

Exploring solutions to capacity issues among stakeholders

A Research Report to the Surrey School District



Territorial Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that Surrey Schools resides on the traditional, unceded, and shared territories of Coast Salish peoples: The q̓íc'əy'—Katzie, the q'w̓a:n̓'ən'—Kwantlen and the SEMYOME — Semiahmoo First Nations: the stewards of this land since time immemorial.

Contents

4	About the research
7	Key findings
10	Key take-aways
19	Recommendations
22	Detailed findings
23	The school experience, issues and observed changes
32	Awareness and comprehension of the issue
39	Potential actions to address the issue
54	Attitudes and opinions
63	Staying informed: Methods and preferences
71	Respondent profile



About the research

Survey methodology

An online survey was conducted among a sample of 7,600 students, parents/caregivers and staff members in the Surrey School District.

Respondents included a mix of parents/caregivers (4,595), staff (3,551) and students (108), with some minor overlap (i.e., some staff are also parents/caregivers).

The survey was made available in six languages and each respondent could complete the survey in the language of their choice: English, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Punjabi and Tagalog.

Approximate response rate: ~10%

The margin of error for a random sample of 7,600 respondents, assuming a population of 150,000 (i.e., the approximate size of the Surrey School District community) is +/- 1.10% at the 95% confidence level.

The survey was conducted from November 20 to 29, 2023.

On average, it took 26 minutes to complete.

Focus group methodology

A set of five focus group discussions were held on December 6 and 7, 2023 – three sessions among parents/caregivers of students in the Surrey School District and two sessions among students.

- **Parent/caregiver sessions:**

- Recruitment: A question in the quantitative survey asked parents/caregivers to express interest in participating the focus groups. Those who expressed interested were then contacted and invited to attend.
- Attendance: Between 35 and 45 parents/caregivers attended each of the three sessions. Parent/caregiver participants represented a range of schools attended by their child/children.
- Duration and process: Parent/caregiver sessions were two hours in duration and followed a discussion guide.

- **Student sessions:**

- Recruitment: Students were recruited by the School District from student leadership councils across the district.
- Attendance: More than 25 students (all from grades 10, 11 and 12) participated in each session.
- Duration and process: Student sessions were 90 minutes in duration and also followed a discussion guide.



Key findings

Survey respondents report high levels of familiarity and concern about the capacity issue facing the Surrey School District.

- The survey showed that insufficient space is viewed to be the most pressing issue facing the District – a greater proportion of respondents select it as the most pressing issue (35%) compared to the ‘lack of support for students with diverse abilities and needs’ (30%) and ‘insufficient staffing’ (21%).
- Nine-in-ten (89%) respondents describe themselves as familiar with the capacity issue. In fact, 59% describe themselves as “very familiar” with the capacity issues in the District.
 - Staff are most familiar (95%), followed by parents/caregivers (85%) and then students (70%).
- Concern about capacity challenges is pervasive and strong: 98% of survey respondents describe themselves as at least somewhat concerned. More notably, more than three-quarters (77%) report that they are “very concerned.”
- The extent and depth of concern about capacity issues is reflected in the high level of agreement with the statement: “The situation is unlike others we have seen...and requires immediate attention” (87% agree and fully 61% strongly agree with this view).

The focus groups suggest stakeholders do not fully appreciate the urgency and depth of the issue and lack understanding about the proposed solutions.

- Most parents/caregivers acknowledge that continuing population growth in Surrey is a primary factor in the capacity challenges facing the District. However, few appreciate the extent to which the population growth is unprecedented, and the need to respond quickly with unconventional solutions.
- Both parents/caregivers and students hold misperceptions about several of the potential options intended to alleviate capacity challenges. These misperceptions notably influence receptivity to some options.
 - For instance, many lack understanding about the online/hybrid learning options. With regards to hybrid learning, few understood the option allowed for up to 50% of a course to be completely remotely from home. It was generally understood by students as taking some courses online and some in-person. Discussions about fully online classes suggest some parents/caregivers incorrectly assume this means all classes would be 100% online, rather than having fully online courses as part of their courseload.
- This sense that capacity is under control may stem from the current ‘doubling up’/‘split grade’ strategies. As well, the long-term use of portables might suggest to parents/caregivers that capacity issues tend to come and go.

It is difficult for parents/caregivers and students to separate capacity issues from concerns about staffing.

- In the focus group sessions, both parents/caregivers and students were fixated on the potential implications of some options for teachers.
- Parents/caregivers and students shared concerns that point to a current lack of teacher availability, suggesting to them that teachers are already stretched and the District is under-staffed. Naturally then, they are concerned that increased capacity will exacerbate the issue.
- The information conveyed in the tested options is insufficient to provide parents/caregivers with assurances about the role and time requirements for teachers and, by extension, the quality of education available to their children.
- While some parents/caregivers recognize that teacher-student ratios are mandated by government, many do not. As a result, they make incorrect assumptions that some of the strategies being considered (notably, the division of the school day into shifts, extended days, and a tri-semester approach to meeting space challenges) will require teachers to work longer days, double shifts, or to be employed on a tri-semester basis. As a result, many tend to dismiss these options as undesirable and unrealistic.

Stakeholders strongly believe provincial funding is needed, although blame for the capacity issue is attributed to both the District and the government of BC.

- Not surprisingly, there is overwhelming agreement (94%) that the province must provide more funding so that the District is not responsible for implementation of action items.
- Further, 84% agree that it is the province's, not the District's, responsibility to tackle the issue by building more schools.
- Very few respondents (17%) accept the view that the issue of capacity could be resolved with current funding levels. In fact, more than two-thirds reject this view, with a majority (52%) "strongly disagreeing" that existing funding is sufficient to solve the problems.

The focus groups revealed that the finer details related to funding are poorly understood. Most parents/caregivers are unaware of the specific budgetary roles of the District and the provincial government, and that operational and capital budgets are distinct and serve different purposes. Some focus group participants believe the District is at least partially responsible for the issue, due to poor planning (*"Suddenly it is urgent? Why did the District not see this coming?"*)

Parents/caregivers see the proposed solutions as temporary fixes. They wish to know what is the long-term plan and to better understand timelines.

- For most parents/caregivers and students, the options under consideration are all short-term solutions that do not address the fundamental issue of a lack of schools in the District.
- Parents/caregivers had difficulty evaluating the potential strategies without knowing the intended timelines for implementation.
- For most, the ideal solution lies in building new schools within the Surrey School District. While most recognize that short-term solutions are required, support for these can potentially be bolstered if there is a commitment to a longer-term solution that definitively addresses capacity challenges within the Surrey School District.

Survey findings indicate that only an extremely small proportion (4%) of respondents see the capacity issues as short-term. In fact, more than nine-in-ten (92%) disagree, with eight-in-ten (79%) “strongly disagreeing” with the statement.

Stakeholders believe action is needed to rectify the capacity issue, and there is a preference for those solutions perceived to be least disruptive.

- Survey findings show there are clear preferences for some actions over others. Receptivity to potential options to address the capacity challenges indicate that those actions that limit incursions to the lives of students, parents/caregivers and teachers are the options most accepted by respondents.
 - Top three supportable actions: prefabricated/modular additions and schools; building on district-owned sites; and boundary changes.
 - Three actions respondents are most opposed to: fully online classes, school shifts and tri-semester schooling.
- Fully 84% agree with the statement that “despite the extreme capacity issues, the Surrey School District must avoid any actions that disrupt the schedules of all stakeholders” (i.e., students, parents/caregivers, teachers). The strength of opinion on this issue is notable: six-in-ten (58%) “strongly agree” with this view.

The focus groups echoed the desire for less disruptive solutions, shedding light on some of the reasons for the expressed concerns about the tested strategies.

- Both parents/caregivers and students concede that they are ‘creatures of habit.’ Some of the potential options tested (e.g., busing, shifts, tri-semester schooling) disrupt established routines/schedules and present significant challenges around family schedules, parents/caregivers’ work schedules, daycare requirements and social/extracurricular activities for students. To add to this, coming out of the pandemic, parents/caregivers are looking for stability and normalcy for their kids, and don’t want to face any further, poignant changes.
- As was evident in the quantitative survey, those options that are least likely to cause incursions to long-term and established household/family routines are most likely to be supported.
- Participants expressed significant resistance to measures that place a burden on parents/caregivers’ schedules and/or family life: Dividing the school day into two shifts, busing, tri-semester schooling are rejected by both parents/caregivers and students.
- Other concerns about the proposed solutions center around the perceived implications on student safety, access to resources, availability of green space and views about quality and number of portables.

Parents/caregivers wish to be kept informed and participate in decision-making as it relates to the selection of measures to alleviate capacity issues.

- Parents/caregivers participating in the focus groups expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with the information available to them about the options to address the capacity challenges. Many reported that they want more information and that they want it sooner than they are receiving it.
- The survey reveals that parents/caregivers have clear preferences about how they would like to be contacted. Fully 84% indicate that email is their preferred method of communication for information about future developments related to the capacity issues.
- When asked who they would like to receive information and updates from, the District is the most popular option, with 53% expressing a desire to hear from this source. A smaller proportion (30%) would like to receive information from the province.



Key take-aways

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1

Survey respondents report high levels of familiarity and concern about the capacity issue facing the Surrey School District.

2

The focus groups suggest stakeholders do not fully appreciate the urgency and depth of the issue and lack understanding about the proposed solutions.

3

It is difficult for parents/caregivers and students to separate capacity issues from concerns about staffing.

4

Stakeholders strongly believe provincial funding is needed, although blame for the capacity issue is attributed to both the District and the government of BC.

