

# Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA Parent Survey Results

April 4, 2013

# Disclaimer

This survey was conducted as an informal, Web-based poll for the convenience of the Survey Team and the respondents. We believe the results to be a meaningful, if unscientific, representation of the views of some Lexington families of students with special needs. The response data in the survey do not reflect or constitute the opinions, endorsement, or position of either the Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA or the Lexington Public Schools. The opinions and responses presented are solely those of the survey respondents. Because the data constitute opinions, different interpretations are possible. The Lexington SEPAC/SEPTA does not assume responsibility for the readers' interpretation of, or reaction to, the survey or this presentation.

# April 4 SEPAC Meeting Agenda

- Introductions/Meeting Guidelines
- Survey Results & Recommendations
- Questions and Feedback

# April 4 SEPAC Meeting Guidelines

- Questions are welcome throughout, but we will need to limit discussion to ensure that we cover all the survey results.
- Additional time is allotted for questions and feedback at the end.
- Please do not share details regarding your child during the open meeting due to confidentiality considerations.

# Background

- The SEPAC/SEPTA Parent survey was discussed as part of the September 20, 2012 SEPAC and School Committee meetings which addressed concerns regarding the behavioral intervention strategies used with students who have special needs.
- Per these discussions, the SEPAC/SEPTA leadership team agreed to partner with the School Committee and LPS Administration to launch a parent survey.
- The SEPAC/SEPTA launched an online survey from November 13, 2012 to November 27, 2012.
- Prospective respondents were notified of the survey via the LPS Global Connect email system (which goes out to all parents with children in LPS), various Lexington LISTSERV® email lists, the SEPAC Web site, and via flyers posted in Lexington.
- Survey results have been extensively shared with and reviewed by LPS staff and administration as well as members of the School Committee.

# Goals

- The survey sought to better understand parent satisfaction with:
  - Special Education service delivery
  - Communication
  - Parent partnership efforts
  - Use of behavioral intervention strategies
- Target respondents included parents of children on an IEP or 504 Plan in Lexington Public Schools (currently or within the last two years), or parents of children who had been evaluated but were found ineligible for special education services.
- The goal of the survey results was to help advise the Lexington Public Schools on special education services and resource planning, and to better focus SEPAC/SEPTA efforts.

# Survey Methodology

- The SEPAC/SEPTA Survey Team reviewed comparable surveys from surrounding towns, (such as Newton and Belmont), and reviewed the questions and results from the Lexington SEPAC March 2012 Parent Survey.
- In order to develop survey questions, the SEPAC/SEPTA Survey Team held a focus group with approximately 10 parents of children with special needs in LPS to understand common questions and concerns.
- The Survey Team reviewed the survey questions and incorporated feedback from:
  - Linda Chase (LPS Director of Student Services)
  - Diane Pelletier (LPS Interim Director of Special Education)
  - Alessandro Alessandrini (SEPAC/SEPTA School Committee liaison)

# Survey Notes

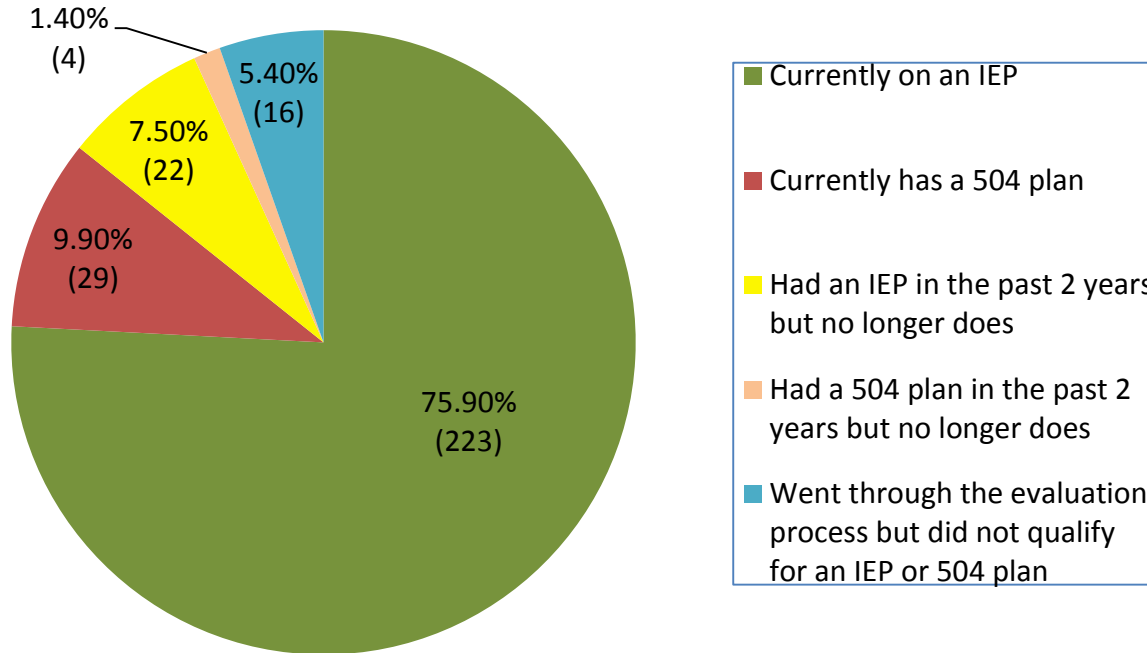
- The survey was launched online via SurveyMonkey®.
- Respondents were not asked to identify themselves to access the survey, but were asked to provide demographic information to help provide meaningful context.
- The SEPAC/SEPTA Survey Team made their best efforts to keep all responses, including comments, anonymous.



# Survey Response Rate and Demographics

# Response Rate

## Respondents by IEP/504 Plan Status



### Response Rate--Parents of Children currently on an IEP:

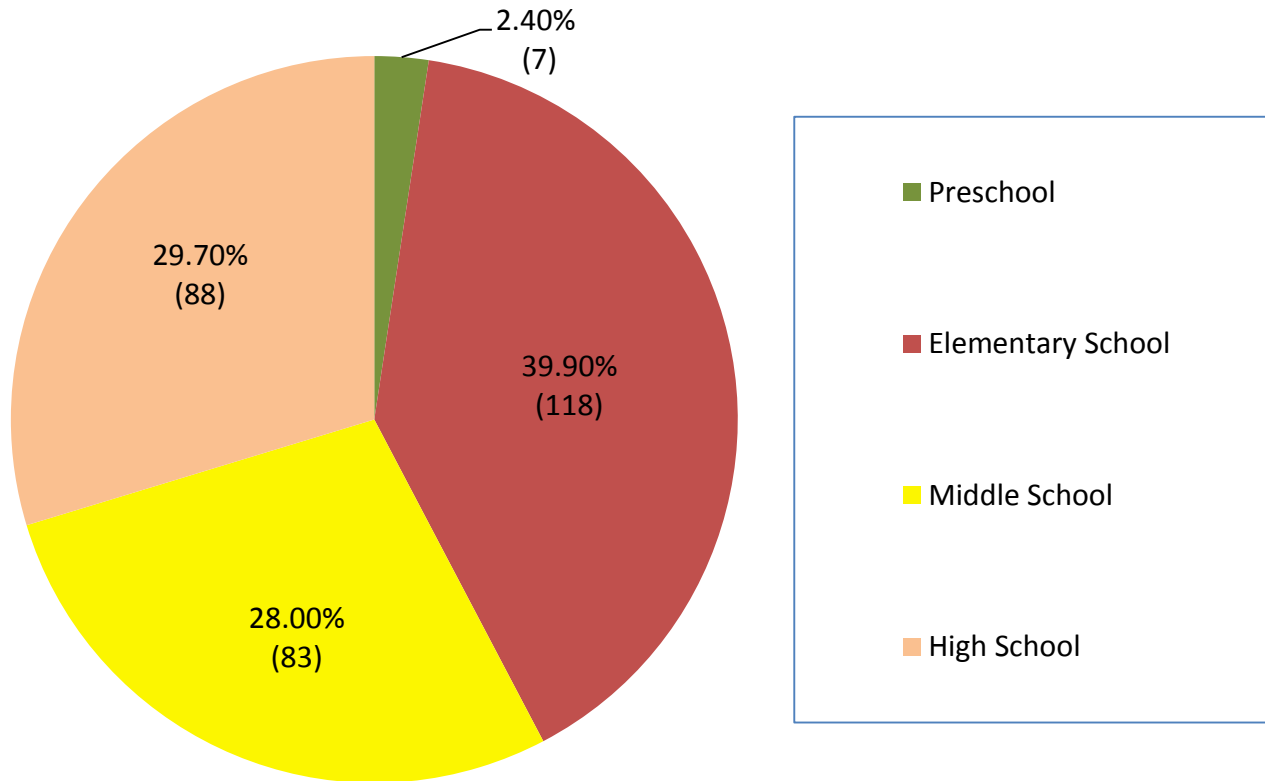
- 1007 students currently on an IEP (December 2012)
- 223 respondents with children currently on an IEP
- **Response rate: 22%**

### Response Rate--Parents of Children currently on a 504 Plan:

- 105 students currently on a 504 Plan (February 2013)
- 29 respondents with children currently on a 504 Plan
- **Response rate: 27%**

