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The New Albany-Plain Local Schools: A Community Attitudes Survey

Saperstein Associates, Inc. | Spring 2019

This research explores perceptions of the
New Albany-Plain Local Schools
among district residents.

It taps opinions on myriad school-related issues from two perspectives: the community at large and residents with children who, in the recently-completed academic year, were enrolled in the New Albany Schools.

Methodology

- Telephone interviews were conducted with 450 adult residents of the New Albany-Plain Local School District.
- Three hundred (300) of those residents were drawn at random from the most recent list of registered voters available from the Ohio Secretary of State. Within this sample, 125 residents, or 42%, were parents* of children enrolled in the New Albany Schools.
- The remaining 150 interviews were conducted with parents not interviewed previously, selected at random from a list provided by district officials.
- This procedure allows for two robust analyses, one of the community at large (300) and a second of parents (275).
- The Margin of Error, or MoE, for each analysis is approximately $\leq \pm 5.7$ percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence.

*Throughout this report, the term “parent” refers to any adult responsible for a child enrolled in the New Albany Schools.

- All of these interviews:
 - were conducted from Monday, May 6, through Saturday, May 25;
 - averaged 16 minutes in length; and
 - were completed with residents on cell phones (89%) and landlines (11%).
- To complete the 450 interviews, 7,751 unique telephone numbers were dialed at least once, yielding a ratio of approximately 17 to 1.
- Finally, as the table on the following slide demonstrates, residents comprising the community sample reflect all adults living in the district on several key dimensions, involving geography, gender, age, and children enrolled in the New Albany Schools.

	Actual*	Community Sample
Geography		
City of New Albany	52%	52%
Plain Township	9%	9%
Columbus	39%	39%
Children in NAPLS		
Yes ("Parent")	42%	≈40%
No ("Non-Parent")	58%	≈60%
Gender		
Male	49%	47%
Female	51%	53%

	Actual*	Community Sample
Age		
Younger than 25	11%	9%
25-34	13%	14%
35-44	23%	22%
45-54	27%	24%
55-64	14%	16%
Older than 64	12%	13%

*Source: Registered voter data file for Franklin County

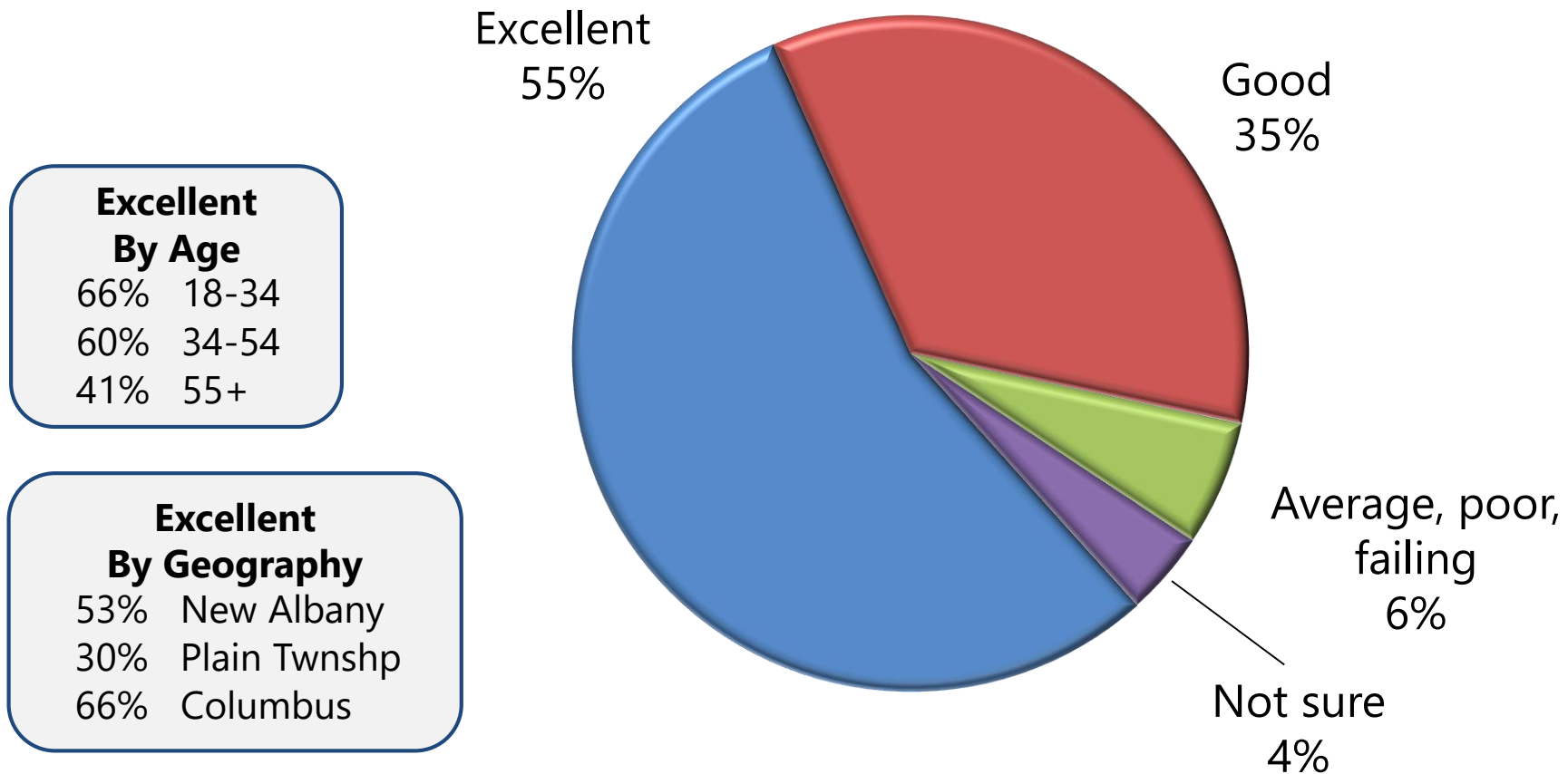
Part I: The Community

Community

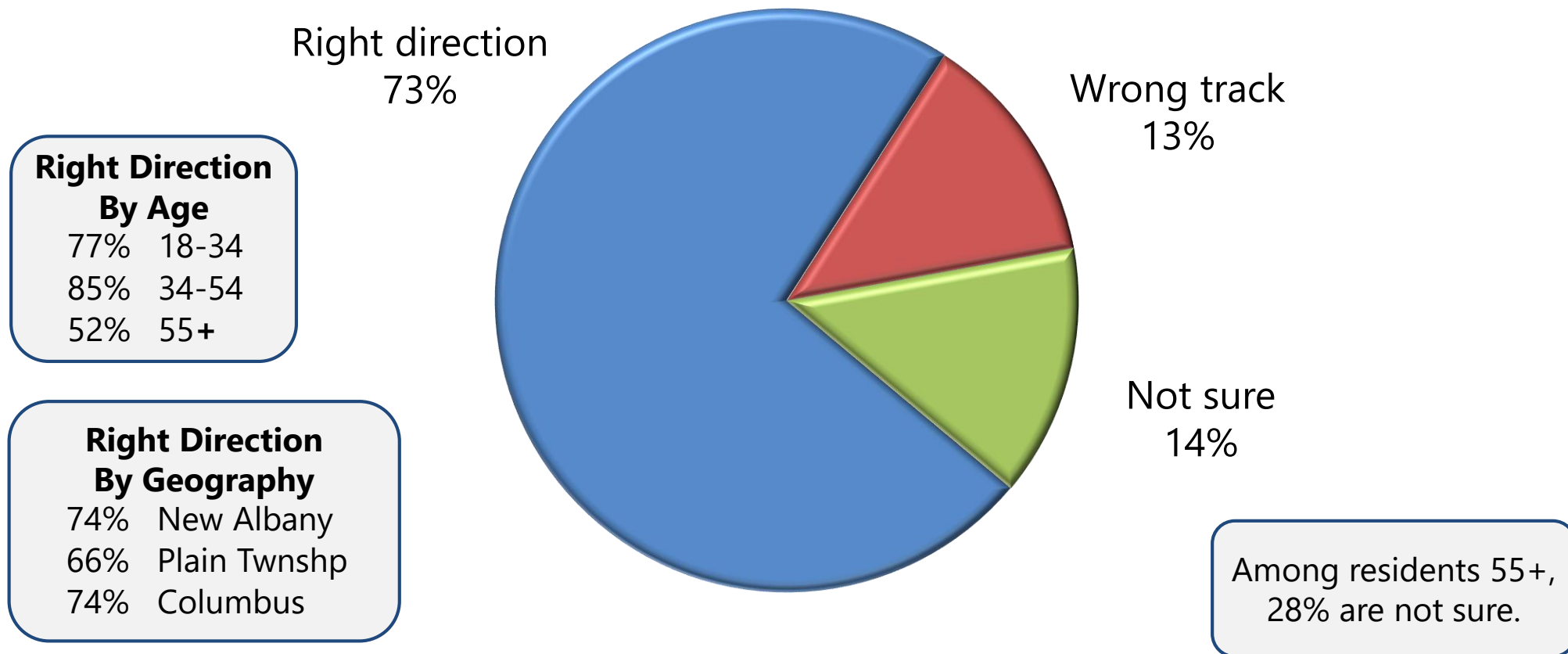
Overall Impressions

- Nine out of ten residents believe the New Albany Schools are excellent or good.
- At least as many consider the New Albany Schools:
 - Well-maintained;
 - Safe for students; and
 - Committed to creating a culture of accountability that achieves the best academic and developmental outcomes for each student.
- More than seven out of ten residents claim the New Albany Schools are heading in the right direction.
- For a plurality of residents, providing a quality education and a safe environment should be the district's highest priorities.

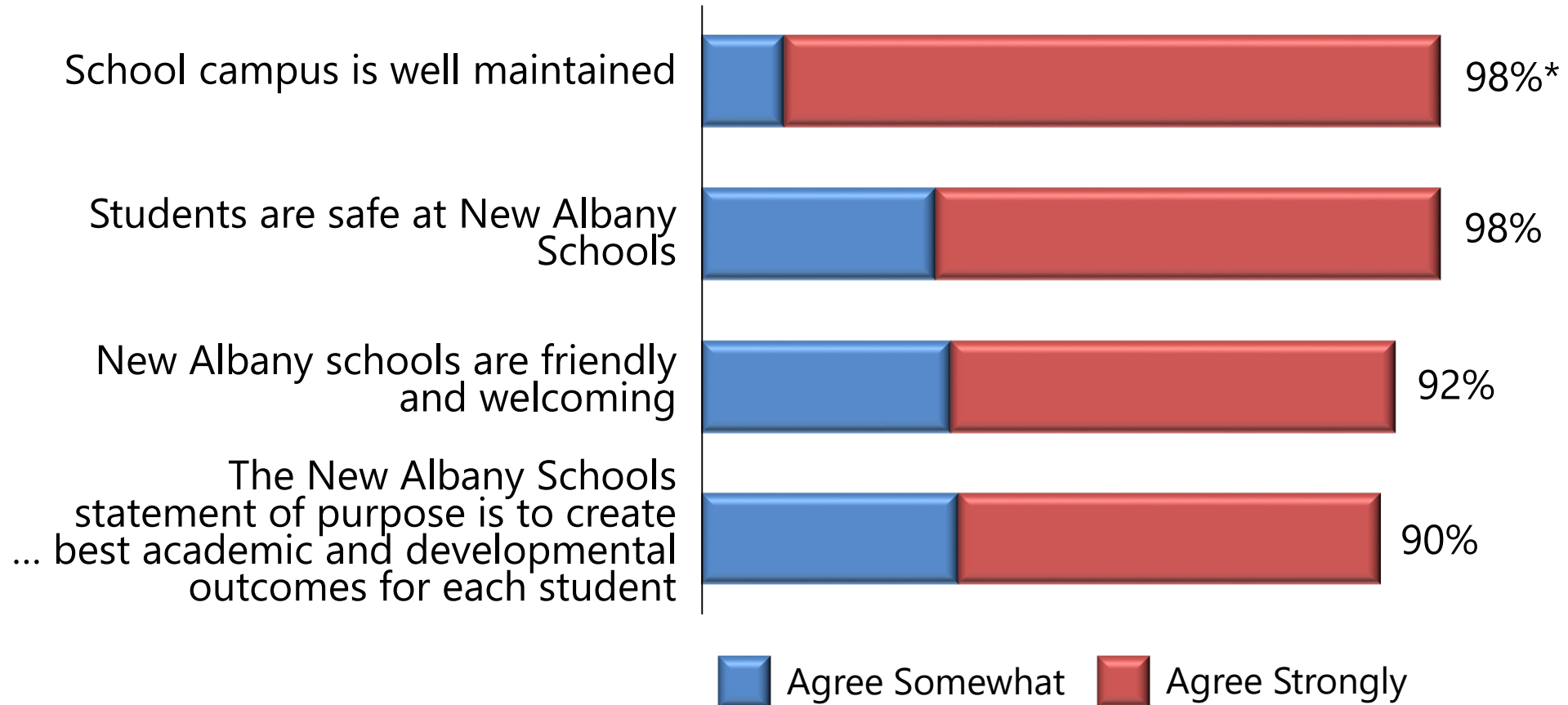
More than five out of ten district residents consider the New Albany Schools excellent. Nearly everyone else considers them good.



As they look to the future, three out of four residents believe the New Albany Schools are heading in the right direction. For one out of eight, they are off on the wrong track.



