



Austin Independent School District

Department of Program Evaluation

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AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT PARENT SURVEY RESULTS, 2007-2008

Strong relationships among staff, students, and parents are critical to student success. In particular, parent involvement in education is associated with higher student achievement (for a meta-analysis see Fan & Chen, 2001). The Austin Independent School District (AISD) Parent Survey was designed to monitor the relationship between campus staff and parents. The survey results provide campuses with feedback about how parents feel about their treatment by school staff, the school's educational environment, and their own involvement in the school. Each principal receives a report containing item results for his or her campus and for all schools at the same level. Principals are encouraged to review results and to share them with campus staff as appropriate. In addition, principals are asked to provide results to Campus Advisory Councils for use during the development of Campus Improvement Plans.

The 2007-2008 Parent Survey was administered in January and February 2008. Each campus principal was asked to ensure that a parent of every student received the survey. The survey was available on paper, with translation in Spanish, and was available online in both languages.¹ The response rate to the survey in 2007-2008 was higher than that for 2006-2007, particularly among parents of secondary students. A total of 16,106 parents responded to the survey, representing approximately 20% of the district's students (see Table 1 for summary by level).

Table 1. Parent Respondents 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, by Level

	Elementary		Middle		High		Total	
	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08
# of parents responding	11,812	12,493	1,354	1,831	1,426	1,731	14,592	16,106
# of students enrolled	45,431	45,993	15,790	16,115	20,279	19,522	81,500	81,629
% of students represented	26.0%	27.2%	8.6%	11.4%	7.0%	8.9%	17.1%	19.7%

Note. Percentages of respondents' students are based on the total number of valid responses received for each level.

¹ More than one third (34.3%) of the surveys received were completed in Spanish, and 12.5% of all surveys were completed online.

Respondents were asked to report the ethnicity and grade level of the child for whom they were completing the survey. Results (Tables 2 and 3) indicate that students for whom parent surveys were completed generally were representative of the district in terms of both grade level and ethnicity².

Table 2. Parents Responding, by Grade Level

	Grade	% of students, as reported by parent respondents	% of students in AISD population
Elementary	EC	0.5%	1.2%
	PK	10.9%	10.2%
	K	16.0%	16.1%
	1	15.8%	15.7%
	2	15.6%	15.4%
	3	14.3%	14.4%
	4	14.0%	13.6%
	5	12.5%	12.6%
	6	0.6%	0.8%
Middle	6	35.2%	32.6%
	7	21.3%	33.7%
	8	43.5%	33.7%
High	9	28.8%	30.8%
	10	29.6%	24.4%
	11	22.4%	22.4%
	12	19.2%	22.3%

Note. Percentages of respondents' students are based on the total number of valid responses received for each level.

Table 3. Parents Responding, by Child's Ethnicity

	Elementary School		Middle School		High School	
	% reported ethnicity of students by parents	% of students in AISD population	% reported ethnicity of students by parents	% of students in AISD population	% reported ethnicity of students by parents	% of students in AISD population
African American	9.7%	11.4%	9.2%	12.6%	10.3%	13.1%
Asian	3.6%	3.5%	4.5%	3.1%	3.4%	3.1%
Hispanic	64.1%	62.0%	34.6%	55.7%	51.9%	49.2%
Native American	1.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%
White	21.6%	22.9%	51.3%	28.4%	34.0%	34.2%

² Parents identified their child's ethnicity, not their own.

KEY FINDINGS

As in the past, parents at all levels provided generally positive responses regarding their experiences with AISD schools. In addition, elementary school parents again provided more positive responses to the majority of items than did parents at the other levels. Also consistent with previous results, parents at all levels most frequently reported positive experiences with teachers, compared with other campus staff. With regard to information provided to parents, parents felt most informed about their child's academic progress and behavior. However, responses from parents at all levels suggest they received less information about graduation and post-graduation topics than they did other topics. Parents reported that teachers and parent support specialists were the staff who provided them the most information about parent/family involvement and resources, and teachers were their prime source of information about the availability of tutoring.

Research shows parent involvement often includes attendance at teacher conferences and school activities (e.g., open houses or athletic events), and that parent involvement positively influences student achievement (Parcel & Dufur, 2001; Thompson, 2002). Since 2006-2007, the Parent Survey has included items designed to gather information about parents' involvement in campus activities and in their child's schoolwork (i.e., homework). Parents reported they were most likely to attend general school meetings (e.g., Open House, Back to School night) and regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences and were least likely to participate in school leadership opportunities and district-wide events.

ITEM RESULTS, BY SURVEY TOPIC AREA

The results of each survey item are presented in the sections that follow. Items are grouped into topic areas including Quality of Education, Safety, Quality of Interactions with School Staff, Support for Parent Involvement, Parent Participation and Academic Press, Communication and Information, Teacher and Principal Compensation Alternatives, and Transfer Policies. Longitudinal results are provided, where applicable. Large percentages of "strongly agree" and "agree" indicate areas in which campus staff excelled, and large percentages of "disagree" and "strongly disagree" indicate areas for possible improvement.³ Large increases or decreases from year to year⁴ should be examined to determine whether changes in policy or practice might account for changes in parent perceptions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

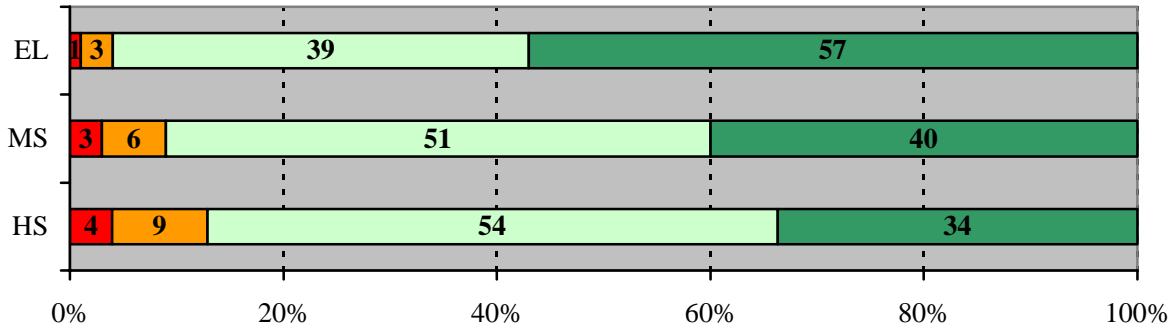
When asked to report on the quality of education, 88% of high school, 91% of middle school, and 96% of elementary school parents agreed or strongly agreed that their child was getting a good education (Figure 1), suggesting that most parents are pleased with the quality of education in AISD. Fewer than 5% of parents strongly disagreed that their child was getting a good education.

³ Percentages do not include responses of "don't know" or "does not apply." Information regarding the number of respondents selecting each response option, including "don't know" and "does not apply," can be found in Appendix A. Identification of items with large numbers of "don't know" responses could be informative.

⁴ Changes are noted in this report when differences in percentages of positive or negative responses are greater than 5 percentage points from one year to the next.

Although the percentage of positive responses was consistently high across all grade levels, elementary school parents were more likely than secondary school parents to strongly agree that their child was getting a good education.

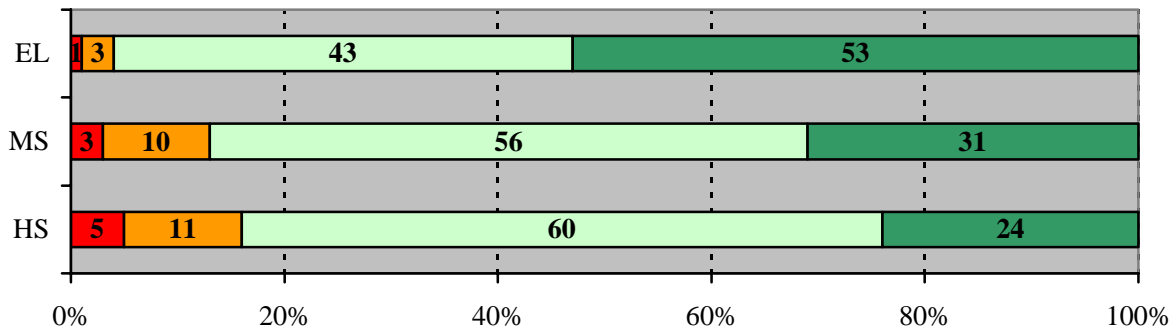
Figure 1. I believe that my child is getting a good education. (Item 11)



SAFETY

Most parents at all levels agreed or strongly agreed that their child’s school was a safe learning environment (Figure 2). Perceptions of school safety were somewhat less positive among secondary school parents than among elementary school parents, though most secondary school parents (87% at middle school and 84% at high school) did agree that their child’s school was a safe learning environment.

Figure 2. My child’s school is a safe learning environment. (Item 17)

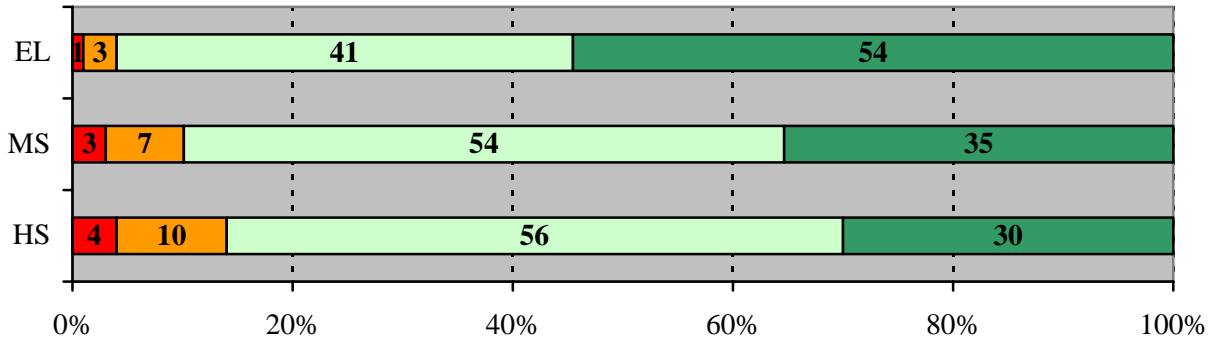


QUALITY OF INTERACTIONS WITH SCHOOL STAFF

A large majority of parents at all levels agreed or strongly agreed that staff treated their children with courtesy and respect (Figure 3). Responses were more favorable among elementary school parents (95% positive) than among secondary school parents; however, 89% of middle school and 86% of high school parents also agreed or strongly agreed that school staff treated their children with courtesy and respect.

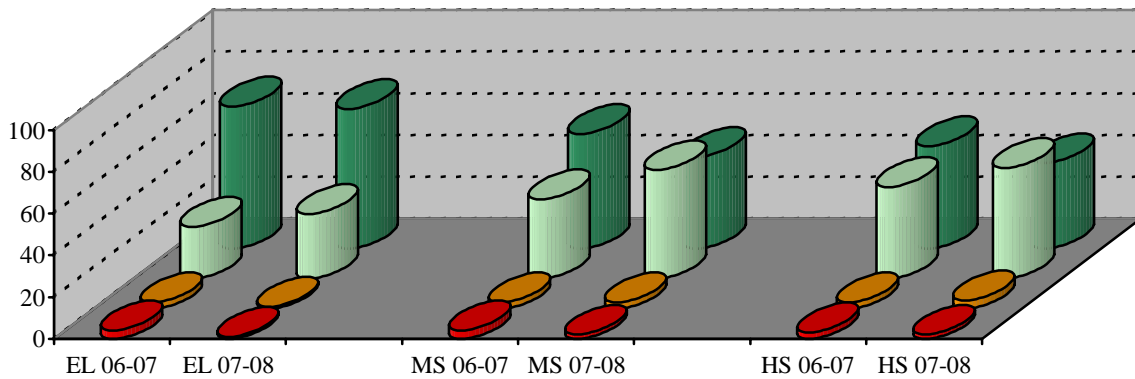


Figure 3. School staff treat my child with courtesy and respect. (Item 7)



Parents also reported specifically that teachers, office staff, counselors, assistant principals, and principals treated them with courtesy and respect (Figures 4 through 8). Elementary school parents were more likely in 2007-2008 than in the previous year to report being treated with courtesy and respect by teachers and office staff, and middle school parents reported a slight increase in 2007-2008 in courtesy and respect received from office staff. However, high school parents were more likely to provide negative responses in 2007-2008 than in 2006-2007 to items concerning courtesy and respect from assistant principals and principals (Figures 6 and 7).

