

**A REPORT ON THE 2014 RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC EDUCATION SURVEY**

*Preliminary Analysis of Results*

PRELIMINARY REPORT

## Table of Contents

<b>An Introduction to Rhode Island’s 2015-2020 Public Education Planning Process.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction to Rhode Island’s 2015 Public Education Survey.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Background .....	2
Limitations .....	2
<b>Survey Results .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Who took the survey?.....	3
Purpose and Desired Scope of PK-12 Education in Rhode Island.....	5
Improvement Areas and Looking Toward the Future.....	9

## A REPORT ON THE 2014 RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC EDUCATION SURVEY

### An Introduction to Rhode Island's 2015-2020 Public Education Planning Process

On October 25, 2014, the Rhode Island Board of Education, the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Rhode Island Department of Education launched a new, groundbreaking strategic-planning process to determine the goals for pre-school through high-school public education in Rhode Island. This process will empower the community to develop a strategic plan for public education from start to finish. The strategic plan for public education will be developed by Rhode Islanders, for Rhode Islanders.

We are committed to supporting the development of this plan based upon four principles:

- (1) **Transparency:** Every part of this process will be transparent, publicly available, and easily accessible.
- (2) **Engagement:** Every interested Rhode Islander will have an opportunity to contribute his or her opinion and to participate in the process.
- (3) **Empowerment:** A community team will develop the plan; the people most affected by public education will be closest to the decision-making process. The Board and Council will partner with the community team from the first to the final draft.
- (4) **Respect:** The process and plan will incorporate the opinions, expectations, and beliefs of participating Rhode Islanders. Although not every opinion will be reflected in the final plan, no perspective will be ignored.

This report summarizes the results of our first statewide survey on public education. This survey is one part of the first of three strategic-planning stages:

#### **Stage 1: Convene a Statewide Conversation**

*Invite thousands of Rhode Islanders to discuss the future of public education.*

These discussions will range from our multi-thousand person surveys to intimate, living-room discussions. This statewide conversation will sculpt the planning and the process and, ultimately, serve as the basis for the strategic plan.

#### **Stage 2: Convert the Conversation to Action**

*Recruit, select, and prepare the "Ambassador Design Team"*

A community team will work directly with the Rhode Island Board of Education to develop the strategic plan through numerous drafts, each of which will respond to new "chapters" of information produced through the statewide conversation.

#### **Stage 3: Launch a Statewide PK-12 Plan**

*Launch the new Rhode Island plan and create the conditions for its success*

Through the combined efforts of the Rhode Island Board of Education, the Ambassador Design Team, and the thousands of people who contributed to the statewide conversation, Rhode Island will launch a plan that reflects our shared values, beliefs, and hopes about the future of public education.

## Introduction to Rhode Island's 2014 Preschool-12 Public Education Survey

### Background

The Rhode Island 2015-2020 Strategic Planning Process started with a statewide conversation about public education. This conversation included a large-scale survey intended to reach all Rhode Islanders. Unlike educational surveys administered in the past that we distributed to students, parents, and educators, with this survey we reached out to every stakeholder group and community in Rhode Island. The survey had a simple purpose: Listen thousands of Rhode Islanders – the voices of parents and grandparents, elected officials, business people, students, educators, and community members – to better understand their opinions, hopes, and priorities for the future of public education.

With the support of qualitative researchers, we designed this survey to achieve the following goals:

- (1) ensure appropriateness and accessibility across a wide range of stakeholders;
- (2) commit to brevity (respondent completion in 5 to 7 minutes);
- (3) focus on overarching goals and opinions (rather than on discrete programs or initiatives);
- (4) enable an interpretation of the respondents' highest priorities and most strongly held beliefs; and
- (5) provide the opportunity for open-ended responses for qualitative analysis.

The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education set the audacious goal of collecting 10,000 respondents in two months. We surpassed this goal, through the support of many individuals, communities, and organizations, including teachers' unions, school districts, educators' associations, faith-based and civic organizations, state government agencies, advocacy groups, Chambers of Commerce and Workforce Investment Boards, state and regional newspapers, and elected officials. We are very grateful for this support.

### Limitations

This survey has several important limitations that we would like you to be aware of before you interpret the results.

First, we designed the survey to support a strategic planning process and not as a qualitative study of a discrete research question. The results support the intent of the design: to enable readers and users to better understand Rhode Islanders' opinions, hopes, and priorities for the future of public education. People can use these results to inform other research pursuits, but the inferential power of the survey results may be limited.

Second, in some cases individual-stakeholder sample sizes fell below the threshold necessary to sustain analysis. In particular, the survey had low response rates from students, from elected officials, and from the residents of some municipalities.

