



# The Achievement Gap Initiative At Harvard University

*Reading First Leadership Summit, Houston, Texas*

## *Leadership for Raising Achievement Levels And Closing Achievement Gaps*

*September 12, 2007*

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Faculty Co-Chair & Director

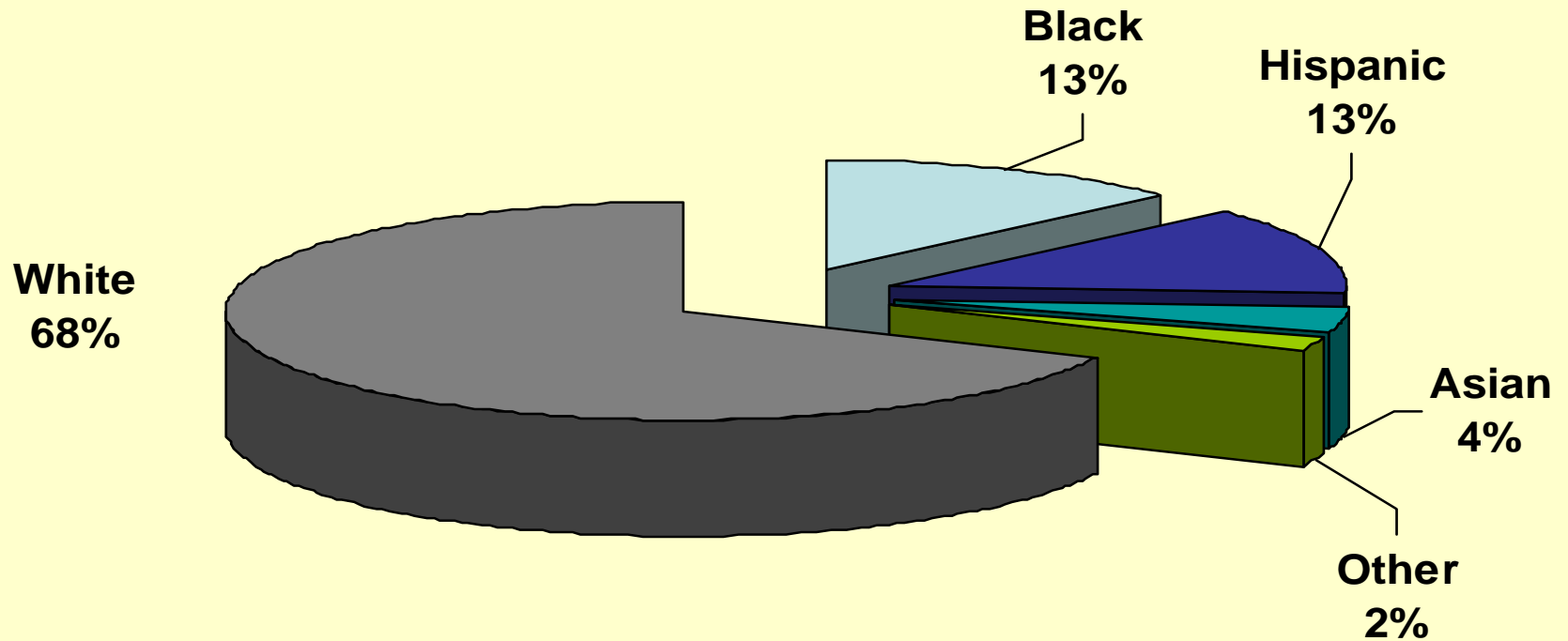
the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University, and

Founder, the Tripod Project for School Improvement

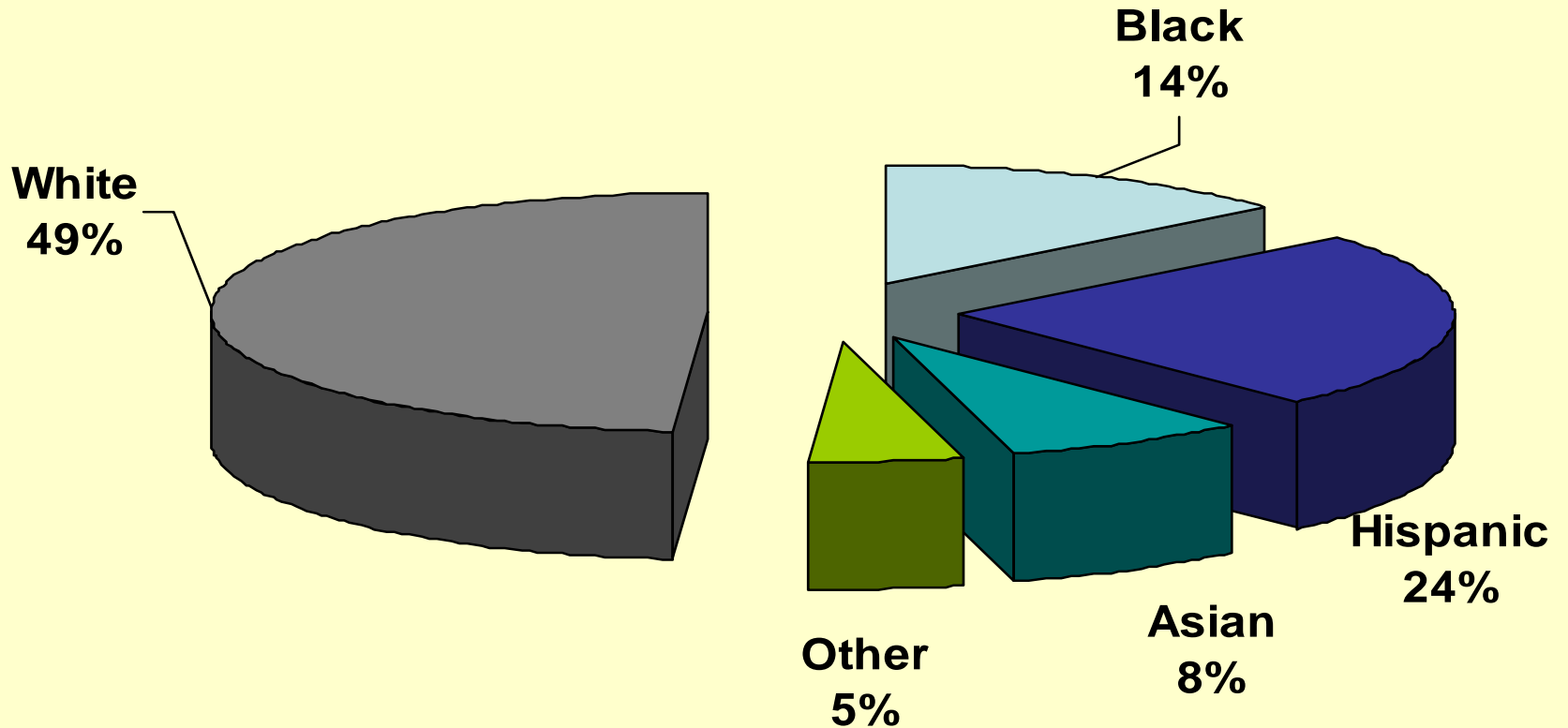
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# US Population Shares in 2000



# US Population Shares Projected for 2050



*“Any fool can count the seeds in an apple,  
but only God can count the apples in a  
seed.”* Rev. Robert Schuller

The bounty of the harvest depends upon the effectiveness of cultivation, and the effectiveness of cultivation depends, over time, on the intensity of the search for effective methods and the dedication of effort to help children reach their full potential.

## *Some Good News*

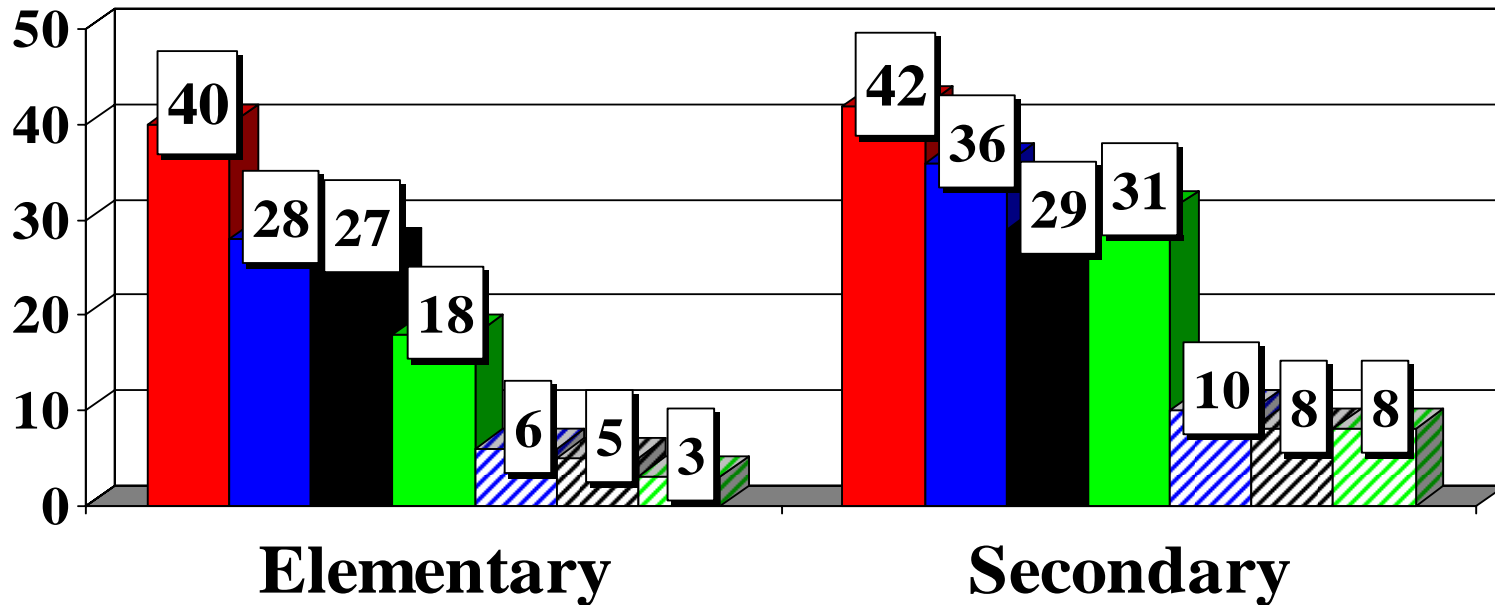
- Black-white and Hispanic-white test score gaps at the high school level for NAEP and SAT scores narrowed dramatically during the 1970s and 1980s, during a period when the gap in high school graduation rates also narrowed.
- Black-white and Hispanic-white test score gaps in the NAEP for nine-year olds have narrowed in recent years, even as scores for white 9-year olds have risen.
- There are virtually no differences in mental ability by SES or race/ethnicity at 9-11 months of age in the National ECLS.

