
Leadership Perspectives on Public Education

The Gallup 2018 Survey
of K-12 School District
Superintendents

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Executive Summary

Gallup developed this research study of K-12 superintendents of U.S. public school districts to understand their opinions on important topics and policy issues facing elementary and secondary education. Since 2013, Gallup has conducted the survey at least annually. The following are key findings from the 2018 study.

The vast majority of superintendents remain excited about the future of their school district but are less enthusiastic about the future of K-12 public education in the U.S. Twice as many superintendents strongly agree or agree they are excited about the future of their school district (86%) as strongly agree or agree they are excited about the future of U.S. K-12 education (42%). However, opinions of the future of U.S. K-12 education are more positive now than they were a year ago (32%).

Superintendents see the biggest challenges facing their district as recruiting and retaining talented teachers, improving the academic performance of disadvantaged students, and dealing with the effects of poverty on student learning. Sharply more superintendents are concerned about preparing students for engaged citizenship — 74% strongly agree or agree it is a challenge for their district, up from 50% in 2017 and 51% in 2013.

The most important measures of school effectiveness in superintendents' eyes are high school graduation rates and having engaged and hopeful students. Roughly nine in 10 regard these as very important indicators. A much smaller, and declining, percentage of superintendents (61%) regard standardized test scores as a very important measure of effectiveness.

While superintendents are much more likely to agree than to disagree that high school graduates are well-prepared for success in college or for success in the workforce, sizable percentages are neutral. They see support to develop social and life skills as most helpful among various strategies to better prepare students for both college and the workforce. Additionally, they believe job shadowing, internship and entrepreneurship opportunities are most helpful in improving student preparedness for the workforce.

More than seven in 10 superintendents say their district partners with local businesses or institutions to help promote career and vocational training. Thirty-five percent say their district has partnerships with employers to recruit students directly out of high school into full-time jobs. Manufacturing, skilled trades, healthcare and construction are some of the industries that superintendents most commonly say their graduates are getting jobs in directly out of high school. The most frequently cited specific job superintendents say their students get directly out of high school is welding.

Most superintendents believe students and parents would be interested in a program in which large employers recruit students out of high school into full-time jobs while offering them opportunities to pursue higher education. More than three-quarters of superintendents say their district would participate in such a program.

The vast majority of superintendents, 91%, strongly agree or agree they would be in favor of scaling back current curriculum and testing requirements to allow students time for internship, apprenticeship and job shadowing opportunities.

Superintendents remain very negative in their evaluation of how the federal government is handling K-12 education policy — 42% say it is doing a poor job, and 44% say its performance is “only fair.” A slim majority say they have “no confidence at all” in the Trump administration to handle K-12 education policy, though this is down slightly from last year.

The percentage of superintendents saying their schools have armed security personnel, 42%, is up slightly since the Parkland, Florida, school shooting in early 2018. That compares with the 38% measured in 2013 after the December 2012 Newtown, Connecticut, school shooting. However, there has been a substantial increase in the percentage of superintendents who say they are considering adding armed personnel in schools.

Key Findings

The Future of K-12 Education

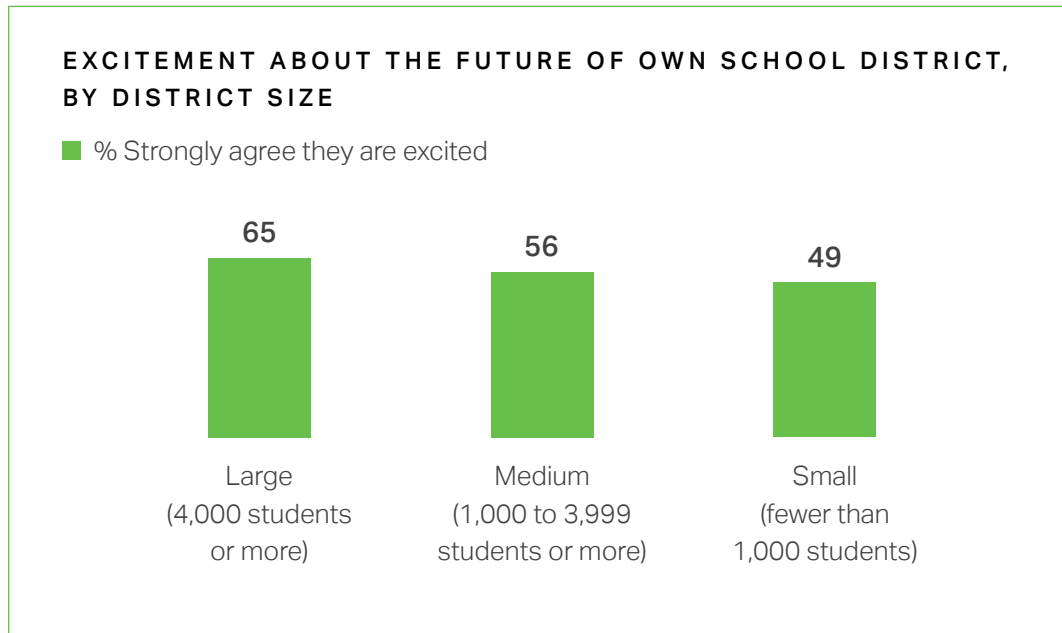
U.S. public school superintendents remain enthusiastic about the future of their school district. As is typical, they are much less excited about the future of public education in the U.S., although their optimism about education in the country has rebounded after a decline last year.

Eighty-six percent of superintendents strongly agree or agree they are excited about the future of their school district, with 53% strongly agreeing. Both percentages are consistent with results from prior superintendent surveys.

Meanwhile, 42% strongly agree or agree they are excited about the future of K-12 public education in the U.S., while 24% strongly disagree or disagree. The percentage who agree they are excited is improved from 32% a year ago and similar to the 44% expressing excitement in 2015. Last year, in fact, more superintendents disagreed (38%) than agreed (32%) they were excited. That shift could have been tied to uncertainty last year about K-12 education policy in the early months of the Trump administration.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.						
	% 5 Strongly agree	% 4	% 3	% 2	% 1 Strongly disagree	% Don't know/ Does not apply
I AM EXCITED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MY SCHOOL DISTRICT.						
2018	53	33	11	2	<1	<1
2017	55	30	9	4	2	<1
2015	52	34	9	4	2	0
I AM EXCITED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF K-12 PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE U.S.						
2018	14	28	35	17	7	<1
2017	12	20	30	23	15	0
2015	14	30	33	18	6	0

Superintendents of large districts, based on the number of enrolled students, are most likely to express excitement about the future of their district, and those in small districts are least likely to do so. Sixty-five percent of those in large districts (with enrollments of 4,000 or more) strongly agree they are excited about their district’s future. That compares with 56% of those in medium-sized districts (1,000 to fewer than 4,000 students) and 49% of those in small districts (fewer than 1,000 students).



In addition, 65% of superintendents in cities, 53% of those in suburbs, 55% of those in towns and 48% of those in rural areas strongly agree they are excited about the future of their district. City superintendents have been more excited than rural superintendents about their district’s future in previous years’ surveys as well.

Excitement about the future of U.S. K-12 education is similar among superintendents based on district size and location.

