

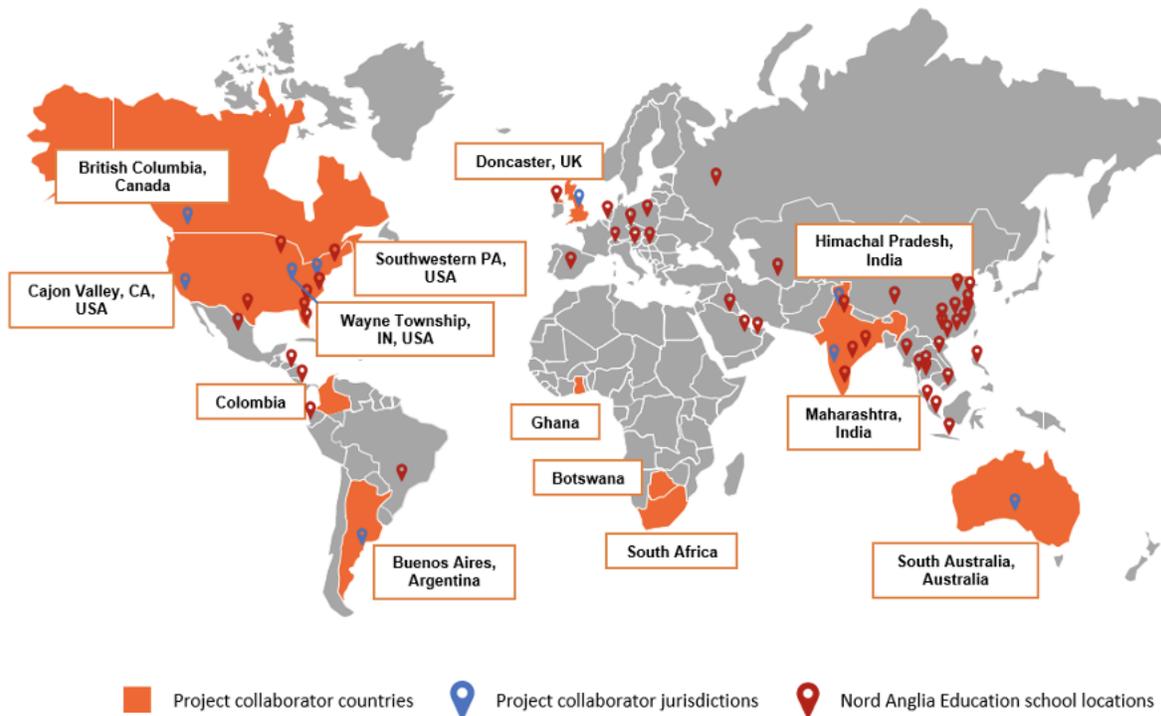
## PERSPECTIVES FROM PARENTS IN THE METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WAYNE TOWNSHIP, INDIANA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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### FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION NETWORK

In January 2020, the Center for Universal Education at Brookings (CUE) launched a new project focused on family and parent engagement in education.<sup>1</sup> The project emerged

<sup>1</sup>The suggested citation for this report is: Winthrop, R., Ershadi, M., Harrington, G., & Partington, S. (2021, March). *Family engagement in education network technical report: Perspectives from parents in the Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township*. Center for Universal Education at Brookings.

out of CUE's work on harnessing [education innovations](#) to address inequality and help all young people, regardless of the community in which they are born, develop the full breadth of competencies and skills they will need to thrive in work, life, and citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2019, CUE conducted consultations across 15 countries with 50 decisionmakers –from ministers of education to school leaders– that were focused on advancing teaching and learning strategies that supported whole child development or as some call it the development of academic plus 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. A recurring theme from the consultations was a desire of decisionmakers to have more and better strategies for engaging parents and families. Together with 41 project collaborators across 10 countries, members of CUE's [Family Engagement in Education Network](#), CUE has been exploring what it takes to build strong family-school partnerships especially in contexts striving to address inequality and deliver a broad suite of skills and competencies for their children.

## **EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES**

The COVID-19 pandemic caused mandatory shutdowns and mass disruption of schooling worldwide. In the Union States of America, over 50 million students enrolled in pre-kindergarten to grade 12 were affected. Educators responded to the crisis by rapidly shifting their in-class lessons online so that students could continue to learn remotely. As a result, parents<sup>2</sup> and families have been given a front row seat to how and what their children learn 'in school,' and academic outcomes and student success hinge on parent involvement now more than ever before. The coronavirus-related school closures propelled new and necessary ways of teaching and learning, but despite educator's efforts, [statewide polls](#) show that 90% of parents are worried that their children are falling behind academically.

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<sup>2</sup> We use the term parent throughout to denote a child's parent, guardian, or caregiver.

# METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WAYNE TOWNSHIP

An overview of the Metropolitan School District (MSD) of Wayne Township is outlined below, including demographics, a summary of schools in the district, and a description of key district initiatives.

## Demographics

The MSD of Wayne Township is located in Marion County in Indianapolis, Indiana. It serves almost 16,500 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The demographics of the MSD of Wayne Township are as follows (“50 facts,” 2019; IDOE, n.d.):

*Table 1. Demographics of MSD Wayne Student Population.*

| <b>Race/Ethnicity</b>         | <b>% of Students</b> |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Black                         | 35.5                 |
| Hispanic                      | 28.7                 |
| White                         | 28.8                 |
| Multiracial                   | 6.1                  |
| <b>Special Services</b>       |                      |
| Free/Reduced Lunch            | 75                   |
| Special Education             | 14                   |
| Gifted and Talented Education | 9.7                  |
| Limited English Proficiency   | 17.4                 |
| Career and Technical Program  | 19.2                 |

Approximately 22% of the population of children ages 5-17 in the MSD of Wayne Township live in poverty, according to federal standards (“SAIPE,” 2019). Between 2014 and 2018, the median household income in Marion County was \$46,692 (“Quick Facts,” n.d.).

## District Mission

The MSD of Wayne Township mission statement reads: “Provide multiple opportunities for learning, that meet or exceed the present and future goals and aspirations of our students, in partnership with our community.” The power of community building and engagement for student success is included as a district belief and is also named as one of MSD Wayne’s core strategies (“MSD of Wayne Township District Vision,” 2020).

## Schools

There are 21 schools in MSD of Wayne Township: one preschool, four PreK-6 schools, seven K-6 schools, one school spanning from grades 6-12, two middle schools serving students in grades 7 and 8, one ninth grade center, two high schools serving students in grades 10-12, one special education K-12 school, one virtual education high school, and one vocational high school where students in grades 11 and 12 can attend career preparation classes for half of the day and spend the remaining half-day at their home high school (“MSD 2019-20 Information Guide,” n.d.; Public School Review, n.d.).

In 2019, the MSD Wayne four-year graduation rate was 89%, slightly above the state’s total graduation rate of 87% (IDEO, n.d.). MSD Wayne public schools have an average math proficiency score of 40% and reading proficiency score of 50%, compared to the statewide averages of 54% and 63%, respectively (Public School Review, n.d.).

## Family Engagement

### ParentSquare

MSD Wayne uses the ParentSquare app for school communication with parents through email, text, and app notifications. Through ParentSquare, parents can message with teachers, staff, and other parents, participate in group messages, comment on school postings, sign up to volunteer and more, all in their preferred language (“MSD Wayne Uses ParentSquare,” 2020).

### Adult Education

Based in Ben Davis High School, MSD Wayne's Adult Education program offers adults free classes in reading, writing, language and math to complete high school equivalency, as well as career and technical education classes in areas such as manufacturing, hospitality, and construction. Specific courses are also offered to support new English learners ("MSD 2019-20 Information Guide," n.d.).

## Key Initiatives

### Area 31 Career Center

As a STEM certified school, Area 31 Career Center is a vocational high school open to students in grades 11 and 12 across several school districts, including MSD Wayne. Program areas include Advanced Manufacturing, Business, and Technology, Communication, Construction and Manufacturing, Health Sciences, Human Services, Public Safety, and Transportation. Enrolled students spend half of their day at the Area 31 Career Center and the remaining half-day at their home high school. Students can choose to follow a path of preparation for a career straight out of high school or can earn college credits that can be transferred following high school graduation ("Area 31," 2019).

### Ben Davis University High School

BDUHS is a partnership between the MSD Wayne and Vincennes University that allows students to earn a high school diploma as well as an Associate Degree in one of four degree-programs: Liberal Arts, Business Management, Information Technology, and Health Careers. Eligible sophomores interested in attending BDUHS participate in an application and selection process. For students who are Wayne Township residents, there are no tuition costs for enrollment in BDUHS university courses, although there may be textbook and course fees ("Ben Davis," 2020).

### Achieve Virtual Education Academy

Since 1999, MSD of Wayne Township has operated Indiana's only online high school program from an Indiana public school, called Achieve Virtual Education Academy. Achieve Virtual is a free, online high school program for youth and adults. Students can

attend Achieve Virtual full-time or use Achieve Virtual courses as a way to accelerate learning or recover lost credits in order to earn AP, Honors, and Core 40 Indiana diplomas (“Achieve Virtual,” 2020).

## **SURVEY OF PARENTS**

From June 3, 2020 to July 22, 2020, CUE distributed a 38-item online survey to parents and caregivers of students enrolled at the MSD of Wayne Township. A total of 522 primary caregiver responded to our survey. To collect data representative of the population of the MSD of Wayne Township, we determined our sample sizes before commencing data collection by assuming that the student population in this jurisdiction was equal to the parent population, thus using a conservative approach, which dismissed the possibility of siblings. We set our confidence level at 95% and margin of error at 5 % according to guidelines for research activities (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Based on our apriori calculations, we aimed to collect 376 responses from primary caregivers in the MSD of Wayne Township. All survey items were optional such that respondents could choose to provide a response to a subsequent question without having responded to a previous question. As a result, the response proportions per survey item options do not always sum to 100%.

