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Students Speak

A 2024 Snapshot of Youth Well-Being in the District of Columbia

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2024

Contents

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Executive Summary

During the 2022-23 school year (SY), **Education Forward DC** and **Youth Invest Partners** supported a cohort of 12 Washington, D.C., local educational agencies (LEAs) in administering selected domains of the Panorama Social Emotional Learning (SEL) survey to provide educators with data on well-being for students in grades 3-12. The organizations partnered with Bellwether to analyze the schools' survey data and develop a report published in April 2023, <u>Students Speak: A Snapshot of Student Well-Being in the District of Columbia</u>. The report was the first in a multiyear effort and included a call for other District of Columbia LEAs to use the Panorama SEL survey and participate in future studies to help build a more comprehensive understanding of student well-being across the city.

This year, several additional LEAs answered the call, allowing the 2024 report to include data from a wider range of students across D.C. **This report is the continuation of last year's work, analyzing student responses on the Panorama SEL survey while using data collected in SY23-24 to summarize the current state of student well-being across participating D.C. LEAs.**

It is intended to aid educators, policymakers, and communities in interpreting the survey results, tracking progress over time, and identifying strengths and areas for growth. In future years, all D.C. LEAs will be invited to join the administration of the Panorama SEL survey so that the city's education leaders are equipped with actionable data and locally contextualized research on student well-being.

Themes Identified

The survey topics answered by each sample were aligned to **three overall themes** related to D.C. student well-being.

OVERALL THEMES

School Environment and Supports
Is school a place where students feel supported and feel like they belong?

Self-Perception and Skills
Do students believe they can achieve academically and persevere through setbacks to achieve important school, career, and life goals?

Quality Relationships
Do students have quality relationships at school and outside of school?

PANORAMA SEL TOPICS

Sense of Belonging
Rigorous Expectations
Valuing School

Self-Efficacy
Perseverance

Supportive Relationships
Teacher-Student Relationships

Snapshot: Youth Well-Being in the District of Columbia

The 2024 Panorama SEL survey findings vary across themes and grade levels. The survey points to bright spots related to Quality Relationships and School Environment and Supports; specifically, across grade levels, students responded favorably on the Supportive Relationships and Rigorous Expectations topic areas. There are also potential areas of growth. For example, compared with younger students, older students responded less favorably on several scales, especially related to the Sense of Belonging and Valuing School topic areas.

School Environment and Supports

SENSE OF BELONGING

70%
responding favorably (grades 3-5)

48%
responding favorably (grades 6-12)

RIGOROUS EXPECTATIONS

79%
responding favorably (grades 3-5)

71%
responding favorably (grades 6-12)

VALUING SCHOOL

70%
responding favorably (grades 3-5)

55%
responding favorably (grades 6-12)

Self-Perception and Skills

SELF-EFFICACY

64%
responding favorably (grades 3-5)

52%
responding favorably (grades 6-12)

PERSEVERANCE

65%
responding favorably (grades 3-5)

59%
responding favorably (grades 6-12)

Quality Relationships

SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

85%
responding favorably (grades 3-5)

83%
responding favorably (grades 6-12)

TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

62%
responding favorably (grades 5-11)

Note: See Page 18 for details on how a "favorable response" was defined in the survey analysis.

Key Takeaways and Research

Key Takeaways	Research
The majority of students value school and say that it is important to do well in their classes. Students' Valuing School Scale score was 70% in grades 3-5 and 55% in grades 6-12.	These findings are congruent with findings from last year's study as well as recent research providing evidence that most students feel motivated to do well in school.[1]
Although older students value school, most do not find what they are learning useful and applicable to their current lives. While 81% of students in grades 6-12 said it is important for them to do well, less than half said what they are learning is interesting or useful in their daily life.	These findings align with student engagement data collected over the past decade demonstrating that less than half of high school students feel that what they are learning in school is useful to them outside the classroom.[2]
Across grade levels, students' scores on the Rigorous Expectations Scale were more than 70%. However, students with disabilities (SWD), English learners (ELs) in grades 6-12, and Hispanic students in grades 6-12 responded less favorably when asked if they were held to high expectations, compared with their peers.	Research long demonstrates the impact of teacher expectations on student outcomes, particularly its impact on academic achievement for students from stigmatized groups.[3] According to Panorama Education, students who feel they are held to high expectations are "more likely to trust that their teachers believe in them and their capacity to succeed, and as a result, achieve greater academic success."[4]
There was great variation in student responses on the Sense of Belonging Scale when broken out by grade and gender. An average of 70% of students responded favorably on Sense of Belonging items in grades 3-5. However, Sense of Belonging was among the lowest reported domains for students in grades 6-12. This was particularly true at the start of high school, as Sense of Belonging was lowest among students in grades 8-9. Additionally, female and nonbinary students responded less favorably on the Sense of Belonging Scale than their male peers in grades 6-12.	These findings suggest that Sense of Belonging may decline as students advance through the education system; the findings are also congruent with previous research demonstrating that both female[5] and nonbinary students[6] report a lower sense of belonging than their male counterparts. This is concerning, as recent research[7] shows that students who feel a strong sense of belonging are more likely to "be engaged in school and to perform well academically."[8]

Key Takeaways and Research (2 of 2)

Key Takeaways	Research
Across the sample, an average of more than 50% of students responded favorably on items related to Self-Efficacy. However, Self-Efficacy was one of the lowest-scoring domains across age groups, with a score of 64% among students in grades 3-5 and 52% among students in grades 6-12.	Self-efficacy captures the extent to which students believe they can achieve academically and have the skills to succeed in school, career, and life. Differences across grade bands in this sample suggest that there is a drop in self-efficacy for students as they transition from middle to high school. This finding is congruent with previous research demonstrating that students tend to experience a drop in self-efficacy beginning in middle school.[9]
There was also variation in Self-Efficacy responses when broken out by gender. Self-Efficacy responses for female students were less favorable than for students who identify as males in grades 6-12.	The middle school drop in academic Self-Efficacy remains when the results are disaggregated by gender, although it is steeper for female students as they advance through school. This "results in lower self-efficacy for girls than boys throughout middle and high school."[10]
Across grade levels, an average of more than 50% of students responded favorably on items related to Perseverance. However, there was variation when broken out by subgroups. Female and nonbinary students in grades 6-12 responded less favorably than their male peers on items related to Perseverance. Additionally, students identified as at-risk in grades 3-5 responded more favorably than their peers on the Perseverance Scale.	These gender-related differences are concerning, as perseverance is associated with "a growth mindset and higher achievement."[11] Recent research provides a more nuanced understanding of the gender gap in perseverance, suggesting that gender-based stereotypes can contribute to levels of perseverance among male and female students.[12] Although more research is needed to understand patterns of academic perseverance among nonbinary students, recent literature suggests that the use of implicit and explicit curricula that are "strongly binary" in schools may negatively impact the educational experiences and outcomes of nonbinary students.[13]
Across grade levels, students generally feel that they have supportive relationships at home and at school. However, within late-middle and early high school grades, students report having fewer supportive relationships, particularly with teachers or adults at school. Students in grades 8-9 responded less favorably than other grades on the Supportive Relationships Scale.	This finding is congruent with recent research suggesting that adolescent self-reports of loneliness at school increase immediately after they transition from middle to high school.[14] This suggests an opportunity for high schools to consider developing more intensive relationship-building efforts to enhance teacher-student relationships in grade 9.

Students Speak: A 2024 Snapshot of Youth Well-Being in the District of Columbia

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Contents

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What is student well-being?

Student well-being is an essential component of young people's success in school and beyond.

The term "well-being" encompasses multiple domains of students' health, including students' social and emotional wellness, relationships with peers and adults, and engagement and purpose at school.[15]

Due to its complex nature, supporting student well-being requires an approach that is comprehensive and differentiated; while all students benefit from a positive school climate and support for social and emotional development, some students may need additional, more targeted and intensive supports to address acute mental health needs.

DEFINING STUDENT WELL-BEING

For this report, participating schools administered selected domains of the Panorama SEL survey, which defines student well-being as "**the positive experiences, thoughts, and feelings that enable students to thrive**."[16]

This framing situates well-being as a multidimensional construct that is central not only to students' learning outcomes but also to their holistic growth and development across multiple aspects of their lives.

Why focus on student well-being?

Schools can provide a buffer against the negative impact of stressors that students face, inside and outside the classroom, by creating a positive school climate and intentionally supporting the development of young people's social and emotional skills.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, schools function as crucial partners in efforts to support and improve student well-being and mental health.[17] A large body of research demonstrates that when schools intentionally support young people's mental health, interpersonal relationships, and social and emotional development, students benefit academically and emotionally.[18]

The impacts include short-term benefits, like increased academic performance and decreased anxiety and depression, as well as long-term benefits like enhanced social-emotional skills and attitudes and the ability to thrive in adulthood.

As a result, educators across the country have committed to fostering positive well-being in addition to tending to students' academic growth. Organizations like the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) provide resources and guidance to help schools integrate evidence-based support for SEL throughout the school day.[19]

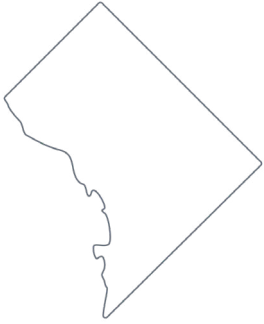# D.C. schools are committed to student well-being. (1 of 2)

The mental health of children and youth across the country has been on the decline for more than a decade,[20] accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.[21] **Educators and policymakers are seeking to address these trends by improving and increasing schools' support of student well-being**,[22] as a substantial body of research demonstrates that students who participate in well-being programming do better academically, socially, and emotionally[23] across a range of indicators.[24]

In D.C., surveys of student mental health mirror national trends. For example, in the most recent report on citywide results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), State Superintendent Christina Grant notes that "our students continue to face mental and emotional health concerns."[25] Among other things, the 2021 YRBS results point to worrying rates of suicidality, disordered eating, and feelings of unsafety — particularly among female middle and high school students and LGBTQ+ and transgender students — in the year following the onset of the pandemic.[26]

Moreover, **recent data indicate that chronic absenteeism, which is tied to student health and well-being, continues to be a challenge across the District of Columbia**.[27] Typically defined as missing 10% or more days in a given school year, chronic absenteeism is often tied to students' health and well-being in the present and can have adverse effects on students' health outcomes in the future.[28] In D.C., the chronic absenteeism rate dropped by 4 percentage points to 44% during SY22-23 but remains almost 13 percentage points higher than the COVID-19 pandemic rate of 31%, according to data from D.C.'s school report cards.[29] The problem is particularly greater at the high school level, as recent data indicates that 60% of high school students in D.C. were chronically absent during SY22-23.[30]

> The mental health of children and youth across the country has been on the decline for more than a decade, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

D.C. schools are committed to student well-being.

Aimed at ensuring D.C.'s students are safe and have a sense of belonging, D.C. schools and education agencies are increasing their focus on well-being supports for students and staff.

Given this national and local context, many of D.C.'s education agencies are prioritizing students' well-being. For example, in late 2023, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education published the results of a landscape scan aimed at understanding the state of SEL in D.C. schools.[31] The report catalogs the many agencies and entities that have a role in supporting the well-being of students and highlights partnerships such as this report and ThriveK12, which seek to gather additional data on student well-being.[32]

The D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) 2023-2025 strategic plan also includes a focus on fostering student and staff well-being and outlines initiatives such as aligning the city's health and education systems, expanding training opportunities, and launching a citywide school climate survey.[33]

Similarly, District of Columbia Public Schools' (DCPS) 2023-2028 strategic plan includes "Connected to Schools" as a strategic priority. Aimed at ensuring D.C.'s students are safe and have a sense of belonging, D.C. schools and education agencies are increasing their focus on well-being supports for students and staff.[34]

This is the second annual report in a multiyear project. The 2023 report examined similar survey topics from a smaller sample. For more on the prior Students Speak findings, click here.

Contents
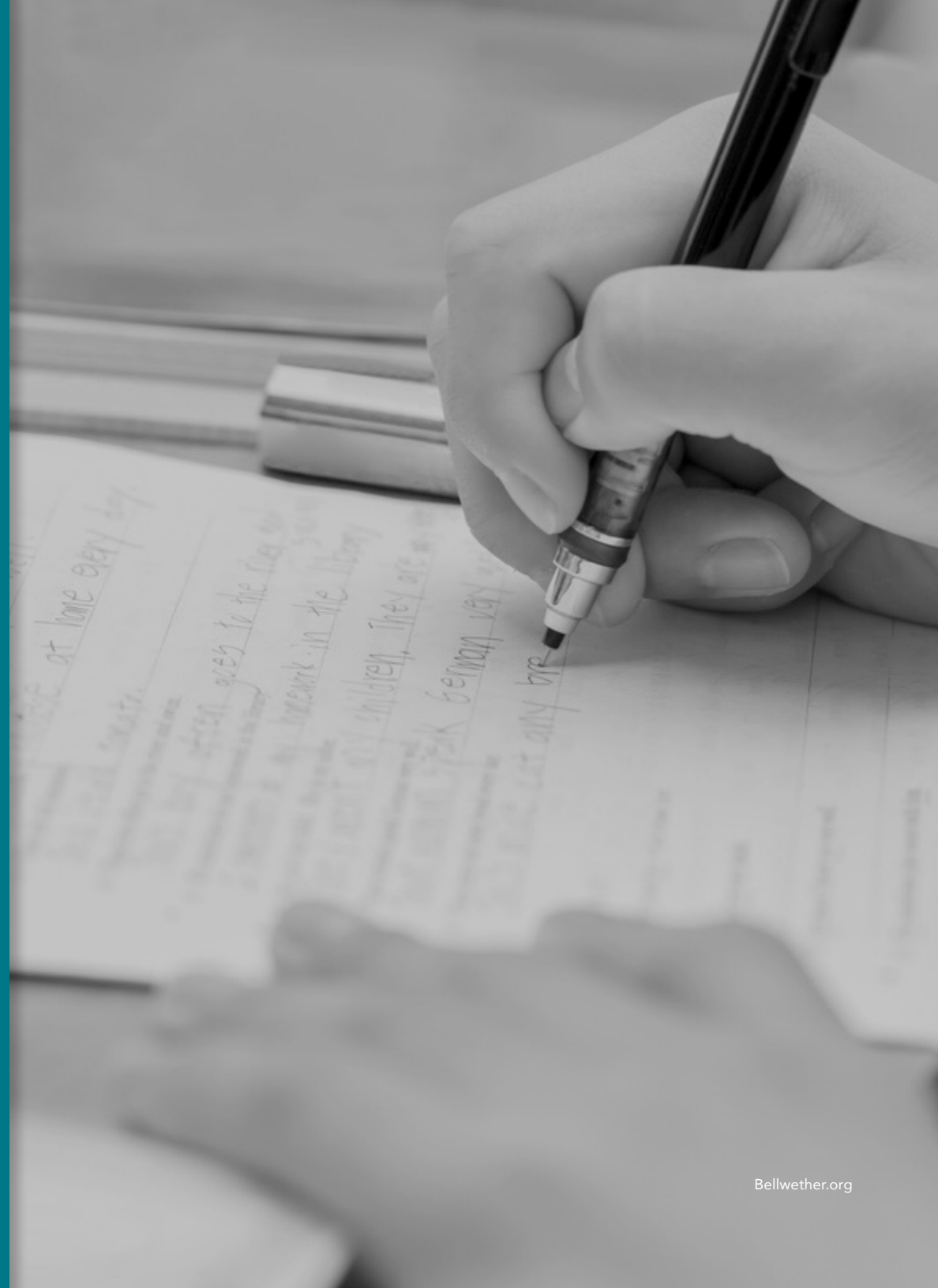
The Panorama SEL Survey

The Panorama SEL survey is a tool designed by Panorama Education to help educators measure students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to their own emotions, identities, and relationships with others.[35] The survey measures a variety of topics that fall under three broad categories: 1) student skills and competencies, 2) school environment and supports, and 3) student relationships.

