School District of the City of York

District Diagnostic | July 2015

SECTION I: FINDINGS

Mass Insight EDUCATION

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Mass Insight
EDUCATION

This is the first section of a three-section report.

I. **Section I** includes the diagnostic findings and 2013 Recovery Plan updates, as well as recommended focus areas.

II. **Section II** includes recommended focus areas and possible actions.

III. **Section III** includes an appendix and additional resources.

Part I: Overview & State of the District (p. 3)

Part II: Findings: Mass Insight Education's 10 District Domains (p. 16)

Part III: Findings: 2013 Recovery Plan Progress (p. 50)

Part IV: Recommended Focus Areas (p. 59)

Purpose of the SDCY/Mass Insight Partnership

The purpose of the collaboration between the School District of the City of York (SDCY) and Mass Insight Education is to identify district strengths and opportunities for growth in order to update the 2013 Recovery Plan with high-impact action items that will increase student achievement.

Objectives of the District Diagnostic

1. To gather information about the district's current status and to identify key strengths and areas of growth.
2. To engage in reflective conversations about the district's current performance relative to its desired state.
3. To identify opportunities to improve performance by providing recommendations designed to promote organizational effectiveness, and efficiency, while maintaining an unwavering focus on student achievement.
4. To identify progress made since the 2013 Recovery Plan.

Multiple Levers for District-Wide Improvement

Transform the Central Office to better support schools

Improve schools and accelerate student achievement

District Diagnostic Process Overview

Step 1:
Data Collection

Mass Insight collected data from a variety of sources to evaluate district systems and processes. Data collection included a review of performance data, existing reports and documents, feedback gathered from interviews and focus groups, and surveys collected from school and central office staff.

Step 2:
Review and Synthesis

Mass Insight analyzed data by looking across ten major domains in order to identify organizational strengths and areas for growth and improvement.

Step 3:
Recommendations

Mass Insight developed a manageable set of recommendations based on the findings of the diagnostic process. Recommendations are intended to be implemented over the next three years.

Data Collection

Data and Document Review

Includes organizational charts, strategic plans, past audits, job descriptions, budgets, handbooks, general data, and other materials.

Survey Results

Includes Central Office staff, school leaders, teachers, and other school-based staff members.

Interviews and Focus Groups

Interviews include Central Office leaders, school board members, and school principals; focus groups include school and Central Office personnel, students, and community members.

Data Review & Analysis

Interviews:

13 one-on-one interviews completed, including:

- 5 Central Office employees
- 3 school administrators
- Board and union leadership
- York mayor
- State Representative
- Superintendent
- Chief Recovery Officer

Focus Groups:

27 focus groups completed with **more than 150** participants, including:

- 15 Central Office focus groups
- 3 school administrator focus groups (1 principal, 2 Assistant Principal)
- 6 parent and community member focus groups
- 3 teacher focus groups

Surveys:

2 surveys administered with a total of **277** responses, including:

- 50 responses to the Central Office survey
- 227 responses to the school staff survey

SDCY by the Numbers: School Year 2014-2015

5,920 students in grades PK-12

- **100%** qualify for free and reduced lunch
- **21%** Special Education
- **26%** English Language Learners
- **16%** White
- **38%** Black or African American
- **41%** Hispanic/Latino
- **5%** Other

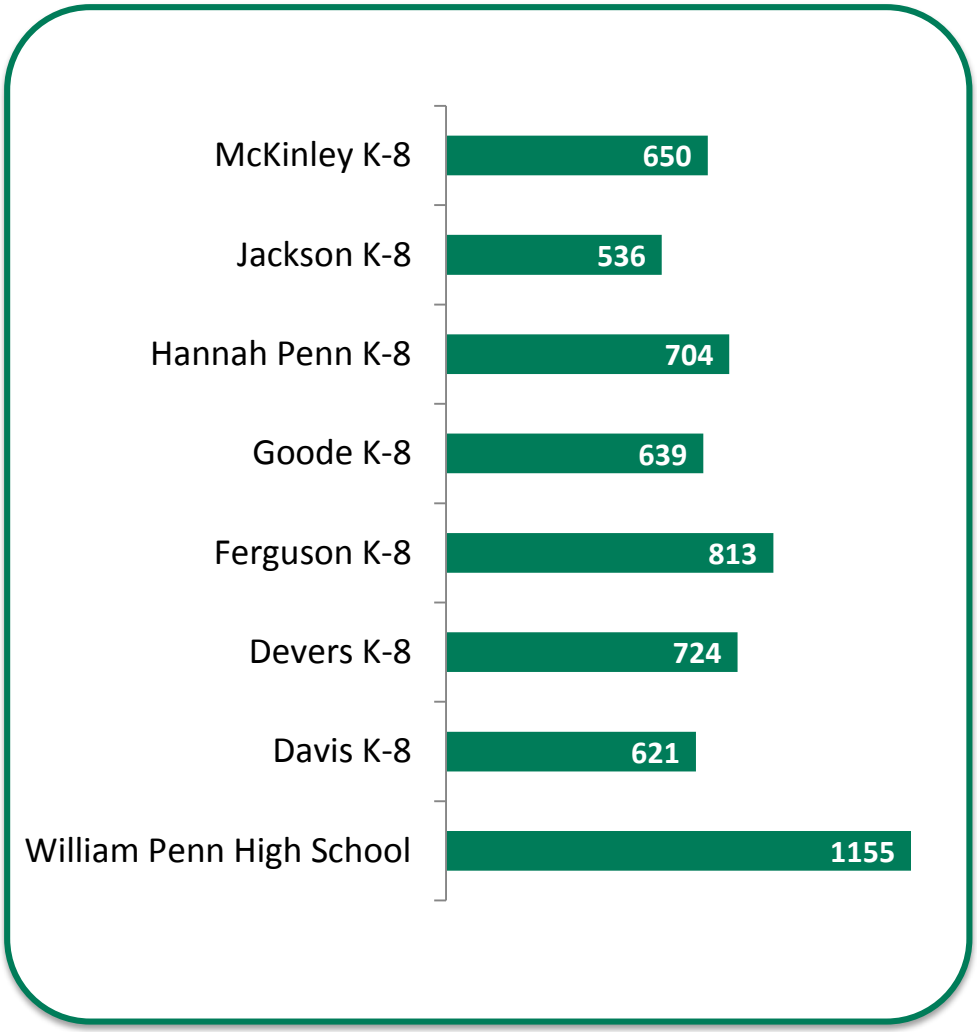
8 schools

321 teachers

19 administrators

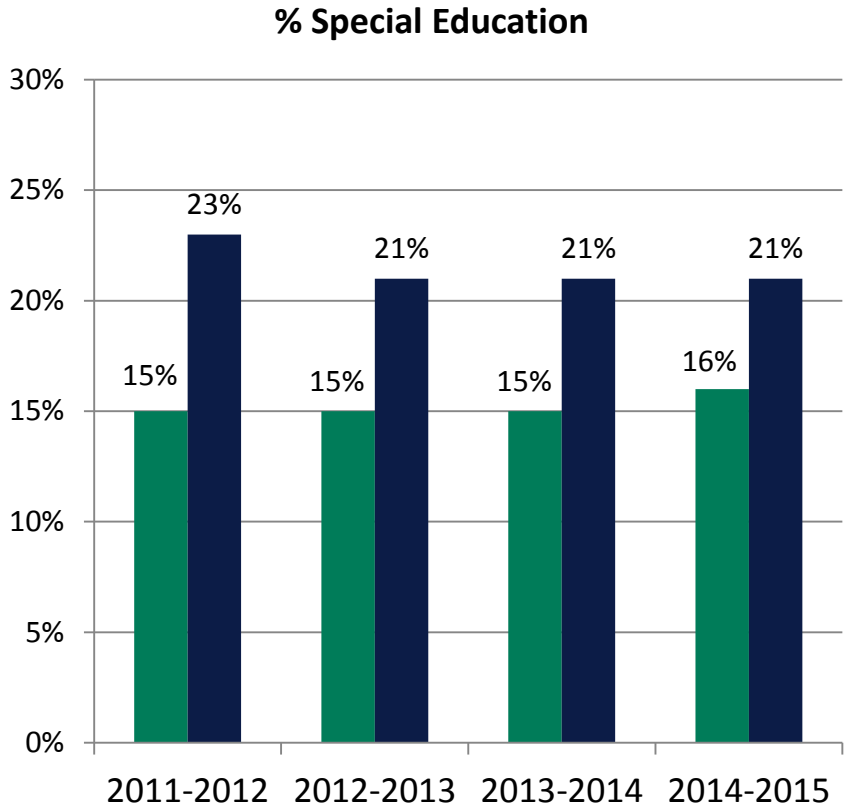
43 Central Office staff members

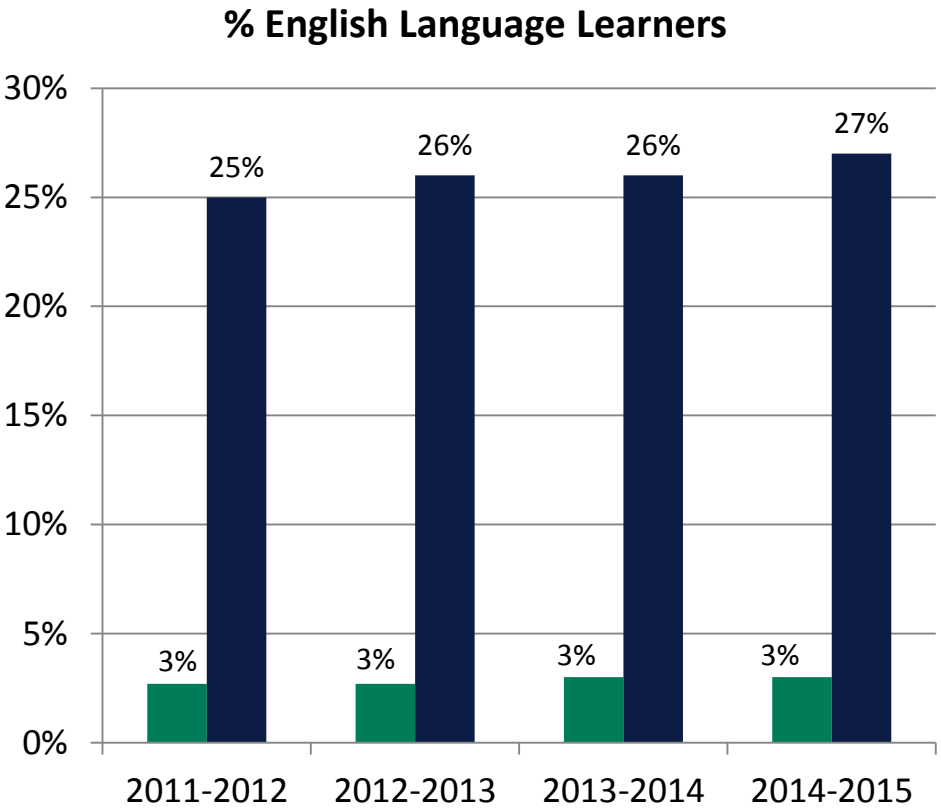
$114.69M FY15 approved budget



SDCY by the Numbers: Special Populations

In the 2014-2015 school year, 1,254 students were enrolled as English Language Learners, and 1,202 as receiving special education services. Of these, 469 were enrolled in both programs.