## **SURVEY AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

A selection of survey responses is presented below. The order in which the results are presented here does not reflect the order in which the respondents completed the questions on the survey. CUE will however share the survey instrument upon request. Please send inquiries to: [leapfrogging@brookings.edu](mailto:leapfrogging@brookings.edu).

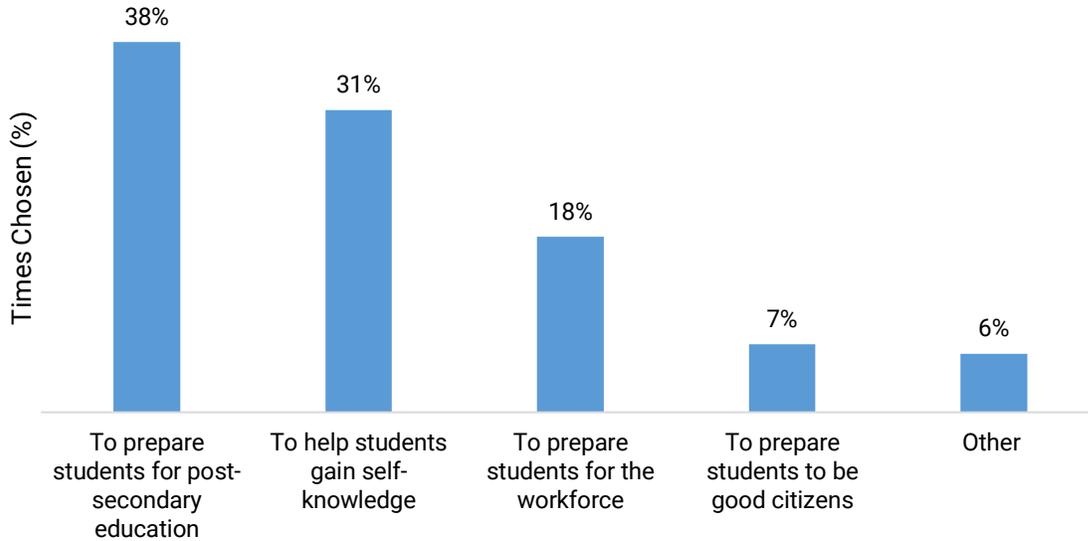
## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank our project collaborators at the Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township, without whom we would not have been able to conduct this survey.

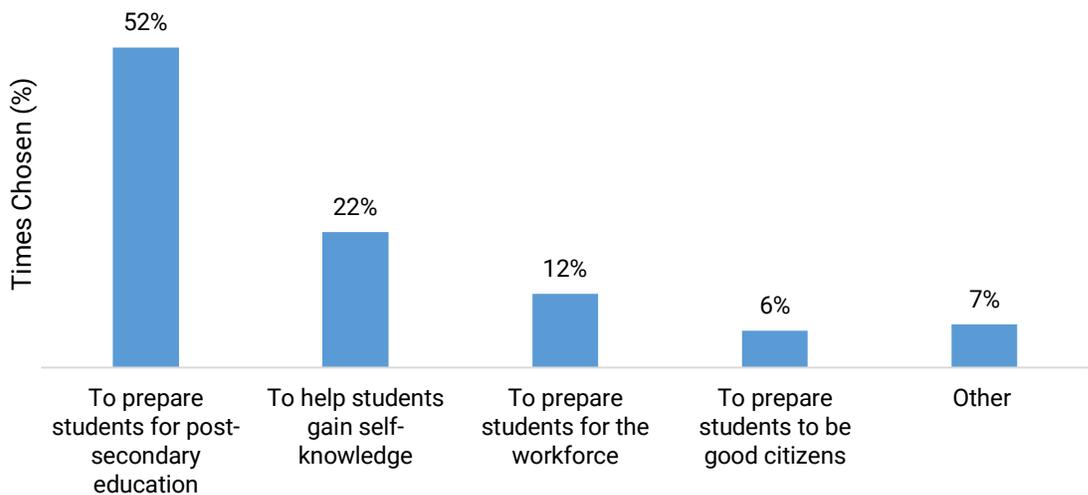
## SURVEY FINDINGS

### Parents' beliefs on the purpose of school and perceived alignment with teachers

**I believe the most important purpose of school is:  
(sample size=437)**

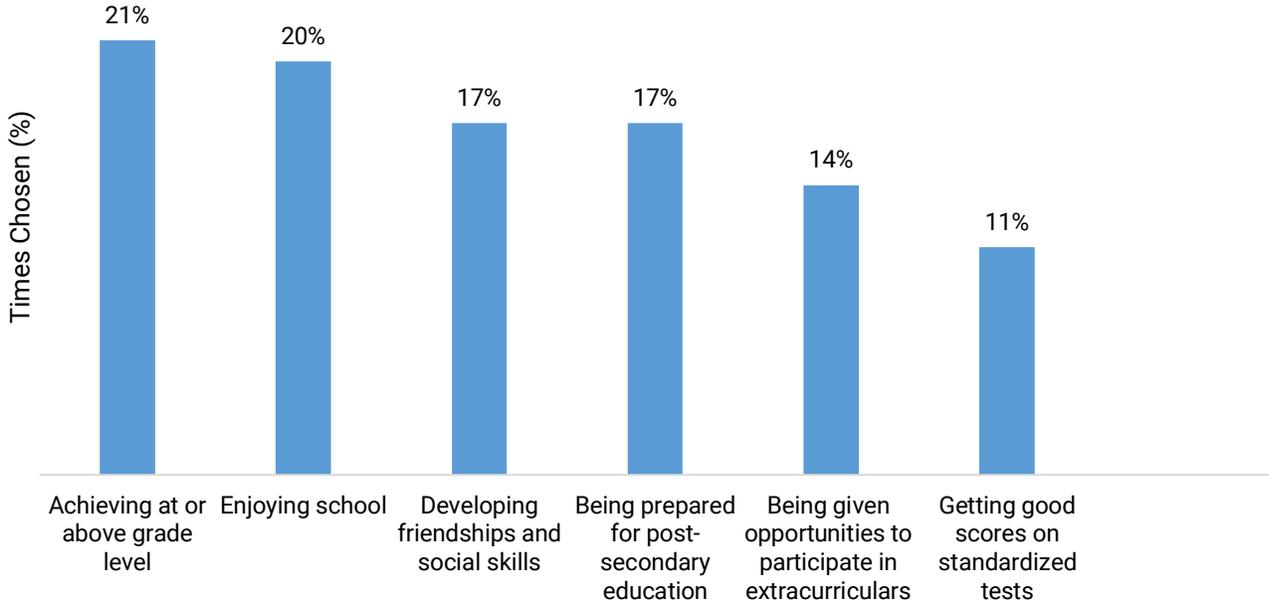


**I believe that my child's educators (e.g. school administrators and teachers) believe that the most important purpose of school is:  
(sample size=417)**



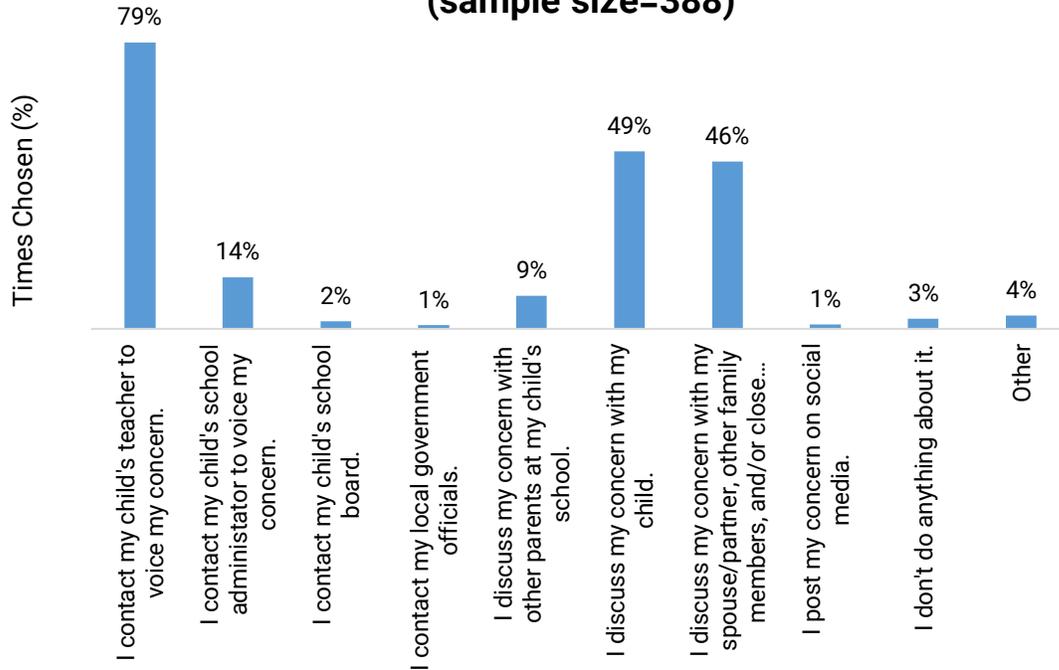
Parents' indicators of quality and perceived alignment with educators

I am satisfied with my child's education when my child is:  
(sample size=418)

