Welcome

Community Committee on Grading & Homework

Entry Activities:

Sign in using QR Code

Grab some dinner – across the hall in St. Helens

Find a table

Fill out a name tag and find a table with a mix of parents, students, teachers and principals

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SCHOOL DISTRICT 411

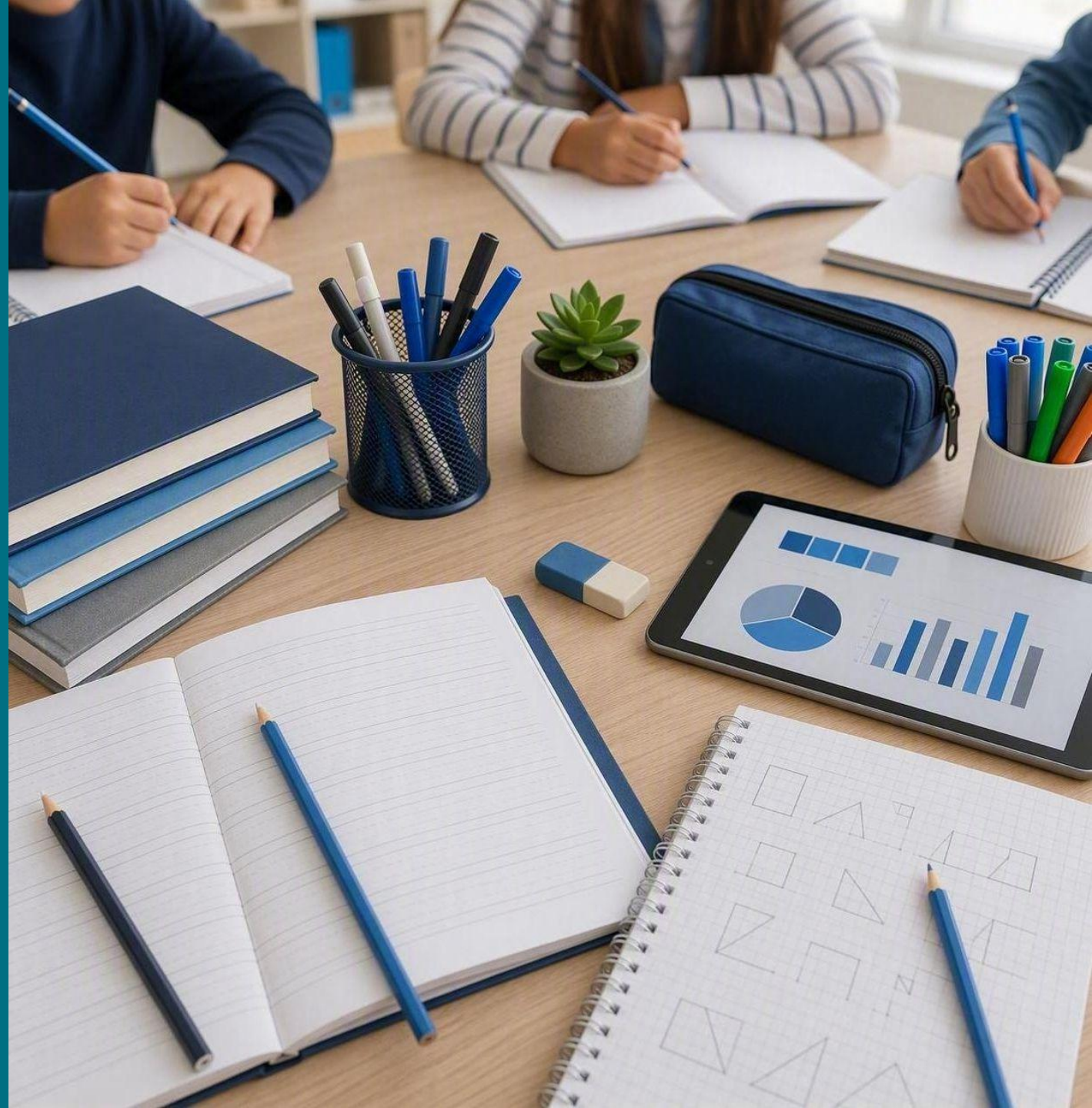
Community Committee on Grading & Homework

Meeting 2: November 3, 2026

Facilitators:

Will Paananen
Executive Director of Secondary Schools

Rich Mellish
Executive Director of Teaching & Learning Services



Starter – 5 minutes

1. **Table introductions**
   - **Name**
   - **Role** (parent, teacher, student, admin…)
   - Give an example of impactful feedback that you have received in your life
     - Can be big of small, from school, work, sports, hobby or life

2. **As a table, come up with 1-3 things that you feel makes feedback effective**

Meeting 2 Agenda



Welcome & Agenda



Purpose, Process, Product



Shared Learning



Exploring Student Voice

Today's Objectives

- Continue to build shared understanding of current practices, policies and procedures
- Answer questions and wonderings around grading and homework from previous meeting
- Review current data, student voice (saving parent / teacher input for next session)
- Plan for next steps

Meeting Norms and Agreements

- **Assume Positive Intent**
- **Focus on Systems and Patterns**
- **Listen to Understand**
- **Share Your Experience, and make Space for All Voices**
- **Stay Curious**
- **Respect Confidentiality**
- **Honor the Purpose of the Group**

This group is designed to explore broad themes, experiences, and potential improvements related to grading and homework. It is not intended to resolve immediate concerns involving individual students, staff members, classrooms, or schools.

ISD Problem of Practice

In our district we are not yet providing learning experiences that eliminate pervasive disproportionate differences in academic outcomes and sense of belonging for students by race, ability, language, and income.

Leadership & Workgroup Structure

Who is leading and organizing improvements in grading and homework?

Project Leaders	Will Paananen & Rich Mellish	
Leadership Team	**Project Leaders** & Jaqueline Downey	3 Large High School Principals
Workgroup	**Leadership Team**	Grading Practices Advisory Committee (GPAC)
Advisories & Feedback Loops	Community Committee on Grading & Homework	Sectionals (administrators)	Department Leads (teachers)	Student Feedback Loop TBD

Meeting 2 Agenda



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Our Charge

Strategic Plan: Strategy 3

Cultivate a sense of hope and joy for learning, and provide more room for students to grow and explore passions and interests.

Action:

Clarify, align, and improve homework and grading practices to support students to learn, fail forward, and participate in activities that support their interest and passion.

What are grades for?

Ranking students	College admissions
Motivating learning	Feedback to students and parents

Process: 10 dots table activity

Table Talk: what was the outcome?

