

Classified Rep. Notes October 19, 2021

Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer: Question of the Month

“What can the district continue to do to improve absence rates/retention?” See page 6 for responses.

Dr. Angela Huff: Interim Director of Schools Comments

Welcome back. I hope that during fall break you had time to rest, relax and spend time with friends and family. We have been through some hard and challenging times but as a family we make it through. I would like to share some COVID numbers with you, as of today student positives are 34 and student exclusions are 383. When I shared the data with you in September student positives were 223 and exclusions were 1,697. You can see it has gone down tremendously. For employee positives right now is 17 and exclusions are 23. In September we had 54 positive employees and 112 exclusions. When this school year first started some of our student positives had gotten to 900 and exclusions about 7,000.

I want to share one more thing, you might have seen in the paper about Montgomery County giving money to employees. On October 11th, the county commissioners passed a resolution utilizing monies they were giving in the American Rescue Plan Act to use money not to exceed \$11 million to use for current Montgomery County government employees. That does not include CMCSS. I wanted to make sure you knew that, we have received a couple emails about it. There are different things we are looking at using our monies for and that information has been shared with you. Montgomery County received money from the federal government and CMCSS received their own money.

Elizabeth Vincent and Anthony Johnson, Communications Department: ESSER Feedback/Update

We do have money coming our way from the federal government called ESSER. This is for the school systems. The government has passed several rounds of this funding over the last several months. One of the conditions we have to meet in order to receive that money is to collect feedback from members of the community, from our employees, and all the different groups that are stakeholders in the school system on how we are planning on spending those funds. During the summer we held some focus groups about ESSER 3.0 and those were conducted virtually. We collected feedback (see pages 7-18 for summary of feedback) and made some revision to the proposed budget based on the feedback we received and submitted it to the education department.

We are still where we were last month, we don't have the money. We continue to comply with the states requirements. Hearing possibly November. Continue to work with the state and ensure we are in compliance. Looking back we were able to pull about \$4 million from ESSER funding for the 4% COLA bonus. ESSER 3.0 has more stipulations on what the money can be spent on, like 20-30% has to be spent on learning loss.

Erica Christmas, Classified Employees and Substitutes Coordinator: Classified Retention and Improving Absences

We were about 83% retention the previous year and 81% for 20/21 school year. Our top reasons for employees leaving is categorized as other followed by better pay and moving. We have had 423 separations and hired 233 new employees. Some staffing challenges that have presented is competition for hourly jobs. Clarksville is a growing industry with companies and is a competition for us with large sign-on bonuses and higher earning opportunities. Even fast food companies have increased their starting wages. Transportation has an employee referral sign-on bonus program. We still continue to have bus driver, nurse and substitutes shortages. Our substitute pool was historically low moving into this school year. We are now seeing more new hires of substitutes than we are losing. Currently at 245 substitutes. We have shortened the onboarding processes. As for absentees we are hearing reduction in the COVID numbers, we

see that in the absences as well. In the 3-4 weeks prior to fall break I was tracking a steady decline in our absences for teachers and sped assistants.

Melissa Izatt, Director of Educator Quality: Certified Employee Retention

Certified retention is a very similar pattern to classified retention in the in 20/21 was 85.9% and prior year was 88.8%. The biggest reason for certified employees to leave CMCSS is move/spouse relocating followed by retirement. Staying around 40-50 vacancies, we will fill some and then lose some. Statistically, the number of people entering teacher prep has declined. There was approximately a 35% decrease in teacher prep programs over the past several years. So we are really reliant on the different pathways, such as the grow your own. This year the state has lightened the restrictions on permits and only requiring a bachelors. The permit is for one year and the educator would need to transition to a job embedded license by the spring. That is a three year license that allows the educator to complete the coursework while working in the teaching capacity. We are also looking at current teachers that can enroll in a special education program and immediately go into that position with a provisional license. Special Educator and counseling have no flexibility when it comes to licensure, so we are very limited on alternative options.

Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer: Classified Staff Appreciation Day

October 20th – Onsite and Volunteer Recognition

Sharing a positive story from your school/location

Adult High School: Has have 7 graduates so far this school year.

Questions and Rumors

Question

Why are we not paid for holidays, fall breaks, etc.?

Answer

Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer: Everyone that is a permanent employee does receive holiday and vacation pay. Holidays are listed on your calendars on the [CMCSS website](#). At the bottom of the calendar is a key that shows the number of vacation and holiday paid days. If you are 12 month employee you have 13 federal holidays. During fall break many employees have days out of calendar but many also have vacation days you received added. (Reference [HUM-A014 Holidays](#))

Question

Would starting the high schools at 7:00am and ending at 2:00 pm help eliminate the need to hold buses at the high school in the afternoon? This would not be a perfect solution because it would make the bus drivers wake up earlier than they already have to, but maybe it would prevent the high schools students from having to be at school an hour and sometimes more after school waiting for their hold bus to return. All the high school students would be dropped off at home first and then the buses could come back to take the middle schoolers at the normal time of 2:25, 2:30.

Answer

Norm Brumblay, Chief Operations Officer: That is a lot to look at from a transportation prospective. We will look into it more as we are looking at different ways to offset the staffing issues. It is important to know that the middle schools and high schools are using the same buses. Moving one, would mean we have to move the other, this would require more than just bus drivers to wake up earlier. Also not all buses are “hold buses”, making changes because of 2 “hold buses” at a school would change all the other buses too. It is something we have considered but need to investigate further.

Dr. Sean Impeartrice, Chief Academic Officer: We have spoken with Norm and open to more options. This would require the middle school to open earlier and we already have a few students out in the dark in the mornings. Working on solutions.

Question

I was wanting to know why the cafeteria workers and the custodians have not been able to get a rise. They have worked through this pandemic since the whole thing started. Handing out food and keeping the buildings clean. Both are right in the front line on a day to day

basis. There are fast food places offering more to new hires than either are paid. Yet teacher assistants got a rise this year.

Answer **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** This year we all received a COLA and step increase. Educational assistants were up for market analysis and movement in 20/21 school year. The 20/21 school year budget did not allow for the implementation of the market analysis. Education Assistant market analysis was implemented in the 21/22 school year. Classified positions have a market analysis every 5 years. This year the group that was scheduled is warehouse/textbook processing and child nutrition. Special request for custodians, nurses and bus drivers.

