



**MISSISSIPPI
CHARTER SCHOOL
AUTHORIZER BOARD**

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IN MISSISSIPPI

High-Level Findings of Mississippi First's Report to the Board

2020

OCTOBER 2020



GENERAL KNOWLEDGE



PUBLIC OPINION



EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAM
QUALITY



SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT



OVERALL SATISFACTION

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01.



The *Mississippi Public Charter Schools Act of 2013* established the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB) as the sole entity in Mississippi responsible for authorizing and overseeing charter schools. In 2017, the MCSAB received a federal Charter Schools Program grant which required them to “sponsor an annual parent and general public survey” to “assess awareness, general sentiment, satisfaction levels, and concerns about charter schools.” The MCSAB selected Mississippi First to conduct the survey and publish a report of the findings.

02.



Mississippi First is a 501c3 public policy non-profit that champions transformative policy solutions ensuring educational excellence for every Mississippi child. Mississippi First is a leading voice for state-funded pre-K, high-quality public charter schools, and rigorous state standards.

03.

Project Director & Designer

Toren Ballard is the Project Director for this report. He serves as the Director of K-12 Education Policy at Mississippi First. Toren was supervised by Rachel Canter, Executive Director of Mississippi First.

MacKenzie Stroh Hines is the designer of this report. She is the Chief of Staff for Mississippi First and designs all of Mississippi First's materials and develops its communications strategy.

04.

Special Thanks

Mississippi First worked with the Survey Research Laboratory (SRL) at Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center as part of this project. SRL's call center made the telephone calls for the survey according to specifications by Mississippi First and provided technical descriptions of their work and the sample as well as the results of the telephone calls. The report's analyses and commentary, including comparisons to national education surveys, are the work of Mississippi First. As such, Mississippi First does not represent that SRL agrees or disagrees with any of this analysis or commentary.

MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS



ENROLLMENT	262	563	564	247	357	135	-
GRADES SERVED	5-8	5-8	5-8	K-3	K-2	K-1	6
YEAR OPENED	2015-2016	2015-2016	2016-2017	2018-2019	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
2018-2019 Accountability Grade	D	B	C	N/A	N/A	N/A	-
Location	Jackson	Jackson	Jackson	Clarksdale	Jackson	Jackson	Greenwood

DEMOGRAPHICS

Female	51.3%	46.89%	47.87%	57.89%	47.90%	45.19%	-
Male	48.47%	53.11%	52.13%	42.11%	52.10%	54.81%	-
	97.33%	98.05%	99.11%	91.90%	98.32%	97.78%	-
Asian	0%	*	*	0%	*	0%	-
Two or More Races	*	*	*	*	*	*	-
White	*	*	*	6.48%	*	*	-
Hispanic or Latino	0%	*	0%	*	0%	0%	-
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0%	*	0%	0%	*	0%	-

*Represents suppressed data to prevent the identification of individuals.

†Leflore Legacy Academy opened in Greenwood, Mississippi, in August 2020. When the survey was administered, Leflore Legacy had not yet opened.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IN MISSISSIPPI



Overview of Survey

In 2017, the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB) received a federal Charter Schools Program grant to “further enable the fulfillment of MCSAB’s vision to have parent and community input into the operation of [charter] schools.” Among other strategies, MCSAB proposed to “sponsor an annual parent and general public survey” that would “assess awareness, general sentiment, satisfaction levels, and concerns about charter schools.” In 2018, and again in 2020, MCSAB commissioned Mississippi First to design, conduct, analyze, and report on an annual parent and general public survey conducted via telephone in the state of Mississippi.

Mississippi First partnered with the Survey Research Lab at Mississippi State University (SRL) to finalize the survey questions and administer the survey via telephone in July 2020. Eleven (11) demographic items were added to the 32 survey items in order to ensure respondents were representative and to enable analysis based on demographic factors. Participants were randomly drawn from one of two parent¹ pools: a non-charter parent pool, which included parents of children eligible to attend, but not enrolled in, charter schools; and a charter parent pool, which included all parents of children enrolled in charter schools in 2019-2020. More information about the technical aspects of the survey are available on request.

High-Level Findings

This publication includes high-level findings from each of the two sections of the poll. More information is available upon request from the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board.

