

Kauffman Future of Learning: Qual Board Findings and Recommendations



Objectives

Provide insight into parents' perceptions of the future of learning and explore language to communicate future initiatives following the April survey.

Supporting objectives:

1. Assess parents feelings toward their children's education and expectations of education.
2. Investigate how parents think of and talk about life skills, career and job skills, as well as college skills.
3. Determine the language best suited to communicate new learning initiatives and appetite for reform.



Methodology

Global Strategy Group conducted two qual boards between October 8th and 10th, 2018 among 42 parents in the Kansas City Metro Area.

Boards were segmented by ethnic background:

Board 1: White Parents

- Subset of Rural Parents

Board 2: Parents of Color



Educational environment

Parents see their communities through the lens of education systems—and most KC parents are satisfied

Education dominates the conversation about the area in which parents raise their children, often second only to crime.

*We have lived in our town for only 2 1/2 years. We chose our town because it used to be small and **the schools are close by and have great reviews**. – White Parent*

*I live in a relatively quiet and racially mixed suburban community in the Midwest where the cost of living and **quality school district education** make it ideal to raise children and family. – Black Parent*

Generally, parents are happy with KC metro schools— though there is some dissent among non-white parents.

*Excellent. **I feel like my kids are challenged and score high on national testing**. The school offers a wide variety of extracurricular activities. There is a high level of parent participation and involvement. – White Parent*

*The quality of the schools in my area are okay. I would not say they are the greatest. **But the teachers can only teach the information that is given to them**. – Black Parent*



Rural parents tend to place value on a “tight-knit community” and “knowing/trusting neighbors” when assessing their community.

High schools are doing a good job preparing students for college, but miss the mark when it comes to life beyond the classroom

Most parents feel high schools are doing a better job preparing students for college...

*I think that schools with proper funding and administration are most definitely providing opportunities for college readiness. **Programs like AP classes and the A[+] program in Missouri are definitely successfully geared towards higher education.** – Black Parent*

*Yes [they are doing a good job preparing students for college]. **More college level courses**, days structured as how colleges do them, better access to colleges and universities. – White Parent*

...but are not seeing enough focus on life after the classroom.

*I think they are more focused on test taking and where the school ranks as a whole. **They need to focus on finance, balancing bank accounts and what it means to provide and live.** – White Parent*

*High schools these days **are not good at preparing students for life beyond the classroom.** Schools should have a specific class dedicated to this, that is mandatory for all students EACH year of high school. – Black Parent*

Other skills
parents feel are
missing:



Finances



Responsibility



Time management



Critical
Thinking



Parents desire an interactive community of learning— they dislike their own isolated experiences and rote memorization

Their Own High School Experience



I selected this image to show that my high school experience was all about being 'book smart' and less about teaching and technology. It was complex because it often ended up **simply regurgitating material**, that you read, instead of demonstrating a true understanding. – White Parent



I had a very well rounded, culturally diverse, vigorous high school experience. I had a college prep experience because that is what I wanted. **The sense of community was not there but I would say my personal desire and drive propelled me alone!**
– Latinx Parent

Their Ideal High School Experience



The reason I chose this photo is because it shows what I feel is one of the most important things one learns while in high school, **how to create and sustain lasting friendships**. – Black Parent



This teacher is being very **interactive** with students. This is a good environment full of learning. This photo is different from the photo I chose of my high school experience because **we didn't have a lot of interaction with most of our teachers**. – Latinx Parent

Parents want some form of higher education for their children, but their ultimate goal is self-sufficient children

Some type of higher education is a top priority for both white parents and parents of color...

*I mainly want my kids to get their high school diploma, and then find something that they are passionate about and pursue it. My oldest...has no intent on going to college, but instead is **making plans to attend a trade school** when he graduates. – Black Parent*

*I expect big things for my daughter... **I fully expect her to attend college** and pursue a career of her choosing. She has many dreams: designer, engineer, and singer. I plan on helping her achieve whichever she chooses. – White Parent*

...but the ultimate goal is independence, self-sufficiency and character.

*I will not dictate my child's career field, however it is my job to make sure they have the right tools and mindset to become a **confident and effective member of society**. – Black Parent*

*I expect my children to graduate and apply themselves in some sort of post-secondary education. I expect my child to accomplish **independence** as an adult and be **a functioning and contributing member of society**. – White Parent*

*I hope my children get to pursue whatever dream career they choose. I hope they grow up to be **independent and financially savvy adults** and that they aren't haunted by debt, etc. – Black Parent*



Parents of Color are more likely to mention trade school and technical schools as options than **White Parents**.

Many parents would like to broaden the scope of high school to have greater emphasis on preparing students for life as an adult



Money management
“Financial Literacy”
“Budgeting”

*I believe students should be learning money management, the stock market, home buying and **more about developing their own businesses**. It makes me upset that home ownership and **money management isn't learned because it is such a huge part of adult life**. – Black Parent*



Communication

*I think students are losing touch with respecting authority, proper etiquette, how to **interact socially without social media**. They are also **lacking good communication skills**. – Black Parent*



Responsibility / Independence

*The main thing they could be doing better is teaching study habits and **independent studying / learning responsibilities**, as college work is primarily on the student to learn material. – White Parent*

Test scores often play a prominent role in parents' assessment of what makes a good school – often absent are metrics focused on life beyond the classroom and career-ready skills

Metrics of good schools:



Reviews & test scores



Graduation rates / college enrollment



Caring / engaged teachers



Problem solving curriculum

Metrics of bad schools:



Low test scores



Drop-out rates



Safety concerns



Attendance records



Parents are clearly conflicted: while they rely on test scores as a metric for good schools, they bemoan the “teaching to the test” culture

Some parents see test taking limiting the opportunity to learn basic skills, arts and creativity, and that the pendulum has swung too far towards tests.

*Now schools are so focused on testing that they **don't teach kids things they necessarily need to know to reach their personal goals, and they teach to test.** – White Parent*

*Schools are very focused on test scores especially in elementary... The higher the test score the more money and resources they get! **There is no push for community. There is no push for music/art/any extra curricular activities.** – Latinx Parent*

*The only thing I don't like is the amount of testing for the kids. I know we need to do assessments to understand where the kids rank **but I just think it is too much testing and I think it is difficult for the teachers to do that much testing for the kids.** – White Parent*

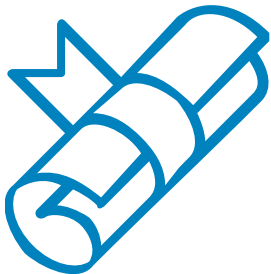


The (declining) value of a
college degree

Parents believe the purpose of college is to get a job, so parents look to career prospects to justify costs



If there is the guarantee of a well-paying job at the end of the college career, then yes, going into debt is worth it. I think the \$20,000-\$25,000 amount is a reasonable amount to pay. Unfortunately, the cost continues to rise over the years, which will push more and more people away from attending these institutions. – White Parent



A lot of jobs just want a degree, any degree. You're not even considered for a lot without that piece of paper. But once you have it, you can get a wide variety of jobs. – White Parent

If my child had a job lined up after college, which would help foot the bill of education, or even got into a career with tuition forgiveness, I'd be on that in a heartbeat. However, there are so many soft degrees that you just don't need, like philosophy. In that case, the internet or cracking a book are far cheaper than attending a four year college. – White Parent



Given the purpose of college is to get a good paying job, parents see little utility in a liberal arts education.

A college degree is baked into parent expectations, but rising costs and impending debt strikes at their desire for financial self sufficiency

**\$20,000 -
\$100,000**

Assumed Cost of a 4 year
College Degree

\$20,000

Reasonable price for 4 year
College Degree

Is college worth it?

I think it depends on the earning potential of the degree, where paying a loan off is easier to accomplish (e.g., a high paid in-demand field vs a lesser paid field demand, where paying off the loan may take years). – Black Parent

*If my kid can't make **at least enough money to live on her own and build her life** at least similar to what I had and have then it's not worth it.* – White Parent

*A college degree is worth it, if after the student is able to find a job **paying a salary that will allow them to begin to support themselves**. [It's] not worth it [if] the loans that student is paying back takes a big part of the student's salary.* – Black Parent

I see [the value of a college degree] declining. Because of the huge student loan debt, paying off your loans will take such a long time. – Black Parent



Given the purpose of college is employment, parents want college students developing tangible career skills

Desired College Skills



STEM Courses /
Technical Skills



Communication



Collaboration /
Interpersonal



Interviewing



Professional Experience



Work Ethic



Time Management



Most parents felt college students, to an extent, are being prepared for the workforce of tomorrow, though [Rural Parents](#) were more likely to be unsure.

