

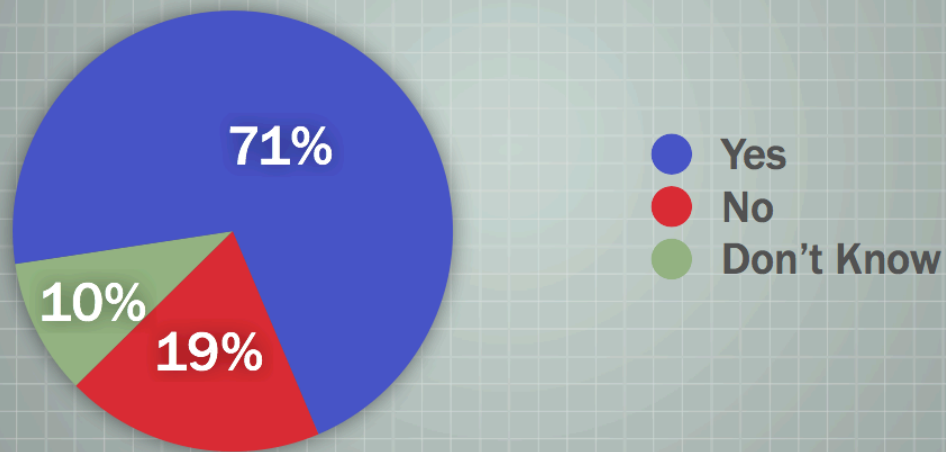
“INSIDE” INTELLIGENCE

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*The Texas Weekly/Texas Tribune insider poll
for the week of April 8*

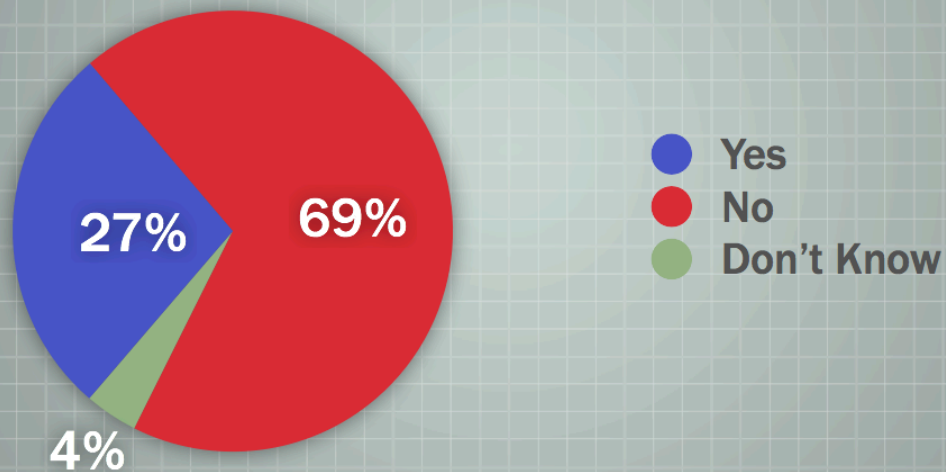
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should Texas cut the number of standardized tests to 5 from 15?



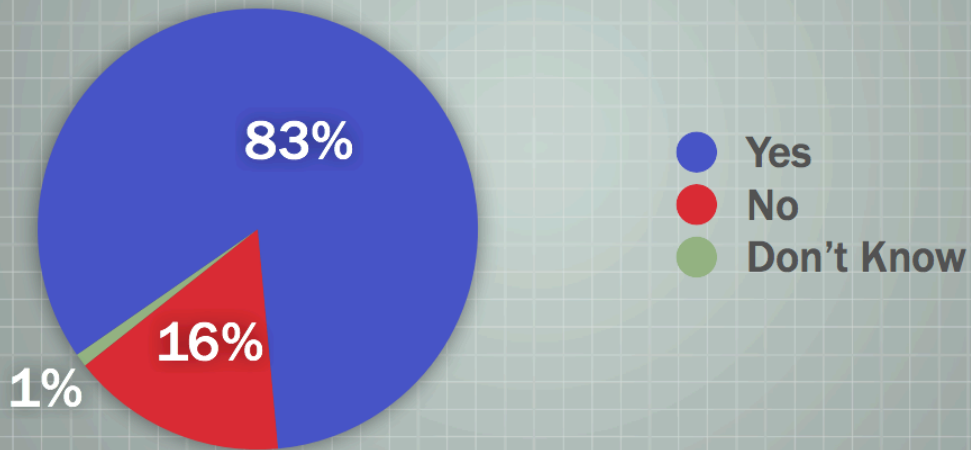
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should high schoolers be required to complete a college prep curriculum?



