Education Elements

Strategic Planning Community Engagement Readout

Michigan City Area Schools

Spring 2023

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Community Engagement Summary

We heard from

2,901

constituents through the Community Survey

101

students, teachers, staff, community members, parents/guardians participated in Focus Groups

We hosted

13 Focus Groups

50+

participants attended the town hall

This data will be used to inform the Michigan City Area Schools Strategic Plan.

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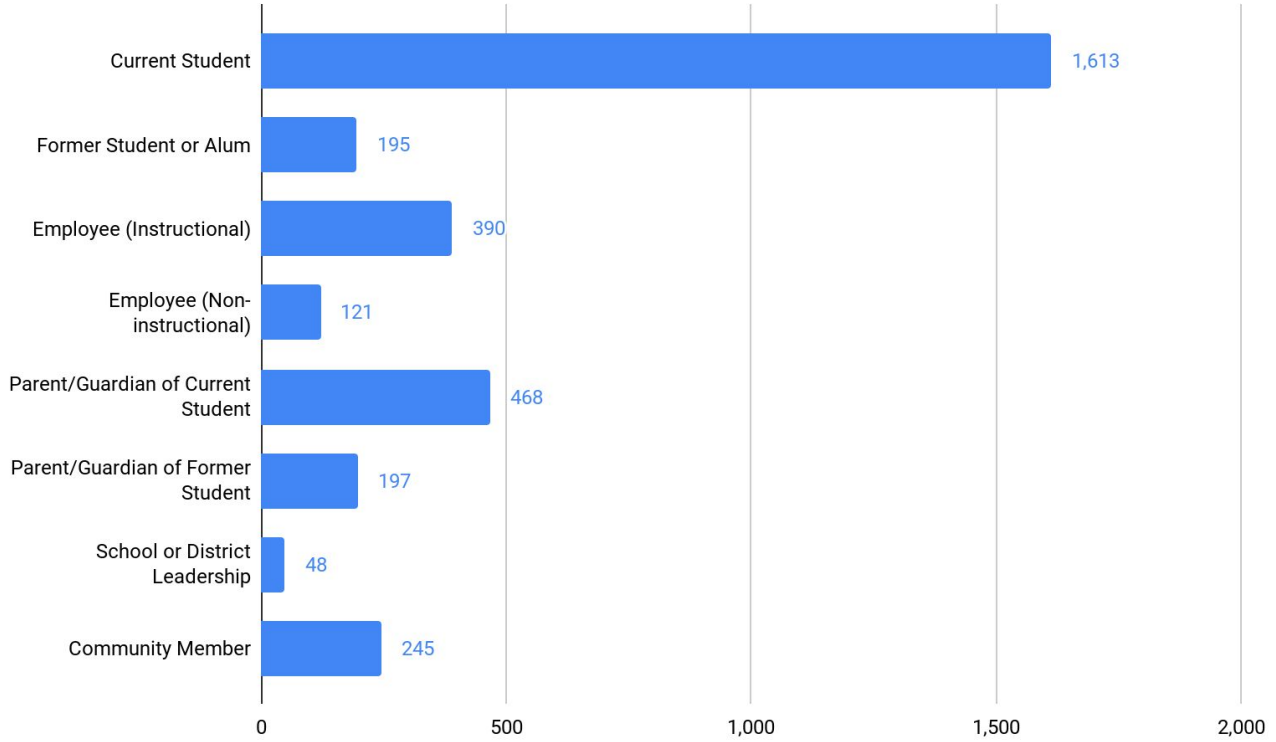
Community Survey Responses by Role



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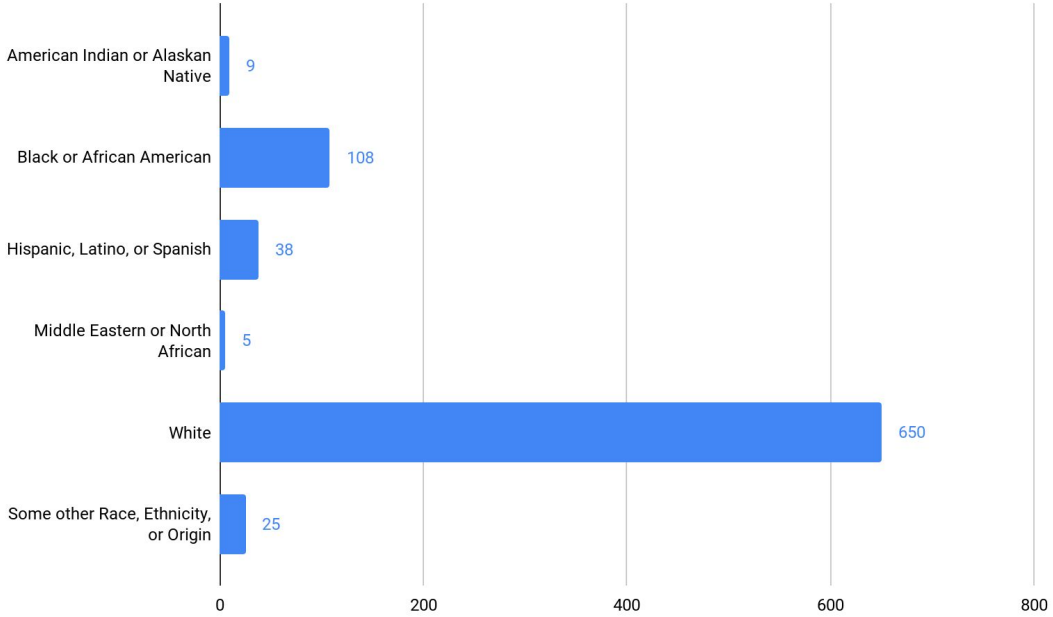
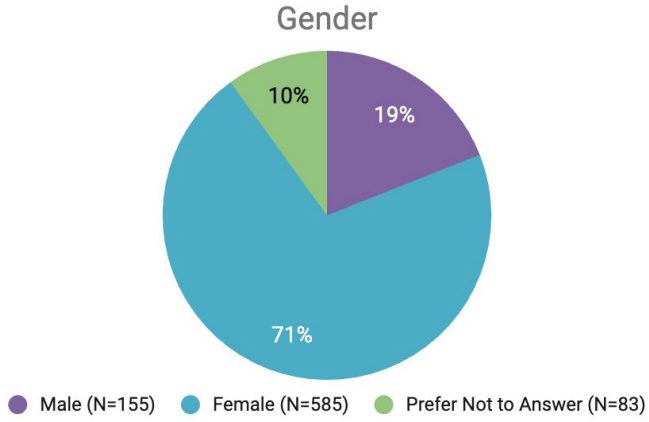
Community Survey Responses by Adult Demographics





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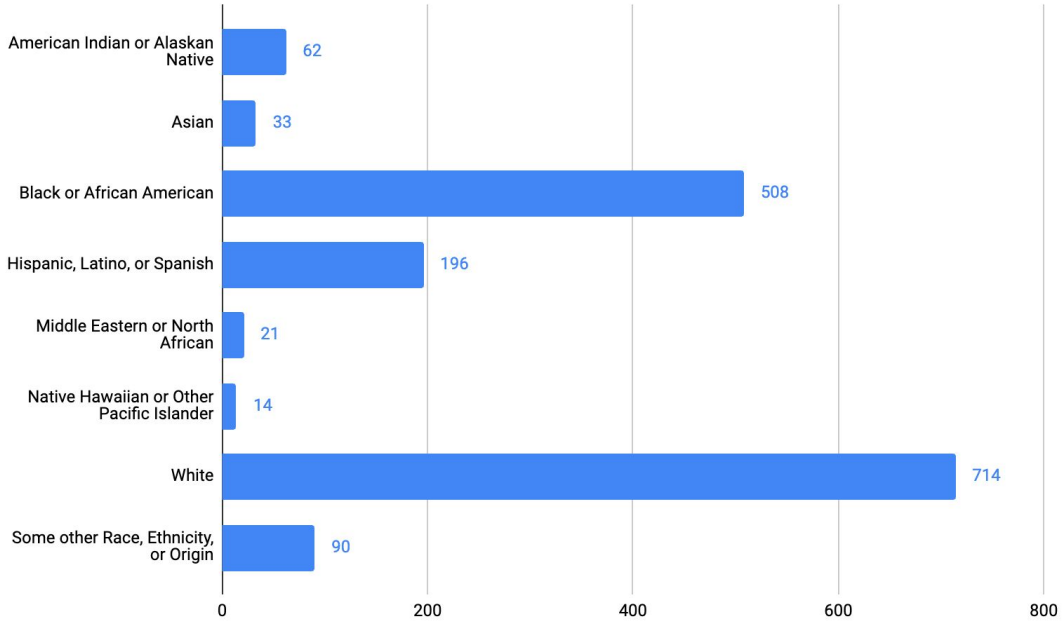
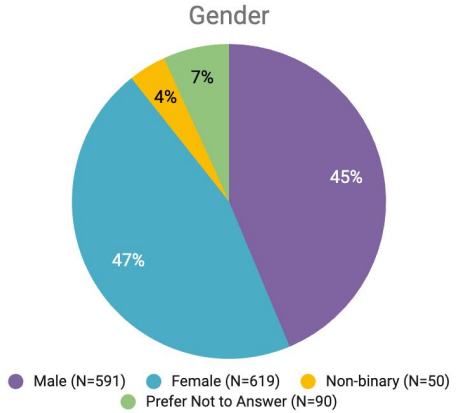
Community Survey Responses by Student Demographics





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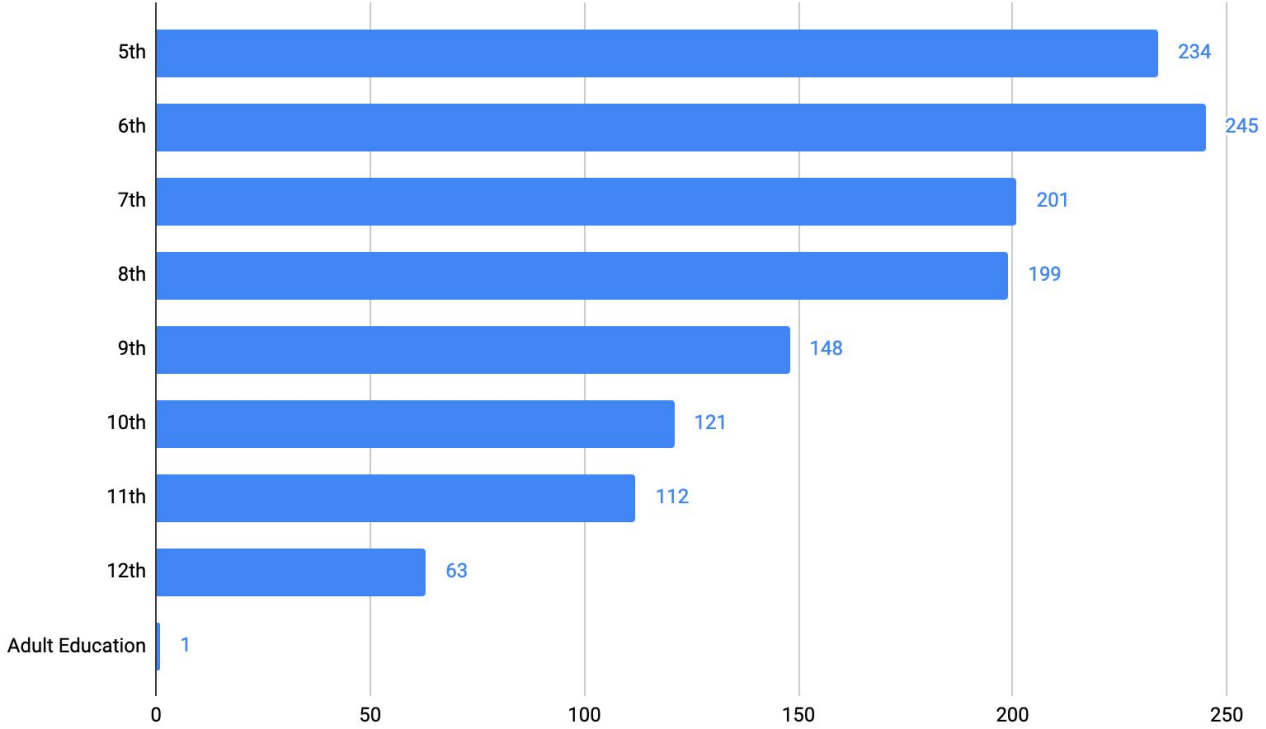
Community Survey Responses by Student Demographics



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Overall Experience

Snapshot of Data:

- Focus group
- Survey

Initial Prompting Questions for Reflection

- *What about this demographic data either confirms your current understanding of the district students, or surprises you?*
- *What are we doing to meet the needs of all students?*

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Survey Responses
Quantitative Data

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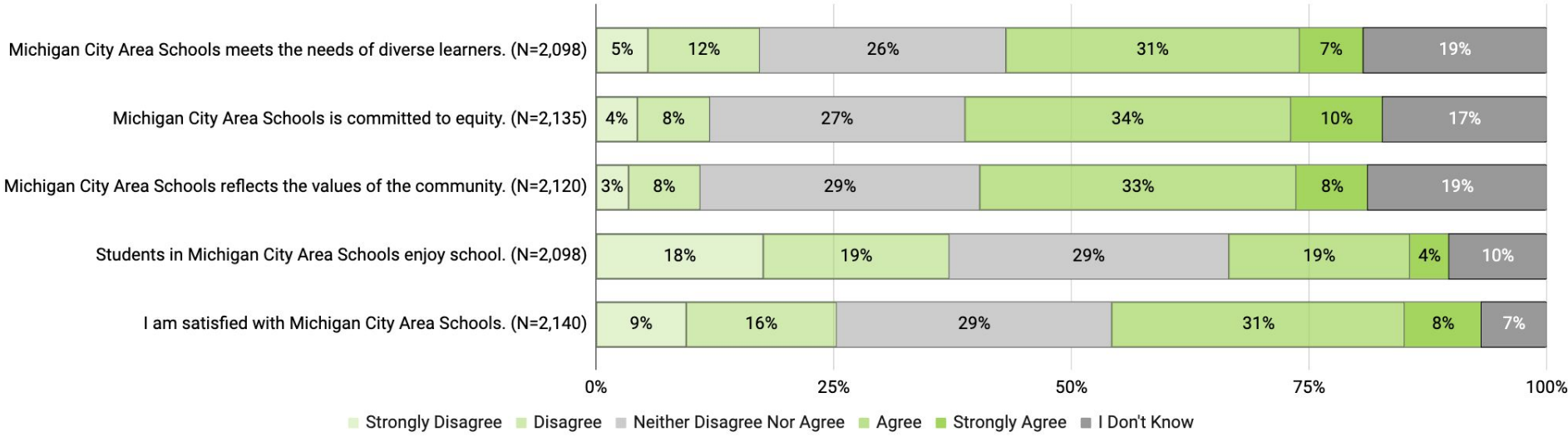
Overall Survey Data



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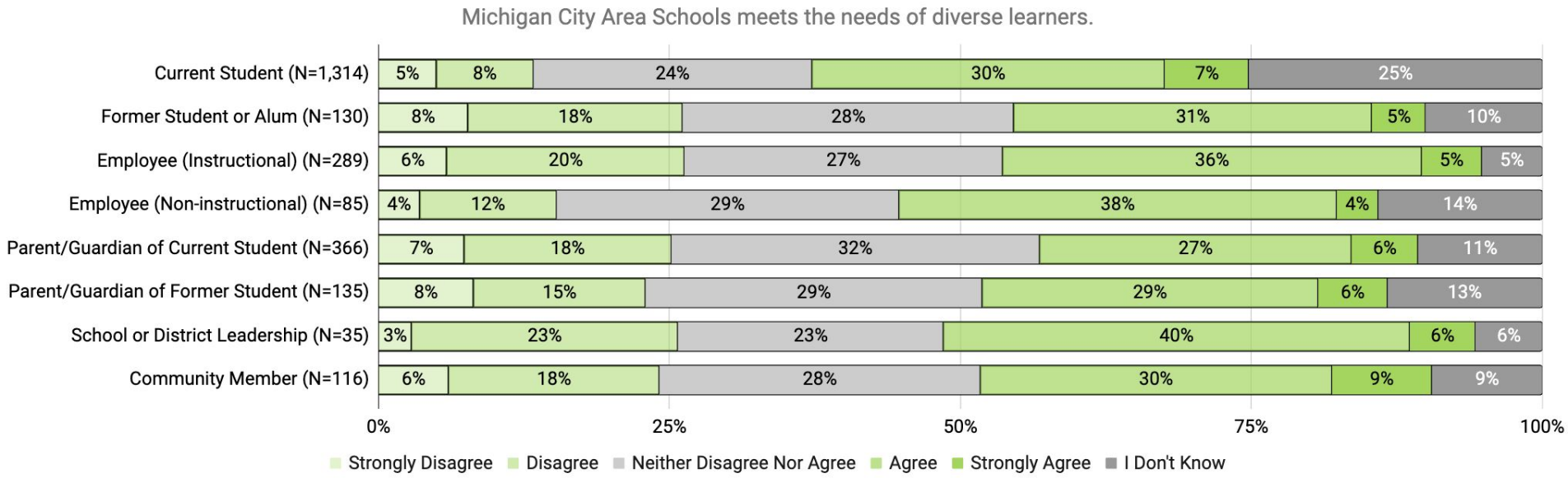
Survey Responses - By Role