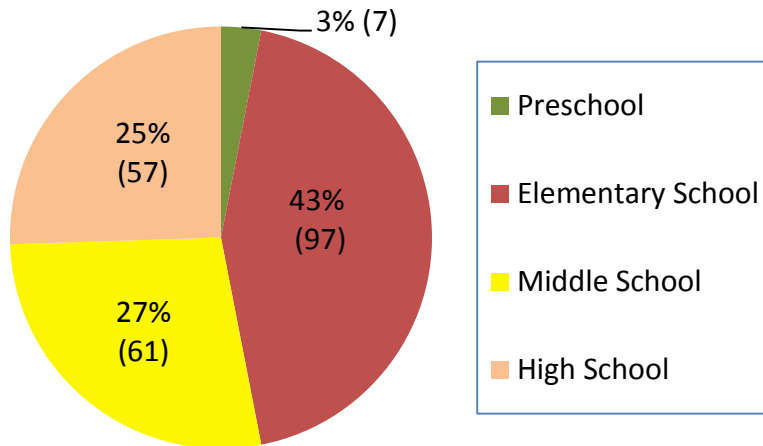
# Demographics

## Respondents by School Level

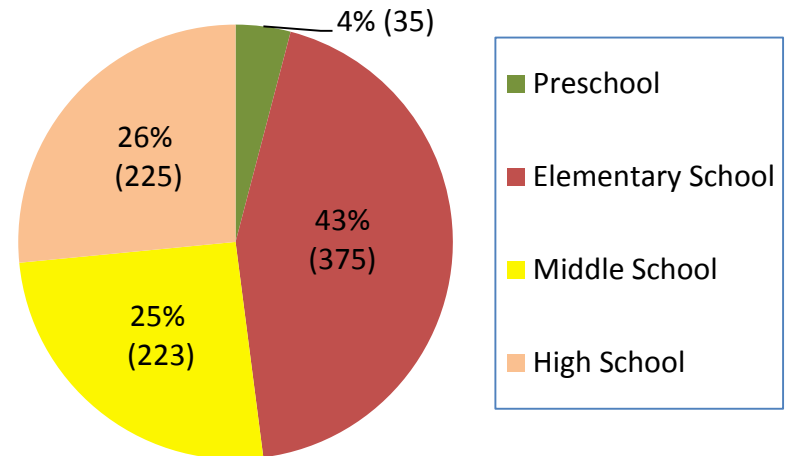


# Demographics

Survey Respondents by School Level—Students on IEPs



Lexington Actuals by School Level—Students on IEPs

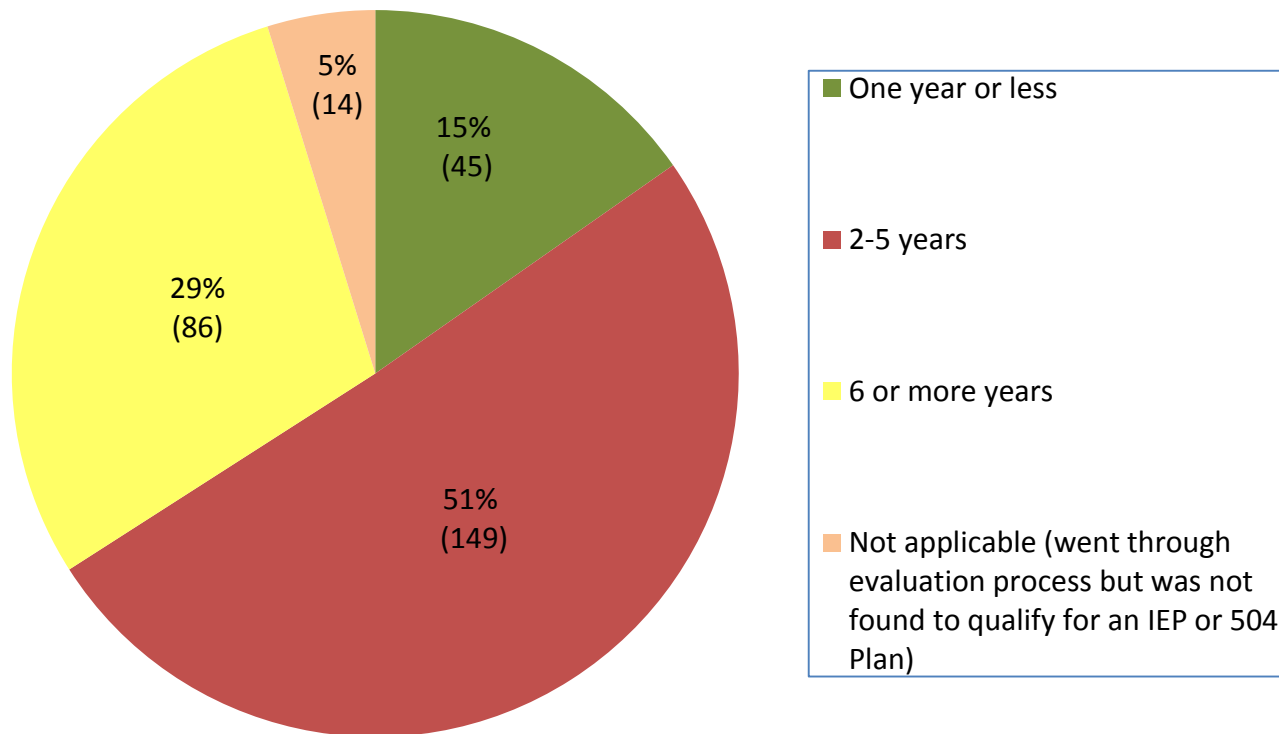


## Response Rates of Students on IEPs by School Level

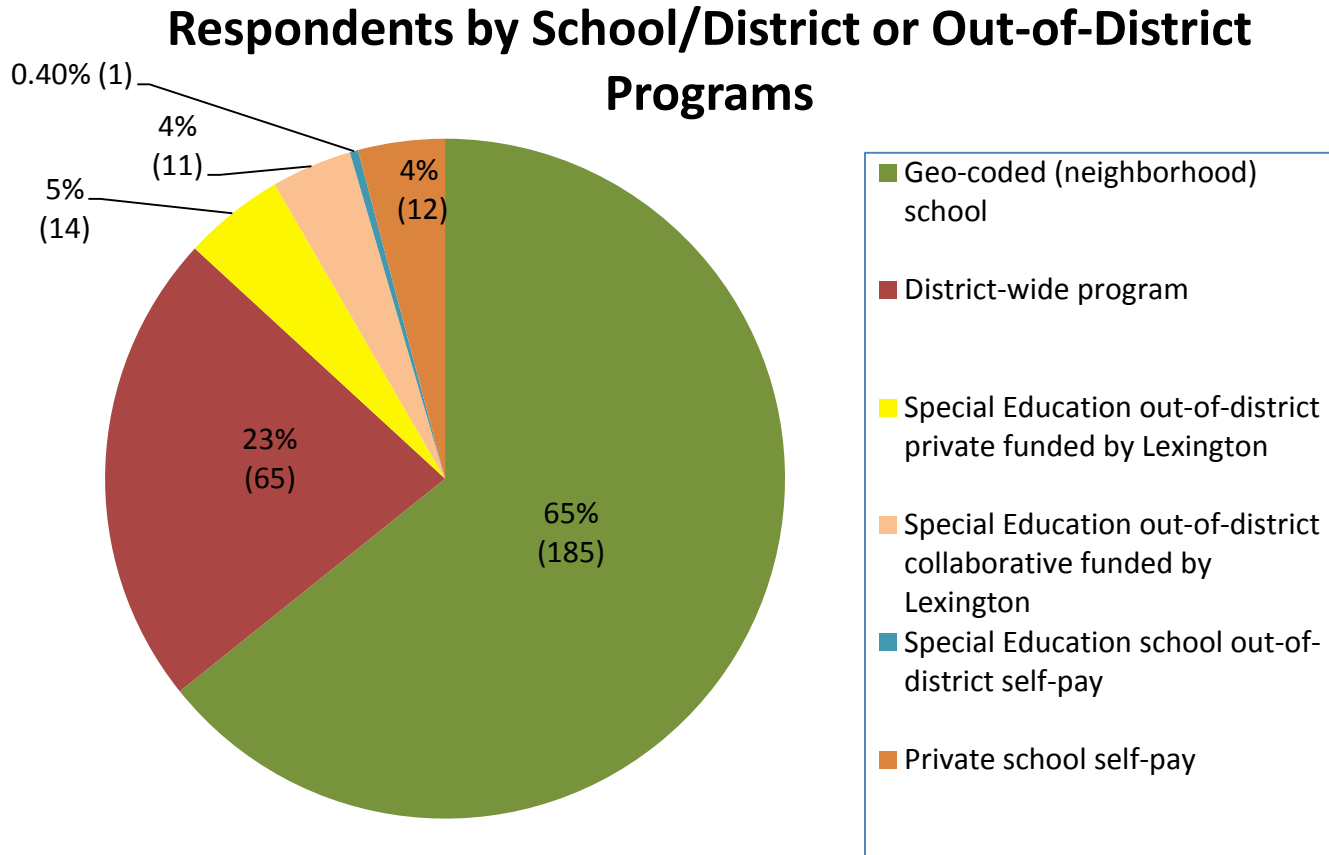
Preschool: 20%  
Elementary: 25%  
Middle School: 27%  
High School: 25%

# Demographics

## Respondents by Length of Time on IEP or 504 Plan



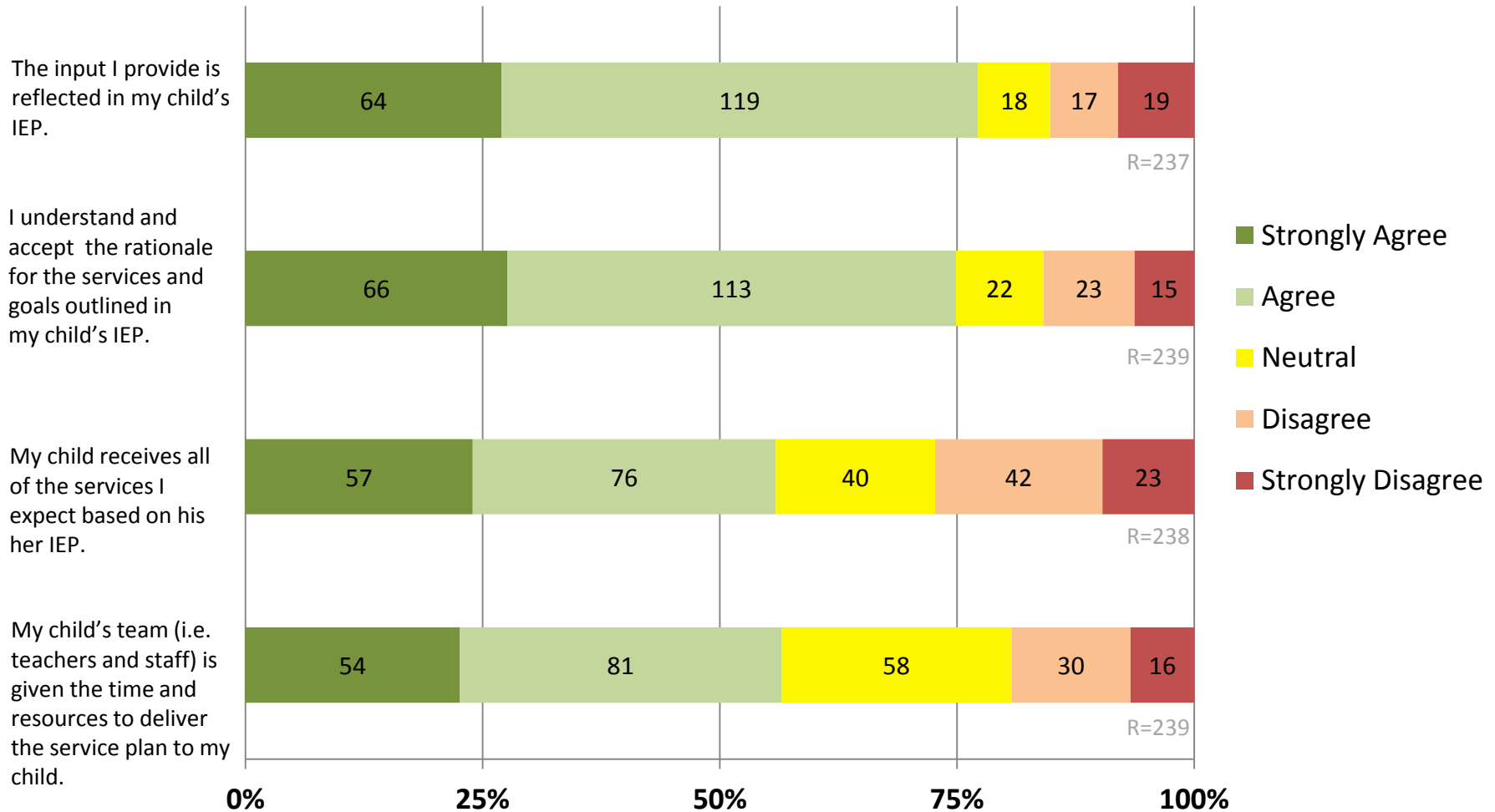
# Demographics



**Note:** According to February 2013 numbers, Lexington had 91 students in out-of-district placements funded by Lexington (partially or fully), and 67 students in self-pay private schools, but who were receiving special education services through Lexington Public Schools.

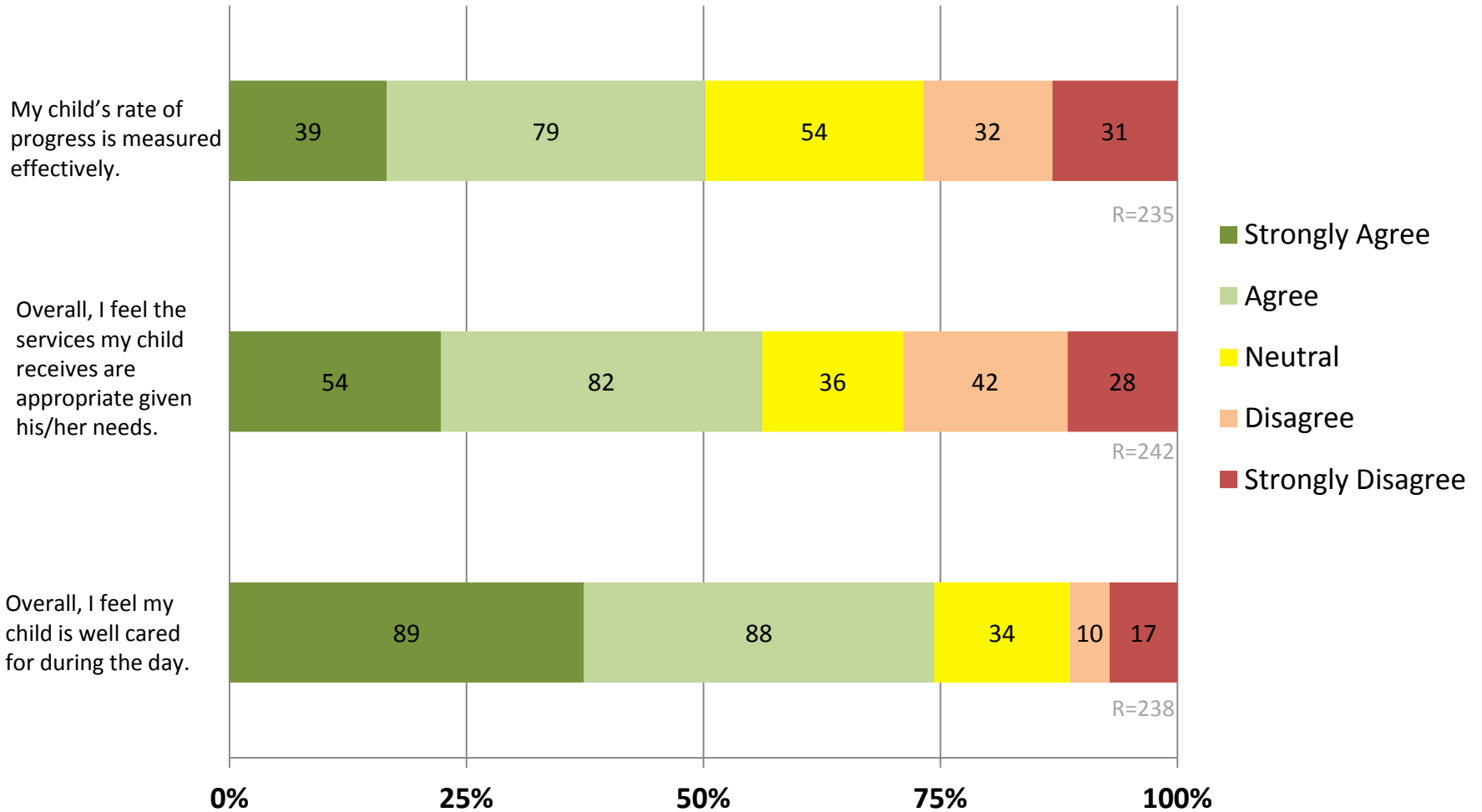
# Placement/Services Delivery for Children with an IEP (Question 6)

