



# Evidence from EPIC's Evaluation of the Partnership Model

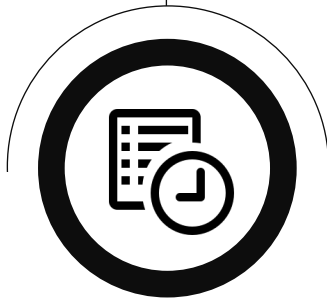
**Presented to:  
Michigan State Board of Education  
September 13, 2022**

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Faculty Director, EPIC*

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# Agenda



01

How were Partnership schools and districts faring prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?

02

How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect Partnership schools and districts?

03

How are Partnership schools and districts faring now?

04

Implications & Recommendations

# EPIC Study of the Partnership Model

## Data and Methods

- **Longitudinal**

- Four years: 2018-19 through 2021-22
- Three additional years to come, through 2024-25

- **Mixed-methods**

- Case studies of Partnership districts in years 1 and 2
- Interviews with Partnership district and PSA leaders in years 1- 4
- Surveys of Partnership district teachers & principals in years 1- 4
- Econometric analyses of student and teacher administrative data 2015-16 through fall 2021
  - Cohort 1 (Round 1) identified in 2016-17
  - Cohort 2 (Rounds 2 and 3) identified in 2017-18

# **Summary of Findings:**

## **How Were Partnership Schools & Districts Faring Prior to the Pandemic?**

# Many Elements of the Model Were Working as Intended

- **Many leaders believed Partnership facilitated important changes**
  - Partnership agreement development process allowed for strategic planning and provides direction
  - Fostered communication: “[Partnership] really has given us more of a language for work we needed to get done.”
  - Ability to use Partnership as a motivator
  - Review of Goal Attainment process enabled reflection and continuous improvement
- **School and district leaders reported receiving useful supports and assistance from MDE and the ISDs**
  - Shift from compliance-focused to a more “service-minded orientation.”
  - Valuable assistance from MDE staff; improvements over time
  - ISDs provide enhanced supports, especially salient for PSAs
- **21h and RAG funding were viewed as valuable but insufficient**
  - General dollars useful for addressing local needs
  - “Drop in the bucket”

# Many Elements of the Model Were Working as Intended

Before the COVID-19 Pandemic, Principals Reported Increased School Focus in Academic, Non-Academic, and Human Capital-Related Areas

## Academic

Curriculum and Instruction

Schoolwide Academic Performance

Data-Driven Instruction

## Non-Academic

Student Behavior

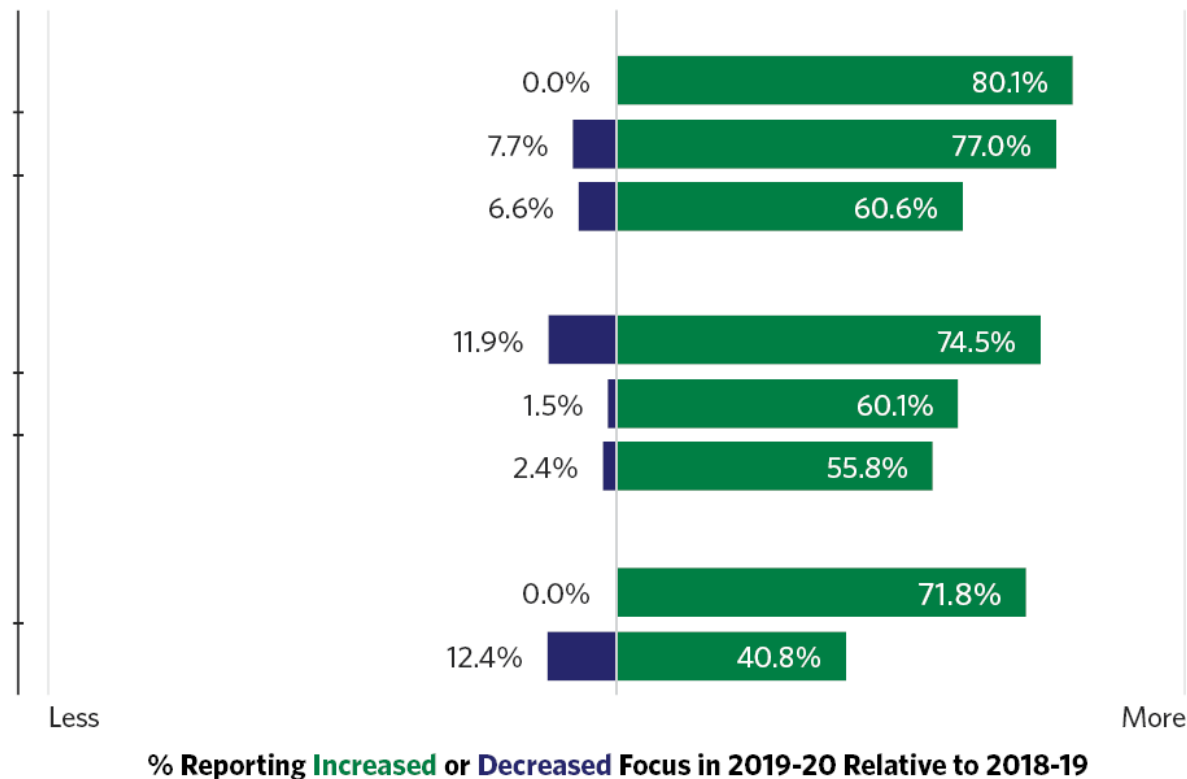
Family/Community Engagement

Student Attendance

## Human Capital

Professional Development

Teacher Hiring



Principals were asked about the extent to which their schools' focus changed from the 2018-19 school year to the 2019-20 school year. Bar heights represent the mean principal response in fall of 2019-20 SY.

# Human Capital Was a Pressing Challenge

- In 2018-19, 20 out of 21 Partnership leaders identified human capital issues as among the **most significant challenges** to turning around their districts
- Human capital issues impacted Partnership districts' ability to develop the capacity of their teaching force.
  - Professional development
  - School/district-specific knowledge
  - System-wide improvements

*“That kind of turnover—every time that happens—that puts us in a situation where we’re trying to rebuild things that had previously been functioning and working and now we’re trying to rebuild it.”*

**– Partnership District Leader**

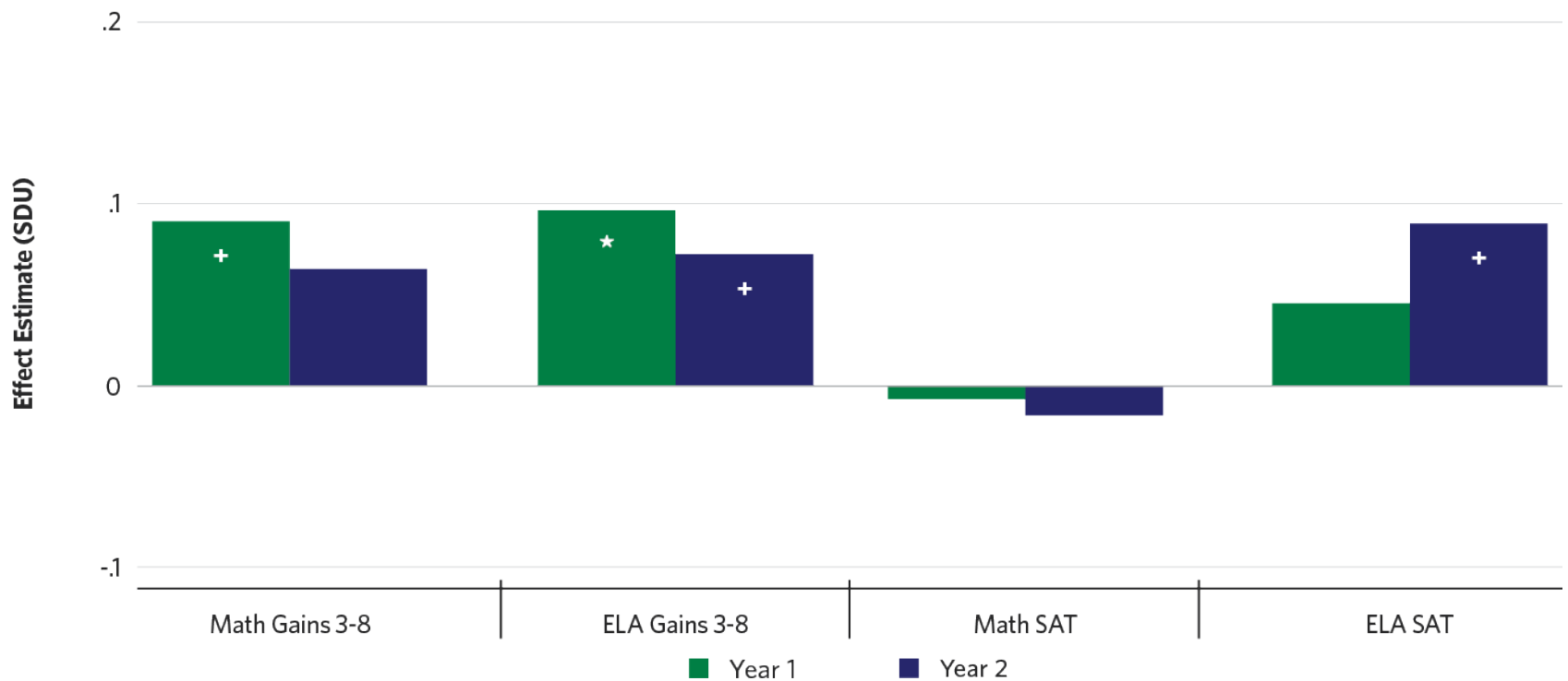
# Human Capital Was a Pressing Challenge

- Educators attributed human capital challenges to **lower compensation**, a lack of **locally available teachers**, & **Partnership status**
- Partnership **districts responded** to human capital challenges:
  - Using long-term subs to staff classrooms
  - Altering instructional programming
  - Focusing on teacher compensation & development
  - Attracting strong school leaders
  - Improving school culture – trust, belonging
  - Focus teachers' time on core work
  - Implementing Grow Your Own programs
  - Attracting “right fit” teachers



# Partnership and Student Achievement: Cohort 1 Math and ELA M-STEP

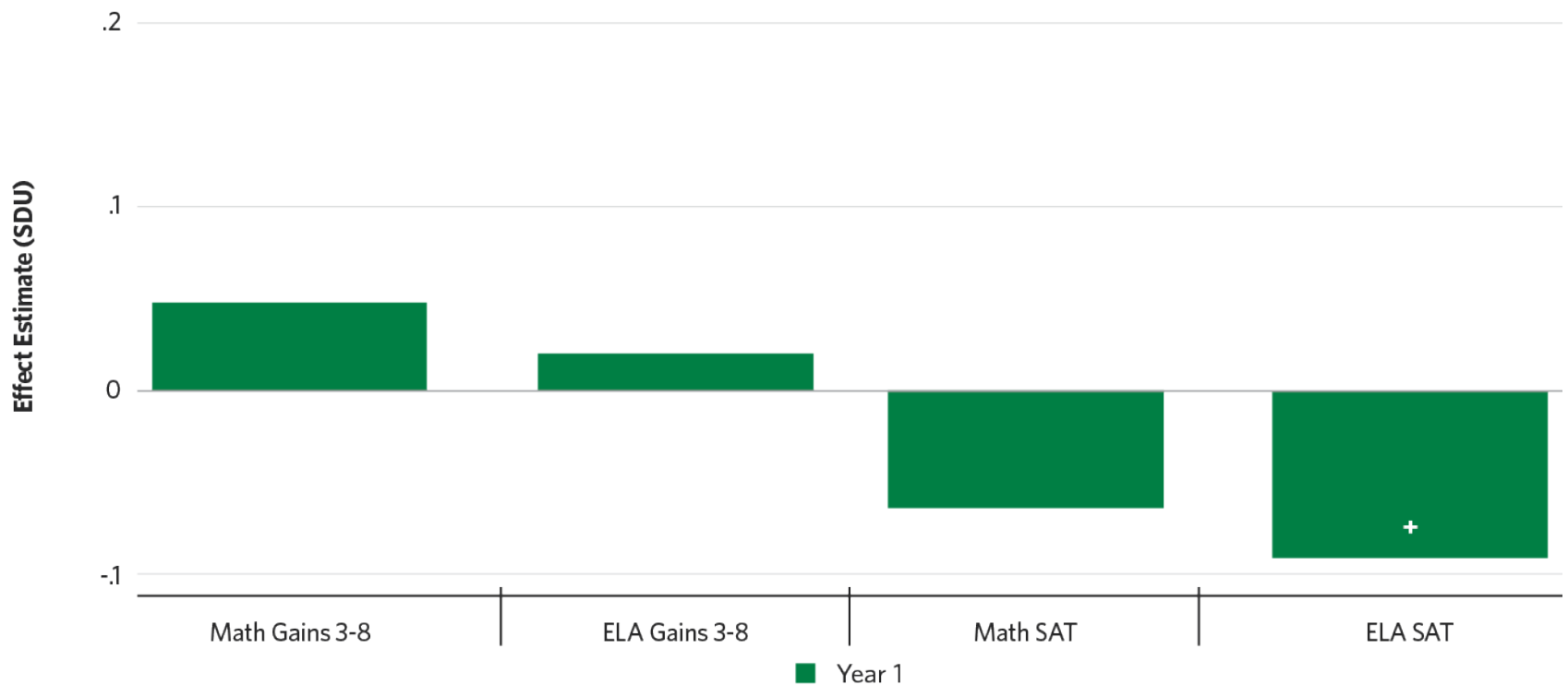
Cohort 1 Student Achievement Gains Improved in 1<sup>st</sup> Year of Implementation Relative to ID year, Tapering Off in 2<sup>nd</sup> Year



