

# Consequences of the Addition of the SAT Writing Section

A Survey of Writing Changes in the Nation's  
K-12 Educational System

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# Diminishing Writing Skills

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- Writing is a core skill needed for success in both education and the workplace.
- Only 2% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 1% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders scored at the “Advanced” level, and 33% and 24%, respectively scored at the “Proficient” level in the latest NAEP Writing Assessment (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2007)
- 14% of entering college freshmen enroll in remedial writing courses (NCES, 2003).

# The SAT Writing Section Introduced to:

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- **Strengthen writing in our nation's schools and colleges**
- **Reinforce the importance of writing skills throughout a student's education**
- **Enhance all students' chances of academic success**
- **Help administrators to determine students' readiness to successfully meet postsecondary writing demands.**

# Purpose of the Study

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- To learn about changes in writing instruction across the nation's K-12 education system in the 3 years after the announcement of the SAT writing section.
- To describe the near-term impact of the SAT writing section on K-12 education.

# Consequential Validity

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Pertains to the social consequences of using a particular test for a particular purpose.

It is important to gather evidence of positive consequences of using a test as well as evidence that any adverse consequences are minimal (Messick, 1989; Brualdi, 1999).

# The Target Sample

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- Two populations of K-12 educators – English Language Arts teachers and District Administrators
- Represents all 6 College Board regions and includes all 50 states plus District of Columbia.
- Stratified on school/district metropolitan area and size.
- Over-sampling in states with high SAT volumes.
- 56,384 teachers and 10,918 administrators were surveyed.

# Survey Components

Up to 44 items: administrators

Up to 47 items: teachers

## Four Sections, Focusing on Changes in:

1. Priorities, attitudes, expectations, and awareness related to writing
2. How writing is taught, (e.g., number of writing courses, frequency of essay tests and assignments; teaching methods and rigor)
3. Learning related to writing (e.g., student performance, writing programs, standards).
4. Resources (e.g., professional development, time to grade writing assignments, and other resources).

**“SAT writing section impact” question at end of each section**

# Response Rates

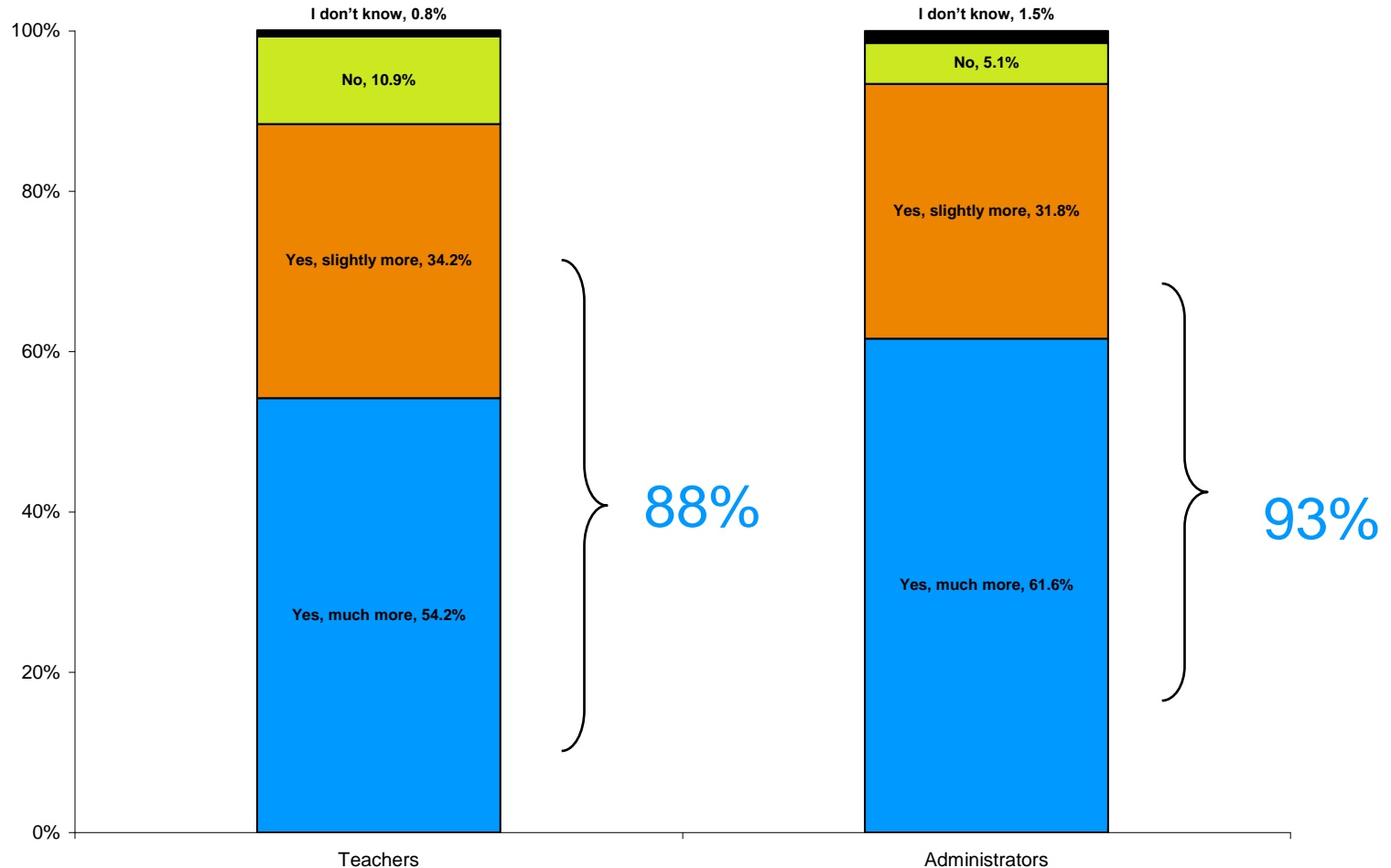
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- **Teachers** – 9% (N=4,922) completed survey and 10% (N=5,716) answered at least one question.
- **Administrators** – 8% (N=826) completed survey and 9% (N=949) answered at least one question.
- The schools/districts represented in the sample were similar to the nation in terms of metropolitan area, diversity, and size.