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Parents/caregivers see the proposed solutions as temporary fixes. They wish to know what the long-term plan is and to better understand timelines.

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Stakeholders believe action is needed to rectify the capacity issue, and there is a preference for those solutions perceived to be least disruptive.

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The focus groups echoed the desire for less disruptive solutions, shedding light on some of the reasons for the expressed concern about the tested strategies.

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Parents/caregivers wish to be kept informed and participate in decision-making as it relates to the selection of measures to alleviate capacity issues.



Recommendations

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- **Keep stakeholders, especially parents/caregivers, informed:** Overall, the provision of information is an important component of an expected consultative process. Parents/caregivers want to understand why options are necessary, the efficacy of solutions, the potential implementation timeline and the implications for children and families. The findings suggest that a substantial informational effort is required if stakeholders are to be convinced of the efficacy of some of the options (notably, the division of the school day into shifts, extended days, and a tri-semester approach to meeting space challenges).
- **Be forthright about staffing/teacher implications:** Any information about potential options to address capacity issues must be specific, detailed and outline implications (or lack thereof) for teachers. It will be important for the District to acknowledge that it fully understands that more teachers are required, that it is actively working to meet this requirement, and that the addition of new teachers will preserve the mandated teacher-student ratio. If parents/caregivers can be convinced that options do not place an undue burden on teachers or on the attention that teachers devote to their students, they will be more inclined to assess options based on their objective merit.

Recommendations

- **Solicit further input from stakeholders, especially parents/caregivers:** Continue to provide opportunities for stakeholders to provide input into and ask questions about the proposed solutions to the capacity issue. Parents/caregivers are especially concerned and would likely respond positively to town halls or other forums where they can share their thoughts and have their questions answered.
- **Share more detail and specificity about the parameters of online learning:** This will be necessary if both parents/caregivers and students are to accept either of the online learning models under consideration.
- **Consider other jurisdictions:** Continue to explore what other jurisdictions are doing to address capacity and consider providing case studies or some other form of communication to illustrate how those jurisdictions are making the implemented solutions work.
- **Pursue the three most positively received mitigation strategies (prefabricated modular additions or schools, boundary changes and building schools on district-owned sites in undeveloped communities):** While stakeholders expressed concerns about each of these three strategies, they can be implemented with less disruption to stakeholders relative to the other solutions tested. In the absence of additional funding, continue to give these solutions serious consideration, while addressing the concerns raised by stakeholders in this research.

Recommendations (cont'd)

- **Provide information to parents/caregivers around advocacy on this issue:** The findings suggest that parents/caregivers could be stimulated to act as advocates for their children and their children's schools, if continually reminded that the provincial government plays a pivotal role in funding capital budgets (including new school construction). Parents/caregivers are frustrated and would likely appreciate a means to coming together to rally and apply pressure to the provincial government.
- **Provide funding information to parents/caregivers:** Many parents/caregivers are confused about funding -- including where it comes from and how it can be used. Additional information about funding would help them understand the challenges the District is facing. Providing such information might also be helpful in dispelling any existing misperceptions around who has the responsibility and the wherewithal to find solutions for the current and ongoing capacity issues.
- **Continue to request additional funding from the provincial government – and ensure that stakeholders are aware of these requests:** Increased funding will be needed to build new schools – the only strategy viewed by parents/caregivers as a long-term solution to the capacity issue. It is also important that these requests are communicated to parents/caregivers, as doing so reassures these stakeholders that the District is taking action to obtain funding.









Detailed findings



The school experience, issues and observed changes





Most pressing issue facing the District

	Total	Parents/ caregivers	Staff	Students
Insufficient space to accommodate the growing number of students	 35	44	21	51
Lack of support for students with diverse abilities and needs	 31	22	44	12
Insufficient staffing	 21	19	24	11
The after-effects of the pandemic on students	 4	4	4	7
Safety/security issues	 3	4	1	15
Another issue	 7	7	6	4

Note that staff are more likely to select 'lack of support for students with diverse abilities and needs' as the most pressing issue facing the District. One might hypothesize that they are most exposed to challenges of this nature. In the parent focus groups, a few participants mentioned (unaided) that the capacity issue is resulting in a lack of support for students with diverse abilities and needs. When probed in the student focus groups about who might be most affected by the potential options examined, both groups of students identified LST (Learner Support Team) students: *"Those in LST or those with needs for extra support. A lot of these [proposed solutions] would be tougher for them."*

Q9. What do you see as the most pressing issue facing the Surrey School District?
 Base: Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

Incidence of observing changes at the schools in the past three years

	Total	Parents/ caregivers	Staff	Students
Yes – observed changes	 63	53	79	32
No	 9	11	4	21
Not sure	 23	29	12	44
Not applicable	 6	7	5	3

Following this question in the survey an open-ended question asked: *What changes have you noticed? Please list those changes below.* The open-ended responses generally aligned with the concerns that emerged in the focus groups: School capacity/spacing issues, staff shortages, lack of funding for schools and lack of sufficient supports for students (such as resources for those with diverse abilities and needs). Linked to the capacity challenges and staff concerns, there was a misperception that class sizes are increasing.

Q10. Aside from the impact of the pandemic on the education system, have you observed any changes at the schools you are familiar with in the district in the past three years?
 Base: Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

“*Best things*” about the school experience today, according to students

- **Diversity:** The the mix of students exposed them to a variety of cultures, to lots of different students, and to a variety of interests: *“There are lots of different students. You get to learn about things, about their holidays and about different lifestyles.”*
- **Benefits of extracurriculars:** Including student clubs and activities that *“let us explore a lot of things.”* With a wide variety of extracurriculars and clubs available, students saw benefits beyond socialization and opportunities to share interests with a broad mix of students: *“They give you lots of opportunities to take on leadership positions, in clubs or other activities.” “[Extracurriculars and clubs] give you a chance to meet different people with lots of different interests. And to try new things.”*

“Challenges” about the school experience today, according to students

Virtually all students in both focus groups agree that the experience in schools today is “worse” compared to two years ago. When asked to specify how the experience has worsened, several examples are identified.

- **Overcrowding, especially in hallways and common areas:** *“A lot of times you just can’t move in the hallways.” “There’s no place for lunch. Some of us go to the Aquatic Club for lunch just to find room.”*
- **Fewer opportunities for interaction as it is difficult to bring everyone together in a single assembly due to over-capacity:** as a result, some students feel isolated, left out (a lack of inclusivity) and there is less school spirit. One student shared that in Grandview, there are too many students for them all to be in the gym at the same time – they need separate assemblies for different grades/parts of the school.
- **Prevalence of portables:** *“You feel detached from the school in portables. You don’t feel like you are part of the school.” “[With portables] weather has an effect... Snow, rain. It’s hard to get to them. In summer you have to open all the windows because it’s too hot.”*
- **Perceived lack of courses available:** *“There isn’t a lot of options in courses that I might want;” “When everything is filled to capacity, you don’t have the same choices.”*

“Challenges” about the school experience today, according to students (cont’d)

Virtually all students in both focus groups agree that the experience in schools today is “worse” compared to two years ago. When asked to specify how the experience has worsened, several examples are identified.

- **Less access to people resources**, including one-on-one time with teachers and counsellors: *“In the last two years, it’s harder to contact teachers – even online.” “There’s less one-on-one time with teachers. They have other things to do.”*
- **Concern for younger students**: *“I think younger kids are feeling a little scared or not welcomed. There’s just too many [students]. They can feel lost.”*
- **Challenges related to multiple classes in the same classroom at the same time**: *“In one room, there are three different courses going on at the same time...hard to manage.”*
- **Perceived strain on teachers**: *“It’s tough for teachers, too. There are just too many students to get everything done.” “It takes so long to get stuff marked by teachers. Way longer than before.”*
- **Greater competition for extracurriculars, sports**: *“Some things are really competitive, like sports. Harder to get on [to teams] with so many more people.”*

What students consider to be the ideal school experience

In the student focus groups, participants were asked to complete the following exercise:

Please describe what you see as the ideal school experience. In other words, if we set aside issues around increasing numbers of students and the challenges that may result, what would have been the perfect school experience for you over the last two years?

Key themes emerged in responses to this exercise. Some themes are related to the capacity issue, while others are more general.

Themes related to the school environment that emerged in students' responses included:

Inclusivity: This includes creating a welcoming, caring environment and combatting bullying/discrimination.

- *“A school environment based on a foundation of inclusivity.”*
- *“Being kind to each other in-person and online.”*

Community: Many stressed the importance of having the opportunity to interact with others – including students in other grades – and building school spirit and collaboration through events.

- *“Lots of events and opportunities for the school community to get together and build school culture.”*
- *“Collaboration opportunities with peers outside of my own grade.”*

More space: Although many focused on intangible factors (such as community, flexibility, access to teachers), some also outlined having more space in schools – with several students calling for new schools to be built to address the capacity problem.

- *“Uncrowded hallways and enough time to get to classes without being late.”*
- *“Big open hallways.”*

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Themes related to courses and format that emerged in students' responses included:

Access to courses: This includes greater availability of special classes (such as AP-level courses) and more opportunities to participate in these courses via enhanced scheduling.

- *"No waitlist."*
- *"Running AP/advanced courses over more blocks. Currently, my school has all of the AP classes and advanced classes in the D block of first semester, restricting students' abilities to take more than one."*

Engaging course content: A number of students expressed a desire for more hands-on courses, career-oriented course content and classes that allow them to learn about new subjects.

- *"Hands-on learning environment."*
- *"Variety in courses/programs that allow me to explore different subjects and career paths."*

Flexibility: More flexibility in the learning format – for example, allowing students to have the option for hybrid courses, and catering curriculum to a variety of learning styles.

