

Rising to the Challenge: *Are Recent High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?*



*Key findings from a survey among parents of recent public high school graduates
Conducted August 2015*

Methodology

- A national survey was conducted online and by telephone from August 17 to 31, 2015, among 917 parents of recent public high school graduates from the classes of 2011 through 2014, including:
 - 568 parents of children who are currently enrolled in or recent graduates of two-year and four-year colleges
 - 349 parents of children who are not currently enrolled in and have not graduated from two-year or four-year colleges

Key Takeaways

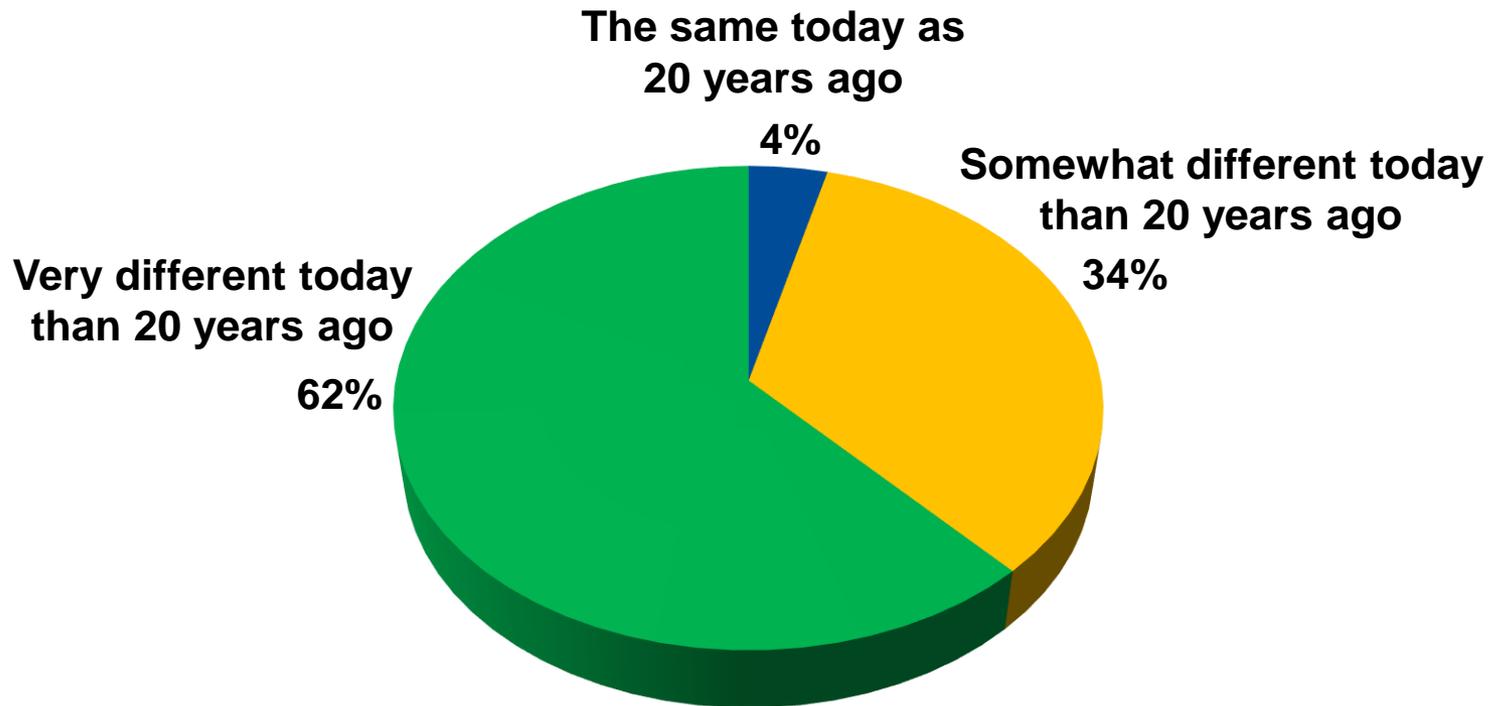
- There is a disconnect between parents and students, faculty, and employers in perceptions of readiness for life after high school.
 - 73% of parents of college students believe that high school prepared their children very or extremely well for college academics, but only 53% of college students themselves feel the same way.
 - 84% of parents are at least somewhat satisfied with the job their child's high school did preparing them for success after high school, but only 56% of employers and 35% of college instructors are satisfied with the job U.S. high schools are doing preparing recent graduates for work/college after high school.
- Parents of students who attended high schools with low academic expectations report lower levels of satisfaction with the job high schools are doing preparing their children for success after high school. These parents want higher academic expectations for their children.
 - 79% believe that having higher academic standards would have helped improve their child's preparedness for work or college after high school.

Key Takeaways

- Preparation and communication are key, and a majority of parents do not feel that high schools are doing enough to communicate with them.
 - 55% of parents report that their child's high school communicated too little and majorities see room for improvement in the job high schools are doing providing information that is critical to ensuring young people are prepared for work or college after high school.
- Both parents and students wish they had done more during the student's time in high school.
 - 6 in 10 recent high school graduates say they would have worked harder if they knew then what they know now about the expectations of college and the work world.
 - Two-thirds of parents say that if they had it to do over again, they would be more involved in their child's high school education.

Virtually all parents recognize that the things students need to learn in high school today are different from 20 years ago

Perception of what a student needs to learn in high school today

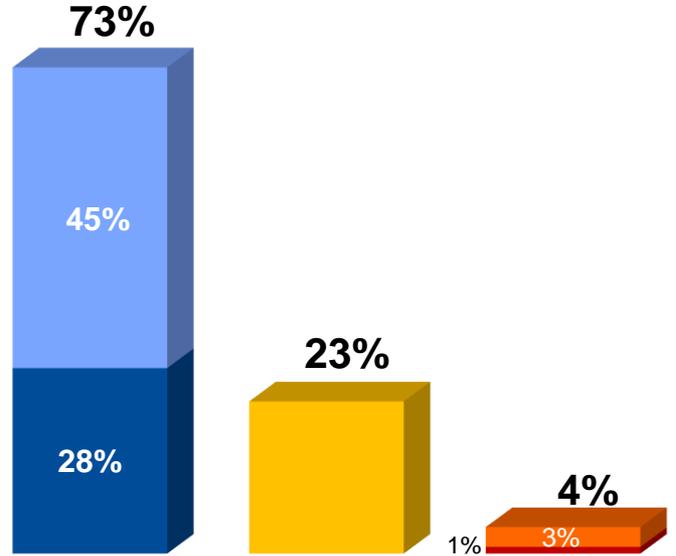


A solid majority of college students' parents feel that high school prepared their child very/extremely well for college; fewer than half of non-students' parents concur

Which best describes how well your child's HS education prepared him/her for the following?

