

2015 MIDDLE SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY ANALYSIS

Prepared for Alexandria City Public Schools

August 2015



In the following report, Hanover Research analyzes the 2015 Middle School Climate Survey, conducted on behalf of Alexandria City Public Schools. The survey was designed to assess how students feel about their experiences at Francis C. Hammond and George Washington middle schools. Specific issues examined in this analysis include school boundaries and discipline, teaching and learning, and overall satisfaction, among others.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

In the following report, Hanover Research analyzes the 2015 Middle School Climate Survey, conducted on behalf of Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS). The survey was designed to assess how students feel about their experiences at Francis C. Hammond and George Washington middle schools. Specific issues examined in this analysis include school boundaries and discipline, teaching and learning, and overall satisfaction, among others.

The survey, administered in June 2015, consisted primarily of a series of ranking scales, as well as a few multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question. All numerical data and responses to the open-ended question are presented in this report. The data supplement provides complete response breakdowns for all close-ended questions as well as responses to the open-ended question. In total, 1,972 students responded to the survey. Of those, 1,765 completed the survey and 207 provided a partial response. After removing those who completed only a small portion of the survey, 1,819 total respondents were included in the analysis.

The following report is divided into six sections:

- **Section I: Overall Satisfaction** presents findings regarding respondents' overall satisfaction with their school experience, including how well they like their school and teachers and whether they feel they belong at their school.
- **Section II: School Boundaries and Discipline** evaluates respondents' views on school boundaries and discipline, including the rules and norms that are in place and their physical and emotional safety at school.
- **Section III: Teaching and Learning** examines how respondents feel about the instruction they receive at school, including the concern teachers have for their students and how well students pay attention in class.
- **Section IV: Interpersonal Relationships** examines respondents' views on interpersonal relationships at school, including beliefs about the level of respect for diversity and the availability of social support.
- **Section V: School and Community Engagement** presents findings on respondents' level of school and community engagement, in particular, how actively involved they are in clubs and athletics and how welcome their family feels at school activities.
- **Section VI: Respondent Characteristics** presents data on respondents' personal characteristics, including the school they attend, the grade in which they are enrolled, and their race/ethnicity.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Overall, respondents are satisfied with their school experience.** Most like their school, like their teachers, and feel they belong and are accepted at their school. However, it is worth noting that for four of the five statements regarding overall satisfaction, at least 30 percent responded only neutrally or negatively. And, for two of the statements nearly half responded only neutrally or negatively (Figure 1.1).
- **Most respondents feel safe at school but also believe bullying is an issue.** Fifty-six percent of respondents indicate they feel safe at school, and slightly less than that (48 percent) believe *other* students feel safe on school property or on the school bus (Figure 1.1, Figure 2.2). With regards to bullying, approximately half of all respondents agree that physical bullying is a problem at their school, and more than 60 percent agree that verbal bullying is a problem at their school (Figure 2.3).
- **Most respondents (62 percent) believe all groups are treated with respect at their school.** Nonetheless, a sizeable proportion of respondents (38 percent) do not believe all groups are treated with respect at their school (Figure 4.2). In addition, about a quarter of respondents believe students rarely or never treat others with respect, regardless of their sexual orientation, how they look or where they are from, or whether they speak fluent English (Figure 4.1).
 - When asked which groups are not treated with respect, respondents mentioned lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ) individuals and Hispanics more than any other group (Figure 4.3).
- **Respondents view teachers very positively, but largely disagree that students pay attention in class.** Most respondents (73 to 74 percent) believe teachers have high expectations for and care about their students, but only 20 percent of respondents agree that students pay attention in class (Figure 3.1).
- **Respondents both perceive and demonstrate a moderate level of school and community engagement.** Forty percent of respondents agree there is a strong sense of community on campus, and 55 percent agree their family feels welcome participating in school activities. Further, about half of all respondents are actively involved in clubs, athletics, or other school activities (Figure 5.1).
- **Many respondents have a negative perception of the rules and norms at their school.** Only thirty-seven percent agree that the rules are fair, 31 percent that the consequences for breaking the rules are fair for all students, and 26 percent that all students know the rules (Figure 2.1).
- **Significant differences exist in the racial/ethnic makeup of respondents from the two middle schools.** Respondents from George Washington Middle School are much more likely to be white (39 percent versus 7 percent), and much less likely to be African-American (13 percent versus 32 percent), compared to respondents from Francis C. Hammond Middle School. Indeed, George Washington Middle School has a significantly smaller proportion of respondents in nearly every minority group (Figure 6.3).