- *"Choice of hybrid for some people."*

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Themes related to resources and opportunities that emerged in students' responses included:

Access to teachers and guidance counsellors: A number mentioned topics related to more access to teachers, including more attention from and one-on-one time with teachers.

- *“Easier access to school staff.”*
- *“Being able to have that connection and support with teachers.”*

Access to other resources: Although this theme was less common than the above, some students called for greater access to resources such as mental health and other supports, and technology.

- *“Resources for all students like technology, textbooks, etc.”*

Opportunities for extracurriculars: Partly driven by their interest in community and hands-on learning, several students emphasized the importance of extracurriculars:

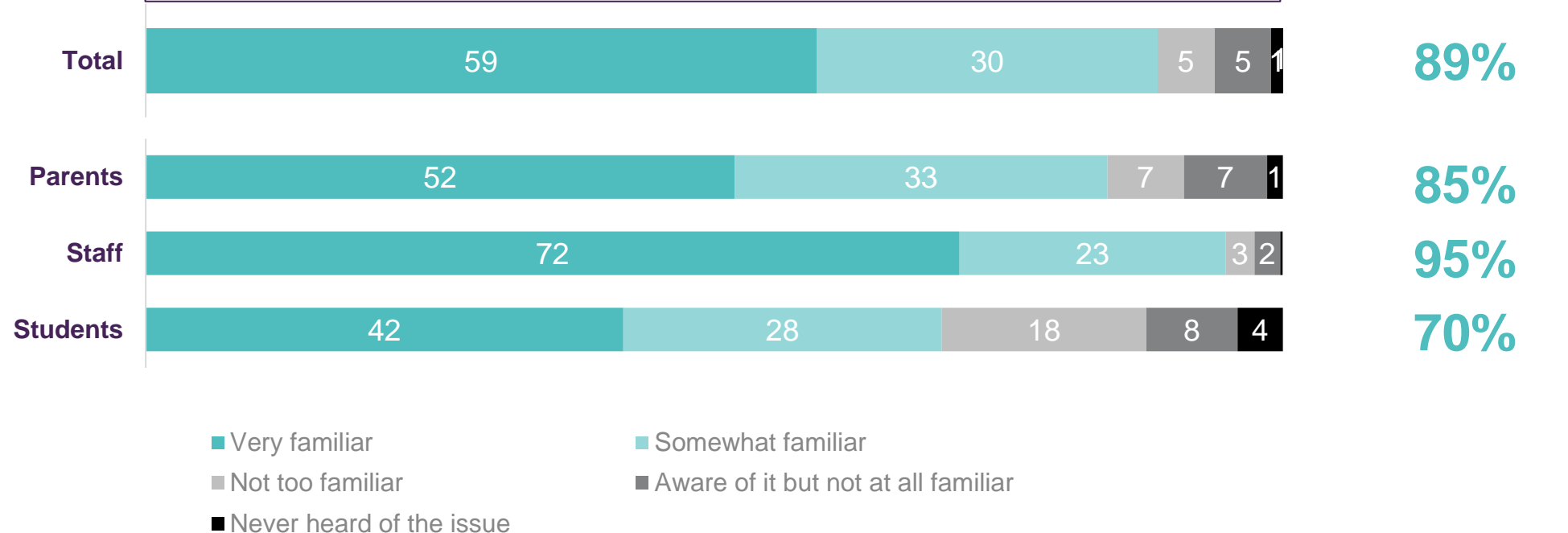
- *“A school that offers clubs in many diverse fields.”*



Awareness and comprehension of the issue

Familiarity with the issue

Student enrolment is growing rapidly in the Surrey School District, causing space-related challenges in nearly every school community. Just in the past two years, the district has seen a 200% increase in new student enrolments, with an annual average of over 2,400 new students. This surge in enrollment has far outpaced the availability of provincial funding for new schools and additions to existing schools, making it increasingly difficult for the district to address the capacity demands it is facing.



Q12. To what extent are you aware of and familiar with this issue?
 Base: Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

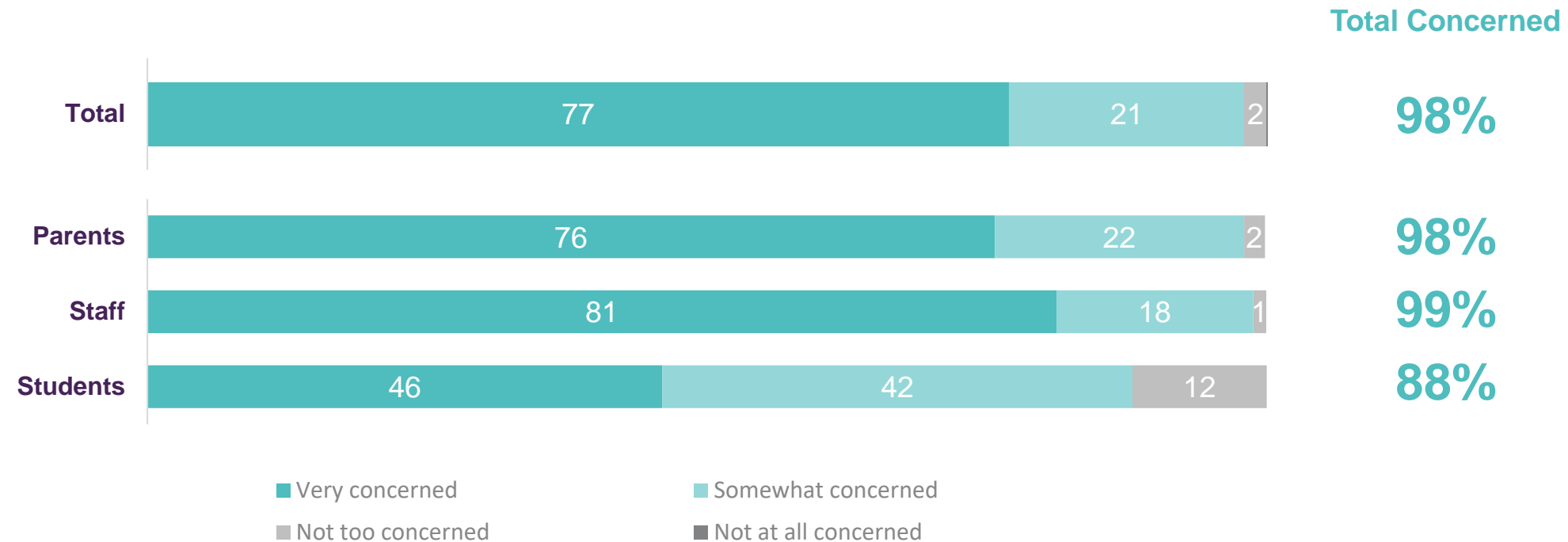
Student awareness of options being considered to address capacity issues

In both student sessions, participants were aware of at least some of the options that are under consideration to alleviate capacity and crowding challenges within Surrey District schools.

Unaided, two solutions were cited by participants:

- **Shifts** – understood by students as different grades being taught at different times of the day.
- **A hybrid or online/in-class model** – understood by students as taking some courses online and some in-person.

Concern about the impact of the challenges



Q13. How concerned are you about the impact of these capacity challenges?
Base: Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

What parents/caregivers are most concerned about when it comes to space challenges/capacity issues

In all three sessions among parents/caregivers, initial discussions focused on a central question: What is it about space challenges/capacity issues facing the Surrey School District that concern you most when it comes to your child's education? A variety of issues emerged in this initial discussion.

Access to Resources

Several parents/caregivers across all three sessions raised issues related specifically to access to resources within schools, including access to libraries, gyms and washrooms.

- *"There is less access to important resources like libraries and gyms."*
- *"Some schools are using gyms and libraries for classes, restricting access [to these facilities] for all the other students."*
- *"They are using the same resources for more students: gyms, clubs, sports and libraries."*

Student Safety

Several parents/caregivers identified concerns around issues of safety in schools due to overcrowding: dangerous drop-off points due to high traffic, unsafe passage from portables to main buildings especially when raining, cold, or unpleasant weather; overcrowded playgrounds.

- *"There are a lot of unreported safety incidents because there aren't enough people to manage them."*
- *"Student safety is a real issue when there are far more students than there should be."*
- *"I'm worried about the safety of our children when you have 650 kids on a playground for 300 kids."*
- *"There's so much traffic with drop-offs. We had a child that was hit by a car."*

What parents/caregivers are most concerned about when it comes to space challenges/capacity issues

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Quality and Number of Portables

While some parents/caregivers in some sessions accepted portables as a necessity in overcrowded schools, several expressed concern about the perceived increasing reliance on portables and the adverse effects on portable use for students.

- *"My daughter is in a portable. No heat. I send scarves and gloves with her."*
- *"In warmer months, portables are too hot – no air flow. In winter, they're too cold."*
- *"I'm concerned about the quality of portables: lack of heating, no natural light, detached from the school."*
- *"I think portables and lack of space affects their [students'] dignity. Why is that normal for kids?"*
- *"There are 13 portables with one washroom that only works half the time. And when it's pouring rain, they have to go outside to run to the bathroom. That's a health issue too...they get wet, cold."*
- *"My whole life was in portables. We need to do better in Surrey."*

A few parents/caregivers also questioned why portables emerge with such strength as a solution. They question why alternatives are not sought:

"Why don't we think of building up? If we don't have the land, build up."

"A lot of the options [being considered] take a long time -- three to four years. So, you are not solving the problem that exists now. The only answer seems to be portables as an immediate solution."

