



# Alliance for Excellent Education

Results from a Survey of 750 Underserved Parents and 350  
Teachers of Underserved Students

December 2015



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EXCELLENT EDUCATION



# Methodology

- Our survey reached 750 underserved parents (defined as parents who are African-American, Hispanic, or make less than \$50,000 in household income a year) and 350 teachers of underserved students (defined as teachers who either teach in a school with 50% or more students of color, or 50% or more students living in poverty).
- The survey was conducted online. The parent data were weighted slightly by gender.
- In a randomly selected sample, the margin of error for N=750 respondents is +/- 3.6% and the margin of error for N=350 respondents is +/-5.2%. The margin of error is greater for subgroups within the overall sample.

# Key Findings – Overall Issue Context

- The context is favorable for introducing a new approach such as personalized learning. **Underserved parents and teachers report that they are comfortable with changes in approaches to teaching by large margins.**
- **Parents' most pressing concerns seem especially relevant to the aims of personalized learning.** Specifically, they report being most concerned that today's students are not being adequately prepared for the real world, that low-income students are not receiving a quality education, and that schools' one-size-fits-all approach is shortchanging students.
- **Teachers' top concerns were slightly different** and present a more challenging context for introducing personalized learning. **Their overall top concern was that teachers lack the time needed to address every student's needs.** If they perceive personalized learning as being too burdensome or too unrealistic, they may be less likely to support it.



