

What We Think

PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF URBAN SCHOOL CLIMATE

A PROJECT OF THE URBAN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT TASK FORCE

BRIAN K. PERKINS



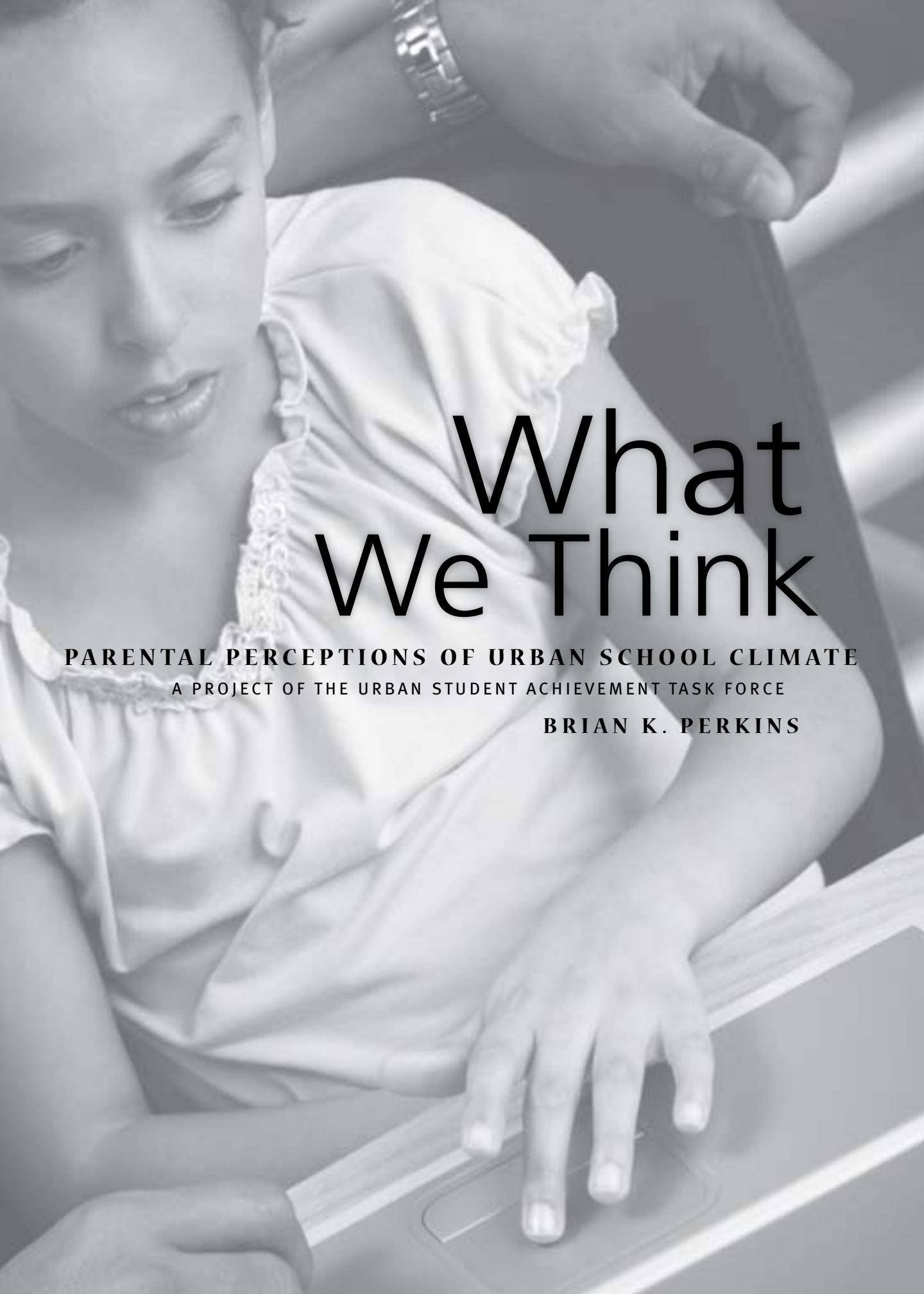


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Foreword



Involving parents, families, and communities in the education of their children is imperative for all schools. The potential for parents and families to be skillful, knowledgeable, and effective partners, capable of ensuring that their children receive the quality of education to which they are entitled, should be a goal of every school system.

Research confirms that regardless of the economic, racial or cultural background of the family, when parents are partners in their children's education, the results are improved student achievement, higher test scores and grades, better attendance, more completion of homework, more positive attitudes and behavior, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in higher education.

Parental and family involvement is equally critical to school climate—the impressions, beliefs, and expectations about a school as a learning environment. School climate

plays a critical role in the academic development of the student learner, and parents and families strongly influence that climate.

What We Think is the third school climate survey conducted by the National School Boards Association's Council of Urban Boards of Education. It follows last year's *Where We Teach*, which surveyed 5,100 teachers and administrators to solicit their perspectives on the urban learning experience. The first report in the CUBE school climate series, *Where We Learn*, shared how students felt about their school environment through a survey of 32,000 urban students, the largest study conducted on urban school climate in public education.

With questions that mirror those of the student and teacher/administrator surveys, the third phase of this project solicited similar perspectives from parents and

families about school climate. The report shares parent and family perceptions of seven major themes: parental involvement; expectations for success; safety; trust, respect, and ethos of caring; bullying; community welfare; and the importance of race.

Brian Perkins, CUBE's Steering Committee past chair and school board president in New Haven, Connecticut, served as the principal investigator for all three studies, with the assistance of CUBE's Urban Student Achievement Task Force. Dr. Perkins is professor of Education Law and Policy in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Southern Connecticut State University and adjunct professor at Columbia University, Teachers College.

Sincerely,

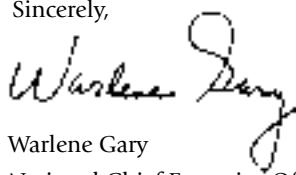


Anne L. Bryant
Executive Director
National School Boards Association

The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) provided invaluable input on the shared recommendations included in this report. The recommendations correlate with the seven themes addressed in *What We Think*, and provide a collective perspective on the importance of asking the opinions of parents and families about school climate. They also promote effective school, parent, and family partnerships, where both school and home share responsibility for children's learning.

It is our hope that the results and shared recommendations of this study will encourage urban school boards to respond to the needs of parents and families and provide the supports necessary for them to be involved in their children's learning.

Sincerely,



Warlene Gary
National Chief Executive Officer
Parent Teacher Association

Acknowledgements



A special thank you is due to the review team. After almost three years of this, you stepped up to the plate to look at all the graphs, charts, and text. I look forward to our next project together. Dr. Warren Hayman and Carol Coen, your support and critical eyes have made all of our projects a success. Katrina Kelley and Jessica Bonaiuto make it all possible by putting in the hours to see the project through. Again, your organizational guidance makes all the difference in the world.

Thanks again, to the NSBA Art Director Carrie Carroll and designer, Stephanie Wikberg. Your scheduling this year helped keep things on track. Thanks for your patience when some of the deadlines slipped. Your gentle reminders were welcomed. Glenn Cook, your encouragement as usual is greatly appreciated.

As always, the hard work of NSBA's communications staff, Christina Gordon, Linda Embrey, and Jay Butler is greatly appreciated.

Thanks to Dr. Anne Bryant, NSBA Executive Director. Your suggestions regarding the parent version have been particularly helpful in my data analysis. Thanks, again, to Dr. Gabriella Oldham for her comprehensive review of the draft manuscript and charts.

I also wish to thank the many districts that participated in the study. Without you, we would not have the climate study. This year was a record number of districts. Your assistance has made this worthwhile endeavor a reality. To my colleagues on the respective boards, thank you sincerely for your encouragement and support.



Finally, I need to thank Chantel Esdaille and Rose Marie McKenzie for their work on data entry and research. Again, you have been given this project legs and arms. Last but not least, Keisha Goode – thank for your tireless review of the manuscript and what must have seemed like an endless discussion of the implications of the findings. Thank you so much for everything, especially your patience.

This project managed to move forward despite staffing challenges. The cooperation of all involved made it

happen. I am grateful to know that so many people understand that the affective dimension of the school day is just as important as the academic dimension. School climate matters.

Brian K. Perkins, Ed.D.
President, Board of Education
New Haven, Connecticut 2008
Immediate Past Chair, CUBE 2007-2008

Executive Summary



This study is the third in a historic series focused on perceptions of school climate in urban schools. A plethora of factors influence school climate and student achievement. Assessing one factor or another without considering the system can only produce flawed and/or skewed results. These results may then lead to inappropriate and ineffective decisions concerning the improvement of each. Previously, I have surveyed students, teachers, and administrators from school systems throughout the United States. I have enlisted urban districts varying in size, demographics, region, locality, and philosophy to provide the much-needed snapshot of how these stakeholders perceive the schools and systems in which they live, study, and work. Many schools and districts that had participated in the previous studies were again included this year, along with additional districts that are members of the Council of Urban Boards of Education.

Parents have a particularly interesting perspective of school. As previous participants in the system, their views seem to transcend what may be current practice. Nonetheless, perception is reality. If they perceive the schools as open, respectful environments, they will interact with them accordingly. Conversely, if they perceive schools to be closed, disrespectful environments, they will respond as befitting this view. Not surprisingly, parents indicated that they also care very deeply about the issues that face schools: Safety; Parental Involvement; Parental Expectations of Success; Trust, Respect, and Ethos of Caring; Bullying; Community Welfare; and Importance of Race. Generally, parents demonstrated that the affective dimension of the school day is just as important as the cognitive dimension.

These current findings should not in any way be construed as universal. The survey

instrument was created to provide insight into a number of topics, but it is in no way exhaustive. Parental perceptions have at least as much influence as other factors that affect school and post-school outcomes. It is hoped that the findings of this study will stimulate healthy conversations and further inform the studies we initiated three years ago on the importance of school climate. Schools are generally considered to be safe places created to mold the minds, hearts, and souls of the next generation of global citizens. The extent to which this goal is accomplished depends greatly upon the views and perceptions held by all participants, including parents.

METHODOLOGY

Invitations to participate in the study were extended to the entire membership of the Council of Urban Boards of Education. Surveys were administered according to a specified protocol during the months of September and November, 2007. Represented in this study were 17 states and 1 territory, including Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, U.S. Virgin Islands (St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas), Virginia, and Washington. Approximately 10,270 surveys were received from parents

in 112 schools, which included 52 PK/K-5 schools, nine PK/K-8 schools, 27 6-8 schools, and 24 9-12 schools.

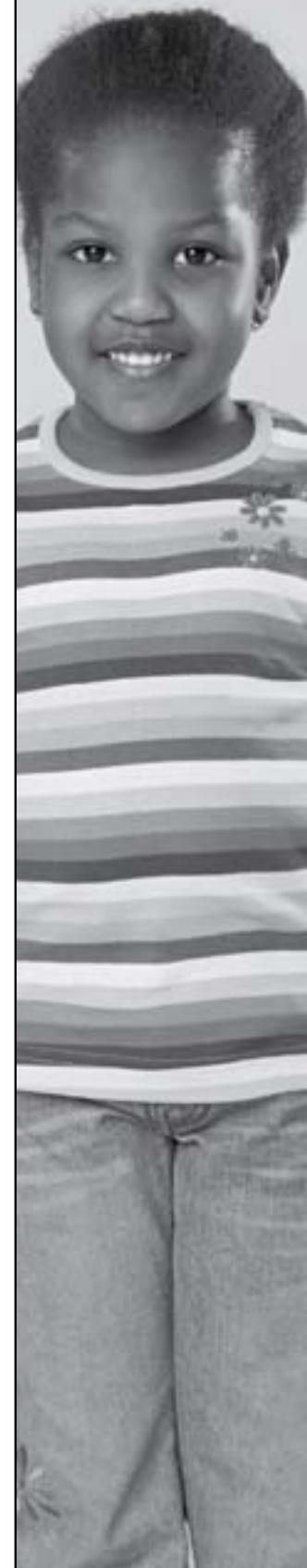
Demographic information was solicited from the parents who participated. The self-identified survey respondents were 29.7% male and 70.3% female. Among the respondents:

- 41.7% of all respondents self-identified as Black, 19.8% as White/Non-Hispanic, 31.4% as Hispanic, 0.5% as Native American, 4.6% as Asian, and 2% as other ethnicities.
- On average, parents indicated that they visited the school 11 times in the last year (Median = 4.0; Mode = 3.0).
- Parents indicated that their primary source of information about the school was their children (62.1%).
- Most parents indicated that their home language was English (74.0%), followed by Spanish (22.1%).

MAJOR FINDINGS

The findings of this study are grouped under seven categories:

- Safety
- Parental Involvement
- Parental Expectations for Success
- Trust, Respect, and Ethos of Caring
- Bullying
- Community Welfare
- Importance of Race



SAFETY

When considering school safety, the majority of parents surveyed (75.3%) viewed their child's school as a safe place. This was especially true for White and Asian parents (>80%), while Black parents were least positive in their views of school safety, with 12% feeling schools were unsafe and 20% not sure about school safety. Parents who used self-experience as their primary source of information in forming an opinion about school safety were positive (76.1%), while parents who relied on teacher or principal input were slightly less positive (72.9%). Interestingly, when polled about students fighting a lot at school, only 42% of parents surveyed strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement. Another 37.7% were not sure and 20.2% agreed that students fought a lot. Similarly, when asked about students carrying knives or guns to school, less than half strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement, while 40.2% were not sure.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Most parents indicated that they visited their child's school and attend parent-teacher conferences. Specifically, when parents were asked if they visited their child's school to support activities, over 75% strongly agreed or agreed that they did so. When disaggregated, 82.3% of White parents strongly agreed or agreed, followed closely by Native American

parents, Black parents, and Hispanic parents. Asian parents had the lowest percentage, at 67.6%. A similar finding emerged when analyzing the results of the statement *I have attended a parent-teacher meeting in the last year*. A majority of parents (77.4%) strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. When disaggregated by ethnicity, White parents indicated the highest attendance (82.7%), followed by Native American parents, Black parents, and Hispanic parents. Asian parents had the least amount of agreement, at 70.6%.

PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS FOR SUCCESS

The vast majority of parents surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that their children were capable of performing very well on standardized exams. This held true across all ethnic groups as well as when disaggregated by gender. The majority of parents also strongly agreed or agreed that their children would pursue opportunities in higher education at the community college or university level. When parents were asked if they were proud of their children, 97% strongly agreed or agreed. All ethnicities were well above 90% in their agreement, with Native American parents agreeing 100% that they were proud of their children.

TRUST, RESPECT, AND ETHOS OF CARING

Parents clearly felt that they could trust the teachers at their child's school (84%), with Asian parents having the highest percentage (90.6%) when disaggregated by ethnicity. The majority (87%) of parents also felt respected by the teachers. The percentage of agreement on teachers respecting students was noticeably lower at 77.2%; Black parents had the lowest agreement at 68.8%, while all other ethnicities were above or well above 80%. Parents who cited the teacher or principal as their primary source of information indicated more frequently that they trusted the teacher and principal. This supports the premise that the relationship between the school and teacher influences their views. Another intriguing result surfaced when parents were asked if they felt that teachers at their child's school were highly qualified. While over 80% of parents reported that they trusted the teachers at their child's school, the percentage who agreed or strongly agreed that teachers were highly qualified registered at 70.1%. Black and Hispanic parents had the lowest percentages, with 66.9% and 66.6%, respectively. Parents agreed that they felt respected by administrators at their child's school (83.1%); however, the percentage of Asian parents was lower at 77.8%, while other ethnicities were above 80%

BULLYING

In this study, only a little over half of parents polled felt that teachers had the ability to stop bullying, with close to 30% not sure if this was possible. Hispanic parents ranked the highest at 69.7% in agreeing or strongly agreeing that teachers could stop bullying, with Asian parents close to 30% lower (40.8%). While it appears that parents are cognizant and concerned about bullying, just over 25% of parents have spoken to an administrator about this issue. Interestingly, only 11.9% of parents stated that their child was bullied at least once during the month and 16.1% were unsure. Parents with students in the middle grades (6-8) were the largest group (10.6%) to report that their child was bullied during the school day at least once per month.

COMMUNITY WELFARE

The majority of parents indicated that there had not been violent crimes within their immediate neighborhoods in the past six months (48.9%). However, a quarter of them indicated that there had been violent crimes within their immediate neighborhoods in the past six months (25.5%). Blacks and Hispanics indicated more frequently than the other groups that there were violent crimes in their immediate neighborhoods.



IMPORTANCE OF RACE

The majority of parents (70.3%) indicated that they did not believe race was a factor in the success of children at their child's school. Only 63.8% of parent did not believe that children not of their child's race did better in school. When asked if some races of children were smarter than others, 60.8% of parents strongly disagreed or disagreed, while a significant 22.9% were unsure. White parents disagreed at 77.4%, while Asian parents were over 30% below that figure, at 42.7%.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into a subset of the public's perspective on urban education. The parent perspective demonstrates trends worthy of immediate consideration and future study. First, parents have a significantly more positive perspective on school climate than their children do. Second, parents who indicated that their primary source of information about the school was the newspaper were consistently more negative than other groups on statements related to safety, respect, and expectations. Those

parents who indicated that television was their primary source of information about the school were consistently more negative than other groups on statements related to community welfare and the importance of race in the school. Parents indicated that their top two sources of information about the school were from their child(ren) and self-experience. While print and video media appear to influence a relatively small number of parents, it significantly skews the opinions and views of parents on matters of grave importance.

As in the previous studies, these findings are overwhelmingly positive. Parents in urban districts are optimistic and positive about their schools. Contrary to popular reports, these findings do not suggest that parents view the schools negatively. Also consistent with the previous studies, some areas clearly require some follow-up. These areas include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Why significant numbers of parents believe children carry guns or knives to school.
- Why parents who rely on the newspaper for information about the school are more negative about issues of safety, respect, and expectations.
- Why parents who rely on television for information about the school are more negative about issues of safety, respect, and expectations.

■ Why parents who speak Spanish as the home language were significantly high in indicating that they did not feel welcome at their child's school during visits.

