

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: John McLaughlin and Rob Schmidt
RE: Georgia Statewide Survey – Key Findings
Date: January 3rd, 2015

SURVEY SUMMARY: Majorities of voters in Georgia favor numerous policies that will increase school choice. While voters favor The Georgia Opportunity Scholarship Program, the Georgia Tax Credit Scholarship Program and public charter schools, they also believe these programs should be broadened so more students can be given the opportunity to participate. More important, support for these policies transcends conventional partisan political boundaries, as there is broad appeal with key voter groups, particularly Republican primary voters, women and African American voters.

➤ **Georgia voters largely support the concept of school choice. The Georgia Opportunity Scholarship Program is quite popular and Georgians believe this program should be expanded and more inclusive.**

✓ Two in three Georgians (66%) favor the concept of school choice.

Generally speaking, would you say you favor or oppose the concept of school choice? School choice gives parents the right to use the public dollars set aside for their child’s education to send their child to the public or private school which better serves their needs.

	Total	GOP	Gender		Race		Child <18 In School	
		Primary	Male	Female	White	Black	Yes	No
Favor	66%	75%	64%	68%	64%	68%	71%	63%
Oppose	29%	19%	29%	28%	30%	28%	23%	31%
DK/Refused	5%	6%	7%	4%	6%	4%	6%	5%

- Support for the concept of school choice among Republican primary voters increases to 75%, while only 19% oppose.
- African American voters are slightly more likely than white voters to favor school choice, 68% to 64%, respectively.
- Furthermore, those who have children under the age of 18 in school favor school choice by a higher margin, 71% to 23%.

✓ Greater than three in four voters (76%) favor Educational Opportunity Scholarships. Only 10% oppose these scholarships. Support is consistent among all key demographic groups.

Favor/Oppose: “Educational Opportunity Scholarships”

	Total	GOP	Gender		Race		Child <18 In School	
		Primary	Male	Female	White	Black	Yes	No
Favor	76%	75%	74%	78%	74%	78%	78%	75%
Oppose	10%	9%	10%	10%	11%	10%	9%	10%
DK/Refused	14%	16%	17%	12%	16%	12%	14%	15%

- Three in four (75%) Republican primary voters favor Educational Opportunity Scholarships.
- Additionally, 78% of African Americans favor Educational Opportunity Scholarships, while 74% of white voters favor them.

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- ✓ Sixty-three percent (63%) favor the Georgia Opportunity Scholarship Program, which would allow parents to use the money the state has set aside for their child's education to send them to the public, private or church-run school of their choice. Three in ten (31%) oppose this program.

The Georgia Opportunity Scholarship Program would allow students who currently attend public school to use the money the state has set aside for their education to attend either the public, private or church-run school of their parent's choice. This is often referred to as a school voucher program. Knowing this, would you favor or oppose the Georgia Opportunity Scholarship Program?

	Total	GOP	Gender		Race		Child <18 In School	
		Primary	Male	Female	White	Black	Yes	No
Favor	63%	71%	59%	67%	61%	64%	69%	61%
Oppose	31%	23%	36%	28%	33%	32%	27%	34%
DK/Refused	5%	7%	5%	5%	6%	4%	4%	6%

- Support for the Georgia Opportunity Scholarship Program rises to 71% with Republican primary voters.
 - Women are more likely than men to favor this program, 67% to 59%, respectively.
 - Almost two in three (64%) African Americans support this program, as do 61% of white voters.
 - Those with children in school are more likely than those without children in school to support this program, 69% to 61%, respectively.
- ✓ Greater than eight in ten (82%) believe that state-funded educational scholarships should be given in at least some capacity. The majority (55%) says that all children should have access to these scholarships, regardless of what school district they are assigned. Eleven percent (11%) believes only low income students should have access, while 16% say only children in failing public schools should have access. Just 14% of Georgians believe that scholarships should not be provided at all.

Now, which of the following comes closest to your own personal opinion when it comes to providing state-funded scholarships or vouchers to families who want to send their children to the public or private school of their choice?

All children should have access to these scholarships, regardless of what school district they are assigned to
 Only low income families should have access to these scholarships, regardless of what school district they are assigned to
 Only children in failing public schools should have access to these scholarships, which would allow for them to attend another non-failing public school or private school of their choice

OR

We should not provide these scholarships to any students at all.

	Total	GOP	Gender		Race		Child <18 In School	
		Primary	Male	Female	White	Black	Yes	No
All Children	55%	63%	57%	53%	58%	46%	56%	55%
Only Low Income	11%	5%	11%	11%	6%	20%	11%	11%
Only Failing Schools	16%	13%	14%	18%	14%	23%	17%	16%
No Scholarships	14%	14%	13%	14%	18%	8%	10%	16%
DK/Refused	4%	6%	5%	4%	5%	3%	6%	4%

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- **Georgians favor public charter schools and support grows as they learn more about them. Voters also largely agree that children in public charter schools should receive equal funding for their education.**

- ✓ Voters favor public charter schools by a greater than two to one margin, 66% to 24%.

Favor/Oppose: "Public Charter Schools"

	Total	GOP	Gender		Race		Child <18 In School	
		Primary	Male	Female	White	Black	Yes	No
Favor	66%	72%	65%	68%	65%	68%	65%	67%
Oppose	24%	18%	24%	24%	24%	24%	23%	24%
DK/Refused	10%	11%	12%	8%	11%	8%	12%	9%

- Republican primary voters are more likely to support public charter schools, 72% to 18%.
- African Americans are slightly more likely than white voters to support public charter schools, 68% to 65%, respectively.

