



# Norwood High School First-Year Supports

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February 7, 2024




# Overarching Concepts


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1. Supports for first year students in high school can be categorized into the following: academic needs, behavioral needs, emotional needs, and procedural needs. (Akos, P., & Galassi, J. P., 2004)
2. Research indicates that students who fail a course during their 9th grade year are more likely to struggle throughout their high school career, and that multi tiered systems of support foster student engagement, positive social interactions, and academic achievement for all students. (Flannery et. al, 2019).
3. Historically, high schools create systems that maximize efficiency across all grades, which may not meet the needs of their youngest students, and assumes that all high school students are academically and emotionally ready for a uniform approach on day one.
4. High schools introduce enhanced supports, such as Grade 9 academy, to build a solid foundation for success moving forward. This approach has demonstrated improved academic achievement. (Styron & Peasant, 2010).
5. While there are common approaches to enhancing supports for first year students, there is no one size fits all solution.


# First Year Supports Committee Timeline

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**Phase 1:** Conduct a needs assessment of the academic, emotional, and behavioral supports needed for a successful transition from middle school to high school (May-June 2023). 

**Phase 2:** Research best practices in this area, as well as options that other high schools have used to address their own needs (June-September 2023). 

**Phase 3:** Develop, examine, and solicit feedback regarding potential options for enhanced support for first year students, up to and including a First Year Academy (October 2023 -January 2024). 

**Phase 4:** Recommend (or not) a model and associated structures and supports for implementation in September 2024. (January 2024-March 2024). 

# Benefits and Challenges of Current System

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## What's working?:

- Caring and invested staff, some who have dedicated their work to first year students
- Four Year Graduation rate 97.2%
- Students report feeling welcomed to NHS
- Voice and choice in coursework
- Access to career programming

## Challenges:

- Lack of common planning time for staff of grade 9 students
- No specific programming for grade 9 that is focused on transition
- Increased academic deficits of grade 9 students
- Lack of procedural knowledge of credit accumulation, progress towards graduation
- Little support for study and organizational skills
- Minimal transitional programming to assist with middle to high school transition
- No designated support for emotional and behavioral challenges of grade 9 students

# Core Needs for NHS

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1. **Academic Support** - Developing academic habits of mind, an academic growth mindset, and gaining proficiency in the 5 C's of the PONG
2. **Emotional Support** - Self-regulation skills & strategies, self-advocacy, managing independence, & successfully handling adversity and conflict
3. **Behavioral Support** - Emotional self-regulation skills & strategies, maintain healthy and respectful relationships, & maturing into adulthood
4. **Procedural Support** - GPA, Credit Accumulation, Code of Conduct, Organizational support, attendance

# Why Do other High Schools Increase Supports for First Year Students?

## Why Do Schools Make Changes?

- To meet the ever present, and growing, academic, behavioral, emotional, and procedural needs of students.
- To increase opportunities for students and teachers
- To better address social-emotional and mental health needs of students
- To strengthen the transition from middle to high school and increase “early intervention.”

# How Do other High Schools Increase Supports for First Year Students?

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## What Types of Changes are Made?

- Create common planning time for teachers in grade 9.
- Incorporate teams, and team teaching, across grade 9.
- Develop a skills course or support system for organizational and study skills.
- Designate staff to support grade 9 (administration, school counseling, special education).
- Incorporate peer mentoring systems
- Increase communication between grade 8 and grade 9 staff.

# Student Feedback

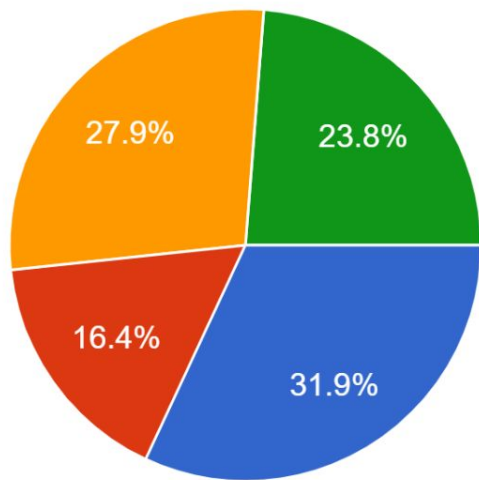
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- 65% response rate on student survey
- Cross-section of students participated in detailed focus groups
- Focus on what worked during grade 9 transition, what did not work, what supports were available, and what opportunities for additional support are recommended.



## What grade are you in?

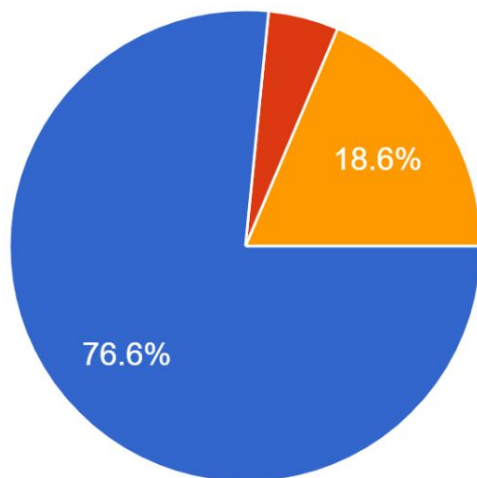
623 responses



- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th

## What Middle School did you attend?

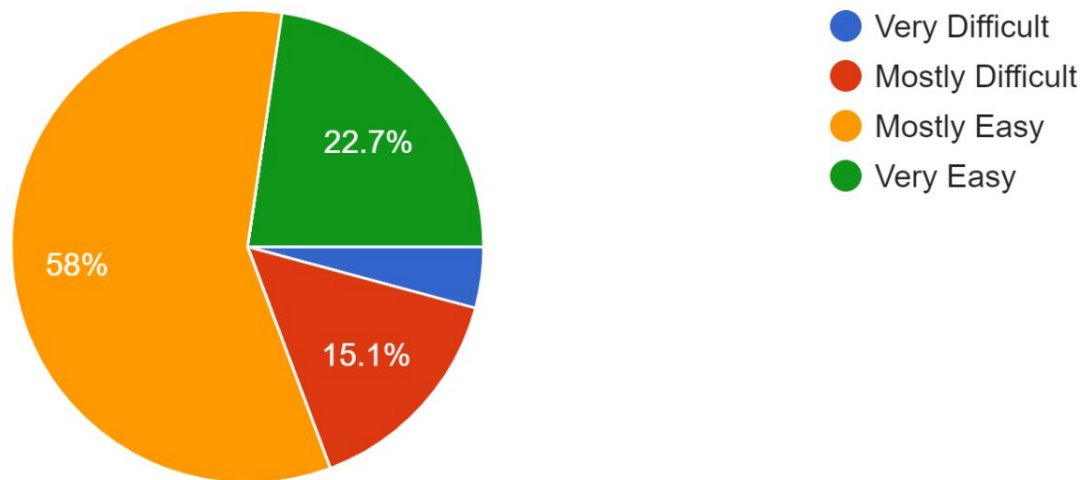
623 responses



- Coakley Middle School
- St Catherine's
- I did not attend Middle School in Norwood