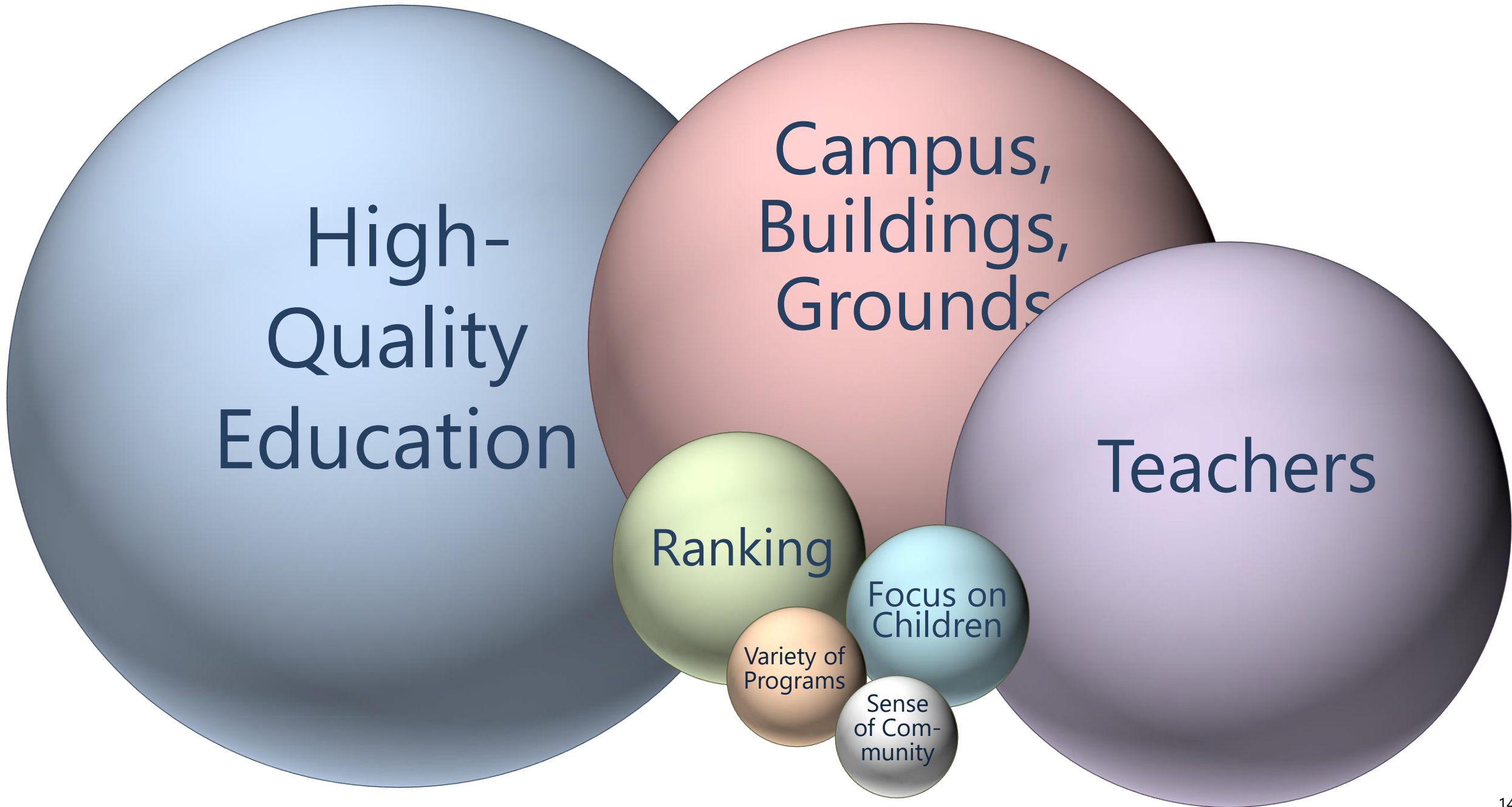
General impressions of the New Albany Schools are mostly positive.



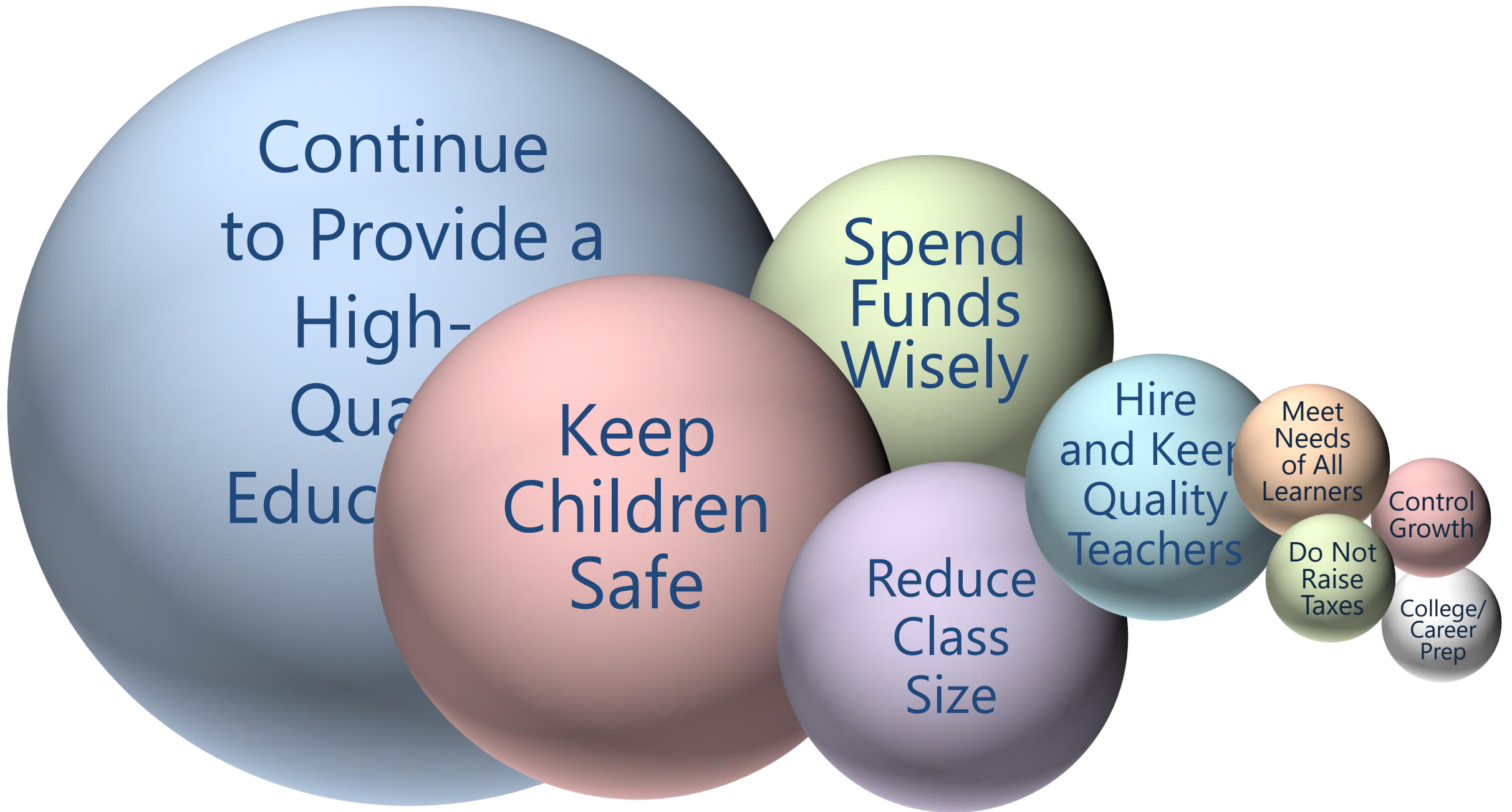
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In an open-ended question, residents were asked:

“What do you like most about the New Albany Schools?”



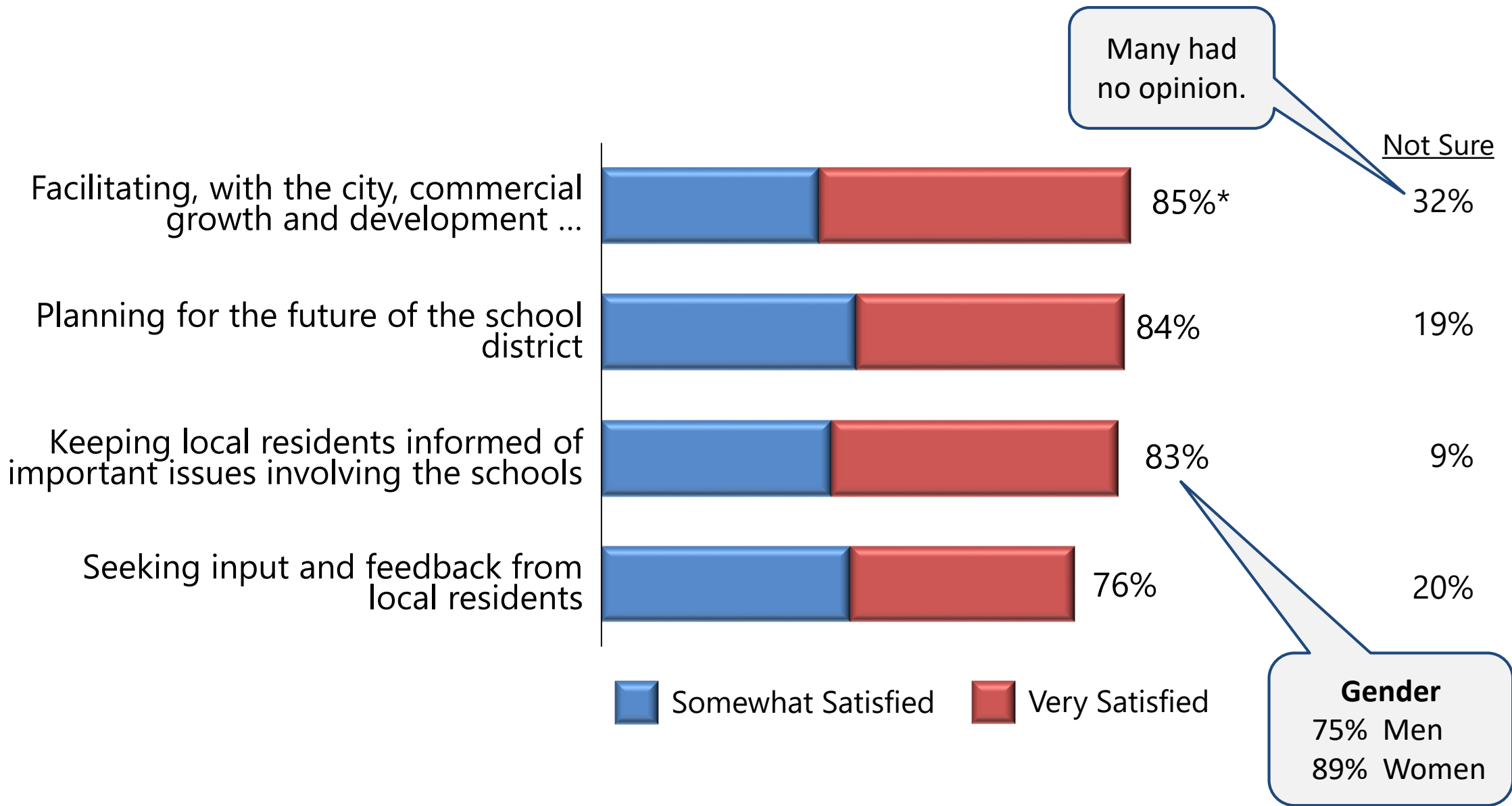
In a second open-ended question, residents were asked to identify what the New Albany Schools – including the Board of Education and administrative staff – should consider its highest priorities.



Community

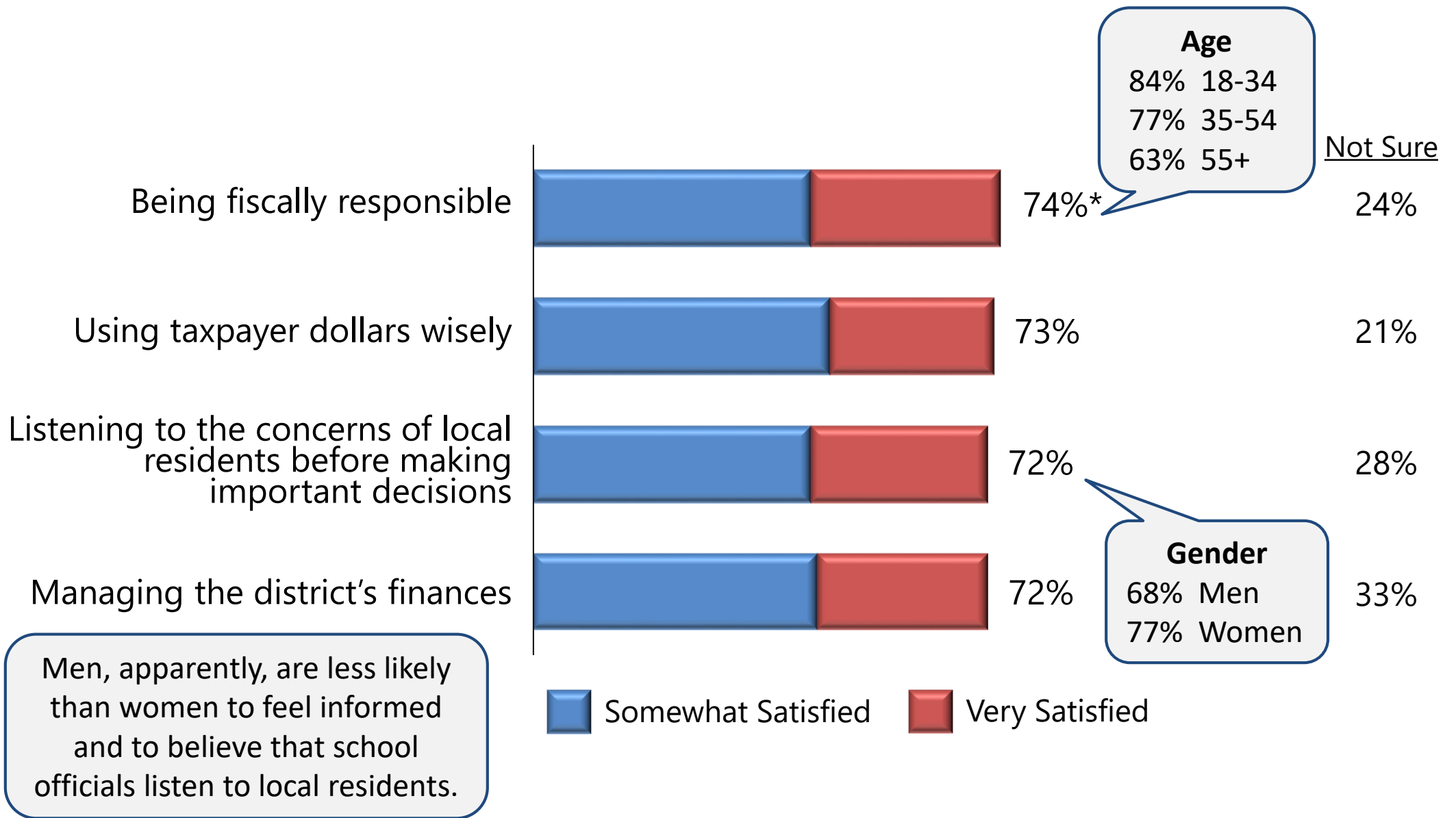
Satisfaction With School Officials

- At least eight out of ten residents are satisfied with the efforts of school officials to:
 - Facilitate, with the city, commercial growth and development;
 - Keep residents informed of important school-related issues; and
 - Plan for the district's future.
- According to seven out of ten, school officials:
 - Seek input and feedback from the community;
 - Listen to the concerns of residents; and
 - Manage the district's finances wisely.
- Fewer residents – six out of ten – are impressed with efforts to implement cost-saving measures to stretch taxpayer dollars to 2023.

