



Whiteboard
Advisors

Education Insider: State of the Union
Address

February 2014

Why Education Insider?

We harness the wisdom of well-connected influentials to provide insights and predict policy outcomes for stakeholders in the education debate.

The Value

Whiteboard Advisors is a policy-oriented consulting practice. We provide proprietary research and strategic support to investors, philanthropic donors, government leaders, and entrepreneurs who seek unparalleled understanding of the education policy and business environments.

Education Insider helps those who need quality information to make high-stakes decisions about the direction of federal policy. Education Insider combines the wisdom of informed crowds with expert analysis to offer unparalleled information, analysis, and forecasting on a range of federal education policy issues and likely outcomes.

Education Insider conducts an anonymous survey of a **small group of key education influentials** (policymakers, thought leaders, and association heads) to get their thoughts and commentary about the context of the current debate and possible outcomes. This helps surface the underlying dynamics that can affect the trajectory of policies, positively or negatively, and go deeper than the conventional wisdom and rhetoric.

Why Education Insider?



The Process

Education Insider is a monthly report that cuts through the noise and provides real-time insights on national education policy trends, debates, and issues—from the handful of decision makers that are really driving the process. We combine a survey of key education influencers with our own analysis to provide a unique perspective on the current state of debate.

Who Are The Insiders?

Influential leaders who are shaping federal education reform, including individuals who have or are currently serving as key policy and political “insiders,” such as:

- Current and former White House and U.S. Department of Education leaders;
- Current and former Congressional staff;
- State education leaders, including state school chiefs and former governors; and
- Leaders of major education organizations, think tanks and other key influentials.

The Framing Questions...

In this *Education Insider* edition, we asked Insiders to respond to President Obama's State of the Union remarks, and the White House's corresponding State of the Union [Fact Sheet](#).

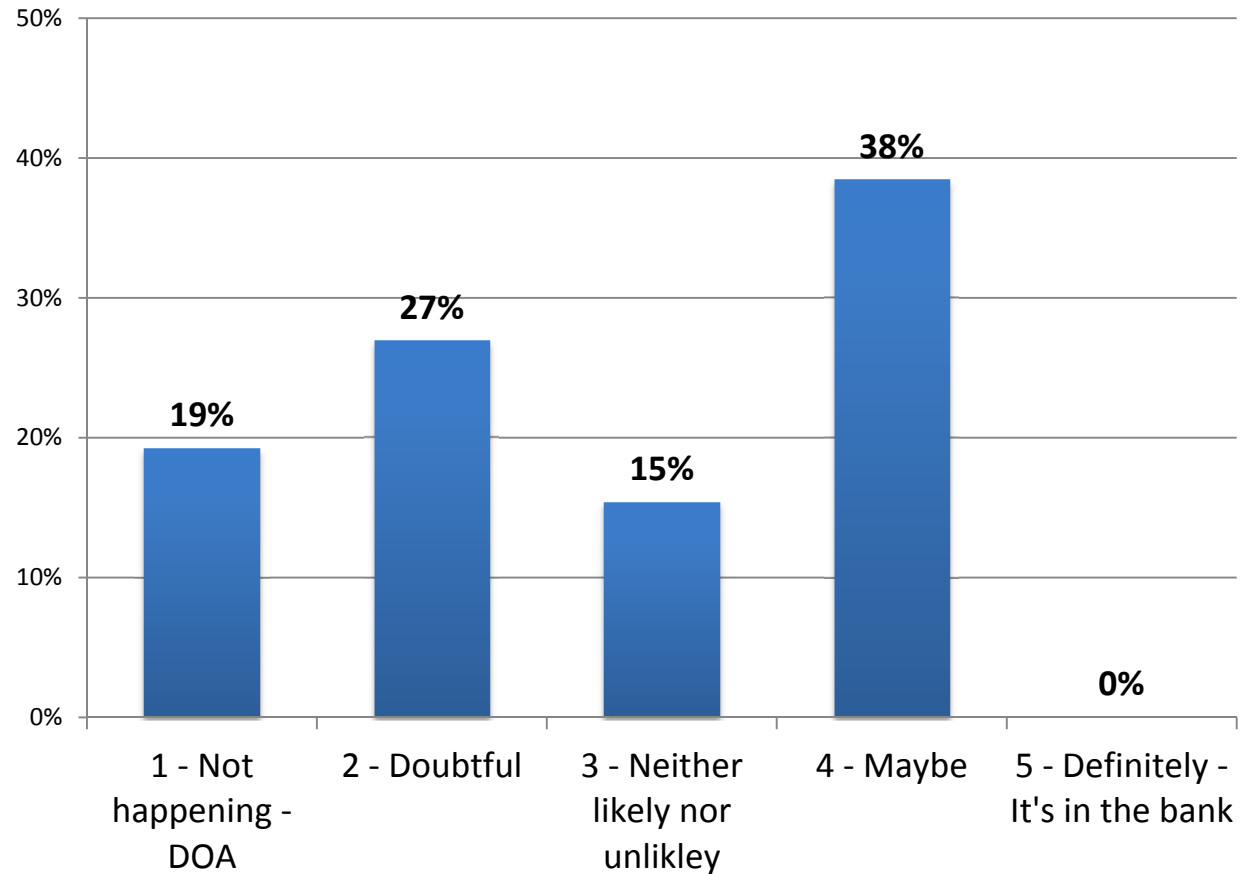
We asked Insiders about each education issue that the President mentioned. For those that would require Congressional action, we asked them to rank the likelihood of passage, ranging from 1 as "Not happening – DOA" to 5 as "Definitely – It's in the Bank."

For those programs that are already underway or that the President plans to implement through executive action, we asked Insiders to select an A-F grade, reflecting their opinion on whether the proposal is a good idea.