# Placement/Services Delivery for Children with an IEP

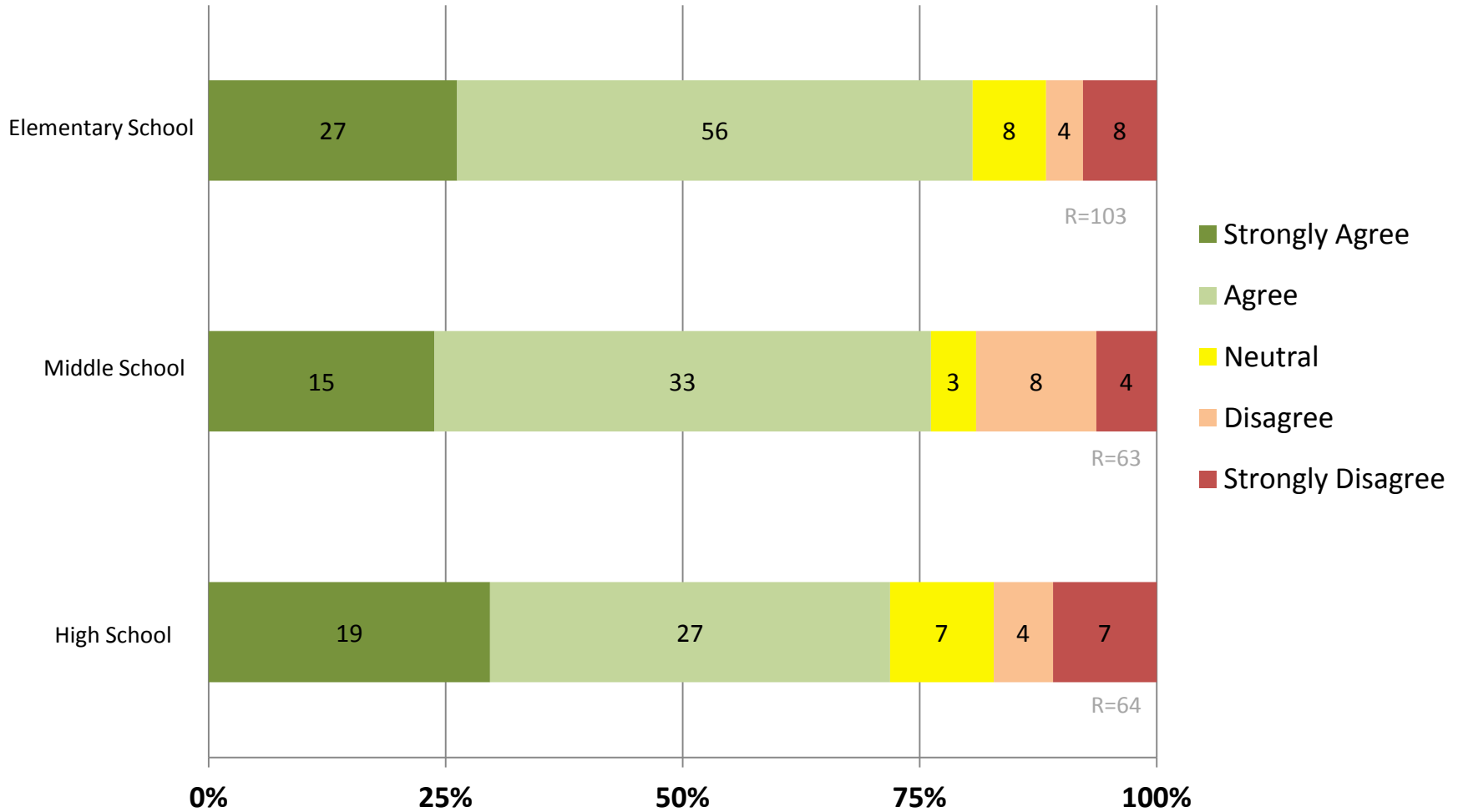




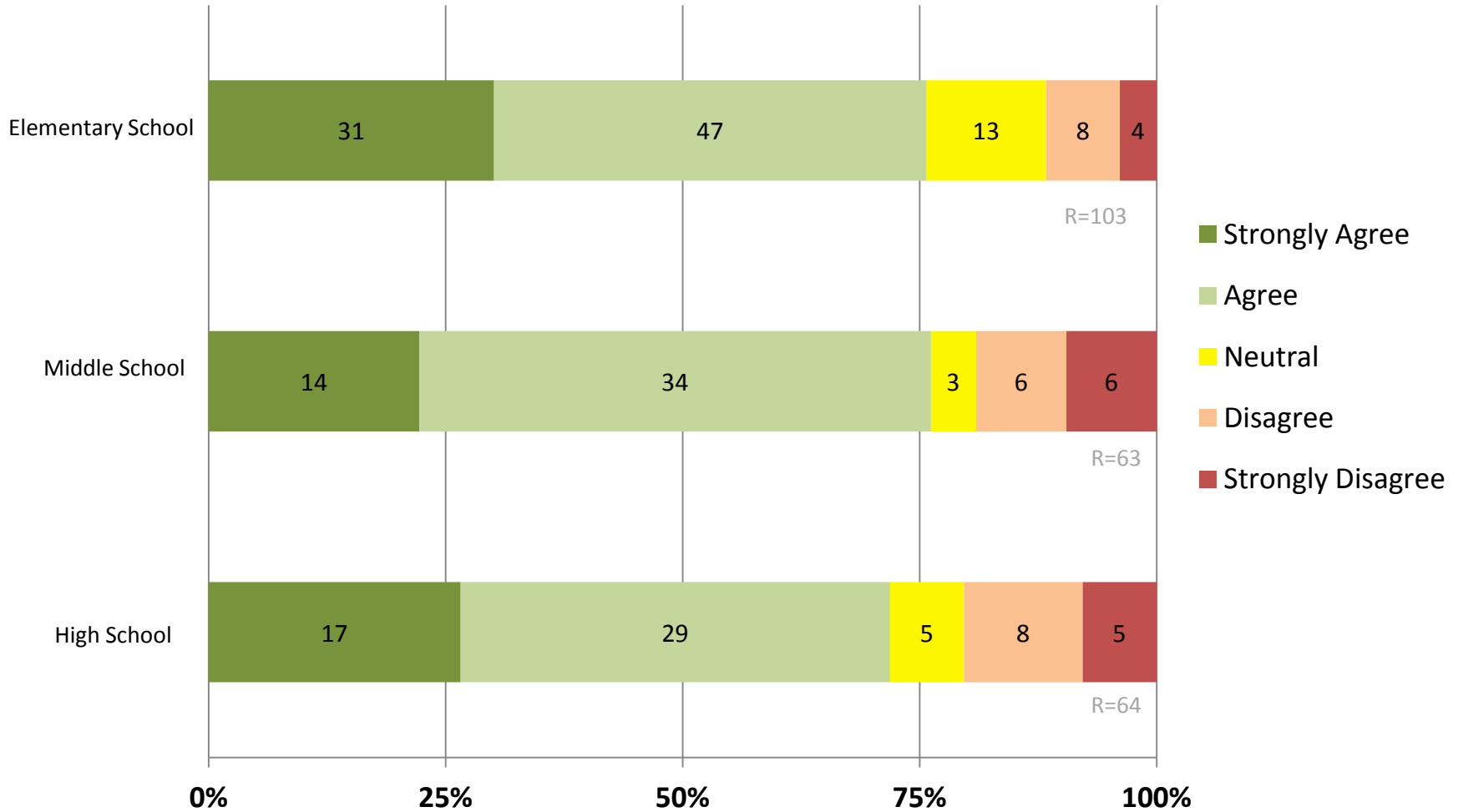
# Placement/Services Delivery for Children with an IEP



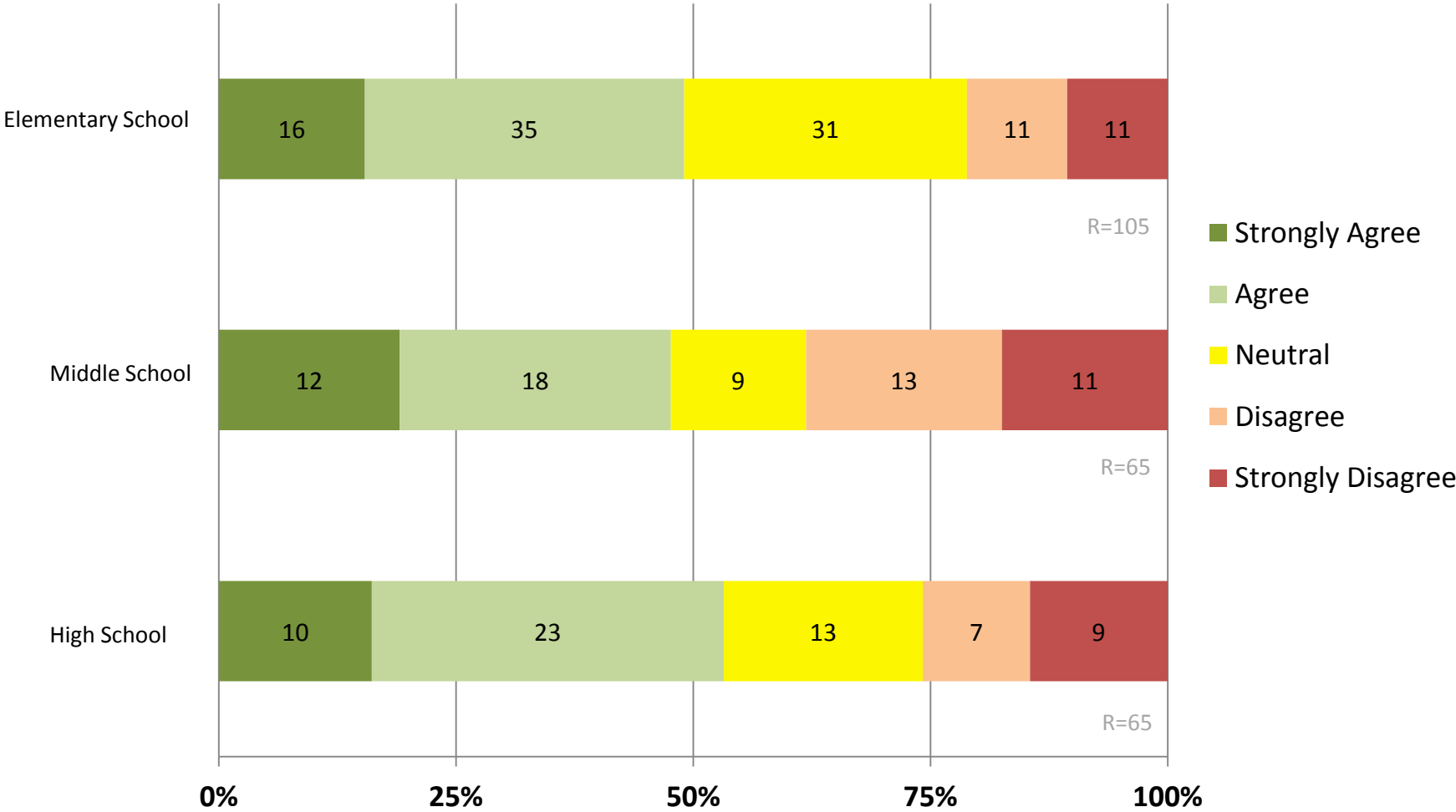
# The input I provide is reflected in my child's IEP.



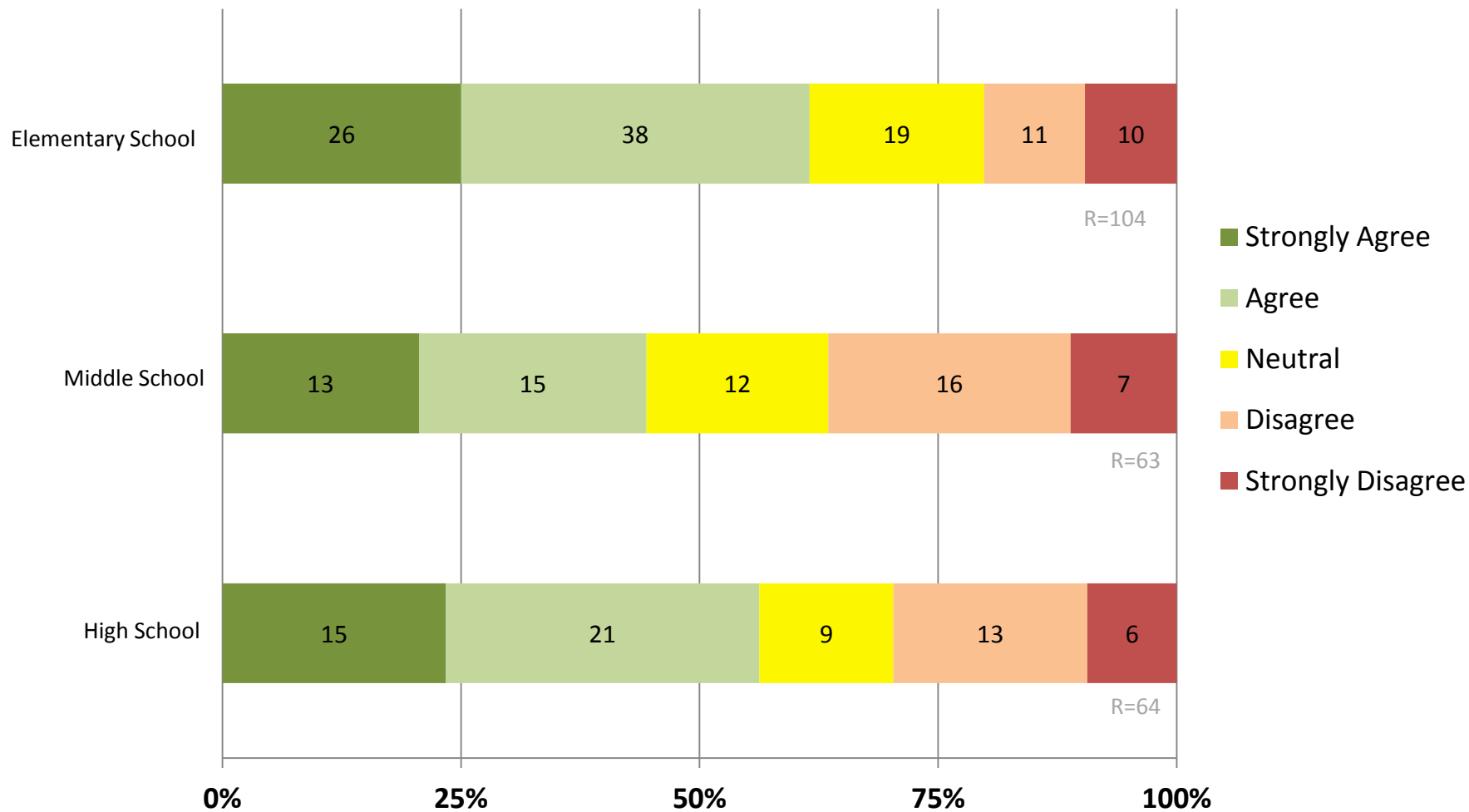
# I understand and accept the rationale for the services and goals outlined in my child's IEP.



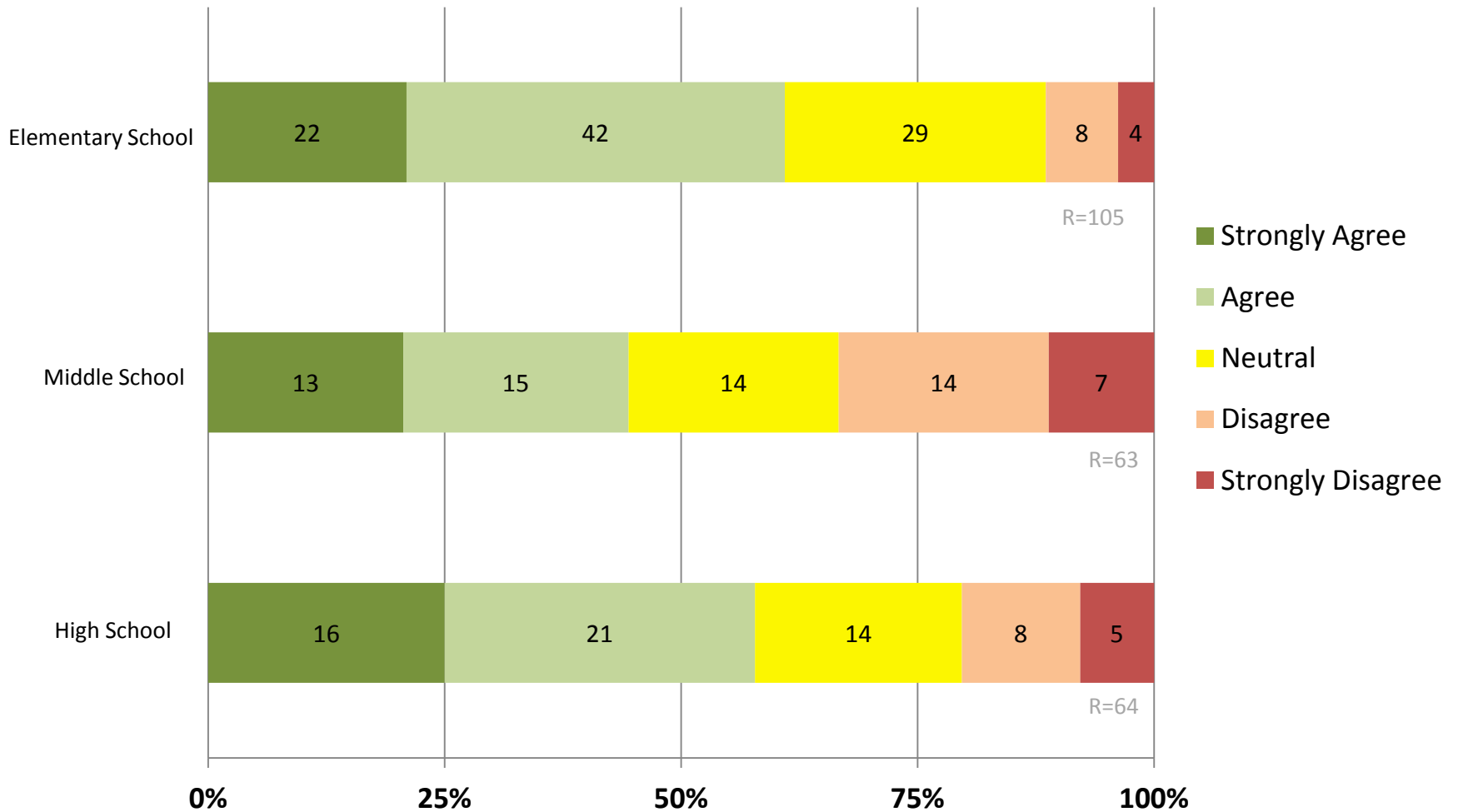
# My child's rate of progress is measured effectively.



