

March 2022

# Insights from interviews and survey perspectives at MS118



# Objective

**Gather early perspectives** from staff, students, [families and community members] to **surface key questions to support the development of a strategic plan** that centers the creation of student-centered learning environments that are culturally affirming, equitable, engaging and supportive.

*Note: While the original objective was to include family and community voice in this early round of interviews, we were only able to speak with one parent and so these voices are not truly represented here.*

# Study Design

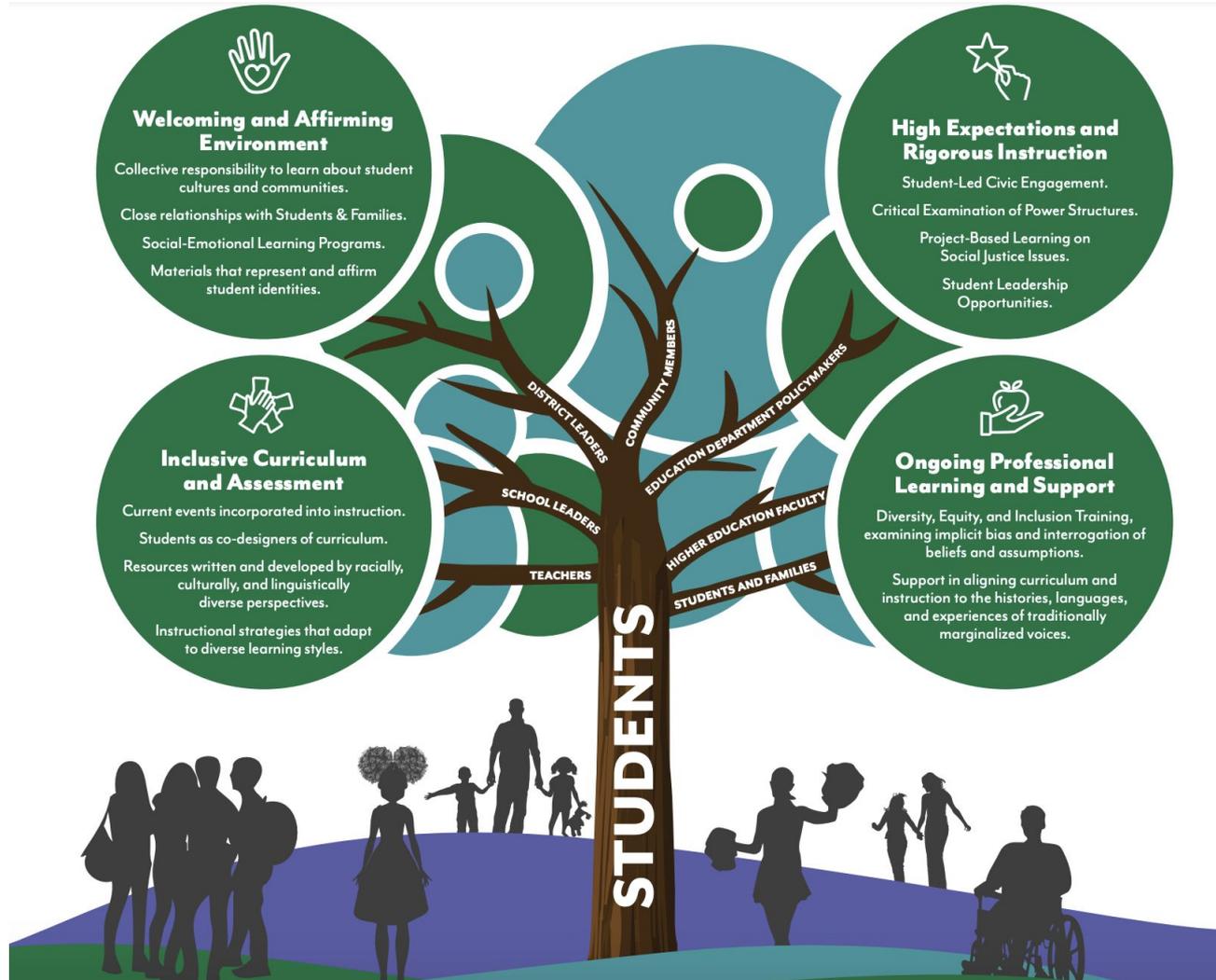
1. Review of publicly available data: NYC School Survey, student and parent responses
2. Interviews with 2 teachers, 2 support staff, 1 parent, and 6 students
3. Survey of 63 staff

# Limitations

- COVID interruptions in publicly available data question the validity of interpretations in 2019-20 and 2020-21. Accordingly, 2018-19 data were used.
- Small sample size of student focus group discussion, only one parent contributing to family/community group discussion
- Survey findings are school-wide aggregates, such that disproportionalities in experience across Academies or by race, gender, sexuality and other factors are hidden.

As the Strategic Planning process unfolds, we expect **family, community members and current students to be deeply involved** in recommendations and key decisions.

# In pursuit of Culturally Responsive- Sustaining Learning Environments



(Source: NYSED  
Framework for Culturally  
Responsive-Sustaining  
Education)

# **Data Review: NYC School Survey**

Proposed for consideration as baseline pre-COVID numbers, to which the strategic planning team might look for comparison following review of 2021-22 results to understand early progress made.