Third, to promote accessibility we distributed the survey in six languages; however, we administered the survey exclusively electronically. Therefore, we may have missed some key perspectives because of the lack of access to or comfort with web-based survey tools.

Fourth, though we distributed the survey statewide and we intended to reach all stakeholder groups, the responses are not proportionate to the demographics of Rhode Island. Among the most notable areas of disproportionality are an over-representation of the opinions of parents and educators and uneven proportionality across communities.

Fifth, by intentional design, the survey did not collect information on the racial, ethnic, or socio-economic status of respondents.

## Survey Results

### Section One: Survey Respondents

In this section, we summarize the information that we collected about our survey respondents. We did not collect information on gender, race, ethnicity, native language, or age.

Approximately 10,500 people responded to the survey. Approximately 10,150 indicated that they were a Rhode Island resident, a teacher in Rhode Island, or an individual or part of a family living in Rhode Island. The other 350 respondents were exited from the survey and, consequently, their responses are not included in these results.

**Survey Question #9: Who are you?** Respondents were asked to choose the single answer that most accurately described them.

The majority of respondents identified primarily as either an educator or parent/guardian, with community members as the next largest group. Approximately 5.2% did not respond to the question.

You should interpret the results of this item with an understanding that many respondents may identify into multiple identity categories although the survey design forced them to select only one category.

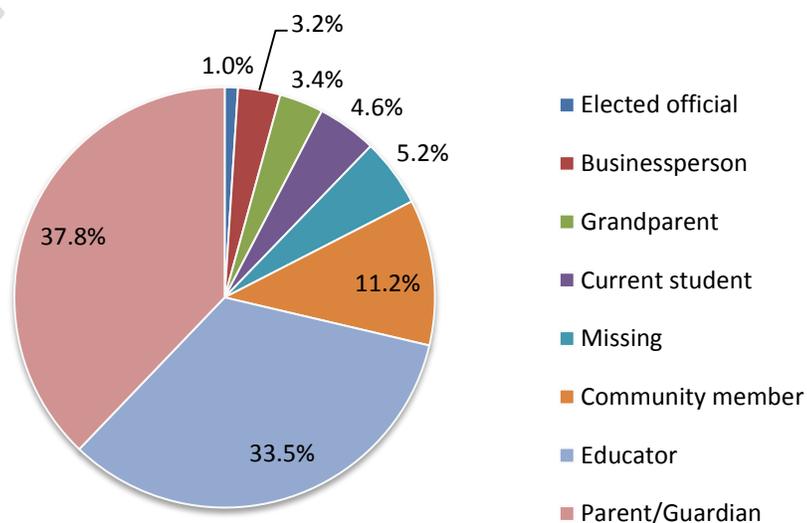


Figure 1: Who are you? (Q9)

### Survey Question #12: Where do you live?

Residents of urban municipalities made up 40.2% of the total, with non-urban towns at 52.3%. Approximately 7.5% chose not to share their town of residence.

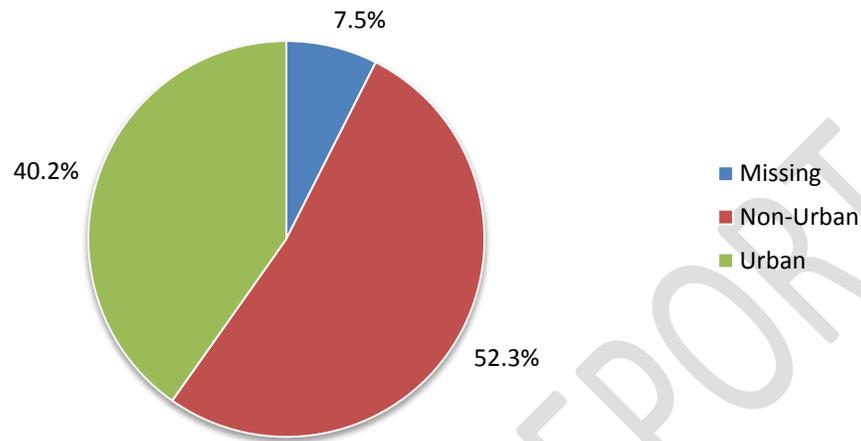


Figure 2: Where do you live? (Q12)

### Survey Question #11: How often do you discuss PK-12 public education with friends/family?

The majority of respondents reported that they talk about education issues with friends and family regularly, on a daily or weekly basis. Slightly more than one-quarter of the survey respondents reported that they discuss education infrequently. Approximately 6% did not respond to this question.

