



Executive Summary

Throughout September and early October of 2023, APS engaged in the first phase of gathering stakeholder feedback on their hopes and aspirations for the students in APS, challenges and opportunities APS faces, and what APS should prioritize in its next Strategic Plan. In the near future, this feedback will help inform revisions to the **Foundations** elements of the strategic plan, which are the vision, mission, core values and strategic priorities for the division (see part I to the right). However, the initial input provided by students, parents, staff, and the community will support all phases of the development process.

APS does a full review of its strategic plan every six years. 2023-2024 is a year for full review. In January, work will shift to revising the Implementation and Monitoring elements after the revised Foundations are voted on by the School Board in December. Again, additional opportunities for feedback will take place throughout the development process. This executive summary and report outline what we have heard thus far from the community to inform the Foundations.

Who was engaged thus far?

Community Engagement for Part I has been organized into three main strategies - administration of a broad **community questionnaire**, **community forums**, and **focus groups**.

There were 4,231 total responses to the **questionnaire** including 973 students, 893 staff, and 2365 parent/community members.

Community forums were scheduled at each of the comprehensive high schools. There were approximately five (5) participants at the Wakefield forum which was conducted in Spanish and 17 total participants at Yorktown (in-person and virtual combined).

Strategic Plan Development Timeline | 2023-24

Part I Strategic Plan Foundations: Mission, Vision, Core Values, Priorities <i>What we aspire to for the students of APS</i>	Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire on current foundations • Focus groups and community listening on aspirations for APS
	Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafts of revised Foundations (10/19 - 11/3)
	Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering Committee Drafts Completed (11/8) • Board Work Session (11/14)
	Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Action on Foundations (12/14)
Part II Strategic Plan Implementation and Monitoring Elements. <i>What we will do and how we will measure success.</i>	Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the implementation and monitoring elements including both strategies the district will take to improve student learning and revised metrics for success. • Additional feedback opportunities for families, staff, and community • Final plan is expected to be taken to the board for discussion and approval in June of 2024.
	Feb	
	Mar	
	Apr	
	Ma	
	Jun	



Focus groups were conducted in-person at most middle and high schools. Community and parent focus groups happened across the district with the goal of hearing from a diverse cross section of the APS community. 289 individuals participated in a focus group.

Focus Group Role	Number of Focus Groups Conducted
Students	12
Parents	6
Staff	6
Community	15

Highlighted Initial Takeaways

- Many stakeholders **support the current foundations** in the strategic plan, with approximately 3 out of every 5 respondents indicating either little or no revisions needed to the mission, vision, values and priorities (see page 4-5 for details).
- In responding to questions about hopes and aspirations, the **following 5 themes** emerged most frequently (see page 8 for details).
 - Academics and Instructional Quality
 - Preparedness for Life and Jobs
 - Recruiting and Retaining Teachers
 - Social and Emotional Learning and Mental Health
 - Equity
- **Academics/instructional quality** was the most frequent theme in the questionnaire across roles and demographics, except for staff whose responses indicated recruiting and retaining teachers most frequently.
- From the questionnaire and focus groups, respondents indicated the value of **social and emotional learning** and ensuring that students are in an environment that is safe, supportive to all needs.
- From the questionnaire and focus groups, we also heard the division should work to address the **persistent opportunity and achievement gaps** that exist across the division and that pursuing equity is important to many families and staff across the district.
- Our focus groups also called out the need for **excellent, responsive services** throughout the district, especially serving students with special needs, English Language learners (particularly those students new to the country) and offering supports for students who are struggling.
- Themes that arose from the **student focus group** include:
 - The importance of developing trusting, strong relationships with teachers
 - Balancing school and life expectations and the feeling of not having enough time for all responsibilities.
 - The value of effective counseling services
 - The desire to be ready for life - both to get a job and to be happy in the future
- From discussions with community and parent focus groups, we heard clearly the importance of **trust, communication and follow-through at all levels of the division**.
- Our focus groups also indicated how **teachers and school leaders** have a huge impact on student and family experiences.



Full Report

Community Engagement for the development of the 2024-2030 strategic plan has been organized into three main strategies. These strategies include the administration of a broad **community questionnaire**, **community forums** conducted at the three comprehensive high schools (Wakefield, Washington-Liberty, and Yorktown), and **focus groups** conducted with students, parents, staff, and community group representatives.

Participation in Community Engagement

Questionnaire

There were 4,231 total responses to the questionnaire including 973 students, 893 staff, and 2365 parent/community members. Only 83 of the parent/community respondents **were not** APS parents/family members. The breakdown of participant gender and gender identity and race/ethnicity are detailed in tables 1.1 and 1.2.

Table 1.1 Questionnaire Respondents by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Students*	Staff	Community
American Indian/Native American	0%	0%	1%
Asian	9%	4%	8%
Black or African American	7%	11%	5%
Latino or Hispanic	25%	9%	9%
Native Hawaiian	0%	0%	0%
Two or More	Reported as other	5%	5%
White	45%	70%	69%
Other	9%	2%	4%

6.7% of student race/ethnicity demographic data were blank

Table 1.2 Questionnaire Respondents by Gender/Gender Identity

Gender/Gender Identity	Students*	Staff	Parent/ Community
Female	50%	80%	67%
Male	42%	20%	32%
Non-Binary	.01%	<.01%	<.01%
Other		<.01%	1%

6.9% of student gender demographic data were blank

Community Forums

Community forums were scheduled at each of the comprehensive high schools. There were approximately five (5) participants at the Wakefield forum which was conducted in Spanish and 17 total participants at Yorktown (in-person and virtual combined). These counts do not include steering committee members who attended either the Wakefield or Yorktown forums.



Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted in-person at each of the following middle and high schools. Student focus groups in two schools (Gunston and Kenmore) will be conducted after this analysis is completed (but will be incorporated into the ongoing development of the strategic plan foundations and implementation/monitoring elements). The number of focus groups conducted by role is depicted in Table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3 Focus Groups Conducted by Role

Focus Group Role	Number of Focus Groups Conducted	Number of Participants	Notes
Students	12	123	Two (2) remaining focus groups (Gunston and Kenmore)
Parents	6	58	Two (2) groups conducted in each of North Arlington, Central Arlington, and South Arlington
Staff	6	16	Two (2) focus groups were canceled because of non-participation (non-registration) Teachers and Staff are being rescheduled
Community	15	92	Three (3) groups are being rescheduled for late October/early November

Community Voice

The community, represented by students, families, staff, and community members, responded to two sets of questions in the questionnaire. First, they responded to Likert-type questions related to each of the elements of the strategic plan foundations: vision, mission, core values and priorities. Second, they provided responses to three questions to indicate their hopes and aspirations for Arlington Public Schools and its students.

Vision, Mission, Core Values, and Priorities

The Likert-type questions on the foundations elements, asked questionnaire respondents to provide their perception of the amount that each element needed revision from no revisions needed to significant revisions needed. That data is summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Foundations Revisions: Students, Staff, and Parent/Community Perceptions

	1 Major Revisions needed	2	3	4	5 No Revisions Needed
VISION					
Students	4.89%	12.06%	23.89%	31.29%	27.87%
Staff	3.93%	9.26%	22.59%	29.06%	35.15%
Parent/Community	7.25%	8.73%	19.65%	28.19%	36.18%
VISION TOTAL	5.98%	9.64%	21.29%	29.11%	33.98%



Table 2.1 Foundations Revisions: Students, Staff, and Parent/Community Perceptions

	1 Major Revisions needed	2	3	4	5 No Revisions Needed
MISSION					
Students	6.49%	12.86%	25.06%	36.02%	19.57%
Staff	6.71%	9.69%	23.11%	26.71%	33.79%
Parent/Community	8.18%	10.66%	19.67%	26.34%	35.15%
MISSION TOTAL	7.46%	10.98%	21.69%	28.72%	31.15%
CORE VALUES					
Students	3.24%	9.72%	28.01%	33.22%	25.81%
Staff	5.19%	8.43%	25.81%	27.76%	32.81%
Parent/Community	6.30%	9.69%	20.86%	27.27%	35.88%
CORE VALUES TOTAL	5.33%	9.43%	23.65%	28.81%	32.79%
PRIORITIES					
Students	5.17%	11.52%	29.85%	27.97%	25.50%
Staff	7.08%	11.48%	25.63%	27.24%	28.57%
Parent/Community	5.94%	9.42%	21.67%	27.62%	35.35%
PRIORITIES TOTAL	6.00%	10.37%	24.51%	27.62%	31.51%

Approximately 200 - 225 respondents provided additional comments related to foundations elements. Many of the comments were unrelated to revising the foundations elements. Those unrelated comments were coded for the overall themes related to hopes and aspirations (further in this document). Table 2.1 provides information about the degree of revisions respondents perceived were needed for each of the foundations elements.

Table 2.1 Number of Responses Providing Feedback by Foundations Element

	Students	Staff	Parent/Community
Vision	20	33	143
Mission	18	42	156
Core Values	15	39	173
Priorities	19	51	144

Table 2.2 details the highest frequency themes for each foundation element organized by the respondent role.



Table 2.2 Top Themes of Feedback for Foundations Components (high to low frequency)

Foundation Element	VISION	MISSION	CORE VALUES	PRIORITIES
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Citizenship Learning Opportunities Learning Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Student Support High Expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion High Expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Success Student Well-being and Safety
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Citizenship High Expectations [Statement is] ineffective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Include Teachers and Staff High Expectations Learning Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged Workforce Teachers
Parent/Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion [Vision is] Ineffective High Expectations Citizenship Career and College Readiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Expectations Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Safety College and Career Readiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Expectations Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion [Values are] ineffective Teacher Support Citizenship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers High Expectations Engaged Workforce Accountability
OVERALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion [Vision is] Ineffective High Expectations Citizenship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Expectations Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity, Equity and Inclusion High Expectations [Values are] ineffective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged Workforce Teachers High Expectations Student Success

Hopes and Aspirations

Questionnaire

Respondents answered three questions related to hopes and aspirations for Arlington Public Schools and its students. These questions were:

1. What are your hopes and aspirations for the students of Arlington Public Schools?



2. What are the greatest opportunities and challenges facing APS over the next six years?
3. What should APS prioritize in its next strategic plan as it relates to students, staff, the community?

The corresponding student questions were:

1. What do you hope to accomplish as an Arlington Public Schools student?
2. What about school is helping you be successful? What about school is getting in the way of your success?
3. What should APS focus on to help students achieve success and accomplish their goals?

The themes identified in response to these questions are detailed in the figures to follow. In each figure, the counts represent how frequently respondents referenced a particular theme over all three questions in the questionnaire. For example, if a male respondent answered all three questions and referenced the “academic rigor” theme in each of those three questions, then, for that respondent, that theme would represent three. Also, multiple themes may be present within a single response. For clarity, and to identify the most significant themes, each graph organizes them from highest frequency to lowest. Each graph represents the highest frequency themes identified for a particular group, yet not all themes. The themes included in each graph represent the highest frequency themes (generally 14-16).



Figure 2.01 details the highest frequency themes for all respondents (students, staff, and parent/community).