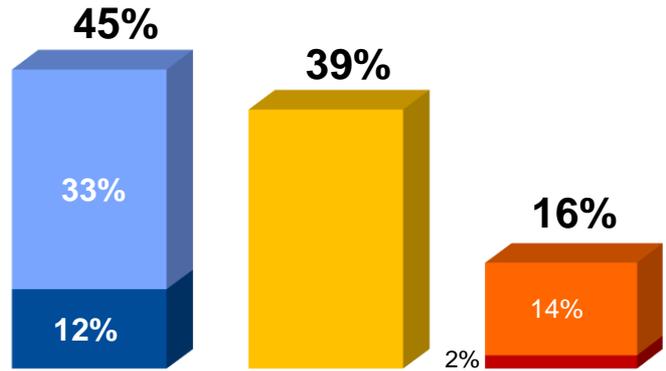
- **Extremely well:**
Prepared for everything he/she faces
- **Very well:** he/she generally is able to do what is expected
- **Somewhat well:** but some gaps in preparation
- **Not too well:** Large gaps in preparation
- **Not at all well:** Struggling to keep up

Academic work in college



Parents of college students

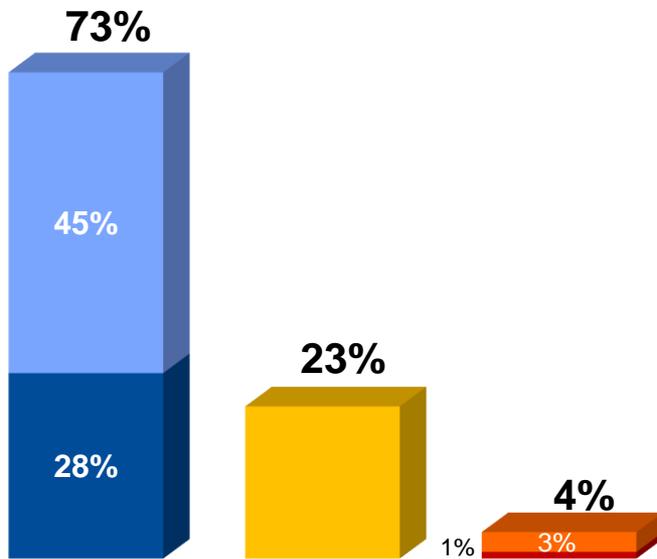
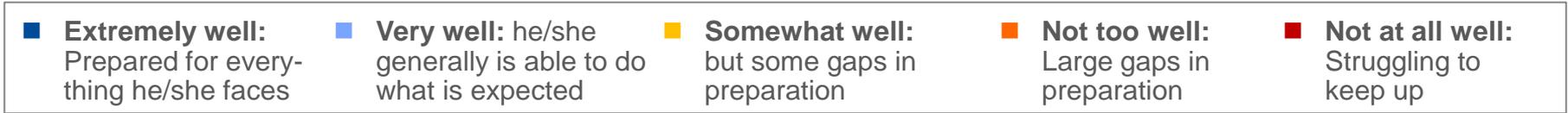
Skills, abilities, work habits expected in the working world



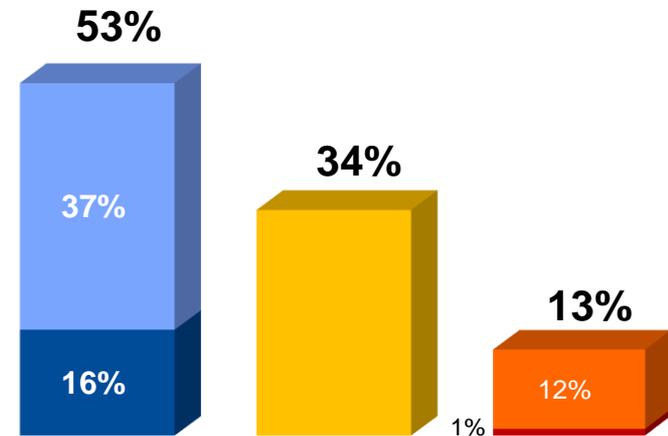
Parents of children not in college

Parents of college students are more optimistic than are college students about their preparedness

Which best describes how well [your, your child's] high school education prepared [you, him/her] for the academic work in college?



Parents of college students

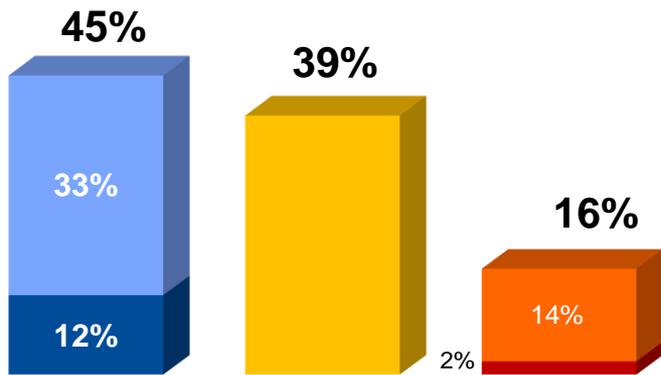


College students

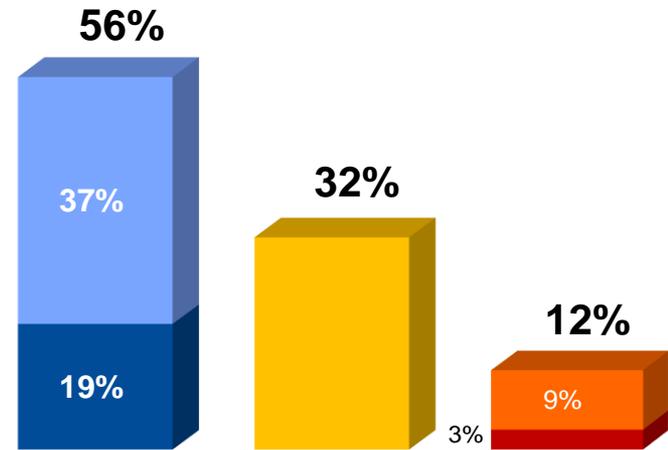
Parents of children that are not in college are less optimistic than young people who are not attending college about their preparedness for the work world

Which best describes how well [your, your child's] high school education prepared [you, him/her] with the skills, abilities, and work habits expected in the work world?

- **Extremely well:**
Prepared for everything he/she faces
- **Very well:** he/she generally is able to do what is expected
- **Somewhat well:** but some gaps in preparation
- **Not too well:** Large gaps in preparation
- **Not at all well:** Struggling to keep up



