



CLIMATE AND CULTURE SURVEY 2025

Westport Public Schools

June 2025

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INTRODUCTION

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OVERVIEW

In this report, Hanover Research presents the results of the Climate and Culture Survey conducted on behalf of Westport Public Schools (Westport).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are education partners' perceptions of the current school climate in the district?
- How do education partners' perceptions of the school climate differ across school level?
- Among the sub-constructs, for which sub-constructs is the district performing well? What are areas for improvement?

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION & SURVEY SAMPLE

- The survey was administered online in April and May 2025 using the Qualtrics online survey platform.
- The analysis includes a total of 4,156 respondents following data cleaning and quality control.
- This report includes topline charts and charts segmented by role and school level..

RESPONDENT QUALIFICATIONS

- Must be a student in Grade 3-12, a parent, or a staff member at Westport.

INTRODUCTION

METHODOLOGY

- Sample sizes vary across questions as some questions only pertain to a subset of respondents.
- Conclusions drawn from a small sample size ($n < 20$) should be interpreted with caution.
- Statistically significant difference (95% confidence level) between groups are noted with an asterisk (*).
- After data collection, Hanover identified and removed low-quality respondents.
- “Don’t Know or Not Applicable” responses, and equivalent, are often excluded from the figures and analysis in order to focus on respondents who did express an opinion.
- Question text and answer options marked with † are truncated for clarity and brevity. For the full text, please consult the data supplement.
- Some data points mentioned in the analysis may not be included as part of the slide visuals due to legibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on analysis of this survey, Hanover recommends that Westport Public Schools (Westport)...

- **Strengthen student engagement through real-world connections and constructive feedback.** Survey data show that students are less likely than staff to feel that teachers provide constructive feedback or connect lessons to life outside the classroom. To boost student motivation and engagement, classroom instruction should more intentionally connect academic content to real-world contexts while offering consistent, meaningful feedback. The district can support this effort by identifying and applying best practices for real-world learning and by providing targeted professional development and support that equips staff with strategies for delivering feedback that deepens understanding and fosters student growth.
- ❖ **Assess the effectiveness of middle and high school programs in addressing students' academic, social, and emotional needs.** Significant differences exist between secondary respondents and their elementary and preschool counterparts. Many middle and high school respondents report experiencing less pride and joy in school, along with lower levels of positive peer relationships and opportunities for soft skill development. Utilizing a mixed methods approach can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges facing middle and high school students. This approach will enable Westport to further evaluate the impact of current initiatives and inform targeted, developmentally appropriate strategies to strengthen school climate and culture at the secondary level.
- ❖ **Address perception gaps by amplifying student voices and experiences.** Survey results reveal notable differences in how students, staff, and families perceive the academic, social, and overall school environment. To better understand the reasons behind these discrepancies, particularly from the student perspective, Westport should consider conducting follow-up focus groups or in-depth interviews with diverse student groups across schools. By gathering deeper insights from students, the district can more effectively identify key areas for improvement and make informed decisions about how to strategically allocate resources to strengthen school culture and enhance the overall learning environment.

KEY FINDINGS

KEY FINDINGS

School & Building Environment

Responses indicate that students generally hold positive perceptions of their school experience. A strong majority of respondents across groups indicate that students feel welcome (86%) and have a sense of belonging (82%) at school. Most respondents also agree that students are proud to attend school, with parents (83%) and school staff (88%) holding higher opinions than students (67%). However, compared to other school levels (Preschool: 90%, Elementary: 78%, High: 84%), middle school respondents (61%) are less likely to report that students are proud to attend school.

Student respondents indicate room for enhancing student enjoyment at school. While most parents (79%) and school staff (88%) report that students like school, a significantly lower proportion of students (43%) hold the same view. Overall, middle (42%) and high (55%) school respondents are less likely to report enjoyment than preschool (98%) and elementary school (68%) respondents.

Academic Environment

Respondents express high perceptions of the resources and academic expectations that students receive. A strong majority of respondents agree that their school provides enough technology (90%) and material (88%) resources to support student learning. Additionally, most indicate that their school wants students to succeed (89%) and sets high expectations for student achievement (83%). Respondents also report that teachers expect students to do their best in school (92%) and want students to succeed (89%).

There are opportunities for enhancing the challenge level for advanced students. Despite having overall positive opinions, compared to students (93%) and school staff (89%), fewer parents (67%) agree that schools adequately challenge advanced students. Furthermore, compared to preschool (82%) and high school (93%) respondents, elementary (73%) and middle (73%) school respondents are less likely to indicate that advanced students are adequately challenged.

KEY FINDINGS

Academic Environment (Continued)

The majority of respondents across groups agree that teachers provide extra help to students when they need it (85%); however, there is room for strengthening teacher feedback to students and connecting lessons to real life, especially at middle and high schools. Compared to instructional staff, students are significantly less likely to report that teachers provide helpful comments on students' schoolwork (instructional staff: 97% vs. students: 67%), keep students updated on their academic progress (92% vs. 64%), praise students' effort on schoolwork (98% vs. 60%), and connect class lessons to life outside the classroom (95% vs. 55%). Additionally, middle and high school respondents hold lower perceptions than respondents at a lower school level in these areas. For instance, middle and high school respondents are less likely to agree that teachers praise students' effort on schoolwork (Preschool: 97%, Elementary: 82%, vs. Middle: 58%, High: 55%), and that teachers connect lessons to life outside the classroom (Preschool: 100%, Elementary: 74%, vs. Middle: 56%, High: 51%).

Overall, respondents perceive students' development of essential soft skills at school positively, with parents and staff having higher opinions than students. In particular, the majority of respondents agree or strongly agree that district schools develop students' critical thinking (84%) and collaboration skills (81%). The areas with the largest distinction across groups include the development of students' ability to manage emotions (students: 59% vs. parents: 69%, school staff: 84%) and empathize with others (students: 60% vs. parents: 72%, school staff: 83%).

There are opportunities for strengthening the soft skill development among middle and high school students. Compared to preschool and elementary school respondents, fewer middle and high school respondents perceive students' soft skill development at school positively. For instance, middle and high school respondents are less likely to indicate that district schools develop students' ability to manage emotions (Preschool: 100%, Elementary: 74%, vs. Middle: 57%, High: 56%) and resolve conflict (Preschool: 98%, Elementary: 74%, vs. Middle: 55%, High: 56%).

KEY FINDINGS

Social Environment

Overall, respondents across groups report positive relationships between students and staff members. A strong majority of students, parents, and school staff indicate that adults at school care about (81%, 87%, and 98%, respectively) and respect (74%, 85%, and 96%) students. Most respondents (over 70%) across school levels also hold positive perceptions regarding student-staff relationships.

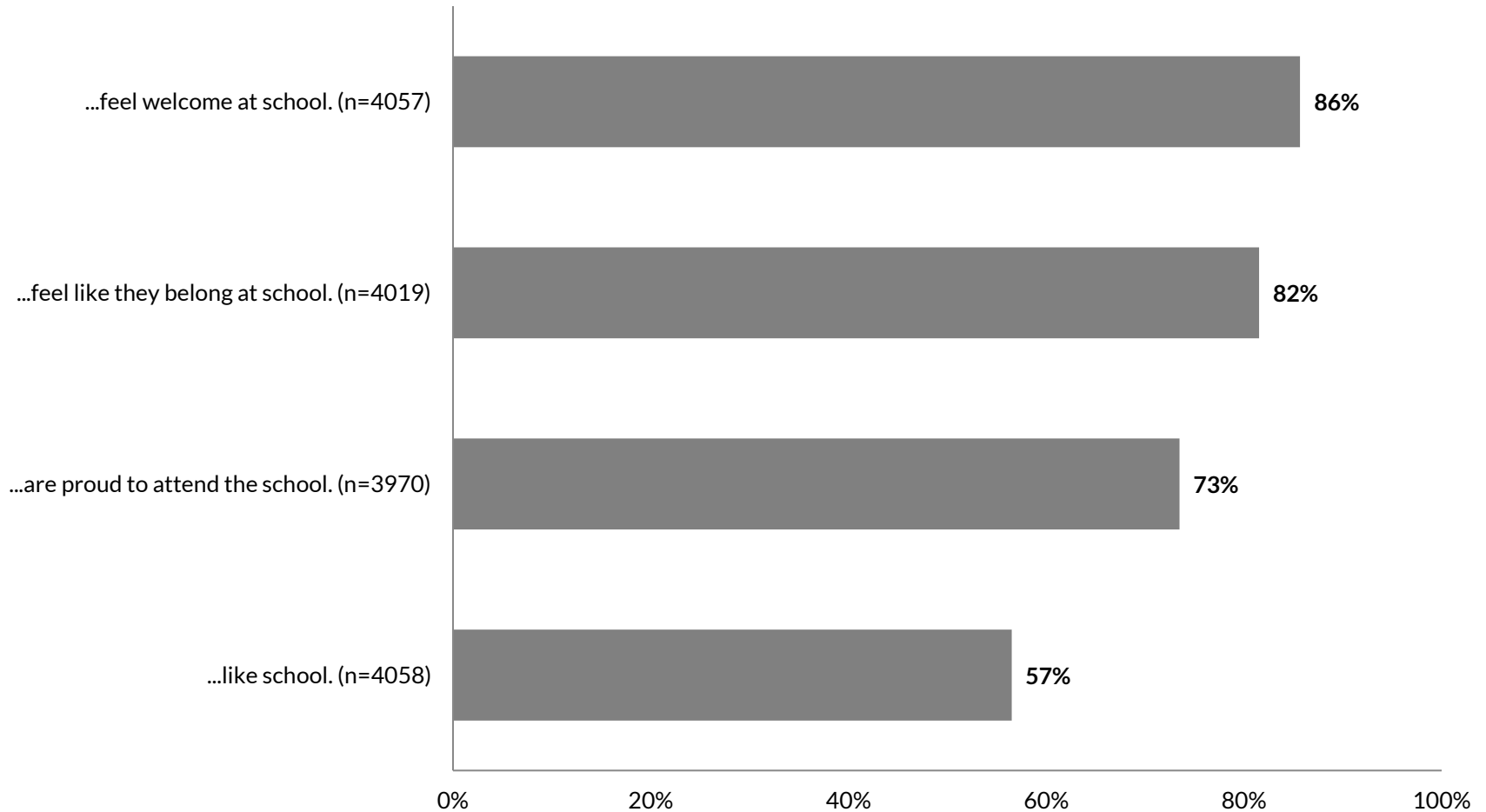
Respondents generally indicate that students have positive relationships with their peers, though opinions vary across groups and school levels. Despite overall positive perceptions, compared to parents and school staff, students are less likely to agree that students at school care about (students: 69%, vs. parents: 74%, school staff: 86%) and respect (students: 62%, vs. parents: 70%, school staff: 76%) other students, and that students help each other learn (students: 60%, vs. parents: 69%, staff: 81%). Across school levels, middle school respondents hold the lowest perceptions. Fifty-six percent indicate that students respect other students, and 53% indicate that students help each other learn.

