

# THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

---

August 2022

Brittney Becker, Meg Lowe, Matt Ragone, Joy Gitter,  
Leila Nuland, Paula Jacobson, & Claire Driscoll



## CONTENTS

Preface.....	4
Overview .....	5
Literature Review.....	6
School Safety .....	6
Inclusivity .....	8
Instructional Climate .....	10
Student Support and Engagement .....	10
Relationships .....	12
Bullying and Discipline .....	13
Principal and Staff Leadership .....	14
Family and Community Engagement .....	16
Conclusion .....	17
Methodology .....	18
Instrument Design.....	18
Analysis.....	18
Findings.....	20
Academic Environment .....	20
Instructional Climate .....	20
Student Attitudes and Effort .....	21
Resources.....	22
School/Building Environment.....	22
Emotional Climate .....	22
Building and Personal Safety .....	23
Social Environment .....	23
Relationships and Discipline .....	23
Bullying and Harassment .....	24
Inclusiveness .....	25
Implications for Practice and Research .....	26
Implications for Practice.....	26
Implications for Research .....	27
Additional Resources .....	28
Appendix A: Tables and Figures .....	29
Section A: School/Building Environment.....	29
Section B: Academic Environment.....	37

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Section C: Social Environment .....	55
Section D: Inclusiveness.....	71
Appendix B: Climate Survey Instrument.....	82
Main Constructs .....	82
School/Building Environment.....	82
Academic Environment.....	82
Social Environment .....	84
Inclusiveness .....	86

## PREFACE

As we enter the 2022-2023 school year, developing and maintaining a school and district environment that supports student well-being has never been more imperative. By focusing on the social-emotional well-being and mental health of students, districts can better foster feelings of safety, connection, engagement, and ultimately, success.

In the course of our work with over 300 public school districts and eleven state departments of education, the K-12 Team at Hanover Research developed a K-12 Climate Survey instrument to help district and school leaders measure school climate, and in turn, focus on areas in which they can improve their district and school climate.

This paper describes the development of a survey instrument to help district leaders evaluate the state of climate in their schools and district. Our hope is for readers to better understand how they can measure and track school climate and how their local experiences compare to the national trends outlined in this paper.

# OVERVIEW

School climate is a complex, multi-dimensional aspect of education that greatly impacts student learning and development as well as the experiences of staff and parents. Research show that a safe and supportive school climate is critical to student success. The events of the past two years – from COVID-19 to social unrest and politicization of teaching and learning – created new challenges related to school climate while also exacerbating pre-existing issues.

For many years, Hanover Research's (Hanover) clients commissioned research studies and evaluations to understand the current state of school climate in their schools and districts and identify strategies to improve school climate. To support these clients, Hanover developed a standardized K-12 Climate Survey for districts to use to understand their community members' (i.e., students, parents, and staff) perceptions of the climate and culture within their school and district. The survey was developed by content and survey experts at Hanover to assess the following core aspects of school climate: School/Building Environment, Academic Environment, Social Environment, and Inclusiveness.

Between 2018 and 2022 leaders at 30 school districts commissioned Hanover to administer our standardized K-12 Climate Survey. In total, 150,354 individuals responded to the survey and were included in the analysis in this paper. Participating districts are located in the U.S. West, South, Northeast, and Midwest regions, including city, suburb, town, and rural areas. Hanover created individual data dashboards with survey results to allow our K-12 members to view, filter, and segment their results. This paper describes trends found in an analysis of a national dataset of results from the 30 district that utilized Hanover's standardized K-12 Climate Survey. This analysis is also framed by a review of empirical literature as well as Hanover's body of research on K-12 school culture. Hanover further offers expert recommendations for districts engaging in their own initiatives to improve and sustain a positive school climate.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

School climate and culture are complex, multi-dimensional aspects of education that greatly impact student learning and development.<sup>1</sup> While school climate and culture are not necessarily visible, they are certainly felt among all members of the school community.<sup>2</sup> The following literature review examines the research-based components and impacts of school climate, including school safety, inclusivity, the instructional climate, student achievement and engagement, relationships, bullying and discipline, principal and staff leadership, and family and community engagement.

## SCHOOL SAFETY

School safety is a complex topic that encompasses a wide variety of behaviors, such as criminal activity, illegal substance use, and gang violence. Violence and fear of violence in schools represent a significant cause for concern as about five percent of students report feeling afraid of attack or harm at school and avoiding one or more places in school.<sup>3</sup> However, trends in school safety and security demonstrate inconsistent changes within the past ten to 15 years as criminal activity, victimization, and bullying decreased while threats and injuries increased. While nonfatal violence and victimization decreased, these activities occurred at school more often than away from school.<sup>4</sup> Findings from the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which demonstrate this mixture of positive and negative trends in school and youth safety, appear in **Figure 3.1**. The cell color of the right column reflects the significance of the change according to National Youth Risk Behavior Survey analysts.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 3.1: Trends in Violence, 2009-2019

STUDENT EXPERIENCE	PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM INITIAL TO MOST RECENT SURVEY*
Were threatened or injured with a weapon at school	-0.3%
Did not go to school because of safety concerns	+3.7%
Were electronically bullied	-0.5%
Were bullied at school	-0.4%
Were forced to have sex	-0.1%
Experienced physical dating violence	-2.1%
Experienced sexual dating violence	-2.2%

Source: National Youth Risk Behavior Surveys, 2009-2019, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention<sup>6</sup>

\*Not all questions on these student experiences appeared in the 2009 survey. For this reason, the percentage change illustrates the change from 2009—or the first time the question appeared—to 2019.

<sup>1</sup> Ross, R., P. Brown, and K.H. Biagas. "Creating Equitable School Climates: How States and Districts Are Weaving Equity into Their Efforts to Improve Climate." National Association of State Boards of Education, May 2020. p. 17. [https://nasbe.nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/2020/05/Ross-Brown-Biagas\\_May-2020-Standard.pdf](https://nasbe.nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/2020/05/Ross-Brown-Biagas_May-2020-Standard.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Zygouris-Coe, V, K. Nolen, and P.S. Ferrante. "Cultivate a Culture of Coaching." *Learning Professional*, 42:5, October 2021. p. 38. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

<sup>3</sup> Irwin, V. et al. "Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2020." National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Washington, D.C., 2021. p. 16. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2021/2021092.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> "Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Data Summary & Trends Report: 2009-2019." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. p. 40. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/YRBSDataSummaryTrendsReport2019-508.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Figure reproduced with modifications from: Ibid.



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Violence and school shootings occur more frequently in recent years compared to the beginning of the century; and over seven percent of high school students suffered threats or injuries due to a weapon on school property in 2019.<sup>7</sup> Despite the many school safety and security measures established to prevent violence in the post-Columbine world, efforts have not been successful. The Columbine mass shooting gave “the school securitization boom...purpose and moral authority,” as it gathered national media visibility for years to follow, contributing to widespread fear of school shootings.<sup>8</sup> A 2019 article published in the *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* describes how proponents and opponents of increased security in schools believe heightened security affects school climate.<sup>9</sup> Those in favor of increased security argue students that feel safe at school experience better academic, attendance, and behavioral outcomes. Alternatively, those opposed to increase school security argue that visible security steps (e.g., metal detectors, cameras) create a “culture of criminalization,” leading to challenging student-staff relationships, disrupted learning, and misconduct. Safety and active shooter drills can also negatively impact school climate and may increase students’ fear of being harmed at school.<sup>10</sup> Academic research further shows that **visible security efforts have a “pre-prison” effect on school environments, in which students feel uncomfortable and separated from academic and social support.** Such conditions may also include increased punitive actions, leading to a lack of or suboptimal learning opportunities and increased absences and drop-outs—common precursors to the adult criminal justice system.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to violence, **illegal substance abuse poses challenges to school safety and youth development** as alcohol, marijuana, and other illegal substances remain prevalent among students ages 12 to 18. Despite a substantial decrease in alcohol use from ten years ago, as of 2019, 29 percent of high school students had consumed alcohol at least once in the past month, while 22 percent of high school students had used marijuana or were offered illegal drugs on school grounds at least once in the past month.<sup>12</sup> Notably, **a positive school climate serves as a protective factor against the use of these substances.** Through a positive school climate, students can develop constructive student-teacher relationships and mental health states, both of which help to prevent the misuse of illicit substances among minors.<sup>13</sup>

Given the amount of unsafe behavior and fear of unsafe events on school grounds, the Federal Commission on School Safety formed in 2018 to evaluate safety practices and provide guidance on how to improve school safety. Resulting from this commission is a three-part framework, shown in **Figure 3.2**, to understand and address school safety. Positive school climate is listed as a prevention strategy for improving school safety.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> [1] Irwin et al., Op. cit., p. 3. [2] “Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Data Summary & Trends Report: 2009-2019,” Op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> King, S. and N.L. Bracy. “School Security in the Post-Columbine Era: Trends, Consequences, and Future Directions.” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 35:3, August 1, 2019. p. 275.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986219840188>

<sup>9</sup> King and Bracy, Op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 284–285.

<sup>12</sup> Irwin et al., Op. cit., pp. 13–14.

<sup>13</sup> Hansen, A.R. et al. “Understanding and Cultivating a Positive School Climate.” Colorado State University. p. 5.  
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolclimate/schoolclimatewhitepaper>

<sup>14</sup> “Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety.” Departments of Education, Homeland Security, Justice, or Health and Human Services, December 18, 2018. [https://www2.ed.gov/documents/school-safety/school-safety-report.pdf?utm\\_content&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term](https://www2.ed.gov/documents/school-safety/school-safety-report.pdf?utm_content&utm_medium=email&utm_name&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term)

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Figure 3.2: Categories and Elements to Improve School Safety

PREVENT	PROTECT AND MITIGATE	RESPOND AND RECOVER
Character education and positive school climate Mental health Threat assessment Press coverage Violent entertainment and rating systems School discipline Law enforcement	Training Troops to Teachers (i.e., training military veterans and retired law enforcement officers to become certified educators) Building and campus security	Active shooter preparedness

Source: Federal Commission on School Safety<sup>15</sup>

### INCLUSIVITY

Feeling included and having a sense of belonging are fundamental human needs and positively affect students' learning and well-being, yet many students feel disconnected from their school community.<sup>16</sup> For example, 2016-2017 survey results from 45,676 middle school students across the United States show that 29 percent of students lack a strong sense of belonging within their school community.<sup>17</sup> Further, disaggregating data between students who do and do not feel connected and like they belong at school produces insights into student behaviors, confidence, and actions. Put succinctly, data show "a positive correlation between sense of belonging and contributing positively to the school community."<sup>18</sup> Specifically, survey data reveal that students with a strong sense of belonging are more likely than students with a weak sense of belonging to report positive behaviors and beliefs, such as the ability to identify abusive relationships and step in, interest in helping others, and the importance of treating all people with respect.<sup>19</sup> Fear and concerns around belonging can cause a response similar to protecting oneself against a threat, which can increase one's sense of caution and decrease engagement and academic processing. Such preoccupation with a threat—in this case, a sense of belonging and inclusion—can consume the cognitive resources necessary for learning.<sup>20</sup>

This connection between students' sense of belonging and in-school behaviors parallels findings from a 2017 study published in *School Psychology International* that demonstrates how **belonging serves as a predictor of student achievement**. In this study, researchers use data on 340 Grade 7 and 9 students to analyze the extent to which school climate and social identification each predict academic performance and to which social identification serves as a mediator between school climate and academic performance. Results show parents' education level, socioeconomic status, and school identification significantly correlate with academic achievement measured by national standardized testing. Further, social identification "fully mediated" school climate and academic performance in numeracy and writing.<sup>21</sup> While results do not

<sup>15</sup> Figure adapted from: Ibid., pp. 13–14.

<sup>16</sup> [1] Healey, K. and C. Stroman. "Structures for Belonging: A Synthesis of Research on Belonging-Supportive Learning Environments." Student Experience Research Network, February 2021. p. 1. <http://studentexperiencenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Structures-for-Belonging.pdf> [2] "The Importance of Belonging-A Nationwide Look at Adolescent Students' Sense of Belonging." EVERFI. pp. 4–5. [https://2gag5314usvg3k1yhz13gzy4-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Belonging\\_11\\_17.pdf](https://2gag5314usvg3k1yhz13gzy4-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Belonging_11_17.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> "The Importance of Belonging-A Nationwide Look at Adolescent Students' Sense of Belonging," Op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Healey and Stroman, Op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Reynolds, K.J. et al. "How Does School Climate Impact Academic Achievement? An Examination of Social Identity Processes." *School Psychology International*, 38:1, February 1, 2017. p. 78.



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

demonstrate a significant connection between school climate and academic achievement, this may result because social identification factors could have been but were not included in school climate measurements. Still, researchers believe “educational reform programs and practices may benefit from an approach that serves to build the psychological connection between school members.”<sup>22</sup>

**Disaggregating inclusivity data by student race reveals a racial school climate gap, where students from different racial backgrounds experience school differently in terms of high expectations, safety, relationships, respect, connectedness, and engagement opportunities.** Illustrating this gap is a 2015 study from the *American Journal of Community Psychology*, which leverages survey data from 400 middle school students and teachers, finding that within individual middle schools, students from different racial backgrounds experience school differently across of safety, relationships, connectedness, and engagement. Further, these differences are larger in schools with larger achievement gaps.<sup>23</sup> Similar research published by WestEd discusses these trends using a sample with additional racial groups and grade levels. These insights on the racial school climate gap appear in **Figure 3.3**.

**Figure 3.3: Students Reporting High Levels of School Climate Factors**

SCHOOL CLIMATE FACTORS	AFRICAN AMERICAN		AMERICAN INDIAN		ASIAN		HISPANIC		WHITE	
	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS
School Connectedness	34%	31%	43%	36%	51%	42%	42%	37%	53%	47%
Caring Adult Relationships	35%	35%	36%	36%	33%	30%	31%	30%	40%	39%
High Expectations	55%	47%	54%	46%	55%	44%	51%	43%	59%	50%
Safety	52%	49%	57%	63%	64%	60%	54%	53%	65%	63%
Respect for all Students	49%	37%	N/A	N/A	53%	50%	47%	42%	50%	40%

Source: Region IX Equity Assistance Center at WestEd<sup>24</sup>

Key: MS=middle school; HS=high school

Further, the COVID-19 pandemic imparted additional complications and challenges, causing interruptions and loosening the connections that students had in school. Despite students’ return to in-person learning, many find it difficult to reconnect in educational settings.<sup>25</sup> As a result, education leaders and researchers explored and continue to promote strategies to support and solutions to improve the disconnect and exclusion that many students feel, such as:<sup>26</sup>

- Prioritizing relationships with students;
- Helping students see themselves as leaders;

[https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0143034316682295?casa\\_token=\\_K9bPo4vhpUAAAAA:43weKmChVlju8Z4LoPORvTj9k4f65G3myB5dkFqQb367-hxitr2DjIMDoV5FNk6JykQC42qnK\\_cQjw](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0143034316682295?casa_token=_K9bPo4vhpUAAAAA:43weKmChVlju8Z4LoPORvTj9k4f65G3myB5dkFqQb367-hxitr2DjIMDoV5FNk6JykQC42qnK_cQjw)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 91–92.

<sup>23</sup> Voight, A. et al. “The Racial School Climate Gap: Within-School Disparities in Students’ Experiences of Safety, Support, and Connectedness.” *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 56, September 17, 2015. pp. 9, 13–14. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282040467\\_The\\_Racial\\_School\\_Climate\\_Gap\\_Within-School\\_Disparities\\_in\\_Students'\\_Experiences\\_of\\_Safety\\_Support\\_and\\_Connectedness](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282040467_The_Racial_School_Climate_Gap_Within-School_Disparities_in_Students'_Experiences_of_Safety_Support_and_Connectedness)

<sup>24</sup> Figure reproduced nearly verbatim from: Voight, A. “The Racial School-Climate Gap.” Region IX Equity Assistance Center at WestEd, 2013. p. 4. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED580366.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Barr, K. and B. Arnold. “Students as Decision Makers: Listen to Students to Strengthen Your School’s Climate.” *Principal Leadership*, April 2022. p. 45. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

<sup>26</sup> Preceding text adapted and bulleted text reproduced nearly verbatim from: Ibid., pp. 45–47.

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Consulting with students to envision change; and
- Evaluating and redesigning systems to center student voices.

### INSTRUCTIONAL CLIMATE

**A school's instructional climate, including how teachers engage with and instruct students, impacts the way teachers treat and support students.** Teachers' expectations, self-efficacy, organization of classroom instruction, and leadership all support positive student learning outcomes.<sup>27</sup> To demonstrate, a 2016 *American Educational Research Journal* publication analyzed the relationship between school context, teacher turnover, and student achievement. Specifically, researchers used five years of New York City Department of Education data on thousands of students and teachers to explore several school climate factors (e.g., leadership, expectations, relationships, and safety) to assess school context as it relates to teacher turnover and achievement.<sup>28</sup> Following the analysis, researchers find that, among other results, the school climate factors of school safety and academic expectations correlate with student achievement. When teachers experience positive school contexts, then turnover decreases and assessment scores increase faster.<sup>29</sup>

**However, teachers possess biases that can lead to variation in the expectations and treatment of students.**<sup>30</sup> Research shows teachers tend to hold different expectations depending on the student, and these expectations often exist along racial lines. A 2018 working paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research leverages data from the 2002 Education Longitudinal Study and analyzes bias in teacher expectations and the effect of such bias. Results find that while teachers are overly optimistic about students' college readiness, teachers hold different expectations for white and black students.<sup>31</sup> For example, teachers expect 58 percent of white high school students but 37 percent of black high school students to receive a four-year college degree or more.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, students are more likely to attend college when they learn from teachers who believe in and set high expectations for them. However, statistically significant data finds teachers hold higher expectations for white students than for black students, which impedes the latter's chances of postsecondary education by creating "self-fulfilling prophecies."<sup>33</sup> These findings have significant implications for today's school climate and culture efforts. For example, schools and districts can develop empathy and cross-cultural competence and reduce bias through professional learning opportunities.<sup>34</sup>

### STUDENT SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT

**Students who have a positive outlook or experience because of a school's climate and culture demonstrate higher academic achievement and involvement.** Notably, a 2017 analysis published in *Review of Educational Research* uses 78 studies to explore the connection between school climate and academic achievement gaps

<sup>27</sup> Darling-Hammond, L. and C. Cook-Harvey. "Educating the Whole Child: Improving School Climate to Support Student Success." Learning Policy Institute, September 7, 2018. p. 13.

<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/educating-whole-child-report>

<sup>28</sup> Kraft, M.A., W.H. Marinell, and D. Shen-Wei Yee. "School Organizational Contexts, Teacher Turnover, and Student Achievement: Evidence From Panel Data." *American Educational Research Journal*, 53:5, October 1, 2016. pp. 1416–1422. eved from Sage Journals

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 1411, 1439.

<sup>30</sup> Kaplan, L.S. and W.A. Ownings. "Establishing a Student-Centered Learning Culture." In *Culture Re-Boot: Reinvigorating School Culture to Improve Student Outcomes*, Corwin, 2013. p. 146.

[https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/55136\\_Kaplan\\_Excerpt.pdf](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/55136_Kaplan_Excerpt.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Papageorge, N.W., S. Gershenson, and K.M. Kang. "Teacher Expectations Matter." *National Bureau of Economic Research*, Working Paper 25255, November 2018. p. 1.

[https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w25255/w25255.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w25255/w25255.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Gershenson, S. and N. Papageorge. "The Power of Teacher Expectations: How Racial Bias Hinders Student Attainment." *Education Nect*, Winter 2018. p. 67. [https://www.educationnext.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ednext\\_xviii\\_1\\_gershenson.pdf](https://www.educationnext.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ednext_xviii_1_gershenson.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 69–70.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

among students of different socioeconomic statuses (SES). Through methodological and results-focused reviews, researchers find **“positive school and classroom climates mitigate the negative effect of poor SES background on academic achievement”** and SES and school climate perceptions do not significantly correlate.<sup>35</sup> Further, the authors note that positive school climates support a shared sense of comfort and well-being in and of itself. This finding adds to evidence that a positive school climate supports academic achievement among those in vulnerable positions, and underscores the need for investment in school climate efforts at various administrative levels.<sup>36</sup>

**A school's climate also aligns with levels of student involvement, and this alignment demonstrates a positive correlation when schools support student well-being.** Describing this relationship is a 2019 study from *Frontiers in Psychology*, which uses a sample of 153 Grade 10 students and their responses to questionnaires on individual skills and traits, school climate and well-being perspectives, and engagement. Results show well-being experiences affect student involvement in activities and individual characteristics informing social functioning align with positive views of school climate. Further, characteristics such as openness to experiences correlate with social and cognitive engagement, and researchers find a connection between literacy skills, openness, and engagement.<sup>37</sup>

**Bridging school climate, academic achievement, and engagement, recent literature demonstrates schools with higher support levels and structure experience higher engagement levels, which correlate with higher academic performance.** Specifically, a 2018 study uses data from a sample of 60,411 high school students and 11,442 high school teachers to analyze the mediating role of student engagement between school support and student achievement.<sup>38</sup> Results show student characteristics combined with school climates lead to certain behavioral outcomes, and high student expectations and strong student-teacher relationships correlate with greater student engagement. This engagement then serves as a mediating factor toward increased academic achievement. Therefore, efforts to support school climate and student engagement may increase performance levels (i.e., graduation rates and standardized test scores).<sup>39</sup>

To experience the beneficial combination of positive school climate and student involvement, **student leadership opportunities should facilitate positive school climates and elevate student voice.**<sup>40</sup> By giving students a chance to contribute to conversations and decision-making, leaders and teachers can use student input to guide changes, and students experience more responsibility and accountability.<sup>41</sup> Adults must listen and give leadership opportunities to a diverse pool of students, not simply the highest achieving students or athletes, and elevating traditionally underrepresented and disempowered students' voices is particularly important.<sup>42</sup> However, not all leadership opportunities are equal, and teachers and leaders must consider

---

<sup>35</sup> Berkowitz, R., H. Moore, et al. “A Research Synthesis of the Associations Between Socioeconomic Background, Inequality, School Climate, and Academic Achievement.” *Review of Educational Research*, 87:2, April 1, 2017. pp. 425, 434, 453–458. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316669821>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 457.

<sup>37</sup> Lombardi, E. et al. “The Impact of School Climate on Well-Being Experience and School Engagement: A Study With High-School Students.” *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 2019. pp. 1, 7–9. <https://www.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02482>

<sup>38</sup> Konold, T. et al. “School Climate, Student Engagement, and Academic Achievement: A Latent Variable, Multilevel Multi-Informant Examination.” *AERA Open*, 4:4, October 1, 2018. pp. 1, 4–5. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2332858418815661>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 9–10.

<sup>40</sup> Weissbourd, R., S.M. Bouffard, and S.M. Jones. “School Climate and Moral and Social Development.” National School Climate Center, February 2013. p. 4. <https://schoolclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/sc-brief-moral-social.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Benner, M., C. Brown, and A. Jeffrey. “Elevating Student Voice in Education.” Center for American Progress, August 14, 2019. p. 3. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2019/08/14/473197/elevating-student-voice-education/>

<sup>42</sup> Feuer, A. “Make Student Voices Really Matter in Our Schools.” *Panorama Education*. <https://www.panoramaed.com/blog/make-student-voices-really-matter-schools> [2] Benner, Brown, and Jeffrey, Op. cit., p. 21.

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

how student leadership will move the classroom or school towards its goal before implementation. **Figure 3.4** presents a continuum of student leadership strategies presented by the Center of American Progress, showcasing how an increase in the number of student voices corresponds with a decrease in the depth of each voice heard.

**Figure 3.4: Comparing Student Voice and Leadership Opportunities**

COLLABORATION WITH ADULTS					
BEING HEARD ←					→ LEADERSHIP
Expression	Consultation	Participation	Partnership	Activism	Leadership
Volunteering opinions; student contributions acknowledged by adults	Sharing feedback and opinions in focus group or survey	Participating in meetings with decision-makers	Explicit, institutionalized role in decision-making	Identifying problems and solutions; advocating for change	Co-planning, co-executing, and having shared responsibility for outcomes

Source: Center for American Progress<sup>43</sup>

Notably, recent data comparing pre- and post-COVID-19 student surveys show **student engagement and effort decreased following the onset of the pandemic**, implying the potential for negative impacts on other areas of student development (e.g., academic performance) given the aforementioned studies. Specifically, a study using over 75,000 survey results from the fall of 2018 and fall of 2020 by Challenge Success—a non-profit connected with Stanford Graduate School of Education—illustrates that while time spent on schoolwork increased, students' effort and engagement widely decreased.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, although students are doing more schoolwork, a higher percentage of students are disengaged and a lower percentage are purposefully or fully engaged (i.e., completing schoolwork, understanding its purpose, and finding it interesting).<sup>45</sup>

## RELATIONSHIPS

**Positive student-teacher relationships are key components of both positive school climates and students' emotional safety, and students in these relationships demonstrate fewer problematic behaviors as well as behavioral and academic improvements.** These improvements range in short- and long-term outcomes and include "higher student academic engagement, attendance, grades, fewer disruptive behaviors and suspensions, and lower school dropout rates."<sup>46</sup> Through these interactions, students have opportunities to learn moral and social skills from those they trust and expand their social and emotional capacities.<sup>47</sup> Student-teacher relationships also encourage self-motivation among students, which cultivates a more engaged classroom and positive learning environment where disciplinary infractions are less frequent.<sup>48</sup>

Empirical evidence demonstrates direct connections between student-teacher relationships and peer relationships, and strong student-teacher relationships can also reduce bullying. For example, a 2018 study in *School Psychology Quarterly* explores how student-teacher relationships may reduce negative student experiences caused by bullying. Researchers used a sample of 691 middle school students and 85 teachers and collected baseline mental health data (e.g., behavioral engagement, concentration problems, depression, emotional regulation problems) and follow-up teacher and student-reported data (e.g., comparable mental

<sup>43</sup> Figure reproduced verbatim from: Benner, Brown, and Jeffrey, Op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> [1] "Kids Under Pressure: A Look at Student Well-Being and Engagement During the Pandemic." Challenge Success, February 2021. p. 7. <https://challengesuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CS-NBC-Study-Kids-Under-Pressure-PUBLISHED.pdf> [2] Konold et al., Op. cit.

<sup>45</sup> "Kids Under Pressure: A Look at Student Well-Being and Engagement During the Pandemic," Op. cit., pp. 7–8.

<sup>46</sup> Sparks, S.D. "Why Teacher-Student Relationships Matter." Education Week, March 13, 2019. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/why-teacher-student-relationships-matter/2019/03>

<sup>47</sup> Weissbourd, Bouffard, and Jones, Op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> "Why Strong Teacher Relationships Lead to Student Engagement and a Better School Environment." Waterford.Org, April 29, 2019. <https://www.waterford.org/education/teacher-student-relationships/>

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

health data, bullying incidents, perceptions of student-teacher relationships).<sup>49</sup> Results showed “bullies and bully/victims had the poorest relationships with teachers” and both groups may benefit from improved relationships with teachers.<sup>50</sup> Further, students involved in bullying—perpetrators and victims—demonstrated greater concentration issues, emotional regulation problems, and engagement challenges, which underscores the need for positive relationships that reduce the prevalence of bullying at the outset. Positive student-teacher relationships also moderate depressive symptoms for bullies and victims.<sup>51</sup>

Although strong student-teacher and peer relationships support positive academic and behavioral outcomes, Challenge Success’ pre- and post-COVID-19 data analysis demonstrates that students’ positive relationships with their teachers and peers are still present but weaker.<sup>52</sup>

### BULLYING AND DISCIPLINE

**Bullying and harassment have significant negative impacts on student development, including mental health challenges (e.g., depression, anxiety) and dropping out of school, and are potentially life-threatening due to interactions leading to suicide or violence.** Promising results from the 2020 Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety show that the percentage of 12- to 18-year-old students reporting bullying decreased from 28 percent to 22 percent between 2009 and 2019, however, it remains unclear if incidents of bullying decreased or if only *the reporting* of incidents decreased.<sup>53</sup>

**Students may often avoid telling others, particularly teachers, about bullying incidents due to feelings of fear, shame, and helplessness.** Fear is a common reason for not reporting bullying as students are often afraid of what bullies will do if they find out that an adult knows about the incident.<sup>54</sup> Conversely, students fear that once an adult becomes involved, the adult will engage in a way that further aggravates the situation or mistakenly punish the victim.<sup>55</sup> Students may also not always recognize actions as bullying, and therefore do not report more indirect or subtle forms of inappropriate behavior, such as exclusion from groups or activities or spreading rumors. Additionally, victims of bullying may feel powerless against their bullies due to their inability to stand up to bullies and adults’ lack of intervention.<sup>56</sup> When adults do not believe victims of bullying or intervene, students may begin to think adults do not care about them and perpetrators can escape accountability and disciplinary consequences.<sup>57</sup> Alternatively, when students believe adults will intervene, they are more likely to report incidents.<sup>58</sup>

Teachers and school staff play a key role in preventing bullying and impacting school discipline, as they have opportunities to recognize and report incidents and prevent unfavorable disciplinary outcomes (e.g., suspensions). **When teachers and staff indicate an effort towards bullying and incident prevention, incidents decrease, and willingness to intervene increases.** Demonstrating these relationships is a 2014

---

<sup>49</sup> Huang, F.L. et al. “Bullying Involvement, Teacher–Student Relationships, and Psychosocial Outcomes.” *School Psychology Quarterly*, 33:2, June 2018. pp. 223, 225–227. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED594868.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 229–230.

<sup>52</sup> “Kids Under Pressure: A Look at Student Well-Being and Engagement During the Pandemic,” Op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> Irwin et al., Op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> “Why Don’t Kids Report Bullying?” Committee for Children, September 7, 2016.

<https://www.cfchildren.org/blog/2016/09/why-dont-kids-report-bullying/>

<sup>55</sup> [1] “Frequently Asked Questions.” Nebraska Department of Education, September 8, 2017.

<https://www.education.ne.gov/safety/bullying-prevention/frequently-asked-questions/> [2] Fraser, J. “Why Don’t Kids Speak up about Bullying?” *The Edvocate*, February 21, 2016. <https://www.theedadvocate.org/why-dont-kids-speak-up-about-bullying/>

<sup>56</sup> “Why Don’t Kids Report Bullying?,” Op. cit.

<sup>57</sup> [1] “Frequently Asked Questions,” Op. cit. [2] “Why Don’t Kids Report Bullying?,” Op. cit.

