



Parents' Perspective on Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE) Scheme



NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

NPC Vision

The National Parents Council want to see an Ireland where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential

NPC Mission

The National Parents Council exists to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children’s education. NPC will work to increase the capacity and capability of the education sector, to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all children and young people.

Values

NPC knows that when parents and schools work together, children do better. Therefore, NPC believes that in order to achieve this parents must feel:

Engaged: Parents must be actively engaged in the education of their children.

Supported: Parents’ involvement in children’s education must be supported by the attitudes, beliefs and practices of all members of the school and broader education community.

Partners: Parents must be viewed as partners in facilitating children’s learning and be supported in this role by the school and broader education community.

Valued: Parents should be viewed as full partners in the decisions that affect their children and their family.

Welcomed: Parents should be welcome in the school, and their support and assistance sought as a valuable resource to support children’s education in the school.

Connected: All communication and dialogue with parents must be regular, open, two-way and meaningful.

National Parents Council

Key Activities

SERVICE DELIVERY

NPC's services are developed to empower parents so that they can support their children in all aspects of education.

HELPLINE

The NPC helpline is a national confidential service for parents. The helpline staff listen and give information and support to parents to help them make the best possible decisions for and with their children.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The NPC Training and Development programme is a national programme of training, development and support for parents. The purpose is to empower parents to play an active part in their child's education at every level.

WEBSITE

The NPC's website www.npc.ie aims to provide parents with information regarding education at early years, primary and post primary levels.

ADVOCACY

NPC engages in awareness-raising activities and campaigning and lobbying at a national level on the objectives of its Strategic Plan.

REPRESENTING PARENTS

NPC represents the voice of parents through representation on external bodies and other mediums. NPC consults with parents and brings parents' views to bear on education policy.

BUILDING PARTICIPATION

NPC builds participation strategies and activities to ensure parents and children are an integral part of the work of NPC.



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Introduction

The National Parents Council (NPC) are delighted to share the views of parents on the review of the Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE) Scheme. We have gathered and analysed feedback from parents regarding their experiences of and opinions on the supports provided through the RACE scheme.

This report will explore key areas of focus, such as parental awareness of the scheme, understanding of the reasonable accommodations available, experiences with the application and decision-making processes, and the impact of these accommodations on students' learning, wellbeing, and overall examination experience.

The findings presented in this report are based on the results of a survey conducted by the NPC during January and February 2026. The survey was sent to all parents on the NPC mailing list who had consented to receive such invitations and was open from January 29 to February 16, 2026. During this period, a total of 458 parents completed the survey.

This report will share the opinions of the parents who completed the survey.



Survey

A survey titled Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE) Scheme was shared with parents to gather feedback on how the scheme is working in practice. The survey was short and anonymous and included a mix of multiple-choice questions, rating scales, and open-ended questions. This format allowed parents to select responses that best reflected their experiences while also providing space to share additional comments.

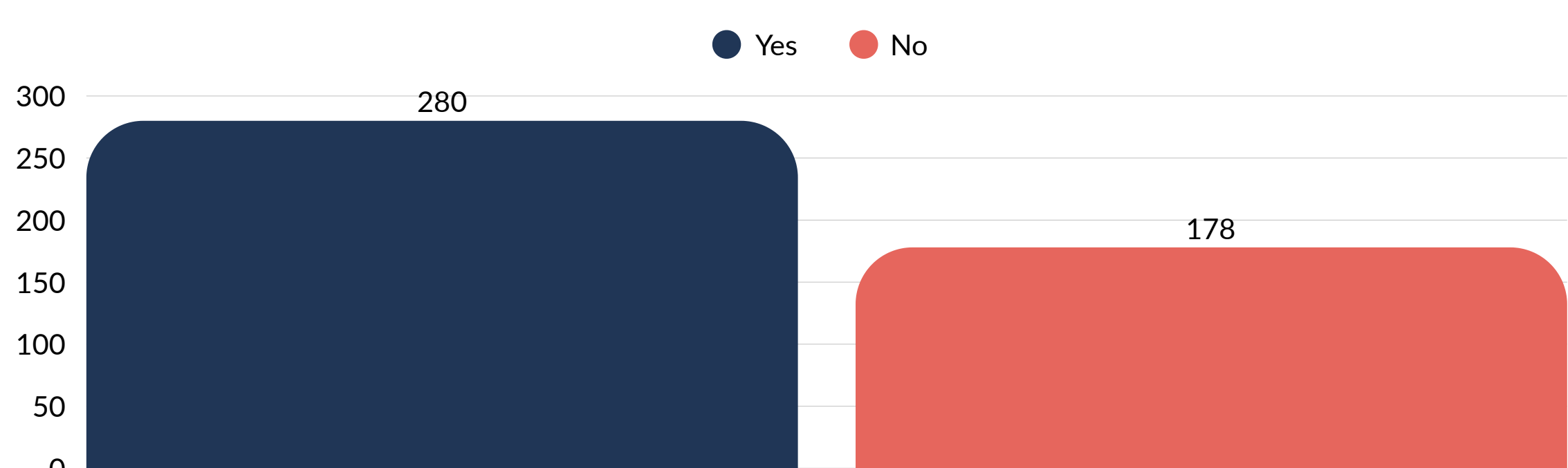
The survey aimed to understand how well the current system supports students who require additional assistance during state examinations. Parents were invited to give feedback on what aspects of the scheme work effectively and where they feel improvements may be needed. Their input included reflections on their overall satisfaction and any challenges they or their children may have encountered.

The main findings of the survey, including key themes and parent perspectives, will be presented in the following sections.



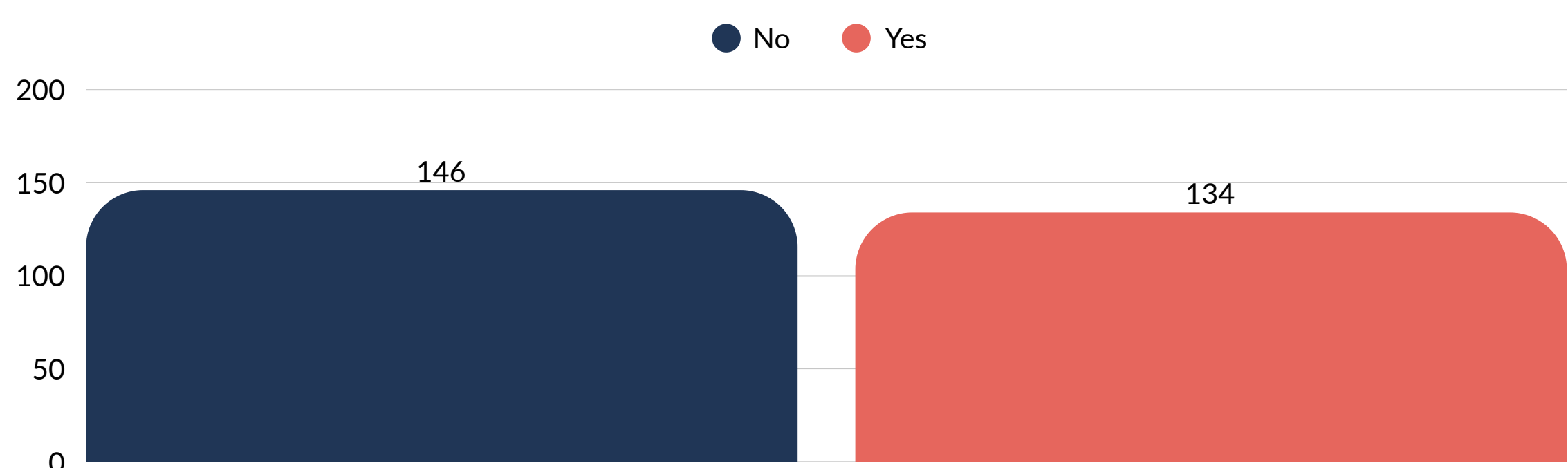
Survey Findings

Q 1 When parents were asked whether they knew about the RACE scheme, most said they were aware of it, while a smaller group said they were not. (see Figure 1).



(Figure 1)
Do you know about the RACE scheme?

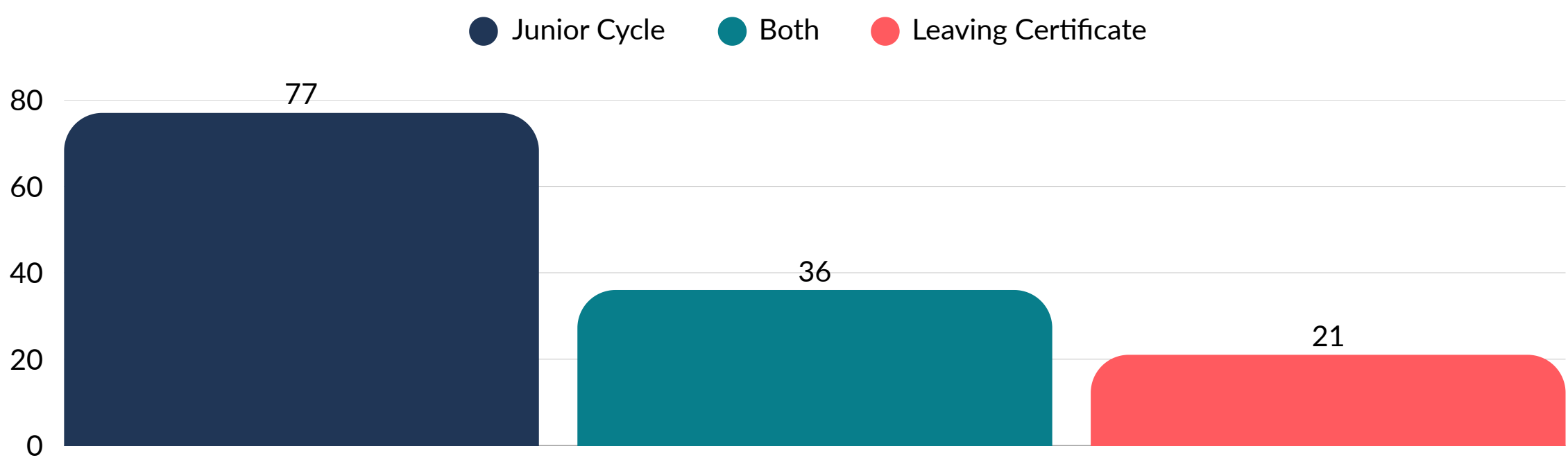
Q 2 Parents who said they were aware of the RACE scheme were then asked whether their child had applied for or used it. Around half (52%) said that their child had not used it, while the other half said they had (see Figure 2).



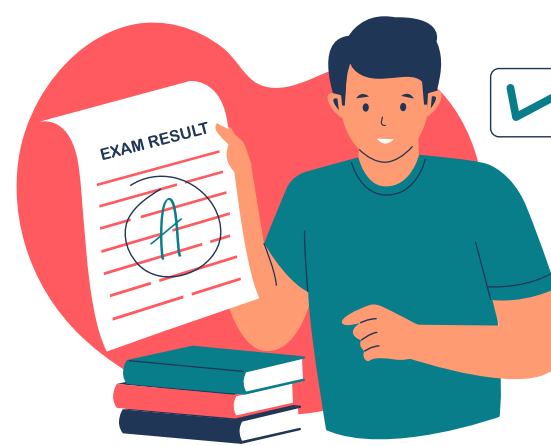
(Figure 2)
Has your child applied for or used the RACE scheme?