## How you would describe your overall transition to NHS from your previous school?

622 responses

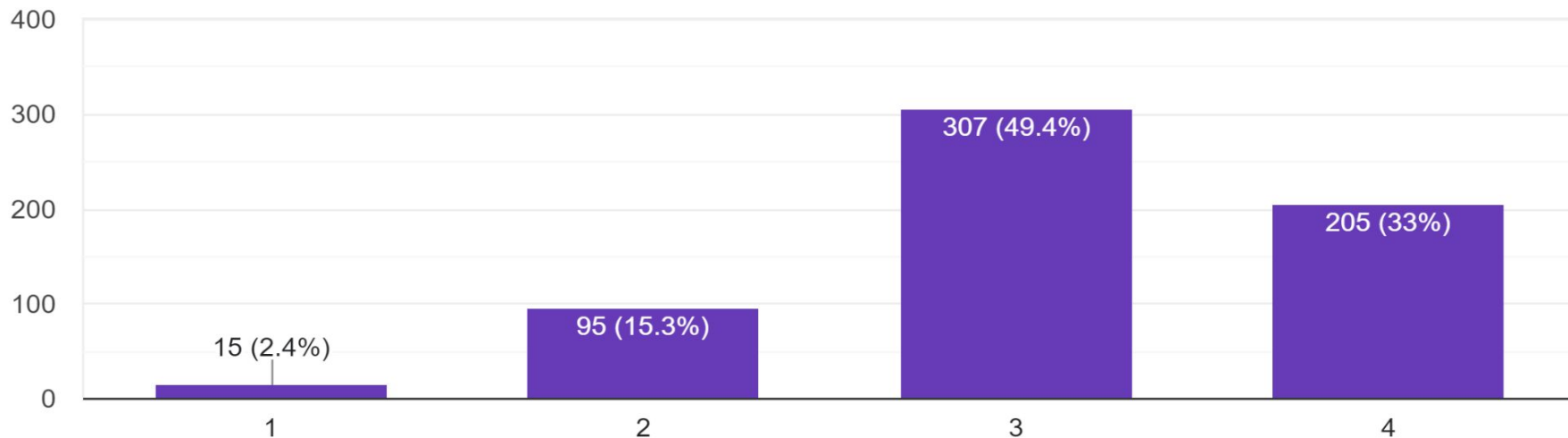


Think about how you felt during your first few months at Norwood HS. How would you rate the different areas of your experience?

4= Strongly agree 3= Somewhat Agree 2= Somewhat disagree 1= Strongly disagree

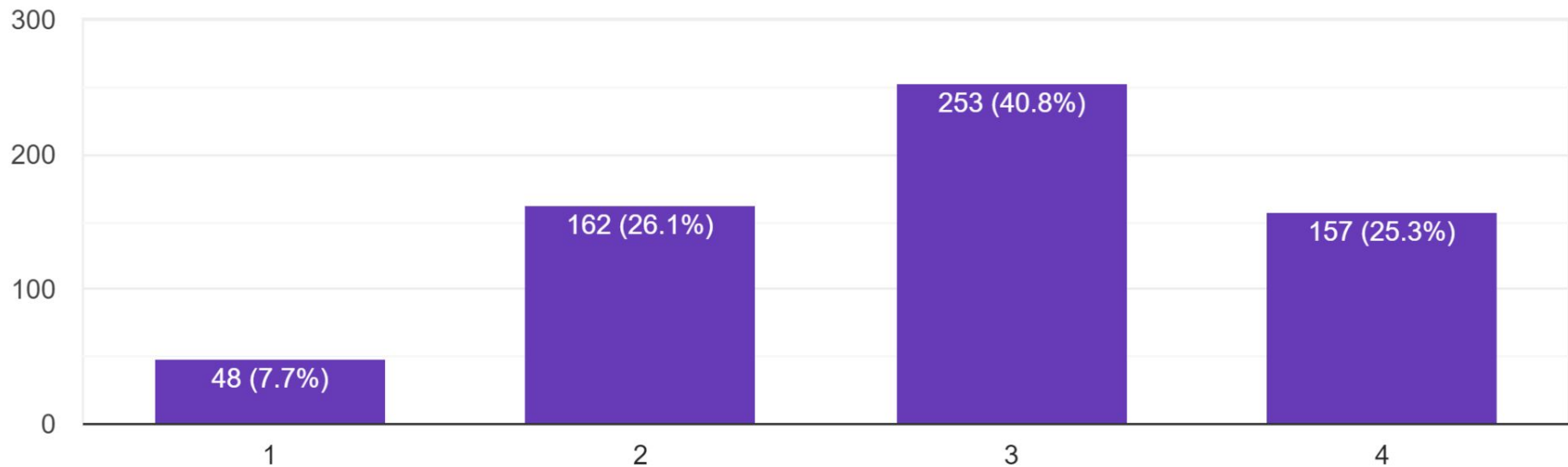
I had the necessary study skills to be successful

622 responses



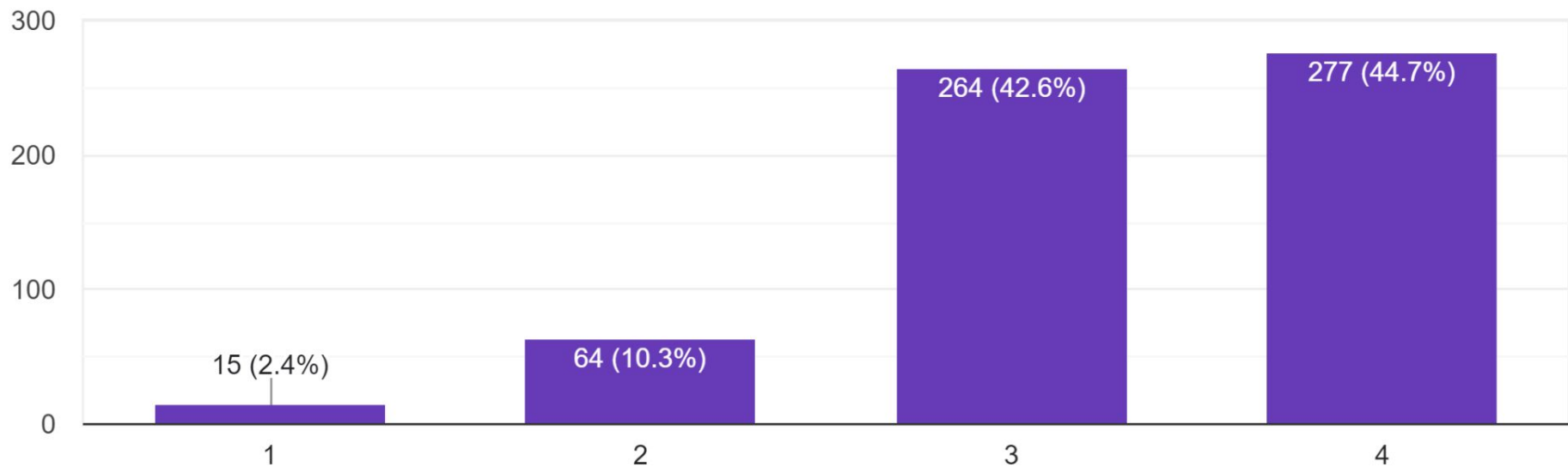
## I had the ability to manage my stress

