



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
PHILADELPHIA

**Stakeholder Feedback  
on the School District of Philadelphia's  
New Accountability Framework**

**Office of Evaluation, Research, and Accountability**

**September 2021**

# Gathering Feedback

The School District of Philadelphia (SDP) is introducing the SPREE (School Progress Report on Education and Equity), a new annual school accountability report on school performance and student outcomes for the 2020-21 school year. This tool will replace the District's current accountability tool, the School Progress Report (SPR), and it will be closely aligned to the Board of Education's [Goals and Guardrails](#).

As part of the process to develop this new report, we surveyed and conducted focus groups with a range of stakeholders to gather their feedback on what should and should not be included, as well as on what information should "count" towards a school's overall rating. We wanted to get feedback from those who work directly in schools (teachers and principals), those who support schools (central office staff, assistant superintendents, and the Board), and those who send their children to Philadelphia's schools (parents and guardians).

This document summarizes their feedback, highlighting **five common themes** that emerged through our outreach:

- The Importance of Growth;
- Focus on the Range of College and Career Readiness;
- Consider Equity;
- Align State and District Metrics; and
- Focus on School-Level Factors.

# Who Participated

## Focus Groups

This section details the number of individuals from each stakeholder group who were invited to the focus groups, as well as the number who attended and participated. **In total, ERA held 18 focus groups with 74 participants representing nine stakeholder groups.**

## School Leaders and Principals

### From high schools:

District high schools: Five principals attended out of nine invited, representing neighborhood, special admission, and CTE schools.

Charter high schools: Seven school and charter management organization leaders responded to six invitations. Participants represented 13 high schools and 22 schools in all.

### From non-high schools:

District elementary/K8/middle schools: Five principals attended out of eight invited. Participants represented four neighborhood schools and one city-wide school.

Charter elementary/K8/middle schools: Six school and charter management organization leaders attended out of seven invited. Participants represented 10 schools serving grades K-8 and 11 schools in all.

## Teachers and School Staff

Nineteen teachers attended out of 41 invited. Participants represented 18 schools and 11 Networks, as well as six high schools and 12 lower-grades schools. Participants represented neighborhood, city-wide, and special admission schools. A representative of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) also participated.

## Central Office Staff

Ten Chiefs, six Assistant Superintendents, and seven staff from the division of Evaluation, Research, and Accountability (ERA) provided feedback in focus groups. An additional 12 participants represented internal SDP offices.

# Surveys

This section summarizes information about the individuals who responded to the survey. **In total, ERA received 140 responses.**

