

M I A M I - D A D E C O U N T Y , F L O R I D A

The Public's Opinions on Education



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In Feb. 2026, Inquire LLC surveyed 500 likely November 2026 general election voters in Miami-Dade County for their views on public education, school consolidation, leadership, and the upcoming millage renewal. Respondents displayed a balanced range of demographics, including age, ethnicity, income, education, geography, gender, language preference and party affiliation.

The margin of error is +/- 4.4%. Data provided here is a sampling of a larger dataset.
Media and academic inquiries can be directed to news@partnershipformiami.com.



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Executive Summary

With over 330,000 students enrolled in district and public charter schools, Miami-Dade's public education ecosystem is widely recognized as one of the highest-performing large urban school districts in the country. At the same time, district data show that over one-third of students are not yet meeting grade-level expectations in reading and math, reinforcing an urgency and shared commitment to strengthen foundational skills so every student succeeds. This work is happening within an evolving landscape; enrollment in district-managed schools has continued to decline as charter and private school enrollment grows, reflecting both a shift toward expanded school choice and the affordability pressures pushing families out of the county altogether.

As M-DCPS prepares for a superintendent transition and the renewal of a voter-approved operating millage, the Partnership for Miami commissioned a survey of 500 likely November 2026 voters to better understand how Miami's residents perceive our education ecosystem and the strategic choices ahead. The goal was to provide civic leaders with actionable insights regarding what residents value, where they see progress, and what outcomes they hope to see in return for their public investment.

The results reveal a community profoundly invested in its public schools, yet one that holds high expectations for the future. Residents deeply value public education and have resounding trust in our teachers. They value the many forms of school choice available to them and strongly support M-DCPS better aligning resources and adapting its footprint to allow for great investment in teachers and student success.

This survey was conducted among 500 likely voters in Miami-Dade County with a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percentage points.

Key Takeaways

1 Miami trusts teachers the most.

Teachers are the most trusted voices in Miami-Dade education by a wide margin. Respondents believe investing in great teachers is the single most important step toward stronger schools.

Teachers are the most trusted voices in education, with 82% of respondents viewing them favorably, the highest of any institution tested. When asked who they trust most to improve education, 53% chose teachers, far outpacing parents (30%), principals (5%), and school board members (4%). This trust spans party lines, age groups, and ethnic backgrounds. Poll participants also ranked hiring and retaining well-qualified teachers as the single most important improvement for K-12 education (31%), ahead of increasing school funding (24%).

2 Residents recognize need to realign resources, strengthen schools.

Poll participants understand the tradeoffs that come with enrollment changes and are open to school consolidation when it leads to stronger outcomes for children.

When asked to prioritize, 74% of respondents say leaders should focus on ensuring students learn at the highest levels possible, even if that means closing or combining underenrolled schools, over keeping all schools open regardless of cost (20%). Similarly, 63% are comfortable with the county operating fewer schools as long as students have stronger programs and more staff. Consolidation messages about stronger academic programs (75% convincing) and better-targeted funding (74%) resonate broadly. Miamians are clear: outcomes for students come first.

3 Miamians believe schools are good, but not good enough.

Most poll participants rate Miami-Dade's public schools positively. But when presented with student reading data, overwhelming majorities say current performance is unacceptable and demand change.

Two-thirds of respondents (65%) rate Miami-Dade public schools positively, and 63% agree they prepare students well for college and careers. But Miamians are not complacent: 80% agree that too many students are performing below grade level, and when presented with data that shows nearly 40% of students are not reading at grade level, 86% rate that as substandard or unacceptable, with 64% calling it outright unacceptable. A full 88% of respondents believe schools need either major (50%) or minor (38%) changes.

4 Residents support school choice.

When asked to choose between competing educational priorities, a majority of respondents favored expanded choice over traditional funding models.