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Lack of Green Space/Outdoor Space

While limited, at least one or two parents/caregivers in each session identified a lack of green space at schools because of the prevalence of portables on former playgrounds/green areas:

- *"They [students] are losing access to outdoor spaces."*
- *"There needs to be green space but it's shrinking."*
- *"There aren't enough classrooms. Now the portables are taking up a lot of space and reducing the playgrounds, green space for kids."*

Student-Teacher Ratio

While there is significant misunderstanding around teacher-student ratios, many parents/caregivers believe that the number of students per teacher is rising. Only some are aware that ratios are mandated by the government.

Many parents/caregivers who believe that student-teacher ratios are increasing cite "doubling up" of classes or "split grade" classes as evidence. Few understand that split grade classes have been in place for a long period of time and are not related to more recent capacity issues:

- *"Within a few weeks of school start, we were told they were going to do split classes...split levels. parents/caregivers are worried that their child is going to be left behind."*
- *"Just too many cases of two grades in one class. How can teachers manage so many more students?"*



Potential actions to address the issue

Proposed measures

Busing students to a neighbourhood school: Busing students to available classrooms or spaces across the district to attend a school outside of their neighbourhood or community.

Hybrid online classes: Secondary students enrolling in courses with an online component. This could mean that up to 50% of the course content can be completed remotely from home. This online component would be balanced with an in-person component where students would also attend physical, on-campus sessions or activities.

Fully online classes: Secondary students having fully online classes as part of their course load.

Building schools on district-owned sites in undeveloped communities: Building schools on land already owned by the school district in communities that have not yet developed and busing students to these sites until housing is built and people move into that catchment area.

Dividing the school day into two separate shifts: For example, students would attend school from either 7:30 am until 1:30 pm or 2 pm until 8:00 pm.

Tri-semester schooling: An academic calendar system in which the traditional school year is divided into three equal-length semesters. Each semester has longer school days, but the semester is shorter in duration. Students would attend one of the following:

- September to May;
- December to August; or
- May to December

Situating schools within residential, corporate, or community buildings: As Surrey becomes more urbanized, and land more expensive and less available, schools would be located within office, residential, or community buildings.

Prefabricated modular additions or schools: Similar to a portable, this refers to pre-manufactured building components that are constructed off-site and then transported to an existing school facility. These modulares can come in groups of eight or 16 classrooms and can be multi-story which preserves outdoor space for children. These modulares can be constructed much more quickly than a school addition.

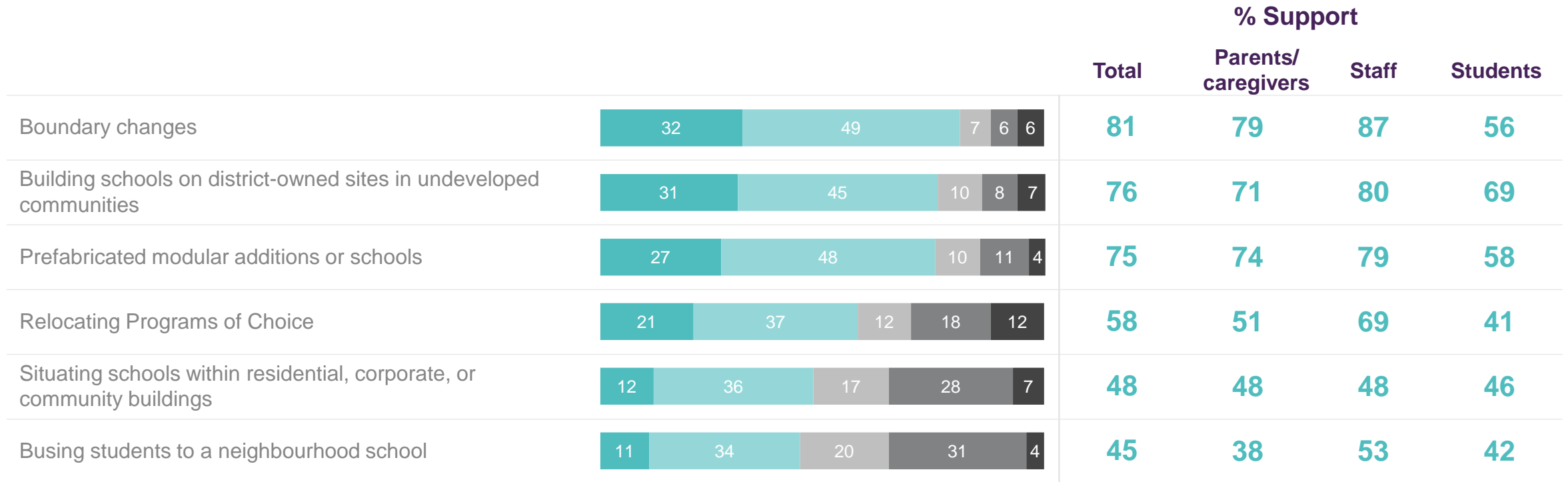
Redirecting students to other schools outside their catchment: Limiting access to a school for students who live in that school's catchment due to capacity issues. These students will be redirected to another school in the district.

Boundary changes: Adjusting the geographical boundaries that determine which neighborhoods or areas are included in a particular school's catchment area to manage school capacity and balance enrollment.

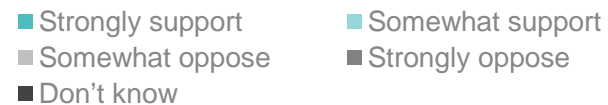
Relocating Programs of Choice: Moving Programs of Choice from their current location to a different area of the district which may have more capacity.

Extended day: In secondary schools, modifying school hours so classes take place beyond the regular school day's typical hours; either earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon. Students may take classes earlier in the day or later in the day or may have a significant break in the middle of the day.

Proposed solutions to address the issue



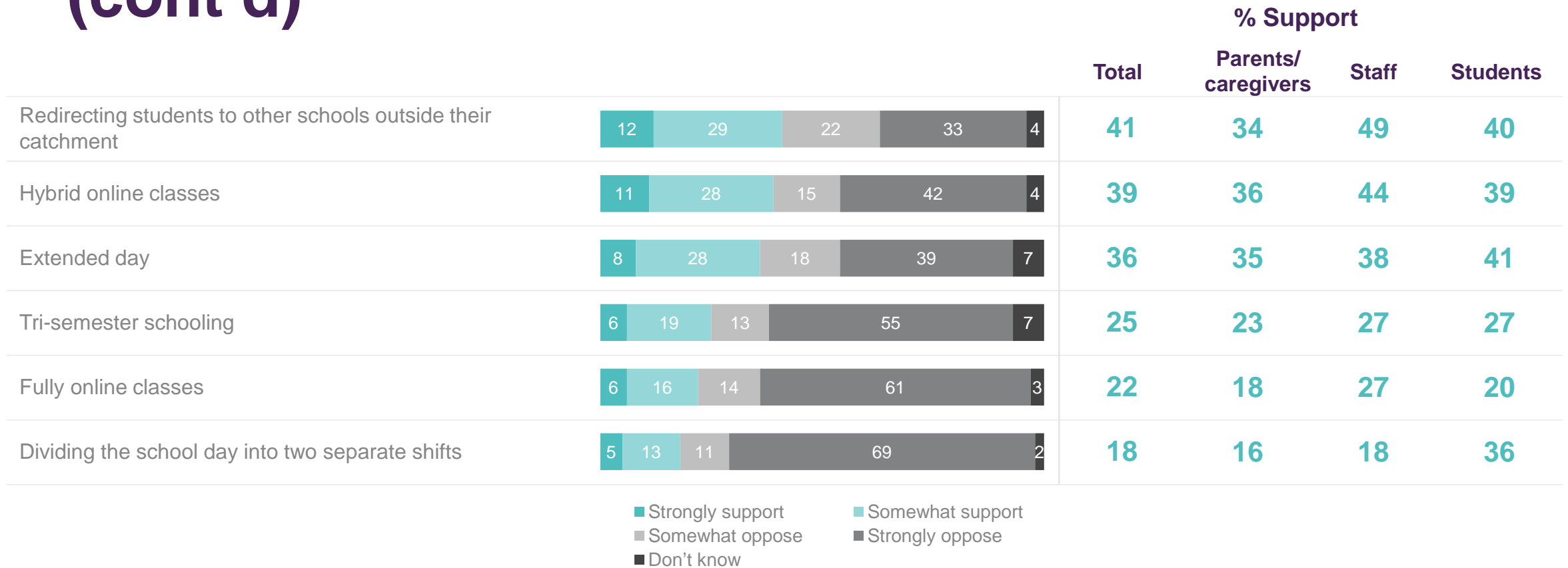
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Q15. The Surrey School District is currently experiencing an unprecedented surge in enrollment, and at the same time, it is grappling with significant space limitations. To address this situation, the district has been exploring a variety of options. Some of these measures are already operational to a limited extent, with the possibility of further expansion, while others are still under review. Please take a moment to review the list of proposed measures and indicate your level of support or opposition to their implementation.

Base: Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

Proposed solutions to address the issue (cont'd)



Q15. The Surrey School District is currently experiencing an unprecedented surge in enrollment, and at the same time, it is grappling with significant space limitations. To address this situation, the district has been exploring a variety of options. Some of these measures are already operational to a limited extent, with the possibility of further expansion, while others are still under review. Please take a moment to review the list of proposed measures and indicate your level of support or opposition to their implementation.

