

Student Survey Report Pendleton School District

The voices of students from American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) backgrounds are critical in our efforts to improve AI/AN students' academic and social outcomes. To listen to students' voices, we recently administered a survey to middle and high school students to assess their perceptions of the extent to which their classrooms and schools are responsive to their cultures. Your school district kindly allowed us to administer the student survey. Below, we provide an overview of how the survey was developed and administered, the sample of students that completed the survey in Pendleton School Districts, and the results for Pendleton School District. We also outline the next steps in our research plan that build on the survey outcomes.

Context for the Survey

The student survey was developed and administered in the context of a 3-year project entitled "The Role of Native Language and Culture in Decreasing Discipline Problems and Increasing Academic Achievement for American Indian/Alaska Native Students" and funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education (Grant # R305A140162). Much of our project activities focus on analysis of extant data from the National Indian Education Study (NIES) and the School-wide Information System (SWIS). NIES data provide a wealth of information on how AI/AN students experience their educational environments, how teachers integrate Native language and culture into instruction, and what school administrators do to create culturally responsive learning environments. However, our analyses have shown that relationships between the presence of Native language and culture in the classroom and educational outcomes for American Indian/Alaska Native students are very difficult to interpret based on NIES data alone.

Data from the School-wide Information System (SWIS), a web-based application that many schools use to collect information on discipline referrals, provides important information on the frequency and type of behavioral violations occurring within a school. Potential differences in behavioral outcomes between Native and non-Native students, however, are difficult to interpret given that we know little about the classroom environment of students referred to the office for disciplinary reasons.

Student Survey Development

To help us better interpret our findings from the NIES and SWIS data analyses, and to understand what teachers can do to improve outcomes for AI/AN students, we developed a student survey. The purpose of the survey was to:

1. Assess how students feel about:
 - a. the academic support they receive from their teachers
 - b. the social support they receive from their teachers and peers
 - c. the relevance of instruction to their cultural identity formation
 - d. the relationships between their schools, families, and communities

2. Provide students with the opportunity to nominate teachers they felt provided culturally responsive instruction and support, or to indicate that they did not have access to teachers who provided this kind of support.

We presented survey items from existing surveys to a focus group consisting of Native students at the University of Oregon and Native community members in Eugene, Oregon. We also solicited feedback on the survey from the Indian Education Advisor to the Superintendent of Public Instruction at the Oregon Department of Education, as well as the Government to Government Agency Education Cluster. Based on the feedback we received we modified the survey items. We provided students with the opportunity to nominate teachers, so that we could invite nominated teacher to a follow-up interview to learn more about their instructional practices.

Survey Administration

The survey was administered electronically via Qualtrics or in paper and pencil to 8th, 10th, and 12th graders in Spring 2016. Prior to administering the survey, parents of all students were notified of the survey administration and given the opportunity to opt for their child's exclusion from taking the survey. Students provided informed assent prior to taking the survey. Students first provided demographic information (gender, grade level, race/ethnicity, and tribal affiliation) and then completed a total of 44 items assessing their perceptions of (a) academic support in the classroom, (b) social support in the classroom and school, (c) their cultural identity, and (d) their school's relationship with their family and community. Each item was scored on a 7-point scale: Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Somewhat Agree (3), Neither Agree nor Disagree (4), Somewhat Disagree (5), Disagree (6) and Strongly Disagree (7).

Survey Sample

A total of 178 students from schools in Pendleton School District completed the survey. Of those students, 16 identified as AI/AN only, and 13 identified as partially AI/AN in addition to other racial/ethnic backgrounds. Tribal affiliations included Confederate Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Of the 29 students who listed full or partial AI/AN background, 13 were male and 14 female.

Analyses

As we anticipated that students who have tribal affiliations or who reported their backgrounds as full AI/AN are more likely to live in communities that provide greater cultural and social supports for AI/AN students, we separated results below into two categories: one reflecting students who identify as entirely AI/AN and one composed of students who listed partial AI/AN background.