50 dots total, how many in each box?

What are grades for?

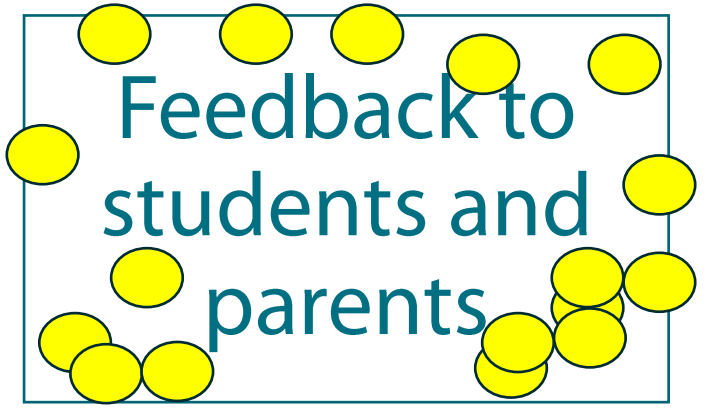
A-

*Come up with **one argument to keep** and **one argument to phase out***









Mastery

Target Outcome

Consistency

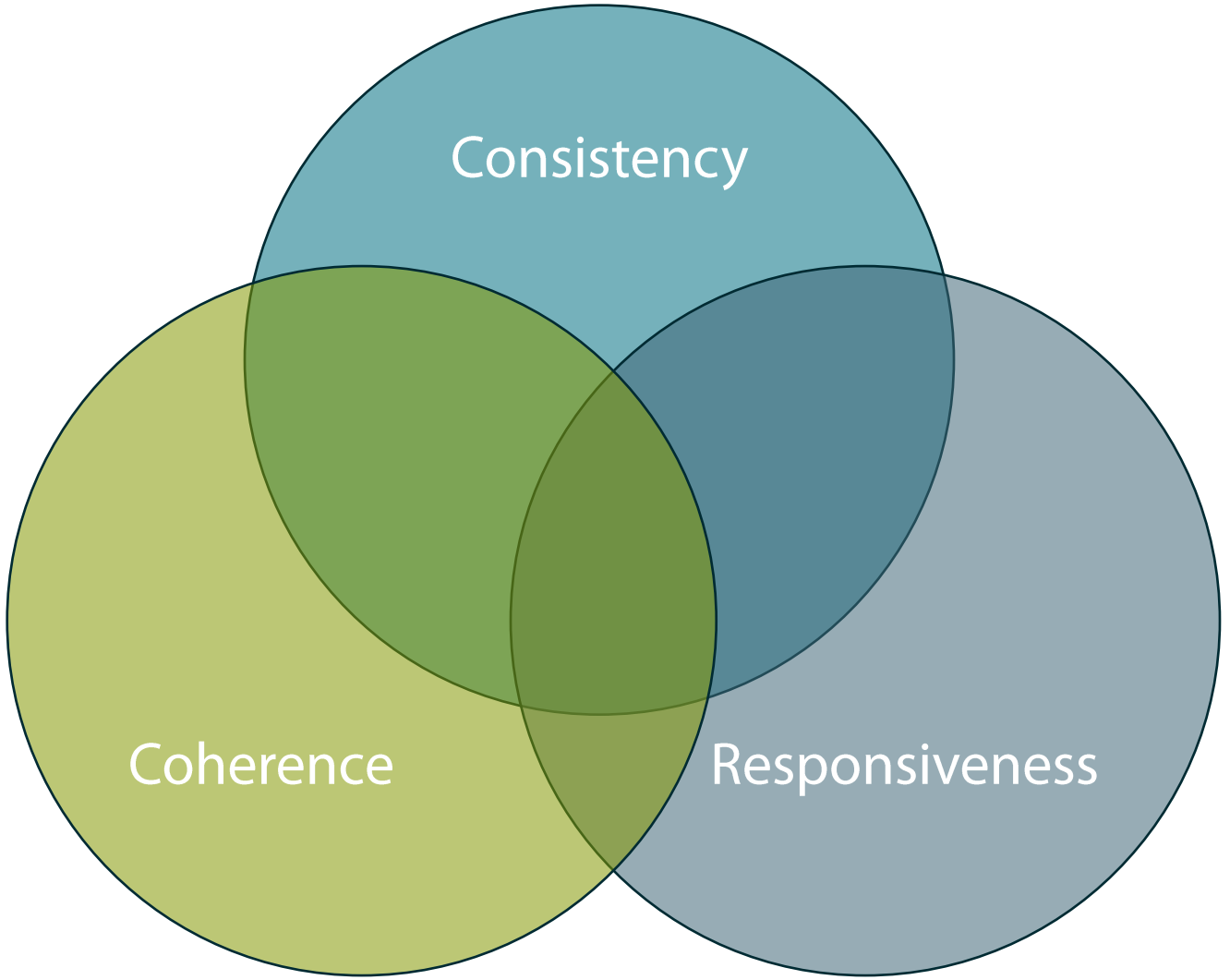
What should be the same? Clearly articulated systems, structures, and predictable patterns of behavior

Coherence

How do we ensure practices make sense and are aligned to our values? Practices that make sense across settings AND are adapted to the context AND aligned to our mission, vision, and Portrait of a Graduate

Responsiveness / Relevance

What should vary? Flexibility to meet the unique needs of groups and individuals



What applicants want the committee to accomplish

The clearest request is a shared framework that improves coherence without lowering expectations.



Applicants consistently framed the goal as better alignment, not simply easier grading or less work.