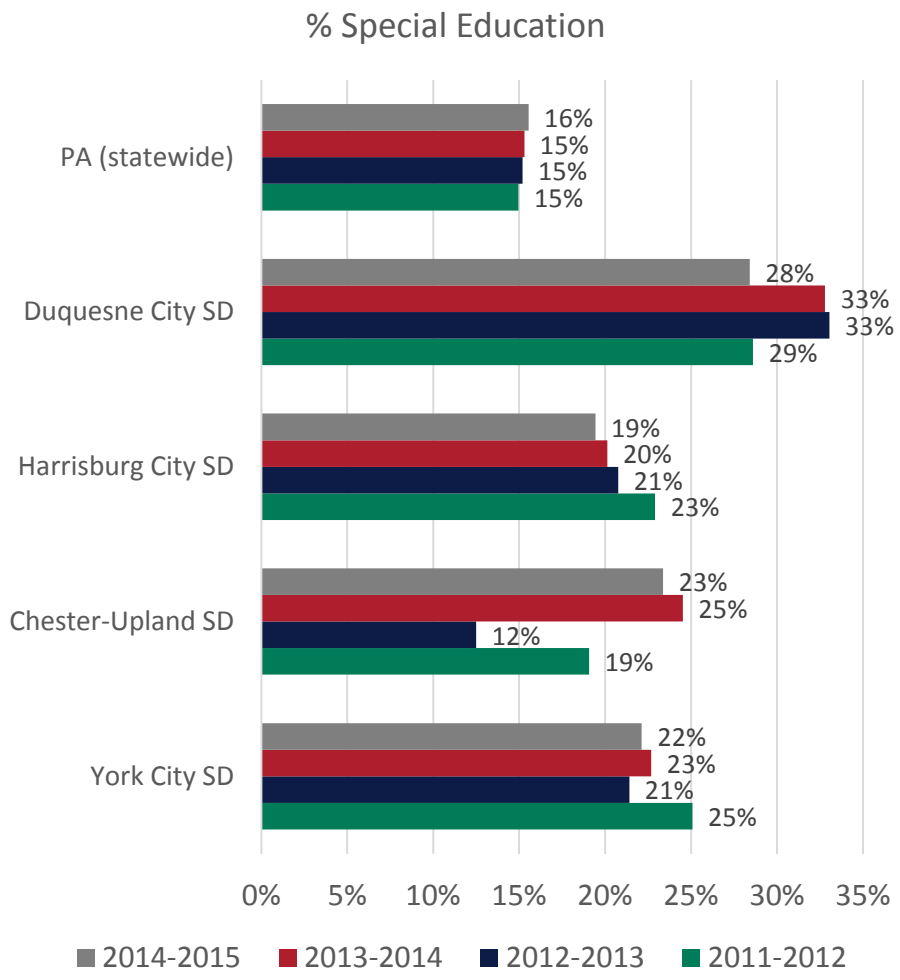


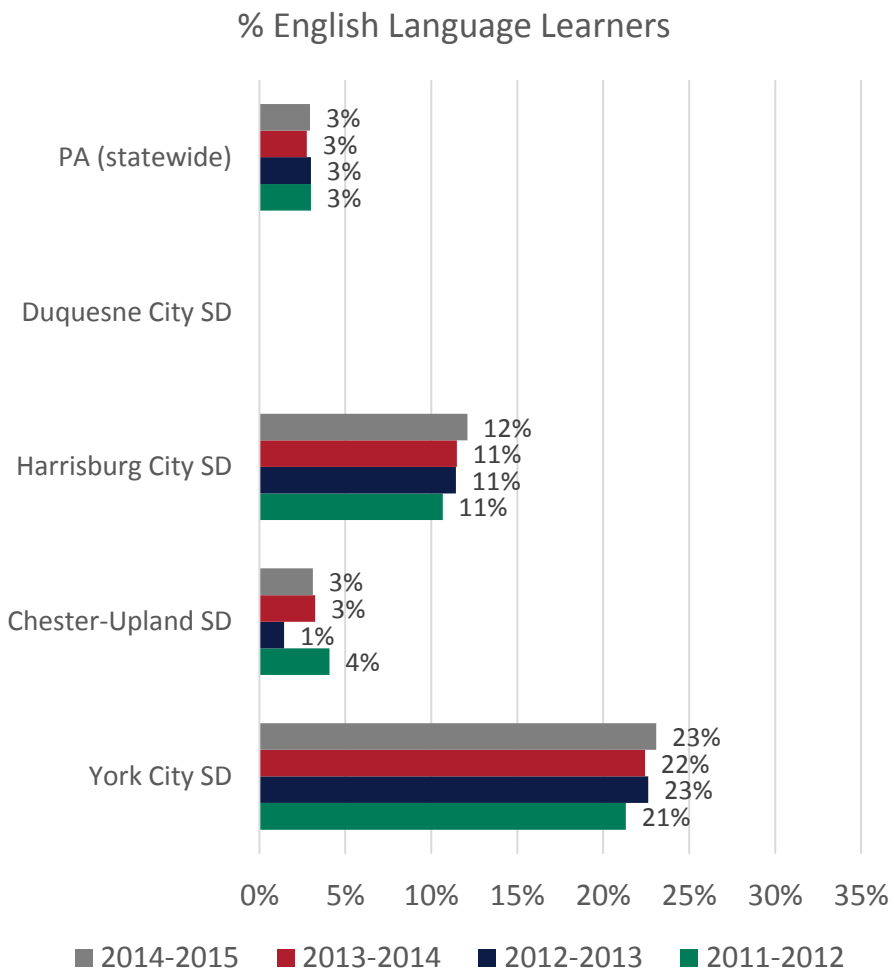


Pennsylvania SDCY schools

Source: Pennsylvania statewide data as reported on http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org/ and https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_204.20.asp and as obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of Education

Financial Recovery Districts by the Numbers: Special Populations

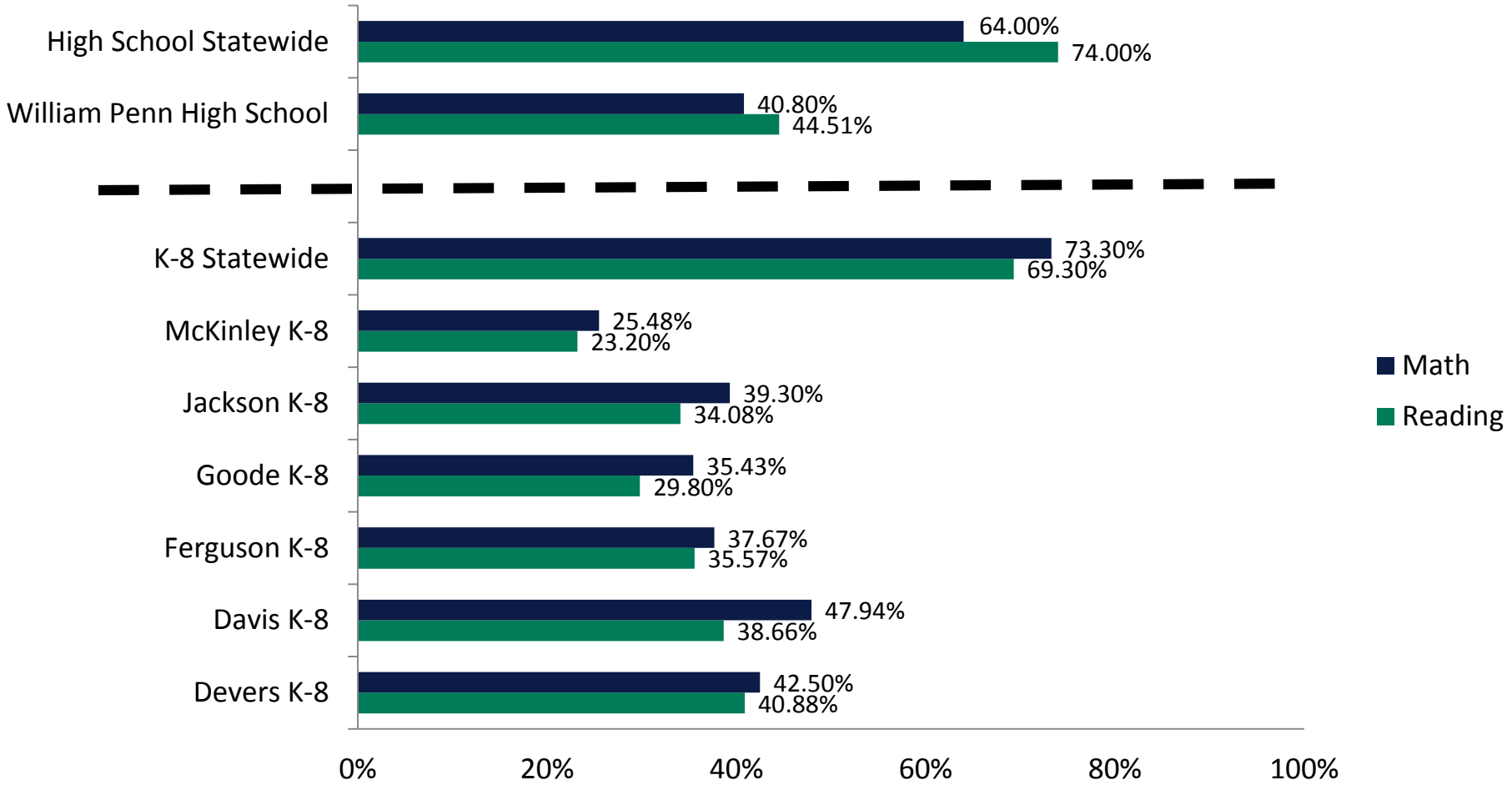




* ELL data is unavailable for Duquesne City SD for ELL enrollment due to the small number of students.

Source: Pennsylvania statewide data as reported on http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org/ and https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_204.20.asp and as obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of Education

District Performance: Reading & Math Proficiency



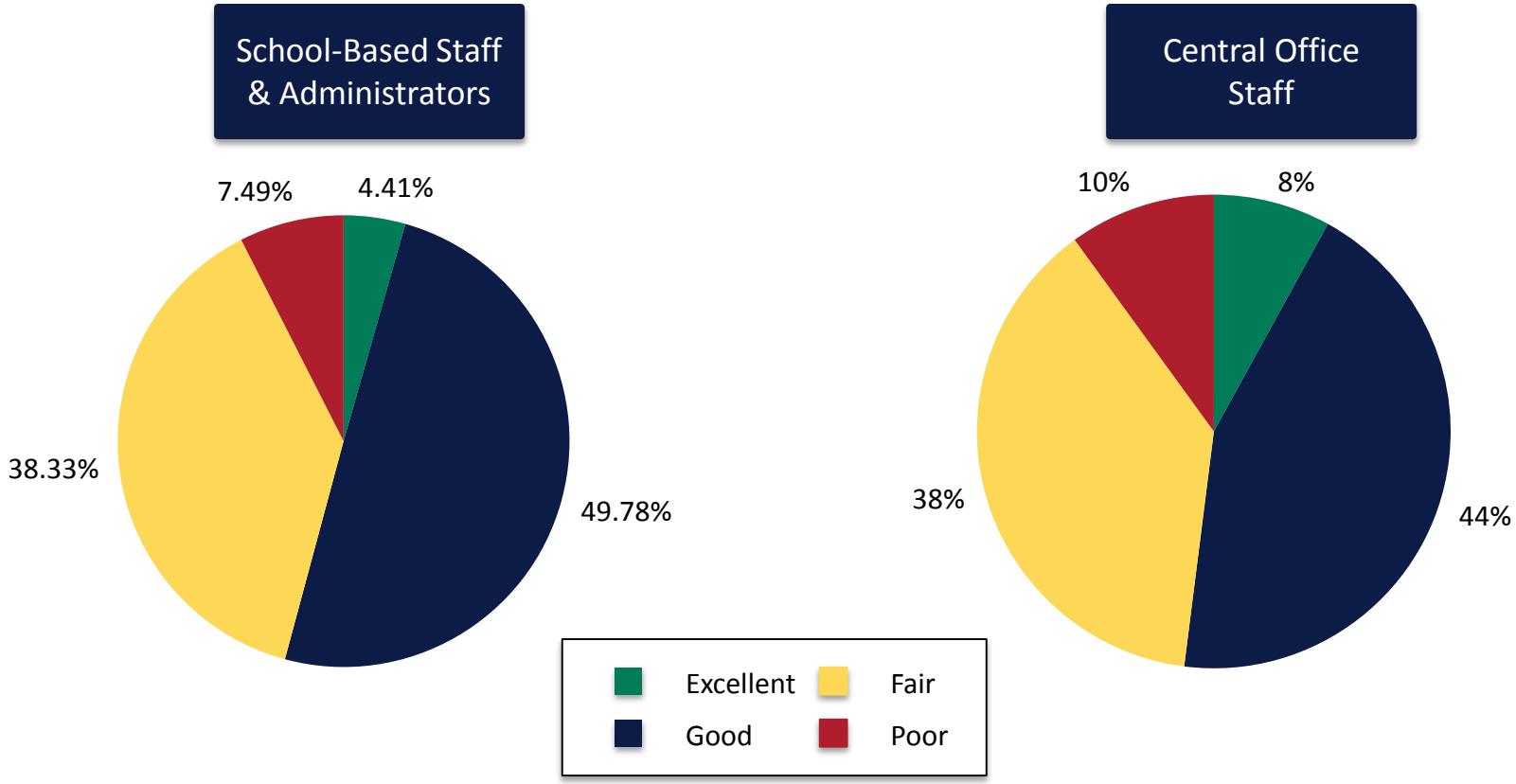
- 2013-14 PSSA and Keystone Data as found on paschoolperformance.org and http://www.eseafedreport.com/Content/reportcards/RC14M.PDF

Hannah Penn K-8 had not yet re-opened in this testing year

District Performance: Perception of Quality of Education

Survey Question: "Overall, I think the quality of education in York City Schools is…"

***Responses**: Just over half of SDCY employees (54% of school-based staff and 52% of Central Office staff) believe that the quality of education delivered by the district is good or excellent.*

