



Family Needs Assessment Winter 2026 Brief

Report by

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A Comprehensive Report
for Educational Leaders,
Community Decision-
makers, and Partners



Image Disclaimer

Photos included throughout this report reflect moments from PIQE workshops and programming and are intended to represent the communities we serve. Individuals pictured are not those who participated in the survey.

Report Background

This is an abbreviated version of the full 2026 Family Needs Assessment. [Please view the full report here.](#)



The Family Needs Assessment (FNA) is an effort that PIQE leads annually to better understand the perspectives of the parents/caregivers we serve through our parent-focused family engagement programming. The aim of the report is to illuminate household and community needs that persist as well as those that shift over time. The report underscores that systems of support have yet to develop proper capacity and enhanced access to resources that can ultimately help to address and ameliorate individual, family, and community challenges.

Methods & Demographics

This brief summarizes responses from 1,129 parents/caregivers across California. Topics of inquiry included safety and wellbeing; equity, inclusion, and belonging on and off campus; socioeconomic conditions and political influence; accountability and oversight at home and at school; and caregivers' ranked needs related to resources, adult education, and improving school experiences for children.

Households were selected using a purposive sampling method of at least one parent/ caregiver who participated in a PIQE workshop during the Winter 2025 program cycle. Surveys were conducted by PIQE's Operations Department via telephone in December 2025. The survey was informed by [Spring 2025 focus group findings](#) on the same topics. Focus group participants were also invited to complete the survey. Surveys could be completed in English or Spanish, with most items using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree-strongly agree) and a few using ranked preferences.

Of 9,142 potential participants, 1,129 completed surveys. The majority of caregivers identify as female, Hispanic/Latina/o/x, speak Spanish at home, and report annual household incomes under \$60,000. Over half completed elementary or middle school, and just over a quarter completed high school. Nearly 70% have at least one child who is an English learner, and over two-thirds have children in middle or high school. Full demographic data can be reviewed in the full report.

Scan to read the 2025 Spring Family Needs Assessment here.

Findings

Parents Feel Schools and Neighborhoods Are Safe?

On a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree, most caregivers reported that their neighborhoods and their children’s schools feel safe.

- **Over 75% trusted campus security;**
- **About 70% agreed that local law enforcement keeps them and their children safe without bias;**
- **Nearly two-thirds felt schools address substance use (e.g., vaping and drugs) effectively;**
- **One notable data point was related to safety and security in school bathrooms: about 25% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed that school bathrooms were safe and secure, confirming what we learned in the Spring 2025 focus groups.**

On the other hand, in ranked responses about improving their child’s experience, caregivers highlighted the need for stronger safety measures. These ranked responses align closely with focus group findings from the Spring 2025 FNA report.

- **Nearly two-thirds wanted stricter substance policies;**
- **Over half requested increased protection against internal threats like bullying and weapons;**
- **Over 40% prioritized enhanced measures for external threats, including school shootings, sexual predators, and unauthorized immigration and customs enforcement (ICE) access – see Figure 1.**

Figure 1 – Top Three Things to Improve Child’s School Experience

School Improvement Priorities	Count	Percentage
Stricter school policies related to substances (alcohol, drugs, vaping, etc.) on campus	737	65.28%
Increased safety measures on campus related to internal threats (i.e. bullying, harassment, students bringing weapons to school)	618	54.74%
More academic support from teachers/school staff/school counselors	532	47.12%
Increased safety measures on campus related to external threats (i.e. school shootings, unlawful ICE access/detentions, sexual predators, etc.)	487	43.14%
Hiring more teachers, counselors, and/or support staff	359	31.80%
Access to enhanced mental health support	302	26.75%
More professional development for teachers (cultural responsiveness, SPED training, positive reinforcement/redirection strategies, etc.)	263	23.29%
Evaluation for special education services	89	7.88%

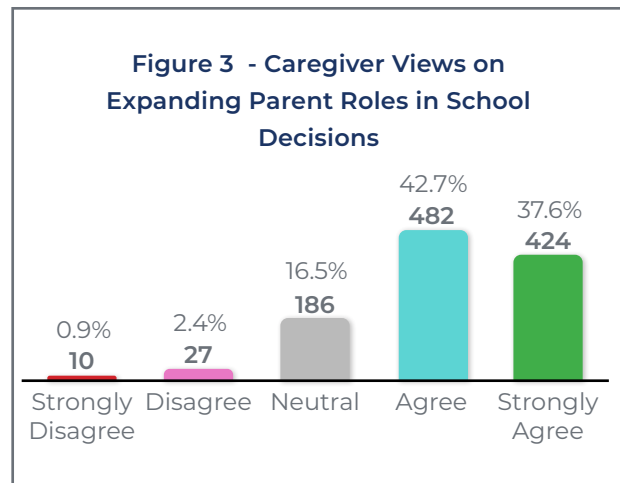
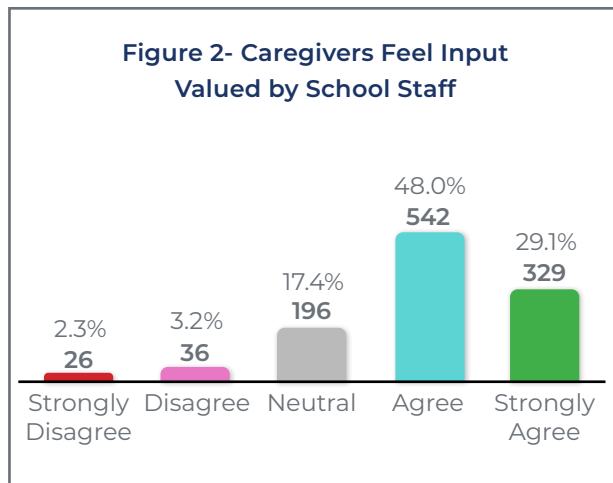
Perspectives on Equity, Communication, and Academic Support

Caregivers generally reported satisfaction with academic support and classroom engagement.