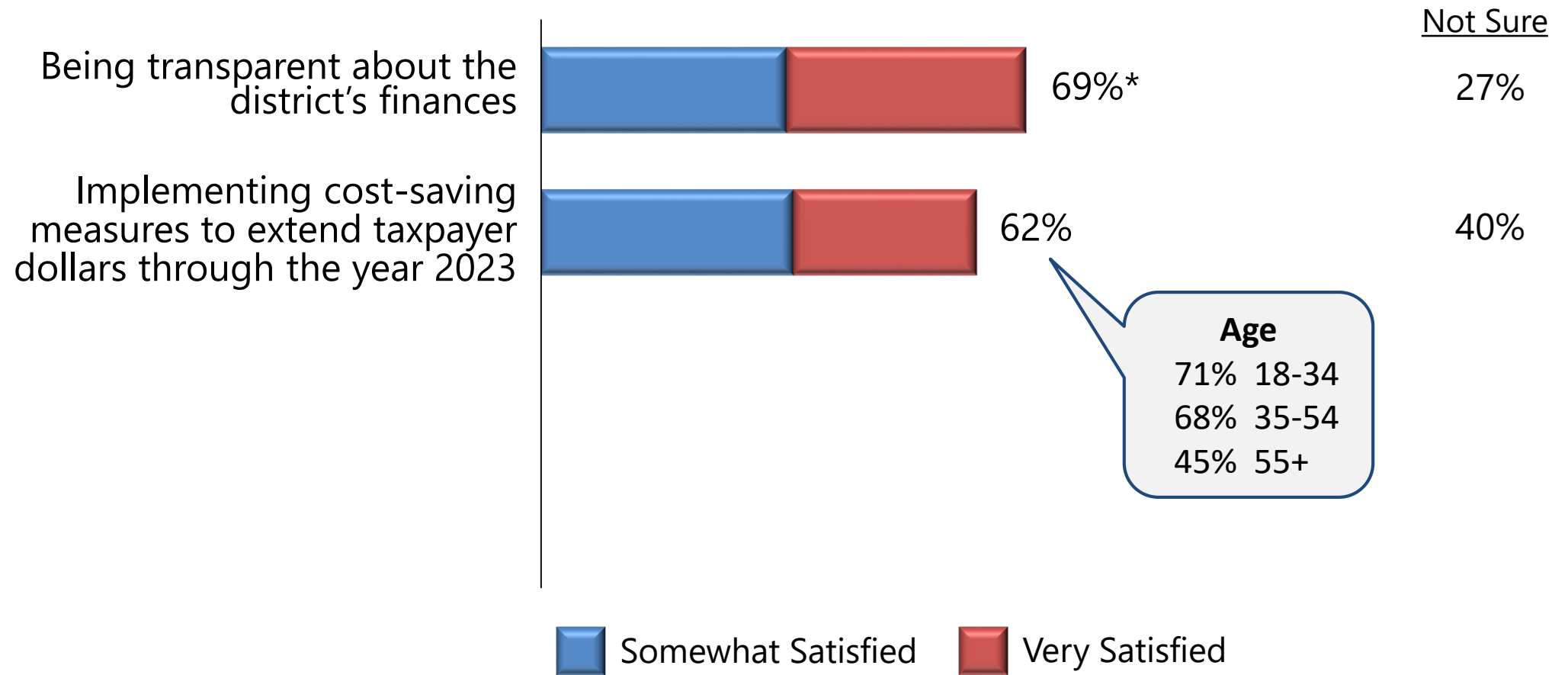


*"Not Sure" excluded from Somewhat / Very Satisfied percentages.

Q10: This next question addresses the performance of school officials in various areas ... tell me if you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied.



*"Not Sure" excluded from Somewhat / Very Satisfied percentages.



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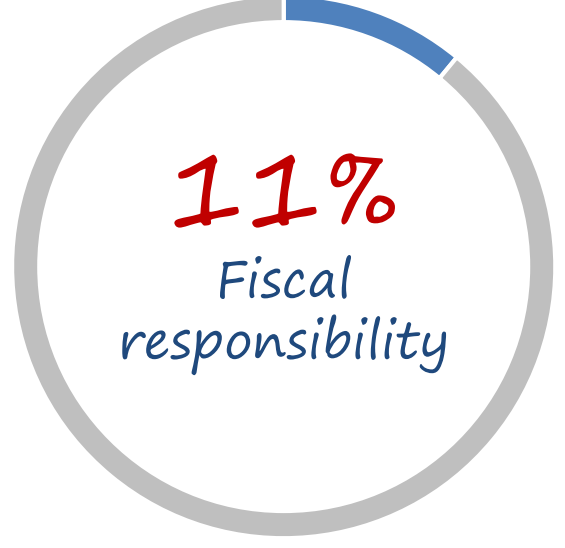
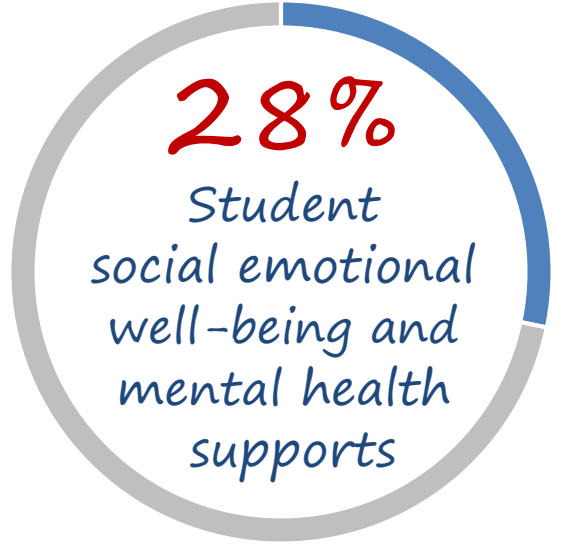
District Initiatives

Community

Residents were presented with four initiatives school officials consider “high priority” and encouraged to identify the most important. The four include:

- Academic achievement and growth;
 - Fiscal responsibility;
 - Student safety; and
- Student social emotional well-being and mental health supports.

For a plurality of voters, academic achievement and growth is the most important initiative – followed closely by two of the remaining three.



Residents were asked:

“... is there anything ... you’d like to see the New Albany Schools start doing, stop doing, or do better?”

Many of the comments involve new programs and services, such as full-day Kindergarten, classes for foreign languages not currently taught, and more security on campus.

Other comments reflect changes in policies and practices, such as greater fiscal transparency, fewer emails, and less standardized testing.

Typical comments appear on the following slides.*

*All of the comments are available in a separate document.

"Have better options for childcare when school is closed."

"Begin an IB program."

"They need more supports for students."

"I would like to see the athletic facilities improved."

"I would like to see smaller classroom sizes."

"Reduce the pay-to-play athletic fees."

"Offer more support for struggling high school students."

"Stop sending out so many emails."

"Make it easier to navigate the website and get information online. Have more concise emails."

"They need more buses."

"Stop wasting money."

"I would like to see more of a security presence on all school campuses."

"Offer all-day Kindergarten as a standard without extra cost."

"Focus more on vocational studies, languages ... home economics and shop."

"They need more extracurricular sports in elementary schools."

"Stop serving so much unhealthy food."

"They need to better handle traffic coming in and out. Kids are exposed in two or three spots. It's just not safe."

"Bring back some educational assistance and lower class size."

"Stop paying the teachers so much so they can afford more teachers."

"I wish they would do more field trips for the younger students."

"Make STEM a priority."

"They should start serving free food."

"Get the opinions of the students ... when it comes to teacher evaluations."

"I'd like to see more choices of foreign language classes."

"Have better transparency about spending."

"Get away from standardized testing."

"Transportation should be provided for preschoolers."

"We need more programs for gifted students."

"Stop making plans without a clear vision."

"We need more specialized activities for special needs students."

"They could do better with the diversity of faculty."

"Stop emphasizing that college is for everyone."

"They need more funding for ... music, visual, ... and performing arts ..."

"They need more variety in after school programs."

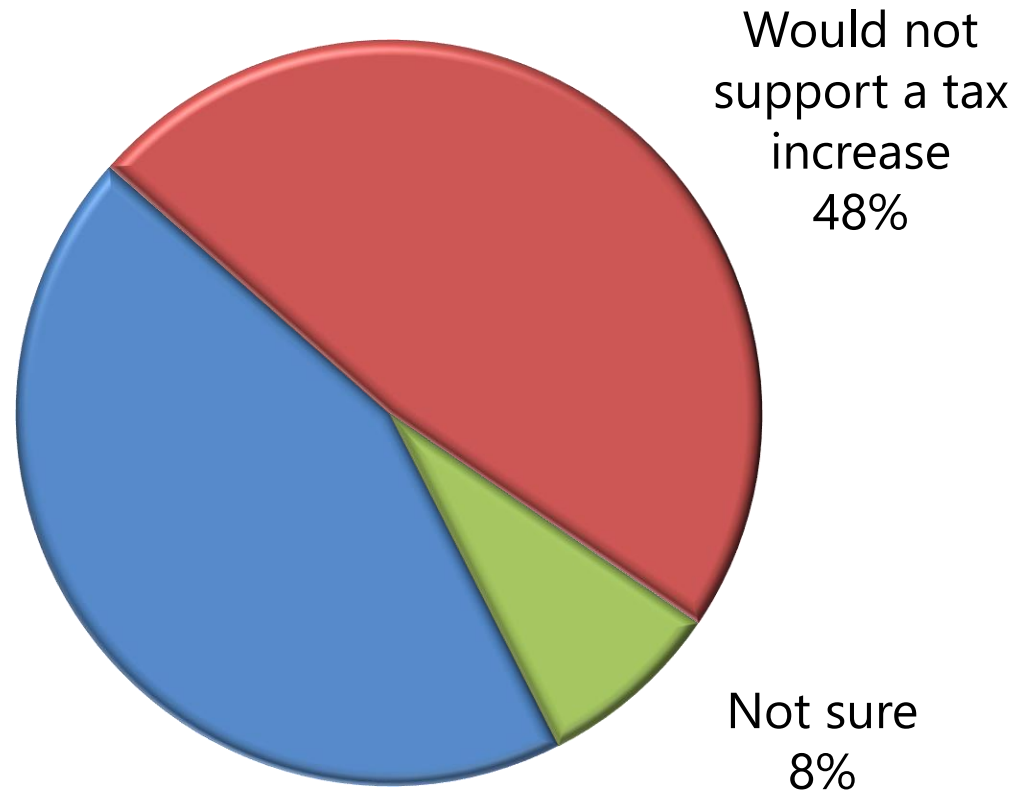
If the suggested changes require additional funding, less than half the community is likely to support a property tax increase to provide that funding.

Would By Age
56% 18-34
47% 35-54
31% 55+

Parents
48%

Would support a tax increase
44%

Would By Geography
44% New Albany
30% Plain Twnshp
47% Columbus



This finding is difficult to interpret for several reasons. For example: Many suggestions may have been offered, perhaps correctly, with the expectation that additional revenue would not be needed.

Part II: Parents

The children identified by the parents in this study are enrolled in the district's facilities in percentages that approximate actual enrollment.

	Actual*	Sample
Building		
Early Learning Center	7%	12%
Primary School	22%	24%
Intermediate School	23%	21%
Middle School	17%	15%
High School	31%	27%

*Source: Ohio Department of Education

Predictably, parents of children enrolled in the New Albany Schools, compared with “non-parents,” tend to be younger and a little more likely to reside in Columbus.

	Parents	Non-Parents
Age		
<25	5%	11%
25-34	8%	17%
35-44	40%	15%
45-54	41%	12%
55-64	5%	23%
>64	1%	22%

Among parents, 81% are 35 to 54; among non-parents, the comparable figure is 27%.