¹ We use “parents” expansively in this report to mean any adult with custodial responsibility for a child.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

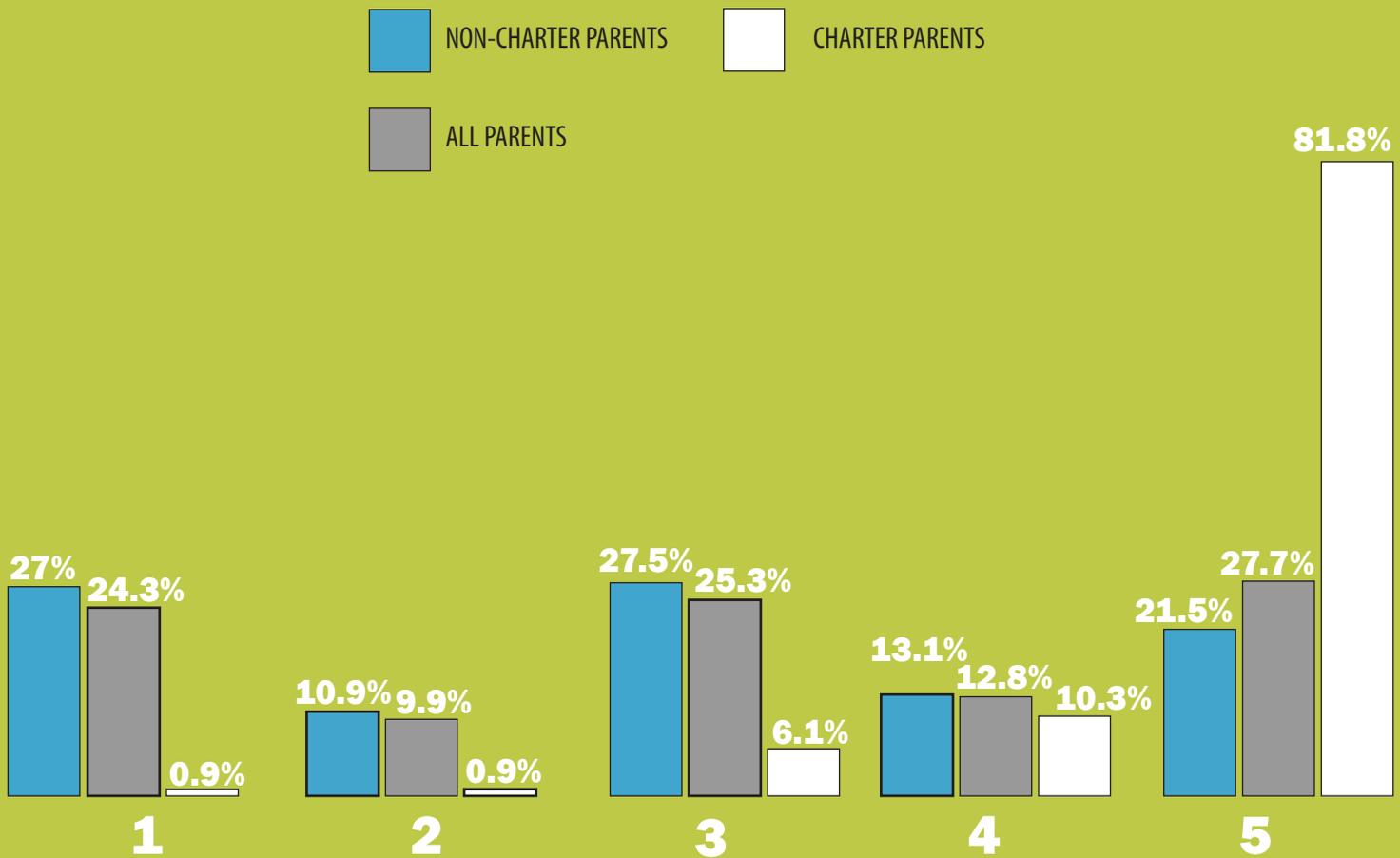
3 in 4 parents in charter school communities (75.7%) report some familiarity with charter schools.

Compared to our 2019 survey of parents in charter school communities, both charter school parents and non-charter school parents indicate much more familiarity with charter schools in 2020.

Almost **3 in 4 (73%) non-charter parents** now report at least some familiarity with charter schools, compared to **61.8% in 2019**.

The percent of charter parents reporting at least *some* familiarity remains very **high at 99.1%**, but those who consider themselves “very familiar” surged 14.2 percentage points from **67.6% in 2019 to 81.8% in 2020**.

How would you rate your familiarity with charter schools?