Respondents generally express favorable opinions about student discipline; however, perceptions vary about consistent enforcement of and students' adherence to school rules. Over two-thirds of respondents indicate that adults at school enforce school rules fairly (73%) and consistently (71%). However, compared to student (76%) and parent (75%) respondents, school staff (61%) are less likely to agree that school rules are consistently enforced. Additionally, while about three-quarters (74%) of respondents indicate that students at school understand school rules, a significantly lower proportion report that students follow school rules (55%), largely due to the low perceptions among student respondents (49%) as well as middle (45%) and high (59%) school respondents.

CHARTS

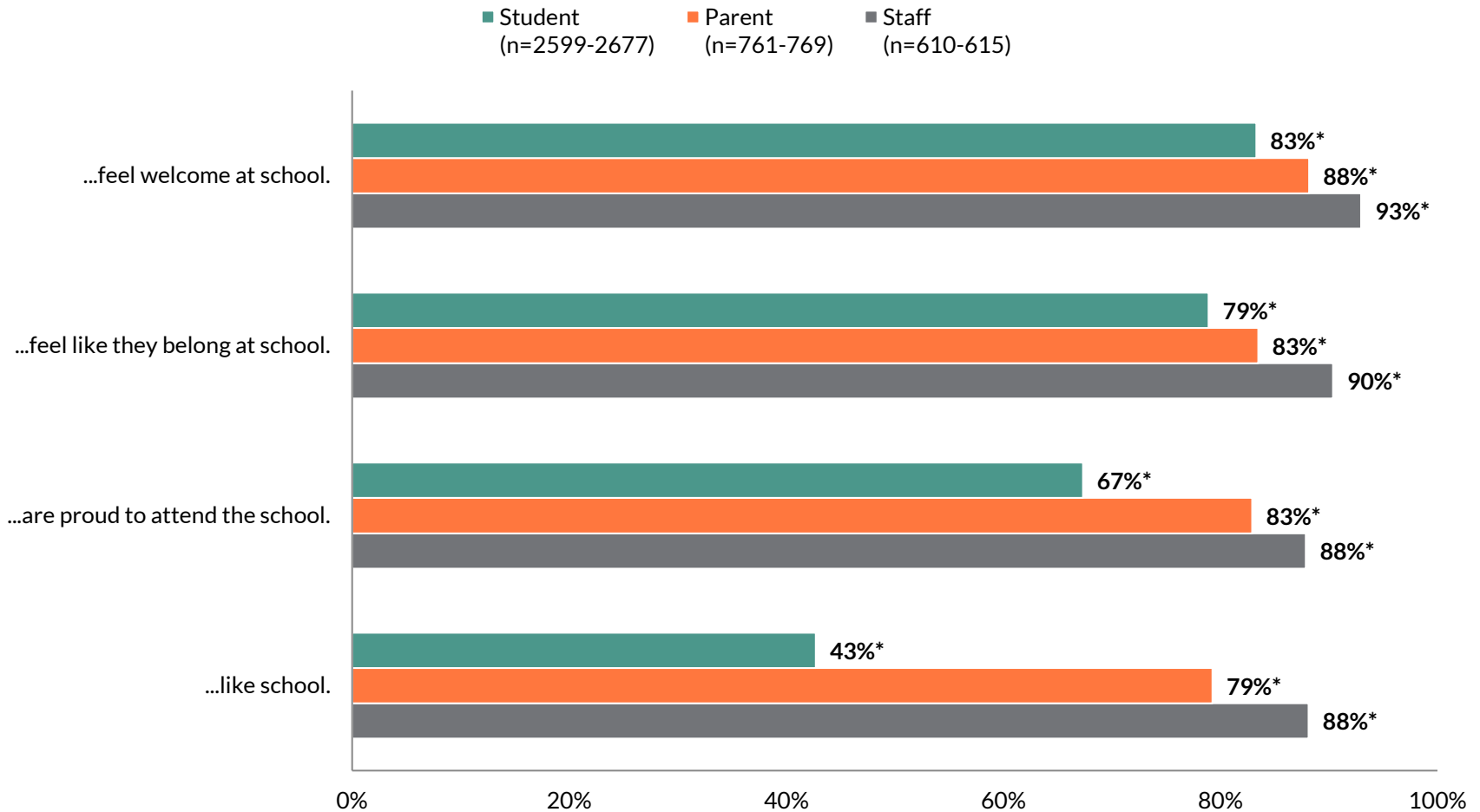
POSITIVE EMOTIONAL CLIMATE - TOPLINE

Agreement with statements about emotional climate. Students at my [child's] school...
% Agree + % Strongly Agree



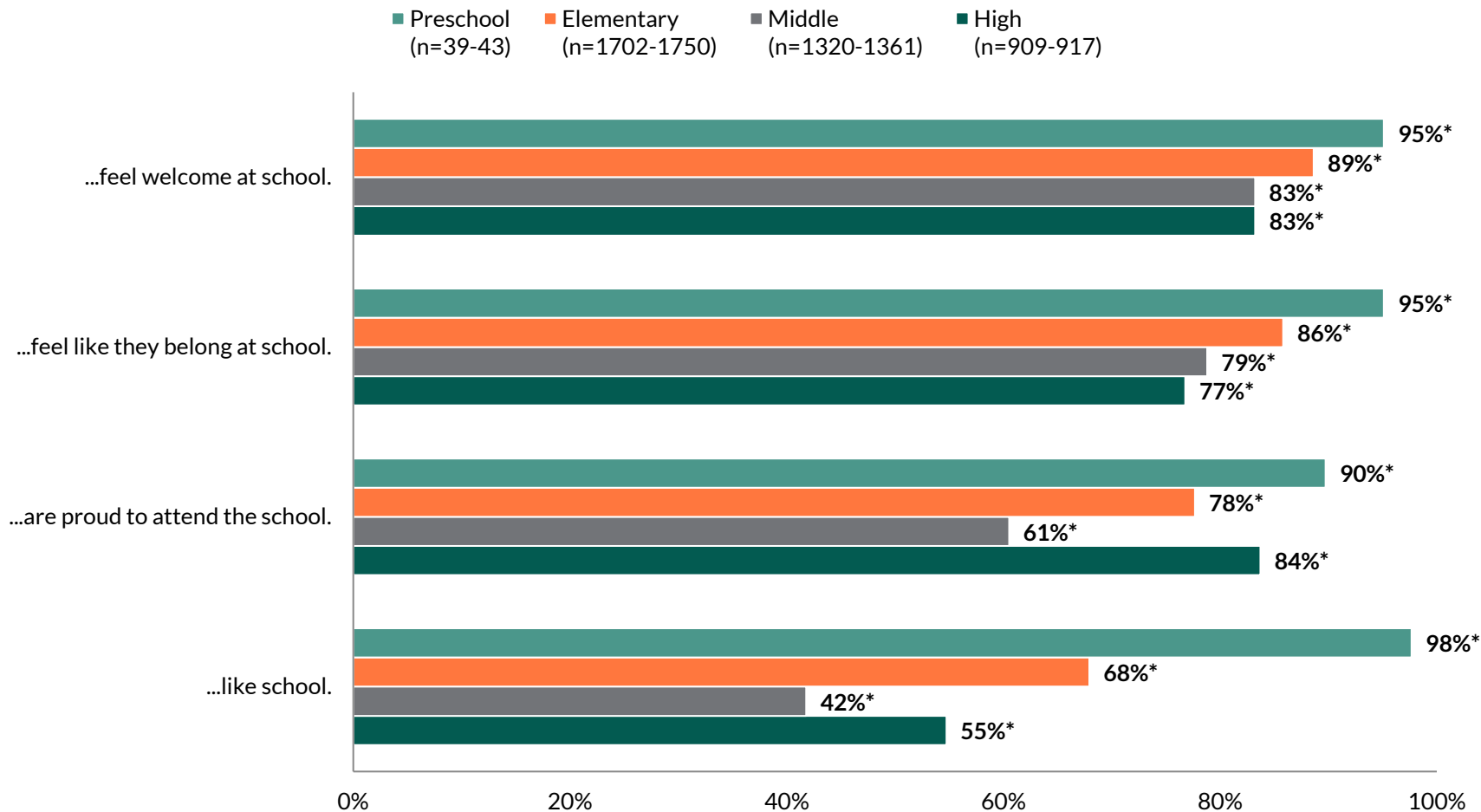
POSITIVE EMOTIONAL CLIMATE – BY ROLE

Agreement with statements about emotional climate. Students at my [child's] school...
 % Agree + % Strongly Agree



POSITIVE EMOTIONAL CLIMATE – BY SCHOOL LEVEL

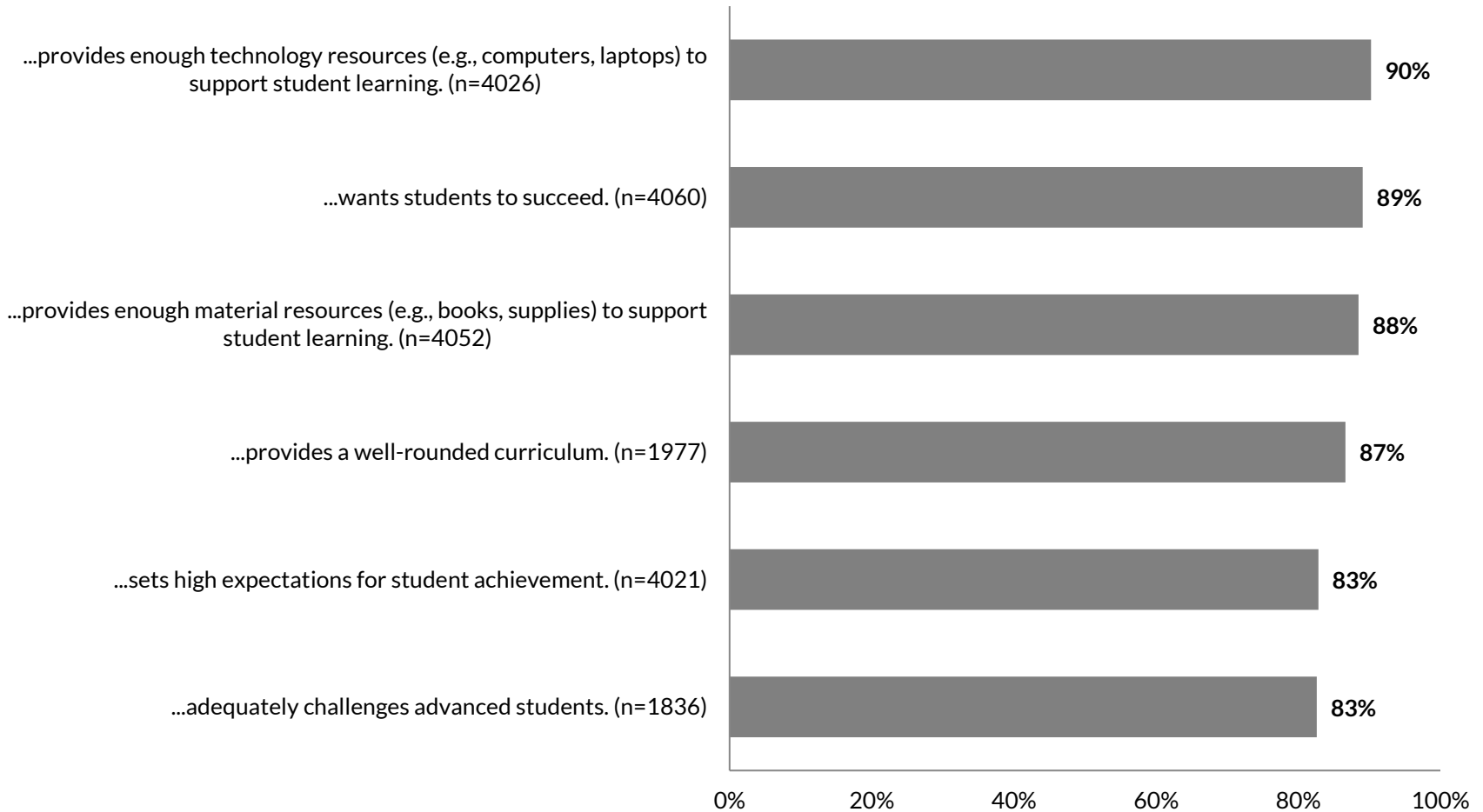
Agreement with statements about emotional climate. Students at my [child's] school...
 % Agree + % Strongly Agree



