



# SAC Team 4

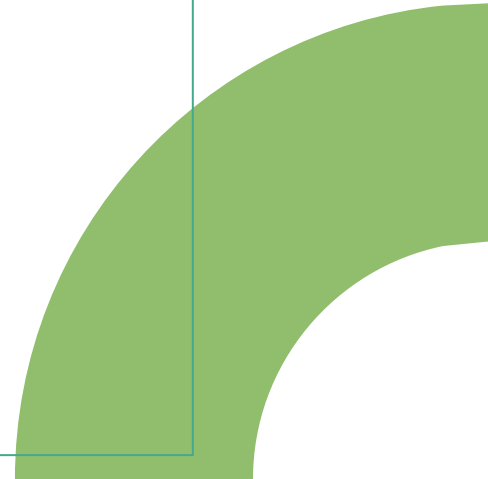
## COMMUNITY GROUPS, CONNECTIONS, AND PARTNERSHIPS

### HOW TO EFFECTIVELY CONNECT WITH THE SYCAMORE FAMILY

Lauren Barnes, Mike Gearin, Will Hudson,  
Brandon James, Evelyn Wagner

ADMIN SUPPORT: MALLORY BONBRIGHT, CHAD LEWIS

May 9, 2022



# AGENDA

## Next Steps

Suggestions for the district and group

## Background

Leverage the 70% model and focus on defining a new group

## Framework

Group structure and a purpose

## Connections

Ideas and input from peer school districts.

## Survey

Field survey of Sycamore Families

# BACKGROUND

Last year, we focused on “engaging the 70%.”

This year, we focus on “engaging the **30%**” of families who **do** have kids in our schools.





# INITIAL CHARTER

---

This follows up on 2021's "Engaging the 70%." This team will look at ways we can enhance the engagement of the 30% of families who **DO** have kids in our schools.

Essential questions:

- How do we identify the "influencers" in the district/community? How can they serve our community? In what capacity? How can they serve as "ground crew" for the district?
- How do we maintain the momentum from previous engagements and master facility planning?
- What opportunities and ideas should be explored to engage this community?
- What media would the 30% prefer to receive these communications?
- How might we leverage this group to communicate major changes in the school district?



# SELECTED OBJECTIVES

---

Leverage learnings the 2021 70% Project Model

Seek District Peers who have made similar steps

Reach out to the 30% and gather current views and inputs

Focus on defining a group

Provide data-driven basis that illustrates needs and enables future metrics for success

# connections



# INTRO

## WHAT ARE OUR PEERS DOING?

- o Meg Krsacok, Communications Consultant at Sycamore Community Schools, assisted SAC Team 4 with identifying districts within the region that have taken similar steps to create a more robust communication platform with an emphasis on transparency and inclusion.
- o Ms. Krsacok provided the team with the contact information for the Middletown Communication Director, Elizabeth Beadle.
- o On 01/27/2022, SAC Team 4 met with Ms. Beadle via a Zoom meeting for approximately an hour, and she provided SAC Team 4 with detailed information about Middletown's "Middie Rising" Program and more specifically how Middletown City Schools uses "Key Communicators" to broadly and transparently share and receive information across the district in an effort to build and sustain district-wide trust and communication.

# MIDDIE RISING PROGRAM

- o The primary goal of the “Middie Rising” Program is to encourage the Middletown School District (students, faculty, parents, the community at large, etc.) to “rise up and be the reason”. The principal message of the program is that in lieu of circumstances, there is always a chance to better oneself, better the community, and rise up and do great things.
- o Through this program, Ms. Beadle wanted to change the perception and culture of the Middletown School District and promote a more positive view of the Middletown Community.
- o The first step in achieving this mission was to select individuals for a committee that would engage in positive discussions about key district and community topics with the communication director and superintendent and share reflections as well as information with the community. These individuals are known as the “Key Communicators”.

# KEY COMMUNICATORS

- o They are the most positive gossipers in the district.
- o They meet with communications director and superintendent every other month and they either do a zoom or written communication on the other months
- o In the meetings, there are generally a topic or two up for discussion and led by the superintendent (i.e., state report cards, COVID and masking, violence on school grounds, etc.), and the key communicators then ask questions, provide feedback, and update the superintendent on what they have been hearing from the community at large throughout the district.
- o Applications to be a key communicator are taken at the beginning of the school year (via sign-up sheet, email, and social media). 20-25 applicants are selected (by superintendent and communication director) and refreshed, if necessary, throughout the year.
- o No term limit and members stay on as long as they would like.

# WHAT WE LIKED ABOUT IT

- o It was evident how important it was that everyone throughout the Middletown Community felt included and had an opportunity to have a voice.
- o Key Communicators include a diverse group of members from the Middletown Community including parents, faculty, pastors, etc.
- o Additionally, social workers, also known as Success Liaisons ([BCESC.org](http://BCESC.org)) are also included in the monthly meeting with the Key Communicators to provide a voice for the families/students of low to moderate designated households. Research has shown that parents of this demographic tend to not show up to school and district related information functions; however, their voices are just as valuable as everyone else in the community.

# WHY IT WASN'T A GOOD FIT

- o Ms. Beadle noted that only two of the seven schools in her district have PTOs. In lieu of a PTO presence across all of the Middletown schools, the superintendent and communication director have developed and executed on the Middie Rising concept, which has had a powerful and positive impact on culture and communication throughout the Middletown footprint.
- o If Sycamore adopted a Key Communicators Committee similar to Middletown, there would be a lot of overlap and similarities in roles and functions currently performed by the PTO.
- o Middletown key communicator committee meetings generally covered topics such as state report cards, COVID and masking, violence on school grounds, etc.
- o This group would focus on updates or changes such as changes to a construction program implementation or funding, changes to academic or sports programs, proposed academic calendar year changes, bus routing/access changes, building-specific changes, etc

# SURVEY

Survey Overview

Initial Findings

Parents with Kids  
at Multiple School  
Buildings

Possible Next Steps



The background is a light green color with several abstract shapes and patterns. In the top left, there is a dark teal semi-circle. In the top right, there is a yellow semi-circle with three white vertical bars. In the bottom left, there is a dark teal semi-circle. In the bottom right, there is a dark green semi-circle. There are four clusters of dots: a 3x8 grid of dark green dots in the top left, a 10x3 grid of orange dots in the bottom left, a 3x8 grid of dark green dots in the bottom center, and a 10x10 grid of orange dots in the bottom right.