1 MEANING “NOT AT ALL FAMILIAR” AND 5 MEANING “VERY FAMILIAR”

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE



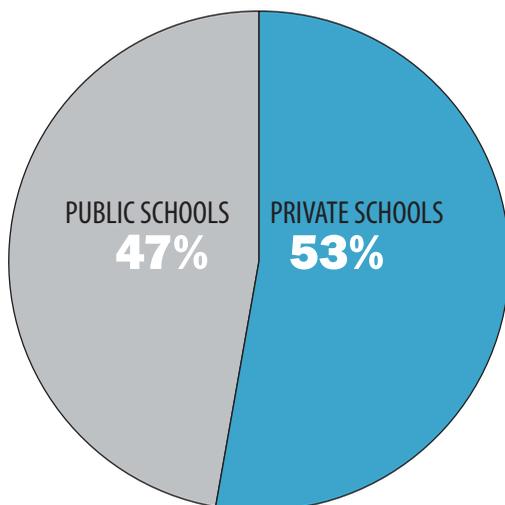
Among parents in charter communities with at least some charter school familiarity, identifying charter schools incorrectly as private schools remains an issue.

Despite increased familiarity, a majority of all parents in charter school communities (53%) **could not correctly identify charter schools as public schools.**

Even among parents with children in charter schools, 44% believe charter schools to be private. The rate of incorrect responses among both parent groups is slightly higher than in 2019, though not statistically different.

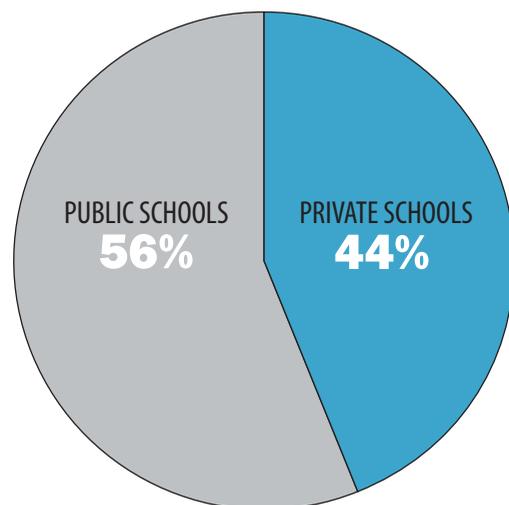
NON-CHARTER PARENTS:

Would you say charter schools are **public** or **private** schools?



CHARTER PARENTS:

Would you say charter schools are **public** or **private** schools?