Survey Results

We first examined the average response for each survey subscale: (a) academic support in the classroom, (b) social support in the classroom and school, (c) cultural identity, and (d) the school's relationship with students' family and community. Smaller values are more desirable. Figure 1 provides results for subscale means by student group (AI/AN only and AI/AN plus other racial/ethnic background). A mean of 3 is approximately equivalent to "somewhat agree."

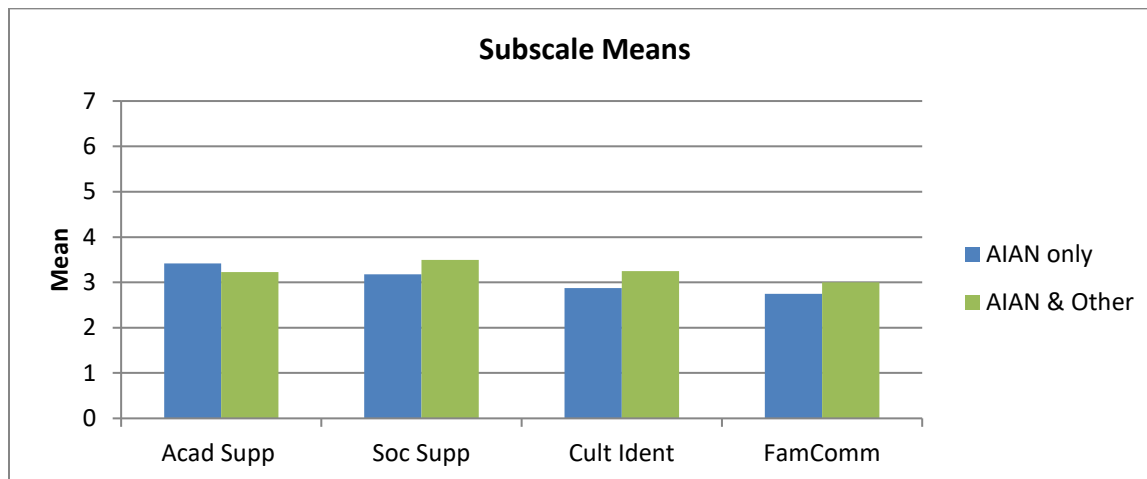


Figure 1: Subscale means for students who identified as only or partially AI/AN.

The 29 AI/AN students nominated a total of 26 teachers they felt provided culturally responsive classrooms and support. A number of students also indicated that there was no teacher they felt provided this kind of support. Figure 2 provides an overview of the percent of students who indicated absence of culturally responsive support in their schools.