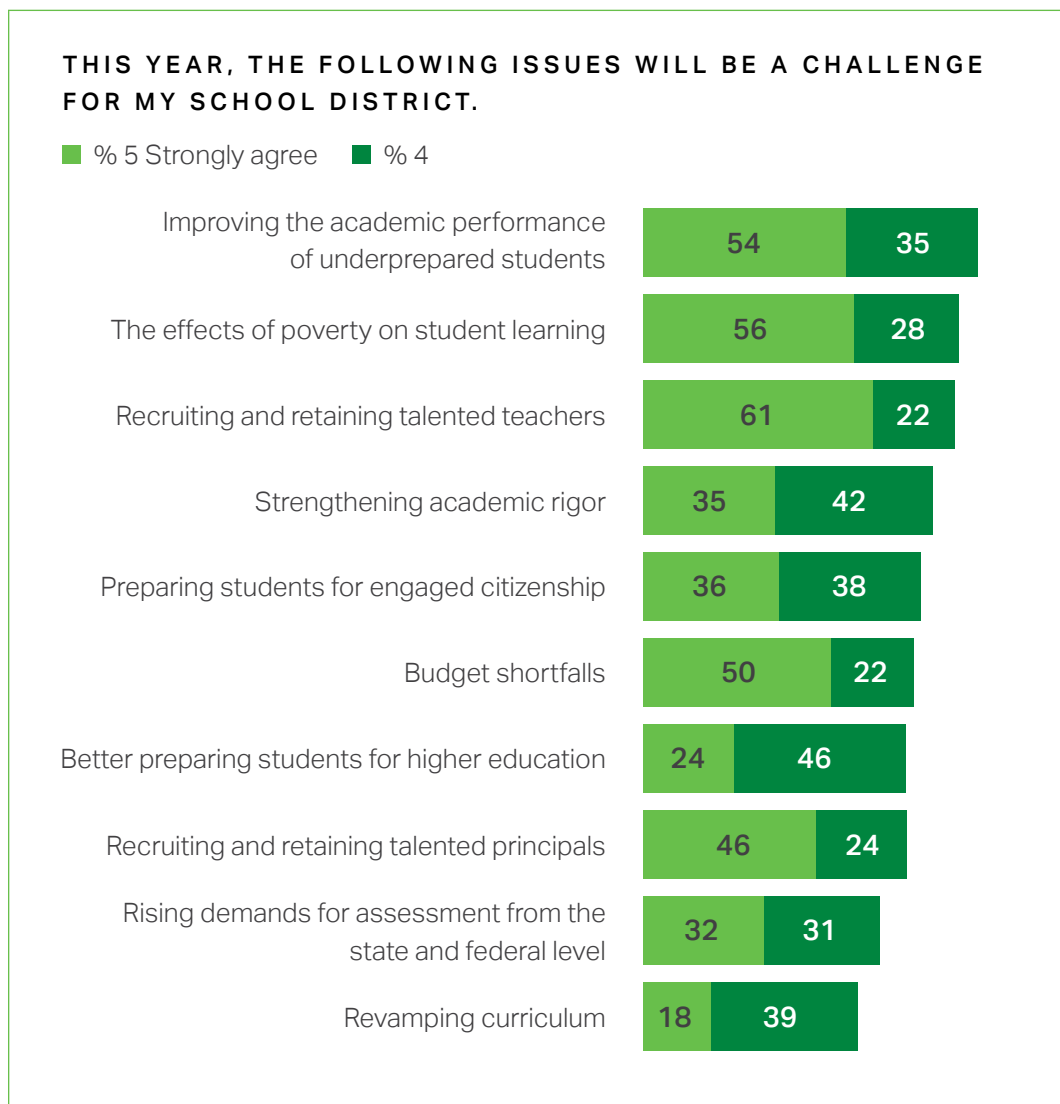
Challenges Facing K-12 Education

Superintendents are most likely to see improving the performance of disadvantaged students and finding and keeping talented teachers as challenges for their district. At least eight in 10 strongly agree or agree that improving the academic performance of underprepared students (89%), the effects of poverty on student learning (84%), and recruiting and retaining talented teachers (83%) will be challenges for their school district this year.

Five other issues are viewed as challenges by at least seven in 10 superintendents. These include strengthening academic rigor (77%), preparing students for engaged citizenship (74%), budget shortfalls (72%), better preparing students for higher education (70%), and recruiting and retaining talented principals (70%).

Superintendents are somewhat less likely to say rising demands for assessment from the state and federal level (63%) and revamping curriculum (57%) will be challenges.

Of these 10 items, recruiting and retaining talented teachers gets the highest level of strong agreement, at 61%.

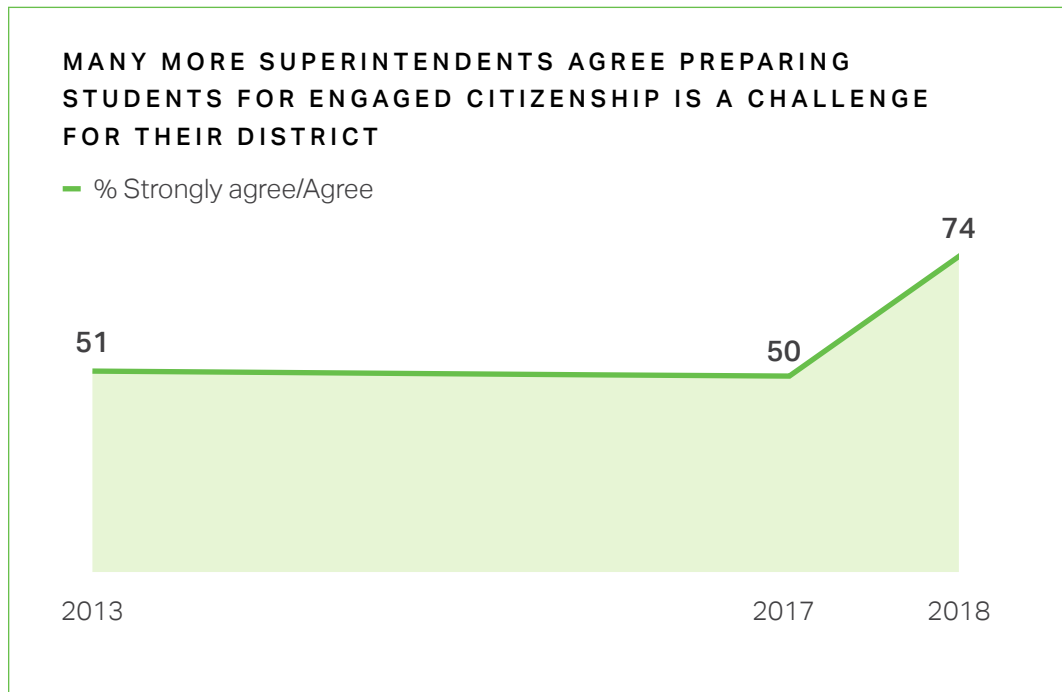


Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about issues facing your school district this year.

This year, the following issues will be a challenge for my school district.						
	% 5 Strongly agree	% 4	% 3	% 2	% 1 Strongly disagree	% Don't know/ Does not apply
Recruiting and retaining talented teachers	61	22	10	4	2	<1
Improving the academic performance of underprepared students	54	35	9	2	<1	<1
The effects of poverty on student learning	56	28	11	4	1	<1
Budget shortfalls	50	22	18	7	3	<1
Recruiting and retaining talented principals	46	24	16	7	2	5
Preparing students for engaged citizenship	36	38	19	6	1	<1
Strengthening academic rigor	35	42	17	5	1	<1
Rising demands for assessment from the state and federal level	32	31	26	7	4	<1
Better preparing students for higher education	24	46	23	4	1	1
Revamping curriculum	18	39	29	10	3	1

Gallup asked superintendents most of the same items included in this year's survey in 2017, as well as in 2013.