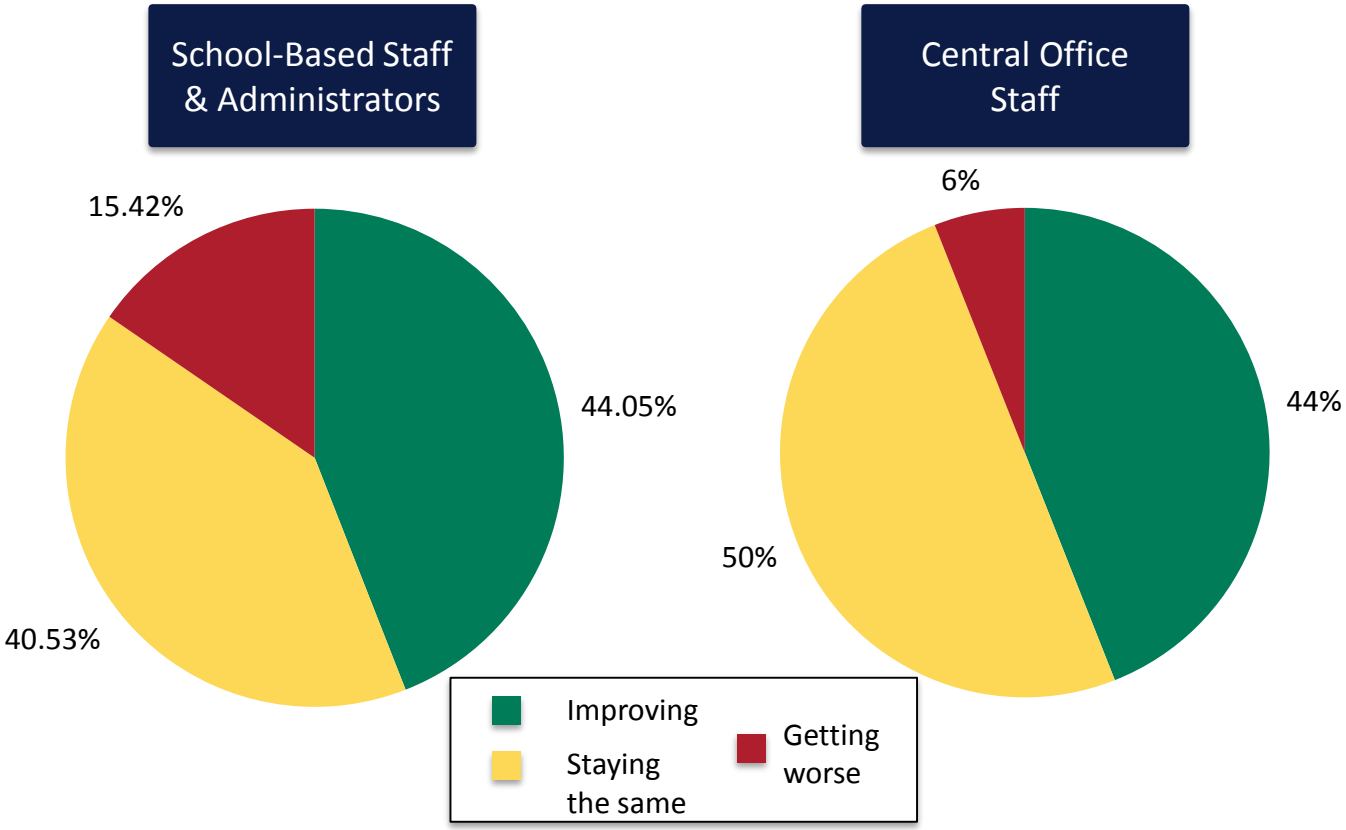


* Central Office N=50, School-based staff N=227.

District Performance: Perception of Quality of Education

Survey Question: "Overall, I think the quality of education in York City Schools is…"

***Responses**: Staff are split on the trajectory of the quality of education in York City schools: 44% of school-based staff and Central Office staff believe the schools are improving.*



* Central office N=50, School-based staff N=227.

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Findings

- Mass Insight Education's district diagnostic findings are organized into ten domains.
- Findings are based on information gathered from survey data, focus groups and interviews, and a review of data and documents.
- For each domain, the report identifies strengths and growth areas, followed by highlighted evidence such as district data, survey results, or anonymous quotations from surveys or interviews.

<u>Key</u>:

60%	Indicates survey result data
"ABC."	Indicates survey comment or anonymous quotation from a focus group or interview with stakeholders
***Responses**: 123*	Indicates Mass Insight Education's assessment of evidence

Mass Insight Education's 10 District Diagnostic Domains

1 **Vision, Strategy, & Culture:** Communicate a clear vision and set of goals for the district, promoting a culture of excellence and high expectations.

2 **Organizational Structure & Policy:** Establish coherent structures, processes, and policies that promote organizational effectiveness.

3 **School Management:** Create structures and build capacity to drive school improvement efforts, ensuring that all families have access to excellent schools.

4 **Central Services:** Promote the seamless delivery and integration of central office support services, allowing educators to focus on high-quality teaching and learning.

5 **Finance:** Promote high-yield and sustainable resource investments; maximize the amount of resources flowing directly to students and classrooms.

6 **Human Resources:** Establish systems and processes to recruit, place, develop, and retain talent.

7 **Academics:** Design and implement a rigorous academic program with aligned and high-quality curricula, assessments, and instruction.

8 **Operations:** Ensure smooth nonacademic operations, emphasizing efficiency and productivity.

9 **External Affairs:** Engage parents, family, and community members as partners in the education system.

10 **Data & Accountability:** Create shared accountability for student achievement at all levels of the organization; promote a strong data culture by using data to inform and drive decision-making.

Findings: Vision, Strategy, & Culture

1

Communicate a clear vision and set of goals for the district, promoting a culture of excellence and high expectations.

Strengths

- A core group of staff at Central Office and the schools believe students can achieve. They also believe the district has a strong mission.
- Multiple stakeholder groups voiced the desire to collaborate more with personnel both within and outside of the district to learn new ideas and align practices.
- Although 41% of school-based survey respondents believe schools are staying the same, 44% indicated that they believe York schools are improving.
- Both focus groups and survey responses indicate that the school community perceives its teachers and student diversity as a district strength.

Growth Areas

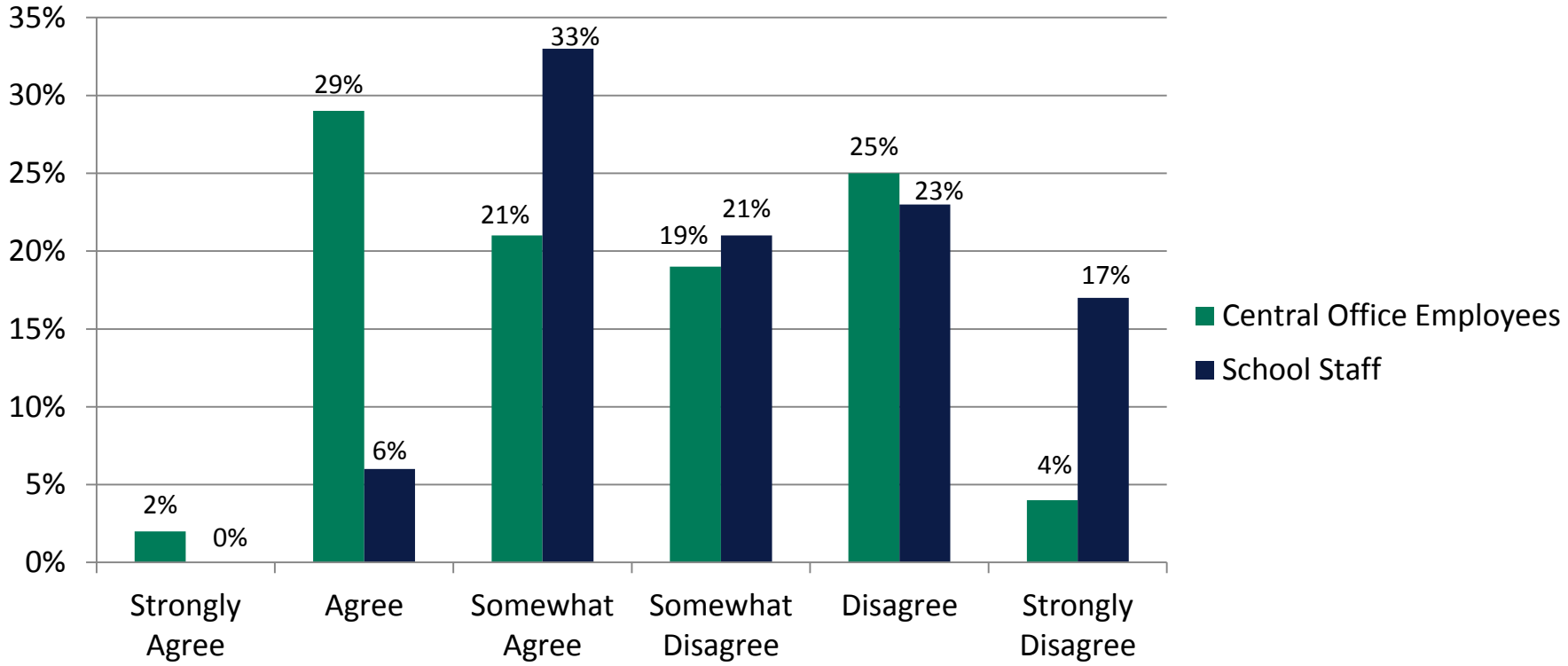
- Multiple stakeholder groups shared that morale is low and that there is a widespread feeling of mistrust, both within Central Office and between district and school-based personnel.
- Focus groups frequently stated that they are unclear of the district's vision and long-term strategy. Survey results echoed this concern, and the document review reinforced the lack of a clear vision and measureable strategy.
- While principals and assistant principals cited numerous examples of their hard work and commitment to the district, they also appeared to be uncertain of their ability to take initiative to develop school-based systems and structures to improve building practices.
- Current decision-making practices to make school improvements are not necessarily centered on the instructional core. (*See slide 60.*)

Evidence: Vision, Strategy, & Culture

1

Survey Question: The district has a long-term strategy to achieve its vision that has been clearly articulated to all employees.

***Responses**: Central Office and school staff's perception of the district strategy differ: while a majority of Central Office employees believe the district has a long-term strategy that has been clearly articulated to all employees, most school-based staff disagree.*



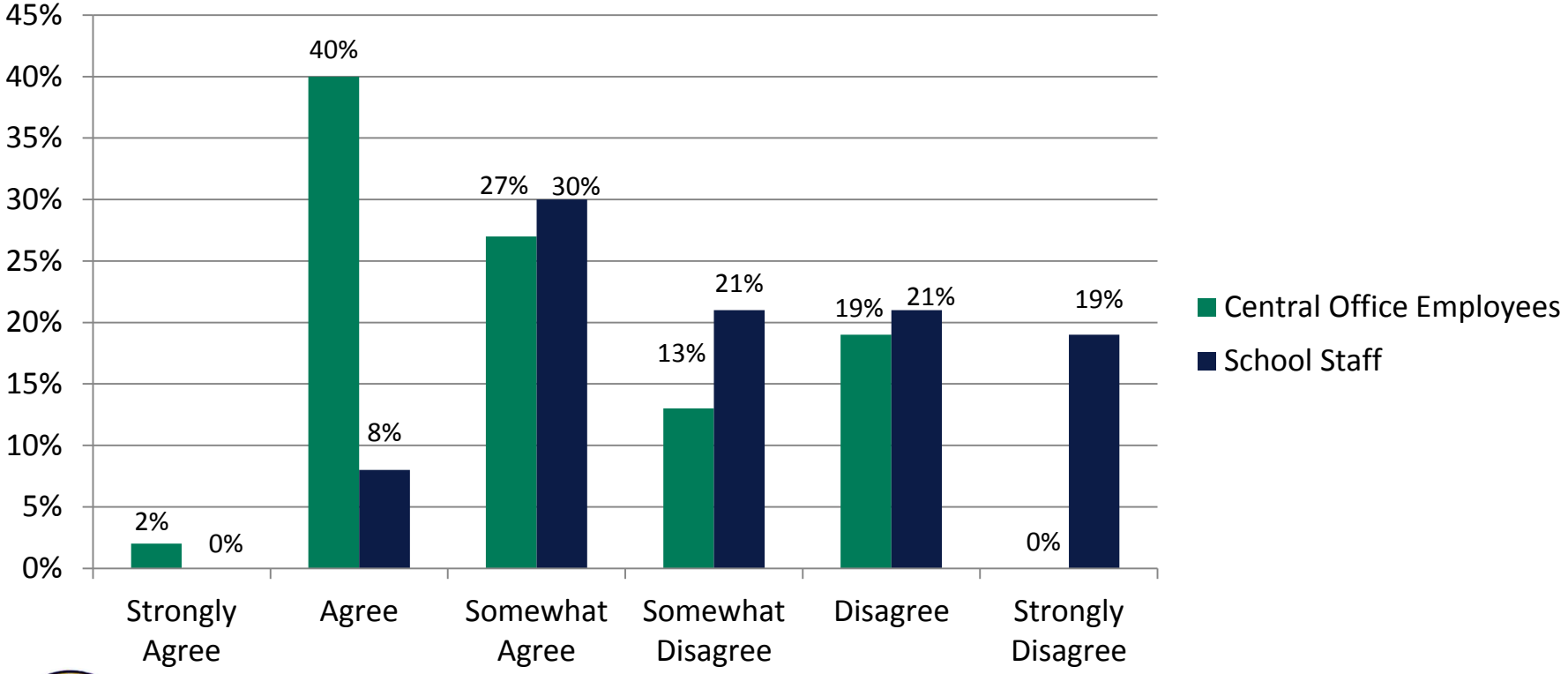
*The above graph includes data from Central Office staff, N=50, and school-based staff; N= 222.

