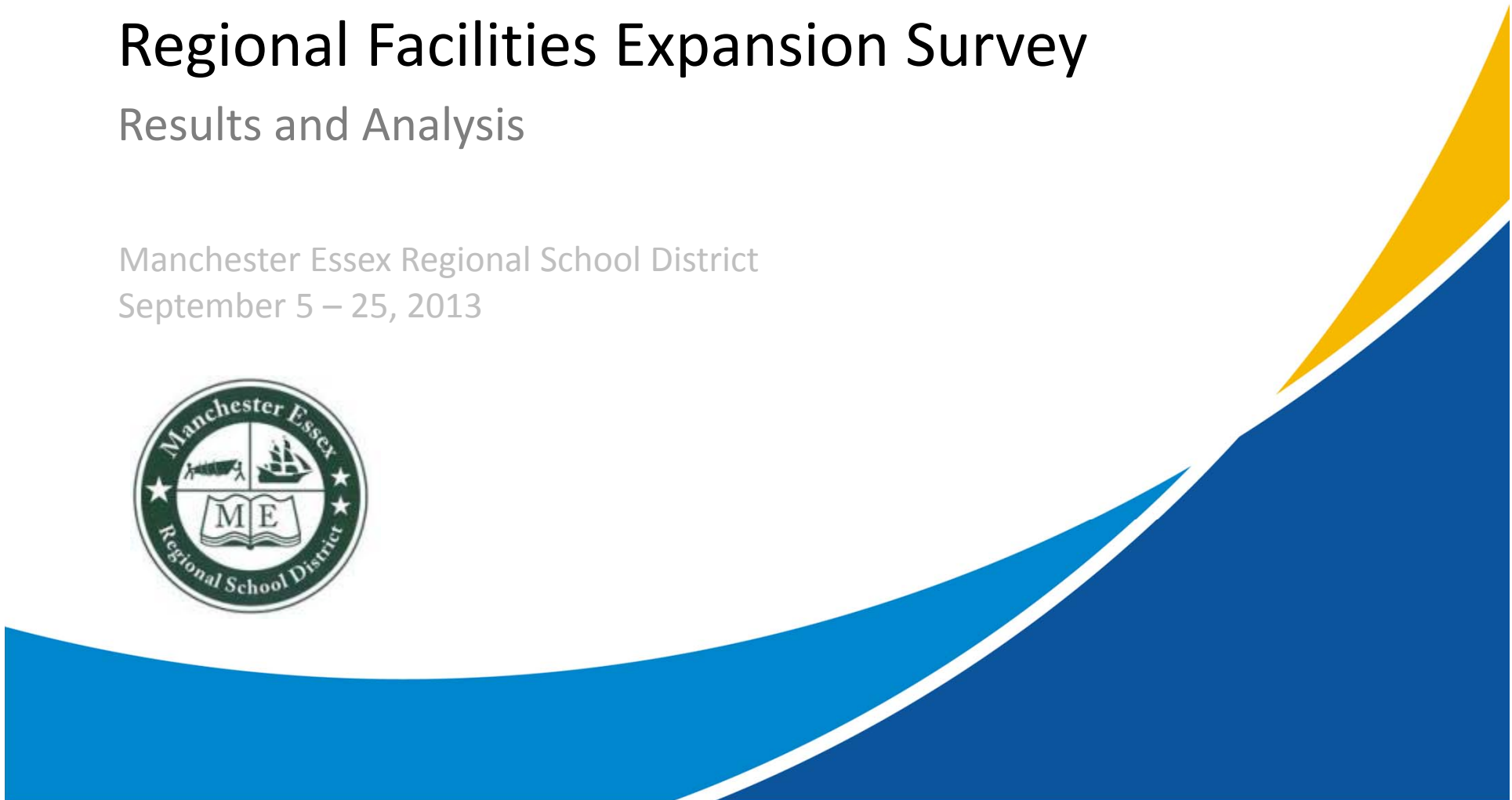


# Regional Facilities Expansion Survey

## Results and Analysis

Manchester Essex Regional School District  
September 5 – 25, 2013



# Overview

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The current state of our elementary facilities is in decline. A recent facilities needs assessment, conducted by Habib & Associates, determined that each of our elementary school buildings has exceeded its useful life, requiring a plan of action to address the structural and programmatic needs of the district.

The annual cost to maintain the Manchester Memorial Elementary, built in 1950, and Essex Elementary, constructed in 1958, is only expected to increase significantly in the short-term. It is, therefore, imperative that MERSD formulate a long-term plan to address our declining elementary school facilities in order to responsibly manage costs and provide students with a safe and environmentally sound learning environment.

The first step in this process is for the School Committee to determine the academic program configuration for the elementary schools. Currently, MERSD utilizes a neighborhood schools model, under which elementary students attend school in their respective towns, in close proximity to their homes.

One plan under consideration is to unify the elementary schools into one community beginning in Kindergarten, similar to our current Pre-Kindergarten and Middle/High School programs. Under this model, Essex and Manchester students would attend school together.

This important policy decision impacts students, parents and the community at-large. In order to determine our future course of action, the School Committee will convene a task force/study committee to review the educational implications of the academic program and gather public input on possible solutions.

# Technical Notes

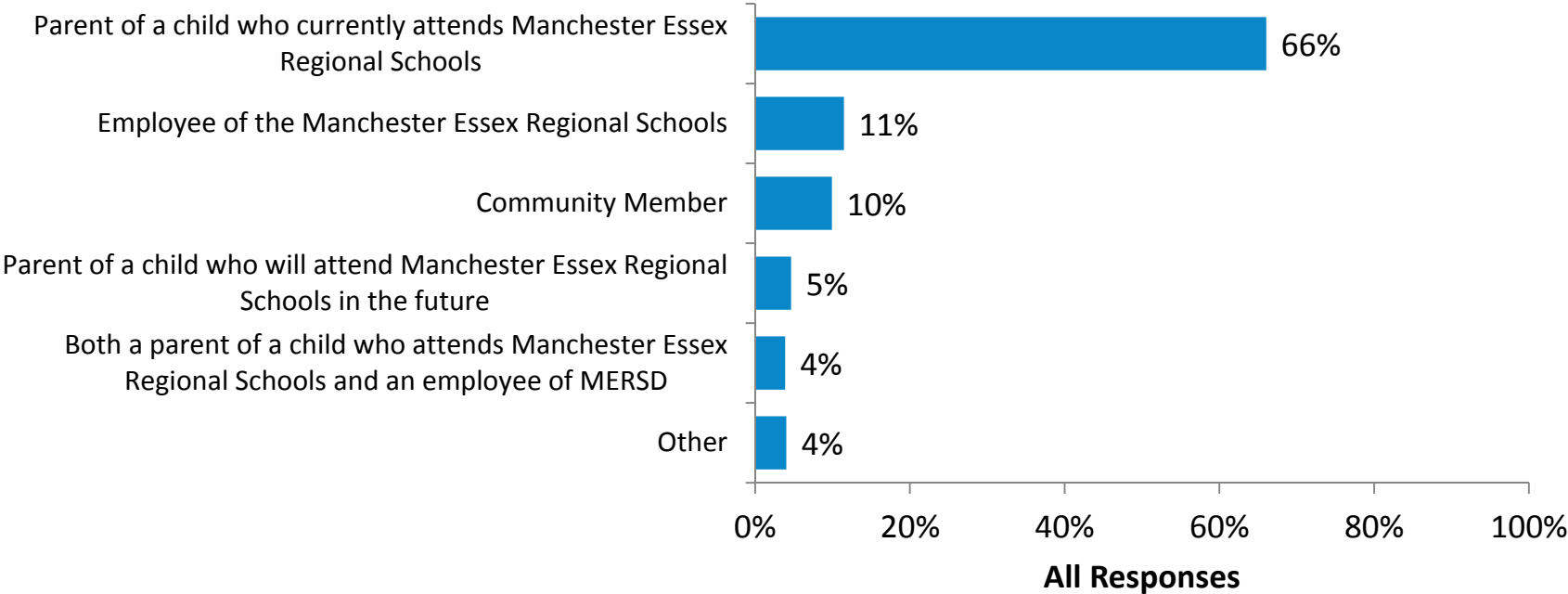
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- The survey could be accessed in three ways:
  - Parents of Manchester Essex Regional Schools students were sent an email with a link to participate.
  - A link to participate was made available on the district's website.
  - An option for submitting an email address to receive an invitation was made available for potential participants.
- The options for potential expansion plans were presented in random order to participants to reduce bias.
- Since results do not reflect random sampling, they should not be generalized to the entire population of community members. Rather, results reflect the perceptions and opinions of those individuals who chose to participate.

