



State of School Safety Report 2019
Safe and Sound Schools

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Introduction

While schools are objectively very safe places—and, according to available data¹ – safer today than in years past—in the United States, there are many concerns about the level and quality of safety in school systems. There are questions of whether or not stakeholders in schools have a strong understanding of the existing precautions and if these precautions are effective. *Safe and Sound Schools* aims to demystify these perceptions by conducting research through nationally-fielded surveys, conducted with support from faculty and students at Boston University College of Communication.

Safe and Sound Schools is a national nonprofit organization founded by Michele Gay and Alissa Parker, two Sandy Hook mothers who lost their daughters in the tragic shooting on December 14, 2012. The organization’s mission is to support school crisis preparedness, response, and recovery, and to protect every school and every student, every day. *Safe and Sound Schools* delivers crisis-prevention, response, and recovery programs, tools, and resources, backed by national experts across six key areas: mental and behavioral health; health and wellness; physical environment; school law, policy, and finance; culture, climate, and community; and operations and emergency management. *Safe and Sound Schools* continues to answer the growing needs of school communities with custom programs, assessments, and training through the Safe and Sound Institute, reaching schools in every U.S. state, as well as 133 countries.

The inaugural *State of School Safety Report*, conducted in 2018, collected and analyzed perceptions of school safety from 2,870 parents, students, educators, and community members. This study found disparities between stakeholder groups:

- Students generally felt unheard and that potential school safety issues were overlooked.
- There is a lack of clear communication between educators and other stakeholder groups.
- While educators, overall, felt more confident in their school’s ability to handle potential safety issues, other stakeholders felt less prepared.
- While most stakeholders felt that schools had sufficient funds to increase school safety precautions, educators felt the opposite.
- There is a lack of awareness of safety issues in schools with fewer than 500 students.

All of these findings can be traced to a lack of communication between administrations and stakeholders.

¹ Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 2018, from the [Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics](#).

With this second survey and a better understanding of how stakeholders perceive school safety, *Safe and Sound Schools* is furthering its mission and providing more insights to help educators, parents, staff, students, and community members to protect schools and students.

The *2019 State of School Safety* survey measured current views on safety and sought to capture any changes in school safety perceptions. The research questions for the survey, designed in collaboration with students and faculty at Boston University College of Communication, were:

- R1: What changes around school safety opinions/attitudes/perceptions have occurred?
- R2: What level of understanding do stakeholders have surrounding school safety protocols?
- R3: How willing are stakeholders to get involved in improving school safety independently and with administrators?
- R4: As school safety protocols evolve, do stakeholders – especially students – feel their thoughts and opinions are being heard as school safety protocols evolve?

Michael Dorn, Executive Director,
Safe Havens, International, Inc.

“This report covers a lot of very important topical areas. Surveying the various stakeholder groups with comparison between their viewpoints is very helpful. Seeing alignment is great reinforcement when it is there, and disconnects can be extremely helpful for readers to step back and check their assumptions.”

Methodology

To address these research questions, five surveys were conducted for each stakeholder group: students in grades 6-12; parents of school-aged children; educators; public safety officials (police, fire, and emergency responders); and general community members (adults without a direct connection to a school). Each of these groups has a direct interest in school safety and are the same stakeholders assessed in 2018.

While some survey questions remained consistent from 2018 to 2019, the new survey did not repeat all questions. Given the evolution of school safety, new dimensions and topics were added.

The online survey questionnaire was conducted from March 8 to April 7, 2019, utilizing skip-through questions to cater to each stakeholder. *Safe and Sound Schools* promoted the survey to all *Safe and Sound School* online community members, partner organizations, and the general public through social media advertising (see the Acknowledgements section of this report for a list of organizations who helped promote the survey).

While there were no demographic or role quotas defined in advance, the survey received a total of 3,383 responses (46 percent were educators; 21 percent were parents; 18 percent were students; 8 percent were general community members; and 7 percent were public safety officials). A detailed report on participant demographics is available on page 27
Variables assessed by the survey included:

Demographics

- Age, Gender, Race/Ethnicity
- School Size, School Type (public, private, charter), and District (urban, suburban, rural)
- Grade Level (of responding students or grades of students served)
- Location

Attitudes toward school safety

- Satisfaction towards safety precautions
- Experience with school safety
- Resource awareness

Staff behaviors in school

- Employment history
- Safety training
- Knowledge/use of updated safety protocols

Perceptions of school safety

- Level of safety felt in school
- Level of parent comfort in sending children to school
- Preparedness, in the event of a school safety threat
- Perceptions of other students' behavior

Summary of Findings

Combined with findings from *Safe and Sound Schools'* work with national experts, school administrators, teachers, support staff, school-based mental health and wellness professionals, students, teachers, and public safety experts, the survey results identify several school safety issues that need to be addressed:

- Increase communication and collaboration with students, specifically:
 - The inclusion of students in school safety planning, and
 - Ensuring student knowledge of and access to mental health support.
- Ensure that educators' optimism about school safety expertise does not perpetuate a false sense of security about safety preparedness.
- Ensure that students' awareness of danger does not impede their overall well-being and education.
- Expand parent involvement and communication about safety.
- Expand the concept of mental health in overall school safety.
- Develop truly comprehensive understandings of school safety and cross-functional teams that include, both, internal and external stakeholders.

The general findings are consistent with other research on this topic, such as a March 2019 poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The AP-NORC Center results identified similar concerns about overall safety perceptions and the connection to bullying.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to school safety, *Safe and Sound Schools* hopes every community member can use this report to begin conversations and make progress toward increasing the safety and security of their schools. If the survey findings resonate for your community, you have a good starting point. If they differ, we invite you to launch a fact-finding mission to understand the differences, which will inform your next steps.

Results

Safety Preparedness

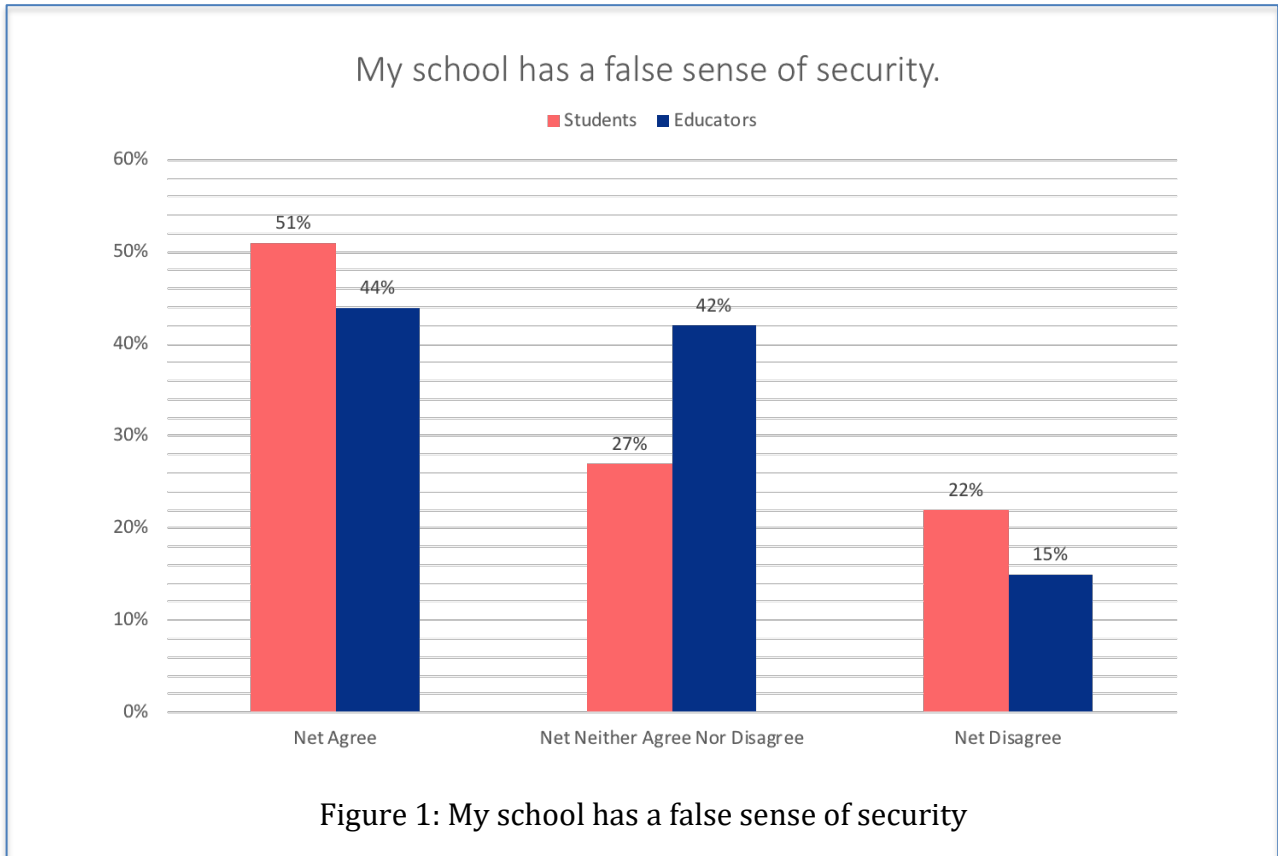
Both educators and students were asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree with the following statement, *“My school has a false sense of security.”* Half of the students (51 percent) strongly agreed with the statement, whereas educators were divided between agreeing (44 percent) and neither agreeing nor disagreeing (42 percent) in 2019 (see Figure 1).

On the other hand, 22 percent of students and 15 percent of educators surveyed disagreed with this statement, indicating these respondents feel the school has an appropriate level of concern about school safety.

The high degree of uncertainty (27 percent and 42 percent) in 2019 tells us that there is a lot to be done to improve communication and awareness about the steps schools are (or are not) taking to improve safety from both physical and psychological perspectives.

