The State of the Special Education Profession Survey, 3rd Edition Report

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2025 CEC Leadership Institute

Council for Exceptional Children

State of the Profession Design Team

- Dr. Mary Lynn Boscardin (Chairperson, CEC Past President)
- Dr. Jennifer Lesh (Chairperson, CEC Past President)
- Dr. Susan Fowler (CEC Past President)
- Dr. William Bogdan (CEC Past President)
- Dr. Mary Ruth Coleman (CEC Past President)
- Dr. Kyena Cornelius (CEC TED Division President, Higher Education Survey)
- Dr. Ruby Owiny (CEC TED Division Past President, Higher Education Survey)
- University of Massachusetts Amherst Ph.D. Students

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State of the Profession Design Team (cont.)

- Dr. Julie Bost (CEC President)
- Ben Tillotson (CEC President-Elect)
- Chad Rummel (CEC Executive Director, ex officio)
- 2024 CEC Board of Directors
- 2024 Representative Assembly Members

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Educators	Administrators	Higher Education
➢ General Education Teachers ➢ Special Education Teachers ➢ Related Services Personnel, IDEA Part B ➢ Early Childhood Providers, IDEA Part C ➢ Para Educator ➢ Other	➢ Special Education Administrators ➢ General Education Administrators ➢ Early Childhood Directors/Coordinators ➢ Superintendents ➢ State/Federal Agency Personnel	➢ Clinical ➢ Professor

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Survey Categories (42 Items)

I. Personnel Preparation to Meet the Needs of Students with Exceptionalities

II. Classroom/Assessment, Instructional, Intervention, and Management Practices

III. School or District-wide Approaches to Meeting the Needs of Students with Exceptionalities

IV. Parent and Family Engagement

V. Educator Evaluations

VI. Demographics

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Respondents to Educator Survey

Positions	n	% of educators	% of all responses
Special Education Teacher (incl. kindergarten)	1,444	58 %	39%
Para educator	203	8%	5%
General Education Teacher (incl. kindergarten)	187	8%	5%
Related Service Provider, IDEA Part B	177	7%	5%
Early Childhood Service Provider, IDEA Part C	157	6%	4%
Other	313	8%	8%
Total Educators	2,481	100%	66%

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Respondents to Administrators Survey

Current Job Title	Frequency	Percent
Early Childhood Service Coordinator/Administrator, IDEA Part C	24	4.8
Special Education Administrator (Special Education Director, Special Education Principal, Special Education Assistant Principal, Special Education Central Office Specialists)	414	82.3
General Education Administrator (Principal, Assistant Principal, Central Office Specialists)	39	7.8
Superintendent	7	1.4
State or Federal Agency Personnel	19	3.8
Total	503	100

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Respondents to Higher Education Teacher Preparation Provider Survey

Positions	*n* Gender	% of CEC Members	% of all Participants
Higher Education/Teacher Preparation Providers	238 87.8% F 11.1% M	91%	.50%
Total Survey Participants	4,607 100%	100%	100%

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Self-reported Educator Responses by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	n	Percent
White	728	87%
American Indian/Alaska Native	36	4%
Hispanic/Latino	22	3%
Multi-racial	20	2%
Black/African American	18	2%
Asian /Asian American	11	1%
Middle Eastern/North African	2	0%
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	2	0%
Total Responses	839	100%

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Educator Self-Reported Educational Levels

Highest Degree Earned	Total	Total
Master's	486	57%
Bachelors	162	19%
Education Specialist	105	12%
Doctorate	44	5%
High School	25	3%
Associates	16	2%
Certificate program	15	2%
Post-Doctorate	3	0%
Total Responses	856	100%

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Setting Where Respondents Reported Spending 50% or More Time
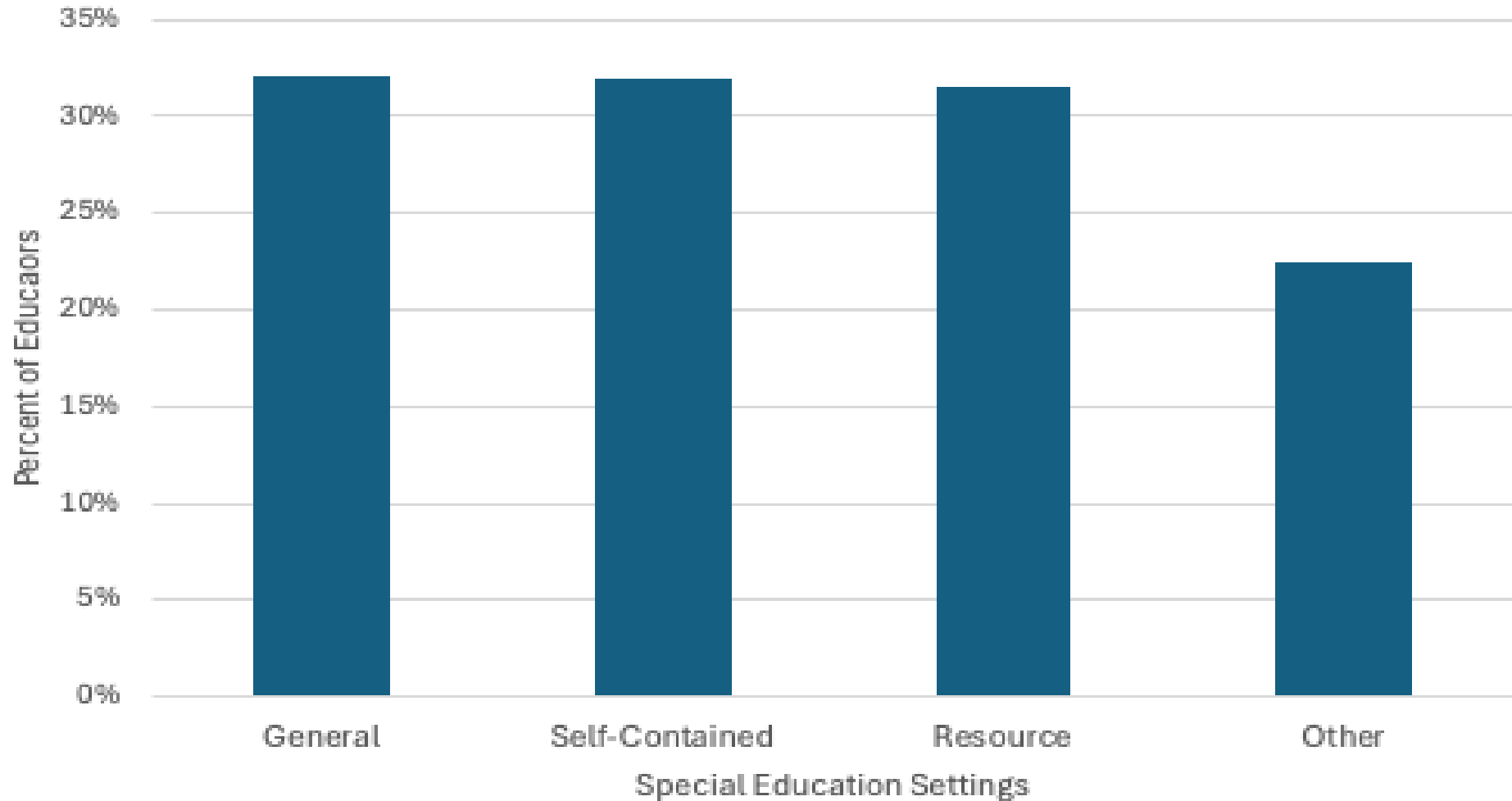
Number of Years Educators have Worked in Education
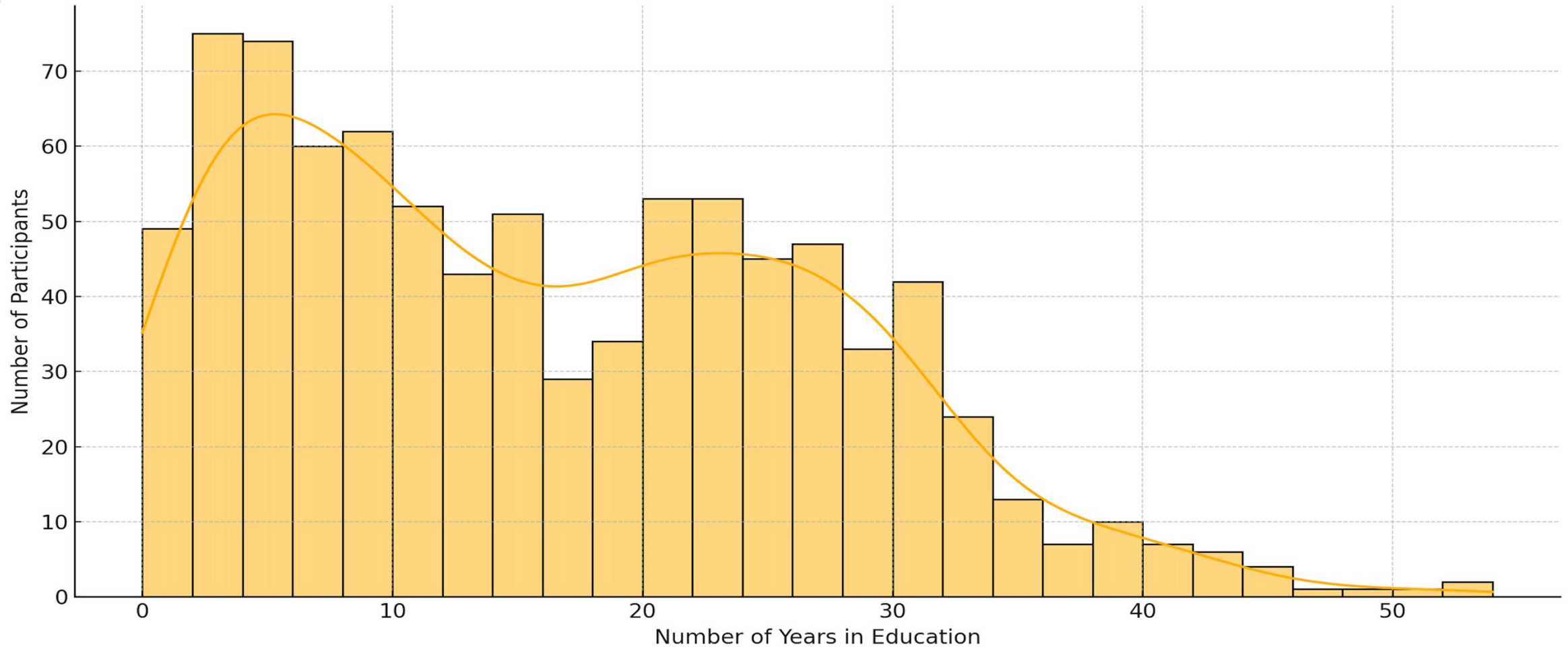
# Community Work in; Education Funding; CEC Member

Q37: Community Classification — Number of Respondents: Urban 198, Suburban 282, City/Town 183, Rural 208, Other 22

Q38: Primary Funding Source — Private Funds 34, Public Funds 718, Mixed Funds 79, Don't Know 48, Other 12