Question Are subs included in market analysis?

Answer **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** Subs are not included in market analysis. With ESSER funding we have increase the rate of pay and created bonus for working high need days.

Question Why is the warehouse being moved from Central Services South back to Gracey?

Answer **Norm Brumblay, Chief Operations Officer:** Warehouse is migrating from South to Gracey to facilitate the build out of the virtual school. Virtual school is in a leased spaced for the 21/22 school year.

Question Will there be an after school program and who is the point of contact for it?

Answer **Dr. Sean Impeartrice, Chief Academic Officer:** Yes, there are after school programs. Dr. Kimi Sucharski, kimmie.sucharski@cmcss.net, is the point of contact for the programs.

Question Can we file for any type of grants or whatever needed to get PPE to protect our staff?

Answer **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** The Safety and Health Department has PPE in stock. Administrators were sent the following link to request PPE ([PPE Request Form](#)). Items in stock include: disposable adult / child masks, reusable adult masks, sanitizing wipes, gowns, face shields, gloves, and hand sanitizer. We are currently waiting on a shipment for Lysol spray. If a school or employee would like to request PPE, please submit the request form and the Safety and Health Department will place all items in the courier. Employees may also email safety@cmcss.net with any questions.

Question Why is the pay rate for custodians so low? The pay rate does not match the job duties.

Answer **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** This has been put up for market analysis as a special request. At this point it is difficult to keep up with the private sector. A thing to remember is we have our benefits and most private sectors don't offer the level of benefits we have.

Question Could custodians be compensated with the pay for an open position? Since we are doing the work, can we get at least part of the pay?

Answer **Norm Brumblay, Chief Operations Officer:** If custodians are covering for open positions we are paying them overtime. In the past it has just been comp time, but we are paying them overtime.

Question Are we still going to receive a payout for comp time? If so, how will the payout be computed?

Answer **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** Yes that is include with ESSER 3.0 funding request. If you work over 40 hours a week (not including holiday, personal time, comp time or vacation pay), your comp time is accrued at an overtime rate of time and half. Once approved all unused comp time earned from last year will be paid out at your current pay rate. Once we are notified that our ESSER 3.0 requests have been approved communication will be provided.

Question We have been told k12 Virtual is moving to Central Services South. A district office is not a smart location for a school. The parking lot will not hold 80+ extra people with all the large trainings held there. Getting out in the afternoons will be more of a nightmare than it is now. Who's idea was this anyway?

Answer **Dr. Sean Impeatrice, Chief Academic Officer:** The idea to move there started with Mr. House's and me then Operations provided us with options. We are leasing a building this year. After reviewing the options provided by Operations this was the best possibility. This is a physical school and wanted to make sure teachers wouldn't have to teach both virtual and in-person. Once it was established as its own school we had to look at what land and buildings were available. We already had a third phase buildout already planned for Central Services South. This is more people than originally planned. This year we have about 1,400 virtual students and planning on 800 next year. This was really our only option. Traffic isn't ideal, Operations has request a light be put right there and it has been denied by the state.

Norm Brumblay, Chief Operations Officer: There was always going to be additional offices in that space. We physically did not have another space and ESSER funding wouldn't allow for us to purchase land. We went out there on a training day when it was full and have approximately 96 parking spaces available. On a normal day there are over 200 parking spaces available. Not idle for traffic. As for space that was the best option.

Question Concern: Tik Tok challenges are a major concern in the schools right now.

Answer **Anthony Johnson, Chief Communications Officer:** Had over 100 incidents with damage exceeding \$20k. The September challenge was to vandalize especially in bathrooms challenge. We have been working with the Sheriff's department to communicate there will be legal repercussions. After the communications went out, we saw a decrease in incidents. October challenge was to assault an employee. We made sure to remind families of the zero tolerance policy. Keeping an eye on the rest of the challenges planned for the months ahead, hopefully with the national coverage we have received and the conversations with the Sheriff's office and Clarksville Police coming down we will see an end to the challenges. Some students have created positive challenges. We are hoping the negative challenges will no longer be an issue. We are working on a new campaign; last year it was *Be a buddy not a bully*. This year, with the Education Foundation and counselors, we are doing the *One kind word* campaign. It has been a hard year with student behavior. As I talk with news reporters, we have a really strong educators and support staff in CMCSS and it appears we are in a better place than many other districts.

Question Does the district consider making vaccines for covid mandatory for teachers and staff?

Answer **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** At this time we are not. If there is a federal, state or OSHA mandate then we would be require to. We do encourage vaccines and have provided them with Onsite.

Anthony Johnson, Chief Communications Officer: Tennessee is 1 of 20 states that the state legislator has said that public entities cannot have a vaccine mandate. If there was a federal mandate it would be anticipated that it would be tied up in court between our state and federal government.

Question Concern: EA's being used as subs more than their intended schedule.

Answer **Erica Christmas, Classified Employees and Substitutes Coordinator:** Classified employees, such as EAs, are asked to help with classroom coverage during this time to combat the sub shortage and ongoing challenges of the pandemic. Employees from all over the district are partnering with the substitute program to help cover teacher absences and keep schools open for our students, including school level and district level administrators and department supervisors. The substitute program appreciates this partnership as a joint

effort to keep quality instruction ongoing for our students. We are seeing some positive movement in our sick leave going down and the sub pool increasing.

Question When will our nurses see the hazard pay bonus discussed with previous grant/3.0 funding?

Answer **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** Waiting on ESSER 3.0 approval.

Question Teachers have been offered extra to drive buses. Custodians have been offered overtime to help out at other schools. Bus drivers are allowed to work in the cafeteria during their break. What can you offer assistants? We don't work 8 hours and some wouldn't mind helping out with the shortages.

Answer **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** Will look more into other options for education assistants to help more in their own schools.

Question Will the hazardous pay plan of an additional \$5 per hour that was approved by the county for county employees that are deemed essential and continued to work from March of 2020 to October of 2021 include CMCSS employees? I believe those county employees deemed essential will receive an extra \$5 per hour for hours they worked during that time period. Are CMCSS employees considered "county employees"?

Answer **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** That pay was for the county government employees only and not the school district.