The biggest change since last year is a spike in the percentage who agree that preparing students for engaged citizenship will be a challenge, which is up 24 percentage points from a year ago when just half regarded it as a challenge. To some degree, this may be an acknowledgment of the increasingly contentious and polarized political environment in the U.S. It could also be a reaction to the prominent student activism on gun violence that occurred after the Parkland, Florida, school shooting earlier this year. About half, 51%, also saw preparing students for engaged citizenship as a challenge in 2013.



Seventy-four percent of superintendents regard preparing students for engaged citizenship as a challenge for their district, up from **50%** a year ago.

There have also been double-digit increases compared with last year in the percentage of superintendents who say better preparing students for higher education, strengthening academic rigor and the effects of poverty on student learning will be challenges for their district. Similar percentages of superintendents this year as last year believe budget shortfalls and assessment demands will be challenges for their district.

Changes in Perceptions of Issues as Challenges for District, 2017 to 2018			
	% Strongly agree/Agree, 2017	% Strongly agree/Agree, 2018	Change (pct. pts.)
Preparing students for engaged citizenship	50	74	+24
Better preparing students for higher education	59	70	+11
Strengthening academic rigor	66	77	+11
The effects of poverty on student learning	74	84	+10
Improving the academic performance of underprepared students	81	89	+8
Revamping curriculum	50	57	+7
Rising demands for assessment from the state and federal level	64	63	-1
Budget shortfalls	73	72	-1

Note: The items on recruiting and retaining talented teachers and principals were not asked in 2017.

From a longer-term perspective, compared with 2013, other notable changes are declines in the percentage who say rising demands for assessment (down from 82% to 63%) and revamping curriculum (down from 69% to 57%) are challenges. In 2013, many schools were in the process of revising their curriculum to implement the Common Core State Standards, which by now would have been adopted or rejected in most states. Since 2013, there also has been a 13-point increase in the percentage of superintendents who say improving the academic performance of underprepared students is a challenge.

Although superintendents from all district types regard improving the academic performance of underprepared students as a challenge, the problem seems especially acute for those in city or large districts. Sixty-nine percent of city superintendents and 65% of those in large districts, compared with 48% to 59% of superintendents in other types of districts, strongly agree improving underprepared students' performance is a challenge.

Also, while 51% of suburban superintendents strongly agree recruiting and retaining talented teachers is a challenge for their district, that is significantly lower than the percentages for city (65%), town (63%) and rural (65%) superintendents.

Recruiting and retaining talented principals appears to be a greater challenge for city (57% strongly agree) and large-district (55%) superintendents than for others.

Evaluating Effectiveness

Superintendents see high school graduation rates, student engagement and student hope as the most important indicators of public school effectiveness in their community. Roughly nine in 10 say these factors are very important measures of effectiveness, far more than say the same about other factors tested in the survey.

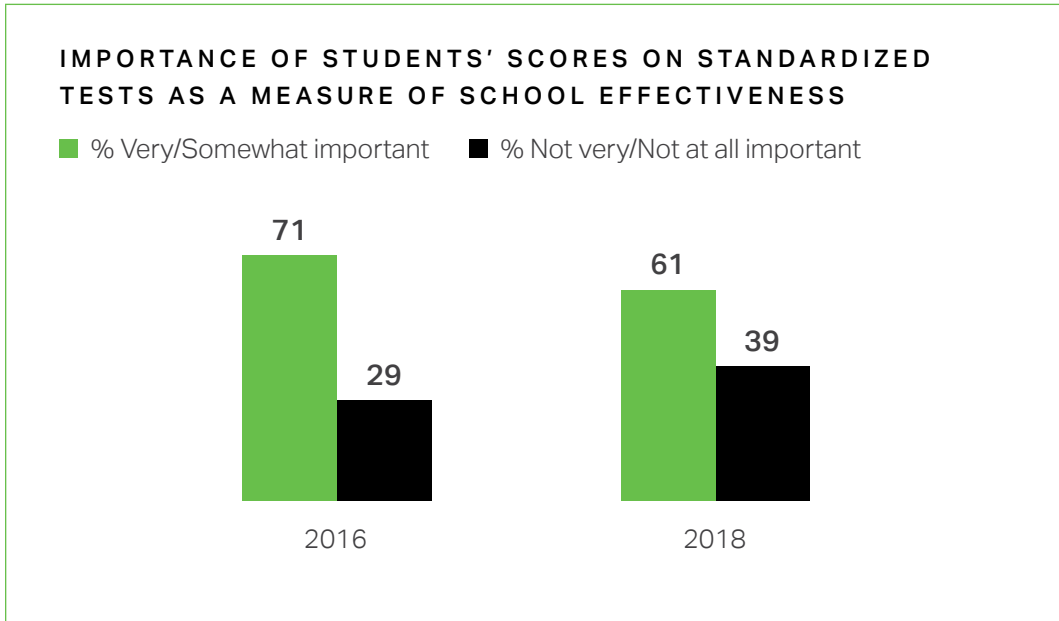
About half of superintendents believe the percentages of high school graduates who go to college or community college (48%) or who go to technical or trade school (52%) are very important indicators of how a school is doing. About a third say the same about the percentage of graduates who get jobs immediately after completing high school.

Only 9% say standardized test scores are a very important indicator of school performance, with another 52% calling them somewhat important.

How important do you think each of the following is for measuring the effectiveness of the public schools in your community?					
	% Very important	% Somewhat important	% Not very important	% Not at all important	% Don't know/Does not apply
How engaged students are with school	91	8	<1	0	<1
How hopeful students are about their future	90	9	<1	0	0
Percentage of students who graduate from high school	89	9	<1	0	2
Percentage of high school graduates who go to technical or trade school	52	45	2	<1	1
Percentage of high school graduates who go to college or community college	48	48	2	<1	2
Percentage of graduates who get jobs immediately after completing high school	33	55	9	1	2
Scores that students receive on standardized tests	9	52	32	7	0

Nine in 10
superintendents
say student
engagement,
student hope
about the future,
and high school
graduation rates
are very important
indicators of school
effectiveness.
Just **1 in 10** say
the same about
standardized
test scores.

All of these items were asked in 2016, and all but the standardized test score item were asked in 2015. The rank order of responses has generally been similar in each measurement. There have been slight increases in the percentage rating for each as a very important indicator over the past three years, except for standardized testing. Fewer superintendents regard students' scores on standardized tests as very (9%) or somewhat (52%) important today than did so in 2016 (14% and 57%, respectively).



Suburban school district superintendents attach slightly greater importance to standardized test scores than do those in other locales. Seventy percent of suburban superintendents say standardized test scores are very (12%) or somewhat (58%) important measures of school effectiveness, compared with between 58% and 60% of superintendents in other types of districts.

Rural school district superintendents are less likely to say the percentage of graduates who attend college or community college is a very important measure of school effectiveness. Forty-two percent say it is very important, compared with 51% to 55% of superintendents in other districts.

Student Preparedness

Superintendents are much more optimistic than pessimistic that high school graduates in the U.S. are well-prepared for success in college and the workforce, although many still need convincing. Overall, 53% of superintendents strongly agree or agree and only 6% strongly disagree or disagree that high school graduates are well-prepared for success in college — but 40% do not lean in either direction (give an answer of “3” on a five-point scale). By 40% to 11%, superintendents agree rather than disagree that high school graduates are well-prepared for success in the workforce, with 48% being neutral.