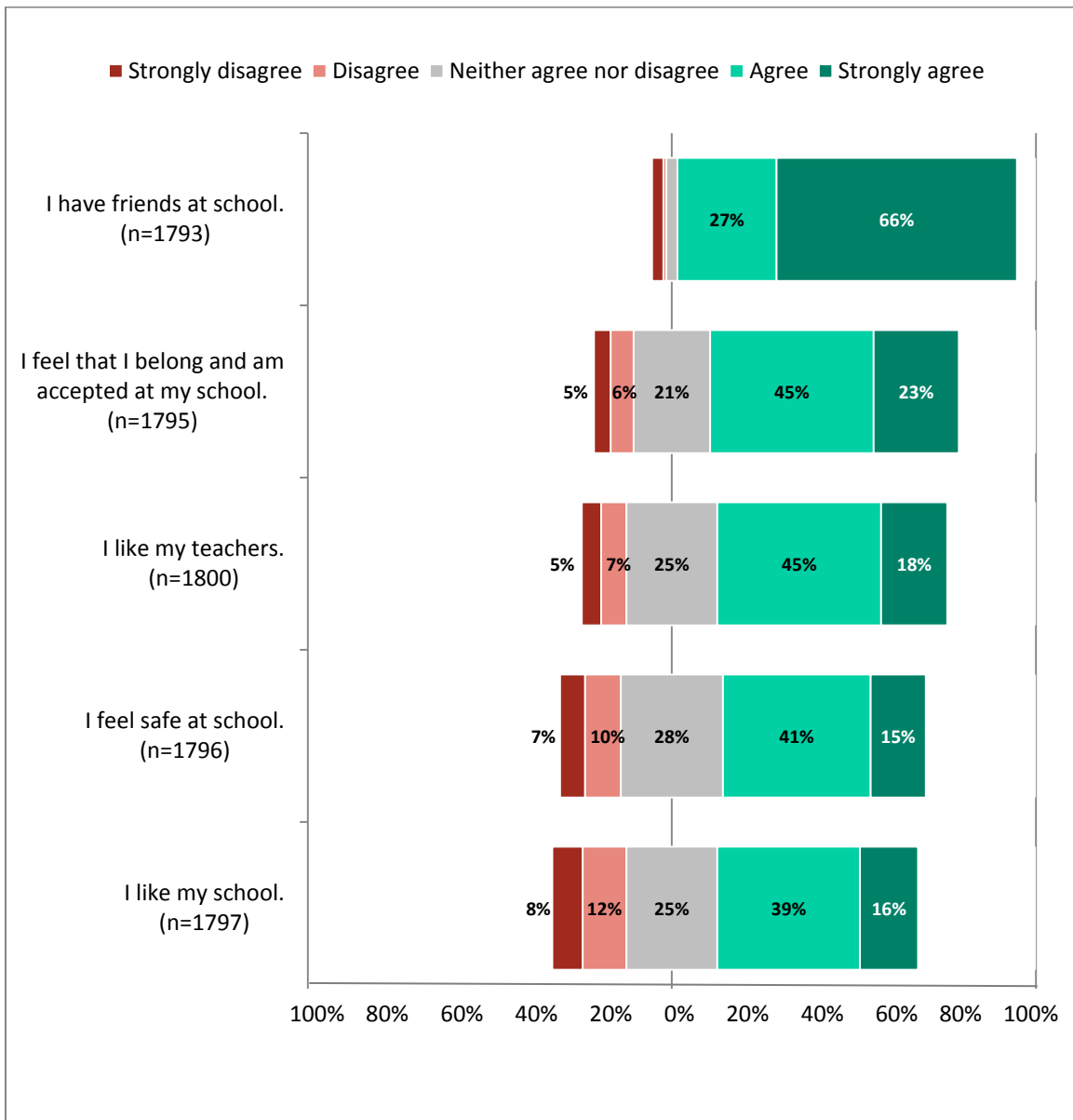
SECTION I: OVERALL SATISFACTION

KEY FINDINGS

- **The vast majority of respondents – 93 percent – say they have friends at school.** However, that still leaves seven percent who do not agree that they have friends at school (Figure 1.1).
- **Most respondents like their teachers (63 percent) and feel they belong and are accepted at school (68 percent).** On the other end of the scale, 11 to 12 percent of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with these statements (Figure 1.1).
- **Slightly more than half of respondents agree that they like their school (55 percent) or feel safe at school (56 percent).** While still representing a majority of respondents, these percentages demonstrate the lowest levels of agreement among the five statements regarding overall satisfaction (Figure 1.1).

FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Overall Satisfaction with School Experience



Note: Percentages smaller than five percent are not displayed.

SECTION II: SCHOOL BOUNDARIES AND DISCIPLINE

KEY FINDINGS

- Many respondents have a negative perception of the rules and norms at their school.** Only thirty-seven percent agree that the rules are fair, 31 percent that the consequences for breaking the rules are fair for all students, and 26 percent that all students know the rules (Figure 2.1).
- About half of respondents agree that students feel safe on school property and while riding the bus.** Responses were nearly identical for these two statements, with 48 percent agreeing that students feel safe, approximately 30 percent neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 22 percent disagreeing (Figure 2.2).
- Verbal bullying appears to be the biggest safety issue at ACPS middle schools, with 61 percent of respondents agreeing it is a problem at their school.** Physical bullying also seems to be a bit of an issue, with 48 percent of respondents agreeing it is a problem at their school. Responses regarding cyber-bullying were fairly evenly split between those who agree it is a problem (37 percent) and those who disagree it is a problem (36 percent) (Figure 2.3).

FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Agreement/Disagreement with Statements about Rules and Norms

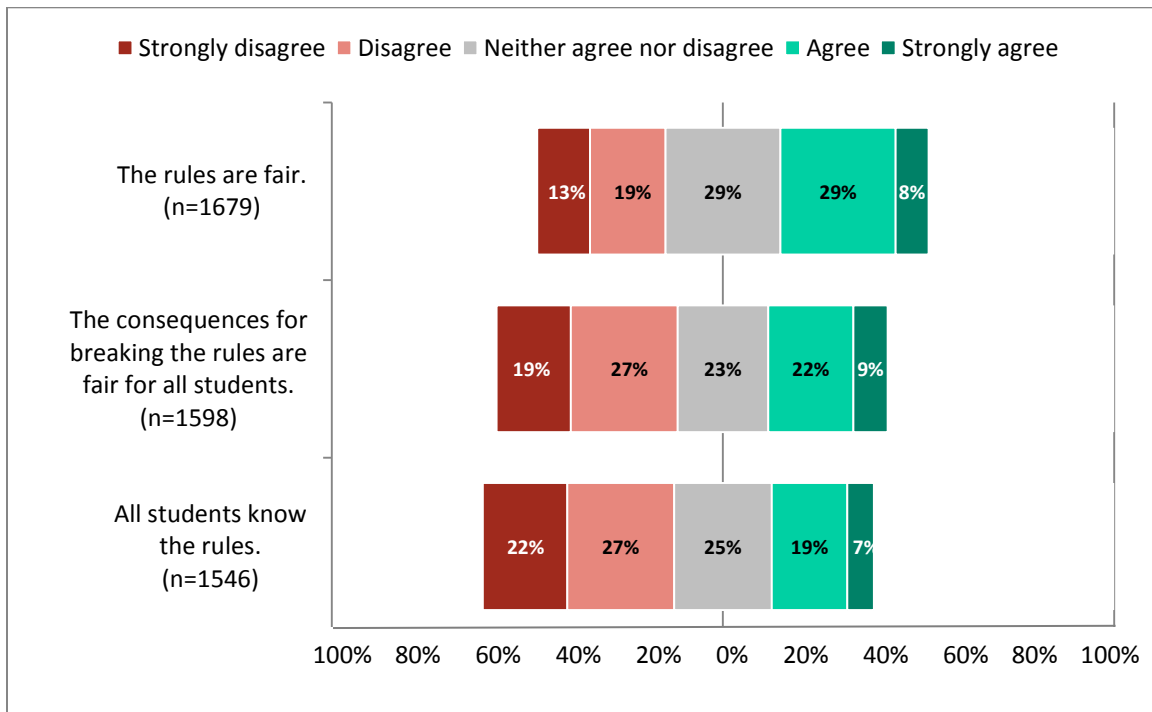


Figure 2.2: Agreement/Disagreement with Positive Statements about Physical and Emotional Safety

