown in the tables. In all cases, crosstabulation results are also shown. This type of bivariate analysis examines differences between subgroups of the overall population. In the cases where cross tabulation results are presented, a chi-square test, an independent t-test for means, or a Z-test for independent percentages is shown.

A chi-square test is used in cases where comparisons are made for categorical variables. A t-test is used in cases where comparisons are made between independent population percentages.

The purpose of these statistical tests is to determine whether or not the observed difference between subgroups in the sample is due to sampling error or whether it is due to a real difference in the population. When the results are statistically significant, it strongly suggests that the observed difference between sub-groups found in the sample is due to a real difference in the population, and not due to sampling error.

A chi-square significance level of .05 indicates significance at the 95 percent level. In other words, it is 95 percent likely that the results are due to a real difference between comparison groups. A chi-square significance level of .01 indicates significance at the 99 percent level. When a t-test or a Z-test is shown, lower- and upper-case letters indicate significance at the 90 and 95 percent levels respectively.

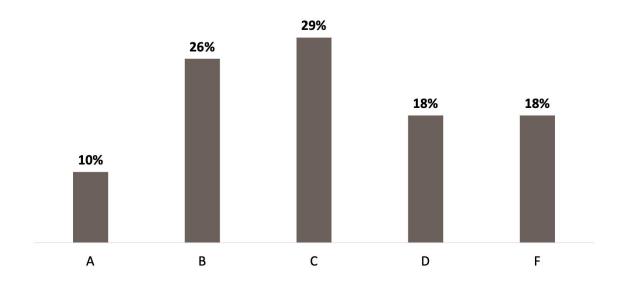
#### **General population questions**

Using the familiar letter grading system from A through F, where A is excellent, B is good, C is average, D is poor and F is a failing grade, what overall grade would you give the Massachusetts school system since the start of COVID-19 in March 2020?



### What overall grade would you give the Massachusetts school system since the start of COVID-19 in March 2020?

Massachusetts, March 19-21, 2021, MA Residents, MM, N=1,500, +/- 2.4 %



- A plurality (29%) of Massachusetts residents would grade the Massachusetts school system with a C-average over the past year. Twenty-six percent (26%) said they would give the school system a B grade, followed by 18% who said a grade of D would be appropriate, and 18% who said the school system deserves a failing grade of F. Only 10% of Massachusetts residents would give the state's school system a grade of A.
  - O Those with children were slightly more favorable towards the school system. While the plurality (30%) of parents gave the school system a C-grade, a combined 40% of parents gave the school system a grade of A or B, compared to 34% of non-parents who gave the system an A or B.

- Parents with three or more children were more likely to give Massachusetts' school system an F (22%), than those with only one child (13%) or two children (11%).
- Of parents that report no synchronous component while their child/children were learning exclusively at-home, a quarter (25%) gave the school system an F grade.
- A majority (57%) of Republicans and a plurality (40%) of Independents give the school system a grade of D or F, compared to only 23% of Democrats in the state.
- There were large variances by race and ethnicity on this issue:
  - Almost a third (30%) of Black/African-American respondents gave the school system an F, compared to 18% of White respondents and 14% of Hispanic respondents.
  - Asian respondents were the most likely to give the school system an A grade (22%) followed by Black/African-American respondents (22%). Ten percent (10%) of Hispanic respondents and 8% of White respondents gave the school system an A.
- The Boston metropolitan area had the highest percentage of respondents that would give the system an F, at 22%.
- Those with less than a college degree were nearly twice as likely to give the system a failing grade (23%) compared to those with a college degree or greater (12%).
- There was not a significant difference between public school teachers or employees compared with the general population on this question.

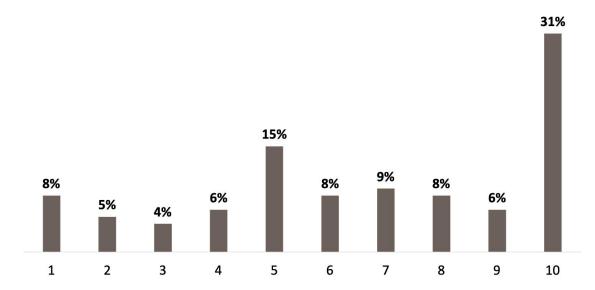
How strongly do you believe the teachers' union was involved in the decision to teach remotely? (scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all involved and 10 being heavily involved)

