

What Do Parents Want?



Parents of different **racial and ethnic groups are more alike than different** when it comes to their educational aspirations for their children, according to a report released by the Washington-based Thomas B. Fordham Institute in August.

In an online survey of 2,000 parents in 2012 and subsequent "What Parents Want" report, Fordham Institute officials applied market-research principles to parents' priorities for schools. **"A strong core curriculum in reading and math"** and an emphasis on **science, technology, engineering, and math, or STEM**, emerged as the top two school priorities for parents overall.



Parents wanted their children to learn **good study habits, self-discipline, critical thinking,**

and **strong communication skills.**



Still important but **less critical to parents:**

- college preparation
- development of strong social skills
- grouping students by their ability levels
- offering vocational classes and special initiatives aimed at struggling or special-needs students.

When the poll results were broken down **by parents' race**, the big picture looked much the same, but **individual differences emerged.**

For instance, **white parents** placed more importance on **"learning good study habits and self-discipline"** than did African-American and Hispanic parents.



Meanwhile, **African-American and Hispanic parents** put greater emphasis on their children's acceptance into **"a top-tier college"** and a school's ability to provide strong preparation for state tests.



Parents also said they **would give up certain programs** or study areas if it meant that doing so **would enable schools and educators to focus more on core curriculum, STEM,** and other high-priority areas.



Parents described certain school traits and programs as valued but not essential, including hands-on learning, grouping students by ability levels, and taking a "very traditional approach to learning."



"School characteristics" that **most parents could part with** if they had to ...

lower overall school enrollment,
close proximity of a school to their homes,
modernized school buildings,
fluency in a foreign language,
fostering a love of country or patriotism,
and school uniforms.

SOURCE: Thomas B. Fordham Institute

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