Base: Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

Most supported strategies

	Total	Parents/ caregivers	Staff	Students
Prefabricated modular additions or schools	50	51	51	22
Building schools on district-owned sites in undeveloped communities	42	41	42	31
Boundary changes	34	32	37	19
Relocating Programs of Choice	20	17	25	8
Hybrid online classes	19	19	20	23
Situating schools within residential, corporate, or community buildings	19	20	17	12
Busing students to other schools with available space	17	14	21	12
Redirecting students to other schools outside their catchment	11	9	14	8
Tri-semester schooling	11	10	12	19
Extended day	10	11	10	15
Dividing the school day into two separate shifts	8	8	8	27
Fully online classes	4	3	5	11
None of these	6	7	4	13

Q16. Looking at this list, please indicate which strategies you would most support being implemented at schools in the Surrey School District.
 Base: Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

Most opposed strategies

	Total	Parents/ caregivers	Staff	Students
Fully online classes	61	66	56	54
Dividing the school day into two separate shifts	55	53	58	39
Tri-semester schooling	44	41	49	38
Extended day	31	25	38	35
Hybrid online classes	17	18	15	22
Redirecting students to other schools outside their catchment	16	19	12	17
Busing students to another school within the district	12	14	9	12
Situating schools within residential, corporate, or community buildings	11	10	12	8
Relocating Programs of Choice	6	6	5	7
Prefabricated modular additions or schools	4	4	4	4
Boundary changes	3	3	2	4
Building schools on district-owned sites in undeveloped communities	3	3	2	2
None of these	2	2	2	6

Q17. And which of these strategies would you most oppose being implemented at your child's school/at your children's school(s)/at the school you attend/at the school where you work?

Base: Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

Prefabricated modular additions or schools

In many ways, this option elicited the strongest support among parents/caregivers.

Speed: Parents/caregivers understood that modular additions could be constructed quickly.

Resources: Many saw the modular approach as addressing concerns around key resources like libraries and gyms. Prefabs would eliminate the need to use libraries and gyms as classrooms. A few parents/caregivers also mentioned that it is possible to build pre-fab libraries, gyms and washrooms. *“Modular structures until new schools are built is a good solution. This way students are still on existing school sites and can still have access to specialty facilities such as libraries, gymnasiums, weight rooms, home economic classes and technology education classes, to name a few.”*

Several participants saw this option as cost-effective: *“It’s a more cost-effective way to build a community.”* However, participants did not seem to understand that this solution also requires provincial funding.

Most acknowledged that there have been advancements and improvement in prefabs: *“Pre-fab has come a long way”.*

Green space: Although some felt this option would preserve more green space than alternatives such as portables (because they can be multi-story), others reported that prefab/modular additions would continue to encroach on green space and playgrounds. *“It takes a bigger space from the outdoor space.”*

Shorter-term solution: Some also continued to report that while receptive to the option, it continued to be a short-term solution rather than a permanent one. *“It’s not a bad option, but it’s still temporary.”*

A demand for more information about prefabs was evident. With additional information, support for this option would grow.

This potential solution was discussed in the parent focus groups.

Building schools on district-owned sites in undeveloped communities

In the parent focus groups, most parents/caregivers showed support for this option as it focuses on building new schools and most parents/caregivers see that as the long-term solution to the capacity issue.

Shorter-term solution: parents/caregivers expect that because the community overall will continue to grow, school sites that may be somewhat remote at the moment, will likely be readily filled with students over the medium to long terms.

Disconnects from community: Some parents/caregivers were concerned that students attending schools at a distance from their homes and friends would lead to a lack of community.

More information needed: Several parents/caregivers noted that in the absence of more precise information about the sites, they were hesitant to offer full support. While they acknowledged that any building of schools was supportable, they expressed short-term concern about the potential remoteness of sites and the implications for students (notably, the need for busing).

The option raised questions for parents/caregivers: Some questioned why this option wasn't already being implemented, while others asked why, if the District has money to build schools in undeveloped communities, they are not building schools in areas where they are currently needed.

The length of time required to build a school was cited as a “con” as it did not address current capacity issues.

- *“How will students get to these schools?”*
- *“I worry that it doesn't really solve the problem because by the time the school is built, it will have a new community to serve rather than the existing community.”*
- *“It takes so long to build a school. This is not a solution for today's problems.”*

This potential solution was discussed in the parent focus groups.

Boundary changes

Most parents/caregivers in the focus groups agreed that adjusting geographical boundaries was a reasonable ask, and at least part of a solution to managing school capacity and balance enrolment, albeit a short-term measure.

Lack of clarity: It elicits some confusion among parents/caregivers who are under the impression that population growth is occurring across the district.

- *“Are we to assume there are schools that aren’t over-capacity?”*

Many view this as a short-term option: In the absence of more schools, it will eventually prove inadequate as a means of addressing continued increases on the local population.

- *“It’s really just shifting students around, not really addressing the issue.”*
- *“Simply shifting students from school to school or changing boundaries does not provide a long-term increase in “seats” for students. It is a very temporary fix at best.”*

Concerns about repeated changes: Some parents/caregivers express concern about having to “constantly adjust boundaries” if this option is to be effective. They don’t want their children having to change schools more than once.

This potential solution was discussed in the parent focus groups.

Hybrid online classes

Some receptivity to this option was apparent. Feedback suggests a lack of understanding about how this option would work and a preference for courses that are either fully online or fully in-person. Students would like the option to take online classes at their own discretion.

Few understood the option that allowed for up to 50% of a course to be completely remotely from home: It was generally understood by students as taking some courses online and some in-person. Several students believed that some courses would be offered on an online basis and students would have a choice in identifying which courses, if any, they were prepared to take on an online basis. While some students are open to having some online learning available, few report any enthusiasm for a model that splits a single course into an online component and an in-person component. Most are prepared to accept completion of those courses viewed as readily undertaken on an online basis, but few want to spend half of their course time in online sessions. “[*Online*] is not really meant for everyone. Some people just don’t do well at it.”

Some courses are felt to lend themselves to online completion: For example, the “Careers” course was mentioned as an example in both groups; some identified math courses although others saw math as a definite in-person course. “*Some courses work better online. Like math: watch a video. But something like French, you need to be in class to participate.*”

Mention of online learning tended to trigger negative impressions of such learning during the pandemic: For many students, the discussion on a hybrid approach sparked repeated references to the disenchantment with online learning during Covid. “*I found it really hard to focus during Covid. Even in a hybrid option, you are by yourself. Being in school is way better than being online.*”

Online classes are viewed as providing less sense of community and socialization: Some higher-grade students emphasized the importance of having in-person classes as they prepared for university. For these students, in-person learning was important for them as they contemplated the transition to post-secondary schooling. All student participants rejected the notion of a fully online option. As one student observed, “*it would mean the kids would be socially under-served.*” “*We want to be more connected and have a sense of community. If some online happens, that might be okay, but it has to be limited.*”

Students want choice in deciding what format to take each course in: online or in-person: While it is important to understand that students have misconceptions about what the hybrid learning option entails (i.e., 50% of a course completed online), they are adamant about having a choice in deciding what courses they may take that include online learning. The choices are deemed personal and fit with their preferences and approach to learning. “*Some courses could be better online. But everyone should have an option. Like math: good for some, but not everyone.*”

Students express concern about limited access to teachers: “*It’s harder to get hold of teachers and counsellors when you are online. It’s just harder to contact them.*”

This potential solution was discussed in the student focus groups.

Busing students to another school within the district

Students raised a few concerns about busing as an option.

Disconnects the student from their own community: Requires some students to attend schools at a distance from their homes and friends. *“It would really disconnect you from your community.”*

Additional time needed to get to and from school: *“If you are bused outside of your neighborhood, it would take a lot of your time.”*

Perceived negative impact on extracurriculars: Most believed that busing would be run on a schedule with little flexibility, precluding participation in extracurriculars (including sports and clubs) at the end of the school day.

Widespread opposition: Although some other solutions elicited more negative reactions, a number of students felt their peers would not be open to this strategy.

This potential solution was discussed in the student focus groups.

Tri-semester schooling

Focus group participants rejected the notion of tri-semester schooling mostly because it was perceived as seriously disrupting the lives and schedules of all stakeholders including students, parents/caregivers and teachers/staff.

Splitting up friends and the creation of two separate ‘communities’: Many were concerned about having siblings forced into different semesters and the challenges to family life, childcare and community life. *“You don’t get to go out with your friends if you are on different semesters. That’s really unfair.” “Could lead to people being upset due to separation from friends and other students.” “It divides the school community. The culture.”* (Students)

There are perceived disadvantages to attending school during the summer months: it might interfere with family vacation, it is too hot in the non-air conditioned schools, and students would miss out on the job/volunteering opportunities that tend to be more plentiful during the summer months: *“There are times when the summer is too hot so that could be a challenge.” “Lots of volunteering and work opportunities are in the summer. So many would lose out on that.”* (parents/caregivers)

Several students suggested longer days/shorter semesters would be detrimental to learning. *“It means too much content squished into a shorter duration.”* (Student)

Students might “forget” what they had learned between semesters. Many students and parents/caregivers assumed a greater amount of time would elapse between semesters. *“If a break is longer than it is now, that could be a problem. People forget things.”* (parent/caregiver)

Several older students expressed concern about the implications of not being in school during the winter semester when university applications are due. *“I’d worry that it would throw off university entrance and the application process.”* (Student)

The option was seen as negatively influencing extracurricular activities including school teams and clubs. *“If you are on a team, how does it work with three semesters?” “Sports are run with other districts.”* (parents/caregivers)

Several parents/caregivers expressed concerns about the influence on teachers. Failing to understand that additional teachers would be required, several believed that teachers would be required to work a full year (*“When do teachers go on vacation?” “How’s the union going to react?”*). For those who recognized that additional teachers would be hired, there was a concern around filling spots given the teacher shortage: *“There are already teacher retention problems and a teacher shortage.” “Teachers are not going to want to give up their summers.”* (parents/caregivers)

Some students offered constructive advice about a tri-semester approach, suggesting that if all students from the same grades were in the same semesters, it had the potential to reduce the total number of students in school at the same time. *“If all the grade 12s had the same semesters, it could work.”* (Student) A small proportion of parents/caregivers were prepared to admit that there may be some advantages for families: *“May work for some parents/caregivers who want different holidays. Could alleviate some pressure for some families.”* (parent/caregiver)

This potential solution was discussed in both the parent and the student focus groups.

