

# Alternative Schedules Survey

## Results and Analysis

Ridgewood Public Schools

School Year: 2021-2022



# Project Overview

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This year, Ridgewood Public Schools began a discussion with parents/guardians, staff members, students, and community members to determine whether changes should be made to the school day start and end times.

The Alternative Schedules Survey was administered to parents/guardians, staff members, students in grades 6-12, and community members to gather feedback about the potential changes. Results will inform future decisions on the school start and end times of district schools.

K12 *Insight* partnered with district leadership to develop the survey, which addressed the following topics:

- School arrival and dismissal
- Current schedule feedback
- Modified start time concerns
- Impact on personal/professional life

Email invitations with unique survey links were sent to parents/guardians and staff members. Reminders were sent May 10, 12, and 18. Parents, guardians, and community members could also participate via a public link on the district's website. Students in grades 6-12 accessed the survey in school. The survey was translated into Korean and Spanish.

This report summarizes survey results and breaks them down by respondent type.

Results do not reflect random sampling; therefore, they should not be generalized to all Ridgewood parents, guardians, staff, students in grades 6-12, and community members. Rather, results reflect only the perceptions and opinions of survey participants.

Findings for each item in the report exclude participants who did not answer. Not Applicable answers were excluded from calculations. In charts and graphs, data labels less than 5 percent are not shown. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

This report includes the thematic analysis of the open-ended survey question. Responses from the open-ended question were closely analyzed and coded to identify similarities and dissimilarities within the data. Pattern coding was then utilized to identify and categorize similarly coded data to develop the major themes.

# Executive Summary

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- A strong majority (88% and higher) of participating parents/guardians and secondary students said their child/they have an alternate means of transportation to school.
- A perception gap exists between participating parents/guardians and secondary students on items related the current schedule and their time to complete work. For example, 87% of parents/guardians said their student(s) has/have enough time to complete their schoolwork compared to 67% of students. 76% of parents/guardians said their family has enough free time to spend with their student(s) compared to 50% of students.
- A strong majority of high school parents/guardians (87%), staff (86%), and students (84%) said students benefit from period 9.
- When providing feedback on the current start times, participating students showed the most favor in having a later start time. However, a majority (79% to 90%) of participants said the current end time of school is ideal or works well.
  - 60% of students said their school start time is too early and 79% said the end time is ideal or works well.
  - 86% of parents/guardians said the current elementary school start time is ideal or works well for their family. 90% said the same about the current end time of elementary schools.
  - 65% of parents/guardians said the current middle school start time is ideal or works well for their family; 34% said it's too early and would prefer a later start time. 89% said the current end time of middle schools are ideal or work well.
  - High school parents/guardians were split with 50% saying the current high school start time is ideal or works well for their family and 50% saying it's too early and would prefer a later start time. 88% said the current end time of the high school is ideal or works well.
  - 86% of participating staff said their school start time is ideal or works well and 83% said the end time is ideal or works well.
- Half of the participating parents/guardians (50%) said they were uncomfortable or very uncomfortable with a reduction in instructional minutes to accommodate a later start time for secondary students; 23% of staff said the same.

# Executive Summary (Continued)

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- Participating staff members expressed more concern (Concerning or Very Concerning) on items related to modifying start times than parents/guardians and students.
  - 67% of staff said they were concerned with the timing of school athletics or after-school/co-curricular activities; 44% of parents/guardians and 39% of students said the same.
  - 60% of staff said they were concerned with students' ability to take advantage of extra help from teachers compared to 39% of parents/guardians and 19% of students.
- 73% of participating community members and business owners expressed concern with the mental health and well-being of Ridgewood's youth if start times are modified.
- Participating students responded more favorably (Strongly Agree or Agree) than parents/guardians and staff members on items related to a later start time impacting their focus, attention, motivation, energy levels, and absences/tardiness to school. They also responded more favorably (Very Positive Impact or Positive Impact) about the impact of a later start/end time on their personal life.
  - 81% of students said they believed a later start time would positively impact their motivation and creativity compared to 42% of staff and 66% of parents.
  - 91% of students said they believed a later start time would positively impact their energy level compared with 55% of staff and 70% of parents/guardians.
  - 81% of students said a later start time would positively impact their general health and well-being compared with 29% of staff and 56% of parent/guardians.
  - 69% of students said a later start time would positively impact them getting to school on time compared with 18% of staff and 9% of parents/guardians.

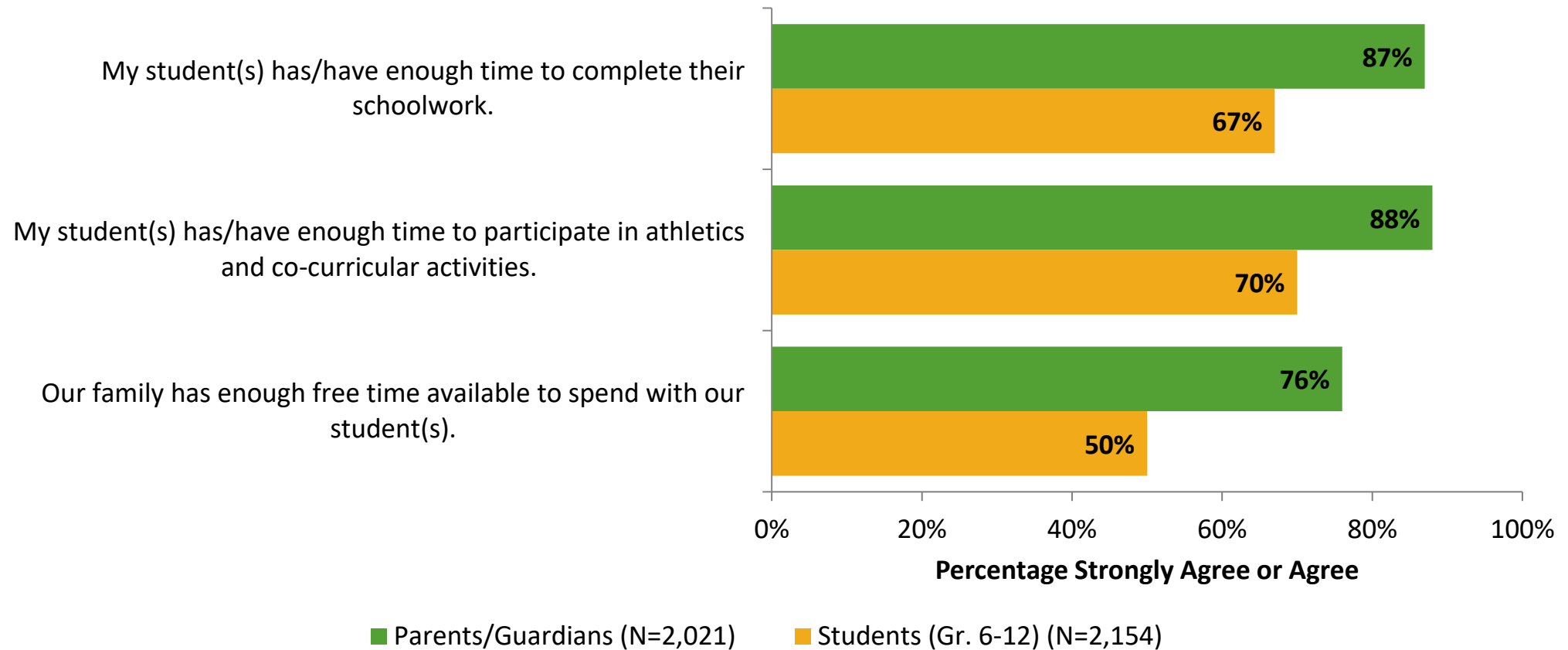
# Participation

Responding Group	Number of Invitations Delivered (NMax)	Number of Responses (N)	Response Rate (%)	Public-access Link Responses	Total Responses
Parents/Guardians and Community Members	6,294	1,292	—	1,107	2,399
Staff	834	373	45%	—	373
Students (Gr. 6-12)	3,115	2,157	69%	—	2,157

Participation by Language (Parent/Guardian and Community Members)	Total Responses
English	2,327
Korean	66
Spanish	6

# Current Schedule: Comparison by Respondent Type

Based on the current schedule, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements for your family overall?

