

SURVEY REPORT : 2Q 2019

LOUISIANA BUSINESS LEADERS ON EDUCATION REFORM

➤ BUSINESS FORWARD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business Forward is a national trade group that has worked with more than 2,000 business leaders across Louisiana.

We cover a range of issues, including education reform, tax reform, trade, infrastructure, clean energy, and immigration. We've organized hundreds of briefings across the country on education reform, focusing on career and technical training, promising education technologies, school choice, and charters. These briefings have included the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Labor, two deputy secretaries, and hundreds of other officials.

For the past year, we have talked with business leaders in Louisiana about the changes they believe schools should make to better prepare students for the workforce. We asked them about funding, standards, teacher autonomy, accountability, and skills.

Nearly half of the responses focused on fixing how schools teach, from offering more personalized teaching and smaller classes, to giving teachers more autonomy.

One in four responses covered school funding, including more funding for the neediest schools, and more funding, in general.

One in five of the responses focused on skills, including technical training (like software coding) and life skills (like balancing a checkbook).

One in six responses covered social issues, such as bullying and discipline, work ethic, morality, and “liberal indoctrination.”

Nearly half of the responses mentioned charter schools, and nearly all responses were in favor of them. This concentration of remarks reflects the large amount of programming we conducted on charters in 2018.

Respondents are pro-teacher and anti-bureaucrat. Complaints were more likely to focus on the education system than those working within it. While some were critical of teachers, respondents who mentioned teachers were more likely to support giving them more autonomy.

LOUISIANA BUSINESS LEADERS RECOMMENDATIONS

We have worked with more than 2,000 business leaders across Louisiana, and over 400 of them have participated in programming on how to improve public schools. We asked Louisiana business leaders to tell us about the changes they believe schools should make to better prepare students for the workforce. More than 200 of them provided recommendations.

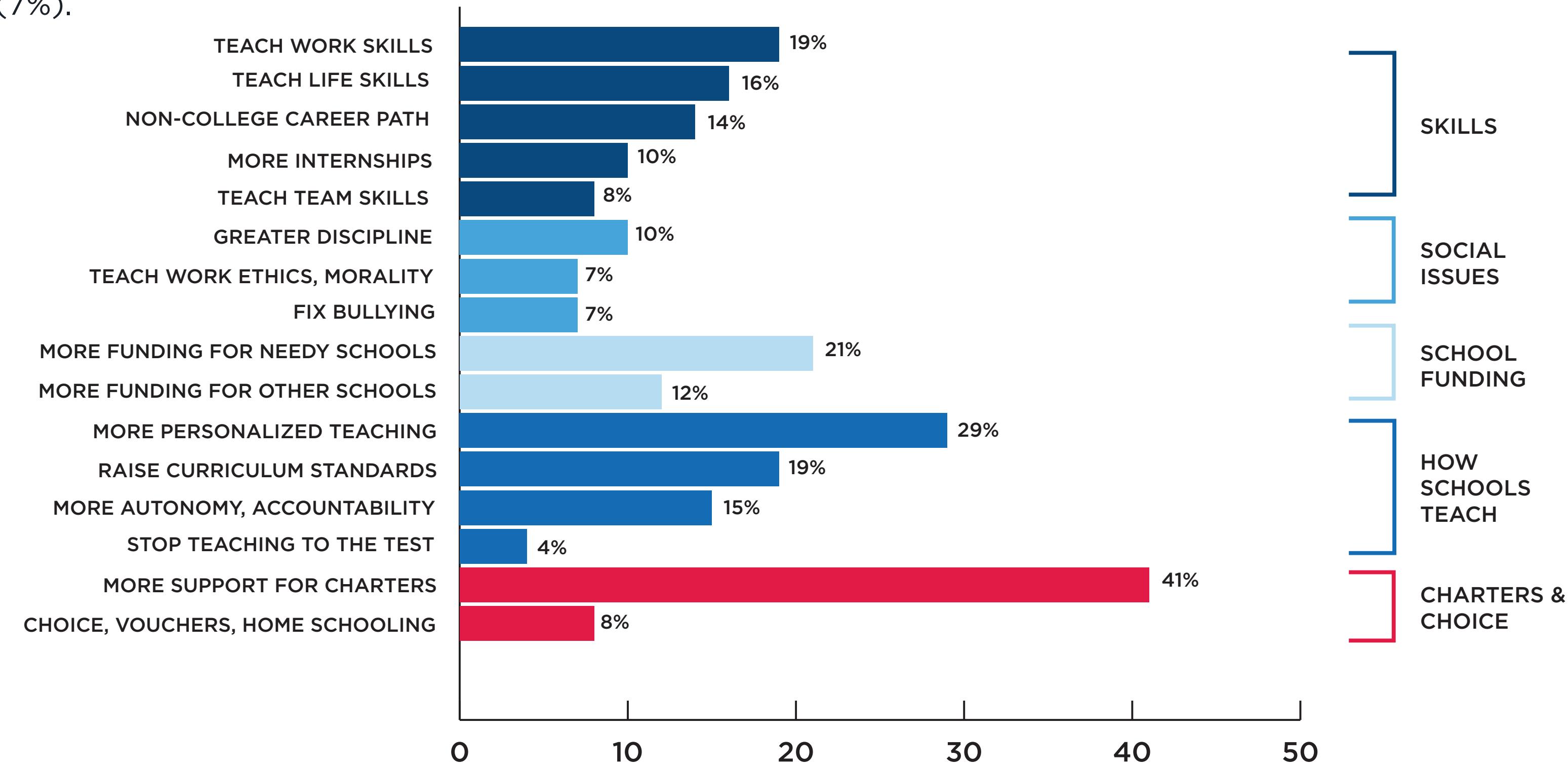
Nearly half of the responses focused on fixing how schools teach, from offering more personalized teaching (29% of recommendations), raising standards (19%), and giving teachers more autonomy over their teaching and holding them more accountable (15%).