## *Some Bad News*

- At the end of the 1980s, black-white and Hispanic-white gaps for high school students abruptly stopped narrowing for NAEP scores, SAT scores and high school graduation rates.

# Leadership And Framing the Work

Percentages of teachers checking each listed statement, concerning “the last professional development program that had little or no effect on teaching or learning” in their classes.



- It was just too much, on top of everything else the school was trying to do.
- There was too little support and training.
- Teachers were not held accountable for doing it.
- The way it was introduced didn't inspire me to try.
- I never thought it could work with my students.
- I really tried to make it work, but it just didn't help my students.
- Doing it well would have been too much work.

## IMPLICATIONS

### *Reason Ineffective:*

### *What leaders can do:*

“The way it was introduced didn’t inspire me to try it.”

Introduce ideas in ways geared to foster interest and positive anticipation.

“Teachers were not held accountable for doing it.”

Confirm agreements, including on design & use of monitoring and feedback mechanisms.

“There was too little support and training.”

Offer appropriate training & assistance and organize teams for peer support & sharing.

“It was just too much, on top of everything else the school was trying to do.”

Establish priorities, streamline assignments, foster coherence of systems.

**Teacher engagement in professional development, such as addressed on the previous slides, is especially important when professional development might serve to expand instructional repertoires for topics that students find difficult to learn.**

# Three Legs of the Instruction Tripod

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graph TD; A[Three Legs of the Instruction Tripod] --- B[Content]; A --- C[Pedagogy]; A --- D[Relationships]
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Content

Pedagogy

Relationships

# The Central Framework

1. Trust & Interest

1. Mistrust & Disinterest

2. Control & Autonomy

2. Imbalanced Control  
& Autonomy

3. Ambitiousness  
(high goals)

VS.

3. Ambivalence  
(low goals)

4. Industriousness

4. Disengagement &  
Discouragement

5. Mastery & Consolidation

5. Confusion & Irresolution

# Four Trust Questions, regarding:

1. Motives

2. Competence

3. Dependability

4. Collegiality & Respect

(Whose excuse are you?)

# These group process ideas help us to formulate targets for student engagement

Trust & Interest	→	<b>Feel trusting, safe and welcome</b>
Control & Autonomy	→	<b>Behave cooperatively</b>
Ambitiousness (high goals)	→	<b>Embrace mastery goals</b>
Industriousness	→	<b>Work diligently</b>
Mastery & Consolidation	→	<b>Achieve satisfaction</b>

# The Basic Framework = Three Clusters of Five Concepts

**A. Five *STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TARGETS***

**B. *Five CLASSROOM CONDITIONS for  
Achieving the Student Engagement Targets***

**C. *Five ORGANIZATIONAL NORMS for  
Achieving and Sustaining the Classroom  
Conditions***

## **A. Five *STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TARGETS***

- 1. *Feel trusting, safe and welcome* in the school environment**
- 2. *Behave cooperatively* and abide by school rules.**
- 3. *Embrace mastery goals* more than socially comparative goals.**
- 4. *Work diligently* and remain resilient in response to setbacks.**
- 5. *Achieve satisfaction and a sense of efficacy* based on effort and progress.**

## ***B. Five CATALYTIC CONDITIONS for Achieving the Student Engagement Targets***

- 1. Feasibility: Instruction and supports make success seem possible.***
- 2. Relevance: Lessons show connections to real life.***
- 3. Enjoyment: Lessons are interesting and appropriately challenging.***
- 4. Teacher Support and Press: Teachers are both supportive and demanding.***
- 5. Peer Support: Peers are supportive (or at least not detractors).***

## ***C. FIVE ORGANIZATIONAL DOMAINS for Achieving and Sustaining Catalytic Conditions Targets:***

- 1. School climates characterized by high support and high press for all (including adults) are the norm.***
- 2. Multiple people play leadership roles and there is shared, mutual accountability for effort & outcomes.***
- 3. Teachers have deep content knowledge and focus collectively on developing relevant, challenging, coherent and streamlined curricula.***
- 4. Instruction is focused on achieving mastery for all students of critical skills and “higher order” understanding of challenging content.***
- 5. Assessment and feedback, both formative and summative, are targeted to support effective learning for students at all skill levels.***

*Classroom Goal Structures  
and Academic Persistence:*

*Preliminary Findings*

*from over 500*

*of Elementary School Classrooms*

*January 2004*

The mastery promotion index “*Help*,”  
comprises three items:

**“My teacher likes it when I ask questions.”**

**“My teacher is nice to me when I ask  
questions.”**

**“My teacher is happy to help me with my  
work.”**

(alpha=.79)

The promotion of performance-approach:  
“*Perfectionism*”

“In our class, it is very important to get everything correct.”

“In our class, getting right answers is very important.”

(alpha=.84)

# Four Classroom Goal Climates

*Low Help,  
Low  
Perfectionism*

*Low Help,  
High  
Perfectionism*

*High Help,  
Low  
Perfectionism*

*High Help,  
High  
Perfectionism*

# *“Slackers”*

(based on teacher perceptions)

**How many of your students:**

**Seem not to care** enough about doing well in this class;

Seem to **avoid seeking help**, even when they need it?

Because of EFFORT levels, **fail to complete their work** on a regular basis?

**Make excuses** for not doing their work, even when it is relatively easy?

(alpha=0.83; 415 teachers).

# *“Classmate Collegiality”*

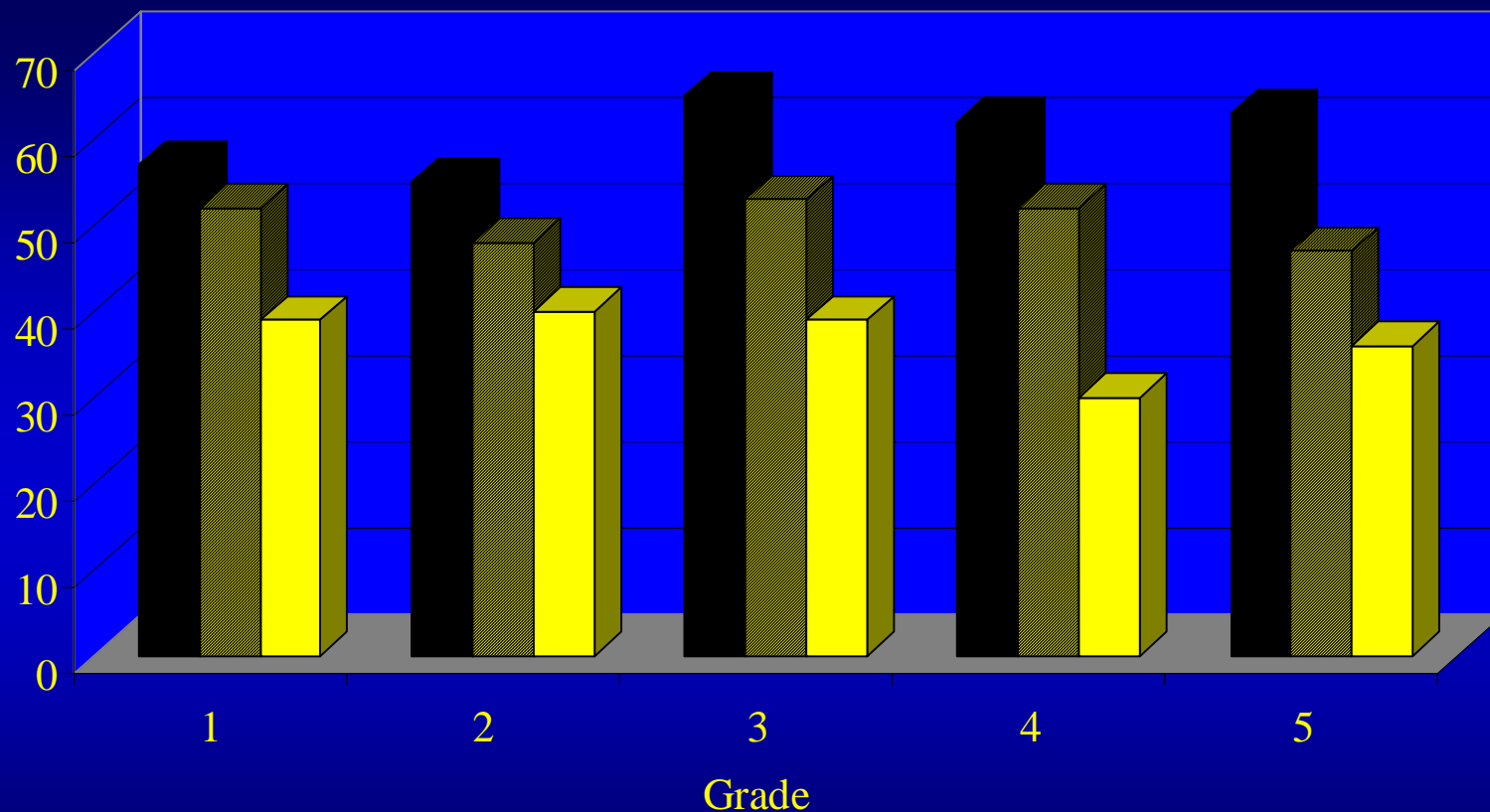
**“In our class, kids like to help each other learn.”**