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How strongly do you believe the teachers' union was involved in the decision to teach remotely? (scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all involved and 10 being heavily involved)

Massachusetts, March 19-21, 2021, MA Residents, MM, N=1,500, +/- 2.4 %

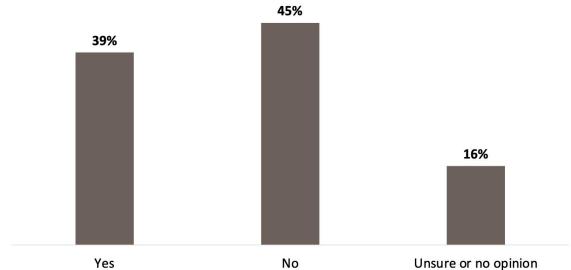


- Using the 1-10 scale, a plurality (31%) of respondents said they believe the teachers' union was heavily involved in this decision. Fifteen percent (15%) fall in the middle, saying they were somewhat involved. A combined majority of 62% ranked the union's involvement as a 6 or higher on the scale.
  - A majority (50%) of parents/guardians ranked the union's involvement as an 8 or higher.
  - Republicans and Independents ranked the teachers' union's involvement higher on the scale, with 44% of Republicans and 35% of Independents saying the union was heavily involved (10 on the scale).
  - Those living in Boston were also more likely to rank the union's involvement higher,
     with 36% saying the union was heavily involved.



### Do you think the teachers' union was acting in the best interest of children during the pandemic?

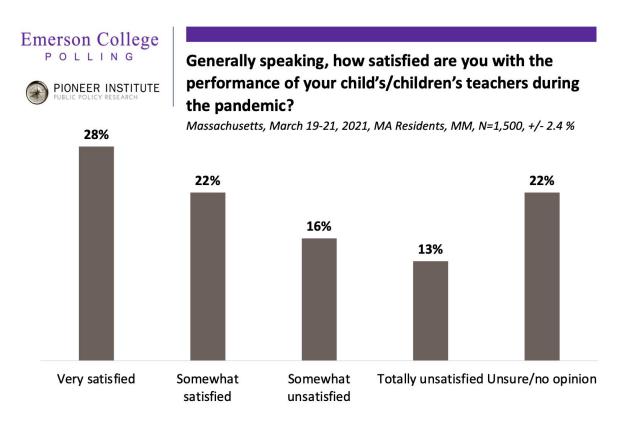
Massachusetts, March 19-21, 2021, MA Residents, MM, N=1,500, +/- 2.4 %



- Respondents were split on whether or not the teachers' union was acting in children's best interest; 44% said it was not, 39% said it was, and 16% were unsure.
  - Parents and non-parents said the union was acting in children's best interests in equal proportions (39% in each group), but a higher percentage of parents (47%) than non-parents (43%) said the union was not acting in their child's best interest.
  - White respondents were more likely to say the union was not acting in children's best interest, at 48%, compared to 38% of Black/African-American and 34% of Hispanic/Latino respondents.
  - A plurality (45%) of those with a college degree or higher said the union was acting in the best interest of children, compared to 34% of those with either some college, a high school degree or less.
  - By region, a majority (54%) of Southshore and a plurality (49%) of Boston respondents believe the union was not acting in the best interest of children during the pandemic.

- Conversely, pluralities in Northshore (42%) and Worcester/Western Massachusetts (46%) said the union was acting in the best interest of children.
- A majority of public school teachers/employees (57%) think the union was acting in the best interest, while 32% said they were not, and 11% were undecided. The general population had a different opinion, with 46% thinking they were not acting in the best interest, 37% thinking they were, and 17% were undecided.

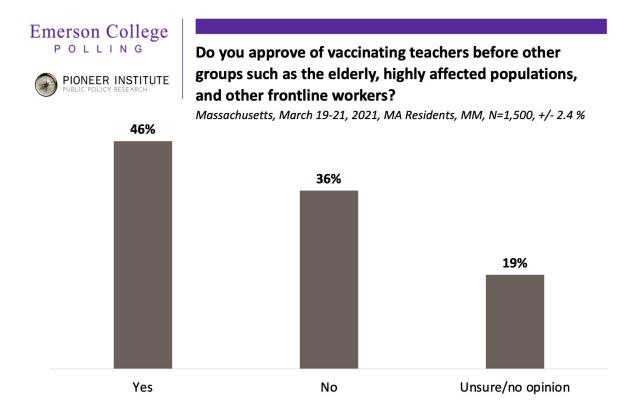
Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with the performance of your child's/children's teachers during the pandemic?



