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**STATE COLLEGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

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TO: Board of School Directors

FROM: Jason Perrin and Robert O'Donnell

DATE: November 6, 2014

RE: Strategic Plan Survey Results

Please find two attached documents. The first document is an executive summary of the survey results specific to the district's Strategic Plan. Students, faculty, and parents completed the survey in June 2014. The second document is the entire analysis of the survey using the aggregate results. These results will be used as benchmark data in order to measure progress over the next three years.

The survey was completed in order to benchmark qualitative data regarding the district's *instructional focus* and "pillars." These four pillars/areas: 1) *Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration*, 2) *Responsive Teaching and Learning*, 3) *High Expectations for All*, and 4) *Welcoming and Safe Climate for Learning and Work*, continue to be the main focus areas as we look to improve.

At a future board meeting, we will present information regarding measuring progress for all of the benchmarks in the Strategic Plan (2014-2017), using both qualitative and quantitative data.

The management of the survey, and the analysis was completed by Dr. Edward Fuller, Director of the Penn State Center for Evaluation and Education Policy Analysis at Penn State University. He will be in attendance at the board meeting on November 10<sup>th</sup>, in order to assist in answering any questions that you may have.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**  
**State College Area School District**  
**Strategic Plan**  
**Baseline Surveys of**  
**Students, Teachers, and Parents**

**November 2014**

**Ed Fuller, PhD**  
Associate Professor, Professor in Charge, and  
Director, Center for Evaluation and Education Policy Analysis (CEEPA)  
Educational Leadership Program  
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## Introduction

As part of the State College Area School District's Strategic Plan Initiative, members of the Penn State Center for Evaluation and Education Policy Analysis (CEEPA) worked collaboratively with the SCASD administrative team to design surveys to provide baseline information about the SCASD Strategic Plan. Surveys were designed for students in grades 3 through 12, teachers, principals, and parents. Importantly, students, teachers, and principals reviewed the surveys and made important contributions to the quality of the surveys.

The student and teacher surveys were administered during the last two weeks of school in 2014 while the principal and parent surveys were administered in the last two weeks of June. All surveys were administered electronically through SurveyMonkey. Dr. Ed Fuller, Executive Director of CEEPA and an Associate Professor in the Education Policy Studies Department, collected the data and is the only person with access to the survey results.

This survey is aligned with SCASD's 2014 Strategic Plan and was designed to provide baseline information on that plan. These data should *not* be used to evaluate school administrators, teachers, or students for any reason. Finally, *the goal of these surveys is to show improvement over time*, not to make value judgments about educators or schools.

There are four pillars to the SCASD strategic plan: (1) Welcoming and Safe Climate; (2) Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration; (3) High Expectations for All; and (4) Responsive Teaching and Learning. Dr. Fuller statistically analyzed the original survey results and identified various concepts that aligned with the four pillars. Using these concepts—called domains in this report—to group statements together in the analyses ensures that statements measuring the same idea are grouped together. This Executive Summary highlights both the areas of strength and areas of potential concerns that should be investigated further.

## Student Results

Because of the differences between elementary and secondary schools as well as the differences in cognitive abilities between students at the two levels, surveys were created and administered separately for the two school levels. The elementary school survey included 30 statements while the secondary school survey included 80 statements.

### Elementary School Students

For elementary students, six different domains emerged from the four pillars of the SCASD Strategic Plan. These six domains and the average percentage of students responding “Yes” or “Definitely Yes” to the statements within each domain are displayed in Figure ES1.

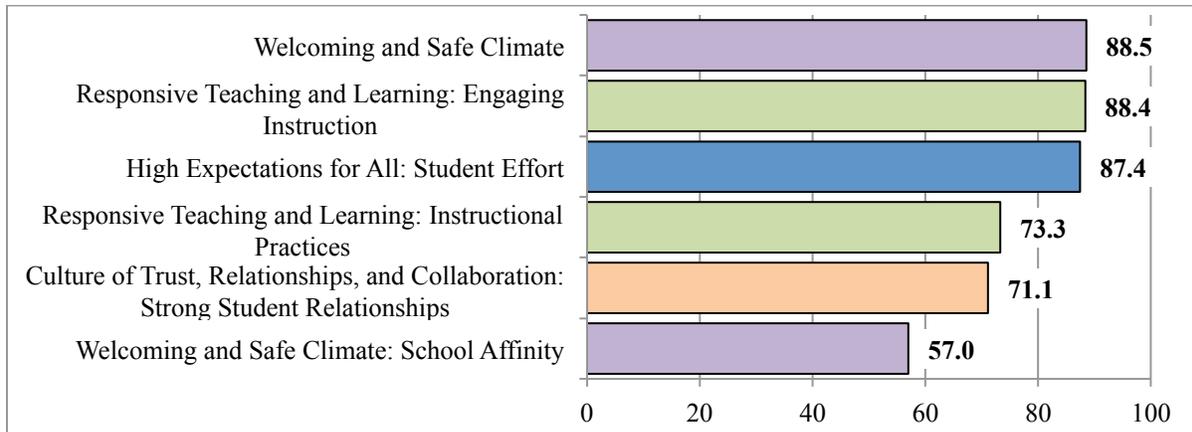
As shown in the graph, students had very positive perceptions across all six domains. This reflects very positively on the educators working in SCASD elementary schools. In particular, students had extremely positive perceptions about the existence of an overall welcoming and safe climate, the provision of engaging instruction, and the communication of high expectations for all students. The average percentage of students responding “Yes” or “Definitely Yes” for each of these three domains was about 88%. These are extremely positive results and would likely be more positive than for most schools in the United States.

While the perceptions associated with instructional practices and a culture of trust, relationships, and collaboration were less positive than the aforementioned three domains, the results were still quite positive. Indeed, an average of nearly three-quarters of students responded positively to the statements in these two domains.

The domain with the least positive response was students' perceptions of their affinity for school. The two statements for this domain included: (1) I like school; and, (2) I look forward to

going to school. About 61% of students answered “Yes” or “Definitely Yes” to the first statement and about 53% answered similarly to the second statement. While almost none of the students responded with either “No” or “Definitely No” to either of these statements, about 32% and 38% of students responded with “sometimes” to the two statements, respectively. Thus, a substantial proportion of elementary students appear to not agree entirely that they look forward to school or enjoy school.

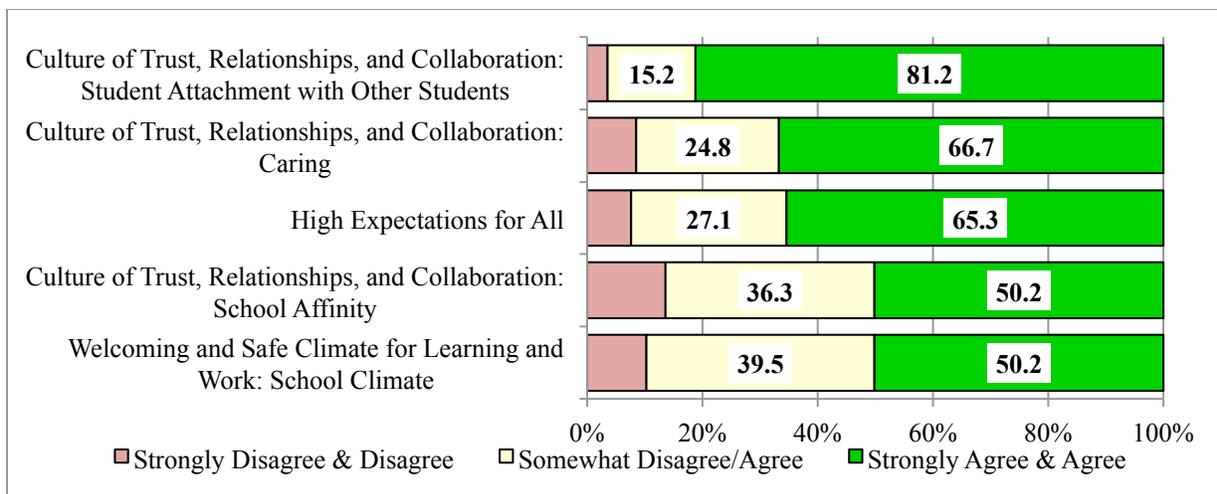
Figure 1: Average Percentage of Elementary Students Responding Yes or Definitely Yes by Domain Area



### Secondary School Students

Because of the nature of the statements used in the Responsive Teaching and Learning sections of the survey, comparisons across all domains is not possible. However, Figure 2 provides the average percentage of students responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to the statements within each domain. As shown in Figure ES2, the majority of responses were quite positive across all five domains. In particular, students were particularly positive regarding their attachment with other students in the school. Students were also quite positive regarding student perceptions of caring and high expectations for all students.

Figure 2: Average Percentage of Secondary Students Responding “Yes” or “Definitely Yes” by Selected Domain Area



With respect to individual statements, students were extremely positive about three distinct areas: teacher classroom practices; teacher expectations and student effort; and, caring and safe atmosphere. For the statements in Table 1, at least 90% of students agreed at some level with the statement and at least 67% responded with either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.”

With respect to teaching practices, the results suggest students perceive that teachers instruct students to: use technology to enhance student learning; use information accurately; interpret information to draw conclusions; and, work in groups. With respect to high expectations and student effort, the results suggest students perceive that they try their best, teachers expect them to participate, and teachers expect students to treat each other with respect. Finally, with respect to the caring and safe atmosphere, the results suggest that students perceive: teachers and other students care about them; they have friends, and feel safe in the school.

Table 1: Statements with the Highest Percentage of Secondary Students Responding “Yes” or “Definitely Yes” by Selected Areas

Survey Statement	% Students Responding	
	Agree & Str Agree	All Agree Responses
<b>Teaching Practices</b>		
Teachers teach us to use information accurately.	74.4	92.5
Teachers teach us to use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information.	74.1	91.6
Teachers teach us to interpret information and draw conclusions.	67.1	90.2
Students work with a partner or in groups.	69.5	92.2
Students use technology.	86.1	95.5
<b>Teacher Expectations and Student Effort</b>		
Teachers expect me to participate in class every day.	69.5	88.4
I usually try my best at school.	76.0	91.4
My teachers expect me to treat people with respect.	83.6	95.3
<b>Caring and Safe Atmosphere</b>		
My teachers care about me.	69.8	91.2
There is at least one adult in this school who cares about me.	88.0	95.6
I have some good friends at this school.	90.1	96.5
There are students in this school who care about me.	87.2	96.1
This school is a safe place to be.	73.7	91.2

The responses to other statements, however, highlight some areas of challenge. In particular, students were less positive about two areas: relationships and student voice; and, teaching outcomes and practices. For these statements, less than 50% of students responded with “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” and less than 75% of students agreed with the statement at any level of agreement.

With respect to relationships and student voice, students feel less positive about: the level of respect shown by students; their level of comfort in communicating their thoughts and opinions; the frequency with which teachers recognize or praise students; and, students and teachers collaborating to make the school a better place.

With respect to teaching outcomes and practices, students had less positive perceptions about the degree to which teachers employed some fundamental teaching strategies such as: communicating the purpose of the lesson; summarizing the lesson; having students correct

mistakes on assignments and assessments; emphasizing learning from mistakes; and, having students provide feedback to their peers. Not only are these teaching behaviors that should occur on a regular basis, but they are fundamental to student learning, particularly with respect to the 21<sup>st</sup> century skill of learning from mistakes.

Table 2: Statements with the Lowest Percentage of Secondary Students Responding “Yes” or “Definitely Yes” by Selected Areas

Survey Statement	% Students Responding	
	Agree & Str Agree	All Agree Responses
<b>Relationships and Student Voice</b>		
Students at this school treat each other with respect.	34.3	73.3
Students are involved in decisions about classroom rules/procedures.	37.8	66.1
In this school, students show respect for each other's viewpoints.	38.8	73.4
I feel comfortable saying what I think at school.	45.4	74.0
Students are encouraged by teachers to say what they think.	46.1	74.9
Students can talk to teachers about things that are bothering them.	48.0	75.1
In the past week, a teacher has recognized or praised me for doing good work.	49.1	70.2
Teachers and students work together to make our school better.	44.1	74.6
<b>Teaching Outcomes and Practices</b>		
My teachers: Take the time to summarize what we learn each day.	39.4	64.8
My teachers have us correct our mistake on both assignments and assessments	40.8	64.3
My teachers: Emphasize learning from our mistakes.	47.9	74.0
My teachers: Tell us what we are learning and why.	45.4	74.0
Students provide feedback to each other.	43.9	74.3

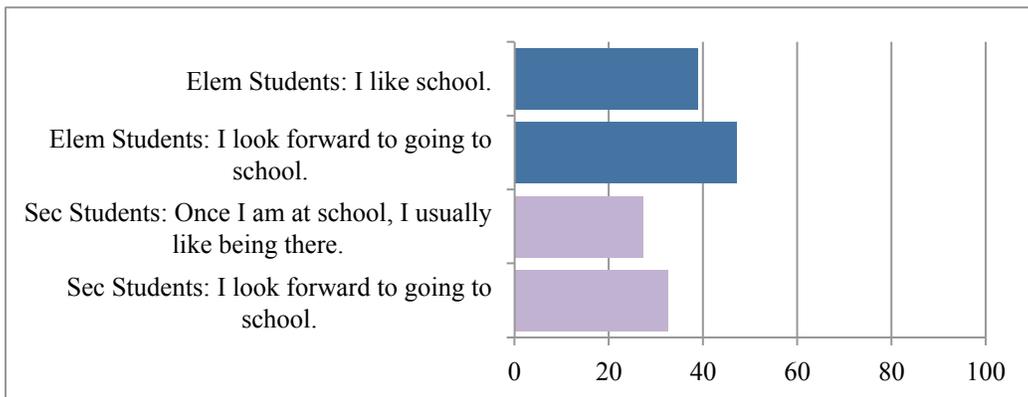
### Overall Strengths and Areas of Challenge for Elementary and Secondary Students

The overall greatest strength is that students perceived that both teachers and other students care about them. This is a critical finding given the extensive research literature that has found a strong, positive relationship between the perception of caring and student outcomes.

Another strength made evident by the surveys is that students perceive teachers to employ a variety of instructional strategies. This suggests that SCASD teachers are not simply lecturing students and then assigning homework, but are employing a variety of different instructional strategies. Importantly, these strategies include both group work and the use of technology.

One major challenge area is that a rather significant percentage of students at both school levels reported that they did not look forward to going to school, did not like school, and did not like school even after they had arrived at school. Figure 3 displays the percentage of students *not* in agreement with statements regarding looking forward to going to school and liking school. Students responding more negatively to these statements were far more likely to have more negative responses to all other statements in the survey—even with respect to teaching practices. Unfortunately, the survey data does not allow for the identification of a causal or directional link between liking school and perceptions of student and teacher behaviors. One possibility is that students that do not like or look forward to going to school simply perceive all of their schooling experiences from a more negative perspective. Alternatively, students that experience less positive interactions with students and teachers and have less exposure to engaging instructional practices may simply become less likely to like or look forward to going to school.

Figure 3: Average Percentage of Students Responding “Yes” or “Definitely Yes” for School Affinity Statements



Another area of challenge that is not evident from the overall responses is that students with the lowest perceptions about teacher care had substantially less positive perceptions for almost all other statements. While student perceptions of teacher care are quite positive for most SCASD students, the survey revealed that somewhere between 15% and 20% of the SCASD student population were not in full agreement that teachers cared about them. As shown in the full report (see page 25), such students had dramatically lower perceptions for almost every other statement in the survey. Indeed, these students hold more negative perceptions about the behaviors of their: classmates, teachers, and instructional strategies employed by teachers. Again, the data do not allow for an identification of the direction of these relationships or the causal link. Certain behaviors by other students and teachers as well as differential access to particular classroom environments may reinforce a student’s perceptions of teacher care. Alternatively, a student with a low perception of teacher care may view the behaviors of students and teachers in a more negative light than other students.

### Teacher Results

Research has generally shown that teacher perceptions differ by school level with secondary teachers typically have less positive perceptions of school leadership and other facets of schooling than elementary teachers. To some extent, this is a result of secondary schools being organized differently and serving far more students in a larger physical space. In addition, research has shown secondary teachers tend to be more committed to their particular subject area and subject area team than to the overall school or to students. Finally, secondary school teachers interact with a far greater number of students on a daily basis and the behaviors of secondary students differs dramatically from elementary school students. Because of these reasons, the data are reported for both elementary school and secondary school teachers. This does not mean, however, that secondary schools or secondary school teachers are any better or worse than elementary schools or teachers. Rather, the point is that there are differences between the two schooling levels that impact teacher perceptions.

### Both Elementary and Secondary

While there are differences in the levels of agreement between elementary and secondary teachers, there was some agreement on the areas of strengths and challenge areas.

## Strengths

Most importantly, both sets of teachers were in strong agreement that SCASD schools were a good place to work and learn and that they enjoyed working at their particular school. These are important perceptions given the strong research connection between teacher satisfaction with their workplace and teacher effectiveness with respect to teaching and learning. Further, this suggests that SCASD school leaders have been fairly successful in creating and maintaining positive working environments for teachers.

Teachers at both levels generally had positive perceptions of their own abilities and efforts. More specifically, both groups of teachers were confident in their own abilities to: assess student learning; improve their teaching effectiveness; enhance student effort; adjust instruction based on a variety of information; and, improve their overall instruction. In addition, both groups of teachers agreed that they consistently tried to improve their classroom climate based on the input of teachers and students as well as to accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of every student.

Both groups of teachers also agreed school leaders evaluated teachers in a fair and professional manner as well as held teachers to a high professional standard for delivering instruction. Moreover, both groups of teachers were in agreement that school leaders consistently attempted to ensure schools were safe and welcoming places for students and parents.

Both sets of teachers were also in general agreement that SCASD educators teach students to achieve the following outcomes:

- Communicate effectively (writing and speaking);
- Evaluate information critically and competently;
- Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information;
- Access information efficiently (time) and effectively (sources);
- Work with a partner or in groups; and,
- Interpret information and draw conclusions.

Both sets of teachers also were in agreement that teachers attempted to achieve a number of other learning outcomes. However, the outcomes mentioned above had the greatest levels of agreement.

Both sets of teachers also had relatively high levels of agreement that teachers ensure all students have equitable access to a high-quality curriculum and utilize a wide variety of information to make decisions about instruction.

Finally, and importantly, both sets of teachers had high levels of agreement that all members of the school community are valued and that educators value what students have to say. Valuing all community members is important given that community members must feel valued in order to create a democratic and responsive environment. Further, when educators and students are valued, both groups of individuals have greater commitment to the school and district.

Research has consistently shown that all of the above areas of agreement are critical to high performance. Such positive responses by teachers at both school levels underscore the high quality of schools in the district.

## Areas of Challenge

There were a number of different areas of challenge that were common to both elementary and secondary teachers. The two most prominent areas of challenge were associated

with teacher involvement in decision-making and engagement in effective discussions about the achievement gap.

With respect to involvement in decision-making, a substantial percentage of both groups of teachers disagreed with the statements shown in Table 3. While the majority of teachers actually agreed with these statements, the percentage of teachers disagreeing was high relative to the levels of disagreement for other statements. These results suggest that school leaders should focus on creating a more effective process for making decisions, involving more teachers in the decision-making process, and creating an atmosphere in which teachers can feel comfortable voicing concerns. One strategy to accomplish this might be to start collecting anonymous feedback from teachers and discussing such feedback with teachers.

Table ES3: Percentage of Teachers Disagreeing with Statements About Involvement in Decision-Making by School Level

Statement	Elementary	Secondary
We have an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems.	26.9	35.1
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	33.3	35.6
School leaders seek the input of teachers on important decisions concerning this school.	21.2	25.2
School leaders are willing to make changes based on teacher input.	23.3	26.3
School leaders provide opportunities for teachers to provide anonymous feedback about school leadership.	39.1	53.9

The second major challenge area was having effective discussions about the achievement gap in terms of gender, racial/ethnic, and socio-economic equality. About 30% of elementary teachers and 50% of secondary teachers disagreed with statements about the school having effective discussions in these three areas. Given that closing the achievement gap is one of the Pennsylvania school profile metrics and a district goal, school leaders should endeavor to have such discussions more often and focus on concrete actions that can address the gaps. Further, the district administration can ensure that schools have accurate and timely information regarding the various achievement gaps faced by each school.

Additional areas of challenge include: school leaders' efforts to improve teaching and learning by being aware of what occurs in classrooms; teachers receiving feedback; and, teachers being able to observe each other in the classroom. About 23% of elementary teachers and 36% of secondary teachers disagreed that school leaders were aware of what occurred in classrooms. Further, 27% of elementary teachers and nearly 50% of secondary teachers disagreed that teachers have opportunities to watch each other teach. Finally, 23% of elementary teachers and 41% of secondary teachers disagreed that school leaders provide suggestions that improve teaching effectiveness.

One caveat to this final challenge area is that, due to the nature of secondary school specialization, school leaders of secondary schools are rarely the primary providers of suggestions of the improvement of instruction. Rather, secondary school leaders are expected to ensure teachers have access to someone that can help improve a teacher's instruction. In fact, almost three-quarters of secondary teachers agreed that there is at least one person who provides effective suggestions to improve teaching effectiveness. Moreover, both elementary and

secondary teachers agree that school leaders understand how students learn and understand effective instruction.

This suggests that the issue is not the knowledge and skills of school leaders, but creating different structures and mechanisms to ensure that teachers have greater opportunities to work collaboratively on improving their instruction. This will require a strong collaboration between district leaders, school leaders, and teachers to create new strategies that focus on providing teachers more and different opportunities to work on improving their instruction.

## **Elementary School Teachers**

### Strengths

There were also some areas of strength that were specific to elementary schools. These additional areas of strength included:

- School leaders' understanding of the teaching and learning process;
- School leaders' support for risk-taking;
- Focus on teaching students how to learn from their mistakes, evaluate their own progress, view failure as an opportunity to learn, and view success as a long-term cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes;
- Effective professional development;
- Atmosphere of trust and respect; and,
- Support for students having a voice.

### Areas of Challenge

There were not any noteworthy areas of challenge specific to elementary schools.

## **Secondary School Teachers**

### Strengths

There were not any noteworthy areas of strength specific to elementary schools.

### Areas of Challenge

There were several areas of challenge specific to secondary schools. Most noteworthy of these areas were:

- Increasing opportunities for teachers to collaborate on a variety of issues;
- Managing student behavior effectively and consistently enforcing rules of behavior in a fair manner; and,
- Viewing failure as an opportunity to learn.

## **Parent Results**

Overall, parents were extremely pleased with SCASD. Indeed, 29% of respondents “strongly agreed” and another 48% of respondents “agreed” that they were satisfied with the district. Similarly, almost 85% of respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they were happy with the educational experiences provided by the school district with another 9% responded they “somewhat agreed” with this perception.

With respect to the four pillars, respondents overwhelmingly voiced positive perceptions about: a welcoming and safe climate; responsive teaching and learning; high expectations; and, a culture of trust, relationships, and collaboration.

In addition, there were some particular areas that received extremely high levels of agreement from parents. These included:

- Communication efforts from schools and the district;
- High expectations for the district held by parents;
- Positive treatment of students by educators;
- Enjoyment of school by children; and
- Provision of a breadth of learning experiences by the district.

While these areas received extraordinarily high levels of agreement, it is important to remember that all areas received high levels of agreement from respondents.

There were, however, some areas of challenge. In particular, parents of high school students had lower levels of agreement than either elementary or middle school parents. Some specific areas of concern raised by high school parents included:

- Homework issues;
- Degree to which educators know parents and students well; and,
- Communication to parents about the strengths, weaknesses, and progress of students.

Some of these issues are simply a result of the structural and organizational differences between elementary and high schools. However, the high school—and middle schools as well—could endeavor to address some of the concerns of parents. In fact, issues surrounding homework appear to be a concern of all parents, but particularly of parents of older children.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the results from this baseline survey of the SCASD Strategic Plan strongly suggest that the district is perceived in an extremely positive manner by students, teachers, and parents. Clearly, all members of the SCASD community believe district schools are highly successful across a number of different areas. It is difficult to imagine that many other school districts in Pennsylvania or from across the nation would receive such consistently high levels of agreement across students, teachers, and parents.

These high levels of agreement can, however, be both a blessing and a curse. Such strong positive views of the district are a blessing in that, overall, the district appears to be meeting the needs and expectations of community members. Rightfully so, community members have long been very proud and supportive of the district. This was shown in the overwhelming support for last spring's referendum on building a new high school.

Alternatively, these high levels of agreement can also be a curse in that the widespread positive views can overshadow some areas of challenge that exist in the district. For the district to move from being a very good district to a truly outstanding district that becomes recognized for excellence across the state and nation, community members and SCASD educators will need to recognize these areas of challenge and commit themselves to identifying and solving the underlying issues identified by these challenge areas.

Although the survey data is only a snapshot of SCASD and further evidence should be collected, the survey suggests several areas of challenge that should be addressed. First, and

foremost, the survey suggests that a small but important percentage of students feel disengaged from the schooling process, perceive teachers don't care very deeply about them, and perceive teachers don't provide them with a sufficient level of encouragement and support. These students are often the "invisible" children in classrooms—the children who don't excel, don't behave inappropriately, and don't participate at high levels. While such students tend to perform reasonably well in school, they often don't perform to their potential. To be a truly outstanding district, SCASD educators will need to discover why some students feel disengaged and collaboratively identify strategies to more fully engage the students so that they can maximize their potential. This will be a long and arduous process which is why many districts rest on their accomplishments and ignore their mission to maximize the potential of *every* child. Yet, this district is extremely well-positioned to break the mold and truly embrace the notion that each and every child can truly succeed.

The second major area of challenge is to increase the communication and feedback between students, teachers, school leaders, and district leaders. While this survey is a step in this direction, educators should endeavor to create strategies and structures that greatly increase the frequency and quality of communication and feedback between all stakeholders. One concrete action step that stems directly from the survey results is for district leaders, school leaders, and teachers to begin or enhance efforts to collect anonymous feedback and act on that feedback. Acting on such feedback should include, at a minimum, having open and honest conversations about the feedback at the classroom-, school-, and district-levels.

The third major challenge is to create strategies and structures to increase collaboration. This is difficult—particularly at the student and teacher levels—because time is so precious in a school day. Educators, however, need to examine and analyze the outcomes they desire and whether they can reach these desired outcomes without changing the degree to which effective collaboration occurs.

Finally, the fourth major challenge is to ensure that each and every student receives high-quality instruction in every classroom. While the overwhelming majority of students receive such high-quality instruction in almost every classroom, the survey suggests the existence of instances when not every child has the opportunity to engage with high-quality instruction in every classroom. Improving in this area will require a great deal of reflection by teachers and leaders as well as focusing on the above three challenge areas.

The State College Area School District is extremely well-situated to face these difficult challenges and move the district forward such that the district is widely recognized as one of the truly exemplary school districts in Pennsylvania and the United States. This survey provides important baseline data to measure the commitment and progress of our community as we strive to become even better.

**State College Area School District  
Strategic Plan  
Baseline Surveys of  
Students, Teachers, and Parents**

**November 2014**

**Ed Fuller, PhD**

**Associate Professor, Professor in Charge, and  
Director, Center for Evaluation and Education Policy Analysis (CEEPA)  
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## INTRODUCTION

This report describes the basic results of surveys administered to teachers, students (grades 3-12), and parents across the State College Area School District during May and June 2014. The surveys were developed in collaboration between the Center for Evaluation and Policy Analysis housed in the Penn State University's Educational Leadership program and State College Area School District. SCASD students, teachers, principals, and district administrators reviewed the surveys and made suggestions for improvement. The final surveys were approved by SCASD administrators.

This survey is aligned with SCASD's 2014 Strategic Plan and was designed to provide baseline information on that plan. These data should *not* be used to evaluate school administrators, teachers, or students for any reason. Moreover, because this is baseline data and the survey is unique to SCASD, extreme caution should be employed in making conclusions about the degree to which the results should be viewed as negative or positive.

*The overarching goal of these surveys is to spur conversation among all SCASD stakeholders about areas of strengths and areas of challenge within the district.* Ultimately, these surveys will serve as the basis for a cyclical process that will involve three steps: measure progress, reflect on past practices, and improve practices. This cyclical process will occur on a yearly basis and involve district leaders, school leaders, teachers, students, and other school community members at the discretion of principals.

There are four pillars to the SCASD strategic plan: Welcoming and Safe Climate; Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration; High Expectations for All; and Responsive Teaching and Learning. CEEPA personnel took the original survey results and conducted factor analyses for each survey. For each survey, statistical analyses identified various constructs that somewhat align with the four pillars. Using the constructs to group statements in the analyses ensures that statements measuring the same idea are grouped together.

This report includes four sections. These sections include:

- Section I: Elementary Student Responses
- Section II: Secondary Student Responses
- Section II: Teacher Responses
- Section III: Parent Responses

Within the teacher response section, the results are disaggregated by school levels: elementary and teachers. Secondary school teachers include those individuals assigned to teach at either a SCASD middle school or the high school for a majority of the instructional day.

The response rates for elementary school students, middle school students, and teachers at both levels were greater than 85%. The high response rates make the results generalizable to all students and teachers at these levels. The response rate at the high school level was around 55% and the response rate for parents was less than 50%. Caution should be used in interpreting the information at these levels.

## **SECTION I: ELEMENTARY STUDENT RESPONSES**

### **Introduction**

The elementary student survey included 30 statements divided into the four pillars of the SCASD Strategic Plan: Responsive Teaching and Learning, Welcoming and Safe Climate, High Expectations, and Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration. While the statements were originally divided into these four sections, a statistical analysis suggested the statements were actually measuring six different concepts related to the four pillars. These six constructs included:

- Overall Welcoming and Safe Climate;
- Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration;
- Engaging Instruction within Responsive Teaching and Learning;
- Instructional Practices within Responsive Teaching and Learning;
- High Expectations for All: Student Effort; and,
- Connection to the School within Welcoming and Safe Climate.

Students had five possible answer choices: “NO WAY!, No, Sometimes, Yes, DEFINITELY YES!” These options were created based on reviewing other elementary surveys both within SCASD and across the country.

This section is divided into two sub-sections: overall domain averages and the results for individual statements by domain.

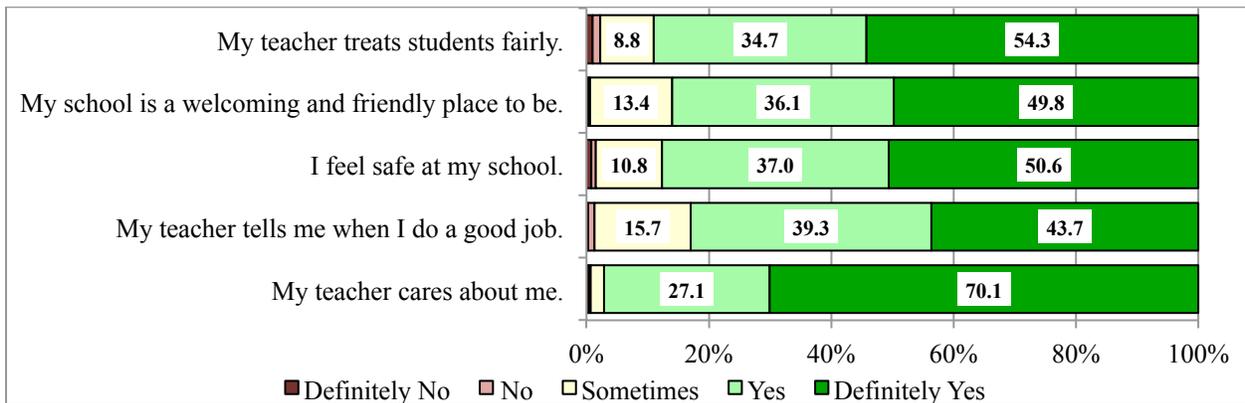
### **Results for Individual Statements by Domain**

#### **Welcoming and Safe Climate: Overall**

Students had very positive responses to the five statements within this domain. Specifically, at least 50% or greater of the students responded “Definitely Yes!” to the statements within this domain. Impressively, about 70% of the students answered “Definitely Yes” when asked if their teacher cared about them and almost all the other students responded with “Yes.” Thus, students overwhelmingly believed teachers cared about them.