620 responses



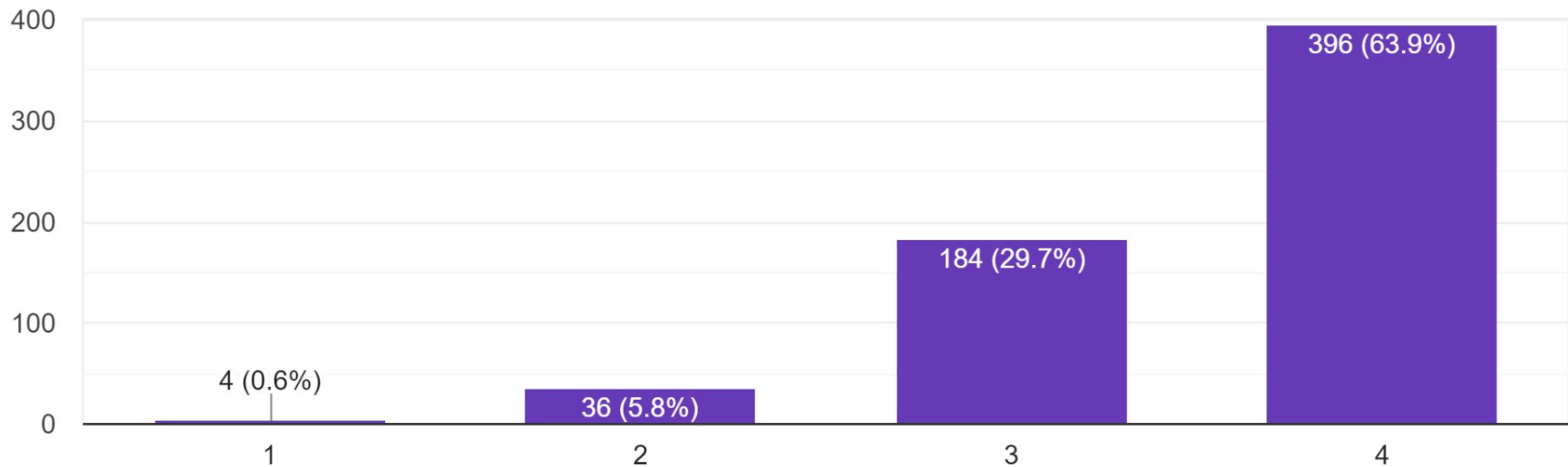
## I felt welcomed to Norwood High School

620 responses



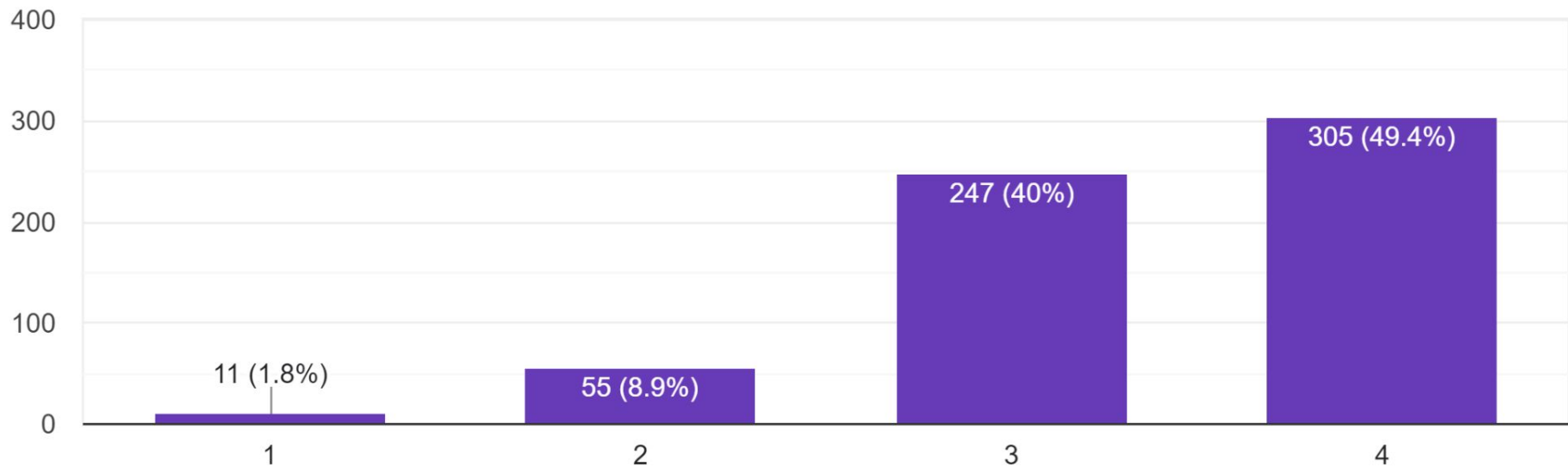
## I understood the rules and expectations of Norwood High School

