

WHITE ROCK AGENDA GAP PRESENTS:

YOUTH VOICES ON POSITIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS

★ MISSION STATEMENT ★

Agenda Gap is a youth-led collective dedicated to improving youth mental health support in their communities. Through the program, youth explore how policy and social determinants shape mental wellbeing and take action to drive positive change in their community. In BC, about 1 in 7 children and youth experience a mental health challenge. The White Rock Agenda Gap group's objective is to bring attention to the importance of trauma-informed approaches in White Rock and South Surrey high schools. A trauma-informed approach in school involves providing youth with mental health resources, and establishing mutual respect in the classroom between students and teachers.

THE CHALLENGE



After surveying 78 youth in the White Rock South Surrey community, we found evidence of a lack of youth involvement regarding decision-making about the classroom environment. Youth highlighted the importance of teacher-student relationships and support for academic stress.

CALLS TO ACTION

- **1. Establish Collaborative Community Agreements**
 - At the start of each school year, co-create a Classroom Community Agreement with students.
 - This agreement should reflect shared expectations for respectful behavior, open communication, and empathy.
 - Display the agreement in the classroom and refer to it regularly.
- **2. Implement Student Feedback Opportunities**
 - Provide regular, structured opportunities for students to share feedback about their classroom experience.
- **3. Integrate Trauma-Informed Education**
 - Ensure that staff receive ongoing training in trauma-informed approaches, with time and resources set aside to support this development.
 - Offer education for students on trauma-awareness and emotional well-being to build a more compassionate school culture.
- **4. Emotional Check-Ins in classrooms**
 - We encourage teachers to host in-person check-ins, giving students the opportunity to discuss their experience in the class to date and share any relevant feelings or concerns.

WHY THIS MATTERS?

Mental health is a growing concern among youth, with over 84,000 students in B.C. struggling each year. Trauma-informed approaches ensure schools are well equipped to understanding the root causes of and effectively addressing challenging behavior. Many students experience trauma that affects their ability to learn, build relationships, and feel safe. Without a trauma-informed approach, schools risk misinterpreting these struggles, which can lead to disciplinary actions rather than support. By integrating trauma-informed approaches, we create classrooms that are empathetic, inclusive, and equipped to support every learner. This shift helps build resilience, improve academic outcomes, and foster mutual respect between students and staff.



WHAT IS A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH?

A trauma-informed approach recognizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery. In schools, it involves:

- Realizing how trauma affects individuals
- Recognizing signs and symptoms in students and staff
- Emphasizing safety, trust, empowerment, collaboration, and cultural sensitivity
- Considering that every individual has a life with stressors outside of school
- Considering students' emotional wellbeing to ensure they reach their academic potential

Increased awareness about trauma & trauma-informed approaches is needed in classrooms. Trauma-informed approaches emphasize the importance of understanding the obstacles and emotional considerations students face that may impact their health and wellbeing. By working together, administration, teachers and students can better support one another in creating healthier, safer school environments.



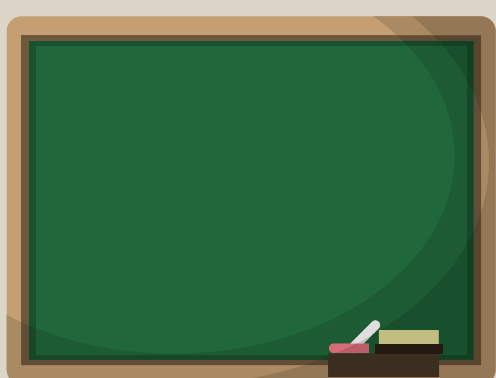
"Mental health thrives where kindness, inclusion, and understanding are part of the classroom culture."