Figure 4. Teachers treat me with courtesy and respect. (Item 23)



	EL		MS		HS	
	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08
Strongly Disagree	4%	1%	4%	2%	3%	2%
Disagree	3%	1%	3%	3%	3%	4%
Agree	25%	31%	38%	52%	44%	53%
Strongly Agree	68%	67%	55%	44%	49%	41%

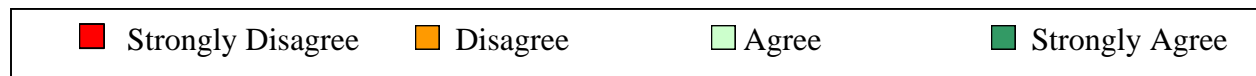
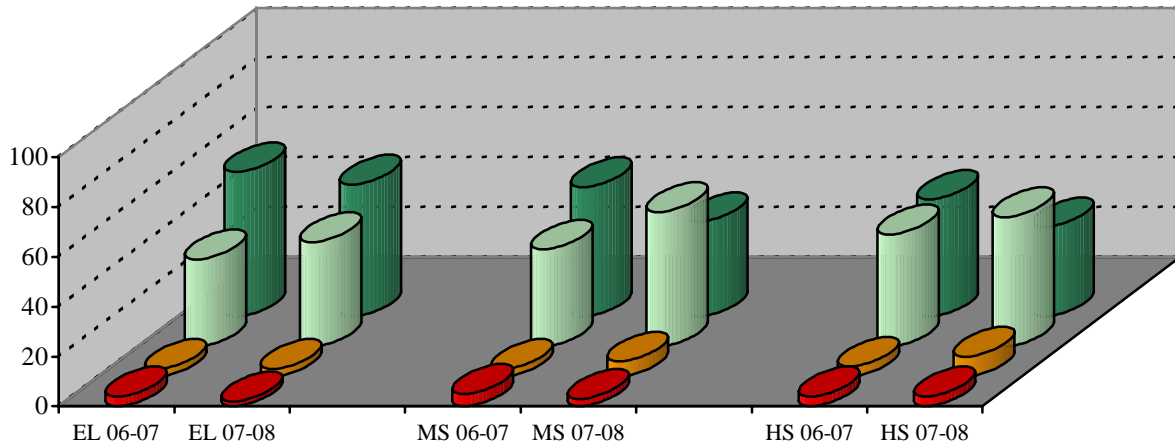
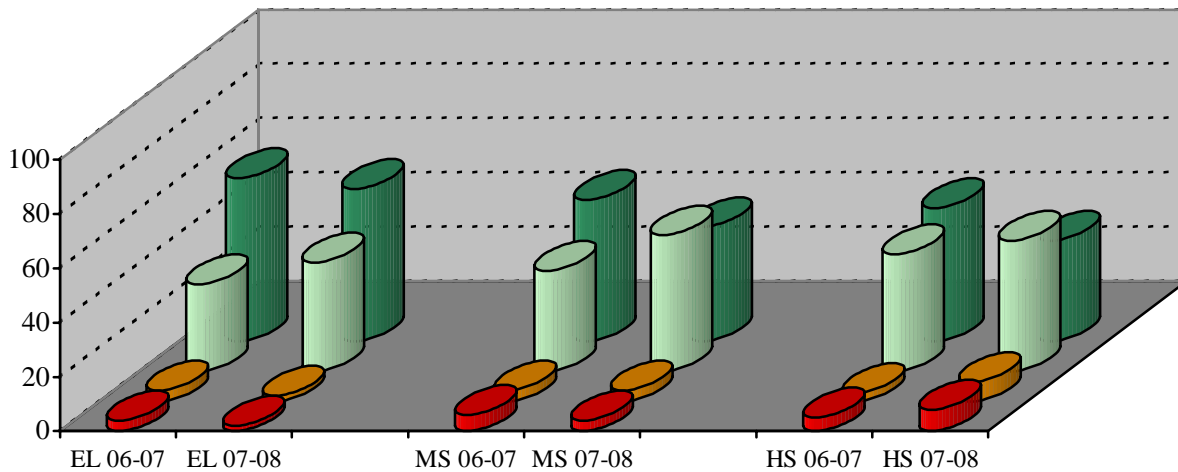


Figure 5. Counselor(s) treat me with courtesy and respect. (Item24)



	EL		MS		HS	
	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08
Strongly Disagree	4%	2%	5%	3%	4%	4%
Disagree	3%	3%	3%	6%	4%	8%
Agree	35%	42%	39%	54%	45%	52%
Strongly Agree	58%	53%	52%	38%	47%	36%

Figure 6. Principal treats me with courtesy and respect. (Item 21)



	EL		MS		HS	
	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08
Strongly Disagree	4%	2%	6%	4%	5%	8%
Disagree	4%	2%	4%	4%	3%	7%
Agree	32%	40%	37%	50%	43%	48%
Strongly Agree	60%	56%	52%	42%	49%	37%

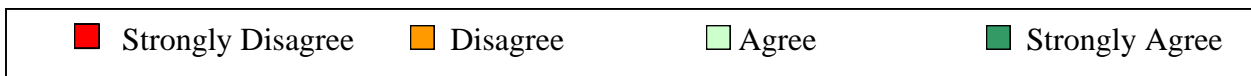


Figure 7. Assistant Principal(s) treat me with courtesy and respect. (Item22)

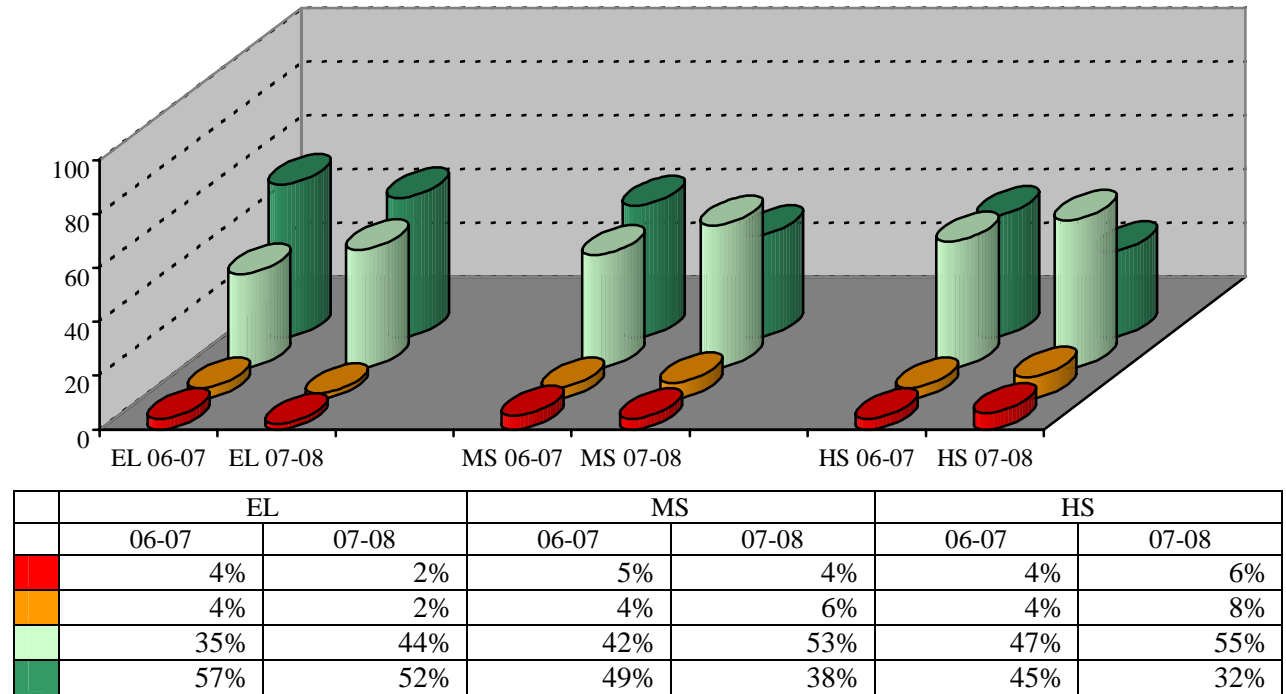
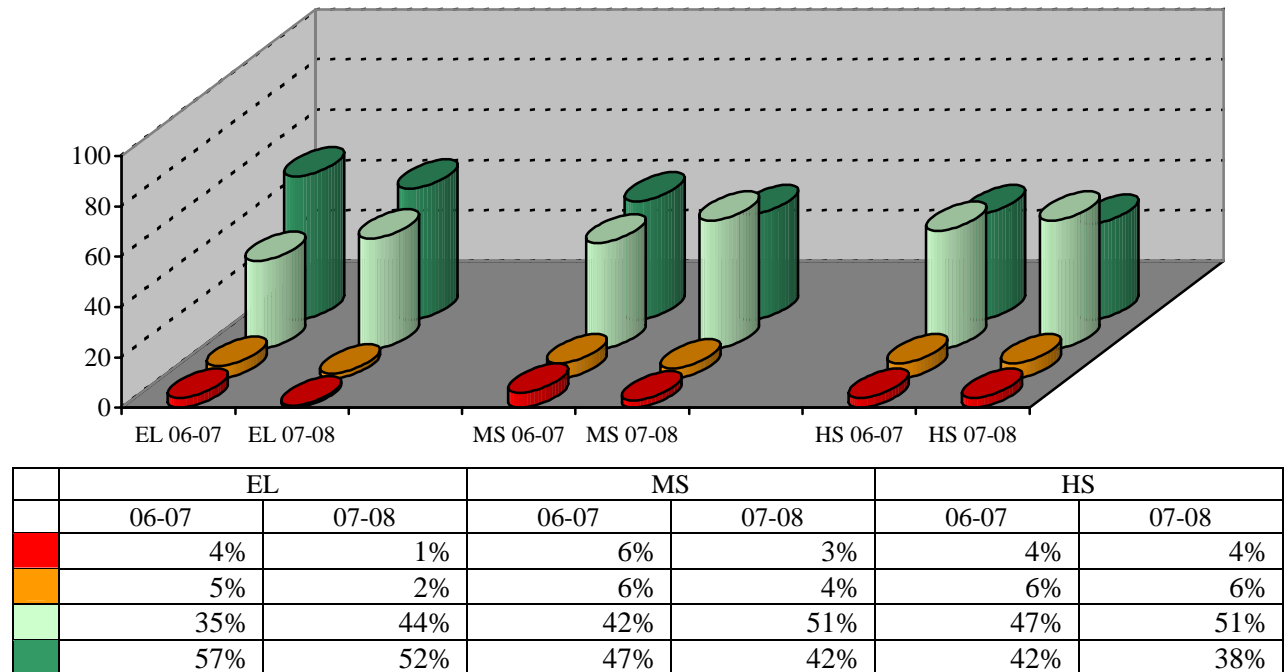


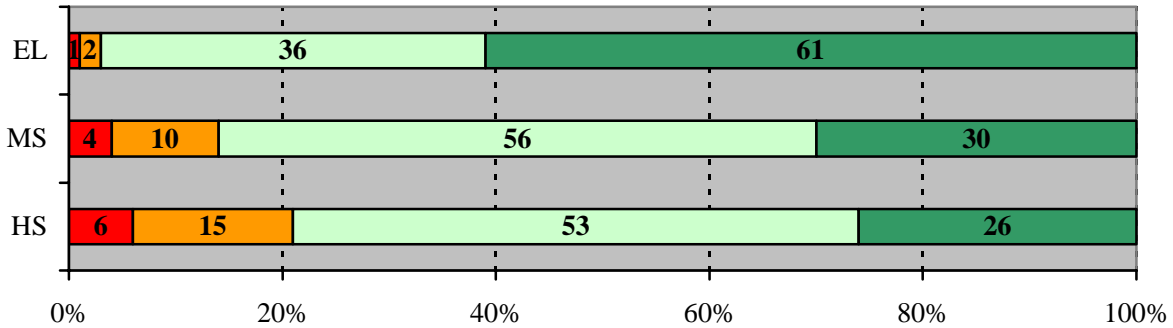
Figure 8. Office staff treat me with courtesy and respect. (Item 25)



■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly Agree

Most elementary school parents (97%) reported feeling welcome in their child’s classroom (Figure 9). Secondary school parents were somewhat less likely to agree; in fact, 21% of high school parents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they felt welcome in their child’s classroom.

Figure 9. I feel welcome in my child’s classroom. (Item 8)



Most elementary school parents also agreed or strongly agreed their child’s school used the suggestions they made about their child’s education (Figure 10). Secondary school parents were somewhat less likely to agree; almost one sixth of middle school parents and nearly one third of high school parents did not agree the school used their suggestions about their child’s education, suggesting that secondary schools may be less receptive to parental input than are elementary schools.

Results concerning the perceived value placed on parental input indicate a slight decline from the prior year in some areas. Specifically, high school parents were less likely in 2007-2008 than in 2006-2007 to say counselors and principals valued their input in academic decisions about their child (Figures 12 and 13, respectively). Middle school parents also were less likely in 2007-2008 than in 2006-2007 to report counselors valued their input (Figure 12).

Figure 10. My child’s school uses the suggestions that I make about my child’s education. (Item 9)

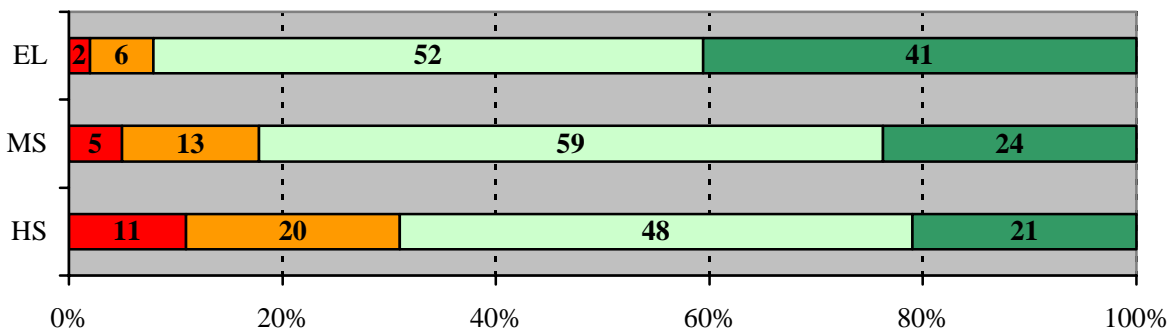
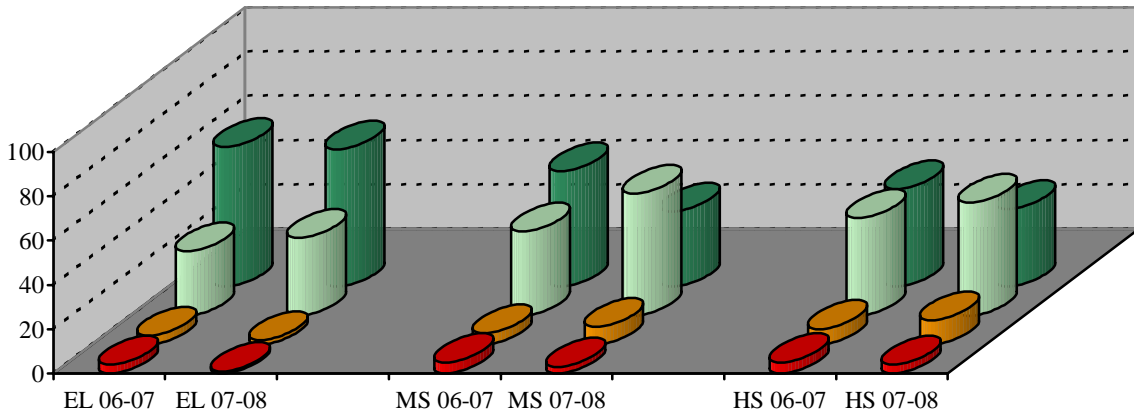
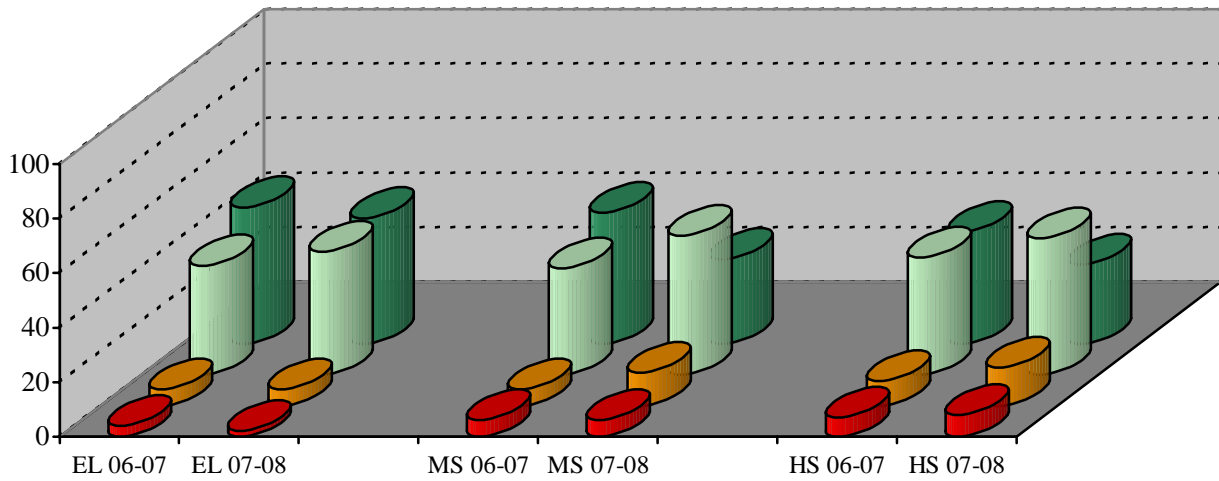