Figure 2.01: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Total Combined Responses (N=4321)**

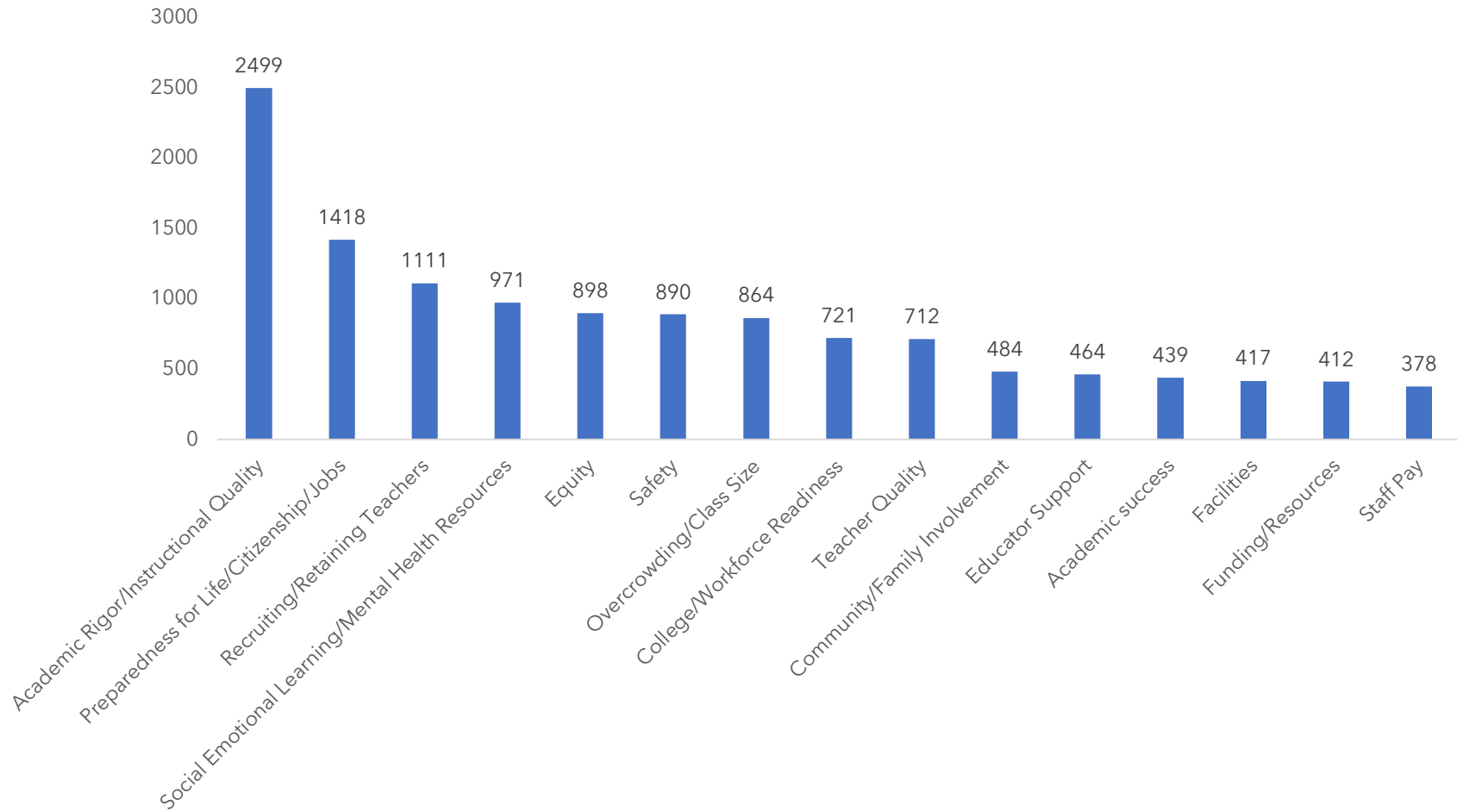




Figure 2.02 details the highest frequency themes for all student respondents (only).

Figure 2.02: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Students** (N=973)

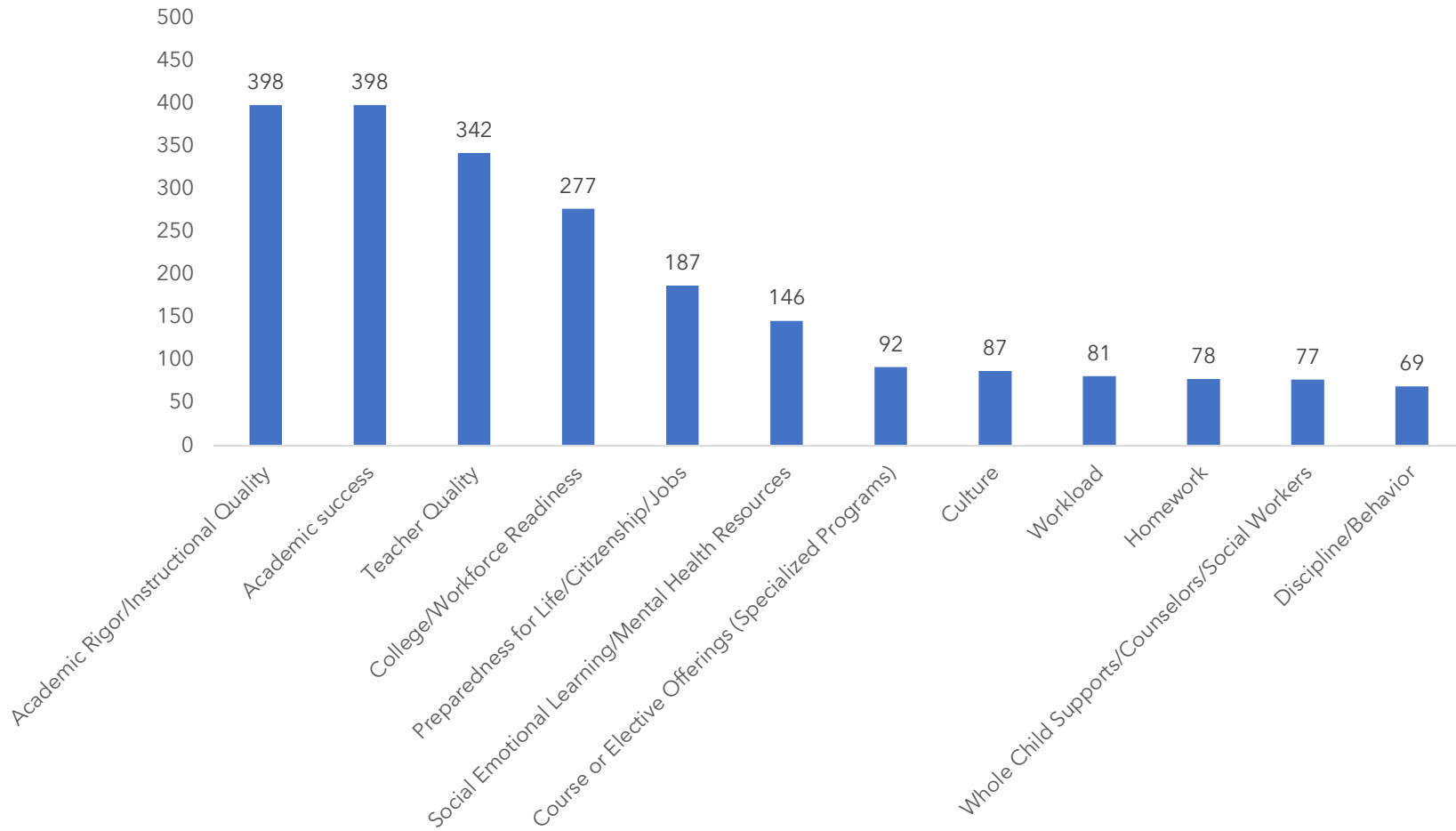




Figure 2.03 details the highest frequency themes for all staff respondents (only).

Figure 2.03: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Staff** (N=893)

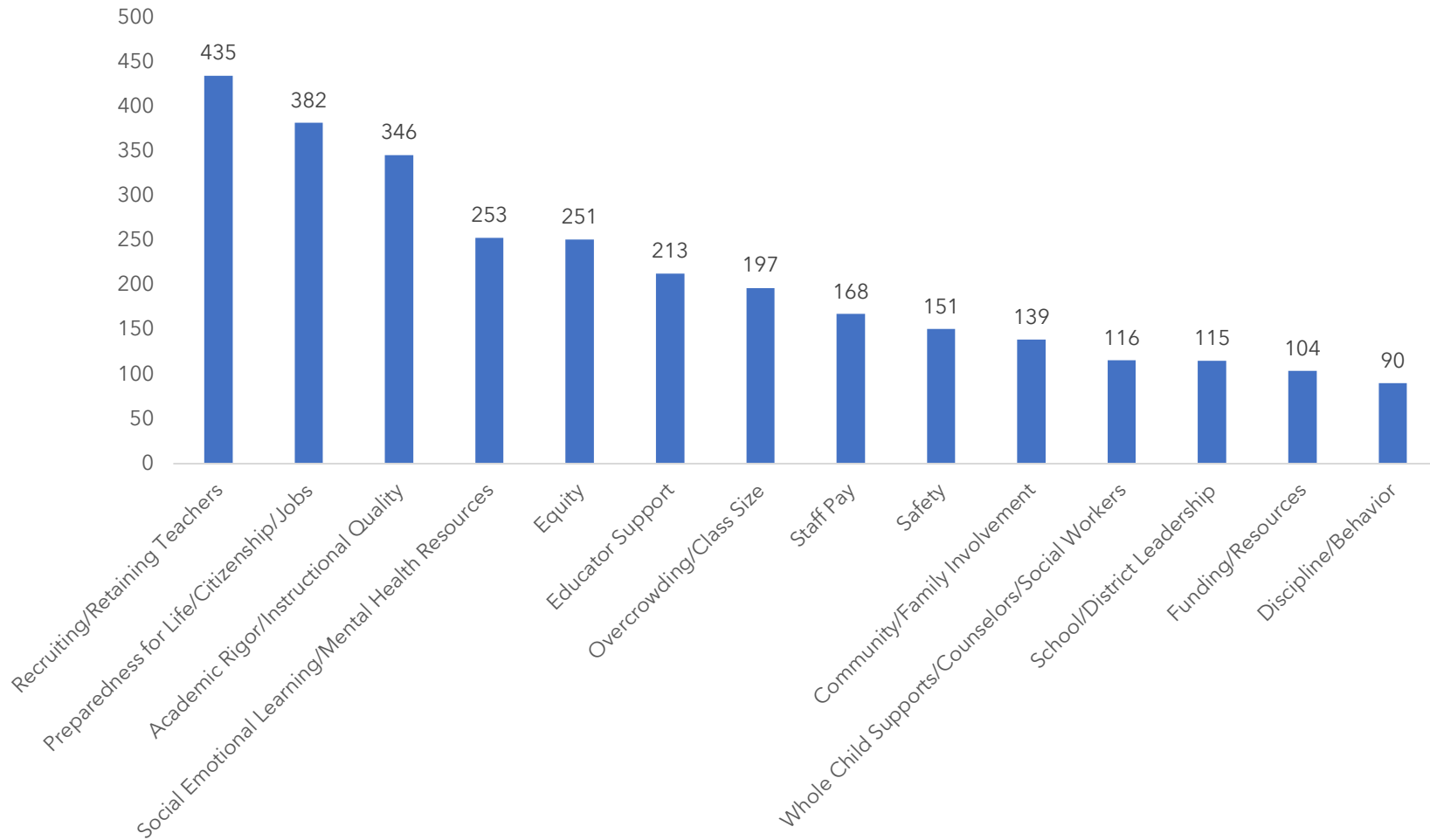




Figure 2.04 details the highest frequency themes for all parent/community respondents (only).