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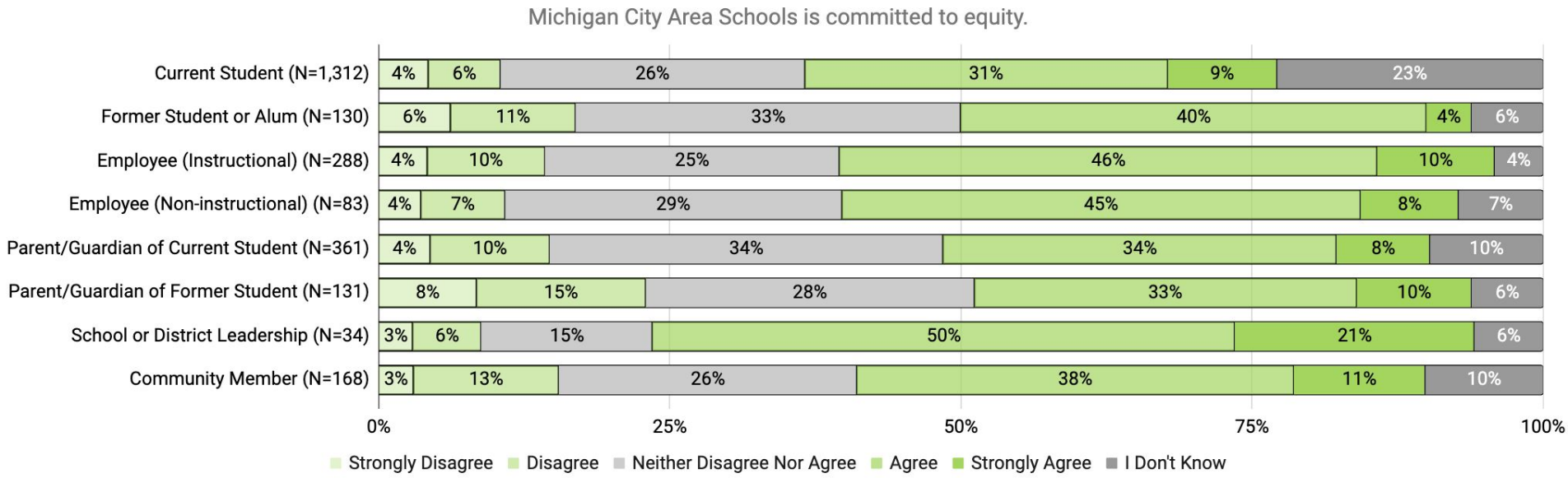

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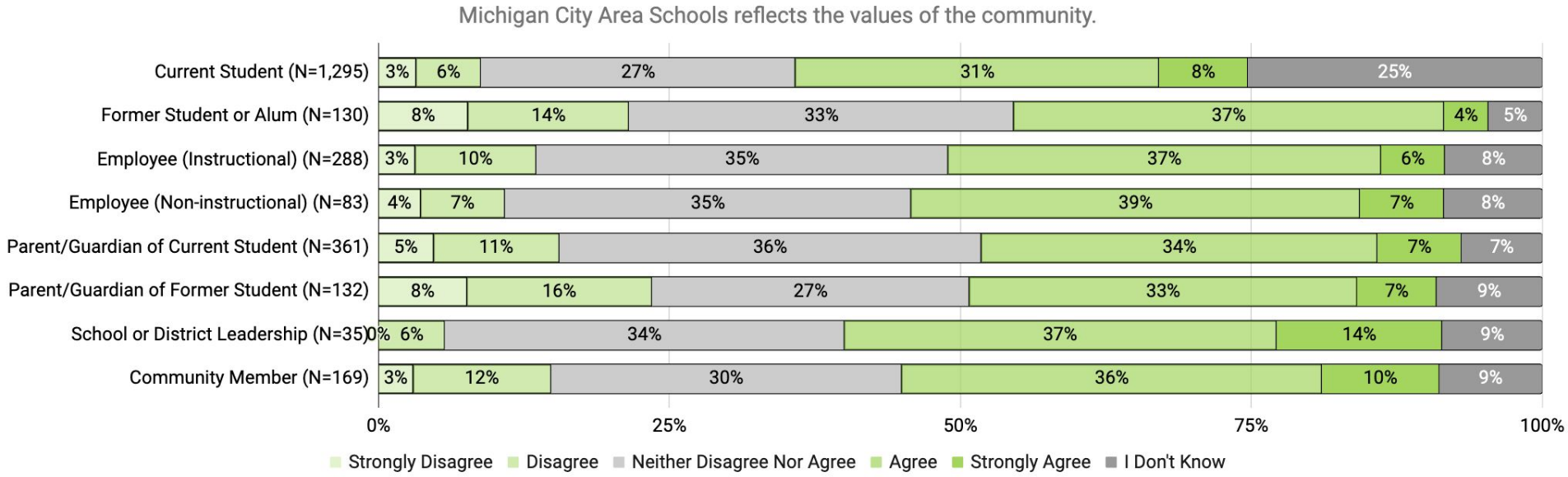

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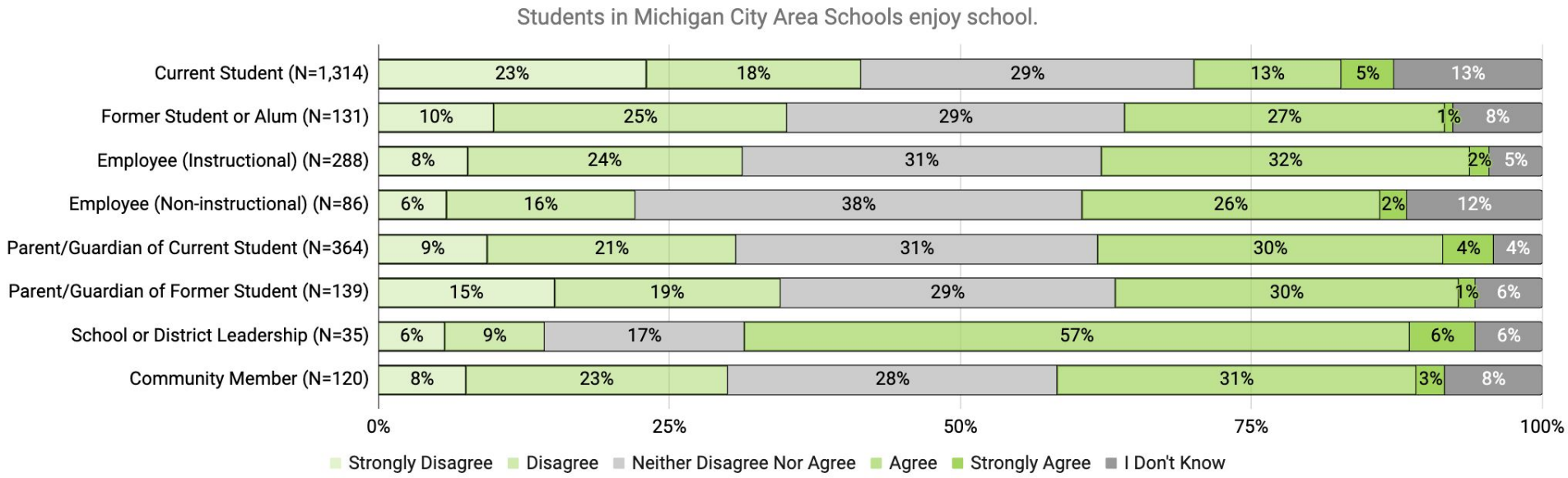
Survey Responses - By Role



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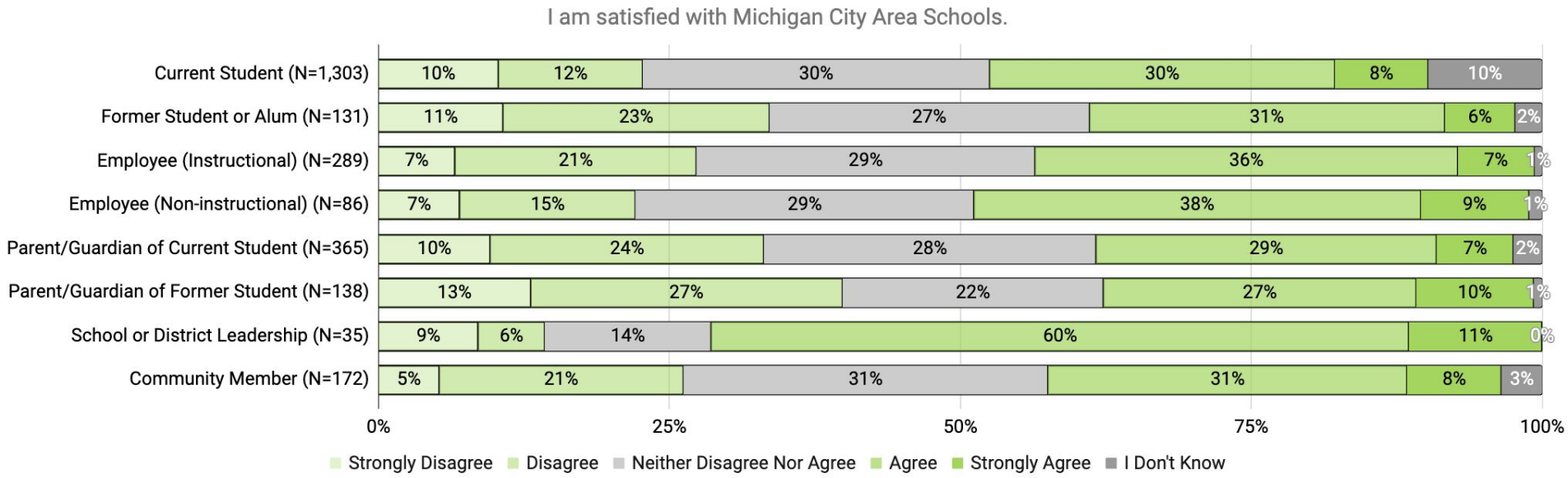

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Focus Group and Qualitative Survey Trends

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Focus Group Questions - Overall Experience

Students: What do you like about school?

Students: What would make school more enjoyable?

Adults: What are some things that MCAS does well?

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Trend Summary: Access + Opportunities

MCAS offers many unique opportunities, programs, and course offerings, including access to electives and AP courses. As a result, many students attend excellent colleges and achieve career success after high school. However, concerns were expressed in surveys and focus groups that not enough people know about these accomplishments. Additionally, there is concern that certain groups of students (particularly students of color, students with disabilities, students living in poverty, and students with transportation challenges) are underrepresented in these opportunities and courses.

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Trend Summary: Celebrating + Sharing What's Working

There are many things to celebrate at MCAS, including improvements in recent years that rival nearby wealthier districts. Specific improvements and positive attributes named during focus groups and surveys include: dual credit options, Career and Technology Education, professional development opportunities, activity buses for elementary students, incorporation of technology, and efforts to include all students. A trend from community engagement is that many people feel like more should be done to communicate what is working well and the improvements that the district has made so that the community is aware.

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Trend Summary: Choosing MCAS

There was concern expressed by many respondents that many families who live and work in Michigan City, including in the school system, choose to send their children to neighboring school districts. Many respondents said it is critical that MCAS make improvements and communicate about them so that new families choose to send their children to MCAS. Concerns were also reported about the quality of education varying depending on which school in the district a student is attending. A need for consistency was identified.

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Access & Communication

Snapshot of Data:

- Community Survey
- Focus Groups

Initial Prompting Questions for Reflection

- *What are the best ways for constituents to access information?*
- *How can we improve communications for all constituents?*
- *How can we ensure all constituents are able to access information and resources?*

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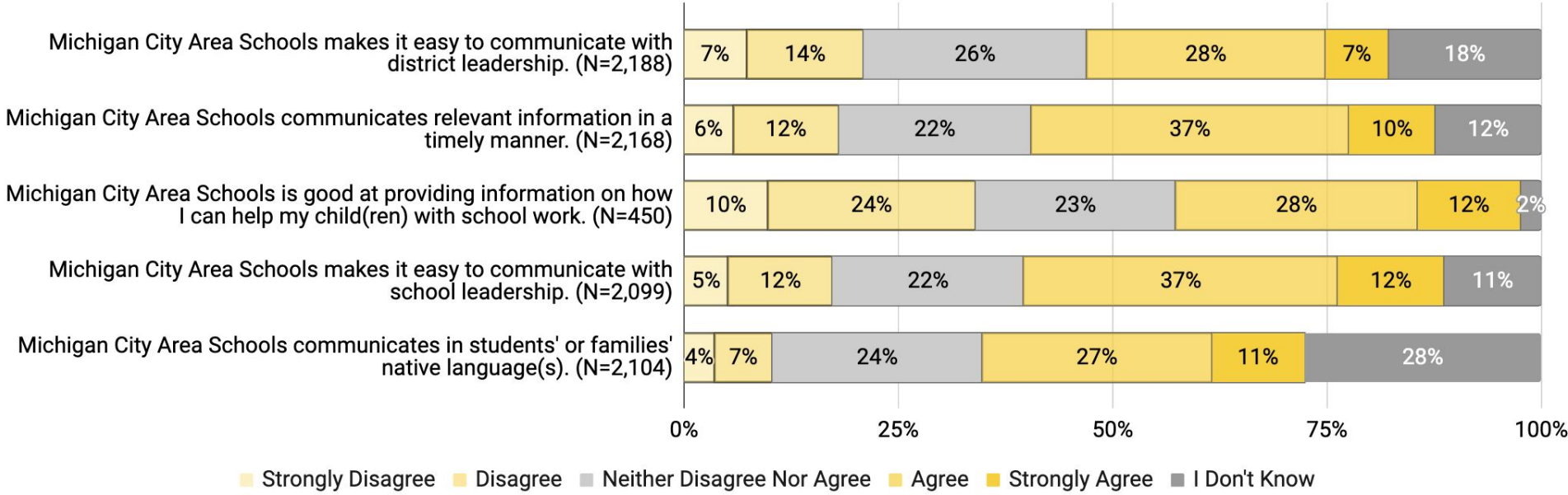

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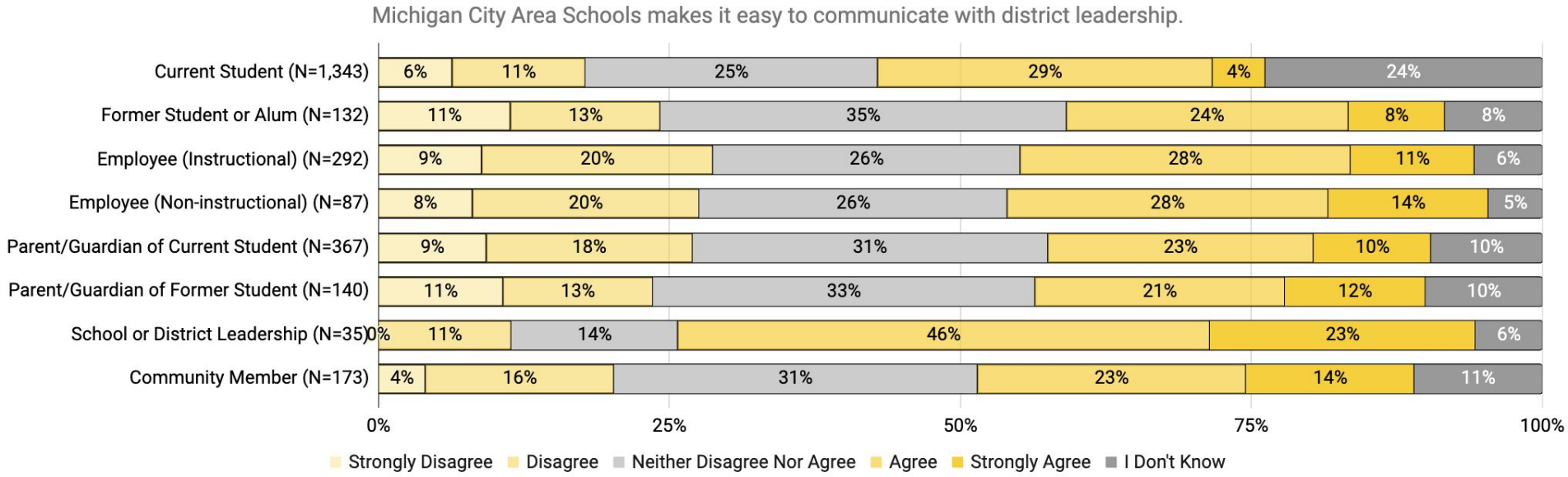
Survey Responses - By Role



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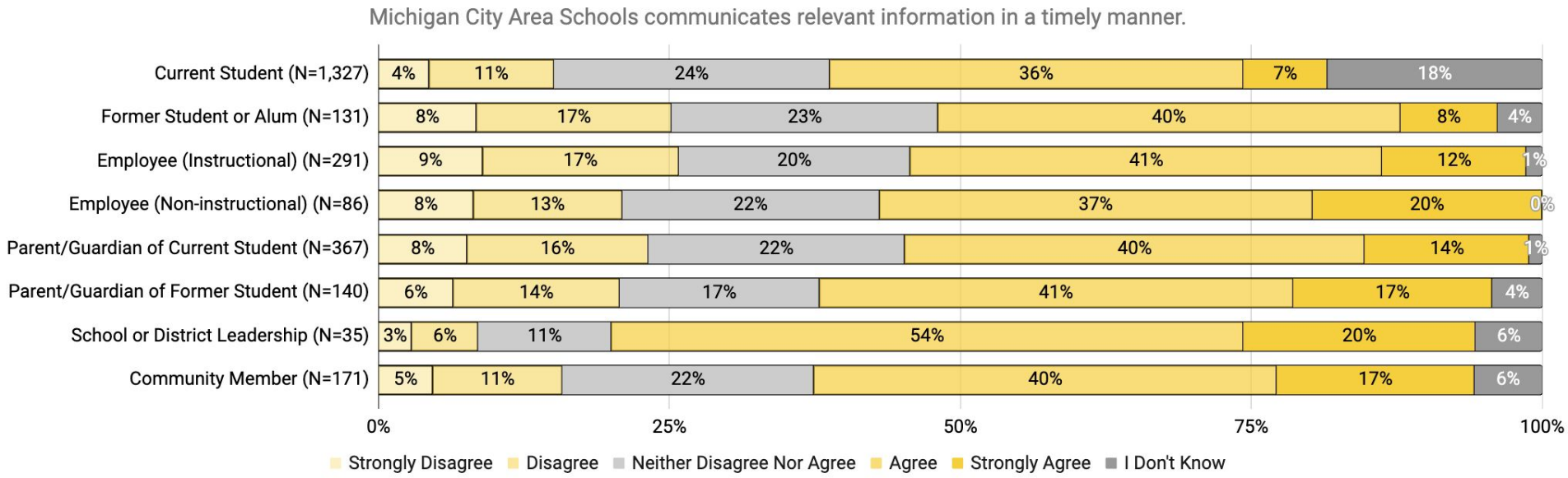