The statement with the least positive response was “My teacher tells me when I do a good job.” Specifically, about 44% of students responded “Definitely Yes” and about 40% responded with “Yes.” While the responses were extremely positive, this may be an area that could receive increased attention by teachers and administrators.

Figure 1: Elementary Student Perceptions of Welcoming and Safe Climate (2014)

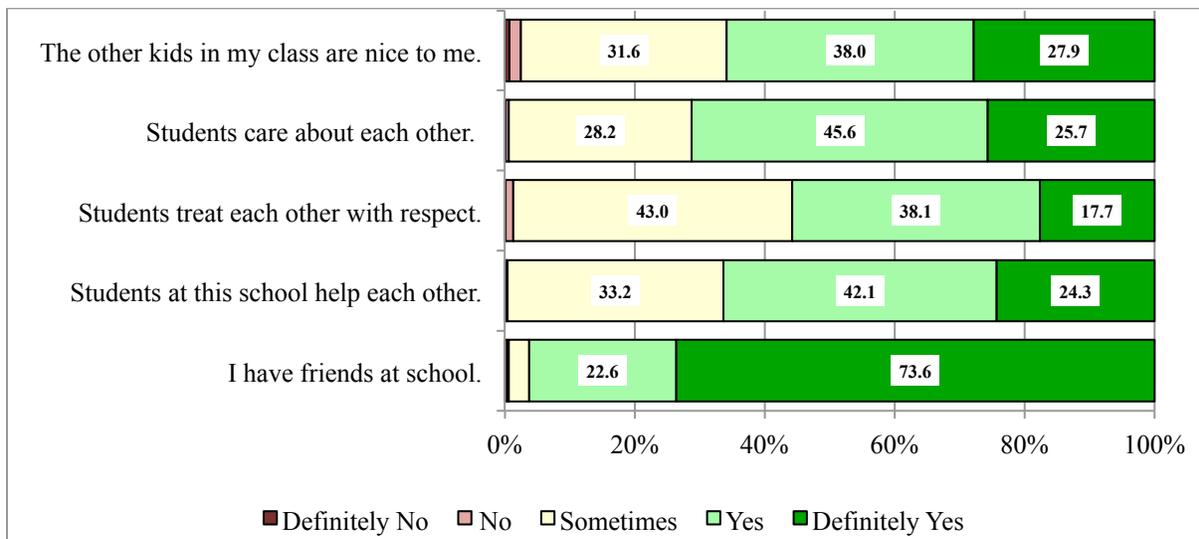


### Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration

While the responses within this domain were generally quite positive, the responses were less positive than for some of the other domains. Importantly, almost 97% of the students responded “Yes” or “Definitely Yes” when asked if they had friends at schools. The remaining four statements had substantially less positive results than for this particular question.

Between 56% and 70% of students answered positively (Yes or Definitely Yes) to the remaining statements. However, a fairly substantial percentage of students answered only “sometimes” to these statements. The statement with the least positive results was “Students treat each other with respect.” Specifically, about 43% of students responded only “sometimes” or “No” to this statement. Combined with the relatively low percentage of students responding positively to the other statements about treatment by other students suggests teachers and administrators examine how students treat each other and investigate strategies to improve student behavior towards each other.

Figure 2: Elementary Student Perceptions of Instructional Practices (2014)

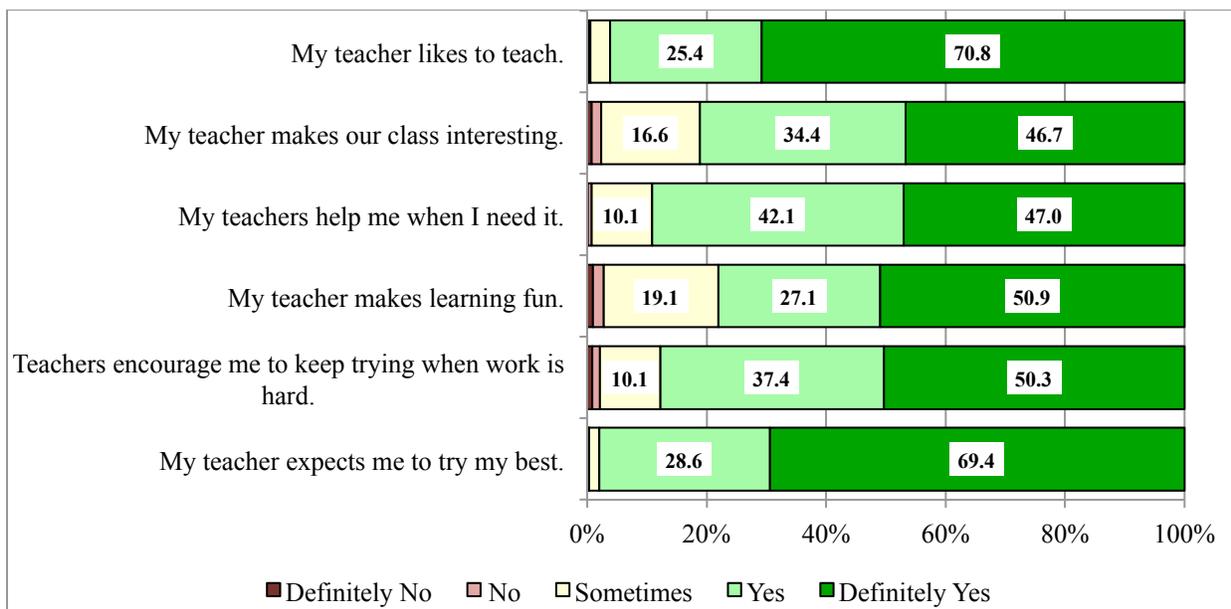


### Responsive Teaching and Learning: Engaging Instruction

Student responses to statements about engaging instruction were extremely positive. Indeed, positive responses ranged from about 70% to almost 100%. This strongly suggests students view the instruction in classrooms as quite engaging. Most encouraging was that almost 100% of students indicated teachers expected them to try their best in class. Further, 87% indicated teachers generally encourage them to keep trying when the work is hard.

None of the statements had particularly negative responses. The statement with the least positive response was about teachers making learning fun. Yet, even for this statement, 77% of students had positive responses and most of the remaining students answered with “sometimes.”

Figure 3: Elementary Student perceptions of Engaging Instruction (2014)



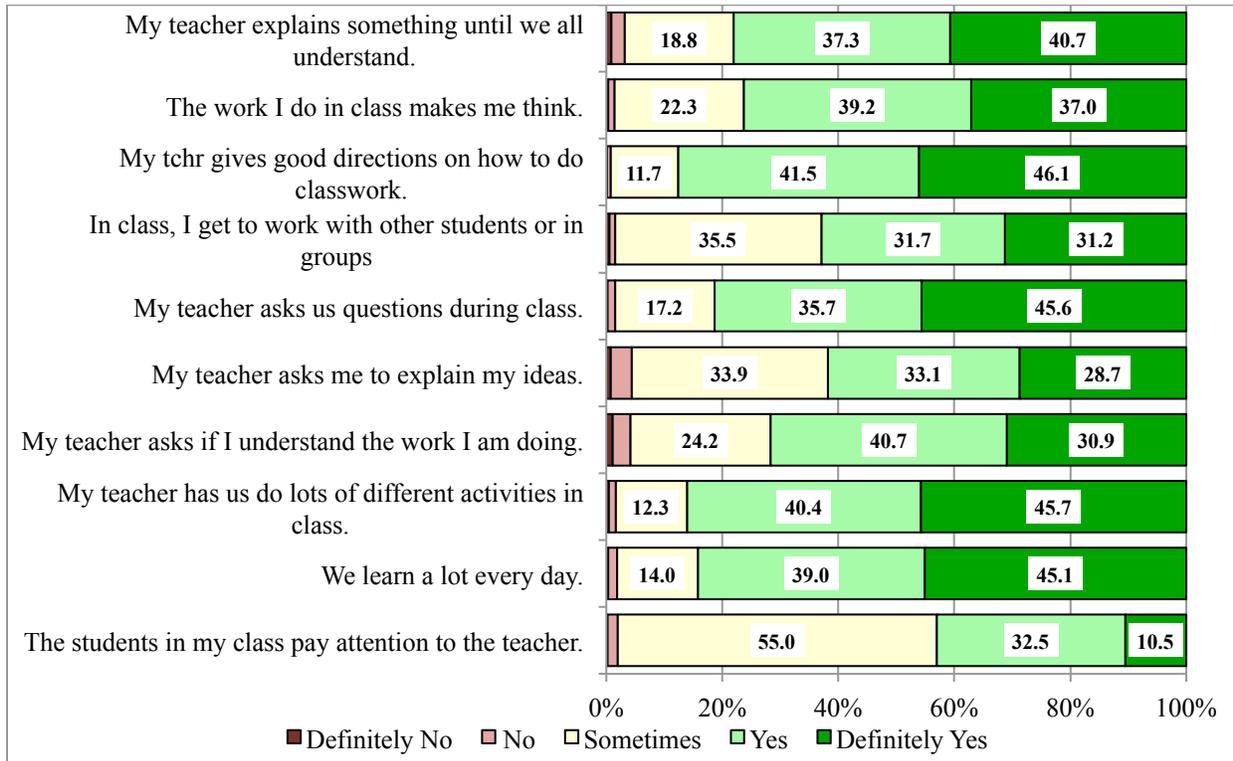
### Responsive Teaching and Learning: Instructional Practices

As with the other domains, responses were quite positive across all statements. With the exception of one statement, the vast majority of students—generally greater than 75% of students--responded positively to statements. With greater than 80% positive responses, the two statements with the most positive responses were: “My teacher has us do lots of different activities in class;” and, “We learn a lot every day.”

This suggests teachers are utilizing a variety of teaching approaches and ensuring students are learning on a daily basis. While these are certainly expectations for every teacher, my experience with instruction in a variety of schools leads me to believe that SCASD teachers may be exhibiting these teaching behaviors more frequently than teachers in other schools.

The statement with the least positive response was, “my teacher asks me to explain my ideas.” Yet, nearly 100% of students answered “sometimes,” “yes,” or “definitely yes.” Given that not all lessons are amenable to asking students to explain their ideas, the responses are still very positive.

Figure 4: Elementary Student Perceptions of Instructional Practices (2014)

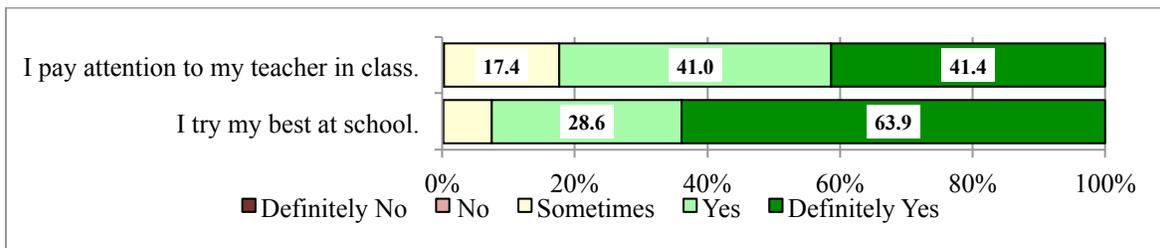


**High Expectations for All: Student Effort**

While a number of statements were intended to measure high expectations, the statistical analysis revealed that two statements were measuring student effort as one component of high expectations. These two statements were: I pay attention to my teacher in class; and, I try my best at school.

Responses to both statements were quite positive with greater than 80% of students responding positively. Interestingly, students were far more likely to respond that they paid attention to their teacher in class than when making the same judgments about their classmates (as shown in Figure 4 above). Indeed, while 82% of students responded “yes” or “definitely yes” to paying attention to their teacher, only 32% of students responded in the same manner when asked about their peers. This discrepancy warrants further exploration.

Figure 5: Elementary Student Perceptions of High Expectations and Student Effort (2014)



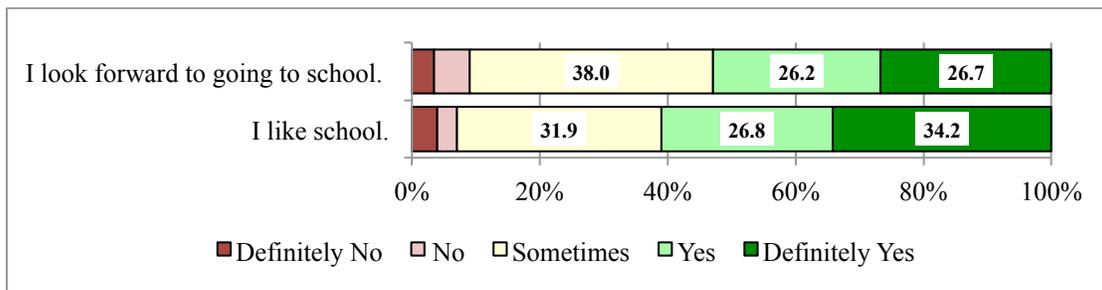
**Welcoming and Safe Climate: School Connection**

This domain measures the student’s perceived connection with the school through two statements: I look forward to going to school; and, I like school. Slightly more than 50% of

students responded positively about looking forward to going to school while a greater percentage—about 60%--responded positively about liking school.

While these percentages are quite high, the results are probably lower than desired. The fact that almost 10% of students indicated they did not look forward to going to school and another 38% responded they only sometimes look forward to going to school seems problematic given the students are in elementary school—a school level which tends to be more engaging and interesting to students than the other school levels. Further exploration of the reasons behind these perceptions could yield important findings that could address these issues. Alternatively, the findings may simply reflect that students would prefer not getting up early for school. Regardless, the reasons should be further investigated.

Figure 6: Elementary Student Perceptions of Their Connection to School (2014)



### Analysis of Student Perceptions by Teacher Expectations/Encouragement

In this section, student perceptions of the various domains are examined by differences in student perceptions of teacher expectations and encouragement as well as student perceptions of their connection to schooling.

With respect to student perceptions of teacher expectations/encouragement, three groups were created based on responses to two statements: My teacher expects me to try my best; and, Teachers encourage me to keep trying when work is hard.

Students answering “Definitely Yes” to both statements were placed in the “Highest” group, students answering “Yes” for one of the statements and either “Yes” or “Definitely Yes” for the other question were placed into the “Average” group, and all other students were placed in the “Lowest” group. Note that, even the students in the “Lowest” group generally had fairly positive perceptions of teacher expectations/encouragement. The purpose of this analysis is to examine whether students with the lowest perceptions of teacher expectations/encouragement had different perceptions across the various domains than students with the highest perceptions of teacher expectations/encouragement.

As shown in Table 1, about 31% of students were in “Lowest” group while 29% were in the “Highest” group. The remaining almost 40% of students were in the “Average” group.

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Students in Groups Based on Perceptions of Teacher Encouragement and Expectations

Group	Number	Percent
Lowest	422	30.8
Average	541	39.5
Highest	403	29.4
Total	1366	99.8

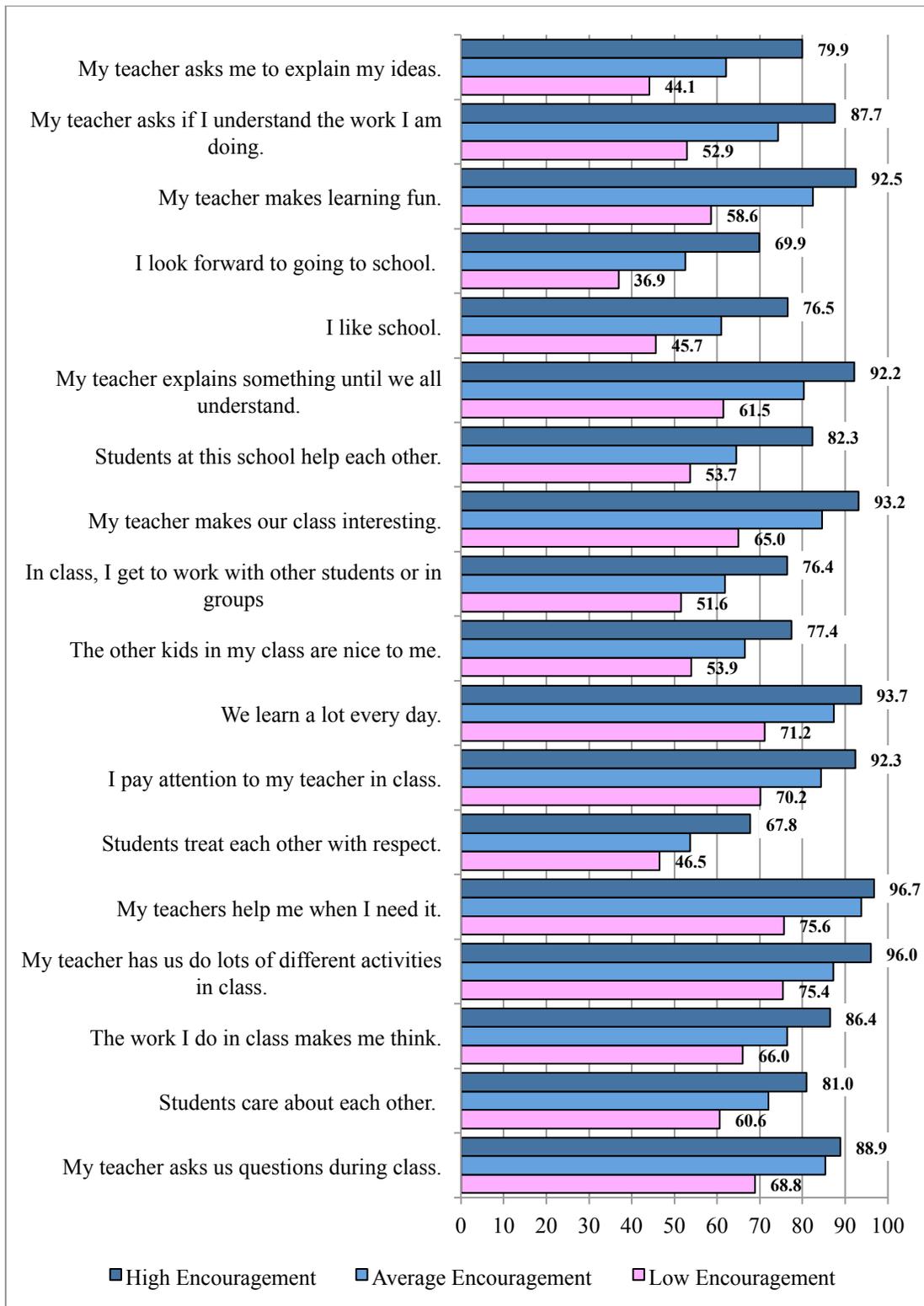
Figure 7 below presents the average percentage of students responding “Yes” or “Definitely Yes” for the three groups of students based on their perceptions of teacher expectations/encouragement. The results are presented in descending order based on the difference in the percentage of positive responses between students in the highest group and those in the lowest group. In other words, the statements at the top of the graph had the greatest difference in perceptions between students in the highest and lowest groups.

The graph clearly shows that students with higher perceptions of teacher expectations/encouragement had more positive perceptions across a wide range of statements than students with lower perceptions of teacher expectations/encouragement.

The first six statements all had differences between students in the highest- and lowest-groups that were at least 30 percentage points. Three of the statements were related to instruction—specifically, teachers explaining information, teachers asking students to explain information, and teachers asking students if they understand the lesson. The other three statements asked about the teacher making learning fun, students liking school, and students looking forward to school.

These results suggest some relationship between student perceptions of teacher expectations/encouragement, student connectedness to school, and instructional practices. Unfortunately, the data does not allow for any conclusions about which of these areas causes the other. However, based on other research, a plausible explanation would be that teachers that hold lower expectations for students employ lower-level instructional techniques that, in turn, lead to a decreased sense of connectedness and affinity for school.

Figure 7: Elementary Student Perceptions of High Expectations and Student Effort (2014)



### Analysis of Student Perceptions by Student Connection with Schooling

Another perspective to employ when analyzing the data is to compare the results based on differences in how connected students feel with the school. Using the results from two statements (*I look forward to school* and *I like school*), students were placed into four groups: Lowest Connectedness, Lower Connectedness, Higher Connectedness, and Highest Connectedness. Placement was based on the answers to both statements together as shown below in Table 2.

Table 2: Identification of Student Groups Based on Connection to School

I Like School	I Look Forward to School				
	Definitely No	No	Sometimes	Yes	Definitely Yes
Definitely No	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest
No	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest
Sometimes	Lowest	Lowest	Lower	Lower	Lower
Yes	Lowest	Lowest	Lower	Higher	Higher
Definitely Yes	Lowest	Lowest	Lower	Higher	Highest

Table 3 provides the number and frequency of students in the four groups. Note that most students had relatively positive perceptions of school connectedness. In fact, even when including any students responding “No” or “Definitely No” on either statement, only about 10% of all students were in the “Lowest” group. In comparison, more than 22% of students responded “Definitely Yes” to both statements.

Table 3: Number and Percentage of Students in Groups Based on Perceptions of Connection to School

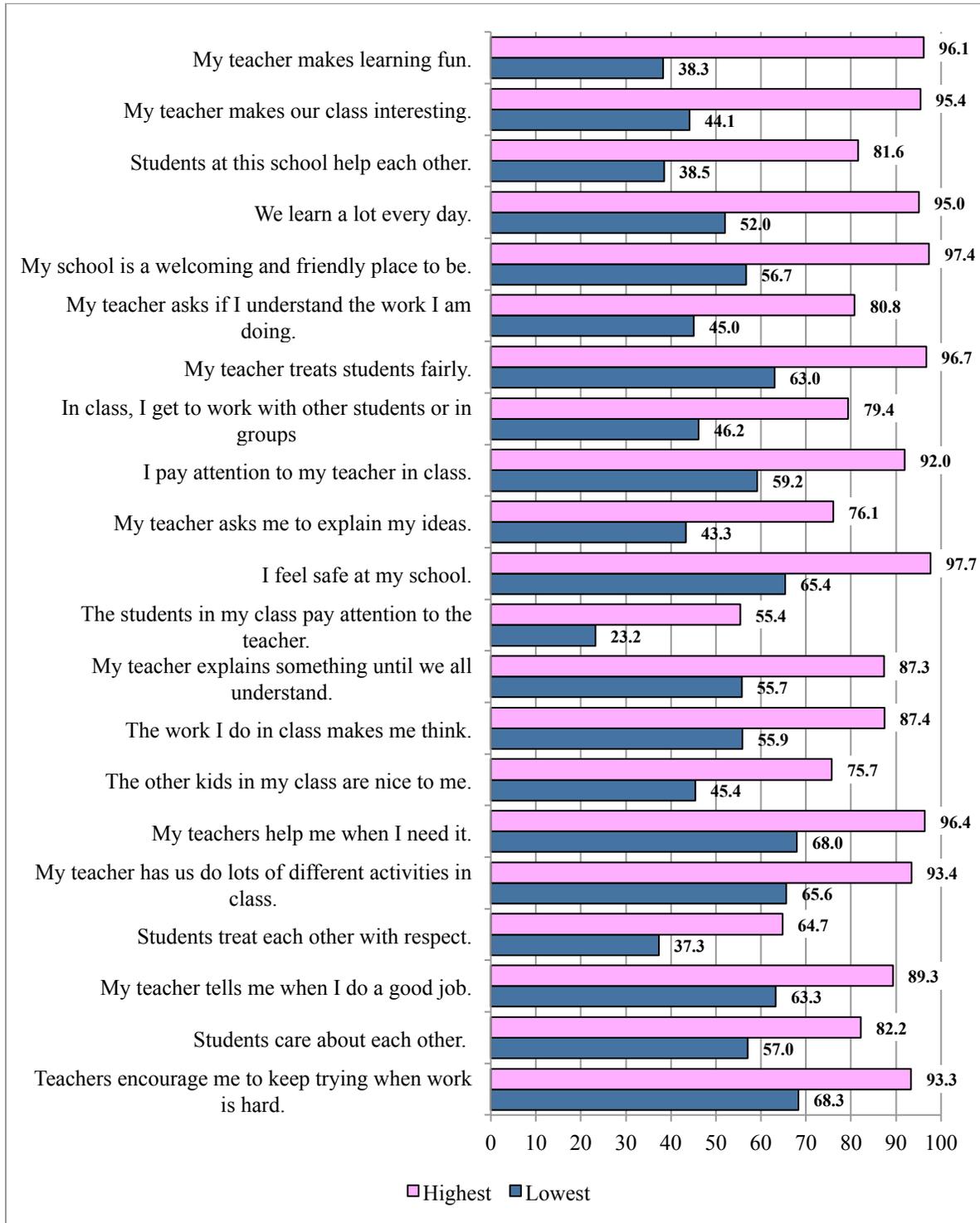
Group	Number	Percent
Lowest	133	9.7
Low	526	38.4
High	330	24.1
Highest	308	22.5
Total	1297	94.7

Although few students had a low sense of connectedness to school, those that did had far lower perceptions of teaching, learning, climate, and relationships than students with a strong sense of connectedness. These stark differences are displayed in Figure X below. The results are in descending order, with the statements with the greatest difference between the two groups at the top of the graph.

The two greatest differences were for student perceptions of the teacher making learning fun and making the class interesting. While the data does not allow the establishment of causality between connectedness and perceptions of fun/interesting classes, other research would suggest that teachers that can make a student perceive classes as fun and interesting are far more likely to create a sense of student connectedness to the school. While the majority of students (> 75%) have positive perceptions of classes being fun and interesting, about 25% of students do not. Teachers and leaders should work collaboratively to investigate if students with low perceptions about classes being fun and interesting are concentrated in certain classes or have similar

characteristics. Identifying students that do not look forward to coming to school and do not like school need to be identified and the cause of their discontent should be identified. If such students are not identified, the students will be at-risk for not fulfilling their academic potential.

Figure 8: Elementary Student Perceptions of Connectedness to School (2014)



### Analysis of Student Perceptions by Student Perceptions of Teacher Care

A final perspective to use when analyzing the data is to examine student perceptions based on differences in student perceptions of teacher care. The results of three questions (*My teacher cares about me*, *My teachers help me when I need it*, and *My teacher tells me when I do a good job*), students were placed into three groups: Lowest Perception of Care, Average Perception of Care, and Highest Perception of Care Lower Connectedness. Students with an average response of less than four constituted the “lowest” group, students with an average response between 4.00 and 4.99 were placed in the “average” group, and, students with an average response of 5.00 were designated as the “highest” group.

Table 4: Number and Percentage of Students in Groups Based on Perceptions of Teacher Care

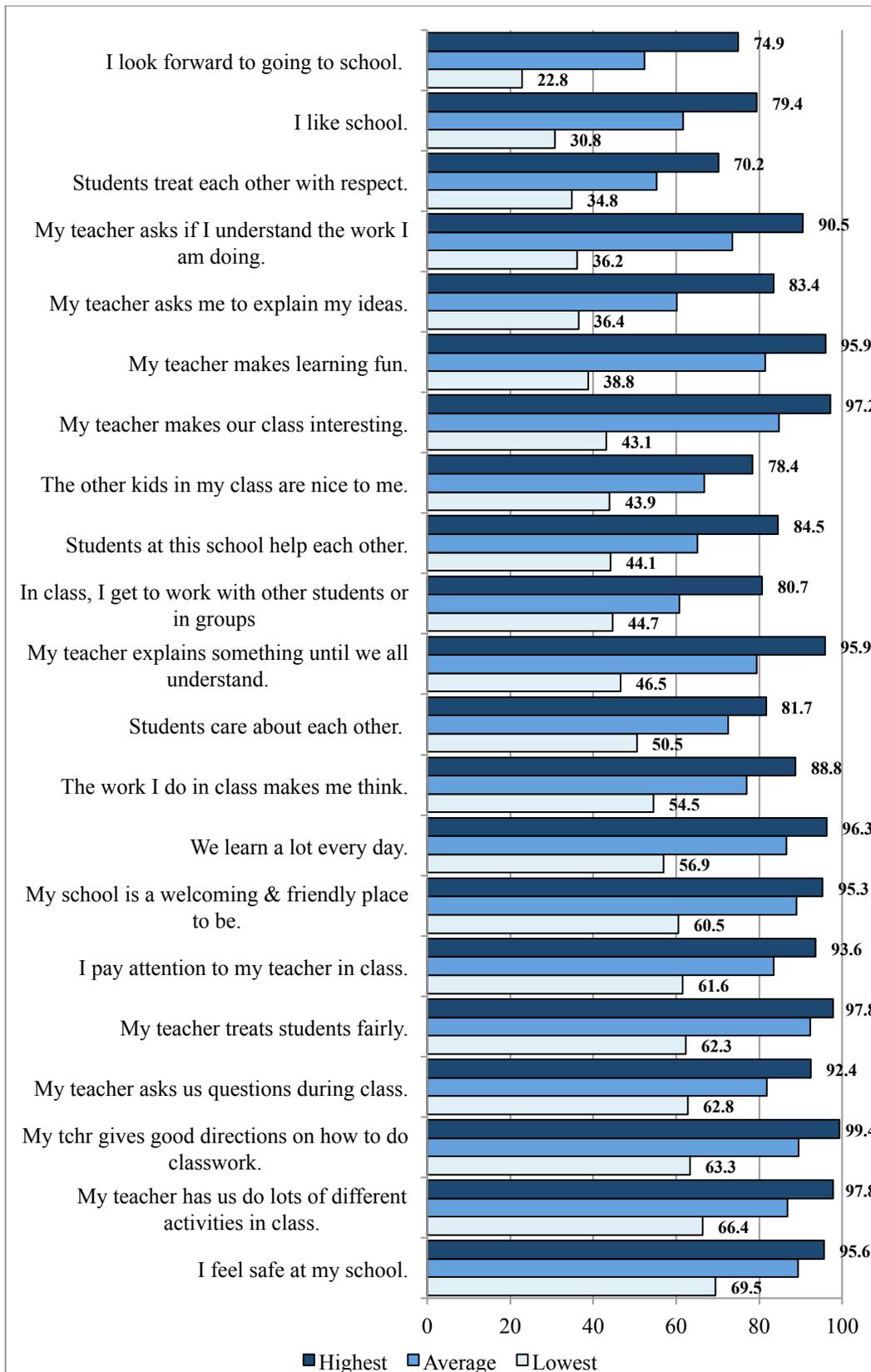
Group	Number	Percent
Lowest	220	16.1
Average	825	60.4
Highest	322	23.6
Total	1367	100.0

As shown in Figure 9, students with the lowest perceptions of teacher care had substantially lower perceptions of the majority of the other statements. In general, students with the lowest perceptions of teacher care were less likely to perceive that other students were nice to them, cared about them, or helped each other. Moreover, such students were less likely to perceive that their teachers exhibited the types of behaviors associated with effective instruction such as making the class interesting or fun, asking the student if s/he understood the lesson, explaining the lesson until everyone understands, placing students in groups to work together, and asking the student to explain the student to explain her/his ideas.

Unfortunately, the causal connection between the perceptions of care and teacher or student behaviors is unclear. Certain teaching behaviors may reinforce a student’s perceptions of teacher care. Alternatively, a student with a low perception of teacher care may view a teacher’s behaviors in a more negative light than other students.

Regardless, these findings underscore the powerful influence of student perceptions of teacher care. This suggests that adults in SCASD schools need to ensure that each and every student feels cared for if all students are to reach their academic and social potential. This will likely require some additional effort on the part of educators to carefully observe students in school and identify students who may perceive a lower level of teacher care. This can be difficult given that such students are often quiet and can appear “invisible” in the school setting because they are neither high achievers or exhibit inappropriate behaviors that garner the attention of adults.

Figure 9: Elementary Student Perceptions of Teacher Care (2014)



## **SECTION II: SECONDARY STUDENT RESPONSES**

The secondary student survey included 80 statements divided into the four pillars of the SCASD Strategic Plan: Responsive Teaching and Learning, Welcoming and Safe Climate, High Expectations, and Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration. While the statements were originally divided into these four sections, a statistical analysis suggested the statements were actually measuring nine different concepts related to the four pillars. These nine constructs included:

- Welcoming and Safe Climate for Learning and Work: School Climate
- Responsive Teaching and Learning: Learning Objectives
- Responsive Teaching and Learning: Teaching Practices
- Responsive Teaching and Learning: Student Classroom Behaviors
- Responsive Teaching and Learning: Student Classroom Practices
- High Expectations for All
- Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration: School Connectedness
- Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration: Caring
- Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration: Student Attachment

Students had the following six possible answer choices with their associated numeric coding:

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat Disagree (3)
- Somewhat Agree (4)
- Agree (5)
- Strongly Agree (6)

These options were created based on reviewing other elementary surveys both within SCASD and across the country. This section is divided into two sub-sections: overall domain averages and the results for individual statements by domain.