# survey overview



# COMMUNICATION SURVEY SET UP

---

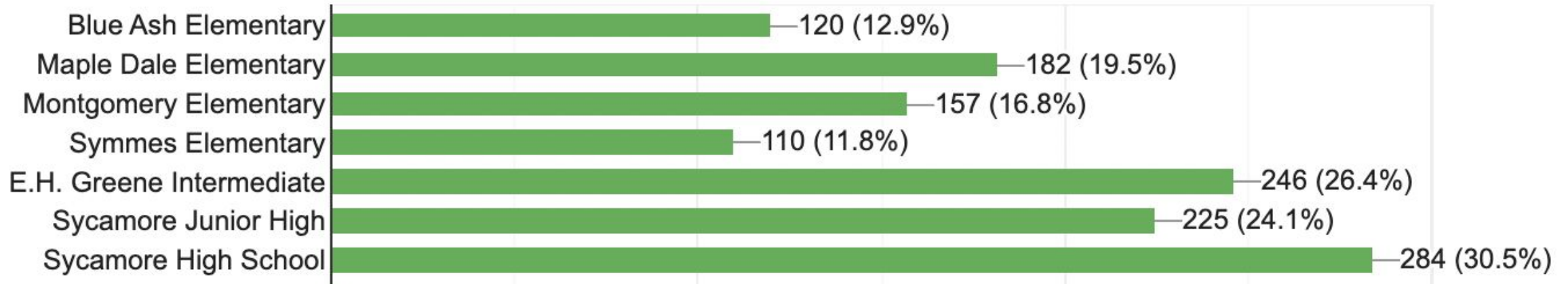
- Poll surveyed all current Sycamore Parents
  - 930 responses; roughly 3500 families in district
- Feedback on communications at three levels: Teacher, building, district
- Parents identified methods of communication they used and how often, which they preferred and how informed they felt
  - Optionally, parents commented on what worked well and opportunities for improvement
- Provides baseline to evaluate any communication adjustments

# SURVEY RESPONSES REPRESENT PARENTS ACROSS THE DISTRICT

Which Sycamore schools do your students CURRENTLY attend? (Please select ALL that apply)