Likelihood of Passage

Development of a New System of College Ratings

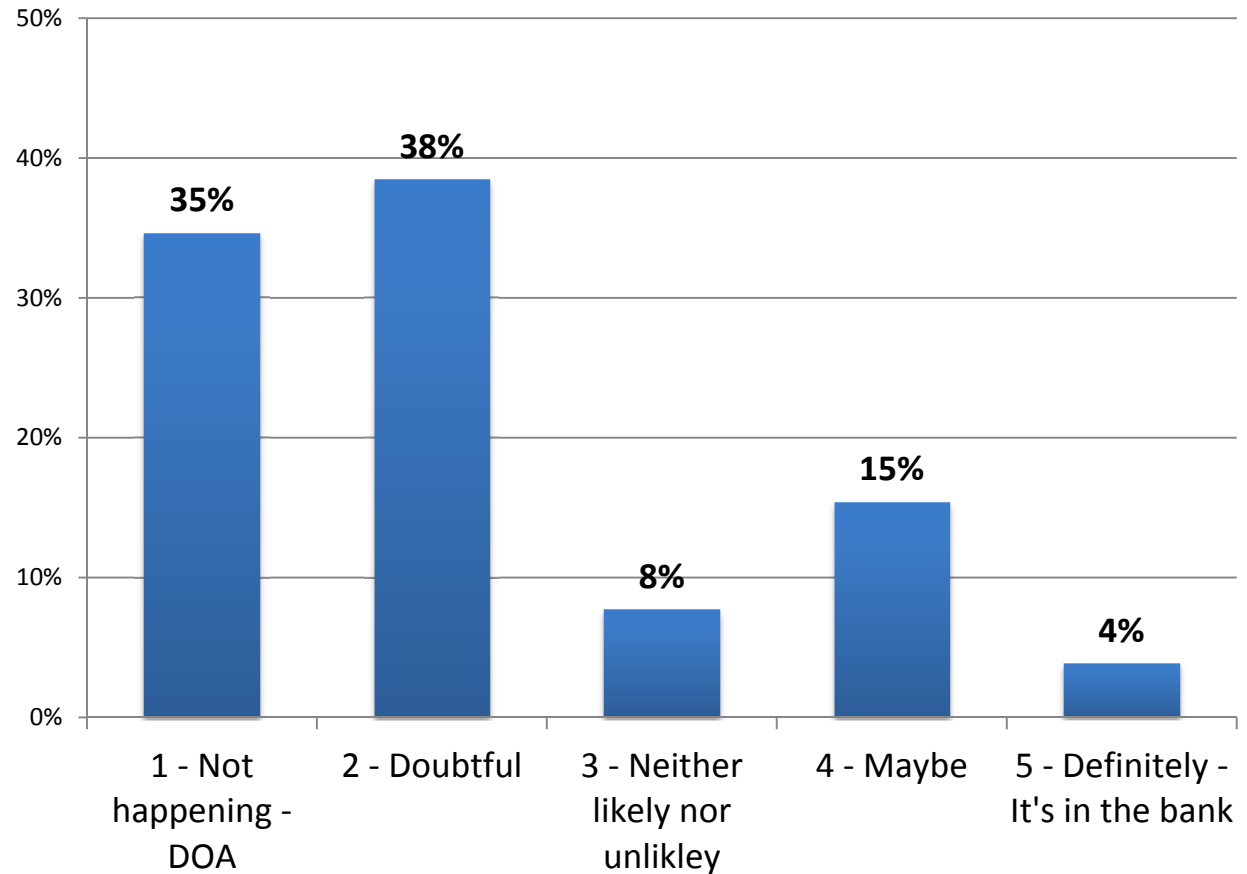
Insiders are generally pessimistic or neutral about the new system of college ratings, though a significant minority think that it may pass Congress.



Question: "Development of a new system of college ratings."