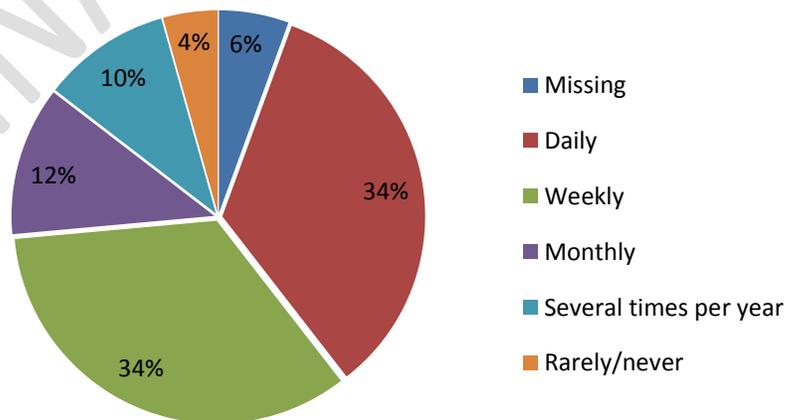


Figure 3: How often do you discuss PK-12 public education? (Q11)

## Section 2: Purpose and Desired Scope of PK-12 Education in Rhode Island

In this section, we summarize respondents' opinions on the purpose and highest priorities for public education. For many of the survey questions, we gave respondents the opportunity to select up to three items from multiple-choice list. To represent this visually, many charts include two bars: one representing the total percentage of *respondents* selecting each item and the other representing the total percentage of *responses* each item represents.

### Survey Question #2: What is the purpose of PK-12 public education in Rhode Island?

Respondents selected up to three responses.

