



Listening to Families: Insights from a Community-Led Survey About the Transition to Employment

MA APSE 2025 Conference



**Institute for
Community
Inclusion**

Agenda

Introductions

About the LPTE

Creation of the LPTE Family Survey

Results of the Survey

Partnering with Lawrence Public Schools

Panel Discussion / Q&A

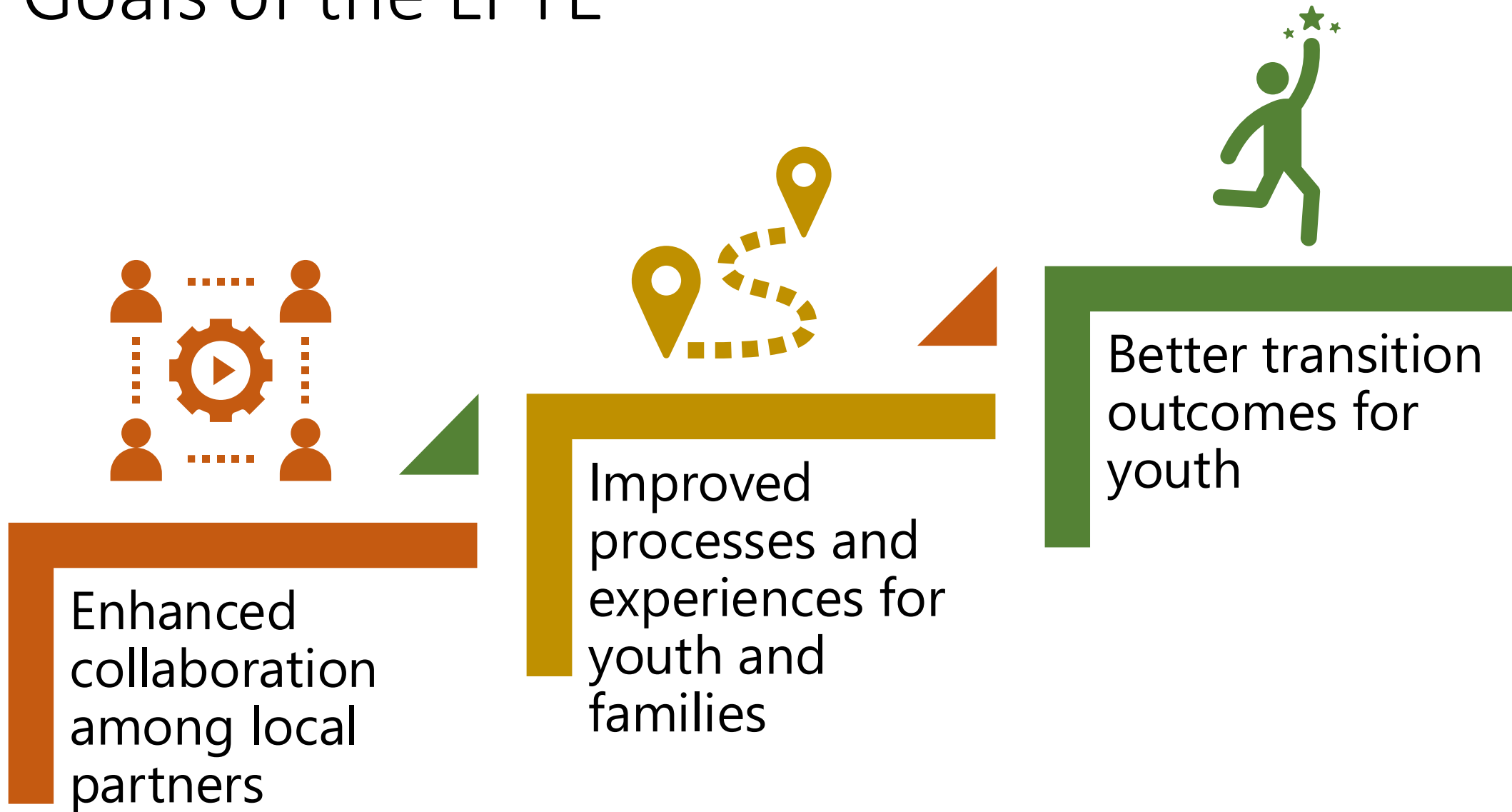
About the LPTE

The Lawrence Partnership for Transition to Employment (LPTE) was **established in 2021** under a **5-year grant** from the Administration for Community Living (ACL) as a National Center of Excellence on **Community Collaborations for Employment.**

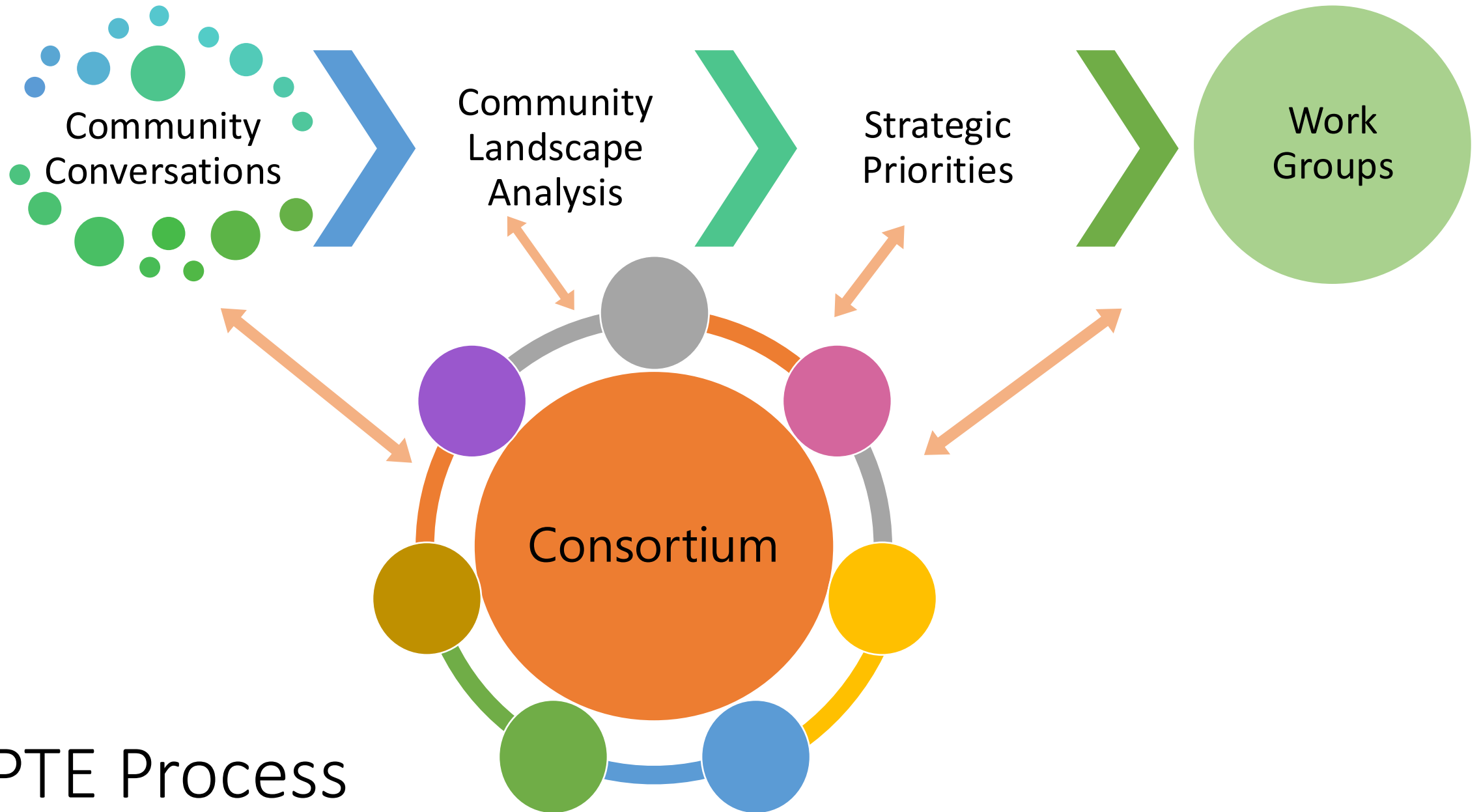
The project aims to **improve the transition process** for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) in **Lawrence, Massachusetts.**



