

Introduction

- The Kennedy Day School (KDS) is a special education school for children with complex needs and challenges in Brighton, Massachusetts.
- Children with special needs are at higher risk for dental caries compared with those without complex medical conditions. ¹
- Barriers to dental care for patients with special health needs include limited access to dentists trained to treat patients with special needs, atypical patient presentation and behavioral issues, physical barriers and lack of transportation, financial barriers, and more. ^{2,3}
- Dental anxiety can be especially prevalent in children with special needs due to sensory impairment, communication challenges, and previous negative experiences. ³
- Sensory-adapted dental environments (e.g., ambient lighting, soothing background music, weighted blanket) produces relaxation and reduces anxiety in the dental clinic, specifically for those with developmental disabilities. ⁴
- This study included a survey given to parents of KDS students to obtain caregiver input in developing a dental clinic that is suited for KDS students.

Methods

Study population:

- A 31-question survey was distributed via e-mail to 65 parents/legal guardians for students ages 6 to 22 currently enrolled at KDS from July to November of 2023.

Data collection and analysis:

- An anonymous survey consisting of a total of 31 questions included: 4 caregiver information questions, 6 student demographic questions, 4 student medical history questions, 10 student dental history questions, and 7 questions regarding the potential features of the on-campus clinic.
- Data was collected on REDCap and was imported into Excel.



