

## **RESPONSES TO A DISTRICT-WIDE SURVEY RELATED TO CALENDAR**

### **BACKGROUND**

On December 1, 2009, the Wake County Board of Education adopted a resolution to seek in put from parents of students enrolled in the Wake County Public Schools System (WCPSS) regarding preferences for school calendars. Currently, there are 44 elementary schools using a year-round, multi-track systems, while 58 elementary schools utilize a traditional calendar. At the middle school level, 9 middle schools follow the year round, multi-track calendar and 19 middle schools use the traditional calendar. In addition to these schools, 2 elementary, 2 middle schools, and 1 high school follow a modified calendar, which is similar to a year-round single-track system. One high school follows the community college calendar and 4 alternative schools follow the traditional calendar.

The Superintendent charged the Evaluation & Research Department (E&R) with developing options for methods of obtaining parental input along with cost estimates of each method. These options were presented to the Board at the Committee of the Whole meeting of December 15. All of the options were predicated on conducting a survey, with response opportunities in both English and Spanish. The differences among the options centered around distribution of notification, methods of participating in the survey, and the parents to be included. The Board initially decided to include both web-based and paper copies of a survey, with notification being mailed to each parent. The eligible participants would be parents of all students in grades K-12. Subsequent to this decision, the board revised the plan so that notifications would be sent home with each student, the primary means of participating would be web-based, although paper copies would be available for those without internet access. Parents would preferred to use the paper copy were invited to return the surveys to the school or directly to the E&R Department.

Between December 15 and December 31, 2009, E&R Department staff created and pilot-tested the survey questions and obtained a list of all students enrolled in WCPSS as of December 1 along with their student ID numbers. The ID numbers would be used to control participation in the survey, eliminating duplicated submissions, and ensuring that only the parents of enrolled students would be able to participate. Notification letters including the name and ID number of each student were prepared, a Spanish-language version of the letter was prepared, and the survey was posted to the District web-site and tested. The letters were then printed, and distributed to schools and a translation of the survey into Spanish was prepared. The schools, in turn, distributed the surveys to students to carry home to parents and, in addition, notified parents through School Messenger, an automated telephone service, to expect to receive the letters.

Meanwhile, on January 2, 2010, the Board had reviewed and approved the contents of the survey. At that same meeting there was some discussion of the expected/acceptable return rates. Because a survey is intended to allow generalization from the returns to the larger population, it was important to establish some kind of threshold for participation to ensure that generalizations could be made with confidence. Of course, in some surveys, a sample, rather than the entire population, is asked to participate. Typically, in this methodology, the sample is constructed so that it is representative of the larger population. Also, the survey allows replacement. That is, if the desired sample does not participate, then individual members of the sample group can be replaced by other participants with similar characteristics so that the sample returns recreate the larger population. In this case, however, since everyone in the population is invited to participate, the size of the returns becomes the key to ability to generalize. In past surveys, a desired return of 60% had been established for district-level information, with a 33% return rate for individual schools. No final decision as to desired return rate was taken by the Board.

The survey was opened on line on January 11, 2010, and parents were given until noon on January 25, 2010, to complete the survey on line or to transmit the surveys on paper to their school or to the E&R Department office. During the survey period, some individual parents contacted E&R indicating that they had inadvertently completed the survey twice for the same student. In those cases, E&R staff worked with these parents to ensure that one and only one survey was submitted. Once the survey period closed, analysis of the data was undertaken. These results are reported in the first part of this report.

The Board also commissioned a survey of staff about their feelings regarding calendar. The survey was created by the E&R department staff and was launched on the district's intranet. Because Track 3 teachers were not scheduled to be in their schools during the survey period, principals were asked to notify these teachers of an internet link that would enable them to participate in the survey from outside the district. The results of the staff survey are presented in the second part of this report.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

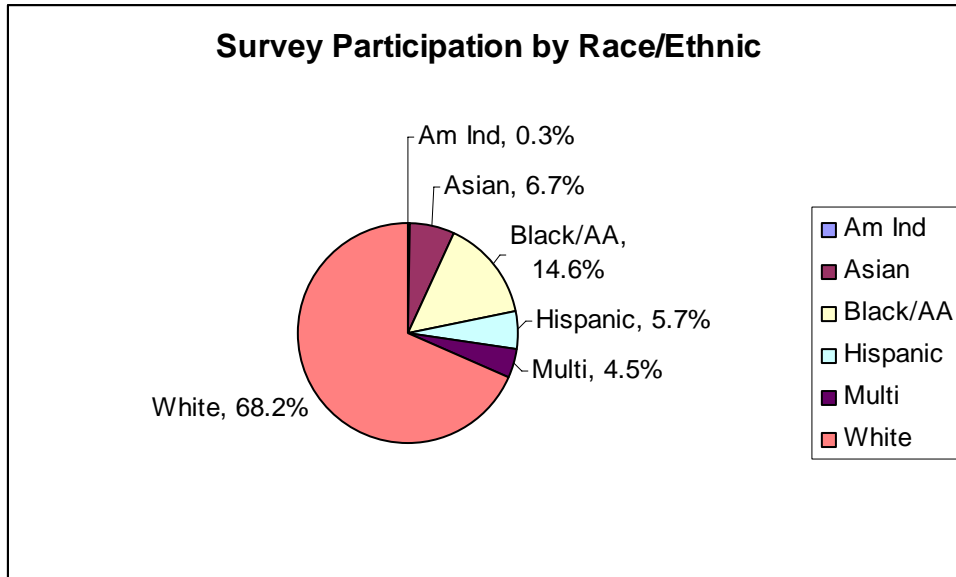
A total of 41,344 responses were received electronically or in hard copy. The submissions were inspected to determine whether any were associated with the same ID number. It was found that there were 774 duplicates. Initially, these were removed from the data base and saved in a separate data file, along with 959 surveys with invalid ID numbers. This process allowed us to clean the usable data base and to retain in separate files those submissions that were suspect. At the end of this scrubbing process, 39,611 valid submissions had been identified, representing 28% of all eligible participants.

In the discussion that follows, participation will be examined in two ways. First, we will compare the make up of the participant population as compared to the make up of the total population of the district. This will answer the question: how similar is the survey respondent population to the district as a whole? Then we will compare the respondents of a given subgroup to the total of that subgroup in the district population. This will

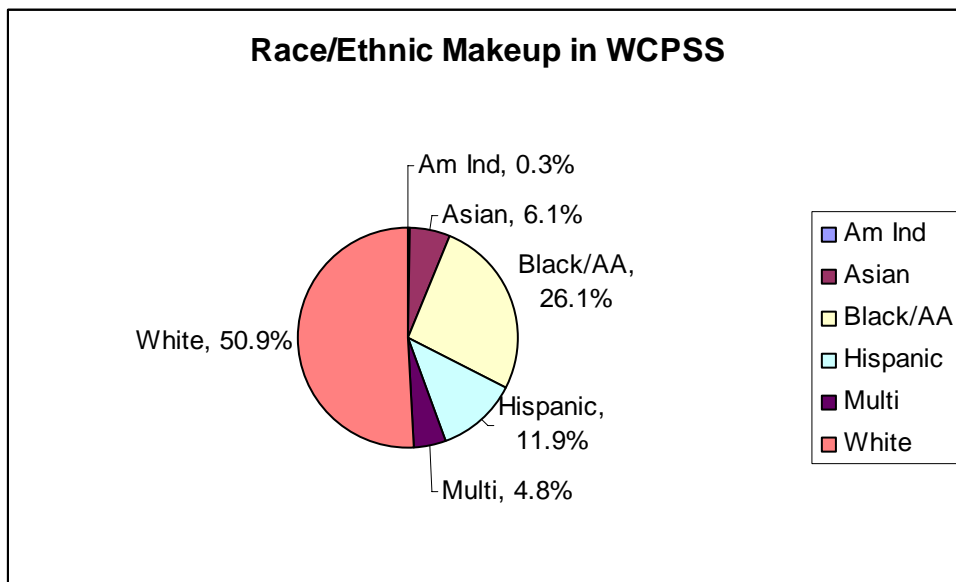
answer the question: how large a percentage of a given sub-group responded to the survey?