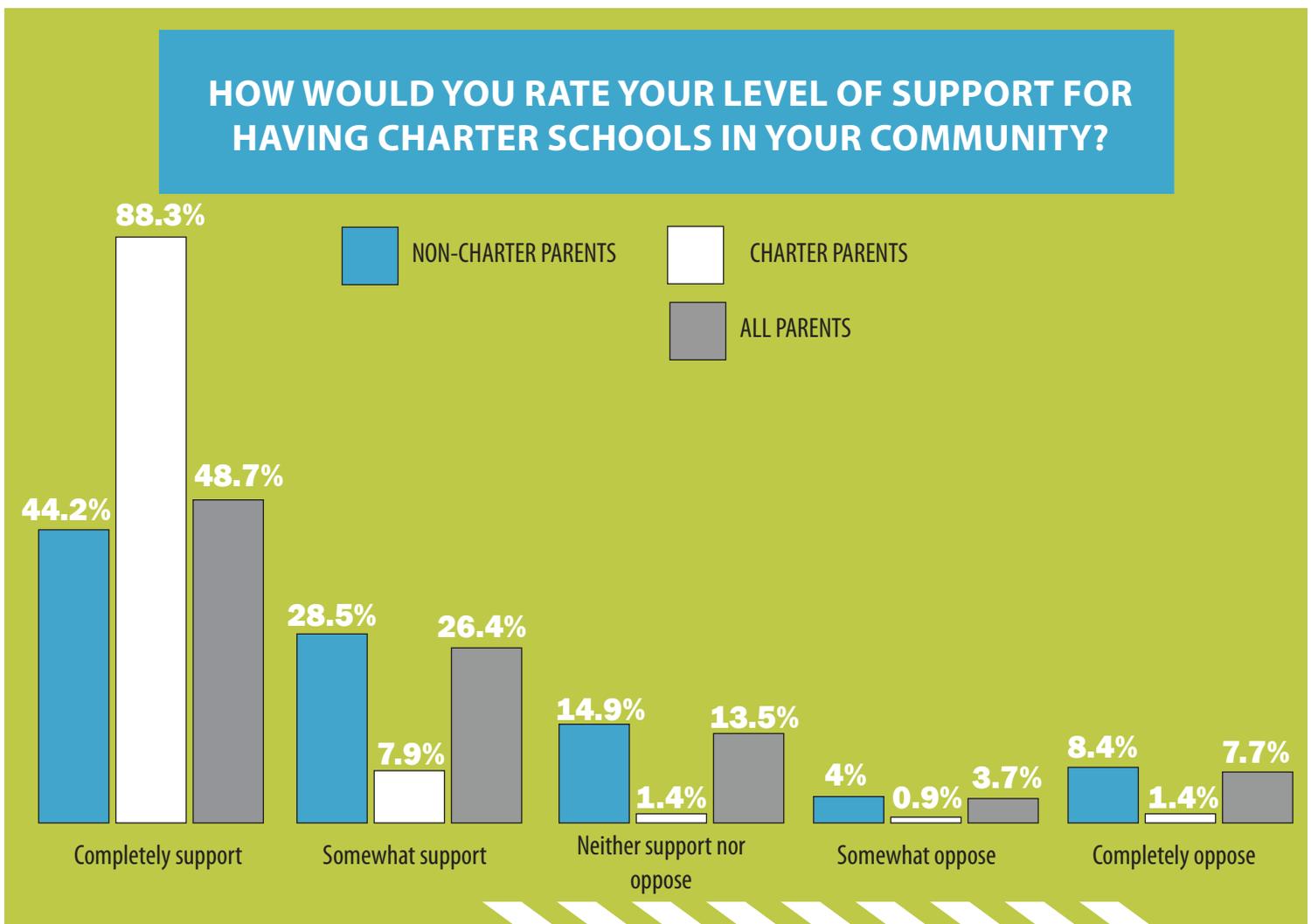
PUBLIC OPINION

As in 2019, support for charter schools among all parents remains high. Charter parents remain more likely to express this support than non-charter parents.

Overall, strong majorities of all parents in charter school communities support charter schools in their communities (75.1%) and statewide (69.2%).

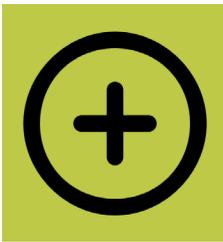
Similar to 2019, **96.3% of charter parents and 72.7% of non-charter parents** “strongly” or “somewhat” support charter schools in their community. Among charter parents, support for charter schools statewide was nearly identical to support for charter schools in their community, though non-charter parents were somewhat more likely to support charter schools in their community than statewide.

While almost **no charter parents** oppose charter schools, **1 in 8 (12.4%) non-charter parents** are “strongly” or “somewhat” opposed to charter schools in their community and a similar percent (13.4%) are opposed to charter schools statewide.



PUBLIC OPINION

Over 6 in 10 parents believe charter schools have had a positive impact on education in their communities. Compared to non-charter parents, charter parents are more likely to believe that charter schools are positively affecting education in their community, and this divide appears to be growing.



64% of all parents believe having a charter school has affected education in their communities “**very**” or “**somewhat**” positively, but, as in 2019, charter parents are much more likely to hold this belief (92.5%) than non-charter parents (60.3%).