# Participation

| Responding Group  | Number of Responses from Email Invitations | Number of Responses from MERSD Website | Total Number of Responses |
|-------------------|--|--|---------------------------|
| Community Members | 347  | 300                                    | 647                       |

## Which of the following best describes you?

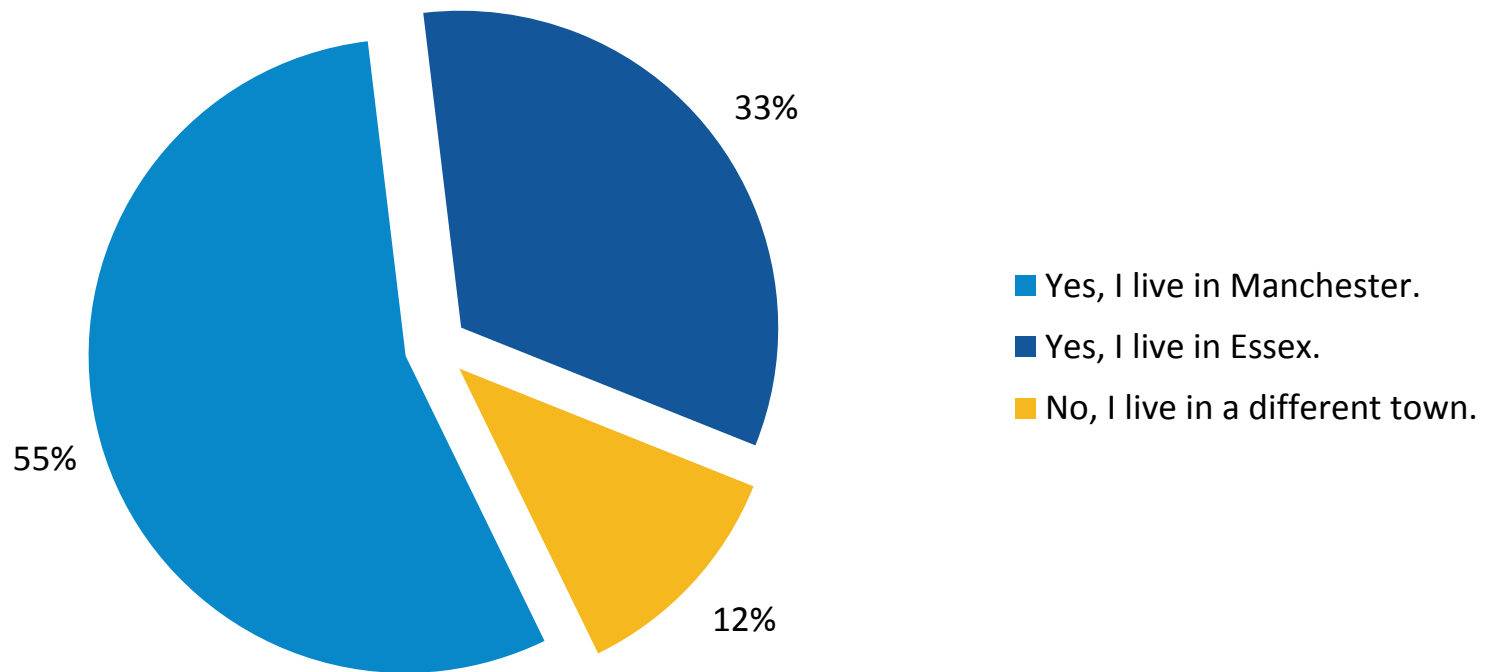


*Note: No evidence of ballot box stuffing present in surveys submitted via the district website.*



# Residence

Do you live in Manchester or Essex? (N=640)

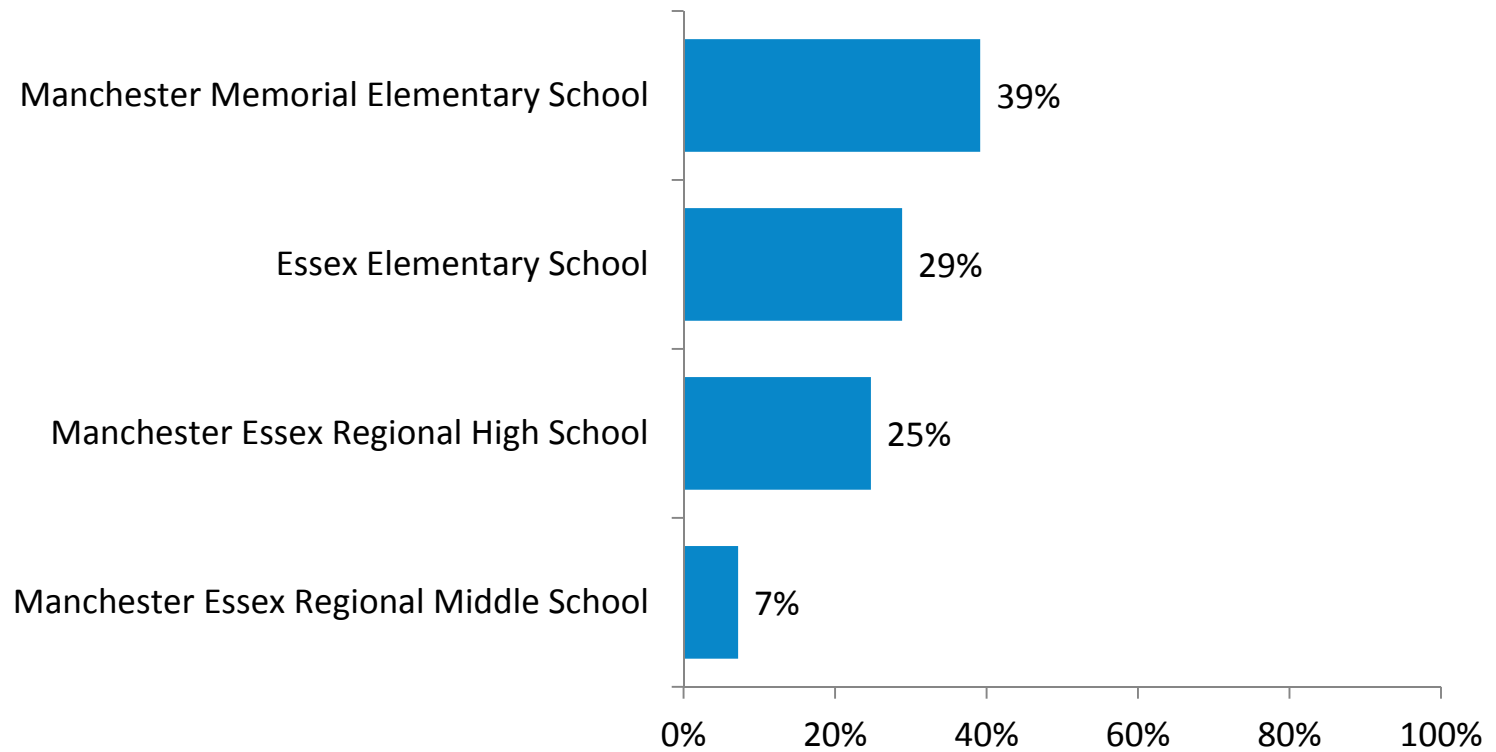


Note: All participants were given the opportunity to answer this question.



# Work Location

In which school do you primarily work? (N=97)

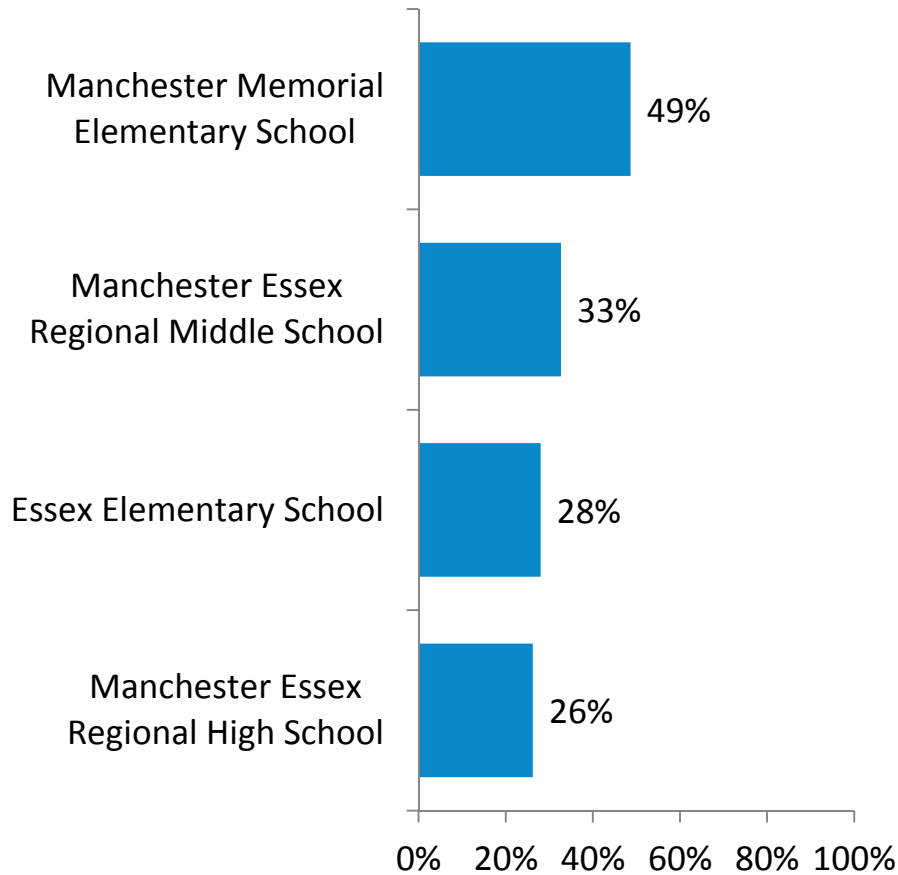


*Note: Only participants who had answered they are an employee of the Manchester-Essex Regional School District were given the opportunity to answer this question.*

