

AFT/WTU
Teacher Leaders Program
2019- 2020

**Teacher Perspectives: Impact of Alternative Suspension Policies on Teacher
Safety**

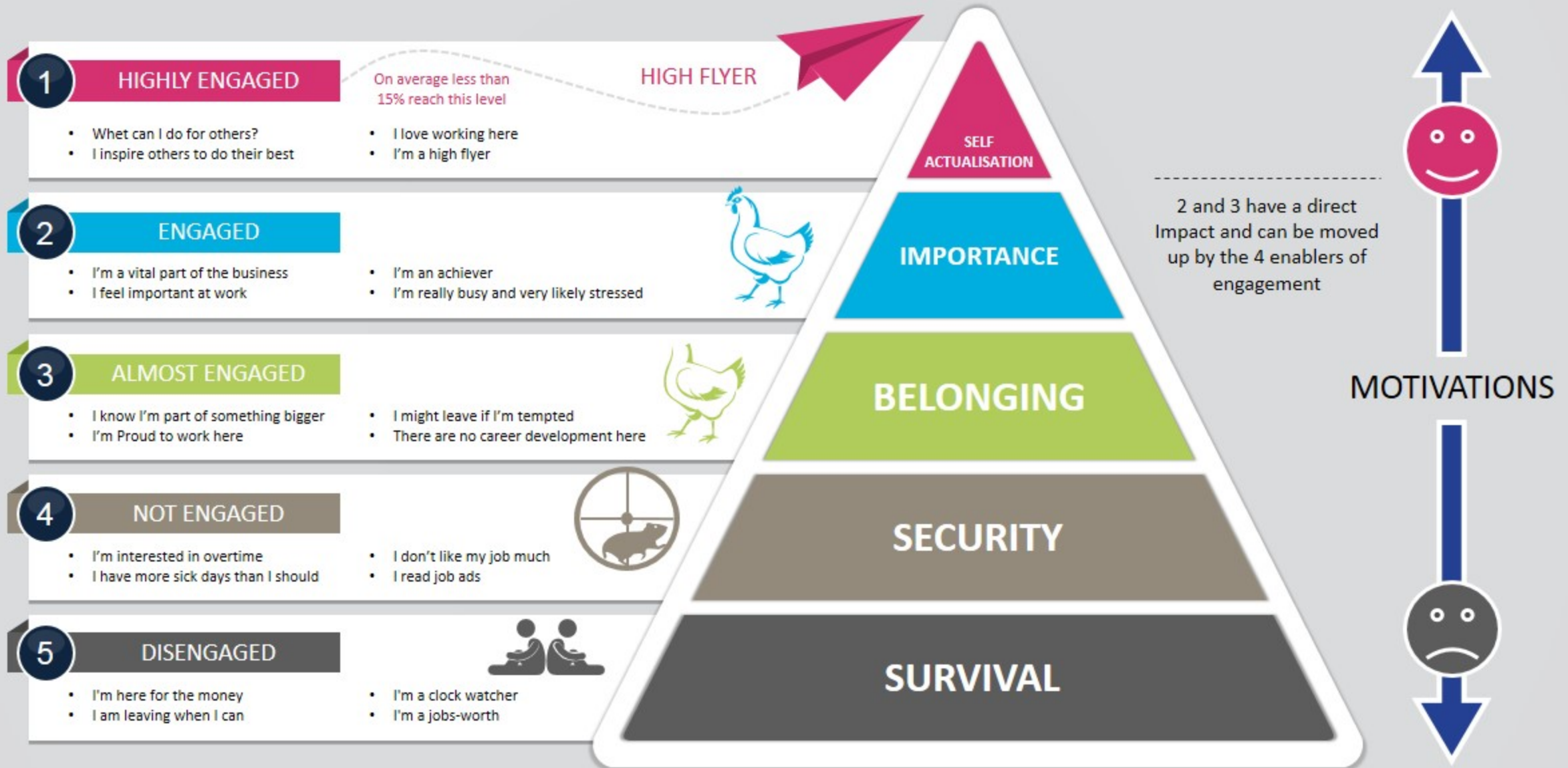
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Research Question

- ▶ *How have the alternatives to suspension policies, also known as the Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018, impact the safety and wellness of K – 12 teachers?*

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



Rationale

The purpose of this research is to explore how this policy impacts teacher safety and wellness during the academic school year 2019 – 20.