Goals of the LPTE



LPTE Process



LPTE Work Groups



Foster better cross-agency connections



Offer more work experiences



Prepare for other aspects of adult life



Partner with families



Partnering with Families Work Group



LPTE Work Group on Partnering with Families

Andrea Morris, Director of Family Support Center and Advocacy, The Arc of Greater Haverhill-Newburyport

Herb Cabral, Parent Advocate

Steve Michelson, Youth Services Program Manager, Northeast Independent Living Program (NILP)

Elizabeth Hogue, Transition Specialist, Lawrence Public Schools (LPS)

Esther Kamau, Research Project Manager, Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), UMass Boston





Community Landscape Analysis Results

Challenges in engaging families

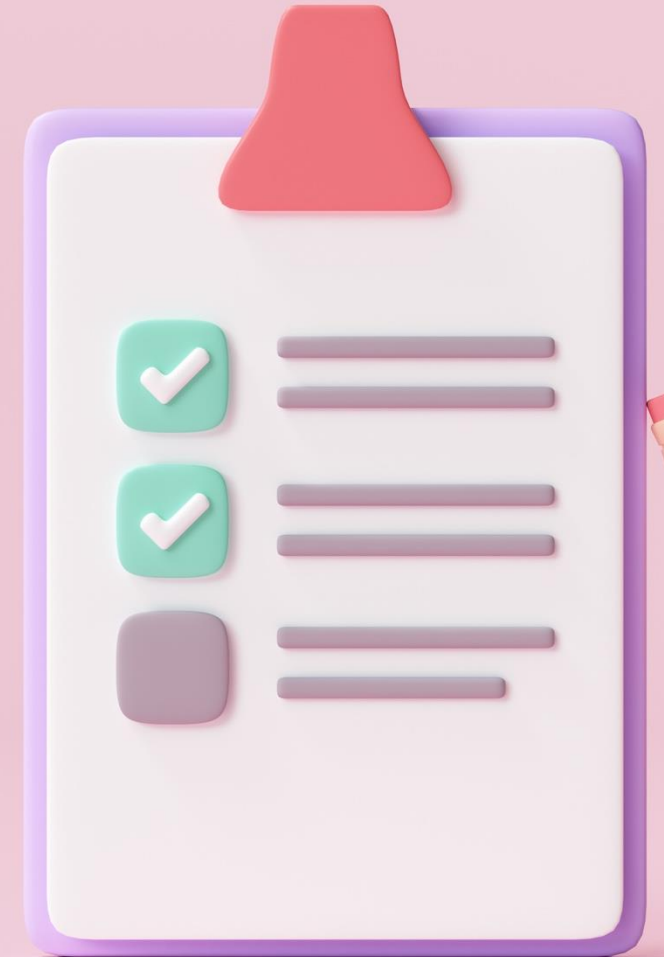
- Providers and schools reported difficulty connecting with families
- LPTE experienced similar challenges engaging families in the community

Consortium response

- Identified “Partnering with Families” as a key priority area
- Established a work group composed of community partners and parents

Family Survey

- Partnering with Families workgroup members designed short survey
- Initial distribution through the LPTE Consortium got minimal response



Expanding Survey Reach Through LPTE/LPS Partnership

- **Partnership:** LPTE partnered with LPS/Office of Student Support Services (OSSS) to broaden survey outreach
- **Distribution Methods:** Email and text messages (multiple rounds)
- **Targeted Outreach:**
 - Initial → transition-age families
 - Expanded → all families district-wide



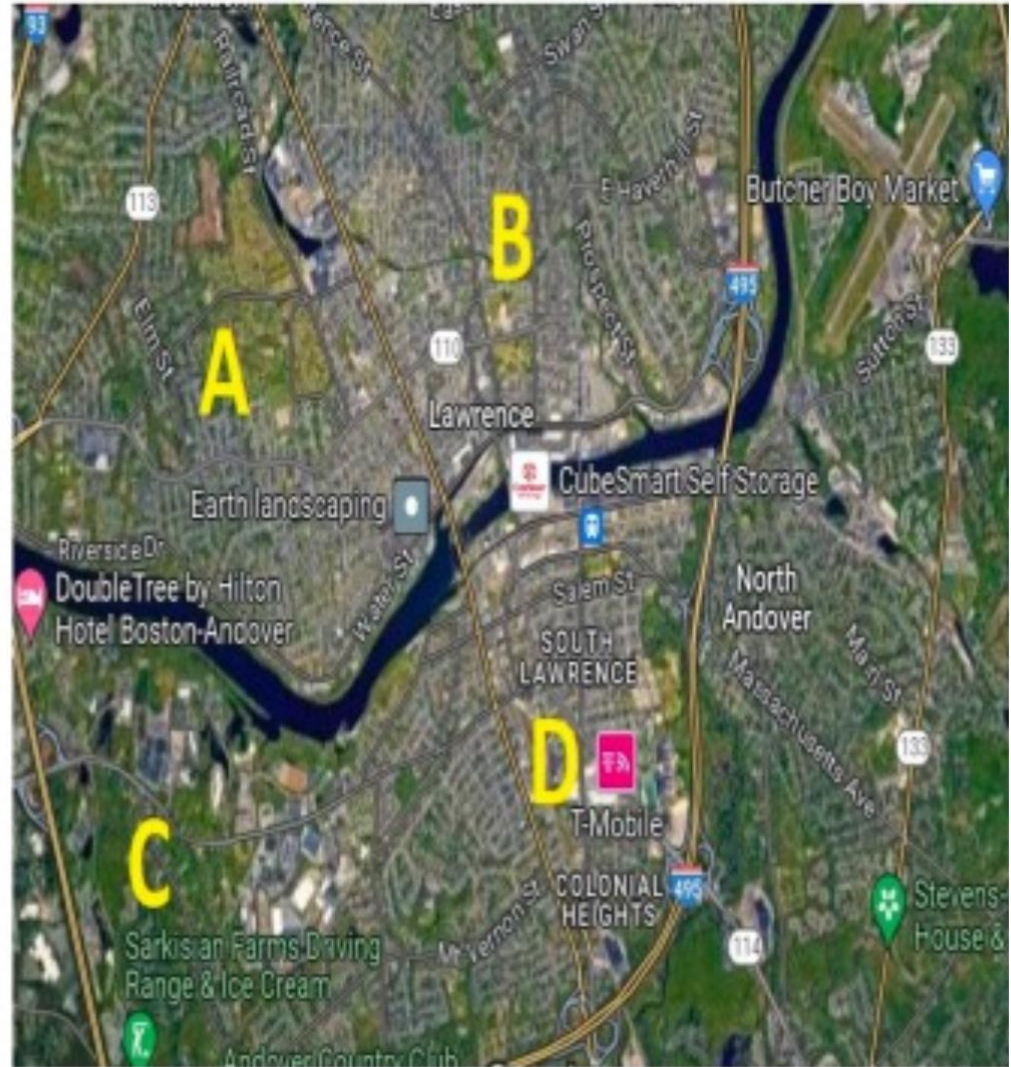
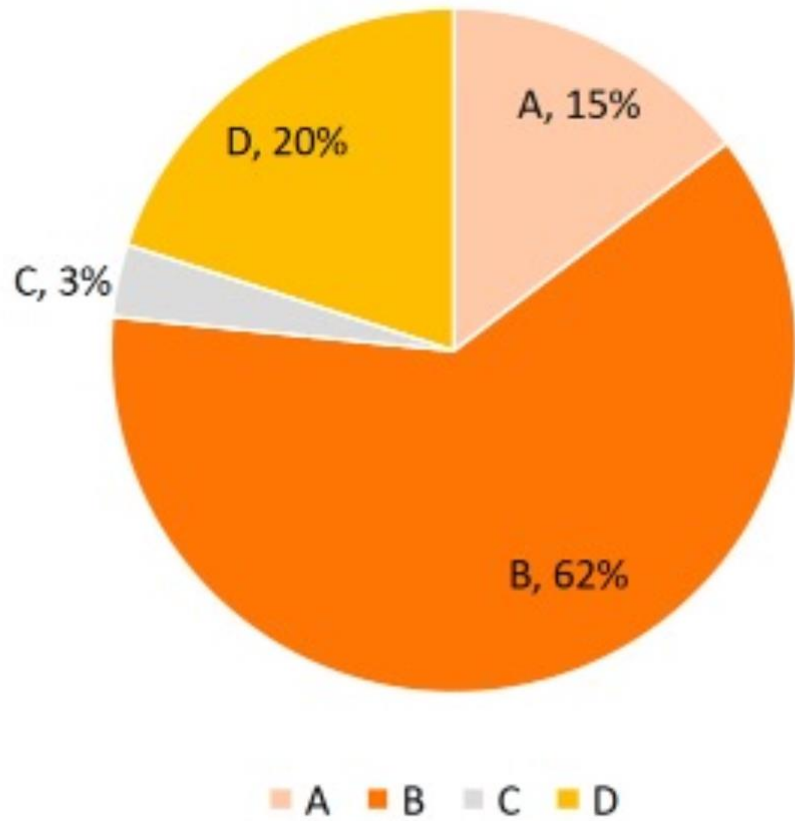
Impact:

- **Before partnership:** <20 responses
- **With LPS/OSSS partnership:** 205 responses
- **Takeaway:** Partnership significantly increased reach and family representation in Lawrence

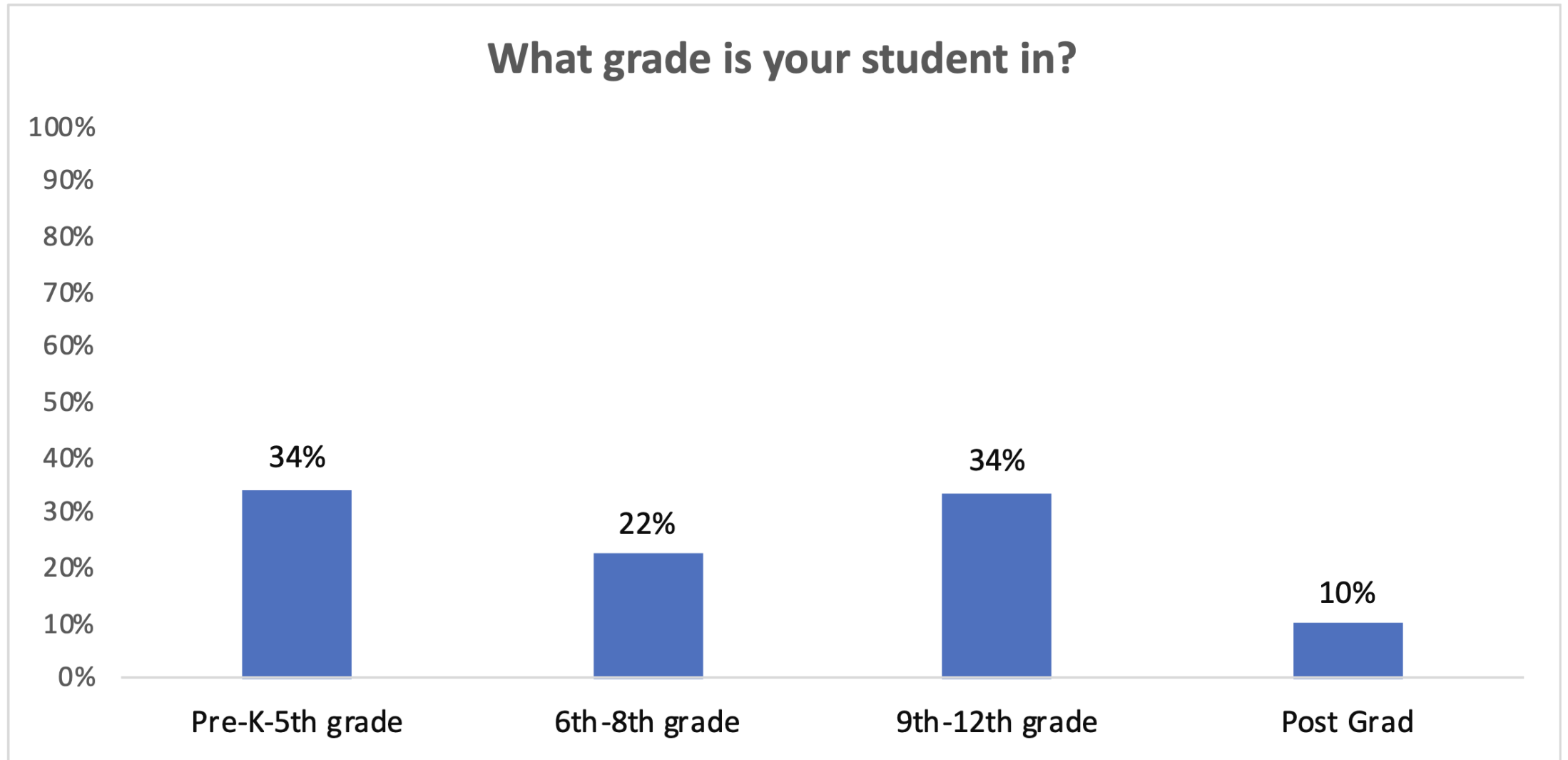


Results of the Family Survey

Where in the Lawrence area do you live?