Comparison with the 2018 survey results:

The 2018 survey explored this dimension with a different construct. It asked the degree to which the phrase *“I feel like the school has a false sense of security that things that are happening around the country couldn’t happen here”* describes their school or child’s school. The 2018 survey also found more students than educators agreeing with the statement.



Safety Threats

All stakeholders were asked to identify from a list of 10 issues the top-three threats they were most concerned about in schools. For context, in 2018, it was no surprise that, in light of the Parkland shooting, “An active shooter in the school” was the top concern for all four groups (47 percent of parents, 52 percent of students, 58 percent of educators, 37 percent of the public). News coverage makes active shooter threats seem more common. Media coverage kept active shooter risks front and center as a public concern in 2018. This is despite the marked contrast to reality, specifically that suicide rates far outpace homicide rates in school, according to the CDC’s 2017 [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) (the most-current version of the survey).

The 2019 results suggest an evolving story, where we see mental health emergencies (which included suicide and self harm in the survey) rising to the top of concerns for many stakeholder groups (see Table 1 for top-three concerns, and Figure 2 for full results).

Mental health was the top concern among educators, public safety officials, and the general public members surveyed, but not for parents or students. The top concern for surveyed parents and students was an active shooter threat.

Secondary concerns were bullying and an intruder for educators and parents, where students chose mental health emergencies, and public safety officials and community members ranked active shooters.

The third-most concerning threat for responding public safety officials and students were intruder in the school, mental health emergency for parents, active shooter for educators, and drug/alcohol abuse for community members.

Stakeholder Group	Top Concern(s)	Second Concern(s)	Third Concern(s)
Community Members	Mental Health Emergency AND Bullying	Active Shooter	Drug/Alcohol Abuse
Public Safety Officials	Mental Health Emergency	Active Shooter	Intruder
Educators	Mental Health Emergency	Bullying AND Intruder	Active Shooter
Students	Active Shooter	Mental Health Emergencies	Intruder
Parents	Active Shooter	Bullying AND Intruder	Mental Health Emergency

Table 1: Top-three concerns about safety threats

When comparing specific results by stakeholder group in the 2019 survey with the 2018 survey, we found (see Figure 2):

- Parents who responded to the 2019 survey were most concerned about an active shooter in the school (20 percent) and an intruder in the school or a bullying incident (18 percent each). These are the same top-three concerns parents reported in the 2018 survey.
- Students responding to the 2019 survey were most concerned about an active shooter in the school (19 percent), a mental health emergency (17 percent), and intruder in the school (12 percent). In 2018, students ranked active shooter as first, followed by an intruder, and then mental health, indicating a higher concern for mental health by students in 2019.
- Educators responding in 2019 were most concerned about a mental health emergency (20 percent) and an intruder in the school or a bullying incident both (18 percent each). In 2018, educators ranked active shooter, then intruder in the school, then mental health emergency. This shift in thinking by educators suggests increased knowledge among educators about the importance of mental and behavioral health.
- Community members responding to the survey in 2019 were most concerned about mental health emergencies and bullying (18 percent each), followed by active shooter (17 percent). In 2018, community members ranked active shooter, then intruder in the school, followed by bullying.
- Public Safety officials responding in 2019 were most concerned about a mental health emergency (19 percent), followed by an active shooter in the school (18 percent) and then an intruder in the school (14 percent). This cohort was not surveyed separately in 2018.

When compared to the 2018 survey, the 2019 results point to better understanding of mental and behavioral health, and their contribution to creating a safe school environment, among educators, public safety officials, and the general community. It is interesting to note that parents, who are the most responsible for mental health, and students, who are ones to experience a mental health emergency, are more worried about the perceived risk of an external threat that is statistically unlikely to occur.

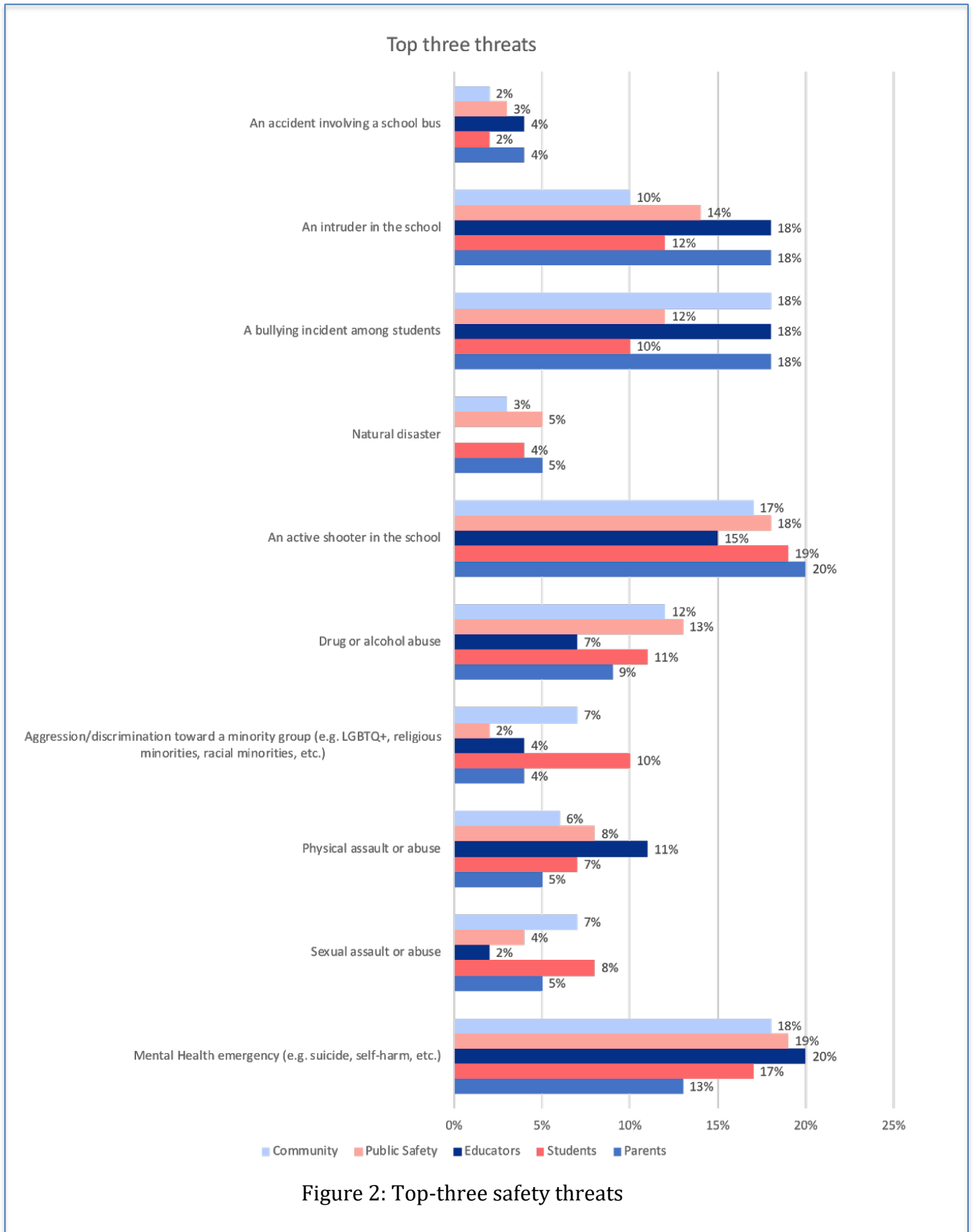
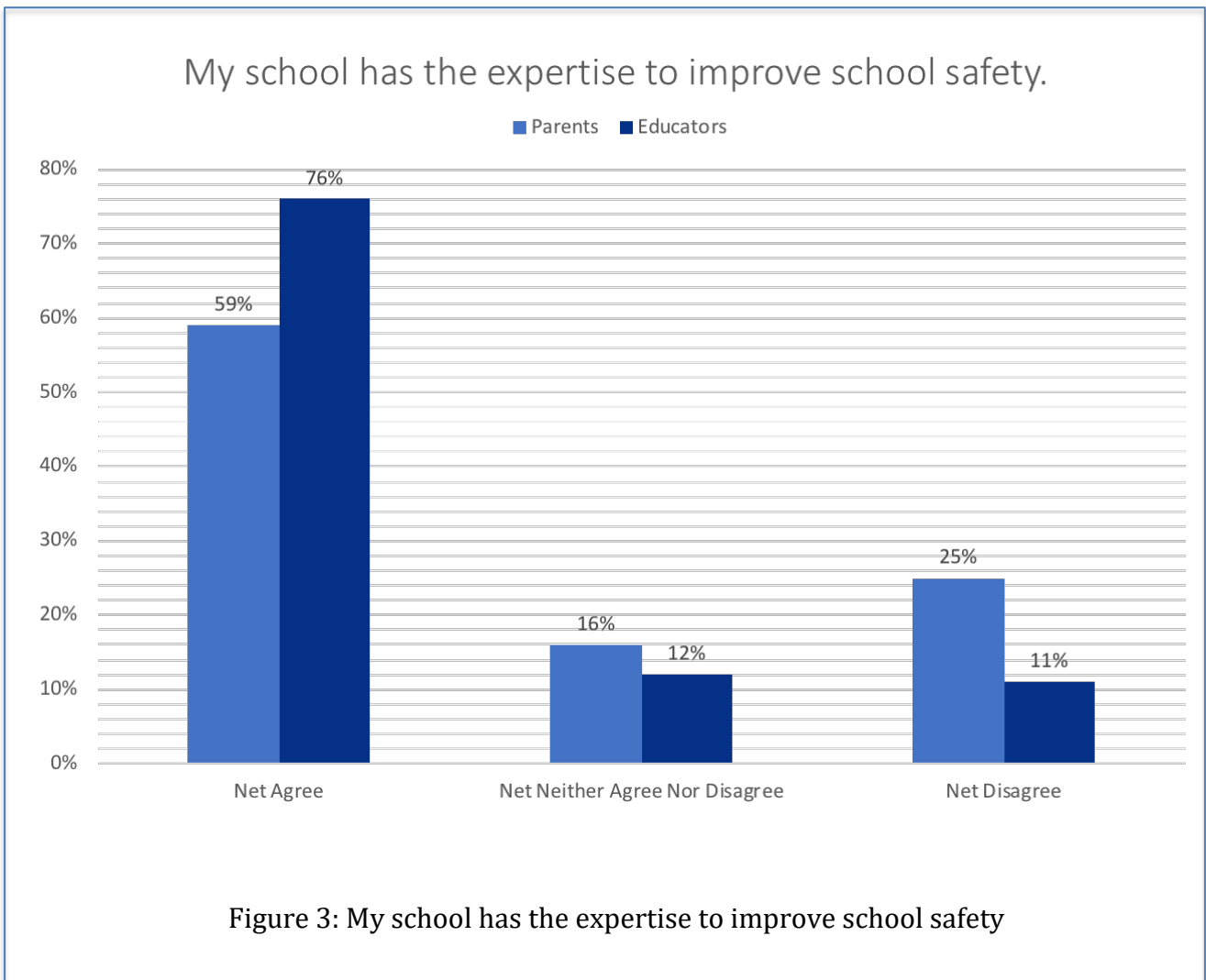