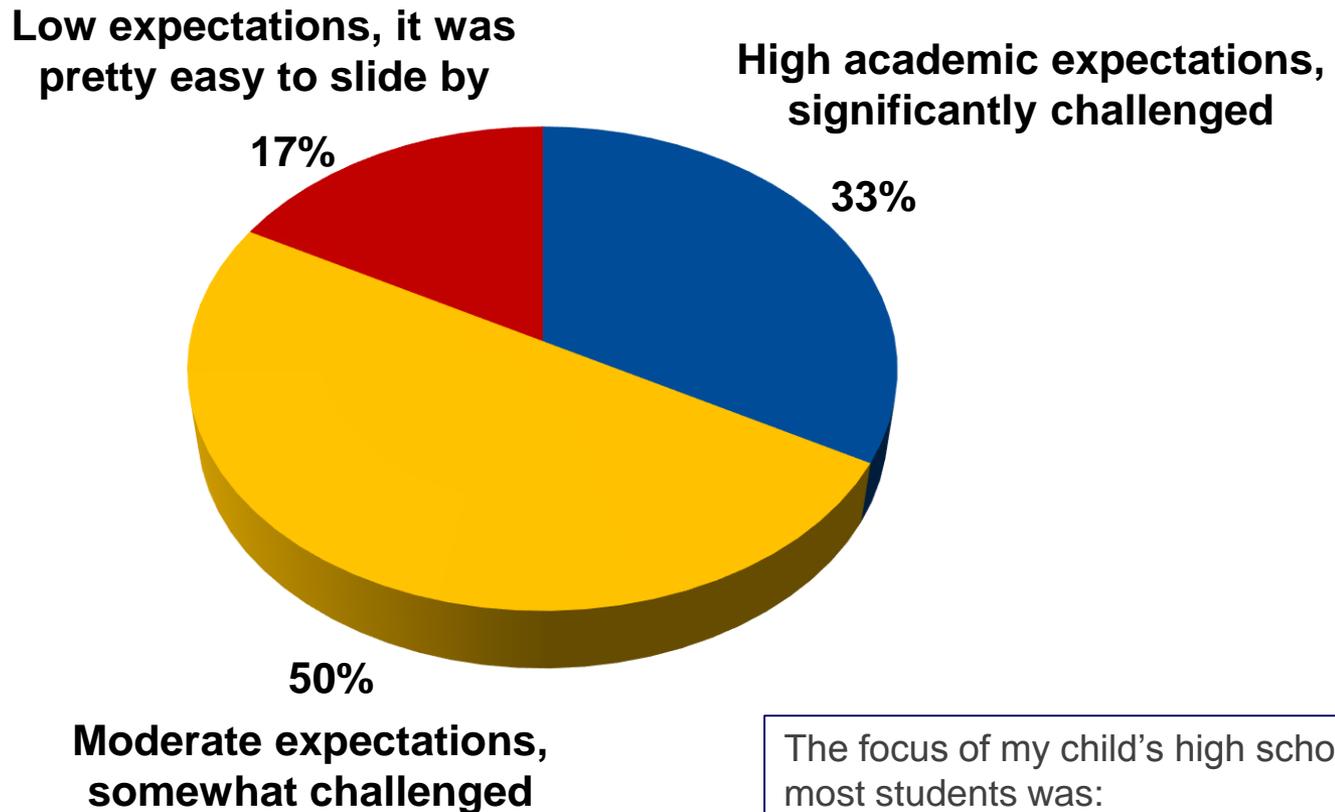
Parents of children not in college



Young adults, not in college

Only one in three parents says their child's high school set high academic expectations for their child

Which best describes your child's experience in high school?

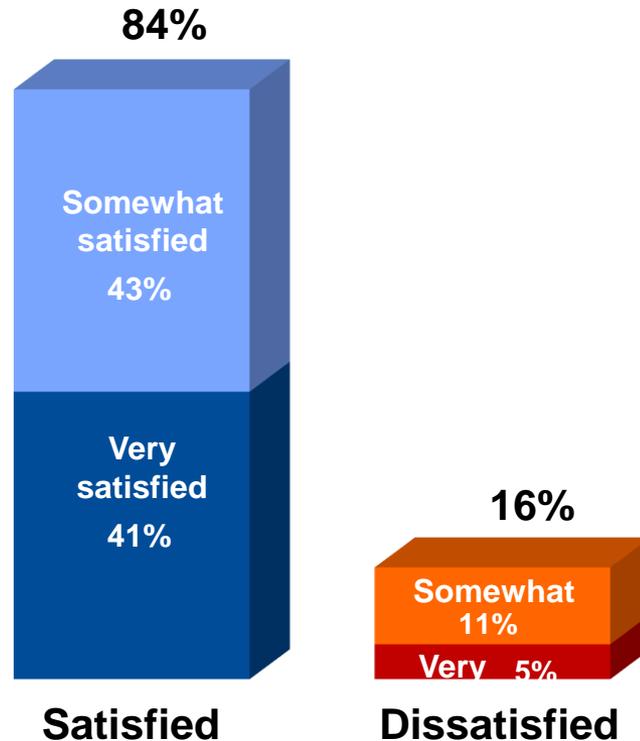


The focus of my child's high school for most students was:

Earning a high school diploma	50%
Attending college	49%

A majority of parents are at least somewhat satisfied with the job their child's high school did preparing them for success after high school

Overall, how satisfied are you with the job your child's high school did in preparing [him/her] for success after high school?



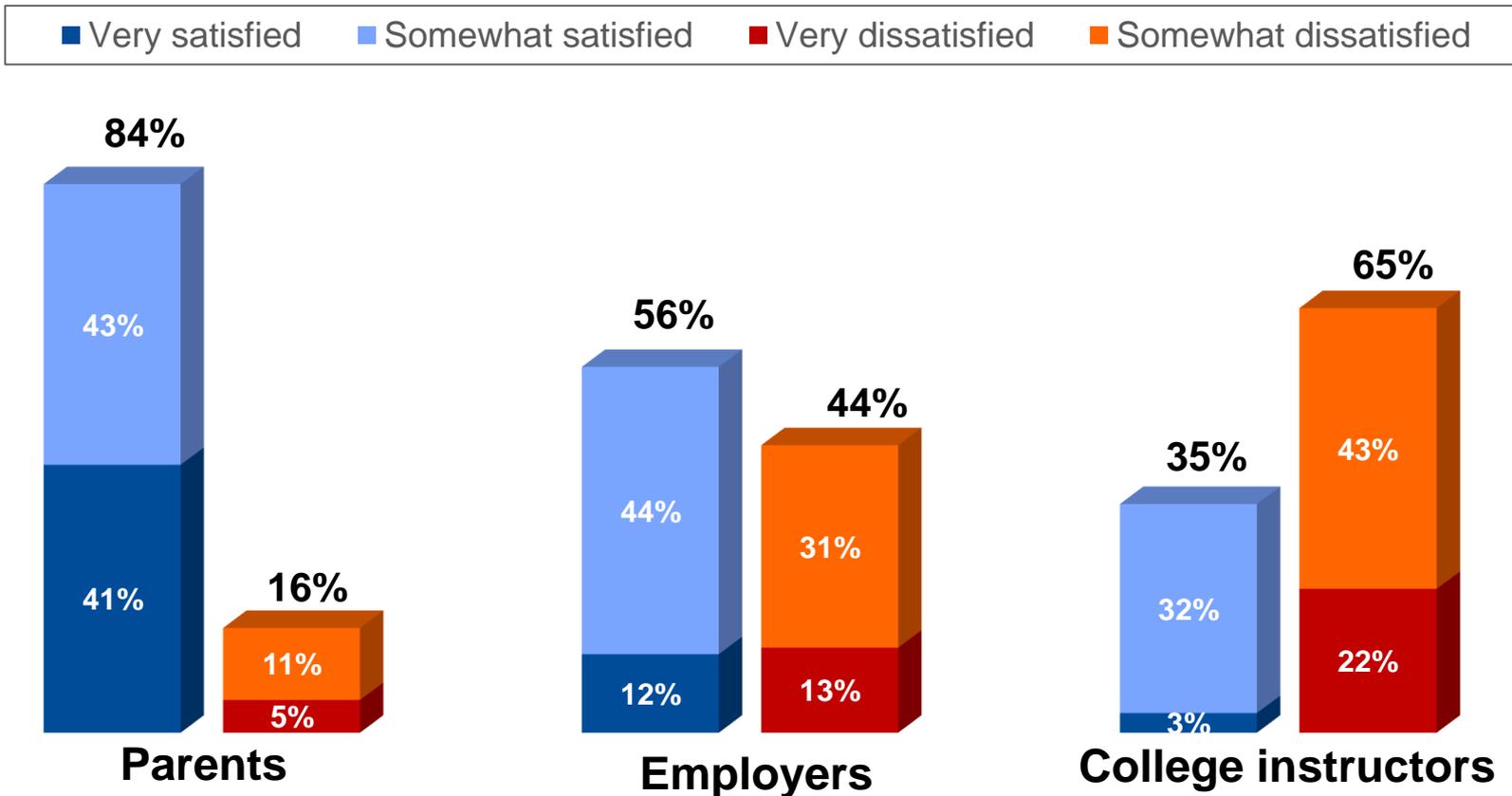
Degree of satisfaction varies significantly by high school achievement level and academic expectations

Overall, how satisfied are you with the job your child's high school did in preparing [him/her] for success after high school?