Extended day

Many participants had trouble comprehending this option and wanted more detail. Concerns raised focused on disruptive impacts on students' and teachers' schedules and well-being.

Significant uncertainty about this option emerged largely due to a lack of specificity around the definition: As was apparent in discussion around shifts, appraisals of extended days tend to focus on the implications for course selection and extracurriculars: *"What if courses are not at times that they want. Like if they had an extracurricular and a course happens at the same time."* *"Some kids have jobs after school. How would that work?"*

Implications for extracurricular activities: The majority expressed reservations about extended days, with concern most focused on the implications for extracurricular activities. Again, comprehension of the specifics of extended days was limited.

Impacts on teachers: In both sessions, while making assumptions that were inaccurate, students volunteered that teachers should not be expected to spend more time at school. *"What about teachers with kids? How would they manage if the day is longer?"* *"My concern with trimester or extended/split day we will lose even more teachers to other districts."*

Impact on mental students' health: Others noted that longer days could be draining and have a negative impact on students' mental health.

Implications for community: Students were concerned that this solution could lead to division and a weakening of the school culture/spirit.

While some students conceded that extended days may require an adjustment, they also believed it could assist in alleviating capacity issues: *"It could work longer term. Everything would adapt to a different schedule."*

Significant opposition to a potential "significant break in the middle of the day" also emerged: *"It's not viable to show up in the morning and then again in the afternoon. It's not fair for students or teachers."*

This potential solution was discussed in both the parent and the student focus groups.

Dividing the school day into two separate shifts

The focus group discussions about this potential solution underscore concerns about how this potential solution would negatively impact students, parents/caregivers and families. Participants were unable to imagine a solution that would fully address all of the following concerns.

Reduction in 'family time': Most saw substantial negative implications for families, particularly for working parents/caregivers. Feedback was made that two shifts might work for parents/caregivers who work shifts, parents/caregivers acknowledge that such situations are not the norm: *"All the family time is gone."* (parent) *"Are they going to be eating dinner at school?"* (parent/caregiver)

Logistical challenges related to families with two or more children attending school on different shifts: parents/caregivers and students alike expressed concern about coordinating multiple drop off and pick-ups. *"parents/caregivers can't change their schedules. They are 9 – 5. How do they pick you up at 1 pm?"* (student)

Safety concerns stemming from the late hour of the second shift: This was one of the strongest objections among parents/caregivers. Even students raised this as a concern: *"The idea of staying out until 8 and then walking home. Whose parents/caregivers would want that?"* (student) *"Sometimes there are busing delays so this could result in bused students getting home very late."* (student)

Splitting up friends and the creation of two separate 'communities': parents/caregivers also expressed significant concern about splitting up friends and the community. While some indicated that the shifts would likely occur according to grades, even these parents/caregivers saw this as alleviating some concerns, most were uncomfortable with creating two separate communities for students. Further, creating shifts based on grade might result in families with children in two-separate shifts, resulting in reduced 'family time'. *"As far as school culture goes, it's even more difficult."* (student) *"I think people want to be there with their friends and this wouldn't allow for it."* (student)

Inability of the late shift to participate in 'after school' activities – getting home too late to complete homework, undertake extracurriculars and maintain a part-time job: High levels of concerns about participation in extracurriculars was apparent. parents/caregivers could not imagine an option that was able to accommodate extracurriculars, given the times for each shift. parents/caregivers attached significant importance to their children's participation in school-based social activities, including clubs, sports and special interests. Most felt shifts would cause damage to this important element of a child's education. *"How do they do extracurriculars at 8?"* (parent/caregiver)

Confusion around the potential impact on teachers: Feedback suggests at least a few participants did not understand the implications of two shifts on teachers. There was a strong sense that there would not be enough teachers. Comments were expressed in both parent and student groups about whether teachers would be required to work both shifts: *"First thing that comes to mind is teachers. What happens to them? It's really long for them to work. It would really negatively impact them."* (student)

This potential solution was discussed in both the parent and the student focus groups.

Fully online classes

The focus group discussions with parents/caregivers about this potential solution suggests some receptivity to online classes, as long as all students are exposed to some in-person learning.

Insufficient socialization resulting from isolation: emerged as strong negatives associated with fully online learning: *“It means students can’t work together...there’s no interaction.”* (parent)

Lack of interaction with teachers: *“Our kids are entitled to supports and they aren’t going to have that online.” It means no opportunity to develop relationships.”*

Lack of supervision and support: Several parents/caregivers stressed that a fully online option would mean that there was no means of supervising students, and no way to support those who need additional help. *“Who will support the kids at home, especially those with working parents?” “The majority of parents can’t be home to monitor kids.”* “This is not appropriate particularly for our increasing ELL population.”

Negative associations of this option with what was experienced during the pandemic: Many parents/caregivers recalled the *“anxiety and stress”* that online learning caused children during the pandemic. They did not want to see that repeated in a fully online option. *“We saw this during Covid – online was a disaster.”* (parent) *“Covid proved it didn’t work.”* (parent)

The option may have been misunderstood: Feedback to this option suggests some participants may have misinterpreted this potential solution, incorrectly assuming that all classes would be fully online (rather than having some fully online classes as part of students’ courseload).

Limited support for this solution emerged, although some positive feedback was offered:

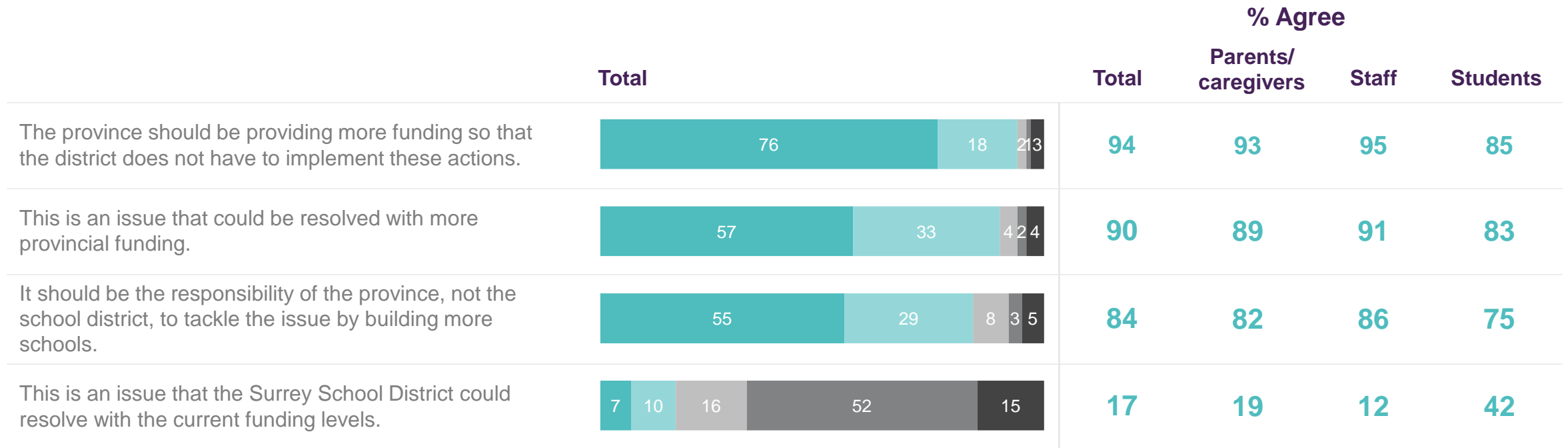
- Among the relatively small minority who reported some receptivity to online classes, many reported that were more inclined to be supportive of a hybrid model. For almost all parents/caregivers, a fully online option was rejected. *“Partial online classes would be better.” “Some classes could go online – an elective option like the career education course.” “[Online] should be optional and they should still be able to go to school.” “Expand online classes but make it optional.”*
- Some parents/caregivers believed that it could work for older students. *“Might work for some...especially grades 11 and 12, but a blend [of online/in-person] would be better.”*
- Perceived to provide scheduling benefits and access to a fuller range of courses, including electives.

This potential solution was discussed in the parent focus groups.