# Survey Results – Attitudes/Priorities

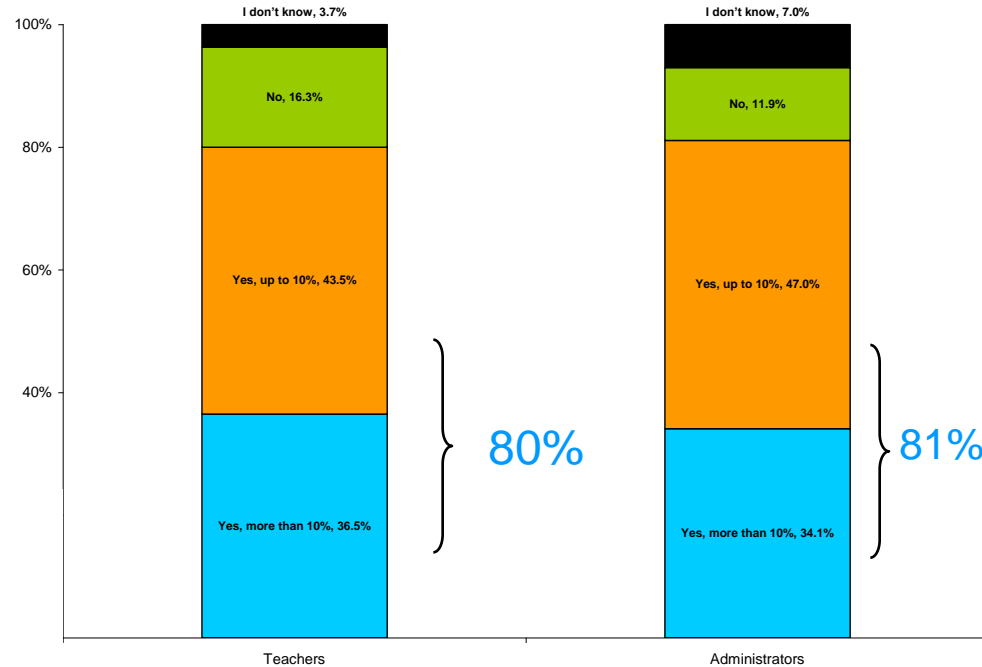
“Has writing become more of a priority in your school/district?”