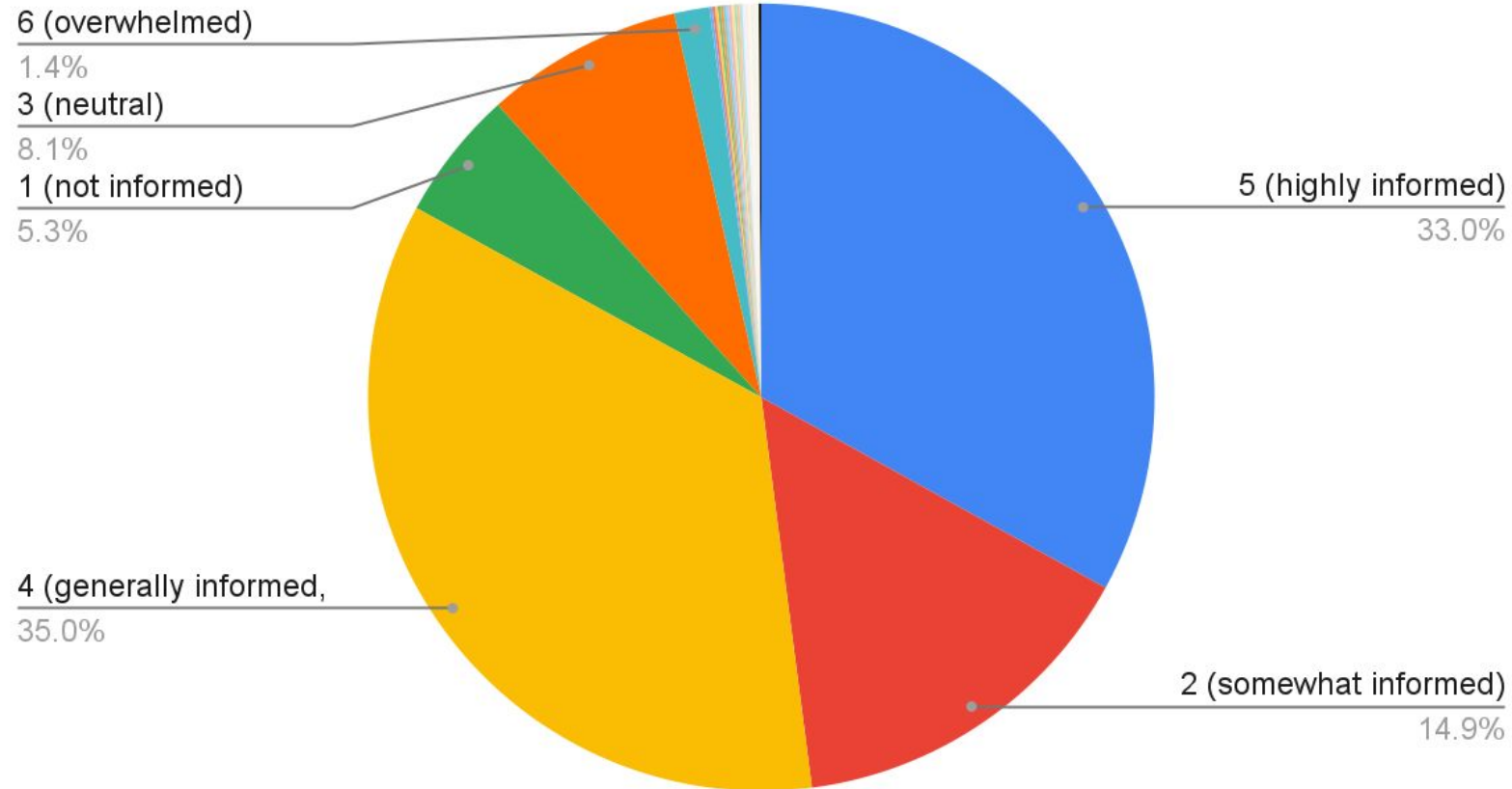


932 responses



# CLASSROOM NEWS: OVER 76% FELT WELL INFORMED (3,4, OR 5)

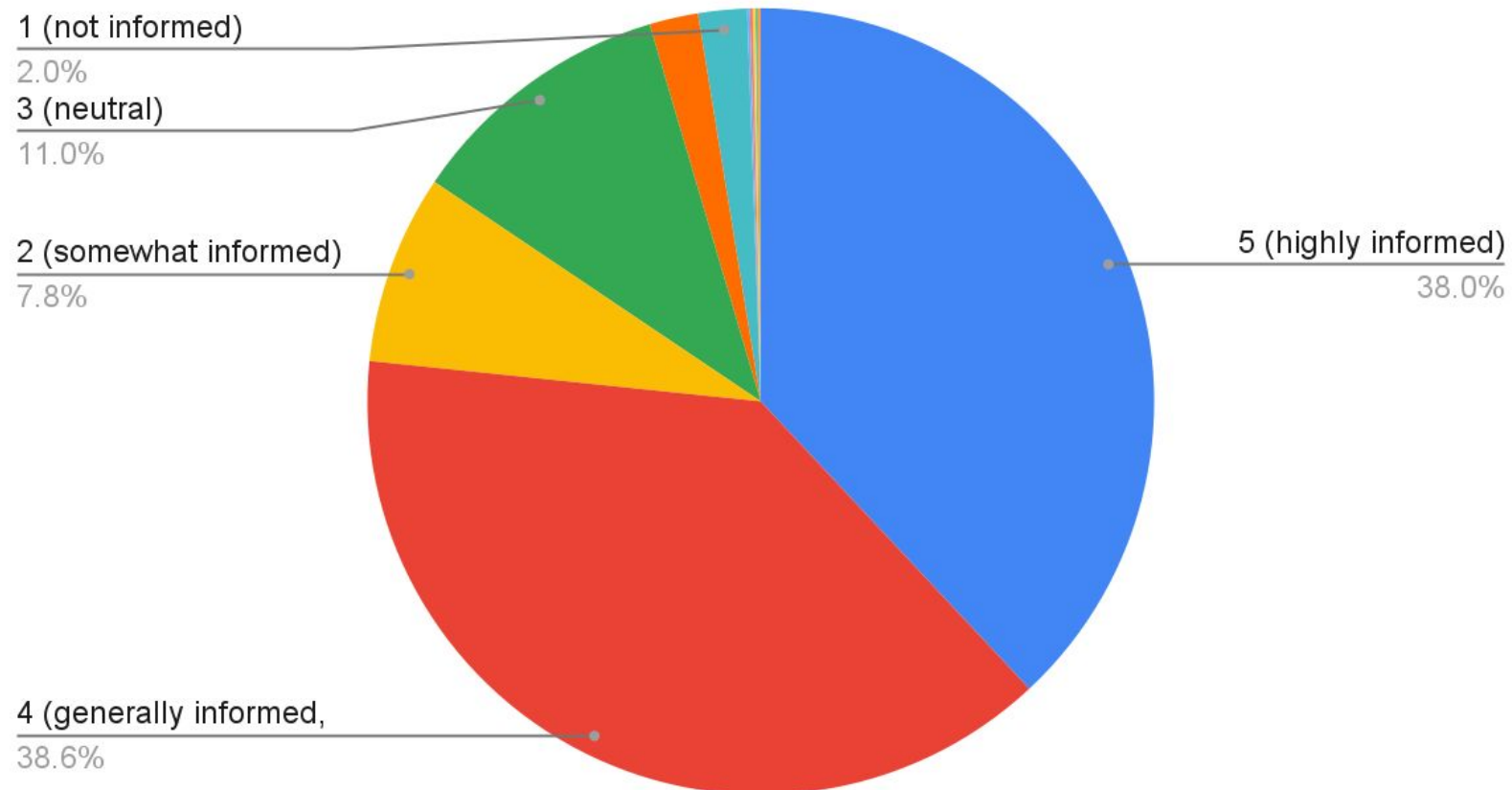
Classroom: How informed Do You Feel?