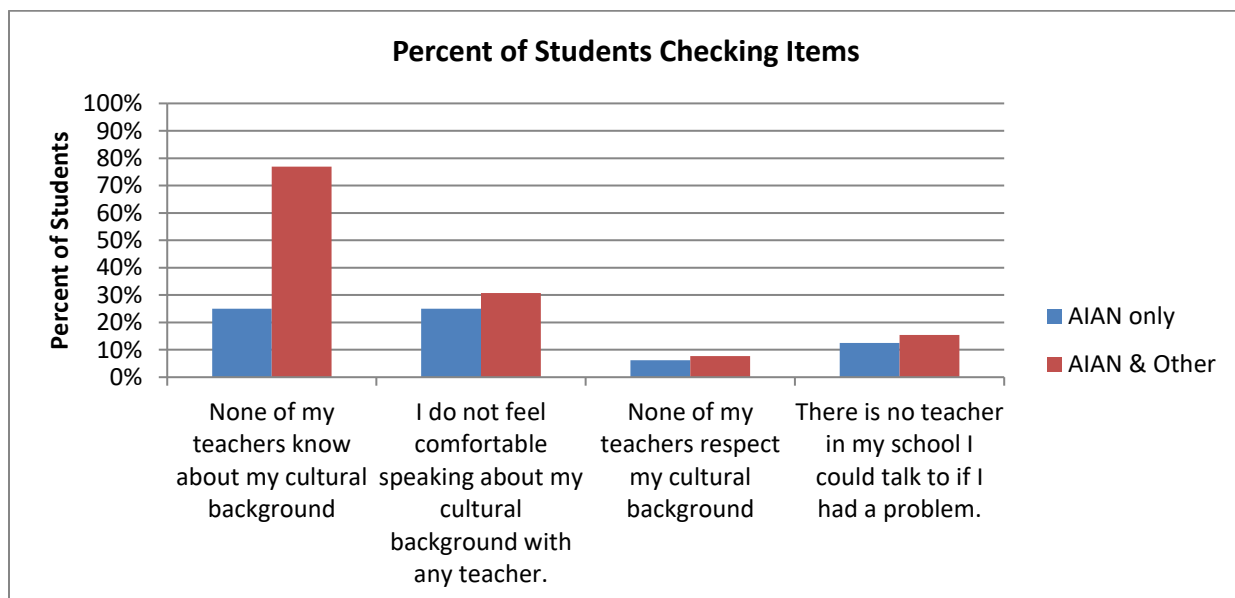


Figure 2: Percent of students indicating lack of access to culturally responsive support.

We examined the percent of students who agreed, were impartial, or disagreed with each item within the four subscales. To make outcomes more easily interpretable, we collapsed response options into three categories: “strongly agree/somewhat agree/agree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” and “strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/disagree.” Figure 3 shows Academic Support items ratings by percent of students from full or partial AI/AN backgrounds, Figure 4 shows Social Support items ratings, Figure 5 shows Cultural Identity items ratings, and Figure 6 shows Family/Community Relationship items ratings.