Q39: CEC Membership — Yes 346, No 544
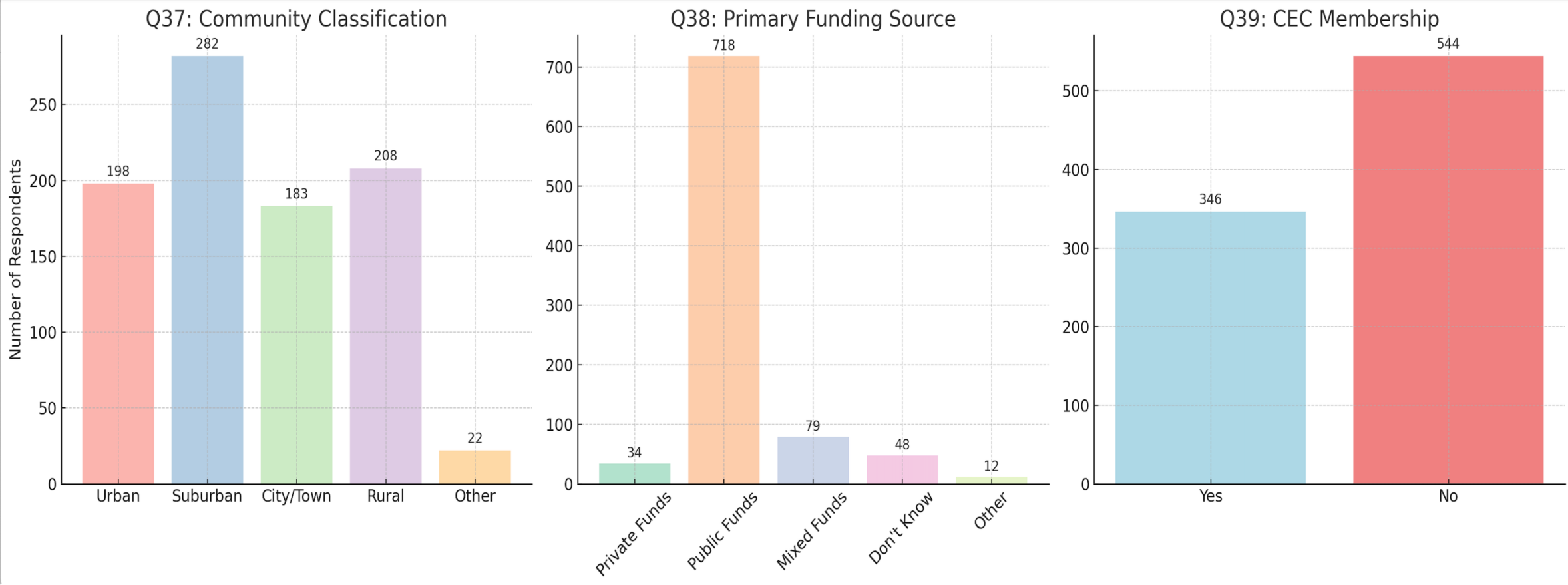
Where Participants are From
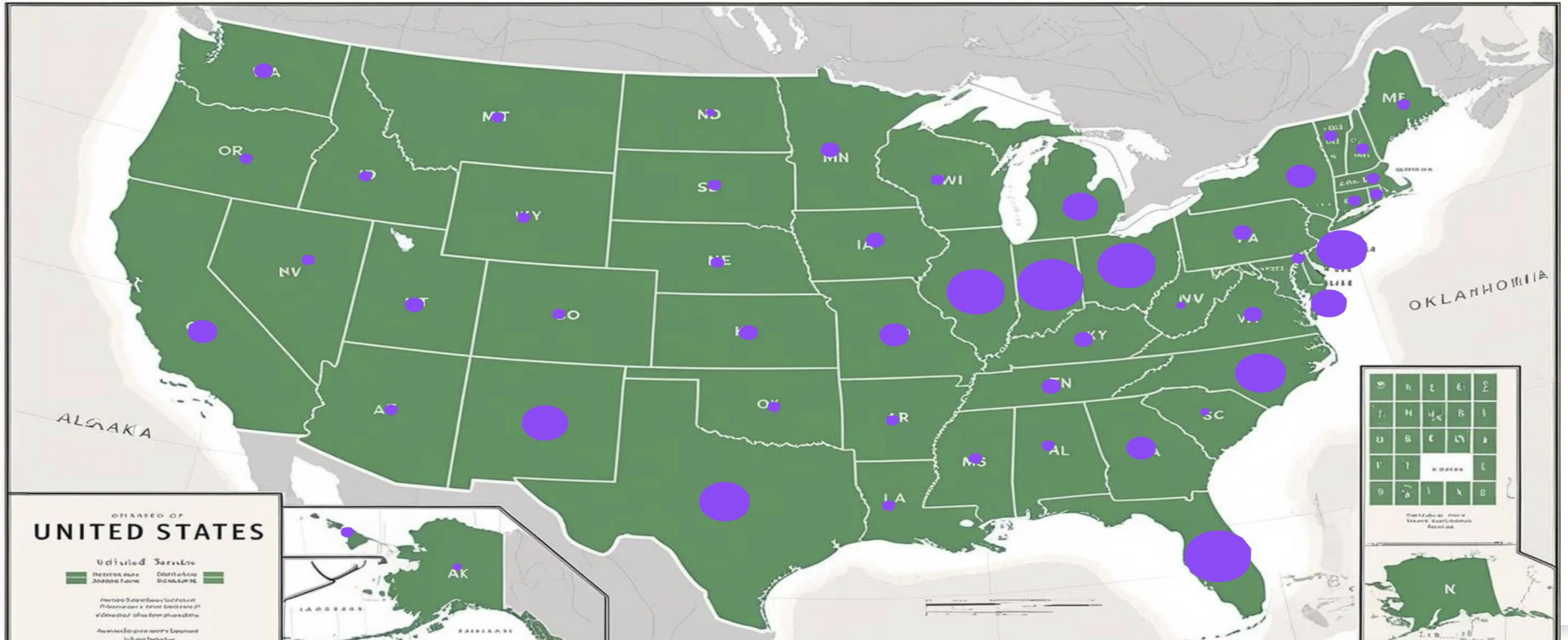
Section I:
Personnel Preparation to Meet the Needs of Students with Exceptionalities

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Comparison of 2019(2nd Ed.) to 2024 (3rd Ed.)SoTP: Perceived Personnel Preparation to Meet the Needs of Students with Exceptionalities
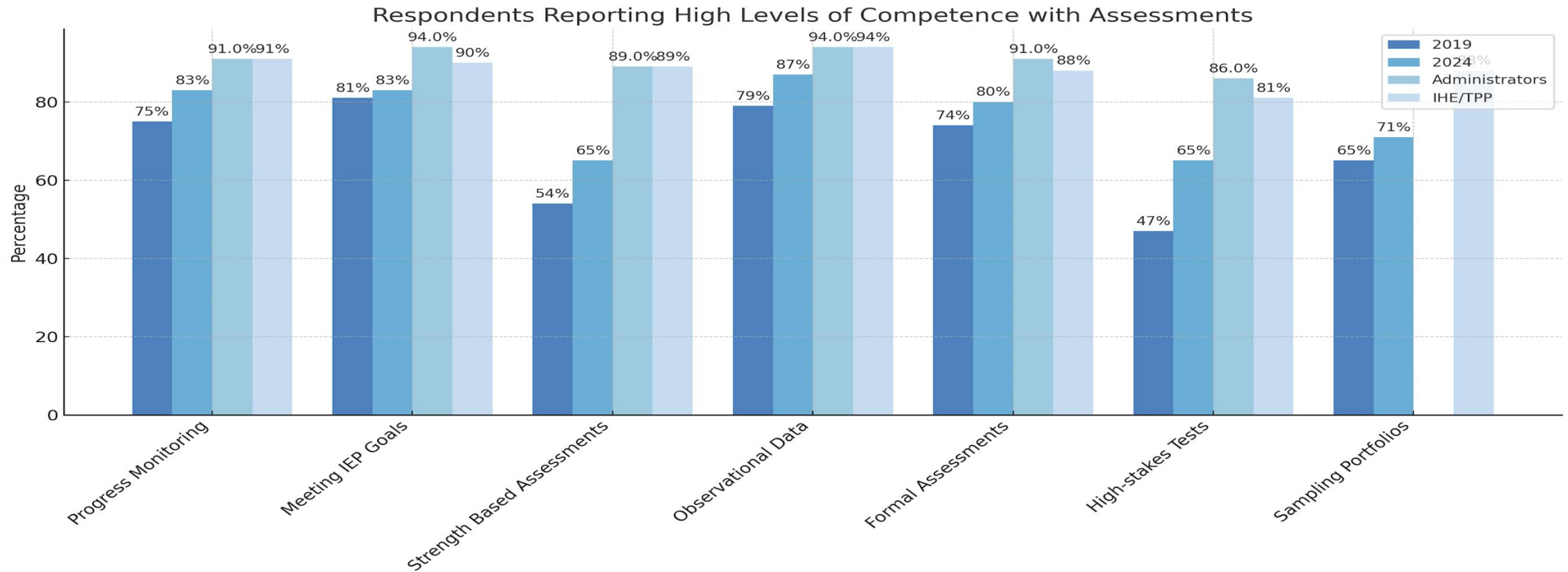

Perceived Personnel Preparation by Group
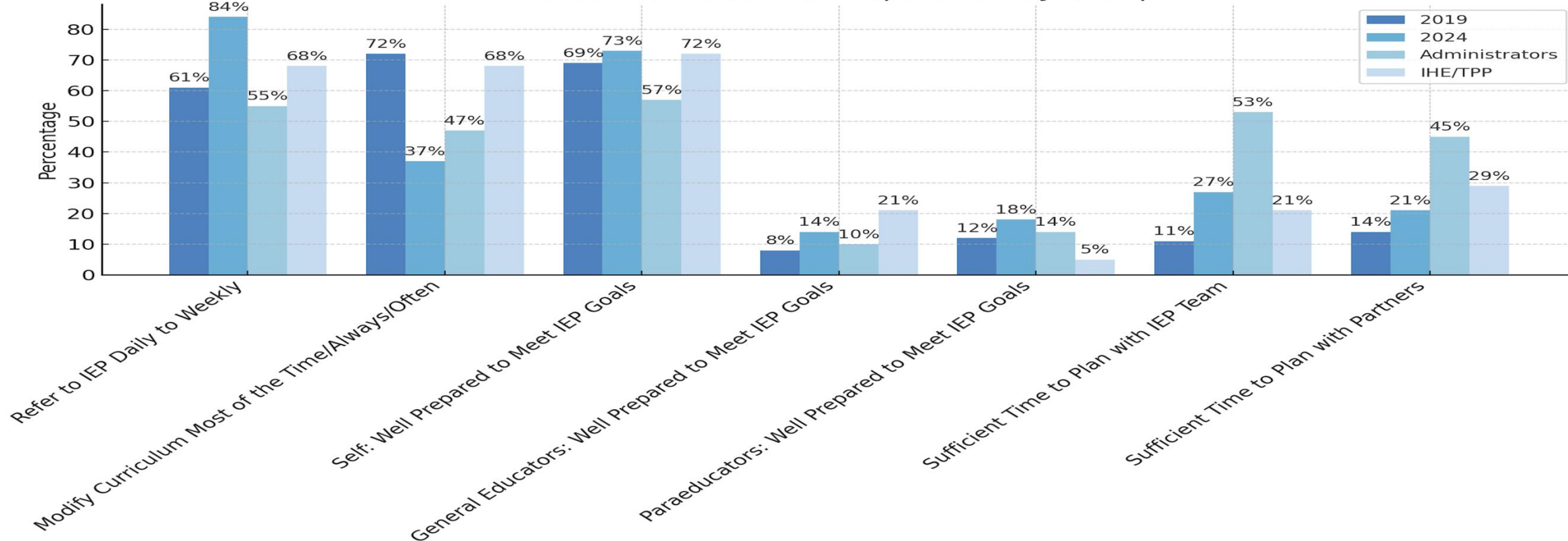
# 2019 vs. 2024 Respondents Rating Supervisors and Administrators as Well Prepared to Support IEP Goals