**“In our class, kids help each other if they make a mistake.”**

**“In our class, kids tell you when they do better than you.”**

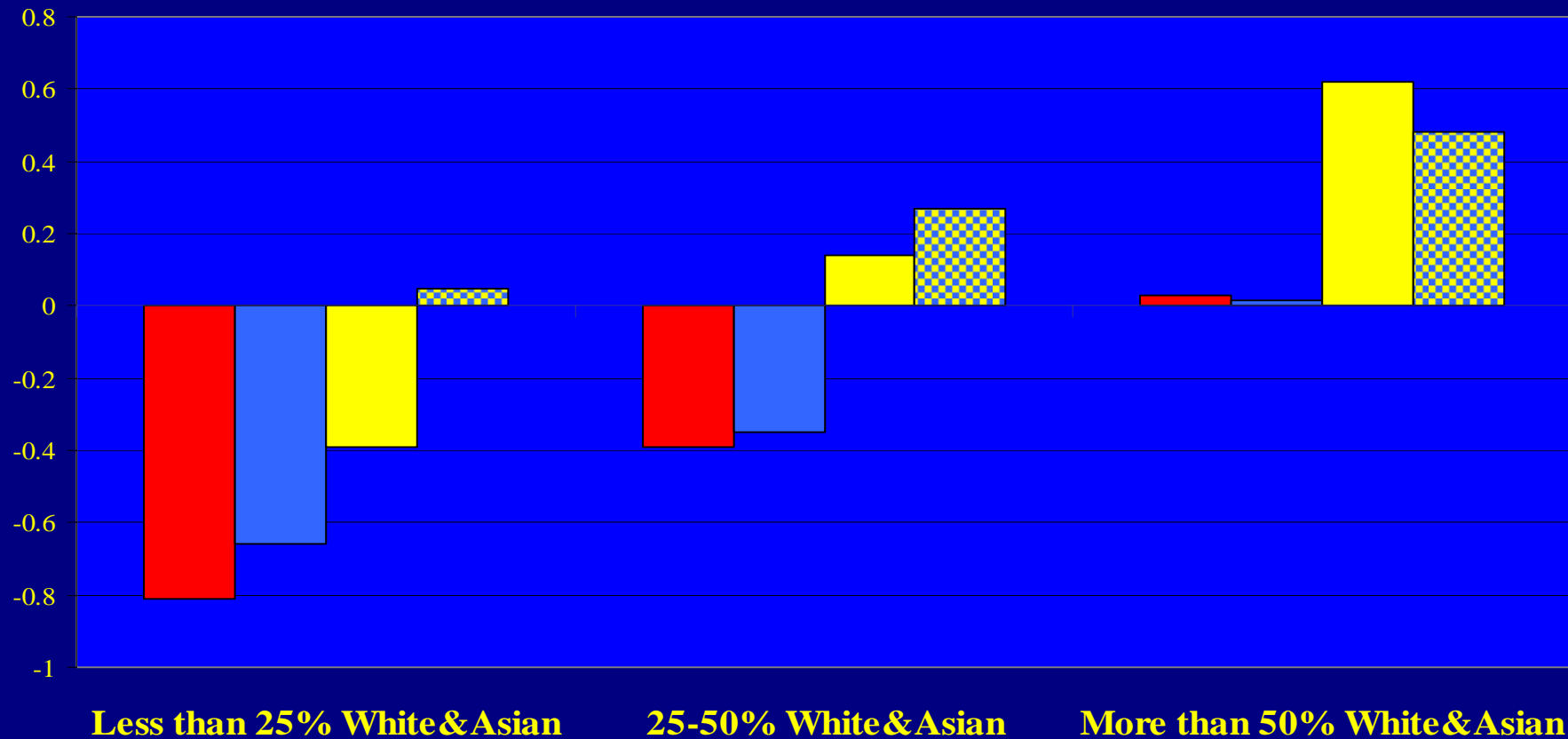
**“In our class, some kids tease you if you make a mistake.”**

**Exhibit 2:** The percentage who agree: "Some classmates tease kids who make mistakes," for three classroom racial mixes and five grade levels. (n=15344 elementary students, fall semester 2003)



■ <25% White & Asian    ▨ 25-50% White & Asian    ■ >50% White & Asian

**Exhibit 3:** *Classmate Collegiality*, shown for three racial mixes within four classroom goal environments as reported by students, winter 2003. (542 elementary classrooms)



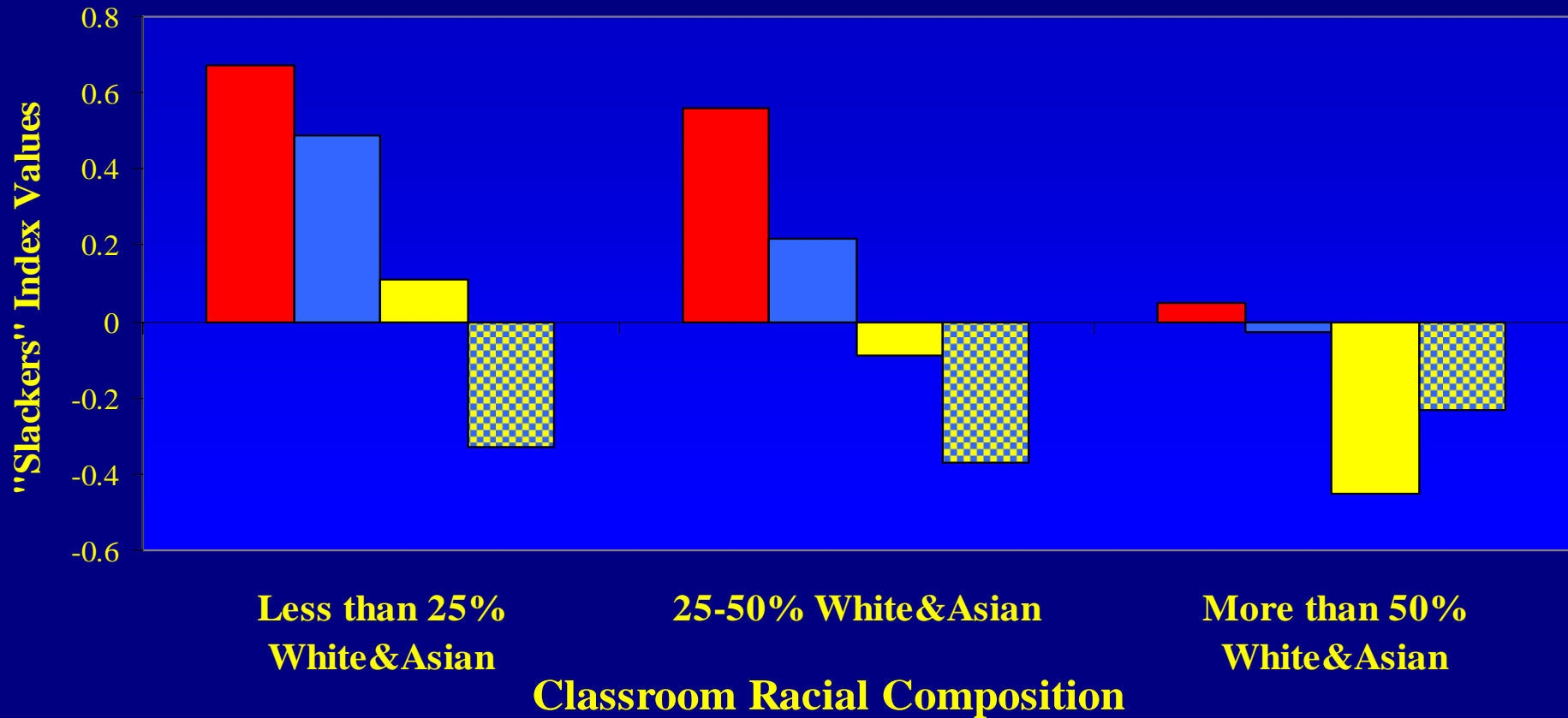
■ low perfectionism, low help

■ high perfectionism, low help

■ low perfectionism, high help

■ high perfectionism, high help

**Exhibit 4:** Teachers' perspectives regarding what proportion of the students in the class are "slackers." For three racial mixes, the chart shows values within four classroom environments. (415 elem classrooms)