The main goal is to better understand:

- ▶ Verbal Conditions
- ▶ Emotional Conditions
- ▶ Physical Conditions
- ▶ The administrative response
- ▶ The feelings related to the conditioned experience

Student Fair Access to School Act of 2018

- ▶ On July 12, 2018, the District of Columbia enacted uniform school discipline reforms applying to both DC Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter school.
- ▶ The purpose of the Act is to **ensure student safety** and **ensure access to education** providing uniform definitions for all DC Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter.
- ▶ The Act establish policies for school climate and discipline that emphasis **positive behavior, setting limits on the use of suspensions and expulsions**, creating additional supports.

Literature Review

- ▶ Gregory, Cornell, and Fan (2012) conducted a statewide study of 280 high schools examined the **relationship between an authoritative school climate** and both teacher reports of victimization and school records of **threats against staff**.
- ▶ The findings concluded schools showed that **structure**, as measured by student- and teacher-reported clarity of school rules, and **support**, as measured by teacher-reported help.

Literature Review (Cont.)

- ▶ Moon and McCluskey (2020) conducted a study of violence and aggression against teachers in middle and high school using a sample of 1629 teachers in the southwest region of the United States.
- ▶ The findings suggest that teacher victimization at school is highly prevalent, with detrimental **negative impacts on victimized teachers**.
- ▶ The experiences involving five victimization types (theft/property damage, **physical assault, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, and noncontact aggression**) are **correlated with teachers'** self-reported job performance, student trust, **safety at school**, and thoughts about quitting.

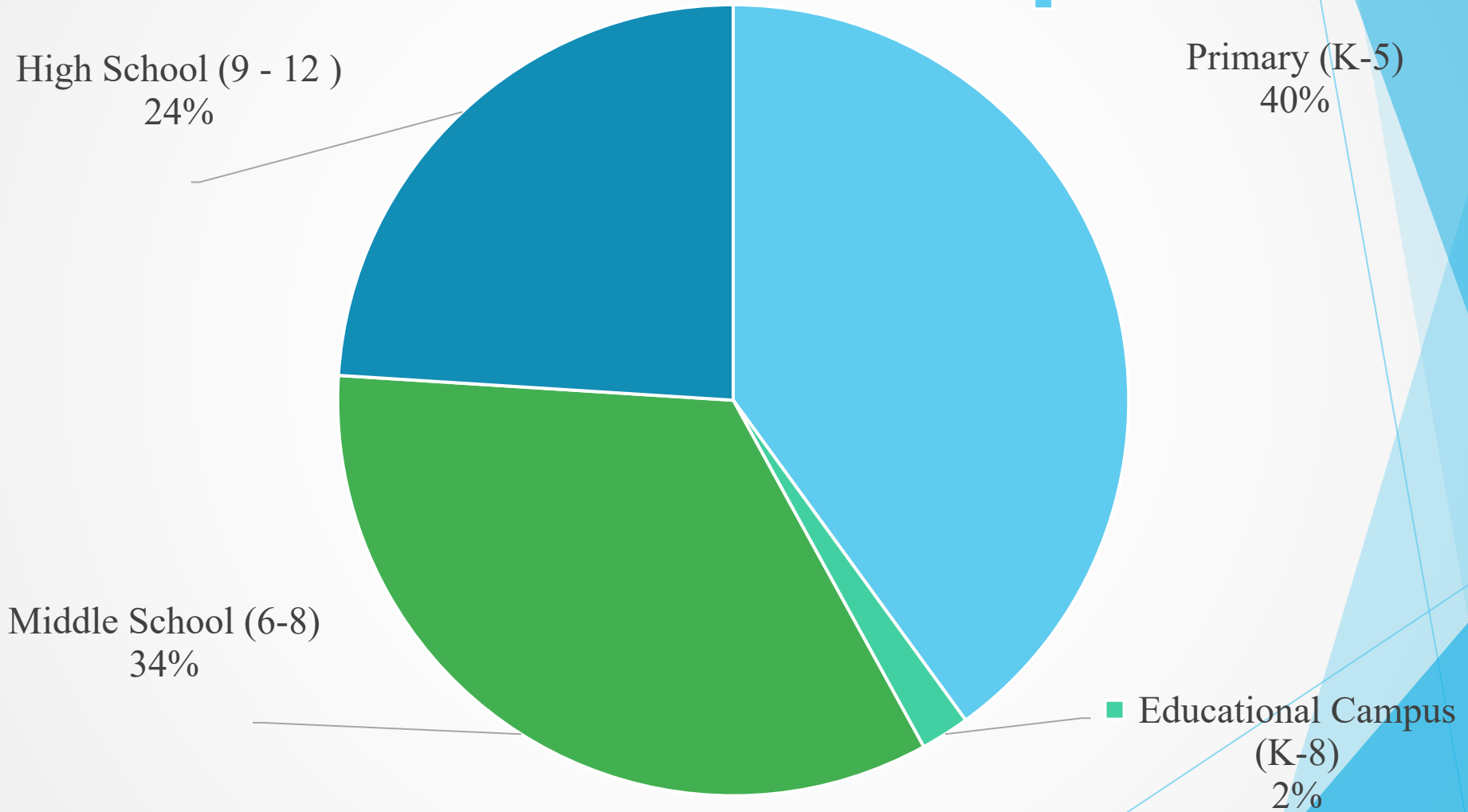
Literature Review (Cont.)