Respondents Rating Supervisors/Admins as Well Prepared to Support IEP Goals
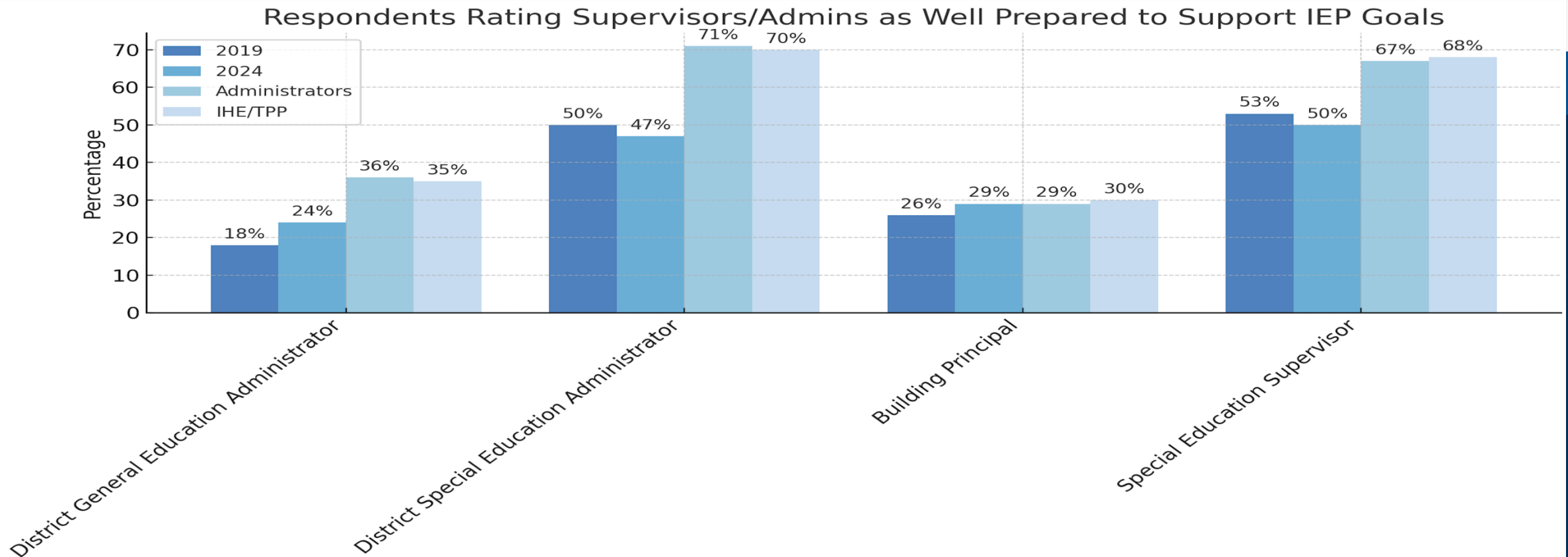
Section II: Classroom/Assessment, Instructional, Intervention, and Management Practices

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Respondents Reporting High Levels of Competence with Assessments

Respondents Reporting High Levels of Competence with Assessments

Legend: 2019, 2024, Administrators, IHE/TPP

- Progress Monitoring: 75%, 83%, 91.0%, 91%
- Meeting IEP Goals: 81%, 83%, 94.0%, 90%
- Strength Based Assessments: 54%, 65%, 89.0%, 89%
- Observational Data: 79%, 87%, 94.0%, 94%
- Formal Assessments: 74%, 80%, 91.0%, 88%
- High-stakes Tests: 47%, 65%, 86.0%, 81%
- Sampling Portfolios: 65%, 71%

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2019 to 2024 Comparison of Respondents Reporting High Levels of Competence in Use of Instructional Practices

High Levels of Competence in Use of Instructional Practices (2019–2024 & Groups)
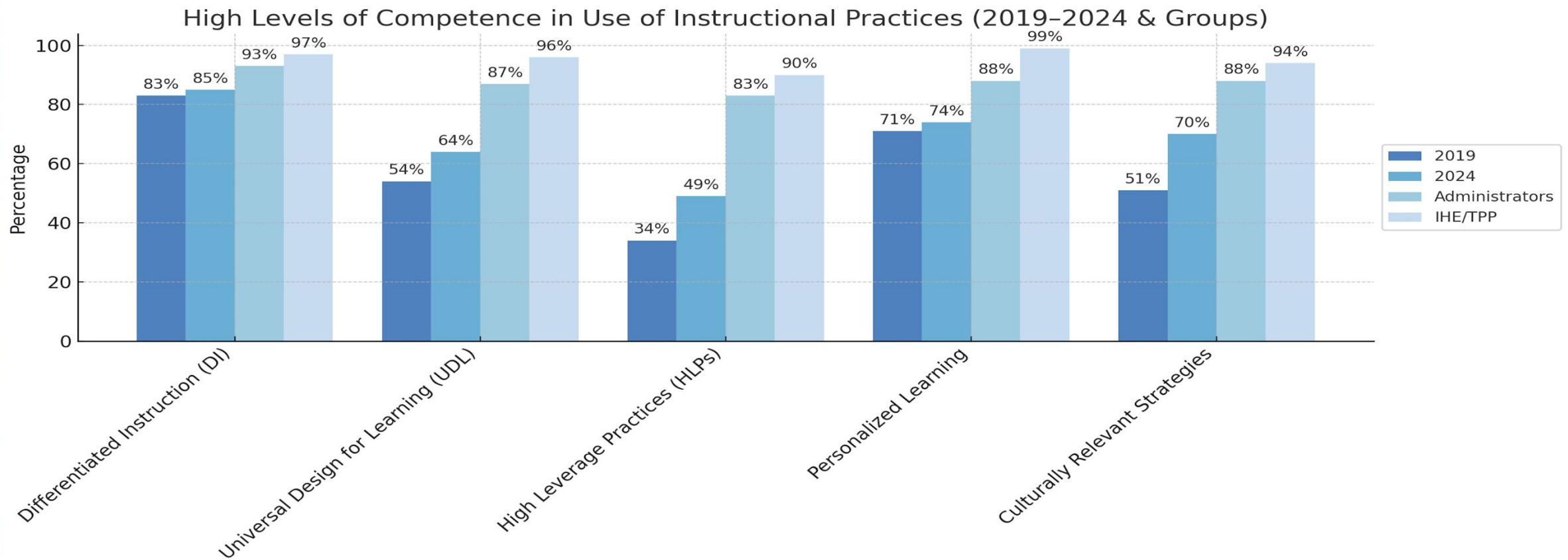
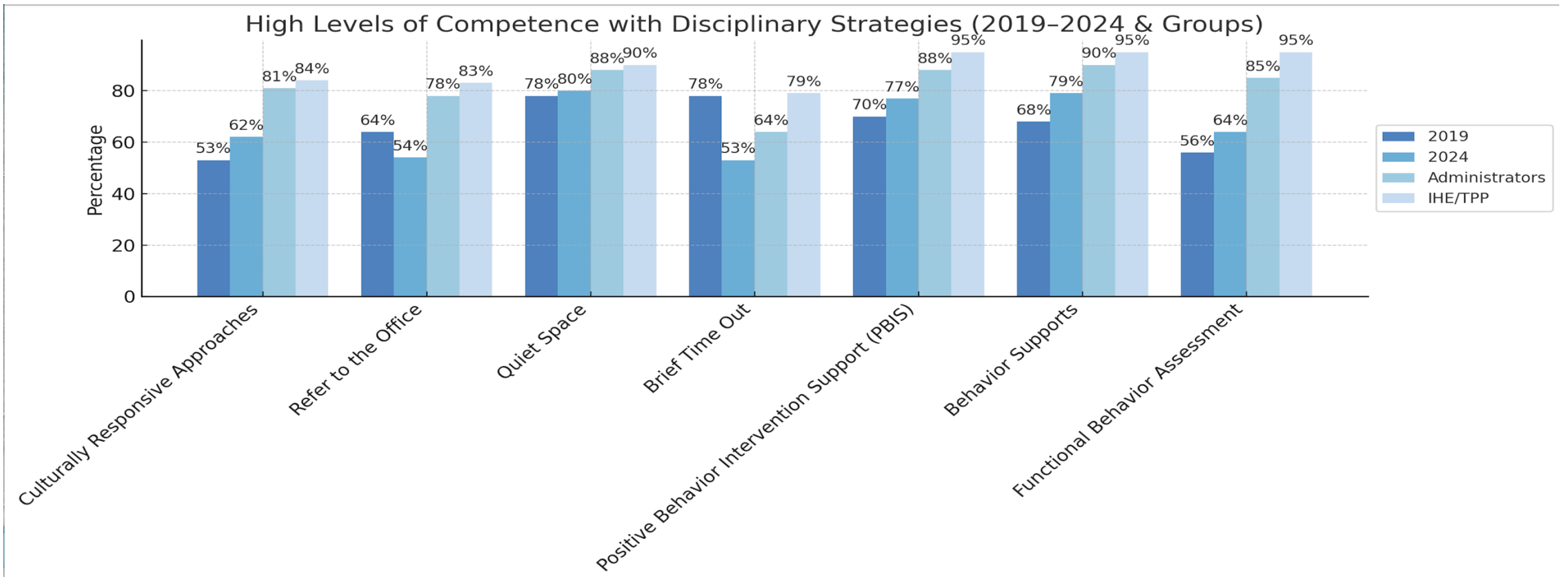# New for 2024: Comparison of Respondents Reporting High Levels of Competence in Use of Instructional

High Levels of Competence in New Instructional Practices (2024 & Groups)