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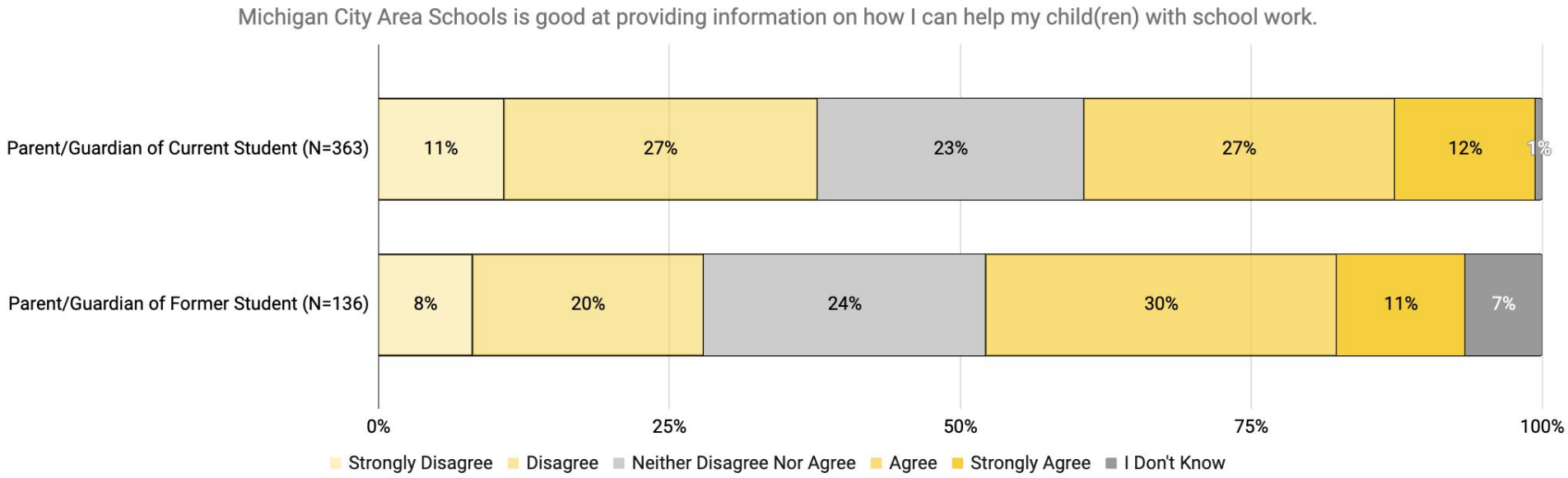

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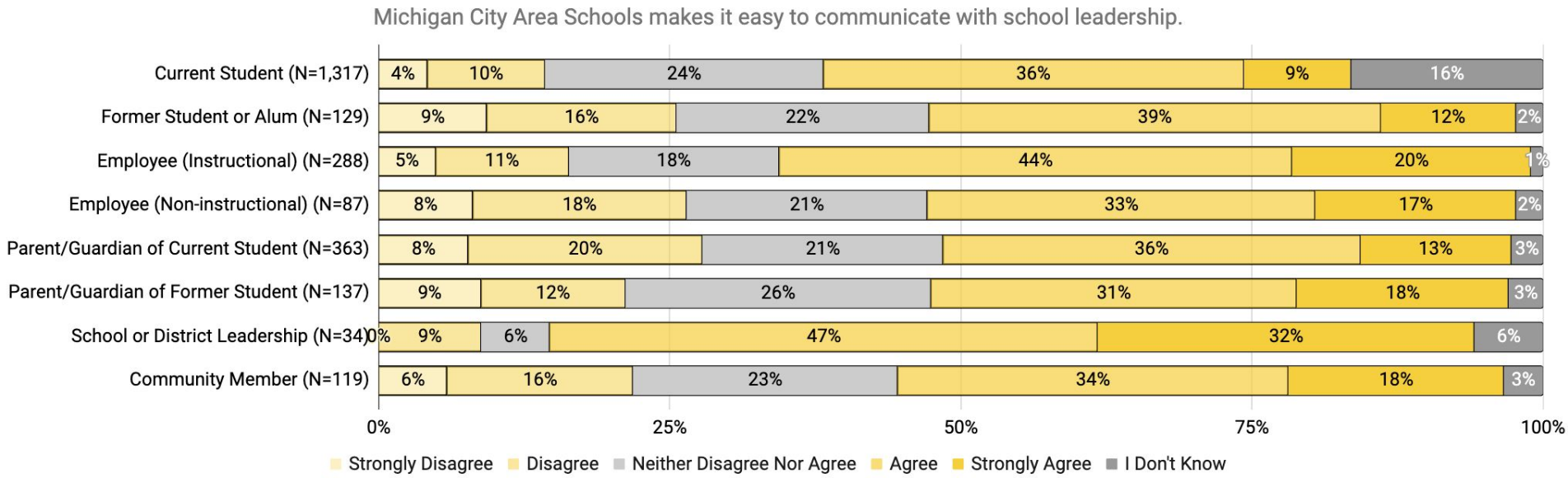

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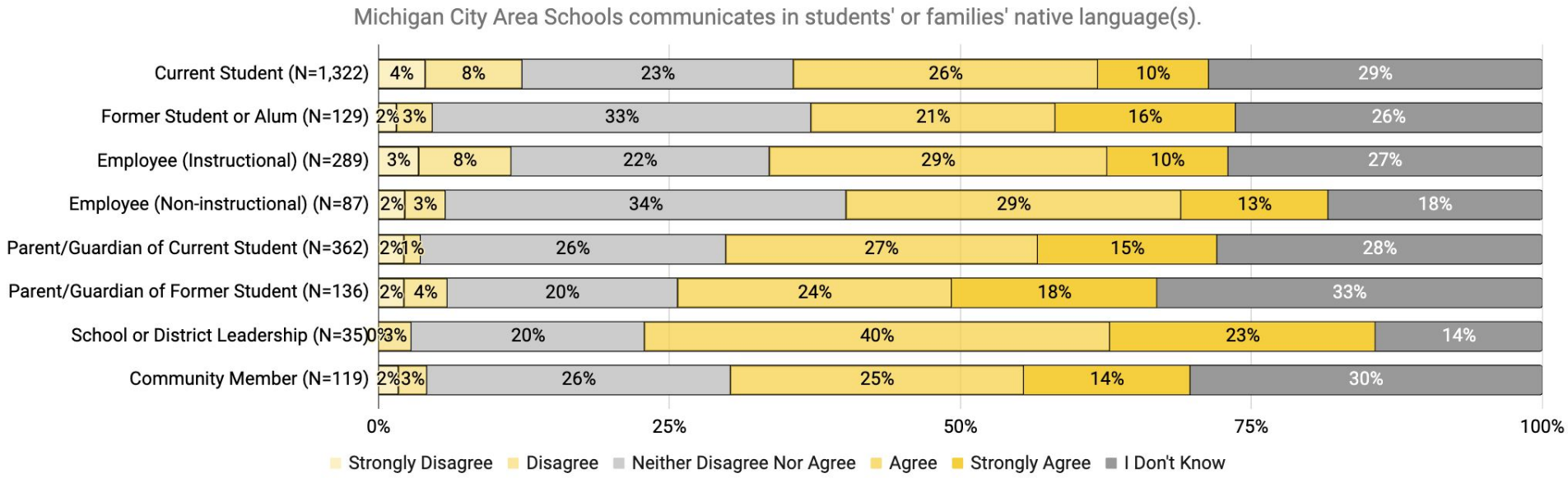

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Focus Group and Qualitative Survey Themes

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Focus Group Questions - Access & Communication

Students: How do you receive important information (on work/grades, upcoming events, deadlines, etc.) from adults at school?

Adults: Are the current communication methods working for you? How so? Consider communication with teachers, school, district leadership.

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Trend Summary: Conveying Important Information in a Timely Manner

Students generally reported feeling like they had access to important information through their teachers. Across the other constituent groups (teachers, non-instructional staff, family members, community members, and administrators), participants reported feeling like they sometimes learned of important information at the last minute, or not at all. There were cases where this led to rumors or misinformation spreading. Specific groups found it particularly difficult to access information, including older adults.

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Trend Summary: Responsiveness

Most community members who participated in focus groups or answered the open ended survey question reported that the district office responded to requests in a very timely manner. Among teachers, non-instructional staff, and parents, there were more concerns about lack of a timely response or a response at all when tried to get information from the school or district. In particular, some parents of students with disabilities reported that the process for getting a student diagnosed and receiving special education services needs to be more responsive.

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Trend Summary: Effectiveness of Communication Methods

Participants from across constituent groups generally reported finding district communication methods and tools helpful, particularly Class Dojo, Schoology, all calls, newsletters, and emails. Some participants noted that the district shares a lot of information via social media, which is not always accessible to those who don't use social media. Additionally, some participants thought it would be helpful to have formal and regularly timed updates to ensure that the community knows when to expect updates and doens't miss them.

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Climate and Responsive Culture

Snapshot of Data:

- Community Survey
- Focus Groups

Initial Prompting Questions for Reflection

- *How can we create more safe learning environments?*
- *How are families and students supported in the district?*
- *What support areas for students do we need to target **organizationally**?*

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Survey Responses
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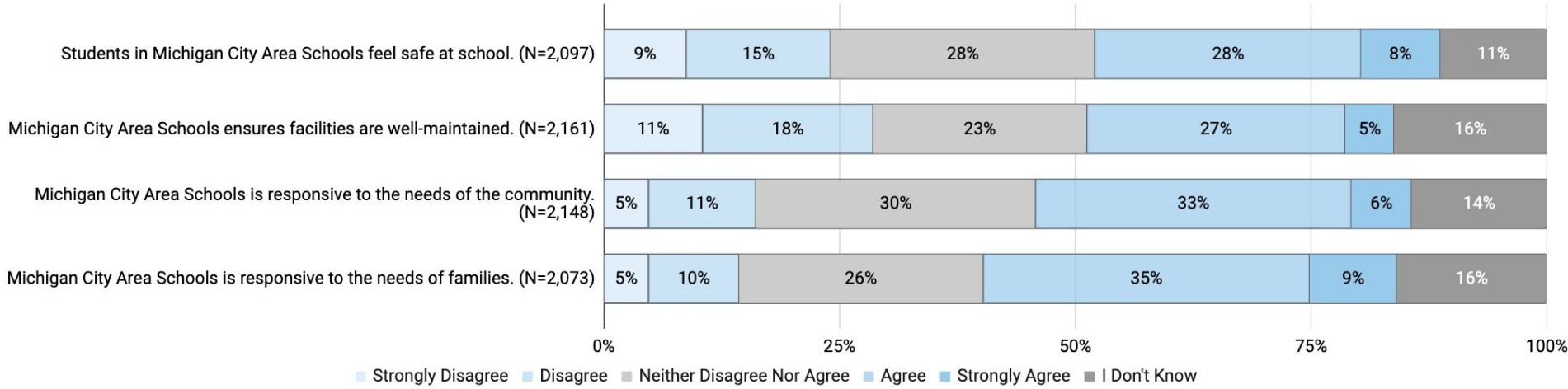
Overall Survey Data



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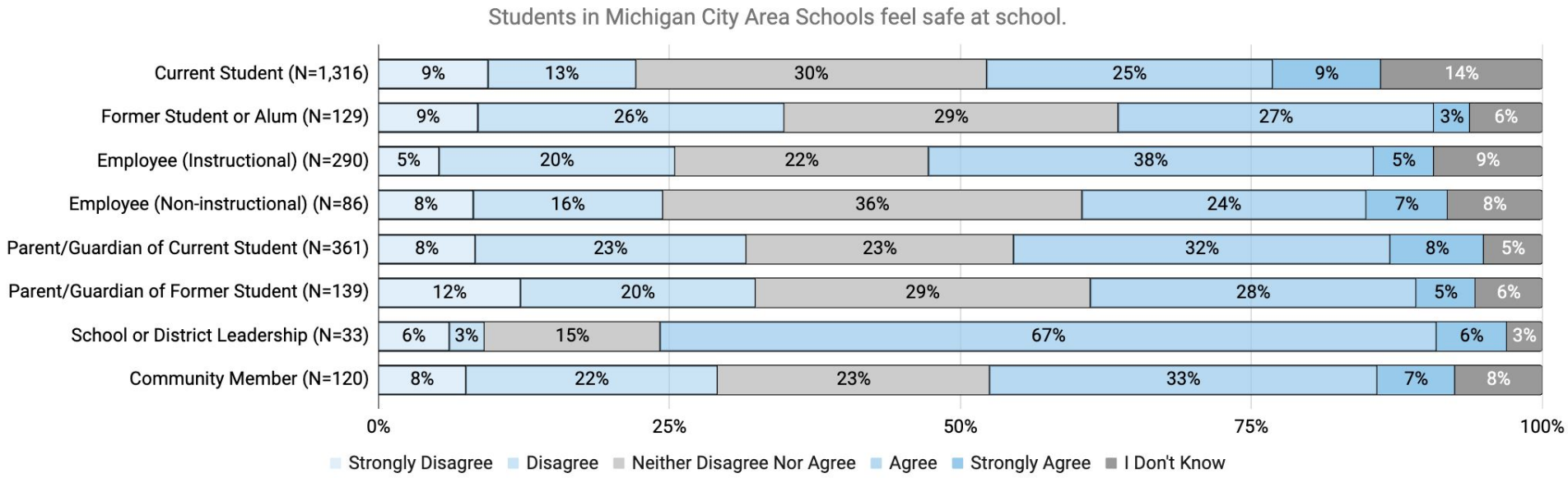
Survey Responses - By Role



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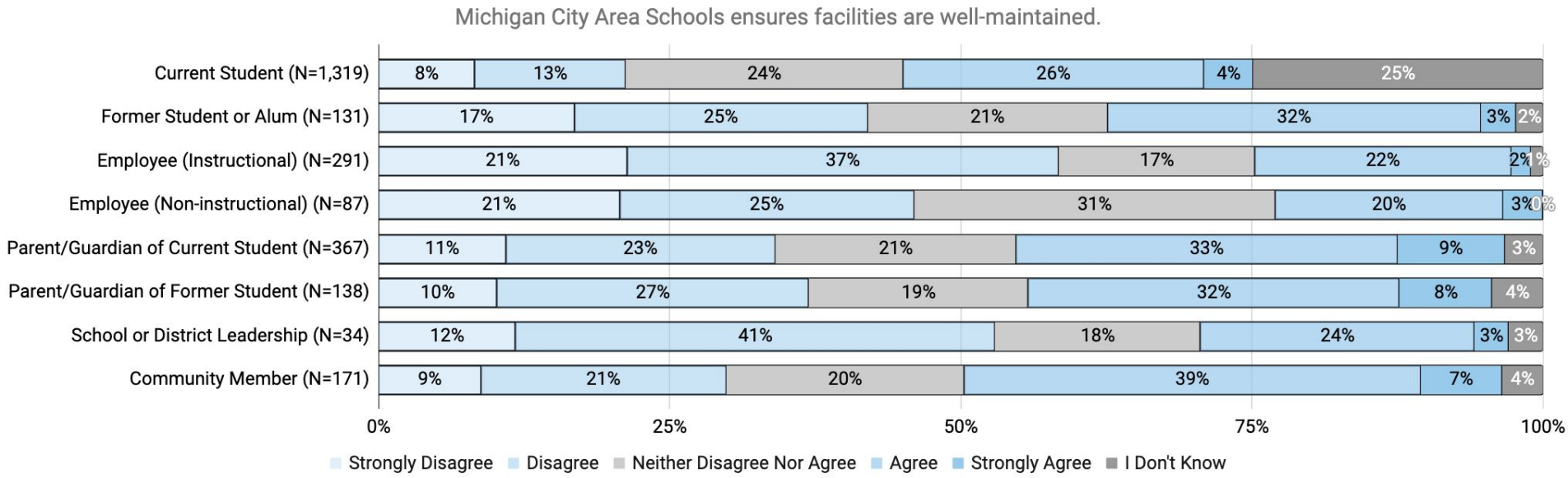
Survey Responses - By Role



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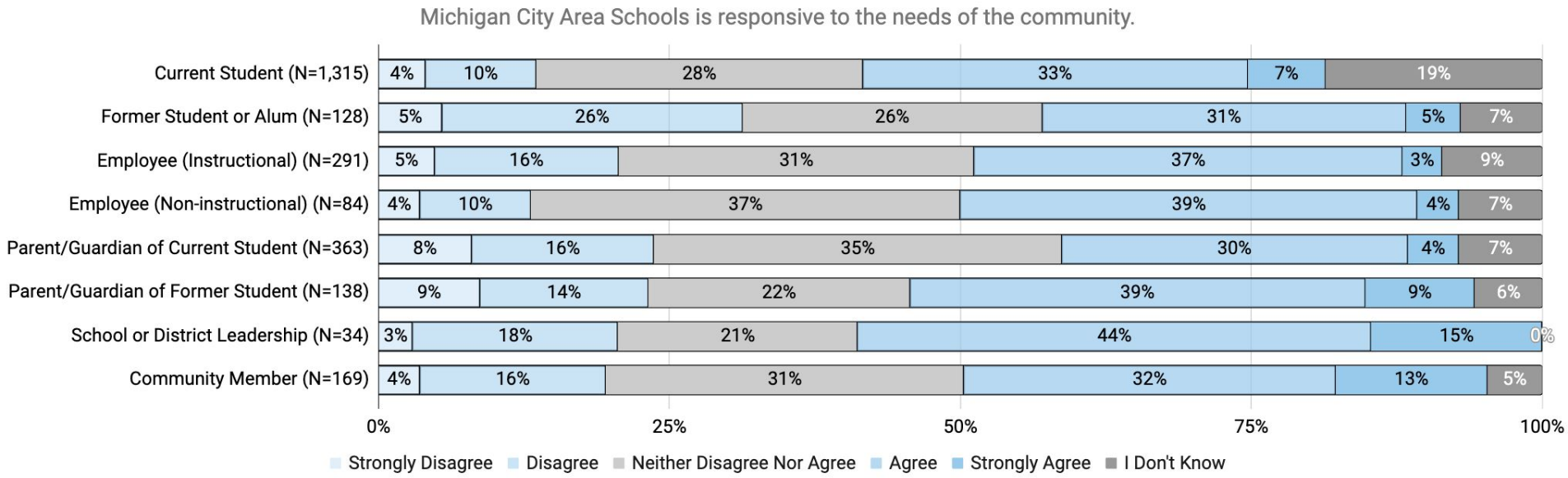