The topics in **bold** were identified by schools that participated in the 2021 Ninth Grade Counts Network (convened by Youth Invest Partners, formerly Venture Philanthropy Partners+Raise DC). These questions were selected as being the most relevant given the context and values of the participating schools and from questions that educators had about students' well-being.

The "Teacher-Student Relationships" survey topic was administered by a separate set of schools that partnered with Kelvin Education, a wellness platform, to assess students using the Expanded Definition of Student Success (EDSS) survey. The EDSS survey was designed by NewSchools Venture Fund (adapting questions from several sources, including the Panorama SEL survey) to measure student social-emotional competencies and attributes of positive learning environments. All surveys were administered in fall 2023.

SEL Survey Topic	Definition
Sense of Belonging	How much students feel that they are valued members of the school community.
Rigorous Expectations	How much students feel that their teachers hold them to high expectations around effort, understanding, persistence, and performance in class.
Valuing School	How much students feel that school is interesting, important, and useful.
Self-Efficacy	How much students believe they can succeed in achieving academic outcomes.
Perseverance	How well students are able to persevere through setbacks to achieve important long-term goals.
Supportive Relationships	How supported students feel through their relationships with family, friends, and adults at school.
Teacher-Student Relationships	How strong the social connection is between teachers and students within and beyond the school.

This report represents the survey responses of 31,974 students attending schools in the District of Columbia.

Student Demographics	Percent of Students in Survey Sample	Number of Students in Survey Sample
Total Students	100%	31,974
Student Gender		
Male	49.7%	15,881
Female	50.2%	16,058
Nonbinary	0.1%	32
Student Subgroups		
Students Identified as At-Risk	39.4%	12,591
SWD	14.4%	4,606
ELs	17.3%	5,542
Racial and Ethnic Demographics		
Asian	2.0%	648
Black or African American	60.7%	19,413
Hispanic	20.8%	6,635
Native American	1.7%	534
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.4%	129
Two or More Races	4.3%	1,383
White	28.7%	9,167

STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS AT-RISK:[36]

- Qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

- Qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- Have been identified as homeless during the academic year

- Are under the care of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA, or "foster care")

- Are high school students at least one year older than the expected age for their grade level

Notes: Within some samples, fewer than 10 students identified as nonbinary or did not report a gender. Students are categorized as Hispanic through an ethnicity variable that is separate and distinct from race. This distinction implies that the percentages from race and ethnicity categories will not add up to 100%. In addition, this implies that students may identify with a race listed here as well as Hispanic ethnicity. For example, an Afro-Latino student would be included in both the Black or African American and Hispanic rows in this table. Additionally, Sample E (Page 17) did not include demographic indicators for EL status, SWD, at-risk status, race, or students who identify as nonbinary.

The data represent a small subset of the larger D.C. public school student population.

According to data from OSSE, a total of 97,059 students enrolled in all public schools in the District of Columbia (DCPS and charter school LEAs) in SY22-23.[37] This report includes a subset of the larger population of public school students in D.C. Within this sample, students who identify as white or Native American are slightly overrepresented, compared with the overall public school student population.

Race/Ethnicity	Percent of all D.C. Students (N=97,059)	Percent of Students in Survey Sample (N=31,974)	Number of Students in Survey Sample (N=31,974)
Asian	1%	2%	648
Black or African American	63%	61%	19,413
Hispanic	20%	21%	6,635
Native American	0.1%	2%	534
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.4%	129
Two or More Races	3%	4%	1,383
White	13%	29%	9,167

Notes: Within the public school data in D.C. on this page, which comes from OSSE, students are categorized as Hispanic within the race variable. However, within the survey sample of this report, students are categorized as Hispanic through a separate and distinct ethnicity variable, which means the percentages listed here will not add up to 100%. In addition, this implies that students may identify with a race listed here as well as Hispanic ethnicity. For example, an Afro-Latino student would be included in both the Black or African American and Hispanic rows in this table.

The study combines data from multiple groups of students who took slightly different versions of the survey.

Survey versions differed based on grade level and/or the LEAs' preferred topic areas. Samples A-D took Panorama SEL survey scales. Sample C took the EDSS survey, which includes Panorama SEL survey questions on aligned topics. To provide a more comprehensive picture of student well-being across the city, this report combines student responses for all survey topics related to the overall themes.

Factors	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C	Sample D	Sample E	Total Surveyed
Number of Students	12,481	19,211	2,350	4,178	282	**31,974 students**
Grade Levels Surveyed	3-5	6-12	3-5	6-12	5-11	**Grade levels 3-12**
Number of LEAs	11	9	10	8	2	**16 LEAs**
Survey Topics Assessed	• Sense of Belonging • Rigorous Expectations • Self-Efficacy • Perseverance	• Sense of Belonging • Rigorous Expectations • Self-Efficacy • Perseverance	• Valuing School • Supportive Relationships	• Valuing School • Supportive Relationships	• Teacher-Student Relationships	**7 topics assessed**

Note: The data from last year's report and this data are not directly comparable due to differences in number of samples, size of samples, and participating LEAs.

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The analysis highlights meaningful differences in favorable responses across topic areas and student subgroups.

Individual Question Analysis

For most survey topics, students were asked multiple questions that were coded on a 5-point Likert scale. Responses of "4" or "5" were considered "favorable responses." For the survey topic assessing supportive relationships, students were asked "yes" or "no" questions. A "yes" response was considered a "favorable response."

Overall Topic Analysis

A scale score was calculated for each survey topic overall and by student subgroup. The percent of favorable responses for each question in the topic area were averaged to produce an overall percent that is reported as the scale score.
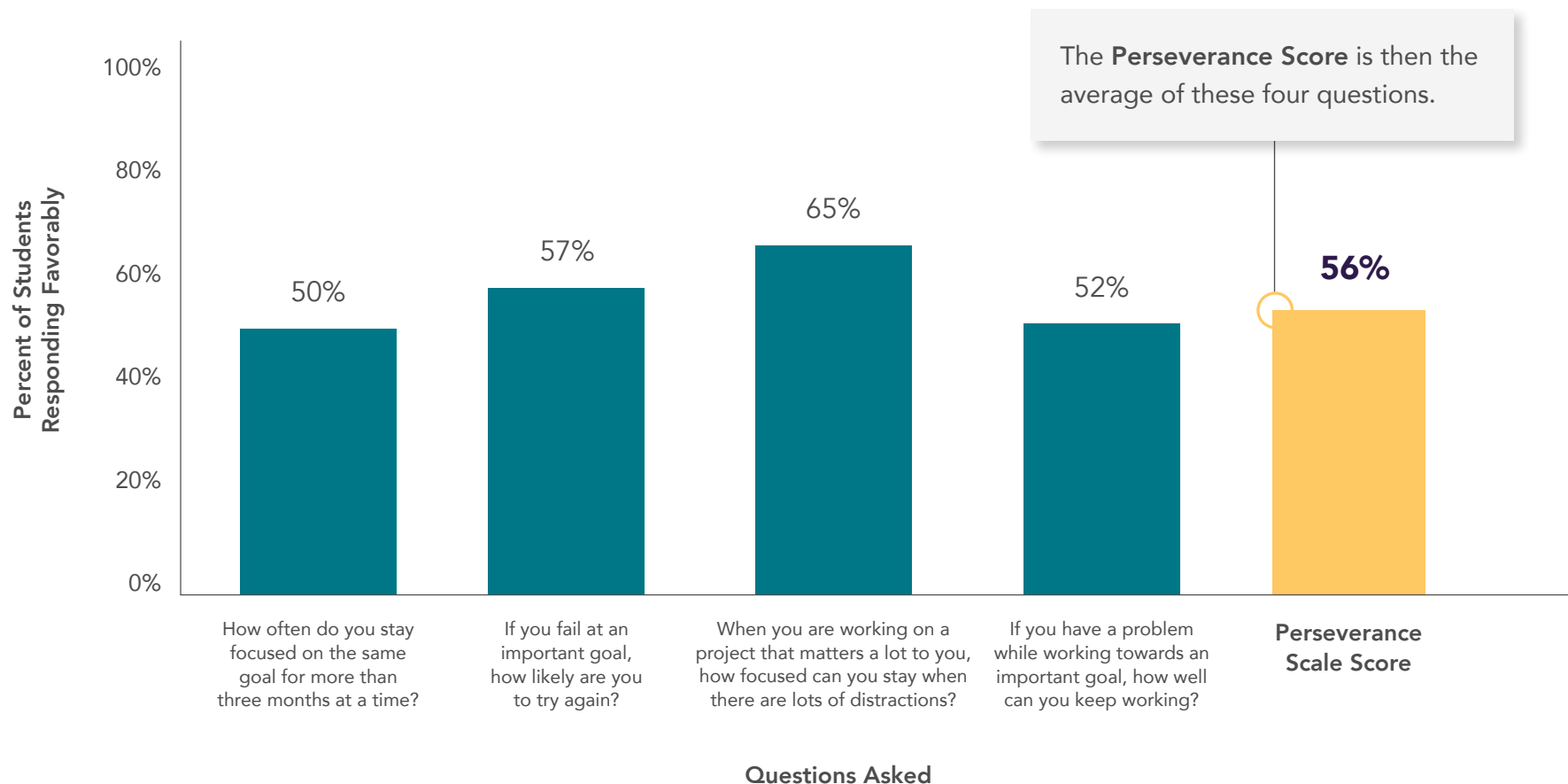
Subgroup Analysis

Results by student subgroups are presented where differences were observed across groups. However, some subgroups contained fewer than 20 students, and therefore the findings should be interpreted with caution. Rather than drawing immediate conclusions based on results from groups with very small sample sizes, it may be more useful to continue tracking these patterns over time to see if they persist in future years.

For each survey topic, the average percent of favorable responses was calculated across questions.

Percent of Students Responding Favorably on the Perseverance Scale
Mock data for illustrative purposes only

The **Perseverance Score** is then the average of these four questions.

Percent of Students Responding Favorably (y-axis: 0% to 100%)

Questions Asked (x-axis)

- How often do you stay focused on the same goal for more than three months at a time? — **50%**
- If you fail at an important goal, how likely are you to try again? — **57%**
- When you are working on a project that matters a lot to you, how focused can you stay when there are lots of distractions? — **65%**
- If you have a problem while working towards an important goal, how well can you keep working? — **52%**
- Perseverance Scale Score — **56%**

Note: This calculation method is also used by DCPS to calculate and interpret the Panorama SEL Survey results.[38]
This chart is a sample illustration and does not reflect real data recorded from the Panorama SEL survey.

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Contents

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School Environment and Supports

Is school a place where students feel supported and feel like they belong?

Sense of Belonging
How much students feel that they are valued members of the school community.

Rigorous Expectations
How much students feel that their teachers hold them to high expectations around effort, understanding, persistence, and performance in class.

**Valuing School**
How much students feel that school is interesting, important, and useful.

School Environment and Supports

- On average, students in grades 3-5 reported feeling a greater Sense of Belonging in school, responding more favorably on this Scale (70%) compared with older students (less than 50%). When broken down by grade, students in late-middle school and early high school report the lowest scores on the Sense of Belonging Scale.

- Female (45%) and nonbinary (26%) students in grades 6-12 responded less favorably than male students (51%) on the Sense of Belonging Scale.

- Across each grade, racial groups responded similarly on the Sense of Belonging Scale.

- Most students in grades 3-5 (79%) and grades 6-12 (71%) report that their teachers hold them to high expectations.

- SWD reported being held to less rigorous expectations compared with their peers.

- ELs and Hispanic students responded less favorably than their non-EL and non-Hispanic peers on the Rigorous Expectations Scale in middle and high school.

- Students' perceptions of teachers' rigorous expectations were lowest in grades 9-10.

- Overall, the Valuing School Scale score was 70% among students in grades 3-5 and 55% among students in grades 6-12.

- Valuing School Scale scores were lowest among late-middle school and early high school students.

Do students feel a sense of belonging in school — that they are valued members of the school community?