In a forced choice, 58% say parents should have more educational options so their children can attend the schools that best serve their needs, regardless of zip code or income, compared with 37% who say the priority should be better funding for traditional public schools. This aligns with broader sentiment about school options: 55% say the growth of public charter and magnet schools is a "good thing," while 18% say it is a "bad thing."

5 Miami is generous and expects responsible use of resources.

Miami-Dade residents are generous and ready to continue investing in their public schools. They also have a clear expectation: the district must demonstrate responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

The school millage renewal starts with solid support: 63% would vote yes on the initial ballot language, rising to 66% after hearing a plain-language explanation. Miami wants to fund teacher pay and school safety. However, 56% believe the district should find savings in operations rather than rely on tax increases, compared to 38% who say schools are underfunded. The lowest-rated area for education leaders is responsible use of taxpayer dollars (55% approve vs. 32% disapprove). Miamians are willing to invest in teacher and student success, but they want accountability and efficiency.

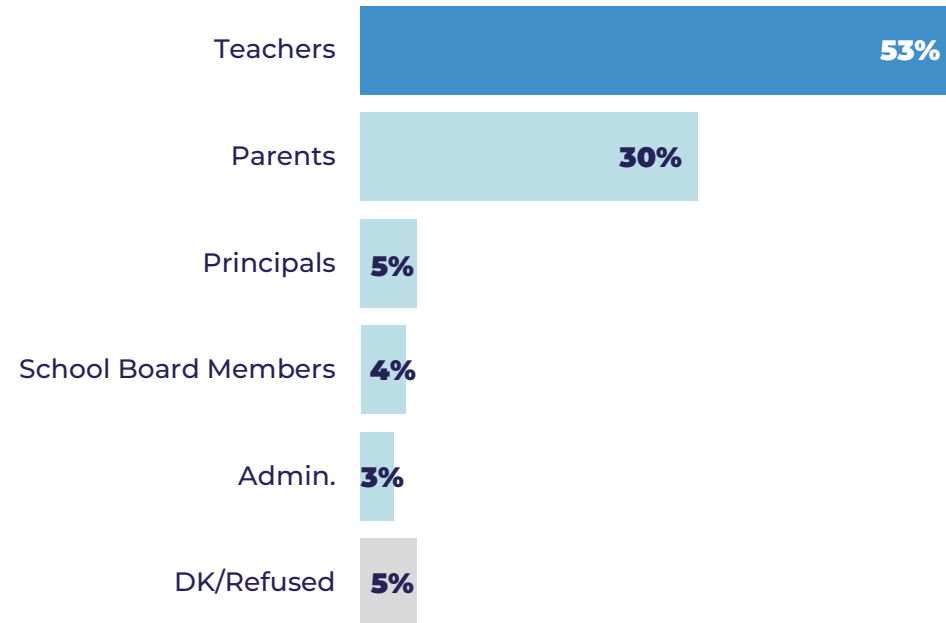
Miami trusts teachers the most.

When asked who they trust most to improve education, a majority (53%) selected teachers, far outpacing parents (30%) and other stakeholders. Teachers also received the highest favorable rating (82%), followed by traditional public schools (75%) and magnet schools (73%). Public charter schools earned a 62% favorable rating.

When poll participants were asked to identify the most important step to improve K-12 public education, the top response was “ensuring well-qualified teachers are hired and retained” (31%), followed by increasing funding for traditional public schools (24%).

53% of respondents trust teachers the most when it comes to improving education, reflecting deep community respect for educators.