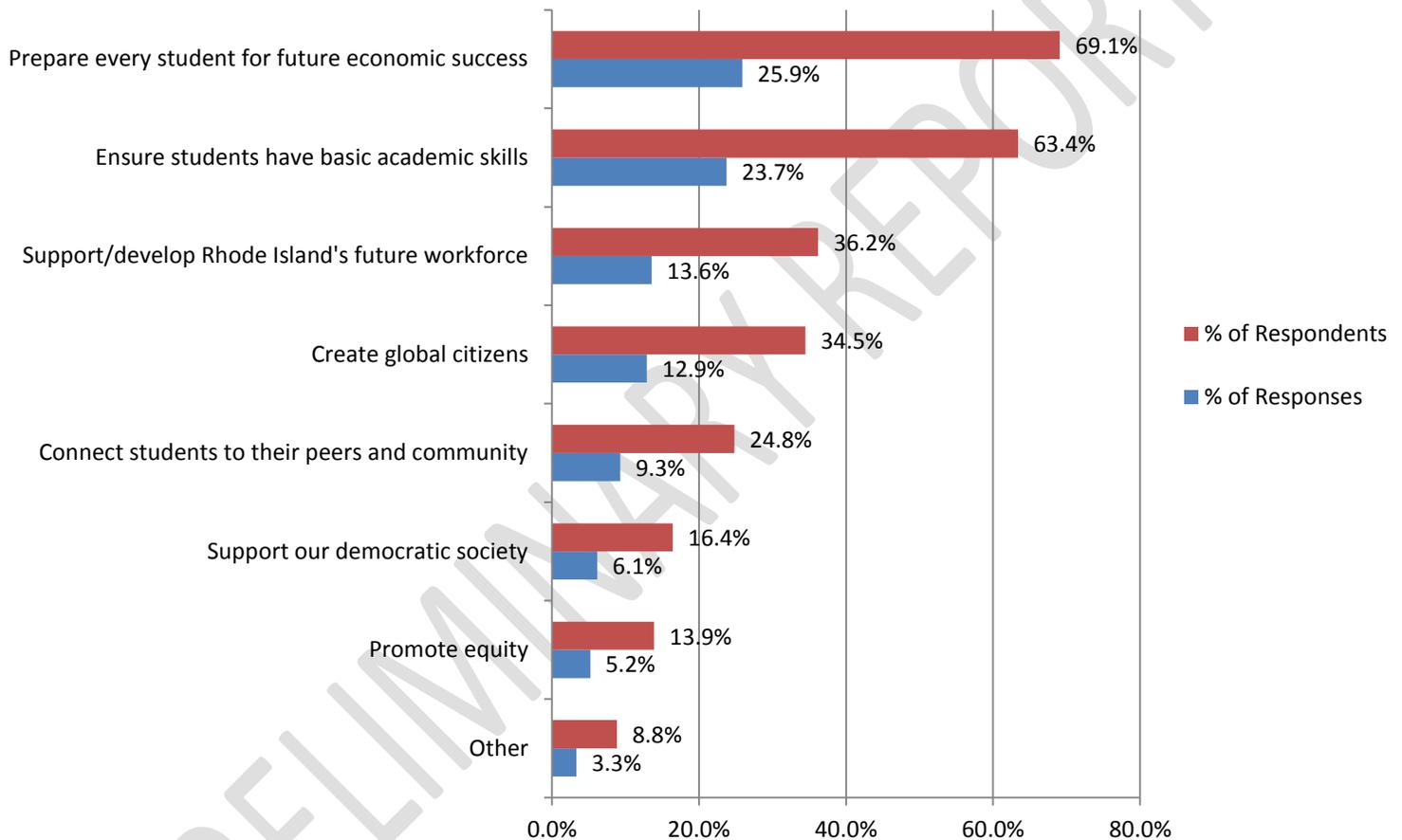


Figure 4: What is the purpose of public education (Q2)

The full report will include disaggregated results of this question as well as analysis of the responses submitted through the "Other" category.

**Survey Question #3: What are the most important skills current PK-12 students should learn before graduating?** Respondents selected up to three responses.

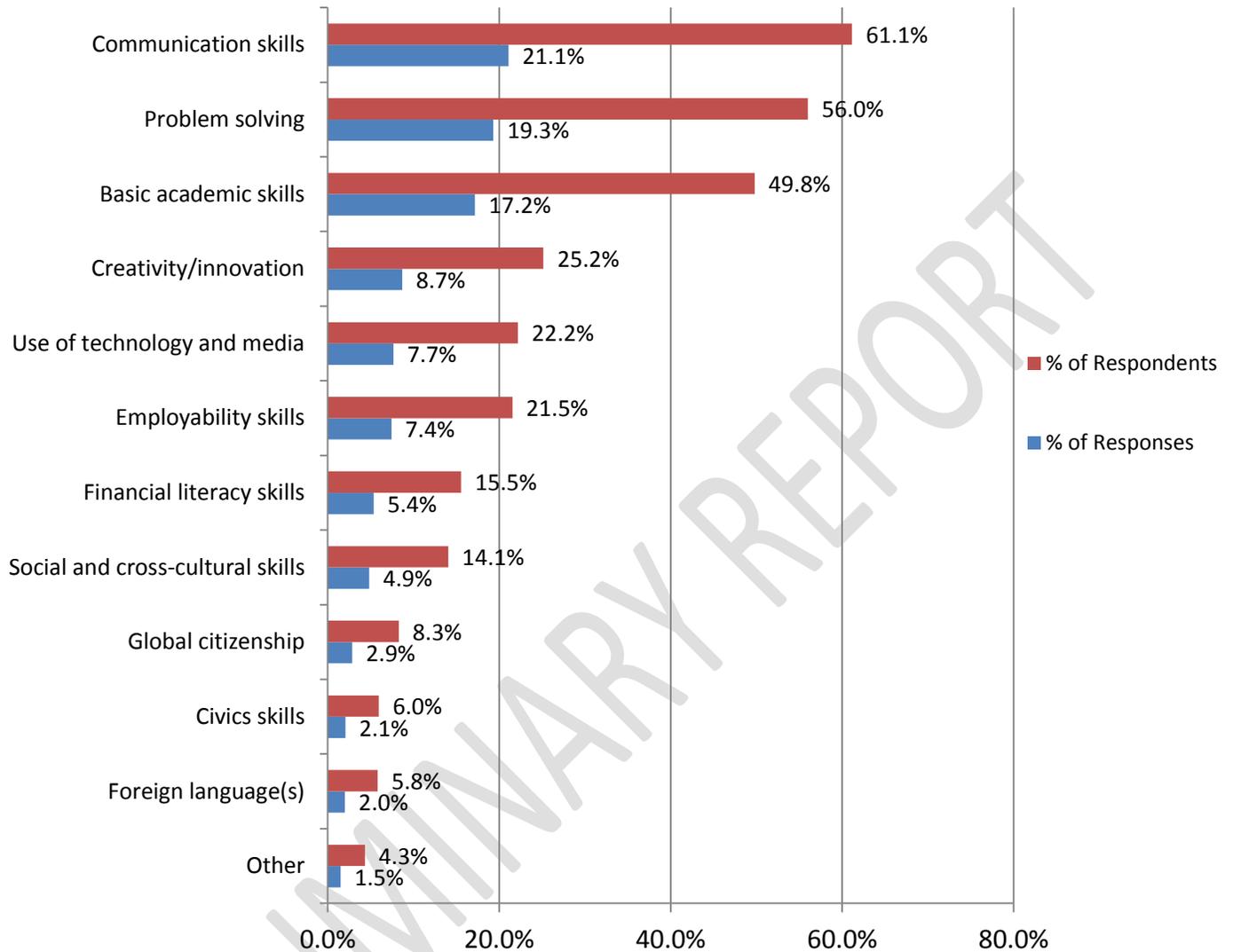


Figure 5: What are the most important skills students should learn before graduation? (Q3)

The full report will include disaggregated results of this question as well as analysis of the responses submitted through the “Other” category.