Evidence: Vision, Strategy, & Culture

1

Survey Question: The district has established a manageable set of priorities informed by school data and student need.

***Responses**: Central Office staff and school staff's perception of whether the district has a clear set of priorities are substantially different: while the majority of Central Office employees believe the district has a manageable set of priorities informed by data and student need, most school-based staff disagree.*



*The above graph includes data from Central Office staff, N=50, and school-based staff; N= 222.

Evidence: Vision, Strategy, & Culture

1

90% of school staff survey respondents and 78% of Central Office respondents believe internal politics damage staff performance and morale.

***Responses**: Recent staff turnover and unstable funding have resulted in feelings of uncertainty for staff.*

"Unfortunately, the district has lost a lot of excellent staff due to its uncertain future."

"The district needs to narrow and define its vision so it can be communicated, so that people buy in."

"We need a clear culture for the district, a 'York way.'"

"So much turnover in administration leads to confusion and changing priorities."

"There are a lot of quality things happening here, people will stay if they know things are stable."

"Kids need to be taught that they are good enough."

"The entire district staff is working scared. People can't work well scared."

Findings: Organizational Structure

2

Establish coherent structures, processes, and policies that promote organizational effectiveness.

Strengths

- Several key members of SDCY leadership are aware of the most commonly voiced challenges with district.
- Some focus group participants reported that collaboration across the K-8 buildings is growing.

Growth Areas

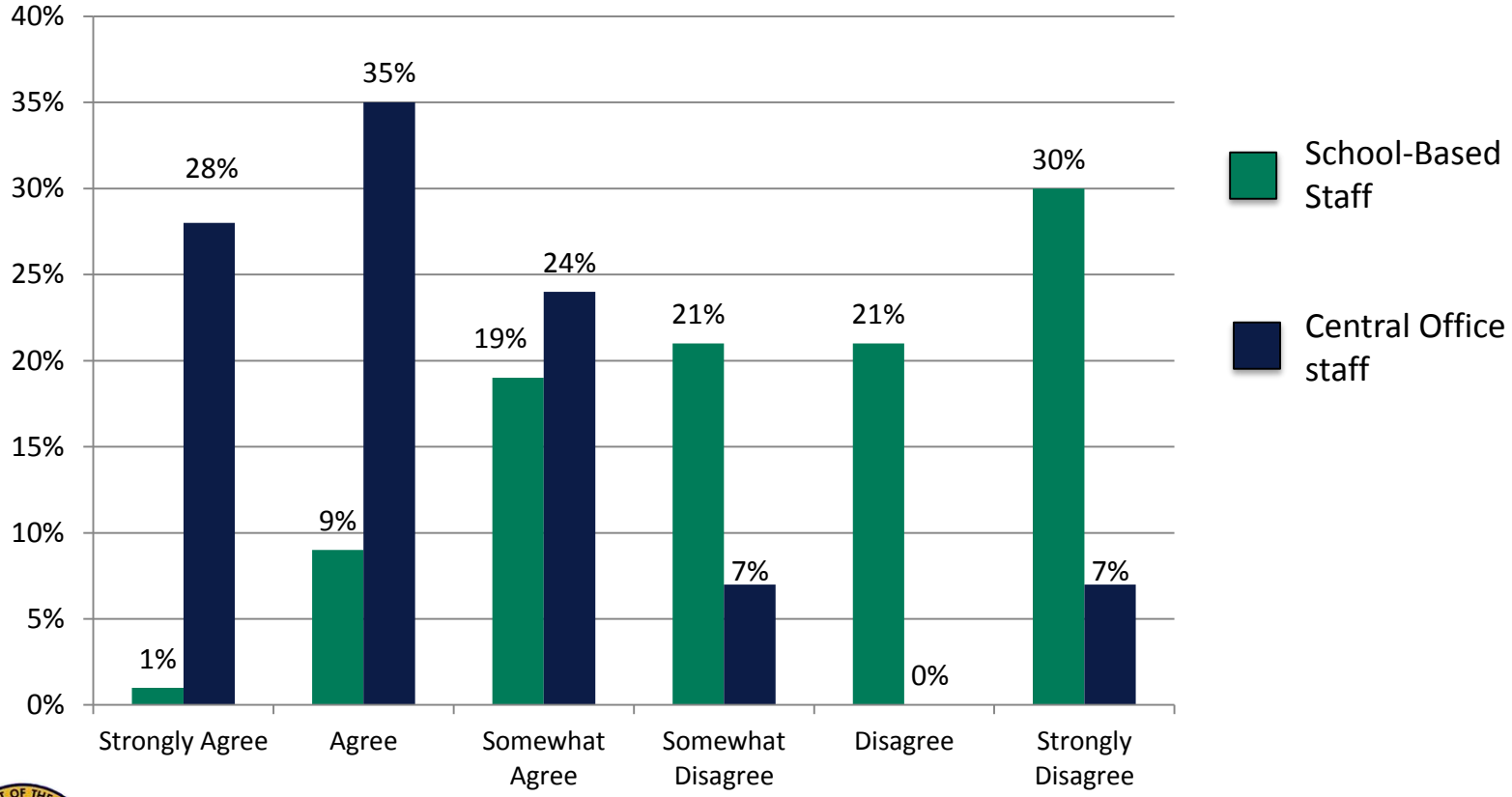
- Currently there are no systems in place to provide select members of Central Office or the School Board with either internally or externally provided professional development.
- The district's organizational chart is outdated, and school and Central Office focus group participants and survey respondents noted a lack of clarity around roles and reporting structures.

Evidence: Organizational Structure

2

Survey Question: Central Office communicates effectively with stakeholders to keep them fully informed on matters affecting them.

***Responses**: A large majority of school-based staff believe that Central Office does not communicate effectively with stakeholders; most Central Office staff believe communication is effective.*



*The above graph includes responses from Central Office staff; N=46, and school-based staff, N=220.

Findings: Central Services

3

Create structures and build capacity to drive school improvement efforts, ensuring that all families have access to excellent schools.

Strengths

- Central Office staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- New financial, HR, and student information systems should provide efficient and usable information for next school year.
- A centralized enrollment system is in the district's budget for next year, which will help address student transiency within SDCY and the inefficient nature of the current paper and school-based enrollment system.

Growth Areas

- Technology remains a consistent district challenge, with concerns ranging from infrastructure and district goals, to communication difficulties and a lack of teacher PD or up-to-date classroom resources.
- Although fewer than 50 district employees work in Central Office, there is very little structured cross-department communication or collaboration.
- Improved communication was the most commonly voiced need across stakeholder groups. Specific requests included more clarity, consistency, and timeliness with Central Office communications, improved community and parent outreach, and a clearer mission, vision, and action steps for the district moving forward. The majority of stakeholders interviewed and/or surveyed also expressed concern about the inadequacy of the district's website.
- SDCY has a high rate of student transiency: In the 2014-2015 school year, 670 out of 5,920 students (11.3%) transferred among York City schools, up to six times per student. A total of 764 transfer requests were processed.

Evidence: Central Services

3

66% of Central Office staff survey respondents agree that Central Office staffing meets the needs of the district, but only 30% of school staff survey respondents agreed with the same statement.

***Responses**: The majority of survey respondents rated central services as "good" but there were substantial concerns about support for both administrative and instructional technology. Stakeholders also expressed major concerns about both internal and external communications in focus groups, interviews, and the online survey.*

"Technology is rated as poor due to the lack of manpower to meet the needs of the district."

"We really need someone to do positive publicity with the outside community."

"[There is] a level of frustration with Central Office. All systems should support what goes on at the classroom level."

"Both HR and Special Ed are great at getting back to employees and being visible in the buildings."

"Our website is always behind and not very updated, plus it should be in Spanish as well since we have a large Hispanic population in our district."

Findings: School Management

4

Create structures and build capacity to drive school improvement efforts, ensuring that all families have access to excellent schools.

Strengths

- To drive school improvement, next year all schools will have an extended school day and additional professional development days in the academic calendar. Teachers will also participate in daily PLCs.
- Survey respondents and focus group participants expressed optimism about new leadership, characterizing it as "more supportive than in the past."
- Both the district and school staff's interest in pursuing a distributed leadership model for school-based leadership indicates a strong, collective interest in adjusting practices to improve student achievement and encourage staff satisfaction.

Growth Areas

- While Cornerstone offers select at-risk students an alternative academic experience, focus group comments suggest ambiguity regarding the mission, vision, operations, student referral process, and exit system. Enrollment jumped from 37 students in 2013-2014 to 87 students in 2014-2015. Concerns were voiced that without a strong mission, systems, or structure s in place, this influx of students makes the program unsustainable.
- Focus group feedback, student enrollment numbers, and academic performance data indicate that the use of Bearcat Cyber Academy should be revisited.
- Focus group and survey participants noted the variability and inconsistency of disciplinary responses across buildings; similarly, student focus group participants stated that discipline is not taken seriously.
- Student focus group participants brought up a need for more incentives to come to school, recommending more opportunities for student activities to "provide [students with] the ability to have a future."

Evidence: School Management

4

Only 14% of school staff survey respondents and 39% of Central Office staff survey respondents agree that schools have the resources they need to be effective.

79% of school staff survey respondents do not agree that there is a mutual trust between school-level employees and the Central Office.

Only 26% of school staff survey respondents agree that district leadership communicates important decisions accurately and in a timely manner, compared to 61% of Central Office staff survey respondents.

"We're hoping that Distributed Leadership changes the climate in the buildings."

"We reinvent school every summer but don't figure it out until late winter."

* The above graphs include responses from school staff, N=221, and Central Office staff, N=48.

Findings: Finance

5

Promote high-yield and sustainable resource investments; maximize the amount of resources flowing directly to students and classrooms.

Strengths

- Anticipated new state resources could be used to help fund the district's needs and new initiatives.
- SDCY's new financial information system will likely improve the efficiency and use of financial data.

SDCY's partnership with Public Financial Management (PFM) will include a robust analysis of district finances that should be considered the principal resource for evaluating and adjusting financial decision-making.

Growth Areas

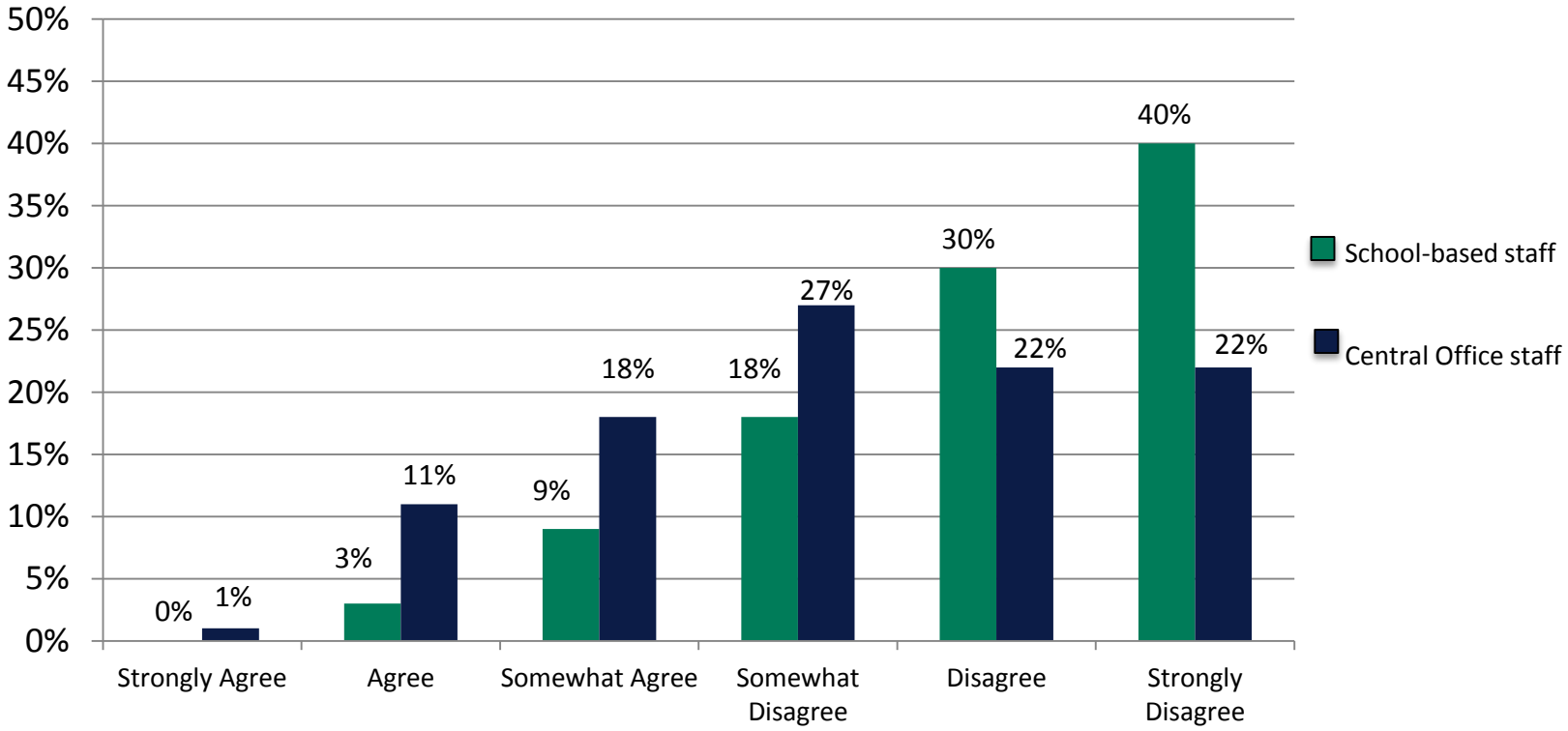
- Interview and focus group data suggest the use of Title I money varies by building and could be used more strategically.
- The high referral rates for Special Education both impacts students and costs the district money.
- York City's per-pupil funding is on par with the Pennsylvania state average over the past three years, and is only slightly lower than comparable districts; this similarity suggests the district may need to revisit its spending strategy to ensure practices are centered on student learning needs.