*Lowest Achieving Students Made the Strongest Achievement Gains*

# Partnership and Student Achievement: Cohort 2 Math and ELA M-STEP

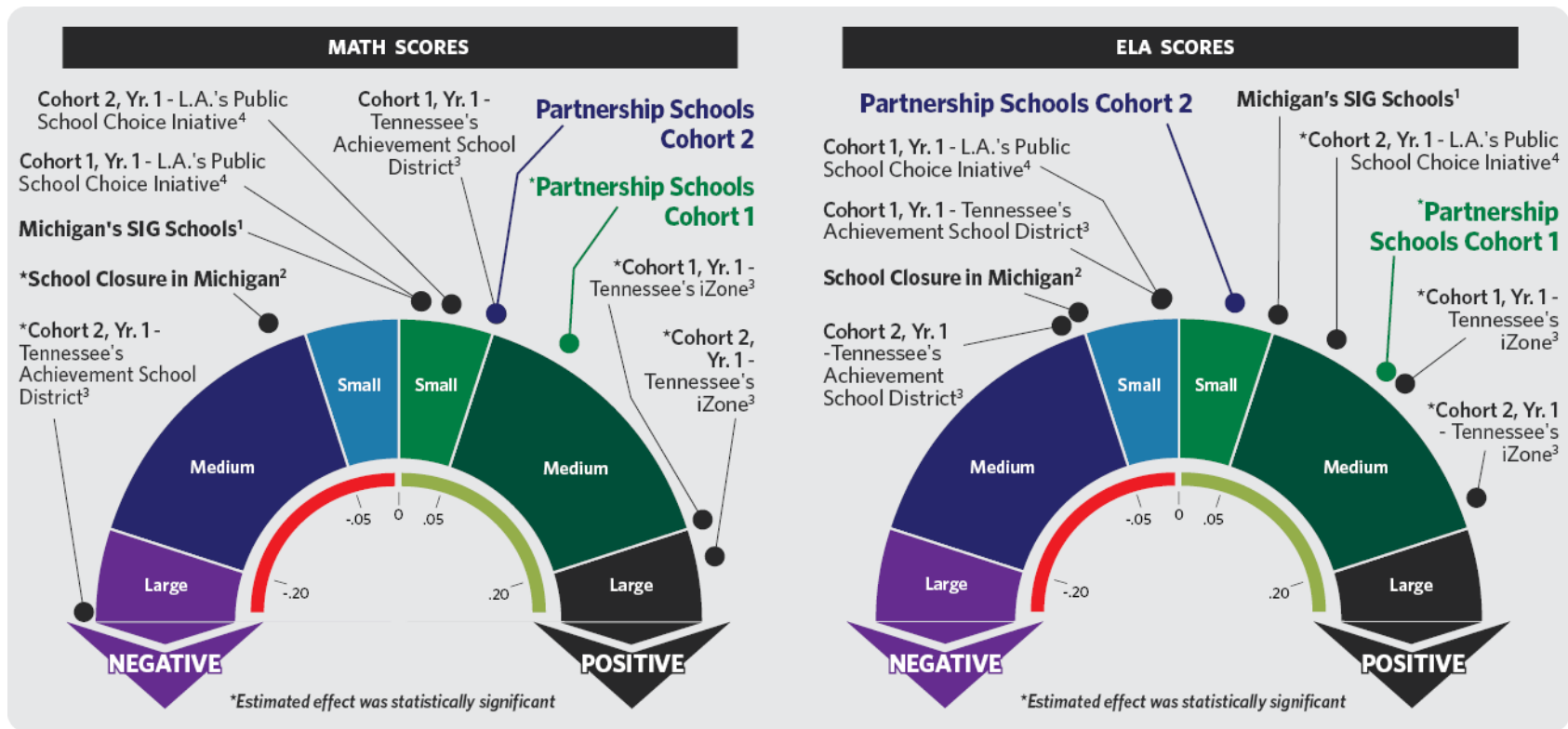
Cohort 2 Partnership Schools Fared  
Similarly to Comparison Schools



Lowest Achieving Students Made the Strongest Achievement Gains

# Partnership and Student Achievement: Math and ELA M-STEP

## Cohort 1, Year 2 Outcomes Compare Favorably to Similar Interventions; Cohort 2 Partnership Outcomes Less Positive



Source: 1Rice, J., Bojorquez, J. C., Diaz, M., Wendt, S. & Nakamoto, J. (2014); 2Brummet (2014); 3Zimmer, Henry & Kho (2017); 4Strunk, Marsh, Hashim, Bush-Mecenas & Weinstein (2016)

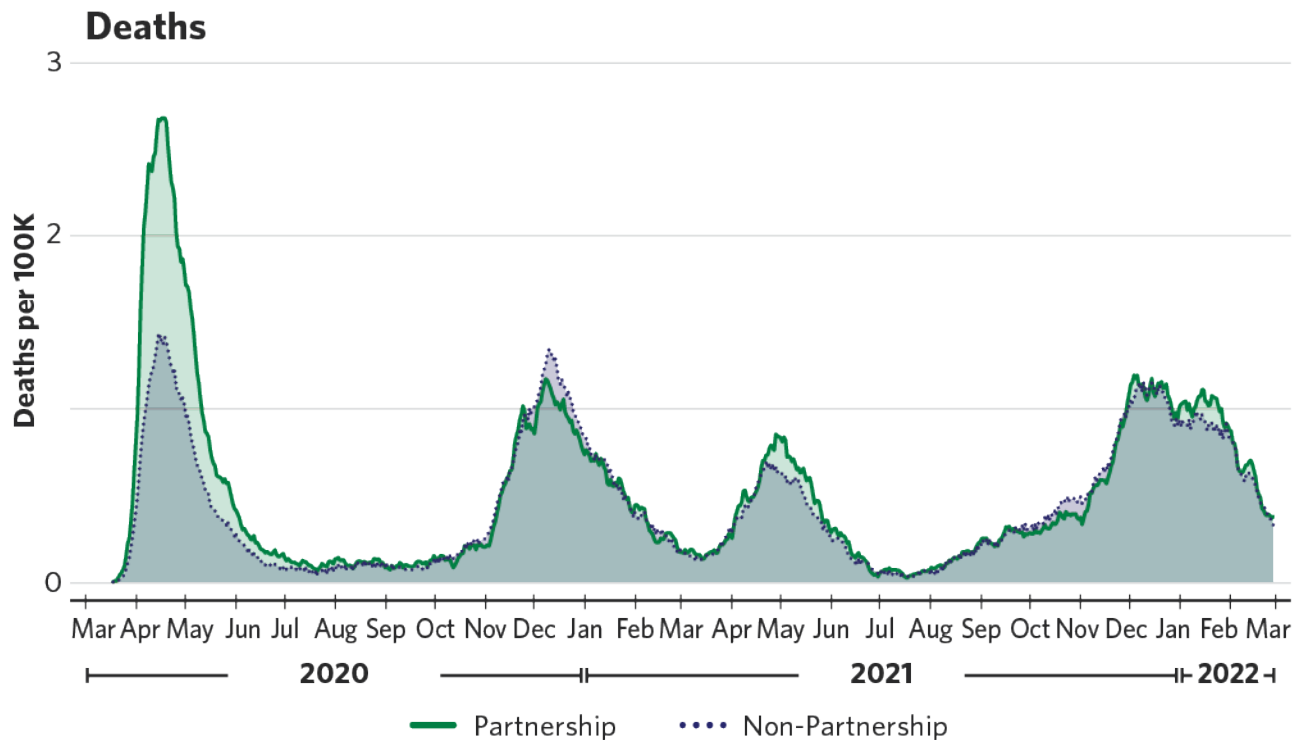
Note: Michigan SIG Evaluation (2014). This is a different source that was used last year, as this source includes year 2 outcomes.

# **Summary of Findings:**

## **How Did the COVID-19 Pandemic Affect Partnership Schools and Districts?**

# COVID-19 in Partnership Communities


## Partnership Communities Had Higher Test Positivity Rates and More Cases and Deaths Than the Rest of the State



**CASES PER 100K**

**21,422**  
Partnership Districts

**20,256**  
Non-Partnership Districts



**COVID-19**  
Cases and Deaths  
as of March 1, 2022

**DEATHS PER 100K**

**372**  
Partnership Districts

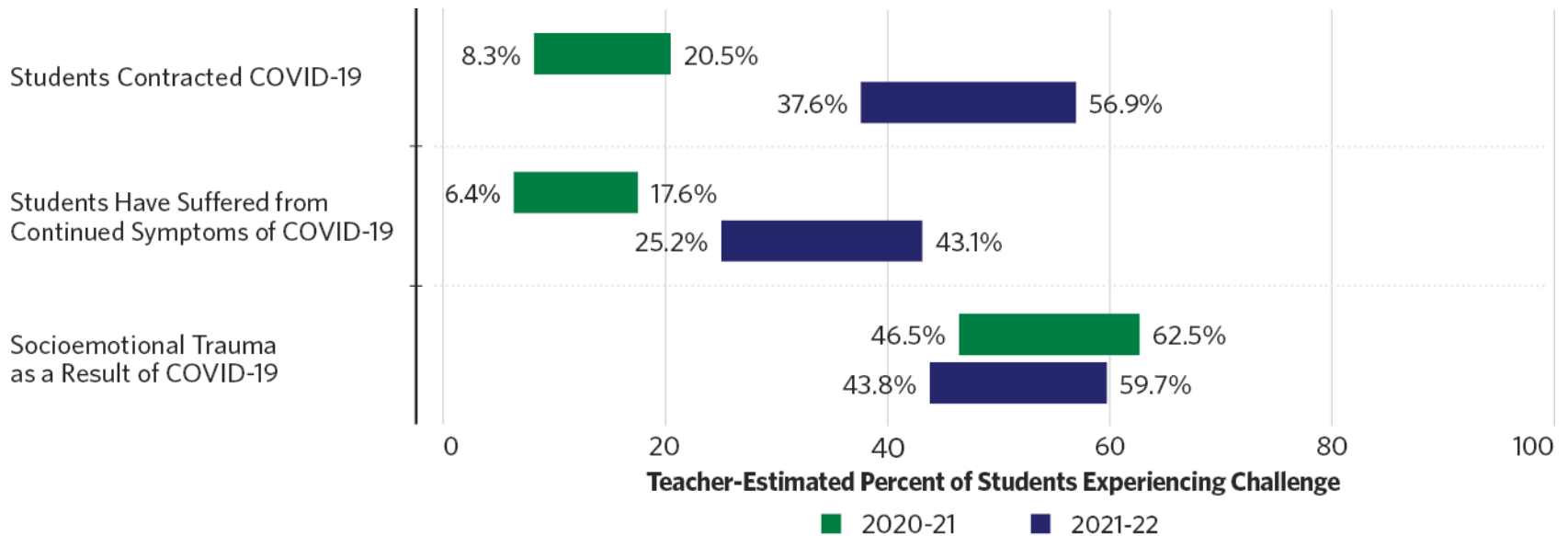
**318**  
Non-Partnership Districts

Note: Line graph shows seven-day rolling averages, weighted by student enrollment, from April 1, 2020 through March 1, 2022. Figures at bottom represent weighted district average cumulative rates as of March 1, 2022. Source: MDHHS.