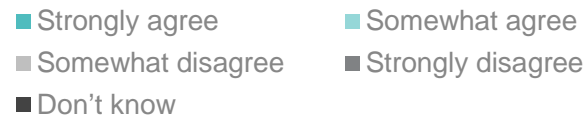


Attitudes and opinions

Views related to funding and responsibility



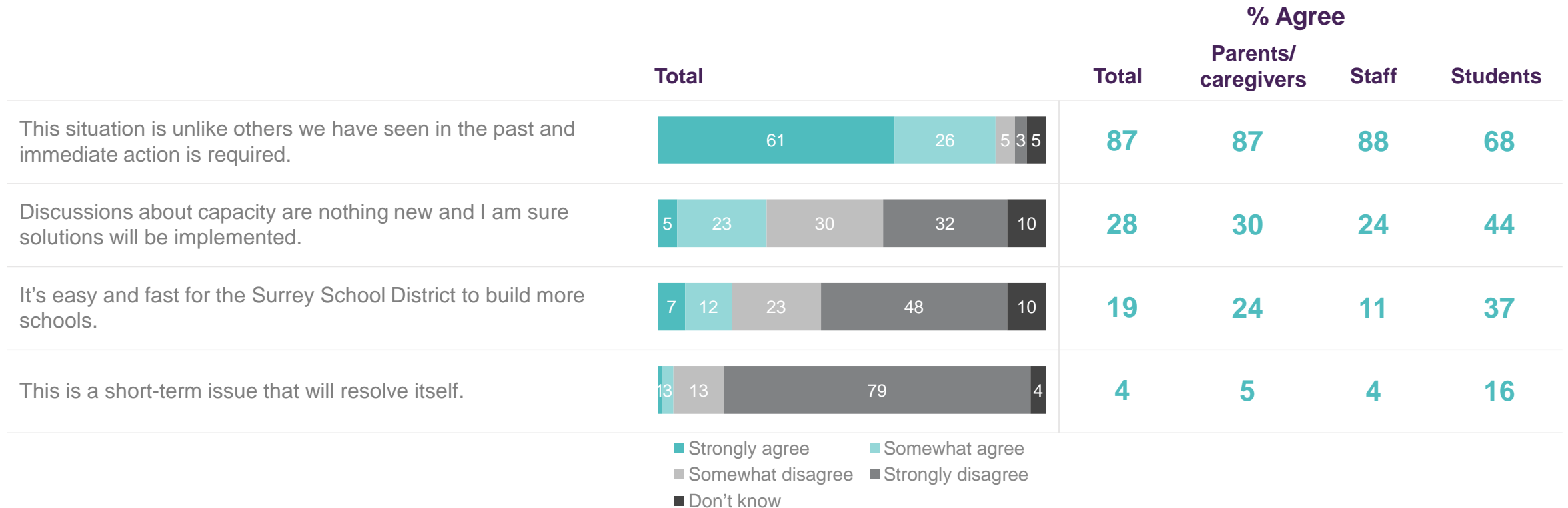
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Q14.
Q18.
Base:

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements about the capacity issues facing Surrey schools. In the next few questions, you will be shown a series of statements about the proposed measures. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.
Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

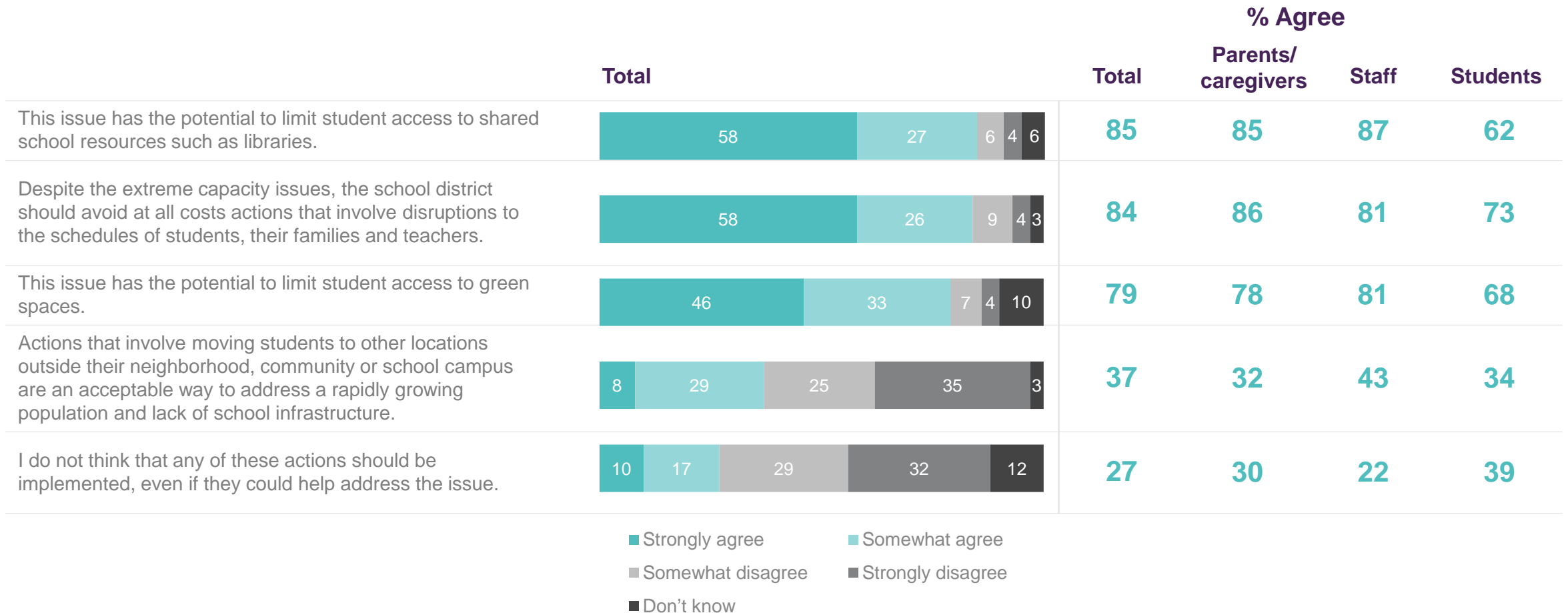
Views on the perceived severity of the issue



Q14.
Q18.
Base:

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Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

Views about the proposed solutions



Q14.
Q18.
Base:

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements about the capacity issues facing Surrey schools. In the next few questions, you will be shown a series of statements about the proposed measures. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.
Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

Overall receptivity to the potential options

For the most part, parents/caregivers and students did not react positively to any of the potential options discussed in the focus groups. While they recognize solutions are needed to address the capacity issue, none of the options are seen as 'ideal', even those that were rated as most acceptable in the survey. Most tended to see these as short-term, temporary solutions, and there was a strong desire to know what is being planned for the longer-term.

- *"Isn't the real answer more schools?"*
- *"If the problem [of crowding/capacity] is going to continue, I don't see how any of these work on a long-term basis. People are prepared to see some changes, but not ones that continue on without a real answer."*
- *"I really don't think any of these should be implemented long-term or permanently."*
- *"Leadership should plan for long term, not five or 10 years from now."*
- *"What is the overall plan that you [the District] have? What is the overall goal to meet the needs of our community?"*

In fact, some students volunteered that they were prepared to live with the challenges of crowding/capacity rather than accept the options proposed.

- *"I don't really like any of these. Maybe more portables is OK when you think about these. Building more schools might be hard."*
- *"There are lots of issues right now but these kinds of changes are worse than what we are already living with. I guess you can get used to anything."*
- *"We are kind of used to the routine [that exists now]. Any of these [options] changes that. Maybe makes it worse."*

Experience and knowledge increase openness

Learnings from the focus groups suggest that having prior knowledge of or experience with some of the proposed solutions can make parents/caregivers more open to these strategies.

- Several parents/caregivers, including those from other countries, mentioned that they had had experience with some of the solutions discussed, such as shifts.
- Those who had some knowledge of and experience with these options tended to be more open to them.
 - For example, one parent who had grown up in a nearby district mentioned that when she was in high school, her school had used the "shifts" model for one semester, sharing the school with students from another school whose building was undergoing construction. This participant felt that the solution was manageable and noted that students and staff had adjusted to the change.
- Examples cited by parents/caregivers suggest that providing parents/caregivers with examples or information about how solutions have been successfully implemented in other jurisdictions might increase receptivity.

Advice from parents/caregivers on addressing the issue

In the parent focus groups, participants were asked to complete the following exercise:

Please pretend that you are writing a brief email to the Surrey School District. Tell them what advice you would give to Surrey School District as it deals with the very challenging issues around insufficient space in schools. Please write this on the paper provided.

Themes related to priorities and concerns that emerged in parents/caregivers' responses included:

Preference for modular: Prefabricated/modular additions were cited as a viable option by some parents/caregivers – with some caveats.

- *“Modulars are the best short-term solution ONLY if they have washrooms, windows, proper heat and cooling.”*

Criticism of more disruptive options: A number of parents/caregivers criticized solutions such as shifts and the tri-semester system due to potential disruptions to students' schedules and lives (extracurriculars, rest, etc.) and those of their families.

- *“The solutions we implement must be least disruptive to their routines to avoid additional stress. They have families and activities outside of school [...] be mindful of that.”*
- *“Any solutions should allow students to continue to participate in extracurricular activities such as after school sports and music programs. These activities are often the ones that keep students tethered to the school and motivated to continue their education.”*

Student wellbeing and a comfortable environment: Many parents/caregivers stressed the need to prioritize student wellbeing, comfort and safety, and emphasized the importance of ensuring that students have the necessary resources and spaces (libraries, green spaces, etc.) to support a high-quality education.

- *“Over-capacity schools have a negative impact on our children – less access to playgrounds, libraries, music, green space [...] children and staff need comfortable environments to focus on learning.”*
- *“Seek provincial support and collaborate with all stakeholders, but **keep student needs at the center.**”*

Advice from parents/caregivers on addressing the issue (cont'd)

In the parent focus groups, participants were asked to complete the following exercise:

Please pretend that you are writing a brief email to the Surrey School District. Tell them what advice you would give to Surrey School District as it deals with the very challenging issues around insufficient space in schools. Please write this on the paper provided.

Themes related to frustrations and knowledge gaps that emerged in parents/caregivers' responses included:

Government pressure: Many parents/caregivers called on the District to pressure the provincial government for more funding – betraying a lack of understanding of the District's inability to lobby.

- *"Please push the provincial government for more funding. Be firm."*
- *"The district needs to aggressively lobby the province for emergency funding."*

Planning-related frustrations: A number of parents/caregivers expressed frustration at a perceived lack of planning/foresight on the part of the province, city and the District, again suggesting a gap in knowledge about the planning process and the District's role in it.