One in four responses focused on funding, with 21% of comments focused funding for Louisiana's neediest schools and 12% focused on more funding for schools, in general.

One in five responses focused on skills, including more emphasis on work skills (19% of responses), life skills (16%), offering a non-college path (14%), and providing more internships (10%).

One in six responses focused on social issues, such as school discipline (10% of responses), bullying (7%), and teaching ethics and morality (7%).

Nearly half of responses focused on charters, with **nearly all responses in favor of charters**. We note, however, that this result reflects our extensive programming this past year on charters.



* COMMENTS ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLS COMprise A GREATER PERCENTAGE OF TOPICS DISCUSSED, WHICH IS LIKELY THE RESULT OF ASKING RESPONDENTS ABOUT EDUCATION REFORM

HOW SCHOOLS TEACH

Half of the responses focused on fixing how schools teach, from offering more personalized teaching and smaller classes, to giving teachers more autonomy.

“ Schools would be so much better if the adults stop doing what's right for them, [and] start doing what's right for the children. ”

- SILVIA BENTON
EDUCATOR,
LAFAYETTE, LA

“ Let schools be designed so that no child fails and that every child be encouraged to take up all subjects of interest. We should encourage 2 year trade schools, 2 years certificates in accounting, and 4 year colleges if that is what the student wants and is smart enough. We should prepare them for everything in the future. ”

- KAY M.
METAIRIE, LA

“ Pay our teachers a decent wage, and maybe create smaller class sizes. It's not rocket science. ”

- RAYE BROFFORD
RETired BUSINESS EXECUTIVE,
HAMMOND, LA

“ Louisiana students are not prepared to compete at the global level because they are not prepared from HS or college to face today's challenges in the real world. ”

- NESTOR J. NAVARRO, JR.
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
NAVARRI INTERNATIONAL GROUP, LLC,
THIBODAUX, LA

FUNDING

One in four responses focused on funding, including securing more equitable funding for the neediest schools and increasing funding more generally.

“
We need a fair, equitable, balanced, and practical approach. Pay teachers more so that we attract the talent required to provide a quality education. Provide more funding to communities that are struggling.
”

- JESSE KIRKHAM
REGULATORY ADVISOR,
FED EX EXPRESS CORP.,
DANVILLE, LA

“
We need to restructure our leadership so we can utilize funds strictly for our classrooms and students... It seems the good teachers are not being utilized to the best of their abilities.
”

- GILEN NORWOOD
EDUCATOR,
NATCHITOCHES, LA

“
From broad funding cuts to underfunding special needs and axing the gifted programs, our state and local funding is inadequate to develop talent and ensure quality of life for graduates.
”

- E.W.
PARENT/CONSULTANT
NEW ORLEANS, LA

“
All children should have the same opportunity. The public schools do not have the same support they had 15-20 years ago. It's a sad situation, and they wonder why the new generation is doing so badly. Schools need resources.
”

- RUTH PEREZ
BUSINESS OWNER,
KENNER, LA

“
Graceland schools are unbelievably poor. The buildings are run down and the classrooms are like a prison.
”

- REGINA VERDIN
VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC
AND STUDENT AFFAIRS,
FLETCHER COMMUNITY COLLEGE,
GRACELAND, LA

SKILLS

One in five responses recommended that schools provide more technical training and access to internships.