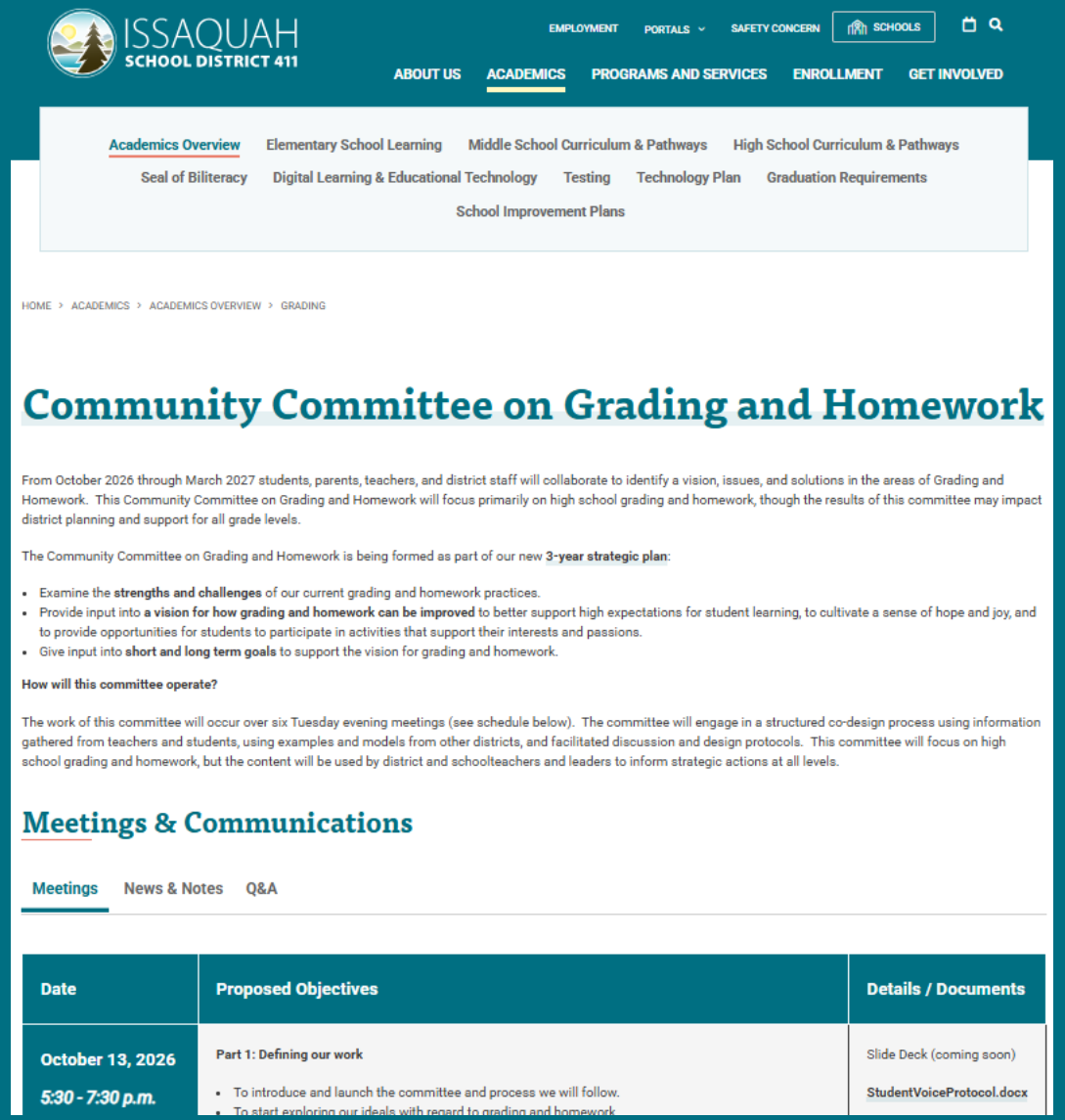
Committee Resources

All resources and meeting notes will be kept on our committee web page

HOME > ACADEMICS > ACADEMICS OVERVIEW > GRADING >

Community Committee on Grading and Homework

*Includes a **Q&A** using questions in the meeting follow-up feedback form.*



Q&A: What will this committee produce? Will it result in meaningful improvement?

1. **Information to include in a written guide to grading and homework.** This would be a community-facing document or web resource to provide more definition to what parents and students can expect in all our classes.
2. **Continuous improvement plans.** This committee will provide input into ongoing and long-term goals for improving our systems for grading and homework.

These products will help guide district leadership in working with our teachers and our teacher's association to determine common commitments and next steps in improving grading and homework practices.

Some changes may be quick and simple to implement.

Some changes may take time for teachers to collaborate or time for training.

This committee exists because the district is committed to hearing our community input and working toward improvements that matter to the student experience in our schools.

Q&A: Why do we have a threshold for recovery? What is the threshold?

- New topic post-covid.
- Shift from individual discretion to district plan
- Extensive discussion of pros and cons of recovery policies
- Set a minimum threshold of C+ / 77%
- Minimum is a floor, school course teams may jointly raise the minimum
- Does not prevent teachers addressing extenuating circumstances / equity concerns

More on our Q&A Site

Q&A: How does the district work with the Teacher's Union?

- Grading Practices Advisory Committee
- Collective Bargaining for issues regarding working conditions

Q&A: What happens when a student fails a class?

- No credit
- Retake or Credit Recovery
- May affect course sequence

Table Talk – 5 minutes

- What other questions would you like us to address in the future?
- Add questions to Q&A poster

