

#MAFAMILYVOICE

Beyond Words: Parent Perceptions on Early Literacy

A Conversation Highlighting The Findings From An MA Parent Poll On Early Literacy Featuring A Dynamic Panel Discussing Policy Solutions

Welcome

Tuesday, May 14, 2024, from 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM



LEARN MORE:  @EdTrustMA  www.edtrust.org/massachusetts.org



Event Program

10:00 a.m. Welcome

Welcome remarks by **Chanthy Lopes**, Assistant Director for Engagement and Communications, Ed Trust in MA

10:05 a.m. Opening Remarks

Opening remarks by **Senator Sal DiDomenico**

10:15 a.m. Parent Poll Results

Overview of recently released statewide poll data by **Steve Koczela**, President, The MassINC Polling Group

10:35 a.m. Panel Discussion: What comes next?

Panel moderated by **Mandy McLaren**, reporter for The Great Divide. Panelists include:

- **Ariel Taylor Smith**, Senior Director, National Parents Union Center for Policy & Action
- **Ron Noble**, Chief of Teacher Prep, The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ)
- **Katherine Tarca**, Director of Literacy and Humanities, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- **Edith Bazille**, Founder of Black Advocates for Educational Excellence (BAEE)

11:10 a.m.

Audience Q&A

11:25 a.m. Closing Reflections

Closing reflections by **Micheal Moriarty**, member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white top, is sitting on a stool and reading a book to a group of young children sitting on the floor in a classroom. The room has wooden shelves with books and toys in the background.

Massachusetts Parental Insights on Early Literacy

Findings from a Massachusetts parent poll with children ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade

Spring 2024

Steve Koczela
President, The MassINC Polling Group

This project was sponsored by The Education Trust in Massachusetts with support from The Barr Foundation



Survey Background

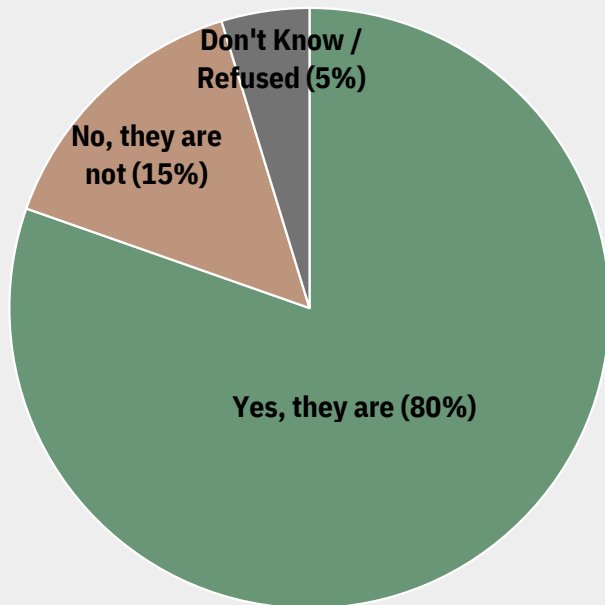
- Results are based on a statewide survey of 1,559 Massachusetts parents with children ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade, including oversamples of Black, Latino, and Asian parents.
- The survey is the tenth wave in a series of polls of K-12 parents in Massachusetts that began in May 2020.
- The survey was conducted from April 8–May 2, 2024, via live telephone and online interviews in English and Spanish.
- Data was weighted to known population parameters by age, gender, race, education, and region.
- Three parent focus groups were conducted in the Spring of 2024. A statewide focus group and a group comprised of parents of color were conducted in March of 2024 pre-survey and the third focus group, a statewide group, was conducted in April of 2024, post-survey.
- It is sponsored by the Education Trust in Massachusetts with support from The Barr Foundation.

Key Findings

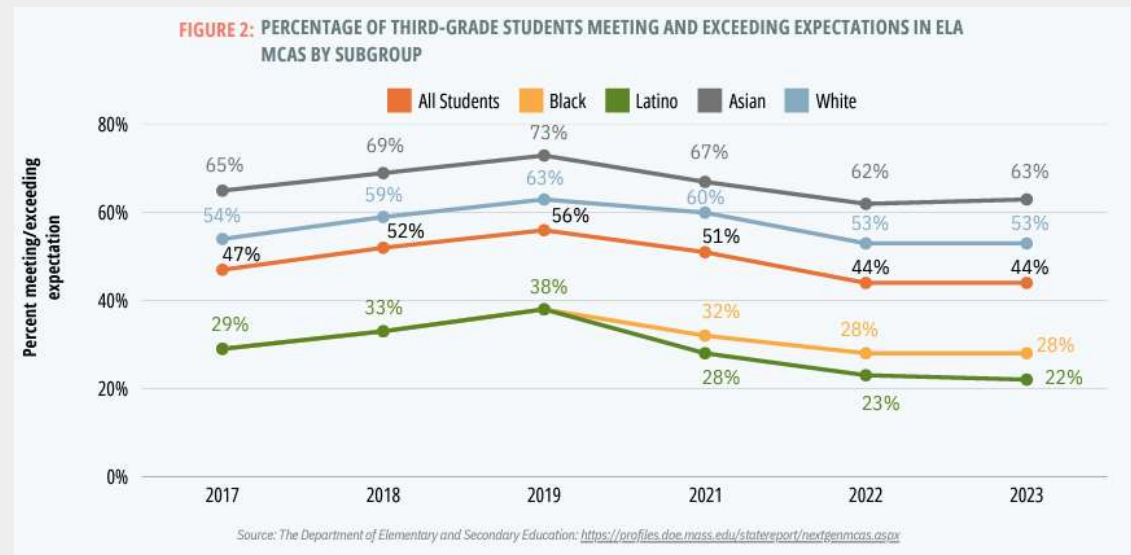
- An overwhelming majority of parents think schools should be required to use evidence-based reading approaches (84%). Most (81%) are unaware such a requirement does not exist today.
- A large majority (80%) think their child is reading at expected levels and that their child's school is doing a good job of teaching them how to read (89%).
- However, when presented with data on actual literacy scores in Massachusetts, concern rises significantly (84%).
- Parents express varying degrees of familiarity with the reading approaches & methods used in classrooms.
- Parents predominantly rely on items directly linked to their child's teacher to understand their reading progress, rather than on standardized sources such as MCAS or screeners.

Most parents say children are reading at expected level

- Most parents (80%) say they think their child is reading at the level expected of students in their age group.
- While statewide, less than half of students (44%) are meeting expectations for literacy proficiency (according to 3rd grade ELA MCAS). Proficiency rates are even lower for Black and Latino students.



Q: To the best of your knowledge, is your **GRADE LEVEL** child reading at the level expected for students in their age group?