Figure 11. Teachers value my input in academic decisions about my child. (Item 23)



	EL		MS		HS	
	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08
Strongly Disagree	4%	1%	5%	3%	5%	4%
Disagree	4%	2%	5%	8%	7%	11%
Agree	29%	35%	38%	55%	44%	51%
Strongly Agree	63%	62%	52%	34%	44%	35%

Figure 12. Counselor(s) value my input in academic decisions about my child. (Item 24)



	EL		MS		HS	
	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08
Strongly Disagree	4%	2%	6%	6%	7%	8%
Disagree	6%	6%	6%	12%	9%	14%
Agree	40%	45%	39%	51%	43%	50%
Strongly Agree	50%	46%	48%	31%	41%	29%

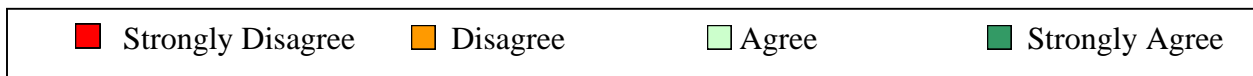


Figure 13. Principal values my input in academic decisions about my child. (Item 21)

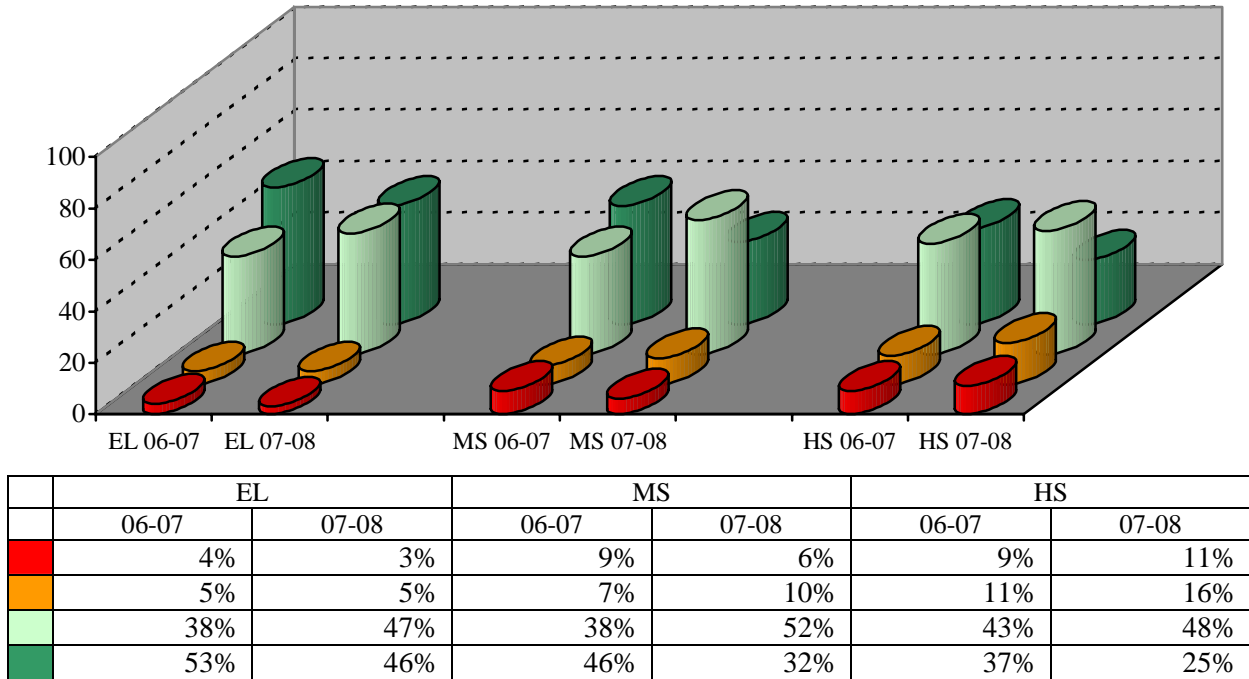


Figure 14. Assistant Principal(s) value my input in academic decisions about my child. (Item 22)

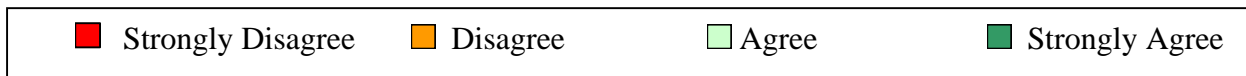
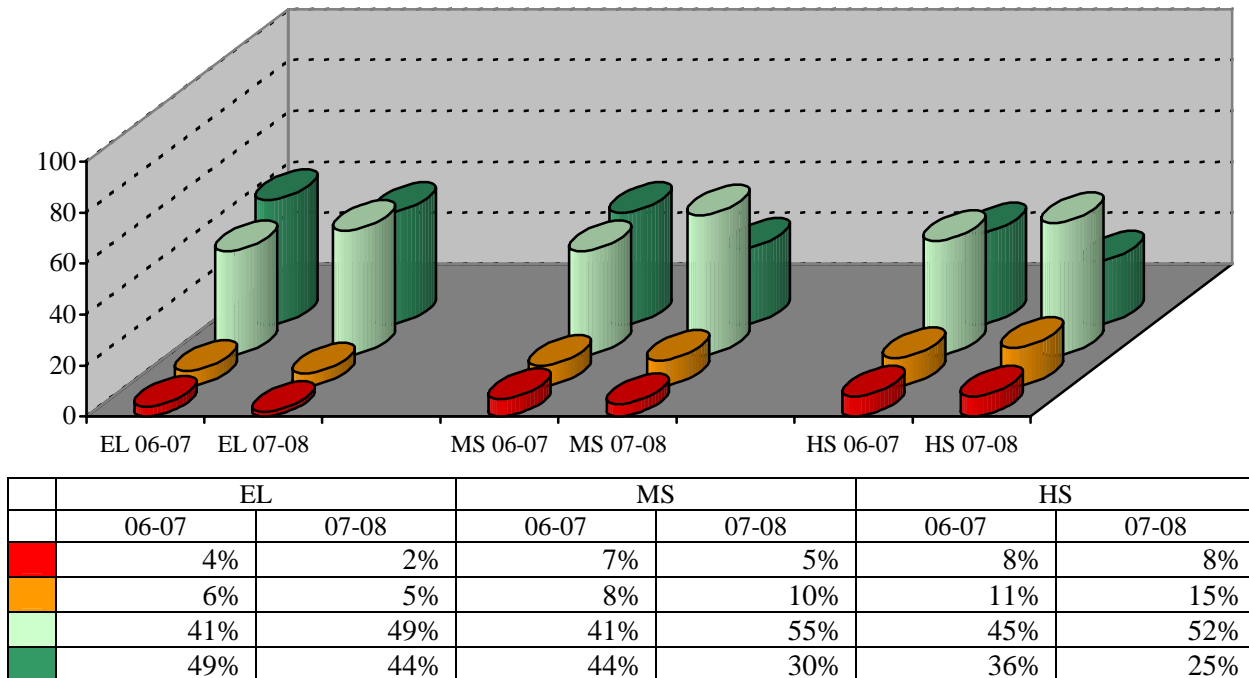
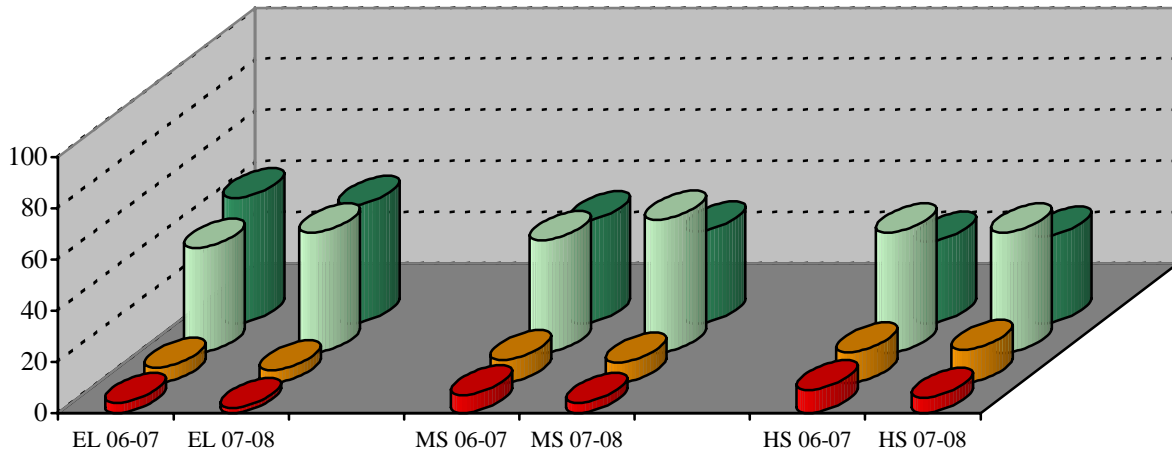


Figure 15. Office staff value my input in academic decisions about my child. (Item 25)



	EL		MS		HS	
	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08
Strongly Disagree	4%	2%	7%	4%	9%	6%
Disagree	6%	5%	9%	8%	12%	13%
Agree	41%	47%	44%	52%	47%	47%
Strongly Agree	49%	46%	40%	36%	32%	34%

SUPPORT FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The majority of parents at all levels agreed or strongly agreed that their child’s school provided opportunities for them to learn how to help their child succeed in school (Figure 16). However, nearly one quarter of high school parents and one fifth of middle school parents did not agree. Despite decreases in 2007-2008 in the percentages of parents who strongly agreed that specific school staff had helped them to become more involved, combined percentages of those who agreed or strongly agreed remained similar to those in 2006-2007 (Figures 17 through 21).

Figure 16. My child’s school provides opportunities for me to learn how to help my child succeed in school. (Item 13)

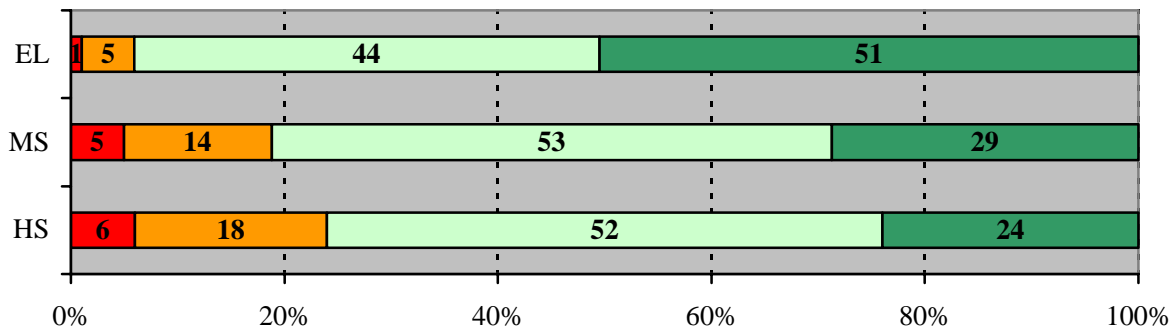


Figure 17. Teachers have helped me to become more involved in my child's education. (Item 23)