Sense of Belonging Score
Results from Sample A (grades 3-5) and Sample B (grades 6-12)
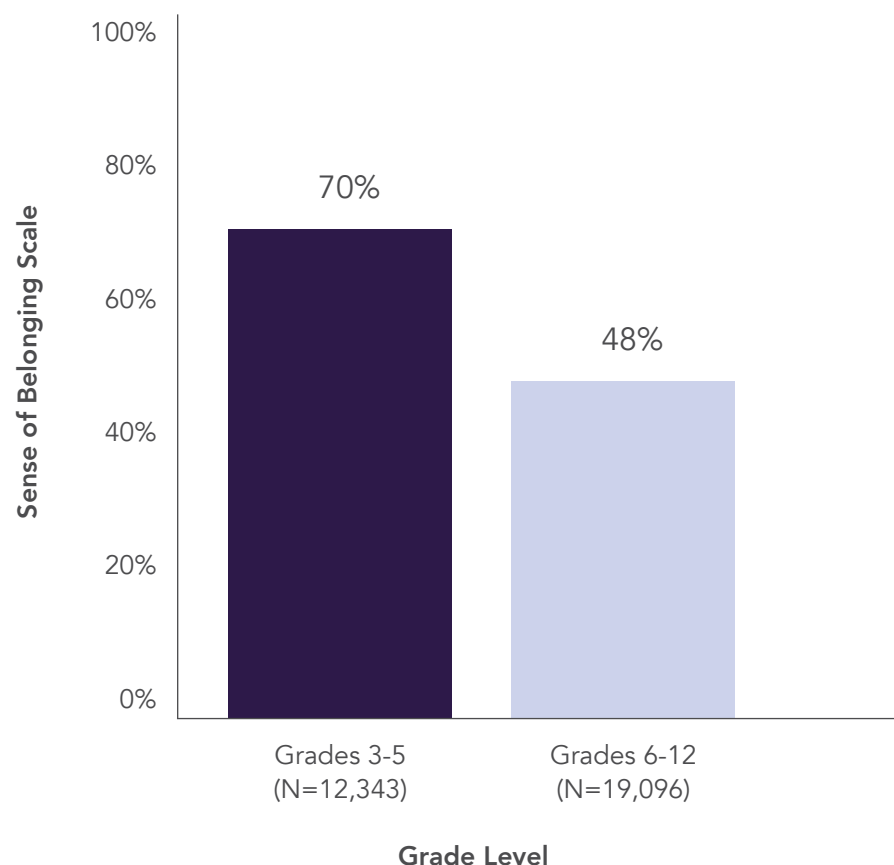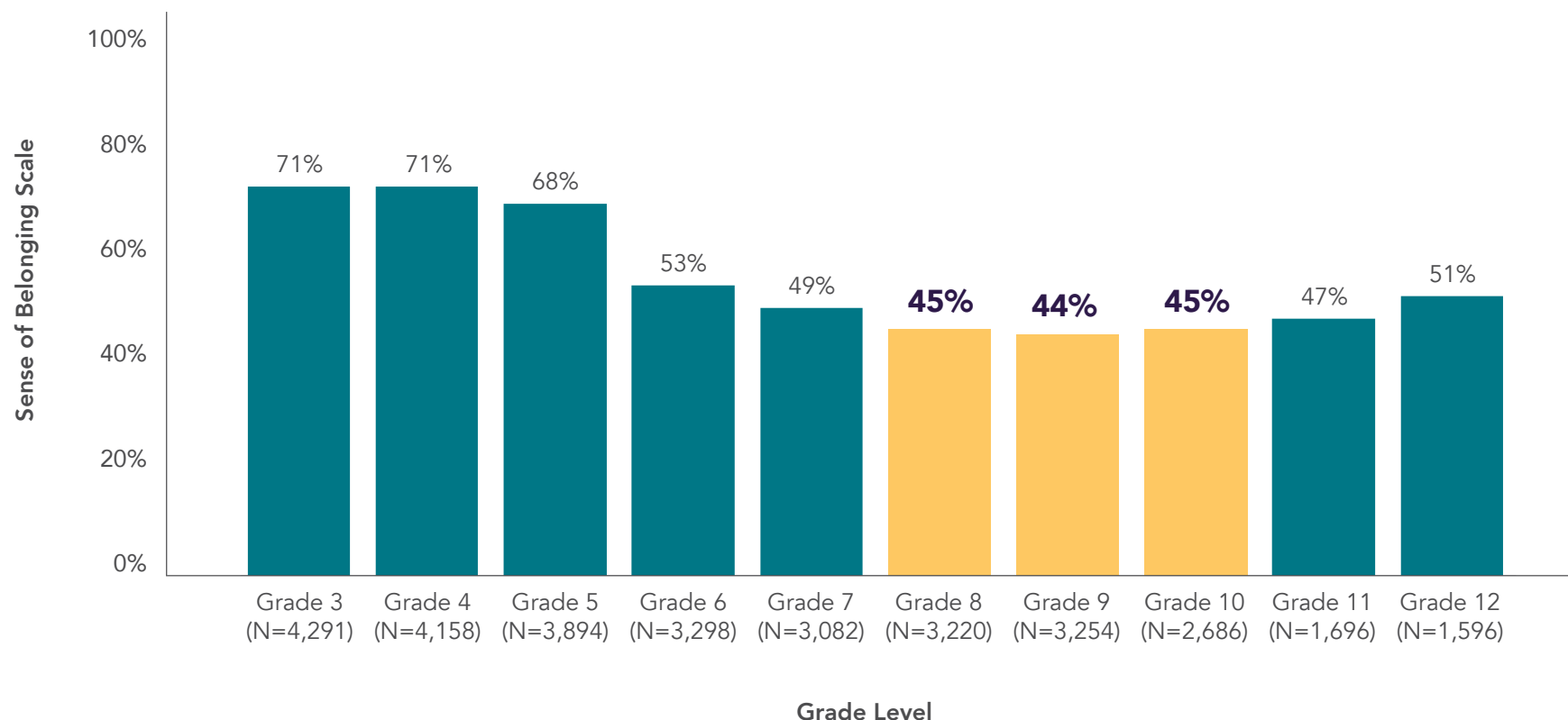

Similar to last year, the Sense of Belonging score in grades 3-5 was 70% and was just under 50% for middle and high schoolers, revealing a large gap between younger and older students' sense of belonging.

Note: Although the 2023 and 2024 samples are not directly comparable due to differences in size and participating LEAs, 2023 results are included here for the purpose of exploring similar patterns.

When broken down by grade, students in late middle school and early high school report the lowest scores on the Sense of Belonging Scale.
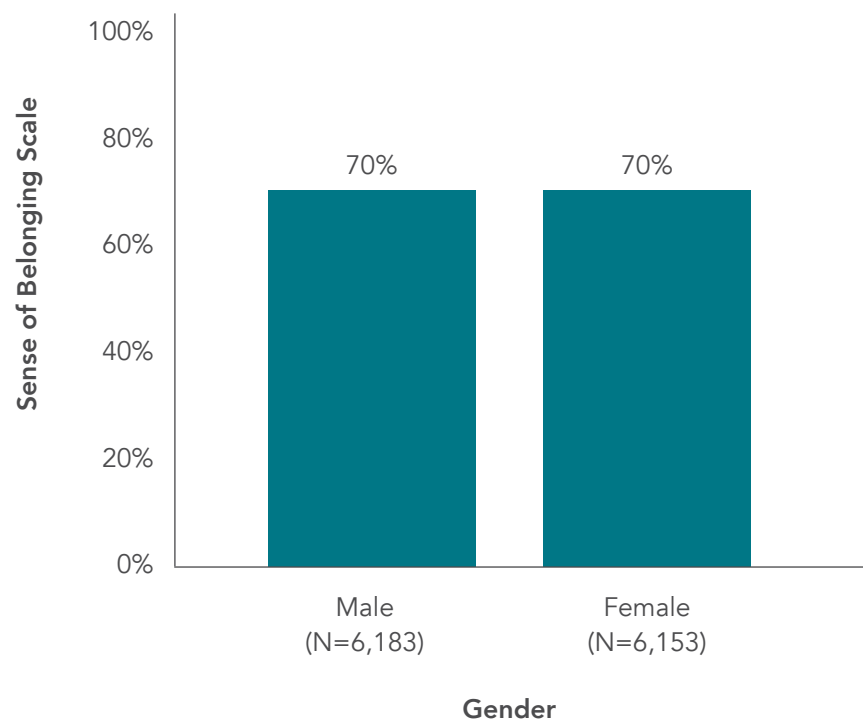
Sense of Belonging Score

Results from Sample A (grades 3-5) and Sample B (grades 6-12)

Students Speak: A 2024 Snapshot of Youth Well-Being in the District of Columbia

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Female and nonbinary high school and middle school students responded less favorably about feeling a sense of belonging than their male peers.
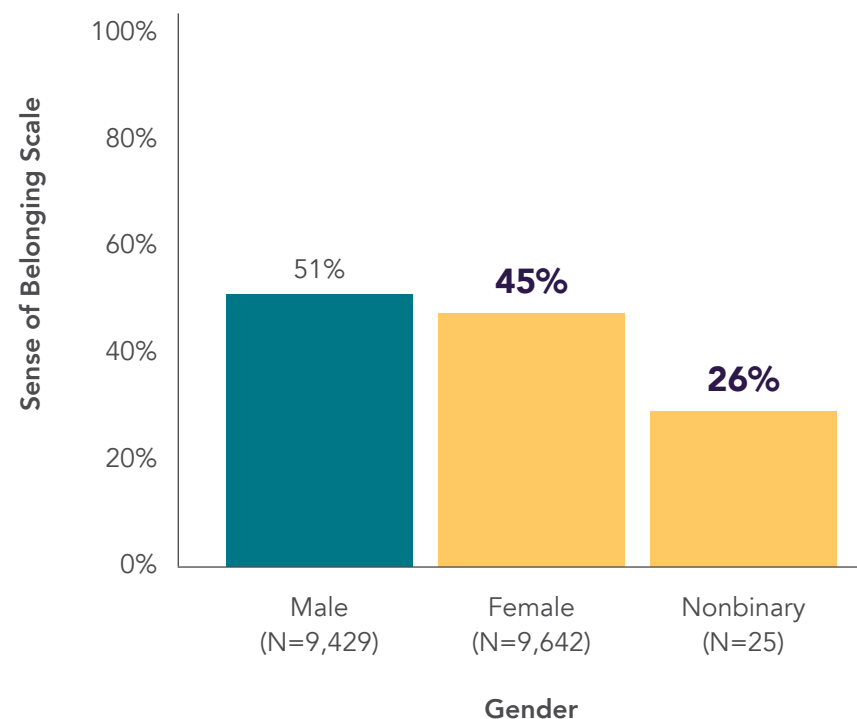
Sense of Belonging Score
Results from Sample A (grades 3-5)

Sense of Belonging Score
Results from Sample B (grades 6-12)

25   *Note: Responses from nonbinary students in grades 3-5 are not reported due to small sample size.*

At each grade level, students responded similarly on the Sense of Belonging Scale across racial and ethnic groups.

**Sense of Belonging Score, By Race and Ethnicity**
Results from Sample A (grades 3-5)

Race	Sample Size	Average Sense of Belonging Score	Difference From Overall Average (Percentage Points)
Asian	N=312	71%	+1
Black or African American	N=6,953	69%	-1
Hispanic	N=2,557	72%	+2
Native American	N=215	68%	-2
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	N=36	67%	-3
Two or More Races	N=642	70%	0
White	N=4,163	72%	+2

Sense of Belonging Score, By Race and Ethnicity
Results from Sample B (grades 6-12)

Race	Sample Size	Average Sense of Belonging Score	Difference From Overall Average (Percentage Points)
Asian	N=334	50%	+2
Black or African American	N=12,291	48%	0
Hispanic	N=4,016	46%	-2
Native American	N=317	47%	-1
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	N=93	46%	-2
Two or More Races	N=731	47%	-1
White	N=4,942	47%	-1

Note: *Students are categorized as Hispanic through an ethnicity variable that is separate and distinct from race.*

Do students feel that their teachers hold them to high expectations?

Rigorous Expectations Score
Results from Sample A (grades 3-5) and Sample B (grades 6-12)
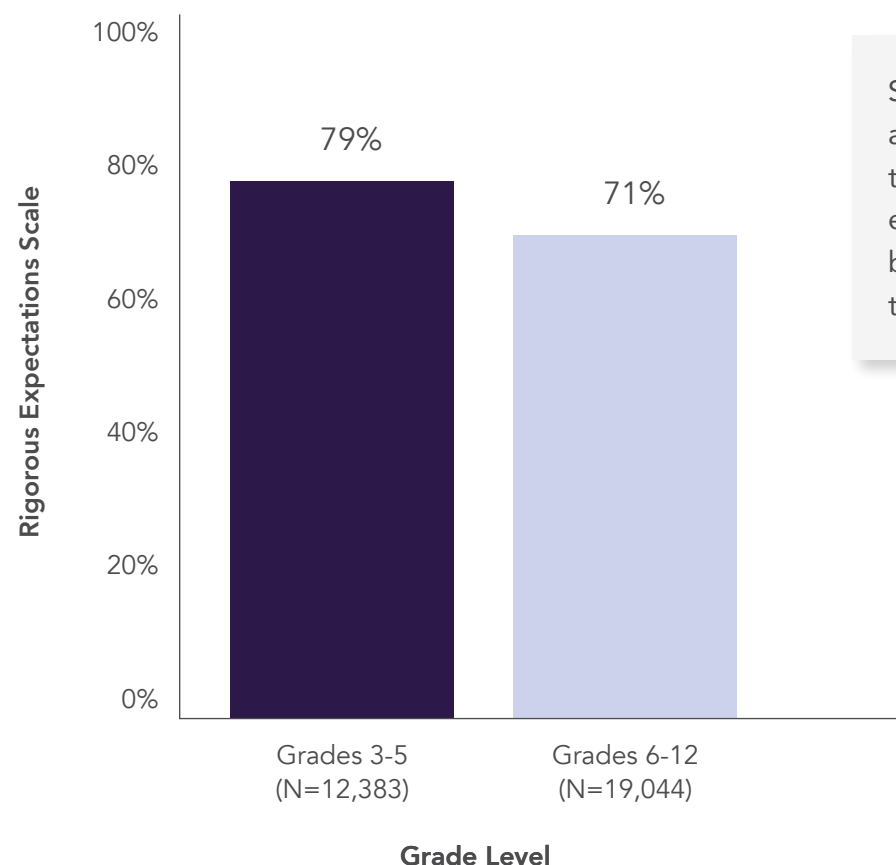
Students in grades 3-5 (79%) and grades 6-12 (71%) report that their teachers hold them to high expectations. Across both grade bands, Rigorous Expectations was the second-highest survey domain.

These findings are similar to the 2023 survey, where the Rigorous Expectations Scale score was 75% for grades 3-5 and 72% for grades 6-12.

Note: Although the 2023 and 2024 samples are not directly comparable due to differences in size and participating LEAs, 2023 results are included here for the purpose of exploring similar patterns.