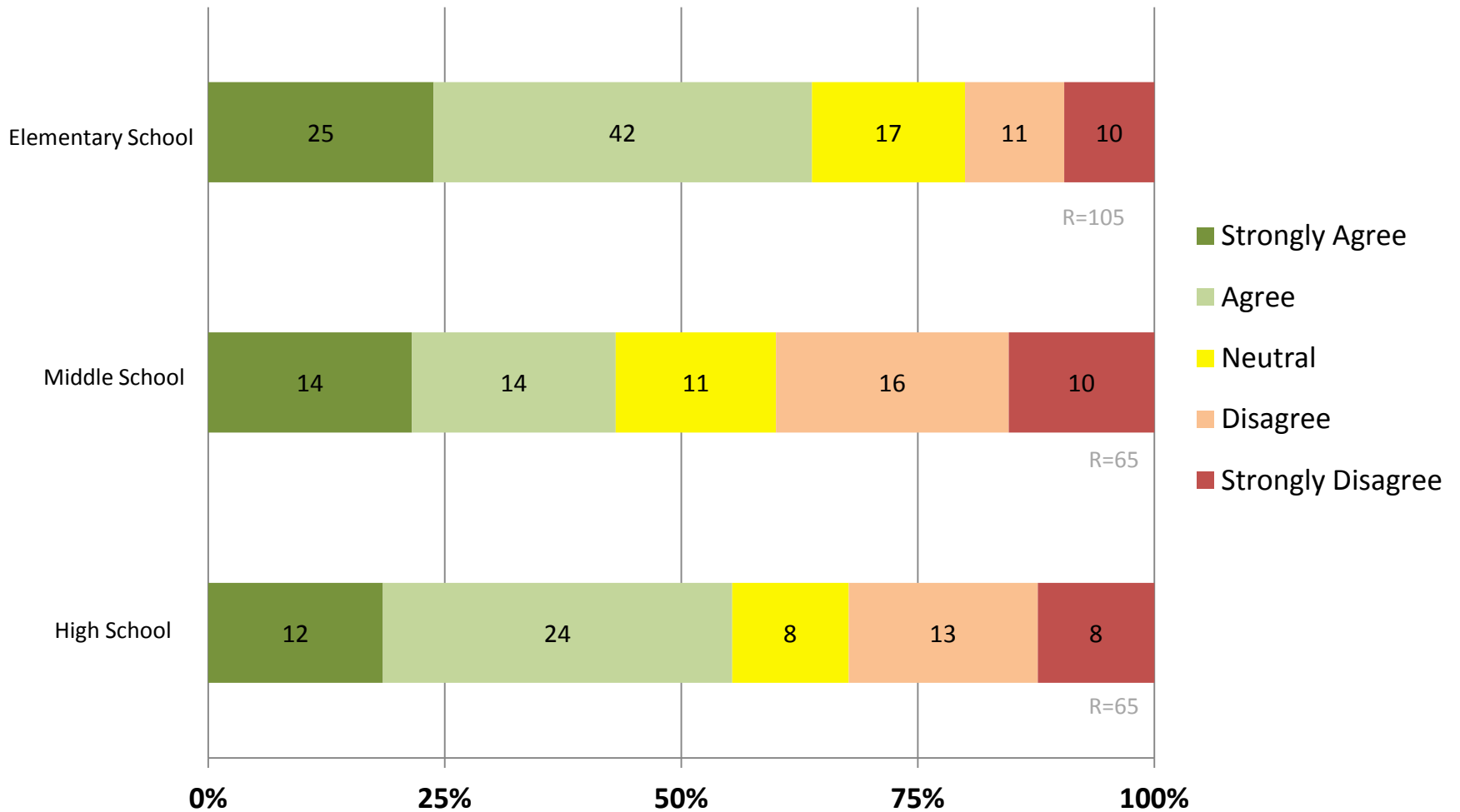
# My child receives all the services I expect based on his/her IEP.



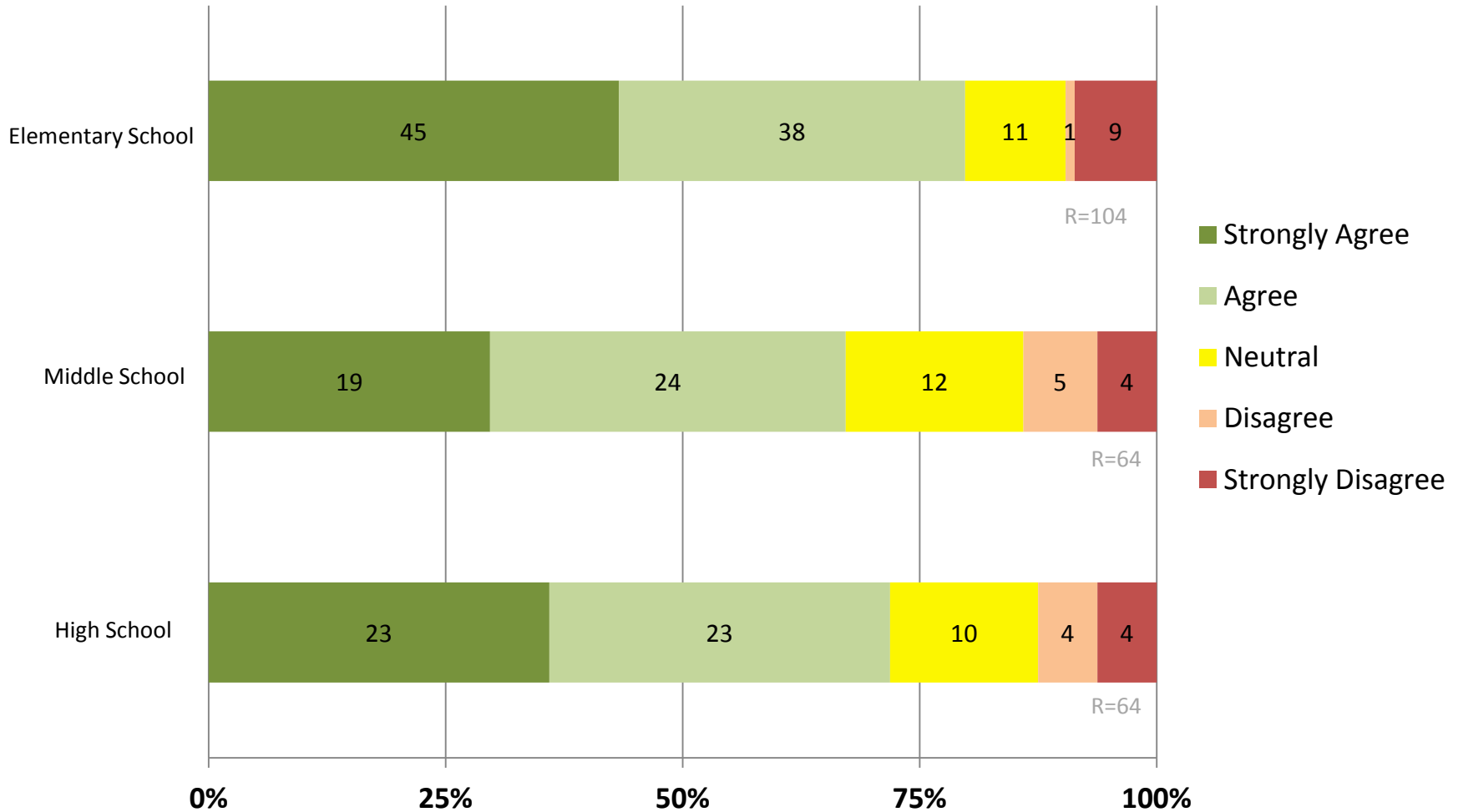
# My child's team (i.e., teachers and staff) is given the time and resources to deliver the service plan to my child.



# Overall, I feel the services my child receives are appropriate for his/her needs.



# Overall, I feel my child is well cared for during the school day.





# Placement/Services Delivery for Children with an IEP

## Parent Comments--Common Themes

### **Strengths**

- Supportive teams and school cultures
- Effective interventions
- Flexible approaches

### **Areas for Improvements**

- Student placement approaches/length of time required to access services.
- Methods for monitoring and measuring student progress.
- Communication (type, response, and frequency) with parents about evaluations, placements, and student progress.
- Conflict resolution strategies when parents and staff disagree.

# Placement/Services Delivery for Children with an IEP

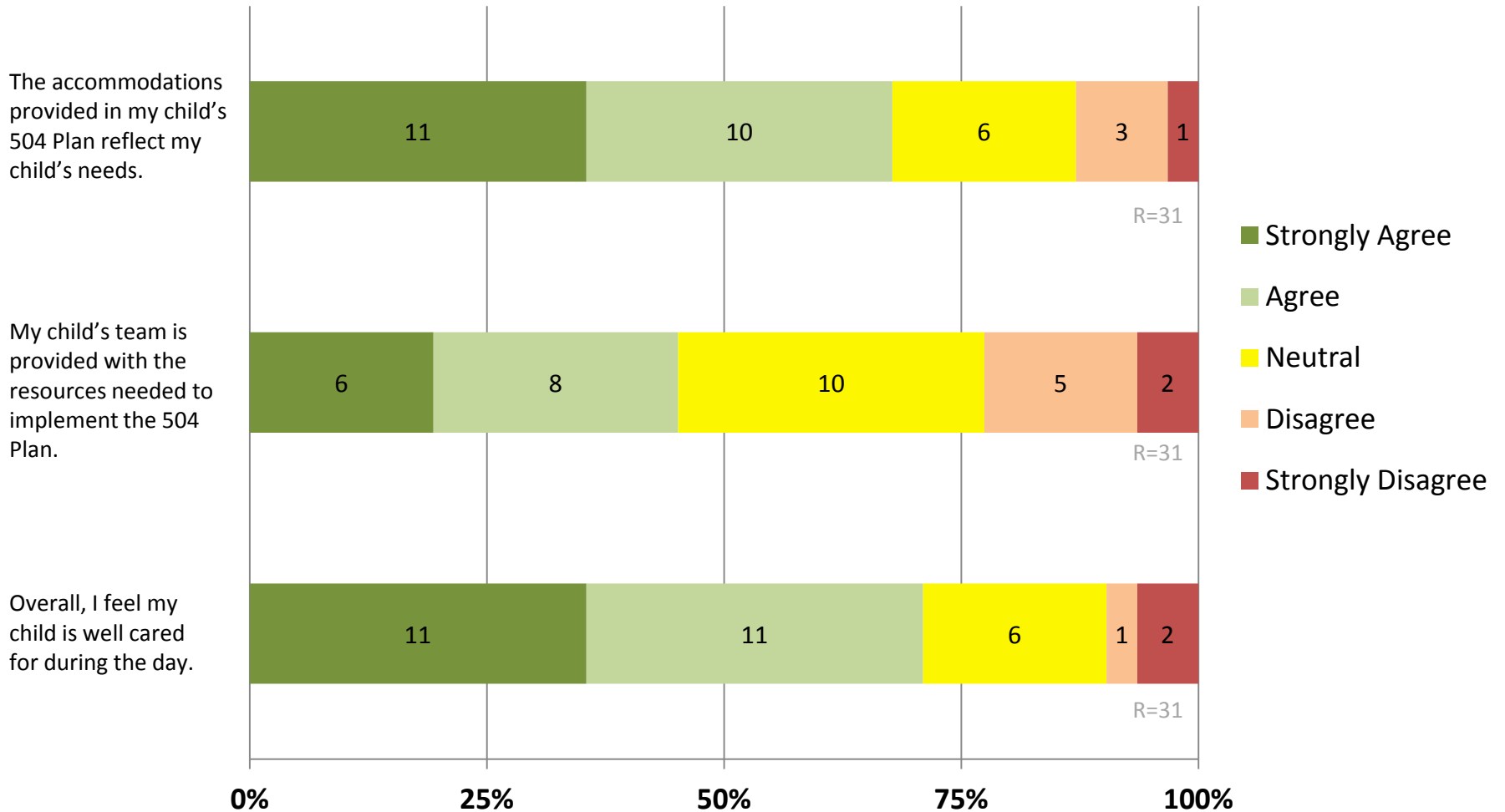
## Initial Recommendations

- Ensure placements are appropriate by measuring and monitoring student progress and program effectiveness in collaboration with parents, with special emphasis on middle school and high school students. (LPS)
  - Committees are currently looking at service delivery models across all domains.
  - School representatives attend transition meetings from Pre-K to elem. to middle and middle to high school
- Educate parents about all steps of the evaluation and service delivery process and timeline associated with each step. (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
  - November 1, 2013, ETS Round Table with SEPAC/SEPTA
  - Parent Coffee on Feb. 1, 2013 "Referral and Evaluation Process"
  - Currently updating the Student Services Procedural Manual
- Encourage staff communication early and often, and provide clear communication paths, providing parent education and greater opportunities for parent. (LPS)

**Note:** Record reviews are completed every 6 years by the Department of Early and Secondary Education (DESE). The district is currently undergoing a self-assessment as part of its coordinated program review (Compliance Review). The self-assessment includes a review of procedures and timelines.

