

Stride Survey: Christian Parents' Attitudes Regarding Public Schools & Public Education

Since 2000, Stride K12 has been a leader in K–12 online education, putting quality hands-on and online curriculum directly into the homes of the students and families we support.

Stride K12-powered learning offers a personalized approach for students through a variety of education experiences. Every family is unique and has different requirements for their child's learning environment. Stride K12 offers multiple resources for students and families: a vibrant online school community, academic support, and extracurricular activities help students connect, stay motivated, and succeed with online learning. With Stride, families can find answers, information, and inspiration to begin their learning journey or continue it.

This research, commissioned by Stride and conducted by Pinkston, provides insights into Christian parents' priorities and concerns about their children's education and their consideration of different school types. Online interviews were conducted July 1-5, 2022, from a sample of 1,595 parents or guardians who identify as Christian and have kids in public school, grades K-12.

Key Findings:

A majority of parents are concerned about the quality of education their children are receiving. Two-thirds (66%) of Christian parents lack confidence in the quality of their children's public school education.

Additionally, nearly half of Christian parents say public education does not reflect their personal values. 43% of parents do not feel their personal beliefs are represented in public education, and 39% of those who would not consider non-religious private schools cite this reason. While their foremost concern is quality of education, an alignment with faith-based values is clearly a factor for a significant number of Christian parents as they consider education options.

Christian parents report significant interest in a virtual school program, and there is a correlation between interest in virtual school and concern about education quality. Among those who would consider private Christian school for their kids, 59% say they are very likely (28%) or somewhat likely (31%) to enroll their children in a free virtual program for the upcoming school year if they had access to one.

Christian Parents Survey – Results

About the Research: Pinkston conducted a survey of 1,595 parents (or guardians) who identify as Christian and have kids in public school, grades K-12. The sample is nationally representative by demographics; surveys were conducted in English and administered online.

Only just over a third of Christian parents are very satisfied with their child(ren)’s public school, yet only 10% are actually dissatisfied; parents’ opinions fall mostly in the middle.

How satisfied are you with your child(ren)’s public school?	
Base: 1,595	
Very satisfied	37%
Somewhat satisfied	44%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	9%
Somewhat dissatisfied	7%
Very dissatisfied	3%

Do you agree or disagree with these statements?

Two-thirds (66%) of Christian parents are concerned about the quality of education their children receive in public school. Additionally, there is a correlation between interest in virtual school and concern about education quality.

I am concerned about the quality of education my kids get in public school.	
Base: 1,595	
Agree completely	30%
Agree somewhat	36%
Neither agree nor disagree	14%
Disagree somewhat	12%
Disagree completely	9%

Half (49%) of Christian parents would prefer to send their child(ren) to a private school.

There is a correlation between interest in private school and concern about education quality.

I would prefer to send my child(ren) to a private school if I could.	
Base: 1,595	
Agree completely	25%
Agree somewhat	24%
Neither agree nor disagree	22%
Disagree somewhat	16%
Disagree completely	13%

Conflicting values are relatively less important than education quality in school choice, yet 43% of Christian parents feel that public schools no longer reflect their personal values.

Public schools no longer reflect my personal values.	
Base: 1,595	
Agree completely	16%
Agree somewhat	27%
Neither agree nor disagree	28%
Disagree somewhat	18%
Disagree completely	12%

More than half of Christian parents (58%) believe in and support public education.

I am a proponent of public education.	
Base: 1,595	
Agree completely	27%
Agree somewhat	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	36%
Disagree somewhat	5%
Disagree completely	2%

Christian parents are equally interested in private non-religious or Christian schools. There is less interest in Catholic school among non-Catholic parents.

Which of these school types would you consider for your child(ren), assuming cost and location were not a factor?

PRIVATE NON-RELIGIOUS SCHOOL	
Base: 1,595	
Definitely WOULD consider	25%
Probably WOULD consider	30%
Might or might not consider	26%
Probably would NOT consider	11%
Definitely would NOT consider	8%

PRIVATE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL	
Base: 1,595	
Definitely WOULD consider	25%
Probably WOULD consider	28%
Might or might not consider	22%
Probably would NOT consider	14%
Definitely would NOT consider	11%

PRIVATE CATHOLIC SCHOOL	
Base: 1,595	
Definitely WOULD consider	14%
Probably WOULD consider	16%
Might or might not consider	23%
Probably would NOT consider	21%
Definitely would NOT consider	26%

HOMESCHOOL	
Base: 1,592	
Definitely WOULD consider	17%
Probably WOULD consider	21%
Might or might not consider	24%
Probably would NOT consider	17%
Definitely would NOT consider	20%

Cost is the #1 deterrent to Christian parents considering a Christian or non-religious private school.

