



Whiteboard  
Advisors

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## Education Insider

America's College Promise, Student Data Privacy & K-12 Priorities

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January 2015

# Why Education Insider?

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An Insider Look At Education Policy From Leaders Across the Country



Survey Insiders



Analyze Results



Report Insights



Drive Action

## About Education Insider

*Education Insider* is a monthly report that uses a proprietary model to cut through the noise and provide real-time insights on national education policy trends, debates, and issues—from a small group of approximately 50-75 Insiders who are close to the process. We conduct a survey of these influencers, which includes their candid opinions and insights, to provide a unique perspective on K-12 and higher education. The views expressed do not necessarily represent the viewpoints of Whiteboard Advisors or any of its employees.

## Who Are the Insiders?

Influential leaders who are shaping federal education reform, including individuals who have served 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 and think tanks, as well as other key influentials.

# Executive Summary

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## A Look At Key Insights From Our Brief January Survey

### Data Snapshot

**92%** of Insiders think the America's College Promise proposal is unlikely to pass.

**51%** of Insiders believe federal legislation addressing student data privacy is likely to pass.

**Nearly 4 in 5 (79%)** of Insiders believe that additional federal accountability measures for schools are unlikely.

**47%** of Insiders believe expanded school choice is likely, while **39%** see no change.

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### America's College Promise Proposal

Among Education Insiders, the overwhelming consensus is that President Obama's proposal for free community college will not be implemented. Many Insiders believe that this proposal will fail to get support from Congress, citing the high cost of this "entitlement program" as the key barrier.

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### Student Data Privacy Act

Just over half of Insiders believe that student data privacy legislation will become law. While most believe that there is overwhelming support from the public and among elected officials, some see the political realities of Congress getting in the way.

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### K-12 Policy Priorities

Significant numbers of Insiders expect that expanded accountability measures for schools (79%) and expanded teacher evaluation measures (86%) are "unlikely." Those surveyed were more optimistic about expansions to school choice and greater student data privacy measures, with 43% and 57% respectively saying they are "likely."

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# America's College Promise Proposal

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## Nearly 3 in 4 Insiders Believe Free Community College Won't Happen Any Time Soon

### Background

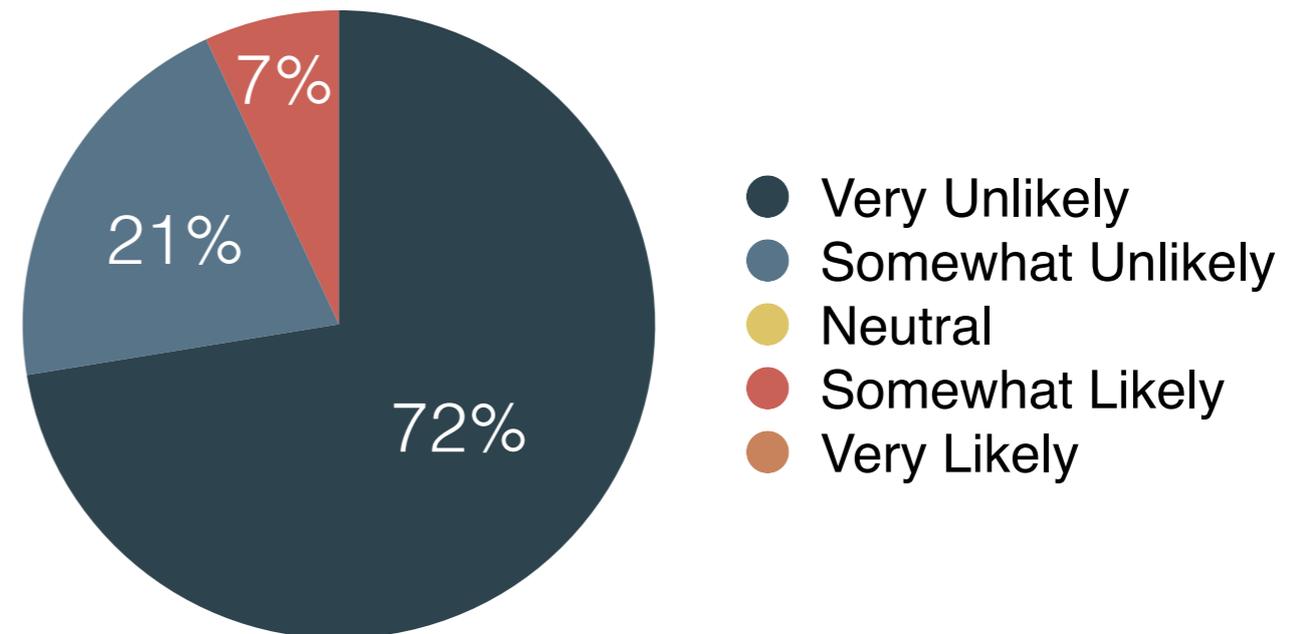
On January 9, 2015, the Obama Administration released a proposal that would make community college free to students who meet certain requirements. The initial proposal requires states to share a portion of the cost.