Meeting 2 Agenda



Welcome & Agenda



Purpose, Process, Product



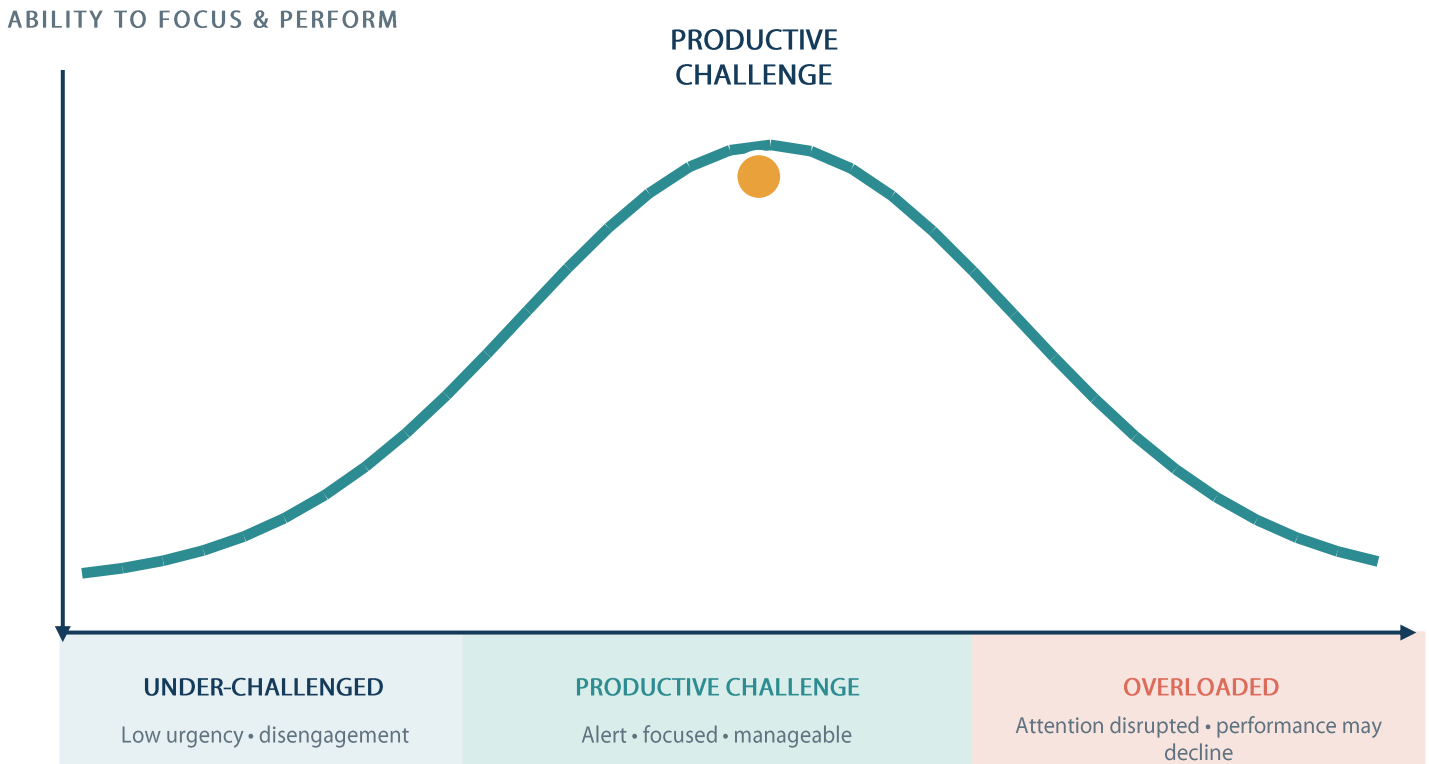
Shared Learning



Exploring Student Voice

Productive challenge supports performance

The goal is not to eliminate challenge. It is to create challenge students can successfully engage with.



A useful principle, not a fixed formula

The "best" level is not identical for every learner or task.

RIGOR ≠ WORKLOAD

Productive challenge is not the same thing as stress.

Use this curve as a conversation starter, not as a prescription for a specific amount of homework.

Challenge + support creates the learning conditions

Homework and grading should increase productive engagement, not simply increase pressure.

	LOW SUPPORT	HIGH SUPPORT
HIGH CHALLENGE	**OVERWHELMED** **High challenge • low support** Unclear starting point Frustration or avoidance Focus shifts to survival, compliance or points	**PRODUCTIVE STRUGGLE** **High challenge • high support** Thinking is required Feedback guides next steps Students can recover and improve
LOW CHALLENGE	**DISENGAGED** **Low challenge • low support** Low investment Repetition without purpose Limited reason to persist	**COMFORTABLE** **Low challenge • high support** Success is likely-but may not be meaningful Confidence may grow Limited stretch if it continues

ASK FIRST

Is the work appropriately challenging?

Do students have the support and clarity needed to succeed?

Does the Feedback and grade help students understand where they are and what to do next?

What should homework and grading move students toward?

Purpose, clarity, feedback, and manageable challenge help students stay in a productive learning zone.

TOO EASY / LOW VALUE

"I can finish without really thinking."

- Repeated practice after mastery
- Completion without a clear learning purpose
- Points reward volume more than learning

PRODUCTIVE LEARNING ZONE

"I have to think, and I know what to try."

- Purposeful practice tied to learning
- Clear expectations and success criteria
- Useful feedback and chances to improve

TOO MUCH / OVERLOAD

"I don't know where to start."

- Unclear or competing demands
- Workload crowds out sleep and other commitments
- Consequences make mistakes feel unsafe

COMMUNITY QUESTION Which practices help students experience challenge as purposeful, clear, and manageable?

Grading Practices – 5 minutes

Printed copies at your table.

Table Talk:

Choose one part of the flow chart and read the descriptors on the following pages. Pick and share one idea that you feel is important and why.

Meeting 2 Agenda



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Exploring Student Voice

Student Voice Themes

Positive Experience

How are we doing in making sure students see the learning as personally **meaningful**, **enjoyable**, or **supportive** of their life and learning goals?

Workload

How are we doing in making sure **student workload is appropriate** for their goals and allows time for healthy life choices such as clubs, sports, community activities?

Feedback

How are we doing in making sure students have the chance to **try** new learning, and **get feedback** so that they can **learn from their mistakes** before major graded tasks and tests?

Clear & Fair Grade

How are we doing to make sure that your **grade reflects how well you learned** the essential learnings of the class, and are not overly impacted by the process of learning such as early stumbles?

Data / Voice Records

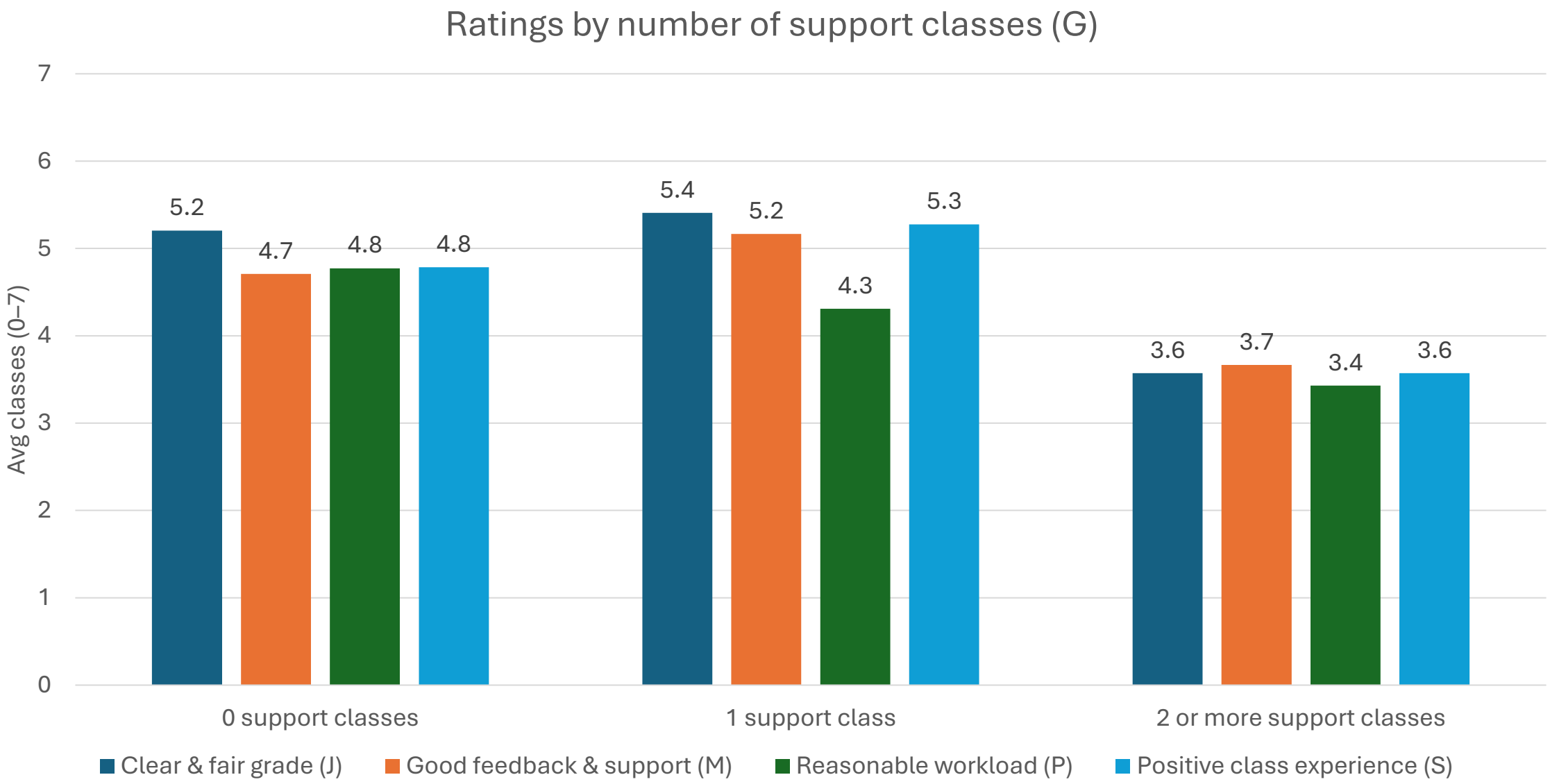
- Names, School, Specific course changed to protect personally identifiable information
- Otherwise unaltered, open ended, and not always on point – voice is messy
- Between survey and interviews, well over 300 students, all three schools
- Not a scientific survey – just input