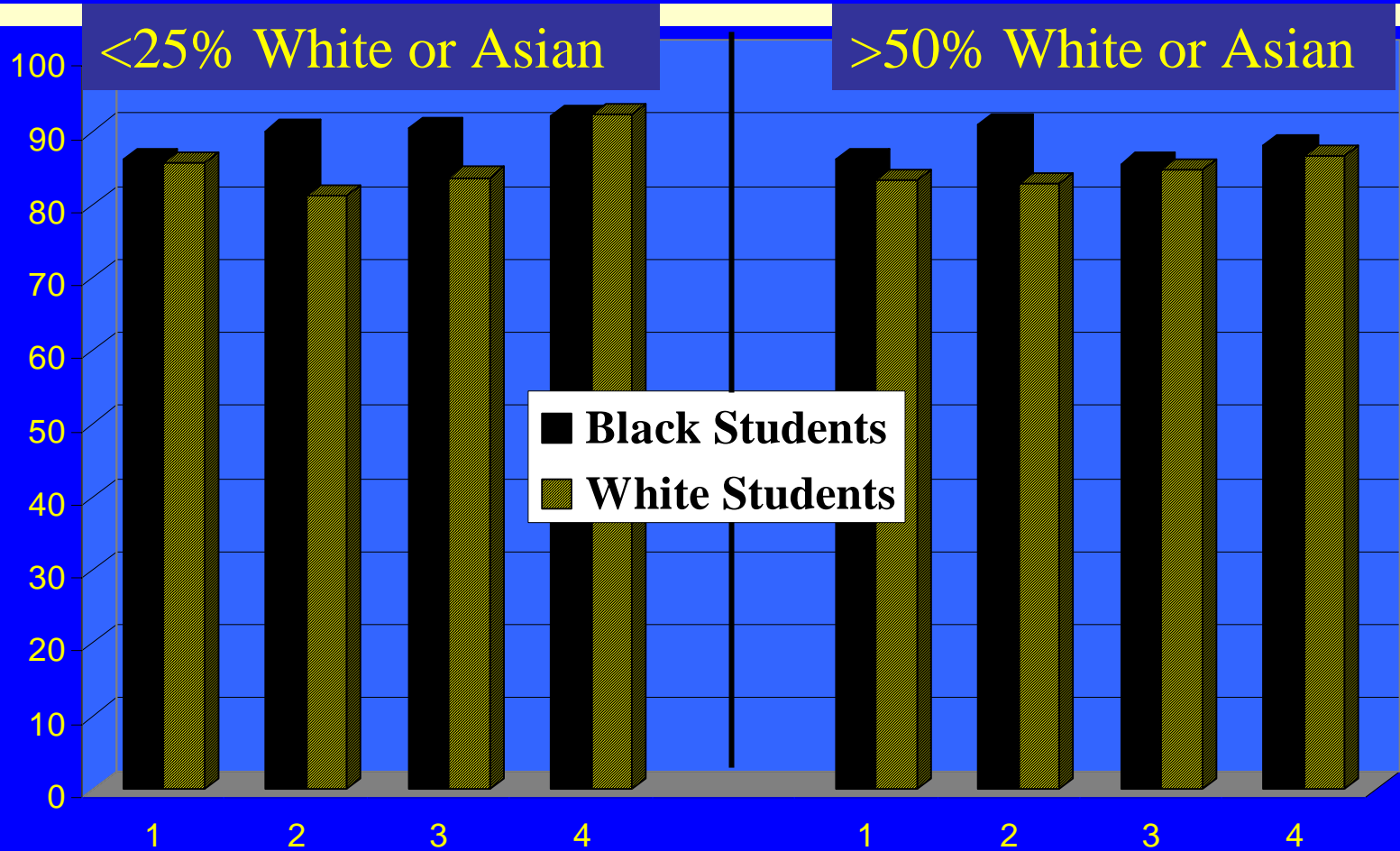
■ low perfectionism, low help

■ low perfectionism, high help

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■ high perfectionism, high help

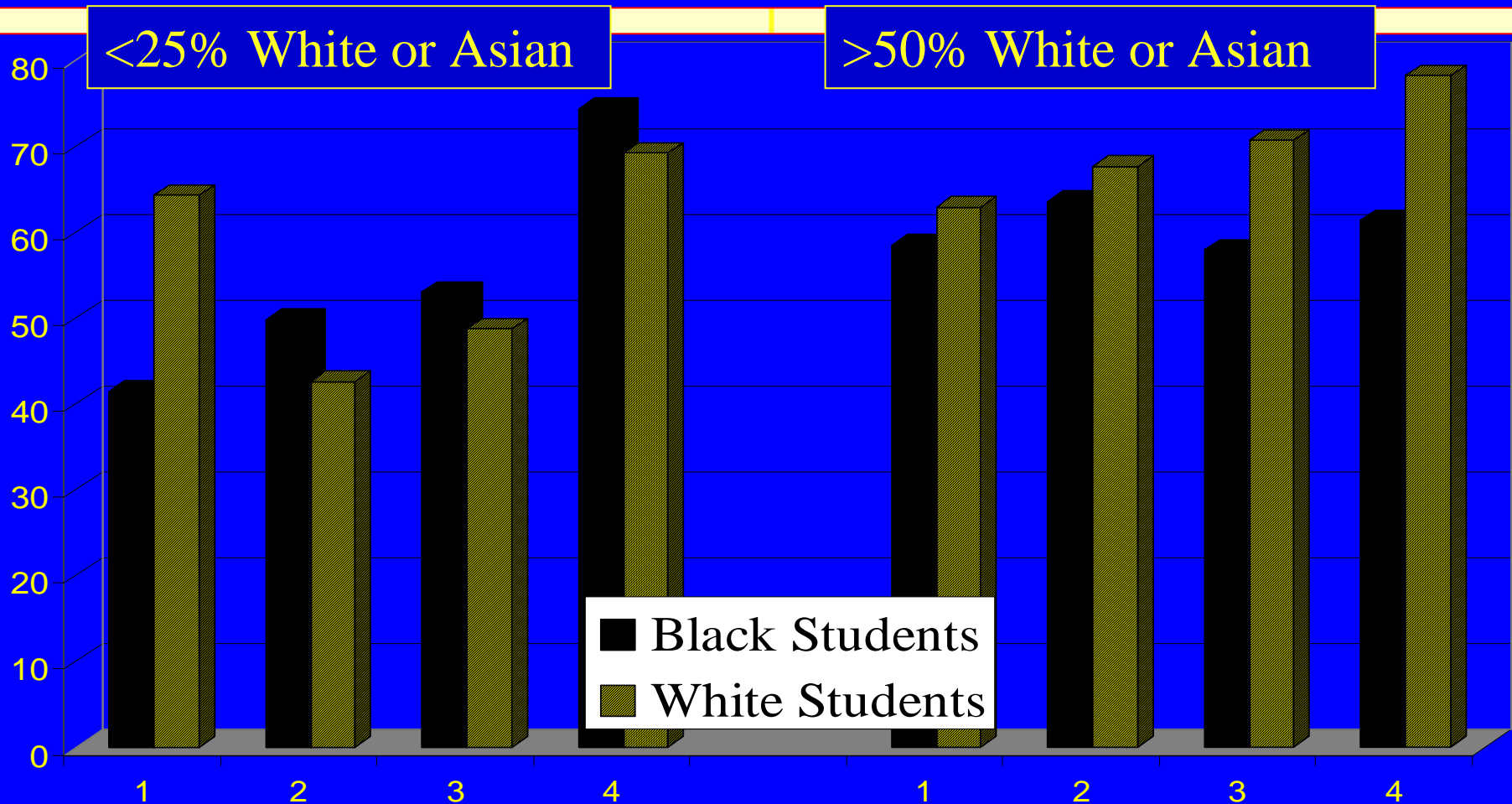
# Exhibit 6: Percent who agree in the Fall: *“I will do my best work in this class all year long.”*



## Classroom Climate

1= Low Help, Low Perfectionism; 2= Low Help, High Perfectionism  
3= High Help, Low Perfectionism; 4 = High Help, High Perfectionism

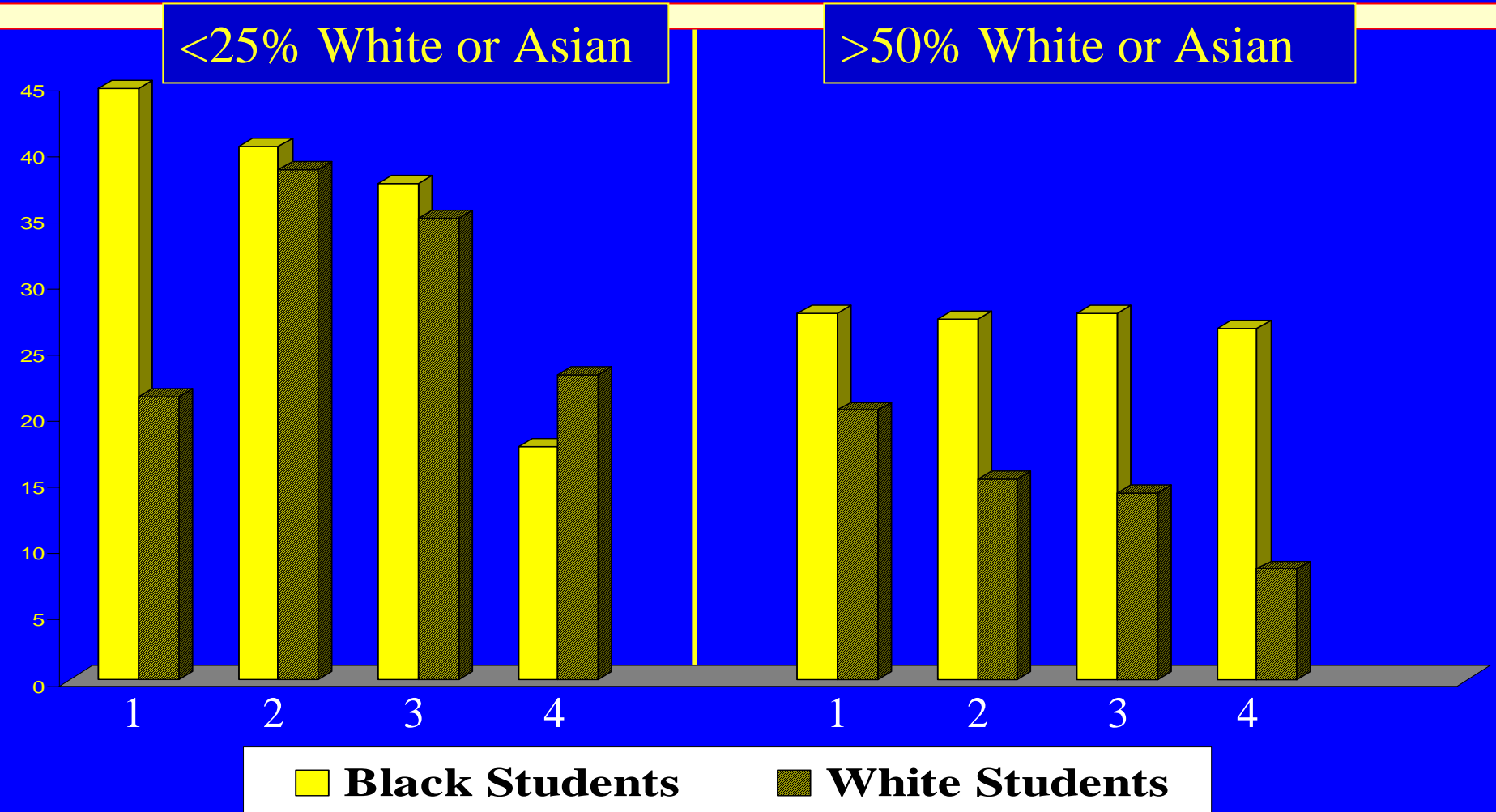
# Exhibit 7: Percent who agree in the spring: *“I have done my best work in school all year long.”*



