

PTAC/PDE Equity and Inclusion Initiative Survey of Teachers in Urban Settings



PENNSYLVANIA TEACHERS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Survey Notes

N = 489

All respondents indicated that they are current classroom teachers who work with students in public, urban Pennsylvania schools.

Grade Levels Taught by Respondents (some teach more than one level)

Pre-K = 12

Primary (K-2) = 123

Intermediate (3-5) = 163

Middle School (6-8) = 230

High School (9-12) = 62

PA Department of Education Equity Definition

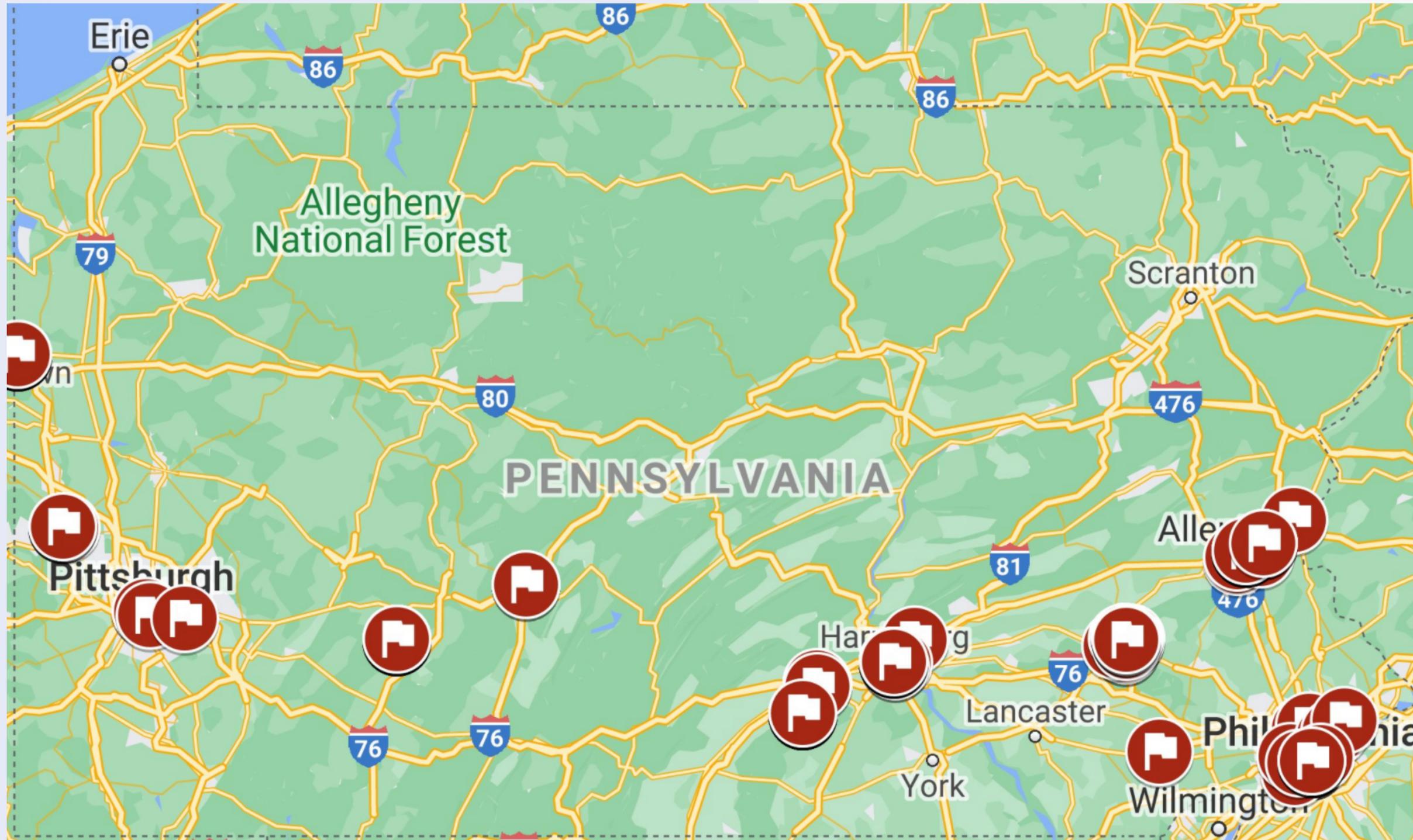
"Every student having access to the educational resources and rigor they need at the right moment in their education across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, family background and/or family income."



Map of LEAs Represented by Survey Data



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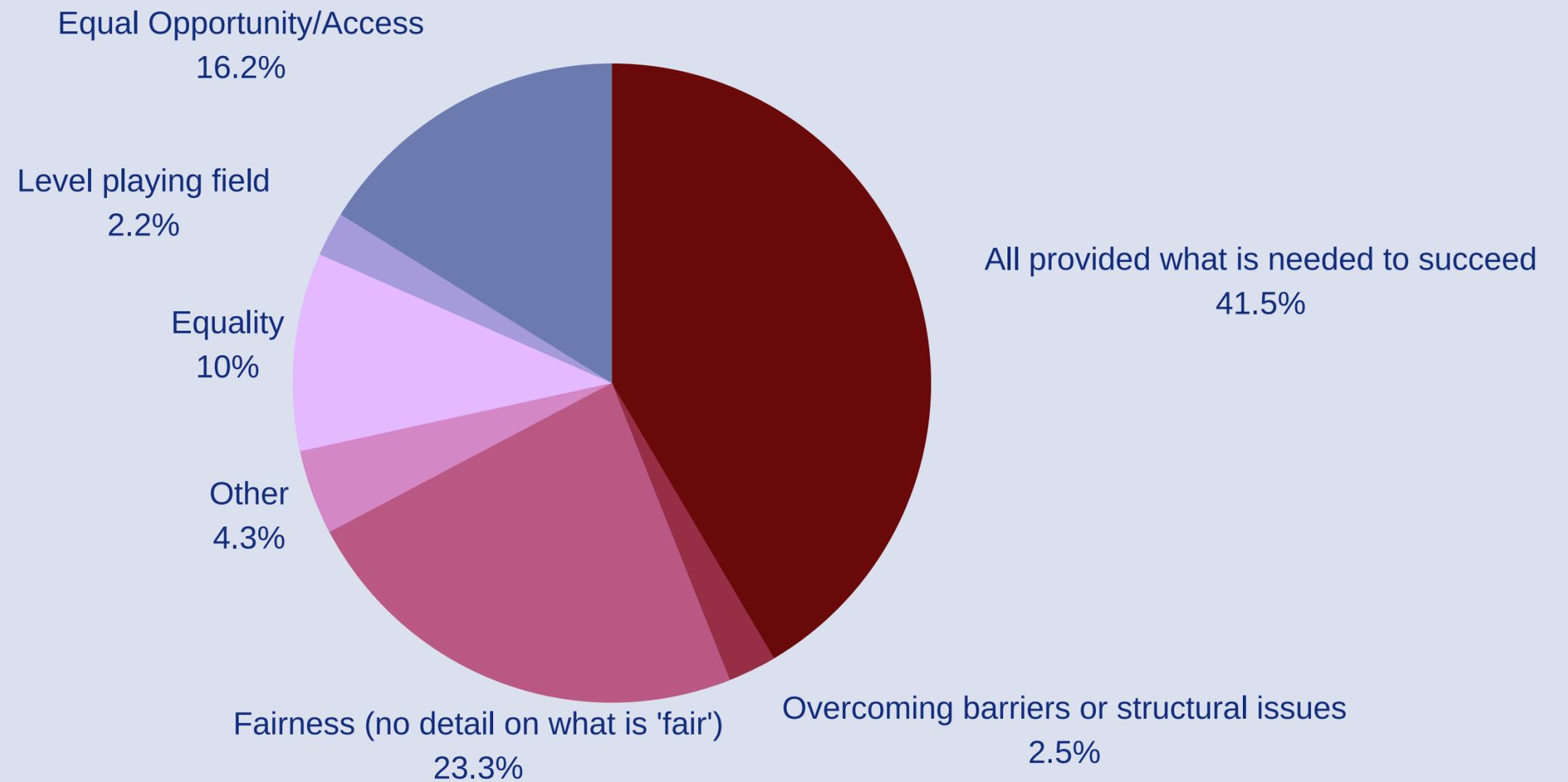




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What is your personal definition of "equity?"