620 responses



## I was able to handle issues with friends and peers appropriately

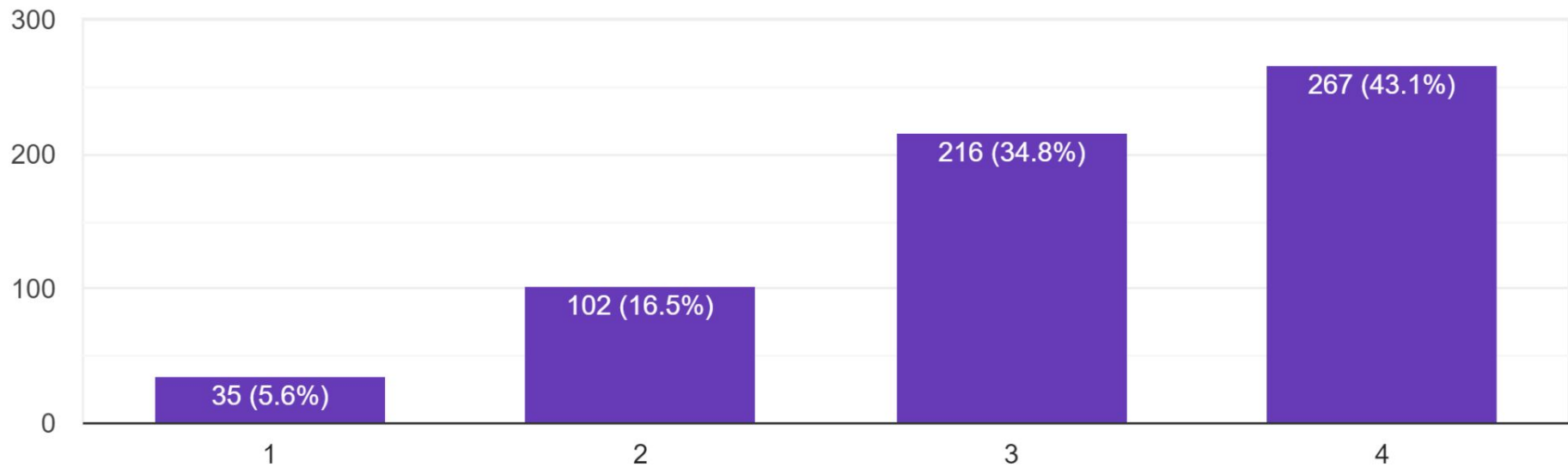
618 responses





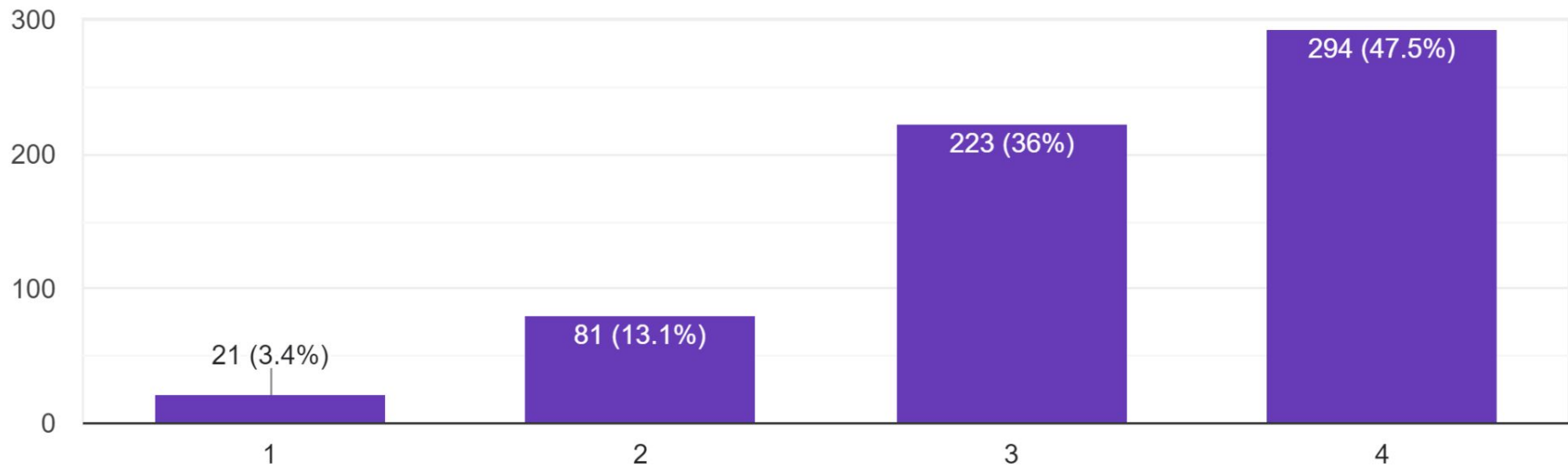
## I knew who to go to if I needed more support

620 responses



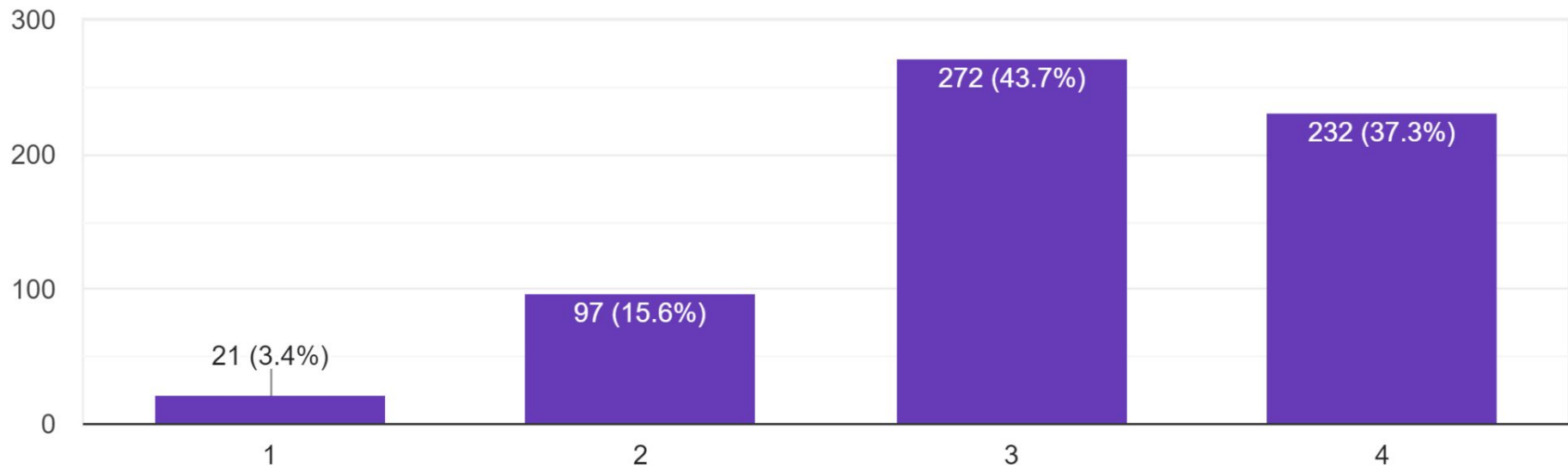
## I knew who to go to if I needed academic help