A comparison of all four stakeholder groups from these four studies will be available in a forthcoming manuscript. These comparisons exhibit interesting differences among the stakeholders and provide a basis for conversations to strengthen relationships and create healthy open climates.

Recommendations



When schools regard their relationship with families as a partnership in which school and home share responsibility for children's learning, the result is an increase in the levels and types of parental involvement as well as the support that families demonstrate for the school. When this partnership is extended to include the larger community, the benefits are greater yet. With this in mind, we encourage all families to become involved in their school system and advocate for their children's education. We encourage all schools to welcome these families into the learning communities. And, we encourage all school boards, as leaders of school districts and communities, to adopt policies to support school-family partnerships.

SAFETY – Schools should be safe environments to support their academic mission. Students should have safe and supportive climates and learning environments that support their opportunities to learn and that are free of abuse, violence, bullying, harassment, weapons, and harmful substances including alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

■ Parents and school staff should monitor, support, and advocate for laws and programs that promote safety education in school curriculum and community programs; raise awareness of the need for safe recreational equipment and facilities, playground safety, school bus safety, and internet safety; and prevent the exploitation of children.

■ Schools and parents also should protect children from violence and address the dangers associated with gangs, cults, and other violent behaviors.



PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Families are active participants in the life of the school, and should feel welcome, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class. Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families, and that together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

- Parents should create a home environment that encourages learning and nurtures their child's physical, mental, social, and spiritual education.
- Parents should be involved in their children's education at school and in the community, developing an understanding of how their children function in both environments.
- Schools should collaborate with parents, families, and parent groups to create programs to engage families and match the needs of the school, students, parents, and the community.
- Schools should share accurate information about the school's goals, programs, and policies in languages that are accessible to all guardians.
- Schools should welcome parents into the school and seek their support and assistance, ensure that communication between home and school is constant and meaningful, promote and support parenting skills, and ascertain that parents are full partners in the decisions affecting children and families.

PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS FOR SUCCESS

SUCCESS – School staff and families should have shared expectations for their children's achievement and future careers that are high, yet reasonable.

- Schools and families should support the philosophy that all children can learn at high levels, and this expectation should be established in the schools and in the children's homes.
- Schools and families should establish high expectations and standards for the academic and social development of all children.

TRUST, RESPECT, AND ETHOS

OF CARING – Families and school staff should continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

- Families should be empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

BULLYING – Bullying in schools is a pervasive problem that can have negative consequences for the school climate and for the right of students to learn in a safe environment without fear.



- Schools and families should influence policies and support programs that address the prevention and elimination of bullying and to offer intervention when necessary.
- Schools and families should share a firm belief that bullying behavior is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in homes, schools, playgrounds, buses, and school activities in which children congregate.
- Schools and families should work with the appropriate agencies and organizations in a national effort to inform the general public about the risks and cost of bullying for both the bully and the target, as well as those who witness bullying and bring about a change in societal attitudes toward bullying.
- Schools should know, interact with, and involve all community stakeholders, including families and parent groups, in all stages of program planning, design, and implementation.

IMPORTANCE OF RACE – Family involvement improves student success, regardless of race/ethnicity, class or parents' level of education. For involvement to happen, however, principals, teachers, and parents themselves must believe that all parents can contribute to their children's success in school.

- Principals and teachers should support parent and family involvement by working to understand class and cultural differences.
- School staff and families should promote initiatives to address racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequities in the schools and in the community.
- Schools and families should support educational programs to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, national origin, language, religion, age, physical and academic ability, and sexual orientation.
- Schools and families should support equal opportunity for housing, education, health care, employment, and quality free public education.

COMMUNITY WELFARE –

Engaging community members, businesses, and organizations as partners in children's education can improve the learning community in many ways. Families, schools, community members, and organizations should collaborate to expand learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation with shared ownership of all aspects of programs, projects, and outcomes.

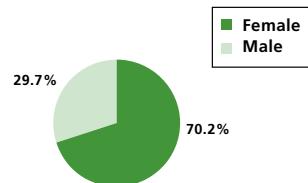
- In collaboration with parents, families, and schools, the design of comprehensive strategies to bring together all of the stakeholders should build partnerships among all of the major groups in the school community.



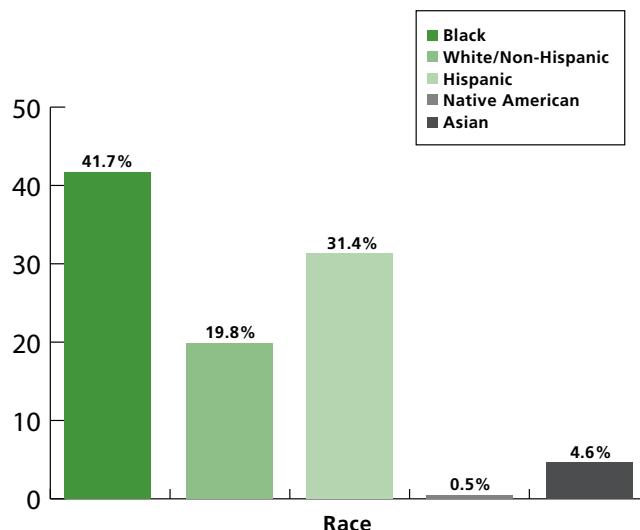
Survey Demographics



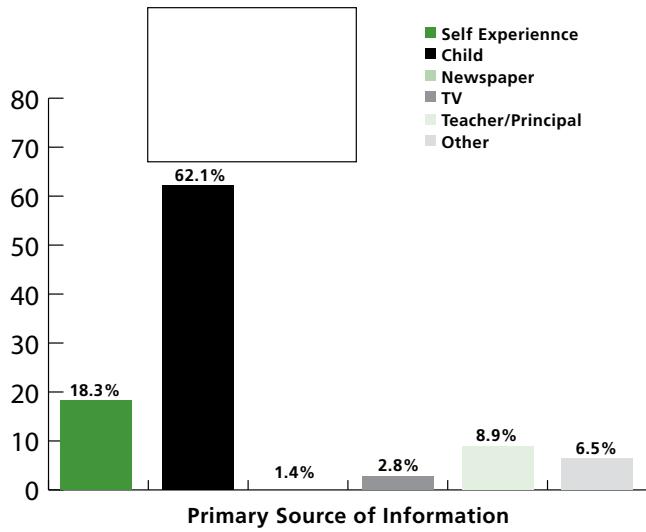
GENDER DISTRIBUTION



- A total of 10,274 surveys were completed. 29.7% of the parents surveyed were male and 70.2% were female.



- 41.7% of all parents surveyed self-identified as Black, 31.4% as Hispanic, 19.8% as White/Non-Hispanic, 4.6% as Asian, and 0.5% as Native American. Just over 2% were Other.



- 62.1 % of all parents surveyed indicated that their primary source of information about the school is their children. Approximately 18.3% indicated their self-experience, 8.9% indicated a teacher or principal, 2.8% indicated television, 1.4% indicated the newspaper, while 6.5% indicated some other source as their primary source of information about the school.

1 Safety



School safety is among the most essential elements influencing school climate and culture. While the rate of student victimization at school has decreased since 1993, the public continues to believe that schools have become increasingly unsafe (IES, 2001; Schiraldi & Ziendenberg, 2001). According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, safety needs are among the foundational requirements for personal development (Maslow & Frager, 1987).

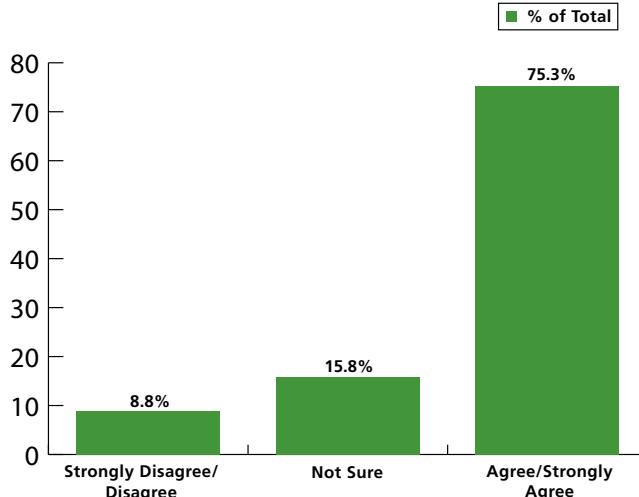


Figure 1a: Responses to "My child's school is a safe place." (% Total)

- A majority of parents (75.3%) viewed the schools as safe places.
- Approximately 10% of parents did not think their schools were safe. (Fig. 1a)

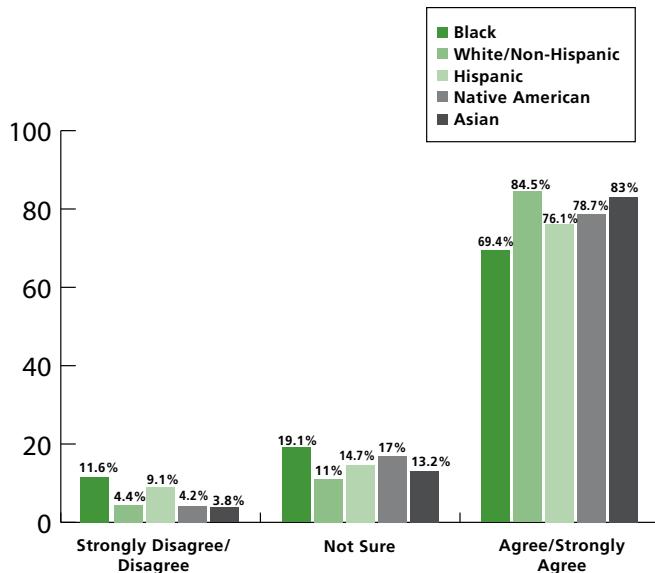


Figure 1b: Responses to "My child's school is a safe place." (% within Ethnicity)

- White and Asian parents held overwhelmingly positive views about school safety (84.5% & 83%, respectively).
- African American parents were least positive in their views on school safety. Approximately 12% did not think schools were safe places and almost 20% were unsure. (Fig. 1b)

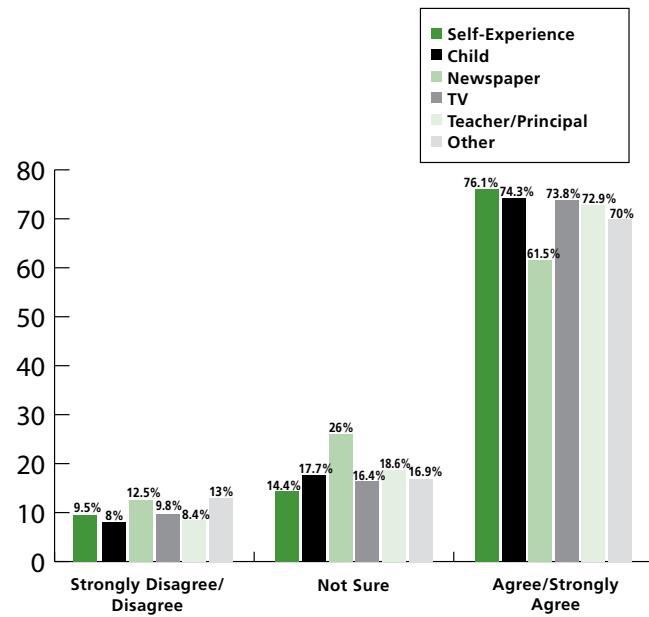


Figure 1c: Responses to "My child's school is a safe place." (% within Source of Information)

- Generally, parents who used self-experience as their primary source of information about their school held more positive views about safety (76.1%).
- Parents who used the newspaper as their primary source of information about their school held more negative views about safety (12.5%). (Fig. 1c)



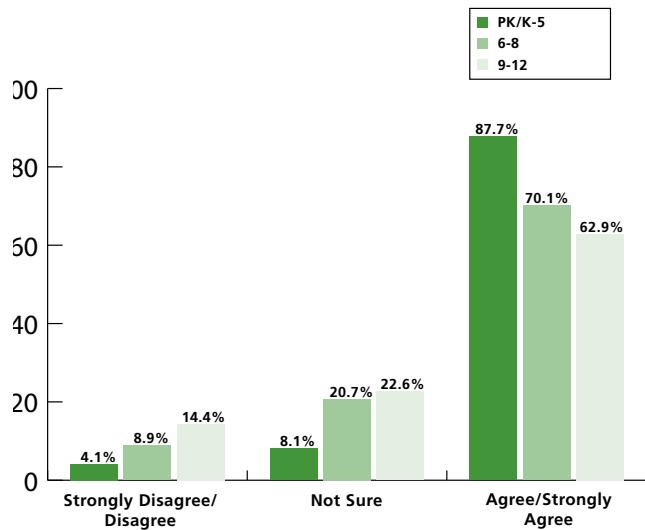


Figure 1d: Responses to "My child's school is a safe place." (% within Grade Level)

- Parents with children in high school (Grades 9-12) were the least positive about safety in their child's school. Approximately 14% of high school parents said that the schools were not safe.
- Generally, as the grade level increased, the parents' perceptions of school safety became more negative. (Fig. 1d)

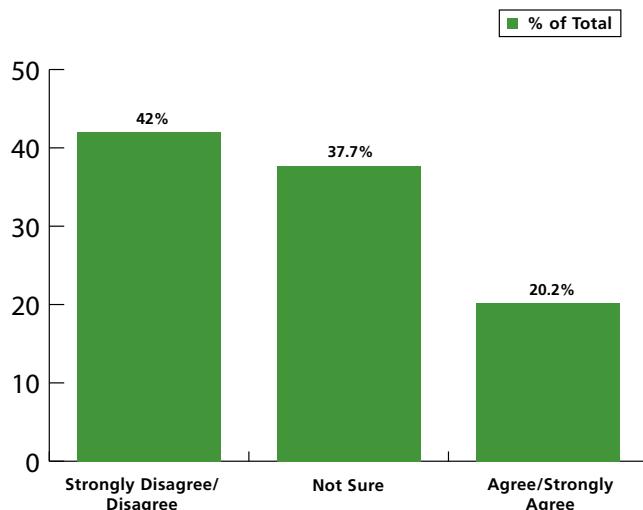


Figure 2a: Responses to "Students at my child's school fight a lot." (% Total)

- Together, close to 60% of parents were not sure or agreed that students fought a lot (37.7% & 20.2%). (Fig. 2a)

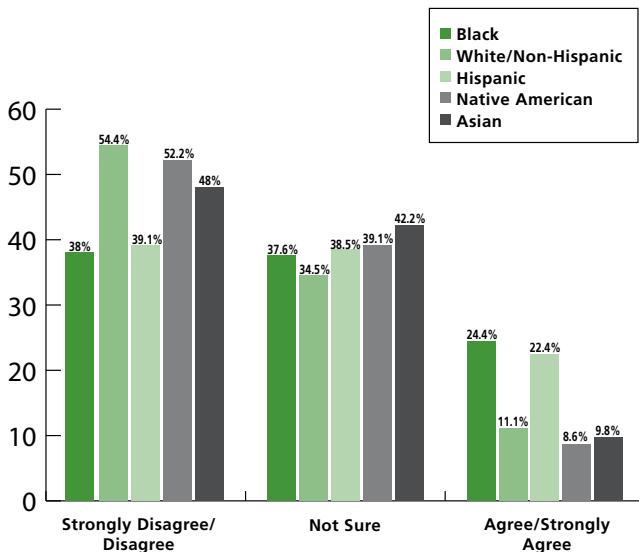


Figure 2b: Responses to "Students at my child's school fight a lot." (% within Ethnicity)

- Over 50% of White parents did not believe that students fought a lot, while significantly more Blacks and Hispanics believed that they did fight a lot (24.4% and 22.4%, respectively). (Fig. 2b)

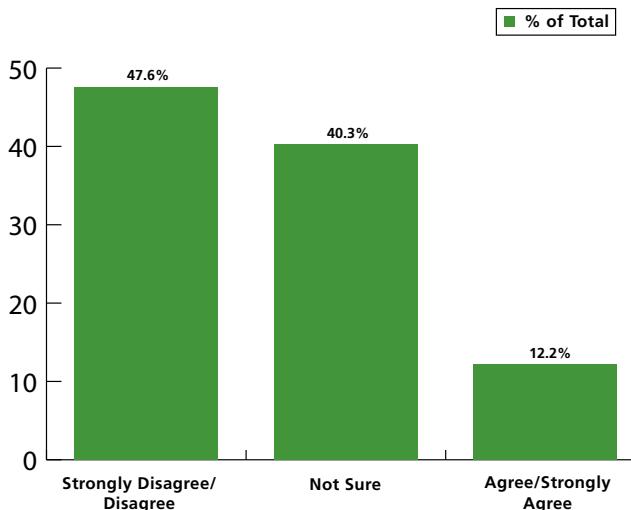


Figure 3a: Responses to "Some children carry guns or knives to my child's school." (% Total)

- Close to 50% of parents strongly disagreed or disagreed that students carried guns or knives to school (47.6%).
- Slightly over 40% of parents stated that they were unsure if students carried weapons to school (40.3%).
- Slightly more than 10% of parents believed that some children carried guns or knives to school (12.2%). (Fig. 3a)

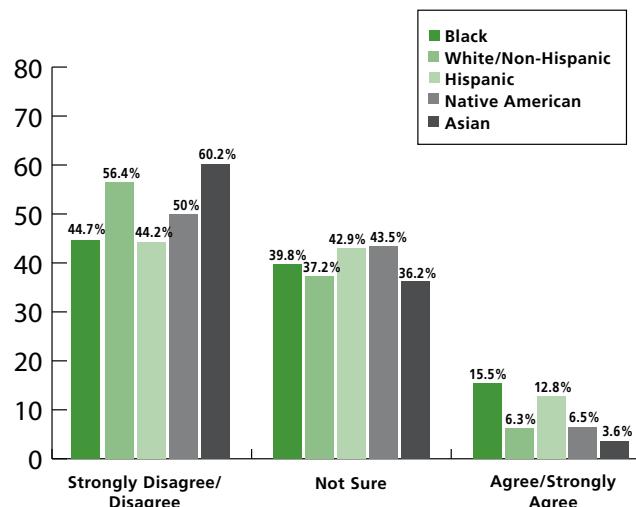


Figure 3b: Responses to “Some children carry guns or knives to my child’s school.” (% within Ethnicity)