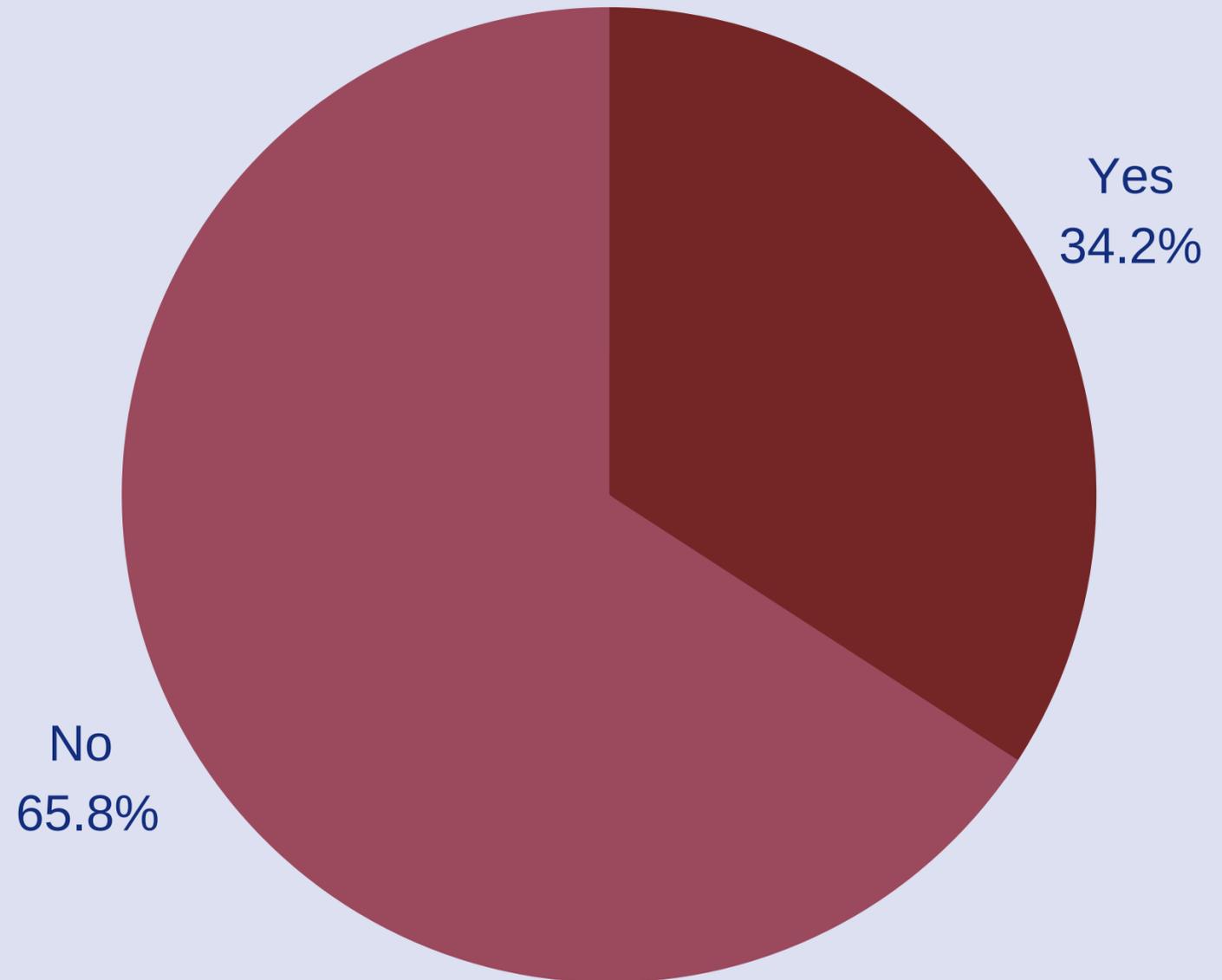
Most common responses fell into six categories





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Before taking this survey, were you familiar with the Pennsylvania Department of Education's published definition of "equity?"



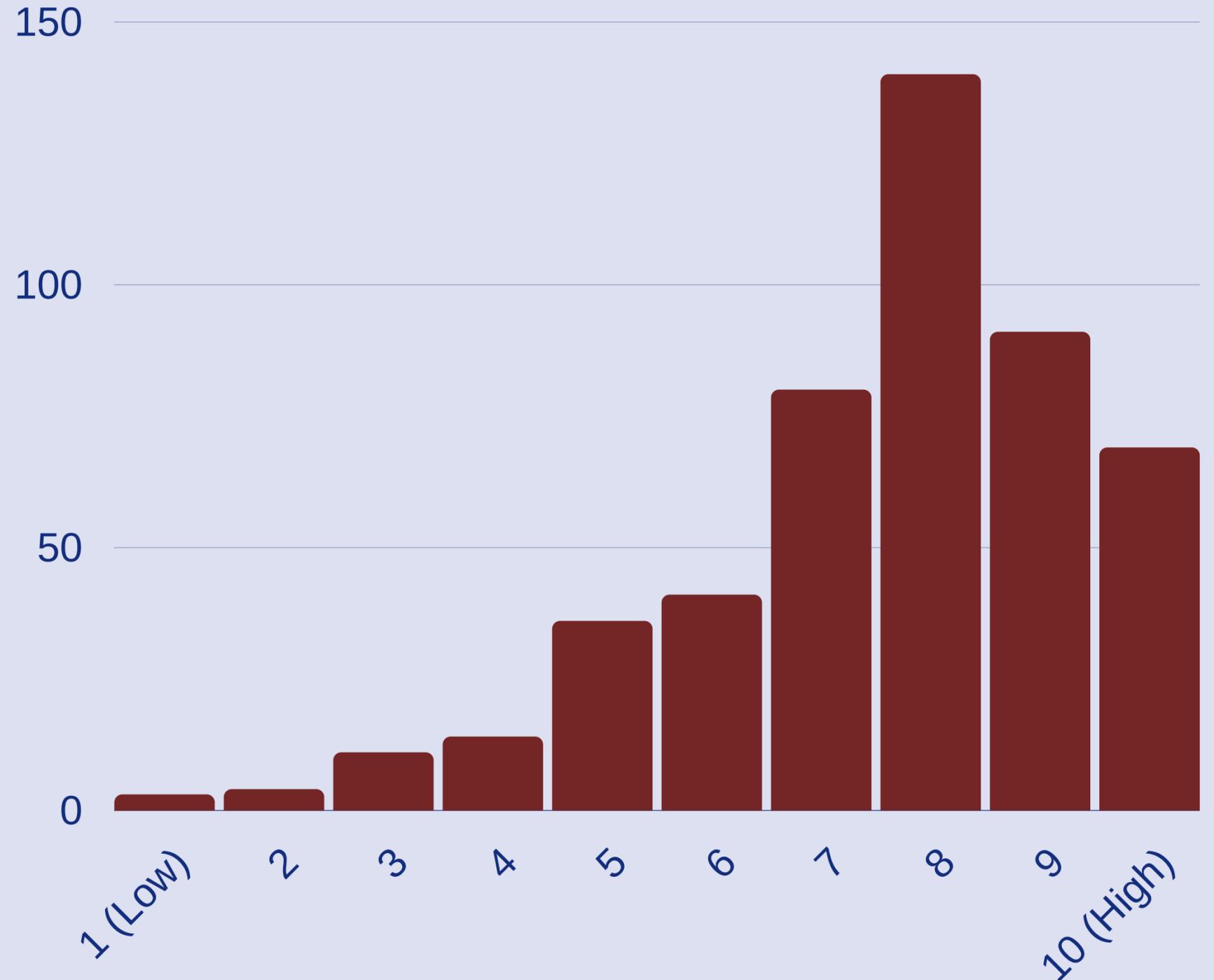


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How well informed do you feel about being able to promote equity (as defined by PDE) through your teaching practices?

Mean: 7.60

Median: 8.00





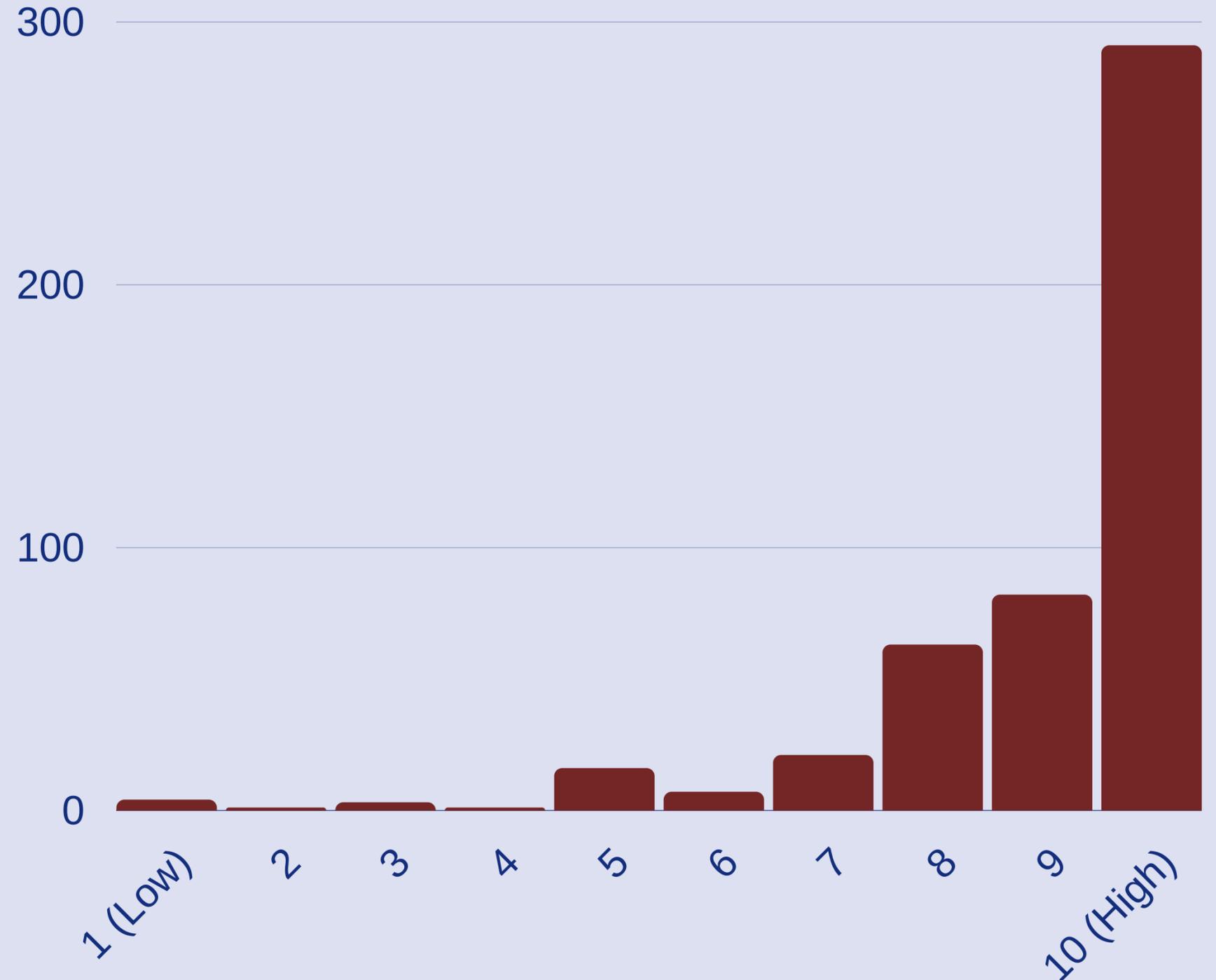
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Pennsylvania Teachers Advisory Committee
Survey of PA Teachers in Urban Settings, May 2021

How much value do you see in promoting equity (as defined by PDE)?