Figure 1. Survey respondents by role

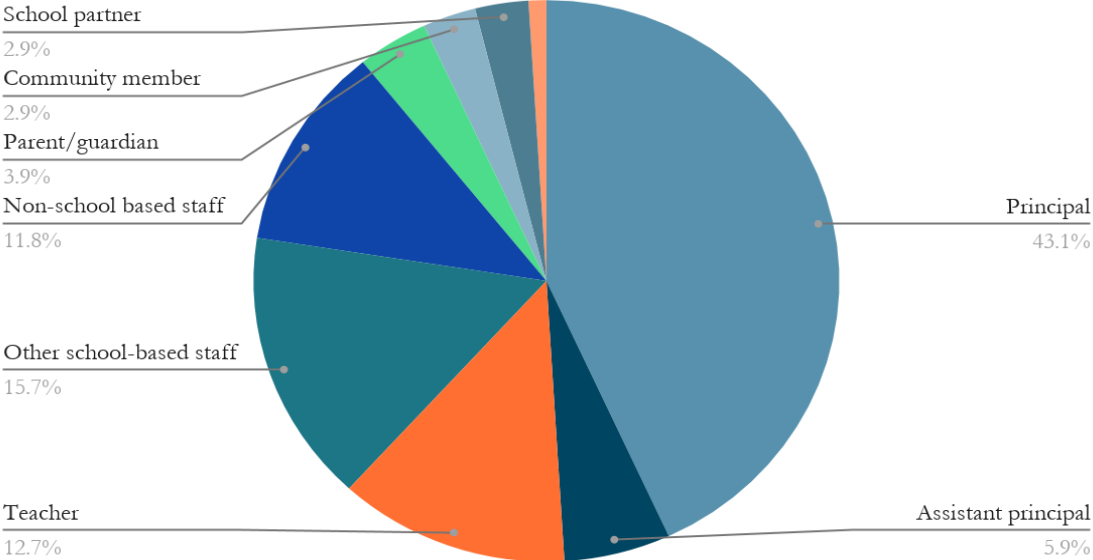
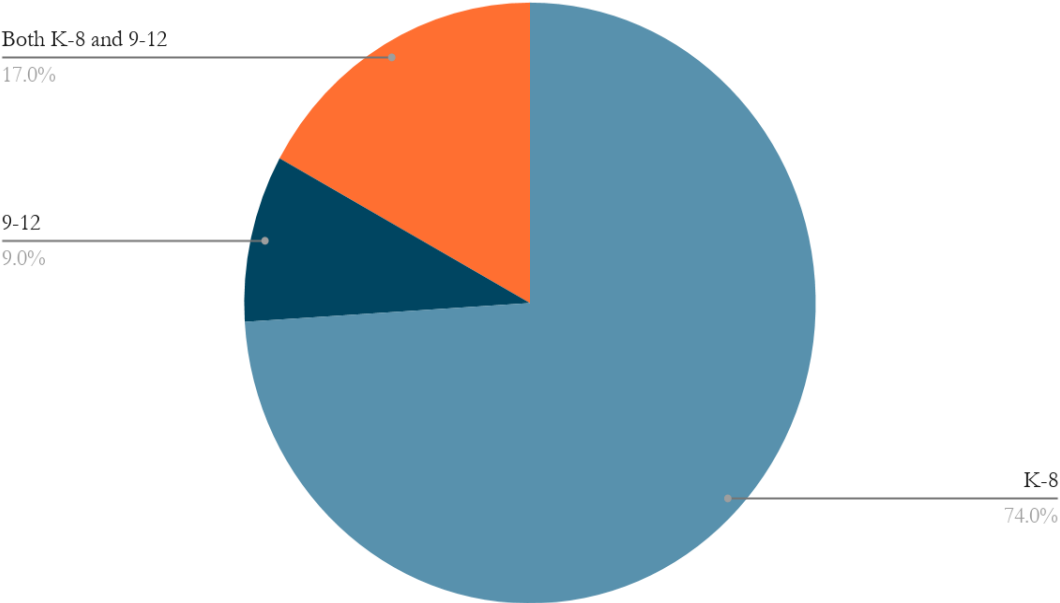


Figure 2. Respondents by represented grade bands



# What We Heard and What We Did

The following section summarizes the common themes in the feedback we received from teachers, principals, central office staff, assistant superintendents, and the Board. These themes were largely consistent across conversations and stakeholders, as was the specific feedback. This section also includes notes on the decisions we made in response to that feedback.