Figure 2.04: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Parent/Community** (N=2365)

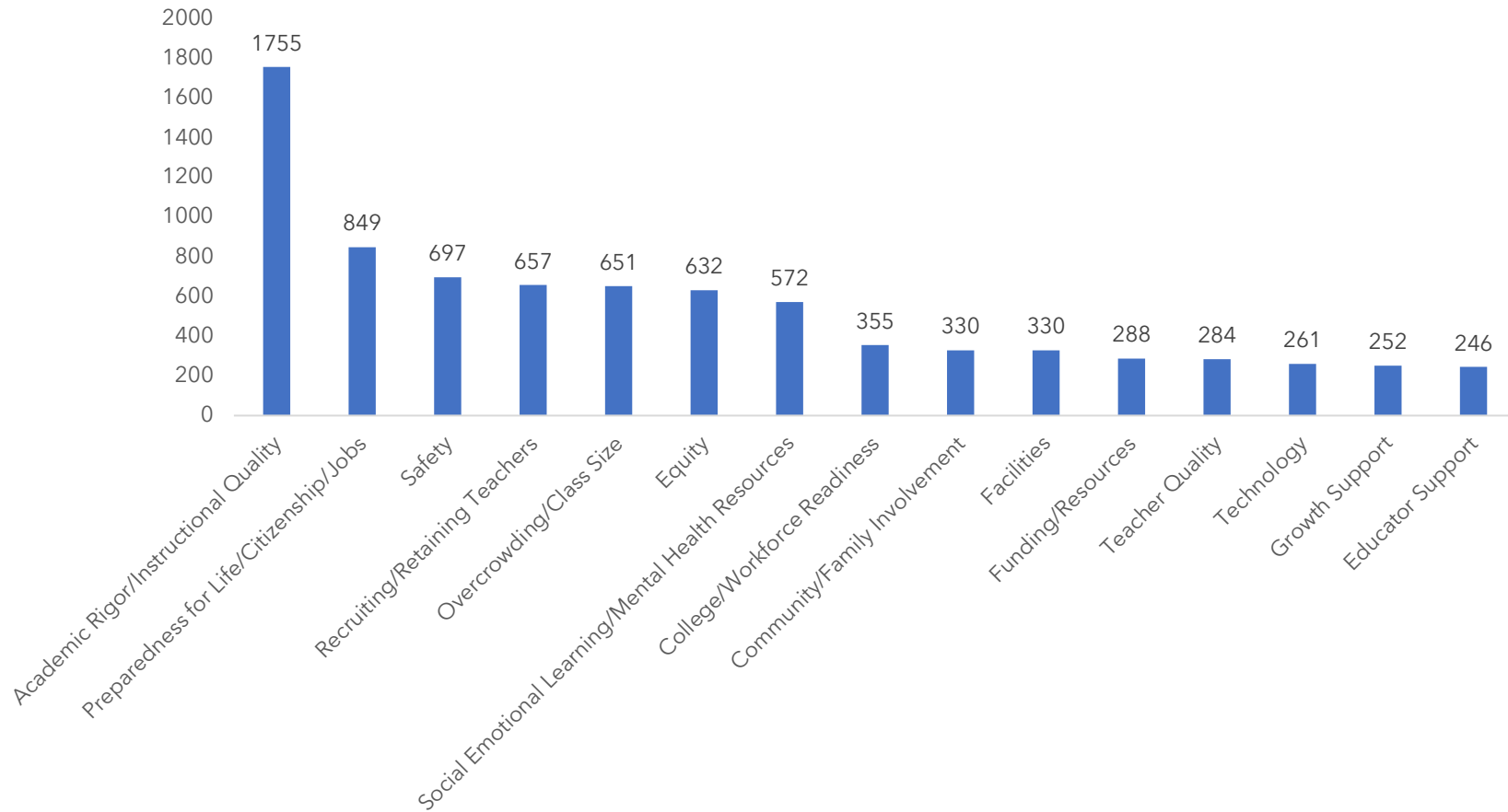




Figure 2.05 lists the highest frequency themes students, staff and parent/community respondents who identified as Asian.

Figure 2.05: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Asian American/Pacific Islander** (N=321)

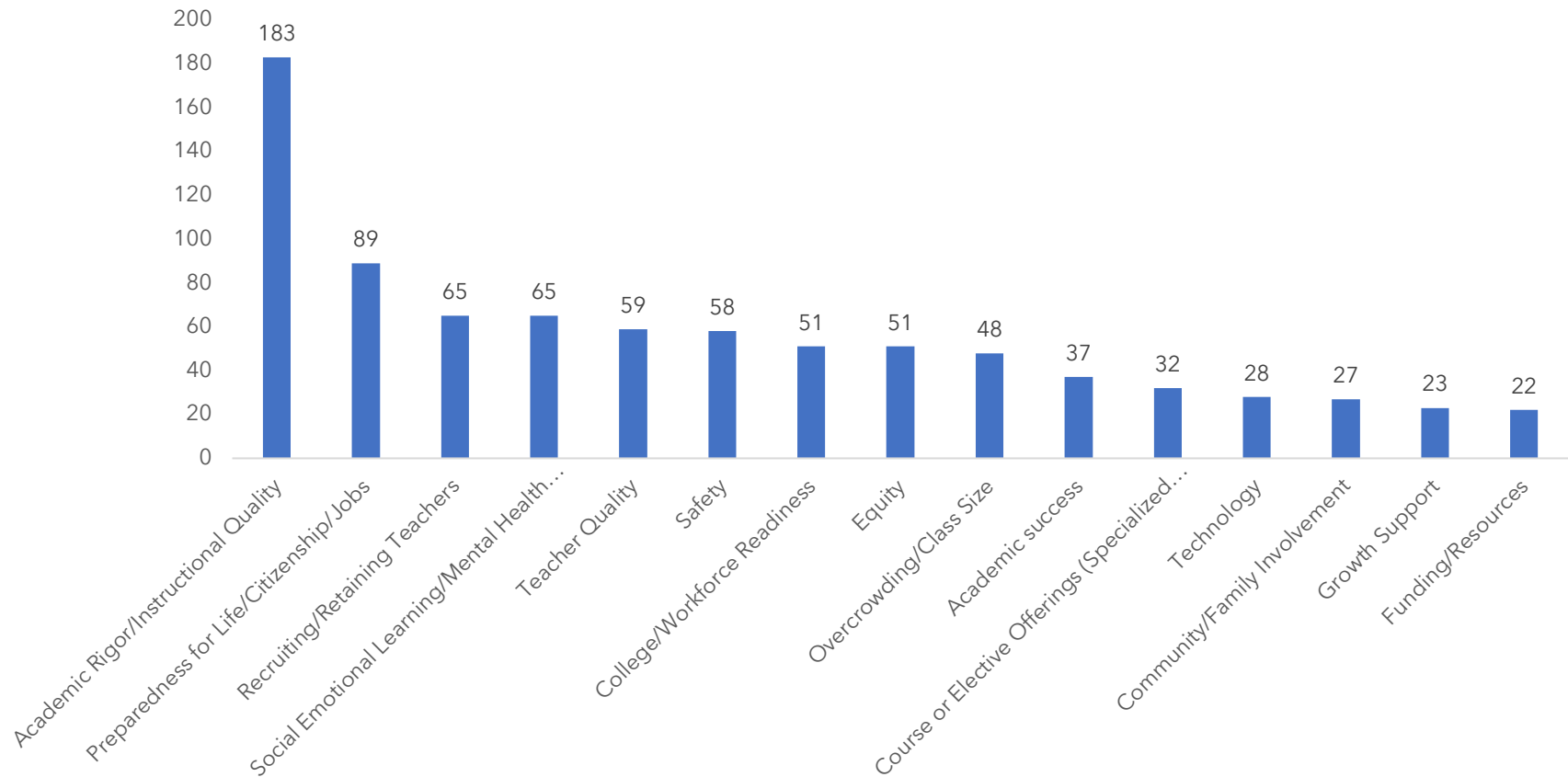




Figure 2.06 details the highest frequency themes for students, staff and parent/community respondents who identified as Black/African American.

Figure 2.06: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Black/African American** (N=269)

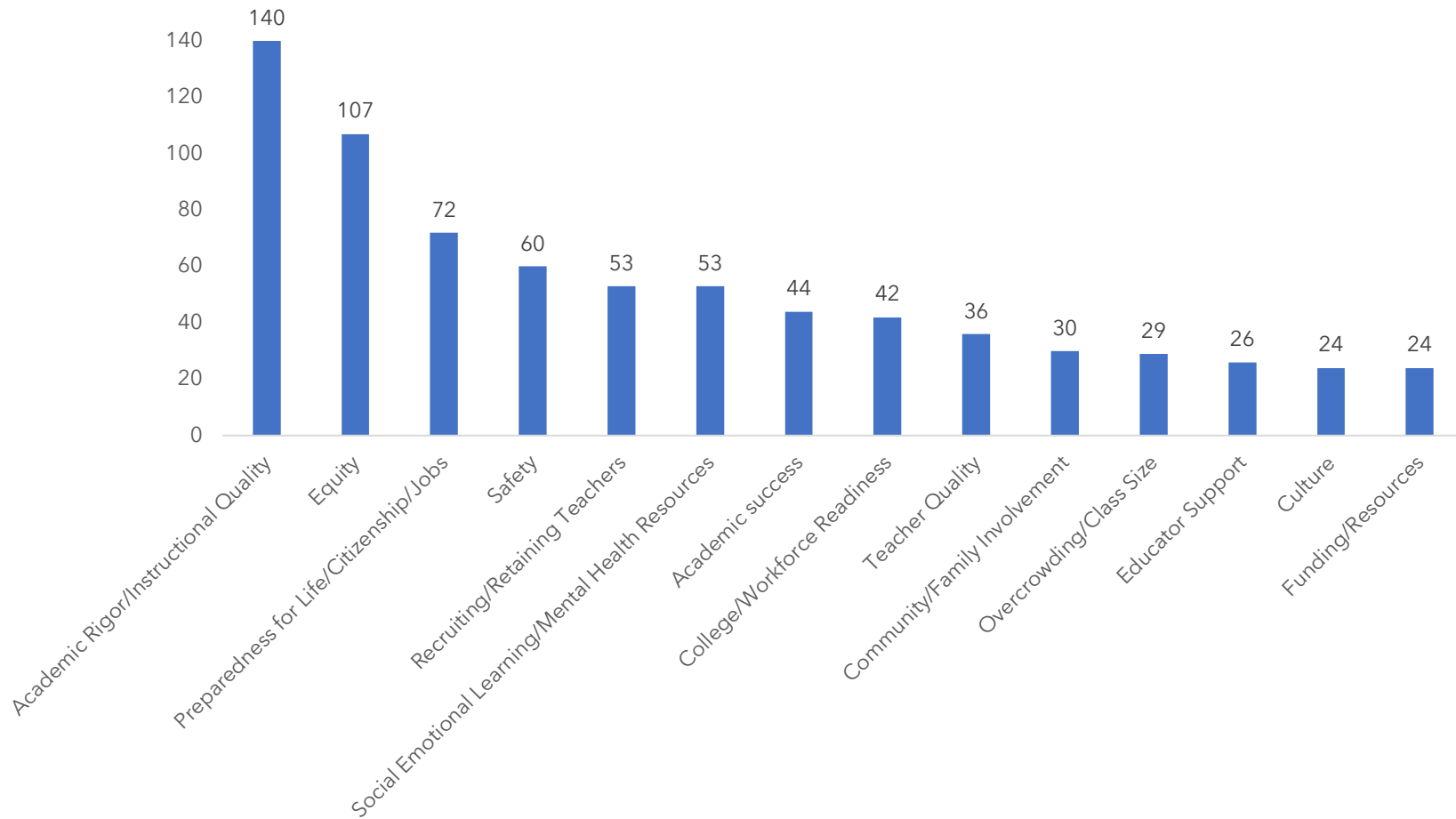




Figure 2.07 details the highest frequency themes for students, staff and parent/community respondents who identified as Latino/Hispanic.