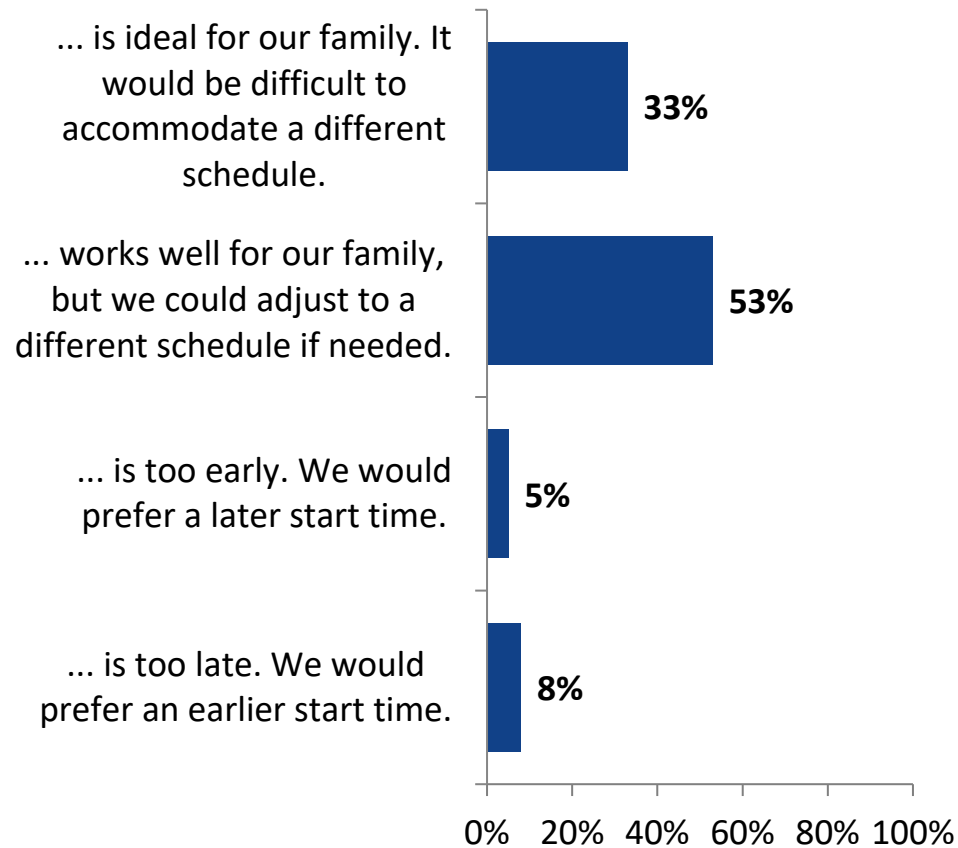


Answer options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Not Applicable (N/A was not an answer option for students)

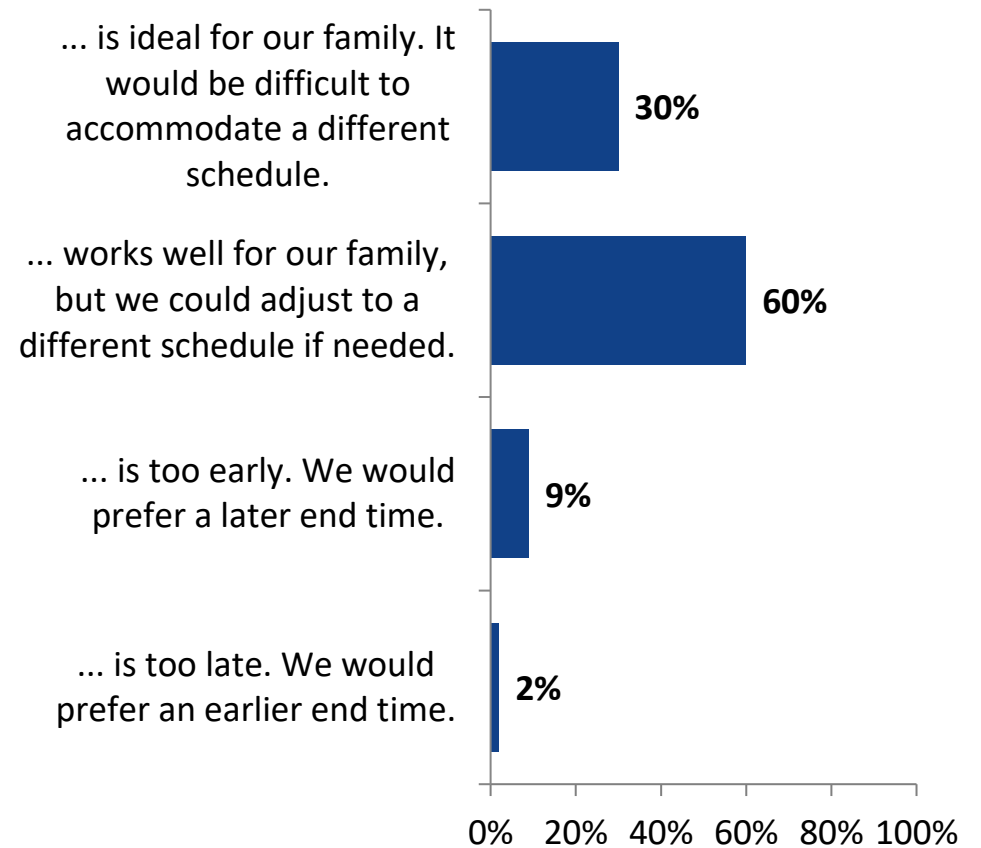
Notes: Only parents/guardians and students answered these questions. Wording varied slightly between participant groups. Wording displayed is from the parent/guardian survey. Not Applicable responses have been excluded from calculations.

# Current Elementary School Start/End Time Feedback

The current elementary school start time for our student(s)... (N=980)



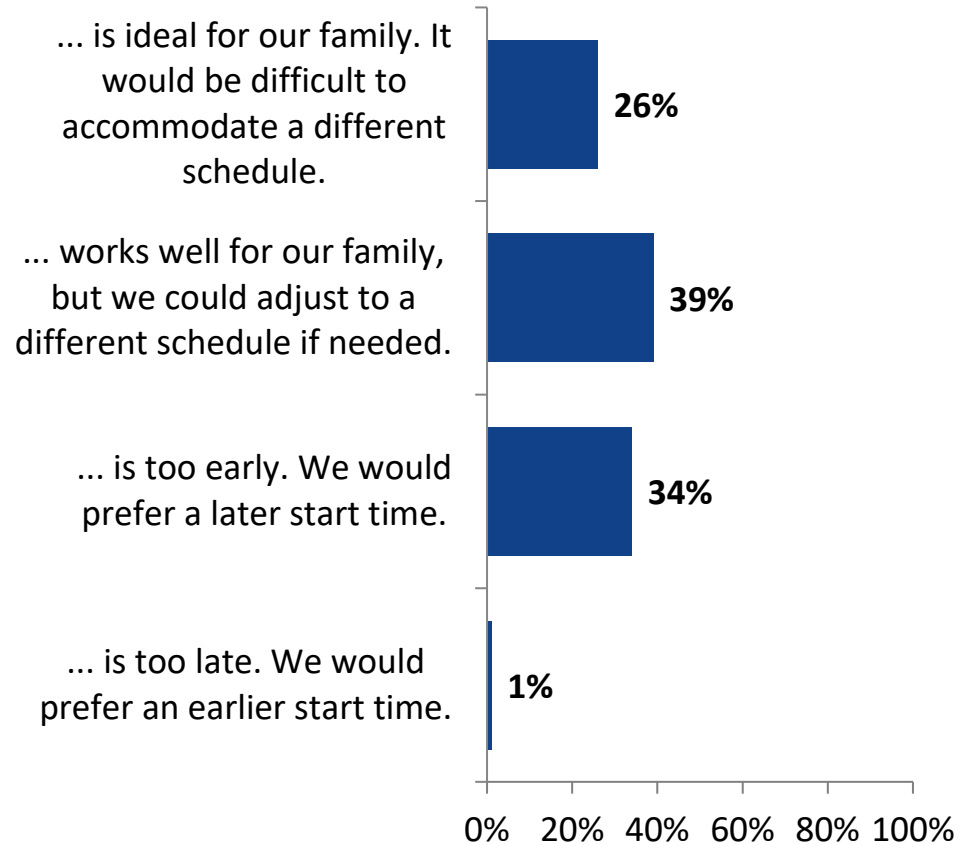
The current elementary school end time for our student(s)... (N=981)



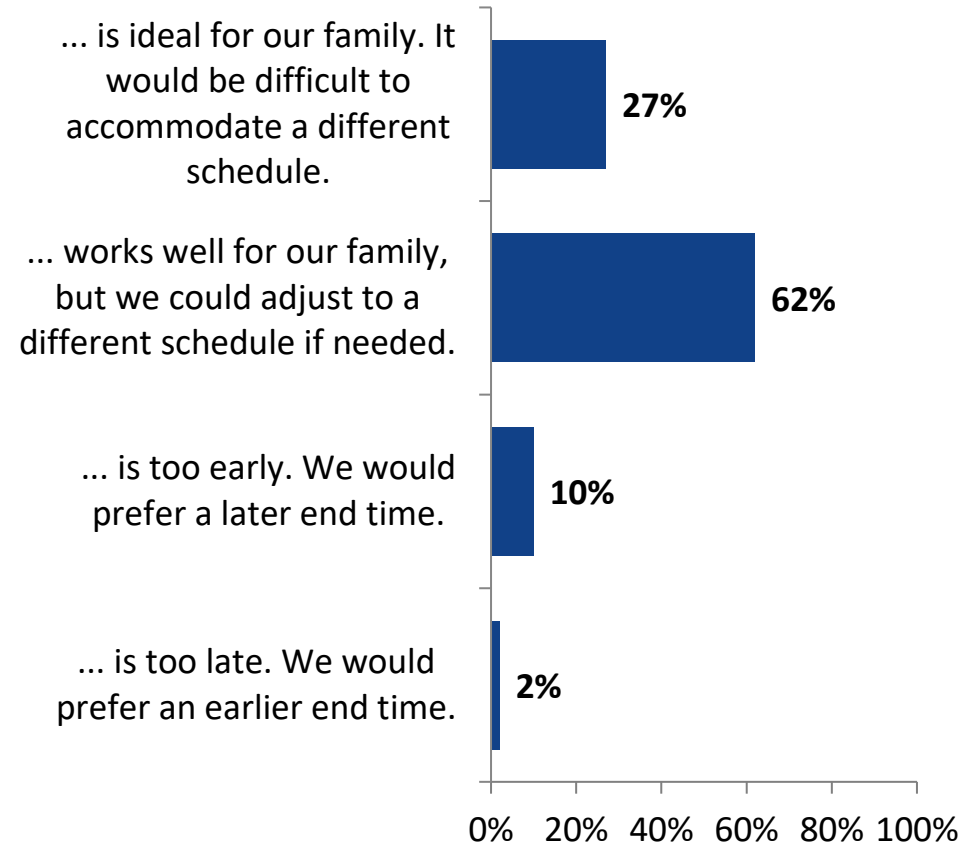
7 Note: Only parents/guardians with elementary school students answered these questions.