Superintendents are more positive about college graduates’ readiness for the workforce — 58% strongly agree or agree they are well-prepared, 34% are neutral, and 6% strongly disagree or disagree.

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. You may use any number between 1 and 5.

	% 5 Strongly agree	% 4	% 3	% 2	% 1 Strongly disagree	% Don't know/ Does not apply
High school graduates in this country are well-prepared for success in college.	6	47	40	5	1	1
High school graduates in this country are well-prepared for success in the workforce.	5	35	48	9	2	1
College graduates in this country are well-prepared for success in the workforce.	8	50	34	5	1	2

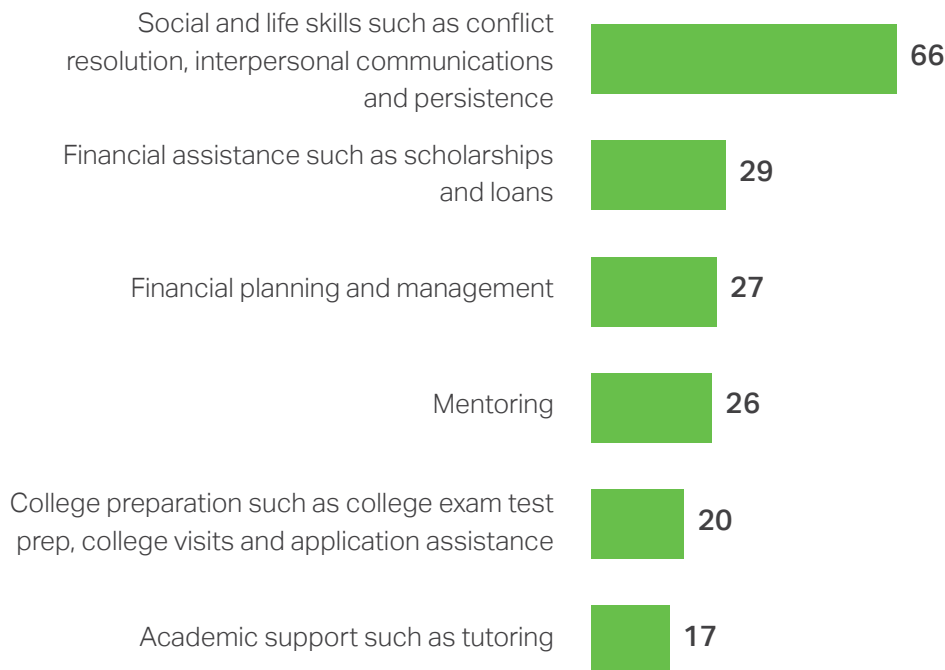
There is little variation in these attitudes by district type.

The items about workforce preparedness were previously asked in 2016. There has been no change in superintendent perceptions that college graduates are prepared for the workforce, as 58% agreed and 6% disagreed two years ago. There has been a slight increase in the percentage who believe high school graduates are prepared for workforce success, from 37% in 2016 to 40% in 2018, with an equal drop in the percentage who disagree, from 14% to 11%.

Superintendents believe teaching social and life skills — such as conflict resolution, interpersonal communications and persistence — would be helpful in preparing students for college. Two-thirds of superintendents choose this as most helpful among six strategies to improve college readiness. The next most helpful strategies from superintendents’ perspective are financial assistance (29%), financial planning and management (27%), and mentoring (26%). About one in five say college preparation such as exam prep, college visits and application assistance would be most helpful, while 17% believe academic support such as tutoring would be.

IN YOUR OPINION, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF SUPPORT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL IN IMPROVING STUDENT PREPAREDNESS FOR COLLEGE? PLEASE SELECT UP TO TWO.

■ % Selecting



Superintendents believe teaching students social and life skills are among the most important types of support districts can provide students for success in college and the workforce.

Life and social skills also rank prominently when superintendents are asked about potentially effective strategies for improving student preparedness for the workforce. Sixty-six percent believe life skills would be most effective — roughly the same percentage as those who choose job shadowing, internship and entrepreneurship opportunities (69%). Superintendents are much less likely to choose job and employment skills training such as interviewing and resume writing (21%), and fewer still pick mentoring (17%) and career counseling (13%) as the most effective strategies for preparing students for the workforce.

IN YOUR OPINION, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF SUPPORT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL IN IMPROVING STUDENT PREPAREDNESS FOR THE WORKFORCE? PLEASE SELECT UP TO TWO.

■ % Selecting



School districts can also boost student preparedness by providing resources and support to help them decide on, and succeed in, their postsecondary pursuits. Most superintendents say their district provides support for a number of post-high school paths.

More than eight in 10 say their district provides a great deal or fair amount of support for students pursuing four-year college (85%) and two-year college (82%). Just shy of eight in 10 say the same about technical or trade school, and close to seven in 10 offer resources for students who want to pursue military service (69%) or want to enter the workforce (65%). A smaller percentage, but still a majority (58%), provide resources for students wanting to pursue volunteer or service opportunities after high school. Students who desire to start a business or take a “gap year” after high school likely would find less help at their high school, with 16% and 8% of superintendents, respectively, saying their district provides a great deal or fair amount of support for those activities.

To what extent, if any, does your district provide support for students pursuing the following paths after high school graduation?					
	% A great deal	% A fair amount	% Not much	% Not at all	% Don't know/Does not apply
Four-year college or university	50	35	2	1	12
Two-year college	44	38	4	1	13
Technical or trade school	31	48	7	1	13
Military service	20	49	16	1	13
Entering the workforce	14	51	21	1	13
Volunteer or service opportunities	16	42	28	3	11
Starting a business	2	14	54	15	14
Taking a “gap year”	2	6	43	31	18

Gallup asked superintendents two years ago about support for these postsecondary paths, and the results are largely similar. The biggest change is a six-point increase in the percentage of superintendents who say their district provides a great deal or fair amount of support for military service. There also has been a slight decline in the percentage who say their district supports volunteer or service opportunities, from 63% to 58%.

There are generally not meaningful differences in support for the various postsecondary options by school district size. Although at least eight in 10 superintendents in districts of all sizes say their district provides at least a fair amount of support for four-year college or university study, 43% of small-district superintendents say they provide a great deal of support for this, compared with 62% of those in medium-sized districts and 57% of those in large districts.

Regardless of the path that high school graduates take immediately after high school, for most, the ultimate goal is a well-paying and fulfilling job. More than eight in 10 superintendents say their school district partners with local businesses either a great deal (22%) or somewhat (61%) to understand their employment needs to best position students for higher education credentials and degrees. Gallup found similar results when the question was asked in both 2013 and 2016. Superintendents in large districts (96%) are more likely than those in medium-sized (87%) and small (79%) districts to say they have these kinds of partnerships.

To what extent does your school district partner with local businesses to understand their employment needs to best position students for higher education credentials and degrees?