- A near majority (49%) report being somewhat or very satisfied with the performance of teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic, with 28% being very satisfied and 22% being somewhat satisfied. Sixteen percent (16%) report being somewhat unsatisfied and 13% were totally unsatisfied by teachers' performances. Twenty-two percent (22%) were unsure or had no opinion on the issue.
  - Forty-one percent (41%) of parents have been very satisfied, and an additional 29% have been at least somewhat satisfied. Only 10% of parents report being totally unsatisfied
  - Within parental subgroups:
    - Parents with children attending K-2nd grade report the highest rate of satisfaction, at 84% satisfied (with 48% very satisfied and 36% somewhat satisfied). Sixty-two percent (62%) of parents of children in 3-5th grade, 60% of parents of children in 6-8th grade, and 65% of parents with children in high school are satisfied.

- Parents with children that are currently still learning remotely are more satisfied, with 78% reporting at least somewhat satisfaction.
- Among public school teachers/employees, 67% have been at least somewhat satisfied, while 16% are at least somewhat unsatisfied. Compared with non teachers/employees, 48% are at least somewhat satisfied, and 30% are at least somewhat unsatisfied.

<u>Do you approve of vaccinating teachers before other groups such as the elderly, highly affected populations, and other frontline workers?</u>



- A plurality (46%) of respondents think teachers should be prioritized for a Covid-19 vaccine. Thirty-six percent (36%) said they should not, and 19% were unsure or had no opinion on the issue.
  - Public school teachers/employers approved 49% to 33% while everyone else approved 45% to 36%
  - Guardians approve 47% to 30% while non guardians approve 44% to 40%
  - Age has the most significant impact on this issue
    - 18-34 approve 53% to 26%
    - 35-49 approve 50% to 32%
    - 50-64 approve 44% to 42%
    - 65+ disapprove 47% to 33%

#### **Parent-only questions**

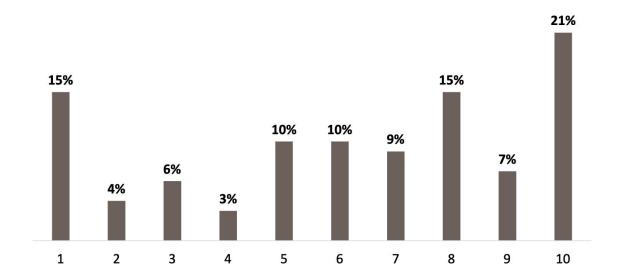
How much do you believe the education of your child/children was compromised during the pandemic as a result of learning remotely? (scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all, and 10 being entirely)





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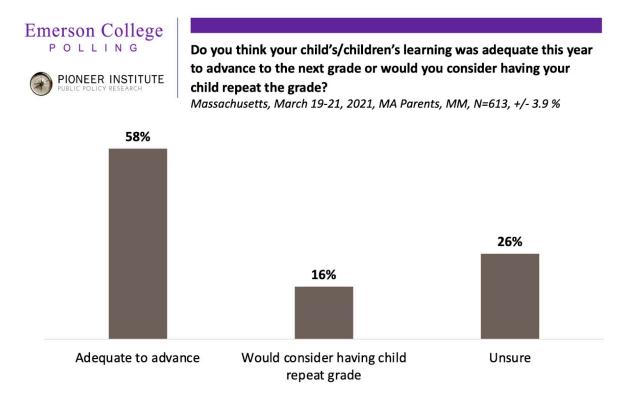
Massachusetts, March 19-21, 2021, MA Parents, MM, N=613, +/- 3.9 %



- Twenty-one percent (21%) of Massachusetts parents believe their child/children's education has been entirely compromised due to the pandemic. A majority (54%) say it has been compromised at a 7 or higher on a scale of 1-10.
  - Fifty-five percent (55%) of female parents said their child/children's education was compromised at 7 or higher on the scale, compared to 50% of male parents.
  - o By race:
    - Fifty-eight percent (58%) of White parents say their child/children's education was compromised at 7 or higher on the scale
    - Fifty percent (50%) of Black parents say their child/children's education was compromised at 7 or higher on the scale

•	Forty-five percent (45%) of Hispanic parents say their child/children's education was compromised at 7 or higher on the scale

Do you think your child's/children's learning was adequate this year to advance to the next grade or would you consider having your child repeat the grade?