<sup>58</sup> Cortes, K. and B. Ladd. “To Tell or Not to Tell: What Influences Children’s Decisions to Report Bullying to Their Teachers?” *School Psychology Quarterly*, 29, September 1, 2014. pp. 2, 9, 26. Downloaded from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265419530\\_To\\_Tell\\_or\\_Not\\_to\\_Tell\\_What\\_Influences\\_Children's\\_Decisions\\_to\\_Report\\_Bullying\\_to\\_Their\\_Teachers](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265419530_To_Tell_or_Not_to_Tell_What_Influences_Children's_Decisions_to_Report_Bullying_to_Their_Teachers)



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

study published in *School Psychology Quarterly*. This study uses survey data from 3,616 Grade 6 students and 1,447 teachers and staff members to measure aggression, bullying, victimization, and willingness to intervene. With these data, researchers find schools that actively commit to addressing bullying experience fewer incidents, and teacher and staff commitment to bullying inform student-reported bullying.<sup>59</sup> Findings also show teachers' perspectives of student-teacher relationships do not correlate with bullying, but "when teachers and staff feel that they are addressing bullying, the students are less likely to be aggressive and are more willing to intervene to help other students," which makes a case for schools (e.g., teachers, staff, leaders, counselors) partaking in bullying prevention efforts.<sup>60</sup>

However, **teachers and other staff members indicate needing additional support to engage in behavioral incidents involving sexual orientation, gender, and race.**<sup>61</sup> Given this need for teacher training around student conduct, the Learning Policy Institute describes how professional learning approaches with the strongest impacts on student performance share the following characteristics:<sup>62</sup>

- Focus on deepening teachers' content knowledge and instructional practices;
- Function as a coherent part of a school's improvement efforts, aligned with curriculum, assessments, and standards, so that teachers can implement the knowledge and practices they learn in their classrooms;
- Occur in collaborative and collegial learning environments in which teachers participate in professional learning and together grapple with issues related to new content and instructional practices;
- Provide authentic activities rooted in teachers' inquiry and reflection about practice within the context of the curriculum and students they teach;
- Link to analysis of teaching and student learning, including the formative use of assessment data;
- Are supported by coaching, modeling, observations, and feedback; and
- Are of sufficient duration that the skills can be learned, practiced with support, and refined over time, so that they become part of a teacher's repertoire and a school's routines.

**Furthermore, policies and procedures (e.g., those dictating student discipline) directly impact students' and stakeholders' school experiences and performance indicators (e.g., attendance, referrals);** and these experiences and outcomes illustrate school climate.<sup>63</sup> For example, the Learning Policy Institute emphasizes that discipline policies focused on suspensions and expulsions remove disciplined students from the classroom, which negatively impacts their academic and social connection to school. This loss of connection can then lead to additional negative individual and community outcomes, such as chronic absenteeism, truancy, antisocial behavior, wider achievement gaps, a poor sense of community, and threat perceptions.<sup>64</sup>

## PRINCIPAL AND STAFF LEADERSHIP

**Individual and collective efforts between school staff and their leaders are critical as together these stakeholders significantly affect experiences within the school community.** Therefore, leaders and staff

---

<sup>59</sup> Espelage, D., J. Polanin, and S. Low. "Teacher and Staff Perceptions of School Environment as Predictors of Student Aggression, Victimization, and Willingness to Intervene in Bullying Situations." *School Psychology Quarterly*, 29, August 4, 2014. p. 287.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264462982\\_Teacher\\_and\\_Staff\\_Perceptions\\_of\\_School\\_Environment\\_as\\_Predictors\\_of\\_Student\\_Aggression\\_Victimization\\_and\\_Willingness\\_to\\_Intervene\\_in\\_Bullying\\_Situations](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264462982_Teacher_and_Staff_Perceptions_of_School_Environment_as_Predictors_of_Student_Aggression_Victimization_and_Willingness_to_Intervene_in_Bullying_Situations)

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 301–303.

<sup>61</sup> Bradshaw, C.P. et al. "Teachers' and Education Support Professionals' Perspectives on Bullying and Prevention: Findings From a National Education Association Study." *School Psychology Review*, 42:3, September 2013. pp. 280, 289–291. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

<sup>62</sup> Bulleted text reproduced verbatim from: Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey, Op. cit., p. 47.

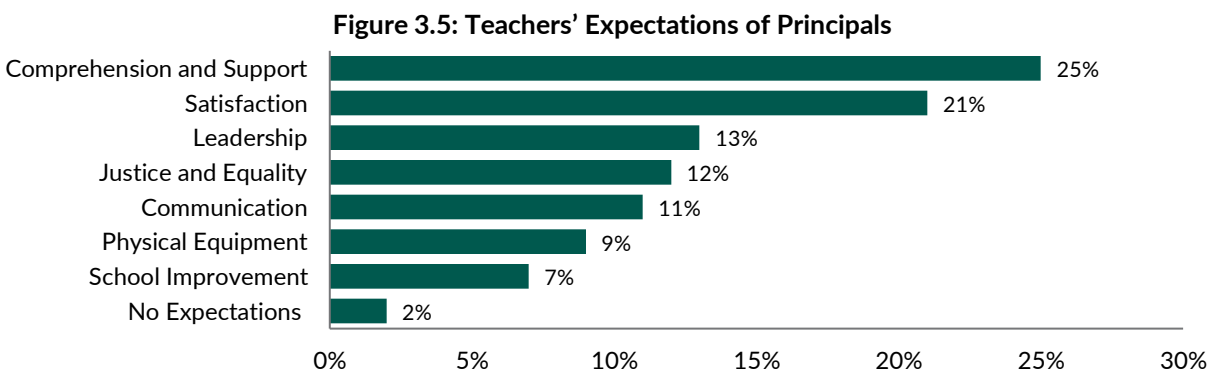
<sup>63</sup> "A Parent and Educator Guide to School Climate Resources." U.S. Department of Education, April 10, 2019. p. 3. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essaguidetoschoolclimate041019.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey, Op. cit., p. 26.



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

must cooperate and communicate to effectively provide instruction and positive school experiences for all. As an example, a 2015 study published in the *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research* gathered perception data from 677 volunteer teachers to explore teachers' perceptions and expectations of school principals, to inform how principals operate. Researchers find that teachers' expectations of principals largely relate to human relationships, with comprehension and support being the most common, followed by others shown in **Figure 3.5**.<sup>65</sup> These factors demonstrate how relationships and communication are highly important when considering school workplace culture and climate, and researchers suggest that leaders assume a "considerate style of administration" and offer teachers support.<sup>66</sup> *Note: Although this study took place internationally, schools in the United States may still find these results informative when considering teacher-leader interactions and support.*



Source: *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*<sup>67</sup>

Two leadership styles that demonstrate positive impacts on school culture and teachers' experiences are **instructional leadership** and **distributed leadership**. Demonstrating these effects is a 2021 study from *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, which uses teacher survey data from 104,358 teachers across 32 countries to understand the effects of instructional and distributed leadership on self-efficacy, job satisfaction, supportive school culture, and teacher collaboration.<sup>68</sup> Researchers find numerous direct and mediating associations between leadership styles and outcomes. According to individual country analysis, distributed leadership has a significant impact on teacher collaboration, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. Using multi-country data, results show that instructional *and* distributed leadership directly support teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction, with the largest associations between instructional leadership and self-efficacy and distributed leadership and job satisfaction.<sup>69</sup>

**Additionally, teacher skillsets and leadership have positive impacts on colleagues and students, highlighting the importance of supporting professional learning for teachers.** As described by the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF), for teachers to be able to model positive skills and competencies (e.g., communication, collaboration, creative thinking), teachers must receive training and practice using these skills. Such opportunities require protected professional learning and collaboration time and guidance

<sup>65</sup> Aslanargun, E. "Teachers' Expectations and School Administration: Keys of Better Communication in Schools." *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 15:60, September 1, 2015. pp. 17–18.  
<http://dergipark.gov.tr/doi/10.14689/ejer.2015.60.2>

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>67</sup> Figure data obtained from: *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>68</sup> Liu, Y., M.Ş. Bellibaş, and S. Gümüş. "The Effect of Instructional Leadership and Distributed Leadership on Teacher Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction: Mediating Roles of Supportive School Culture and Teacher Collaboration." *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49:3, May 1, 2021. pp. 430, 436–437.  
[https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1741143220910438?casa\\_token=IPduAIJY5gkAAAAA:6FVVkXDve3CCT1uc7tSD55V8yArFKzXASE\\_rmVaXqC9OyNNkSgwWUuvT\\_GaQMbvMQjyZ3CeY\\_yj7bg](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1741143220910438?casa_token=IPduAIJY5gkAAAAA:6FVVkXDve3CCT1uc7tSD55V8yArFKzXASE_rmVaXqC9OyNNkSgwWUuvT_GaQMbvMQjyZ3CeY_yj7bg)

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 431, 442–444.

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

for self-reflection.<sup>70</sup> Subsequently, once good teachers become great teachers, they must have opportunities for leadership and decision-making to give them a voice in school decisions while improving the likelihood they remain in the classroom as effective teachers. Notably, NCTAF describes how “well-designed teacher leadership roles allow expert teachers to meet their own needs for new challenges and career advancement while also addressing critical school and district needs.”<sup>71</sup>

Furthermore, teacher leadership supports positive student outcomes. A 2020 meta-analysis of 21 studies from 1997 to 2018 published in *Educational Research Review* finds clear, positive connections between teacher leadership and student performance. The analysis concludes teacher leadership positively affects student achievement, and teachers and principals engage interdependently in shared leadership and community-facing professionalism. Researchers also find certain aspects of teacher leadership have a greater impact on student outcomes than others; for example, making improvements to curriculum and instruction has the greatest influence on student outcomes out of seven dimensions.<sup>72</sup>

## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Family and community engagement are critical components to positive school climates.** Studies show that school climates have high levels of support and caring when parents are more engaged with the school community.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, findings from a 2021 *Urban Education* study of parents in California schools indicate that “parents’ experiences of school climate are related to the schools’ efforts to encourage parental involvement” regardless of the parents’ race or ethnicity.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, research from studies in the *School Community Journal* and *Child Development* highlight that family engagement in school has a variety of benefits on student outcomes also associated with school climate, including students’ academic achievement, school engagement, and behavior.<sup>75</sup> Further, community involvement in schools is essential to building and sustaining supportive school climates.<sup>76</sup>

**Empirical studies find a positive association between families’ perceptions of school climate and their level of involvement in their child’s school.** Parents who perceive a school as welcoming and inviting are more likely to become involved in the school.<sup>77</sup> For example, a positive school climate can promote family involvement by encouraging families to volunteer and participate in decision-making. According to the Ohio Department of Education, “when families feel welcome, valued, and supported by the school, they are more likely to work together with the school in supporting their child’s education.”<sup>78</sup> Additionally, a negative

---

<sup>70</sup> “What Matters Now: A New Compact for Teaching and Learning.” National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future, 2016. pp. 17–18. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED572506.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21–23.

<sup>72</sup> Shen, J. et al. “The Association between Teacher Leadership and Student Achievement: A Meta-Analysis.” *Educational Research Review*, 31, 2020. <https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S1747938X19305317?token=16B01F50DAC7CD231E821AFEF3350A78696E6FF8053340251786C7750A18B910270B925728E9697605E8A4BFC3CEE6E&originRegion=us-east-1&originCreation=20211118203237>

<sup>73</sup> Berkowitz, R., R.A. Astor, et al. “Parental Involvement and Perceptions of School Climate in California.” *Urban Education*, 56:3, March 1, 2021. p. 397. Accessed via SagePub.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 409.

<sup>75</sup> Shumow, L. and J.A. Schmidt. “Parent Engagement in Science With Ninth Graders and With Students in Higher Grades.” *School Community Journal*, 24:1, Spring 2014. Accessed via EBSCOHost. [2] Wang, M. and S. Sheikh-Khalil. “Does Parental Involvement Matter for Student Achievement and Mental Health in High School?” *Child Development*, 85:2, March 2014. Accessed via EBSCOHost. [3] Wang, M., N.E. Hill, and T. Hofkens. “Parental Involvement and African American and European American Adolescents’ Academic, Behavioral, and Emotional Development in Secondary School.” *Child Development*, 85:6, 2014. Accessed via EBSCOHost.

<sup>76</sup> McAlister, S. “Why Community Engagement Matters in School Turnaround.” Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2013. p. 1. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1046328.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> Berkowitz, Astor, et al., *Op. cit.*, p. 397. Accessed via SagePub.

<sup>78</sup> “Engaging Families with a Welcoming Climate.” Ohio Department of Education. <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Family-and-Community->

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

school climate can hinder family engagement, and parents' perceptions of school safety may affect their perceptions of opportunities for participation in and communication with their child's school.<sup>79</sup>

School climate may predict parent involvement more than other school factors, such as enrollment size. A 2013 study by researchers at Fordham University investigated the association between school size and family engagement by analyzing data from the parents' version of the annual New York City Department of Education's Learning Environment Survey, which surveyed parents at 545 middle and high schools throughout New York City. Results showed that parents' perceptions of whether the school climate is physically and emotionally safe mediated the negative association between school enrollment size and parent involvement.<sup>80</sup>

### CONCLUSION

A positive school climate impacts nearly every aspect of a student's, teacher's, parent's, or community member's experience with teaching, learning, and the school community. Numerous empirical studies indicate a safe and supportive school climate is critical to promoting positive student achievement and engagement outcomes.

---

Engagement/Framework-for-Building-Partnerships-Among-Schools/Engaging-Families-with-a-Welcoming-Climate.pdf.aspx

<sup>79</sup> Goldkind, L. and G.L. Farmer. "The Enduring Influence of School Size and School Climate on Parents' Engagement in the School Community." *School Community Journal*, 23:1, 2013. pp. 233–235. Accessed via EbscoHost.

<sup>80</sup> Goldkind and Farmer, Op. cit.

# METHODOLOGY

## INSTRUMENT DESIGN

Hanover developed the K-12 Climate Survey (See Appendix B) to assess district community members' (i.e., students (Grade 6 and above), parents, and staff) perceptions of climate and culture in their school and district. Content experts and survey methodologists at Hanover examined relevant literature; resources developed by organizations who support K12 education; and trends in climate instruments Hanover has designed for our K-12 education clients. Based on this comprehensive review, we identified the following core sections to measure: School/Building Environment, Academic Environment, Social Environment, and Inclusiveness.

**School/Building Environment** contains three sub-sections: Positive Emotional Climate, Building and Personal Safety, and Physical environment. Respondents indicate how much they agree with statements about students' sense of belonging and feeling welcome at school, how safe students and staff feel at school and school events, and how well school buildings are maintained.

**Academic Environment** contains six sub-sections: Instructional Climate (School-Level), Instructional Climate (Teacher-Level), Student Attitudes Toward Learning, Student Engagement, Student Support Services, and Student Outcomes. For all items in the Academic Environment section, respondents rate their level of agreement with different statements. The Instructional Climate section includes statements related to schools and teachers setting high expectations for students, wanting students to succeed, and providing resources and support for student achievement. Student Attitudes Toward Learning and Student Engagement address students' perceptions of the learning process, how motivated they are to learn, and how much access they have to quality activities. Student Support Services addresses the schools' and districts' ability to provide enough resources for a variety of student-sub populations, and Student Outcomes asks about district schools' ability to develop valuable life skills in students and prepare them for life after graduation.

**Social Environment** contains five sub-sections: Students' Positive Relationships and Discipline, Staff Members' Positive Relationships, General Bullying and Harassment, Student Experiences with Bullying and Harassment, and Staff Experiences with Bullying and Harassment. Together, these items address the interactions between students and staff to determine if all parties are treated with respect and feel that others care about them. This section also reflects on general and specific instances of bullying experienced by students and staff. Finally, staff are asked if they receive the support they need from their school or building through professional development and resources.

**Inclusiveness** contains four sub-sections: Community Engagement, Parent Engagement, School Leadership and Personnel, and District Leadership and Personnel. The engagement sections ask about the district and schools' ability to communicate effectively and transparently with community members and parents. School Leadership and Personnel solicits feedback from parents and school staff and asks them to indicate whether or not they agree that administrators at their school are in tune with the concerns of the community. District Leadership and Personnel pertains to how well district leadership communicates a strong vision, makes decisions on behalf of the broader community, and whether the district itself is able to attract and retain high quality and diverse staff.

## ANALYSIS

Analysis of the K-12 Climate Survey data involved three main processes: data cleaning, topline analysis, and segmentation analysis.

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Data cleaning** is a rigorous process designed to eliminate low quality data. It involves a thorough review of responses for thoughtfulness, logical consistency, and attention to detail. Responses that trigger “flags” on several measures are removed from the dataset. The Climate Survey data was cleaned at the district level, and the clean data was compiled into the final national level dataset. The national dataset included responses from a total of 150,354 individual respondents from 30 different school districts. Responses were collected between January 2018 and May 2022.

**Topline analysis** explores patterns across all responses in all districts and is particularly useful for identifying topics or issues upon which there is broad consensus.

**Segmentation analysis** explores differences by respondent characteristic. This paper focuses on two segmentations – by role in district (staff, parent, or student) and by grade level. For the purposes of this analysis, we grouped respondents into two categories based on their or their child’s grade level or the highest grade level taught for instructional staff. Some non-instructional staff are missing from the grade level segmentation because we could not assign them to a single grade range. Grade level segmentations presented in this document are: Primary (Grades K-5) and Secondary (Grades 6-12).

An interactive dashboard of survey results allows for additional segmentation analysis, including results by district characteristics. District characteristics were identified through data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). In this analysis, responses are segmented by district enrollment, district geography, district affluence, and respondent relationship to district. For enrollment, we chose two measures: number of total students and percentage of students from a minority. Percentage of students from a minority is defined by NCES as Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, or two or more races. District geography includes segmentations by U.S. region and urbanicity. To measure affluence, we used the percentage of students who receive free or reduced lunch. Respondents are also segmented by role (i.e., staff or parent), grade level (i.e., primary, middle, or high school level), and involvement in or receiving services from Special Education or English Learner programs.

The results presented in this paper are not nationally representative and data were not weighted during analysis. However, the dataset includes respondents from districts in the U.S. West, South, Midwest, and Northeast regions.

## FINDINGS

This section summarizes notable findings from the national dataset of Climate Survey results developed by Hanover. Results are organized around each of the main survey themes: Academic Environment, School/Building Environment, Social Environment, and Inclusiveness. This paper focuses on analyzing the results for two segmentations – by role in district (staff, parent, or student) and by grade level (Primary Grades K-5 and Secondary Grades 6-12).

### ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

#### INSTRUCTIONAL CLIMATE

**At the primary school level, most parents and staff believe the school and teachers want students to succeed and that teachers expect students to do their best in school.**

- More than 9 out of 10 primary school parent respondents and almost all teacher respondents agree or strongly agree teachers want students to succeed (Teachers: 99%; Parents: 93%) and that teachers expect students to do their best in school (Teachers: 99%; Parents: 92%).
- More than 9 out of 10 primary school parent respondents and school staff respondents agree or strongly agree their or their child's school wants students to succeed (Staff: 97%; Parents: 92%).

**Primary school staff are more likely to believe their school is setting high expectations for students than do parents.**

- A higher proportion of primary school staff respondents agree or strongly agree the school sets high expectations for student achievement (92%) and adequately challenges advanced students (78%) than do parents. A large majority (80%) of parent respondents agree or strongly agree the school sets high expectations for student achievement. Although, just 68% agree or strongly agree their child's school adequately challenges advanced students.

**Primary school teachers are more likely to believe teachers are providing adequate instructional support than do parents.**

- A higher proportion of teacher respondents think teachers provide helpful comments on students' schoolwork (Teachers: 94%; Parents: 74%), provide extra help to students when they need it (Teachers: 97%; Parents: 79%), keep students updated on their academic progress (Teachers: 94%; Parents: 80%), praise students' efforts on schoolwork (Teachers: 98%; Parents: 86%), or connect class lessons to life outside of the classroom (Teachers: 94%; Parents: 77%).

**At the secondary school level, most staff believe the school wants students to succeed and most teachers believe teachers want students to succeed, but fewer, about 80 percent, of parents and students agree.**

- Most staff respondents agree or strongly agree the school (94%) wants students to succeed compared with just over 80% of student (82%) and parent (83%) respondents.
- Most teacher respondents agree or strongly agree teachers want students to succeed (99%) compared with 83% of parent and student respondents.

**The gap between the perspective of secondary school teachers and secondary school parents and students regarding instructional support is even greater.**



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Most teacher respondents agree or strongly agree teachers provide helpful comments on students' schoolwork (92%), provide extra help to students when they need it (97%), keep students updated on their academic progress (95%), praise student effort on schoolwork (97%), and connect class lessons to life outside of the classroom (92%).
- In comparison, 62% or fewer of parent and student respondents agree or strongly agree teachers provide helpful comments on students' schoolwork (Parent:54%; Student:62%), praise student effort on schoolwork (Parent:62%; Student:57%), or connect class lessons to life outside the classroom (Parent:57%; Student:56%). Just two-thirds to three-quarters of parent and student respondents agree or strongly agree teachers provide extra help to students when they need it (Parent:72%; Student:75%) and keep students updated on their academic progress (Parent:74%; Student:66%).

## STUDENT ATTITUDES AND EFFORT

### **Most primary school staff think students in their school enjoy learning.**

- Most primary school staff agree or strongly agree students at their school get excited to learn new things (89%) and enjoy learning (87%).
- About 80% of primary school staff agree or strongly agree that students are motivated to learn (79%) and work hard (81%).

### **Fewer primary school staff think students are coming to school prepared.**

- Just two-thirds of primary school staff (67%) agree or strongly agree students at their school come to class prepared.

### **At the secondary school level, fewer school staff agree students enjoy learning, are motivated to learn, or work hard.**

- Fewer secondary school staff agree or strongly agree students in their school enjoy learning (58%), get excited to learn new things (57%), are motivated to learn (51%), or work hard (52%).

### **Most secondary school students do not agree that students at their school are motivated to learn, get excited to learn new things, or enjoy learning.**

- Fewer than one-third of secondary school student respondents agree or strongly agree that students enjoy learning (30%) or get excited to learn new things (32%), and just 34% of secondary school student respondents agree or strongly agree that students are motivated to learn.
- Half of secondary school student respondents (50%) agree or strongly agree students in their school work hard but only 41% agree or strongly agree students come to class prepared.

### **Strong majorities of staff, parents, and students believe their school develops students' skills in critical thinking, listening, and collaborating with others.**

- More than 80% of primary school parents and school staff agree or strongly agree their school develops skills in collaboration (Staff: 87%; Parents: 84%), critical thinking (Staff: 84%; Parents: 81%), and listening (Staff: 83%; Parents: 84%).
- At the secondary school level a greater proportion of respondents agree or strongly agree the school is developing these skills compared to other skills, but there is still room for improvement. Two-thirds or more of respondents agree or strongly agree their school develops critical thinking (Staff: 70%; Students: 66%; Parents: 68%) and collaboration skills (Staff: 76%; Students: 66%; Parents: 71%).

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Approximately 60% agree or strongly agree that their school develops students' listening skills (Staff: 63%; Students: 60%; Parents: 64%).

**Schools are doing less well helping students learn to manage their emotions or resolve conflict, especially at the secondary school level.**

- Just over half of secondary school staff (55%), student (51%), and parent (52%) respondents agree or strongly agree the school is developing students' ability to resolve conflict.
- Just over half (55%) of secondary school staff respondents agree or strongly agree their school is developing students' ability to manage their emotions compared with fewer than half of secondary school student (44%) or parent (48%) respondents.
- At the primary school level, approximately three-quarters of primary school staff respondents agree or strongly agree their schools are developing students' abilities in managing their emotions (74%) and resolving conflict (76%). Just over 70% of parent respondents hold the same view.

## RESOURCES

**Many primary school parents and staff would like to see more, high-quality extracurricular and co-curricular activities for students.**

- Only approximately 55% of primary school parent respondents agree or strongly agree there are enough co-curricular (55%) or extracurricular (56%) activities for students. 60% of primary school parent respondents agree or strongly agree their child's school offers quality co-curricular or extracurricular activities for students.
- Approximately three-fifths of primary school staff respondents agree or strongly agree there are enough (60%), quality (63%) co-curricular activities for students. Two-thirds or more of primary school staff respondents agree or strongly agree there are enough (66%), quality (71%) extracurricular activities.

**There is demand for additional student support services, particularly to support students' mental health and well-being and underperforming students.**

- Only two-thirds of primary (66%) and secondary (65%) school staff respondents and fewer than three-fifths of secondary school student (59%) or parent (54%) respondents agree or strongly agree their or their child's school provides enough resources for students' mental health and well-being.
- Secondary school parent respondents are the least satisfied with the availability of resources to support under-performing students. Only 49% of parent respondents agree or strongly agree the school provides enough resources for these students.

## SCHOOL/BUILDING ENVIRONMENT

### EMOTIONAL CLIMATE

**The overall emotional climate in primary schools is positive.**

- More than four-fifths of primary school parent and staff respondents think students feel welcome (Staff: 93%; Parents: 87%), feel like they belong (Staff: 90%; Parents: 83%), are proud to attend their school (Staff: 85%; Parents: 83%), and like school (Staff: 87%; Parents: 84%).

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Secondary school parents and staff have a more positive view of the emotional climate for students than do secondary school students.**

- 83% of secondary school staff respondents and 73% of secondary school parent respondents agree or strongly agree students in their or their child's school feel welcome compared with 63% of secondary school student respondents.
- 74% of secondary school staff respondents and 67% of secondary school parent respondents agree or strongly agree students feel like they belong at school compared with 54% of secondary school students.
- 61% of staff and 65% of parent respondents agree or strongly agree students like school compared with just 37% of student respondents.

## BUILDING AND PERSONAL SAFETY

**Most primary school parent and staff respondents perceive a generally positive school and building environment.**

- About 90% of primary school parent and staff respondents agree or strongly agree the school provides a safe learning space for students (88%) and that students feel safe at school (Staff: 90%; Parents: 89%), at school-sponsored events after school (Staff: 90%; Parents: 89%) and going to and from school (Staff: 92%; Parents 89%).
- As a counterpoint, only 63% of primary school staff respondents agree or strongly agree their school does not have an issue with violence or theft.

**At the secondary school level, fewer see the school and building environment as safe.**

- Just 68% of secondary school student respondents agree or strongly agree their school provides a safe learning space for students and that they themselves feel safe at school.
- Just 33% of secondary school staff, 36% of secondary school students, and 44% of secondary school parents agree or strongly agree their or their child's school is free of violence or theft.

## SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

### RELATIONSHIPS AND DISCIPLINE

**Nearly all primary school staff and most parents believe adults in their school care about and respect students.**

- 96% of staff respondents and 90% of parent respondents agree or strongly agree adults in their or their child's school care about students.
- 93% of staff respondents and 86% of parent respondents agree or strongly agree adults respect students.

**At the secondary school level, most staff believe adults care about and respect students, but fewer students and parents agree.**

- 93% of secondary staff respondents agree or strongly agree adults in the school care about students compared with 77% of parent respondents and 67% of student respondents.

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- 86% of secondary school staff respondents agree or strongly agree adults in the school respect students compared with 70% of parent respondents and 59% of student respondents.

**Fewer than half of secondary school students believe the students in their school care about or respect each other.**

- 48% of secondary school student respondents agree or strongly agree students in their school care about each other.
- 45% of secondary school student respondents agree or strongly agree students in their school respect other students.

**Fair and consistent rule enforcement is an area for improvement in secondary schools.**

- Only about 60% of secondary school staff (59%), parent (61%), and student (60%) respondents agree or strongly agree adults in the school enforce school rules *fairly*, and only half of secondary school staff respondents (51%) agree or strongly agree adults in the school are *consistent* in their rule enforcement.
- Just 38% of secondary school student respondents agree or strongly agree students in their school follow the rules. Only 57% of secondary school student respondents agree or strongly agree their peers understand the rules.

## BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

**The most common forms of bullying in both primary and secondary schools are verbal harassment and physical threats by students at the school.**

- One-quarter of primary school parent respondents report their child has been verbally harassed by other students more than once in the last month, and 15% of primary school staff respondents indicate they themselves have been verbally harassed by students more than once in the last month.
- At the secondary school level, 31% of staff respondents and 24% of student respondents indicate they have been verbally harassed by students at their school more than once in the last month. 31% of secondary school parent respondents indicate their child has been verbally harassed more than once in the last month by students at school.
- 10% of primary school and 15% of secondary school parent respondents report their child has been physically threatened by another student more than once in the past month.
- 8% of primary school staff, 10% of secondary school staff, and 14% of secondary school student respondents report they have been physically threatened by a student more than once in the last month.

**For students, physical appearance is the most common target of bullying and harassment at all grade levels, but it is more common at the secondary school level.**

- 24% of primary school staff, 50% of secondary school staff, and 57% of secondary school student respondents report students at their school are bullied or harassed for their physical appearance more than a few times per year.

**Other common targets of bullying and harassment at the secondary school level are gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, and race, ethnicity, or skin color.**

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Approximately 35% of secondary school staff respondents and over 40% of secondary school student respondents indicate students at their school are harassed or bullied based on gender identity or expression (Staff: 36%; Students: 44%), sexual orientation (Staff: 37%; Students: 43%) and race, ethnicity, or skin color (Staff: 34%; Students: 40%) more than a few times per year.

**A greater proportion of secondary school student respondents report a high incidence of harassment and bullying than do secondary school staff respondents on all characteristics.**

- The difference between staff and student perspectives is greatest in harassment or bullying due to political beliefs, where 21% of staff respondents report bullying or harassment more than a few times per year compared with 37% of student respondents and religious beliefs, where 13% of staff respondents report harassment or bullying more than a few times per year compared with 24% of student respondents.

## INCLUSIVENESS

**Many community members do not think their school district is engaging them.**

- Only half of community member respondents (50%) agree or strongly agree the district engages the community. Fewer than half agree or strongly agree the district communicates effectively with the community (48%) or that the district responds to community members' questions or concerns (45%).

**Many parents, staff, and members of the community at large do not believe decision-making at the district level or at the school level is transparent.**

- Just 39% of community respondents and 55% of staff respondents agree or strongly agree the district is transparent with the *community* about district decision-making. 53% of parent respondents agree or strongly agree the district is transparent with *parents* about district decision-making.
- At the school level, just 59% of parent respondents agree or strongly agree staff members at their child's school are transparent about school decision-making. The proportion of parent respondents who agree or strongly agree staff members at their child's school are transparent about school decision-making is higher among primary school parents (67%) than among secondary school parents (53%).

**School staff are substantially more likely to think administrators at their school are in tune with parents', students', and teachers' concerns than are parents, especially at the secondary school level.**

- Among primary school staff respondents (excluding administrators), approximately 85% agree or strongly agree administrators are in tune with parent's concerns (87%) and students' concerns (84%) and three-quarters agree or strongly agree that administrators are in tune with teachers' concerns (76%) compared with approximately 70% of parent respondents.
- Among secondary school staff respondents, approximately four-fifths agree or strongly agree administrators are in tune with parent concerns (83%) and student concerns (78%) and two-thirds agree or strongly agree administrators are in tune with teachers' concerns (67%) compared with just over half of secondary school parent respondents.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Hanover's national K-12 Climate Survey dataset highlights the many positive aspects of school climate at U.S. schools as well as areas for continued improvement. Decades of research confirm school climate and culture impacts nearly every aspect of how students, teachers, staff, parent, and community members experience teaching, learning, and working in schools. Recognizing the importance of a positive school climate and culture, educational leaders are committed to creating the conditions that build and sustain effective school cultures. We offer the following implications for practice and future research to support ongoing efforts to improve climate in K-12 schools.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

**Prioritize more immediate efforts to improve school climate at the secondary (Grade 6-12) level while continuing to maintain a positive climate at primary (Grade K-5) level schools.** Survey results show a greater need for improvement in school climate at the secondary level especially related to student attitudes toward learning, social environment, fair and consistent rule enforcement, and physical safety. District leaders should work to develop transformation school leaders through professional learning and leadership training. Transformational leaders can then, in turn, employ community building and relationship building activities from the start of the school year and throughout the school year. Activities that focus on school spirit, promoting inclusivity, establishing connections between school and community organizations, inspirational or motivational speakers or videos, and service learning demonstrate district and school commitments to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment. Additionally, focusing on academic achievement elevates the meaningfulness of school for students.