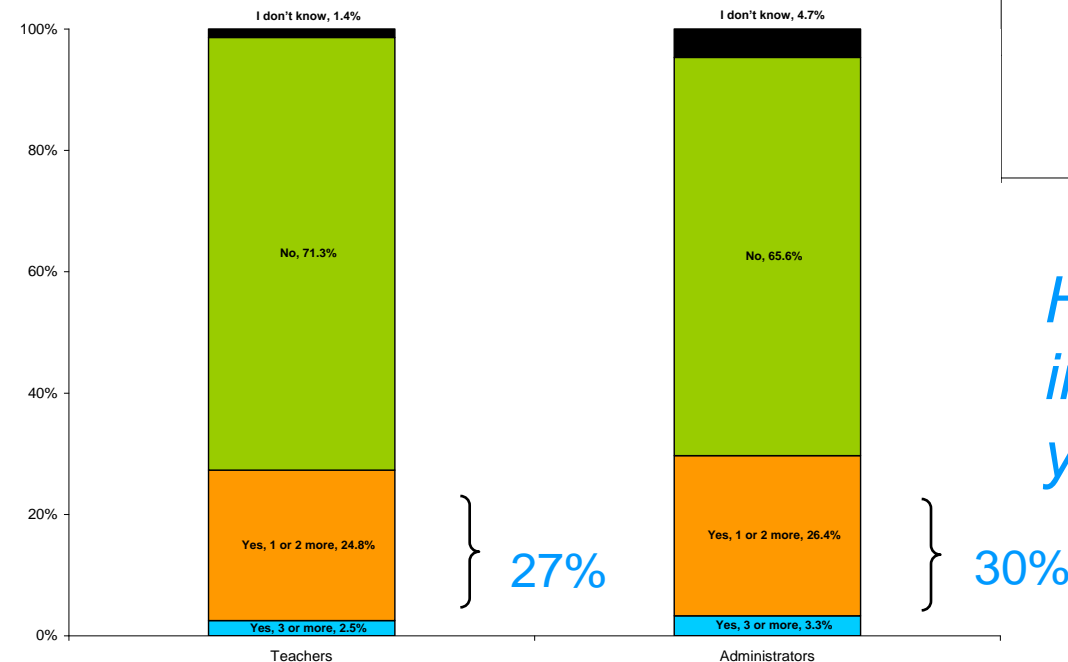
SAT Impact: *Two-thirds of the teachers and 58% of administrators: SAT Writing was a major or minor factor in this change.*

# Survey Results – Teaching of Writing

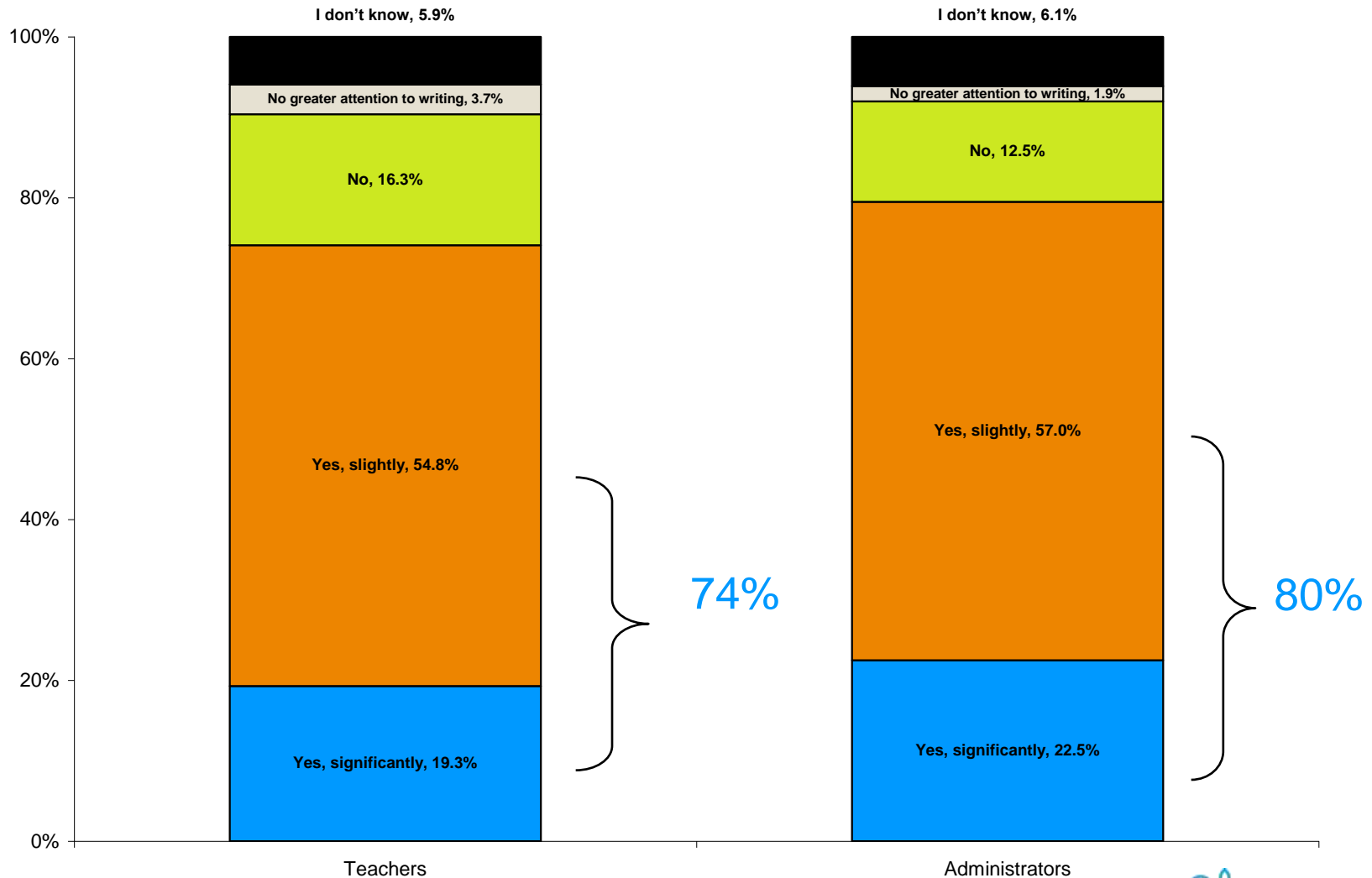
*Has more class time been spent on writing projects, writing assignments, writing analysis, and/or related writing activities in English/ Language Arts courses?*