## Classroom Climate

1= Low Help, Low Perfectionism; 2= Low Help, High Perfectionism  
3= High Help, Low Perfectionism; 4 = High Help, High Perfectionism

**Exhibit 8: Percent who agree in the fall they will do their best work all year, minus the percent who agree in the spring that they did. (Elementary)**



### Classroom Climate

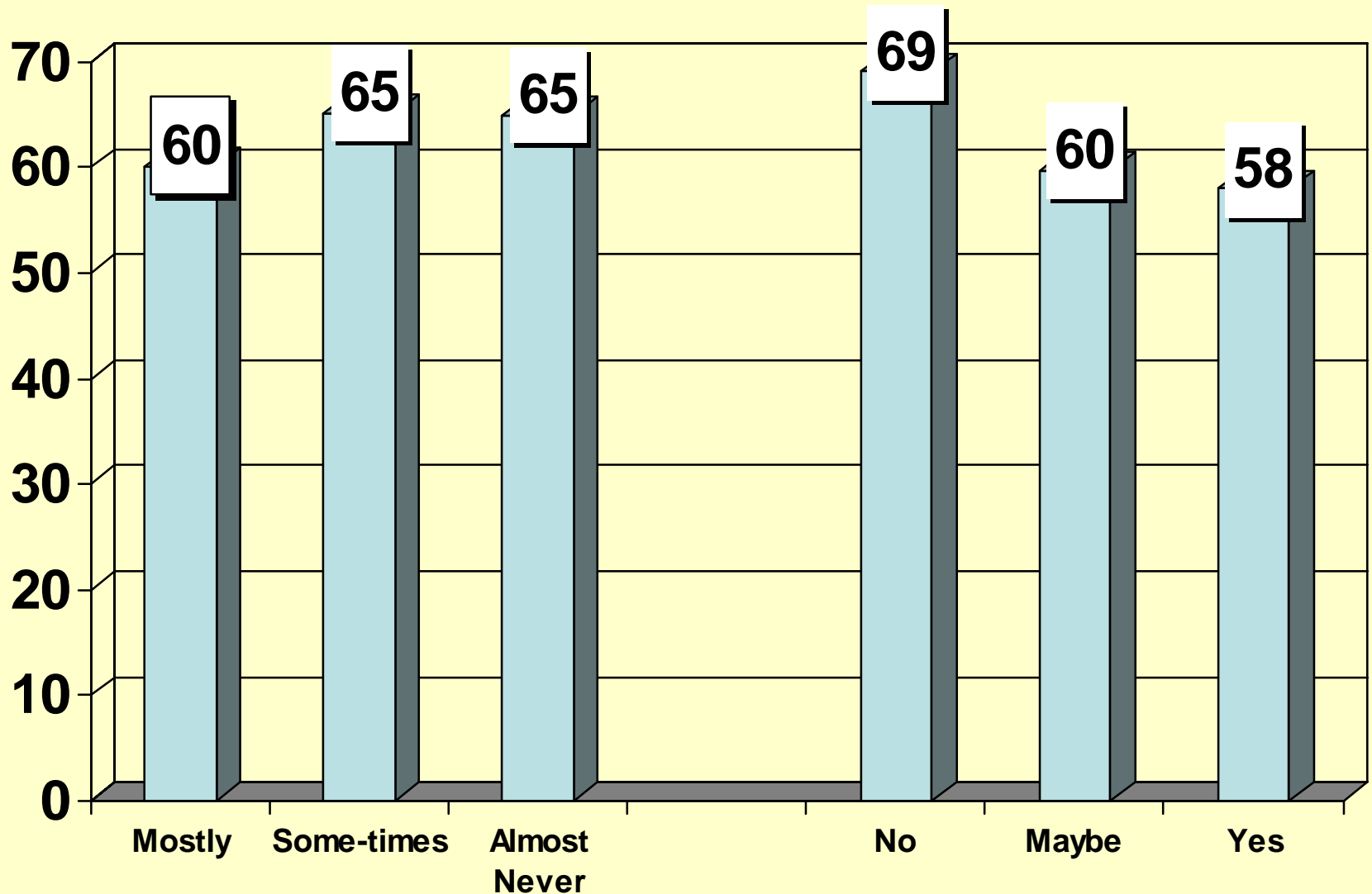
1= Low Help, Low Perfectionism; 2= Low Help, High Perfectionism  
3= High Help, Low Perfectionism; 4 = High Help, High Perfectionism

# Some patterns for Hispanic Students In Tripod Project Data

Data are from many schools  
across the nation.

Cross tabulations with how much English  
Is spoken at home and with  
“Learning is often hard for me.”

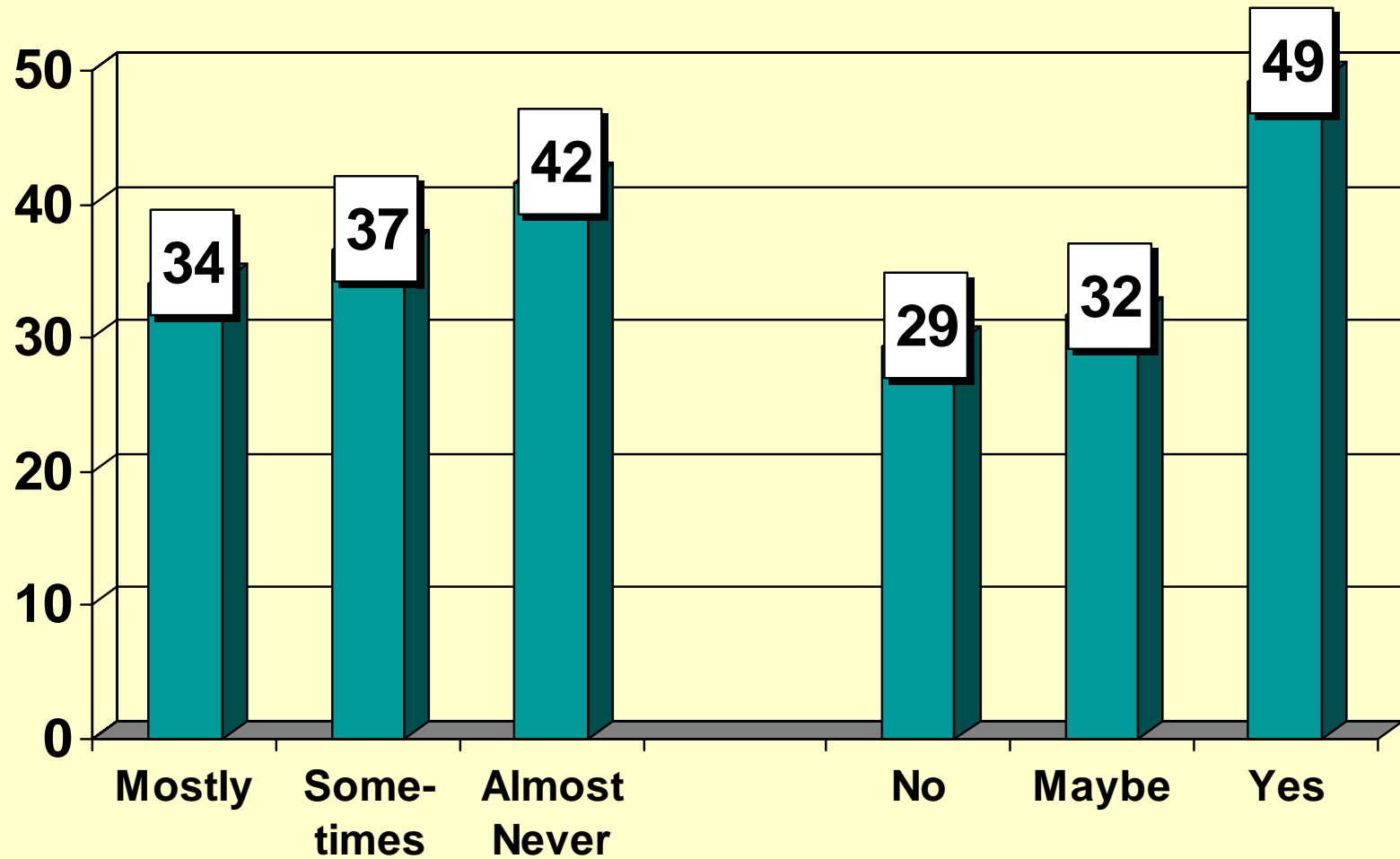
# Percent "Yes," to, *"I like coming to school."*



FAMILY SPEAK ENGLISH AT HOME?

LEARNING OFTEN HARD?

