

**To: FASTER Arkansas**  
**From: The Winston Group**  
**Subject: Survey Key Findings**  
**Date: September 2, 2014**

## Overall Key Findings

There are five key findings from a recent statewide survey in Arkansas, commissioned by FASTER Arkansas (August 25-27, 600 registered voters in Arkansas):

- 1.) Voters and parents are concerned about the state's education system, and do not think that children are being given enough tools to prepare them for the future.
- 2.) There is a recognition of the need for better broadband Internet access in schools, with a majority of the state's voters supporting the proposal to allow schools to connect to an existing high speed network.
- 3.) Supporting statements were more widely believed than opposing statements, and even after hearing opposing statements, support for the proposal is still over 70%.
- 4.) Voters believe that the proposal would generate positive outcomes for the state, including economic growth and helping the state's workforce.
- 5.) Given the outlook on the education system and recognition of the need, there is a positive reaction among voters overall and parents to the idea of a special session to discuss the proposal.

## Environment of the State

Voters are concerned about the state's public education system. Across party, voter outlook on the situation is that it is mediocre and clearly could be better, with only 6% who believe the system is excellent (33% good, 41% fair, 18% poor).

<b>Views about the K-12 Public Education System in Arkansas</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>GOP</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Democrat</b>
Excellent	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
Good	<b>33</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>39</b>
Fair	<b>41</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
Poor	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>15</b>

Parents share the same view, with only 7% of parents who say the system is excellent (28% good, 35% fair, 26% poor).

In terms of whether children in Arkansas are being given enough tools to prepare them for the future, most of the state's voters feel that they are not given enough tools, with more than half the state's voters (55%) saying they are not (41-55 are-are not). Parents also do not believe children are being given enough tools for the future (41-56 are-are not).

<b><i>Do you think that children in Arkansas are or are not being given enough tools to prepare them for the future?</i></b>	Overall	Parents
Are	<b>41</b>	<b>41</b>
Are not	<b>55</b>	<b>56</b>

Additionally, Arkansas voters view the quality of the state's education system as having a great deal of impact on the state economy (67%), rather than only some (25%), not much (6%) or not at all (1%).

### **Views about Broadband**

In this survey we tested a variety of belief statements about the state's standing in broadband:

- 77% believe that *Arkansas schools need better access to Internet content, video and courses for this school year and for the future, and many schools in the state do not have enough access to high speed Internet to meet these challenges* (77-19 believe-do not believe among voters overall; 74-24 among parents).
- There is a significant level of belief in the statement that *getting broadband Internet access to every school is as important of an issue as getting electricity to everyone was in the 1930s* (74-24 believe-do not believe). This is widely believed across party lines (75-25 among Republicans, 67-31 among independents, 80-17 among Democrats).
- Additionally, there is a high level of belief that *only half the schools in Arkansas meet the level of broadband Internet connectivity that is needed per student* (70-23 believe-do not believe among voters overall; 70-26 among parents), and the state's voters would find that situation to be unacceptable (76%) rather than acceptable (20%), if that statement were true. Parents are even more likely to find this to be unacceptable (17-83 acceptable-unacceptable).
- The state's voters also understand that faster Internet access in schools will lead to improvements in student learning, with 87% of the state's voters believing the statement that *having faster Internet access in schools would give students better ability to do research, have access to online courses and the best*

video lectures, which would improve student learning (87-13 believe-do not believe among voters overall; 87-13 among parents).

## Standing of the Proposal

Given voter outlook on the education situation in the state, there is a high level of support for the proposal (69-19 favor-oppose), which extends across party lines and to parents (72-18).

<b><i>There is a proposal to amend the state law to allow K-12 educational institutions to connect to an existing high speed Internet network through a public-private partnership. Do you favor or oppose this proposal?</i></b>	Favor- Oppose
Overall	<b>69-19</b>
Republicans	<b>73-17</b>
Independents	<b>63-25</b>
Democrats	<b>73-13</b>
Parents	<b>72-18</b>

## Statements about the Proposal

We tested a series of supporting and opposing statements related to the proposal. Supporting statements were stronger than opposing statements, and the arguments that were the strongest related to positive outcomes that could be generated for the state.

<b>Supporting Statements</b>	Believe	Do not believe
Increasing students' access to the Internet will create a better educated workforce and bring more jobs into the state.	<b>81</b>	<b>17</b>
If this proposal does not pass, Arkansas' students will be at a disadvantage to students in other states who have better access to high speed Internet.	<b>78</b>	<b>18</b>
This would level the playing field by reducing the cost of high speed Internet for school districts statewide, including rural and low income areas.	<b>71</b>	<b>22</b>

This proposal would allow Arkansas' children to be able to use a high speed Internet network that has already been paid for by taxpayers. Estimates say it can be done without additional cost, and in fact the state may be able to significantly reduce cost.	<b>67</b>	<b>26</b>
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- Voters believe that increasing students' access to the Internet will create a better educated workforce and bring more jobs into the state (81-17 believe-do not believe).
- A strong majority also believe that if the proposal does not pass, Arkansas students will be at a disadvantage to students in other states who have better access to high speed Internet (78-18 believe-do not believe).
- Voters also tended to believe the statement that the proposal would allow children to use a high speed network already paid for by taxpayers and that it could be done without additional cost (67-26 believe-do not believe).

While supporting statements were stronger, but there was some credibility to opposing statements.

<b>Opposing Statements</b>	Believe	Do not believe
Private Internet providers have already invested in infrastructure and sponsored programs to increase access to high speed Internet for low income and rural areas.	<b>59</b>	<b>32</b>
The urgency of this problem may be overstated.	<b>51</b>	<b>45</b>
This proposal could lead to unfair competition with private providers.	<b>49</b>	<b>41</b>

- Voters tend to believe that private providers have invested in infrastructure and sponsored programs to increase high speed Internet access to rural and low income areas (59-32 believe-do not believe).
- By a small margin, there is some belief that the urgency of the problem may be overstated (51-45) and that the proposal could lead to unfair competition with private providers (49-41).

However, even after hearing both supporting and opposing statements, support for the proposal increases slightly (69-19 before the statements, 73-17 after the statements).

## Positive Outcomes for the State

The state's voters connect the proposal to positive outcomes for the state.

<b><i>If this proposal is passed, please tell me if it would help, hurt or have no impact on each of the following:</i></b>	Help	Hurt	Have no impact
Economic growth of the state	<b>71</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>
Student outcomes and test scores	<b>72</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>
State's workforce and job training for the future	<b>78</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>

- 71% of voters believe the proposal would help economic growth of the state.
- 72% think it will help student outcomes and test scores.
- 78% see the proposal as helping the state's workforce and job training for the future.

## Legislative Implications

Voters would tend to be favorable to a legislator who supported the proposal (45-7 more favorable - less favorable, 43% no impact). Additionally, voters and parents tend to be supportive of the idea of a special session to discuss the proposal (*Some are considering holding a special session of the state legislature this fall to discuss this proposal. Do you support or oppose holding a special session?* 61-34 support-oppose among voters overall, 68-28 among parents).

## Methodology

600 Registered Voters  
August 25-27, 2014  
Margin of error +/- 4  
30% cell