Figure 2.07: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Latino/Hispanic** (N=513)

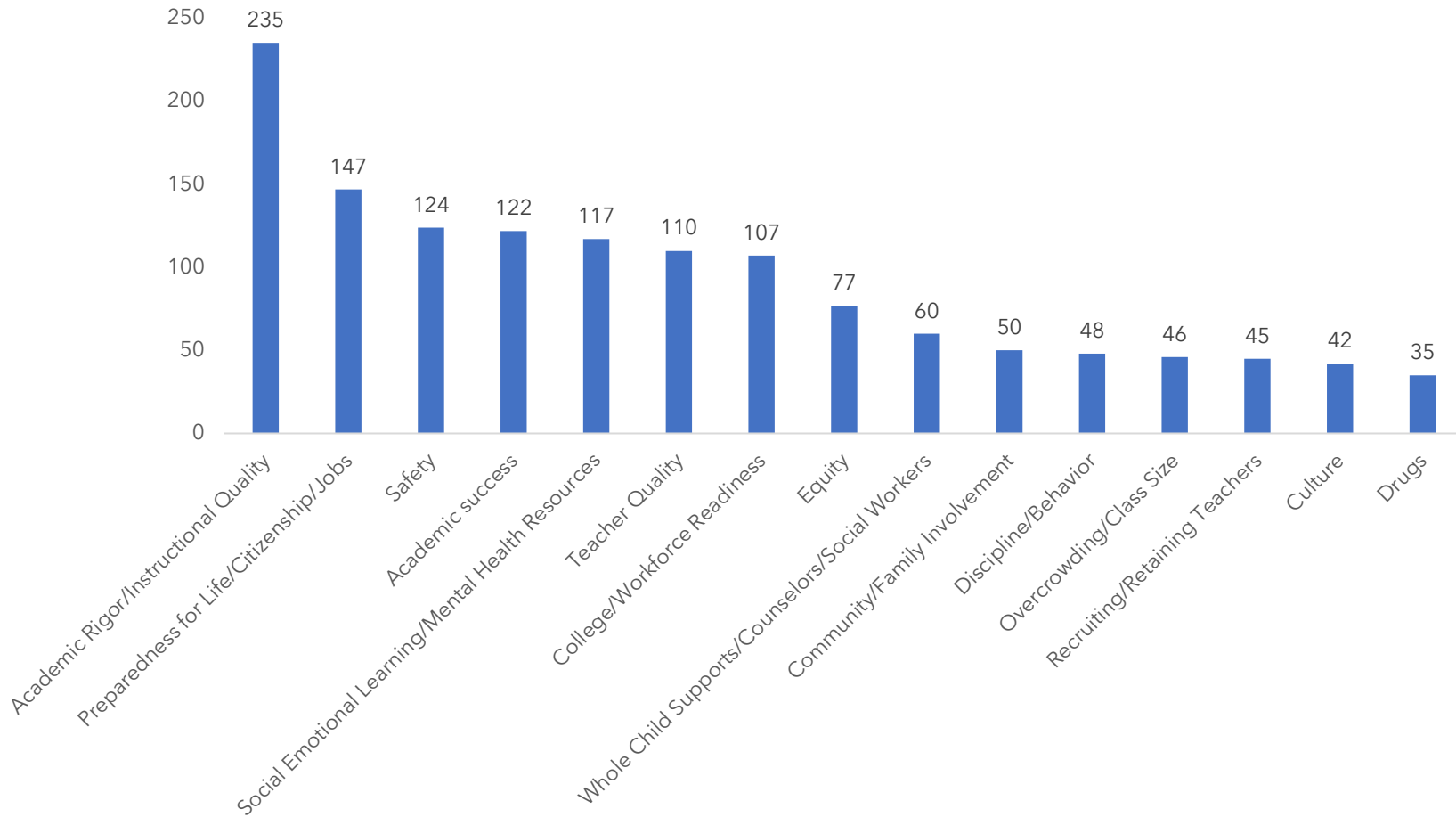




Figure 2.08 provides the highest frequency themes for students, staff and parent/community respondents who identified with Two or More races/ethnicities.

Figure 2.08: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Two or More Races** (N=155)

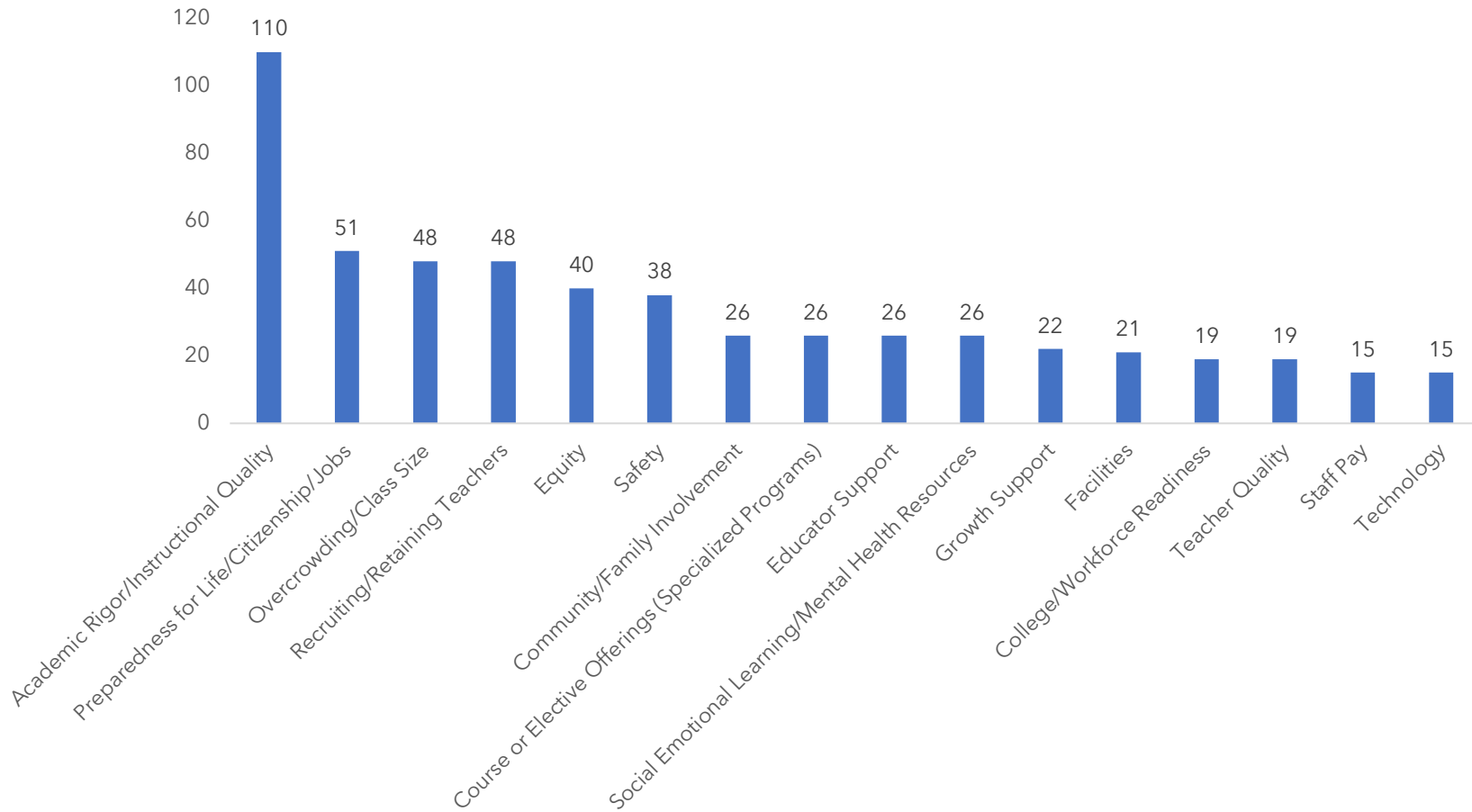




Figure 2.09 provides the highest frequency themes for students, staff and parent/community respondents who as identified as White.

