

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS NY STATE SUBSTANTIAL EQUIVALENCY POLL

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Statewide polling by Charney Research finds that voters statewide in New York massively support requiring private schools to offer students basic education in secular subjects “substantially equivalent” to what public schools offer, as state law provides. Additionally, voters say they would be more likely to vote for candidates who backed this. This support ran across the aisle, including majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, a remarkable fact in a polarized age.

This issue is controversial because government and press investigations have found that many private schools operated by Hasidic (ultra-Orthodox) Jewish groups do not provide equivalent secular instruction to public schools. Although they make up under 2% of the state’s population, conventional political wisdom about the Hasidic voting bloc’s power in New York City and certain counties has made politicians reluctant to speak or act on this problem.

However, no public polling has examined views among voters state-wide, so Charney Research was commissioned by the nonprofit YAFFED, which works on the substantial equivalency issue, to explore them.

Our survey among the broader state population underlines that the conventional wisdom is based on mythology among registered voters statewide, as we found previously among New York City Democrats.

There is massive consensus in support of substantial equivalency. This runs across the aisle, religions, geography, and even public and religious school parents.

- 84% of all registered New York voters support substantial equivalency on secular subjects among public and private schools, and 56% support it strongly.
- This includes 84% of Democrats, 90% of Republicans, and 83% of independents.
- In addition: 81% of Jews support substantial equivalency, along with 87% of Catholics, and 94% of “mainline” Protestants. Even 66% of Evangelical/born-again Christians support substantial equivalency, and 94% of Muslims do as well.
- The support is not just city-focused: along with 88% of New York City voters, there is support among 85% of Hudson Valley voters, 81% of Upstate voters and 79% of Long Islanders.
- Even those with a stake support the measures: 98% of parents with children in private religious schools support the measure, along with 97% of parents with children in non-religious private schools and 85% of public school parents.

This support is not just abstract: majorities also support the specific details of equivalency and increasing enforcement.

- 93% of voters statewide support requiring that all students in private schools be taught English, math science, social studies, art and physical education. 72% strongly support it. This includes 97% of private religious school parents.
- Similar majorities also support requiring at least 3.5 hours of secular education daily. 76% of all voters favor it, as do 86% of private school parents (both religious and non-religious).
- 87% of statewide voters support requiring private school students to learn civics, as public school students do.
- As for enforcement: nearly three fifths (58%) back unannounced inspections to check if private school students are receiving basic schooling in secular subjects. This includes 57% of private school parents.
- Likewise there is no political difference in support of enforcement: 59% of both Democrats and Republicans favor unannounced inspections.
- 83% of statewide voters support requiring private schools to certify that they are substantially equivalent in order to receive state aid. Again, support is very broad: 83% of Democrats, 82% of independents, and a slightly larger share of Republicans, 86%. Some 88% of private school parents also agree (including 87% of religious school parents).

Our findings show that the substantial equivalence issue has state-wide political implications.

- 62% of statewide voters say that a state or local candidate's support for substantial equivalency would make them more likely to vote for that candidate.
- Very few, only 6%, view support for substantial equivalency as a negative that would make them less likely to support a candidate. The rest, a quarter of voters, say that it not affect their votes.
- As we see throughout, the issue has implications for both parties: 70% of Democrats and 63% of Republicans say it would increase their likelihood of supporting a candidate.
- While this issue is most important to NYC voters (69% say it would make them more likely to vote for a candidate), we see majorities throughout the state say the same. That includes 60% of voters in the Hudson Valley, 56% of Upstate voters, and 55% of Long Islanders.

Methodology

Charney Research conducted 496 online interviews among registered voters in New York State from May 21 to June 6, 2021. The sample was quota controlled to promote representativeness in terms of region, race, age, gender, religion, and education level. This sample is in addition to the earlier-reported 570 interviews conducted amongst NYC Democrats.