Figure 2: Top-three safety threats

Expertise to Improve School Safety

Parents (59 percent) and educators (76 percent) responding to the 2019 survey agreed that schools have the expertise to improve school safety. The 2019 survey also found 25 percent of parents disagreed and 11 percent of educators disagreed (see Figure 3). These findings are consistent with the CDC’s 2017 [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) that has shown a significant reduction in student behaviors related to school violence, which suggests schools have demonstrated expertise in responding to concerning student behaviors.

Compared to 2018, when only 11 percent of parents disagreed about schools having the necessary expertise, there was a significant rise in uncertainty among parents surveyed in 2019. This could be attributed to a communication gap where parents just are not aware, or to a parent’s fear for the safety of their children. It could also be due to parents’ increased awareness and scrutiny about school and student safety, and as more informed parents become involved, we may say an increased rate of disagreement.

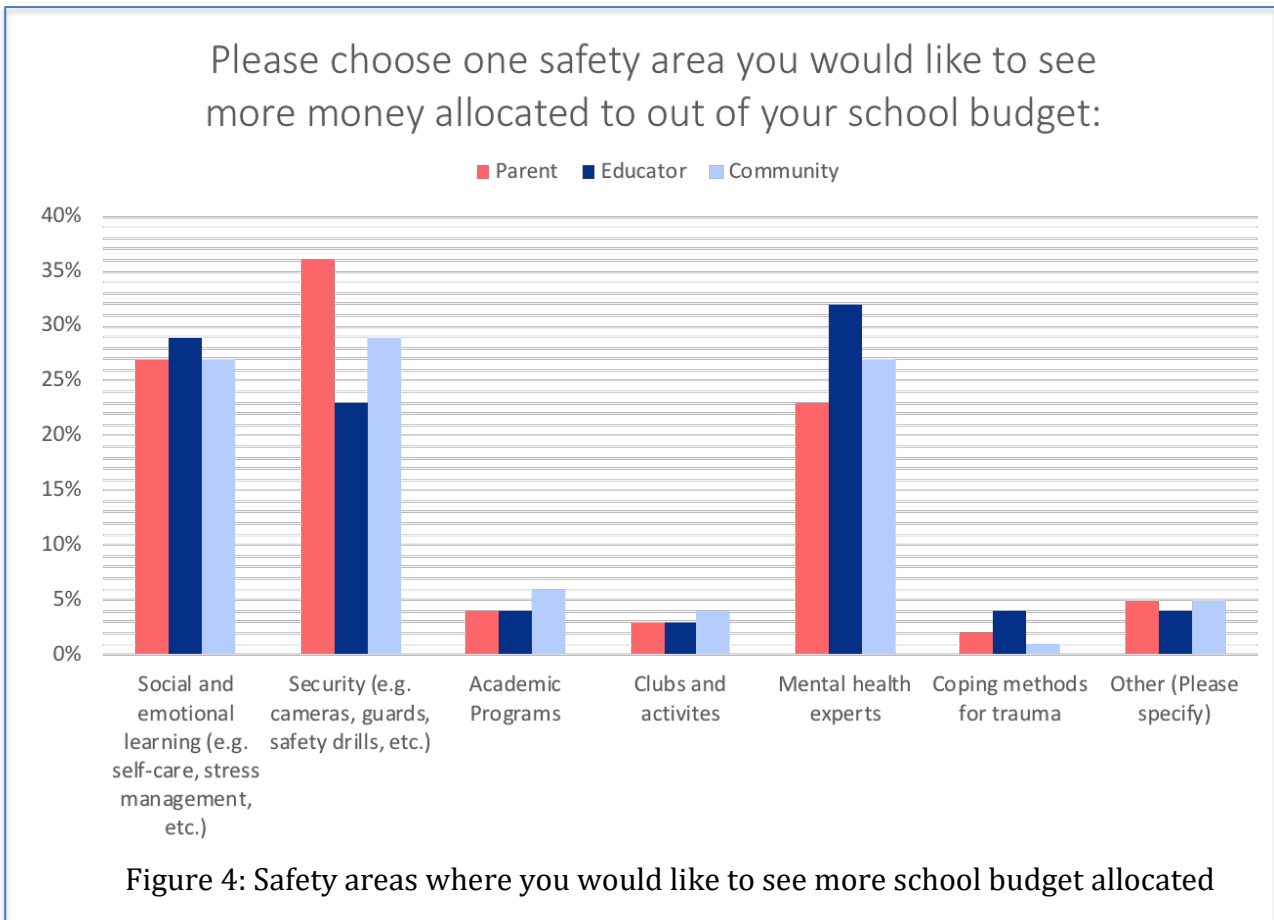


Budget Allocation

In 2018, both parents and educator respondents felt their school could benefit from additional finances to improve school safety. The 2019 survey dove more deeply to pinpoint perceptions of where additional financial allocations should be focused.

The 2019 survey asked parents, educators, and the general community to identify **one** safety area they would like to receive more allocations from their school budgets. Options included social and emotional learning, security, academic programs, clubs and activities, mental health experts, coping methods for trauma, and other (see Figure 4).

All respondents prioritized three main categories that need more financial resources: social and emotional learning, mental health experts, and security. Looking more closely, educators prioritized mental health experts and social and emotional learning over security, whereas parents prioritized security. Community member priorities were more evenly distributed among the three. Of note, all three stakeholder groups clustered around social emotional learning at the same rate even though it was not the top priority. The most prevalent responses to “other” (chosen at in less than 5 percent within all three groups) included armed personnel in school (despite having the option of “security”).



Reunification

The 2019 survey asked educators, students, and parents how comfortable they felt with the procedures of reuniting families after an incident. Educators overall agreed that they know how to reunite students with their families after a school safety incident (78 percent).

However, roughly half of parents and students offered that they did not know how to reunite with their family after a school safety incident. In both cases, they were more likely to disagree that they knew how to find their family after a safety incident (see Figure 5). This suggests a potential disconnect between school readiness and stakeholder readiness. This points to the need for schools to improve communication about reunification procedures. Note, reunification was a new topic area for the 2019 survey, so there is no comparative data to the 2018 report.



Responsibility

Respondents were asked if they believe internal or external parties are more responsible for school safety. Internal parties include those who are involved with the school on a frequent basis, such as: principals, teachers, school nurses, front desk staff, school guidance counselors, school psychologists, students, or other. External parties include those who are not directly involved with the school on a daily basis, such as: local law enforcement, emergency responders, parents, government leaders, superintendents, or other.

Of the 3,838 responses, a majority of people agreed that internal parties are more responsible for school safety rather than external parties. Educators felt a significantly stronger reliance on internal parties (90 percent), compared to the other three stakeholders (percentages all fell between 70-77 percent) (see Figure 6).



Next, respondents were asked to specify who (of the internal parties) they believed held the most responsibility for school safety. Generally, stakeholders responded that the principal is responsible for ensuring that staff members and students are educated about and prepared for school safety incidents. However, students and public safety officials were the only responders to rank school resource officers as among the top-two internal parties most responsible for safety (see Figure 7).

Within the educator stakeholders, 54 percent of respondents said the principal was responsible for school safety, with 17 percent choosing teachers as a second choice.