Figure 2.09: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **White** (N=2643)

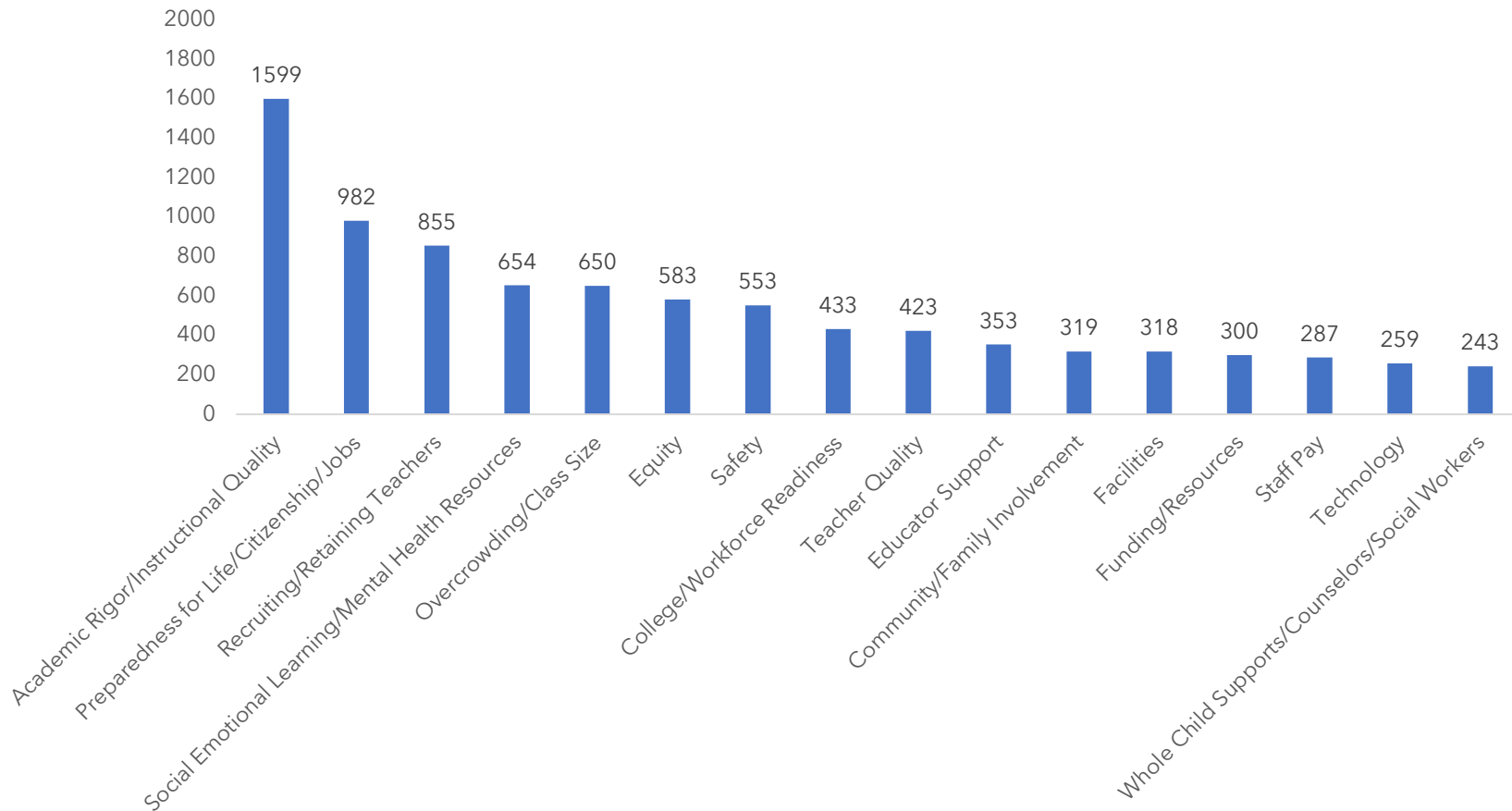




Figure 2.10 provides the highest frequency themes for students, staff and parent/community respondents who identified as female.

Figure 2.10: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Female** (N=2751)

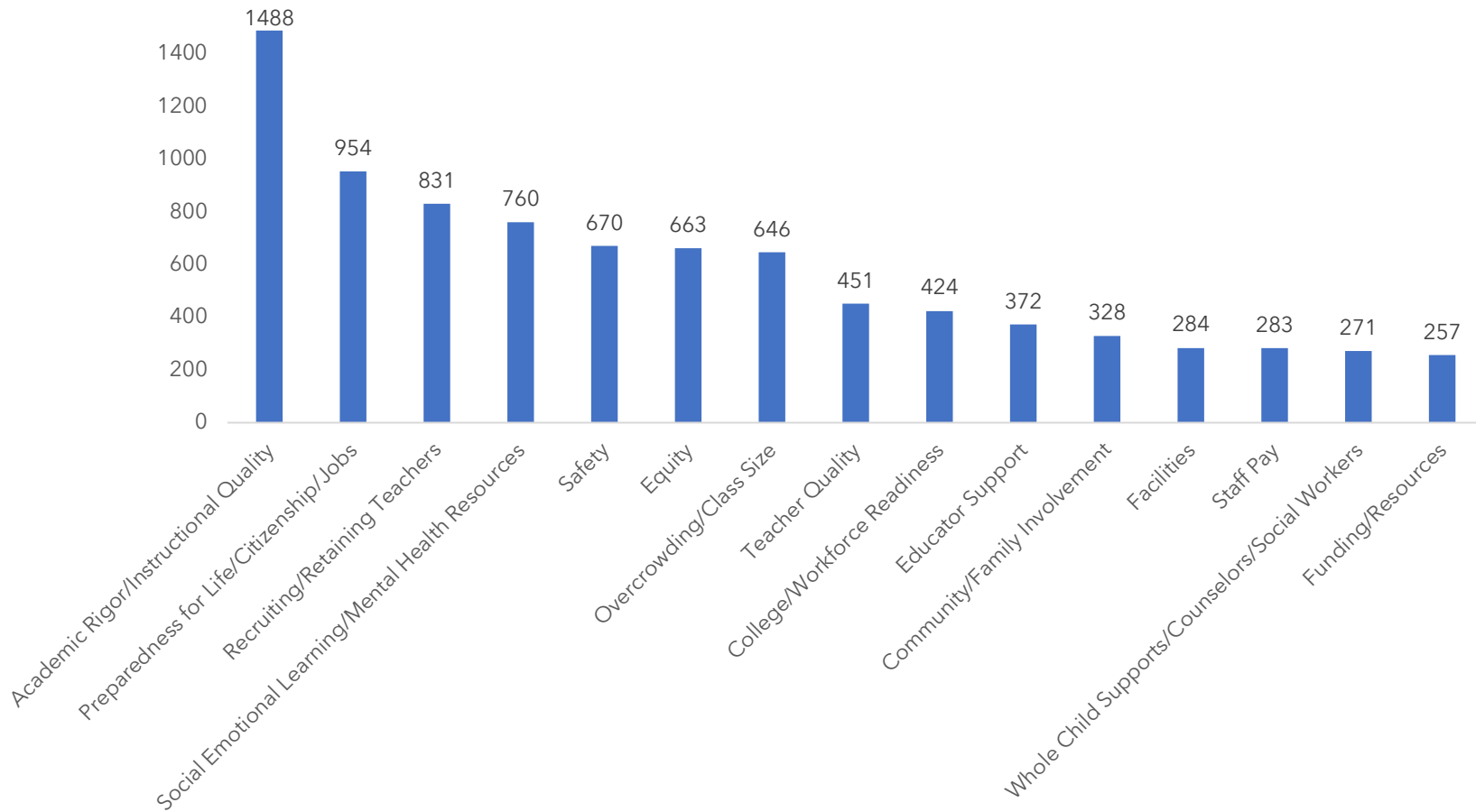




Figure 2.11 provides the highest frequency themes for students, staff and parent/community respondents who identified as male.

Figure 2.11: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Male** (N=1317)

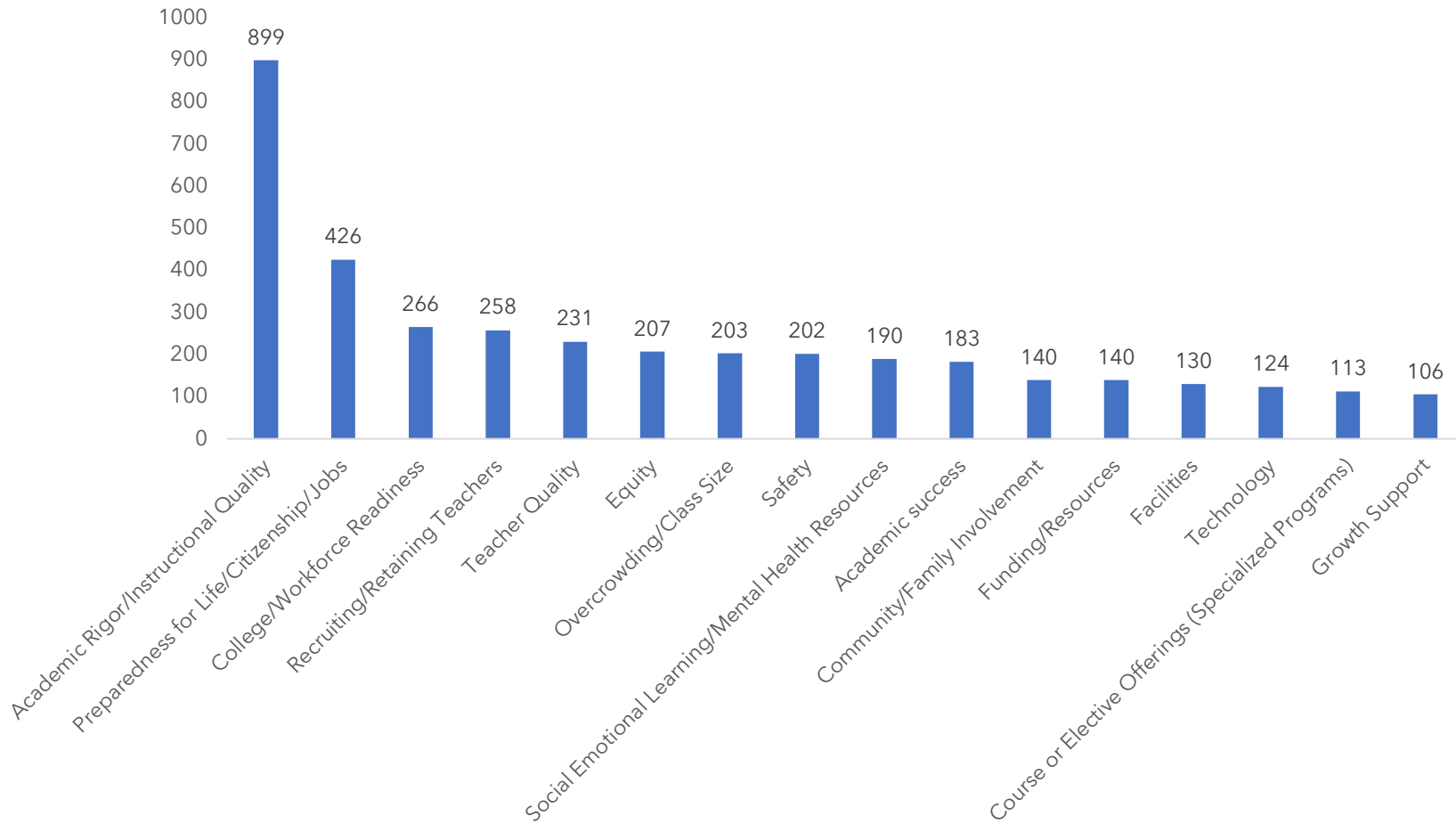




Figure 2.12 provides the highest frequency themes for students, staff and parent/community respondents who responded to the question related to gender as “other” or “prefer not to say.”.