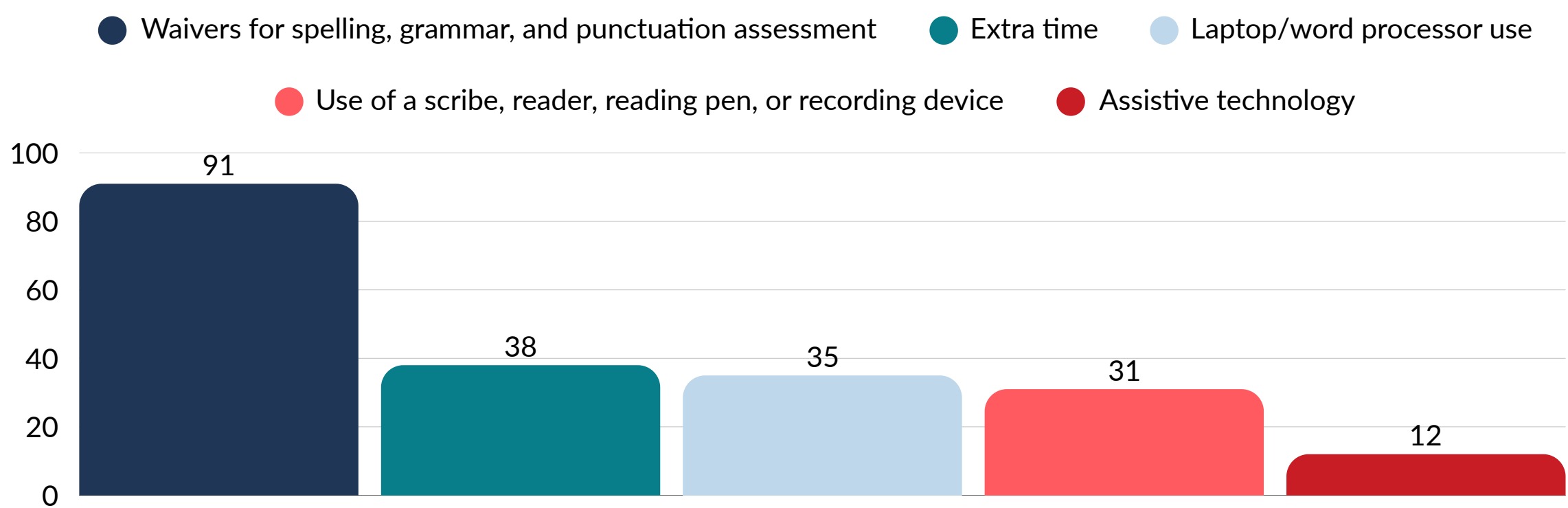
Q 3 Parents who said that their child had applied for or used the RACE scheme were asked which exam it was for. Most parents reported that it was for the Junior Cycle, a smaller group said it was for the Leaving Certificate, and some said it was for both (see Figure 3).



(Figure 3)
What exam was it for?



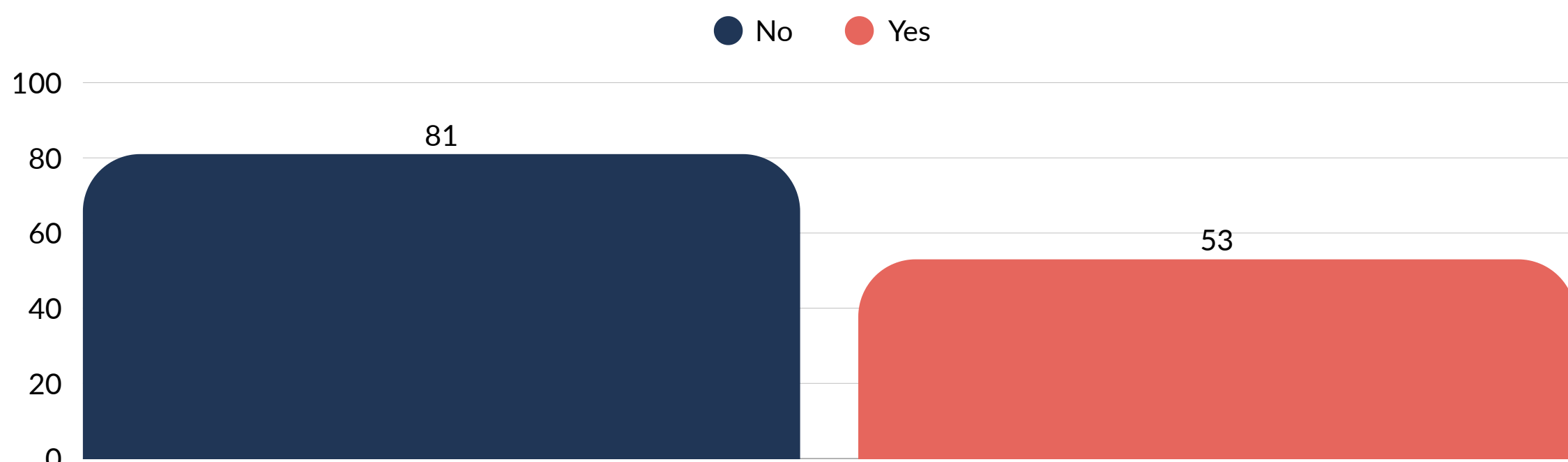
Q 4 Parents were asked which reasonable accommodations their child had received, and they could select more than one option. The most commonly mentioned support was waivers for spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Parents also reported the use of a scribe, reader, reading pen, or recording device, as well as the use of a laptop or word processor. Some said their child had been given extra time, and a smaller group mentioned the use of assistive technology (see Figure 4).



(Figure 4)
Which of the following reasonable accommodations has your child received:



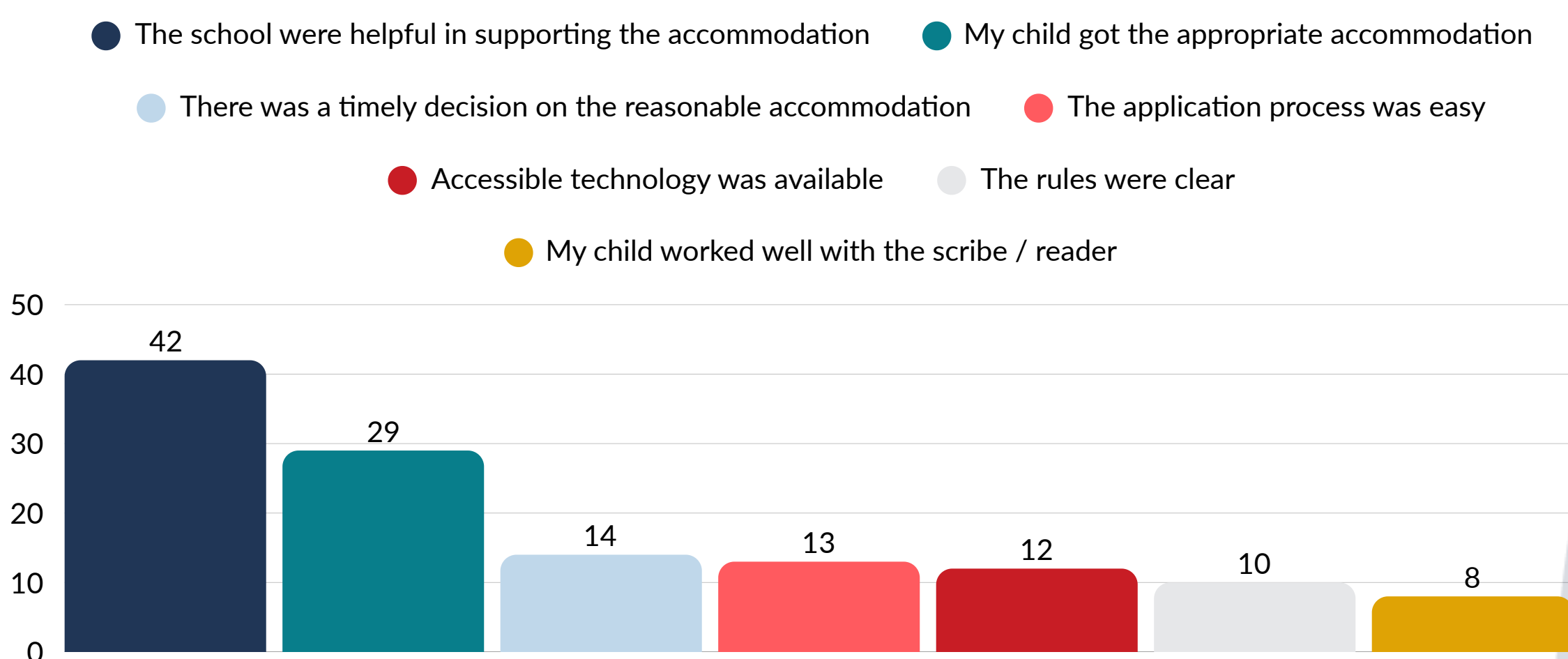
Q 5 Parents were asked whether they were satisfied with the RACE scheme overall. Some said they were satisfied, while a larger number said they were not (see Figure 5).



(Figure 5)

Overall were you satisfied with the RACE scheme?

Q 6 Parents who were satisfied with the RACE scheme were asked which aspects of the RACE scheme worked well for their child, and they could select more than one option. Many parents said that the school was helpful in supporting the accommodation, and others felt that their child received the appropriate support. Some parents reported that decisions were made in a timely manner and that the application process was straightforward. A number mentioned that accessible technology was available and that the rules were clear. A smaller group said their child worked well with the scribe or reader (see Figure 6).



(Figure 6)

What are the aspects of the scheme which worked well for your child?



Q 7 Parents who were satisfied with the RACE scheme were asked: “Can you tell us more about why these aspects of the scheme worked well for your child?” A small number of parents provided additional comments describing how the scheme supported their child’s needs and helped them to manage the exam process more effectively.

Some parents said that the RACE accommodations helped reduce stress and made exams more manageable for their children. Supports such as smaller rooms, extra time, waivers, and access to laptops, readers, or recording devices helped children who struggle with dyslexia, ADHD, dyspraxia, anxiety, medical needs, or slow writing. These adjustments allowed students to focus better, feel safer, and show what they are capable of without being held back by their difficulties.

Parents also highlighted that having the right accommodations improved their children’s confidence. Knowing they would not be penalised for spelling or grammar, or that they could work in a quieter space with fewer distractions, made the exam environment far less overwhelming. Several parents said their children were better able to stay calm, concentrate, and demonstrate their knowledge, something they could not have done under standard exam conditions.