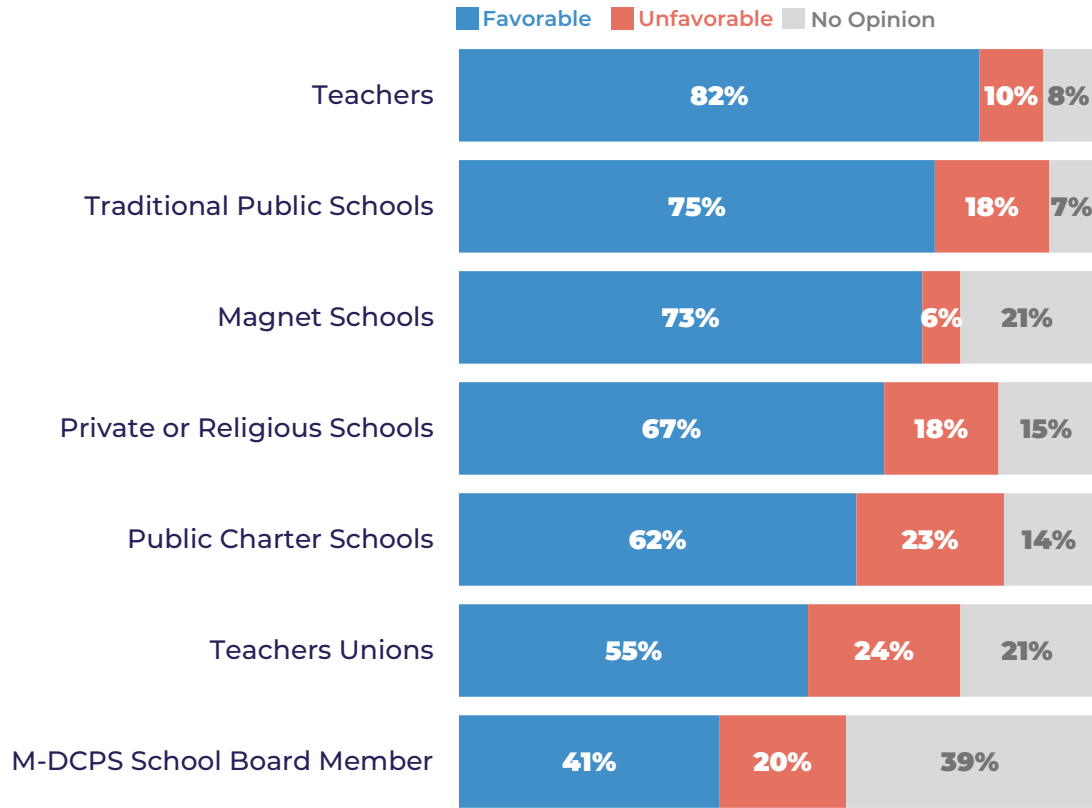
Who do you trust the MOST to improve education?



Miami trusts teachers the most. *(Cont.)*

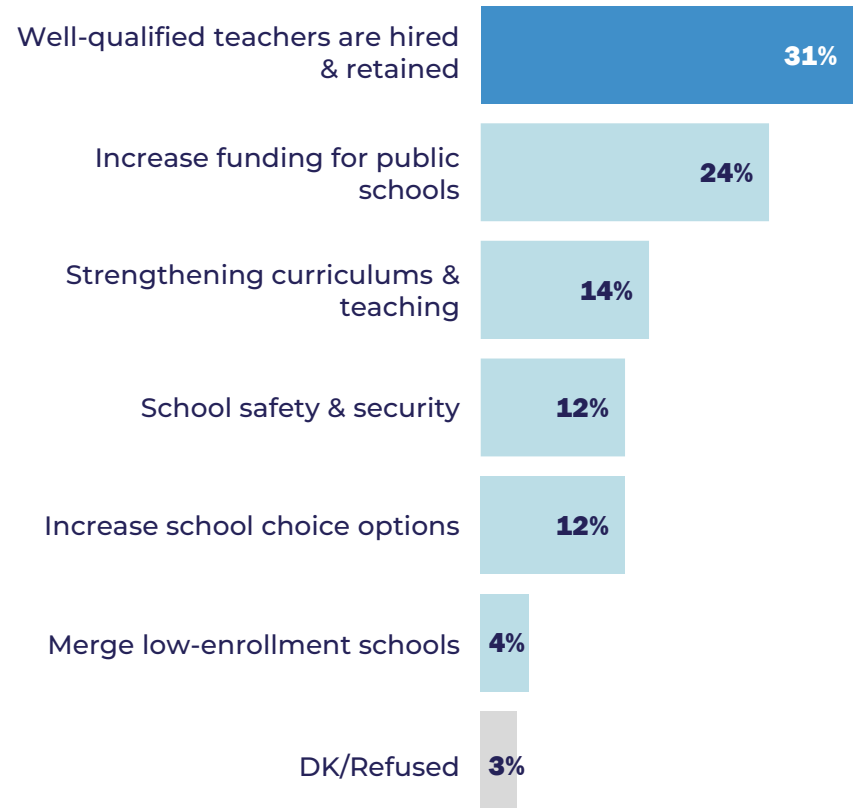
82% view teachers favorably, the highest rating of any group tested. This deep trust in educators is a foundation that strong leadership can build on.