619 responses



## I was able to organize my classwork, my homework and my long term assignments

622 responses



# Student Focus Group Feedback

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## Challenges:

- Disconnect between 8th grade and 9th grade
- Understanding the “why” of high school
- Not understanding impact on overall GPA from 9th grade year
- Lack of study and organizational skills
- Struggled communicating with and reaching out to teachers & support staff

## Student Recommendations:

- More robust first year orientation
- Clear and high expectations early on
- Specific teaching of study and organizational skills and procedural knowledge
  - (ex. A 9th grade seminar)
- More hands on mentoring from upperclassmen

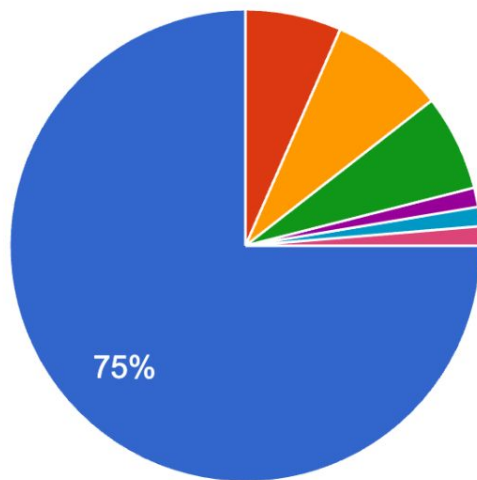
# Staff Feedback

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- 83% response rate on staff survey
- Cross-section of staff, including many with historical and current grade 9 experience, will participate in focus groups
- Focus on what currently works during grade 9 transition, what does not work, what supports are available, and what opportunities for additional supports are recommended.

## What is your role at NHS?

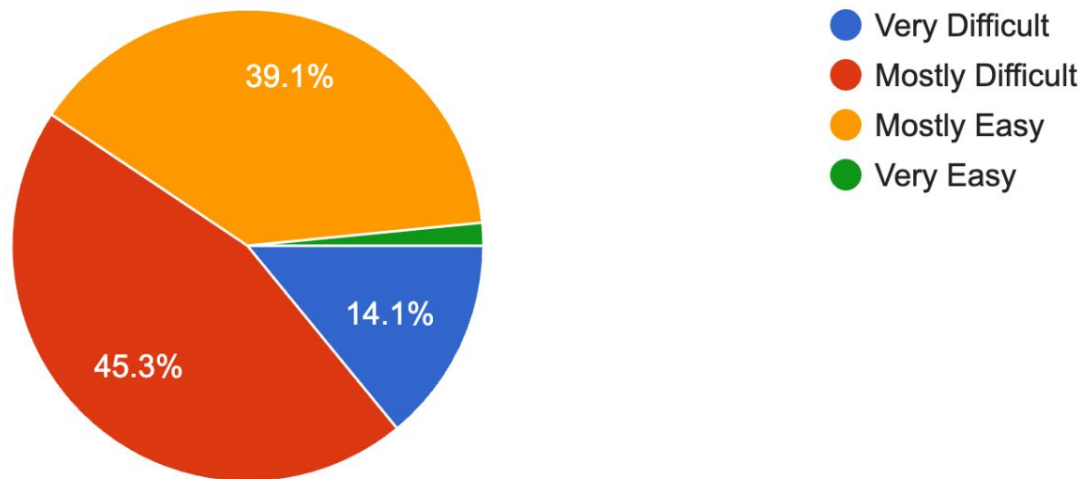
76 responses



- Teacher
- Administrator/Department Chair
- Counselor
- Paraprofessional
- school nurse
- School Nurse
- Speech-language pathologist

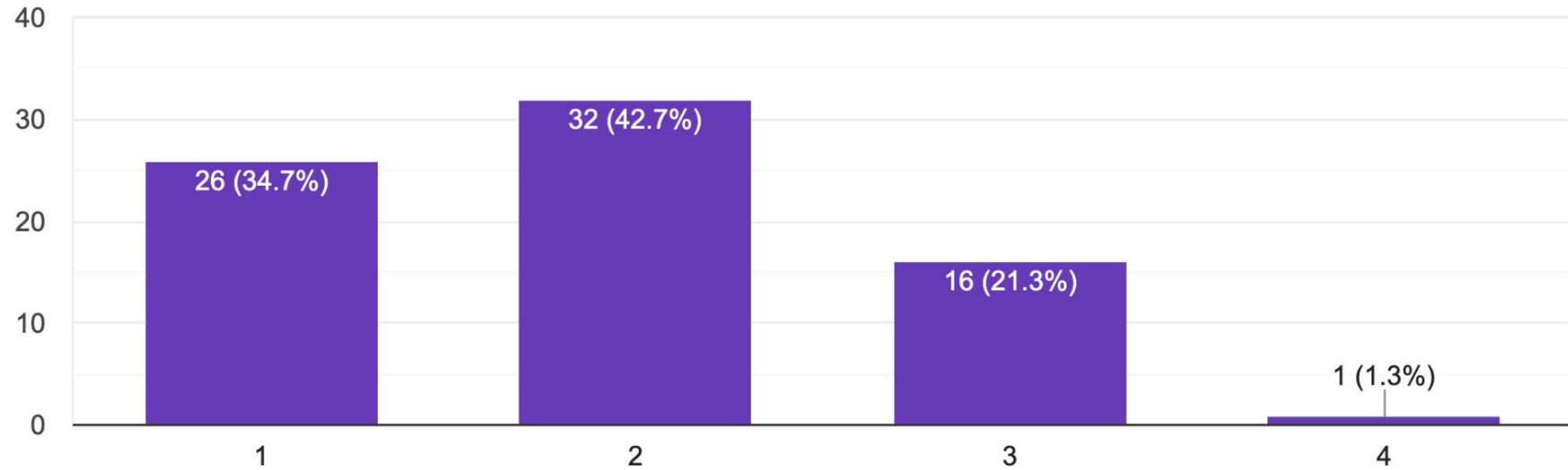
## How you would describe the overall transition for 9th graders to NHS from their previous school?