- **Nearly 90% agreed that teachers respect students’ culture, language, and traditions;**
- **Over 80% felt their families were treated equally regardless of language, citizenship, or income;**
- **Over 80% said teachers have high academic expectations;**
- **About 76% felt schools provide adequate support for students with learning differences or disabilities;**
- **Eighty-six percent noted that school staff communicate in their preferred language;**
- **Over 90% receive timely updates on grades, attendance, and assignments.**

Despite these positive experiences, caregivers emphasized a need for more nutritious school meals, with over 40% indicating that school meals do not meet family expectations for healthy eating. Additionally:

- **32% of caregivers wanted more school personnel;**
- **47% requested additional academic support;**
- **23% supported more teacher professional development;**
- **27% wanted enhanced mental health support;**
- **Over 40% face work or transportation barriers that limit attendance at school events;**
- **While nearly 80% feel their input is valued, many caregivers want more opportunities to collaborate in school decision-making – see Figures 2 and 3.**

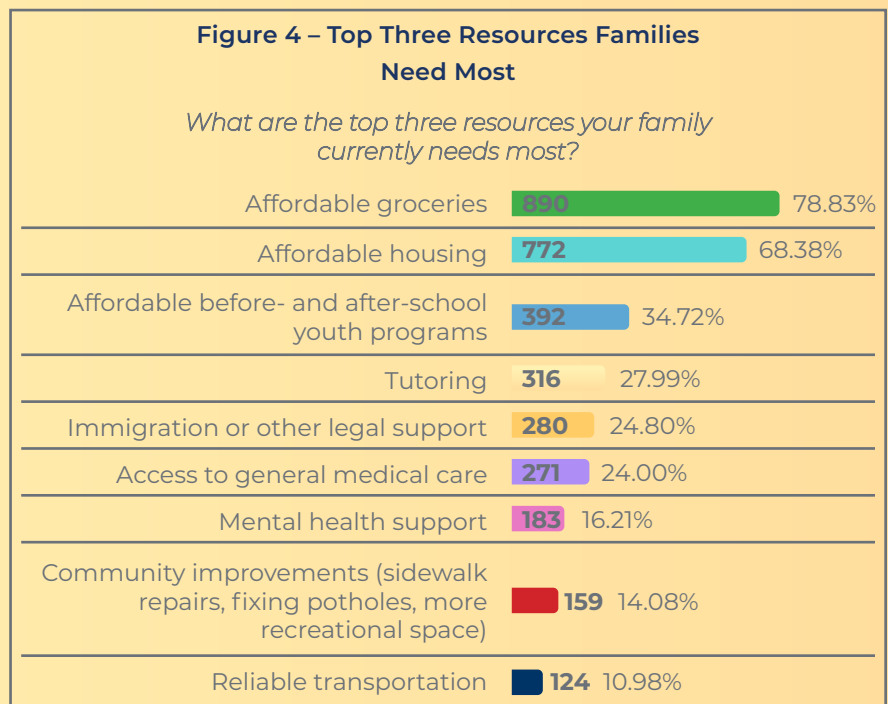


Economic Strain, Anxiety, and Access to Essential Household Needs

Many caregivers reported that the current economy creates stress and challenges for supporting their children’s education.

- **Nearly half said housing costs or instability have made it difficult to support learning;**
- **About 46% noted that economic stress, including lack of work and inflation, affects their child’s emotional well-being;**
- **About two-thirds of caregivers also reported that political or immigration-related issues increase stress or fear in their households;**
- **While roughly 45% feel local leaders are responsive to under-resourced and newcomer families, over 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed.**

When asked about top household needs, nearly 80% ranked affordable groceries highest, followed by affordable housing (70%) and before- and after-school programs (35%). About a quarter of participants identified tutoring, medical care, or immigration/ legal support as priorities – see Figure 4.



Recommendations and Conclusion

This survey of 1,129 caregivers across California illuminates both strengths and areas for growth in supporting students and families. The shifts in perception around safety serve as an important reminder that perspectives and experiences are complex and can change depending on how participants are queried on a topic. It also underscores the need to collect qualitative data so the contours and complexities of caregivers' daily lives can be expanded upon in their own words. That is where this iteration of the FNA began – see Spring 2025 FNA.

The following are recommendations based on what was learned from the most recent surveys:

- **School Safety & Well-Being: Strengthen supervision, bullying and substance use prevention, mental health support, and communication with caregivers.**
- **Academic Support & Staffing: Offer tutoring, resources for caregivers learning English, hire additional staff, and provide teacher professional development.**
- **Caregiver Engagement: Involve caregivers in decision-making, offer flexible meetings, and communicate in preferred languages.**
- **School Meals & Nutrition: Improve meal quality, gather feedback, and partner with community programs.**
- **Economic & Family Supports: Connect caregivers to food, housing, healthcare, after-school programs, and legal/tutoring resources.**
- **Inclusive & Supportive Environments: Provide culturally responsive resources and foster safe, equitable schools.**
- **Adult Education: Offer ESL, GED, digital literacy, and workforce programs with flexible scheduling, integrated with family engagement. Figure 5 reflects the adult education that surveyed caregivers would like. Participants were asked to choose their top three choices.**

In conclusion, addressing and prioritizing the needs identified by caregivers can strengthen both student success and overall family well-being. Schools and community partners are called upon to work together to create environments where students feel safe, supported, and respected. Expanding resources for caregivers, such as adult education and access to basic needs, further promotes equity and inclusion. By focusing on these areas, schools can build more responsive, supportive, and reciprocal communities for all families.