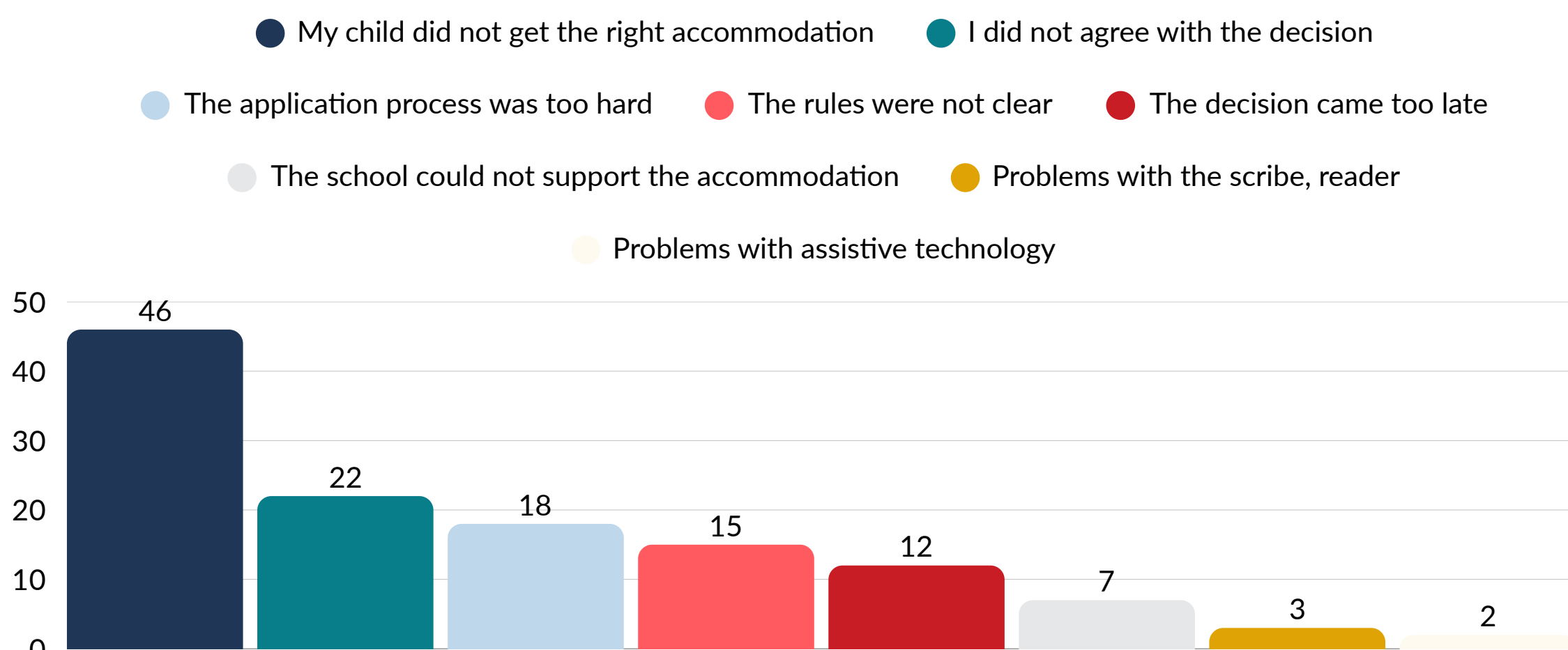
A strong theme throughout was the important role schools played. Many parents said the school handled the entire application, carried out assessments, completed the paperwork, and explained the process clearly. This made the experience much easier for families, especially for those unsure about how to apply. Where supports were granted and communicated on time, parents felt reassured and grateful that their children had a fair chance to perform to their potential.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

Q 8 The same parents were asked if there are any other reasons which made the RACE scheme beneficial for their children. Many found that smaller exam centres, with only a few students present, created a calmer, less distracting environment. Extra time was highlighted as particularly valuable although as with other supports more timely confirmation that they would be granted the support would have helped. Others noted that their children were happy with the readers assigned to them and that sitting exams in a separate room helped them focus and feel more comfortable.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

Q 8 Parents who said they were not satisfied with the RACE scheme were asked to choose the reasons for their dissatisfaction. Many parents felt that their child did not receive the right accommodation, and others said they disagreed with the decision made. Some found the application process too difficult or felt that the rules were not clear. A number reported that the decision arrived too late, while others said that the school was unable to support the accommodation. A smaller group mentioned problems with the scribe or reader, or with assistive technology (see Figure 7).



(Figure 7)

What are the reasons you are not satisfied with the RACE scheme:

Q 9 Parents who were not satisfied with the RACE scheme were asked to explain how the issues they identified contributed to their dissatisfaction. A number of parents reported that their main concern was that their child did not receive the accommodation they needed. Many felt that the supports granted did not match their child's actual learning needs, creating unnecessary stress and leaving them at a disadvantage during exams. Several parents also expressed disagreement with the decisions made, particularly where they believed that the assessment process did not fully recognise or capture their child's specific difficulties.

Timeliness and clarity were also significant concerns. Some parents said decisions arrived too late to prepare their child properly, practise with the accommodation, or use it during mock exams. Others found the rules and criteria confusing or unclear, making it difficult to understand what was required, how decisions were made, or why certain accommodations were refused. This lack of transparency contributed to frustration and uncertainty for families.

A smaller number of parents experienced practical barriers. These included difficulties with the application process, schools being unable to support certain accommodations, and issues with access to scribes, readers, or assistive technology. In these cases, parents felt that the system was either too complex or not well equipped to meet their child's needs, resulting in a process that added stress rather than reducing it.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

Q 10 The same parents who indicated that they were not satisfied with the RACE scheme were also asked whether there were any other reasons, not listed in the survey options, that contributed to their dissatisfaction. A number of parents provided detailed comments describing wider issues with the system, including limitations in available supports, concerns about fairness, challenges within schools, and the impact of inadequate accommodations on their children's long-term educational outcomes.

Parents highlighted a wide range of broader concerns about the RACE system that extended beyond the predefined survey categories. Many felt that the system is too narrow and rigid, failing to match the realities of students' learning profiles. A recurring theme was dissatisfaction with the level of extra time offered, particularly the recently introduced 10 minute allowance, which was widely viewed as insufficient for students with slow processing speed, comprehension challenges, ADHD, dyslexia and other neurodevelopmental differences. Parents emphasised that extra time is essential for these students, as they require longer to read, process and write. Delays in decision-making and unclear processes were also frequently cited, with some students reaching the mock exams, or the final exams, without knowing what supports they would receive.

A second significant issue described by parents relates to fairness, equity, and the long-term consequences of inadequate support. Parents described cases where students with clear and well-documented needs were denied appropriate accommodations, or where recommendations from psychological or occupational therapy assessments were not implemented. Some shared contrasting experiences where children who had struggled throughout school excelled in college once meaningful supports were finally provided.

There were concerns raised also with regard to late applications which parents felt were not always dealt with fairly.

Parents raised concerns that without adequate support in the Leaving Certificate, students may be prevented from accessing further education supports such as the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE), despite having the ability to succeed once accommodations are in place. Many felt that insufficient exam supports risked blocking capable students from progressing, not because they lacked ability, but because exam conditions prevented them from demonstrating it.

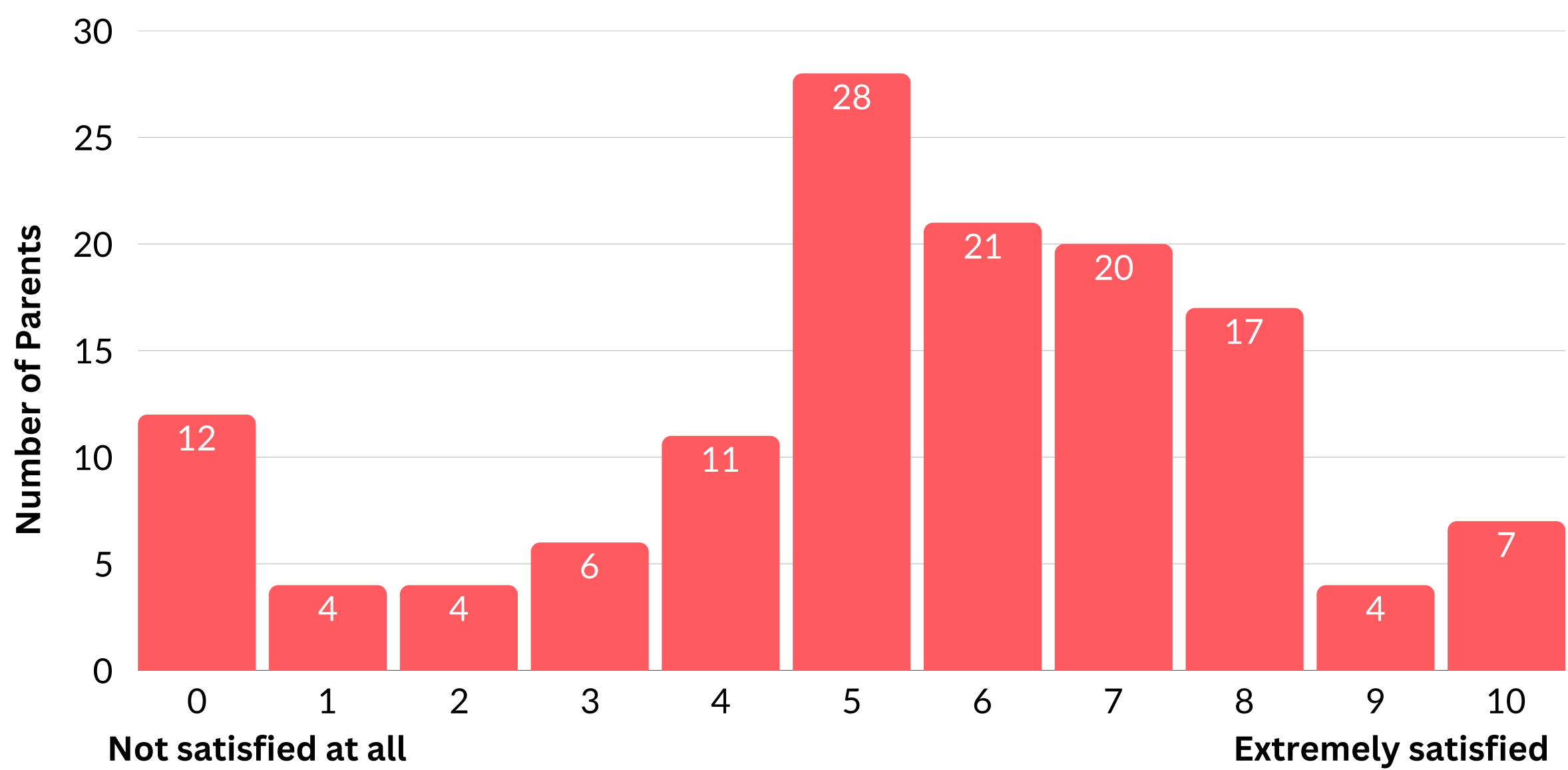
Finally, parents expressed concerns about responsibility, communication, and consistency across schools. Many argued that RACE and DARE applications should be led by schools rather than parents, given that schools hold detailed knowledge of attendance, medical needs and learning challenges. Some reported poor communication, late applications or a lack of awareness about which accommodations were available. Others raised issues with access to assistive technology earlier in the school cycle because eligibility was tied to exam requirements.



Several parents also highlighted that schools lack the staffing, resources and specialist support needed to consistently meet the needs of neurodivergent students. Many felt that exam accommodations alone are not enough and that support throughout the school years is essential to ensure students can meaningfully participate and reach their full potential.

