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## **New Jersey Voters Support Assessments as a Measure of College and Career Readiness**

*Poll shows support for using a state test aligned to strong academic standards to ensure students are on track for future success.*

**Trenton, NJ** (March 22, 2018) – We Raise New Jersey (WRNJ) today announced the [results of a recent poll](#) exploring registered voters’ perceptions of a range of topics in education. The poll – conducted by Global Strategy Group – revealed that voters believe strongly in high standards, aligned assessments, and the importance of being prepared for college and the workforce.

As Governor Murphy moves to replace New Jersey’s statewide annual assessment, it’s especially important to understand that a strong majority of New Jersey voters believe tests in schools are helpful. Sixty-nine percent believe tests can be a good measure of what students learn. And while 40 percent think students have “too many” tests, another 44 percent believe students have “too few” or “just the right amount” of tests in the classroom.

These opinions transcend party affiliations and demographics. Democrats (70 percent), Independents (67 percent), and Republicans (72 percent) are all in agreement that tests can be a good measure of student learning – as do white (70 percent), African-American (68 percent), and Hispanic (58 percent) voters.

“Acting Education Commissioner Lamont Repollet recently announced that he would embark on a listening tour of every county in our state. He will also create an advisory board to examine New Jersey’s standardized testing future. We see this as an important step toward determining the next generation of statewide assessments as New Jersey continues to evolve in order to remain a leader in education,” said Patricia Morgan, Executive Director of JerseyCAN and WRNJ coalition member. “Since a majority of New Jerseyans support statewide assessments, the State must ensure that we are developing a test that will continue to provide useful, meaningful data on how our students are progressing towards college and career readiness.”

Seventy percent of registered New Jersey voters believe students should meet statewide minimum standard requirements before advancing to the next grade. And similar numbers strongly support a statewide test to make sure New Jersey students are meeting these minimum academic standards, with more than 60 percent wanting a statewide test to ensure standards are met and only 30 percent opposed.

If students don’t meet minimum standards, voters expect consequences. A strong majority (70 percent) believe New Jersey students will not be prepared for college and will have to repeat high school-level classes in college, 63 percent believe New Jersey’s workforce will not be prepared for jobs in the new economy, and 57 percent expect fewer New Jersey students to be able to compete for jobs generally.

“This poll affirms our belief that while we have much to be proud of with our public education system in New Jersey, there is more work to do to ensure all of our students receive the support they need to succeed after high school,” said Donna Custard, President of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation and WRNJ coalition member. “As a coalition, we believe that state standards and assessments are one important rung on the ladder for college and career readiness. We are encouraged that members of the public recognize the importance of measuring student progress and ensuring students are fully ready to enter higher education and the workforce.”

While voters give high ratings to public schools, African American and Hispanic voters show concern toward their community schools, with 44 and 55 percent favorability ratings compared to 75 percent for white voters and 68 percent overall. African American and Hispanic voters are also less likely to believe their schools are adequately preparing students for college.

Michael Taylor of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey and We Raise NJ coalition member remarked, “The fact that our African American voters have expressed more concerns about their schools and more support for the state test is telling. The [most recent state assessment results](#) show that the achievement gap between African American and white students is 30 percentage points for 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade English Language Arts and 33 percentage points for Algebra 1 – two academic benchmarks often used to project college and career readiness. These voters recognize that we need this kind of honest, objective information to determine where more support is needed and to ensure students receive that support.”

NJ PTA President and We Raise NJ coalition member Rose Acerra added, “We Raise New Jersey has always believed that we have some of the very best schools and teachers in the nation. Part of our mission is to ensure that each and every child has access to the excellent education that many children already receive. That is why we are focused on the essential elements for helping all students graduate ready for a bright future. This poll confirms that members of the public also see the need to hold our students, educators, and schools to the high standards we know they can achieve – and to use a state test that emphasizes critical thinking to help measure that achievement.”

If you want to help ensure New Jersey keeps high expectations for all our students, please email [contact-us@weraisenj.org](mailto:contact-us@weraisenj.org) with your name and contact information, visit <http://www.weraisenj.org/>, and follow <https://www.facebook.com/WeRaiseNJ/> and [@WeRaiseNJ](#).

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**We Raise New Jersey:** WRNJ advocates for the high-quality education every student deserves to be prepared for success in college, career, and community by harnessing the collective strength of New Jersey’s influential education, business, and civic organizations. Coalition members include: New Jersey PTA, JerseyCAN, New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, New Jersey Council of County Colleges, New Jersey Business & Industry Association, and the New Jersey Charter Schools Association.

**About the Poll:** Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 612 registered voters in New Jersey from December 11 to 14, 2017. The results of this survey have a margin of error of +/-4.0%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of the expected electorate are properly represented based on historical turnout.