- *"The District needs to properly forecast and count density in developments for future school growth."*
- *"You need to plan for the future. If we know that a new project is being done we need to make sure that the infrastructure and facilities are available."*

Advice from parents/caregivers on addressing the issue (cont'd)

In the parent focus groups, participants were asked to complete the following exercise:

Please pretend that you are writing a brief email to the Surrey School District. Tell them what advice you would give to Surrey School District as it deals with the very challenging issues around insufficient space in schools. Please write this on the paper provided.

Themes related to details and design changes that emerged in parents/caregivers' responses included:

Desire for details: Some parents/caregivers expressed a desire to know more about the issue, including the facts and figures and details of the proposed solutions.

- *"I would welcome the opportunity to see a plan and path forward that would consider many issues and concerns proposed by parents in the consulting. For example, student safety with online learning or bussing, overcrowding and resource allocation and what communities would be considered for modular development. It would help to see a detailed plan to support the gap in information."*
- *"Would love a breakdown of the schools in the district along with current admission numbers, projected numbers of students and capacities. A visual of the boundaries per school may be easier to see and understand so people could understand the district's decisions."*

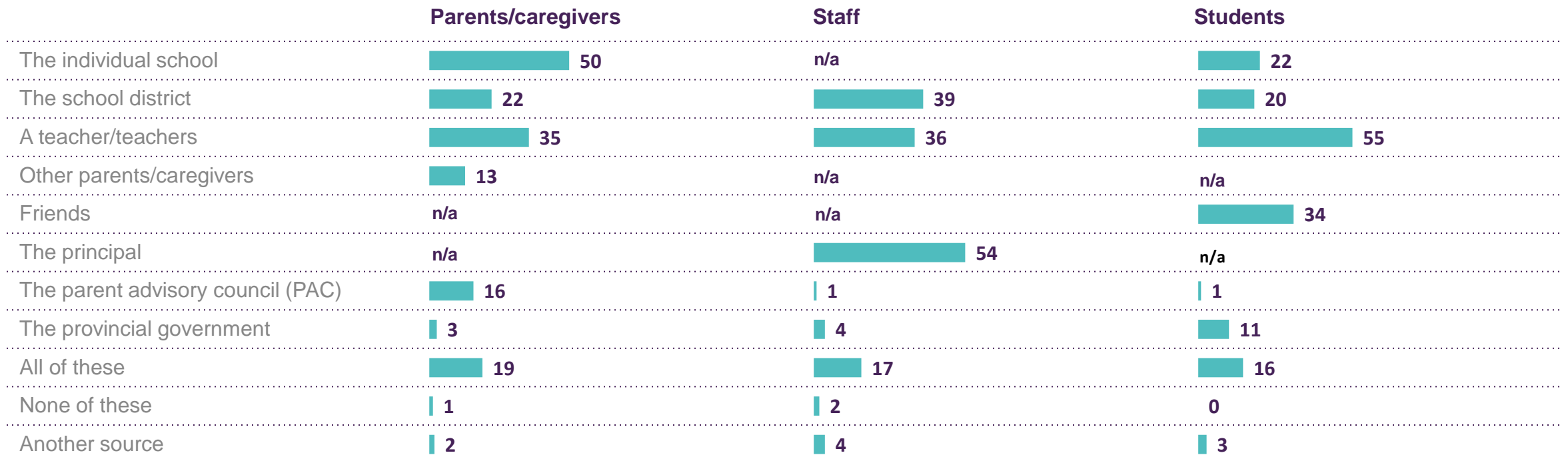
Design and policy suggestions: Some parents/caregivers provided design and policy-related suggestions (some of which were beyond the District's control), including:

- Using one design for all new schools to speed up the design process.
- Making use of rec centres for younger students, as these spaces have multi-purpose rooms, gyms, libraries, etc.
- Building larger multi-story schools and leasing out the space until it's needed.
- Tying residential development to school development to ensure that growth does not outpace capacity.



Staying informed: methods and preferences

Sources relied upon most for information about Surrey District School(s)



Q20-22.

When it comes to information about [parents/caregivers: your child's or children's school(s)] / [students: your school] / [staff: the school(s) where you work], which of the following do you rely on the most?

Base:

Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

Preferred sources of information about future developments related to these issues

	Total	Parents/ caregivers	Staff	Students
The school district	59	53	69	38
The provincial government	34	30	40	28
The principal	24	23	25	22
A teacher/teachers	7	7	6	26
The Parent Advisory Council (PAC)	4	6	1	2
All of these	25	30	17	23
None of these	1	1	1	4
Other	1	1	2	3

Q23.
Base:

And which of the following would you want to hear from when it comes to future developments related to these issues?
Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

Preferred method of communication for information about future developments related to these issues

	Total	Parents/ caregivers	Staff	Students
Email	81	84	80	46
School Meetings	12	9	15	20
Social Media	7	6	6	33

24.

Base:

What method of communication would you most prefer that we use to reach you about developments related to these issues?
Total sample (Total n=7600; parents/caregivers n=4595; Staff n=3551; Students n=108)

Perceived lack of information about space challenges/capacity issues among parents/caregivers

In all sessions, parents/caregivers expressed a high level of dissatisfaction and frustration with the information available to them about solutions and options to address the capacity challenges.

Many report that they want more information, and that they want it sooner than they are getting it now. Others would like an avenue to express this anger but aren't sure how or where to direct their frustrations.

- *"Parents aren't informed – messaging needs to be consistent and repetitive."*
- *"Parents want to be heard – provide venues for them to be heard."*
- *"Parents are uneducated on funding and where it comes from. They don't know where to express their anger."*

For many parents/caregivers, there is a concern and frustration that the District was caught unaware by the surge in enrolment and has no longer-term plan to effectively address it.

- *"It seems like everything is temporary solutions. We weren't prepared for the [surge in] students."*

Messages that resonate

During the first night of parent/caregiver groups, participants were shown the following paragraphs, and were asked to underline in blue the words/phrases they liked and underline those they disliked in red:

1. The Surrey School District is experiencing unprecedented, rapid growth in enrollment. Over the past decade we have seen consistent annual growth of approximately 800 new students, which is a remarkable trend in itself. However, the past two years have presented us with unique challenges as new student enrolment has surged by an extraordinary 200 per cent, which has required us to consider a number of unconventional strategies to manage the growth.

2. The provincial government has not kept up with the funding required to adequately manage the unprecedented growth the district has seen and continues to experience. Many schools in the district are operating over capacity which has forced us to explore strategies to manage growth to accommodate the current and future student population. While some of these strategies are new to the district, they provide students with a diverse and unique learning environment that helps introduce them to the everchanging hybrid workforces they will experience upon graduation.

3. We understand that the current situation and the introduction of these unique strategies to manage enrollment growth will be challenging and will impact you and your family, but we remain committed to providing the best educational experience possible for our students. We will continue to work tirelessly with the provincial government in advocating for increased funding and the construction of both more schools and additions to current schools.

4. We feel it is critical that parents, guardians, students and staff are engaged in the process of identifying what strategy will yield the most success in managing our enrollment growth while ensuring the quality of our students' educational experience. This is the reason we wanted your insights and to hear your concerns in the online survey that was designed to gather your input on strategies the district is considering.

Messages that resonate (cont'd)

Most disliked the majority of the messaging in the first three paragraphs, particularly:

- References to the lack of funding from the province (suggesting there is significant anger about this); and
- Mentions of the proposed strategies (likely due to parents/caregivers' opposition to many of these solutions).

However, a number were more positive about Paragraph 4, particularly the sentence, “We feel it is critical that parents, guardians, students and staff are engaged in the process of identifying what strategy will yield the most success in managing our enrollment growth while ensuring the quality of our students’ educational experience.” Parents/caregivers clearly want to feel consulted in this process, and are supportive of working with the District and other stakeholders to find a solution.

Messages that resonate

During the second night of parent/caregiver groups, participants were shown a revised messaging exercise in which they were asked to choose which of the below statements they preferred:

1. The Surrey School District is experiencing unprecedented, rapid growth in enrollment. Over the past two years new student enrolment has surged by an extraordinary **200 per cent**.

2. The Surrey School District is experiencing unprecedented, rapid growth in enrollment. Over the past decade we have seen consistent annual growth of approximately 800 new students; however, the past two years have presented us with unique challenges as new student enrolment has surged by an extraordinary **2,500 net new students each year**.



Almost all participants selected the second option.



Respondent profile

Respondent profile

STAKEHOLDER*

% Total

60	Parent/caregiver
47	Staff
1	Student

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN THE SURREY SCHOOL DISTRICT

*% parents/
caregivers*

44	One
46	Two
9	Three
2	Four or more

TIME LIVED IN THE SURREY/WHITE ROCK AREA

*%
parents/
caregivers*

% Staff

% Students

3	2	6	Less than one year
7	2	8	One to less than three years
11	5	6	Three to less than six years
15	7	16	Six to less than 10 years
62	64	59	10+ years
1	21	6	Prefer not to answer

* Adds to more than 100% as there is overlap: some staff are also parents/caregivers

Respondent profile (cont'd)

TYPE OF SCHOOL ATTENDED BY CHILDREN*

*% parents/
caregivers*

79	Elementary
39	Secondary
1	Learning Centres
<1	Adult Education
1	SAIL

TYPE OF SCHOOL EMPLOYED AT**

% Staff

61	Elementary
30	Secondary
1	Learning Centres
<1	Adult Education
1	SAIL
8	Other

TYPE OF SCHOOL ATTENDED

% Students

7	Elementary
92	Secondary
1	Adult Education

* Adds to more than 100% as some parents/caregivers have more than one child enrolled in the Surrey School District

** Adds to more than 100% as some staff work in more than one location