### Insiders Weigh In

Our survey indicates that Insiders do not believe this proposal will become law. Nearly three in four respondents (71.4%) say the proposal is “very unlikely” to become law. When asked why they responded as they did, Insiders mostly agreed that a Republican-led Congress is unlikely to authorize a large, expensive “entitlement program” that would require a “change in tax policy.”

### By The Numbers

An astounding 92% of respondents indicated that the proposal is either “very unlikely” or “somewhat” unlikely to pass. No Insiders were neutral on the issue, and only 7% said the proposal was “somewhat likely.”



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**Q: President Obama outlined his vision for the America's College Promise proposal, which would make community college free for students who meet certain requirements. In your opinion, how likely is this proposal to be implemented?**

# America's College Promise Proposal

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## Insiders Offer Comments On The Prospects For Free Community College

### No Love From Congress

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“Paying for it requires a change in tax policy that Republicans object to.”

“Republicans aren't going to create and expand an entitlement program.”

“It needs Congressional approval, which is unlikely given the makeup of Congress. Tennessee is the model for free community college, and its senior Senator, chair of the education committee, said he's against the President's proposal.”

“It's a hugely expensive program that a Republican Congress would need to authorize...”

“It has been panned by many on left and right already. This is not just about obstinate Republicans. There are also concerns on the left about misallocating resources.”

### Too Expensive

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“Too costly.”

“Too big of a price tag.”

“It's about the costs. Do we really see this Congress raising taxes to pay for more federal spending and new programs? Do we see them eliminating the tax breaks for 529s? I think not.”

### The Long Game

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“Not in this Administration. I believe the President was restocking the policy cabinet for Democrats for 2016 and beyond.”

### Regrets

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“Great idea that will fall victim to partisanship and concerns about cost.”

# America's College Promise Proposal

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## Political Realities Aside, What Do Insiders Think Of The Proposal?

**Q:** In general, what is your opinion of President Obama's America's College Promise proposal?

### A Mixed Bag

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"It is great from the standpoint of symbolism and shifting the conversation; in terms of policy, it may not be the most effective way to boost college opportunity and success."

"Great idea; driven more by politics than substance though."

"The concept of 'free/universal K-14' (rather than the current free and universal K-12) education makes sense given the demands of the 21st century workforce. However, I do think that, in these budget-challenged days, the primary focus should be on helping low-income students, not 'all' students. Current financial aid solves the tuition challenges—already—for low-income students, and none of the proposals solve the 'cost of living' hardships that are actual barriers to post-secondary education."

"It is a good idea in concept, but it more than likely leads to less accountability in high school. It only works if we significantly improve the quality and accountability of community colleges."

*Note: Some comments have been edited for clarity.*

### The Naysayers

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"Tired, ideological thinking. More subsidies without greater accountability for higher education or the tough policies to get students ready for higher education."

"It's a bad idea that naively hopes some combination of more federal money and more federal governance of community colleges will fix them...Tough to reform existing institutions top to bottom."