## The Importance of Growth

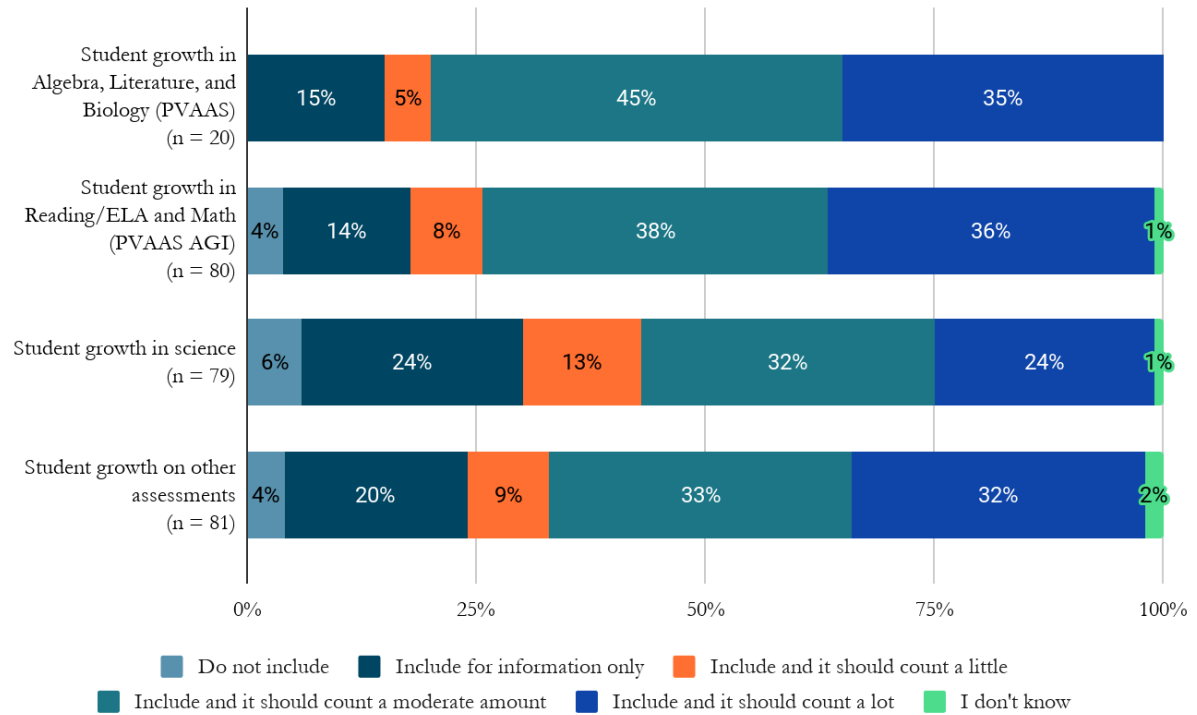
### What We Heard

“Being able to look at the lowest-performing students in each grade really allowed us to focus our efforts. I think there should be points awarded for lower-performing groups making progress. This also helps us acknowledge strong work done by staff members.”

*-Feedback from a Lower-Grades Principal*

Looking at growth--in addition to whether students are proficient on state assessments--remains crucial, because growth provides a sense of how well schools are educating students regardless of their academic background and starting performance levels. However, some teachers and leaders from higher performing schools expressed concern about the feasibility of maintaining high growth year after year.

Figure 3. Should student growth in reading/ELA and math (PVAAS AGI) be included in the report? If so, should these metrics be scored or informational?



Two thirds of high school principals and three quarters of lower-grade principals who responded to the survey believed that student growth should matter at least a moderate amount.

### How We Addressed This Feedback

In addition to measures of whether students are meeting state standards, we included measures of student growth on state assessments. The new accountability report also establishes performance targets to evaluate schools in terms of student growth.

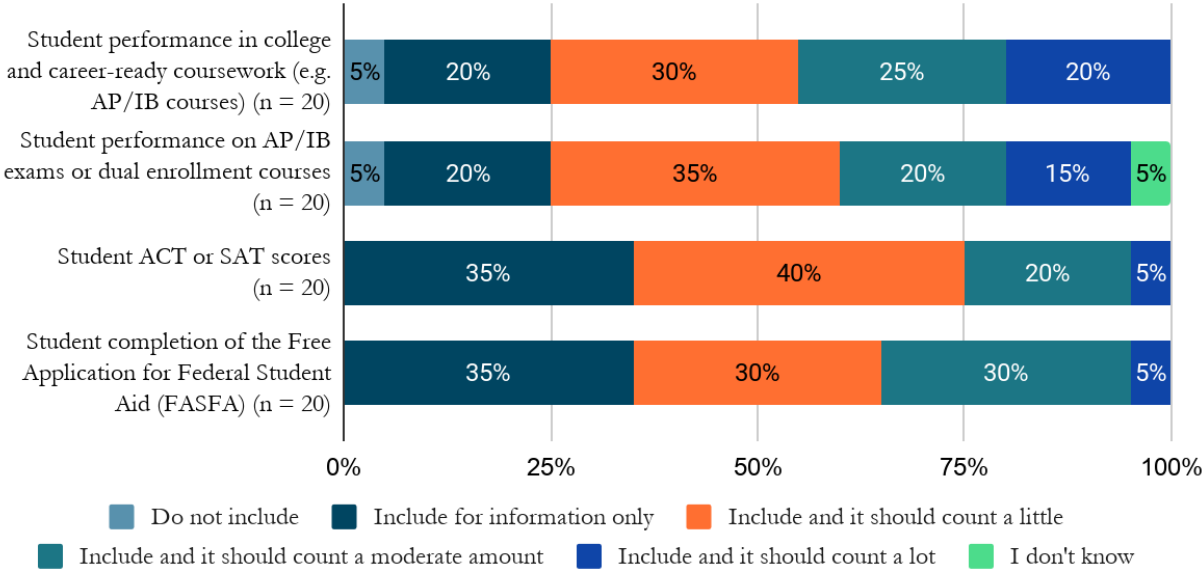
# Focus on the Range of College and Career Readiness

