

INTRODUCTION

The creation of a supportive environment, whether within social-emotional learning (SEL) programs or within more informal contexts, increases social support. Social support, in turn, has been found to decrease adverse stress-related health outcomes (Conner, Miles, & Pope, 2014) and increase engagement (Wang & Eccles, 2012), as seen in Fig. 1.

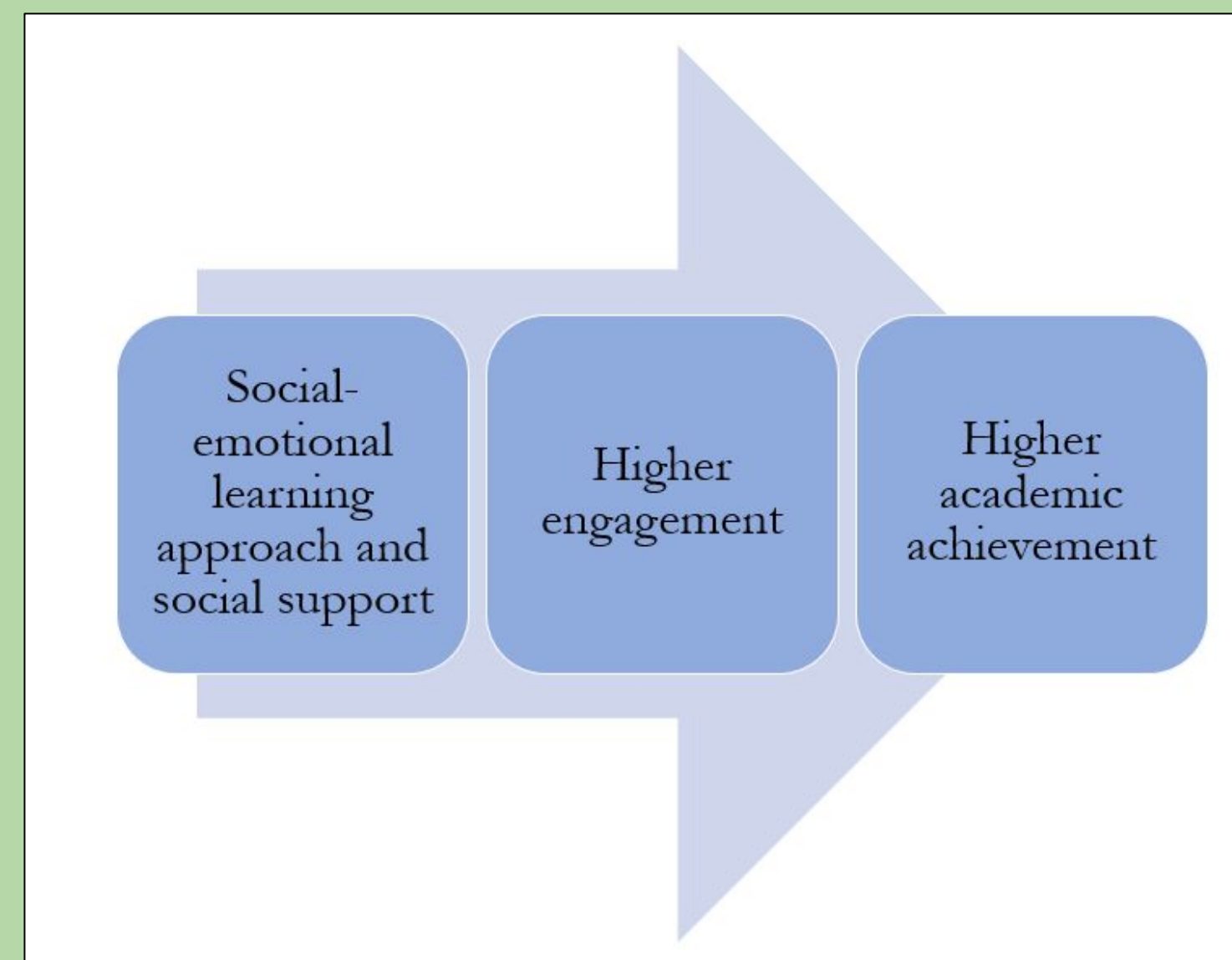


Figure 1

While there is existing research on connectedness and perceived social support (sense of feeling cared about) as it pertains to SEL, as well as data on peer support and teacher support, there isn't any research on the ambassadors in particular. This is significant because the unique role that ambassadors fulfill has a great impact on the SELF experience.