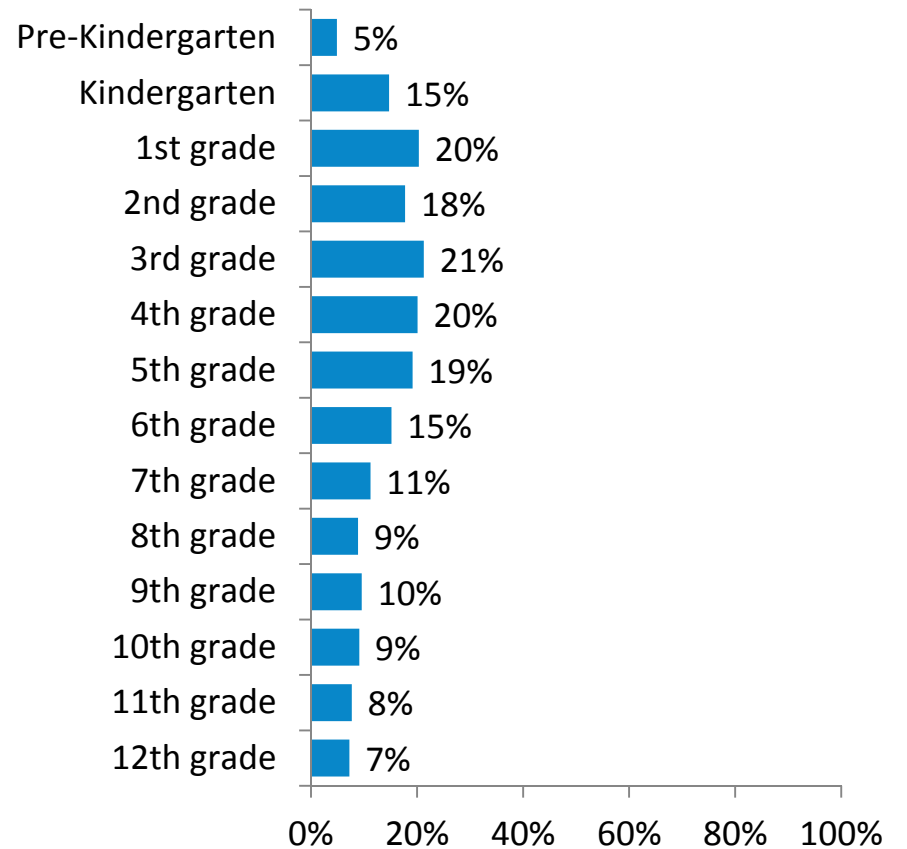


# School and Grade of Current Students

**School Attended (N=450)**



**Grade Level (N=428)**



Notes: Only participants who answered they are the parent of a child who currently attends a Manchester-Essex Regional School were given the opportunity to answer these questions. The sum of percentages may exceed 100% because participants could select more than one response option.

# Transportation and Proximity to School

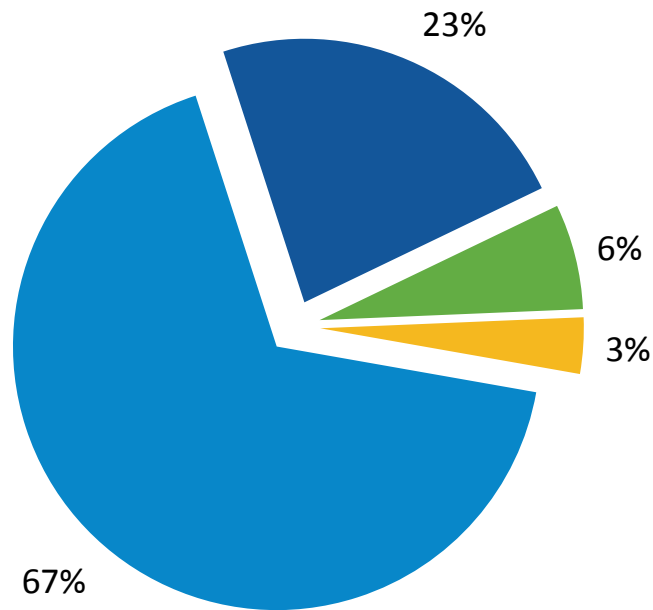
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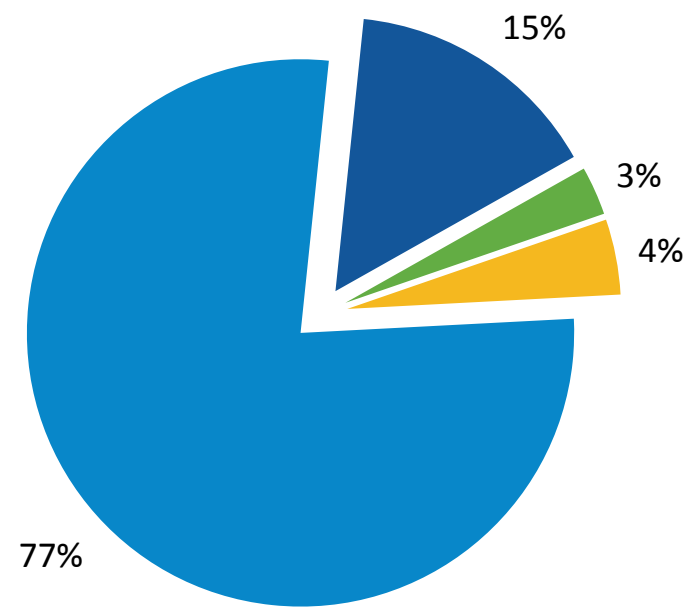
# Proximity to MERSD Elementary Schools

How close do you live to Essex Elementary School? (N=232)



- Less than 2 miles
- 2-5 miles
- 6-10 miles
- More than 10 miles

How close do you live to Manchester Memorial Elementary School? (N=382)



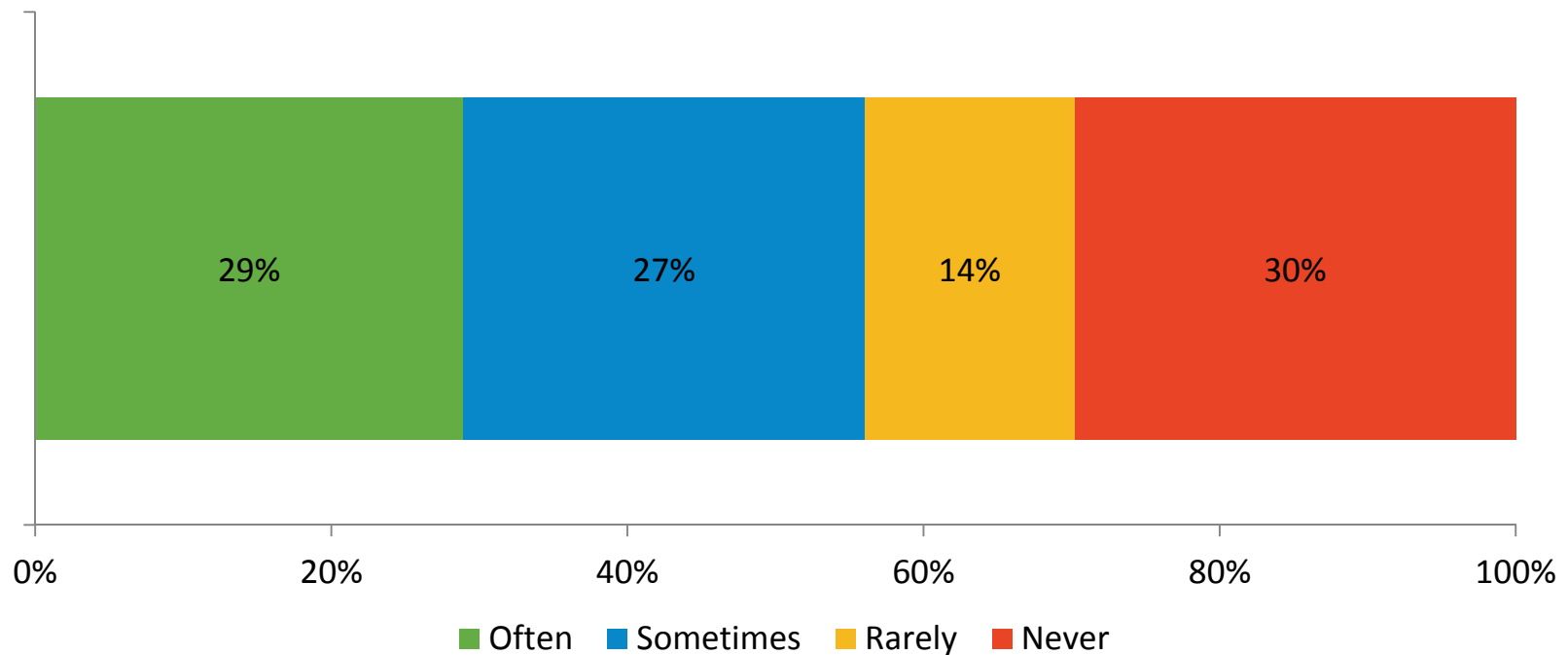
- Less than 2 miles
- 2-5 miles
- 6-10 miles
- More than 10 miles

Note: Only participants who answered that they live in the corresponding town or worked at the corresponding elementary school were given the opportunity to answer this question.