- ▶ Souers and Hall (2019) explore the idea of trauma-sensitive practices. To create an environment where it is safe for students to grow, to develop, to exist, and to learn referred to as a positive learning environment
- ▶ The source suggests to maintain a **culture of safety**, two big ideas: **physical security and emotional safety** must be address.
- ▶ It also suggests if teaches do not feel safe, they can not lead or teach effectively.
- ▶ In closing, the teacher needs to feel safe, supersedes everything else.

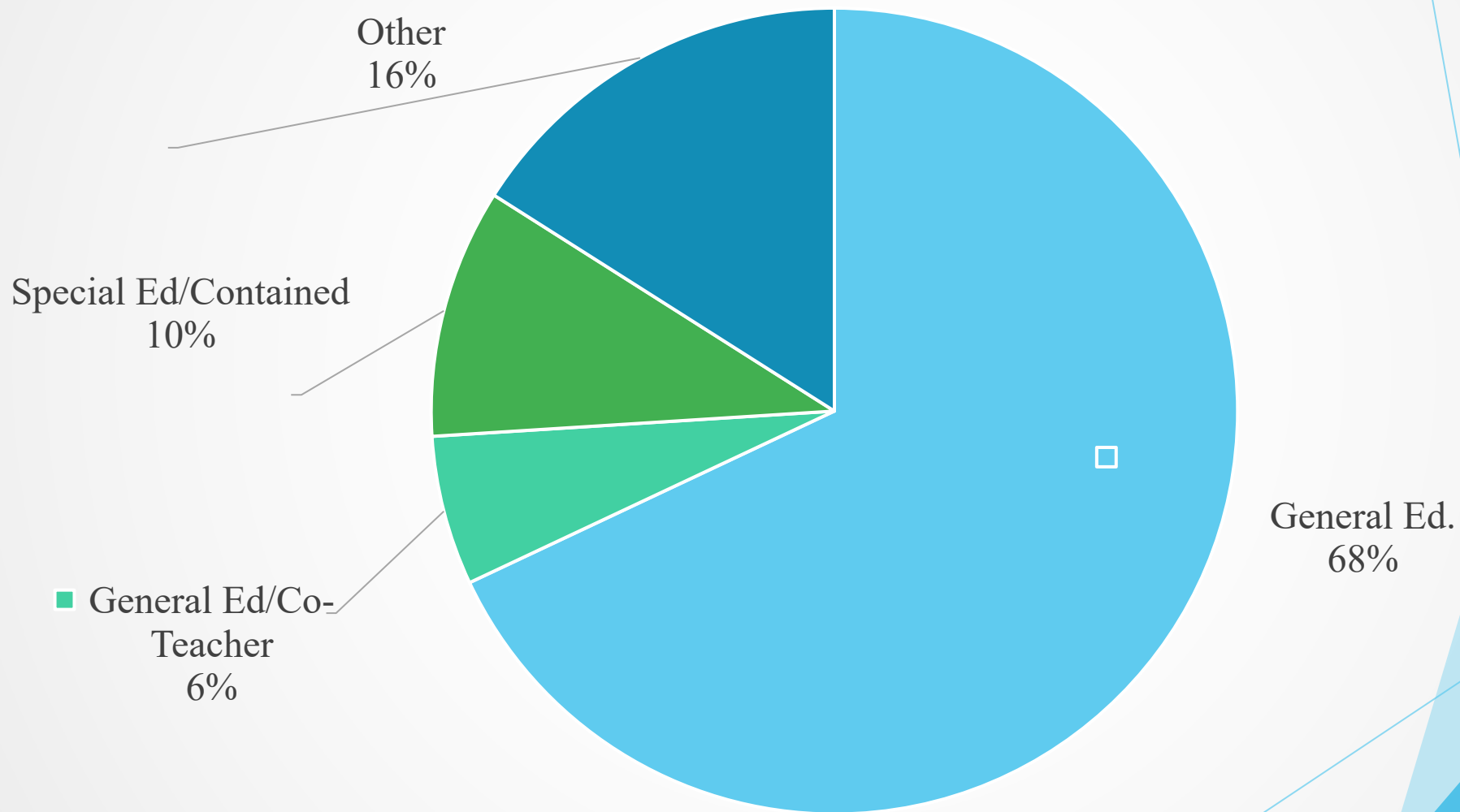
Data Sources & Collection

- ▶ Snowball Sampling Approach
- ▶ Anonymous 16 Question Survey using Microsoft Forms
- ▶ Compiled using Microsoft Forms
- ▶ Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data
 - ▶ Verbal, Emotional, and Physical Conditions of Teachers