# Current Middle School Start/End Time Feedback

The current middle school start time for our student(s)... (N=944)



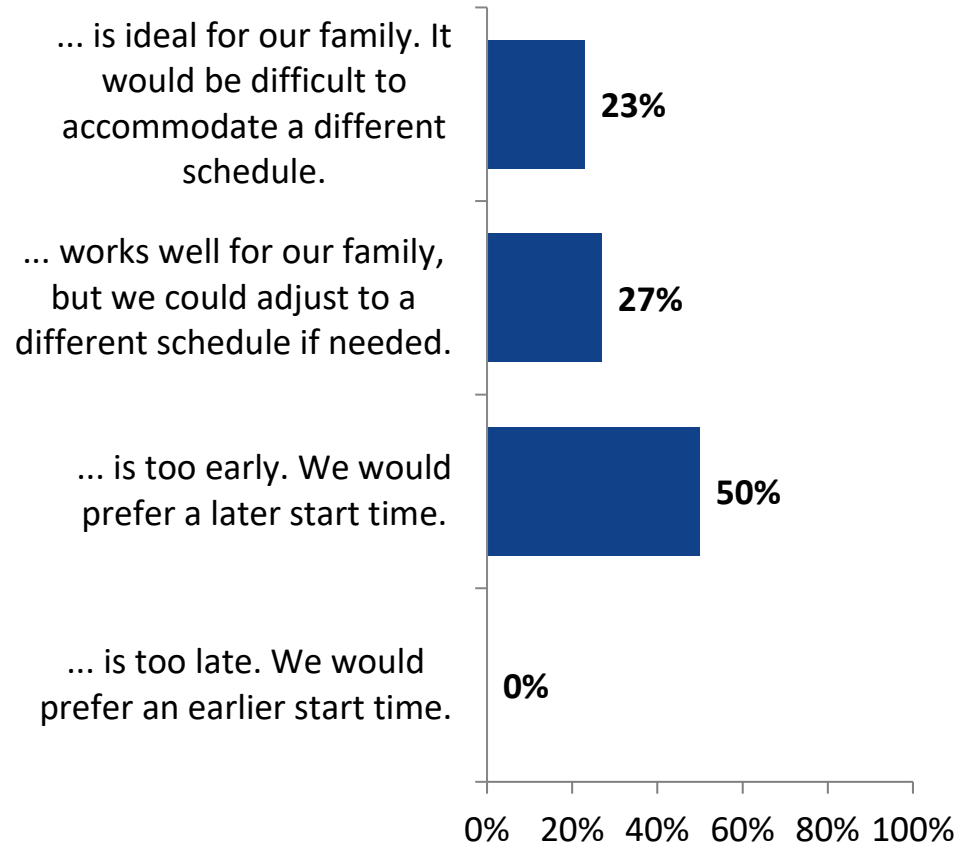
The current middle school end time for our student(s)... (N=944)



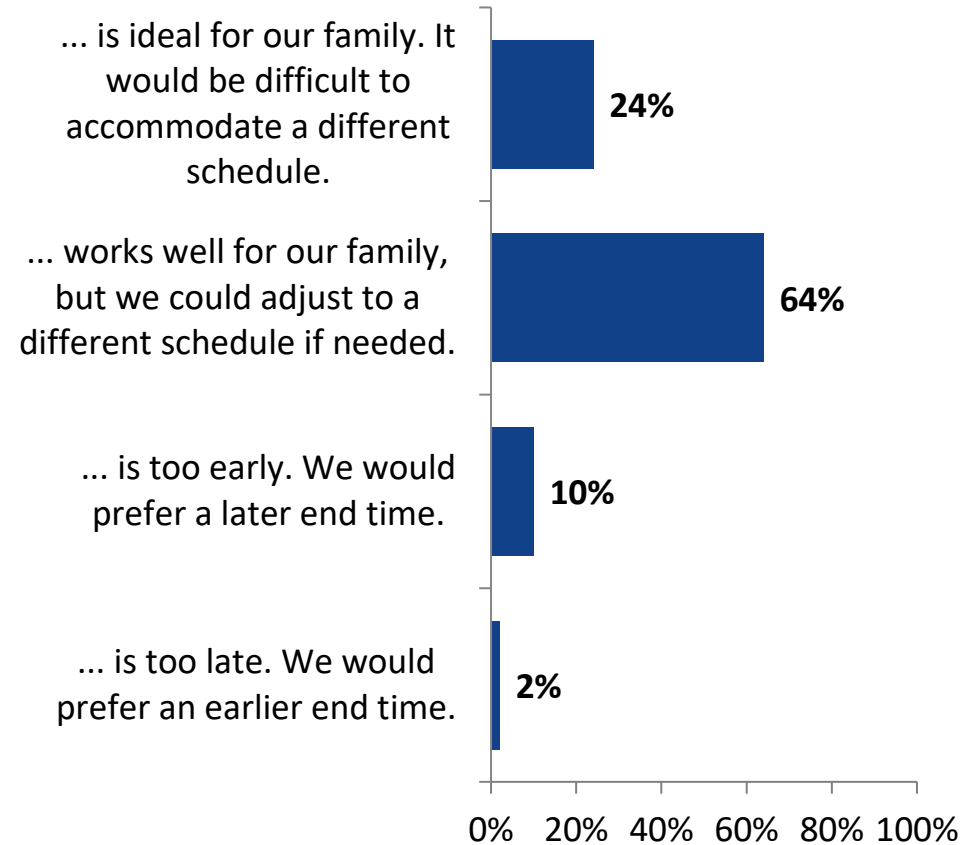


# Current High School Start/End Time Feedback

The current high school start time for our student(s)... (N=1,058)

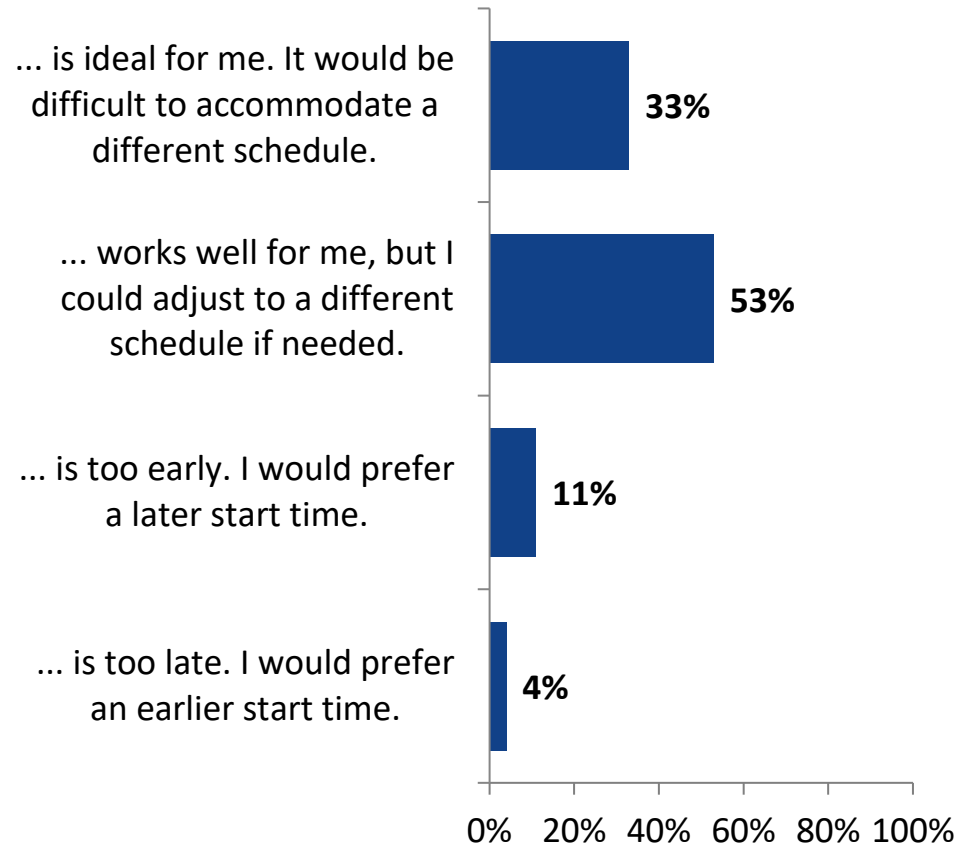


The current high school end time for our student(s)... (N=1,058)