# Children Walked to School

How often do you walk your elementary school child to school? (N=339)



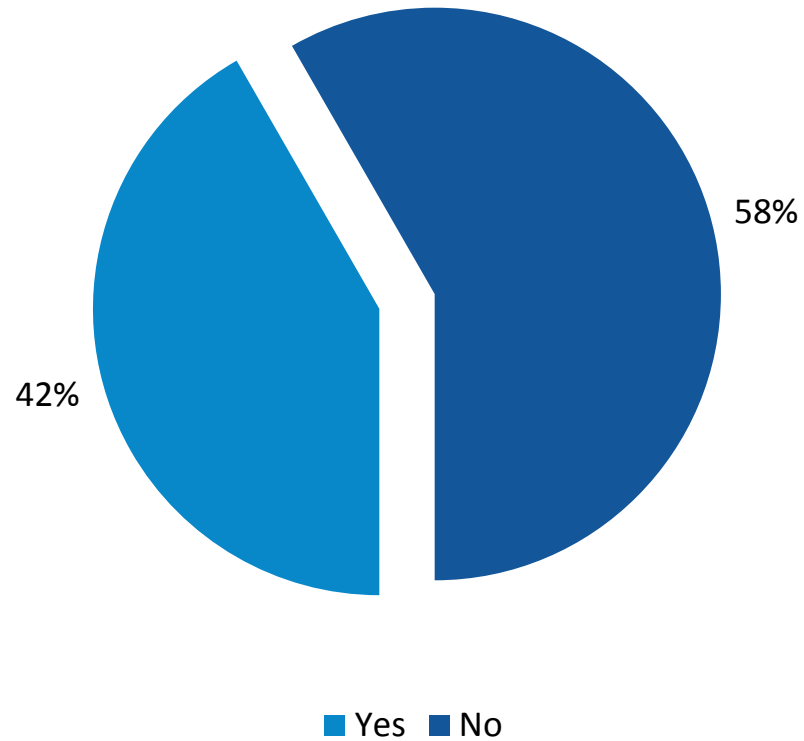
Notes: Only participants who answered they are the parent of a child who currently attends Essex Elementary School or Manchester Memorial Elementary School were given the opportunity to answer this question.



# School Bus Transportation

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Does your elementary school child take the school bus to or from school? (N=331)

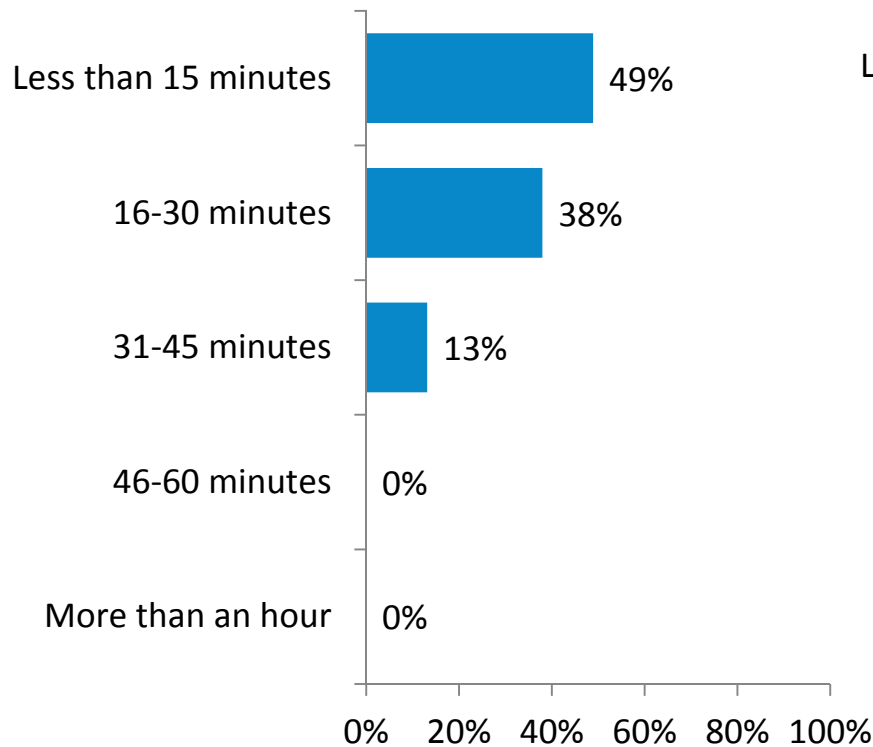


*Notes: Only participants who answered they are the parent of a child who currently attends Essex Elementary School or Manchester Memorial Elementary School were given the opportunity to answer this question.*

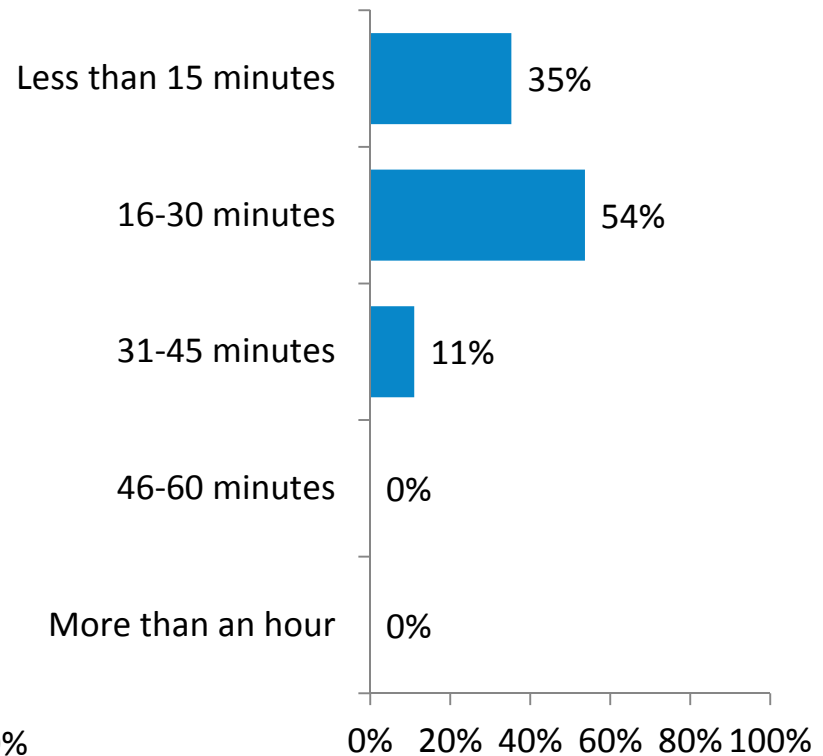


# School Bus Transportation

On average, how long is your elementary school child's bus ride? (N=137)



What is the longest bus ride you would be comfortable with for your elementary school child? (N=136)



Note: Only participants who answered they are the parent of a child who currently attends Essex Elementary School or Manchester Memorial Elementary School and rides the school bus were given the opportunity to answer this question.