INSTRUCTIONAL CLIMATE - TOPLINE

Agreement with statements about instructional climate. My [child's] school...

% Agree + % Strongly Agree

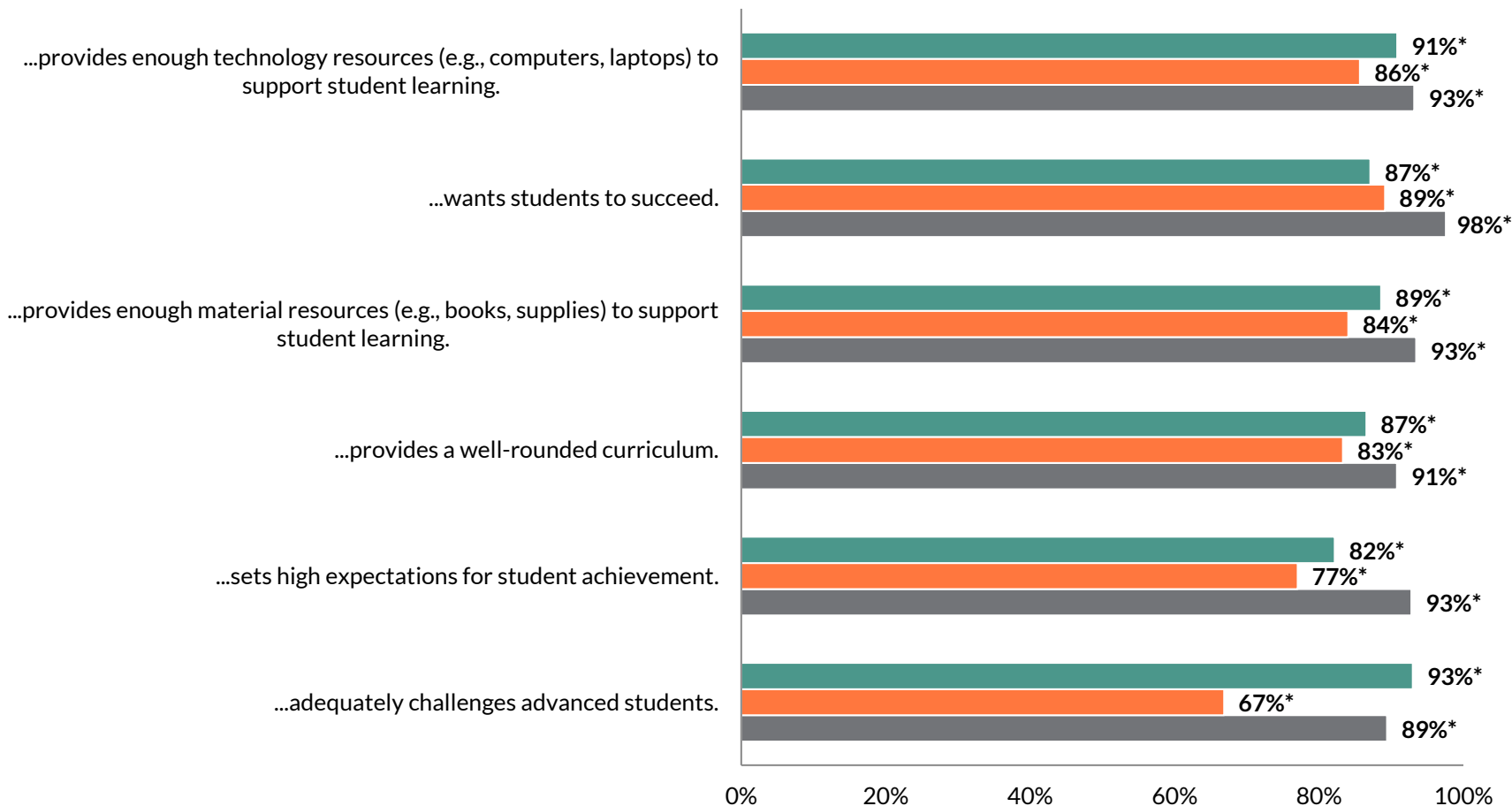


INSTRUCTIONAL CLIMATE – BY ROLE

Agreement with statements about instructional climate. My [child's] school...

% Agree + % Strongly Agree

■ Student (n=600-2698) ■ Parent (n=649-755) ■ Staff (n=587-614)



Note: * indicates statistically significant differences between groups at the 95% level.

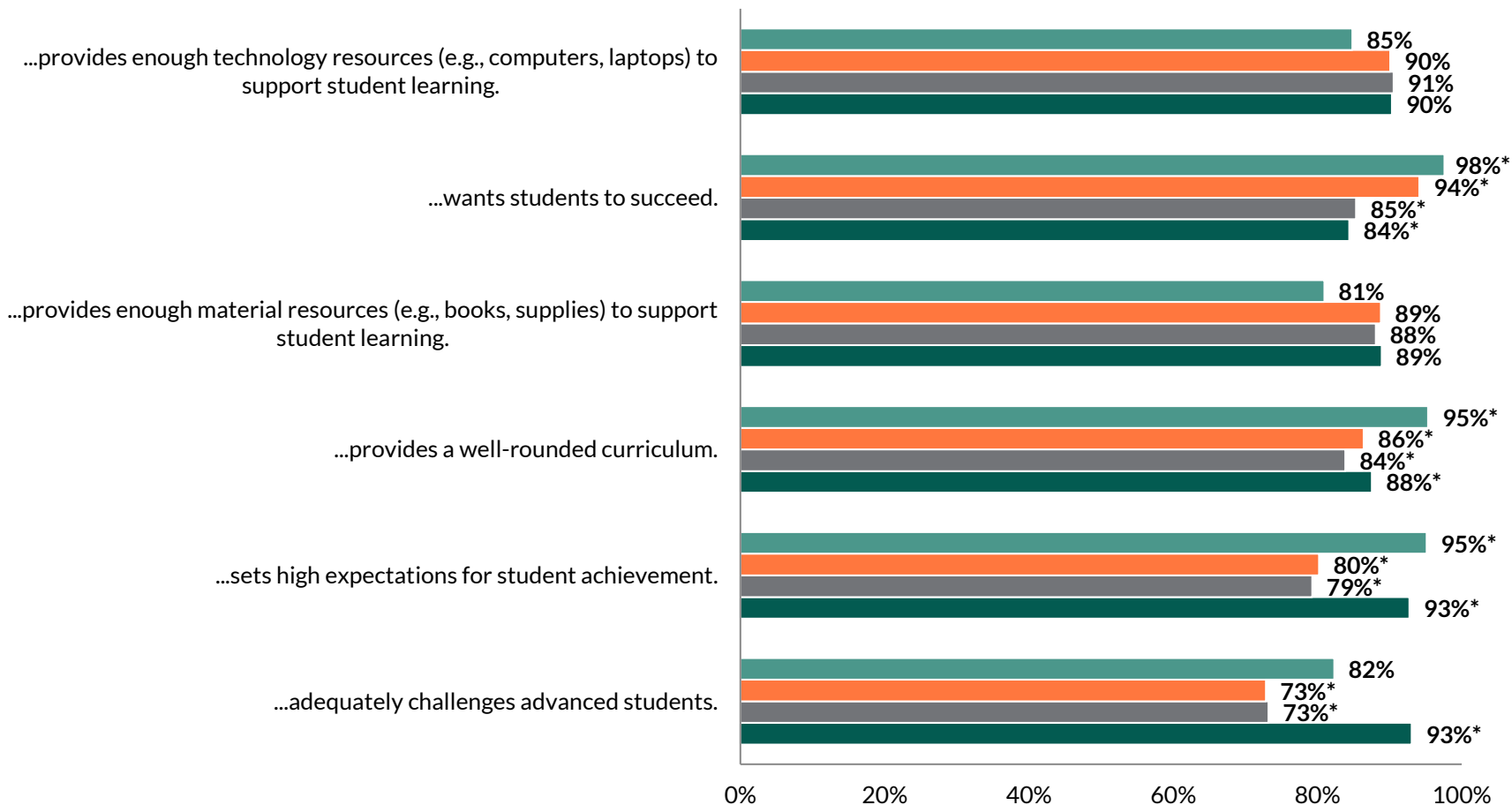
Note: Only students, parents, and school staff saw this question. Only students in Grades 3-8 did not see options “...provides a well-rounded curriculum” and “...adequately challenges advanced students.”

INSTRUCTIONAL CLIMATE – BY SCHOOL LEVEL

Agreement with statements about instructional climate. My [child's] school...

% Agree + % Strongly Agree

■ Preschool (n=33-43)
 ■ Elementary (n=604-1754)
 ■ Middle (n=332-1376)
 ■ High (n=866-898)



Note: * indicates statistically significant differences between groups at the 95% level.