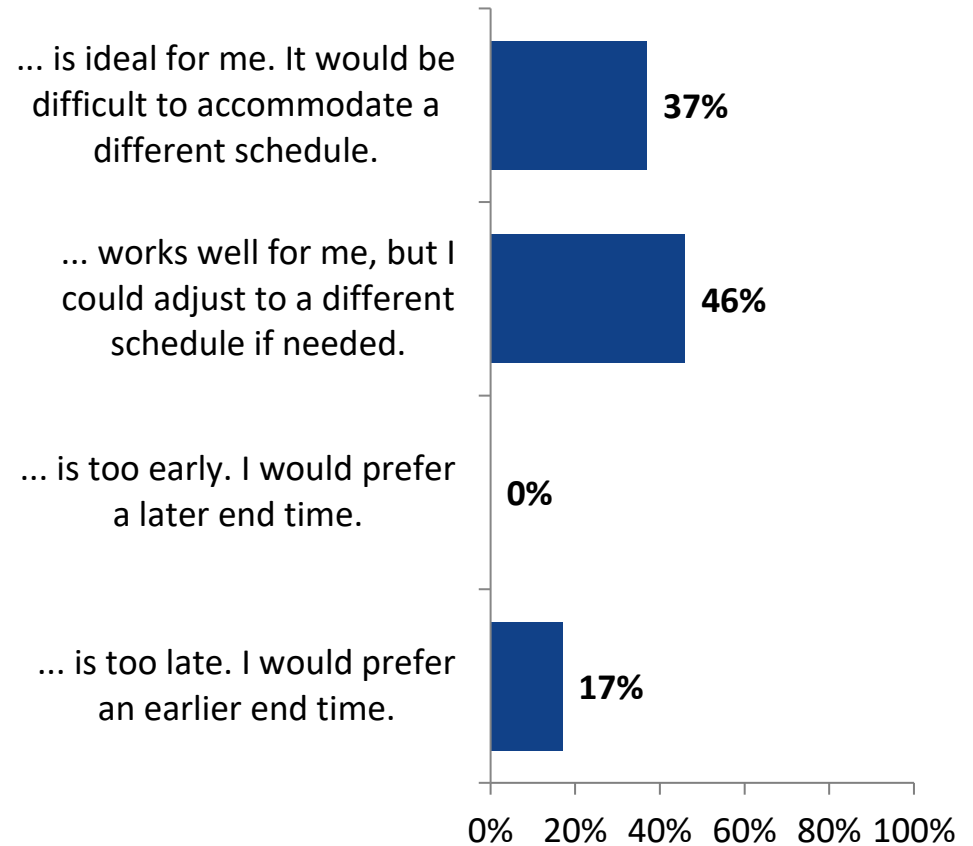


# Current Start Time Feedback

The current start time of my school... (N=369)

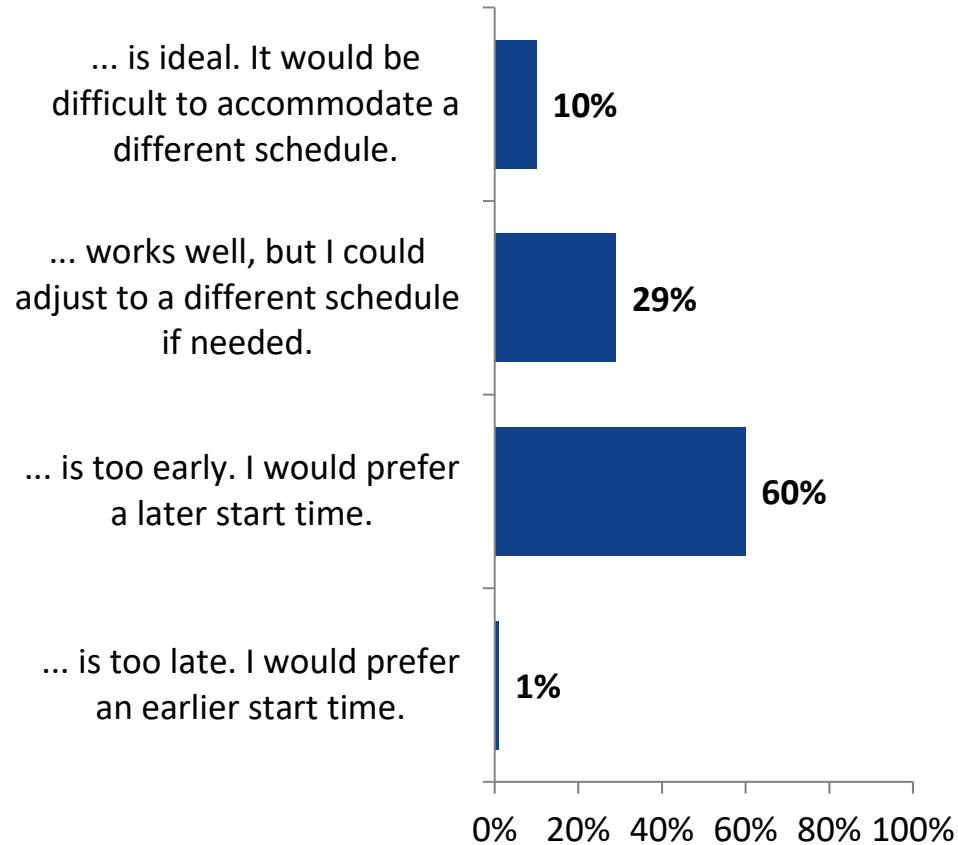


The current end time of my school... (N=364)

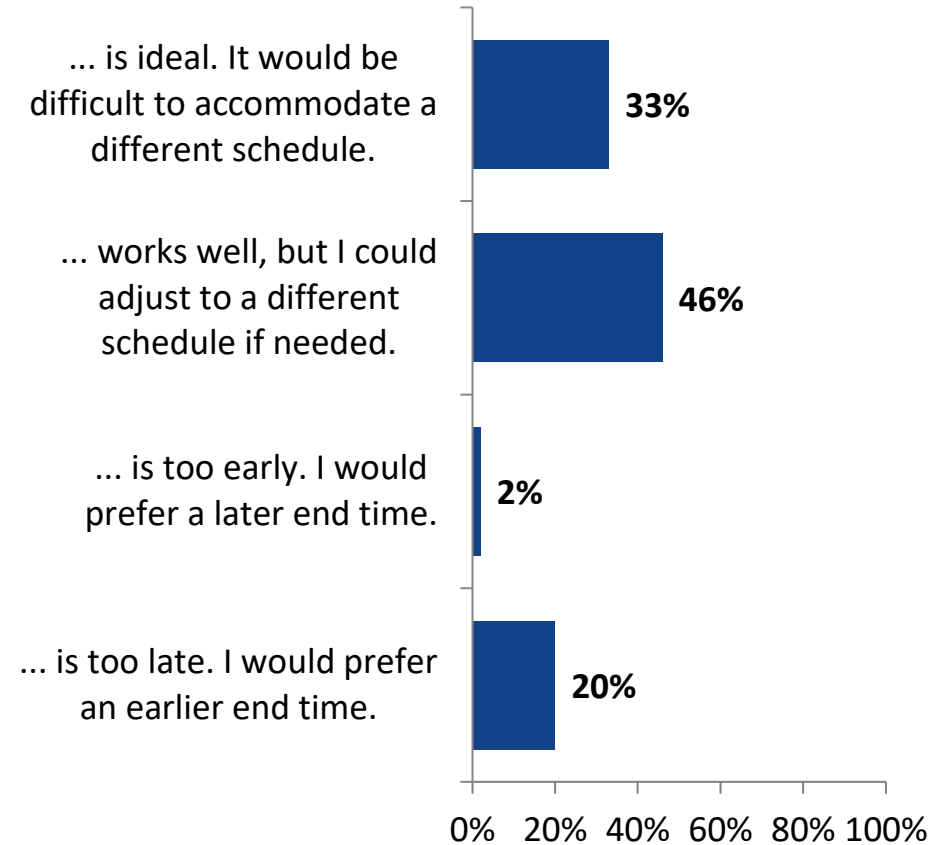


# Current School Start/End Time Feedback

The current start time of my school... (N=2,152)