- ✓ Support for public charter schools increases to 72% after hearing that they are independent public schools that are free to be more innovative and are held more accountable for student achievement.

Charter schools are independent Georgia public schools that are free to be more innovative and are held accountable for improved student achievement. Knowing this to be true, do you favor or oppose public charter schools?

	Total	GOP	Gender		Race		Child <18 In School	
		Primary	Male	Female	White	Black	Yes	No
Favor	72%	74%	74%	71%	70%	74%	77%	70%
Oppose	20%	16%	17%	21%	21%	19%	16%	21%
DK/Refused	8%	10%	9%	8%	9%	6%	8%	9%

- ✓ By a 70% to 22% margin, Georgians agree that students attending charter schools should receive the same amount of funding for their education as they would have received if they remained in their traditional public school.

Children attending a public charter school in Georgia are often funded at lower levels than children attending traditional public schools in the same district. For state approved public charter schools, student funding is among the lowest 5% in the state, regardless of geographic location. Knowing this, please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Students in public charter schools should receive the same amount of money for their education as they would have received in their traditional district school."

	Total	GOP	Gender		Race		Child <18 In School	
		Primary	Male	Female	White	Black	Yes	No
Agree	70%	77%	71%	69%	73%	63%	72%	70%
Disagree	22%	14%	20%	24%	19%	31%	21%	22%
DK/Refused	8%	10%	9%	7%	9%	6%	7%	8%

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- **The Georgia Tax Credit Scholarship Program has two in three support from voters and voters want to see this program expanded. Additionally, the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program is very popular.**

- ✓ Sixty-five percent (65%) favor the Georgia Tax Credit Scholarship Program.

The Georgia Tax Credit Scholarship Program allows families to receive scholarships to send their children to the public or private school of their choice. These scholarships are funded by private donations from businesses and individuals in exchange for a tax credit.

Do you favor or oppose this program?

	Total	GOP	Gender		Race		Child <18 In School	
		Primary	Male	Female	White	Black	Yes	No
Favor	65%	73%	69%	62%	67%	59%	69%	64%
Oppose	26%	16%	24%	29%	25%	33%	22%	28%
DK/Refused	9%	11%	8%	9%	8%	9%	9%	8%

- Seventy-three percent (73%) of Republican primary voters favor the Georgia Tax Credit Scholarship Program.
- Whites are more likely than African Americans to support this program, 67% to 59%, respectively.
- Those who have children under the age of 18 in school support this program by a 69% to 22% margin.

- ✓ By a similar margin, 64% to 28%, voters favor increasing the cap and expanding this program.

Currently, there is a limit on the amount of these tax credit scholarships available to Georgia's students. As a result, many children in Georgia are currently on waiting lists to receive these scholarships. Knowing this, would you favor or oppose increasing the cap on these tax credit scholarships so more children can participate in this program?

	Total	GOP	Gender		Race		Child <18 In School	
		Primary	Male	Female	White	Black	Yes	No
Favor	64%	68%	65%	62%	63%	67%	70%	61%
Oppose	28%	21%	27%	29%	28%	28%	21%	31%
DK/Refused	9%	11%	8%	9%	10%	5%	9%	8%

- While white voters were initially more likely than African Americans to support the Georgia Tax Credit Scholarship Program, African Americans are more inclined to believe that this program should be expanded, 67% to 63%, respectively.

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- ✓ Georgians largely favor the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program, 85% to 10%, which provides scholarships for special needs children.

The Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program provides state-funded scholarships for children with special needs, like autism and other developmental disabilities. These scholarships or vouchers help pay for their education at public or private schools that their parents believe can better meet their needs compared to the traditional public school they are assigned to. Knowing this, do you favor or oppose the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program?

	Total	GOP	Gender		Race		Child <18 In School	
		Primary	Male	Female	White	Black	Yes	No
Favor	85%	81%	83%	86%	81%	92%	91%	82%
Oppose	10%	10%	11%	9%	12%	6%	5%	12%
DK/Refused	5%	9%	6%	5%	7%	2%	4%	6%

BOTTOM LINE: Georgians are showing a strong propensity to favor increasing school choice programs. Even in a highly polarized political environment, these policies garner support across many key voter groups. As the new legislative session approaches, lawmakers should be mindful of voters' desires to increase educational options for students and parents and make scholarship programs more inclusive.

Demographic Summary:

Children <18 In School	%	Race	Total
Yes	33%	White	62%
No	66%	African American	30%
Teacher Household	%	Hispanic	2%
Yes	23%	Age	%
Work In School	17%	Under 40	21%
Retired	6%	41 – 55	25%
No	75%	56 – 65	25%
Education	%	Over 65	26%
Not College Graduate	41%	Gender	%
College Graduate	57%	Male	47%
Party	%	Female	53%
Republican	36%	Area	%
Democrat	36%	North	71%
Independent	26%	Central	15%
		South	14%

**Totals may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding and refusal rates*

Methodology: This survey of 600 likely general election voters in Georgia was conducted on November 30th and December 1st, 2014. A subsequent oversample of 142 Republican primary voters was conducted on December 2nd to bring the total number of Republican primary voters up to 400. All interviews were conducted via telephone by professional interviewers. Interview selection was random within predetermined election units. This sample included 25% of interviews conducted on cell phones in the general election sample and 15% of interviews conducted on cell phones in the Republican primary sample. This survey was structured to correlate with actual voter turnout in both a statewide general election and Republican primary election. This poll of 600 likely general election voters has an accuracy of +/- 4.0% at a 95% confidence interval. The sample of 400 likely Republican primary election voters has an accuracy of +/- 4.9% at a 95% confidence interval. The error margin increases for cross-tabulations.