Group	Respondents	% of all respondents
All respondents	**289**	**100.0%**
0 support classes	238	82.4%
1 support class	32	11.1%
2 or more support classes	7	2.4%
No usable answer (blank / multiple selections)	12	4.2%

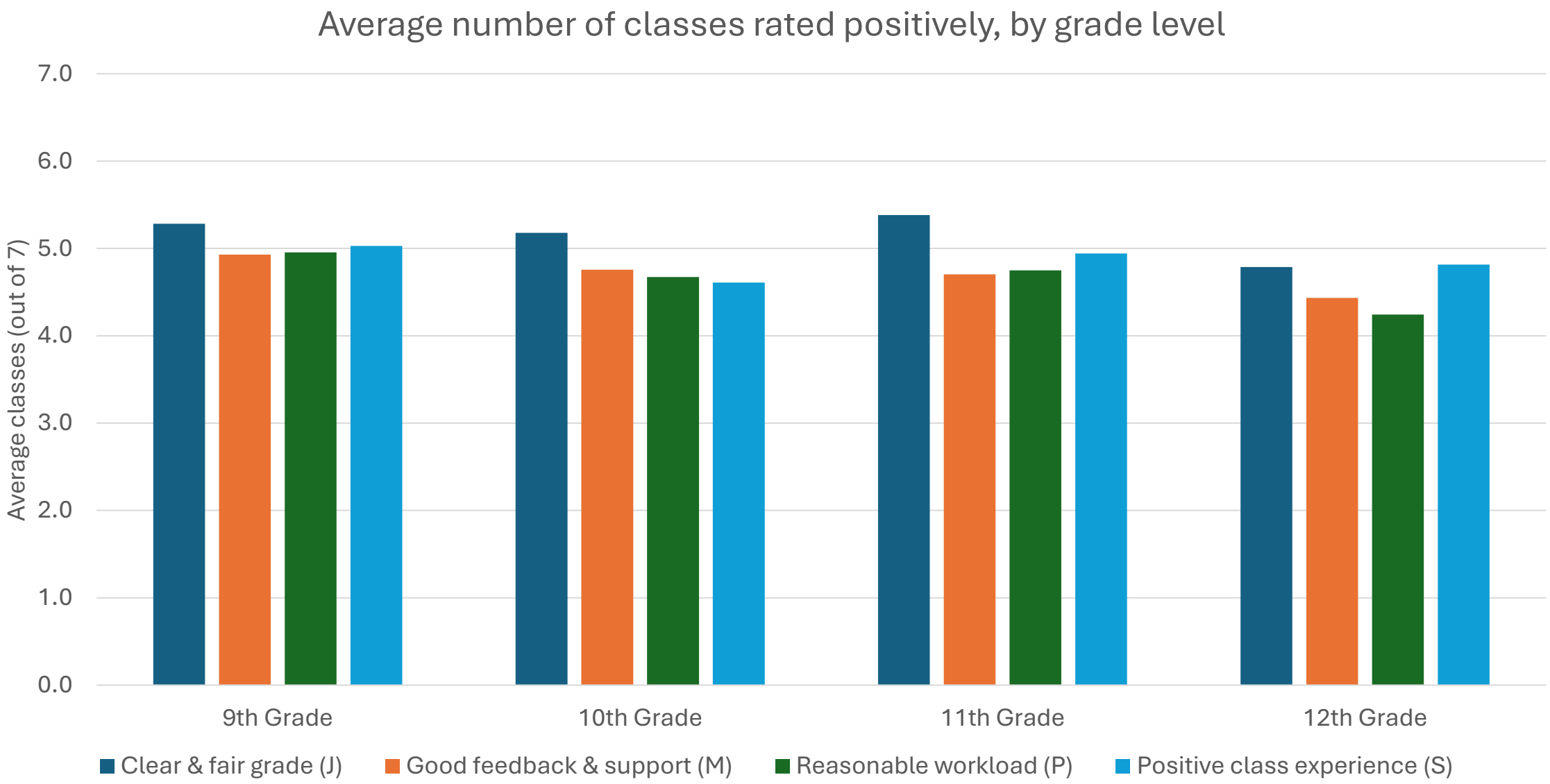
Group	Respondents	% of all respondents
All respondents	**289**	**100.0%**
0 advanced classes	45	15.6%
1–2 advanced classes	80	27.7%
3–4 advanced classes	103	35.6%
5–7 advanced classes	53	18.3%
No usable answer (blank / multiple selections)	8	2.8%