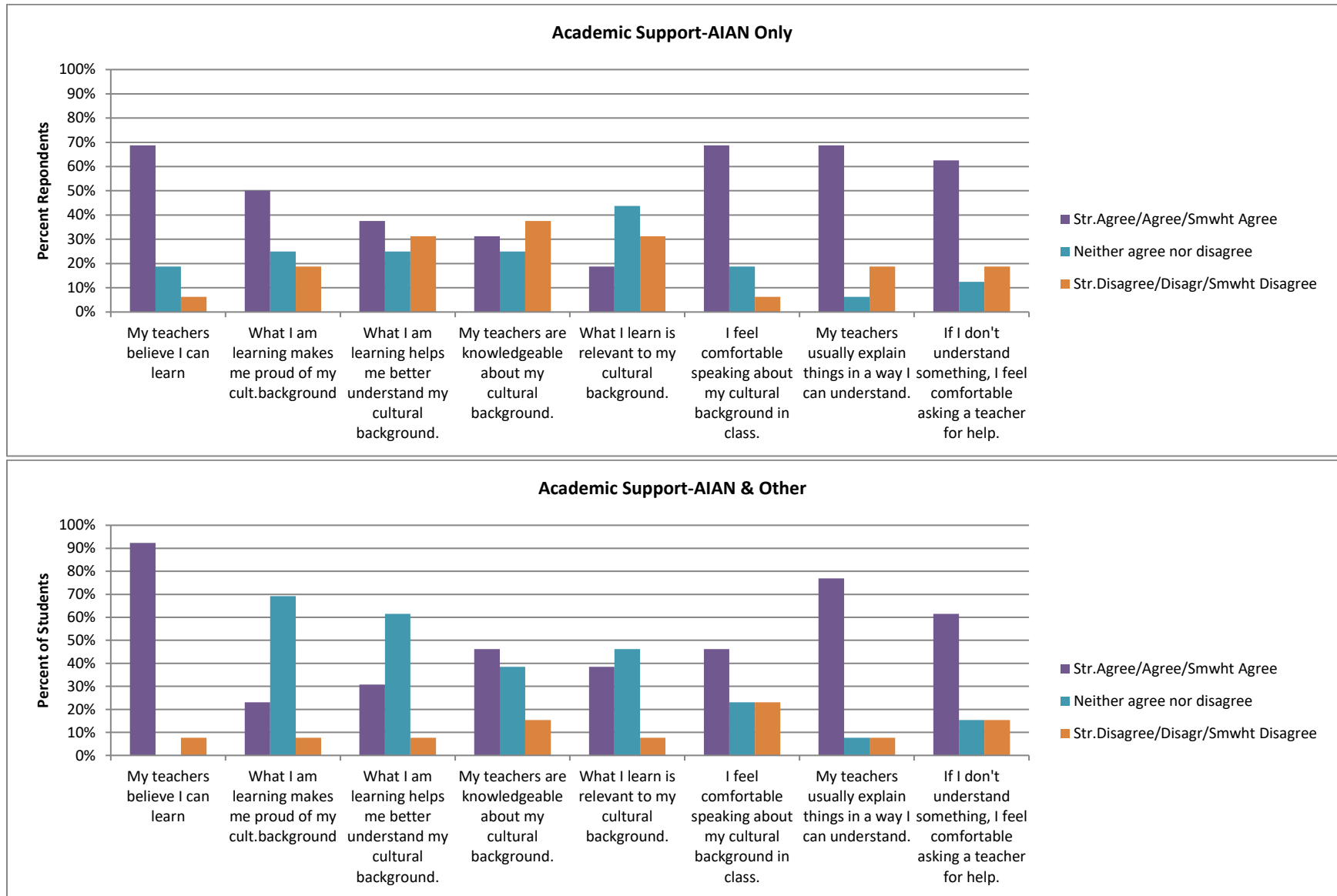


Figure 3: Academic Support items ratings by percent of students from full or partial AI/AN backgrounds