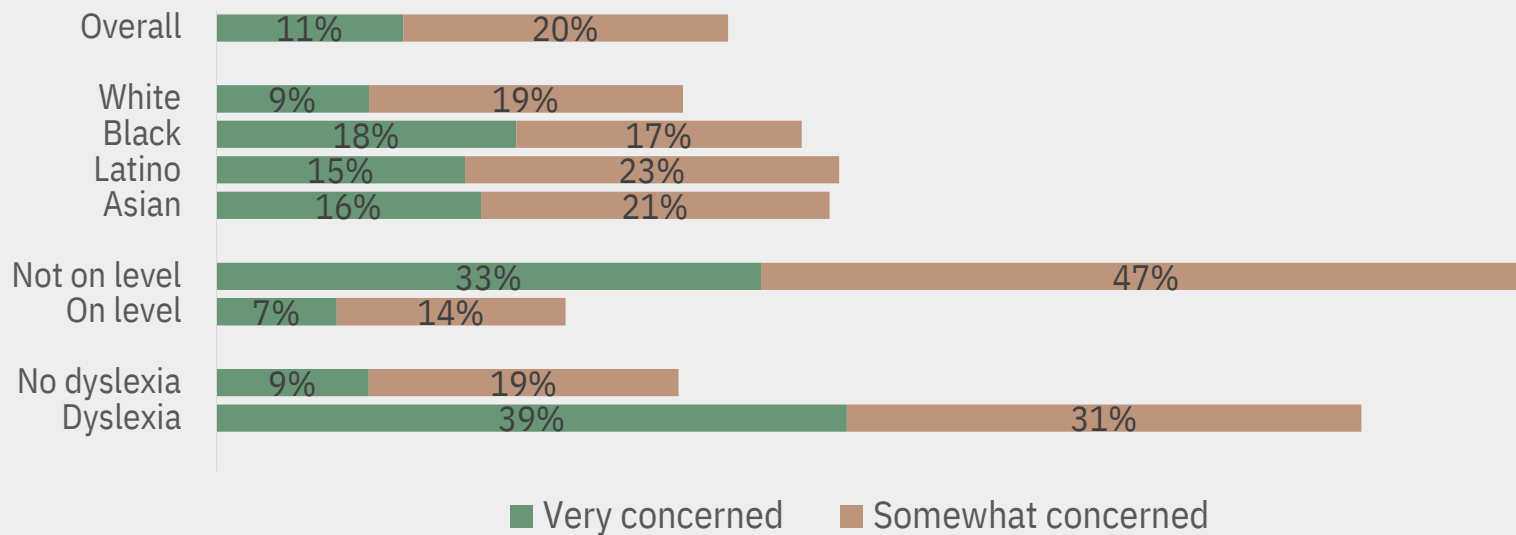
SOURCE: Ed Trust Massachusetts chart, using DESE data.

Most parents do not express concerns about reading progress

- In all, just 31% say they are concerned about their child's reading progress this year. Concern is much higher among parents who say their child is not at expected reading levels (80%) and parents who say their child has dyslexia (70%).

Most parents are not concerned about their child's reading progress

% of parents who say they are _____ about their child's reading progress



Q: When it comes to your **GRADE LEVEL** child's progress in reading this school year, would you say you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

Most parents concerned child is behind

- Among parents who are concerned, 27% are concerned their child is behind and 26% cite specific reading challenges, such as spelling, reading, comprehension and more.

Parents are most concerned about their child being behind and the content they are behind on

% of concerned parents who say they are concerned about

	Overall
Child is behind grade level	27%
Specific reading challenges (spelling, comprehension, etc.)	26%
Issues with teacher / school / curriculum	19%
Noting specific disability	9%
Child's academic challenges	9%
Lack of resources / support	6%
Child not interested in reading	6%
Future impact	3%
Other	9%
Nothing / IDK / None	7%

*Q: You mentioned you are concerned about your **GRADE LEVEL** child's reading. What concerns you about your child's progress?*

“

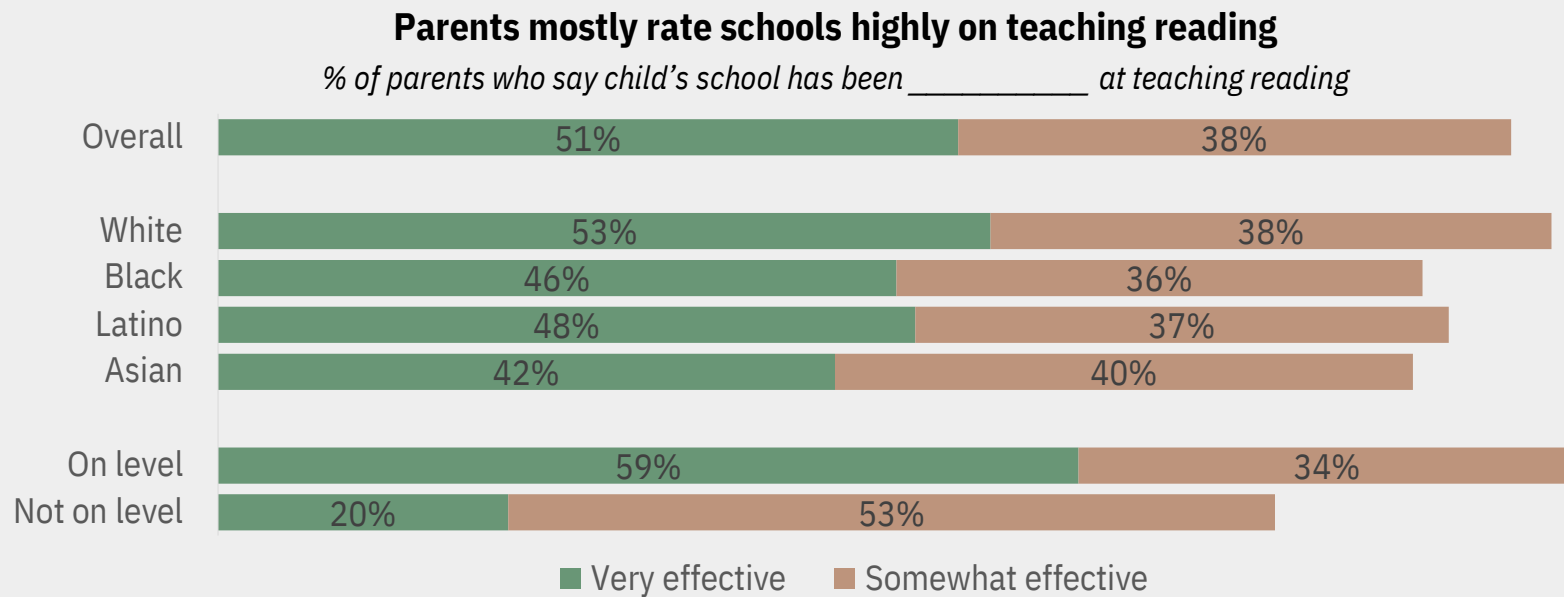
“He can read the words perfectly. The comprehension and putting the story together overall is where he struggles.”