“ Teach more computer, or AI, subjects. Most of the new jobs in the future will need more math and science courses. Also, we need to increase trade school courses in plumbing, electrical, mechanical, automotive, and make these schools more affordable.

- KAY M.
SELF-EMPLOYED,
METAIRIE, LA

“ Focus on more vocational trade opportunities as well as having advanced education for those who are preparing for college.

- JESSE KIRKHAM
REGULATORY ADVISOR,
FED EX EXPRESS CORP.,
DANVILLE, LA

“ The 21st century is here and we as a state need to stop staying in the 19th & 20th century of skills.

- DELANO WILSON
CEO,
M.A.C.S. LLC,
SHREVEPORT, LA

“ From my experience from when my children attended public schools they are lacking in preparing students for the work force.

- SHERYL GOINS
SUBCONTRACTOR,
SHREVEPORT, LA

“ Most high school students are competent in utilizing computers. Expand that knowledge into mechanical repair of electrical and gas powered motors, skills in carpentry, plumbing, building, architecture, agriculture, and product storage and transportation.

These are occupations with needed expertise.

- JOHN W. TURNER
BALL, LA

“ Teachers need to look at job descriptions and then provide curriculum to meet the job requirements.

- MONA MISTRIC
DENHAM SPRINGS, LA

CHARTERS AND CHOICE

Four in 10 responses covered charter schools and school choice. Most respondents expressed a favorable opinion toward charter schools.

“
I think that our charter school is really doing well. I love that some high school students are really standing out. They are getting scholarships to top-notch colleges.
”

- ANGELA BYRD
ENTREPRENEUR,
NEW ORLEANS, LA

“
Our charter system faces challenges both locally and statewide. However, they seem to excel where others are slower to improve.
”

- E.W.
CONSULTANT,
NEW ORLEANS, LA

“
Charter schools are the only way for a child to be challenged and succeed in Graceland. Unfortunately the waiting list is long and some children never get in. It is very, very sad.
”

- REGINA VERDIN
VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS,
FLETCHER COMMUNITY COLLEGE,
GRACELAND, LA

“
Charter schools were a completely different approach to education after Hurricane Katrina. They radically improved New Orleans Parish educational outcomes.
”

- DEBORAH SETTOON
OFFSHORE PROJECT MANAGER,
SHELL OIL COMPANY,
KENNER, LA

“
I support not-for-profit charter schools that give schools more choice for innovation.
”

- DORI ST. AMANT
PROFESSOR,
LOUISIANA TECH,
RUSTON, LA

SOCIAL ISSUES

One in ten responses covered social issues, such as bullying and discipline, work ethic, morality, and “liberal indoctrination.”

“Teachers should not have to be afraid to punish students if they do not behave in a classroom.”

- NESTOR J. NAVARRO, JR.
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
NAVARRI INTERNATIONAL GROUP, LLC,
THIBODAUX, LA

“Students should respect teachers.”

- NESTOR J. NAVARRO, JR.
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
NAVARRI INTERNATIONAL GROUP, LLC,
THIBODAUX, LA

“Education is the foundation of a democracy. Without education, children cannot understand the complexities of politics. It is essential that children discern the differences in democracy and authoritarianism and make the right choices for themselves and their neighbors. If we educate children correctly, they can build a better future for themselves.”

- SANDRA FREUND
RETIRED CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER,
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH,
BASTROP, LA

NATIONAL SURVEY

As part of our work on education reform, Business Forward surveyed our national network of business leaders on the state of public schools and how to improve them. The business leaders responding represented a range of industries, businesses sizes, and more than 40 states and territories. Two-thirds either have children currently enrolled in public school or have children who have graduated from public school.