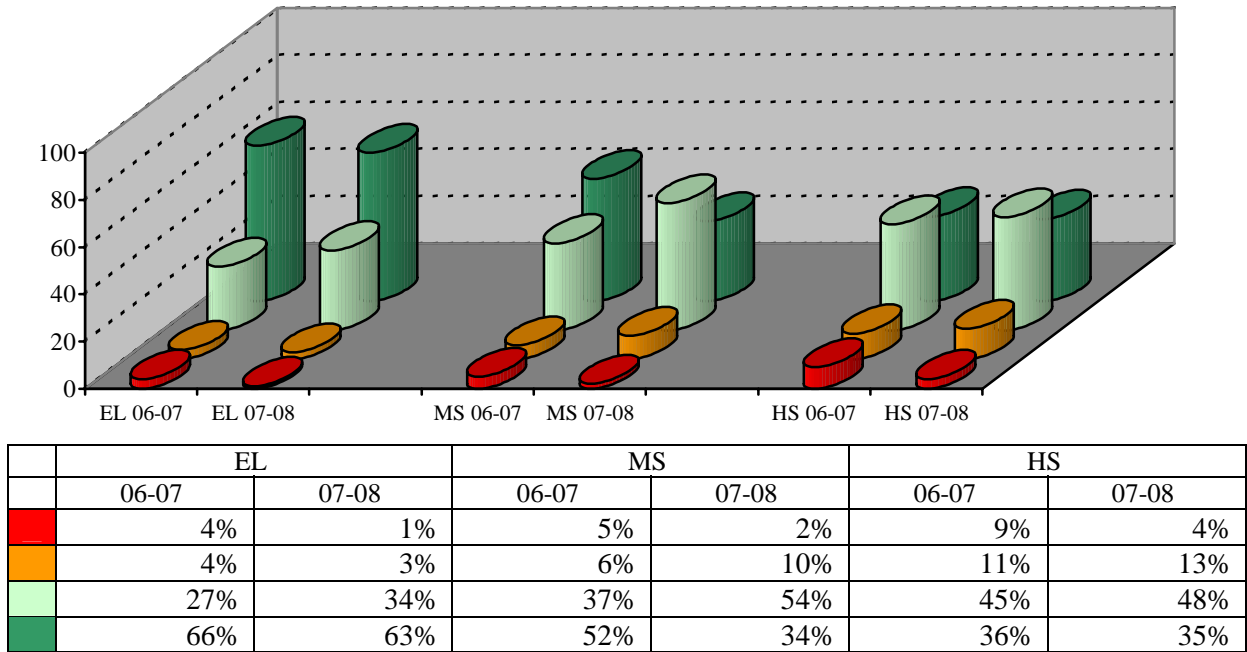


Figure 18. Counselors have helped me to become more involved in my child's education. (Item 24)

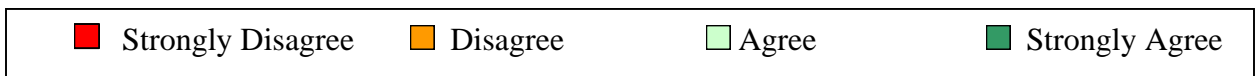
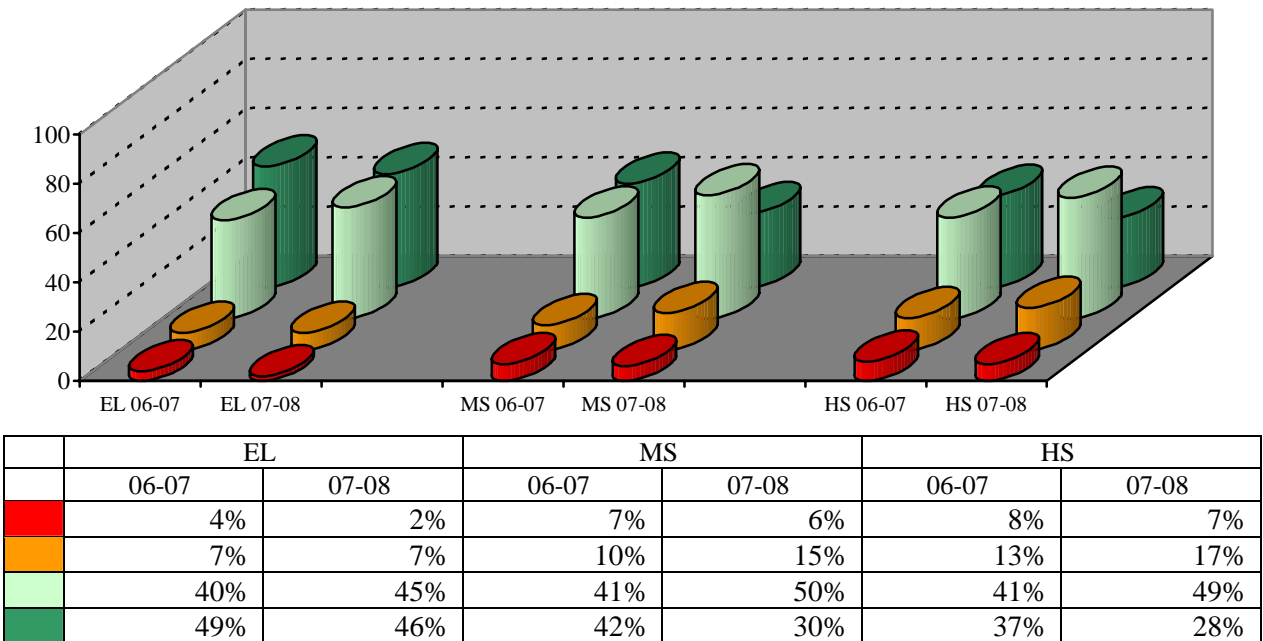


Figure 19. Principal has helped me to become more involved in my child's education. (Item 21)

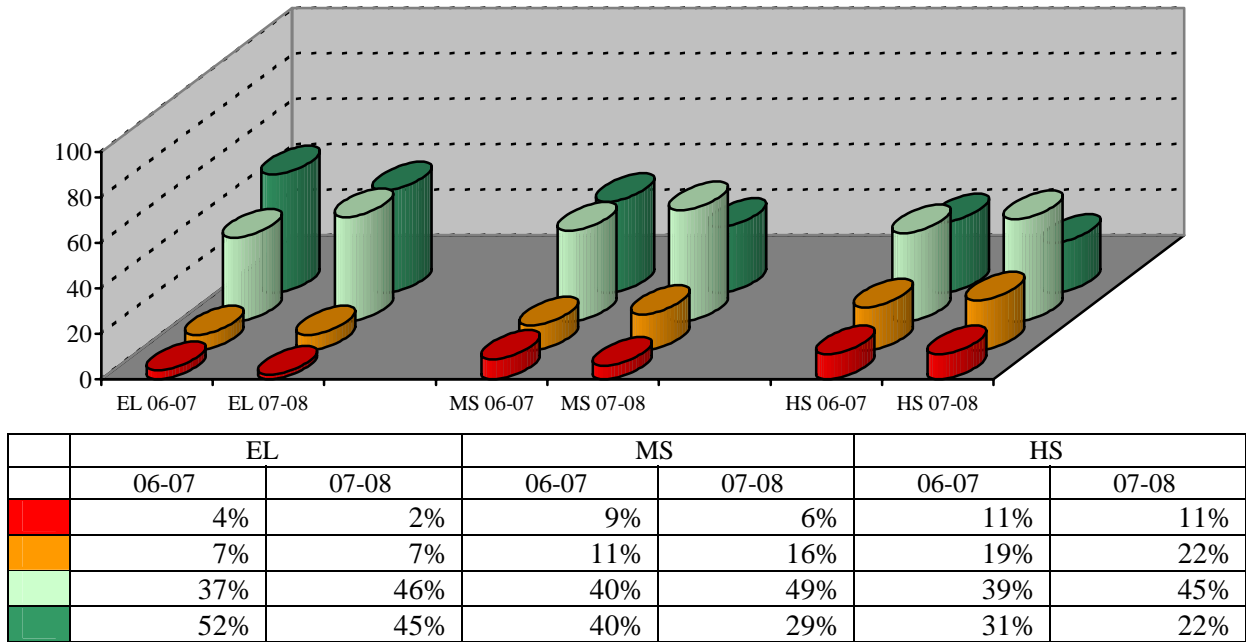
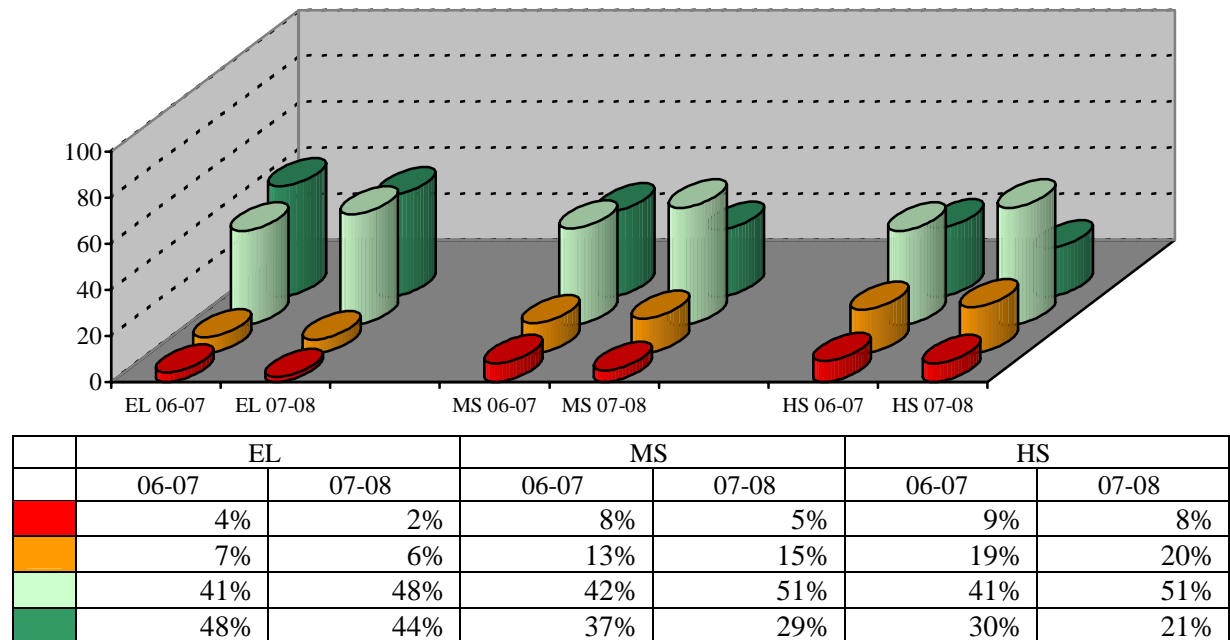
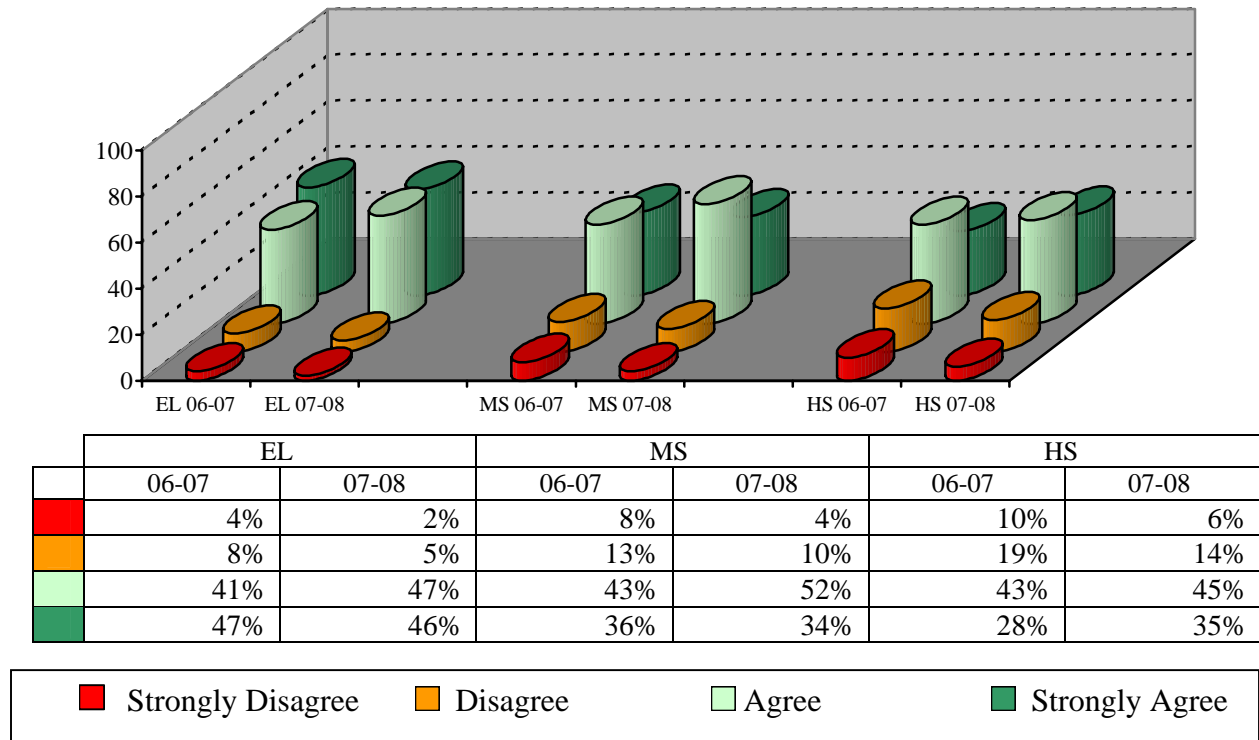


Figure 20. Assistant Principal(s) have helped me to become more involved in my child's education. (Item 22)



■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly Agree

Figure 21. Office Staff have helped me to become more involved in my child's education. (Item 25)



More than one third of elementary school parents reported receiving information about parent and family involvement from teachers, and about one quarter of elementary and middle school parents reported receiving information from parent support specialists, about both parent and family involvement and parent and family resources (Figures 22 and 23). High school parents reported receiving information from teachers and parent support specialists less frequently than did elementary and middle school parents, but were about equally as likely as elementary and middle school parents to receive information about parent and family involvement and resources from counselors.