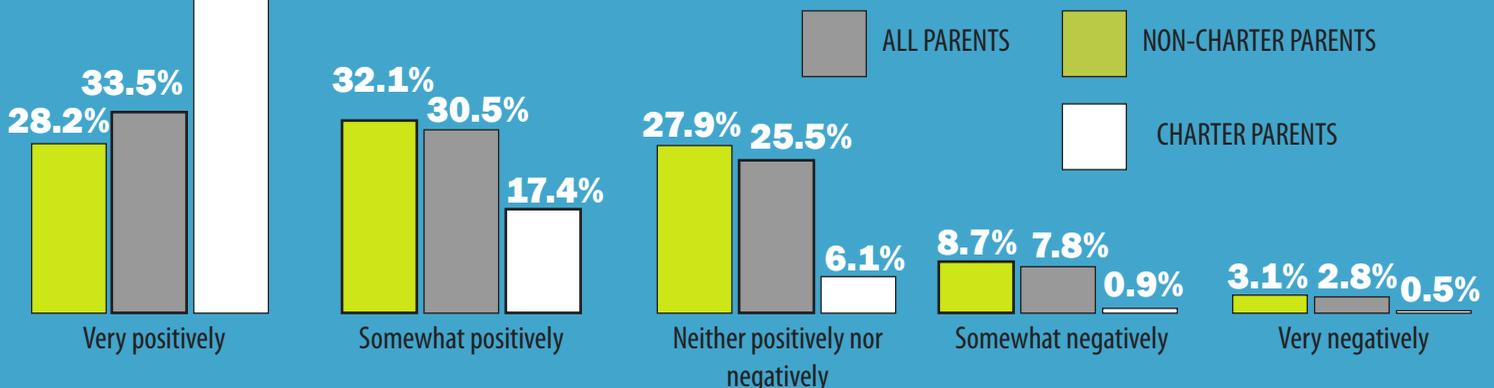


The opinions of **charter parents** have become more decisive as **3 in 4** (75.1%) now believe having a charter school is “very positively” affecting education in their community, up almost 12 percentage points from 63.8% in 2019.



At the same time, negative perceptions among **non-charter parents** are growing: while less than **1 in 10** believe the effect on local education to be “somewhat” negative, this share has more than doubled from 3.6% in 2019 to 8.7% in 2020.

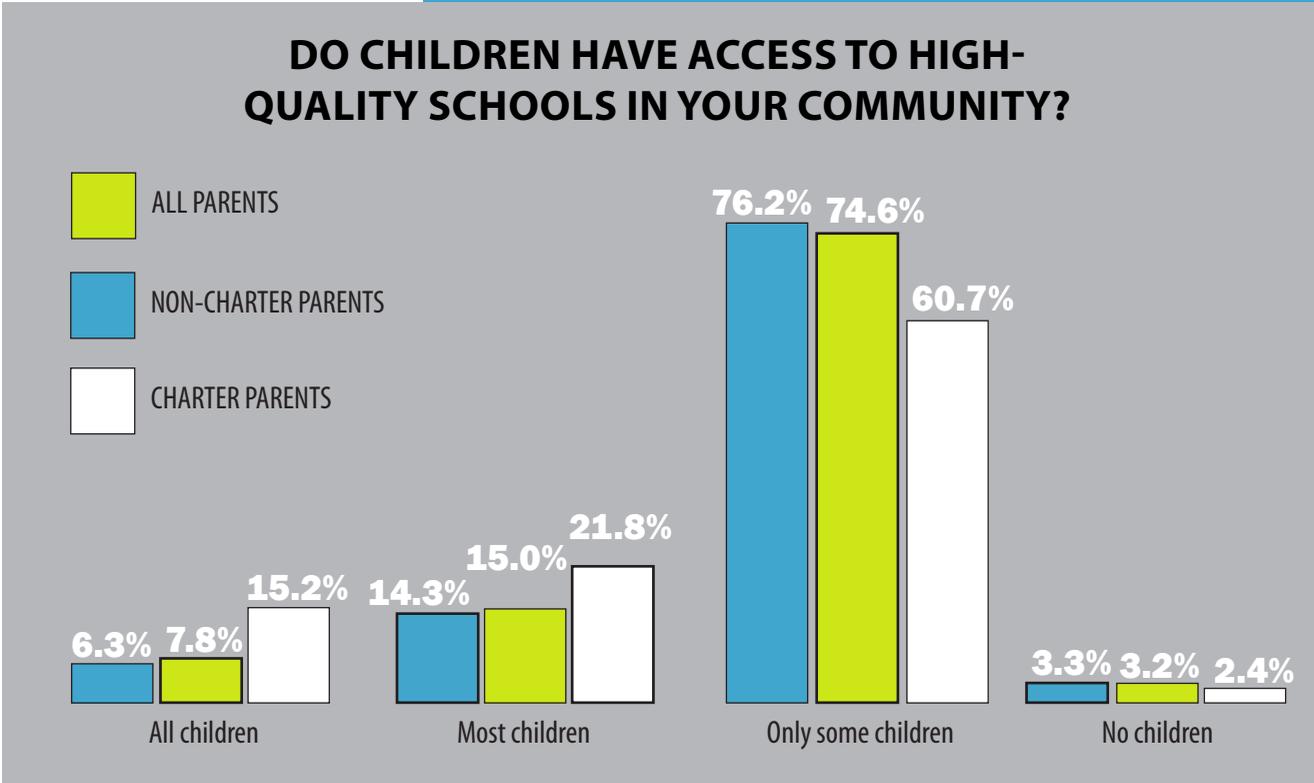
HOW DO YOU THINK HAVING A CHARTER SCHOOL IN YOUR AREA HAS AFFECTED EDUCATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



PUBLIC OPINION



A majority of parents (74.6%) still believe that “only some” children have access to high-quality schools in their community, though non-charter parents are more likely to express this belief.