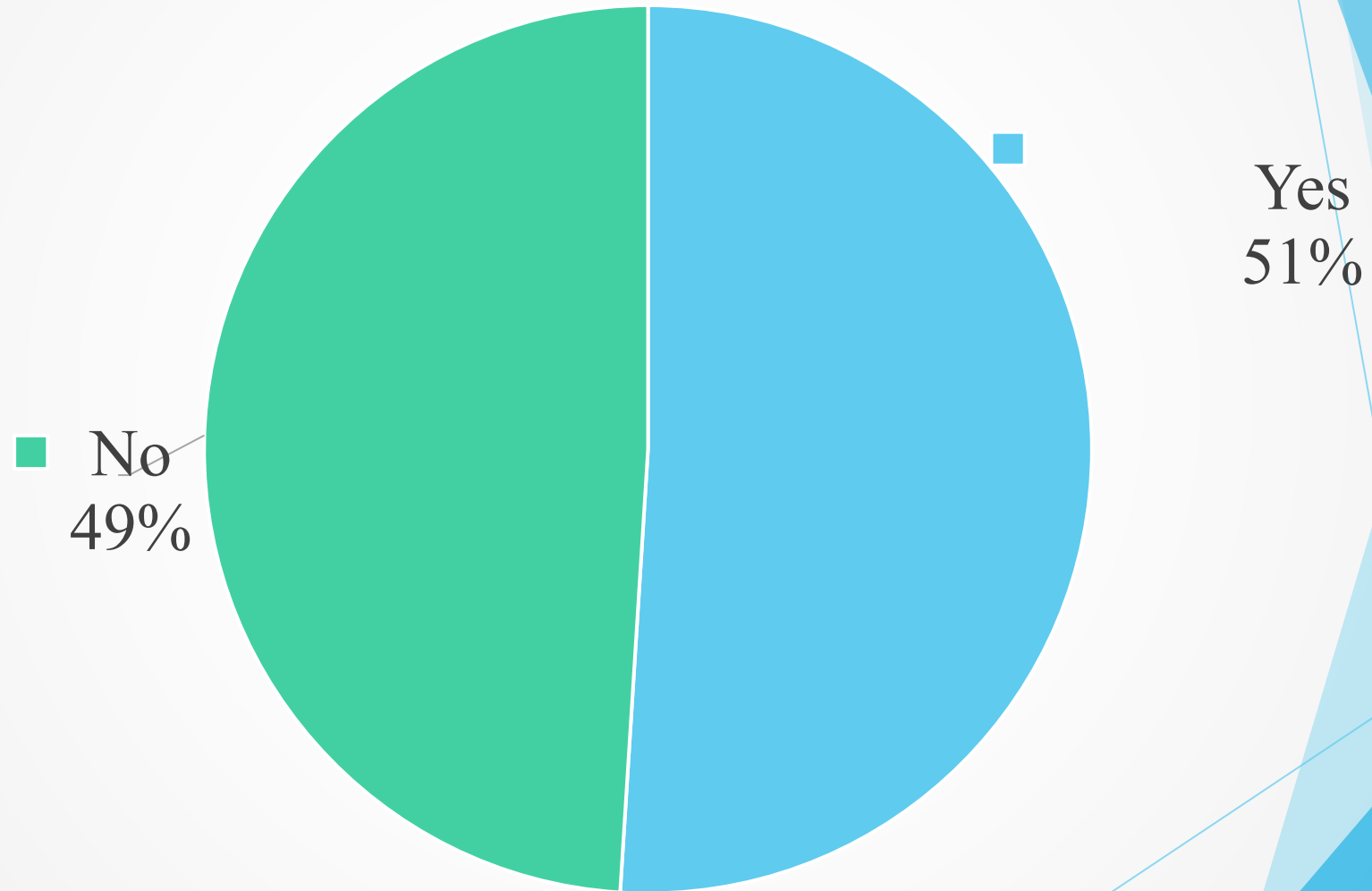
Grade Level



Teacher Status



Do you Feel Safe



Why?

