

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project
FROM: Hart Research Associates and Ferguson Research
DATE: August 23, 2014
RE: Findings from a Survey on School Nutrition Among Parents in Georgia

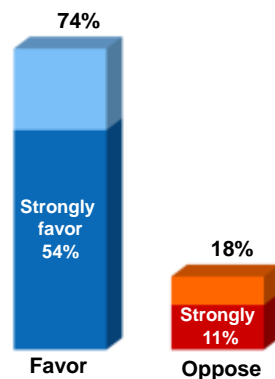
The Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project commissioned Hart Research Associates and Ferguson Research to conduct a statewide survey of public school parents in Georgia who are registered to vote. We conducted 502 interviews between June 25 and 29, 2014. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 4.4% for the full sample, with higher tolerances for subgroups of the sample.

This memo is a brief review of the survey's key findings.

Nearly three in four parents in Georgia support the current nutrition standards for the national school meal program. Seventy-four percent (74%) of parents say they are in favor of the standards after hearing a description of them, including a 54% majority who strongly favor the rules. Just 18% of parents say they oppose the standards.

Nearly three in four parents favor the current school meal standards—and a majority do so strongly.

Do you favor or oppose requiring schools to meet these nutrition standards for school meals?*



* Description prior to question:

"The national school meals program provides lunches and breakfasts to many school children across the country, and provides them for free or at a reduced cost to children from low-income families.

In this program, the federal government reimburses school districts for the costs of meals that meet certain nutrition standards, such as **providing fruits and vegetables, limiting the use of salt, and following age-appropriate calorie limits.**

Individual school districts have the flexibility to build on the requirements, as long as the meals meet basic, minimum standards.

To be clear, this school lunch is a full meal that can only be purchased as a full meal—it does not include extra items that can be purchased individually for additional money."

Support for the standards is high across-the-board, with majorities of mothers (78%) and fathers (69%), and lower- (80%), middle- (73%), and upper-income parents (74%) endorsing them. Support is particularly high among African-American parents—90% of whom say they favor the standards—but is also quite strong among white parents (70%).

Notably, support for the meal standards crosses political lines. Many issues in politics today split heavily along political lines—standards for school meals is NOT one of them. Indeed, there is a surprising level of agreement across the political spectrum on this issue: 69% of Republicans, 59% of independents, and 85% of Democrats say they favor these standards. The level of GOP support is especially important in Georgia, where Republican-leaning parents outnumber Democratic-leaning ones by a seven percentage point margin.

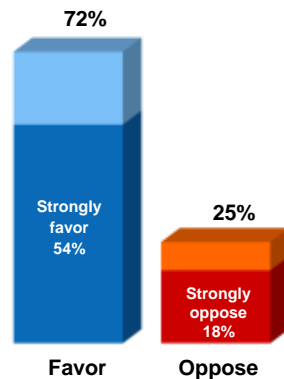
In additional to their overall support, Georgia parents endorse the standards' individual components, which we also tested in the survey. In large numbers, parents tell us that schools should be required to do the following with every school meal:

- Include a serving of fruits or vegetables – 93%
- Offer free water – 91%
- Limit the amount of salt – 75%
- Provide foods made from whole grains – 66%

More than seven in 10 parents endorse nutrition standards for food served outside the school meal. As with meal standards, seven in 10 parents (72%) favor standards for the foods sold a la carte, in school stores, and school vending machines.

Parents strongly endorse Smart Snacks standards.

*Do you favor or oppose requiring schools to meet nutrition standards for the foods and beverages sold a la carte and in vending machines?**



* Information prior to question:

"Starting this July, all foods sold a la carte or in school stores and school vending machines will have to meet basic minimum nutrition standards, such as limiting calories, fat content, and sodium in the foods while encouraging more fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy items. Individual school districts will have the flexibility to build on the standards if they wish to, as long as they meet basic, minimum standards."

Again, support is very high across the parent population, including by political affiliation: 64% of Republicans, 55% of independents, and 85% of Democrats say they are in favor.

Their support may stem, in part, from what they see as a lack of nutrition in the foods that were available from these sources until July of this year. Just 20% of parents say that food sold a la carte in the cafeteria is totally or mostly healthy, and even fewer say this of food sold in school stores (11%) or in vending machines (6%).

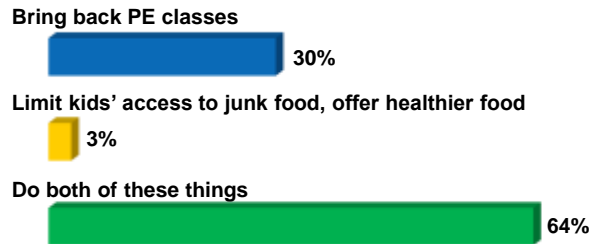
Hart Research / Ferguson Research

More broadly, a large majority of parents express concern about children’s health and childhood obesity, and most say that schools should employ a combination of more physical activity AND healthier food to address childhood obesity. Nearly four in five parents (78%) say that they are concerned about the state of children’s health in the U.S. today—including 47% who are very concerned. Similarly, 73% say they are concerned about childhood obesity specifically (and, again, 47% are very concerned).

To help address the obesity issue, parents favor an “all in” approach—bringing back PE classes to schools AND offering healthier foods to kids at school. Nearly two thirds of parents say that Georgia needs both:

Parents endorse the need for offering PE *and* limiting children’s access to junk food.

In order to help address the issue of childhood obesity, schools should:



This telephone poll was conducted among 502 parents who are registered to vote. A sample list was purchased from a third party vendor, and respondents were screened to ensure that interviewees are registered to vote, are parents, and have children in public schools.