Parents see the typical college students as carefree and dependent on parents, with costs often dictating access, particularly among parents of color

Typical College Student



- 18-25 years old
- Mostly supported by parents (help from financial aid & part-time jobs)
- Focused on classes, studying and social life

College Access & Cost

Parents of color are somewhat less likely to think everyone has the same chance at a college education

*Not everyone has a chance at a college education. **What determines if a kid has a chance at a four year college is if they get a student loan or grants, or if he/she pays for it, or their parents.***

– Black Parent

Everyone has the same opportunity to go to college, it might just be easier for some than others.** Some families can provide more financial and emotional support, where as other students are more on their own to get financial aid and support themselves. **– White Parent

How parents think about skills

Parents describe life skills as those needed to navigate adult life



Self-Care Skills

Financial Planning, Cooking, Laundry, Hygiene, Grocery Shopping, Taxes

Budgeting. Laundry. Grocery shopping. Cooking. Taking care of a car. These are critical skills our students lack. – White Parent



Communication / Social Skills

Social Interactions, Emotional Awareness, Confidence

*The skills communication, critical thinking and self control are essential in my opinion **because being able to communicate in the work place and in general, is necessary to engage other individuals effectively.** –Black Parent*



Responsibility

Organization, Time Management, Decision Making, Self-Control, Commitment

*For a student to be ready for life, they have to have **the discipline to succeed**; but moreover, they also have to have **common sense** – Black Parent*



White Parents overwhelmingly stress financial literacy and money management, along with home ec skills. **Parents of Color** stress this as well, but also mention “self-discipline”, “self-control” and “accountability.”

When parents think of college ready skills, they rarely think of subject matter expertise— instead they lean back into life skills



Responsibility

Financial Planning, Time Management, Organization, Independence

College ready skills consist of **being a hard worker, on time, willing to learn and adapt**. These are very important [and] a lot of students don't realize how much this impacts them because college is so different from high school. – White Parent



Communication Skills

Collaboration, Team Work, Listening

When thinking of college ready skills, I think of time management skills, **communication skills**, problem solving skills and technological skills. – White Parent



Self-Care Skills

Money Management, FAFSA skills, Scholarships

These skills are important because once an individual goes to college, for the most part, they are more independent and **no longer reliant on the parents for everyday tasks like washing clothes, waking themselves up, and going to class**. –Black Parent



Technical Skills

High School knowledge, Study Skills

If a child doesn't have an **understanding in the required high school course**, they will be lost in the advanced requirements of college. –White Parent



White parents put more emphasis on communication skills, problem-solving and money management, while Parents of Color are more likely to stress discipline, self-motivation and accountability.

Parents focus on communication skills above all else for career skills, a consistent theme in the needs of parents, and look for these skills to be taught in high school



Communication Skills

Collaboration, Team Work

*Communication skills. Even if you don't have the best overall abilities for a job, **if you can communicate well, I think you're a better asset** than someone that looks like they are the total package. – White Parent*



Technical Skills

Math, Business, MS Office,
Technology

Familiar with Word, Excel and other Microsoft Office programs... Familiar with code. Able to understand other languages like Spanish. Good writing skills. Ability to do basic math and above. – White Parent



Responsibility

Attitude, Time Management, Problem
Solving, Organization, Work Ethic,
Commitment

With having a career, being able to manage time is really important. Being organized is also another important factor. – White Parent

Parents see job skills as specific, applicable skills, whereas career skills contribute to long-term growth and development

Parents see job skills as more immediate and specific to the task...

A job is right now you'll take anything to pay the bills, a career is with focus and intent on a specific skill set.

- *Black Parent*

Career ready skills to me involve more higher level thinking, planning, and execution of tasks with a more widespread audience and accountability factor (the abstract). **Job ready skills to me are more concrete and more specific technical related skills.** (ex: Working on an assembly line and mastering a focused manual task). – *White Parent*

... while career skills look towards long term growth potential.

*I don't really think that career ready skills and job ready skills are the same but they are as equally important. Job ready skills is the ability to succeed in entry-level, general education and move into a program of study or a college major. **Career ready skills is the ability not just to enter into, but to advance through a career over time.***

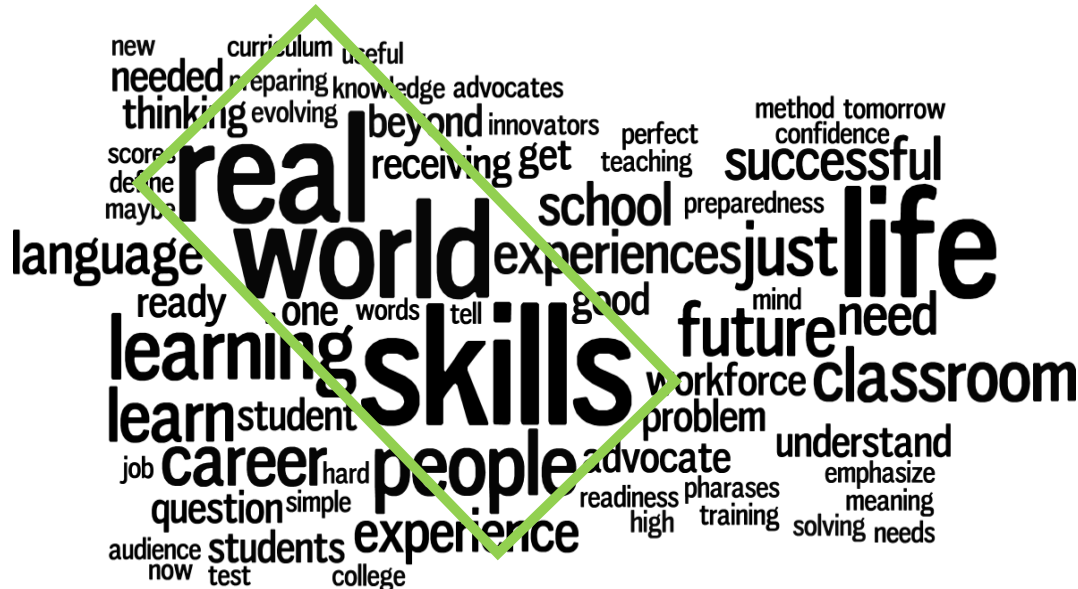
- *White Parent*

*There is a slight difference between job and career readiness but not by much. Jobs are kind of short sighted and in the now. **Careers are long term with growth potential; some do turn jobs into careers.*** - *Black Parent*



While parents see value in all skills, life skills are fundamental to success in both the workforce and college, so are a priority to many

What phrases should advocates use when talking about a high school education that teaches useful skill sets for the future workforce students will face?



Parents ultimately see real life skills as imperative over college/work skills

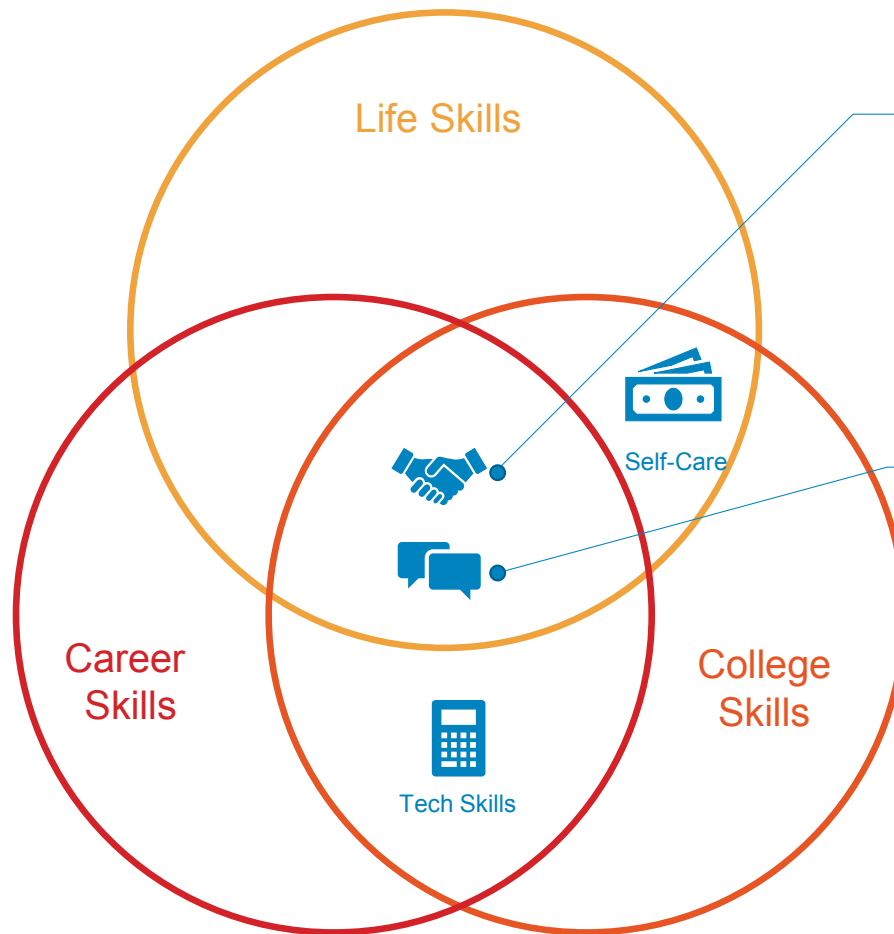
*I would say the most important would be to prepare for life first. **You have to be prepared for life in order to prepare for work or career.***

- Black Parent

*I believe all are extremely important. **Most important would be preparing them for life as an adult beyond the classroom.** These skills I believe need to be mastered before they can be career oriented. - White Parent*



Personal responsibility and communication / social skills are required for success in life, career and college



Personal Responsibility

- Money Management
- Organization, Time Management
- Self Control
- Accountability

Communication / Social Skills

- Social Interactions
- Emotional Awareness
- Collaboration, Teamwork
- Verbal / Written Communication

Parents prioritize soft skills like communication, perseverance and critical thinking. Looking to the future, parents see little value in test taking skills

High Importance Skills

Skill Set	Avg. Rating 10 pt scale
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Communication	9
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Perseverance	9
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Critical Thinking	9
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Communication will be even more essential 20-30 years from now.