60.7% of charter parents and **76.2% of non-charter parents** believe that “only some” children have access to high-quality schools in their community.



Compared to non-charter parents, **charter parents** are more than **twice as likely** to believe that “all children” have access to high-quality schools in their community (15.2% to 6.3%), though this sentiment is not common among either group.



To improve access to high-quality schools, **84.5% of charter parents** and **54.9% of non-charter parents** believe opening a charter school has affected access “very” or “somewhat” positively. Overall, this figure is 58.2%.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

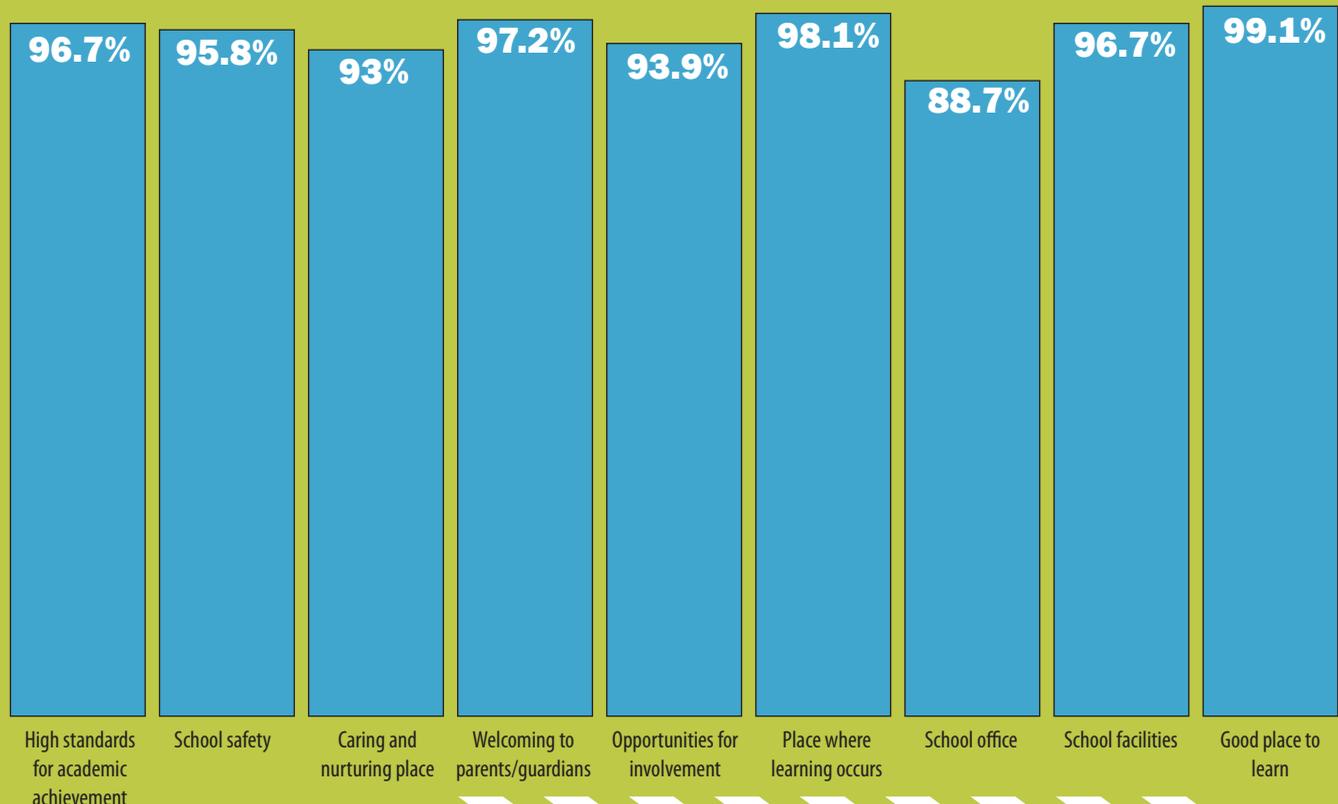
Charter parents remain overwhelmingly satisfied with their child's school environment, with over 90% approval on all but one indicator.