## **In 2018-19, over 90% of MS118 students agreed with the following items on the NYC School Survey (91% responding)**

I feel that my teachers **respect my culture/background**. (93% positive)

In general, my teachers treat students from different cultures or backgrounds **equally**. (91%)

In general, my teachers present **positive images** of people from a variety of races, ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds. (90%)

*Note: While results from the 2020-21 school year are available, the response rate was too low (37%) to report findings here.*

## Over 90% of MS118 parents agreed with the following items on the NYC School Survey for families (50% responding)

I feel **respected** by my child's teachers, principal/school leader. (94%)

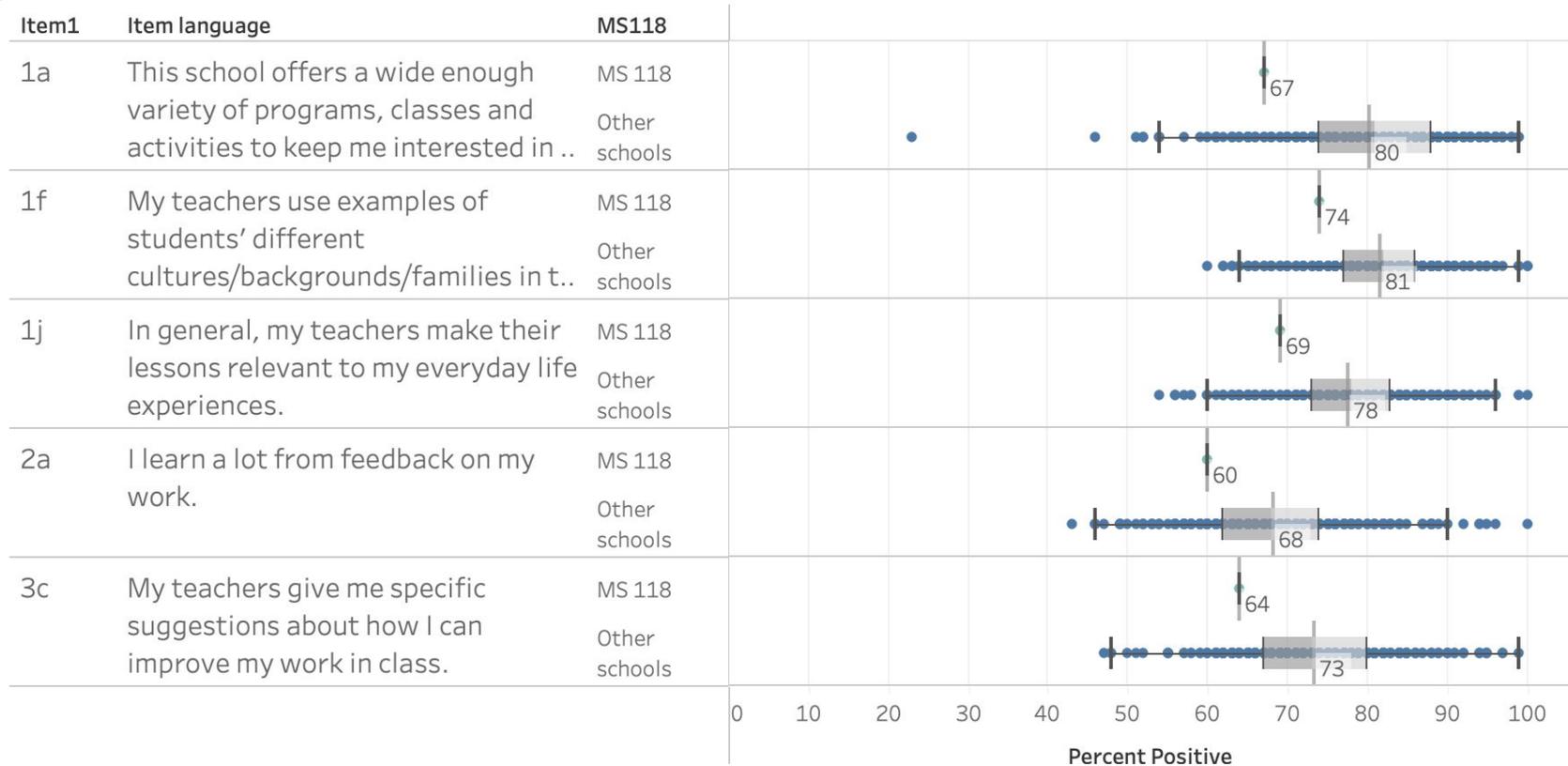
My child's school **communicates** with me in a language and in a way that I can understand. (93% positive)

Teachers and parents/guardians think of each other as **partners in educating children**. (92%)