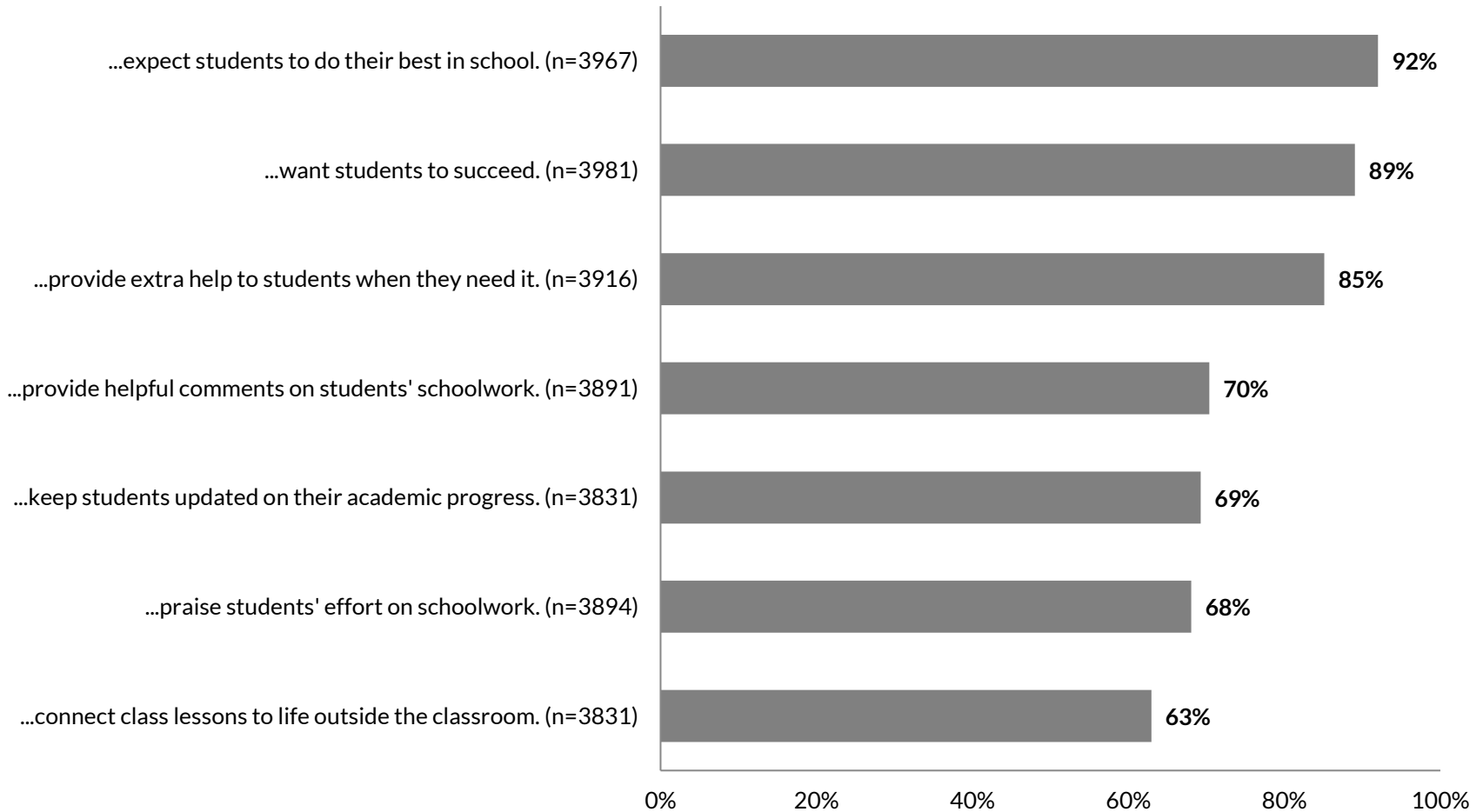
Note: Only students, parents, and school staff saw this question. Only students in Grades 3-8 did not see options “...provides a well-rounded curriculum” and “...adequately challenges advanced students.”



TEACHERS' INSTRUCTION - TOPLINE

Agreement with statements about instructional climate. Teachers...

% Agree + % Strongly Agree

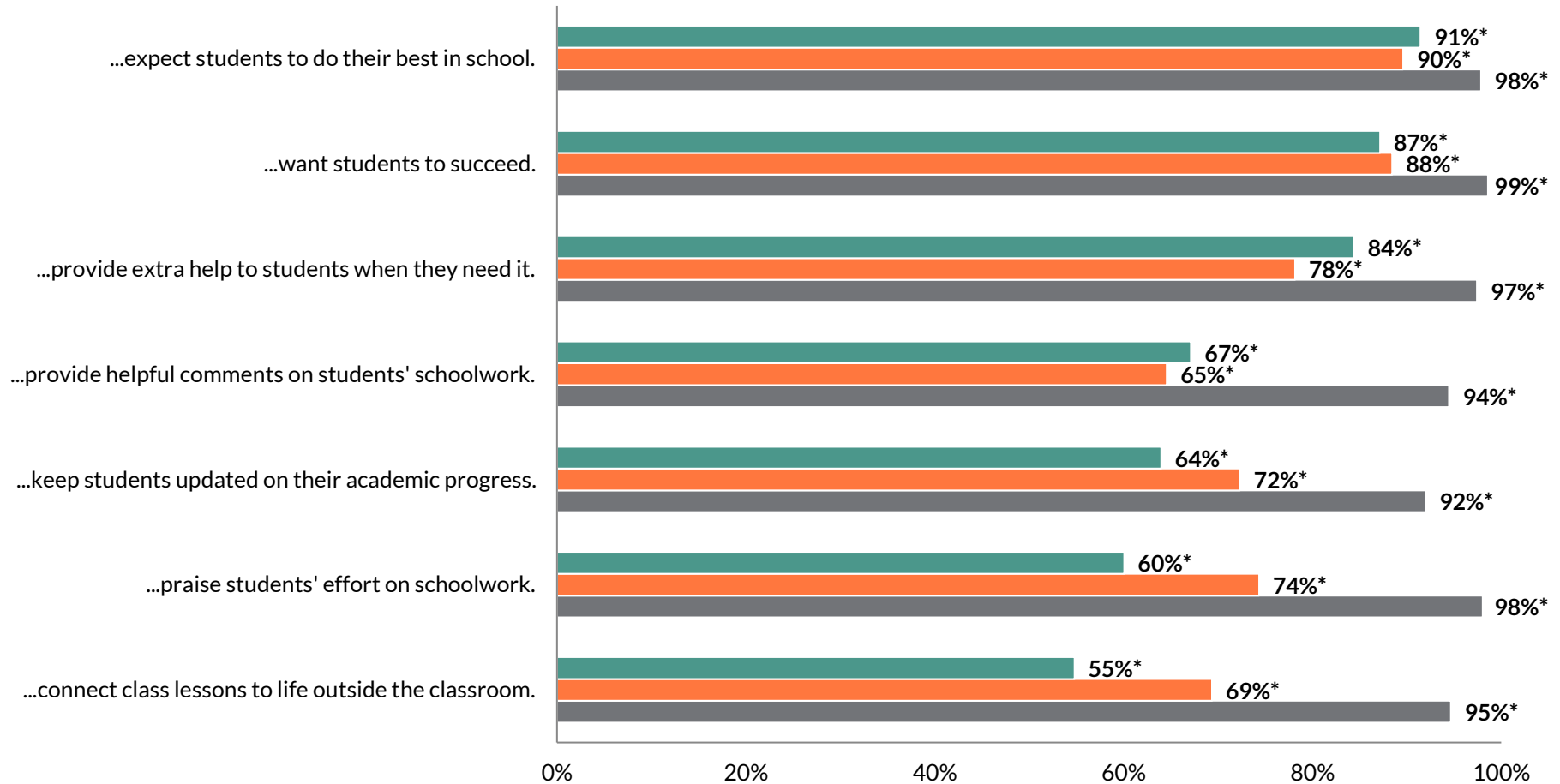


TEACHERS' INSTRUCTION – BY ROLE

Agreement with statements about instructional climate. Teachers...

% Agree + % Strongly Agree

■ Student (n=2625-2680)
 ■ Parent (n=653-736)
 ■ Staff (n=512-565)

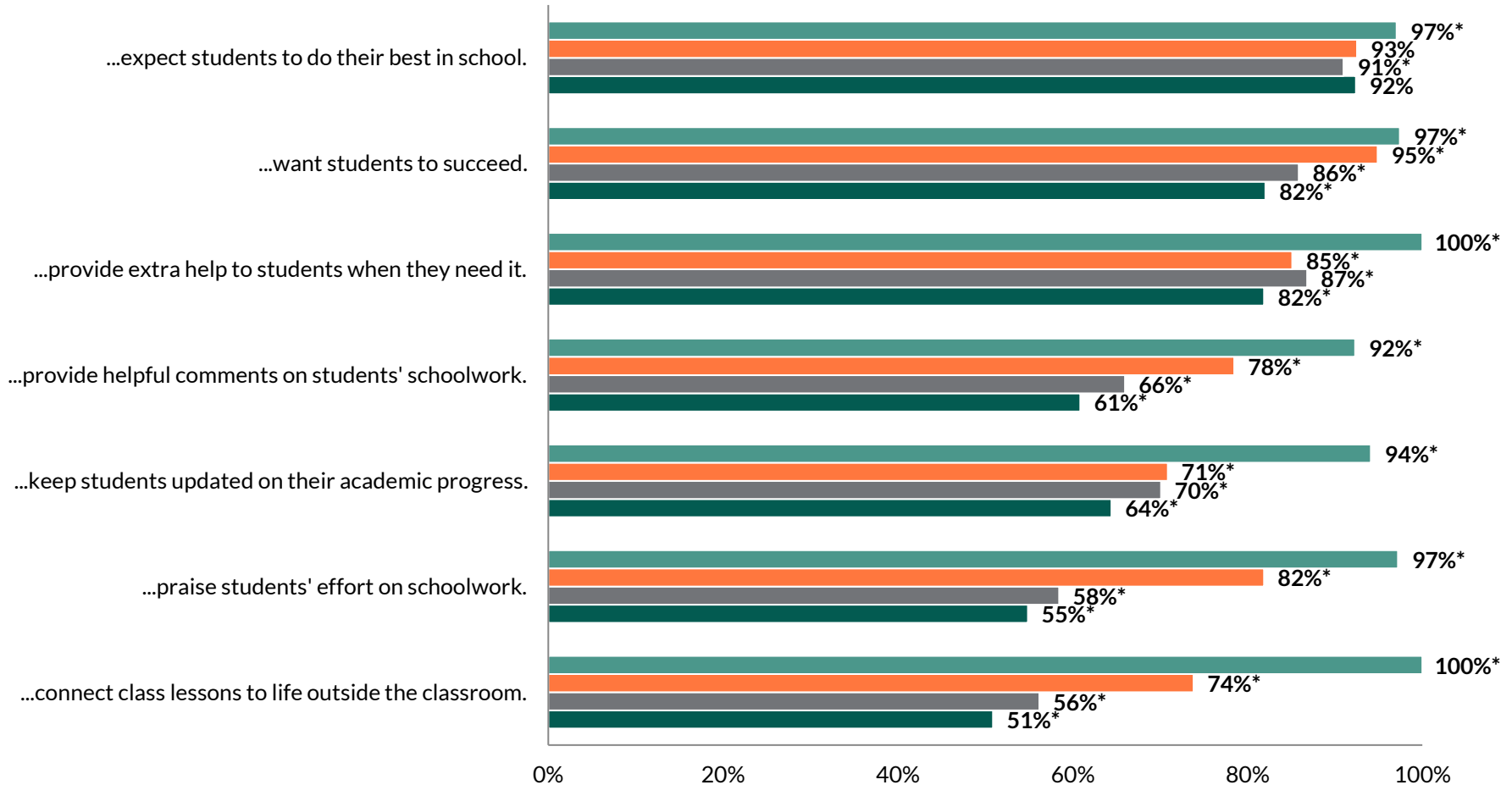


TEACHERS' INSTRUCTION – BY SCHOOL LEVEL

Agreement with statements about instructional climate. Teachers...