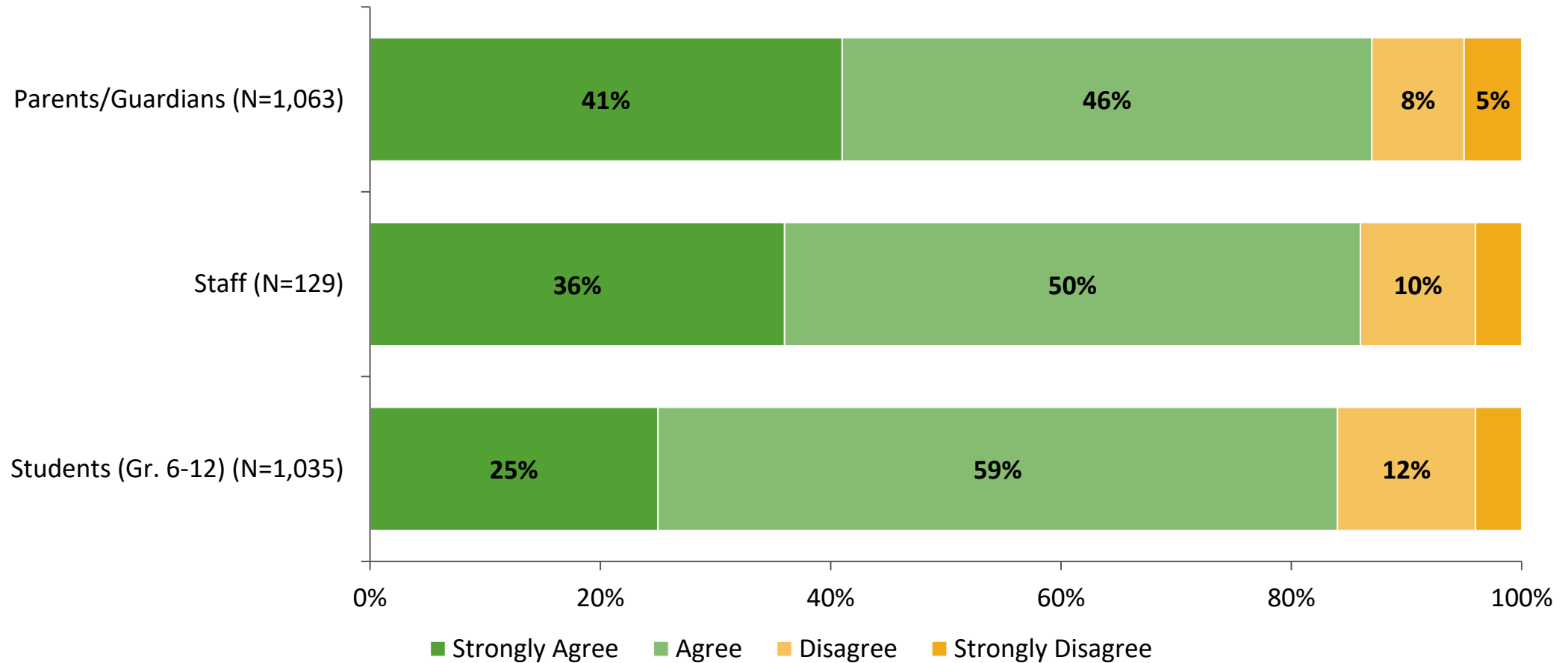


The current end time of my school... (N=2,153)



# Period 9 Feedback: Comparison by Respondent Type

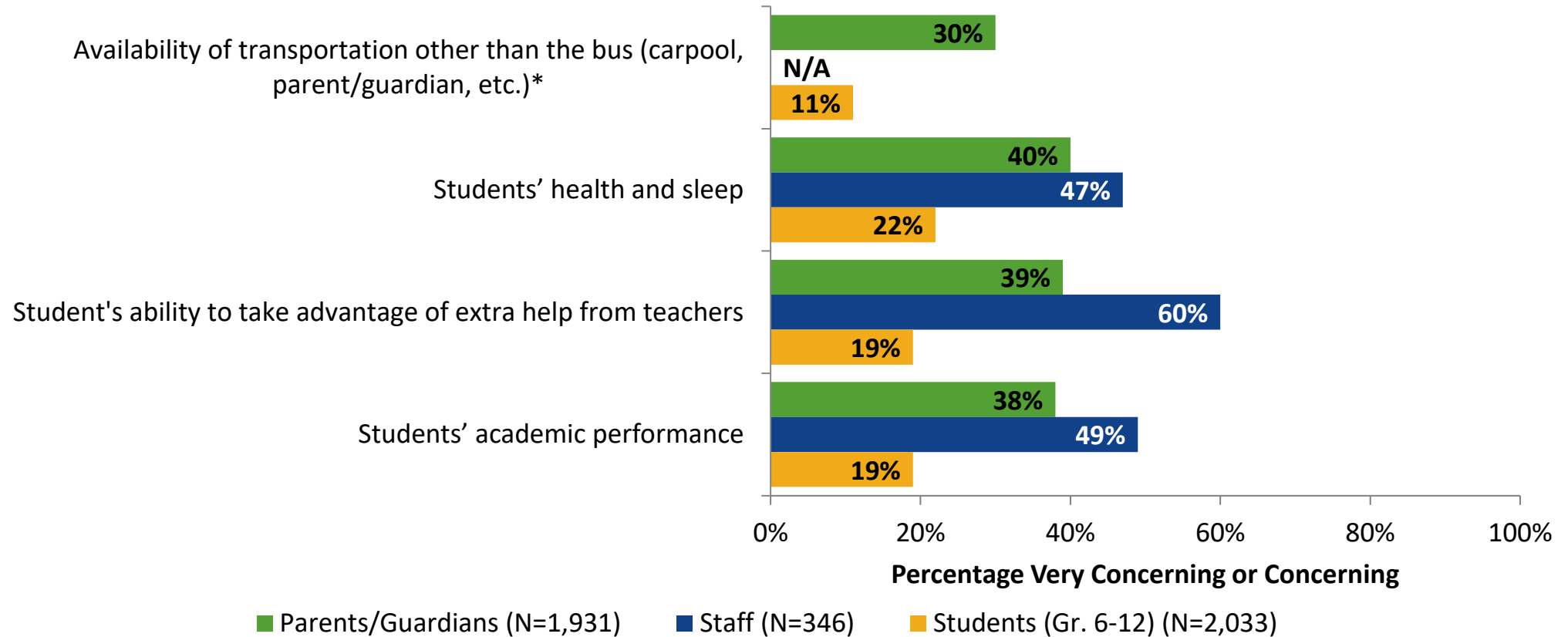
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement? My high school student(s) benefit(s) from period 9.



Notes: Only participants associated with Ridgewood High School answered this question. Not Applicable responses have been excluded from calculations.

# Modified Start Times: Comparison by Respondent Type

To what extent are the following factors a concern for you if school start and end times are modified?

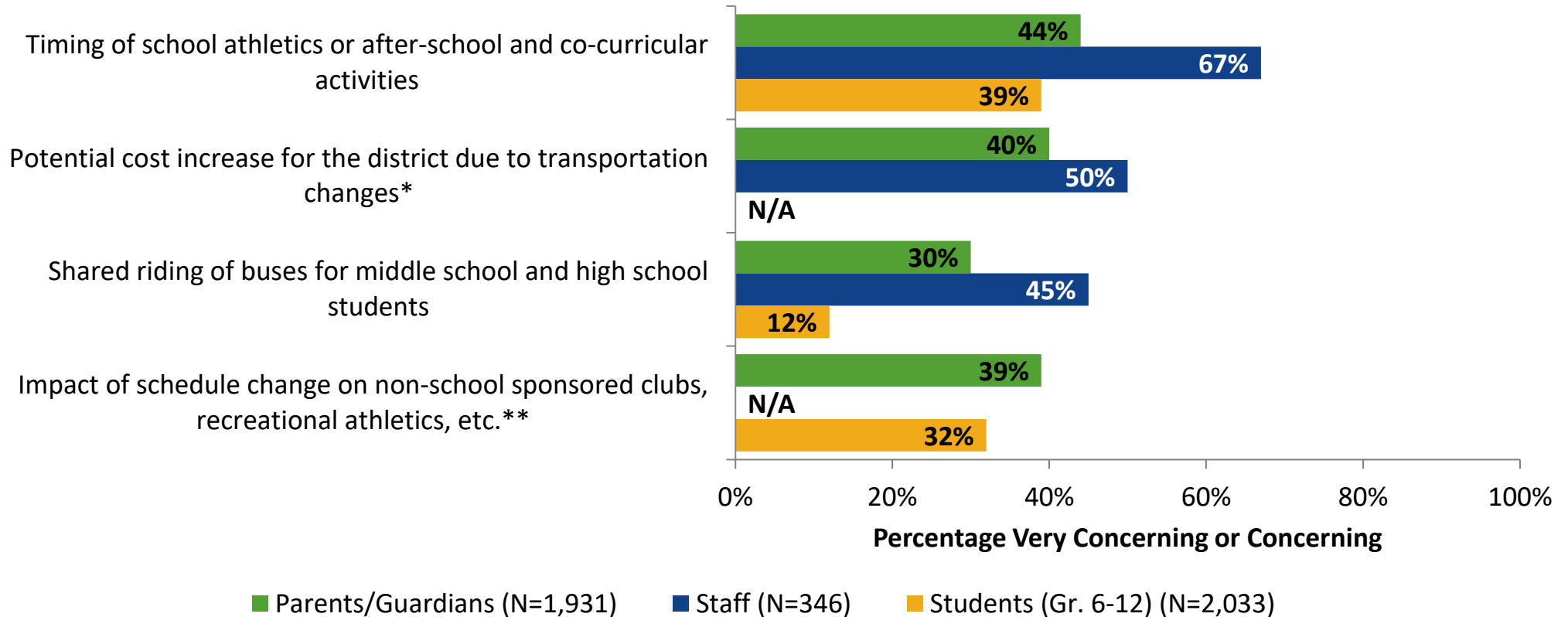


Answer options: Not Concerning At All, Somewhat Concerning, Concerning, Very Concerning, Not Applicable

Notes: N/A indicates a respondent group did not answer that question. Wording varied slightly between participant groups. Wording displayed is from the parent/guardian survey. Not Applicable responses have been excluded from calculations.