Question Why do schools need 3 P.E. teachers to monitor a gym with as few as 60 students BUT our bus drivers are expected to both monitor and ensure the safety of the students they transport on top of operating a motor vehicle with as many as 78 students? Could the district not fund Bus Monitors for each bus using funds from all the lost drivers & doubled routes? This would allow one individual, with appropriate licensure, the ability to focus only on driving and the other individual, trained in conflict resolution, to simply monitor and mediate the students.

Answer **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** With teachers we have to follow a ratios mandated by the government. Some schools have a PE assistant instead of a teacher. Some of our elementary schools will have one PE teacher and instead of hiring another PE teacher will hire a PE educational assistant. As for the savings from all the unfilled positions we are using the stipend to pay for double rates or for the bus driver retention and recruitment bonuses.
Norm Brumblay, Chief Operations Officer: This goes into the last question too. Being a bus monitor or bus driver would be a great way for an education assistant to help out with the shortages. We have funding for bus monitors just hard to find more. Contact Elizabeth Kong Elizabeth.kong@cmcss.net or Ron Garner Ron.Garner@cmcss.net if you are interest in helping out as a bus driver or monitor.

Question How can an EA come in and make the same pay as someone that been there for some years?

Answer **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** Goes to market analysis. If there is positive movement on your position we don't move you to the higher grade at your current step. We take your rate of pay, add 5% and move you to the new grade. You will be making more pay then before. Steps don't equal years of experience. If you feel you have questions, please reach out to Erica Christmas Erica.Christmas@cmcss.net.

Question of the Month

What can the district continue to do to improve absence rates/retention?

- It needs to be made clear to parents how students can still complete assignments in Google Classroom when they are home sick and that they can communicate directly with teachers through email if they have questions. This could improve grades, which would decrease retention.
- Hold the parents accountable if there's no acceptable reason/drs note
- Continue to stress to parents and students how important regular attendance is. Also, make sure that the children who do miss school can come back and get extra help to make up for lost time.
- Hold students and/or parents accountable for poor behaviors. Ensure that bus drivers and staff are being supported when they file paperwork on a student(s) who is causing trouble and making the bus or classroom unsafe for staff and other students.
- Unsure at this time.
- File the documentation required to be able to go remote and/or require mask for all students and staff.
- Bonuses in increasing increments. It needs to be worth it in order for the teachers to not WANT to be absent. It could be done monthly, quarterly, by semester and annually. For retention the same theory, yearly bonuses.
- Unsure. I think they are already doing everything they can do.
- The protocol in place is sufficient.
- Figure out how to hold the parents accountable.

ESSER 3.0 Budget Feedback

3.0

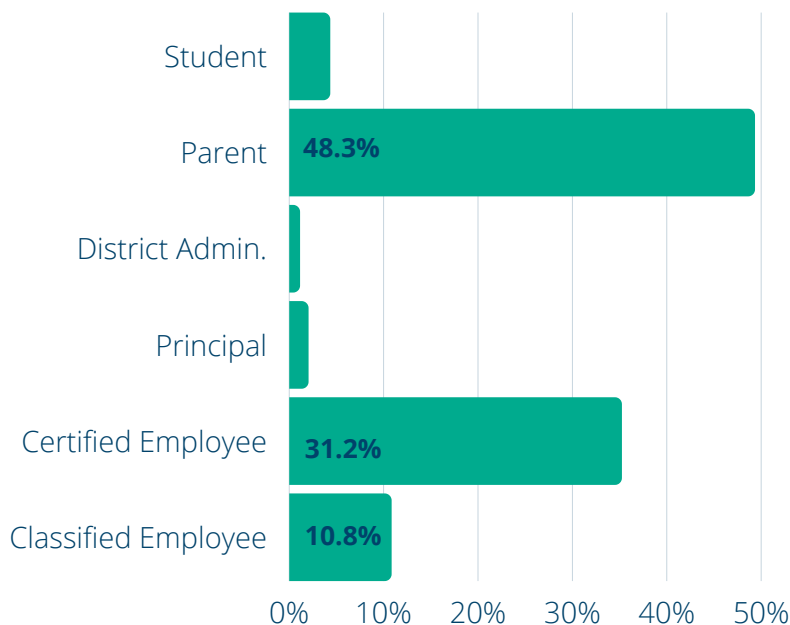
ESSER 3.0 Feedback Collection

Overview

To gather feedback on the proposed use of ESSER 3.0 funds, CMCSS used focus groups to engage, parents, employees, and other partners along with a survey that was open for one month (June 10th-July 9th). The district conducted 8 focus groups with a variety of stakeholder groups, which are listed below:

- Parents and Caretakers
- Students
- Certified Employees
- Classified Employees
- School Administrators
- Special Populations Stakeholders (parents, employees, advocacy partners)
- Teachers' Associations

Survey Respondents



In total, there were 560 people who clicked through to the survey to complete it initially. Upon getting to the open response questions, many respondents dropped off for a total of roughly 100 true responses. The groups with the largest representation in the survey were Parents, Certified Employees, and Classified Employees.

Focus Groups

3.0

Focus Group Feedback Summary

Overall, focus group participants indicated positive feelings toward the proposed plan for ESSER 3.0. Many of the aspects that participants liked were that the plan focused on people, including more funding that was centered on employees and creating new positions that could provide support to employees. Participants also appreciated a focus on much-needed building maintenance. There were also, however, some areas for growth highlighted, such as a desire to know more specifics about proposed positions, particularly those at the Central Office level that appeared to have large line items for things like furniture. Participants in all groups also placed a heavy emphasis on ensuring there was a continuous opportunity throughout the life of the ESSER funding cycle to know how the programs were going and how funding could be adjusted.

Positives

- ✓ People, not programs
- ✓ Maintenance and building upgrades
- ✓ Employee retention bonuses, attendance bonuses, etc.