% Agree + % Strongly Agree

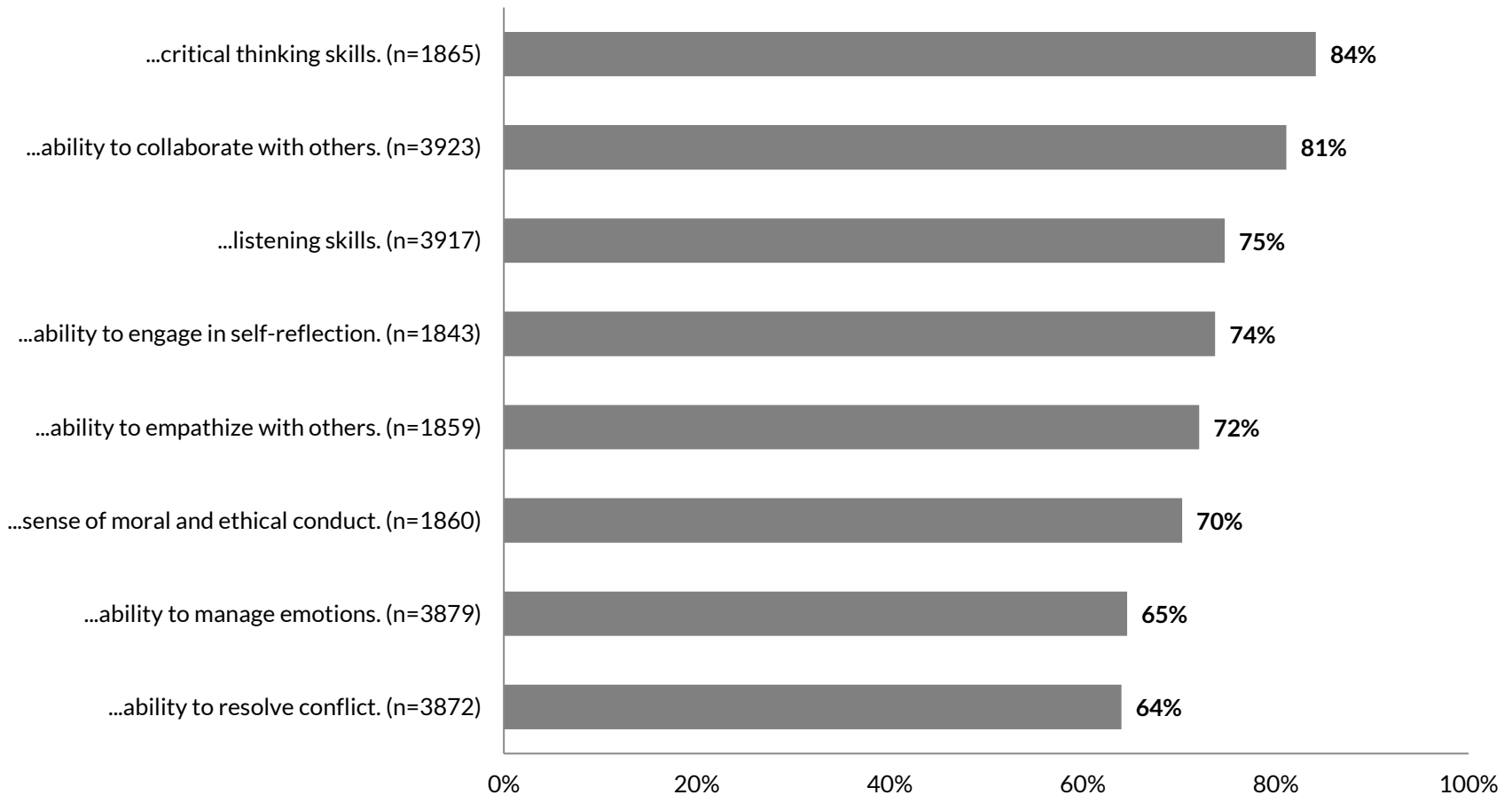
■ Preschool (n=17-39)
 ■ Elementary (n=1620-1715)
 ■ Middle (n=1317-1358)
 ■ High (n=843-869)



STUDENT OUTCOMES - TOPLINE

Agreement with statements about student outcomes. [The district/The school] develops students'...

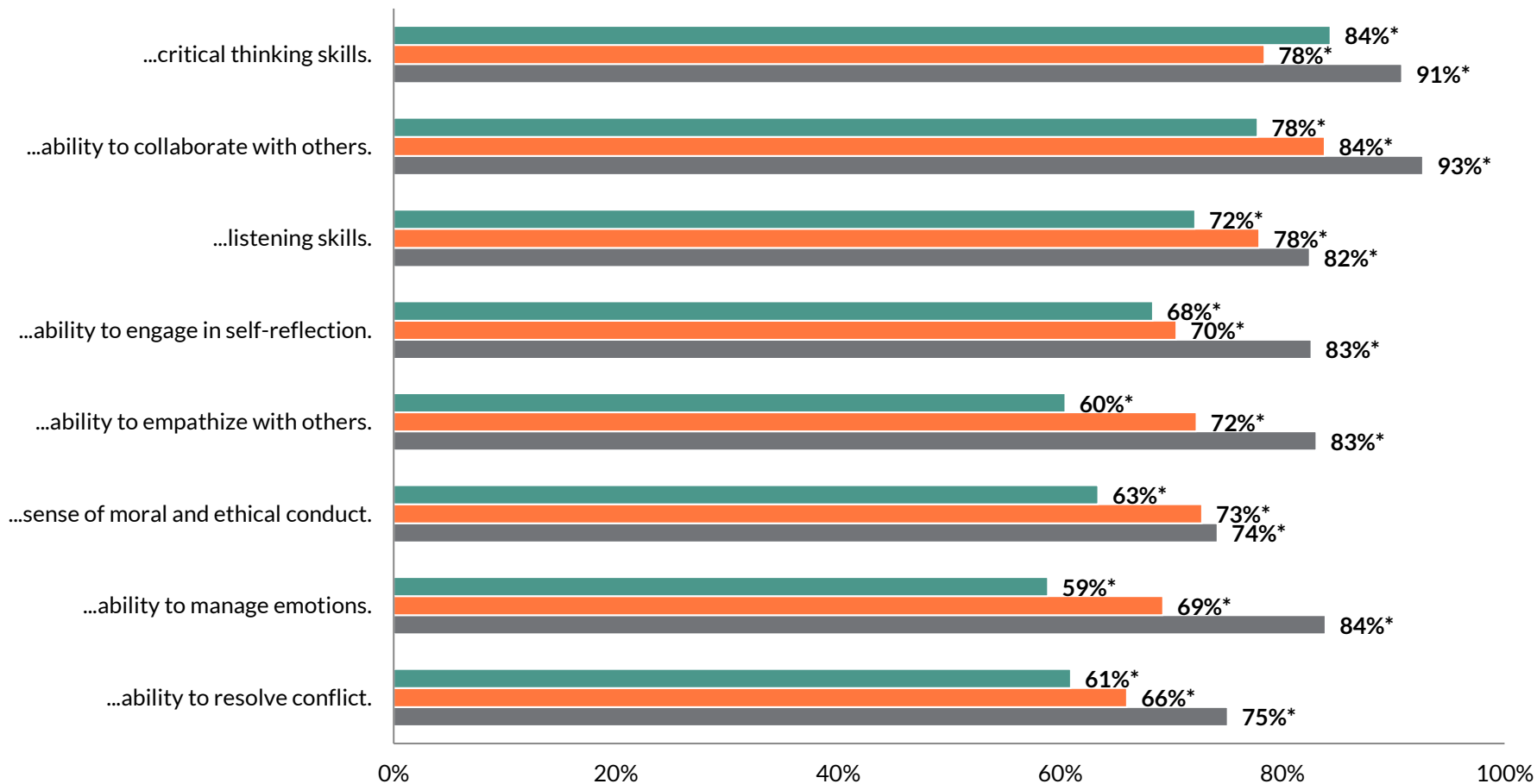
% Agree + % Strongly Agree



STUDENT OUTCOMES – BY ROLE

Agreement with statements about student outcomes. [The district/The school] develops students'...
% Agree + % Strongly Agree

■ Student (n=577-2634) ■ Parent (n=665-698) ■ Staff (n=595-602)