Experience

Student Harrassment

No Consequences

Strong Administration

Security

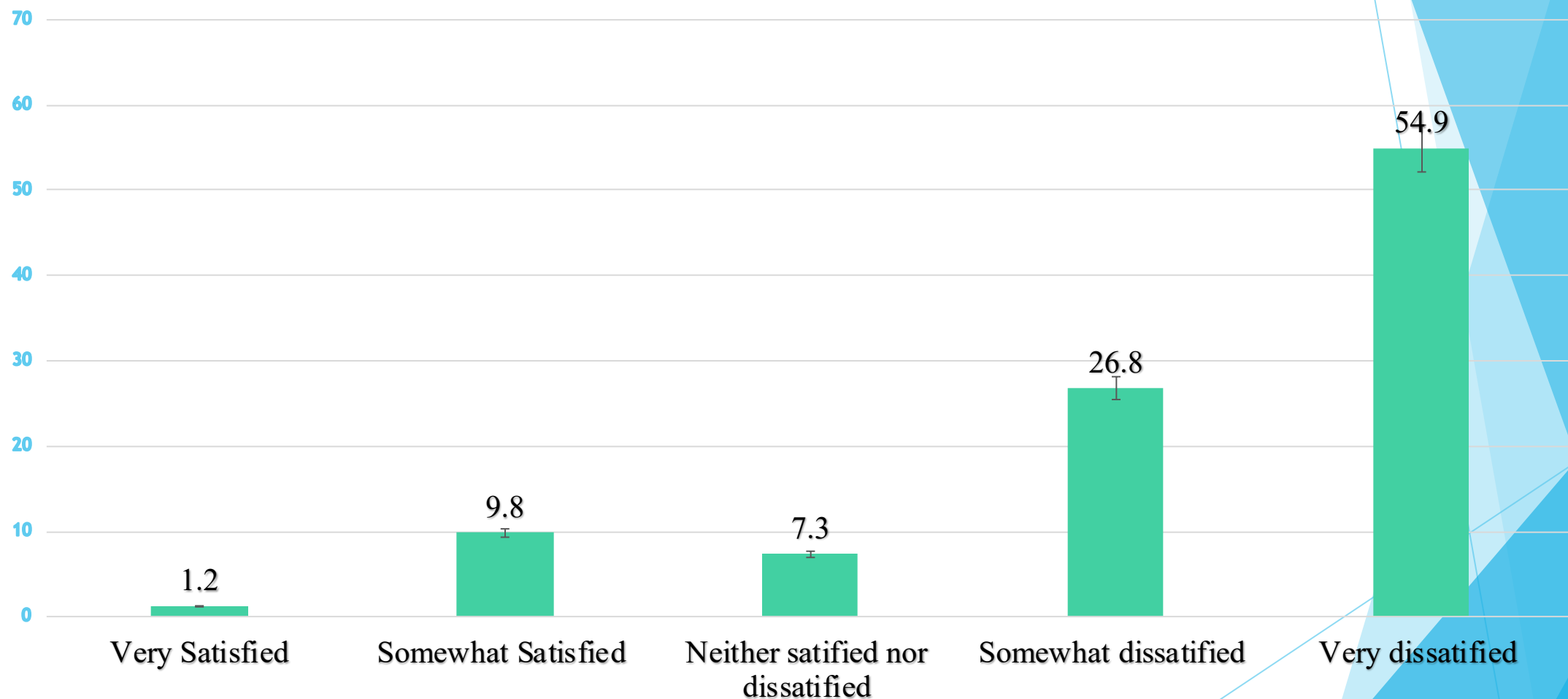
Safe Passage

No Accountability

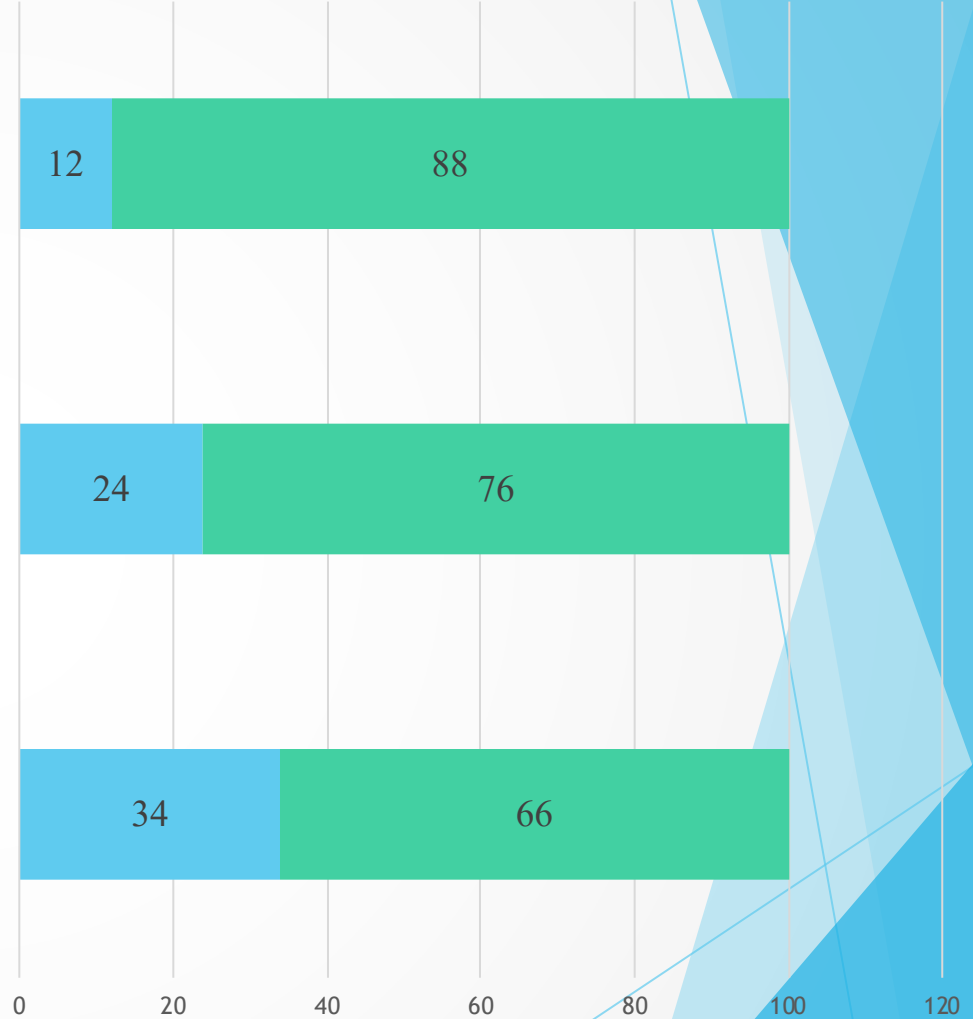
Gender

No Training

How satisfied are you the disciplinary actions associated with the policy at your school?

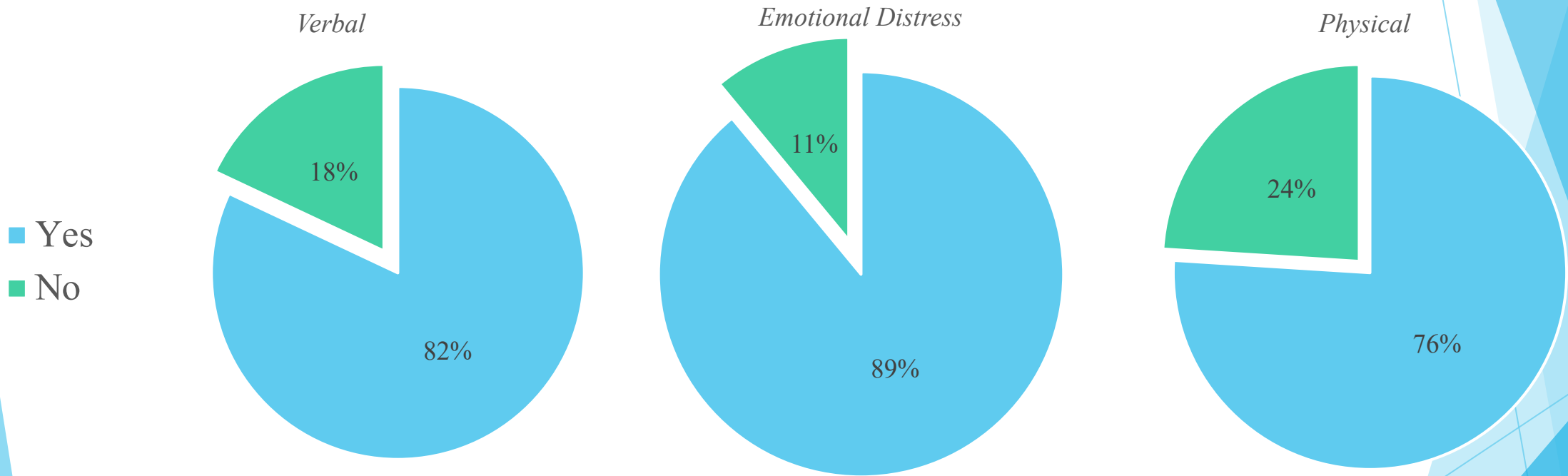


Do you feel that your school discipline policy fosters a school climate that engages all student learning?



■ Yes ■ No

Have you or do you know of a teacher who has been verbally, emotionally, or physically threatened in your school?



If yes, What was the Administrative Response?

Restorative_Justice
Sent_Student_Back_Class

Nothing

Student_Was_Removed_From_Class

Hands_Tied

In_School_Suspension

Administrative Response Quotes

- “The students go through Social-Emotional discussions with members of the Behavior team using the Restorative Justice model.”
- “Administration said that there is nothing that they can do. We can write up a complaint so that they can file it.”
- “The student ,after threatening to kill the teacher who was following the in-school pass policy and removed by a security officer, was sent back to the same classroom by the principal.”

If yes, do you feel Administrative response was effective?