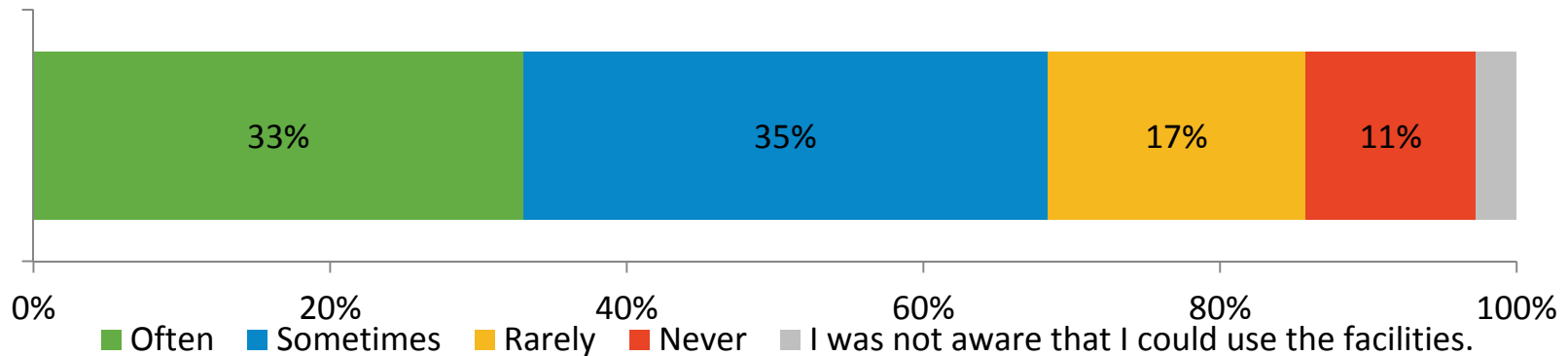
# Use and Perception of Facilities

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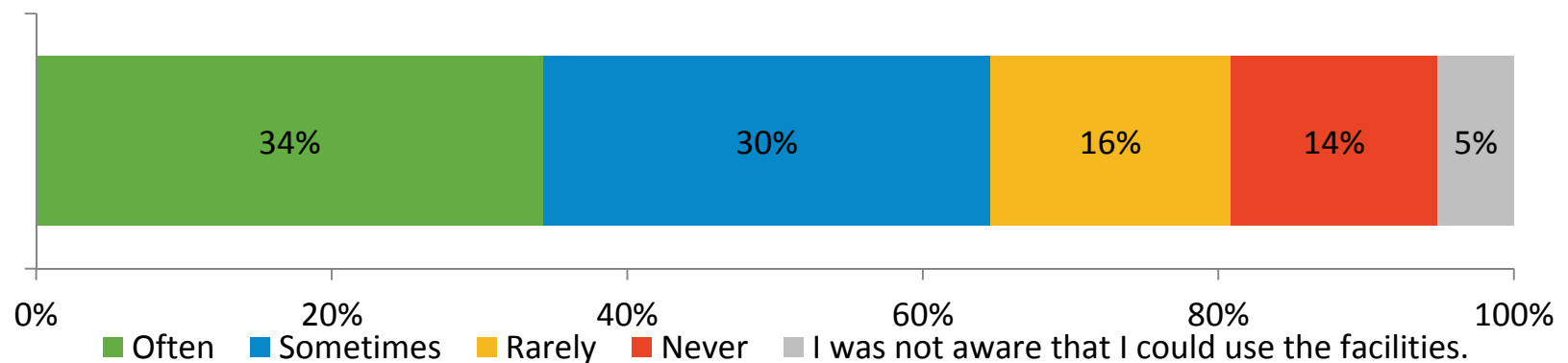


# Facilities at MERSD Elementary Schools

How often do you use the facilities (such as the playground, field or library) at Essex Elementary School when school is not in session? (N=218)



How often do you use the facilities (such as the playground, field or library) at Manchester Memorial Elementary School when school is not in session? (N=370)

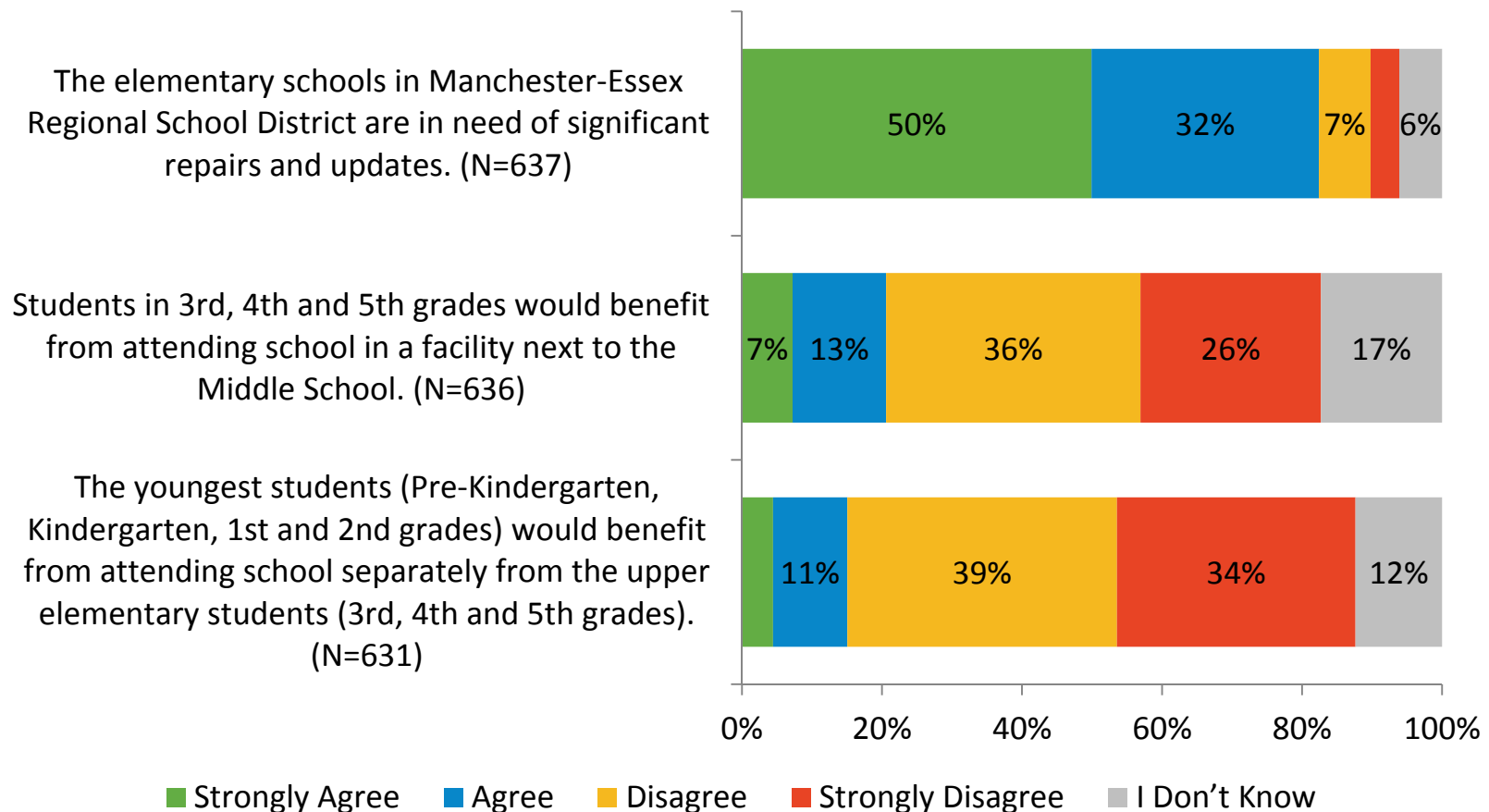


Note: Only participants who answered that they lived in the corresponding town or worked in the corresponding elementary school were given the opportunity to answer this question. Data labels less than 5% not shown.