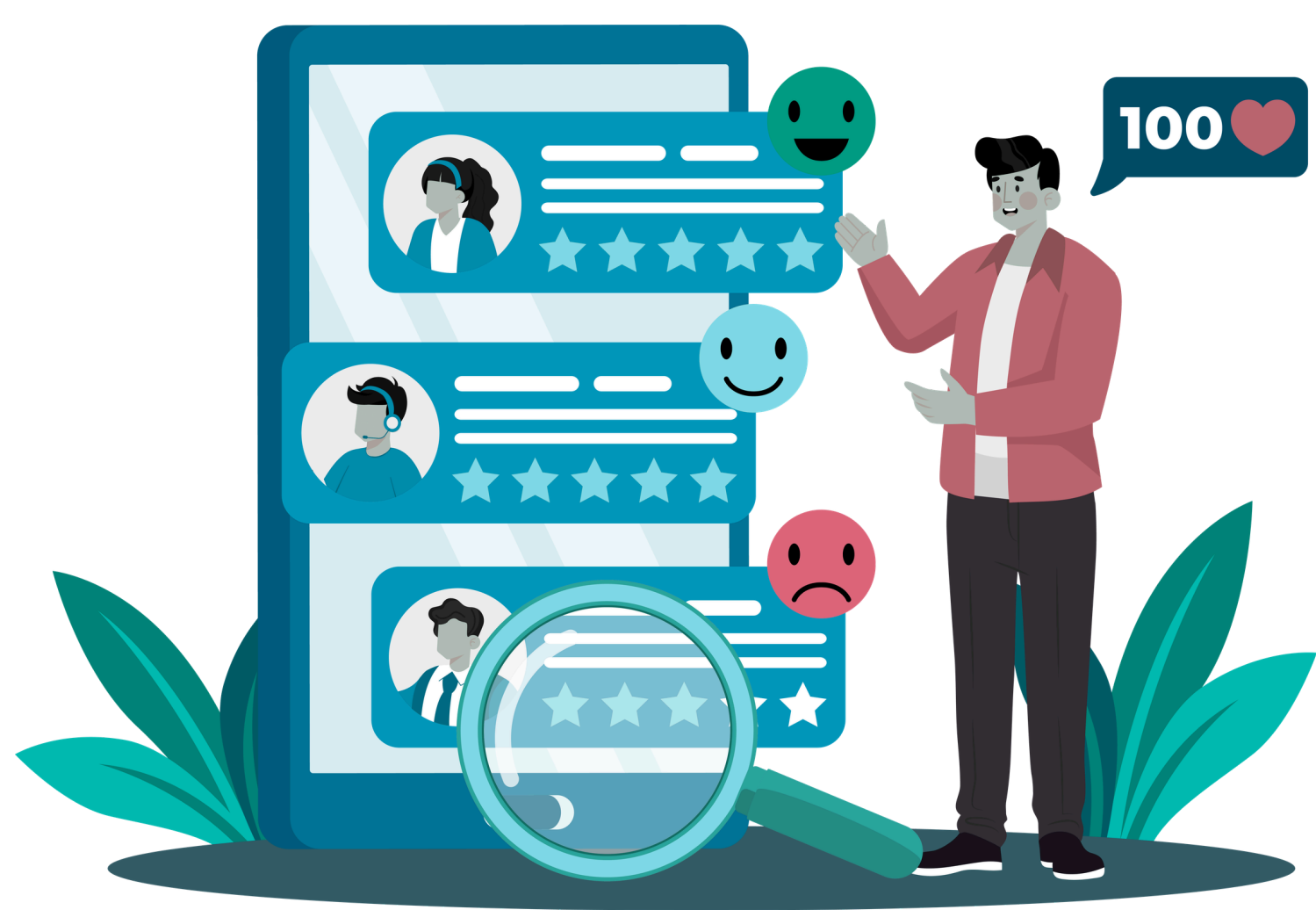
*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

Q 11 All parents were asked to rate their child’s overall experience with the RACE scheme on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 meant not satisfied at all and 10 meant extremely satisfied. Most parents rated their child’s experience around the middle of the scale, while fewer selected the very low or very high ratings (see Figure 8).



(Figure 8)

How would you rate your child’s overall experience with the RACE scheme?



General Comments from Parents

Parents were invited to provide open-ended questions to two separate questions: Question 12, “What would you suggest that could improve the RACE scheme?”, and Question 13, “If there is anything else you would like to add.” These questions gave parents the opportunity to share their views in their own words. The following is a summary of their responses:

Q 12 What would you suggest that could improve the RACE scheme:

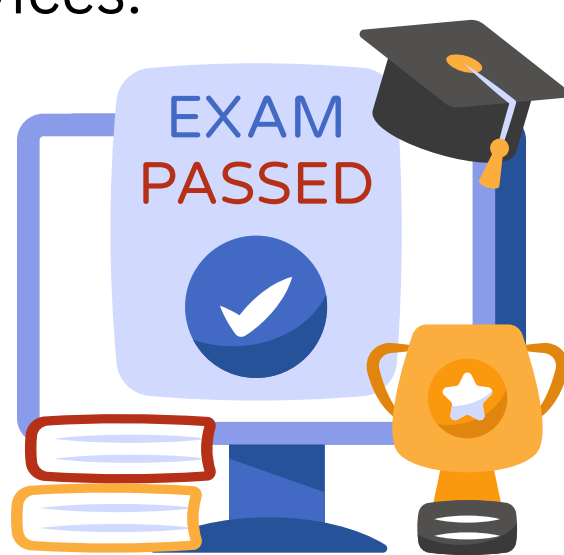
Parents offered a wide range of suggestions on how the RACE scheme could be improved. A large number felt that decisions should be made earlier, ideally at the start of third year or well before mock exams, so that students and schools can plan properly. Many said the application process should be easier, with clearer rules and better communication between schools, parents, and the Department of Education.

A recurring theme was the belief that students with a diagnosed learning difficulty should automatically receive appropriate accommodations, rather than having to rely on strict criteria or a single test result on a particular day. Parents felt that greater weight should be given to long-term school evidence, professional assessments, and the child’s actual performance under exam conditions, rather than narrow thresholds. Some also felt that existing assessments, such as dyslexia reports, should be accepted without additional testing.

Many parents highlighted the need for more meaningful extra time, saying that very small fixed amounts are not enough. Some suggested bringing time allowances in line with practices in the UK and EU, while others recommended more flexible arrangements such as supervised breaks, stop-the-clock options, or processing-time accommodations.

Parents also felt that support should begin earlier in secondary school and that students should be allowed to use accommodations consistently throughout their school journey rather than only during state exams. Some noted that the scheme should be more responsive to combined difficulties such as dyslexia with ADHD, language disorders, or processing challenges.

A number of parents asked for better access to technology, clearer guidance on assistive technology, and automatic approval for technology already sanctioned by SENOs. Others felt that students should have the option of a scribe, or more scribes should be available, as some children struggled with recording devices.



Communication was another strong theme. Parents asked for clearer explanations of decisions, faster appeals processes, better information on requirements, and more open engagement with stakeholders such as teachers, psychologists, and parents. Some felt that schools should communicate more proactively and that parents should be involved formally in decision-making.

Parents also mentioned the need for fairer and more consistent assessments, possibly carried out by independent assessors rather than relying solely on schools. Some noted that students often do not find out about their accommodations until very late, which adds stress.

Several parents called for accommodations to take better account of sensory needs, handwriting difficulties, physical conditions, and situations where a child narrowly misses diagnostic criteria but still clearly needs support. Others asked for improvements to how scribes and special centre supervisors are trained, to ensure they can genuinely help the student rather than simply being present in the room.

Overall, parents said the scheme should be more flexible, more empathetic, and more aligned with students' real needs, ensuring that supports reflect how a child performs under exam pressure. Many emphasised that appropriate accommodations do not “lower standards”; they enable students to show what they can truly achieve without being held back by difficulties unrelated to their knowledge or ability.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.

Q 12 If there is anything else you would like to add?

Parents shared a wide range of final comments about their experiences of the RACE scheme and the wider state exam system. Many emphasised that the process remains stressful and difficult to navigate, especially for students with autism, dyslexia, ADHD, and other learning or processing needs. Some parents felt that written exams place an unfair burden on certain students and questioned whether other options could be made available.

Training and resources were another concern. Some parents felt that scribes, readers, or special centre supervisors should have more training to ensure they can meet students' needs effectively. Others emphasised that schools often lack specialist staff, time, or knowledge to navigate the process properly.

Parents also noted that technology, sensory needs, and handwriting or physical difficulties require more consistent consideration. Access to assistive technology, quiet rooms, and support for students with anxiety or regulation difficulties were mentioned as areas that could be strengthened. Many parents expressed appreciation that their views were being sought, though they stressed the importance of these suggestions being listened to and acted upon. A number said they were grateful for the existence of the RACE scheme but believed it needed further development to ensure fairness and genuine equal access.

Overall, parents called for a system that is more consistent, timely, transparent, flexible, and centred on the actual needs of students, so that children are assessed on their knowledge and understanding rather than the pace at which they can complete an exam.

*This is a summary of the parents' voices; please refer to the appendix for full answers.



Conclusion

This report shares what parents think about the Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE) scheme. The feedback shows that while families value the intention behind the scheme and appreciate the support it provides, parents also identified several important areas that need to be strengthened to ensure the system truly meets the needs of all students who require accommodations.

Parents consistently highlighted the importance of a scheme that is clear, fair and communicated effectively. They want a process that is easy to understand, supported by transparent criteria and explained in a way that helps families know what to expect. Many families emphasised the need for timely decisions, straightforward guidance, and accessible information so that students can prepare properly and feel confident going into their exams. They also stressed the value of strong partnerships between schools and parents, built on open communication, consistent updates and genuine collaboration.

Across the findings, parents noted that the effectiveness of the RACE scheme depends heavily on how well it is implemented. Families want decisions that reflect each student's real needs, based on professional assessments, long-term school evidence and an understanding of how the student functions under exam conditions. Concerns were raised about the limited amount of extra time currently offered, the strictness of eligibility thresholds, delays in decision-making and the variability in how supports are provided across different schools. Parents also highlighted the importance of adequate training, resources and specialist support within schools to ensure accommodations can be delivered fairly and consistently.

Overall, parents believe that by improving communication, ensuring clearer and more flexible criteria, providing earlier and more meaningful decisions, and supporting schools with the resources and expertise needed to implement accommodations effectively, the RACE scheme has the potential to become a more equitable, transparent and student-centred system. Families welcome efforts to review and strengthen the scheme, but they want to be fully informed, fully involved and confident that reasonable accommodations will genuinely support every student who needs them.



Appendix

Can you tell us more about why these aspects of the scheme worked well for your child:

1. My child was struggling in reading and spelling as she is dyslexic and race help her amnesty so grateful this is available
2. The school did it all so I can't truly comment on the process
3. She was able to work in a room by herself and therefore perform better with less noise and distraction from others. She was able to attend and show up because she felt safe.
4. I've only applied this year. Child sitting jnr cert june
5. She was in a room on her own which helped with concentration.
6. The school knew what to apply for and just sent us the paperwork for reading and signing
7. It just made things a little easier my son needed movement breaks. My daughter was reasonably happy going into her exams
8. They knew the reader
9. The application was handled efficiently by the school and she benefited from grammar and spelling waiver .
10. Accommodations were very helpful and settling for our daughter.
11. The reader allowed my child more time to write the answers, without having to read and re-read the questions.
12. My child was able to use a recording device as he would be too slow at typing
13. Spelling waiver for English
14. School did the application. Was informed and signed the application.
15. The school carried out assessments and were very helpful at filling out the forms etc
16. She's dyslexic and needs waivers
17. The school were very helpful
18. It made exams less stressful and easier
19. My daughter's medical condition means she may need to spend 10-20 attending to medical needs during an exam. The extra time means she does not need to worry about missing out if she does.
20. "Learning support coordinator processed the application in time."
21. Made life easier for my daughter as she is very slow at Writing
22. I actually am neither satisfied nor unsatisfied. I applied months ago and have not received news yet as to whether she has been granted accommodations. She also has never used any accommodations so I can't comment on their use
23. Her issues were spotted late and she got her waiver in time for exams
24. My son sat his exams in a smaller room because he has ADHD and gets distracted
25. I did nothing. The school did it all.