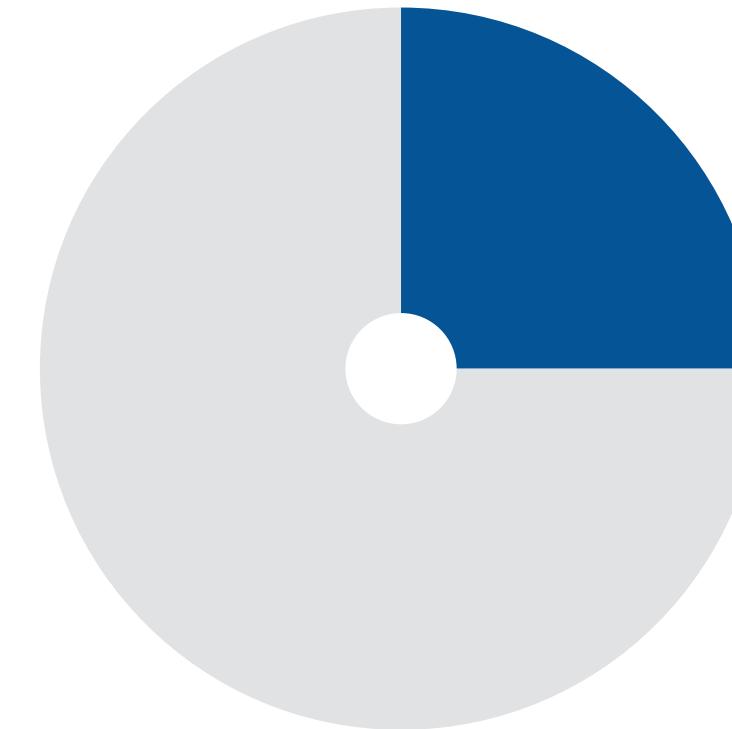
A majority of these business leaders (57%) believe our schools are on the wrong track. One in four worries that poor schools will hurt her business's ability to compete. Half believe our schools are underfunded. And 85% support one or more market-driven reforms, including greater school autonomy (59%), replacing underperforming schools (29%), and expanding charter schools (34%).

These results are consistent with what we've heard from business leaders at the hundreds of briefings we've organized around the country on career and technical training, promising education technologies, school choice, and charters. These briefings have included the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Labor, two deputy secretaries, and hundreds of other officials.

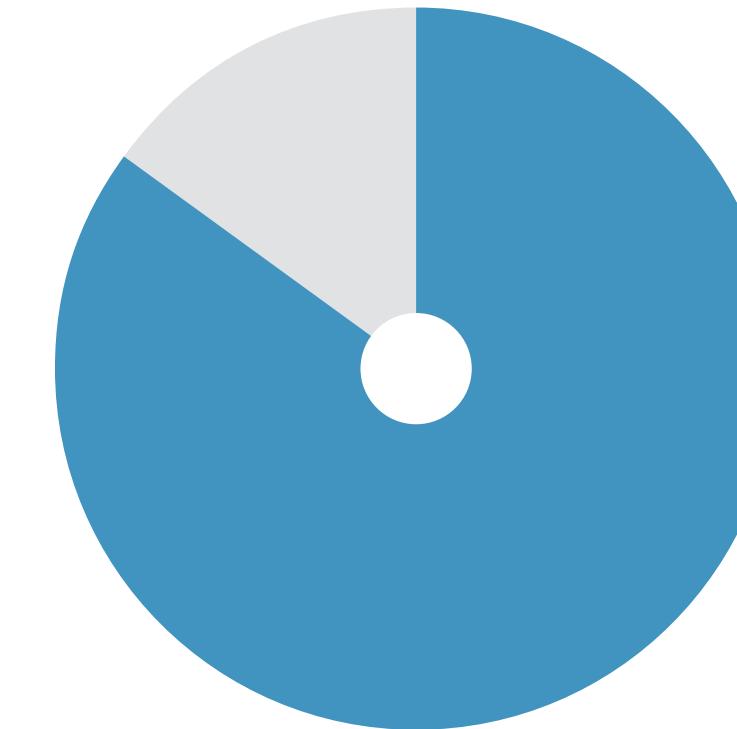
**57% BELIEVE OUR SCHOOLS
ARE ON THE WRONG TRACK**