Areas for Growth

- ✓ Greater focus on Classified Employees
- ✓ Proper support from new positions
- ✓ Emphasis on continual monitoring and feedback
- ✓ Central Office positions (top-heavy)

"The only thing I'd say looking forward is that it's a three-year process. We will need to continue recalibrating to ensure that the things we're putting money toward are being done effectively and efficiently"

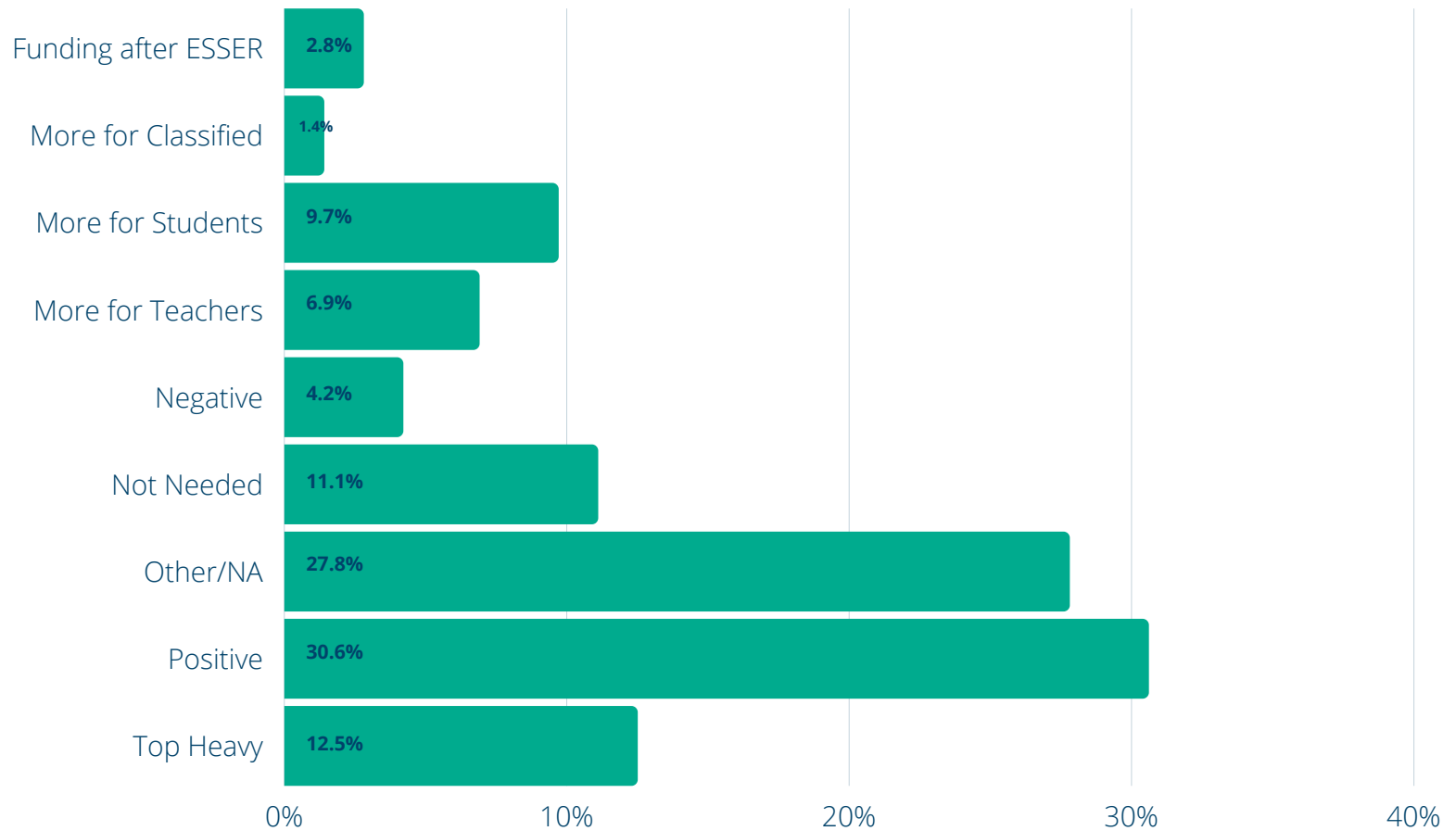
ESSER 3.0 Focus Group Participant



Survey Responses

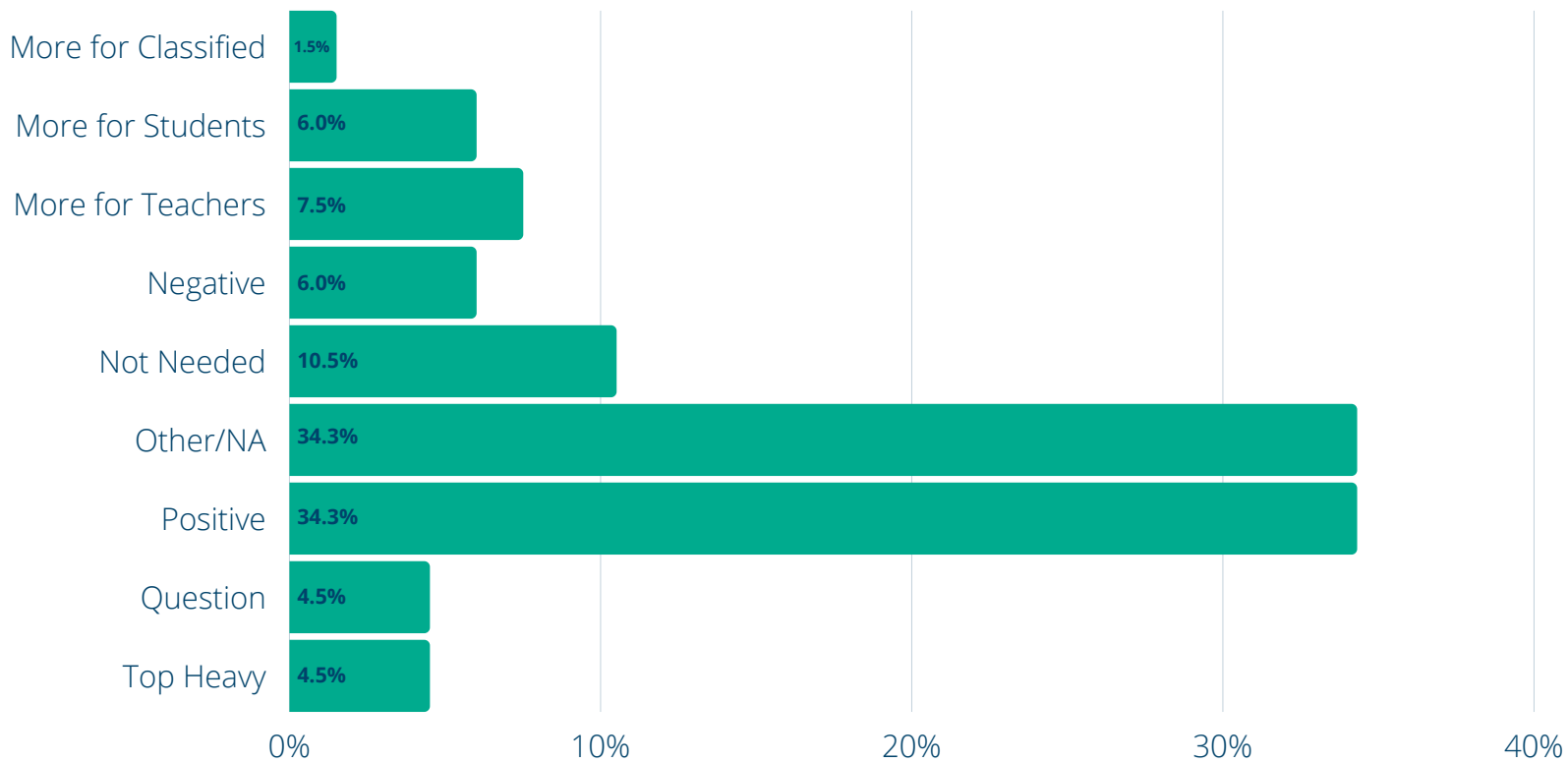
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Business Affairs