- Black and Hispanic parents felt significantly more certain that some children carried guns or knives to school (15.5% & 12.8%, respectively).
- Generally, Asian parents did not believe that students carried weapons to school (60.2%). (Fig. 3b)

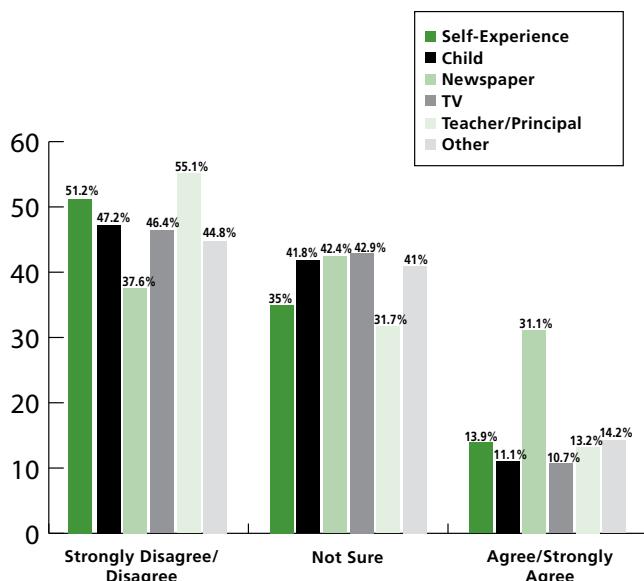


Figure 3c: Responses to “Some children carry guns or knives to my child’s school.” (% within Source of Information)

- Significantly more parents who identified the newspaper as their source of information about the school believed that children carried guns or knives to school (31.1%).
- Parents who identified the teacher or principal as their source of information about the school did not believe that children carried guns or knives to school (55.1%). (Fig. 3c)

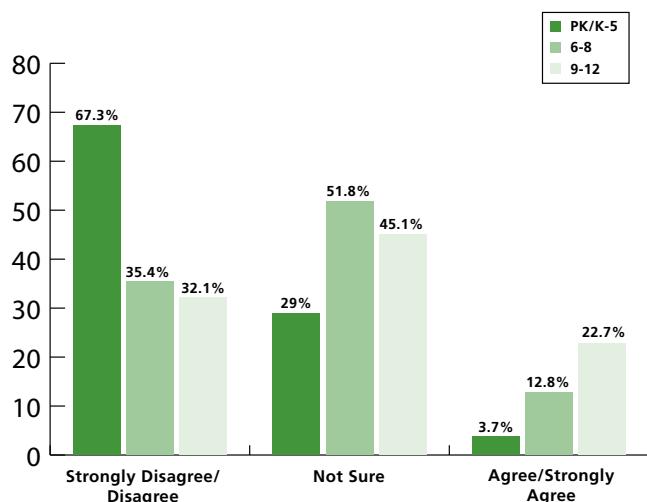


Figure 3d: Responses to "Some children carry guns or knives to my child's school." (% within Grade Level)

- Parents of students in high school (Grades 9-12) believed more than parents at the lower grade levels that some children carried guns or knives to school (22.7%).
- Generally, as grade level increased, more parents believed that some children carried guns or knives to school. (Fig. 3d)

2 Parental Involvement



The definition of parental involvement varies widely. For some researchers, it means attending conferences with teachers, assisting with homework after school or discussing the school day with children. Overall, research has established parental involvement as a critical component for child and adolescent academic development in school (Handel, 1999; Jeunes, 2005; Machen & Notar, 2005). Research has shown that parental involvement in children's academic lives tends to decline after primary/elementary school (Brough & Irvin, 2001; Eccles & Harold, 1993; NSDC, 1999; Sanders & Epstein, 1998) and further declines between the middle grades and high school (Epstein, 1995, 1996).

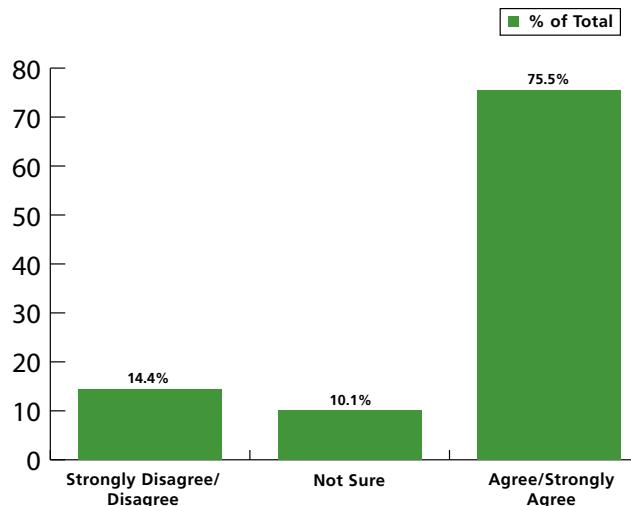


Figure 1a: Responses to "I visit my child's school often to support its activities." (% Total)

- Most of the parents surveyed indicated that they visited their child's school to support activities (75.5%).
- Approximately 15% of parents did not support activities (14.4%). (Fig. 1a)

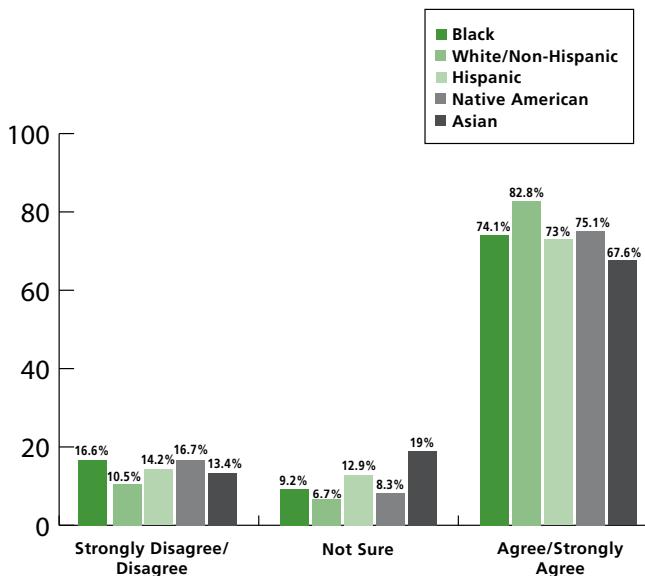


Figure 1b: Responses to "I visit my child's school often to support its activities." (% within Ethnicity)

- More White parents indicated that they visited their child's school to support its activities (82.8%).
- While White, Native American, Black, and Hispanic parents were above 70% in their agreement, fewer Asian parents indicated that they visited the school often to support its activities (67.7%). (Fig. 1b)

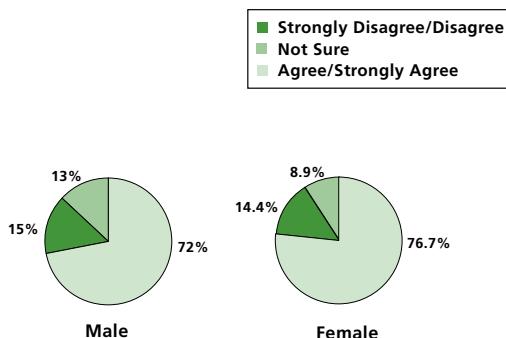


Figure 1c: Responses to "I visit my child's school often to support its activities." (% within Gender)

- Slightly more female parents (76.7%) indicated visiting the school to support its activities than did their male counterparts (72%).
- Over a quarter of male parents did not support activities or were not sure if they did (15% & 13%, respectively). (Fig. 1c)

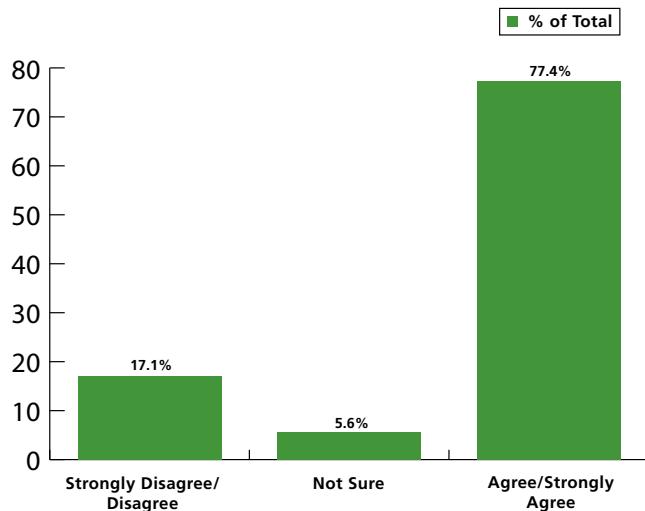


Figure 2a: Responses to "I have attended a Parent-Teacher meeting in the past year." (% Total)

- The majority of parents indicated that they attended a Parent-Teacher conference within the last year (77.4%).
- Almost 20% of parents did not attend a conference (17.1%). (Fig. 2a)

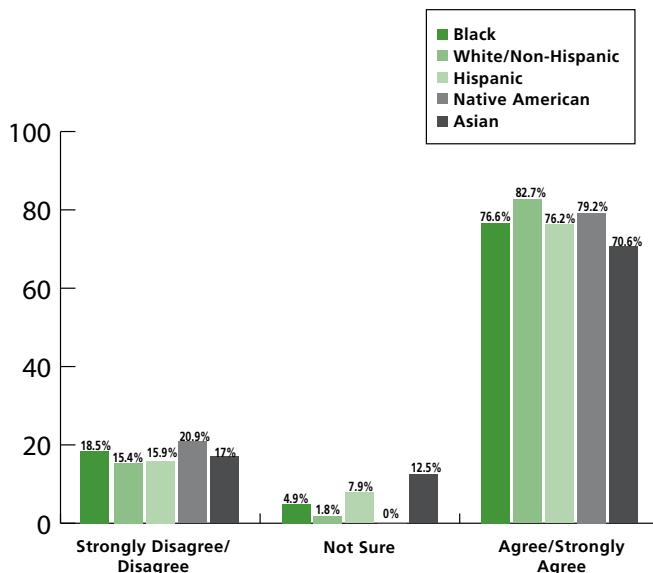


Figure 2b: Responses to "I have attended a Parent-Teacher meeting in the past year." (% within Ethnicity)

- White parents indicated that they had attended a Parent-Teacher conference more frequently than other ethnic groups (82.7%).
- The lowest rate of participation in a Parent-Teacher conference came from Asian parents at 70.6%. (Fig. 2b)

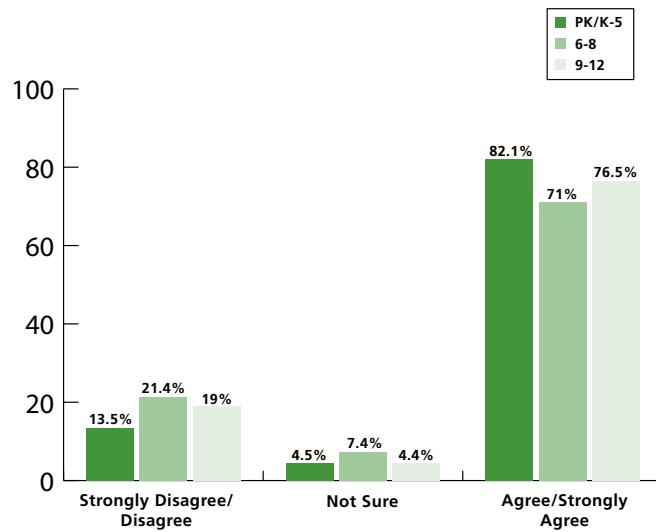


Figure 2c: Responses to "I have attended a Parent-Teacher meeting in the last year." (% within Grade Level)

- Parents of students in the lower grades indicated that they attended Parent-Teacher meetings more than those with children in other grade levels.
- Parents of students in the middle grades indicated that they did not attend Parent-Teacher meetings more than those with children in other grade levels. (Fig. 2c)

Parental Expectations for Success



Educational expectations of parents have significant long-term implications for children. Some researchers have found that parents' educational expectations for their children during adolescence is significantly related to their children's actual educational attainment by age 28 (Chin, Jacobs, Bleeker, Vernon, & Tanner, *in press*). Some studies have shown that parents are powerful agents in influencing the goals, choices, and behaviors of their children (Farmer, 1985; Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984; Trusty, 1998).

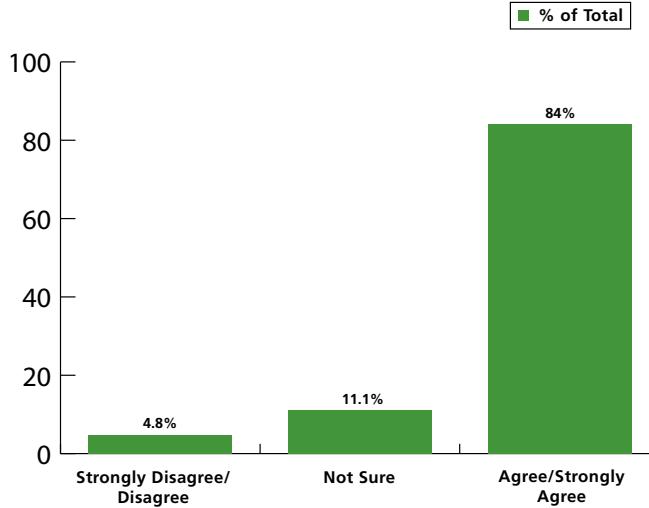


Figure 1a: Responses to "My child is capable of high performance on the standardized exams given at his/her school." (% Total)

- Parents overwhelmingly believed that their child was capable of high performance on standardized tests (84%).
- Fewer than 5% of parents did not think their child was capable of high performance on standardized tests (4.8%). (Fig.1a)

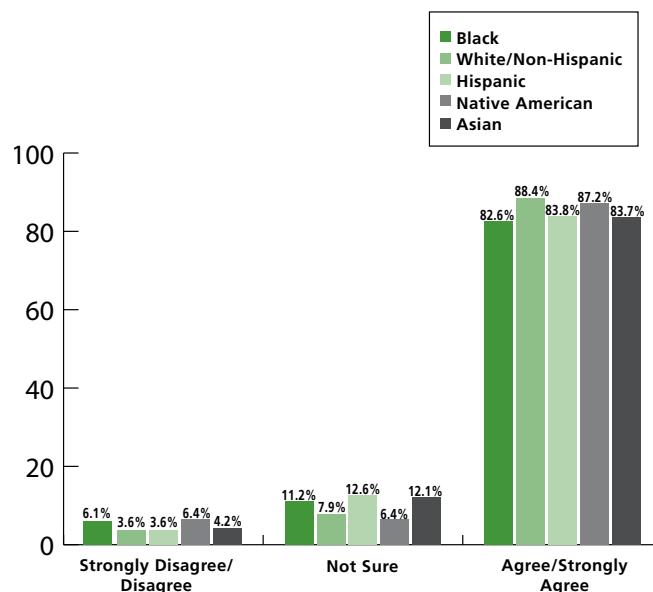


Figure 1b: Responses to "My child is capable of high performance on the standardized exams given at his/her school." (% within Ethnicity)

- Parents of all ethnic groups felt strongly about their child's capability to perform on standardized tests.
- White parents were most confident about their child's ability to perform (88.4%), followed closely by Native American parents (87.2%). Blacks indicated the least confidence in their child's capability to perform on standardized tests (82.6%). (Fig. 1b)

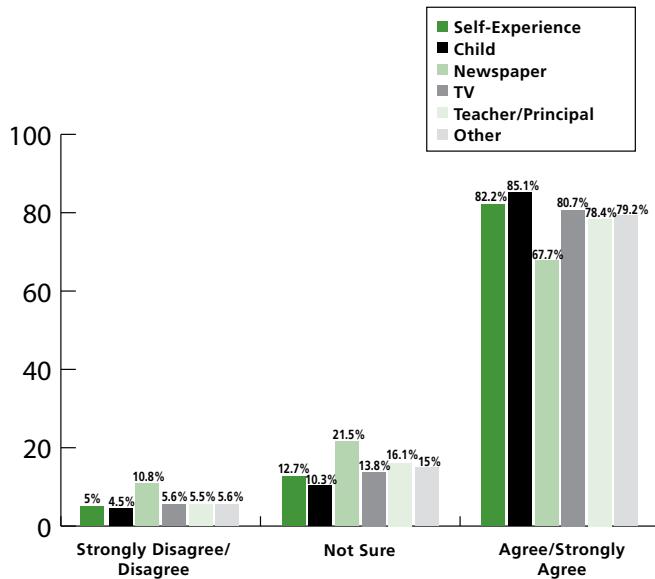


Figure 1c: Responses to "My child is capable of high performance on the standardized exams given at his/her school." (% within Source of Information)

- Parents who relied on their child as their source of information about the school were most confident in their child's capability for high performance on the standardized exams (85.1%).
- Those who indicated that the newspaper was their source of information about the school were least confident in their child's capability for high performance on the standardized exams (67.7%). (Fig. 1c)

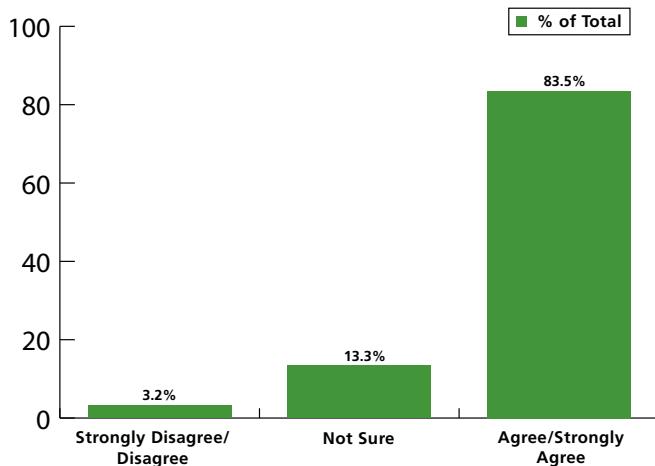


Figure 2a: Responses to "My child will continue his/her education at a community college or university." (% Total)