Favorable or unfavorable opinion of each?



31% say hiring and retaining well-qualified teachers is the single most important step to improving Miami-Dade schools.

Which would MOST improve K-12 education?



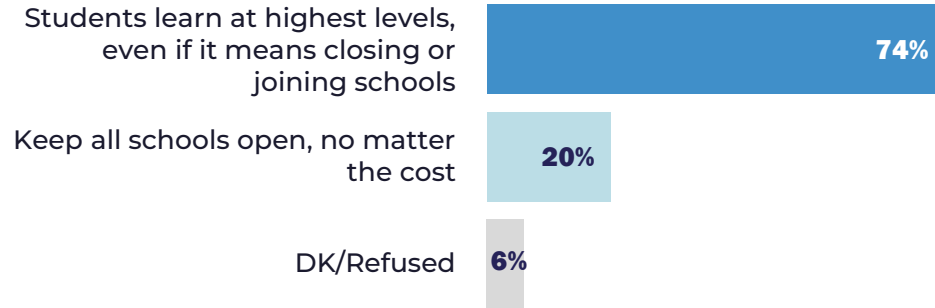
Residents recognize need to realign resources, strengthen schools.

53% of residents are aware that district enrollment has declined by more than 100,000 students over the past 20 years. The most commonly cited reason for declining enrollment (35%) is the rising cost of living, driving families out of Miami-Dade County.

When poll participants were informed that underenrolled public schools could mean fewer resources are available for classroom instruction and limit teacher pay, 78% responded that it was “concerning.” When presented with a hypothetical scenario involving two nearby public schools with low enrollment and whether they favored or opposed combining the two schools, 76% were in favor of combining schools to better deliver resources and academic support for students with just 18% in opposition.

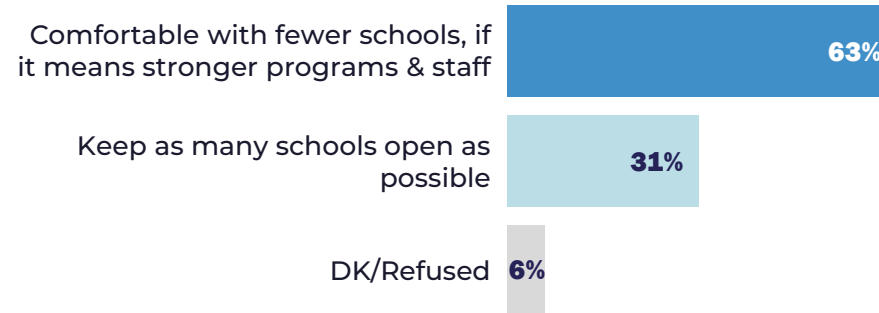
74% believe the top priority should be ensuring students achieve at the highest levels, even if it requires rethinking how schools are organized.

In light of enrollment decline, which should be a more important priority for education leaders?



63% are open to the idea of fewer schools if it means students get access to stronger programs and better-supported teachers.