-White parent

Low Importance Skills

Skill Set	Avg. Rating 10 pt scale
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Standardized Tests	5
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SAT and ACT	5
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These tests are a joke. They won't mean anything 20-30 years from now.

- White parent



Parents of Color stress “perseverance”, followed by “communication” and “tolerating unpleasant feelings.” **White Parents** stress “communication” followed by “critical thinking” and “judgement and decision-making.”

How to talk about reform

Most parents welcome change, though there is little consensus on how much change is needed—a good reminder of the importance of tone

Parents are split on if there needs to be minor changes, major changes, or a complete overhaul...

...but all would welcome some level of change

*For Kansas City public schools, **a complete overhaul is needed**. A change in how schools are funded would be the first step.*

– Black Parent

*As far as I know, **it would be a minor change**. Some classes are already offered to help with this but it is limited and not required.*

– White Parent

*I think [many] more additional things need to be incorporated into the schools. **This includes open minded, diverse ways of thinking**. This would require a **major change** in how schools think teaching should be. Offer basic classes that students don't even learn until college.*

– White Parent

*I would say **there has to be a push for no nonsense and straight forward methods, telling the students this is actually something you will need to succeed**. It starts early labeling a class saying "life skills/study skills/how to keep a job/how to be successful in life etc.."*

– Latinx Parent



High schools are generally seen as capable of teaching desired skills — parents point to interactive teaching and experiential learning as possible routes

Parents see high schools as capable of teaching life skills, career skills, and college skills...

... and look to hands-on learning experiences as a tool to build these skills.

***I absolutely believe they are capable.** They used to teach life skills, which was in a lot of home ec classes, but those have gone by the wayside. As for career/job ready skills, I think that this could definitely be implemented. - White Parent*

*I think it is possible... **I don't think that these kind of skills could be taught in the classroom utilizing typical strategies alone. It would take real life scenarios and hand on training.** - Latinx Parent*

Yes, high schools can teach these skills and I believe they can be in conjunction with core classes. - Black Parent

*Give them situations and prepare for them to deal with [them]. **Having pretending examples and letting them handle would be useful.** Having the kids shadow an adult for the day and know what skills the adult are using. - White Parent*



Lack of resources and too much emphasis on test tacking are common obstacles to reform



Funding

Cutting workforce and **budget** doesn't help... not empowering teachers, or giving them a decent salary... **focusing so much on metrics** and not enough on life skills, individual pursuits, etc.

- White Parent, Rural



Test focus

State required tests. Because schools have to teach to the test, it prevents making proper changes to the curriculum.

- White Parent

When talking about the new strategy, there is an opportunity to appeal to parents' frustration with their own lack of life preparedness



Coming out of high school, was there anything you believe your high school education left you unprepared for?

Financial management

*I feel that high school left me unprepared for credit. When I got out of high school I didn't have any knowledge of how credit cards work, and **I was not taught how to properly manage money.** [I] got myself into a financial hardship. – Black Parent*



**Communication/
Social Skills**

*The **real world.** I needed work on my interpersonal relationships.
– White Parent*



Responsibility

***I felt like I really didn't know how to live as an adult.** That should have been talked about and how to handle different situations. So when I got to college, it was a huge eye opener on how far behind I really was.
– White Parent*



Parents are excited by language that references responsibility, independence and life skills

*At ZYX High School we are shaking things up and changing the way students learn. At this school, **we let kids determine how they learn** and how they are measured on their learning. **Class sizes are small**, with an average 1:15 ratio. You have the opportunity to **work in teams, as well as independently**, and set reasonable timelines for yourself on when projects are due. Teachers are there to teach the material in a way that benefits you, and **you will be required to be responsible for your learning**. If you complete the requirements prior to the end of the semester, **you can do work study or you can attend seminars and classes on learning life skills and preparing yourself to enter the workforce**. – White Parent*

*I am proud to announce to the community, the opening of Dreams League High School. We are excited about your future because **we guarantee your success**, because we will not only **ensure you'll succeed academically, but beyond the school book**. We will provide **mandatory paid internships** for all students where you will be taught **money management** through a bank account open via Dreams League High School. The school will provide 50% of college tuition for all students and **we will work towards finding grants** for our lower income students – Black Parent*



Parents volunteered the following popular key phrases



- Black Parent



- Latinx Parent



- White Parent, Rural



Again, parents gravitate toward “real world” language when prompted with phrases Kauffman might use

“Real World Learning”



I love this because real-world learning is so important.
– White Parent

“Beyond the Classroom”



I would use this because you are teaching skills for real life and not just basic academic tools.
– White Parent

“Education is Evolving”



I would use this in my billboard because it really makes you want to know more.
– Black Parent



Findings & Recommendations

Key Themes

Life Skills

Life skills encompass skills that are critical for success in adult life, the future workforce, and college. Moreover, this is what parents believe are missing from today's high schools and what frustrates them most about their experience. When talking about needed skills, lean into this lane.

Community

Parents want their children to be integrated into the community and know how to communicate with their peers. Emphasis placed on group learning and social skills will resonate with parents.

Incremental

Parents are not on the same page about how much change is necessary. Promote incremental changes to the education system that will not intimidate the parents that do not see a huge need for change.



Key Themes Continued

Metrics

Parents dislike standardized tests and the culture they create; however, absent metrics to evaluate a school's ability to prepare students with useful skills, standardized tests provide parents with a reliable way to understand school performance. We need to fill that void.

Self-Sufficiency and Independence

When parents think of their children's future, they do think of college, but what they really want is self-sufficiency and for their children to be independent. Frame the education initiative as providing students with the skills they need to ultimately be self-sufficient and independent.



The campaign in 30 seconds:

Most of the tests students will face in life will not be in the classroom. It is time for **education to evolve** and ensure students are ready for the **real world** by creating **independent** and **self-sufficient** students through **interactive, community** based high schools that are focused on **life skills** that go beyond the classroom.