**25% WORRY POOR SCHOOLS
HURT BUSINESS'S
ABILITY TO COMPETE**



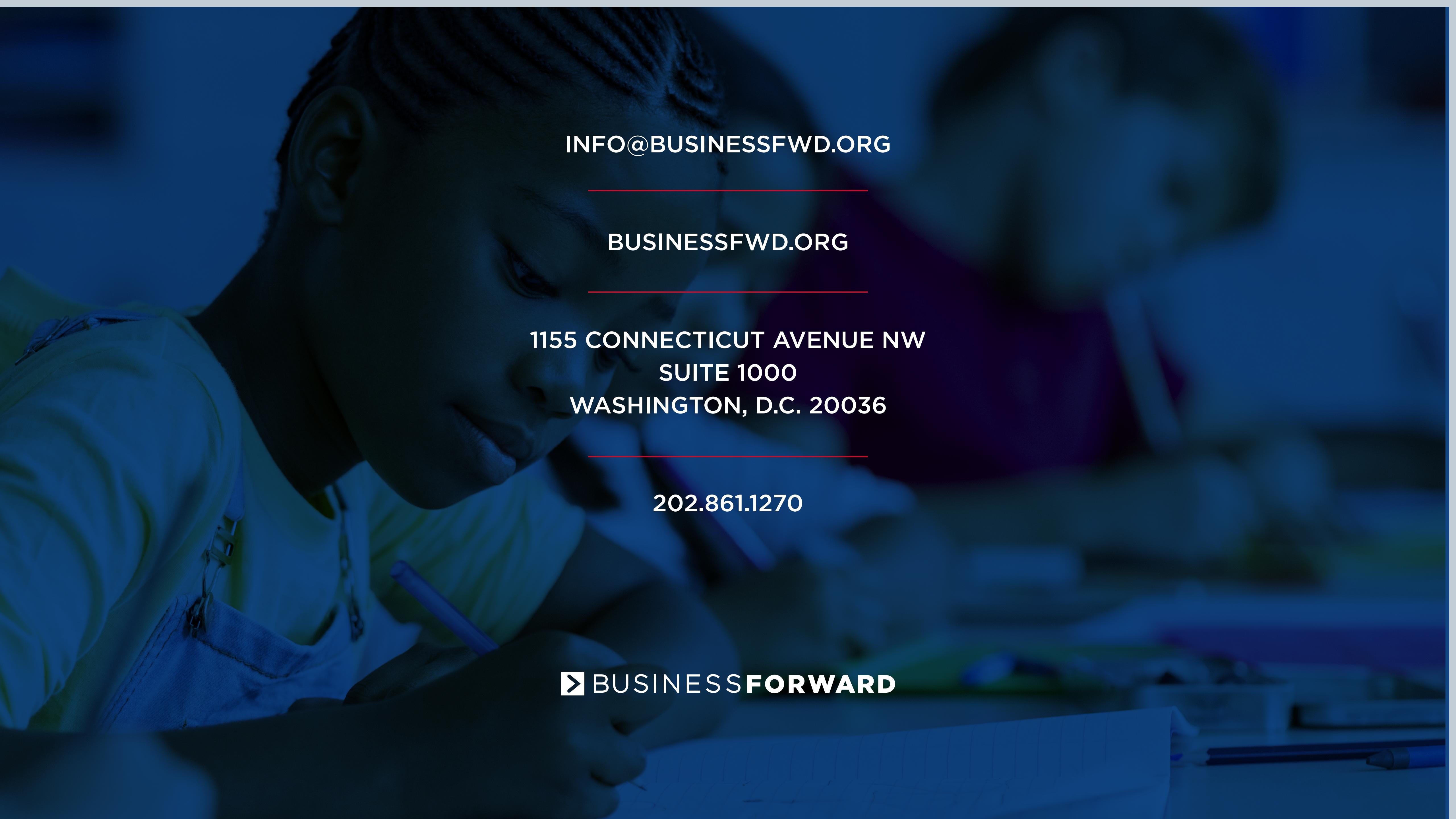
**85% SUPPORT
MARKET-DRIVEN REFORMS**



**50% BELIEVE OUR
SCHOOLS ARE
UNDERFUNDED**



For complete results, click to: <https://www.businessfwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Education-Survey-July-2018.pdf>

A black and white photograph of a man from the chest up. He has dark hair and is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt under a dark suit jacket. A dark tie is visible. He is looking down at a lined notebook that he is holding in his hands. A blue pen lies across the notebook. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an office or library setting.

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