Not all sub-populations within WCPSS participated at the same rates, of course. Figure 1 below shows the ethnic/racial composition of the responders while Figure 2 shows the ethnic/racial composition of the school district over all:

**Figure 1: Ethnic Composition of Responders**



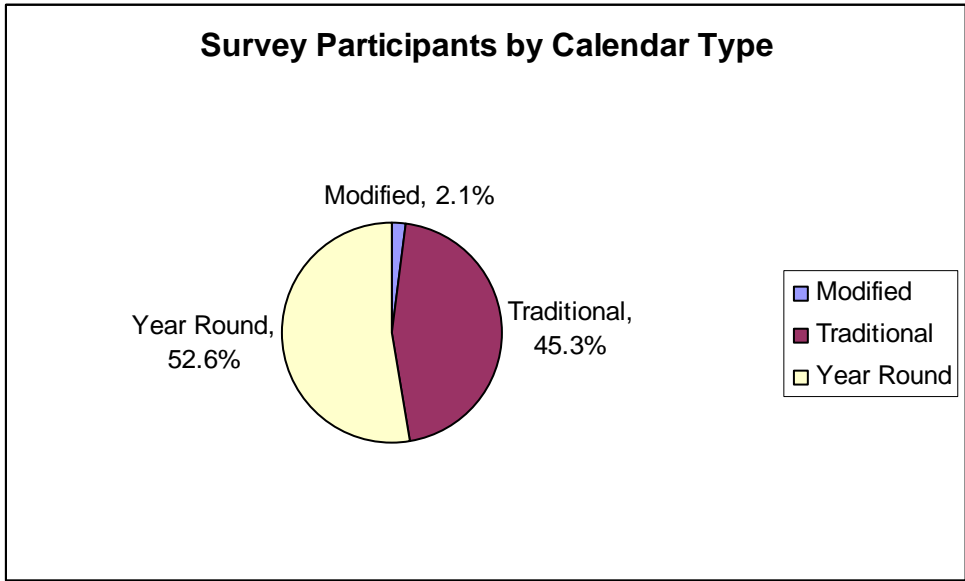
**Figure 2: Ethnic Composition of District**



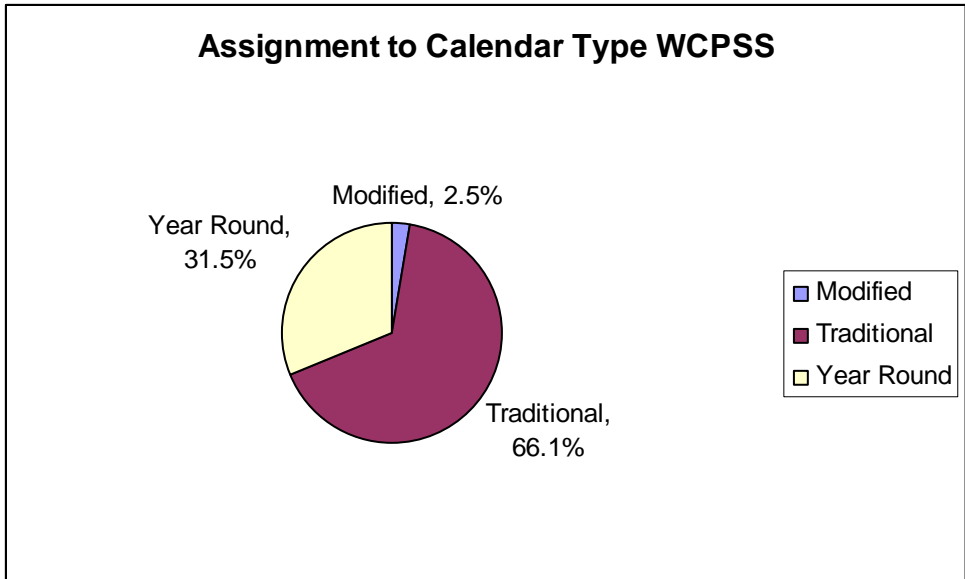
Comparison of these two charts shows that parents of white students were more likely to respond to the survey than were parents of African American or Hispanic/Latino students. Parents of American Indian, Asian, and multi-racial students participated in the survey in about the same proportions as they represent within the total district population.

The survey was available to parents of students at all grade levels within the district although currently year-round calendars are only used at elementary and middle schools. Thus, it is not surprising that elementary and middle school parents were more likely to participate in the survey than were the parents of high school and alternative school parents. Figures 3 and 4 compare participation rates in the survey with enrollment rates:

**Figure 3: Survey Participants by Calendar Type**

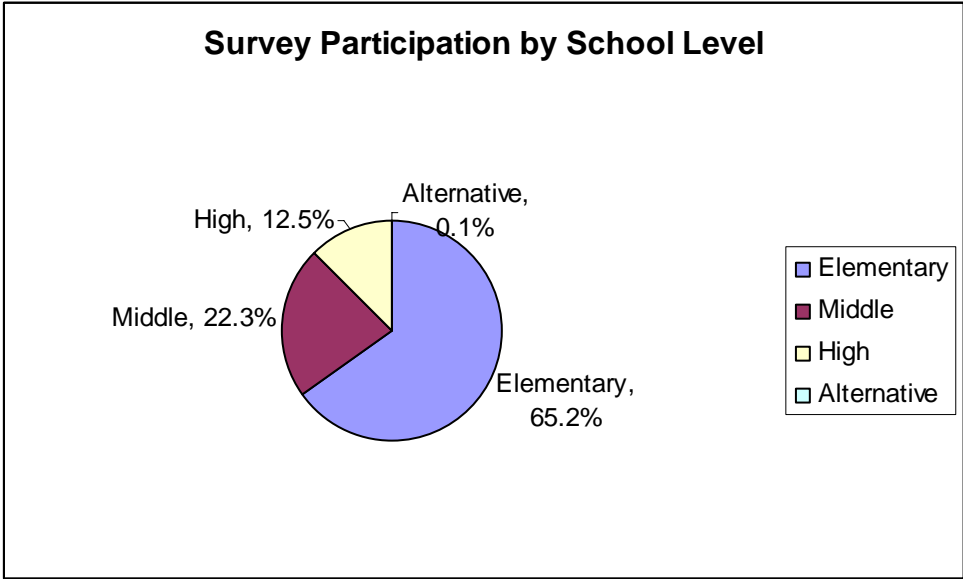


**Figure 4: Population in WCPSS by Calendar Type**

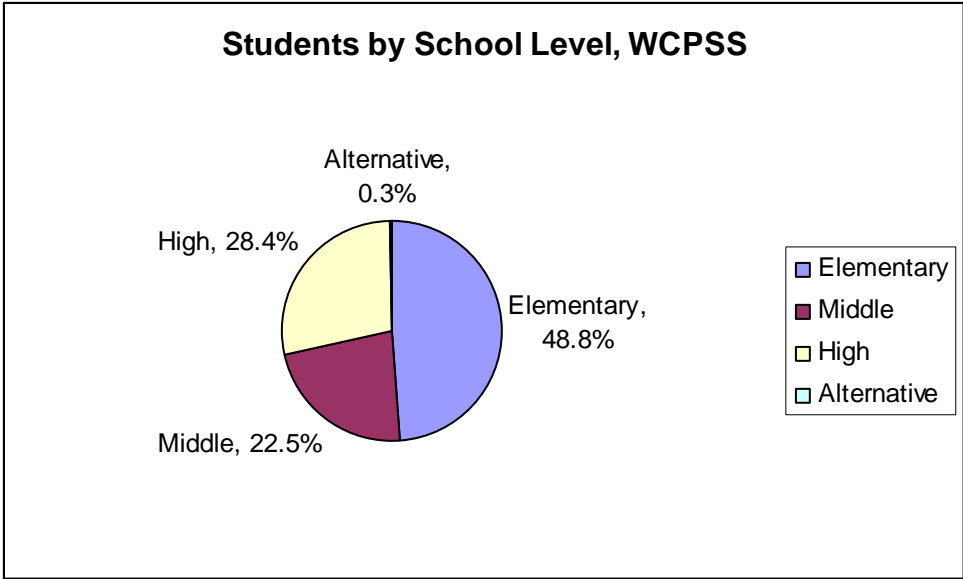


Figures 3 and 4 reveal that while somewhat more than half of the survey participants were the parents of students assigned to year-round calendars, almost two-thirds of WCPSS students are assigned to traditional calendar schools. This over-representation of year-round parents is complicated by the fact that most high school students are assigned to traditional calendar schools, but high school parents were less likely to participate in the survey, as Figures 5 and 6 show:

**Figure 5: Participation by School Level**



**Figure 6: Student Assignment by School Level**



Clearly, parents of elementary school students were more likely to participate in the survey than was true for high school parents. Middle school participants and alternative school participants in the survey reflect the distribution of these groups in the larger district student population. For whatever reason, then, the parents of some students were more likely to participate in this survey than was true for parents of other groups. This dis-proportion should be borne in mind when reviewing survey results. A complete analysis of responders compared with the total school population is shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: Responders Compared with WCPSS Enrollments**

	Respondents		WCPSS	
All	39,611	100.0%	141,224	100.0%
Modified	825	2.1%	3,489	2.5%
Traditional	17,936	45.3%	93,316	66.1%
Year Round	20850	52.6%	44,419	31.5%
	39611	100.0%	141224	100.0%
Male	19,746	49.8%	71,923	50.9%
Female	19,865	50.2%	69,301	49.1%
	39,611	100.0%	141,224	100.0%
Am Ind	105	0.3%	390	0.3%
Asian	2,640	6.7%	8,591	6.1%
Black/AA	5,789	14.6%	36,882	26.1%
Hispanic	2,251	5.7%	16,773	11.9%
Multi	1,798	4.5%	6,743	4.8%
White	27,028	68.2%	71,845	50.9%
	39,611	100.0%	141,224	100.0%
FR Elig	5,839	14.7%	44,260	31.3%
Not FR	33,772	85.3%	96,964	68.7%
	39,611	100.0%	141,224	100.0%
LEP	1,796	4.5%	12,608	8.9%
Not LEP	37,815	95.5%	128,616	91.1%
	39,611	100.0%	141,224	100.0%
SWD	3,808	9.6%	17,708	12.5%
Not SWD	35,803	90.4%	123,516	87.5%
	39,611	100.0%	141,224	100.0%
AIG	9,122	23.0%	25,501	18.1%
Not AIG	30,489	77.0%	115,723	81.9%
	39,611		141,224	
Elementary	25,811	65.2%	68,858	48.8%
Middle	8,816	22.3%	31,835	22.5%
High	4,960	12.5%	40,094	28.4%
Alternative	24	0.1%	437	0.3%
	39,611		141,224	

Inspection of the submissions presented in Table 1 reveals that, in addition to groups already mentioned, other disproportions exist in the participation pool:

- Several groups were over-represented in the survey as compared with their proportion of WCPSS students. Parents of students in Year Round calendars were more likely to participate than was true for parents of students on a traditional calendar. Elementary parents were also more likely to respond to the survey.
- Similarly, parents of female students were slightly more likely to respond than were parents of male students. Other over-represented groups in the survey included parents of white students, parents of students not eligible for free/reduced-price meals, parents of non-SWD students, parents of non-LEP students, parents of students identified as Academically/Intellectually Gifted students.
- Conversely, parents of African American, Hispanic-Latino, FRL eligible, SWD students, LEP students, and high school students were under-represented in the survey. Parents of other student groups participated at about the rates of the make up of their children in the larger WCPSS student population.