Evidence: Finance

5

Survey Question: Schools have the financial resources they need to be successful.

***Responses**: Neither school staff nor Central Office staff survey respondents believe the schools have the resources they need to be effective.*



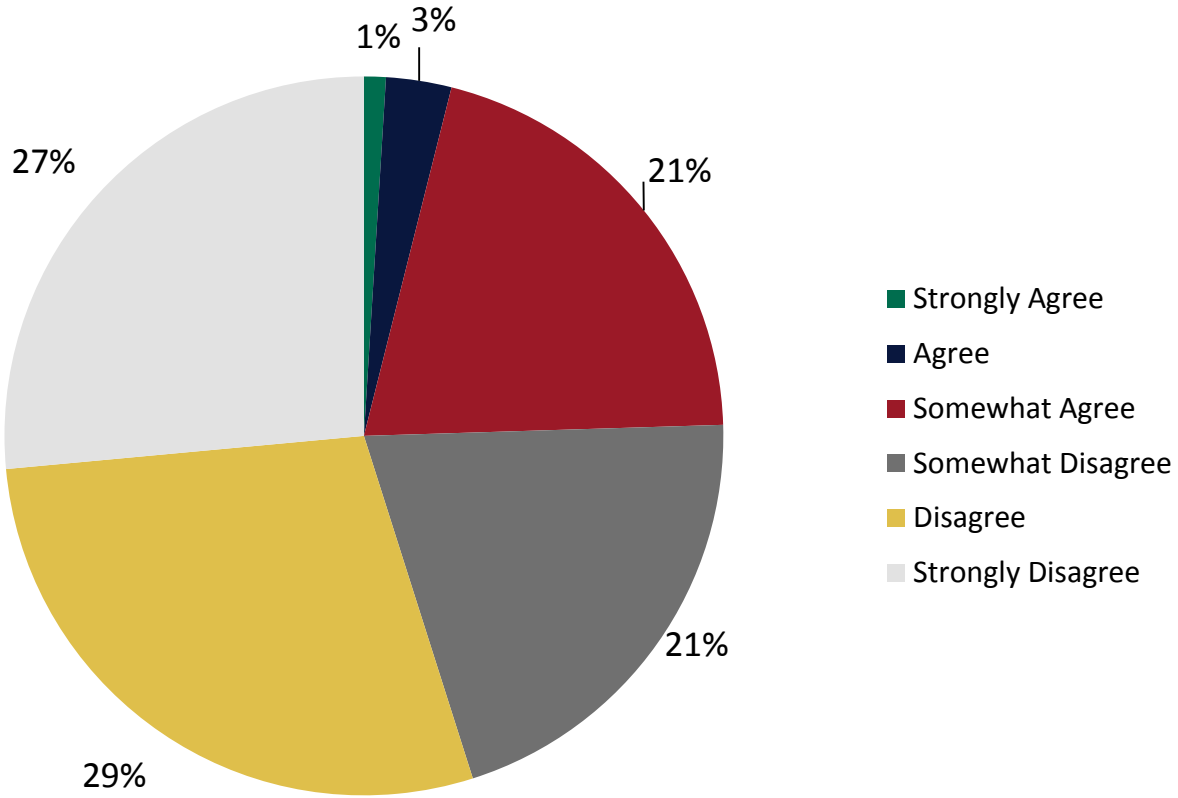
* The above graphs include responses from school staff, N=221, and Central Office staff; N=45.

Evidence: Finance

5

Survey Question: Individual schools have sufficient decision-making authority over their budgets.

***Responses**: 75% of school staff survey respondents do not believe that individual schools have sufficient decision-making authority over their budgets.*

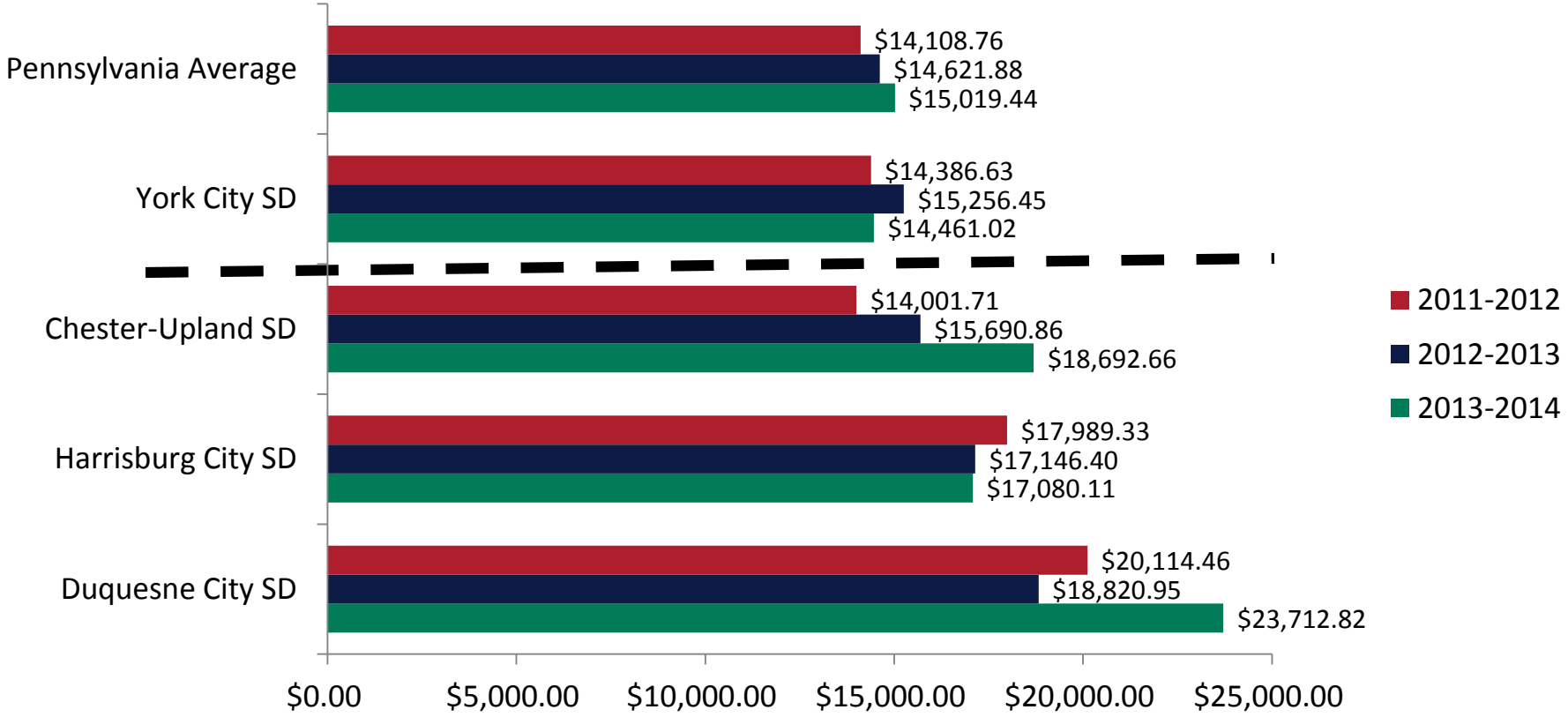


* The above graphs include responses from school staff; N=200.

Evidence: Finance

5

***Key Finding**: York City per-pupil funding is close to the state average but is lower than two of the three other districts in financial recovery.*



Source:
http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/summaries_of_annual_financial_report_data/7673/afr_excel_data_files/509047

Findings: Human Resources

6

Establish systems and processes to recruit, place, develop, and retain talent.

Strengths

- With principals signing on for the next 3-4 years, leadership at the school level is likely to develop the consistency that numerous stakeholder groups voiced as being a high district need. This stability in leadership could also positively impact staff attendance and retention rates.
- Focus group participants and school staff surveys indicate that teachers consider their peers to be a district strength, and cited their dedication, resilience, work ethic, and perseverance as their strongest attributes.
- Recently, the district effectively filled 13 vacant administrative positions.

Growth Areas

- Various focus groups alluded to leaders in "acting" positions, suggesting both inconsistency in personnel and a lack of ownership for roles.
- School administrators requested additional opportunities for cross-school collaboration and two-way dialogue with the district.
- In the 2014-2015 school year, teacher attendance dropped from 91% to 88%. According to NCTQ, the average attendance rate for urban districts is 94%.*
- All focus groups referred to a chronic lack of substitute teachers, which results in "splits" that disrupt learning for all students.
- While time is allocated to provide teachers with professional development through professional learning communities (PLCs), focus groups suggested meetings are not always consistent or impactful.

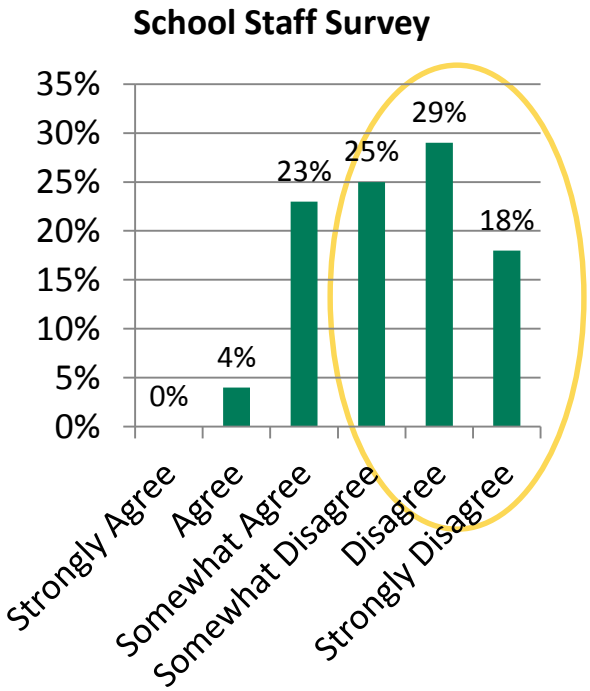
*Source: NCTQ (2014). Roll Call: The importance of teacher attendance. http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/RollCall_TeacherAttendance

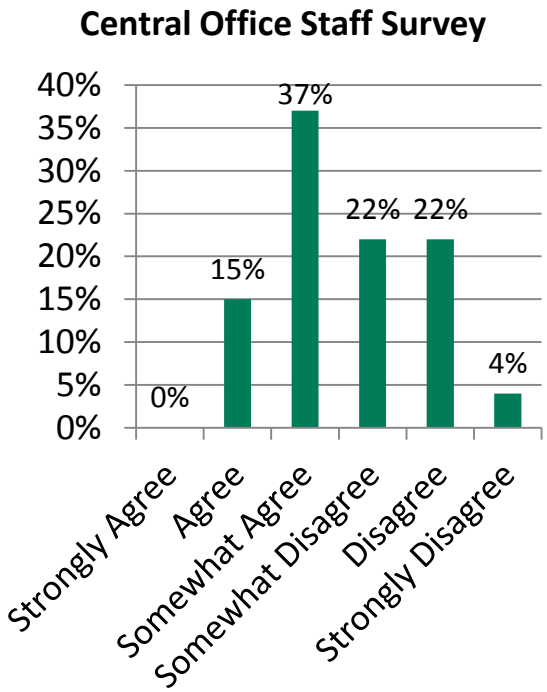
Evidence: Human Resources

Attract and Hire | Develop | Retain

Survey Question: The district successfully attracts high-quality candidates for all Central Office and school-based positions.