# Perceptions of Facilities

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

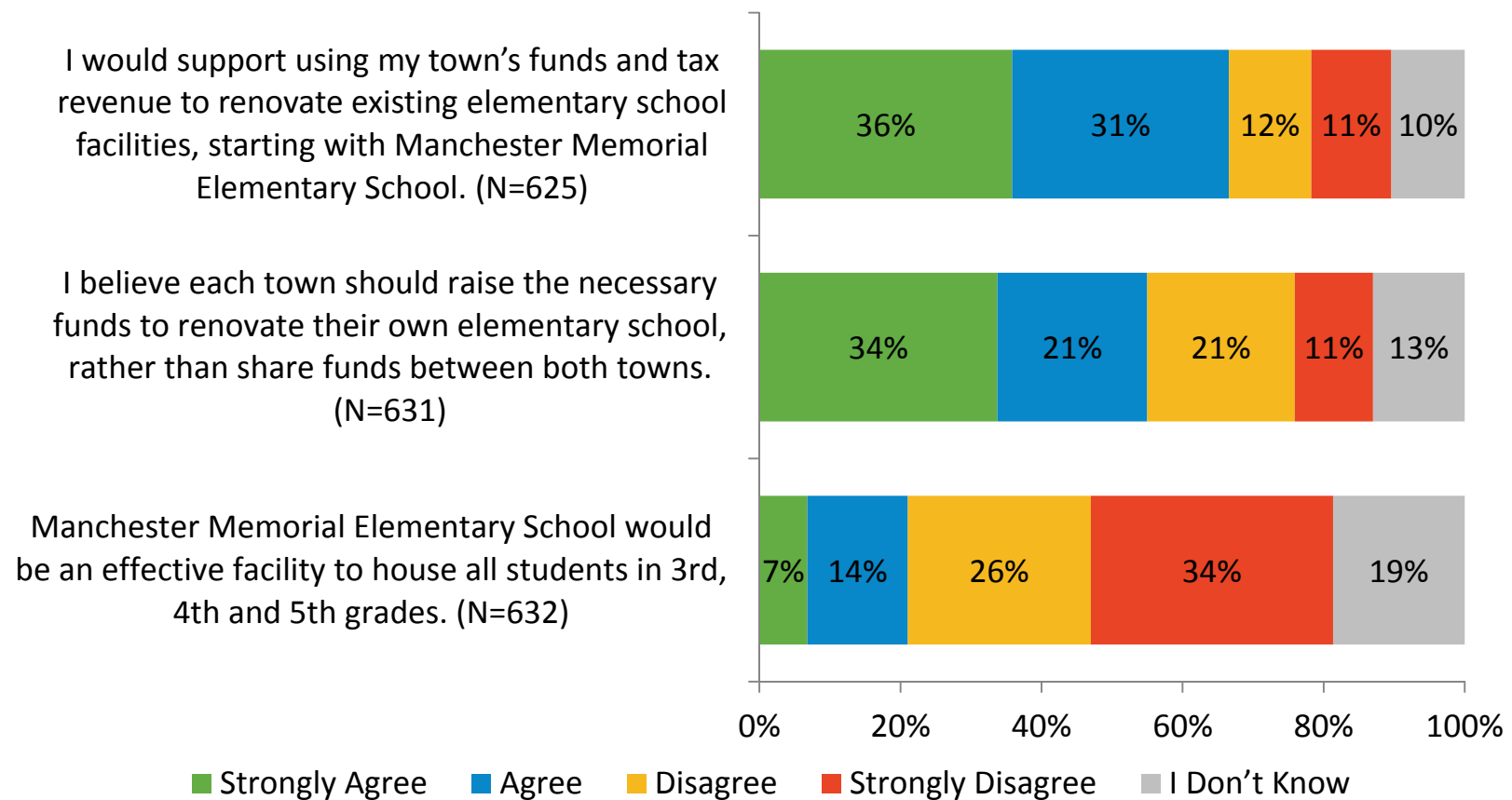


Note: Data labels less than 5% not shown



# Perceptions of Facilities

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

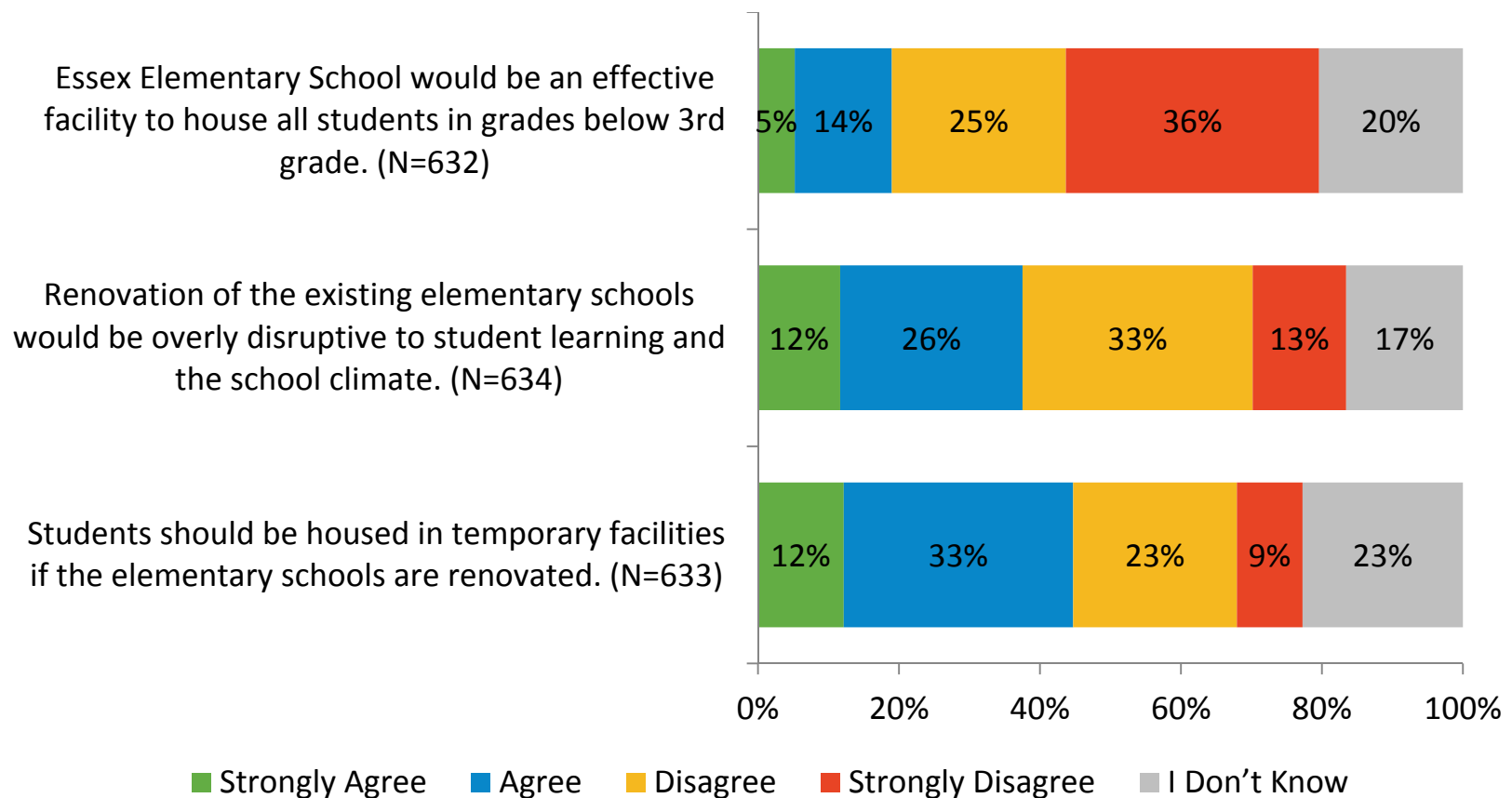






# Perceptions of Facilities

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



# The MERSD Regional Agreement

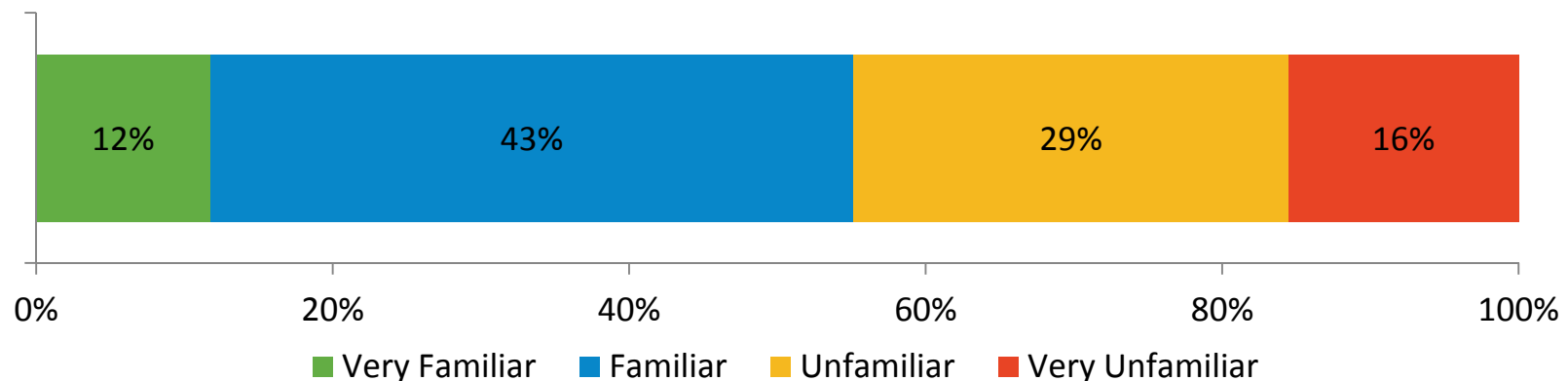
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# Regional Agreement

Survey participants were informed of the following: *"The regional agreement of the Manchester Essex Regional School District requires all plans for expansion and improvements to school facilities to be approved separately by townspeople in both Manchester and Essex. Both towns must approve of all spending, even if the spending will only impact a school in one of the towns. Given the current agreement, the townspeople of Essex must approve any spending used to improve Manchester Memorial Elementary School and vice versa for Essex Elementary School."*