Tables from the survey are below. Questions can be directed to Craig Charney, craig@charneyresearch.com (917-372-2951)

Poll Results

New York State law lets private schools teach any subject, including religious instruction, but requires them to give their students basic education in secular subjects like science, math, and English that is at least "substantially equivalent" to what public schools offer. Have you heard of this issue?

	NYS voters	"Mainline" Protestants	Catholics	Evangelical/ Born-Again Christians	Religious private school parents
Yes	59%	55%	60%	38%	74%
No	35%	43%	36%	46%	21%
Don't know	6%	2%	4%	16%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Do you favor or oppose requiring that students in private schools get basic education in secular subjects that is at least substantially equivalent to what public schools offer?

	NYS voters	"Mainline" Protestants	Catholics	Evangelical/ Born-Again Christians	Religious private school parents
Favor, strongly	56%	61%	54%	40%	73%
Favor, somewhat	28%	33%	33%	26%	25%
Oppose, somewhat	6%	1%	7%	15%	0%
Oppose, strongly	2%	4%	2%	0%	2%
Don't know	7%	1%	5%	19%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Would you be more or less likely to vote for a local or state political candidate who supports this requirement?

	NYS voters	"Mainline" Protestants	Catholics	Evangelical/ Born-Again Christians	Religious private school parents
Much more likely	35%	35%	33%	25%	55%
Somewhat more likely	27%	36%	31%	28%	24%
Neither more nor less likely	25%	21%	26%	26%	18%
Somewhat less likely	4%	3%	3%	6%	1%
Much less likely	2%	1%	2%	0%	1%
Don't know	7%	4%	5%	16%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Would you favor or oppose requiring that all students in private schools are taught English, math, science, social studies, art, and physical education?

	NYS voters	"Mainline" Protestants	Catholics	Evangelical/ Born-Again Christians	Religious private school parents
Favor, strongly	72%	79%	73%	64%	78%
Favor, somewhat	21%	19%	22%	24%	19%
Oppose, somewhat	3%	0%	3%	0%	1%
Oppose, strongly	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%
Don't know	3%	0%	1%	13%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Would you favor or oppose requiring that all students in private schools should get at least 3½ hours of secular education daily?

	NYS voters	"Mainline" Protestants	Catholics	Evangelical/ Born-Again Christians	Religious private school parents
Favor, strongly	47%	44%	41%	26%	57%
Favor, somewhat	29%	35%	35%	38%	28%
Oppose, somewhat	9%	12%	9%	8%	7%
Oppose, strongly	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%
Don't know	12%	6%	12%	26%	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Would you favor or oppose requiring students in private schools to learn civics, as public school students must?

	NYS voters	"Mainline" Protestants	Catholics	Evangelical/ Born-Again Christians	Religious private school parents
Favor, strongly	54%	56%	47%	34%	53%
Favor, somewhat	33%	36%	40%	46%	33%
Oppose, somewhat	5%	4%	4%	3%	4%
Oppose, strongly	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%
Don't know	7%	4%	8%	15%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Most private schools receive public funds for transportation, secular books, security, academic support, and other things. Would you favor or oppose requiring private schools to certify they are substantially equivalent to public schools in basic secular subjects to get state aid?

	NYS voters	"Mainline" Protestants	Catholics	Evangelical/ Born-Again Christians	Religious private school parents
Favor, strongly	52%	60%	49%	32%	56%
Favor, somewhat	31%	30%	36%	49%	32%
Oppose, somewhat	8%	6%	9%	7%	6%
Oppose, strongly	3%	0%	2%	3%	5%
Don't know	6%	5%	5%	10%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Would you favor unannounced inspections to check if private school students get basic schooling in secular subjects, or would you favor pre-announced inspections?

	NYS voters	"Mainline" Protestants	Catholics	Evangelical/ Born-Again Christians	Religious private school parents
Favor unannounced inspections	58%	63%	53%	36%	53%
Favor pre-announced inspections	30%	32%	36%	48%	40%
Don't know	12%	6%	10%	16%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%