- Parents overwhelmingly agreed that their child would continue his/her education after high school (83.5%).
- Only 13.3% of parents were unsure of continued education for their child.
- Fewer than 5% indicated that their child would not continue his/her education at a community college or university (3.2%). (Fig. 2a)

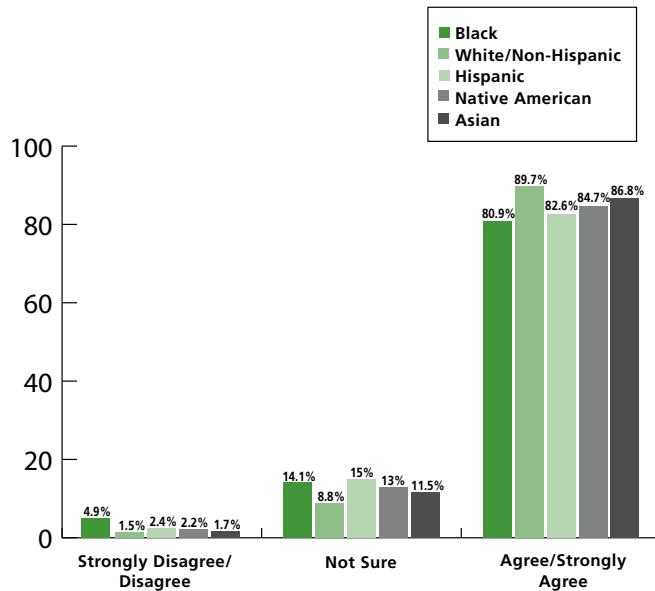


Figure 2b: Responses to “My child will continue his/her education at a community college or university.” (% within Ethnicity)

- While over 80% of all ethnicities indicated that their child would continue his/her education, Whites were the highest in agreement (89.7%).
- Black and Hispanic parents, while very positive, were among the lowest in agreement with the statement that their child would continue his/her education at a community college or university (80.9% and 82.6%, respectively). (Fig. 2b)

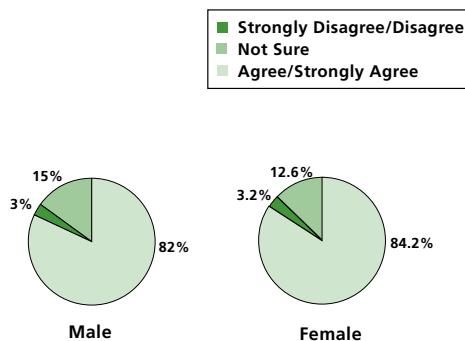


Figure 2c: Responses to “My child will continue his/her education at a community college or university.” (% within Gender)

- Slightly more female parents (84.2%) believed their child would continue his/her education at a community college or university (84.2%) than male parents (82%).
- More males (15%) were unsure than females (12.6%) whether or not their child would continue his/her education at a community college or university. (Fig. 2c)

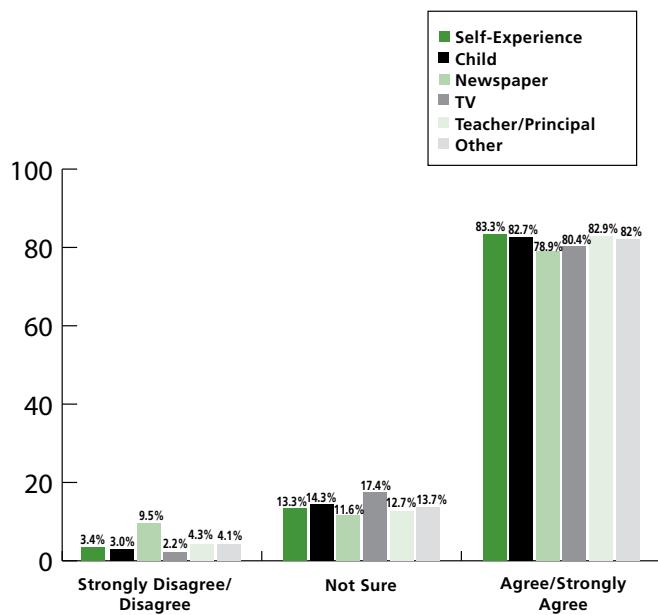


Figure 2d: Responses to “My child will continue his/her education at a community college or university.” (% within Source of Information)

- Parents who indicated that the newspaper was their primary source of information about the school were significantly more likely to believe that their child would not continue his/her education at a community college or university (9.5%). (Fig. 2d)





Trust, Respect, & Ethos of Caring



Trust, Respect, and Ethos of Caring are the foundations upon which relationships are built in schools. Trust between parents and teachers is a vital element in building and maintaining the family-school relationship. The dynamics among teachers, students, and parents influence whether students regularly attend school and sustain efforts on the difficult tasks of learning. The atmosphere of respect and caring in the school helps to solidify relationships and create more positive dynamics among the stakeholders. Schools that value good communication between the home and school must develop ways to dialogue over time in order to build mutual respect. According to the Carnegie Council Task Force (1989), "School systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students. But when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge." Wessler and Preble (2003) emphasize one of their framework components—respect—as the key ingredient to a safe and positive school culture that enables all students to feel respected and valued.

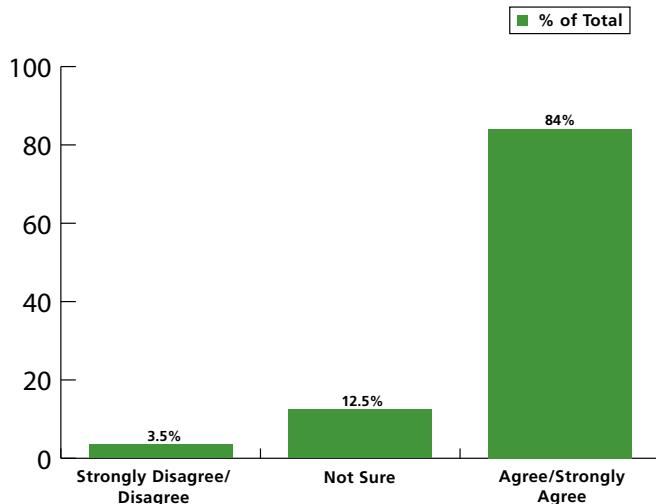


Figure 1a: Responses to "I trust the teachers at my child's school." (% Total)

- The majority of parents strongly agreed or agreed that they trusted the teachers at their child's school (84%).
- Only 12.5% were not sure about trusting teachers at their child's school.
- Fewer than 5% of parents did not feel that they could trust the teachers at their child's school (3.5%). (Fig. 1a)

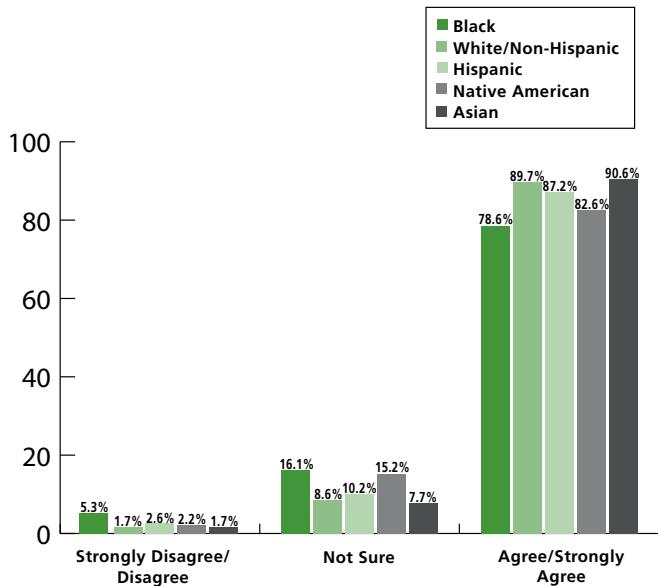


Figure 1b: Responses to "I trust the teachers at my child's school." (% within Ethnicity)

- Asian parents indicated more than others that they trusted the teachers at their child's school (90.6%), while Blacks were the least trusting of the teachers (78.6%).
- Black parents (5.3%) responded that they did not trust the teachers at least three times more than White and Asian parents (both 1.7%). (Fig. 1b)



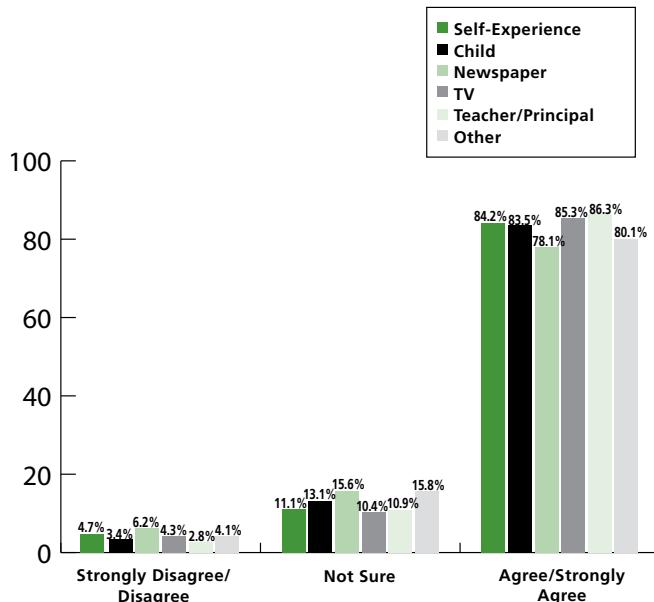


Figure 1c: Responses to "I trust the teachers at my child's school." (% within Source of Information)

- Parents who indicated that their primary source of information about the school was the teacher or principal were most trusting of teachers in the school (86.3%), while those who indicated that the newspaper was their source of information were least trusting of teachers (78.1%). (Fig. 1c)

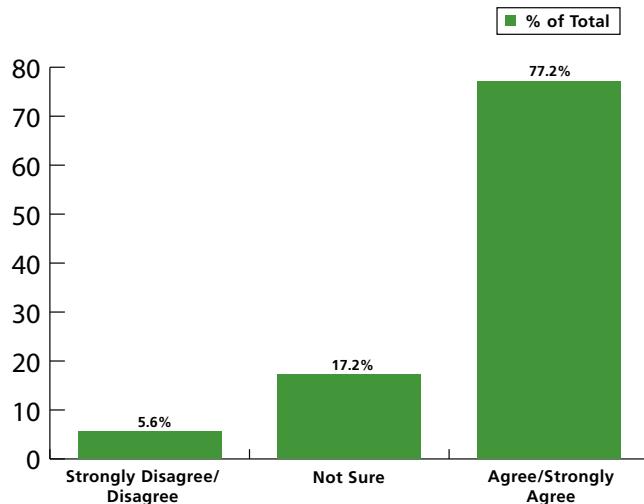


Figure 2a: Responses to "At my child's school, teachers respect the students." (% Total)

- The majority of parents agreed that teachers respected their students (77.2%).
- A significant number of parents were not sure if teachers respected their students (17.2%). (Fig. 2a)

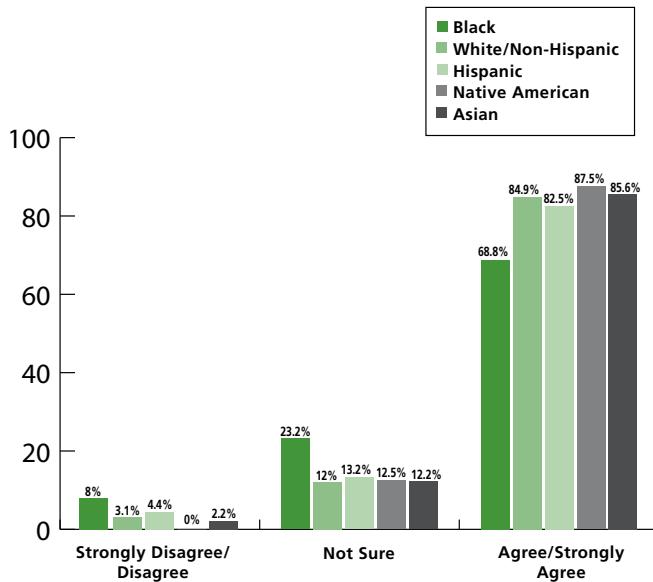


Figure 2b: Responses to “At my child’s school, teachers respect the students.” (% within Ethnicity)

- Native American parents were the most in agreement about teachers respecting the students (87.5%).
- Significantly fewer Black parents thought that teachers respected students, compared to all other ethnic groups (68.8%).
- Black parents (8%) were more than twice as likely to believe that teachers were not respectful to students, compared to Whites (3.1%); almost twice that of Hispanic parents (4.4%); and almost four times that of Asian parents (2.2%). (Fig. 2b)

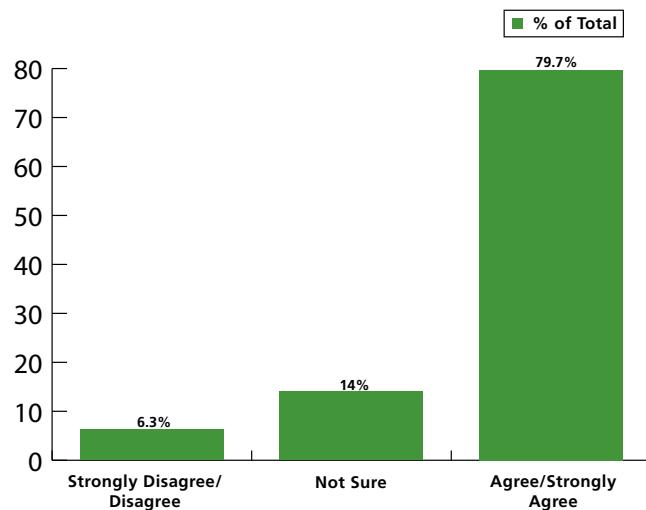


Figure 3a: Responses to “The teachers care whether or not my child is successful.” (% Total)

- Most parents believed that teachers cared whether their child was successful (79.7%).
- A significant number of parents were not sure if teachers cared whether their child was successful (14%). (Fig. 3a)

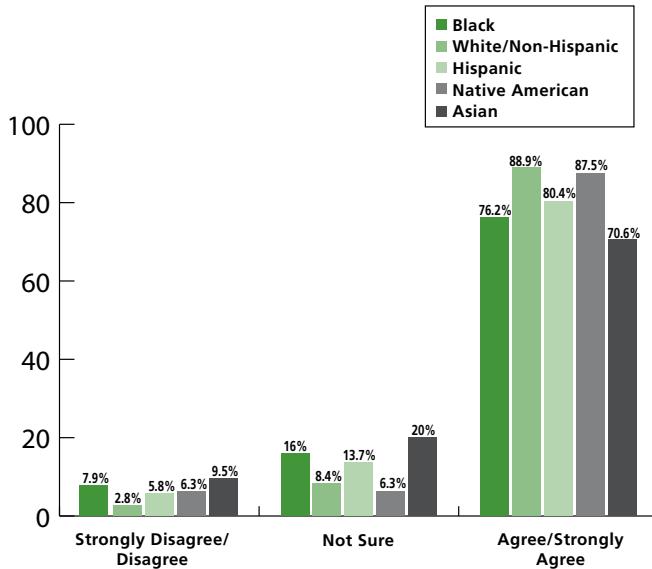


Figure 3b: Responses to "The teachers care whether or not my child is successful." (% within Ethnicity)

- Parents who identified themselves as White or Native American had the highest level of agreement on teachers caring about their child's success (88.9% & 87.5%, respectively).
- While a solid majority of Asian parents also agreed with this statement, their percentage was the lowest, at 70.6%. (Fig. 3b)

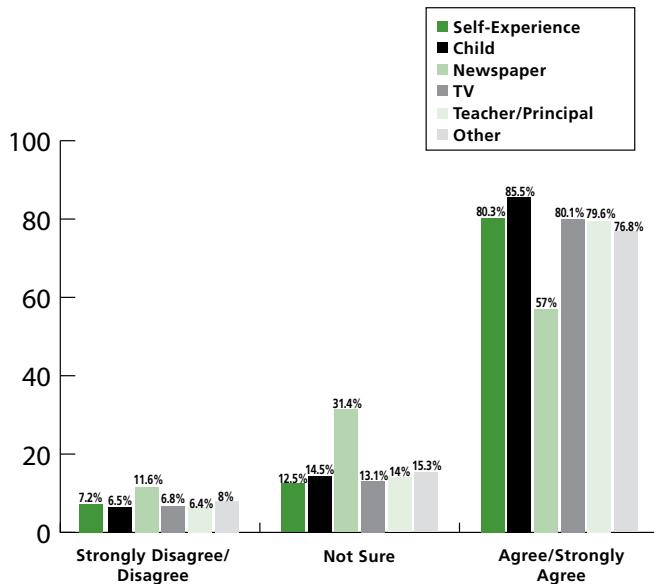


Figure 3c: Responses to "The teachers care whether or not my child is successful." (% within Source of Information)

- Parents who indicated that their children were their primary source of information about the school were most in agreement that teachers respected the students (85.5%).
- Significantly fewer parents who indicated that the newspaper was their primary source of information about the school believed that teachers respected the students (57%), compared to all other sources of information. (Fig. 3c)

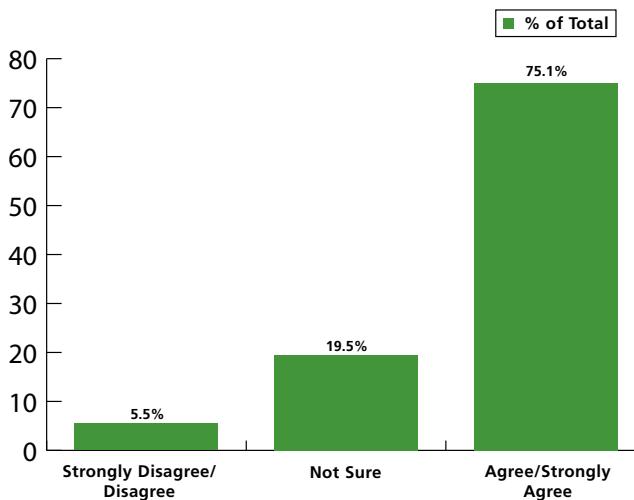


Figure 4a: Responses to "Teachers are fair at my child's school." (% Total)