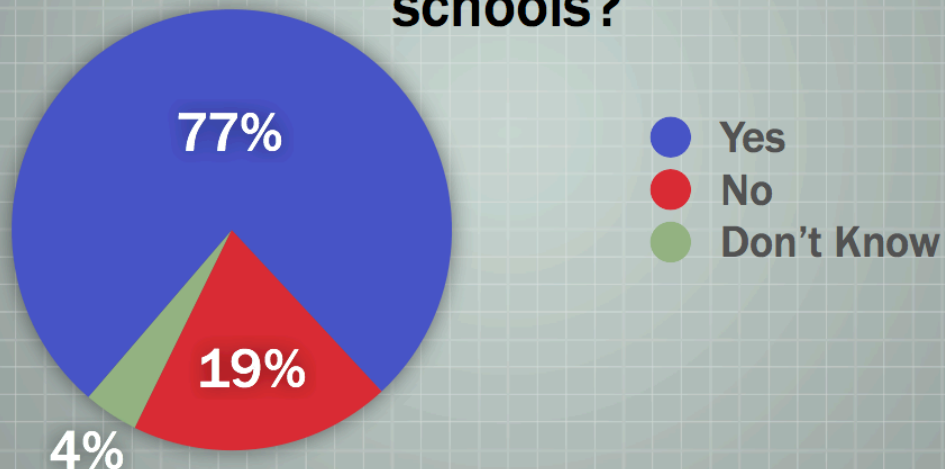
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should high schoolers be offered different paths to graduation?



INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should students take the same tests in public and publicly funded private schools?



Should the Legislature lower the number of required standardized tests in high school from 15 to 5?

- "This seems to be too large of a reduction. The STAAR system has a lot of problems, but I fear this is too big a reaction in the other direction."

- "I struggle to understand why we need 5 standardized tests, much less 15."

- "Somewhere in the middle seems right to me."

- "The facts speak clearly; more testing does NOT equate to higher learning standards."

- "We should be more concerned with a general diffusion of knowledge not the ability to recite back a set amount of information during a set time frame on a set of particular days."

- "Number of test should be reduced, but so far it's all about the number. Shouldn't we be trying to figure out what needs to be tested and get the number that way? Right now, members of the Legislature seem to be guessing (like a lot of kids do on the test)."

- "I don't know what a standardized test is, but 15 of them in high school seems like too much. What happened to taking end of year/course final exams?"

- "Does it really matter how many tests we have if the students are not passing them?"

- "I graduated from an accredited Texas High School and did so with LESS than 15 tests. I also had no iPad, homework on line, etc. What I

did have was teachers who TAUGHT - and required homework and TESTS over that homework and the readings assigned to me! I was taught HANDWRITING, spelling, math, history, ART, MUSIC, PE, as well as Spanish, accounting, Home Ec. Then was accepted to the University of Texas and graduated!"

- "Some reduction is long overdue"

- "We had decided as a state to set a goal for all our children to graduate ready for college or career. While we can and should reduce the number of tests, why would we do so only to test freshman level courses? This would be utterly foolish. By the way, will Dietz re-hear the school finance case if the system he thought needed more money gets eviscerated by the very educrats who filed the case in the first place?"

- "How many is not the issue. The problem is the state has forgotten why they gave the tests to start with. We must have accountability; it just shouldn't be the tail that wags the dog, and that is what it has become."

- "Wow and go back to the old fashioned concept of actually learning."

- "No. We have no other tool to determine whether or not kids are learning anything. However, we should take a close look at how the tests are administered -- how many 'proxy tests' the teachers are giving to get kids ready for the tests."

- "It is not the number of tests but how they are used that is the real issue."

- "Why not require legislators to take and pass the tests each biennium?"

- "It's not just the number of tests but the stakes that attach to them"

- "Eliminate them all and put that money into the classroom, now that is conservative."

- "15 was an overreach, although we haven't addressed the fundamental system at grades 3-8."