Responses: *Most school staff and nearly half of Central Office staff don't think the district attracts high quality candidates for jobs.*



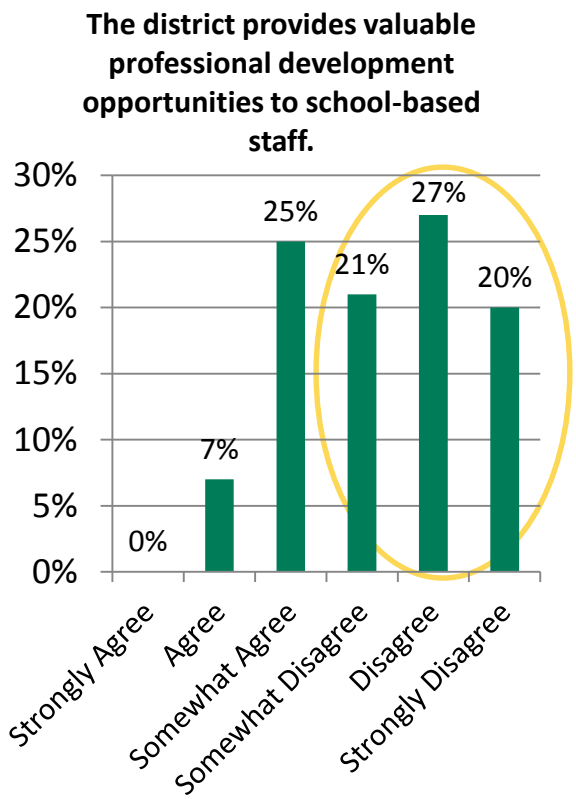


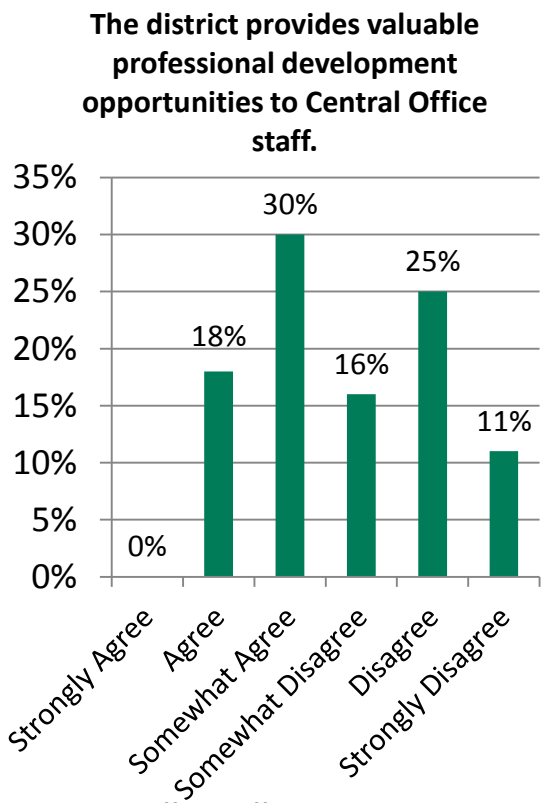
* Central Office N=46, school-based staff N=204.

Evidence: Human Resources

Attract and Hire | **Develop** | Retain

***Responses**: The majority of school (68%) and Central Office staff (52%) survey respondents reported that the district's professional development is not valuable.*



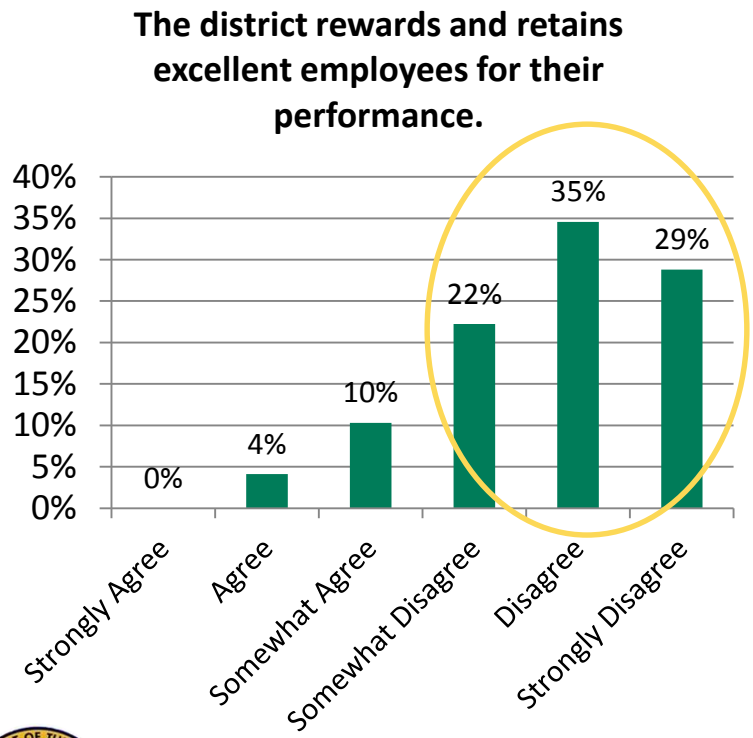


* Graph 1 includes responses from school-based staff, N-=221; Graph 2 includes Central Office staff data: N=44.

Evidence: Human Resources

Attract and Hire | Develop | **Retain**

***Responses**: 86% of school and Central Office personnel report that the district does not reward or retain excellent staff.*



"Excellent performance is rarely rewarded and often not recognized."

"Every building has a hardcore group of teachers that put in everything."

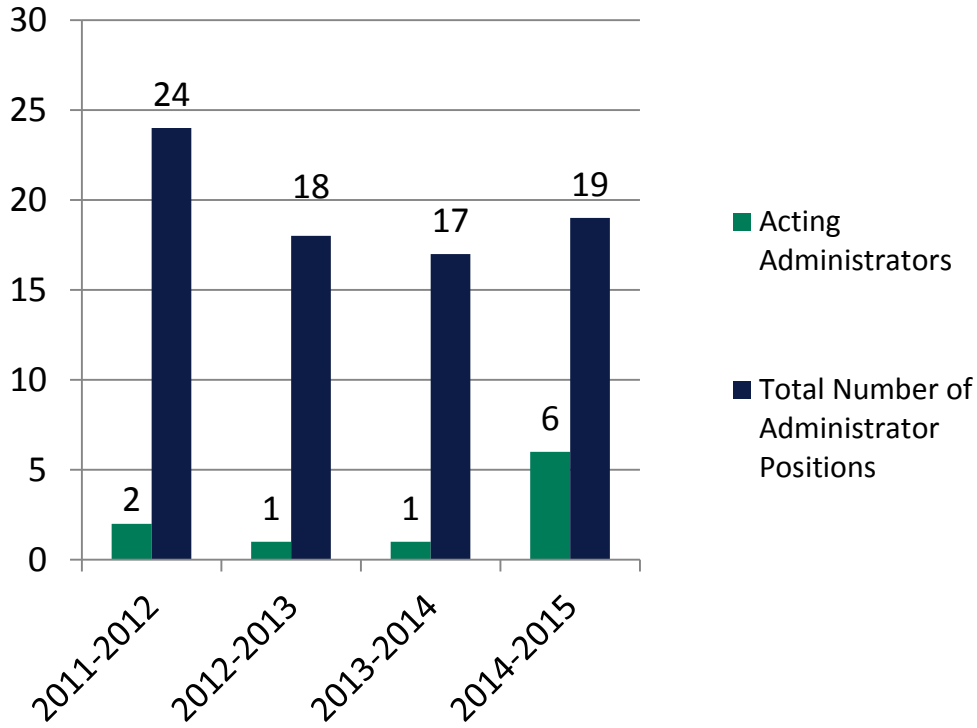
"The district does not reward excellent employees for their performance. They are retained because the employees are self-motivated."

*The above graph includes aggregate data from Central Office and school-based staff; N= 243.

Evidence: Human Resources

6

***Key Finding**: A substantial number of critical positions – principals, assistant principals, and Central Office leaders – have temporary appointments.*



Percent of administrator positions held by an acting administrator:

- 2011-2012: 8.3%
- 2012-2013: 5.6%
- 2013-2014: 5.9%
- 2014-2015: 31.6%

Findings: Academics

7

Design and implement a rigorous academic program with aligned and high-quality curricula, assessments, and instruction.

Strengths

- After-school programming is available at every school five days a week; enrollment has increased more than 300% from 2013-2014 (238) to 2014-2015 (980).
- This summer a group of teachers will be adapting Pennsylvania's learning modules to provide teachers with a scope, sequence, and resources for standards-based instruction.
- Most teachers believe classroom diagnostic test (CDT) assessments provide relevant information about students' strengths and areas of need.
- The district recognizes a need to better support ninth graders' transition to high school and is developing a freshmen academy for this coming fall, which will look considerably different from previous programs.
- K-8 schools are considering a system for teachers to vertically collaborate and loop with their students. This initiative is applying research-based practices and a thoughtful planning process involving teacher input to encourage program success.

Growth Areas

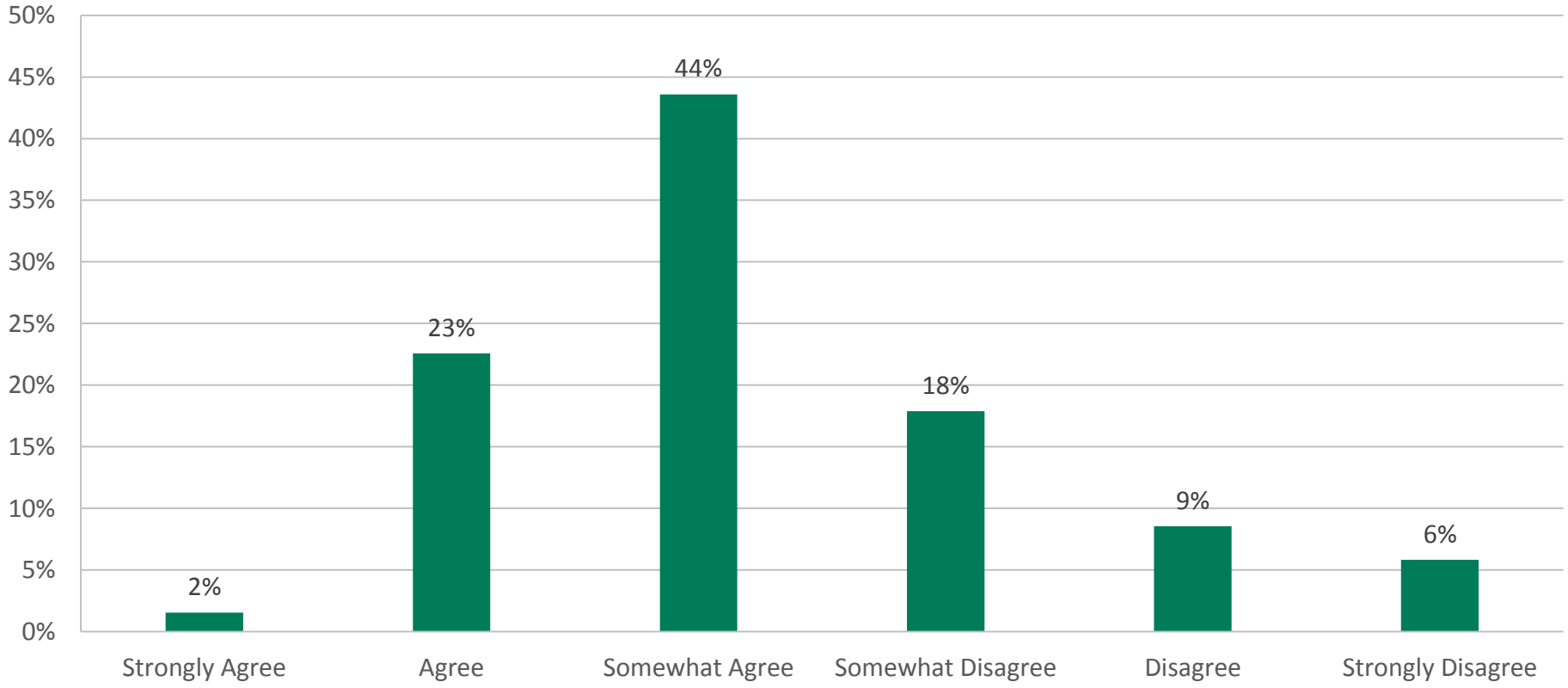
- Focus groups shared that a lack of a consistent curriculum, scope and sequence, and academic materials contribute to a low level of instructional rigor at York schools.
- District common assessments are not seen by teachers or administrators as useful or grade-level appropriate.
- Teachers and administrators believe that current professional development opportunities including both trainings and PLC meetings are not sufficiently meeting teacher needs.
- Available Tier III interventions are notably limited, which may impact students' needs being adequately addressed at this level.
- Student and community focus groups expressed an interest in more arts/electives programming across the schools.
- Numerous stakeholders reported concerns about poor student behavior and a lack of consistent consequences.