**Identify and address gaps in students' abilities to regulate their emotions, resolve conflicts, and maintain positive relationships.** Survey results highlight a need for greater support and resources for students to build these skills in particular. While the need is greatest at the secondary school level, primary school students would also benefit from a greater or continued focus on building these skills as they transition into higher grade levels. Districts should focus on building the capacity of school administrators to daily monitor students' social-emotional conditions and intervene when those conditions become critical. Also, all staff should be trained to integrate social-emotional learning skill-building into existing curricula.

**Ensure students have regular, systematic opportunities to share their experiences and opinions on issues related to school climate.** Many of the areas for continued improvement highlighted in the national dataset suggest students, especially at the secondary school level, are in need of a stronger voice and say in their school's climate and culture. As school and district-level leaders design and implement new strategies, students should be empowered to contribute perspectives and make decisions. Engagement may come in the form of focus or discussion groups, student leadership councils or committees, or student action conferences.

**Expand opportunities for meaningful two-way communication and transparency between district-level leaders and parents and staff to improve awareness of both new and ongoing concerns at individual school sites.** Only about half of parents and staff at both the primary and secondary levels agree district leaders are in tune with school-level issues or concerns. At the primary school level, this statement received among the lowest level of agreement across all survey questions. Specifically, district leaders should develop district-wide communication plans to support school-based leadership and provide strictly adhered to communication procedures. These plans should demonstrate the district's commitment to transparency but also outline situations where sharing information would not be appropriate (i.e., describe the balance school leaders must maintain between transparency and protecting students' privacy).



### IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

**Additional research is needed to clarify which students do not like school and why they feel this way.** Survey results indicate only 37% of secondary students say they like school, by far the lowest satisfaction result of the survey. Yet, we do not yet know if there exist any patterns among these students by race/ethnicity, grade-level (as opposed to grade band), social-economic status, or program participation (e.g., special education, advanced academics, language learners). Further analysis to include additional disaggregation by student demographic characteristics will help to identify the most impacted students. Subsequent qualitative research studies through in-depth-interviews or focus groups with students will identify the root causes of students' dislike of school.

**Further research is needed to assess perceptions of school leadership on school climate.** Gathering school leader (e.g., principals, assistant principals, student activity directors, student services directors) perspectives through a survey is the next essential step to understanding the climate conditions in today's schools. Specifically, understanding how school leadership perceive interactions between staff and parents and staff and students can help explain the gap between parent and staff perceptions that exist in the current survey results. Additionally, school leaders will have insight into which aspects of school climate (e.g., academic, school and building, social, inclusiveness) are most urgently in need of addressing. Finally, a school leader survey is an opportunity to gather feedback on where districts and schools should apply resources (e.g., funding, professional learning, additional staff) to meet challenges.

**Further research is also needed to identify effective strategies for addressing school climate challenges for specific student groups.** Extensive, evidence-based research is needed to provide district and school leaders with strategies to establish positive and welcoming school climates for all students. Research should identify current pilot programs and strategies currently in use around the nation. Then, applying a mixed-methods approach, further research will assess the effectiveness of these strategies in a variety of conditions and contexts.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### [The Why and How of A Positive School Climate](#)

Learn about key reasons why stakeholders benefit from a positive school climate and common traits of effective school climates.

### [New Superintendent Transition Toolkit](#)

Explore strategies for building positive relationships and crafting a common vision for the district to support greater engagement and transparency from district leadership.

### [Action Guide: Characteristics of High-Performing Schools](#)

Review characteristics of high-performing schools, focusing on the importance of opportunities for staff collaboration and engagement.

### [Systematizing Climates that Elevate Student Voice and A Sense of Safety and Belonging](#) **(Member only access)**

Read about Hanover's research into why students do not report bullying when it happens and how schools can create climates that promote student voice and emotional security.

### [Fostering Safe and Inclusive Workplace Communities](#) **(Member only access)**

Review best practices for fostering safe and inclusive workplace environments by valuing and appreciating employees, building relationships, fostering open communication, and embedding inclusiveness in daily practices and policies.

### [Best Practices for Community Engagement](#) **(Member only access)**

Review best practices for increasing family and community engagement, with a focus on engaging with diverse, hard-to-reach, or underrepresented communities.

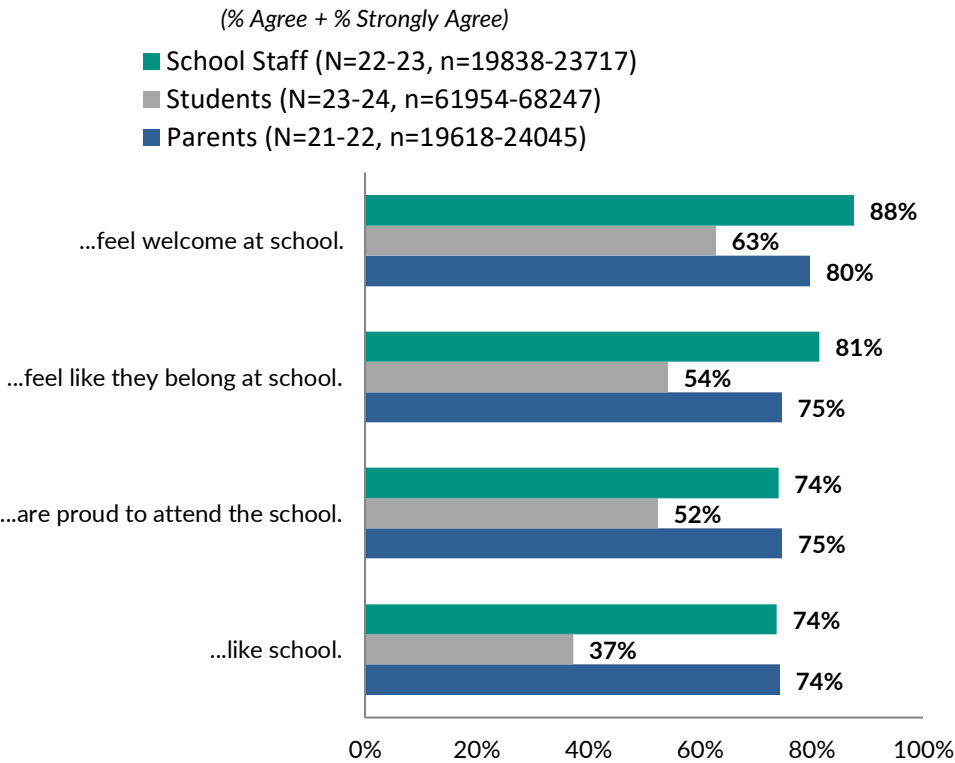
# APPENDIX A: TABLES AND FIGURES

## SECTION A: SCHOOL/BUILDING ENVIRONMENT

### SUBSECTION 1: POSITIVE EMOTIONAL CLIMATE

Figure A1a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

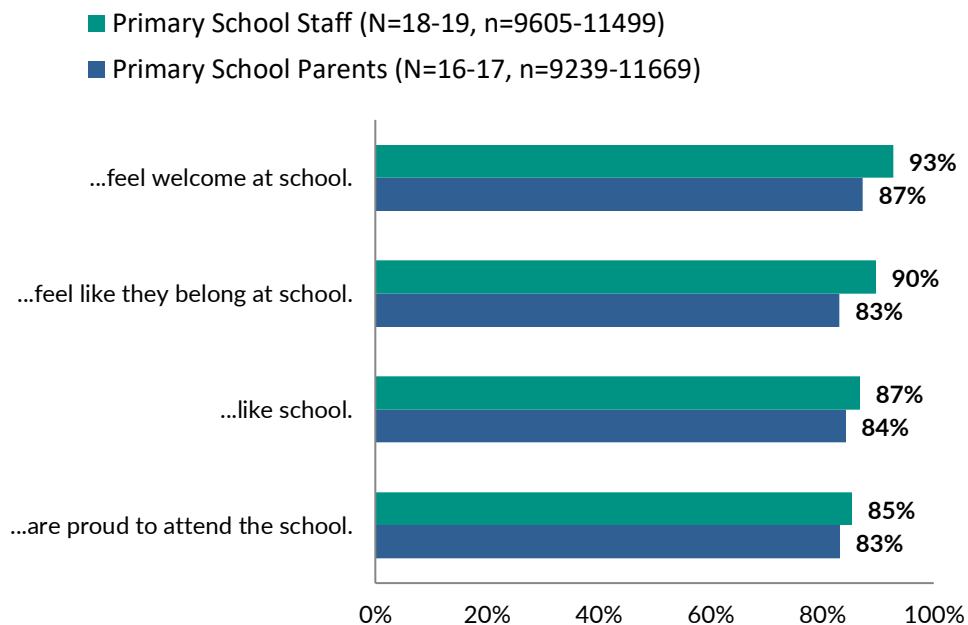
*Students at my/my child's school...*



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure A1b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

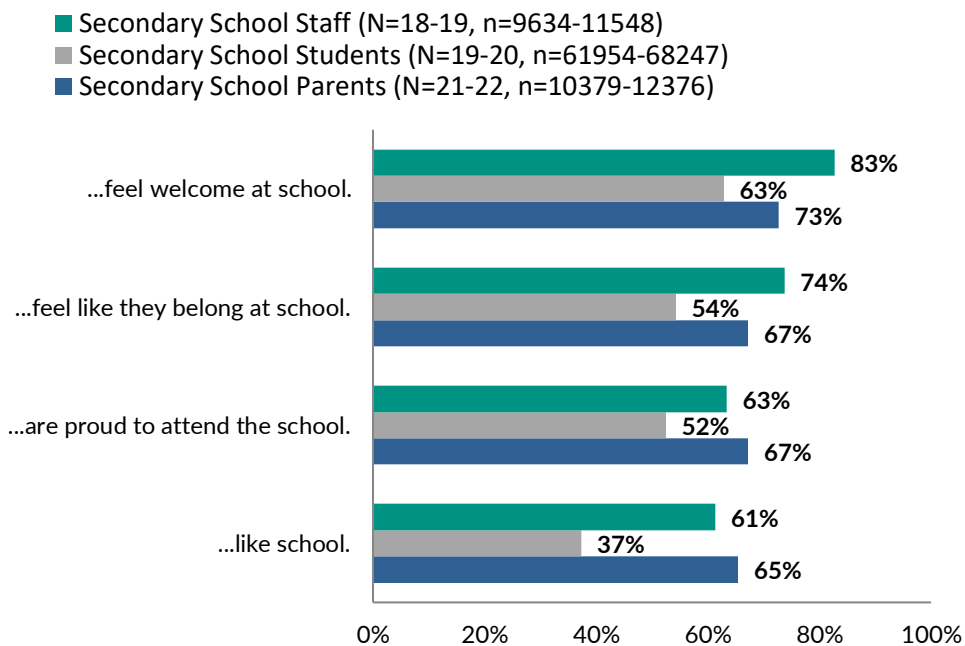
*Students at my school/ my child's school...*



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure A1c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

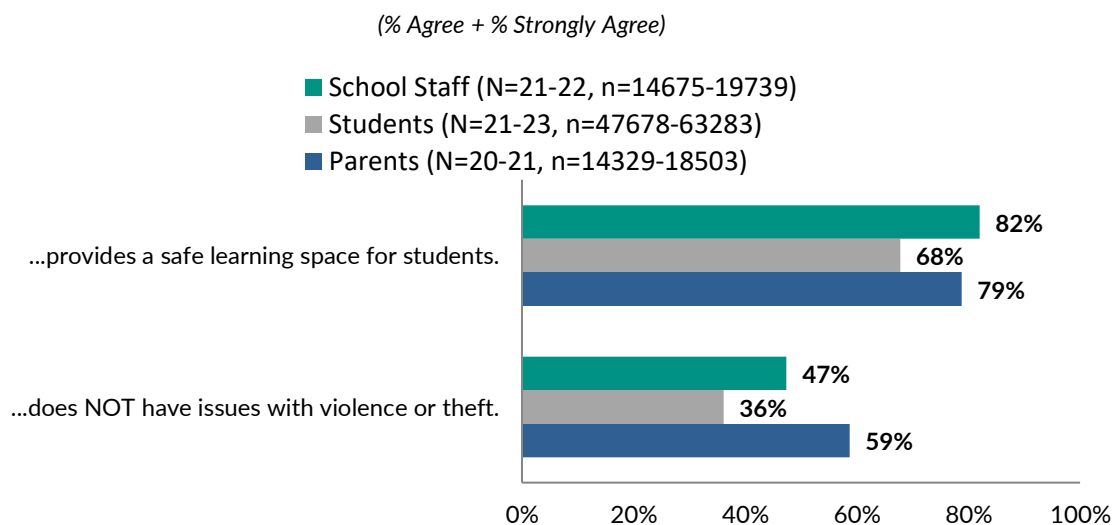
*Students in my school/my child's school...*



## SUBSECTION 2: BUILDING & PERSONAL SAFETY

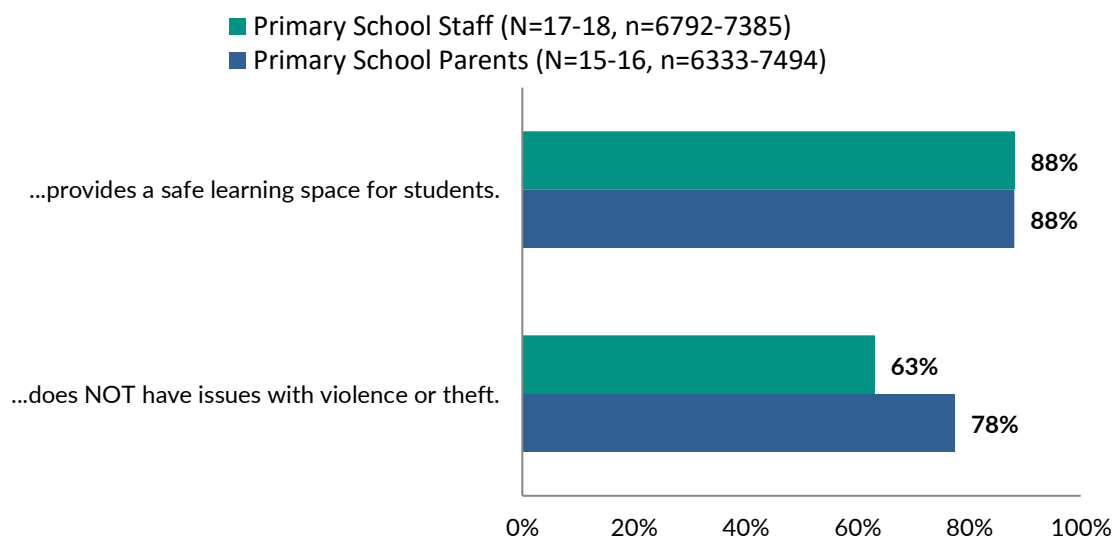
**Figure A2a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*My school/My child's school...*



**Figure A2b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*My school/ My child's school...*

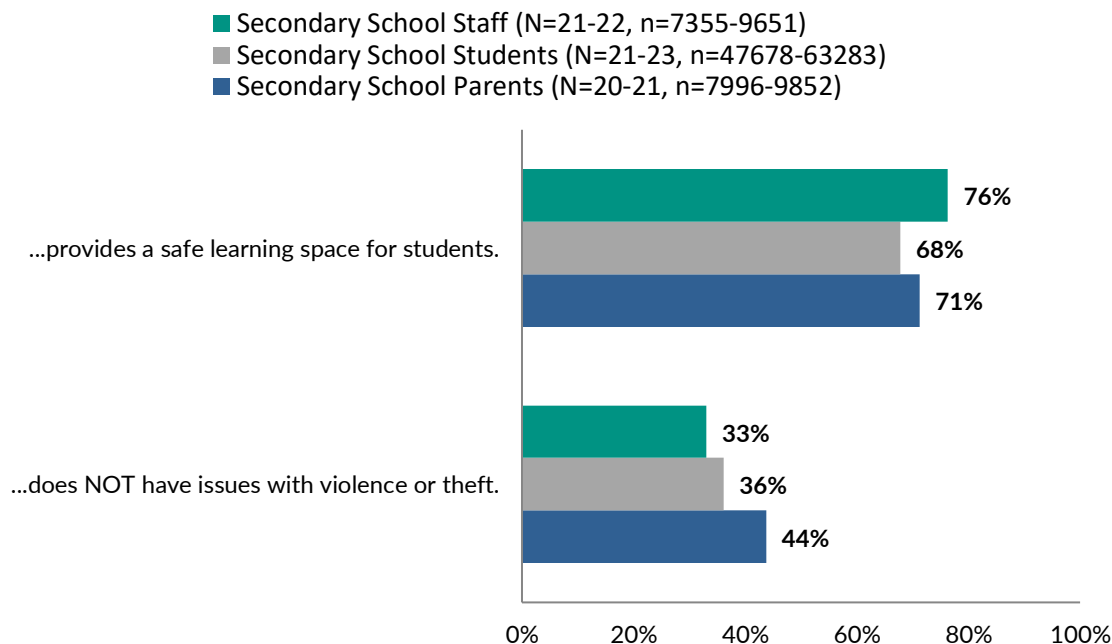




## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

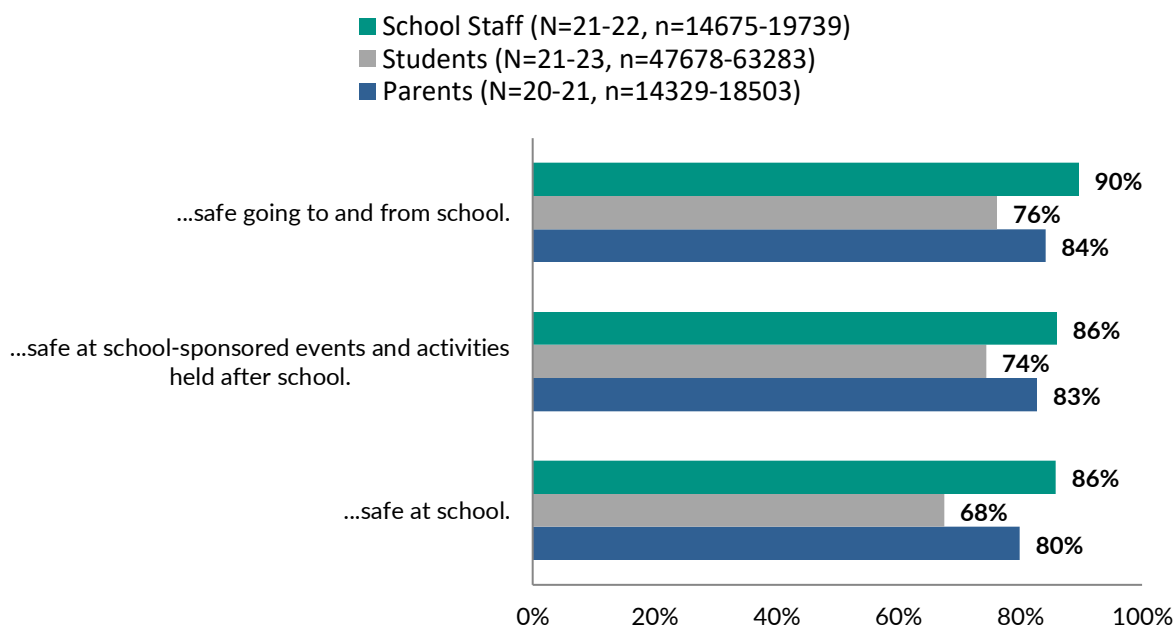
**Figure A2c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*My school/my child's school...*



**Figure A3a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

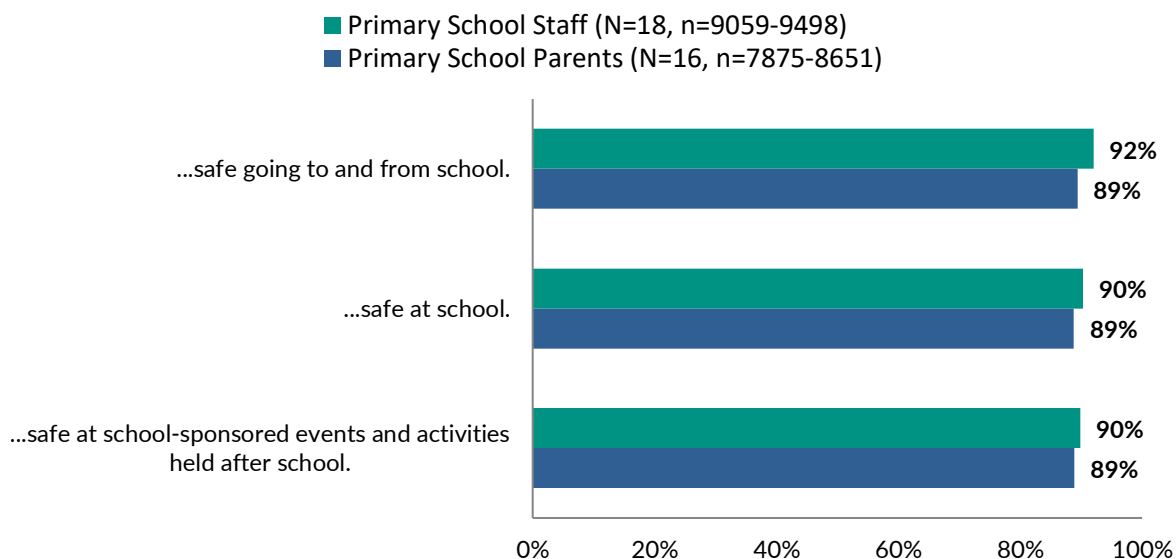
*I feel/My child feels...*



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

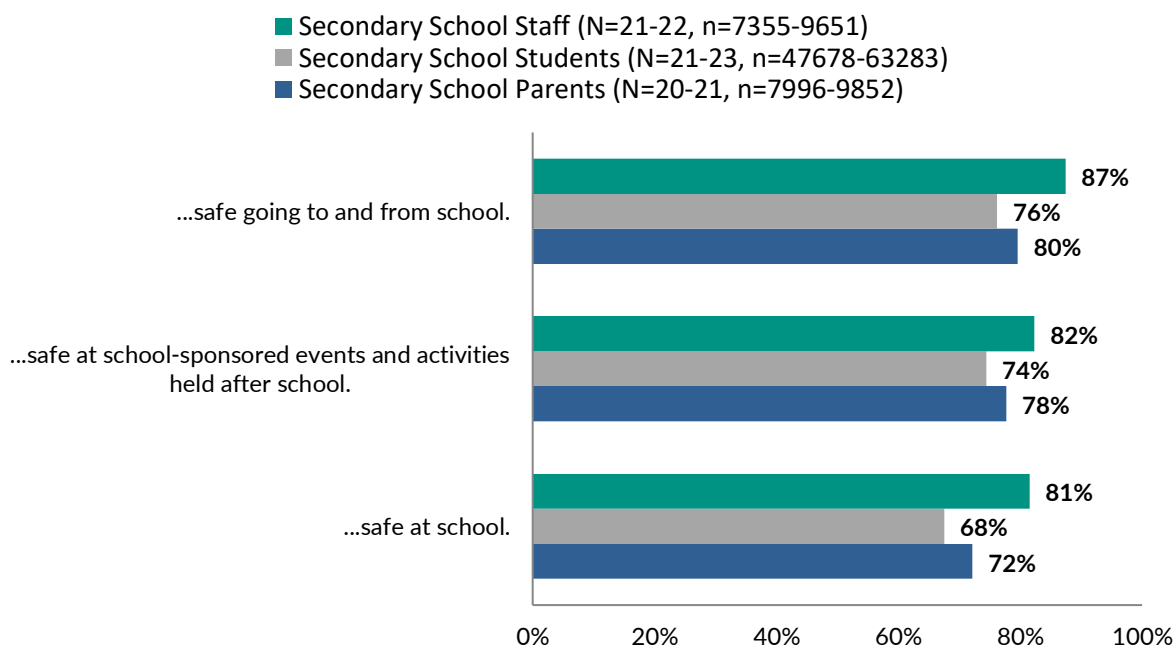
**Figure A3b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*I feel/My child feels...*



**Figure A3c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*I feel/my child feels...*

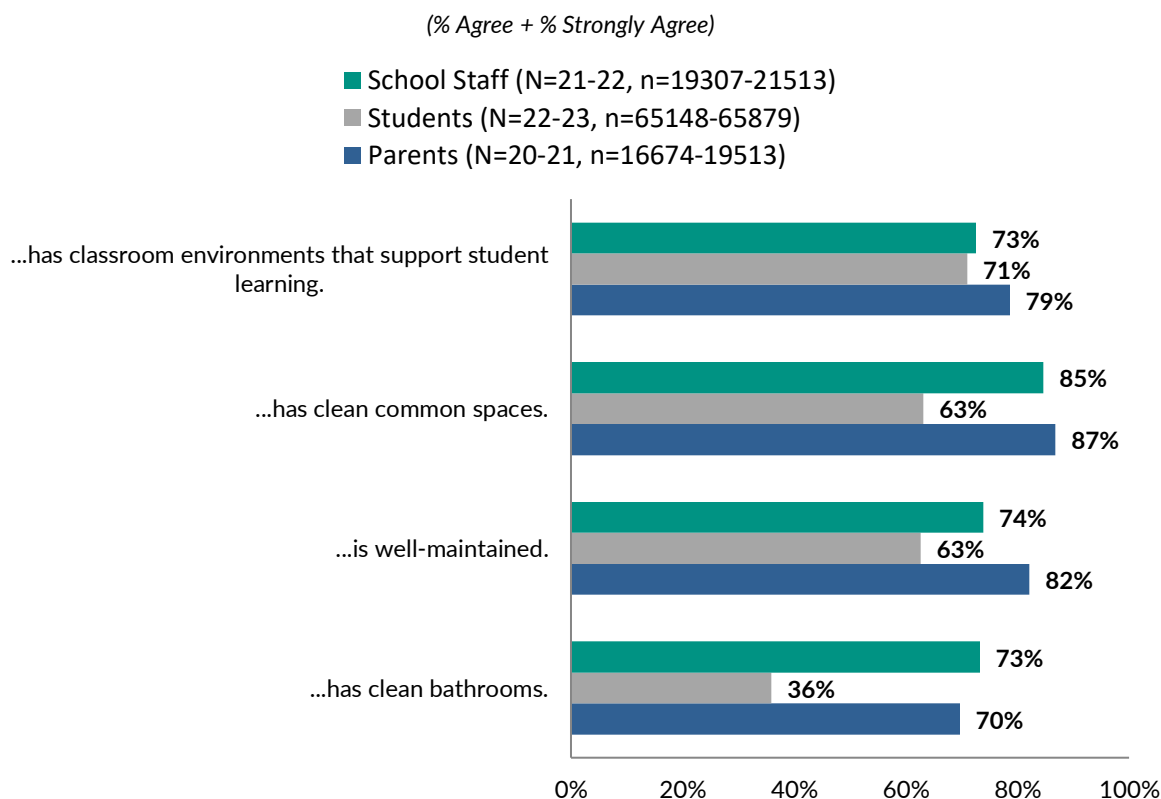


## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### SUBSECTION 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

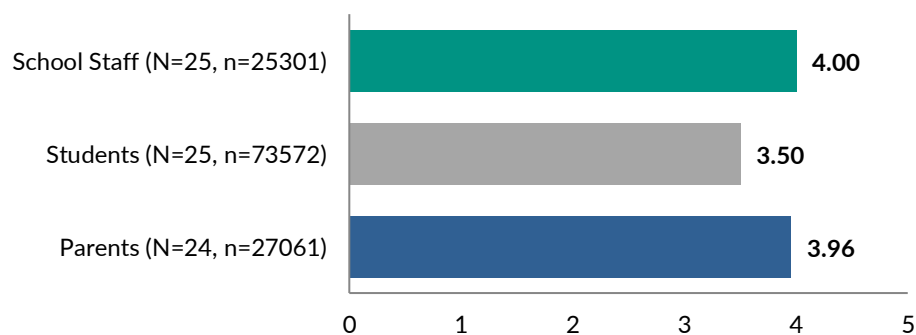
**Figure A4. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*My school/ My child's school...*



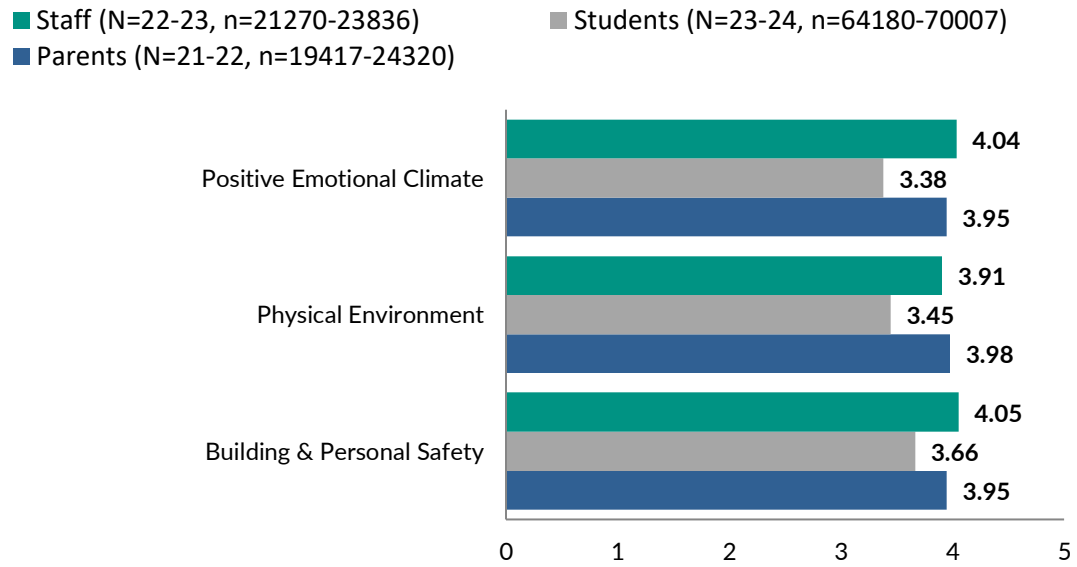
### SUBSECTION 4: CONSTRUCT AND SUBCONSTRUCT AVERAGES

**Figure A5. School/Building Environment Construct Averages**



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure A6. School/Building Environment Subconstruct Averages**