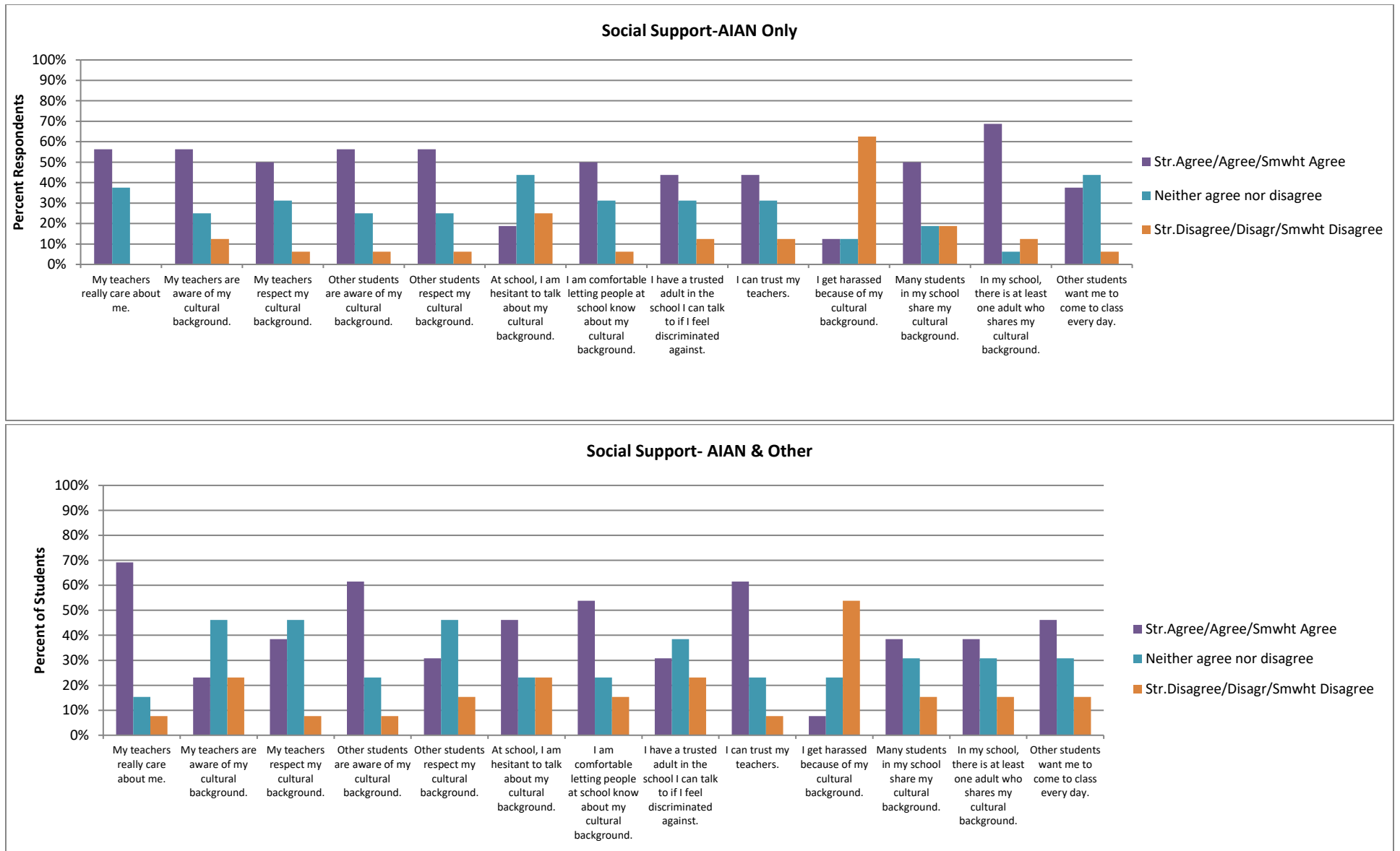


Figure 4: Social Support items ratings by percent of students from full or partial AI/AN backgrounds