Figure 22. The following school staff have provided me with information about parent and family involvement. (Item 28)

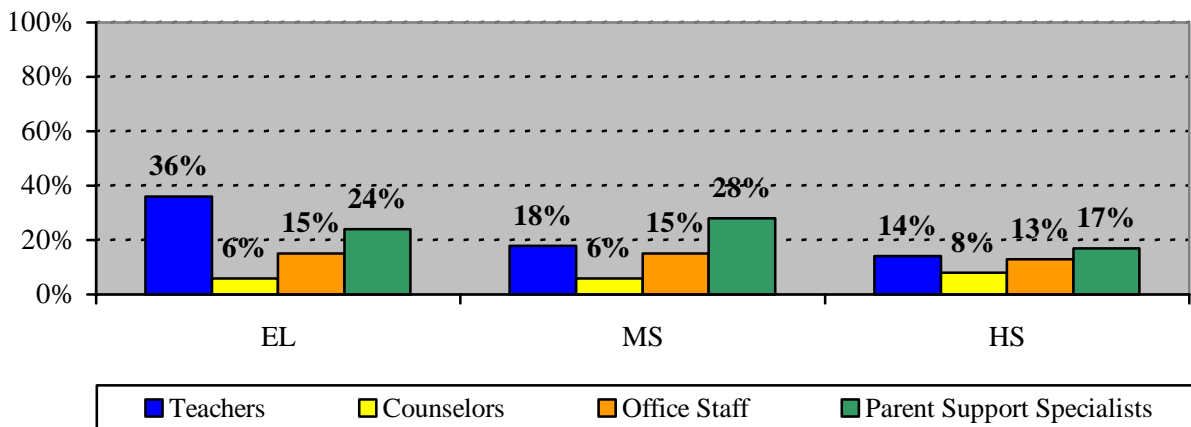
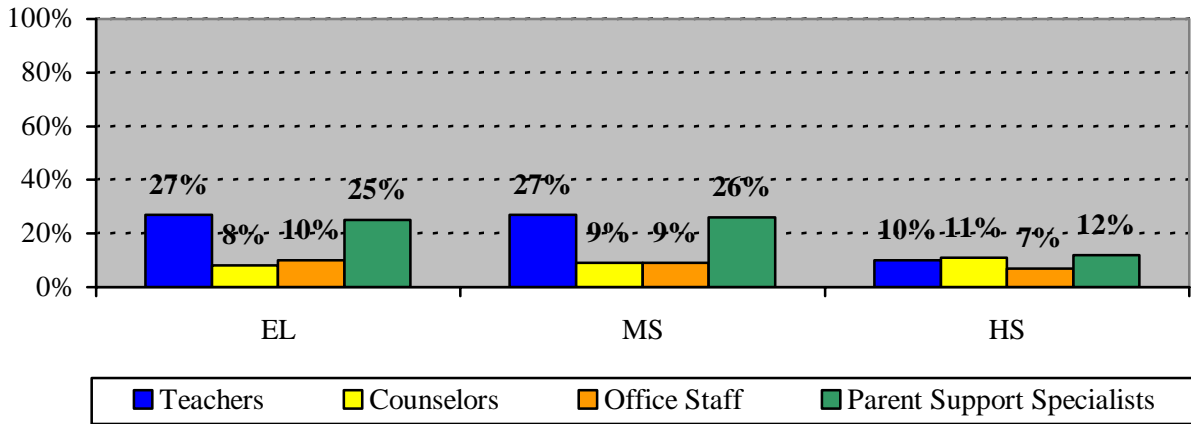


Figure 23. The following school staff have provided me with information about parent and family resources. (Item 28)



PARENT PARTICIPATION AND ACADEMIC PRESS

Fan and Chen (2001) found that parents’ expectations for their children’s academic achievement were strongly related to student performance. Parents across all levels in the present survey were about equally likely to report having encouraged school staff to maintain high academic standards (Figure 24). Fewer than 15% of parents did not agree that they had encouraged high standards for the school. Secondary school parents were more likely than elementary school parents to have discussed future college/career plans with their child; nevertheless, most elementary school parents (88%) report having done so (Figure 25). Notably, although the differences are small, elementary school parents were most likely and high school parents were least likely to report knowing how to help their child pursue college and career goals (Figure 26).

Figure 24. I have encouraged school staff to maintain high academic standards. (Item 10)

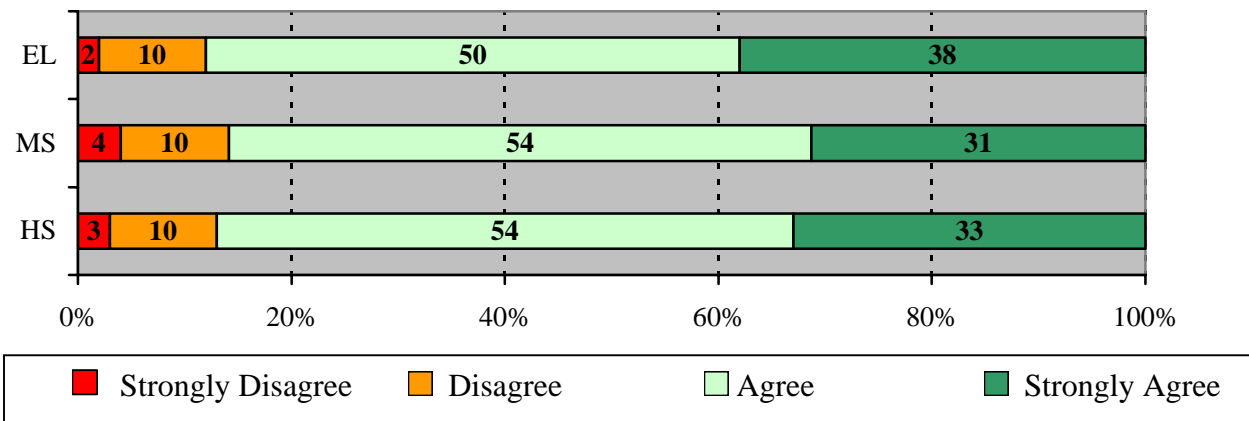


Figure 25. I have discussed future college/career plans with my child. (Item 15)

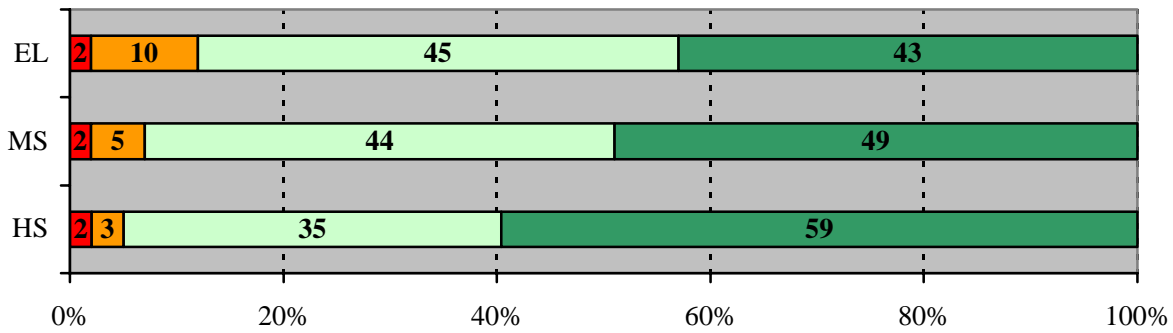
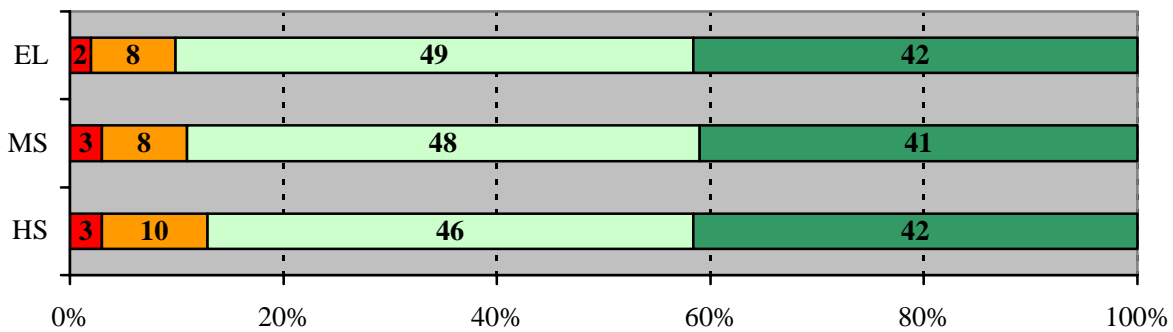
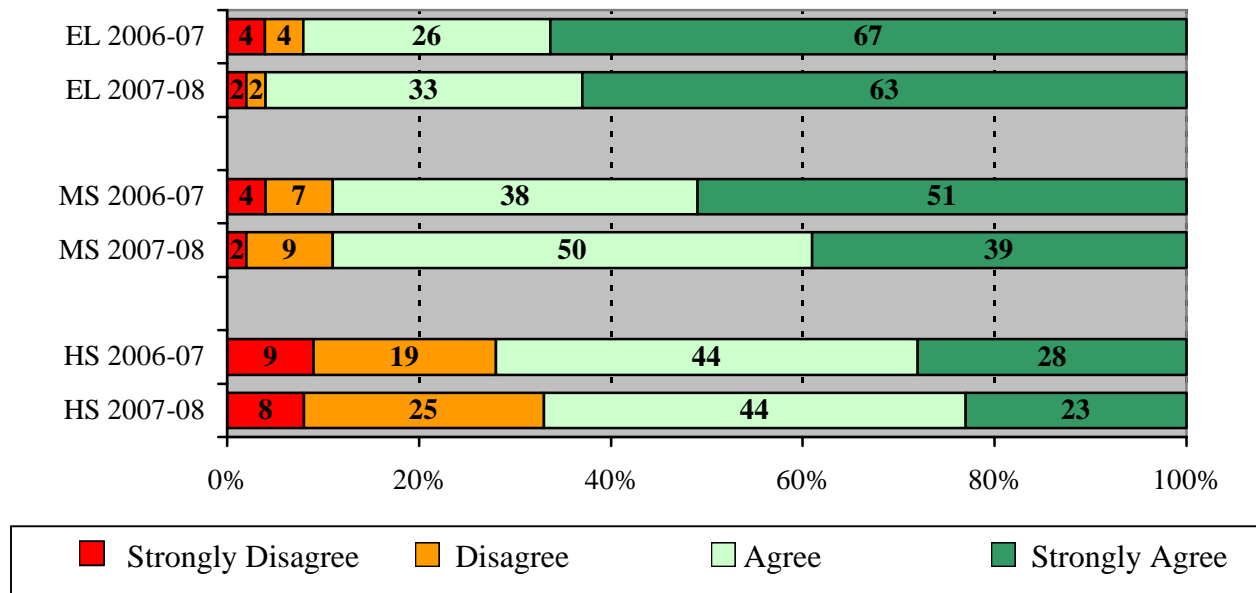


Figure 26. I know how to help my child pursue college and career goals. (Item 16)



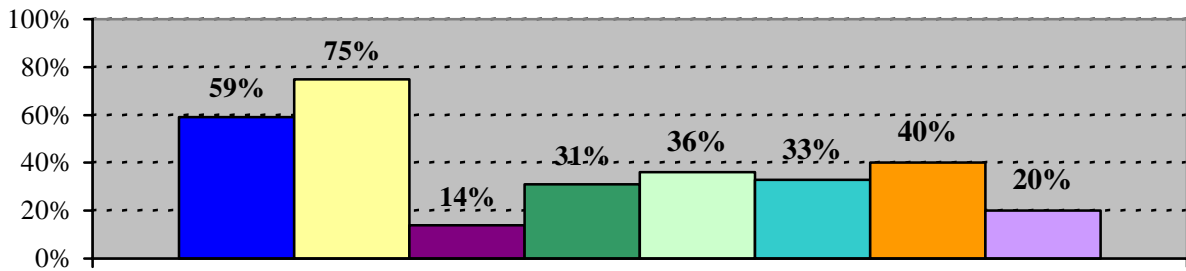
As in 2006-2007, parents at the elementary school level were more likely than were parents at the secondary school level to regularly help their child with school projects and homework (Figure 27). Still, more than three quarters of parents at the high school level reported regularly helping with schoolwork, a slight increase from the percentage that did so in 2006-2007.

Figure 27. I regularly help my child with school projects and homework. (Item 5)

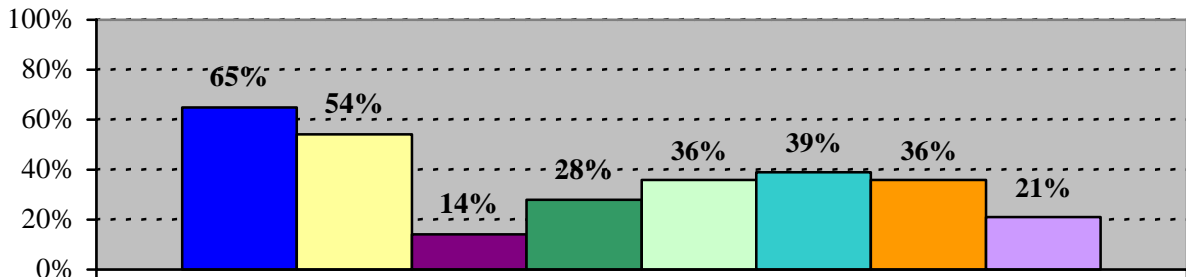


With respect to all the activities listed, elementary school parents were most likely to have participated in regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences (75%). Middle and high school parents were most likely to have participated in general school meetings (e.g., open house, Back to School Night, Choice Sheet Night), with 65% of middle school and 66% of high school parents reporting participation in these events. Parents at all levels were least likely to have participated in school leadership opportunities (e.g., Campus Advisory Councils and event committees; 14% at each level) and district-wide events (e.g., La Feria Educativa, Back-to-School Bash, and Family Technology Week; participation ranged from 14% for high school to 21% for middle school). Participation was similar for most activities across levels; however, high school parents were more likely than were other parents to have participated in sports or other performance events.