In the preceding analyses, we have looked at the make up of the participants as compared with the make up of the district (g/p where g=group and p=survey participant total and dg/dt where dg=district sub-group and dt=district total) While the above analyses compare the make up of the survey respondents to the make up of the schools, another way of looking at the participant pool is to consider the percentages of each sub-group eligible to participate that choose to do so. It has already been observed that 28% of all eligible participants in the district participated. Table 2 below shows the percentage of each participating subgroup compared to the total number of students in that sub-group in the general population (n/t where n=surveys by sub-group and t=population of sub-group):

**Table 2: Respondents as a Percent of District**

Subgroup	Respondents	District Total	Group Response Rate
All	39,611	141,224	28.0%
Modified	825	3,489	23.6%
Traditional	17,936	93,316	19.2%
Year Round	20850	44,419	46.9%
Male	19,746	71,923	27.5%
Female	19,865	69,301	28.7%
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Middle	8,816	31,835	27.7%
High	4,960	40,094	12.4%
Alternative	24	437	5.5%

Thus, it may be seen from Table 2 that while the response rate for parents of students in year round calendar schools was almost 47%, the response rate for parents of students on traditional calendar schools was just less than 20%. Similarly, while almost 38% of parents of elementary school students responded to the survey, only slightly more than 12% of high school students' parents responded.

Finally, the results for individual schools were also tabulated. Table 3 shows that the response rates at the low end of the range were all below 10% for each school level. At the high end, one elementary school had a response rate at almost 70%, while among all middle schools, the highest response rate was just over 50%, with the highest response rate for high schools at just under 22%.

**Table 3**  
**Range of Response by Level**

	Low	High
Elem	8.08%	69.80%
Mid	9.25%	51.90%
High	3.77%	21.96%

Table 4 presents the number of schools whose response rates fell into different categories. Clearly, none of the high schools was in the "greater than 50%" category, although 21 elementary or middle schools reached this rate. At the other end of the spectrum, 17 schools had response rates at/below 11%. A complete list of schools with response rates may be found in Appendix A.

**Table 4**  
**Distribution of Schools by Response Rates**

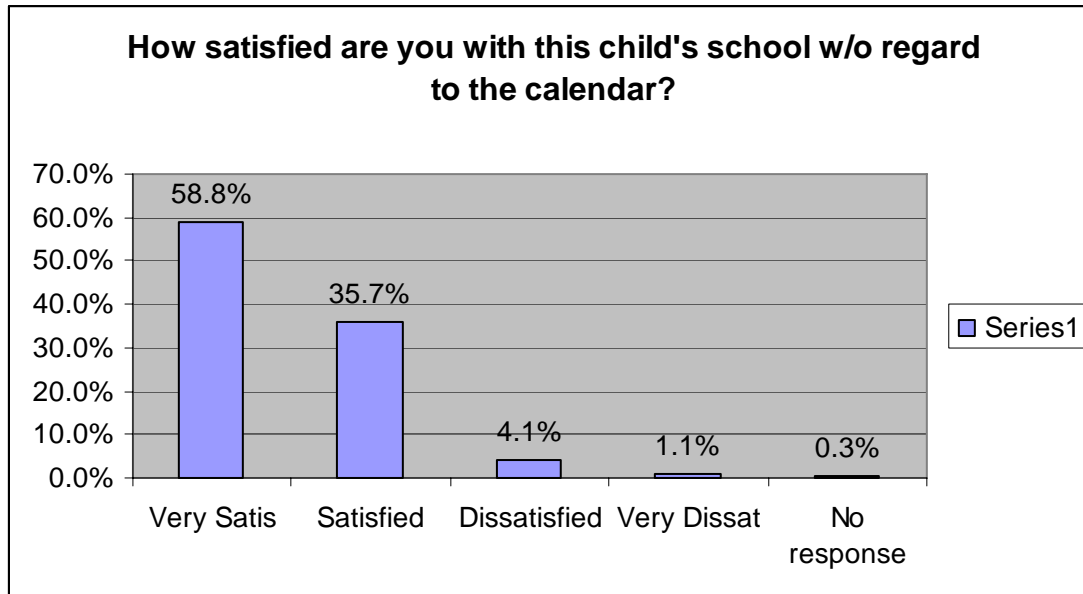
	>50%	33%-49%	11%-32%	0-11%
Schools	21	33	85	17

## RESULTS

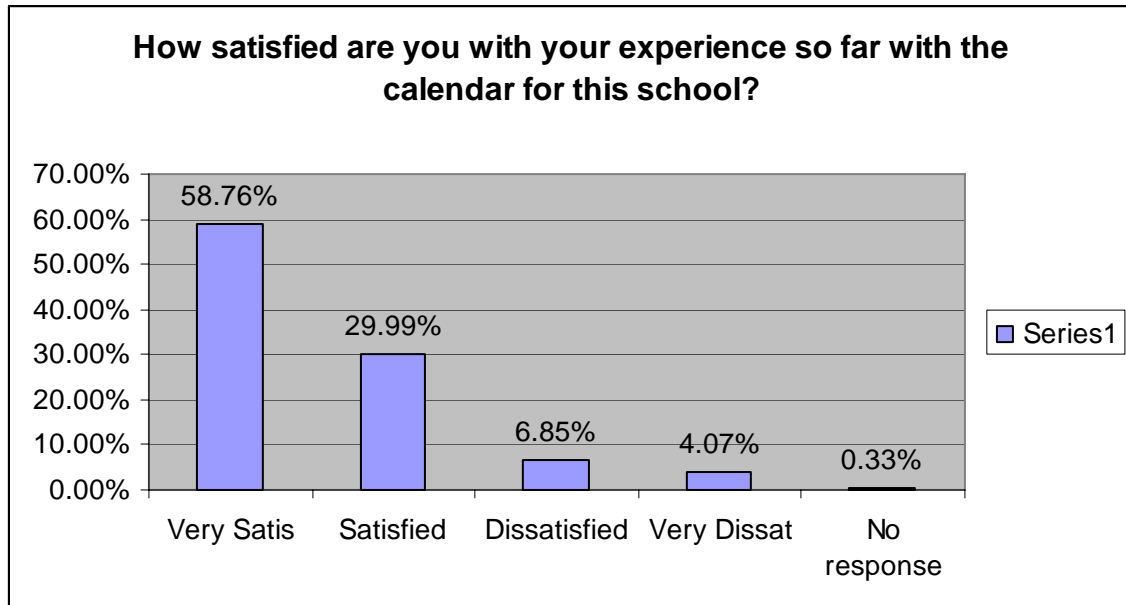
In this section of the report, we will examine responses at the district level to each of the questions on the survey. Additional analyses (by school level, for example) are included in the appendices. A complete report of responses by school may be found on the flash drive that has been provided for each Board member. Since Question 1 was the student ID number, we begin our presentation with Question 2.

The first four questions asked about the respondent's experience and satisfaction with the school to which the child is currently assigned.

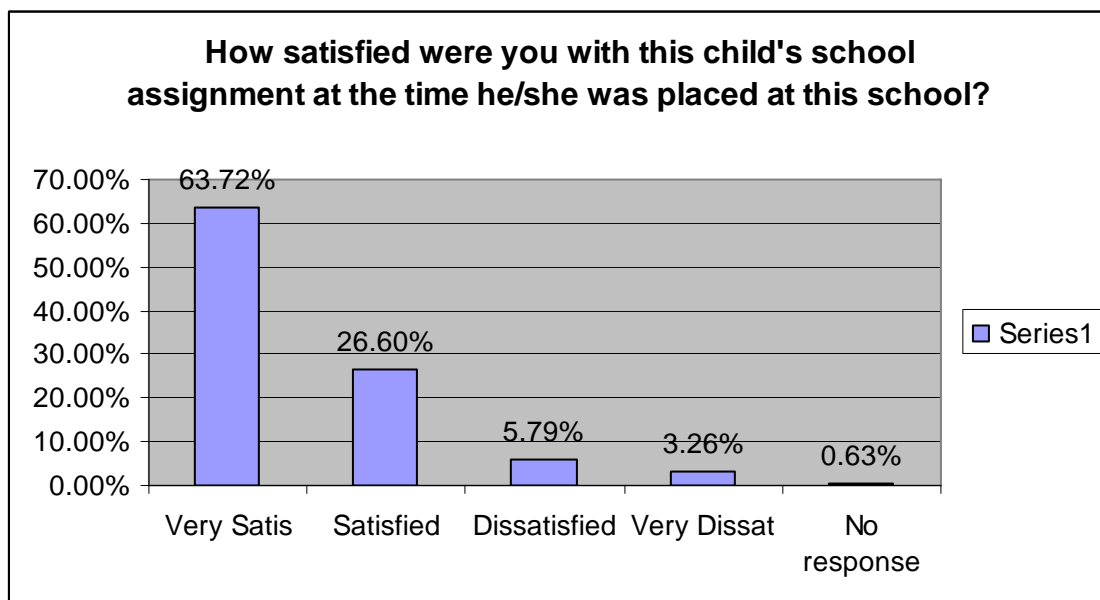
Question 2: How satisfied are you with this child's school, without regard to the school calendar?