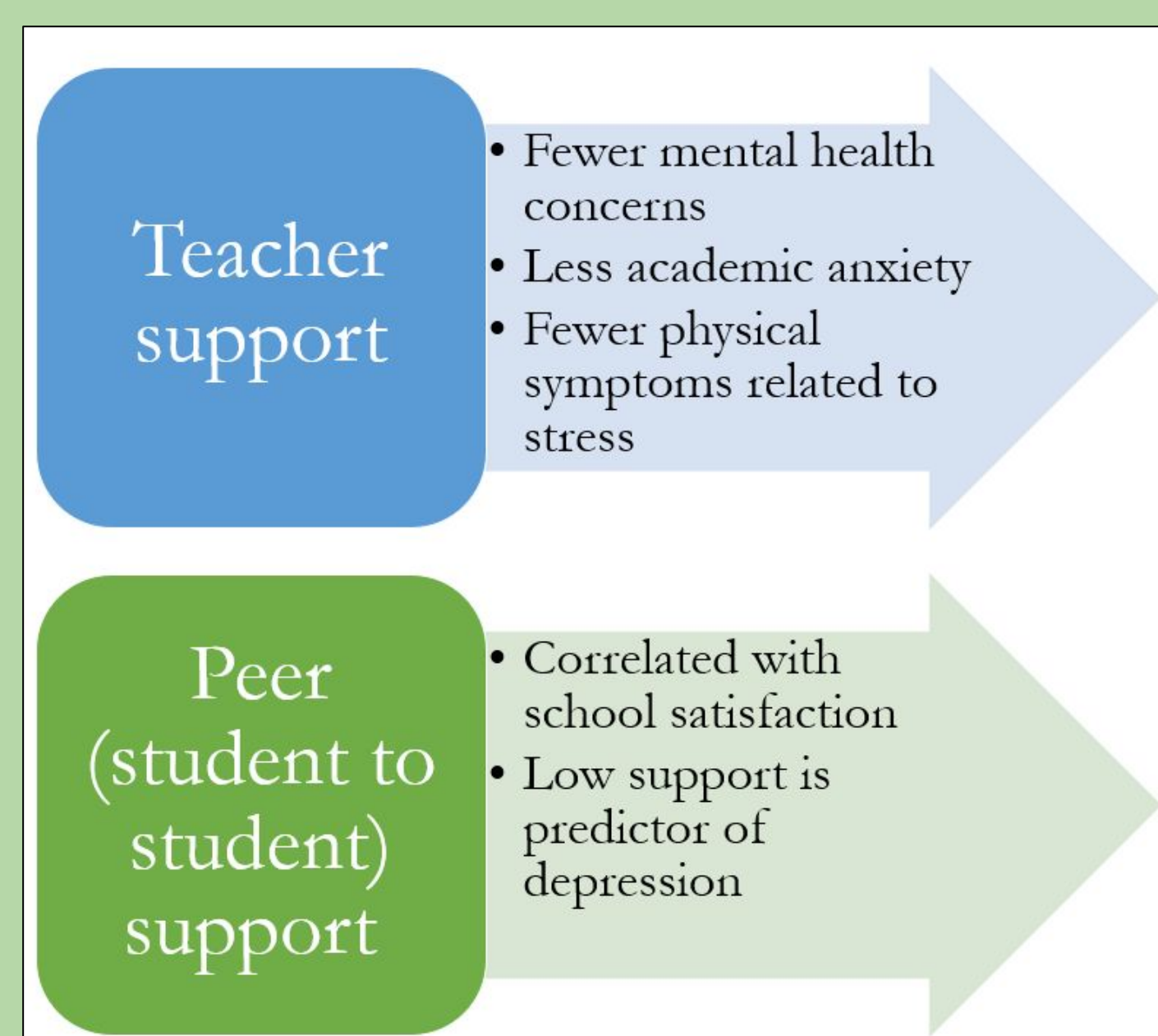


Figure 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

In this study, self-reported social support was assessed by administering a survey through Google Forms. The target population for this survey was the SELF ambassadors, who are juniors and seniors at Gunn. The survey aimed to assess the ambassadors' perceived amount of social support in regard to both the cohorts and the SELF mentors. The survey contained six open-ended and seven agree/disagree questions in order to get a more complete picture of perceived social support as well as what factors are believed by participants to impact it.