# The Issue Environment

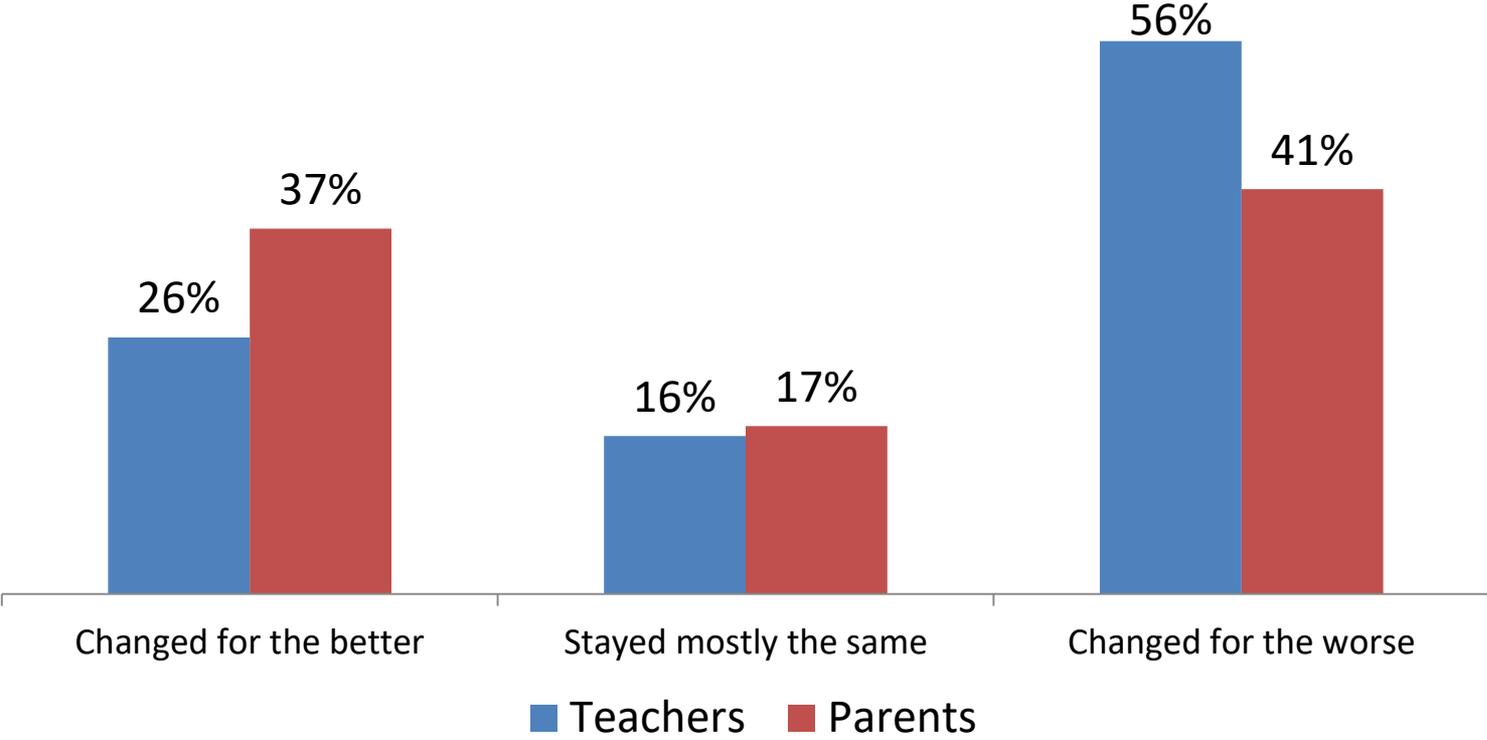


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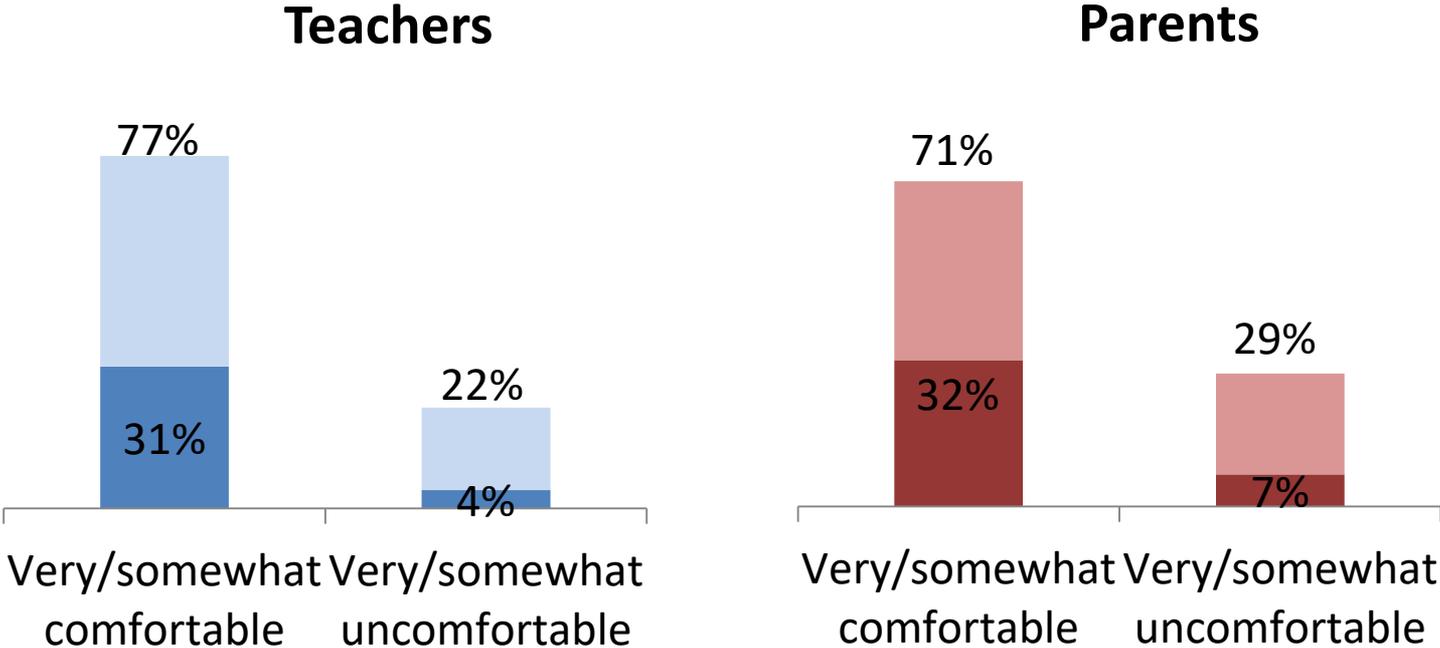
While parents are largely split between thinking the quality of education has changed for the better or worse since they attended school, teachers are more than twice as likely to say it has changed for the worse.

Thinking about the quality of education in school today, how has it changed since you attended grades K-12?



Both parents and teachers tend to be comfortable with alternate approaches to education, suggesting an open-minded context for personalized learning.

Generally speaking, how comfortable are you when [your school/your child's school] teaches lessons differently compared to when you were in school?