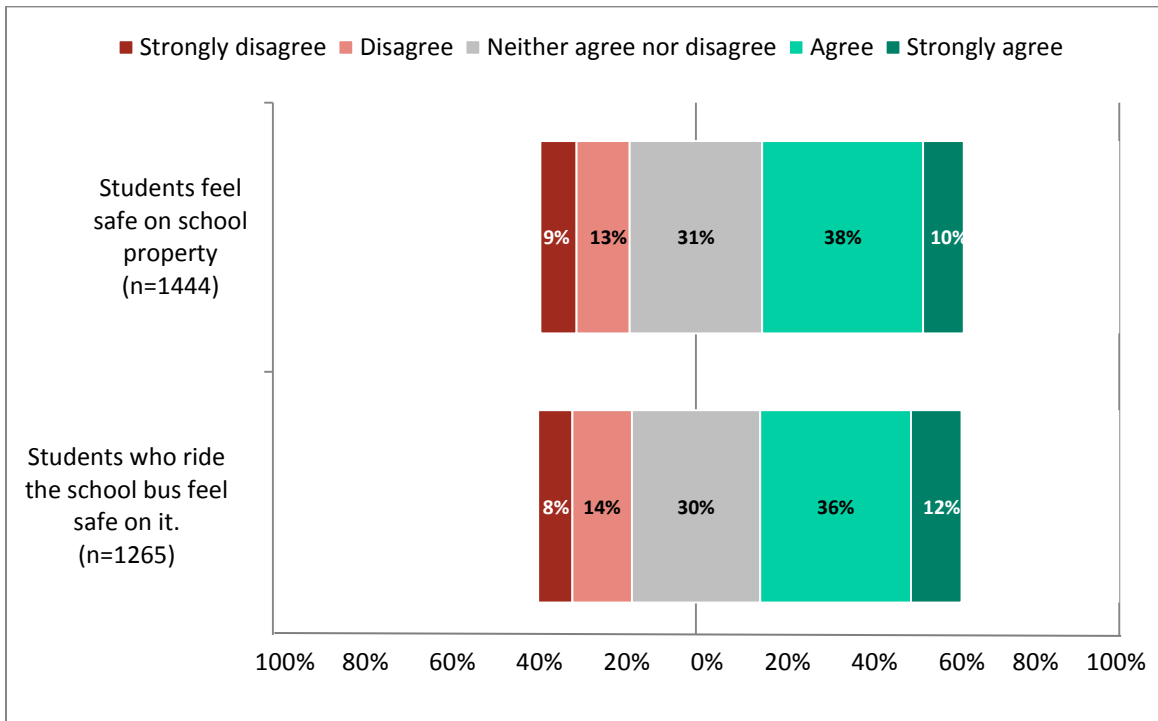
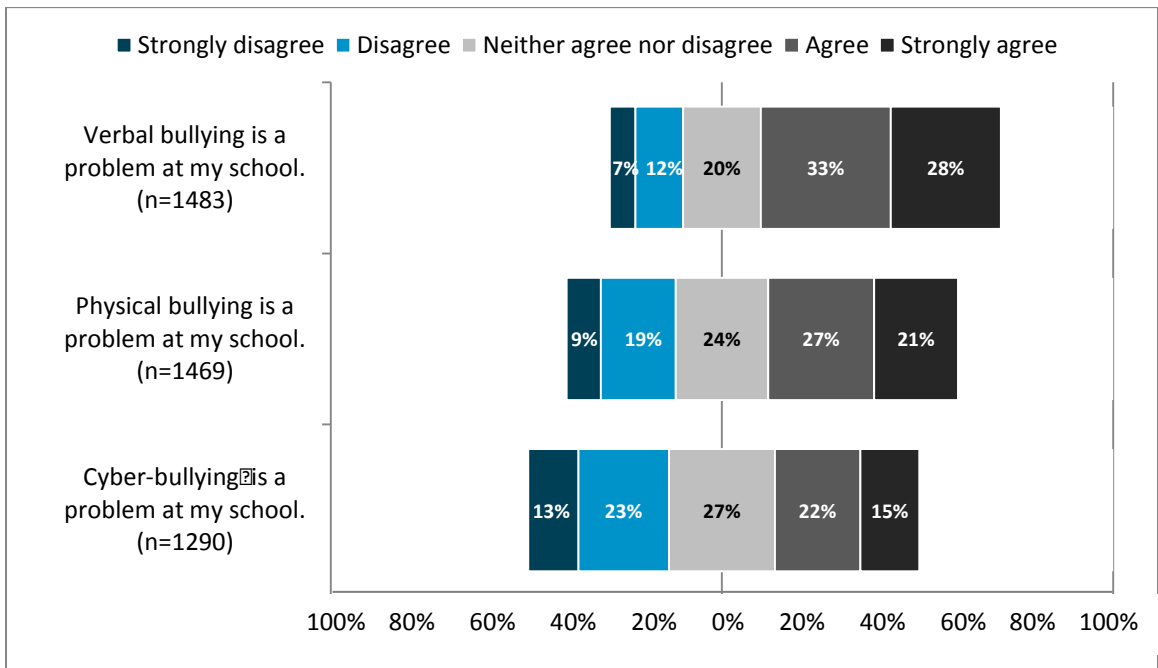


Figure 2.3: Agreement/Disagreement with Negative Statements about Physical and Emotional Safety