A Substantial Expansion of Federal Support for Pre-K Education

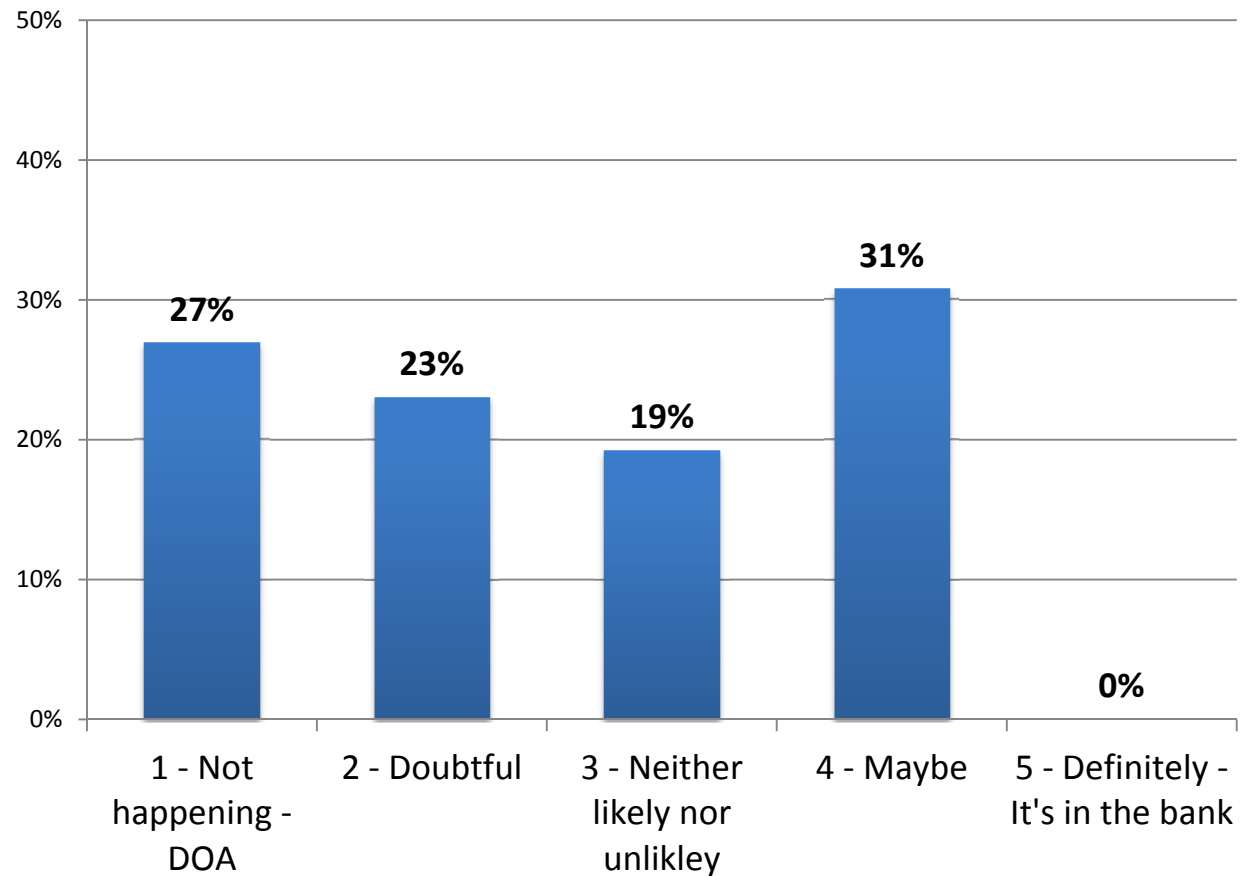
73% of Insiders think that a substantial expansion of federal support for Pre-K is either not happening or doubtful.



Question: "A substantial expansion of federal support for pre-K education."

Scaling Up Models that Personalize Learning and Focus on College and Career Exploration for Students

Most Insiders are pessimistic about the likelihood of the U.S. Department of Education dedicating new resources to scale models that personalize learning and focus on college and career exploration for students.



Question: "Dedicating new resources at the Department of Education to scale up models that personalize learning and focus on college and career exploration for students."

Insider Insights on Likelihood of Passage

- “Basically I think nothing will get through Congress, but the one possibility that might is Pre-K.”
- “Very unlikely that the Administration could develop a new college rating system with any sort of teeth, especially since there seems to be little support in the field or in Congress. Pre-K expansion seems most likely, especially if Congress gets involved, recognizes the need, and tailors the proposal so it doesn’t look like a huge formula grant.”
- “None of this will pass. What they can illegally try and jam down people’s throats is another question. Can we start a countdown to January 20, 2017?”
- “All of these depend on what the substance says and how it will be paid for.”

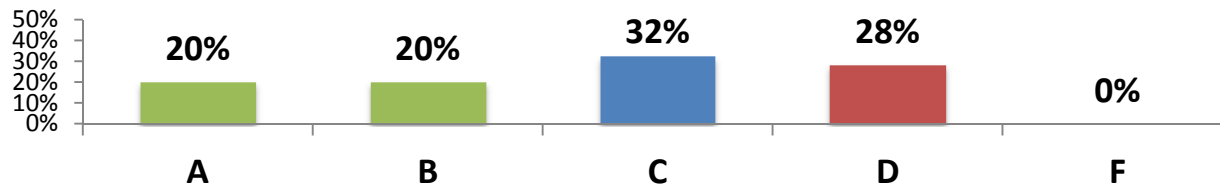
Insider Insights on Likelihood of Passage (continued)

- “There’s a better chance of federal funding for distribution of crack. We are absolutely broke and no number of new programs with good intentions will change that reality.”
- “Everything the President talked about on Pre-K in the SOTU was a policy already funded by Congress in the 2014 appropriations omnibus, not a new proposal. Of course, he never mentioned [that] it’s only a \$250 million program. The interesting takeaway here is that, in the remarks, he suggested that the implementation would really focus on using federal money to leverage philanthropic funding, which is interesting but unclear how it would work.”
- “The Department will develop a new rating system. The question will be, do they use IPEDS [Integrated Postsecondary Data System] data or a new data collection. If it is just a repackaging of IPEDS, it won’t offer us anything improved. There is some interest from both sides on CTE and on allowing for experimentation with new models so I would not count the last out.”

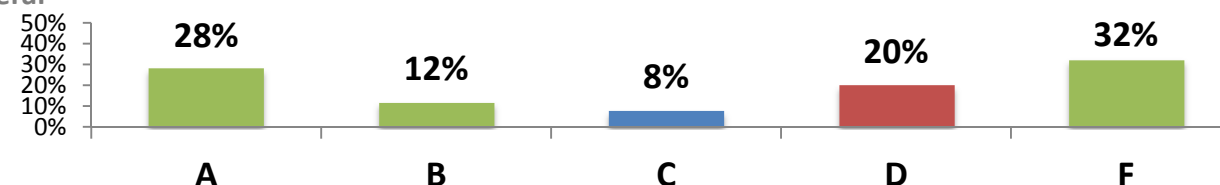
Grading the Proposals

Grade: Development of a New System of College Ratings

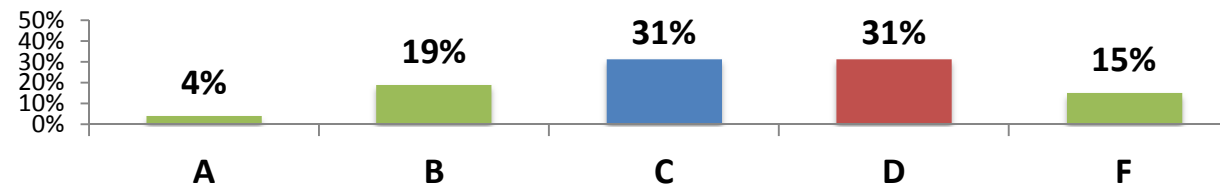
Innovations for College Tools, Cost, and Quality
 A / B: 40%
 D / F: 28%