# Placement/Services Delivery for Children with 504 Plans (Question 7)

# Placement Services/Delivery for Children with a 504 Plan



# Placement/Service Delivery—504 Plans

## Parent Comments—Common Themes

### **Strengths**

- Strong staff
- Strong school support

### **Areas for Improvements**

- Communication with parents
- Staff resources and education

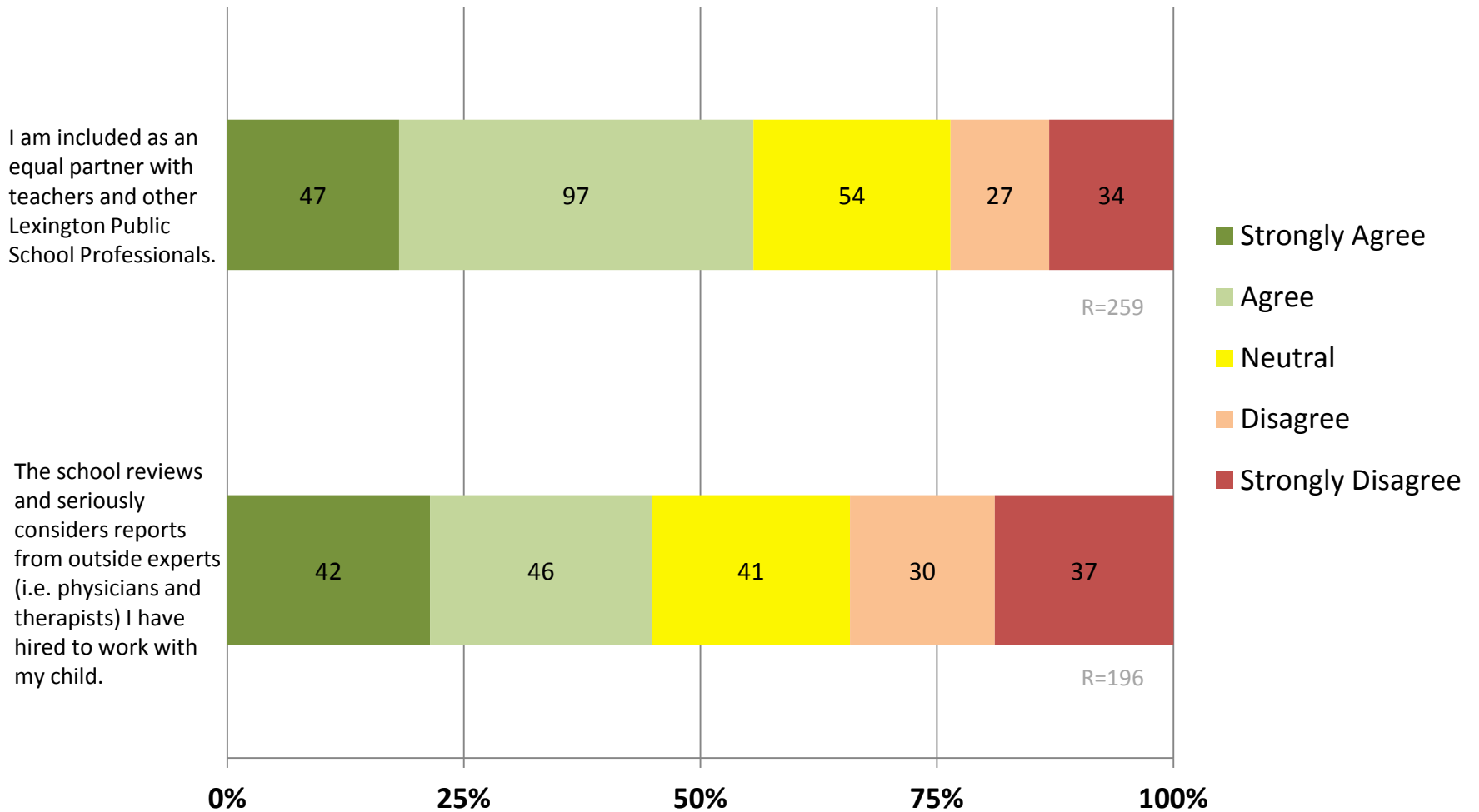
## Placement/Service Delivery—504 Plans

### Initial Recommendations

- Define communication options for parents so that there is a clear path for getting information and answers to questions. (LPS)
- Educate staff about guidelines for working with students on 504 Plans. (LPS)
  - The Guidance Department is currently completing a Procedural Manual for 504 Plans and has instituted new procedures accordingly.
- Work with parents to understand needs, especially at the middle school and high school levels. (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)

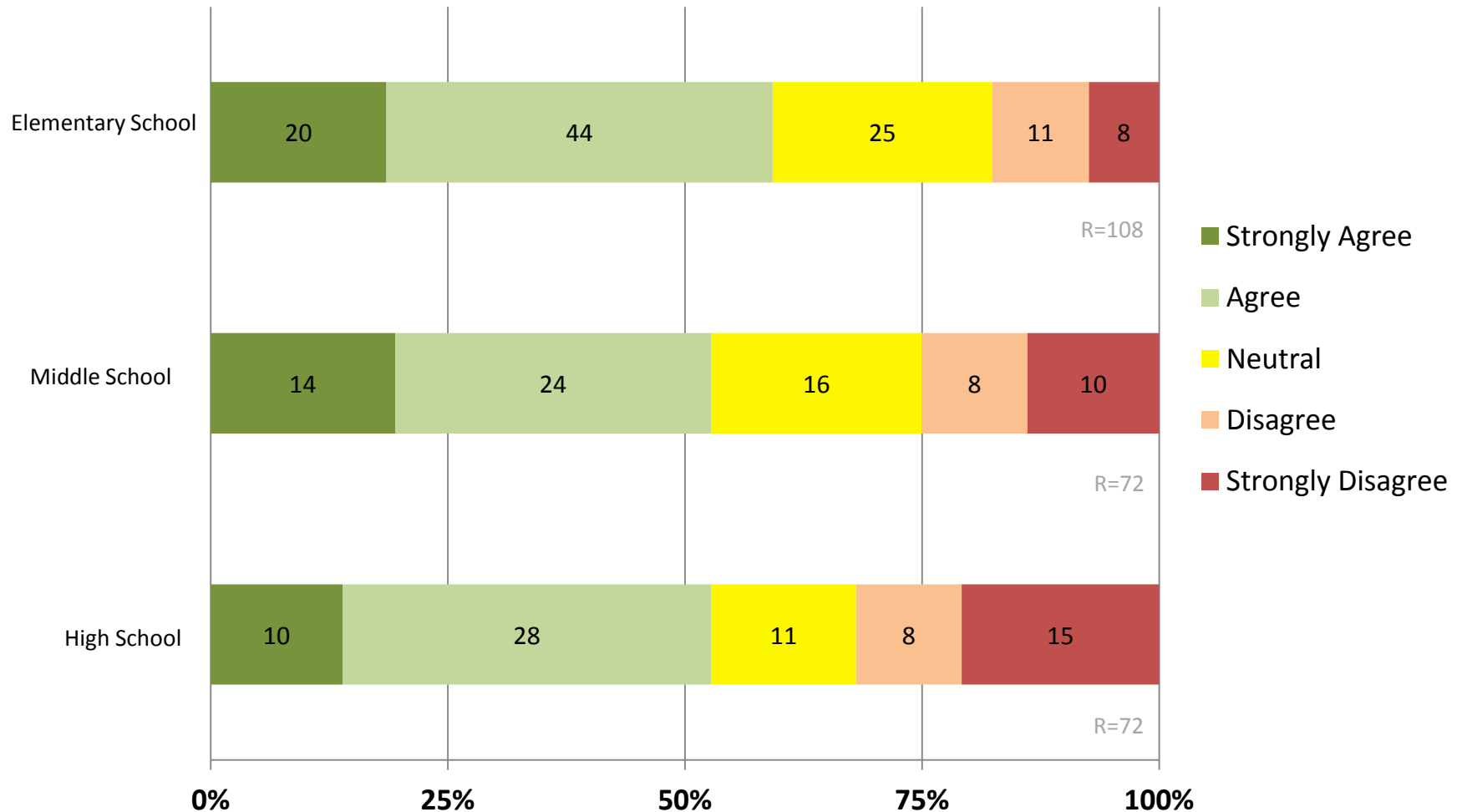
# Partnering with Parents/Outside Experts (Question 9)

# Partnering with Parents/Outside Experts

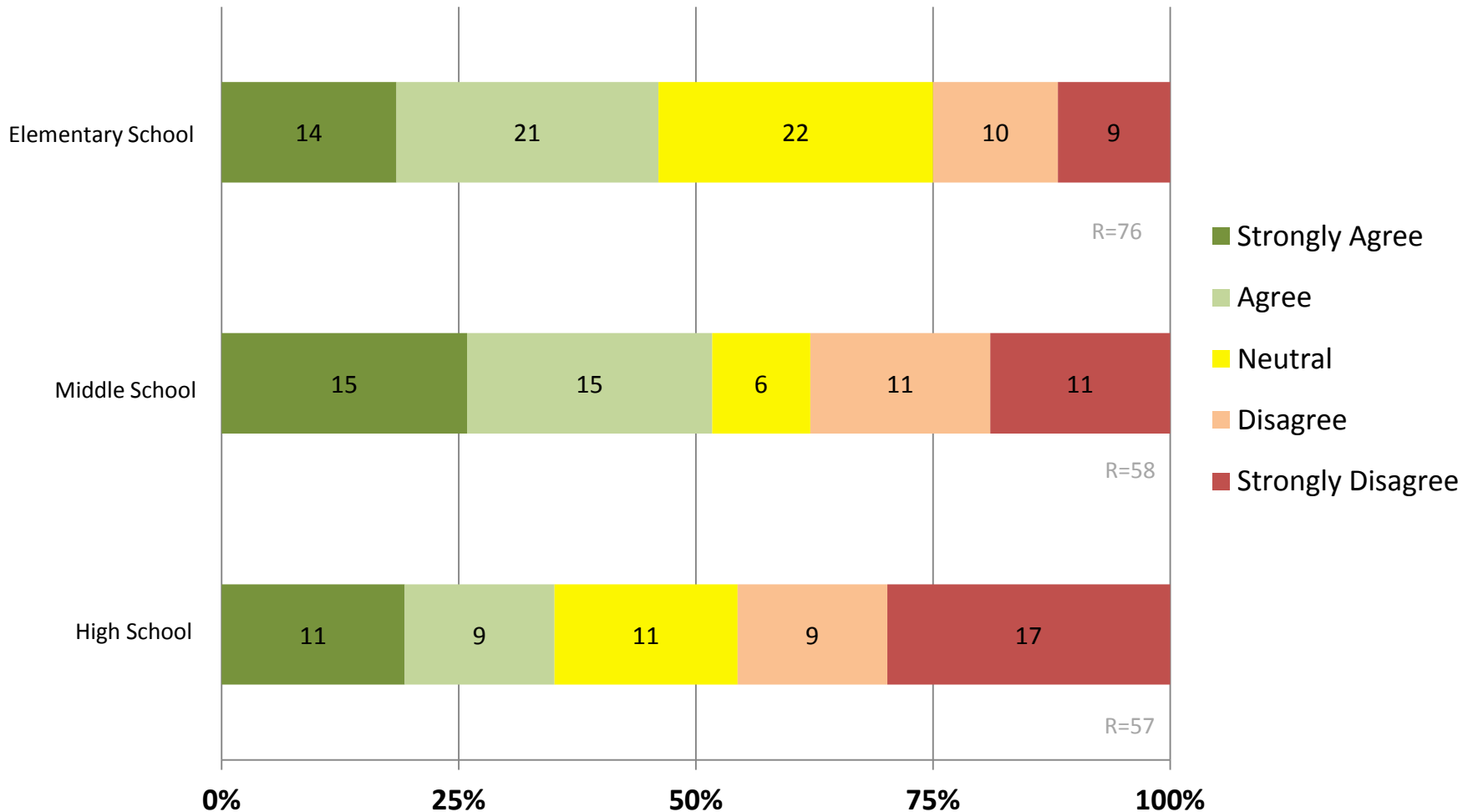




# I am included as an equal partner with teachers and other Lexington Public School Professionals.



# The school reviews and seriously considers reports from outside experts (i.e. physicians and therapists) I have hired to work with my child.



# Partnering with Parents/Outside Experts

## Parent Comments– Common Themes

### **Strengths**

- Strong collaboration with staff
- Effective communication

### **Areas for Improvements**

- Collaboration with parents regarding use of outside expert reports and recommendations
- Conflict resolution strategies

# Partnering with Parents/Outside Experts

## Initial Recommendations

- Compare parent involvement satisfaction rates of parents of children who have IEPs with satisfaction rates of parents of children who do not have IEPs and/or 504 Plans (results of DESE Parent Involvement Survey). (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
- Provide conflict resolution training for parents and staff. (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
  - District provided training for administrators and staff entitled "Difficult Conversations."
  - SEPAC/SEPTA will be planning a workshop on conflict resolution with both parents and staff.
- Work with parents to better understand areas for improvement regarding working with outside experts, and provide education about how outside expert recommendations should be incorporated into IEPs and 504 Plans. (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
- Examine current district processes for working with outside experts to better understand areas for improvement, with a focus on the high school level (LPS):
  - Managing disagreements with parents about outside expert evaluations, reports, and recommendations.
  - Communication with outside experts by teachers and administrators (general communication practices, scheduling observations, teacher observation forms, and inclusion of outside experts in team meetings).

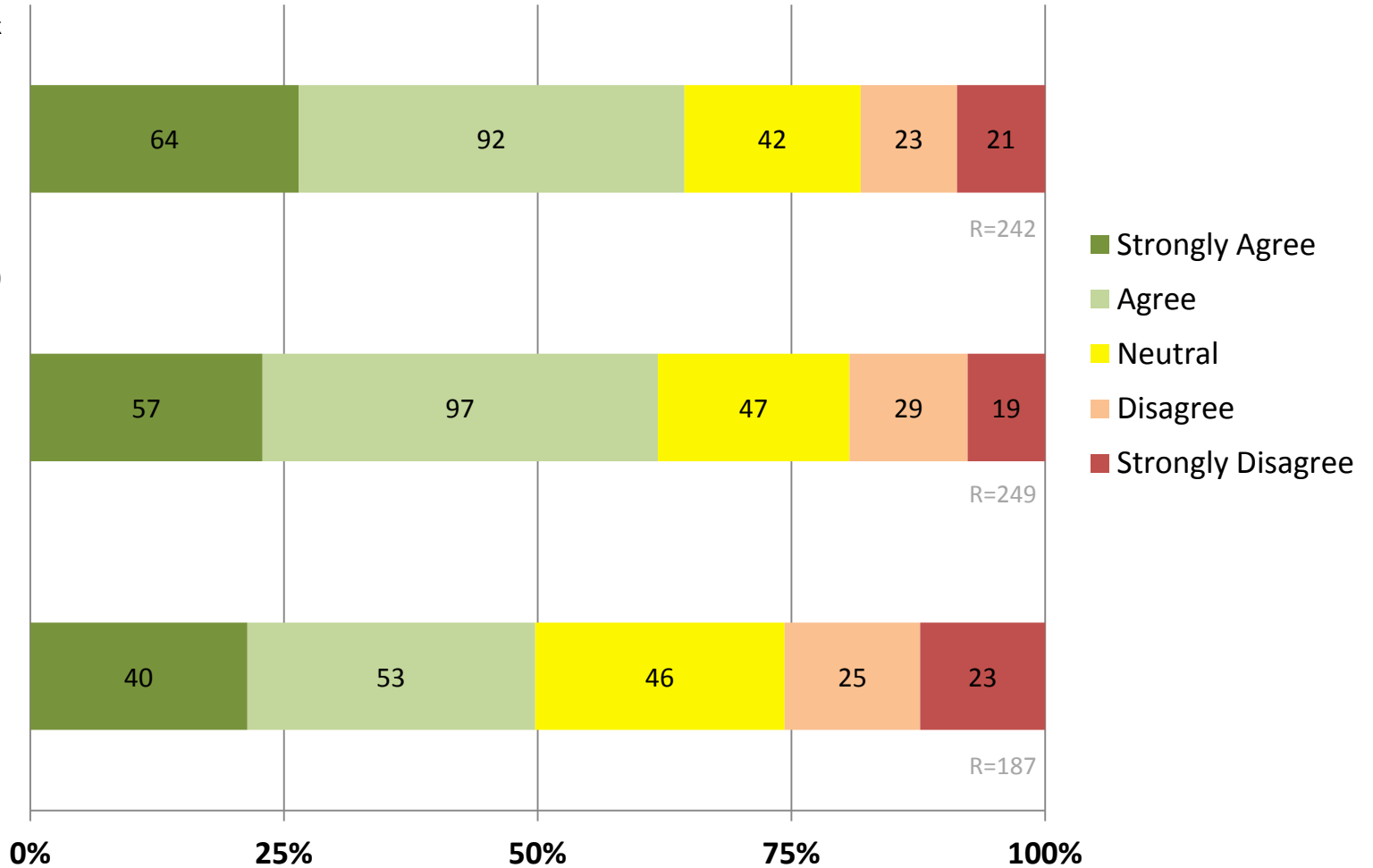
# Staff and Training (Question 10)