DATA AND FINDINGS

PEER SUPPORT

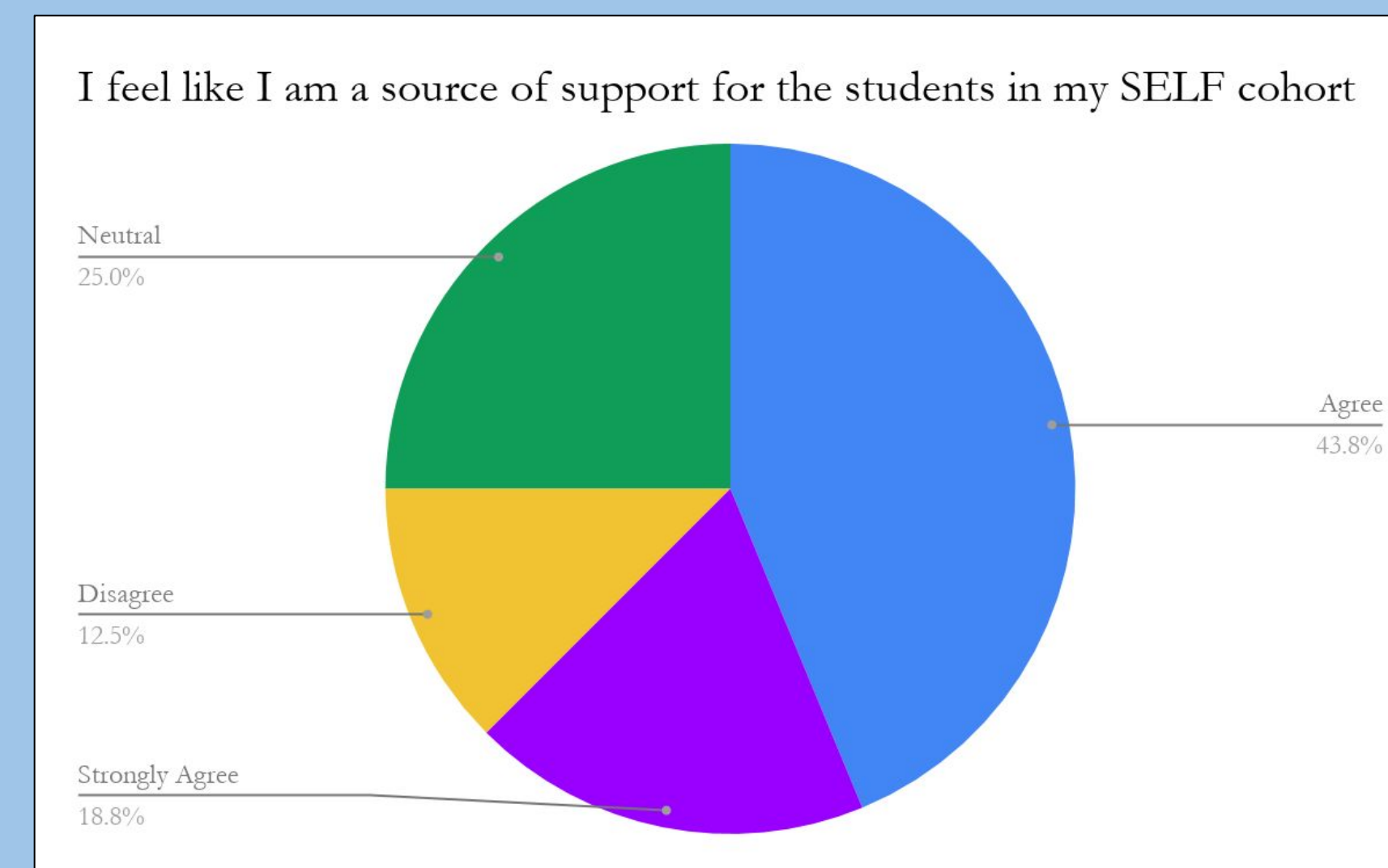


Figure 3

Factors Increasing Social Support

- spending time with cohort outside SELF
- helping cohort with activities and providing advice
- finding common ground