	Parents	Non-Parents
Geography		
City of New Albany	52%	52%
Plain Township	6%	12%
Columbus	42%	36%
Gender		
Male	45%	50%
Female	55%	50%

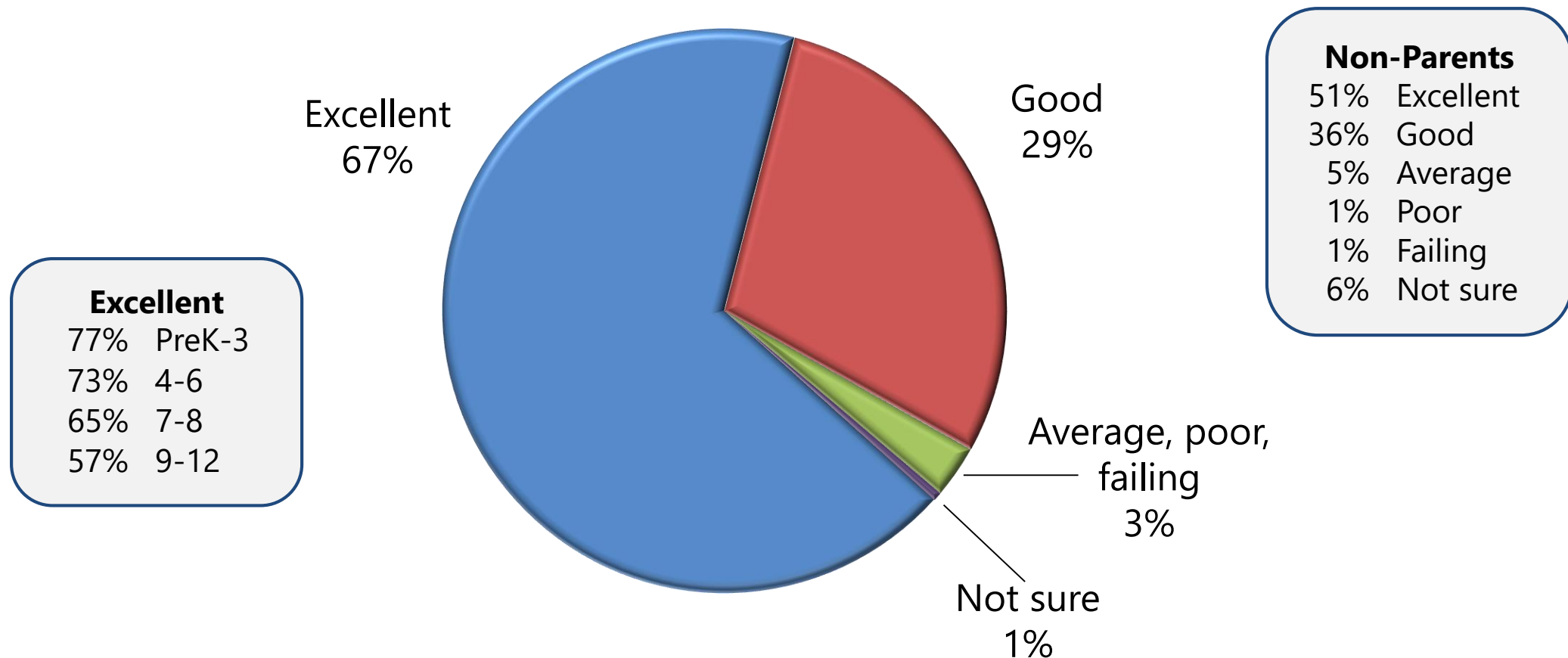
Parents

Overall Impressions

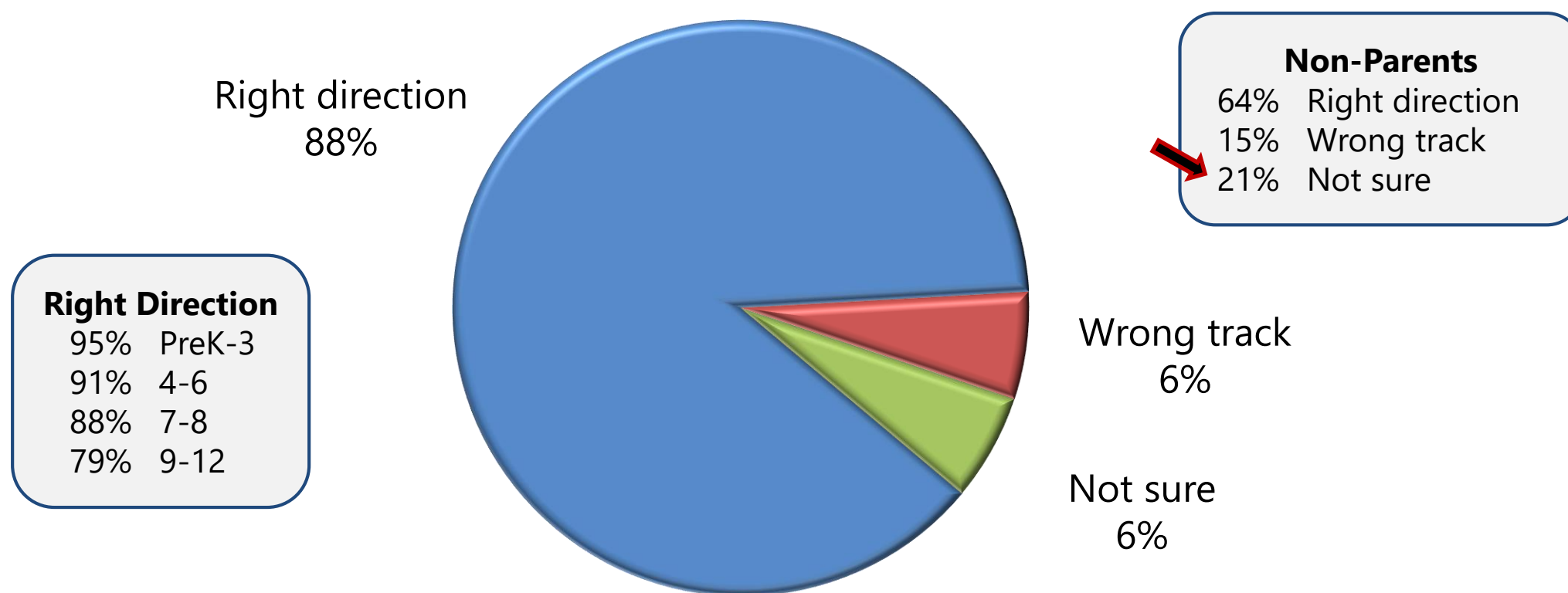
Two out of three parents consider the New Albany Schools excellent. Even more consider the district on track, heading in the right direction. Almost all believe the New Albany Schools are friendly and welcoming, well-maintained, safe for students, and committed to creating a culture of accountability that achieves the best academic and developmental outcomes for each student.

Perceptions of non-parents and parents of the oldest children tend to be less positive.

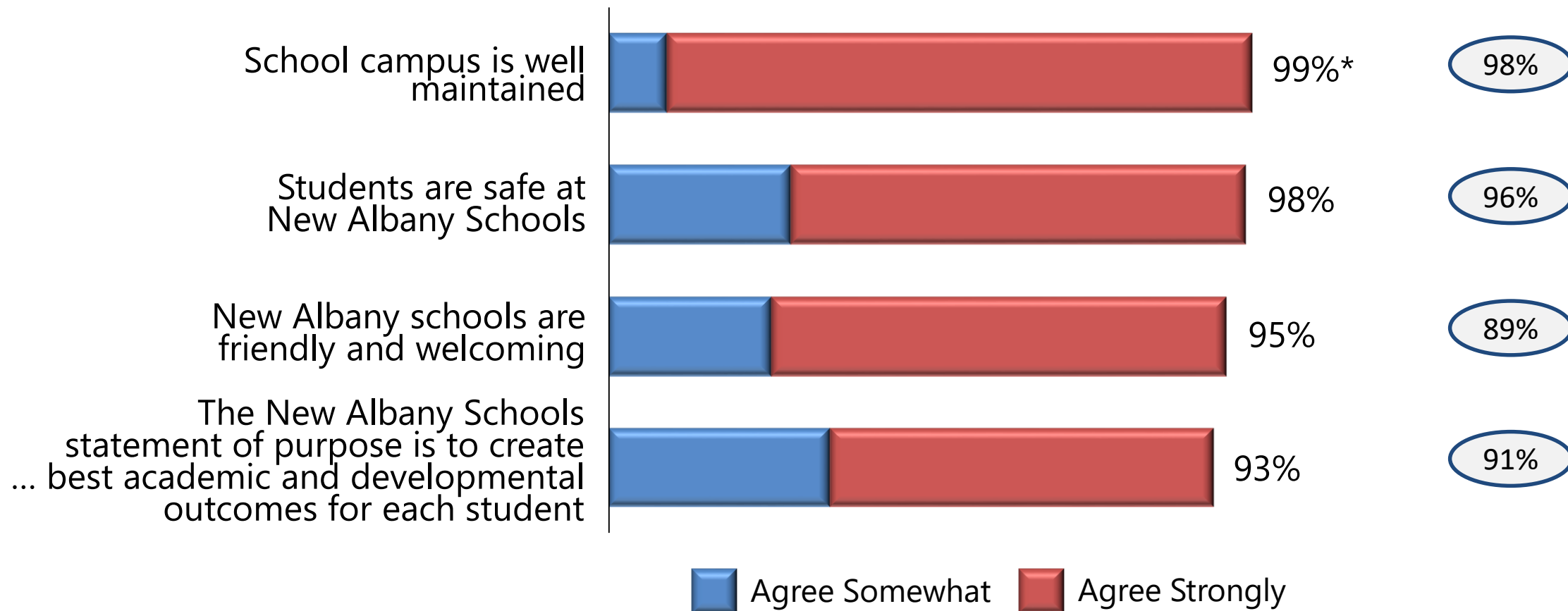
Two out of three parents consider the New Albany Schools excellent. Among non-parents, the comparable figure is lower. Perceptions are strongest among parents of the youngest children.



Nearly nine out of ten parents agree that the New Albany Schools are heading in the right direction. Non-parents are less sanguine – as are parents of the oldest children – but more likely to be uninformed than negative.



Among parents, positive impressions, on these dimensions, are almost universal. They are strong, as well, among non-parents.



*“Not Sure” excluded from percentages. ○ Non-Parents

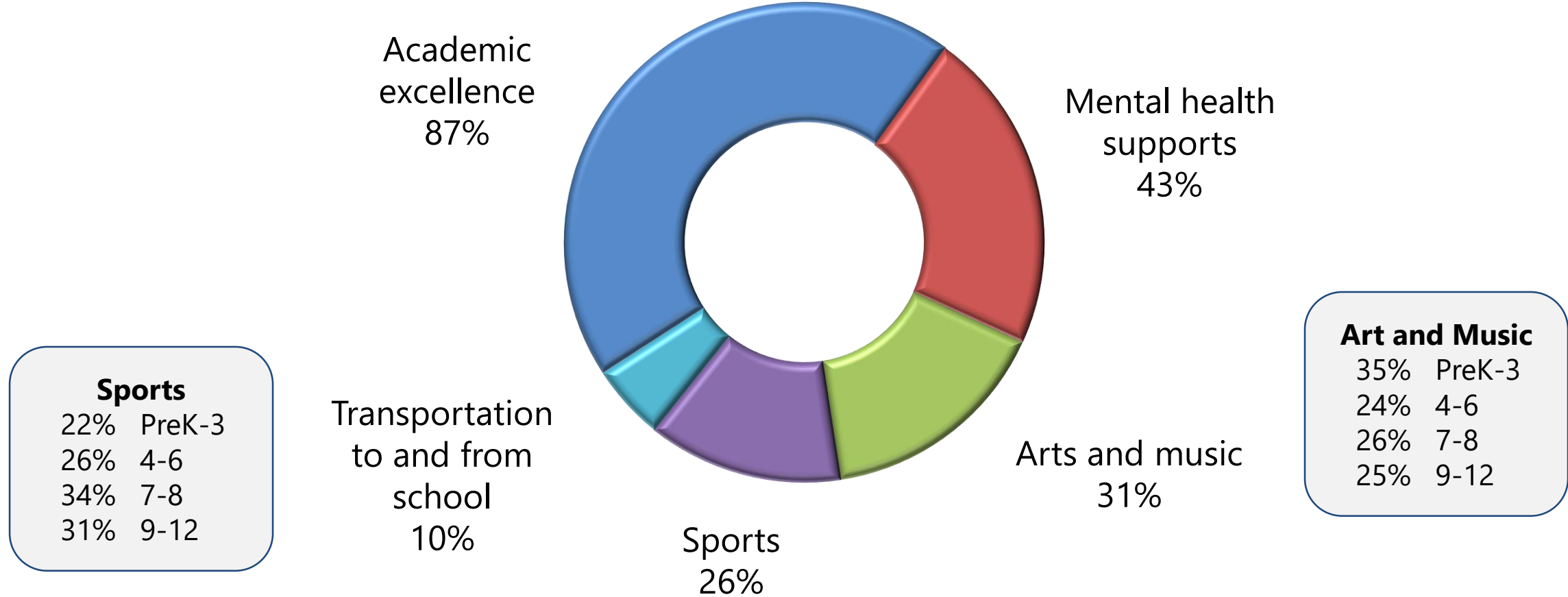
Parents

School Responsibilities

When parents were queried on five responsibilities of the New Albany Schools, the two most important were academic excellence and mental health supports.

By contrast, few parents considered transportation to and from school among the most pressing responsibilities.

Nearly nine out of ten parents selected academic excellence as one of the two most important responsibilities of the New Albany Schools.
More than four out of ten chose mental health supports.