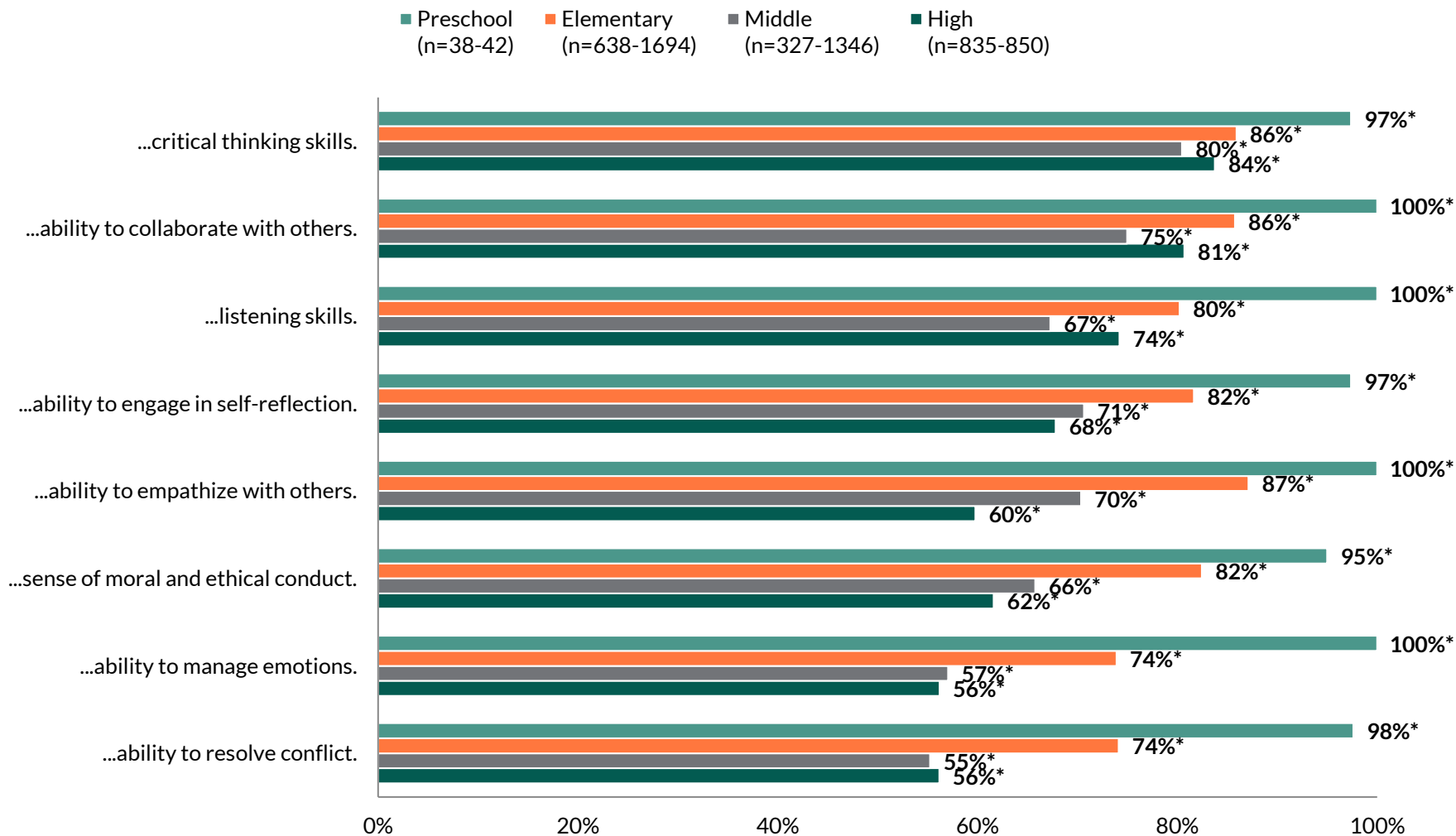


Note: * indicates statistically significant differences between groups at the 95% level.

Note: Only students, parents, and school staff saw this question. Students in Grades 3-8 did not see options "...ability to engage in self-reflection," "...critical thinking skills," "...ability to empathize with others," and "...sense of moral and ethical conduct."

STUDENT OUTCOMES – BY SCHOOL LEVEL

Agreement with statements about student outcomes. [The district/The school] develops students'...
% Agree + % Strongly Agree

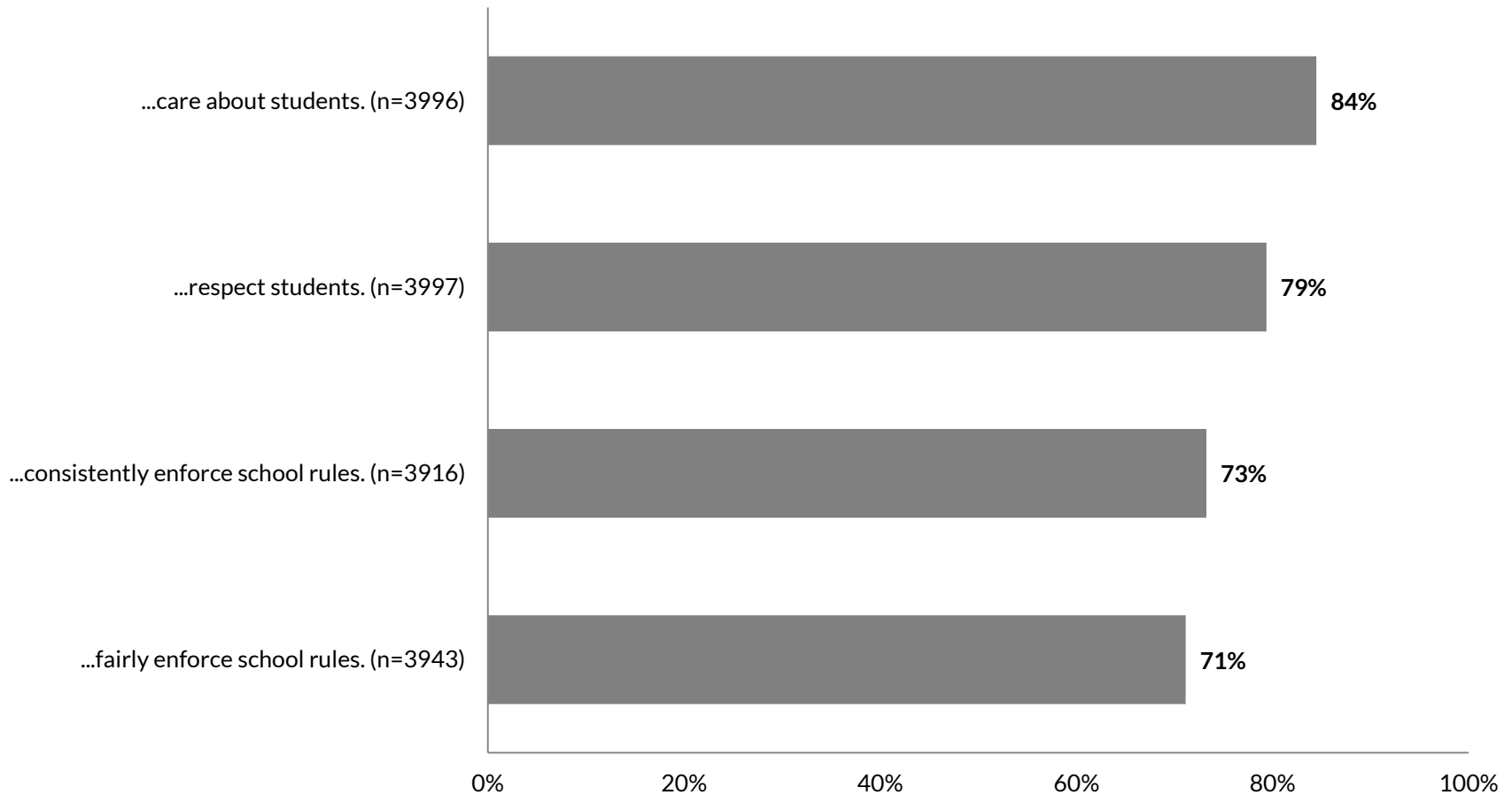


Note: * indicates statistically significant differences between groups at the 95% level.

Note: Only students, parents, and school staff saw this question. Students in Grades 3-8 did not see options "...ability to engage in self-reflection," "...critical thinking skills," "...ability to empathize with others," and "...sense of moral and ethical conduct."

STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF – TOPLINE

Agreement with statements about students' positive relationships and discipline. Adults at my [child's] school...
% Agree + % Strongly Agree

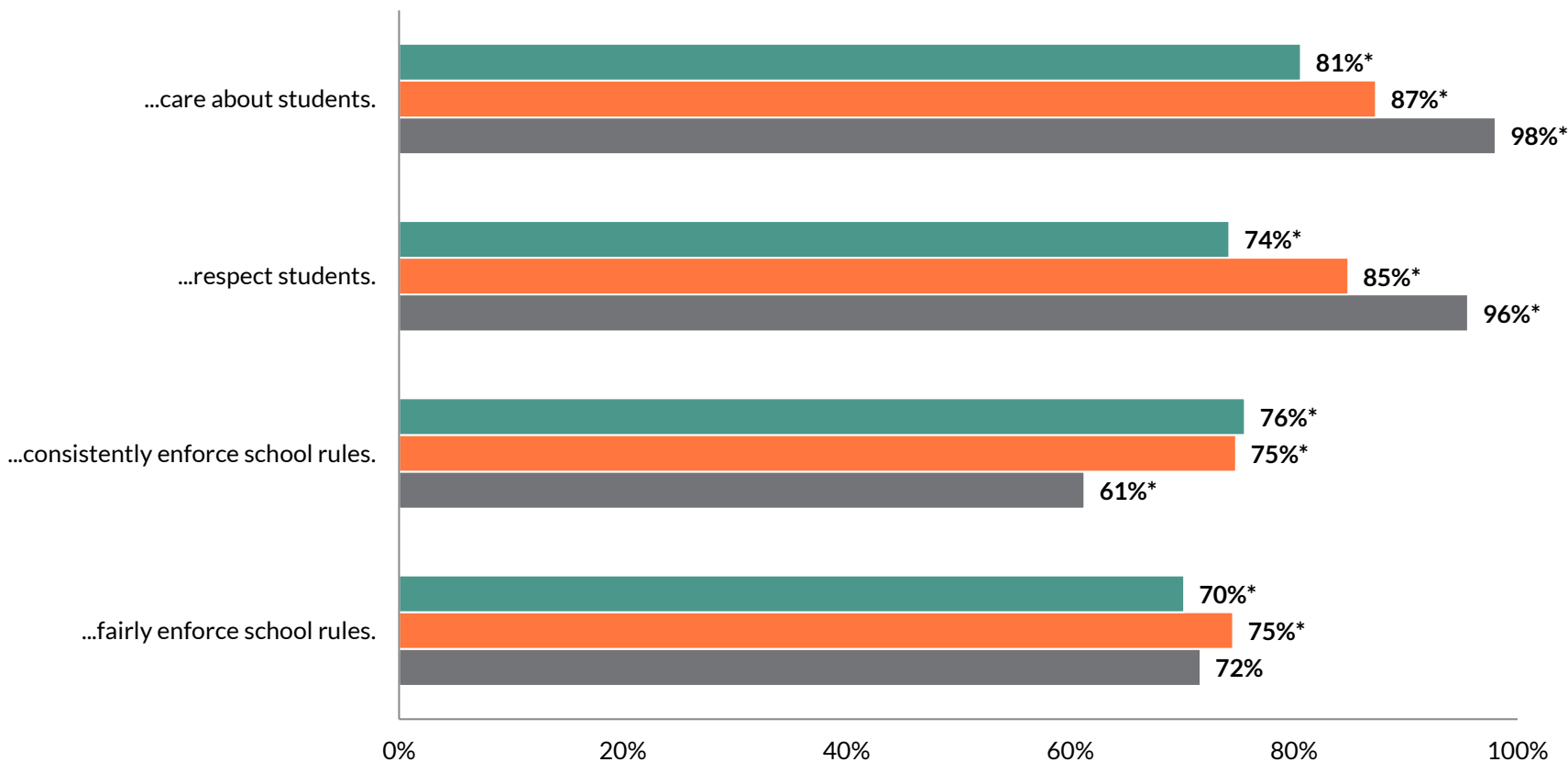


STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF – BY ROLE

Agreement with statements about students' positive relationships and discipline. Adults at my [child's] school...