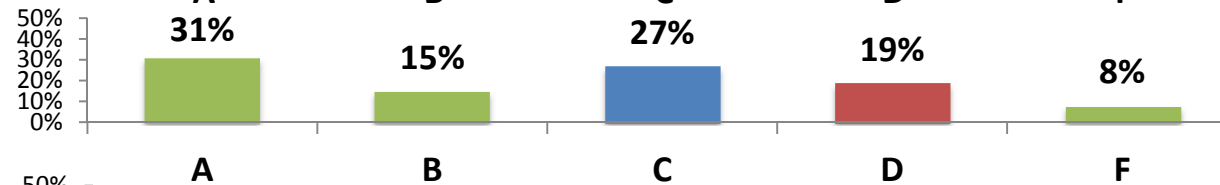
A Substantial Expansion of Federal Support for Pre-K Education
 A / B: 40%
 D / F: 52%



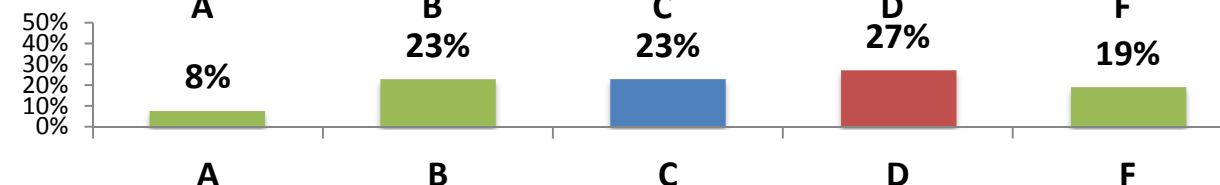
Scaling Up Models that Personalize Learning and Focus on College and Career
 A / B: 23%
 D / F: 46%



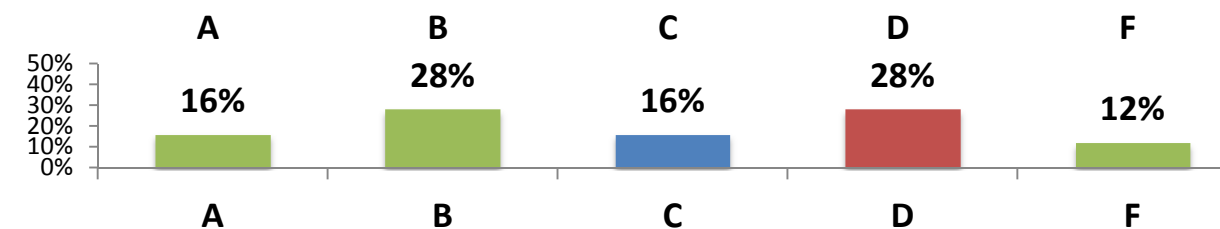
Connecting 15,000 schools
 A / B: 46%
 D / F: 27%