# COVID-19 in Partnership Communities

## High Rates of Community Transmission Reverberated into the Homes of Students in Partnership Districts



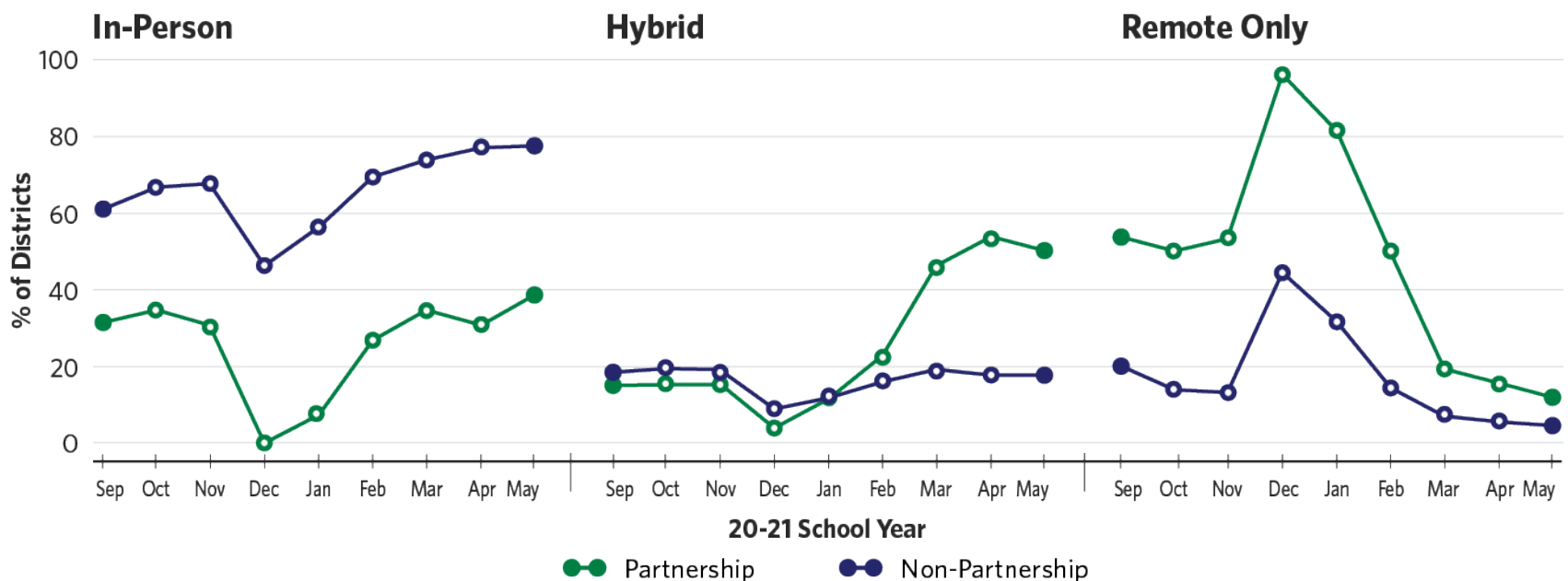
*Note: Bars provide estimated range of students experiencing each health-related challenge based on responses to the question, "In this school year, approximately what proportion of your students have experienced each of the following as a result of COVID-19?" Response options were <10%, 10-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, 76-90%, and >90%. This question was asked to teachers only. To create estimated ranges, we assign the minimum value of the selected response option as the lower bound and the maximum value as the upper bound. We then take the weighted mean of the lower and upper bounds, respectively. Source: Partnership teacher survey.*

*“[In] Fall 2020 I had to have students practice what to say when someone said a family member had died, ‘I am sorry for your loss.’ This is not part of any teacher’s curriculum... Our class lost three students between 2020 and 2022. This is a component that continues to live with all of us. The loss of loved ones... We lost staff members. **It is a formidable act to continue to teach curriculum in the face of death.** One student went to 11 funerals in 2020-2021. ... We comfort, we support families that the son died in his bed after lying down on a Friday evening, we cried with peers and students, and we continue to say, ‘Monday is today and the date is?’ We smile and we sob inside. We smile as the school bus arrives with half of our students and continue on our day.”*

**-Partnership District Teacher**

# COVID-19 and Schooling in Partnership Schools and Districts

## Partnership Districts Relied Heavily on Remote Instruction Throughout the 2020-21 School Year



**▶ Disruptions to in-person learning continued in 2021-22.**

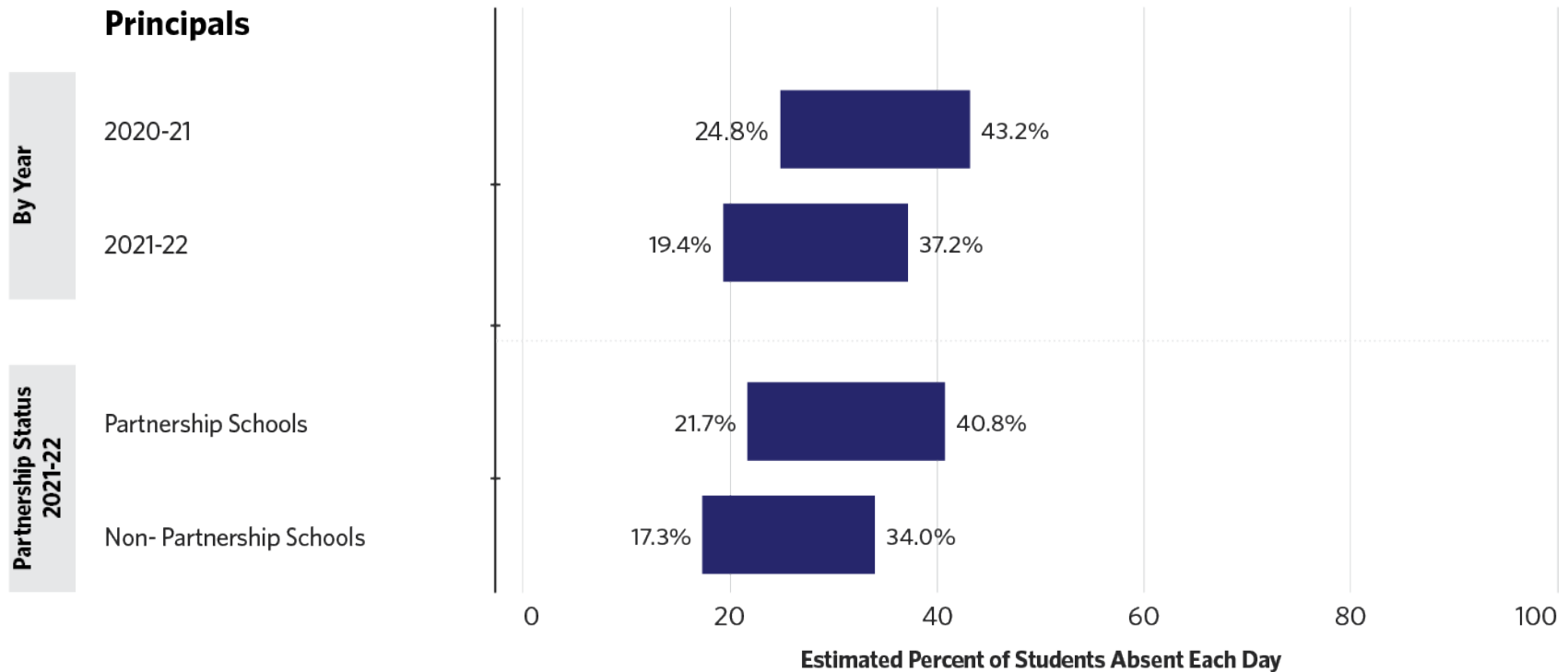


*Note: Marker heights represent the share of Partnership districts that reported plans to operate in a given modality in each month. Fully in-person option means districts have an option for students to attend in-person for all days. Hybrid classifies districts without a fully in-person option that have any students attending a hybrid model. Fully remote identifies districts in which all students attend remotely. Figures exclude virtual districts that were remote prior to the pandemic. Source: Reconfirmed Extended COVID-19 Learning Plans (ECOL).*



# COVID-19 and Schooling in Partnership Schools and Districts

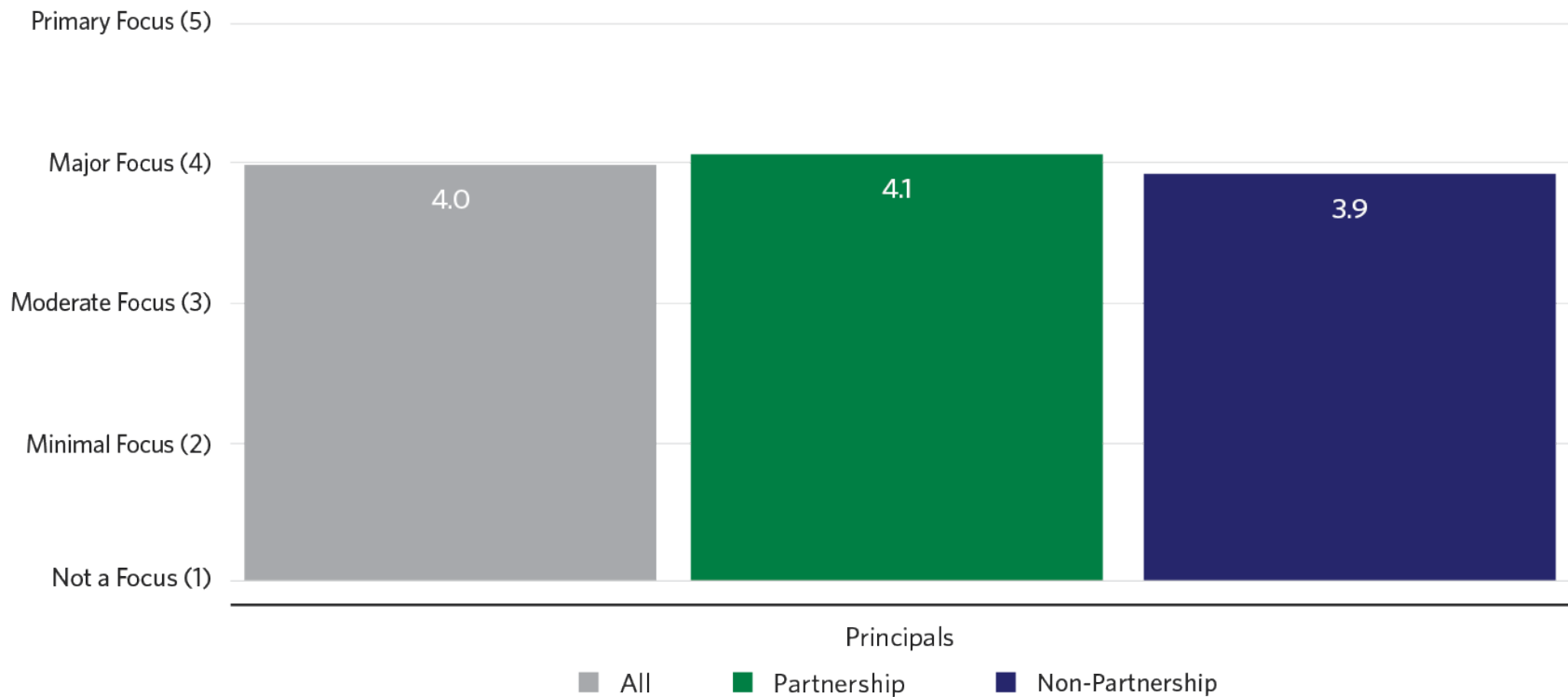
## Chronic Absenteeism Plagued Partnership Districts Throughout the Pandemic



Note: Principals were asked, "Think about student absences over the last month. Approximately what percentage of your students were absent from school (for all or part of the day) each day?" Response options were <10%, 10-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, 76-90%, and >90%. The figure to the left (right) of each bar represents the estimated mean lower (upper) bound.