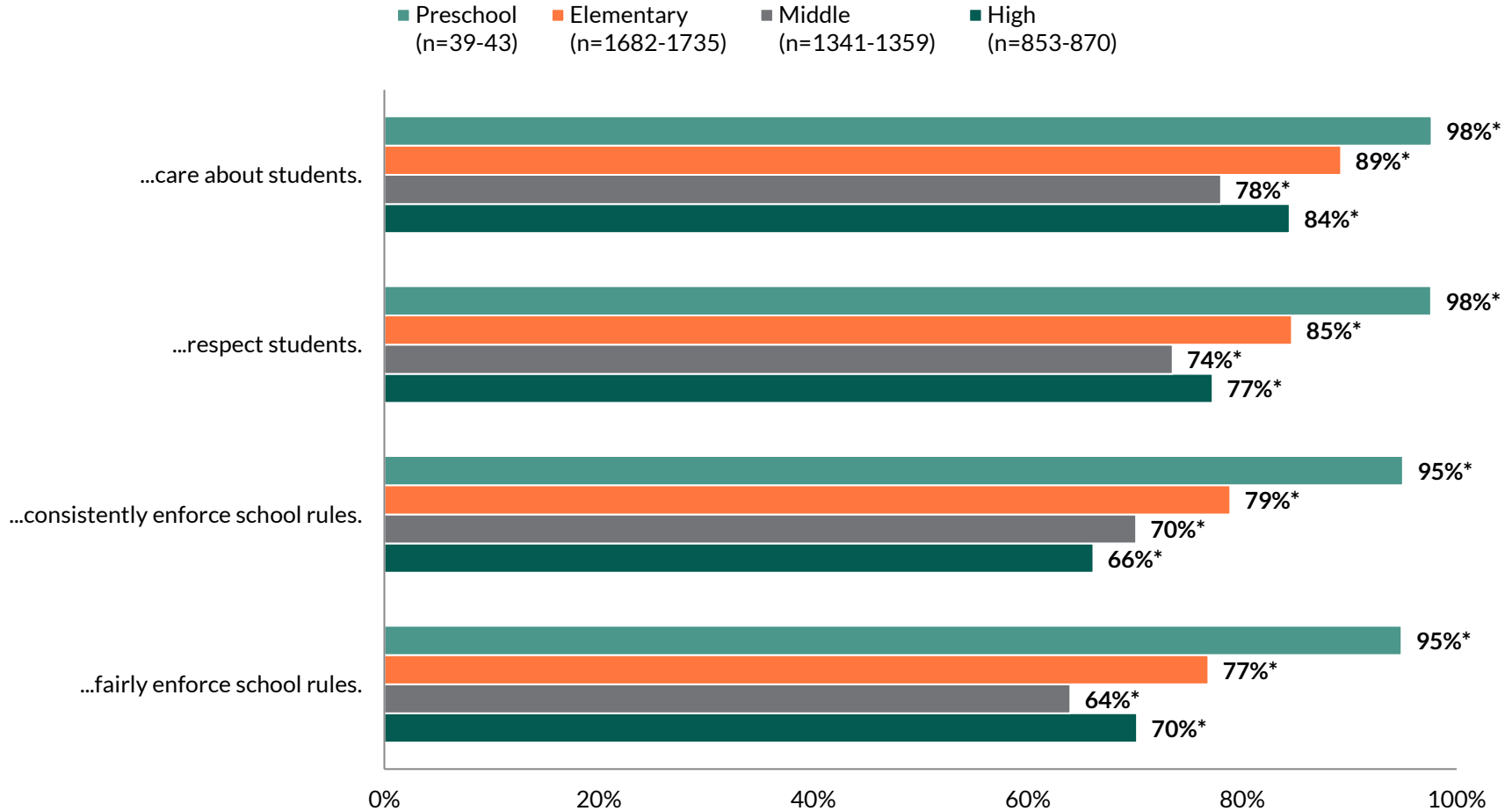
% Agree + % Strongly Agree

■ Student (n=2630-2669)
 ■ Parent (n=679-726)
 ■ Staff (n=606-608)



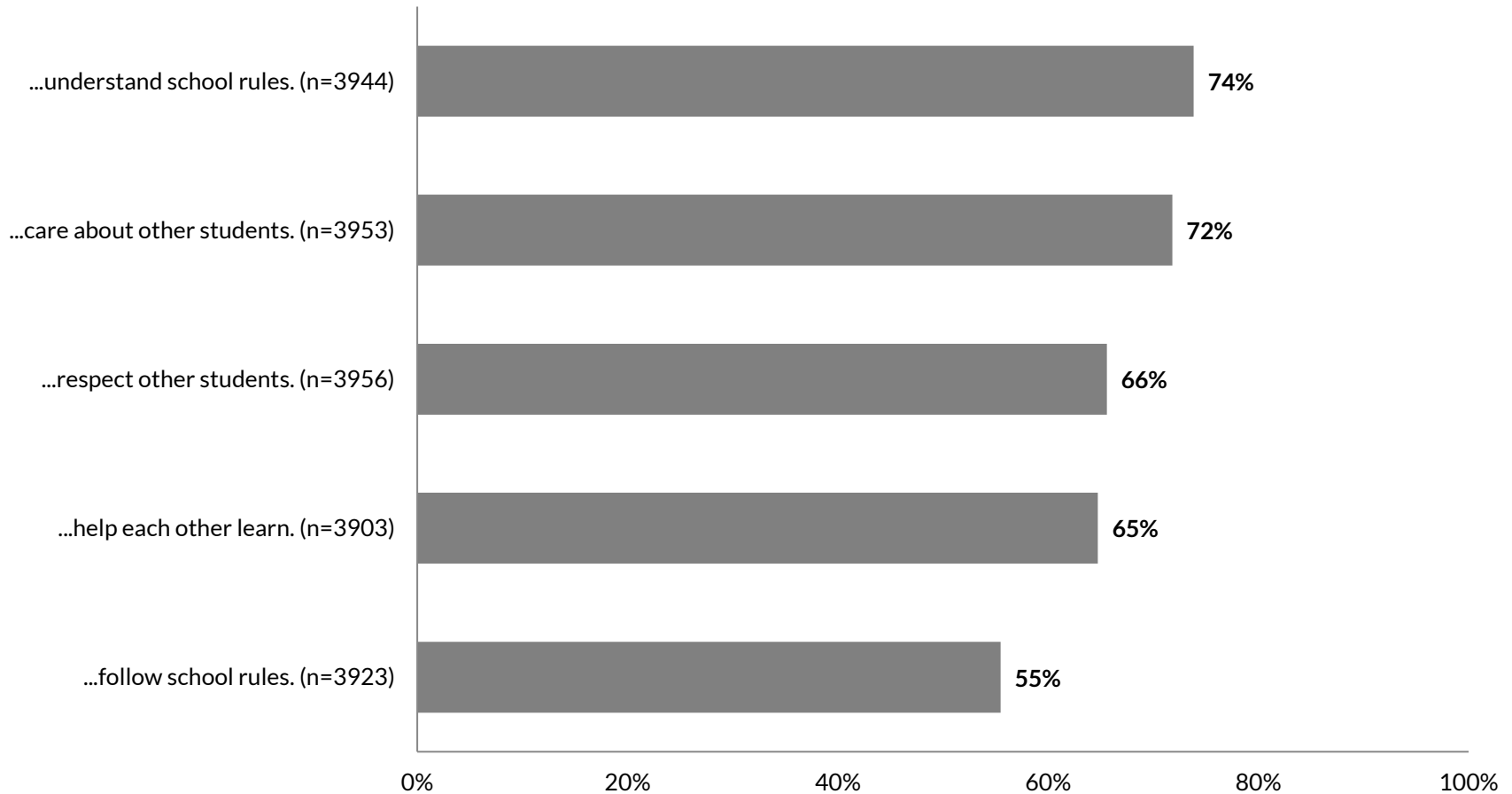
STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF – BY SCHOOL LEVEL

Agreement with statements about students' positive relationships and discipline. Adults at my [child's] school...
 % Agree + % Strongly Agree



STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS – TOPLINE

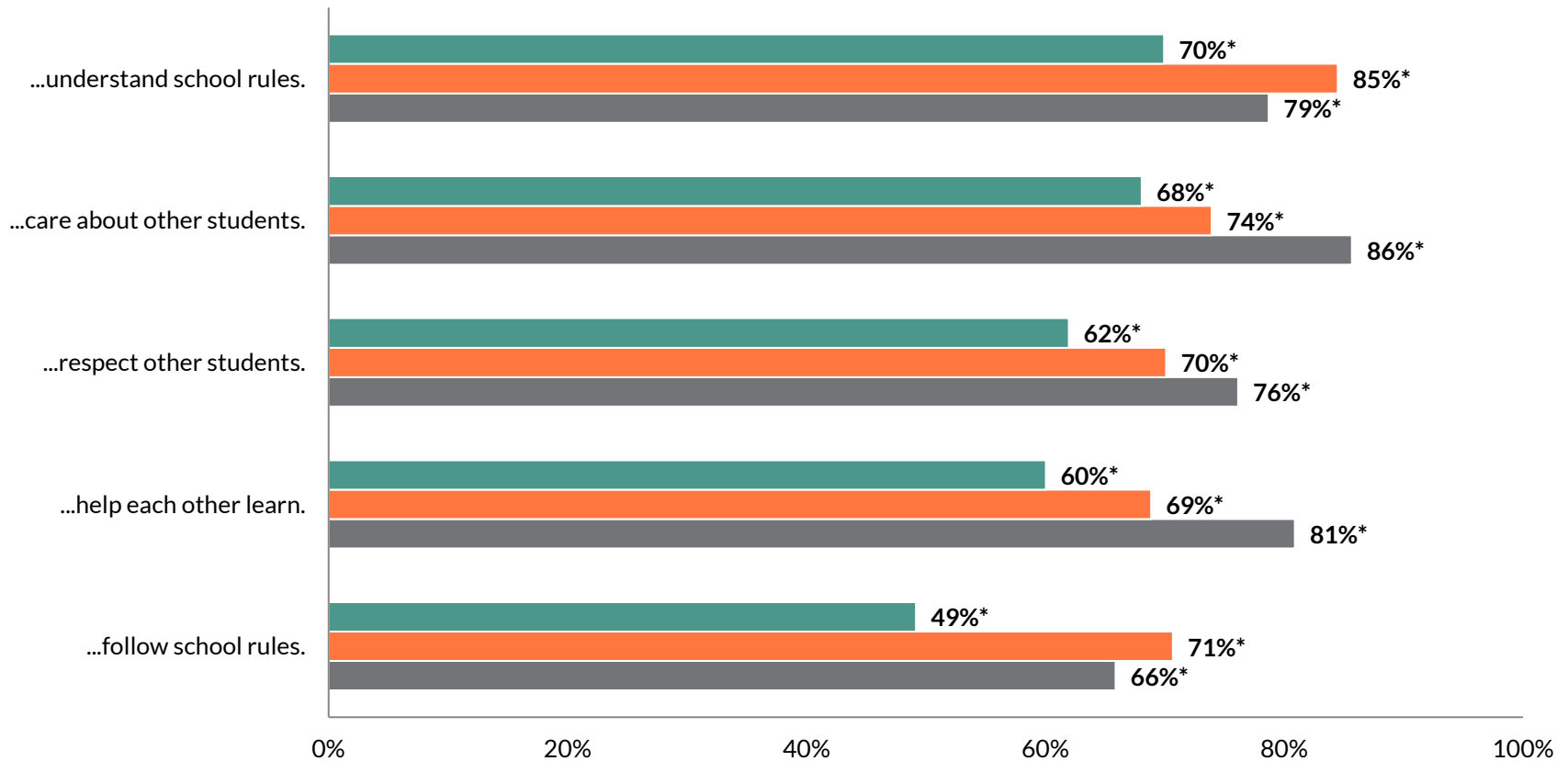
Agreement with statements about students' positive relationships and discipline. Students at my [child's] school...
% Agree + % Strongly Agree



STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS – BY ROLE

Agreement with statements about students' positive relationships and discipline. Students at my [child's] school...
 % Agree + % Strongly Agree

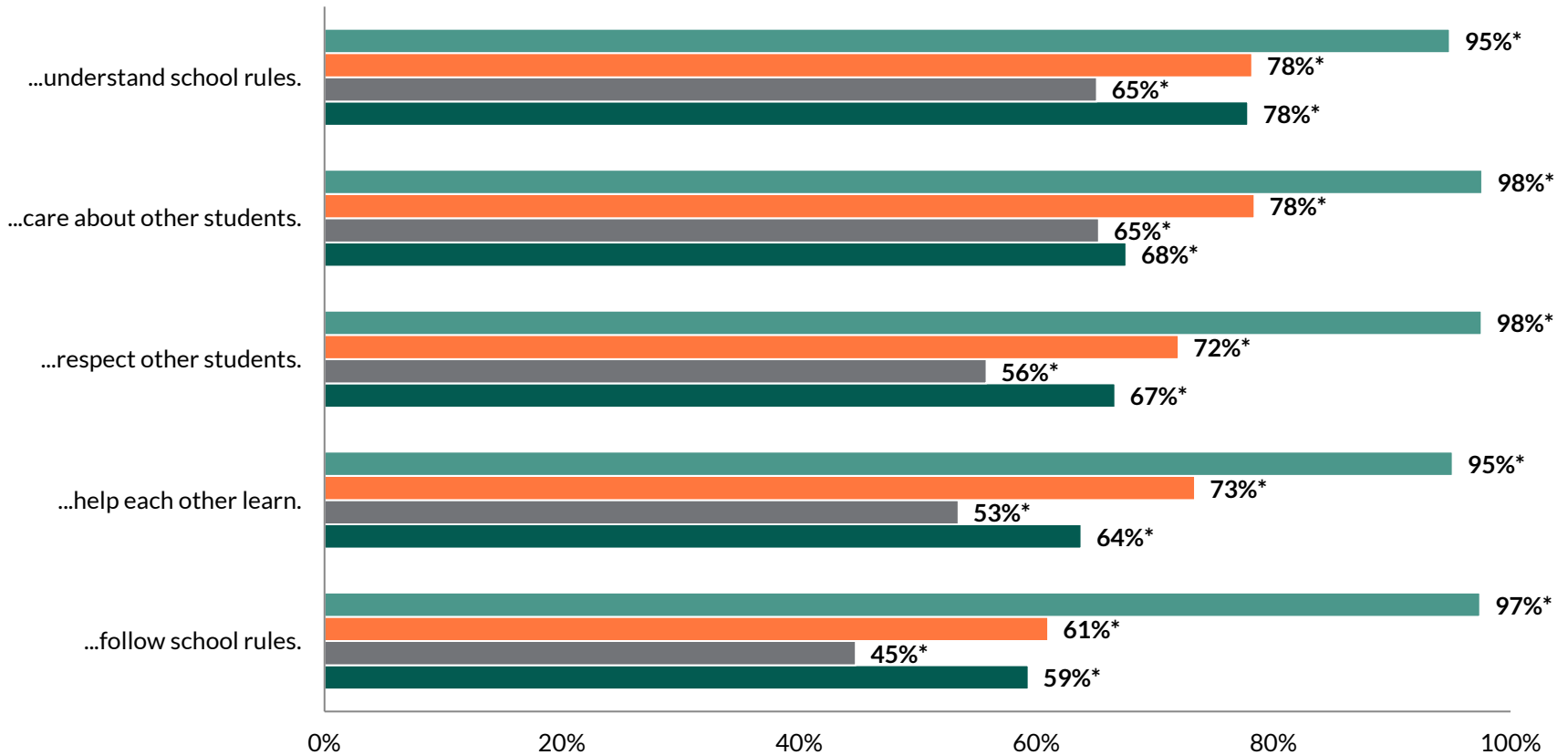
■ Student (n=2637-2645) ■ Parent (n=668-703) ■ Staff (n=597-608)



STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS – BY SCHOOL LEVEL

Agreement with statements about students' positive relationships and discipline. Students at my [child's] school...
 % Agree + % Strongly Agree

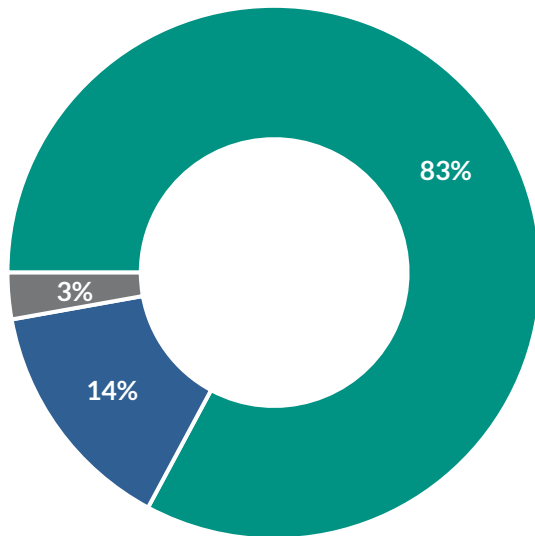
■ Preschool (n=39-42)
 ■ Elementary (n=1684-1710)
 ■ Middle (n=1332-1349)
 ■ High (n=846-859)



EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

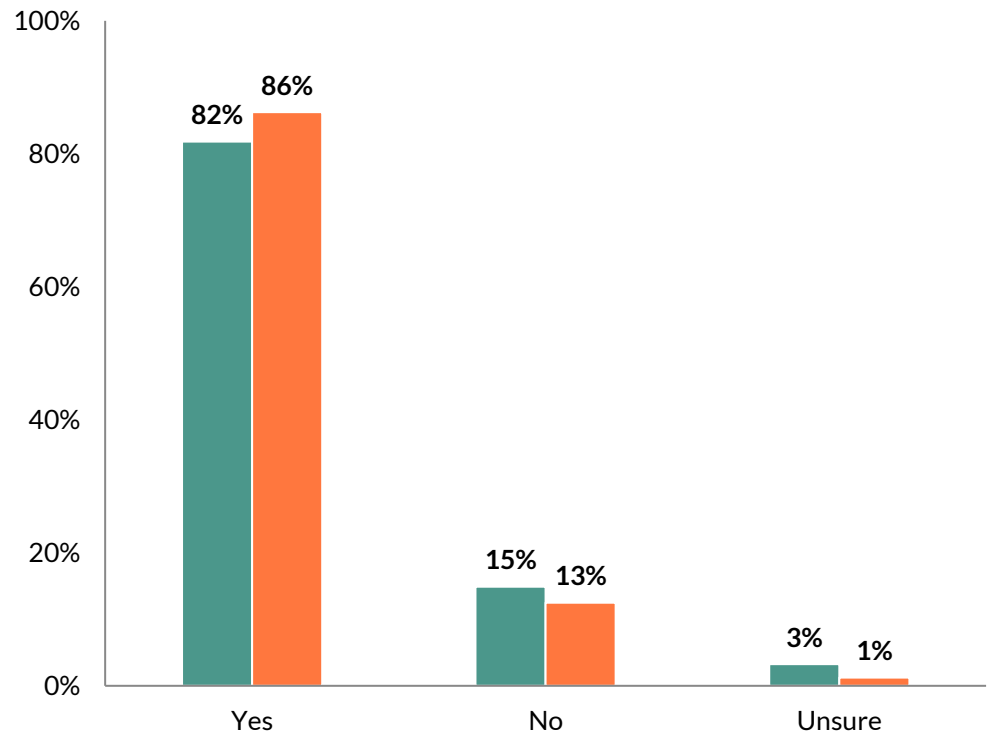
In addition to a regular school day, [do you/does your child] participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities?
(n=711)

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure



In addition to a regular school day, [do you/does your child] participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities?

■ Student (n=551) ■ Parent (n=160)



RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Respondent Group (n=4,156)

Student	66%
Parent	19%
Staff	15%

Staff Role (n=623)

Instructional Certified Staff	77%
Instructional Non-Certified Staff	17%
School Administrator	3%
District Administrator	<1%
Non-instructional staff	3%

Years Working at Westport (n=623)

Less than 1 year	8%
1 to 3 years	17%
4 to 6 years	13%
7 to 10 years	13%
11 to 15 years	13%
16 to 20 years	12%
More than 20 years	23%

Student Grade (n=3,533)

Preschool	<1%
Kindergarten	2%
Transition to Kindergarten	0%
Grade 1	2%
Grade 2	2%
Grade 3	14%
Grade 4	12%
Grade 5	11%
Grade 6	12%
Grade 7	12%
Grade 8	11%
Grade 9	7%
Grade 10	7%
Grade 11	5%
Grade 12	4%

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Race/Ethnicity (n=3,763)

American Indian or Alaskan Native	4%
Asian	9%
Black or African American.	3%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islands	1%
White	68%
Prefer not to respond	22%

Hispanic/Latino (n=3,759)

Yes	10%
No	75%
Prefer not to respond	16%

Gender Identity (n=3,768)

Female	55%
Male	35%
Prefer not to respond	10%

School/Building (n=4,156)

Staples High School	22%
Bedford Middle School	19%
Coleytown Middle School	14%
Long Lots Elementary School	9%
Kings Highway Elementary School	9%
Coleytown Elementary School	9%
Greens Farms Elementary School	8%
Saugatuck Elementary School	8%
Stepping Stones Pre-school	1%
District Office	<1%



Thank you.

CONTACT

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