	% A great deal	% Somewhat	% Not at all	% Don't know/ Does not apply
2018	22	61	14	3
2016	25	61	9	5
2013	19	64	16	1

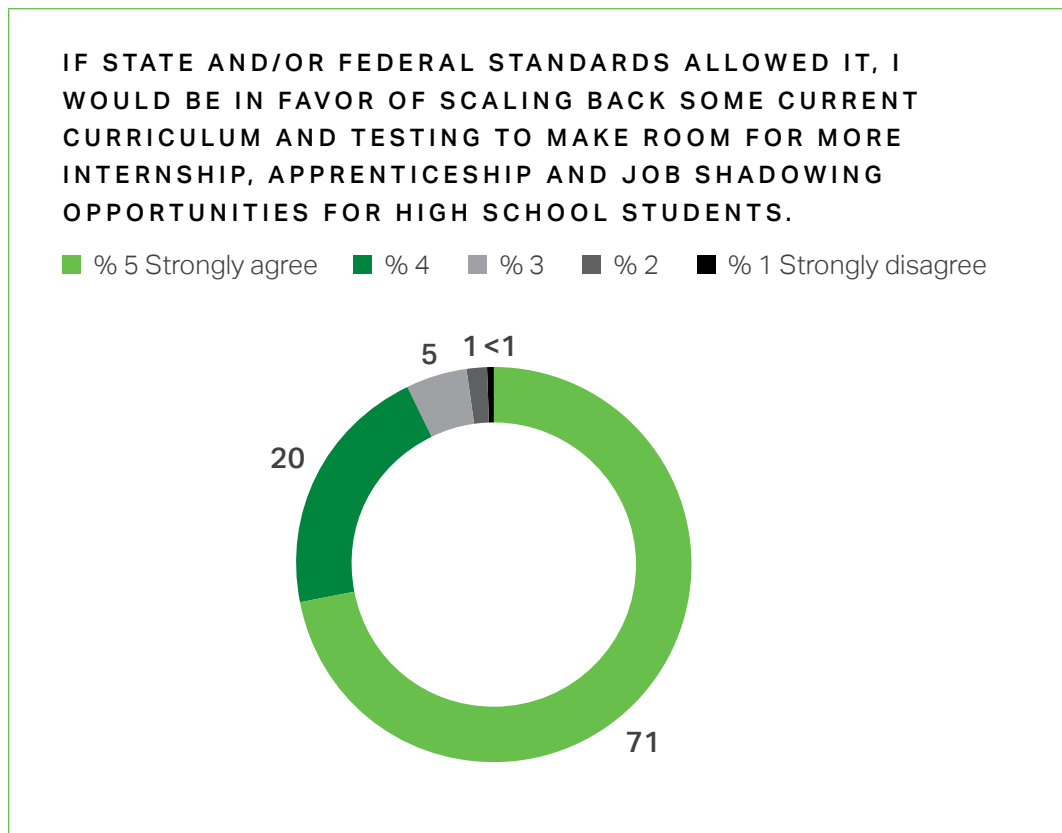
Also, 71% of superintendents say their district works with graduating students a great deal (13%) or somewhat (58%) to pursue nontraditional higher education credentials such as part-time enrollment or online programs. But significantly fewer superintendents say their district offers this type of support now than did so in 2013 (86%).

To what extent does your school district work with graduating students to pursue nontraditional paths to higher education credentials such as part-time enrollment or online programs?

	% A great deal	% Somewhat	% Not at all	% Don't know/ Does not apply
2018	13	58	23	5
2013	26	60	11	4

Students' opportunities for furthering their career preparedness may be limited by the need to fulfill various state or federal education requirements during their high school years. Superintendents widely favor relaxing some of those requirements to give students more time to serve in internships, apprenticeships or job shadowing opportunities. Ninety-one percent agree, including 71% who strongly agree, that they would be in favor of scaling back current curriculum and testing requirements to allow students to take advantage of job training opportunities.

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. You may use any number between 1 and 5.



Two percent had no opinion

Support for relaxing education requirements to make room for career-related opportunities is high and similar among superintendents of different district types.

Nine in 10
superintendents
are in favor of
relaxing state and
federal education
requirements to
give high school
students more
opportunity
for internship,
apprenticeship
or job shadowing
opportunities.

Work Partnerships

Many U.S. school districts partner with local businesses or institutions to promote career or vocational training, if not hire students directly out of high school. More than seven in 10 superintendents, 73%, say their district has partnerships to promote career and vocational training. Meanwhile, 35% report that their district has partnerships with employers who recruit students directly out of high school into full-time jobs.

Is your school district partnering with area businesses or institutions to help promote career and vocational training?	
	%
Yes	73
No	21
Don't know/Does not apply	7

Does your school district have any current partnerships with employers who recruit students directly out of high school into full-time jobs?	
	%
Yes	35
No	53
Don't know/Does not apply	12

Employer partnerships for both training and hiring are more common in city and large school districts and less common in rural, suburban and smaller districts, as well as those in the Western region of the U.S. Just one in four superintendents overseeing districts with fewer than 1,000 students have partnerships that help place graduates in full-time jobs after high school.

Partnerships to Promote Career/Vocational Training and Hire Graduates Into Full-Time Jobs, by District Type		
	% Have partnerships to promote career/vocational training	% Have partnerships to recruit students directly out of high school into full-time jobs
DISTRICT LOCATION		
City	83	56
Suburban	65	28
Town	81	40
Rural	69	29
STUDENT ENROLLMENT		
4,000 or more	88	60
1,000 to 3,999	81	43
Fewer than 1,000	65	25
REGION		
East	72	34
Midwest	75	38
South	76	36
West	64	29

Among superintendents who do not have partnerships with local employers to recruit students into full-time jobs, 31% — equivalent to 20% of all superintendents — say their district has explored creating such partnerships. Twelve percent of those who work in districts without partnerships say their district is very likely to create those partnerships in the next three years, and 36% say their district is somewhat likely to do so.

Has your school district explored creating partnerships with employers to recruit students directly out of high school into full-time jobs?*	
	%
Yes	31
No	46
Don't know/Does not apply	23

*Asked of superintendents whose district does not have partnerships with local employers (n=1,098)

How likely is your school district to create partnerships with employers to recruit students directly out of high school into full-time jobs in the next three years?*	
	%
Very likely	12
Somewhat likely	36
Not very likely	29
Not at all likely	12
Don't know/Does not apply	13

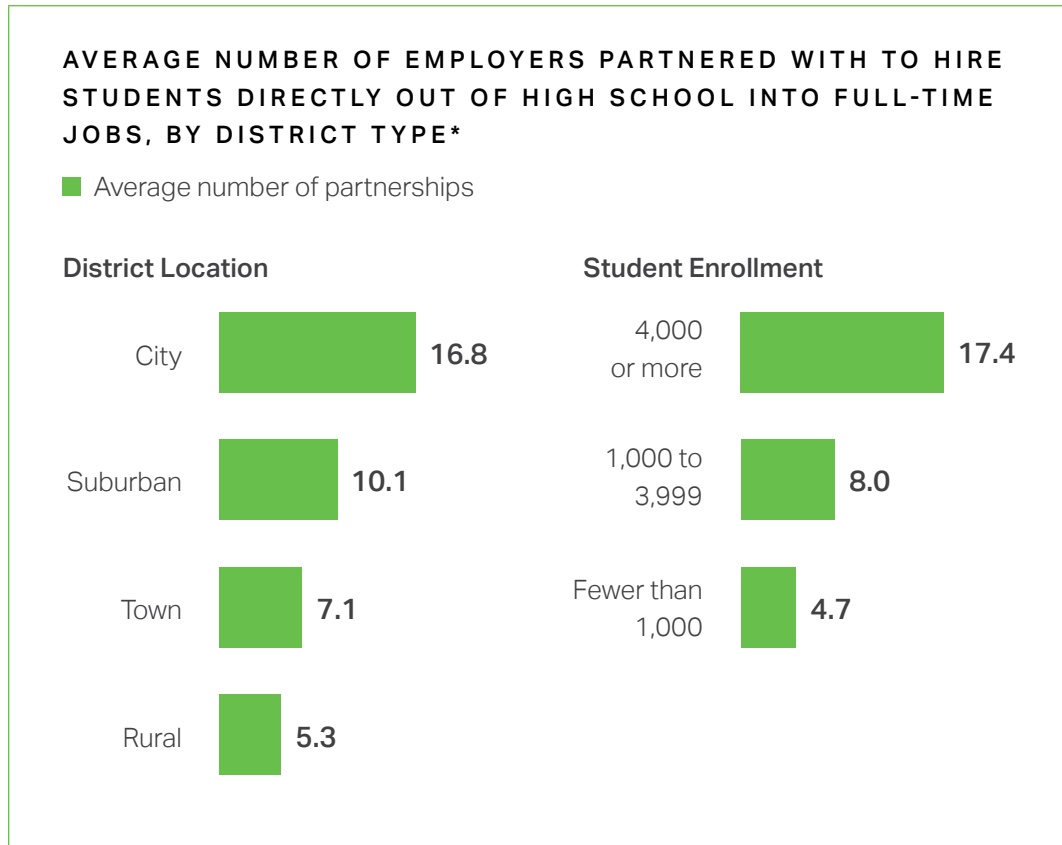
*Asked of superintendents whose district does not have partnerships with local employers (n=1,098)