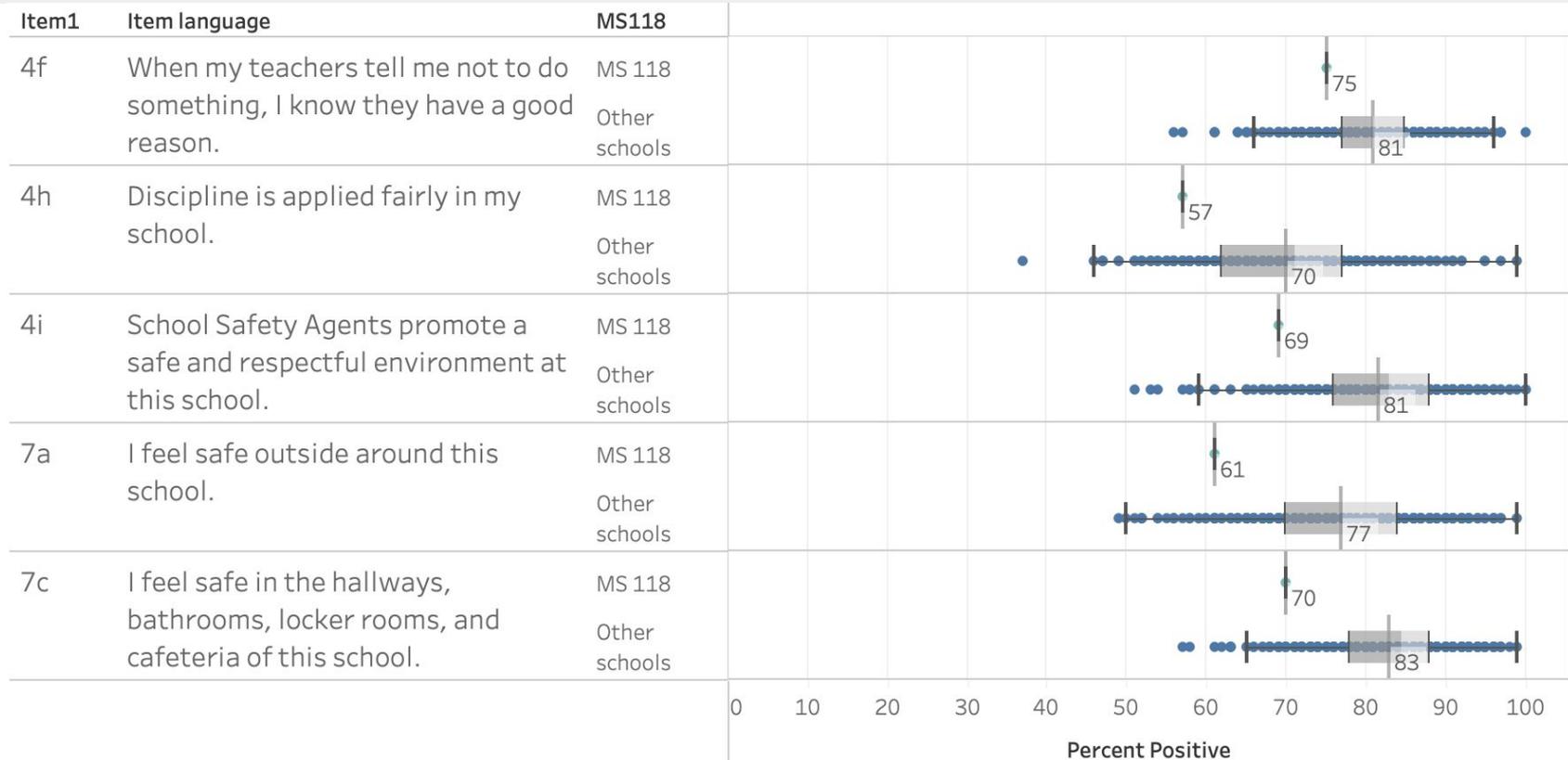
I am **greeted warmly** when I call or visit the school. (92%)

*Note: While results from the 2020-21 school year are available, the response rate was too low (n=54) to report findings here.*

# MS118 ranked in the bottom quartile among middle schools on items related to relevant curriculum and feedback.



# MS118 ranked in the bottom quartile among middle schools on items related to **fairness** and **safety**.



## **Less than 80% of MS118 parents responded positively to the following items on the NYC School Survey (50% responding)**

My child's school offers me opportunities to **visit my child's classroom**, such as observing instruction, participating in an activity with my child, etc. (74% responding positively)

During the school year, how likely are you to **attend a general school meeting or school event** (open house, back to school night, play, dance, sports event or science fair)? (76%)

Since the beginning of the school year, how often have you **communicated** with your child's teacher about your child's performance? (79%)

# **Anecdotes from current students**

Insights from a discussion with 6 students of multiple grade-levels, ethnicities, and Academies, held on February 17th.

Can you tell me about a moment when you felt particularly **SEEN** at school? Like your **LIFE EXPERIENCES** were valuable? Your **STRENGTHS** appreciated?

Themes from discussion:

- Adults know who I am, they welcome me here
- Recognition for achievement (basketball, good grades, leadership roles)
- Inclusion of voice (invitation to hiring team, student council)

*“[I feel seen] when I walk into the building and there are teachers there that are like ‘Hey how’s it going?’ It makes me **feel like someone is happy to see me.**”*

*-MS118 student*

*“I had good grades in 7th and the guidance counselor and principal said my name and I was like ‘Oh **they know me.**” - MS118 student*

Can you tell me about an **ADULT** in the building with whom you feel a **STRONG CONNECTION** or who you feel **CARES** about you and your growth?