Which comes closer to your opinion about the cost of maintaining school buildings vs. investing in education?



Residents recognize need to realign resources, strengthen schools. (Cont.)

78% recognize the financial challenges of operating schools with low enrollment and want to see resources used wisely.

When too many public schools are underenrolled, more funds are needed to operate those schools, which could reduce resources going directly to teaching students and paying teachers. How concerned are you about the financial impact?



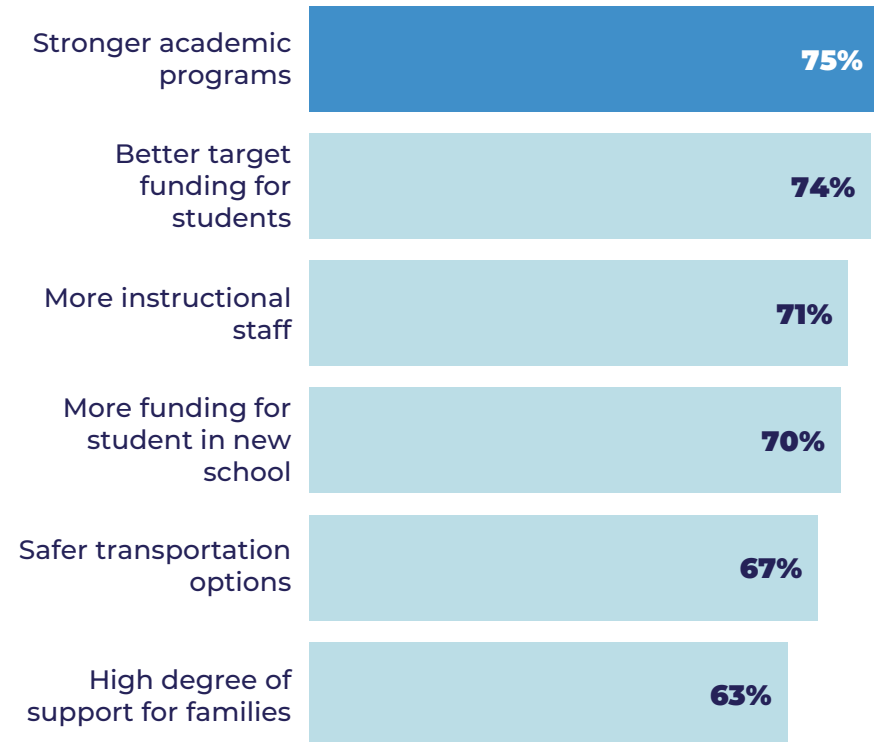
76% support combining two nearby low-enrollment schools when it means delivering better resources and outcomes for students.

Would you favor or oppose combining two nearby, low-enrollment schools into one to better deliver resources to students?



75% say “Stronger Academic Programs” is the most compelling reason to support combining underenrolled schools.

Please indicate if each of the following is a convincing or not convincing reason to SUPPORT combining underenrolled schools.



Miamians believe schools are good, but not good enough.

Poll participants were informed that “Miami-Dade County’s public school system is among the highest performing for large urban districts in the country in subjects like math and reading. However, results for individual schools, classrooms and students vary widely.” They were then asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “Despite Miami-Dade County’s public school system being high performing, there are still far too many students performing below grade level.” Eighty percent agreed with that statement.

According to school district data, nearly forty percent of Miami-Dade County public school students are not reading at grade level. Participants were asked how they felt about this fact. Sixty-four percent responded that it was “unacceptable.” Fifty percent of respondents said the district needs “major changes.”

Despite the acknowledgement of challenges, nearly 7 in 10 residents had a positive view of the quality of Miami-Dade public schools and 63% said that students are prepared for college and career success after graduating from a district high school.

80% agree that while M-DCPS is a high-performing district, there is still more work to do to ensure every student reaches grade level.

Despite M-DCPS being high performing, there are still far too many students performing below grade level.