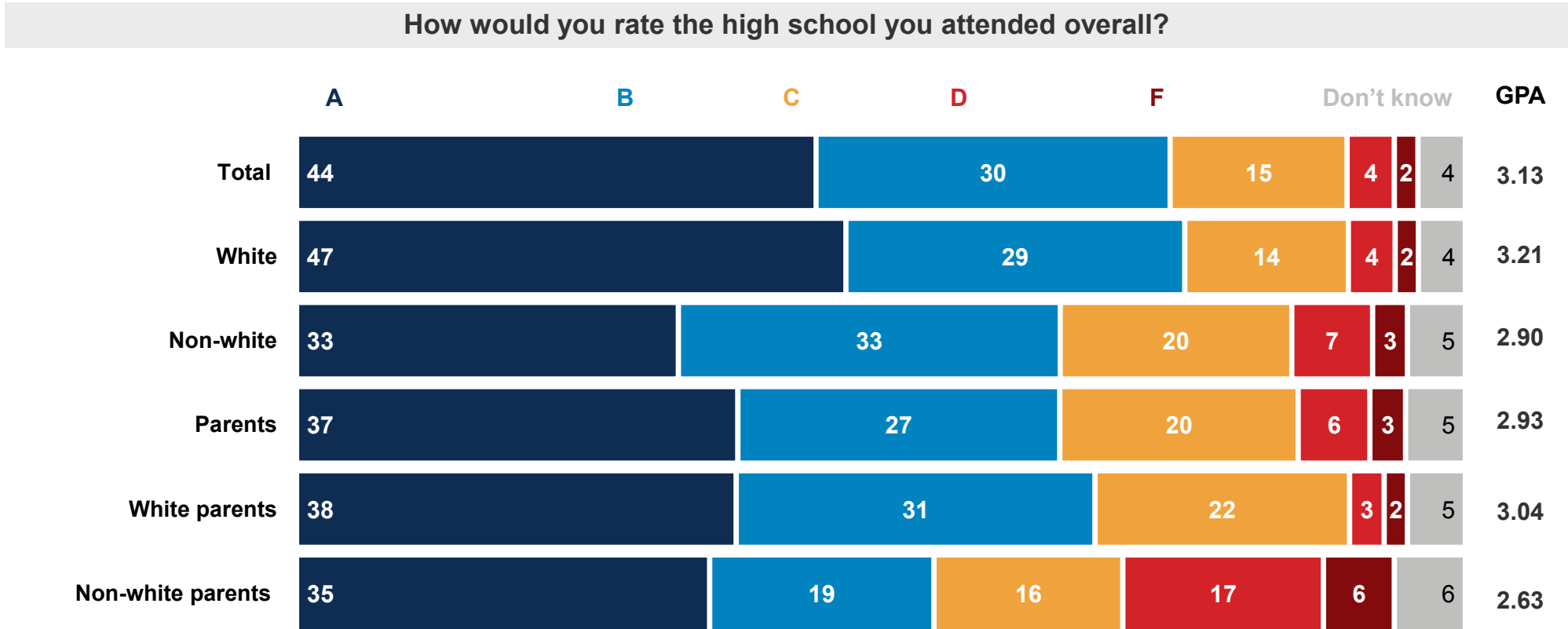
Future of Learning Research Findings

Prepared by Global Strategy Group for the Kauffman Foundation



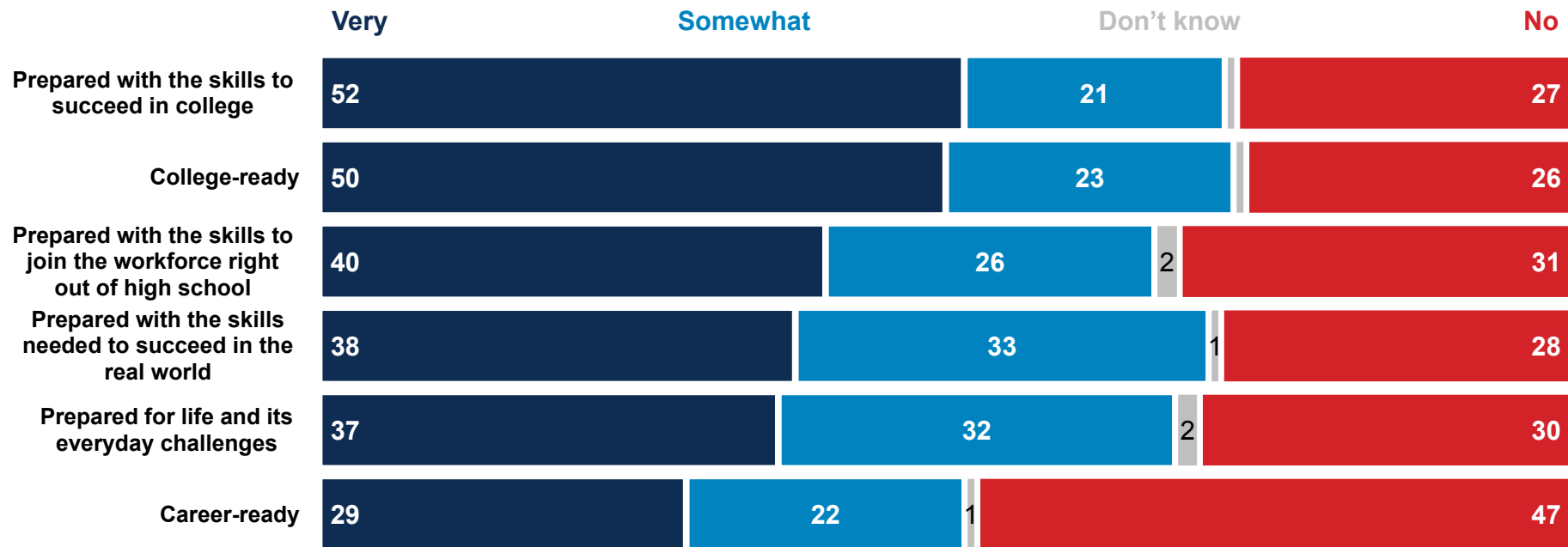
State of Education

Kansas City residents are happy with the high school education they received



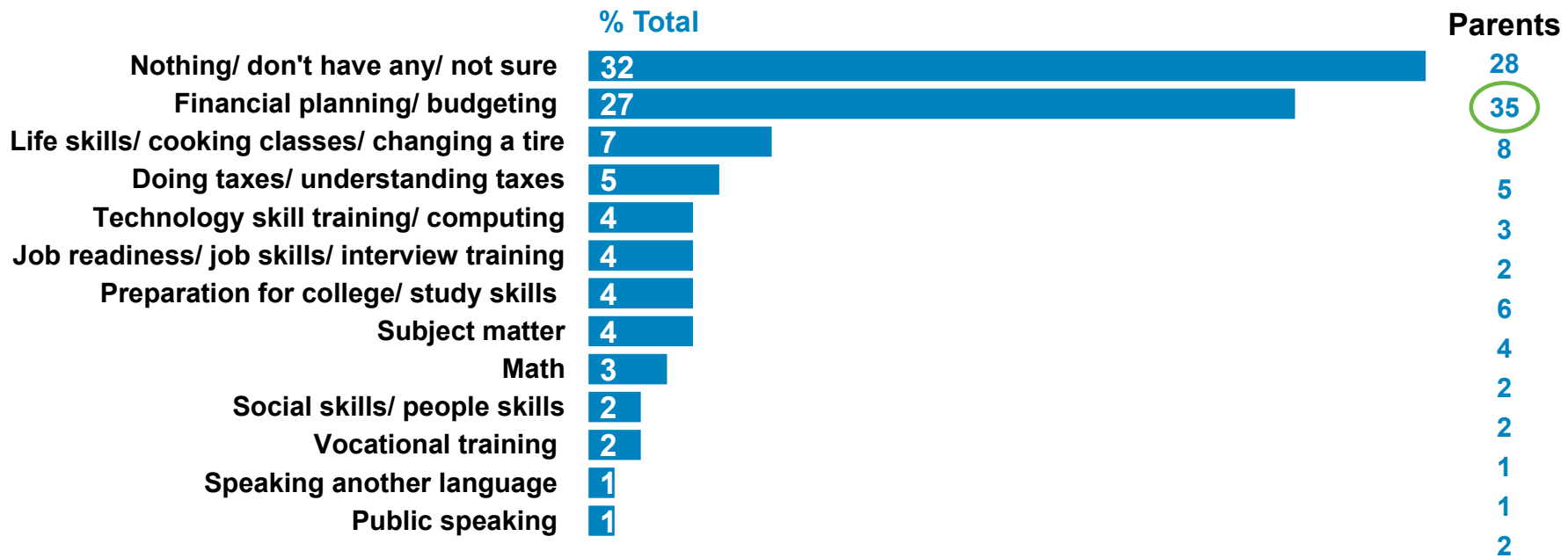
They feel high school did a good job of preparing them for college, but less so when it comes to the workforce or real world skills

Thinking about your own high school education, upon graduation do you believe you were...



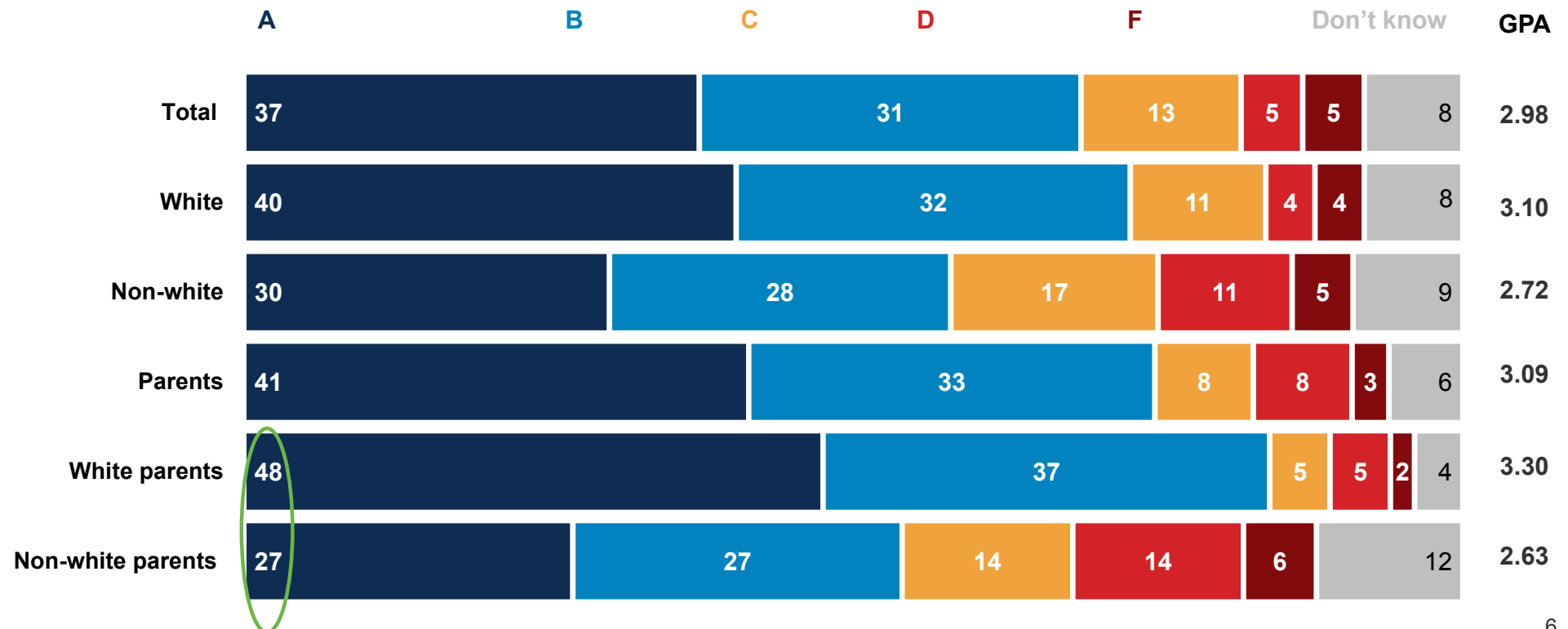
Residents have a limited notion of “skills” at the top of their minds

What skill did your high school not teach you that you believe would have better prepared you for later in life?