Mean: 9.08

Median: 10.00



What do you wish those making educational decisions at the state level knew about educational equity and professional development?



PENNSYLVANIA TEACHERS
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Selected representative responses from
survey of PA teachers in urban settings, May 2021

K-12 ELL Teacher, Southwestern PA

Standardized testing, in some circumstances, does little to enhance educational equity, We have some students who haven't eaten for days, and come to school only because they know they will be fed at least two meals. We have students who have endured unspeakable injustices and trauma who leave home in the mornings simply to come to school for a "safe haven." We can't challenge kids and encourage them to find success in the classroom (or on standardized assessments) when they are in "survival mode."

So many kids have so much happening in their lives outside of school that they cannot even recall basic information. Unfortunately, that means that they can never get to a place, confidently, where they can analyze, apply, or create because they haven't been taught the very basic skills at home. We have to look at educational policies not only from a school-wide, or district-wide, or even statewide perspective, but also from a community-wide system. Because our students are funneled into the school from the surrounding community, education can't prosper in that community if the majority of the general public is starved of basic needs and resources.

What do you wish those making educational decisions at the state level knew about educational equity and professional development?



PENNSYLVANIA TEACHERS
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Kindergarten Teacher, Southeastern PA

This year I had 31 kindergarten students in my class. 5 of those had IEP's, 6 were English Language Learners, and I referred 3 more for further testing. It is nearly impossible to meet the needs of all of these students. Smaller class sizes would allow me to provide more equitable education to my students.

MS Mathematics Teacher, Central PA

Our students have issues at home that can prevent them from doing their best at school. We need more resources to help these students be able act like the teenagers they are, instead of having to worry about how they are going to pay bills and babysitting their siblings all day.

MS STEM Teacher, Philadelphia

I need PD on how can I address equity specifically as a science teacher. Of course, I can use what is discussed in terms of reading/math, in which equity PD has been focused more often, but are there topics in science that provide opportunities to promote equity? We also need more examples of how we can incorporate these practices into our daily interactions with all students. I already look for ways to do this. However, I am limited by my own biases (known or not known).

HS Special Education Teacher, Central PA

So much focus is on the push for us to always be delivering content related to testing. Our PD opportunities are always about data and testing. We don't prioritize equity because of that.



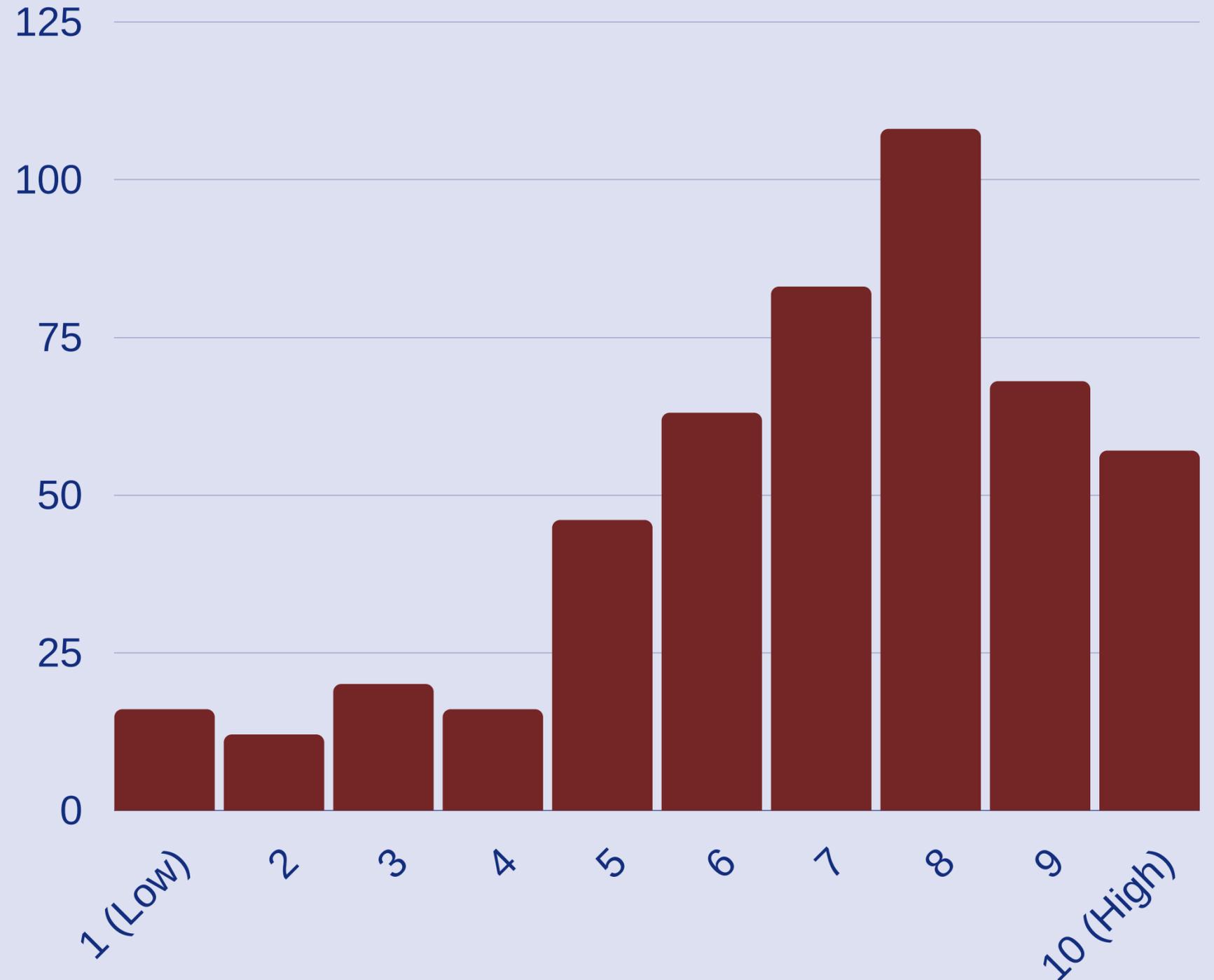
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Pennsylvania Teachers Advisory Committee
Survey of PA Teachers in Urban Settings, May 2021

During your planning and teaching practice, how much focus do you put on students understanding the experiences and perspectives of those with different "races, genders, ethnicities, languages, disabilities, religions, sexual orientations, gender identities, family backgrounds and family incomes?"