## What We Heard

“If my child is enrolled in a CTE high school then I’m not as worried about AP classes. And the opposite is true if my kid is in a magnet school.”  
*-Feedback from a Parent*

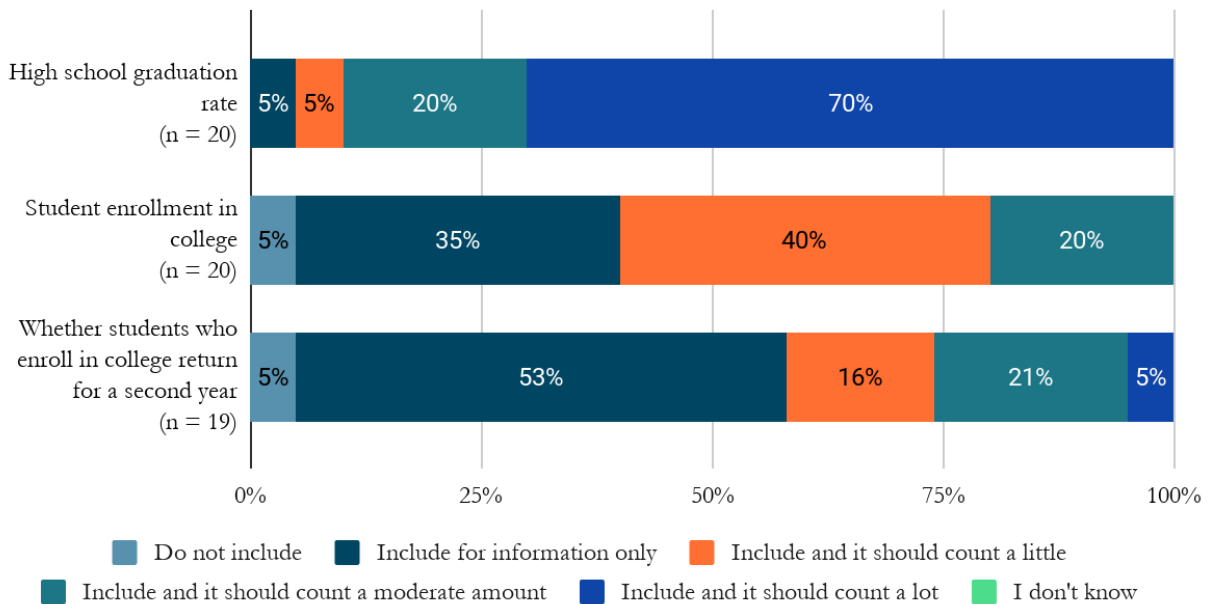
Schools have different goals and missions, which means that college and career preparation and readiness can look different across the city. Many stakeholders indicated that a school-level performance report should look at college and career readiness before 12th grade and account for different types of opportunities that students might have. For example, principals in focus groups expressed that a CTE school report should include information about career preparation, licensures, and job placement -- but noted that this information might not be relevant for schools without extensive CTE programs.

Figure 4. Should various college and career metrics be included in the report? If so, should these metrics be scored or informational?



Across both the focus groups and survey, stakeholders felt that college preparation was important, but there was no clear consensus on evaluating college preparation. In the survey, about the same proportion of respondents said that AP/IB metrics should count a lot as said they should be included for information only. In focus groups, stakeholders suggested that such metrics may need to be considered in relation to the school context -- schools serve students with different incoming preparation and postsecondary goals, so students at some schools may need additional supports before they are prepared to meet college-ready benchmarks.

Figure 5. Should high school graduation, matriculation, and college persistence be included in the report? If so, should these metrics be scored or informational?