26. It helped reassure my child especially by confirming they would not be penalised for spelling and grammar mistakes when facing into their formal, high stake exams.
27. Diagnosis of dyslexia and dyspraxia so being allowed type is beneficial
28. "It alleviated a certain stress for her in an already stressful situation. I now have a junior cycle son in the system with Autism who hasn't been given any accommodations. Therefore is it school specific?"
29. Our school was extremely helpful in the application
30. Recommend support follow an education psychology report for my child were followed
31. My child is dylexic and was granted a spelling waiver. The application and communication process was through the school. I still have not received any update on the application. I am assuming that she has been granted the waiver and additional time (based on media reports).
32. I've heard that if allocated race for jnr cert that may be given it again for leaving cert without having to reapply if school seems it required , if this is correct so much less stressful
33. We have applied for the above but don't yet know if it has been granted, therefore I can't comment on how successful it is or whether we are satisfied with it. There just wasn't any options on the survey for this. Apologies for completing it inaccurately.
34. Eased anxiety and stress levels
35. "he had the knowledge but could not get it down on paper. unfortunately he applied late so had already been downgraded to pass papers when he was capable to do honours"
36. My child was very anxious about the exams before he got the accommodations approved. Once he knew he would have the use of a laptop he could concentrate on study and not worry about writing. He found out a few weeks before his mocks so the timing was good.
37. I was not sure of how to apply for the reader. The teacher talked me through everything, completed the form and I signed it. I received updates from the teacher when I requested same
38. It allowed him a level shot at achieving his potential compared to his peers who did not have the same disadvantages

If there are any other reasons, please tell us more:

1. My school was very helpful and feel it gave them both the best chance of doing their best and feeling more relaxed
2. He did need extra time. That would have made a big difference
3. My child was in a room with 4 Students and theirs also helped as less distractions and more of a calm environment.
4. It was good that my child could have extra time in a separate examining room
5. No
6. Small exam centre was provided
7. Child was very content with the readers
8. late application
9. Another son of mine had a different / negative experience, he is able to spell words from a list (part one of race test for spelling/ grammar waiver) but not able to spell 60% of words when he writes in a passage/ essay (part two of test) he was denied the spelling and grammar waiver ie he passed part one therefore not allowed to be tested for part two. This was appealed but not overturned....it just does not make sense as nowhere in state exams is there a test on a list of words however the majority of tests are answered in essay format

Please provide additional information on how these reasons contributed to your dissatisfaction with the RACE scheme:

1.It has been a stressful wait to see what accommodations he will get. His pres are in 2 weeks and we have not heard yet

2.He needed a scribe and extra time

3.My aon is getting zero support as an autistic person.

4.Both of my older children have been awarded RACE. While it did make a big difference to them on the day, I felt that it was too little too late to really help them. One of the schools handled the full application process, the other didn't. Also, both children should have received DARE aswell but we missed the deadline due to consultants not getting back to us with the letter we needed.

5.I feel that my child should have received more accommodations, owing to a dyslexia, dyscalculia and ADD diagnosis.

6."I believe there is a spelling test the child has to complete regarding a reader or extra time? In a spellings test the child is only focused on the spellings, my child has 'passed' this test so doesn't get a reader or extra time however in state exams he also has to focus on the question and the answer, so there will be many spelling mistakes and is now at a disadvantage as he is trying to remember the question, what he is going to write in his answer, and taking extra time to check his answer, that he hasn't gone off track, checking how much time he has left, all this is taking unnecessary time from him and adds to his stress.

I don't believe the 'spelling test' is fit for this purpose as it doesn't reflect a true exam situation/scenario as any child would be actually focused on the spellings when having the spellings test but in state exams it is a completely different situation and has lots of other things to remember or focus on. "

7.My child should also be granted extra time as she has Dyslexia, DCD and SPD. She will need breaks in particular to the DCD especially for English and History where there will be a lot of writing/typing.

8. "It felt like the application depended on who could right the best essay as opposed to a full consideration of how best to test my child's knowledge. Thankfully we got the accommodations we needed but we got the decision with about 3 weeks to go. That is no time at all to either prepare to work with a scribe or plan for alternatives. These childrens are preparing their approach for months. It has to be preparation on a consistent basis for what will be the conditions in the exams.

We now have to start again with the approach for LC cycle but my son's conditions are not going to go away. He's not doing to grow out of Autism, Dyspraxia, Slpw Processing etc. Yet we face the same uncertainty now in preparation for Senior Cycle "

9. The extra time allowance is too short. For a dyslexic young person there needs to be more allowance made for issues with reading and understanding each question, let alone answering.

10. I just clicked that box as it seemed closest. I just think there should be more options than there are. My daughter gets extra time for eg, but it's time away from the paper. Useful from a muscle and sensory pov but not too much in terms of processing. I would like to see an option of extra time given with the actual paper to students who, for whatever genuine reason, are slower - whether it's processing speed or a medical issue etc.. the accommodations given just aren't enough to make it equal to those without disabilities. And I know how long is a piece of string - both in terms of all students - disability or not, and in terms of the students with disabilities, but maybe there could be a test - or even the one they already do with the 10 mins free writing and the brown fox etc.. - anyway and determine how much extra time a student might need.

11. My son needed more than just use of laptop, he also needs extra time and time for breaks during exams and these were not given only laptop use.

12. Not fit for purpose and doesn't allow/facilitate for differences in children's behaviours/diagnosis

13. "The criteria was too strict/limited and inflexible.

My child contracted covid 2 weeks prior to the Leaving Cert. She was severely affected and was unable to get up not to mind study. Her subject choice meant that she had 6 exams over 3 consecutive days, which is gruelling under normal circumstances but beyond exhausting in her circumstances.

Her Dr certified that she was unable to perform as she would under normal circumstances. The school was very supportive and applied for her to be given extra time. It was refused. This means that there is not an even playing field for all students. Every student should be given the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability. I wrote to the state exams commission. Nothing changed. "

14. Assessing children in exam years puts extra stress on the child. The often do not find out what accommodations are available to them until quite late. All of which adds to extra stress for children that probably cannot handle this amount of stress in the first place.

15. We only received the answer re a reader a short time before the junior cycle exams. It would have been better for that to have been in place for the mock exams too so my daughter could be familiar with that exam experience. She also has a medical condition so being allocated an exam centre to herself was very much appreciated.

16. My son's score from school based test was right on the borderline while both previous AON stated that he should qualify for a reader. No provision made for these children.

17. No extra time available for dyslexic learners

18. I believe my child needs a reader but this wasn't given

19. "A reader would have been helpful for my daughter but she didn't get it."

20. They don't take into account processing speed for dyslexia

21. I was told initially that my child wouldn't be eligible despite his diagnosis as severely dyslexic he did get it in the end but it was a long drawn out process

22. School useless it's like there supplying not wanting help the child
23. The 10 minute additional time is not a fair allocation. Its soul destroying for young adults who deserve to be respected and supported with their disability
24. My boys received Race accommodations for junior cert in 2023, they are now doing leaving certificate. The race accommodations should be available for mock exams as well. My boys have dyslexia, autism and dyspraxia. They need time to process the exam questions in order to answer it accurately. They need extra time in each exam to complete all questions on the exam paper.
25. Not enough time
26. The rules around who gets what are too strict and students who have a diagnosis and a difficulty who don't meet the criteria set by the SEC are excluded.
27. Process not clear, use of memory stick, saving work (autosave/word), student not used to word
28. My daughter needed assisted technology but the school had not enough her to use it for previous tests. She had letters from psychology and other body's saying she should have it and she has ASD and slow processing and it wasn't even considered
29. Dyslexia assessment recommends extra time but school test did not qualify her.
30. We have applied for race but we have not received the decision yet. The extra 10 minutes is only tokenism not helpful
31. The extra time of 10 minutes is inadequate.
32. I knew that the school would apply for RACE on my son's behalf, but I didn't know if he would receive the accommodations or not, so that was a big worry. He had been using a prop for a number of years at that point, and while he did get to use it for his JC exams, there was a chance he wouldn't have. That was stressful.
33. My child did not get a reading accommodation as the test carried out examined word reading. He is dyslexic and has dyspraxia. He struggles with sentence or paragraph reading where he skips words, substitutes words and loses his place when reading. The test did not recognise his challenges at all.
34. "I was told we could only apply in 3rd year not before, that in itself is an issue. I've two children in two different secondary schools 15 minutes apart but procedures, information & approach by schools differs hugely ??!
- My daughter sits her mocks in a few weeks & still no decision on anything we applied for ! She is diagnosed severe dyslexia by an independent educational psychologist but yet the department & school treat that expert, my daughter & her parents like we are looking for a favour, something "extra" !!
35. It's 2026 the department need to get with the times & norms in education for how children with differing issues are treated! "

36. "The accommodations are not enough, but the schools are doing what they can once they are flagged, I have three kids one diagnosed dyslexic, the other 2 undiagnosed. If I hadn't flagged the 2 non diagnosed they would not have been tested, one had spelling and grammar waiver, the other waiver and reader. The youngest won't do junior cert till next year. The whole thing needs to be looked at and tailored to pick up kids not diagnosed Also how about explaining the question, most dyslexic kids struggle with reading the question and trying to figure out what the question is actually asking, once explained they know the answer "

37. My child has problems with processing information and it takes him longer to do things, figure things out and even settle to complete the exam. Because he scored high enough for spelling and grammar, we were told he doesn't meet the criteria for additional supports , including extra time. He is at a disadvantage already.

38. A child with low working memory and dyslexia should have either a reader or technology to read the questions as well as extra time

39. "I was not satisfied with the RACE scheme for several reasons.

Firstly, I fundamentally disagreed with the decision not to grant additional time despite clear, professionally diagnosed conditions such as dyslexia and a comprehension disorder in one case and ADHD combined presentation in the other. In both situations, extra time is the accommodation that would most directly address the core difficulties these diagnoses create in an exam setting.

As a result, my child did not receive the support that was actually needed to fairly demonstrate their knowledge and ability. A spelling and grammar waiver, while helpful in a limited way, does not compensate for slow processing, reduced reading speed, and the extra time required to fully understand exam questions.

In addition, in this year's application, a decision has still not been issued, even with important exams imminent. This delay leaves us in an uncertain position and makes it impossible to plan or prepare appropriately.

Taken together, the refusal to grant extra time, the mismatch between the accommodations provided and the child's actual needs, and the lack of a timely decision this year have left me with little confidence that the scheme is adequately addressing these types of learning difficulties."

40. Every child with additional needs should get the accommodations, not just those that fall within a small bracket. Each child that has additional needs faces huge struggles, many unseen by teachers or professionals, but always seen by parents. These children work so incredibly hard just to get by and then they get denied the most basic of help from the departments that would level the playing field for them.

41. My child is dyslexic, and was given a reader to read a word or sentence. What he needed was a reader in a subject like English to read comprehension. Or he needed extra time. Not 10 minutes which is the new proposal...

42. In my opinion my child needs to be in a quiet area for the exams as distraction is a big issue could also do with extra time.
43. "If my child has had a full psychological assessment And a diagnosis of dyslexia, the department should not be able to turn down her application on the basis of a school based test.
- Also, it's causing my child extra stress to be kept waiting until a couple of short months before her junior certificate to know about accommodations having had 3 years of grades being lowered due to her spelling difficulties. "
44. No communication from school with parent, no info on what accommodations my son would get, very rushed
45. "Following an audit there was a disagreement between the school's assessment and that of the auditor. I was not made aware of this from either party. My daughter should have got a spelling waiver (12,4% spelling error) and a reader. She got none. I found the whole thing to be very stressful when it should not be. We have re applied for her leaving cert. And have has her reassessed. My previous experience was we were told too late of the decision to appeal it. I also believe it is impossible to get a reader regardless of the results. My daughter is doing her pres at the moment and she has told me that there are now more children in the special accommodation class than the actual exam hall which really defeats the purpose. I am just wondering why it was so hard for us to get special accommodation. My daughter has severe dyslexia and dyscalculia and suffers from anxiety.
- I have ticked yes to one of the options above because I couldn't submit this form. So questionnaire is flawed.
- This form did not allow for the answer. My daughter did not receive any accommodation."
46. There was no option of extra time. The reader was not math literate, so was not able to read the maths paper fluently. She could not read some of the English paper vocabulary
47. Dyslexic, she's poor memory recall, comprehension and processing, tests sat in school said she didn't qualify.
48. They should have been allocated extra time for the exams
49. With a child with ADHD & dyslexia, a diagnosis from a professional should be enough to warrant accommodations. There shouldn't be a level of accommodations., ie, one receives grammar waiver, one receives a scribe and so on. Must be a waste of SET /SNA time in testing each child. When a child has a diagnosis, of learning difficulties, they should automatically get every accommodation that would help them reach their full potential in an exam. While I understand this could come down to additional resources (ie a scribe) I'm sure any parent would be willing to help. (Obviously not for their own child).
50. "Extra time needs to be granted to students with dyslexia. Also bar is set too high for the use of assistive technology "
51. Dyslexic individuals with cognitive challenges do not get the extra time that they need to process the questions correctly
52. Spelling waiver is too restrictive

54. While my son got a spelling and grammar waiver he also really needed extra time to complete his exams. While the extra 10 minutes is welcomed it falls far short for students who need extra time to process the information being asked for.