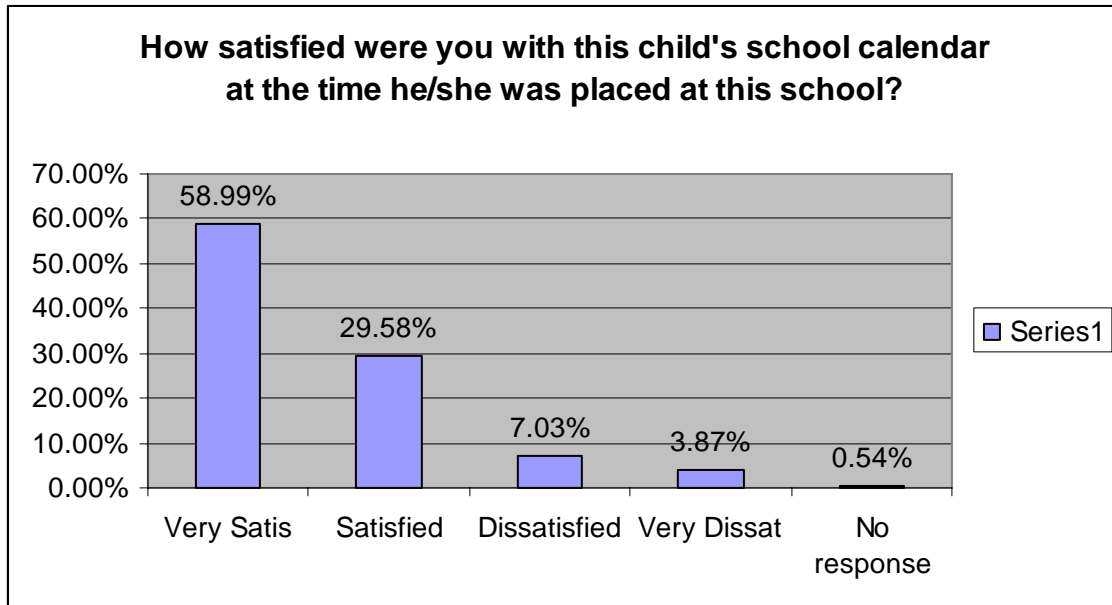
Question 3 asked this question: How satisfied are you with your experience so far with the calendar for this school?



Question 4: How satisfied were you with this child's school assignment at the time he/she was placed at this school?

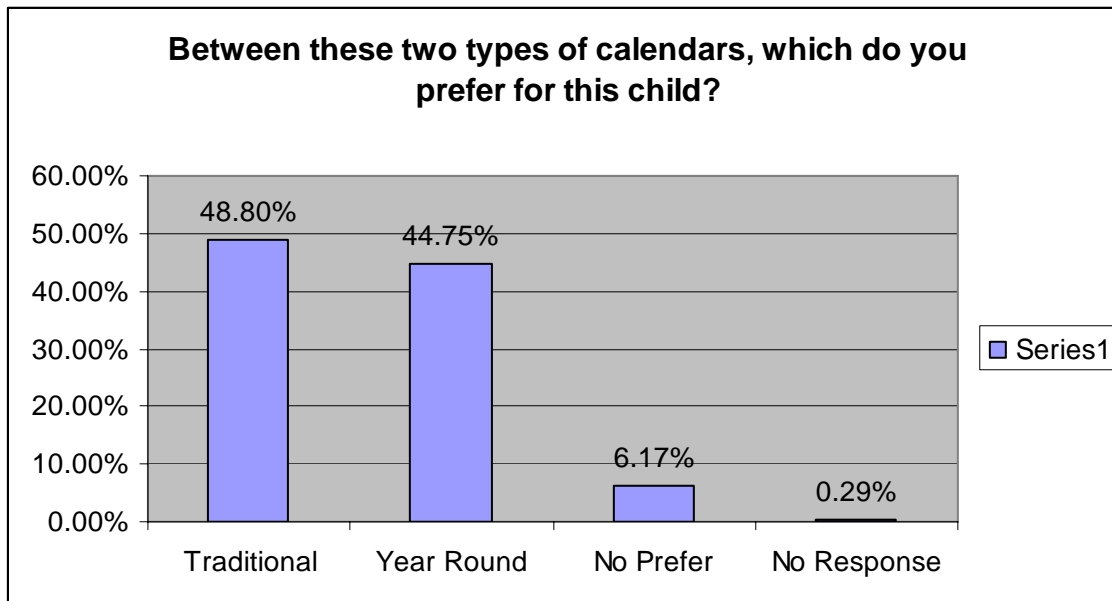


Question 5: How satisfied were you with this child's school calendar at the time he/she was placed at this school?

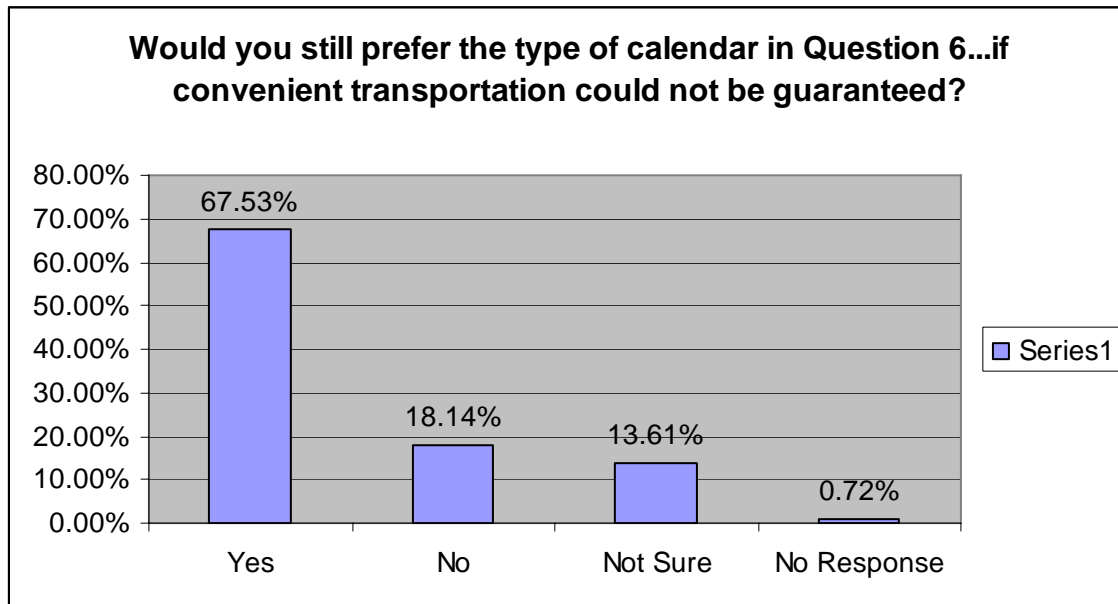


The next several questions asked about the respondent's preference for calendar type.

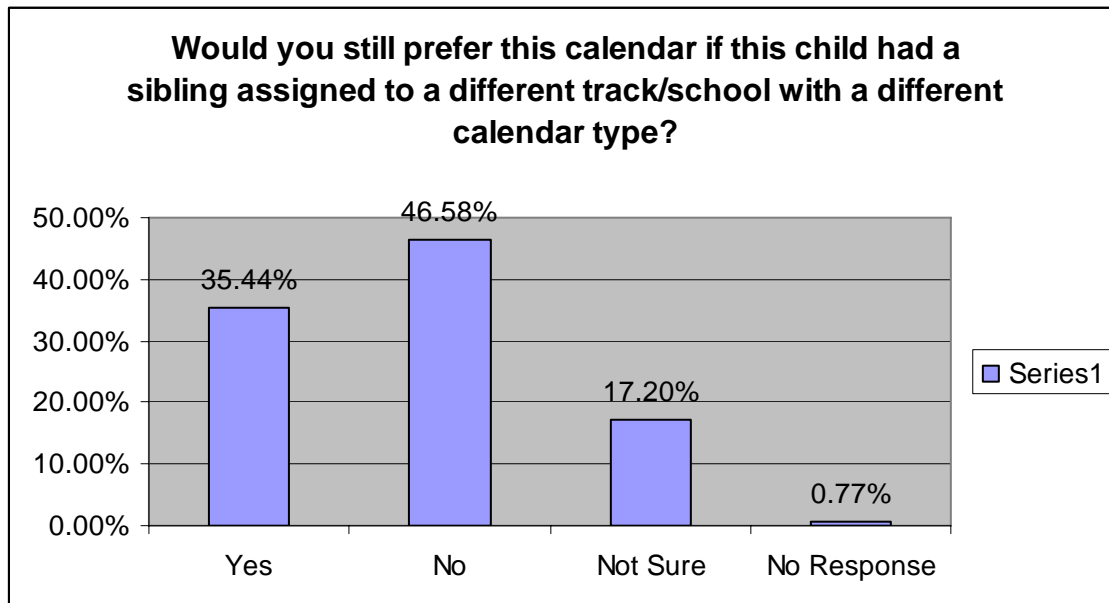
Question 6 asks: Between these two types of calendars, which do you prefer for this child?



Question 7: Would you still prefer the type of calendar in Question 6 for this child if convenient transportation could not be guaranteed?