Themes from discussion:

- Open door when I need it
- High expectations
- Makes me feel seen

*“When I get upset, I know I can **always go to her for everything**. She brings a happiness to my day.” - MS118 student*

*“If you’re having a bad day they can help you out, they are the people to talk to, they help you **get through it**. They lighten up your day.” -MS118 student*

Can you tell me about a moment when you felt like you were particularly **IN CONTROL** of your own learning? Where you felt **CONFIDENT** you would be able to grow and learn hard things?

Themes from discussion:

- Students having a say in what they are learning and how
- Teacher listening to students, aligning instruction/support to what students identify as a need/interest
- Students taking responsibility

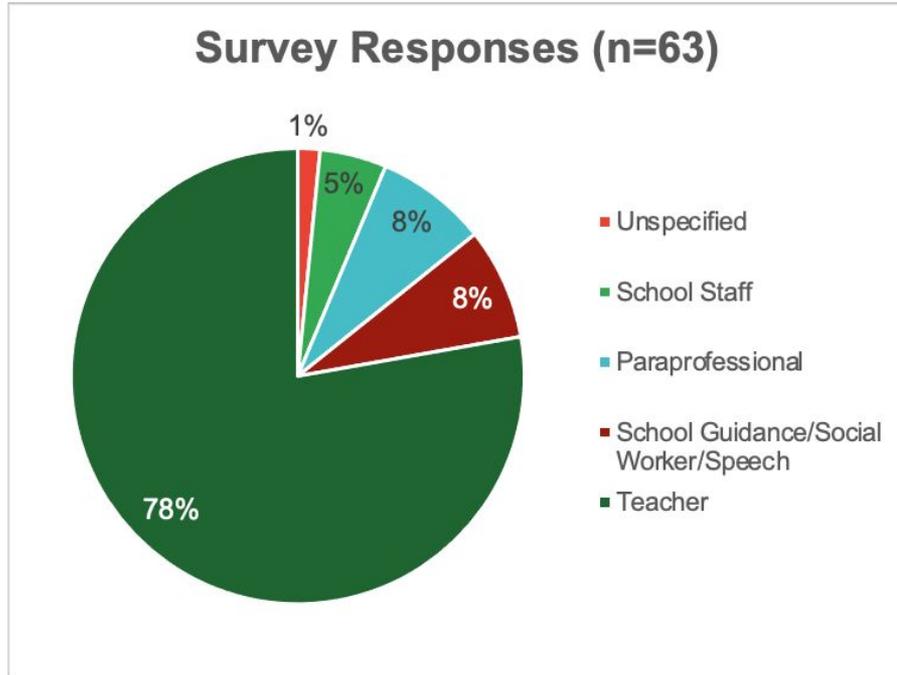
*“... when I’m able to **pick and choose what I want to learn** instead of them giving us a curriculum. Instead of a repeat of things we learned before.” -MS118 student*

*“...when our teachers let us choose events that we want to learn of, topics. They can **build off the key ideas in the [curriculum] of the class** they want to do and teach us what we want to learn.” -MS118 student*

# **Staff Survey and Interviews**

Insights from a survey of 63 staff members in early February, with follow-up interviews to share additional context and examples

# Staff Survey and Follow-up Interviews



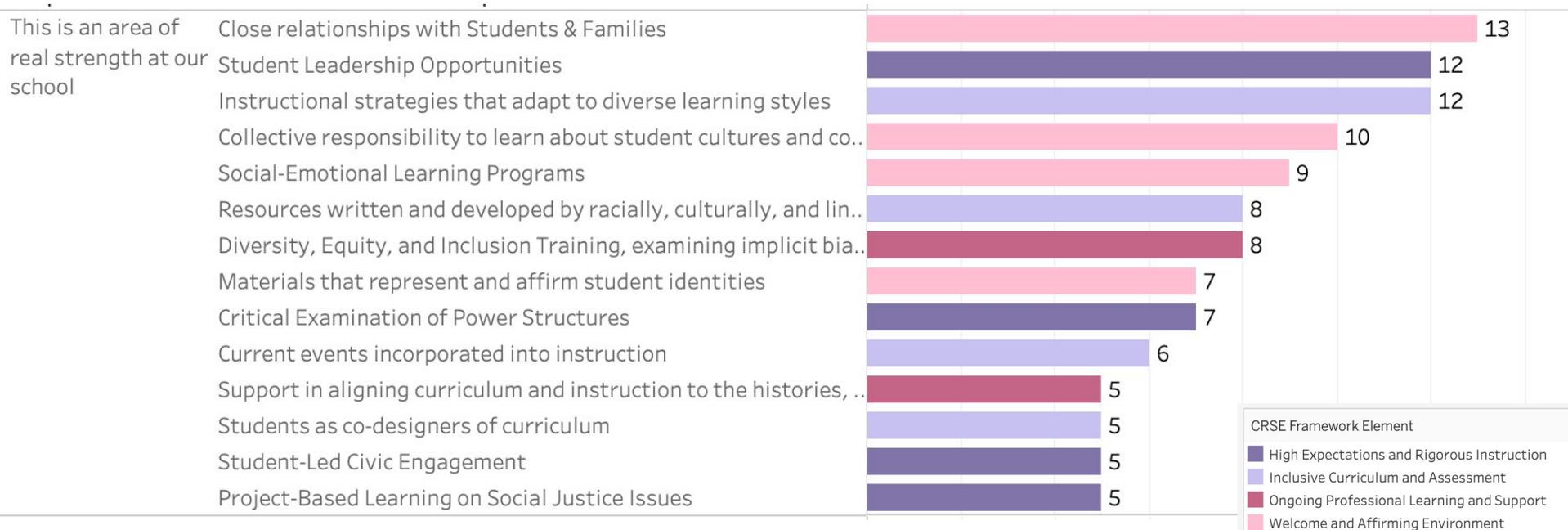
Follow-up interviews with 2 teachers, discussion with 2 support staff and one parent.