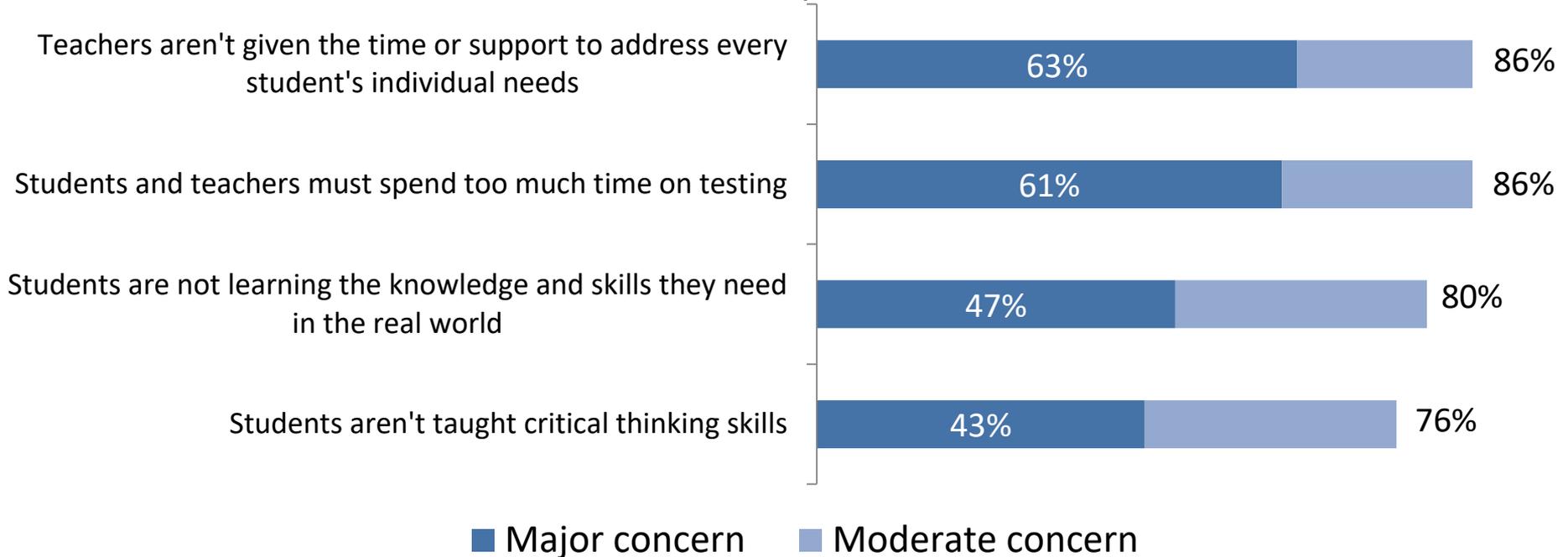


Darker colors indicate intensity

Some of teachers' top concerns (lack of critical thinking skills and lack of real world skills taught today) are well-addressed by personalized learning. Others (time and support to address every student's needs and not adding to the testing burden) may be concerns that proponents of personalized learning need to inoculate against.

Below is a list of concerns some have about education today. Please say whether each is a major concern, a moderate concern, a minor concern, or not really a concern to you personally.