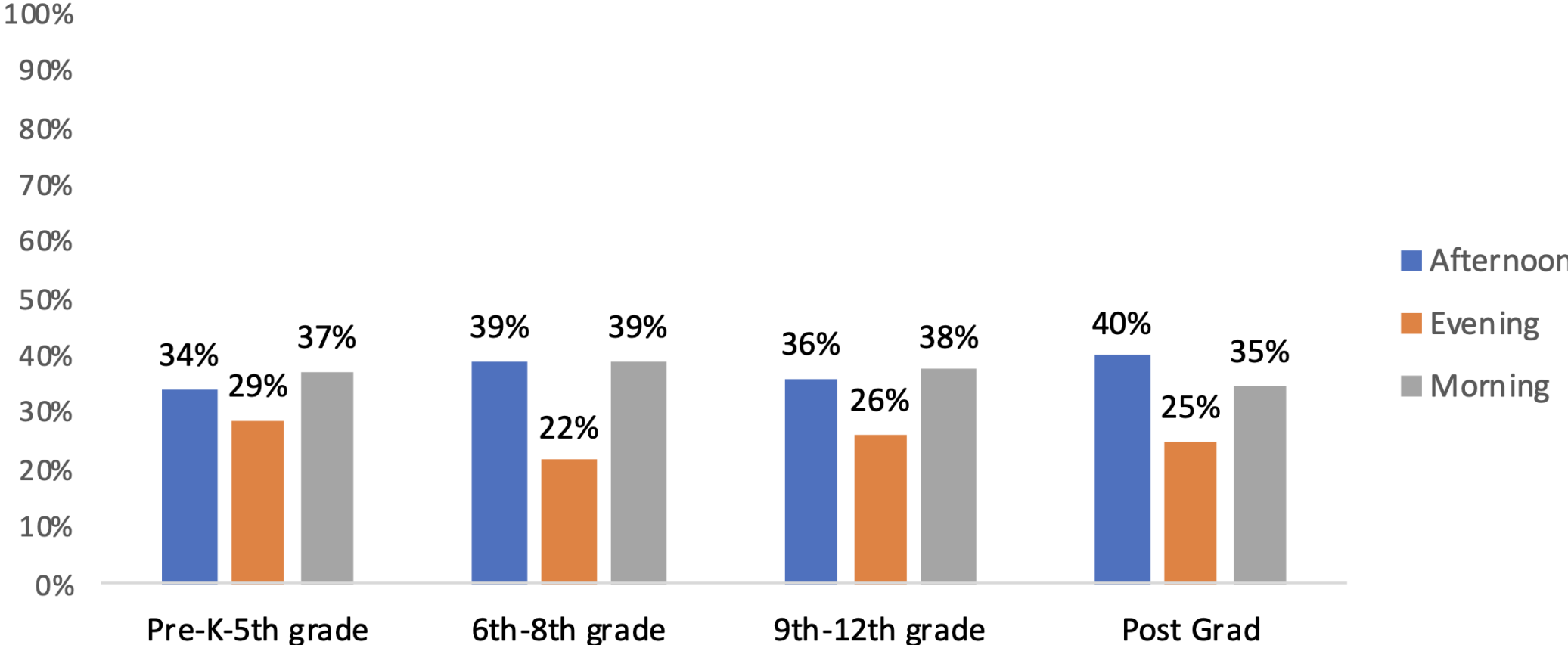


Findings: Demographics

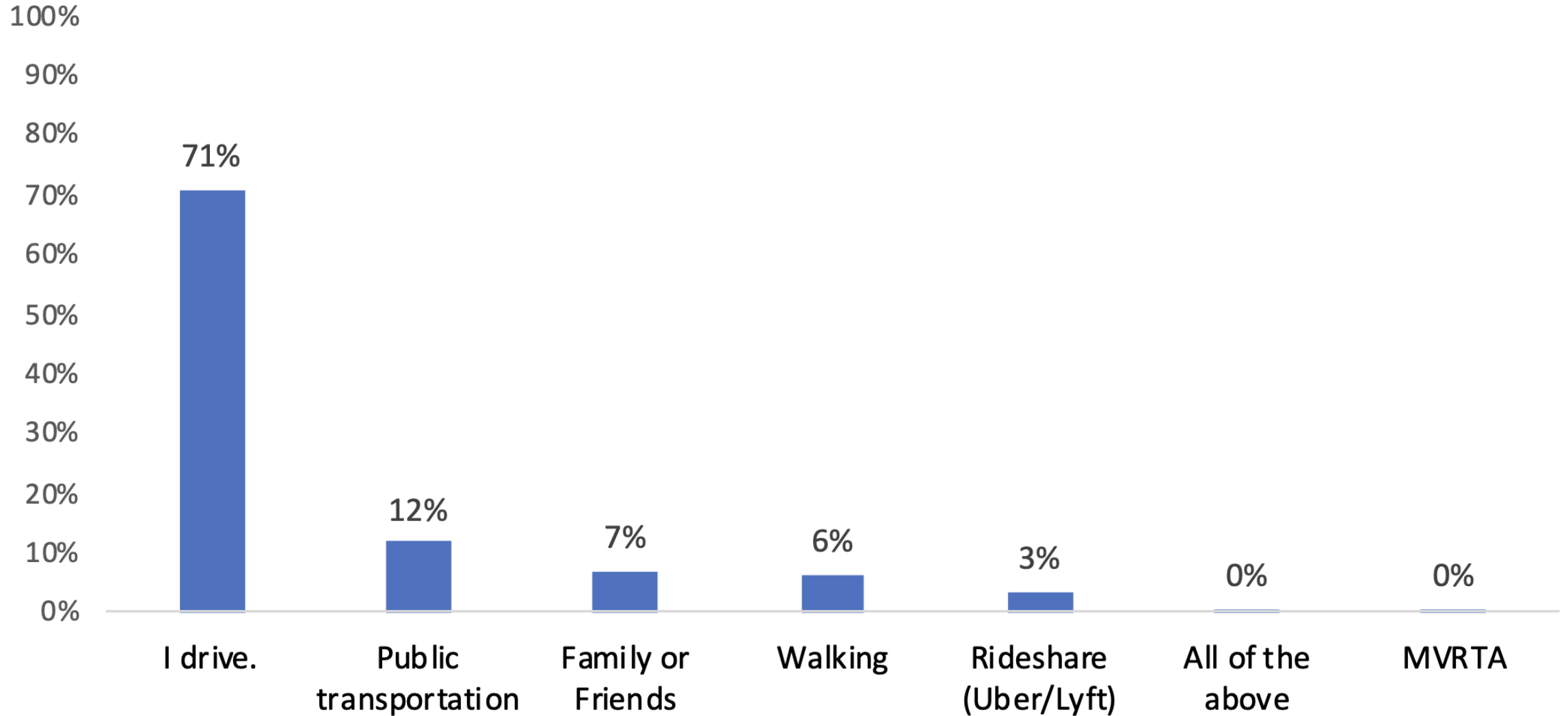


Findings: Location and Accessibility

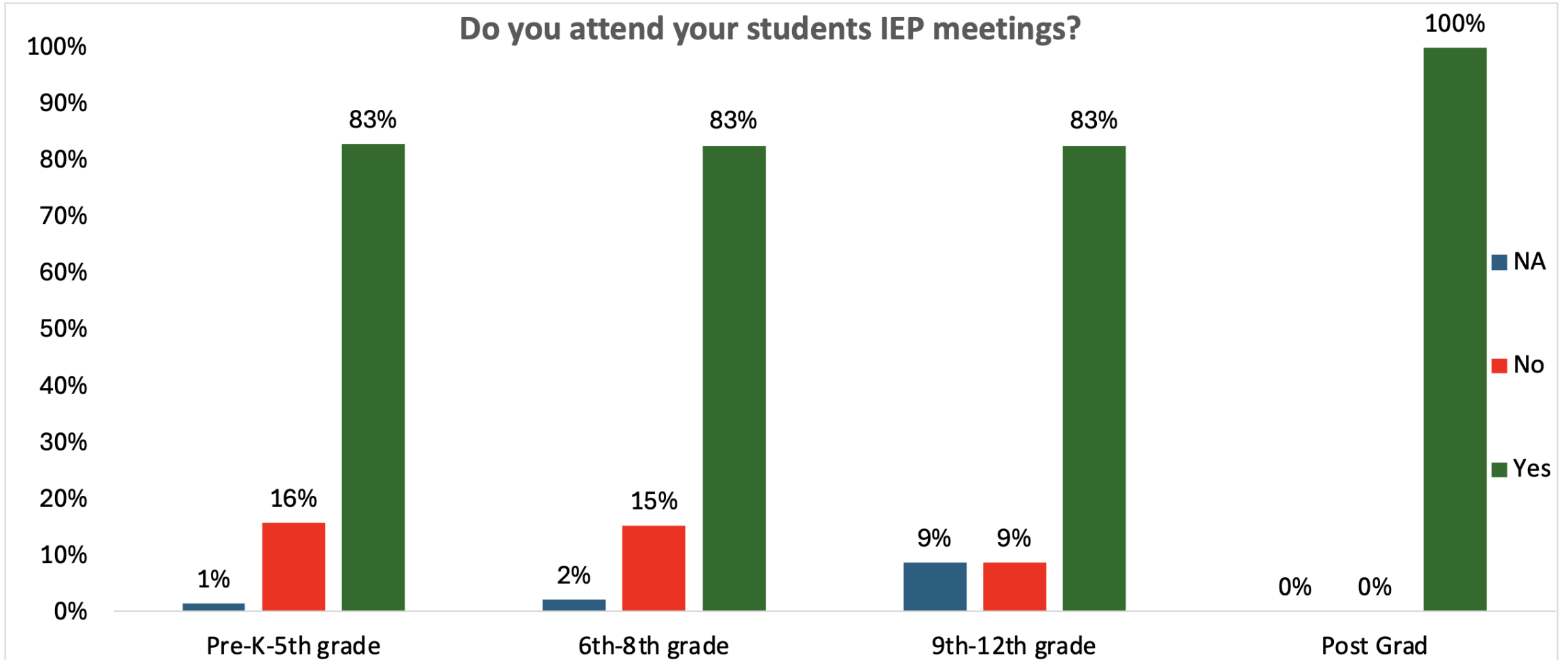
What time of the day are you most available during the weekdays?