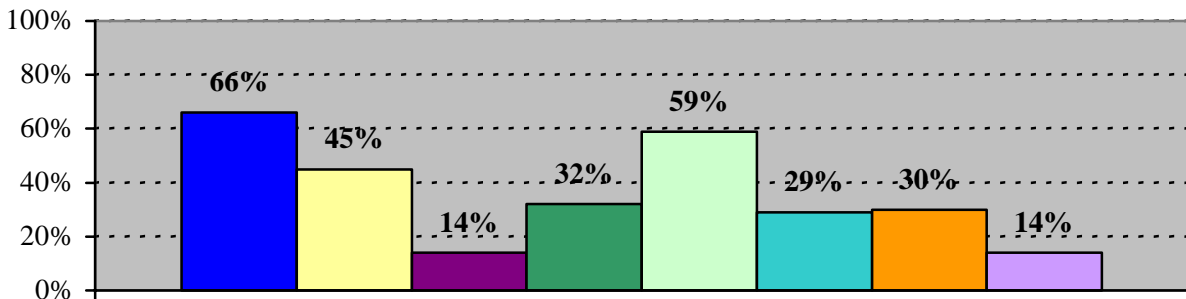
Figure 28. In which of the following activities do you participate? (Item 29)



Elementary 2007-08



Middle School 2007-08



High School 2007-08

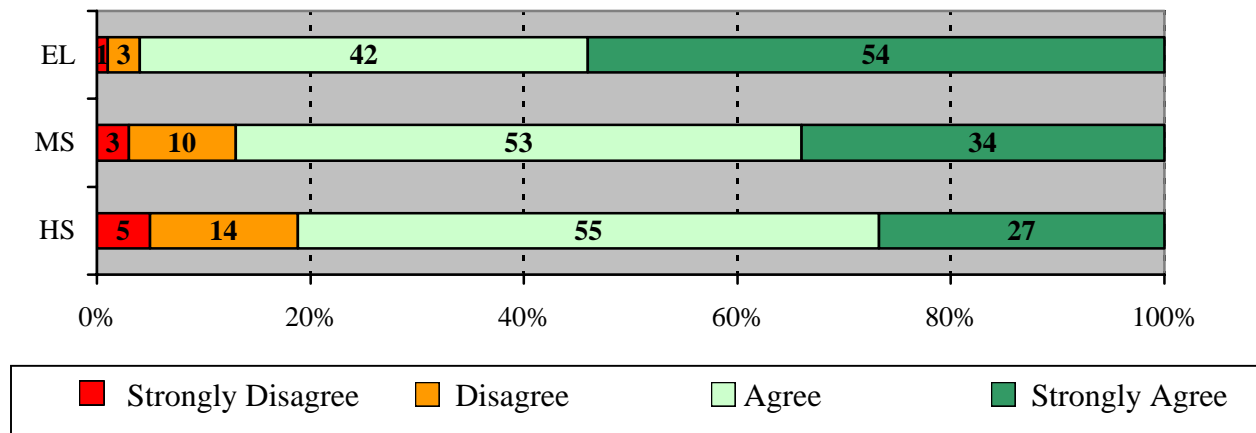
Note. Refer to legend on page 18.

- General school meetings (e.g., open house, Back to School Night, Choice Sheet Night, etc.)
- Regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences
- School leadership opportunities (e.g., Campus Advisory Council, event committees, etc.)
- Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)/Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA)
- Sports or other performance events
- Academic events (e.g., science fairs, debate competitions, etc.)
- Other special events or conferences (e.g., workshops, Family Night, Learning Walks, etc.)
- District-wide events (e.g., La Feria Educativa, Back-to-School Bash, Family Technology Week, etc.)

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

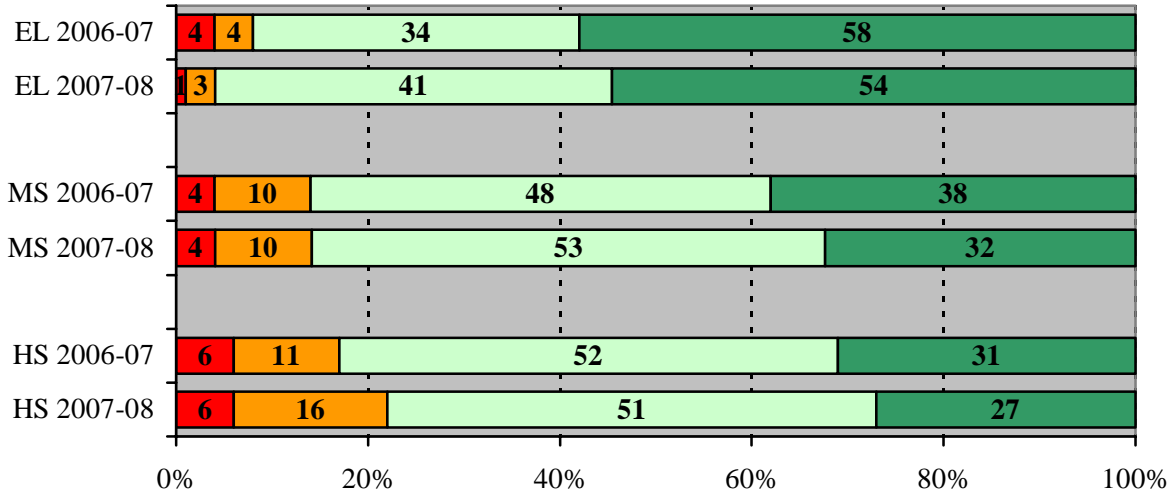
Most elementary school parents agreed or strongly agreed that schools clearly communicated expectations for their child’s learning (96%). Middle and high school parents also responded favorably (87% of middle and 82% of high school parents agreed or strongly agreed), but high school parents were only half as likely as were elementary school parents to strongly agree (Figure 29).

Figure 29. My child’s school clearly communicates its expectations for my child’s learning.
 (Item 12)



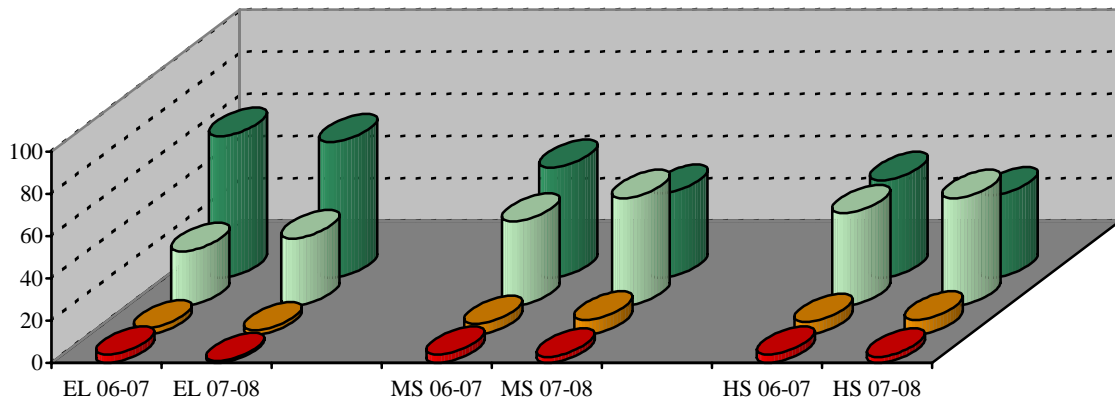
Similar to results from 2006-2007, the majority of parents at elementary and middle schools reported receiving positive feedback about their child from school staff. Despite a decrease from 2006-2007 with respect to the percentage of high school parents reporting positive feedback, more than three quarters of high school parents still agreed or strongly agreed that school staff provided them with positive feedback about their child.

Figure 30. School staff provide me with positive feedback about my child. (Item 6)



Most parents at each level (96% of elementary, 91% of middle, and 90% of high school parents) agreed or strongly agreed that teachers provided them with opportunities for two-way communication (Figure 31). Elementary school parents responded nearly as favorably about the opportunities provided by principals, assistant principals, and counselors (Figures 32 through 34). However, secondary school parents provided somewhat less favorable ratings for counselors, assistant principals, and principals. Overall, two-way communication opportunities from each staff group received positive ratings, with the most unfavorable response coming from high school parents, 11% of whom strongly disagreed that principals provided them with such opportunities.

Figure 31. Teachers provide me with opportunities for two-way communication (e.g., phone calls, student agenda books, meetings, email, etc.). (Item 23)



	EL		MS		HS	
	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08
■	4%	1%	4%	3%	4%	3%
■	3%	2%	5%	7%	6%	7%
■	26%	32%	40%	51%	44%	51%
■	67%	64%	52%	40%	46%	39%

■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly Agree

Figure 32. Principal provides me with opportunities for two-way communication (e.g., phone calls, student agenda books, meetings, email, etc.). (Item 21)

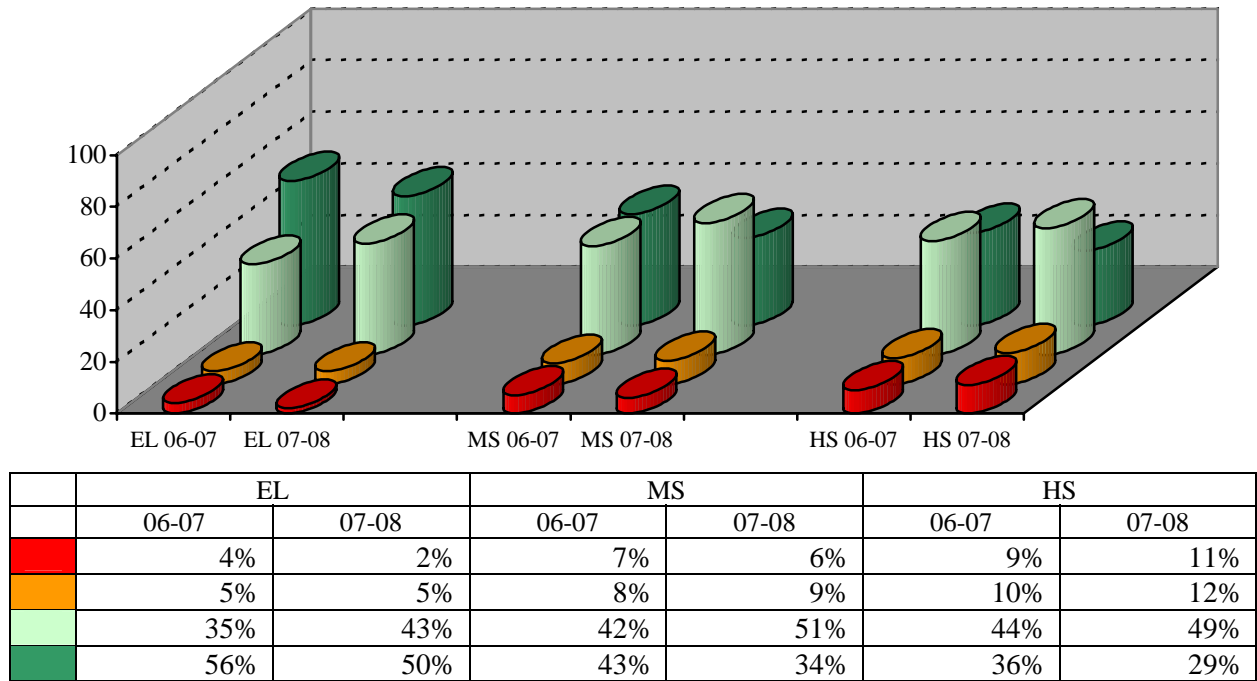


Figure 33. Counselors provide me with opportunities for two-way communication (e.g., phone calls, student agenda books, meetings, email, etc.). (Item 24)

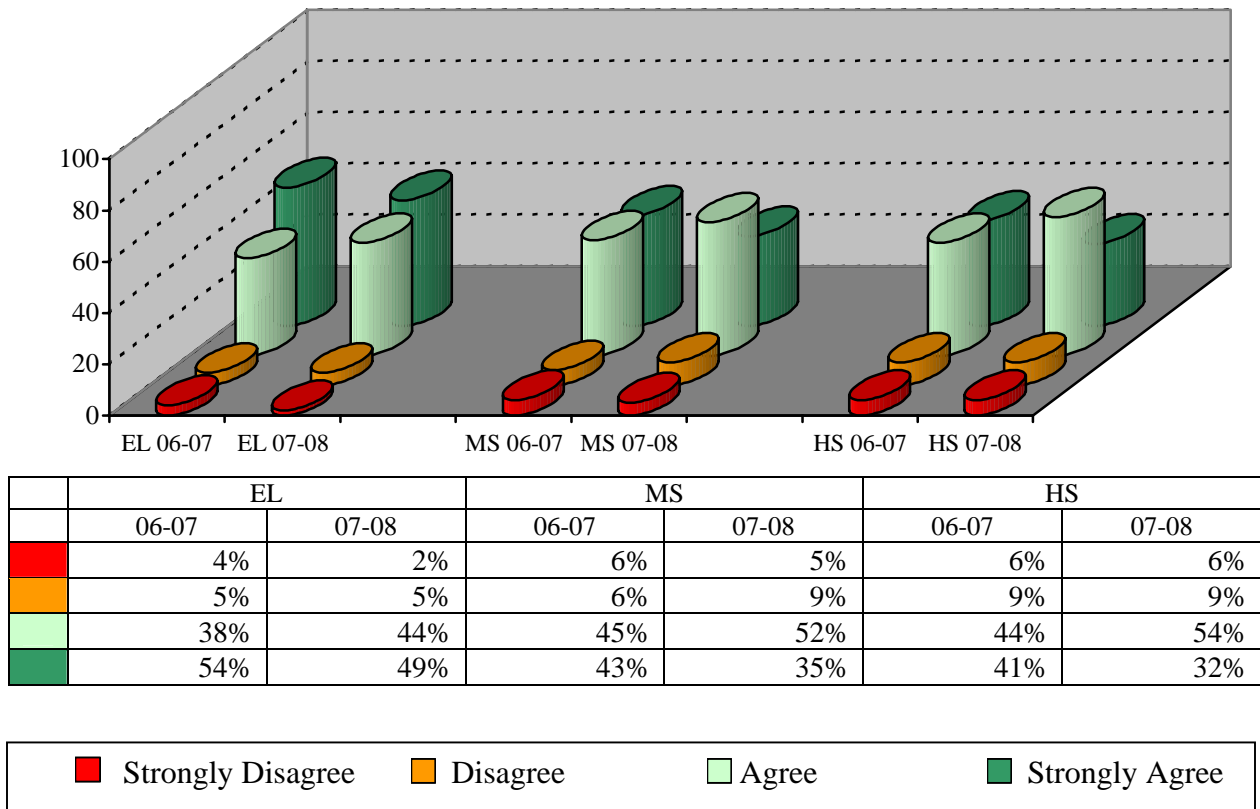
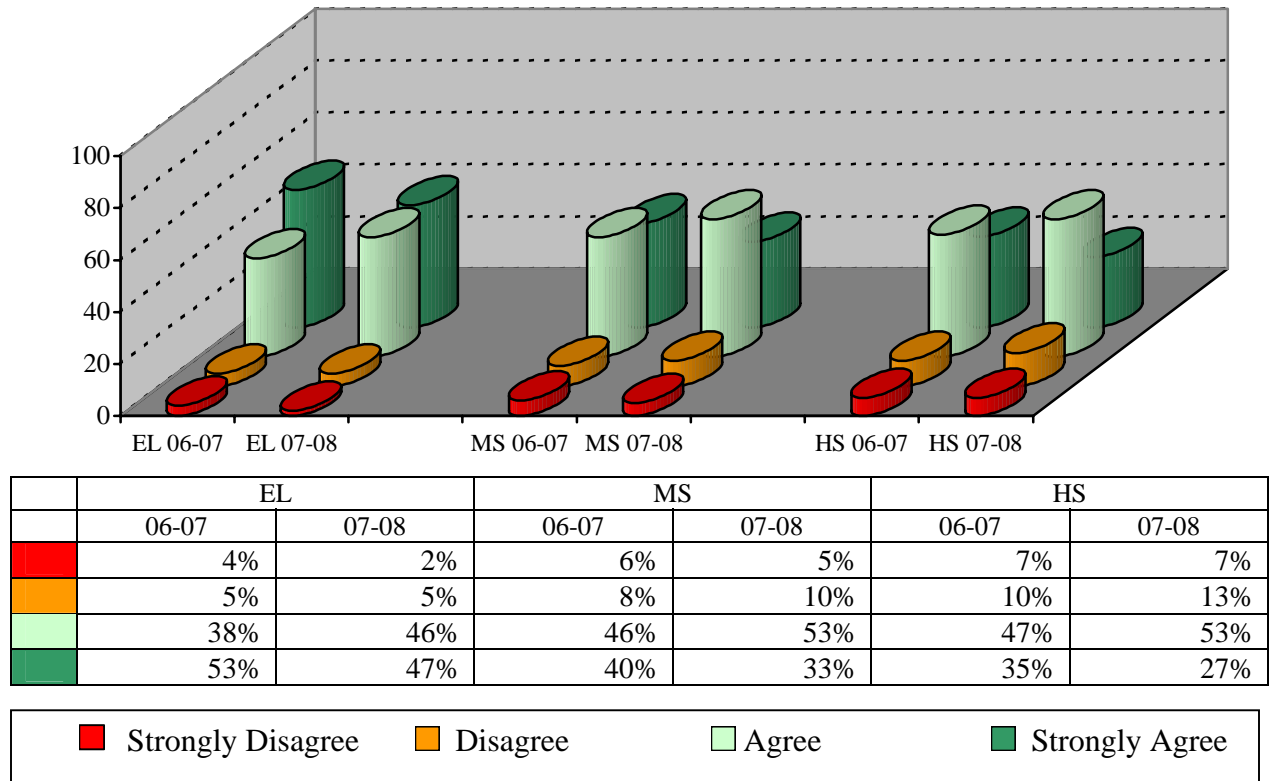