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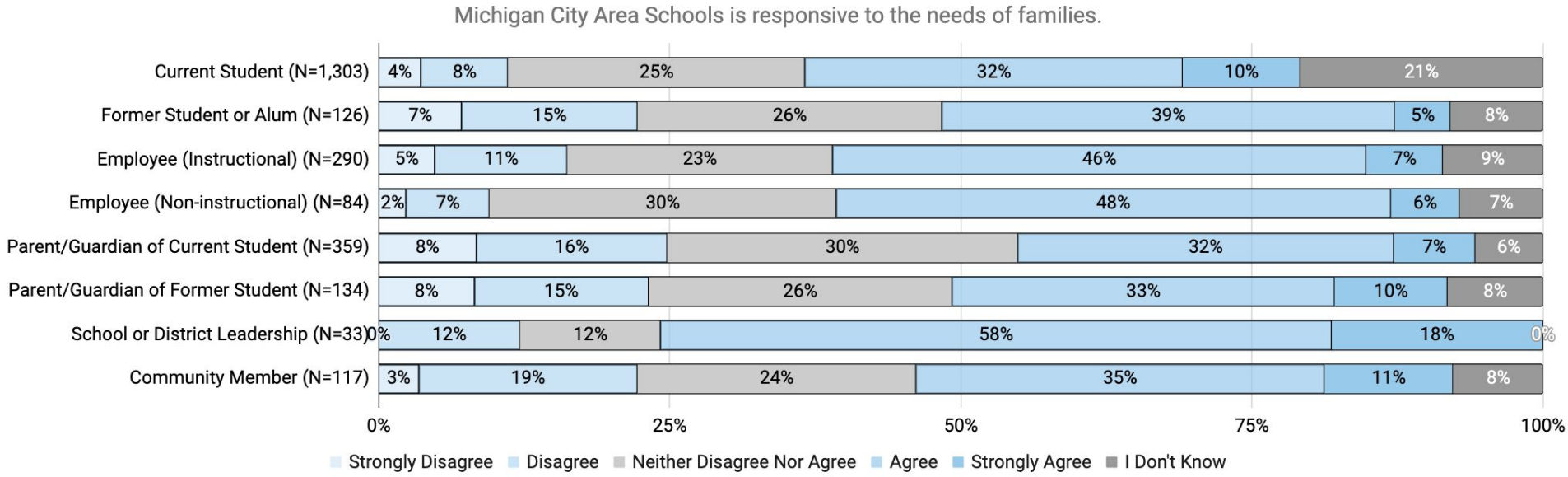
Survey Responses - By Role



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Focus Group and Qualitative Survey Themes

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Focus Group Questions - Climate and Responsive Culture

Students: Do you feel safe at school? Why or why not? (Probe: Are there things the school could do to make you feel safer?)

Adults: Do you feel like our schools are safe? When you think of the idea of being safe at school, what are you thinking about? How do you define safety?

What is your standard or definition of “well-maintained”? What is your expectation of up-to-date facilities and/or maintaining facilities in a satisfactory manner?

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Trend Summary: Campus Access/ Security

Most students reported feeling safe from a physical campus security standpoint. Some adult respondents, including parents and staff, expressed concerns about campus access and the possibility of unauthorized entry into school buildings. Other adult respondents reported feeling safe, and noted the presence of dual control doors, buzzing-in requirements, and effective protocols in their schools. Differences were noted between schools, with variations in security practices and inconsistent enforcement, so that some buildings feel physically more secure than others.

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Trend Summary: SEL, Bullying, Behavior, and Social Media

When asked about school safety, bullying came up many times across different constituent groups as a major safety concern. This concern is exacerbated due to the prevalence of social media, which many participants say is having a significant impact on students' mental health and social functioning. Other behavioral concerns were mentioned, including physical fighting between students and behaviors that disrupted classroom instruction. Parents and MCAS employees stated that the underlying issue is a lack of appropriate staffing (and a staffing crisis in general) to meet students' behavioral and mental health needs.

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Trend Summary: Equity and Respect

There was a wide disparity in perceptions of safety among students, staff, and families, with many participants noting that who felt safe depended on various factors, including grade level, school, and academic track. Several participants called out the need to address the safety and support of specific groups, including BIPOC students, students with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and families in crisis. was emphasized. Overall, there was a call among participants for a comprehensive equity-focused approach to ensure that all students feel safe, supported, and respected within the school environment.

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Trend Summary: Facilities and Cleanliness

Across constituent groups, participants had significant concerns regarding facilities, cleanliness, and needs for upgrades within the school environment. Participants expressed concerns about the overall condition of the facilities, including outdated infrastructure, insufficient maintenance, cleanliness standards, and potential health and safety hazards in schools. Participants stated that repairs, upgrades, and better custodial services are needed. This area was listed as an example where neighboring districts are ahead of MCAS.

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Student Performance

Snapshot of Data:

- District-Wide Data
- Focus Groups
- Town Hall
- *No survey questions for this domain*

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Initial Prompting Questions for Reflection

- *What are we doing that is currently meeting the academic needs of **all students** and what can we focus on to improve our impact?*
- *What kind of **instructional support** can improve the learning experience for our students?*

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District-Wide Student Performance Data

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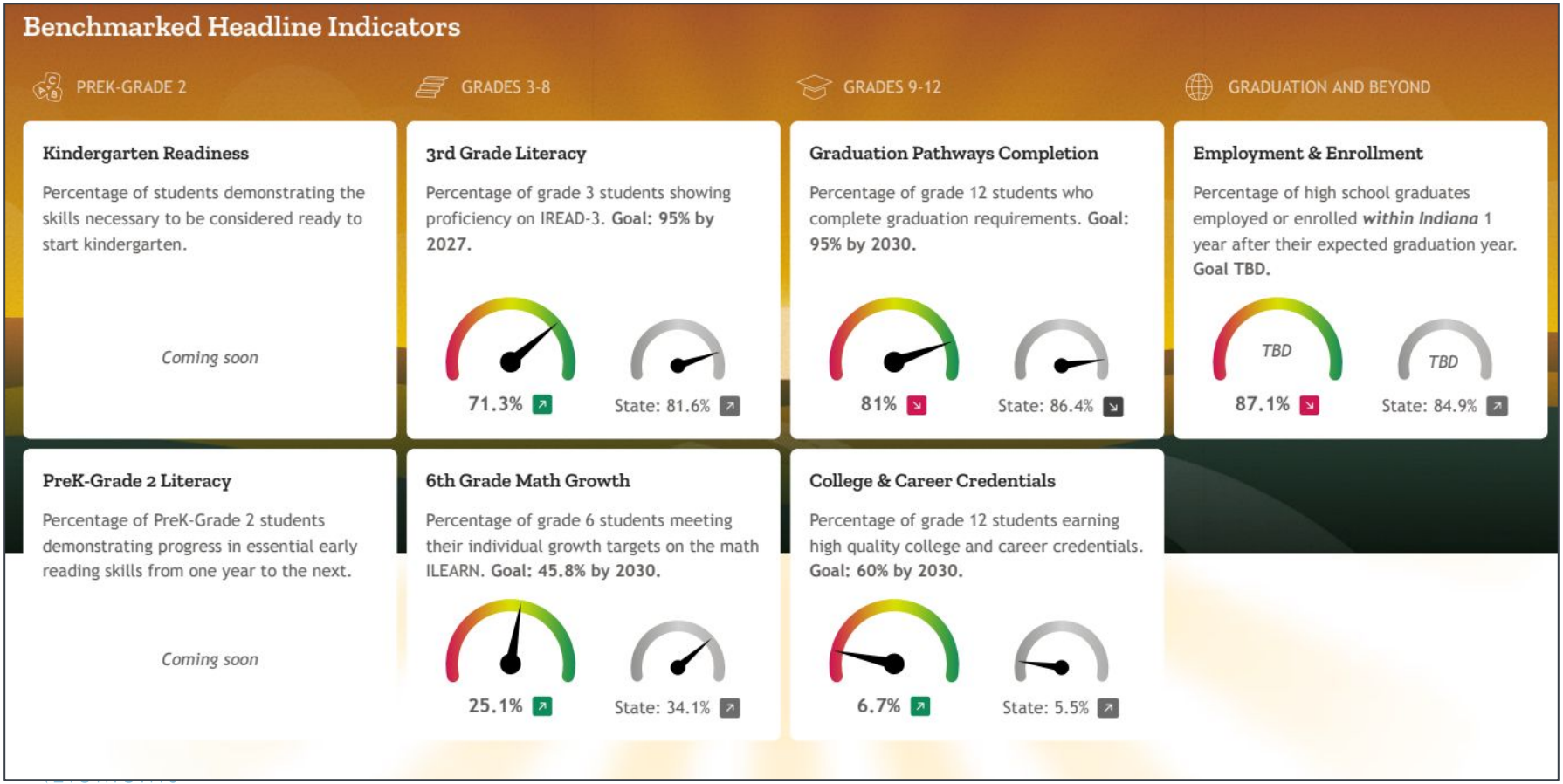
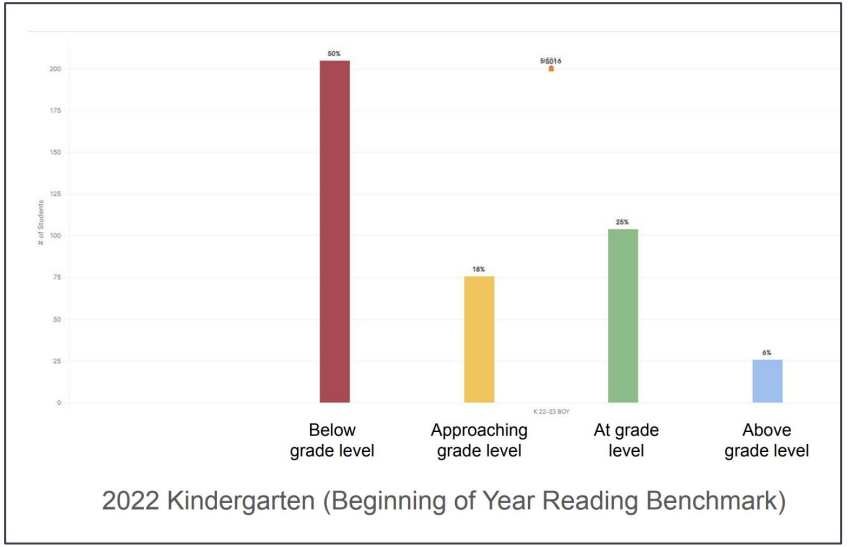
Indiana Graduates Prepared to Succeed (GPS) Data



Early Childhood Benchmark Data



2022 Kindergarten (Beginning of Year Reading Benchmark)

		Overall			Black Students			White Students			Special Education		
		BOY	MOY	EOY	BOY	MOY	EOY	BOY	MOY	EOY	BOY	MOY	EOY
Kindergarten	2020- 2021	11%	25%	43%		16%	28%		30%	57%		12%	11%
	2021-2022	22%	29%	55%	17%	22%	50%	27%	37%	59%	17%	23%	27%

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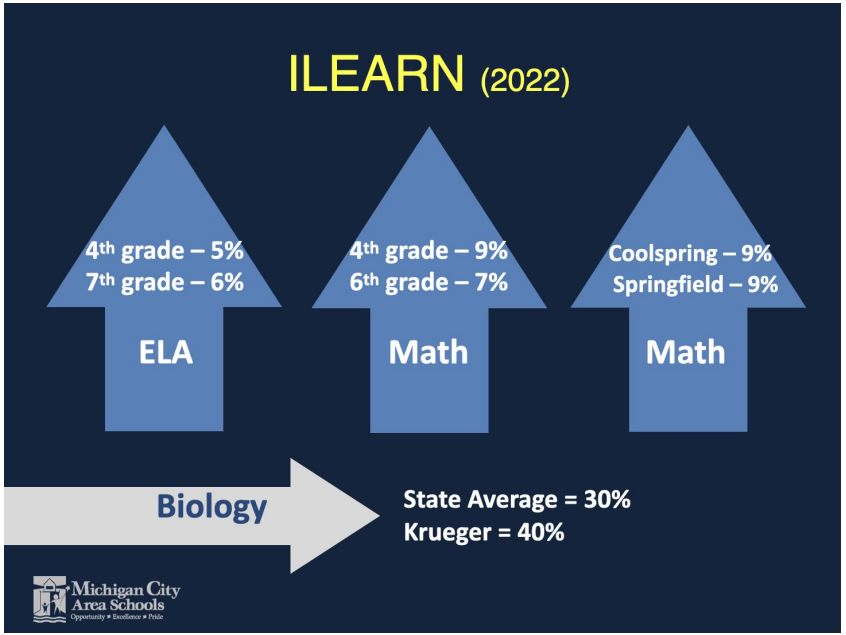
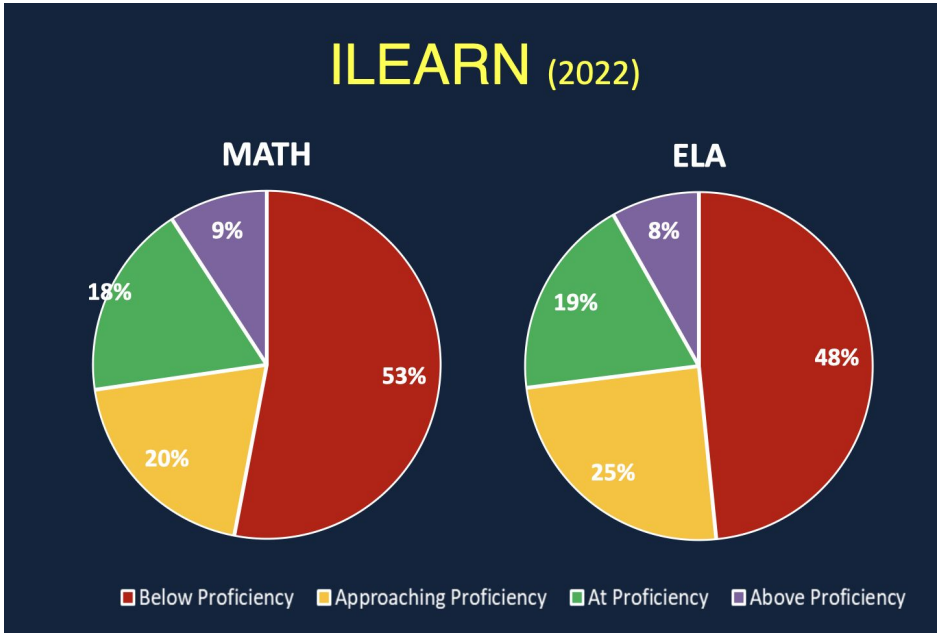
ILEARN Data





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College and Career Readiness Data

Career – Tech Success

- New Partnerships: Franciscan Health, Patrick's, Al's, and National Trust for Historic Preservation
- State "Earn and Learn" designation for Construction Technology
- 52 A. K. Smith students participated in Ivy Tech graduation (19 from MCHS)
- 51 MCHS grads earned technical certifications through A. K. Smith.
- MCHS seniors earned 1,000 dual credits through A.K. Smith alone

Secondary Progress

- 59 Early College graduates in the Class of 2022; 100% with post-secondary plan
- 56 21st Century Scholars in 2022; $2.1 million in scholarships
- $6.1 million in scholarships reported by the Class of 2022
- 51 high school students earned a 3 or 4 on their AP exams
- 2,106 dual credits earned by the Class of 2022
- 95% of students were at or above proficiency on the state-required Civics exam

On Track to Graduate

10th Grade: 65%
11th Grade: 61%
12th Grade: 70%

SAT

	MCHS	State
Total Score (400 – 1600)	880	962
Reading & Writing (200 – 800)	445	484
Math (200 – 800)	435	478

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Focus Group and Qualitative Survey Themes

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Focus Group Questions - Student Performance

How do students know they are successful in school?

How do you know you are successful in school?

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Trend Summary: Grades & GPA

Participants reported there are a few ways for students to understand their academic progress, including by checking grades and through 1:1 conversations with teachers. Some students at the elementary level reported feeling stressed out by the emphasis on grades as the primary measure of academic success.

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Trend Summary: Recognition & Praise

There are various ways in which MCAS recognizes student success, including goal tracking sheets, student of the month, schoolwide celebrations for academics and behavior, social media announcements, etc. Several non-instructional staff members shared stories about the impact they had on individual students by praising them; in many of these cases, the students stated that this was the only time they had been recognized at school. Overall, participants highlighted the need for strategies to motivate and uplift all students.

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Trend Summary: Formal Channels of Communication

Most students and parents report finding the formal channels of communication about progress and grades, particularly PowerSchool, to be easy-to-use and effective. However, concerns were expressed by participants about the frequency with which grades are updated on PowerSchool, which made it difficult for them to understand how students were progressing throughout the quarter. Additionally, some parents stated they wished there was more consistent support provided to students who were struggling in specific academic areas.

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Trend Summary: Meeting Ranging Needs

Participants highlighted the importance of addressing a diverse range of student needs and ensuring that all students have opportunities to experience success in school. Specific concerns were expressed about students who were struggling (and the consequences of labeling them with poor grades); about ensuring students with disabilities received special education services; and about students who find success in extracurriculars or sports but not necessarily in the classroom. Overall, participants shared the need for a robust system of supports so that no student falls through the cracks.