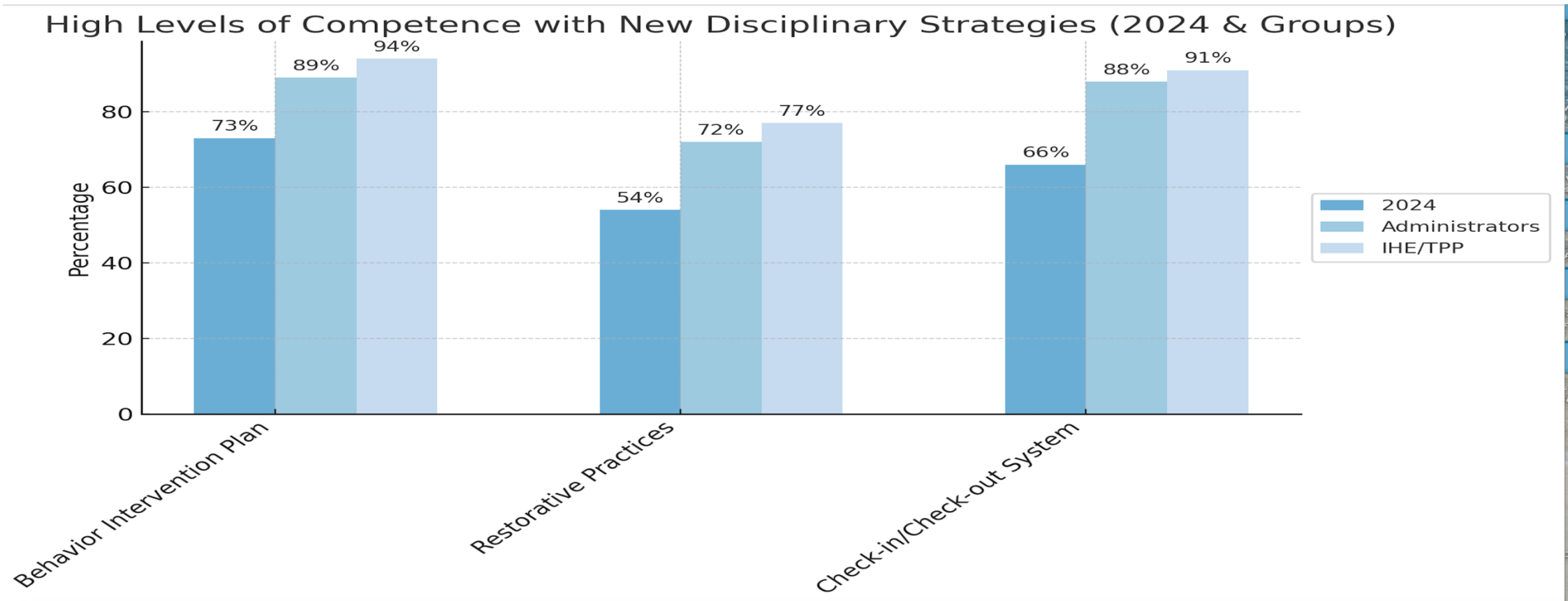# 2019 vs 2024 Respondents Reporting High Levels of Competence with Classroom Organizational Practices
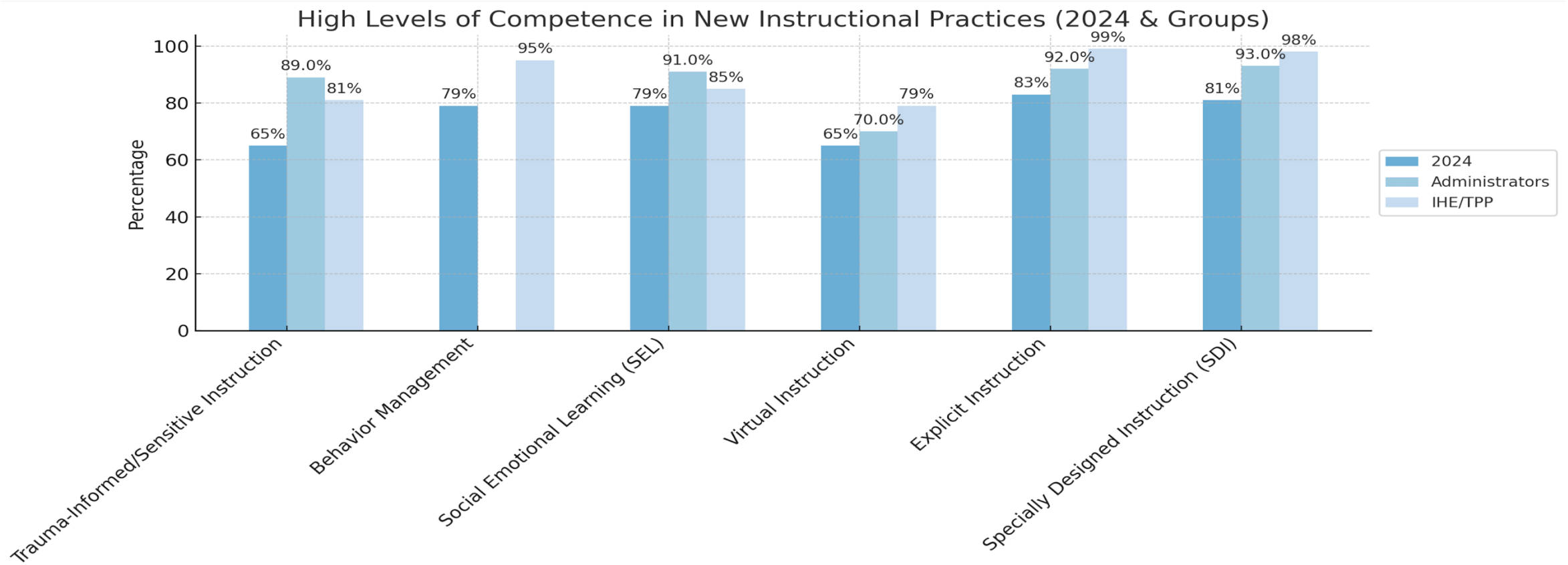
Respondents Reporting High Competence with Classroom Organizational Practices

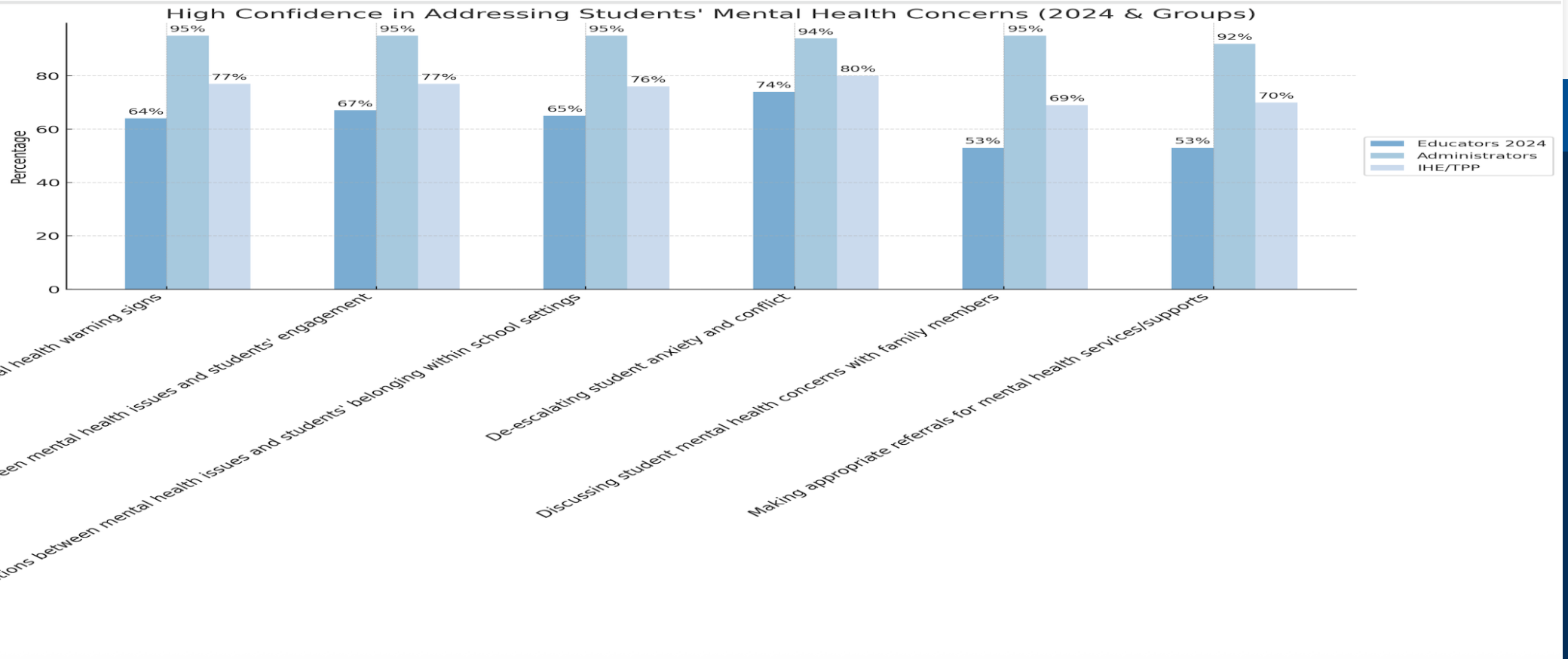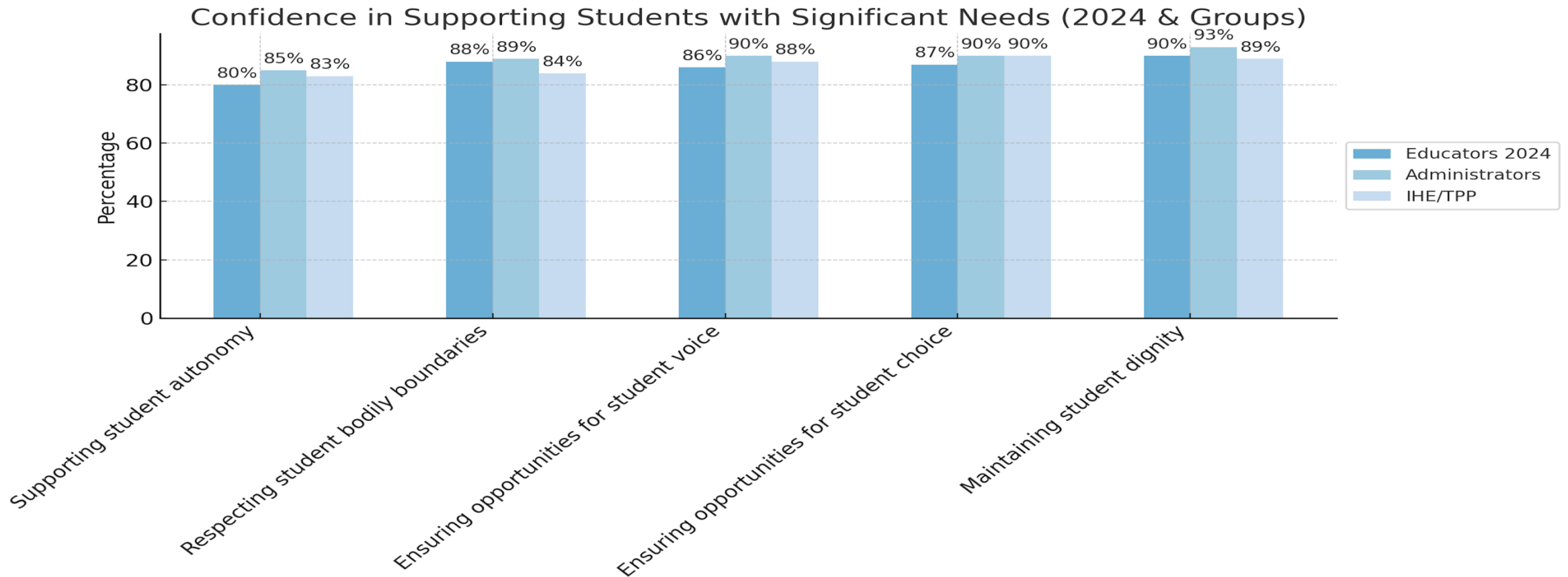# 2019 vs 2024 Respondents Reporting High Levels of Competence with Disciplinary Strategies