- Parents believed that teachers were fair at their child's school (75.1%).
- Almost 20% of parents were unsure if teachers were fair at their child's school (19.5%). (Fig. 4a)

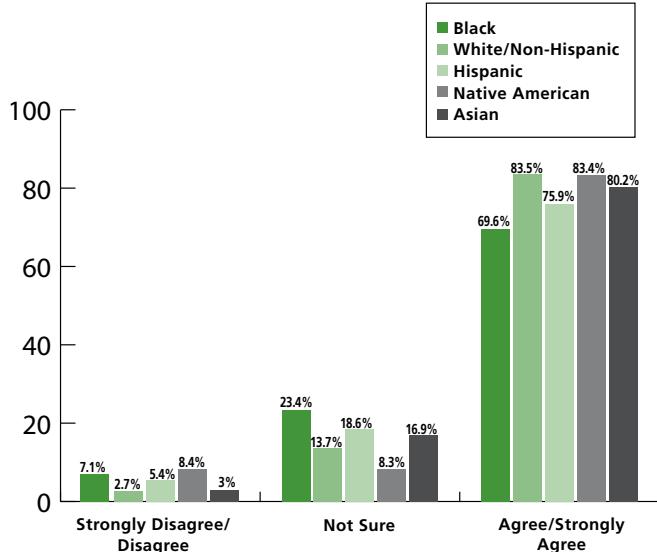


Figure 4b. Responses to "Teachers are fair at my child's school." (% within Ethnicity)

- Over 80% of White, Native American, and Asian parents believed that teachers were fair (83.5%, 83.4%, and 80.2%, respectively).
- Significantly fewer Black parents believed that teachers were fair at their child's school (69.6%). (Fig. 4b)

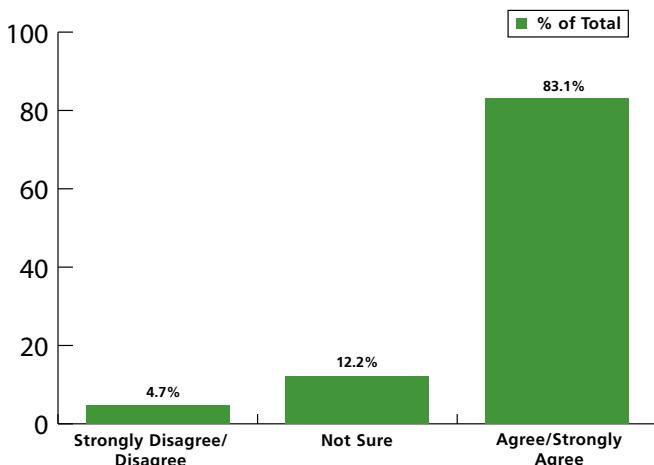


Figure 5a: Responses to "Administrators respect me at my child's school." (% Total)

- Parents overwhelmingly indicated that they felt respected by the administrators at their child's school (83.1%).
- Less than 5% of parents did not feel respected (4.7%). (Fig. 5a)

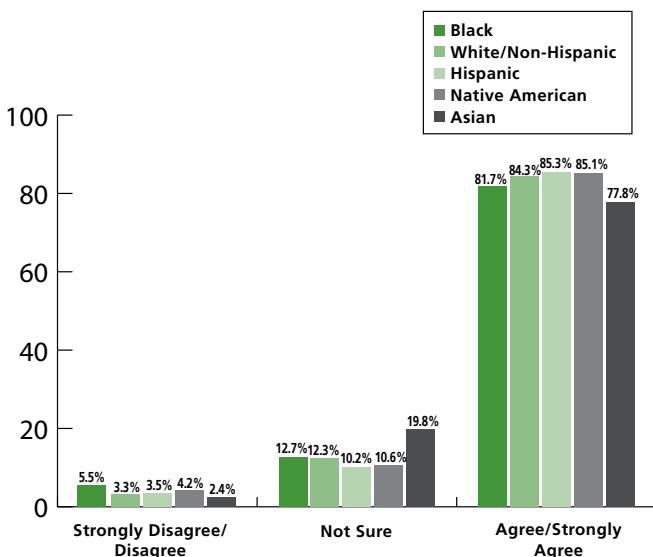


Figure 5b: Responses to "Administrators respect me at my child's school." (% within Ethnicity)

- Hispanic and Native American parents indicated that they felt respected by the administrators more than other ethnic groups (85.3% and 85.1%, respectively).
- While all other ethnicities registered at over 80% agreement, 77.8% of Asian parents felt respected by administrators. (Fig. 5b)

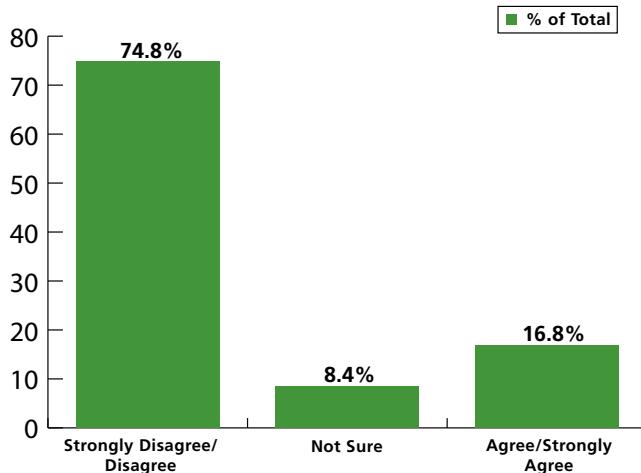


Figure 6a: Responses to "I do not feel welcomed at my child's school when I come to visit." (% Total)

- The majority of parents disagreed with the statement that they did not feel welcomed at their child's school (74.8%).
- Approximately 17% of parents indicated that they did not feel welcomed at their child's school (16.8%). (Fig. 6a)

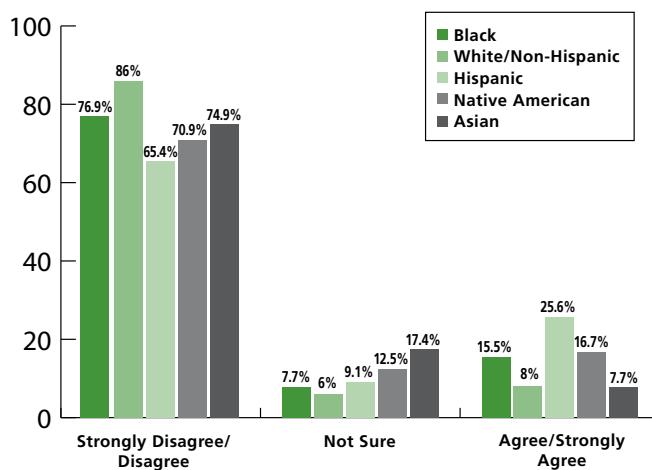


Figure 6b: Responses to "I do not feel welcomed at my child's school when I come to visit." (% within Ethnicity)

- White parents overwhelmingly felt welcomed at their child's school (86%).
- Hispanic parents indicated the lowest percentage of feeling welcomed (65.4%), with almost a quarter of Hispanic parents stating that they did not feel welcomed at their child's school when they came to visit (25.6%). (Fig. 6b)

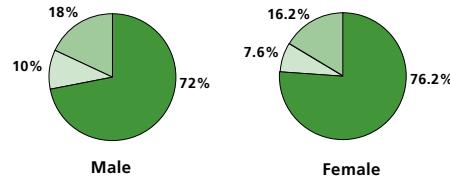


Figure 6c: Responses to “I do not feel welcomed at my child’s school when I come to visit.” (% within Gender)

- More female parents felt welcomed at their child’s school than did their male counterparts (76.2% & 72%, respectively). (Fig. 6c)

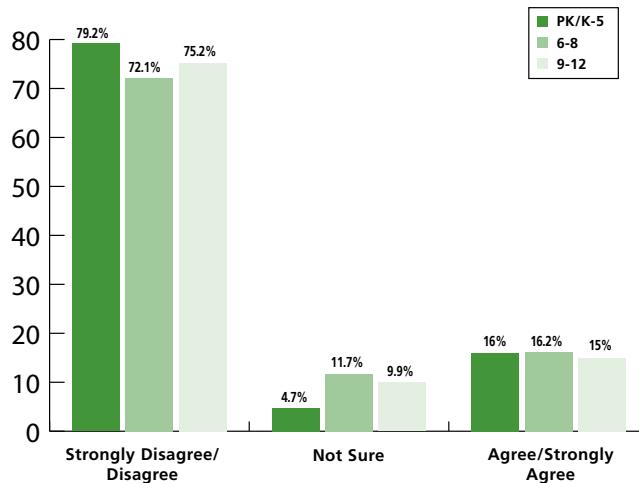


Figure 6d: Responses to “I do not feel welcomed at my child’s school when I come to visit.” (% within Grade Level)

- Responses among parents throughout grades PK-12 were relatively consistent regarding the degree to which they felt welcomed.
- Parents with children in the middle grades (6-8) felt least welcomed when they came to visit (16.2%). (Fig. 6d)

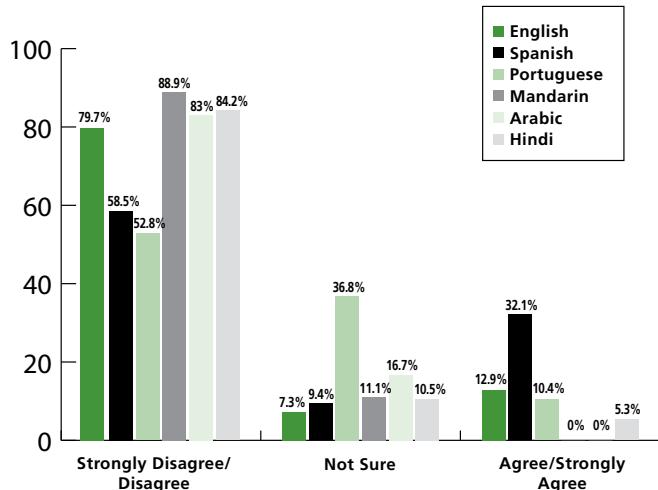


Figure 6e: Responses to "I do not feel welcomed at my child's school when I come to visit." (% within Home Language)

- Parents who spoke Mandarin at home felt the most welcomed at their child's school (88.9%).
- While the majority of Spanish-speaking parents felt welcomed at their child's school (58.5%), approximately one-third stated that they did not feel welcomed (32.1%). (Fig. 6e)

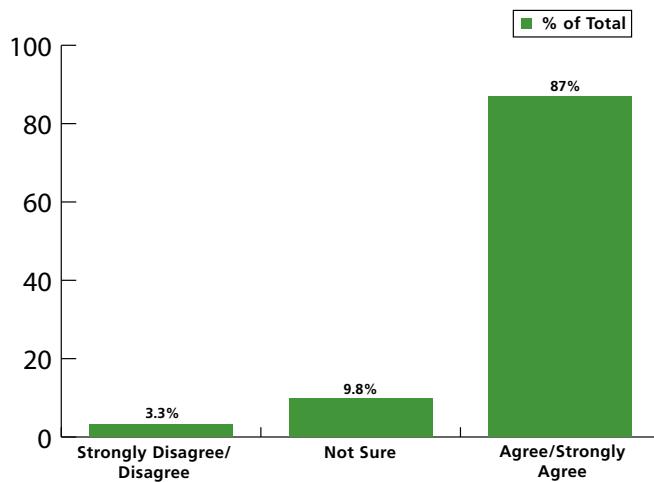


Figure 7a: Responses to "Teachers respect me at my child's school." (% Total)

- Most parents felt respected by the teachers at their child's school (87%).
- Fewer than 5% of parents did not feel respected (3.3%). (Fig. 7a)

5 Bullying



As one of the leading problems in schools, bullying has emerged from a tolerated side-effect of school to a validated concern (Voors, 2000). Targets of bullying experience serious psychological problems and are more likely to be suicidal (Fox, Elliott, Kerlikowske, Newman, & Christeson, 2003; Rigby, 1996). It is estimated that 1.6 million sixth through tenth grade children in the United States have been targets of a bully at least once a week (Nansel et al., 2001). Parents are often unaware of the bullying problem and rarely discuss it with their children. Students typically feel that adult intervention is infrequent and ineffective, and that telling adults will only bring more harassment from bullies and those who encourage them. Students report that teachers seldom or never talk to their classes about bullying (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995).

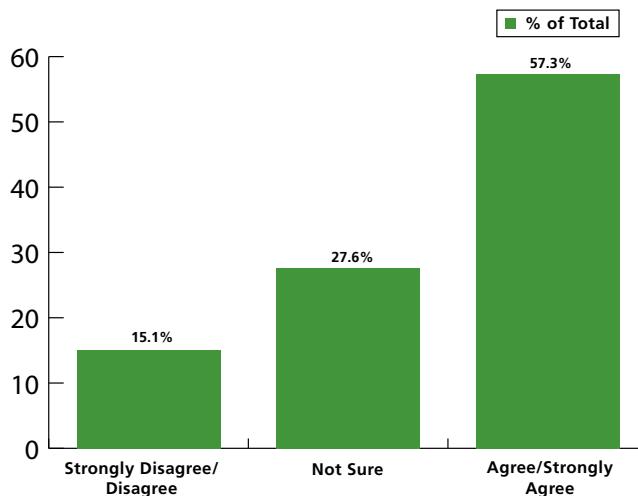


Figure 1a: Responses to "Teachers are able to stop someone from being a bully." (% Total)

- Slightly more than half of the parents surveyed believed that teachers could stop someone from being a bully (57.3%).
- Approximately 15% of parents did not think teachers could stop someone from being a bully.
- Over a quarter of all parents were not sure if teachers could stop bullying (27.6%). (Fig. 1a)

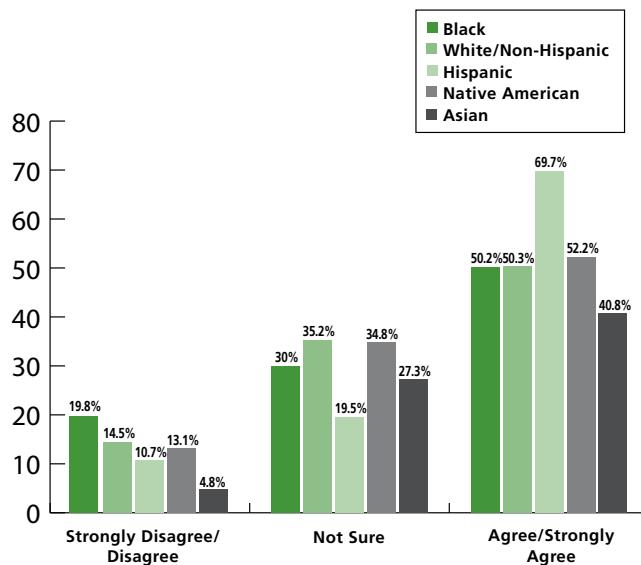


Figure 1b: Responses to "Teachers are able to stop someone from being a bully." (% within Ethnicity)

- More Hispanic parents believed that teachers could stop bullying than the other ethnic groups (69.7%).
- While the majority of parents of other ethnicities were in agreement that teachers could stop bullying, less than half of the Asian parents believed that teachers could stop someone from being a bully (40.8%). (Fig. 1b)

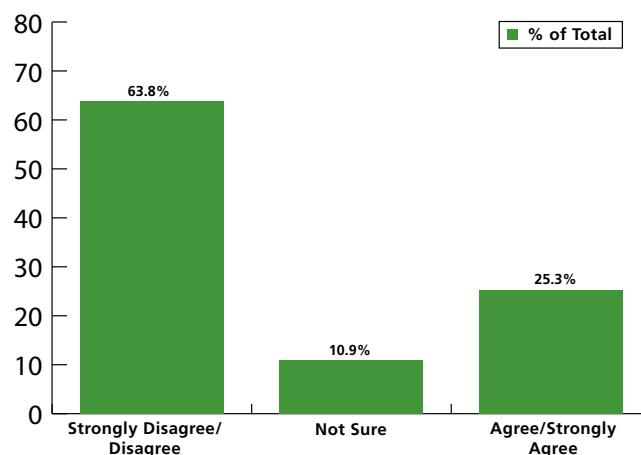


Figure 2a: Responses to "I have spoken to a teacher or administrator about bullying in the past year" (% Total)

- Most parents have not spoken to a teacher or administrator about bullying in the past year (63.8%).
- A quarter of parents have spoken to a teacher or administrator about bullying (25.3%). (Fig. 2a)

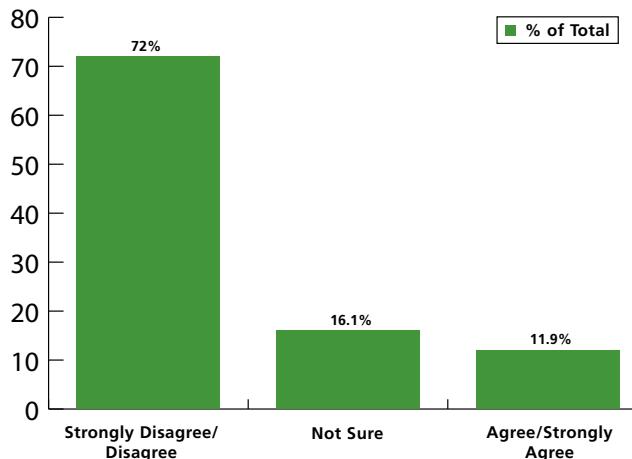


Figure 3a: Responses to "My child is bullied during the school day at least once per month." (% Total)

- The majority of parents indicated that their child was not bullied at least once per month (72%).
- However, more than 10% of parents stated that their child was bullied at least once per month. (Fig. 3a)