However, some metrics related to college and career readiness showed wide support. In the survey, 95% of respondents thought the graduation rate should be scored, with 9 in 10 saying that it should count at least a moderate amount. Three in 4 respondents thought the same about the 9th grade on-track rate. These sentiments were echoed in the focus groups, especially from school leaders.

### How We Addressed This Feedback

We separated out and expanded information on measures related to career and technical education, as well as those related to college preparation. We are also incorporating and evaluating schools on measures of progress through high school and on graduation. All reports will include information on college-going, and, in the future, we hope to supplement that with measures on other post-secondary endeavors (e.g., employment or military enlistment) as the District gains access to that information.



# Consider Equity

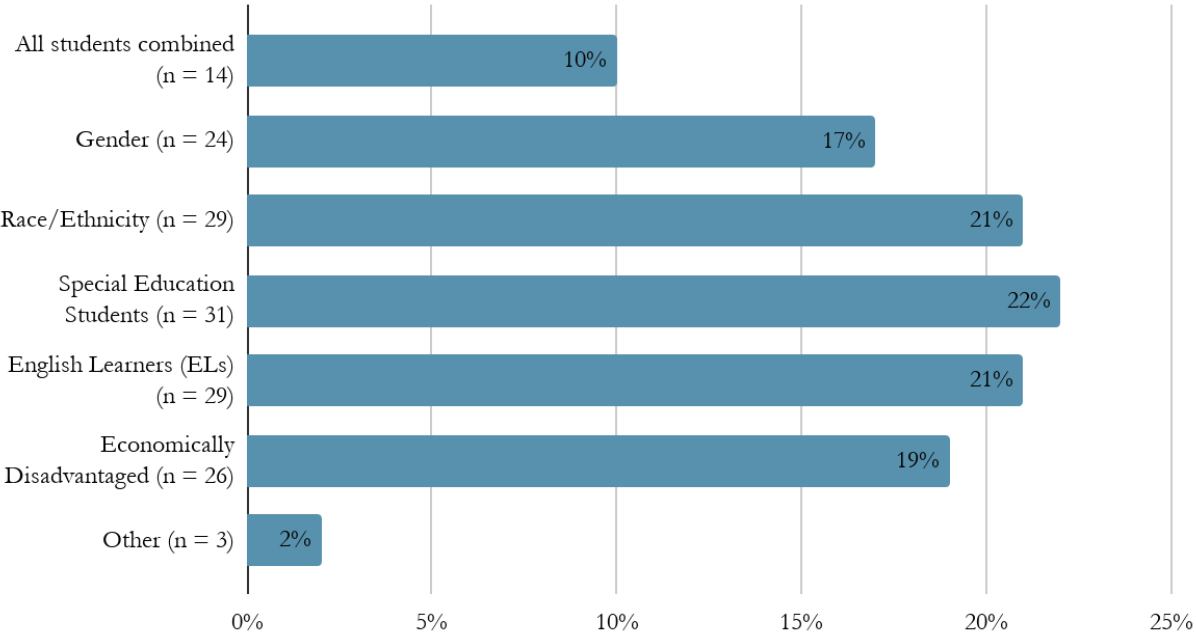
## What We Heard

“If I’m seeing a gap between my subgroups, then I feel like that is something that we can focus on.”  
*-Feedback from a Principal*

In both the survey and the focus groups, we heard the importance of understanding access, opportunity, and performance for different groups of students across the new framework.

Many stakeholders indicated that metrics looking at disproportionality should be included in a school’s accountability report because they allow us to understand whether different groups of students at the same school have the same access or opportunities.

Figure 6. Which of these subgroups should be reported separately on our new annual school report?



Survey respondents said that information on special education students, students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds, and English learners should be reported separately. Just over 20% of respondents held this view, while 17-19% said student information should also be reported separately by gender and economic disadvantage status.

Participants in both focus groups and the survey also raised questions about whether all students have the same access to courses and activities outside of core subjects - like arts, advanced (AP or IB) courses, and co-curricular activities. While participants noted that these opportunities often keep students engaged, we heard concern that all schools might not be able to offer the

opportunities due to funding. While virtually all survey respondents thought that this information was important to include, nearly half said that information on arts and co-curricular activities should be included for display purposes only due to concerns about staffing and resources.