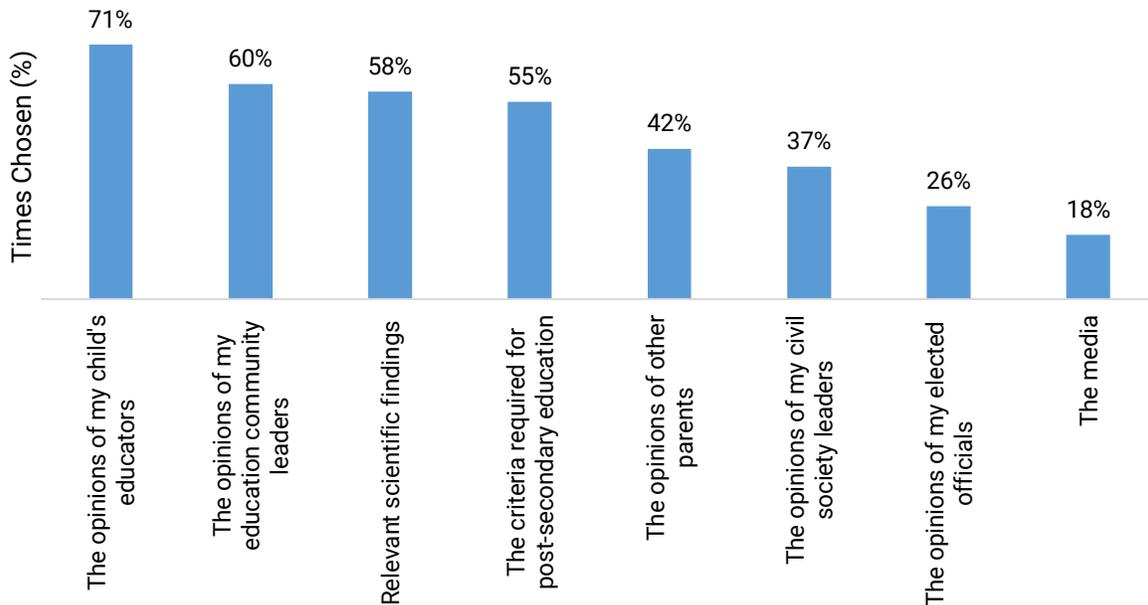


## Parents' sources of information

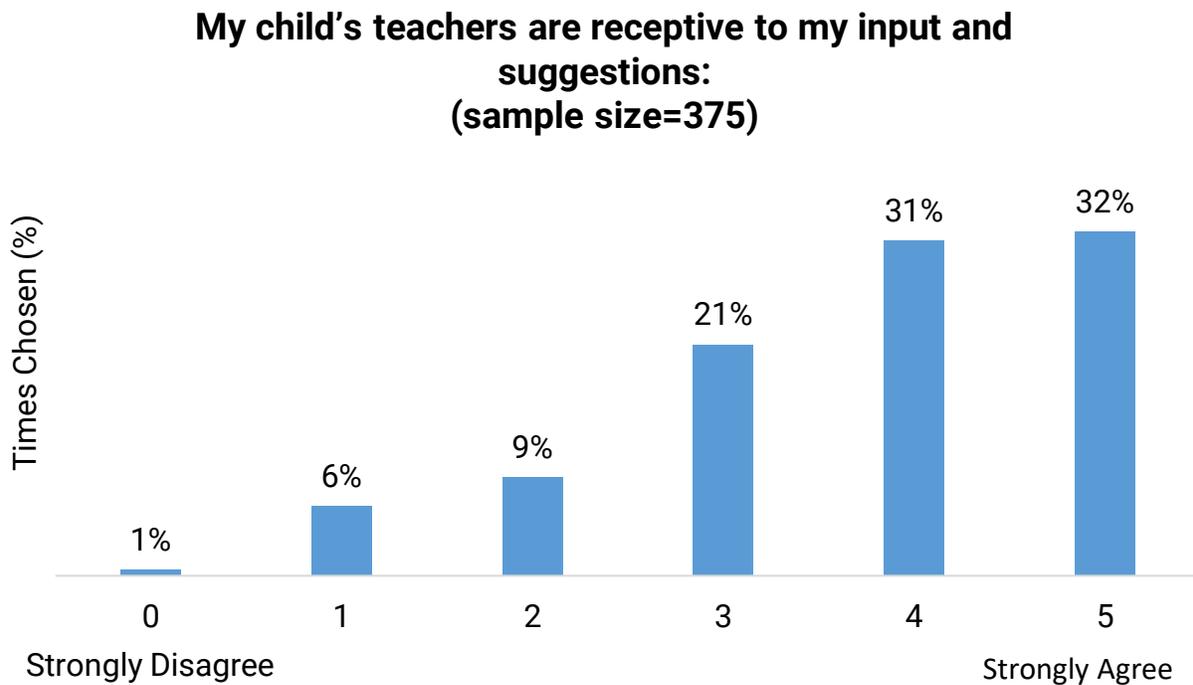
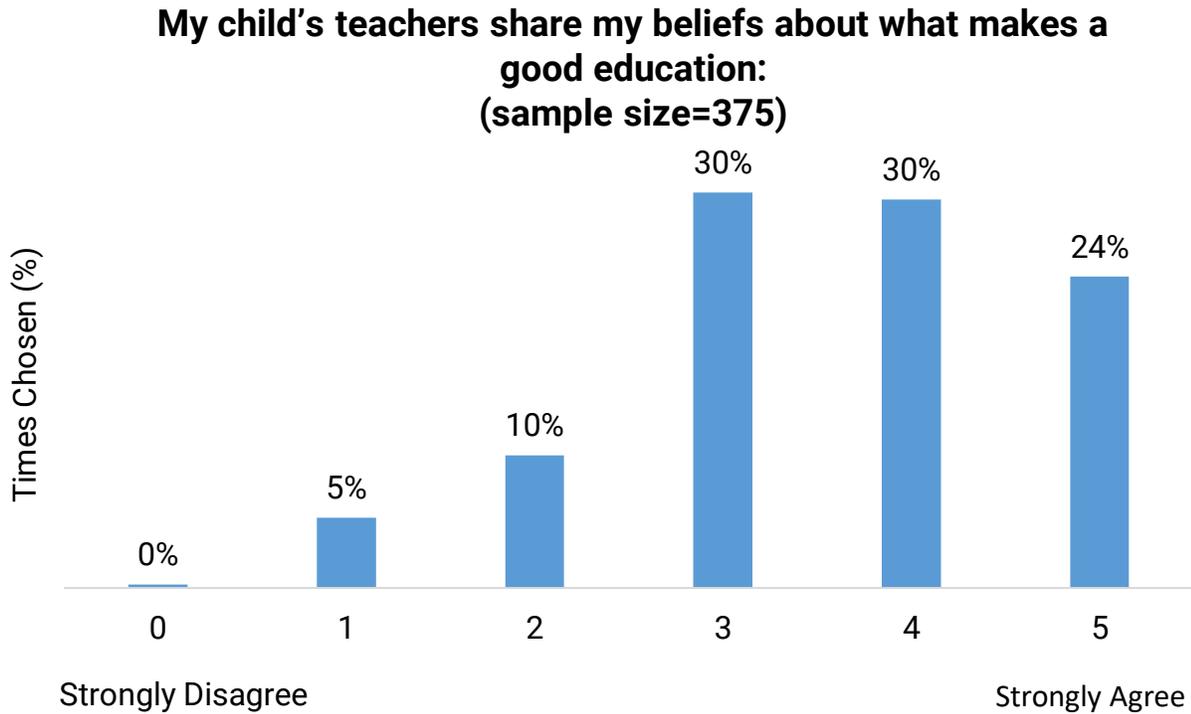
**How do you react when something about your child's education bothers or upsets you?**  
(sample size=388)