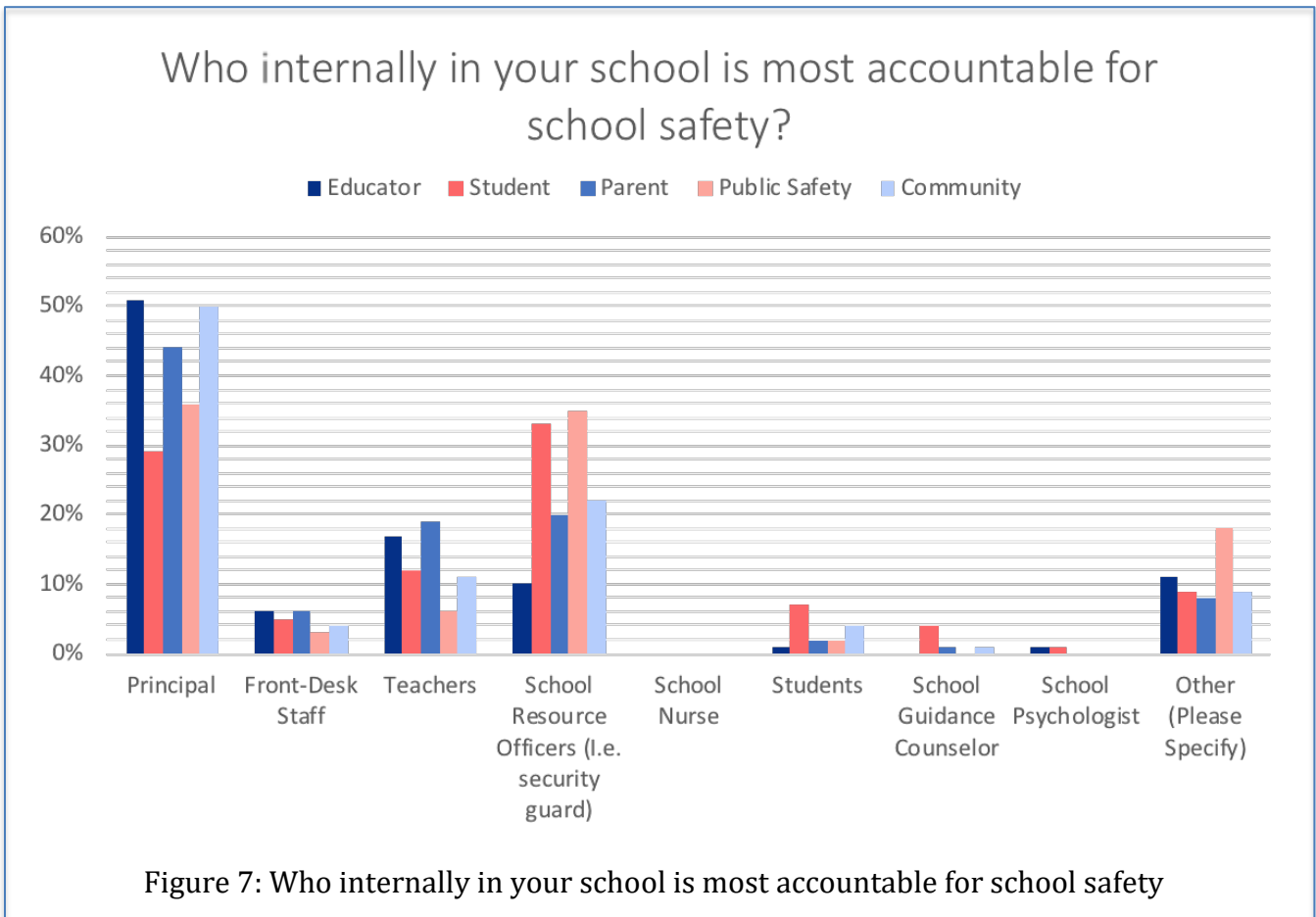
According to 44 percent of parent respondents, the principal is responsible, while 19 percent of parents answered that teachers are responsible.

For public safety officials, 36 percent said the principal was most accountable (36 percent), and 35 percent chose the school resource officer.

Fifty percent of general community member respondents also chose principal, while 22 percent chose school resource officer.

Students were the only stakeholder group to select the school resource officer ahead of the principal. This is interesting, given that students and school resource officers are highly aware of day-to-day activities within the school, and may point to an undervaluing of school resource officers among respondents.

The 2018 survey asked respondents to rank those most responsible for school safety. Due to the different question construct, a year-over-year comparison would not be precise. However, in 2019, parents, educators, and community members who responded to the survey also ranked principal as most responsible, and while students ranked school resource officers in the top spot.



The 2019 survey also asked only educators which other stakeholders played a role in safety planning. While educators felt all stakeholders have a somewhat important role in planning, emergency responders were reported as the most important (see Table 2 and Figure 8). In addition, educators equally found student input as somewhat important and not important. Most educators surveyed viewed parent and community member input as not important.

This may suggest educators do not see the value in bringing in parents, students, and community members for safety planning, and as a result, in informing and upholding safety protocols. It should be noted, however, that educators view students as playing somewhat of a role, more than parents or community members.

Stakeholder Group	No Role in Safety Planning (0)	Not Important (1-2)	Somewhat Important (3)	Important/Extremely Important (4-5)
Emergency Responders	2.4%	15.9%	20%	61.5%
Students	10%	37.9%	37.9%	19.2%
Parents	6.4%	45.2%	19.6%	17.4%
Community Members	5.8%	44.8%	20.6%	17.1%

Table 2: On a scale of 0 (no role) to 5 (extremely important role), to what degree do educators feel others play a role in safety planning (grouped percentages)

On a scale of 0 (no role) to 5 (extremely important role), to what degree do educators feel others play a role in safety planning

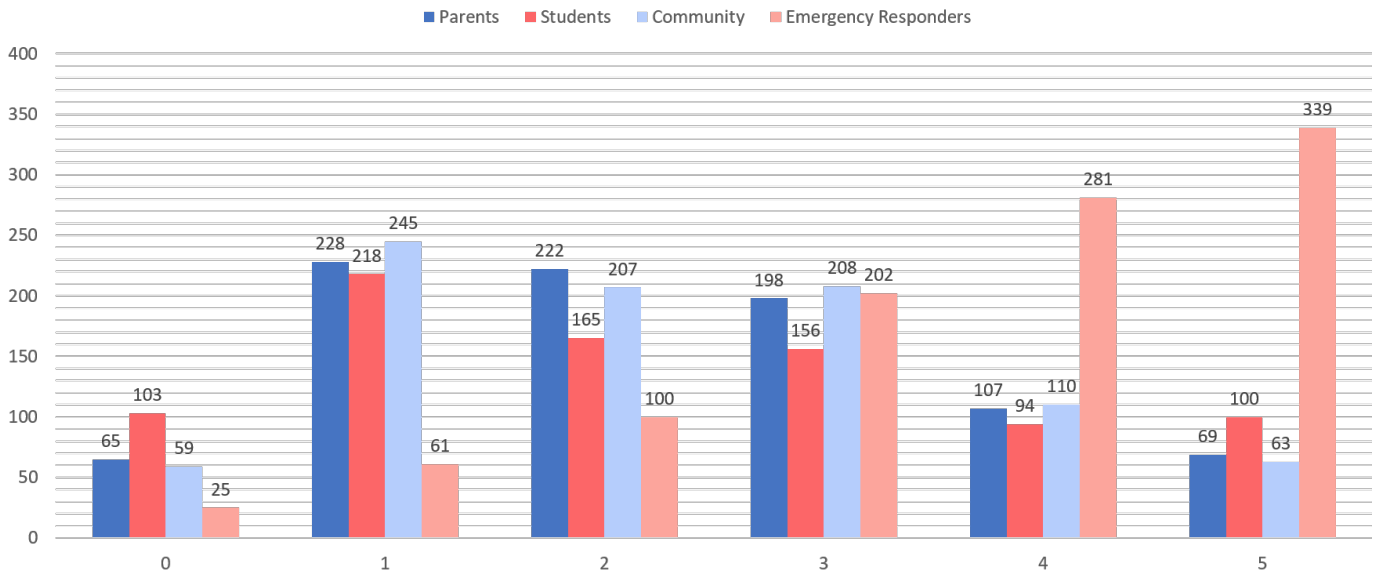


Figure 8: To what degree do educators feel others play a role in safety planning (raw responses)

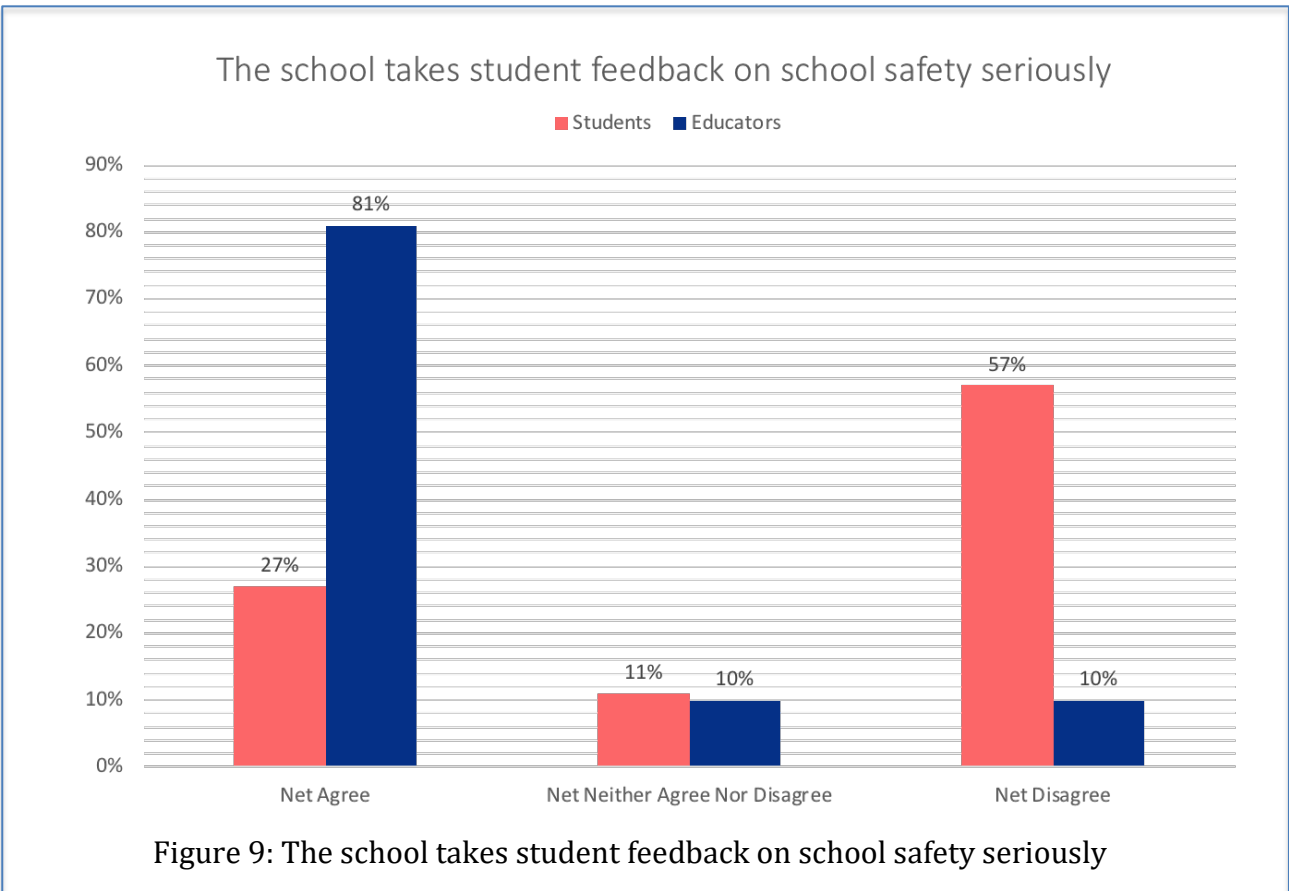
Student Feedback

The 2019 survey also asked students and educators whether they agree or disagree with the statement that the school takes student feedback on safety seriously. Perceived opinions of the surveyed students and educators differed greatly.