	Total satisfied	Very satisfied	Dis-satisfied		Total satisfied	Very satisfied	Dis-satisfied
All parents	84%	41%	16%	HS expectations:			
Parents of college students:				High	96%	70%	4%
Two-year colleges	85%	44%	15%	Moderate	84%	31%	16%
Four-year colleges	92%	53%	8%	Low	55%	12%	45%
Parents of non-students	74%	26%	26%	HS focus:			
Parents of daughters	80%	34%	20%	HS diploma	75%	25%	25%
Parents of sons	87%	48%	13%	College	92%	56%	8%
Whites	82%	39%	18%	HS achievement:			
African Americans	84%	46%	16%	Above avg/most college	95%	61%	5%
Hispanics	87%	43%	13%	Avg/many college, many not	81%	28%	19%
				Below avg/some, few college	56%	12%	44%

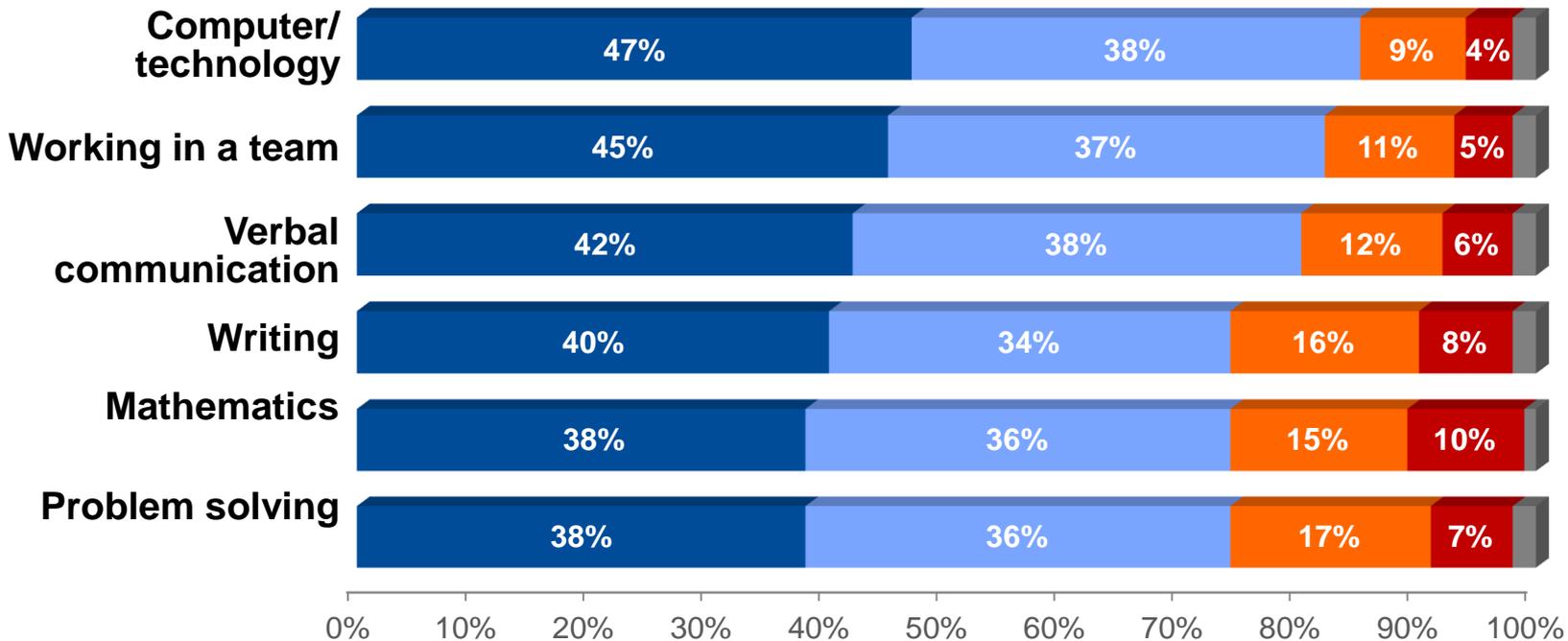
Parents are much more satisfied with the job their child's high school did than are employers and college instructors regarding public high schools generally

Overall, how satisfied are you with the job that [your child's high school did/public high schools in the US are doing] in preparing graduates for success after high school?



A majority of parents are at least somewhat satisfied with the job their child's high school did preparing him/her in specific subject areas

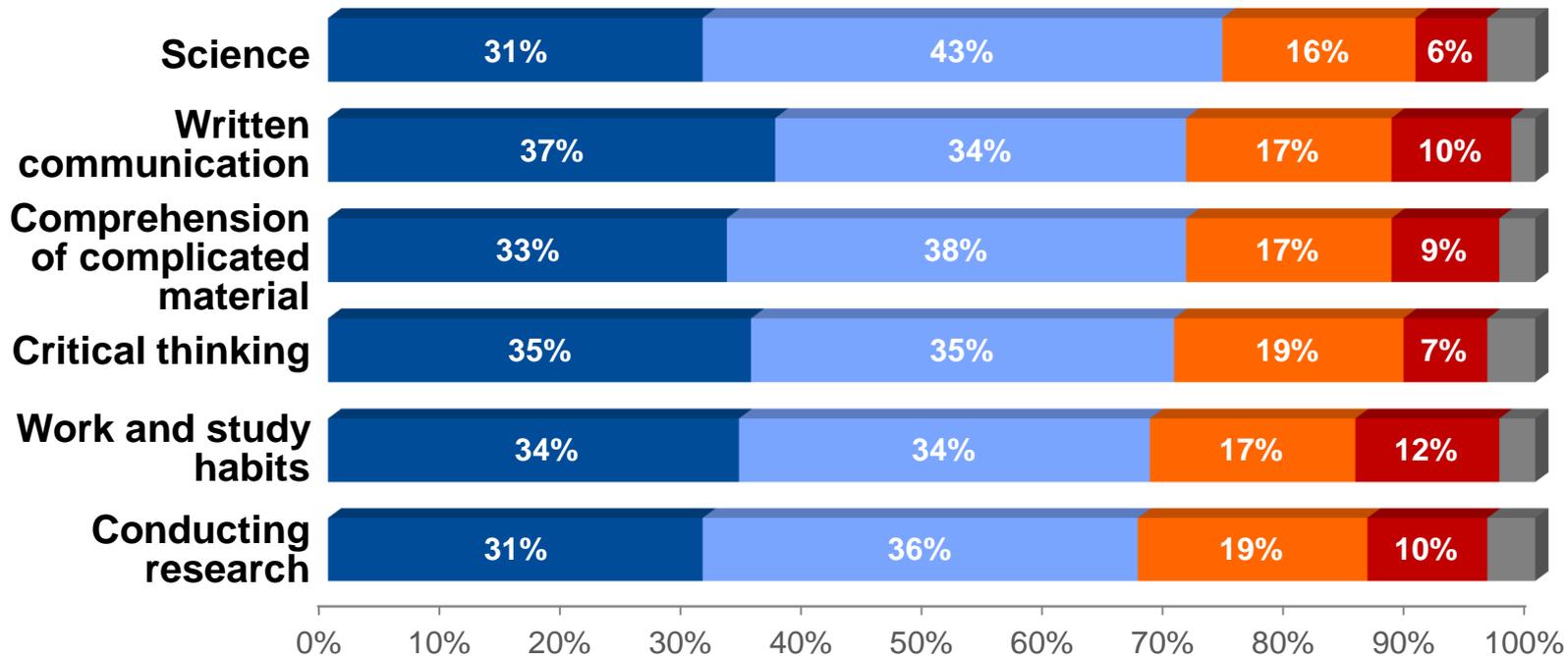
When it comes specifically to the skills listed below, how satisfied are you with the job your child's high school did in preparing [him/her] for success after high school?