### **Responses to Individual Statements by Domain**

#### **Welcoming and Safe Climate for Learning and Work: School Climate**

As shown in Figure 10, students were generally positive about school climate. Indeed, for all statements, the vast majority (>66%) of students agreed in some manner. The statements with the greatest level of agreement were:

- This school is a safe place to be (91% agreement)
- My teachers respect my individuality (87% agreement)

The only statement with less than 70% agreement was, “Students are involved in decisions about classroom rules/procedures” with 66% agreement. Other statements that may be of concern were, “Students at this school treat each other with respect” and “In this school, students show respect for each other's viewpoints” since only 34% to 27% of students agreed or strongly agreed, respectively.

Figure 10: Secondary Student Perceptions of School Climate (2014)



### Responsive Teaching and Learning: Learning Objectives

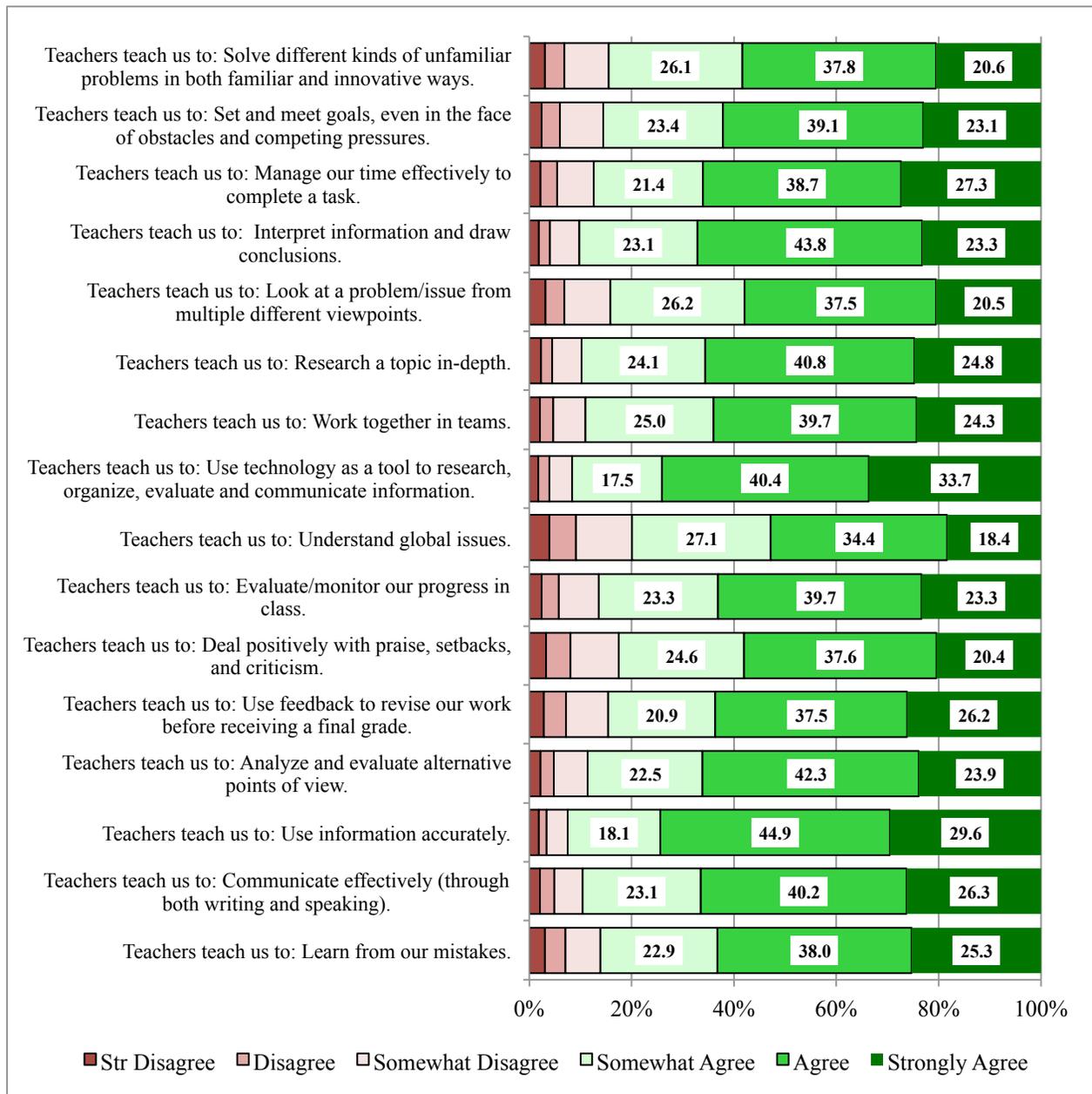
Students were in relatively strong agreement with the 16 statements in this domain. Indeed, for all statements, at least 80% of the students agreed at some level. Moreover, at least 58% of students agreed or strongly agreed with all statements.

More than 90% of students agreed with three statements:

- Teachers teach us to use information accurately;
- Teachers teach us to use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information; and,
- Teachers teach us to: Interpret information and draw conclusions.

The statement with the lowest level of agreement was, “Teachers teach us to understand global issues.” Yet, even for this statement there was 80% agreement.

Figure 11: Secondary Student Perceptions of Responsive Teaching and Learning: Learning Objectives (2014)



### Responsive Teaching and Learning: Teaching Practices

As compared to the responses for the Learning Objectives domain, the level of agreement for the statements in the Teaching Practices domain was lower. For example, at least 80% of students agreed with only 25% of the statements in this domain as compared to 100% for the Learning Objectives domain. The three statements with more than 80% agreement were:

- My teachers: Ask us to explain our answers;
- My teachers: Know when the class understands and when we do not; and,
- My teachers: Encourage me to ask for help in class.

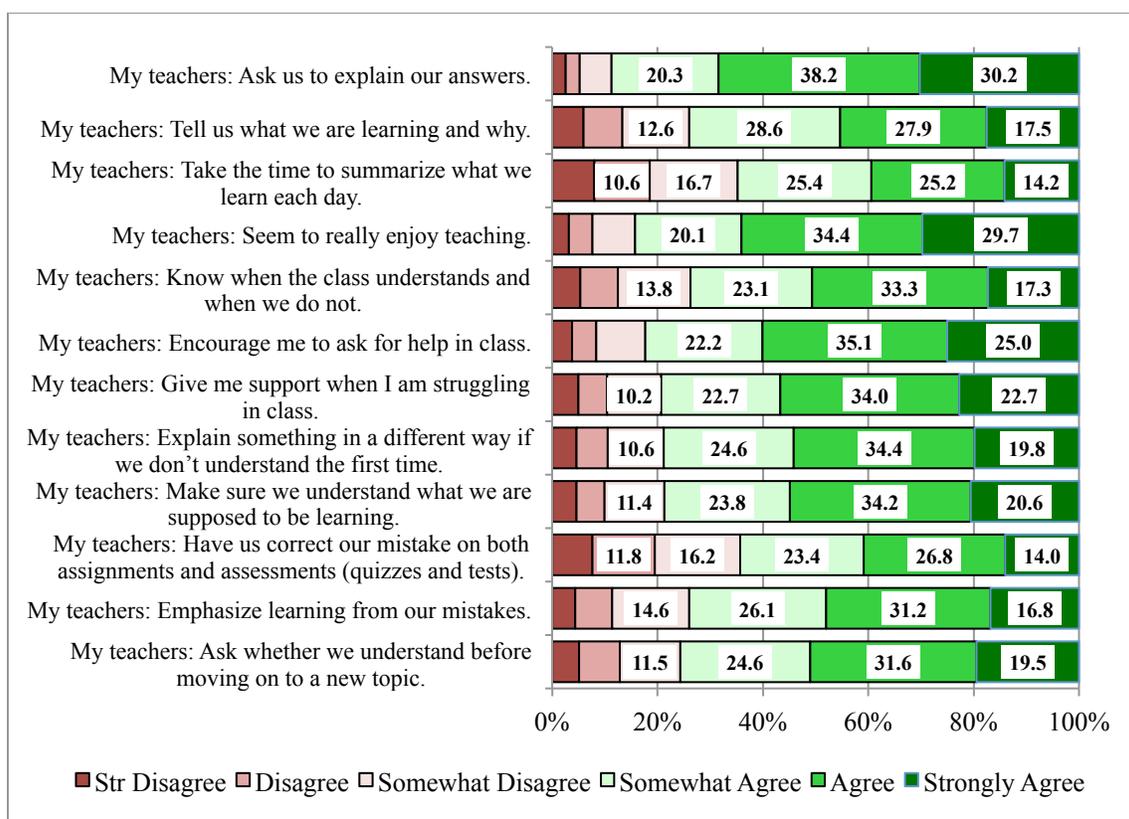
The student responses provide solid evidence that secondary teachers are focused on students understanding the materials and encouraging students to ask for help. These are extremely important classroom outcomes.

Alternatively, two other important classroom practices had lower levels of agreement. Specifically, the two statements with the lowest levels of agreement were:

- My teachers take the time to summarize what we learn each day; and,
- My teachers have us correct our mistakes on both assignments and assessments (quizzes and tests).

While the level of agreement was still rather high for both statements, having students correct answers on their quizzes and tests is an extremely important learning opportunity and should occur on a regular basis.

Figure 12: Secondary Student Perceptions of Responsive Teaching and Learning: Teaching Practices (2014)



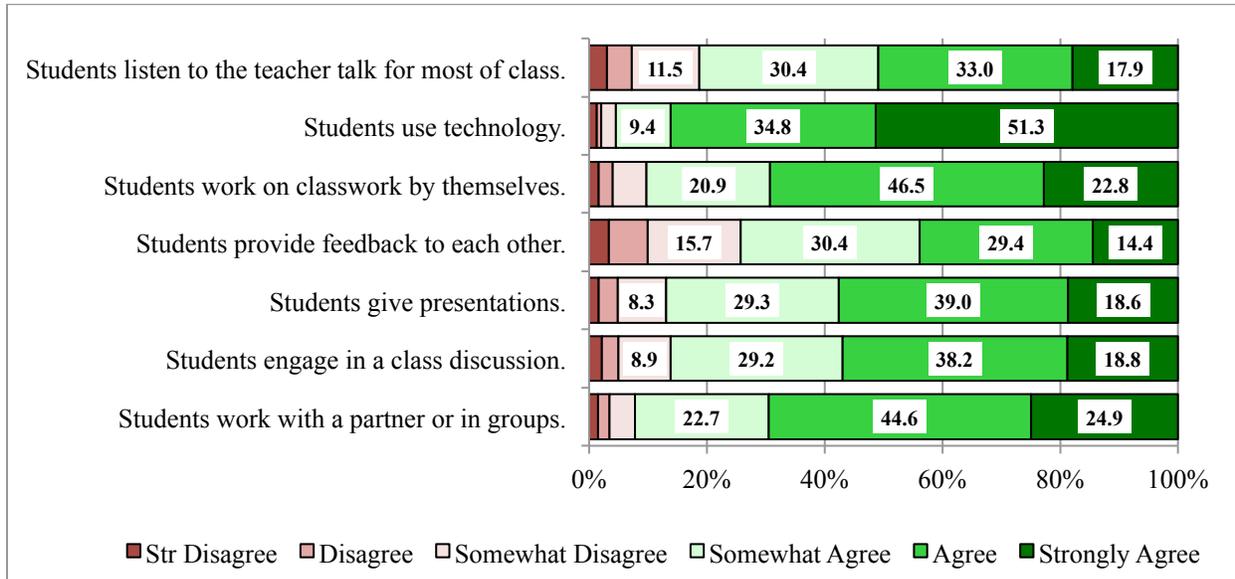
### Responsive Teaching and Learning: Student Classroom Behaviors

With respect to what happens in classrooms, students reported that a wide variety of different behaviors occur in the classroom. Indeed, at least 74% of students agreed at some level that each of the behaviors occurs. This strongly suggests that teachers are utilizing a variety of different teaching strategies and not simply lecturing and having students work independently.

The behavior with the greatest level of agreement was, “Students use technology” with 95% of students agreeing with the statement while the behavior with the lowest level of

agreement was, “Students provide feedback to each other” with 74% of students agreeing with the statement.

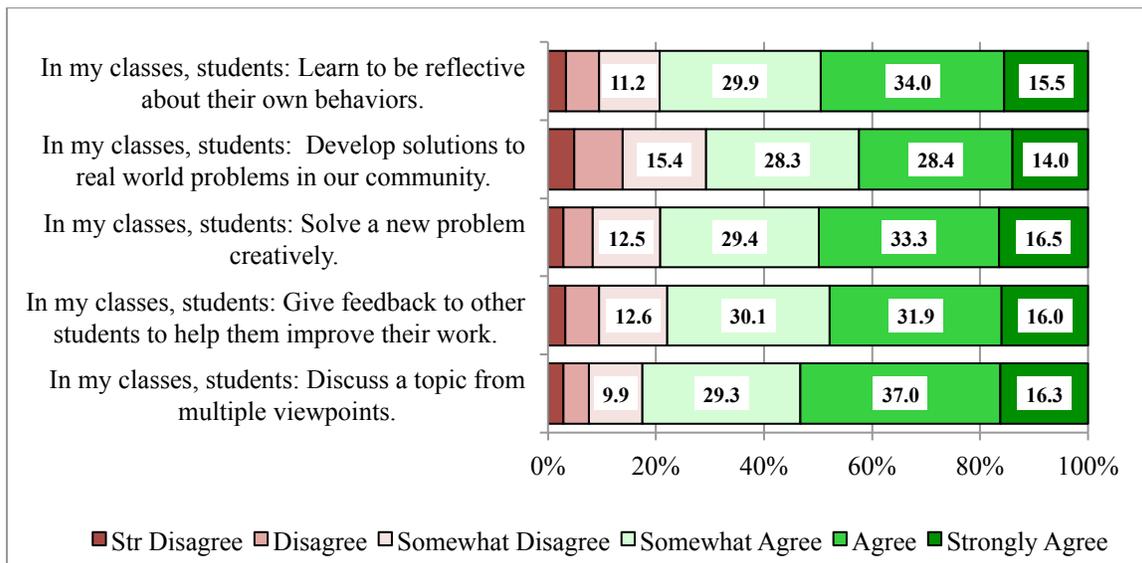
Figure 13: Secondary Student Perceptions of Responsive Teaching and Learning: Student Classroom Behaviors (2014)



### Responsive Teaching and Learning: Student Classroom Practices

There were also relatively high levels of agreement with the use of various classroom practices. Indeed, at least 70% of students agreed at some level with all five statements. Again, this suggests that teachers are not relying on a single instructional method or focusing on a particular purpose, but employing a variety of strategies and focusing on multiple achievement purposes.

Figure 14: Secondary Student Perceptions of Responsive Teaching and Learning: Student Classroom Practices (2014)

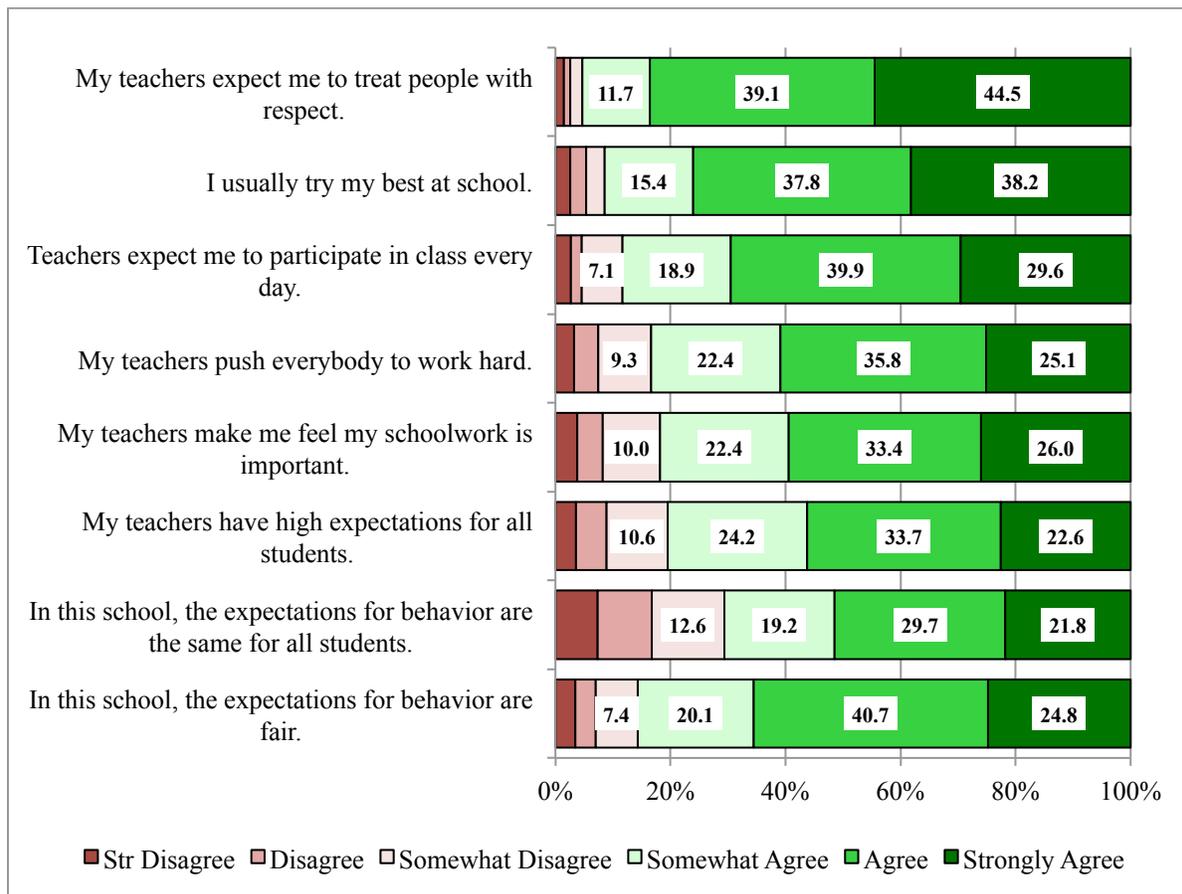


## High Expectations for All

As shown in Figure 15, at least 80% of students agreed at some level with 7 of the 8 statements within this domain. Thus, most students agreed that there was some a general climate of high expectations for all students. The statement with the lowest level of agreement was, “In this school, the expectations for behavior are the same for all students.”

Most specific to this domain are the following two statements: “My teachers have high expectations for all students;” and, “My teachers push everybody to work hard.” Over 80% of students agreed at some level with both of these statements and nearly 60% agreed or strongly agreed. Thus, undoubtedly, SCASD secondary students perceive teachers hold high expectations for them.

Figure 15: Secondary Student Perceptions of High Expectations for All (2014)



## Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration: Connection to School

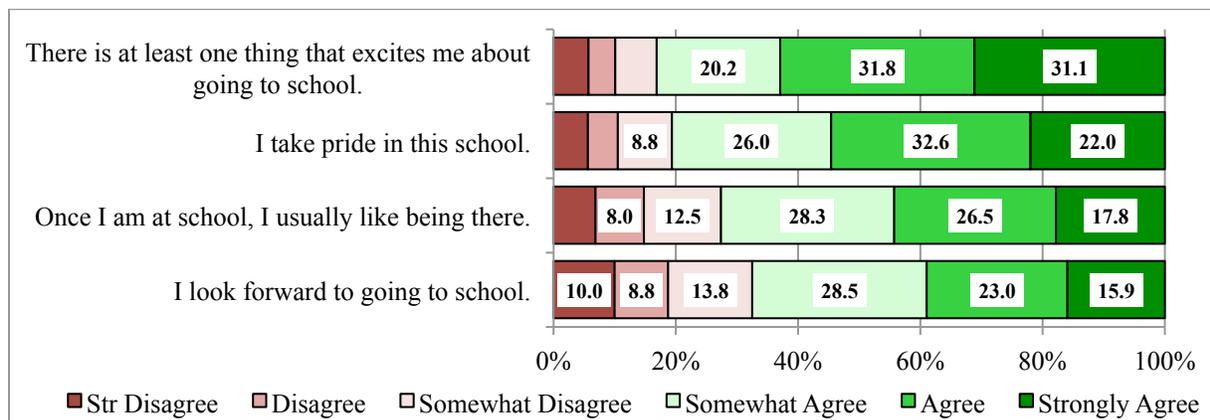
As shown in Figure 16, the majority of students agreed with each of the four statements measuring students’ connections to the school. Specifically, more than 80% of students agreed that at least one thing excites them about going to school while 80% agreed that they take pride in their school.

About 68% of students agreed that they look forward to going to school while a slightly greater percentage (73%) agreed that, once at school, they enjoyed being there. While these are high levels of agreement, only about 40% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they looked forward to going to school while almost one-third of students disagreed with the statement.

Further, only 44% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they liked school once there while more than one-quarter disagreed altogether. Thus, a small but significant percentage of students did not look forward to school and did like being at school once they got there.

These findings suggest that teachers and leaders need to identify the students who do not like being at school and investigate the reasons why the students feel this way. Research suggests students that feel disconnected from the school are at a greater risk for dropping out of school and under-performing academically.

Figure 16: Secondary Student Perceptions of Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration: Connection to School (2014)

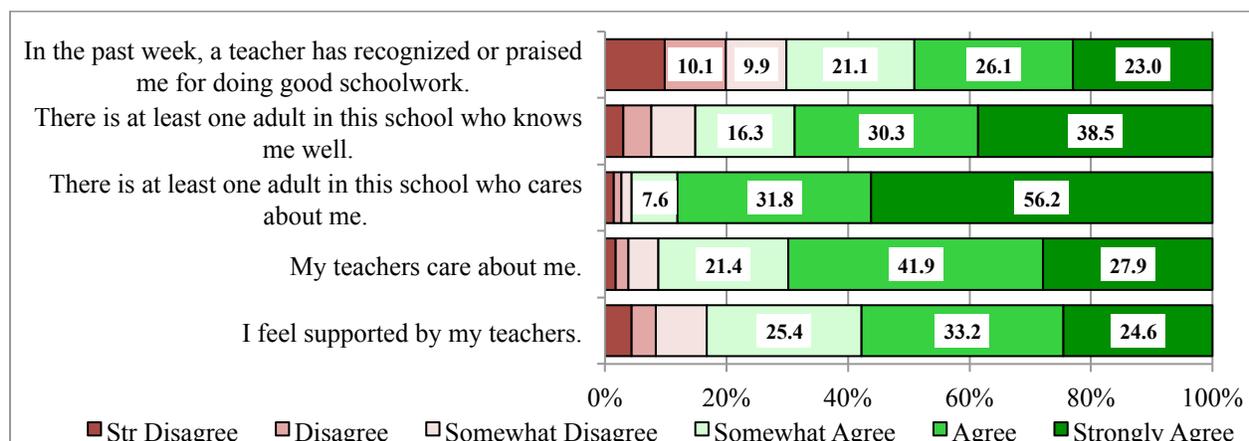


**Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration: Ethic of Caring**

For all but one of the five statements, at least 83% of students agreed with the statements. The statement with the greatest level of agreement was, “There is at least one adult at this school who cares about me” at 96%. The statement with the lowest level of agreement was, “In the past week, a teacher has recognized or praised me for doing good schoolwork.” Even this statement garnered 70% agreement from students.

The results for the statements in this domain strongly indicate that SCASD secondary students perceive teachers support, praise, and care about them. Research has found this ethic of caring is a necessary condition for strong, healthy schools.

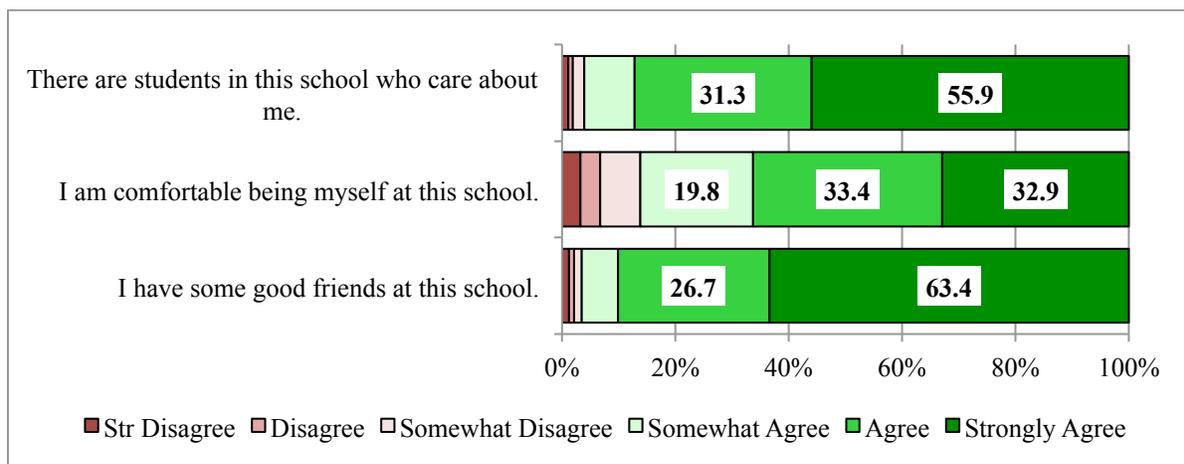
Figure 17: Secondary Student Perceptions of Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration: Ethic of Caring (2014)



### Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration: Student Attachment

There was strong agreement from students for the three statements about attachment. Specifically, at least 86% agreed at some level with each statement. Importantly, 96% of students agreed (about 90% agreed or strongly agreed) that they had some good friends at the school and there were students who cared about them at the school. In an analysis not reported here, minority students (African American, Latino, Mixed Race, and American Indian) were statistically significantly less likely to agree or strongly agree that they had some good friends in the school than White students. While the difference was statistically significant, the magnitude of the difference was relatively small.

Figure 18: Secondary Student Perceptions of Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration: Student Attachment (2014)



### Analysis of Secondary Student Results by Perceptions of Teacher Care

In this analysis, student results are compared between students with the lowest perceptions of teacher care and students with the highest perception of teacher care. Research has consistently shown that student perceptions of teacher caring have a profound influence on how students perceive the entire schooling process. Such students are far more likely to be disengaged, to be absent, to drop out of school, and to be underperforming academically relative to their potential.

Student perceptions of teacher care are based on student answers to the following five statements:

- I feel supported by my teachers.
- My teachers care about me.
- There is at least one adult in this school who cares about me.
- There is at least one adult in this school who knows me well.
- In the past week, a teacher has recognized or praised me for doing good schoolwork.

As shown in Table 5, about 17% of secondary students were in the lowest group and almost 24% of students were in the highest group. Those in the lowest group had an average response of less than 4.00 which indicated that they, on average, disagreed with the statements concerning teacher care.

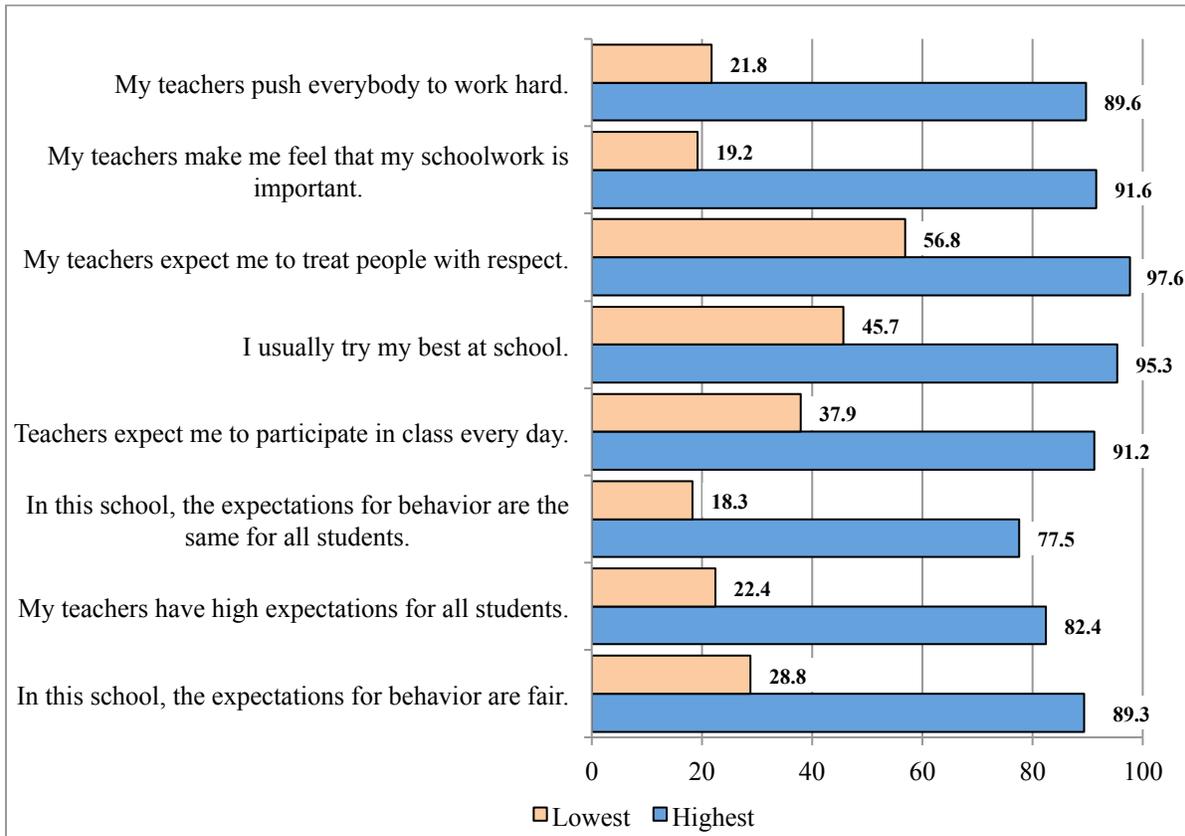
Table 5: Number and Percent of Students in Teacher Care Groupings

Teacher Care Group	Student Respondents	
	Number	Percent
Lowest	403	17.3
Low	760	32.6
High	608	26.1
Highest	557	23.9
Total	2328	100.0

As shown in Figures 19, 20, 21, and 22, students that perceive teachers don't care about them have substantially less agreement about every other statement in the survey. In other words, students that feel teachers don't care about them hold far more negative perceptions about the entire schooling process than students that perceive teachers care about them.