# COVID-19 and Schooling in Partnership Schools and Districts

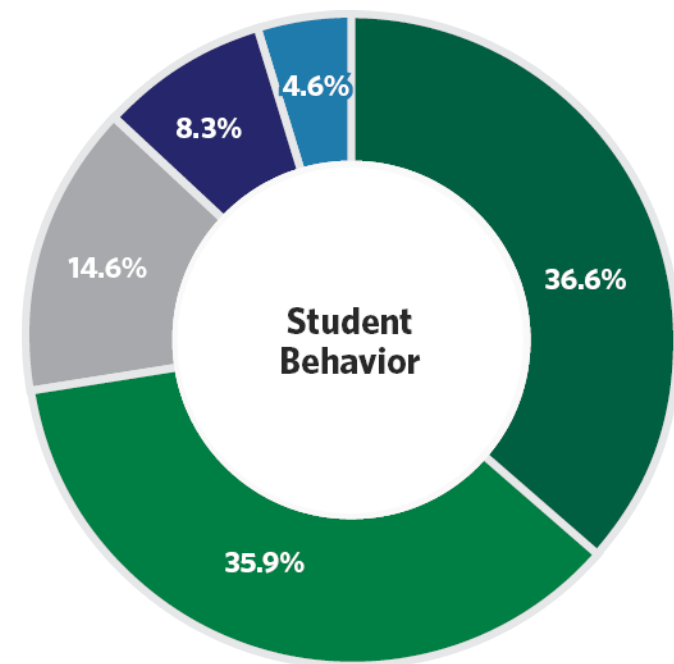
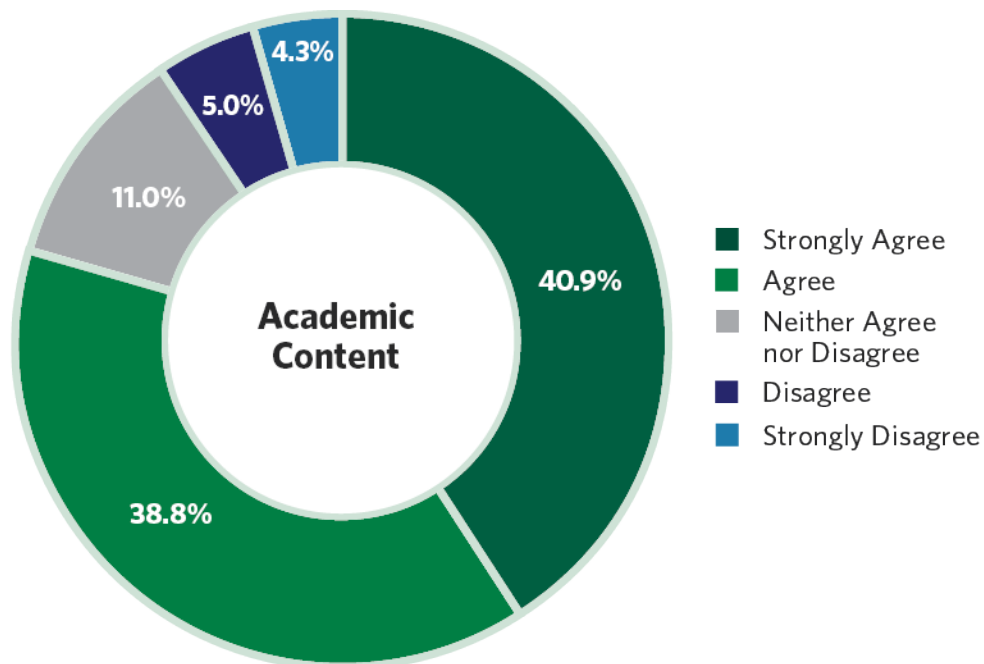
## Educators Responded by Focusing on Attendance Interventions



*Note: Teachers and principals were asked, "In the [current] school year, to what extent are each of the following areas a focus in your school?" Bar heights provide means of teacher (left panel) and principal (right panel) responses to the response item "Student attendance interventions." Source: 2021-22 Partnership teacher and principal surveys.*

# COVID-19 and Schooling in Partnership Schools and Districts

## Partnership Students Struggled With Academic Content and Behavior Given Pandemic-Related Interruptions to Schooling



*Note: Teachers were asked the extent to which they agreed that "students in this school are struggling with academic content given pandemic-related interruptions to learning." Source: 2022 Partnership teacher survey.*

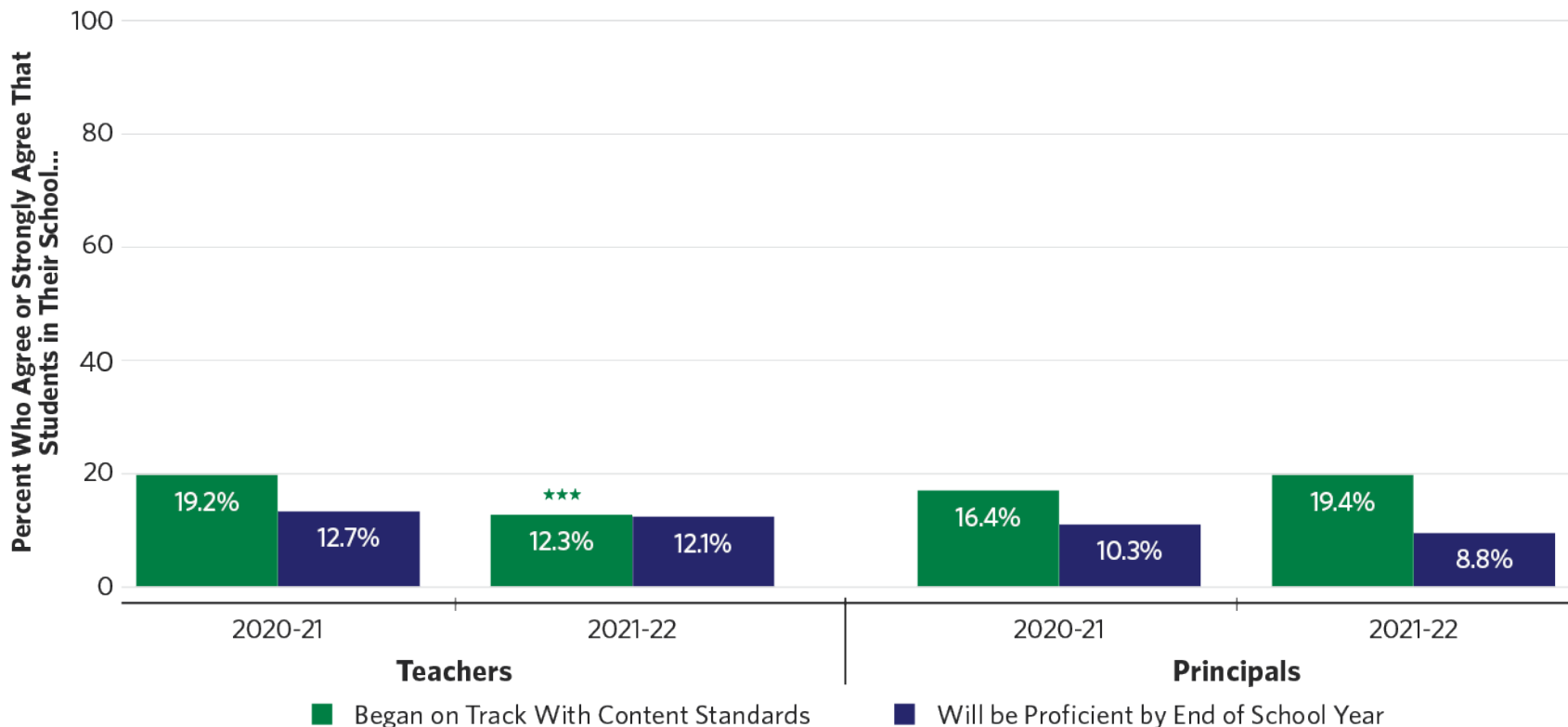
*Note: Teachers were asked about the extent to which they agreed with the statement, "Students in this school are struggling to exhibit appropriate behavior given pandemic-related interruptions to schooling." Source: 2022 Partnership teacher survey.*

# **Summary of Findings:**

## **How Are Partnership Schools and Districts Faring Now?**

# Partnership and Student Achievement During the Pandemic

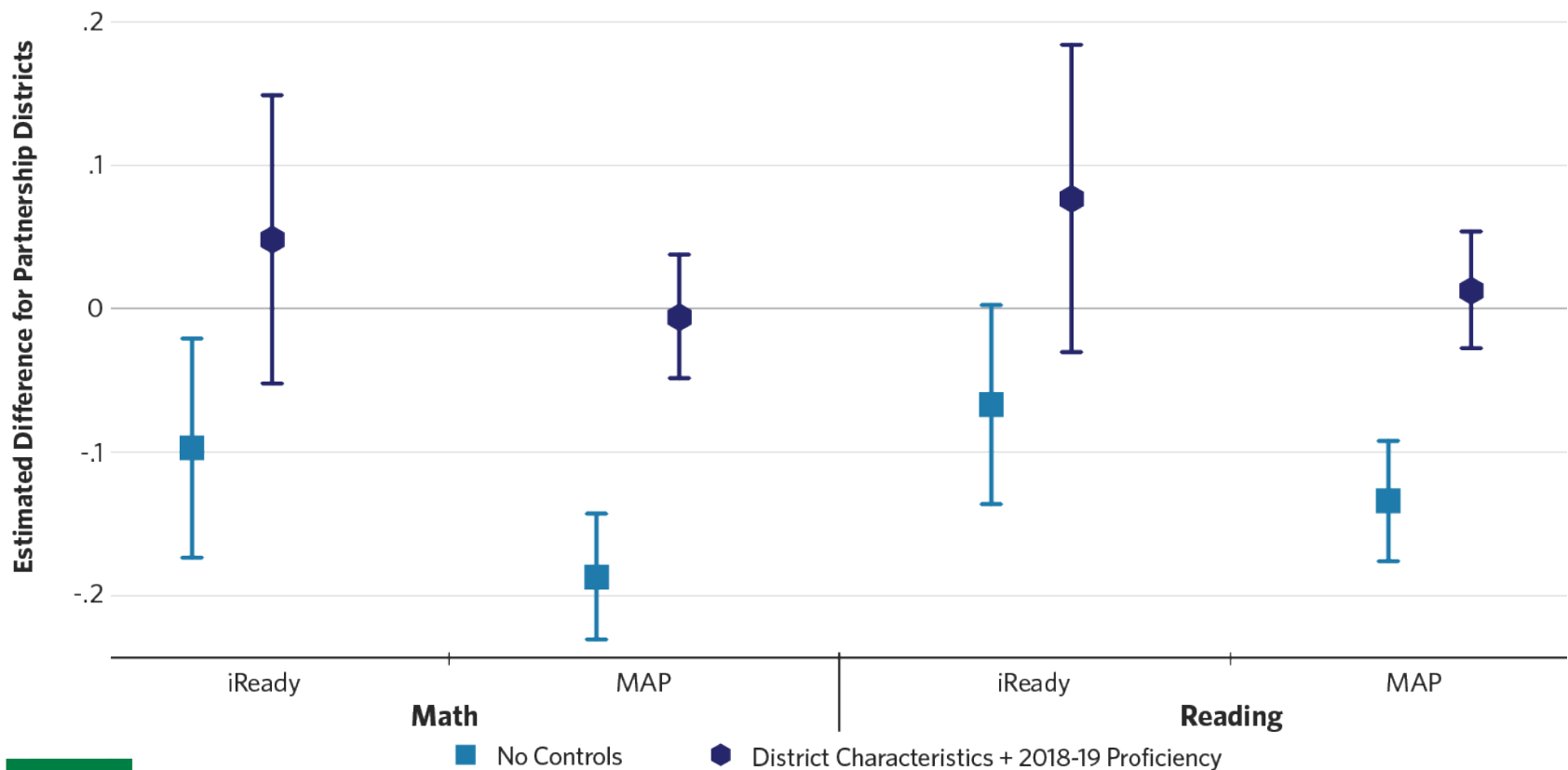
## Educators Estimated that Students Started Behind and Would End Pandemic School Years Without Meeting Content Standards



Note: Educators were asked "To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?" Bars show the percent of educators who agreed or strongly agreed that students in this school began this school year on track with content standards and by the end of the school year students in this school will be proficient in content standards. Stars denote statistical significance of corrected F-tests comparing probability of agreeing or strongly agreeing in 2020-21 relative to 2021-22. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , +  $p < 0.10$ . Source: Partnership teacher and principal surveys.