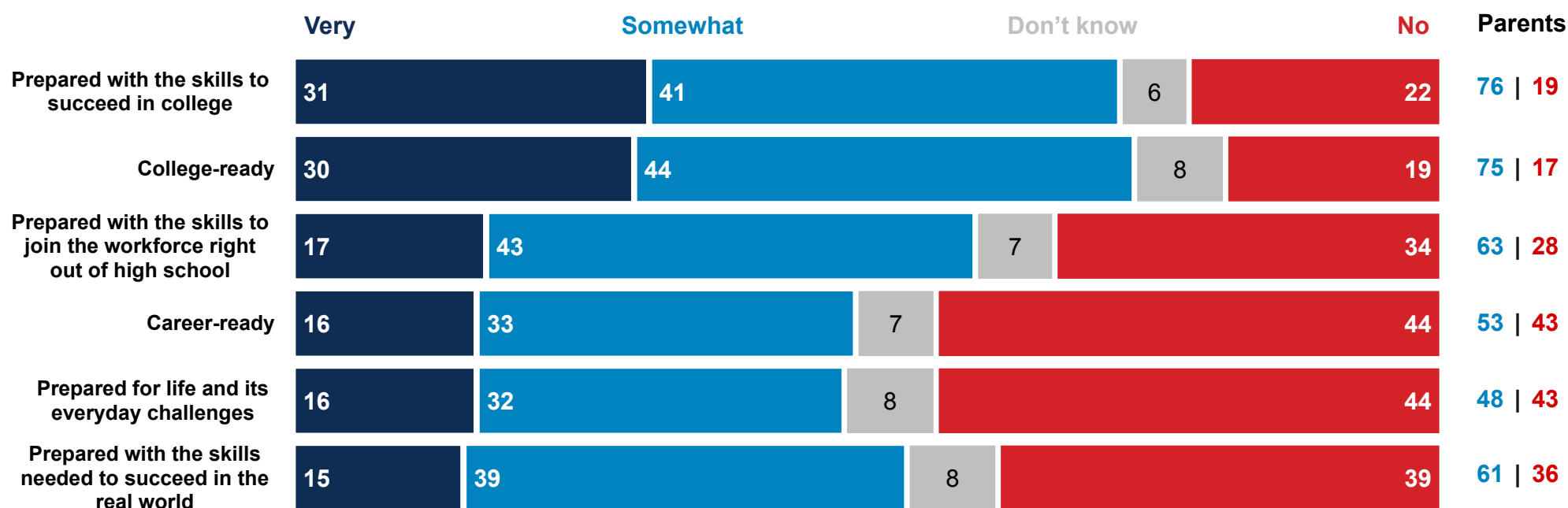
Kansas City residents are happy with schools in their area

How would you rate the high schools in your area overall?



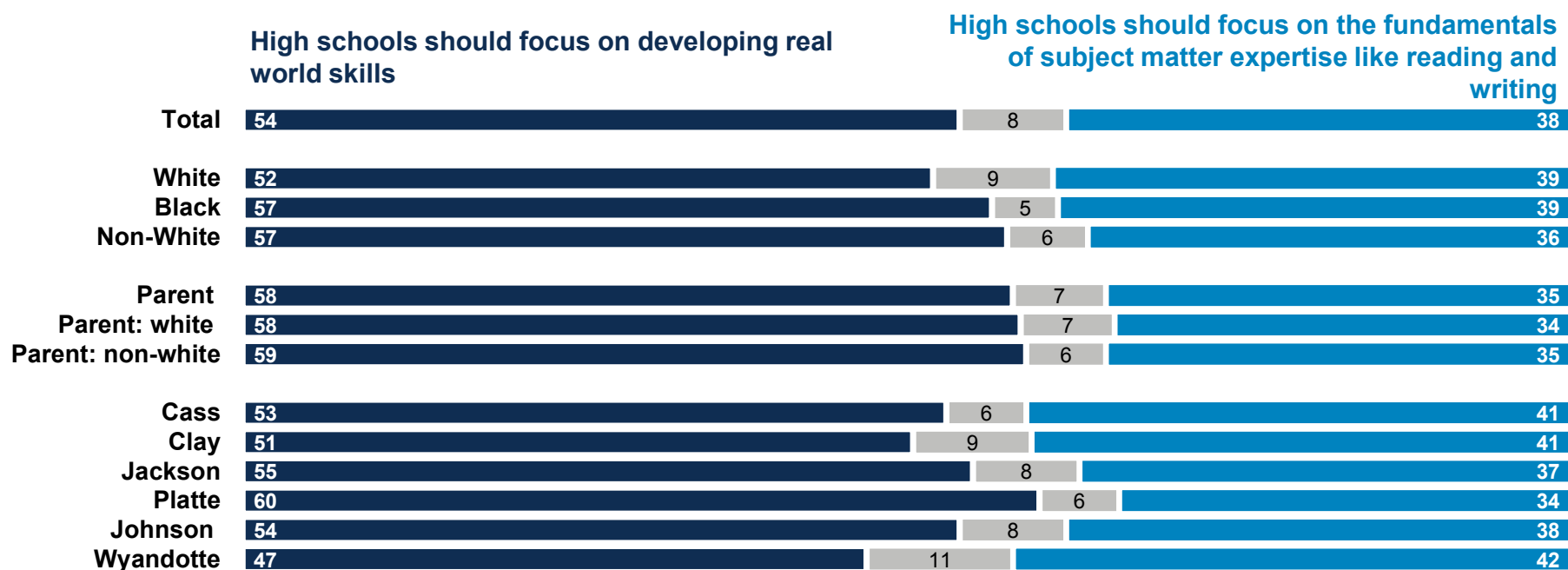
Across the board, today's students are less prepared– with the same disparity between college preparation and real world preparation

Do you believe students who graduate from high schools in your area are...



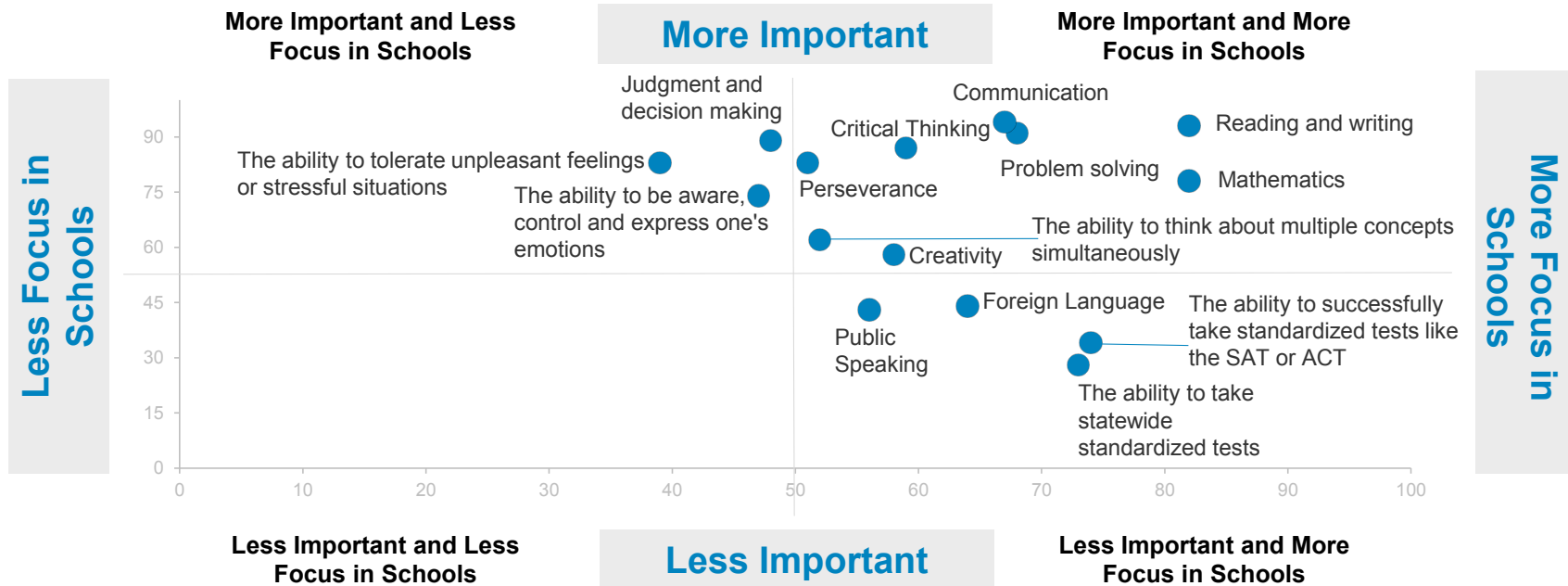
Across groups, there is a clear desire to prioritize real world skills over subject matter in high school

Where should high schools place their focus to prepare students for the future of work?