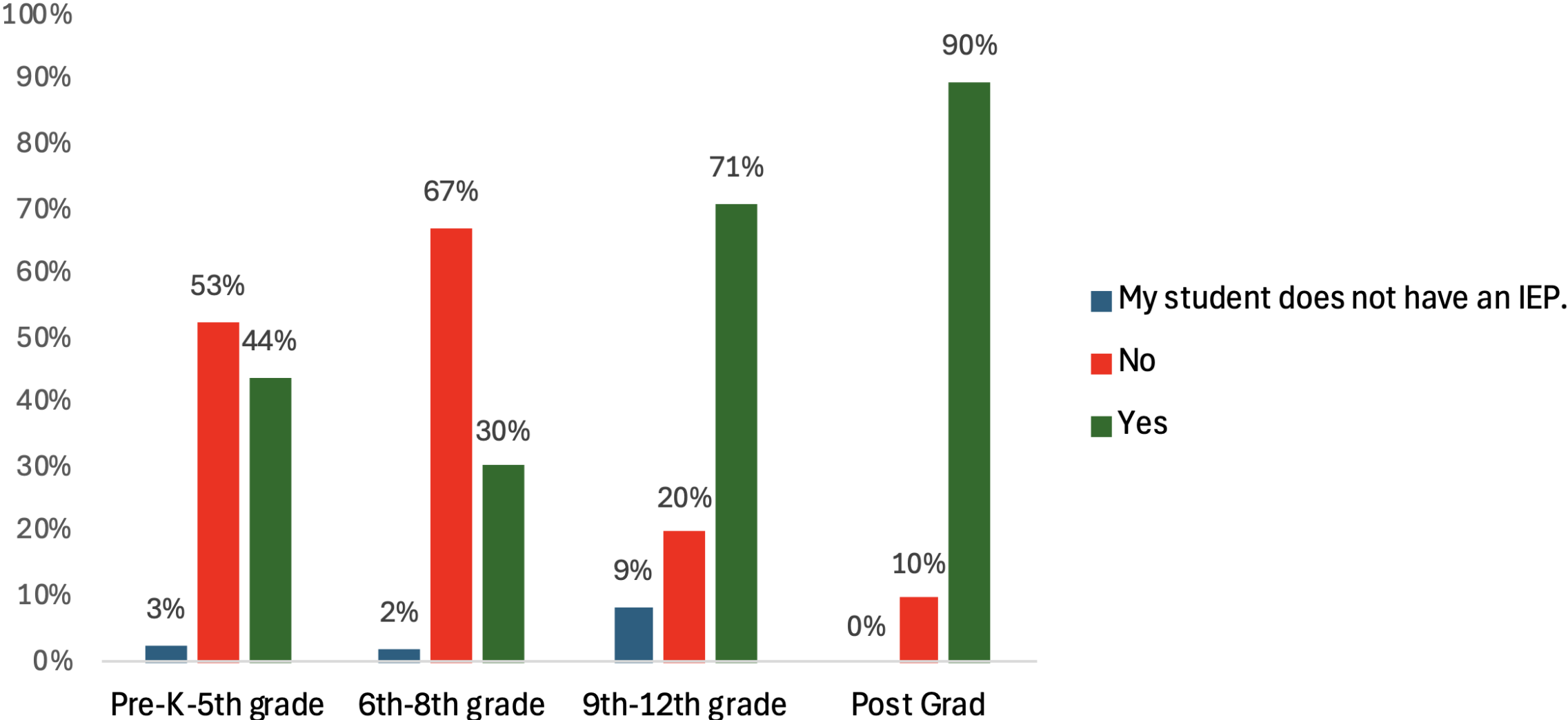
What is your main mode of transportation?



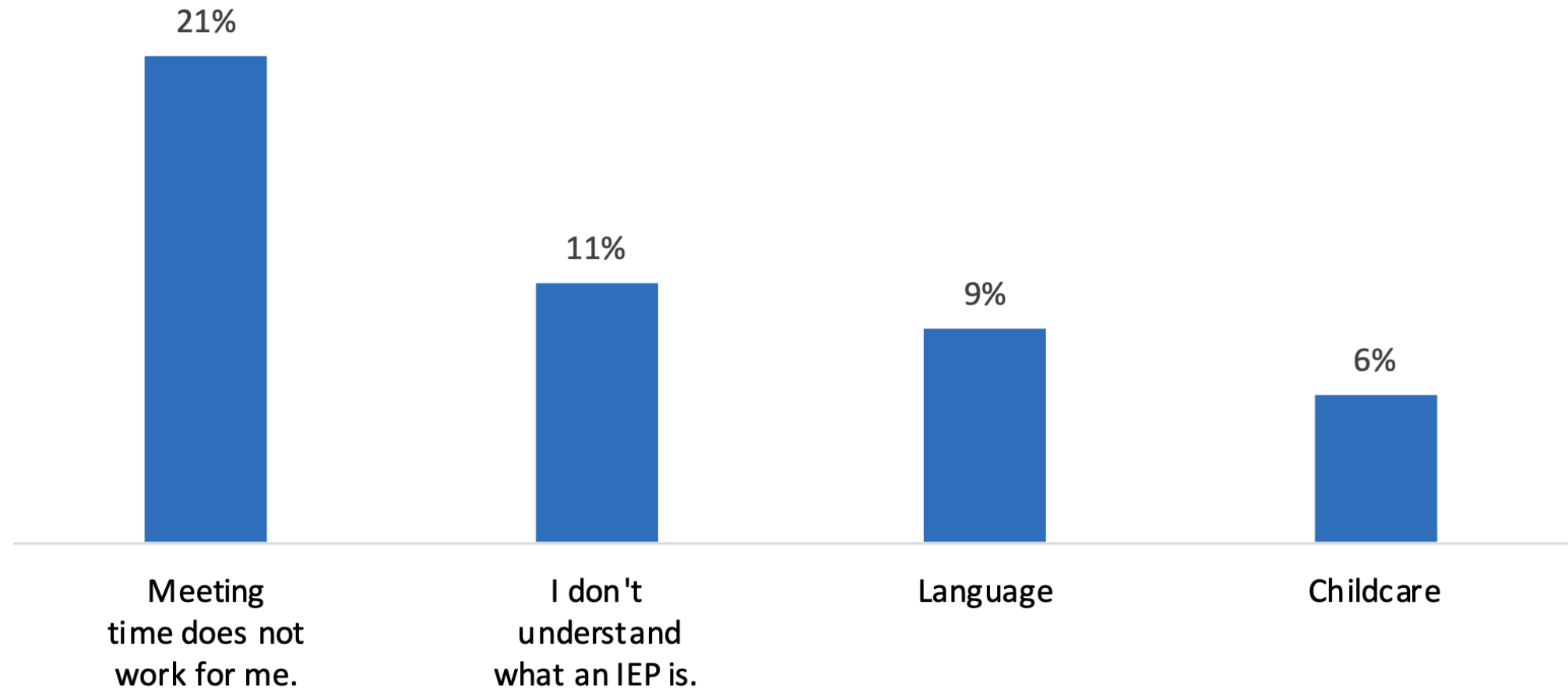
Findings: IEP Meetings and Transition Timelines