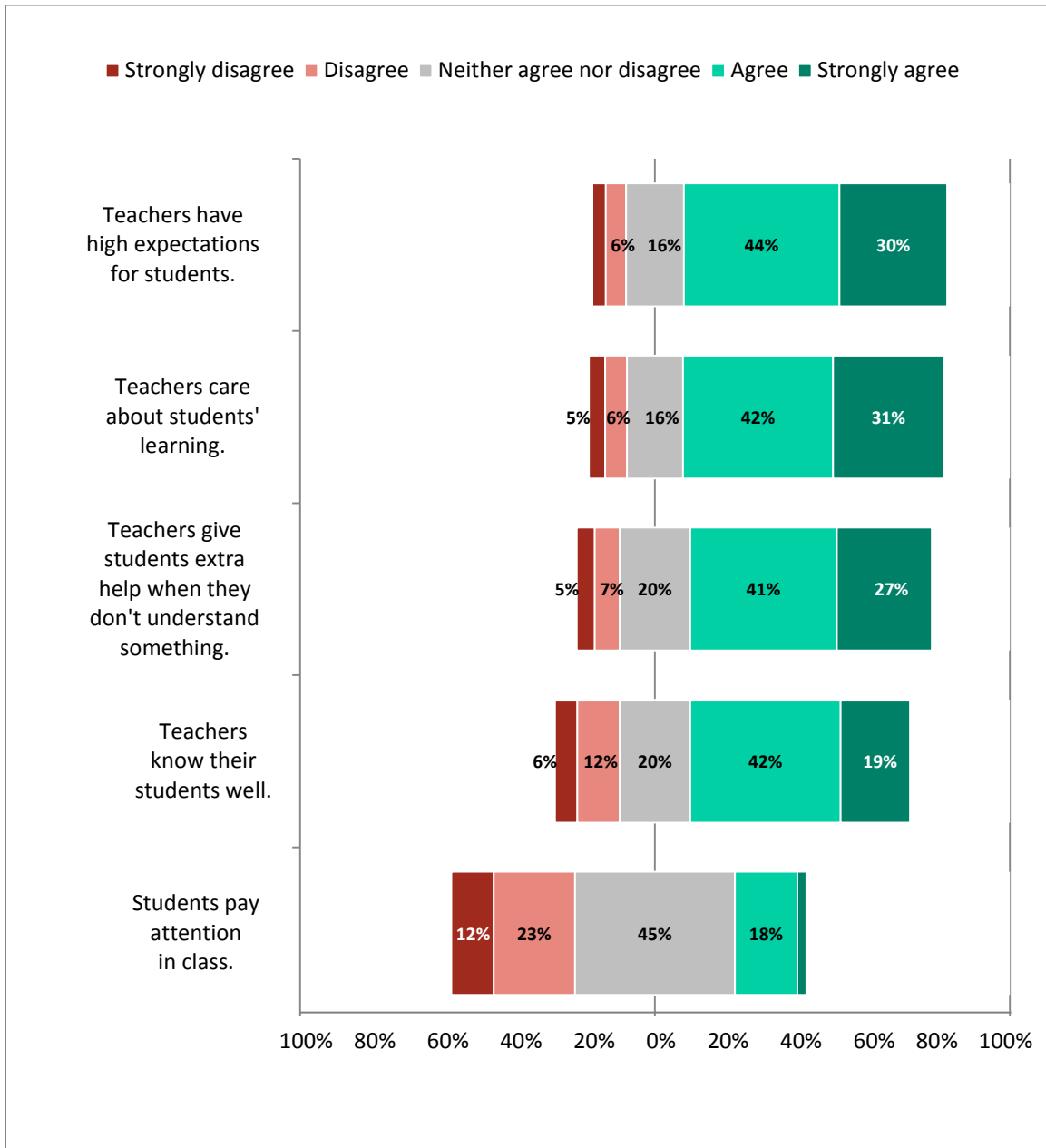
SECTION III: TEACHING AND LEARNING

KEY FINDINGS

- **Nearly three-quarters of respondents (74 percent) believe that teachers have high expectations for students and care about their learning.** Only about 10 percent of respondents disagree with these statements (Figure 3.1).
- **Most respondents also believe that teachers give students extra help when they do not understand something (68 percent) and know their students well (62 percent).** Twelve to 18 percent of respondents disagree with these statements (Figure 3.1).
- **Lack of attention in class appears to be a common problem for students.** Only 20 percent of respondents agree that students pay attention in class while 35 percent disagree that students do so (Figure 3.1).

FIGURES

Figure 3.1: Agreement/Disagreement with Statements about Teaching and Learning



Note: Percentages smaller than five percent are not displayed.

SECTION IV: INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

KEY FINDINGS

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

- **Beliefs among respondents regarding how often students treat others with respect, regardless of their sexual orientation, how they look or where they are from, or whether they speak fluent English, are, on balance, somewhat more positive than negative.** Slightly more respondents believe students *often or always* treat others with respect (37 to 42 percent) than believe students *rarely or never* treat others with respect (23 to 25 percent) (Figure 4.1).
 - Levels of respect across the different types of diversity – sexual orientation, fluency in English, how someone looks or where someone is from – do not differ substantially from one another (Figure 4.1).
- **Most respondents (62 percent) believe all groups are treated with respect at their school.** Nonetheless, a sizeable proportion of respondents (38 percent) do not believe all groups are treated with respect at their school (Figure 4.2).
- **When asked which groups are not treated with respect, respondents mentioned LGBTQ and Hispanic students more than any other group.** Seventeen percent of respondents mentioned these two groups. Next most commonly mentioned were ELL students (12 percent) and African-American students (11 percent) (Figure 4.3).

SOCIAL SUPPORT

- **Most respondents (72 percent) believe they can see a school counselor if they need to.** However, a not insignificant portion – 14 percent – disagree that they can do so (Figure 4.4).
- **A little more than half of respondents believe they are recognized for their accomplishments and achievements (57 percent) and are encouraged to say what they think (55 percent).** At the other end of the scale, approximately a fifth of respondents (19 to 22 percent) disagree with these statements (Figure 4.4).