# BUILDING NEWS: OVER 87% FELT WELL INFORMED (3,4, OR 5)

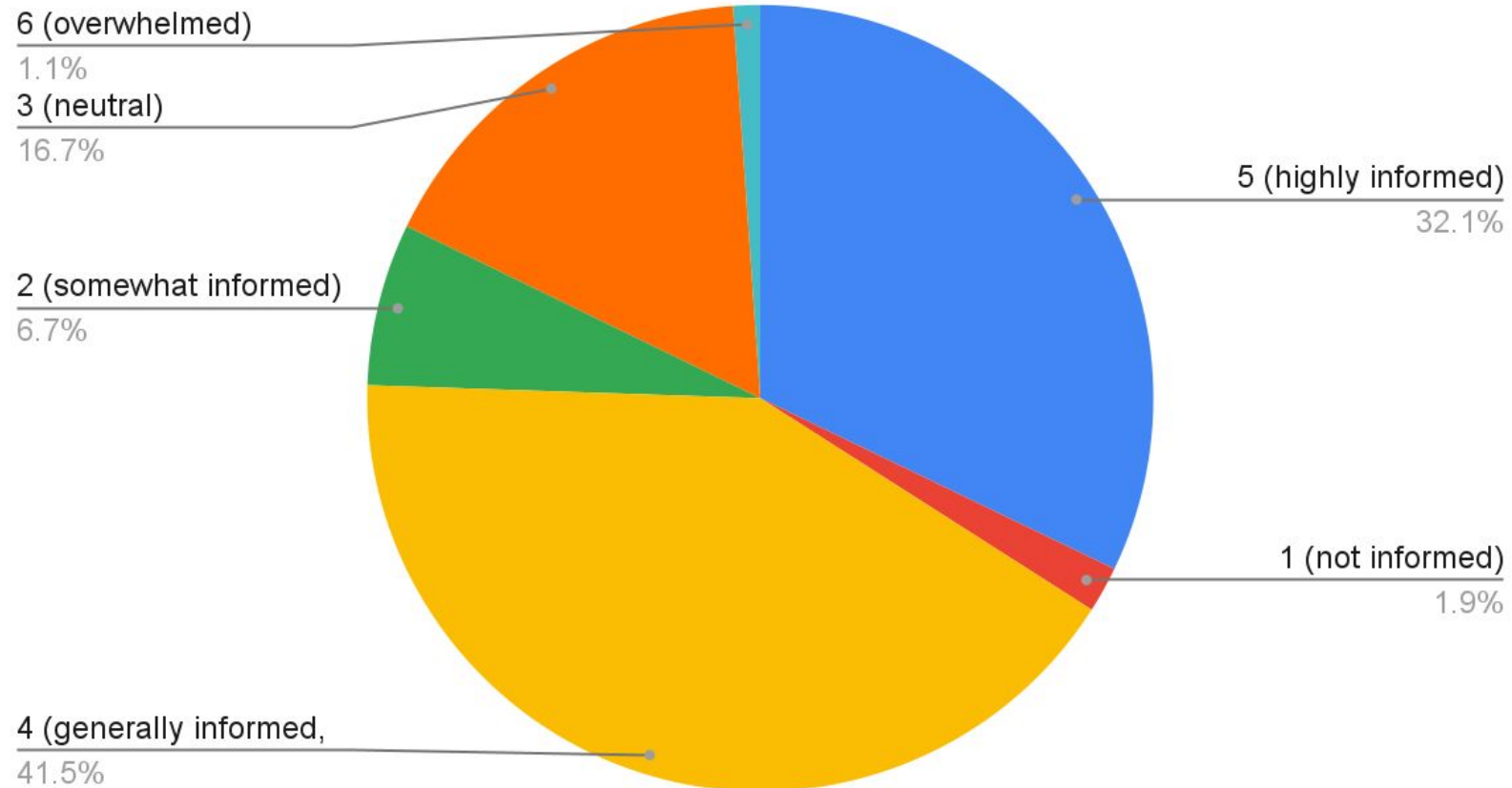
---

Building News: How informed



# DISTRICT NEWS: OVER 90% FELT WELL INFORMED (3, 4, OR 5)

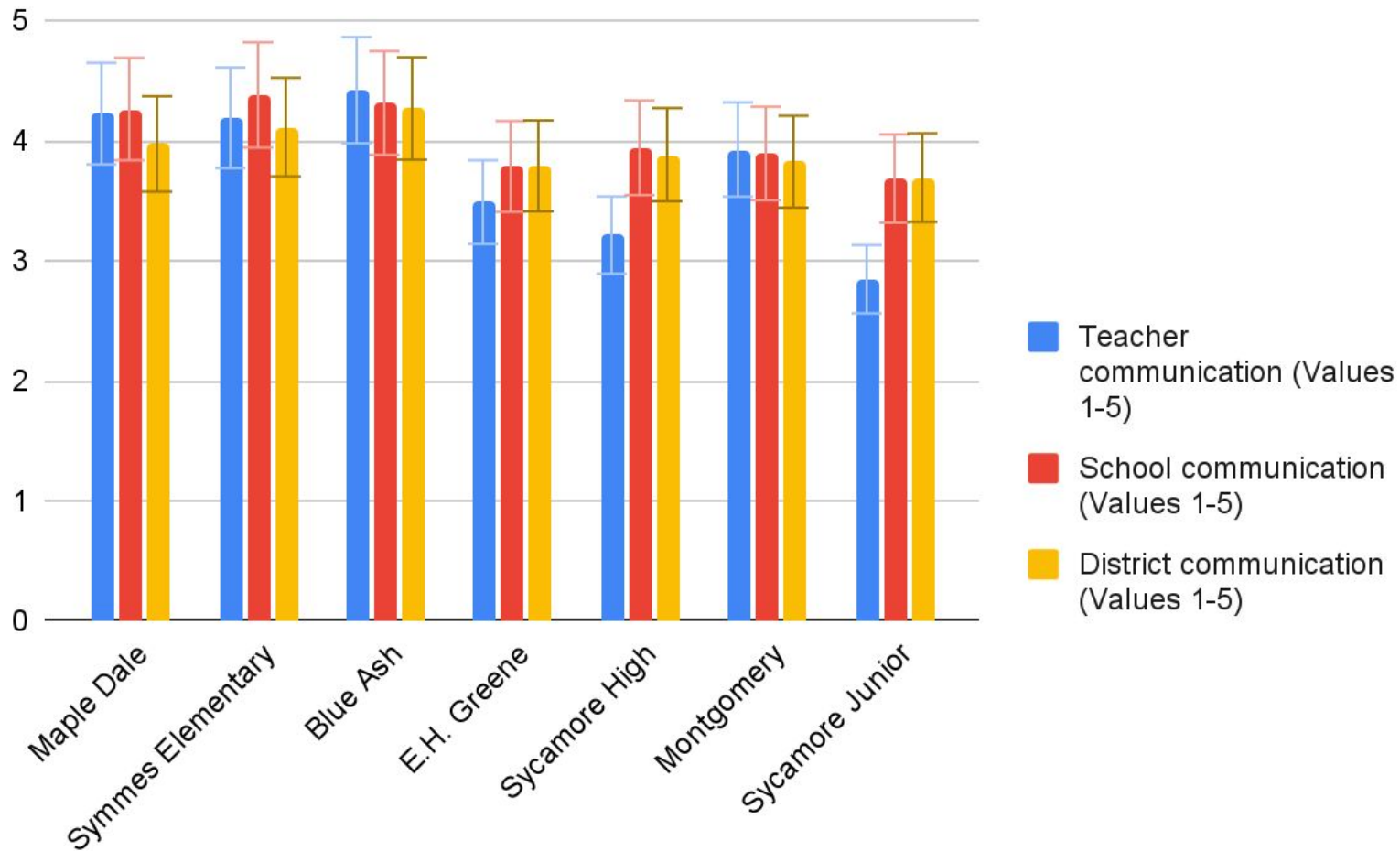
District News: How Informed do you feel?



The background is a solid light green color. It features several abstract geometric elements: a teal circle in the top-left corner, a yellow circle in the top-right corner with three white vertical bars inside it, a dark green semi-circle in the top-right, a dark green semi-circle in the middle-left, a teal semi-circle in the bottom-left, and a dark green semi-circle in the bottom-right. There are four dot patterns: a 3x8 grid of dark green dots in the top-left, a 10x4 grid of orange dots in the bottom-left, a 5x8 grid of dark green dots in the bottom-center, and a 10x8 grid of orange dots in the bottom-right.

# INITIAL FINDINGS

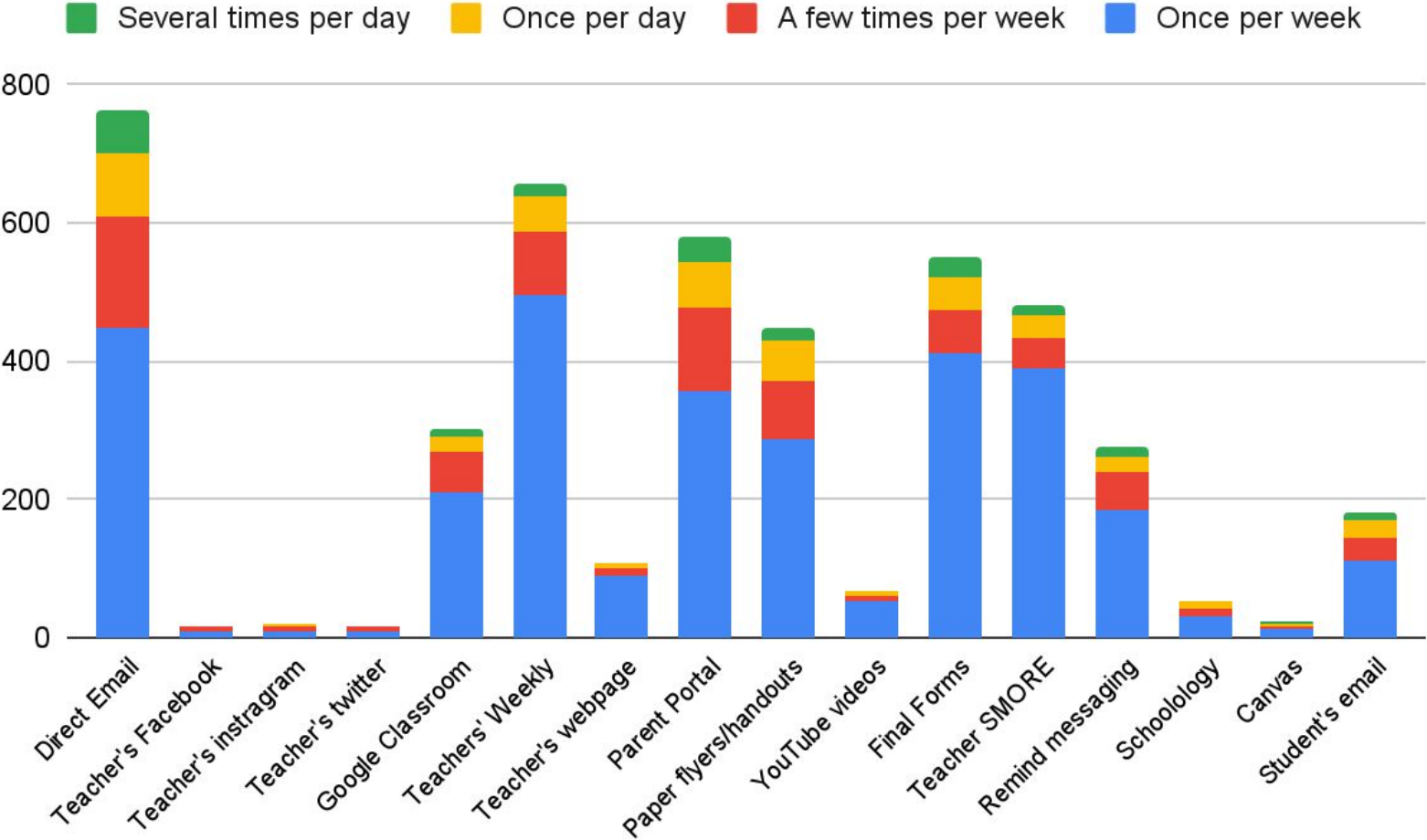
# HOW INFORMED PARENTS FELT, ON AVERAGE, BY SCHOOL