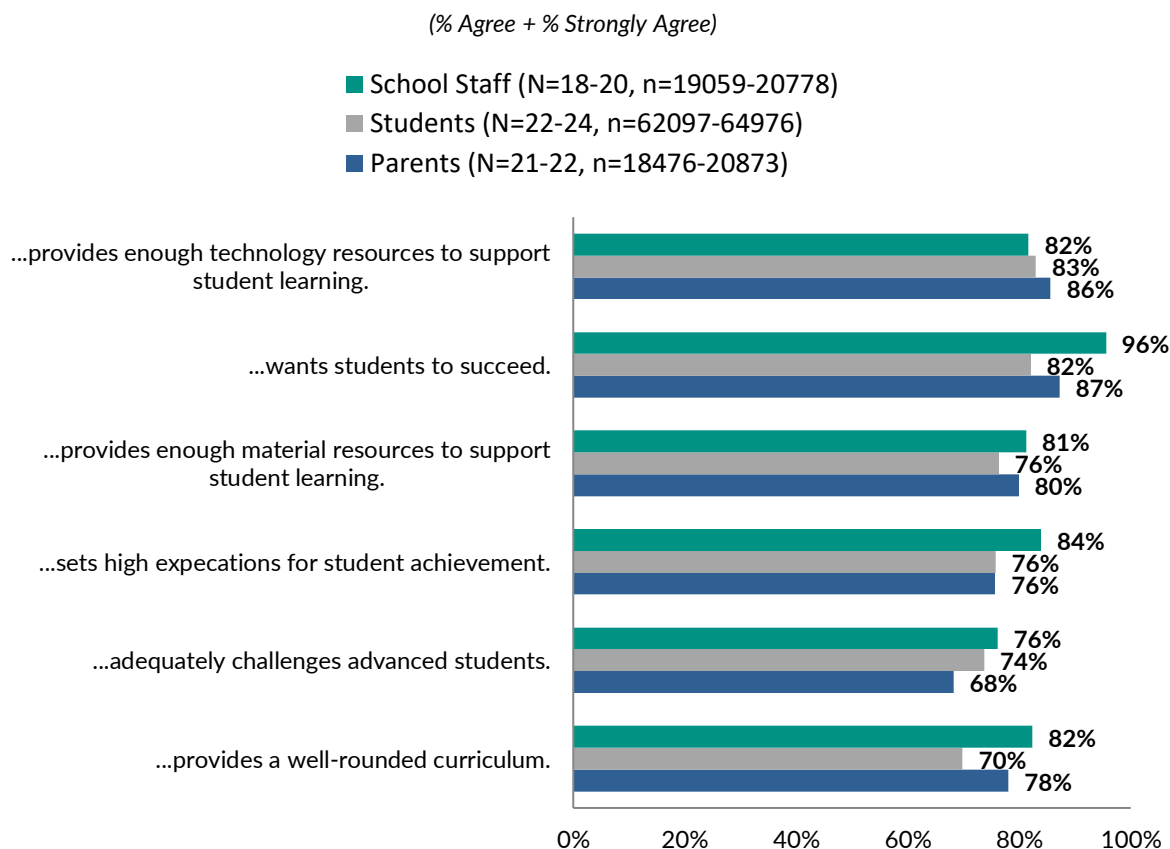


## SECTION B: ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

### SUBSECTION 1: INSTRUCTIONAL CLIMATE

**Figure B1a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*My school/ My child's school...*

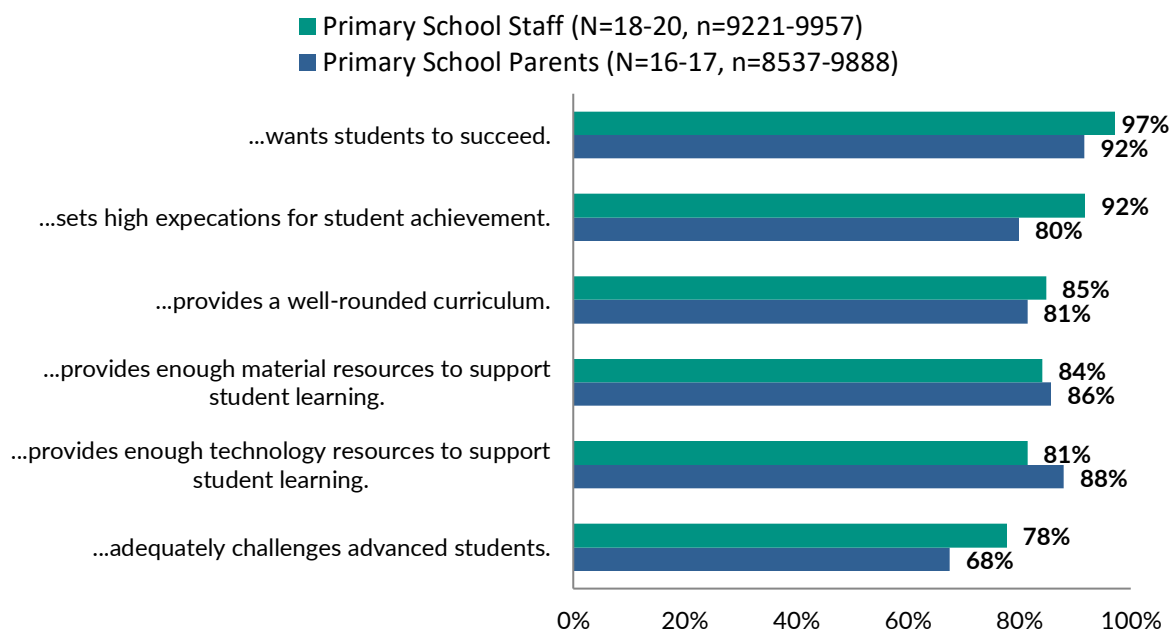


## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure B1b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

***My school/ My child's school...***

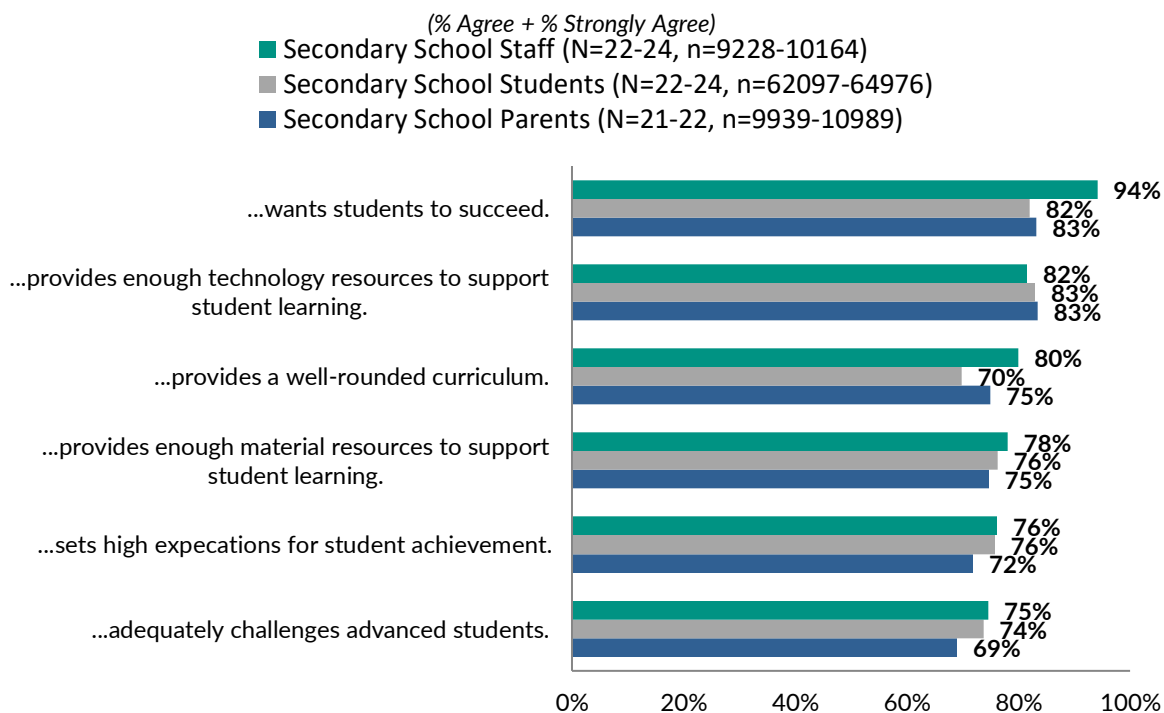
(% Agree + % Strongly Agree)



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure B1c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*My school/ My child's school...*



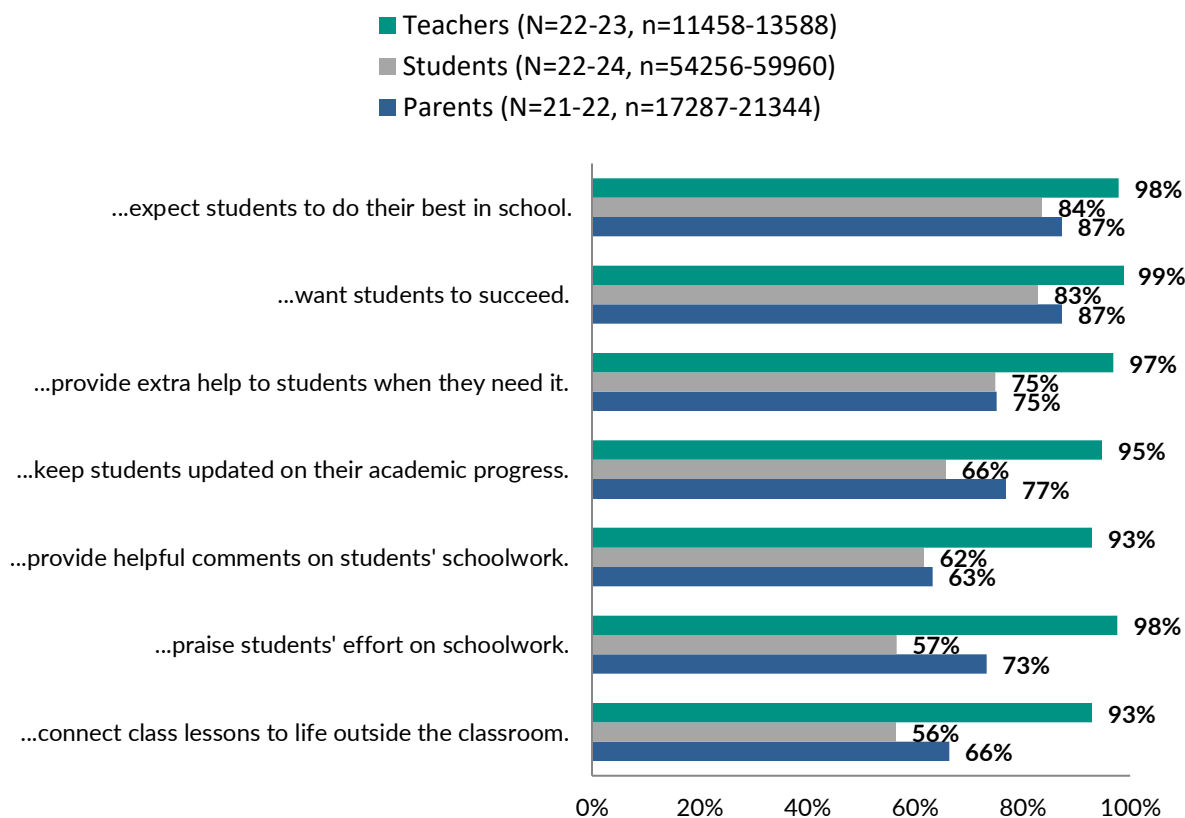


## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure B2a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

***Teachers/My teachers/My child's teachers...***

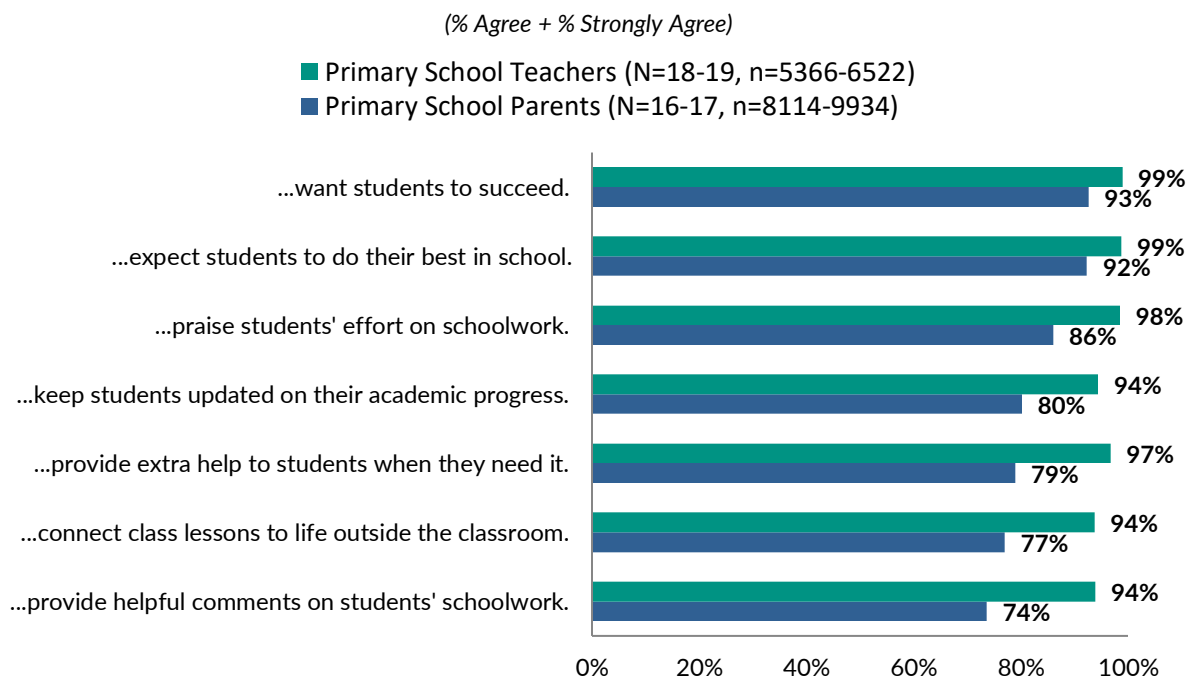
(% Agree + % Strongly Agree)



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure B2b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

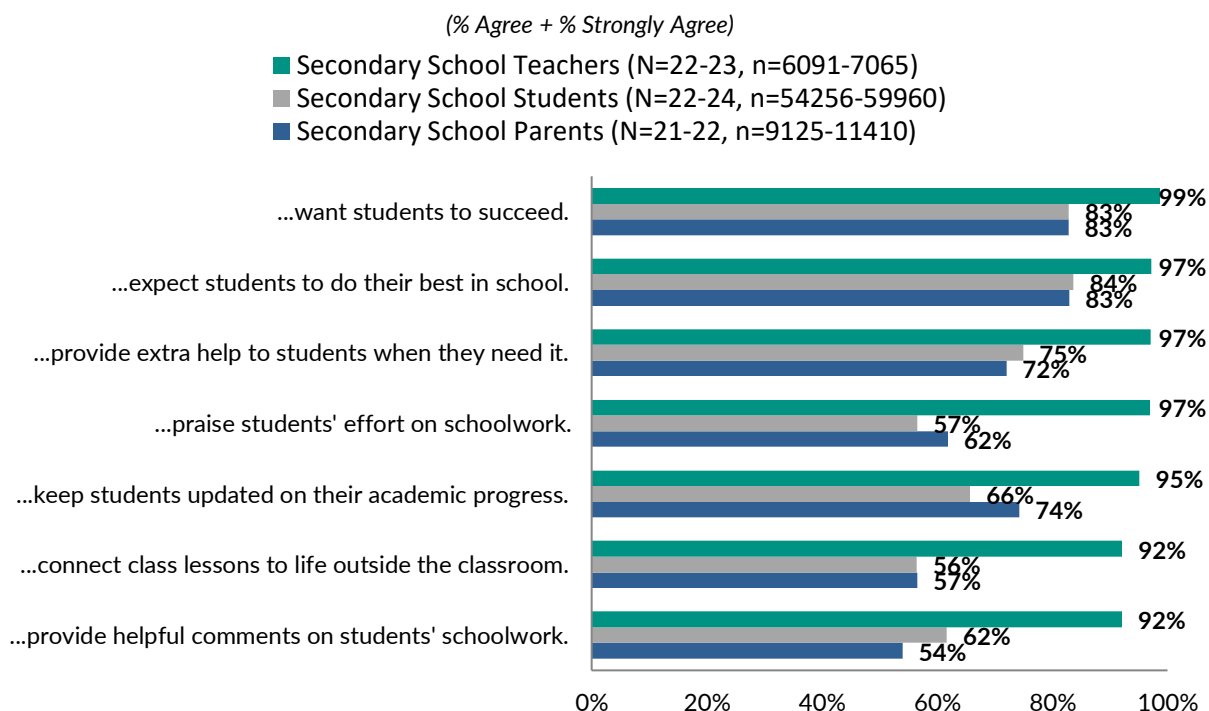
***Teachers/My child's teachers...***



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure B2c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

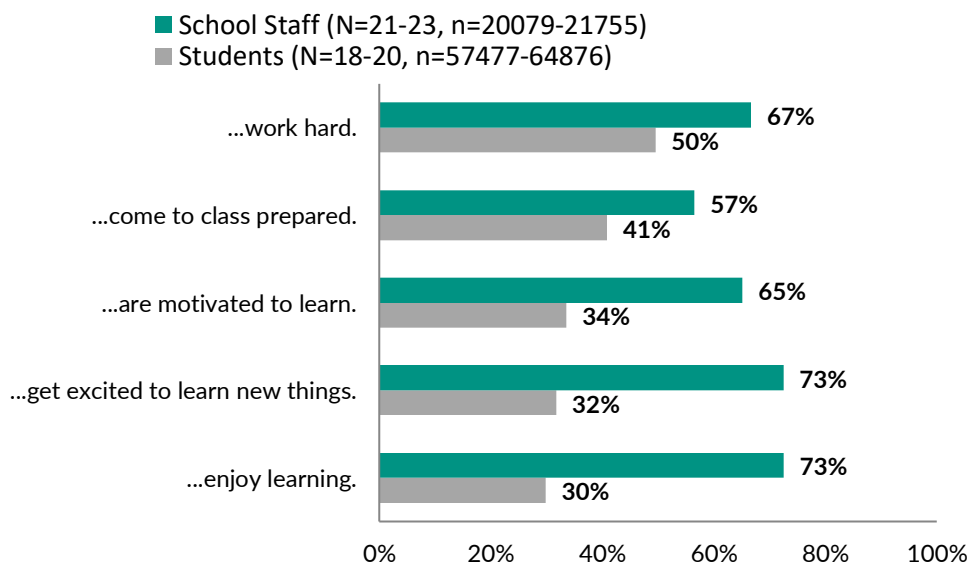
*Teachers/My teachers/My child's teachers...*



## SUBSECTION 2: STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD LEARNING

**Figure B3a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*Most students at my school...*

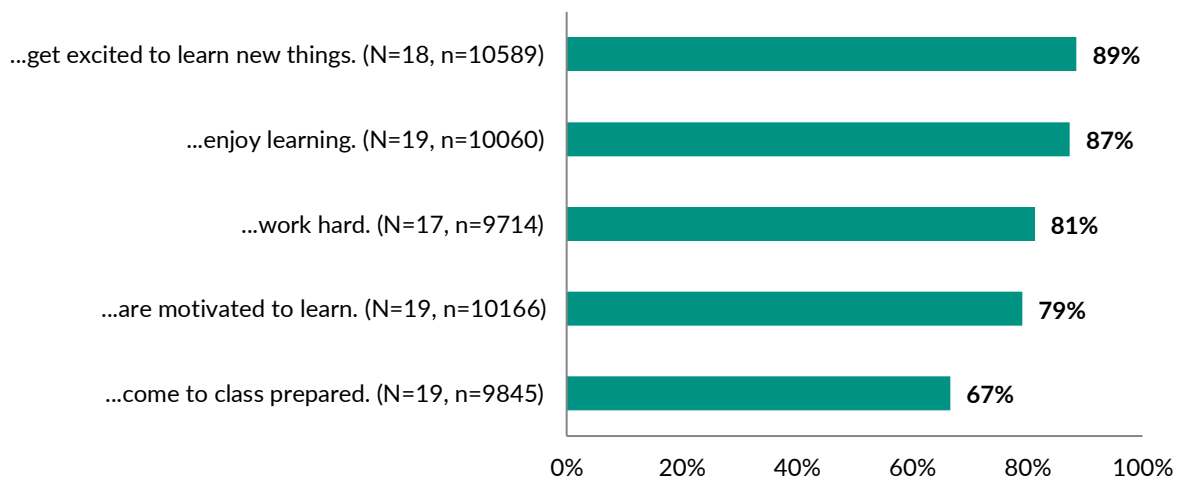


## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure B3b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

***Most students at my school...***

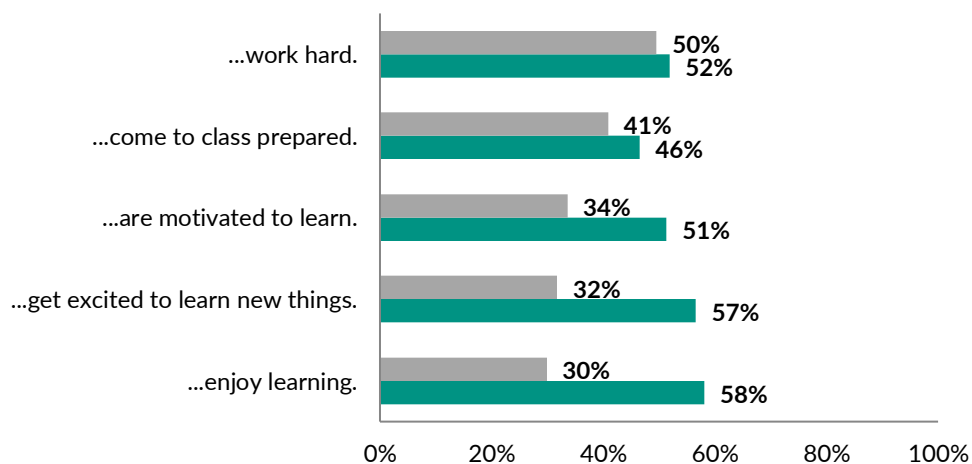
*(Primary School Staff only, % Agree + % Strongly Agree)*



**Figure B3c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

***Most students at my school...***

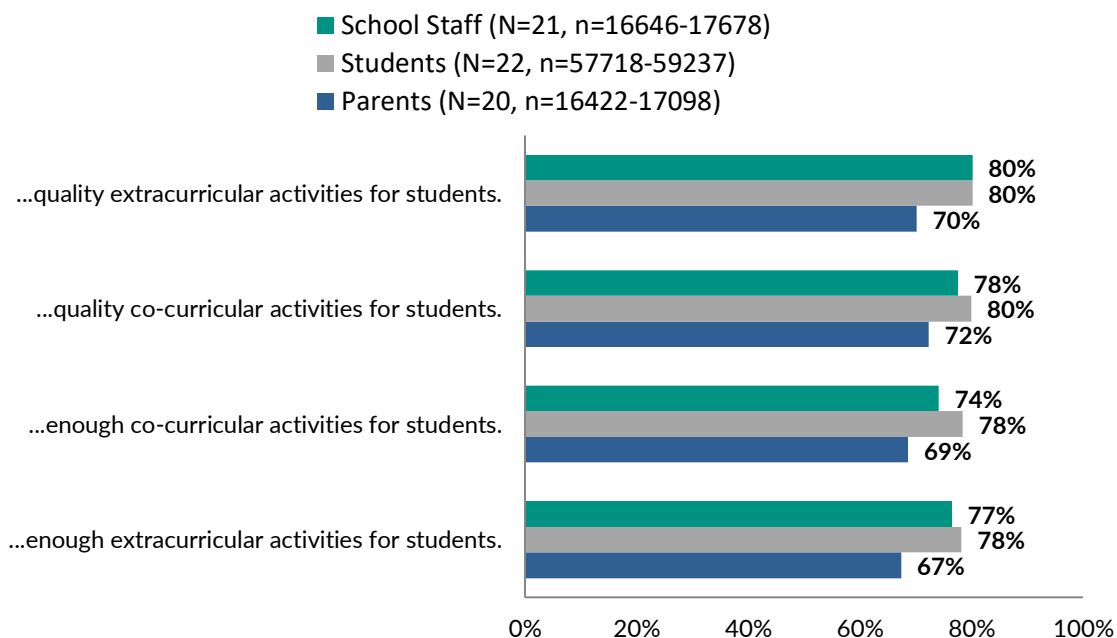
■ Secondary School Students (N=22-24, n=57477-64876)  
■ Secondary School Staff (N=21-23, n=9784-10591)



### SUBSECTION 3: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

**Figure B4a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

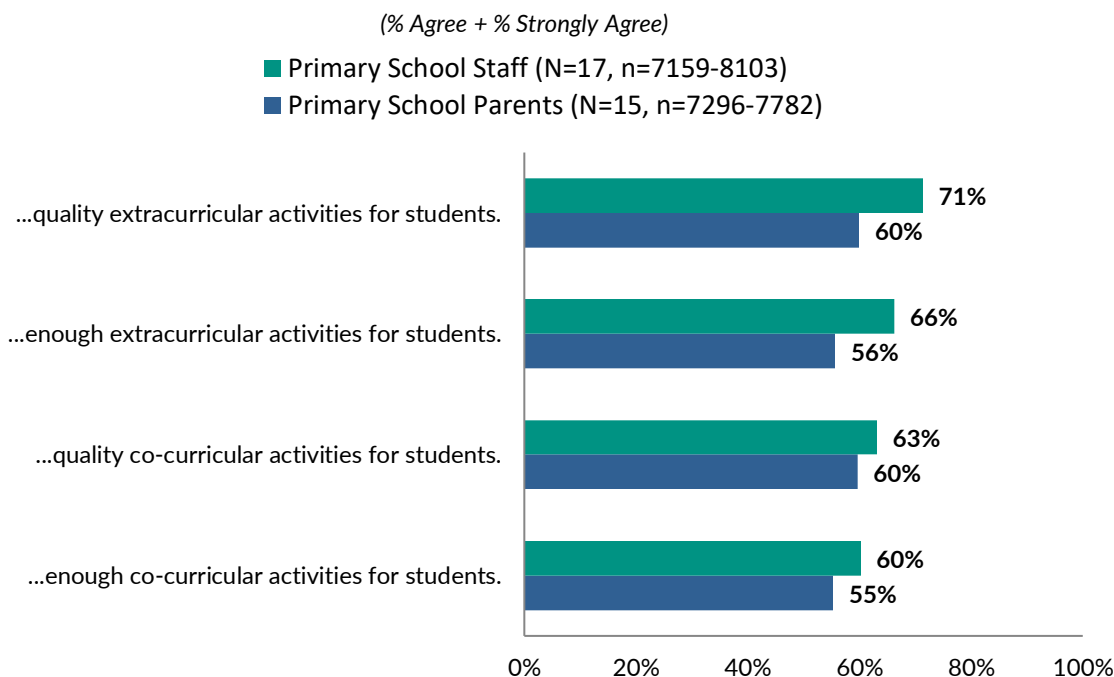
*My school/ My child's school offers...*



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

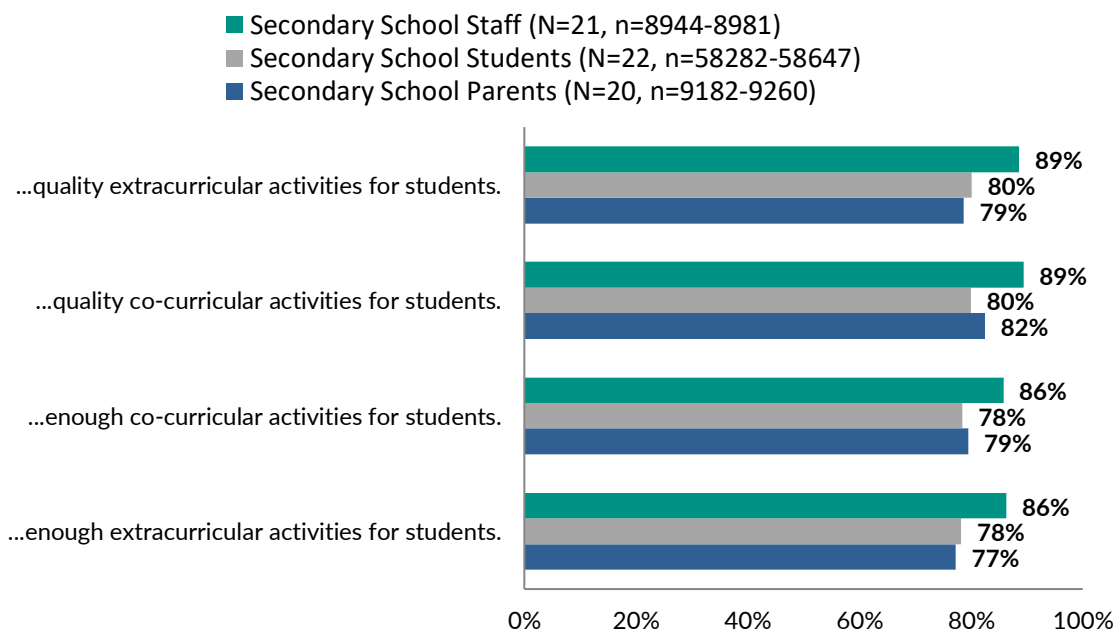
**Figure B4b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*My school/ My child's school offers...*



**Figure B4c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

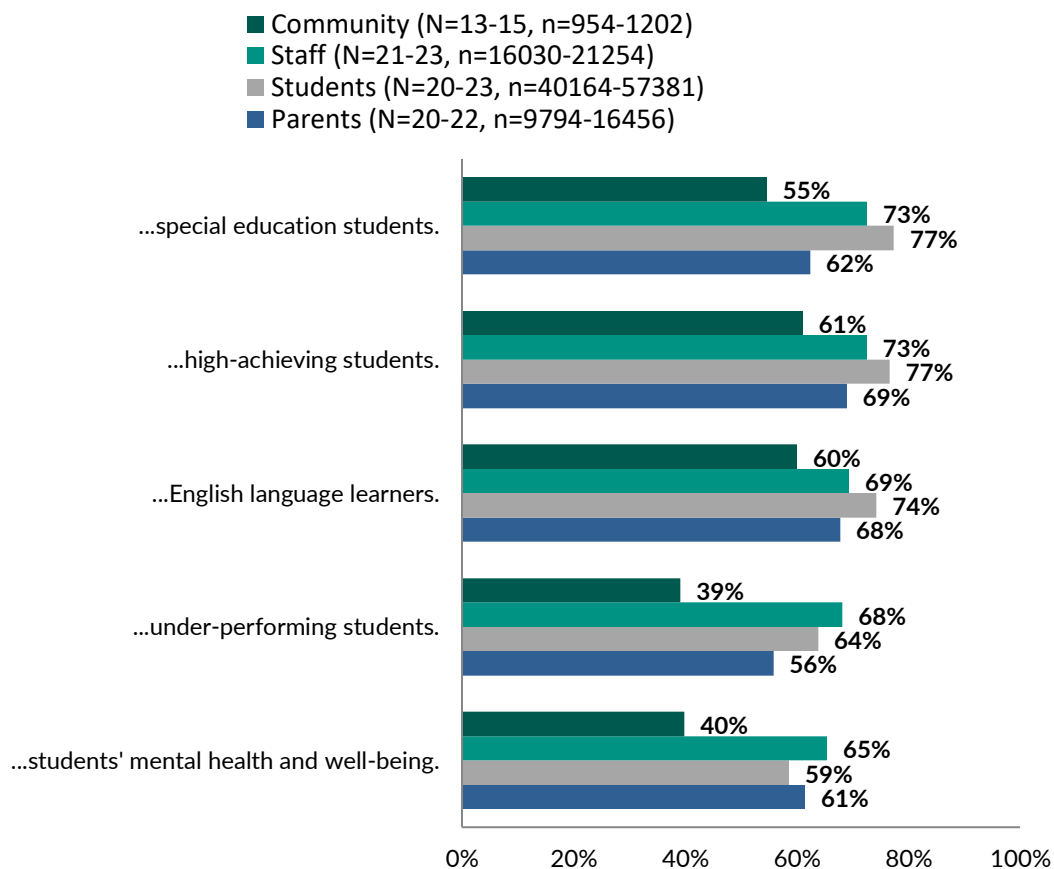
*My school/ My child's school offers...*



SUBSECTION 4: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Figure B5a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

*The school (district)/My school (district)/ My child's school (district) provides enough resources for...*