*Has there been an increase in writing courses throughout your school/district?*



# Has overall curriculum rigor (e.g., in-depth focus within or across certain course topics, a greater emphasis on critical thinking) been increased by greater attention to writing?"



# SAT Writing Impact on the Teaching of Writing

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Roughly 3/5 of both groups reported that the SAT Writing section had been either a major or a minor factor in changing the teaching of writing.

# Survey Results – Learning Related to Writing

59% of Administrators reported that there had been expanded and/or new writing proficiency requirements. These administrators were then asked to specify these requirements (check all that apply).

<i>Writing Requirement</i>	<i>Percentage of Administrators</i>
Part of graduation requirements	39
Part of end-of-year middle school and/or high school performance requirements	48
Incorporated into expectations for college readiness	34
Greater focus on assessment and analysis of writing proficiency	63
Other	11

## Survey Results – Learning Related to Writing, cont.

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- Special or remedial programs for ESL students or those not writing at expected levels have been expanded and/or implemented (39% teachers, 44% administrators).
- Slightly more than half of both groups (53%) indicated that the SAT Writing section had been a major or minor factor in changes in learning related to writing.

# Survey Results – Resources Allocated to Writing

33% of teachers and 55% of administrators reported that more resources had been allocated to writing.

<i>Resources</i>	<i>Percentage of Teachers</i>	<i>Percentage of Administrators</i>
Additional staff members	24	28
Technical resources	61	65
Commercial programs, materials, assessments	47	54
Other	25	27

## Survey Results – Resources Allocated to Writing, cont.

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- 81% of administrators, but only 64% of teachers reported much more or slightly more professional development of teachers with regard to writing.
- Only 13% of administrators and 7% of teachers indicated that more time had been set aside to evaluate students' writing.
- A somewhat larger proportion of administrators (40%) than teachers (one-third) reported that the SAT writing section was a factor in increasing writing resources.