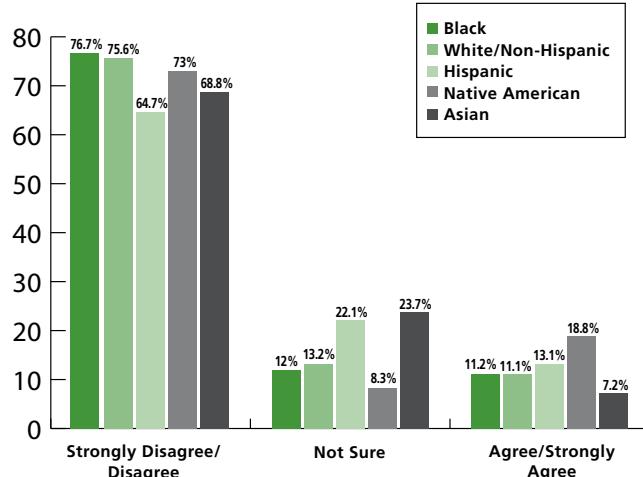


Figure 3b: Responses to "My child is bullied during the school day at least once per month." (% within Ethnicity)

- Native American parents indicated that their child was bullied more than other ethnic groups (18.8%).
- Black parents indicated that their child was not bullied more than other ethnic groups (76.7%).
- The majority of Asian parents indicated that their child was not bullied (68.8%), but almost one-fourth stated that they were not sure (23.7%). (Fig. 3b)

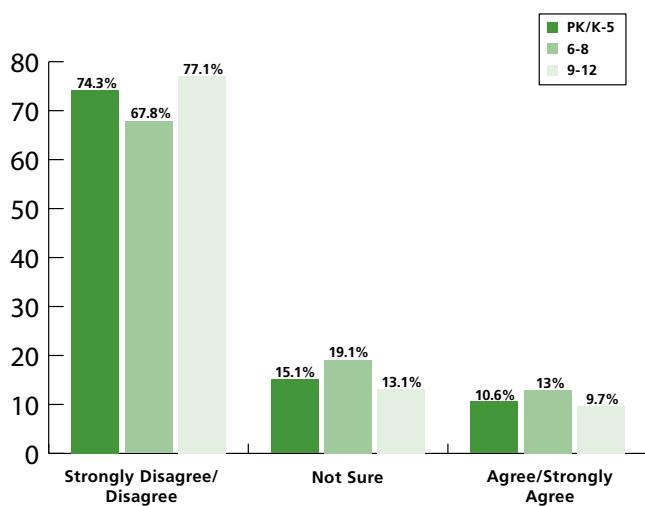


Figure 3c: Responses to “My child is bullied during the school day at least once per month.” (% within Grade Level)

■ Parents with children in the middle grades (6-8) indicated that their children were bullied at least once per month more than parents at other grades (13%). (Fig. 3c)

Community Welfare



The degree to which adults feel secure in their living environments extends to the school environments. It is generally accepted that schools should create an appropriate "emotional environment" for learning and developing. The same is true for young and older adults. Development does not end with adulthood. Individuals develop and are molded by their physical and psychological environments throughout their lifetime. Further, violence exposure, such as witnessing or being victimized by violence, is a critical risk factor for subsequent violent behavior among nonreferred youth (Farrell & Bruce, 1997; Miller, Wasserman, Neugebauer, Gorman-Smith, & Kamboukos, 1999), even after controlling for prior levels of aggression (Brookmeyer, Henrich, & Schwab-Stone, 2005; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998).

Exposure to community violence among inner-city youth is associated with a host of adjustment difficulties (Lynch, 2003), including internalizing and externalizing behavior problems, post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, impairments in memory and cognition, and substance use and abuse. Links between exposure to community violence and adjustment difficulties are not surprising, given the magnitude of exposure experienced by youth. Richters and Martinez (1993) reported in their study of 6–10 year old African American youth that 61% of children in 1st and 2nd grades and 72% of children in the fifth and sixth grades report witnessing shootings, stabbings, and even muggings. In two more recent studies, Campbell and Schwartz (1996) reported that 88% and Purgugganan, Stein, Silver, and Benenson (2000) reported that 79% of middle school students had witnessed violent events such as shootings, stabbings, and muggings. Further, research by Farrell and Bruce (1997) found that 31% of 6th grade urban boys and 14% of girls reported that someone had threatened to kill them; 42% of boys and 30% of girls reported having seen someone shot; and 87–96% of both boys and girls report having seen someone beat up, heard gunfire, and witnessed arrests. The degree of safety and order in the community serves as a foundation for experiences in the learning environment.

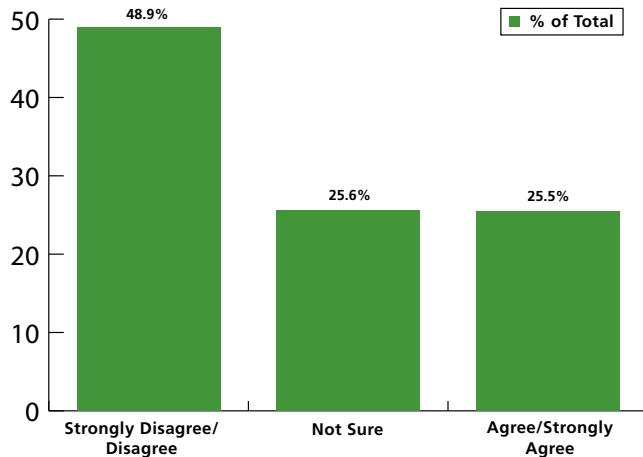


Figure 1a: Responses to "In the past six months, there have been violent crimes within my immediate neighborhood." (% Total)

- Approximately a quarter of parents indicated that there were violent crimes within their immediate neighborhood in the past six months (25.5%).
- Less than half of parents disagreed that there were violent crimes within their immediate neighborhood in the past six months (48.9%). (Fig. 1a)

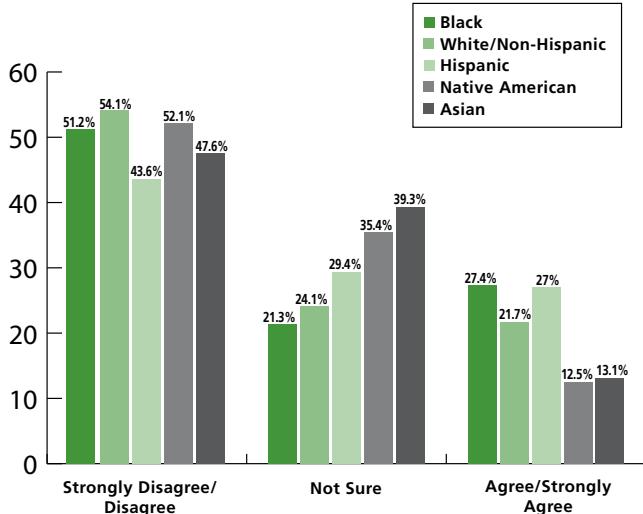


Figure 1b: Responses to "In the past six months, there have been violent crimes within my immediate neighborhood." (% within Ethnicity)

- Approximately a quarter of White, Hispanic, and Black parents indicated that recent violent crimes occurred within their immediate neighborhoods (21.7%, 27%, and 27.4%, respectively).
- Asian and Native American parents' responses were significantly different from the other ethnic groups' responses. Approximately 13% of both Asian and Native American parents indicated that recent violent crimes occurred within their immediate neighborhoods. (Fig. 1b)



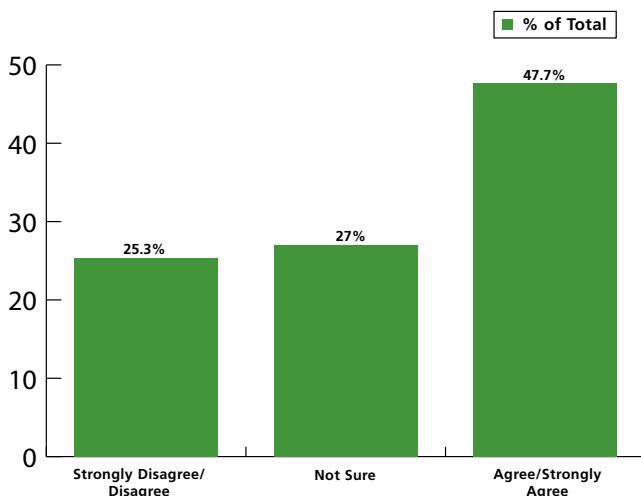


Figure 2a: Responses to "The school building is located in a low-crime area." (% Total)

- Approximately half of the parents surveyed agreed that the school building was in a low-crime area (47.7%).
- Combined, parents who disagreed or were not sure if the school was located in a low-crime area totaled over 50% (25.3% & 27%, respectively). (Fig. 2a)

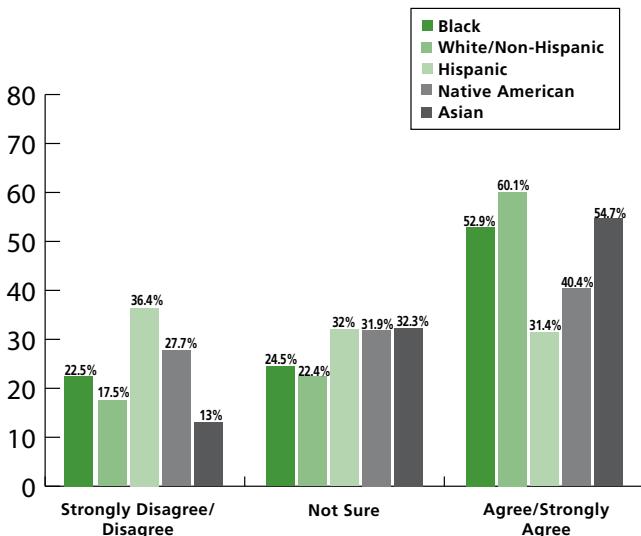


Figure 2b: Responses to "The school building is located in a low-crime area." (% within Ethnicity)

- The majority of White parents agreed that the school was located in a low-crime area (60.1%), while only 31.4% of Hispanic parents thought so.
- Almost 40% of Hispanic parents disagreed with the statement that the school was in a low-crime area. (Fig. 2b)

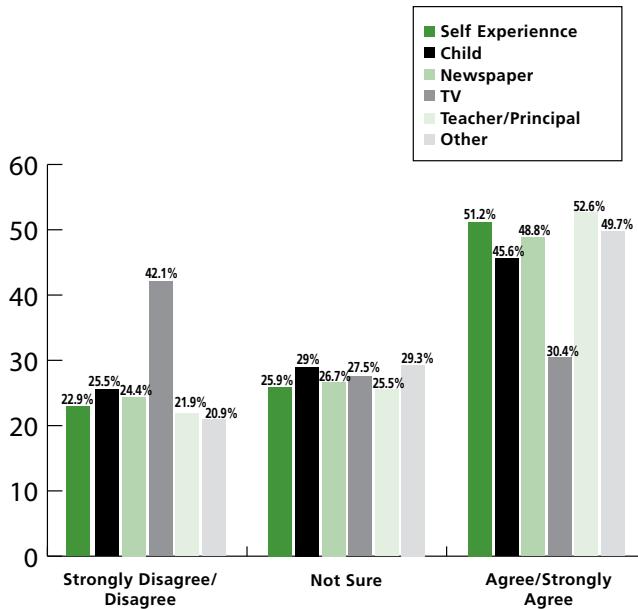


Figure 2c: Responses to “The school building is located in a low-crime area.” (% within Source of Information)

- Parents who indicated that television was their primary source of information disagreed significantly more with the statement that the school was in a low-crime area (42.1%).
- Significantly more parents who relied on self-experience and the teacher or principal as their primary sources of information about the school (51.2% and 52.6%, respectively) indicated that the school was in a low-crime area than did those who relied on television (30.4%). (Fig. 2c)

7

Importance of Race



The importance of race upon achievement and learning opportunities has long been debated within the educational community. Floyd (1969) reported a surprising relationship between whether or not parents were active in the Civil Rights movement and the racial attitudes of preschool children: the preschoolers of more active parents were more pro-White. Branch and Newcombe (1986), in a similar study also with preschoolers, assessed attitudes using two forced-choice techniques, the Clark Doll Test (Clark & Clark, 1939) and the Preschool Racial Attitude Measure II (PRAM) (Williams, 1971). The parents of the children were classified as activists based on their history of Civil Rights activism as revealed on a questionnaire. On PRAM II, virtually no difference was found between the mean scores of activist and nonactivist children; both groups scored in the unbiased range. However, on the Clark Doll Test, a significant difference was found between the mean scores of children of activists, which fell in the White-preference category, and the scores of children of nonactivists, which fell in the no-preference category.

Prejudice and racial misconceptions continue to be a problem in today's society, and are mirrored in school settings at every level. Powlishka, Serbin, Doyle, and White (1994) found evidence of prejudice in children from kindergarten to sixth grade. According to Wittmer (1992), the U.S. grows more diverse each year, and school personnel must teach children as well as teachers to value this diversity. Schools will be the venues in which the community learns to value and respect diversity.

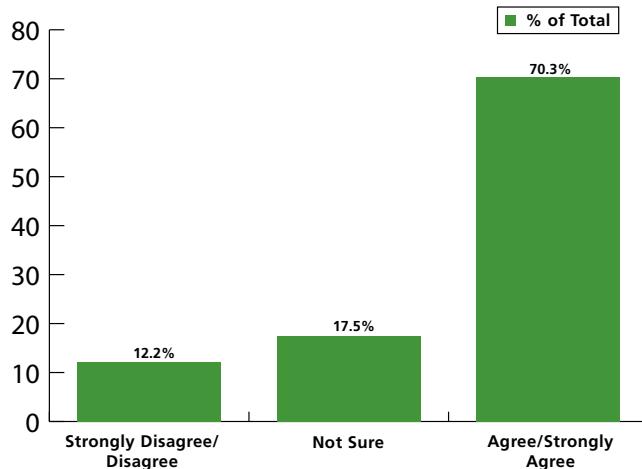


Figure 1a: Responses to "Race is not a factor in the success of children at my child's school." (% Total)

- Generally, parents did not believe that race was a factor in children's success at their child's school (70.3%).
- Just over 10% of parents felt that race was a factor in the success of children at their child's school (12.2%). (Fig. 1a)

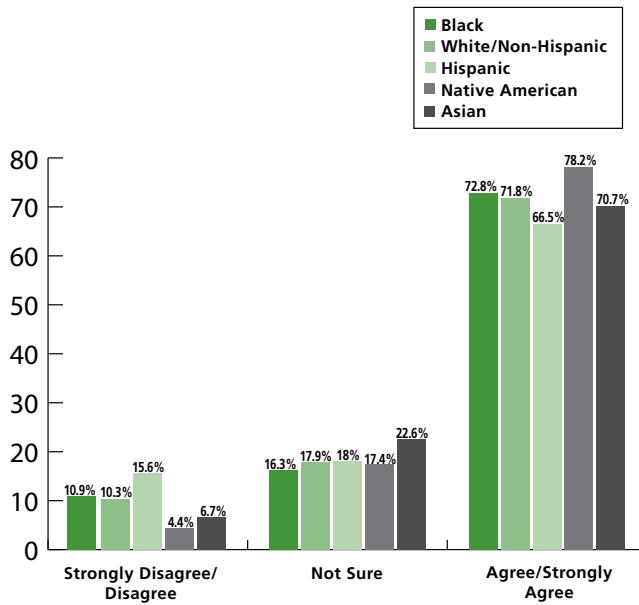


Figure 1b: Responses to "Race is not a factor in the success of children at my child's school." (% within Ethnicity)

- Hispanics more than any other group believed that race was a factor in the success of children at their child's school (15.6%).
- More Native American parents believed that race was not a factor in the success of children in their child's school than any other groups (78.2%).
- While the majority of Asian parents felt that race was not a factor, close to one quarter were not sure (70.7% & 22.6%, respectively). (Fig. 1b)



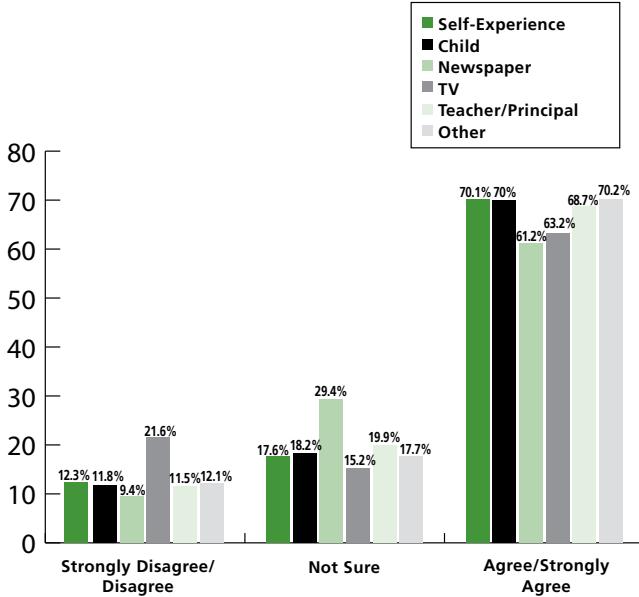


Figure 1c: Responses to “Race is not a factor in the success of children at my child’s school.” (% within Source of Information)

- Among parents who cited television as their primary source of information about the school, almost 22% viewed race as a factor in the success of children at their child’s school (21.6%). This was almost twice each of the other sources of information.
- Parents who relied on the newspaper as their primary source of information about the school were significantly more unsure if race was a factor in the success of children at their child’s school, when compared to other groups (29.4%). (Fig. 1c)

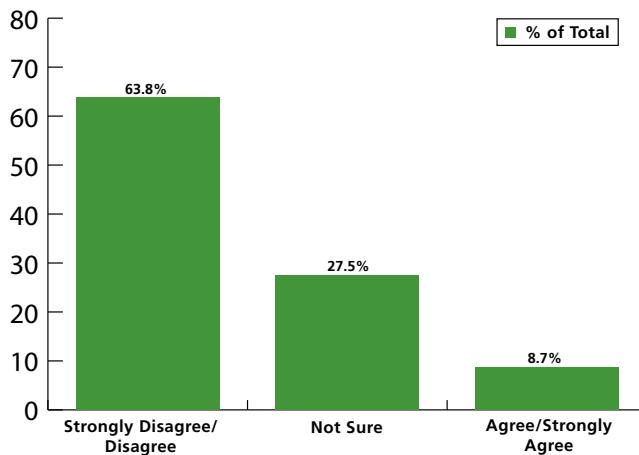


Figure 2a: Responses to “Students who are not of my child’s race generally do better in school than he/she does.” (% Total)