Mean: 6.95

Median: 7.00

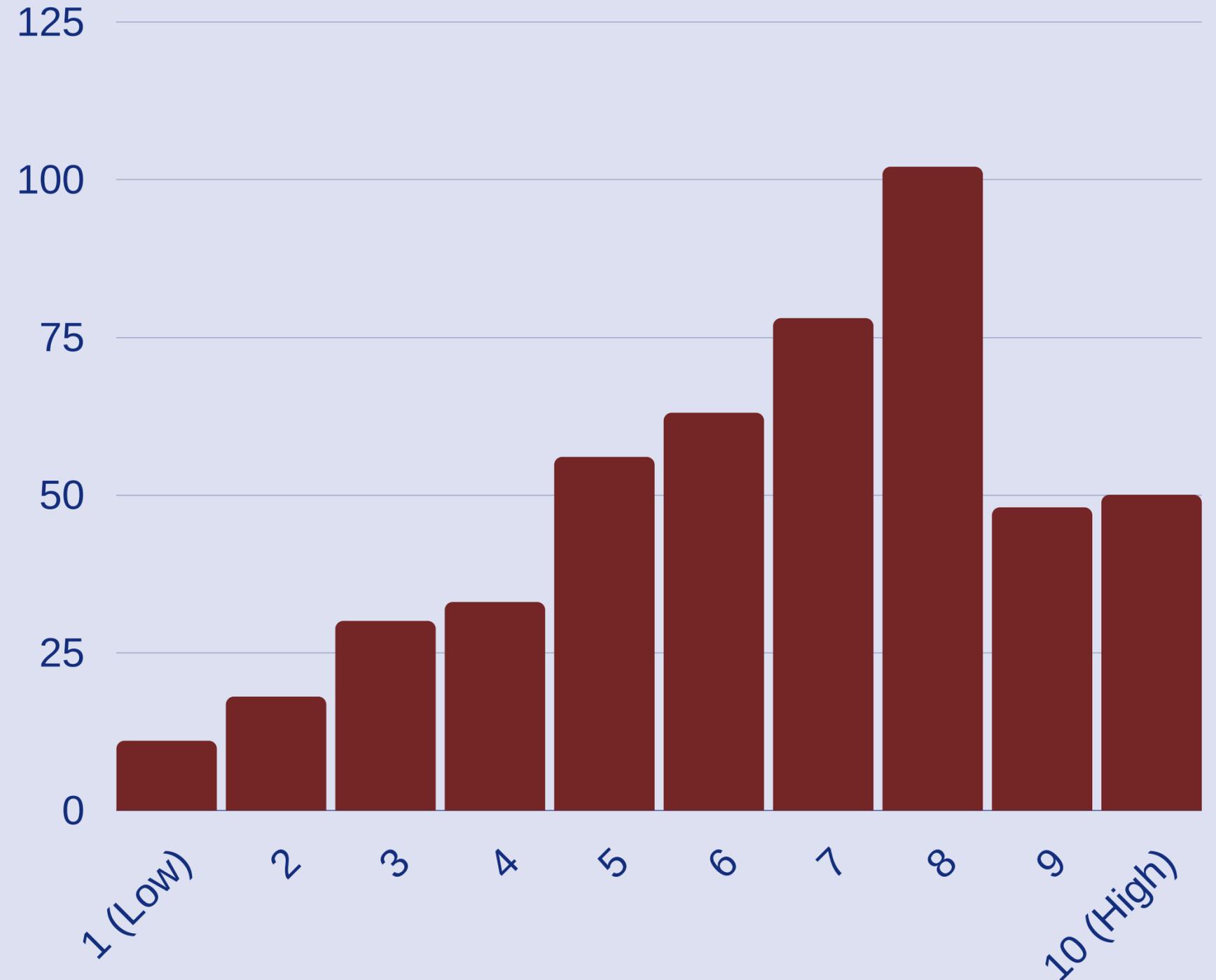




In district/LEA provided professional development that you have participated in during the last 5 years, how much focus has been on students and/or teachers understanding the experiences and perspectives of those with different "races, genders, ethnicities, languages, disabilities, religions, sexual orientations, gender identities, family backgrounds and family incomes?"

Mean: 6.59

Median: 7.00



What do you wish those making educational decisions at the state level knew about educational equity and professional development?



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Selected representative responses from
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High School Teacher, Philadelphia

It's difficult to suggest how to make professional development better when the primary barriers to equity in my school district are systemic and material, not just matters of skill and practice. Orientation on culturally responsive practices comes to mind. I think it's important that professional learning and development sessions aimed at promoting equity actually led by members of the school community – educators, students/alumni, parents, etc.

MS Special Education Teachers, Southeastern PA

Many staff members are unaware of their personal social bias... They do not have the full understanding of how poverty and race impact individuals' lives.

Elementary School Teacher, Eastern PA

Educators need support in anti-bias curriculum and teaching techniques. Educators need to practice self-awareness and to be aware of the biases they may hold (we all have them!) and how they affect classroom outcomes. Both things are achievable through quality PD.

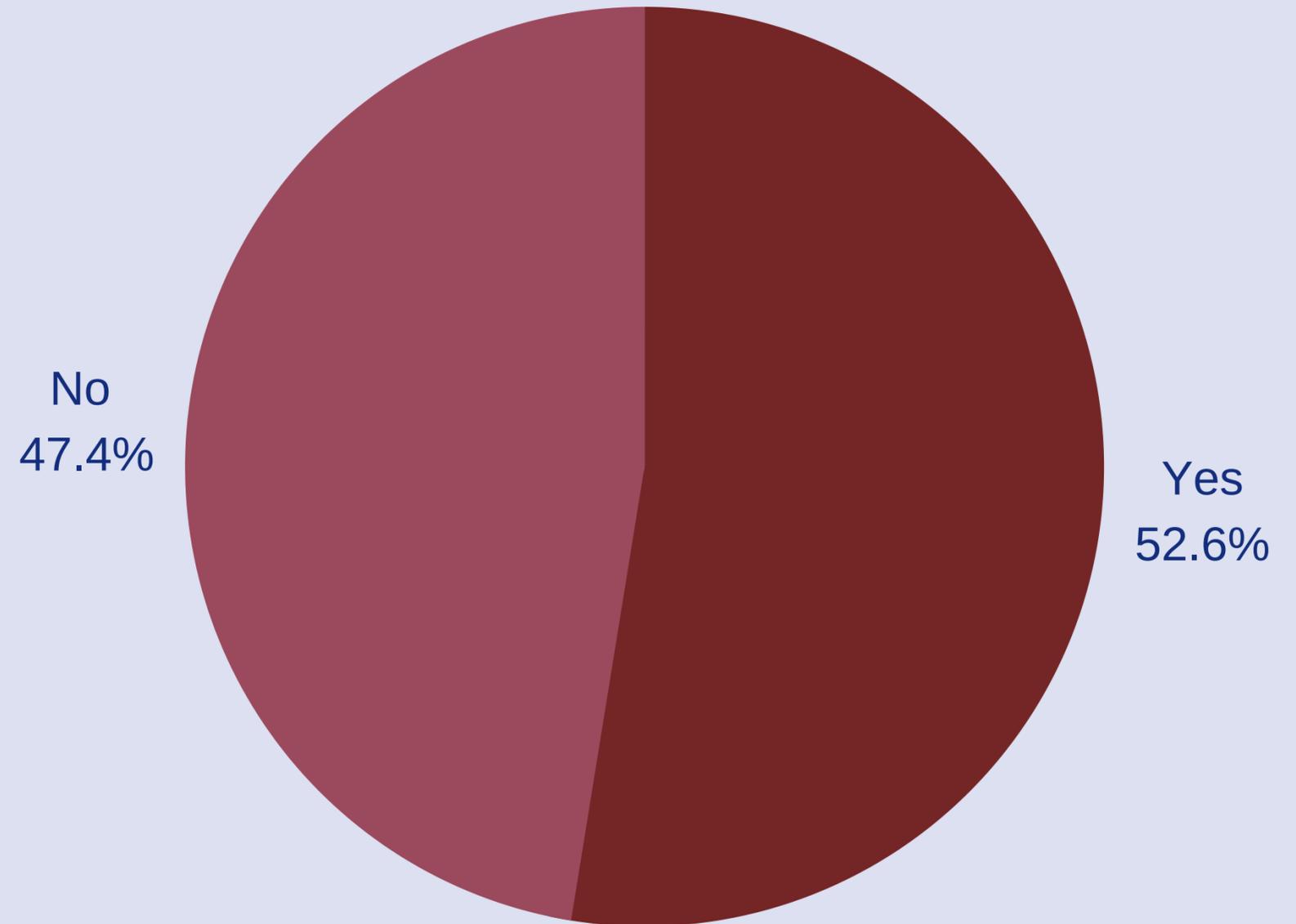
Primary Teacher, Philadelphia

It is easy to say "all students have access" ... Teachers need to be taught HOW to provide said access.



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Think back to the process you went through when you were hired for your current position. Was equity and inclusion discussed during that process?

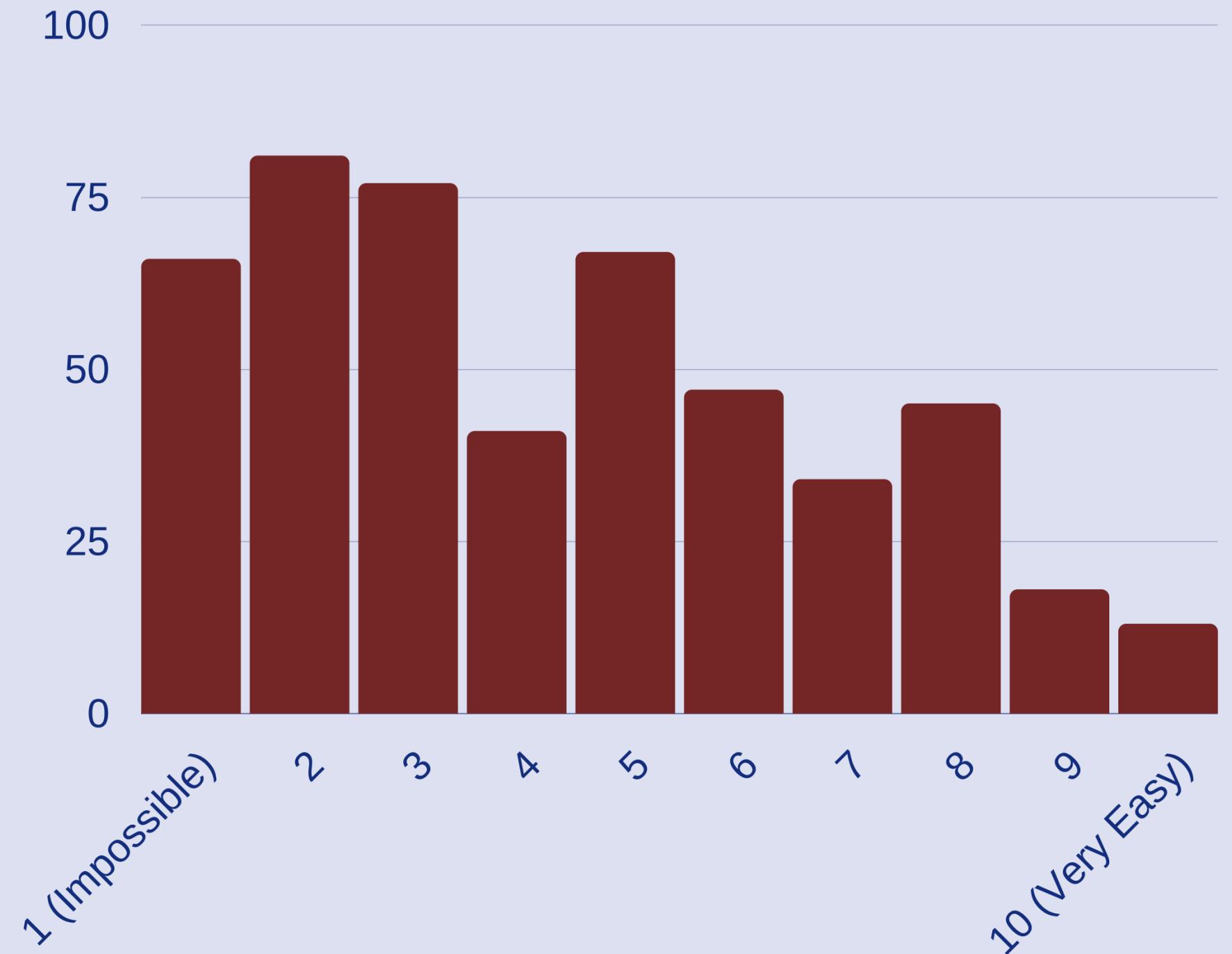




In your current role and setting, how easy is it for equity to NOT serve as a priority?