**Note: Data set limited to parents with students at one school only, about 590 of 932 families surveyed**

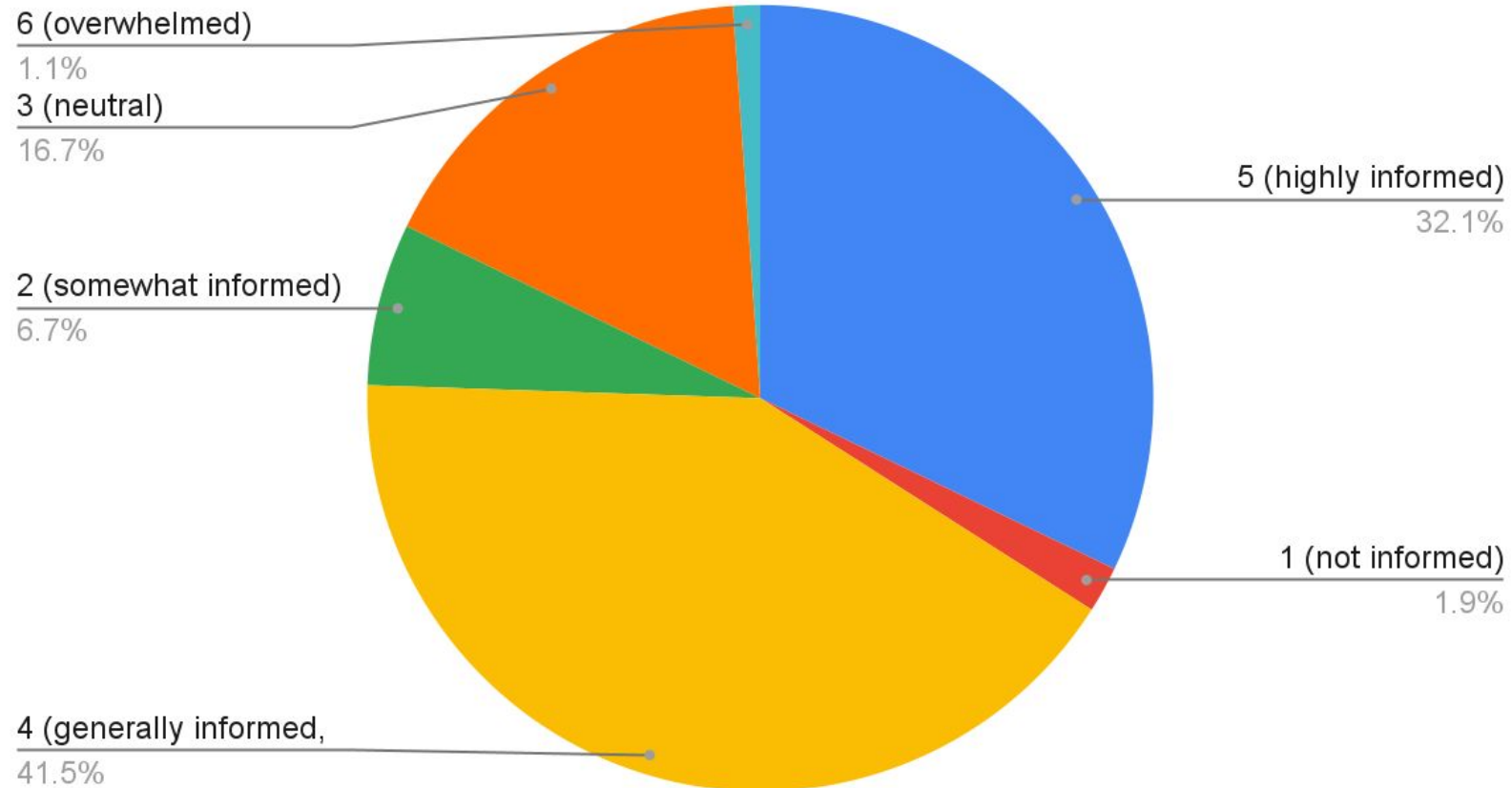


# FOR CLASSROOMS: EMAIL, FINAL FORMS, AND PARENT PORTAL HIGHLY USED

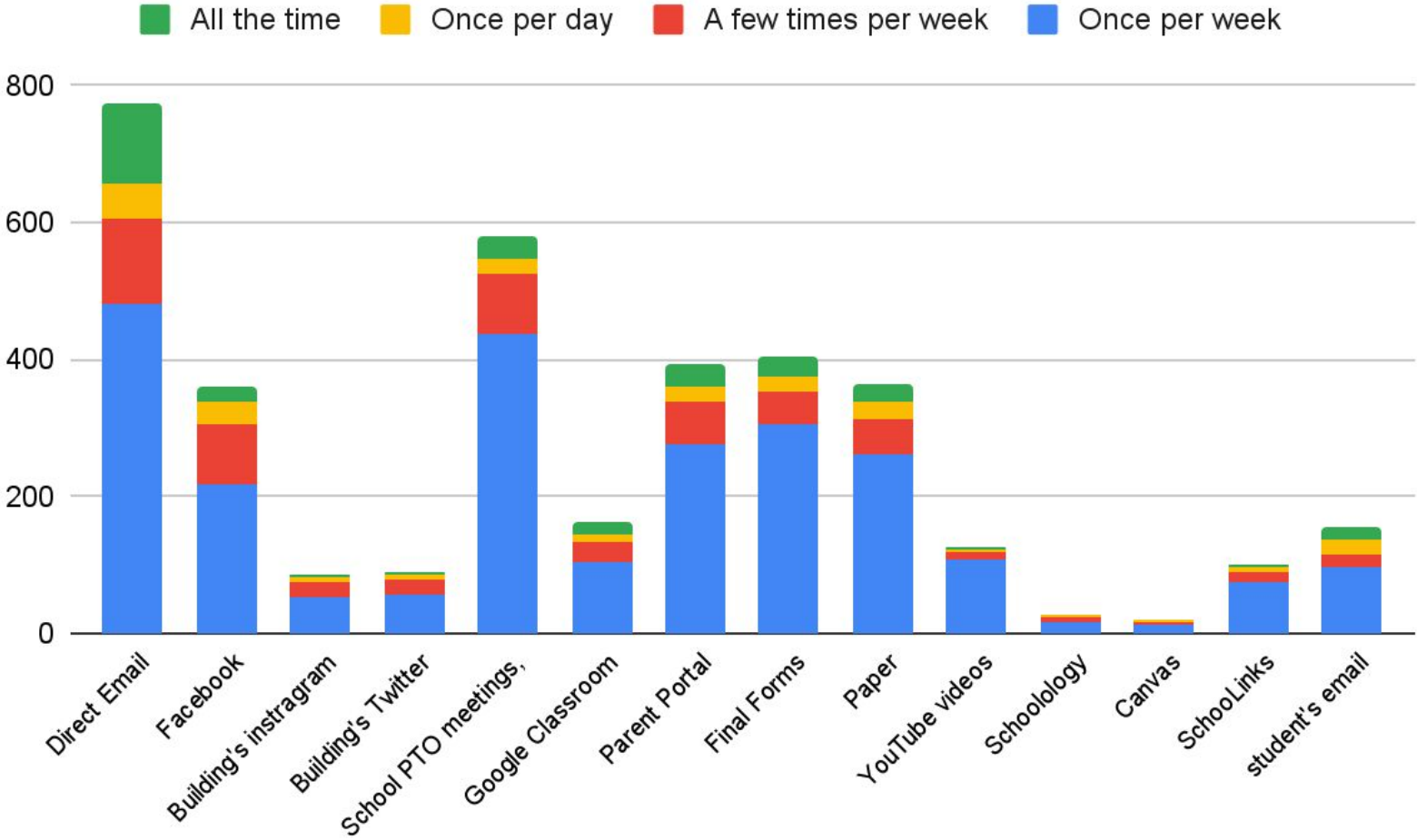


# DISTRICT NEWS: OVER 90% FELT WELL INFORMED (3, 4, OR 5)

District News: How Informed do you feel?



# FOR BUILDING NEWS: DIRECT EMAIL, PARENT PORTAL, PTO HIGHLY USED



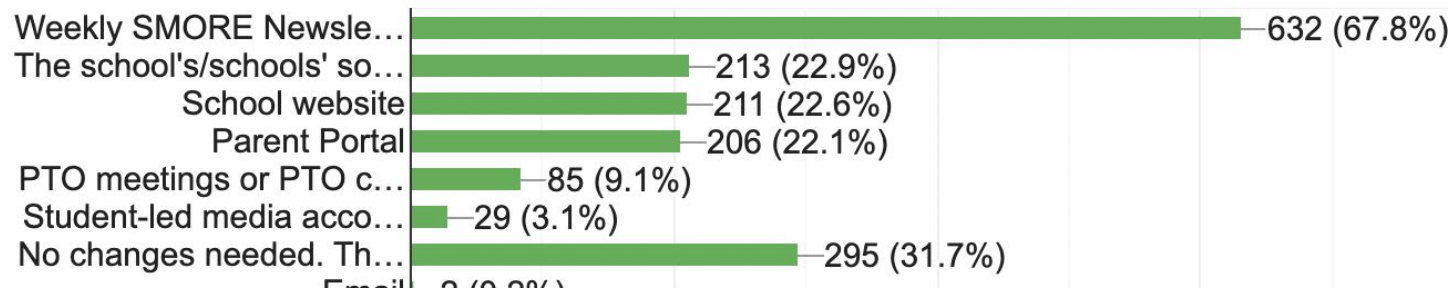
\* Note that building website not option