A majority of parents are at least somewhat satisfied with the job their child's high school did preparing him/her in specific subject areas *(continued)*

When it comes specifically to the skills listed below, how satisfied are you with the job your child's high school did in preparing [him/her] for success after high school?

■ Very satisfied
 ■ Somewhat satisfied
 ■ Somewhat dissatisfied
 ■ Very dissatisfied
 ■ Not sure



Most parents think their child's high school did a good job with big-picture objectives, such as preparing students for success after high school and building confidence, maturity, and personal skills

How would you rate the job your child's high school did in these areas?



Providing your child with an education that would enable [him/her] to be admitted to college and succeed at college-level work



My child's high school fell short

20%

Helping your child develop the confidence, maturity, and personal skills people need as adults



26%

Preparing your child for a good job and career after high school



34%

Helping your child discover and develop a special talent or ability that could become a focal point for [his/her] future



36%

However, parents whose children attended high schools that had low academic expectations of them are much more likely to think the school fell short on these important objectives

How would you rate the job your child's high school did in these areas?

	HS had high expectations		HS had moderate expectations		HS had low expectations	
	Good job	Fell short	Good job	Fell short	Good job	Fell short
Providing your child with an education that would enable [him/her] to be admitted to college and succeed at college-level work	95%	5%	82%	18%	43%	57%
Helping your child develop the confidence, maturity, and personal skills people need as adults	89%	10%	73%	27%	44%	56%
Preparing your child for a good job and career after high school	88%	12%	65%	35%	28%	72%
Helping your child discover and develop a special talent or ability that could become a focal point for [his/her] future	86%	14%	60%	40%	32%	68%

Most think their child's high school did at least a fairly good job on specific actions that help ensure students leave high school well-prepared

How would you rate the job your child's high school did in these areas that can ensure students graduate well-prepared for college or the work world?



Providing opportunities for students to take more challenging courses, such as honors, AP, IB, or college-level classes for free, while still in high school



My child's high school fell short

22%

Challenging students and setting high standards for what students are expected to do and learn



29%

Encouraging students to take the most advanced level courses in math and science



30%

Having a curriculum and approach to learning that keeps students interested and engaged



31%

Most think their child's high school did at least a fairly good job on specific actions that help ensure students leave high school well-prepared *(continued)*

How would you rate the job your child's high school did in these areas that can ensure students graduate well-prepared for college or the work world?



My child's high school fell short

Encouraging parents to be involved in their children's education and providing the right kinds of opportunities for parents to be involved at school and at home



34%

Providing special classes, tutoring, and extra help to students who are having problems in a particular subject



33%

Communicating with parents about their children's education and whether a student is achieving at a level needed for success in college or career after high school



36%

Providing individual guidance to students to help them have a focus and direction to their education



38%

Providing opportunities for more real-world learning through internships, etc, and other opportunities to make classroom learning more relevant



43%

However, parents whose children attended high schools that had low academic expectations of them are much more likely to think the school fell short on important objectives

How would you rate the job your child's high school did in these areas?

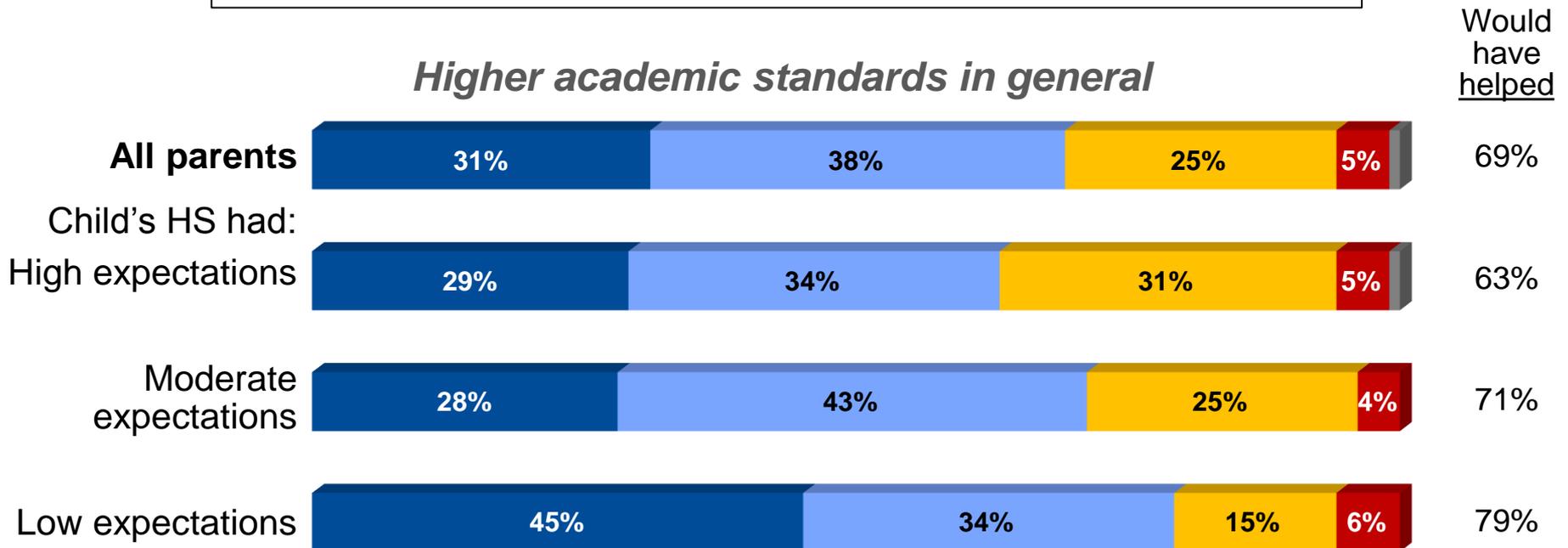
	HS had high expectations		HS had moderate expectations		HS had low expectations	
	Good job	Fell short	Good job	Fell short	Good job	Fell short
Honors, AP, IB, college course	91%	7%	75%	22%	41%	54%
Challenging students/high standards	92%	6%	66%	32%	28%	70%
Urging students to take most advanced math and science	90%	8%	64%	33%	30%	64%
Curriculum/approach that keeps students interested and engaged	92%	7%	61%	36%	32%	64%
Encouraging parents to be involved	82%	16%	65%	35%	29%	67%
Providing extra help to students who are having problems	78%	15%	60%	36%	34%	60%
Communicating with parents about their children's education	83%	15%	62%	37%	22%	75%
Providing individual guidance to help students focus/have direction	83%	15%	57%	41%	22%	74%
Real-world learning opportunities	78%	20%	49%	48%	24%	72%

Parents whose children attended high schools with low academic expectations are more likely to think higher academic standards would help a great deal to increase preparedness

What impact would this have had on your child's preparedness for success at work or college after high school?



Higher academic standards in general



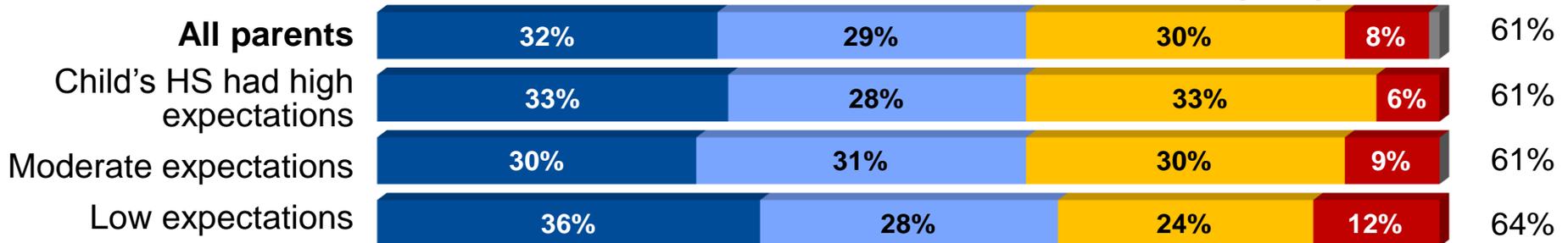
Majorities think requiring more math and science would help increase preparedness for success after high school

What impact would this have had on your child's preparedness for success at work or college after high school?