# Staff and Training

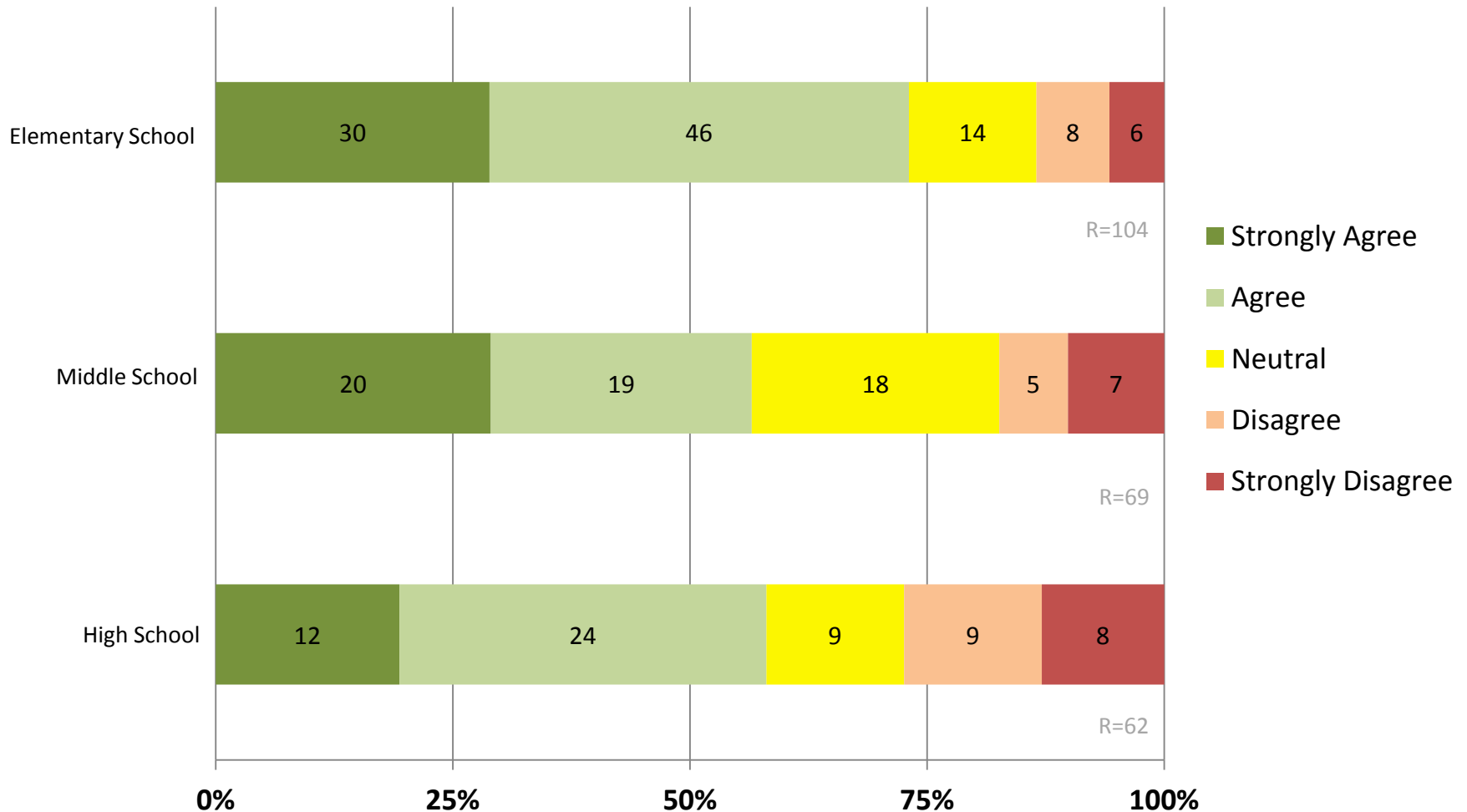
Special education professional staff work effectively with my child (this includes special educators, Occupational Therapists, Speech Therapists, Social Workers, and Behavioral Specialists.)

General education staff members (regular classroom teachers) effectively work with my child.

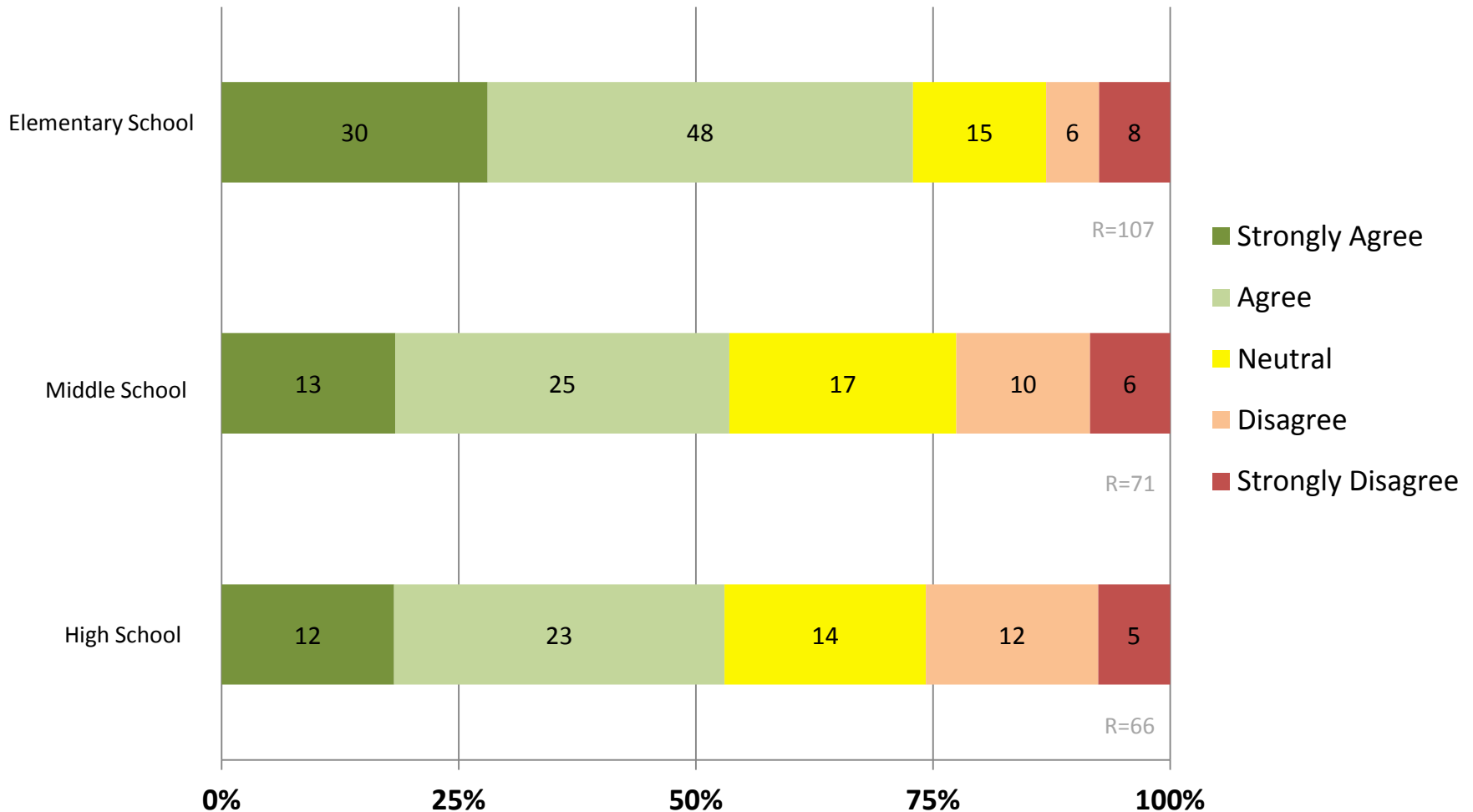
Instructional aides (including SSIs) are trained to effectively work with my child.



# Special education professional staff work effectively with my child.

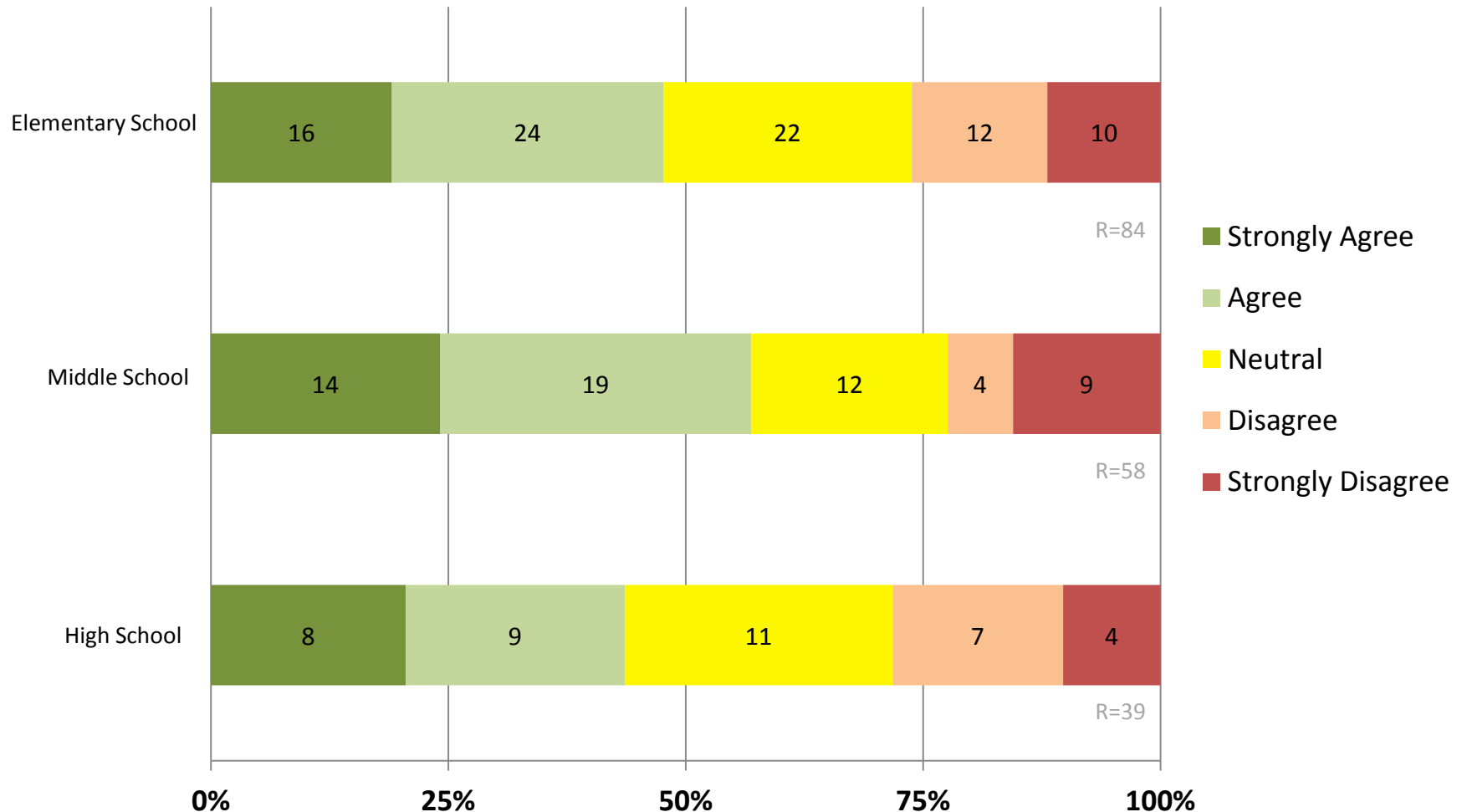


# General education staff members (regular classroom teachers) effectively work with my child.





# Instructional aides (including SSIs) are trained to effectively work with my child.



# Staff & Training

## Parent Comments—Common Themes

### **Strengths**

- Quality, dedication, and enthusiasm of special education staff
- Quality of general education staff

### **Areas for Improvements**

- Instructional Aide (IA) training and retention
- Consistency of staff quality

# Staff & Training

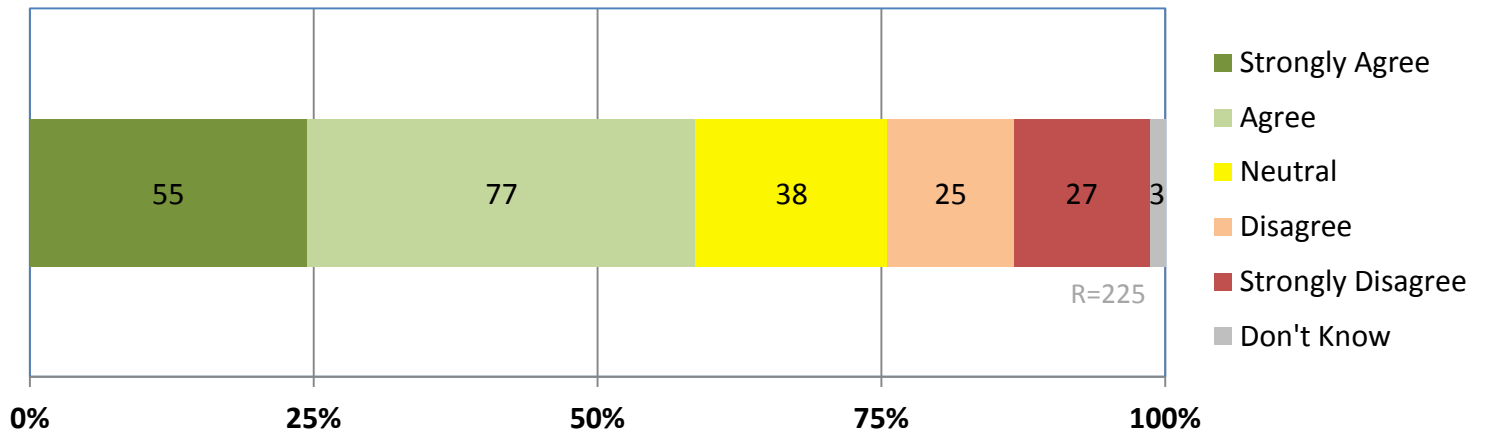
## Initial Recommendations

- Examine Instructional Aide (IA) training and retention (LPS).
  - Educate parents about instructional aide roles and training requirements.
    - 60 IAs have been trained in effective behavioral interventions with a focus on proactive strategies.
    - There is mandatory annual training for all support staff.
  - Look at communication paths between parents and instructional aides, and clearly define communication guidelines for parents.
  - Examine instructional aide retention rates to determine if parent perceptions are valid given district data.
- Define communication paths for parents with staff concerns, particularly at the middle schools and high school.