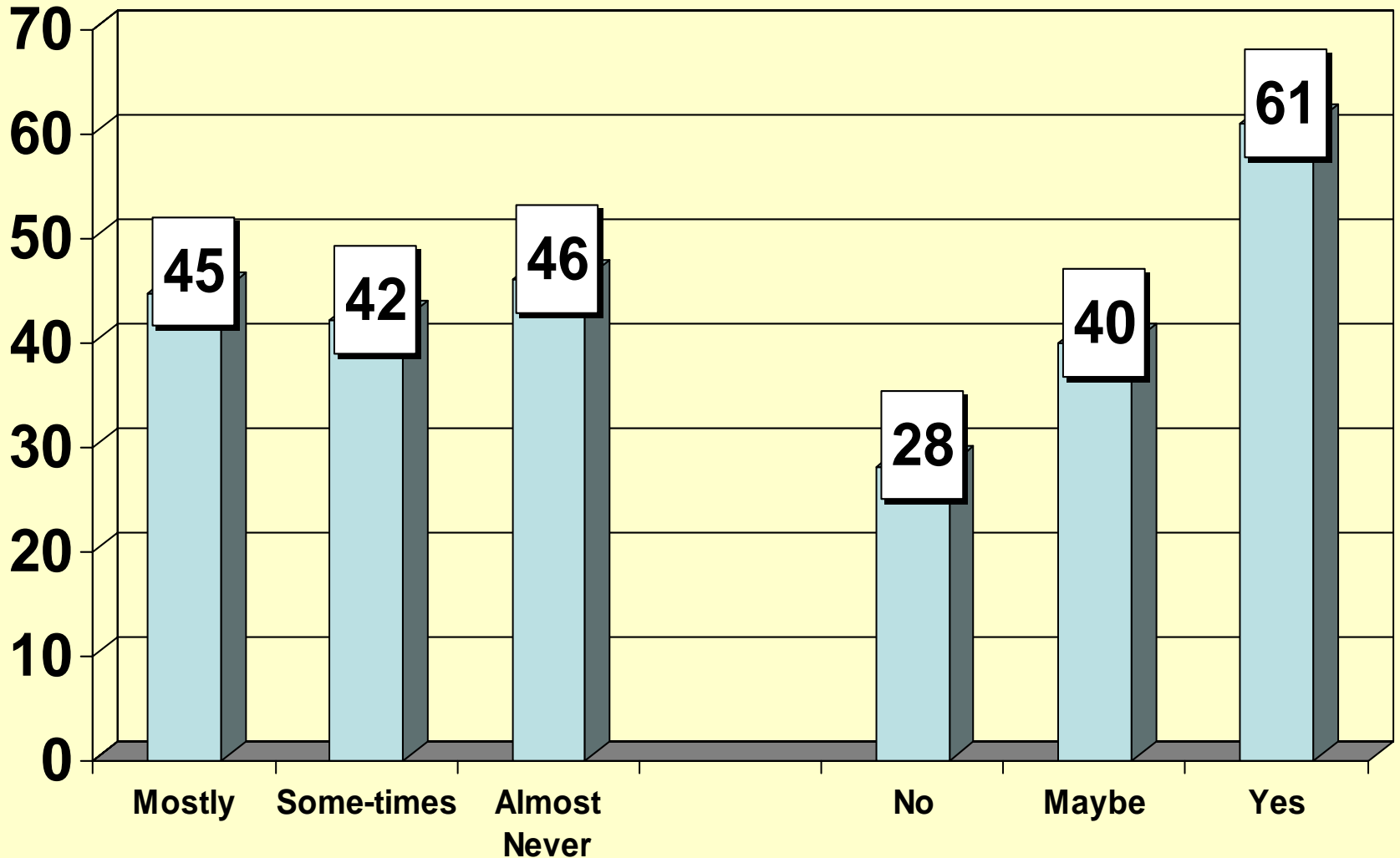
# I feel bad about myself if I make mistake.



FAMILY SPEAK ENGLISH AT HOME?

LEARNING OFTEN HARD?

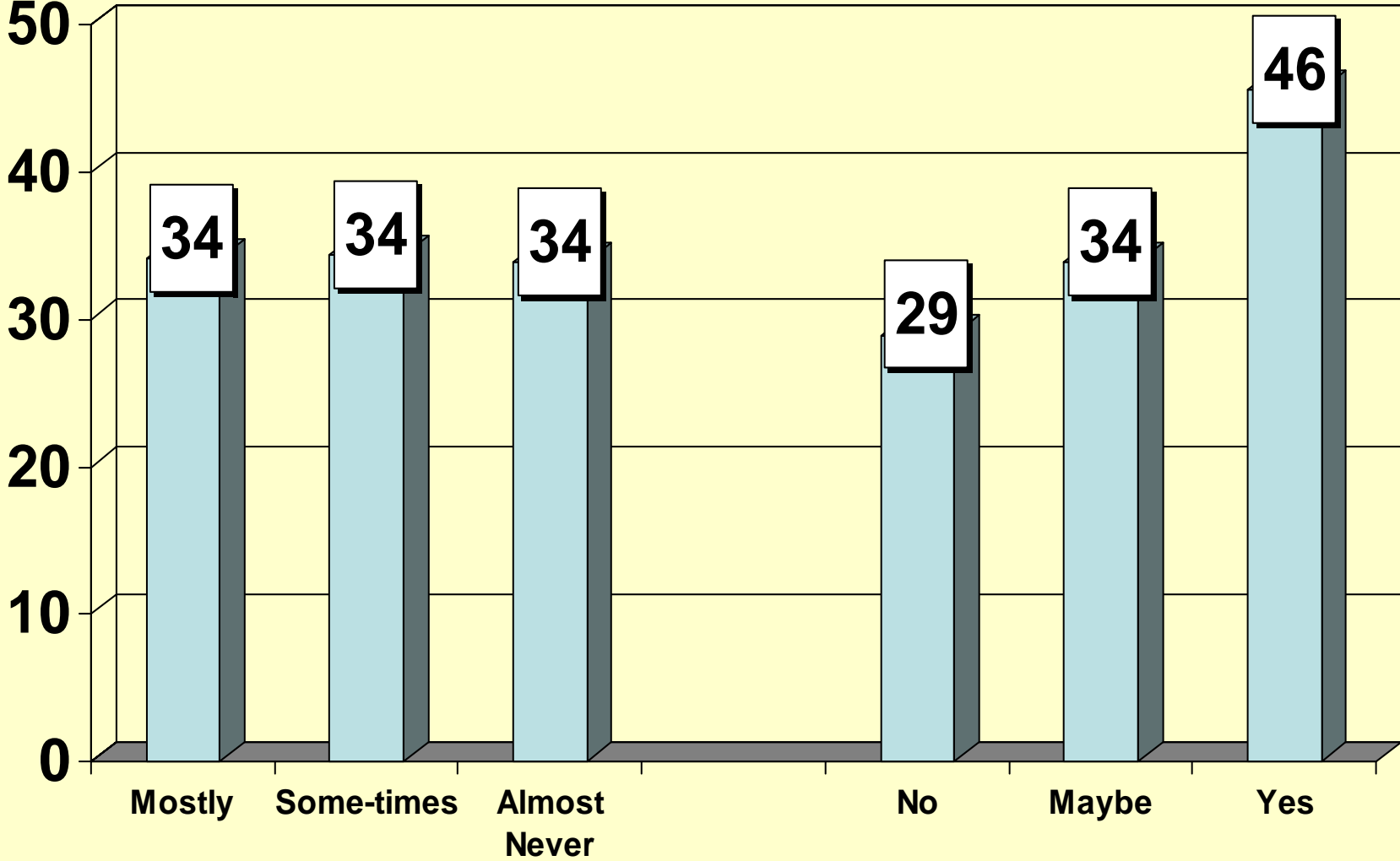
At school, I worry that I might not do as well as other kids.



FAMILY SPEAK ENGLISH AT HOME?

LEARNING OFTEN HARD?

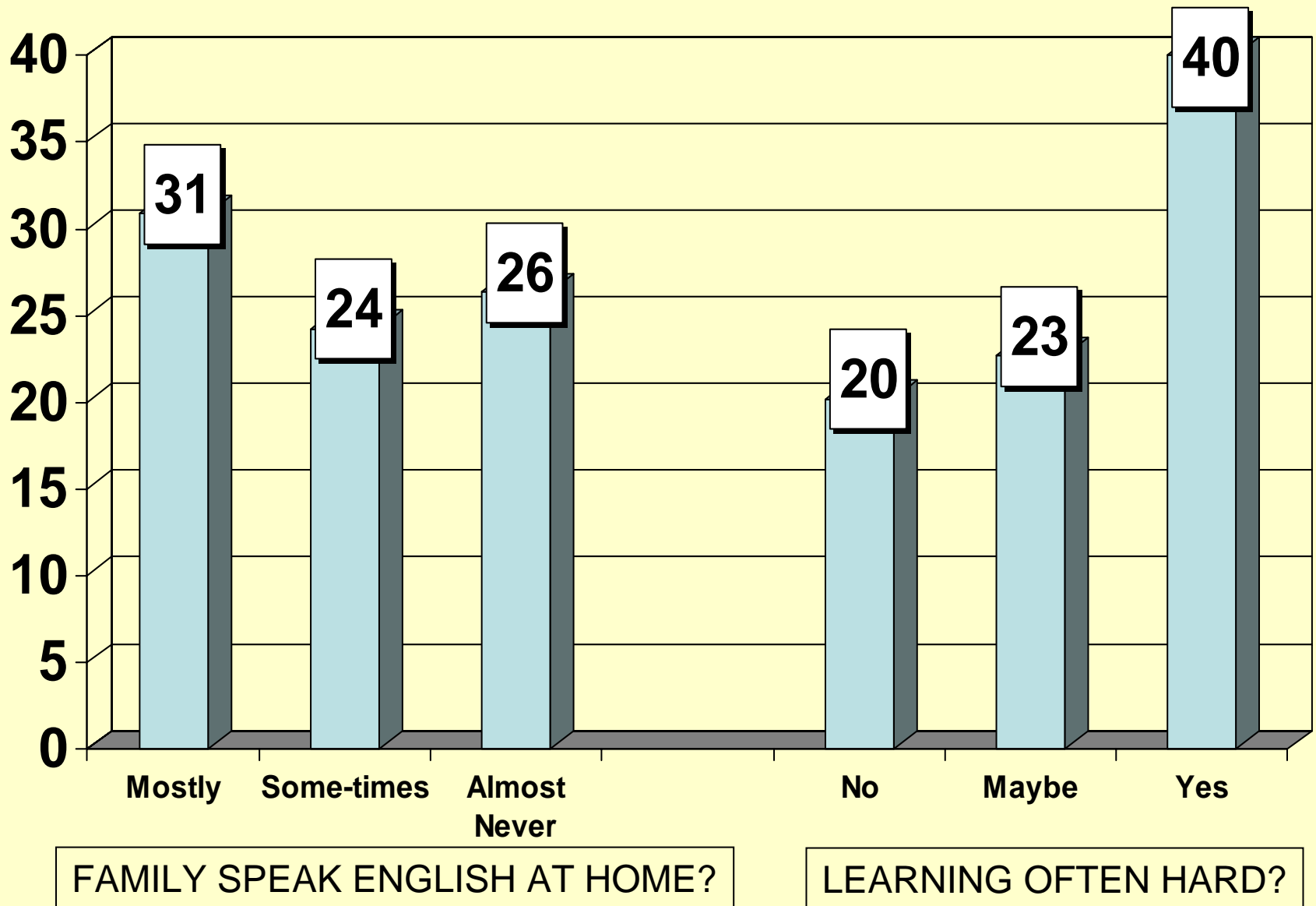
# Some classmates tease kids who make mistakes.