While 80 percent of educators agreed that student feedback is valued by the school in this question, only 27 percent of students felt that student feedback is taken seriously. The educator results are somewhat consistent with the results reported in Table 2 and Figure 8, where 37.9 percent of educators surveyed said student input is somewhat important in school safety planning.

However, almost 60 percent of students who responded to the survey disagree with the statement, and feel their feedback is not taken into consideration. These numbers are consistent with 2018 findings, suggesting a lack of progress in this area (see Figure 9).

These findings point to the imperative for school administrators to prioritize student engagement in the planning process for safety preparedness — not solely in the activities of drills. We know that students are almost universally present at school safety incidents. They are impacted by and should be part of the planning for emergency response.



Coping Mechanisms

The 2019 survey asked parents if they felt that their child/children’s school taught their child/children coping mechanisms for dealing with trauma. Parent perceptions were not favorable, with 39 percent of parents disagreeing, meaning they did not think the schools teach children strategies for coping with traumatic events. In addition, 33 percent remained neutral and 27 percent agreed. This does not necessarily mean that schools are not teaching coping skills, rather that parents are not aware or they did not fully understand the question (see Figure 10).

The same question was asked of educators, and yielded results similar to those of surveyed parents — 36 percent disagreed. However, only 17 percent remained neutral and 47 percent agreed, reflecting deeper knowledge of in-school activities.

Students were also asked if they felt as though their school taught them coping mechanisms for dealing with trauma. A large majority disagreed (74 percent), while 10 percent were neutral and 15 percent agreed. This finding shows there is large room for improvement, according to students, who are the ones to most benefit from this type of education. Note, this topic area was new in the 2019 survey, so no comparative data is available.

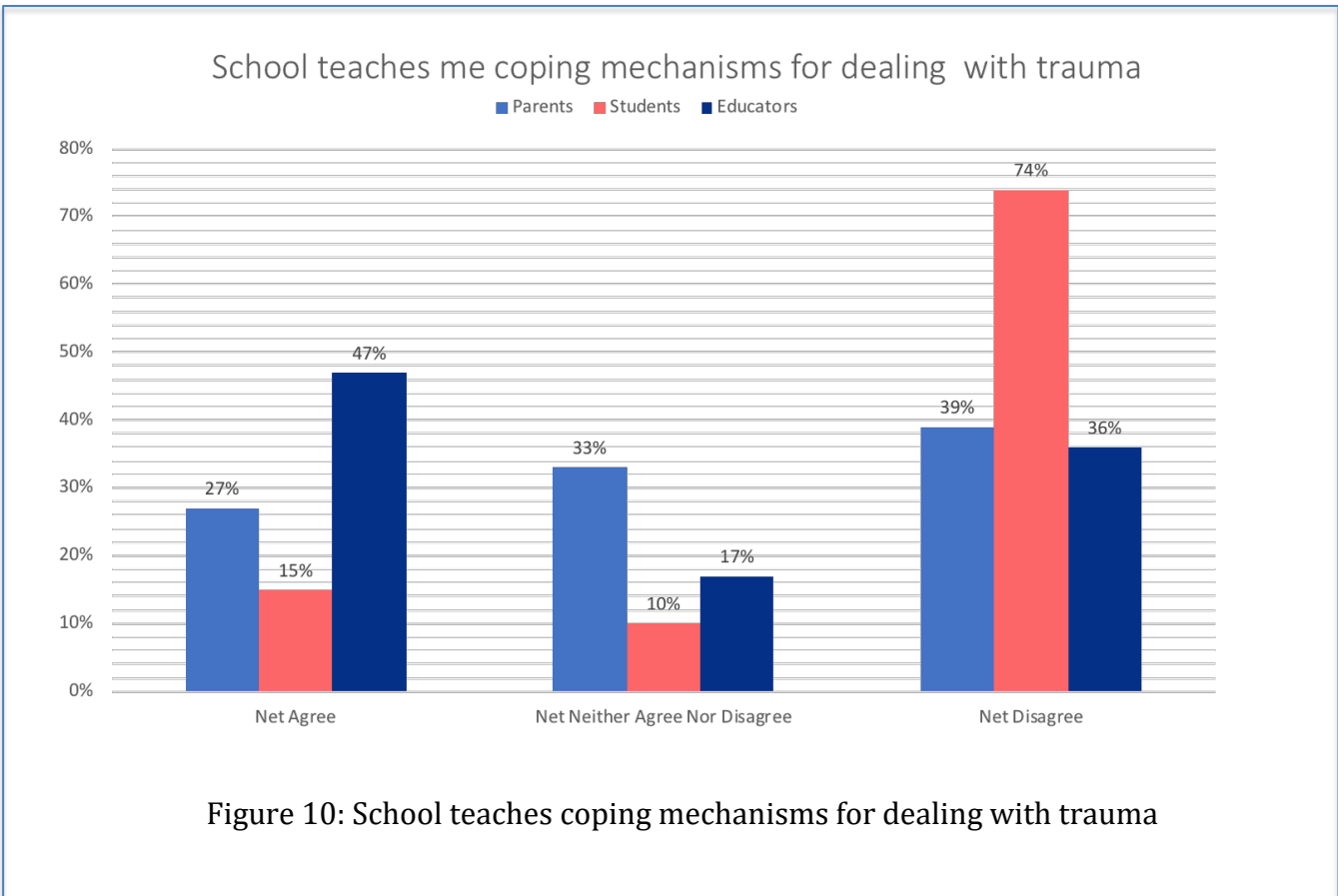
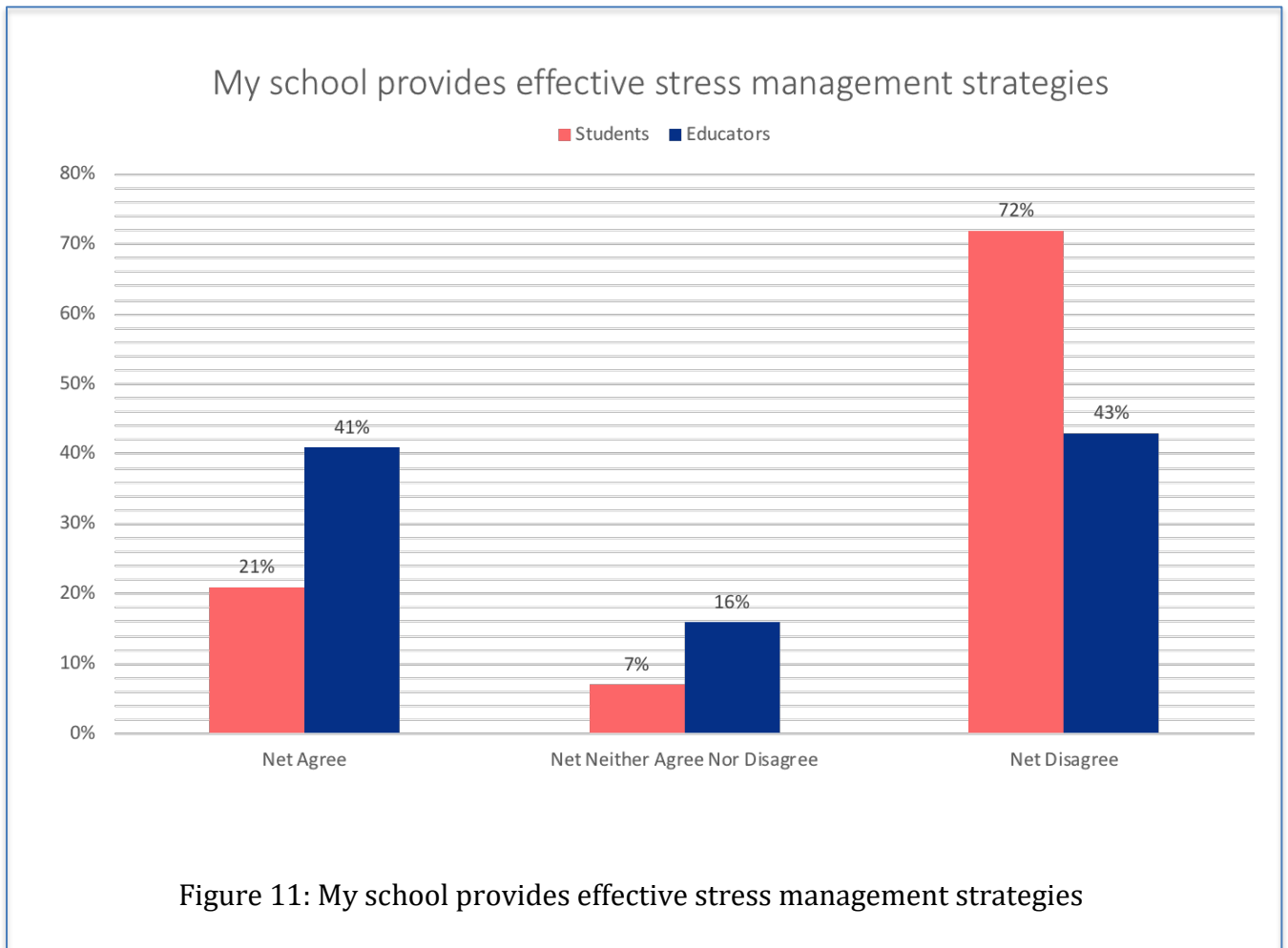


Figure 10: School teaches coping mechanisms for dealing with trauma

Stress Management

Among 2019 survey respondents, there was a clear distinction between students' and educators' perceptions of how effectively stress management skills are taught in school. The majority of students (72 percent) disagreed that their school teaches effective stress management, while educators were split: 41 percent agreed and 43 percent disagreed. Only 21 percent of students agreed that their school teaches effective stress management (see Figure 11). Note, this topic area was new in the 2019 survey, so no comparative data is available.