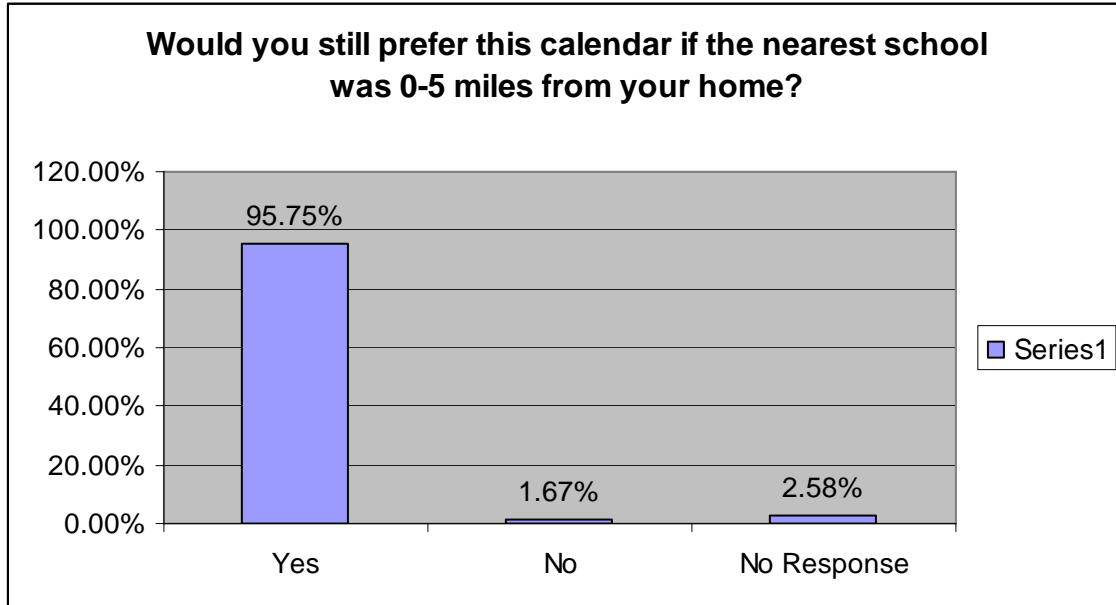


Question 8: Would you still prefer the type of calendar you chose in question #6 if this child had a sibling assigned to a different track or to a school with a different calendar?

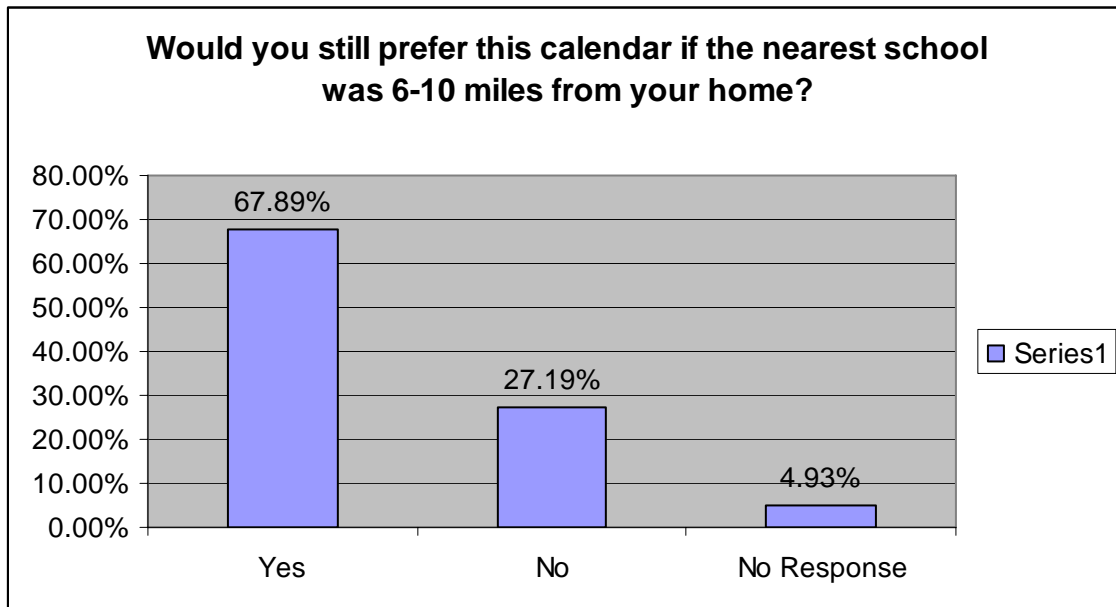


The next three questions asked about acceptable distance between home and school.

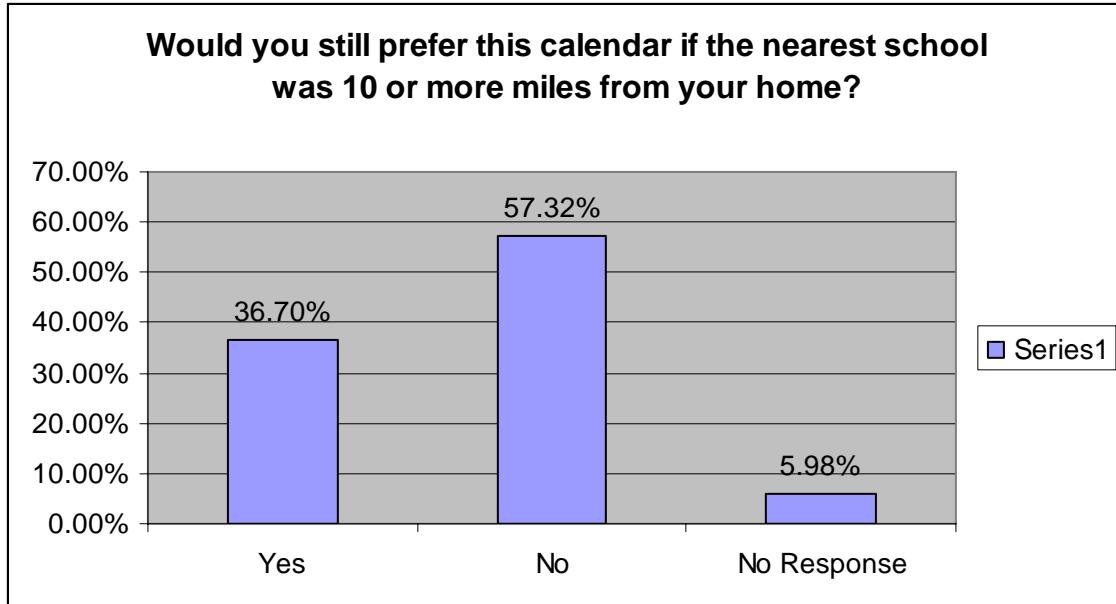
Question 9a: Please indicate whether you would still prefer the type of calendar you chose in Question 6 if the nearest school with this calendar was 0-5 miles from your home.



Question 9b: Please indicate whether you would still prefer the type of calendar you chose in Question 6 if the nearest school with this calendar was 6-10 miles from your home.

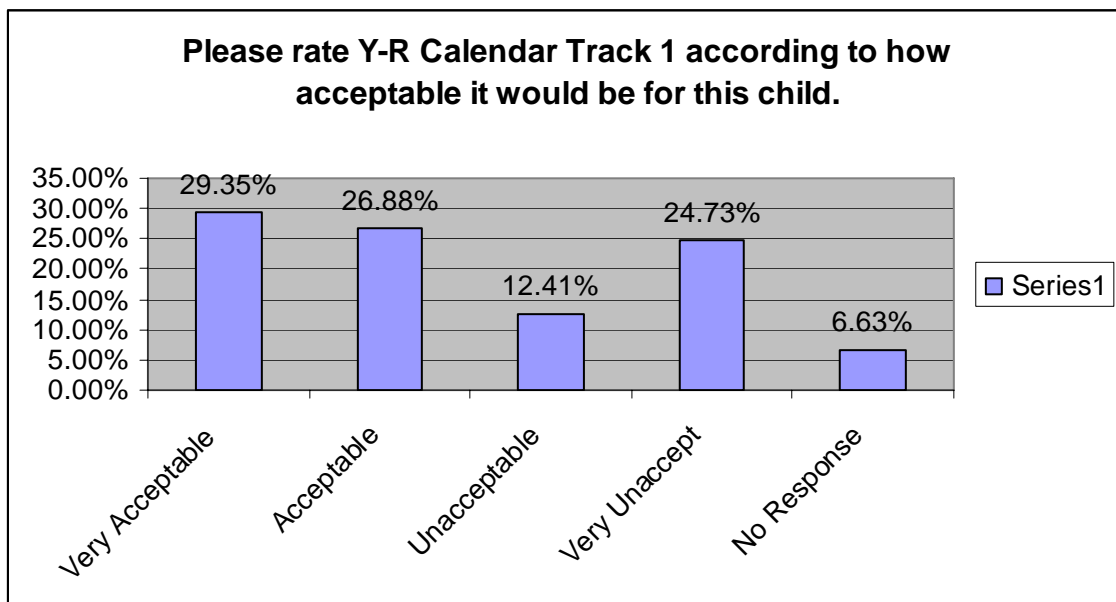


Question 9c: Please indicate whether you would still prefer the type of calendar you chose in Question 6 if the nearest school with this calendar was 10 or more miles from your home.