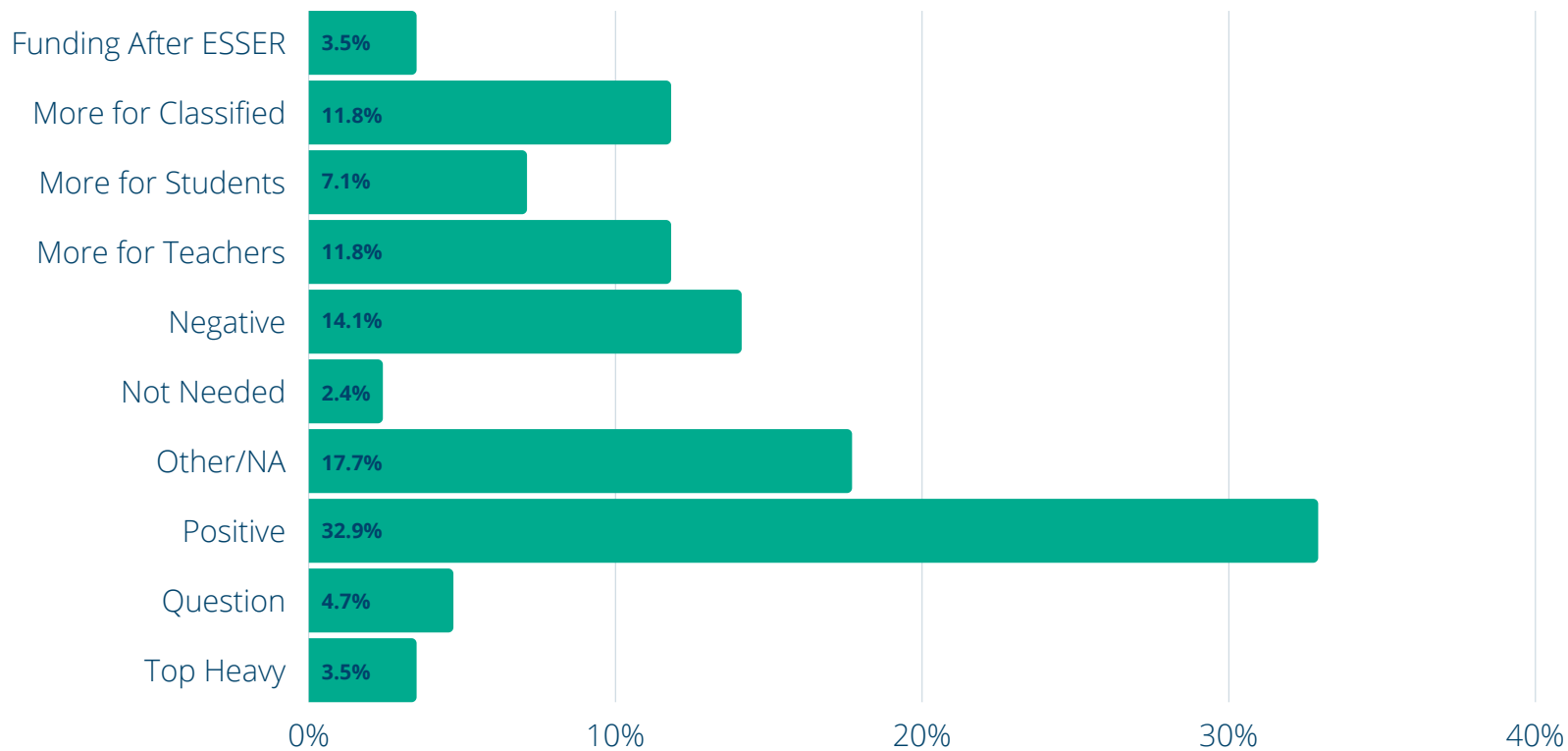
The Business Affairs portion of the ESSER plan received mostly positive comments, with the second-highest percentage of responses being **Other/NA.** Responses tagged as other were either blank, read as "no comment, NA," or were comments that were unrelated to ESSER 3.0 budget feedback. The Budget Affairs portion did receive a slightly higher percentage of responses that were tagged as **Top Heavy**, mainly because more people seemed to wonder specifically about the need to use ESSER funds to pay for ESSER accountants and payroll positions. Comments in the **Not Needed** category were similarly focused on the need for accountants to monitor ESSER funds. **Negative** comments were mostly not related to this portion of the ESSER plan, but appeared to be more negative about the plan overall. Similar to other portions of the plan in which there was a line item for furniture for a new position, there were a few negative comments about that line item.