# BUILDING COMMUNICATION Preference Summary

If you could choose, which methods would you prefer to use to stay connected with SYCAMORE BUILDING news and information? (please check all that apply)

932 responses



**Weekly SMORE Newsletter**  
**School/Schools' social media accounts**  
**School website**  
**Parent Portal**  
**PTO Meetings or PTO communication channel**  
**Student let media accounts (student council, The Leaf, student social media)**

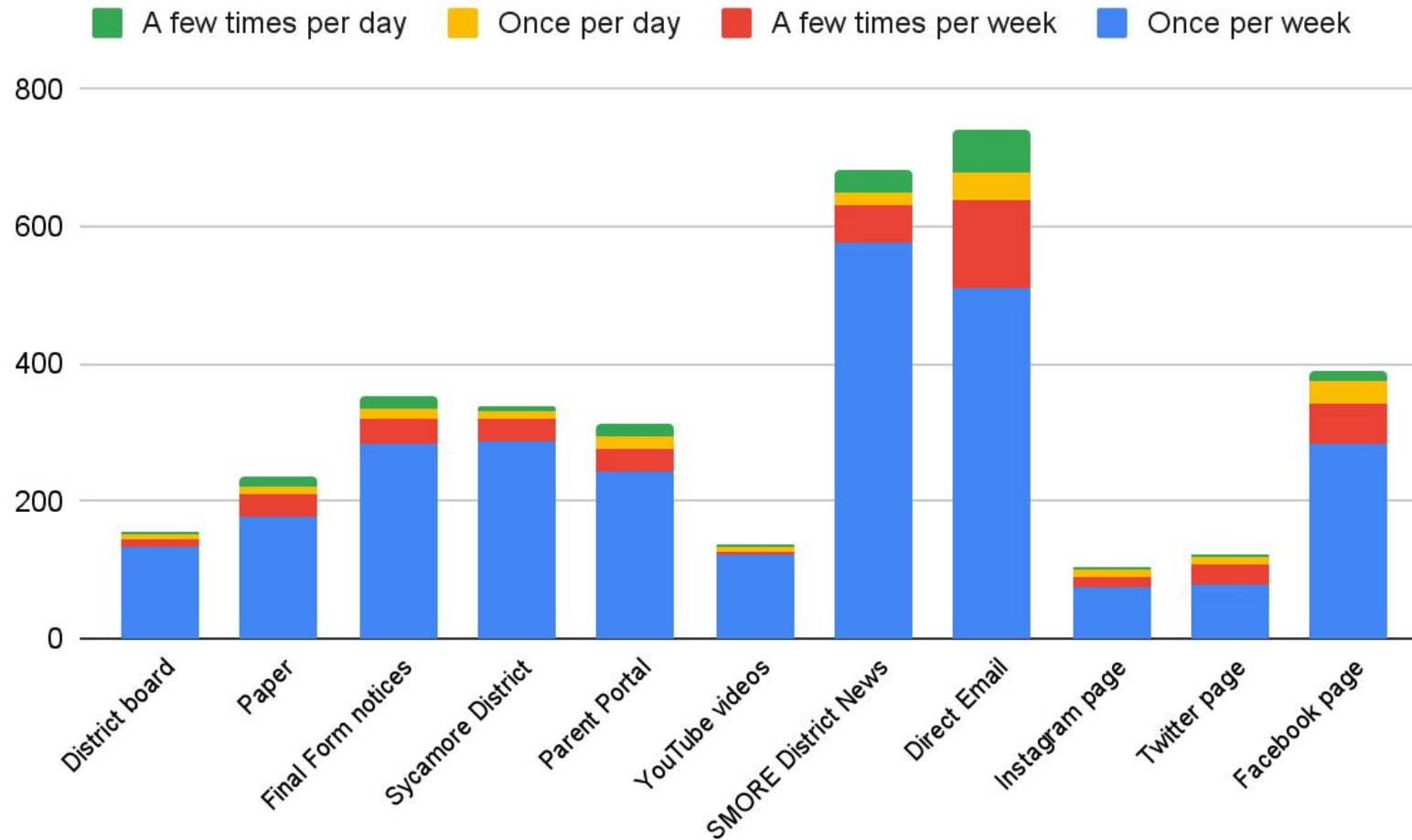
# BUILDING NEWS COMMENTS: 25% Was FEEDBACK ON Format, Frequency