Participants were asked to consider the NYSED CRSE Framework and identify elements that were areas of strength, areas of recent progress, and areas in which the school had experienced struggle.

# “This is an area of real strength at our school”

## Relationships with students and families

School staff who responded to the survey also noted strengths in student leadership opportunities and differentiated instructional strategies.



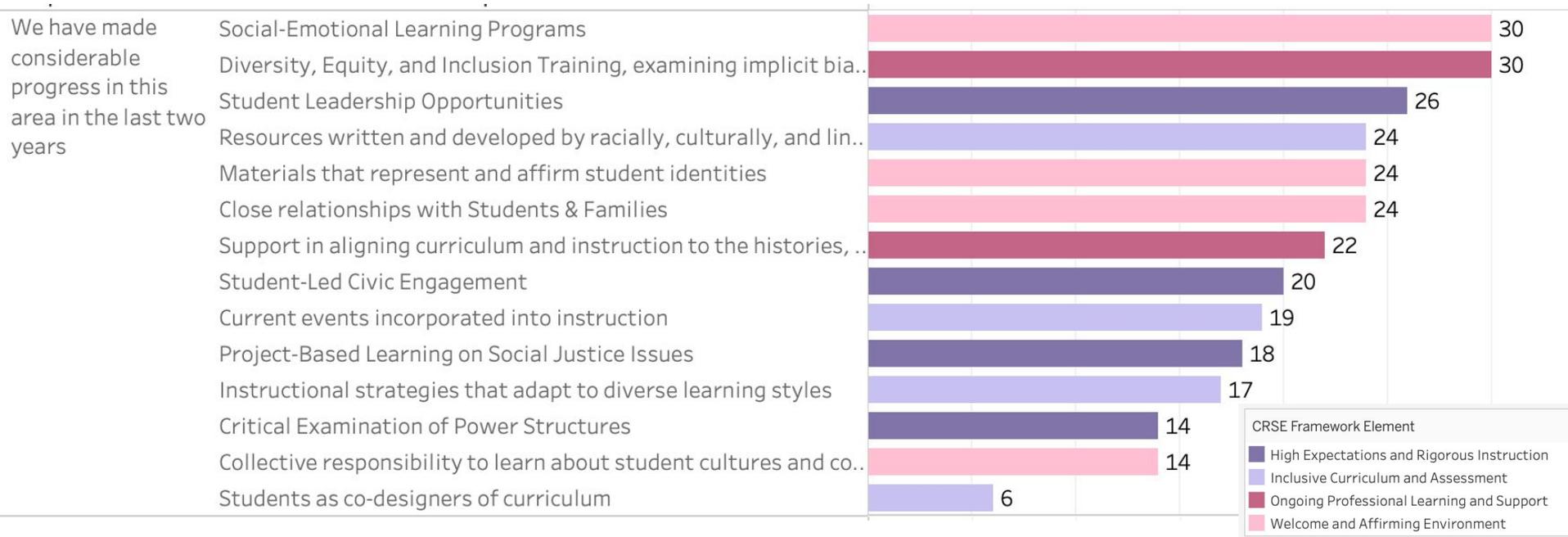
# Relationships with students and families

*“My daughter, it was her first year in junior high school during the pandemic, and she had a really hard time going remote. I expressed that to the school. They **immediately connected us** to a program for her to get counseling and therapy and it’s just working wonders for her... the staff **makes you feel very comfortable in expressing your concerns** with the school and in meeting your child’s needs.” -MS118 parent*

*“We lost one student in the fire stuff that happened, that was really really sad for everyone. The school made for the staff and for the kids a really good follow up ... they’re still doing that. If you have any situation that you have to communicate **you have people to go to here.**” -MS118 support staff member*

# “We have made considerable progress in this area in the last two years” - Social Emotional Learning

Respondents also noted progress in DEI training, student leadership opportunities, and inclusive curriculum.