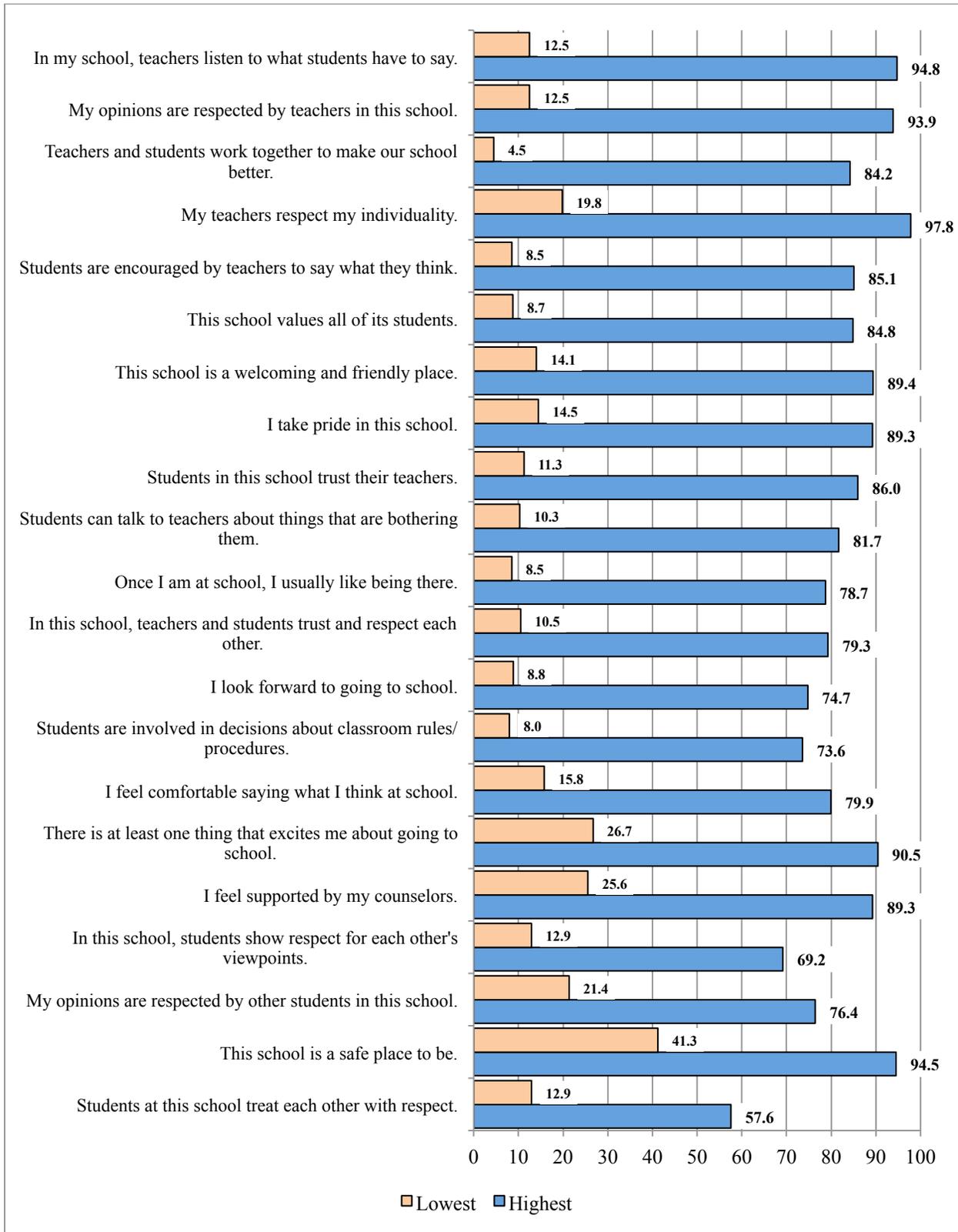
Leaders and teachers should carefully collaborate with students to identify the underlying causes of this issue and address the causes. While the number and percentage of students is not large, the SCASD Strategic Plan underscores the importance of maximizing the potential of every child in the district, not just 80% or 90%. Thus, increased focus and attention should be paid to students struggling in school and showing signs of disengagement.

Figure 19: Student Views of High Expectations by Perceptions of Teacher Care\*



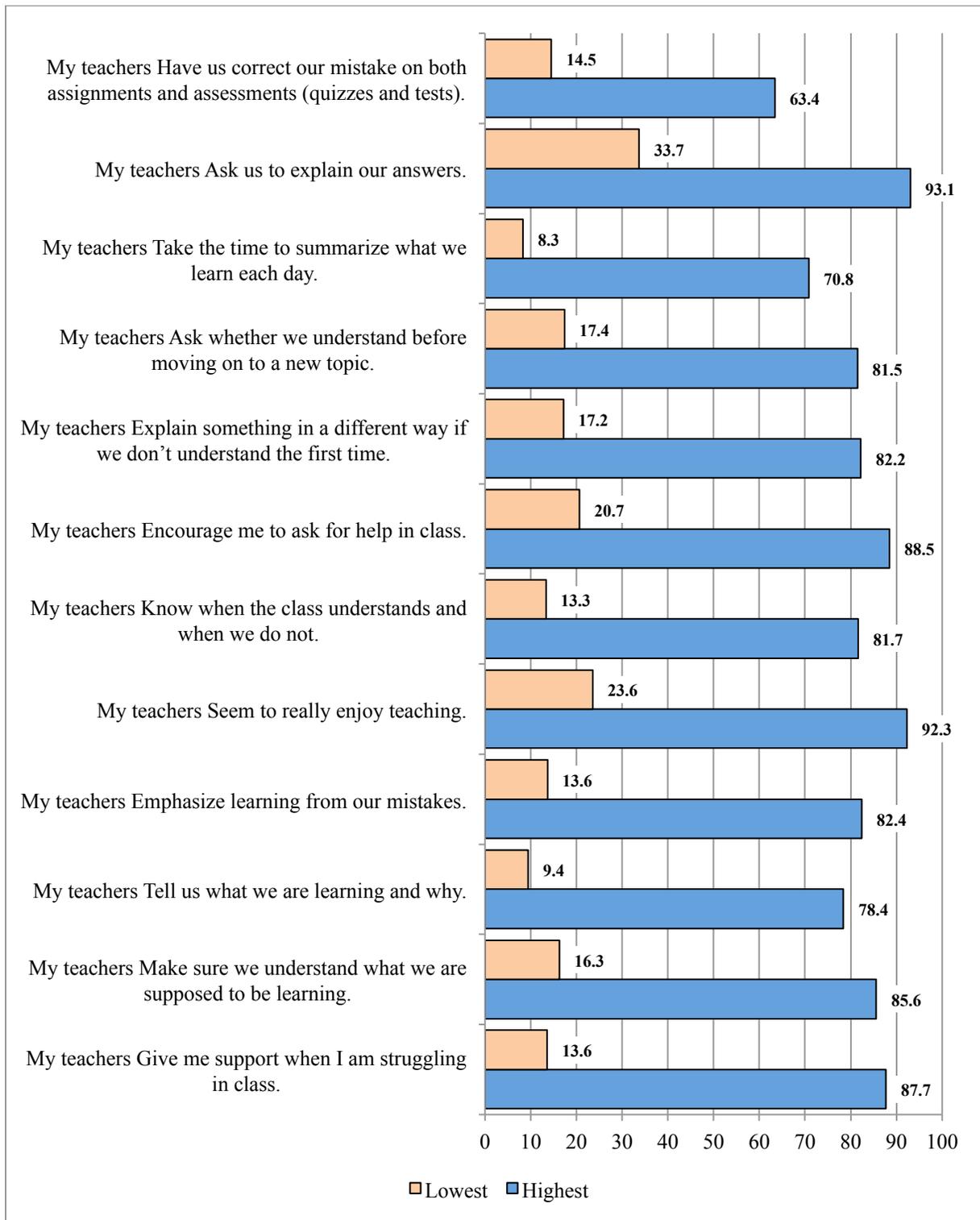
\* Percentage of students responding "Agree" or "Strongly Disagree"

Figure 20: Student Views of School Climate by Perceptions of Teacher Care\*



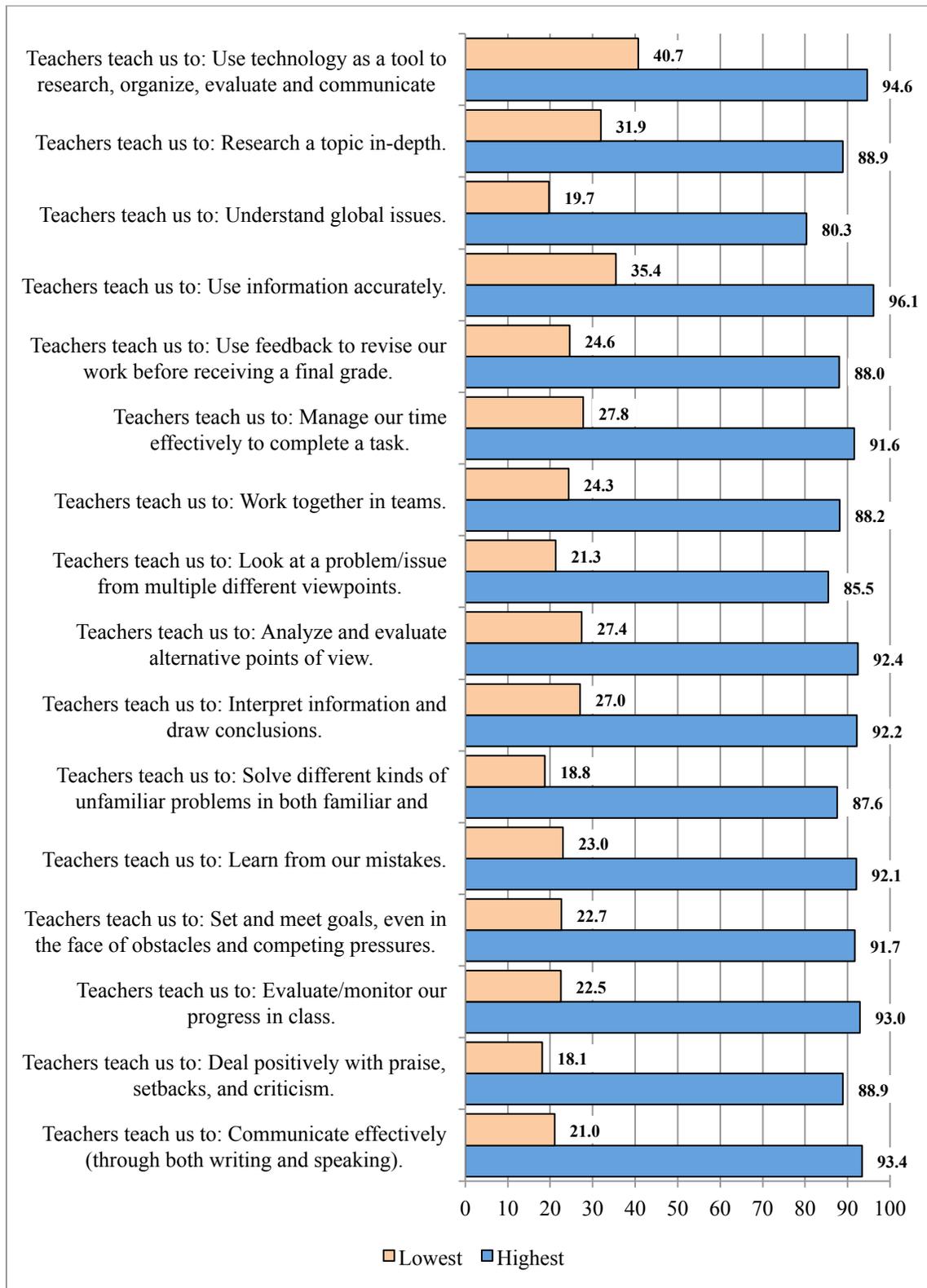
\* Percentage of students responding "Agree" or "Strongly Disagree"

Figure 21: Student Views of Teaching Practice by Perceptions of Teacher Care\*



\* Percentage of students responding "Agree" or "Strongly Disagree"

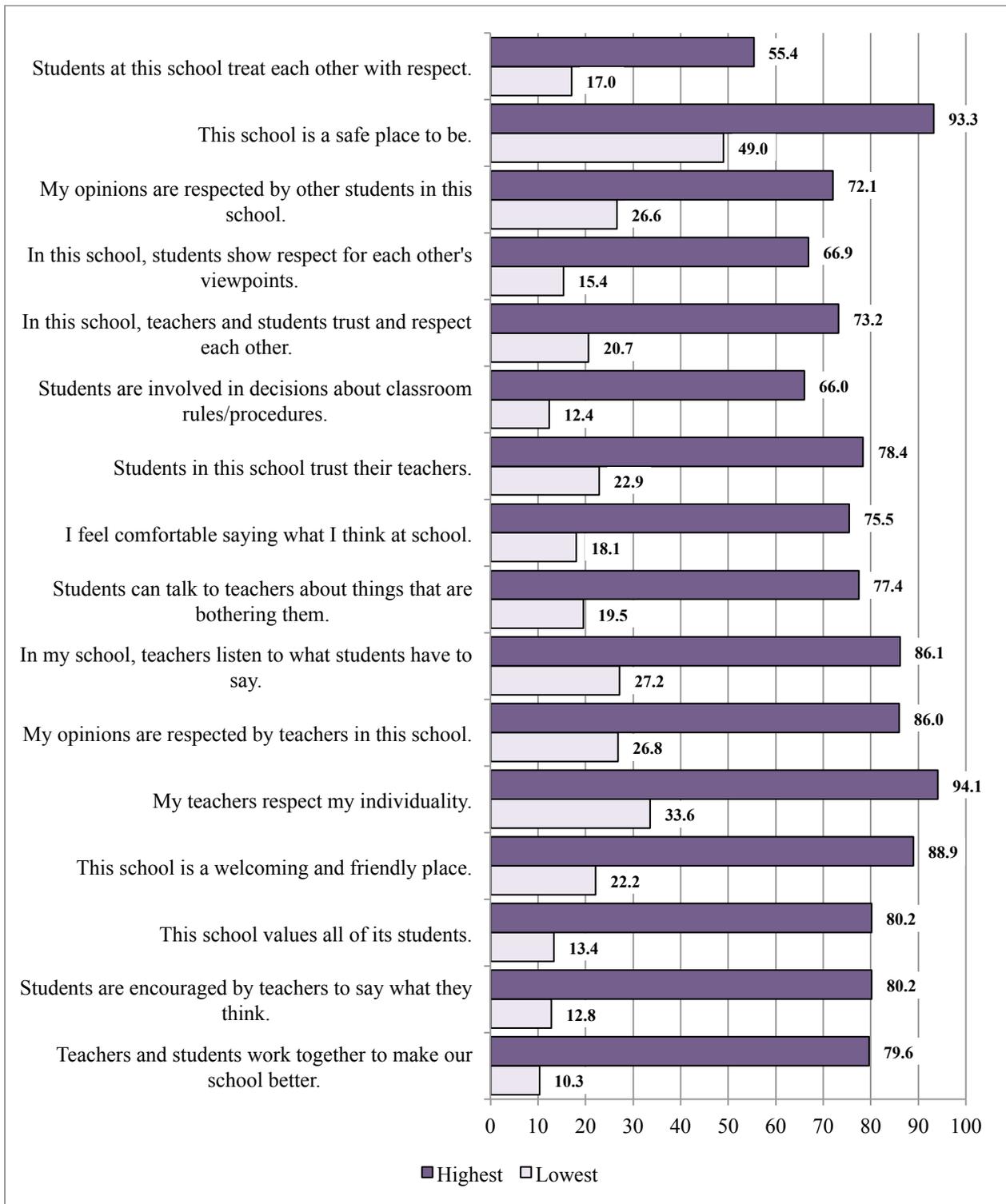
Figure 22: Student Views of Learning Outcomes by Perceptions of Teacher Care\*



\* Percentage of students responding "Agree" or "Strongly Disagree"

## Analysis of Secondary Student Results by Student Affinity with Schooling

Figure 23: Student Views of Learning Outcomes by Perceptions of Teacher Care\*



\* Percentage of students responding "Agree" or "Strongly Disagree"

### **SECTION III: TEACHER RESPONSES**

This section of the report examines the responses of elementary and secondary teachers. Secondary teachers include those employed at the two middle schools and the high school. The response rate was greater than 85%, thus the results are representative of all teachers in SCASD. As with the student survey, the teacher survey was originally aligned with the SCASD Strategic Plan's four pillars: Responsive Teaching and Learning, Welcoming and Safe Climate, High Expectations, and Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration. While the statements were originally divided into these four sections, a statistical analysis suggested the statements were actually measuring 10 different concepts related to the four pillars. These 10 constructs included:

- School Leadership;
- Responsive Teaching and Learning:
  - Learning Outcomes;
  - Teaching and Learning;
  - Professional Development;
  - Special Populations;
- High Expectations and Equity for All;
- Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaborations:
  - Teacher-Student Relationships;
  - Teacher Relationships and Collaboration;
- Welcoming and Safe Climate for Learning and Work
  - Teacher Respect and Pride; and
  - Student Voice.

The factor analysis revealed that a large number of the statements were related to each other in explaining the overall construct of school leadership. This was expected given that school leaders profoundly affect the working conditions and daily lives of teachers. Indeed, almost every statement in the teacher survey could be influenced by school leadership. Because the school leadership construct included such a large proportion of the statements, the construct was artificially divided into ten sub-constructs. This allows the reader to focus on specific aspects of leadership even though all of the statements are related in that they measure the overall construct of leadership.

- Teaching and Learning;
- Instructional Leadership/Teacher Evaluations;
- Teacher Involvement in Decision-Making and Teacher Voice;
- Teacher Collaboration;
- Teachers are Treated as Professionals;
- Welcoming and Safe Place;
- Management of Student Behavior;
- Effective Communication;
- Support for Teachers; and,
- Overall Leadership and School Perceptions.

#### **Results for Individual Statements by Domain**

Across all of the constructs, elementary teachers generally in more agreement and had more positive perceptions than secondary teachers. This is expected given the nature of the

differences between elementary and secondary schools. In particular, elementary teachers tend to work in much smaller environments, thus effective communication and collaboration are easier to accomplish. Moreover, the smaller environments make creating and maintaining close, trusting relationships much easier than in the larger secondary school environments. Thus, differences between elementary- and secondary- teachers should not be taken as an indicator of differences in leadership or the abilities and capacities of teachers at the two levels, but only that the differences reflect the dramatic disparity between elementary- and secondary- school contexts driven largely by school size, the nature of teacher assignments, and the nature of the number of teachers with whom a student interacts.

### School Leadership

#### Teaching and Learning: Elementary Teachers

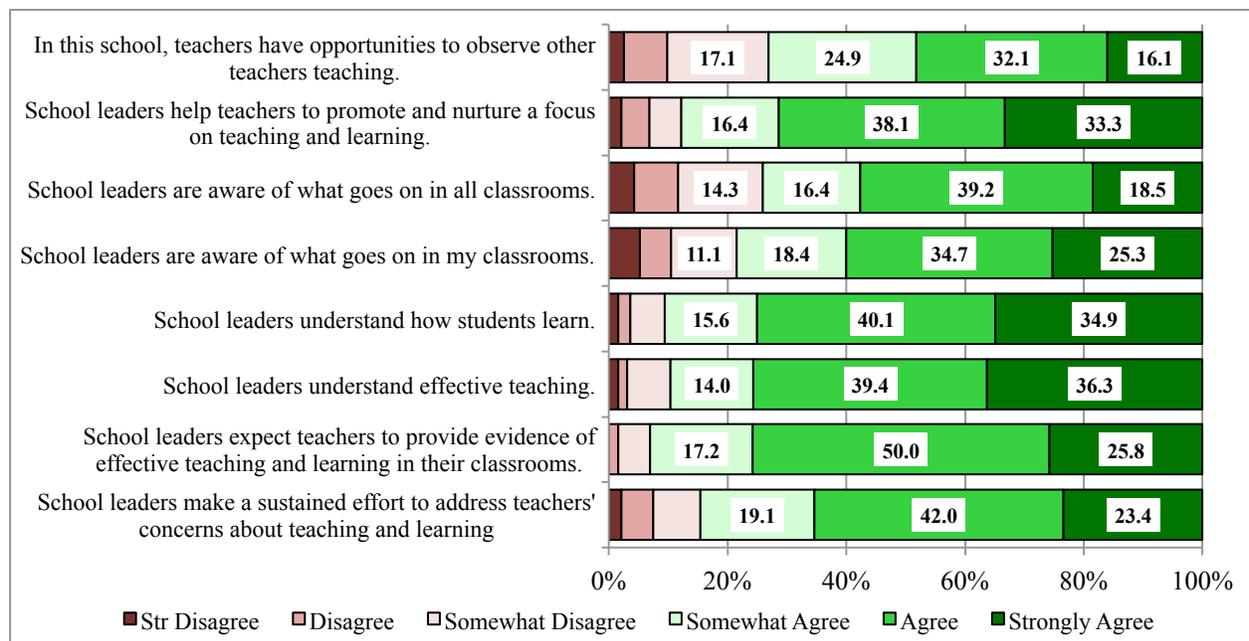
As shown in Figure 24, the majority of teachers agreed at some level with all eight statements in this domain. There was, however, varying levels of agreement across the statements, particular with respect to the percentage of teachers responding with “strongly agree.” At least 90% of teachers agreed at some level to the following three statements:

- School leaders expect teachers to provide evidence of effective teaching and learning in their classrooms;
- School leaders understand effective teaching; and,
- School leaders understand how students learn.

These are important characteristics of effective school leaders, thus such strong agreement suggests SCASD elementary principals have a firm grasp on teaching and learning and fully expect teachers to document effective teaching and learning.

Alternatively, less than 75% of teachers agreed that school leaders are aware of what is occurring in classrooms and that teachers are provided opportunities to watch each other teach.

Figure 24: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Teaching and Learning (2014)

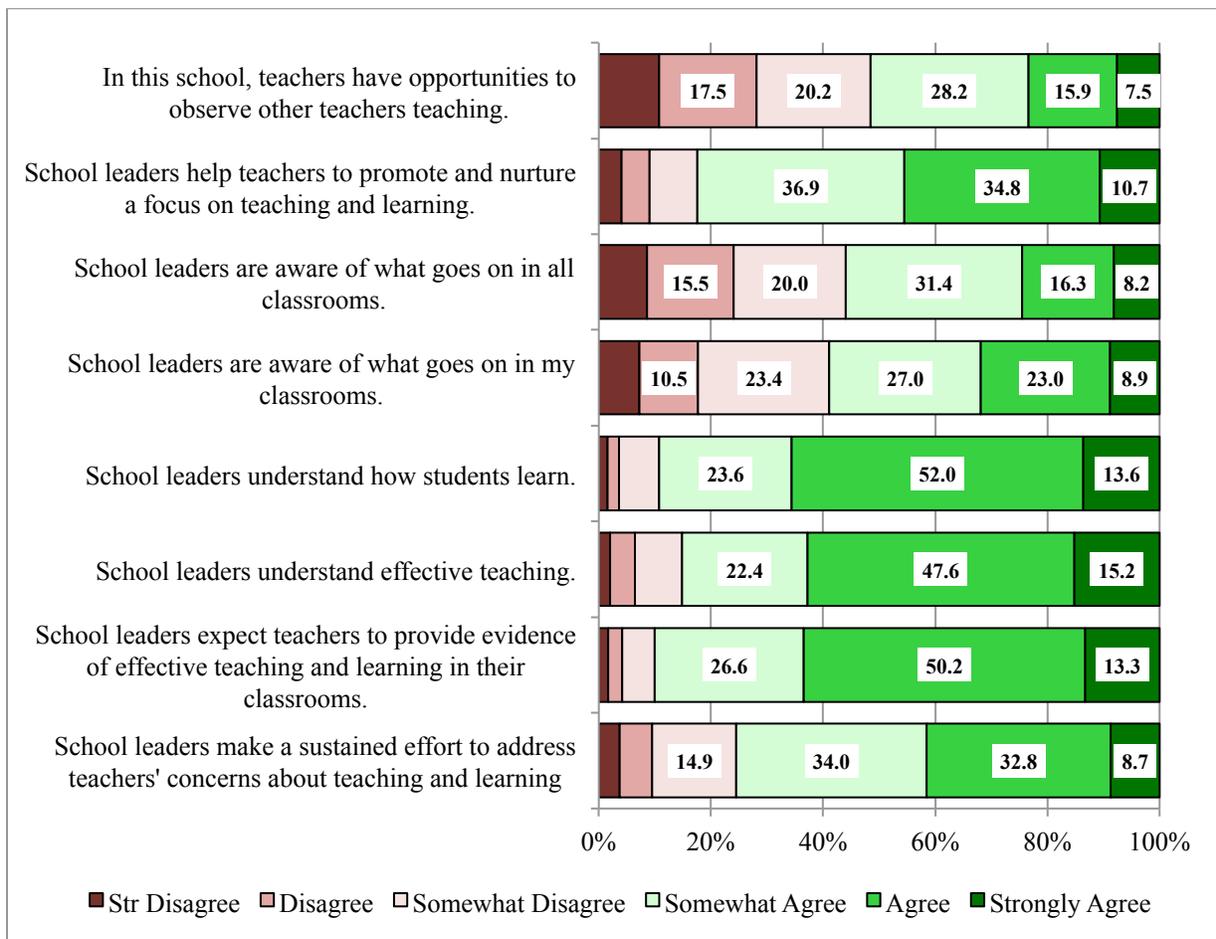


## Teaching and Learning: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 25, there was a wide range in the level of agreement across the 8 statements. Four of the statements had greater than 80% agreement and another statement had 75% agreement. The statements with 90% agreement were, “School leaders expect teachers to provide evidence of effective teaching and learning in their classrooms” and “School leaders understand how students learn.” Further, over 80% of teachers agreed that school leaders “help teachers to promote and nurture a focus on teaching and learning.” These results strongly suggest that teachers perceive school leaders support and understand teaching and learning—critical components to effective school leadership.

Alternatively, less than 60% of teachers agreed that school leaders are aware of what is occurring in classrooms and that teachers are provided opportunities to watch each other teach. The relatively low level of agreement about school leaders being aware of classroom instruction is typical in secondary schools. With the large number of teachers per leader, the plethora of duties to which leaders must attend, and the sheer size of the schools impede more constant and visible instructional leadership.

Figure 25: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Teaching and Learning (2014)



## Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

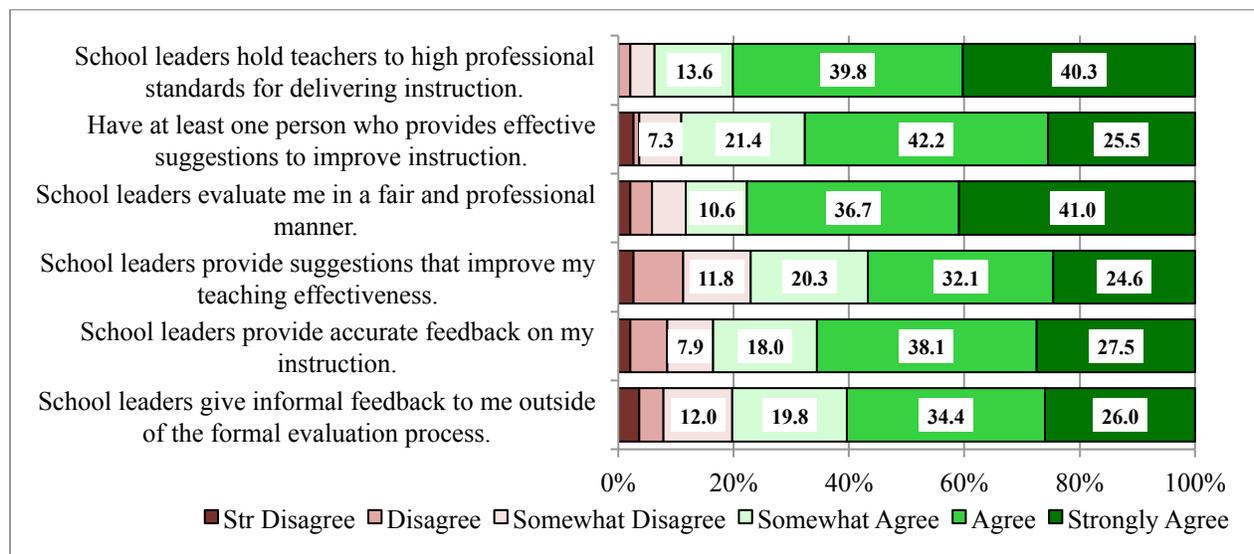
The high level of agreement by teachers supports the notion that SCASD school leaders have a deep working knowledge of teaching and learning. Such knowledge is at the core of instructional leadership which is the primary avenue through which principals influence student outcomes and school effectiveness.

To improve the results in this area, school and district leaders should collaborate with teachers and designing strategies that allow for more direct instructional leadership activities—including providing time and support for teachers to watch each other teach.

### Instructional Leadership and Teacher Evaluations: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 26, the vast majority of teachers agreed at some level with all six statements for this domain. The statement with the highest level of agreement (94%) was, “School leaders hold teachers to high professional standards for delivering instruction” while the statement with the lowest level of agreement (77%) was, “School leaders provide suggestions that improve my teaching effectiveness.”

Figure 26: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Instructional Leadership and Teacher Evaluations (2014)

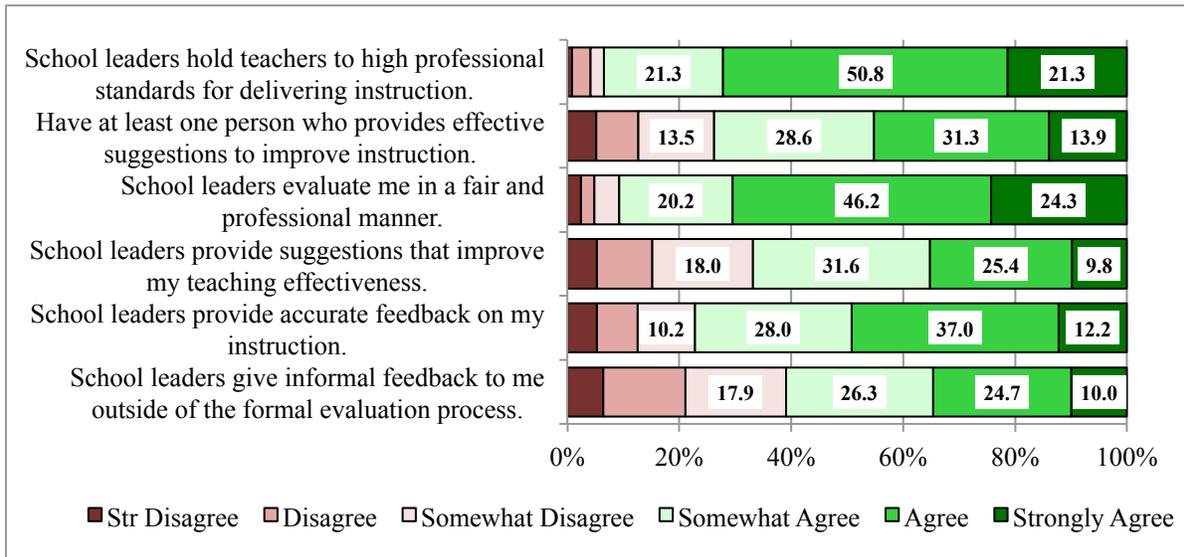


### Instructional Leadership and Teacher Evaluations: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 27, teachers generally agree that school leaders evaluate teachers in a “fair and professional manner.” Further, teachers also generally agree that school leaders “hold teachers to high professional standards for delivering instruction.”

Teachers had lower levels of agreement regarding the suggestions to improve instruction. For example, one-third of teachers disagreed that leaders provide suggestions that improve teaching effectiveness and about one-fourth disagreed that there was at least one person that provided effective suggestions for improving teaching.

Figure 27: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Instructional Leadership and Teacher Evaluations (2014)



### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

The overall results strongly suggest that school leaders hold high expectations for quality instruction and provide effective instructional leadership to teachers. Having high expectations is a critical lever for ensuring effective teaching occurs on a regular basis.

Moreover, teachers were in agreement that school leaders evaluated them in a fair and consistent manner. This is a key finding given that this perception is the foundation upon which strong and trusting relationships between leaders and teachers exists.

School leaders in SCASD should be commended for exhibiting the type of instructional leadership that is key to creating effective schools. Indeed, research consistently shows such instructional leadership is fundamental to delivering effective teaching and learning.

However, the results also suggest room for improvement. For example, more than 40% of elementary teachers and 65% of secondary teachers only somewhat agreed or disagreed with the statement that, “School leaders provide suggestions that improve my teaching effectiveness.” Similarly, 32% of elementary teachers and almost 55% of secondary teachers only somewhat agreed or disagreed with the statement, “[I] have at least one person who provides effective suggestions to improve instruction.”

In response school- and district- leaders need to further investigate these teacher perceptions and ensure that every single teacher has a source of high-quality feedback that is ongoing in order for each and every teacher to continuously improve their instruction.