Redesigning High School
 A / B: 31%
 D / F: 36%

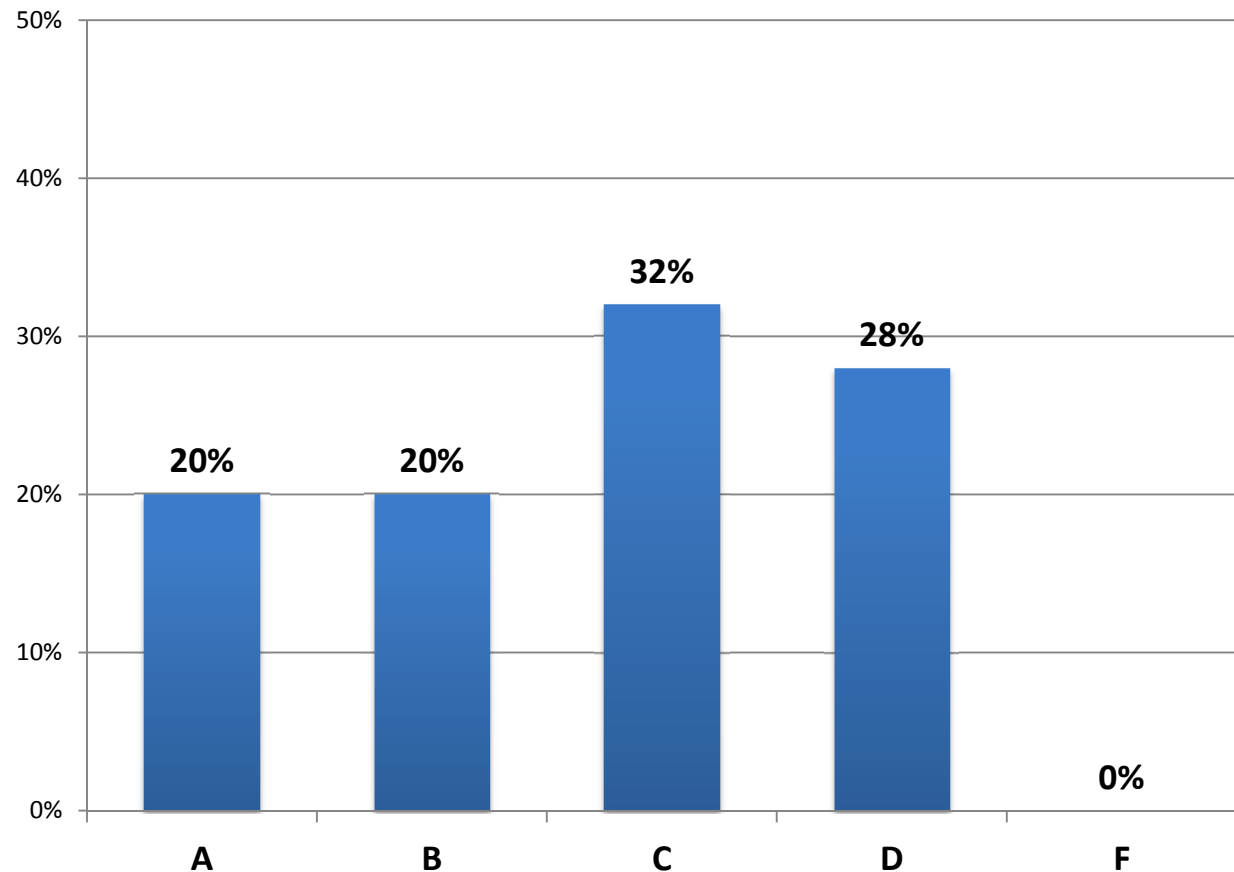


Mobilizing New Commitments
 A / B: 44%
 D / F: 40%



Grade: Innovations for College Tools, Cost, and Quality

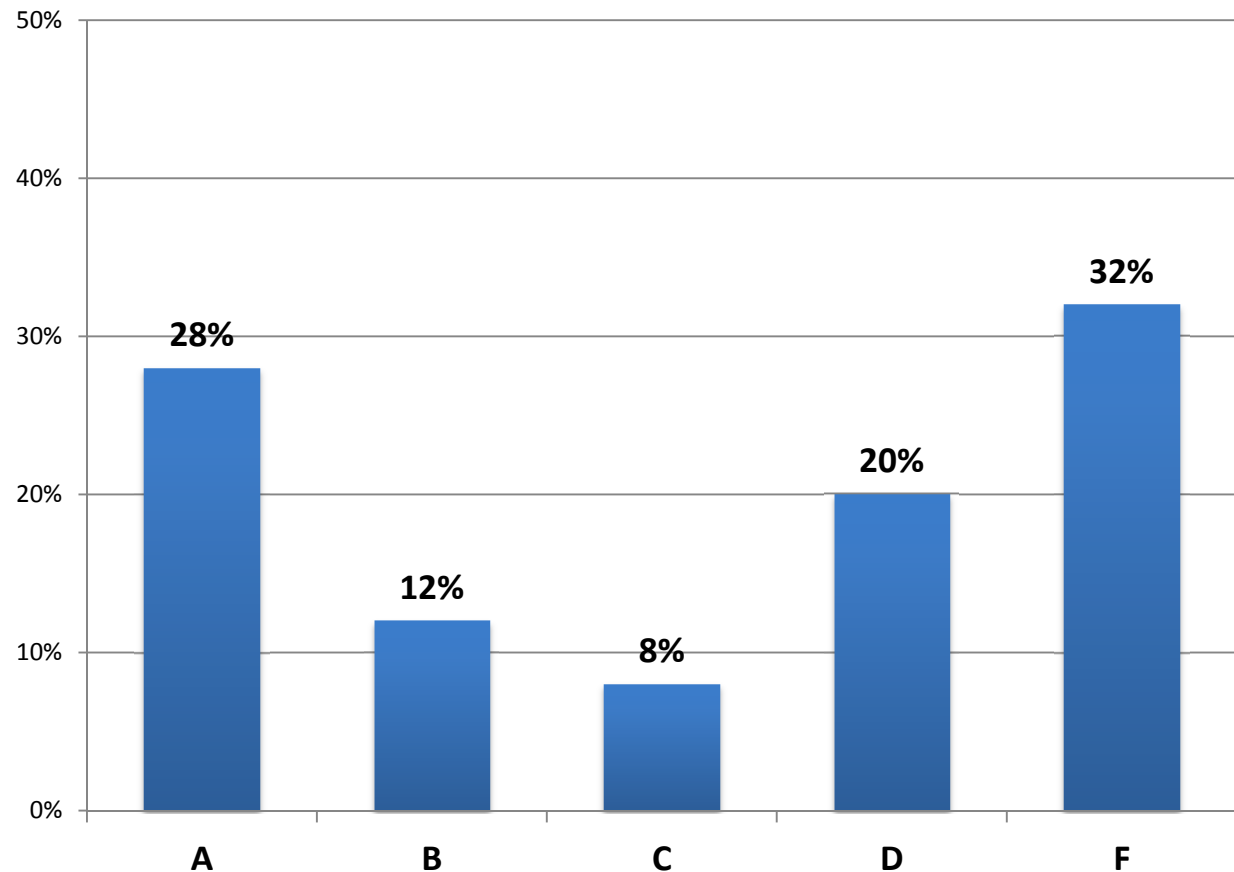
When asked about the plan to work with education and technology stakeholders to spur innovations related to college tools, cost, and quality, 40% think it's an A or B idea, 32% think it's a C idea, and 28% think it's a D idea.



Question: "Working with education and technology stakeholders and experts to spur the development, validation, and scaling-up of innovations that will (1) provide students/families with tools and resources to help them make informed decisions about going to and paying for college and (2) lead to breakthroughs on college cost and quality."