**What influences your perspective about what makes for a good quality education for your child?**  
(sample size=354)

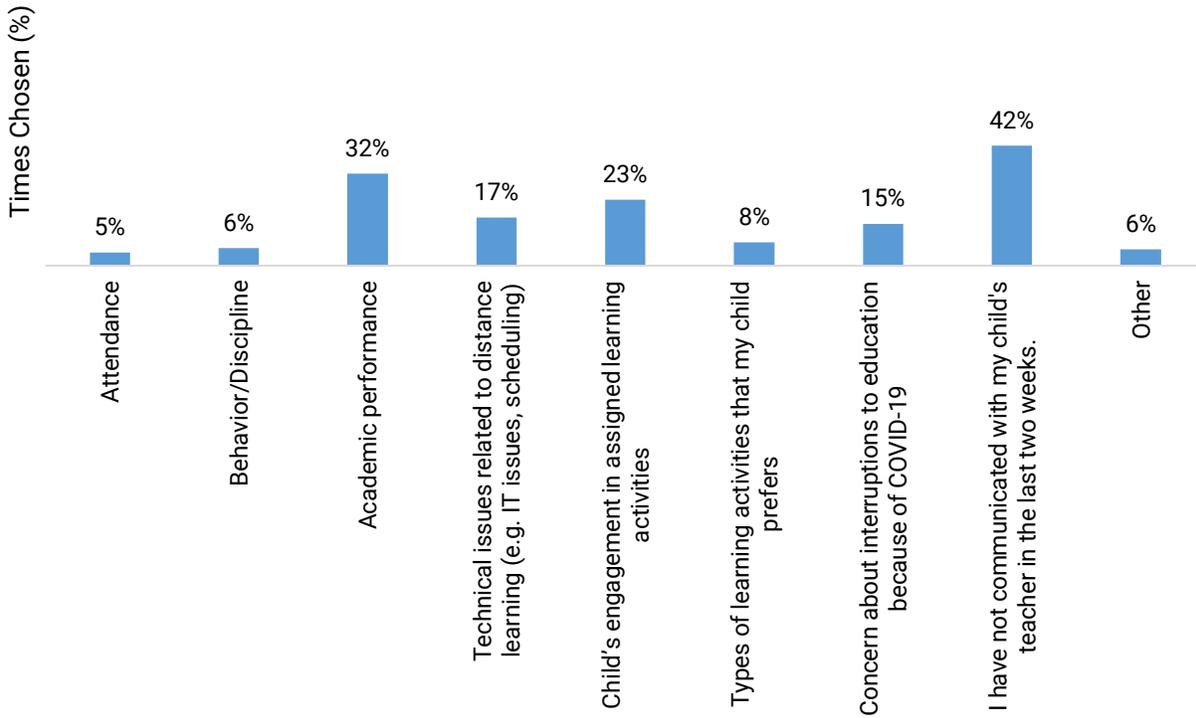


## Parents' trust of and perceived alignment with teachers

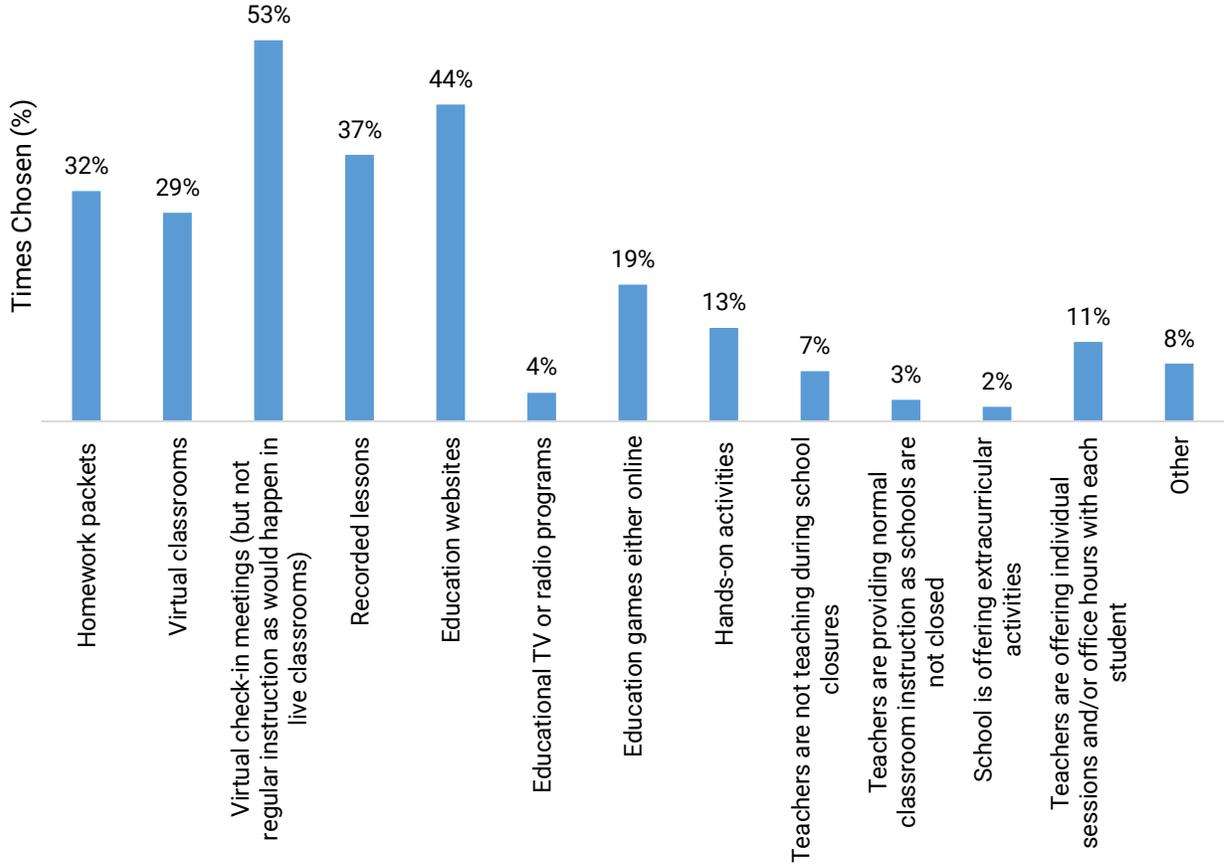


## Parents' opinions on pedagogy

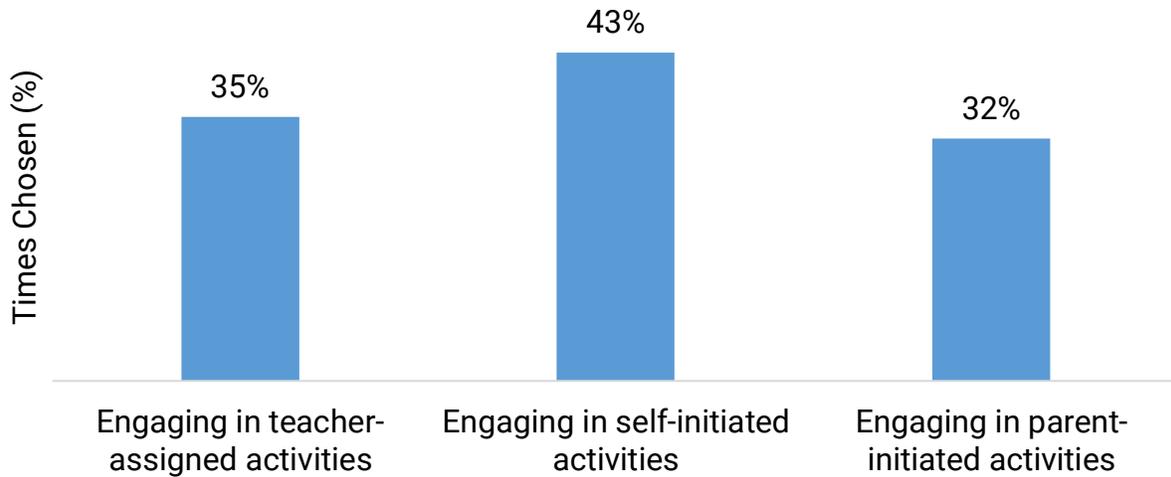
**In the last two weeks, what have you communicated to your child's teacher about?  
(sample size=390)**



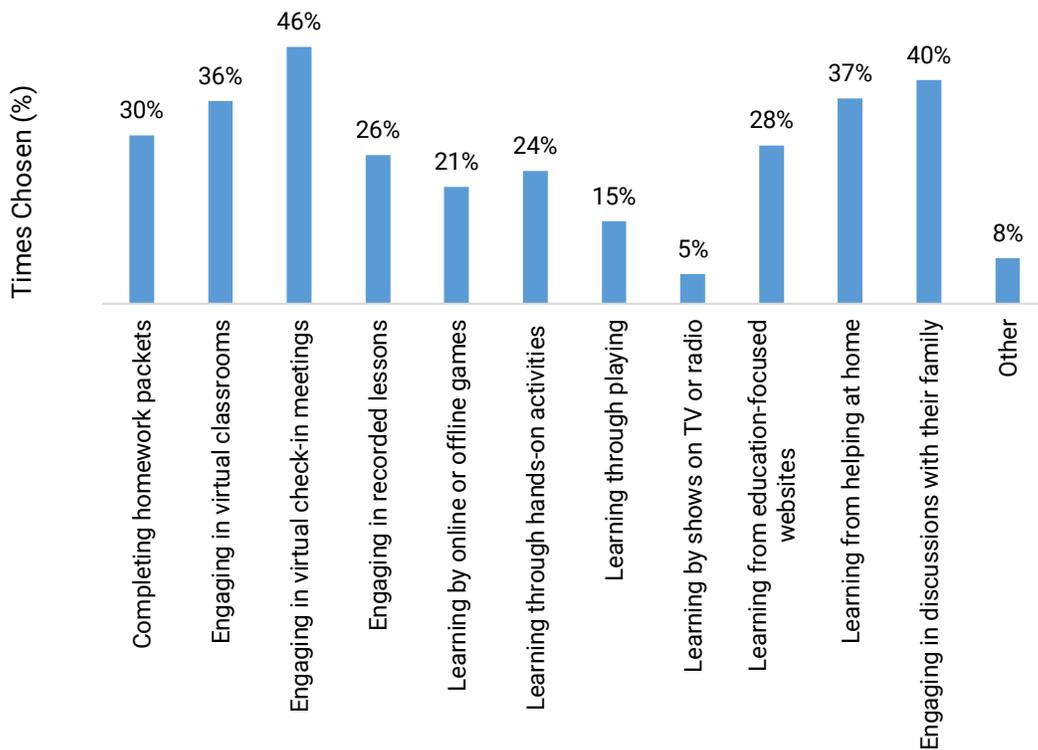
**In the last two weeks, how are your child's teachers continuing to teach right now?  
(sample size=483)**



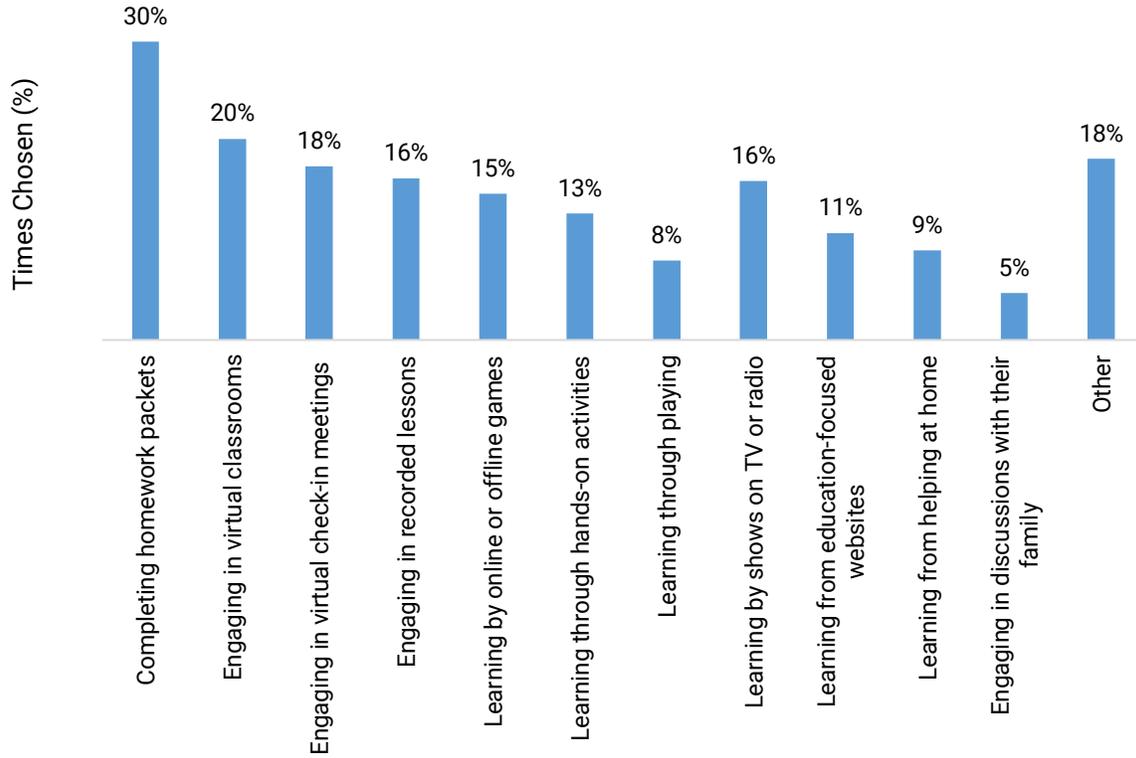
**How is your child spending the majority of their time right now?  
(sample size=466)**