## How We Addressed This Feedback

We included information on key measures broken out by student groups, as well as measures of disproportionality on specific indicators of student access and opportunity. This information also supports the Board of Education's focus on equity and is a necessary step for dismantling -- and tracking whether we are making progress on dismantling -- racist practices and policies currently in place. We also included measures of arts, co-curricular, and athletic participation -- but for informational purposes only.

## Align State and District Metrics

### What We Heard

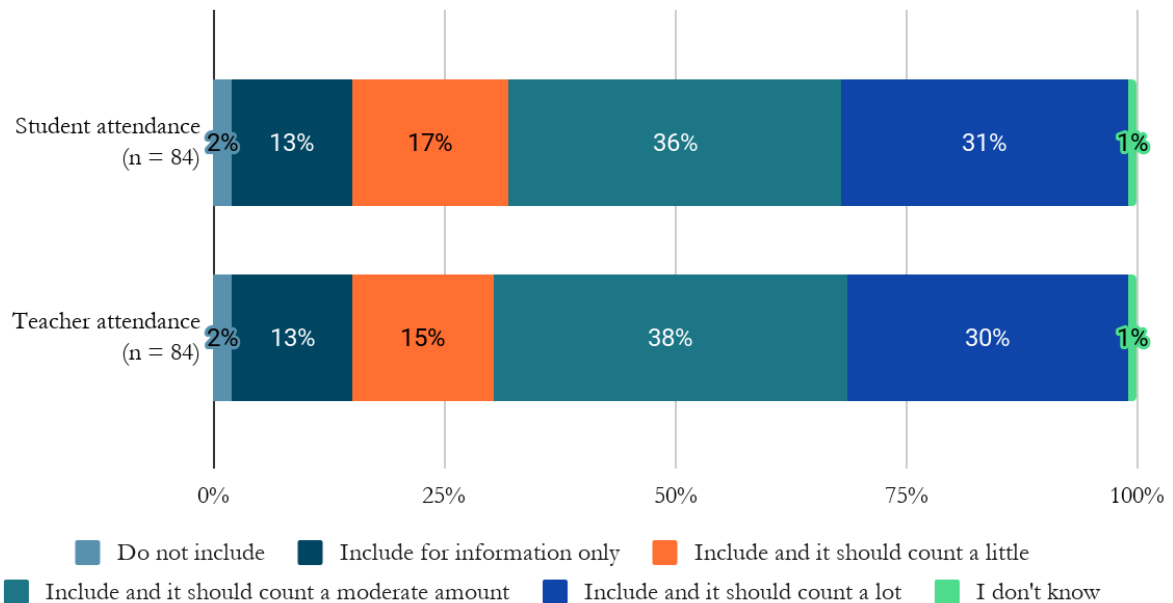
“You need to better integrate [accountability] into the school comprehensive planning process, which is already wildly disconnected from our day-to-day work, though getting a bit better with the quarterly check-ins. Otherwise, what is the purpose of this report card? We know bad grades aren't motivating for students. Are they motivating for schools?”

*-Feedback from a Focus Group Participant*

Focus group participants indicated that streamlining District metrics and aligning them to state metrics would make it easier for schools to act on data, as historical accountability tools have sometimes set performance expectations that differ from other state or district goals.

For example, respondents in both focus groups and the survey expressed strong support for including student and teacher attendance. Nearly 85% of survey respondents supported scoring (or rating) schools on these, with 2 in 3 respondents saying the two should matter at least a moderate amount. Focus group participants also generally supported including attendance information, although principals and teachers disagreed on whether teacher attendance should be included.

Figure 7. Should attendance metrics be included in the report? If so, should these metrics be scored or informational?



However, school leaders in the focus groups expressed frustration that schools can be identified for state interventions based on one student attendance metric, but the District tools evaluate schools using a different metric and standard.

### How We Addressed This Feedback

Wherever possible, we aligned metrics across tools and set performance thresholds aligned to other local and state goals, like the [Board's goals and guardrails](#) and the state's [Future Ready Index](#). With respect to attendance, for example, the new report will look at the same standard -- students attending at least 90% of days -- while also reporting out on other attendance bands.