Are any of these a reason you would not consider a private <u>non-religious</u> school? (Select all that apply)	
Base: 714 (who would not consider this school type)	
Cost (tuition or additional fees)	63%
May not agree with their beliefs and values.	39%
I'm not sure of the quality of the academics.	24%
I'm not sure they would have good activities or sports.	16%
Can't get my child there / need before/after school care	12%
My child has special needs.	11%

Are any of these a reason you would not consider a private <u>Christian</u> school? (Select all that apply)	
Base: 734 (who would not consider this school type)	
Cost (tuition or additional fees)	62%
May not agree with their beliefs and values.	41%
I'm not sure of the quality of the academics.	25%
I'm not sure they would have good activities or sports.	16%
Can't get my child there / need before/after school care	12%
My child has special needs.	11%

For Catholic schools, more Christian parents (primarily Protestant) are unsure of alignment with their beliefs and values, yet cost remains the second-highest deterrent.

Are any of these a reason you would not consider a private <u>Catholic</u> school? (Select all that apply)	
Base: 1,098 (who would not consider this school type)	
May not agree with their beliefs and values.	60%
Cost (tuition or additional fees)	49%
I'm not sure of the quality of the academics.	18%
I'm not sure they would have good activities or sports.	12%
My child has special needs.	10%
Can't get my child there / need before/after school care	8%

For the following question, a “virtual school program” is defined as an individualized education experience with responsive, online curriculum that allows students to work at their own pace and is taught by state-certified teachers who differentiate instruction through live virtual sessions. This program is delivered online at home.

Interest in a virtual school program is very strong among Christian parents, with half of all parents saying they are likely to enroll for the upcoming school year. Among Christian parents, interest is essentially the same for Christian and non-religious private virtual school.

If you had access to a free, virtual school program, how likely would you be to send your child(ren) to a private, <u>non-religious</u> virtual school in the upcoming school year?	
Base: 1,266 (who are open to considering this school type)	
Very likely	29% (or 23% of all Christian parents)
Somewhat likely	33% (or 26% of all Christian parents)
Not sure	20%
Not very likely	19%

If you had access to a free, virtual school program, how likely would you be to send your child(ren) to a private <u>Christian</u> virtual school in the upcoming school year?	
Base: 1,180 (who are open to considering this school type)	
Very likely	28% (or 21% of all Christian parents)
Somewhat likely	31% (or 23% of all Christian parents)
Not sure	23%
Not very likely	18%

If you had access to a free, virtual school program, how likely would you be to send your child(ren) to a private <u>Catholic</u> virtual school in the upcoming school year?	
Base: 837 (who are open to considering this school type)	
Very likely	25% (or 13% of all Christian parents)
Somewhat likely	34% (or 18% of all Christian parents)
Not sure	22%
Not very likely	19%

Over half of Christian parents say the most important features in choosing a school are quality of teachers, safety, and academic excellence, (top 3), then learning support, good community and location / accessibility.

Which of the following features are most important in your choice of a school (assuming cost was not a factor)? (Select all that apply)	
Base: 1,595	
Quality of teachers	72%
Safety	68%
Academic excellence	61%
Learning support	56%
Good community (parents, kids)	54%
Location / accessibility	52%
Quality of facilities	48%
Class size	44%
Technology used / taught	43%
Extracurricular activities	40%
College prep	39%
Shapes kids' character	36%
Career prep	34%
Alignment with my beliefs	31%
Spiritual or religious formation / practices	20%

DEMOGRAPHICS / PROFILE QUESTIONS

Base for all questions: 1,595

What grade(s) will your child(ren) be in for the upcoming school year? (Select all that apply)	
Kindergarten to 5th grade	52%
6th to 8th grade	36%
9th to 12th grade	44%

What type(s) of school do your child(ren) attend? (Select all that apply)	
Public school	100%
Parents with at least one other child in these types of schools:	
Private non-religious school	1%
Private Christian school	2%
Private Catholic school	1%
Homeschool	3%

With what denomination are you affiliated, or what is the denomination of the church you attend most often?	
Category, coded from selected choice out of list of denominations	
Catholic	21%
Protestant denomination	72%
Other (e.g. Orthodox, Latter Day Saints)	7%

Region where currently live	
Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)	16%
Southeast (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)	21%
Central South (AL, AR, KY, LA, MS, OK, TN, TX)	23%
Midwest (IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI)	23%
West (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY)	17%

Area where live is	
Suburban	43%
Urban	26%
Rural	24%
Small town	7%

Respondent's relationship to child(ren)	
Mother	54%
Father	43%
Other	4%

Marital status	
Married	59%
Single, never married	23%
Divorced or separated	15%
Widowed	2%
Prefer not to say	1%

Race / ethnicity (respondents could select multiple):	
White / European or Middle Eastern	72%
African American / Black	18%
Latino / Hispanic	10%
Asian American / Asian / Pacific Islander	4%
Native American	3%
Other	1%

Parent's Age	
18 to 24 years old	2%
25 to 34 years old	25%
35 to 44 years old	43%
45 to 54 years old	22%
55+	8%

Highest degree or level of school completed	
Some high school	3%
High school diploma / GED	22%
Associate's or technical degree	15%
Some college	22%
Bachelor's degree	25%
Post graduate degree	12%

Total household income, before taxes	
Less than \$25,000	14%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	27%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	22%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	15%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	13%
\$150,000 or more	8%
Prefer not to say	1%