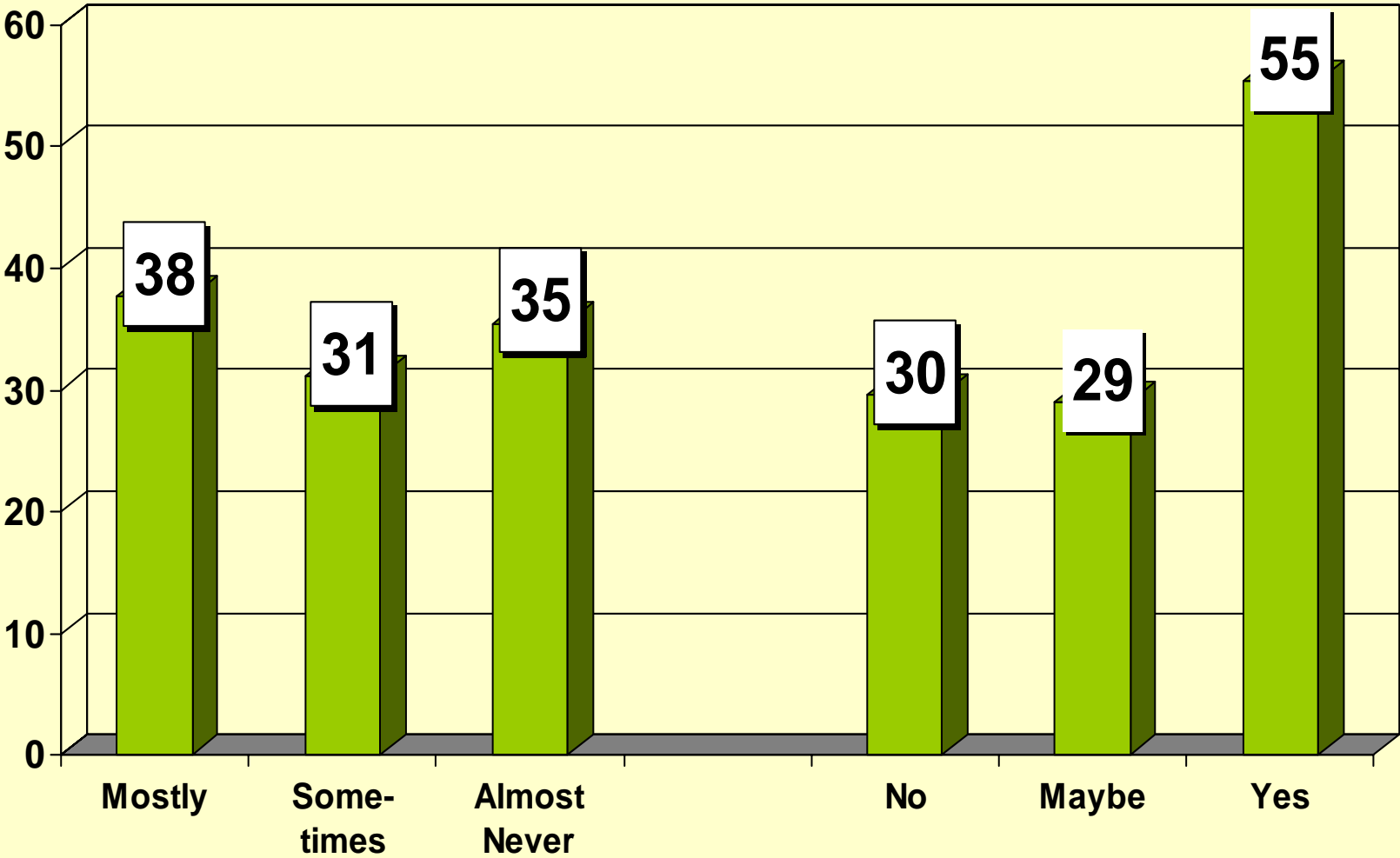
FAMILY SPEAK ENGLISH AT HOME?

LEARNING OFTEN HARD?

In our class, kids tell you when they do better than you.



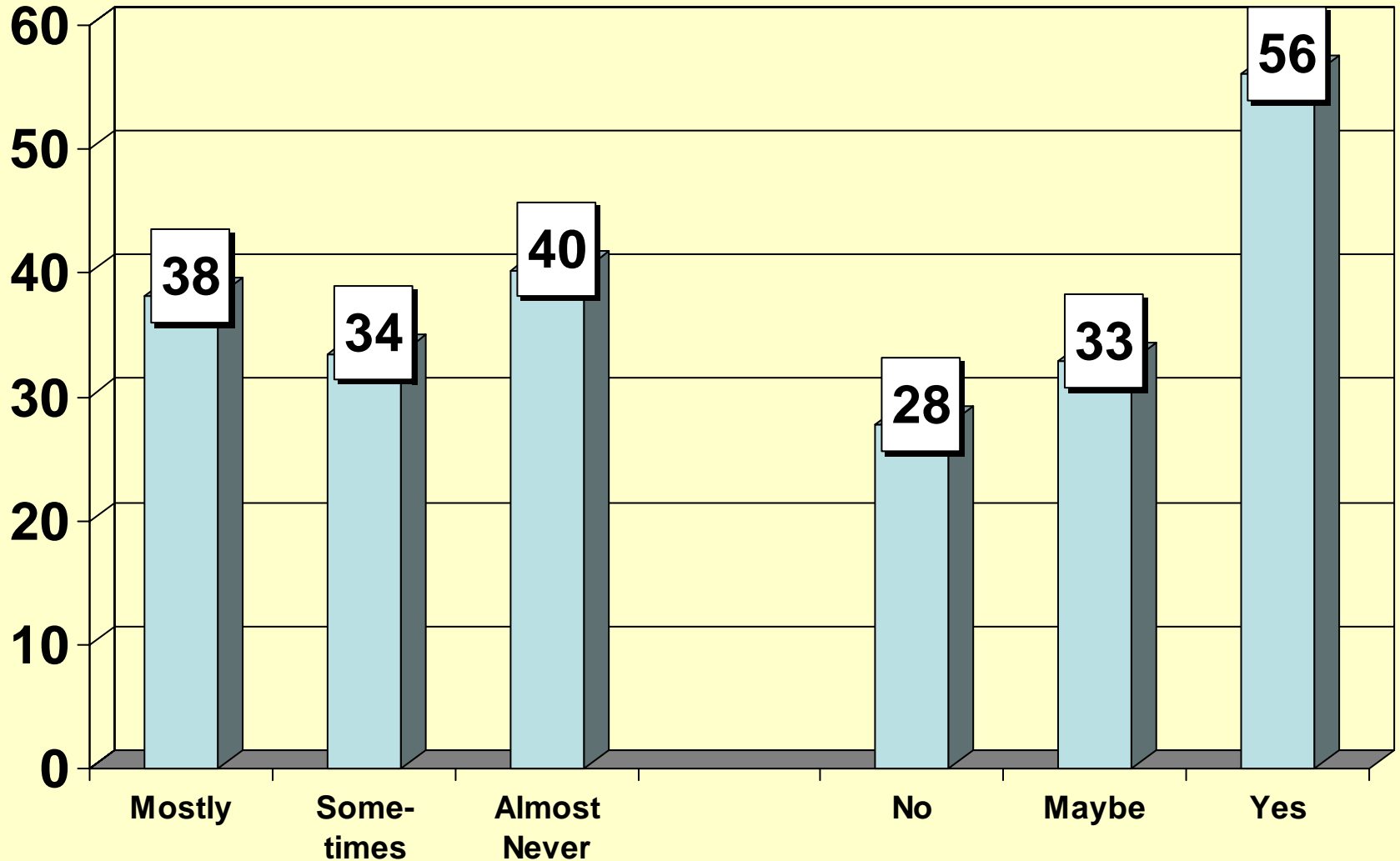
# Sometimes I get into trouble at school.



FAMILY SPEAK ENGLISH AT HOME?

LEARNING OFTEN HARD?