Superintendents who do have partnerships with local employers were asked to give more specifics about the nature of those partnerships. On average, superintendents say they have partnerships with nine companies that recruit students directly out of high school into full-time jobs. Nearly half, 48%, say their district has a more limited set of partnerships with four or fewer employers. At the other extreme, 10% of superintendents say their district has more than 20 partnerships.

With how many companies does your school district have partnerships to recruit students into full-time jobs directly out of high school? Please enter in a number between 1 and 999 below.*	
	%
One	14
Two	15
Three	14
Four	5
Five	17
Six to nine	5
10 to 20	19
More than 20	10
Don't know/Does not apply	1
Average	9.1
Median	5

*Asked of superintendents whose district has partnerships with local employers (n=780)

As might be expected, city and large school districts tend to have more employment partnerships than do rural and small-enrollment districts. On average, city and large-district superintendents report having 17 such partnerships, compared with five among those in rural and small districts.



*Asked of superintendents whose district has partnerships with local employers (n=780)

Superintendents most commonly report that students hired directly out of high school from their district are being hired in the manufacturing (40% mention this), skilled trades (27%), healthcare or medicine (21%), and construction and heavy equipment (20%) industries. Superintendents also mention significant hiring in the automotive industry (15%), agriculture and farming (12%), and computer and technology industry (11%).

In which industries do those partnerships offer jobs for your district's students directly out of high school? Please list all industries that come to mind.*	
	%
Manufacturing	40
Skilled trades	27
Healthcare/Medicine	21
Construction/Heavy equipment	20
Automotive	15
Agriculture/Farming	12
Computers/Technology/IT	11
Culinary	8
Hospitality/Tourism/Hotel/Resort	7
Customer service/Service industry	6
Retail	6
Restaurant/Food service	5
Nursing/Nursing assistant	4
Energy/Power/Oil and gas	4
Banking/Financial	4

*Asked of superintendents whose district has partnerships with local employers (n=780); table shows industries receiving 4% or more mentions. See full results in the Appendix.

Welding appears to be a particularly popular job option for high school graduates — 27% of superintendents mention welding as a job their students get directly out of high school as a result of employment partnerships, far more than any other job type. Sixteen percent of superintendents say their students get jobs in manufacturing, and 11% say construction. Ten percent say their graduates get jobs as nursing assistants. Other specific job placements include machinists, auto mechanics and electricians.

What are some types of jobs that your district’s students are getting directly out of high school from these partnerships with employers? Please list all jobs that come to mind.*

	%
Welder	27
Manufacturing (nonspecific)	16
Construction (nonspecific)	11
Nursing assistant/CNA	10
General labor	8
Machinist	7
Customer service/Service industry (nonspecific)	7
Healthcare/Medicine (nonspecific)	6
Auto mechanic	6
Electrician	6
Restaurant/Food service (nonspecific)	5
Technician/Technical (nonspecific)	5
Carpenter	4
Automotive (non-specific)	4
Mechanics (non-specific)	4
LPN/Nurse	4
Cook	4
Farmer	4
Computer programmer/Coder	4
Computers/Technology (non-specific)	4
Skilled trades	4

*Asked of superintendents whose district has partnerships with local employers (n=780); table shows industries receiving 4% or more mentions. See full results in the Appendix.

Combined Work/Higher Education Programs for High School Graduates

One approach to meeting employers’ needs while helping students achieve their career goals is offering a program that recruits students directly from high school and places them in full-time jobs. As part of the program, these new employees would be given the flexibility to pursue higher education credentials while they work.

More than three-quarters of superintendents, 77%, say their district would participate in such a program. Just 4% say their district would not, while the remaining 19% say they have no opinion or the program would not apply to their district (for example, those serving only K-5 students).

The next set of questions are about a potential program in which large employers would recruit students directly from high school into full-time jobs. As part of that program, employers would offer participants flexible opportunities to pursue higher education credentials.

Do you think your school district would or would not participate in such a program?	
	%
Yes	77
No	4
Don't know/Does not apply	19

After differences in “no opinion” are taken into account, support for the program is high and similar by district type.

Superintendents predict that both students and parents would be interested in a concurrent work/higher education program and that teachers and guidance counselors would support it. Specifically, 61% of superintendents believe students would be extremely or very interested in the program, and 64% say the same about parents. Sixty-four percent of superintendents also believe teachers and guidance counselors would be extremely or very supportive.

How interested do you think students would be in such a program?						
	% Extremely interested	% Very interested	% Somewhat interested	% Not too interested	% Not interested at all	% Don't know/Does not apply
2018	21	40	25	3	1	11

How interested do you think parents would be in such a program?						
	% Extremely interested	% Very interested	% Somewhat interested	% Not too interested	% Not interested at all	% Don't know/Does not apply
2018	25	39	23	2	1	10

How supportive do you think teachers and guidance counselors would be of such a program?						
	% Extremely supportive	% Very supportive	% Somewhat supportive	% Not too supportive	% Not supportive at all	% Don't know/Does not apply
2018	20	44	22	2	1	10

Superintendents in large districts are more optimistic than those in small districts that students would be highly interested in the program. For example, 67% of superintendents in large districts (as well as 65% of those in medium-sized districts) think students would be extremely or very interested, compared with 56% of those in small districts.

Federal Education Policy

Superintendents are generally critical of the way the federal government has handled K-12 education policy, as they were in the two prior measurements in 2015 and 2017. Forty-two percent say the federal government has done a poor job in the past five years — a period that spans both the Trump and Obama administrations — while just 12% say it has done an excellent or good job. The percentage giving a poor rating is lower than it was in 2015, when a majority (53%) gave this rating.

How would you rate the job the federal government has done with K-12 education policy in the last five years?					
	% Excellent	% Good	% Only fair	% Poor	% Don't know/Does not apply
2018	<1	12	44	42	1
2017	1	15	40	45	0
2015	1	9	36	53	0

Superintendents' opinions of the federal government's handling of K-12 education policy do not vary by district size. However, city superintendents (35%) are somewhat less likely than superintendents in other locales to give the federal government a poor rating.