### Teacher Involvement in Decision-Making and Teacher Voice: Elementary Teachers

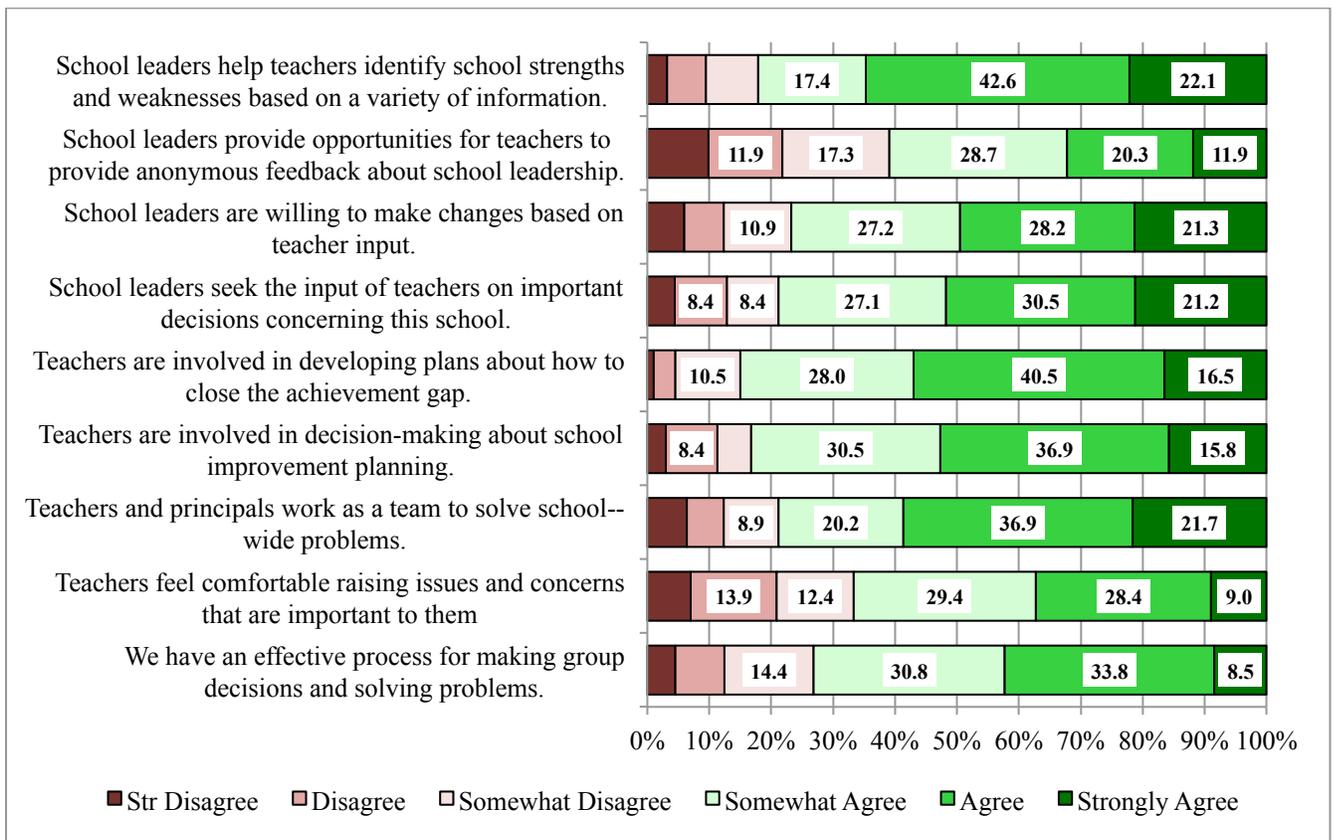
As shown in Figure 28, a majority of teachers agreed with all of the 10 statements in this domain, but the level of agreement varied across statements. The levels of agreement for these statements, however, were typically lower than for most of the other statements in the other domains. The four statements with the highest levels of agreement—greater than 80%—were:

- Decisions are guided by the school vision/mission;
- Teachers are involved in developing plans about how to close the achievement gap;

- Teachers are involved in decision-making about school improvement planning; and,
- School leaders help teachers identify school strengths and weaknesses based on a variety of information.

The two statements with the lowest levels of agreement were, “Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them” with 67% agreement and, “School leaders provide opportunities for teachers to provide anonymous feedback about school leadership” with 61% agreement.

Figure 28: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Involvement in Decision-Making and Voice (2014)



### Teacher Involvement in Decision-Making and Teacher Voice: Secondary Teachers

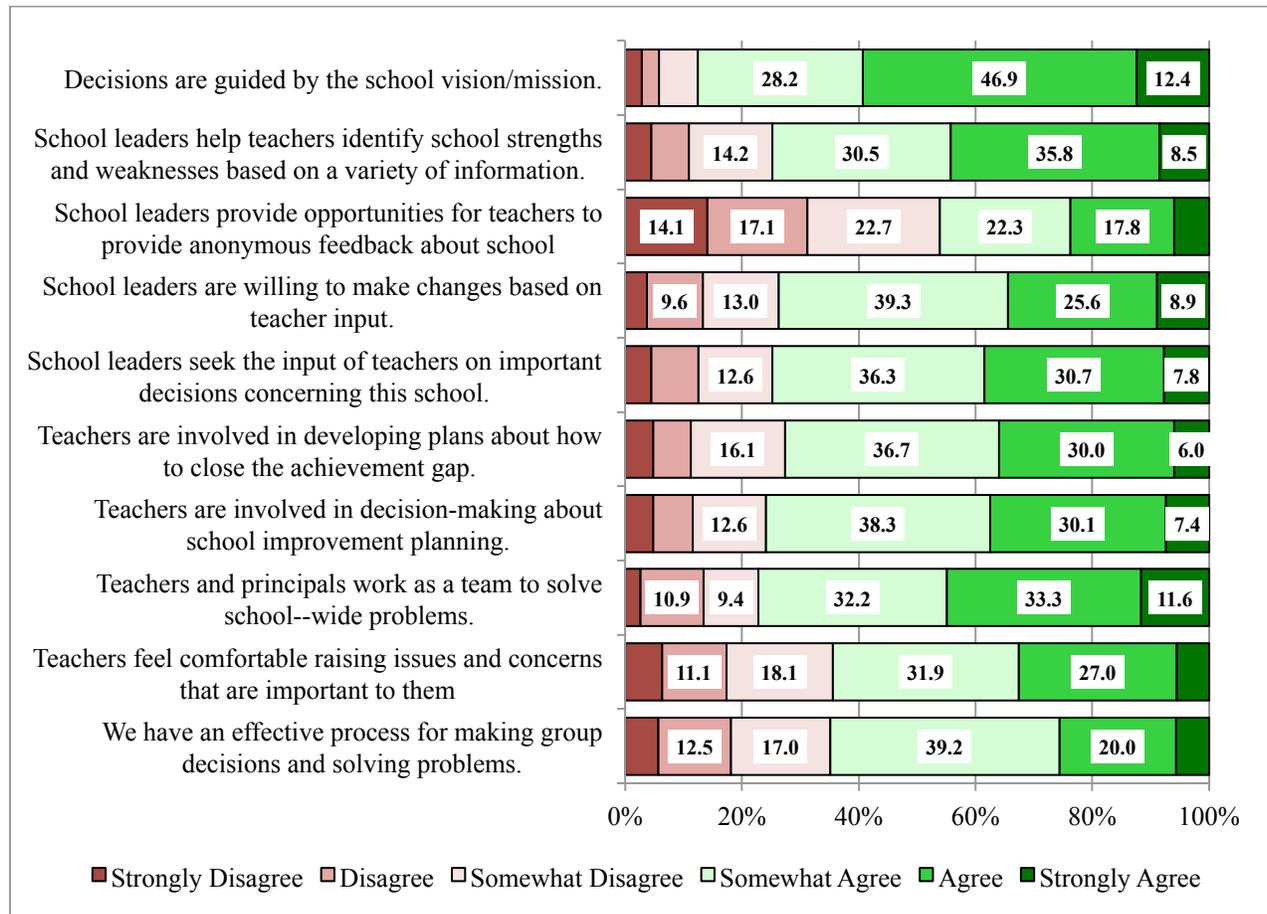
As shown in Figure 29, the majority of teachers agreed with all but one of the 9 statements, but the levels of agreement were lower than for many of the other statements in the other domains. Indeed, only one statement had greater than 77% agreement (decisions are guided by the school vision/mission).

In particular, teachers seemed concerned about teacher voice and the decision-making process. Specifically, only about 65% of teachers agreed at some level that “Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them” and only 46% agreed at some level that, “School leaders provide opportunities for teachers to provide anonymous feedback about school leadership.”

With respect to involvement in decision-making, only about 65% of teachers agreed at some level that there is “an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems.”

A slightly greater percent (75%) agreed that “School leaders seek the input of teachers on important decisions concerning this school.”

Figure 29: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Involvement in Decision-Making and Voice (2014)



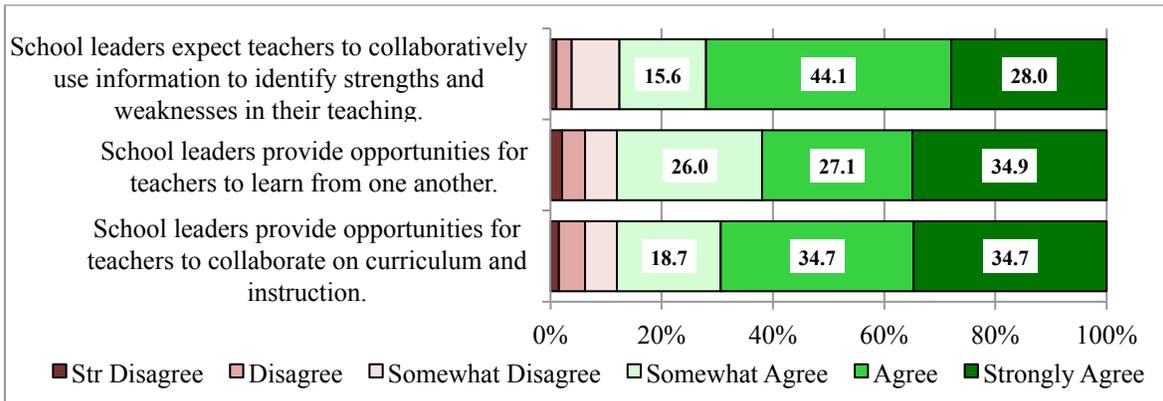
### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

While still overwhelmingly positive, these results suggest school leaders should strive to provide greater opportunities for teacher involvement in decision-making and providing input into important issues. This Strategic Plan survey is one strategy that can help improve these perceptions, but school leaders should work with faculty to create and adopt additional strategies. Further, school leaders must act on the input provided by teachers so that teachers perceive the process as valuable.

### Teacher Collaboration: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 30, about 88% of teachers agreed at some level with the three statements about teacher collaboration. In particular, there was a high level of agreement that school leaders facilitated teacher collaboration about curriculum and instruction.

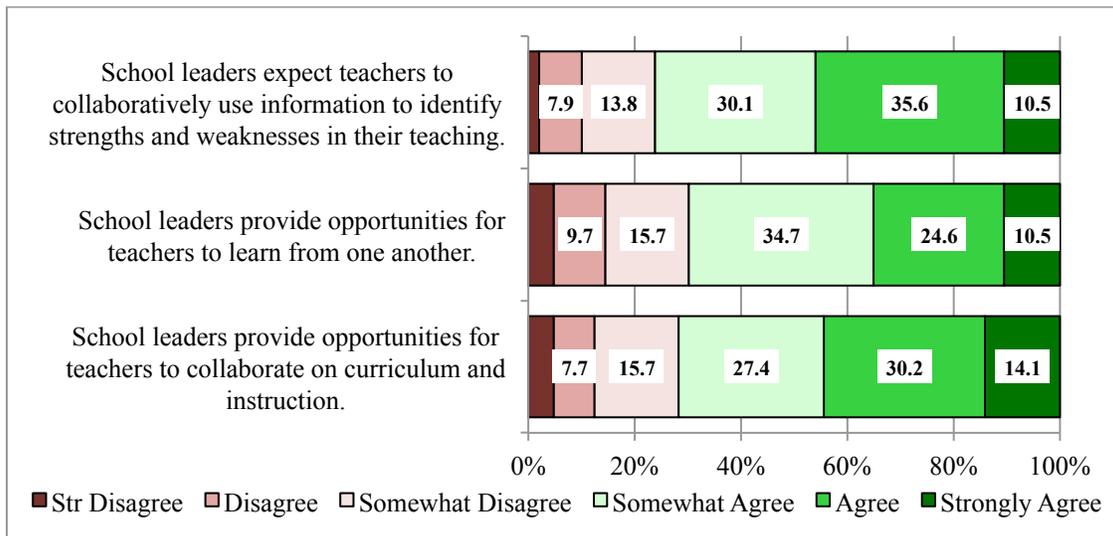
Figure 30: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Collaboration (2014)



### Teacher Collaboration: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 31, the vast majority of teachers agreed at some level that school leaders expect teachers to collaborate and support that collaboration. However, there remains between 25% and 30% of teachers that disagreed that collaboration is expected and facilitated by school leaders. Moreover, in a previous statement, a relatively low percentage of teachers agreed that teachers were able to watch one another teach.

Figure 31: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Collaboration (2014)



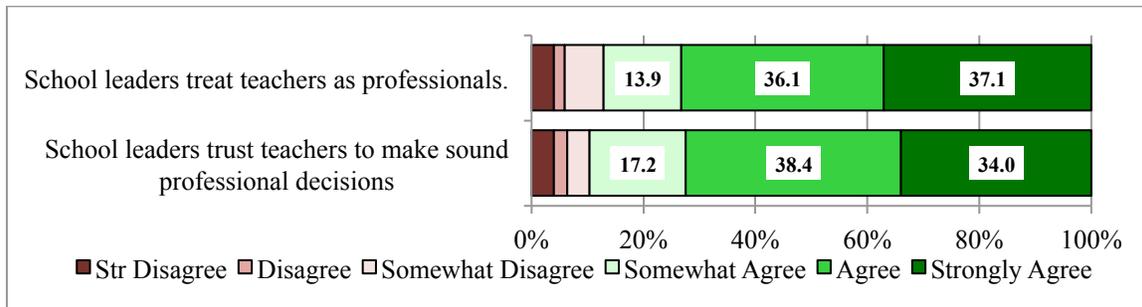
### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

The results suggest teachers perceive a high degree of collaboration among teachers occurring in SCASD schools, particularly at the elementary level where collaboration is more easily accomplished. While the results are very positive, the percentage of teachers responding with “strongly agreed” suggests there is still room for improvement, especially at the secondary level. To address these concerns, school- and district- leaders will need to think creatively to provide the time and space necessary to facilitate effective teacher collaboration. This may require re-thinking how the day is organized and the utilization of adults in classrooms.

### Teachers are Treated as Professionals: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 32, teachers overwhelmingly agreed that school leaders treated teachers as professionals. More than one-third strongly agreed with the two statements.

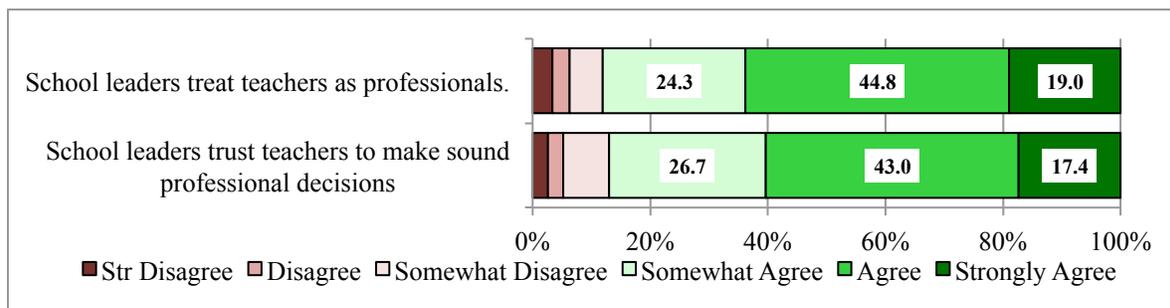
Figure 32: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Professionalism (2014)



### Teachers are Treated as Professionals: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 33, teachers overwhelmingly agree that school leaders treat teachers as professionals and trust teachers to make sound professional decisions. Almost one-fifth strongly agreed with the two statements.

Figure 33: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Professionalism (2014)



### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

The high levels of agreement signal the existence of strong, trusting relationships between teachers and leaders. This is a critical foundational issue that absolutely must be present for school to be effective. The results from other statements within other domains support the findings in this domain. Thus, this survey makes clear that leaders treat teachers as professionals and this behavior of principals engenders teacher trust in and respect for school leaders.

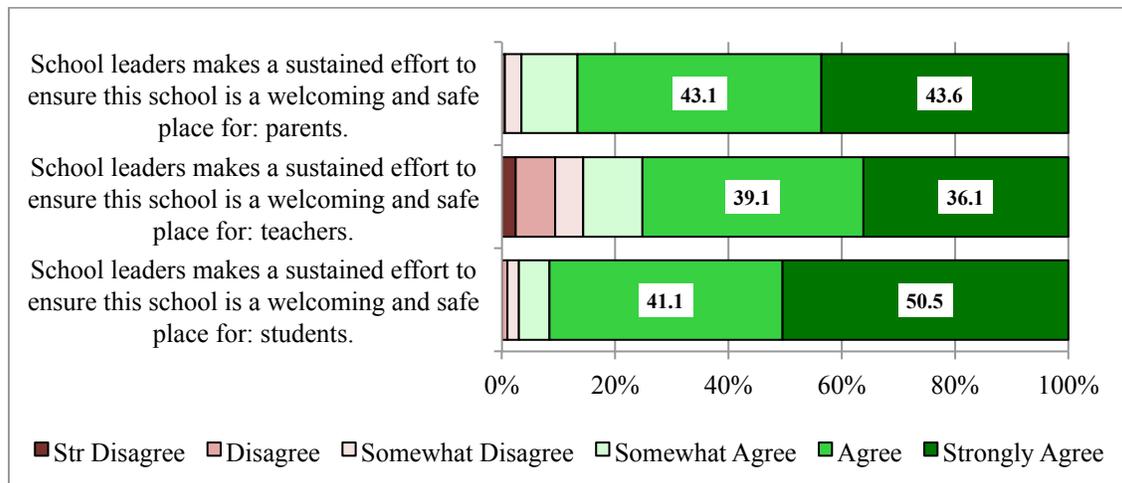
Despite the overwhelming support, there is still room for growth as the percentage of teachers responding with “strongly agree” was only about 33% at the elementary school level and less than 20% for both statements at the secondary level. School leaders should investigate why some teachers are not in strong agreement with these statements and how school leaders could address teacher concerns in this area.

### Welcoming and Safe Place: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 34, almost 100% of teachers agreed at some level that school leaders make a sustained effort to ensure the school is a welcoming and safe place for students and

parents. A slightly lower percentage (86%) agreed at some level that school leaders make a sustained effort to ensure the school is a welcoming and safe place for teachers.

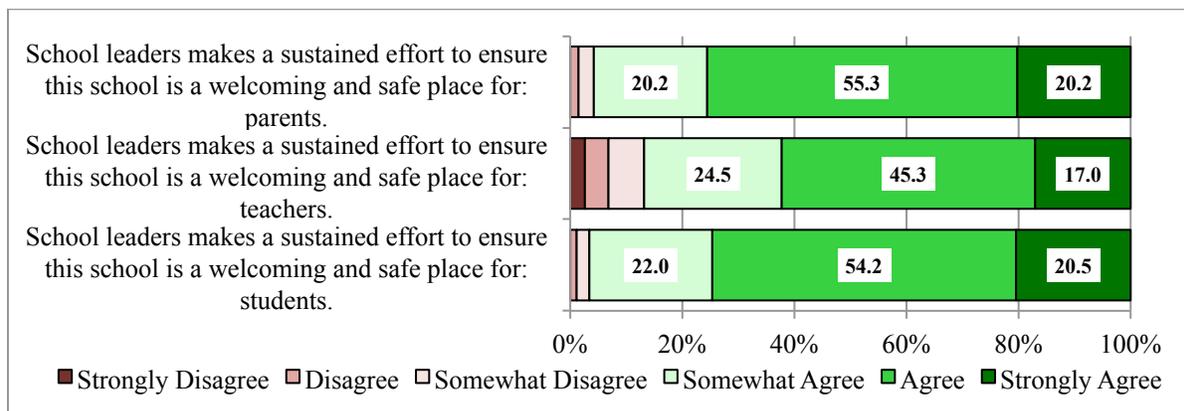
Figure 34: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Welcoming and Safe Schools (2014)



### Welcoming and Safe Place: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 35, teachers also overwhelmingly agree that school leaders make the school a safe place for students, teachers, and parents. Indeed, at least 87% of teachers agreed at some level with all three statements.

Figure 35: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Welcoming and Safe Schools (2014)



### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

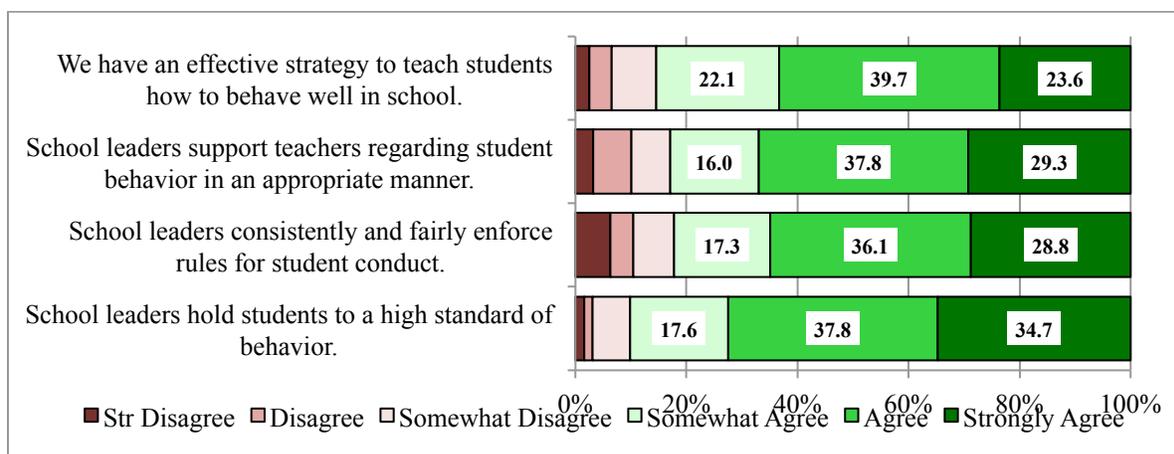
School leaders have clearly created a welcoming and safe place for children and adults in SCASD schools and should be commended for their accomplishments. Despite the high levels of agreement, there is still room for improvement at the secondary level given that the percentage of teachers responding with “strongly agree” was less than 20% for all three statements.

### Management of Student Behavior: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 36, the vast majority of teachers agreed at some level that teachers and leaders have effective strategies for managing student behavior. Two of the statements had

lower levels of agreement: “School leaders consistently and fairly enforce rules for student conduct” and “We have an effective strategy to teach students how to behave well in school.”

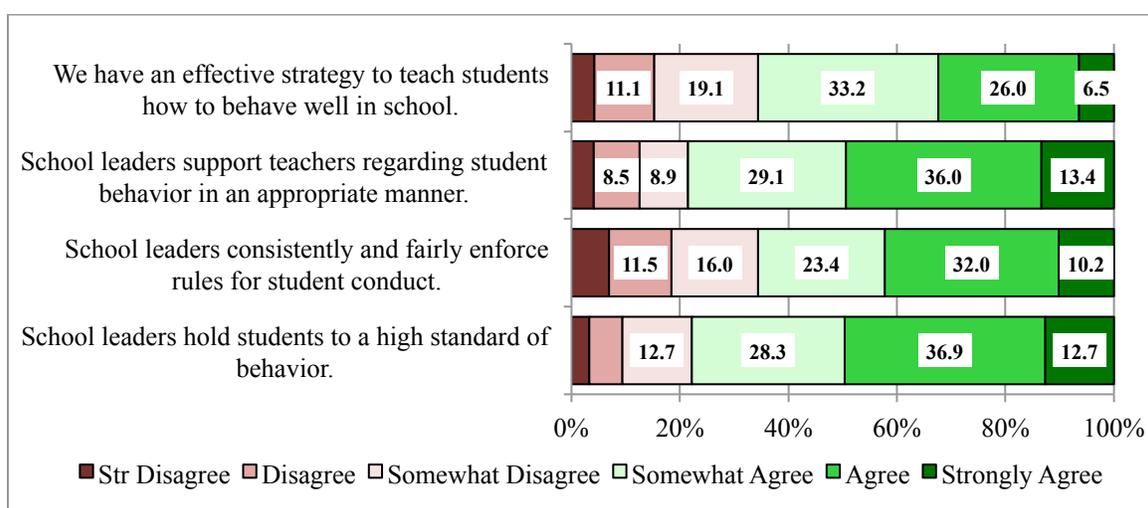
Figure 36: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Management of Student Behavior (2014)



### Management of Student Behavior: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 37, about 78% of the teachers agreed at some level that school leaders hold students to a high standard of behavior and support teachers with respect to student behavior. Alternatively, two of the statements had relatively low levels of agreement: “School leaders consistently and fairly enforce rules for student conduct” and “We have an effective strategy to teach students how to behave well in school.” Roughly 35% of teachers disagreed with these statements, thus suggesting a significant proportion of the teachers perceive some problems in these areas.

Figure 37: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Management of Student Behavior (2014)



### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

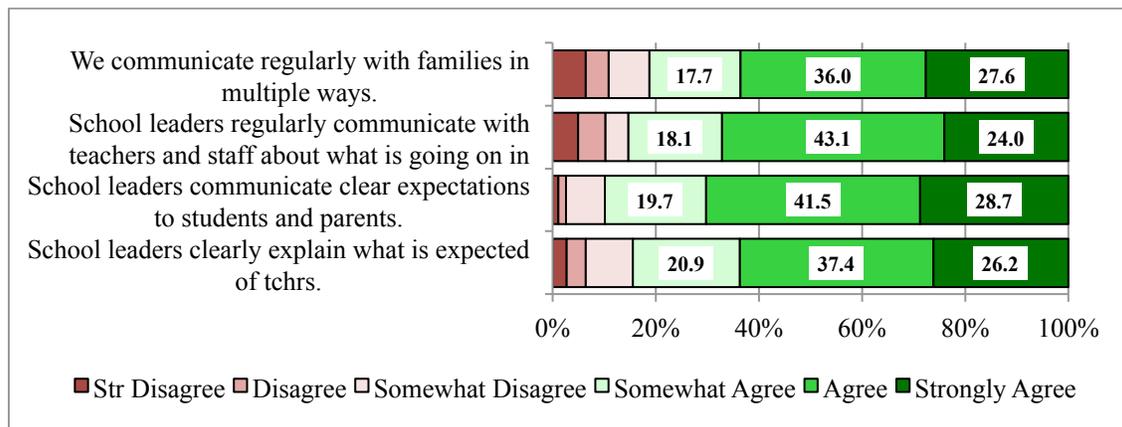
While the results are extremely positive and underscore the effective teacher- and school-leadership occurring in SCASD schools, the lower levels of agreement concerning the support of teachers in matters of student behavior and in the consistent application of rules for student

conduct suggest improvements could be made. School leaders should investigate the causes of these perceptions and work with teachers to address the underlying causes. At the secondary level, the principal and assistant principals may need to work more closely with each other to increase consistency of application and enforcement of rules.

### Effective Communication: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 38, there was a high level of agreement that communication at SCASD elementary schools was effective. Importantly, teachers perceive that principals clearly communicate expectations of students, teachers, and parents.

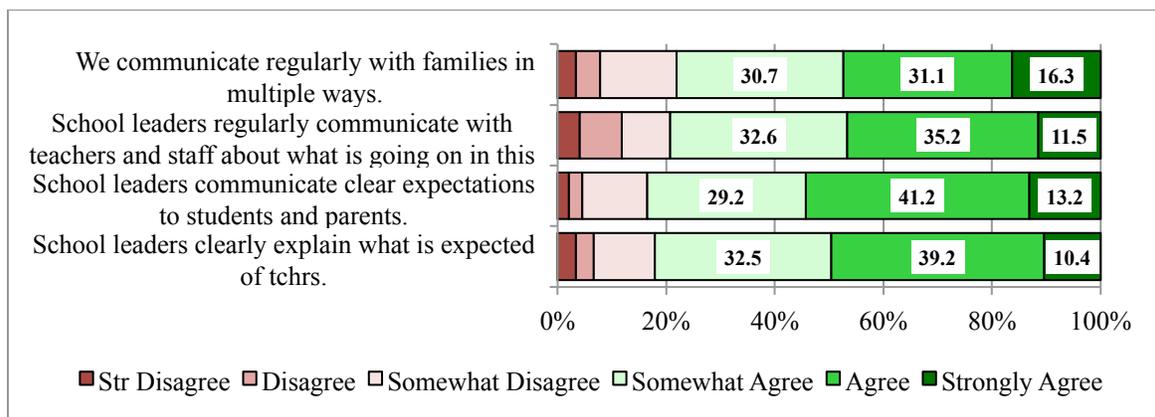
Figure 38: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Effective Communication (2014)



### Effective Communication: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 39, the vast majority of teachers—around 80%--also agreed at some level that school leaders communicate effectively with teachers, students, and parents. Importantly, 80% of teachers also agreed at some level that school leaders clearly communicate their expectations for teachers.

Figure 39: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Effective Communication (2014)



### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

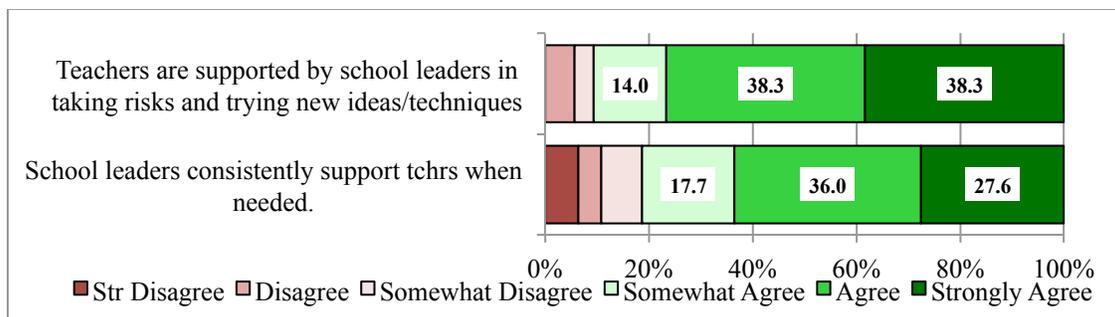
Not only is clear communication a foundation of developing strong, trusting relationships, but clearly communicating expectations improves the effectiveness of teachers and

provides excellent role modeling for teachers to clearly communicate expectations to students. While the results are quite positive, there is still room for improvement given that the percentages of teachers responding with “strongly agree” ranged from 10% to 28%. School leaders could endeavor to move a greater percentage of teachers into the “strongly agree” category.

### Support for Teachers: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 40, the vast majority of teachers agreed at some level that school leaders support teachers when needed and, more specifically, support teachers in taking risks and trying out new ideas and techniques. The percentage was slightly lower for consistently supporting new teachers when appropriate, but the percentage was still quite high (81%).

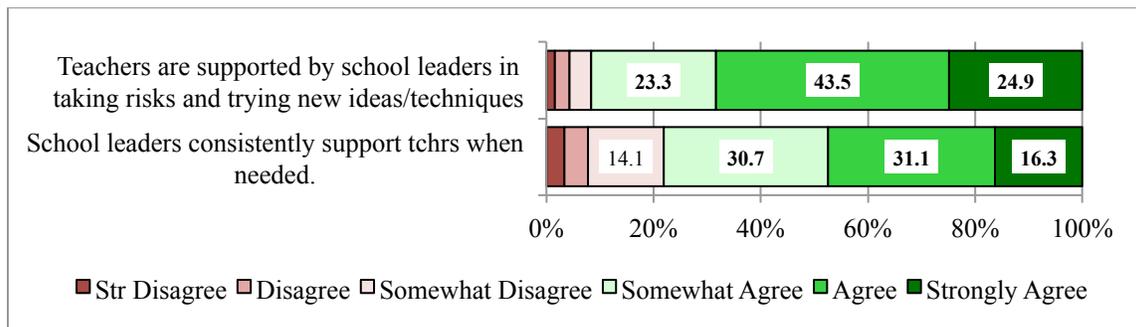
Figure 40: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Support for Teachers (2014)



### Support for Teachers: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 41, more than 90% of teachers agreed at some level that school leaders support teachers in taking risks and trying new ideas and techniques. A lower percentage (78%) agreed at some level that teachers were supported by school leaders when appropriate. While this percentage was lower, the percentage was quite high and of the 22% that disagreed with the statement, most only “somewhat disagreed.”