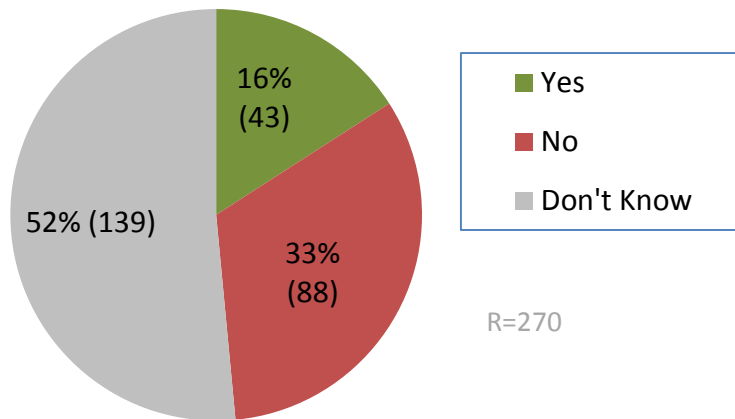
# Behavior Interventions (Questions 11--15)

# Behavior Interventions--Collaboration

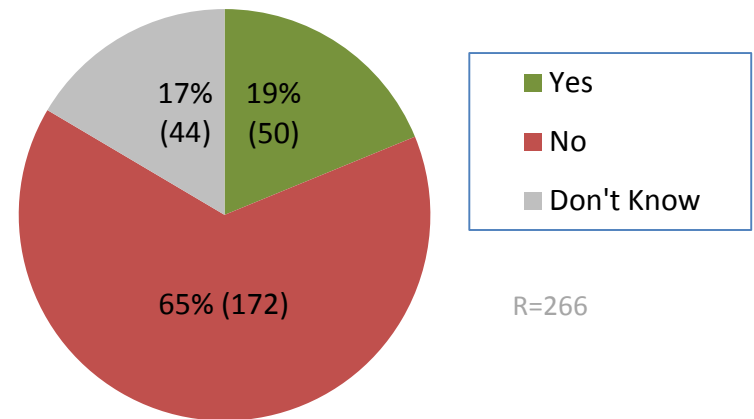
Staff members collaborate with me on behavior interventions, strategies, and supports for my child in school.



**A functional behavioral assessment (FBA) has been completed for my child.**



**My child has a written behavior plan at school (to reduce problem behaviors or increase positive behaviors).**



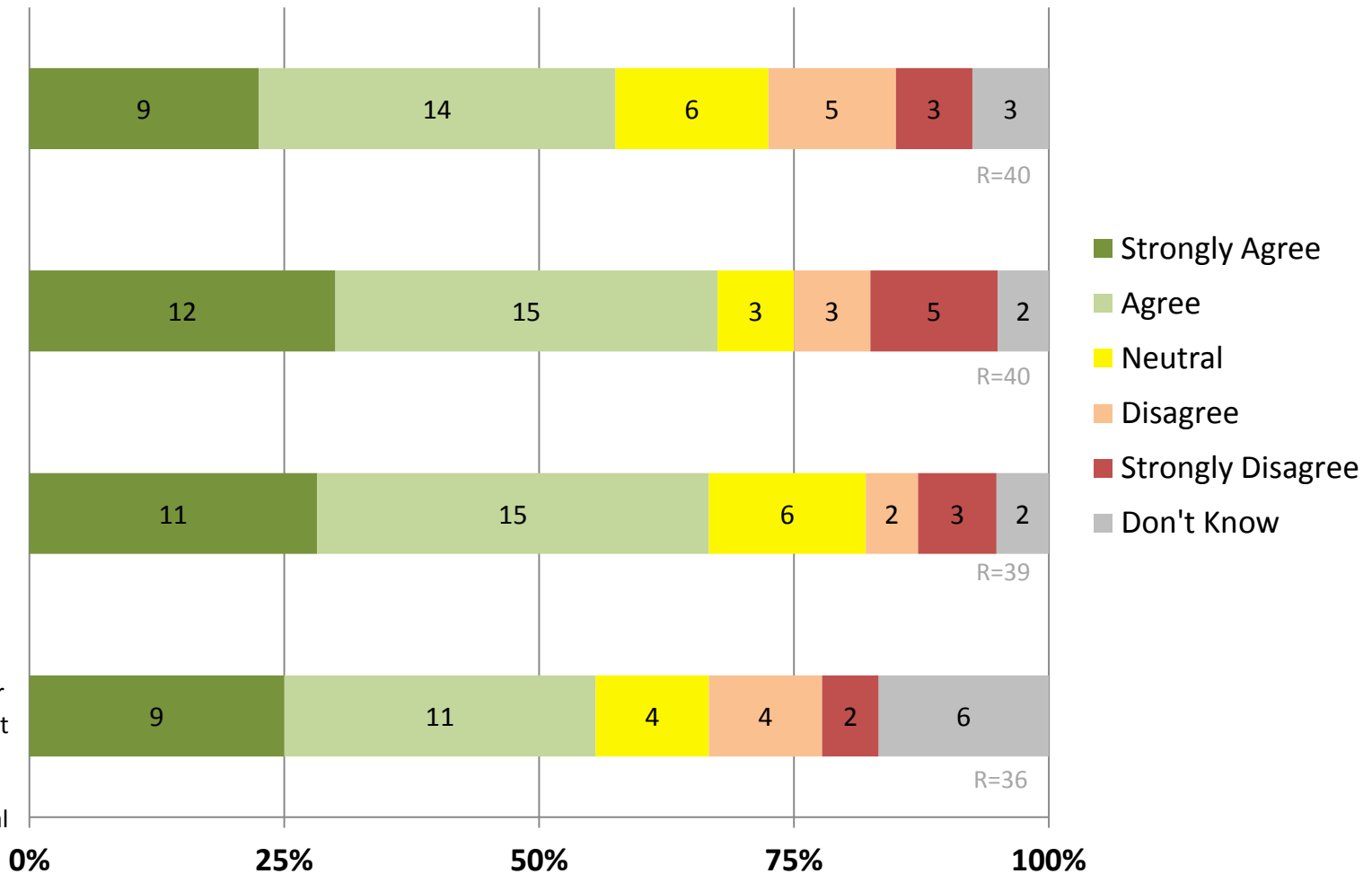
# Functional Behavioral Assessments

The functional behavior assessment included the collection of descriptive data and linked the observed data to hypotheses about the observed data.

While the FBA was in progress, I was contacted and asked for my input regarding my child's behavior.

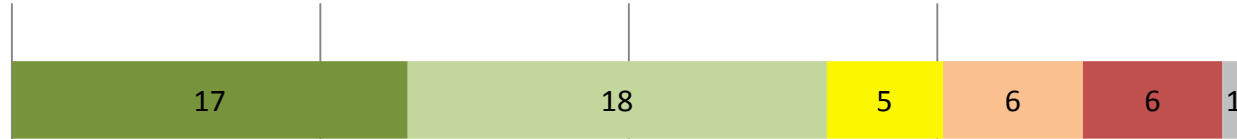
The results of the FBA were shared with me, and any questions that I had regarding the assessment were answered.

If needed, a behavior plan was created that was linked to the results of the Functional Behavioral Assessment.



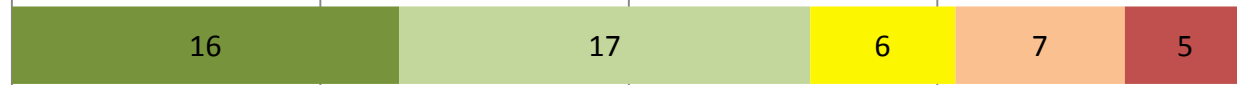
# Behavior Plans

I was given the opportunity to provide my own perspective/feedback about the plan.



R=53

In my child's behavior plan, the specific behaviors, consequences, and behavior-change tools are clearly defined and communicated to me.



R=51

The behavior plan was reviewed with me, and any questions that I had regarding the plan were answered.



R=51

The behavior plan includes positive reinforcement for positive behaviors.



R=51

I receive regular updates regarding the effectiveness of the behavior plan in reducing challenging behaviors and increasing positive behaviors.



R=49

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't Know

# Behavior Interventions Parent Comments—Common Themes

## **Strengths**

- Collaborative process
- Quality of services and staff

## **Areas for Improvements**

- Communication with parents regarding behavior plans and progress monitoring/measuring
- Consistency of staff quality and response time



# Behavior Interventions

## Initial Recommendations

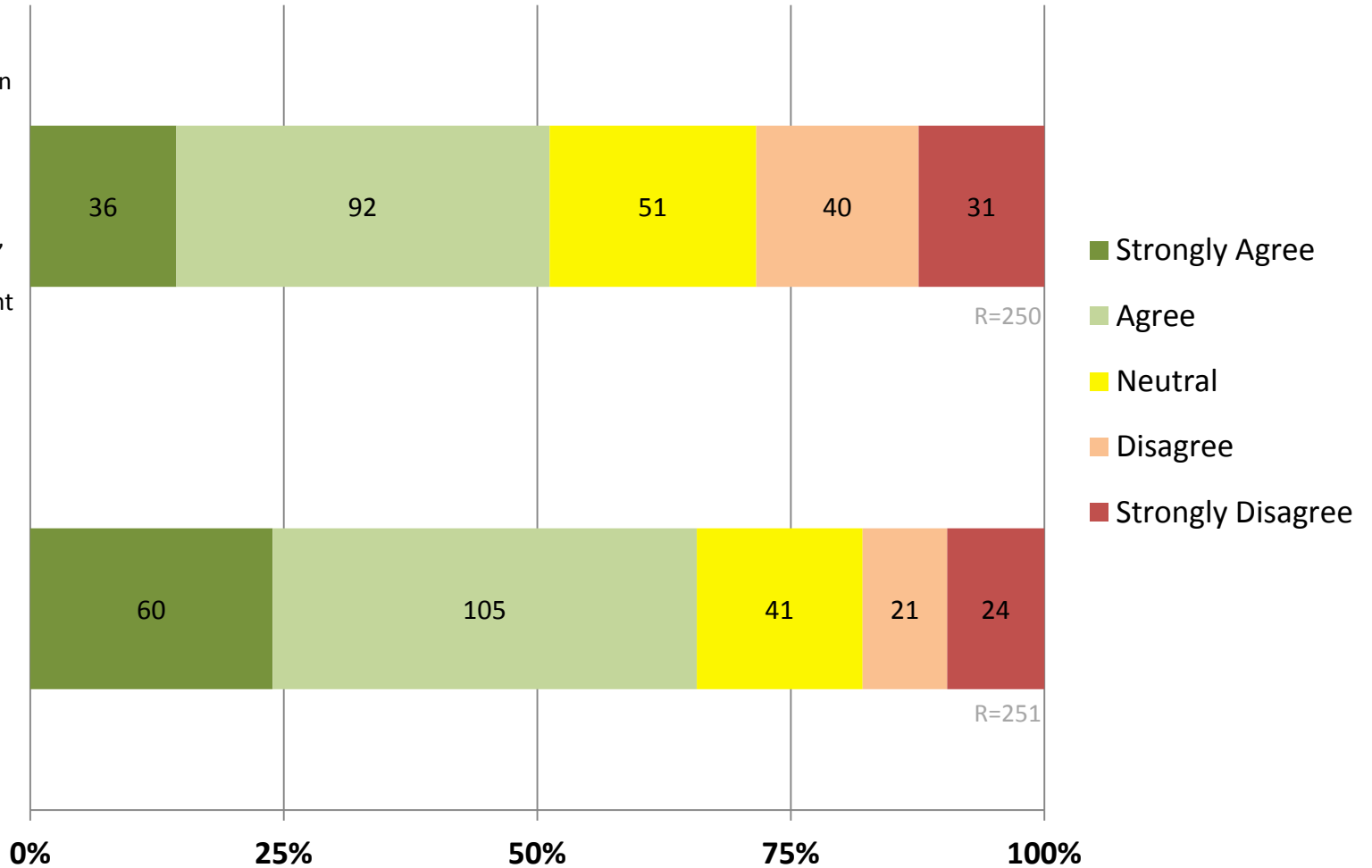
- Educate parents about behavior plans and Functional Behavior Assessments (what they are, when they are needed, and the related processes and timelines). (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
- Examine best practices for measuring and monitoring behavior plans and work with parents to understand what information would be most helpful to them. (LPS)
  - A new Behavior Specialist was added to the staff district-wide this year.
  - Expectations are that all written student behavior plans will be reviewed with parents. To help monitor this, a new form has been implemented that is handed to parents and is placed in the student's file. Upcoming Professional Development will ensure district-wide implementation.
  - To date, 150 staff were trained or re-certified in Crisis Prevention Institute training. More will be trained by the end of the year.
  - ABA Coordinator and behavior specialists are visiting all schools to help them continually improve building-based responses to potentially escalating behavioral issues.

# Communication (Questions 16 and 17)

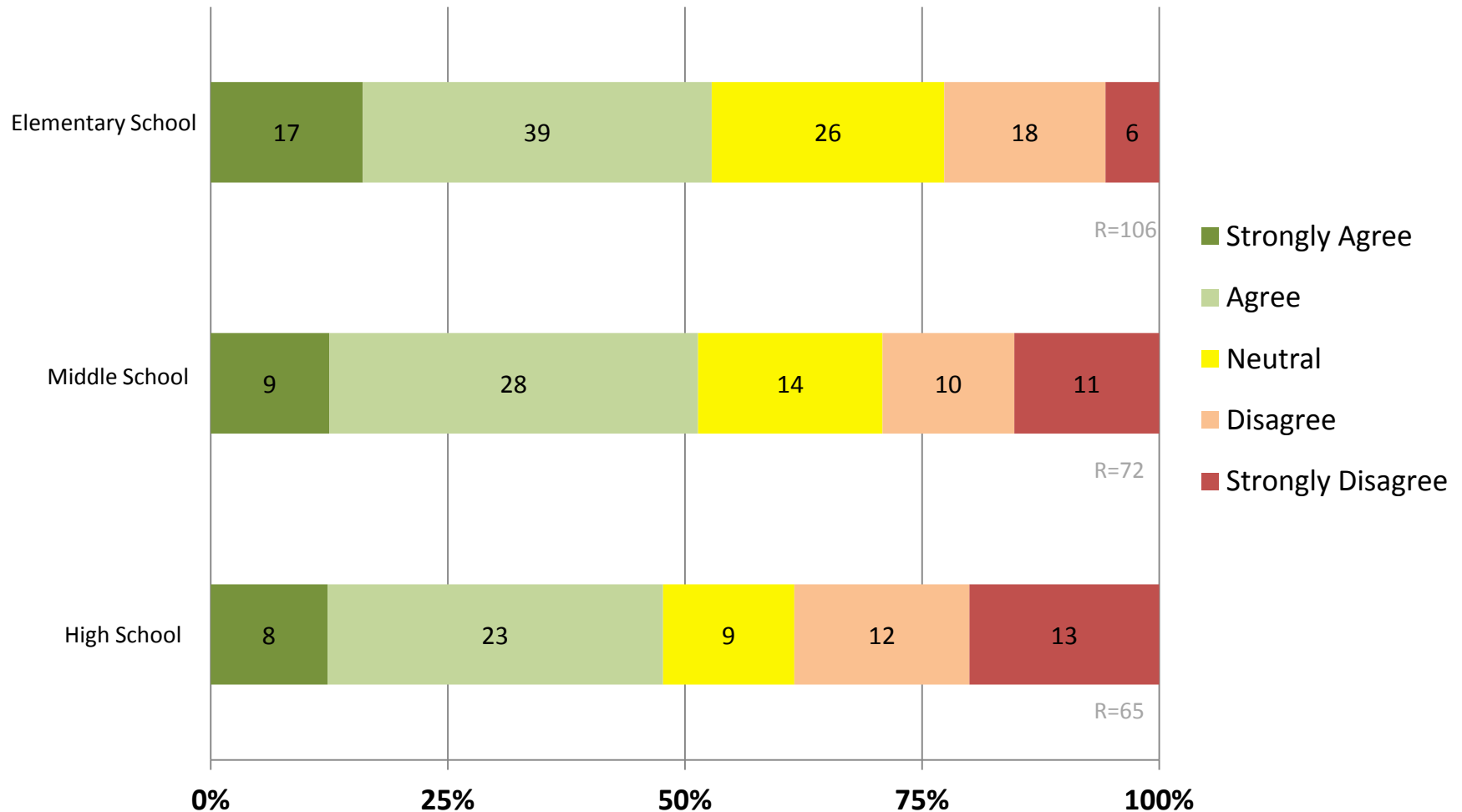
# Timeliness of Communication

I get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under my child's IEP or 504 Plan (for IEPS this may include type of service, implementation of the current IEP, and current level and rate of progress on goals).