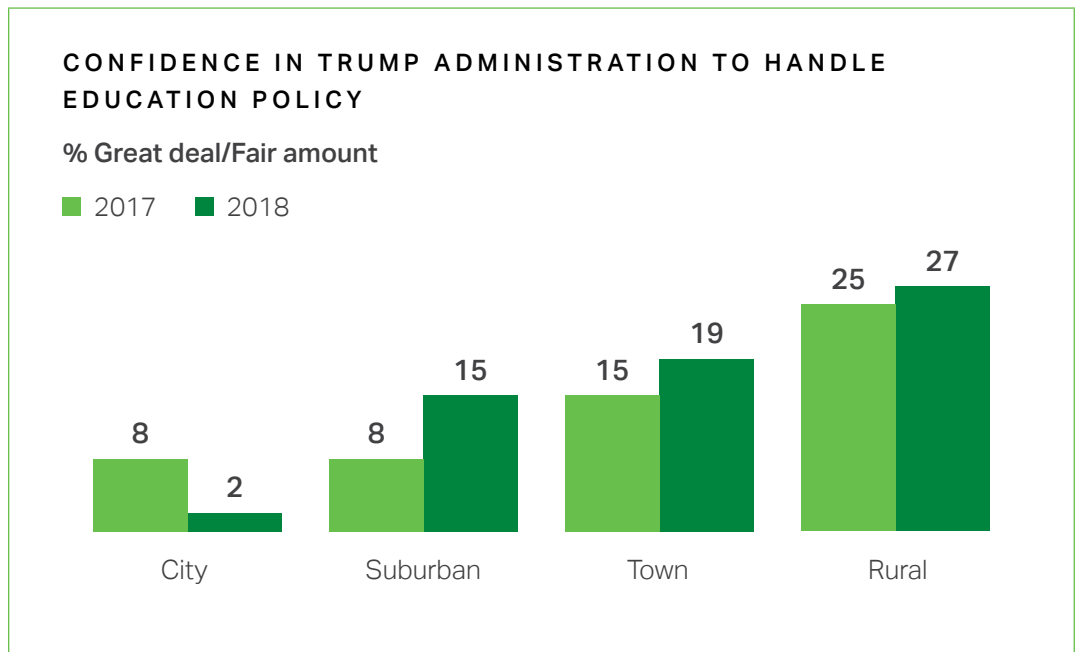
When asked about the current presidential administration specifically, a majority of superintendents, 51%, continue to say they have no confidence at all in the Trump administration to handle K-12 education policy, although that is slightly lower than the 55% who said the same last year. Just 20% have a great deal or fair amount of confidence, up slightly from 16% a year ago. Gallup has not asked this question about prior presidents, so it is unclear how confidence in the Trump administration compares with other presidential administrations.

How much confidence do you, personally, have in the Trump administration to handle K-12 education policy?					
	% A great deal	% A fair amount	% Not much	% None at all	% Don't know/Does not apply
2018	5	15	27	51	2
2017	4	12	26	55	3

As was the case last year, confidence in the Trump administration varies by district location but is still generally low overall. Twenty-seven percent of rural superintendents have confidence in the Trump administration, compared with just 2% of those in city districts. In fact, 71% of city superintendents have no confidence at all in the current administration.

Confidence in Trump Administration to Handle K-12 Education Policy, by District Type				
	% A great deal	% A fair amount	% Not much	% None at all
DISTRICT LOCATION				
City	0	2	25	71
Suburban	5	10	20	60
Town	3	16	28	51
Rural	6	21	32	40

Suburban superintendents show the biggest change in confidence in the Trump administration, with an increase of seven percentage points from 8% to 15%.



School Safety Measures

One of the pivotal events of the 2017-2018 school year was the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, that resulted in the deaths of 17 people. The incident reignited the debate over how to prevent future mass shootings at schools. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the large number of school shootings in the past two decades, most superintendents five years ago as well as today say that emergency notification plans are in place and that safety considerations are a priority in the renovation and construction of district buildings.

Currently, 89% of superintendents say their district has an effective system for providing immediate notification to parents in case of an emergency, essentially unchanged from the 90% who said so in 2013.

Does your school district have an effective system for providing immediate electronic notification to parents in case of an emergency?		
	2013	2018
	%	%
Yes	90	89
No	9	10
Don't know/Does not apply	0	1

Likewise, 88% say safety considerations have been a priority in building construction over the past five years, similar to the 90% who said so in 2013.

In the last five years, have safety considerations been a priority when renovating or constructing buildings in your school district?		
	2013	2018
	%	%
Yes	90	88
No	8	6
Don't know/Does not apply	2	6

Although very high in all districts, those in town, rural and small-enrollment districts are less likely to say their district has an effective emergency notification system and to say safety has been a priority in building construction.

Emergency Notification Procedures and School Safety Considerations in Building Construction, by District Type		
	% Have effective emergency notification system	% School safety has been a priority in building renovation or construction
DISTRICT LOCATION		
City	94	93
Suburban	94	90
Town	88	91
Rural	87	85
STUDENT ENROLLMENT		
4,000 or more	93	97
1,000 to 3,999	95	91
Fewer than 1,000	86	85

Five years ago, in the months after the Newtown, Connecticut, school shooting, 38% of superintendents said their district had armed security personnel or police officers in their schools. Today, the figure is up slightly to 42%.

Does your school district have armed security personnel or police officers in schools?		
	2013	2018
	%	%
Yes	38	42
No	62	58
Don't know/Does not apply	0	<1

While those figures have not changed much in the past five years, there has been a more substantial change in the percentage of superintendents who say their district is considering adding armed security personnel. Of the 58% of superintendents who do not currently have armed personnel in their schools, nearly half, 46% (equivalent to 27% of all superintendents), say they are considering adding them. Five years ago, 28% of superintendents who did not already have armed personnel in schools (equal to 17% of all superintendents) said they were considering adding them.

Armed security appears to be common in city and large school districts and uncommon in rural and small districts. Roughly eight in 10 superintendents in city and large school districts say their schools have armed security personnel. That compares with less than one in four rural or small districts. About half of suburban and town superintendents report having armed security in schools.

Presence of Armed Security in Schools, by District Type	
	% Have armed security in district schools
DISTRICT LOCATION	
City	77
Suburban	49
Town	50
Rural	24
STUDENT ENROLLMENT	
4,000 or more	83
1,000 to 3,999	61
Fewer than 1,000	23

More than four in 10 rural superintendents who do not have armed security in district schools say their district is considering adding them.

Conclusion

As superintendents embark on a new school year, they are setting policies and making decisions that they believe will better educate students and better prepare them for their future. It is clear that postsecondary paths are an important consideration for these education leaders, as many districts offer resources to help students succeed in whatever path they choose after high school graduation. These include formal partnerships with employers to promote career and vocational training and partnerships to hire students into full-time jobs. Most superintendents are also open to having their district participate in programs that combine full-time employment with postsecondary education for high school graduates, which can put them on a promising career path immediately after high school while not forcing them to forego the potential benefits of higher education.

Some of the biggest challenges superintendents face, by their own account, are recruiting and retaining talented teachers and improving the performance of disadvantaged students. And for most, budget shortfalls remain an issue. Preparing students for engaged citizenship is becoming more of a challenge, according to superintendents.

Student safety is a fundamental expectation for parents but one that has become harder to guarantee in light of numerous tragic incidents on campuses across the country. Superintendents have made safety a priority in building construction and believe their district has an effective emergency notification system in place. Many employ armed security personnel at schools, and an increasing number are considering doing so after the Parkland school shooting.