Figure 2.12: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Other/Prefer Not to Say** (N=88)

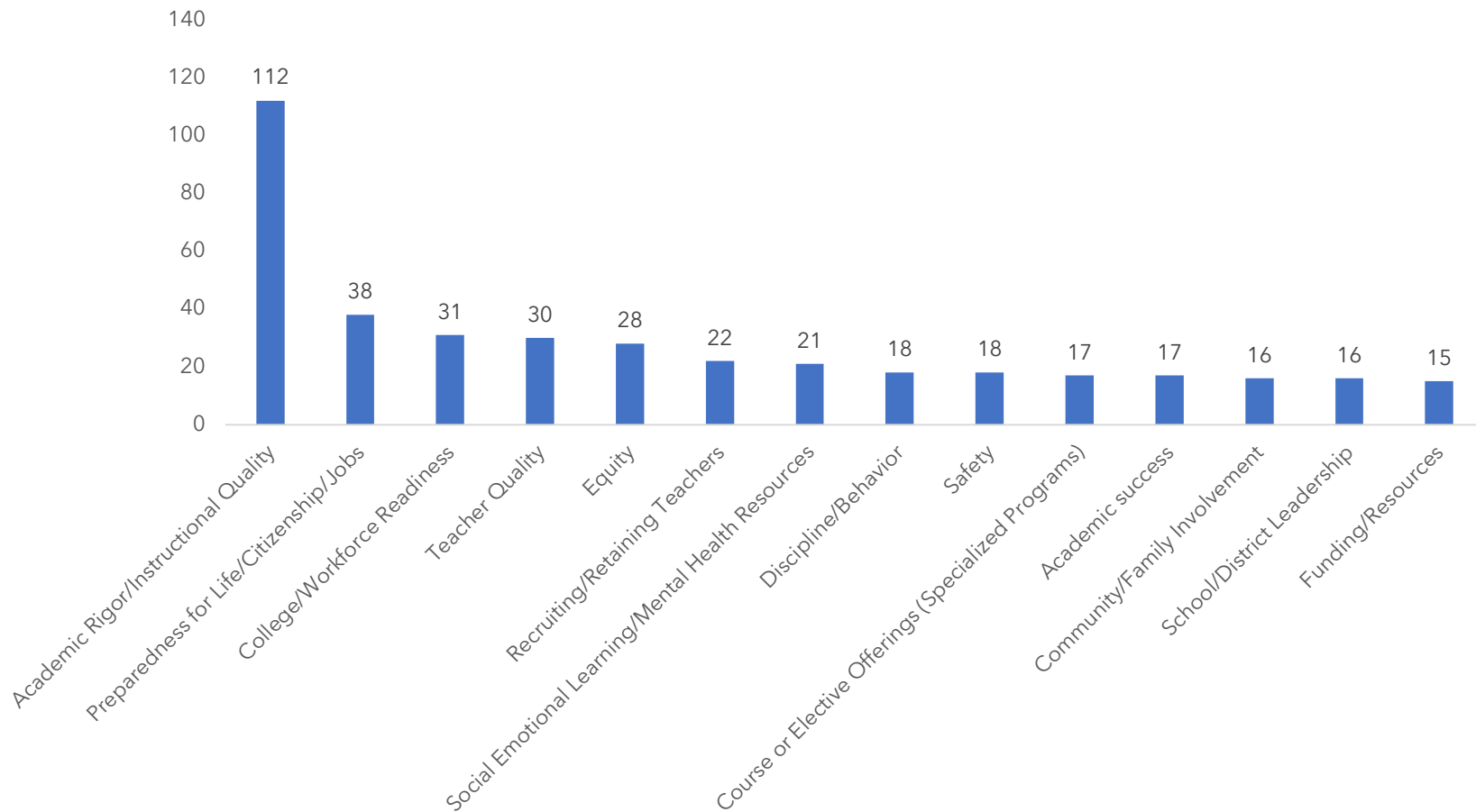




Figure 2.13 provides the highest frequency themes for students, staff and parent/community respondents who reside in zip codes in the northern region of Arlington County.

Figure 2.13: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Staff and Parent/Community Northern Arlington County (Zip Codes)** (N=1063)

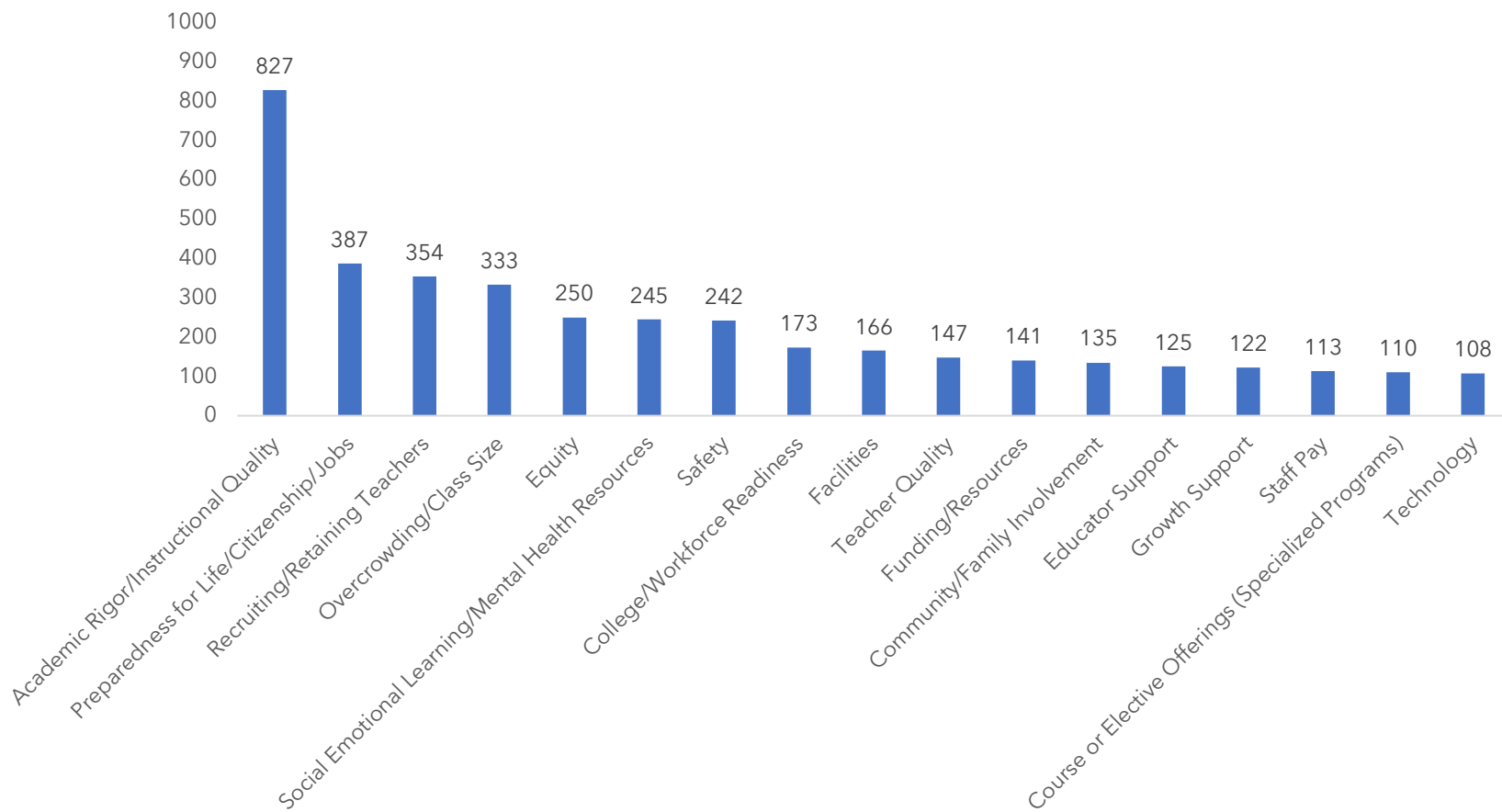




Figure 2.14 provides the highest frequency themes for students, staff and parent/community respondents who reside in zip codes in the central region of Arlington County based on zip code.

Figure 2.14: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Staff and Parent/Community Central Arlington County (Zip Codes)** (N=499)

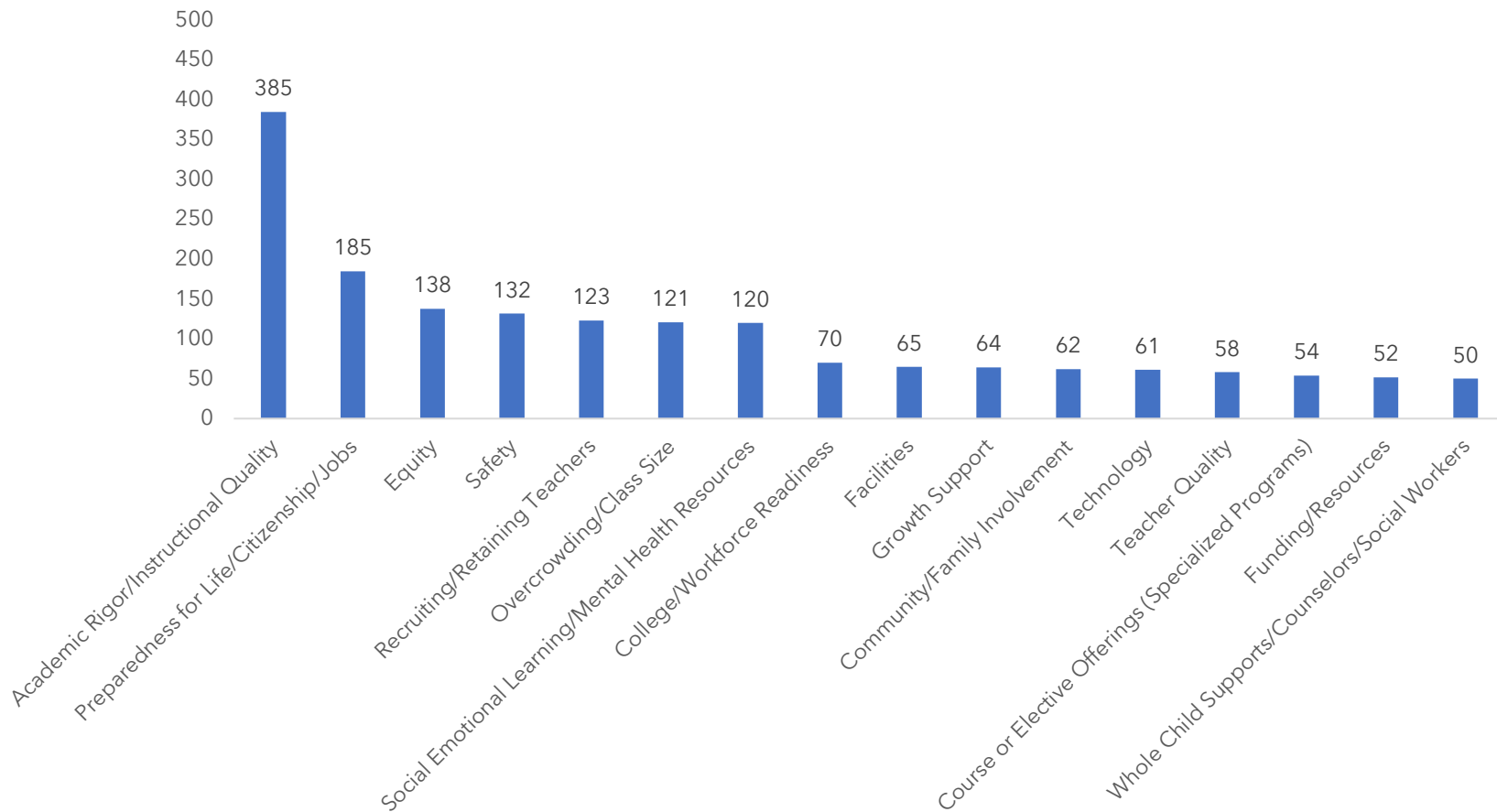




Figure 2.15 provides the highest frequency themes for students, staff and parent/community respondents who reside in zip codes in the southern region of Arlington County based on zip code.