High Levels of Competence with Disciplinary Strategies (2019–2024 & Groups)
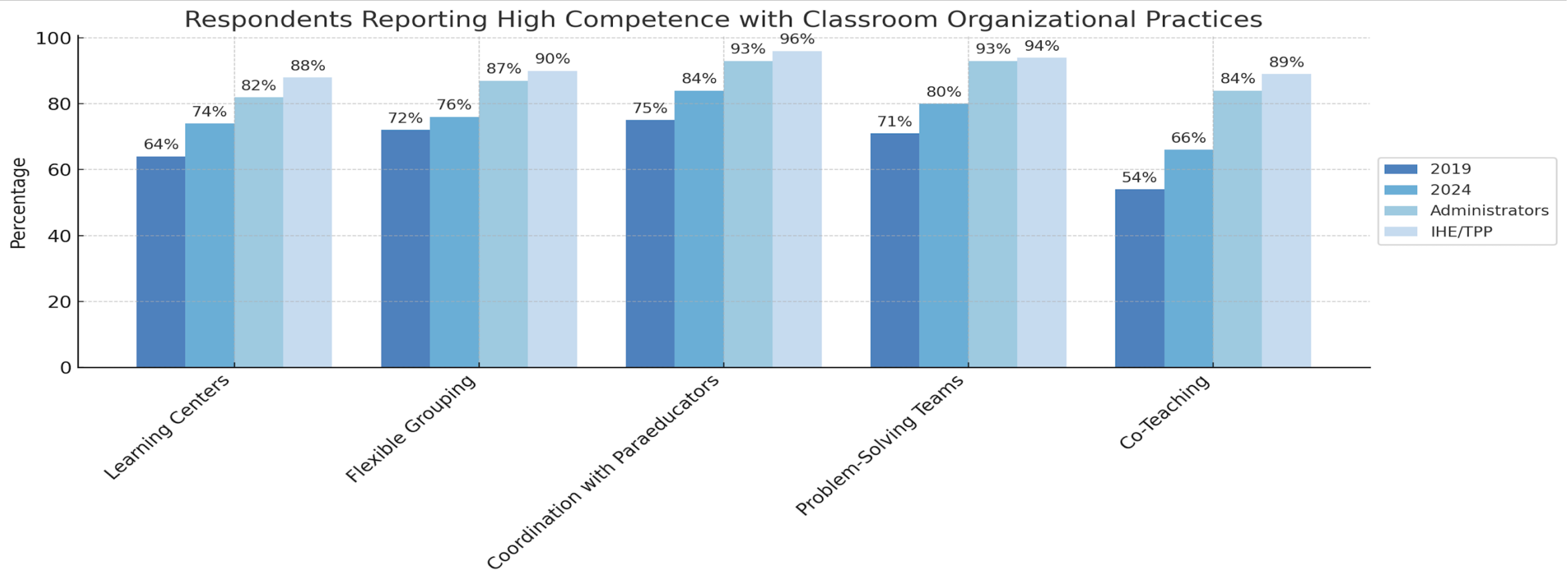
New for 2024: Respondents Reporting High Levels of Competence with Disciplinary Strategies

High Levels of Competence with New Disciplinary Strategies (2024 & Groups)

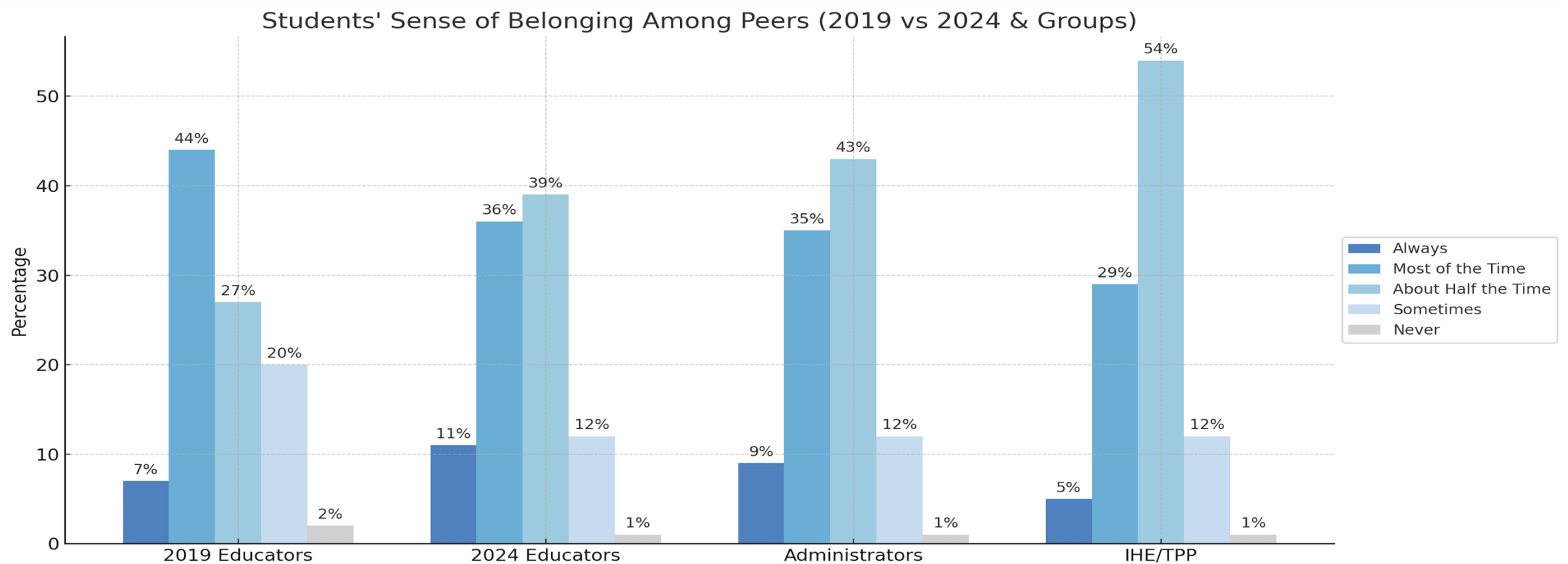# New for 2024: Respondents Reporting High Levels of Knowledge and Confidence in Abilities to Address Students' Mental Health Concerns

High Confidence in Addressing Students' Mental Health Concerns (2024 & Groups)

New for 2024: Respondents Reporting High Levels of Knowledge and Confidence in Abilities to Support Students with Significant Needs


Confidence in Supporting Students with Significant Needs (2024 & Groups)

2019 vs 2024 Respondents Reported Level of Students' Sense of Belonging Among Peers
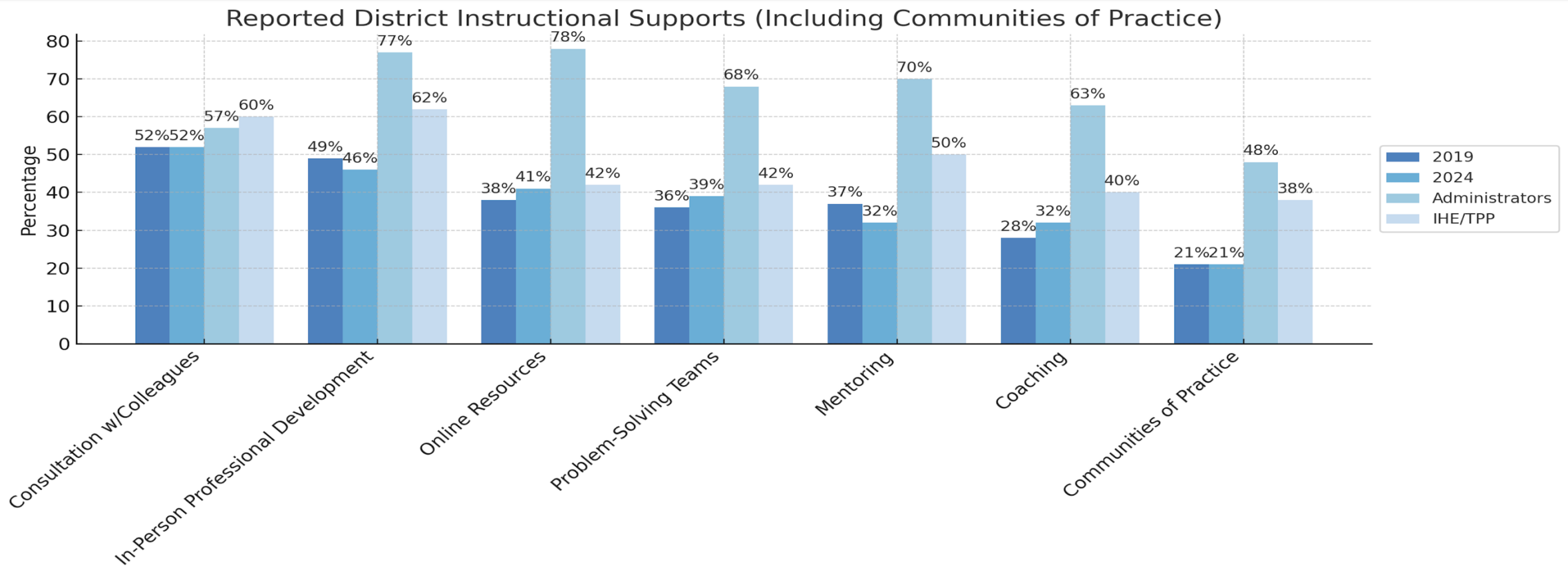

Students' Sense of Belonging Among Peers (2019 vs 2024 & Groups)