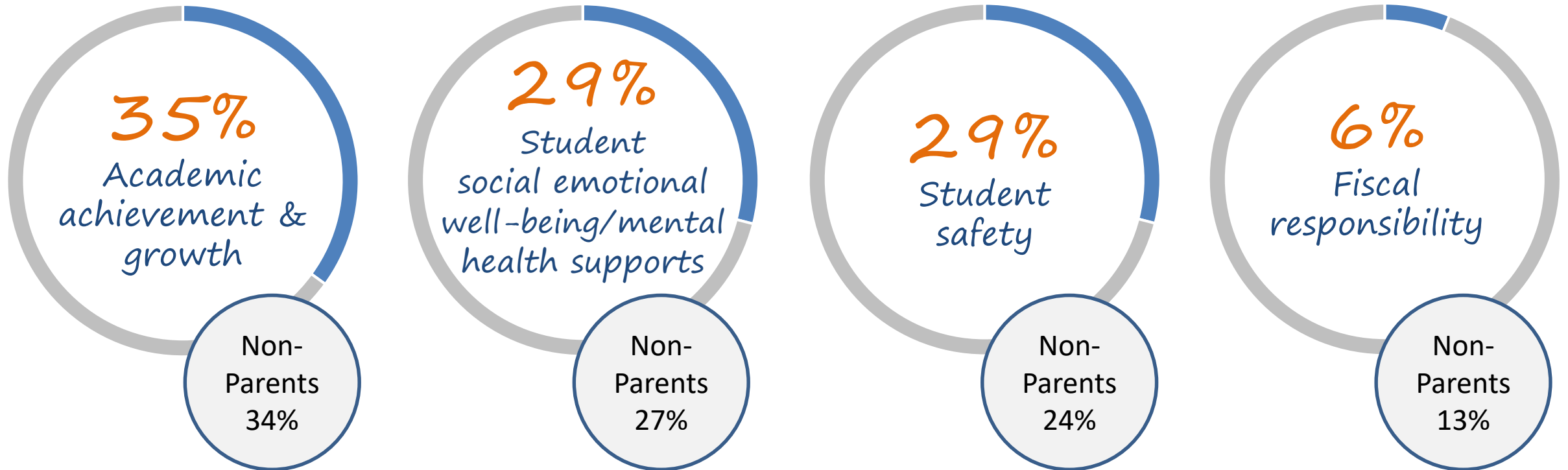
Initiatives

Parents

Of four initiatives school officials describe as “high priority,” a plurality of parents consider academic achievement and growth the top priority.

Almost as many, however, favored student safety and social emotional well-being and mental health supports.

For a plurality of parents, academic achievement and growth is the top initiative, though not by much. The opinions of non-parents are similar.

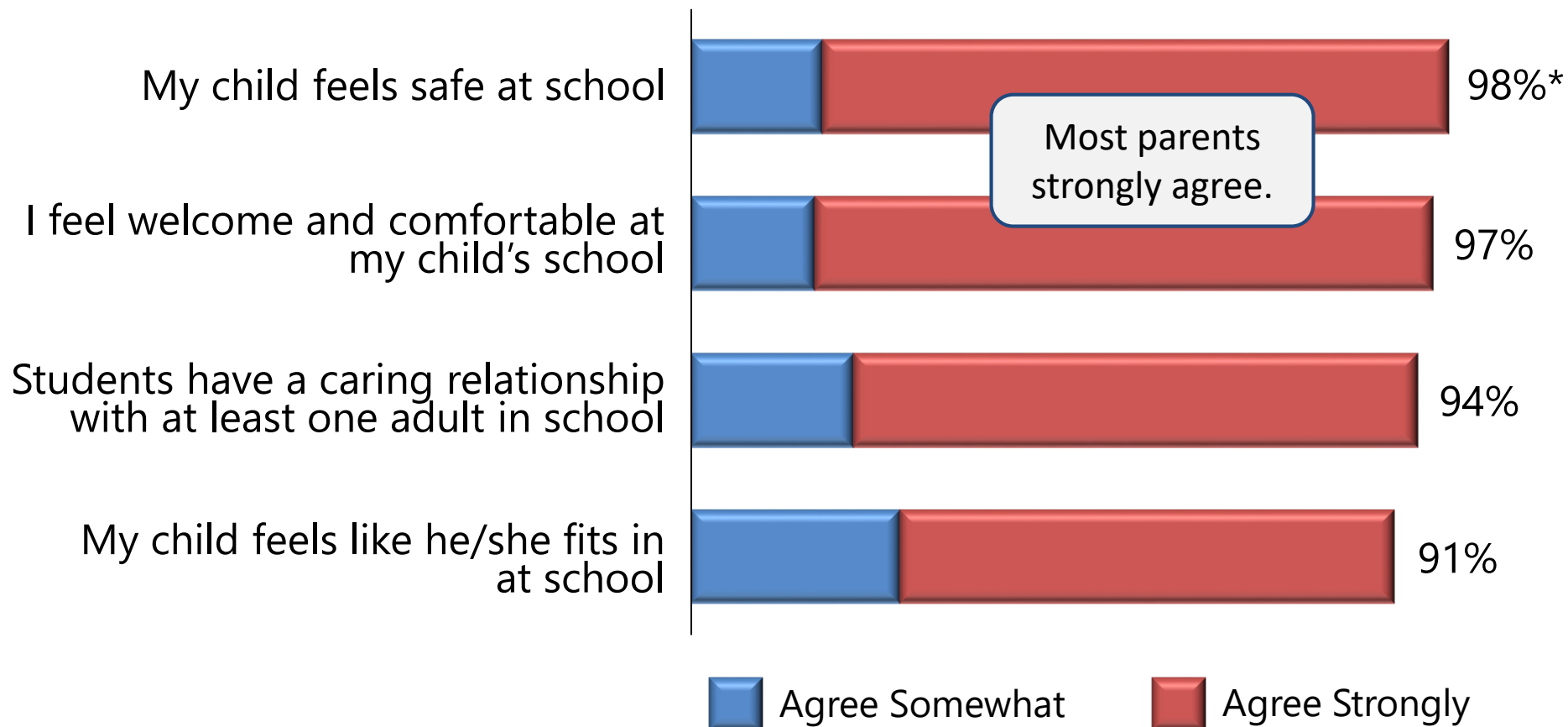


Parents

The School Environment

At least nine out of ten parents agree their children feel safe at school, fit in at school, and have a caring relationship with at least one adult at school.

Nearly all parents also agree they feel welcome and comfortable when visiting the school their child attends.

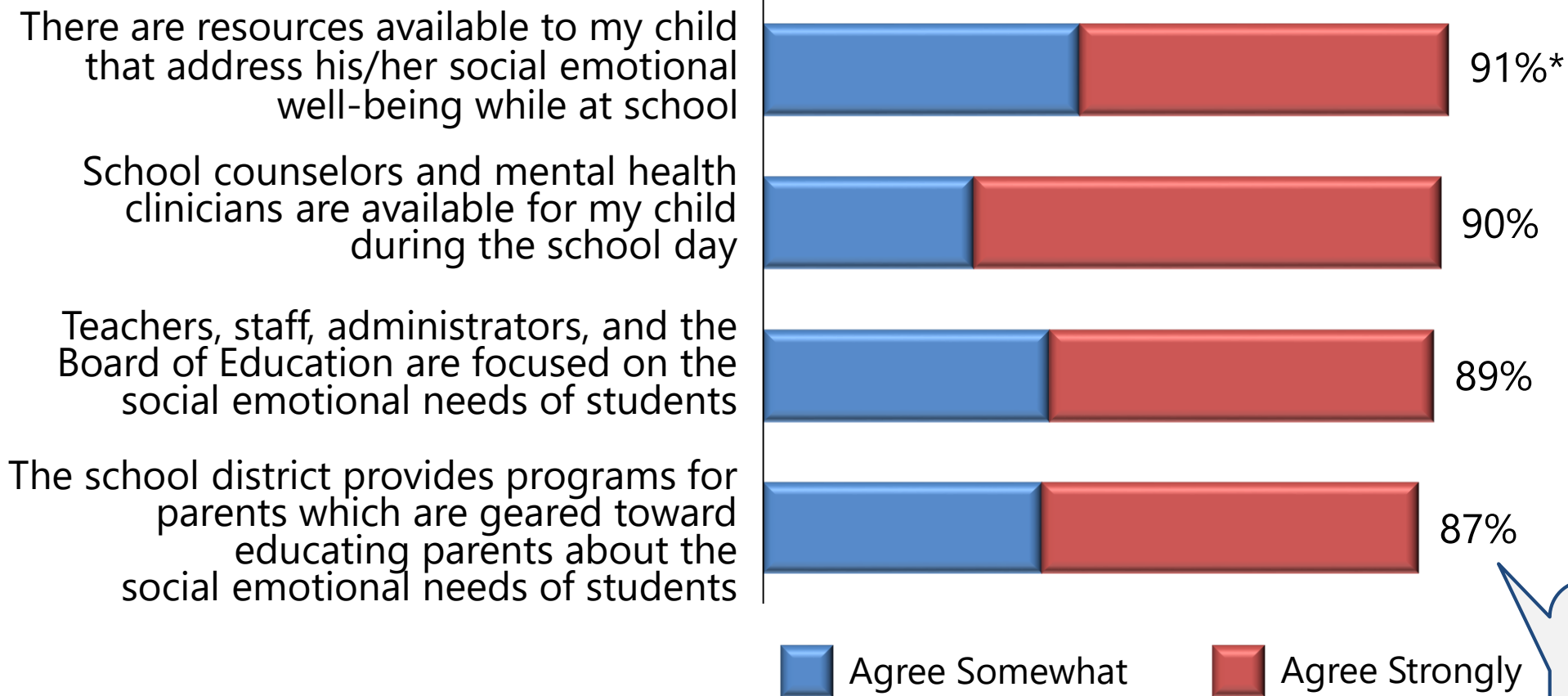


*"Not Sure" excluded from percentages.

Parents

Well-Being Programs

Most parents agree that the New Albany Schools are focused on the social emotional needs of children and provide programs and staff to address those needs.



89%	PreK-3
87%	4-6
92%	7-8
83%	9-12

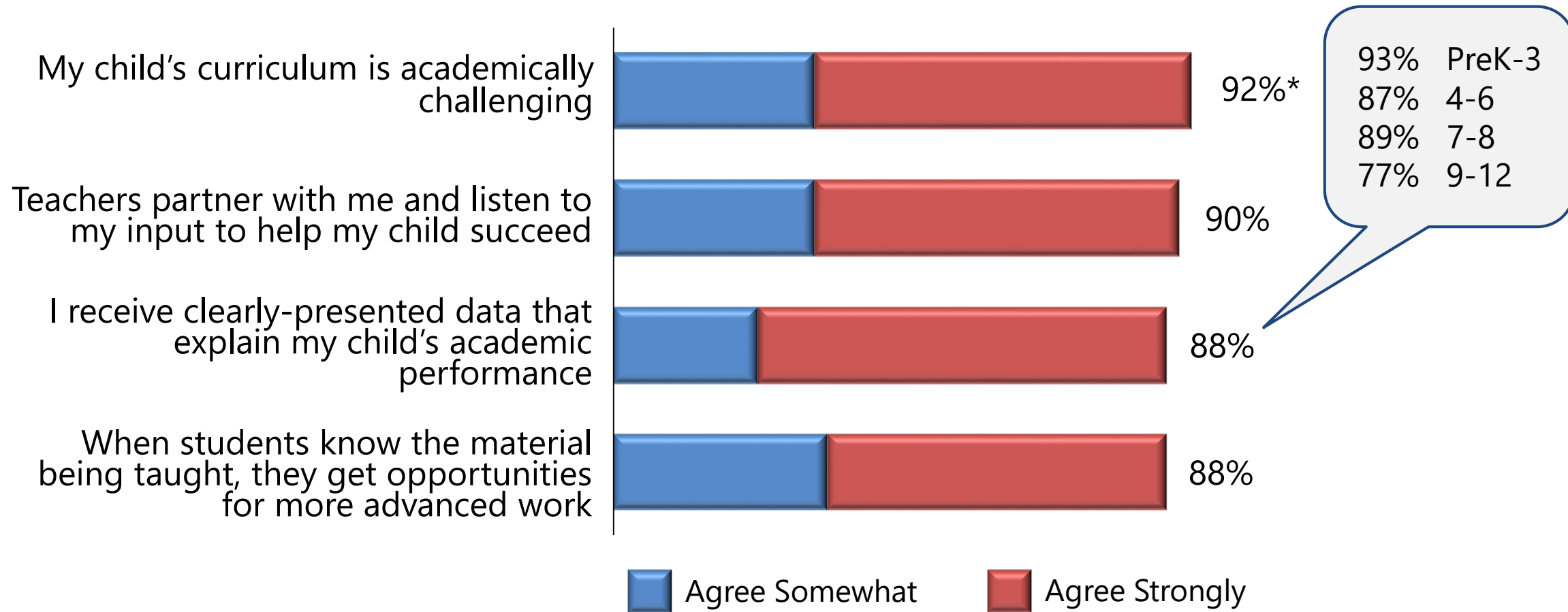
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Classes

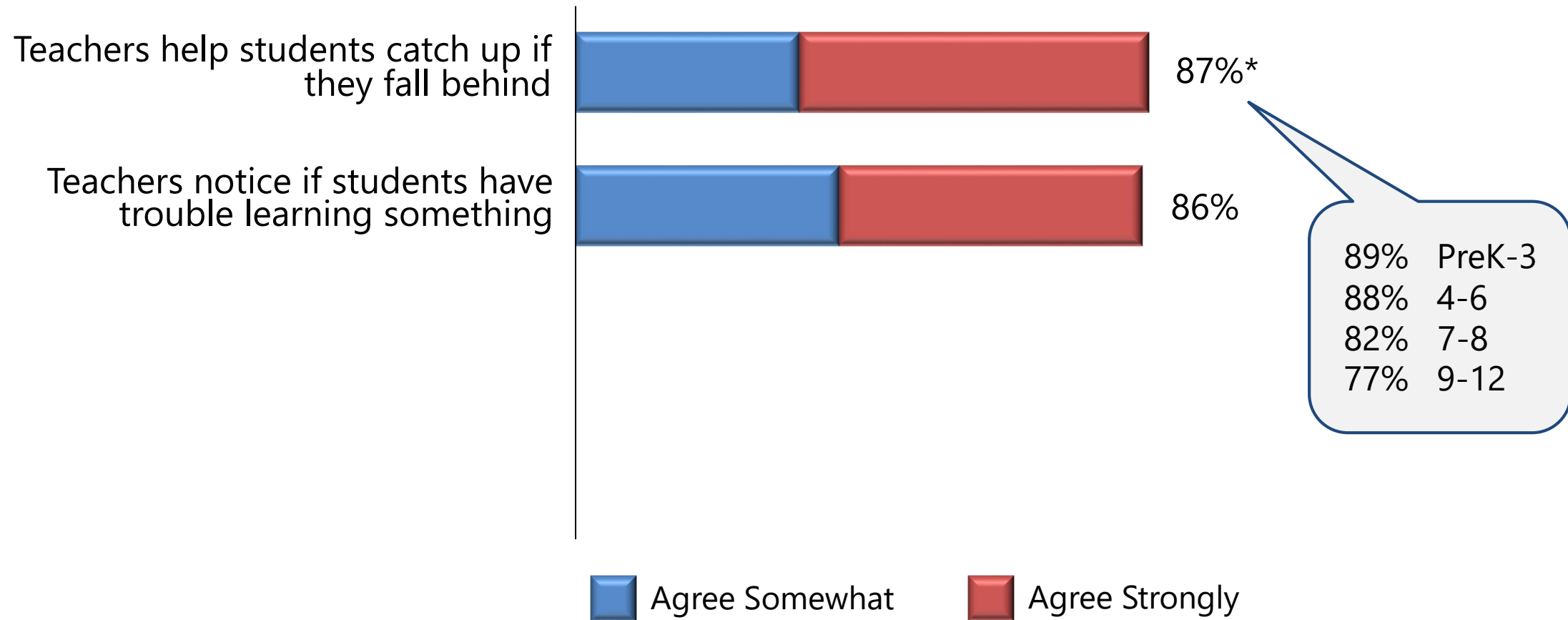
Parents

Nearly all parents agree – many strongly – that:

- Their child is challenged academically;
- Teachers are partners who value the input of parents;
- The data they receive about their child is clearly explained;
- More challenging work is available to students who need it;
- Teachers help students to catch up when they fall behind; and
 - Teachers notice when students have trouble learning.