FIGURES

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

Figure 4.1: Agreement/Disagreement with Statements about Respect for Diversity

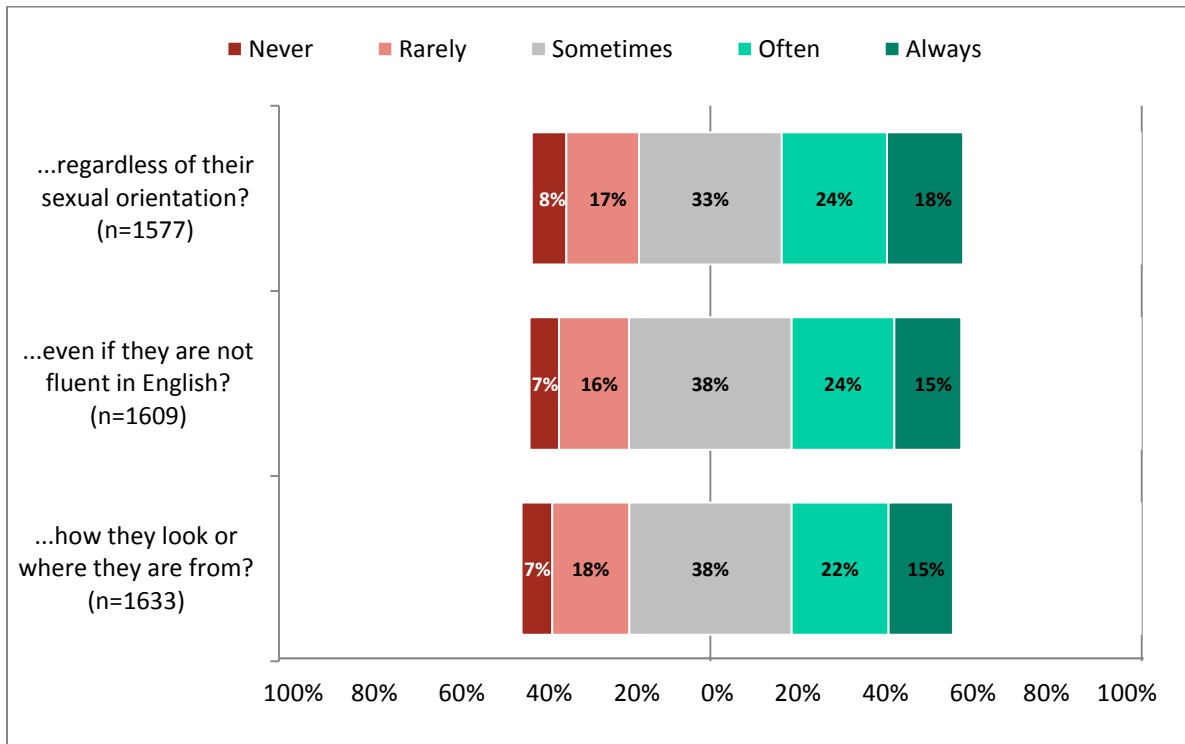
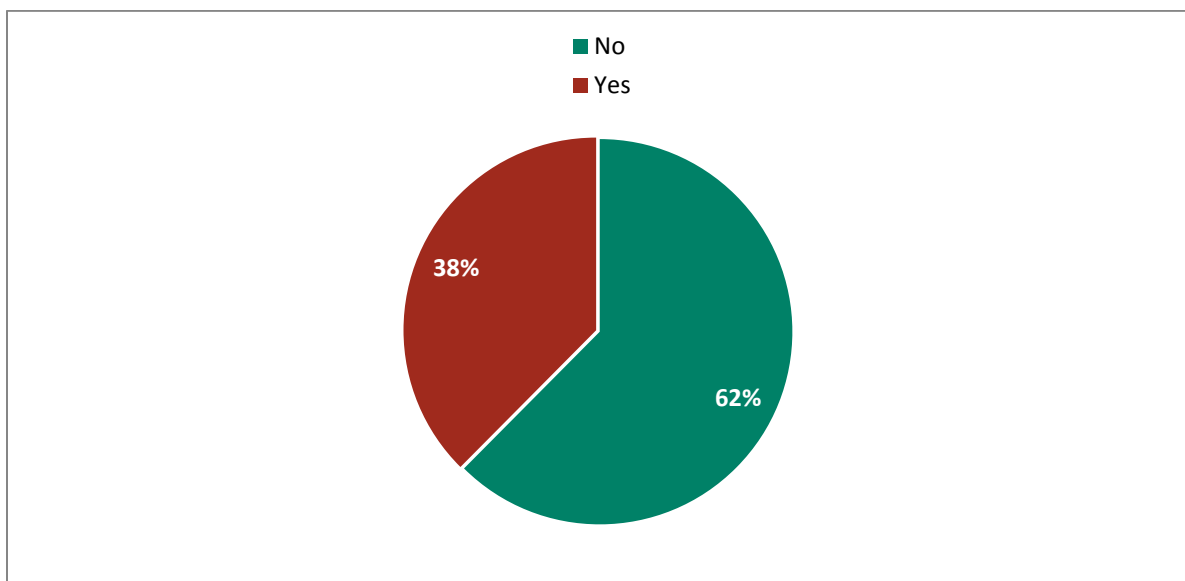
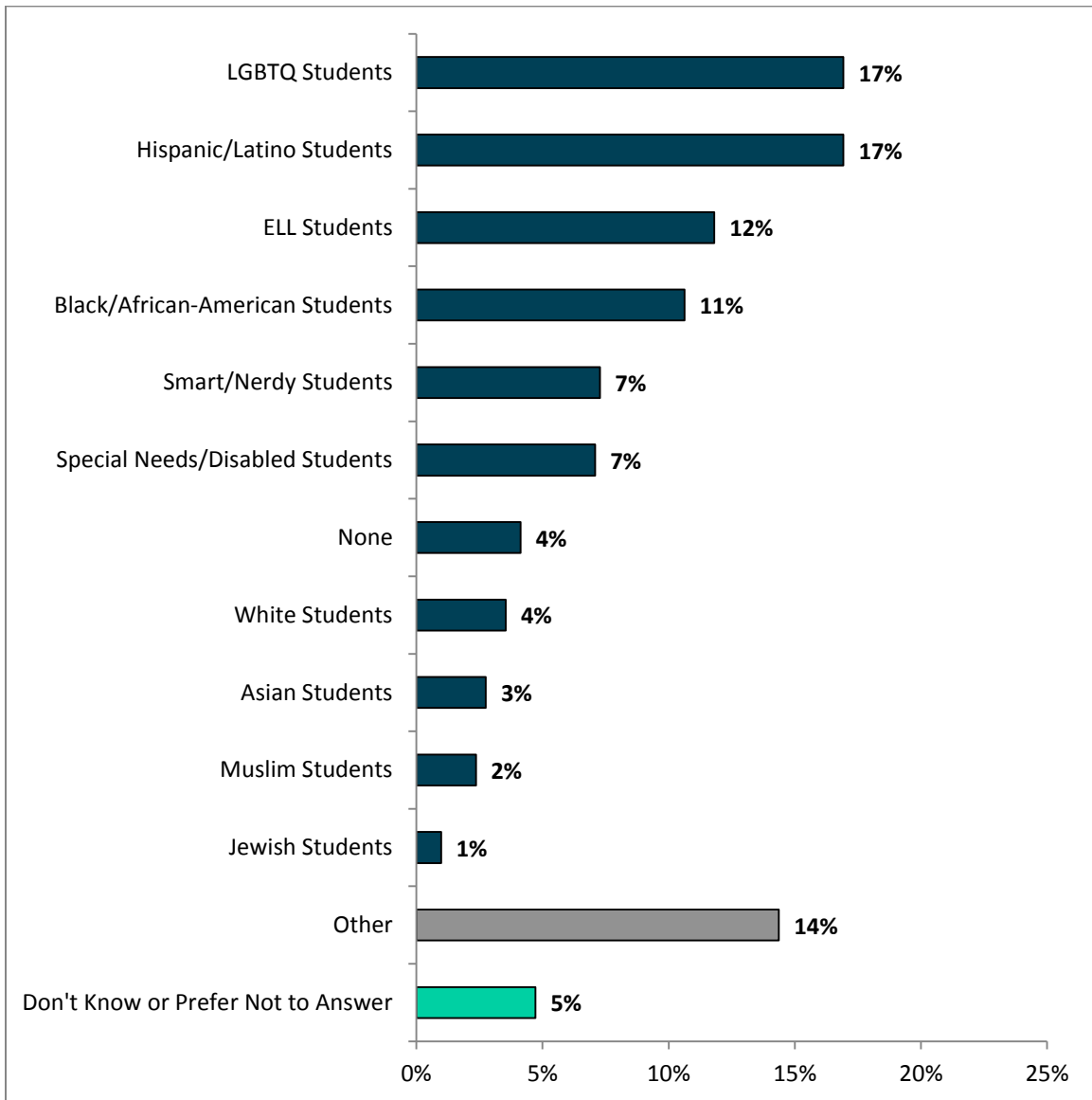