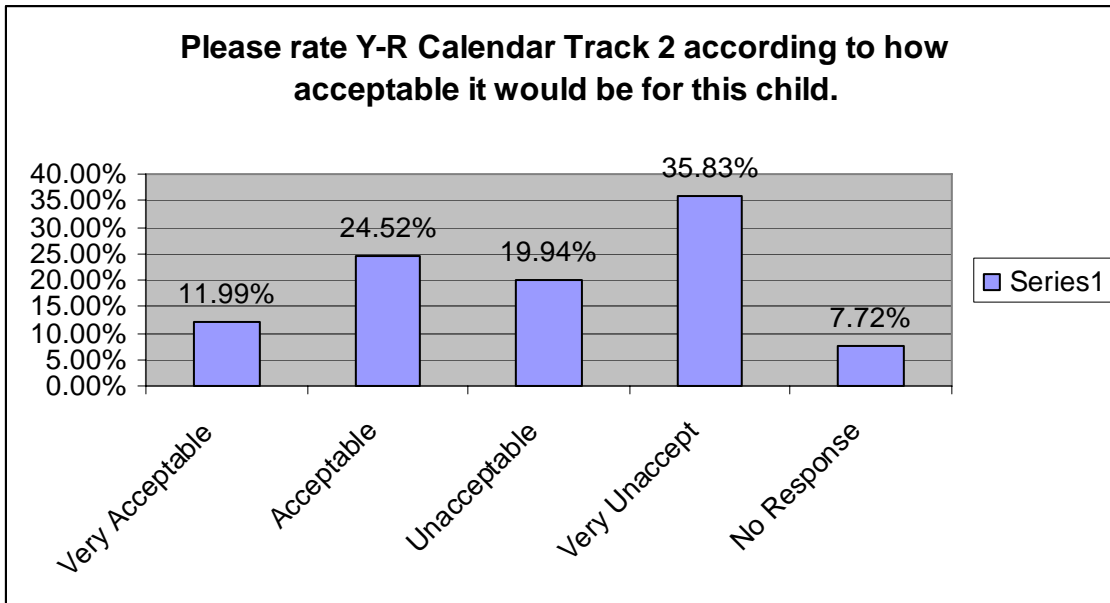


The next four questions asked about preferences for tracks in year-round schools. Survey respondents were able to activate a window before responding in which the details for each track were shown

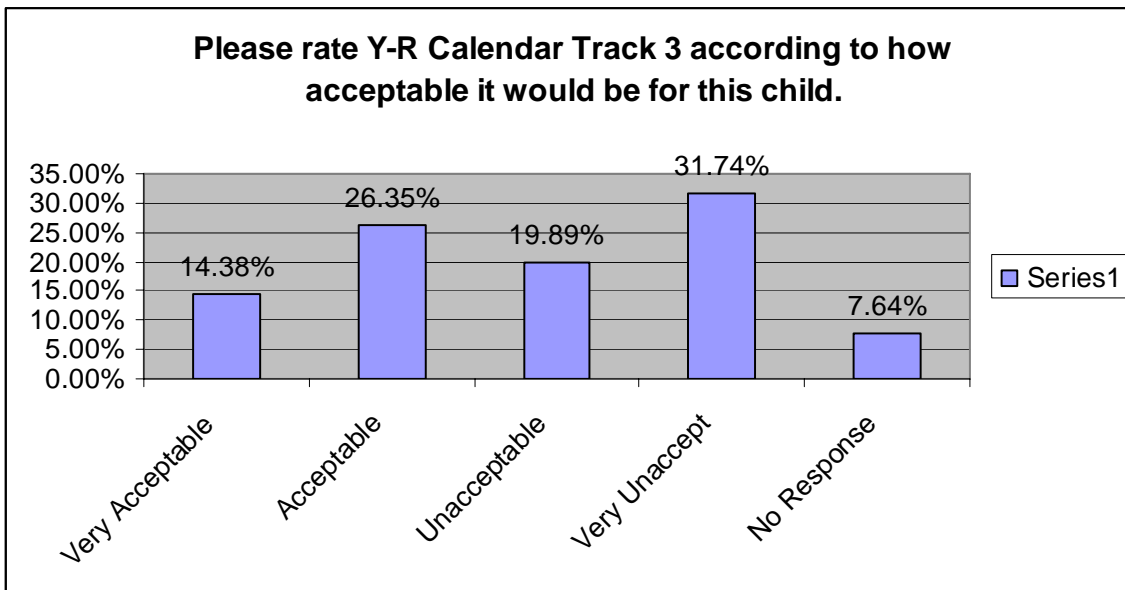
Question 10a: Please rate Year-Round Calendar Track 1 according to how acceptable it would be for this child.



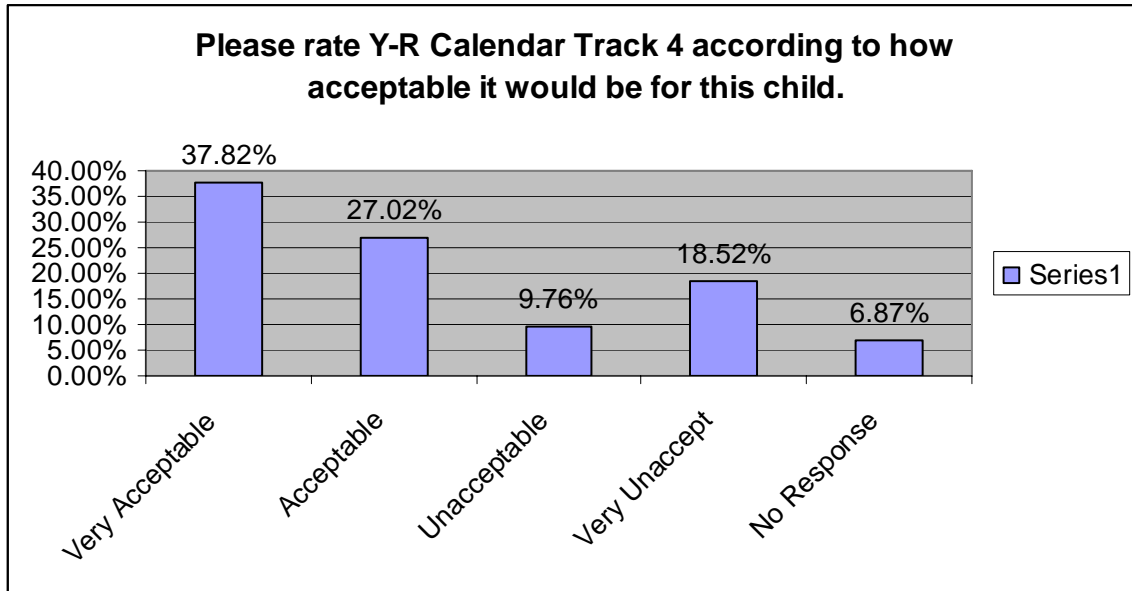
Question 10b: Please rate Year-Round Calendar Track 2 according to how acceptable it would be for this child.



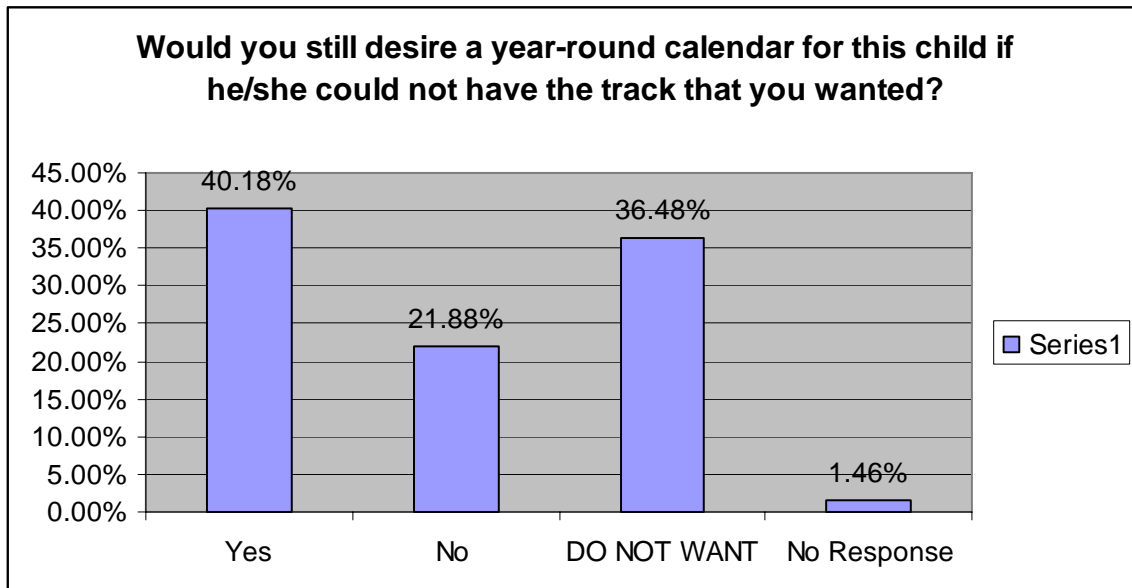
Question 10c: Please rate Year-Round Calendar Track 3 according to how acceptable it would be for this child.