Across grade levels, SWD responded less favorably than their peers about being held to rigorous expectations.
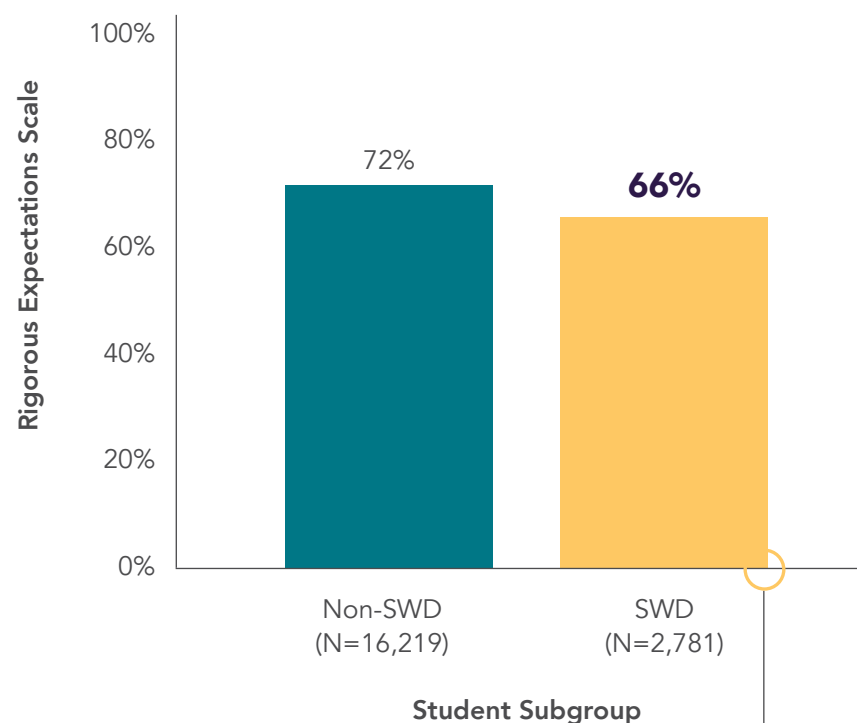
Rigorous Expectations Score, By SWD
Results from Sample A (grades 3-5)
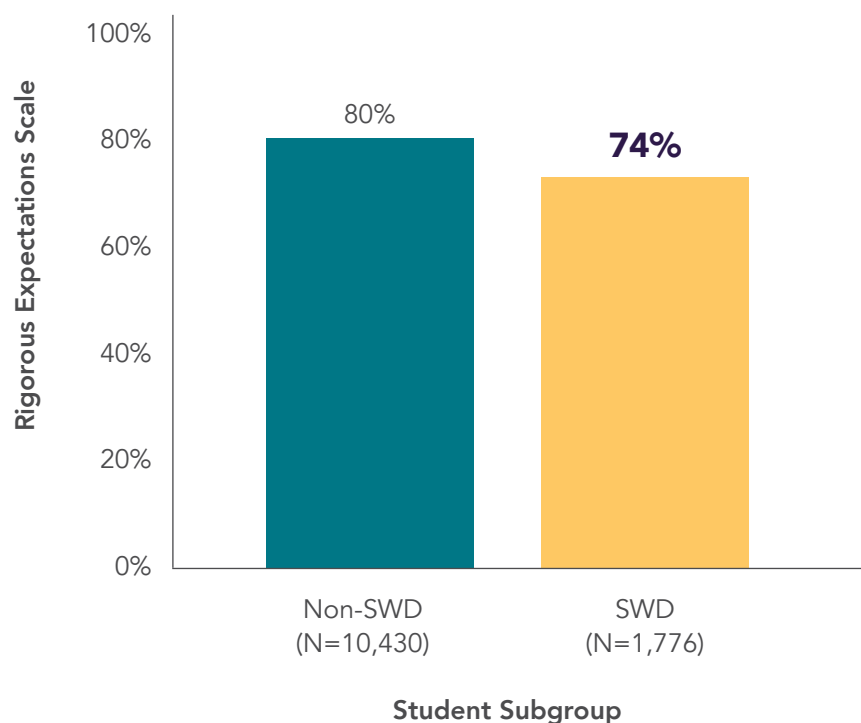
Rigorous Expectations Score, By SWD
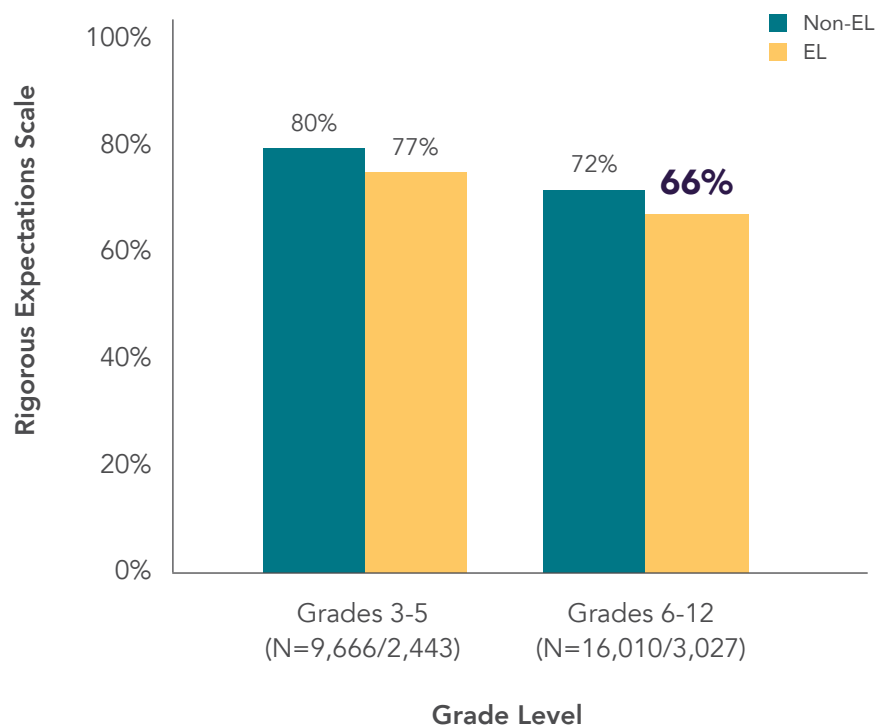*Results from Sample B (grades 6-12)*

In higher grade levels, SWD responded the least favorably when asked, "How high are your teachers' expectations of you?"

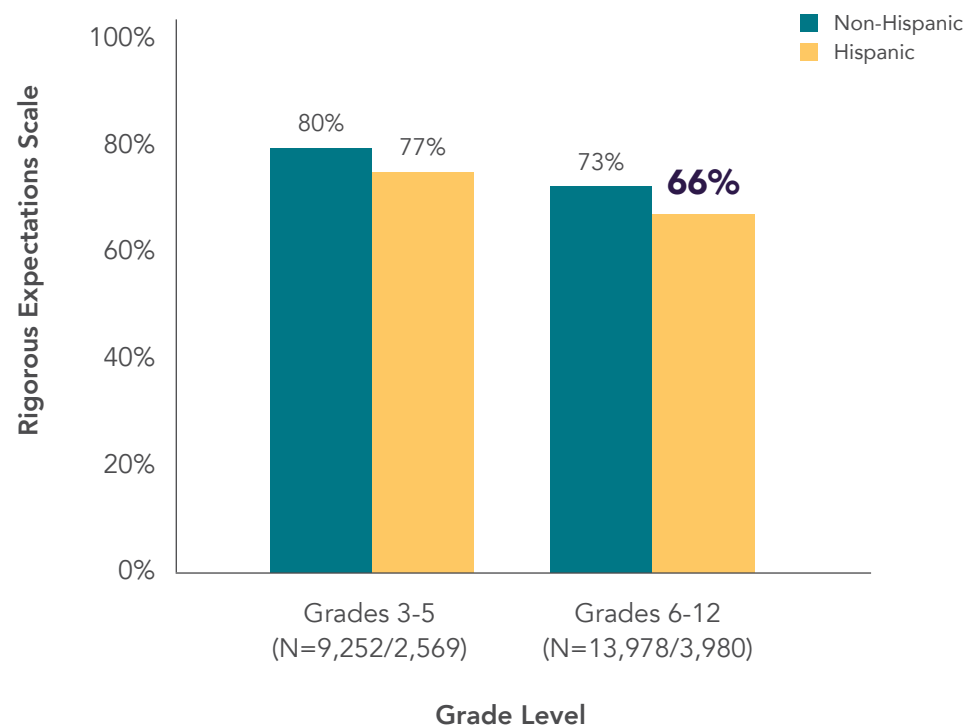# ELs and Hispanic students responded less favorably than peers about whether teachers hold them to high expectations.

Rigorous Expectations Score, By EL Status

Results from Sample A (grades 3-5) and Sample B (grades 6-12)

Legend: ■ Non-EL ■ EL

Grades 3-5 (N=9,666/2,443): Non-EL 80%, EL 77%
Grades 6-12 (N=16,010/3,027): Non-EL 72%, EL **66%**

Y-axis: Rigorous Expectations Scale
X-axis: Grade Level

Rigorous Expectations Score, By Ethnicity

Results from Sample A (grades 3-5) and Sample B (grades 6-12)

Legend: ■ Non-Hispanic ■ Hispanic

Grades 3-5 (N=9,252/2,569): Non-Hispanic 80%, Hispanic 77%
Grades 6-12 (N=13,978/3,980): Non-Hispanic 73%, Hispanic **66%**

Y-axis: Rigorous Expectations Scale
X-axis: Grade Level

When broken out by grade, student perceptions of teachers' rigorous expectations were lowest in early high school and do not appear to be driven by race.

Rigorous Expectations Score, By Grade
Results from Sample A (grades 3-5) and Sample B (grades 6-12)
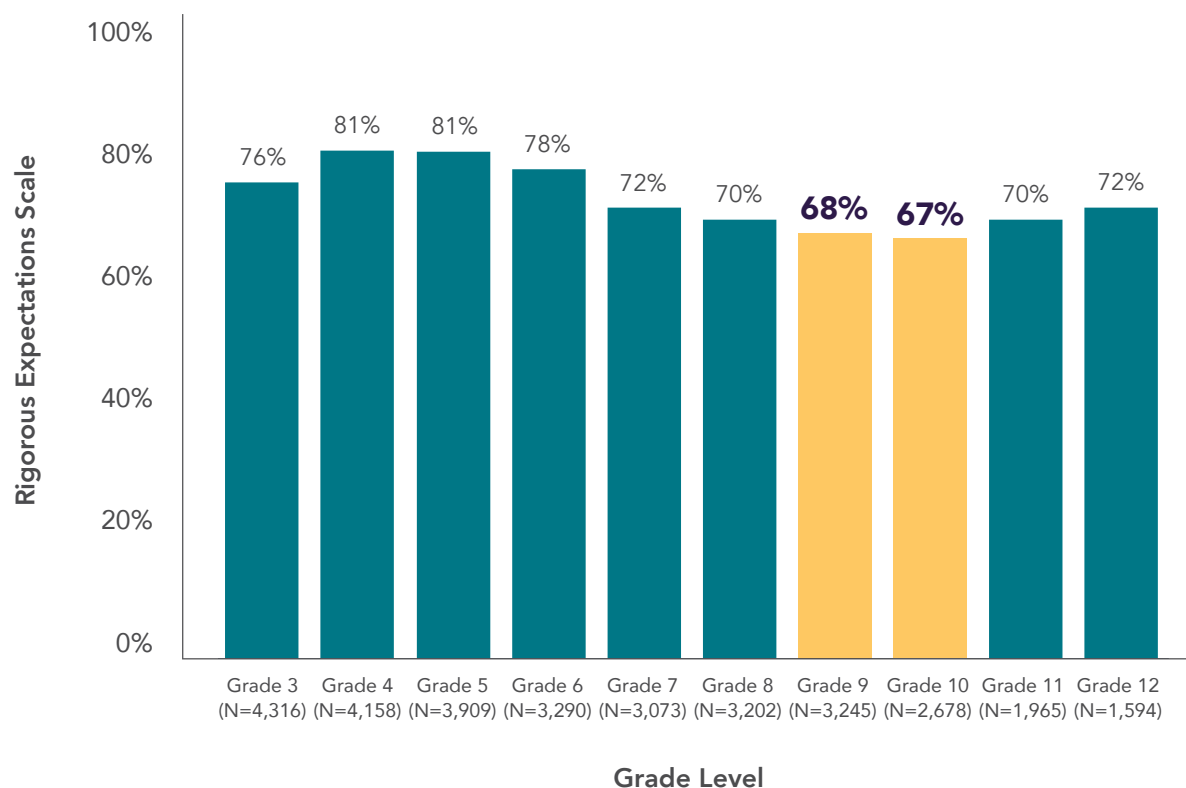
Across public schools in D.C., student racial demographics vary by grade. For example, in SY22-23, elementary school students who identify as white comprised 16% of the public school student population. However, by high school, this racial group comprised only 9% of the public school student population.[39]

To understand whether the differences here are a function of grade or race, additional analyses were completed (Appendix). These findings demonstrate that across racial groups, students reported lower rigorous expectations in late-middle school and early high school. Therefore, differences in expectations may be related to grade or age more so than race.

Across racial and ethnic groups, students who identify as Native American responded less favorably than average on the Rigorous Expectations Scale.

Rigorous Expectations Score, By Race and Ethnicity
Results from Sample A (grades 3-5)

Race	Sample Size	Average Rigorous Expectations Score	Difference From Overall Average (Percentage Points)
Asian	N=311	80%	+1
Black or African American	N=6,973	80%	+1
Hispanic	N=2,569	77%	-2
Native American	**N=215**	**71%**	**-8**
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	N=36	77%	-2
Two or More Races	N=643	79%	0
White	N=4,185	79%	0

In grades 3-5, Native American students' score was 8 percentage points below the overall average score on the Rigorous Expectations Scale.