Figure 34. Assistant Principals provide me with opportunities for two-way communication (e.g., phone calls, student agenda books, meetings, email, etc.). (Item 22)



The majority of parents at all levels reported receiving enough information about the variety of topics addressed on the survey (Figures 35 through 37). With respect to all the topics, parents were most likely to agree that school staff provided them with enough information about student behavior expectations and the parent involvement policy. However, at least 25% of middle school parents disagreed that school staff provided them with enough information about high school graduation requirements and plans, and at least 25% of both middle and high school parents disagreed that school staff provided enough information about Personal Graduation Plans, financial aid/scholarships, college opportunities, or career opportunities. High school parents also disagreed that school staff provided them with enough information about their child’s academic plans and goals or their child’s preparedness for TAKS. These results, together with responses from more than 10% who reported not knowing how to help their child pursue college and career goals (Figure 26), suggest a need for additional strategies designed to inform secondary parents about their child’s academic progress and postsecondary opportunities.

Figure 35. School staff provide me with enough information about: (Item 26)

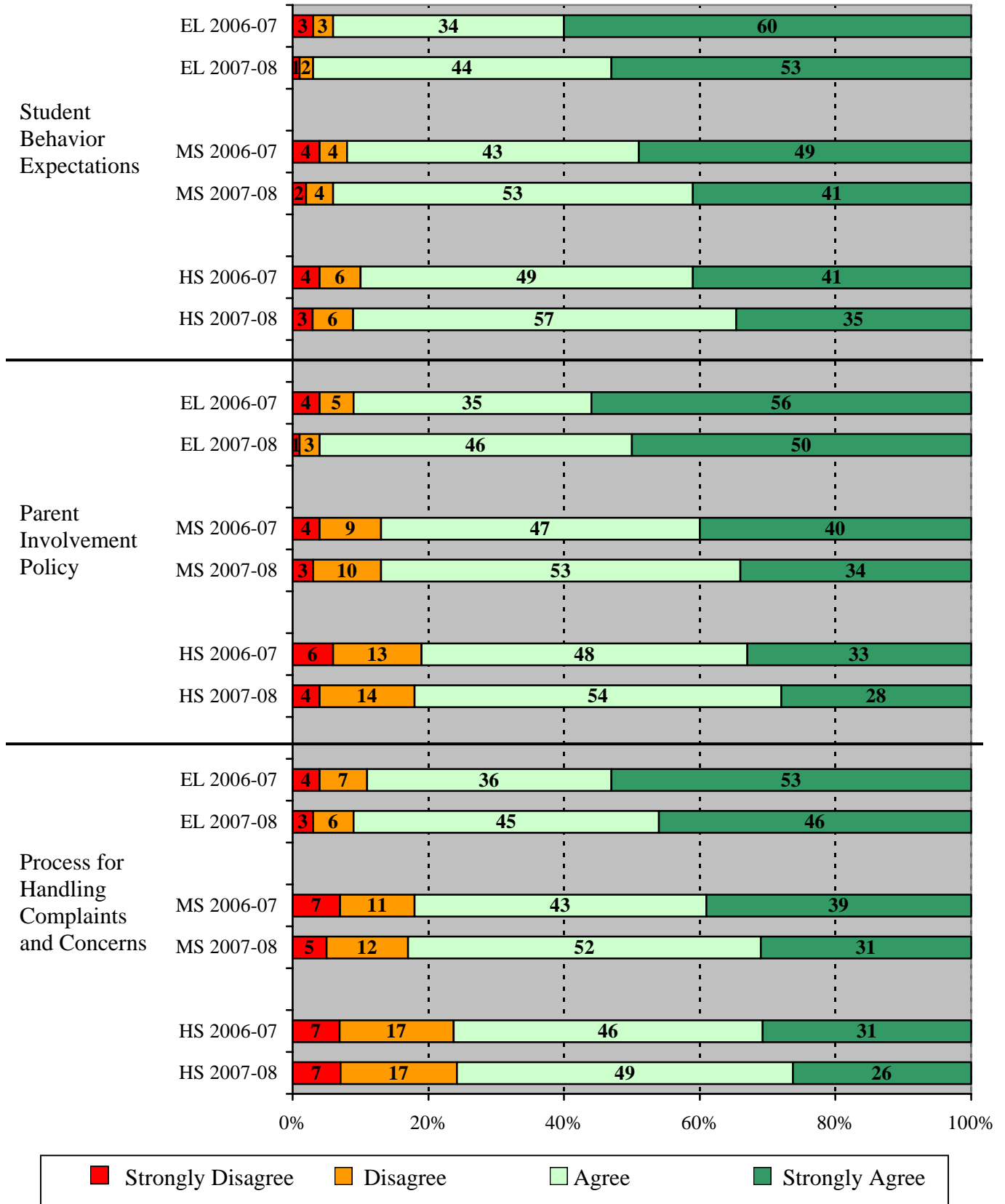


Figure 36. School staff provide me with enough of the following information: (Item 27)

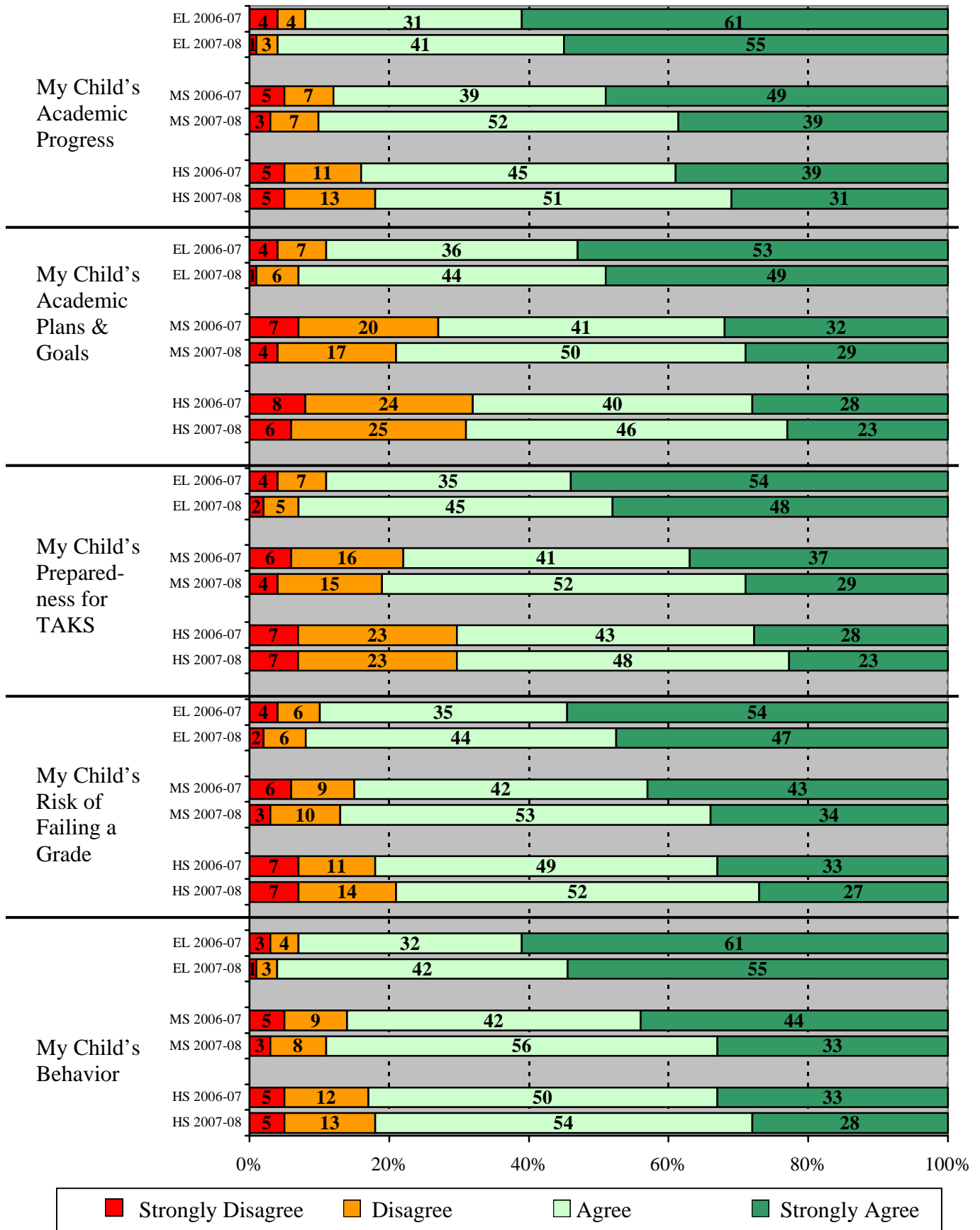
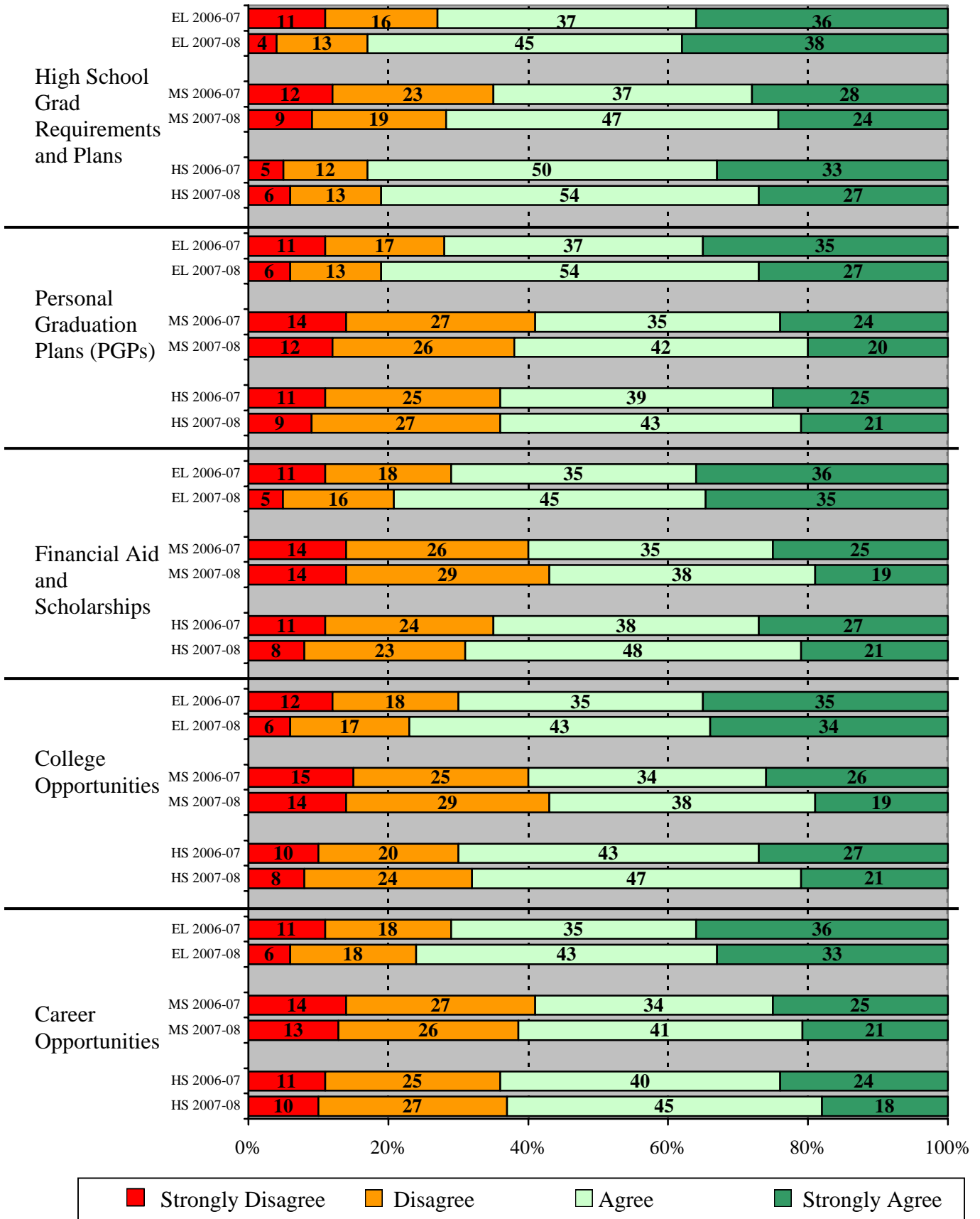
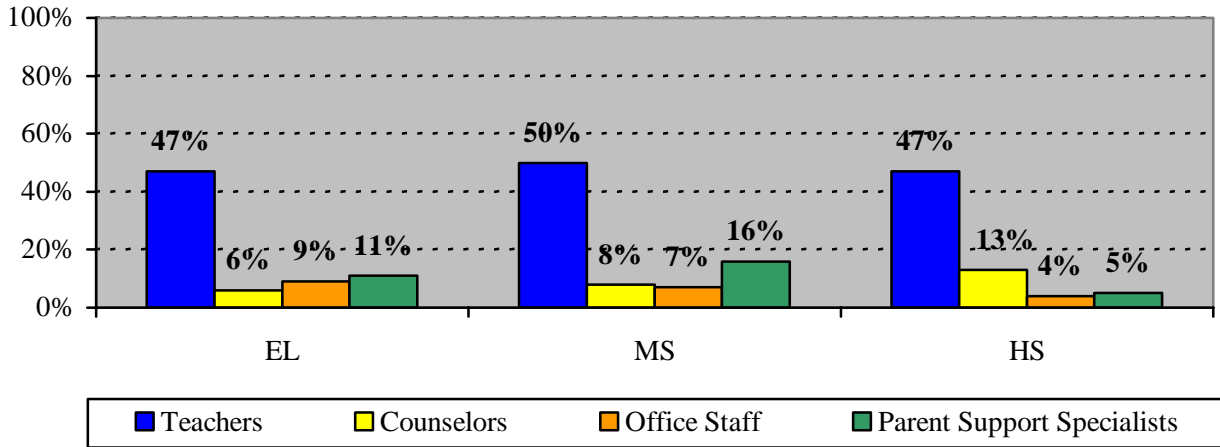