“I’m just concerned that my child is not progressing the same as other children in their grade. I want them to be ready for the future.”

-Parents that participated in the 2024 Spring MPG poll

Most parents say schools effectively teaching reading

- Most parents think schools are effective at teaching their child to read. Even among parents concerned with their child's progress or those who say child is not at the expected level, ratings remain high.



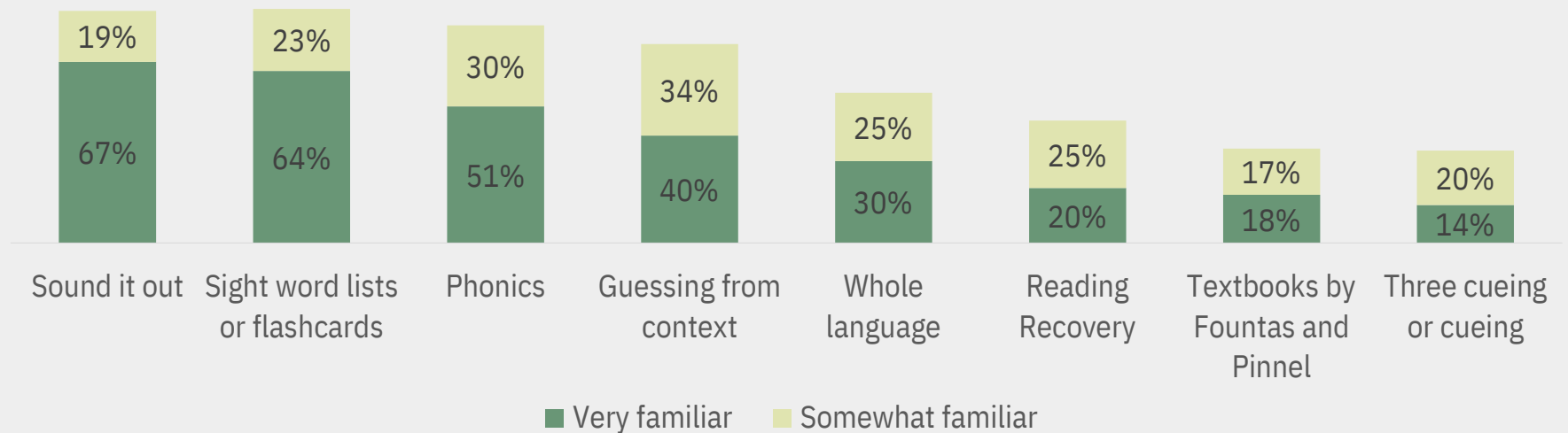
Q: How effective do you think your child's school has been so far at teaching your **GRADE LEVEL** child to read?

Mixed familiarity with key reading approaches

- Sound it out, sight words/flashcards, phonics, and 'guessing from context', are the tools most recognized by parents.

Most parents have mixed familiarity with reading tools and methods used in classrooms

% of parents who say they are very or somewhat familiar with each reading-related tool/method



Q: Thinking about the tools and methods teachers use in the classroom to help kids learn how to read, how familiar are you with each of the following?

Differences in familiarity with reading concepts

- Black and Latino parents are more likely to report familiarity with reading approaches that are discredited and not evidence-based.

Black and Latino parents report more familiarity with a variety of disproven tools and methods

% of parents who say they are “very / somewhat familiar” with each reading-related tool/method

	Overall	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Sight word lists or flashcards	87%	88%	88%	82%	78%
Sound it out	86%	88%	85%	82%	72%
Phonics	80%	84%	81%	67%	71%
Guessing from context	74%	75%	72%	68%	72%
Whole language	56%	53%	68%	66%	50%
Reading Recovery	45%	41%	58%	59%	45%
Textbooks by Fountas and Pinnell	35%	31%	46%	46%	40%
Three cueing or cueing	34%	32%	45%	41%	36%

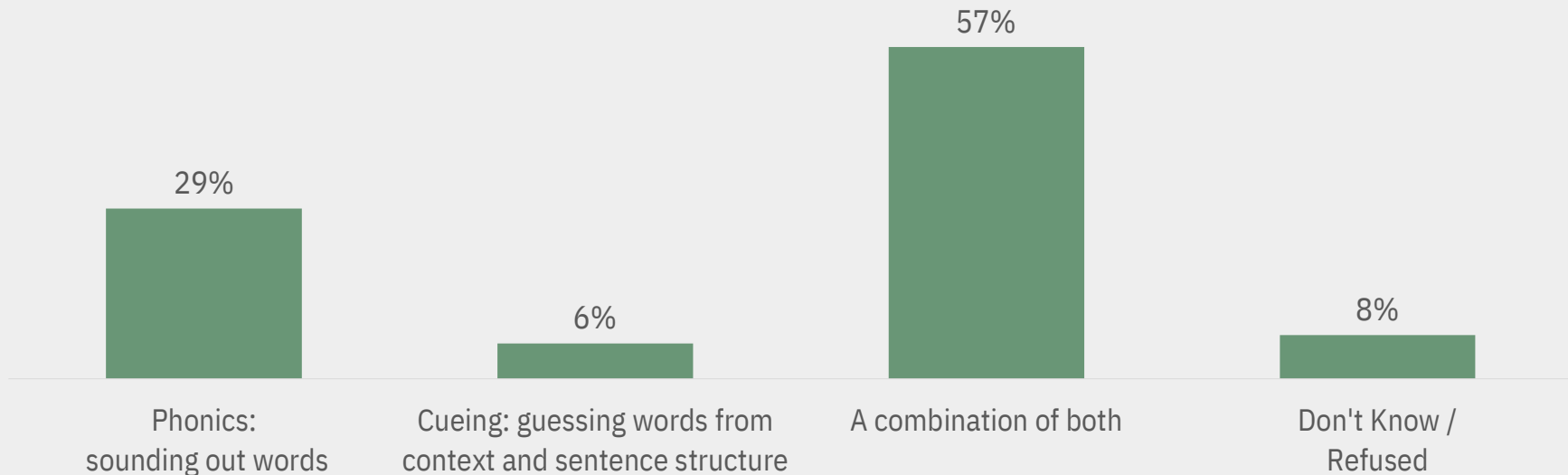
Q: Thinking about the tools and methods teachers use in the classroom to help kids learn how to read, how familiar are you with each of the following?

Parents unsure which methods are proven to work

- Parents are mostly unaware of what approach is proven most effective to support reading progress among students, with just 29% saying phonics is the most effective method.