Section III:
System Level Supports: School or District-wide Approaches to Meeting the Needs of Students with Exceptionalities
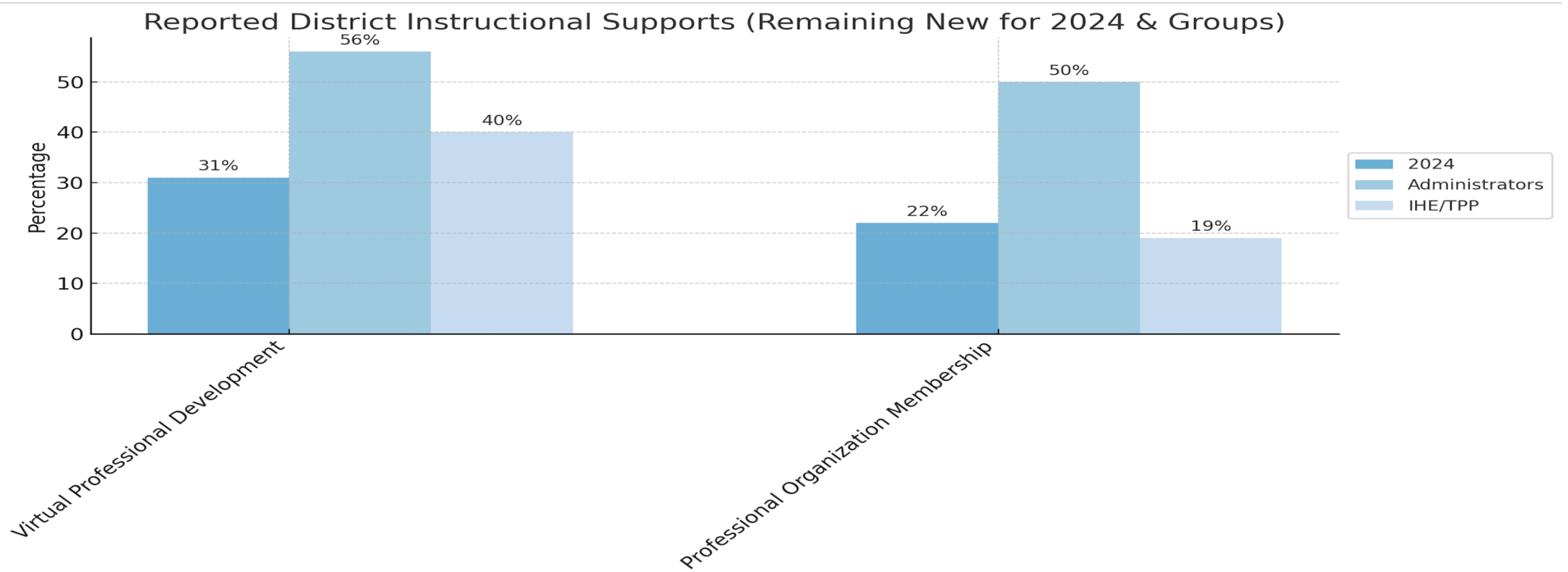
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2019 vs 2024 Respondents Reporting District Support for Higher Levels of Frequent Use of Instructional and Intervention Models
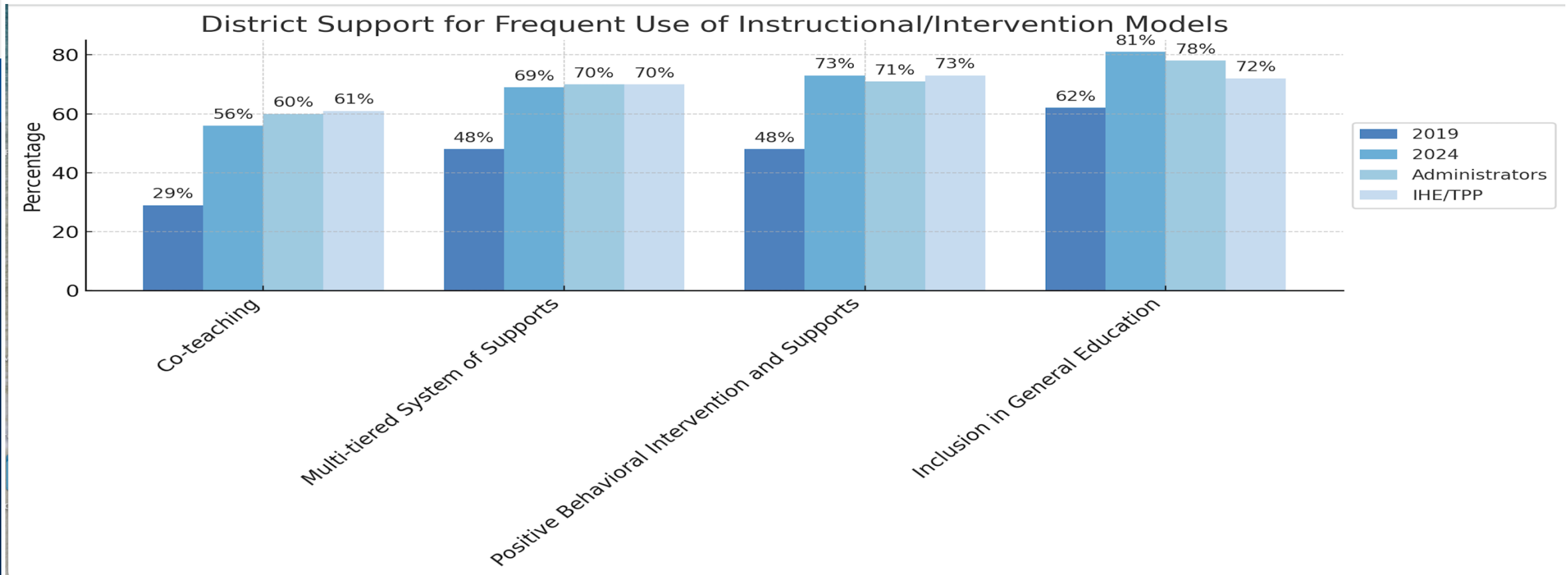

District Support for Frequent Use of Instructional/Intervention Models

2019 vs 2024 Respondents Reporting Higher Levels of Supports in their District

Reported District Instructional Supports (Including Communities of Practice)

Legend: 2019, 2024, Administrators, IHE/TPP

- Consultation w/Colleagues: 52%, 52%, 57%, 60%
- In-Person Professional Development: 49%, 46%, 77%, 62%
- Online Resources: 38%, 41%, 78%, 42%
- Problem-Solving Teams: 36%, 39%, 68%, 42%
- Mentoring: 37%, 32%, 70%, 50%
- Coaching: 28%, 32%, 63%, 40%
- Communities of Practice: 21%, 21%, 48%, 38%

New for2024: Respondents Reporting Higher Levels of Supports in their District

Reported District Instructional Supports (Remaining New for 2024 & Groups)

Educator Perceptions of the Provision of Planning, Teaming, And Collaboration Time to Effectively Implement IEPs
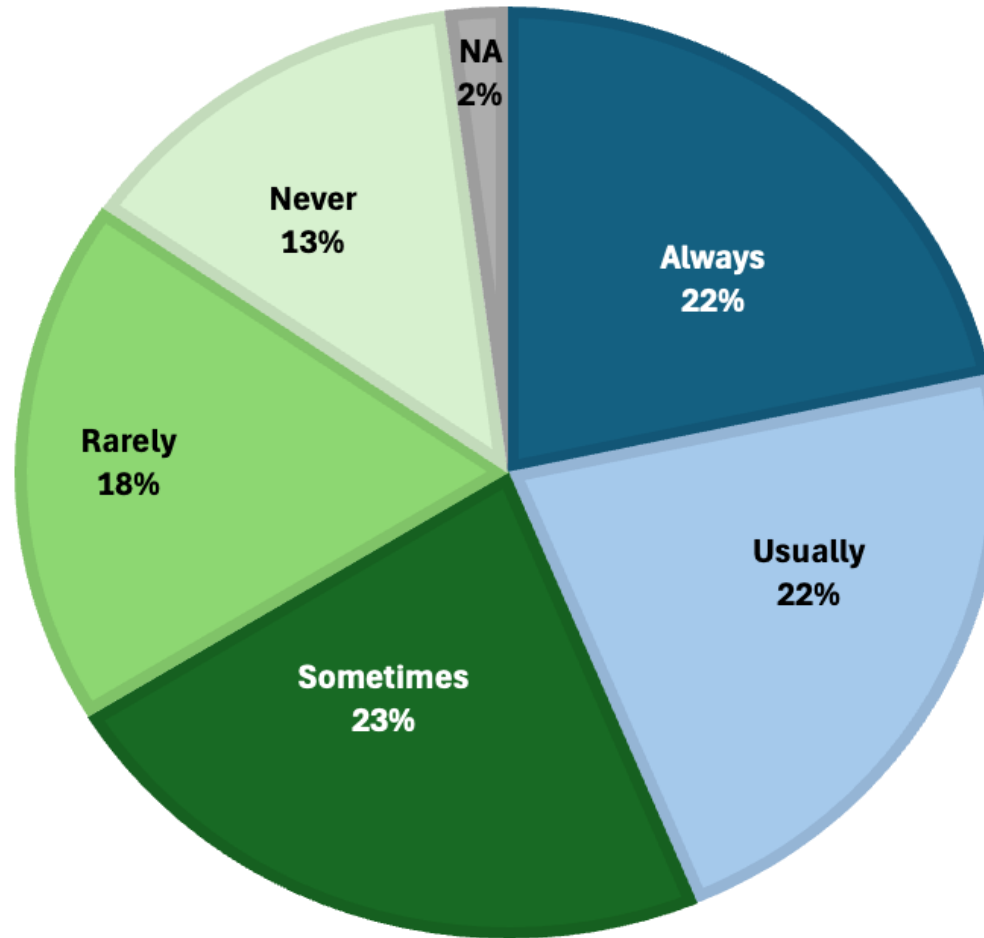
Item: The leadership team with which I work provides regularly scheduled school time to engage in interventional, instructional planning, and teaming or collaboration.