Grade: A Substantial Expansion of Federal Support for Pre-K Education

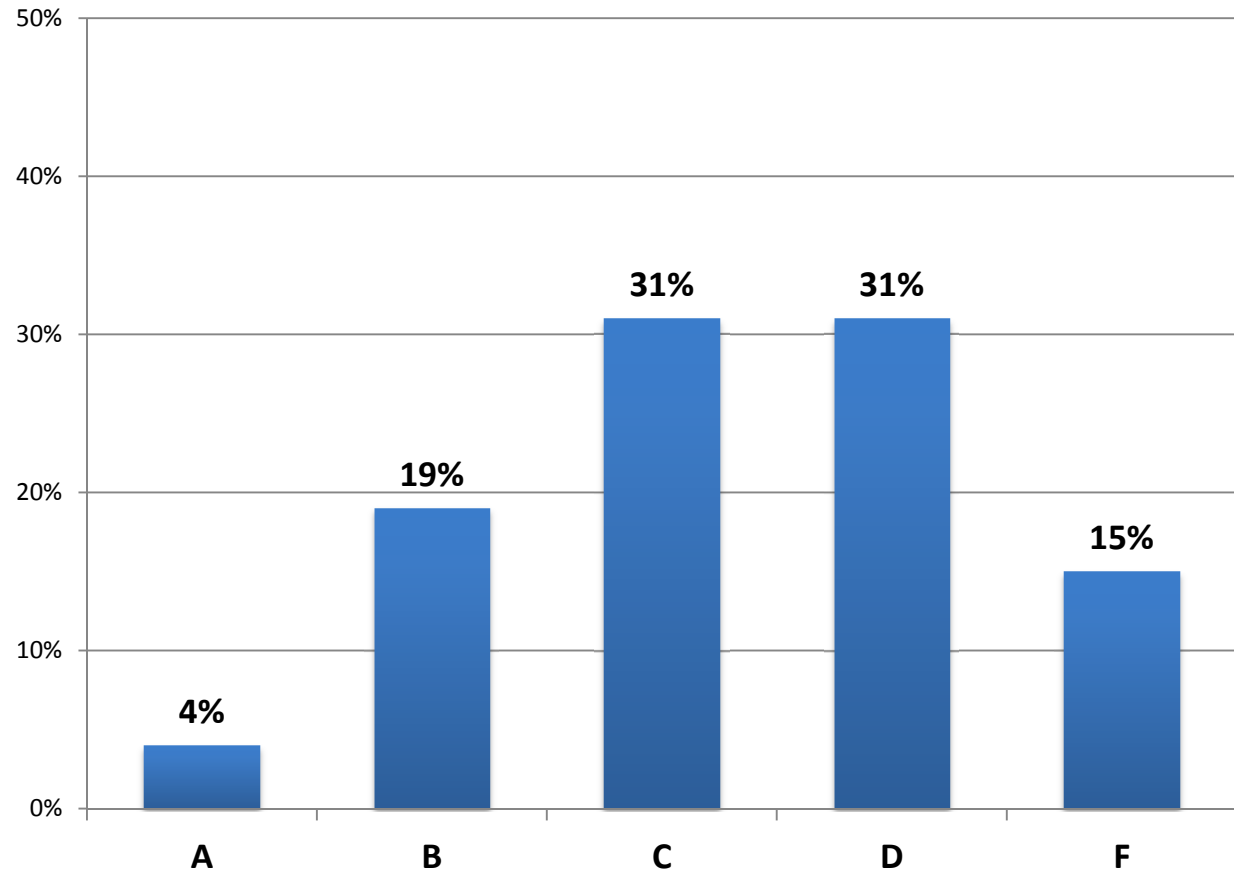
More than half of Insiders think that a substantial expansion of federal support for Pre-K is a bad idea.



Question: "A substantial expansion of federal support for pre-K education."

Grade: Scaling Up Models that Personalize Learning and Focus on College and Career Exploration for Students

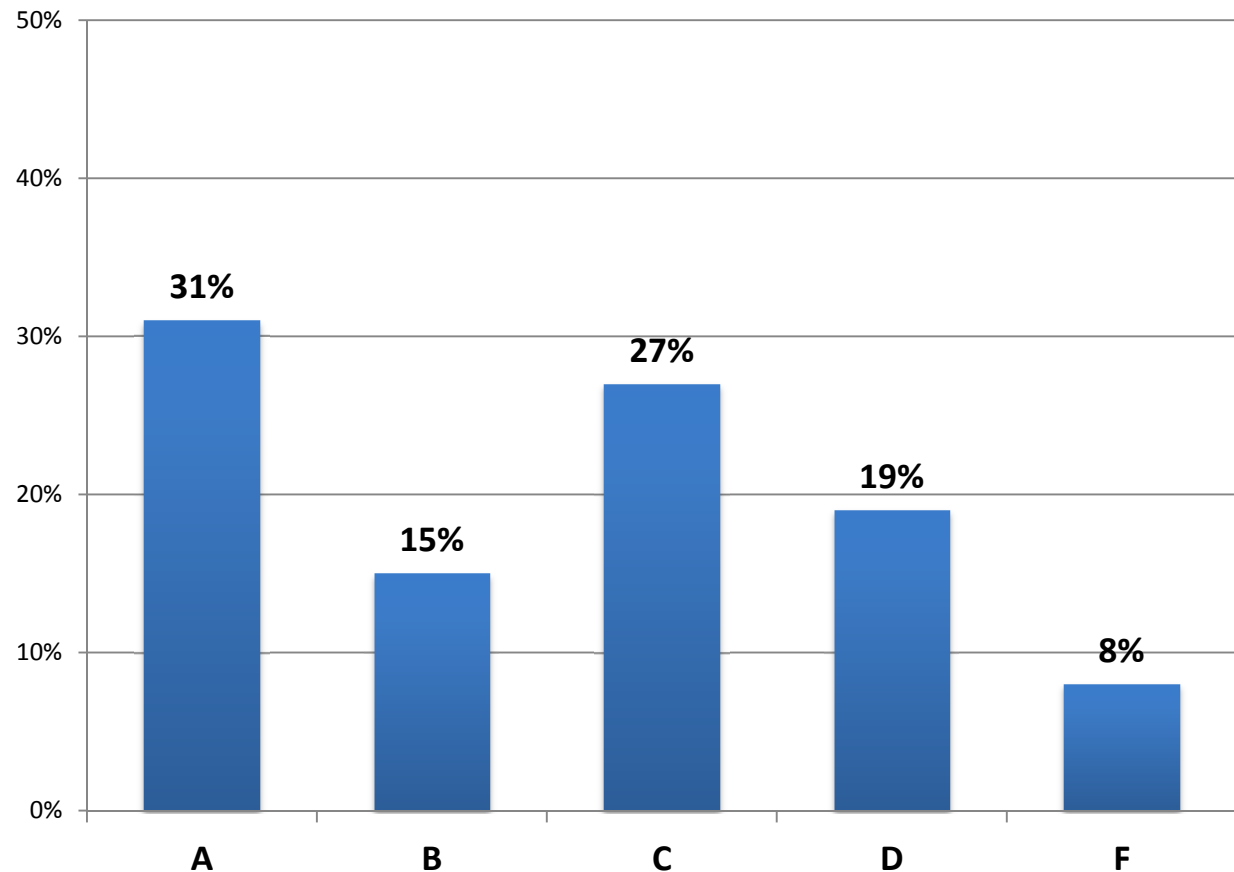
Insiders do not think that dedicating new resources at the Department of Education to scale up models that personalize learning and focus on college and career exploration for students is a good idea; 77% rate it C, D, or F.