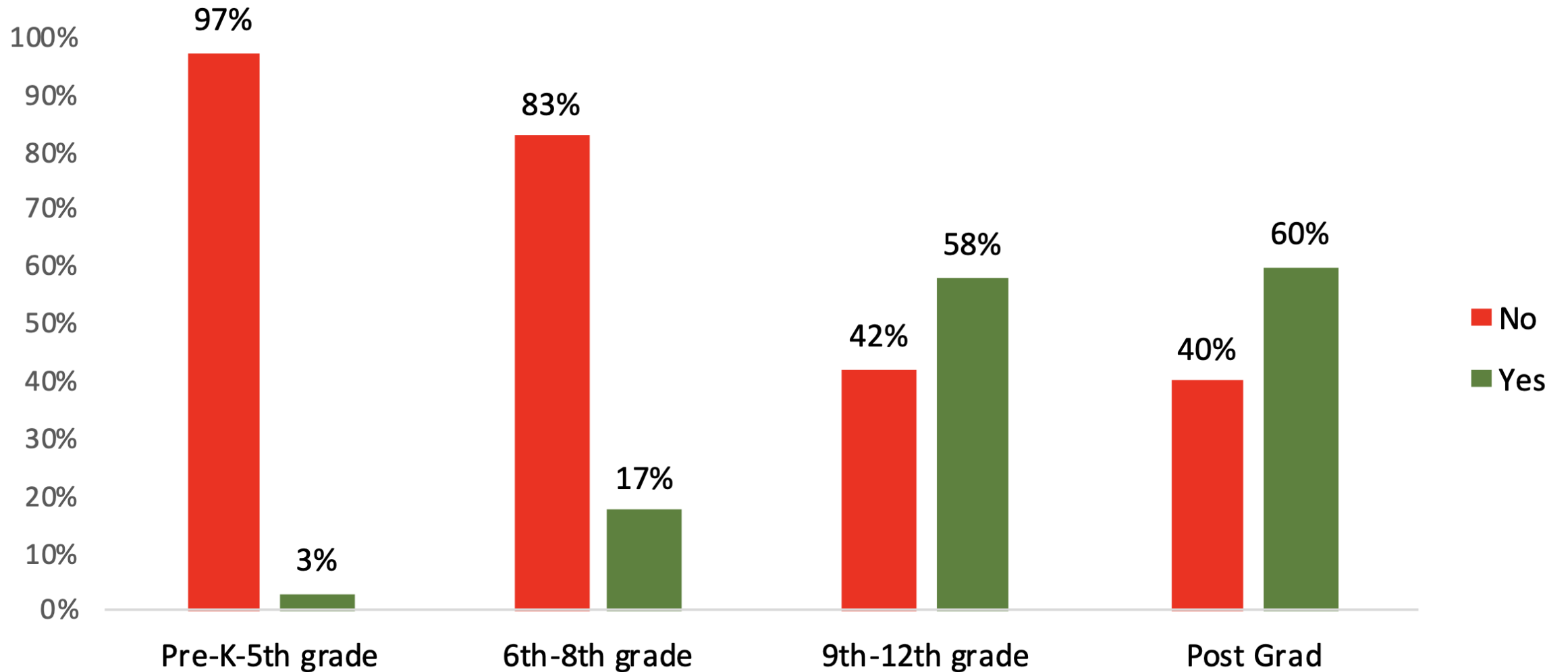
Does your student attend their IEP meetings?



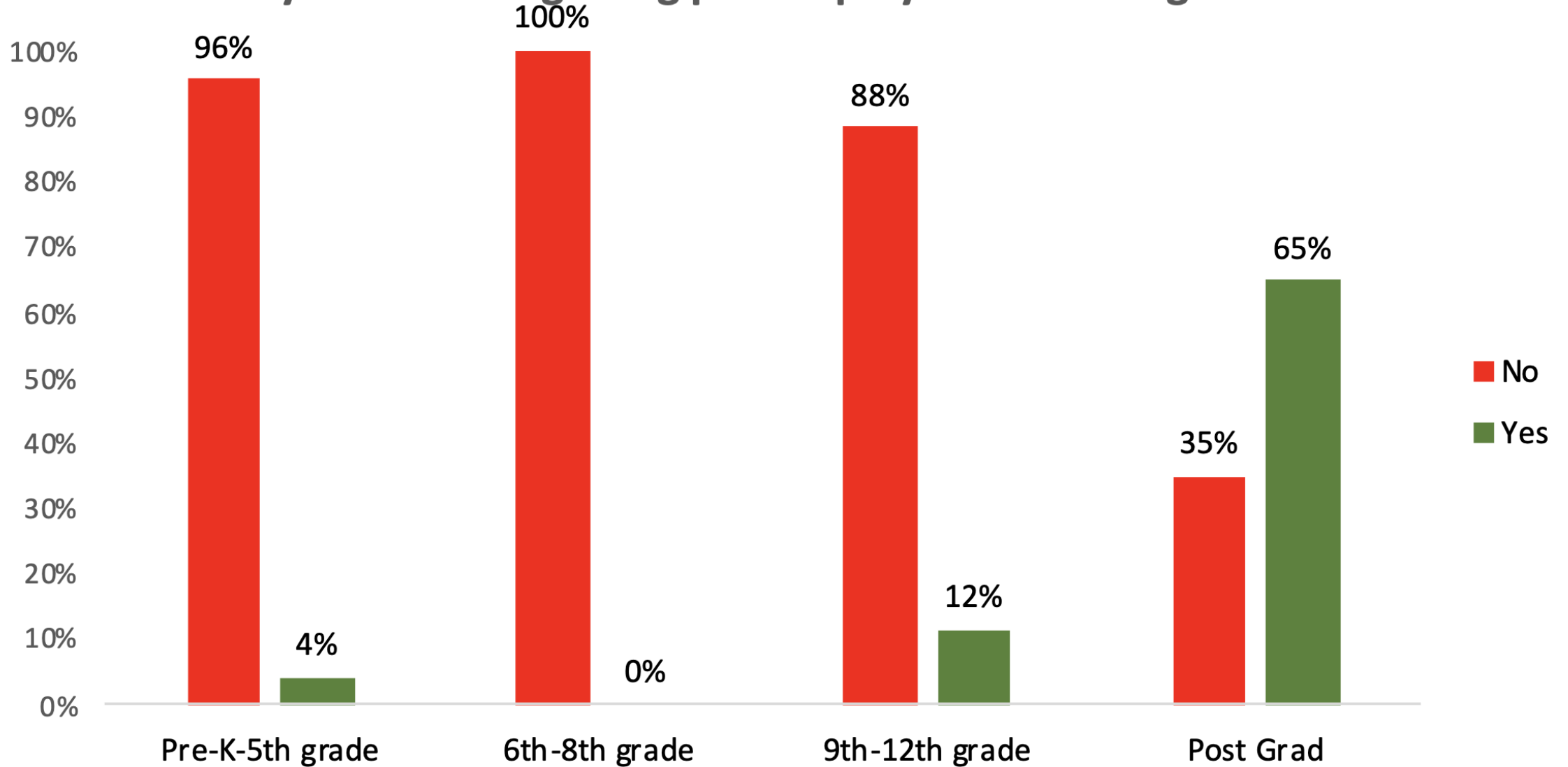
What are some barriers to attending the IEP meetings? (top 4 responses)