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Educator Perceptions of the Provision of Regularly Scheduled School Time to Plan or Work with IEP School-Based Team Members to Effectively Implement IEPs
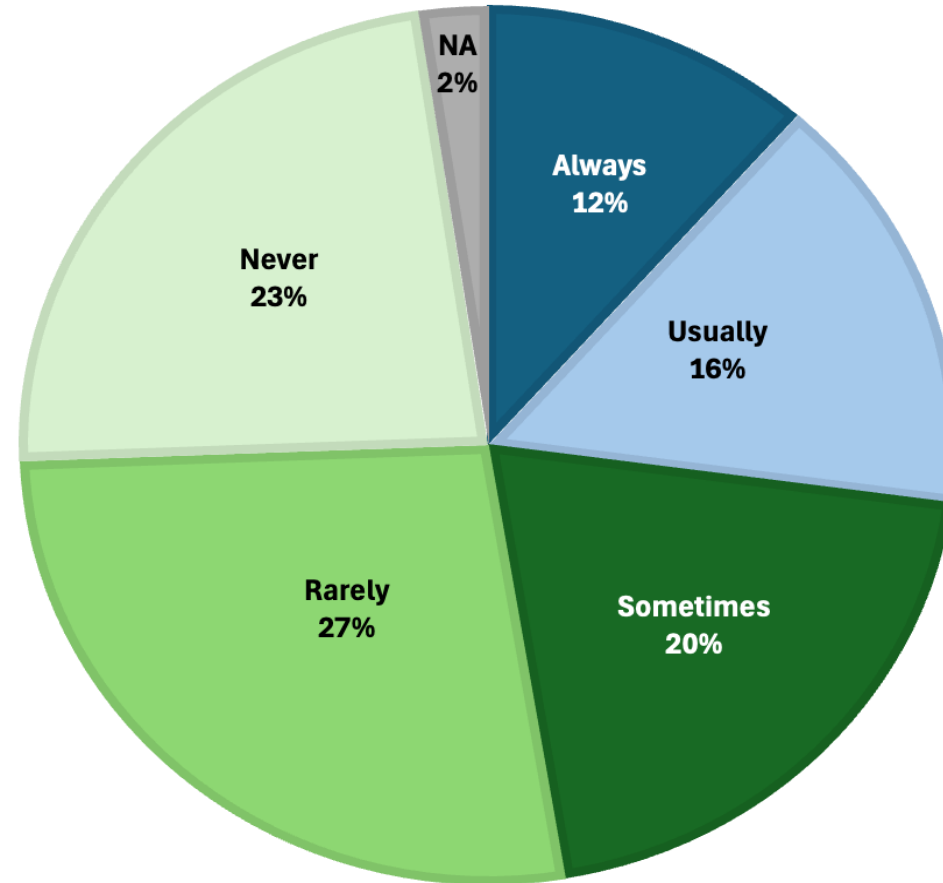
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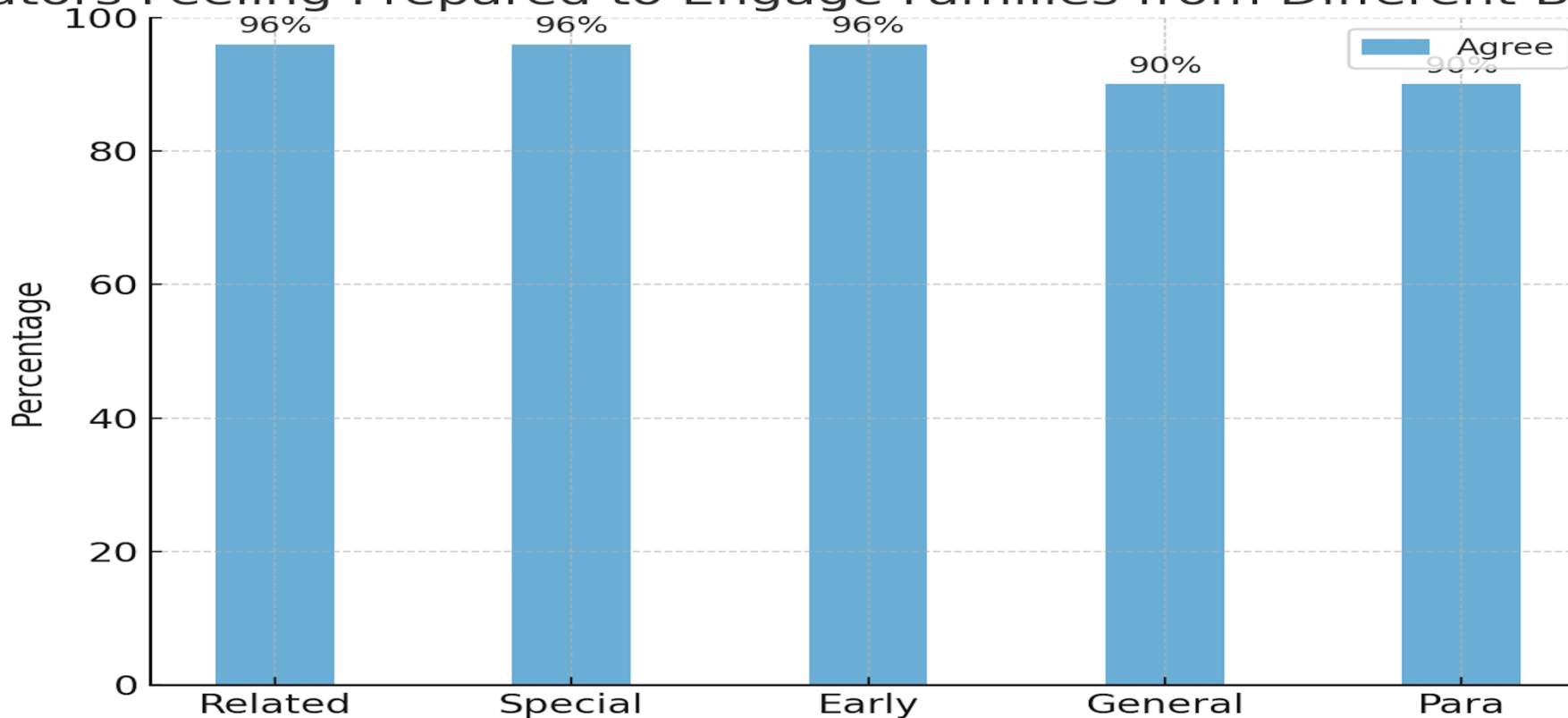
Section IV:
Parent and Family Engagement

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2019 vs 2024 Percentage of Respondents Rating High Levels of Competency in Engaging Families with Diverse Backgrounds

Competency in Engaging Families with Diverse Backgrounds
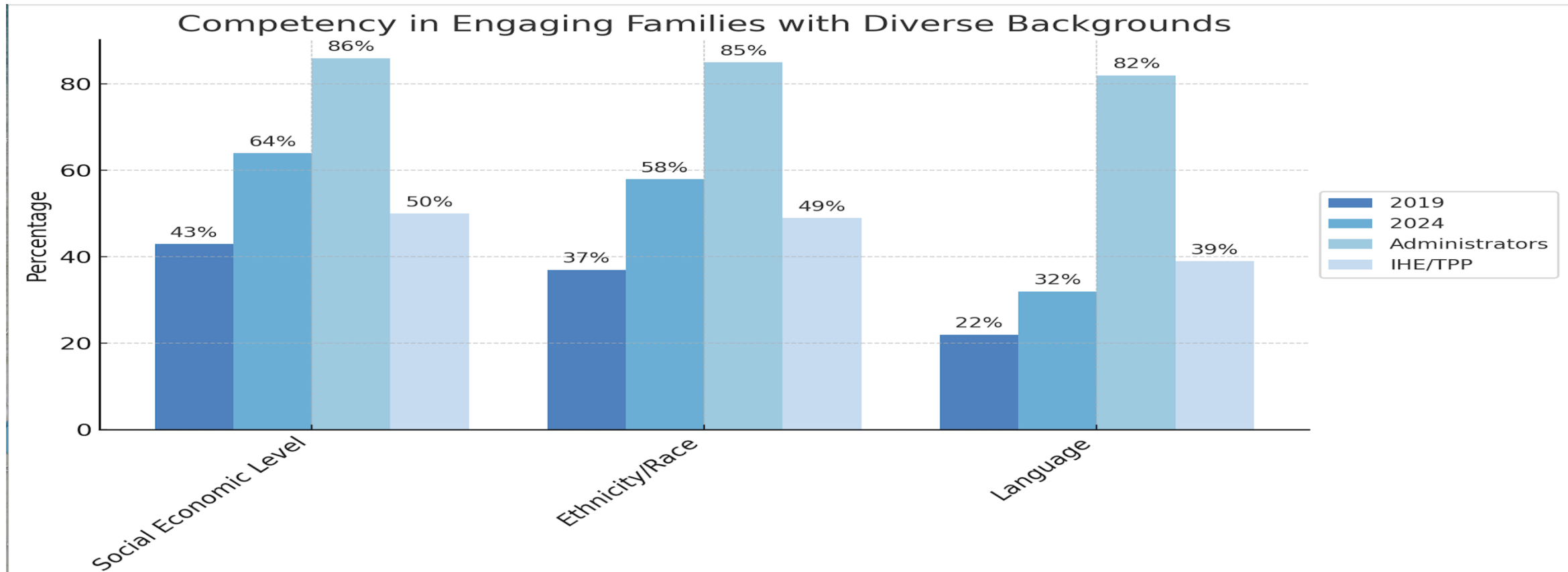
2024 Educators Perceptions of their Preparedness to be Responsive to Families of Students with Exceptionalities whose racial, cultural, and ethnic background differs from theirs.

Educators Feeling Prepared to Engage Families from Different Backgrounds
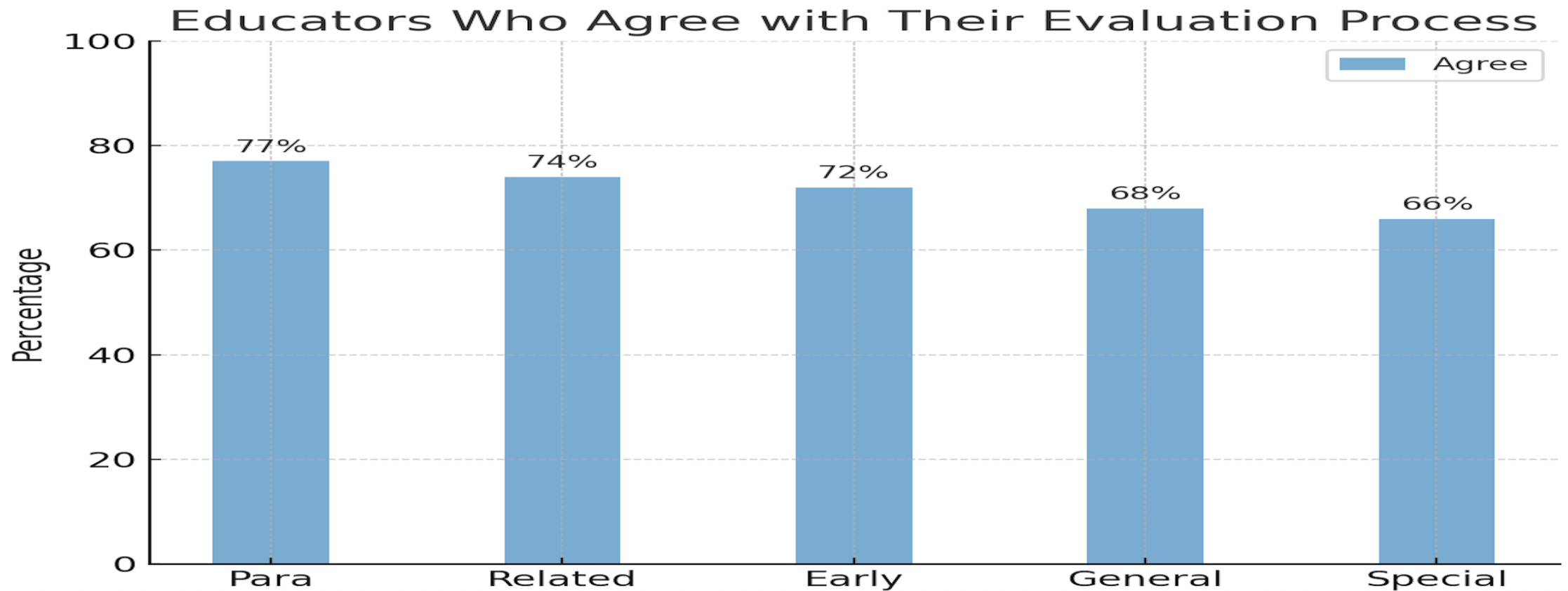
Section V:
Educator Evaluations

2019 vs 2024 Respondents Identifying Topics used in Their Evaluation and the Percentage Rating of the Use of the Topic as Very to Extremely Important