Parents are not aware of which approaches are proven to support reading

% of parents who think each is the most effective way of teaching reading



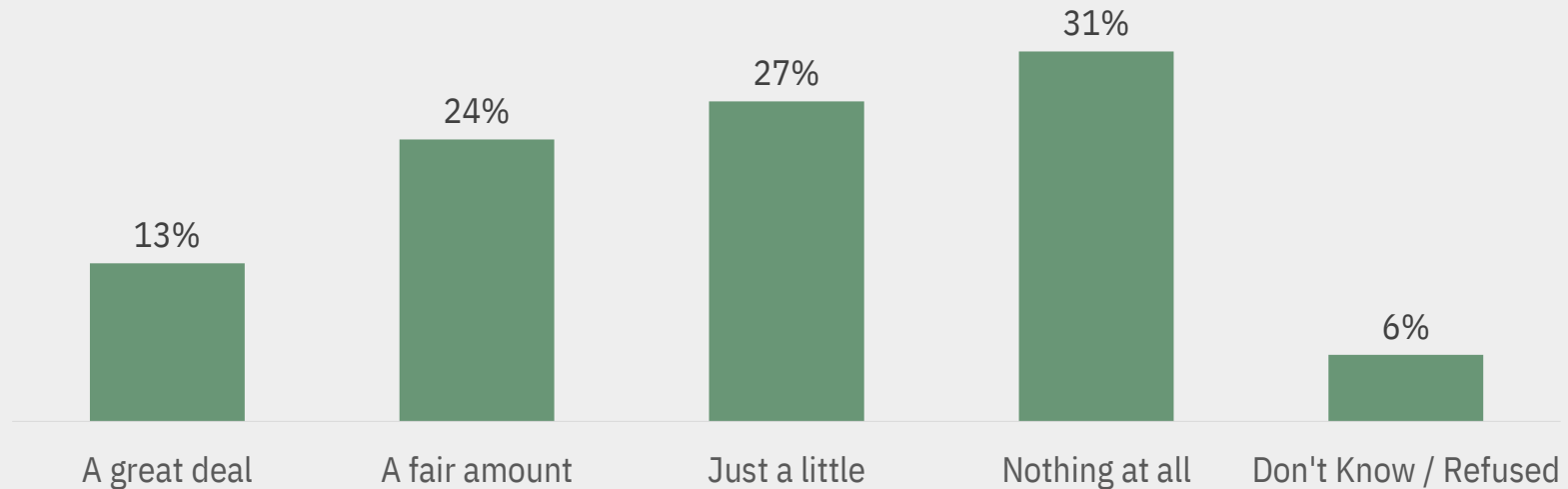
Q: From what you know, what do you think research has shown is the best or most effective way to teach kids how to read?

Most parents have not heard about state literacy crisis

- Similar to focus group findings, most parents have not heard much about Massachusetts students scoring below grade level on literacy tests in recent years. Only 13% say they have heard a great deal.

Parents are mostly unaware of the literacy crisis in Massachusetts

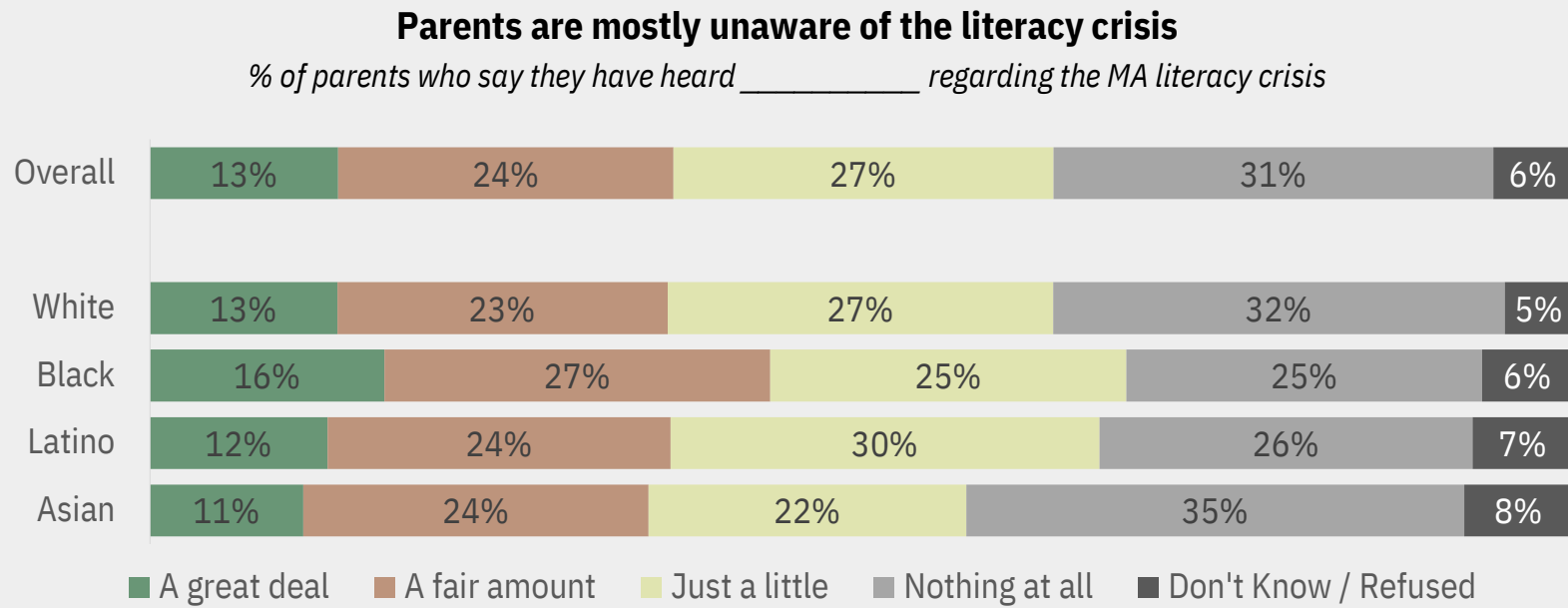
% of parents who say they have heard _____ regarding the literacy crisis



Q: How much have you heard or read recently about students in Massachusetts scoring below grade level on reading tests?

Parents across demographics have not heard much on crisis

- Across demographics, most parents have not heard much about the literacy crisis.