Please scan for survey

References



Please scan for references

Results

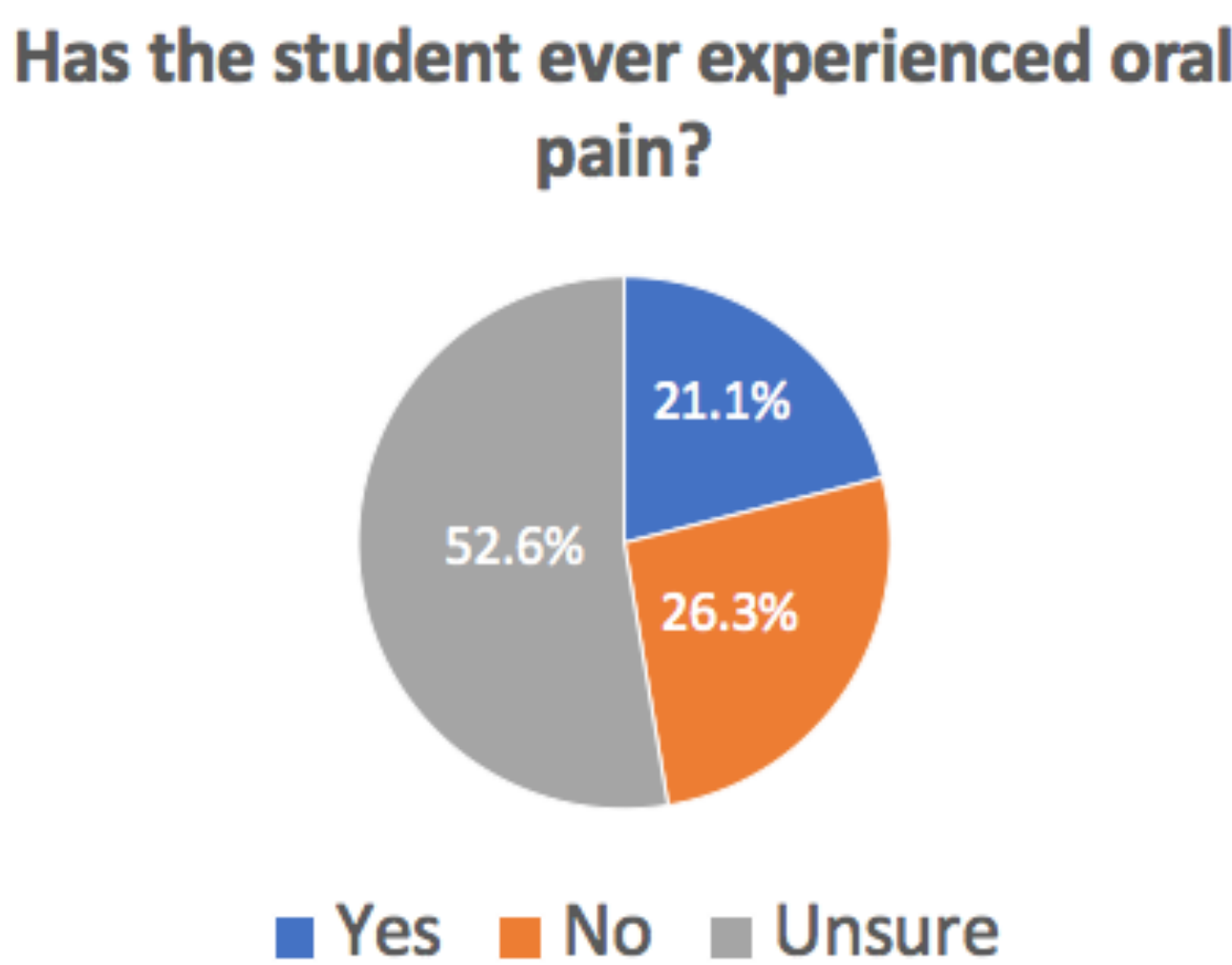
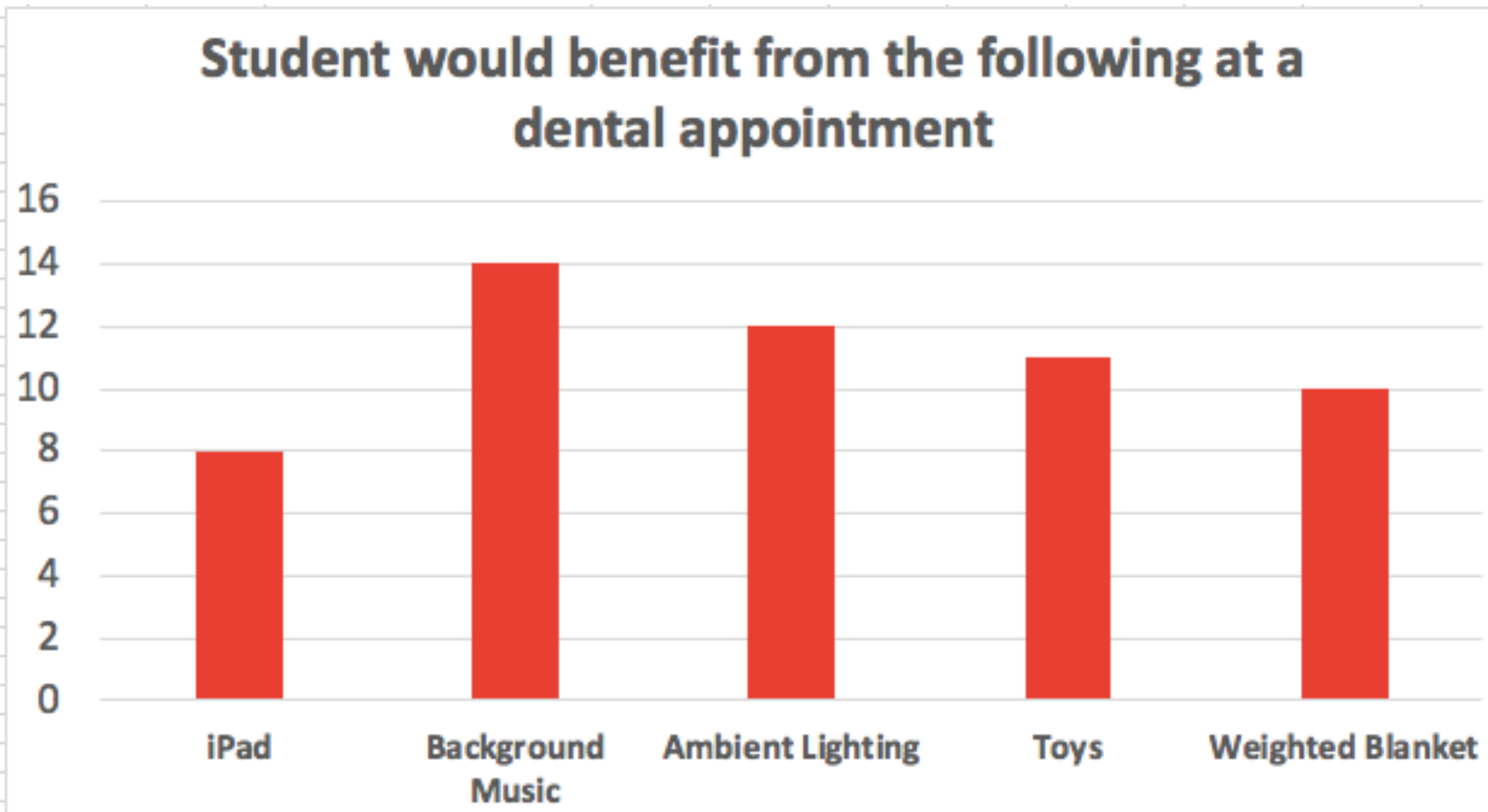
- Of the 65 surveys distributed, 19 were returned for a 29% response rate.