**Survey Question #5: What do you value most in a PK-12 public school?** Respondents selected up to three responses.

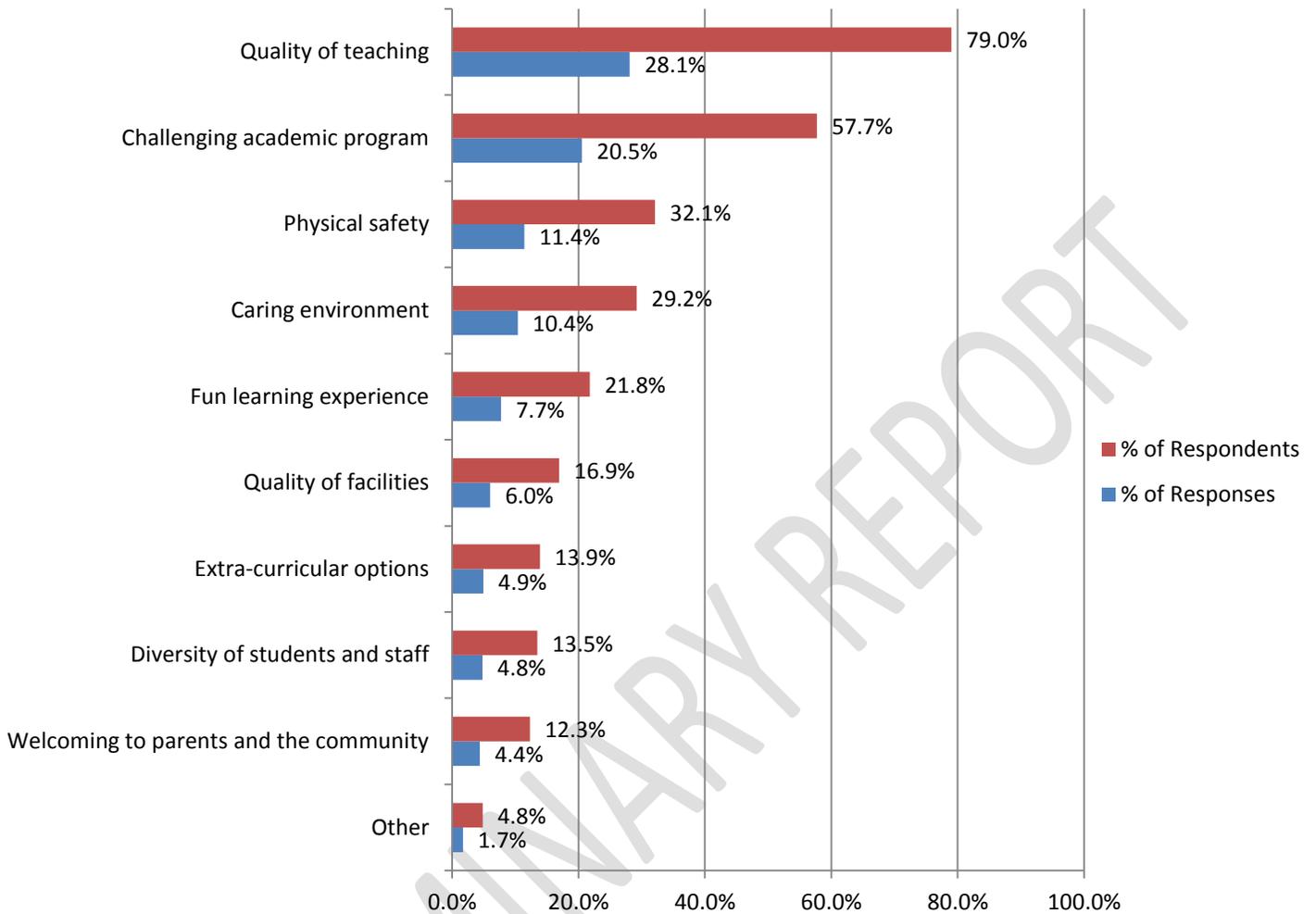


Figure 6: What do you value most in PK-12 public schools? (Q5)

The full report will include disaggregated results of this question as well as analysis of the responses submitted through the “Other” category.