Figure 37. School staff provide me with useful information about the following topics: (Item 27)



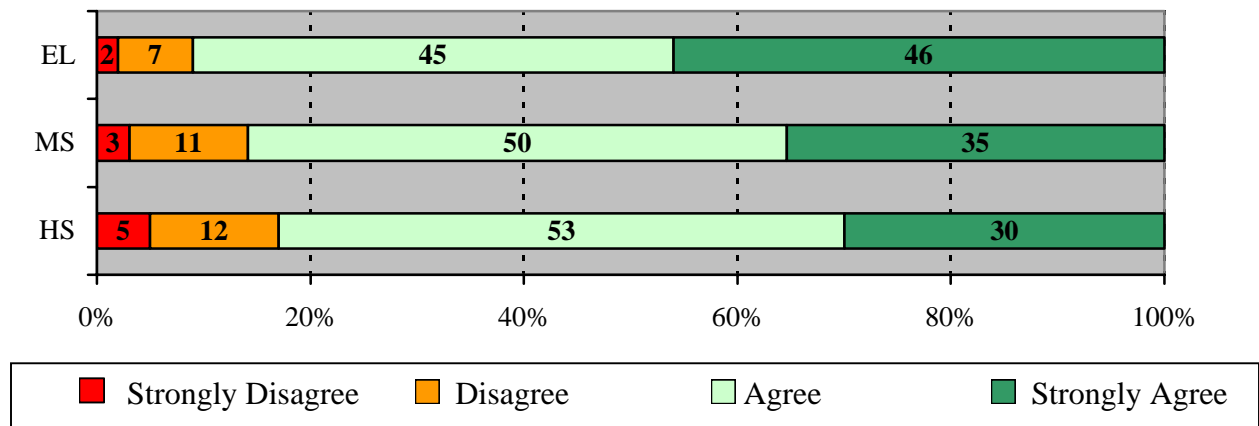
About half of parents at each level reported receiving information from teachers about the availability of tutoring (Figure 38). Fewer parents reported receiving information about tutoring from office staff, counselors, or parent support specialists. Results were similar for parents at each level.

Figure 38. The following school staff have provided me with information about availability of tutoring. (Item 28)



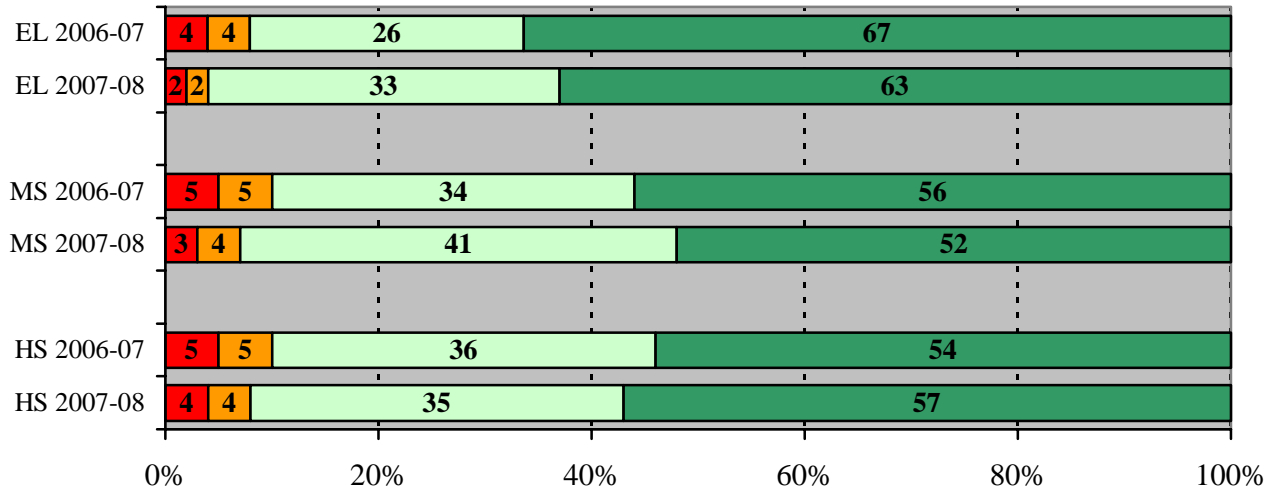
Most parents reported knowing where to get information about school ratings (Figure 39). However, 9% of elementary, 14% of middle, and 17% of high school parents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they knew where to find school ratings information, suggesting a need for additional strategies for communicating with parents about school ratings.

Figure 39. I know where to get information about my school’s ratings. (Item 14)



Parents at each level were likely to agree or strongly agree that school staff provided information in their home language (Figure 40). Responses were similarly favorable in 2006-2007.

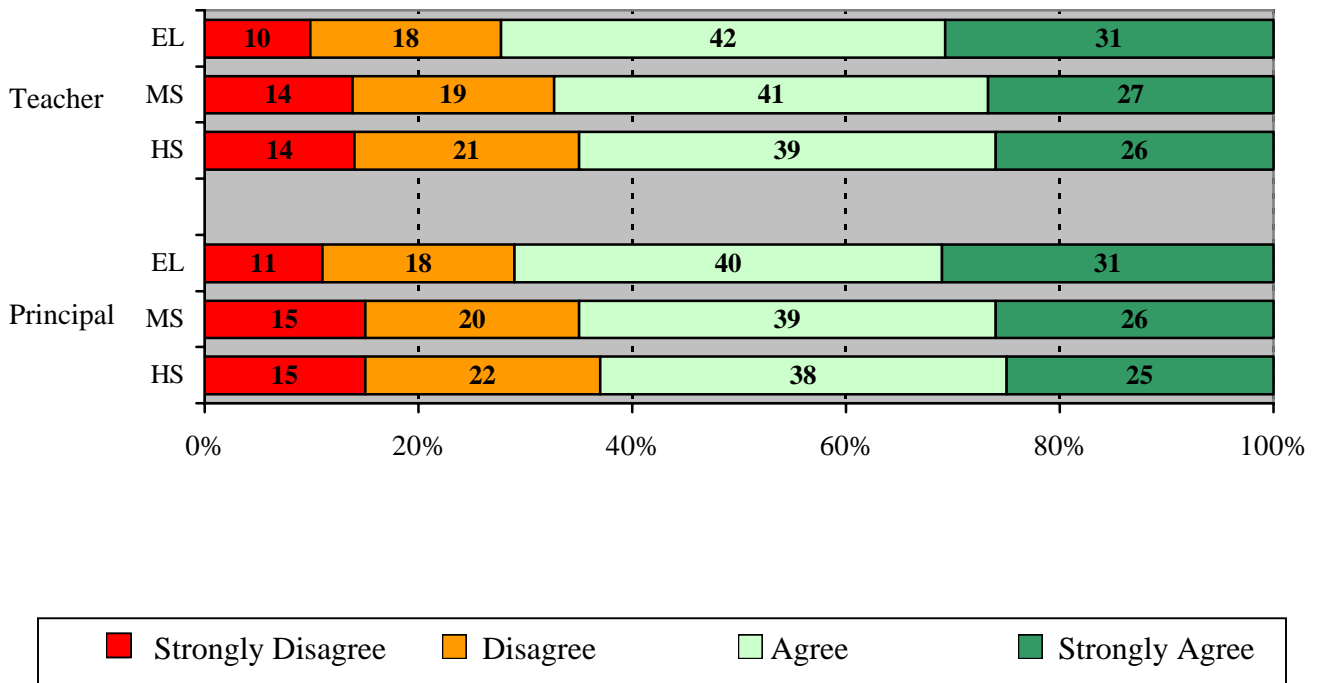
Figure 40. School staff provide me with information in my home language. (Item 4)



TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL COMPENSATION ALTERNATIVES

About two thirds of parents agreed or strongly agreed that a portion of a teacher’s salary should be related to the performance of his or her students on more than one assessment, and parents provided similar responses regarding such compensation for principals (Figure 41). The remaining one-third of parents who did not agree were slightly more likely to disagree than to strongly disagree. The phrasing of these items does not allow for interpretation regarding opinions concerning compensation for student performance on only one assessment.

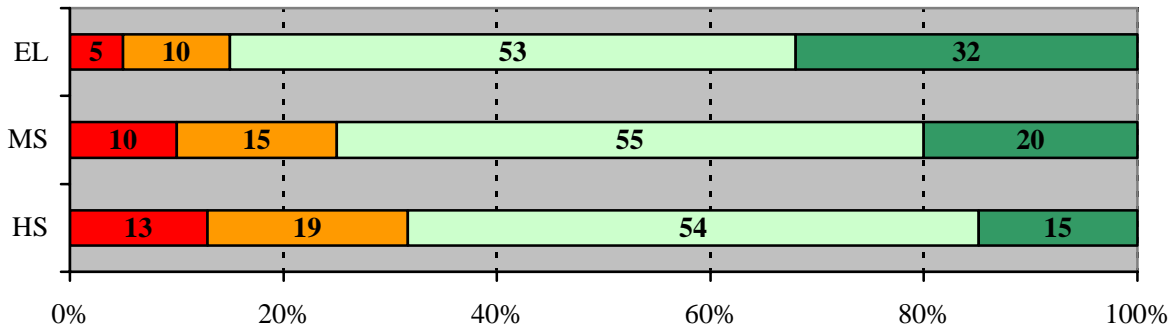
Figure 41. A portion of a [teacher’s or principal’s] salary should be related to the performance of his/her students on more than one assessment. (Item 19)



TRANSFER POLICIES

Satisfaction with AISD’s transfer policies decreased with each successive grade level (Figure 42). Elementary school parents were most likely to be satisfied (85%) and high school parents were least likely to be satisfied with the transfer policies (59%). Although percentages of parents who agreed are similar across levels, elementary school parents were twice as likely as were high school parents to strongly agree that the policies were satisfactory.

Figure 42. I think AISD’s transfer policies are satisfactory. (Item 20)



SUMMARY

Parents at all levels, and particularly at the elementary school level, provided generally positive responses regarding their experiences with AISD schools, and most agreed or strongly agreed that their child was getting a good education. Parents favorably rated their interactions with a variety of campus staff, with highest ratings for their treatment by teachers. Most parents reported school staff provide them with enough information about a multitude of topics; however, responses from parents at all levels suggest that they received the least information about graduation and post-graduation topics. Middle school parents provided more favorable responses in 2007-2008 than the previous year regarding the information school staff provided about their child’s academic plans/goals and high school graduation plans and requirements, and elementary school parents provided more favorable responses in 2007-2008 than the previous year regarding information provided about all graduation and post-graduation topics.

Parents were most likely to report attending scheduled parent-teacher conferences and general school meetings, of all activities listed. The majority of high school parents also reported attending sports or other performance events. Most parents reported encouraging the school to maintain high academic standards, and most reported regularly helping their child with school projects and homework. A large majority of parents reported feeling welcome in their child’s classroom, and most indicated that schools used their suggestions about their child’s education. However, nearly one third of high school parents did not agree that schools valued their input.

Results indicate that parents were largely satisfied with their schools, but would have liked more information about their child’s preparedness for TAKS and post-graduation topics. Additionally, results suggest that school staff should improve responsiveness to parental input about their child’s education.

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