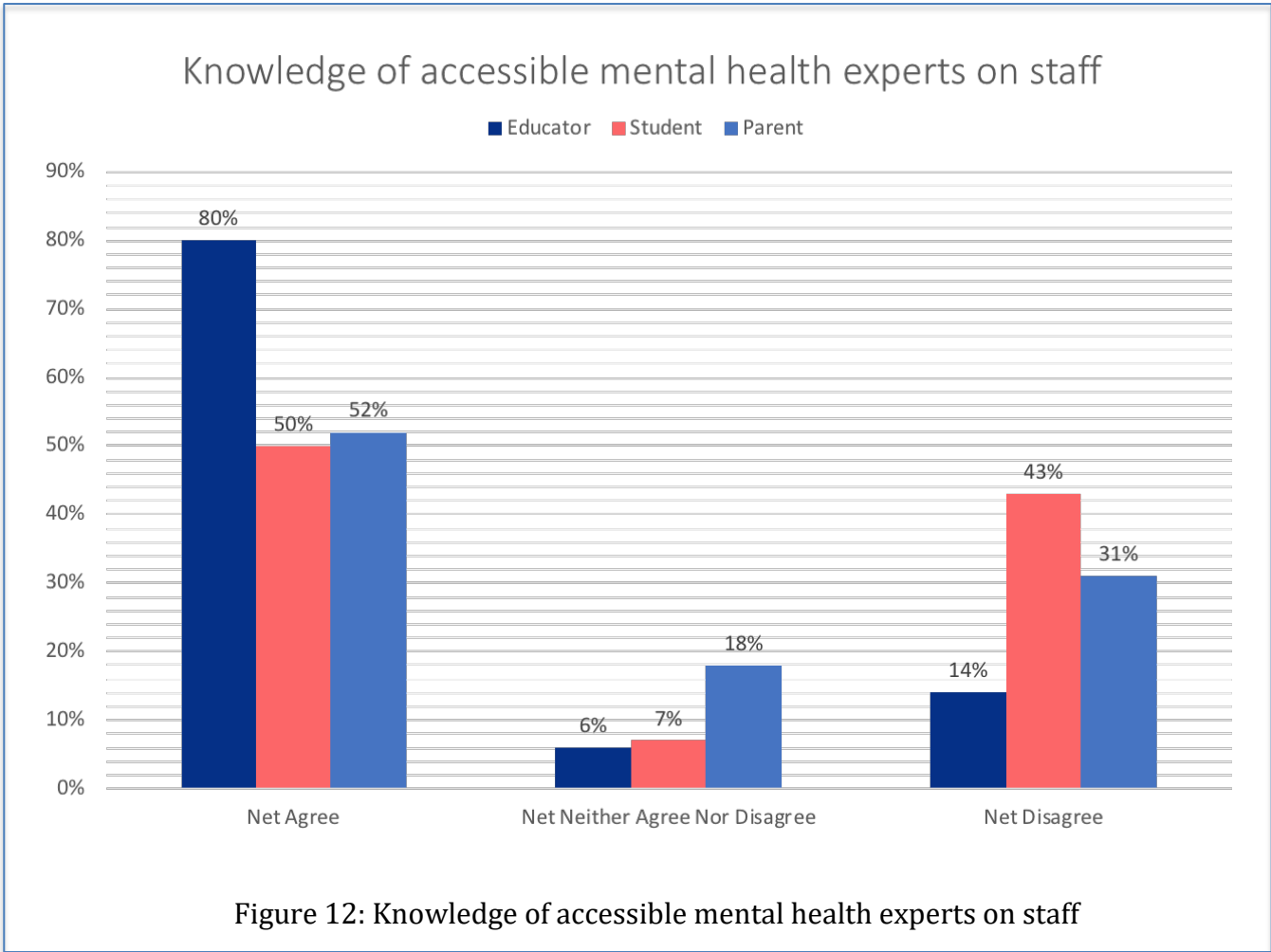


Access to Mental Health Experts

The 2019 survey asked students and educators if they know where to find mental health experts at their schools. A full 80 percent of educators who chose to respond to the survey agreed they did know where to find mental health experts, while 6 percent were neutral and 14 percent disagreed.

Only about half of students responding to the survey agreed they knew where to find mental health experts at their school, while 7 percent neither agree nor disagreed and 43 percent disagreed.

In addition, 52 percent of parents surveyed agreed they know how to access mental health experts provided at their child/children’s school, while 18 percent neither agree nor disagreed and 31 percent disagreed (see Figure 12). Note, the 2018 survey asked about perceptions of whether the school did a good job of providing mental health experts on staff. Though the subjects are related, due to the different construct, a comparison to 2018 data is not reliable.



Public Safety Meetings

Regarding public safety meetings, a majority of respondents across *all* stakeholder groups were unaware of public safety meetings happening in their community. Among students, 66 percent of respondents were unaware of these meetings and only 17 percent had ever attended a public safety meeting. Other stakeholder groups were more likely to have been to a meeting, but overall a majority were still unaware of these meetings happening (see Figure 13). Note, this topic area was new in the 2019 survey, so no comparative data is available.

These findings suggest another opportunity to engage all stakeholders in school safety planning, as noted earlier.

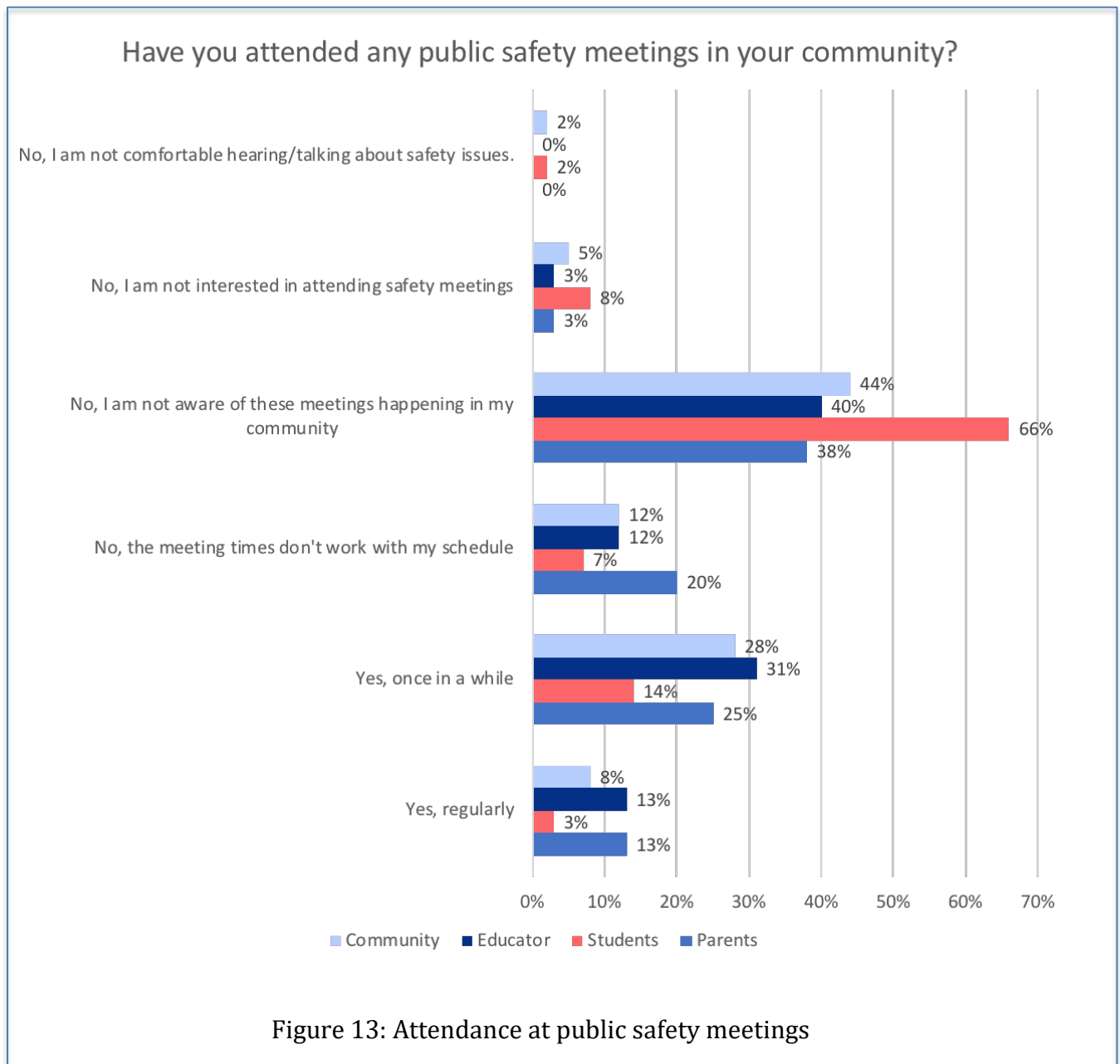


Figure 13: Attendance at public safety meetings

Implications

Students and parents differ from educators on a many school safety issues, suggesting a possible disconnect in communication and/or understanding.