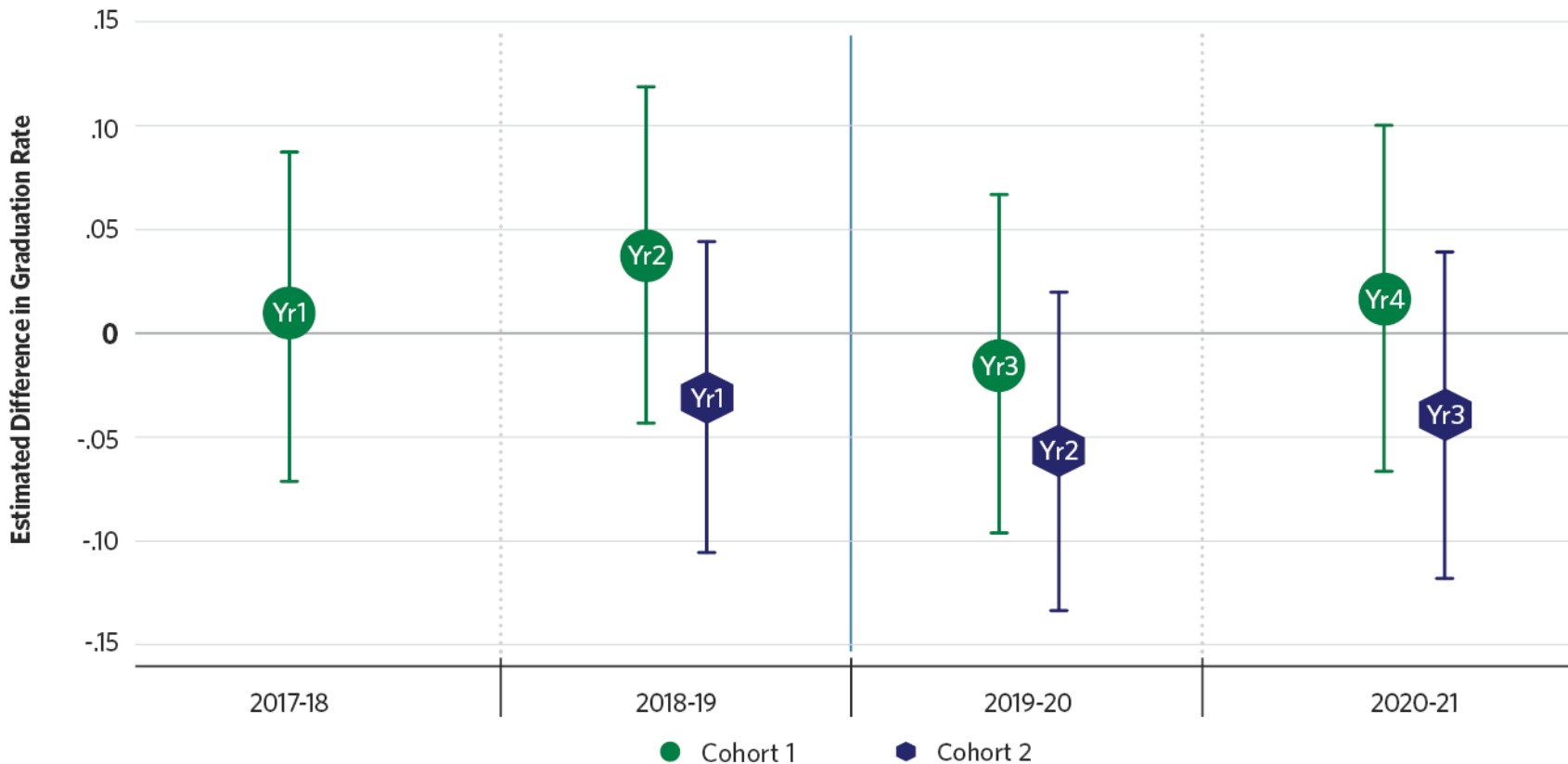
# Partnership and Student Achievement During the Pandemic

Benchmark Growth Was Slow in 2020-21, but Slightly Better in Partnership than Similar Districts



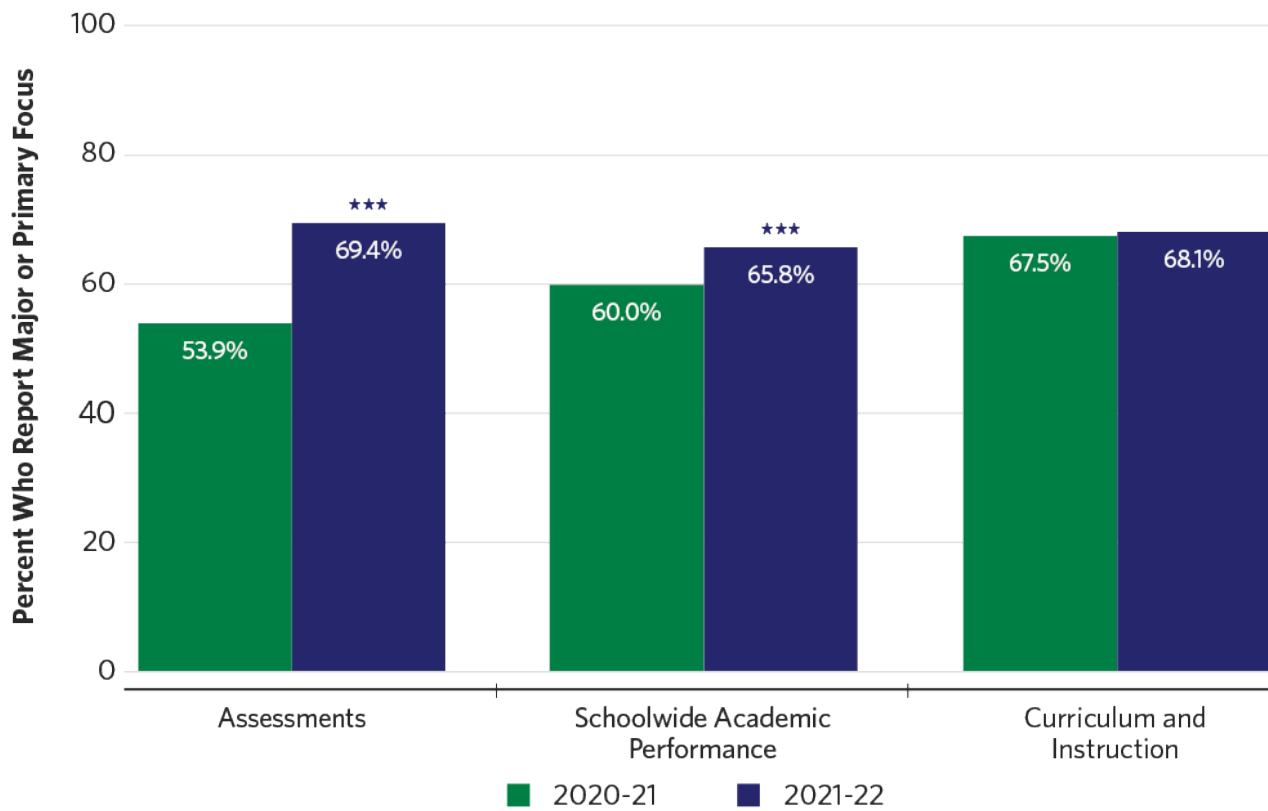
# Partnership and Graduation Rates, Before and During the Pandemic

## Cohort 1's Early Progress on Graduation Rates Stalled During the Pandemic



# Partnership Schools and Districts Are Focusing on Academics

## Partnership Teachers Report Focusing on Several Areas to Improve Academic Performance, Especially in 2021-22



Educators Reported a Major or Primary School Focus on Literacy:

**71%**

Teachers

— and —

**83%**

Principals

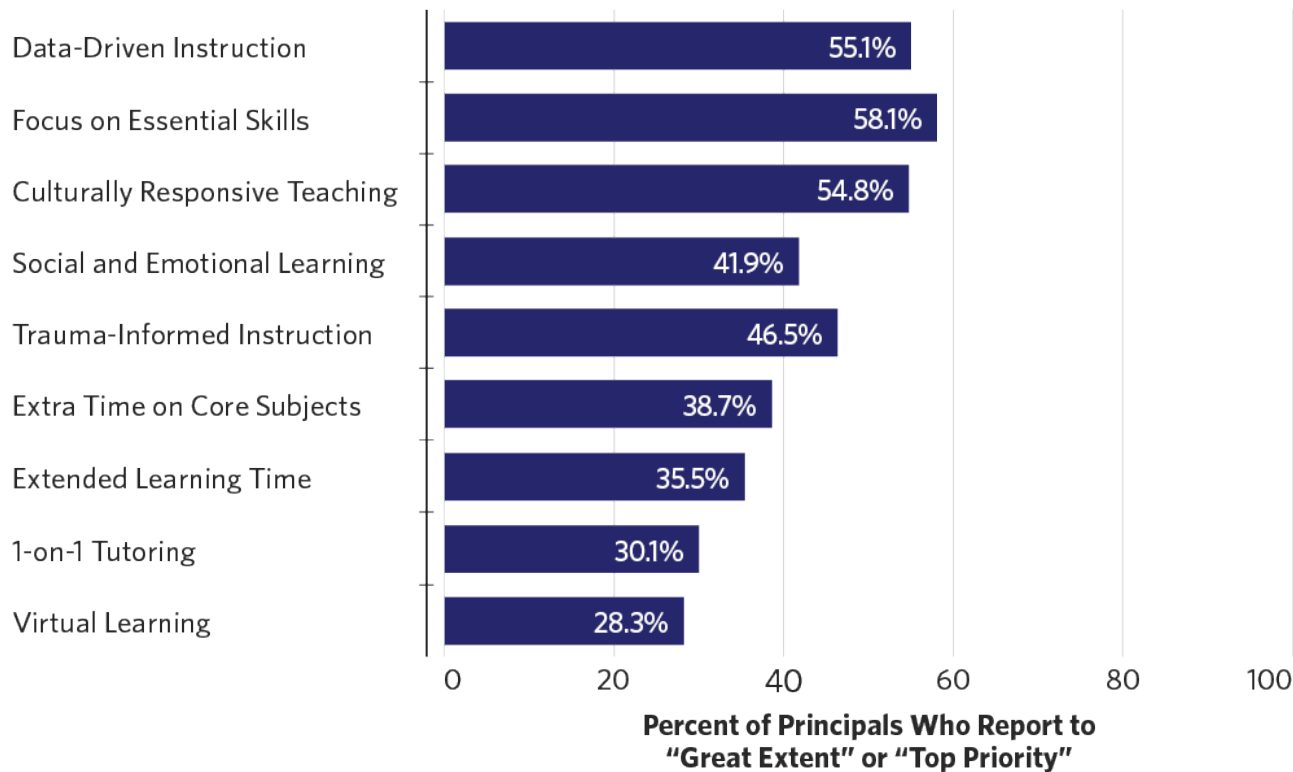


Note: Teachers were asked, "To what extent are each of the following areas a focus in your school?" Response options were "not a focus," "a minor focus," "a moderate focus," "a major focus," or "a primary focus." Percentages reflect the share of Partnership district educators selecting a major or primary focus for each item in each year.



# Partnership Schools and Districts Are Focusing on Academics

Partnership Principals Report Using Varied Strategies to Address Student Needs, Many of Which Were Popular Before the Pandemic



**35%**  
of Principals  
Report Providing  
Peer-to-Peer  
Tutoring

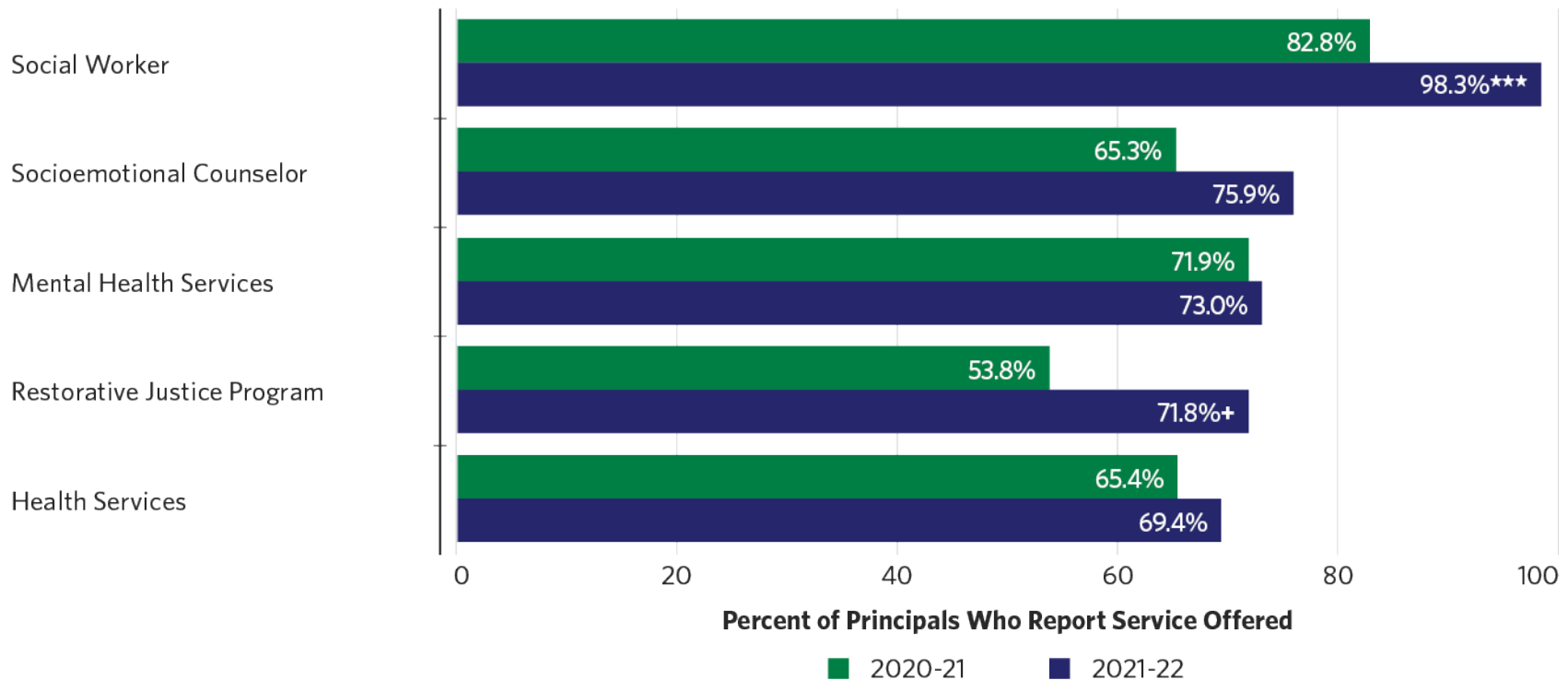
— and —

**67%**  
of Principals  
Report Providing  
Tutoring  
by Adults



*Note: Principals were asked, "To what extent is your school using each of the following strategies to accelerate learning and/or address student needs?" Response options were, "Not at all," "to a minimal extent," "to a moderate extent," "to a great extent," or "this is a top priority at our school."*