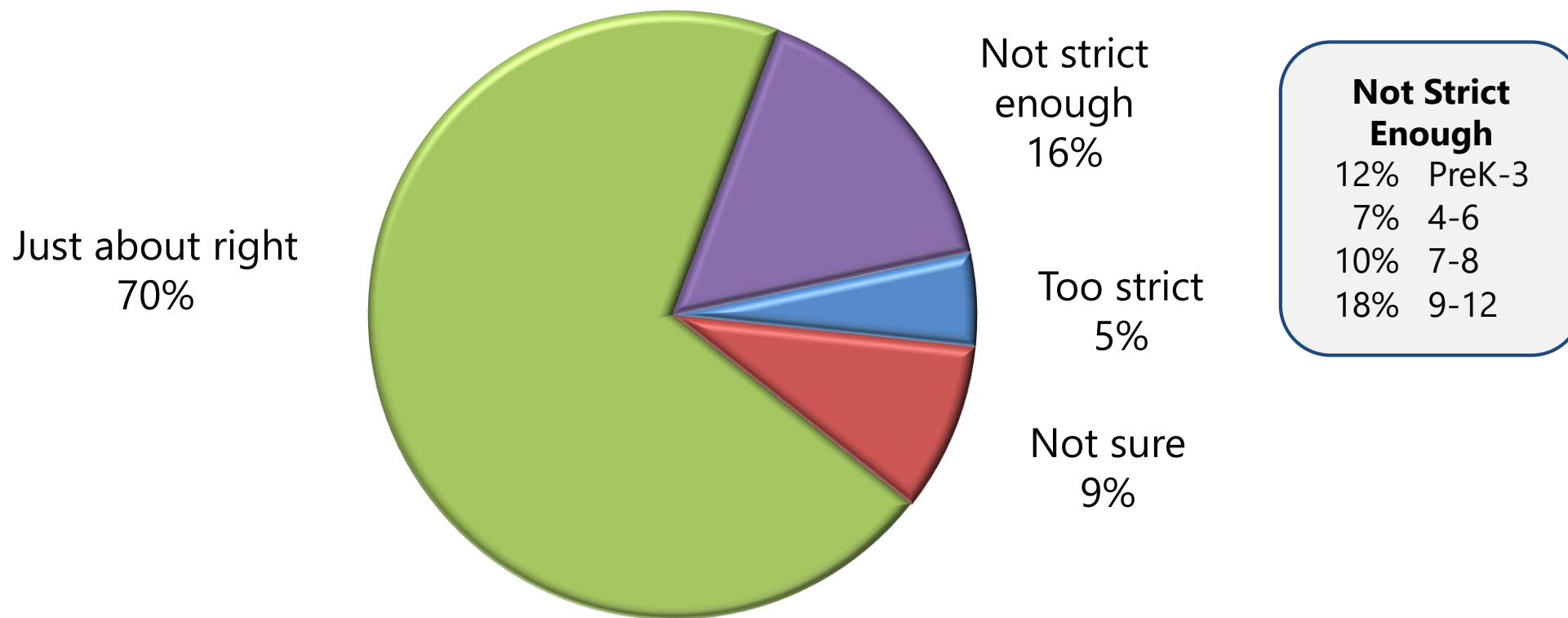


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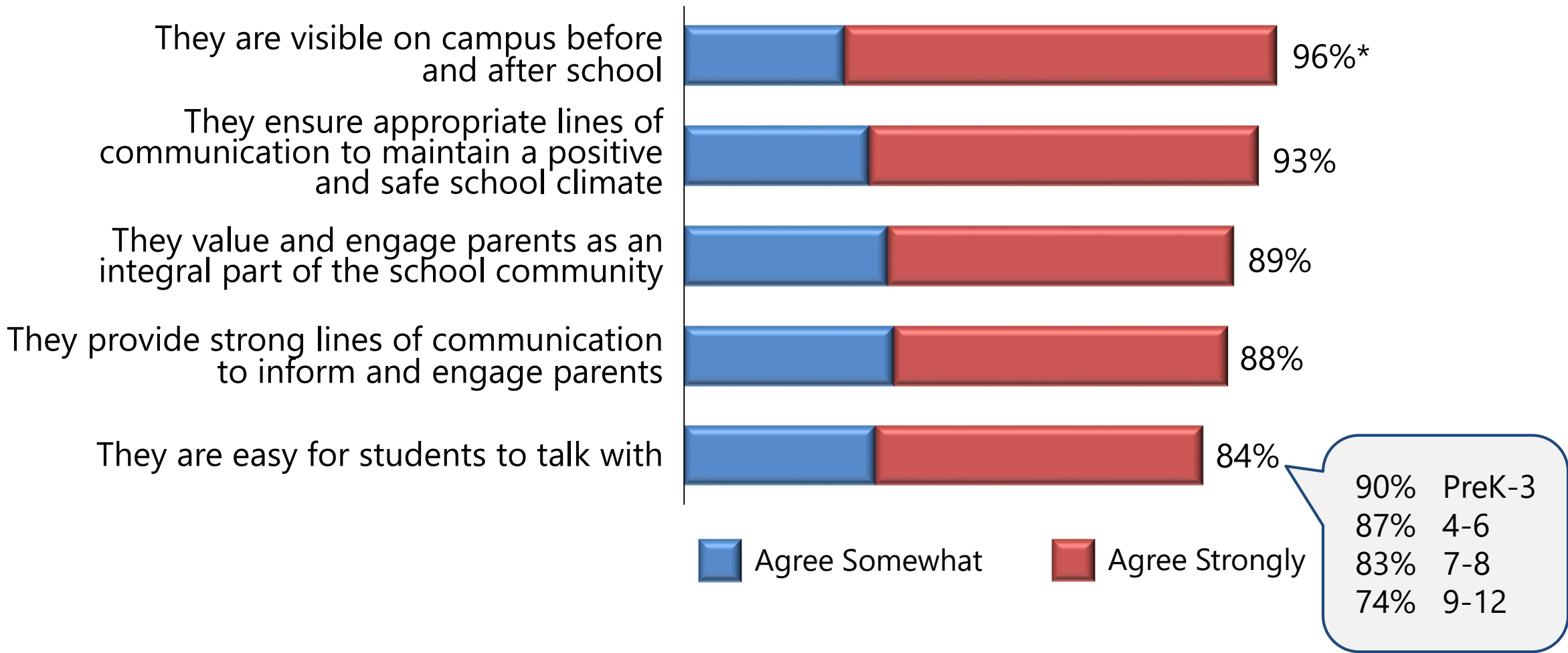
Seven out of ten parents believe that discipline at their child's school is adequately strict. Roughly two out of ten disagrees, with most claiming it is not strict enough.



Administrators

Parents

- At least eight out of ten parents agree – again, many strongly – that the district’s administrative staff:
 - Are visible on campus before and after school;
 - Ensure appropriate lines of communication to maintain a school climate that is positive and safe;
 - Value and engage parents as an integral part of the school community;
 - Provide strong lines of communication to inform and engage parents; and
 - Are easy for students to talk with.



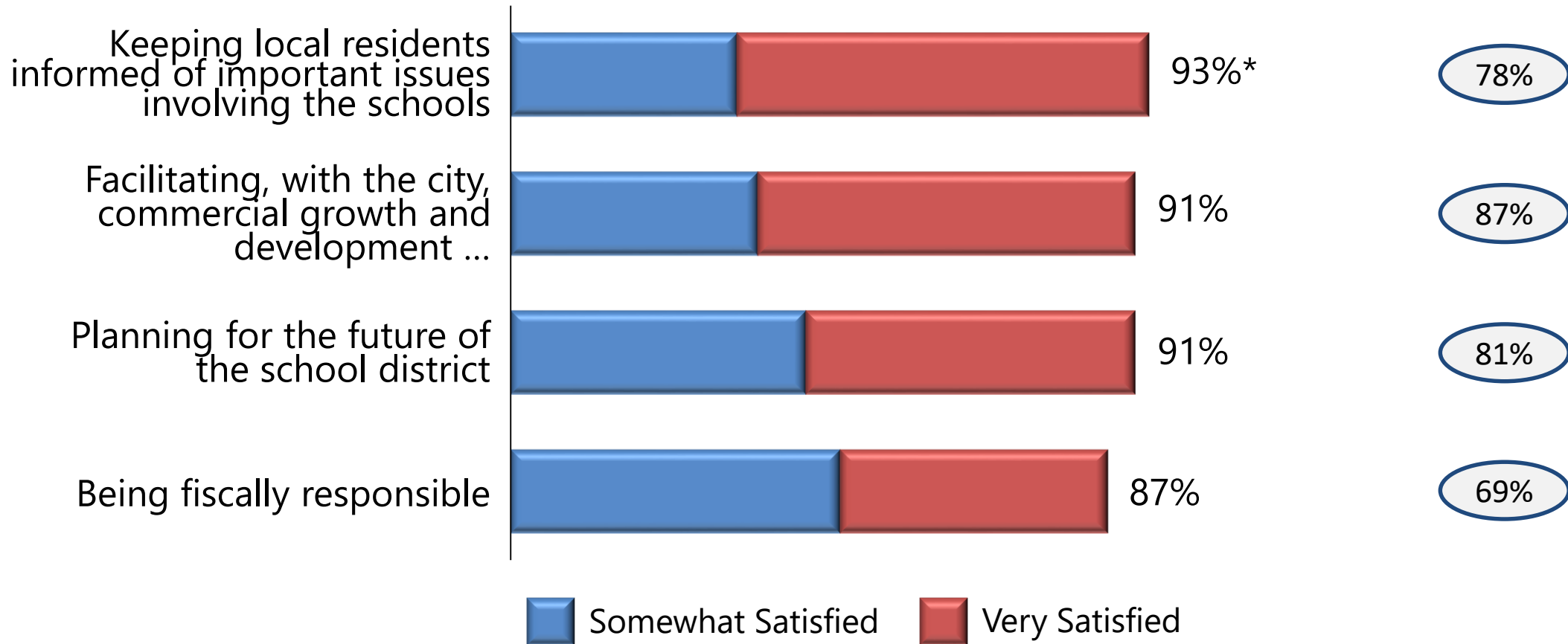
*“Not Sure” excluded from percentages.

Parents

Satisfaction With School Officials

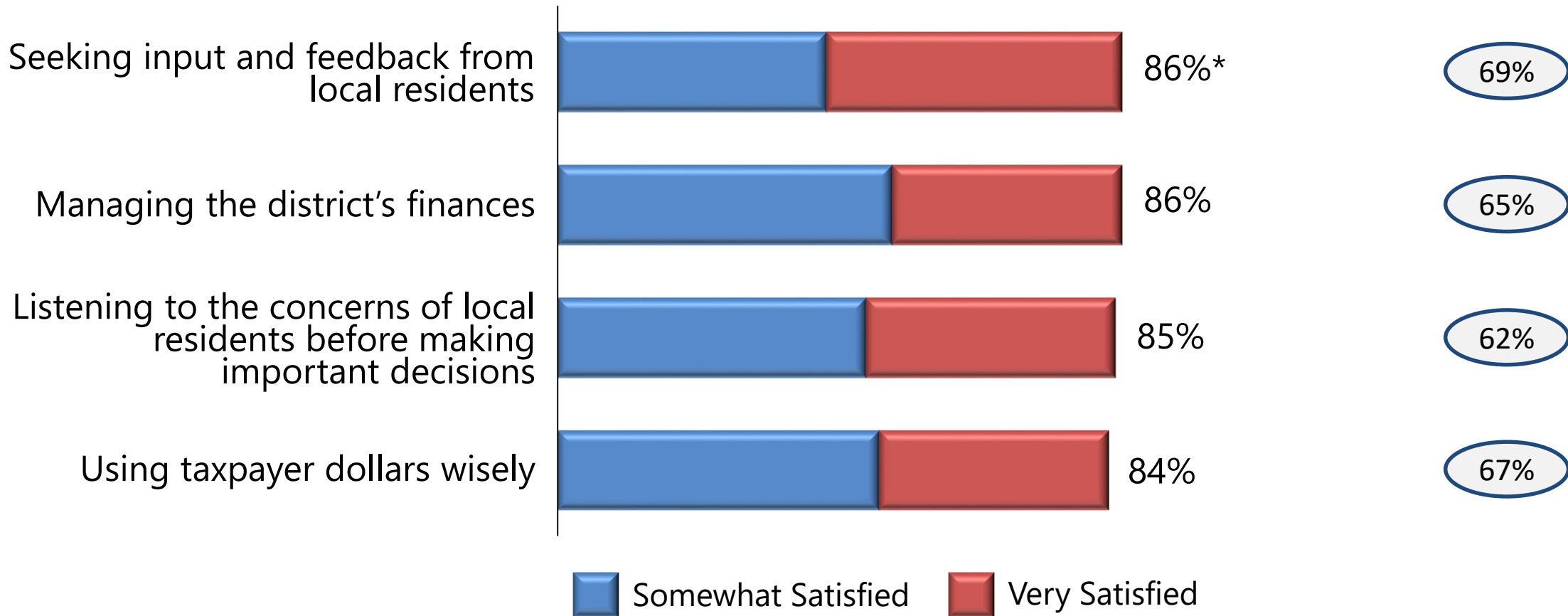
- At least nine out of ten parents are satisfied with how school officials:
 - Keep local residents informed of important issues;
 - Facilitate, with the city, commercial growth and development; and
 - Plan for the future.
- At least eight out of ten are satisfied with how school officials:
 - Manage the district's finances;
 - Seek input and feedback from the community; and
 - Listen to the concerns of local residents.