**Survey Question #4: How important is the quality of PK-12 public schools to Rhode Island’s success as a state?** Respondents selected only one.

An overwhelming majority of respondents (96.1%) indicated that the quality of PK-12 public schools was either 5 (of the highest importance) or 4 (next highest importance). 71 respondents (less than 1%) indicated that public education was either 1 (unimportant) or 2 (limited importance). The full report will include disaggregated analysis of these results.

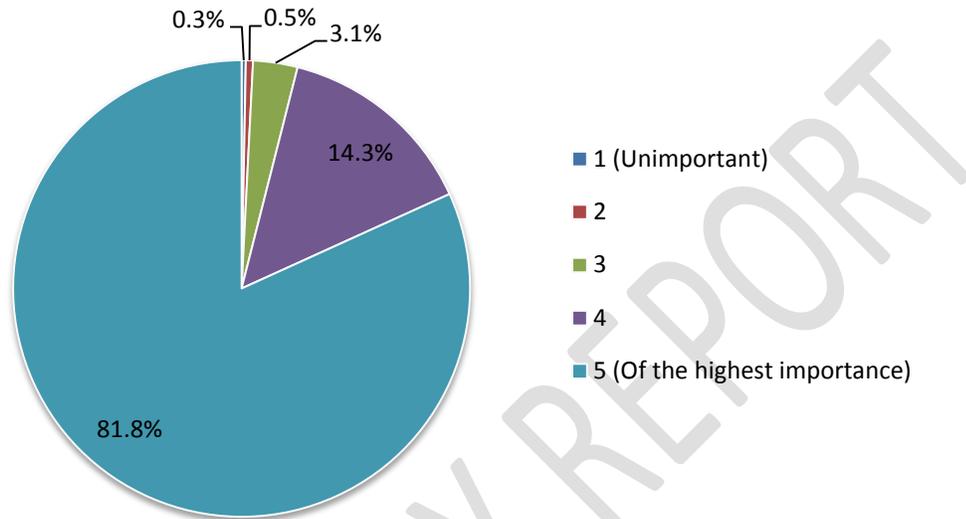


Figure 7: How important is the quality of PK-12 public schools to Rhode Island’s success as a state? (Q4)

**Survey Question #10: What is your impression of PK-12 public schools in Rhode Island?**

Respondents were asked to select one of the following choices. Approximately 5.2% did not respond to this question. The full report will include disaggregated analysis of these results.

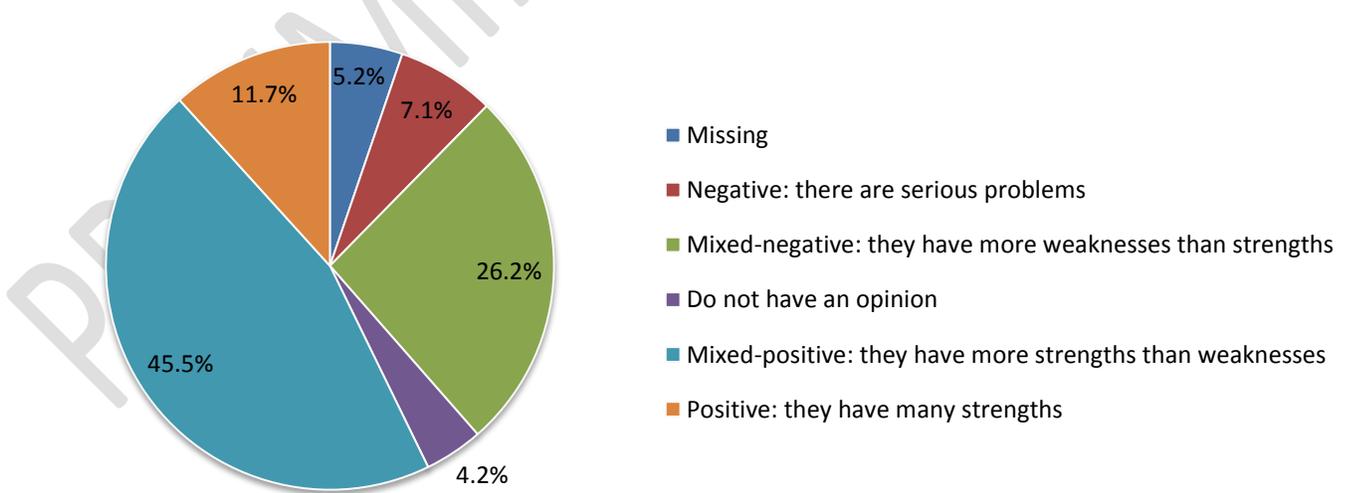


Figure 8: What is your impression of PK-12 public schools in Rhode Island? (Q10)

### Survey Question # 13: Other comments about public education in Rhode Island

The survey offered one open-ended prompt without word limits for people to contribute other thoughts. More than 4,000 respondents followed up on this prompt, and an aggregated analysis of the responses will be included in the full report.