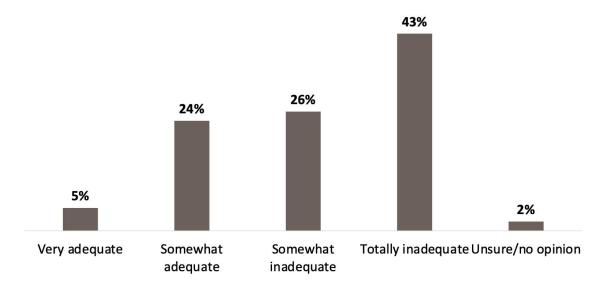


- A majority (58%) of parents think that their child/children have learned enough to stay on track and advance to the next grade level in the fall, while 16% say they would consider holding their child back a grade. Over a quarter (26%) of parents are unsure whether their child's learning was adequate to stay on track.
  - Among parents with one or two children, there is more certainty that their child/children are ready to move up a grade (66% say adequate to advance/ 13% would consider holding a child back/ 21% are unsure). Among parents with 3 or more children, parents are more split: 39% say their children's learning has been adequate to advance, 25% say they would consider having the child/children repeat a grade, and 37% are unsure.

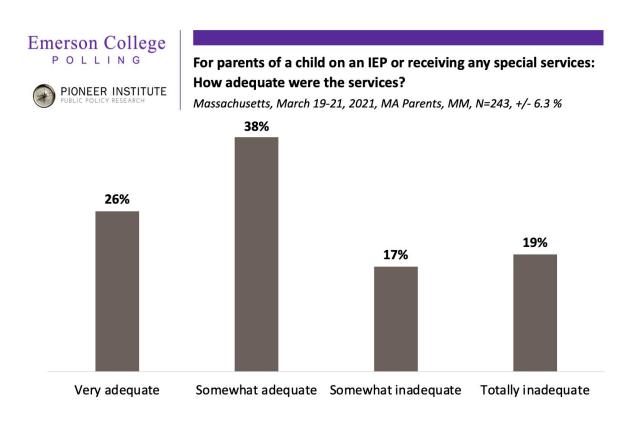


### Do you feel your child was able to get adequate socialization this year?

Massachusetts, March 19-21, 2021, MA Parents, MM, N=613, +/- 3.9 %

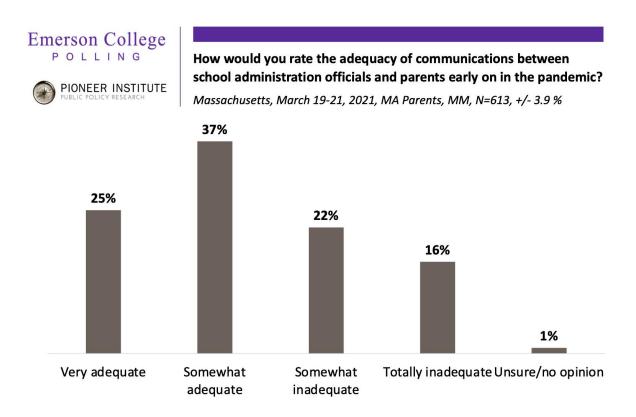


- A plurality (43%) of parents feel that the socialization their child/children have received during the pandemic has been totally inadequate. Twenty-six percent (26%) think the socialization has been somewhat inadequate, 24% say it has been somewhat adequate, and 5% say it has been very adequate. Two percent (2%) were unsure or had no opinion on the issue.
  - O Hispanic/Latino parents reported higher rates of adequate socialization, with 48% reporting their child/children has been receiving at least somewhat adequate socialization. Thirty-seven percent of Black/African-American parents report at least somewhat adequate socialization. White parents report a much lower rate of adequate socialization for their children, with 24% saying it has been somewhat or very adequate.
  - Male parents are slightly more satisfied with their children's socialization, at 34% very or somewhat adequate, compared to female parents, at 26% very or somewhat adequate.



• Among the parents who report having a child that is on an IEP or receives special services, a majority (64%) said the services were at least somewhat adequate. Nineteen percent (19%) of these parents said the services have been totally inadequate, and 17% say they have been somewhat inadequate for meeting their child's needs.

How would you rate the adequacy of communications between school administration officials and parents early on in the pandemic?