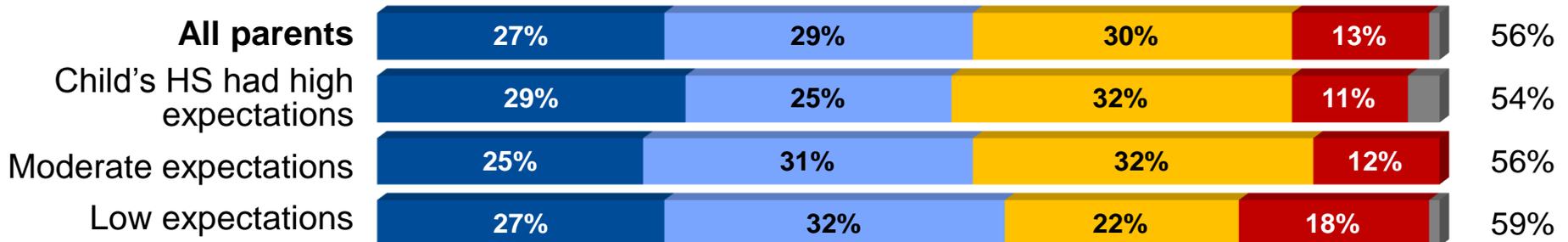


Would have helped

Requirement that students pass four years of math, including Algebra 2



Requirement that students pass biology, chemistry, physics

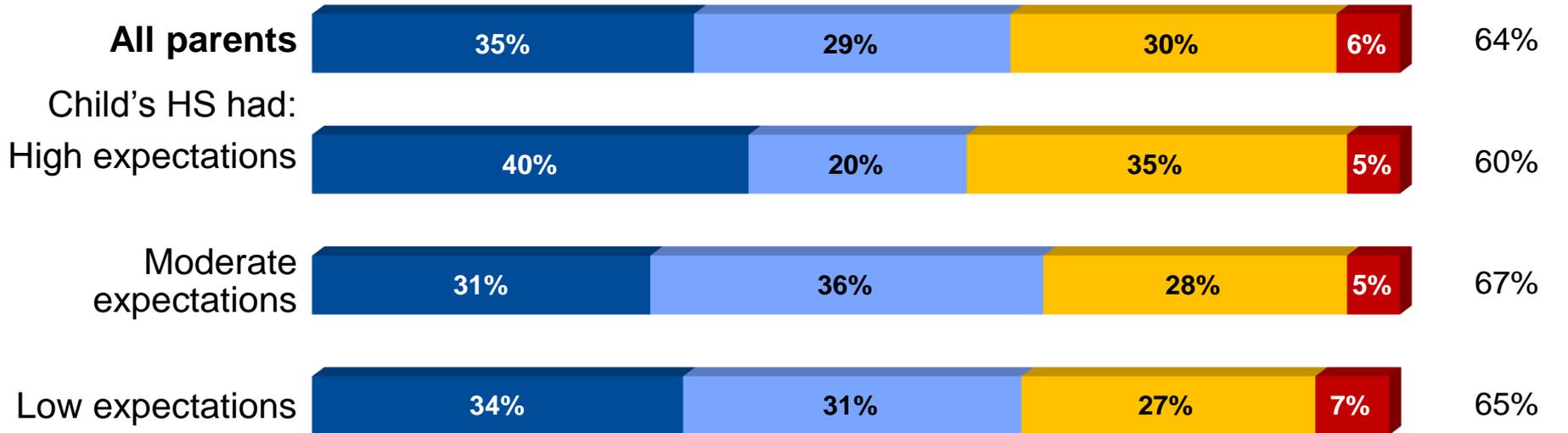


Three in five or more think requiring passage of math and writing exams to graduate would help to increase preparedness

What impact would this have had on your child's preparedness for success at work or college after high school?



Requirement that students pass exams in math and writing to graduate

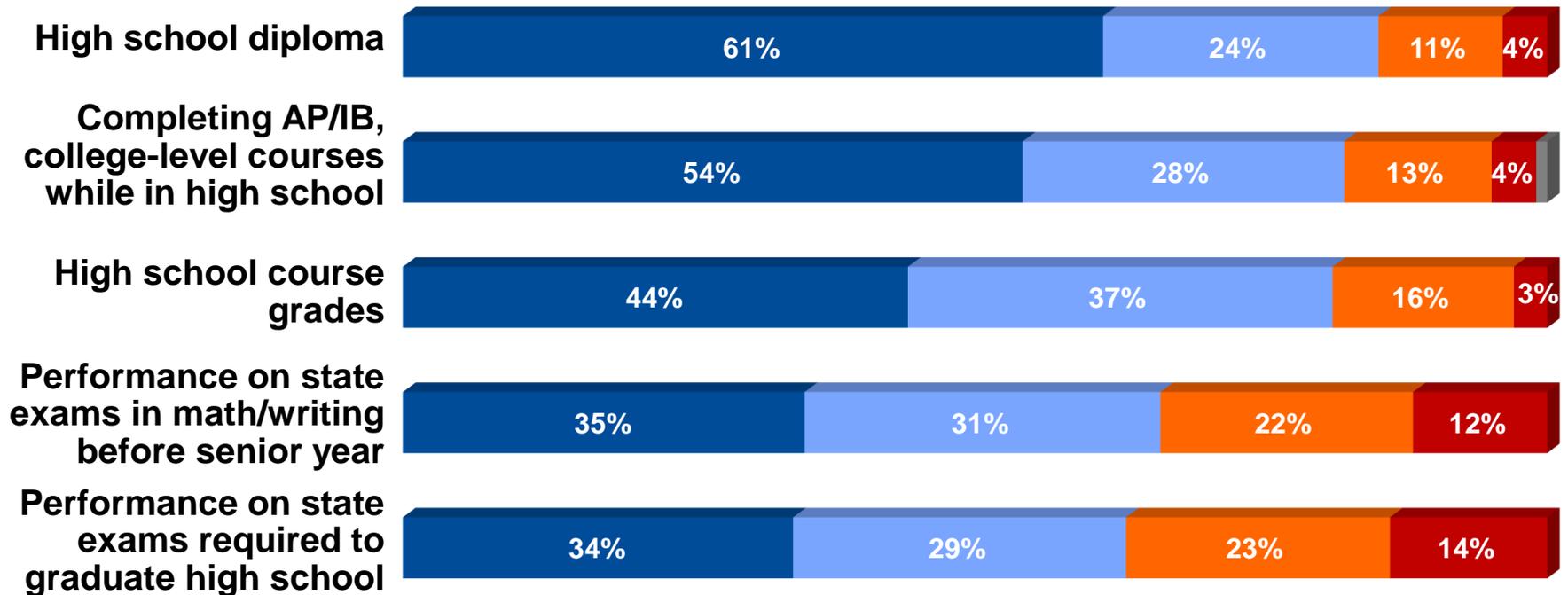


Would have helped

Parents view a high school diploma and completion of advanced courses as the most useful indicators of preparedness for success after high school

How useful and valuable are the following as indicators of HS graduates' preparedness with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in work or college after high school?