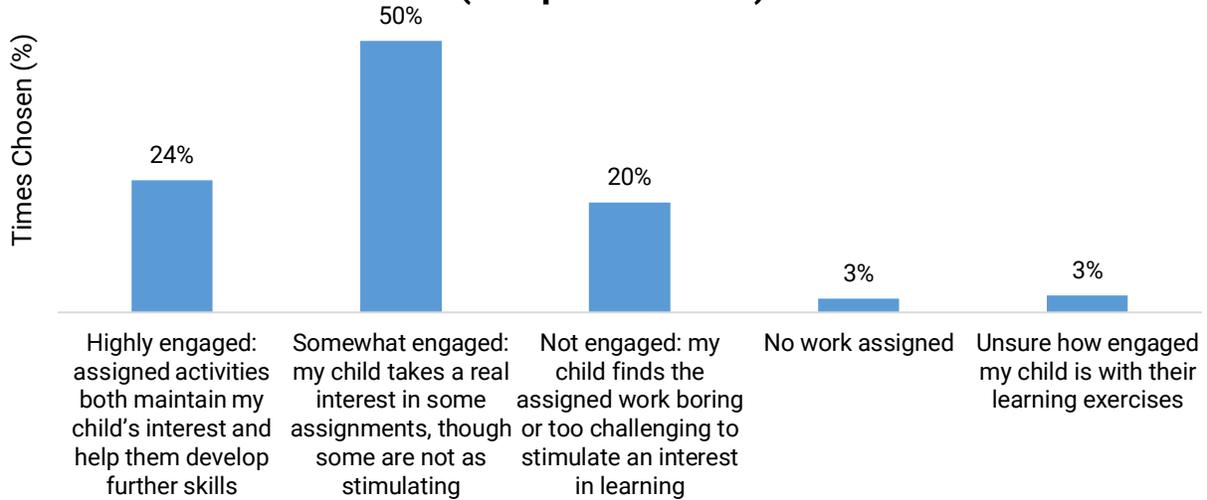
**When you think about the different ways in which your child is or was learning during their school closure, which are you MOST satisfied with?  
(sample size = 458)**



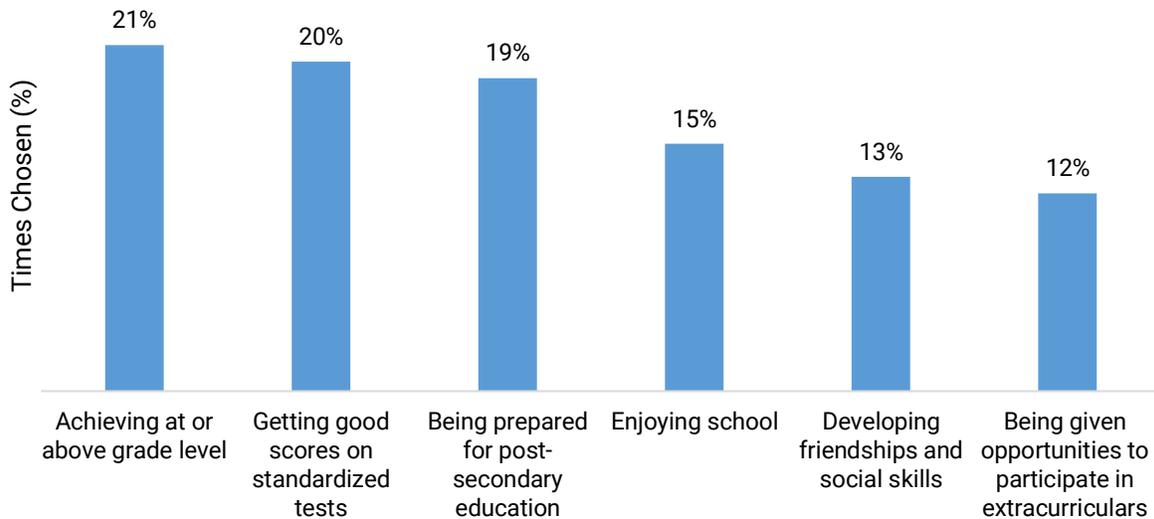
**When you think about the different ways in which your child is or was learning during their school closure, which are you the LEAST satisfied with?  
(sample size=397)**



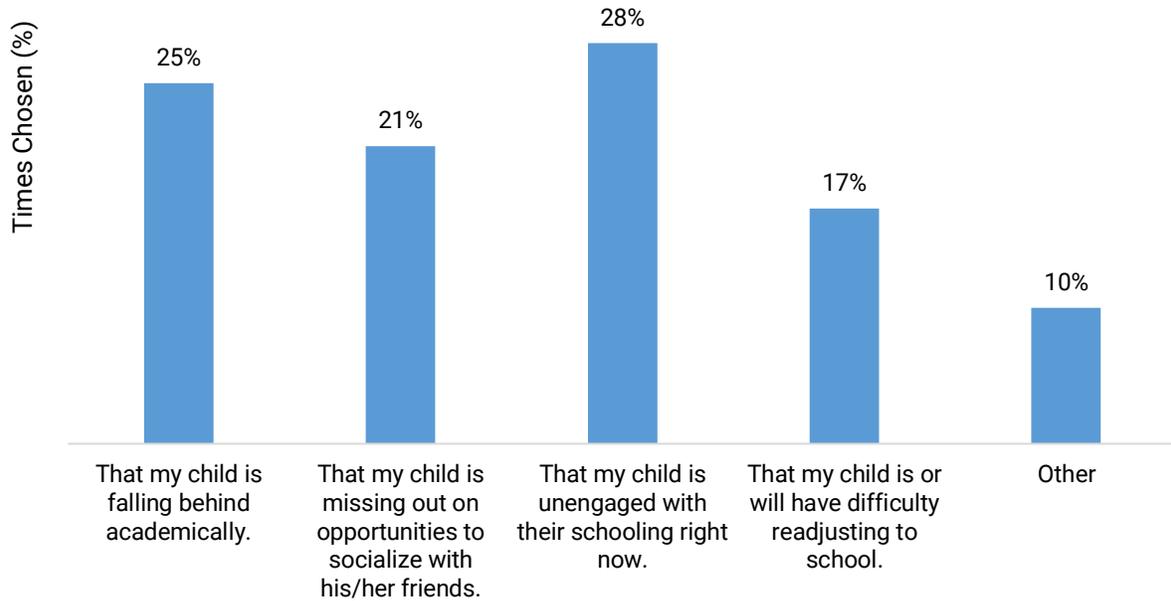
**How engaged is your child with the activities their teacher has assigned (given what you view as an expected level for their age)?**  
**(sample size=387)**



**I believe that my child's educators (e.g. school leaders and teachers) are satisfied with their students' education when their students are:**  
**(sample size=378)**