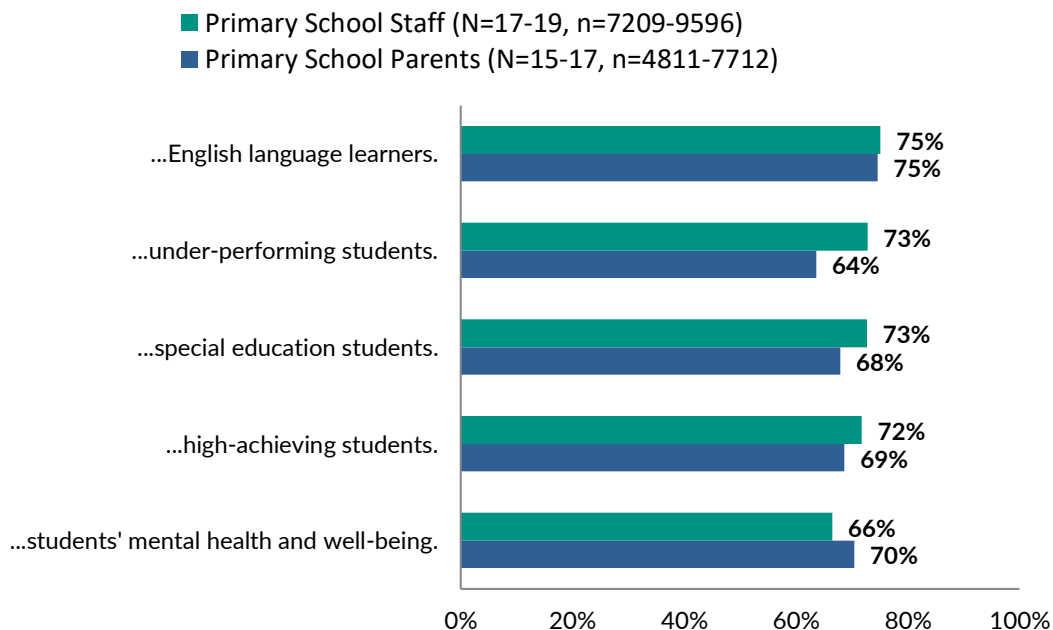


## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure B5b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

***My school (district)/ My child's school (district) provides enough resources for...***

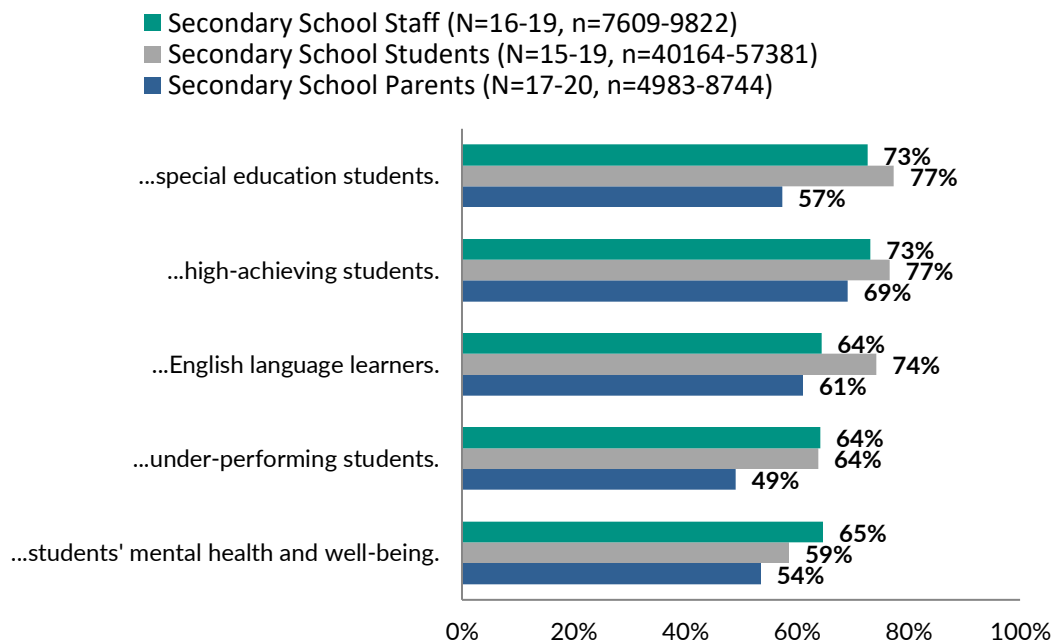
*(% Agree + % Strongly Agree)*



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure B5c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

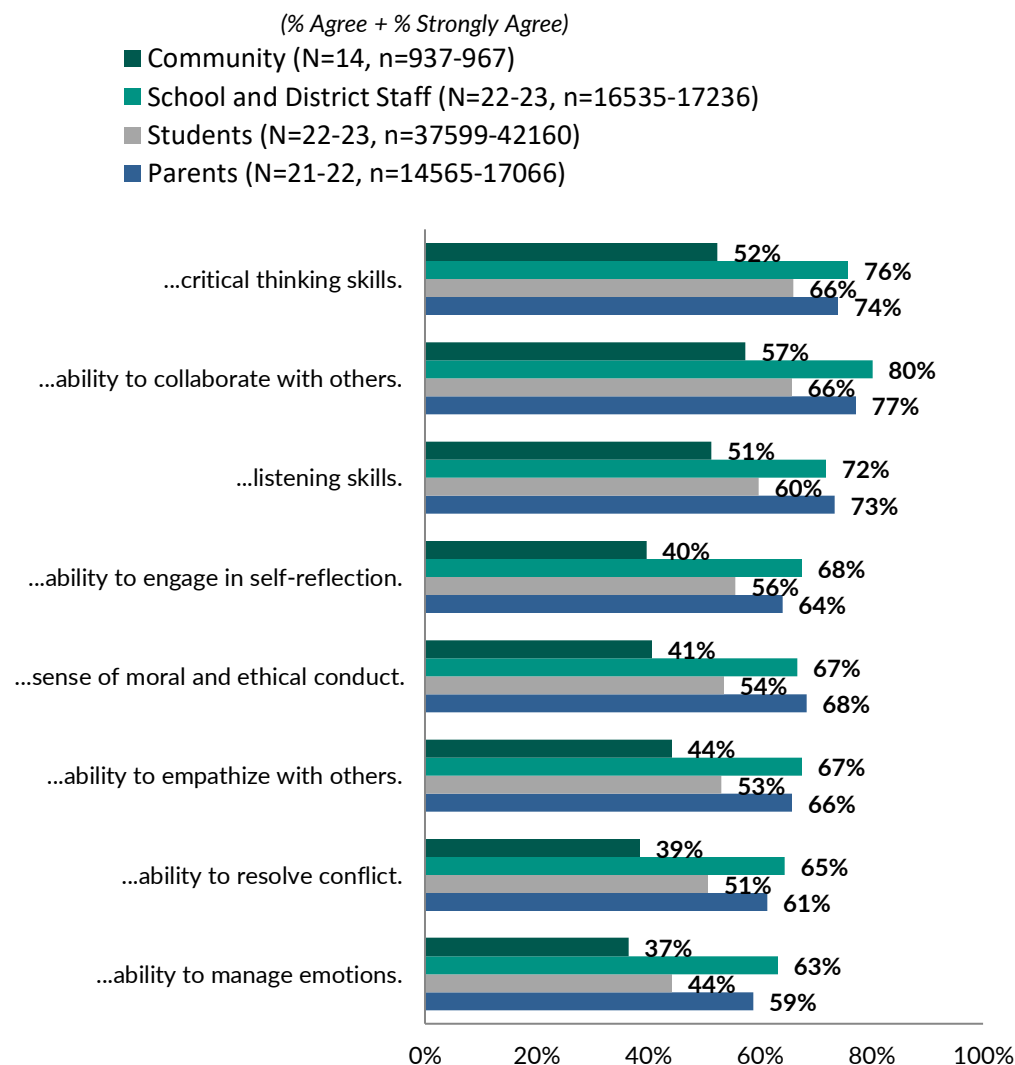
***My school/ My child's school provides enough resources for.....***



## SUBSECTION 5: STUDENT OUTCOMES

**Figure B6a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*Schools develop/My school develops/ My child's school develops students'...*

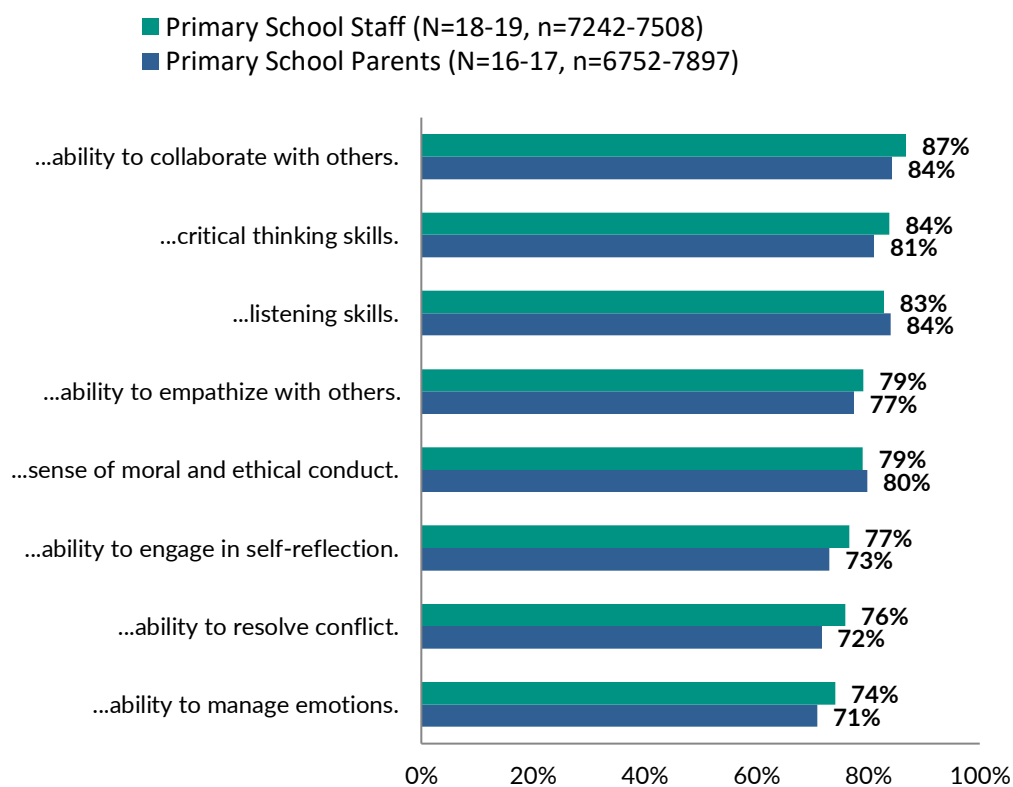


## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure B6b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

***My school develops/ My child's school develops students'...***

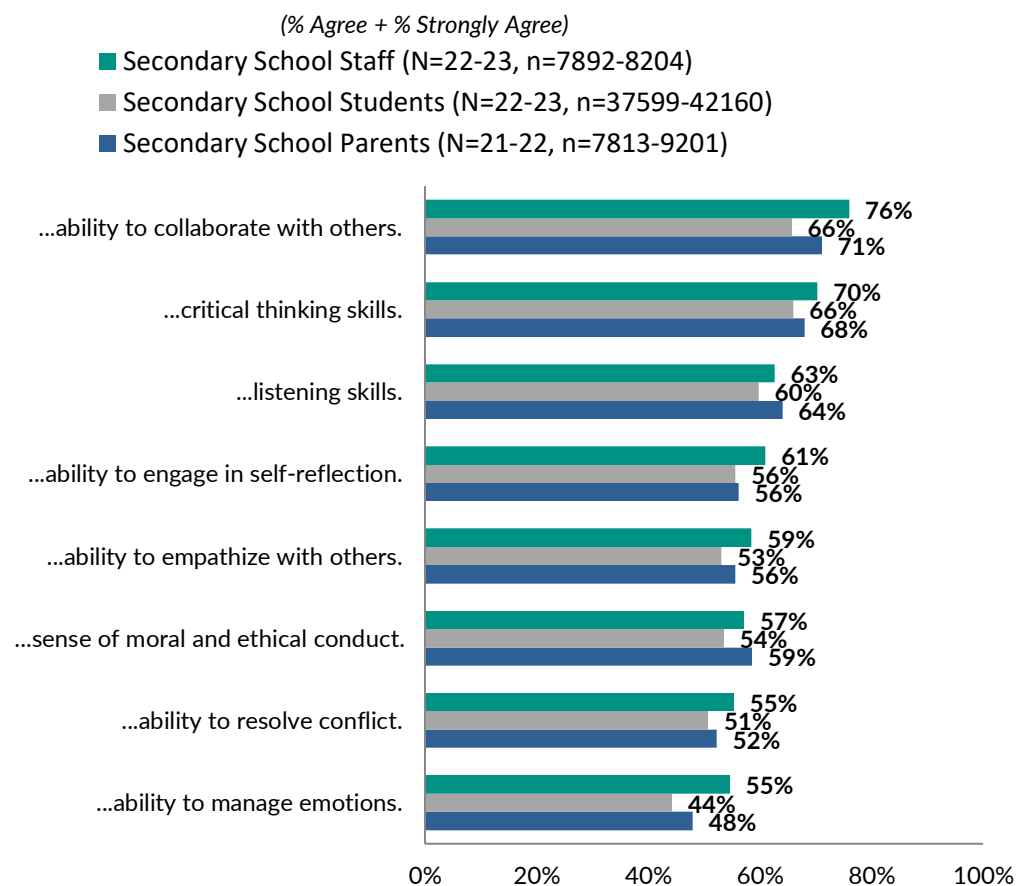
(% Agree + % Strongly Agree)



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure B6c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

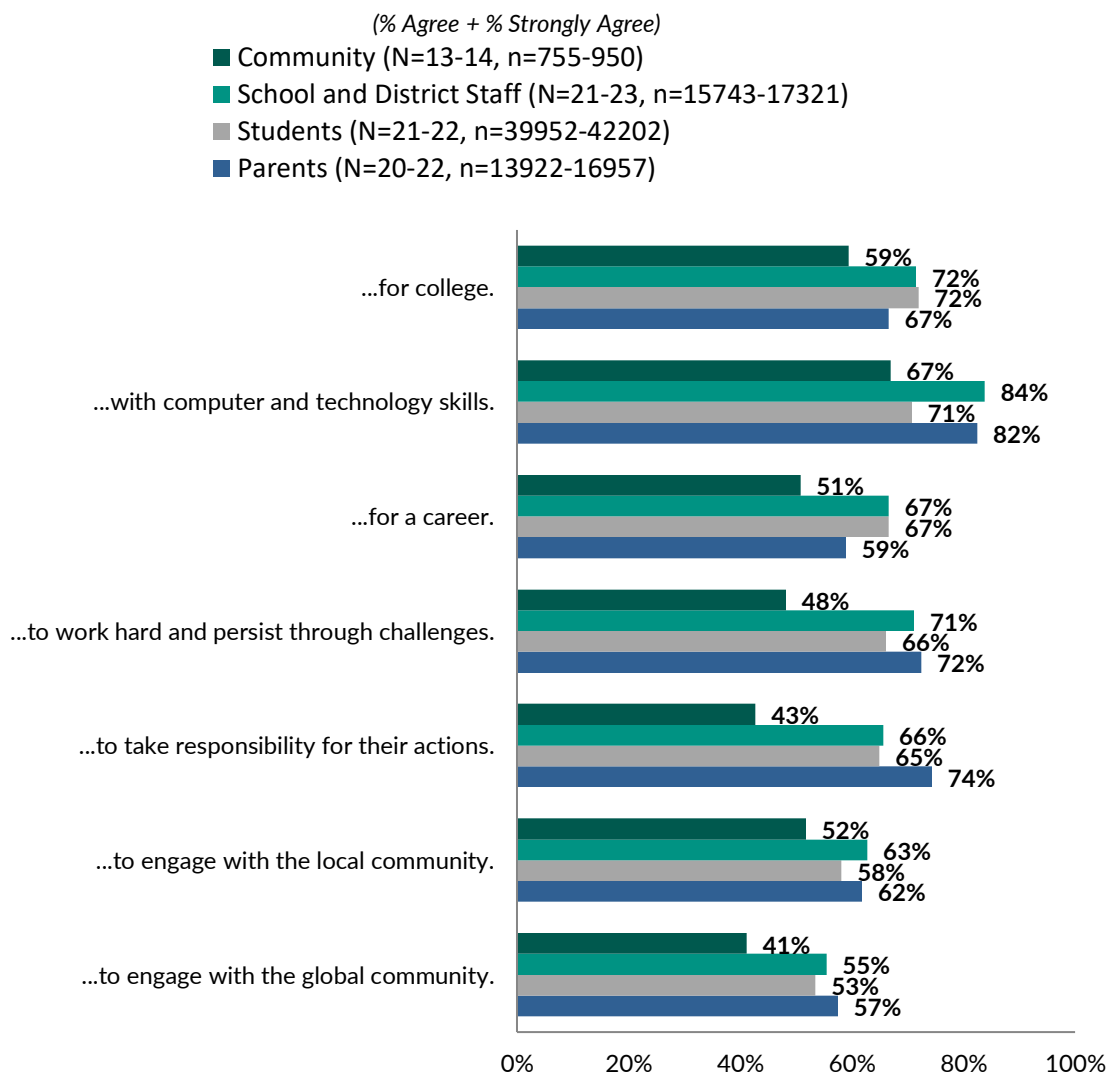
***My school/ My child's school develops students'...***



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure B7a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*Schools prepare/My school prepares/ My child's school prepares students...*

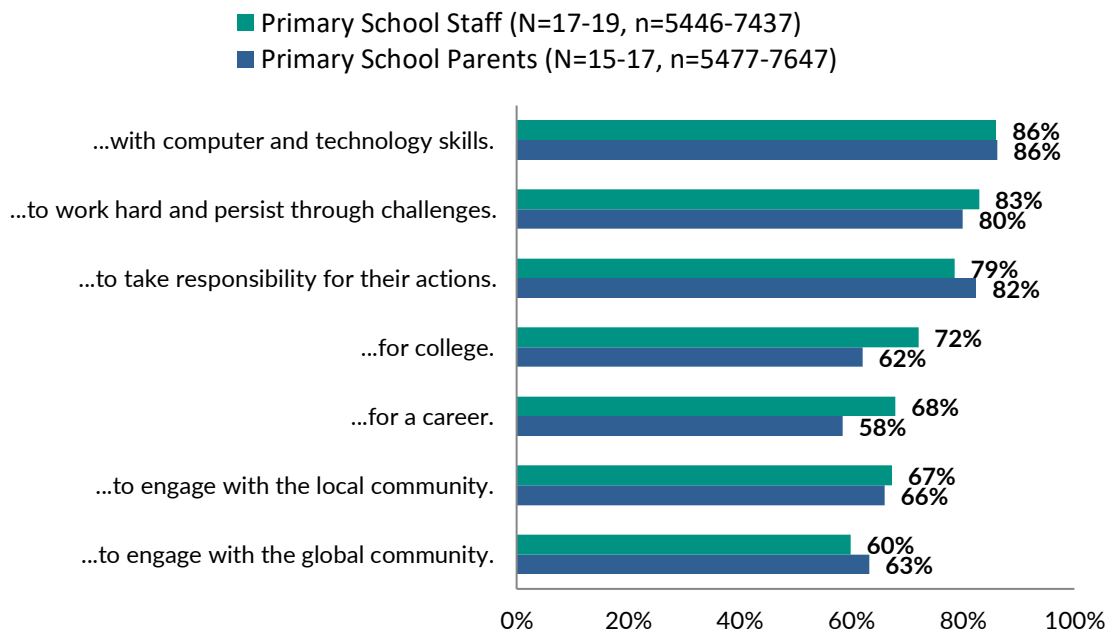


## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure B7b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

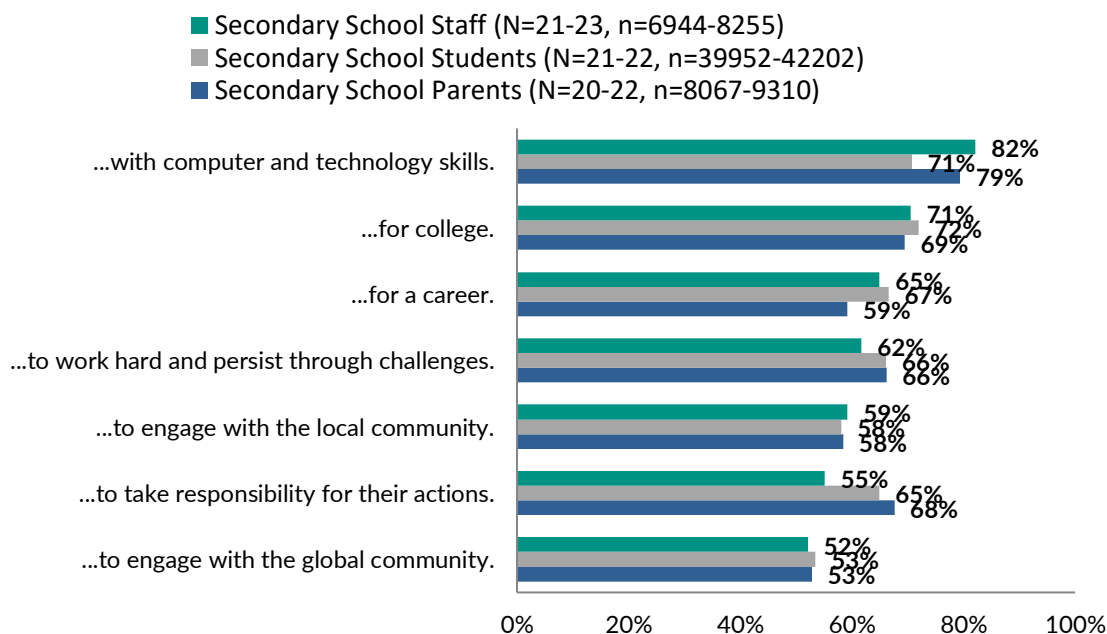
*My school/ My child's school prepares students...*

(% Agree + % Strongly Agree)



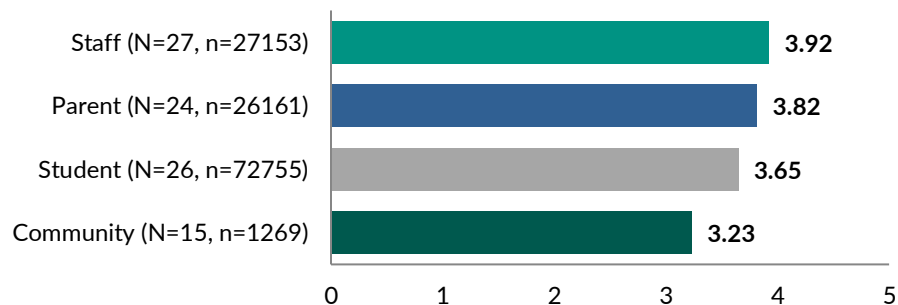
**Figure B7c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*My school/ My child's school prepares students...*

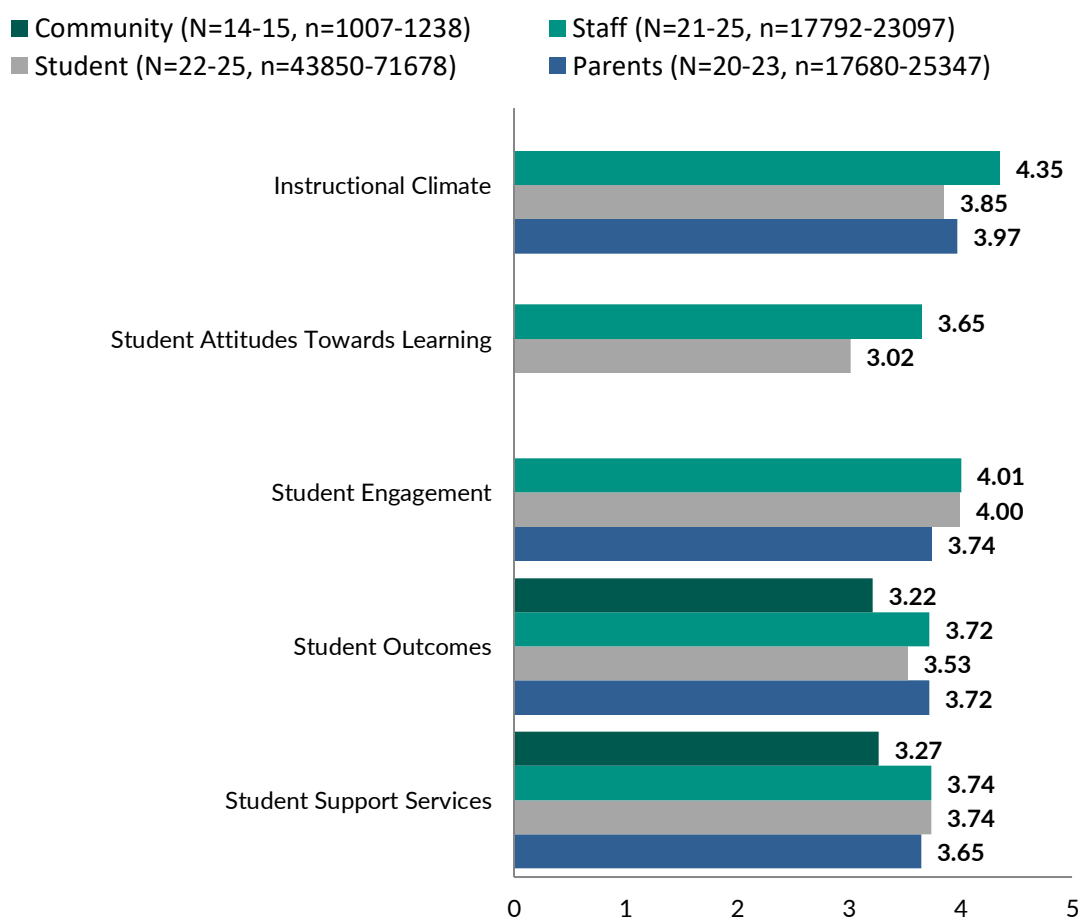




**Figure B8. Academic Environment Construct Averages**



**Figure B9. Academic Environment Subconstruct Averages**

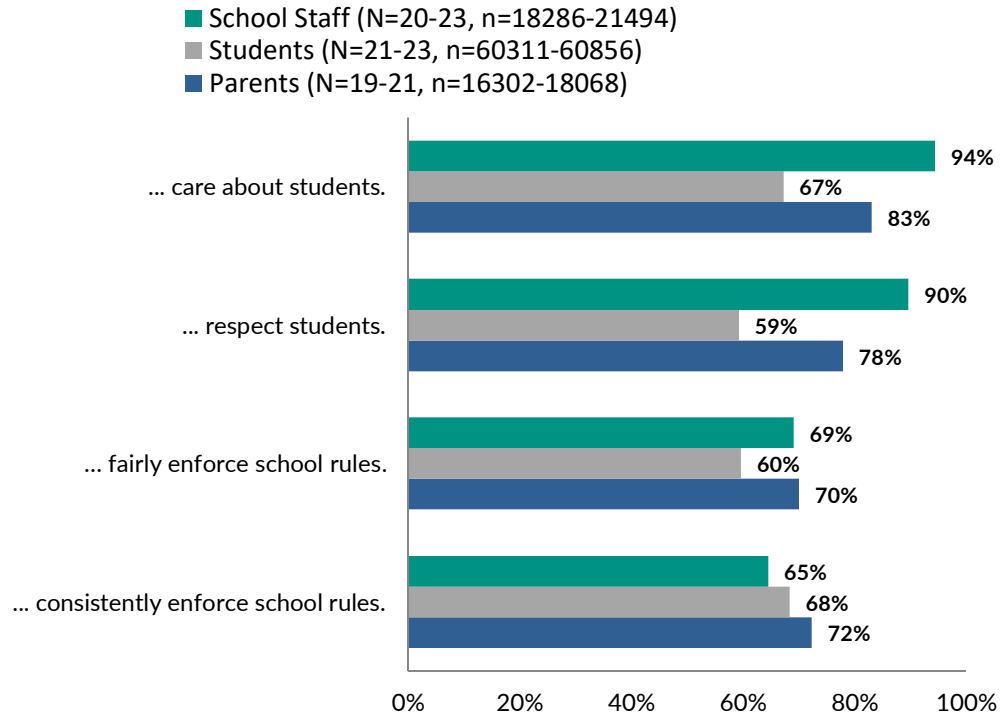


## SECTION C: SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

### SUBSECTION 1: STUDENTS' POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS & DISCIPLINE

Figure C1a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

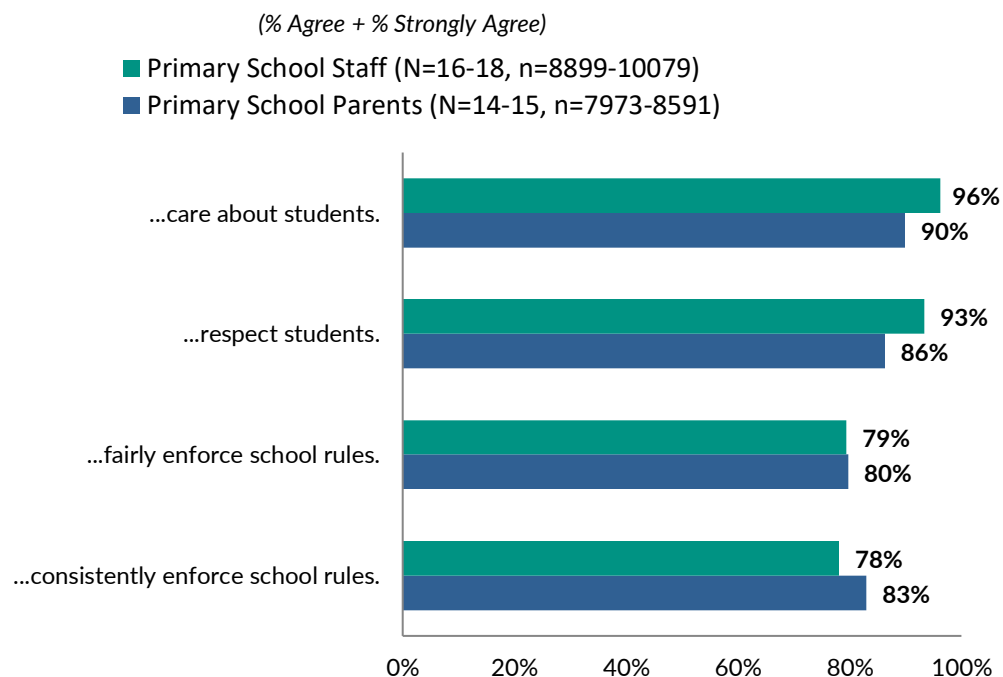
*Adults at my/my child's school...*



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure C1b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