## Section Three: Improvement Areas and Looking Toward the Future

In this section, we summarize the responses to survey questions that focused on areas for improvement and future priorities for public education.

### Survey Question #6: What improvement priorities would you recommend for Rhode Island's current PK-12 school system? Respondents selected up to three responses.

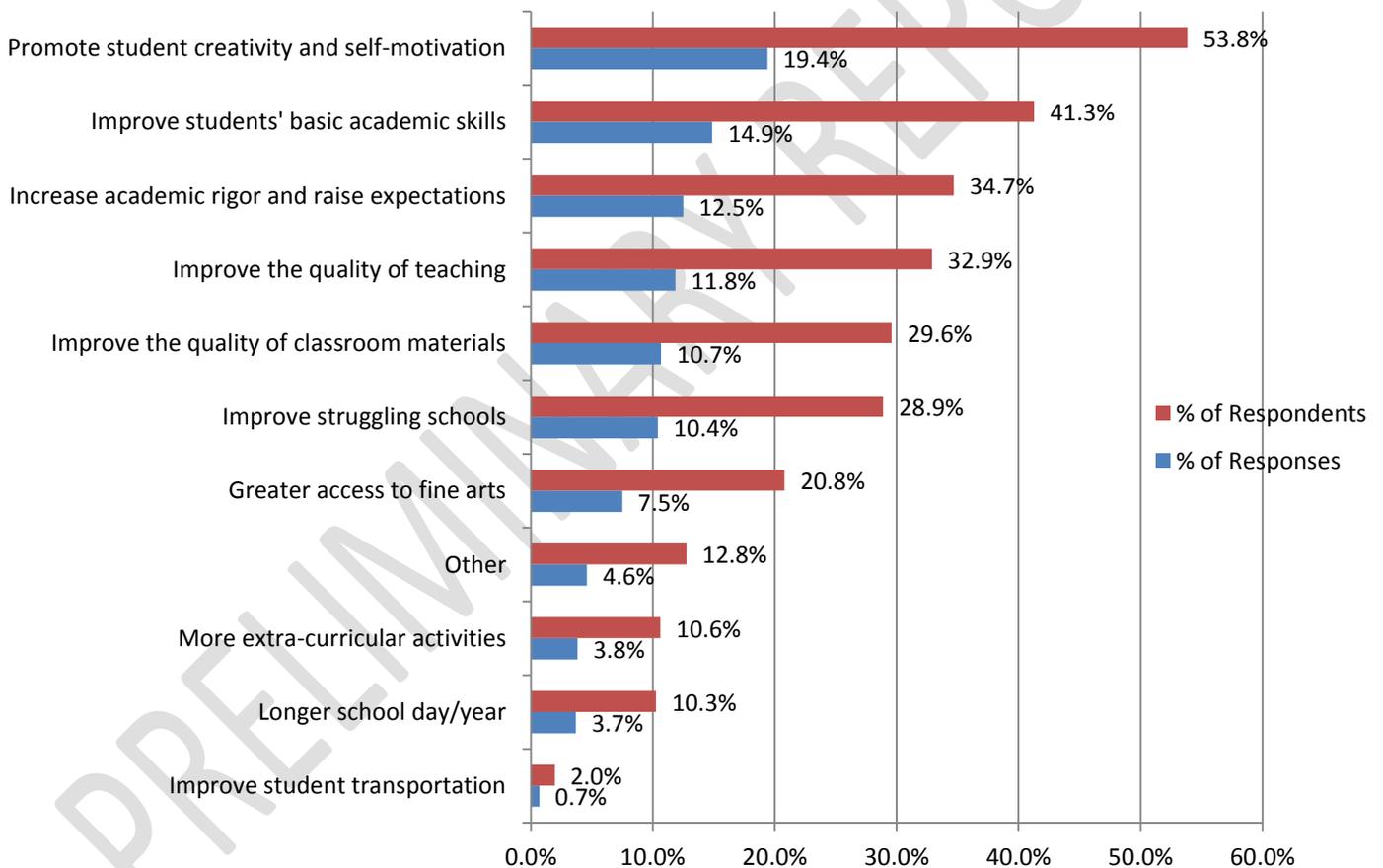


Figure 9: What improvement priorities would you recommend for Rhode Island's current PK-12 school system? (Q6)

The full report will include disaggregated results of this question as well as analysis of the responses submitted through the "Other" category.