### Shifting the Conversation

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"It's a powerful idea and helps move the conversation forward regarding college access and the importance of postsecondary education and training that is not necessarily traditional 4-year colleges."

"While this has no chance of moving with this Congress, it has grabbed the public's attention and may have helped shift the narrative around and aspirations for higher ed policy."

# America's College Promise Proposal

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## Political Realities Aside, What Do Insiders Think Of The Proposal?

**Q:** In general, what is your opinion of President Obama's America's College Promise proposal?

### Complex Policy Dynamics

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“There is no incentive for anyone or any institution to focus on results; it is just an expansion of access—a recipe for more money spent with no greater chance of better outcomes.”

“Paying for community college is not as big an obstacle as some others - the signaling effect is great but there are cheaper and more targeted ways to do that.”

“Difficult to understand why it's needed given the range of available financial aid. It also doesn't address anything related to the readiness gap.”

“Bad policy and, quite frankly, bad politics. There are very few barriers to attending community college anyway plus the American public hears "free" and gets the joke that they are ultimately paying for this nonsense.”

“It creates a new entitlement where effectively delivered Pell grants would actually take care of the vast majority of students affected.”

“Good, but still leaves some unanswered questions including what impetus is there for students to go beyond community college.”

# Student Data Privacy Act

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## Half Of Insiders Think Federal Action Is Likely, Citing Bipartisan Support For The Issue

### Background

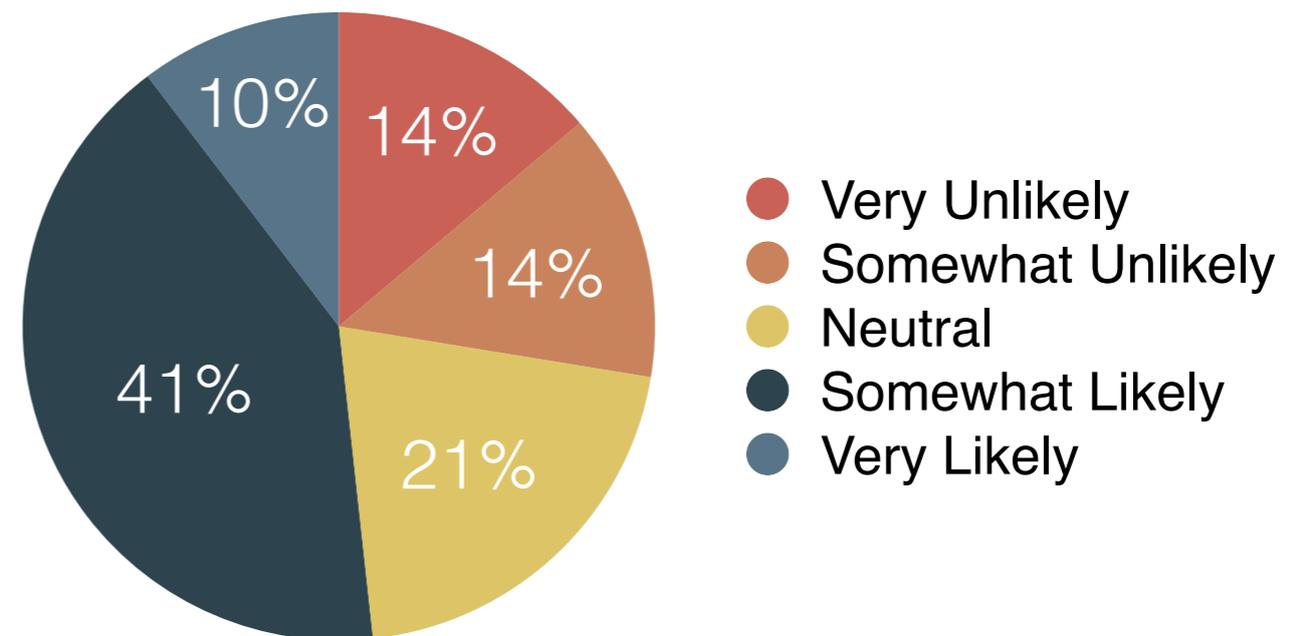
President Obama outlined a so-called “consumer privacy bill of rights” on January 12, 2015. The proposal includes a Student Data Privacy Act modeled off similar legislation enacted in California in 2014, which was designed to protect students from misuse of student data by education technology companies.