- "Teachers can use the time to TEACH the facts so that the tests are less of an issue."

- "And they should up the standardized tests to lawmakers to 5. I'm far more concerned about their intellectual capacities than the 3rd graders at Mumford Elementary."

- "They should lower the number but not all the way down to 5."

Should all students be required to finish a college preparatory curriculum (i.e. four years of science & math, including Algebra II or another math class) to get a high school diploma?

- "Large percentages of students will not go on to college, and trying to put all kids on this path partially explains the dropout problem. We need to offer different tracks for students with different abilities and goals."

- "Our focus needs to be on workforce readiness. Whether it means college, junior college, or technical training, we need to tailor it to the aptitude and interest of the student."

- "I have never understood this requirement as one can get a Bachelor of Arts with only one elementary math class in college."

- "Not every student is college bound or even college material. When some high school graduates can't even put together an intelligible sentence, we don't need to fool ourselves into thinking they will all go to college."

- "Our state needs to come to the realization that some students will benefit more from career training than college ready courses."

- "Texas public schools started down a path 20 years ago to maximize each student's potential, a path based on the noble idea of a supportive approach to help kids in younger grades get basic academic skills. The 'soft bigotry of low expectations' was rejected, and replaced with the idea that any student could achieve if given the right teaching and attention. But along the way the goal has been lost. Instead of making it possible for anyone to go to college if they have the native ability and the desire, the system now assumes (if not requires) that everyone must go to college regardless of their skills or preferences. The methods have become an end of themselves. The pendulum has swung too far in the

other direction. The whole program has now morphed into an inflexible secondary school system that pushes kids to drop out - many times the exact same high-risk kids that we were originally trying to help. Stop the madness."

- "STEM classes are a necessary aspect for a global economy. Efforts to dilute the school system should be viewed carefully."

- "I wonder if we would be having this 'not every kid needs to go to college' discussion if the student demographics in Texas were still majority White and not majority Hispanic. This Legislature is prepared to be the first in decades to tell our kids 'Let's go out there and shoot for the middle!'"

- "Students should have access to the curriculum, but they should not be required to take and finish it. Not everyone wants to go to college, and not everyone should go to college. To quote the late, great Judge Smalls, 'The world needs ditch diggers too.'"

- "Who is going to fix our cars, HVAC, electrical, plumbing etc. if they can all recite poetry but can't work on things."

- "Texas needs to return to the three levels College Prep, Basic and Vocational! In each of these, everyone received a diploma based on the 'core' needs - three English, two math, three history. Vocational folks actually had a diploma and quite often a certificate which could help them get a job - either as a cosmetologist or a draftsman (yes, I realize I am showing my age), the people in basics were prepared for community college,

regular college or had some skills for a job."

- "Many students are not and should not be college-bound"

- "Lord no. Teach to the kids skills."

- "You mis-state the question. The 4x4 has been shown to be preparatory not only for 4 year colleges, but also for two year and technical colleges as well as most high paying, new jobs."

- "'All' covers a very broad spectrum. Even so, the curriculum doesn't need to be as structured as people are currently thinking it does. People need to step back, take a breath and loosen up their thinking a little, because both can be done in most (not saying 'all') instances."

- "Yes we need that since math and science teach people to think critically. Critical thinking is a foreign concept to most people. And we must insist that US and World history be included in this"

- "Not all kids are college bound and good kids who aren't academic should have an opportunity to succeed."

- "Yes."

- "The Recommended Program is fine as a default but Algebra II is not necessary for many college majors."

- "WHY-- never has made sense except, of course, to those trying to fill seats in higher education & who like to trick kids into dead end career paths!"

- "There are hundreds of thousands of American manufacturing jobs

available that cannot be filled without skilled labor. Not every kid should choose a four-year philosophy degree over a great career as a welder or C&C operator. We need to begin rewarding and valuing those that can build the future as much as we reward and value those that dream it."

- "Not all students will go to college; therefore, requiring them to complete a college prep curriculum to get a high school diploma would create additional dropouts that opt into a GED program to get what they really need out of public schools."

- "Why try to take our youth out of the job market by saying they didn't graduate high school when they are better prepared, under a different high school program, to be productive members of society?"

- "There are a lot of great electricians, plumbers, AC repair techs, automotive mechanics, If students want to prepare for a trade, let them."