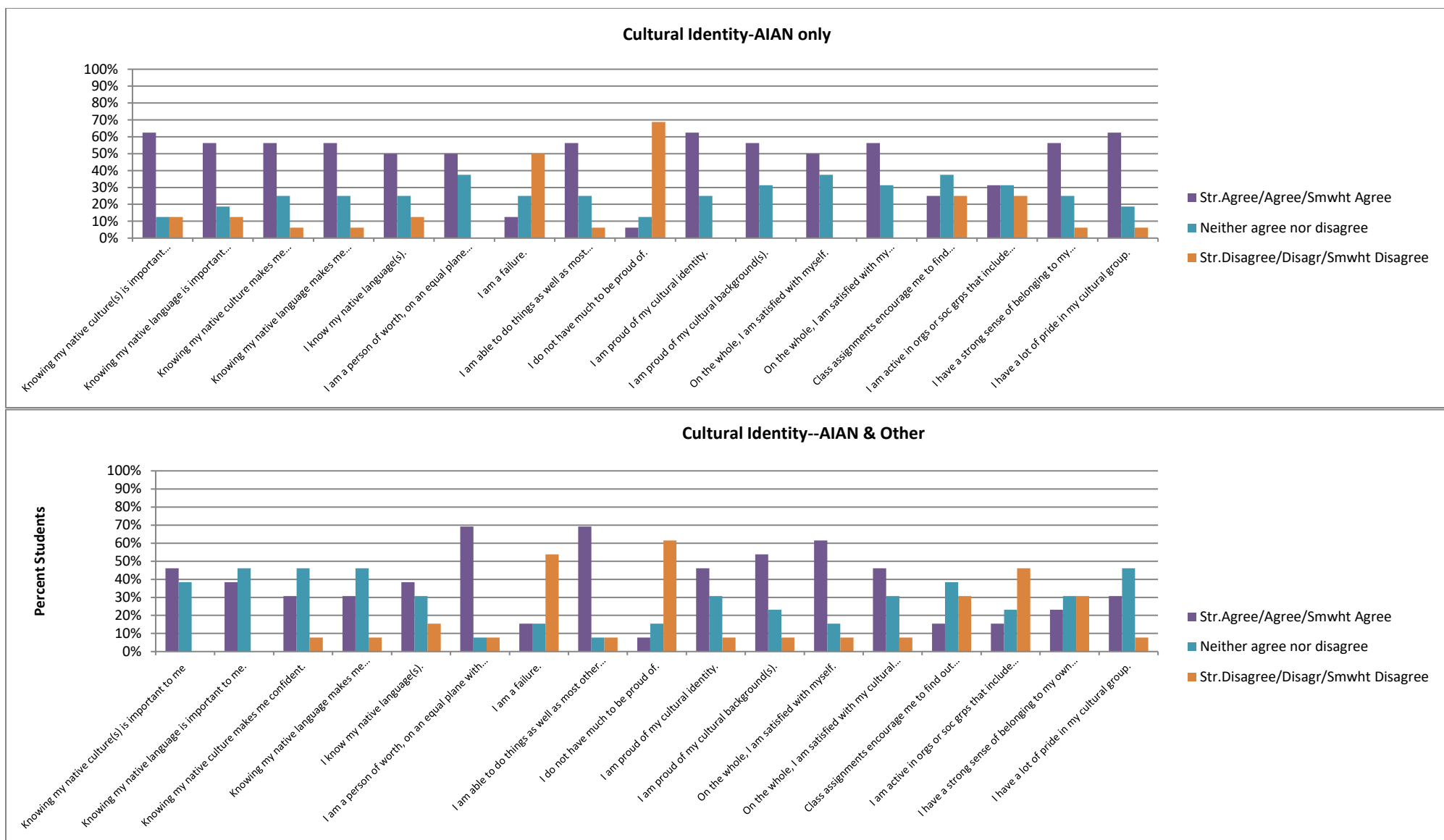


Figure 5: Cultural identity items ratings by percent of students from full or partial AI/AN backgrounds