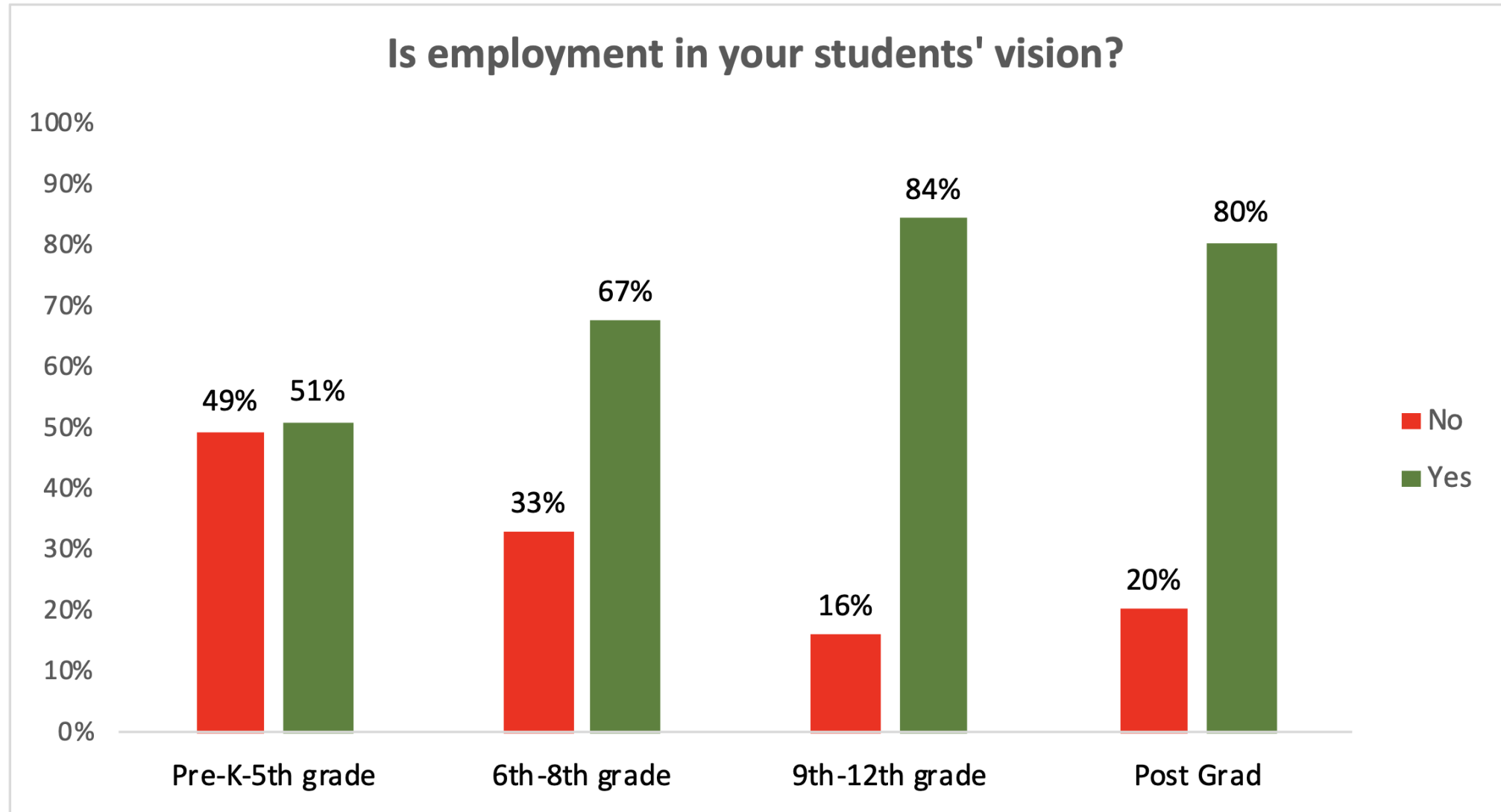
If your student is over 14, are you familiar with the process/timeline of transition planning to adulthood?



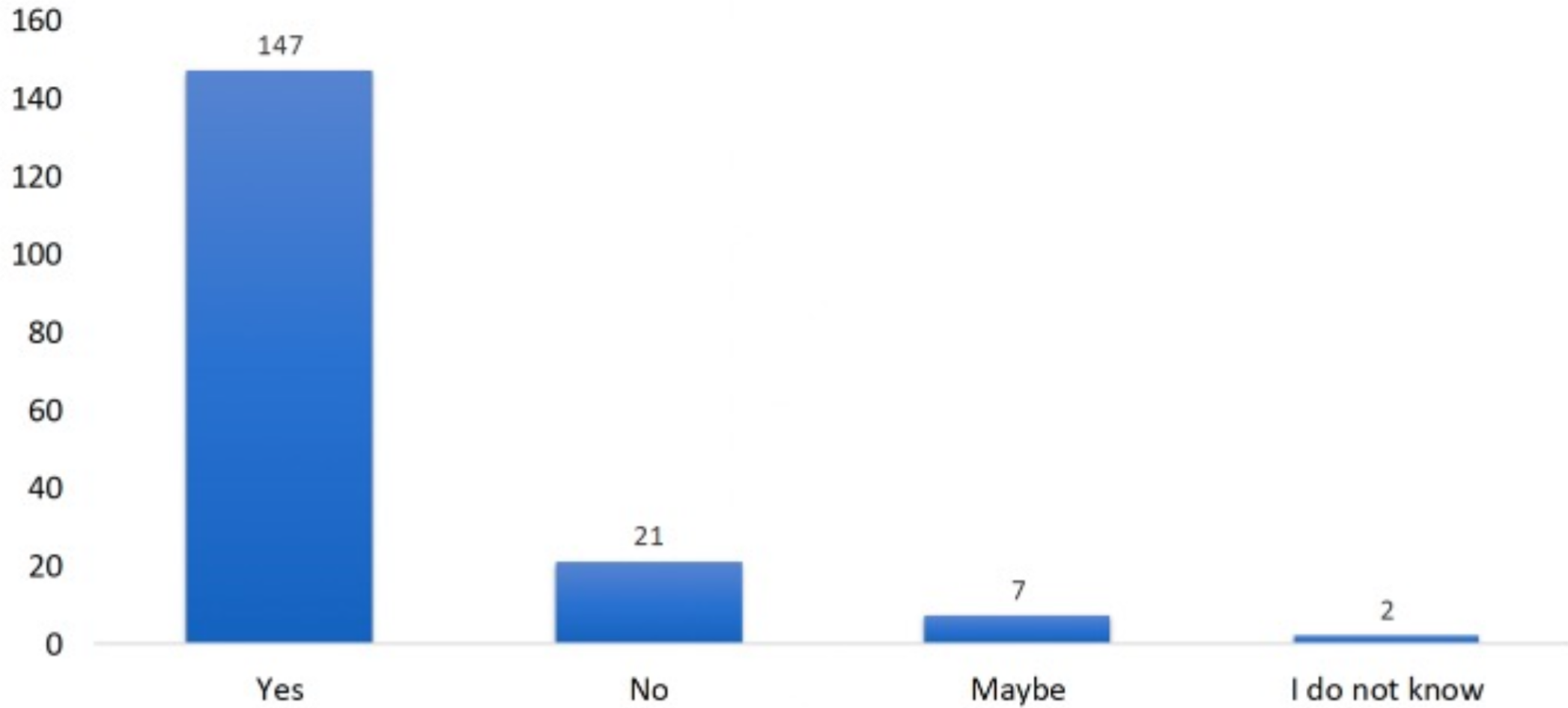
Is your student getting pre-employment training?