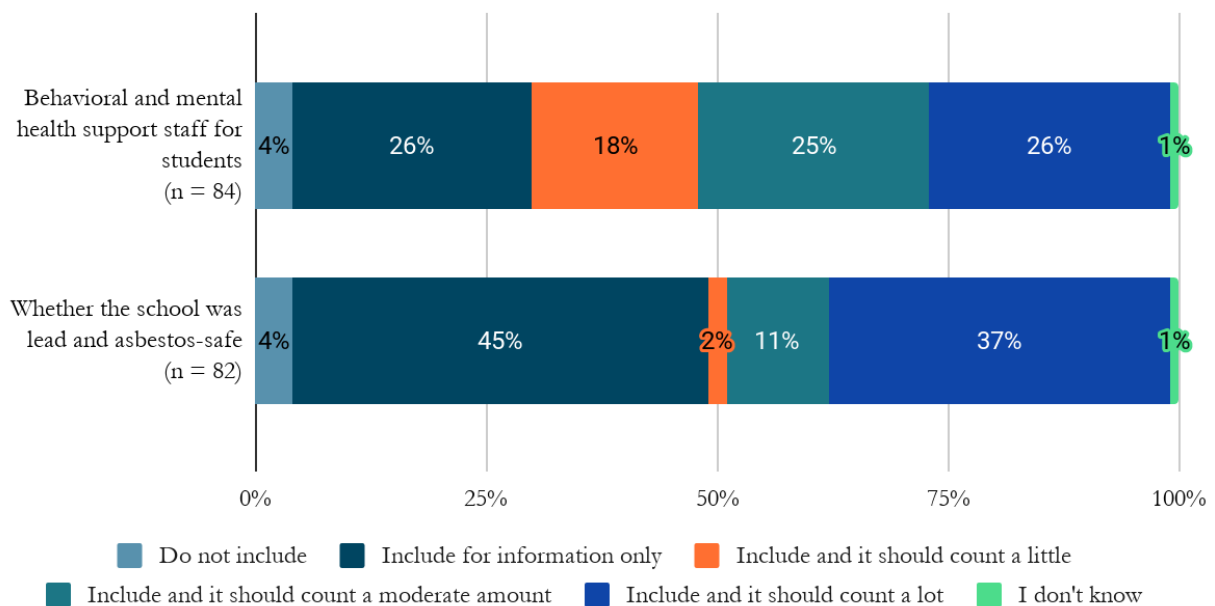
We are also sharing clear documentation on how each measure will be rated so that schools and stakeholders know how expectations may change over time and can plan for how to reach those long-term goals.

## Focus on School-Level Factors

### What We Heard

If a measure depends on the District or management organization allocating money and/or resources (for example, whether or not a school is lead- and asbestos-safe), respondents said it shouldn't be included in a school-level score. In focus groups, respondents identified staffing composition and environmental factors as measures that are heavily dependent on central operating budgeting decisions.

Figure 8. Should staffing and environmental metrics be included in the report? If so, should these metrics be scored or informational?



Similarly, about 4 in 10 survey respondents said that data on lead/asbestos safety, behavioral and mental health supports, and parent advisory group (SAC) activity should be included for informational purposes only. This rose to about 5 in 10 among principals and APs.

### How We Addressed This Feedback

While some measures that are not directly within each school's control are displayed in the report for information purposes, schools are not evaluated on these items. They are included so that stakeholders can easily understand how a school looks on all of the Board of Education's key targets and leading indicators. This is also intended to help hold the District or management organization accountable for taking action on these issues.

# Next Steps

The District is preparing to release more information on its new accountability framework, which is closely aligned to the Board of Education's Goals and Guardrails and informed by this stakeholder feedback. The materials to be released will include detailed information on how each metric will be rated and the design of the full report.

Over the coming months, ERA will work to support schools leaders in understanding and interpreting the new reporting metrics. We will also be seeking feedback from schools on other data that should be released to supplement the report (e.g., in School Profiles), and we will be developing materials that different stakeholders can use to understand the report and included metrics (e.g., overviews specifically designed for parents and SACs, for teachers and school staff, or for community partners).