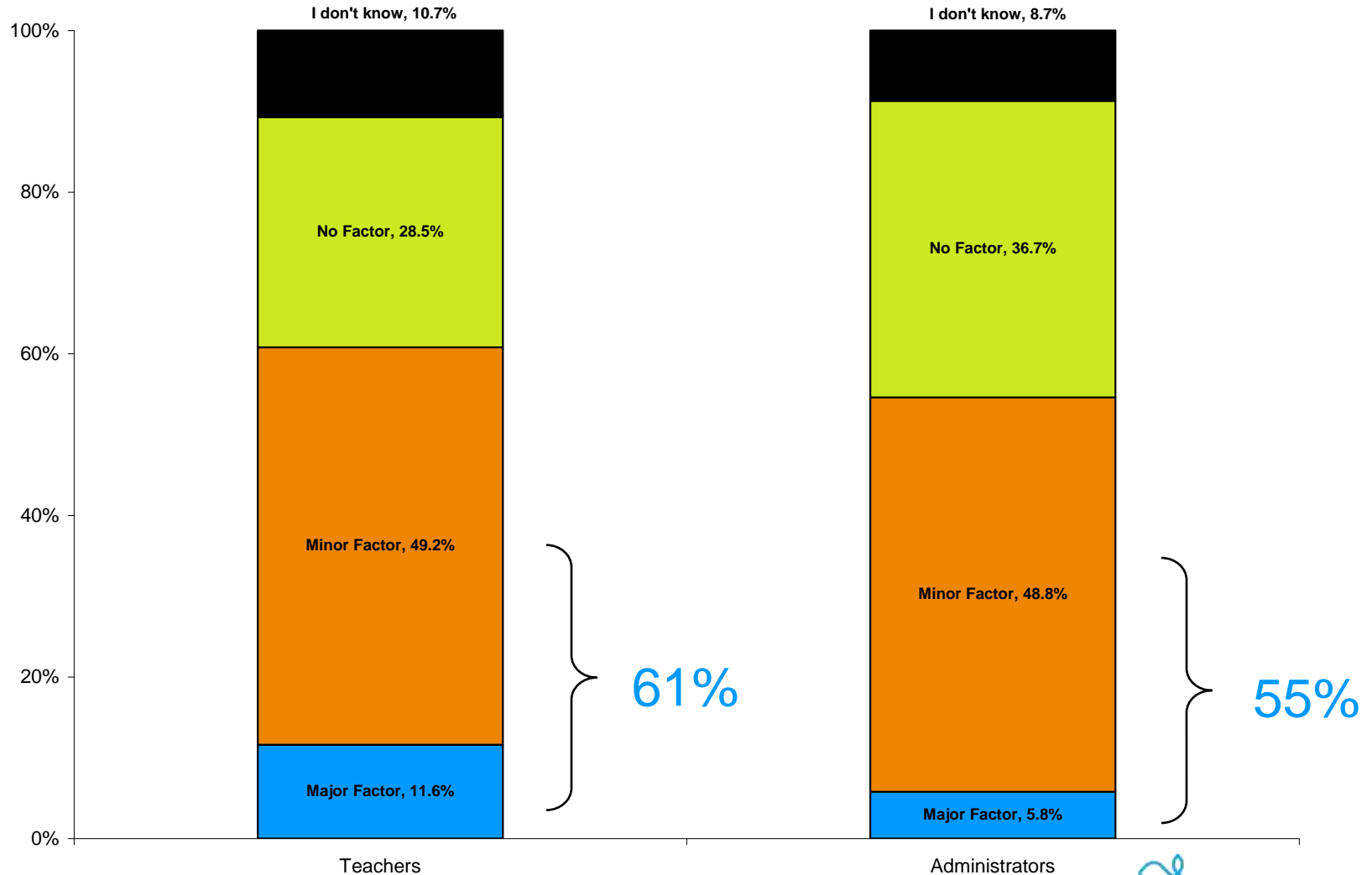


# The Importance Placed on Writing Three Years Ago and Today\*

<i>Importance of Writing</i>	<i>Percentage of Teachers</i>		<i>Percentage of Administrators</i>	
	3 years ago	Today	3 years ago	Today
No importance	0	0	0	0
Little importance	3	1	2	0
Neither stressed nor ignored	15	6	14	3
Important	19	11	24	9
Fairly important	26	20	27	17
Very important	27	41	25	50
One of most prominent parts of curriculum	10	21	8	21

\* Note. The survey was administered in fall 2006, therefore the responses for “3 years ago” refer to the year 2003, and the responses for “today” refer to fall 2006.

# Overall SAT Impact - “Has the SAT writing section been a factor in the increased importance that your school/district has placed on writing?”



# Conclusions

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- In the 3 years after the first announcement of the SAT writing section, the teachers and district administrators surveyed reported major changes with regard to writing.
- The SAT writing section had a role in supporting these changes.
- There was general consistency between teachers and administrators in their responses, and there were very few notable differences between high-minority and low-minority schools and districts.

# Limitations

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- Teacher sample did not include those without email addresses.
- In some cases, more than one teacher from the same high school responded to the survey and did not give the same answers.
- Retrospective approach (respondents were asked to recall changes from 3 years ago).

# Thank You!

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Jennifer Kobrin at: [jkobrin@collegeboard.org](mailto:jkobrin@collegeboard.org)

# Coding of Open-Ended Comments

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- Focus is on the state writing test (35% administrators, 19% teachers).
- Emphasis is on SAT (and/or ACT) preparation (26% teachers, 25% administrators).
- The emphasis on writing is not new; current initiatives only emphasize what our importance for student writing has been for years (21% teachers, 23% administrators).
- The district supports writing initiatives (21% administrators, only 4% teachers).
- Emphasis is on cross-curricular approaches to writing (17% administrators, 14% teachers).
- The school or district has an intensive writing focus (16% teachers, 14% administrators).
- Teachers need more time to do their job effectively, to assign and grade writing assignments (15% teachers, only 5% administrators).
- Staff attends workshops and/or conferences to continue professional development (13% administrators, only 6% teachers).