Effective_&_Consistent

Teacher_Resigned

Disrupted_Learning_Environment

More_Interventions_Needed

Teacher_Problem

Increased_Threats_Students

No_Consequence

Ineffective_&_Inconsistent

Administrative Effectiveness Quotes

- ▶ “110% No. The poor response has led to Multiple Repeat Infractions by many of the same individuals who believe they have Teflon Status due to poor or No Principal.& Admin Responses.”
- ▶ “It makes me feel like my safety is not valued. It makes me feel like teachers are supposed to just put up with and tolerate threatening or aggressive behavior because it's a kid who is doing it.
- ▶ “No, I do not feel the administrative response was effective because the student was not held responsible for their actions or made to make the relationship whole again with the teacher, they threatened.”
- ▶ “Yes, each situation comes about in its own way and has a unique way of handling it but overall the RJ model helps students to learn about their own feelings and draws a more empathetic approach out of them.”
- ▶ “No, but they did all they could within the constraints of the Grosso bill.”

How did it make you feel?

Unsupported

Unappreciated

Disrespected

Horrible

Angry

Optimistic

Upset

Unsafe

Sad

Powerless

Frustrated

Neglected

How Did it Make You Feel Quotes

- ▶ “As an educator, I feel that the response and lack of support from administration makes it difficult for teachers to do their jobs.”
- ▶ “It makes me feel like my safety is not valued. It makes me feel like teachers are supposed to just put up with and tolerate threatening or aggressive behavior because it's a kid who is doing it.”
- ▶ “Unsupported. My administration cares about their teachers but it seems like their hands are tied, especially when we don't have enough support staff.”
- ▶ “Frustrated, and that I cannot trust my administration to look out for the teachers or the other students in the class. It feels that administration is trying to protect a small group of students who as a result feel that they can get away with anything, including putting teachers' belongings in their pants and walking into classes of teachers they don't know, with zero consequence.”
- ▶ “When administrators are effective in their response to any threats or negative behavior, it makes me feel safe, respected, and delighted to be a part of the school family.”

Future Recommendations

- ▶ In order to address the concerns brought up by teacher participants in this study. District of Columbia (DCPS) should immediately establish continuous quarterly professional development to support the implementation of the policy.
- ▶ Further study to include additional stakeholders with various perspectives such as deans, counselors, school resource officers and administrators.
- ▶ Further research is necessary to investigate the predictors, and negative consequences, as well as policy implications in the context of the findings.

Physical Safety for Teachers

- ▶ “Teachers need to feel that we are safe within the contexts of our settings. We should be able to walk through our doors and commence our work feeling confident that we can do our jobs safely.”
- ▶ “Many things can negatively affect our sense of physical safety, such as a student who uses aggression to regulate his or her emotions or the simple fatigue and lack of sleep associated with the stress of our roles.”

Emotional Safety for Teachers

- ▶ Working in an emotionally safe environment is critical to growth, success, and the cultivation of effective teaching and learning practices.
- ▶ Teachers must feel safe enough to be vulnerable with our administrators and colleagues so that we can come forward to ask for support when we need it and access resources without fear of judgment or retaliation.”
- ▶ Many things can negatively affect our ability to feel emotionally safe, including lack of strong leadership, inability to feel emotionally safe asking for help, or low self-efficacy in the job.”

Funding

- ▶ Councilmember Grosso included funding for much of the bill in the FY2019 budget, including over **\$2 million** directly to schools through the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula.
- ▶ The budget also included additional funding for OSSE to provide support to schools:
 - ▶ **\$450,000** additional for restorative justice practices;
 - ▶ **\$400,000** for other training and supports;
 - ▶ **\$1.4 million** for community schools grants;
 - ▶ **\$300,000** to collect further data and conduct a long-term evaluation of the law and any unintended consequences.

References

- ▶ Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- ▶ D.C. Law 22-157. *Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018*. code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/laws/22-157.html.
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- ▶ Moon, B., & McCluskey, J. (2020). *An exploratory study of violence and aggression against teachers in middle and high schools: Prevalence, predictors, and negative consequences* doi:10.1080/15388220.2018.1540010
- ▶ Souers, Kristin, and Peter A. Hall. *Relationship, Responsibility, and Regulation: Trauma-Invested Practices for Fostering Resilient Learners*. ASCD, 2019.