

# **The University of Akron Poll: Ohio Public's Views on Early Childhood Education Issues 2018**

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## **Executive Summary**

Ohioans report being moderately aware of early childhood education issues—less aware of than opioid abuse but more aware of than Medicaid expansion.

More than one-half of the Ohio public is not aware that most children are not ready for kindergarten when they first go to school.

Most Ohioans are aware that children from well-off and less well-off families are not equally prepared to start kindergarten.

Over two-thirds of Ohioans know that children who are not prepared to start kindergarten are not able to quickly catch up.

A large majority of Ohioans know parents without childcare have a hard time getting and keeping a job due to financial and time constraints.

Based on the answers to these four questions, Ohioans appear to be fairly knowledgeable of some basic facts concerning early childhood education.

A large majority of Ohioans say new programs for all-day daycare, all-day preschool, and all-year programming were important and prefer such programs to be voluntary for families.

Analysis of these data reveal four clusters of opinion on early childhood education: *Skeptical Daycare Followers* (48% of the Ohio public), *Reluctant Preschool Supporters* (17%), *Eager Preschool Backers* (17%), and *Enthusiastic Daycare Advocates* (18%).

## **The Survey**

This poll was conducted by the Center for Marketing and Opinion Research for the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at The University of Akron. It was a random sample of 1,000 Ohio eligible voters conducted by telephone (with cell phone and web components) between September 10 and October 4, 2018, with a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points.

## **Awareness of Early Childhood Education Issues**

To assess the Ohio public's awareness of early childhood education issues, the survey respondents were asked if they had read or heard about "early childhood education programs, which help children be ready to start kindergarten." If they answered "yes," respondents were then asked if they considered themselves "very," "somewhat," or "not very" aware of the issue. (The "no" and "not very aware" responses were combined for ease of presentation.)

Parallel questions were also asked about two similar policy issues: "fighting opioid abuse and

The Ohio public's awareness of early childhood education issues fell between awareness of opioid and Medicaid programs.

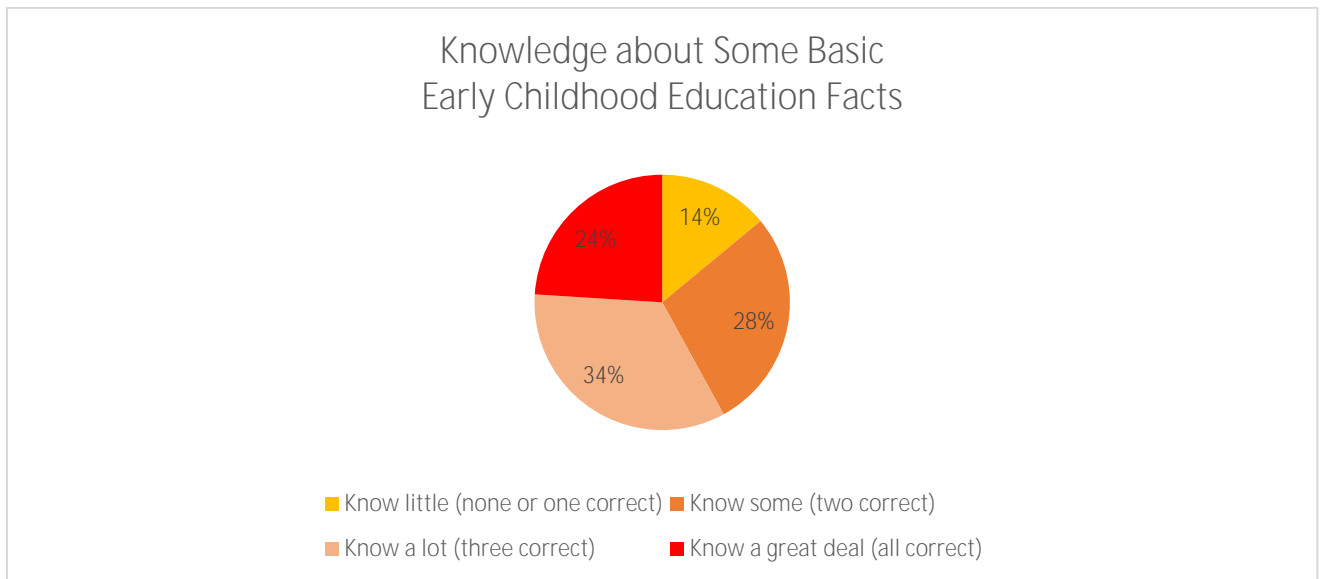
On one hand, self-reported awareness of early childhood education issues was markedly lower than for opioid abuse, where nearly three-

Finally, more than four-fifths (86%) correctly answered “true” to the statement that parents without childcare have a hard time getting and keeping a job.

The correct answers to these true/false questions were added together in a knowledge measure, ranging from none or one correct answer to all four correct answers.

Overall, about one-quarter of the Ohio public (24%) knew “a great deal” about some basic facts about early childhood education; about one-third (34%) knew “a lot”; and about another one-quarter (28%) knew “some” about the subject. The remaining one-seventh (14%) know “little.”