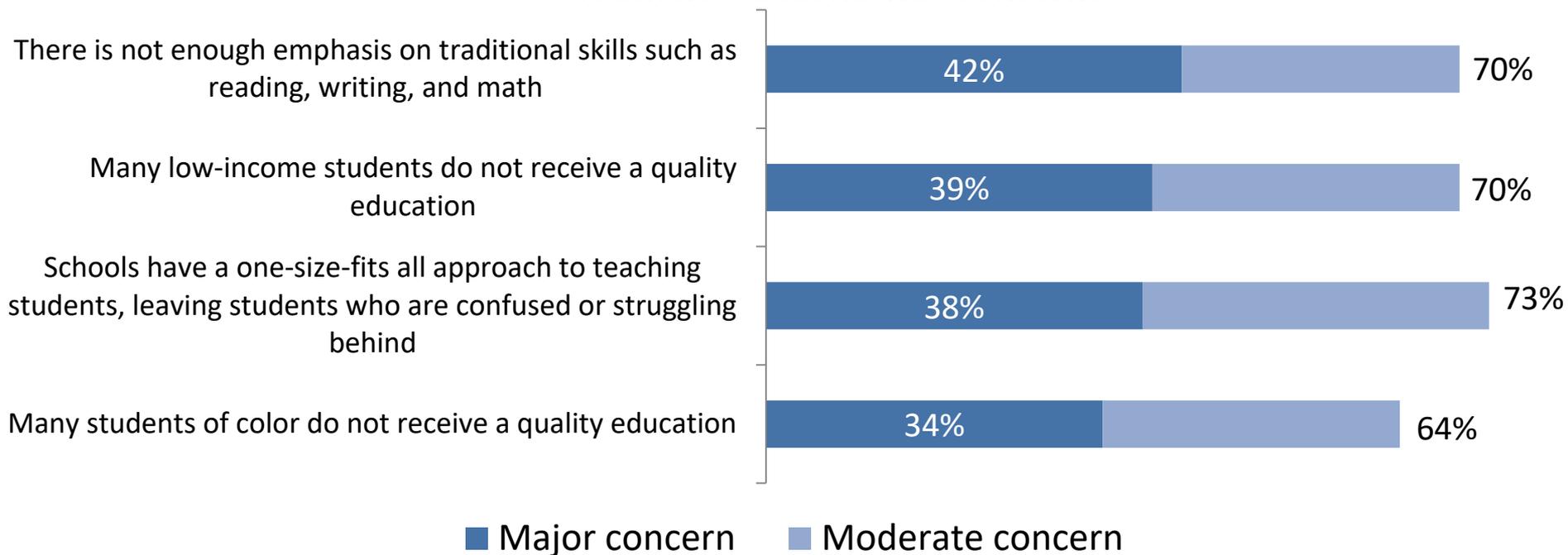
### Teachers – Top Tier Concerns



Concerns that were on a second tier included the notion that low-income students and students of color are not receiving a quality education. Teachers were still concerned about this, but less so than those in the first tier.

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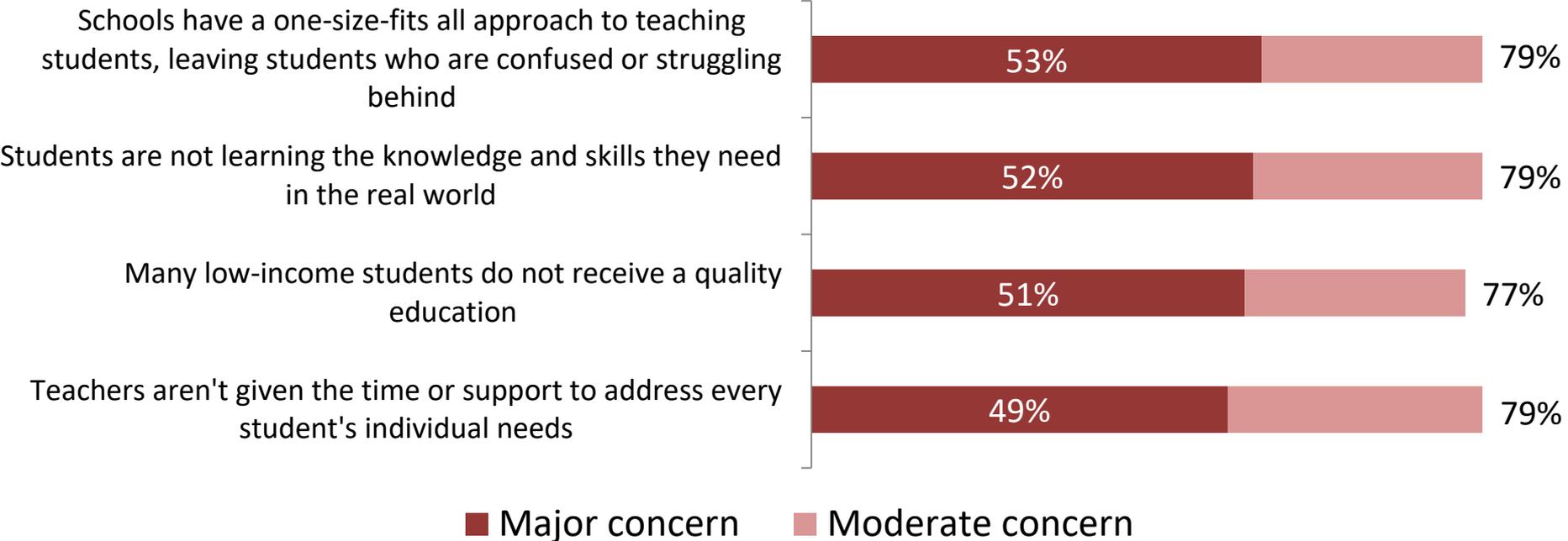
### Teachers – Second Tier Concerns



Parents' top concerns align more neatly with the goals of personalized learning; roughly half of parents believe schools' one-size-fits-all approach, lack of teaching real-world skills, poor record teaching low-income students, and time and support for teachers to address student needs are major concerns.