---

- One vehicle
- One platform
- Consolidate
- Streamline
- Too many
- Too few
- Fewer
- Minimize
- Pick one
- Less duplication
- Hard to keep track
- Fewer communication
- Make it simple
- One place
- Everything in one place
- Too much
- Consistency
- Duplication
- Overwhelm
- One media
- Concise

While 86% favorable about communication, comments suggest there is a broad discussion about changes they would like to see

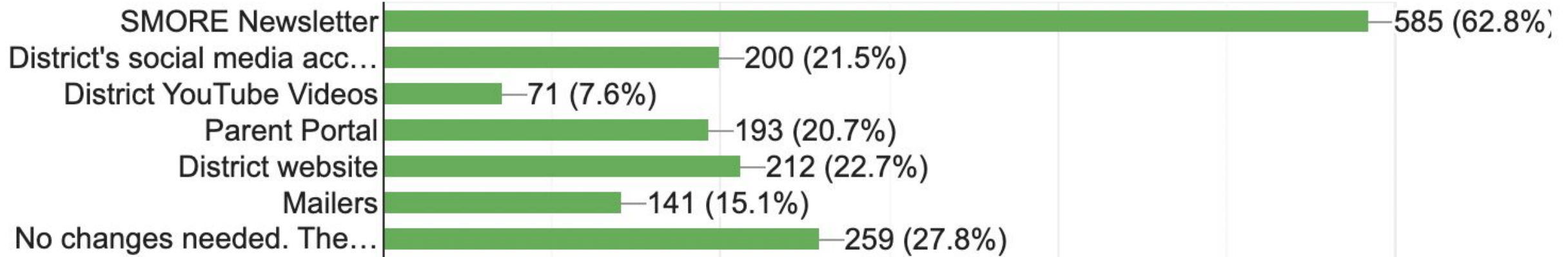
# FOR DISTRICT NEWS: EMAIL, AND SMORE ARE MOST USED