As in 2019, over **95% of charter parents** "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with six of the nine indicators of school environment quality, including whether the school holds high academic standards, is safe, feels like a place of learning, is welcoming to parents, is clean and well maintained, and is a good place to learn.

At least **93% of charter parents** "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with two of the three remaining indicators of school quality, including whether the school is a **caring and nurturing place** and whether **parents have opportunities for involvement**.

With **88.7% approval**, the school office remains the area in which parents see the most need for improvement, though disapproval is down 6.3 percentage points from 2019 to just 0.9% in 2020.

APPROVAL OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM QUALITY

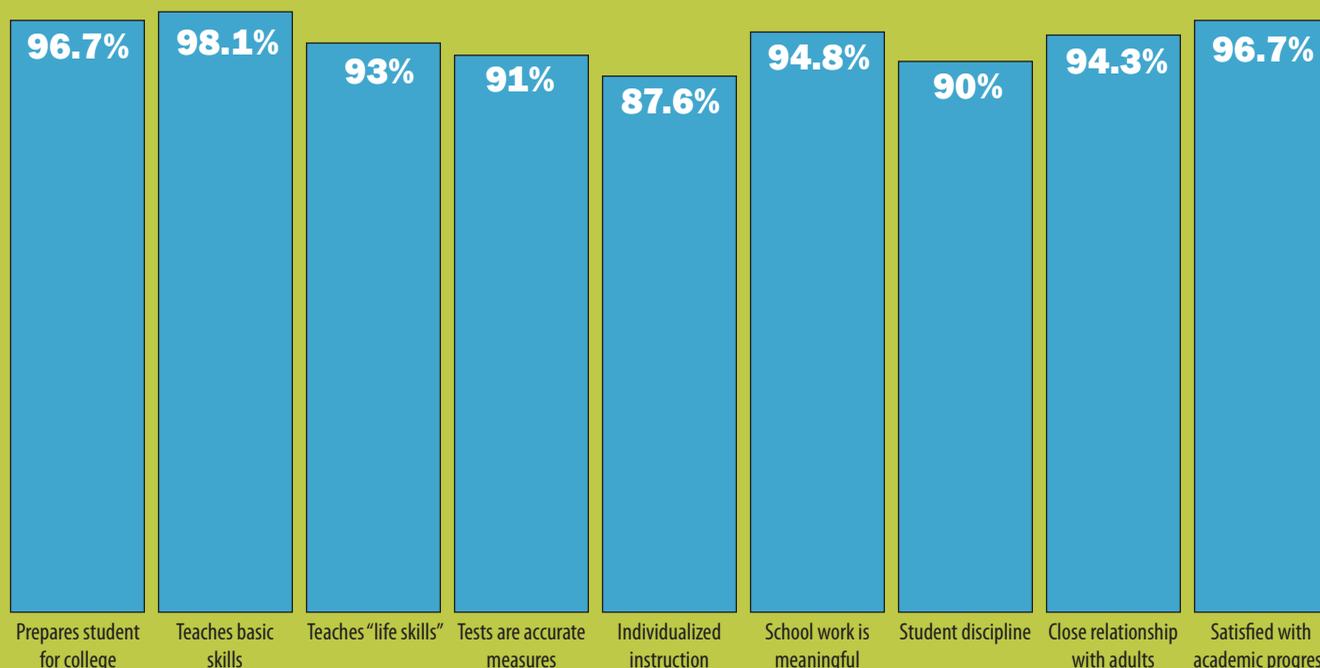
Educational Program Quality at charter schools received even higher marks than in 2019, with notable improvement in the only area of concern.

At least **90% of charter parents “agreed” or “strongly agreed”** with eight of the nine **indicators of educational program quality** (up from five of nine indicators in 2019), including whether the school does a good job preparing students for college, whether the school teaches basic skills (e.g., reading) and “life skills” (e.g., responsibility), whether the school does a good job measuring academic performance and assigning meaningful school work, whether their child has a close relationship with at least one adult at the school, and whether the parent is satisfied with the child’s academic progress.

87.6% of charter parents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the remaining indicator of educational program quality: whether the school provides individualized instruction.

Charter parents’ approval of school discipline (90%) saw huge improvement from 2019, as parents are now 9.5 percentage points more likely to “agree” or “strongly agree” that school discipline is fair.

