

Report to the Community – Families Feel Empowered to Partner With Their Child(ren)’s Schools Measure of Progress

Background:

In spring 2021, the Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) sent out—using various communication modes—an invitation for parents with children in K-3rd grades across the PSESD service area to share their thoughts and experiences partnering with their child’s or children’s school. Multiple modes to invite parents were used including notices in PSESD communication venues, Superintendent’s message, as well as through the established contacts of three members of the Measures of Progress Design Team (a community member and two PSESD staff). The full Design Team included three community members and eight staff from across PSESD programs and departments. The team met across several weeks in spring 2021 to discuss the intent of the survey and to co-develop the survey and its implementation. The team also agreed on offering a limited incentive scheme (i.e., drawing of 10 respondents’ names who will receive \$15 each as a token of appreciation).

In late spring, the “Families Feel Empowered to Partner with their Child(ren)” online survey (using Qualtrics) was launched. Of the 45 survey responses, 37 were completed by parents with children who are in kindergarten, 1st -, 2nd - and/or 3rd - grade levels. Thirty-two (86%) of survey respondents identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC); half of these respondents (51%) have diverse primary languages (i.e., home language is not English); and a majority (54%) reside in King County while 38% live in Pierce County.

Key results:

What does the following statement mean to you: “Families feel empowered to partner with their child(ren)’s schools”?

- 32 (86%) defined the experience using the following words: **feeling confident, comfortable, safe, respected, valued, supported, and listened to by school staff who acknowledge parents as holders of expert knowledge about their children.** Twenty-two percent of the parents emphasized the importance of **two-way communication and developing trusting interactions** with teachers and school staff that enable them to work together to support children’s academic performance, physical health, and socioemotional well being. Parents feel able to provide positive and negative feedback, and there is follow-up that occurs or real change that is put in place based on parent communication.
- A few parents (14%) raised perspectives on what ‘feeling empowered to partner with their child(ren)’s school’ is **not**. Parents expressed an opinion that ‘feeling empowered to partner with schools’ is *“a myth or a privilege that exists for some families but not for others.”* This perception is exacerbated among families whose primary or home language is not English.
- Parents were also asked what else they would like to share about their experiences with their children’s K-3rd grade schools and **many responses reflected on schooling matters that families faced because of the COVID-19 pandemic.** Parents referenced socioemotional concerns, communication, and technological challenges.

“This has been a terrible year. My child is extremely behind. I am worried for her next year. Her social and emotional wellbeing are being affected due to her stress about going to school, staying safe, and worries about her learning.”

“I would like the teachers to communicate with me at least once a week, because this past year there was very little communication.”

Overall Aggregate Results¹

What do parents' survey responses suggest about their **Family Engagement experiences**?

- A majority of parents (57%) report **feeling very welcome** by teachers and other staff of their K-3rd child(ren)'s school(s).
- One out of every two parents feel very comfortable connecting with their child(ren)'s teacher(s) **about their child(ren)'s schoolwork**.
- About 60% of parents feel very comfortable connecting with teachers **about their child(ren)'s social and emotional needs**.
- Two out of five parents feel **very confident in communicating with the school principal or assistant principal** their concerns about their child(ren)'s experiences.

What do parents' responses suggest about **Family-School Partnership through shared leadership experiences**?

- 46% of parents report that they have been **invited to help make policy or practice decisions** at least about half of the time.
- 52% parents/family members indicate that their **feedback about school policies and practices are heard** at least about half of the time.

A critical note: Consistently, when data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, by primary/home language, and by county residence, we found that **BIPOC respondents, parents with diverse primary/home languages (i.e., not English) and residents of King County** tended to make up the groups that experienced less-satisfactory family engagement and partnerships through shared leadership with their children's schools.

What advice do you have for us at the PSESD to support schools' efforts to improve relationships with parents and caregivers/guardians? Parents and caregivers highlighted:

- The importance of attending to expanding language access in the school environment for both children and parents; the value of regular communication about their children's learning; the importance of investing in family engagement and inclusion of parents in decision-making about children's schooling; and the need for increased funding to meet various needs and improve services.

"My advice is to support the parents' and caregivers' "built" relationships with schools and [for] schools to invite parents and caregivers to their children's education and provide translators for them so some parents and caregivers who need translation can understand more."

"Keep working with parents, it actually helps the child or children."

"Listen to their stories and (the) needs of each family."