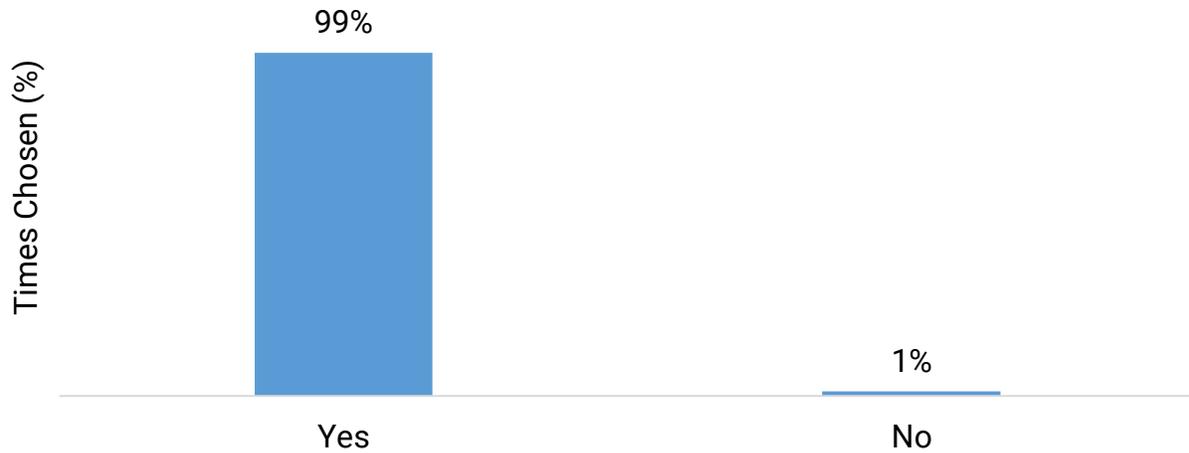


**With regards to your child's education right now, what worries you the MOST?  
(sample size=389)**

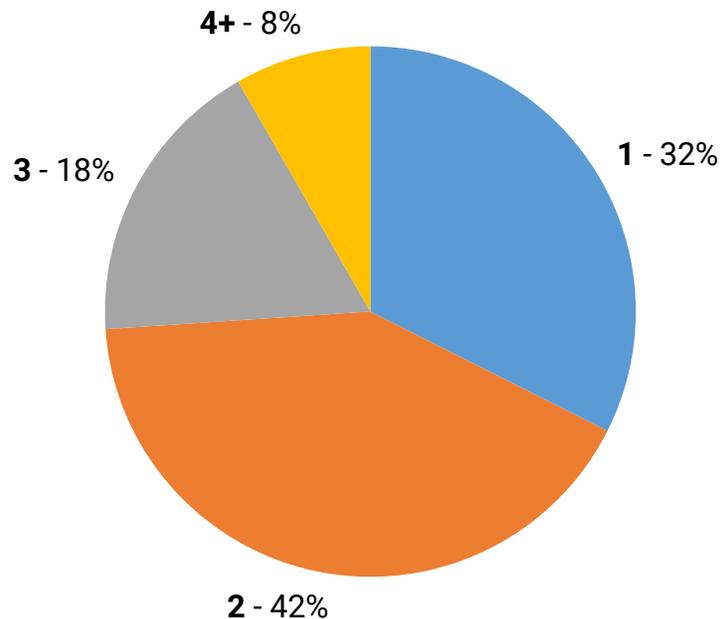


## Demographics of survey respondents from MSD Wayne Township

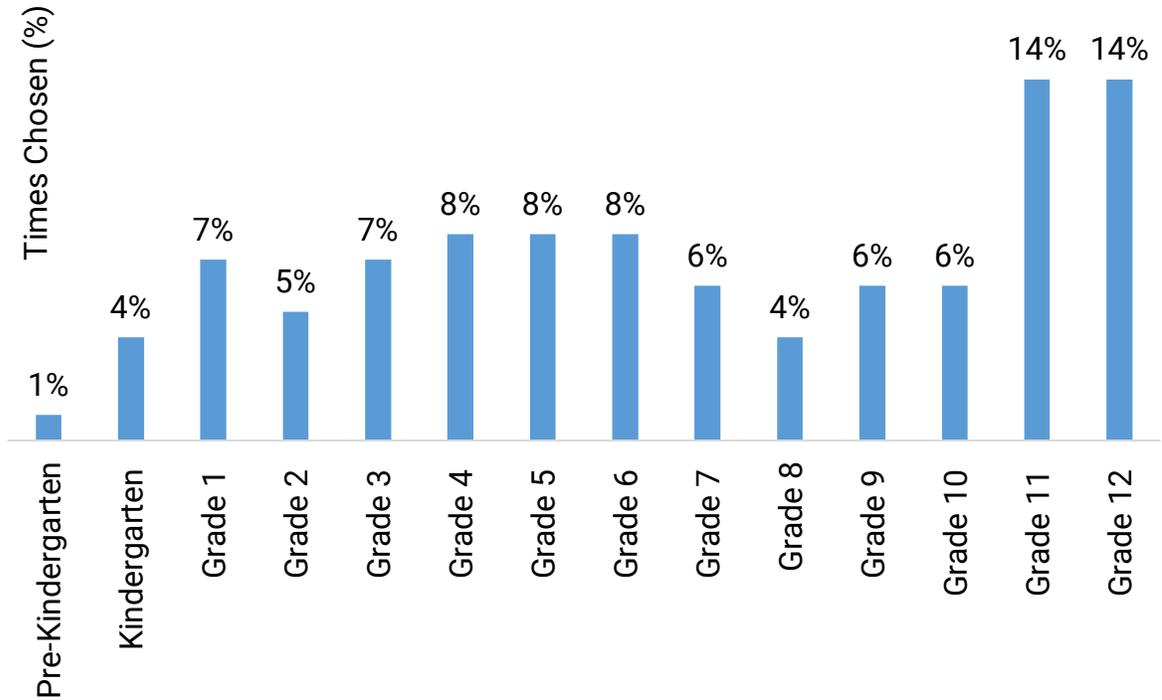
**Are you your child's primary caregiver (i.e., the adult who assumes the most responsibility in caring for the health and well-being of the child)?**  
(sample size=366)



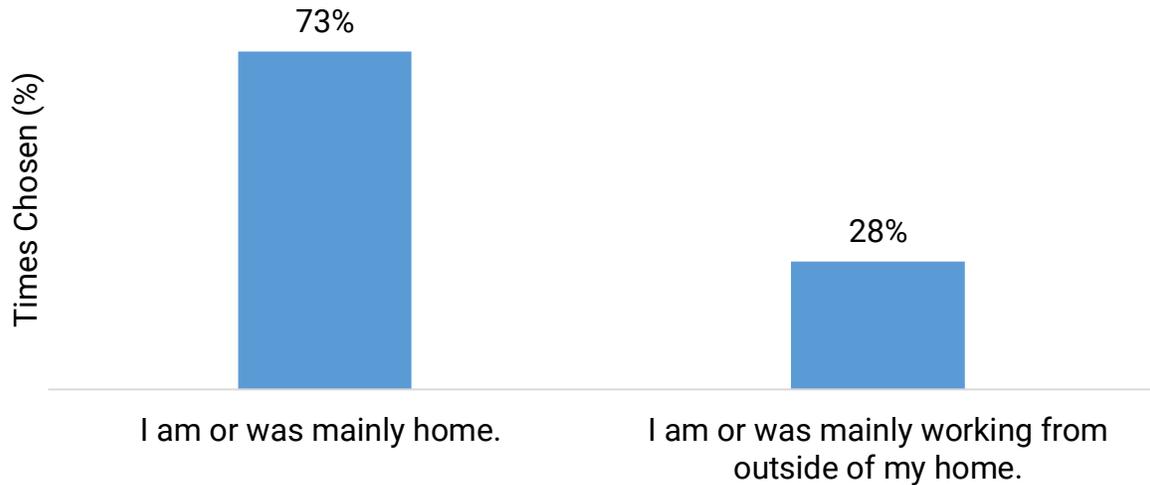
**How many children do you have who are currently in preschool through grade 12 in school and live at home with you?**  
(sample size=518)



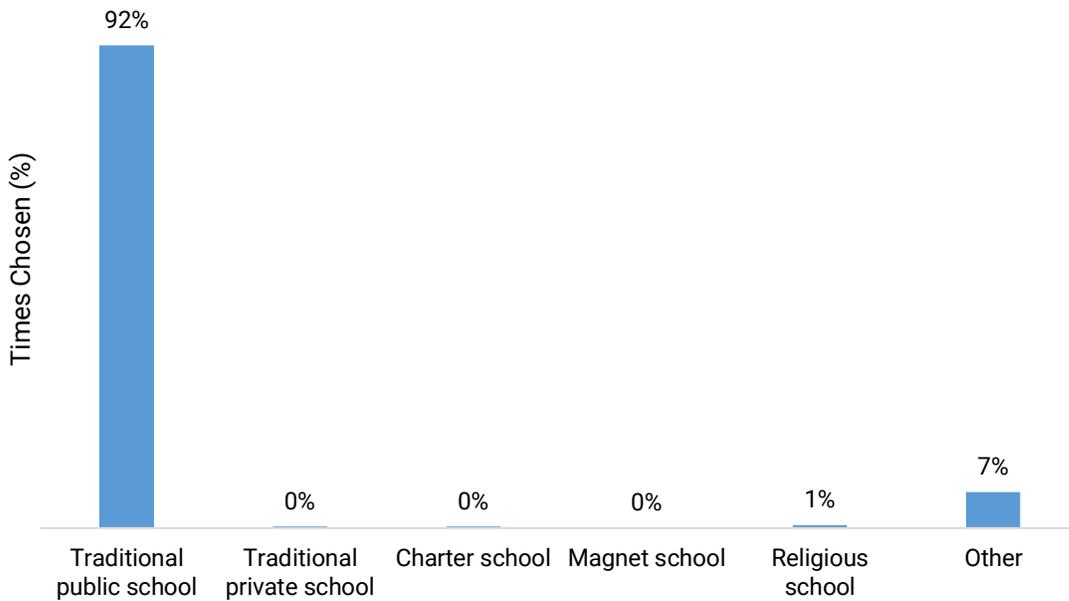
**In which grade is your oldest child who is enrolled in school  
(preschool to grade 12)?  
(sample size=516)**



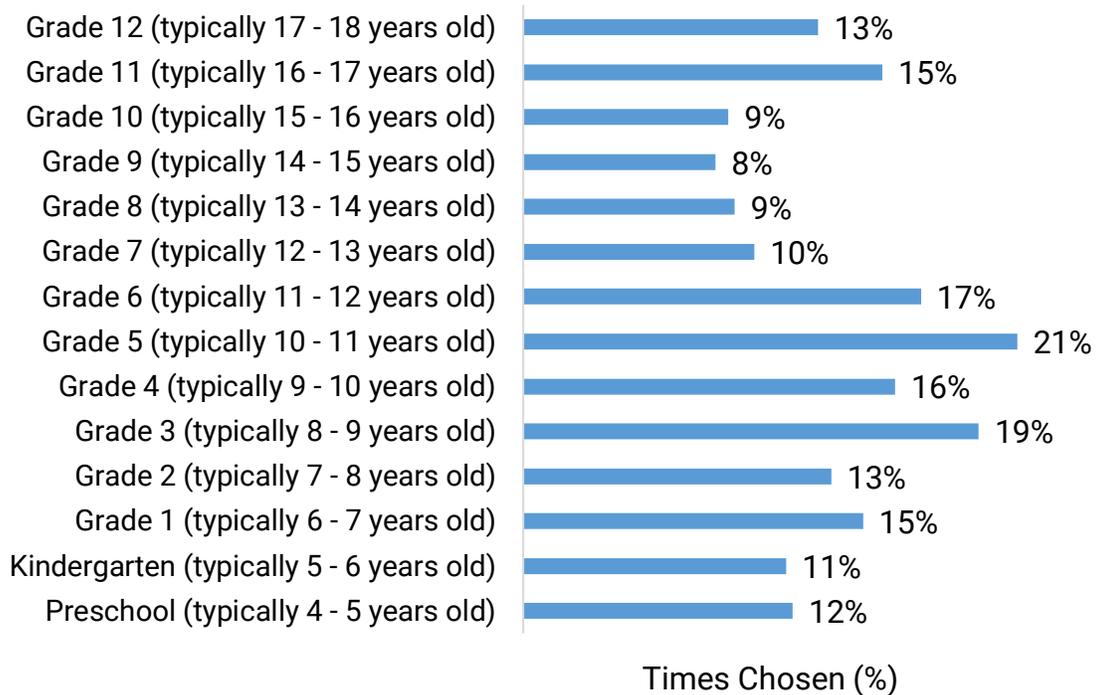
**During your child's school closure, are or were you mainly  
home (whether employed or unemployed) or are or were  
you mainly working from outside your home?  
(sample size=367)**