Topics Used in Educator Evaluation (2019 vs 2024)
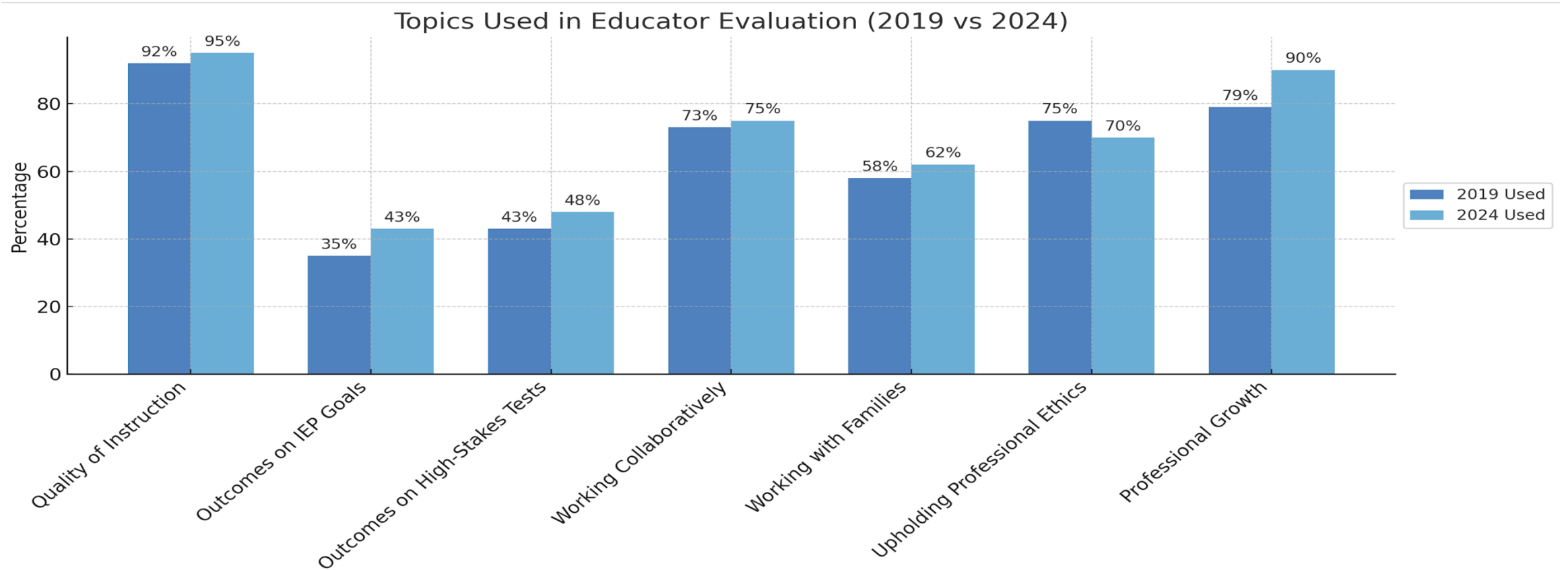
2019 vs 2024 Respondents Identifying Topics Important in Their Evaluation and the Percentage Rating of the Importance of the Topic as Very to Extremely Important
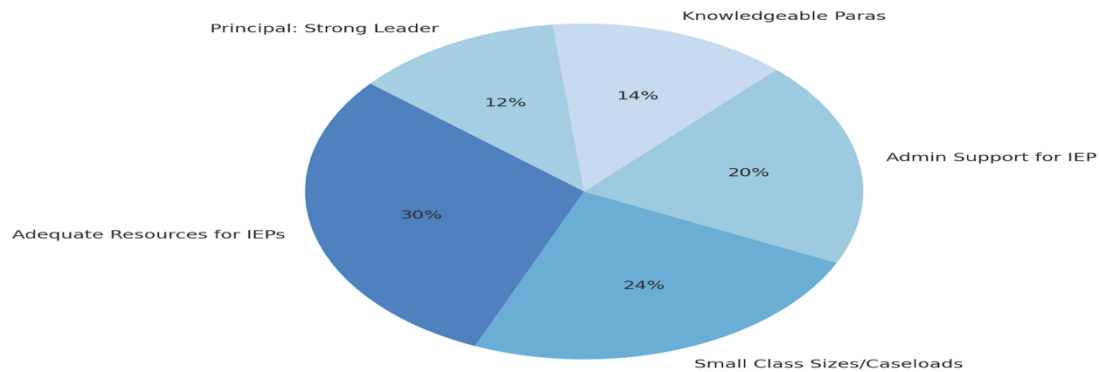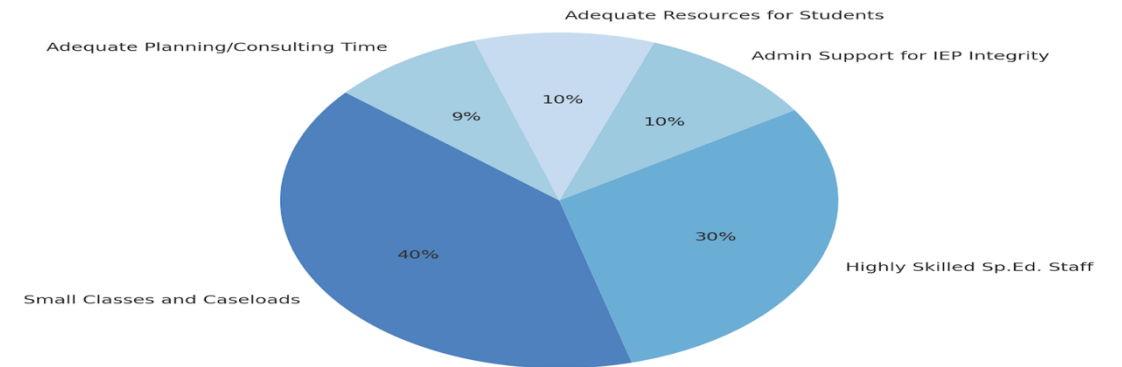

Importance of Evaluation Topics (2019 vs 2024)
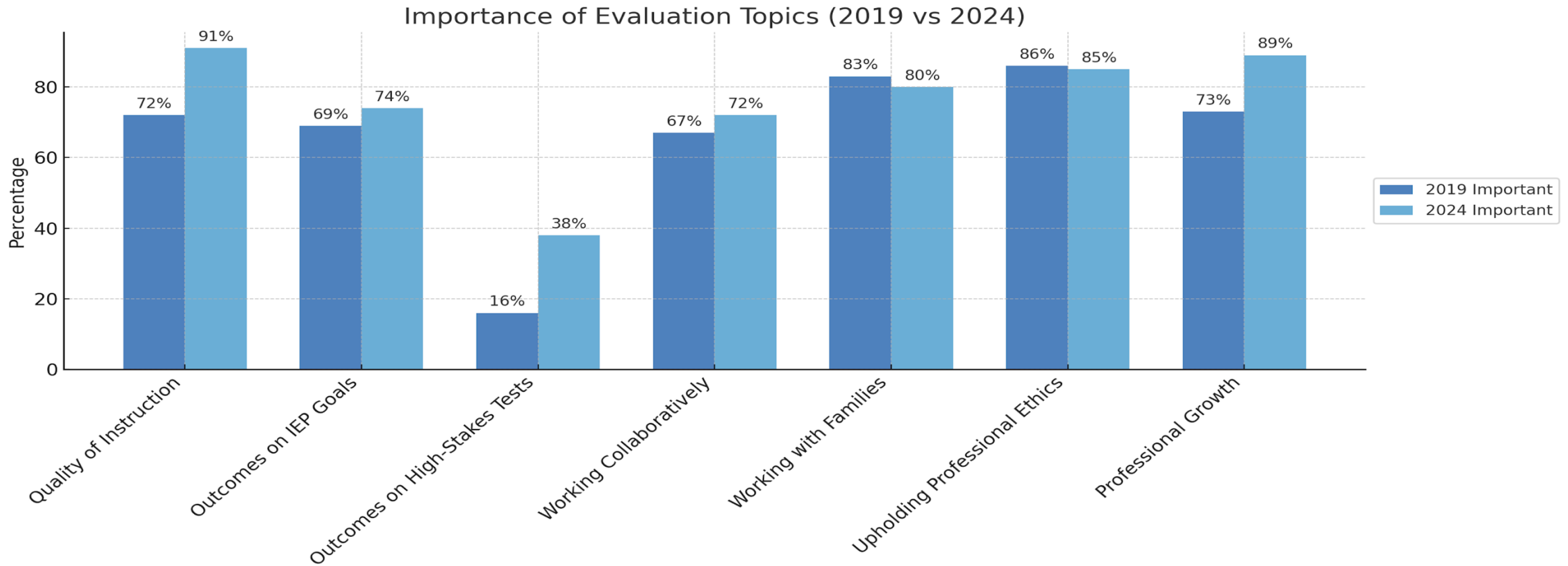
Educators Agreement with Evaluation Process

Identification of Most Important Elements for Success

Top 5 - 2019 Educators
- Knowledgeable Paras — 14%
- Admin Support for IEP — 20%
- Small Class Sizes/Caseloads — 24%
- Adequate Resources for IEPs — 30%
- Principal: Strong Leader — 12%

Top 5 - 2024 Educators
- Adequate Resources for Students — 10%
- Admin Support for IEP Integrity — 10%
- Highly Skilled Sp.Ed. Staff — 30%
- Small Classes and Caseloads — 40%
- Adequate Planning/Consulting Time — 9%

Top 5 - 2024 Administrators
- Professional development — 16%
- Admin support for IEP integrity — 19%
- Adequate resources to meet IEP requirements — 21%
- Smaller class sizes/caseloads — 29%
- Access to related service providers — 15%

Top 5 - 2024 IHE/TPP
- Admin Support for IEP Process — 17%
- Trained SPED Building Staff — 19%
- Principal as Instructional Leader — 22%
- Smaller Class Sizes/Caseloads — 24%
- Inclusive Practices — 17%

Key Takeaways

Improvement from 2019 to 2024:

- Educators and administrators report increased perceived preparation to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities. There are still gaps in the time provided for planning and collaboration across team members.

- Increased competence for Educators in assessment strategies like progress monitoring and observational data.

- Increased competence in PBIS and behaviorally culturally responsive approaches

- High confidence reported in newer instructional practices such as Trauma-Informed Instruction, SDI, and SEL.

- Educator perception of student sense of belonging increased

- Educators feel increasingly prepared to engage with families from diverse backgrounds, though disparities remain among roles and there is still some gaps when it comes to working with different languages

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Key Takeaways

System-Level Supports

- There was a clear increase from 2019 to 2024 in district support for the use of intervention models such as MTSS, PBIS, and co-teaching.

- New (2024)supports like virtual PD and professional organization membership have been introduced, though uptake is still developing.

- Many educators still report insufficient time for planning or collaboration with IEP teams.

Key Elements for Success

- Across all groups (educators, administrators, IHE/TPP), top-rated success elements include:

- Smaller class sizes and caseloads (all groups reported in top 1)

- Highly skilled special education staff

- Administrative support for IEP implementation

- Adequate resources

- Inclusive leadership practices

The Value of Being of a CEC Member

Report higher levels of confidence and competence across instructional, assessment, and behavioral domains.

- More likely to:
  - Use evidence-based and inclusive practices
  - Engage families from diverse backgrounds
  - Participate in professional learning communities
- Greater agreement with evaluation processes
- Tend to rate system-level supports more favorably
- More likely to prioritize:
  - Professional development
  - IEP integrity
  - Inclusive practices

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Non-CEC Members Report:

Report lower levels of preparedness and confidence in some key areas

- Less consistent use of high-leverage practices

- Report more barriers to collaboration and fewer district supports

- Less likely to rank professional organizations and PD as top contributors to success

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Summary

- What does this mean for you – Units/Divisions?

Thank you!