55. Dyslexia diagnosed age 6. 3 physiological reports over the years at huge cost. Speech therapy reports. Refused RACE support at junior cert. Now some support at LC. Had to fight every step of the way. Blatantly obvious that my child cannot approach the exams in the same way as a child not affected by dyslexia. Barely passes an exam. Untold stress for us and our child. Always on your mind. Always on edge because if you're not, you might miss something.

56. No extra time available for my child 2 years ago

57. The application process is way too late. Having to wait until the exam year is very unfair

58. "My child has very slow handwriting due to slow processing—. 8th percentile. Although he is a high achiever academically looking for 600-625 points. But because his handwriting is readable he did not qualify for extra time

Whereas my other son has dyslexia. Very mild. But he has an official diagnosis. Only mildly affects his spellings. So doesn't affect his performance in exams. He does mostly maths science subjects. However He qualified for extra time because he's not a great speller. !! "

59. "I was dissatisfied with the RACE scheme based on my experience with both my current Leaving Certificate student and my older child who also required accommodations.

My older child has a formal diagnosis of dyslexia alongside a comprehension-based speech and language disorder, identified in 2nd class in primary school. Given the dual nature of her difficulties — decoding text and processing meaning — additional time was essential for her to fully access exam questions, plan responses, and accurately demonstrate her knowledge. While she was granted a Spelling and Grammar Waiver, she did not qualify for extra time. In practice, this meant she was still significantly disadvantaged, as her comprehension and processing speed difficulties directly impact how quickly she can read, interpret, and respond to exam material. A Spelling and Grammar Waiver alone does not address these core access barriers.

For my current child, we are now halfway through the mock examinations and still do not know whether he has been granted a Spelling and Grammar Waiver or additional time. This delay creates unnecessary stress and uncertainty at a critical stage of exam preparation and undermines the purpose of providing reasonable accommodations.

In my view, a student with both dyslexia and documented comprehension difficulties should automatically be considered for additional time, as the nature of these diagnoses directly affects reading speed, processing time, and written output under exam conditions. The current system does not appear to fully reflect the functional impact of combined literacy and language-based learning needs."

60. She won't get anything as she is borderline which is so unfair for her
61. My child has received more accommodation in the form of a scribe for Maths for the Leaving Cert and a laptop for everything else, but really he needs a recording device for which I believe he qualifies under his multiple diagnoses and needs. DAMP, DCD, Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, ADHD, Hypermobility (1st centile fine motor), Sensory Processing Disorder. The school were the issue in not reading the guidelines correctly in my opinion and being reluctant to even spend time on an application initially as it is 'notoriously hard to get any support other than a laptop accommodation'. Through my dogged insistence, the application was filed for a scribe for Maths, but nothing else and he will have a scribe for maths for his leaving certificate. However, how an examiner will 'read' his music notations either is beyond me as his penmanship is mostly illegible. I believe RACE should engage with the parent and not just the school. A simple 15 minute conversation with the people who know the child's diagnosis and reports inside out I think would be far more beneficial to the children struggling to 'perform' in a system that doesn't reflect their true aptitude and intelligence. My son was failing all his maths tests (as he had to write them - no access to maths software on laptops allowed), so he self-excluded from higher level to ordinary as it was too distressing to him. He continued to 'fail' in ordinary despite all his teachers saying in class and verbally it is clear he has a full understanding but if they can't read it they can't give the marks - fair enough. For his first exam after practising with a scribe as a scribe, he got 87% - this was after just 3 weeks of support.
62. My daughter could have used more supports but did not meet the criteria
63. I had two children who needed the support of the RACE scheme, I was disappointed that they both lost access to their supports in the years they were due to sit their state exams. I had to go through the appeals process and a review of an assessment to regain the support.
64. My child has dyslexia but didn't qualify in 3rd year for any accommodations as she passed spelling test by 1 spelling and has had great difficulty completing mocks on time
65. The school principal was a huge obstacle. She doesn't "believe" in ADHD. There was no extra time given in the end and my son was made feel embarrassed about his difference.
66. "Mixed answers given by different teaching staff.
Connection to internet caused delay unnecessary stress to exam.
Slow laptops
Sufficient extra time needed for dyslexia. "
67. If a child gets a reader, they should not have to share this reader with another student. It is very off putting for them and very unfair. .
68. "I had to push for my child to be assessed. It should be automatically done when school has copy of diagnosis for additional needs.
He was only given access to a quieter space, no additional time or grammar waiver given despite his reports from mock exams stating spelling and grammar were an issue across 3 language subjects. "

69. It is not clear who decides on what accommodation to apply for.
70. My child did not get the extra time and it should be longer than 10 minutes
71. The school did not test his writing in time, and he could not apply for a laptop
72. My daughter completed her leaving cert 3 years ago. There was no extra time available for her. This is exactly what she needed to bring her to a level playing field with her peers. She is slower to process words
73. My child has dyslexia and ADHD, he was not given the waiver as he scored too high on a test. Once a child has a diagnosis they should automatically receive the accommodations

If you there is other reasons, please tell us more:

1. RACE and DARE should be the responsibility of the school and not the parents to apply for. DARE in particular is very difficult to get and schools are well aware of time missed by students who have underlying health issues and/or anxiety. The system needs to be more streamlined to ensure that students get every support available to help them to reach their potential rather than having issues that affected them in secondary holding them back after leaving school when they could have done better with more support.

2. My children always have a problem with being distracted easily, so a smaller exam room would have suited them both better. I know it is difficult to accommodate everyone, but especially at Leaving cert level, more should be done.

3. "The same thing really. More options. I don't really know what, but I'm sure ot's can be consulted on this. Other options that can be offered for exams. And probably a bit more leniency in awarding them tbh.

But like you've got the exams themselves - but the students will have had difficulties the entire 3 or 2 years prior to the exams - they're at a disadvantage from the getgo. So it's not just the exams - it's the note taking, the paying attention, the writing down hw, doing hw and studying and all the executive functioning and physical abilities that go into those, and even things like going into school every day and all the extra difficulties that come with that, depending on the student - maybe much more tiring, physically taxing, sensory, social etc.. often for medical reasons, they'll end up missing bits of school all over the place. None of this is their fault.

Now there'll be the continuous assessments to contend with too. And they just don't have enough supports for any of it. I've had 3 autistic, adhd kids with different physical issues go through system now. 2 have had unit involvement. One has learning support hours. I pay private ot, physio and slt as even though they are all attached to the local clinic, they just do not get seen. I have had to do so much work with them myself at home every day as they do not get enough support at school for homework or study or planning or organizing etc..

I think I've been going on a bit.

My point anyway is that 1. There needs to be more accommodation options for exams that reflect the students' long term disadvantages, not just in the writing of the exam. 2. With the new ca programme, there's going to need to be accommodations for those too - same for jc already in place - the students do not get adequate support for those things. They don't get anyone helping them to organize or plan or get extra time or anything like that. 3. There needs to be more support in schools in general. There needs to be a bigger budget given to have staff that can support those who need it. Our schools are in no way good enough still for those who do not fit the mold. What they are given almost seems like empty gestures for all the actual good it does them. They have to work *so* much harder every single day to attain the same things as those without disabilities. They need much more than they are getting right now."

4. Exams are very stressful and my son goes into shutdown during exams so breaks are crucial for him to perform to give him a chance to regulate. So exam time should be paused while he is on a break and then time starts again when he is back in seat and ready to resume. Also extra time to allow for his comprehension issues.
5. "On another point I would just like to add that the timetable for Leaving cert (and appears to be unchanged for years) would seem to be gender biased in favour of males. A lot of the traditional ""male"" based subjects are more spread out allowing for more rest and study opportunities. I "
6. AON's recommendations not taken into account.
7. My son is in 1st year - he could benefit from assistive technology but because we don't know if he would qualify for junior cert until 3rd year he doesn't use it.
8. Extra time is an insult. Is a reflection of how the department of education views learning differences
9. The school was aware of her challenges and didn't inform me about it before it was too late. It should be part of the process. Since returning to 5th year and getting a laptop she has got H1 in test instead of h3 because she has finished the test.
10. Mote time than 10 mins is required.
11. Very dissatisfied that children with dyslexia have not been given meaningful extra time - either 25% extra or 10 mins extra per hour
12. My son struggled to finish any of the JC exams in the time given. He has very low processing speed and while he has high IQ and good overall ability, time pressures affect him very negatively. He struggles with time management due to his disabilities.
13. "What is available isn't nearly enough, unclear how it works, applied, and should be be applied for the for throughout school not just an exam & don't get me started on this insulting 10 minutes just announced."
14. ""
15. Meaningful Extra time needed for exams approx 30 mins before the exam starts for general population or seperate exam centres for those that qualify
17. The parameters for providing accommodations for children is too narrow. The current change of adding extra time of ten minutes is so low and unhelpful that it is pointless.
18. School was good and he got the waiver immediately as he has a psychologist assesesment for Dyslexia, however i believe he needs extra time and potentially use of laptop in exams - he struggles to finish all of his exams, his processing speed is quite slow therefore getting everything written down that he wants

16. "Both my daughter (Leaving Cert 2019) and my son (Leaving Cert 2026) applied for RACE.

My daughter was diagnosed with dyslexia and a comprehension disorder in second class. Although she was granted a spelling and grammar waiver, she was not given any additional time, which was the support she needed most. Because of the combination of dyslexia and a comprehension difficulty, it took her significantly longer to understand what exam questions were actually asking. She regularly had to read questions several times before she could even begin to answer them. This affected every subject.

She struggled consistently throughout primary and secondary school. However, once she reached college and was given appropriate supports, she thrived, successfully completed her course, and is now working as a primary school teacher. That contrast shows clearly that ability was never the issue; access to suitable exam supports was.

My son applied for RACE in sixth year following a diagnosis of ADHD (combined presentation). He also has slow processing speed and weak short-term memory. He was assessed after years of school reports noting that he repeatedly failed to finish tests and exams, a pattern that has been present since the start of secondary school. He has significant difficulties with organisation, sustained focus and concentration.

Like his sister, he struggles to quickly grasp what questions are asking and must read and re-read them before answering. Under strict time pressure, this creates further problems. He can misinterpret a question and produce an answer that is entirely off point, resulting in zero marks, not because he lacks knowledge but because he runs out of time to properly process what is being asked.

Additional time would directly address this, yet the current RACE criteria do not adequately allow for his profile of difficulties. The school has applied for a spelling and grammar waiver, but with mock exams due to begin in four days, we still have no decision. Even if approved, he may only receive an extra ten minutes per paper, which is wholly insufficient given the nature of his difficulties.

At a DARE open day, the college confirmed that if he gains entry through DARE he would receive meaningful supports: extra time in exams and assignments, assistive technology, and a note-taker for lectures. The reality is stark: if he cannot demonstrate his true ability in the Leaving Cert because the necessary time support is denied, he may miss out on the points needed for college entry and therefore never access those supports at all.

In short, the lack of appropriate exam accommodations risks blocking capable students from progressing, not because they cannot do the work, but because the exam format prevents them from showing what they know."