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### Parents – Top Tier Concerns

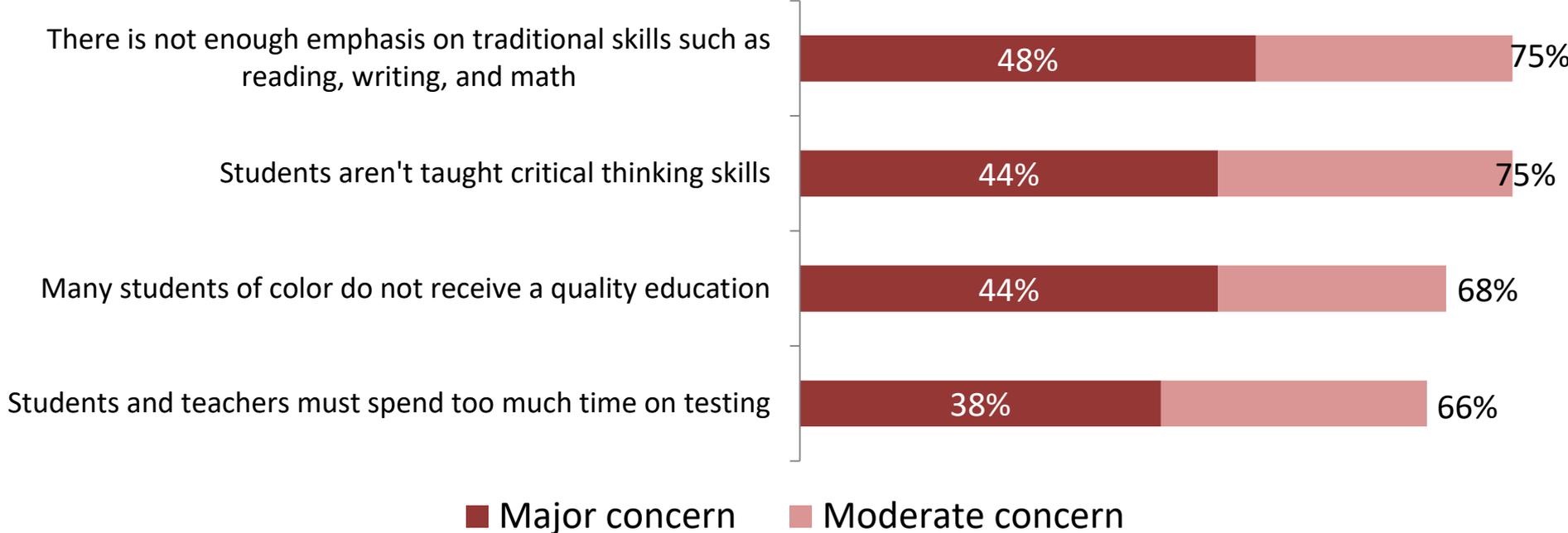


Darker colors indicate intensity

Unlike teachers, parents are less concerned about there being too much time spent on testing.

Below is a list of concerns some have about education today. Please say whether each is a major concern, a moderate concern, a minor concern, or not really a concern to you personally.