We have devalued trades in this state and we should stop."

- "This is a tough call. The state shouldn't endorse tracking of students, yet not everyone is bound for college. This issue is more important than the amount of testing."

- "Throughout America's history, students have been given an opportunity to 'change their minds' because they've had the proper education to do so. The dumbed-down curriculum isn't useful if the student changes his mind later."

- "This is a trick question. In high school I made all a's and b's except for d's in algebra and typing. It's a good thing I became a lawyer."

- "When the legislature passes the test, then we should give it to the kids."

- "Only if they plan to go to college"

Should high schools offer separate pathways to graduation for college preparatory students and for career-track students?

- "But they should not short-change students on the basics."

- "Bring back vo-tech!!! On hot days, I lament the lost opportunity to take A/C repair."

- "What's wrong with shop class anyway?"

- "Career ready high school students will have a positive economic impact to local and state government. Most importantly, these students will start

careers instead of being a burden on society."

- "Not all students are college material, so why are we encouraging a school system that perpetuates the myth that all students will go, or even want to go, to college."

- "Ten years down the road, I think we all know which kids will be on the college track and which ones will be steered to career (because college isn't for them). If anyone can say with a straight face that it won't happen, I've

got tickets for a tour of the Alamo basement I'd like to sell you."

- "Teach the kids how to read, write, add, and subtract. Fund vocational and tech educational and let the kids figure out what they want to do. We need to stop trying to tell kids what they like to do and let them figure it out themselves. Like the rest of us did. Hopefully they will do something with their lives and not become lobbyists."

- "See my tirade above."

- "Most already do so"

- "Not unless the career track is to high paying careers, not low wage jobs that tend to be dead end. The problem with current bills in the legislature is that that distinction is not assured, notwithstanding their advocates' claims."

- "Yes, but it doesn't have to be completely separate tracks. You must leave room for students to change direction without losing years. Bottom line, there must be electives. A future engineer might do well to take a welding class, even if it isn't on the college prep track."

- "But everyone should have the option to choose their path"

- "Teachers want to do this, because it would be easier for them, but it is a terrible idea that will result in broader divide in our society -- as Commissioner Williams has said, we already know who will be put in the 'career track.' We want our work force to be well educated in every sector. That should be the goal."

- "Do not call it a 'track'"

- "We need more technicians, equipment operators, and a host of other skill sets in today's workforce that do not require full college preparatory curriculum-- putting 15-18 year old youngsters on a path to success doesn't necessarily mean going to college."

- "No two kids are the same. Any school is successful if it keeps its students safe while preparing them to be successful and productive adults. Defining that success should be up to students, parents and teachers instead of a generic college preparatory schedule."

- "The simple solution is to treat high school students like colleges treat their students; a core curriculum is essential in the first two years whereas the last two years concentrates on the student's future."

- "All pathways to graduation should prepare students for success in college and careers. No student benefits from a one-sided approach nor does the larger community."

- "Absolutely. This should be a no-brainer."

- "Yes, but a careful yes. The decision has to be the student's/student's family's decision. Otherwise, you're back to the blackbirds/bluebirds tracks of 40 years ago."

- "Value each track equally and don't place 'educrats' labels on career students. A good plumber is a great thing and a valued member of society. Teach them as such."

- "The reality is there is not enough rigor in either pathway at the moment. Those who perform at the commended or advanced level do just fine - but almost everyone else isn't ready for the demand of post secondary work. The real question is whether or not the state can align our work so that the student is prepared regardless of the pathway they choose."

- "The current system supposes there is only one kind of intelligence. All I

have to say is thank God I never had to pass auto body in high school."

- "Absolutely.... tried to run that flag up the pole on the Perot Commission years ago, but the screaming wouldn't stop. All of the 'older' civilizations of the world figured out a long time ago that all brains are not equal. Trades are paying more than folks with college diplomas. We have continued what Carl Parker referred to as 'dumbing down.'"

Should students in state-funded private schools be required to take the same tests as those in public schools?

- "Isn't the whole point of non-public school options to provide alternatives and opportunities for innovation?"

- "Why are we debating this question? Any school receiving tax-payer dollars should be held to the same standards."

- "Sure, once they receive state funding, mother state can require them too!!!"

- "You take the state money, you should get the state 'strings.'"