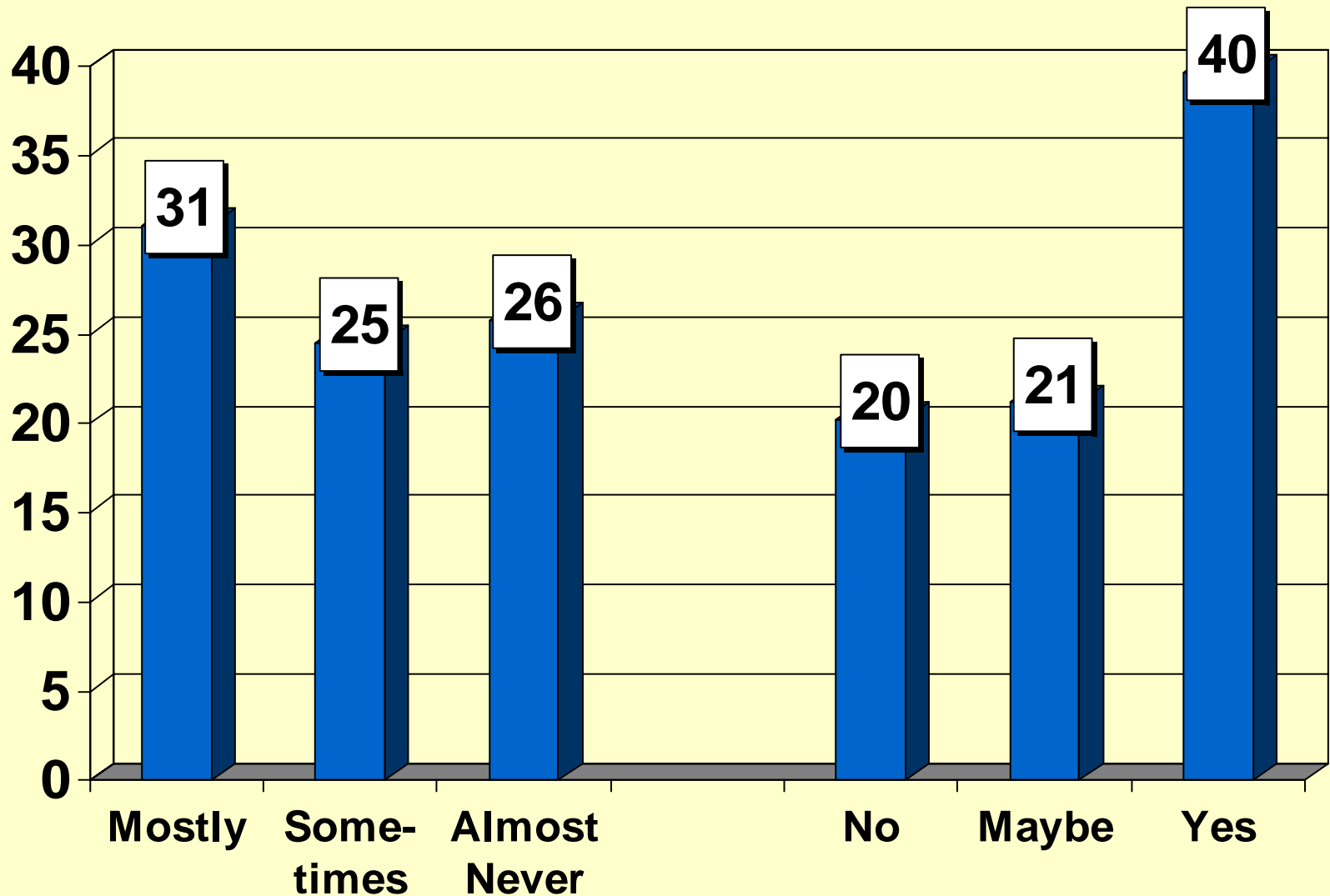
Sometimes my teacher says that I don't pay attention like I should.



FAMILY SPEAK ENGLISH AT HOME?

LEARNING OFTEN HARD?

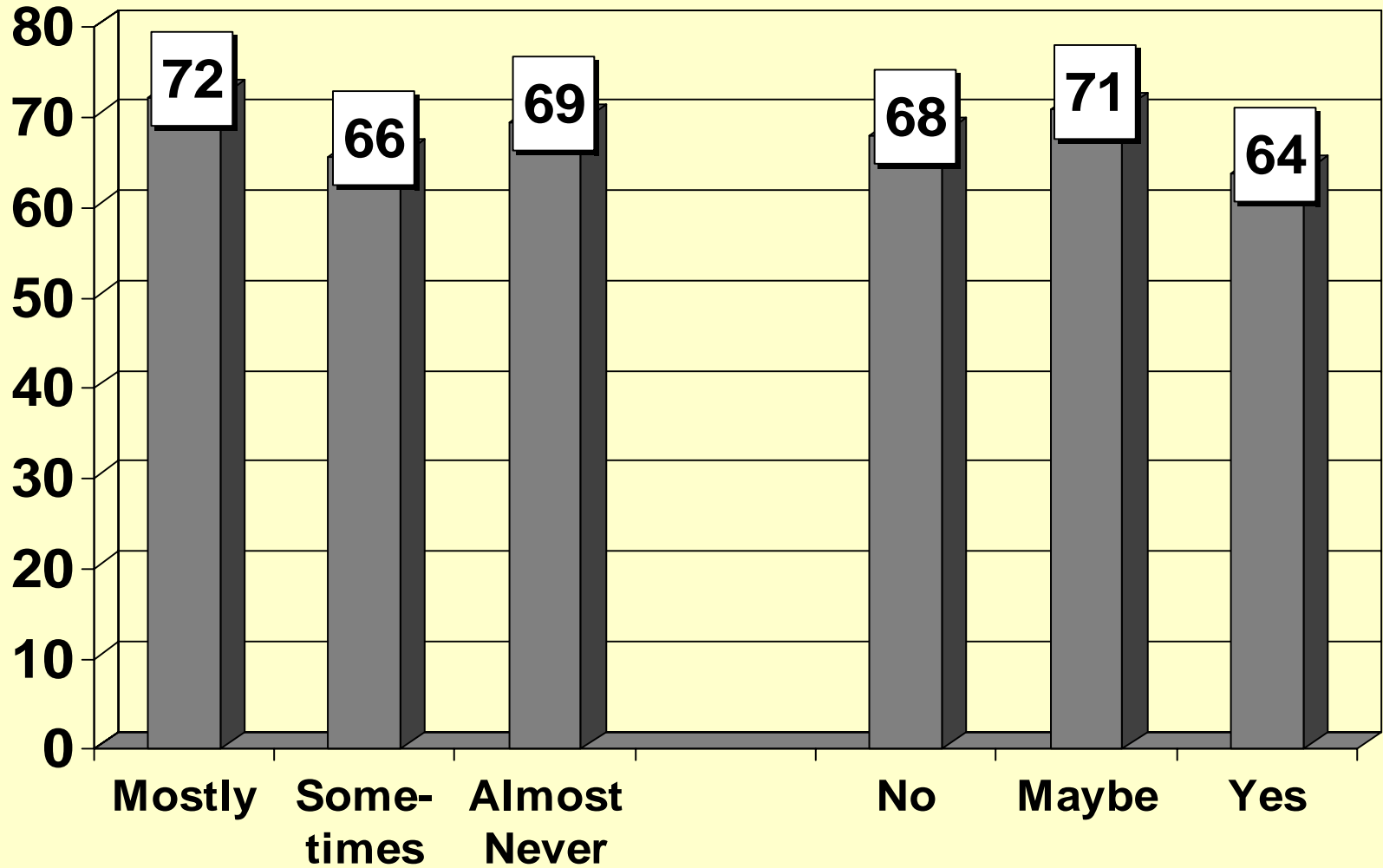
When I work hard, it is because my teacher makes me do it.



FAMILY SPEAK ENGLISH AT HOME?

LEARNING OFTEN HARD?

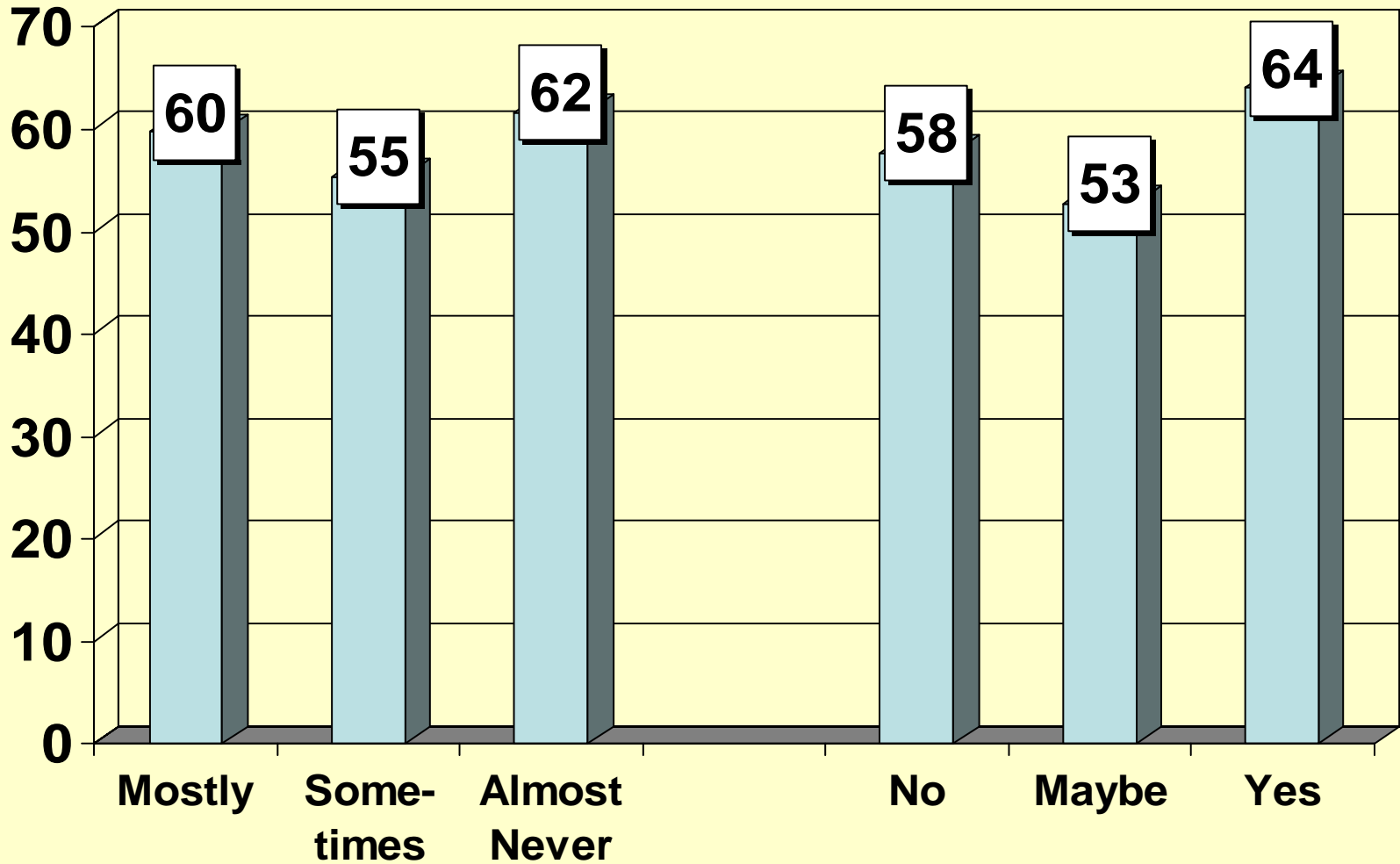
# My teacher likes me.



FAMILY SPEAK ENGLISH AT HOME?

LEARNING OFTEN HARD?

# My teacher likes it when I ask questions.



FAMILY SPEAK ENGLISH AT HOME?

LEARNING OFTEN HARD?