Practices, Strategies, & Actions

Practices:

- Establish classroom agreements collaboratively with students
- Train staff in trauma awareness and inclusive communication
- Normalize conversations about emotions and mental health



Strategies:

- Conduct regular student check-ins and feedback surveys
- Foster consistent routines to reduce uncertainty
- Promote peer support groups and mentorship programs



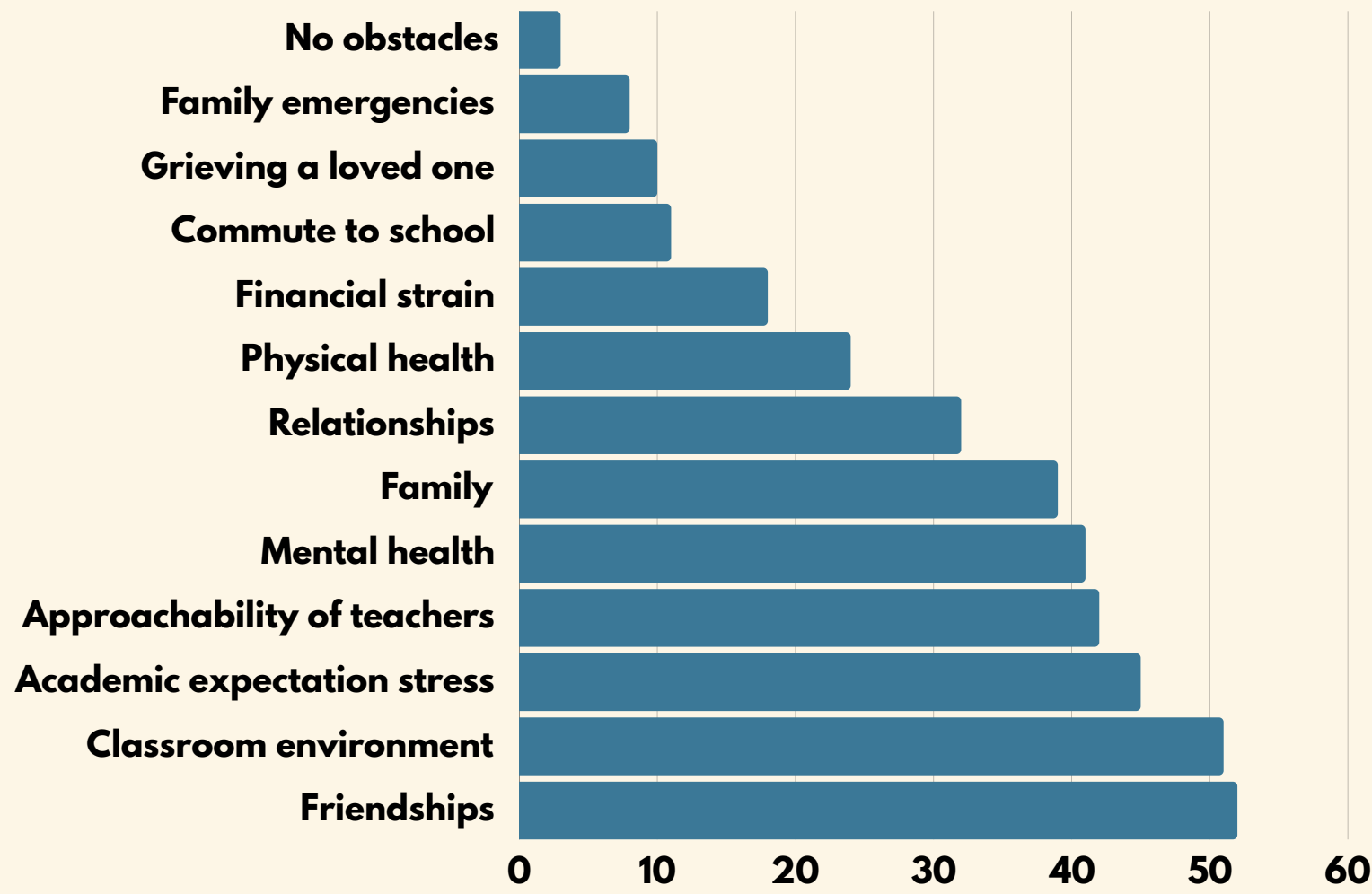
Actions:

- Provide access to mental health professionals and safe spaces in school
- Ensure transparent course syllabi and inclusive teaching materials
- Identify and address barriers to participation and inclusion (e.g., language, ability, identity)

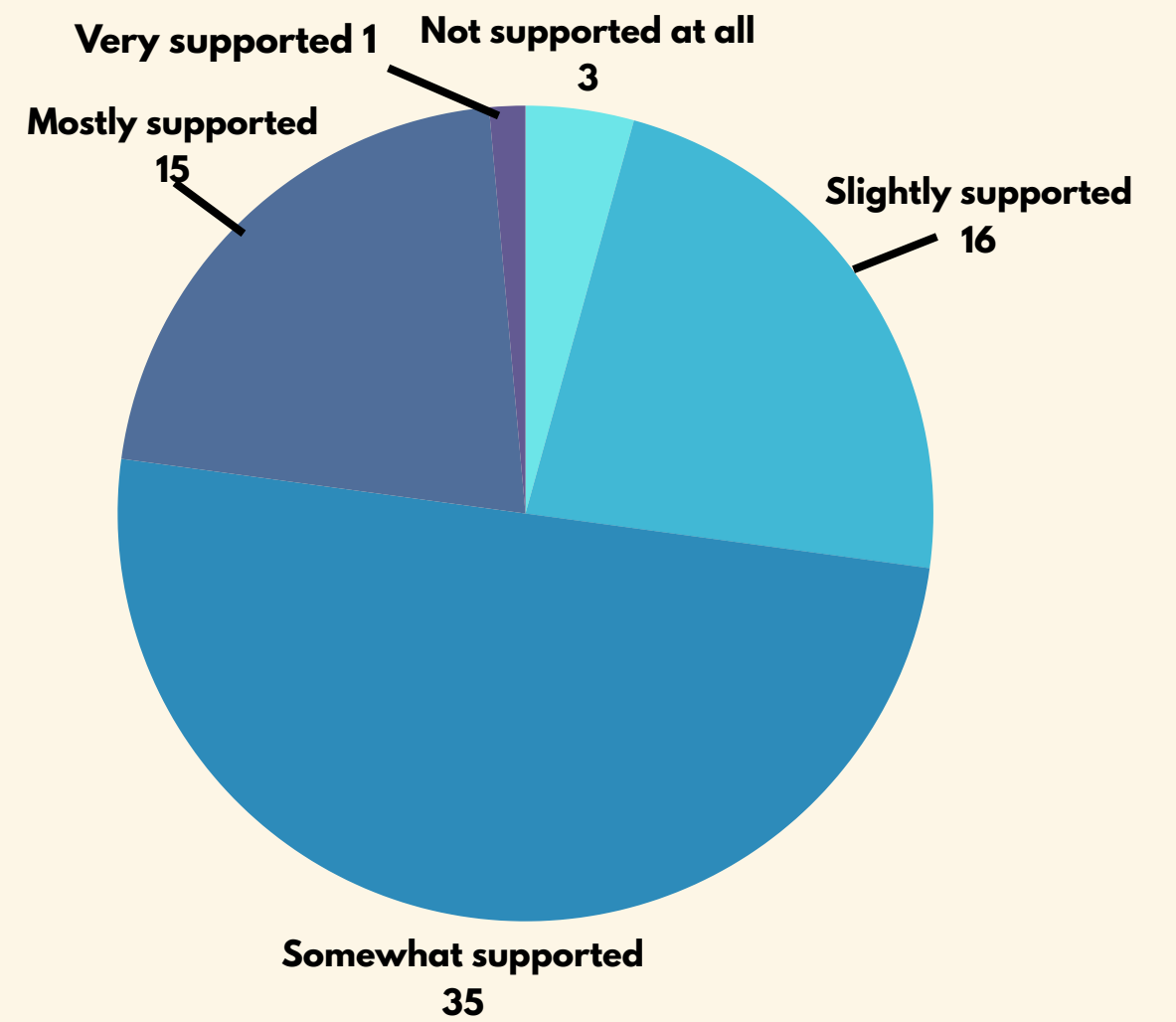


SURVEY RESULTS FROM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SS/WR

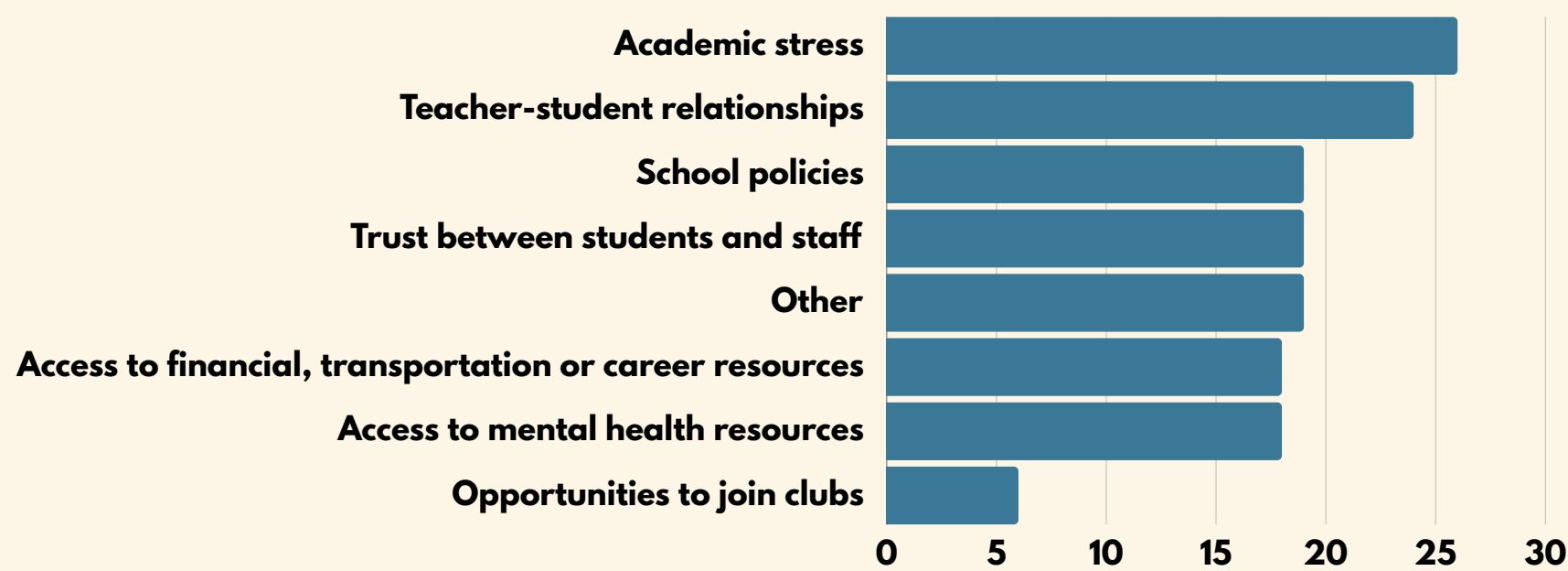
Factors Affecting Student Feelings at School



Degree of Feeling Supported in School



Recommended School Improvements



QUOTES FROM STUDENTS

ON WHAT A POSITIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT LOOKS LIKE TO THEM

“My English teacher gives a lot of time and attention to every student and is almost always willing to go the extra mile to make sure students feel supported and encouraged”

“My science teacher is always smiling and teaches with passion”

“My math teacher supports every individual by giving emotional support and asking them of what they want to earn so she can help us through it.”

“A positive classroom environment for me is where they are firm about what is expected while still being flexible when things don’t work out”

“A positive classroom environment is one where teachers are supportive and understanding, the environment is quiet, and growth is welcome.”

“My drama teacher definitely motivates to learn the most because she talks to me the most and she supports me in everything I do”