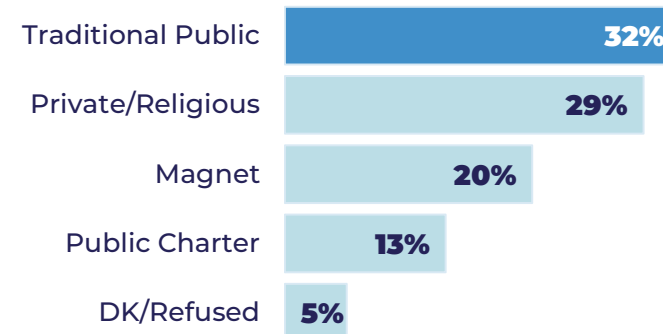


63% agree that Miami-Dade County public schools prepare students well for college .



32% trust traditional public schools the most when forced to choose a single school type.

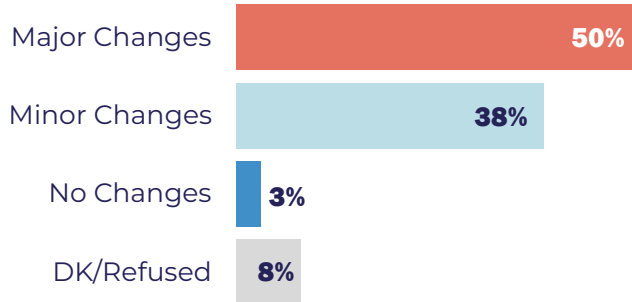
If forced to choose, what type of school do you trust the MOST?



Miamians believe schools are good, but not good enough. (Cont.)

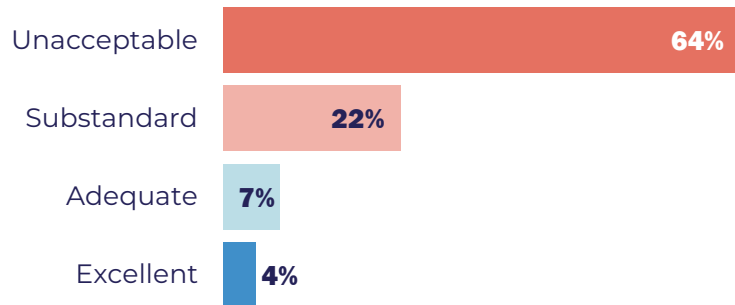
88% believe Miami-Dade County public schools would benefit from changes.

Do you think Miami-Dade County public schools need...?



64% see an urgent opportunity to improve reading outcomes, with nearly 40% of students not yet reading at grade level.

Would you describe this performance as...?



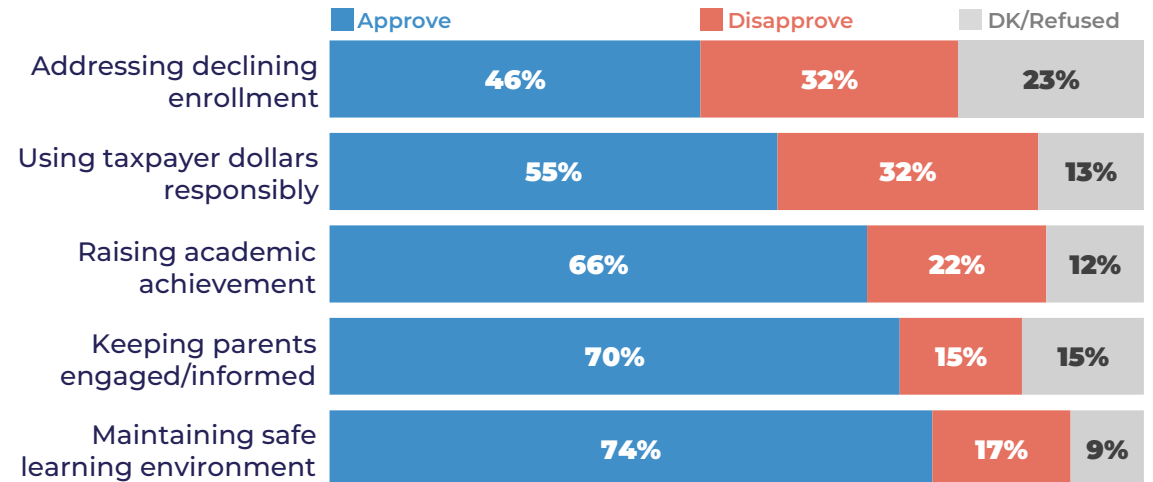
50% approve of the job the Miami-Dade County School Board is doing, while a third disapprove.