Mean: 4.36

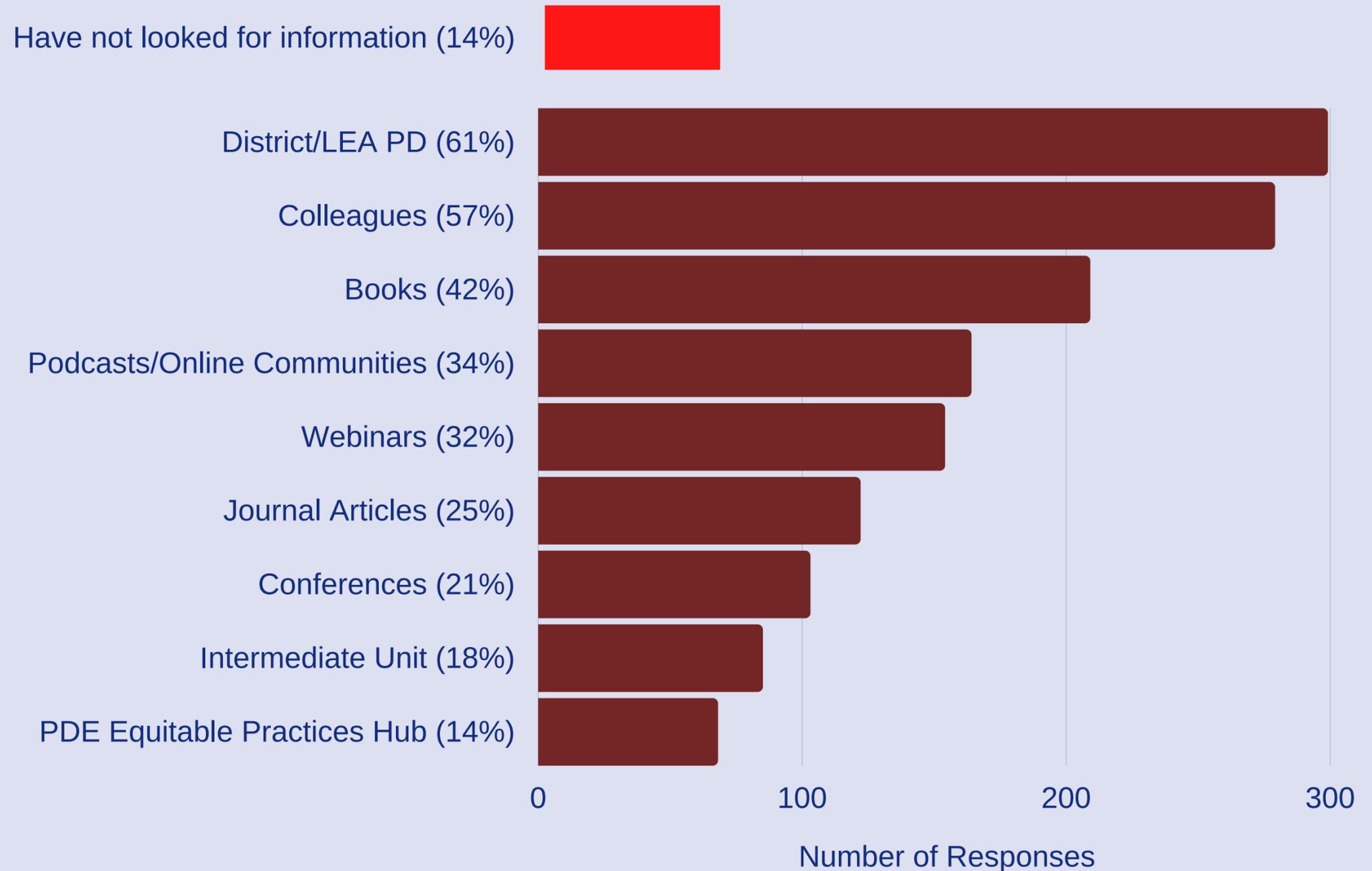
Median: 4.00





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What resources do you use when looking for information about equitable education practices?



What do you wish those making educational decisions at the state level knew about educational equity and professional development?



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Selected representative responses from
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HS English Teacher, Pittsburgh

Educational equity goals must be action oriented...embedded and accountable systemically...in the vision statements, mission statements, hiring policies, curricula, professional developments, pedagogy, teacher/administrator evaluations, student voice initiatives, mentoring programs for teachers, and support systems for marginalized educators/administrators.

Primary Teacher, Western PA

As an African American educator in a small city I felt very isolated and lonely at times. None of these issues were addressed in my district. It's truly sad and a disservice to all our children! There was no support/acknowledgment from the district about current events, black history month, women's history month, etc.

MS English Teacher, Southeastern PA

Last year I listened to several Black students give testimonies of their experiences in our district. I was completely caught off guard by what I heard. In our school, where the majority of students are Hispanic, it's easy to look at our "brown" kids as generalized minorities, but the truth is that African American students have different experiences and are treated differently by the Hispanic students and white teachers. This is something I completely overlooked because in my head they were all minority students, which was very ignorant on my part. If we give students the place to share their voice and experiences, we will learn more about their specific struggles that maybe we wouldn't know about.

What do you wish those making educational decisions at the state level knew about educational equity and professional development?



PENNSYLVANIA TEACHERS
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MS Science Teacher, Eastern PA

The concept of educational equity in a classroom is romanticized. It is often difficult to engage in conversations with decision makers who are too far removed from the classroom or have never stepped foot in one as an educator. When policy is based on the personal memories of those who are removed from the classroom like that, decisions are not inclusive of all in our schools.

Teachers are overworked. The hardest things to balance is time to plan lessons, meetings that take you away during planning time, garnering uninterrupted teaching time, and all the frequent new initiatives. I know I am capable of planning and implementing equitable lessons, but I can also see how my students' success from year to year has ebbed and flowed based on the amount of time I had at my disposal to plan lessons with their best interest in mind.

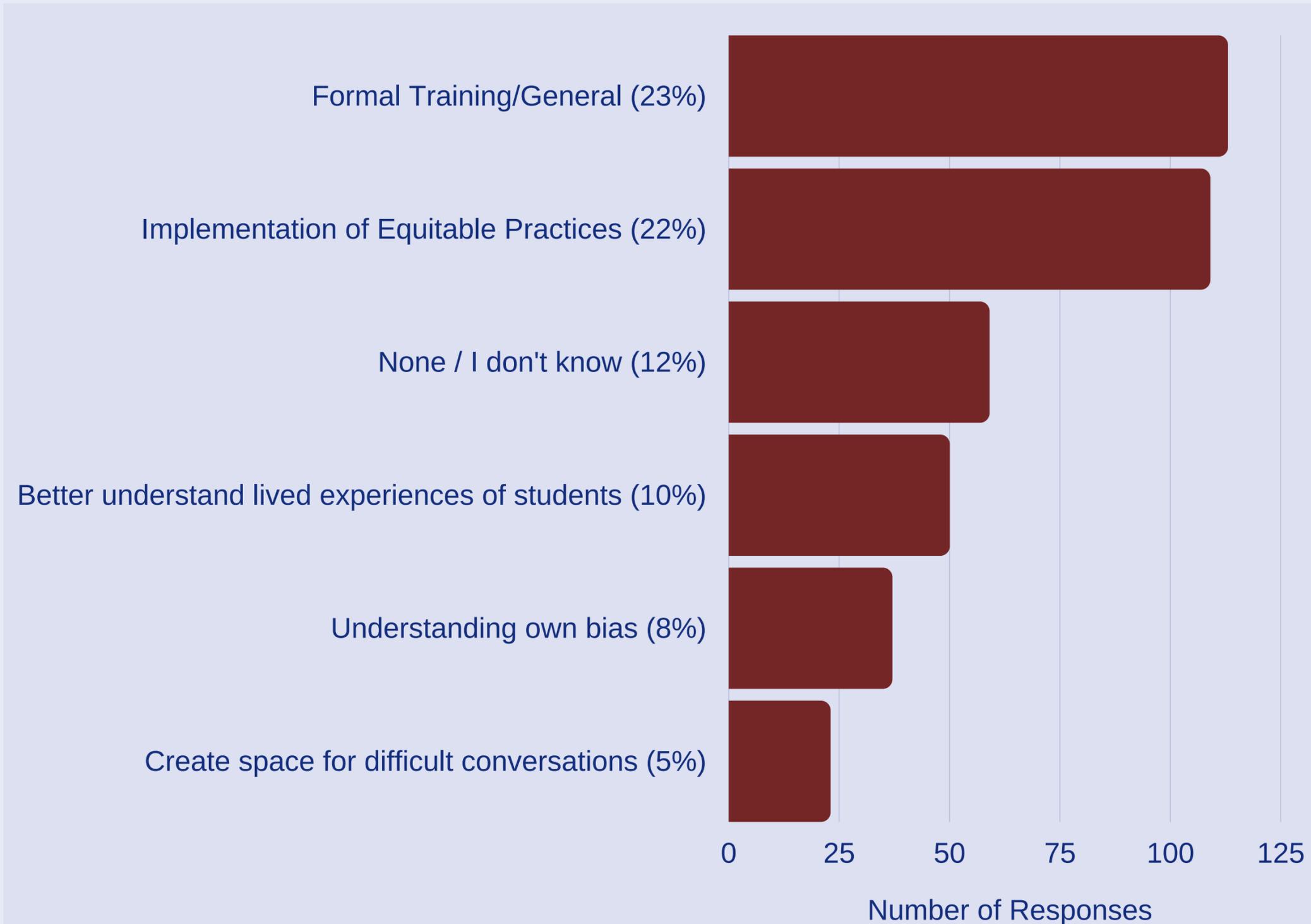
Please visit a few classrooms and speak with teachers and students. Hear their voices before moving forward with any policy.