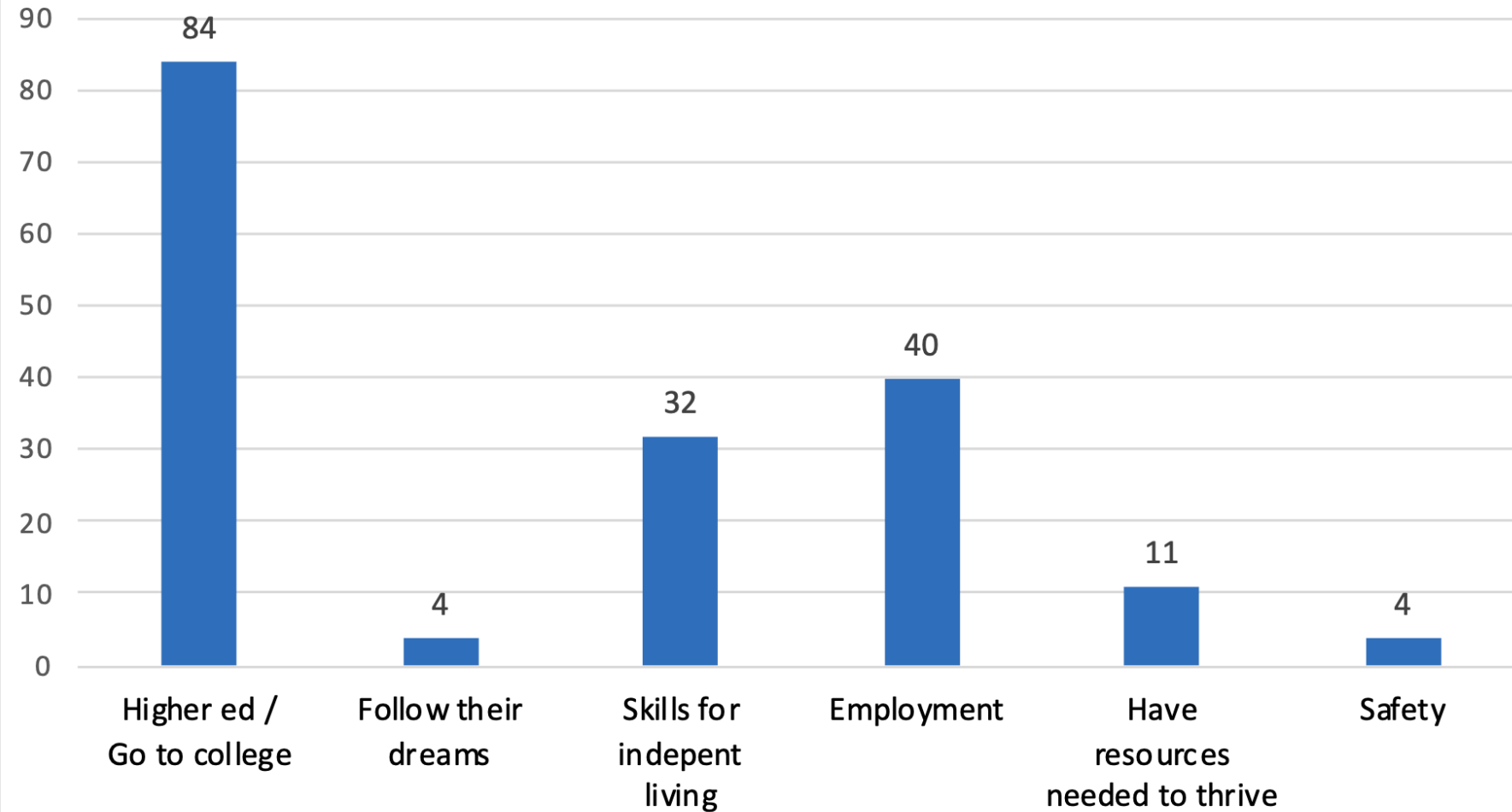
Findings: Employment



Do you see employment as one of the things that your student can do after school?



What would be important for your student when they leave high school? (key themes)



Conclusions

Barriers remain despite family participation

Scheduling conflicts

Language barriers

Lack of childcare

Limited understanding of the IEP process

Family engagement matters


Family engagement predicts positive transition outcomes

IEPs are central to ensuring students receive needed supports and services

Families have post-school expectations

Families want college or employment outcomes

Only a small percentage report access to pre-employment training



Partnering with Lawrence Public Schools (LPS)

LPTTE–LPS Partnership: Listening to Families, Improving Transitions

Based on Survey Findings: How are Transition Age Youth with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities in Lawrence Being Prepared for Adult Life by Lawrence Public Schools?



Elizabeth Hogue, M. Ed.
Transition Specialist
Lawrence Public Schools



Lawrence Partnership for Transition to Employment
Asociación Lawrence para Transición al Empleo

Family Survey Findings & Insights

Barriers to Engagement

- Scheduling conflicts
- Language access
- Childcare needs
- Limited accessibility (e.g., Zoom)
- Lack of clarity about the IEP process

Family Expectations

- Families want transition planning to start earlier
- Families expect employment outcomes after high school
- **Gap:** Only 12% report access to pre-employment training

System Gap: Visibility & Access

- Strong transition supports exist in LPS
- Patterns in the data suggest supports may not be consistently visible or accessible
- Need for clearer, more accessible communication



From Insight to Action: LPS Response

Strong Foundation Already in Place

- Established transition supports across grade levels
- Dedicated transition specialist team and district-wide tools
- Ongoing bilingual workshops, newsletters, and Transition Fair
- Middle school consultation and IEP collaboration

What the data helped us see:

- Supports and expertise are **not always consistently visible or accessible to families**
- Need to think more intentionally about **how families experience and access existing supports**

Refinement of Practice:

Visibility: Make transition supports more clearly identifiable

Access: Provide multiple, flexible ways for families to access information

Relevance: Ensure tools reflect the needs of Lawrence families

Coordination: Strengthen alignment across schools, families, and partners

What This Looks Like in Practice: LPS Transition System

In response to family feedback, LPS has refined how existing supports are designed and used to improve access, visibility, and engagement.



Existing System in Practice: Team & Infrastructure

- 5-person transition specialist team supporting middle and high school
- Ongoing consultation with school teams and participation in IEP meetings
- Development and use of district-wide tools (e.g., Transition Planning Profile, snapshots)
- Coordination across schools, families, and community partners
 - Provides consistent, specialized support across the transition process
 - Existing infrastructure that provided a strong foundation for more intentional, data-informed practice



Existing System in Practice: Systems, Access, & Visibility

Multiple Approaches to Access

- On-demand tools and resources (platform, guides)
- Live opportunities for connection and learning

Central Platform

- Bilingual, district-specific transition platform
- Connects families, staff, and community partners
- Central hub for resources, events, and contacts

Family-Facing Resources

- Transition Activities Guide (EN/ES)
- LHS Transitional Resource Guide
- Rising Lancer Guide

Built-In Access Features

- Bilingual materials
- Multiple formats (digital, events, QR access)
- Clear entry points for families

→ Makes transition supports more visible, understandable, and accessible



Existing System in Practice: Family & Community Partnership

LPTE-LPS Workshop Series: Your Partners in Planning

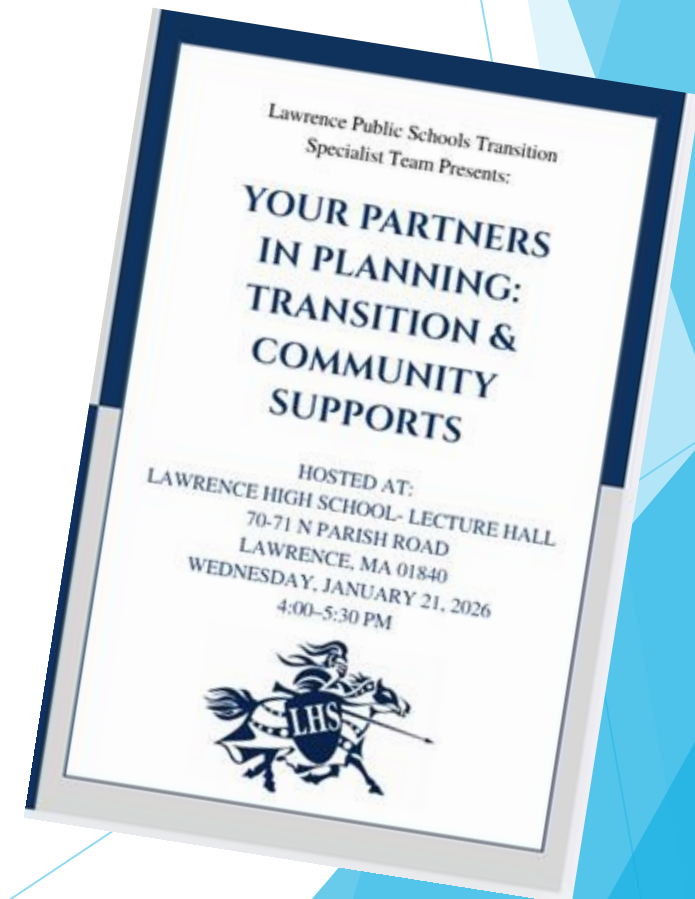
- Multi-session series focused on transition planning and available supports
- Designed to build **knowledge, connection, and confidence**
- Open to families across grade levels

Intentional Design to Address Engagement Barriers

- Same workshop offered **3 times across 3 months**
- Different times of day (daytime & evening)
- In person and Zoom options
- Interpretation available
- Childcare, refreshments, and raffle incentives

Community Partners

- The Arc of Greater Haverhill-Newburyport
- Massachusetts Advocates for Children
- Northeast Independent Living Program
- Merrimack Valley Welcome Center



What We Learned

What We Learned About Family Engagement

- Even with intentional design, attendance remained lower than expected
- Outreach included:
 - Flyers sent to families
 - Promotion through monthly newsletters
 - Follow-up communication across sessions

Key Insight

- Removing barriers is necessary—but not sufficient
- Engagement requires ongoing, relationship-based, and varied approaches

Next Steps

- Continue offering multiple access points (live + recorded)
- Share and reuse recorded sessions to extend reach
- Embed information into existing touchpoints (IEPs, school events, ongoing communication)
- Continue refining outreach and partnership strategies

Bottom Line

→ Family engagement is not a single event—it requires ongoing, responsive systems of support



Q & A



Contact Us!

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