

End of Year Report Card: Students Give Their Schools Below Average Marks for Second Year in a Row

Half of Students Grade Their School a 'C, D or F' for Career Prep

Low-income Students Rate Their Schools Lower Across the Board

WASHINGTON D.C. – June 25, 2024 – Students say their schools are just not cutting it, according to the annual Walton Family Foundation-Gallup Student Report Card released today. The average grade among the 2,152 U.S. students surveyed was a 'B-' and 36% gave their school a grade of 'C' or lower. Just a quarter of students felt their schools deserved an 'A' overall. This is the [second year in a row](#) students gave schools a B-overall.

Quarter of Student Give Schools Poor Grades for Career Advice and Excited Learning

Schools performed the worst when graded by students on content related to career preparedness.

Overall, schools received a 'C+' from students on "teaching you skills that are relevant to your future" with more than 20% giving schools a 'D' or worse. Students also felt schools are doing a less than stellar job when it comes to helping them figure out what type of career they would like to have, with a C+ average and 24% grading a 'D' or worse, including nearly one-in-ten that want to fail their school completely on this issue.

Schools also did not fare well when graded by students on whether their school made them excited for learning. Again, the average was 'C+' with more students giving a 'D' or 'F' than an 'A'.

Lower Income Students Likelier to Report Lower Grades

Low-income students, defined as those who are eligible to receive free or reduced priced lunch at school, are less likely than higher-income students to give their school an 'A' overall (20% vs. 31%). The average of the grades awarded by low-income students equates to a 2.57 GPA, or a B-, while the average for more affluent students is a 2.90 GPA, or a B. The survey also shows that beyond household income, a student's neighborhood income influences school experiences. As the median income in a zip code increases, the gap between the experience of lower- and higher-income students rises from six to 13 percentage points. The grade gap between low- and high-income students is greater in wealthier zip codes.

When parents were asked to grade their child's school, between 24% and 30% of parents in low-income households give their child's school an 'A' across all median incomes in their zip code. In contrast, higher-income parents in higher income zip codes gave their children's schools more 'A's,' suggesting a better experience.

"At a time where we need an education experience to be anything but average we continue to see students give their schools neutral scores on the metrics that matter most," said Stephanie Marken, Gallup Senior Partner for U.S. Research. "And students from lower income households are even more likely to be missing out on the support required to thrive at school."

"As we reflect on these findings, it's evident that our schools are falling short of inspiring and equipping all students, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds, with the tools they need to succeed. This report underscores the urgent need for targeted support and innovation to ensure every student receives a quality education that prepares them for the future," said Edward Hui, Education Program Deputy Director, Walton Family Foundation.

Further details on students' experiences – and how they vary – will be released in an upcoming full Walton Family Foundation-Gallup report.

Methodology

Results for the report card data are based on a Gallup Panel™ web survey conducted Apr. 26-May 9, 2024, with a sample of 2,152 parents of 12-to-19-year-olds and 2,152 children (each belonging to a surveyed parent), living in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based panel of U.S. adults who are randomly selected using address-based sampling methodology. Gallup also recruits using random-digit-dial phone interviews that cover landline and cellphones. Children were reached through adult members of the Gallup Panel who indicated they had at least one child 19 or younger living in their household. Student respondents included 12- to 19-year-old students currently enrolled in grades 5 through 12 at a public, charter, or private school. For this sample of respondents, the margin of sampling error is ± 2.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error for parents is ± 3.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. All reported margins of sampling error include computed design effects for weighting. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

About the Walton Family Foundation

The Walton Family Foundation is, at its core, a family-led foundation. Three generations of the descendants of our founders, Sam and Helen Walton, and their spouses, work together to lead the foundation and create access to opportunity for people and communities. We work in three areas: improving K-12 education, protecting rivers and oceans and the communities they support, and investing in our home region of Northwest Arkansas and the Arkansas-Mississippi Delta. To learn more, visit waltonfamilyfoundation.org and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

About Gallup

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.