Figure 41: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Support for Teachers (2014)



### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

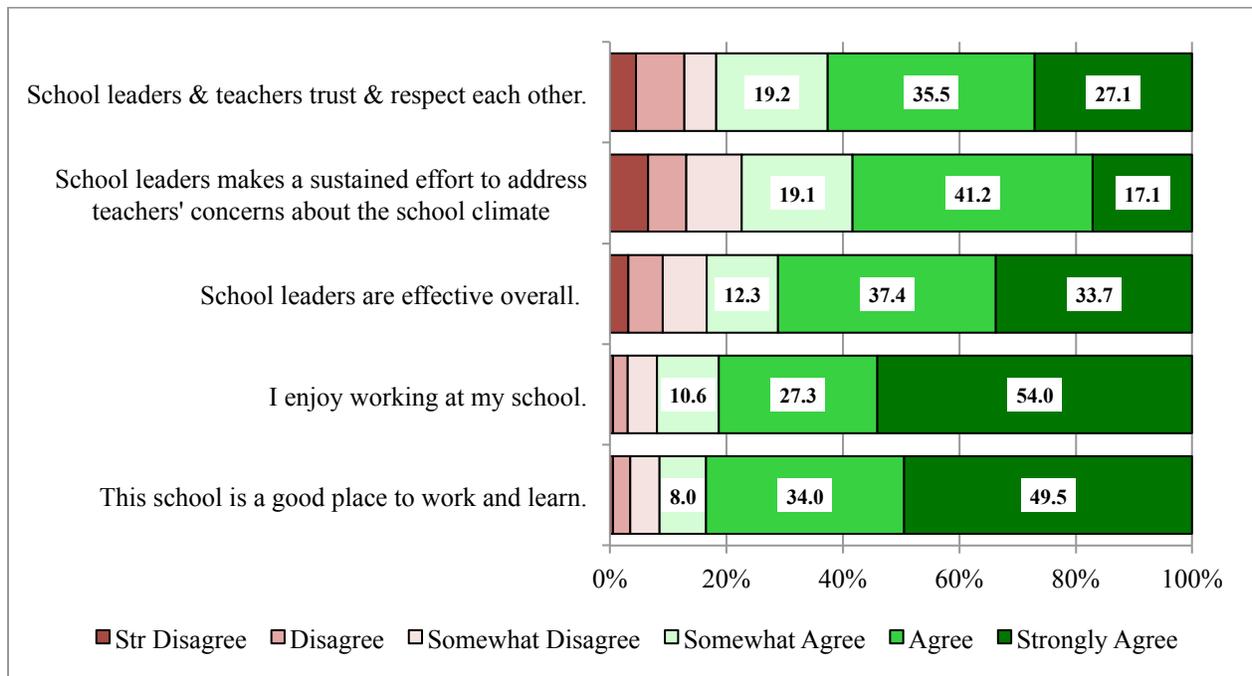
Research has consistently shown that school leader support of teachers is a critical component of effective schools. Further, support in taking risks in trying out new instructional approaches creates an environment focused on continuous improvement—precisely the environment that makes for exceptional schools.

Despite the high level of agreement, there does appear to be room for improvement with respect to overall support for teachers given that less than 50% of teachers "agreed" or "strongly" agreed with the statement. School leaders should ask teachers for clarification about instances and areas in which school leaders could provide more support.

**Overall Leadership and School Workplace: Elementary Teachers**

As shown in Figure 42, at least 77% of teachers agreed at some level with all five statements in this domain, with two statements at about 80% agreement, and another two statements at about 90% agreement. The two statements with 90% agreement were, "This school is a good place to work and learn" and "I enjoy working at my school." The statement with 77% agreement and only 17% strong agreement was, "School leaders make a sustained effort to address teachers' concerns about the school climate."

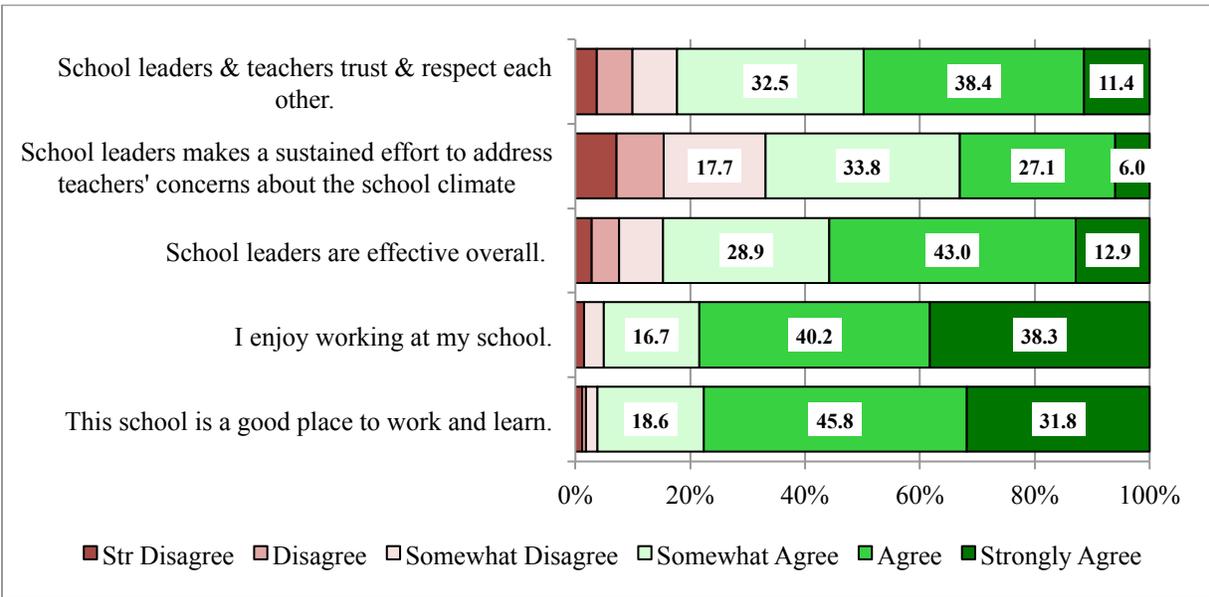
Figure 42: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Overall Leadership and School Workplace (2014)



**Overall Leadership and School Workplace: Secondary Teachers**

As shown in Figure 43, teachers generally had positive perceptions of school leadership and the school in general. In particular, more than 95% of teachers agreed at some level that they enjoyed working at their school and believe it is a good place to work and learn. More specifically, almost 80% "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with these statements.

Figure 43: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Overall Leadership and School Workplace (2014)



### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

The fact that so many teachers view their school as a good place to work and learn and enjoy working at their school speaks to the outstanding schools in SCASD and to the tremendous school- and district- leadership in SCASD.

One area of slight weakness was that not all teachers viewed school leaders as making a sustained effort to address school climate issues. School leaders should further explore the causes of these perceptions and work collaboratively to improve in this area.

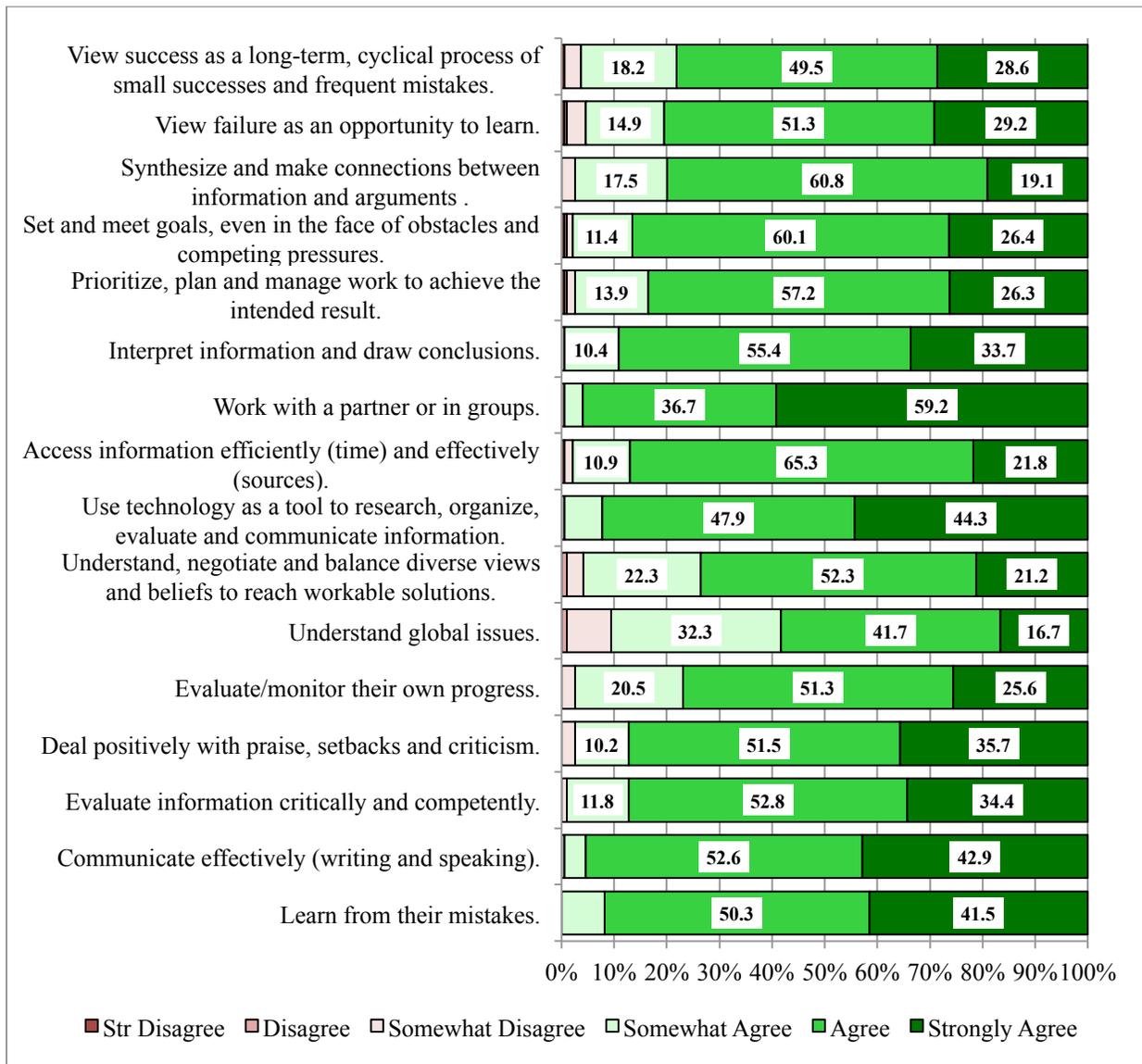
### Responsive Teaching and Learning

#### Learning Outcomes: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 44, at least 95% of teachers agreed at some level that teachers within the school instruct students to achieve 15 of the 16 specified learning outcomes. Indeed, greater than 85% of teachers agreed at some level that teachers teach students 14 of the 16 outcomes. The learning outcomes with essentially 100% agreement were:

- In this school, we teach students to: Learn from their mistakes;
- In this school, we teach students to: Communicate effectively (writing and speaking);
- In this school, we teach students to: Work with a partner or in groups; and,
- In this school, we teach students to: Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information.

Figure 44: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Learning Outcomes (2014)



**Learning Outcomes: Secondary Teachers**

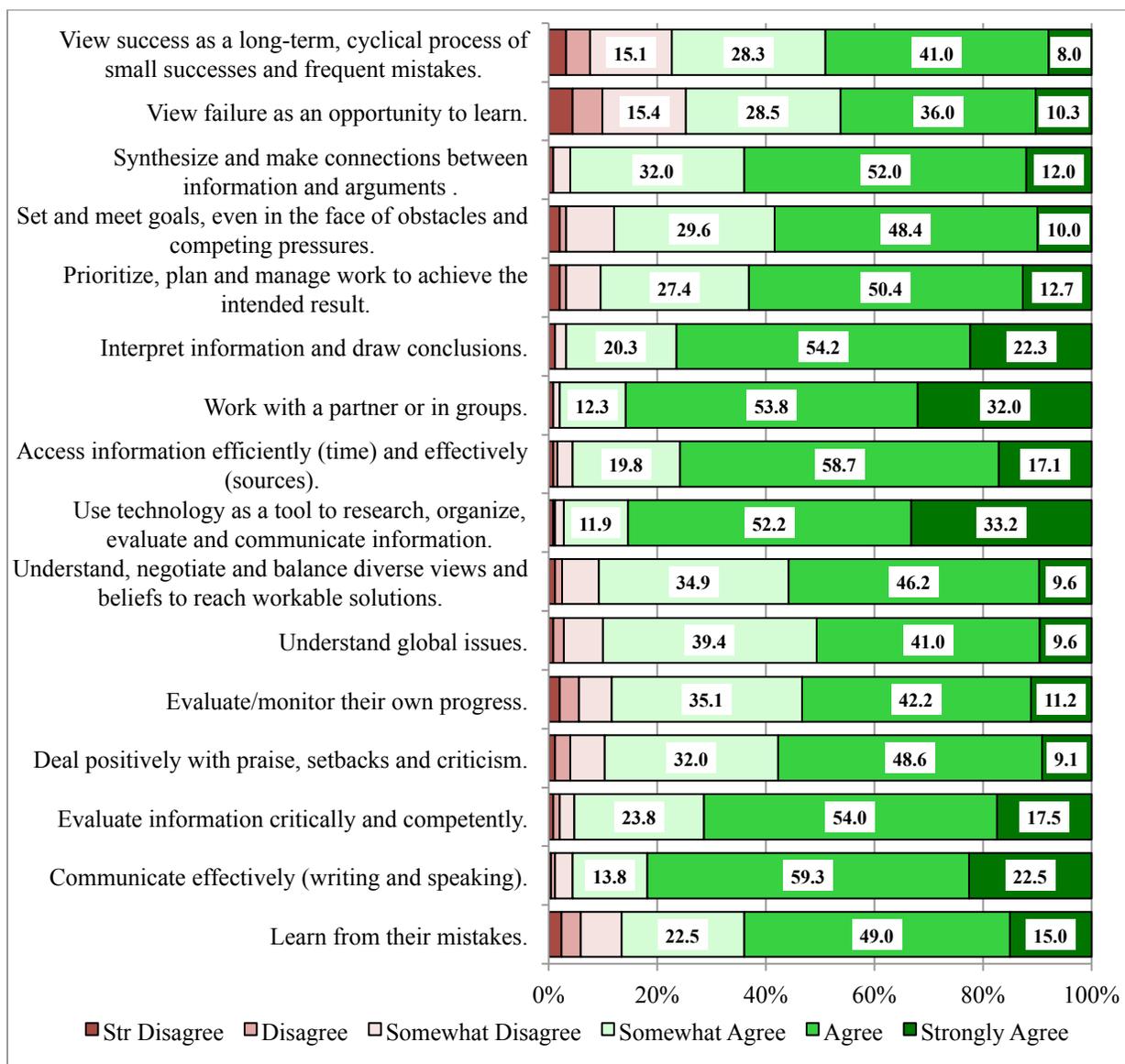
As shown in Figure 45, the vast majority of teachers agreed at some level that the teachers within the school instruct students to the specified learning outcomes. Indeed, greater than 85% of teachers agreed at some level that teachers teach students 14 of the 16 outcomes. The learning outcomes with the greatest levels of agreement—greater than 95%--were:

- In this school, we teach students to: Communicate effectively (writing and speaking);
- In this school, we teach students to: Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information;
- In this school, we teach students to: Work with a partner or in groups; and,
- In this school, we teach students to: Synthesize and make connections between information and arguments.

Alternatively, the two learning outcomes with the lowest levels of agreement were:

- In this school, we teach students to: View failure as an opportunity to learn.
- In this school, we teach students to: View success as a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.

Figure 45: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Learning Outcomes (2014)



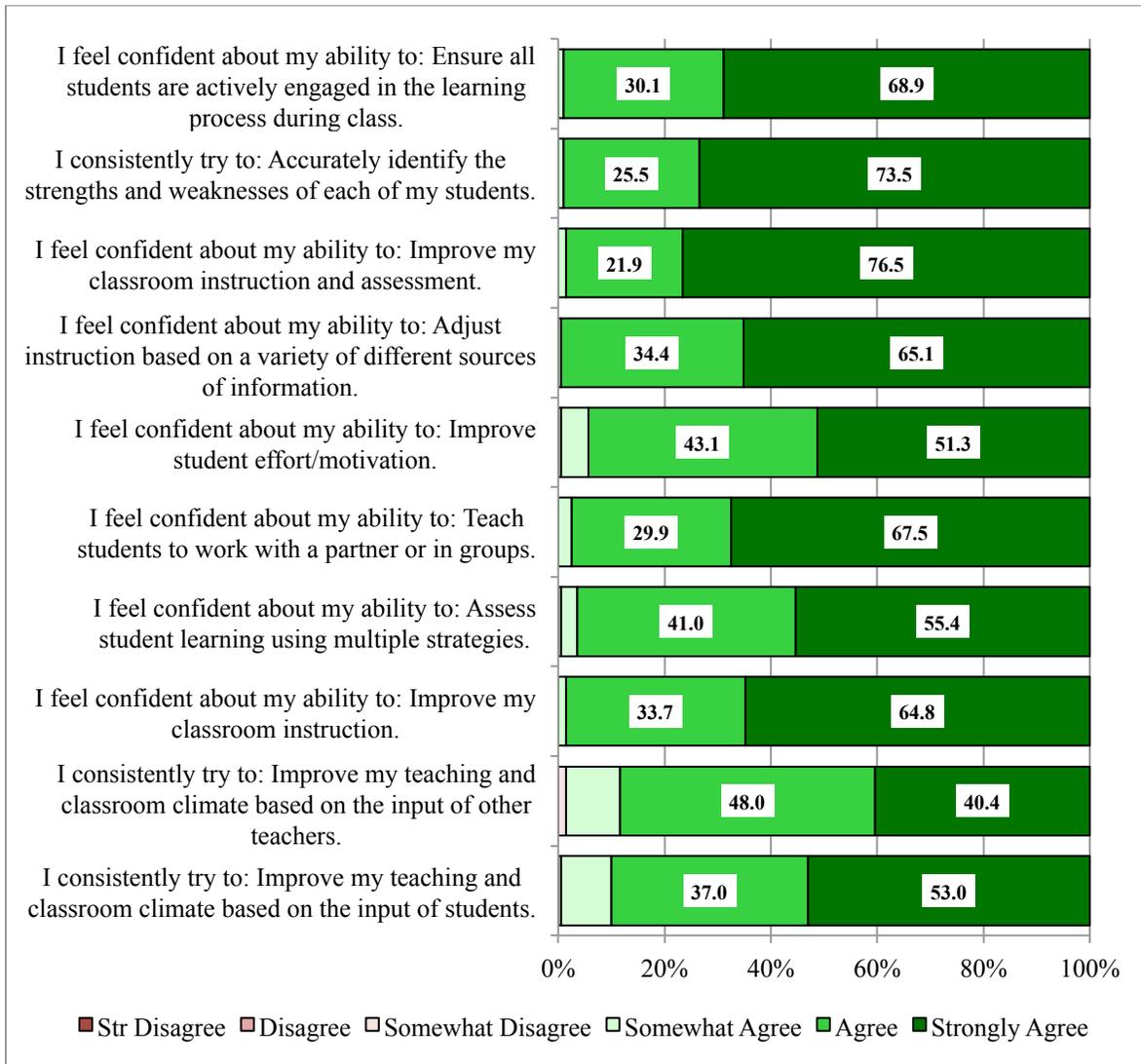
### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

While the responses in this domain strongly indicate that secondary teachers attempt to teach students a wide range of important outcomes, the relatively low levels of agreement about how students view success and failure leaves some room for improvement. Recent research suggests viewing success and failure in these ways are important for developing the persistence necessary to be successful while maintain a healthy and positive view of self in times considered by others as “failure.”

### Teaching and Learning: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 46, almost 100% of teachers responded with “agree” or “strongly agree” to the statements in this domain. Thus, elementary teachers feel extremely confident in their ability to be effective instructors with all students and in their belief that teachers consistently try to be effective instructors.

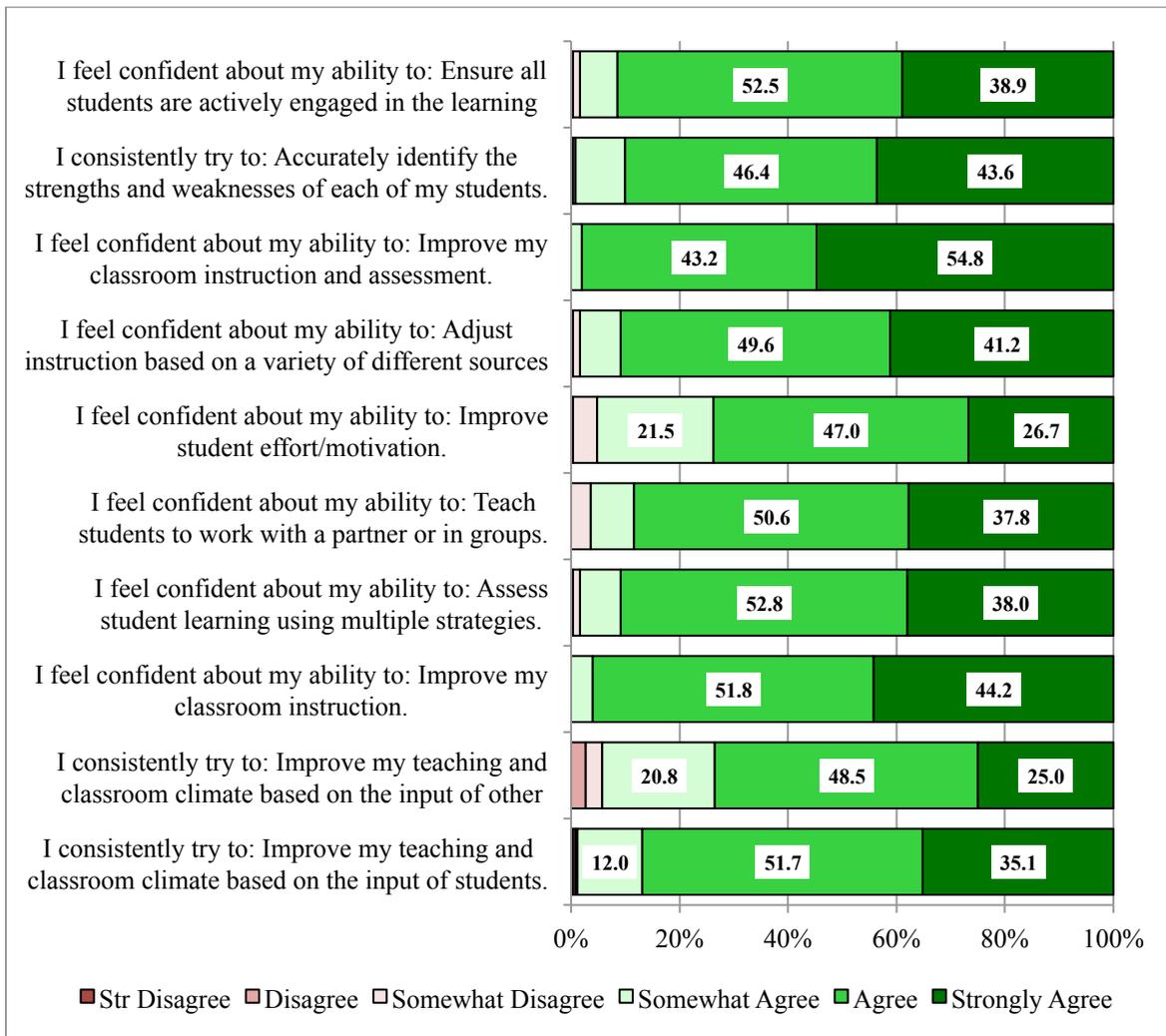
Figure 46: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Teaching and Learning (2014)



### Teaching and Learning: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 47, almost 100% of teachers responded with “agree” or “strongly agree” to the statements in this domain. This suggests teachers feel supremely confident in their ability to be effective instructors with all students and in their belief that they consistently try to be effective instructors.

Figure 47: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Teaching and Learning (2014)



### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

The above responses underscore the very high quality of teachers and teaching in SCASD secondary schools. Yet, this high level of confidence contradicts the perceptions of students identified in the student survey and data on student outcomes that clearly shows not all SCASD students are maximizing their academic and personal potential.

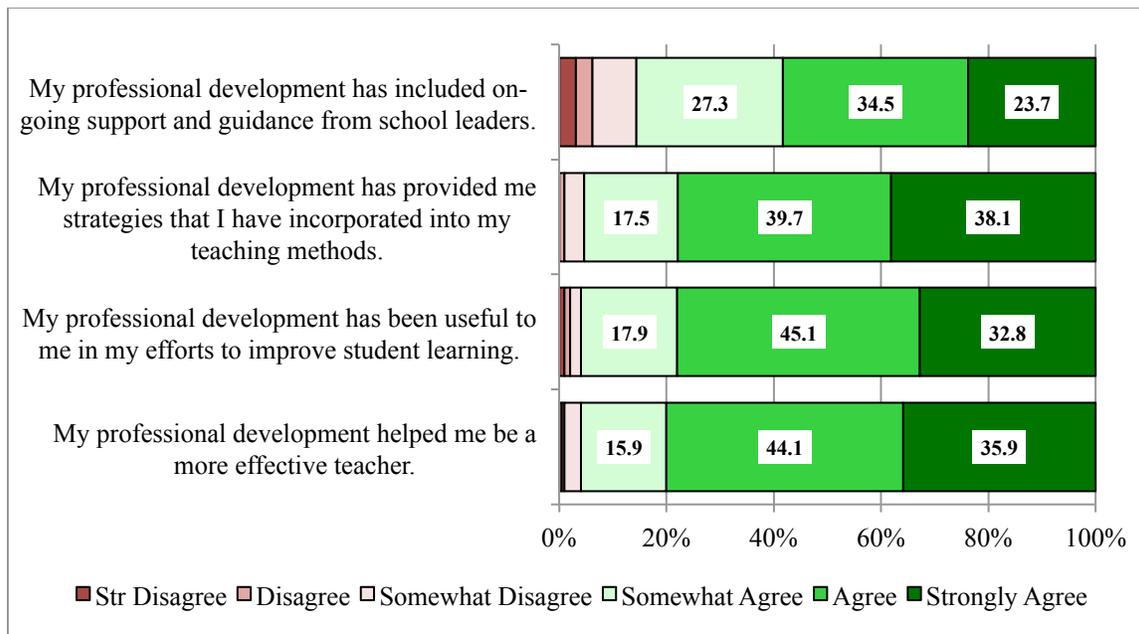
This contradiction places school leaders in the difficult position of fully supporting the plethora of effective instructors, but concomitantly creating some cognitive dissonance in teachers around their own perceptions of their abilities and student outcomes. Yet, the high level of overall success with most students coupled with the fact that a small, but significant, proportion of kids appear disengaged from school and less than positive about the instruction they receive leads to the conclusion that creating such cognitive dissonance is necessary to move the district forward.

### Professional Development: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 48, teachers had very high levels of agreement for all four statements in this domain. Indeed, for three of the four statements, at least 87% of teachers agreed at some level with the concept measured by the statement. Thus, teachers generally believe their professional development opportunities have been useful and effective at helping them improve.

The one area of slight weakness is the perception of teachers regarding the on-going guidance and support from school leaders. While 75% of teachers agreed that school leaders do provide on-going support and guidance, only one-quarter strongly agreed with the statement and nearly three-quarters only somewhat agreed or disagreed with the statement.

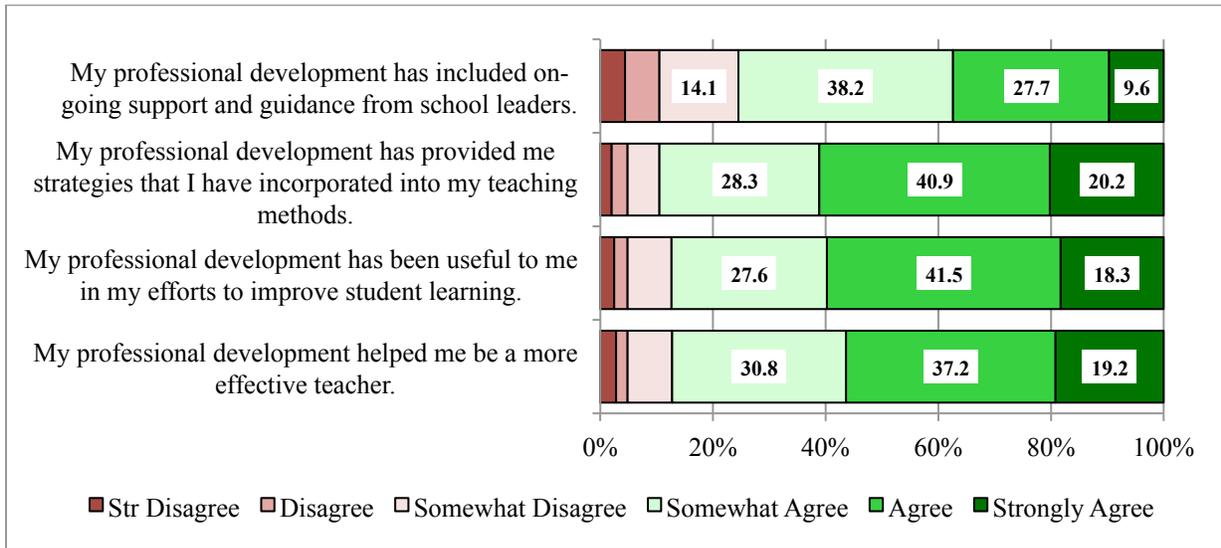
Figure 48: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Professional Development (2014)



### Professional Development: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 49, there was a high level of agreement for three of the four statements about professional development. Indeed, at least 87% of teachers agreed at some level that professional development has helped them to improve their teaching and improve student outcomes. In comparison, only 75% of teachers agreed at some level that the “professional development has included on-going support and guidance from school leaders.”

Figure 49: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Professional Development (2014)



**Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement**

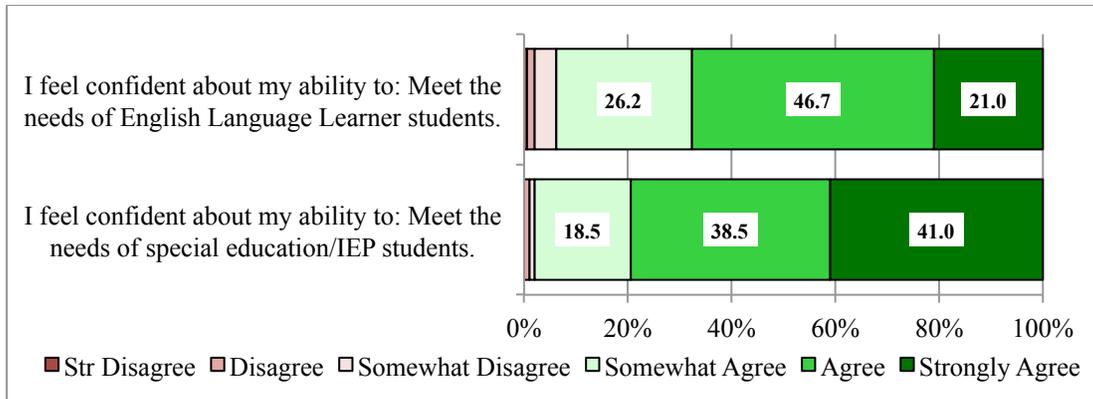
Research suggests the majority of professional development for teachers is neither useful nor effective. SCASD should be commended for ensuring the professional development in the district is actually both useful and effective.

While there was a high level of agreement, the findings suggest that school leaders could become more involved in helping teacher professional development become successfully implemented. This is important given that research on professional development has found that leader support and involvement is critical to the success of the effort.

**Special Populations: Elementary Teachers**

As shown in Figure 50, the vast majority of teachers agreed at some level that they felt confident about their ability to meet the needs of English Language Learner and special needs/IEP students. Agreement was significantly stronger with respect to special needs/IEP students than for ELL students, but still high for both groups of students.