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What professional learning and development do you believe is necessary to promote equity (as defined by PDE)?

Most common responses. No other responses above 5%

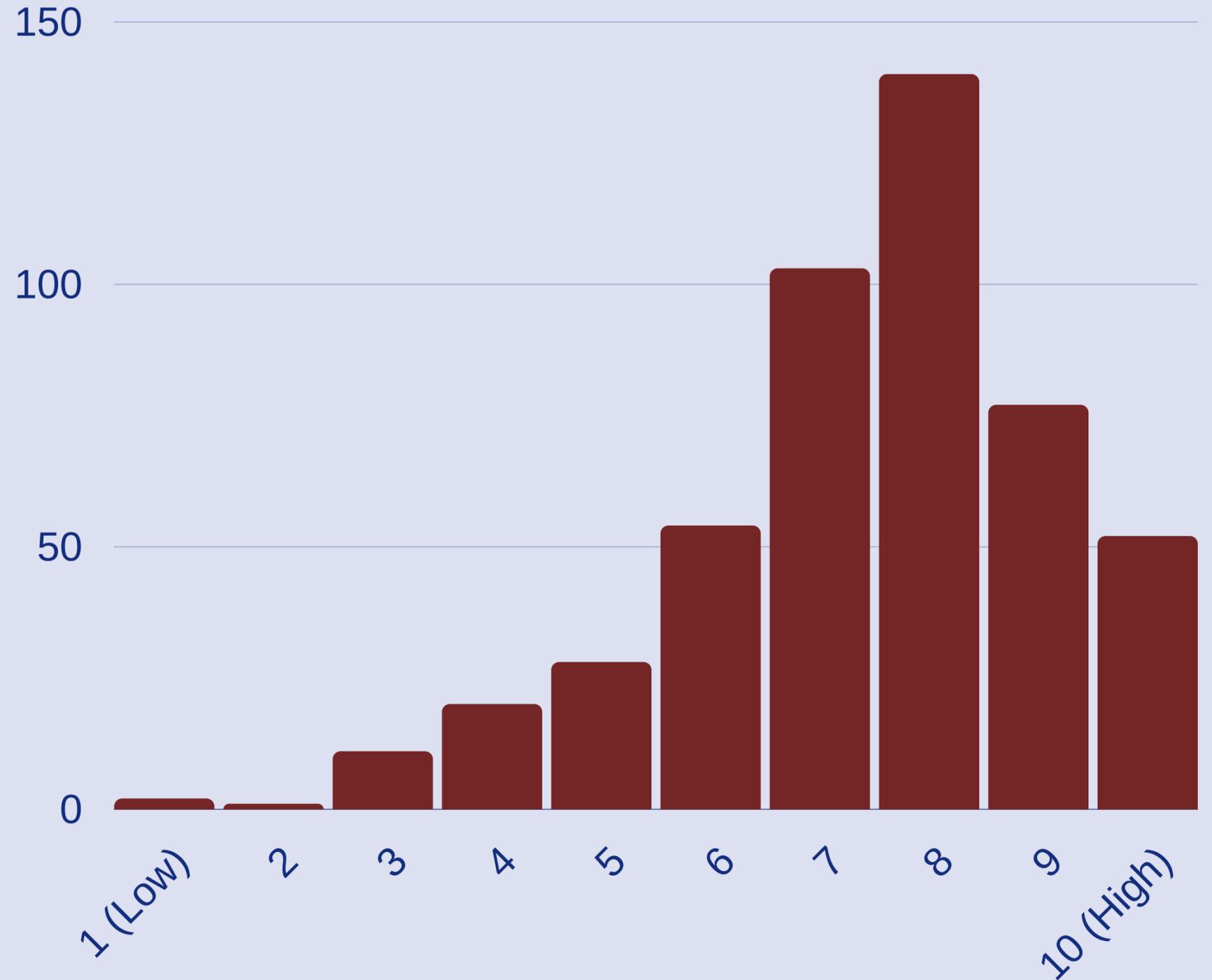




How well informed do you feel about understanding the experiences and backgrounds of students that are in your classes?

Mean: 7.45

Median: 8.00



What do you wish those making educational decisions at the state level knew about educational equity and professional development?



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HS Social Studies Teacher, Central PA

I wish policy makers knew the pushback we face in our local community when trying to create an atmosphere of learning focused on equity for all students. I have been outspoken about the base causes of inequity in classroom discussions, and I have had parents call in to administration. They express concern about what I am teaching to their children, and question if it is part of the curriculum. If members of the community do not understand equity (and the lack thereof), or refuse to acknowledge the issues and the problems that exist, or do not wish to attempt to bring about more equity, then we will not be able to tackle issues of inequity in our communities or schools.

HS Visual Arts Teacher, Philadelphia

What we can do as educators to promote equity will never actually achieve equity. I cannot personally make sure each student has everything they need for true access to equal opportunity. Equity in education can't be achieved if students don't have stable housing, good food, the same economic/caretaking responsibilities, access to health/mental health care, absence of racial trauma ect.

I would like a higher minimum wage, universal health care, free daycare, expansion of welfare, more funding for schools, ect. rather than more professional development focused on a problem that I can't solve.

What do you wish those making educational decisions at the state level knew about educational equity and professional development?



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HS Mathematics Teacher, Western PA

Our school borders established in the 1960s are propagating ignorance that leads to stereotypes, furthering inequity students experience.

Elementary STEM Teacher, Southeastern PA

Equity is a farce. By catering to every little need of every single person we are undermining our students' ability to function in the real world. The real world does not care the color of your skin, your race, religion, orientation. We need to focus on closing the education gap that society has created by unfairly distributing educational resources and funding to more affluent districts. Our students are getting left behind because that are not seen as equal to their wealthier peers.

MS Social Studies Teacher, Central PA

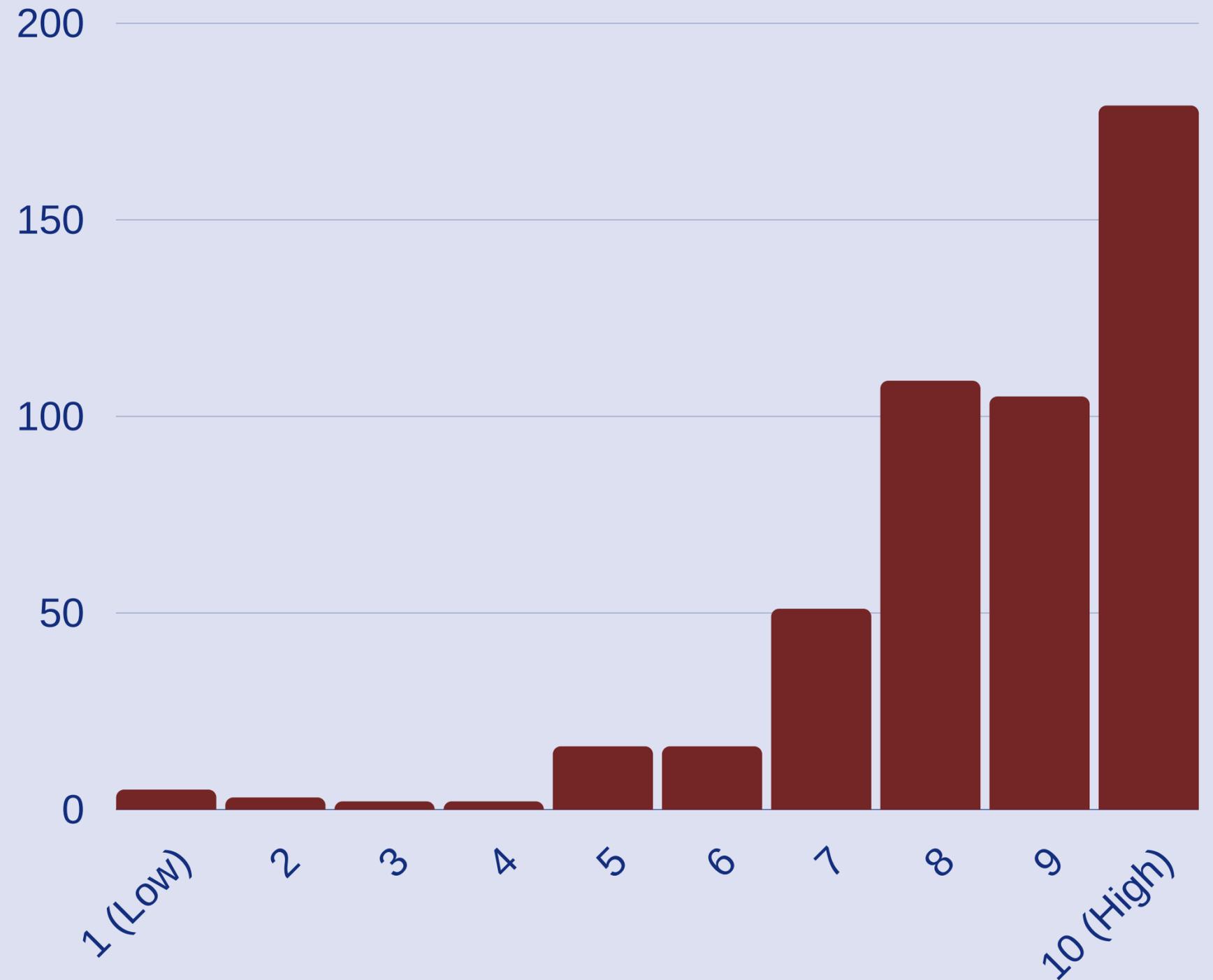
One of my students is incredibly hardworking, intelligent, and diligent. She was also from a low-income family. This student for the majority of the year had a perfect attendance record, except for one week in February 2021. She had missed all the classes for that week. When we teachers contacted her family to discover the reason for her absence we were informed that her Wi-Fi and internet had been shut off due to non-payment. She had to walk, in the cold, to the local YMCA to use their local Wi-Fi to work on assignments in our Google Classrooms, but was unable to attend our timed Zoom meetings.