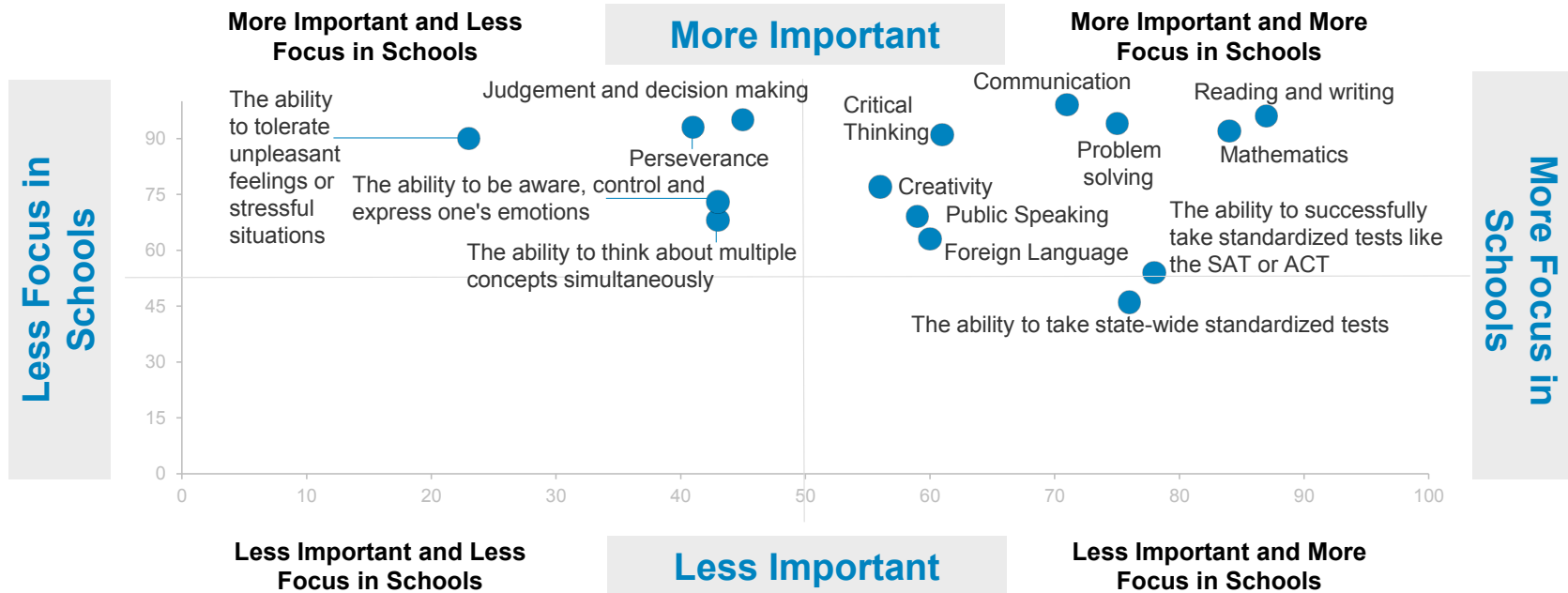
Residents see schools emphasizing testing over decision-making skills

Skills (Focus v. Importance) Total



Non-white parents agree underteaching of critical skills, but still see importance in college prep skills like SAT/ACT and statewide exams

Skills (Focus v. Importance) Non-White Parents

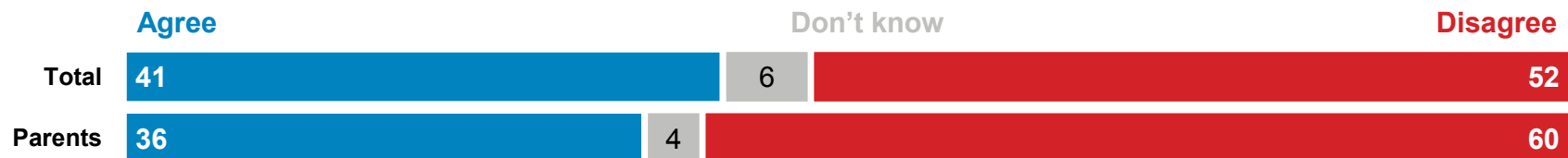


Room for improvement when it comes to how high schools approach preparedness for life after school as well as overall accountability

The current model of assessment used by most public schools, in other words the practice of rating students on an A-F scale is an effective way to measure...

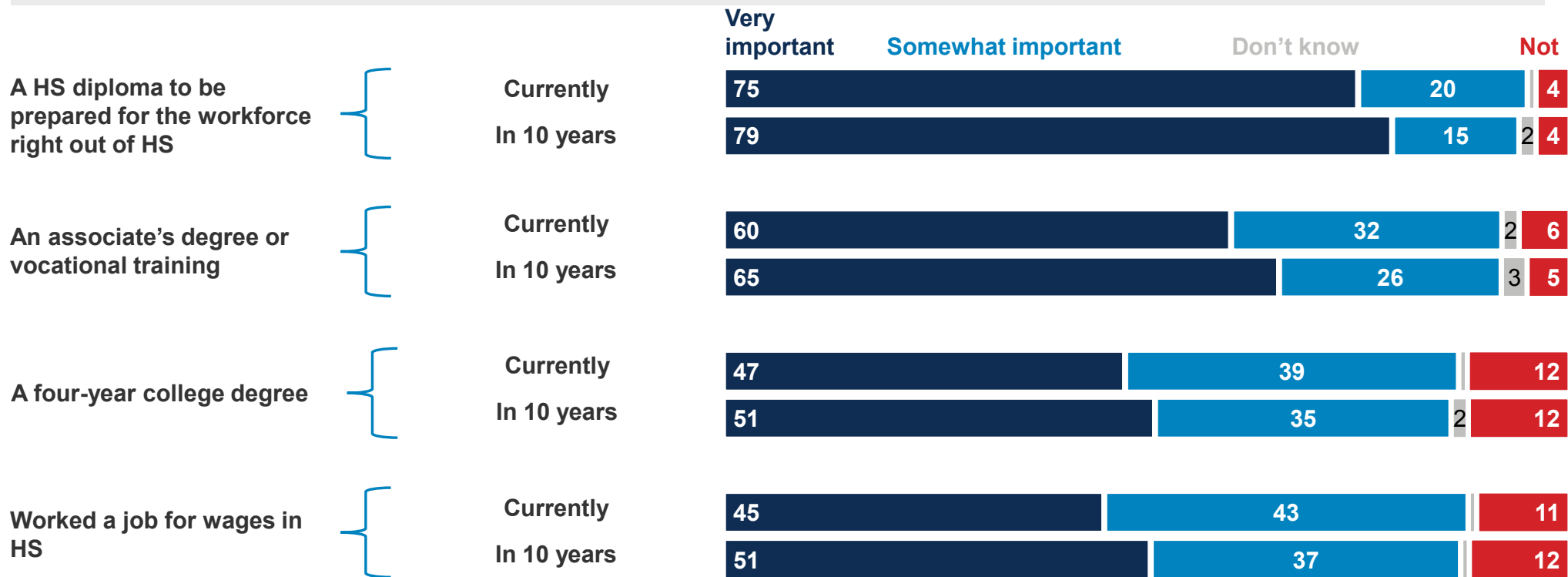


The current model of assessment used by most public schools, statewide standardized tests, is an effective way to measure high school accountability