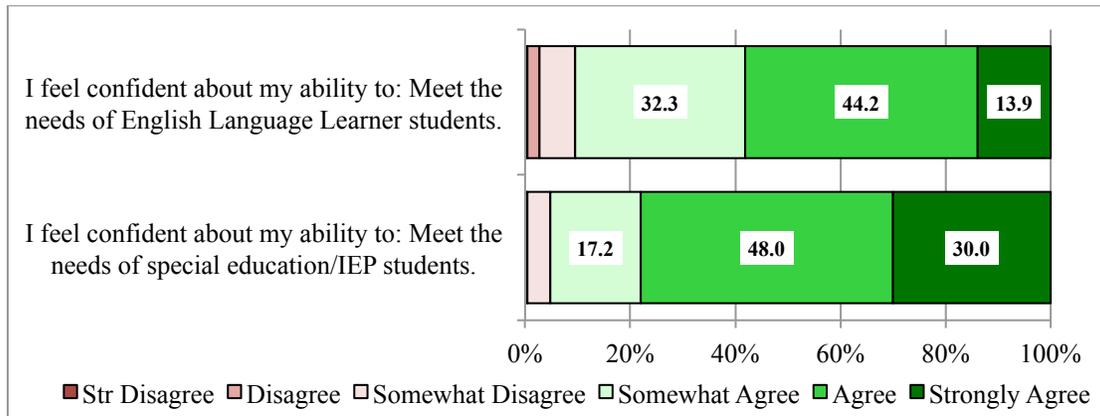
Figure 50: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Special Populations (2014)



### Special Populations: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 51, the vast majority of teachers agreed at some level that they felt confident about their ability to meet the needs of English Language Learner and special needs/IEP students. Agreement was significantly stronger with respect to special needs/IEP students than for ELL students, but still high for both groups of students.

Figure 51: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Special Populations (2014)



### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

In coming years, SCASD leaders should start developing a plan to increase the capacity of teachers to assist ELL students. This is the fastest growing sub-population of students in the US and in Pennsylvania. While the number of ELL students in SCASD will likely remain low for the foreseeable future, having teachers with the knowledge and skills to instruct such students will help teachers become better overall instructors and position the district to be very responsive if the number of ELL students increases in the future.

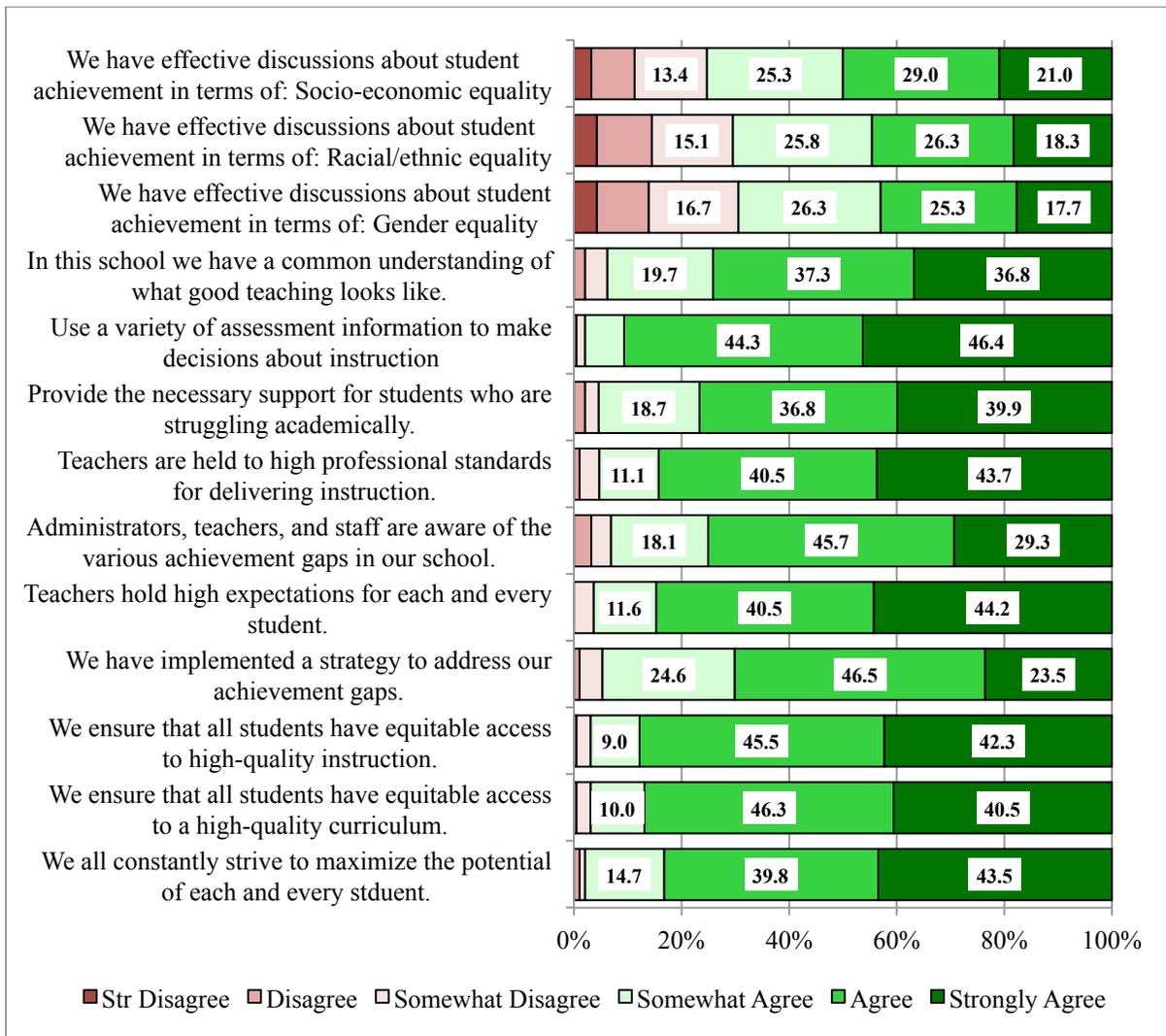
### High Expectations and Equity for All

#### High Expectations and Equity for All: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 52, there were high levels of agreement for 10 of the 13 statements. Indeed, almost 100% of teachers agreed with the 10 statements assessing the expectations of teachers for students and the school strategies to address struggling students.

The three statements about having discussions concerning the achievement gaps, however, had lower levels of agreement. Specifically, only slightly more than 50% of teachers agreed at some level that the school has effective discussions about the achievement gap in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic status.

Figure 52: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of High Expectations and Equity for All (2014)



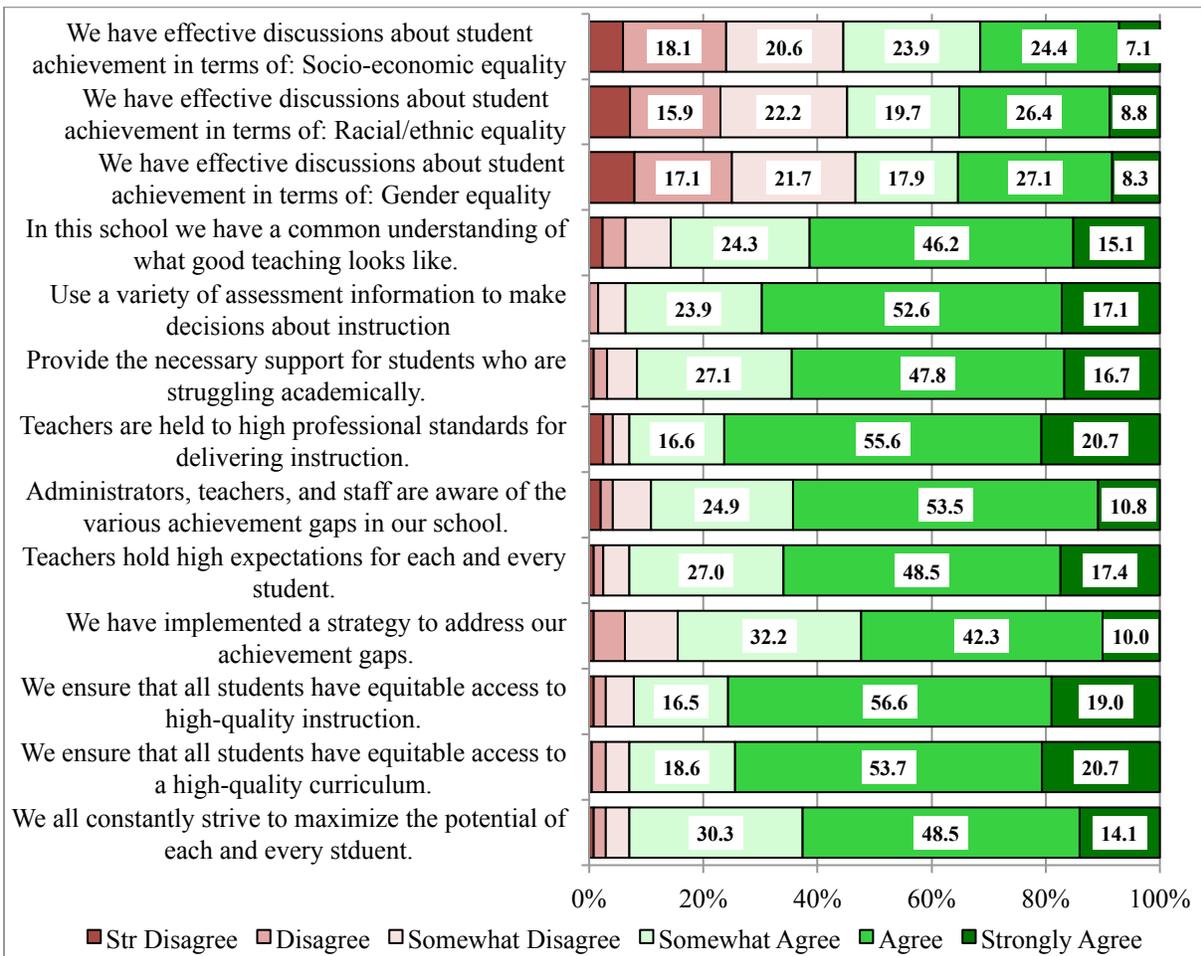
### High Expectations and Equity for All: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 53, at least 85% of teachers agreed at some level with 10 of the 13 statements in this domain. Thus, teachers are fairly positive with respect to the various indicators of high expectations and equity for all students. However, there is clearly room for improvement given that the percentage of teachers strongly agreeing with these 10 statements was around 20% or less.

Further, only about 54% of teachers agreed at some level with the following three statements:

- We have effective discussions about student achievement in terms of: Gender equality;
- We have effective discussions about student achievement in terms of: Racial/ethnic equality; and,
- We have effective discussions about student achievement in terms of: Socio-economic equality.

Figure 53: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of High Expectations and Equity for All (2014)



### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

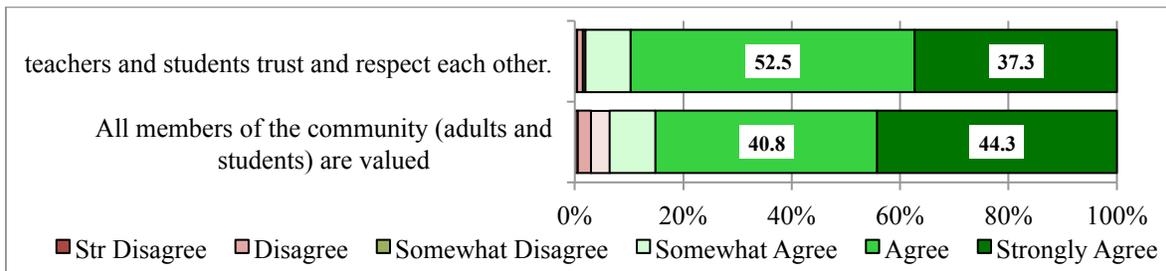
Despite the relatively high levels of agreement for 10 of the 13 statements, there is clearly room for improvement in this area. Most importantly, educators throughout the district need to engage in developing the capacity to have effective discussions about the various achievement gaps. One part of this effort might be to start delving deeper into the gaps through effective collection and analysis of data and the communication of the results to leaders and teachers. The district might also partner with districts that have some success in identifying and closing achievement gaps. The Strategic Plan survey process may be useful in examining this issue as well. Overall, this is a critical area to address as the issue has serious ethical and moral implications and is also going to be part of the Pennsylvania school accountability system.

### Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaborations

#### Teacher-Student Relationships: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 54, there was overwhelming agreement that teachers and students both trust and respect one another. Indeed, almost 100% of teachers agreed with this statement. Similarly, 90% of teachers agreed at some level that all members of the school community are valued.

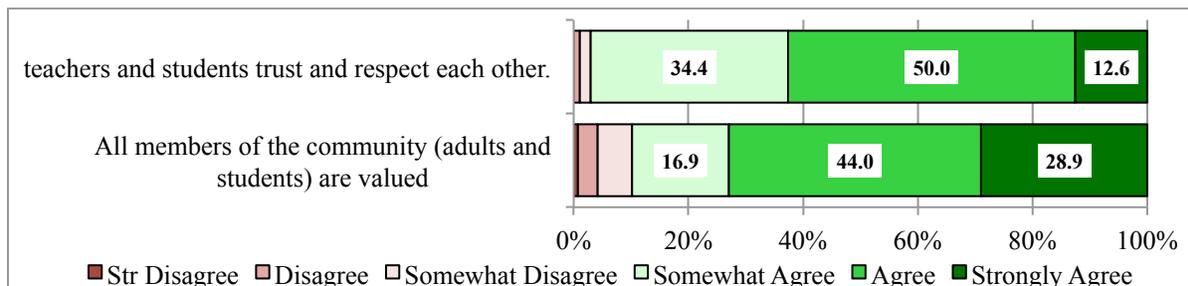
Figure 54: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Teacher-Student Relationships (2014)



### Teacher-Student Relationships: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 55, there was overwhelming agreement that teachers and students trust and respect one another--almost 100% of teachers agreed with this statement. Similarly, 90% of teachers agreed at some level that all members of the school community are valued.

Figure 55: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Teacher-Student Relationships (2014)



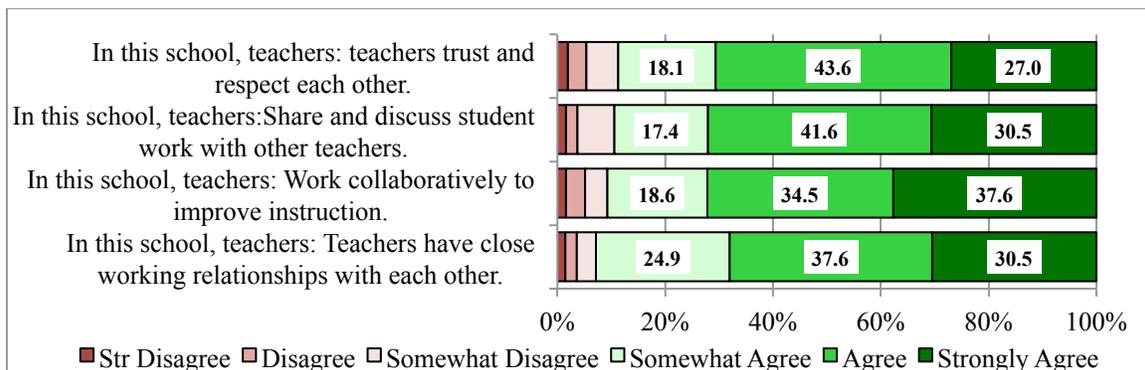
### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

These results suggest strong feelings of trust, respect, and of being valued. While these are very positive responses, leaders might examine ways to enhance these perceptions so that a greater percentage of teachers respond with strongly agree.

### Teacher Relationships and Collaboration: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 56, teachers held high levels of agreement about the four statements measuring teacher relationships and collaboration. Indeed, at least 85% of teachers agreed at some level with all four statements. Teachers were most positive about working collaboratively to improve instruction.

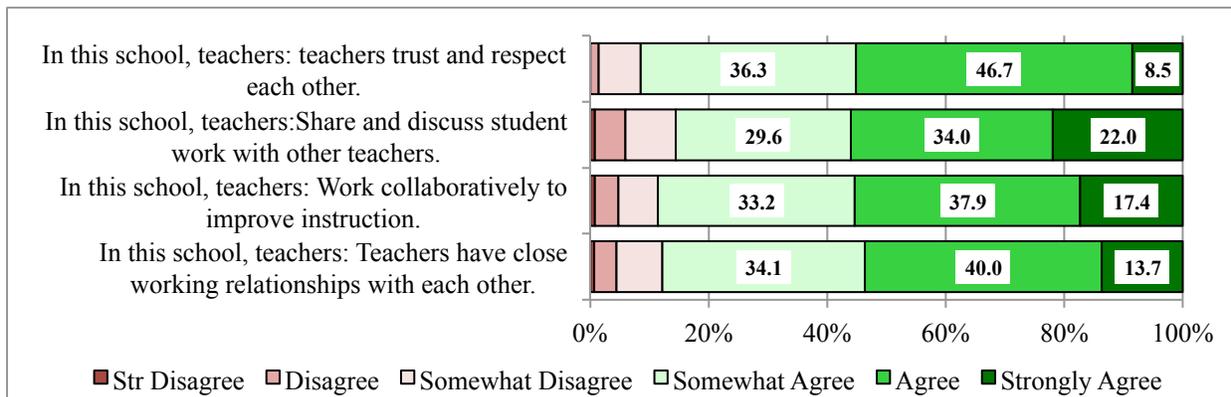
Figure 56: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Relationships and Collaboration (2014)



## Teacher Relationships and Collaboration: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 57, there were generally positive perceptions of teacher relationships and collaboration. In fact, at least 85% of all teachers agreed at some level with all four statements in this domain.

Figure 57: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Relationships and Collaboration (2014)



## Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

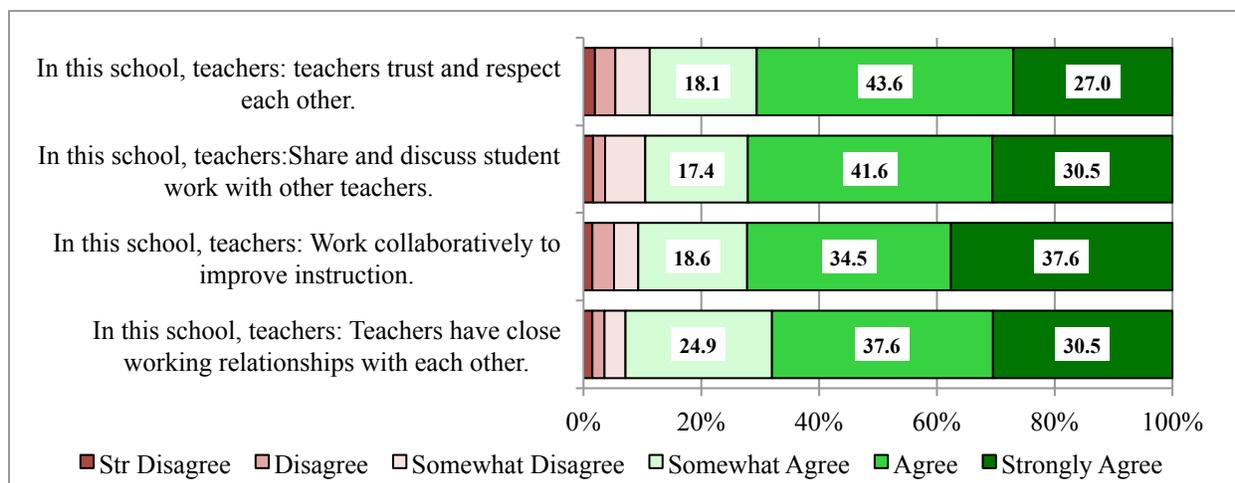
Research has shown teacher collaboration is a critical element in improving teaching and learning and overall school effectiveness. The relatively strong levels of agreement show that SCASD has fostered teacher collaboration. However, there appears to still be room for improvement given that only about one-third of elementary teachers and one-fifth of secondary teachers strongly agreed to these statements. School leaders and teachers should work together to build upon current successes in an effort to strengthen collaboration efforts.

## Welcoming and Safe Climate for Learning and Work

### Teacher Respect and Pride: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 58, there were varying levels of agreement across the five statements measuring teacher respect and pride. Teachers were especially positive about parents having respect for teachers. Teachers also clearly agreed that they have pride in their school and district.

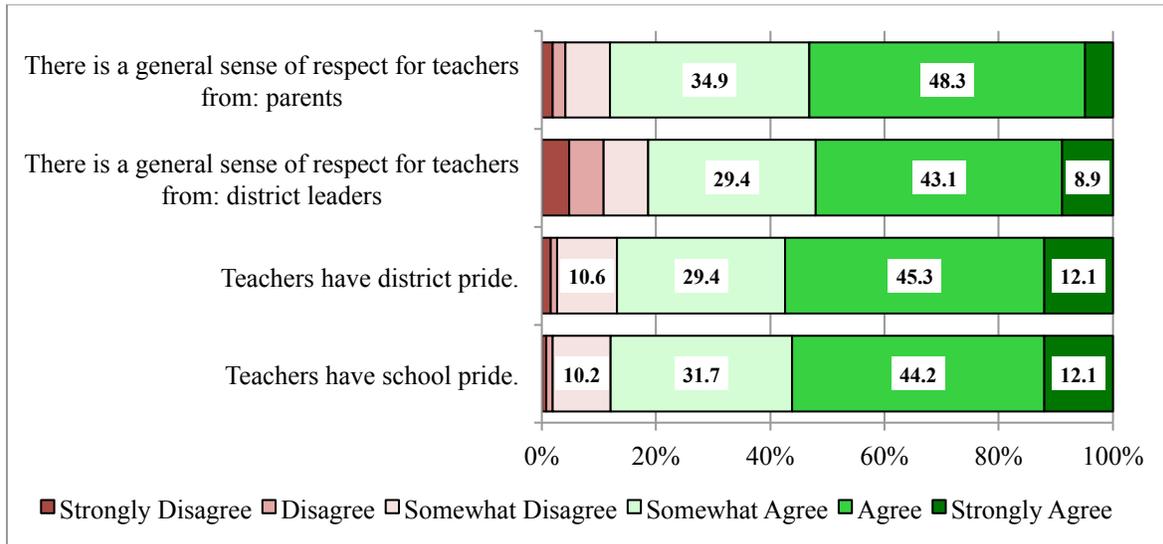
Figure 58: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Respect and Pride (2014)



### Teacher Respect and Pride: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 59, more than 86% of teachers agreed at some level with four of the statements and 80% agreed at some level with a fifth statement. Thus, there was a high level of agreement with most of the statements in this domain. In particular, there was fairly strong agreement that teachers have school and district pride and that parents respect teachers.

Figure 59: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Respect and Pride (2014)



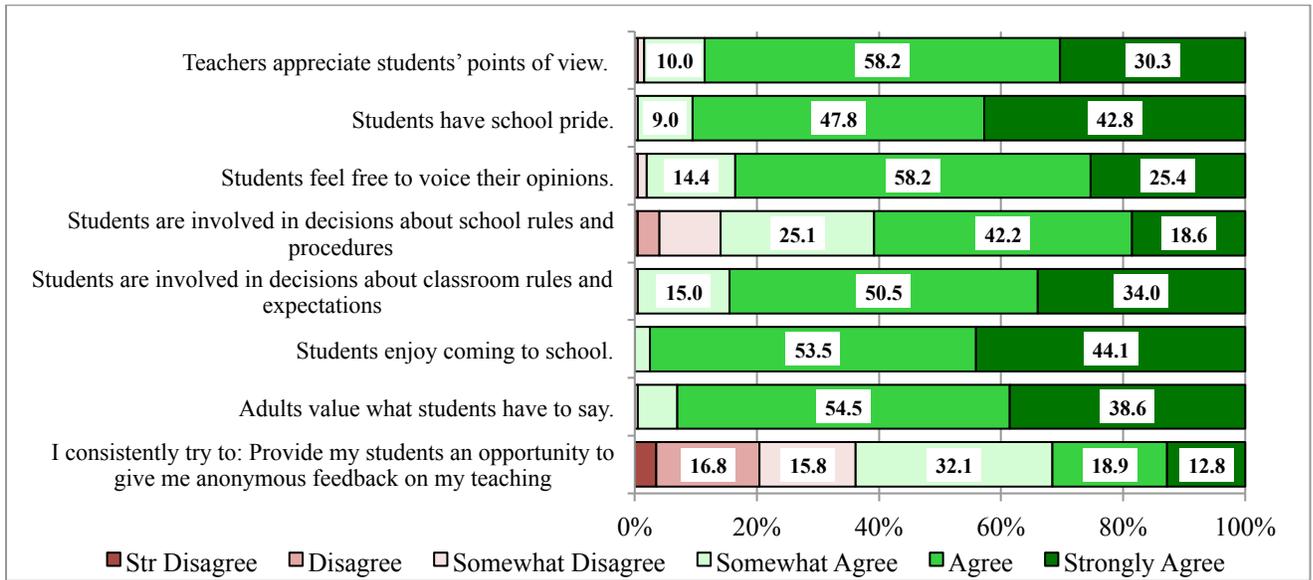
### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

While teachers report having a sense of pride and perceiving respect from parents and district leaders, only about 33% of elementary teachers and 10% of secondary teachers strongly agreed with these statements. School leaders could investigate these perceptions and build upon current successful efforts designed to build pride and strengthen respect.

### Student Voice: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 60, almost 100% of teachers agreed at some level with six of the eight statements and 85% agreed at some level with another statement. The only statement about student voice that did not garner an extremely high level of agreement was, “I consistently try to: Provide my students an opportunity to give me anonymous feedback on my teaching.” This finding is consistent with the results from students and principals about the lack of opportunity to provide anonymous feedback. This survey may help ameliorate these perceptions.

Figure 60: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Student Voice (2014)



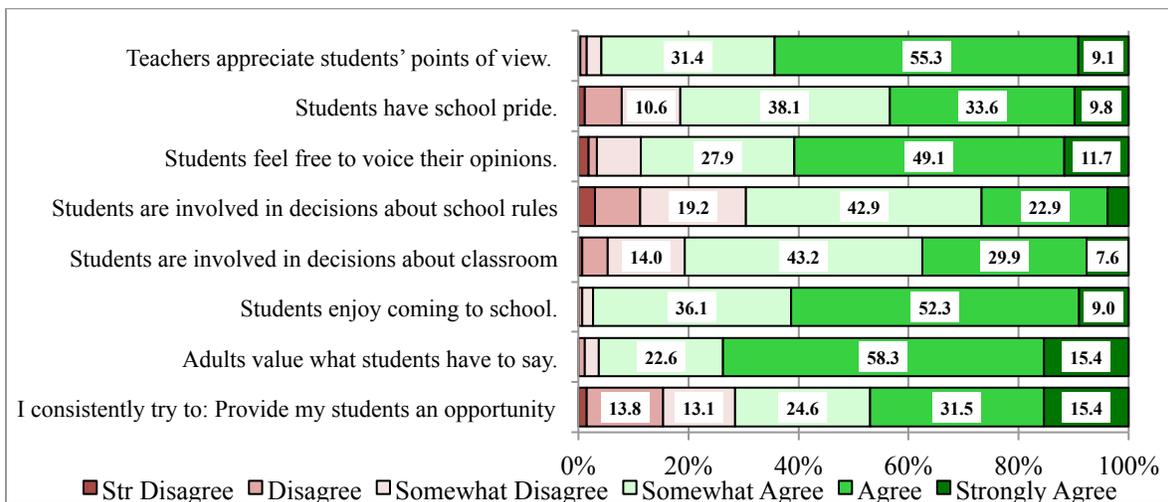
**Student Voice: Secondary Teachers**

As shown in Figure 61, greater than 80% of teachers agreed at some level with 6 of the 8 statements regarding student voice. The three statements with more than 95% of agreement were: “Adults value what students have to say; Students enjoy coming to school; and, Teachers appreciate students’ points of view.”

Two statements, however, had only 70% agreement. These two statements were: “I consistently try to: Provide my students an opportunity to give me anonymous feedback on my teaching; and, Students are involved in decisions about school rules and procedures.”

Finally, only about 25% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that students are involved in making decisions about school rules and procedures. While involving students at the school level is difficult because of the sheer number of students, leaders should endeavor to create a mechanism—such as a survey—to gather input from students about school rules and procedures.

Figure 61: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Student Voice (2014)



## Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

The relatively low levels of agreement about providing anonymous feedback are consistent with perceptions of students and principals as well. In general, prior to this survey, the district lacked any formal mechanism to gather and report the perceptions of students or adults.

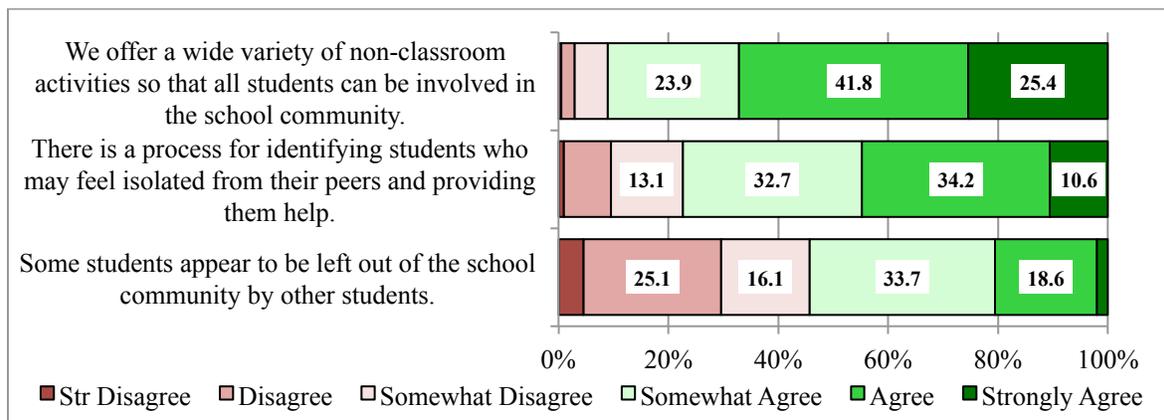
### Student Attachment to School: Elementary Teachers

As shown in Figure 62, teachers were generally in agreement that the school provided a variety of extra-curricular activities to ensure students were participating in the school community. About 77% of teachers agreed the school had an effective process for identifying students who may feel isolated from their peers. While positive, this means that about one-quarter of teachers disagreed that such a process was in place. Further, only about 40% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

The final statement was stated in a negative manner, thus it was harder to interpret. The statement was, “Some students appear to be left out of the school community by other students.” Therefore, a response indicating disagreement actually communicates that students do *NOT* feel left out of the community while a response indicating agreement communicates that the teacher perceives some students *are* left out of the school community.

Overall, about 54% of teachers perceived that some students were left out of the school community. The results from the student survey also suggest that some small, but significant, proportion of students do not feel integrated into their school community.

Figure 62: Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Student Attachment to School (2014)



### Student Attachment to School: Secondary Teachers

As shown in Figure 63, teachers generally were rather positive about the degree to which students were attached to the school. In particular, greater than 90% of teachers believed the schools offered enough extra-curricular activities so that students could be involved in the school community.

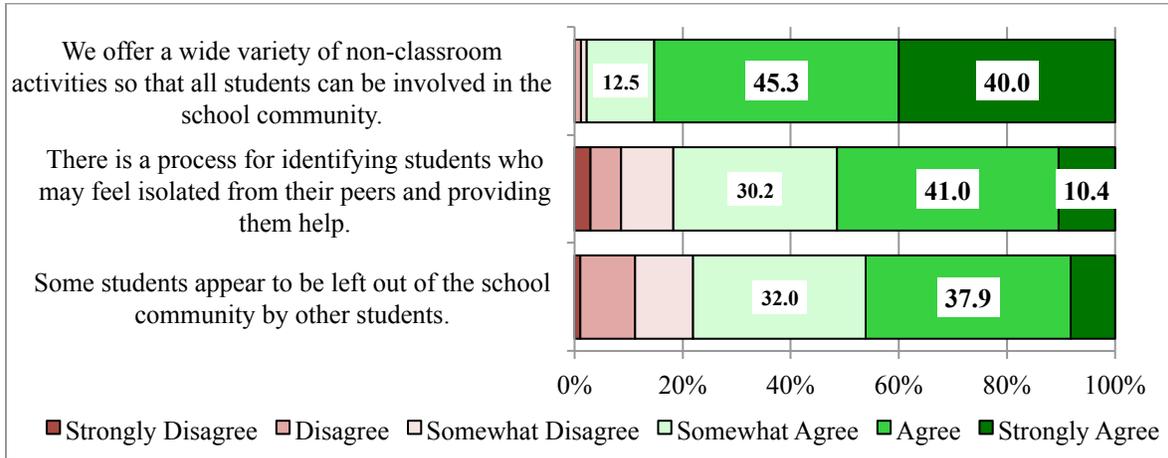
There was also general agreement that the schools had a process for identifying students who may feel isolated from their peers. However, only 10% of teachers strongly agreed with this statement and 20% disagreed with the statement.