### Insiders Weigh In

Half of respondents believe that there will be legislation enacted to address student data privacy. Broad bipartisan support appears to be the key driver, though some Insiders worry that politics could prevent action. Most agreed the issue is indeed “hot,” and a few cited grassroots support from parents as an important factor for this issue.

### By The Numbers

51% of Insiders say some form of a student data privacy legislation is “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to become law. Only 28% think it is unlikely, with a fifth of Insiders unsure about the prospects for similar legislation.



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**Q: President Obama recently proposed the Student Data Privacy Act, which would prohibit technology firms from profiting from student information collected in schools. How likely is this or similar legislation to pass?**

# Student Data Privacy Act

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## Insiders Offer Comments On Protections For Student Data

### Broad Support

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“Protecting student privacy has political appeal on both sides of the aisle.”

“This is a hot issue now, and a coalition could come together without too much drama.”

“This has become an issue parents are talking about at parties, which means the politicians will eventually have to do something.”

“This issue unites the right and the left and is another backdoor way to slow school reform.”

### Politics Could Get In The Way

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“You can't just put 'privacy' on some vanilla data sharing bill and think people won't see it for what it is.”

“There's no legislative text. Hasn't worked with ANYONE on the Hill, including Democrats. Another missed opportunity.”

### Balancing Safeguards & Innovation

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“There is general agreement that the California law on which the proposed federal act is based balances the need for innovation in education and the need to safeguard data and limit how vendors/3rd party solution providers handle student data. If crafted carefully and thoughtfully, a version of this bill can address these concerns while not limiting the role of data to personalize learning and promote innovation.”

### Politics Could Get In The Way

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“Anything the President proposes will be difficult to get through.”

“Protecting privacy is popular, but I'm unsure if congressional Republicans will pass anything significant the administration puts forward.”

“This has more to do with general White House-Congress relations than with the specifics of proposal.”

# K-12 Education Priorities

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## Insiders Take A Look At The Future Of Key K-12 Policies & Priorities

### Background

This month, there has been a lot of activity around state and federal policy for both K-12 and higher education. In addition to the State of the Union, Secretary Duncan outlined his priorities in a January 12 speech and Senator Alexander released a draft of his proposed ESEA revision. We asked Insiders to evaluate how these actions affect a number of key K-12 policy initiatives.

### A Look at the Issues

We surveyed Insiders on the following policy initiatives:

- Annual Testing
- Accountability Measures
- Teacher Evaluation
- Title I Funding
- High Quality Pre-K
- School Choice
- Student Data Privacy

### By The Numbers

**36%** of Insiders say **federal requirements for annual testing** are somewhat less likely. Only **1 in 4** think expanded requirements are likely.

**79%** of respondents think **expanded accountability measures** for schools are either “somewhat” or “very unlikely.”

**86%** said **expanded teacher evaluation measures** are either “somewhat” or “very unlikely.”

**35%** of Insiders believe that **expansions in Title I funding** are unlikely. Slightly more, **44%**, see no change to the current level of funding.

Insiders are evenly divided on the prospects for **expanded access to high-quality pre-K**. **35%** say it is unlikely, **32%** say there will be no change, and **32%** say it is likely.