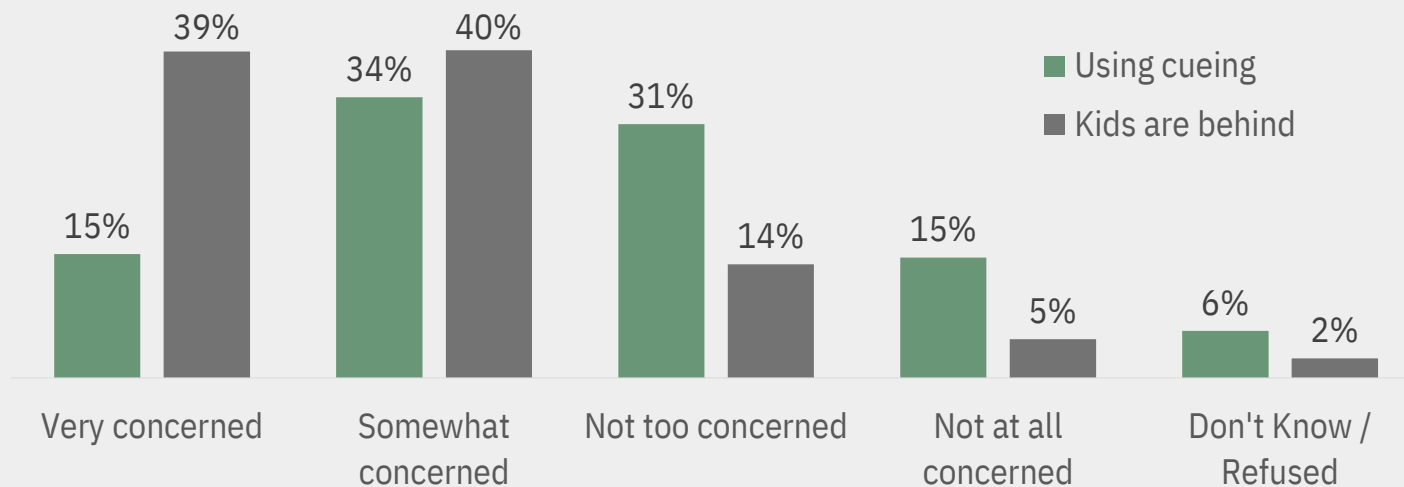
Q: How much have you heard or read recently about students in Massachusetts scoring below grade level on reading tests?

Concern rises among parents as research is shared

- The more information parents are presented with regarding the use of cueing in schools and the number of students not reading at expected levels, the higher concern rises among parents.

Parents more concerned the more they hear about the reading crisis in MA

% of parents who are _____ after hearing about cueing and then how many are behind



Q: Research has found that cueing, which is asking children to guess words from context and sentence structure, does not effectively support reading progress. However, cueing is still a strategy used in many Massachusetts schools. Knowing this, would you say you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned about the use of cueing in some schools?

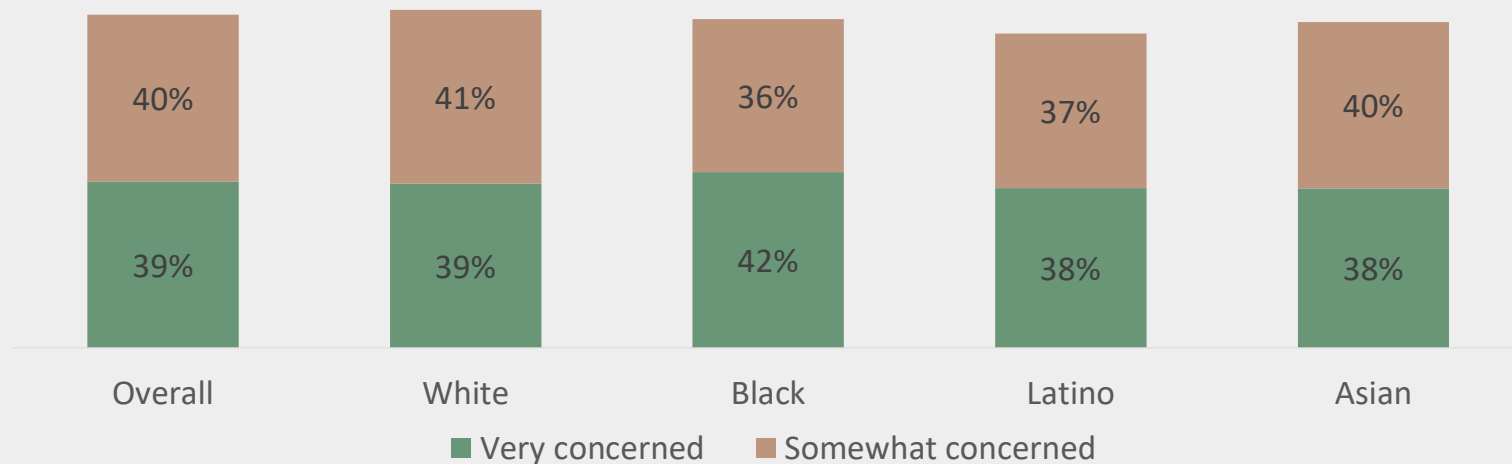
Q: As you may know, more than half of students in Massachusetts are not reading at expected levels by third grade. Knowing this, would you say you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned about students' overall reading levels in Massachusetts?

Concern consistent among all parents

- Once presented with the most recent 3rd grade ELA MCAS scores, there is consensus among 79% of parents that the crisis is concerning.

Parents concern rises with information regarding reading levels

% of parents who are very or somewhat concerned after hearing about students behind on reading



Q: As you may know, more than half of students in Massachusetts are not reading at expected levels by third grade. Knowing this, would you say you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned about students' overall reading levels in Massachusetts?

Parents have heard news about students being behind

- Overall, 52% of parents who said they've heard some news heard about students reading scores and levels being behind grade level.

Over half of parents who have heard news, heard about students being behind grade level

% of parents who heard/read about students falling behind and what they heard

	Overall
Reading scores & levels are behind	52%
COVID impacts	16%
Parents cite sources (news, friend, reading, etc.)	11%
General issues with reading (vocab, comprehension, etc.)	10%
Teacher, district, state challenges	10%
General academic challenges	8%
Lack of resources (support, staffing, materials, etc.)	6%
Other	9%
NA / Nothing	6%