Communications



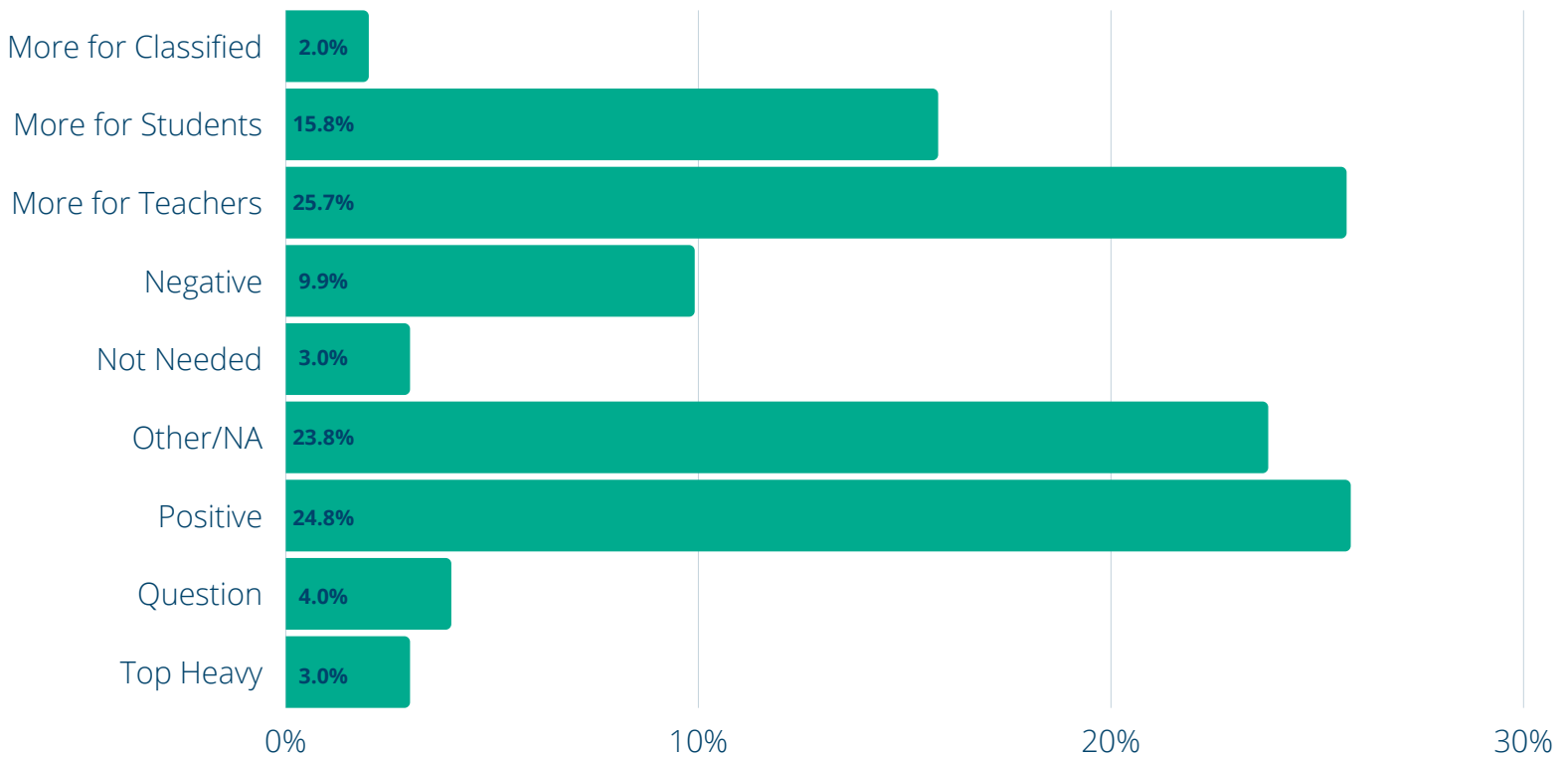
Similar to other portions of the plan, the Communications portion of the ESSER plan received mostly positive comments, with comments that were tagged **Other/NA** being the second-most frequent. Many respondents particularly appreciated the addition of a Parent Engagement position and highlighted that a focus on ensuring better communication with families from schools would be a great benefit to the district. Some respondents, however, indicated that neither the position nor the marketing tools were needed and said they were satisfied with the communication they received from the district. **Negative** comments were mostly not related to this portion of the ESSER plan, but appeared to be more negative about the plan overall. Similar to other portions of the plan in which there was a line item for furniture for a new position, there were a few negative comments about that line item.