How passionate are you about prioritizing educational equity (as defined by PDE) both inside and outside your school?

Mean: 8.53

Median: 9.00

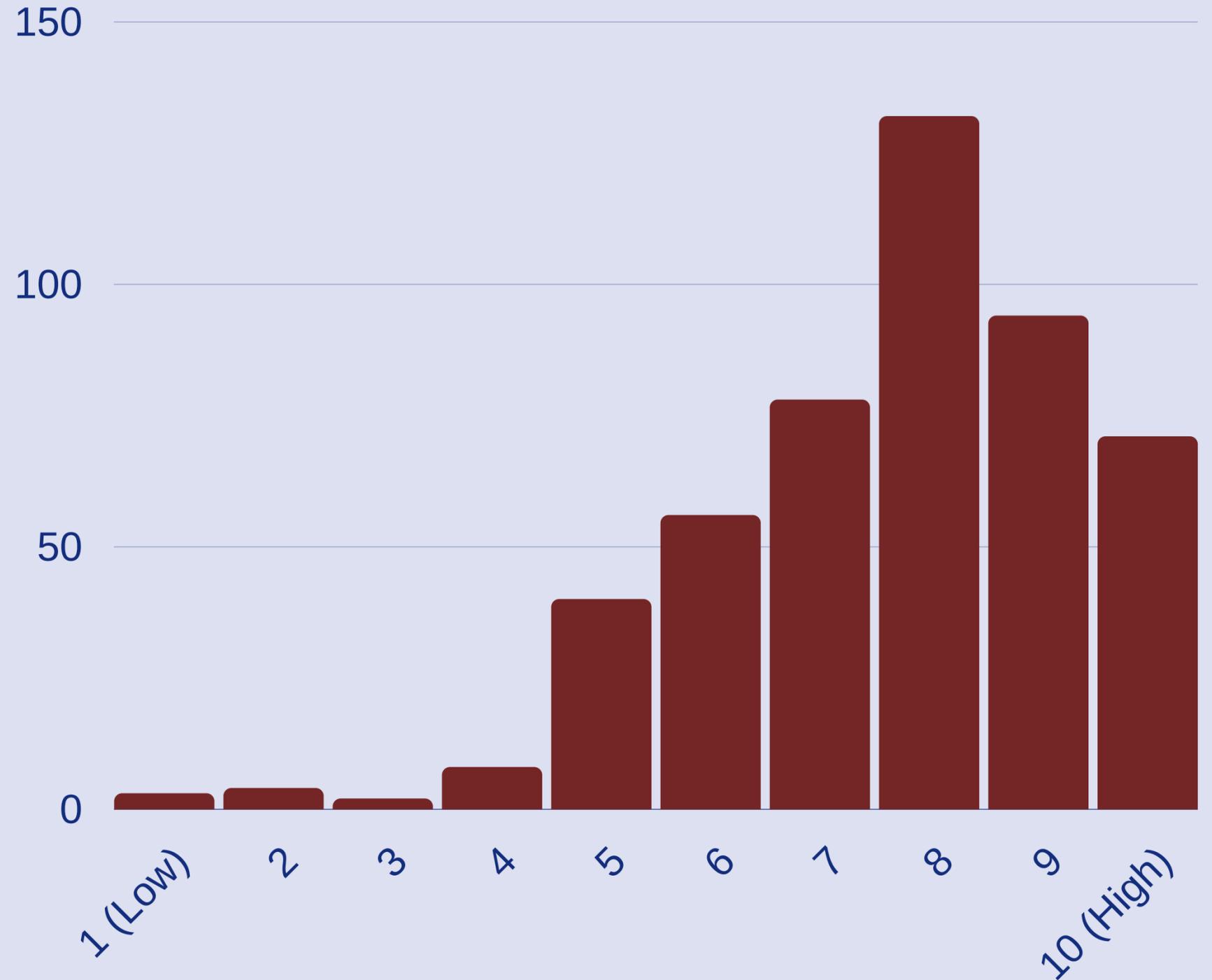




How competent do you feel about working for educational equity (as defined by PDE) both inside and outside your school?

Mean: 7.67

Median: 8.00



What do you wish those making educational decisions at the state level knew about educational equity and professional development?



PENNSYLVANIA TEACHERS
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MS Social Studies Teacher, Southwestern PA

I overheard a student telling her peers that she can't count how many times the police have been to her house over the years to arrest her mother. When this occurs, how can we expect a student to come to school and be mentally present?

Another student has a mom who suffers from mental illness and mistreats and neglects her daughter in many ways. The student feels trapped!

One girl told me she was happy that her parents were getting a divorce because her father is abusive, and they fight all of the time. She later told me they got back together because her father promised he would change. She stated, "that's what he always says".

These "stories" are not uncommon in our district. Many of our students have been, and continue to be, traumatized by life events that they cannot control. Schools need more mental health professionals to help these young people cope with their complicated lives.

What do you wish those making educational decisions at the state level knew about educational equity and professional development?



PENNSYLVANIA TEACHERS
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Middle School Teacher, Southeastern PA

Equity must be integrated and woven into school culture. It begins with administration and continues all the way through. There needs to also be diversity and understanding within staff.

Elementary Teacher, Pittsburgh

Professional development application, consistency in messaging/communication, authenticity from leadership, and practice lacks substance. We have been "doing" equity work from a district perspective for many, many, years. However, the commitment is subpar and what some would refer to "lip service". Our equity department should be visible and this work should be ingrained in all systems, educator practices, and also should be evident in outcomes.

MS Foreign Language Teacher, Central PA

We need more time to learn and discover but we are all so overextended that even the thought of any new commitments seems overwhelming. I don't think teachers can do all that is expected of us and still have a healthy work/life balance. Promoting equity seems essential at this point in our country but I don't know where the time or energy will come from.

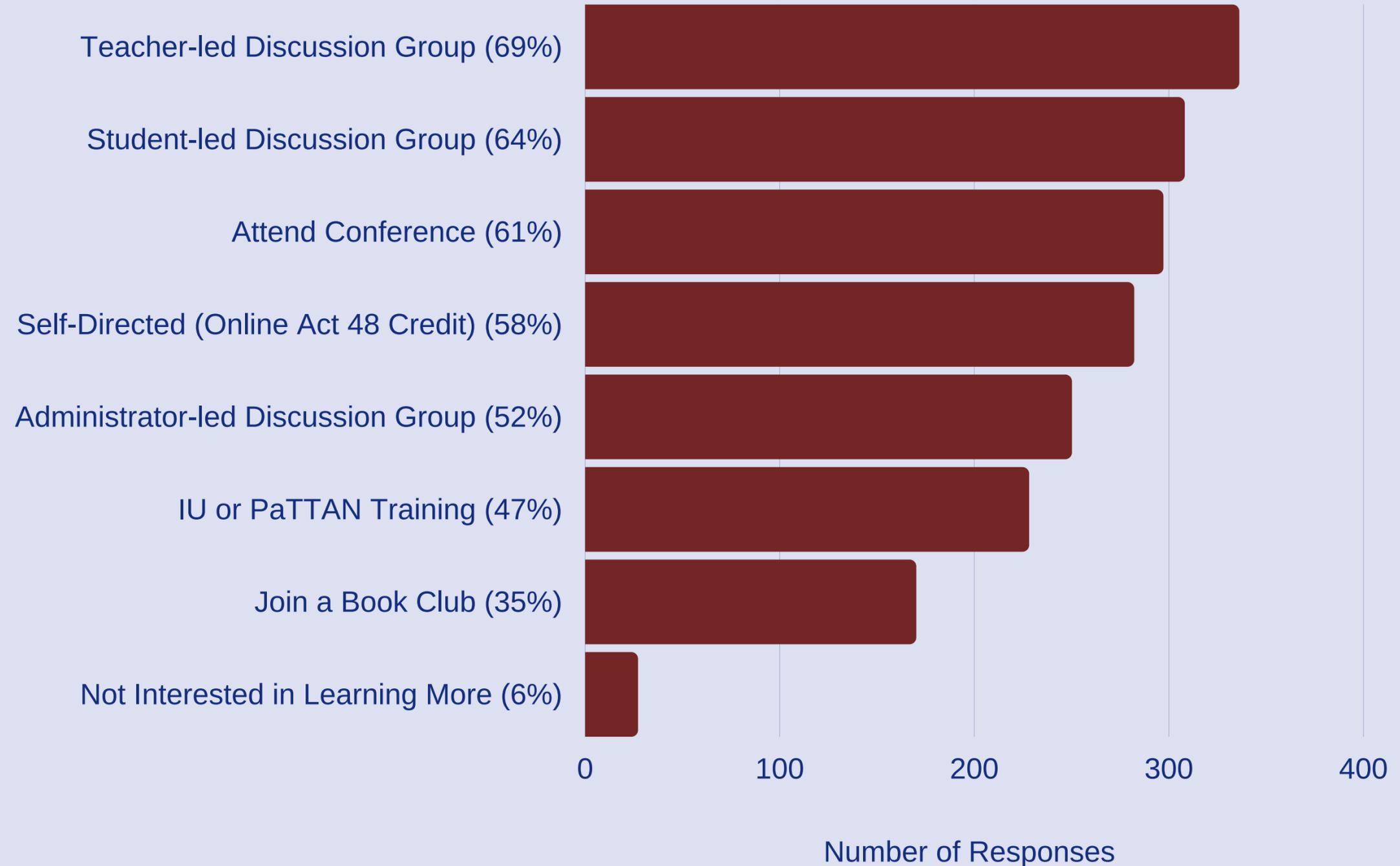
Middle School Mathematics Teacher, Eastern PA

When the pandemic first forced us to leave the confines of our school building, educational inequity was magnified for my students. So many didn't have technology or dependable wifi. If we want our students to be ready for the 21st century, we have to make sure they have the necessary resources.