Figure 4.2: There Are Groups That Are Not Treated with Respect at School



n= 1696

Figure 4.3: Groups Not Treated with Respect (Open-Ended Response)

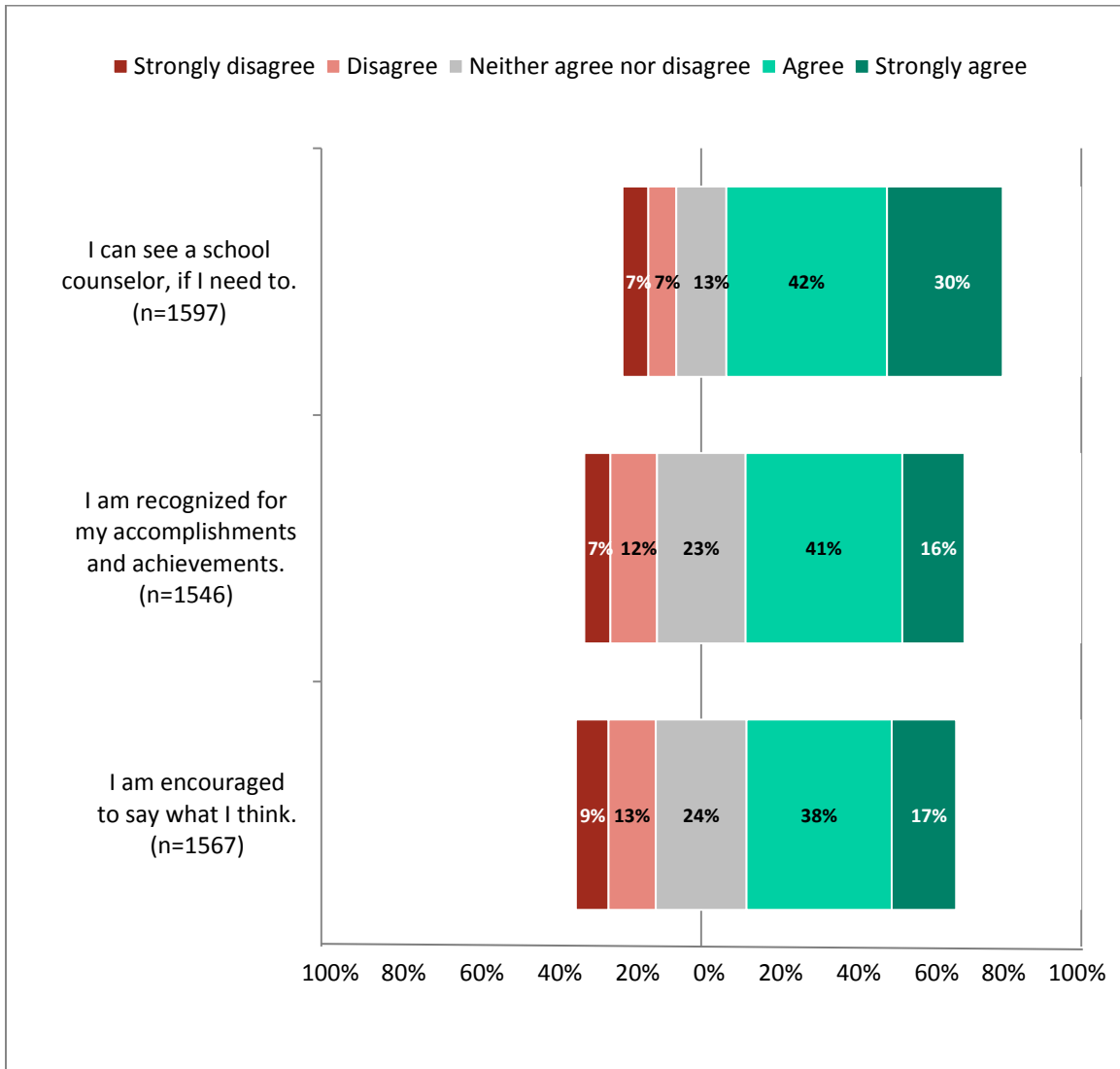


n = 508

Note: Percentages add to greater than 100 percent because some respondents mentioned more than one group.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Figure 4.4: Agreement/Disagreement with Statements about Social Support