Human Resources



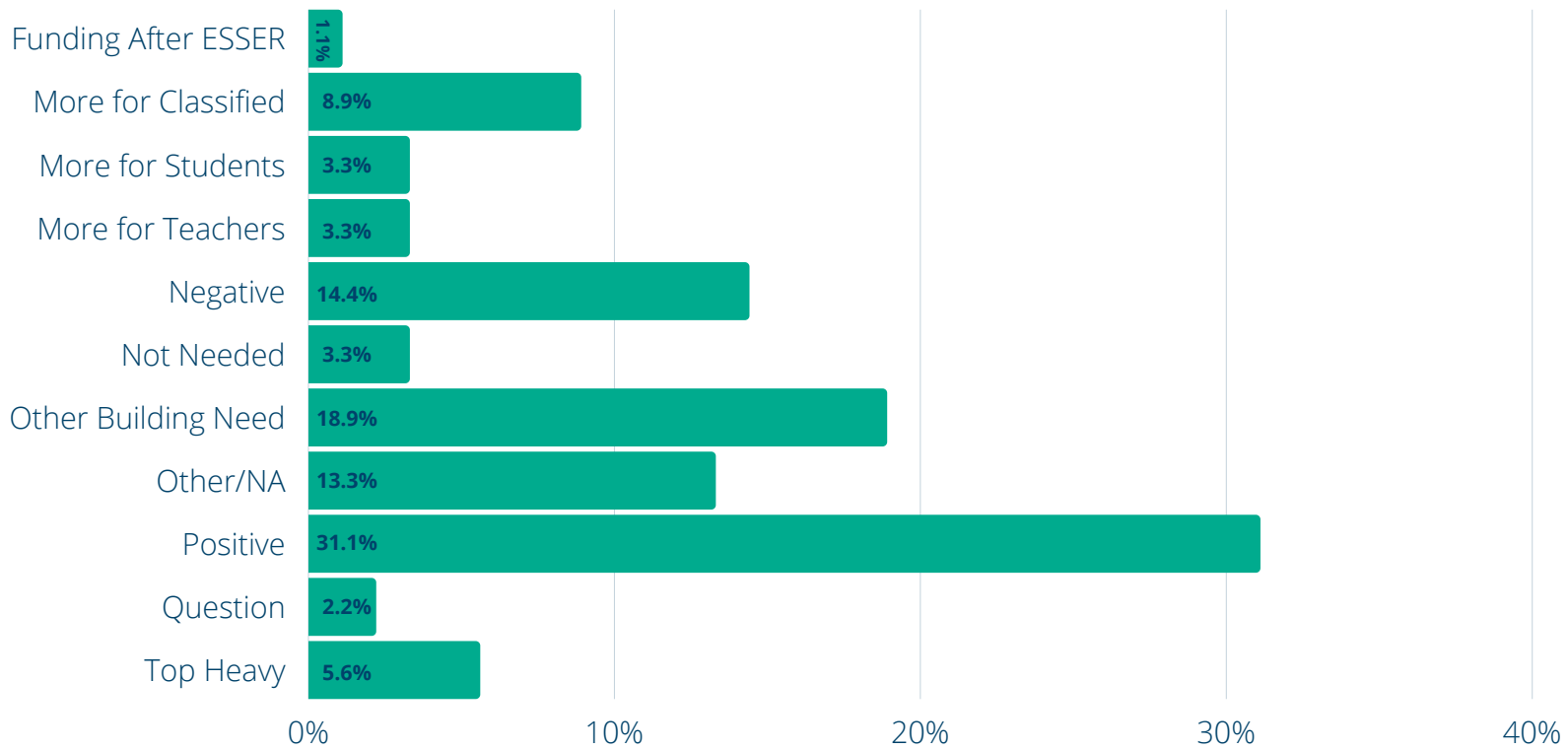
There were mostly positive comments in the Human Resources portion of the ESSER 3.0 plan, particularly on the focus on providing compensation and incentives for employees. Several respondents appreciated a focus on putting money toward recruiting and retaining classified positions; however, there was also a higher proportion of comments in this section of the plan that called for even more money for classified staff compared to other portions of the plan. There were also a larger number of comments in this part of the plan that indicated concern that a significant portion of the money seemed to be disbursed at the district level, not toward teachers. Finally, despite a positive perception overall of the attendance bonus opportunity for teachers, there were also some concerns that some employees would be automatically at a disadvantage from receiving this sort of bonus, particularly young teachers with children. Responses tagged as other were either blank, read as "no comment, NA," or were comments that were unrelated to ESSER 3.0 budget feedback.

Instruction



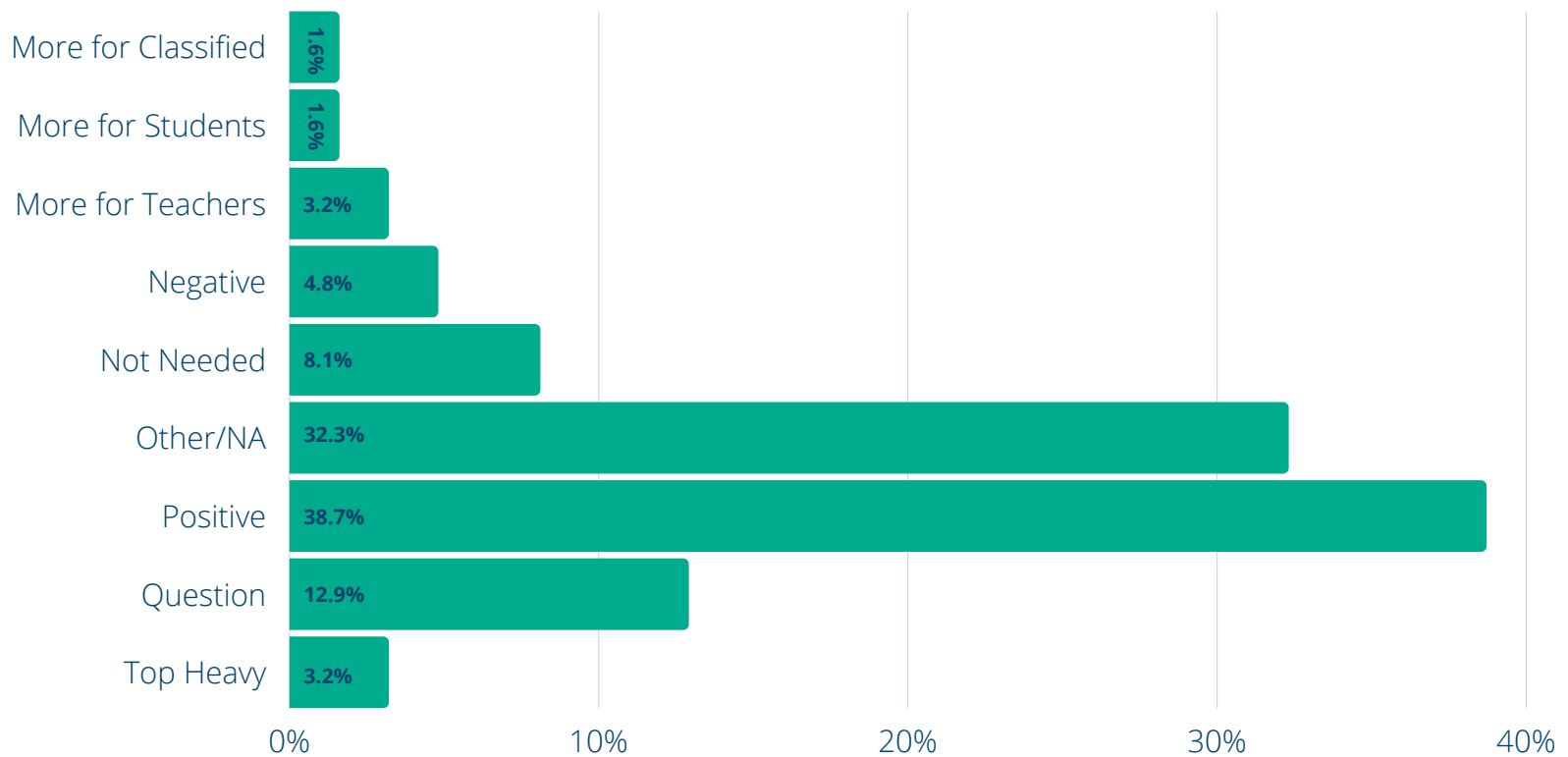
Positive comments for the Instruction portion of the ESSER budget included an appreciation for the focus on social and emotional learning and on recovering learning loss due to the pandemic. However, the largest proportion of comments in the Instruction section were centered on wanting **More for Teachers**. Specifically, respondents indicated a need to focus more on Related Arts areas - PE, and music/band especially. There were also several comments indicating a desire for more funding to be put toward teacher salaries or supplies. Additionally, some respondents indicated that the emphasis on social and emotional learning was too great and should go toward academics instead. There were also some negative comments about a continued emphasis on virtual learning. For those comments that indicated a need to focus **More on Students**, they were nearly all centered on ensuring there was enough funding to support students with special needs. Responses tagged as other were either blank, read as "no comment, NA," or were comments that were unrelated to ESSER 3.0 budget feedback.