# Modified Start Times: Comparison by Respondent Type (Continued)

To what extent are the following factors a concern for you if school start and end times are modified?

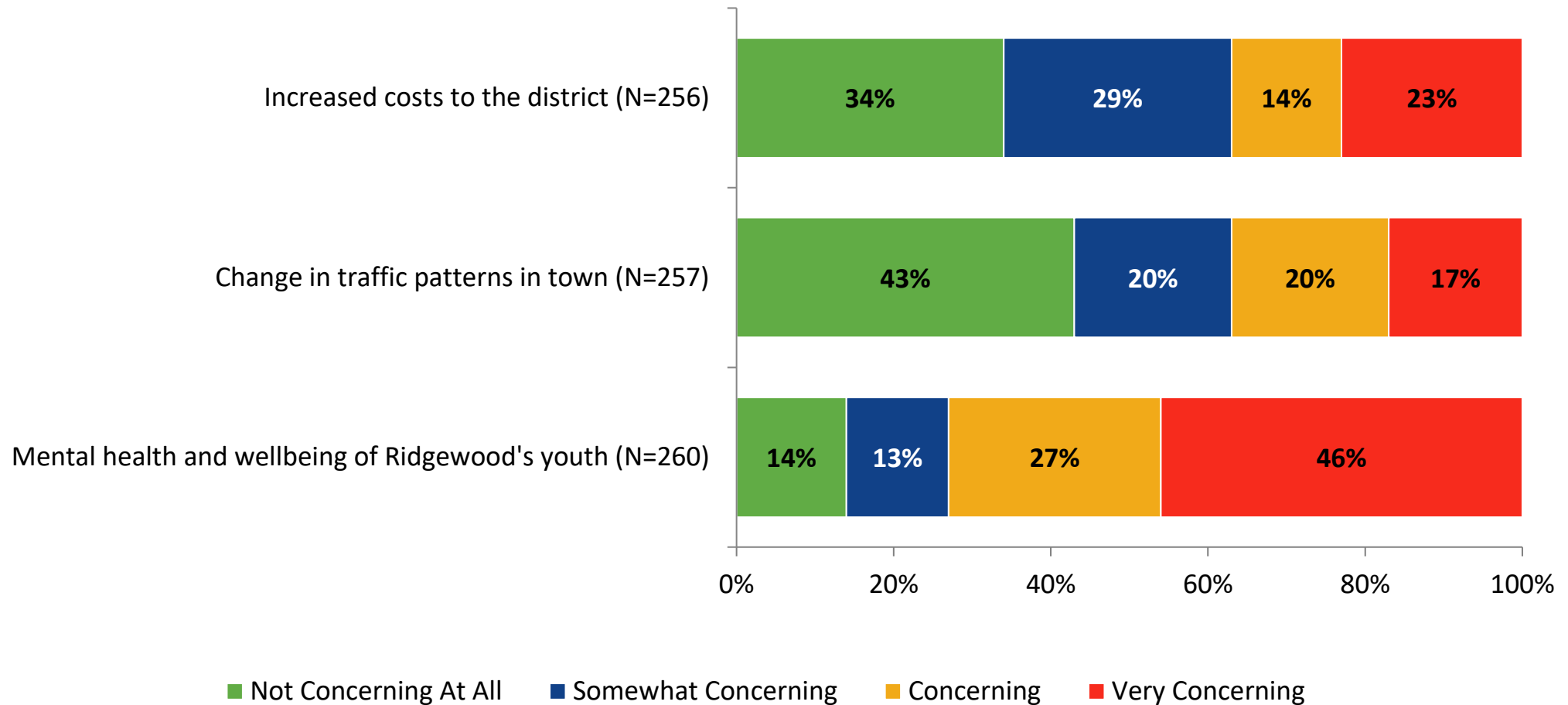


Answer options: Not Concerning At All, Somewhat Concerning, Concerning, Very Concerning, Not Applicable

Notes: N/A indicates a respondent group did not answer that question. Wording varied slightly between participant groups. Wording displayed is from the parent/guardian survey. Not Applicable responses have been excluded from calculations.

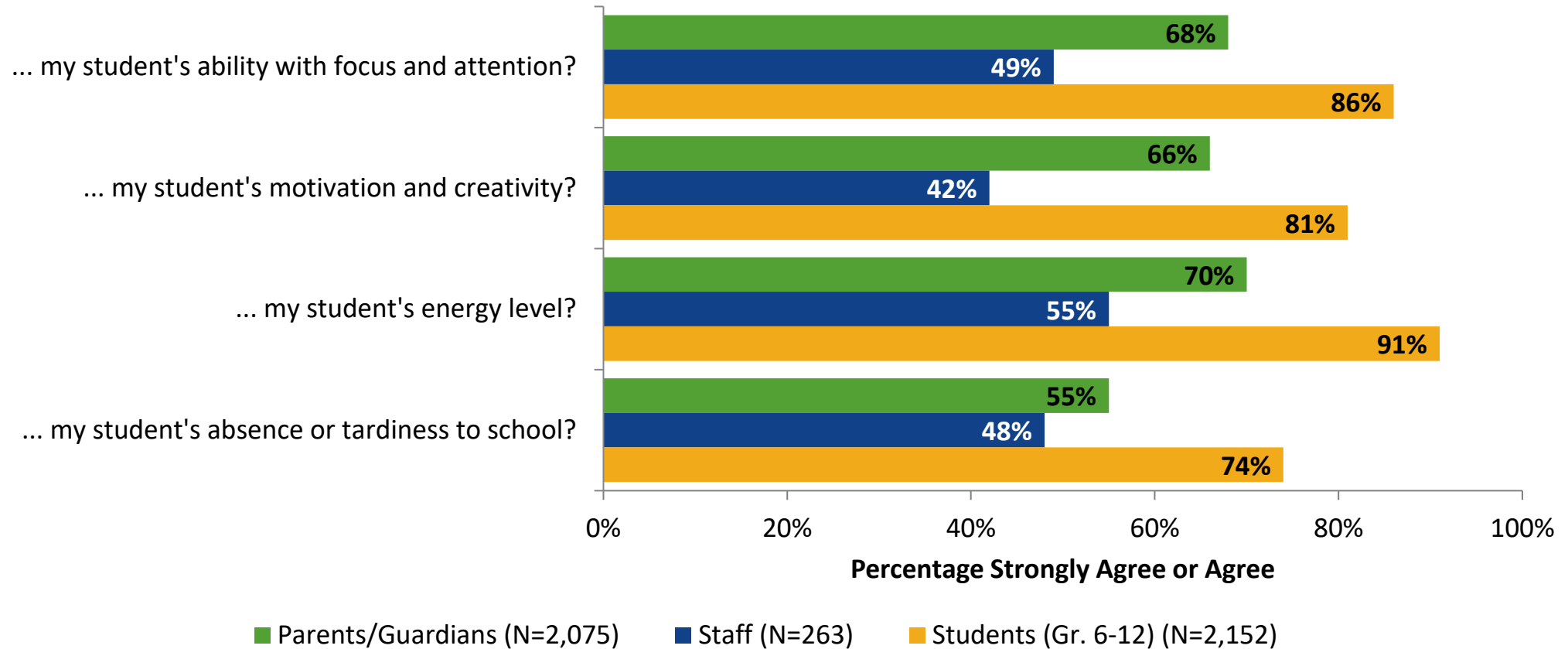
# Modified Start Time Concerns

To what extent are the following factors a concern for you if school start and end times are modified?



# Positive Impact: Comparison by Respondent Type

Overall, do you believe a later start time for grades 6-12 would positively impact...