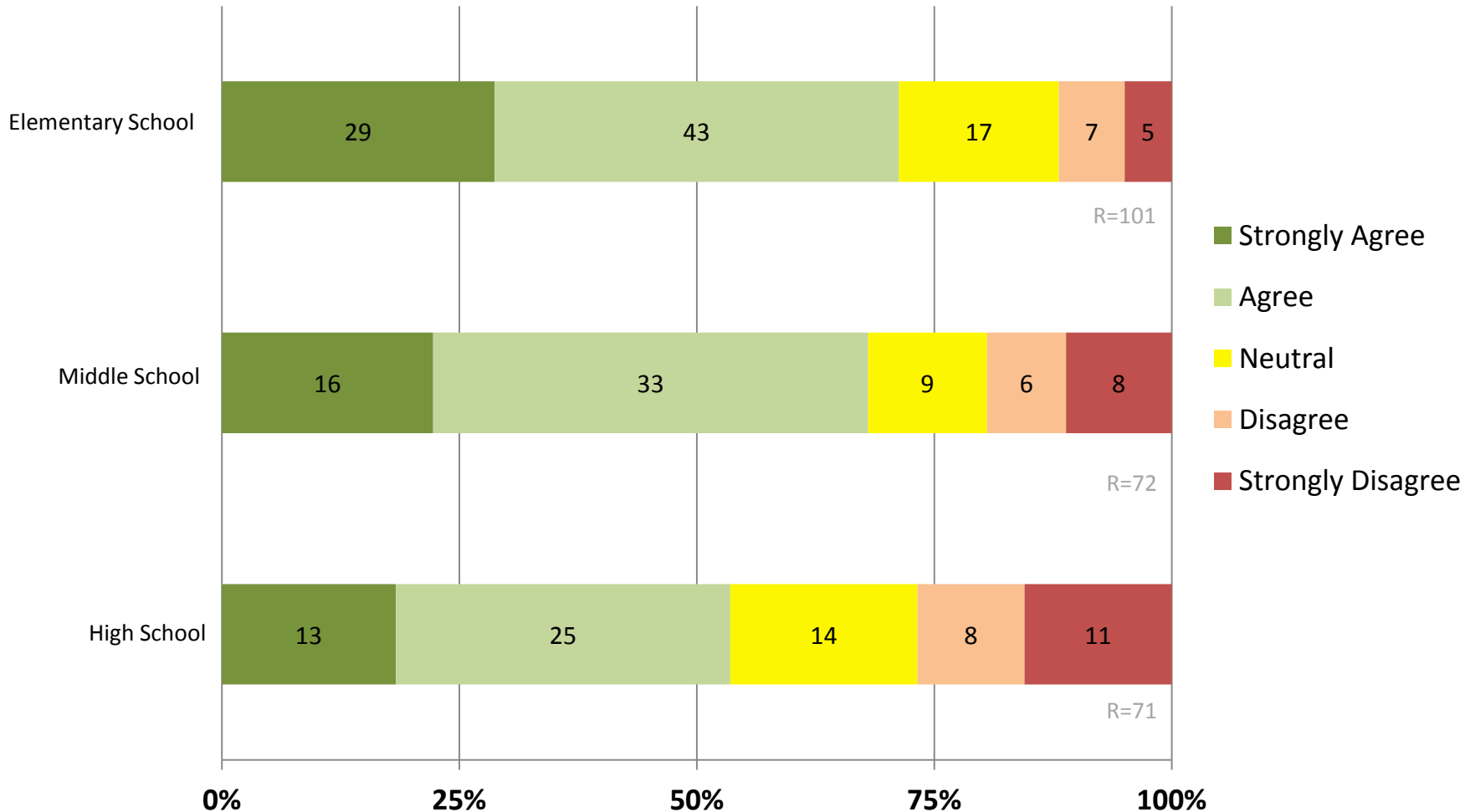
When I raise a question, problem, or concern, I get a response from the LPS administration/staff.



# I get timely, thorough, and helpful information about the services provided under my child's IEP or 504 Plan.

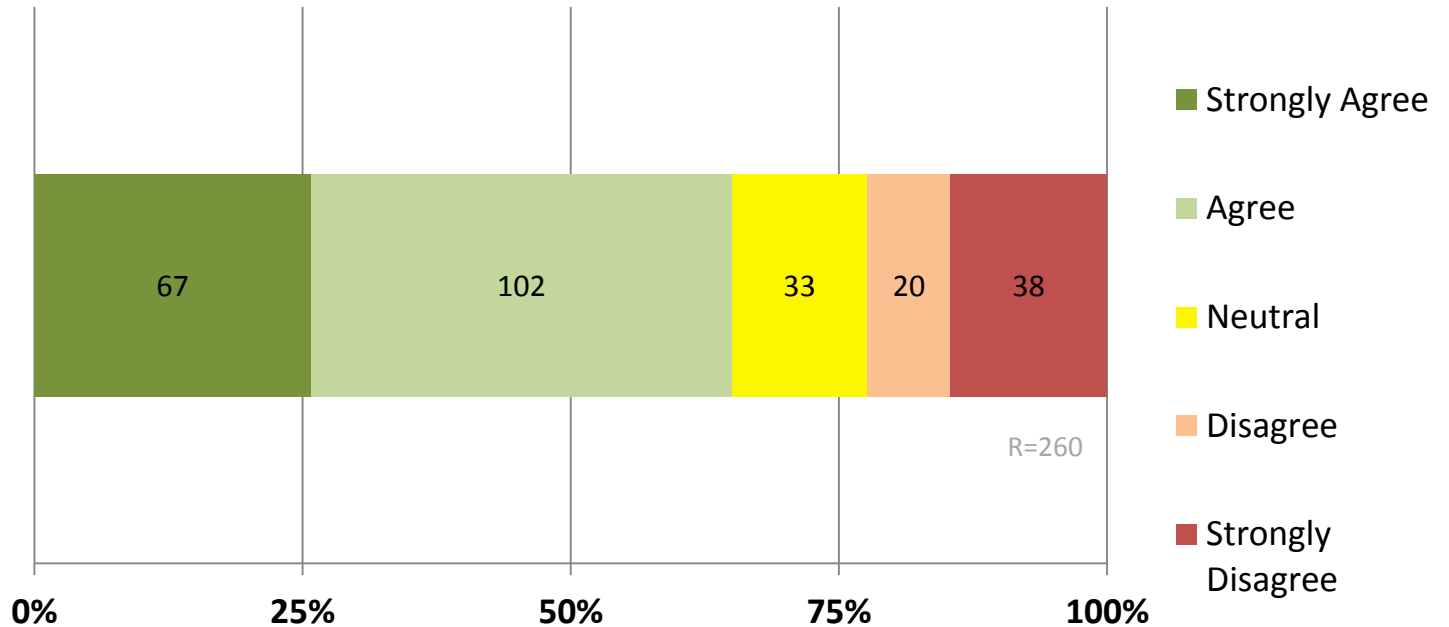


# When I raise a question, problem, or concern, I get a response from the LPS administration/staff.

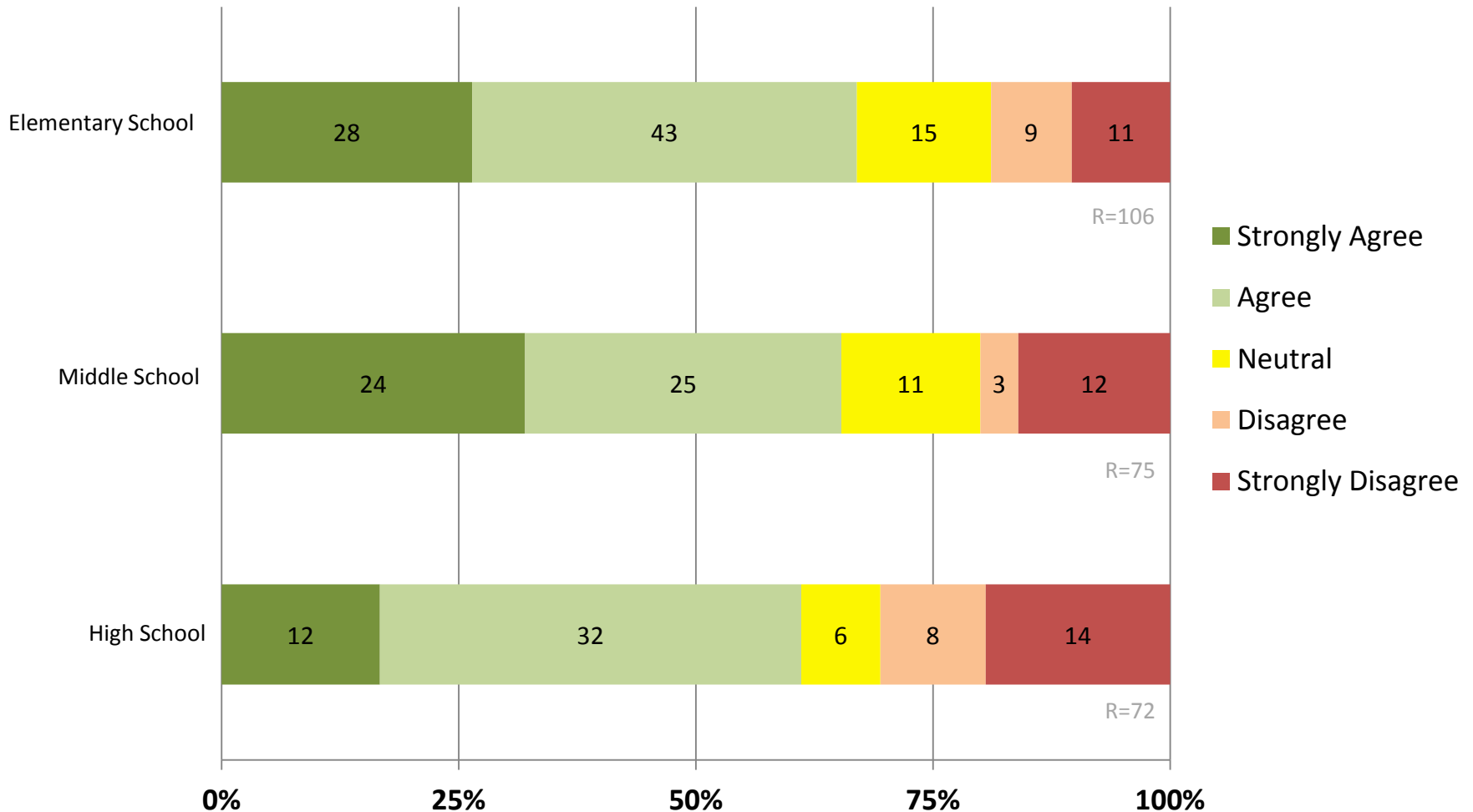


# Communication—Concerns & Questions

I feel comfortable raising concerns and questions with LPS administration/staff.



# I feel comfortable raising concerns and questions with LPS administration/staff.



# Communication

## Parent Comments—Common Themes

### **Strengths**

- Clear, responsive communication.
- Defined points of contact.

### **Areas for Improvements**

- Consistency of response time and follow-through
- Parents' experience of vulnerability when raising concerns/questions



# Communication

## Initial Recommendations

- Examine parent and staff response times and communication methods (email, phone, written communication) to understand what is working and what needs to be improved. (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
- Look at how processes change from elementary school, middle school, and high school that may account for drops in parent satisfaction. (LPS)
- Publish communication paths and response timelines for each school on a yearly basis so that parents know who to contact with questions and concerns, and how to contact them. (LPS)
  - Communication pathways have been developed for all schools and will be updated annually.
- Establish a neutral communication path for parents to address concerns/questions (possibly anonymously) when LPS communication pathways don't succeed, or parents are not comfortable raising concerns with LPS staff members. (LPS and SEPAC/SEPTA)
- Educate parents on legal rights and communication paths for resolving questions and concerns outside of Lexington Public Schools. (SEPAC/SEPTA)

# What aspects of special education in the district do you think are the most effective for your child's development?

## Common themes:

- Quality of staff
- Service Delivery
  - District-wide programs
  - Out-of-District placements
- Communication

“The concept that we all work together as a team to create the best education plan for my child. Staff’s flexibility to modify given material to fit my child’s needs.”

“The fact that my child is in a district-wide program is critical for my child’s success, because the program puts in place an effective baseline of services that can be individualized for my child.”

“Having a SPED teacher who is caring and demonstrates a positive attitude and will work as team with parents...Thank you for helping our child.”

“Small classroom size, one-on-one instruction, properly trained special education staff.”

# What are one or two changes to special education that could be made to better meet the needs of your child?

## Common themes:

- Communication
- Service Delivery
- Administration
- Staff Training/Resources

“An administration that works better with the parents in representing the student’s best interests. An IEP process where everyone was comfortable in representing the student’s best interests.”

“My child had an IEP in place, but the services were sporadic and not actually given. The IEP was only on paper and not implemented.”

“Hire qualified and subject-specific IAs. Educate general education teachers about students on an IEP.”

“More effective communication between staff and parents.”

“Give teachers and counselors appropriate time to do what the IEP stipulates.”