Next steps:

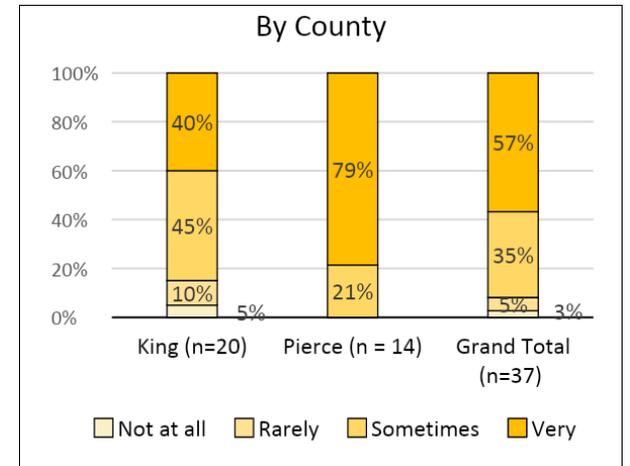
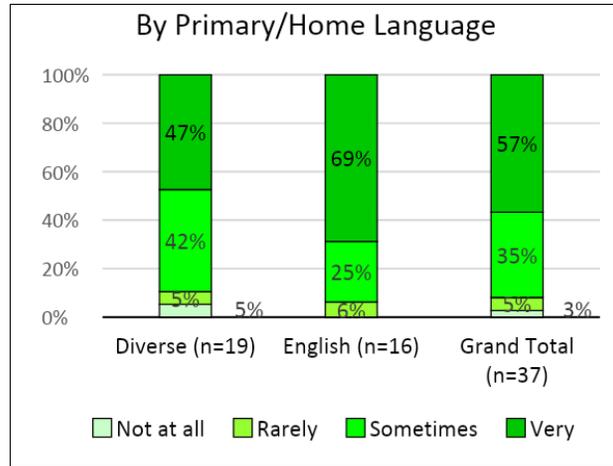
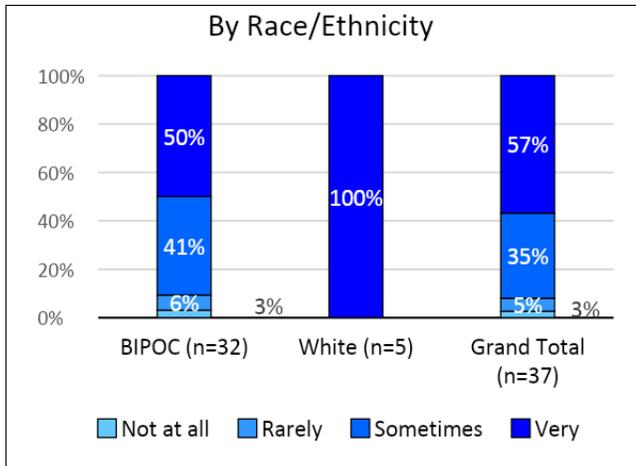
PSESD will bring the 2021 pilot survey results to communities, specifically through PSESD advisory groups that include and work closely with parents and families such as the Representative Advisory Council, Transformation Team to engage parent representatives in providing direction for 2021-22. Based on the experiences implementing the pilot work, we will invite input on improving our processes for data collection, analysis, and reporting. A primary question to the advisory group is how to center relationships in data collection and, at the same time, reach a greater number of parents from the entire PSESD service area.

¹ Disaggregated by race/ethnicity, by primary/home language, and by county residence are provided in separate sections.