Do you approve or disapprove of the job that the Miami-Dade County School Board is doing?



46% approve of how leaders are addressing enrollment decline, making it the area where residents most want to see focused attention.

Do you approve of the job education leaders are doing on each of the following?



Residents support school choice.

When forced to choose between two competing educational priorities, a majority of respondents favored expanded choice over traditional funding models. According to the poll, 58% of participants believe parents should have more educational options so their children can attend schools that best serve their needs, regardless of zip code or income. In contrast, 37% felt the priority should be better funding for public schools, expressing concern that educational choice redirects money to wealthy private institutions.

This finding corresponds with whether poll participants thought the growth of public charter and magnet schools was a 'good thing' (55%) or a 'bad thing' (18%) for Miami-Dade County.

58% think parents should have more educational options so their children can attend the school that best serves their needs.

If forced to choose, which of the following comes closer to your opinion?

Parents should have **more educational options** so their children can attend the schools that best serve their needs regardless of their zip code or income

58%

We need to **better fund our public schools**. While educational choice is nice, it takes money out of our traditional public schools and gives them to wealthy private schools.

37%

DK/Refused **5%**

Miami is generous and expects responsible use of resources.

When presented with ballot language for the school millage renewal, 63% of likely residents indicated they would vote “Yes.” After reviewing simplified language explaining that the measure would continue the existing property tax rate for five years — costing the average homeowner approximately \$250 per year — and would fund teacher pay, personnel, and school safety, support increased to 66%.

In 2022, 71% of Miami-Dade residents backed a referendum reauthorizing the 2018 vote for residents to tax themselves in order to provide salary supplements for teachers and school safety. Approximately 88% of the funds are designated for teacher and counselor salaries and 12% is used for school safety measures including the hiring of school resource officers.

63% would vote “Yes” on the millage referendum today, reflecting strong community support for public education funding.

If the election were held today, would you vote YES or NO?



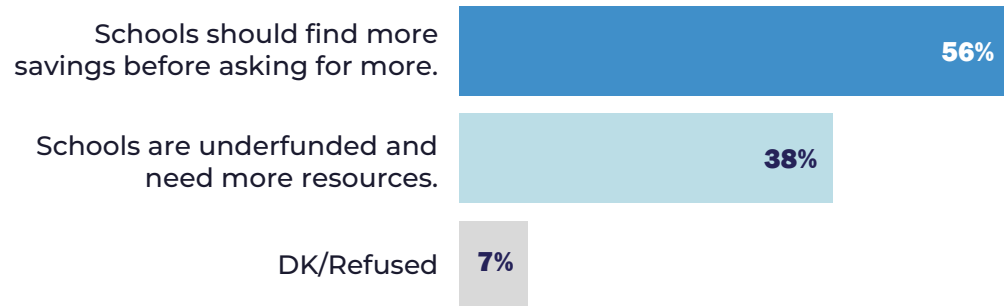
66% vote Yes after learning the referendum continues an existing tax for teacher pay and school safety, not a new tax increase.

After simplified explanation:



56% say schools should find savings first, yet the millage still passes at 63–66%, showing residents will fund accountability.

Which comes closer to your opinion?





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