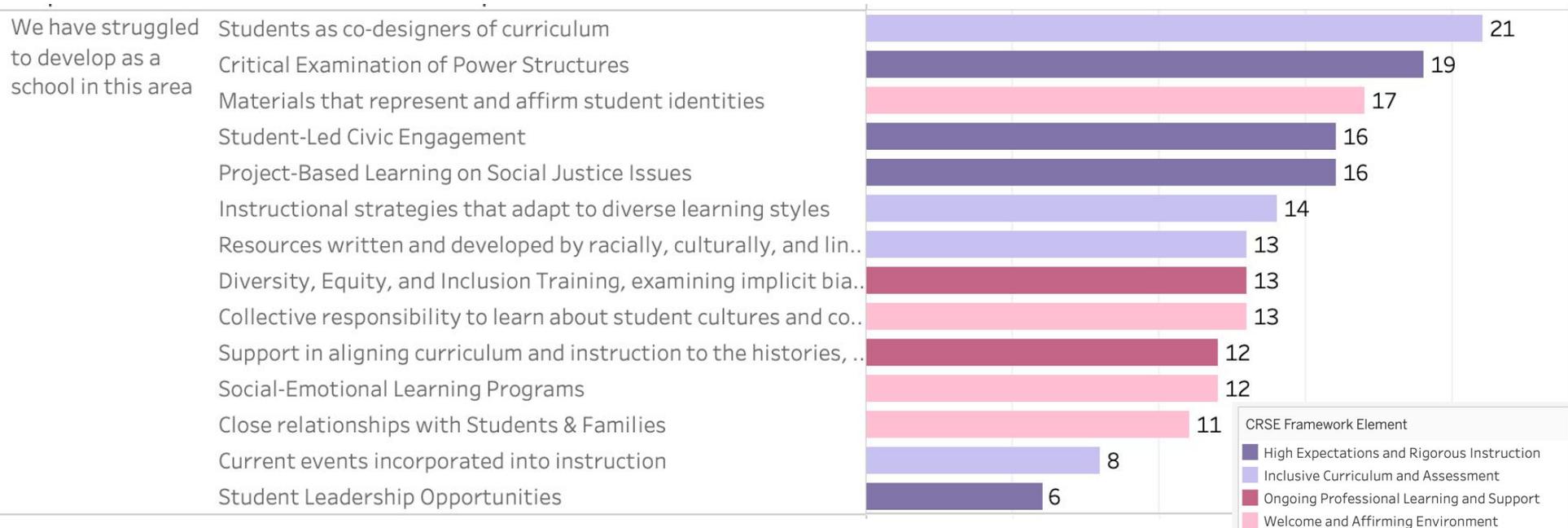
# Social Emotional Learning

*“It’s tough to be in a setting where a student is sitting there one day and gone the next... For them to feel **‘I can talk about how I’m feeling and I’m not going to be yelled at.’** We don’t expect you to be happy every day... I never had this in all my years of teaching.” -MS118 teacher*

*“Wednesdays we have a grade team SEL meeting... Whether it’s **checking in on students as they come in**, mood meters, asking questions at the end of lesson, asking how they’re feeling. Different colored post its - blue I need to talk to someone - other ways to express how they’re feeling. Some days it’s going to be tough, some days i’m going to be upset... SEL corner. Students can isolate themselves and read, **get piece of mind, then come back to us.**” -MS118 teacher*

# “We have struggled to develop as a school in this area” - **Students as co-designers of curriculum**

This also received the most responses in the categories “We have not yet focused on developing as a school in this area” and “I am not sure what this is referring to.”



# Students as co-designers of curriculum

*“I’m curious to know **how would that look like?** Don’t they need to know what they need to learn?” -MS118 teacher*

*“Most of the materials in use seem to be the same from class to class within a grade. I would **expect to see more variety across classrooms** if students were indeed co-designing their curriculum.” -MS118 support staff member*

*“I had students be teachers for a week or two. I give a topic, they come up with a lesson plan, deliver the lesson, **that’s their period...** they had to do some research, had to learn it themselves so they could teach it. Students loved it. Thinking about it now, I wonder **how could I include them throughout the year?** It could be really powerful... let it be something we could build on.” -MS118 teacher*

## For further exploration: Deficit-based thinking

*“There are many teachers at this school that **do not believe in the capabilities of the children...** they often say things like ‘you know these kids can’t do that,’ or request that teachers who attempt to do more for them ‘be more realistic’ when they try to teach advanced and challenging materials.” -MS118 teacher*