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Curriculum & Instruction

Snapshot of Data:

- Community Survey
- Focus Groups

Initial Prompting Questions for Reflection

- *What **academic focuses** should we prioritize as a district?*
- *What are we doing that is currently meeting the academic needs of **all students** and what can we focus on to improve our impact?*
- *What kind of **instructional support** can improve the learning experience for our students?*

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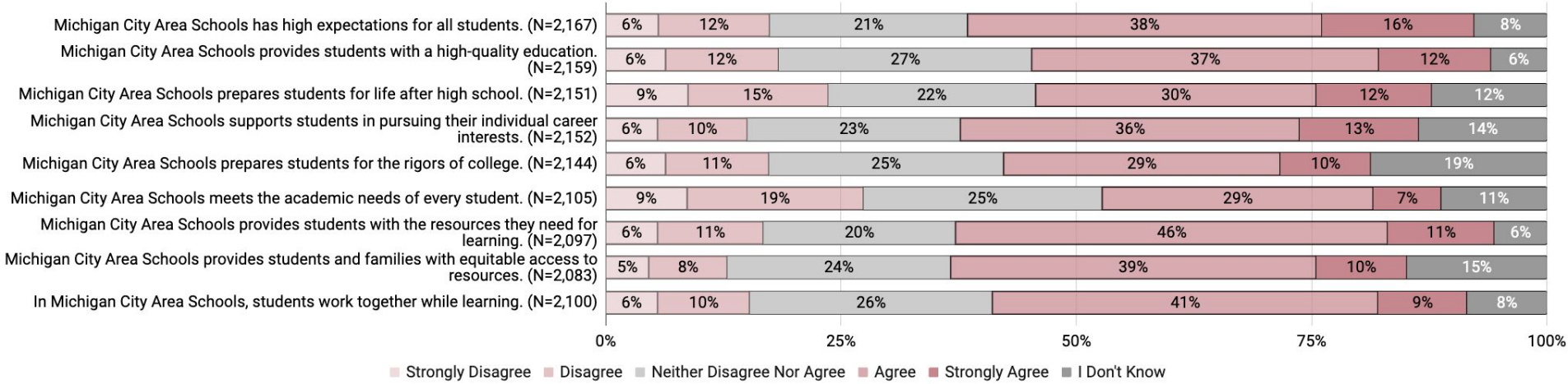

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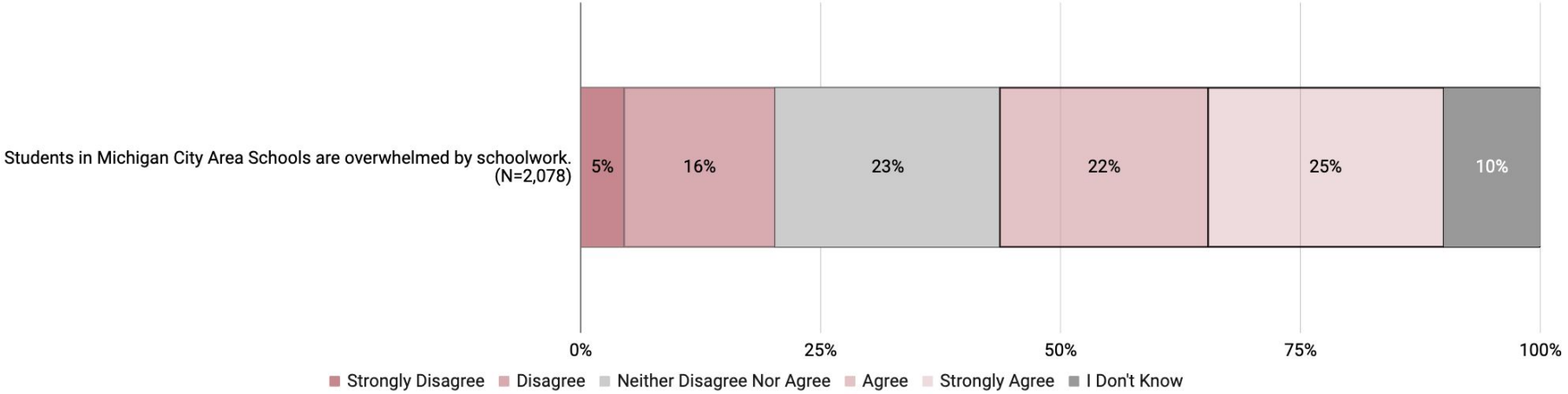

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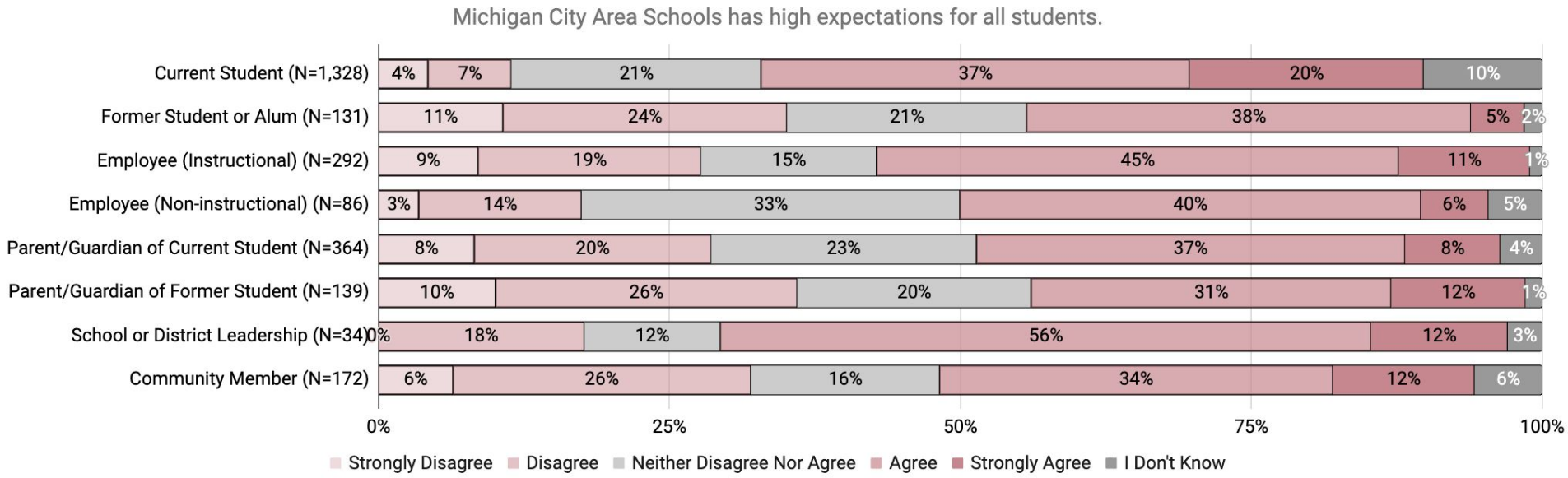
Survey Responses - By Role



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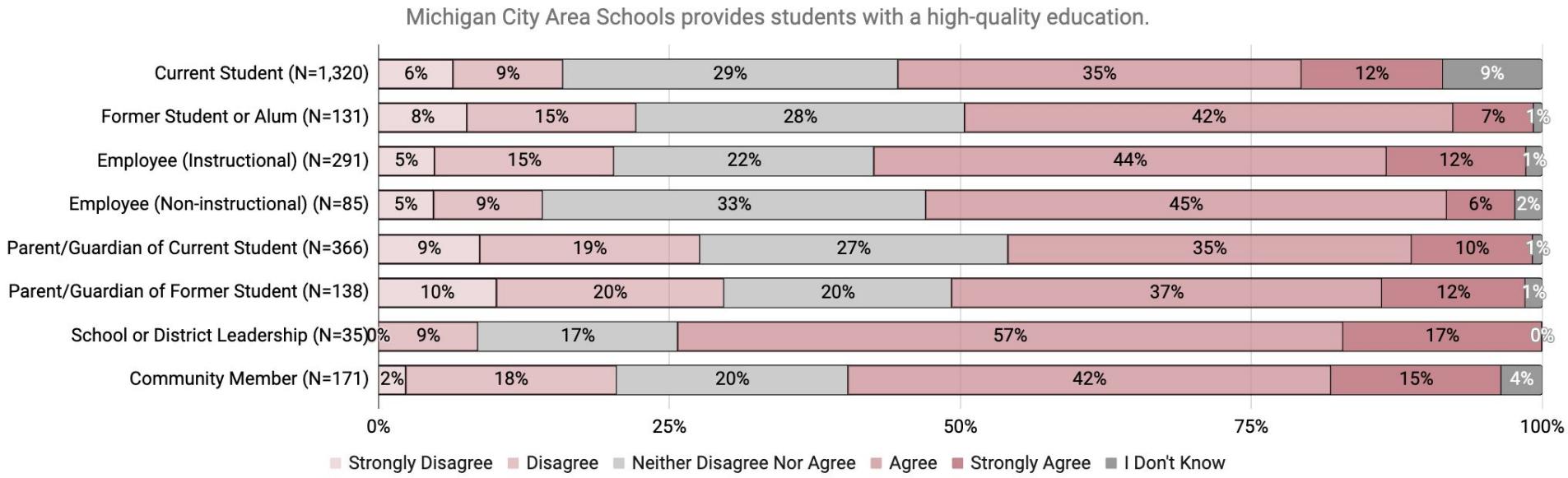
Survey Responses - By Role



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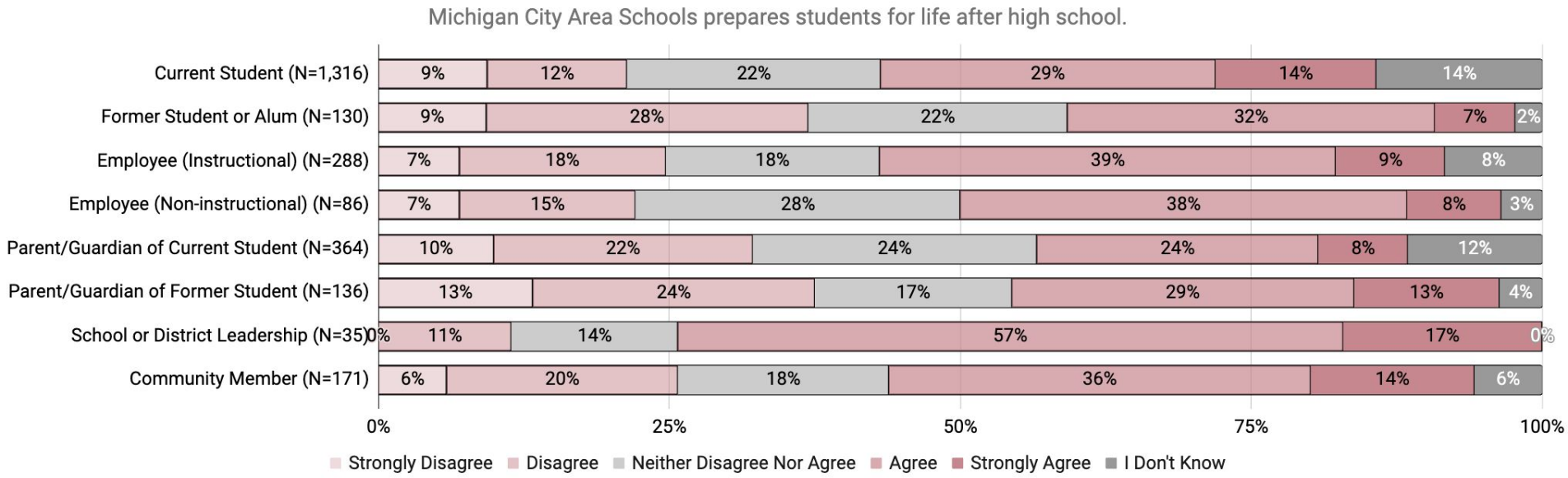

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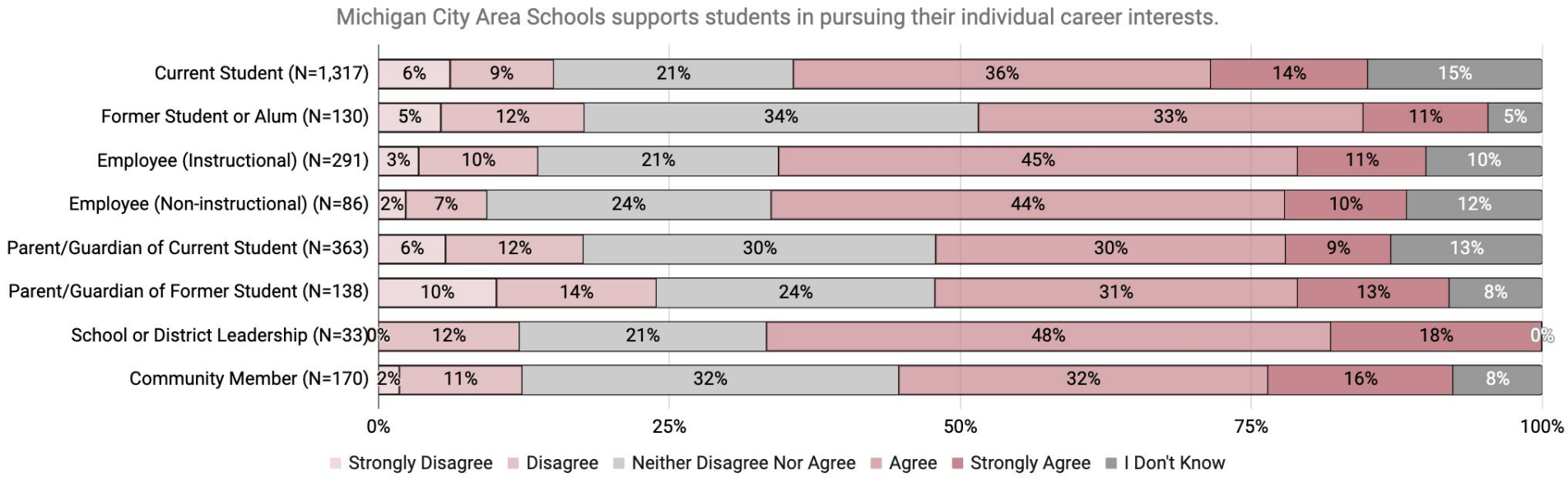

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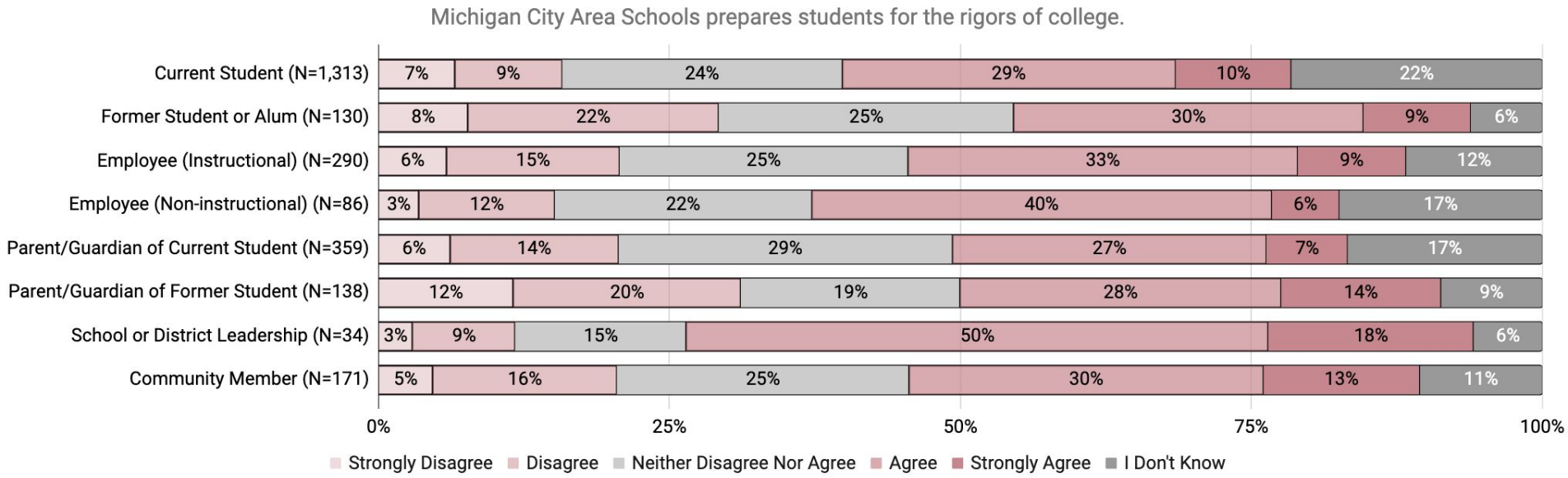

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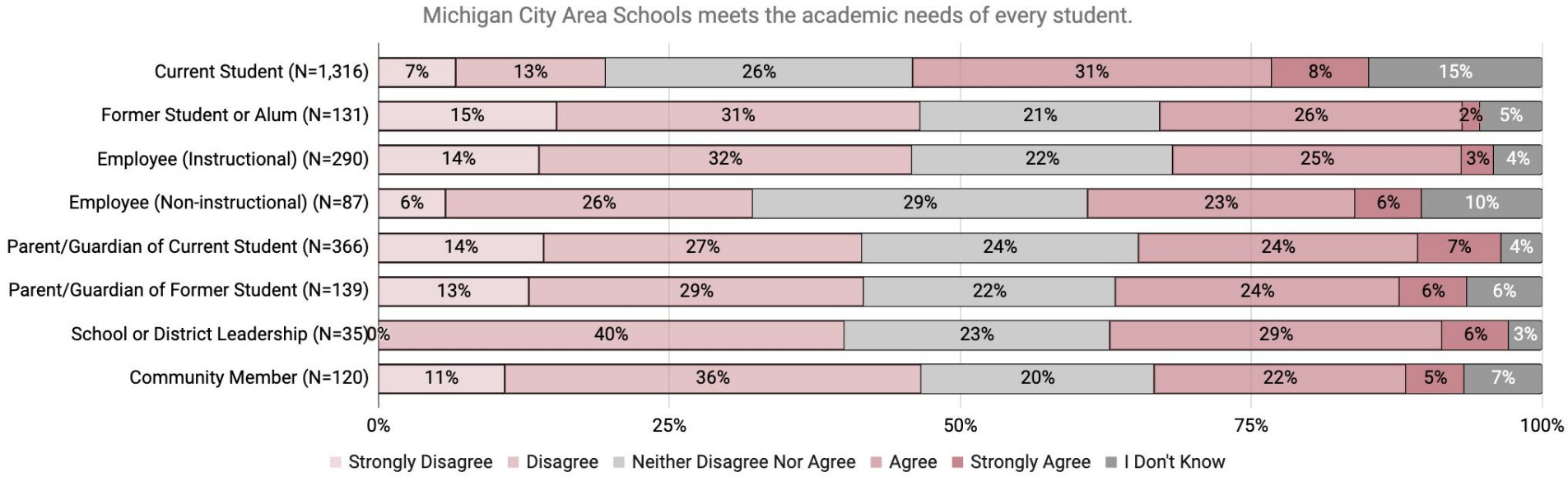