The final statement was stated in a negative manner, thus it was harder to interpret. The statement was, “Some students appear to be left out of the school community by other students.” Therefore, a response indicating disagreement actually communicates that students do *NOT* feel

left out of the community while a response indicating agreement communicates that the teacher perceives some students *ARE* left out of the school community.

Overall, about 78% of teachers perceived that some students were left out of the school community. The results from the student survey also suggest that some small, but significant, proportion of students do not feel integrated into their school community. This question should be asked in both a positive and negative perspective next year to ensure the validity of the responses.

Figure 63: Secondary Teacher Perceptions of Student Attachment to School (2014)



### Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

These findings, in combination with some of the findings from the student survey, suggests teachers and leaders need to review current strategies and policies about identifying and serving students who may feel isolated and ensure that the needs of those students are met. Teachers and leaders should also create a mechanism by which they ask students if they feel isolated or left out, why they feel this way, and what adults could do to improve the situation.

## SECTION III: PARENT RESPONSES

### Introduction

Parents were afforded the opportunity to respond to 30 statements aligned with the Strategic Plan’s Four Pillars. Overall, approximately 1,280 responses were submitted. Ultimately, about 1,115 of the responses had enough answers to utilize in the analysis.

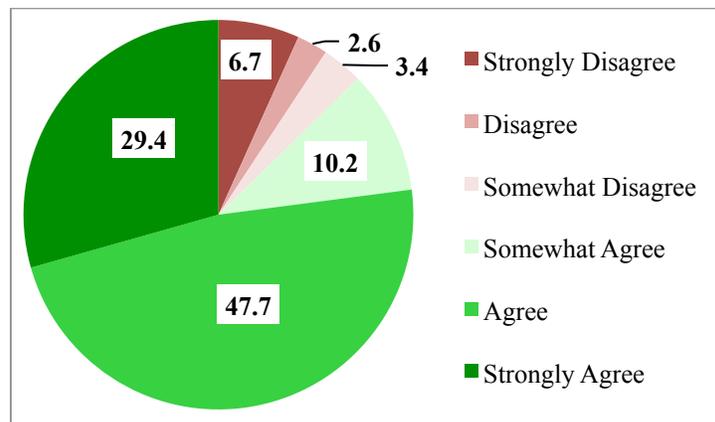
Unfortunately, the response rate for parents was far below 50%. Thus, extreme caution must be taken in interpreting the results and in making conclusions based on the findings. Given the reported characteristics of the respondents, the survey results likely over-represent well-educated parents. In other words, the results are not generalizable to the entire population of SCASD parents.

### Overall Parent Perceptions of State College Area School District

As shown in Figure 64, the overwhelming majority of parents agreed with the statement, “Overall, I am satisfied with the State College Area School District.” Almost 30% of parents strongly agreed and 48% agreed. Thus, nearly 80% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

The positive responses to the statement clearly indicate a great deal of parent satisfaction with the district. Respondents, then, appear to be very satisfied with the efforts of the school board, superintendent, school leaders, and teachers in providing a high quality education to their students.

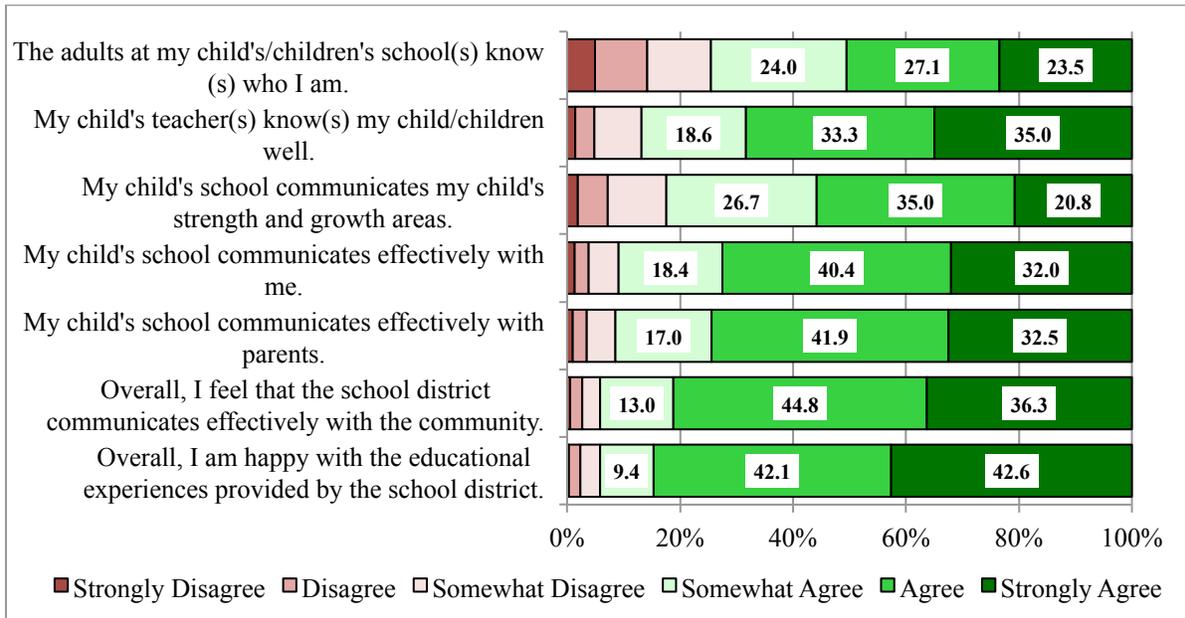
Figure 64: Percentage of Parents Satisfied with State College Area School District (2014)



### Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration

As shown in Figure 65, the majority of parents agreed at some level with all seven of the statements in this domain. Most importantly, 94% of parents agreed at some level that they were, “happy with the educational experiences provided by the school district.” In fact, almost 43% strongly agreed with this statement. Parents were also extremely positive about the communication with parents provided by both SCASD schools and the district as a whole.

Figure 65: Parent Perceptions of Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration (2014)

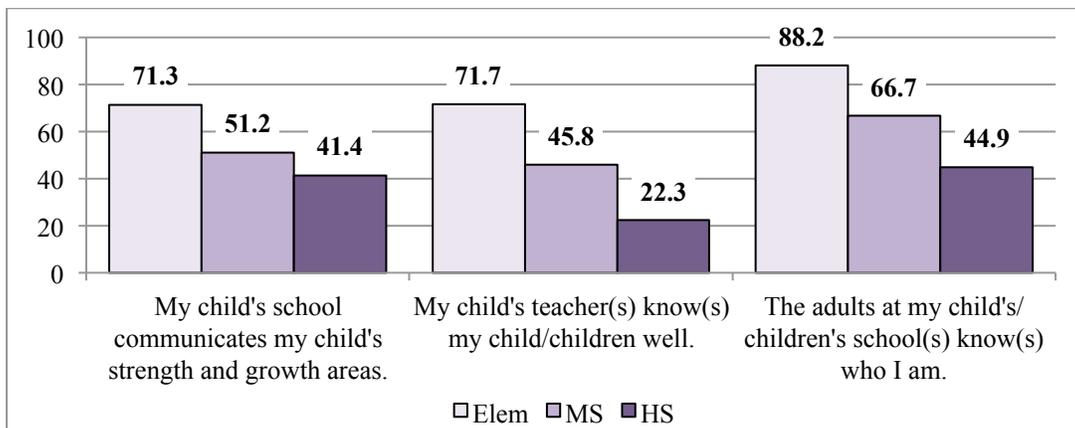


There was less agreement about how well schools communicate about the strengths and weaknesses of children, how well teachers know children, and how well adults in the school know parents. The lower levels of agreement for these statements are driven primarily by differences across the three grade levels as shown in Figure 66.

Specifically, less than 50% of high school parents agreed or strongly agreed that their children’s teachers know their children well and knows the parent. This is typical of high schools—particularly large comprehensive high schools such as the one in SCASD.

Further, only about 50% of middle school parents and 41% of high school parents agreed or strongly agreed that SCASD schools communicate the strength and growth areas of their children. While a much greater percentage of elementary parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, the percentage was still below 75%.

Figure 66: Percentage of Parents in Agreement\* for Selected Elements of Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration by School Level (2014)



\* Agreement as represented by the percentage of parents responding with agreed or strongly agreed.

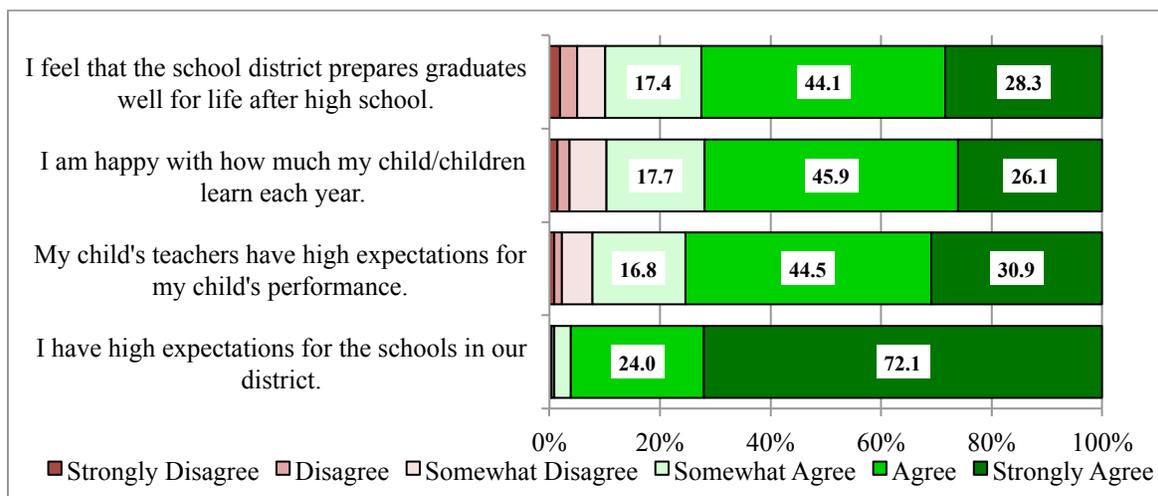
Thus, while the overall levels of agreement are relatively high, the levels of agreement drop precipitously moving from elementary school to high school. Most disturbing is that only 22% of parents of high school students believe that teachers know their children well. This may be a consequence of teachers interacting with between 100 and 200 students a day, but the community must ask whether there might be a better strategy in how students and teachers interact at the high school level.

### High Expectations

As shown in Figure 67, nearly 100% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they held high expectations for the district. About 76% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that teachers hold high expectations for their children.

Between 70% and 75% of parents also agreed or strongly agreed that SCASD prepares students well for life after high school and they are happy with the amount of learning achieved by their children each year.

Figure 67: Parent Perceptions of High Expectations for All (2014)

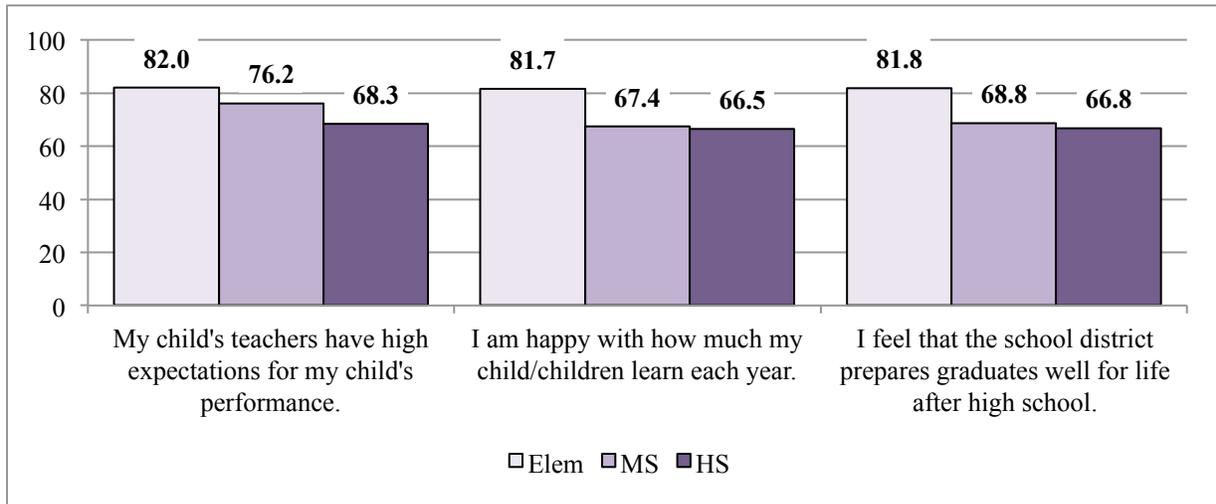


These findings suggest that parents hold high expectations for the district and that district teachers generally hold high expectations for SCASD students. Parents are also generally satisfied with the amount of learning and preparation received by their children. These are extremely positive results and show that parents believe the district is doing an excellent job and have very high expectations for the district.

The results, however, vary by the school level in which their child is enrolled. Indeed, as shown in Figure 68, parents of middle school and high school students are less likely to agree with perceptions about teacher expectations, happiness with the amount of yearly learning, and preparation for life after high school.

While perceptions of secondary school parents are likely to be lower given the decreasing interaction between schools and parents as children get older, the lower levels of agreement suggest that school- and district- leaders might work to identify the source of the lower levels of agreement and devise strategies to address the underlying causes.

Figure 68: Percentage of Parents in Agreement\* for Selected Elements of High Expectations by School Level (2014)



\* Agreement as represented by the percentage of parents responding with agreed or strongly agreed.

### Welcoming and Safe Climate for Learning and Work

As shown in Figure 69, the majority of parents agreed at some level with all five statements assessing perceptions of a welcoming and safe climate. In particular, about 95% of parents agreed that their children are treated well at school and almost 90% agree that their children are safe in SCASD schools. The overwhelming majority of parents also agree that they feel welcome in SCASD schools and that all children are safe in SCASD schools. Interestingly, more than 90% of parents believe their children enjoy going to school. This is about the same percentage of teachers with this viewpoint, but greater than the percentage of students responding that they enjoy going to school.

The results in this section strongly suggest that parents view SCASD schools as safe and welcoming places. Moreover, they also agree that their children enjoy going to school. SCASD educators should be congratulated for creating such safe and welcoming places for both children and adults.

Figure 69: Parent Perceptions of Welcoming and Safe Climate for Learning and Work (2014)

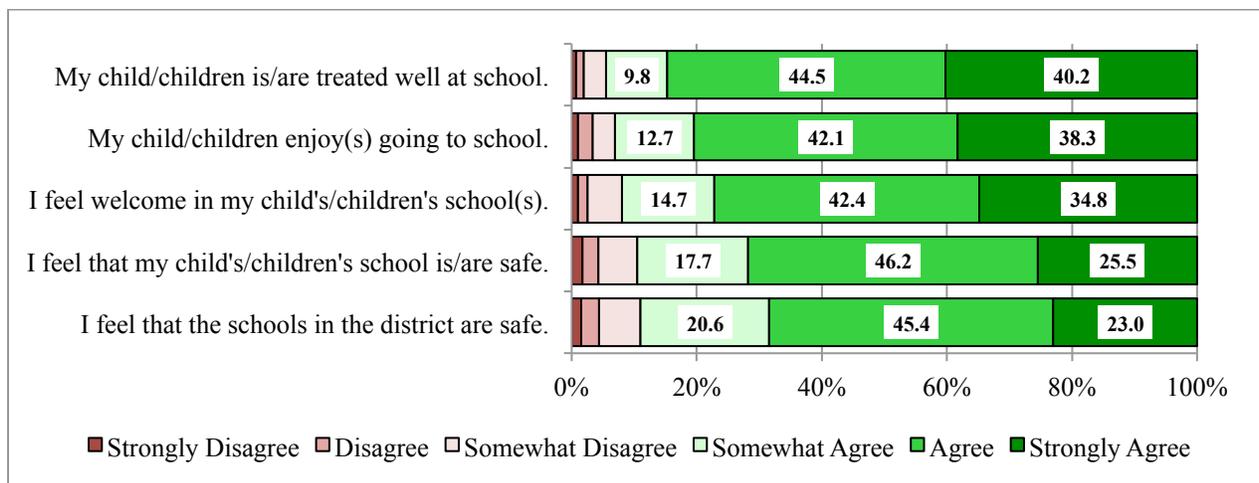
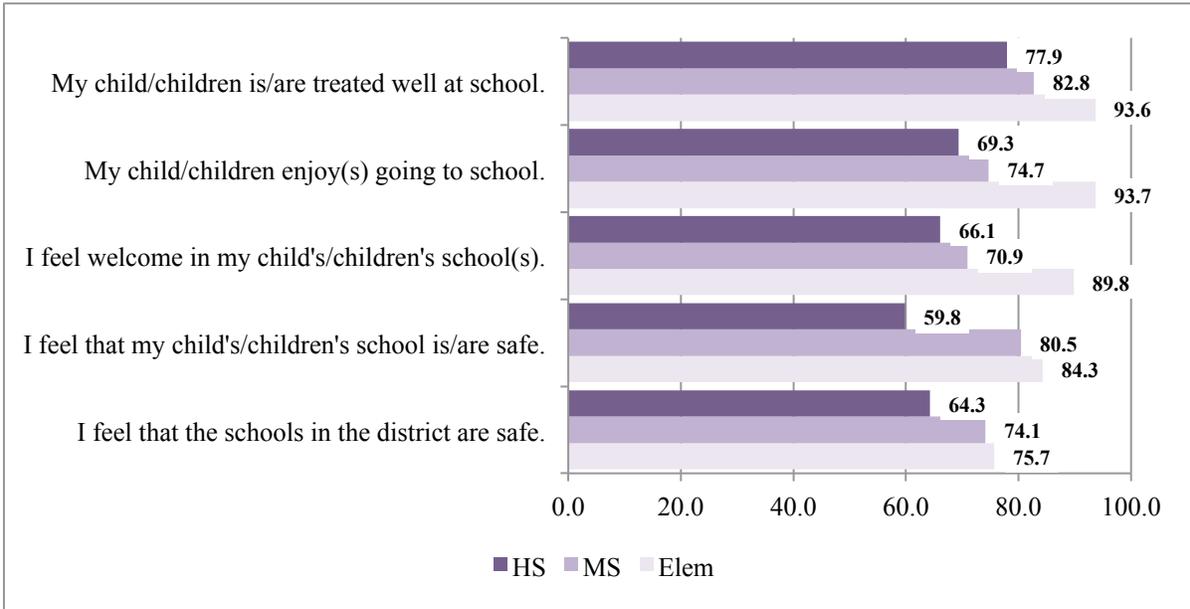


Figure 70: Percentage of Parents in Agreement\* for Selected Elements of Welcoming and Safe Climate Statements by School Level (2014)



\* Agreement as represented by the percentage of parents responding with agreed or strongly agreed.

**Responsive Teaching and Learning**

As shown in Figure 71, the majority of parents agree at some level with all of the 11 statements in this domain. However, there was some variation across statements in the level of agreement and the levels of agreement were generally lower than for statements in the other domains.

There were four statements for which at least 95% of teachers agreed at some level with the statement. These four statements were:

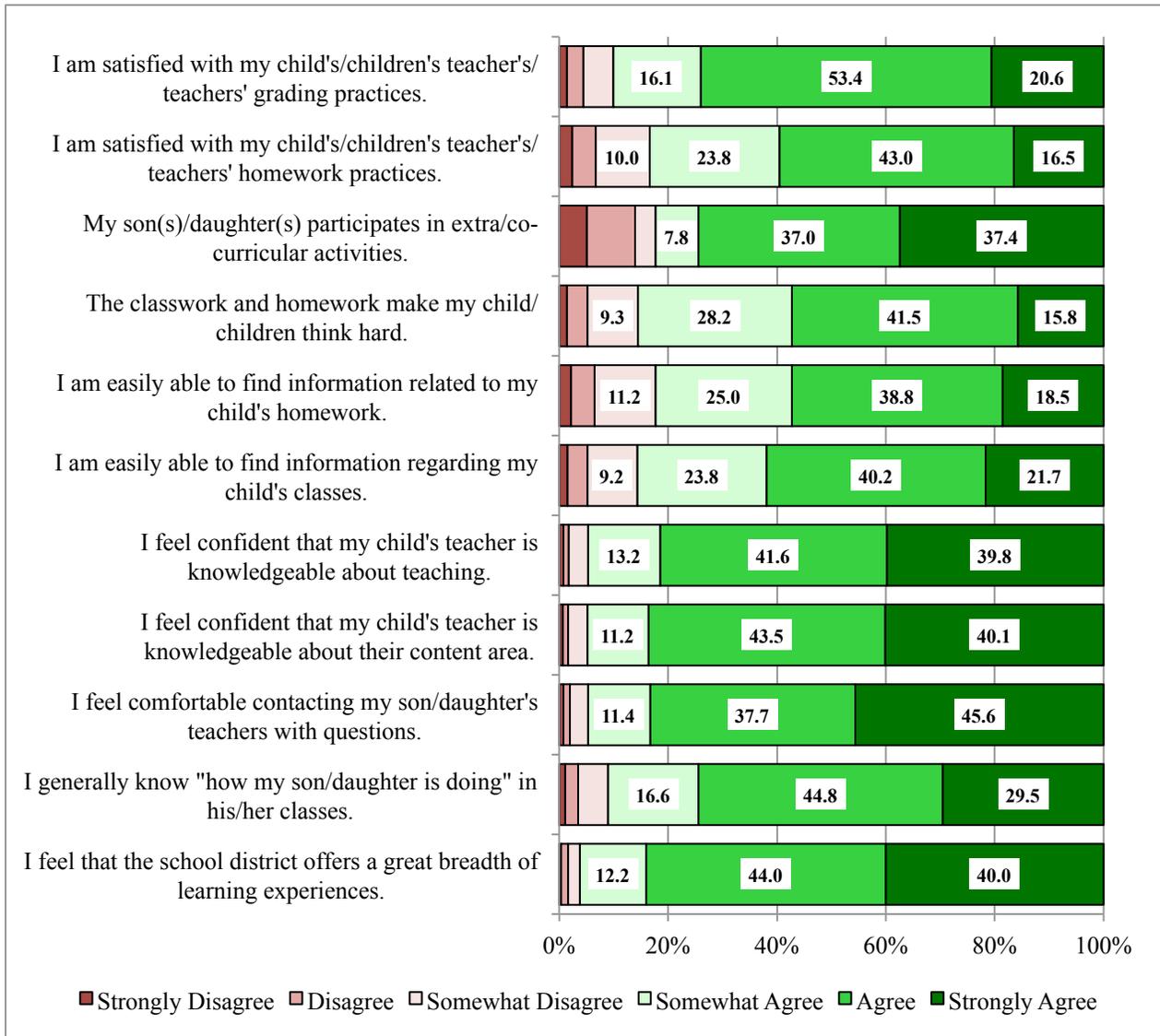
- I feel confident that my child's teacher is knowledgeable about their content area;
- I feel confident that my child's teacher is knowledgeable about teaching;
- I feel comfortable contacting my son/daughter's teachers with questions; and,
- I feel that the school district offers a great breadth of learning experiences.

While the levels of agreement varied by school level to some degree, the levels of agreement were relatively high for all parents.

At the other end of the continuum, four statements had less than a 61% level of agreement. Two of the statements were related to the quality of the classwork and homework and the other two statements were related to being able to easily find information about a child's classes and homework. Specifically, the statements were:

- The classwork and homework make my child/children think hard.
- I am satisfied with my child's/children's teacher's/teachers' homework practices.
- I am easily able to find information regarding my child's classes.
- I am easily able to find information related to my child's homework.

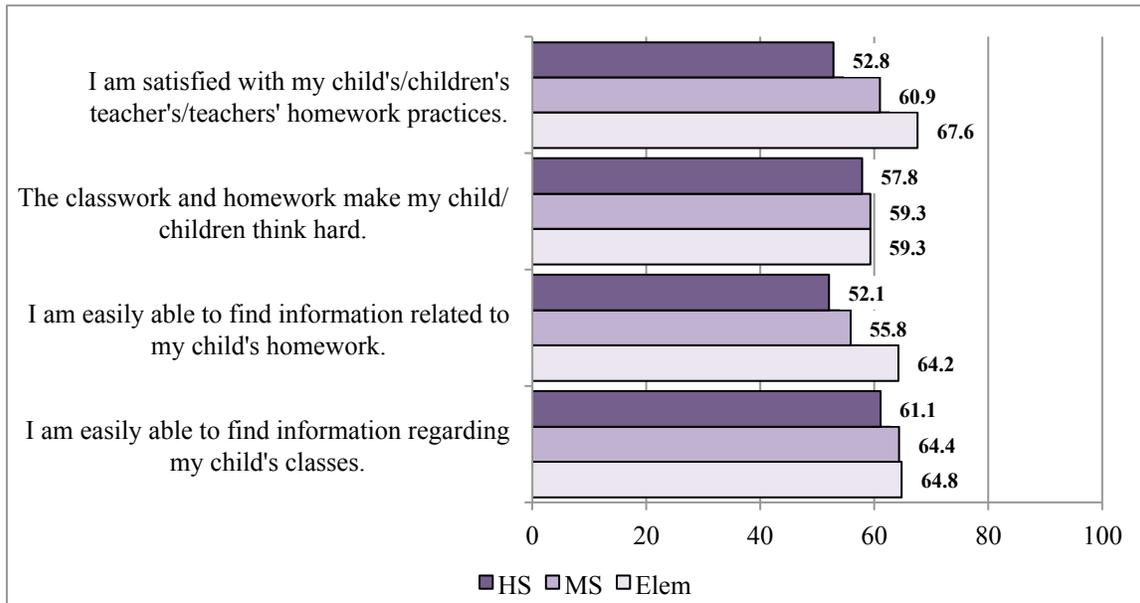
Figure 71: Parent Perceptions of Responsive Teaching and Learning (2014)



Moreover, the percentages of parents in agreement differed by school level, with parents of high school students having lower levels of agreement than parents of elementary students as shown below in Figure 72.

While the overall levels of agreement suggest that parents are generally satisfied in the area of Responsive Teaching and Learning, there are some areas in which the district could make improvements. In particular, school and district leaders should gather additional information about parental concerns regarding classwork and, in particular, homework. Further, the district should review the websites provided for parents to track information about their children's classes and homework. In this regard, school leaders need to work with teachers to ensure that teachers actually provide information to students and parents through the homework website.

Figure 72: Percentage of Parents in Agreement\* for Selected Elements of Responsive Teaching and Learning Statements by School Level (2014)



\* Agreement as represented by the percentage of parents responding with agreed or strongly agreed.

### Summary of Parent Perceptions

Although the low response rates do not allow for generalization of the results to all parents in SCASD, the respondents to this survey communicated extremely positive perceptions about the district. Indeed, respondents were extremely satisfied with all aspects of the district.

However, the respondents also mentioned some areas in which the district could improve. In particular, respondents suggested that: teachers and school leaders could improve their communication with parents; the district could increase the ability of parents to monitor student progress by reformatting the various websites; and, the district should create a plan to review the homework policies at all school levels.

## Conclusion

Overall, the results from this baseline survey of the SCASD Strategic Plan strongly suggest that the district is perceived in a very, very positive manner by students, teachers, and parents. Clearly, all members of the community believe SCASD schools are highly successful across a number of different areas. It is difficult to imagine that many other school districts in Pennsylvania or from across the nation would receive such consistently high levels of agreement across students, teachers, and parents.

These high levels of agreement can, however, be both a blessing and a curse. Such strong positive views of the district are a blessing in that, overall, the district appears to be meeting the needs and expectations of community members. Rightfully so, community members have long been very proud and supportive of the district. This was shown in the overwhelming support for last spring's referendum on building a new high school.

Alternatively, these high levels of agreement can also be a curse in that the widespread positive views can overshadow some areas of challenge that exist in the district. For the district to move from being a great district to a truly outstanding district that becomes district recognized for excellence across the state and nation, community members and SCASD educators will need to recognize these areas of challenge and commit themselves to solving these challenge areas.

Although the survey data is only a snapshot of SCASD and further evidence should be collected, the survey suggests several areas of challenge that should be addressed. First, and foremost, the survey suggests that a small but important percentage of students feel disengaged from the schooling process, perceive teachers don't care very deeply about them, and perceive teachers don't provide them with a sufficient level of encouragement and support. These students are often the "invisible" children in classrooms—the children who don't excel, don't behave inappropriately, and don't participate at high levels. While such students perform reasonably well in school, they often don't achieve academically or socially to their potential. To be a truly outstanding district, SCASD educators will need to identify these children, discover the reasons behind their relatively negative perceptions of schooling, and collaboratively identify strategies to more fully engage the students so that they can maximize their potential. This will be a long and arduous process which is why many districts rest on their accomplishments and ignore their mission to maximize the potential of *every* child. Yet, this district is extremely well-positioned to break the mold and truly embrace the notion that each and every child can truly succeed.

The second major area of challenge is to increase the communication and feedback between students, teachers, school leaders, and district leaders. While this survey is a step in this direction, educators should endeavor to create strategies and structures that greatly increase the frequency and quality of communication and feedback between all stakeholders. One concrete action step that stems directly from the survey results is for district leaders, school leaders, and teachers to begin or enhance efforts to collect anonymous feedback and act on that feedback. Acting on such feedback should include, at a minimum, having open and honest conversations about the feedback at the classroom-, school-, and district-levels.

The third major challenge is to create strategies and structures to increase collaboration. This is difficult—particularly at the student and teacher levels—because time is so precious in a school day. Educators, however, need to examine and analyze the outcomes they desire and whether they can reach these desired outcomes without changing the degree to which effective collaboration occurs.

Finally, the fourth major challenge is to ensure that each and every student receives high-quality instruction in every classroom. While the overwhelming majority of students receive

such high-quality instruction in almost every classroom, the survey suggests the existence of instances when not every child has the opportunity to engage with high-quality instruction in every classroom. Improving in this area will require a great deal of reflection by teachers and leaders as well as focusing on the above three challenge areas.

The State College Area School District is extremely well-situated to face these difficult challenges and move the district forward such that the district is widely recognized as one of the truly exemplary school districts in Pennsylvania and the United States. This survey provides important baseline data to measure the commitment and progress of our community as we strive to become even better.

## **APPENDIX A: DESCRIPTION OF FOUR PILLARS AND CONSTRUCTS MEASURING THE FOUR PILLARS**

There are four pillars to the SCASD strategic plan:

- Welcoming and Safe Climate;
- Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration;
- High Expectations for All; and,
- Responsive Teaching and Learning.

CEEPA personnel took the original survey results and conducted factor analyses for each survey. A factor analysis identifies how individual survey statements are related to the same theme, called a construct. The factor analysis for elementary students identified the following six constructs:

- Welcoming and Safe Climate:
  - Overall;
  - School Attachment;
- Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration;
- High Expectations for All—Student Effort;
- Responsive Teaching and Learning:
  - Engaging Instruction;
  - Instructional Practices.

Students could respond to the statements with the following options: Definitely No, No, Sometimes, Yes, and Definitely Yes.

The factor analysis for all teachers resulted in 11 constructs:

- Welcoming and Safe Climate for Learning and Work: School Climate
- Responsive Teaching and Learning
  - Learning Objectives
  - Teaching Practices
  - Student Classroom Behaviors
  - Student Classroom Practices
- High Expectations for All
- Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration:
  - School Connectedness
  - Caring
  - Student Attachment

Students had the following six possible answer choices with their associated numeric coding: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Somewhat Disagree (3); Somewhat Agree (4); Agree (5); and, Strongly Agree (6)

The factor analysis for all teachers resulted in 11 constructs:

- School Leadership;
- Responsive Teaching and Learning:
  - Learning Outcomes;
  - Teaching and Learning;
  - Professional Development;
  - Special Populations;
- High Expectations and Equity for All;
- Culture of Trust Relationships, and Collaboration:
  - Teacher and Student Relationships;
  - Teacher Relationships and Collaboration;
- Welcoming and Safe Climate:
  - Teacher Respect and Pride;
  - Student Voice;
  - Student Attachment to School.

Teachers could respond to the survey statements in six different ways: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, and Strongly Agree.