Figure 2.15: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Staff and Parent/Community Southern Arlington County (Zip Codes)** (N=732)

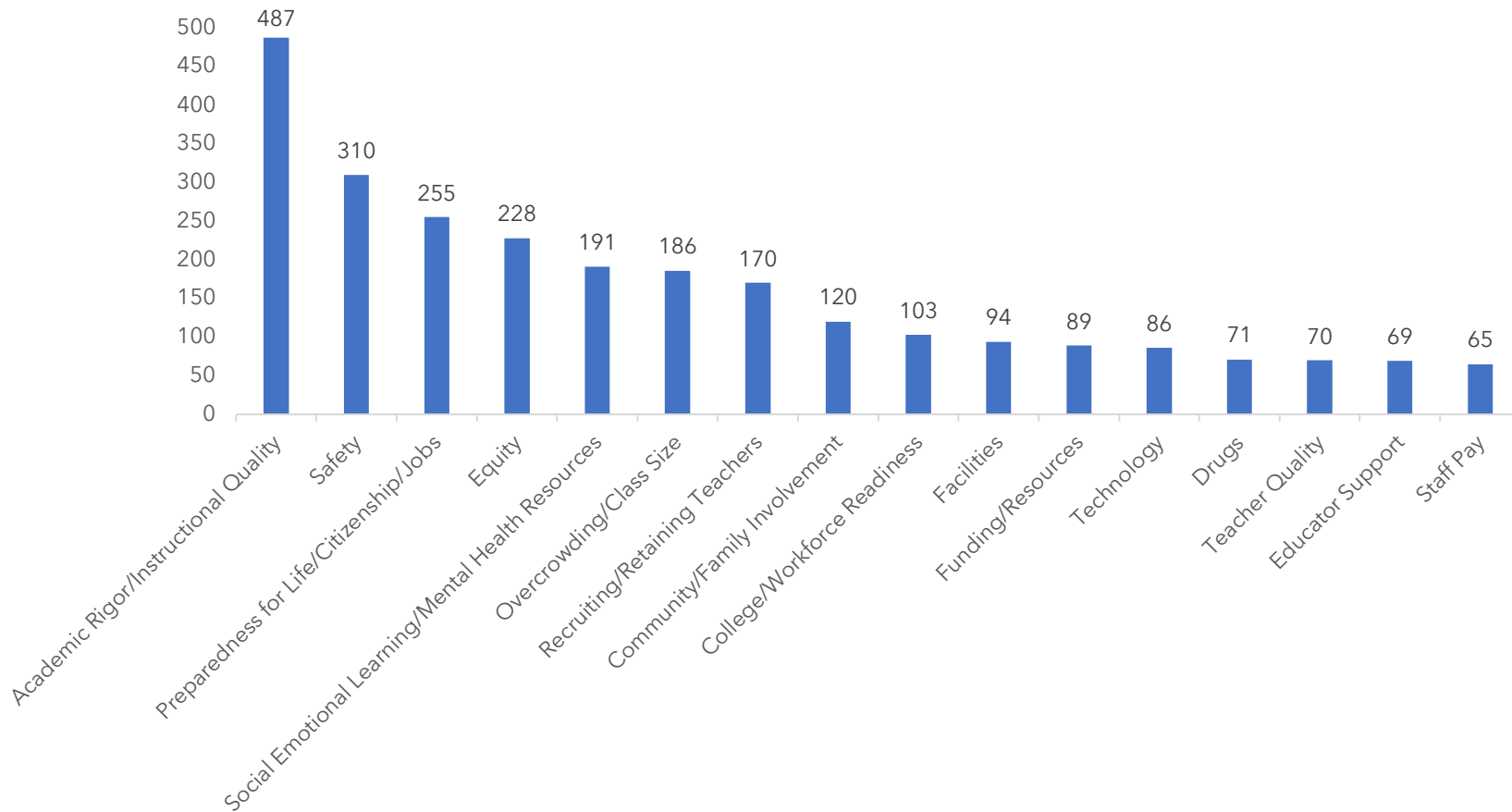




Figure 2.16 provides the highest frequency themes for **students** who have been identified as English language learners.

Figure 2.16: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Students: English Language Learners (N=123)**

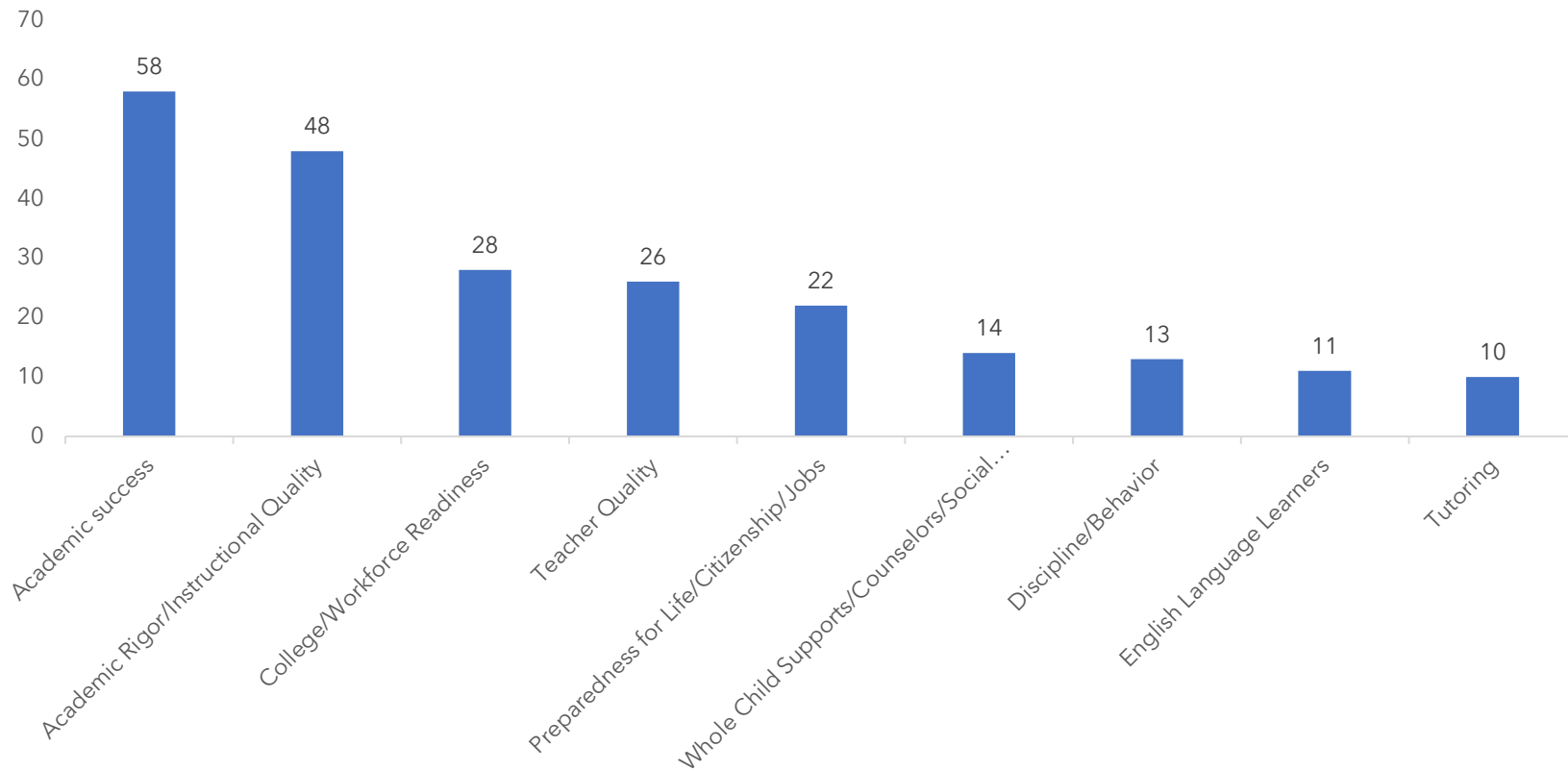




Figure 2.17 provides the highest frequency themes for **students** with disabilities.

Figure 2.17: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Students with Disabilities** (N=110)