64 responses



## They have the necessary study skills to be successful

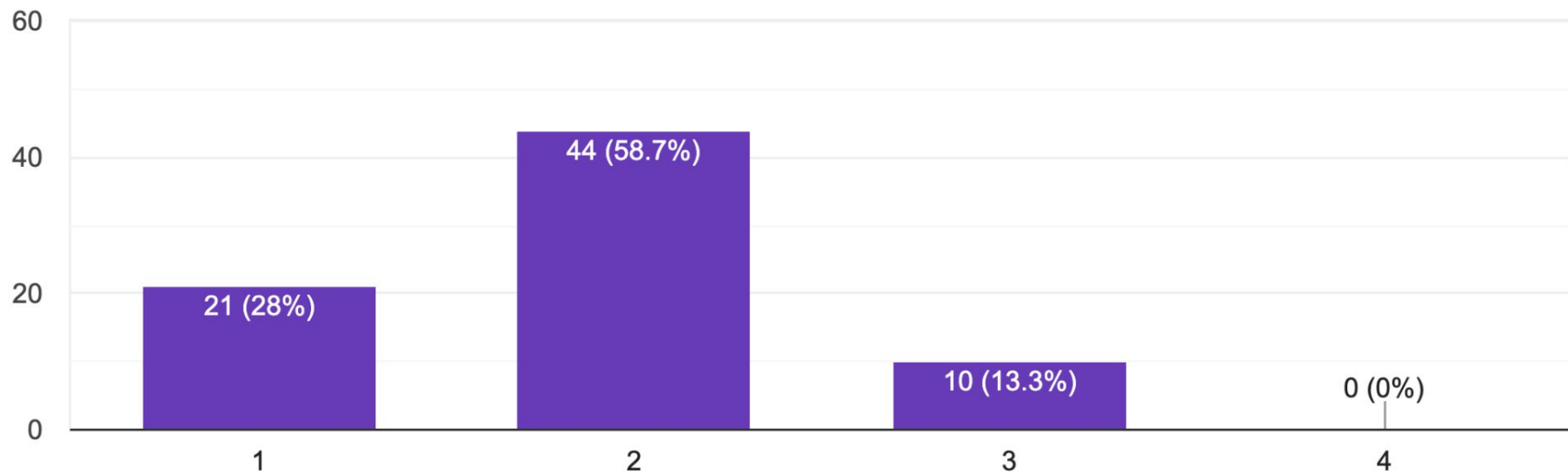
75 responses





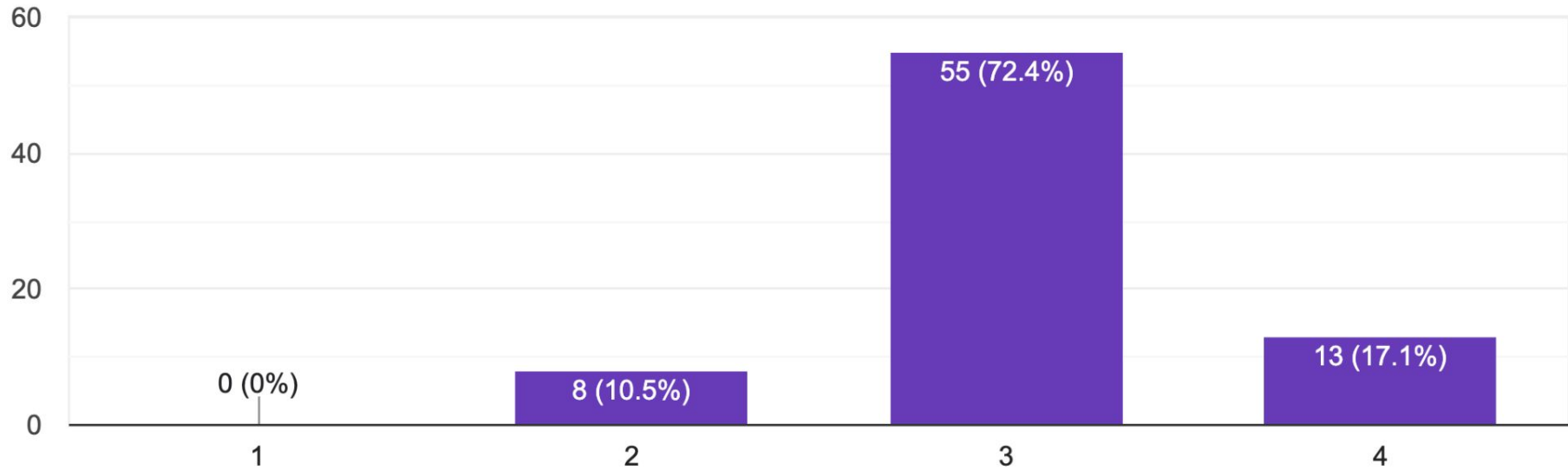
## They have the ability to manage their stress

75 responses



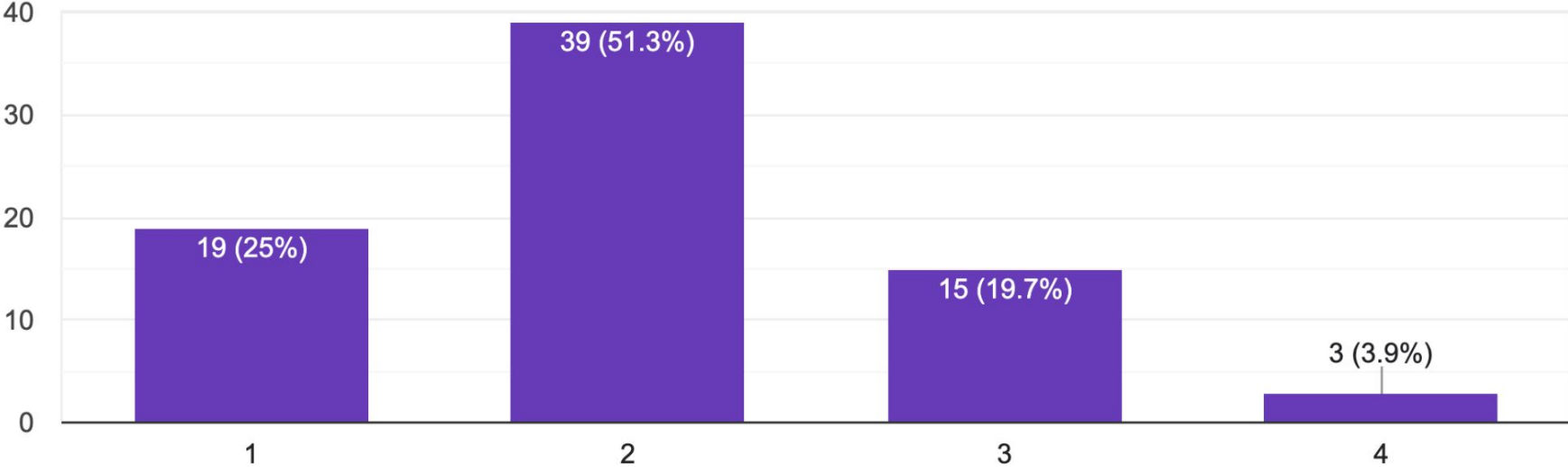
## They feel welcomed to Norwood High School