Educators reporting more positive perceptions about their school safety preparation and practices, resulting in greater confidence in overall school safety than parents and students, across several categories:

- expertise needed for school safety
- knowledge of reunification methods
- understanding how to access mental health experts
- teaching coping mechanisms or stress management strategies

In addition, parents and students differed on their top perceived safety threats and how they would like to see budgets allocated to school safety.

Finally, students and educators also differed on whether they believe educators consider student feedback with safety plans.

These trends suggest a lack of communication from those internal school experts and external stakeholders of parents and students. This could be a result of a lack of communication or a lack of understanding among stakeholders. The lack of communication was also a theme suggested by the *Safe and Sound School Safety Report 2018*.

As in 2018, students still do not feel as if they have a voice in regard to school safety decision-making.

While 80 percent of educators who responded to the survey agreed that student feedback is considered while constructing a safety plan, only 27 percent of students felt the same way. 60 percent of students felt their feedback is not considered. While we know that adolescents often feel not seen and not heard, the severity of this finding points to a profound need to bridge a gap. This gap could be a result of a lack of administrative response to student complaints. It could also stem from students making recommendations about school safety that are not entirely pragmatic or from student perceptions that schools are violent and dangerous places.

A “false sense of security” persists for students.

When 2019 respondents were asked if their school has a “false sense of school safety,” 51 percent of students agreed, suggesting that many young people feel that their school has an illusion of safety, which is again consistent with the CDC’s 2017 [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#). Educator responses were almost split between ‘agree’ and ‘neither agree nor disagree’ with 2 percent more educators responding that they agreed with the statement.

While there is not a large difference in the percentage of responses of ‘agree’ and ‘neither,’ it is interesting that educators and students responding to the survey did not strongly disagree that their school has a false sense of school safety -- which would be the organizationally healthy and desired response. As our work continues, we hope to see more respondents who state that their schools do NOT have a false sense of security.

There is optimism about expertise to improve school safety.

Parents and educators believe their schools have the expertise to improve school safety. In fact, 76 percent of educators agree that schools have the expertise to improve while 59 percent of parents agree. Educators and parents both feel a sense of optimism that their schools have the expertise to improve safety, which reveals a sense of confidence in school systems. In fact, according to the CDC’s 2017 [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), schools are safer today than they were in 1991. It is important, though, that this optimism does not inadvertently contribute to a false sense of security by school communities, and balances needs for both physical and psychological safety.

Educators, parents, and students have different perceptions about mental health experts and education.

Findings also suggest a significant difference in how parents and students felt about the accessibility of mental health experts compared to educators. While 80 percent of educators knew where to find mental health experts in their schools, only about 50 percent of parents and students did. In addition, the stakeholder group with the most responses disagreeing that they knew where to find mental health experts were students, at 43 percent. Due to the high rate of educators knowing where to access mental health experts, we can assume that most schools have mental health experts available. However, this does not necessarily mean the services are accessible. The lack of student awareness could be the result of students not being told, not being reminded of their available resources at school, a lack of accessibility, or a taboo or stigma about using this help.

Seventy-four percent of students responding to the 2019 survey did not feel they were taught how to cope with trauma. A 39% majority of the parent respondents also disagreed that students were being taught how to cope with trauma. While both students and parents disagreed with the statement, educators mostly felt that coping mechanisms were being taught in school. This disparity could simply be attributed to a lack of communication between educators and families. It is also possible that the curriculum for teaching coping strategies has not resonated with the students or parents, or that respondents have different understandings of what schools do to promote internal resiliency.

There is a distinction between where parents and educators want to allocate budget dollars.

Educators who responded to the survey would most like to see money allocated to mental health experts, whereas parents would most like to see money allocated to physical school security. The differences in the two stakeholders' responses suggests that educators and parents have different perceptions of the importance of mental health programs, understanding of how mental health contributes to school safety, and/or security measures to improve overall school safety. While parents and educators disagreed in their first choices of where money should be allocated, social and emotional learning (including self-care and stress management) was the second-most chosen category where both educators and parents would like to see allocations. Schools looking for a launching pad should consider beginning with social and emotional learning, then using data to tease out more granularity among internal or external resources.

Communication challenges still exist.

The severe lack of communication can be seen when stakeholder groups were asked if they attend safety meetings in their community. Across all groups responding to the 2019 survey, a majority were not aware that these meetings occur. While it is possible that in some districts, these meetings do not occur, it may also be solely a communication issue.

One of the most significant findings from this question was with the student respondents. 66 percent of students were completely unaware of community safety meetings, 17 percent have never attended, and only 3 percent of them say then attended these meetings regularly. Public safety meetings could serve as the platform to help all stakeholder groups feel more prepared and heard.

Frank DeAngelis, Retired Principal of Columbine High School

"School safety is about putting the pieces to the puzzle together. Everyone in the community is part of the puzzle and can work together to create an inclusive environment. School safety thrives in a welcoming culture and with belief systems that foster connections to the stakeholders."

In addition, parent and student respondents tended to disagree that they could reunite after a school safety incident. While 78 percent of educators felt they could reunite the families, only 40 percent of parent respondents, and 41 percent of student respondents reported that they knew how to reunite. There may or may not be existing reunification frameworks in place at schools. If there are reunification strategies, there may be a gap in how stakeholder groups access and understand them.

Perceptions of school safety responsibility are focused inward on the school, not involving external stakeholders.

When asked who was more responsible for school safety, internal or external parties, there was an overwhelming majority of 2019 survey respondents who said internal. Interestingly, student, community, and parent respondents all were about 70 percent internal, with involvement of external parties still relevantly ranked. Among educator respondents, 90 percent rated internal parties as being more responsible. This could be because they feel that they and their colleagues bear lot of the responsibility to keep schools safe.

When assigning responsibility among internal staff, educators overwhelmingly responded principal with 54 percent, and then choosing teachers next with 17 percent. This implies that since the principal is ultimately in charge of the day-to-day operations of the school, they are also be responsible for school safety. This logic makes sense, but school safety is not one person's responsibility; it is the work of a cross-functional team consisting of those both inside and external to the school, and with perspectives about both physical and psychological safety.

School Safety Recommendations

The 2019 survey data suggest strategic recommendations and steps that schools may take in order to close the gap between stakeholders and solidify the school community. In general, members from all stakeholder groups need to be more involved in discussions surrounding school safety to help close the communication gap, specifically:

- Communities should clearly and openly welcome input and feedback from all stakeholder groups on school safety plans and programs. If everyone is present, it is more likely that people will be on the same page when a plan is put in place and everyone will have a better understanding of what happens if the school has a safety incident.
- Communities should prioritize student voices in the planning and communication processes. Educators, parents, and public safety officials could benefit from learning more about how students experience day-to-day life at their school and as a result, their understanding of and perspectives about safety concerns and solutions.
- As part of a safety plan, all districts should have a concrete reunification plan that is communicated in paper, electronic, and discussion format at least once per year.
- School and community safety meetings should be more visibly advertised to increase attendance rates and diversity within the meetings. Meetings can improve

awareness, understanding and confidence while providing a platform for stakeholders to voice their opinions.

- Individual follow-up meetings with students could help improve their perceptions of safety. This would create transparency and help students understand why safety plans change or stay the same. It would ensure that students feel heard, even if their recommendations are not as feasible.
- Schools should share regular updates to inform parents and students about safety protocols to increase parent and student confidence in overall safety and preparedness. While some safety procedures cannot be fully explained in these updates to protect students, communication about their existence and specific action steps for students and parents around will help put stakeholders on the same page and close the communication gap.
- Educators should make additional efforts to ensure 100 percent of school staff and students know where to find mental health experts at school.
- Educators should make parents aware of school experts' roles, mental health procedures, steps they can take at home, and opportunities for advocacy to better support their student(s).
- Educators should dedicate more time or instruction, or vary instruction tactics, about coping methods and stress reduction to help students increase awareness, strengthen their resilience to manage stress or traumatic incidents, and serve as advocates about the need for these types of resources.

Conclusion

Despite the objective fact that schools are safe places, and an ever-growing understanding of school safety concerns and solutions, school communities need to remain diligent, and foster a proactive sense of awareness and understanding of the broad contributors to school safety.

Safe and Sound Schools will continue to explore perceptions about school safety in future State of School Safety surveys, including evolving topical areas such as the prevalence of fights in schools, gang activity in schools, weapons on school property, traffic safety, anonymous threats of violence, sexual violence, and civility toward school employees.

Parents send their children to school with the appropriate expectations that they will be safe — that children can focus on learning and growing. Safety threats trump the ability to concentrate, to learn, and to grow. One school safety threat is one too many.