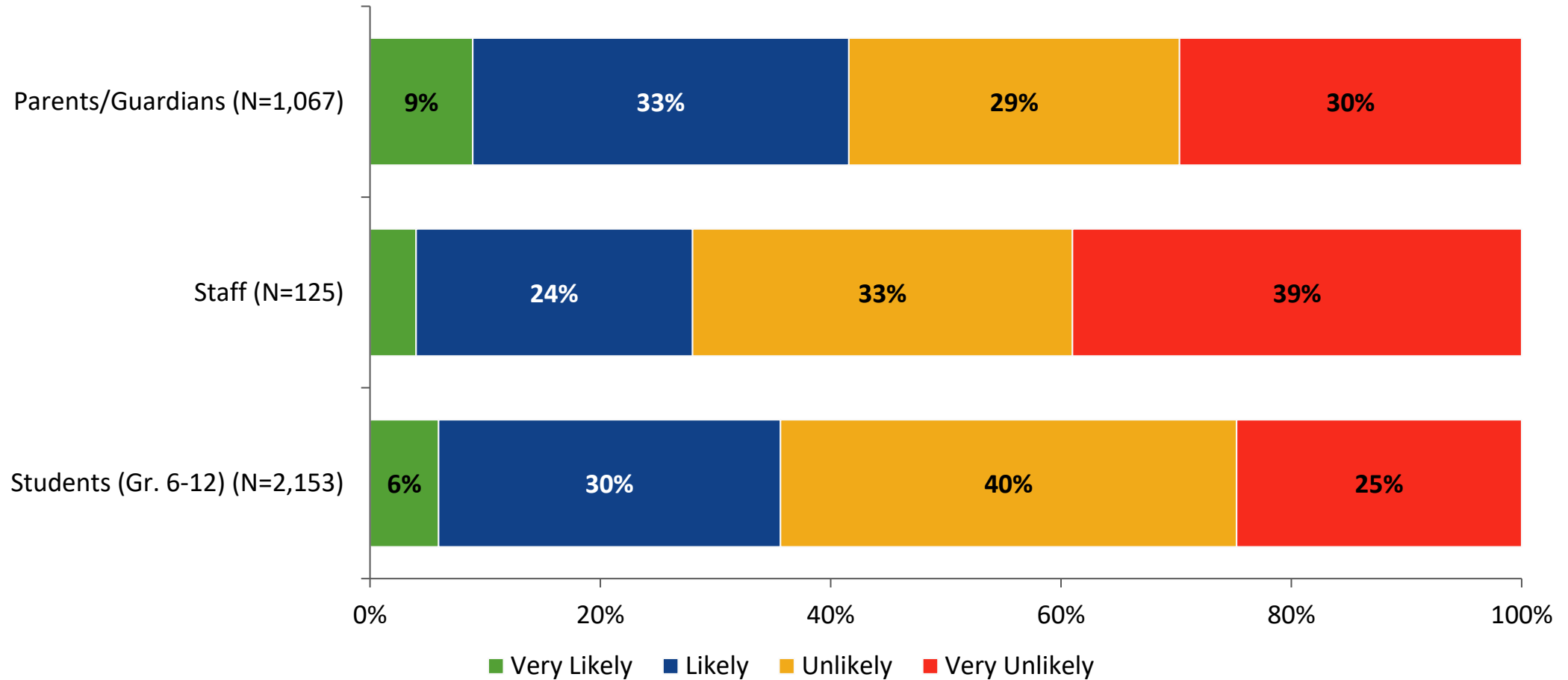
Answer options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Notes: Wording varied slightly between participant groups. Wording displayed is from the parent/guardian survey. Not Applicable responses have been excluded from calculations.



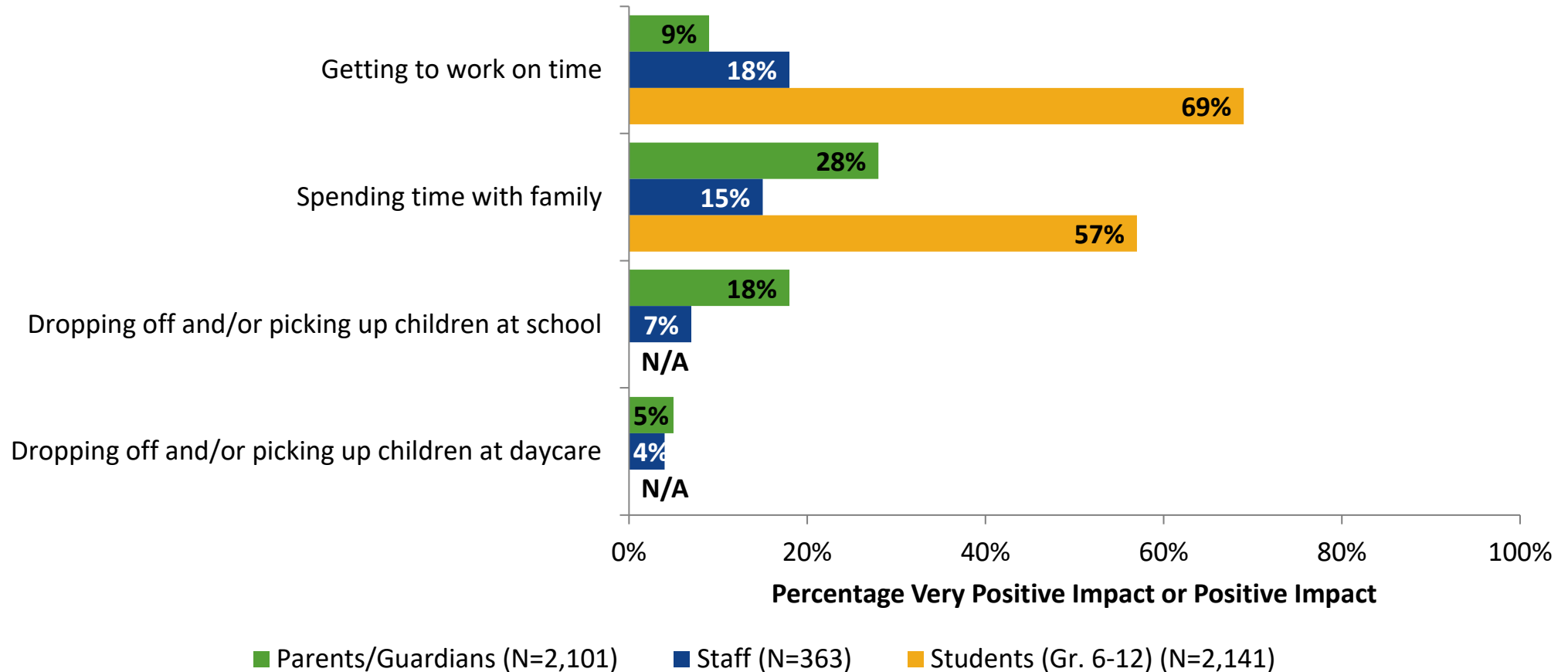
# Extra Help Sessions: Comparison by Respondent Type

How likely is it that your high school student(s) would take advantage of extra help sessions if offered in the morning before the start of school?



# Personal/Professional Impact: Comparison by Respondent Type

What impact would a change to the school start and/or end times have on the following aspects of your personal and professional life?

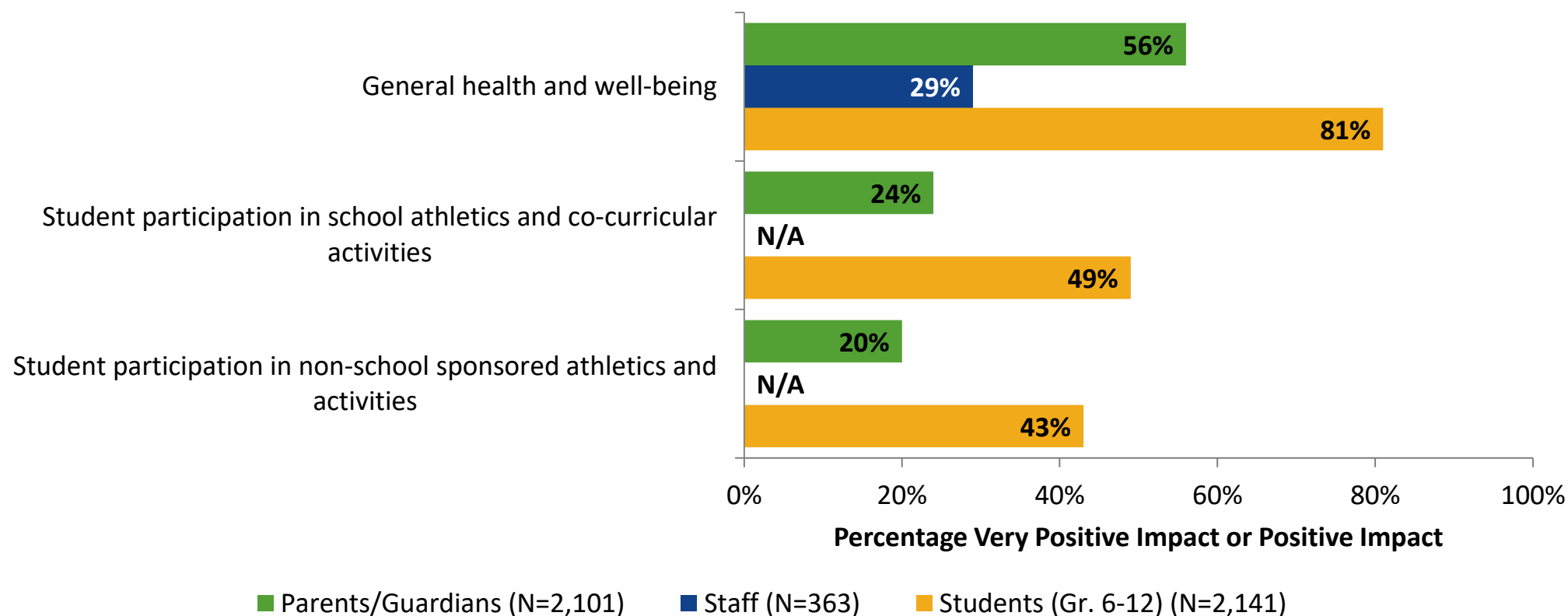


Answer options: Very Positive Impact, Positive Impact, Negative Impact, Very Negative Impact, No Impact

Notes: N/A indicates a respondent group did not have that answer option. Wording varied slightly between participant groups. Wording displayed is from the parent/guardian survey.