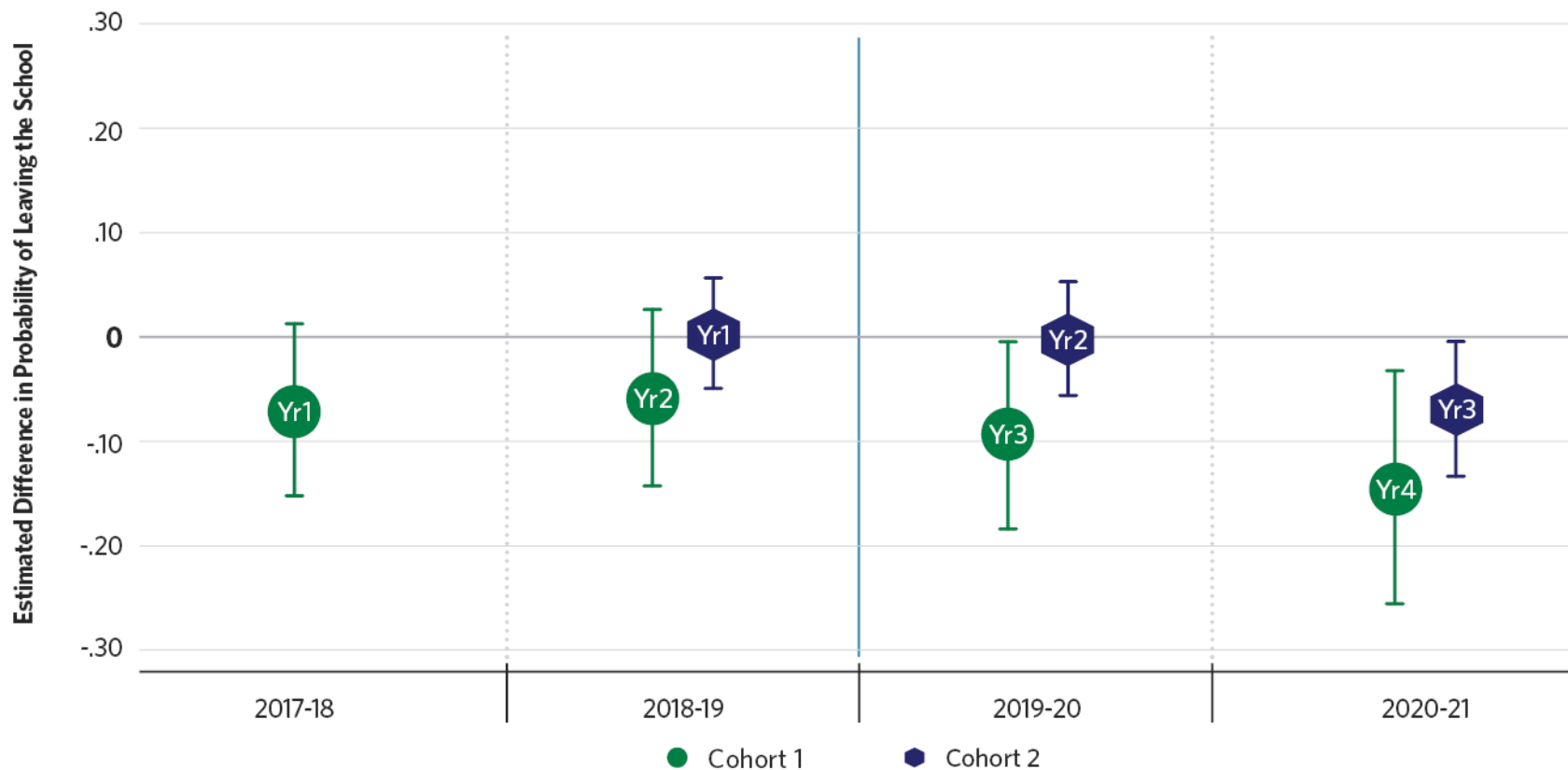
# Partnership Schools and Districts Are Working to Address Socioemotional, Mental Health, and Behavioral Needs



Note: Principals were asked, "From the following list, please identify the services that are made available to your students by your school/district." Percentages reflect the share of principals reporting that the school or district offers each service or resource. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , + $p < 0.10$

# Teacher Turnover in Partnership Schools

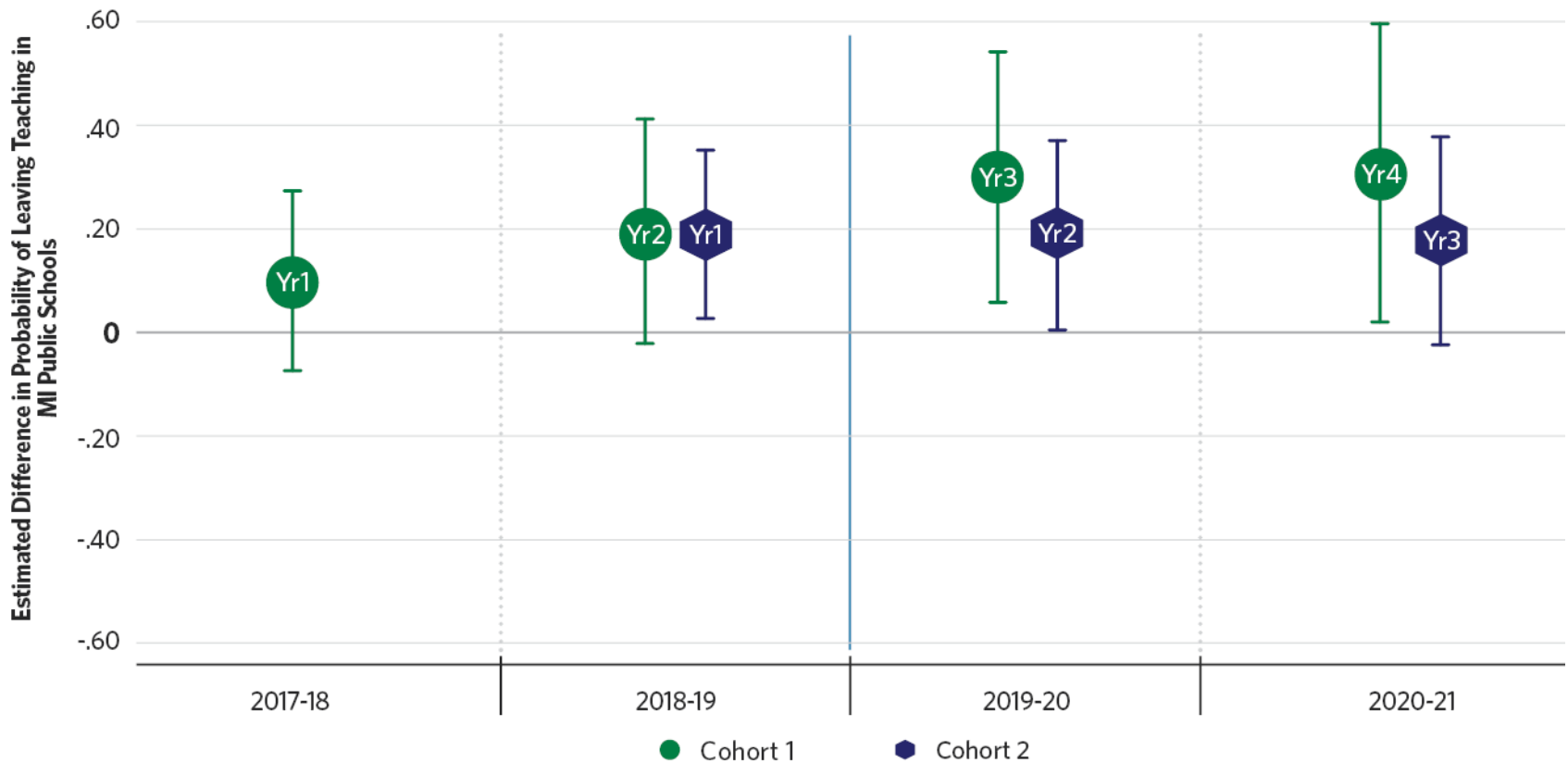
Relative to Comparison Schools, Partnership School *Teacher Turnover Rates Decreased* During the Pandemic



Note: Markers denote coefficient estimates on interaction between Partnership cohort and implementation years in a difference-in-differences model. Spikes represent 95% confidence intervals. Placemarkers on horizontal axis denote years impacted by COVID-19 for each cohort.

# Teacher Turnover in Partnership Schools

Although Fewer Partnership Teachers Left the MI Workforce in 2020-21 Than the Year Prior, *Exits Remained Greater Than in Comparison Schools*



Note: Markers denote coefficient estimates on interaction between Partnership cohort and implementation years in a difference-in-differences model. Spikes represent 95% confidence intervals. Placemarkers on horizontal axis denote years impacted by COVID-19 for each cohort.

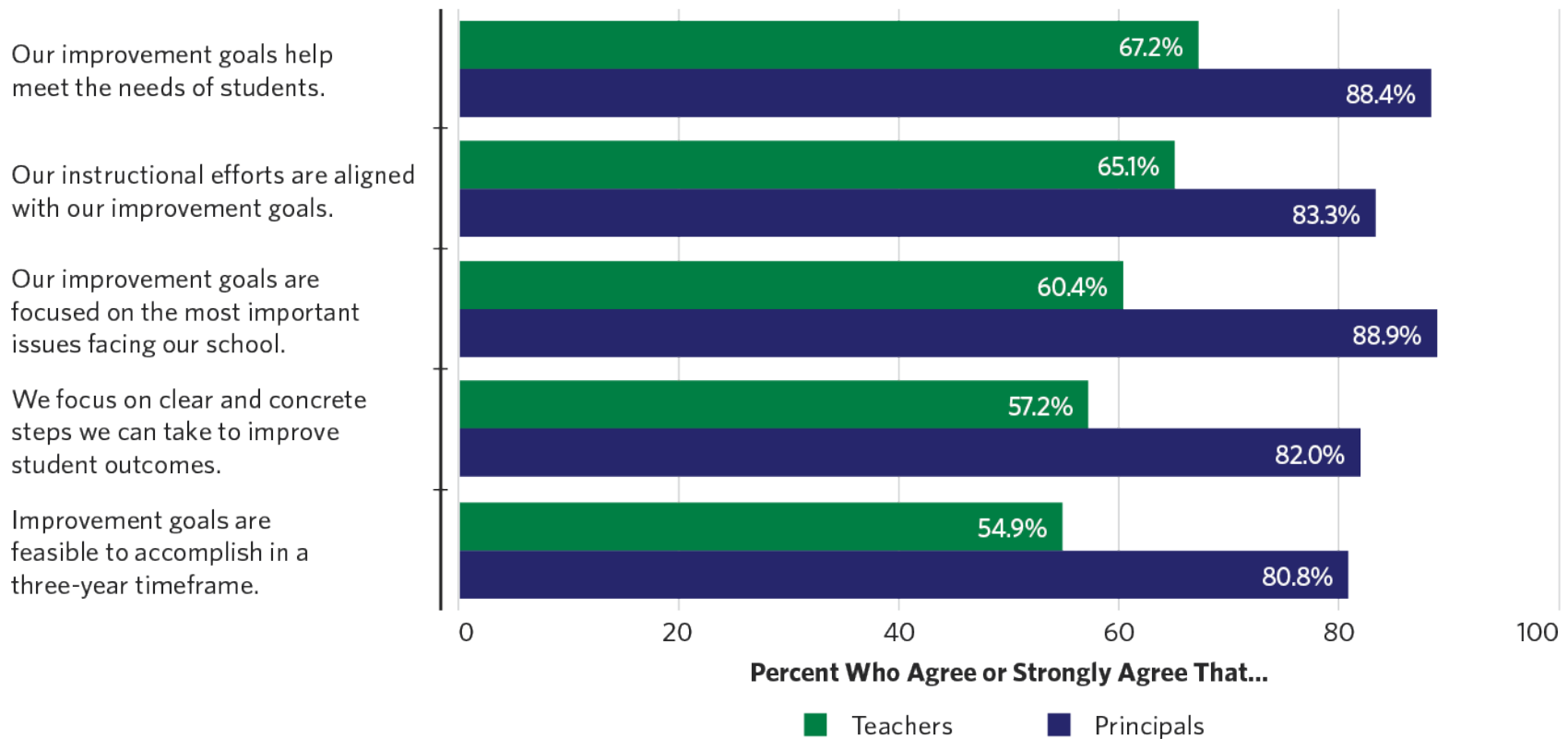
# Teacher Retention in Partnership Schools and Districts