Table 1. Demographics

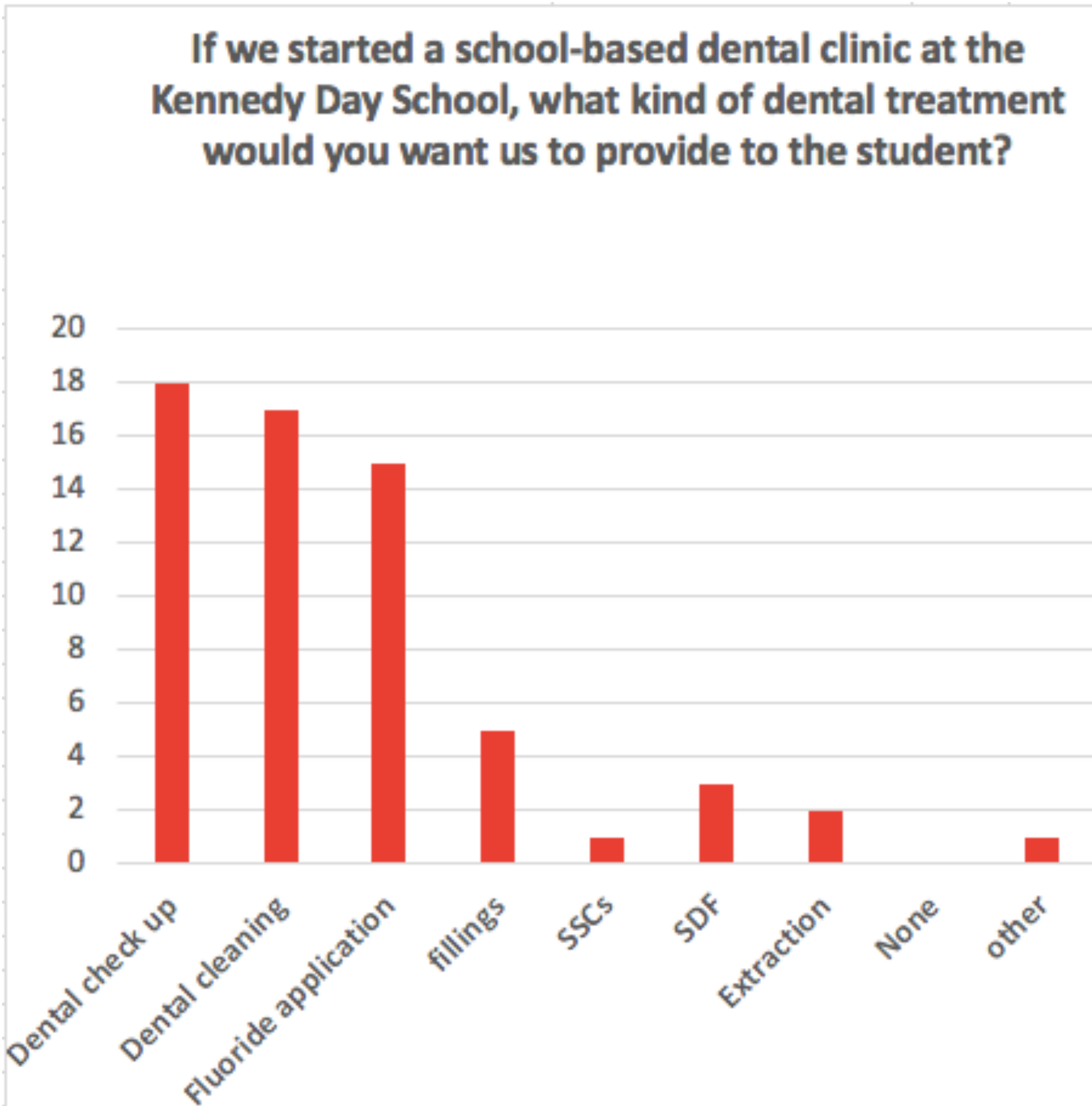
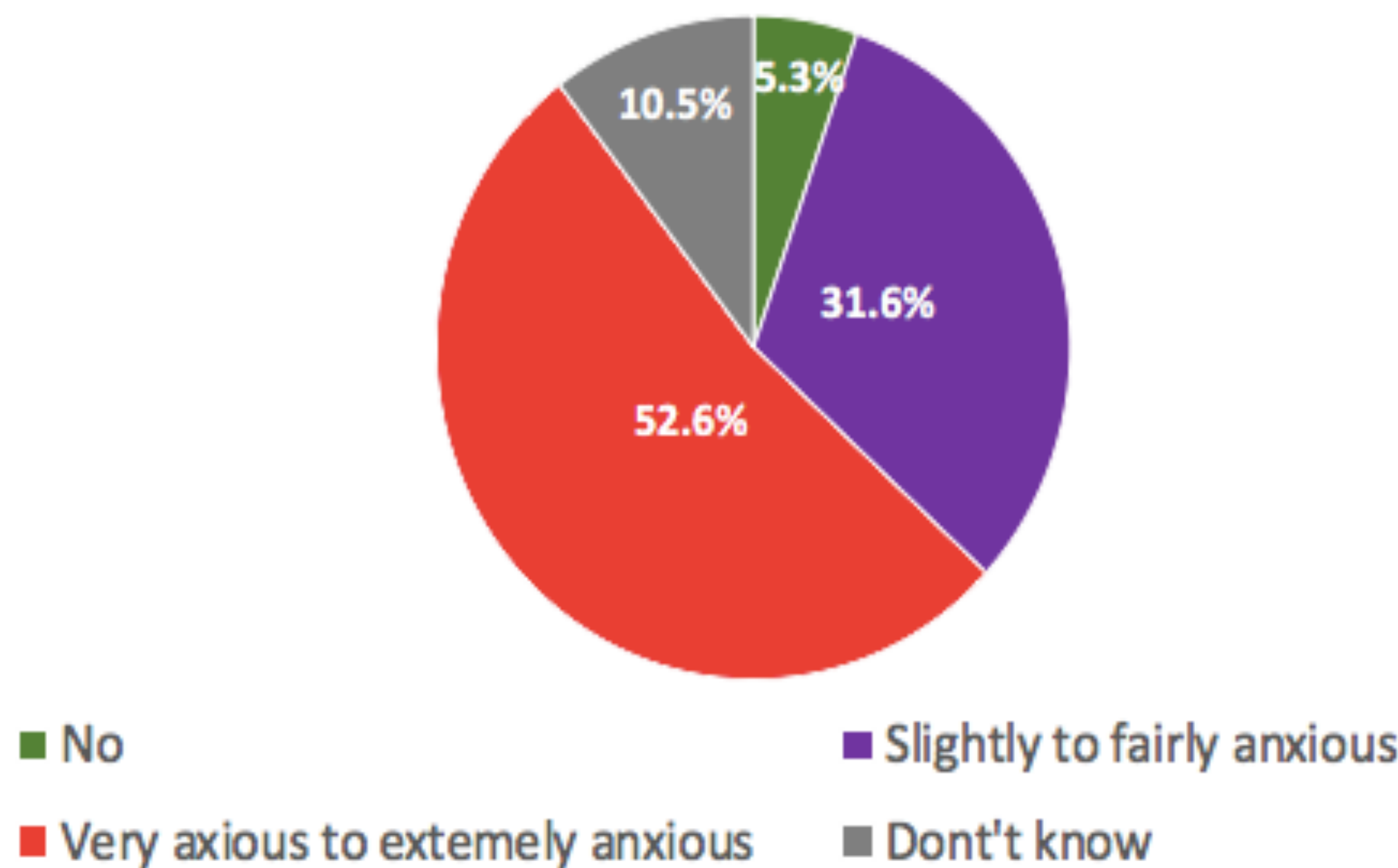
%(n=19)	Survey Responses
52.6%	Female students
89.5%	Non-Hispanic students
68.4%	Student has MassHealth insurance
52.6%	Student has private insurance
Average student's age: 14.4 years (range: 6; 22)	
Average years of enrollment in KDS: 2.98 years (range: <1; 9)	

Table 2. Medical and Dental History

%(n=19)	Survey Responses
73.7%	Student takes more than 5 medications
31.6%	Student is verbal
47.4%	Student uses a laptop/tablet to communicate
68.4%	Student is G-Tube fed
63.2%	Student uses a wheelchair
26.3%	Student has not had a preventive dental visit in the last twelve months
47.4%	Student has received dental treatment under general anesthesia
10.5%	Student has received dental treatment under oral sedation
78.9%	Student gets oral hygiene performed by an adult
42.1%	Student uses electric toothbrush



Does the student get anxious when he/she goes to the dentist?



Conclusions

- Students at KDS have a wide range of medical, dental, and behavioral needs, and caregiver input provides valuable insight into features for the future KDS dental clinic.
- Having a special needs school-based dental clinic with such features, can aid in desensitization and provide easy access to gradual and repeated exposures to prepare the student for future dental encounters.