Factors Decreasing Social Support

- not knowing cohort very well
- not seeing cohort regularly

AMBASSADOR-MENTOR SUPPORT

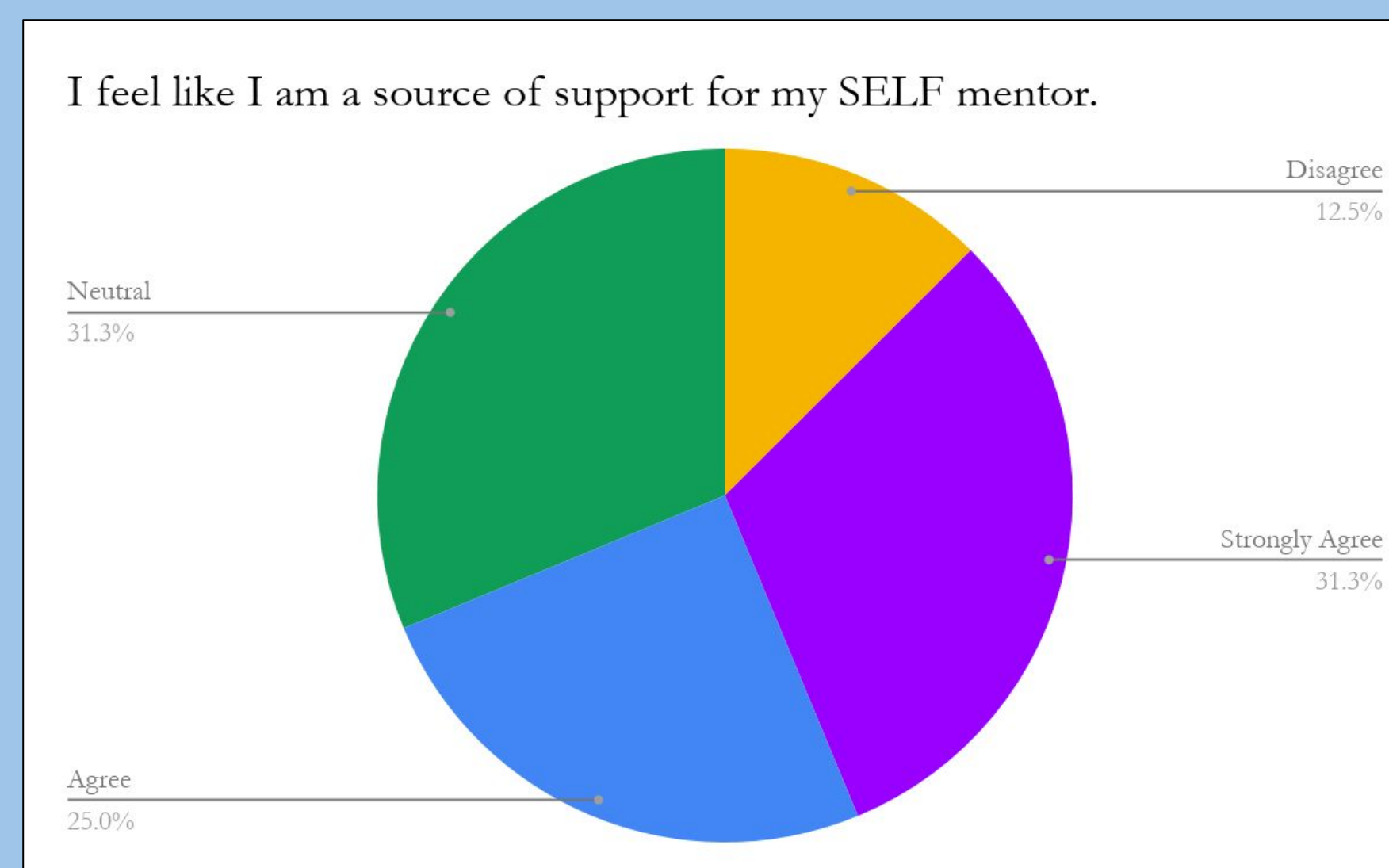


Figure 4

Factors Increasing Social Support

- talking with mentor inside and outside class

Factors Decreasing Social Support

- not knowing mentor well
- not having time with them

MENTOR-AMBASSADOR SUPPORT

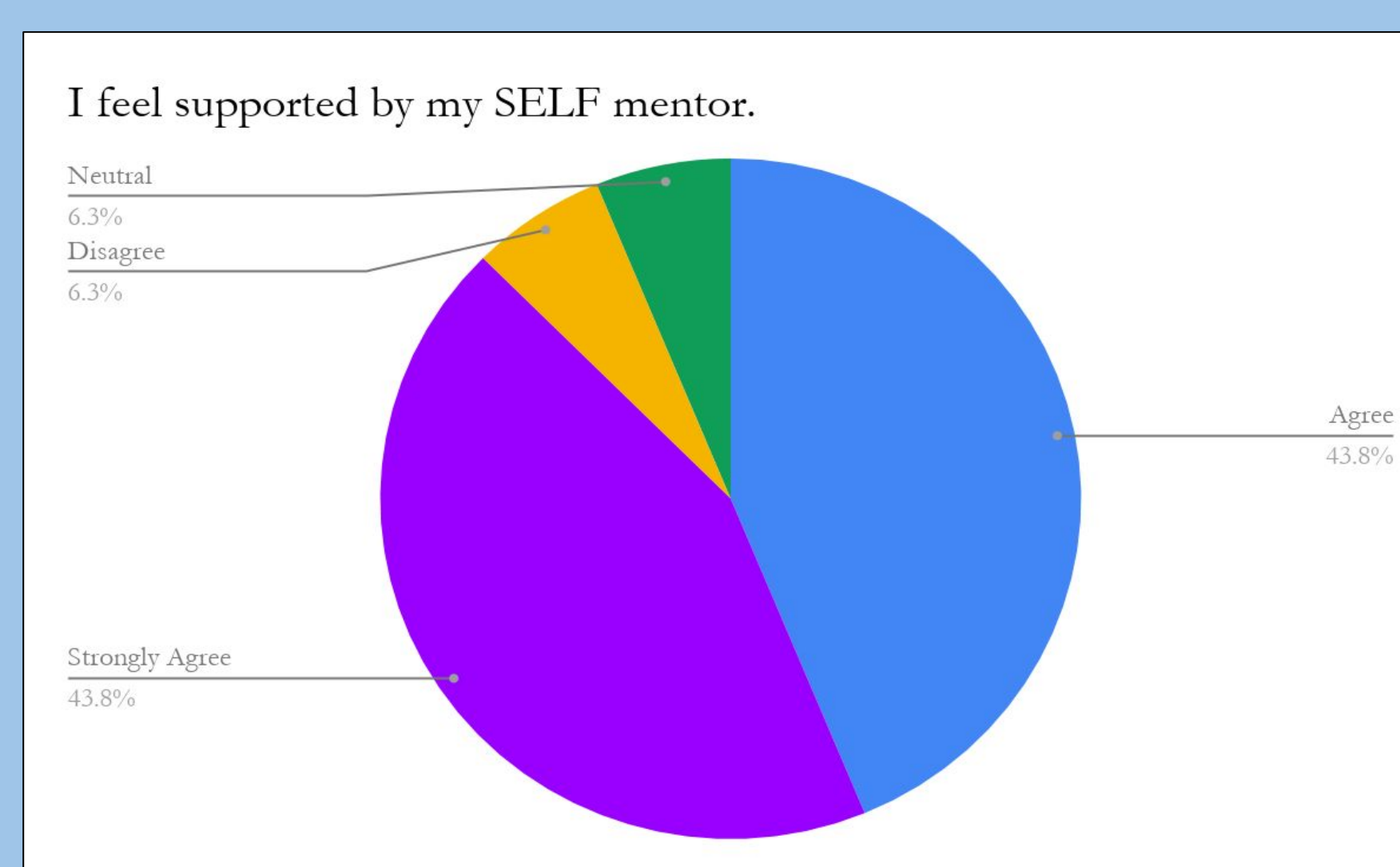


Figure 5

Factors Increasing Social Support

- helping mentor with lessons

Factors Decreasing Social Support:

- feeling as if mentor doesn't need support

DISCUSSION

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that there is a link between SELF and social support in different contexts and further reinforce the value of the SELF ambassadors. However, this study isn't necessarily about correlations; it is about the current state of social support. 63% of ambassadors feel like a source of support for cohort, while 88% feel like their mentor supports them, and 56% feel like a source of support for their mentor. It was difficult to find research on situations in which students feel like a source of support for their teachers, and this is something to explore further. Generally speaking, however, the results provide a picture of the relative strength of social support in various relationships within the SELF program.

IMPLICATIONS

This study will be a valuable source of feedback for the SELF program, and it reinforces the connection between SELF and social support. Building off of the existing literature, this connection to social support also links SELF to positive outcomes.

NEXT STEPS

Only 16 people participated in the survey, which is not a large enough sample to draw conclusions, though it suggests courses of further study. A future study would likely include a larger number of respondents. In addition, no questions were included that would support correlational analysis. This would be a clear direction for a future line of investigation. Future studies could explore combining the existing CASSS (Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale) with additional questions to ensure that the data is more accurate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REFERENCES

Special thanks to my mentors, Ms. Poggio and Ms. Moore-Guerra; my teacher, Mrs. Merchant; and the SELF TOSAs, Ms. Carlomagno and Ms. Firenzi, for making this project possible.

***Works Cited:

- Conner, J. O., Miles, S. B., & Pope, D. C. (2014). How Many Teachers Does It Take to Support a Student? Examining the Relationship between Teacher Support and Adverse Health Outcomes in High-Performing, Pressure-Cooker High Schools. *High School Journal*, 98(1), 22.
- Wang, M., & Eccles, J.S. (2012). Social Support Matters: Longitudinal Effects of Social Support on Three Dimensions of School Engagement From Middle to High School. *Child Development*, (3), 877.
- <https://doi-org.ez2.pausd.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01745.x>