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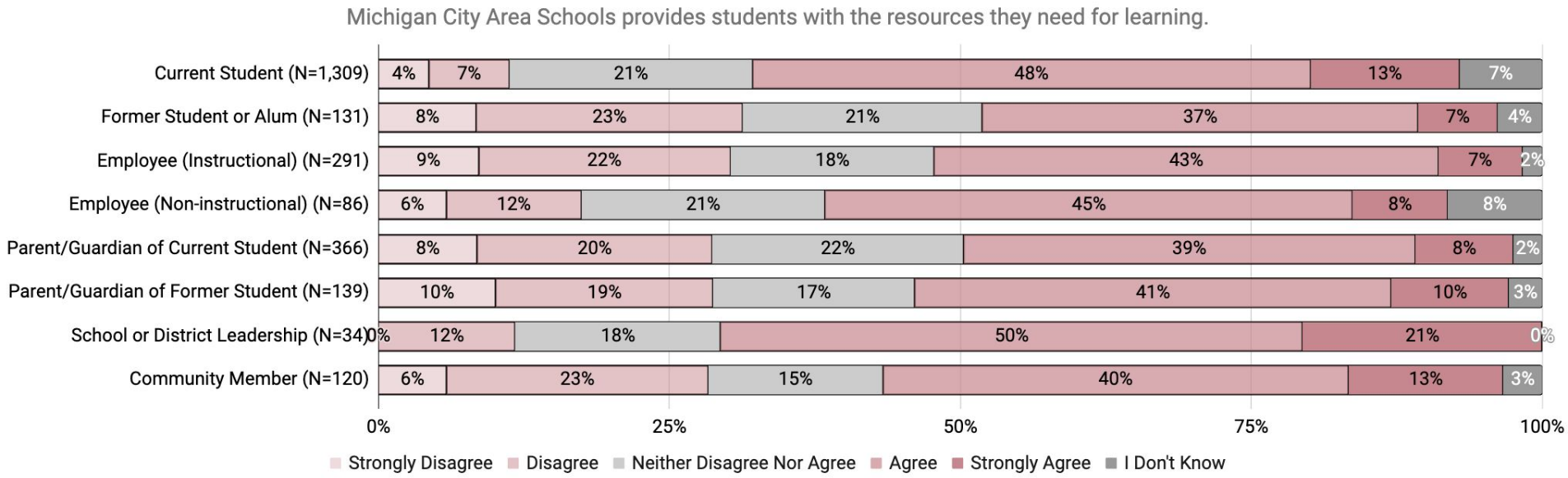

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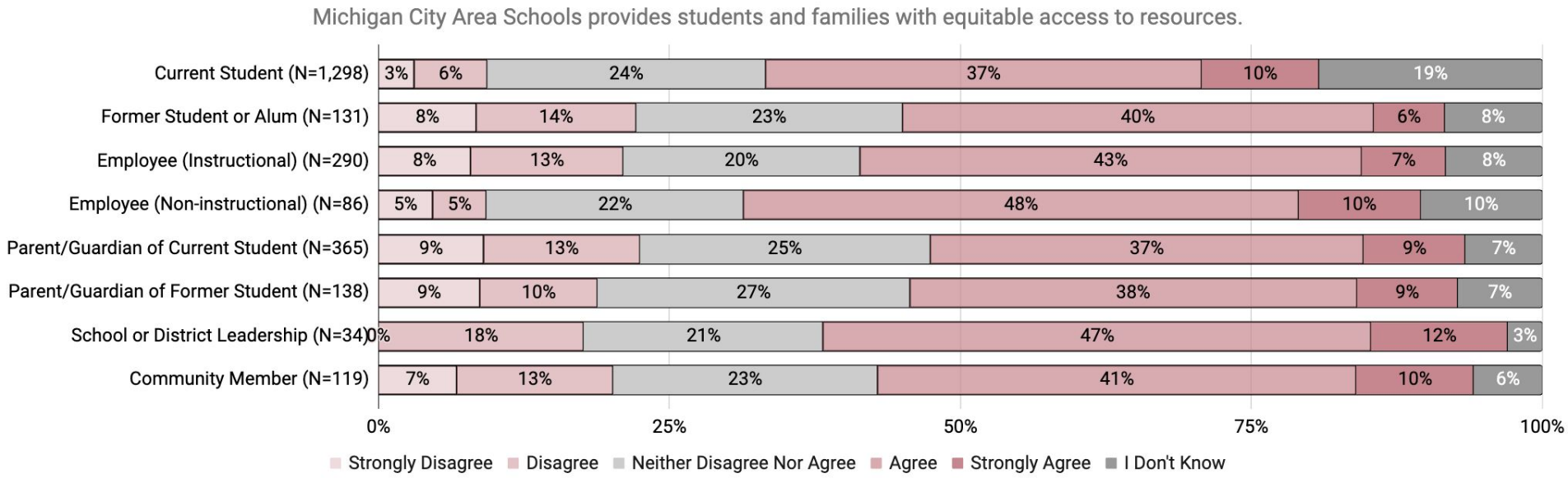
Survey Responses - By Role



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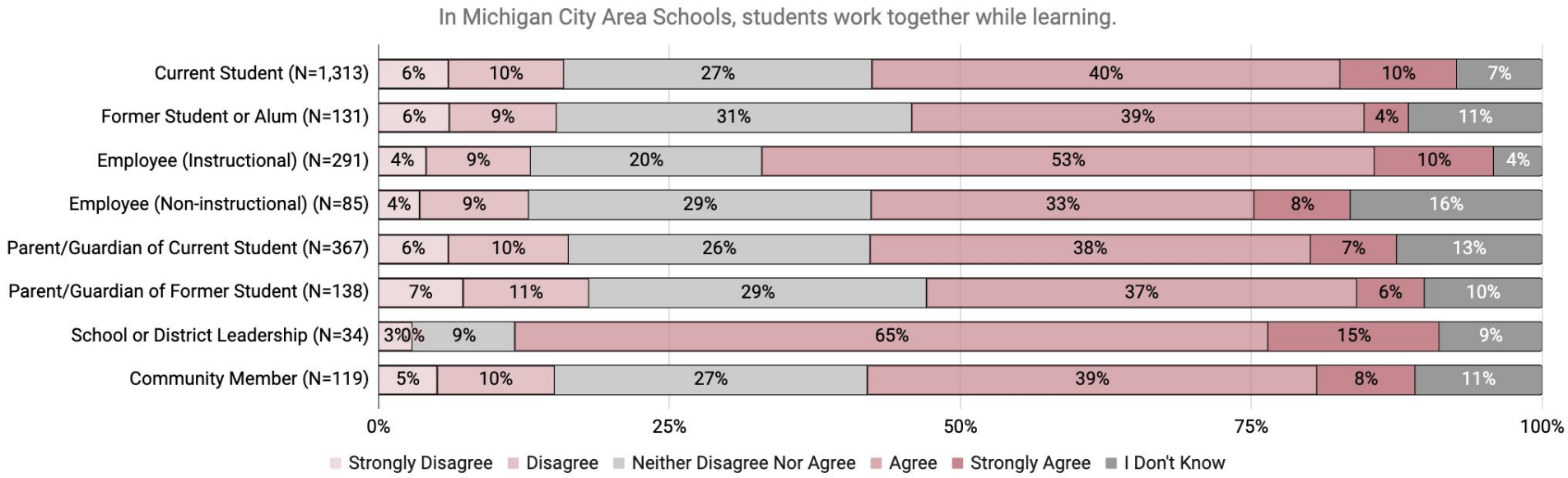
Survey Responses - By Role



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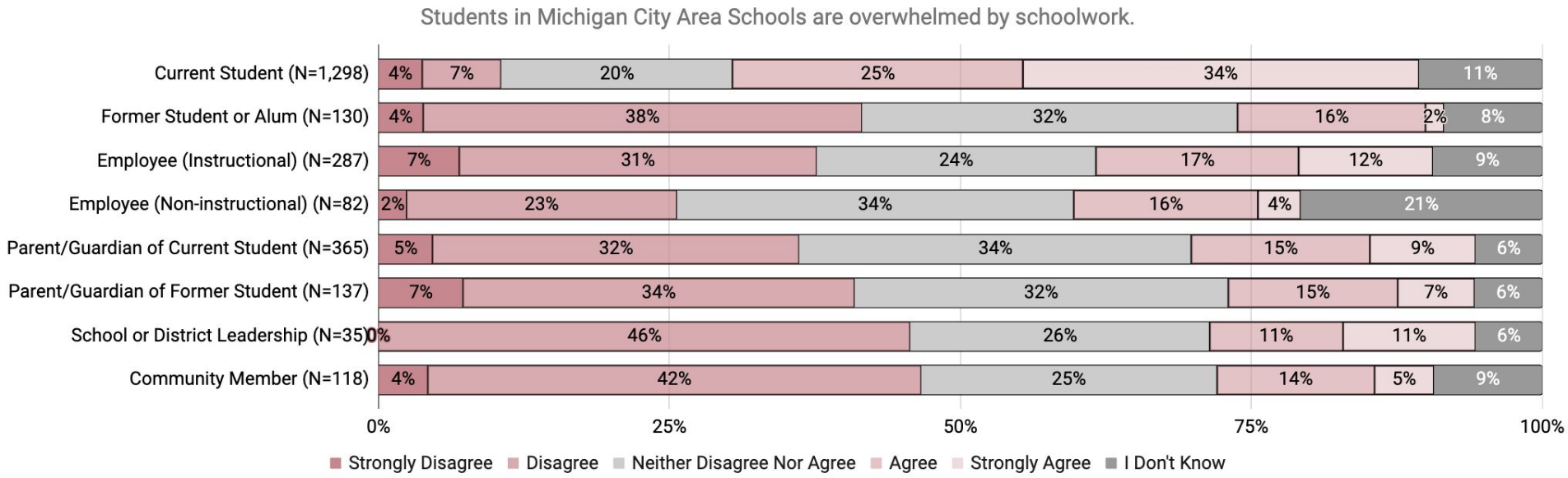

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Trend Summary: Curriculum and Instruction Open-Ended Responses

Survey respondents shared varied opinions about curriculum and instruction at MCAS. Some positively called out specific offerings, such as early college and financial literacy programs. Others expressed concerns with the curriculum, with some students saying they don't feel sufficiently challenged and some teachers saying certain aspects of the curriculum do not allow for enough creativity. Overall there was a recognition that curriculum and instruction needs to account for diverse learning needs. Additionally, teachers need more support in order to implement the curriculum effectively.

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Focus Group and Qualitative Survey Themes

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Focus Group Questions - Curriculum & Instruction

Adults: Does Michigan City Area Schools hold high expectations for students? How do you know?

Students: Tell me about the last time you felt challenged (in a good way) or curious about the classroom content.

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Trend Summary: Coursework and Curriculum

There was a diversity of opinion among focus group respondents about whether MCAS has high academic expectations for all students, though most felt the curriculum was rigorous at least in higher level classes. However, many concerns were expressed about the need to support students who are struggling with coursework, falling behind academically, or experiencing behavioral challenges. Teachers and administrators expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the tiered support system. Additionally, some students wanted the coursework to be more aligned to skills they will need in their adult lives.

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Trend Summary: Data, Standards, Progress

Many non-instructional staff members and parents stated that, while MCAS does a good job of tracking and responding to student academic data, sometimes this is done at the detriment of the “joy of learning.” The pressure on students from over-testing was mentioned by several non-instructional staff and parents. Meanwhile, several administrators felt like MCAS is moving in the right direction in terms of embedding standards into instruction, but staffing challenges make it hard to implement interventions when needed. Some teachers also expressed a concern about helping students progress when they are experiencing trauma and “just trying to survive.”

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Trend Summary: Diverse Learners

Concerns were expressed across constituent groups that MCAS is not sufficiently meeting the needs of diverse learners, including students with disabilities and students who are academically advanced. There is a sense by many participants that students are “passed through” without being sufficiently challenged or receiving the supports they need to be successful. Neurodiverse students and their parents report a need for increased training for school staff around neurodiversity and how to support students who learn differently than their peers or need accommodations.

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Belonging

Snapshot of Data:

- Community Survey
- Focus Groups

Initial Prompting Questions for Reflection

- *To what extent do students feel a part of the **school community**?*
- *How do we create opportunities for **all constituents** (of all backgrounds) to feel connected and engaged?*
- *What are constituents **voicing** that they need to feel inclusion and belonging?*

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Survey Responses
Quantitative Data

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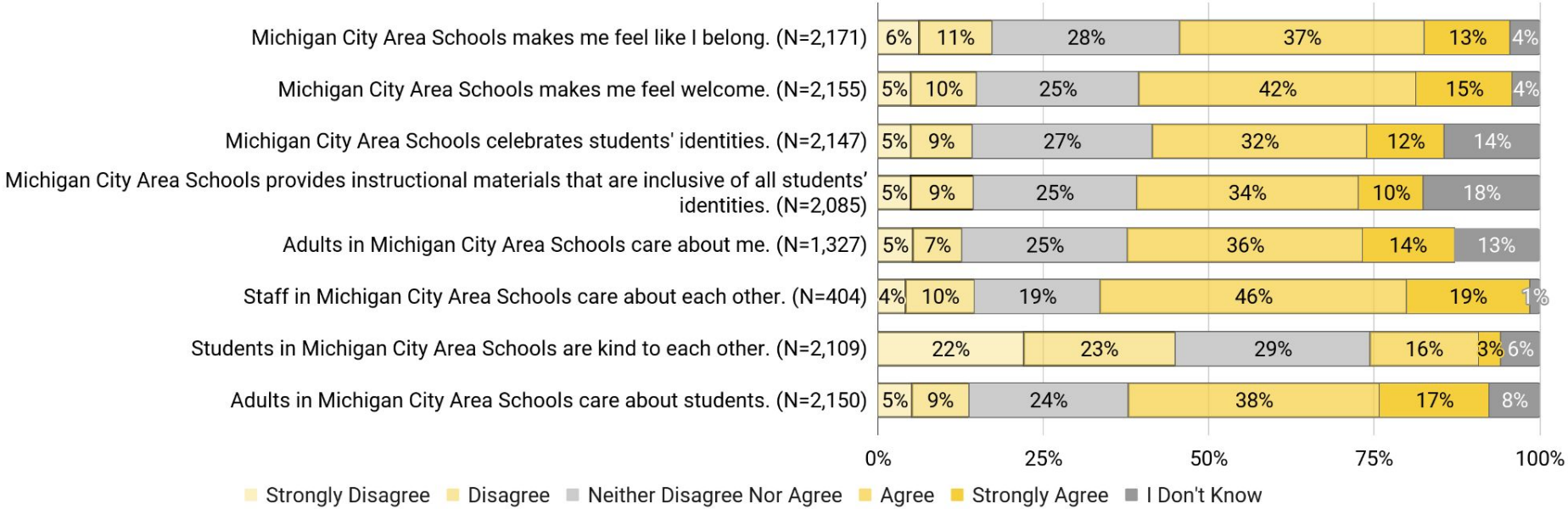
Overall Survey Data



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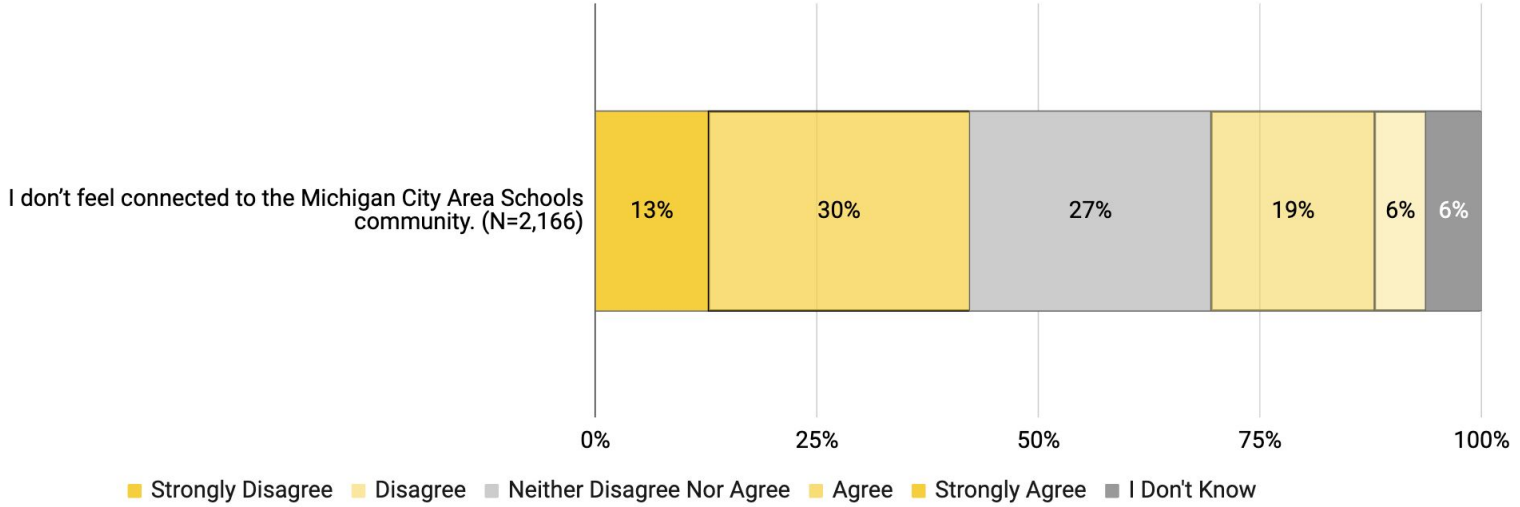
Overall Survey Data