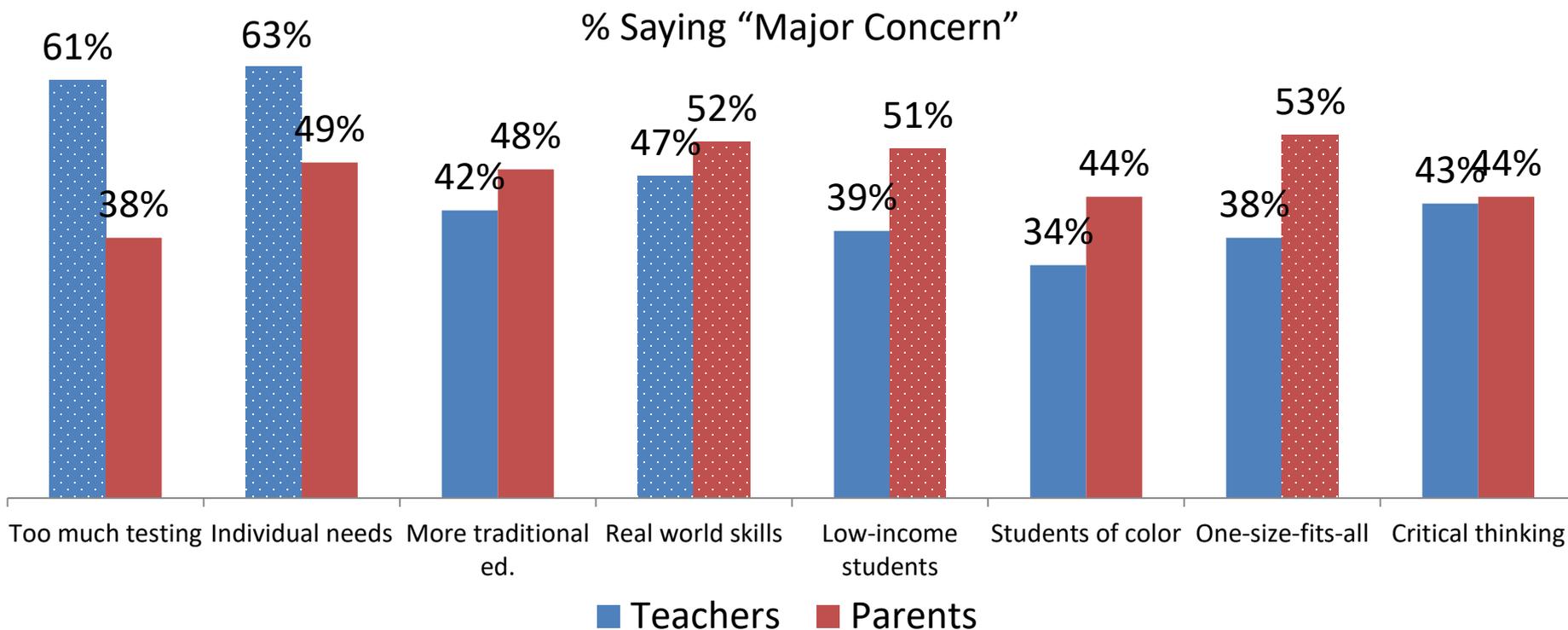
Parents – Second Tier Concerns



Darker colors indicate intensity

Parents and teachers do indeed have very different concerns, with parents slightly more concerned in most but not all cases. There is little overlap with top concerns among parents and teachers, highlighting the importance of careful communication.

Below is a list of concerns some have about education today. Please say whether each is a major concern, a moderate concern, a minor concern, or not really a concern to you personally.



Polka dots = In top 3

Though teachers at all levels talk about lack of support to address individual needs and there being too much time spent on testing, other priorities pop based on grade taught: real-world skills were more important for elementary school teachers, traditional skills for middle school teachers, and critical thinking skills for high school teachers.

Group	Top Three Concerns, by % Major Concern	Percentage
Elementary School Teachers	Teachers aren't given the time or support to address every student's individual needs	64%
	Students and teachers must spend too much time on testing	60%
	Students are not learning the knowledge and skills they need in the real world	45%
Middle School Teachers	Students and teachers must spend too much time on testing	59%
	Teachers aren't given the time or support to address every student's individual needs	58%
	There is not enough emphasis on traditional skills such as reading, writing, and math	55%
High School Teachers	Teachers aren't given the time or support to address every student's individual needs	63%
	Students and teachers must spend too much time on testing	57%
	Students aren't taught critical thinking skills	46%

African-American parents were even more likely to be concerned about most of these statements, especially low-income students and students of color not receiving a quality education.

Group	Top Three Concerns, by % Major Concern	Percentage
African-American Parents	Many low-income students do not receive a quality education	62%
	Schools have a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching students, leaving students who are confused or struggling behind	59%
	Many students of color do not receive a quality education	56%
Hispanic Parents	Students are not learning the knowledge and skills they need in the real world	51%
	Schools have a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching students, leaving students who are confused or struggling behind	48%
	Teachers aren't given the time or support to address every student's individual needs	47%
Low-Income Parents	Schools have a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching students, leaving students who are confused or struggling behind	53%
	Students are not learning the knowledge and skills they need in the real world	52%
	Many low-income students do not receive a quality education	52%