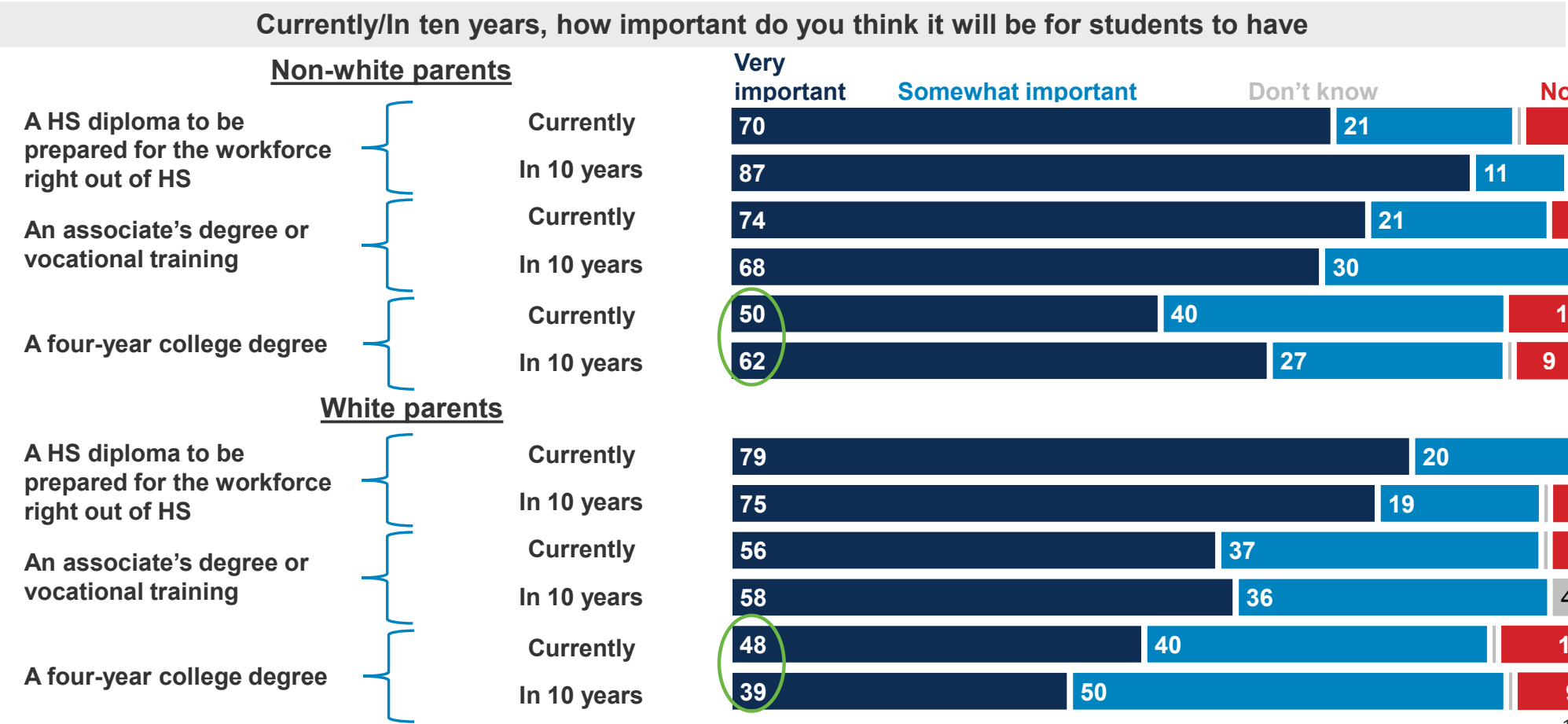


On the surface, residents see the growing importance of high school, vocational programs as well as a four-year college degree

Currently/In ten years, how important do you think it will be for students to have



Yet the value of college is declining among white parents, while non-white parents believe college will be more important in the future



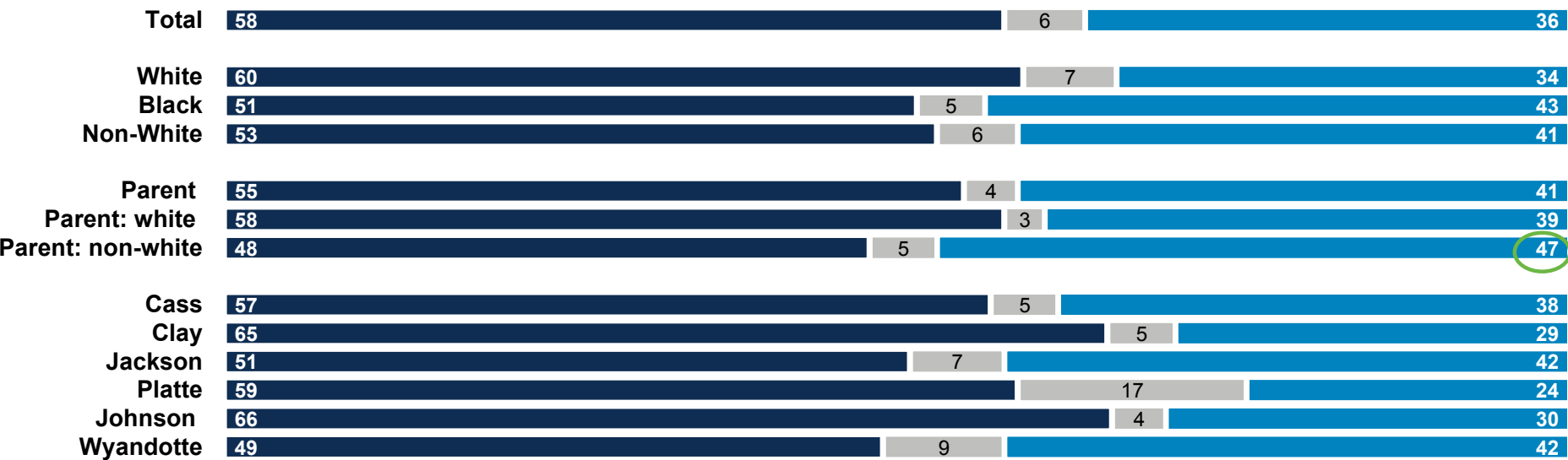
The Future of Work

Most Kansas City area residents are optimistic when it comes to the future of work

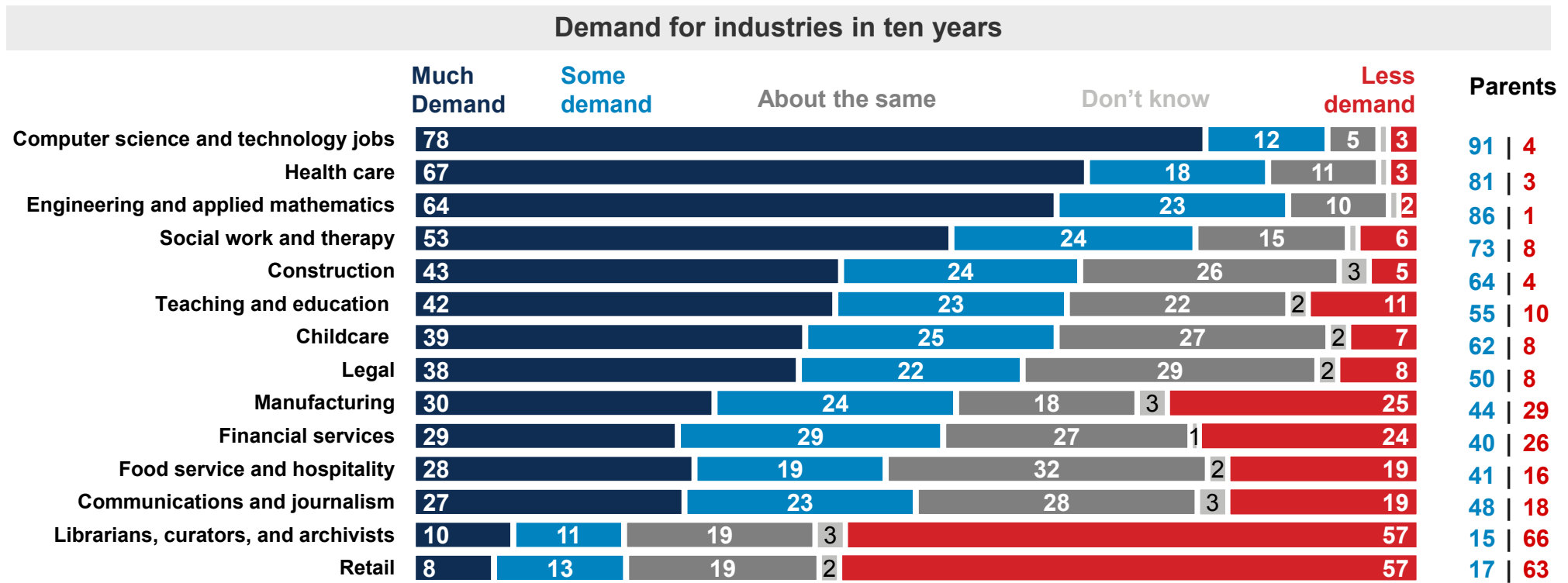
Which of the following comes closest to your opinion about the future of work?