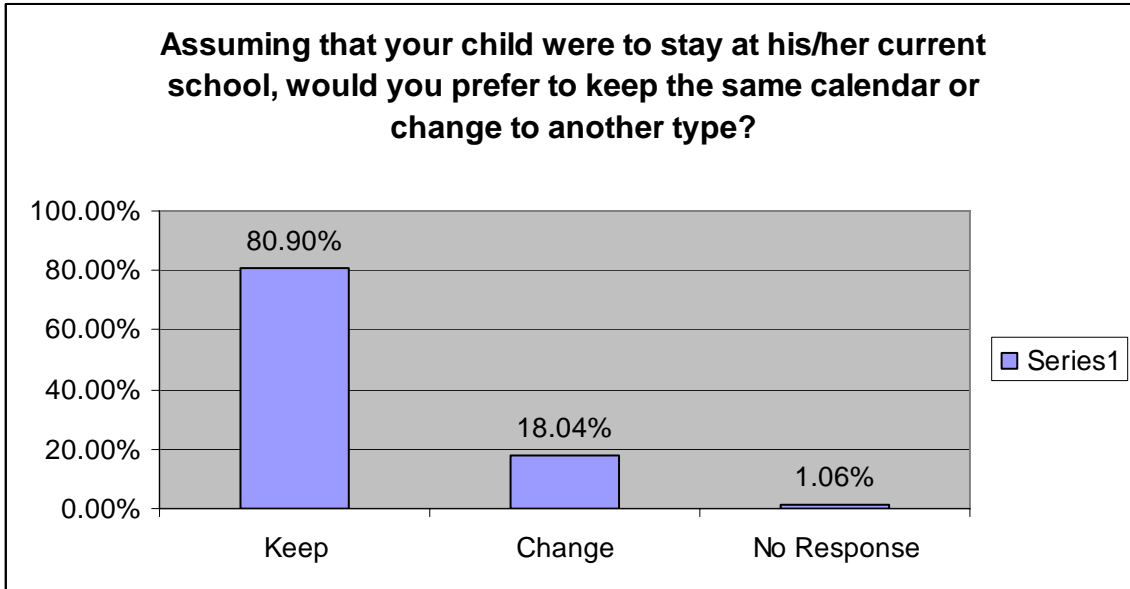
Question 10d: Please rate Year-Round Calendar Track 4 according to how acceptable it would be for this child.



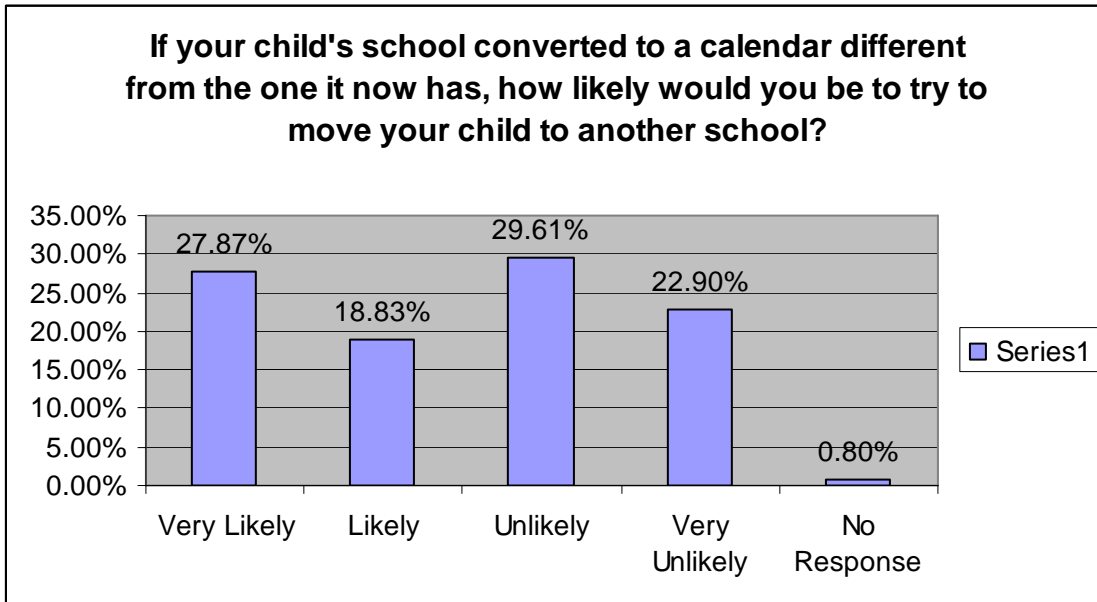
Question 11: Would you still desire a year-round calendar for this child if he/she could not have the track that you wanted?



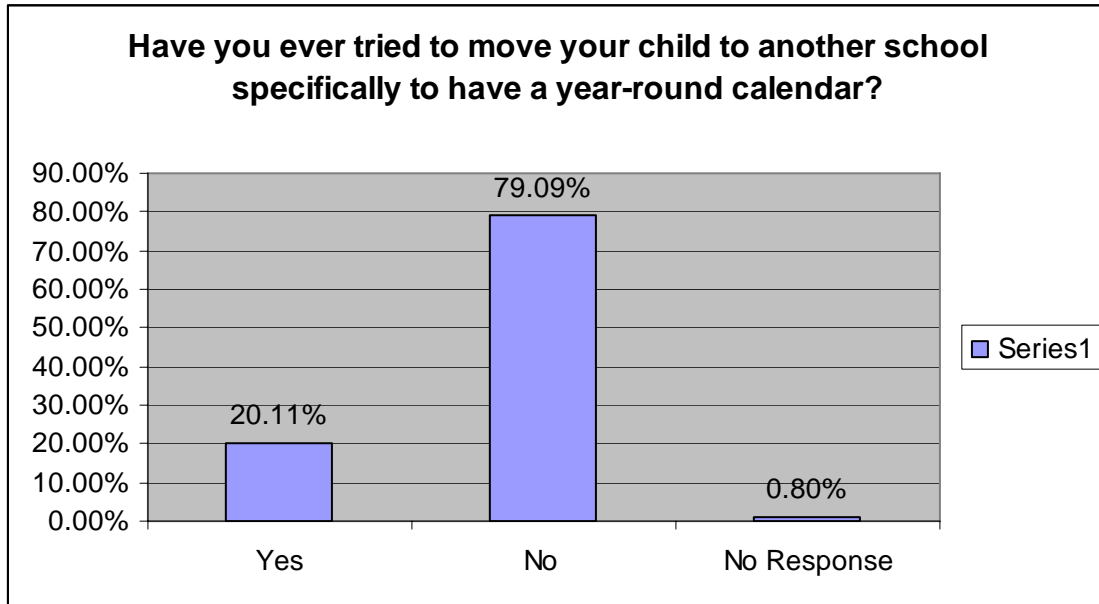
Question 12: Assuming that your child were to stay at his/her current school, would you still prefer that the school keep the same calendar or change to another type?



Question 13: If your child's school converted to a calendar different from the one it now has, how likely would you be to try to move your child to another school?

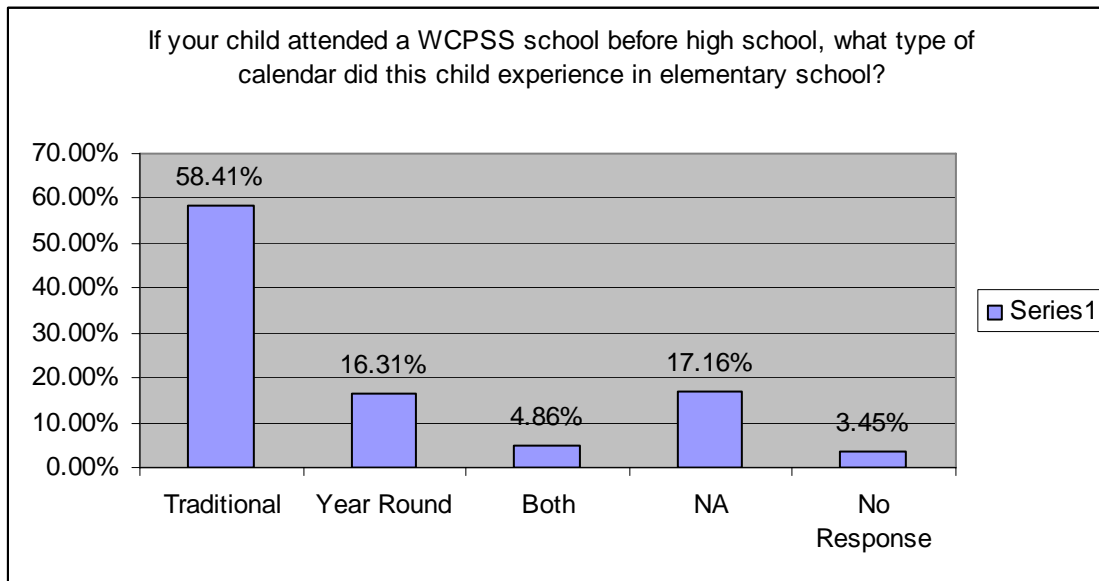


Question 14: Have you ever tried to move your child to another school specifically to have a year-round calendar?