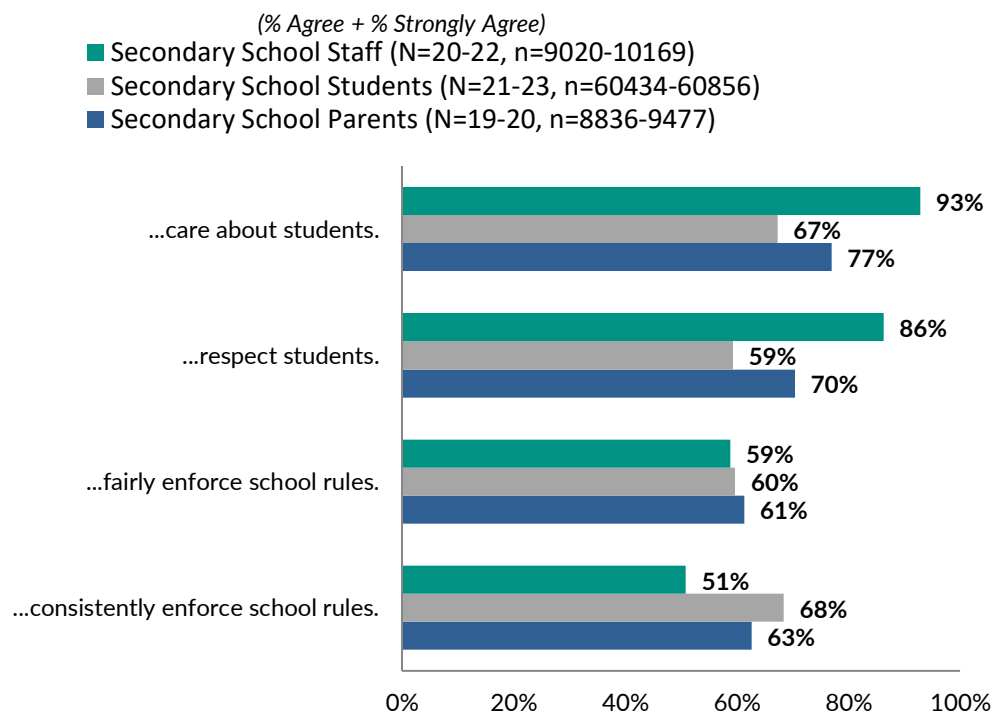
***Adults at my school/my child's school...***



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure C1c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

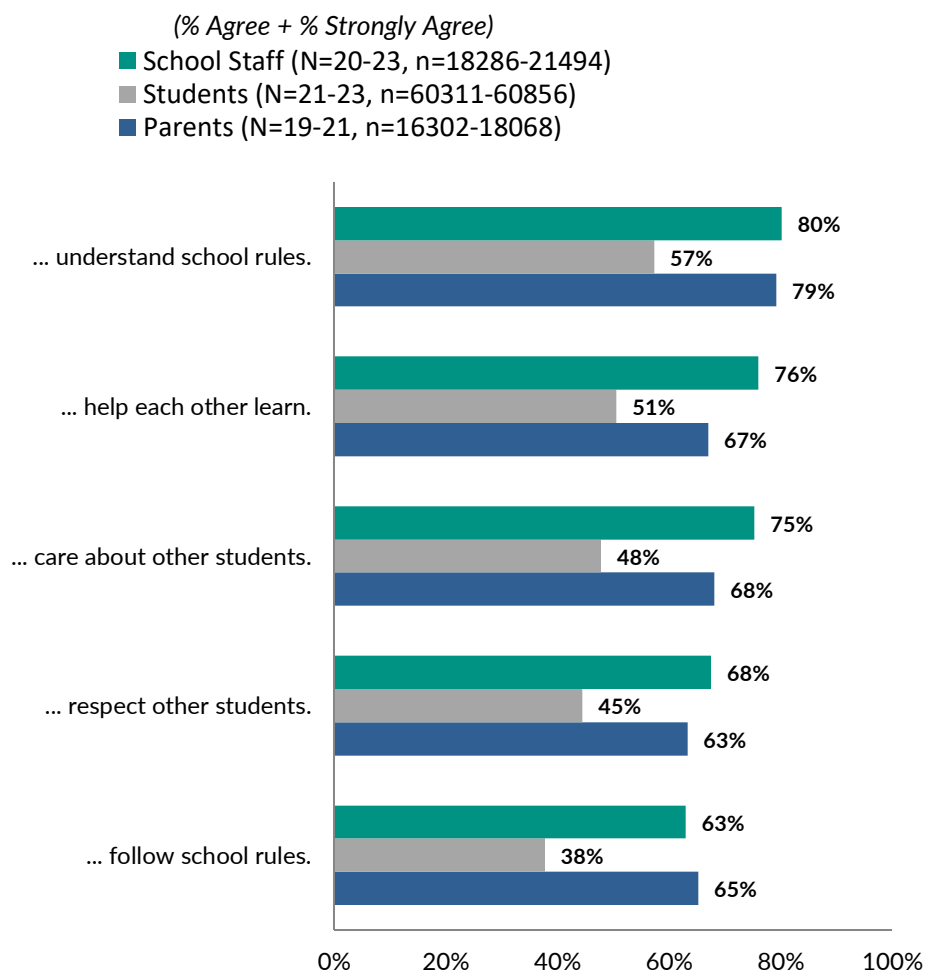
***Adults at my school/ my child's school...***



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure C2a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

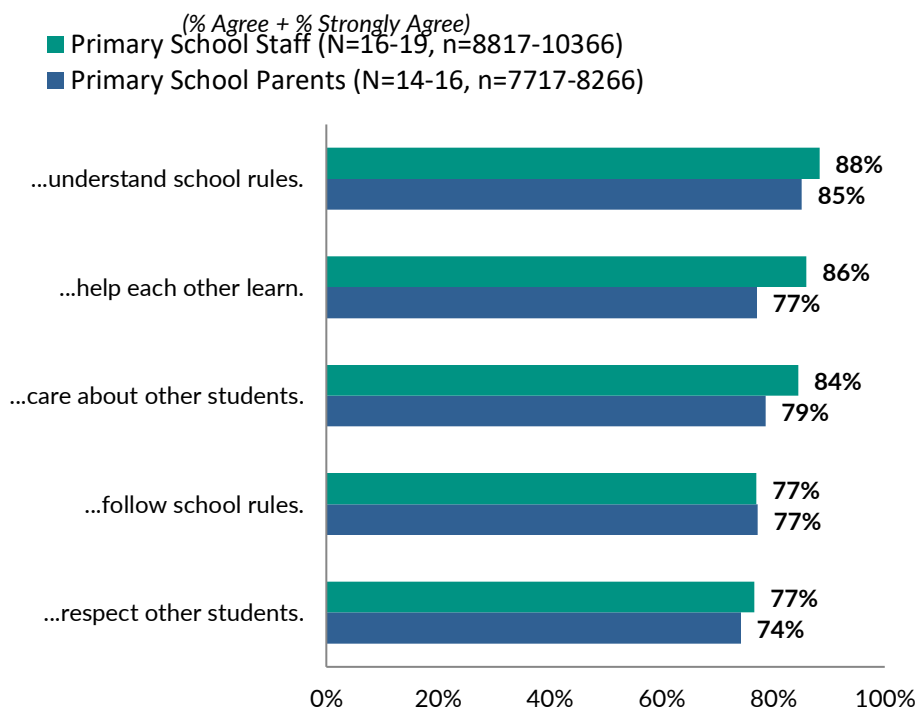
***Students at [my/my child's] school...***



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure C2b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

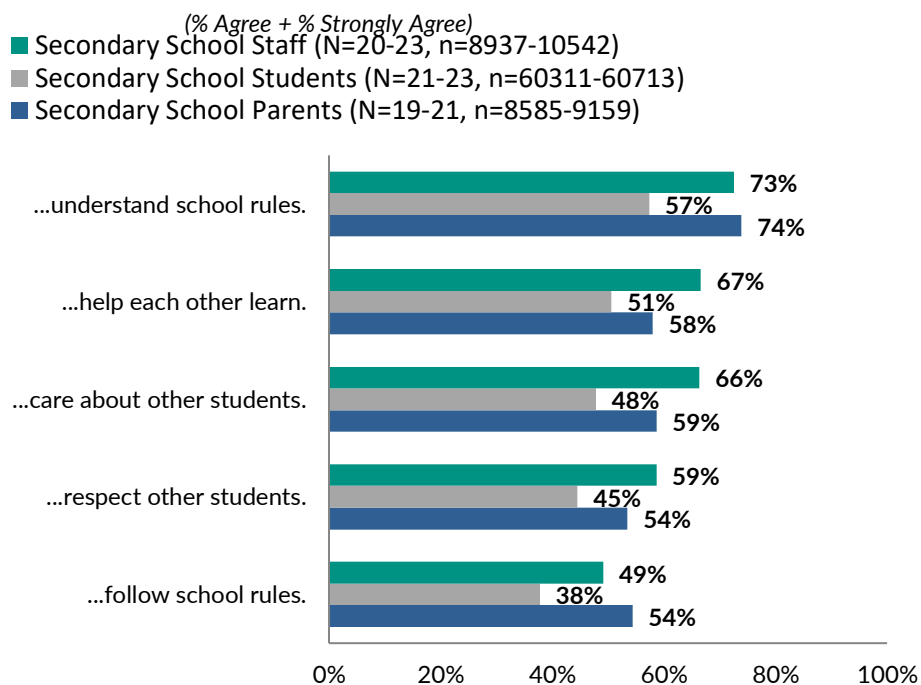
*Students at my school/ my child's school...*



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure C2c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

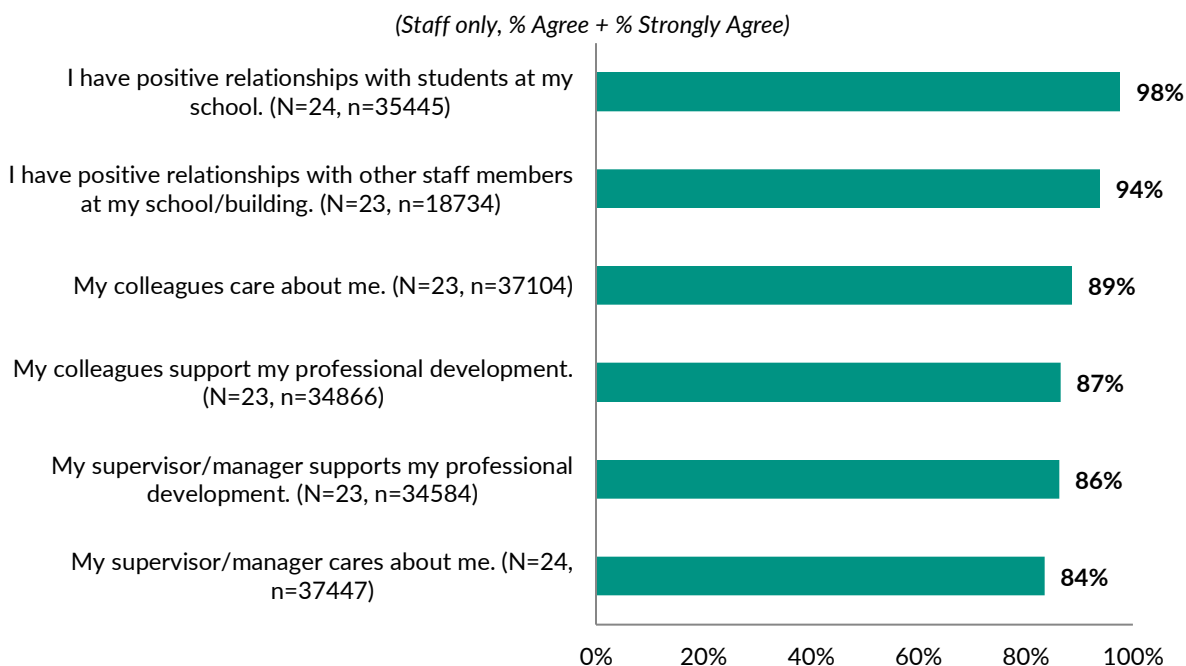
*Students at my school/ my child's school...*



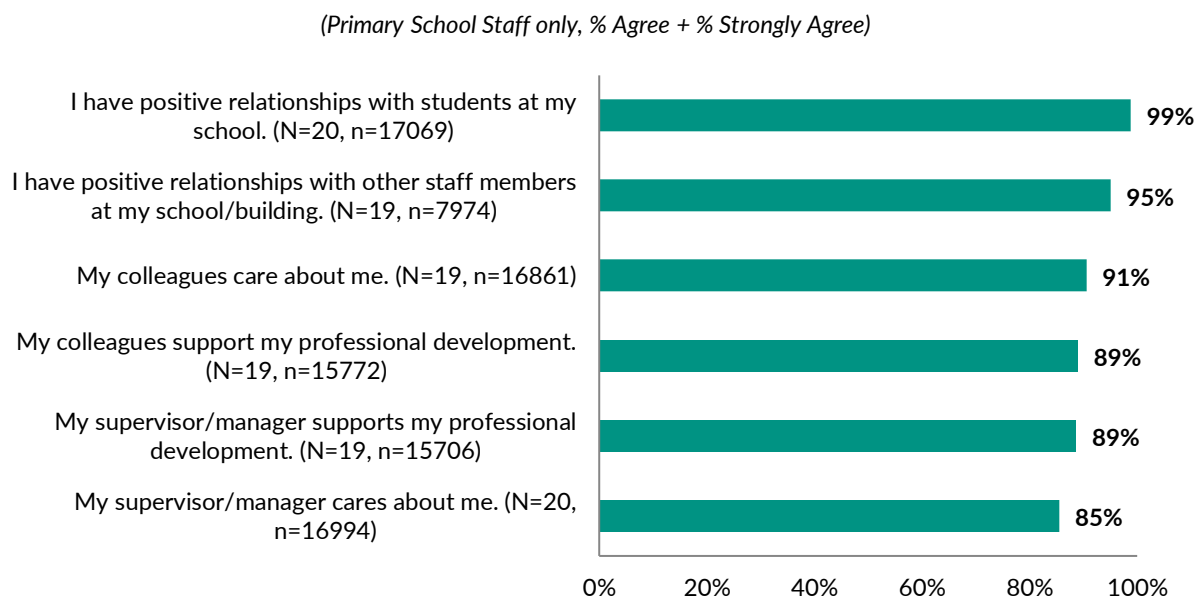


## SUBSECTION 2: STAFF MEMBERS' POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

**Figure C3a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

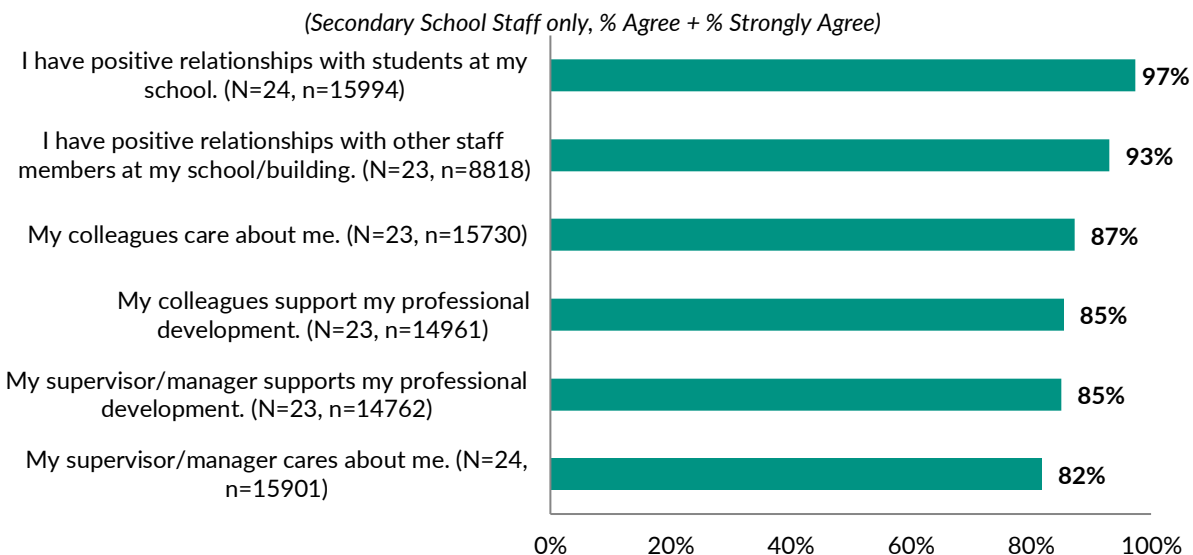


**Figure C3b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**



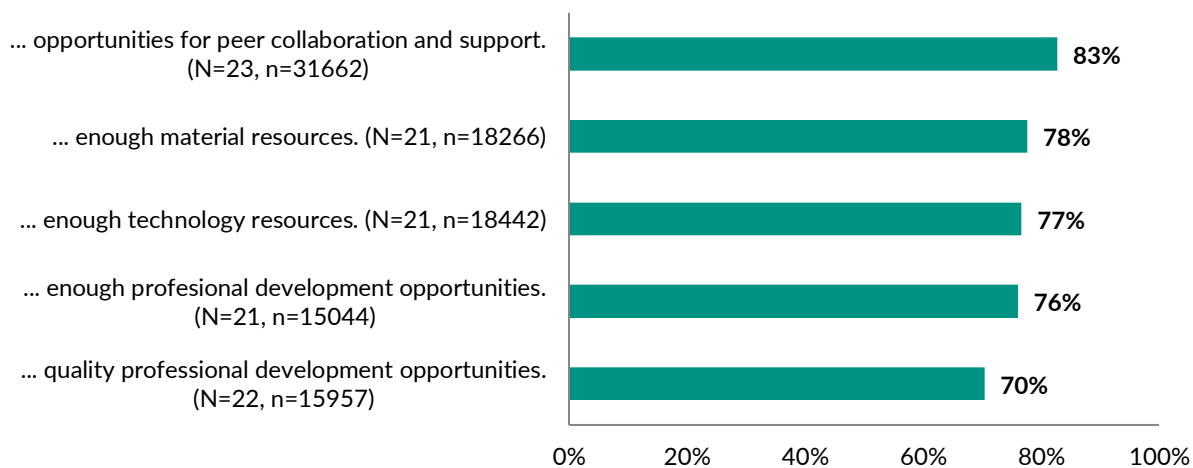
## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure C3c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**



**Figure C4a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

***My building/school provides...***

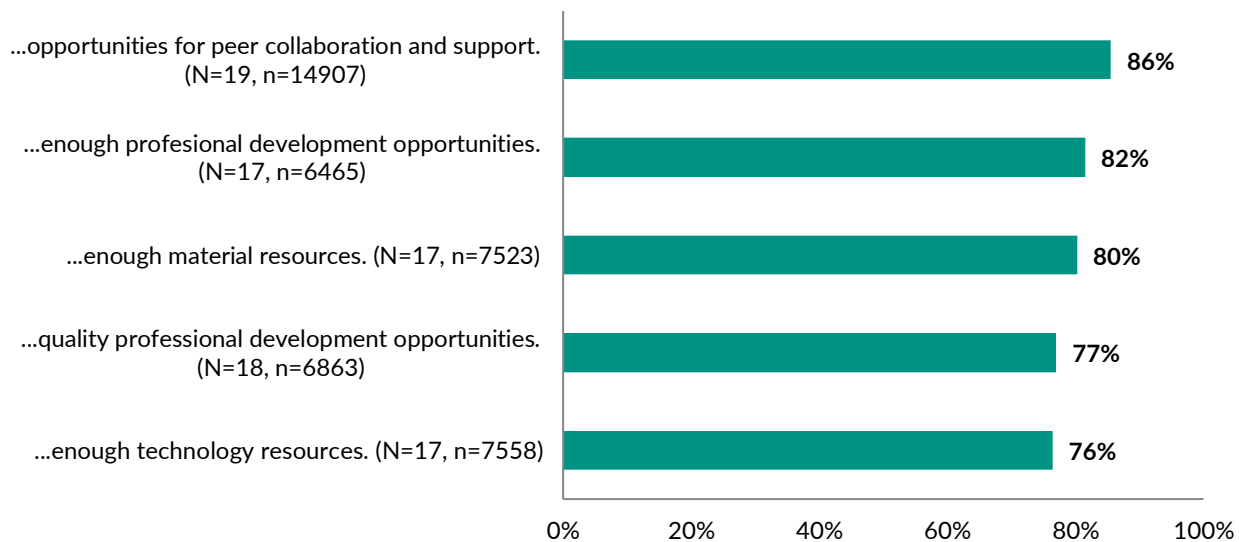


## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure C4b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

***My building/school provides...***

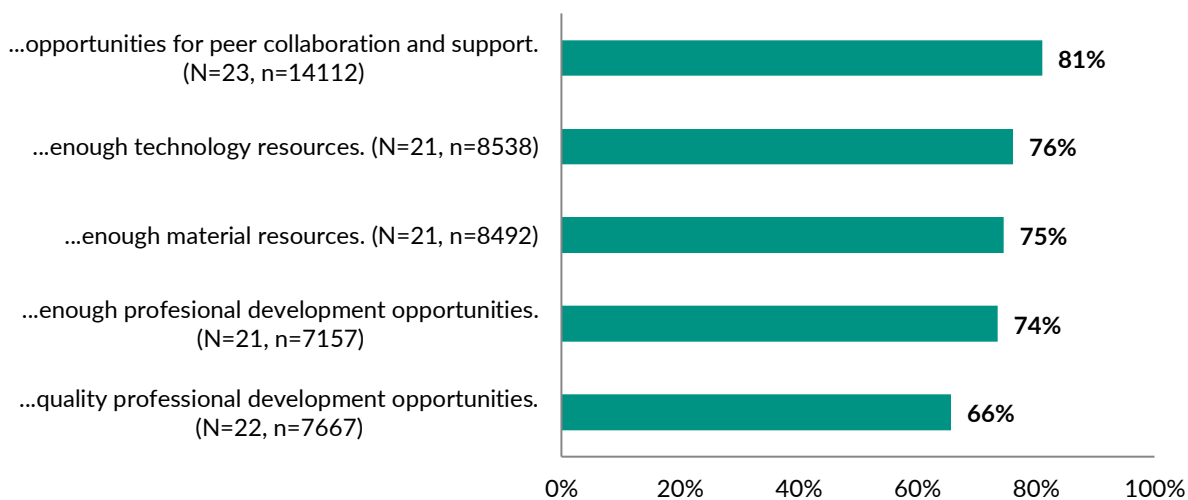
*(Primary School Staff only, % Agree + % Strongly Agree)*



**Figure C4c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

***My building/school provides...***

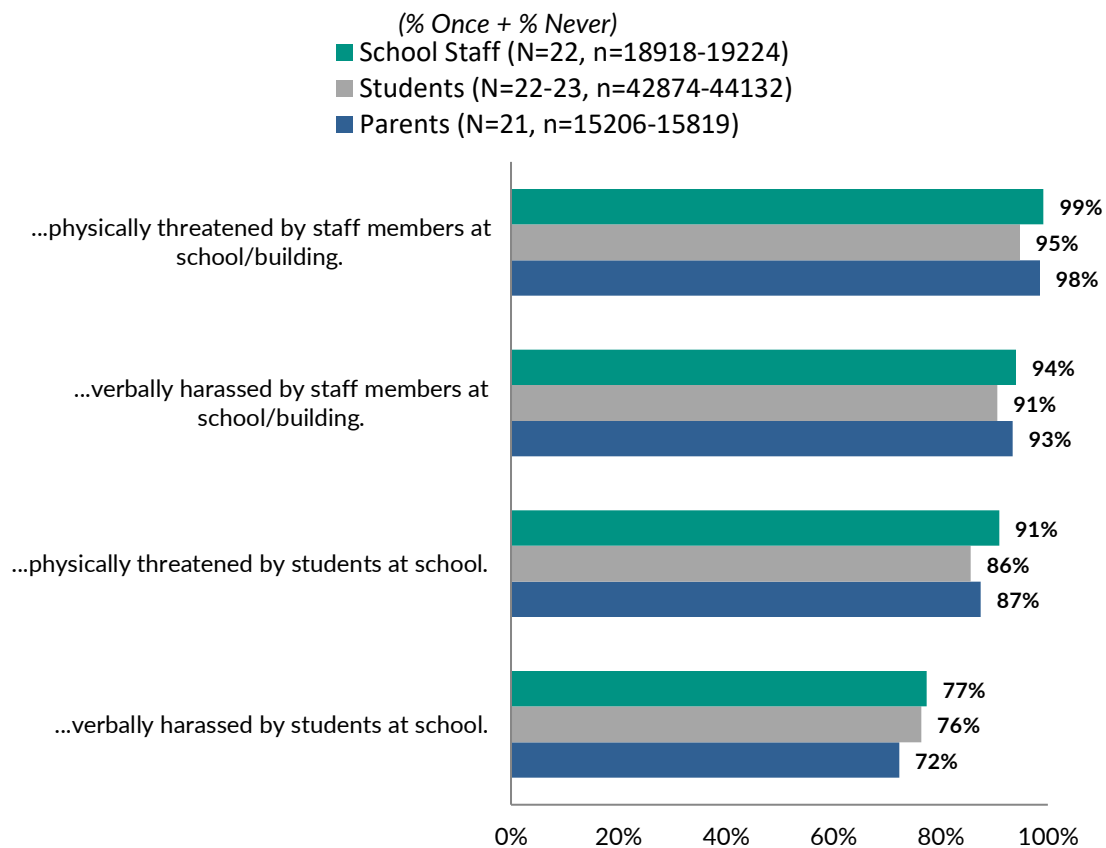
*(Secondary School Staff only, % Agree + % Strongly Agree)*



SUBSECTION 3: GENERAL BULLYING & HARASSMENT

Figure C5a. Please indicate how many times in the past month the following have occurred:

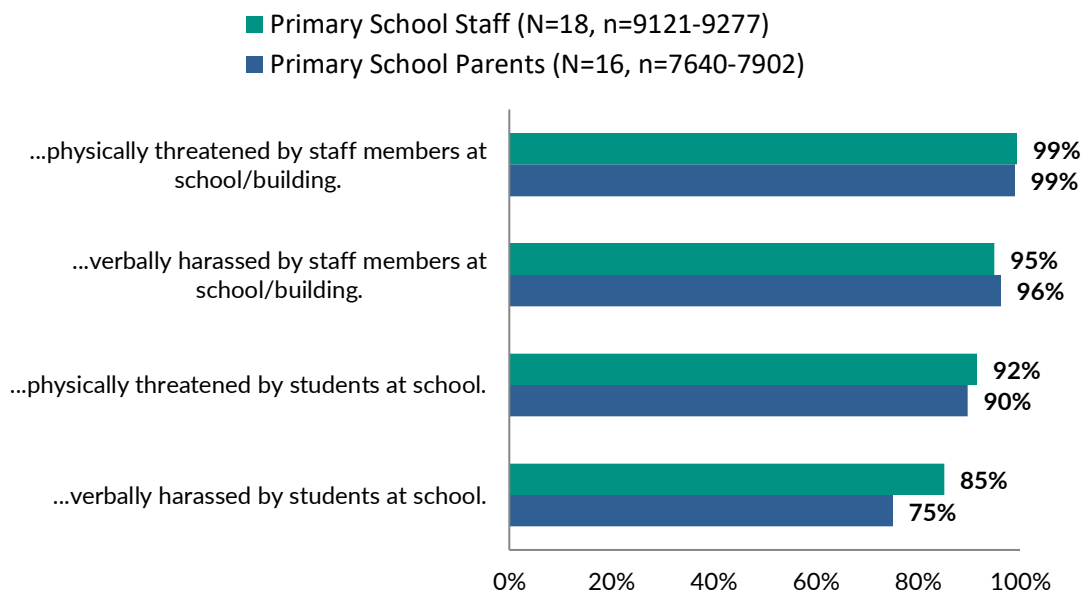
*In the past month, I have been/my child has been...*



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure C5b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

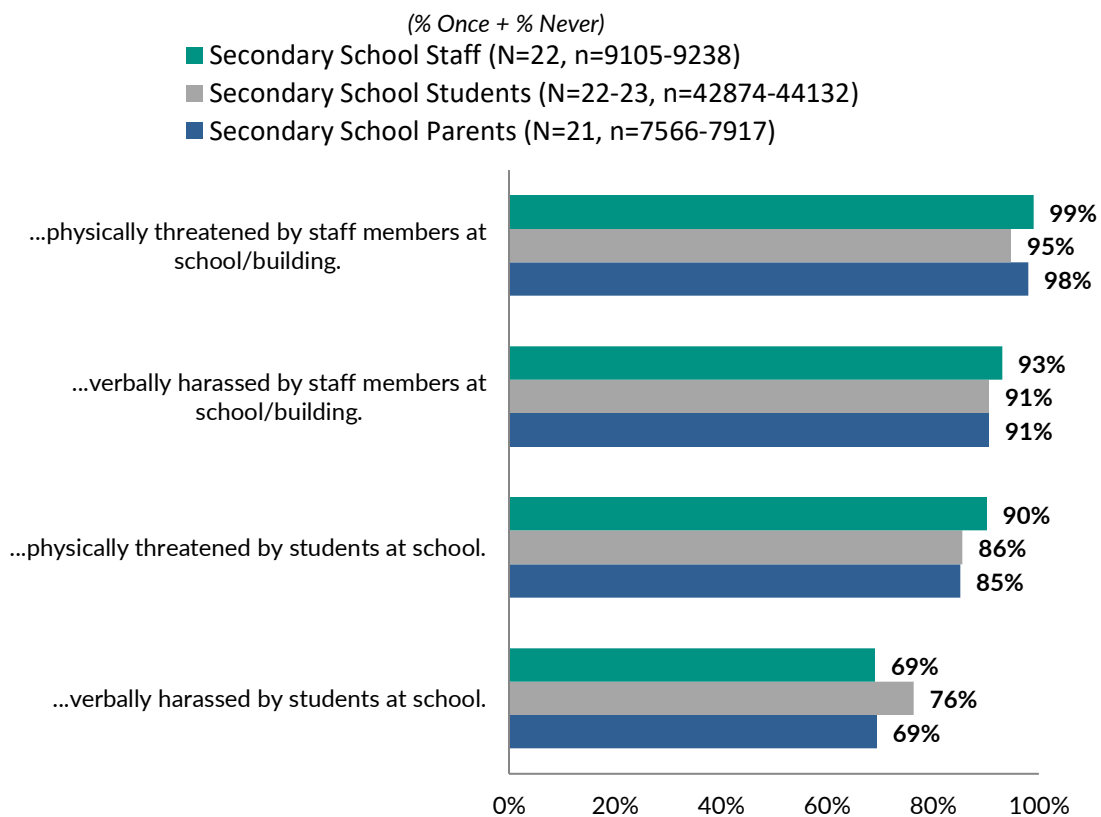
*In the past month, I have been/my child has been...*