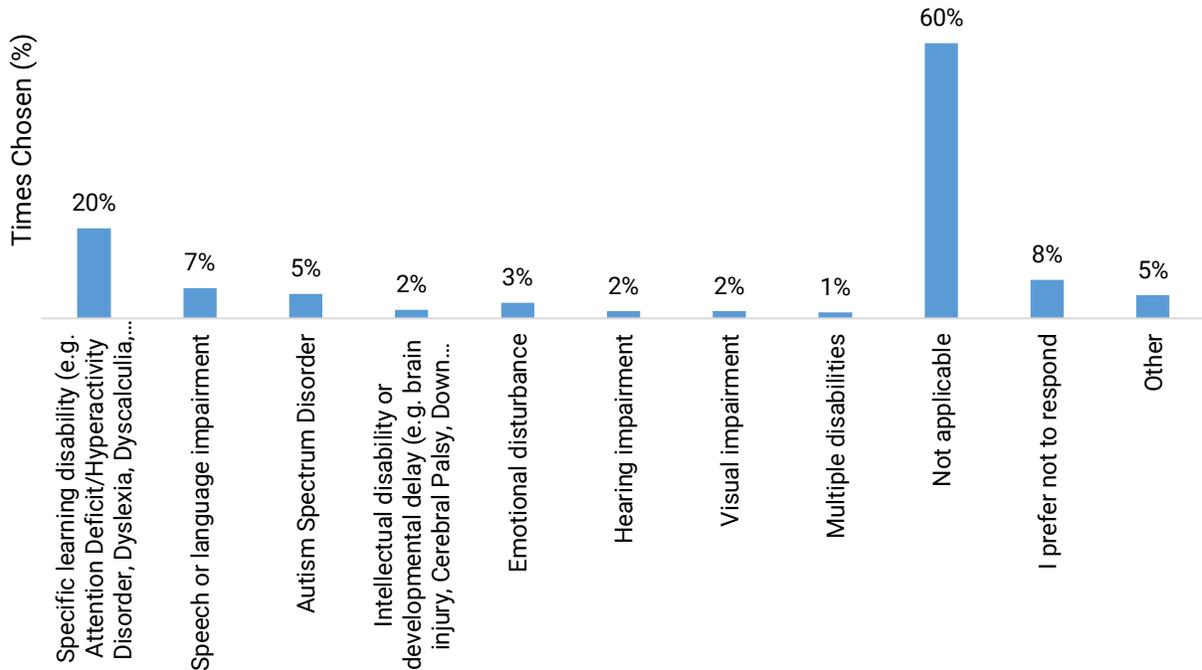
**In what type of school is your child enrolled?  
(sample size=365)**



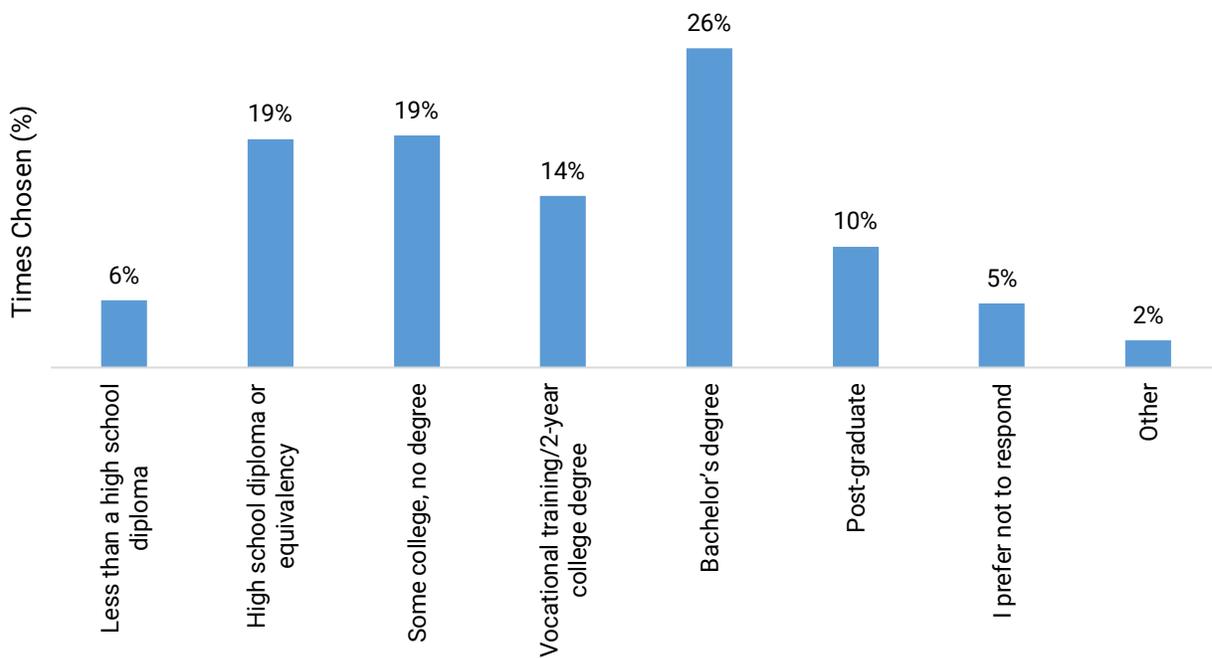
**In what grade(s) is/are all your school aged children? For  
this question, please consider all your children:  
(sample size=366)**



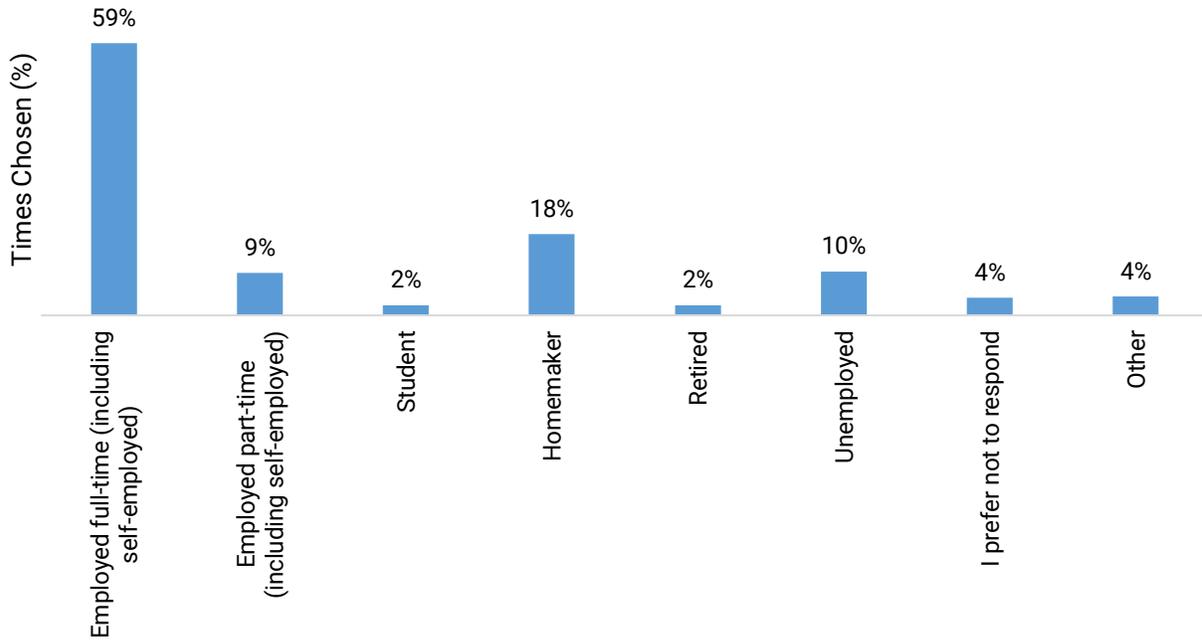
**Has your child been diagnosed with any of the following?  
(sample size=321)**