Teachers Reported Staying in their Schools Because of Culture, Climate, Leadership, and Students; They Leave Because of Workload and Pay

- **Key factors in teachers' decisions to stay in their schools**
  - School leadership
  - Culture and climate
  - Their students
- **Key factors in teachers' decisions to leave their districts or the profession**
  - Workload
  - Pay
  - Accountability designation
  - Administration's treatment of teachers during the pandemic

# Educator Views of Partnership

## Partnership District Educators Believe in the Partnership Model



*Note: Teachers and principals were asked, "Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your organization's improvement goals." Bars denote the share of teachers and principals reporting that they agreed or strongly agreed with each statement. Source: 2022 Partnership survey.*

# Educator Views of Partnership

## Partnership is Viewed as a Supportive Capacity-Building Intervention

*"I just think the term 'partnership,' it has allowed us, when you talk about the evolution, it starts off on a positive note as opposed to starting off with a School Improvement Grant or it's a turnaround."*

**-Partnership Charter Leader**

*"It's given us resources and communications with the [state] Department of Education, not only through our liaison, but through when we did have the face-to-face kinds of meetings that [PAL] held. We were able to do workshops together and focus on areas. It's increased our... participation and relationship with [ISD]. It's been very supportive and good for us."*

**-Partnership District Leader**

# Implications and Recommendations

- **The Partnership Model is a promising turnaround reform and was helping improve systems and outcomes in Partnership schools and districts prior to the pandemic.**
- **The pandemic had an outsized impact on Partnership communities and schools, which stalled progress, though Partnership districts fared somewhat better than demographically similar districts during this period.**
- Continue supporting Partnership and other low-performing schools and districts (including those exiting Partnership).
- Assist Partnership educators and leaders in the use of evidence-based interventions to accelerate learning.
- Support Partnership schools' and districts' efforts to reduce student absenteeism.
- As the state focuses efforts on strengthening the educator pipeline and workforce, pay attention to ensuring Partnership schools and districts can recruit, retain, and support teachers.





**Education Policy Innovation Collaborative**

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION | MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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# Supplemental Slides

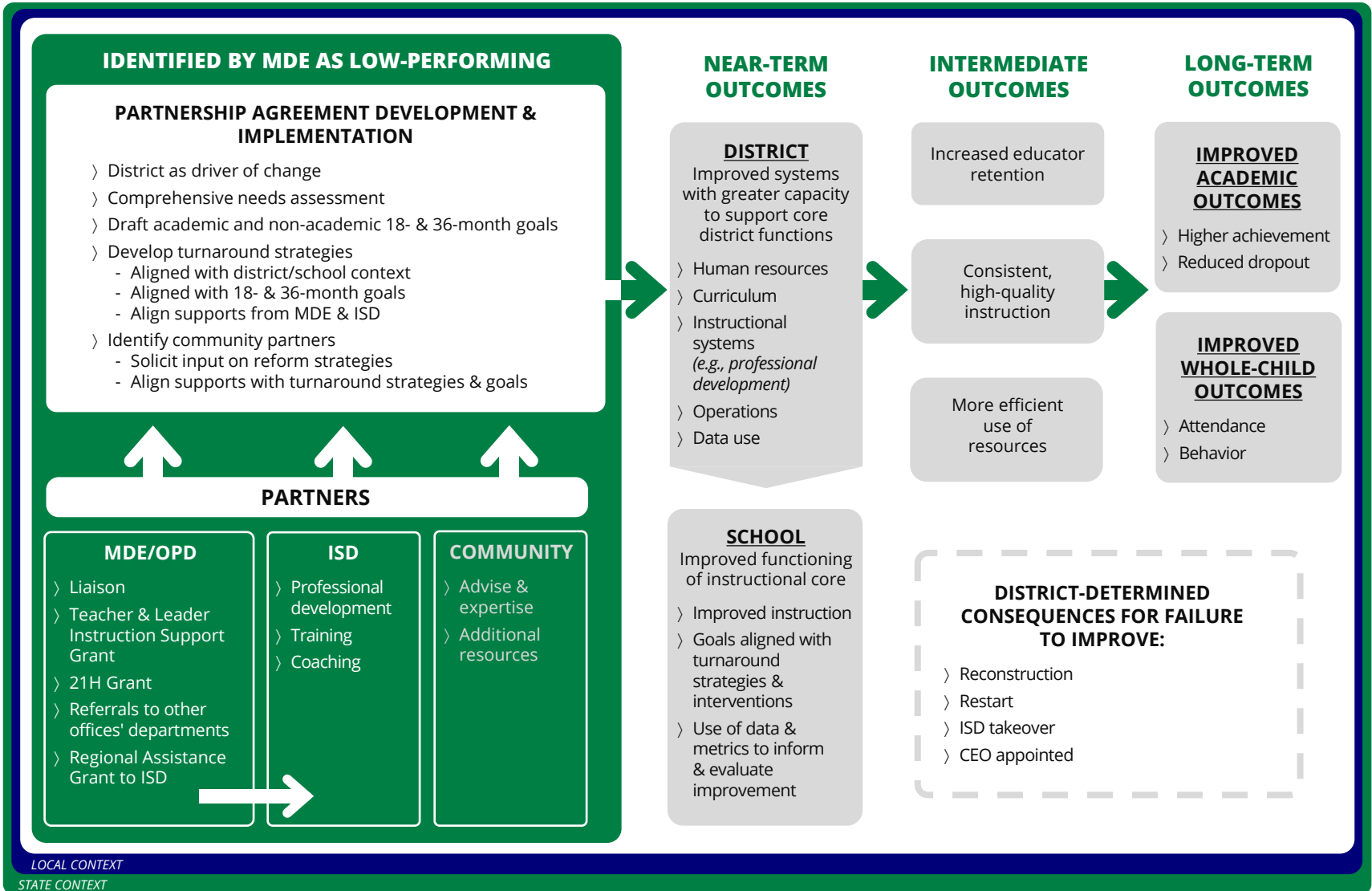


# BACKGROUND ON EPIC

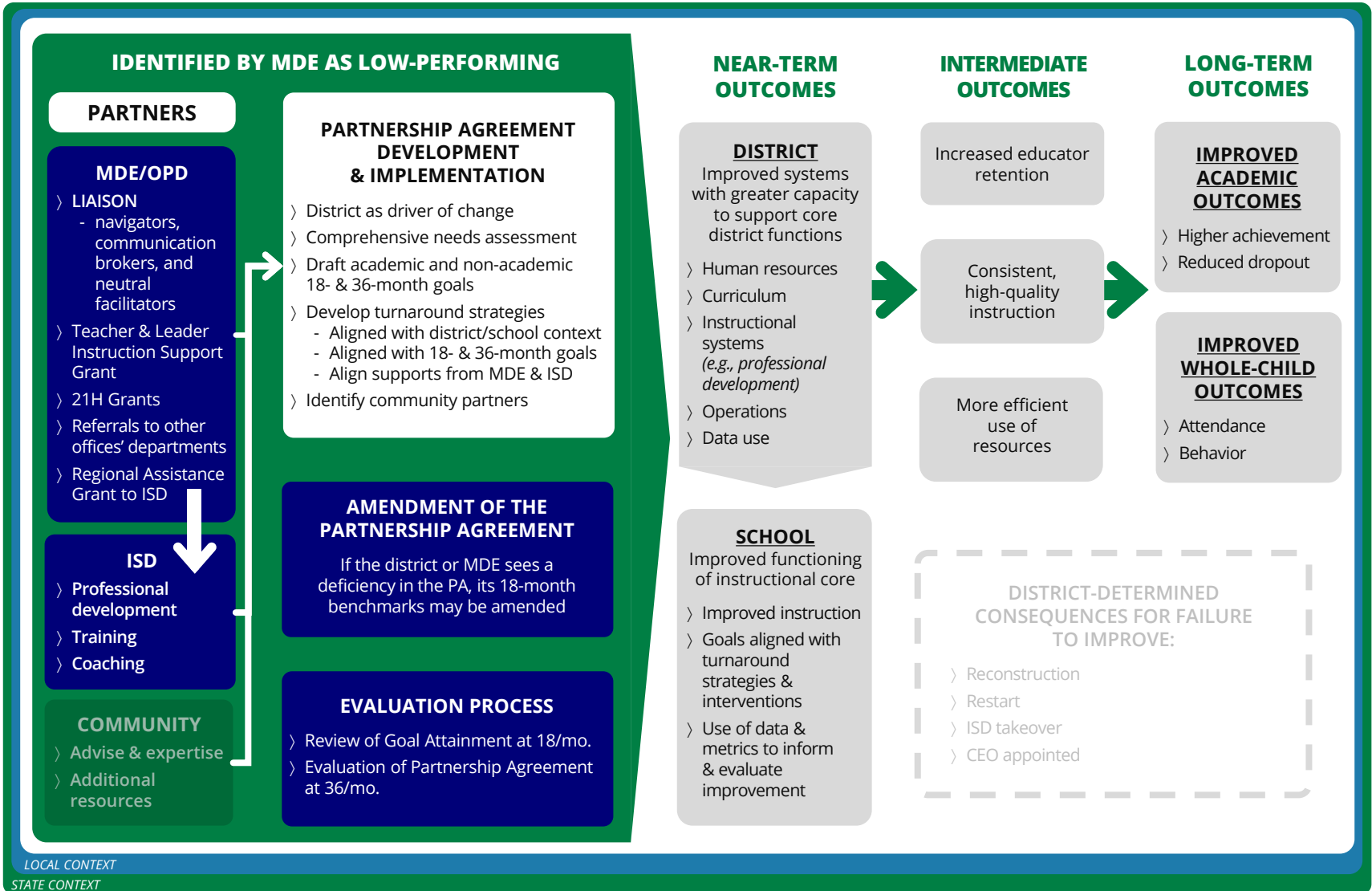


- The **Education Policy Innovation Collaborative (EPIC)** at Michigan State University is an independent, non-partisan research center that operates as the strategic research partner to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI).
- EPIC is devoted to **research with consequence** and the idea that rigorous evidence can improve education policy and, ultimately, students' lives.
- EPIC conducts **original research** using a variety of methods that include advanced statistical modeling, representative surveys, interviews, and case study approaches to **produce new insights** that decision-makers can use to create and implement policy.