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

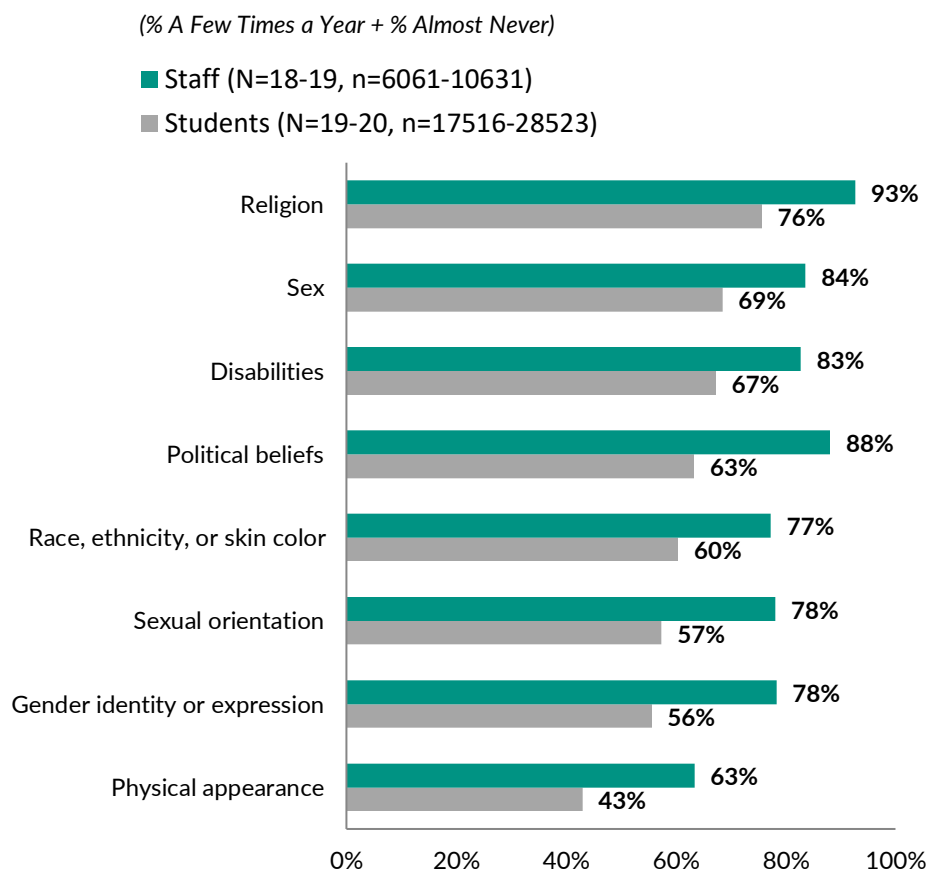
**Figure C5c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*In the past month, I have been/my child has been...*



SUBSECTION 4: STUDENT EXPERIENCES WITH BULLYING & HARASSMENT

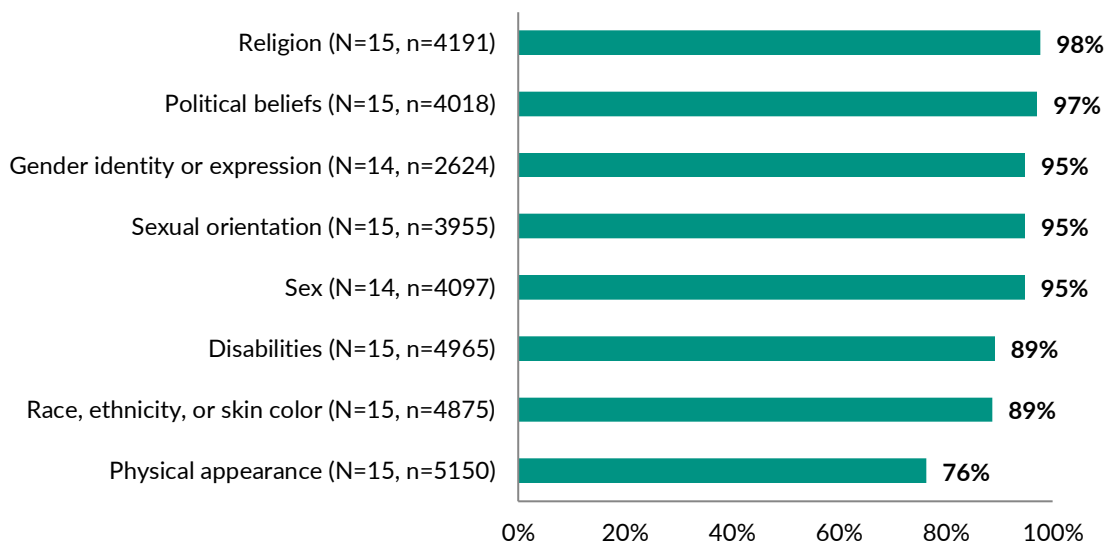
**Figure C6a. How frequently do students within your school experience harassment or bullying based on their:**



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

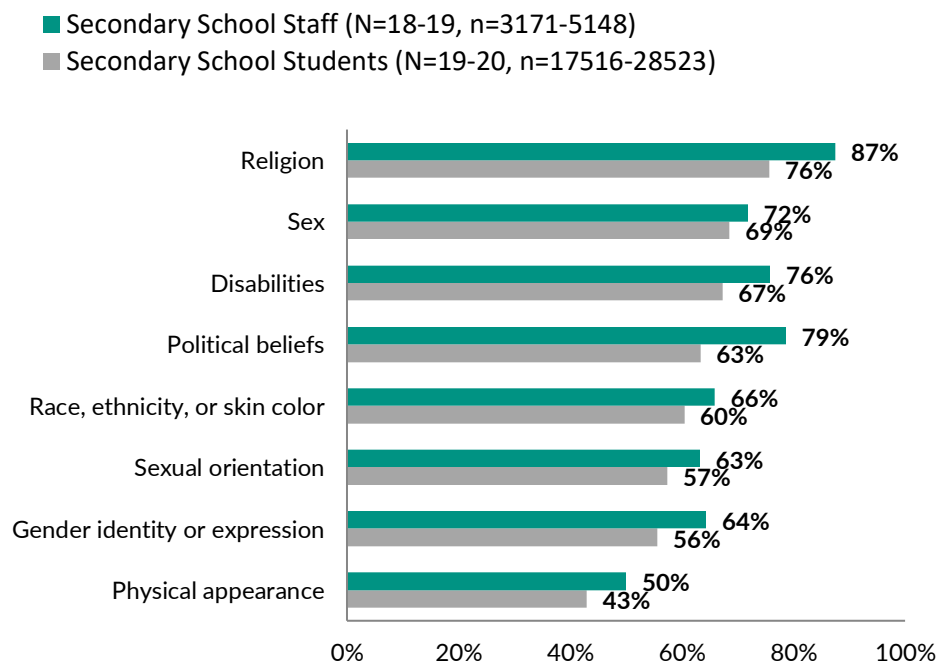
**Figure C6b. How frequently do students within your school experience harassment or bullying based on their:**

*(Primary School Staff only, % A Few Times a Year + % Almost Never)*



**Figure C6c. How frequently do students within your school experience harassment or bullying based on their:**

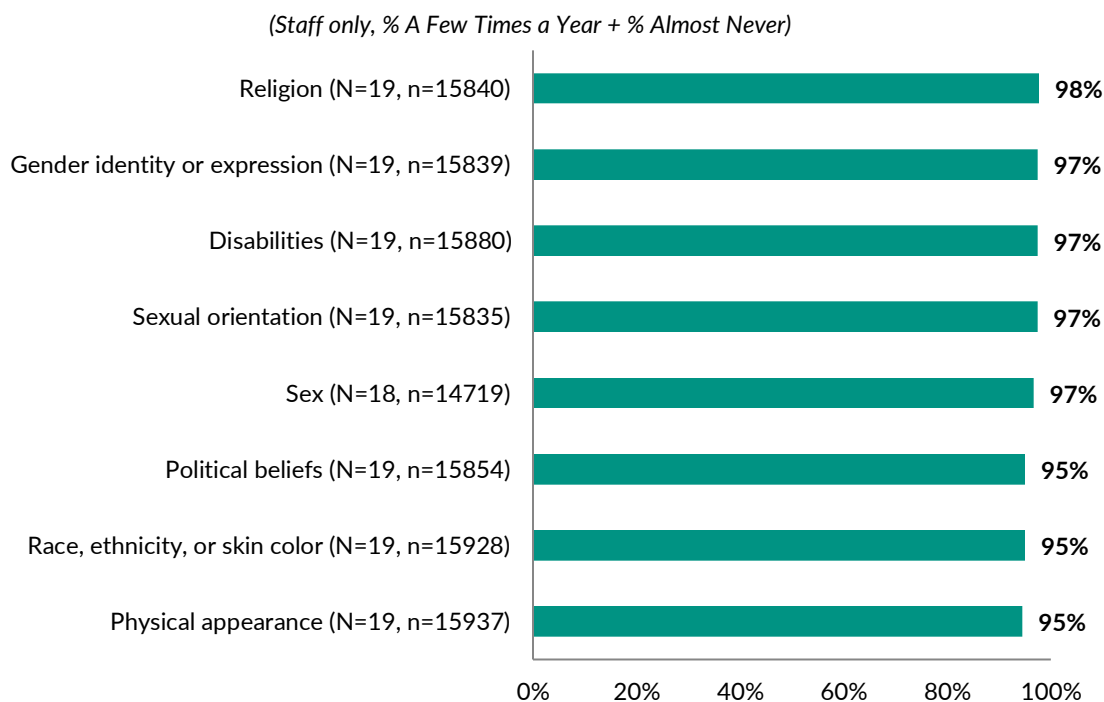
*(% A Few Times a Year + % Almost Never)*





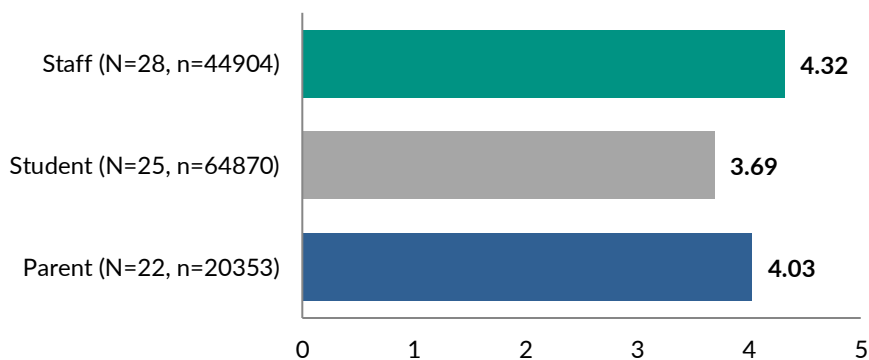
## SUBSECTION 5: STAFF EXPERIENCES WITH BULLYING & HARASSMENT

**Figure C7. How frequently do staff members within your school/building experience harassment or bullying based on their:**

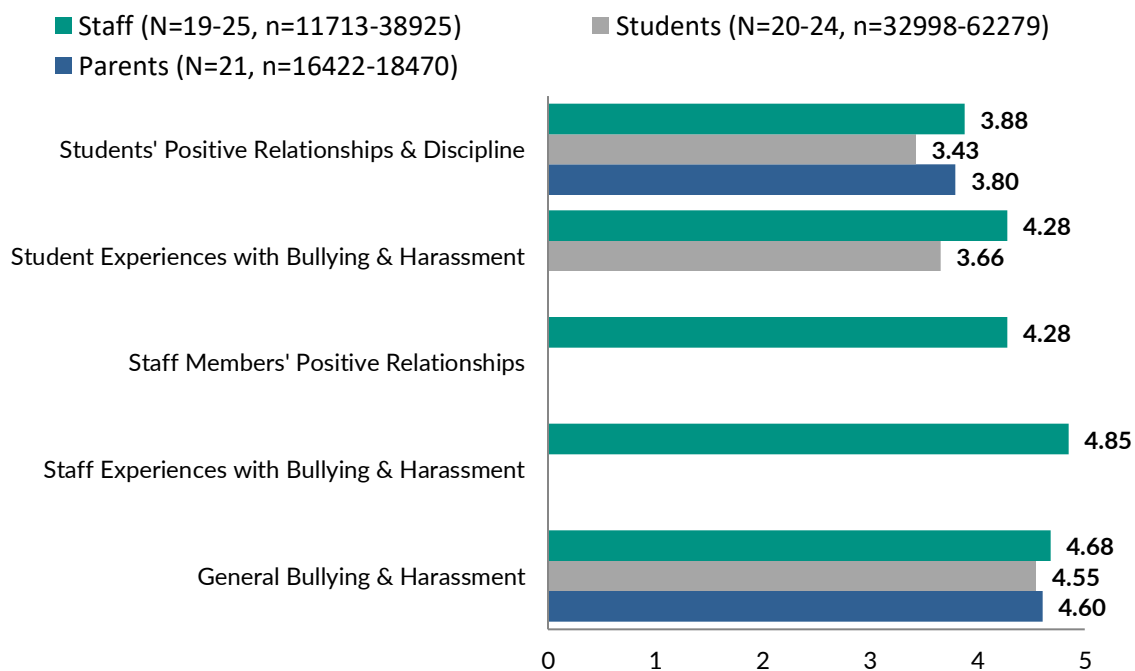


## SUBSECTION 6: CONSTRUCT AND SUBCONSTRUCT AVERAGES

**Figure C8. Social Environment Construct Averages**



**Figure C9. Social Environment Subconstruct Averages**

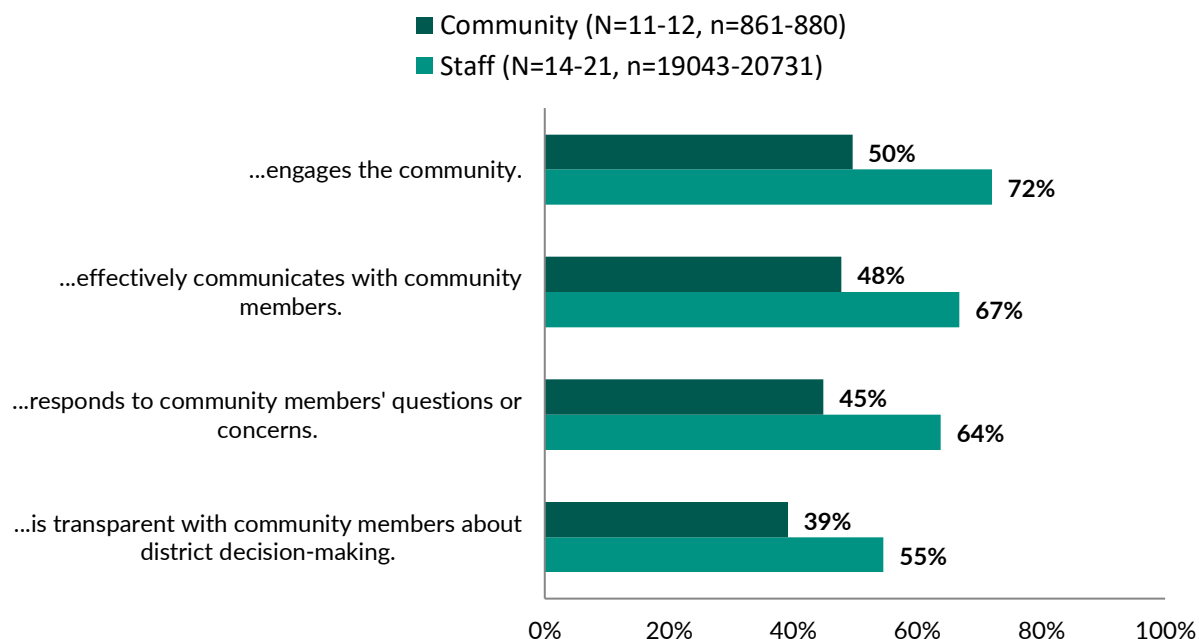


## SECTION D: INCLUSIVENESS

### SUBSECTION 1: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Figure D1. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

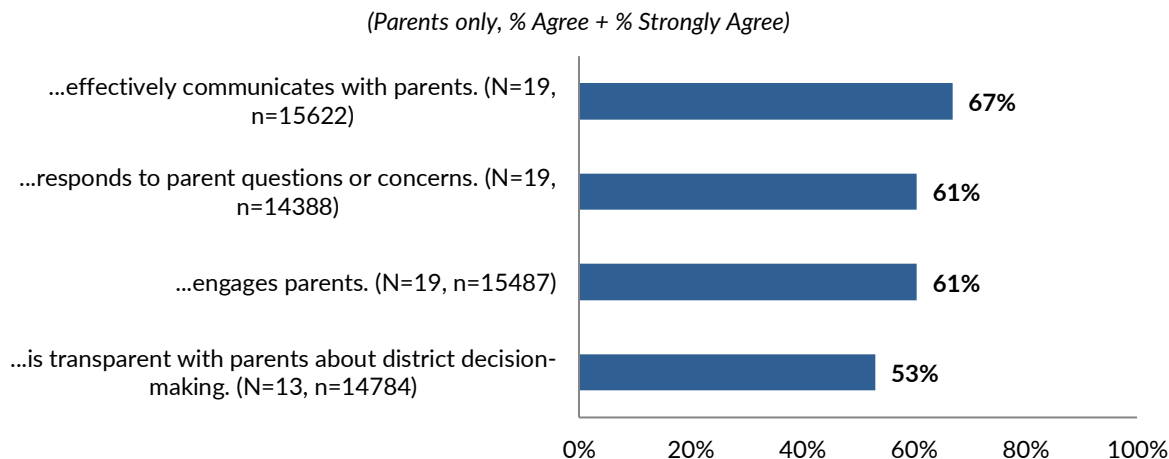
*The district...*



## SUBSECTION 2: PARENT ENGAGEMENT

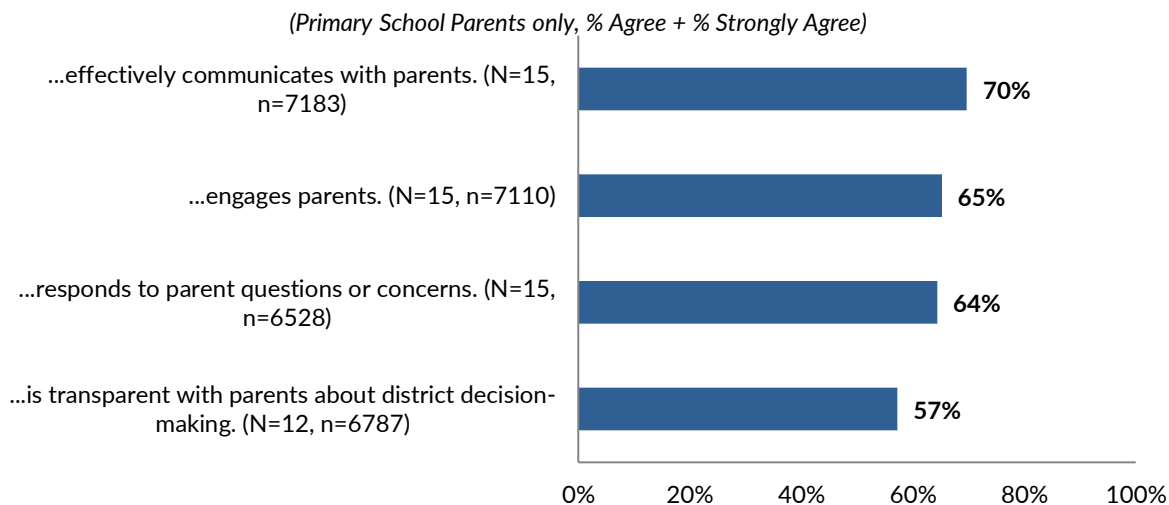
**Figure D2a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

***The district...***



**Figure D2b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

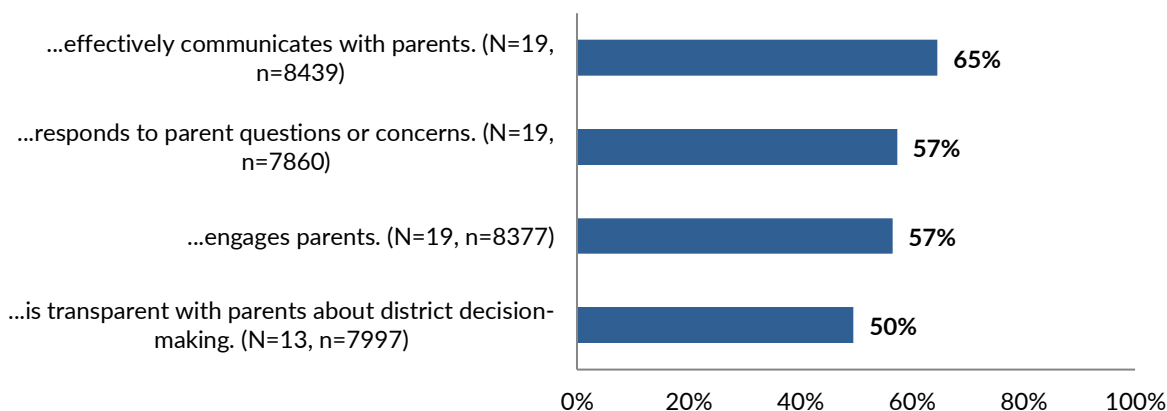
***The district...***



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

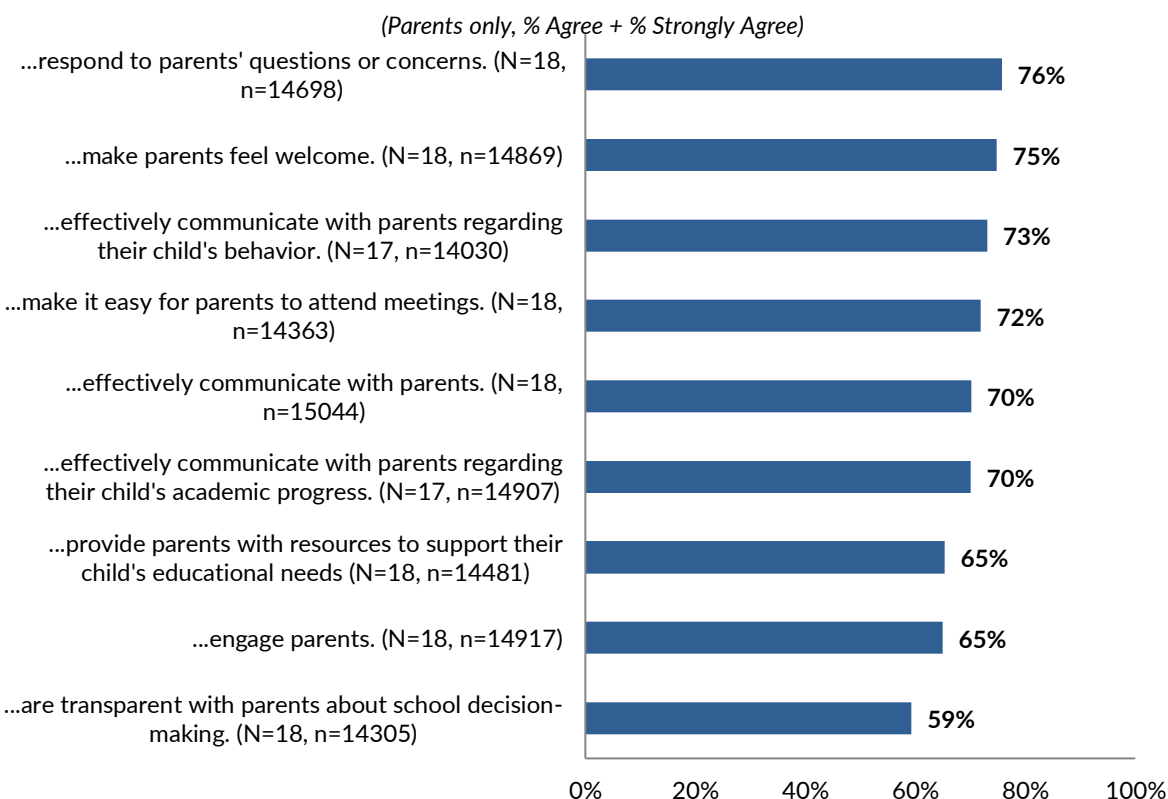
**Figure D2c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

***The district...***



**Figure D3a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

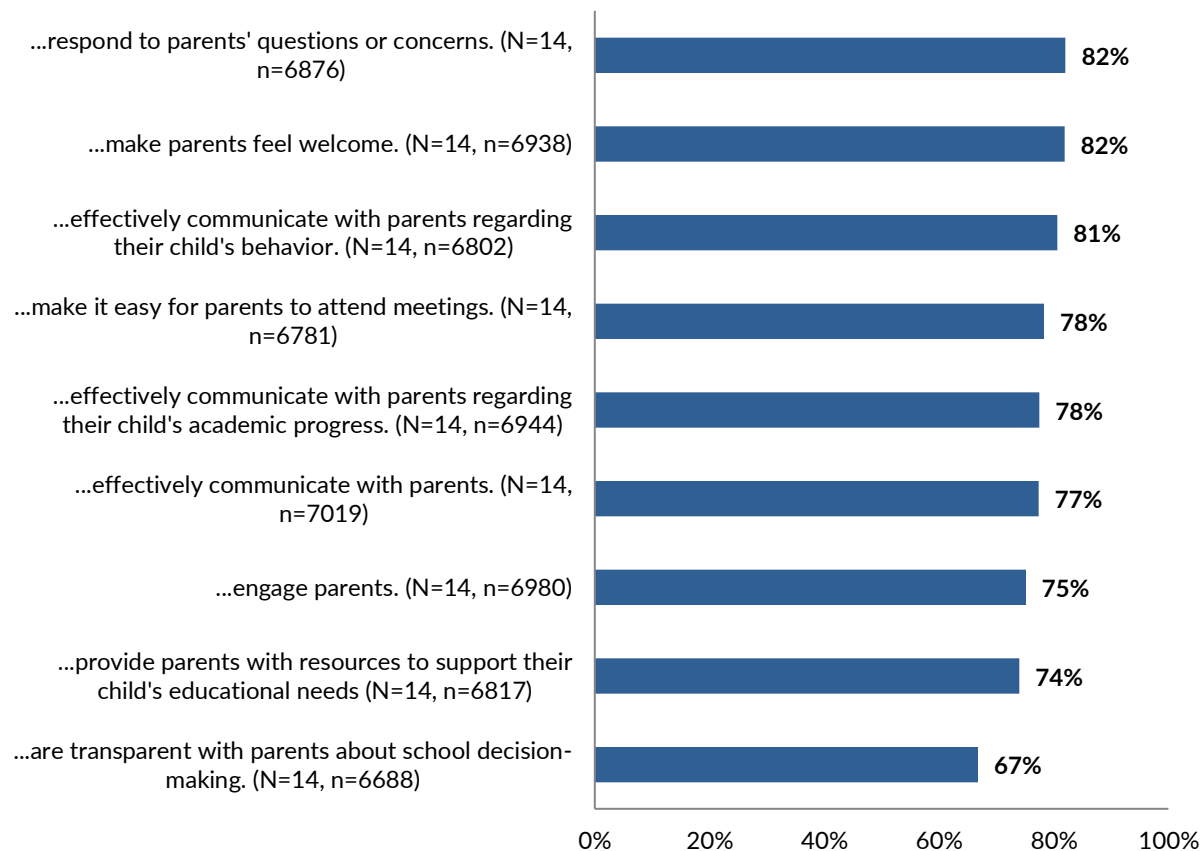
***Staff members at my child's school...***



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure D3b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

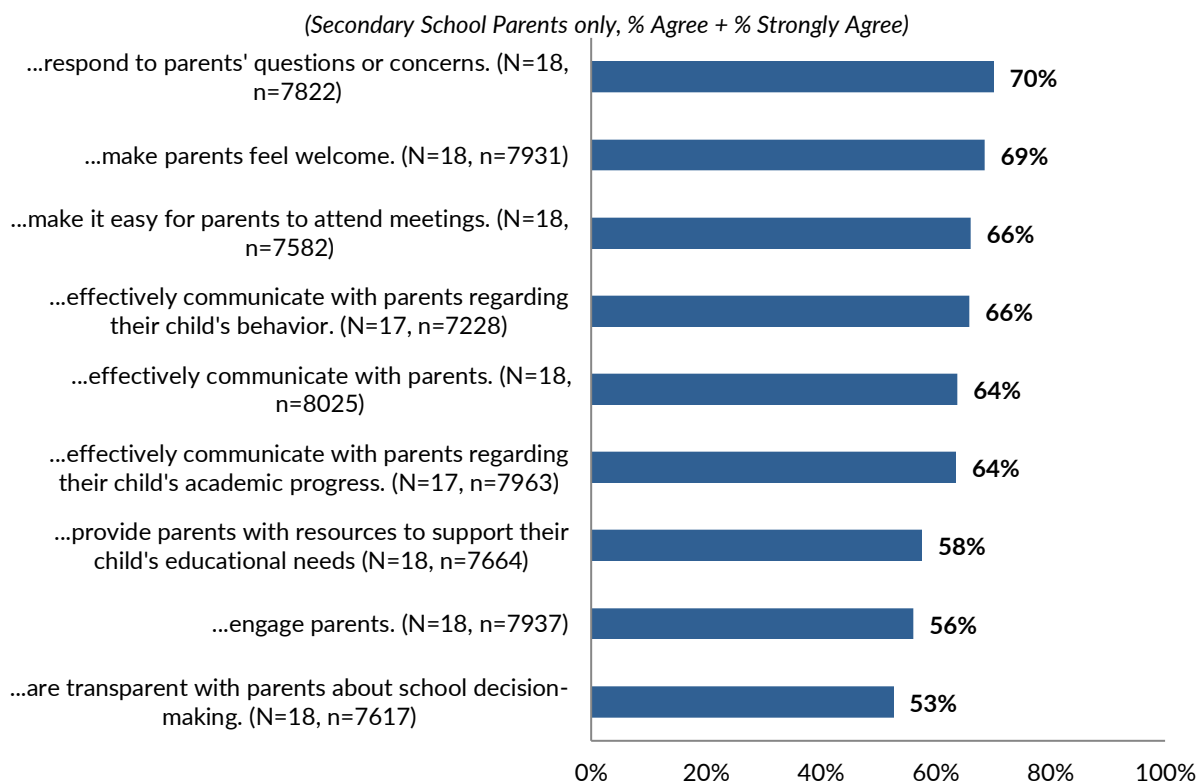
***Staff members at my child's school...***



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure D3c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

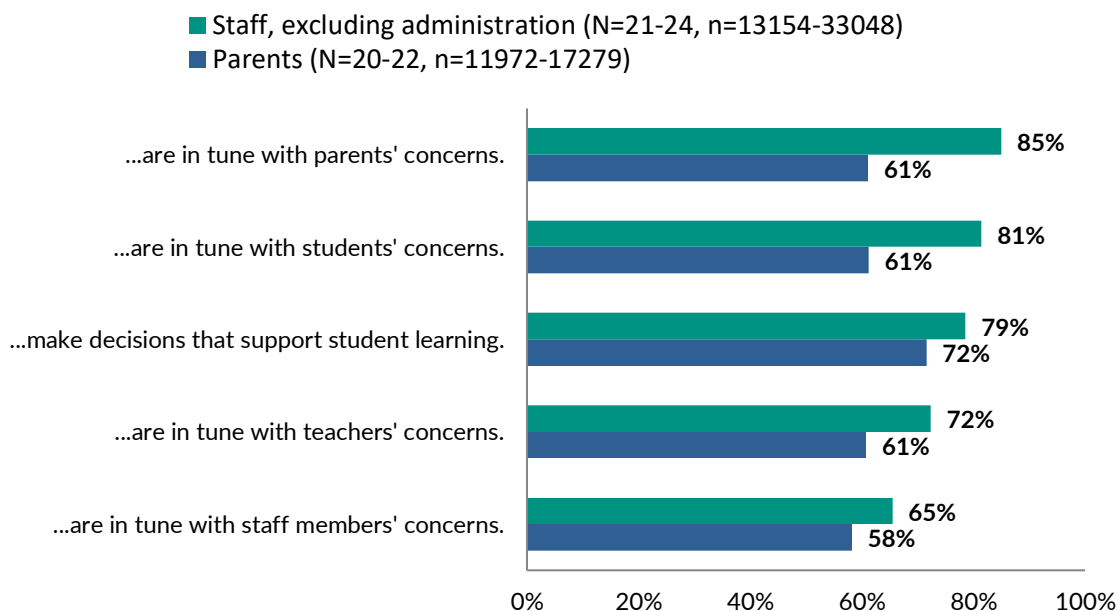
***Staff members at my child's school...***