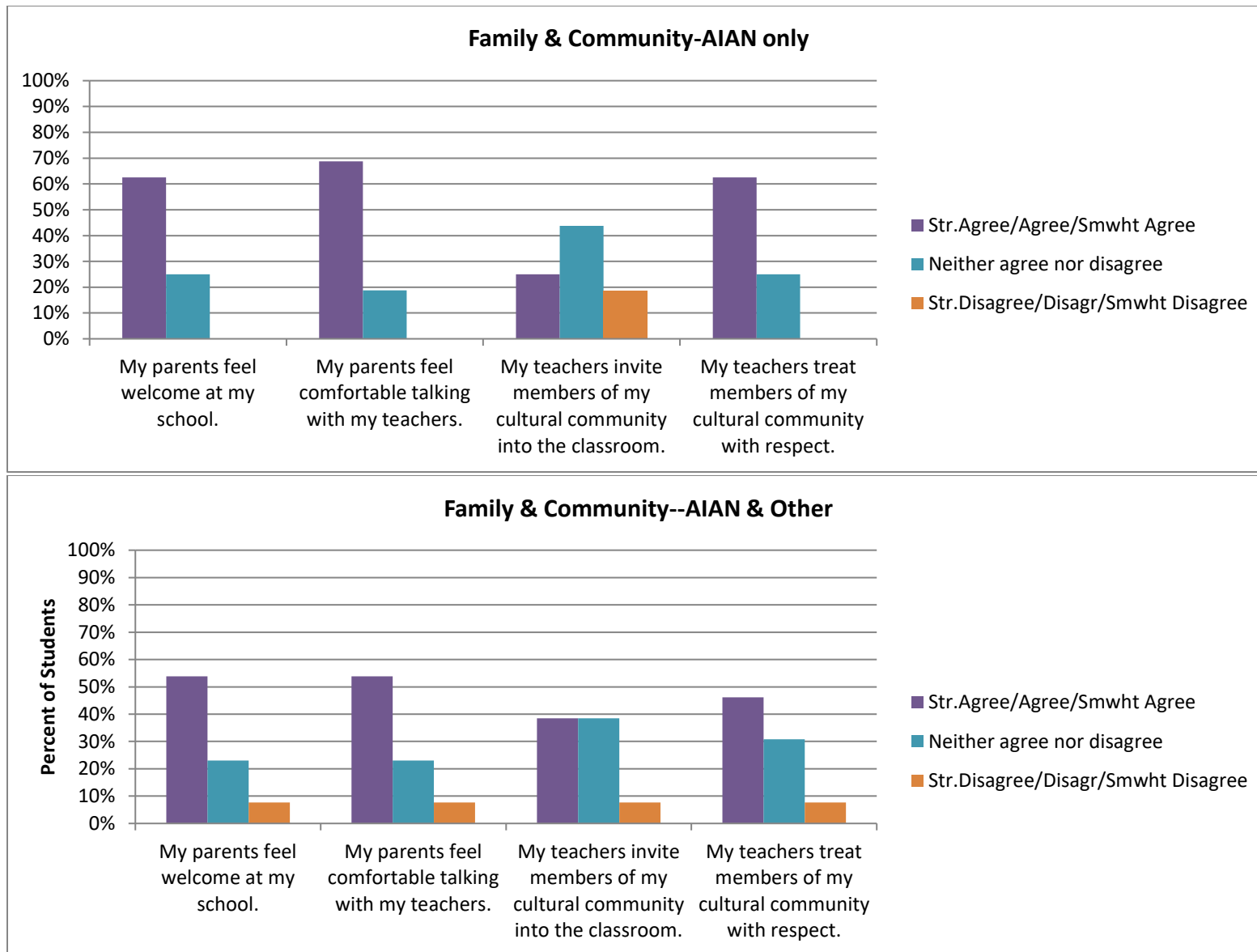


Figure 6: Family and Community items ratings by percent of students from full or partial AI/AN backgrounds

Discussion and Next Steps

Based on the results presented above, Native students who participated in the survey felt overall positive about their school environment. Their average ratings of each survey domain were around the scale's mid-point, meaning that tended to "somewhat agree" that the academic and instructional supports provided by their teachers were culturally responsive, that they were proud of and felt connected to their cultural identity, and that the school had good relationships with their families and communities.

When asked if they had access to individuals in their school who provided culturally responsive support, a percentage of students reported that they did not. About 25%, or 1 in 4 students from full AI/AN backgrounds reported that none of their teachers knew about their cultural background; while about 75%, or 3 in 4 students from AI/AN or other racial/ethnic backgrounds reported that none of their teachers knew about their cultural background. Between 25 and 31% of all students with AI/AN heritage reported not feeling comfortable speaking about their culture with a teacher. About 5-10% of students felt that none of their teachers respected their cultures, and more than 10% reported that there was no teacher in their school they could talk to if they had a problem.

In summary, analysis of the individual academic support scale items suggested that the majority of students felt academically supported, although about 30% of AIAN Only students felt that their education did not help them understand their culture, 38% of AIAN Only students felt their teachers were not knowledgeable about their culture, and about 30% of AIAN Only students felt that the curriculum was not relevant to their culture. Similarly, analysis of the individual social support scale items indicated that the majority of students felt socially supported, although about 25 % of students reported that they are hesitant to talk about their cultural background. Analysis of individual items on the cultural identity subscale showed that students were proud of their language and their culture, but that class assignments did not always encourage their cultural identity formation. Finally, analysis of the individual items on the family and community relationships scale showed that the majority of students felt the school welcomed their family and community, but that teachers did not always reach out to their family members to invite them to the school.

These findings suggest that the Pendleton School District makes great efforts to create culturally responsive classrooms which offer support to benefit Native students. They also suggest culturally responsive instruction and social supports might differ based on contextual factors, such as individual teachers' ability to make instruction relevant to Native students' cultures, establishing trust with Native students and their families, and creating classroom environments where all students' voices are equally heard and respected.

To learn more about teacher practices to create culturally responsive classrooms, we will follow-up with teachers nominated by Native students as providing culturally responsive classrooms. We will invite nominated teachers for a follow-up interview to learn about their training, teaching practices, and student support strategies. Based on the outcomes from those interviews, we will develop a teacher survey to assess the extent to which teachers engage in those successful instructional and social support strategies.