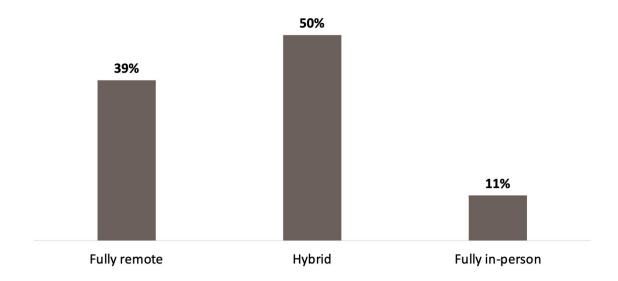
- A majority (62%) of parents rated the adequacy of school administrations' communications as very or somewhat adequate in the early stages of the pandemic, with a plurality (37%) saying it was somewhat adequate. Twenty-two percent (22%) of parents said it was somewhat inadequate, and 16% said it was totally inadequate.
  - Female parents were more likely to say the communication had been at least somewhat inadequate (40%), than male parents (34%).





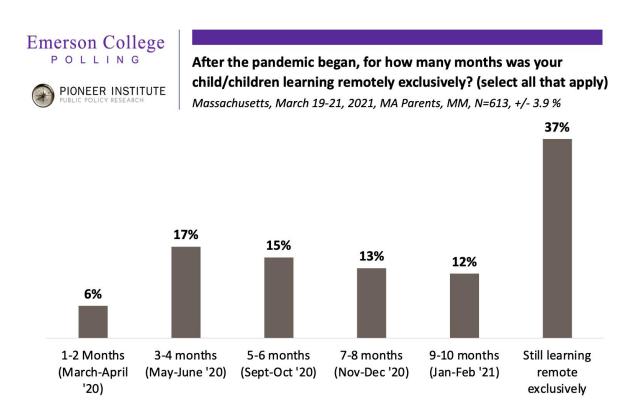
### Is your child learning fully remote, hybrid, or fully in-person?

Massachusetts, March 19-21, 2021, MA Parents, MM, N=613, +/- 3.9 %



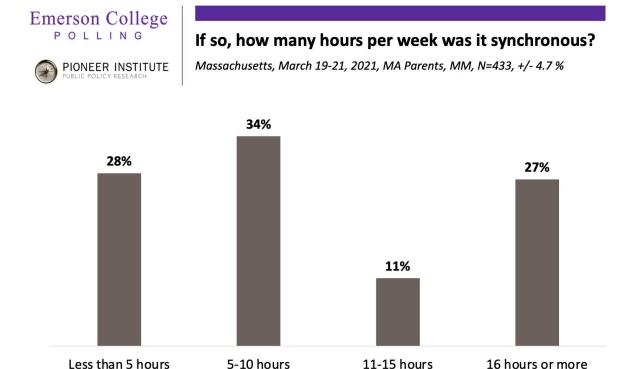
- Fifty-three percent (53%) of parents report having at least one child learning hybrid at this time.
  - Among these parents, 6% report also having a child learning fully remotely, and 8% report also having a child learning fully in-person.
- Forty-two percent (42%) of parents report having at least one child learning fully remotely at this time.
  - Among these parents, 7% report also having a child learning hybrid and 4% report having a child learning fully in-person.
- Twelve percent (12%) of parents report having at least one child learning fully in-person at this time.
  - Among these parents, 36% report having at least one child learning hybrid, and 13% report having at least one child learning fully remotely.

After the pandemic struck and schools closed, for how many months was your child/children learning remotely exclusively?



- A plurality (37%) of parents report that at least one of their children is still learning fully remotely. Twenty-three percent (23%) say that their children were only remote for Spring 2020, and 28% say their children went back between September and December 2020. Twelve percent (12%) report that their child/children learned remotely through February 2021, but are back in school now.
  - O Parents who have children that are just now getting back into schools (remote through January/February 2021) report the highest levels of inadequate socialization at 89% somewhat or totally inadequate, followed by those who have children still fully remote (83% with somewhat or totally inadequate socialization). For students who went back by the end of October 2020, 69% of parents report that their child's socialization has been at least somewhat inadequate.

While your child was exclusively learning remotely, was the instruction synchronous at any time during the week? If so, how many hours per week was it synchronous?



- Seventy-one percent (71%) of parents said that their child/children's remote education was synchronous at some points, while 29% said it was never synchronous.
  - A plurality (34%) of parents with children that had remote learning with synchronous aspects reported that it was synchronous about 5-10 hours a week, while 28% said it was less than 5 hours a week. Twenty-seven percent reported that their child learned synchronously 16 hours a week or more, and 11% said the synchronous learning time was between 11-15 hours a week.