■ Very useful/valuable indicator
 ■ Fairly useful/valuable
 ■ Just somewhat useful/valuable
 ■ Not useful/valuable



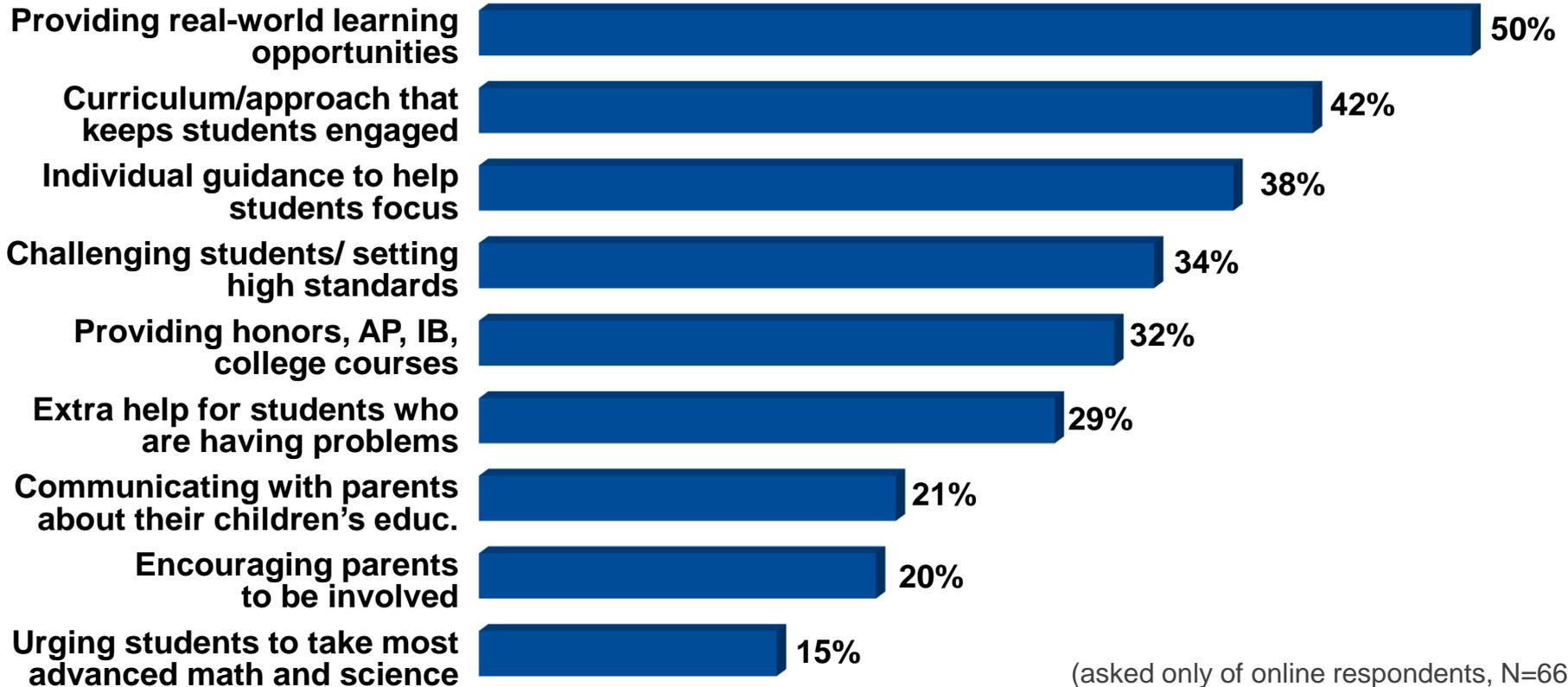
Higher-income parents are less likely to see performance on state exams as valuable indicators of preparedness

How useful and valuable are the following as indicators of HS graduates' preparedness with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in work or college after high school?

	Parents with less than \$40K income		Parents with \$40K to \$75K income		Parents with more than \$75K income	
	Very/fairly valuable	Less/not valuable	Very/fairly valuable	Less/not valuable	Very/fairly valuable	Less/not valuable
High school diploma	91%	9%	86%	14%	80%	20%
Completing AP/IB, college-level courses while in high school	83%	17%	80%	20%	85%	15%
High school course grades	84%	16%	78%	22%	80%	20%
Performance on state exams in math/writing before senior year	73%	27%	65%	35%	60%	40%
Performance on state exams required to graduate high school	75%	25%	61%	39%	55%	45%

Providing more real world learning and having a curriculum that keeps students engaged are the most important things parents think schools can do to increase preparedness

Which two or three of these are most important to ensure that students leave high school well-prepared for college or the work world?

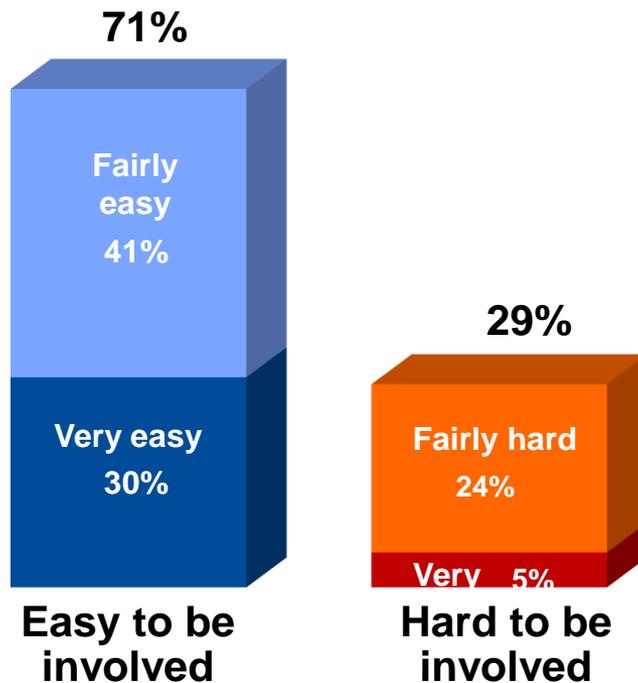


(asked only of online respondents, N=668)

While most parents say it was easy to be as involved as they wanted to be in their child's high school education, one in three say it was hard

How easy or hard was it for you to be as involved as you wanted to be in your child's high school education?

All parents

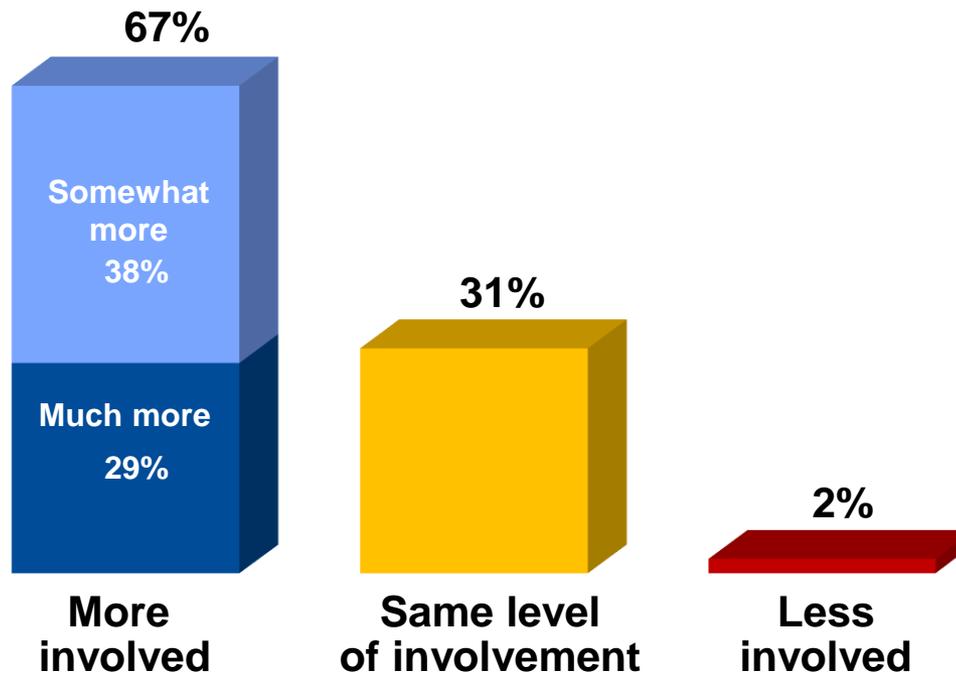


Very/fairly hard to be involved

Parents of child not in college	36%
HS had low expectations	55%
HS below avg achievement (some/few attend college)	53%