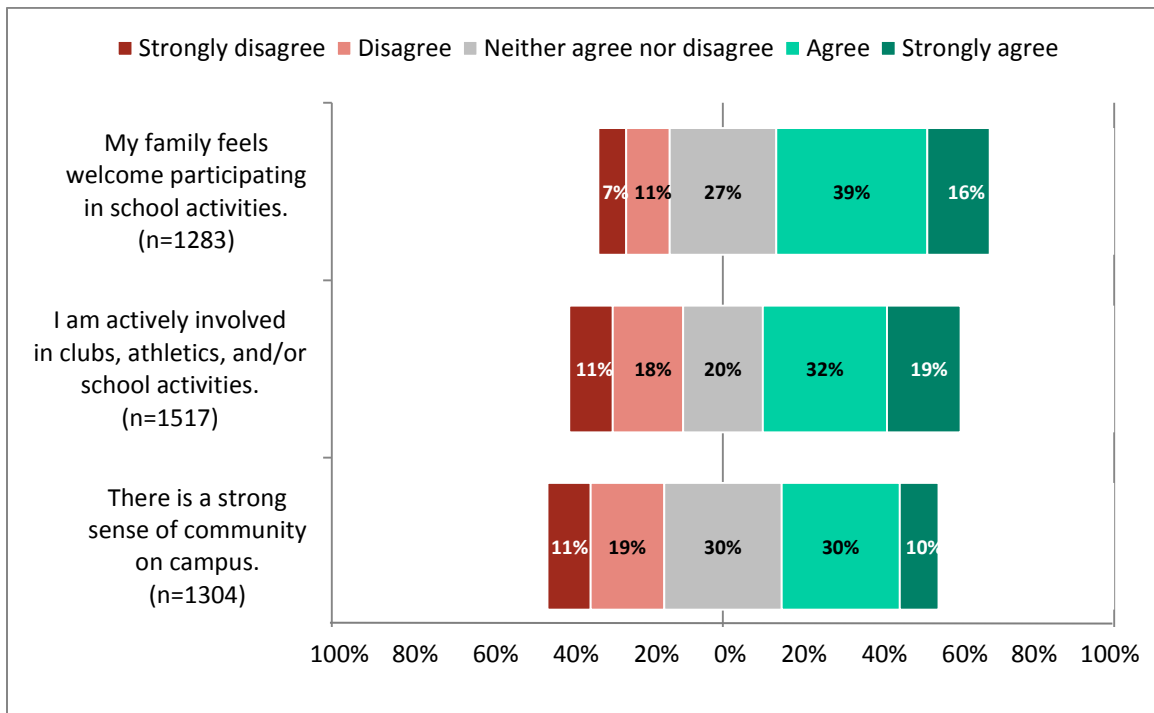
SECTION V: SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

KEY FINDINGS

- **Slightly more than half of respondents agree that their family feels welcome participating in school activities (55 percent).** Eighteen percent disagree that their family feels welcome, a markedly smaller percentage compared to the other two statements (Figure 5.1).
- **Approximately half of all respondents are actively involved in clubs, athletics, and/or school activities (51 percent).** Twenty-nine percent disagree that they are actively involved in these activities, and 20 percent neither agree nor disagree (Figure 5.1).
- Among the three statements concerning school and community engagement, **respondents are least likely to agree that there is a strong sense of community on campus.** Forty percent of respondents agree with this statement compared to 51 to 55 percent who agree with the other two statements (Figure 5.1).

FIGURES

Figure 5.1: Agreement/Disagreement with Statements about School and Community Engagement



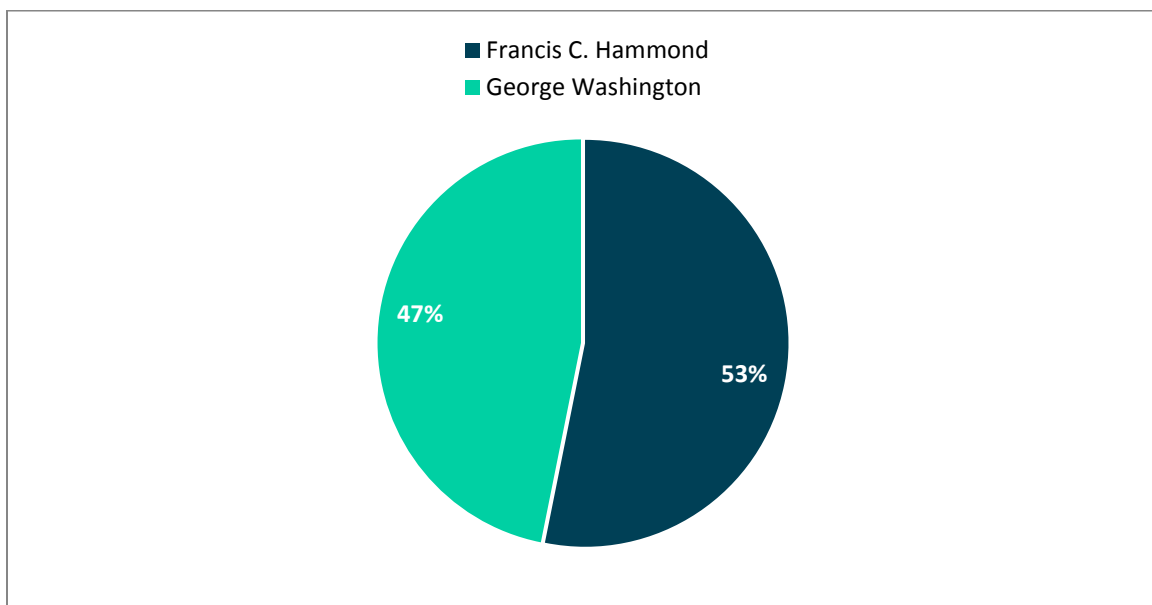
SECTION VI: RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

KEY FINDINGS

- **Both middle schools are well represented among respondents.** Forty-seven percent of respondents attend George Washington Middle School, and 53 percent of respondents attend Francis C. Hammond Middle School (Figure 6.1).
- **Respondents from both schools are fairly evenly distributed across grade levels.** For both Francis C. Hammond and George Washington middle schools, each grade level encompasses roughly a third of respondents. The only minor exception is that there are slightly fewer respondents from George Washington Middle School who are in seventh grade (29 percent) than who are in sixth grade (37 percent) (Figure 6.2).
- **Significant differences exist in the racial/ethnic makeup of respondents from the two middle schools.** Respondents from George Washington Middle School are much more likely to be white (39 percent versus 7 percent), and much less likely to be African-American (13 percent versus 32 percent), compared to respondents from Francis C. Hammond Middle School. Significant differences between the two schools exist across almost every other racial/ethnic group, though, with George Washington Middle School having a smaller proportion of respondents in nearly every minority group (Figure 6.3).