Evidence: Academics

7

Survey Question: High-quality teaching and learning take place district-wide.

***Responses**: The majority of survey respondents (69%) believe high-quality teaching and learning is taking place district-wide.*



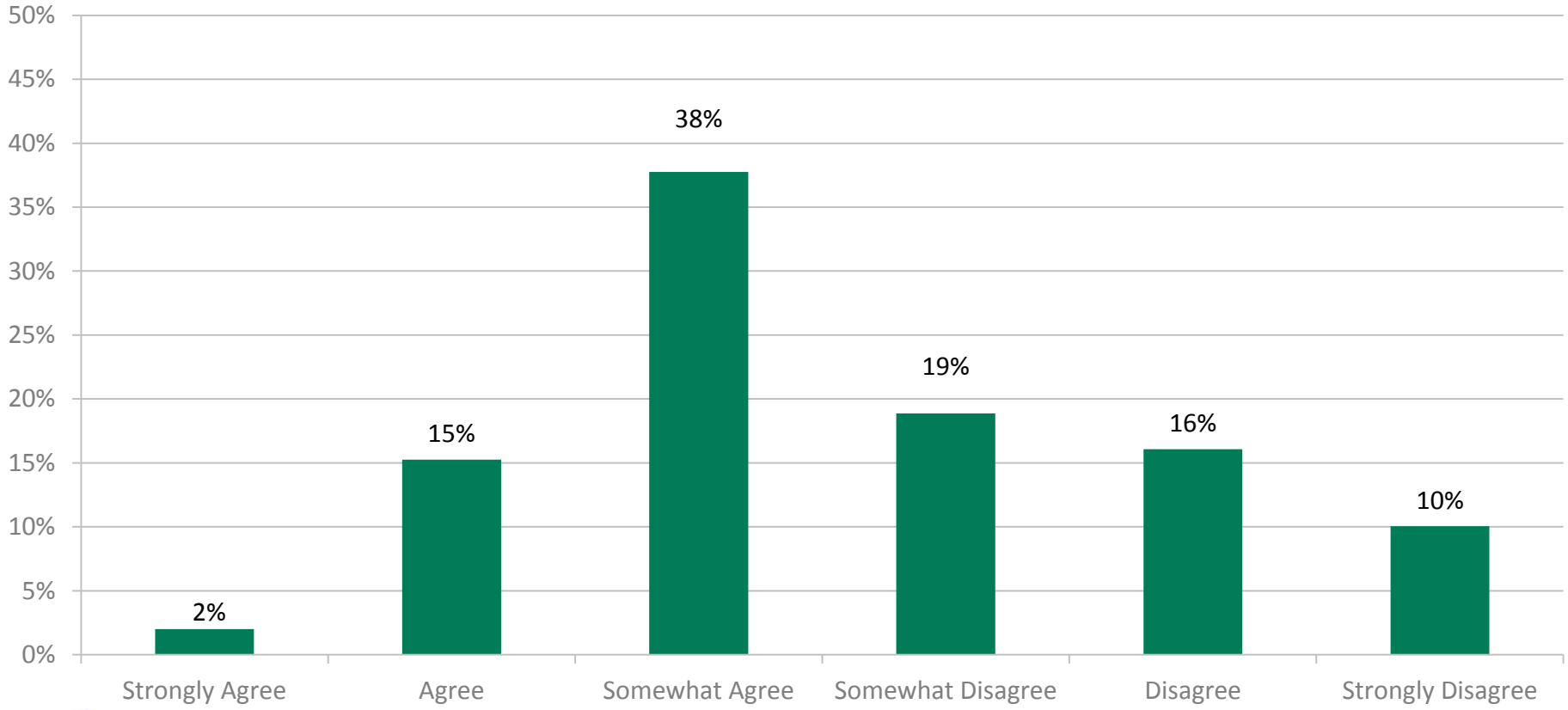
*The above graph includes aggregate data from Central Office and school-based staff; N= 257.

Evidence: Academics

7

Survey Question: The district is preparing students for success in their chosen colleges and careers.

Responses: *More than half of survey respondents (55%) believe the district is preparing students for success in their chosen colleges and careers.*



*The above graph includes aggregate data from Central Office and school-based staff; N= 257.

Evidence: Academics

7

Responses: *Survey respondents and focus group participants believe the lack of resources and systems (e.g. for a good common assessment or interventions) negatively impacts students and results in a lack of rigor in the classroom.*

"We remediate too much. We need to push, we need enrichment."

"The district still insists on the use of a common assessment that was not tested and that has errors."

"Teachers who forge…relationships [with students] see the most growth."

"We need more training on different types of interventions. We need to clarify what is a level II intervention and provide training."

Evidence: Academics

The recent curriculum audit conducted by UPenn offers a comprehensive analysis of current instructional practices and curricular resources in SDCY. Below are some notable findings MIE obtained through interviews and focus groups with school and Central Office personnel that complement or reinforce the findings of the UPenn audit.

York Utilizes…	High-Performing Districts Utilize…
...a range of **curricular materials and assessment systems**. Teachers expressed concern about inconsistencies between buildings, frequent changes in the curriculum, a lack of scope and sequence for instruction, and how not all assessments provide meaningful data or are aligned to grade level standards. Central Office interviews suggest some improvements will be made in these areas for the coming fall.	...a clear research and standards-based curriculum that is non-negotiable, rigorous, and provides teachers with adequate and aligned instructional materials. It is complemented by a consistently used comprehensive, aligned, and easy-to-navigate system to assess and share student performance data. This and other student data is then regularly utilized to improve programs, practices, and policies.
...a dual enrollment program, AP courses, and a scholarship program to increase students' **college & career readiness**. While these are examples of some of the district's current tools to prepare students for post-secondary success, next year's course catalog for the high school will provide additional offerings focused on career.	…college-ready courses as the default for all students. A college-going culture is present both within and outside of the classroom, students are taught self-management skills, and schools offer career-focused classes that prepare students to successfully meet industry standards.
...a broad range of approaches to **engage students in rigorous instruction**. Stakeholders cited the need to set higher expectations for academic achievement and to deepen students' ownership of and investment in their learning. Students stated that only advanced classes are challenging and that “school is too slow."	…instruction that is appropriately cognitively demanding, culturally responsive, and applies research-based strategies to engage students in their learning. With support from the district, school leaders create school cultures rooted in a shared belief that students can meet high expectations when they feel supported and can bridge their goals to their day-to-day learning.

Evidence: Academics

7

York Utilizes…	High-Performing Districts Utilize…
...**professional growth** opportunities for teachers via Central Office offerings, in-building trainings, and professional learning communities. Stakeholders consistently voiced a desire to strengthen this area and to learn more from peers both within and outside of home buildings. The district agrees with this priority and will be implementing daily PLCs and 2 additional PD days in the 2015-2016 school calendar.	...professional learning opportunities that are informed by student achievement data, allow teachers to collaborate and receive support from instructional coaches, include time within the school day to develop skills and work as a team, and are centered on instruction, curriculum, and assessment.
...tiered academic interventions to **address students' learning needs**. However, focus groups mentioned that Tier II practices vary between schools, additional enrichment programs are needed, and that more Tier III interventions should be acquired to meet students' needs. With the recent decision to add 40 more minutes of learning time to the school day, there is an excellent opportunity to deliver greater individualized supports.	…a range of tiered research-based interventions that are carefully selected to meet students' learning needs, are implemented with fidelity, and provide meaningful data for staff to continuously monitor student growth and determine if a change in program is necessary. High quality enrichment opportunities are readily available to extend students' learning and support their preparation for and completion of advanced coursework.

Findings: Operations

8

Ensure smooth nonacademic operations, emphasizing efficiency and productivity.

Strengths

- School personnel indicated that at least some school buildings are well-maintained, calling buildings “safe and secure.”

Growth Areas

- In focus groups and surveys, stakeholders reported that some school buildings are not clean, or pose safety risks. One stakeholder called the buildings and grounds team “decimated [by] cutbacks.”
- There is no ostensibly clear system in place for ordering materials or resources.

Evidence: Operations

8

***Responses**: The perception of schools' cleanliness and safety varied among stakeholders. Some believed individual schools or subsets of schools to be clean and have high-quality technology and resources readily available. However , it was also commonly reported that the teams that work on grounds and technology do not have either the staff capacity or systems necessary to thoroughly support the entire district. A general lack of clear systems to get information ranging from data to resources was also commonly voiced.*

"Buildings are safe and secure."

"Equipment ordering is disjointed."

"There are a lot of programs but no central way to find data quickly."

Findings: External Affairs

9

Engage parents, family, and community members as partners in the education system.

Strengths

- Interviewed community members expressed strong interest in becoming more involved with schools; by identifying specific areas where community engagement can provide additional resources or add value, stronger partnerships could be formed between community members and the district.
- Teachers are required talk to at least 2 parents/day for 180 days/year; this has almost doubled the number of contacts since last year. This practice can contribute to the development of more meaningful school-parent relationships.
- Focus group feedback indicates that schools feel positively about the district's partnership with Communities in Schools and are looking forward to next year's program expansion.
- A SDCY Alumni Network is currently in the works, spearheaded by the Mayor.

Growth Areas

- Multiple stakeholders stated that strong mechanisms to engage the community do not currently exist. They also frequently voiced the need for a Central Office-based Communications Director, a positive public relations campaign for the district, and more school-based efforts to welcome parents into the buildings.
- Numerous community members believe a school-based mentoring program should be developed to increase community engagement and provide students with strong role models.
- While multiple stakeholder groups expressed the desire to collaborate with other buildings and the greater community, they also suggested that current practices do not foster this sort of cooperation. Some focus group participants described the schools as being unwelcoming to parents and the community.

Evidence: External Affairs

***Responses**: Community stakeholders reported a strong desire to engage more with the district, but stated that a lack of clear systems or structures prevents them from doing so. They suggested that the instability of the past few years has resulted in a perception that the district has closed itself off from both other districts and the community.*

To implement this successfully, the district must first identify the areas where the community may be most useful to ensure additional capacity and resources are used effectively.

"Small business owners don't know about [school] needs. We need the district to communicate and then we [the community] will answer the call."

"We need better efforts to collaborate with other districts."

"People have volunteered to help [at schools] and can't get in the door."

"The district does foster communication and engagement opportunities, but they are not generally frequent or meaningful as a whole."

"Parents need to understand that they are partners with the school, working in conjunction with district."

Findings: Data & Accountability

10

Create shared accountability for student achievement at all levels of the organization; promote a strong data culture by using data to inform and drive decision-making.

Strengths

- Stakeholders consistently spoke highly of the high school's Youth Court Alliance. This program was developed in partnership with United Way to improve student attendance and graduation rates through a student-run "court" that utilizes peer relationships to increase students' individual and shared accountability for school completion.
- Special Education compliance has significantly improved, and the district is now out of corrective action.

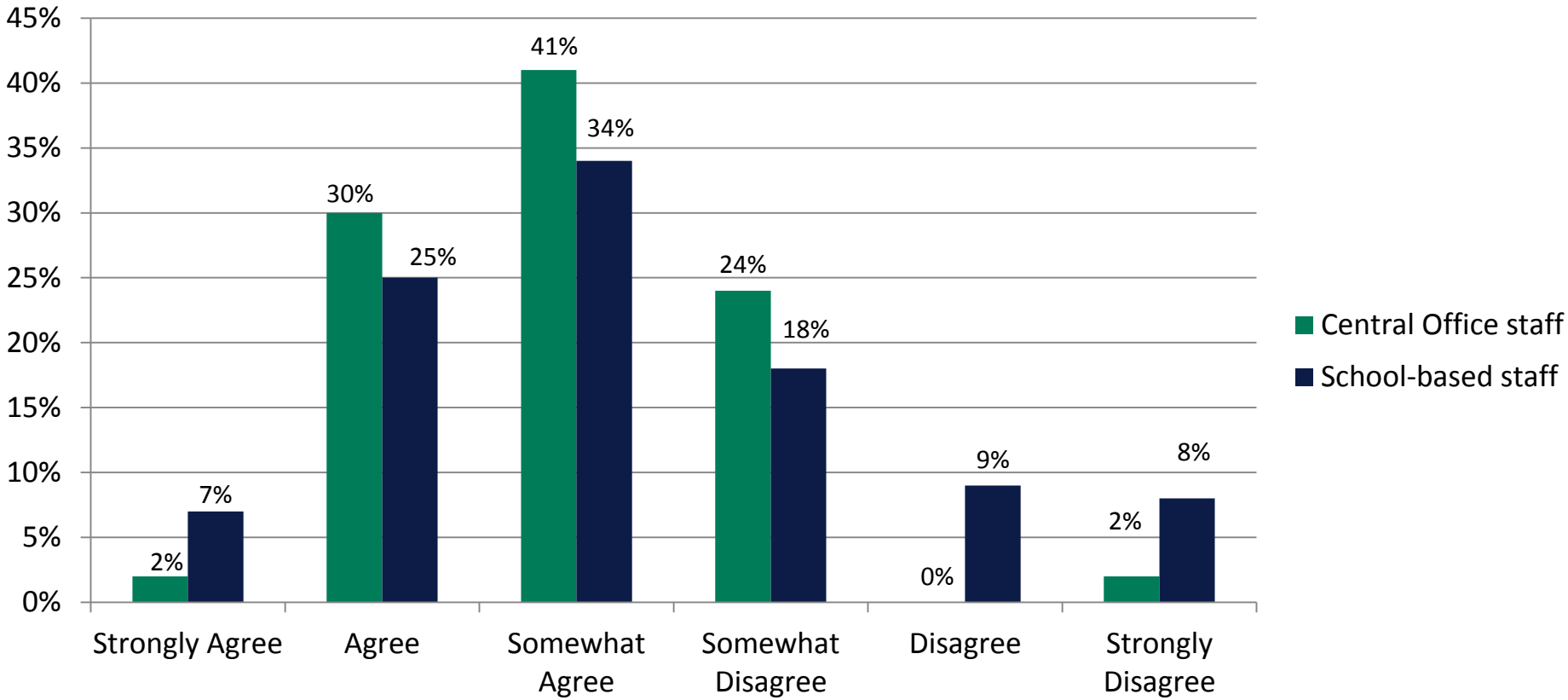
Growth Areas

- The district does not currently have designated personnel to focus on school data.
- While a school score card system currently exists, it was not designed collaboratively and is not shared publicly to monitor school performance or encourage accountability for success.
- Survey data showed school and Central Office staff believe the district has a data-driven culture, but there was a lack of evidence of systems and structures to create such n environment.