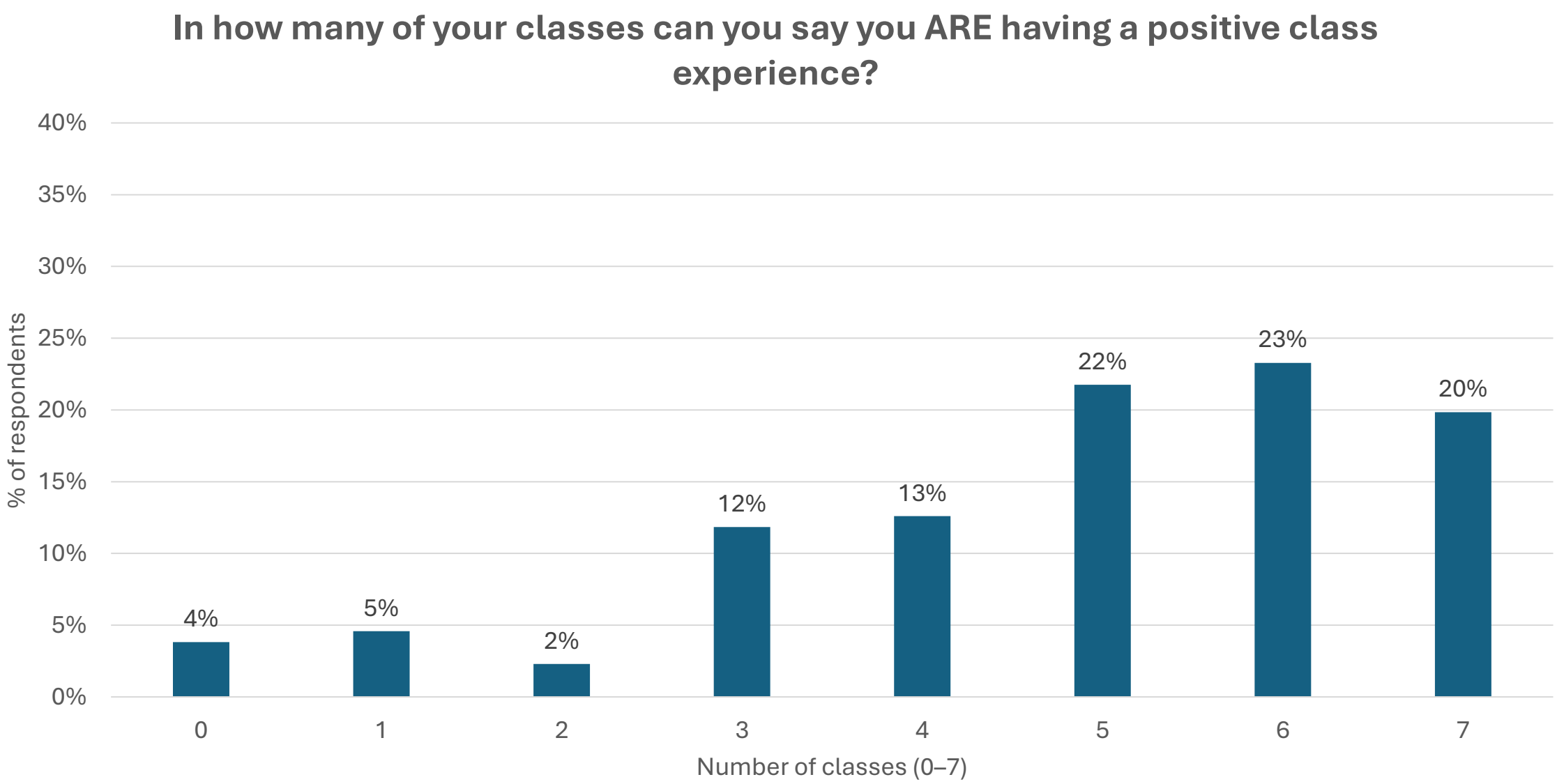
Because students could mark more than one group, categories add up to more than the total, 100%

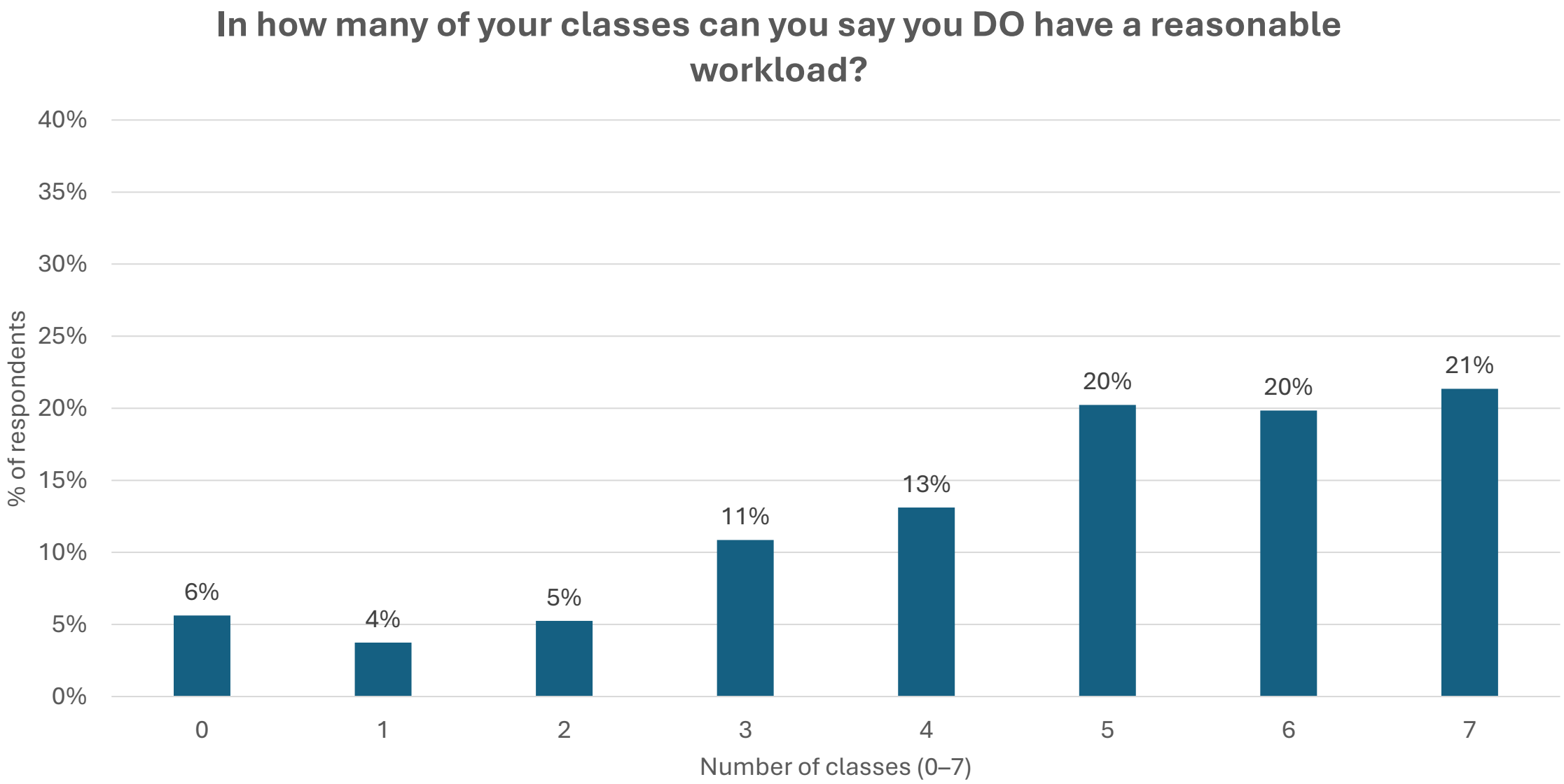
Group	Respondents	% of all respondents
All respondents	**289**	**100.0%**
Asian	139	48.1%
White	145	50.2%
Hispanic/Latino	21	7.3%
Black/African American	12	4.2%
Selected 2+ groups	38	13.1%
Pacific Islander	6	2.1%
Native American	3	1.0%
No response (blank)	14	4.8%