Rigorous Expectations Score, By Race and Ethnicity
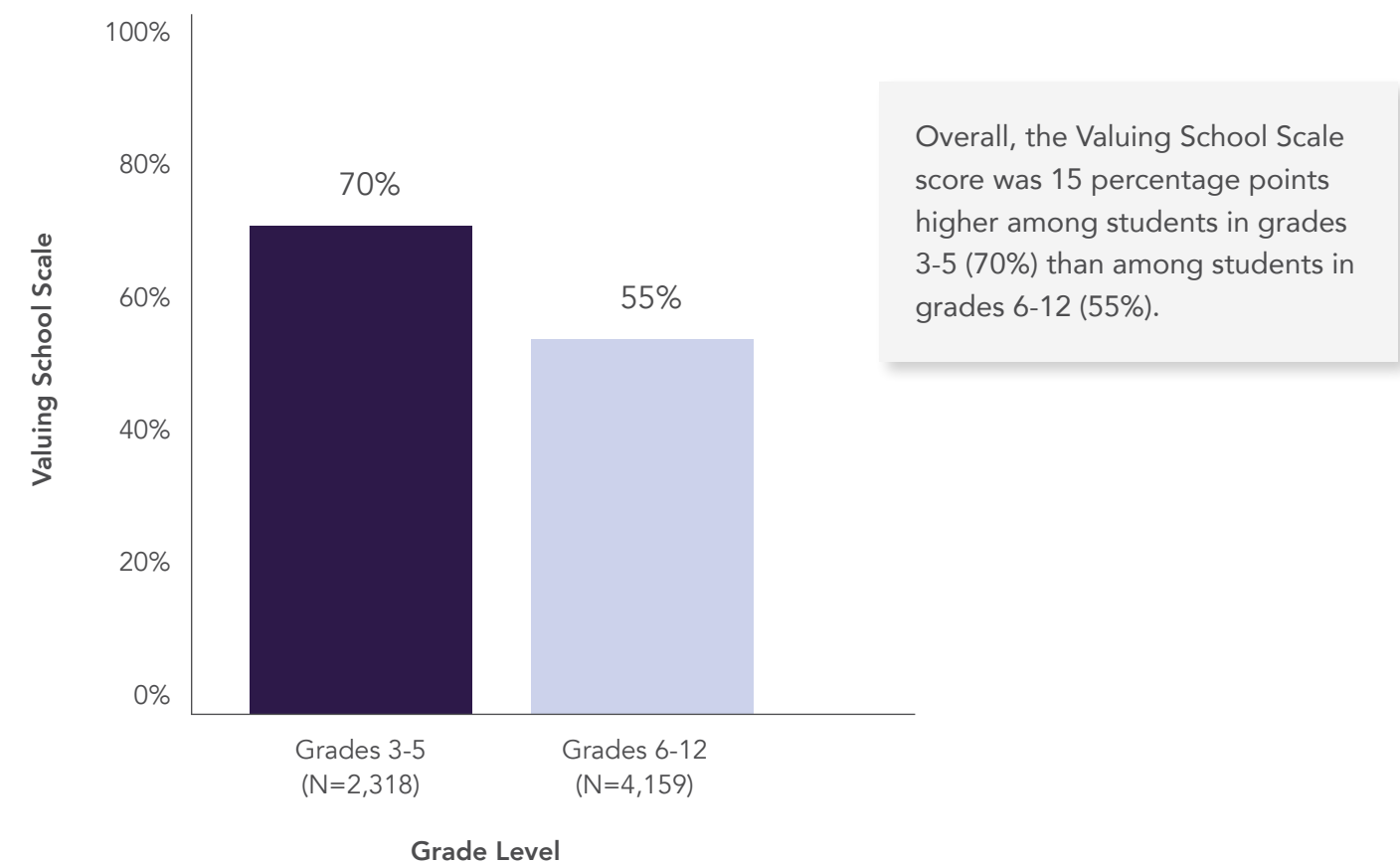*Results from Sample B (grades 6-12)*

Race	Sample Size	Average Rigorous Expectations Score	Difference From Overall Average (Percentage Points)
Asian	N=333	73%	+2
Black or African American	N=12,266	72%	+1
Hispanic	N=3,980	66%	-5
Native American	N=311	66%	-5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	N=91	67%	-4
Two or More Races	N=726	72%	+1
White	N=4,925	70%	+1

In grades 6-12, all groups responded similarly to the overall average on the Rigorous Expectations Scale.

Note: Students are categorized as Hispanic through an ethnicity variable that is separate and distinct from race.

Do students value school?

Valuing School Score

Results from Sample C (grades 3-5) and Sample D (grades 6-12)

Overall, the Valuing School Scale score was 15 percentage points higher among students in grades 3-5 (70%) than among students in grades 6-12 (55%).

This year's results align with those from the 2023 report, when elementary students (71%) reported valuing school more compared with their middle and high school peers (54%).

Notes: *Although the 2023 and 2024 samples are not directly comparable due to differences in size and participating LEAs, 2023 results are included here for the purpose of exploring similar patterns.*

Student responses to specific questions in the Valuing School Scale varied substantially.

Percentage of Students Who Responded Favorably To Question on the Valuing School Scale
Results from Sample C (grades 3-5)

How important is it to you to do well in your classes? (N=2,309)

86%

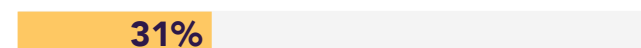*How useful do you think school will be to you in the future? (N=2,318)*

81%

How interesting do you find the things you learn in your classes? (N=2,307)

64%

How often do you use ideas from school in your daily life? (N=2,265)

50%

> While most students reported that doing well in their classes is important, a much lower percentage said they find the things they learn in school interesting or useful. About half (50%) of students in grades 3-5 reported that they use ideas from school in their daily lives, while less than one-third (31%) of students in grades 6-12 reported using them.

Percentage of Students Who Responded Favorably To Question on the Valuing School Scale
Results from Sample D (grades 6-12)

How important is it to you to do well in your classes? (N=4,133)

81%

How useful do you think school will be to you in the future? (N=4,159)

67%

How much do you see yourself as someone who appreciates school? (N=4,123)

52%

How interesting do you find the things you learn in your classes? (N=4,149)

44%

How often do you use ideas from school in your daily life? (N=4,118)

31%

33

Across grade levels, students in grades 8-10 responded least favorably about valuing school.

Valuing School Score
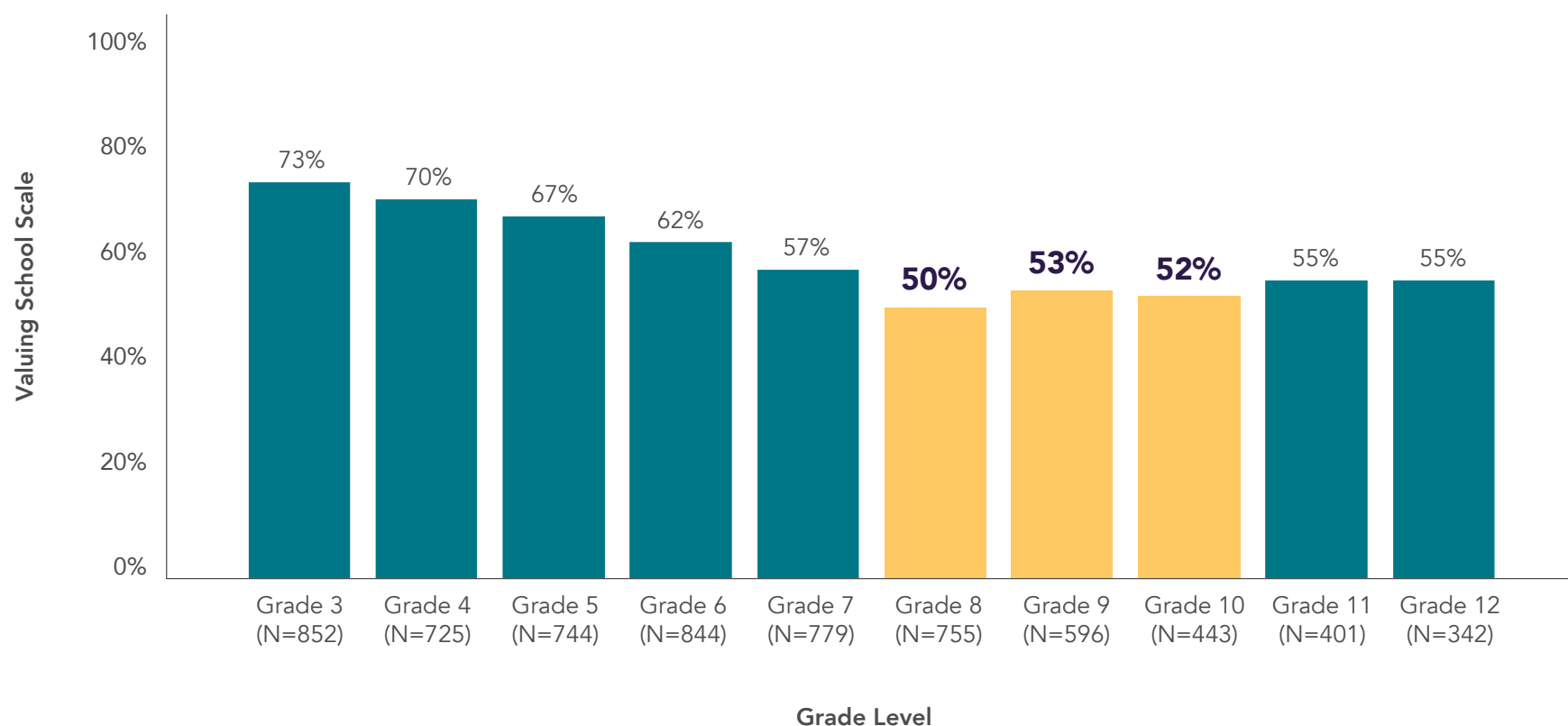
Results from Sample C (grades 3-5) and Sample D (grades 6-12)

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Well-Being in the District of Columbia

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Self-Perception and Skills

Do students believe they can achieve academically and persevere through setbacks to achieve important school, career, and life goals?

Self-Efficacy
How much students believe they can succeed in achieving academic outcomes.

Perseverance
How well students are able to persevere through setbacks to achieve important long-term goals.

Self-Perception and Skills

- Overall, the Self-Efficacy Scale score was 64% for students in grades 3-5 and 52% for students in grades 6-12.

- Female students responded less favorably than male students about self-efficacy in grades 6-12.

- In grades 6-12, Hispanic students responded less favorably than their non-Hispanic peers on the Self-Efficacy Scale.

- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander students responded more than 6 percentage points lower than all other groups on the Self-Efficacy Scale.

- Most students in grades 3-12 reported favorable scores related to persevering through setbacks to achieve important goals.

- Female and nonbinary students in grades 6-12 responded less favorably than their male peers on the Perseverance Scale.

- Students identified as at-risk in grades 3-5 responded more favorably than their peers on the Perseverance Scale.

Do students believe that they can succeed in achieving academic outcomes?

Self-Efficacy Score
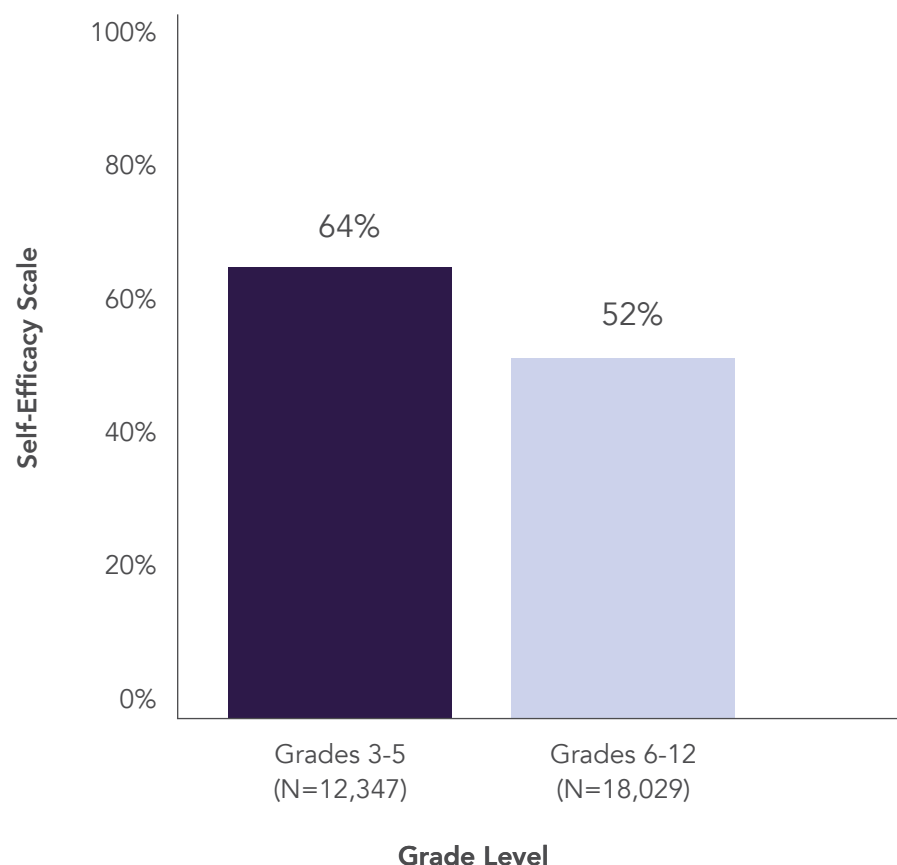
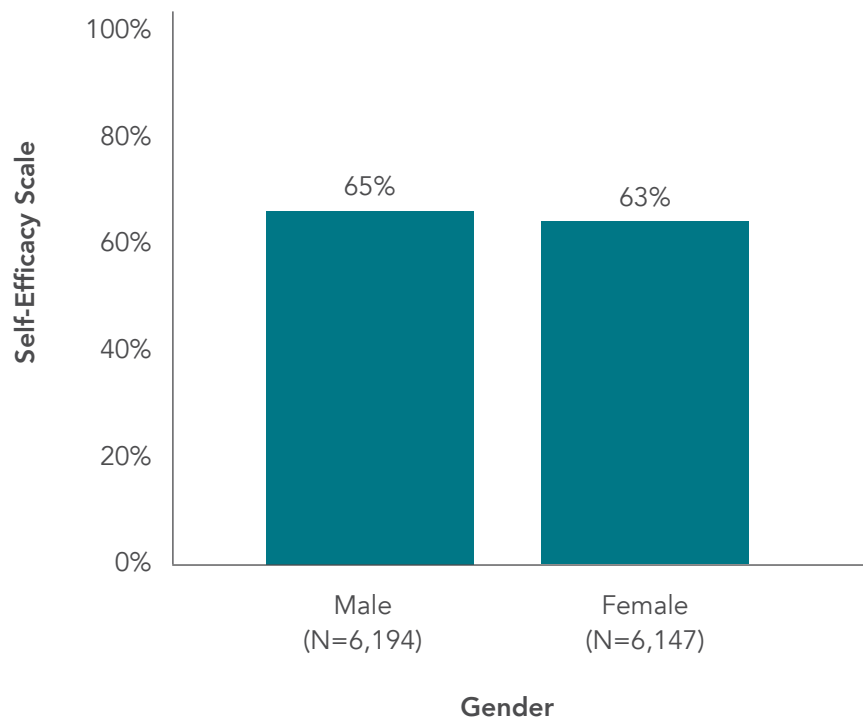*Results from Sample A (grades 3-5) and Sample B (grades 6-12)*

Note: Although the 2023 and 2024 samples are not directly comparable due to differences in size and participating LEAs, 2023 results are included here for the purpose of exploring similar patterns.