# Personal/Professional Impact: Comparison by Respondent Type (Continued)

What impact would a change to the school start and/or end times have on the following aspects of your personal and professional life?

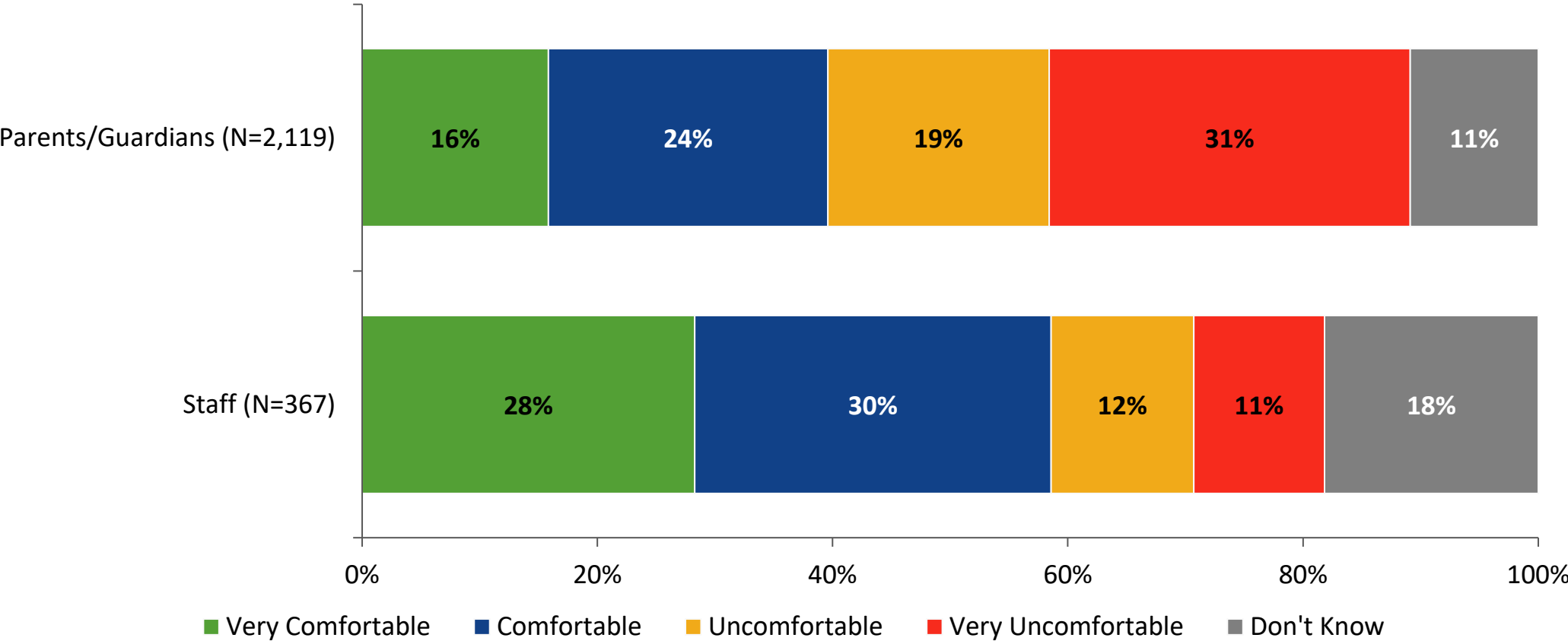


Answer options: Very Positive Impact, Positive Impact, Negative Impact, Very Negative Impact, No Impact

Note: N/A indicates a respondent group did not have that answer option. Wording varied slightly between participant groups. Wording displayed is from the parent/guardian survey.

# Comfort With Change in Instructional Minutes: Comparison by Respondent Type

What is your comfort level with reducing instructional time in the classroom to accommodate a later start at the 6-12 level without delaying end times by the same number of minutes?



Note: Only parent/guardians and staff members answered this question.

## Thematic Analysis — Parents/Guardians

Is there additional information that you need, or is there anything else you would like to share with the Ridgewood Public Schools related to school start and end times? (N=778)

**Parent responsibility.** Participating parents/guardians stated students sleep duration was not the responsibility of the school, but rather their parents. They said parents need to limit their children’s technology usage and instill good sleeping habits for their children, such as going to bed early. They also said that without changes in how parents supervise their children’s sleeping habits, pushing the school start time back would only lead to later bedtimes, and would not affect the amount of sleep children were getting.

**Decisions based on student health and well-being.** Participating parents/guardians advocated for later start times in order to improve student mental and physical health. Responses included references to research and data citing the benefits of longer sleep durations and the importance of later start times for adolescent students. Additionally, parents/guardians stated their children currently had to stay awake later in the evening in order to finish their homework. They said the later start time would allow their children to get sufficient sleep and be more mentally and physically healthy.

**Preparation for the real world.** Parents/guardians said moving the start times would poorly prepare students for their future careers, higher education, and the “real world.” They said no other setting would alter start times to encourage their personal well-being and expressed concern that doing so in school would impede their ability to prepare themselves for their future lives.

**Prioritization of district issues.** Participating parents/guardians described the initiative to alter start times as a waste of resources with little measurable impact on students. They suggested the district devote resources to items of higher priority and impact.

## Thematic Analysis — Parents/Guardians (Continued)

Is there additional information that you need, or is there anything else you would like to share with the Ridgewood Public Schools related to school start and end times? (N=778)

**Stipulations for support.** Participating parents/guardians expressed support for changing start times, provided there was no block scheduling, longer classes, or reduction of instructional time. They also said that moving 9<sup>th</sup> period to the morning defeated the purpose of the later start times, and said if start times were moved, they should be moved for all students rather than just those that did not need 9<sup>th</sup> period.

**More information needed.** Participating parents/guardians said they were not able to make an informed decision about whether they supported a change in start times without more information about the specific times. They stated earlier start times would impact their schedules differently than later start times, and a change of thirty minutes would impact their schedules differently than a change of an hour. They requested more information before a decision was made.

**Challenges from family structures.** Participating parents/guardians said single-parent households and those with children in multiple schools would be negatively impacted by later start times. They stated they would have to send their children to before-school care instead of sending them directly to school; the change in start time would therefore impact where the children went rather than how late they were able to sleep.

## Thematic Analysis — Staff

Is there additional information that you need, or is there anything else you would like to share with the Ridgewood Public Schools related to school start and end times? (N=127)

**Concern for personal time.** Participating staff members said they were concerned about the reduction of time they would have for their personal lives and families as a result of later school end times. They stated changes to traffic patterns would minimize any impact the later start time would have on their morning routine, and they would be hesitant to supervise after-school clubs and activities because of the limited time they would have for their personal lives and families.

**Minimal impact.** Participating staff members referred to both published and anecdotal data supporting the minimal impact later start times would have on students' sleep. They stated students altered their sleep schedules to match the later start times, preferring to stay up later than they do currently when given the opportunity to attend school later in the morning.

**Against reducing instructional time and block classes.** Participating staff members stated they were only willing to consider changing start and end times if they were not partnered with a reduction of instructional time or the installation of block classes that are over 50 minutes in length. They said the shorter classes and current instructional time were critical to student learning, which they felt was a higher priority than other factors impacted by school start and end times. Some mentioned that if any time needed to be reduced, it needed to be from athletics rather than academics.

**Concern for athletics.** Participating staff members said they were concerned about how changing start and end times would impact student athletes, as these students compete with teams from other schools who will have maintained earlier start and end times.

**Preference for state mandate.** Participating staff members recommended the district wait until the state mandate was enacted to delay school start times in order to change the start and end times. They stated making the change with the rest of the state's districts would allow any multi-district collaborations, including athletics, to adapt when needed.

## Thematic Analysis — Students

Is there additional information that you need, or is there anything else you would like to share with the Ridgewood Public Schools related to school start and end times? (N=1,036)

**Later start times, same end times.** Participating students said they wanted school start times moved to a later time but wanted end times to remain the same. They cited a need for more sleep, opportunities to eat breakfast, greater ability to pay attention in class, and fewer tardies as reasons to delay start times. They also stated ending the school day at the same time would enable them to maintain their current habits related to homework, spending time with family and friends, and after-school athletics and activities.

**Less homework would have greater impact.** Participating students stated they felt changing the start and end times of the school day would not make an impact on their sleep without a reduction of homework. They identified homework as the reason they stay up late and do not get enough sleep and said less homework would allow them to go to bed sooner. They also said it would allow them to get more sleep without changing school start times.

**Against block classes.** Participating students stated they were not in favor of increasing class times to 90 minutes, saying the 80-minute classes were difficult to maintain focus.





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