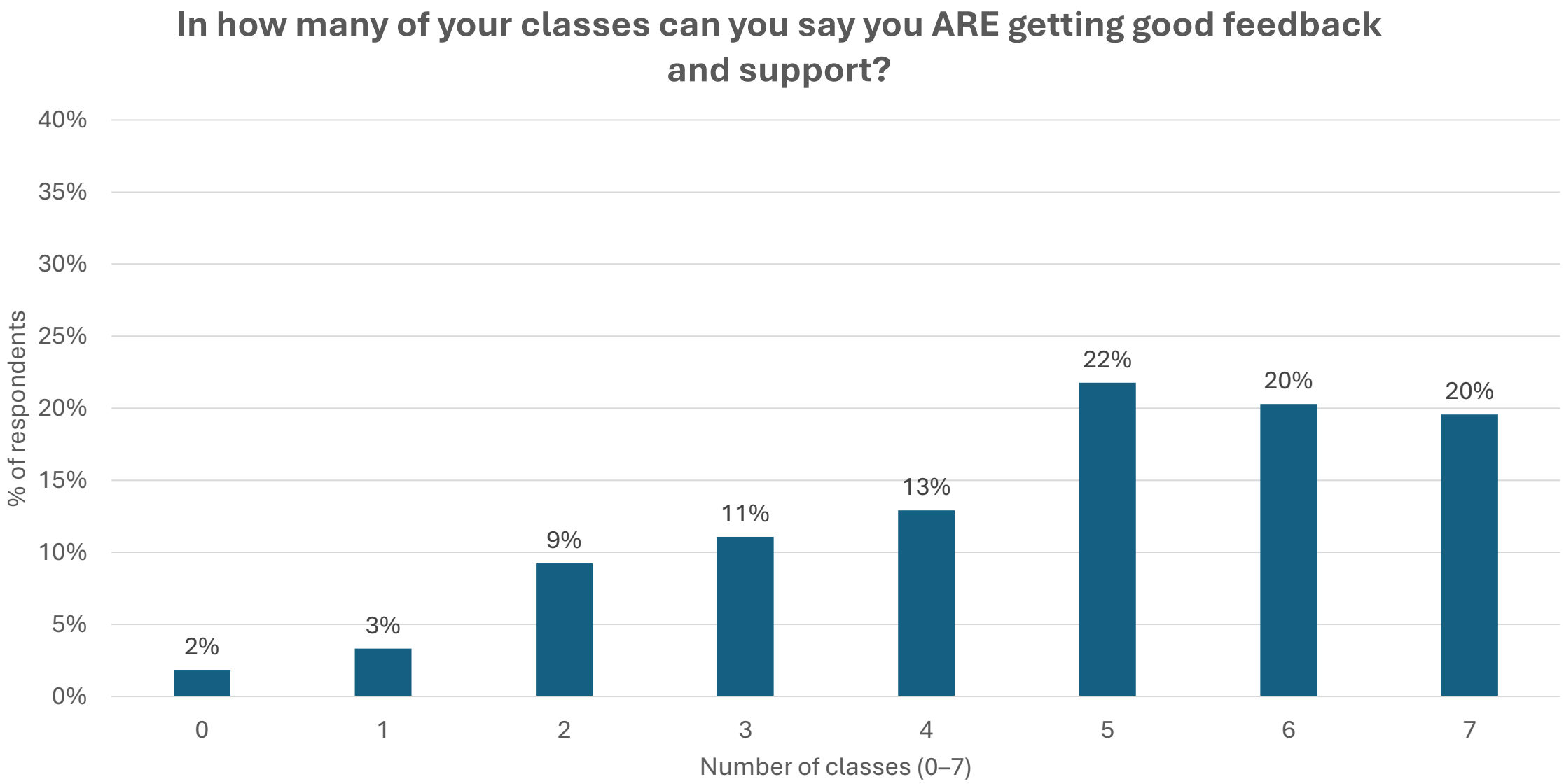

Ratings by number of support classes (G)
Avg classes (0–7)
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
5.2
4.7
4.8
4.8
5.4
5.2
4.3
5.3
3.6
3.7
3.4
3.6
0 support classes
1 support class
2 or more support classes
Clear & fair grade (J)
Good feedback & support (M)
Reasonable workload (P)
Positive class experience (S)


Ratings by number of advanced classes (H)
Avg classes (0–7)
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
5.2
4.9
4.7
5.1
5.4
4.9
4.8
4.9
5.2
4.6
4.9
4.8
5.0
4.6
4.2
4.7
0 advanced classes
1–2 advanced classes
3–4 advanced classes
5–7 advanced classes
Clear & fair grade (J)
Good feedback & support (M)
Reasonable workload (P)
Positive class experience (S)