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In grades 6-12, female students responded less favorably about their sense of self-efficacy compared with male and nonbinary students.

Self-Efficacy Score
Results from Sample A (grades 3-5)

Self-Efficacy Score
Results from Sample B (grades 6-12)

Note: Responses from nonbinary students in grades 3-5 are not reported due to small sample size.

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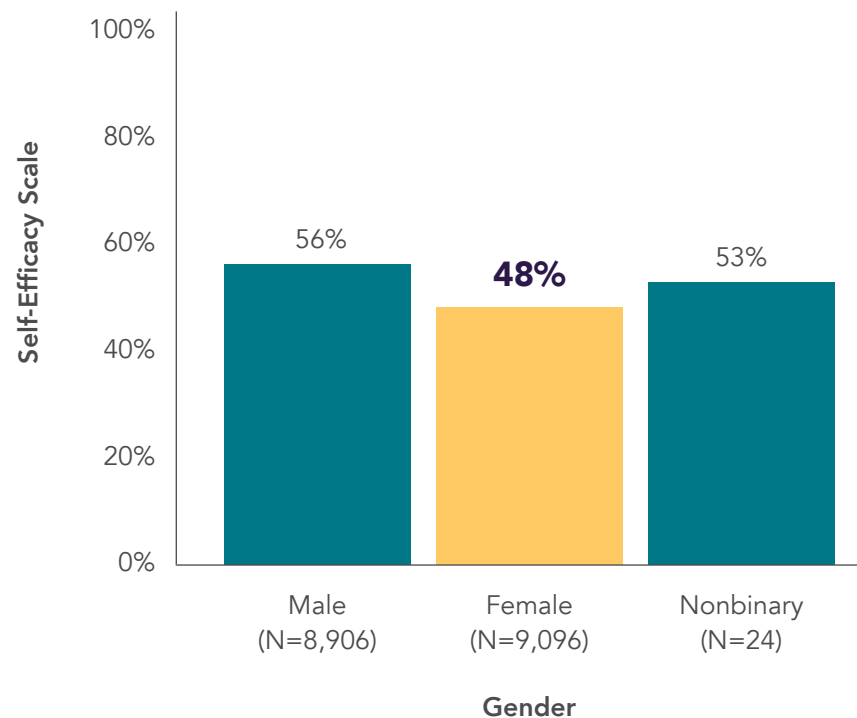
Hispanic students in grades 6-12 responded less favorably on the Self-Efficacy Scale than their same-age non-Hispanic peers.

Self-Efficacy Score, By Ethnicity

Results from Sample A (grades 3-5) and Sample B (grades 6-12)
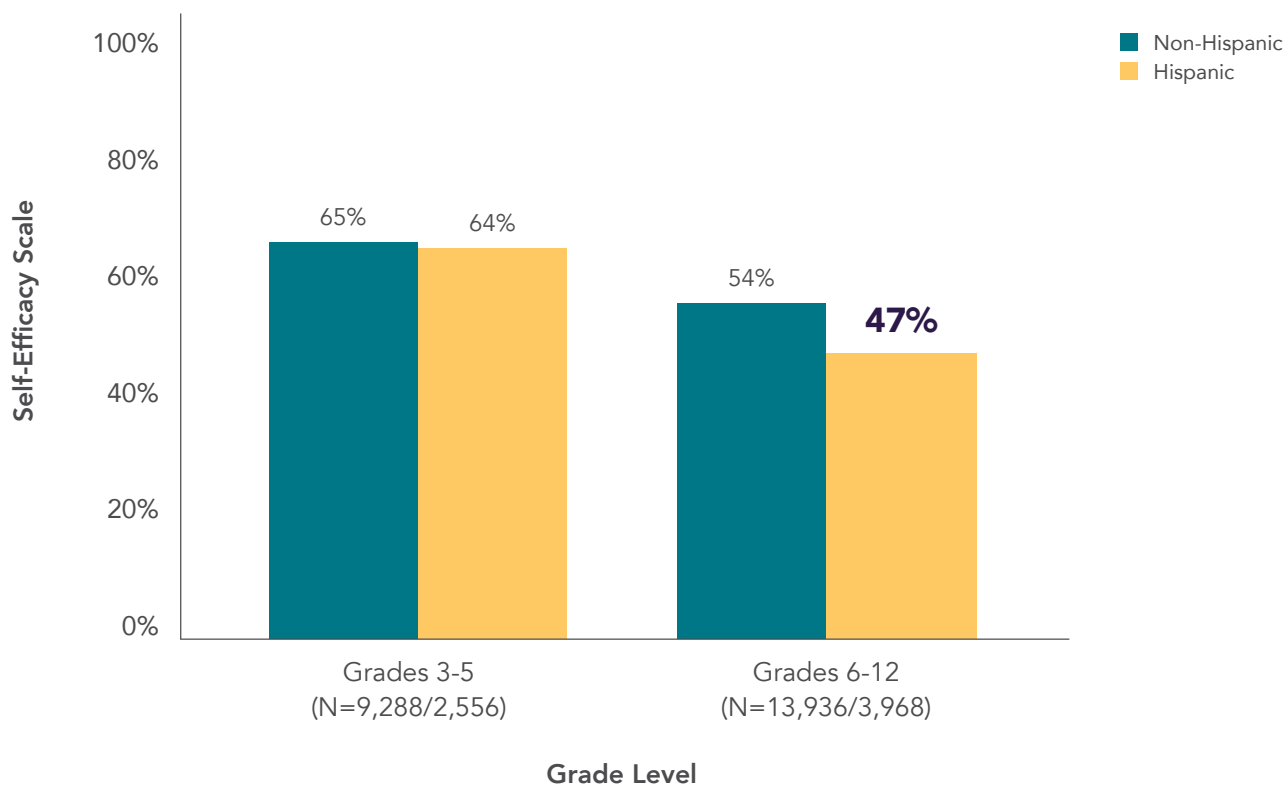
RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

A 2019 analysis found gaps in self-efficacy between Hispanic students and non-Hispanic students in grades 6-12, noting that "self-efficacy declines rapidly during middle school" for all groups.[40]

These findings are reflected in the difference between this year's Sample A and Sample B Self-Efficacy Score.

When broken out by race and ethnicity, Native American and Native Hawaiian students responded less favorably about feelings of self-efficacy compared with peers.

Self-Efficacy Score, By Race and Ethnicity
Results from Sample A (grades 3-5)

Race	Sample Size	Average Rigorous Expectations Score	Difference From Overall Average (Percentage Points)
Asian	N=309	67%	+3
Black or African American	N=6,949	63%	-1
Hispanic	N=2,556	64%	0
Native American	**N=214**	**58%**	**-6**
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	**N=36**	**58%**	**-6**
Two or More Races	N=642	64%	0
White	N=4,177	66%	+2

Self-Efficacy Score, By Race and Ethnicity
Results from Sample B (grades 6-12)

Race	Sample Size	Average Rigorous Expectations Score	Difference From Overall Average (Percentage Points)
Asian	N=301	57%	+5
Black or African American	N=12,007	52%	0
Hispanic	N=3,968	47%	-5
Native American	N=309	48%	-4
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	**N=89**	**41%**	**-11**
Two or More Races	N=621	55%	+3
White	N=4,687	52%	0

In grades 3-5, both Native American and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander students reported a lower sense of self-efficacy, recording a score 6 percentage points below the average score of all students in grades 3-5.

In grades 6-12, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander students responded less favorably than their peers, recording a Self-Efficacy Scale score 11 percentage points below the overall average.

Note: Students are categorized as Hispanic through an ethnicity variable that is separate and distinct from race.

Do students persevere through setbacks?

Perseverance Score
Results from Sample A (grades 3-5) and Sample B (grades 6-12)
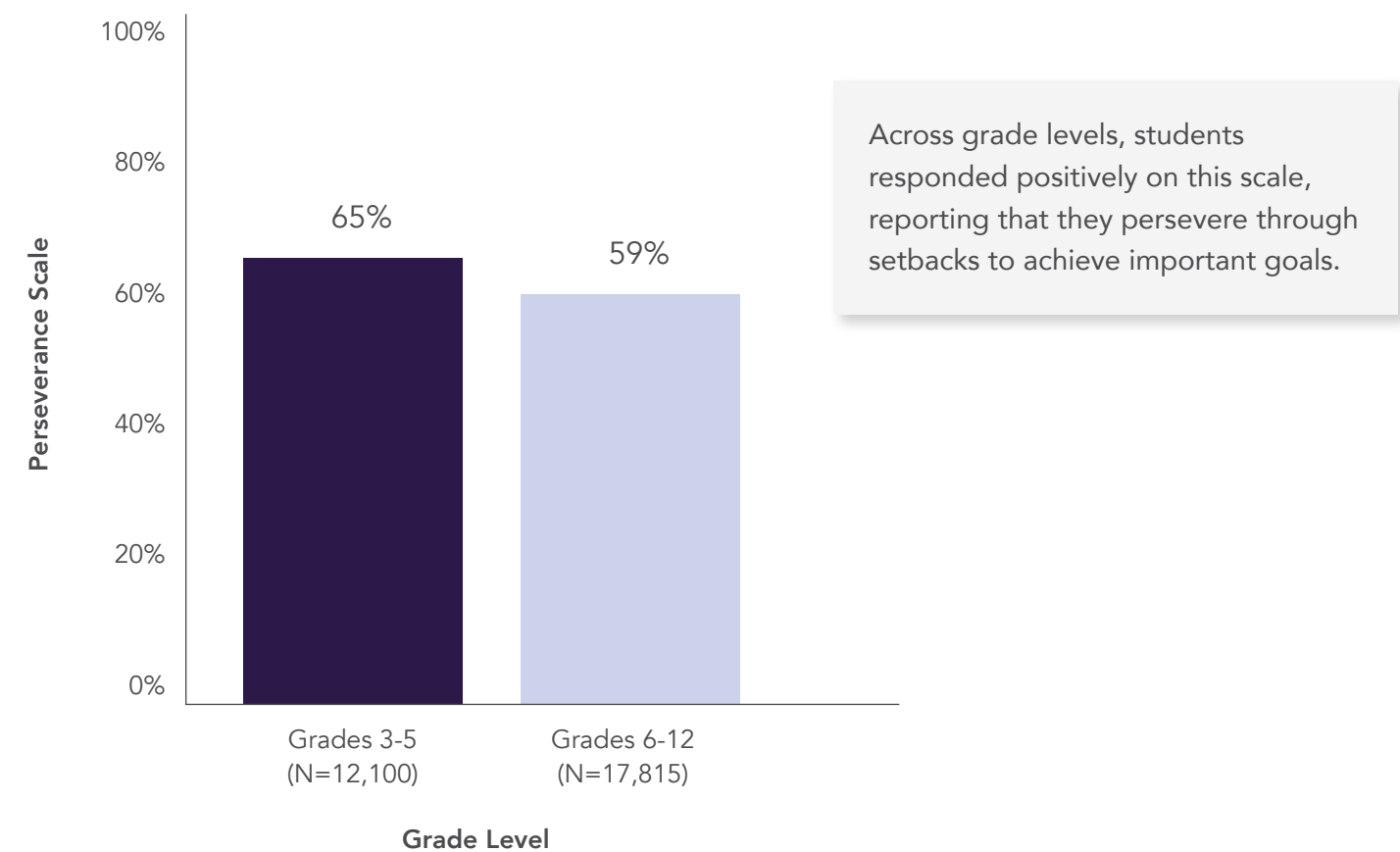
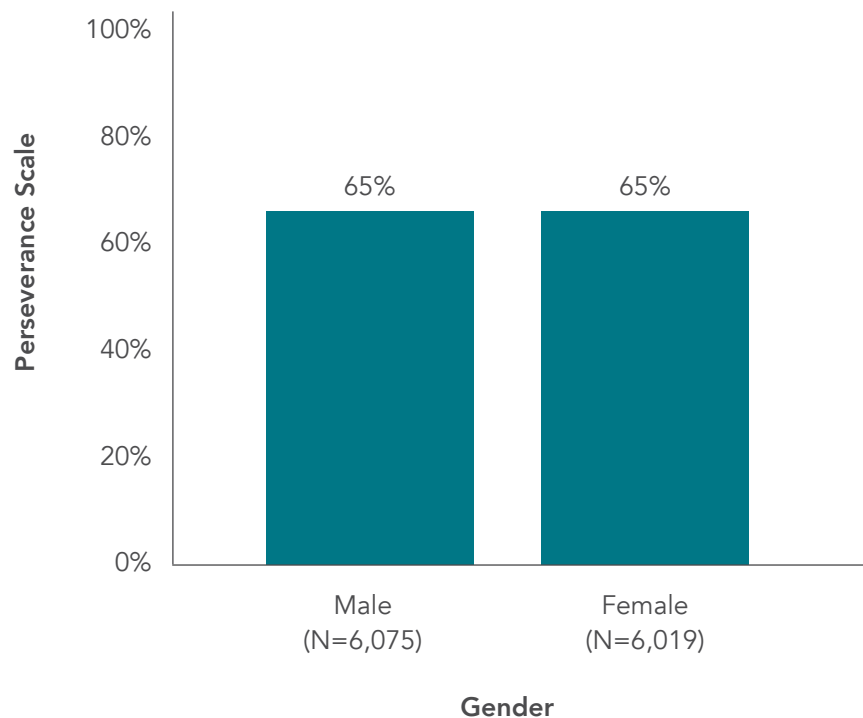Across grade levels, students responded positively on this scale, reporting that they persevere through setbacks to achieve important goals.