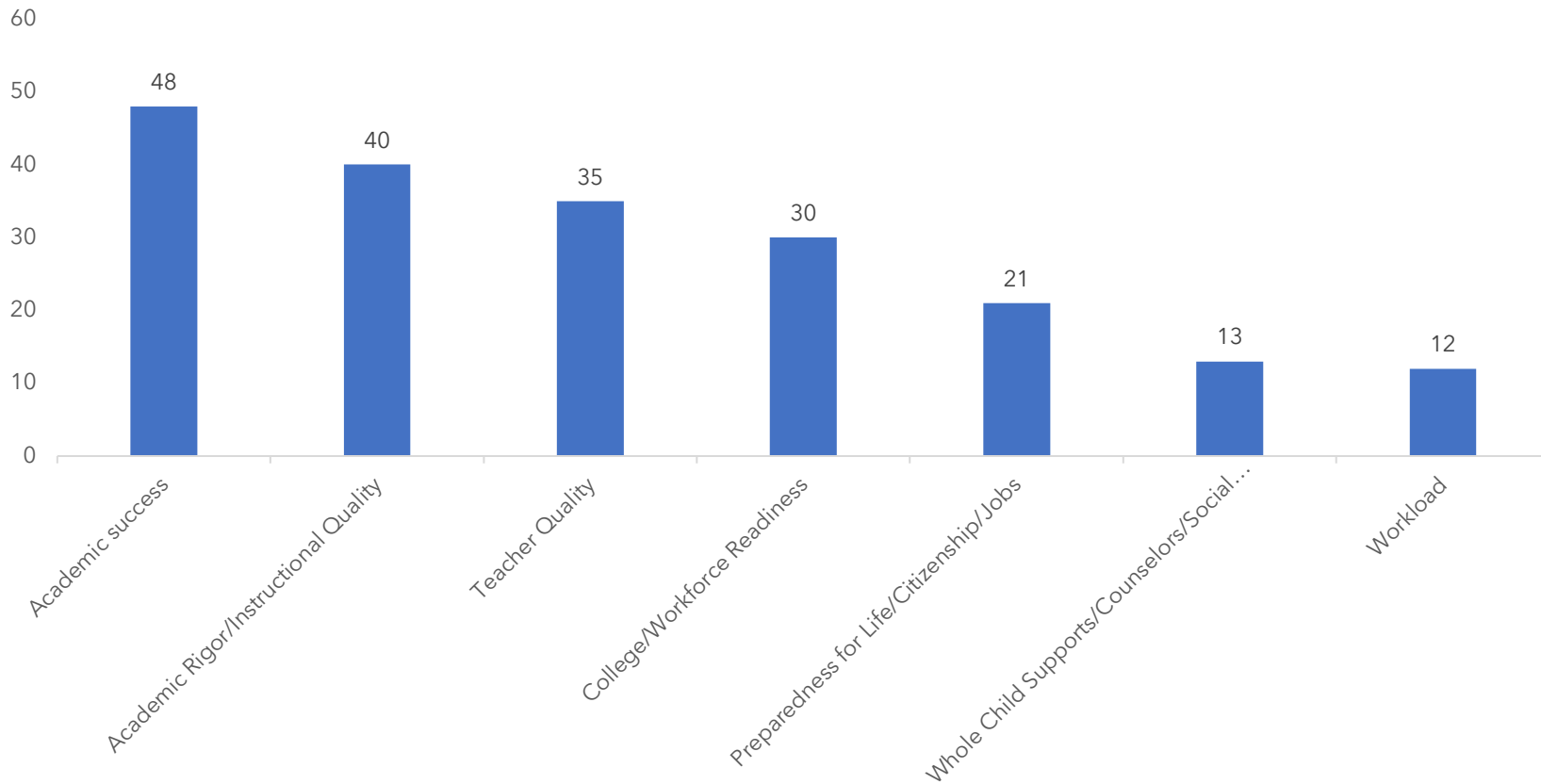
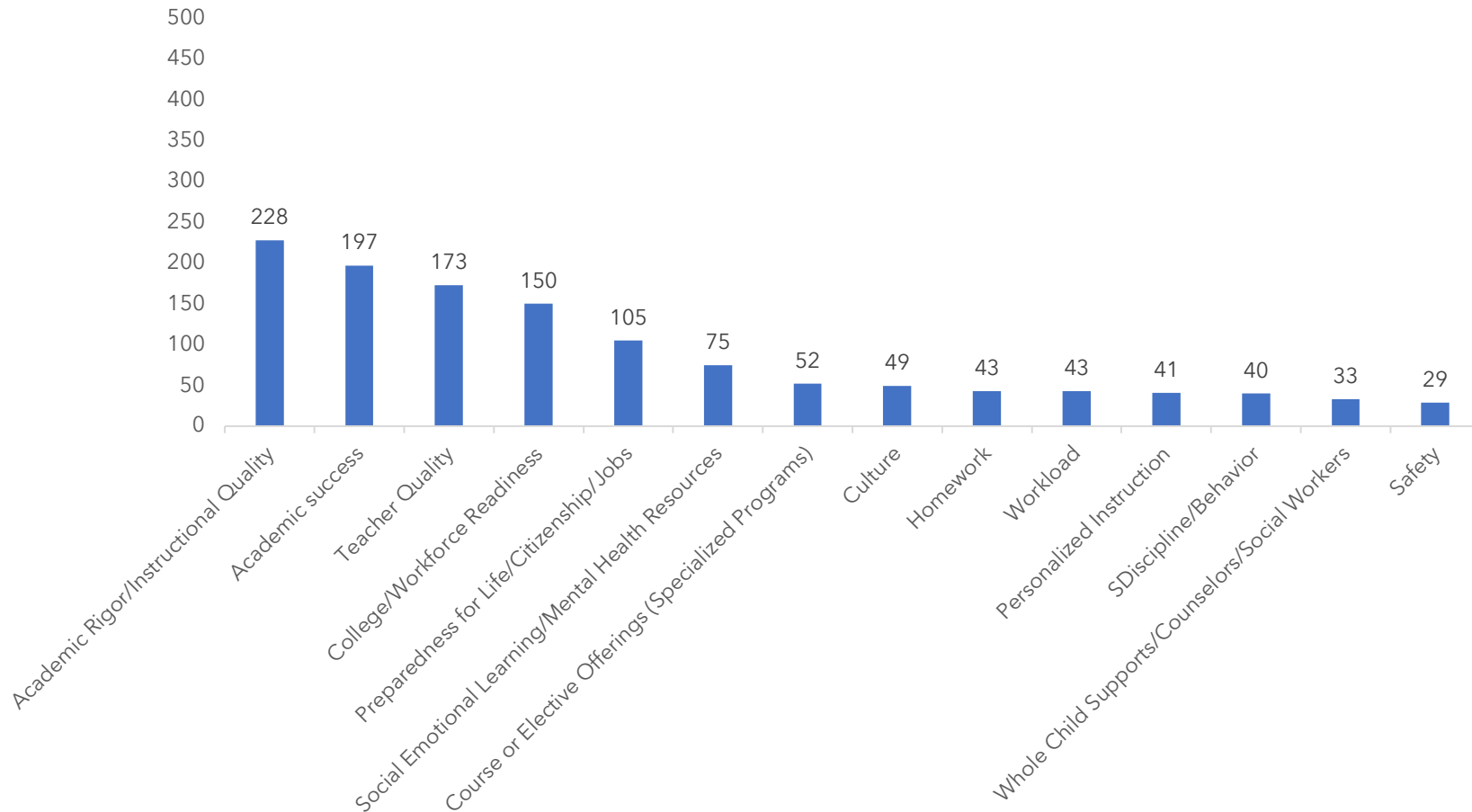




Figure 2.18 provides the highest frequency themes for **students** who have been identified as gifted.

Figure 2.18: Hopes and Aspirations: Highest Frequency Themes: **Gifted Students (N=502)**





Community Forums

There were three community forums. No participants attended the forum at Washington-Liberty High School. The Wakefield forum, conducted in Spanish as the primary language, was attended by approximately five community members (four participants speaking Spanish as the primary language and one speaking English as the primary language). There were a combined 17 participants at the Yorktown High School community forum (combined virtual and in-person). The information below summarizes the hopes of these participants for the system (APS) and for students. This is treated separately because it was one of the three engagement strategies. However, because of the small number of participants engaged, caution should be observed in making broad assumptions or conclusions. This data could be considered as it matches other themes identified in the questionnaire and/or focus group data.

Figure 3.1 Wakefield Forum Participants (Themes)

Aspirations for Arlington Public Schools	Aspirations for Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand Math and English/Language Arts course offerings • Communication (home to school) • Translate the plan to action - equitable access and outcomes • SEL focused on self-control and hope for the future • Teacher/Administrator representation that more closely matches student demographics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equitable outcomes: post-secondary success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Black ○ EL ○ Students with disabilities • Focus on learning (rather than rote and temporary memorization) • Students seen and heard (to be known and cared for)

Figure 3.2: Yorktown Community Forum Participant Aspirations (Themes)

Aspirations for Arlington Public Schools	Aspirations for Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus resources in schools • Rigorous instruction • Student Safety (i.e., drugs in schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equitable outcomes regardless of the geographic location in Arlington • Reduce exposure to devices • Teach students self-regulation skills



Focus Groups

Focus groups were asked eight similar questions which were modified based on the audience. The themes identified in those questions are organized by role in the table below. Staff will not be included until we have been able to speak to a greater number.

Figure 3.3: Focus Group Themes by Role and Question

Question	Students	Parents/Families	Community
What should we be working to accomplish for the students of Arlington Public Schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Preparation/Achievement Career Readiness/Life Skills Extracurricular Activities and Balance Diversity and Representation Community Engagement and Impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Success/Preparation for the Future Confidence and Balance Social and Emotional Development Diversity and Global Citizenship Communication, Technology, and Practical Life Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joy in Learning Real-World Experiences Equity and Inclusiveness Preparation for Success Emphasis on the Whole Child
What are the most important aspects of Arlington Public Schools students' school experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socialization/Relationships Academic Learning/Grades Community and Support from Teachers/Counselors Preparation for the Future Extracurricular Activities/Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Engagement and Challenge Sense of Belonging and Safety Communication and Follow-Through Social and Emotional Well-being Variety and Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety and Well-being Quality of Teaching and Teacher/Student Relationships Academics and Learning Opportunities Inclusivity and Diversity Community and Social Interactions
What are your aspirations for the students of Arlington Public Schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career and Education Goals Independence and Financial Stability (differences between N/S Arlington) Making a Positive Impact Personal Growth/Happiness Passion/Creativity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Success and Independence Happiness/Well-being Life Skills and Resilience Education and College Readiness Social Skills and Community Involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personalization: Maximizing the Individual Potential of Each Student Preparation for College and Career Well-Rounded Education Development of Life Skills and Citizenship Diverse and Inclusive Education



Figure 3.3: Focus Group Themes by Role and Question

Question	Students	Parents/Families	Community
How do you define success for the students of Arlington Public Schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Fulfillment/Happiness • Financial Stability/Independence • Achieving Goals and Accomplishments • Positive Impact/Contribution to Society • Pursuing Passions/Interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happiness and Well-being • Independence and Responsibility • Academic Achievement and Engagement • Empathy and Social Awareness • Lifelong Learning and Curiosity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong Learning Outcomes • Preparation for the Future • Personal Growth and Resilience • Well-Rounded Education • Community Engagement and Equity
What is Arlington Public Schools doing well to support student learning and success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive Teachers/Personal Relationships • Effective Communication/ Collaboration • Recognition and Extracurricular Activities • Resources and Support Systems • Flexibility and Student Voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Teachers • Diverse Program Offerings • Community Engagement • Counselors and Special Services (esp students with IEP/English learners) • Inclusivity and Equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on Flexible Planning and Adaptability • Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives • Wide Variety of Educational Experiences • High-Quality Teachers and Staff • Student-Centered Approaches
What are the biggest barriers to student success in Arlington Public Schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling and Course Credits (transfer students) • Lack of Individualized Counseling • Quality of Teaching and Learning Experience • Limited Electives and Language Options • School Start Times (Time Management) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class sizes • Teacher Support and Compensation • Communication and Transparency • Curriculum and Instructional Methods • Equity and Inclusivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity and Diversity • Teacher Support and Quality • Communication and Transparency • Student Mental Health and Well-being • Class Sizes/Overcrowding
In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Exposure to Career Pathways (early as MS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Recruitment and Retention • Equity and Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing and Teacher Shortages



Figure 3.3: Focus Group Themes by Role and Question

Question	Students	Parents/Families	Community
facing the school system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional Guidance and Support • Balancing School/Life Expectations • Flexible Scheduling/Breaks • Engaging Teaching Methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth and Infrastructure • Academic Level and Expectations • Bias, Special Education and Low Expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health and Student Well-being • Funding and Resource Allocation • Communication and Trust • Curriculum Relevance and Educational Innovation
What should Arlington Public Schools be working on to be successful as a school system in the eyes of the community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalized Support and Communication • Flexibility and Breaks • Engaging Teaching Methods • Less Testing and More Collaboration • Understanding Student Needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity and Budget Support • Preparing Students for the Future • Inclusive Decision-Making • Diverse Requirements and Expectations (Create a School System rather than a System of Schools) • Transparency and Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Communication and Transparency • Equity and Inclusion • Mental Health and Student Well-being • Innovation and Future-Readiness • Resource Allocation and Budgeting
		<p>Follow Up Question (engage all families more effectively)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spaces and Opportunities for Collaboration • Financial Support for Staff and Resources • Inclusivity and Equity of Voice • Improved Communication and Parent Education • Support for Diverse Communities 	