Thus, a majority of the public (58%) knew “a great deal” or “a lot” about the four specific questions asked.



As one might expect, knowledge and awareness of early childhood education issues were closely linked: more knowledgeable members of the Ohio public tended to also be more aware of the issues.

For example, almost two-fifths of those who “know a great deal” (37%) or who “know a lot” (36%) also reported being “very aware” of early childhood education. In contrast, about two-fifths of those who “know some” (40%) or “know little” (42%) also reported being “not very aware” of the issue.



public remained evenly divided, with about one half each (46%) favoring all-day daycare and preschool (with the remaining 8% choosing neither).

### **Other Issues**

When asked if such policy changes should be “mandatory or voluntary for families,” two-thirds (67%) of the respondents said “voluntary” and one-third (33%) said “mandatory.”

When asked to choose between these statements “The State of Ohio has the most responsibility to ensure that all children are kindergarten ready” and “Families have the most responsibility to make sure that children are kindergarten ready,” one-fifth (20%) of respondents said state government and four-fifths (80%) said families.

When asked if such changes should be provided by “public schools, non-profit groups, or a mix of both,” almost three-quarters (73%) of respondents said a mix of both, about one-fifth (19%) said public schools, and the remaining one-tenth (8%) said non-profit v1TJETBT1 0 0 1 374..1005600463004B0

## **Willingness to Raise Taxes to Fund New Programs**

Respondents were also asked to assess

of the policy proposals (daycare, preschool, year-round programs, and home visits).<sup>1</sup> The opinion clusters are summarized on the following pages, with their most notable demographic characteristics highlighted.



In terms of demographic highlights, this cluster has the most men (53%) and is the most likely to live outside of big cities (53%). Compared to the other clusters, it is modestly well educated (38% with college degrees or more education) and affluent (36% with annual income of \$75,000 or more).

**Reluctant Preschool Supporters.** This opinion cluster makes up a little less than one-fifth (17%) of the Ohio public. It is reluctant about supporting early childhood education, with slim majorities noting high importance to daycare, preschool, and all-year programs.

As the label reveals, this cluster favored all-day preschool when forced to choose (71%). Nine in ten members (90%) believe families have the most responsibility for early childhood education rather than the state of Ohio, but interestingly, even more say such programs should be mandatory for families (99%).

The Reluctant Preschool Supporters are not very aware of early childhood education issues (34% self-report “very aware”). However, they are fairly knowledgeable of early childhood education facts (59% know “a lot” or “a great deal” based on the four true/false questions asked). For example, less than one-half (48%)

one-half (54%) of this cluster correctly said that a majority of Ohio children are not ready for kindergarten when they first go to school.

This cluster is quite willing to raise taxes for new programs (9% “low willingness” vs. 63% “high willingness” to increase taxes to help all Ohio children; 11% vs. 66% to increase taxes to help disadvantaged Ohio children). If taxes have to be raised for this purpose, a plurality would prefer increasing state sales taxes (40%).

In political terms, the Eager Preschool Backers are almost equally divided between conservatives (41%) and liberals (42%), but tend to be Democrats (51%); about three-fifths (61%) said they voted for Democrat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 General Election.

In terms of demographic highlights, this cluster is the oldest (69% more than 46 years old), has the most whites (87%), the most married (58%), is the best educated (48% with college degree or more), and most affluent (40% with annual income of \$75,000 or more).

**Enthusiastic Daycare Advocates.** This opinion cluster also makes up a little less than one-fifth (18%) of the Ohio public. This cluster is enthusiastic about early childhood education, with large majorities assigning “high importance” in all four cases.

As the label reveals, this group favors all-day daycare when forced to choose (75%) and also says such programs should be mandatory for families (82%). Three-fifths (60%) of this group believes the state of Ohio has the most responsibility for early childhood education rather than families—it is the only cluster with this pattern.

The Enthusiastic Daycare Advocates are the most aware of early childhood education issues (46% self-report “very aware”) and the most knowledgeable of early childhood education facts (71% know “a lot” or “a great deal” based on the four true/false questions asked). For example, three-fifths (60%) of this cluster correctly said that a majority of Ohio children are not ready for kindergarten when they first go to school.

This cluster is also quite willing to raise taxes for new programs (10% “low willingness” vs. 63% “high willingness” to increase taxes to help all Ohio children; 10% vs. 67% to increase taxes to help disadvantaged Ohio children). If taxes have to be raised for this purpose, a plurality would prefer increasing state income taxes (40%).

In political terms, the Enthusiastic Daycare Advocates are liberal (54%) and Democratic (64%); a little less than three-quarters (71%) said they voted for Democrat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 General Election.

In terms of demographic highlights, this cluster has the most non-whites (31%), the most women (56%), and the most big-city residents (55%). Compared to the other clusters, they are modestly well educated (39% with college degrees or more education) and affluent (33% with annual income of \$75,000 or more).