Perseverance Scale — bar chart:
- Grades 3-5 (N=12,100): 65%
- Grades 6-12 (N=17,815): 59%

Grade Level

Note: *Although the 2023 and 2024 samples are not directly comparable due to differences in size and participating LEAs, 2023 results are included here for the purpose of exploring similar patterns.*

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In grades 6-12, self-perceptions of perseverance were lower among students who identify as female and nonbinary compared with male peers.

Perseverance Score
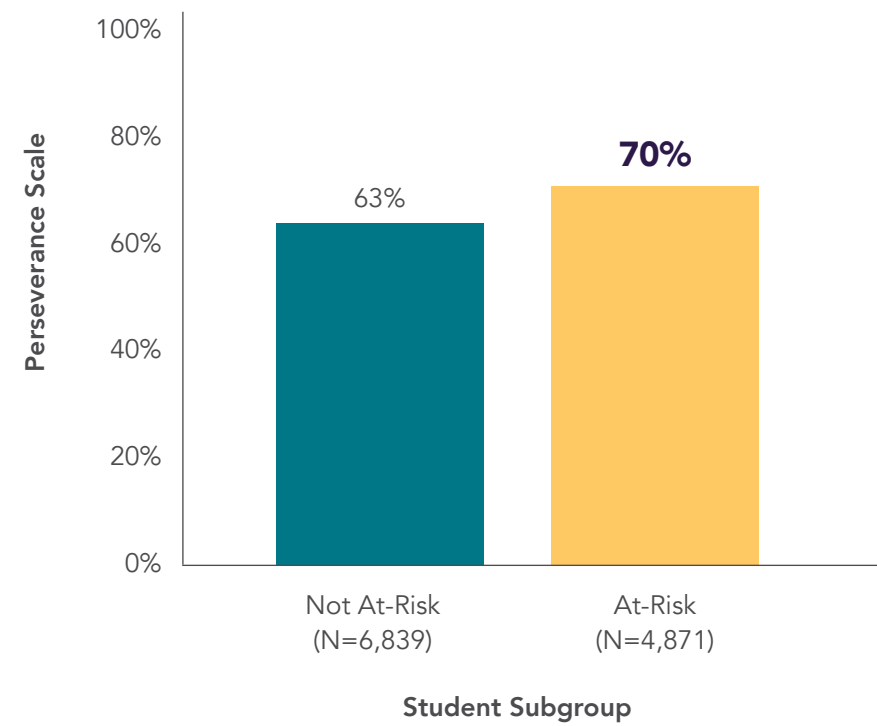*Results from Sample A (grades 3-5)*

Perseverance Score
Results from Sample B (grades 6-12)

Note: Responses from nonbinary students in grades 3-5 are not reported due to small sample size.

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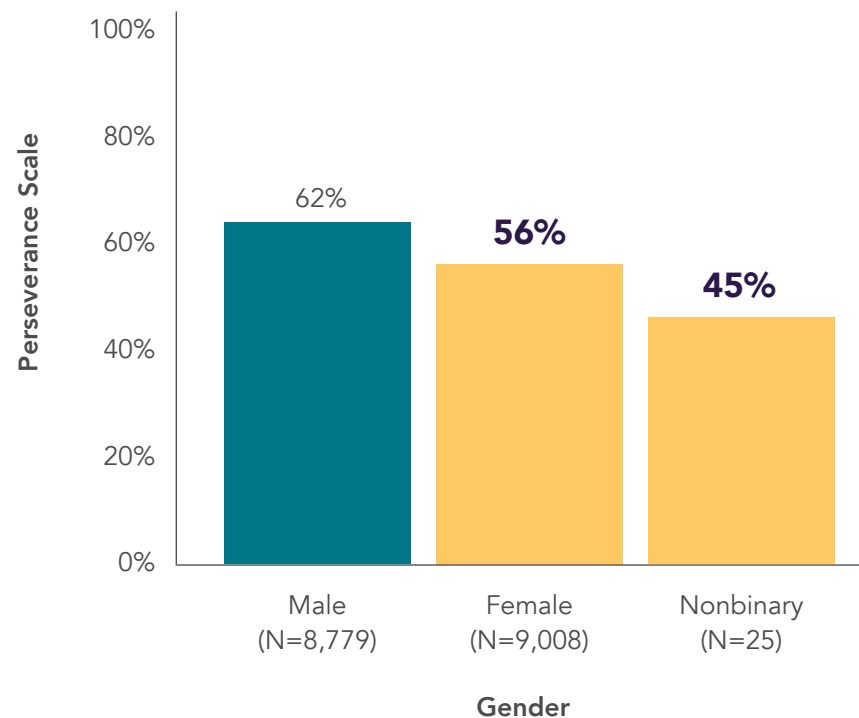
In grades 3-5, students identified as at-risk responded more favorably on the Perseverance Scale than those not identified as at-risk.

Perseverance Score, By At-Risk Status
Results from Sample A (grades 3-5)

Perseverance Score, By At-Risk Status
Results from Sample B (grades 6-12)
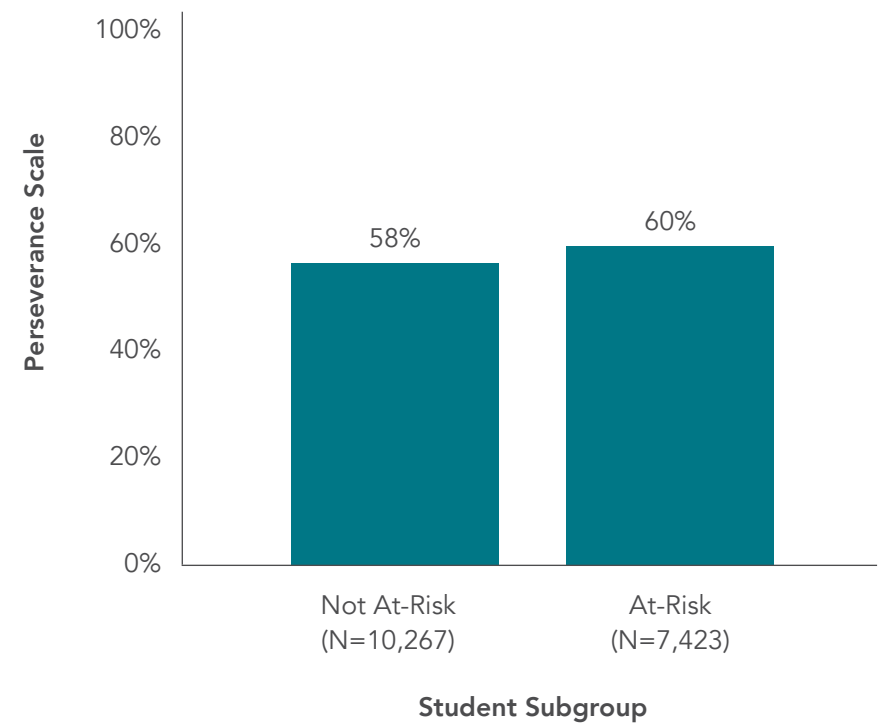
Quality Relationships

Do students have quality relationships at school and outside of school?

Supportive Relationships
How supported students feel through their relationships with family, friends, and adults at school.

Teacher-Student Relationships
How strong the social connection is between teachers and students within and beyond the school.

Quality Relationships

- Across grades, students responded most favorably on the Supportive Relationships Scale (85% in grades 3-5 and 83% in grades 6-12).

- Grade 9 students responded the least favorably (81%) and grade 12 students responded the most favorably (88%) on the Supportive Relationships Scale.

- The Teacher-Student Relationships Scale score was 62% for students in grades 5-11.

- Female students in grades 5-11 (66%) responded more favorably than their same-age male peers (58%) on the Teacher-Student Relationships Scale.

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Do students have supportive relationships in their lives?

Supportive Relationships Score
Results from Sample C (grades 3-5) and Sample D (grades 6-12)
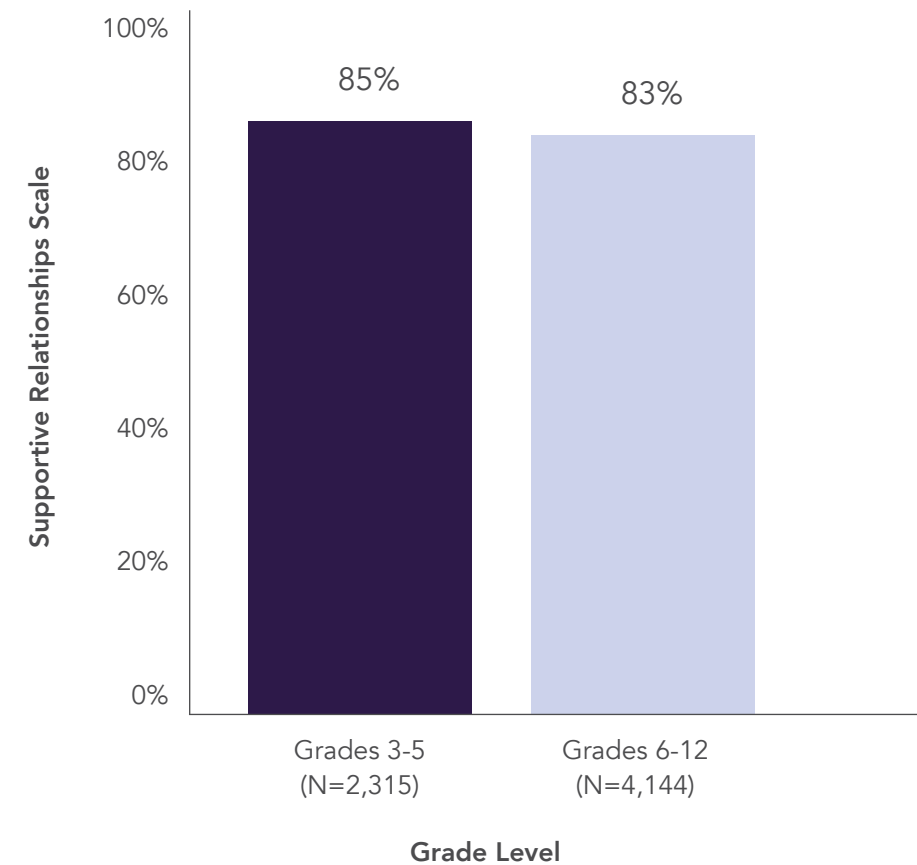
Across grade levels, a strong majority of students reported having supportive relationships (friends, family, and/or adults) in their lives.
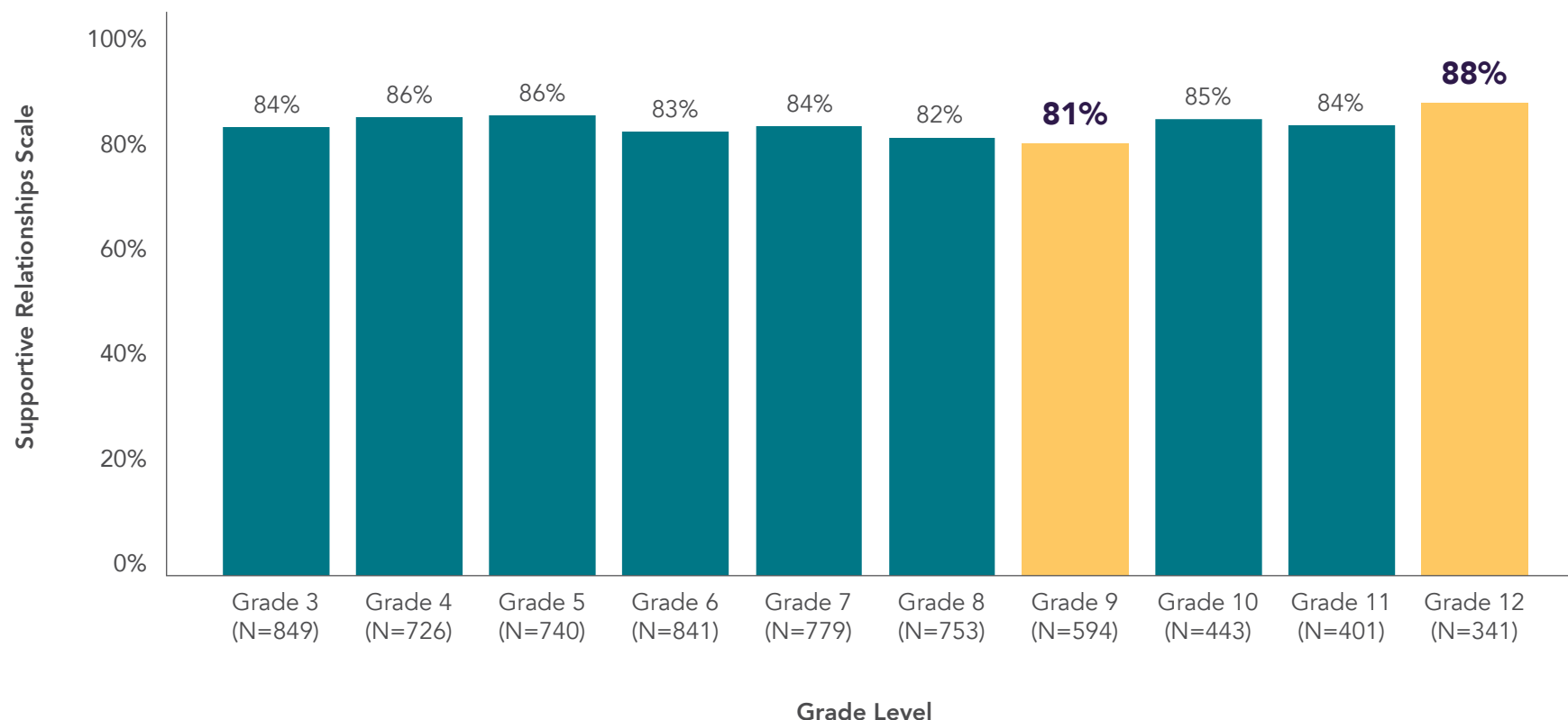
2023 RESULTS

Responses on this topic were also highly favorable in the 2023 sample, where scores for students in grades 3-5 and grades 6-12 were 84% and 83%, respectively.

Note: Although the 2023 and 2024 samples are not directly comparable due to differences in size and participating LEAs, 2023 results are included here for the purpose of exploring similar patterns.

Although most students in each grade reported having supportive relationships, responses were least favorable among students in grade 9 and highest among students in grade 12.