76 responses



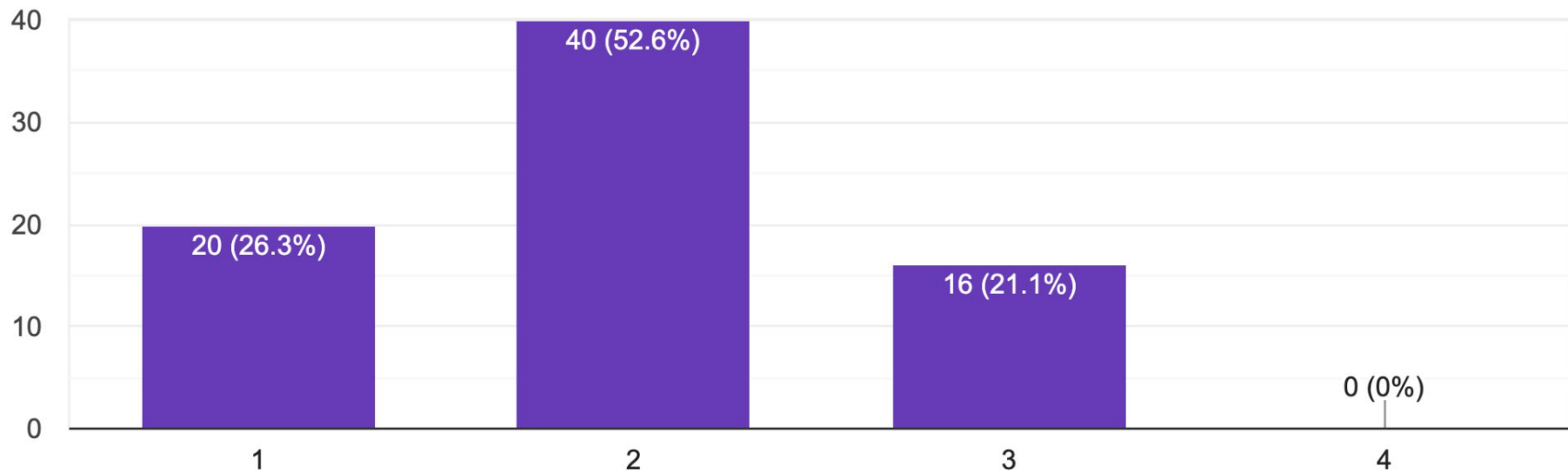
# They understand the rules and expectations of Norwood High School

76 responses



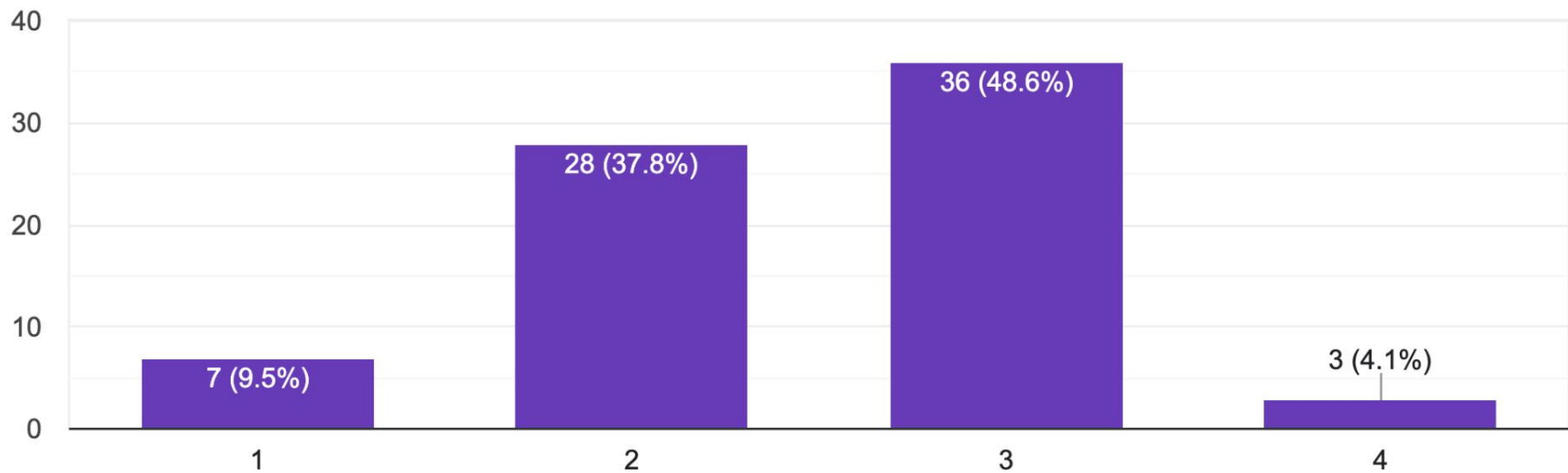
## They are able to handle issues with friends and peers appropriately

76 responses



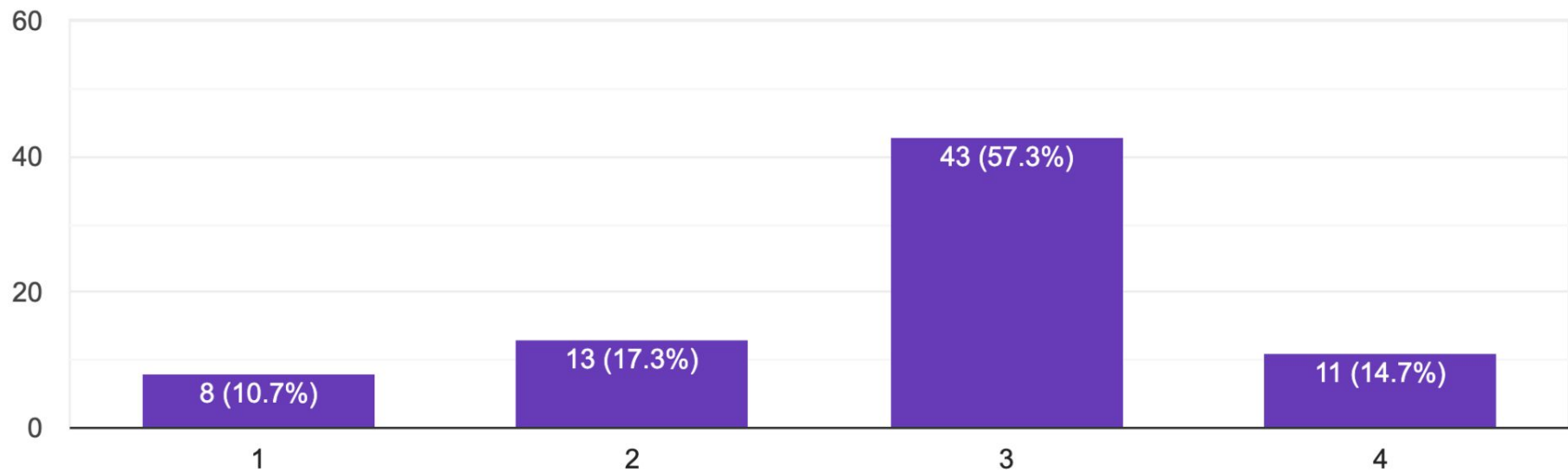
## They know who to go to if they need more support