#### **Demographics**

#### Are you a public school teacher or do you work in the public schools?

• Ninety-one percent of respondents reported not working in the public schools, while 9% reported being a teacher or otherwise employed by the Massachusetts public schools.

### Are you a guardian or parent of a child or children currently enrolled in the K-12 public school system?

• Forty-two percent of respondents are a parent/guardian of at least one child in the Massachusetts K-12 school system, while 58% were not.

#### How many children do you have?

• A plurality (46%) of parent respondents reported having two children, while 26% have one child, 18% have three children, 7% have four children, and 3% have five or more children.

#### What grades are your child/children currently in?

- Thirty-five percent (35%) of parents have at least one child in K-2nd grade
- Thirty-six percent (36%) of parents have at least one child in 3-5th grade
- Thirty-four percent (34%) of parents have at least one child in 6-8th grade
- Thirty-nine percent (39%) of parents have at least one child in 9-12th grade

### **Frequencies**

Using the familiar letter grading system from A through F, where A is excellent, B is good, C is average, D is poor and F is a failing grade, what overall grade would you give the Massachusetts School system since the start of COVID-19 in March 2020?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A	147	9.8	9.8
	В	388	25.9	35.7
	С	431	28.7	64.4
	D	264	17.6	82.0
	F	269	18.0	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

### How strongly do you believe the teachers' union was involved in the decision to teach remotely? (scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all involved and 10 being heavily involved)

Valid 1	1	123	8.2	8.2
				3.2
	2	68	4.5	12.8
3	3	59	3.9	16.7
4	4	94	6.3	23.0
5	5	232	15.4	38.4
6	6	126	8.4	46.8
7	7	130	8.7	55.5
8	8	116	7.7	63.2
9	9	93	6.2	69.4
10	10	459	30.6	100.0
Т	Total	1500	100.0	

### Do you think the teachers' union was acting in the best interest of children during the pandemic?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	585	39.0	39.0
	No	672	44.8	83.8
	Unsure or no opinion	243	16.2	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

### Overall, how satisfied are you with the performance of your district's local teachers' union during the pandemic?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very satisfied	315	21.0	21.0
	Somewhat satisfied	362	24.1	45.1
	Somewhat unsatisfied	256	17.1	62.2
	Totally unsatisfied	409	27.3	89.5
	Unsure/no opinion	158	10.5	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

### Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with the performance of your child's/children's teachers during the pandemic?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very satisfied	417	27.8	27.8
	Somewhat satisfied	323	21.5	49.3
	Somewhat unsatisfied	234	15.6	64.9
	Totally unsatisfied	190	12.7	77.6
	Unsure/no opinion	336	22.4	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

### Do you approve of vaccinating teachers before other groups such as the elderly, highly affected populations, and other frontline workers?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	682	45.5	45.5
	No	541	36.1	81.5
	Unsure/no opinion	277	18.5	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

## How much do you believe the education of your child/children was compromised during the pandemic as a result of learning remotely? (scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all, and 10 being entirely)

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	91	14.9	14.9
	2	25	4.0	18.9
	3	36	5.9	24.8
	4	20	3.3	28.1
	5	63	10.2	38.3
	6	60	9.8	48.1
	7	54	8.7	56.8
	8	94	15.4	72.2
	9	45	7.3	79.5
	10	126	20.5	100.0
	Total	613	100.0	

### Do you think your child's/children's learning was adequate this year to advance to the next grade or would you consider having your child repeat the grade?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Adequate to advance	358	58.3	58.3
	Would consider having child repeat grade	99	16.2	74.5
	Unsure	156	25.5	100.0
	Total	613	100.0	

### Do you feel your child was able to get adequate socialization this year?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very adequate	30	4.9	4.9
	Somewhat adequate	148	24.1	29.0
	Somewhat inadequate	160	26.1	55.1
	Totally inadequate	265	43.2	98.3
	Unsure/no opinion	11	1.7	100.0
	Total	613	100.0	

### If your child is on an IEP or receives any special services, how adequate were the services?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	My child does not have an IEP or receive special services	371	60.4	60.4
	Very adequate	63	10.3	70.7
	Somewhat adequate	93	15.1	85.9
	Somewhat inadequate	41	6.6	92.5
	Totally inadequate	46	7.5	100.0
	Total	613	100.0	