- Most parents did not believe that children of different races than their child did better in school (63.8%).
- Over one-fourth of parents were unsure if children of different races did better than their own child (27.5%). (Fig. 2a)

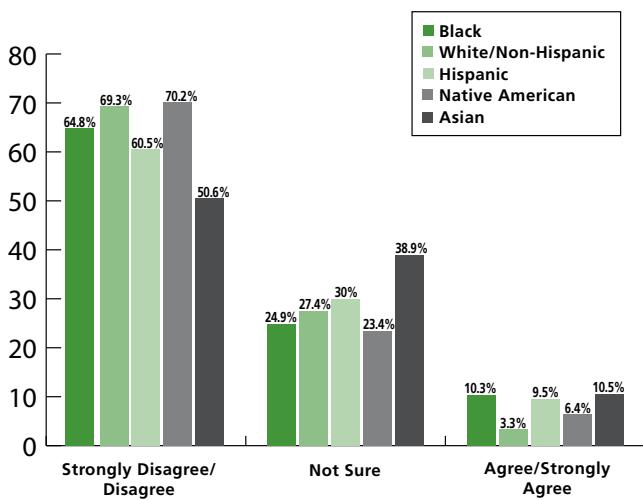


Figure 2b: Responses to "Students who are not of my child's race generally do better in school than he/she does." (% within Ethnicity)

- Over 10% of Black and Asian parents believed that students who were not of their child's race did better in school (10.3% and 10.5%, respectively). This was over three times the number of White parents who stated the same (3.3%).
- Native American and White parents had the highest percentage of parents who did not feel that children of other races did better in school than their own child (70.2% & 69.3%, respectively).
- While approximately half the Asian parents disagreed with the above statement (50.6%), close to 40% were unsure (38.9%). (Fig. 2b)

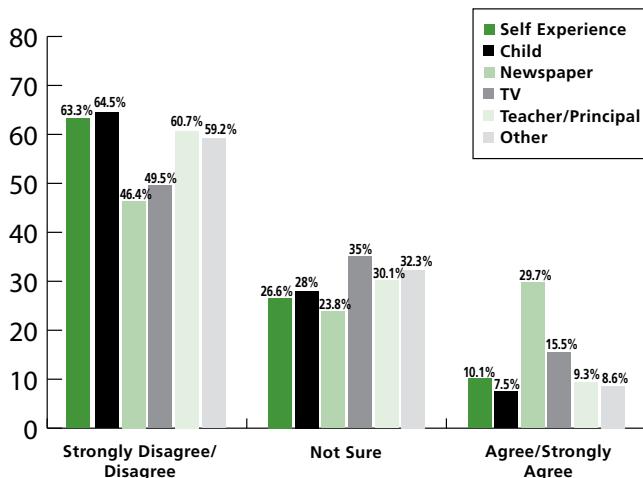


Figure 6c: Responses to "Students who are not of my child's race generally do better in school than he/she does." (% within Source of Information)

- Among parents who indicated that the newspaper was their primary source of information about the school, approximately 30% believed that students who were not of their child's race generally did better in school (29.7%). This is approximately three times the number of parents who indicated self-experience as the primary source of information (10.1%).
- Parents who relied on television as their primary source of information about the school were most unsure, compared to the other groups (35%). (Fig. 2c)

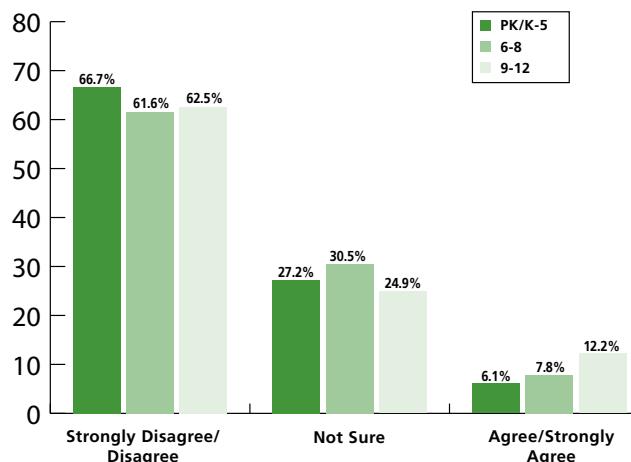


Figure 2d: Responses to "Students who are not of my child's race generally do better in school than he/she does." (% within Grade Level)

- Among parents with students in high school, over 12% believed that students who were not of their child's race generally did better in school (12.2%). This is twice the number of parents with students in PK/K-5 schools (6.1%).
- As grade levels increased, parents were more likely to believe that students who were not of their child's race generally did better in school. (Fig. 2d)

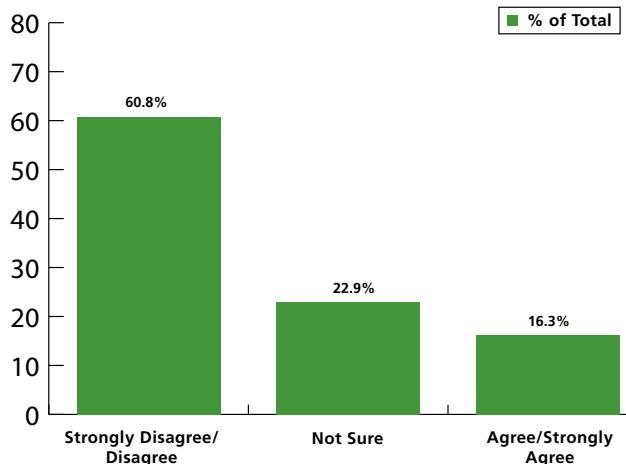


Figure 3a: Responses to "There are races of children who are smarter than others." (% Total)

- Generally, parents did not think that some races of children were smarter than others (60.8%). However, over 20% of parents felt unsure if certain races were smarter than others (22.9%).
- Approximately 16% of parents thought that there were races of children smarter than others. (Fig. 3a)

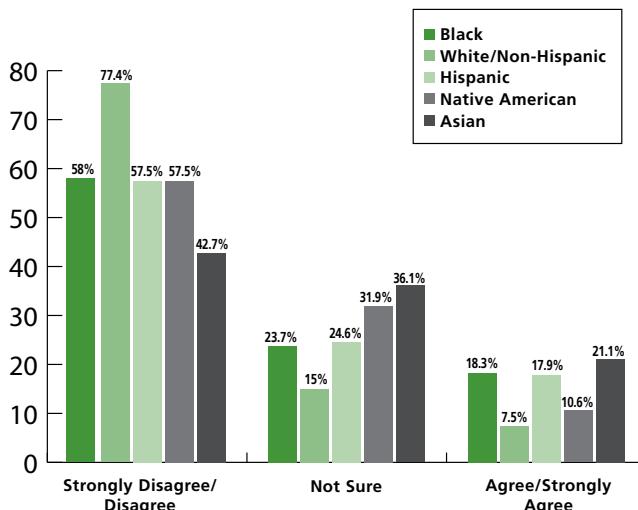


Figure 3b: Responses to "There are races of children who are smarter than others." (% within Ethnicity)

- Among parents who thought that some races of children were smarter than others, White parents were significantly lower when compared to other groups (7.5%). Three times as many Asians (21.1%) and over twice as many Blacks (18.3%) agreed with the statement, compared to Whites (7.5%).
- Asians and Blacks, more than other groups, indicated that they thought there are races of children smarter than others (21.1% and 18.3%, respectively). (Fig. 3b)

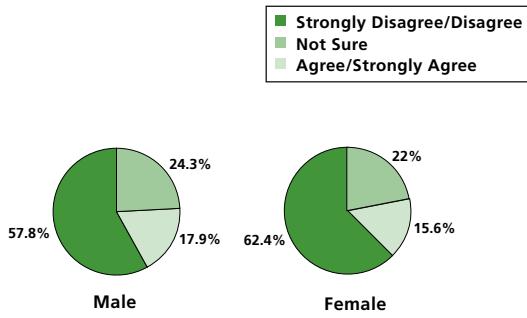


Figure 3c: Responses to “There are races of children who are smarter than others.” (% within Gender)

- Fewer female parents held the belief that there are races of children smarter than others, compared to male parents (15.6% & 17.9%, respectively). (Fig. 3c)

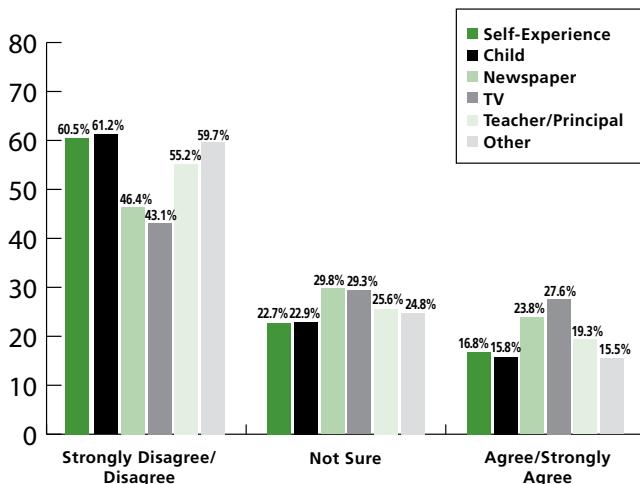


Figure 3d: Responses to “There are races of children who are smarter than others.” (% within Source of Information)

- Among parents who indicated that television was their primary source of information about the school, approximately 28% believed that some races of children were smarter than others (27.6%). This was closely followed by those who relied on newspapers (23.8%).
- Significantly fewer parents who indicated that their children were their primary source of information about the school believed that some races of children were smarter than others, compared to those who relied on newspapers and television (15.8%). This was closely followed by those who indicated that self-experience was their primary source of information (16.8%). (Fig. 3d)

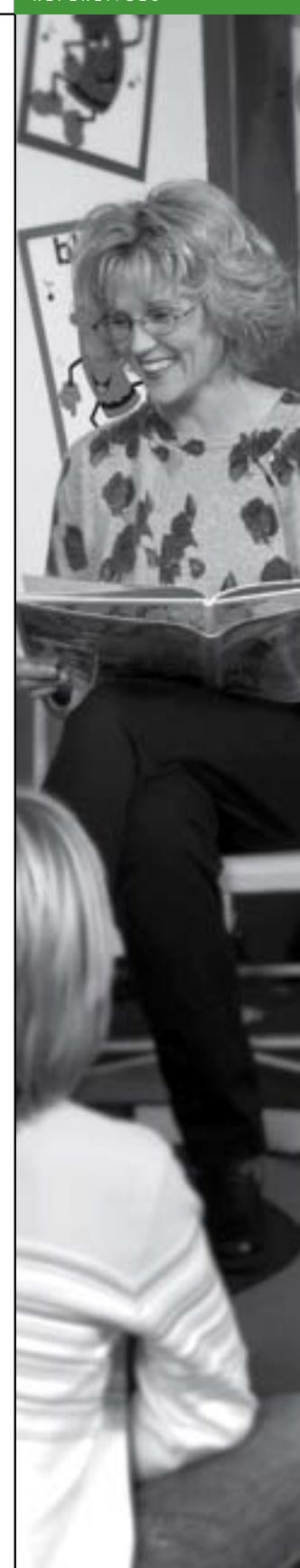


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Annotated Bibliography



SAFETY

Cooper, C. (2005). School choice and the standpoint of African-American mothers: Considering the power of positionality. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 74(2), 174-189.

In this article, the author performs a series of interviews with 14 low-income and working-class African American mothers in California to explore how they chose schools for their children in selected urban districts in California's public school system. All 14 of the mothers reported their dissatisfaction with the safety of their children's current schools and that a safe and orderly learning environment is essential to providing a good education for their children. The author posits a safe school environment as key to improving the quality of urban education.

Smith, E. P. (1997). An ecological model of home, school and community partnerships: Implications for research and practice. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 8(4), 339-360.

Using an ecological model of home, school, and community factors, the authors surveyed 201 parents in a medium-sized, urban, southeastern school district to get a better understanding of the influence of children's home, school, and community on their development and success in school. A 16 item-scale was used to measure school climate. The results indicate that positive perceptions of school safety have a great effect on children's experiences in school, parent satisfaction, and overall school performance.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Anderson, K., & Minke, K. (2007). Parent involvement in education: Toward an understanding of parents' decision making. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 100(5), 311-323.

While it has been determined that parent involvement is considered to contribute positively to children's education, parents and educators define involvement differently. According to the authors,



parents take a more community-centric view that includes keeping their children safe and getting them to school, whereas teachers define involvement primarily as parent presence at the school. Despite the disparity in definition, little is known about how parents decide to be involved. To this end, the authors surveyed elementary school parents in a large, urban school district in the Southwest using the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) model of parent decision-making based on four principal variables of role construction: parents' beliefs and attitudes about the role they should play in their child's education, parents' sense of efficacy or perceived ability to influence their child's education, parent's access to material resources and time, and parents' perception of specific teacher invitations.

Measuring parent involvement at home and at school, the authors found that parents reported considerably more involvement at home than at school, which is significant because schools measure involvement by the extent to which parents are present at the school. The authors found that specific invitations from teachers had the largest effect on parent involvement. The effect of parents' role construction, sense of efficacy, and resources was positively connected to parent involvement, but did not have as great an impact as specific invitations from teachers. The authors encourage future

research to explore which specific forms of communication are most effective to aid in planning other parent involvement programs. They also suggest that school administrators provide training to teachers on how to best collaborate with and involve parents.

Cassanova, U. (1996). Parent involvement: A call for prudence. *Educational Researcher*, 25(8), 30-32, 46.

In this article, Cassanova challenges the notion that parent involvement means that parents can have an active decision-making role in *every* aspect of their child's education. She brings forth the issue of the "controlling parent" who might try to undermine teachers' and school administrators' decision-making powers to take full control of their children and the school. She suggests that the relationship between parents and teachers can be highly competitive, citing research that found instances of low-income African-American mothers being encouraged to participate and "tracked" in parent programs that had little decision-making power and were marginal to the school's operation where more affluent, non-minority parents had access to programs with more influence and decision-making power. Cassanova encourages schools to create well-publicized, highly accessible parent organizations for all parents to participate in, with clear guidelines on what their decision-making powers will

be. This, she concludes, will make sure that all members of the school community are working under the same expectations and can collaborate more effectively to achieve academic success for its children.

Christie, K. (2005). Changing the nature of parent involvement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86(9), 645-646.

This article is a survey of successful statewide efforts to involve parents in public education. She highlights the Maryland Parent Advisory Council's efforts to maximize parent and community involvement practices and policies in each local school system. Specifically, they work to provide training, technical assistance, resources, and mentoring to schools to increase their parent involvement; mandate that two parents must be on the state Board of Education; collaborate with community and public health agencies to provide services in the schools; and encourage districts to use a variety of communication forms to provide parents with information on grade level curriculum, school programs, and student achievement. Also, she highlights other statewide efforts to increase parent involvement in Nevada, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Washington, and Kentucky. The author recommends that states hold their districts accountable to ensure that schools are collaborating with parents

to ensure the academic success of their students.

Drummond, K., & Stipek, D. (2004). Low-income parents' beliefs about their role in children's academic learning. *The Elementary School Journal*, 104(3), 197-213.

Drummond and Stipek did a series of 234 telephone interviews of low-income African-American, White, and Latino parents to get their perceptions on their involvement in their children's academic learning, both at home and at school, and the time of involvement they experienced at their children's schools. Most parents viewed parent involvement as integral to their children's success but reported they were not always aware of opportunities to be involved at their children's school. Using the data gathered and drawing their own conclusions, the authors determined that schools must provide parents with adequate training and the opportunity to increase the literacy and mathematics skills of their students; provide information on community resources that can support their children's academic success; encourage parents to participate in extracurricular clubs, activities, and other after-school programs; and generally remain committed to regularly communicating with parents. The authors suggest that future research should explore potential barriers to parent involvement

specific to their own communities, noting that in one community, a barrier might be lack of access to transportation to and from the school, whereas in another community, language barriers might be high.

Goldring, E., & Shapira, R. Choice, empowerment, and involvement: What satisfies parents? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 15(4), 396-409.

This article examines what makes parents satisfied with their children's schools. Using an anonymous survey administered to 337 parents, the authors conclude that when parents have defined, active roles in the schools and have an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process of the schools, parents are more satisfied with their children's school and report that their expectations are met.

Halsey, P. (2005). Parent involvement in junior high schools: A failure to communicate. *American Secondary Education*, 34(1), 57-69.

According to the author, parent involvement declines as children progress from elementary to secondary schools. Using a series of interviews, participant observation, and document collection, this article explores the efforts of the Redwood Junior High School (RJHS) in west Texas to increase community and parent involvement in their junior high

school. The author found that teachers felt parents were not willing to be involved in their children's education and parents reported that they were unaware of opportunities for involvement. Halsey found that there were three main obstacles to planning and implementing parent involvement at the school. First, there was a difficulty in defining parents' roles in both academic and extracurricular activities. Parents reported being invited to field trips, concerts, and games etc. but showed little involvement in the academic classroom. Second, schools tended to limit involvement to school-wide efforts like Parent-Teacher Conferences and school newsletters, while parents responded better to individual invitations for involvement from teachers. Last, teachers and parents had misconceptions about each other's support and desire for parent involvement.

Using the data, teachers, parents, and students at RJHS gave recommendations for improving parent involvement at their school. These suggestions included improving school-wide communication about parent involvement opportunities, promoting individual and casual contact between the school and parents, and using technology (namely emails and listservs) to improve the communication process. Redwood Junior High School, and the entire school district, implemented the

Volunteer Initiative Program (VIP) to actively involve parents as volunteers in various capacities across the school district.