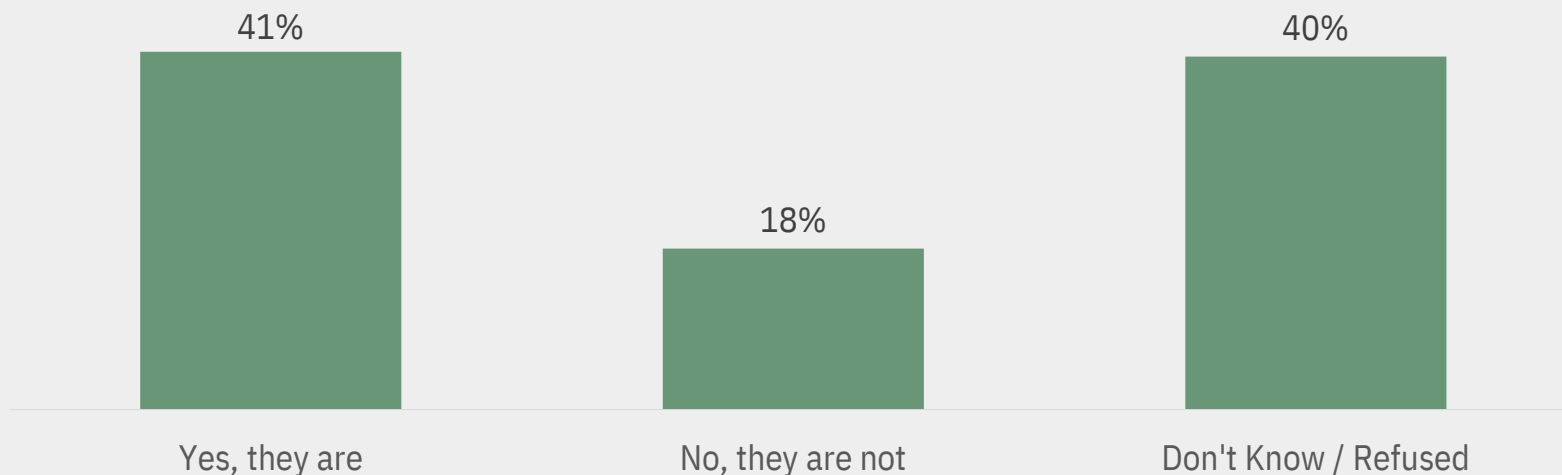
Q: You mentioned you have heard or read about students falling behind on reading. What have you heard?

Few know evidence-based approaches not required

- Few parents are aware that evidence-based reading approaches are not currently required in Massachusetts schools.

Many parents unsure if evidence-based reading approaches are required

% who think schools are or are not required to use evidence-based reading approaches



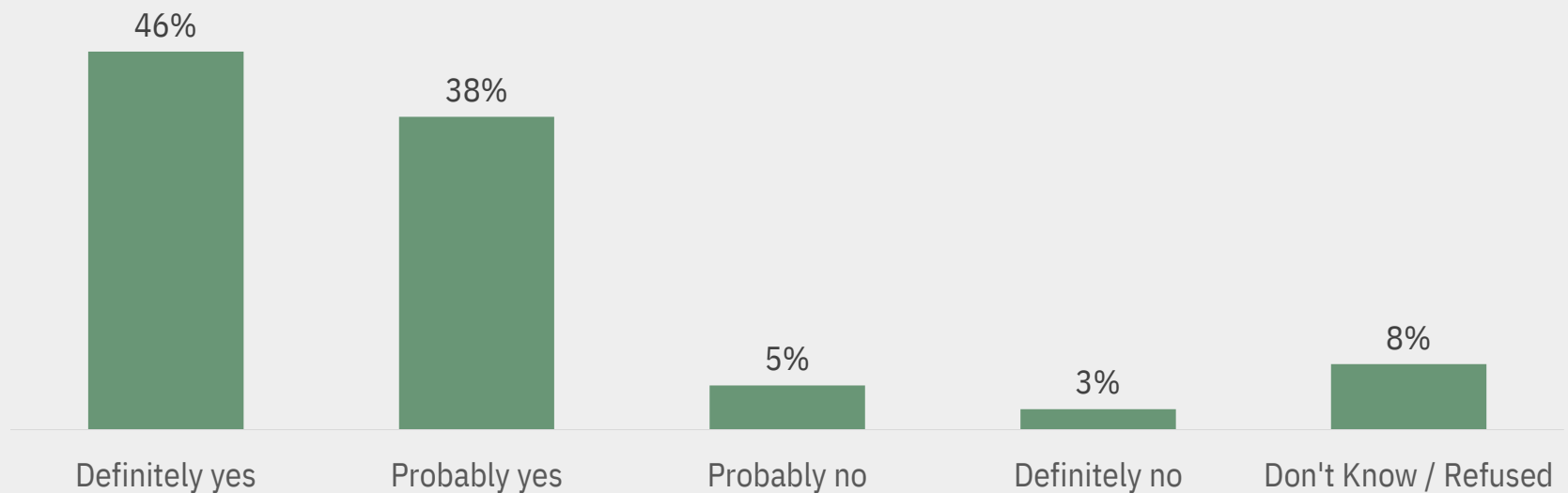
Q: To the best of your knowledge, are schools in Massachusetts required to use "evidence-based" reading curriculum; that is, curriculum that has proven to work in teaching students how to read, or not?

Parents want evidence-based requirement

- When told that evidence-based approaches are not required, most parents (84%) say they want it to be required in Massachusetts schools.

Parents want state to require use of evidence-based reading approaches in schools

% of parents who say _____ to evidence-based requirement



Q: Do you think schools should be required to use evidence-based reading curriculum, which means curriculum materials that are proven to work in teaching students how to read, or not?

Sources of information on reading progress

- Parents predominantly rely on items directly linked to their child's teacher to understand their reading progress rather than on standardized sources such as MCAS or screeners

Parents rely on grades, teacher conferences to understand progress

% of parents who say they use _____ to understand child's reading progress

	Overall
Grades/report cards	71%
Parent teacher conferences	67%
Conversations with my child	64%
Information from my child's teacher	60%
English Language Arts MCAS	33%
Literacy screeners	24%
Other	6%
Don't Know / Refused	1%

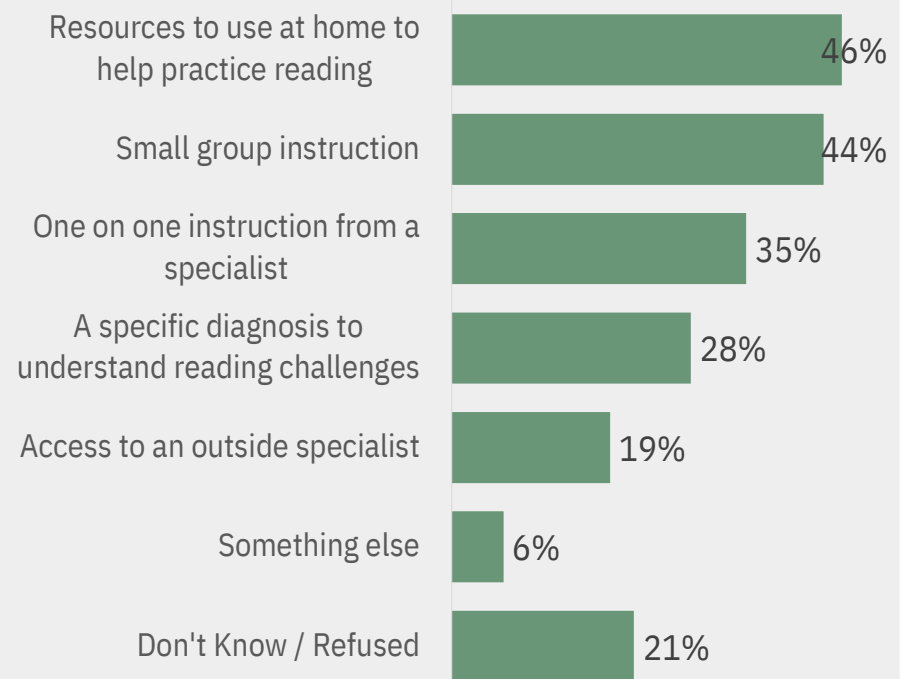
*Q: What information do you use to understand your **GRADE LEVEL** child's progress in reading and writing?*

Schools provide some reading and writing support

- For students who need support in reading, parents say resources to bring home, small group instruction and 1:1 instruction are most commonly provided by their school.
- Since access to a specialist are not commonly provided by the schools, parents seek outside help.