Evidence: Data & Accountability

Survey Question: "The district has a data and performance-driven culture."

***Responses**: The majority of survey respondents – both in Central Office and schools – believe the district has a data and performance-driven culture.*



*The above data includes data from Central Office staff and school-based staff; N= 47 and 214 respectively.

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2013 Recovery Plan Progress

- In 2013, the previous Recovery Officer, David Meckley, worked with a team of advisors and stakeholders to write a Financial Recovery Plan, which identified a series of strategies around finance, staffing, academics, and instruction with the goals of increasing student performance, decreasing the number of students who leave the district to enroll in private or charter schools, and balancing the budget.

- The following slides describe various goals of the plan and their status as of July 2015.

2013 Recovery Plan Progress: Charter Enrollment

2013 Recovery Plan Goal

- A central goal of the 2013 Recovery Plan was to dramatically reduce the number and percentage of students attending external charters within the District's enrollment boundaries. In the 2012-2013 school year, 31.8% of students attended charter schools (including cyber charters), and 5.5% were enrolled in private schools or the regional vocational-technology school. In total, 37.3% of students were enrolled outside of district-run schools.

2015 Outcome

- In the 2013-2014 school year, 38.2% of students received instruction outside of district-run schools.

2013 Recovery Plan Progress: School Management

2013 Recovery Plan Goal

- The 2013 Recovery Plan uses site-based management as a critical component of the foundation for school reform.
- The Plan encourages the use of School Advisory Councils.

2015 Outcome

- Site-based management was implemented successfully, and is in the process of transitioning to a distributed leadership model after a majority vote by York City teachers within each of the schools.
- The School Advisory Councils were not developed successfully, if at all; however, a series of community-based district level committees have existed over the past two years.

2013 Recovery Plan Progress: Finances

2013 Recovery Plan Goal

- The 2013 Recovery Plan emphasized expenditure decreases, which would be sustained in future budgets and coupled with wage reductions, to create a projected net savings of $900,000 in the 2014-2015 school year. The wage reductions would also reduce medical benefits by 50% and eliminate dental benefits. These cuts would allow the district to reallocate resources or make new investments.

2015 Outcome

- None of the financial changes described in the 2013 Recovery Plan have been implemented, including the expenditure decreases, wage reductions, and benefits reductions.
- An anticipated increase in state funding is the only improvement in the district's financial situation.

2013 Recovery Plan Progress: Student Support

2013 Recovery Plan Goal

- The 2013 Recovery Plan outlined the following activities related to student support:
  - Offer a Cornerstone program for students who are exhibiting behavioral difficulties in the mainstream classroom setting.
  - Provide academic and behavioral services for disruptive students as an intermediate step prior to placement in the Cornerstone or alternative setting.
  - Increase Pre-K from 6 classes to 12 by the 2015-2016 school year, eventually expanding to 21 classes total.

2015 Outcome

- The district does offer a Cornerstone program for students who are exhibiting behavioral difficulties in the mainstream classroom setting, and enrollment has increased from 37 in its inaugural year to 87 students in the 2014-2015 school year.
- The district's Response to Intervention and Instruction Handbook lists tiered interventions for students requiring additional academic and/or behavioral support. Implementation of these services varies by school.
- In the 2014-2015 school year, there were 10 Pre-K classrooms, three of which were funded by the district. The district plans to expand to 13 total for the 2015-2016 school year if the Governor's budget is passed as-is, outpacing the 2013 Recovery Plan's goal of 12. The goal is to expand to 22 total to provide Pre-K seats for all four-year-olds in the district.

2013 Recovery Plan Progress: Academics & Instruction

2013 Recovery Plan Goal

- The 2013 Recovery Plan outlined the following activities relating to academics and instruction:
  - Adopt mastery learning or another model to change the way education is delivered.
  - Create a subcommittee within the Community Education Council to review the mastery learning and alternative models.
  - Create multiple houses or academies at the high school to allow students to choose specialized areas of study based on community and student interest in the local workforce
  - Extend the school day by 25 minutes and the school year by five days with no additional compensation for staff.

2015 Outcome

- The district pursued chartering as an alternative education model.
- The Community Education Council does not have a subcommittee to review mastery learning or alternative models.
- William Penn High School is planning to implement a freshman academy for the 2015-2016 school year, and there is interest in creating specialized areas of study based on interest
- As a result of summer 2015 contract negotiations, the school day will be extended by 40 minutes, which is 15 minutes more than the 2013 Recovery Plan recommended. The school year will be extended by 5 days and include additional professional development for teachers.

2013 Recovery Plan Progress: Advisory & External Councils

2013 Recovery Plan Goal

- The 2013 Recovery Plan called for school advisory councils and a Community Education Council (CEC), both of which would meet regularly and be staffed with a full slate of members.

2015 Outcome

- The school advisory councils do not currently exist.
- The CEC was replaced by a Community Action Committee, which is led by the Chief Recovery Officer and the Mayor of York City, who were appointed as co-chairs by the Governor of Pennsylvania.

2013 Recovery Plan Progress: Data & Accountability

2013 Recovery Plan Goal

- According to the Plan, each school would have a balanced scorecard, including specific metrics defined by the CEC under the following domains: academics, safety and health, and financial sustainability. The individual school advisory councils would review the data and establish specific annual performance goals.
- Each school would also create an improvement plan based on a rubric the CEC was to develop. The plans would be approved by the CEC.
- The school board would approve a process for selecting external education providers to operate schools that fail to meet their goals.

2015 Outcome

- Superintendent Holmes has created individual school scorecards that report performance on ten measures. The Superintendent selected the metrics, which include test scores, attendance, graduation rate, student engagement, discipline, numbers of parent contacts, and indicators around school staff. The school-level advisory groups do not exist, and thus cannot review the data.
- Schools write improvement plans based on the state plan format, but the plans are not presented to any external group.
- The external education providers would have been charters if the district had completely transformed into in-district charters.

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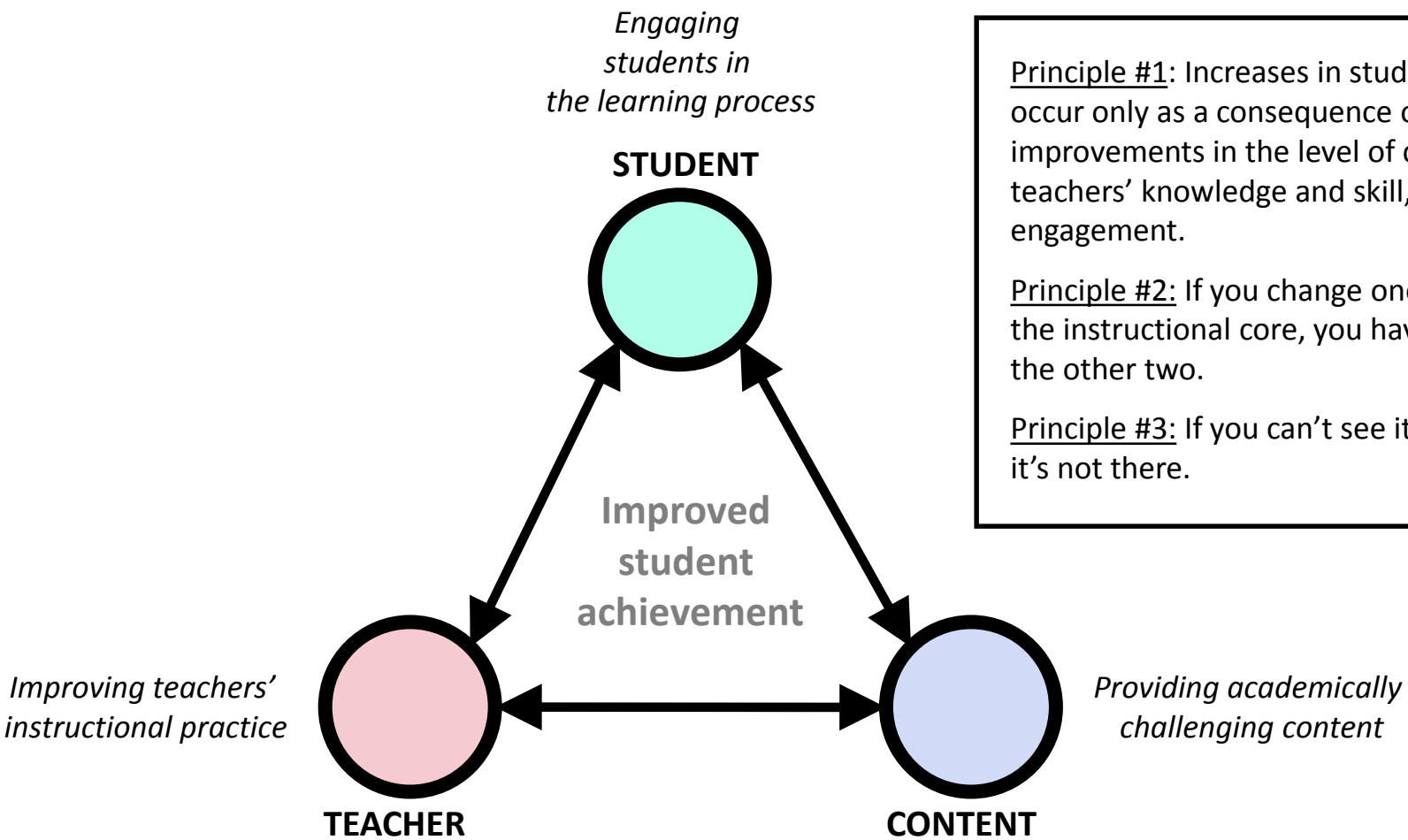
A strong strategy focuses on the Instructional Core – the interaction between the student, the teacher, and the content

The district needs a set of strategies that support the instructional core.

Source: Harvard Public Education Leadership Program, Adapted from Tushman and O'Reilly's Congruence Model, 2002

http://pelp.fas.harvard.edu/book/coherence-framework

Supporting the Instructional Core



Principle #1: Increases in student learning occur only as a consequence of improvements in the level of content, teachers' knowledge and skill, and student engagement.

Principle #2: If you change one element of the instructional core, you have to change the other two.

Principle #3: If you can't see it in the core, it's not there.

Recommendations are intended to help focus Central Office and school attention and resources on strengthening the instructional core

Source: City, E., Elmore, R. Fiarman, S. and Teitel, L., Instructional Rounds in Education, Harvard Education Press, 2009

Five Focus Areas

Support for Instruction

Communications

Talent

Resource Alignment

Performance Management

Initial Recommendations

Section II: Recommendations provides a menu of recommendations aligned to the following categories or "priority areas": **support for instruction**, **communications**, and **talent**. These priority areas will only be successful through effective **resource alignment**, and clear and consistent **performance management**.

Within the first several weeks following the July 15, 2015 submission of this report, the Chief Recovery Officer will begin creating 90-day plans and an amendment to the 2013 Recovery Plan. Immediate recommendations include:

- Create and communicate a clear theory of action and strategy.
- Ensure a system for consistent communication.
- Establish a strategy management process.
- Align Central Office to support school instructional needs.
- Facilitate ongoing cross-school collaboration.
- Continue to implement the freshman academy, distributed leadership, and curriculum adoption initiatives.
- Stabilize school leadership.