Hernandez, S., & Leung, B. (2004). Using the internet to boost parent-teacher relationships. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 40(3), 136-138.

This article determines that parent and teacher relationships can be maximized by way of the internet. They conclude email, listservs and individual teacher and school websites can become powerful tools of communication and provide an additional means for parents to be involved in their children's education. Such a string of communication, the authors conclude, allows parents an opportunity to ask questions and make comments in a quick and easy forum. Also, they discuss the potential of age and grade level materials being made available to parents on the internet to provide supplemental materials that they could use in working with their children. Before instituting the internet in homes and schools, the authors encourage school administrators, teachers, parents, and students to have a shared conversation about the vast number of resources available on the internet and appropriate internet usage.

Jordan, G., Snow, C., & Porche, M. (2000). Project EASE: The effect of a family literacy project on kindergarten students' early literacy skills. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(4), 524-546.

In this article, the authors explore the effects of parent involvement through Project EASE, an intensive literacy development program serving 248 kindergarten students in Minnesota. Largely designed to strengthen letter recognition, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, the year-long program included parent education sessions, parent/child activities at school, and parent/child book-mediated activities for home. Students who participated in the program were given a pre-test and a post-test. At the conclusion of the program, students who participated in the program made tremendous gains in literacy development, namely with vocabulary and reading comprehension. Parents who participated in the program generally had high levels of participation and reported feeling valued by their child's school. The authors note that the greatest impact was for students who performed low on the pre-test. Thus, the authors conclude, schools should make more systematic efforts to involve parents at all educational levels to not only maximize the literacy skills of their children, but their overall academic performance.

Lopez, G. (2001). The value of hard work: Lessons on parent involvement from an (im)migrant household. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(3), 416-437.

Arguing that the term "parent involvement" and what is currently considered legitimate acts of parent involvement is based on a privileged and hegemonic understanding, Lopez's article describes the work of an immigrant family in Texas to involve themselves in their children's education in ways outside of the traditional school model. Lopez conducted a series of observations and in-depth interviews with the Pallida family, an immigrant family in the Texas Rio Grande Valley. In addition to attending school full-time, the Pallida children worked in the fields with their family because their parents believed that they should support their children's efforts in school while continuing to provide opportunities for them to gain "real world" experiences outside of school.

Lopez argues schools must expand their concept of parent involvement from the traditional PTA/PTOs, bake sales, Back to School Nights, and so on to identify the unique ways that parents are already involved in their children's education and effectively involve and collaborate with parents. According to Lopez, this will be particularly important for schools that serve largely immigrant, migrant or other

marginalized families for whom social, economic, linguistic, and health-related needs often make it difficult for these parents to be involved in traditionally sanctioned ways.

Schecter, S., Ippolito, J., & Rashkovsky, K. (2007). Giving parents part of the PIE. *Educational Leadership*, 69-70.

Schecter et. al. reviewed the Parent Involvement in Education (PIE) project—a two-hour after-school program serving second language learners and their parents—designed by three urban schools in Canada. Serving ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse students, PIE aimed to increase the language and literacy skills of its students. PIE involved parents specifically by providing support to, and often learning alongside, their students using select reading material, writing modules, educational software designed to build language and literacy skills, and other web-based material. The authors report that an independent study of the program found that the grades of students who participated in the program were 10 to 15 percent higher than before participation.

PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS FOR SUCCESS

Lopez, G. (2001). The value of hard work: Lessons on parent involvement from an (im)migrant household. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(3), 416-437.

Lopez's article describes the work of an immigrant family in Texas to involve themselves in their children's education in ways outside of the traditional school model. Lopez conducted a series of observations and in-depth interviews with the Pallida family, an immigrant family in the Texas Rio Grande Valley. In addition to attending school full-time, the Pallida children worked in the fields with their family. This, the Pallida family argues, is an alternative form of parent involvement aimed at teaching three important lessons: (1) for the children to become acquainted with hard labor, (2) to recognize that hard labor is difficult, strenuous, and without adequate compensation, and (3) to realize that without an education, they may end up working in a similar kind of job. The Pallida family had high expectations for their children both inside and outside of the classroom and, because of these efforts, school administrators identified the Pallida children as highly successful in all areas, with all of the children graduating in the top 10 percent of their high school class.

Louie, V. (2001). Parents' aspirations and investment: The role of social class in the

educational experiences of 1.5 and second-generation Chinese Americans. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(3), 438-474.

In this article, Louie explores Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in and expectations for their children's education. As the author notes, Asian American parents are more likely to supervise their children's homework completion, assign additional homework, provide a place to study in the home, and provide enrichment resources to their children. Using interviews of 68 undergraduate students at Columbia University and Hunter College and a few parental interviews, the author explores the messages Chinese immigrant parents give their children about education and the investments made in their child's secondary education. Overwhelmingly, Louie found that Chinese American parents had high expectations for their child's education and were highly involved—at school and at home.

Teske, P., Fitzpatrick, J. & Kaplan, G. (2007). *Opening doors: How low-income parents search for the right school*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Center on Reinventing Public Education.

This article explores how, and with what information, low-income parents make decisions about where to send their children to school. In a survey of 800 low

to moderate-income parents in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Washington, DC, and Denver, Colorado, parents reported school's academic quality, curriculum or thematic focus, and location or convenience as the three most important factors in making decisions about where to send their children to school. It was reported that although location and convenience are important factors, academic quality and curricular focus are the primary factors and, therefore, parents are willing to have their children travel to the "right school."

Tobolka, D. (2006). Connecting teachers and parents through the internet. *Tech Directions*, 66(5), 24-26.

In this article, the author, an elementary school teacher in Texas, describes her efforts to involve the parents of her students using the internet. Believing that parents are a child's first teacher, she noticed a trend in students forgetting to return correspondence sent home and not turning in homework or weekly conduct folders. In addition to school-wide efforts at parent involvement and her individual phone calls home, Tobolka created a user-friendly web page and email system that she updates weekly to keep parents aware of happenings inside her classroom and at the school in general. As a result, she found that because of this increased communication, her students' academic performance and overall classroom climate

have greatly improved.

Trotman, M. (2001). Involving the African-American parent: Recommendations to increase the level of parent involvement within African-American families. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 70(4), 275-285.

It has been established that parent involvement in their child's education is crucial to the child's academic and social success. Low parent involvement has been identified as one of the variables contributing to the low academic performance of African American children. Trotman identified four factors contributing to low African American parental involvement. First, schools often alienate non-traditional African American family structures and/or low-income African American families, making the false assumption that because they do not have access to as many material resources, they are not as interested in their child's education. Second, parents' work schedules may not permit them to attend all prescribed school functions. Third, schools may falsely equate parents' low educational level with the value they place on education for their child. Last, low expectations by the school for the child and the level of involvement for African American families are barriers to involvement. Trotman offers ten recommendations to increase African American parent

involvement, primarily urging schools to stop making racist assumptions about the extent to which African American parents desire to be involved in their children's education. Trotman urges schools to make greater effort to communicate regularly concerning positive and negative information, and to establish more creative, non-traditional ways to involve them. Trotman cites the Chapter 1 program in the Philadelphia public school system as a positive example.

TRUST, RESPECT, & ETHOS OF CARING

Finders, M., & Lewis, C. (1994). Why some parents don't come to school. *Educational Leadership*, 51(8), 50-54.

In a series of discussions with Latino and low-income White parents, the authors found that these parents experienced a sense of fear in interacting with their children's schools. They experienced feelings of being unwanted, unvalued, misunderstood, and unininvolved by their children's teachers. Further, the Latino parents noted feeling racial bias against them when they attempted to interact with their children's school. These parents perceived the school's racial bias to be a lack of respect for their cultural values, which ultimately resulted in an unfortunate value conflict between home and school. The authors conclude that

building trust by way of mutual respect and personal relationships is the first and most important step to a positive school climate for students and their families.

Halsey, P. (2005). Parent involvement in junior high schools: A failure to communicate. *American Secondary Education*, 34(1), 57-69.

According to the author, parent involvement declines as children progress from elementary to secondary schools. Using a series of interviews, participant observation, and document collection, this article explores the efforts of the Redwood Junior High School (RJHS) in west Texas to increase community and parent involvement in their junior high school. The author found that teachers and parents viewed effective communication efforts quite differently; teachers felt parents were not willing to be involved in their children's education and parents reported that they were unaware of opportunities for involvement. The author reports that developing positive and mutually agreed upon methods of communication to relay opportunities for parent involvement is imperative. It was recommended that teachers and parents create opportunities for individual and personal contact to build a relationship of trust and respect. This, Halsey concludes, will improve the overall success of the students.

Schecter, S., Ippolito, J., & Rashkovsky, K. (2007). Giving parents part of the PIE. *Educational Leadership*, 69-70.

Schecter et al. reviewed the Parent Involvement in Education (PIE) project—a two-hour after school program serving second language learners and their parents—designed by three urban schools in Canada. Serving ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse students, PIE aimed to increase the language and literacy skills of its students. Taking the approach of “parents as partners,” PIE provided parents with the support to build the language and literacy skills of their students. This idea of partnership extended to include all community members—students, teachers, school administrators, and parents. The authors praise the program for developing positive relationships among all community members, using the community’s diversity as a resource, and overcoming barriers to noticeably increase the language and literacy skills of its students.

Smalley, S., & Reyes-Blanes, M. (2001). Reaching out to African-American parents in an urban community: A community-university partnership. *Urban Education*, 36(4), 518-533.

The authors provide a case study analysis of a Parent Leadership Program (PLP) developed in Tangelo Park, an urban

community in Orlando, Florida. The goal of the PLP is to promote the academic success and growth of African American children in Tangelo Park. Once feeling too intimidated to get involved in their children’s schools, the program provided encouragement and support to African American parents to build trusting and caring relationships with their children’s teachers and school administrators. As a result of the program, the authors note, parents who participated developed strong home/school relationships and thus became more involved in their children’s school activities.

BULLYING

Mental Health America. (2007, October). *What does gay mean?: A survey of Latino parents' perspectives on bullying, sexual orientation and prejudice*. Alexandria, VA.

The study of 503 Latino parents with children 0-17 years old was administered to get an understanding of how Latino parents discuss sexual orientation and bullying with their children. If told by their child that a classmate was bullied for being gay, 35% would talk with their child about the situation, 34% would teach their child how to handle the situation, and 23% would discuss how they should treat the bullied child. 22% of Latino parents reported not being aware that bullying

of gay students happens at all. 59% of parents recognized that bullying of gay students happens in their child's school: 17% said it happens occasionally, 15% said sometimes, 12% said often, and 15% said all the time.

Stockdale, M., & Duys, D. (2002). Rural elementary students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of bullying. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 26(4), 266-277.

Stockdale and Duys surveyed 739 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students, 367 parents, and 37 teachers in seven rural elementary schools in Illinois about their perceptions of bullying in their (or their children's) schools. The authors found that students were more likely than their parents to indicate experiencing physical bullying behaviors and to have been bullied. Parents had higher perceptions than students that bullying takes place in a variety of places and that verbal attacks and exclusionary behaviors also constitute bullying behavior. Nonetheless, the authors conclude that parents are not completely aware of their children's experiences with bullying in schools.

COMMUNITY WELFARE

Smalley, S., & Reyes-Blanes, M. (2001). Reaching out to African-American parents in an urban community: A community-university partnership. *Urban Education*, 36(4), 518-533.

The larger community has a powerful impact on school performance. The authors contend that leaders in urban communities must find positive ways for its citizens to actively participate in and better its neighborhood schools. The authors provide a case study analysis of a Parent Leadership Program (PLP) developed in Tangelo Park, an urban community in Orlando, Florida. The neighborhood once suffered from a high crime rate, poor school attendance, and a high dropout rate. Yet, the citizens made a conscious effort to reclaim their neighborhood and instituted an advisory council to plan and implement a neighborhood watch program, provide tutoring services for all students in the neighborhood, provide all 2-, 3-, and 4-year old students with access to the Head Start program, increase health care services, and facilitate training and activities for parents. As a result of this advisory council, the Parent Leadership Training (PLT) emerged to promote the academic success and growth of African American children in Tangelo Park. Because of the program, the authors note, parents who participated

became more involved in their children's school activities and their larger community as a whole. The authors conclude building healthy communities and community-wide efforts to support education are integral to and maximize school performance.

Smith, E. P. (1997). An ecological model of home, school and community partnerships: Implications for research and practice. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 8(4), 339-360.

Using an ecological model of home, school, and community factors, the authors surveyed 201 parents in a medium-sized, urban, southeastern school district to get a better understanding of the influence of children's home, school, and community on their development and success in school. The results indicate that children's personal experiences and interactions with all members of their community (family, friends, teachers, administrators, other community members) heavily influence their perceptions of educational opportunity. They also found that children's access to positive community members, resources, and community-based organizations also heavily influence children's experiences in school. Using a 16 item-scale to measure neighborhood climate, the results indicate that overall community safety and health had a greatly positive influence on

children's experiences and overall school performance.

IMPORTANCE OF RACE

Cooper, C. (2005). School choice and the standpoint of African-American mothers: Considering the power of positionality. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 74(2), 174-189.

In this article, the author conducted a series of interviews with 14 low-income and working-class African American mothers in California to explore how they chose schools for their children. All 14 of the mothers stressed the importance of their children's education to better their socioeconomic advancement as they become adults, help them be more independent, and protect and defend them in a racist society. At the same time, they reported a general dissatisfaction with the urban public school system, mainly reporting that they felt the educators were unqualified, uncommitted, and racially biased against them and their children. By the end of the study, all 14 of the mothers withdrew their children from the public school system.

Drummond, K., & Stipek, D. (2004). Low-income parents' beliefs about their role in children's academic learning. *The Elementary School Journal*, 104(3), 197-213.

Drummond and Stipek did a series of 234 telephone interviews of low-income African American, White, and Latino parents to get their perceptions on their involvement in their children's academic learning, both at home and at school, and the time of involvement they experienced at their children's schools. There were no significant differences in responses among the ethnic groups. That is, African American, White, and Latino parents viewed parent involvement as integral to their children's success and ranked the importance of helping their children with their academic work as very high.

Finders, M., & Lewis, C. (1994). Why some parents don't come to school. *Educational Leadership*, 51(8), 50-54.

In a series of discussions with Latino and low-income White parents, the authors found that these parents experienced a sense of fear in interacting with their children's schools. They experienced fears of feeling unwanted, unvalued, misunderstood, and uninvolved by their children's teachers. Further, the Latino parents noted feeling a racial bias against them when they made attempts to interact with their children's school. The authors conclude that a positive school/home relationship will maximize the academic and social success of children.

Louie, V. (2001). Parents' aspirations and investment: The role of social class in the educational experiences of 1.5 and second-generation Chinese Americans. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(3), 438-474.

Using interviews with 68 undergraduate students at Columbia University and Hunter College and a few parental interviews, Vivian Louie explores Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in and expectations for their children's education. As Louie notes, it is well-documented that Asian American children are more likely than children of other racial and ethnic groups to equate academic success with parental satisfaction and, therefore, put greater effort into their school work. Louie's findings suggest that Chinese immigrant parents have high expectations for their children, reflecting perspectives of immigrant optimism and immigrant pessimism for their children's educational outcomes in the United States. Most Asian American parents, Louie suggests, view education as the greatest, and in some cases only avenue for social mobility in America. Therefore, Asian American parents are more likely than parents of other races to supervise their children's homework completion, assign additional homework, provide a place to study in the home, and provide enrichment resources to their children. Generally, Louie reports, Asian American children perform

significantly well in school because of this foundation in the home.

Teske, P., Fitzpatrick, J., & Kaplan, G. (2007). *Opening doors: How low-income parents search for the right school*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Center on Reinventing Public Education.

This article explores how, and with what information, low-income parents make decisions about where to send their children to school. In a survey of 800 low to moderate-income parents in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Washington, DC, and Denver, Colorado, parents reported school's academic quality, curriculum or thematic focus, and location or convenience as the three most important factors in making the decision about where to send their children to school. It was reported that although location and convenience are important factors, academic quality and curricular focus are the primary factors and, therefore, parents are willing to have their children travel to the "right school."

The authors found that parents access test scores, demographics, class size, and other performance data, along with visiting to prospective schools, in making their decisions. However, low-income and racial minority parents did not have access to the performance data that White families had. Ultimately, this lack of access for racial minority parents inhibited their ability

to choose the "right school" for their children. Teske et al. recommend making school performance data more accessible. They highlight the San Francisco, CA-based GreatSchools.net website as an example of making such data accessible and user-friendly.

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The National School Boards Association is a not-for-profit federation of state associations of school boards across the United States. Its mission is to foster excellence and equity in public education through school board leadership. NSBA achieves that mission by representing the school board perspective before federal government agencies and national organizations that affect education, and by providing vital information and services to state associations of school boards and local school boards throughout the nation.

NSBA advocates local school boards as the ultimate expression of grassroots democracy. NSBA supports the capacity of each school board—acting on behalf of and in close concert with the people of its community—to envision the future of education in its community, to establish a structure and environment that allow all students to reach their maximum potential, to provide accountability for the community on performance in the schools, and to serve as the key community advocate for children and youth and their public schools.

Founded in 1940, NSBA through the Federation of State Associations now represents 95,000 local school board members, virtually all of whom are elected. These local officials govern 14,890

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ABOUT CUBE

For four decades, the Council of Urban Boards of Education has been at the forefront in helping urban school districts strive for excellence. Established in 1967 by NSBA's Board of Directors, CUBE is the only national membership organization governed solely by urban school board members dedicated to the needs and interests of urban school boards. CUBE's mission is to create opportunities for urban school board leaders to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective policymakers and advocates for excellence and equity in public education.

CUBE represents 114 urban school districts in 35 states and the Virgin Islands. Our member districts educate nearly 8 million students in more than 12,000 schools with a collective budget of \$80 billion. CUBE helps urban school board leaders find solutions to challenges at the local level and seeks to improve their policymaking effectiveness. CUBE creates a forum for urban school board members to share innovative practices through issues seminars, conferences, legislative advocacy, research projects, professional networking opportunities, specialized publications, and local governance and policy assistance.



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