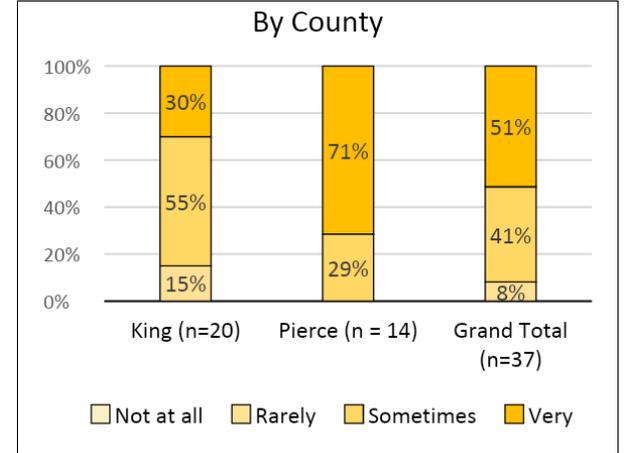
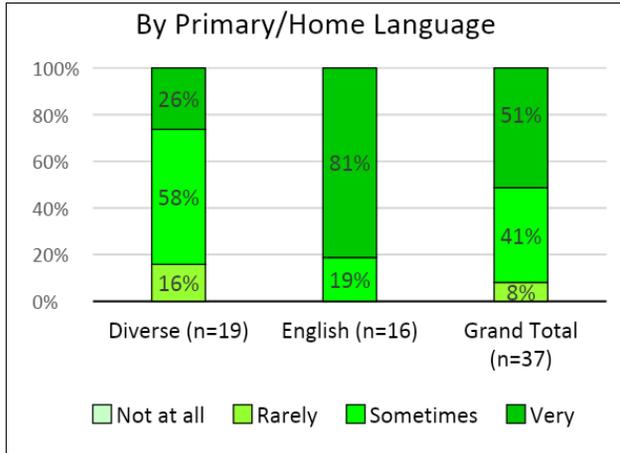
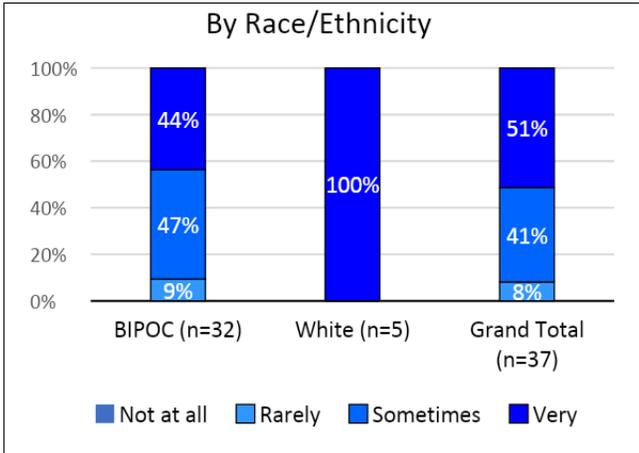
Disaggregated Data Summaries

What do parents' survey responses suggest about their Family Engagement experiences? (Part I)

- Only half of BIPOC parents reported feeling *very* welcome by teachers and other staff in their K-3rd child(ren)'s schools.
- Almost 70% of parents with English as their home language feel very welcome in children's schools when compared to parents with diverse home languages.
- More Pierce County parents feel very welcome in their children's schools when compared to King County parents.

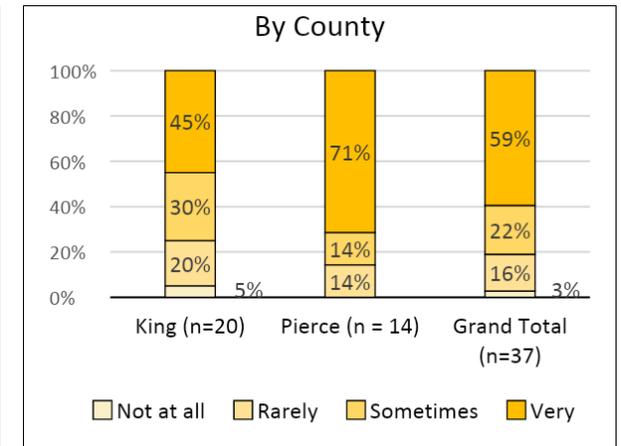
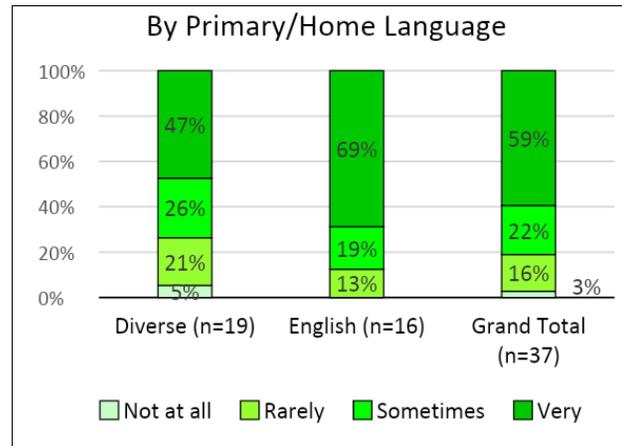
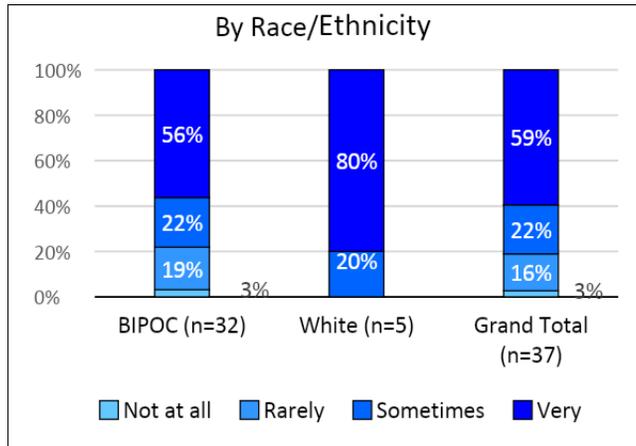


- Less than half of BIPOC parents feel very comfortable connecting with K-3rd grade teachers and other staff about their children's schoolwork.
- Most parents, with English as their home language, feel very comfortable connecting with teachers compared to parents with diverse home languages.
- More Pierce County parents feel very welcome in their children's schools when compared to King County parents.