#### How adequate were the services?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very a	dequate	63	26.0	26.1
Somew adequa		93	38.3	64.3
Somewinadeq		41	16.7	81.0
Totally	nadequate	46	19.0	100.0
Total		242	100.0	

### How would you rate the adequacy of communications between school administration officials and parents early on in the pandemic?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very adequate	155	25.2	25.2
	Somewhat adequate	225	36.6	61.8
	Somewhat inadequate	133	21.7	83.5
	Totally inadequate	96	15.6	99.2
	Unsure/no opinion	5	0.8	100.0
	Total	613	100.0	

### Is your child/children presently learning fully remotely, hybrid, or fully in person? (Fully remote)

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Fully remote	258	42.1	100.0
	Total	613		

### Is your child/children presently learning fully remotely, hybrid, or fully in person? (Hybrid)

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Hybrid	330	53.8	100.0
	Total	613		

### Is your child/children presently learning fully remotely, hybrid, or fully in person? (Fully inperson)

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Fully in-person	75	12.2	100.0
	Total	613		

### After the pandemic struck and schools closed, for how many months was your child/children learning remotely exclusively? (select all that apply)

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-2 Months (March 2020 and April 2020)	37	6.1	6.1
	3-4 months (May 2020, June 2020)	104	16.9	23.0
	5-6 months (Sept 2020, Oct 2020)	91	14.9	37.9
	7-8 months (Nov 2020, Dec 2020)	78	12.8	50.7
	9-10 months (Jan 2021, Feb 2021)	76	12.4	63.0
	They are still learning remote exclusively	227	37.0	100.0
	Total	613		

### While your child was exclusively learning remotely, was the instruction synchronous at any time during the week?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	433	70.6	70.6
	No	180	29.4	100.0
	Total	613		

#### If so, how many hours per week was it synchronous?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 5 hours	123	28.3	28.3
	5-10 hours	147	33.9	62.2
	11-15 hours	49	11.3	73.5
	16 hours or more	115	26.5	100.0
	Total	433	100.0	

### Are you a public school teacher or do you work in the public schools?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	136	9.1	9.1
	No	1364	90.9	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

### Are you a guardian or parent of a child or children currently enrolled in the K-12 public school system?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	613	40.9	40.9
	No	887	59.1	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

### How many children do you have?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	161	26.2	26.2
	2	282	46.0	72.2
	3	109	17.8	90.1
	4	41	6.7	96.8
	5 or more	20	3.2	100.0
	Total	613	100.0	

### What grades are your child/children currently in? (k-2)

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid K-2	212	34.6	100.0
Total	613		

### What grades are your child/children currently in? (3-5))

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 3-5	219	35.7	100.0
Total	613		

#### What grades are your child/children currently in? (6-8)

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	6-8	209	34.1	100.0
Total		613		

### What grades are your child/children currently in? (9-12)

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	9-12	240	39.1	100.0
Total		613		

#### What is your party affiliation?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not registered to vote	67	4.4	4.4
	Democrat	470	31.3	35.8
	Republican	129	8.6	44.4
	Independent or other	834	55.6	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

### What is your gender?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	728	48.5	48.5
	Female	772	51.5	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

### For statistical purposes only, can you please tell me your ethnicity?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Hispanic or Latino of any race	182	12.1	12.1
	White or Caucasian	1060	70.7	82.8
_	Black or African American	113	7.5	90.3
	Asian American or Pacific Islander	107	7.1	97.4
	Other or multiple races	39	2.6	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

### What is your age range?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-34 years	423	28.2	28.2
	35-49 years	365	24.4	52.6
	50-64 years	385	25.6	78.2
	65 or more years	327	21.8	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

### What is the highest level of education you have attained?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High school or less	487	32.5	32.5
	Some college	333	22.2	54.6
	College graduate	378	25.2	79.8
	Postgrad or higher	302	20.2	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

#### Mode

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mobile	1001	66.8	66.8
	Landline	262	17.5	84.2
	Online	236	15.8	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

### Region

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Worcester and WMASS	279	18.6	18.6
	Northshore	396	26.4	45.0
	Boston metro	530	35.3	80.3
	Southshore	296	19.7	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	

### Language

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	English	1453	96.9	96.9
	Español	47	3.1	100.0
	Total	1500	100.0	