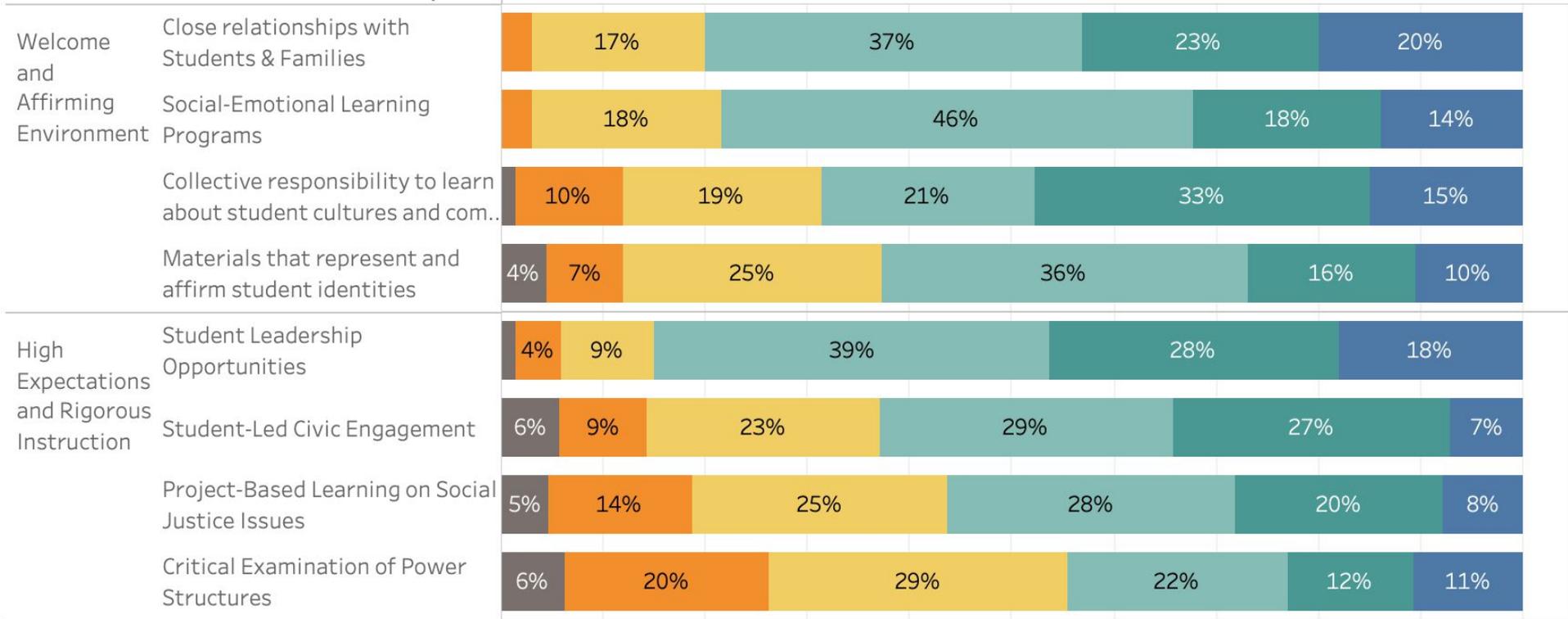
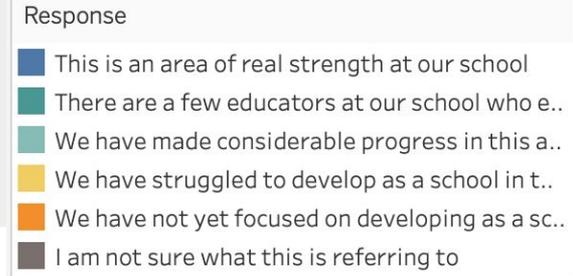
*“Implicit bias is a huge one. I think that’s really hard work for some people, maybe everybody. But still very much there. It is something like when it comes to high expectations and rigorous instruction and us as a faculty **not honoring the gifts students bring**, just saying ‘kids don’t do work anyway’ so not giving them rigorous instruction.” -MS118 teacher*

# No clear consensus: Inclusive and affirming curriculum

Some participants, both in interviews and surveys, called these out as strengths, others as areas of struggle:

- Collective responsibility to learn about student cultures and communities
- Instructional strategies that adapt to diverse learning styles
- Resources written and developed by racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse perspectives

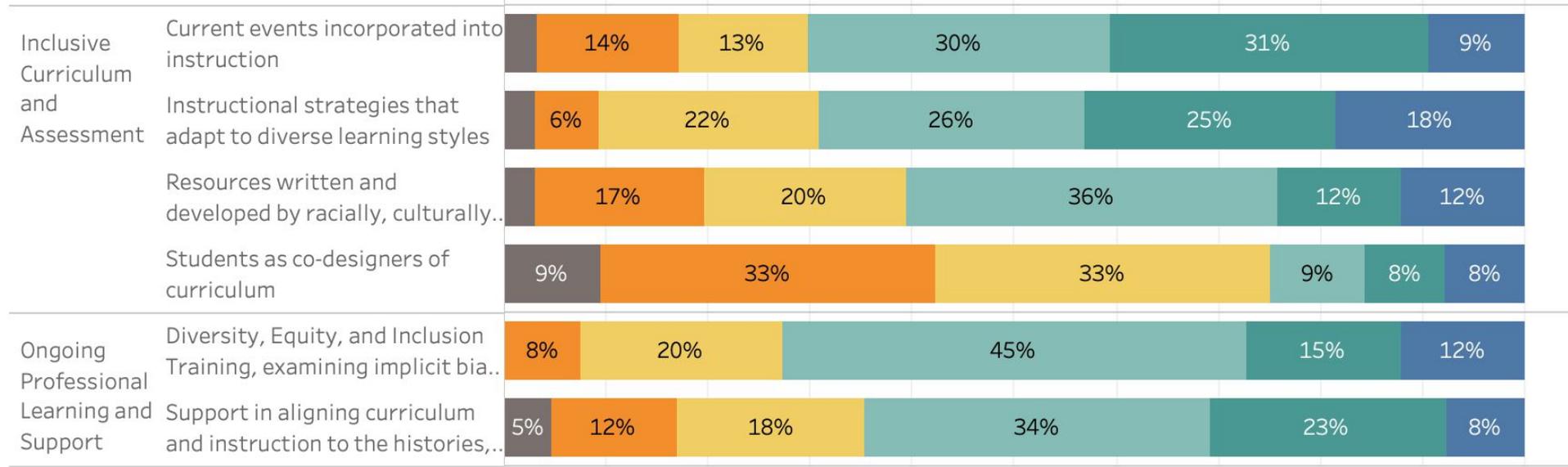
# Additional Staff Survey Data Visualizations



# Additional Staff Survey Data Visualizations

## Response

- This is an area of real strength at our school
- There are a few educators at our school who e..
- We have made considerable progress in this a..
- We have struggled to develop as a school in t..
- We have not yet focused on developing as a sc..
- I am not sure what this is referring to



# Questions for Discussion

1. What resonated with you?
2. What surprised you?
3. Which areas of the staff survey do you believe students, families and community members would most agree with? Disagree with?
4. What questions does this raise for the strategic planning process?