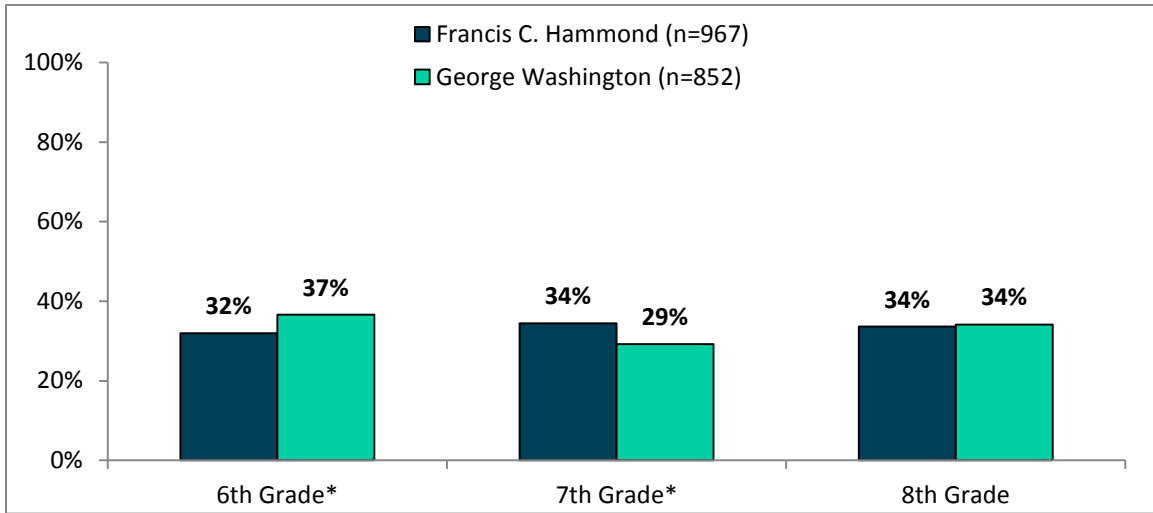
FIGURES

Figure 6.1: Middle School Currently Attended



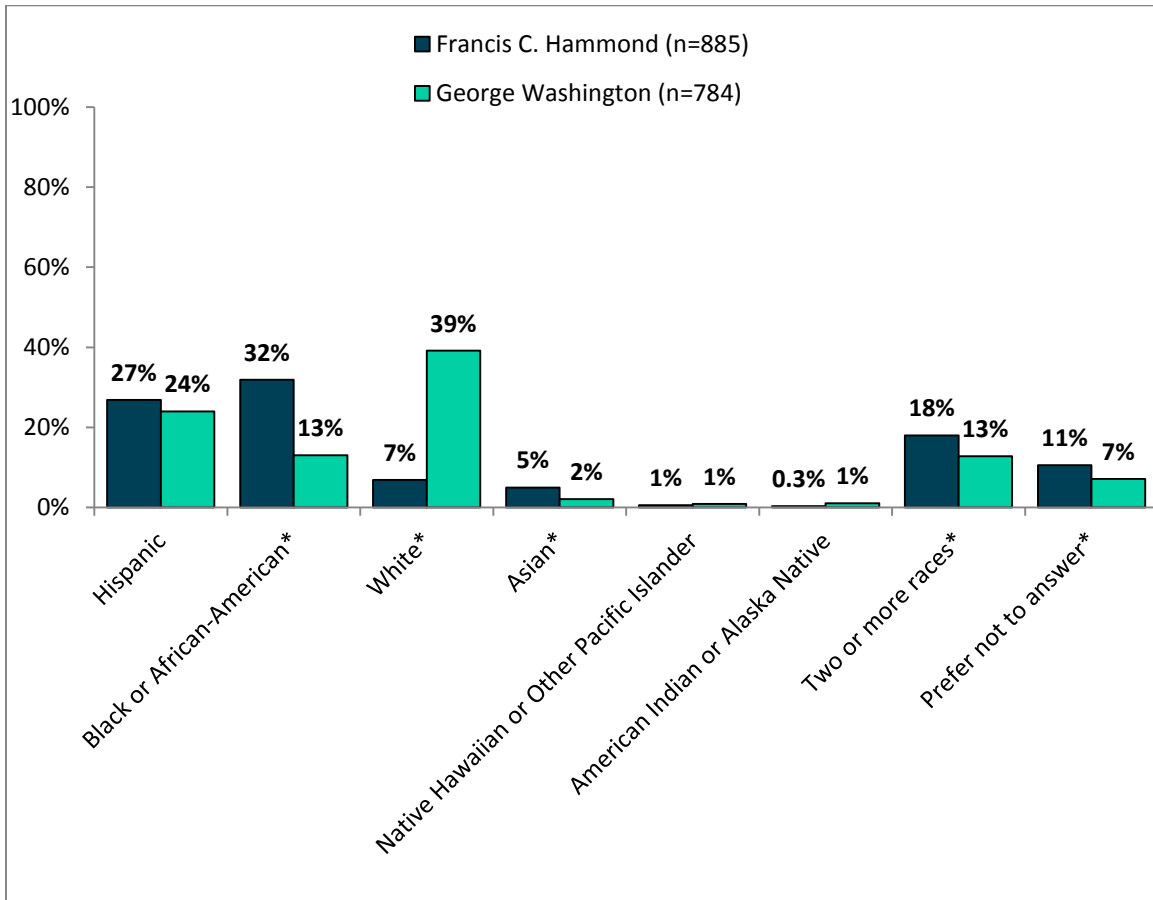
n = 1819

Figure 6.2: Current Grade in School



Note: An asterisk indicates the difference between schools is statistically significant (with a confidence level of 95 percent).

Figure 6.3: Respondent Race/Ethnicity



Note: An asterisk indicates the difference between schools is statistically significant (with a confidence level of 95 percent).

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