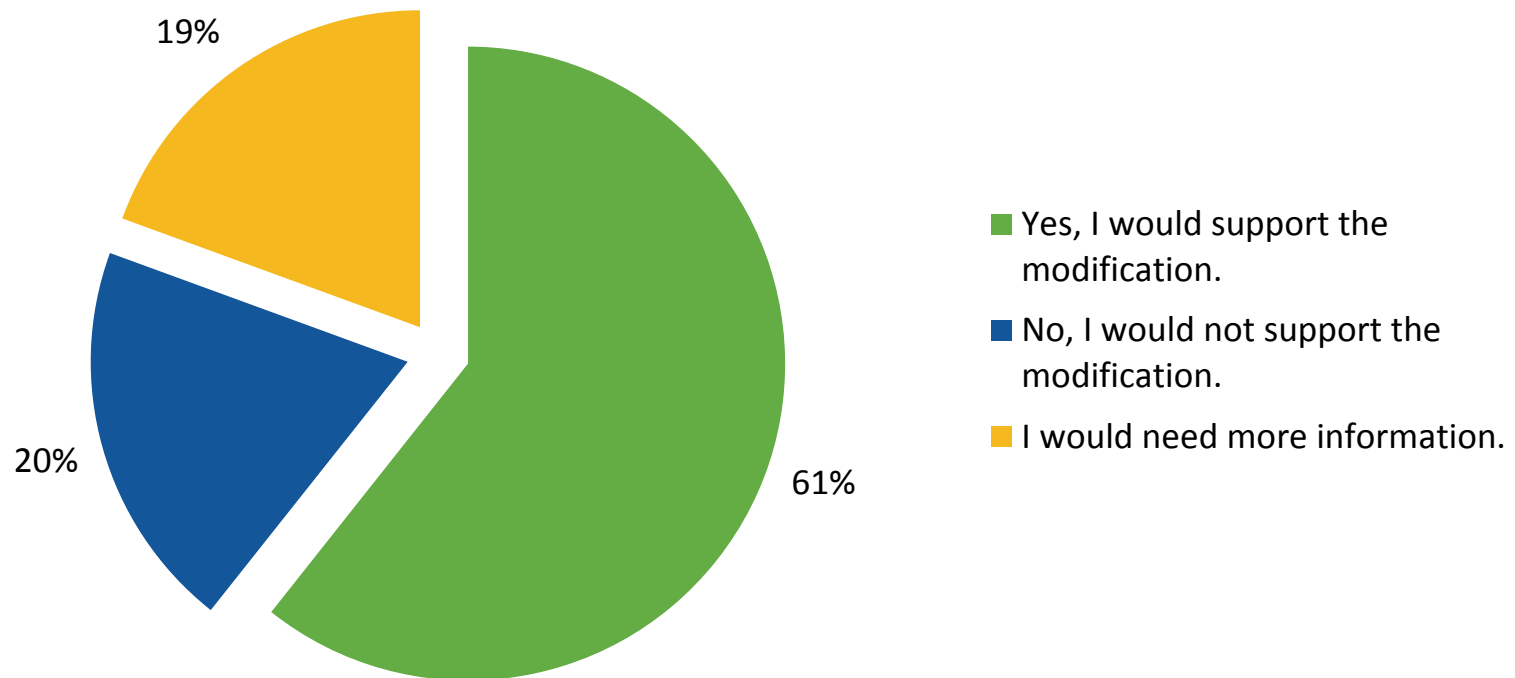
Before participating in this survey, how familiar were you with this aspect of the regional agreement? (N=631)





# Support of Modification

If the regional agreement were modified so that each town could approve or reject spending separately for the school building in their town, would you support this modification? (N=628)





# Additional Information About Modification

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Nineteen percent of participants said that they would need more information when asked if they would support a modification to the regional agreement.

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## Results from Thematic Analysis (N=62)

Many participants commented that they wanted to receive more information about how renovations or new construction would be funded, particularly any state or federal funds that would be available.

Many participants commented that they are concerned that changes to the Regional Agreement could have effects outside of funding for each of the elementary schools. They requested more details on what those potential effects would be.

Several participants stated that they would need a lot more detail about the current Regional Agreement and the current state of both elementary schools before they could form an opinion.

Several participants wrote that they are concerned that separate funding streams for the elementary schools could lead to a disparity in the quality of education provided at the two schools.

# Support for Potential Expansion

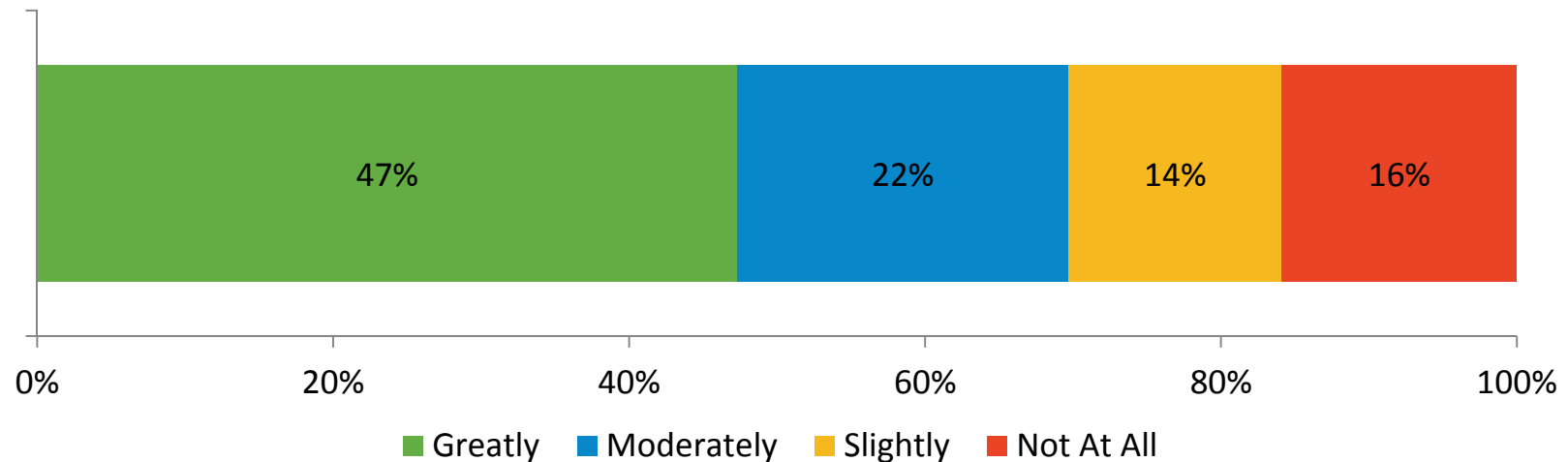
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# Potential Expansion Plans

One possibility would be to continue using the two elementary schools in their current condition, with students attending the school in the town in which they live. The regional agreement would be modified so that each town would vote on the renovations and funding separately.

How much do you support this plan? (N=617)

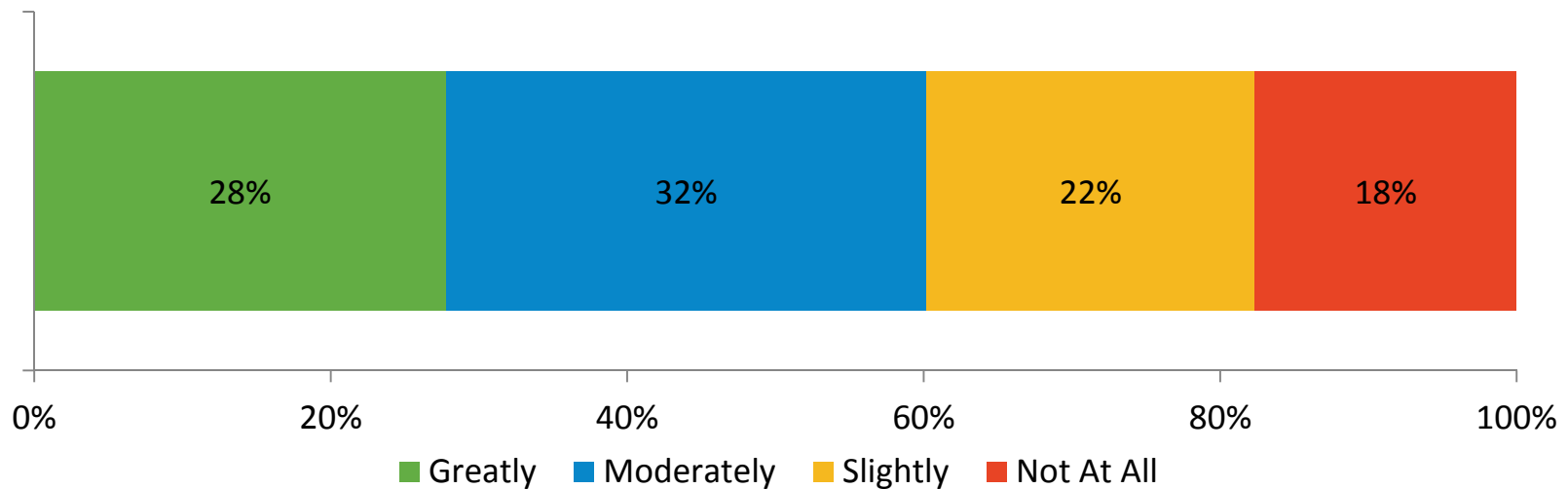




# Potential Expansion Plans

One possibility would be to continue using the two elementary schools in their current condition, with students attending the school in the town in which they live. Renovations would be required in both schools, with Manchester Memorial Elementary School obtaining the majority of the renovations at the onset. Renovations would need to be approved by townspeople in both towns.