19. No communication from school, no idea about these tests in school.

20. The world has changed so significantly in the last 10 years and the accommodations and approach to technology has lagged behind- this needs to be revised urgently

21. I was not aware there was extra time accomodation, I thought this was specifically not available to any student for the junior cert
22. It also feels like she is discriminated against in terms of time. She struggles to understand and has to read qbd re read to try to understand. The a student does not have this issue. More time seems like a necessity not a luxury
23. Depending on school to make application. Parents should make application themselves, with supporting documents. Having to constantly engage and argue with school. Exhausting, stressful.
24. An additional 10 minutes recently announced by the minister of education is wholly inadequate for neurodivergent students, as it fails to reflect the significant extra cognitive effort, processing time, and mental fatigue they manage in order to perform at the same academic level as their peers.
25. Note my child did not get waiver for junior cert we are awaiting mock results no option to tick this in above questions
26. Above question does not make sense
27. My daughter has dyslexia and is due to sit the junior cert next year. The extra time approved is simply not going to be enough.
28. As above

What would you suggest that could improve the RACE scheme:

1. Finalise it at the start of 3rd year so that schools/kids can plan accordingly
2. Not sure as my child had a great experience
3. To receive the right supports for the exam process
4. Criteria seems quite strict, my child's spelling and handwriting are poor but the spelling standard seems ineligible for RACe
5. The application process. The spelling and grammar waiver should be given if dyslexic without testing to see how poorly you score. With ADHD and dyslexia my daughter will fly through and won't spell check words she can spell. She may be anxious and have an urgency to finish which means she'll spell poorly. This waiver should be applied to all kids with a dyslexia diagnosis
6. Give special accommodations from 1st year, especially in MFL and Irish. Stop awarding Irish exemptions so easily.
7. Better communication with parents and not through the school.
8. RACE should be extended to encompass exam preparation and study rather than just during the exam itself. If students are eligible for RACE then they should be receiving reasonable accommodation during the whole school journey and not just at exams.
9. Defined accommodations, depending on diagnosis, especially for leaving cert
10. Instead of above mentioned spelling test, previous test examples/results should be accepted as it reflects a truer picture of the child's performance in an exam setting, not just to be based on a spelling test where the child is only focused on spellings.
11. I think all children with a diagnosis of dyslexia and DCD should automatically get extra time in exams and should not have to go through the testing to see if they qualify. The JC and LC is very different mentally for a child and they may do well in the testing for RACE on THAT day- sitting in the exams puts a different type of stress on them.
12. "Decisions 12 months out
Accommodations in certain circumstances to automatically carry forward for leaving cert "
13. I'm very glad the scheme exists, it's a real step in the right direction and just needs some fine-tuning.
14. I think I've ranted enough on this one 😊
15. Give extra time to students in need of it not just for dyslexia and allow supervised breaks in the exams. SNA support for these supervised breaks is an option.
16. Individuality
17. That the commission should take on board views, requests etc from both teachers pupils and parents and Listen. They need to be more flexible and empathetic. Both the school and a medical certification requested extra time for my daughter. That advice/request was ignored despite their claims on helping students to perform to the best of their ability.

18. If the child has a learning difficulty they should be automatically allowed these accommodations without the extra assessments.
19. Turn around times
20. Nobody coming into the room. Refreshments were brought into the room by a teacher for the examiner which impacted my daughter's concentration.
21. Earlier decision making. We didn't know that RACE was granted until nearly exam time
22. Extra time available in line with EU and UK norms. Not 10 mins per exam, that's just an insult
23. Extra time for exam - minimum of 30 minutes
24. Listen to the children and parents more, not everything can be decided from a quick review of a paper
25. Extra time for processing as a separate accommodation
26. Earlier indication on whether they are likely to qualify eg for assistive technology
27. If a child has a learning difficulty they shouldn't have to go through this whole process make it easier for kids who are struggling enough already
28. The school should be able to grant automatic without the whole process most kids work hard and then cause they do well on a day they get nothing
29. I don't know whether this is part of the Race scheme but extra time for dyslexic would be appreciated. I see 10 minutes being added this year but I think possible 20 minutes would be a step be more realistic
30. A fair and reasonable amount of time for students. 10 minutes for exam is not a reasonable accommodation
31. More exam time and individual exam rooms.
32. Better knowledge and understanding. Better consultations for stakeholders. Better education for teachers
33. Extra time for students with dyslexia
34. All pupils with dyslexia should be allowed an extra 10 mins per hr for exams
35. The need for additional time is vital for Students with dyslexia to reach their full academic potential
36. Listen to the schools about students who may need accommodations. Trust the schools.
37. Clearer information re process, school to practice similar process at mocks
38. The timings and process, we didn't hear about race recommendations until the end of May about a week before the junior cert started.
39. I think it would be better if there were more scribes available as my child had to use a recording device. This requires learning the skill to deliver your answers in a manner in which the examiner will understand them learning to tell the examiner that you are going to insert a quote when the quote ends, so for heavily waited written exams such as English and history this is an extra stress to have to learn. You have to be aware of your tone also.
40. It should be introduced in first year and explaining what can be done to help her.
41. Dyslexia assessment should be used if available

42. Give the decision sooner. Give children with dyslexia meaningful extra time - either 25% extra or 10 minutes per hour.
43. Increase extra time to enable children with literacy challenges have time to show their knowledge and skills.
44. Students don't know till 6th year and 3rd year re accommodations.
45. More time, like 10mins an hour and not per exam. Bring extra time in line with colleges.
46. "If a child is granted assistive technology by the SENO, it should be an automatic accommodation in state exams.
Extra time would make a huge difference to students with processing speed difficulties."
47. Fairer means of assessing difficulties....not leaving it up to individual teachers and local schools to carry out such important tests.
48. Listen to the expert groups for starters! Listen to students & parents & stop acting like the bare minimum is great & people shouldn't be grateful!
49. Extra time for all children who need it. Breaks if they need them.
50. For Autism and ADHD, instead of extra time, let them have brain breaks throughout the exam. To do this, stop their time on the stopwatch while they are on the brain break and when they return to the exam hall, restart their time. That way they can get the same amount of time to complete the exam as everyone else. The only difference, the time they take to regulate isn't counted in their time. Telling them, they can have an extra 20 minutes is useless to someone with ADHD as they have time blindness. Stopping the clock, is a much more effective solution
51. As above
53. Widen the parameters of who gets RACE, children outside of this tiny window also need the accommodations and help.
54. A reasonable amount of extra time for LC
55. Clarification of the rules around the accommodation would be very helpful for parents and more options to have children with accommodations facilitated such as small groups sitting the exams.
56. "It should be applied for much sooner. There should be exceptional reasons why the department would overturn an educational Psychologists recommendations. "
57. Consultation meeting between school student and parent in a planned timely manner
58. "Please refer to the above
Open lines of Communication
Complete the process well in advance of the exams
Please don't offer a service you can not provide ie a reader
Consider what I have said in terms of numbers that are applying for special accommodation. It looks to be a routine procedure for some as opposed to it being a genuine need."
59. More comms between parents and student and school, opportunity to retake DASH if borderline, timed twice might allow for conclusive result.

52. "The RACE scheme could be strengthened by making it more responsive to how a student is actually affected in an exam, rather than relying on narrow thresholds and limited categories of support.

In other education systems, this is already recognised more openly. In the UK, for example, students with appropriate evidence of need can be granted up to 25% extra time in state exams. That approach accepts a simple reality: for some students, the barrier is not knowledge or ability but the speed at which they can read, process and respond under timed conditions. Providing extra time is not an advantage; it is a way of removing a built-in disadvantage.

Here, extra time is treated as rare and minimal, even where professional assessments clearly show slow processing speed, working memory difficulties or attention regulation issues. A small fixed addition of time is often meaningless for a student who consistently cannot finish papers despite knowing the material. Supports should be flexible and proportionate to the documented impact of the difficulty.

Decisions should also give proper weight to long-term school evidence. Years of reports showing unfinished exams and repeated time pressure problems are practical proof that standard time limits are the obstacle. That kind of consistent pattern should matter as much as, if not more than, a single test score on a given day.

The process itself needs firm and early decision deadlines. Leaving families waiting close to mocks or the Leaving Cert for an outcome creates unnecessary anxiety and undermines preparation.

There also needs to be consistency with third level. Colleges readily provide extra time, assistive technology and note-taking supports once students get through the Leaving Cert. The current system risks blocking capable students at the gate, preventing them from ever reaching the stage where those supports are available.

I raised my own child's case with my local minister and was told that the state exams cannot be "dumbed down". That response was deeply insulting. Extra time does not lower standards or make exams easier; it allows students with genuine, diagnosed difficulties to show what they actually know. My older child went on to complete a degree and is now a primary school teacher. The ability was always there. What was missing at second level was the appropriate accommodation to demonstrate that ability in a high-pressure, time-limited exam.

Improving the scheme means recognising that fairness is not about giving everyone the same stopwatch. It is about ensuring that timing itself is not the thing that decides a capable student's future."

60. The obvious one at the moment is the extra time, 10 minutes, while a step in the right direction it really will be no help to my child, who often has to read a question 3 or 4 times to understand what is being asked

61. Don't know

62. Not every is aware of the scheme. Would be helpful if parents of children with additional needs were made aware rather than having to go looking for the information.

63. They didn't receive any accommodations in secondary school, only rest breaks. Yet receives them in college and their diagnosis hasn't changed. There doesn't seem to be a clear standard.
64. Readers and special centre supervisors need to be given some training. Merely, putting a body in a room isn't enough. The idea of accommodation is to help breach the disadvantage a child with SLD faces, when compared to their peers, so that body should be vetted, competent, math literate, and possess some level of training.
65. Schools have to come forward and speak to parents, poor communication, little knowledge.
66. Make the process a blanket process. As explained, when there is a professional diagnosis, the supports should be available to all, not on a basis of how bad your level of diagnosis is.
67. Access to technology
68. Decision being made quicker
69. Extra actual exam time rather than a break. Multiple times I heard I knew more but didn't have time.
70. Extra time considered for students with additional needs and more nuanced approach to spelling waiver
71. Time and understanding of how dyslexic kids learn
72. Extra time in line with other jurisdictions.
73. "Extra time- more than 10 minutes!
Easi read exam papers"
74. Option for direct parent application, when child has parent support. Parents have to apply for DARE themselves. Have school concentrate on kids that don't have parent support. More objective.
75. 10 minutes per exam is not enough to bring these children to a level playing field and is not what happens in other countries. It's a token gesture that doesn't go far enough
76. Earlier decisions.
77. Consult parents. Just require a one liner even so parents can say, on record with the school as part of the child's file/records how they think their child could be best supported in state exams.
78. There should be more alignment & communications at Leaving Cert level about related schemes such as DARE when applying to University.
79. Extra time to children who need extra time. Slow processing and slow handwriting need extra time.
82. I'm unsure how it works from schools point of view, and therefore unsure of how to apply from a parents side. For my daughter her school was on the ball and got it in action but I've not had anything for my son.
83. More time
84. Engaging with those who know the child, their reports and capabilities, instead of only teachers, who it doesn't really affect. They don't deal with the distressed child when they can't communicate and get their points across, and are failing/not getting results that reflect their actual capabilities. Make the process more human and supportive of these vulnerable young people.