Superintendents remain frustrated with federal K-12 policy under the Trump administration, as they were under the Obama administration. They lack confidence in the Trump administration to improve it.

Still, the vast majority of superintendents remain excited about the future of their school district and will continue to strive to achieve what they see as the most important indicators of success, including high graduation rates, engaged students and students who are hopeful about the future.

Methodology

This survey is an attempted census of U.S. public school district superintendents. Gallup used a purchased sample list of 12,445 K-12 school districts across the U.S. to email their superintendents to invite them to participate in a web survey. Gallup conducted 1,892 web interviews from June 25-July 18, 2018, achieving a 15% response rate. The sample of superintendents was weighted to correct for possible nonresponse bias by matching the obtained sample to targets for all U.S. school districts from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) database on district enrollment, geographical region and location of the school in a city, suburb, town or rural area. The weighted sample thus can be projected to represent public school district superintendents nationwide.

Respondent and District Characteristics

What is your age?	
	%
Younger than 30	<1
30 to 39	4
40 to 49	27
50 to 59	44
60 to 69	22
70 or older	3

What is your gender?	
	%
Male	72
Female	28

How many years have you served as the superintendent in this school district?	
	%
Less than six months	2
Six months to less than three years	35
Three years to less than five years	24
Five years to less than 10 years	24
10 years or more	15
Don't know/Does not apply	0

How many years have you served as the superintendent in any school district?	
	%
Less than six months	2
Six months to less than three years	23
Three years to less than five years	20
Five years to less than 10 years	24
10 years or more	28
Don't know/Does not apply	3

How would you categorize your school district?*	
	%
City	9
Suburban	20
Town	8
Rural	62

About how many students are currently enrolled in your school district?*	
	%
0 to 999	57
1,000 to 1,999	14
2,000 to 4,999	15
5,000 to 9,999	6
10,000 or more	8

*These tables are based on self-reports from superintendents. Subgroup results in the report are based on school characteristics as determined by the NCES database.

Appendix

In which industries do those partnerships offer jobs for your district's students directly out of high school? Please list all industries that come to mind.*	
	%
Manufacturing	40
Skilled trades	27
Healthcare/Medicine	21
Construction/Heavy equipment	20
Automotive	15
Agriculture/Farming	12
Computers/Technology/IT	11
Culinary	8
Hospitality/Tourism/Hotel/Resort	7
Customer service/Service industry	6
Retail	6
Restaurant/Food service	5
Nursing/Nursing assistant	4
Energy/Power/Oil and gas	4
Banking/Finance	4
Engineering	3
Woodworking/Carpentry	3
Trucking/CDL/Diesel tech	3
Business/Management/Entrepreneurship	3
Clerical/Accounting/Support	3
Metal tech/Fabrication	3
Logistics	3
Law enforcement/Criminal justice	3
Government/Civil service/Public works	3
Industrial/Industrial maintenance	2

Education	2
Broadcasting/TV/Radio/Video production	2
Food industry/Processing/Distribution	2
Vocational/Tech	2
Technical trades/Technician	2
Veterinary/Pet care	2
Cosmetology	2
General labor	2
Firefighting/Fire science	2
Mechanical/Automation	2
Aerospace	1
Child care	1
EMT/Emergency services	1
Transportation/Railroad	1
Drafting/Graphics	1
Pharmaceutical	1
Mining	1
Forestry/Park service	1
Chemical industry	1
Warehouse/Distribution/Shipping/Packing	1
Sales/Marketing	1
Landscaping	1
Animal science/Dairy/Ranching	1
Timber/Logging	1
Military/Defense	1
Aviation/Aircraft maintenance	1
Dental	1
Other	9

*Asked of superintendents whose district has partnerships with local employers (n=780)

What are some of the types of jobs that your district's students are getting directly out of high school from these partnerships with employers? Please list all jobs that come to mind.*

	%
Welder	27
Manufacturing (nonspecific)	16
Construction (nonspecific)	11
Nurse's assistant/CNA	10
General laborer	8
Machinist	7
Customer service/Service industry (nonspecific)	7
Healthcare/Medicine (nonspecific)	6
Auto mechanic	6
Electrician	6
Restaurant/Food service (nonspecific)	5
Technician/Technical (nonspecific)	5
Carpenter	4
Automotive (nonspecific)	4
Mechanics (nonspecific)	4
LPN/Nurse	4
Cook	4
Farmer	4
Computer programmer/Coding	4
Computers/Technology (nonspecific)	4
Skilled trades	4
Agriculture (nonspecific)	3
Drafting/Graphics	3
Sales (nonspecific)	3
Metal tech/Fabrication	3

CNC (Computer Numerically Controlled) operator	3
Assembly line worker	3
Apprentice/Intern	2
Retail (nonspecific)	2
Cosmetologist/Stylist	2
Energy/Power/Gas and oil (nonspecific)	2
Clerical worker/Clerk	2
Hospitality/Resort/Tourism (nonspecific)	2
Firefighter	2
HVAC worker	2
Building trades (nonspecific)	2
Secretary	2
Server/Waiter	2
Truck driver/CDL	2
Veterinary/Pet care (nonspecific)	2
Entry level (nonspecific)	2
EMT/Emergency services	2
Landscaper	2
Production (nonspecific)	2
Plant operator	2
Office worker	2
Plumber	2
Bank teller	2
Child care worker	2
Culinary (nonspecific)	1
Heavy machine operator	1
Cleaning/Housekeeping	1
Warehouse distribution/shipping	1

Dental	1
Engineering	1
Maintenance	1
Mill worker	1
Hotel management	1
Military/Defense	1
Industrial/Industrial maintenance (nonspecific)	1
Law enforcement/Criminal justice (nonspecific)	1
Timber/Logging	1
Broadcasting/TV/Radio (nonspecific)	1
IT Tech	1
Teacher	1
Banking/Finance (nonspecific)	1
Business/Management (nonspecific)	1
Mechanical/Automation (nonspecific)	1
Animal science/Cattle/Dairy (nonspecific)	1
Transportation/Railroad (nonspecific)	1
Government/Civil service/Public works (nonspecific)	1
Diesel mechanic	1
Management (nonspecific)	1
Pharmaceutical/Pharmacy tech	1
Miner	1
Forestry/Park service (nonspecific)	1
Port/Dock/Marina hand	1
Research and development (nonspecific)	1
Marketer	1
Nursing home/Elder care aide	1
Aviation/Aircraft maintenance (nonspecific)	1

Food industry/Processing/Distribution (nonspecific)	1
Tool and die worker	1
Packer/Packaging	1
Correctional officer/Prison worker	1
Roofer	1
Other	12

*Asked of superintendents whose district has partnerships with local employers (n=780)

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.

For more information, visit www.gallup.com.

About Gallup Education

Gallup experts work with leaders in education to hire and develop talented educators, identify the strengths of each student and create engaging learning environments — fostering long-term student success in the classroom and in future careers. The best educators know that for students to achieve meaningful, lasting success in the classroom and beyond, they must be emotionally engaged in the education experience. This means educators must focus on students' hope, engagement and well-being — the predictors Gallup has discovered matter the most. Measuring and moving the needle on these factors transforms education institutions into places where students — and educators — thrive.

For more information, visit gallup.com/education or follow @gallupEDU.

Even while acknowledging many challenges facing their district, **86% of superintendents** agree they are excited about the future of their school district, with a majority of **53%** strongly agreeing.

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