Question: "Dedicating new resources at the Department of Education to scale up models that personalize learning and focus on college and career exploration for students."

Grade: Connecting 15,000 schools to the Best Technology to Enrich and Personalize K-12 Education

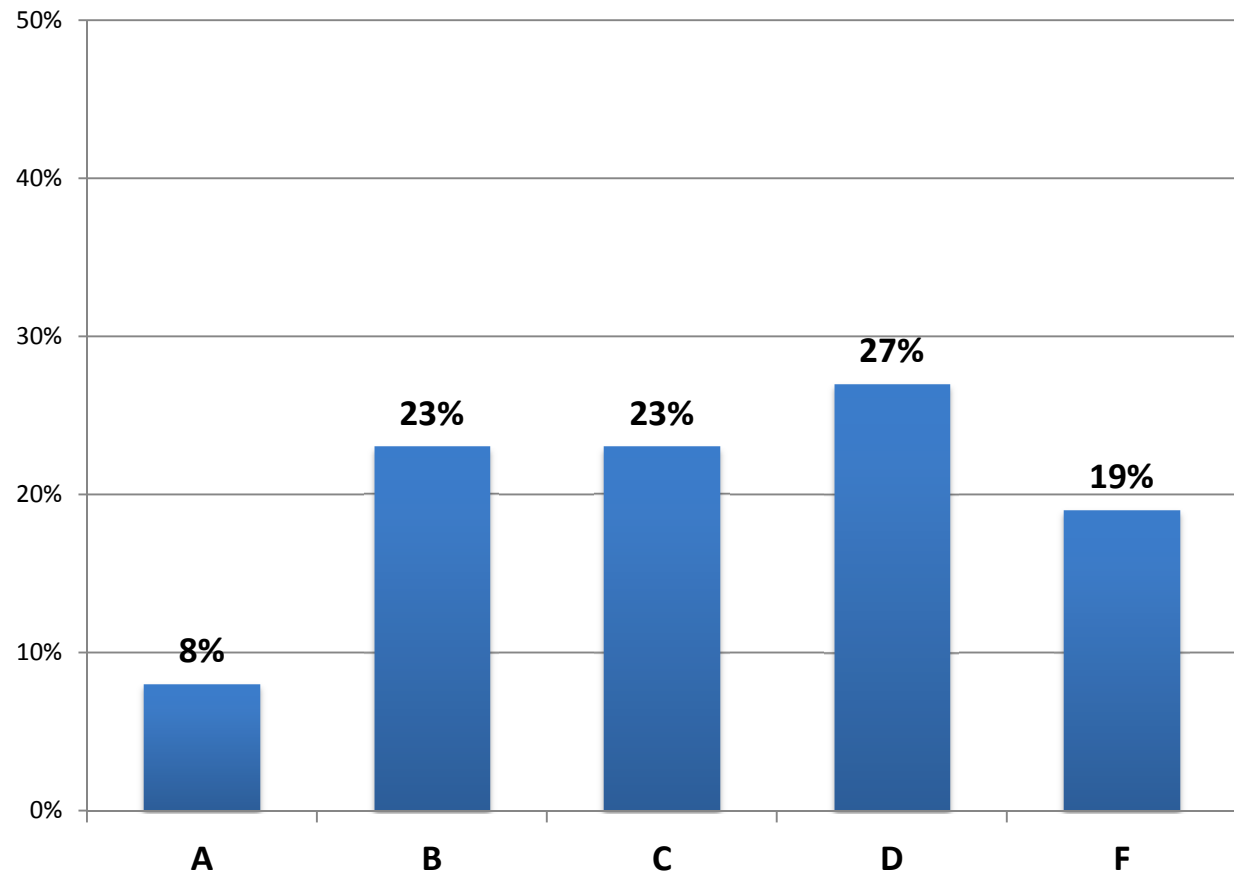
While 27% of Insiders rate it just a C, 46% of Insiders think that the plan to connect schools to high-speed internet and other technology is a good idea.



Question: "Connecting 15,000 schools to the best technology to enrich and personalize K-12 education."