- "I thought the point of the charter schools was to allow greater flexibility and get rid of bureaucratic mandates like inane tests. Seems like the kids graduating from these schools are prepared for college, whereas not all their counterparts in public schools are ready. Proof is in the pudding."

- "Yes! If the state is giving money they should face the SAME requirements! Good enough for kids in public school and is good enough for kids in private schools!"

- "Useful comparison measure"

- "Or something close."

- "Tests serve the same purpose regardless of whether a school is public, public charter, or private. Public money for private schools will turn out to be a huge mistake for children, parents and other taxpayers. Only private investors will come out on top. If the state's leadership didn't already know this, there would be no reason to exempt private schools from the accountability system."

- "They are already for the most part kicking butt on public schools so why bring the standards down. Have you ever looked at the SAT scores of kids who are home schooled? They are doing even more butt kicking. Hey, wait, there seems to be something here, schools that actually 1) teach kids something like simple basics of math, science, history, language etc., 2) are not giving ridiculous and unnecessary tests, and 3) do not teach

social BS are producing great students. Wow, what a concept"

- "Maybe not the same test but definitely the same standard. If a student is in a private school that focuses on math and science, their testing should be weighted as such, with less emphasis on writing or literature."

- "What is a 'state funded private school?' I thought the prevailing view was the giving state dollars to a private school that might actually be effectively teaching students was some kind of crime against humanity. Instead, we insist we must continue to pour taxpayer dollars into failing schools because the bureaucracy needs that money -- effectively teaching kids is clearly a secondary concern."

- "A big fat Yes."

- "Public money and public accountability tests have no place in private schools."

- "Absolutely. I'm not interested in allowing my tax dollars to be used without knowing whether I'm getting the bang for my buck."

- "Private schools are educating students better than public schools. Why try fixing what's NOT broken?"

- "Even Sandy Kress' kids should have to take these tests."

- "What state funded private schools?"

Our thanks to this week's participants: Gene Acuna, Cathie Adams, Brandon Aghamalian, Jenny Aghamalian, Clyde Alexander, George Allen, David Anthony, Jay Arnold, Charles Bailey, Tom Banning, Dave Beckwith, Andrew Biar, Allen Blakemore, Tom Blanton, Hugh Brady, Chris Britton, Andy Brown, David Cabrales, Raif Calvert, Lydia Camarillo, Kerry Cammack, Thure Cannon, Elna Christopher, Harold Cook, Beth Cubriel, Randy Cubriel, Curtis Culwell, Denise Davis, Hector De Leon, June Deadrick, Tom Duffy, David Dunn, Richard Dyer, Jeff Eller, Jack Erskine, Ryan Erwin, Jon Fisher, Tom Forbes, Wil Galloway, Norman Garza, Dominic Giarratani, Bruce Gibson, Stephanie Gibson, Kinnan Golemon, Jim Grace, John Greytok, Anthony Haley, Wayne Hamilton, Bill Hammond, Adam Haynes, Jim Henson, Ken Hodges, Richie Jackson, Jason Johnson, Mark Jones, Robert Jones, Lisa Kaufman, Richard Khouri, Tom Kleinworth, Sandy Kress, Nick Lampson, Pete Laney, Dick Lavine, Leslie Lemon, Myra Leo, Richard Levy, Ruben Longoria, Matt Mackowiak, Bryan Mayes, Scott McCown, Mike McKinney, Robert Miller, Bee Moorhead, Mike Moses, Steve Murdock, Keir Murray, Nelson Nease, Pat Nugent, Nef Partida, Gardner Pate, Tom Phillips, Wayne Pierce, Allen Place, Kraege Polan, Gary Polland, Jay Propes, Ted Melina Raab, Bill Ratliff, Patrick Reinhart, Jason Sabo, Andy Sansom, Jim Sartwelle, Stan Schlueter, Bruce Scott, Robert Scott, Bradford Shields, Ed Small, Martha Smiley, Todd Smith, Larry Soward, Dennis Speight, Jason Stanford, Bob Strauser, Colin Strother, Michael Quinn Sullivan, Sherry Sylvester, Russ Tidwell, Gerard Torres, Trey Trainor, Vicki Truitt, Darren Whitehurst, Seth Winick, Alex Winslow, Peck Young, Angelo Zottarelli.