**Survey Question #7: What future priorities will best ensure that PK-12 schools meet future student and state needs?** Respondents selected up to three responses.

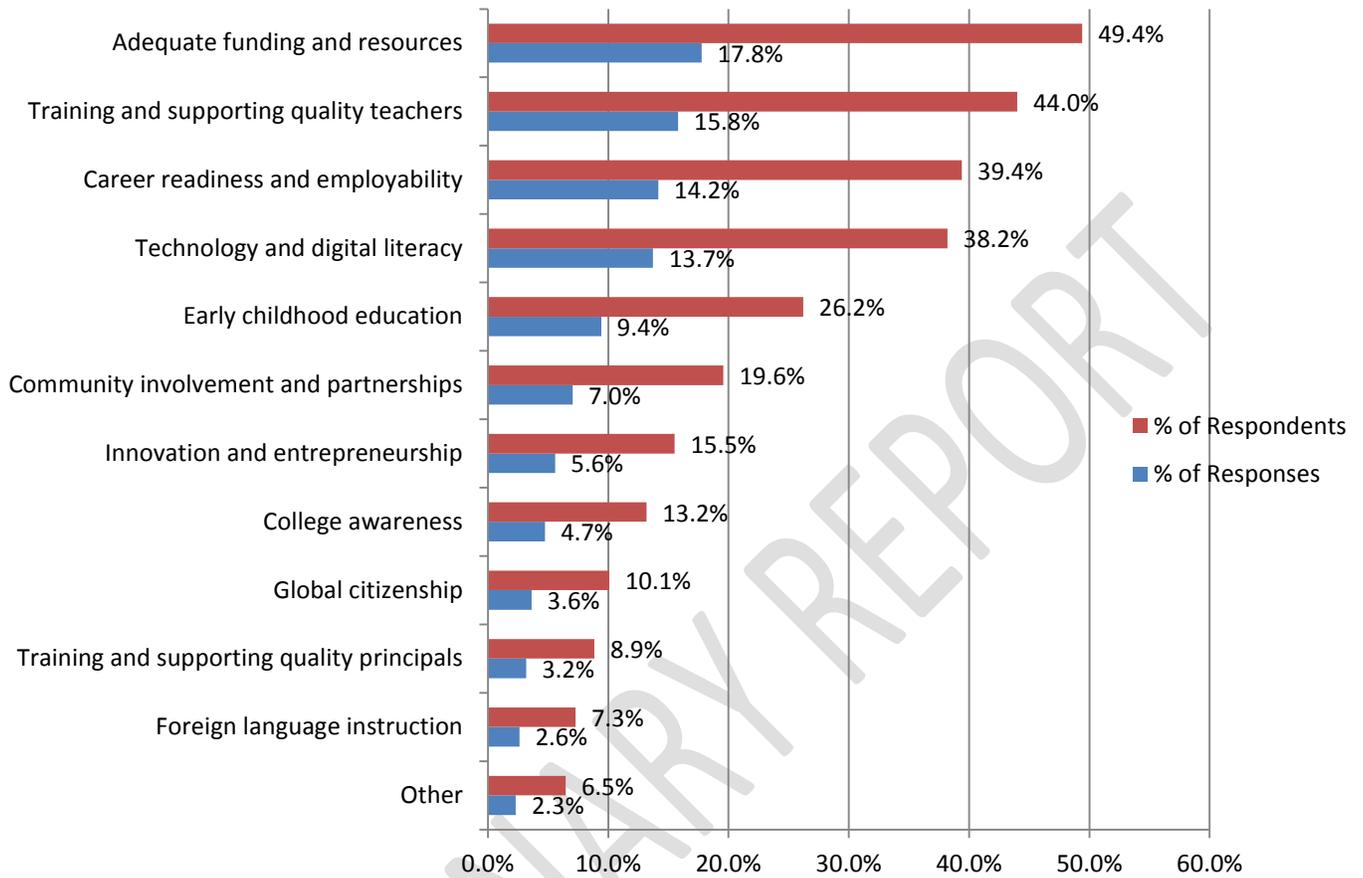


Figure 10: What future priorities will best ensure that PK-12 schools meet future student and state needs? (Q7)

The full report will include disaggregated results of this question as well as analysis of the responses submitted through the “Other” category.

**Survey Question #8: Please name one skill that RI students should be taught in 2020 that is not being taught today.**

More than 6,000 respondents responded to this prompt, and we will provide an analysis of the responses in the full report.