74 responses



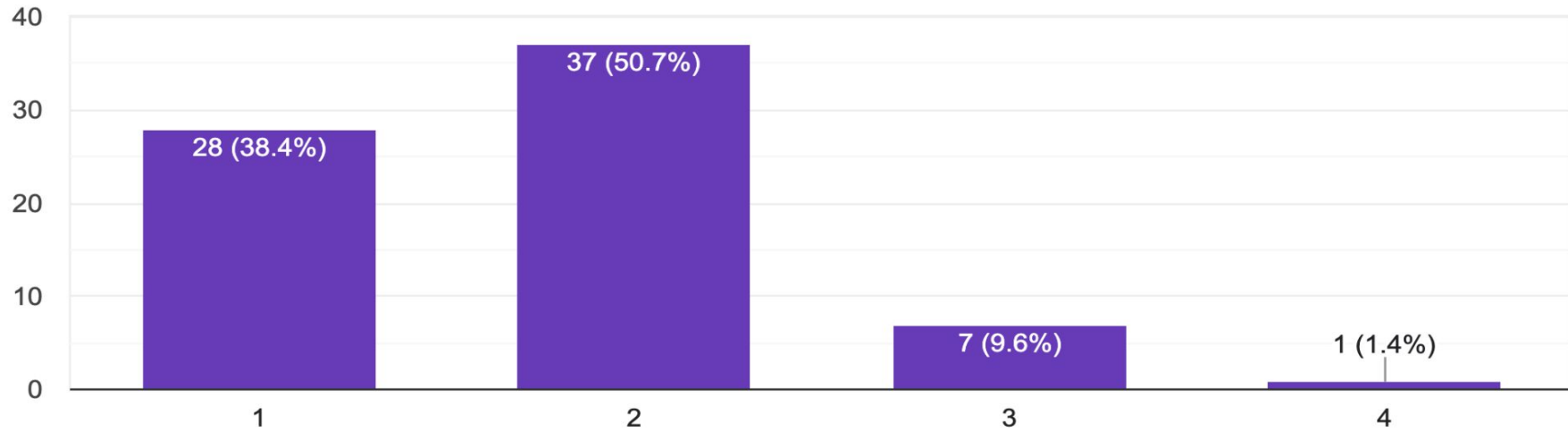
## They know who to go to for academic help

75 responses



## They are able to organize classwork, homework and long term assignments

73 responses



# Site Visits:

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# Recommendations from the First Year Supports Committee

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- The NHS First Year Supports Committee supports using a year (24-25) to adequately prepare for the rollout of a Grade 9 Academy in the 2025-26 school year.
- The revised timeline will allow for the school to adequately prepare for a successful program that meets the emotional, academic, behavioral, and procedural needs of students.
- The proposal is housed under 7 recommendations.

## Recommendation #1:

# Reorganize Committee Timeline to Account for Planning Needed for Launch of Additional First-Year Supports

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## Modify and Extend Timeline to Include Steps Leading up to 2025-26 Launch

Utilize the end of the 23-24, and the entirety of the 24-25, school years (and summers) to prepare for the launch of a grade 9 academy in 25-26.

- This allows collaboration between all staff, including teachers, administrators, department chairs, and central office administration.
- This allows for professional development opportunities before launch.
- This allows staff to utilize planning time next year to develop curriculum and shared practices before implementation.
- This allows time to pilot some elements of the following recommendations.

## Recommendation #2:

### Prepare to Implement Team Teaching Model in Grade 9

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#### **Marry the Benefits of a Middle School Model with the High School Experience**

- Successful academy models create teams of teachers including teachers in core content areas and special education.
- Increase “early intervention” opportunities to better support student during the transition to NHS, and improve future outcomes as a result.

## Recommendation #3:

# Designate Teacher Common Planning Time

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### Use time during the school day for Grade 9 Teams to Meet

- Incorporate teacher common planning time (CPT) for each team into the schedule structure.
- Utilize this time to follow a Student Support Team (SST) model to discuss and monitor appropriate interventions (with the support of a counselor and administrator), meet with students and families, and co-plan curriculum and shared practices.

## Recommendation #4:

### Designate Support Staff to First-Year Academy

#### **Increase Effective and Efficient Supports Through Designated Staff Allocated to Staff and Students in the First-Year Academy:**

- Successful models incorporate a designated administrator and counselor to the Grade 9 Academy.
- Successful models include special educators in the Team Model.

## Recommendation #5:

### Increase Communication with Middle School Staff

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**Create purposeful opportunities for collaboration with the grade 8 teams and middle school staff to improve student outcomes:**

- Collaborate to properly identify at risk students and necessary supports in advance
- Collaborate to ensure proper student placement within teams and classes

## Recommendation #6:

Develop the Five 5Cs Through Programming that Builds Habits of Mind and Transferable Skills

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### Utilize the Academy Model to Improve:

- Grade 9 Orientation
- Organizational and study skills
- Conflict Resolution
- College and Career Planning MyCap (My Career and Academic Plan)
- Stress Management
- Understanding of procedural knowledge (GPA, schedule, course selection, etc.)

## Recommendation #7:

# Identify the Structural Needs of Developing a First Year Academy

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### Anticipated Structural Needs Include:

- Staffing
- Budget
- Course Offerings
- Schedule Needs
- Physical Space



# Next Steps

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## Anticipated Next Steps:

- Expand Committee
- Central Office and School Committee Presentations
- Staff Focus Groups
- Create Expanded Timeline to Incorporate all Recommendations

# First Year Supports Committee Members

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Bill Cyr

Cindy Derrane

Teresa Drummey

Hugh Galligan

Jess Kaplan

Jeff Kerr

Allison Leichtman

Laurie Mead McGrory

Laura Mullen

Rebecca Newman

Caitlin Nottebart

Beth Standring

Kelly Sullivan