Evolving technology will create more opportunities, industries, and jobs that we have not begun to imagine yet

Evolving technology will decrease the number of opportunities and jobs available as technology and automation will replace the jobs that currently exist

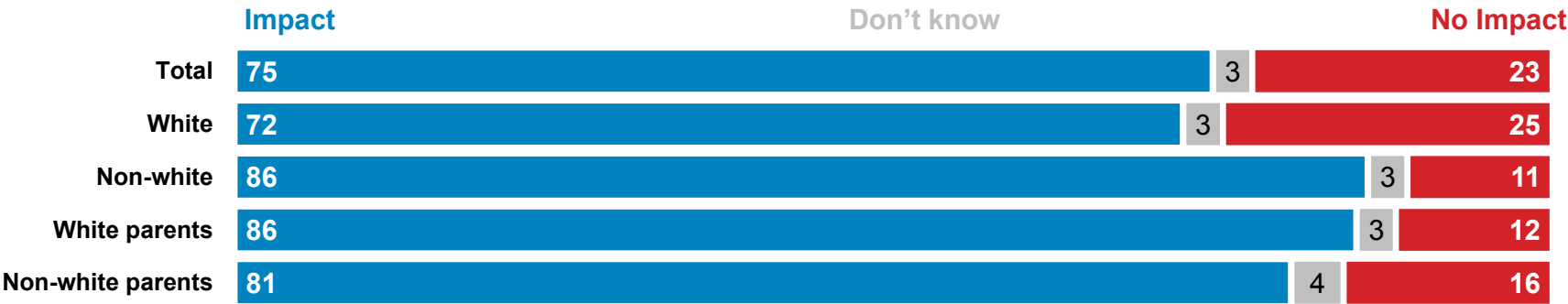


Residents anticipate work in STEM related fields, but their confidence in other work is less pronounced



This changing workforce will impact everyone, but especially future generations

How much of an impact do you think the changing future will have on you, personally?



How much of an impact do you think the changing future will have on students who are in school now?



Technology and education are at the forefront of people's perceptions about the future of work

Thinking about the future of work, who do you think stands to gain?

"Our culture and the big technology companies probably have the most to gain"

"People that work well with computers and can fix them."



"Young people with computerization training"

"Everyone as long as they are putting in the effort to become part of the world"

Thinking about the future of work, who do you think stands to lose?

"I think low skilled students who are not in an environment that allows them to study for vocational or college prep opportunities stand to lose"

"Those who aren't prepared to take advantage of technology"



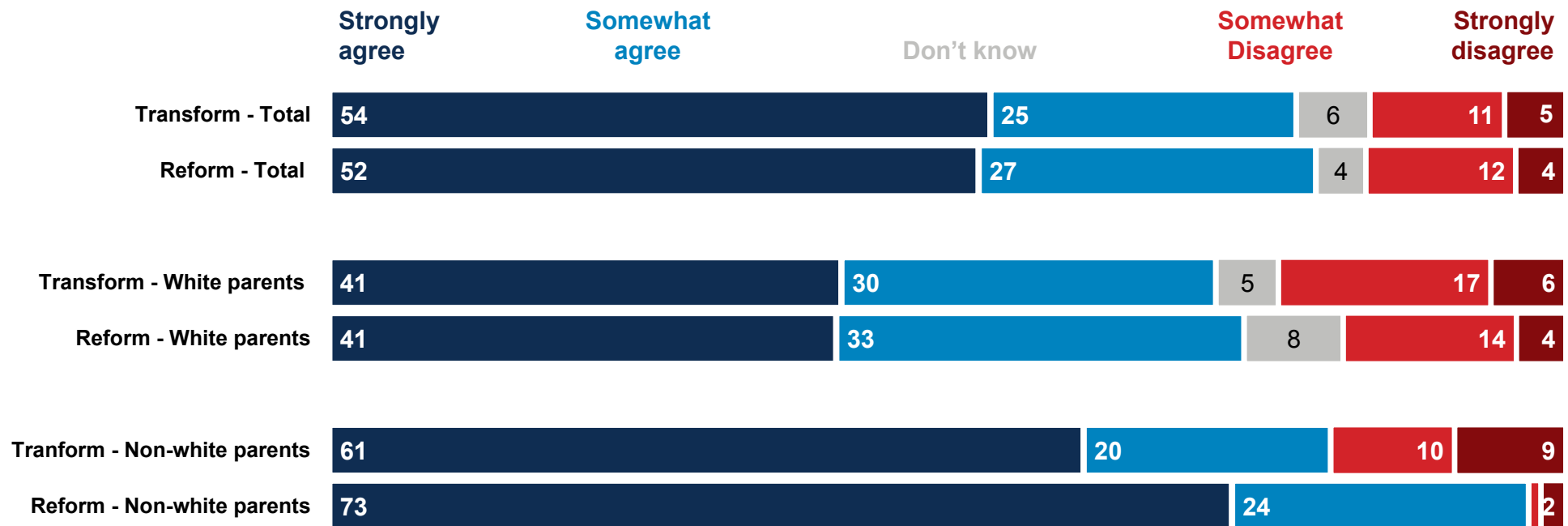
"People who don't stay up with educating with what's happening. Low paying jobs will be the only fallback"

"The older generation will stand to lose"

The Future of Education

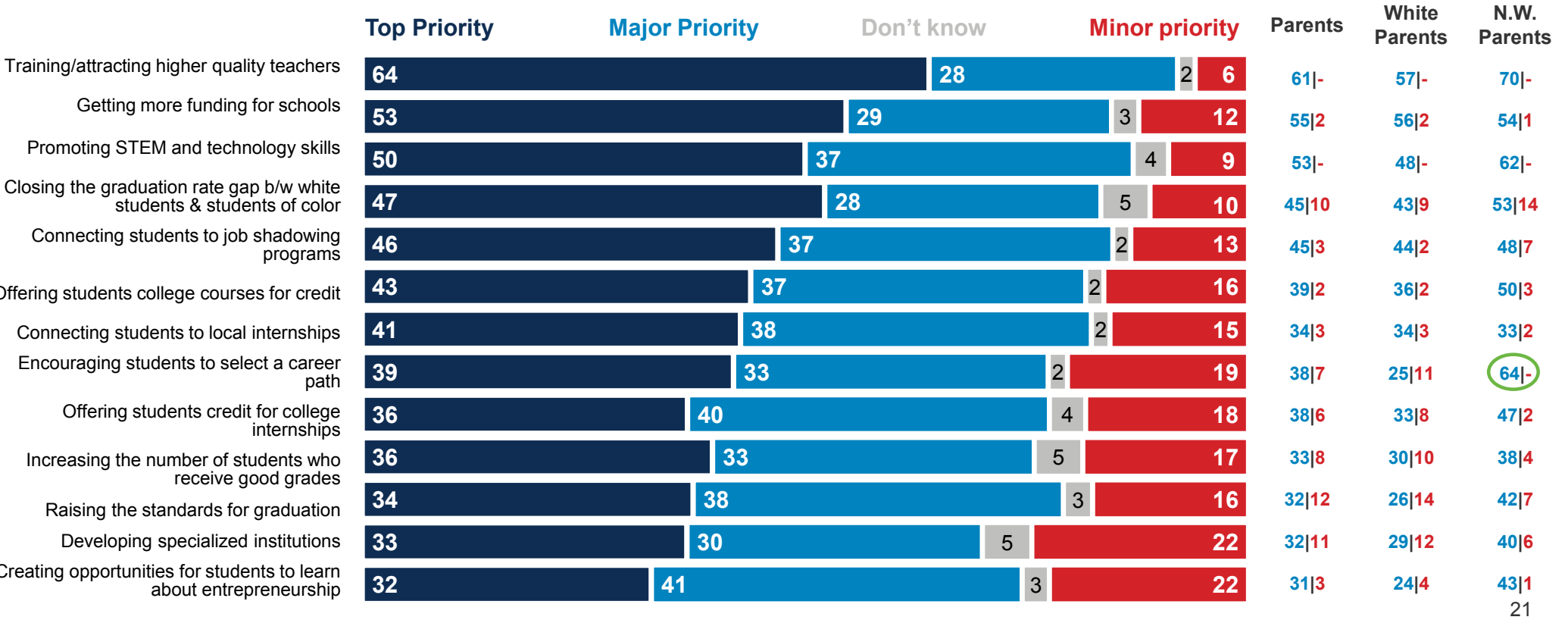
Residents are open to change but generally satisfied with high school education, non-white parents have a stronger appetite for change

We need to transform/reform the way we approach high school education



Residents are open to a host of reform but prioritize more traditional improvements like teacher quality and funding

Priorities for Kansas City Area High Schools



Conclusions & Recommendations

Residents believe schools are preparing students for college, but feel less confident high school students are prepared for life and careers after high school. There is a strong appetite in the Kansas City area for a focus on “real world” skills.

- White parents see decreased value in a college degree, contributing to the frustration with a “college skills” focus in high schools. Non-white parents more likely to be less satisfied with high schools to begin with.

We recommend building on and expanding the role of high school to include these critical skills to prepare students for the changing workforce, as opposed to wholesale change.

When talking about the changing future of work and skills needed, we recommend using a pro-active approach that focuses on the promises of tomorrow and the need to prepare students to capitalize on these opportunities.

- Residents are optimistic about the future of work and see increased demand;
- However, residents see those with the right training and skills as the ones who stand to really gain.

Both residents and parents agree we need to change our approach to high school; however, we recommend a softer tone.

- Messaging is more effective among *parents* when we describe change with softer language, like *reforming* as opposed to *transforming*.

Survey Methodology

Global Strategy Group conducted a telephone survey of 1,201 adults age 18+ in the Kansas City metro area including Cass, Clay, Jackson, Platte, and Wyandotte counties between March 27 and April 5, 2018.

Special care was taken to ensure that the demographics of the various populations are properly represented by the survey's respondents.

Thank You