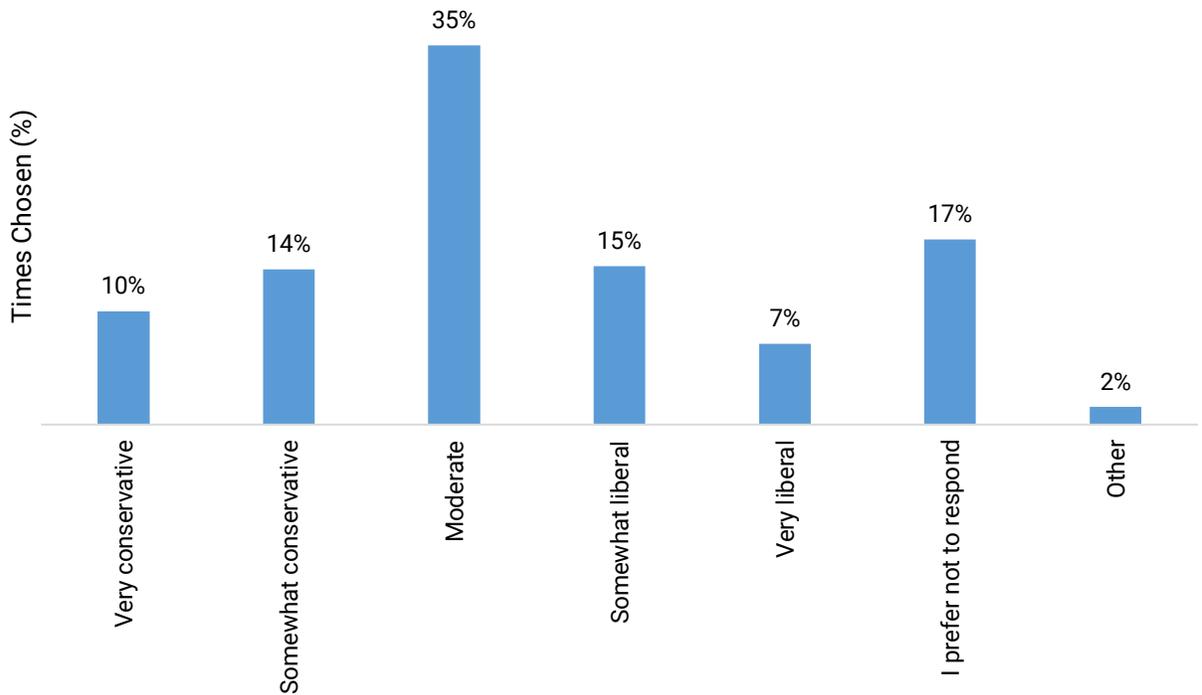
**What is your highest level of education attained?  
(sample size=366)**



**What is your current employment status?  
(sample size=368)**

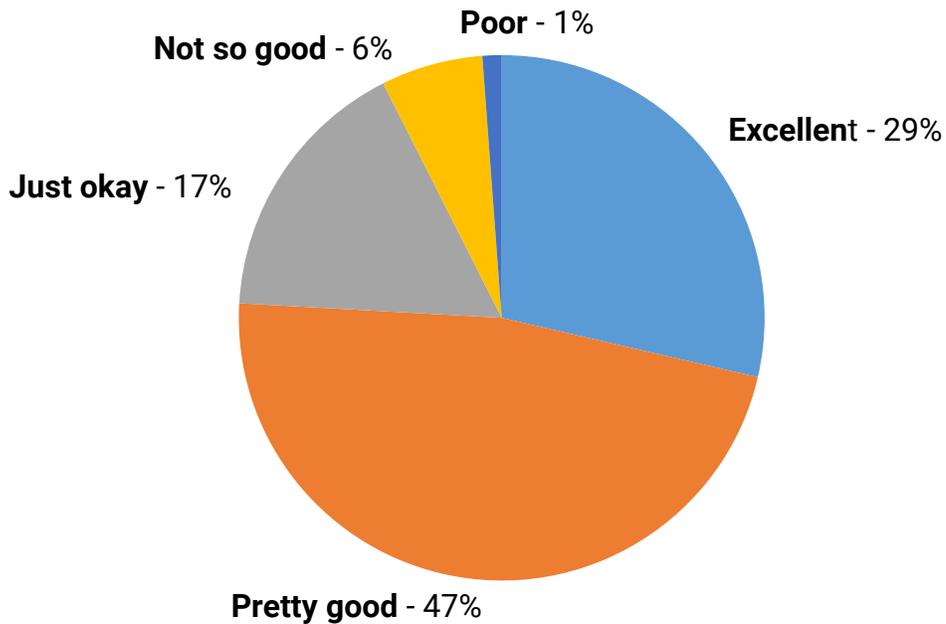


**When thinking about social issues, do you consider yourself to be?  
(sample size=365)**

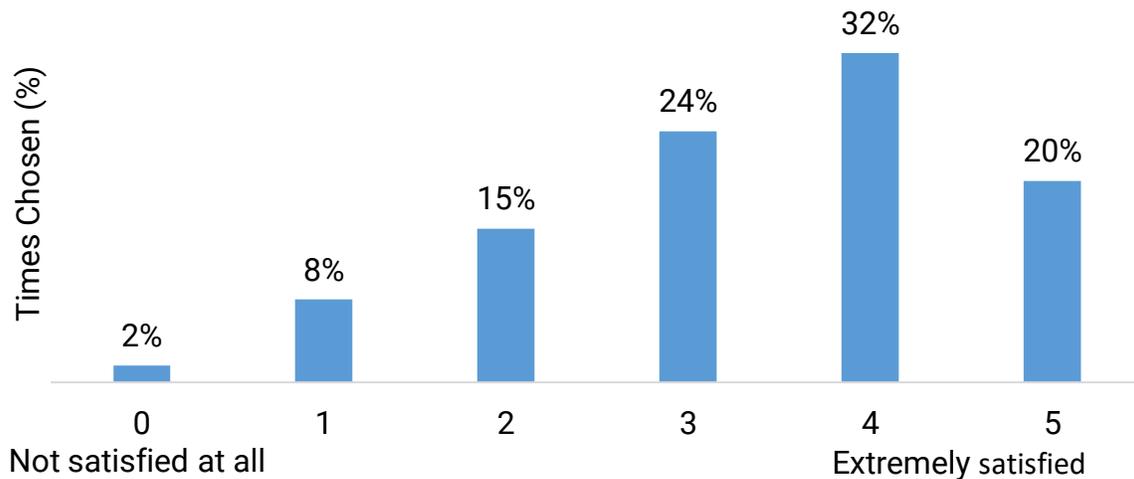


## Parents' satisfaction with their children's education

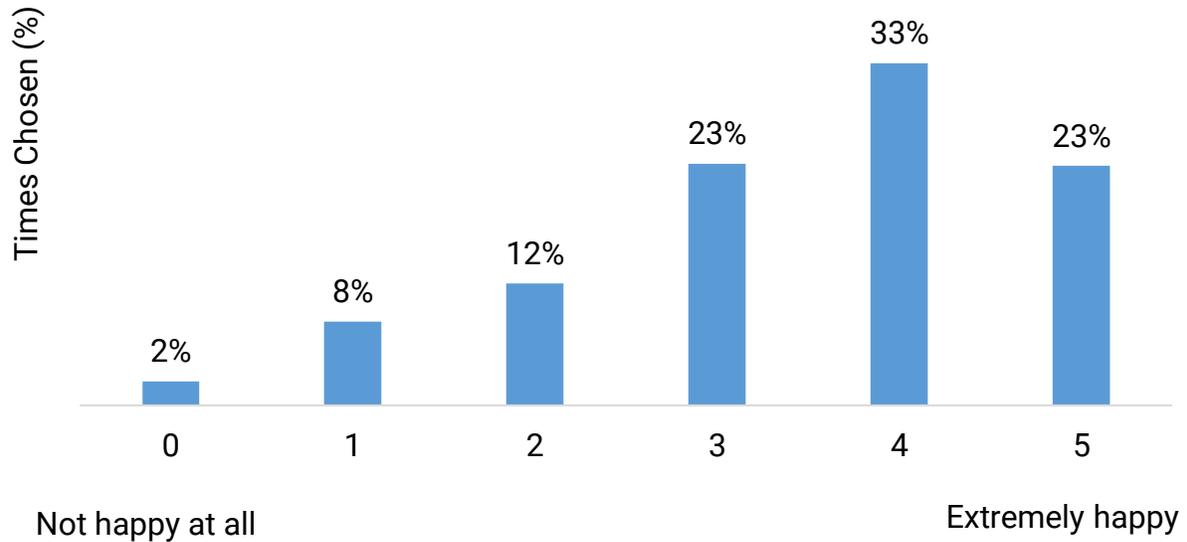
How would you rate the education that your child is getting from their school right now?  
(sample size=510)



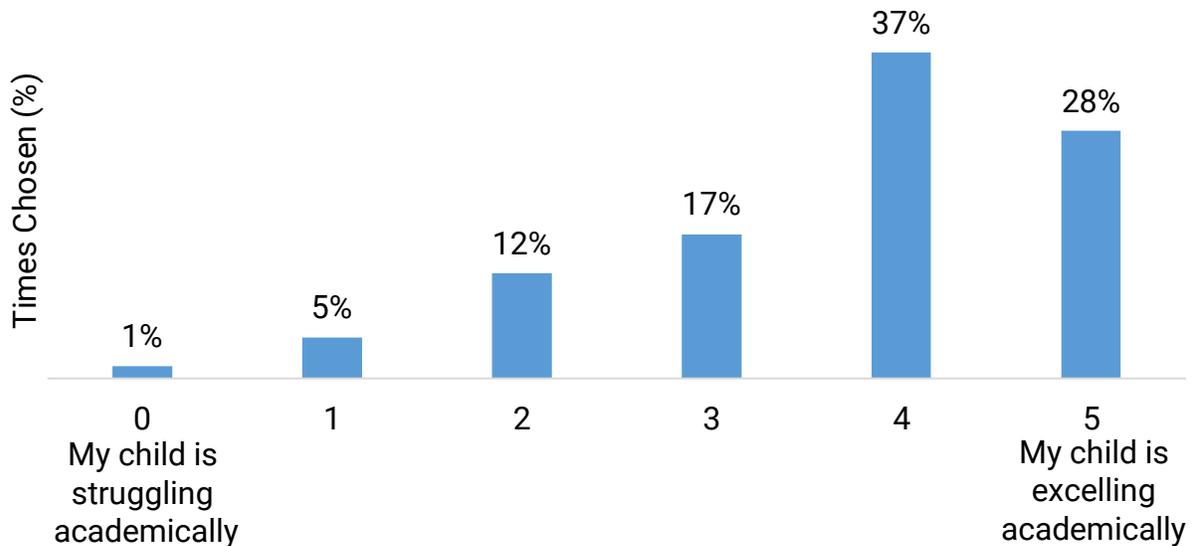
At the time of this survey, how satisfied are you with your child's education?  
(sample size=437)



**At the time of this survey, how happy is your child with their education?  
(sample size=440)**



**How well do you believe your child is doing academically right now?  
(sample size=492)**



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