

## **New Poll Shows Broad Support for Gov. Murphy's Decision to Return All Students to In-Person Learning in Fall 2021**

*However, Opposition to Decision is 5x Higher Among Black Parents, Highlighting Need for Greater Engagement with Parents of Color to Build Comfort Level*

NEWARK - Following Governor Murphy's announcement that all New Jersey schools will return to full-time, in-person learning in the fall, Newark-based non-profit Project Ready conducted a statewide poll of 1,215 New Jerseyans to find out what parents think of the decision.

The poll found support for returning to full-time, in-person learning overall, with 86 percent of New Jerseyans and 88 percent of parents supporting the idea. However, the survey also found significant disparities between what Black and white residents think about the decision. Black residents were 5 times as likely as white respondents (20% to 4%) to say they are opposed to a full reopening in the fall. While 90% of white parents support the move, only 66% of Black parents do.

"While New Jersey has announced that schools will return to in-person learning full time in the fall, not all parents are comfortable with the idea yet," **said Project Ready Executive Director Shennell McCloud**. "There is a significant gap between Black and white residents' support for this decision, which is no surprise given how hard the pandemic has hit Black communities. Some parents remain understandably concerned about the safety of their children, and it is incumbent upon schools to go the extra mile to address their concerns and build trust with parents as they plan for reopening in the fall."

Concerns cited by parents included general ongoing concerns about safety, children not being vaccinated, not trusting children to wear masks and maintain distance, and the experience last year when cases dramatically increased during the fall.

### **Other key findings from the poll include:**

- **Most parents think schools have reopened too slowly, but a racial and partisan gap exists:**
  - Overall, by 52% to 13%, parents think schools in NJ have reopened too slowly rather than too fast.
  - Black parents are more evenly split (28% too slowly, 25% too fast) whereas white (57%-8%) and Hispanic parents (46%-23%) are much more likely to say schools have reopened too slowly.
  - There is a very large partisan gap: 89% of Republicans say schools have reopened too slowly compared to 15% of Democrats, most of whom (52%) think reopening has gone at the right pace.
- **Parents mostly say in-person learning is going well**

- Among parents whose children are back in school, 88% say it's going well versus 11% who say it's not going well.
- **More than 1 in 4 parents are choosing remote learning even with the option of in-person school**
  - Overall, 45% of parents say their child is learning in-person, 11% say they are remote because they don't have the option for in-person, and 28% are choosing remote learning even though in-person school is available
  - Among the 28% of parents choosing remote learning even though in-person learning is an option, the things that would make them more comfortable with returning their child to school in person are if all school staff are vaccinated (46%), if overall COVID cases go down further (41%), if their child is vaccinated (38%), and improved ventilation (34%).
- **Black parents are much more likely to not have the option of in-person learning**
  - Black parents are 5 times as likely as white parents (26% to 5%) to say their kids are learning remote because they don't have the option of in-person learning
- **Most parents are concerned about the impact on their child's mental health**
  - Parents' biggest concerns from the disruption to learning during the pandemic are their child's mental health/emotional well-being (56%) and their child's long-term success in school (44%). One in four (24%) are concerned about not completing the curriculum
  - One in 6 parents (16%) are concerned about not being able to provide financially because of needing to be home during the school day, but Black parents (25%) are three times as likely as white parents (8%) to report this concern, along with 14% of Hispanic parents.

### **About Project Ready:**

Project Ready is a non-profit social justice organization based in Newark, New Jersey. Our long-term vision is to see a world where no community is left voiceless—a world where parents, guardians, and students in our most vulnerable communities feel heard, informed, and civically educated, and thereby powered to overhaul systems and policies in place that limit educational opportunities.

### **Methodology**

*Polling was conducted online from May 15-20, 2021. Using its Dynamic Online Sampling technology and SMS text messaging to attain a sample reflective of registered voters, Change Research polled 1215 people in the state of New Jersey. This includes an oversample of 343 voters in the city of Newark. Post-stratification weights were made on age, gender, political region, education, 2020 vote, and race and ethnicity to reflect the distribution of voters statewide.*

*All polls are subject to errors caused by interviewing a sample of persons, rather than the entire population. In 95 cases out of 100, the responses to this survey should be within plus or minus 3.9 percentage points of those that would have been obtained from interviewing the entire population of likely voters. The sampling error for subgroups of the survey will be greater.*