80. "• Earlier confirmation of accommodations, ideally before mock exams begin
- Assessment based on overall functional impact, not just diagnostic labels
 - Proper recognition of combined learning differences (e.g. dyslexia plus language or processing disorders)
 - Review and replacement of minimal fixed time increases (e.g. 10 minutes) with needs-based time supports
 - Stronger weighting given to long-term educational support history (primary to secondary)
 - Automatic temporary supports in place while applications are pending (especially for mocks)
 - Clear, transparent explanations provided for decisions made
 - Clear guidance on what evidence is required for successful applications or appeals
 - Greater weighting given to teacher and school evidence of daily functional impact
 - Faster, meaningful appeals timelines within the same academic year
 - Ongoing policy review with input from educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, and neurodiversity specialists
 - Recognition of cognitive fatigue and processing load in timed exam environments"
81. That people with dyslexia syndrome should get it even if borderline. They lose out on so much
85. Different assessment processes
86. Allocate supports early in the child's academic secondary school journey and leave them in place.
87. Fairer assessment
88. More time allowed
89. Scheme should support children more with sensory needs and children who are awaiting diagnosis and narrowly missed diagnosis but still have deficits that require support
90. Better application process made by parents to the dept of education rather than through school. Huge problems getting teachers to sign off on accommodations and yet not qualified to say a diagnosis is correct or otherwise.
91. As above
92. One reader per child.
93. Better communication
94. The spelling speed test does not take into account children who can write a bit but not sustain it over several hrs of exam due to hand issues (eg hypermobility). Consultant letter/report should suffice for medical issues
95. Automatic assessment every year to ascertain students requirements
96. Clear information for parents and students
97. More information before application process
98. have independent assessors that triggers when a teacher highlights a concern

99. More flexibility for maths, science and geography, subjects where the child needs to draw graphs or diagrams. More time would be helpful. Also some technology for maths, my son finds writing difficult but there is no help for maths. He is really good at maths but always suffers in exams due to physical exhaustion because he has to write.

100. The decision was received very close to the mock exams so my child didn't know if they would get the extra help which added extra pressure. I think decisions should be made earlier.

101. The RACE scheme seemed good but the school did not do the necessary testing in time

102. Extra time has now been introduced. However, 10 minutes extra per subject is not enough

103. Review the spelling and grammar waiver so it reflects the aspect of what the students will be graded upon ie writing in essay or passage not just a list of words

If there is anything else you would like to add, please put your comments in the box below:

1. The exam process is a waste of time for some autistic people who struggle academically the only involvement parents have are when they are asked for payments
2. Many parents offer support to schools during primary school, helping with reading, running homework clubs etc but this all stops when children go to secondary. Setting up a system of volunteers in secondary schools would make more support available to students who avail of RACE with little or no cost to the school or the department of education.
3. It is great the department is asking for parents take on things, I hope they will actually listen and take the issues/suggestions from parents on board.
4. Thank you for advocating for our children. Us as parents are like little fish in a big pond fighting to be seen
5. Written exams, especially essays, are a huge stressor for my son. If English, and Irish, could be an optional not mandatory subject it would dramatically reduced his stress levels and help his mental health and reduce school refusal. He will never select a course or career that involves writing essays, he exceeds at maths and science based subjects. And while I understand that mandatory subjects are set to have a baseline of education for the workforce these mandatory subjects should only be mandatory for Junior Cycle and stop being mandatory for Leaving Cert. ALL subjects should be optional for Senior Cycle with same follow over for third level institutions. And then would not need as many accommodations as children are being forced to do subjects that are not of their interest, strength or of any utility to their future. Forcing this only increases mental health issues and stress.
6. State exams commission needs to be reviewed and updated and the interests of the student should be foremost.
7. My youngest child is dyslexic and will need supports and I hope they continue to work at improving easier access to supports so when her time arrives to apply to RACE it's as stress free as possible
8. The reader pen is not an automatic solution. It's not for everyone.
9. The state exams committee are actively harming our children by not giving adequate extra time
10. 10 minutes extra time is an absolute disgrace
11. More straight forward process if a professional ot etc recommends should be given
12. 10 min is very little extra time. I thought it would be more
13. No
14. The 10 minutes per paper (that was granted for this year) is not sufficient
15. Extra time is a big thing for us. My daughter is dyslexic and would benefit hugely from extra time to comprehend and process the questions being asked, never mind the time it takes to answer. 10 minutes in an English or History exam is not enough.

16. Students need to be able to access interventions and accommodations and it is an unfair system that diagnosis is necessary & so expensive on parents.

17. It should not be like this every child should be able to get the help they need easily

18. Thank you

19. If students in university can receive meaningful extra time in exams, why can't we do the same for secondary school? Please change the current system. So disappointed in the SEC

20. Earlier notice or accommodation as my daughter did not know in time for mocks.

21. "Here is the email I sent tonight :

To Whom It May Concern,

I am the parent of two children with diagnosed dyslexia. I am writing to formally express my deep concern, disappointment, and anger regarding the recent announcement that students granted RACE accommodations will receive only 10 minutes of extra time for the 2026 examinations. My daughter will sit her Junior Certificate this year, and this decision has immediate and very real consequences for her.

An additional 10 minutes—amounting to approximately 5–7% of a standard examination—falls manifestly short of what is required to provide reasonable or meaningful accommodation for students with dyslexia and other processing-speed difficulties. This decision gives the clear impression that the Department believes even the bare minimum is excessive, and that students with disabilities should simply make do.

I am requesting a clear explanation of how this decision was reached. Specifically, what evidence base, research, or comparative analysis informed the choice of a 10-minute allowance? I ask because this allocation bears no resemblance to established and accepted benchmarks, either nationally or internationally:

- Third Level (Ireland): Most universities provide 10–15 minutes per hour, typically equating to 25% extra time.

- United Kingdom: The standard accommodation for dyslexia is 25% extra time.

- France: Students are commonly granted one-third additional time.

- Australia (e.g. NSW): Systems routinely allow substantially more time (such as 5 minutes per half hour) to ensure students are not penalised for slower processing speed.

Against these standards, a flat 10-minute adjustment is indefensible.

It has been suggested that restrictive limits are driven by concerns about students “gaming the system.” This rationale demonstrates a profound misunderstanding—or disregard—of dyslexia. It also reflects a lack of confidence in the professional judgement of experienced teachers and qualified educational psychologists who assess and recommend accommodations. Penalising students with genuine, documented needs because the system refuses to implement robust safeguards is neither fair nor acceptable.

While measures such as spelling or grammar waivers exist, they do not address the central issue for students with dyslexia: the processing, organisation, and production of ideas under severe time pressure. For many capable and intelligent students, including both of my children, this policy ensures they will be assessed on speed of output rather than depth of understanding, knowledge, or potential.

I also ask whether the Commission has conducted a formal disability impact assessment to determine whether this allocation satisfies the legal standard of reasonable accommodation. If such an assessment exists, I request that it be made publicly available.

There has been significant distress and anger within the dyslexia community since this announcement. In our own household, this decision feels like yet another instance of being ignored, dismissed, and disrespected by the education system.

Children with dyslexia already work harder, advocate harder, and fight harder for appropriate support and recognition. It is difficult to understand why the system continues to place additional obstacles in their path rather than removing them.

I am copying the Minister for Education and Youth, the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality, and the Minister of State for Special Education to highlight the systemic nature of these concerns. I am also copying Senator Shane Curley, in recognition of his active engagement and advocacy on this issue. This policy requires urgent ministerial attention and legislative oversight."

22. Please try and accomodate brain breaks for those who need to regulate themselves and process throughout the exam. It is time to allow access to this irrespective of how they do on their spellings or grammar tests

23. "This is about equal access, not advantage. Timed exams reward speed as much as knowledge, and for students with dyslexia, ADHD or slow processing speed, speed is precisely where their disability lies. Granting only an additional ten minutes per exam does not meaningfully address that barrier. Without sufficient extra time, they are effectively being assessed on the impact of their condition rather than on what they actually know.

A limited accommodation such as ten extra minutes risks permanently restricting a student's pathway, regardless of their real academic ability. If a capable student cannot reach the points required for college because the time allowed was inadequate for them to properly read, process and answer questions, they may never access the third-level supports that would enable them to thrive. That is a systemic blockage, not a reflection of ability.

Support for these needs is increasingly recognised in primary education, and it is routinely provided at third level through substantial extra time and other accommodations. The state exam system sits in between yet offers only minimal additional time, creating a clear break in support at the most critical assessment point. Ten extra minutes per paper does not bridge that gap.

The scheme should be regularly reviewed against international best practice. In other comparable systems, significantly more flexible extra-time allowances are provided without any dilution of academic standards. That evidence shows that meaningful additional time can protect fairness while maintaining rigour, and it should guide policy here rather than defaulting to token adjustments such as ten minutes.

This issue extends beyond one student or one year group. More students now present with recognised neurodevelopmental and specific learning difficulties than when the current model was devised. A small, fixed time increase is not sufficient for the level of need seen in today's classrooms. Capable students are being filtered out by the clock, not by the curriculum. Revising the scheme is not about changing what is examined; it is about ensuring that an arbitrary and inadequate time limit does not determine who is able to progress and who is left behind."

24. "This country doesn't help those who need it in the education system. Properly equipped and specially trained special needs teachers are not funded properly for schools, either primary or secondary. There are not enough of them and they are not specially trained or knowledgeable enough to be impactful for a child's education. The country only provides services and accommodations to those with the absolute highest needs and let's all those children that fall outside of this tiny sliver of a category to just work hard and often, fail. Widen the parameters to allow more help to more children. Make it actually fair for all those with additional learning needs!

Also, the extra 10 minutes added for dyslexics just shows that there was no research done into how dyslexia affects learners. It is not enough and it does not align with best practice and examples seen by other countries. It needs to be way more time than that and apply to far more children. The education system is meant to be child centred but it absolutely isn't when it comes to accommodations."

25. The suggested ten extra minutes of exam time for dyslexic students is an insult. It will make no difference whatsoever .

26. More time is needed for all children who need it and 25% seems to be the norm. My child processes things differently and while he's very intelligent, it just takes him longer to figure out what is being asked

27. No

28. Please take on board the input and suggestions that the parents of these children are giving you. We are the people living this along with the children. We are the people who know best.

29. The option of a smaller exam room is not mentioned in this survey as an accommodation, this is the only thing my daughter who is dyslexic and autistic qualified for so if it did not even mentioned as an accommodation she has not been given a level playing field for sitting of exams. So I can't even finish this survey as it is mandatory to select an accommodation so my child actually got none. I am selecting spelling as this is the one she should have got but didn't. This survey is badly constructed, there should be an option for no accommodations in question 4 as you can apply and get none

30. "I am also a teacher of second level students. I am in a girls only school. I feel that because the students have put a huge effort into improving their spelling they are being penalised and are not receiving the 10 minutes extra. Many of these students have processing difficulties due to their dyslexia. I feel there needs to be testing for these students to give them the accommodation they need. "

31. Students with an AEN are not given a level playing field in the education system. Life is hard enough. Huge focus on positive mental health within schools. This does not seem genuinely important to Dept of Ed if they continue this inequity when it comes to exams.

32. "My child should get the 10 minutes extra time per exam this year. Very little help. Much debate and taxpayers money lost on talk and debate for 10 minutes per exam?!

It should be 10 minutes per hour, per exam to make any attempt to even the playing field. My child has processing problem. Everything takes longer to read and understand. "

33. Thanks

34. 10 minutes additional time is not enough

35. Maybe a lower limit of time to stay in the room for the exam

36. The new 10 minutes extra for state exams for dyslexic students is a first step but not enough. 30 minutes would be better. Some will not use it, for those who do need it, its an immense leveller.

37. Clarity should also be provided around the criteria for additional time and technology particularly at LC level.

38. While the Leaving Certificate examination period runs from 3 June to 23 June, the majority of core, high-demand subjects are concentrated within the first 6–7 days. Consideration should be given to greater cross-department coordination to allow exams to be distributed more evenly across the full exam window. This would help reduce the occurrence of students having to sit multiple cognitively demanding, writing-heavy subjects on the same day, which can significantly impact performance, particularly for students with additional learning needs.

39. Fairer assessment as my child has dyslexia seems system is stacked against children too few resources/ teachers more time required for exams

40. Application for the scheme should be accompanied by an educational report if applicable for the child not just an application completed by the school .

41. As above

42. Typed his mock exams for jnr cert but still haven't had confirmation if has it for state exams yet

43. "My child wasnt given any of the options you listed. He was given a quieter space to allow for anxiety but nothing more.

I ticked "extra time" as i could not complete the form without ticking something"

44. Allow Ed psychological and teachers knowledge of the individual students be considered in reaching a decision on granting race