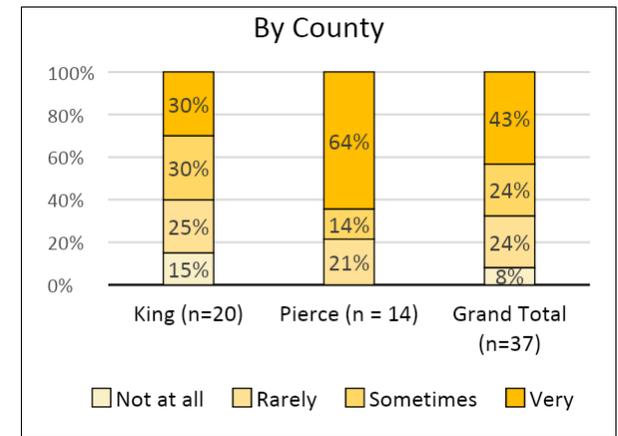
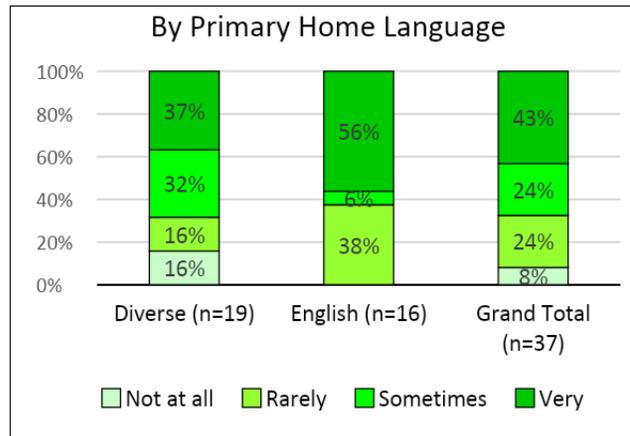
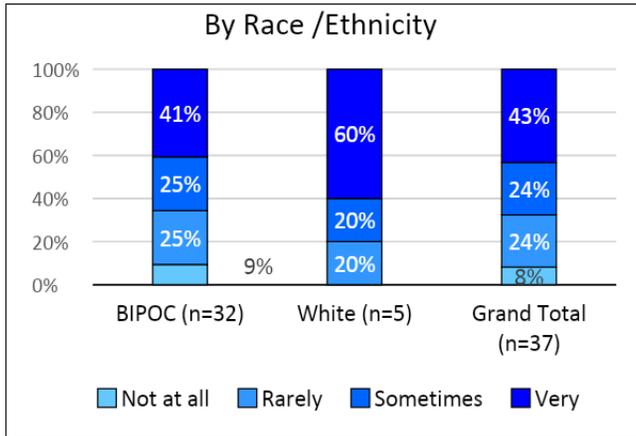


What do parents' survey responses suggest about their Family Engagement experiences? (Part II)

- Just over half of BIPOC parents feel very comfortable connecting with K-3rd grade teachers and other staff about their children's socioemotional needs.
- More parents whose primary language is English, compared to parents with other primary languages, feel very comfortable connecting about their children's socioemotional needs.
- More Pierce County parents feel very comfortable connecting about children's socioemotional needs compared to King County parents.



- Reflecting the general results, only about two of every five BIPOC parents feel very confident in communicating with school administrators about concerns.
- A majority of parents for whom English is their home language feel very confident communicating with school administrators.
- More than twice as many Pierce County parents as King County parents feel very confident in communicating with school administrators.



What do parents' responses suggest about Family-School Partnership through shared leadership experiences?

- Less than half of BIPOC parents (44%) have been invited to help make school policy and practice decisions about half of the time.
- 50% of parents for whom English is the primary language and 47% of parents whose home language is not English have helped about half of the time.
- 57% of Pierce County parents and 40% of King County parents have helped make policy or practice decisions at least about half of the time.
- 51% of BIPOC parents indicate that their feedback about school policies and practices are heard at least about half of the time.
- 50% of parents for whom English is their home language compared to only 26% of parents with other home languages feel their feedback is heard most of the time.
- Pierce County parents are 2x more likely than King County parents to report that their feedback is heard at least most of the time.

Who participated?

- Most survey respondents identify as BIPOC; half of them have diverse primary languages (i.e., home language is not English); and a majority resides in King County.