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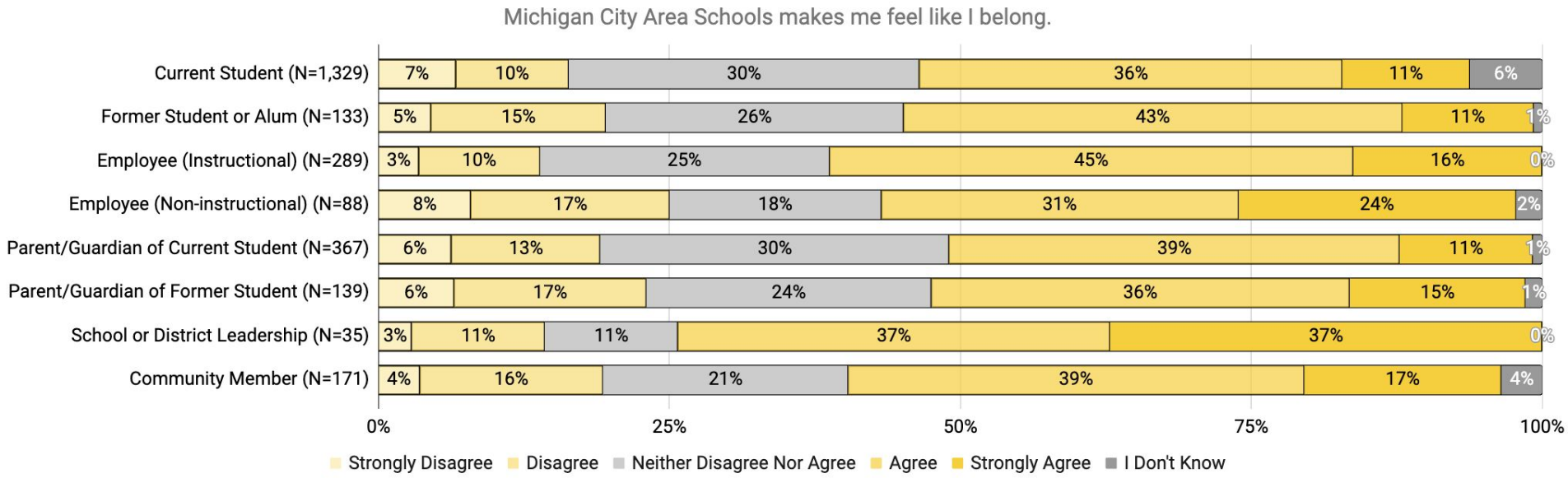
Survey Responses - By Role



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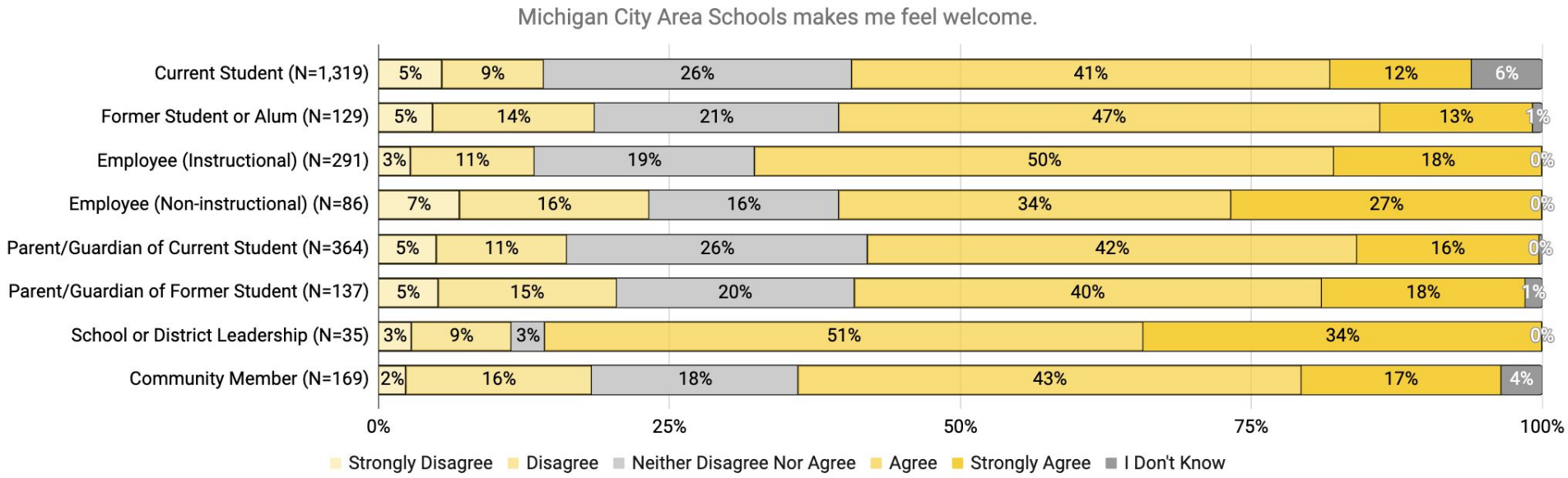

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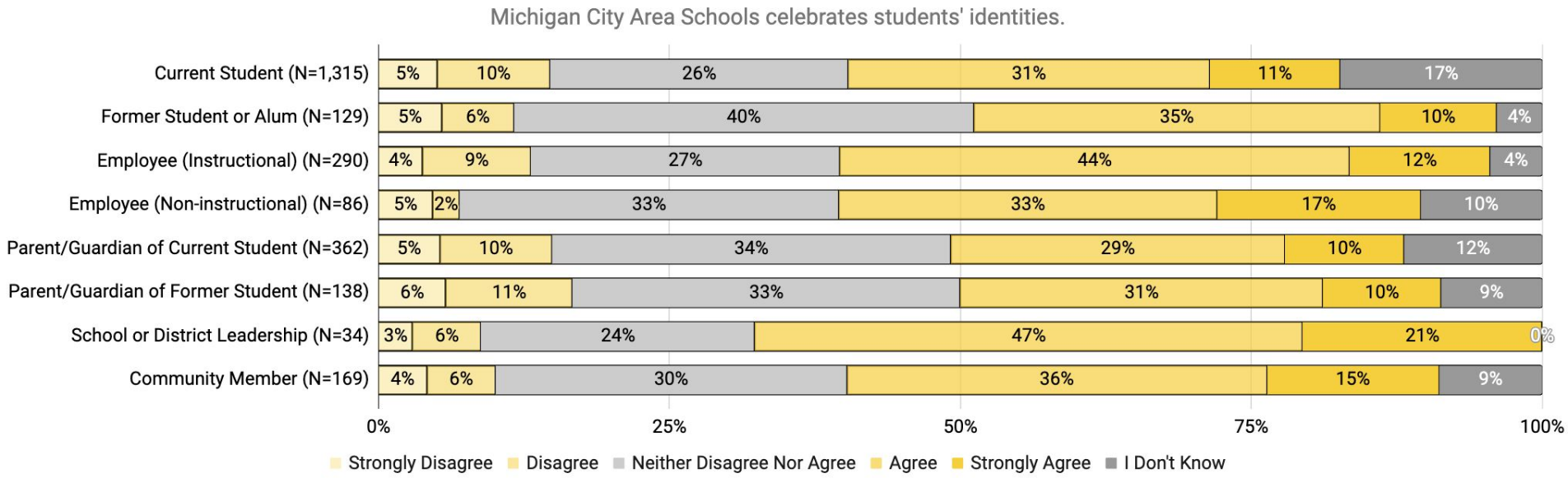

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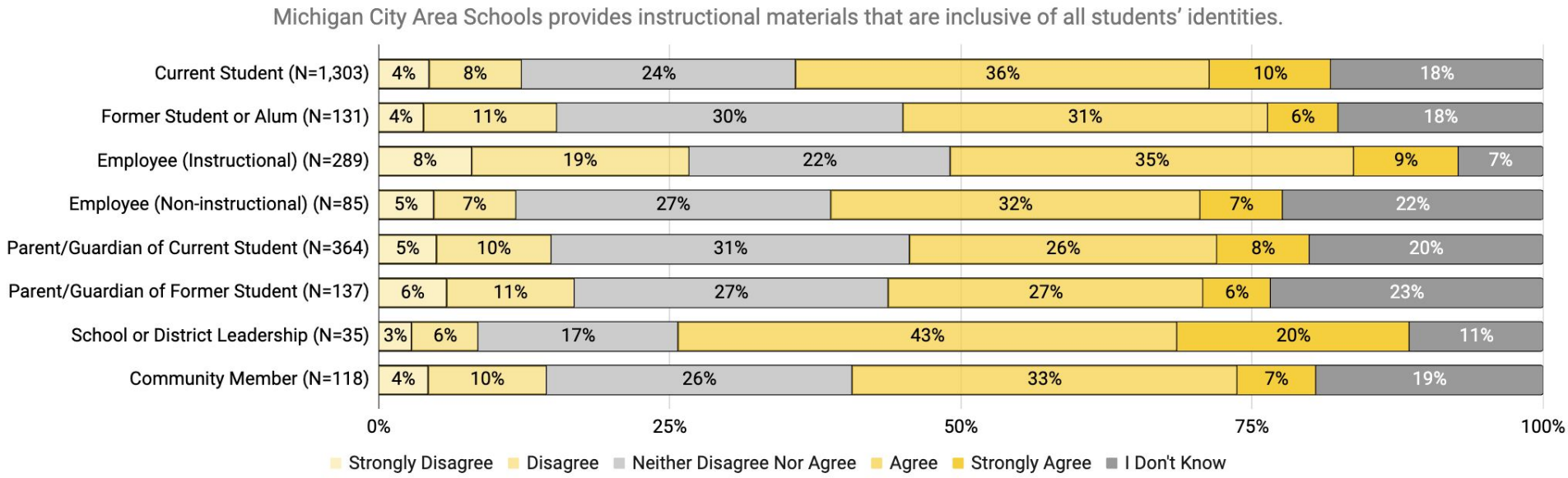

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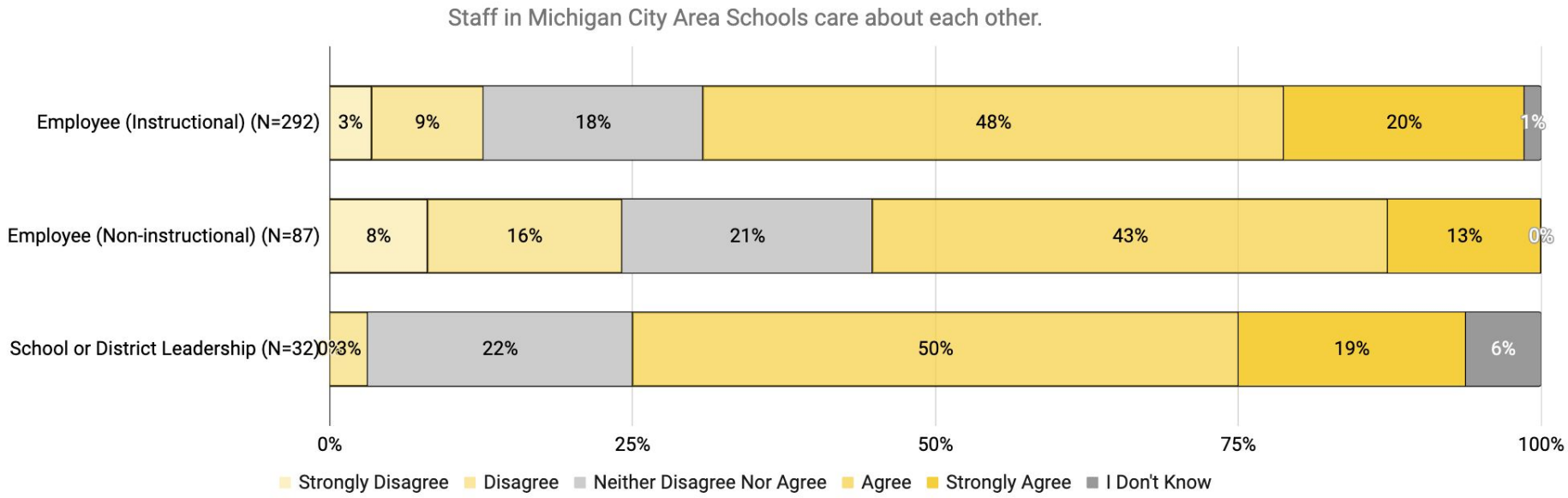

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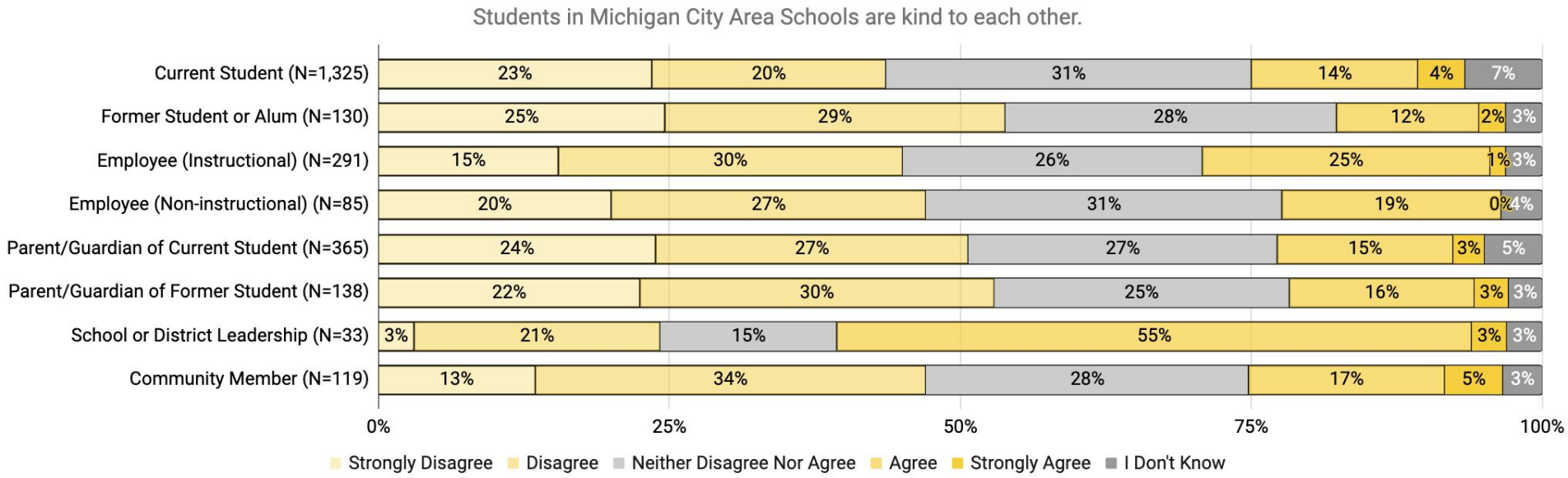

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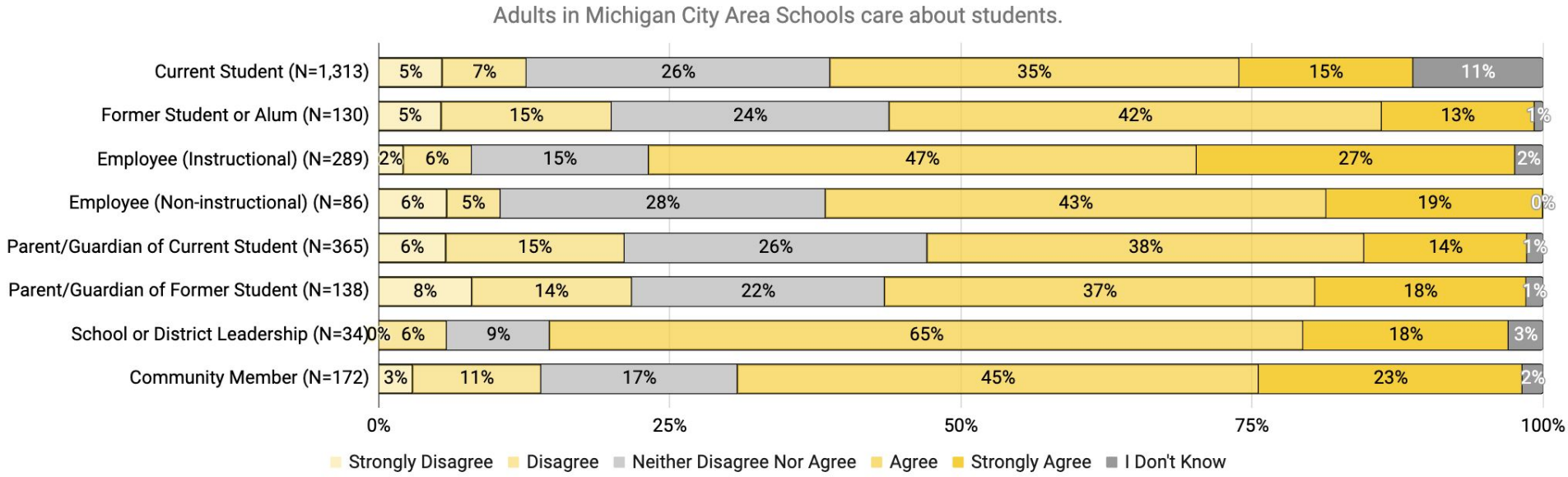

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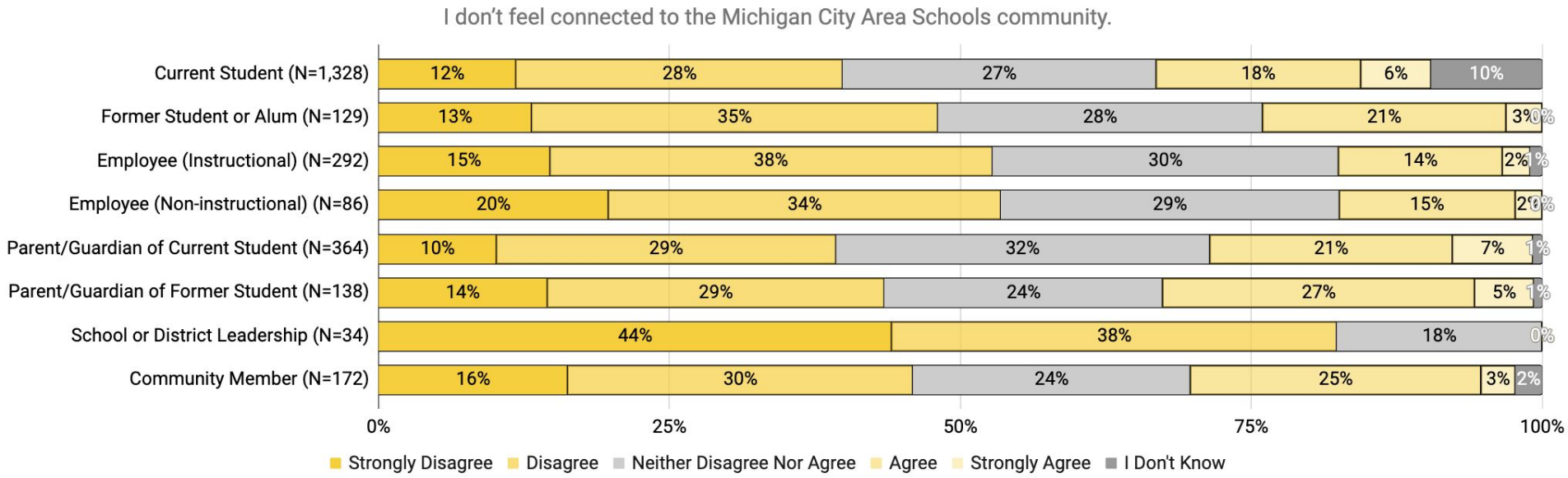

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Focus Group and Qualitative Survey Trends

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Focus Group Questions - Belonging

Students: In what ways do you feel adults in the building know and understand you? (For example, do you see yourself represented in classroom materials?)