Home resources, small group instruction provided most

% who say schools provides _____ to those who need it



*Q: Does your **GRADE LEVEL** child's school provide any of the following resources to children who need help with reading?*

“

It would be nice to see where they are, right? Where they're supposed to be along that line for their reading level, compared to their classmates compared to the standards, but also being able to see where they're dipping and where they're jumping ahead ...”

-Parent that participated in the 2024 Spring Focus Group

Parents seek help outside of school to support reading

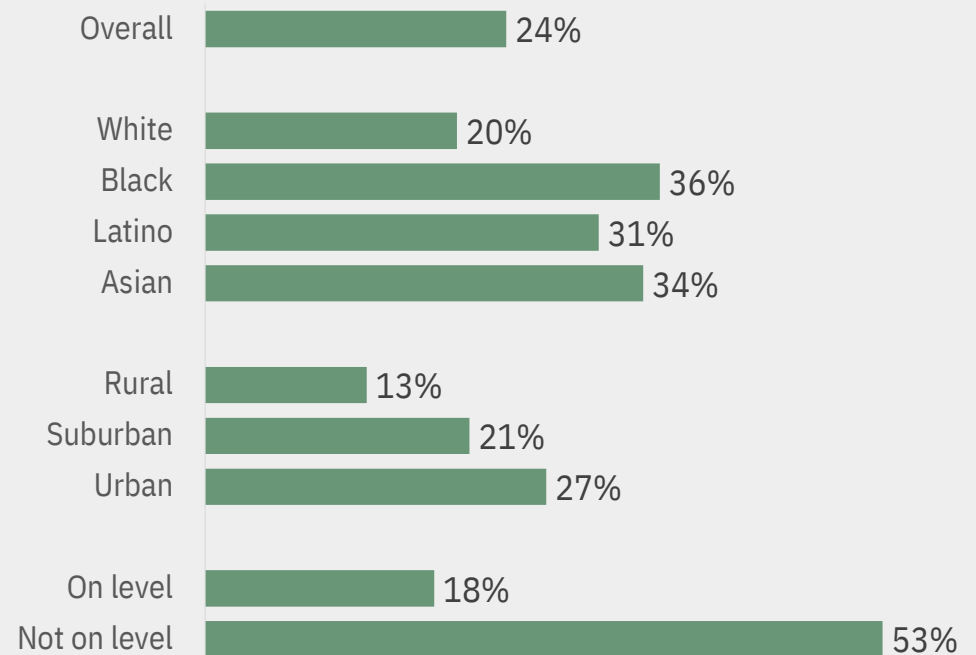
- Black, Latino and Asian parents and those in urban areas are more likely to seek additional support outside of the classroom.
- Among parents who say their child is not at expected reading levels, 53% report seeking outside support.

“Half the people couldn't even attend her IEP meeting because they had to substitute for classes that had no teachers. **And I have paid out of pocket for a private reading tutor since Covid, so since 2020.**”

-Parent from Spring statewide focus group

Who is seeking outside help with reading

% who seek outside help for child's reading progress



Q: Have you ever looked for help outside of school to support your **GRADE LEVEL** child's reading progress? (For example, hired a tutor, enrolled in extra reading classes outside of school, got an outside assessment, etc.)

“

“My concern is that the school is not teaching as they should. I do my own research and help my child, but the school curriculum is not as good”

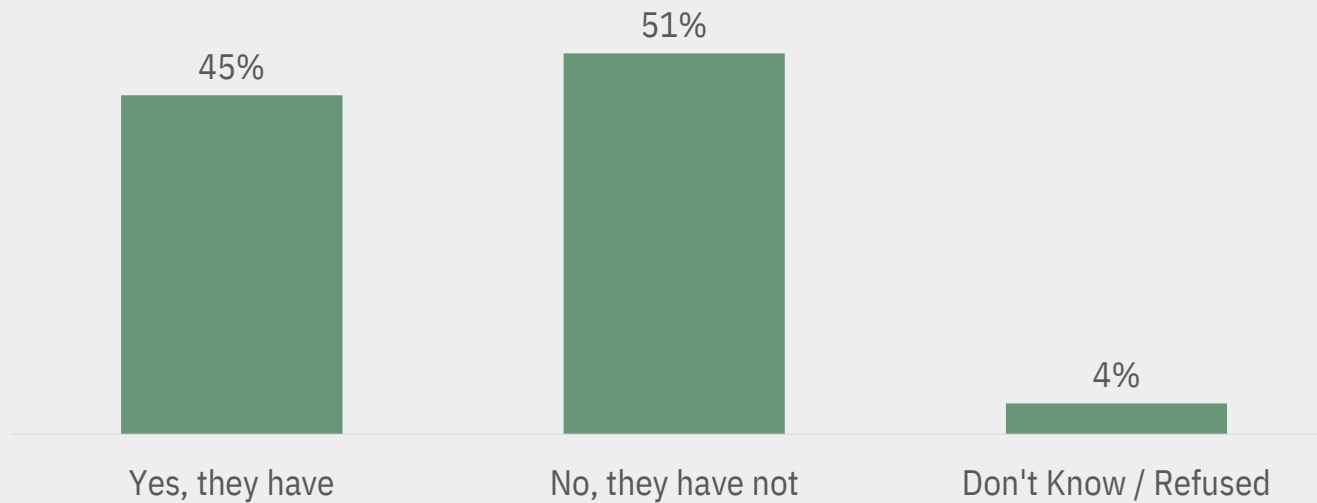
-Parents that participated in the 2024 Spring MPG poll

Some pediatricians discuss reading development

- About half of parents (45%) said their child's pediatrician has discussed their child's reading development with them and 51% said they have not.