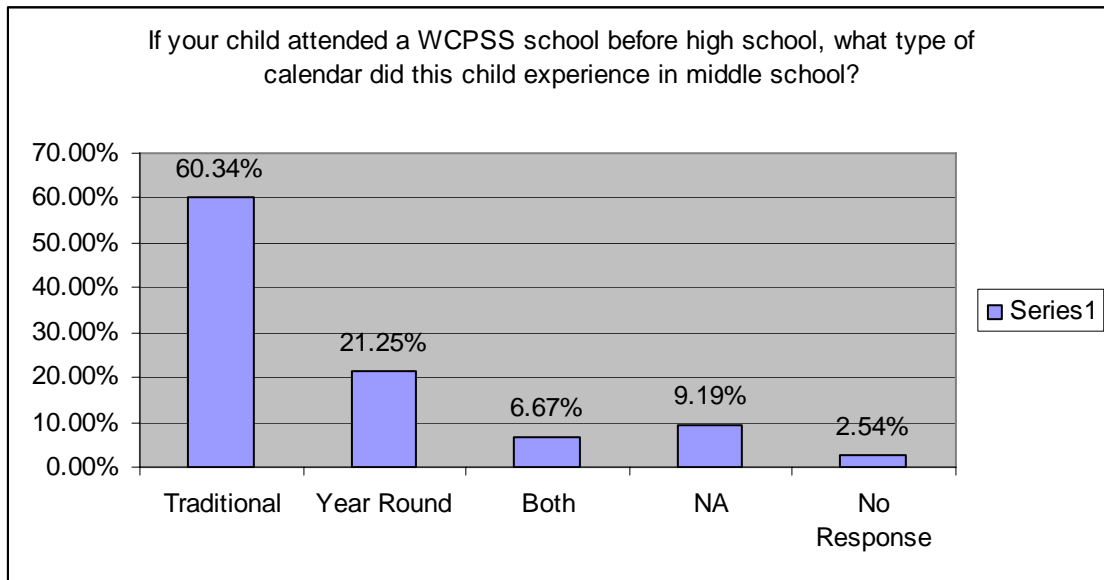


The last series of questions were addressed to high school parents and sought information about experiences of high school students when they were in elementary and middle school.

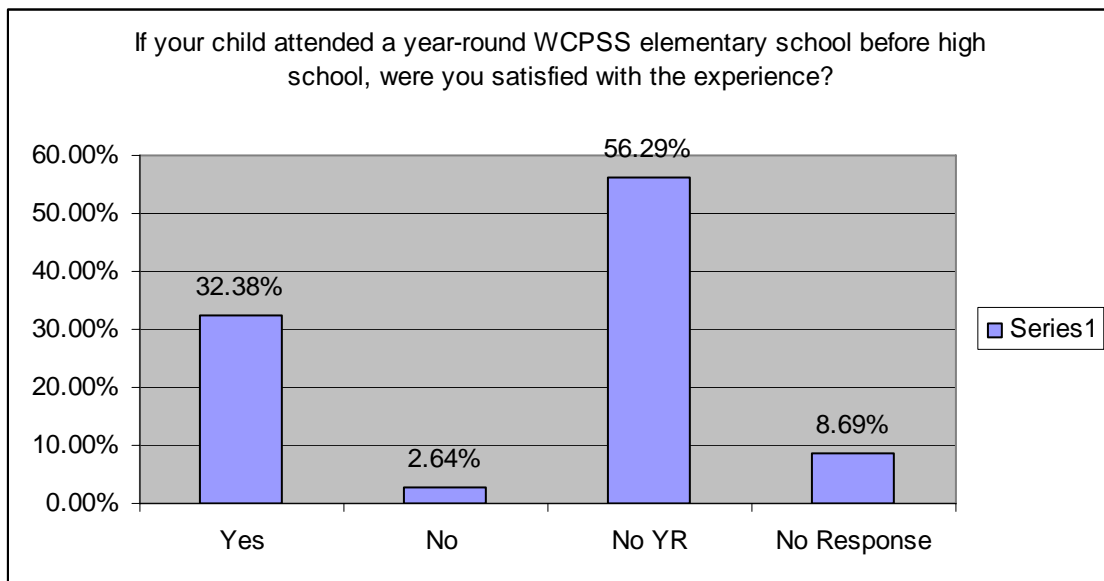
Question 15: If your child attended a WCPSS school before high school, what type of calendar did this child experience in elementary school?



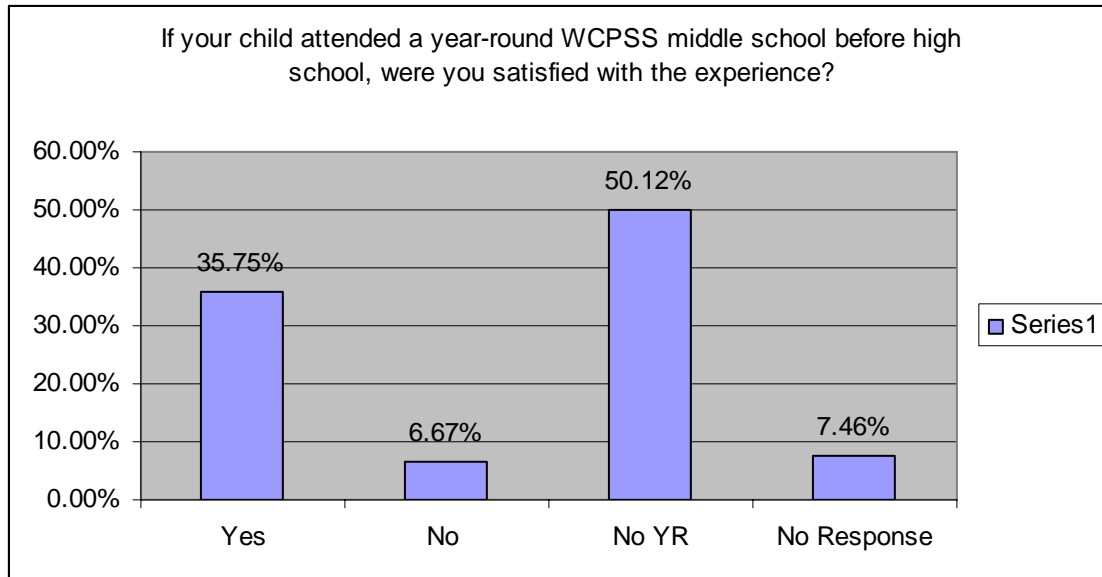
Question 15b asked a similar question: If your child attended a WCPSS school before high school, what type of calendar did this child experience in middle school?



Question 15c asked whether the parents of high school students who had attended a year round elementary school were satisfied with the experience.



The last question in this series was similar to the prior question, with the focus changed to middle school.



In addition to these district level results presentation, additional information may be found in the appendices. Appendix A provides a list of all schools, showing the response rates for each. Appendix B provides a report of responses by calendar type (traditional, year-round, and modified). Appendix C presents results by school level (elementary, middle, high, alternative) and Appendix D provides district level crosstabs. Crosstabs provide a way of examining two questions simultaneously. For example, by crossing responses to Question 12 with those given by the same individuals to Question 3, one sees the consistency/complexity of the individual response patterns. Finally, a flash-drive has been prepared that includes results for each school, regardless of response rate.

### RESULTS OF THE STAFF SURVEY ABOUT SCHOOL CALENDARS

Several questions on the staff survey solicited information about the respondent’s job role, experience level, and experience of different types of calendars.

Which of the following most closely describes your job?		
Job title	N	Percent
Core Area Teacher	2760	37.57%
Special Subject Teacher	1035	14.09%
Special Education Teacher	730	9.94%
Other Certified Staff	732	9.96%
Administrator	204	2.78%
Support Staff	1689	22.99%
Other	197	2.68%

How many years have you worked in a K-12 school, including the current school year?		
Experience	N	Percent
1-2 Years	543	7.37%
3-5 Years	1427	19.37%
6-10 Years	1890	25.65%
11 or more Years	3507	47.60%

During your career, at which of the following types of schools have you worked?	
Calendar	N=YES
Traditional Calendar	6073
Year-Round Calendar	3468
Modified Calendar	465
Non-WCPSS School	2070

Respondents were asked to rank order in terms of preference for working. Because multiple responses were expected, the numbers of responses are provided without percentages.

Rank the following calendar types in the order of where you would prefer to work.			
	Traditional	Year-Round	Modified
Most Preferred	3486	2788	1055
Somewhat Preferred	1657	1469	3558
Least Preferred	1983	2685	2120

Participants in the survey were also asked about the importance of the calendar type in their decision about where to work.

How important is the school calendar type in your decision about where to work?		
Option	N	Percent
Very important	3605	49.03%
Important	2690	36.59%
Unimportant	921	12.53%
Very unimportant	136	1.85%

In order to determine the strength of the preference for calendar type, several complicating factors were asked about, including having a child on a different calendar or track, and distance from home to school.

Would you still prefer your first choice of calendar if you had a child assigned to a different track or a different calendar?			
Option		N	Percent
YES		3070	42.05%
NO		2407	32.97%
NOT SURE		1824	24.98%

Would you still prefer your 1st choice of calendar if the nearest school with this calendar was 0-5 miles from home?			
Option		N	Percent
YES		6976	97.92%
NO		148	2.08%

Would you still prefer your 1st choice of calendar if the nearest school with this calendar was 6-10 miles from home?			
Option		N	Percent
YES		6235	89.88%
NO		702	10.12%

Would you still prefer your 1st choice of calendar if the nearest school with this calendar was 10 or more miles from home?			
Option		N	Percent
YES		4609	66.26%
NO		2347	33.74%

If your first choice is YR, would you still want this calendar if you could not have the track you want?		
Option	N	Percent
YES	3225	46.66%
NO	1019	14.74%
DO NOT WANT YR	2668	38.60%

Finally, respondents were asked whether they would prefer a different calendar if they could stay at the same school. If the school calendar were converted to a different one, respondents were asked to indicate how likely they would be to seek a position at a different school.

Assuming that you continue to work at your current school, would you prefer that the school keep the same calendar or change to another type?

Option	N	Percent
Keep Calendar	5778	78.96%
Change Calendar	1540	21.04%

If your school converted to a different calendar, how likely would you be to try to get a job at another school?

Option	N	Percent
Very Likely	1433	19.62%
Likely	1530	20.94%
Unlikely	2617	35.82%
Very Unlikely	1725	23.61%