Participants

Respondents identified themselves as a part of one out of six stakeholder groups: students in grades 6 to 12, parents, educators, public safety officials, and general community members. The survey's 3,383 respondents were comprised of:

Parents: n=700

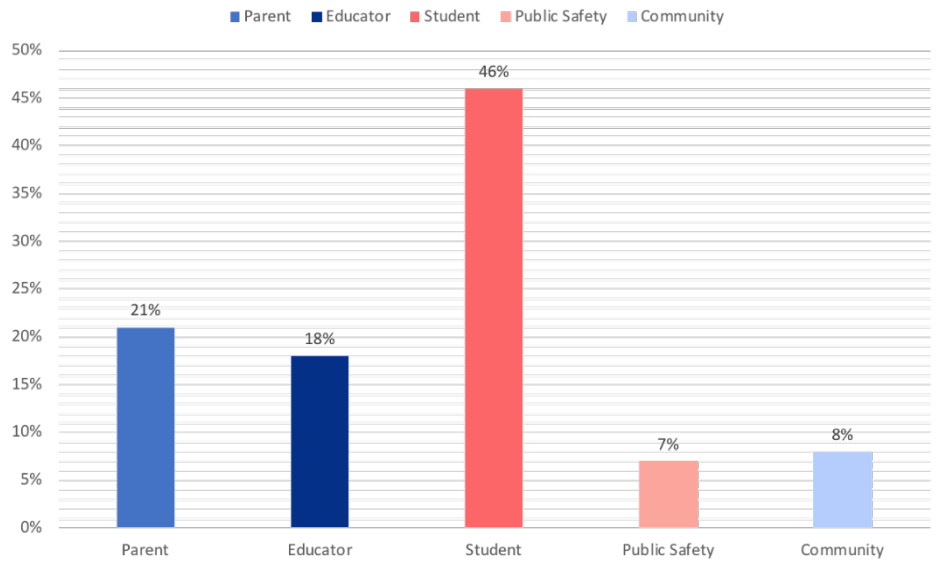
Students: n=614

Educators: n=1,541

Public safety officials: n=248

General community members: n=280.

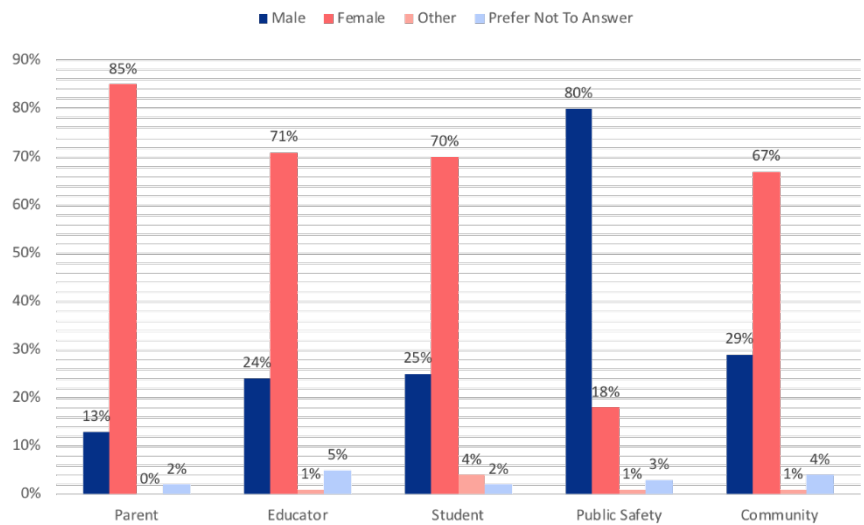
Stakeholder groups



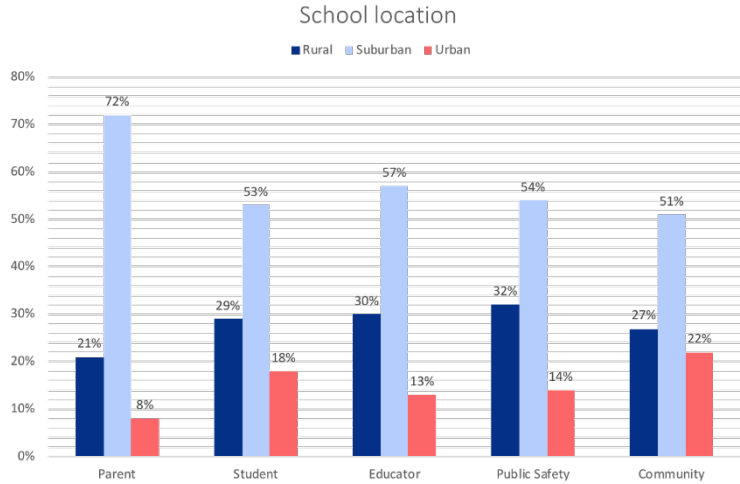
The gender breakdown of each stakeholder group:

- 85 percent of parents were female, 13 percent were male, and 3 percent identified as “other”
- 70 percent of students were female, 25 percent were male, and 3 percent identified as “other”
- 71 percent of educators were female, 24 percent were male, and 5 percent identified as “other”
- 18 percent of public safety were female, 78 percent were male, and 4 percent identified as “other”
- 67 percent of the community were female, 29 percent were male, and 4 percent identified as “other”

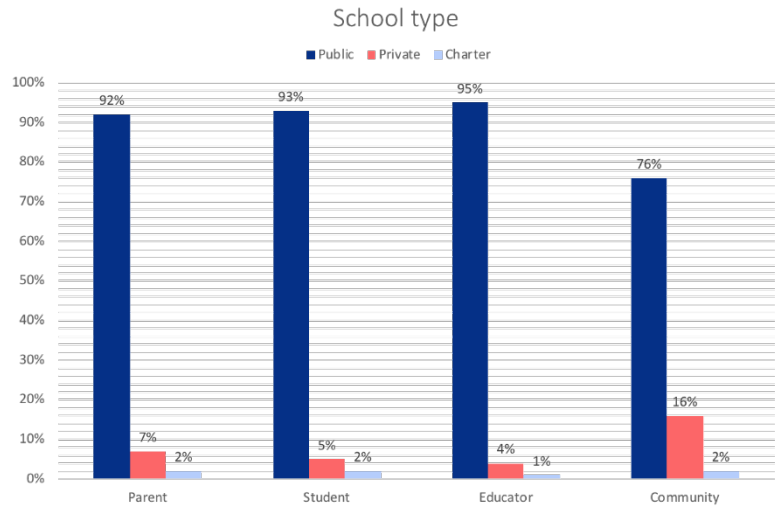
Gender distribution



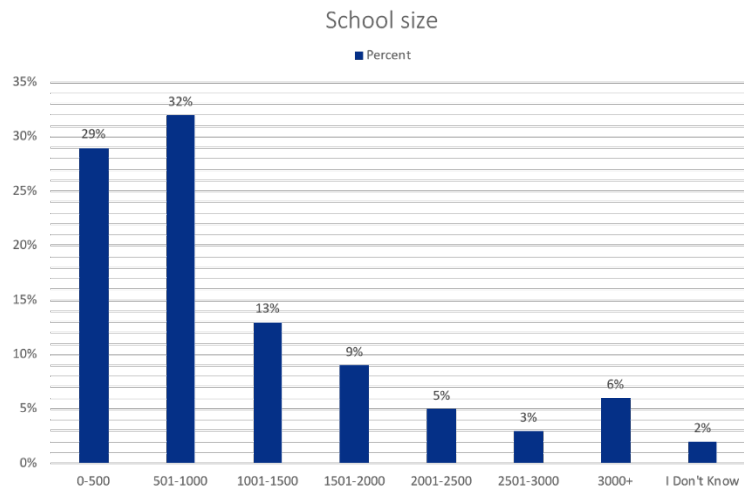
Respondents were asked to identify information concerning the size, location, and type of their school. Overall, a total of 58 percent of respondents say their school is suburban rather than urban or rural.



A majority of respondents (92 percent) either live near, work in, or attend public schools.



Respondents mostly derived from smaller, 0-1000 person, suburban public schools. Specifically, 29 percent of respondents either live near, work in, or attend schools that have under 500 students, 32 percent are involved with schools with 501-1000 students, and 37 percent are involved with schools with over 1001 students.



Acknowledgements

Safe and Sound Schools is grateful for the support of several organizations and experts who helped develop, field, and analyze the State of School Safety Report for 2019.

Students and faculty from Boston University College of Communication conducted strategic background research, wrote the State of School Safety questionnaire, coded the survey, analyzed results, and helped prepare the final report. Special thanks to professor Anne Danehy for her oversight and research rigor, professor Amy Shanler for communication and survey participant outreach, and to Olivia O'Brien, Aidan Gordon, Sydney Cairns, Haley Raftery, and Olivia Rosenburg for their countless hours spent on this research.

Bark's generous donation helped fund the Safe and Sound Schools team's time to review results, coordinate external reviews, and prepare the final report.

Safe and Sound Schools is also grateful to Status Solutions for supporting the presentation and distribution of this research.

Havas PR North America donated their time and resources to help promote the research findings.

For their expert contributions to analysis and interpretation, we would like to thank:

- Stephen E. Brock, Ph.D., NCSP, LEP, professor and program coordinator, School Psychology, Department of Graduate and Professional Studies in Education, California State University, Sacramento
- Frank DeAngelis, retired principal of Columbine High School, and special advisor, Education Leadership, to Safe and Sound Schools
- Michael Dorn, executive director, Safe Havens International, Inc.
- Benjamin S. Fernandez, MS Ed., coordinator, Prevention Services, Loudoun County Public Schools, Office of Diagnostic and Prevention Services, Ashburn, VA
- CJ Huff, educator and child advocate, and retired superintendent of schools, Joplin, MO
- Shari Nacson, LISW-S, child development consultant, clinical social worker, adult educator, and editor
- Susan Payne, founder of Safe2Tell & 28-year law enforcement veteran
- Dr. Melissa Reeves – past-president of the National Association of School Psychologists, special education teacher, counselor, and author

Many organizations who helped spread the word so we could gather a significant sample size of respondents from across the country:

- National Association of School Resource Officers
- National Association of School Psychologists
- Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement
- I Love U Guys Foundation
- National Resilience Institute
- Safe Havens International
- Members of the *Safe and Sound Schools*' Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn communities
- *Safe and Sound Schools* Parent Council
- Safe and Sound Youth Council teen ambassadors