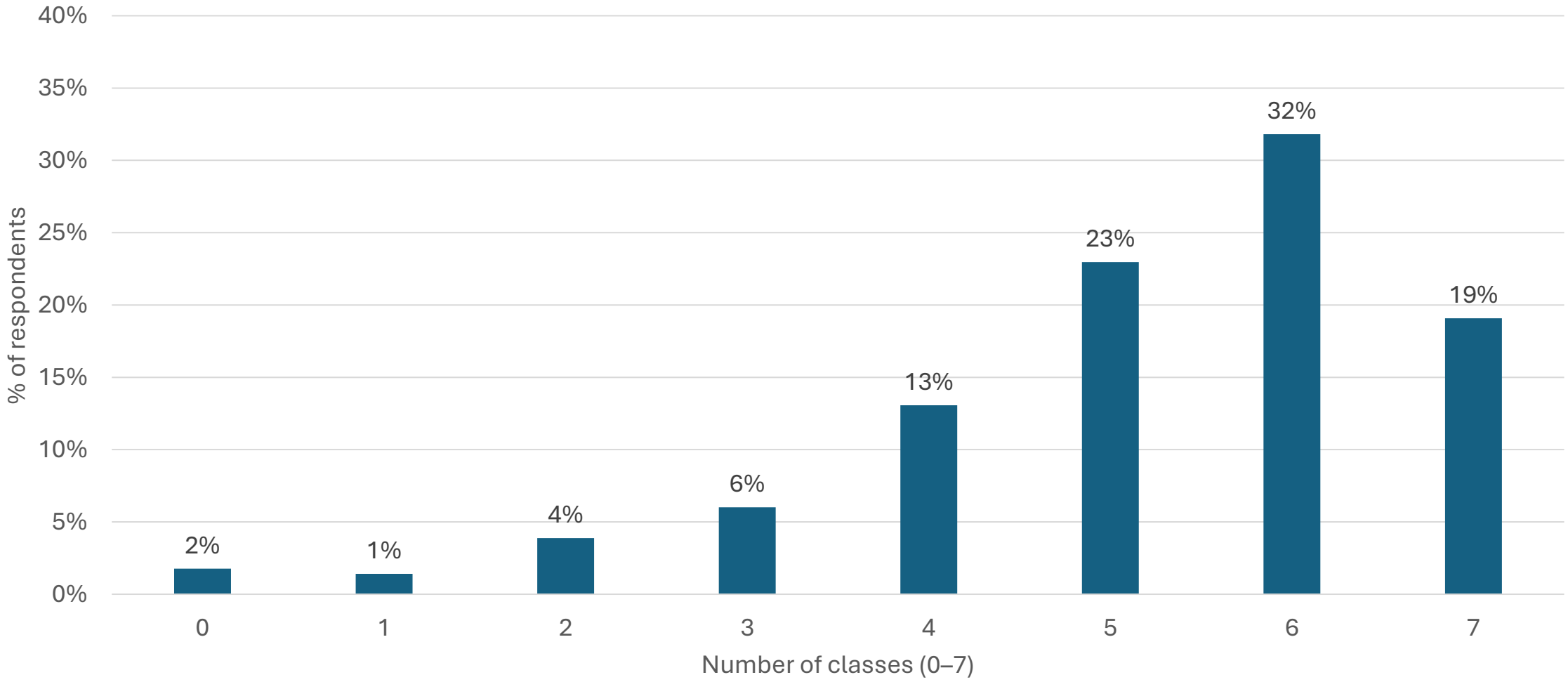

Average number of classes rated positively, by grade level
Average classes (out of 7)
7.0
6.0
5.0
4.0
3.0
2.0
1.0
0.0
9th Grade
10th Grade
11th Grade
12th Grade
Clear & fair grade (J)
Good feedback & support (M)
Reasonable workload (P)
Positive class experience (S)


In how many of your classes can you say you ARE having a positive class experience?
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
% of respondents
4%
5%
2%
12%
13%
22%
23%
20%
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Number of classes (0–7)


In how many of your classes can you say you DO have a reasonable workload?
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
% of respondents
6%
4%
5%
11%
13%
20%
20%
21%
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Number of classes (0–7)


In how many of your classes can you say you ARE getting good feedback and support?
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
% of respondents
2%
3%
9%
11%
13%
22%
20%
20%
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Number of classes (0–7)

In how many of your classes can you say you ARE getting a clear and fair grade.



Student Voice Themes

Positive Experience

How are we doing in making sure students see the learning as personally **meaningful**, **enjoyable**, or **supportive** of their life and learning goals?

Workload

How are we doing in making sure **student workload is appropriate** for their goals and allows time for healthy life choices such as clubs, sports, community activities?

Feedback

How are we doing in making sure students have the chance to **try** new learning, and **get feedback** so that they can **learn from their mistakes** before major graded tasks and tests?

Clear & Fair Grade

How are we doing to make sure that your **grade reflects how well you learned** the essential learnings of the class, and are not overly impacted by the process of learning such as early stumbles?

Examining Student Voice

1. *Work in Student-Parent-Staff groups*
2. *Remember meeting norms and pay attention to air time and power – respectfully share your truth*
3. *Collect student voice samples*
4. *Sort into groupings*
5. *Complete summary form for each group*

Symptom	Problem of Practice	Cause	Strategy
• Visible evidence there is an issue	• Statement of an unmet need	• Theory of why the problem occurs	• Approach to address the cause and meet the need

Topic: *Summarize group in a phrase*

What is important about this topic?

Write what this topic would mean in practice.

Select all that apply

___ Big Idea/Problem of Practice ___ Tactic / Strategy ___ Provocative Idea

___ For Fall 2027 ___ Long Term

___ Focus on Well Being ___ Focus on Learning

Topic: *Study Guides*

What is important about this?

Having a clear study guide for units and unit assessments ensures all student know what is most important to study and what they will be asked to do on the assessment.

___ Big Idea/Problem of Practice _x_ Tactic / Strategy ___ Provocative Idea

_x_ For Fall 2027 ___ Long Term

___ Focus on Well Being _x_ Focus on Learning

Topic:_____

What is important about this?

___ Big Idea/Problem of Practice ___ Tactic / Strategy ___ Provocative Idea

___ For Fall 2027 ___ Long Term

___ Focus on Well Being ___ Focus on Learning

Looking Ahead

- Leaders and GPAC will collate your work today.
- Dig deeper into identified problems of practices:
  - What does the research say?
  - Which are our priorities?
  - What are the root causes?
  - What does good look like?

Feedback and Q/A form

https://www.isd411.org/fs /pages/7133

Please use the following form – also being emailed to you, to give us feedback on this meeting and the planned process

AND

to surface any questions you have that you hope are answered in future meetings and/or on our Committee Site Q&A.

Thank you, our next meeting is on December 1st

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