How much do you support this plan? (N=623)



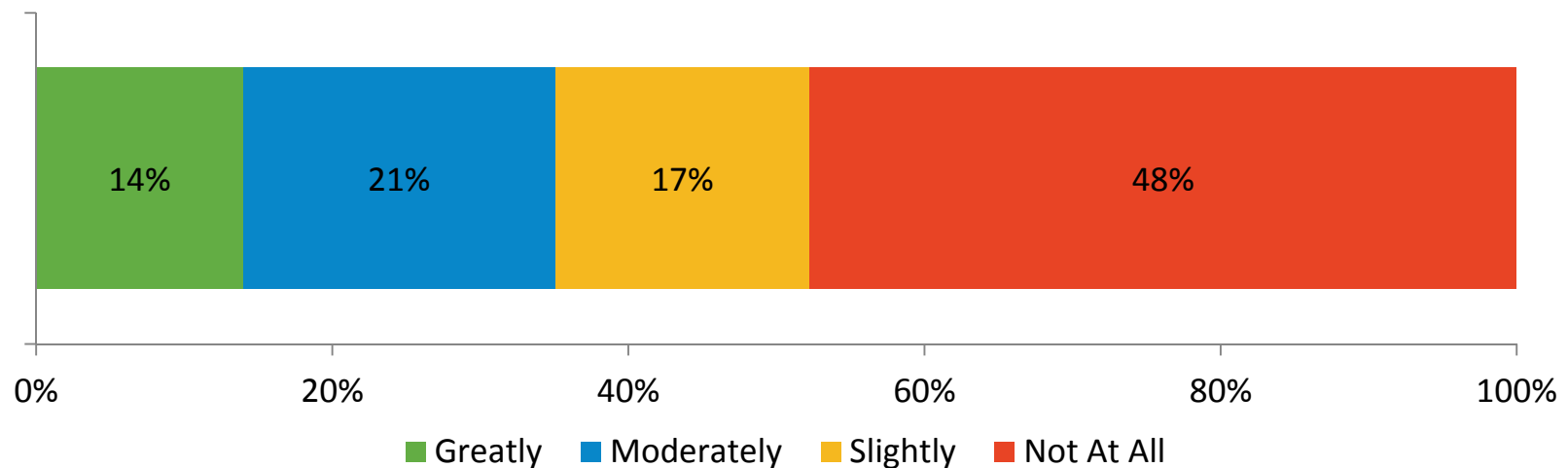




# Potential Expansion Plans

One possibility would be to build a new regional facility to house all elementary students (Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade). The location of the new school would be determined based on the input from a planning committee that includes community members from both towns. The Essex Elementary School and the Manchester Memorial Elementary School facilities would be assessed, and the town would determine future use of each building.

How much do you support this plan? (N=622)

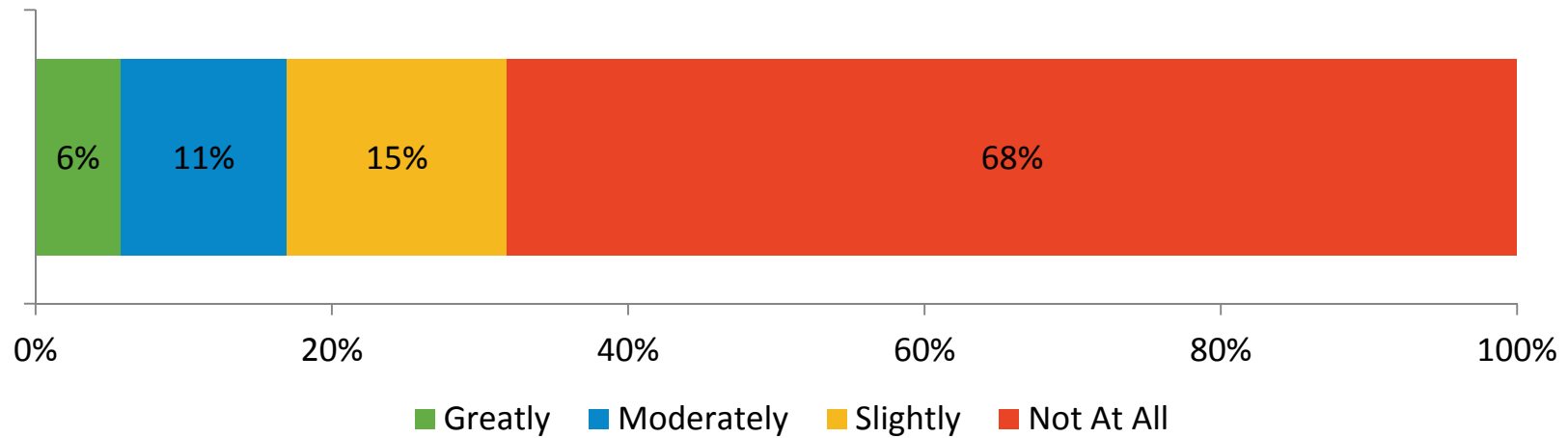




# Potential Expansion Plans

One possibility would be to reassign elementary students based on their grade levels. Pre-Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades would attend school together in the building currently occupied by Essex Elementary School; 3rd, 4th and 5th grades would attend school together in the building currently occupied by Manchester Memorial Elementary School. Since an extensive amount of renovations would be required in both schools, the plan would need to be approved by townspeople in both towns.

How much do you support this plan? (N=625)

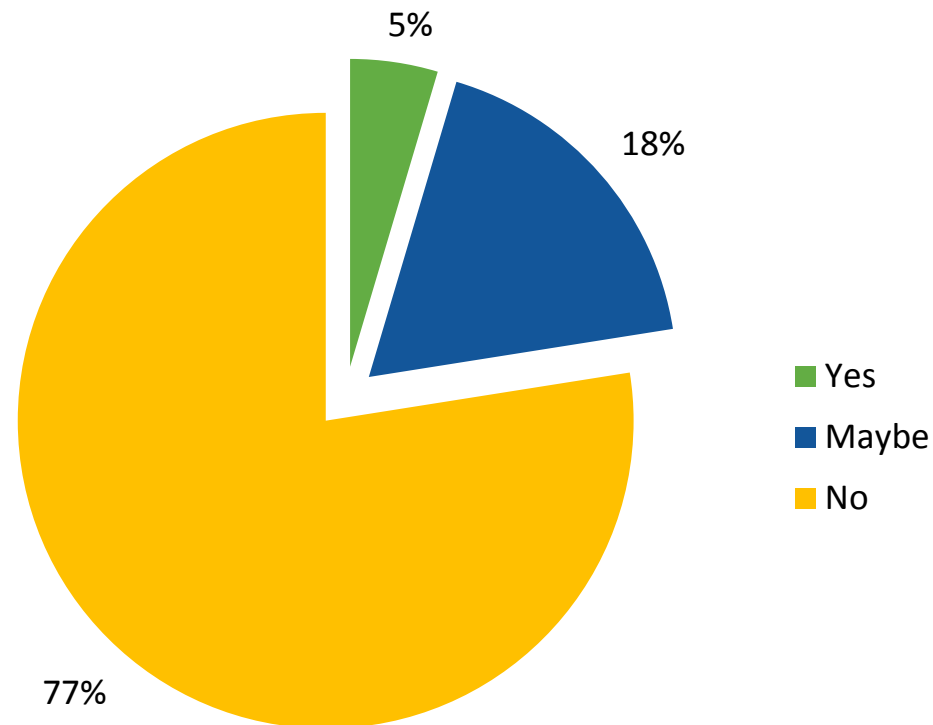




# Task Force/Study Committee

In the coming weeks, the School Committee will convene a task force/study committee to review the educational implications of the academic program and gather public input on possible solutions.

Are you interested in serving on this task force/study committee? (N=631)



Note: Contact information was collected for the 123 participants who responded "Yes" or "Maybe."



# Additional Issues and Concerns

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What additional issues or concerns do you have regarding the elementary school facilities in the Manchester Essex Regional School District?

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## Results from Thematic Analysis (N=248)

Survey participants commented most often that having a neighborhood school is important to a community.

Survey participants wrote that they have concerns for how the work would be funded since it would be a financial burden on the local residents.

Survey participants commented that elementary school students benefit from attending a smaller neighborhood school in terms of transportation, individual attention and strong community ties.

# Conclusions

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## Highlights

- Given student enrollment, parent participation was evenly distributed across both elementary schools
- Overwhelming understanding of the need for significant renovations of elementary school facilities
- Both communities strongly prefer to maintain and improve their neighborhood schools
- Lack of clarity around separate versus shared funding by both towns

## Next Steps

- Share results publically and post report on district website
- Cross-reference results by holding two focus groups in November
- Investigate funding mechanisms and potential impact on the regional agreement
- Charge Task Force to synthesize information and provide recommendations to School Committee

K12 *Insight* is a technology and communications firm that helps school district leadership better engage in conversations with parents, teachers, staff, students and the general public on critical district issues.

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