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Which of the following actions would you be willing to take to learn more about educational equity and inclusion?

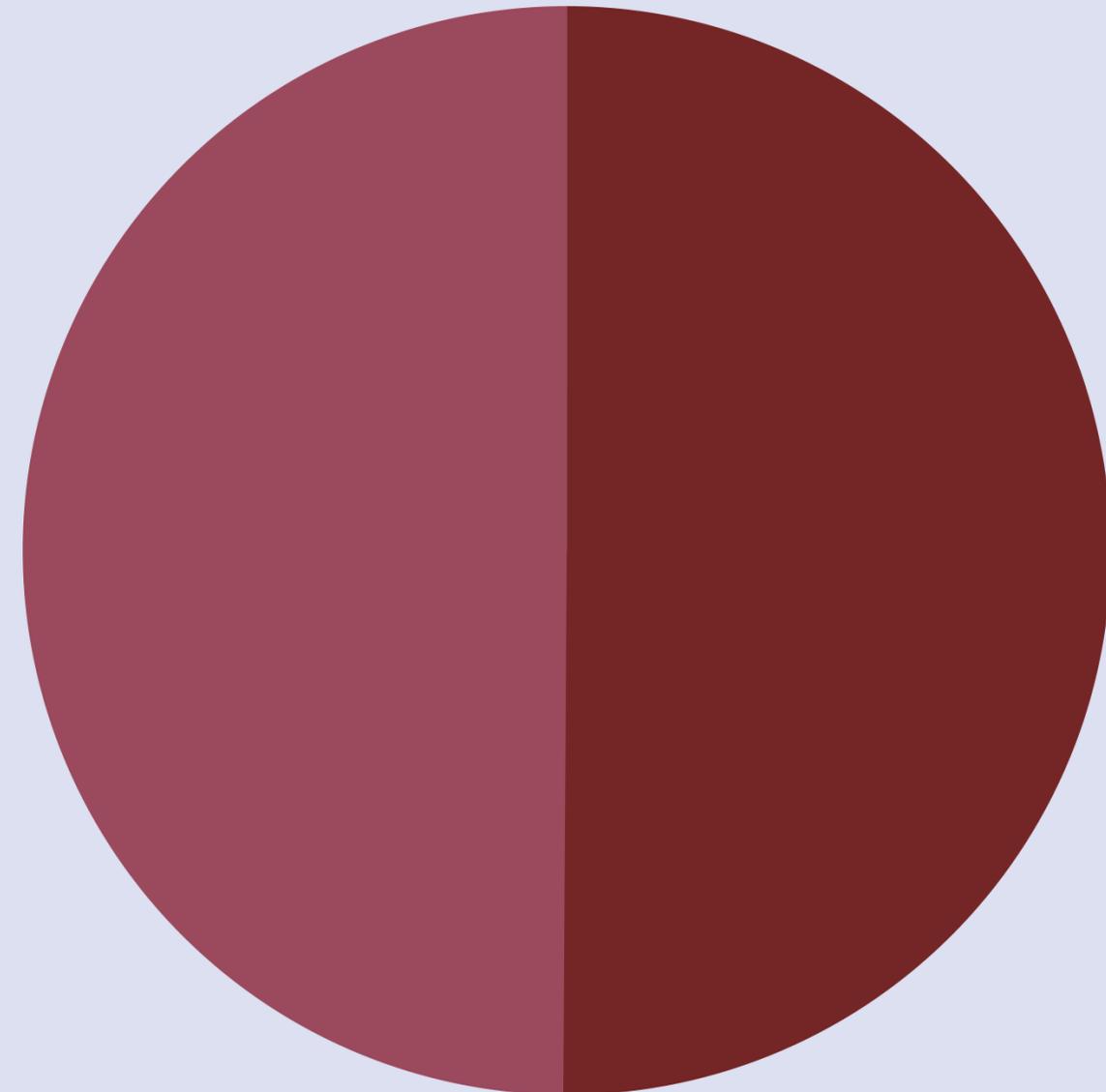




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**Does your school
have a mentorship
program for new
teachers that
includes an
intentional focus on
equity and
inclusion?**

No
49.9%

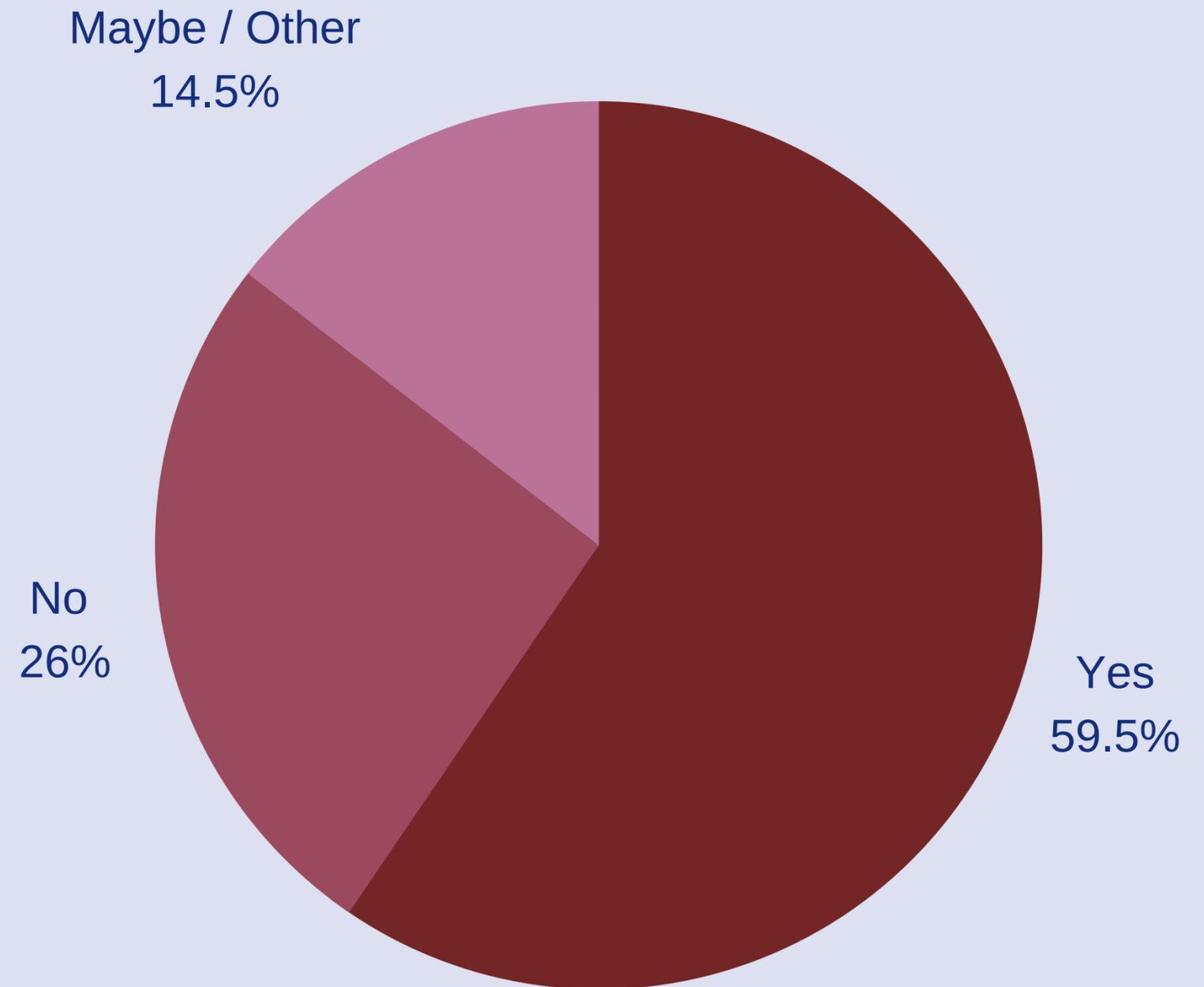


Yes
50.1%



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**If it were offered,
would you be willing
to receive training
and serve as a
mentor to other
teachers on topics of
equity and
inclusion?**





PENNSYLVANIA TEACHERS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

About the Pennsylvania Teachers Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Mission:

**To ensure essential decisions
that impact students
are informed by expert teachers**

PTAC is a non-profit organization. Members are active K-12 classroom teachers who have been recognized for teaching excellence at the state, national, and/or international level representing every region of the state and every subject area. To learn more and apply for membership, visit our website.

Contact Information

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