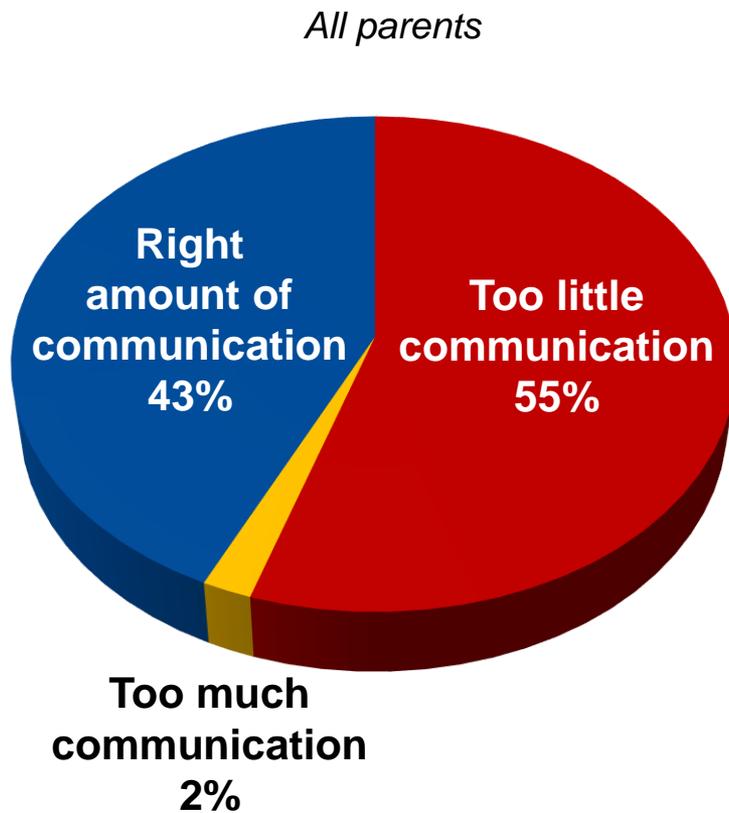
If they had it to do over again, most parents would be more involved in their child's high school education

Realistically speaking, if you had it to do over again, how involved would you have been in your child's high school education?



A majority of parents say their child's high school communicated too little; virtually none say it communicated too much

How much communication did you have with your child's high school teachers, counselors, and other school professionals?



Too little communication

Parents of college students/grads:	
Two-year colleges	52%
Four-year colleges	47%
Parents of child not in college	63%
Whites	60%
African Americans	45%
Hispanics	47%
HS expectations:	
High	34%
Moderate	60%
Low	78%
HS achievement:	
Above avg/most college	38%
Avg/many college, many not	64%
Below avg/some, few college	81%

The most useful methods of communication include e-mail and in-person individual meetings with school personnel

When your child's high school provided information to you, which of these methods of communication did you find to be most useful for you personally?

E-mails from teachers and other school officials



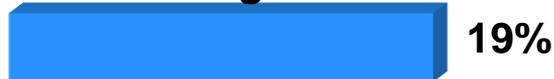
In-person individual meetings at the school



Written materials brought home by your child



Group parent meetings at the school



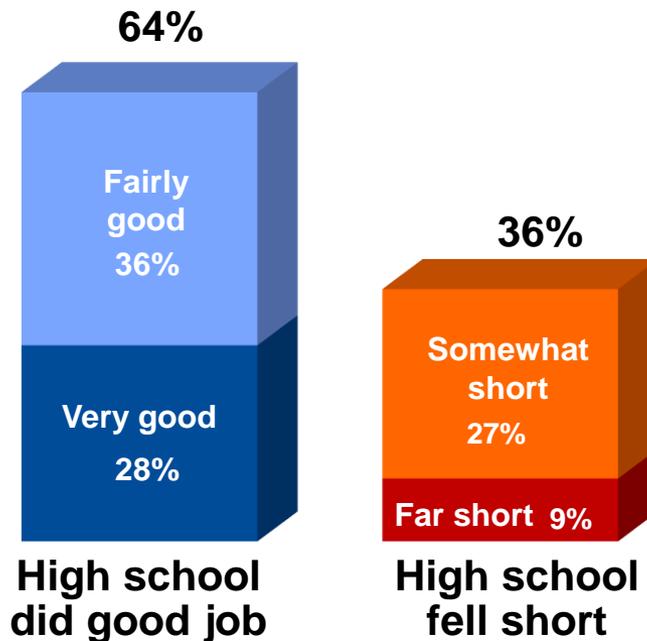
Written materials sent by "snail" mail or regular mail



A majority say their child's high school did a good job helping parents understand what students need to be successful, but a significant minority say it fell short

Based on your personal experience, how did your child's high school do in helping parents understand what students needed to learn and the courses a student needed to take to be successful in a career or college after high school?

All parents

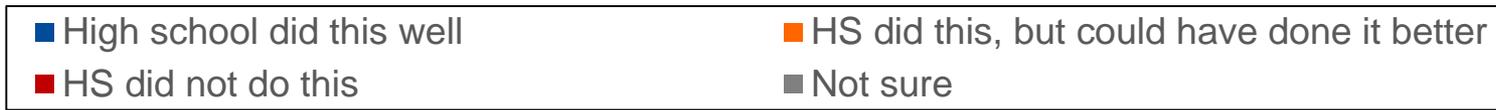


High school fell short

Parents of child not in college	48%
HS had low expectations	76%
HS avg achievement (many college/many not)	45%
HS below avg achievement (some/few attend college)	66%

Parents see significant room for improvement in the job their child's high school did conveying important information critical for success after high school

What kind of job did your child's high school do in providing these types of information/interactions to parents of students?



High school did not do or could have done better

Clear information on requirements/courses needed to graduate from HS



43%

Clear information on requirements/ courses needed to get into college



55%

At least yearly updates on child's progress on courses needed to get into college



54%

In 9th/10th grade, easy-to-understand/useful info on courses needed for college



60%

Parental involvement in selecting child's courses, including more/less advanced level



61%

Easy-to-understand/useful information about exploring career interests and tech classes



67%

Parents of children who attended high schools that had moderate or low academic expectations of their child are much more likely to see room for improvement

*Proportions saying child's high school **could have done better or did not provide** selected types of information/interactions to parents of students*

	HS had high expectations	HS had moderate expectations	HS had low expectations
Clear information on requirements/courses needed to graduate from HS	23%	46%	69%
Clear information on requirements/courses needed for college	29%	63%	82%
Yearly updates on child's progress on courses needed for college	30%	62%	78%
In 9 th /10 th grade, clear/useful info on courses needed for college	35%	67%	86%
Parental involvement in selecting child's courses	37%	70%	87%
Easy-to-understand/useful info on exploring careers and tech classes	44%	74%	88%