# **Opportunities for Sustainable Growth**

Insights from staff survey and follow-up interviews regarding HOW to support equity-driven change in the school

# Opportunities for sustainable growth

## 1. Professional Development that centers the student experience

“[A coach had me] **follow a student** to see how their experience changes from class to class... the way they interact, complete assignments... that branched out and **I built a relationship** with them. [The coach told me to] have them sit in your classroom for a week to build on that, see how that changes. I gave some instruction in Arabic. In other classes they weren't doing anything [but in mine they were engaged]. They're **hungry to learn, they just don't understand.**”

-MS118 teacher

“**Each family and child is different**, whether it's culturally, how they learn, what their beliefs are, just keep that in mind.” -MS118 parent

# Opportunities for sustainable growth

## 2. Raise up model practices right here

“I think it would be great if we could fishbowl some demo lessons that display teachers from different background **modeling some inclusive lessons, in our actual environment.**” -MS118 teacher

“Let’s **look at a classroom where it’s evident** and you can see it in the discourse when you walk into that classroom. Let’s celebrate it.” -MS118 teacher

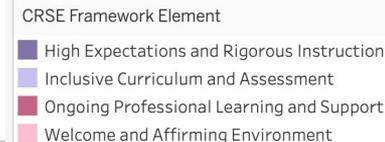
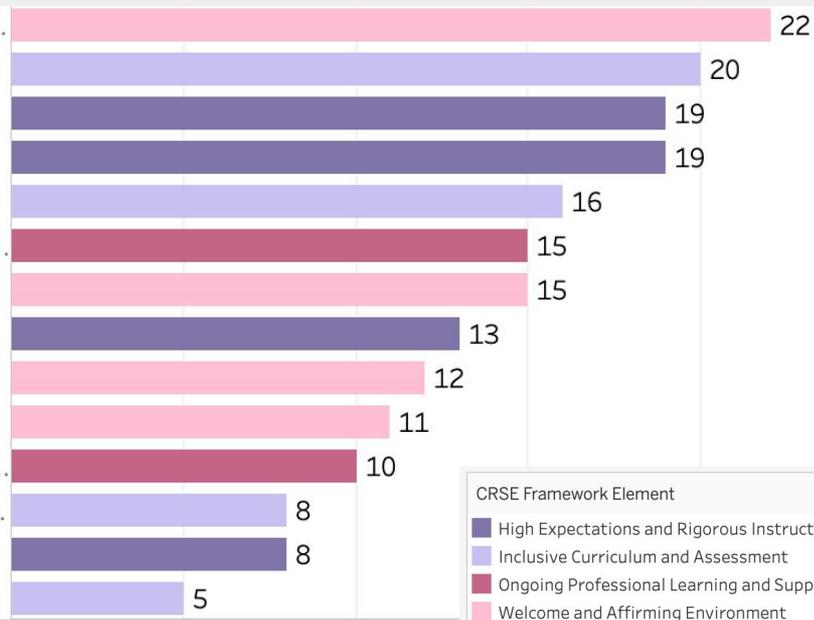
“First and foremost, you’re gonna get people who complain and don’t want to be part of something new and don’t want to do more than they’re already doing. I hear that. I think it’s in how we approach it... Maybe we’re already doing it and we can be **capitalizing on what we’re already doing well...** When people say they don’t have the time, they think it’s this extra thing they have to do - it’s not. It could be **embedded in what you’re already doing.**” -MS118 teacher

# Opportunities for sustainable growth

## 2. Raise up model practices right here

There are a few educators at our school who excel at this and who could be a model for others

Collective responsibility to learn about student cultures and co...  
Current events incorporated into instruction  
Student-Led Civic Engagement  
Student Leadership Opportunities  
Instructional strategies that adapt to diverse learning styles  
Support in aligning curriculum and instruction to the histories, ..  
Close relationships with Students & Families  
Project-Based Learning on Social Justice Issues  
Social-Emotional Learning Programs  
Materials that represent and affirm student identities  
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training, examining implicit bia..  
Resources written and developed by racially, culturally, and lin..  
Critical Examination of Power Structures  
Students as co-designers of curriculum



# Opportunities for sustainable growth

## 3. Pair learning with active inquiry

“Leadership introduces initiatives and then **never checks back in** on them.”  
-MS118 teacher

“Inclusivity programs have been attempted but instead of taking action it is usually **simply talked about.**” -MS118 teacher

“I hear a teacher say ‘If I hear one more thing about CRSE...’ **They’re tired of hearing it. But they’re not sure how to implement it.** If it were more like ‘Try this more.’ [Right now] it’s like to each his own. It’s fallen by the wayside. There’s not common language about it, not a common text. We got the books but we didn’t do anything with it.” -MS118 teacher

# Opportunities for sustainable growth

**What other thoughts do you have?**

# Additional Staff Survey Data Visualizations

Survey respondents were unclear what these topics referred to:

