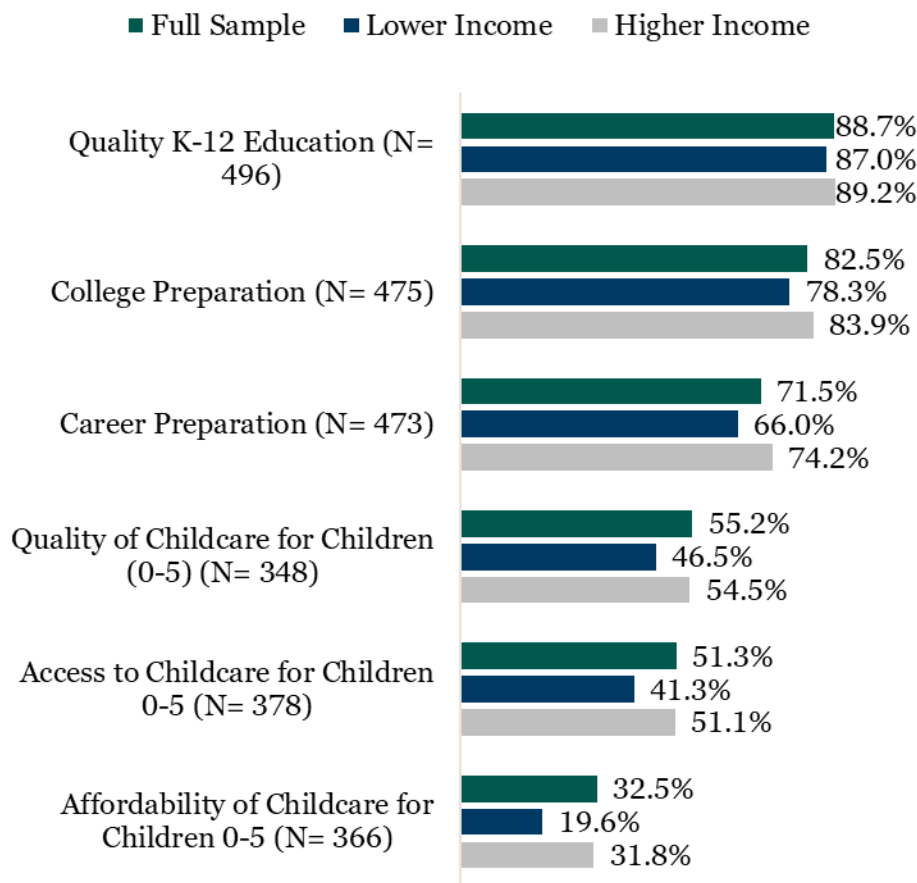


With funding from the Community Foundation of Southern Indiana, the IU Southeast Applied Research and Education Center held community listening sessions and surveyed Clark and Floyd county residents, nonprofit, business, and local government leaders, and the Foundation's fund holders to identify priorities, assets, aspirations, and opportunities for growth and improvement to support thriving communities. Findings will be used to guide the Foundation's grant making to support the community's *Priorities for Progress*.

Prioritizing educational attainment and improving the quality of education in the community can generate positive feedback loops in all areas: from economy, to health, life course, arts and culture.

Figure 1: Education and Workforce Development—Percent that Rate the Item "Excellent" or "Good"



Clark and Floyd counties have strong educational opportunities ranging from early childhood care, public and private K-12 options, and proximity to a number of colleges and universities that offer Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees, as well as direct access to technical and vocational programs and schools including the Prosser Career Education Center, Ivy Tech Community and Technical College, Purdue Polytechnic, and Jefferson Community and Technical College. Local respondents prioritize and value the attainment of trade certificates over four-year degree programs and high school diplomas.

Priorities for Schools

Respondents largely agree that getting and keep good teachers is a top priority for local schools. A majority also state that increasing parental involvement in school should be a top priority.

Respondents largely agree that getting and keep good teachers is a top priority for local schools. A majority also state that increasing parental involvement in school should be a top priority. Income level shapes perceptions of opportunities and priorities for the schools. Lower income respondents want to see increased access and availability of artistic and musical activities, while higher income respondents focus on improving the student discipline policies and procedures.

Figure 2: Top 5 Priorities for Education (N=532)

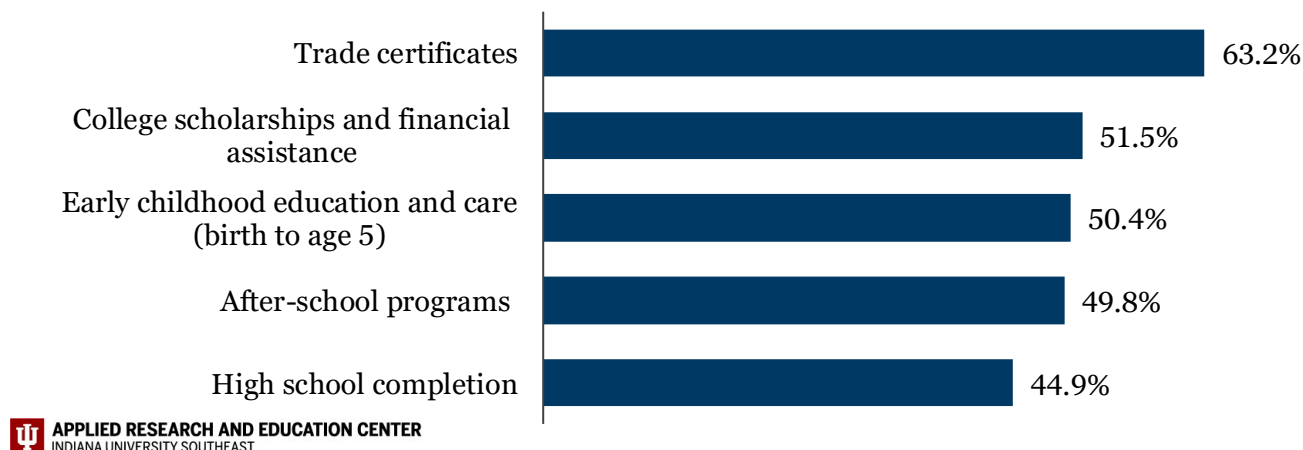
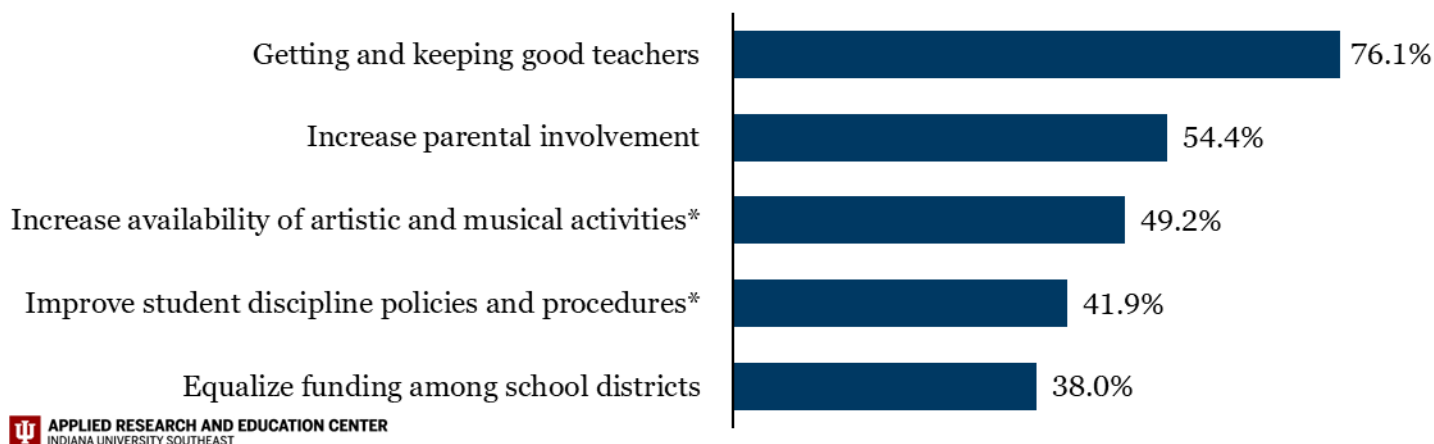


Figure 3: Top 5 Priorities for Schools (N=539)



Recommendations for Education and Workforce Development

- Pursue strategies to ensure that all children have access to high quality developmentally appropriate care from birth to age five.
- Promote the value of various education-to-career pathways, including trades, college attainment, and professional and graduate aspirations, throughout the K-12 system.
- Identify the most important factors in producing, attracting, and retaining high quality teachers and coordinate resources to pursue those strategies.
- Eliminate barriers to student participation in arts, music, and extracurricular activities. This includes increasing exposure to the arts in the standard curriculum, providing resources to ensure access to the equipment and supplies for arts and other extracurricular activities for every child, and developing school transportation strategies that remove transportation as a barrier to participation.
- Align workforce development efforts with regional needs. Secondary and postsecondary education should lay the foundation in basic skills, critical thinking, and problem solving that create a trainable workforce that can adapt to a changing economy. Education is not job training, but improved communication and coordination between the region's employers and its education system will help all parts of the system work more effectively to produce high school and college graduates well-prepared for their next steps. These efforts will also produce employers who understand their own role in training workers with the industry-specific skills they need.