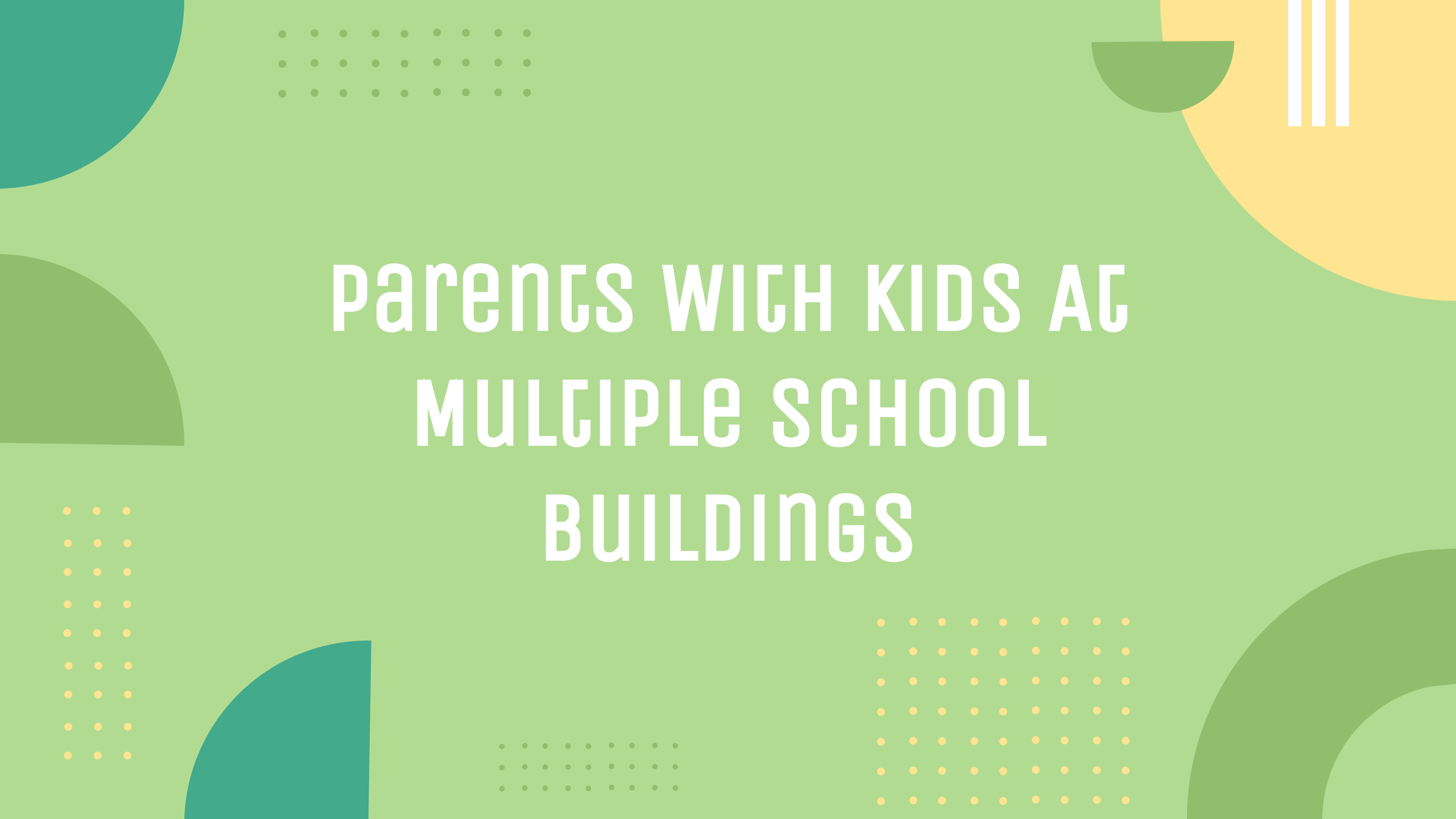


# DISTRICT COMMUNICATION Preference Summary

If you could choose, which would you prefer to use to stay connected with SYCAMORE DISTRICT news and information? (please check all that apply)

932 responses





**PARENTS WITH KIDS AT  
MULTIPLE SCHOOL  
BUILDINGS**



## TOO many COOKS?

---

- 348 of the 932 Participants have kids at multiple schools
- Same percentage of negative (1, 2 and 6) answers related to receiving building and district news...but...

**TWICE** as likely to be overwhelmed with building information and

**FOUR TIMES** as likely to be overwhelmed with district info



## POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY

---

- Parents with kids at multiple schools prefer:
  - SMORE
  - Parent Portal Notifications
  - Final Form Notifications
  - Direct Emails
- Refined communication is important

Will our proposed new group help focus these parents on information?

The background is a light green color with several abstract shapes and patterns. In the top left, there is a dark teal semi-circle. In the top right, there is a yellow semi-circle with three white vertical bars. In the bottom left, there is a dark teal semi-circle. In the bottom right, there is a dark green semi-circle. There are four dot patterns: a 3x10 grid of dark green dots in the top left, a 10x10 grid of orange dots in the bottom left, a 3x10 grid of dark green dots in the bottom center, and a 10x10 grid of orange dots in the bottom right.

# POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

# COMMUNICATION CHANGES TO POTENTIALLY EXPLORE



- **Research** other school districts' tools
- **Level Set** parents of incoming class to share communication tools, expectations
- **Consolidate/summarize** news and info within tools
- **Establish and standardize** uniform set of communication tools across school buildings
- **Create centralized location** with links to information/ apps/ tools
- **Leverage** a Sycamore Communication Group! (see next section)



# FRAMEWORK

How could we maintain momentum from past efforts?

How might we leverage this to support major changes?



# GROUP FRAMEWORK

## Name

Give the group a name, structure, and direction.

## Launch

Make it easy to launch and sustain.

## Scope

Ensure proper fit with other groups responsible for communication

## Advisory

Provide means to make work visible and measurable.

## Examples

Provide examples of desirable initiatives



# KEY SEGMENTS OF THE FRAMEWORK

---

## Charter and Purpose

The overarching purpose of the **Communications Activators** is to:

- Serve as an augment or overlay group that amplifies and clarifies key messages
- Provide assurance that certain key messages are indeed landing, effectively, to the district-at large, but especially to any segments which are most affected (positively or negatively)
- Provide raw and collated feedback that was elicited and collected by the Group



# INSTANCES THIS GROUP MIGHT PURSUE

---

This Group, as an augment to current communications channels, would be invoked by the Superintendent, with awareness/consent of the Board and PTO and Comm Team. This group would focus on updates or changes, pending or in-flight. Some possible instances for this could include:

- Changes to a construction program implementation or funding
- Changes to academic or sports programs, proposed academic calendar year changes
- Bus routing/access changes
- Building-specific changes
- Targeted audience changes (e.g., new ways to better serve multi-kid multi-school families)
- Respond to other feedback/opportunities found in the survey data

The group could select its own options for reach-out meetings, but likely choices would include: common areas, neutral locations such as the public library, a city hall, amphitheater, a church, building lobbies, coffee shops, residences, etc., in addition to using school venues.





# Latter sections of the Framework

---

Structure (analogous to SAC structure):

- 10 members\*, 4 selected and 6 at-large. Directed by Superintendent
- 6 year term as initial basis (aligns well with K-6 and JHS-HS durations)
- Membership process (selected and at-large)
- Open opportunity for standing members to create subgroups
- Change control

-\* Suggested starting point, but ultimately determined by Superintendent capacity to manage and volume of communications opportunities being worked





# COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVATORS NEXT STEPS

---

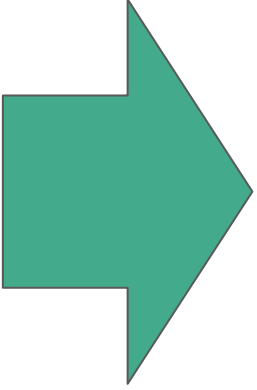
- Budget - no known material impacts to budget expected beyond incidentals such as reimbursement for handout materials, coffee, snacks. All members, named and at-large, are volunteers
- Review Framework and reconcile any desired additions/changes/deletions
- Approval of Board and Superintendent, and acknowledgement of Comm, PTO, other constituents
- Commence process to ID and select named position members
- Communicate, then plan and schedule first meeting with selected members and kick off search for at-large candidates

# LONGER VIEW PATH

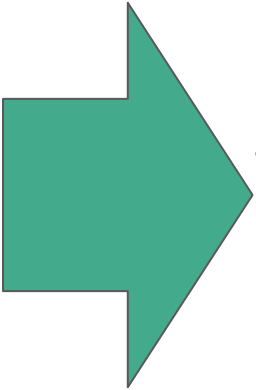
---



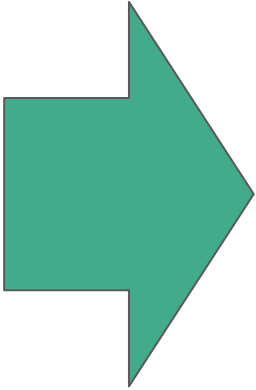
Select changes to implement Summer 2022



Implement changes Fall 2022



Distribute follow up communications survey Spring 2023



Evaluate feedback, determining any additional changes needed



Consider repeating as needed



The background is a bright yellow color. It features several decorative elements: a teal semi-circle in the top-left corner, a green semi-circle in the top-right corner, a green semi-circle in the middle-left, a teal semi-circle in the bottom-left, and a green semi-circle in the bottom-right. There are also four clusters of small dots: a 3x10 grid of teal dots in the top-left, a 3x10 grid of yellow dots in the bottom-left, a 3x10 grid of teal dots in the bottom-center, and a 10x10 grid of yellow dots in the bottom-right. In the top-right corner, there are three vertical white lines of varying heights.

Thank you!