SUBSECTION 3: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP & PERSONNEL

Figure D4a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

*Administrators at the school/my child's school...*



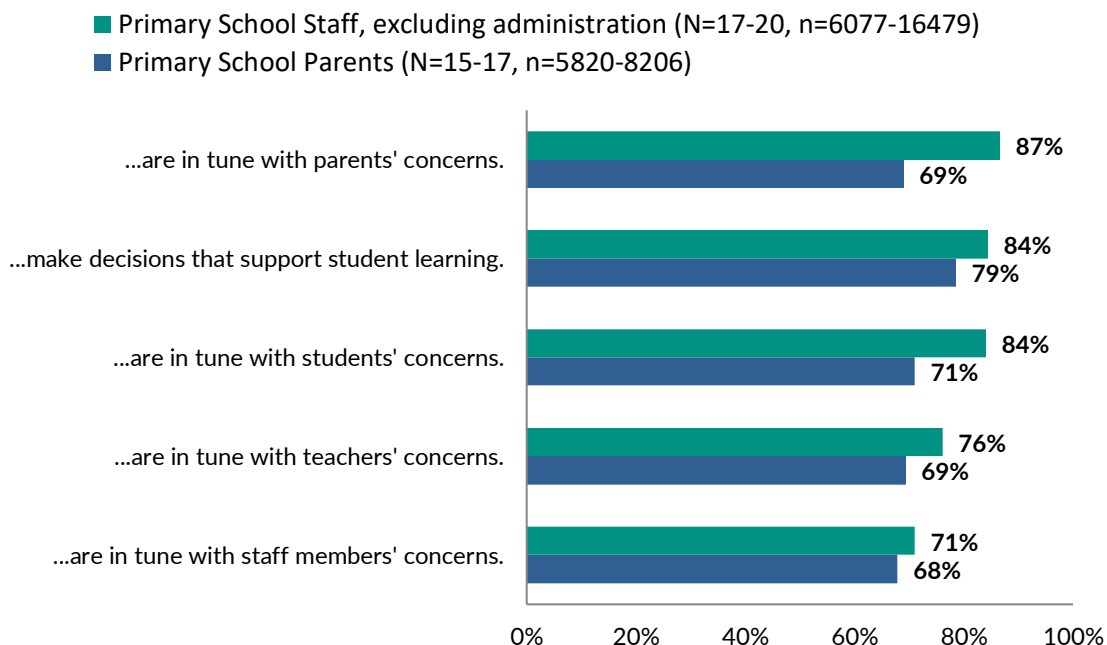


## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Figure D4b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

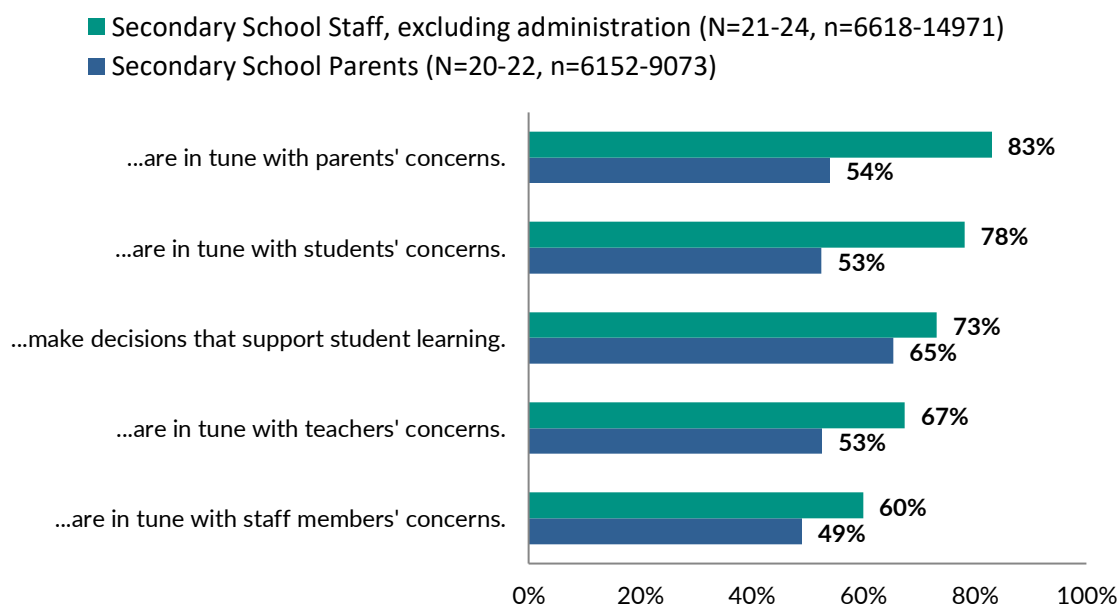
***Administrators at the school/my child's school...***

(% Agree + % Strongly Agree)



**Figure D4c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

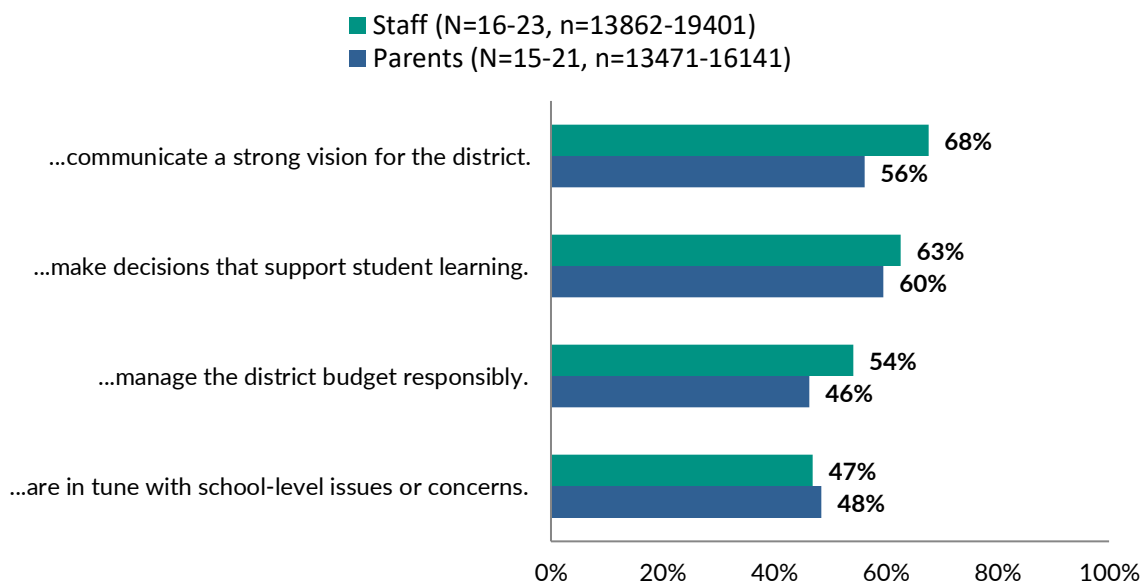
***Administrators at my child's school...***



#### SUBSECTION 4: DISTRICT LEADERSHIP & PERSONNEL

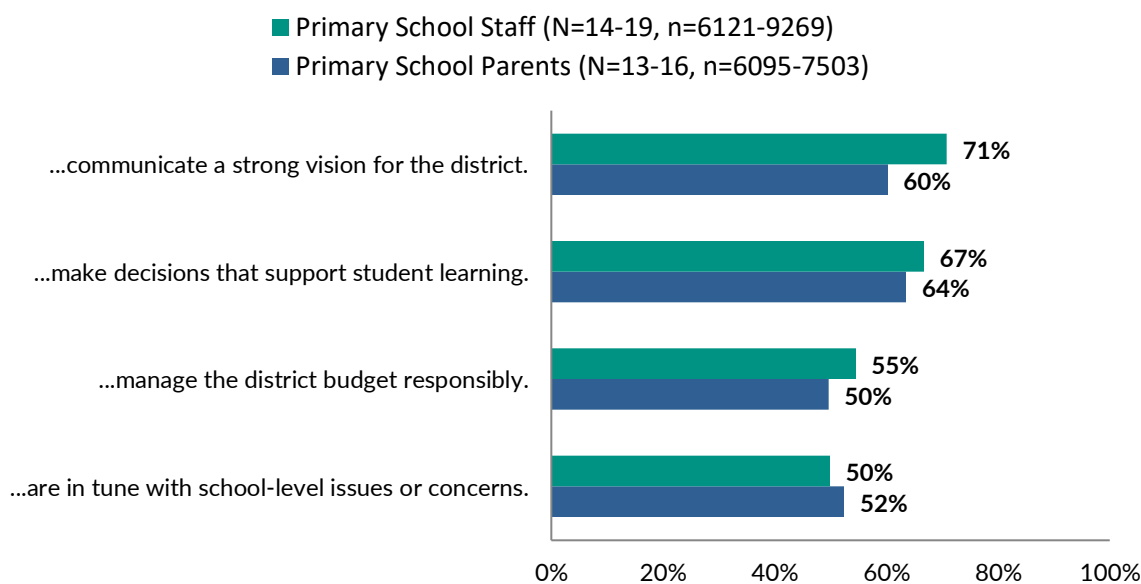
**Figure D5a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*District leaders...*



**Figure D5b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

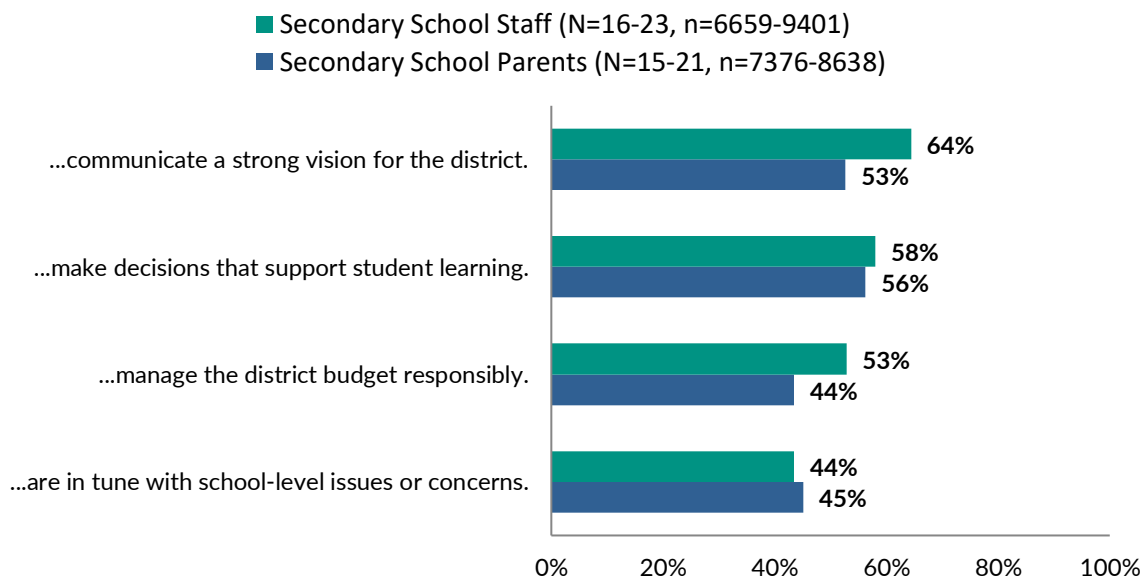
*District leaders...*



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

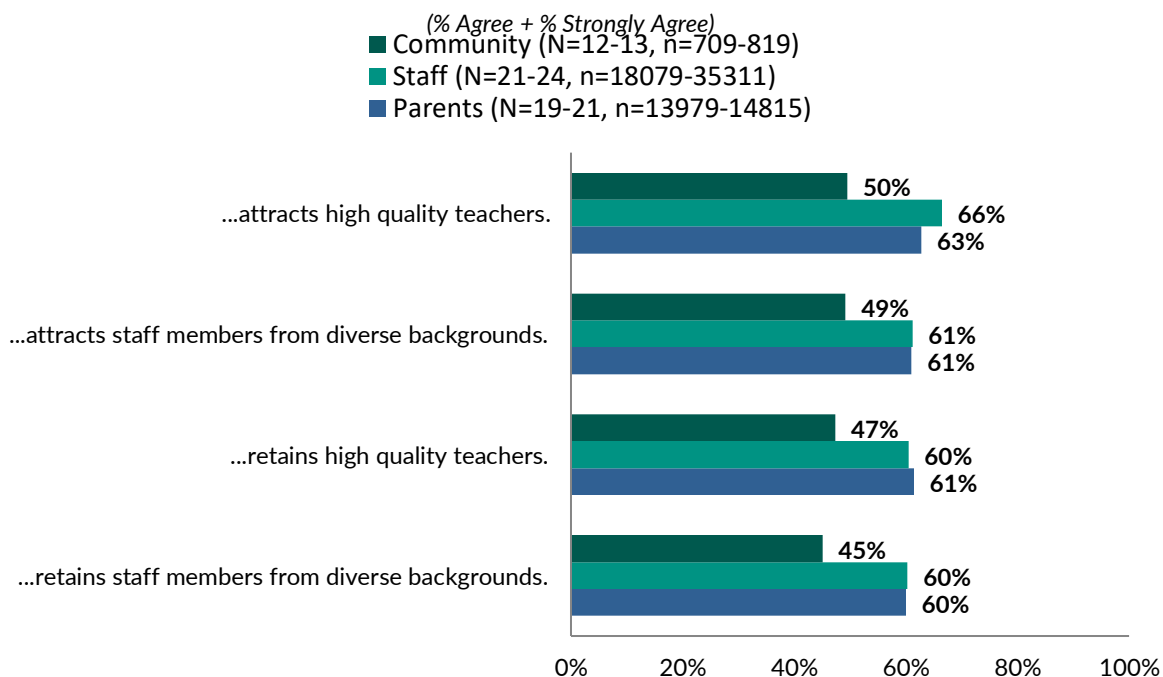
**Figure D5c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*District leaders...*



**Figure D6a. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

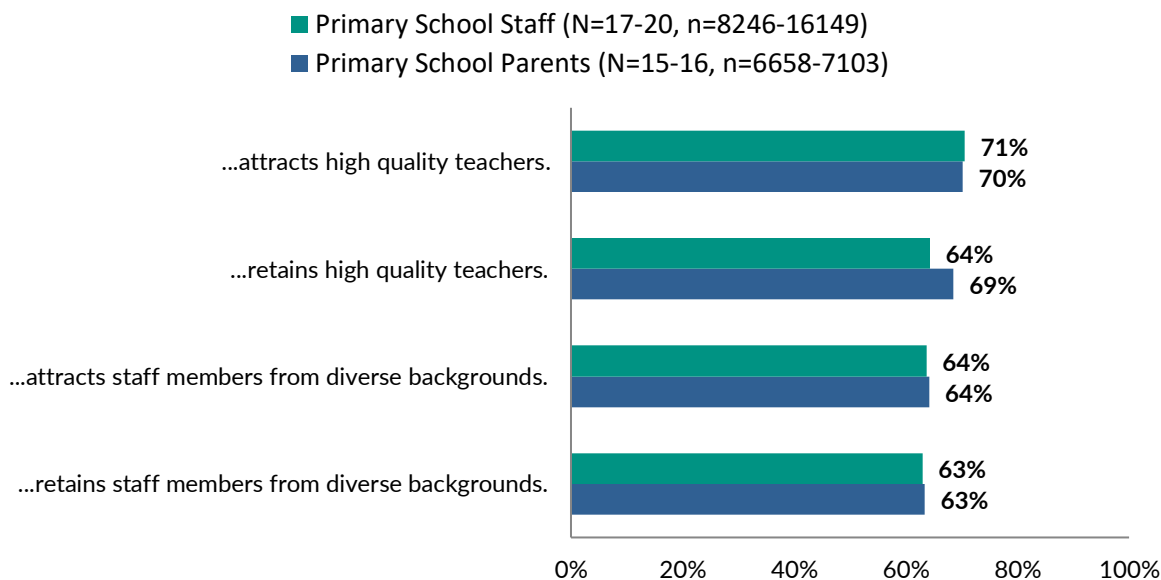
*The district...*



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

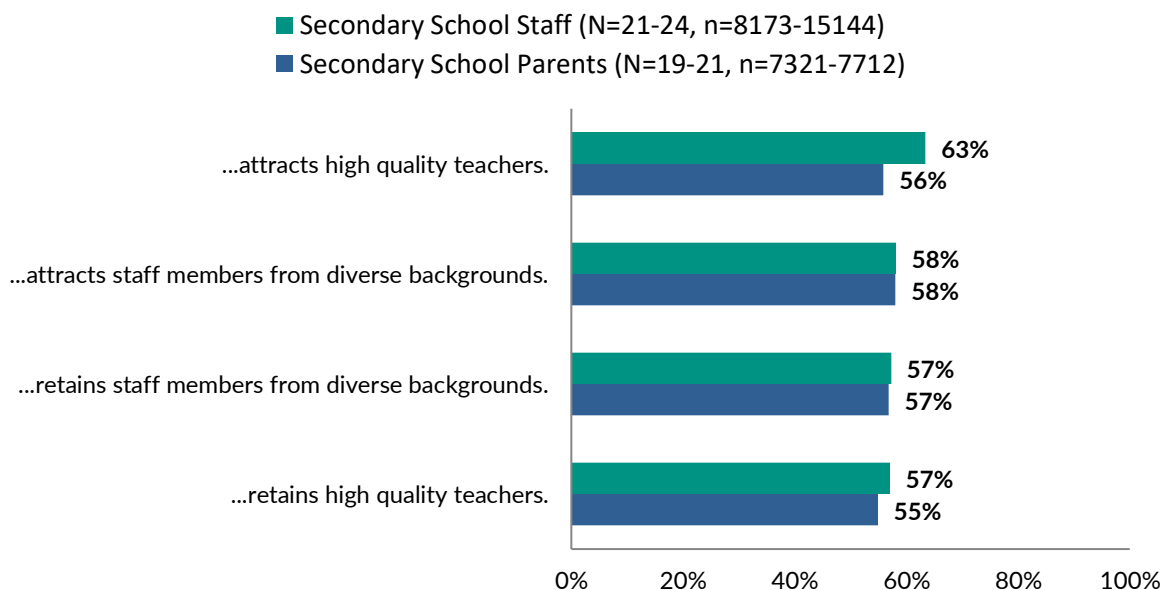
**Figure D6b. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*The district...*



**Figure D6c. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:**

*The district...*



SUBSECTION 5: CONSTRUCT AND SUBCONSTRUCT AVERAGES

Figure D7. Inclusiveness Construct Averages

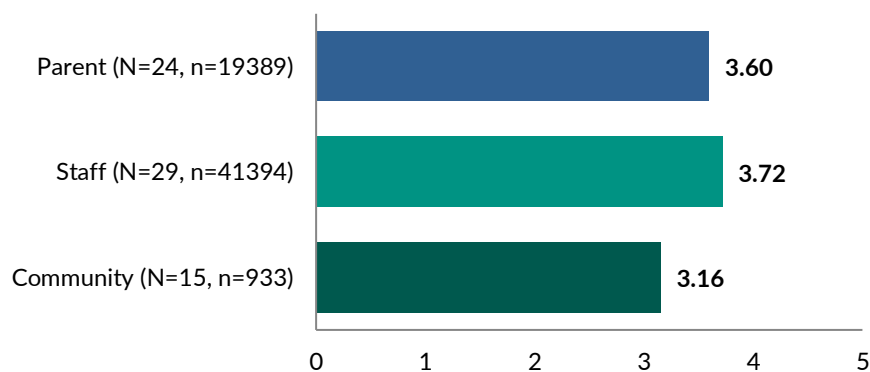
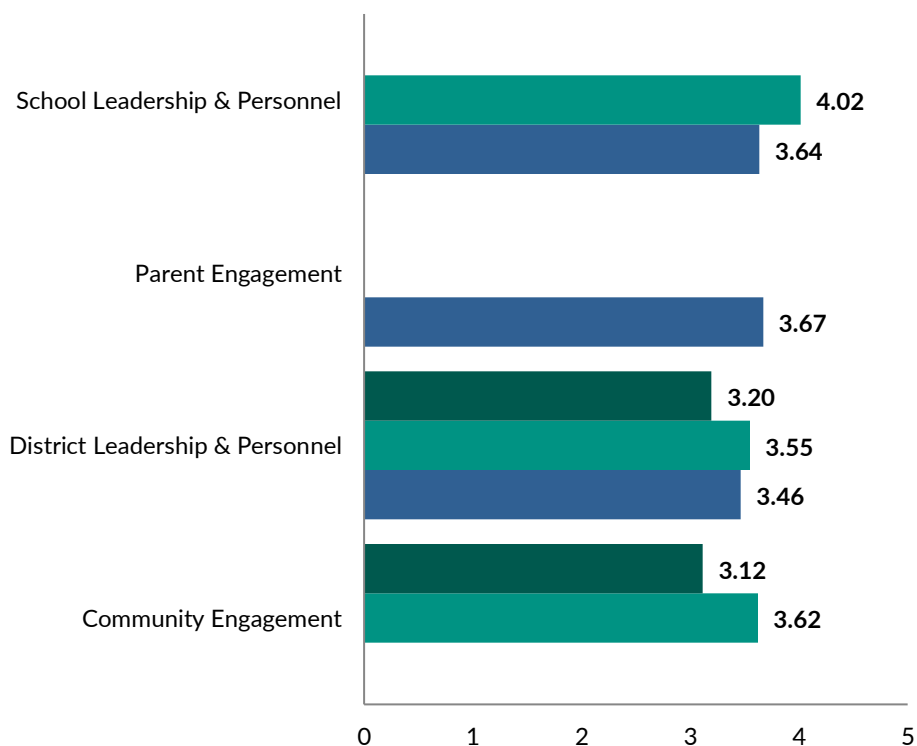


Figure D8. Inclusiveness Subconstruct Averages

■ Community (N=12-13, n=873-903) ■ Staff (N=21-26, n=21369-37861)  
■ Parents (N=19-22, n=15814-18276)



## APPENDIX B: CLIMATE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

### MAIN CONSTRUCTS

#### SCHOOL/BUILDING ENVIRONMENT

*Associated Sub-Constructs, Questions, Scale, and Target Population*

SUB-CONSTRUCT	QUESTION	SCALE	TARGET POPULATION
Positive Emotional Climate	[Students] are proud to attend the school.	Agreement <sup>81</sup>	Students, Parents, School Staff
	[Students] feel welcome at school.		
	[Students] feel like they belong at school.		
	[Students] like school.		
Building & Personal Safety	[The school] provides a safe learning space for students.	Agreement	Students, Parents, School Staff
	[The school] does NOT have issues with violence or theft		
	[I/my child feels] safe at school.		
	[I/my child feels] safe going to and from school.		
	[I/my child feels] safe at school-sponsored events and activities held after school		
Physical Environment	[The school] has clean bathrooms.	Agreement	Students, Parents, School Staff
	[The school] is well-maintained.		
	[The school] has clean common spaces (e.g., hallways, cafeteria).		
	[The school] has classroom environments that support student learning (e.g., size, temperature, lighting).		

#### ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

*Associated Sub-Constructs, Questions, Scale, and Target Population*

SUB-CONSTRUCT	QUESTION	SCALE	TARGET POPULATION
Instructional Climate (School-Level)	[The school] sets high expectations for student achievement.	Agreement	Students, Parents, School Staff
	[The school] wants students to succeed.		
	[The school] provides a well-rounded curriculum.		

<sup>81</sup> The agreement scale commonly includes the following response options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree, Don't Know or Not Applicable

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SUB-CONSTRUCT	QUESTION	SCALE	TARGET POPULATION
	[The school] adequately challenges advanced students.		
	[The school] provides enough material resources (e.g., books, supplies) to support student learning.		
	[The school] provides enough technology resources (e.g., computers, laptops) to support student learning.		
Instructional Climate (Teacher-Level)	[Teachers] want students to succeed.	Agreement	Students, Parents, Teachers
	[Teachers] keep students updated on their academic progress.		
	[Teachers] provide helpful comments on students' schoolwork.		
	[Teachers] expect students to do their best in school.		
	[Teachers] connect class lessons to life outside the classroom.		
	[Teachers] provide extra help to students when they need it.		
	[Teachers] praise students' effort on schoolwork.		
Student Attitudes Towards Learning	[Most students at my school] are motivated to learn.	Agreement	Students, School Staff
	[Most students at my school] come to class prepared.		
	[Most students at my school] work hard.		
	[Most students at my school] get excited to learn new things.		
	[Most students at my school] enjoy learning.		
Student Engagement	[The school offers] quality extracurricular (e.g., sports, clubs) activities for students.	Agreement	Students, Parents, School Staff
	[The school offers] quality co-curricular (e.g., drama, band) activities for students.		
	[The school offers] enough co-curricular (e.g., drama, band) activities for students.		
	[The school offers] enough extracurricular (e.g., sports, clubs) activities for students.		
Student Support Services	[The school (or district) provides enough resources for] English language learners.	Agreement	Students, Parents, School Staff, District Staff, Community Members
	[The school (or district) provides enough resources for] special education students.		
	[The school (or district) provides enough resources for] under-performing students.		
	[The school (or district) provides enough resources for] students' mental health and well-being.		
	[The school (or district) provides enough resources for] high-achieving students.		

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SUB-CONSTRUCT	QUESTION	SCALE	TARGET POPULATION
Student Outcomes	[Schools develop students'] ability to resolve conflict.	Agreement	Students (Grade 7 through 12), Parents, School Staff, District Staff, Community Members
	[Schools develop students'] listening skills.		
	[Schools develop students'] ability to engage in self-reflection.		
	[Schools develop students'] ability to manage emotions.		
	[Schools develop students'] critical thinking skills.		
	[Schools develop students'] ability to empathize with others.		
	[Schools develop students'] sense of moral and ethical conduct.		
	[Schools develop students'] ability to collaborate with others.		
	[Schools prepare students] for a career.		
	[Schools prepare students] for college.		
	[Schools prepare students] with computer and technology skills.		
	[Schools prepare students] to engage with the local community.		
	[Schools prepare students] to engage with the global community.		
	[Schools prepare students] to take responsibility for their actions.		
	[Schools prepare students] to work hard and persist through challenges.		

## SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

*Associated Sub-Constructs, Questions, Scale, and Target Population*

SUB-CONSTRUCT	QUESTION	SCALE	TARGET POPULATION
Students' Positive Relationships & Discipline	[Adults at the school] respect students.	Agreement	Students, Parents, School Staff
	[Adults at the school] care about students.		
	[Adults at the school] fairly enforce school rules.		
	[Adults at the school] consistently enforce school rules.		
	[Students at the school] respect other students.		
	[Students at the school] help each other learn.		
	[Students at the school] care about other students.		



## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SUB-CONSTRUCT	QUESTION	SCALE	TARGET POPULATION
	[Students at the school] understand school rules.		
	[Students at the school] follow school rules.		
Staff Members' Positive Relationships	I have positive relationships with other staff members at my school/building.	Agreement	Staff
	I have positive relationships with students at my school.		
	My colleagues care about me.		
	My supervisor/manager cares about me.		
	My colleagues support my professional development.		
	My supervisor/manager supports my professional development.		
	My school/building provides enough professional development opportunities.		
	My school/building provides quality professional development opportunities.		
	My school/building provides enough technology resources.		
	My school/building provides enough material resources (e.g., books, supplies).		
	My school/building provides opportunities for peer collaboration and support.		
General Bullying & Harassment	[Students/I have been] physically threatened by students at school.	Frequency (Count) <sup>82</sup>	Students (Grade 7 through 12), Parents, School Staff
	[Students/I have been] verbally harassed by students at school.		
	[Students/I have been] physically threatened by staff members at school/building.		
	[Students/I have been] verbally harassed by staff members at school/building.		
Student Experiences with Bullying & Harassment	[Students experience harassment or bullying based on their] Race, ethnicity, or skin color	Frequency (Daily to Yearly)	Students (Grade 7 through 12), School Staff
	[Students experience harassment or bullying based on their] Sex		
	[Students experience harassment or bullying based on their] Disabilities		
	[Students experience harassment or bullying based on their] Religion		

<sup>82</sup> The frequency scales include the following two variations:

Daily to Yearly: Almost Daily, A Few Times a Week, A Few Times a Month, A Few Times a Year, Almost Never

Frequency of occurrence during the past month: Never, 1 Time, 2 to 3 Times, 4 to 5 Times, More Than 5 Times, Don't Know or Not Comfortable Sharing

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SUB-CONSTRUCT	QUESTION	SCALE	TARGET POPULATION
	[Students experience harassment or bullying based on their] Sexual orientation		
	[Students experience harassment or bullying based on their] Physical appearance		
	[Students experience harassment or bullying based on their] Political beliefs		
	[Students experience harassment or bullying based on their] Gender identity or expression		
Staff Experiences with Bullying & Harassment	[Staff experience harassment or bullying based on their] Race, ethnicity, or skin color	Frequency (Daily to Yearly)	Staff
	[Staff experience harassment or bullying based on their] Sex		
	[Students experience harassment or bullying based on their] Disabilities		
	[Staff experience harassment or bullying based on their] Religion		
	[Staff experience harassment or bullying based on their] Sexual orientation		
	[Staff experience harassment or bullying based on their] Physical appearance		
	[Staff experience harassment or bullying based on their] Political beliefs		
	[Staff experience harassment or bullying based on their] Gender identity or expression		

## INCLUSIVENESS

*Associated Sub-Constructs, Questions, Scale, and Target Population*

SUB-CONSTRUCT	QUESTION	SCALE	TARGET POPULATION
Community Engagement	[The district] engages the community.	Agreement	Staff, Community Members
	[The district] effectively communicates with community members.		
	[The district] is transparent with community members about district decision-making.		
	[The district] responds to community members' questions or concerns.		
Parent Engagement	[The district] engages parents.	Agreement	Parents
	[The district] effectively communicates with parents.		
	[The district] is transparent with parents about district decision-making.		

## THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SUB-CONSTRUCT	QUESTION	SCALE	TARGET POPULATION
	[The district] responds to parent questions or concerns.		
	[Staff members at my child's school] responds to parents' questions or concerns.		
	[Staff members at my child's school] engage parents.		
	[Staff members at my child's school] effectively communicate with parents.		
	[Staff members at my child's school] are transparent with parents about school decision-making.		
	[Staff members at my child's school] provide parents with resources to support their child's educational needs.		
	[Staff members at my child's school] make parents feel welcome.		
	[Staff members at my child's school] make it easy for parents to attend meetings.		
	[Staff members at my child's school] effectively communicate with parents regarding their child's behavior.		
	[Staff members at my child's school] effectively communicate with parents regarding their child's academic progress.		
School Leadership & Personnel	[Administrators at the school] make decisions that support student learning.	Agreement	Parents, School Staff (excluding admin)
	[Administrators at the school] are in tune with teachers' concerns.		
	[Administrators at the school] are in tune with students' concerns.		
	[Administrators at the school] are in tune with parents' concerns.		
	[Administrators at the school] are in tune with staff members' concerns (non-teaching staff).		
District Leadership & Personnel	[District leaders] make decisions that support student learning.	Agreement	Parents, Staff, Community Members
	[District leaders] manage the district budget responsibly.		
	[District leaders] are in tune with school-level issues or concerns.		
	[District leaders] communicate a strong vision for the district.		
	[The district] attracts high quality teachers.		
	[The district] retains high quality teachers.		
	[The district] attracts staff members from diverse backgrounds.		
	[The district] retains staff members from diverse backgrounds.		