Operations



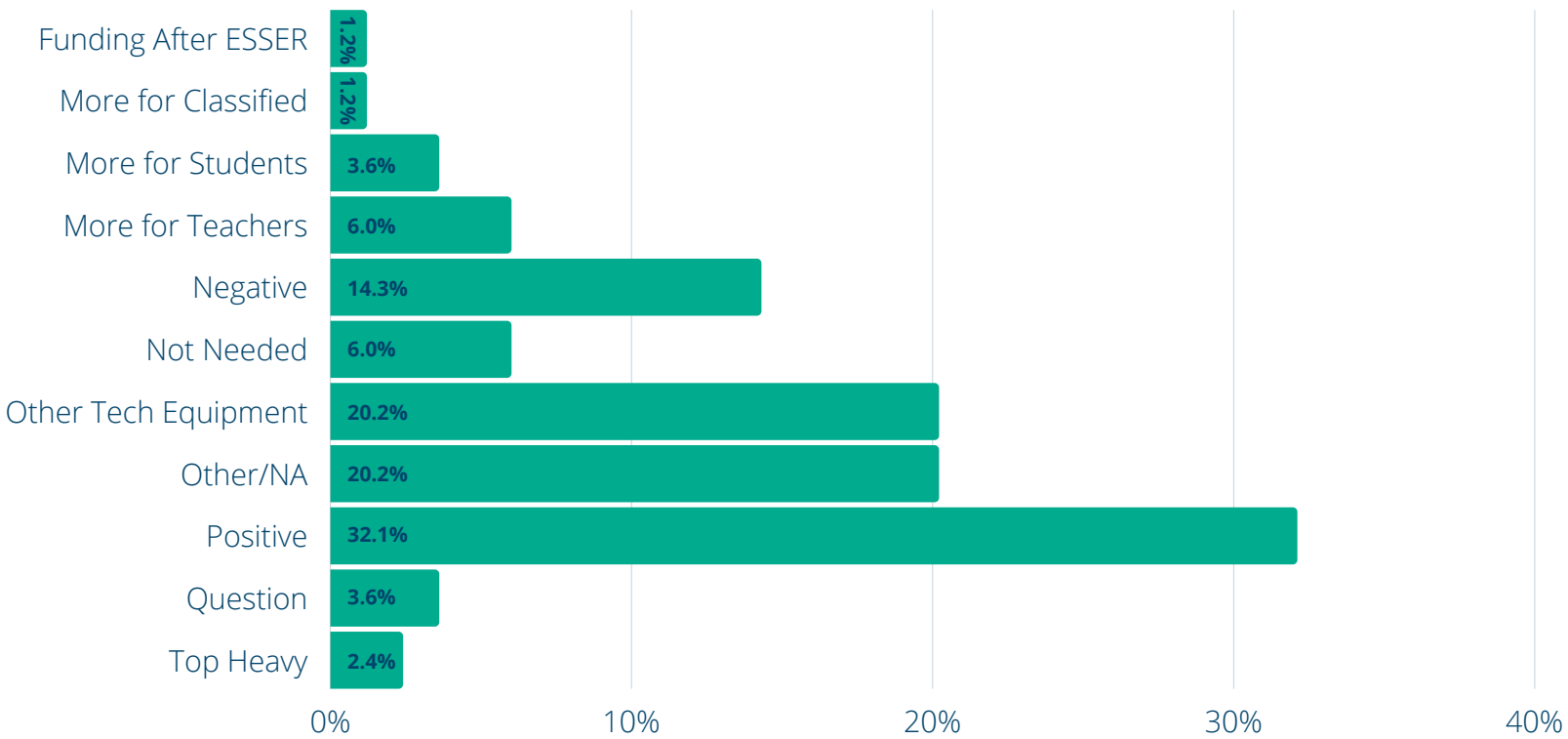
There were a large percentage of positive comments about use of the funds within the Operations part of the ESSER plan, and most respondents indicated they were pleased to see this funding go toward maintenance and building improvements. Unique to some other portions of the plan, there were several comments under this portion of the plan that suggested **Other Building Needs** - repairs to athletic facilities, repairing the Northwest High School roof, and upgrades for auditoriums were the most common types of responses in that category. Despite mostly positive comments, there were some respondents who felt that the amount of money allocated for this portion of the plan was too large. Responses tagged as other were either blank, read as "no comment, NA," or were comments that were unrelated to ESSER 3.0 budget feedback.

Student Records



The Student Records portion of the ESSER budget had the highest proportion of positive comments, with most respondents indicating this was a great use of ESSER funds. Both parents and employees reflected that they have experienced frustrations due to longer processing times with records, and they believe this move toward automated records will make many aspects of the district's work easier. Where there were negative comments, they were really more concerns directed toward a desire to ensure that there would be robust privacy guards for student records that are automated. Responses tagged as other were either blank, read as "no comment, NA," or were comments that were unrelated to ESSER 3.0 budget feedback.

Technology



Most of the comments for the Technology portion of the plan were positive, with respondents indicating an appreciation for even more focus on improving and enhancing technology available in the district. Where there were comments under **Other Tech Equipment**, respondents indicated that they would like to see funds used toward getting different ("better") devices for students due to problems they experienced with laptops this year. There were a few more specific negative comments in this section of the plan that indicated a frustration with our reliance on technology, a belief that we did not need to invest this much more funding in technology, or frustration with specific programs (SeeSaw, Esports). Responses tagged as other were either blank, read as "no comment, NA," or were comments that were unrelated to ESSER 3.0 budget feedback.