- Among non-parents, across all of these issues, satisfaction, on average, is 17 percentage points lower with the greatest differences in the following areas:
 - Listening to the concerns of local residents (23 pp lower);
 - Managing the district's finances (21 pp lower);
 - Being transparent about the district's finances (21 pp lower); and
 - Implementing cost-saving measures to extend taxpayer dollars through 2023 (21 pp lower).
- On average, non-parents were twice as likely to have no opinion on these issues (32% to 16%); notably, this does not account for their less positive perceptions.

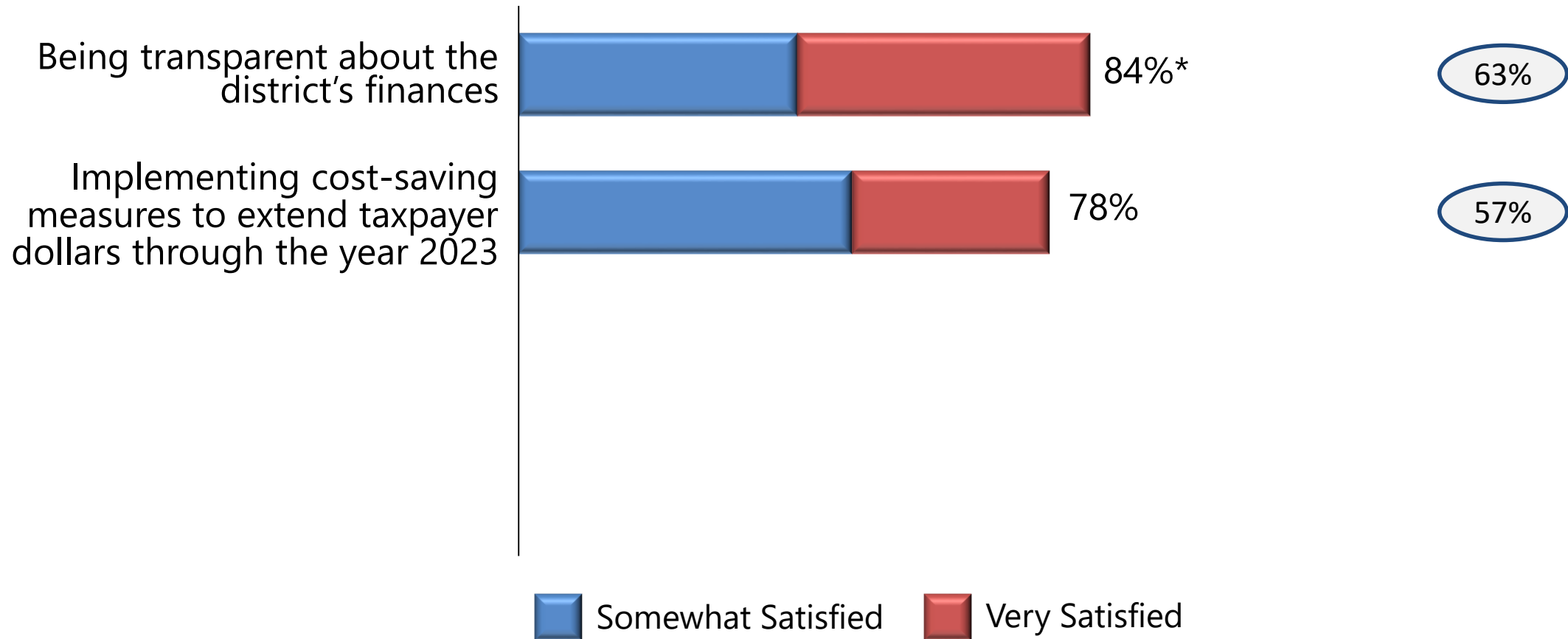


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Q10: This next question addresses the performance of school officials in various areas ... tell me if you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied.



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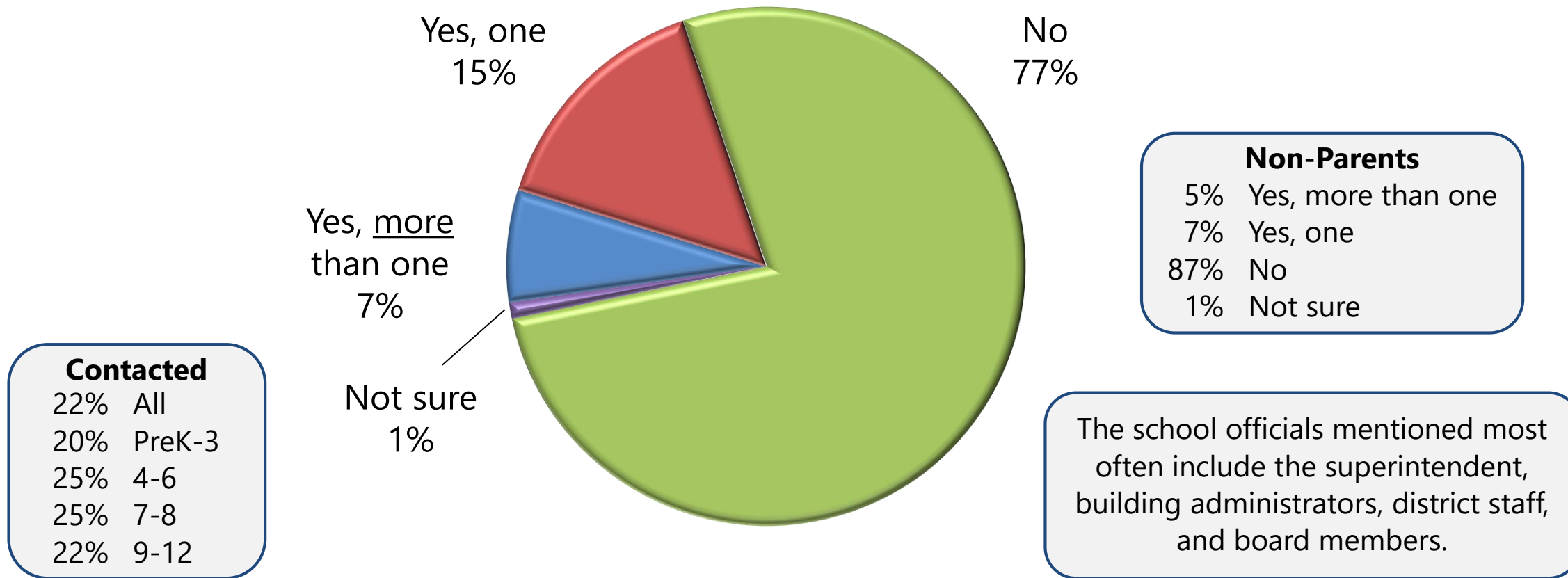


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Parents

Contact With School Officials

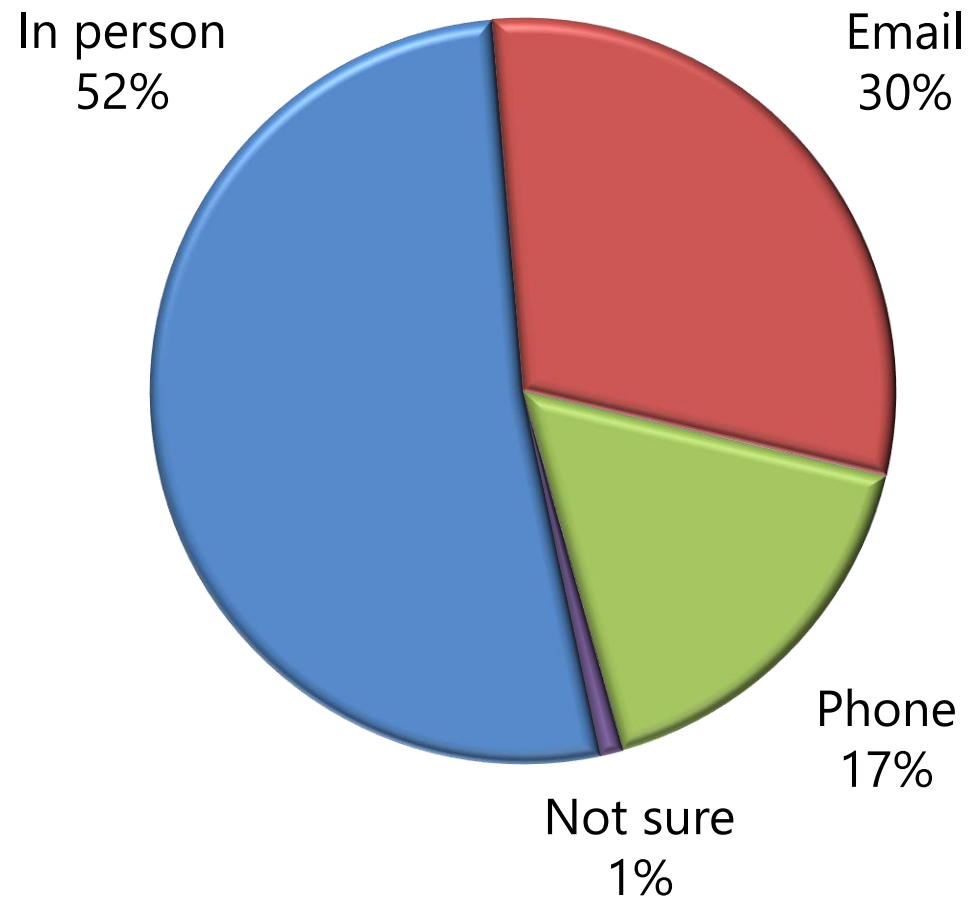
One parent in five contacted a school official during the past year. Among non-parents, the figure is lower: one out of eight.



Among parents, the most common contacts involved in-person visits and email. Phone calls were less common.*

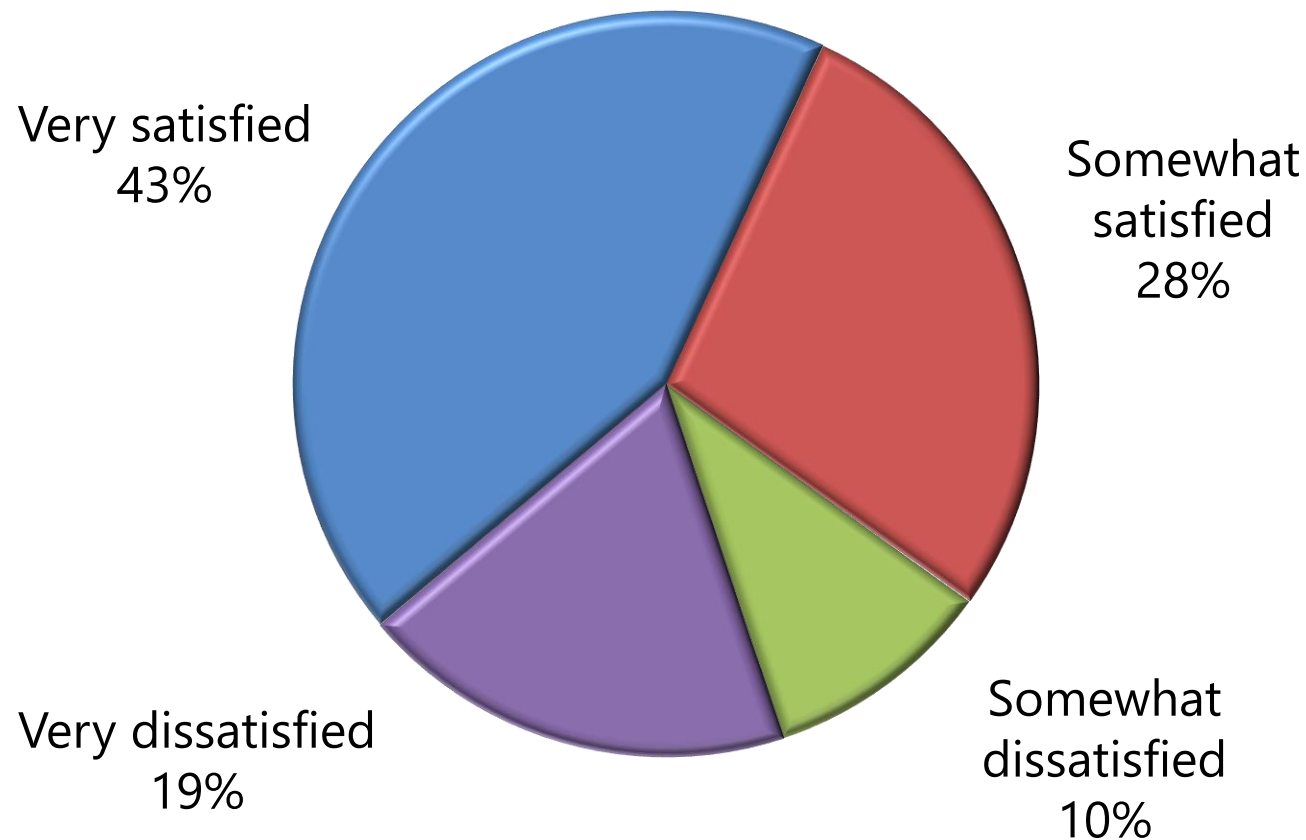
In Person*	
33%	PreK-3
53%	4-6
55%	7-8
53%	9-12

Email*	
50%	PreK-3
27%	4-6
35%	7-8
20%	9-12



*Caution: small sample size

Among parents who contacted a school official, the majority were satisfied with how they were treated.* Some were not – and explained why ...