Parents are split on receiving reading development advice from pediatricians

% of parents who say their pediatrician has/has not discussed reading development



*Q: Has your **GRADE LEVEL** child's pediatrician ever discussed with you how you can support your child's reading development at home?*

Pediatricians mainly recommended practice at home

- Among parents who say their child's pediatrician has discussed reading development, 83% said reading and 61% said talking with child was recommended.

Pediatricians recommending reading, talking with child as top supports

% of parents who said pediatrician recommended _____

	Overall
Reading with your child	83%
Talking with your child	61%
Introducing vocabulary	45%
Oral story time	38%
Singing songs	36%
Repeating your child's sounds and encouraging them to repeat yours	33%
Reciting nursery rhymes	25%
Other	8%
Don't Know / Refused	2%

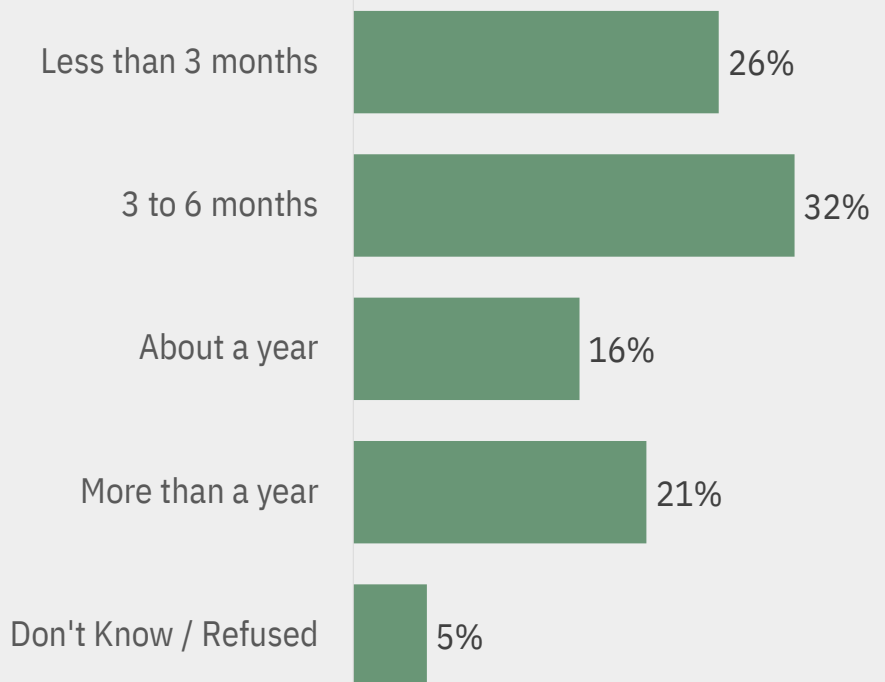
*Q: What kinds of activities or supports did your **GRADE LEVEL** child's pediatrician recommend? **SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.***

Parents say dyslexia diagnoses take time

- For 58% of parents, it took within 6 months to receive a formal diagnosis for dyslexia.
- Once diagnoses are received, children then can get services to support their individual needs.

Most parents received diagnosis within 6 months

% who say diagnosis took _____ to get



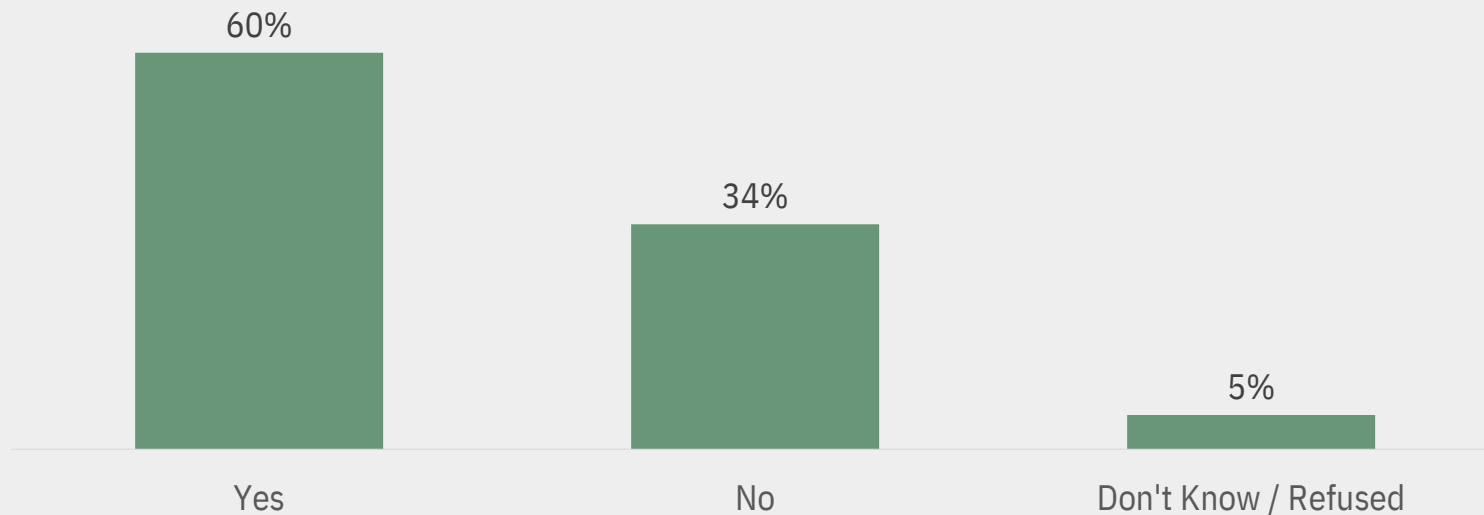
*Q: From the time you noticed your **GRADE LEVEL** child was struggling to read, how long did it take you to get a diagnosis?*

Not all students with dyslexia receiving supports

- While 60% of parents say their child with dyslexia receives specific supports, 34% say their child is not receiving any.

Over half of parents said child with dyslexia received supports, a third did not

% of parents who say child does/does not receive supports for dyslexia



*Q: Does your **GRADE LEVEL** child receive any specific supports for dyslexia?*

Focus Group Findings

"In Massachusetts, if you're not willing to pay privately, you are going to wait six months to a year to have an evaluation anywhere.... some of these kids are undiagnosed, so they're floating through their classes because they're either on a waiting list or they can't get the help they need because they don't have a doctor's note, even though the teacher might know what they need to do for this child, but they can't do it."

"I'm, satisfied with the progress, just not satisfied with the method. I just don't know what method they're using."

"Of course, I would like to get some feedback from the school saying, how my kids are doing. So I would appreciate if the school can, you know, share more feedback with parents."

Thank You!

Join the Conversation
#MAFamilyVoice



Twitter: @EdTrustMA and @MassINCPolling
Facebook.com/The MassINC Polling Group



The Education Trust



Barr
Foundation

THE **MassINC**
POLLING GROUP