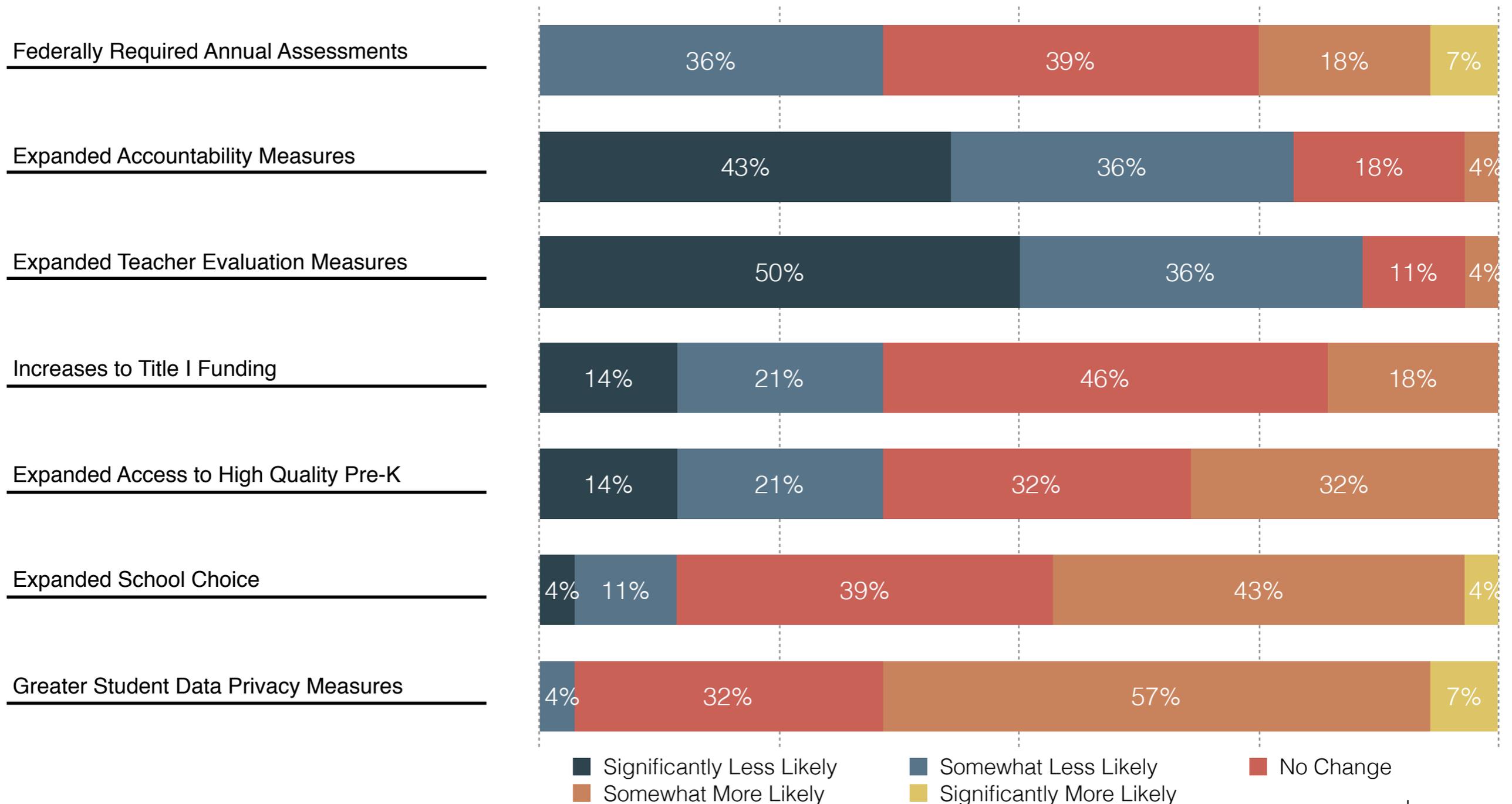
**47%** of Insiders believe we could see **expansions to school choice**. **39%** expect no change.

**64%** of Insiders think we will see **greater student data privacy restrictions**.

# K-12 Education Priorities

## Insiders Take A Look At What Lies Ahead For Key K-12 Policy Issues

**Q:** In light of the State of the Union, Secretary Duncan's recent speech, and Senator Alexander's ESEA draft - in your opinion, what is the outlook for the following K-12 education policies and priorities?



Note: Some numbers do not add up to 100% due to rounding.



# Whiteboard Advisors



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