Adults: In what ways does the district or school create a welcoming environment for students/staff/families?

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Trend Summary: Family Relationships + Belonging

While there were some examples shared of positive and effective family engagement at specific schools, overall participants expressed a need to improve relationships between MCAS and families of students in the district. Some respondents, including family members and district partners, said they felt that participation numbers are low at school and district events where families are invited. Some parents expressed feeling like they are an inconvenience if they try to get involved at their child's school. Other respondents identified specific barriers to family involvement, including school walkability, access to transportation, and perception of cultural differences.

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Trend Summary: Student Relationships + Belonging

When students were asked whether adults in the building know and understand them, there was a diversity of responses, with some students exhibiting positive relationships with adults at school, and others less so. In many cases the answer came down to relationships and incidents with specific teachers, with the most positive examples being cases where teachers knew about students' interests and personalities and asked about these things. Most adult respondents (instructional and non-instructional staff and district partners), felt that adults try hard to make students feel welcome (for example by greeting students by name at the beginning of the day). Specific ways that respondents named to improve student belonging included having more "fun" activities and events at school.

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Trend Summary: Diversity, Representation, and Awareness

While some students identified some instances of education around diversity and representation (for example, during Black History Month), overall participants felt like this is an area of growth for MCAS. In particular, concerns were expressed about the lack of racial diversity in the teaching staff and cases of implicit bias leading to a lack of support for African American students and families. Students also identified the need for more education around diverse cultures, including being able to have tough conversations about race with adults in school.

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Trend Summary: Building/ District Environment

Participants appreciated district and school efforts to create a welcoming environment by utilizing social media platforms to highlight achievements, hosting family nights and events, and having a staff member be “the face of the building” and greet people when they enter. However, there were concerns about consistency across schools, with perceptions of feeling welcomed varying between schools. Overall, participants emphasized the importance of first impressions and ensuring that families and community members feel welcomed from the moment they enter a school building.

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Wellness

Snapshot of Data:

- Community Survey
- Focus Groups

Initial Prompting Questions for Reflection

- *What opportunities exist to better meet the **social-emotional and learning needs** of our students?*
- *What support areas for students do we need to target **organizationally**?*

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Survey Responses
Quantitative Data

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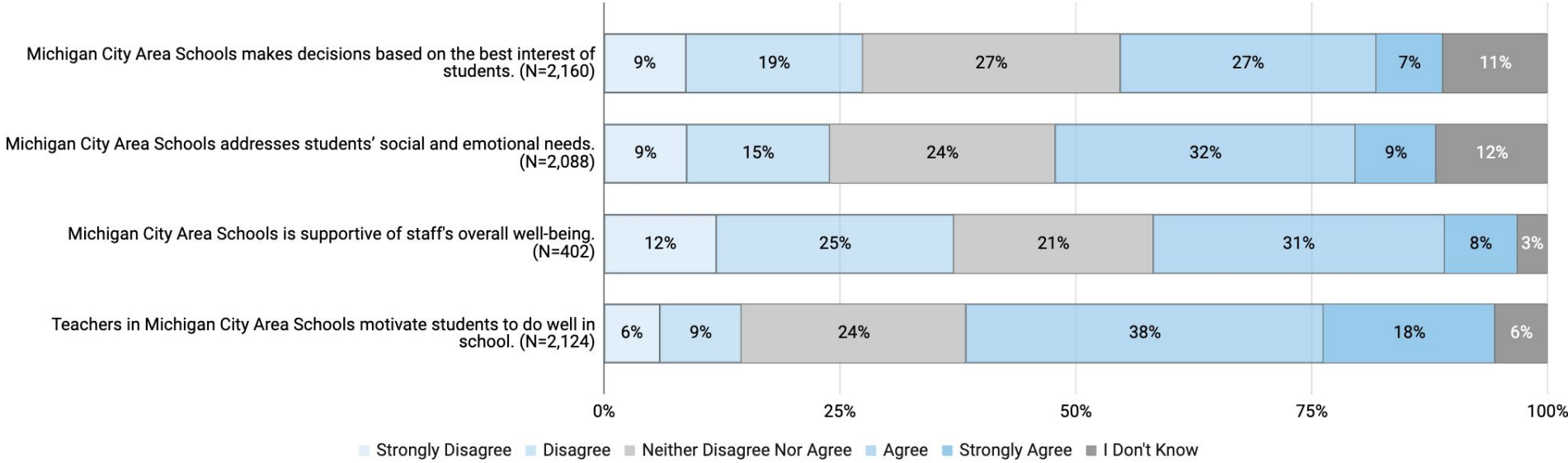
Overall Survey Data



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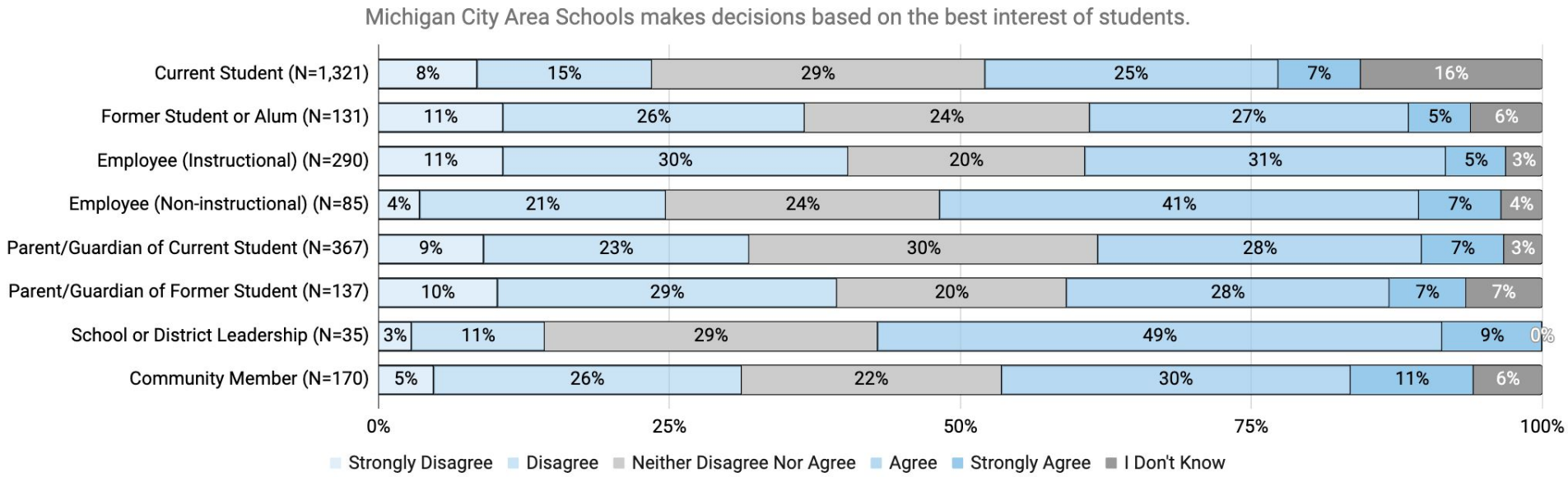

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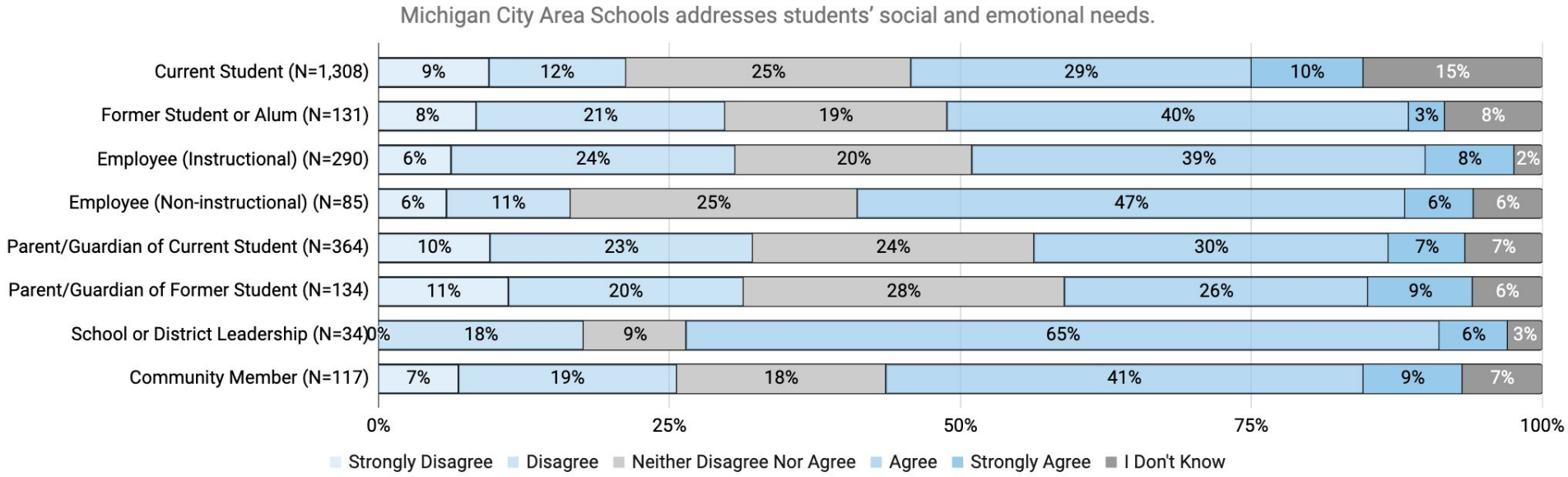

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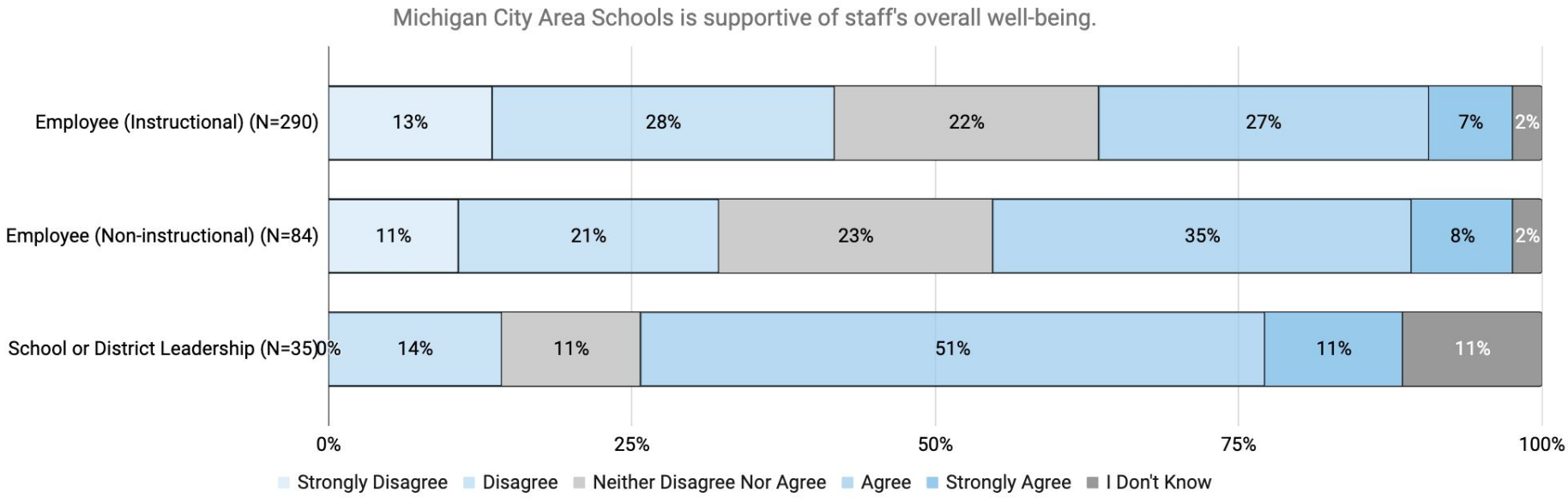

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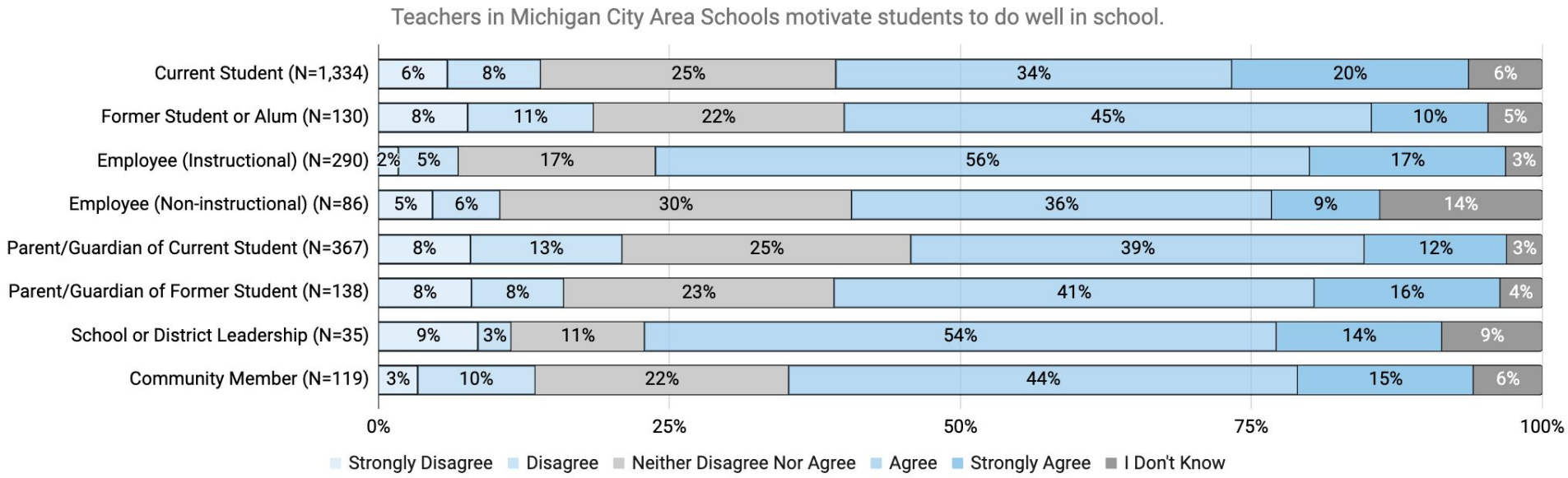

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Focus Group and Qualitative Survey Themes

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Focus Group Questions - Wellness

Teachers/Staff: What supports exist for students to get help when they are struggling in school (emotionally or academically)? What supports would you like to see?

Parents/Community: When thinking about the social-emotional and mental health needs of students, what are some of the most important needs or concerns you've noticed? What stressors might students be feeling both academically and socially?

Students: What do students need help at school with besides classwork? Are there any certain behaviors or emotions or habits they need help from adults to manage?

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Trend Summary: Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mental Health Supports

Concerns were expressed about student mental health and social and emotional well-being, especially since the pandemic. Participants called out the need for increased support of students, especially LGBTQIA+ students. Suggestions were made to better teach students how to manage their emotions and behaviors. There are currently some efforts to address these issues in MCAS, including weekly SEL lessons facilitated by counselors and success coaches, but participants mentioned implementation and resource challenges, making it difficult for some students to receive timely identification and support. Participants also called for anonymous mental health helplines or confidential virtual platforms, to address the stigma associated with seeking help.

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Trend Summary: Staffing and Interventions/Special Education Supports

Participants overall expressed concerns about inadequate staffing and resources in MCAS schools, impacting the ability to meet students' social, emotional, and educational needs. Teachers and parents cited teachers' workload and large class sizes as making it difficult to identify and meet students’ needs. In particular, though intervention programs for special education students exist, the shortage of special education teachers makes it difficult to implement these programs, as well as to successfully implement a co-teaching model, which works better for students. Participants also raised concerns about the special education identification process.

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Trend Summary: Psychological Safety and Equity

Participants brought up disparities in student experiences at school due to their identities and life circumstances. For example, participants mentioned that students living in poverty, who make up a significant percentage of the MCAS community, might be experiencing food insecurity, poor nutrition, and lack of sleep, all of which impact their stress levels. Additional stressors mentioned were witnessing violence and bullying (both in and out of school). Participants emphasized the need for support around mental health and diversity, equity, and inclusion as a way to address social inequities that are also present in MCAS schools.

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Trend Summary: Community and Family Involvement + Programs

Participants highlighted the importance of community and family engagement programs in schools. There are some existing programs that participants mentioned are currently working well, including on-site clinics, success coaches, Bridge to Manhood, Teen Court, math and literacy interventions, credit recovery and tutoring opportunities, and community days. Participants suggested increasing the availability of mentoring programs, referral and resource programs to address behavioral issues, parent awareness classes and workshops, and community-wide events that foster creativity. In addition, participants mentioned the importance of having up-to-date contact information for parents to make sure they receive communications about programmatic opportunities.

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