# MICHIGAN'S PARTNERSHIP MODEL ORIGINAL THEORY OF CHANGE



# MICHIGAN'S PARTNERSHIP MODEL UPDATED THEORY OF CHANGE



# Human Capital Was a Pressing Challenge

## Turnover Impeded Partnership Districts' Improvement Efforts

*"We've been unable to have one program model implemented more than one year due to a turnover in either leadership and/or teachers. [...] There's the consistency issue, which prevents the model from being able to really take hold, and then there's the lack of talent."*

**- Partnership District Leader**

*"Spend all this money and time on professional development and then have to start from scratch with a new teacher who has not had that information because the other teacher left. It's a constant struggle."*

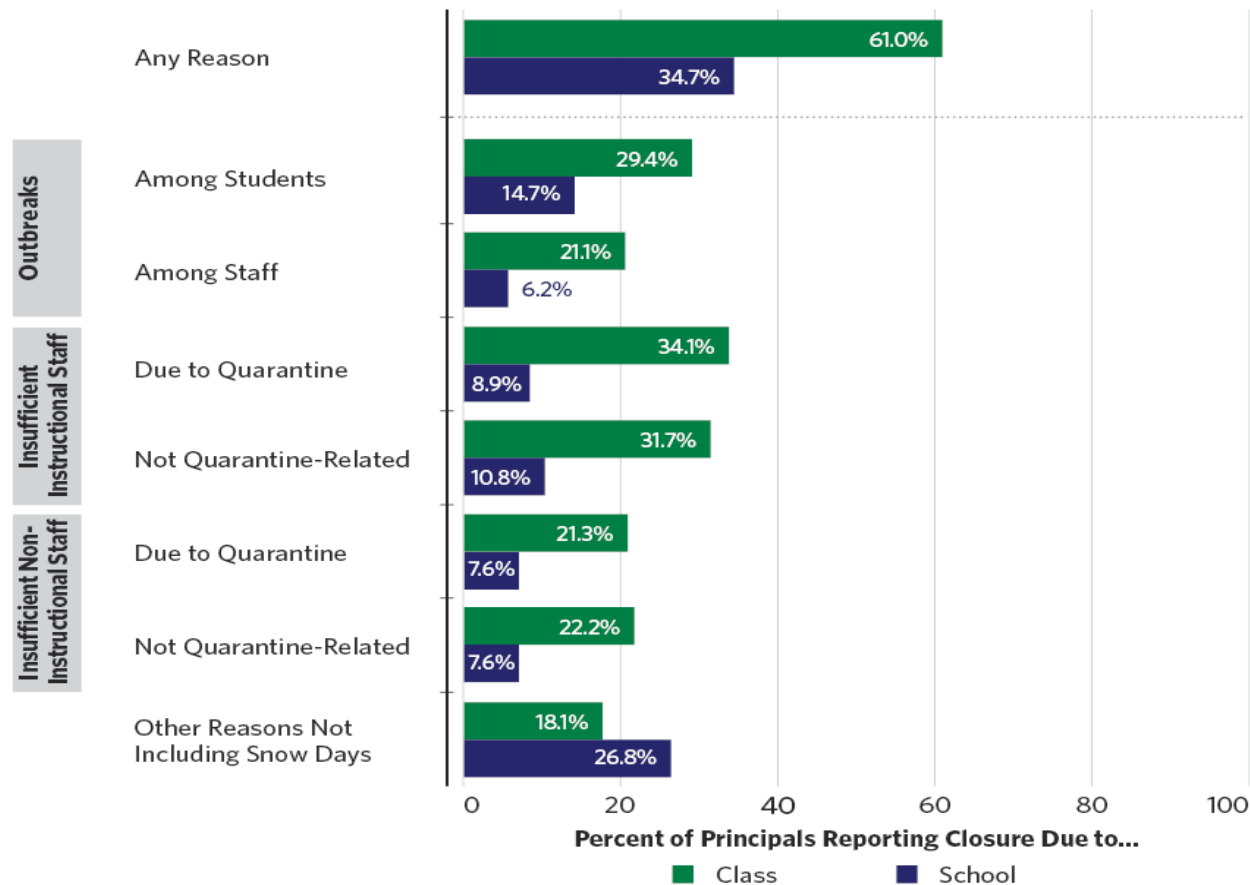
**- Partnership District Leader**

*"That kind of turnover—every time that happens—that puts us in a situation where we're trying to rebuild things that had previously been functioning and working and now we're trying to rebuild it."*

**- Partnership District Leader**

# COVID-19 and Schooling in Partnership Schools and Districts

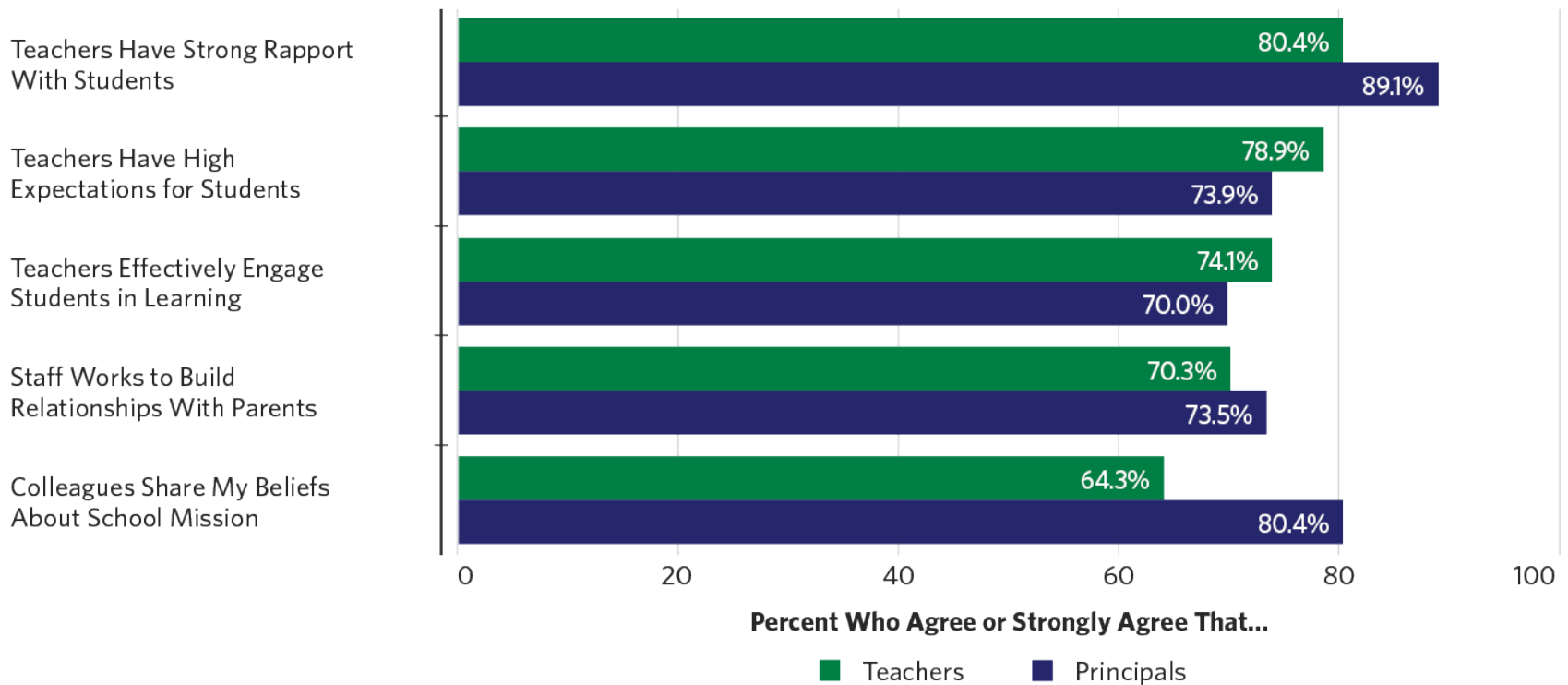
## Schools and Classrooms Frequently Closed for In-Person Instruction During the 2021-22 School Year



Note: Principals were asked, "In the 2021-22 school year, has your school or at least one classroom in your school closed for in-person instruction (i.e., provided no instruction or only remote instruction) due to any of the following?" Principals were then asked to select all that apply. Percentages reflect the share of principals selecting each option.

# Positive Climate and Culture in Partnership Districts

## Partnership Educators Believe Their Schools Have Strong Cultures and Climates

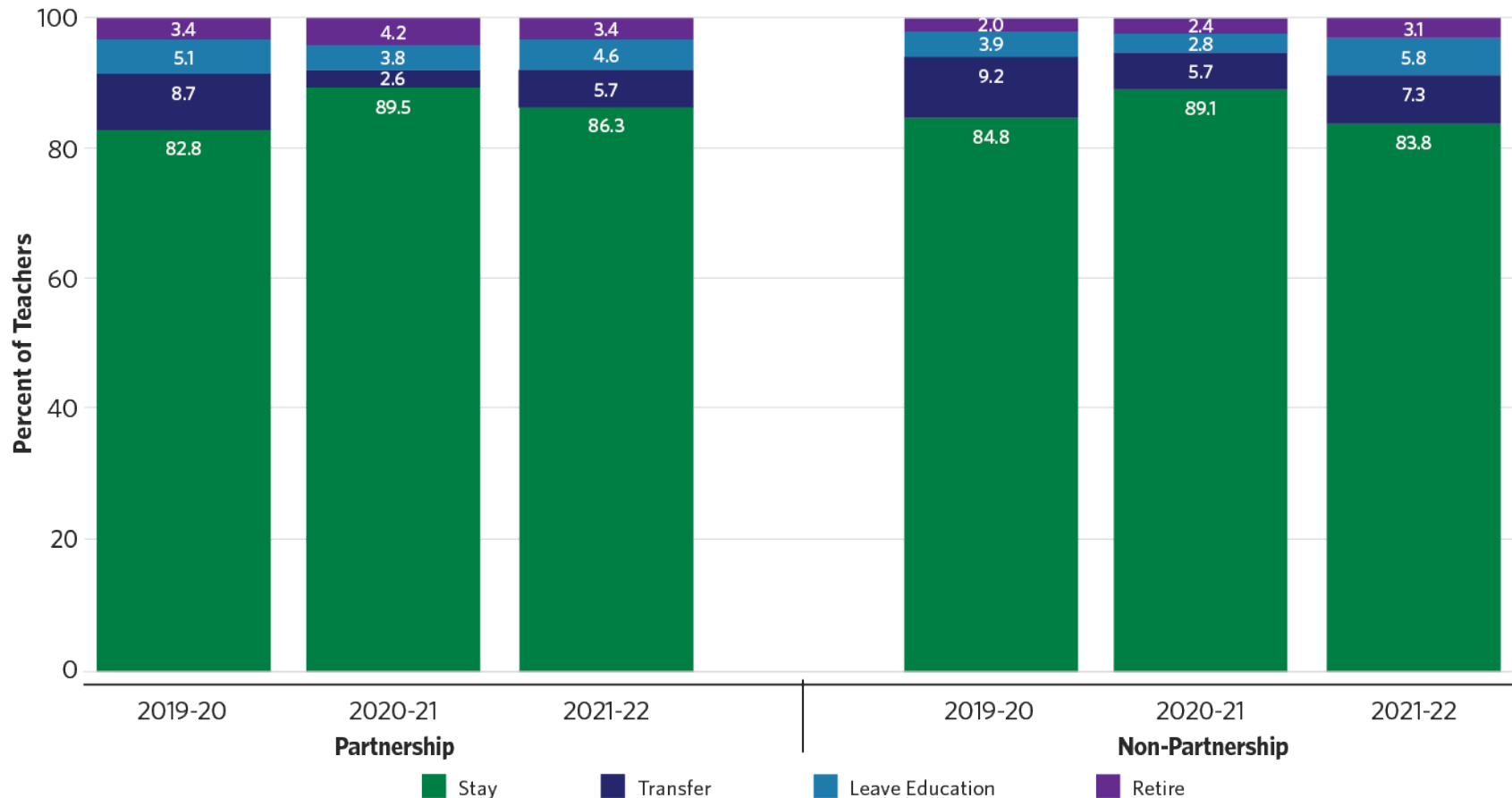


Note: Educators were asked the extent to which they agreed with each statement related to climate and culture. Response options were “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” Percentages represent the share of educators in Partnership districts who agreed or strongly agreed. Source: 2022 Partnership teacher and principal surveys.



# Teacher Retention in Partnership Schools and Districts

Teachers Largely Reported Plans to Stay in Their Current Schools and Districts, but to a Lesser Extent Than the Year Prior



Note: Educators were asked, "Which of the following best describes your plans for next school year?" Percentages provide the share of teachers reporting each plan. Source: Partnership teacher surveys.

# Many Elements of the Model Were Working as Intended

## Review of Goal Attainment Process Was Useful to Many Partnership Leaders

### 1. Review of Goal Attainment (RGA) process enabled reflection and continuous improvement

*“RGA was a good check and balance to make sure that we were who we said we were. ... I think if we weren't in the Partnership Agreement, we would have continued moving forward and not pausing to look at and reflect on what we did like we did. The review of goal attainment makes you stop and review and reflect in a structured process.”*

**- Partnership District Leader**

### 2. Districts used RGA to tell their stories

*“It was helpful for MDE to hear our whole story, and for all of our partners to hear that story with MDE here... The big picture, not just the NWEA scores and those types of things..”*

**- Partnership District Leader**