Grade: Redesigning High Schools through the Youth CareerConnect Grant Program

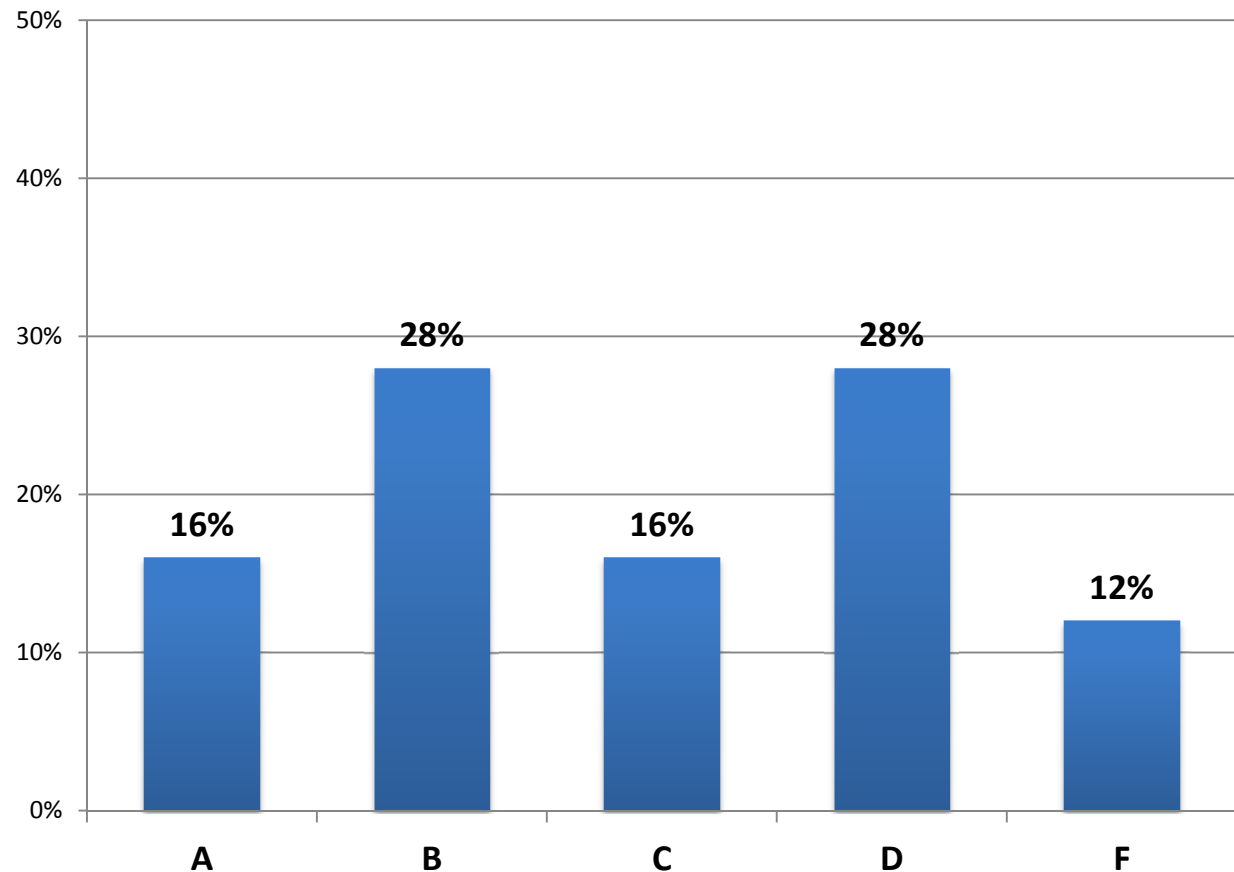
Most Insiders are not particularly impressed with the Youth CareerConnect grant program. 46% rate it a D or F idea, while 23% vote C.



Question: "Redesigning high schools to teach the real-world skills that kids need, through the \$100 million Youth CareerConnect grant program."

Grade: Mobilizing New Commitments to Action and Working with Higher Ed, Businesses, Philanthropists, and Non-Profits

While somewhat divided, 44% of Insiders think that working with stakeholders to increase college opportunities and graduation is an A or B idea. 16% vote C. A large minority, 40%, think it's a D or F plan.



Question: "Increasing college opportunity and graduation by mobilizing new commitments to action and working with colleges/universities, businesses, philanthropists, and non-profits."

Insider Insights on Grades

- “Youth CareerConnect could be a good idea but there is not enough money to do anything. It’s so small we won’t get any idea of whether the program is working or worth expanding.”
- “Now’s not a time for big federal activity on K-12. Uncle Sam needs to step back; opposition is big and growing fast. It’s really troubling that Duncan seems completely unaware of this. His pushing college presidents to advocate for Common Core was mind-boggling. Please, someone get him some clips showing local and state anger about the feds’ involvement in content standards!”
- “The President played an important role in mobilizing key stakeholders and asking them to make commitments to increase college access and affordability. The commitments are a step in the right direction, and while not necessarily legislative or regulatory, are important for furthering the President’s agenda.”

Insider Insights on Grades (continued)

- “An idea like creating partnerships to improve college graduation sounds great until you consider the weak track record of initiatives like that amounting to anything. It’s usually a ‘deliverable’ like an announcement but the follow-up is non-existent. That’s the problem with most of this, it seems very temporary.”
- “Taking credit for things people are already doing is not leadership.”
- “For the ratings system, you know it is bad when Tom Harkin and the universities/colleges are against a Democratic idea.”
- “On the last one [mobilizing new commitments]—great. But shouldn’t they all be doing this already? On pre-K—It’s not that I am opposed to Pre-K per se. It is that we don’t need a massive new infusion of money. We need a better use of the billions of dollars we already put in to early childhood programs across agencies.”

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