*Caution small sample size

“There were not any true repercussions for an incident with my child and another child.”
(Assistant Principal)

“I emailed about pedestrian safety around the school when the new park was built. Michael Sawyers didn’t respond. The Head of Safety called and the conversation was not productive or informative. They didn’t have a good response or commit to addressing the issue.” (Superintendent)

“I requested more bus stops in the neighborhood. The problem was not resolved.” (Transportation)

“They were not giving credit to my daughter for her test scores. It took a long time to get a simple issue corrected.” (Principal)

“My son got jumped for the sixth time and they stole some of his stuff. We raised our concern with the administrators and the teacher. They did not seem to care or feel like they had enough information to do anything about the bullying.”
(School Administrator)

“He said that I only cared about the Kindergarten half day because I have a child of that age and that I would not care after Kindergarten about their policy of only having a half day.”
(School Board)

“I don’t think the person listened to me.”
(Finance Department)

“They do not know their Title 9 issues when it comes to athletics for girls.” (Athletic Department)

“We wanted our grandchildren to look at the schools before they moved to the district. We were unable to arrange a meeting.”
(District Administration)

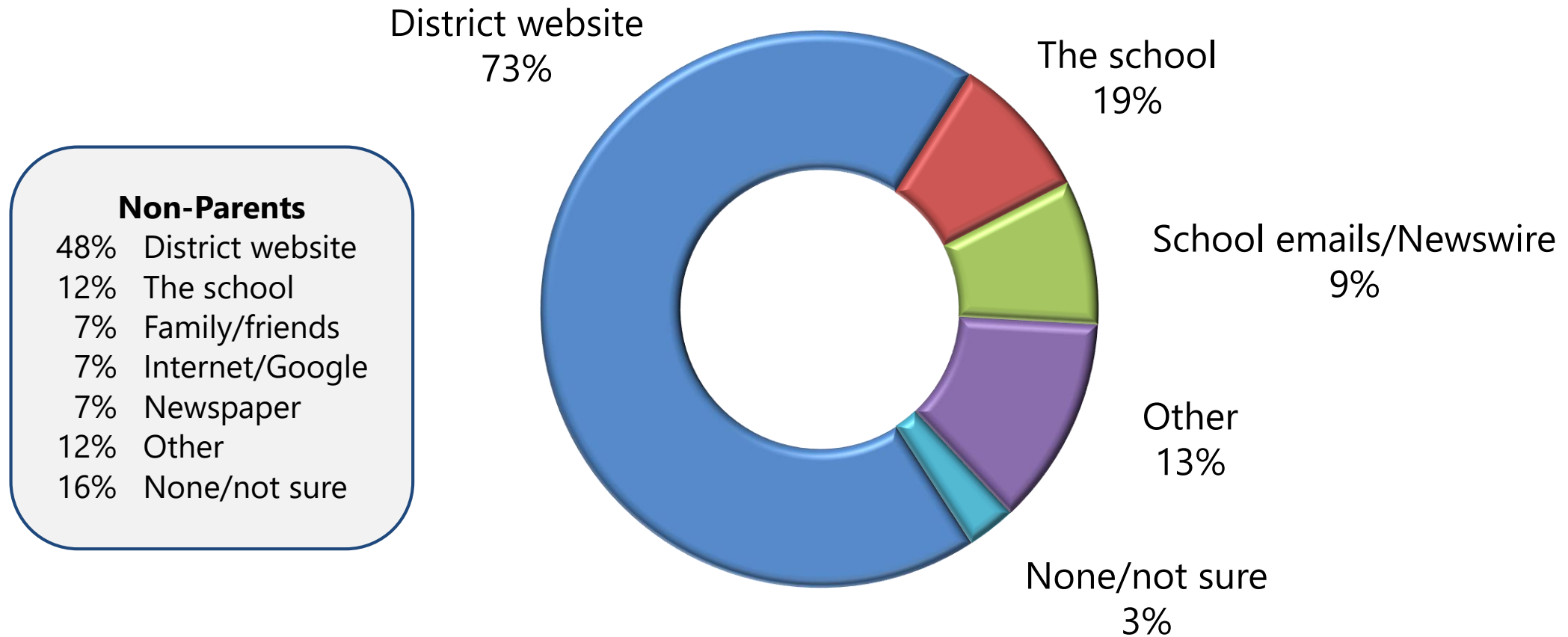
“I felt like I was kind of blown off about my concern for funding sports.” (Athletic Department)

“My son qualified for an IEP in the past, but that ball was dropped when he was re-evaluated. I never heard back from either of the administrators.” (School & District Administrators)

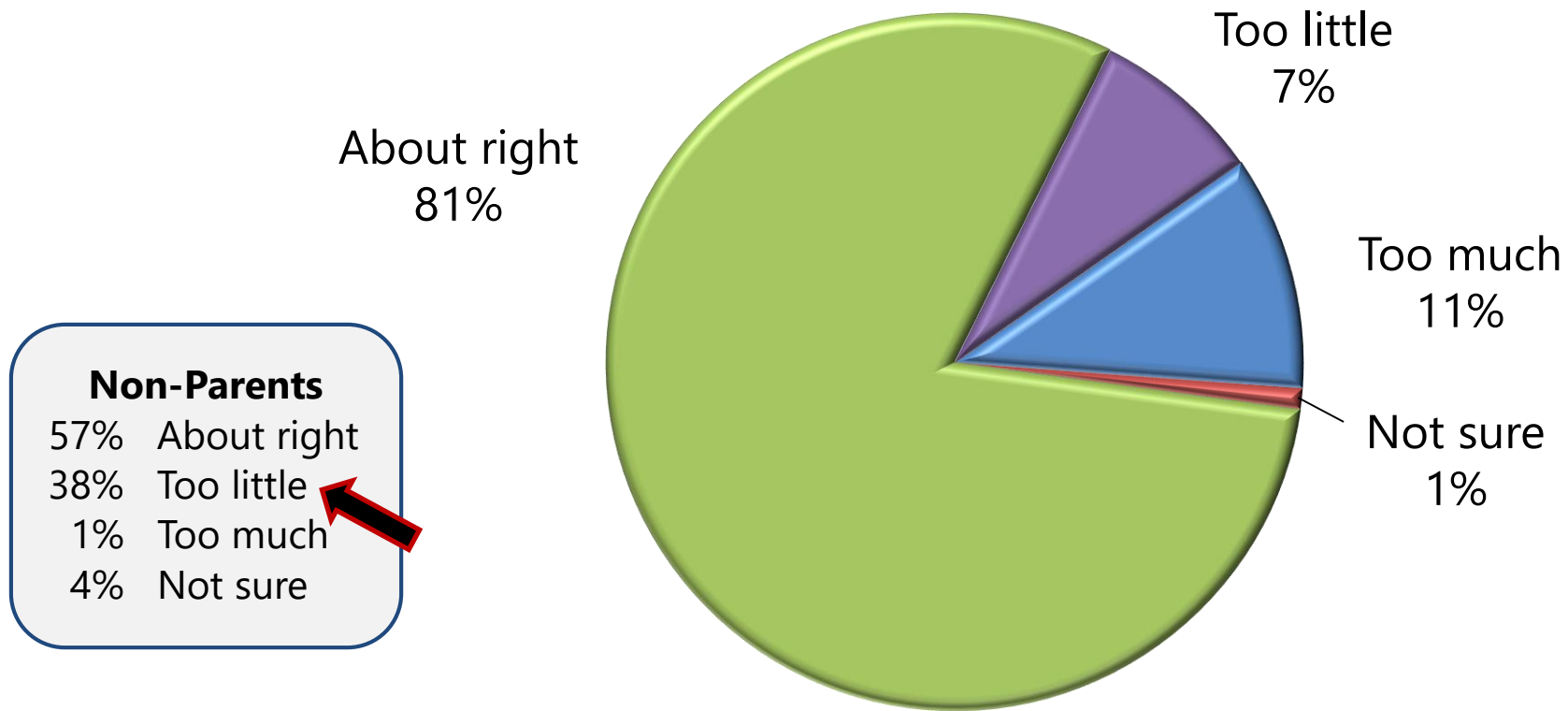
Parents

Information and Events on Campus

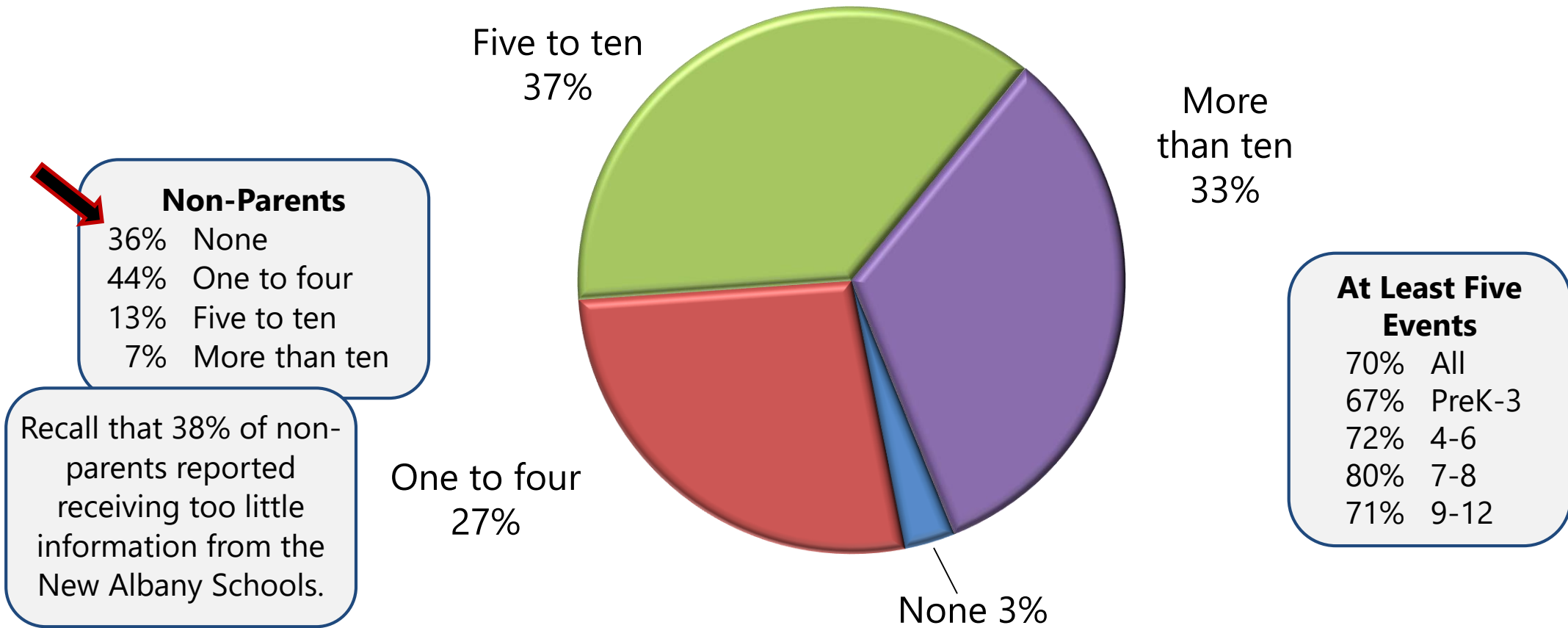
Among parents, the district’s website is, by far, the most popular source of information about the New Albany Schools – as it is for non-parents.



For most parents, the amount of news and information they receive about the New Albany Schools is adequate. Only a few want more. By contrast, four out of ten non-parents want more.



Over the past year, seven out of ten parents have attended at least five events on campus. Predictably, among non-parents, the comparable figure is lower: two out of ten (with nearly four out of ten attending no events).



Recall that 38% of non-parents reported receiving too little information from the New Albany Schools.

Observations

- Among community residents, impressions of the New Albany Schools, across myriad dimensions, are positive. Indeed, a majority of residents describe the schools as both excellent and heading in the right direction.
- Positive impressions of the New Albany Schools are notably more common among parents with children enrolled in the schools – and less common among non-parents, residents of Plain Township, and older residents, the overlap notwithstanding.
- Overall, non-parents know less about the New Albany Schools and, as a consequence, have fewer opinions. That said, many of these residents, especially men, are open to more information about the schools.
- For many residents, both parents and non-parents, the district's top priorities should center on academic achievement, safety, and mental health, areas where most agree the New Albany Schools are currently strong.

- Areas where residents perceive the district as less strong include class size (many want smaller classes), listening to the concerns of local residents (many want more listening), and fiscal responsibility (many want more transparency). In addition, most residents were either unaware of or dissatisfied with the district's efforts to implement cost-saving measures to extend taxpayer dollars through 2023.
- Despite these perceived weaknesses, the vast majority of residents believe the New Albany Schools are committed to creating a culture of accountability that achieves the best academic and developmental outcomes for each student.

Questions?