APPROVAL OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS



OVERALL SATISFACTION

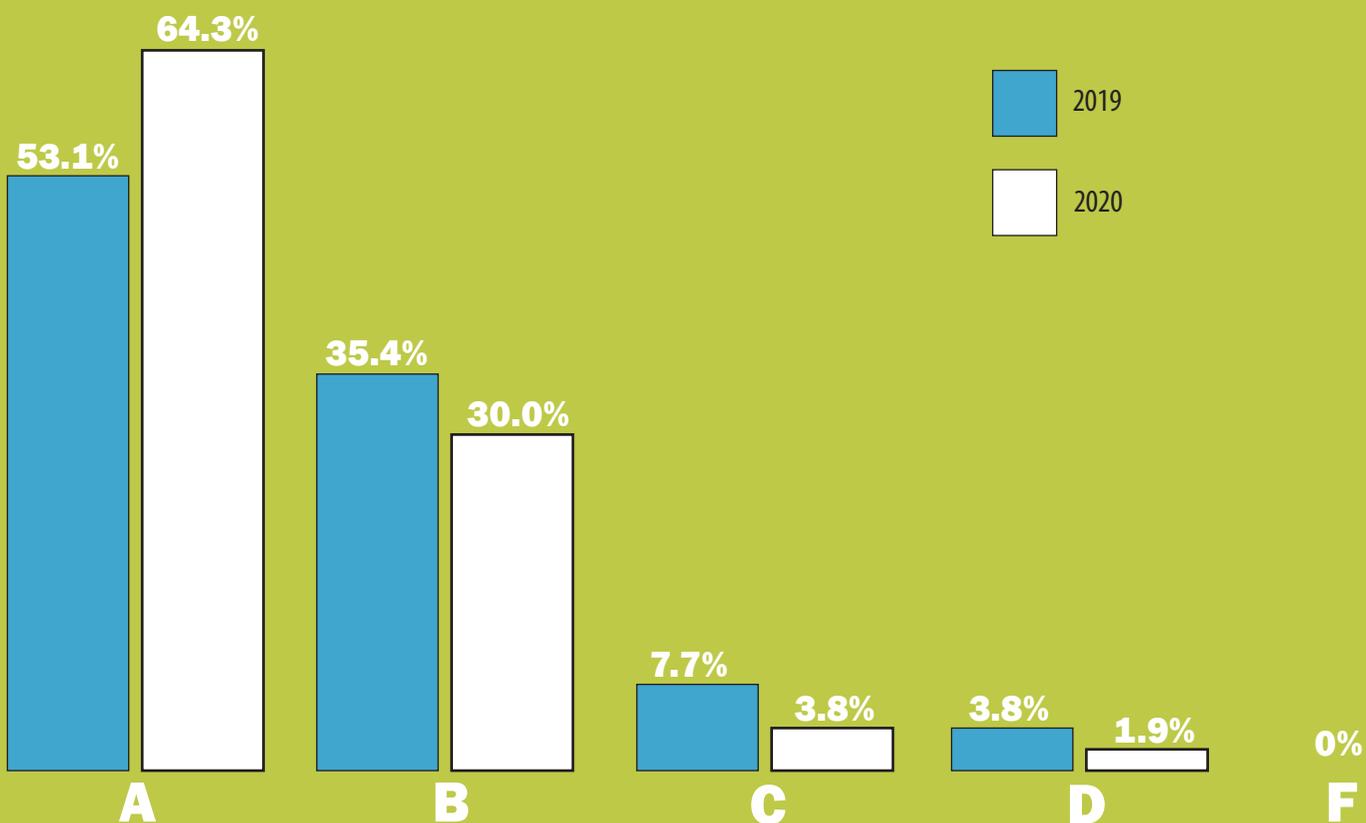
Satisfaction is even higher than in 2019, with almost every parent indicating that they would recommend their child's school to others.

64.2% of charter parents would now give their **child's school an "A,"** up over 11 percentage points from 53.1% in 2019. Similarly to 2019, almost all charter parents (98.1%) would recommend their child's school to other families.

86.5% of charter parents plan to re-enroll their child in their current charter school for the 2020-2021 school year.

Of the **13.5% of charter parents** not re-enrolling their child, 81.5% of these parents gave as a reason they are **moving away from the area or because the child is aging out of the grades** offered by the school.

WHAT GRADE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL?



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The mission of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board is to authorize high-quality charter schools, particularly schools designed to expand opportunities for underserved students.

2020