Supportive Relationships Score
Results from Sample C (grades 3-5) and Sample D (grades 6-12)

Bar chart titled "Supportive Relationships Scale" (y-axis) vs "Grade Level" (x-axis):

- Grade 3 (N=849): 84%
- Grade 4 (N=726): 86%
- Grade 5 (N=740): 86%
- Grade 6 (N=841): 83%
- Grade 7 (N=779): 84%
- Grade 8 (N=753): 82%
- Grade 9 (N=594): 81%
- Grade 10 (N=443): 85%
- Grade 11 (N=401): 84%
- Grade 12 (N=341): 88%

Although students' favorable responses varied, when compared with the overall score, no racial or ethnic group reported a percentage point difference greater than +/- 5 .

Supportive Relationships Score, By Race and Ethnicity
Results from Sample C (grades 3-5)

Race	Sample Size	Average Rigorous Expectations Score	Difference From Overall Average (Percentage Points)
Asian	N=60	83%	-2
Black or African American	N=1,505	86%	+1
Hispanic	N=313	85%	0
Native American	N=41	81%	-4
Two or More Races	N=126	84%	-1
White	N=555	83%	-2

Supportive Relationships Score, By Race and Ethnicity
Results from Sample D (grades 6-12)

Race	Sample Size	Average Rigorous Expectations Score	Difference From Overall Average (Percentage Points)
Asian	N=54	86%	+3
Black or African American	N=2,775	83%	0
Hispanic	N=476	81%	-3
Native American	N=60	78%	-5
Two or More Races	N=180	82%	-1
White	N=687	85%	+1

Note: *Students are categorized as Hispanic through an ethnicity variable that is separate and distinct from race. Some student groups are not reported due to small sample size or missing data.*

Do students have strong relationships with teachers?

Teacher-Student Relationships Score
Results from Sample E (grades 5-11)

N=282

62%
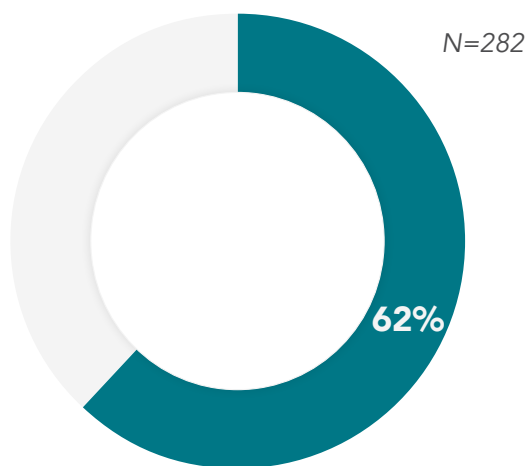
In the sample of students whose survey included a Teacher-Student Relationships Scale, students responded favorably overall (62%).

Percentage of Students Who Responded Favorably To Question on the Teacher-Student Relationships Scale
Results from Sample E (grades 5-11)

When your teachers ask you how you are doing, how many of them are really interested in your answer? (N=249)

64%

If you came back to visit class three years from now, how many of your teachers would be excited to see you? (N=248)

62%

How many of your teachers would you be excited to have again in the future? (N=250)

62%

If you walked into class upset, how many of your teachers would be concerned? (N=250)

59%

More than half of students who responded to items on this scale felt that their teachers were caring, interested in them, and invested in their well-being.

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Female students responded more favorably than male students when asked about their relationships with teachers.

Teacher-Student Relationships Score, By Gender
Results from Sample E (grades 5-11)

Teacher-Student Relationships Scale

- Male (N=147): 58%
- Female (N=135): 66%

Grade Level
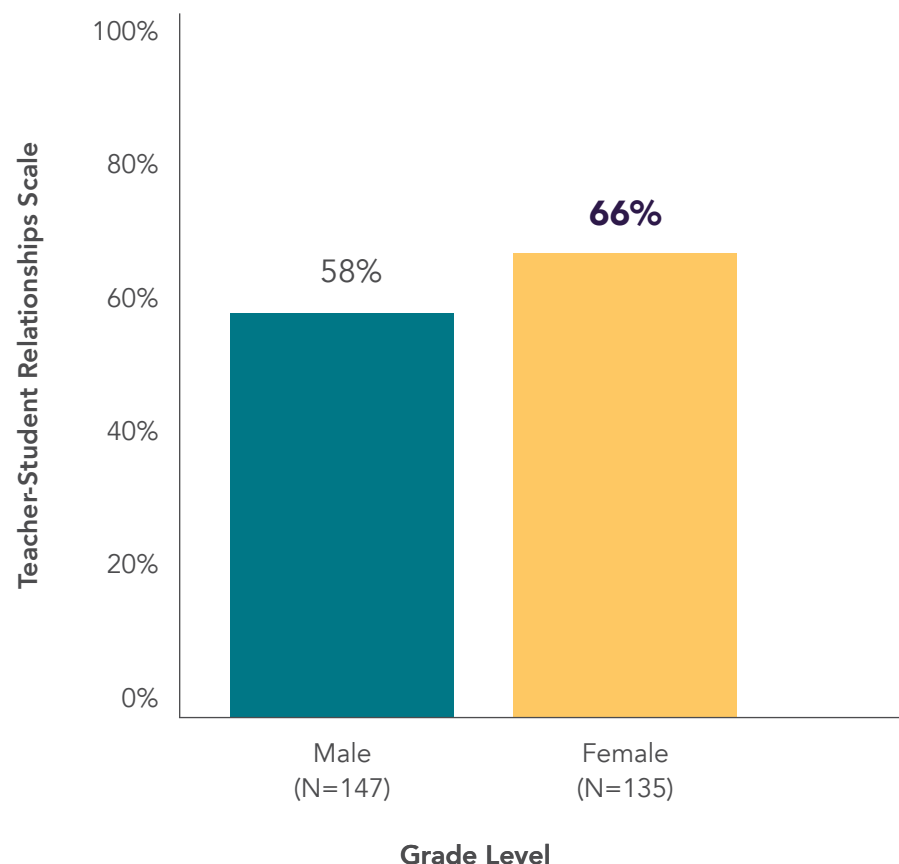
2023 RESULTS

Among last year's sample, male students (41%) responded more favorably on this scale than female students (34%).

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

These findings complement other research that has found that, on average, girls had closer relationships with their teachers across grades 1, 3, and 5,[41] and that teachers perceived their relationships with female students as closer and less conflictual than their relationships with male students.[42]

Note: Although the 2023 and 2024 samples are not directly comparable due to differences in size and participating LEAs, 2023 results are included here for the purpose of exploring similar patterns. Additionally, Sample E did not include demographic indicators for EL status, SWD, at-risk status, race, or students who identify as nonbinary.

Contents

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Report findings highlight potential next steps for D.C. educators, school leaders, and community partners.

This report seeks to support citywide efforts to understand and improve student well-being in the District of Columbia. Much like last year's report, **findings from the 2024 analysis suggest several directions for future research and opportunities for educators, school leaders, and community partners to support student well-being in D.C.**

1   As part of these efforts, educators across the city will need access to comprehensive data on student well-being and school experiences. To ensure alignment and coherence across D.C., **LEAs should work together to ensure that they are administering the same survey items to their students**. Doing so will enable researchers and schools to identify citywide trends and patterns in student well-being.

2   This year's survey results echo findings from the 2023 survey sample indicating that older students respond less favorably on multiple measures of well-being compared with younger students. Although this general pattern reflects broader research on age differences in well-being, the particularly large grade-level gaps in domains such as Valuing School and Sense of Belonging suggest an opportunity to **investigate what factors might increase middle and high schoolers' perceptions that school is an engaging, relevant, and welcoming place**.

3   This report reveals that students in grades 8-10 responded much less favorably on well-being scales than their peers in other grades. To better understand this finding, educators may want to investigate the experiences of early high school students more deeply. This could include efforts to **explore whether students may need increased supports during the transition from middle to high school** — or even whether this student cohort was at a stage of development during the pandemic that affected them differently from other students.

Report findings highlight potential next steps for D.C. educators, school leaders, and community partners. (2 of 2)

4 Much like last year, more than 80% of students who took the Panorama SEL survey responded favorably on the Supportive Relationships Scale. However, there were differences when broken out by grade level, suggesting that future research should **continue to unpack what students of various ages and demographics want and need from their relationships with adults at school**.

5 This year's survey results indicate gender differences in older students' self-perception and skills. This is an opportunity to **investigate what factors might contribute to a lower sense of self-efficacy and perseverance for female and nonbinary students** as they move into middle and high school, and tailor supports accordingly. Future research could help to provide a deeper understanding of factors that might contribute to this gender gap and support school leaders to identify tailored supports and resources.

6 Native American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, EL, and Hispanic students responded less favorably than their peers on items related to self-efficacy and rigorous expectations, with some differences by age. This finding raises questions about how these perceptions may be interrelated: How does it affect students' performance if they do not feel confident that they can be successful and do not think their teacher believes in their potential? Further research can **uncover strategies to bolster self-perception and ensure equitable academic support for students across all racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups**.

Contents

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The data within this report represent various student subgroups and racial demographics across five samples.

Student Demographics	Sample A		Sample B		Sample C		Sample D		Sample E	
	Percent of Students	Number of Students	Percent of Students	Number of Students	Percent of Students	Number of Students	Percent of Students	Number of Students	Percent of Students	Number of Students
Total Students	100%	12,481	100%	19,211	100%	2,350	100%	4,178	100%	282
Student Gender										
Male	50%	6,258	49%	9,476	49%	1,145	50%	2,094	52%	147
Female	50%	6,216	51%	9,707	51%	1,203	50%	2,078	48%	135
Nonbinary	—	—	0.1%	25	—	—	—	—	—	—
Student Subgroups										
Students Identified as At-Risk	40%	4,996	40%	7,595	26%	602	25%	1,044	—	—
SWD	14%	1,798	15%	2,808	16%	365	20%	826	—	—
ELs	20%	2,462	16%	3,080	9%	216	8%	339	—	—
Racial and Ethnic Demographics										
Asian	3%	313	2%	335	3%	60	1%	54	—	—
Black or African American	56%	7,041	64%	12,372	65%	1,536	67%	2,791	—	—
Hispanic	21%	2,583	21%	4,037	13%	315	11%	479	—	—
Native American	2%	216	2%	318	2%	41	1%	60	—	—
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.3%	36	0.5%	93	—	—	—	—	—	—
Two or More Races	5%	649	4%	734	5%	128	4%	180	—	—
White	34%	4,204	26%	4,963	24%	557	17%	691	—	—

Notes: *Some student groups are not reported due to small sample size or missing data. Students are categorized as Hispanic through an ethnicity variable that is separate and distinct from race. This distinction implies that the percentages from race and ethnicity categories will not add up to 100%. In addition, this implies that students may identify with a race listed here as well as Hispanic ethnicity. For example, an Afro-Latino student would be included in both the Black or African American and Hispanic rows in this table. Additionally, Sample E did not include demographic indicators for EL status, SWD, at-risk status, race, or students who identify as nonbinary.*

For the Rigorous Expectations Scale, additional analyses were conducted to understand if the variation in scores was a function of grade level or race.

Across racial groups, students reported lower rigorous expectations in late middle school and early high school. Therefore, differences in expectations may be more related to grade level or age than race.

Student Demographics	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Asian	73%	73%	72%	72%	72%	71%	86%
Black or African American	79%	73%	71%	69%	69%	70%	72%
Native American	69%	71%	65%	63%	61%	69%	59%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	75%	60%	79%	62%	—	—	—
Two or More Races	78%	76%	64%	69%	63%	79%	79%
White	78%	70%	69%	65%	63%	71%	70%
Rigorous Expectations Score (overall)	78%	72%	70%	68%	67%	70%	72%

Note: Students are categorized as Hispanic through an ethnicity variable that is separate and distinct from race. This analysis only includes an analysis of race.

Questions Answered by Sample A

Sense of Belonging

How well do people at your school understand you as a person?

How much support do the adults at your school give you?

How much respect do students at your school show you?

Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?

Rigorous Expectations

How often does your teacher make you explain your answers?

When you feel like giving up, how likely is it that your teacher will make you keep trying?

How often does your teacher encourage you to do your best?

How often does your teacher take time to make sure you understand the material?

Overall, how high are your teacher's expectations of you?

Self-Efficacy

How confident are you that you can complete all the work that is assigned in your class?

When complicated ideas are discussed in class, how sure are you that you can understand them?

How sure are you that you can learn all the topics taught in your class?

How sure are you that you can do the hardest work that is assigned in your class?

How sure are you that you will remember what you learned in your current class next year?

Perseverance

How often do you stay focused on the same goal for more than three months at a time?

If you fail to reach an important goal, how likely are you to try again?

When you are working on a project that matters a lot to you, how focused can you stay when there are lots of distractions?

If you have a problem while working toward an important goal, how well can you keep working?

Questions Answered by Sample B

Sense of Belonging

How well do people at your school understand you as a person?

How connected do you feel to the adults at your school?

How much respect do students in your school show you?

How much do you matter to others at this school?

Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?

Rigorous Expectations

How often do your teachers make you explain your answers?

When you feel like giving up on a difficult task, how likely is it that your teachers will make you keep trying?

How often do your teachers encourage you to do your best?

How often do your teachers take time to make sure you understand the material?

Overall, how high are your teachers' expectations of you?

Self-Efficacy

How confident are you that you can complete all the work that is assigned in your classes?

When complicated ideas are presented in class, how confident are you that you can understand them?

How confident are you that you can learn all the material presented in your classes?

How confident are you that you can do the hardest work that is assigned in your classes?

How confident are you that you will remember what you learned in your current classes next year?

Perseverance

How often do you stay focused on the same goal for more than three months at a time?

If you fail at an important goal, how likely are you to try again?

When you are working on a project that matters a lot to you, how focused can you stay when there are lots of distractions?

If you have a problem while working toward an important goal, how well can you keep working?

Some people pursue some of their goals for a long time, and others change their goals frequently. Over the next several years, how likely are you to continue to pursue one of your current goals?

Questions Answered by Sample C

Valuing School

How interesting do you find the things you learn in your classes?

How often do you use ideas from school in your daily life?

How important is it to you to do well in your classes?

How useful do you think school will be to you in the future?

Supportive Relationships

Do you have a teacher or other adult from school whom you can count on to help you no matter what?

Do you have a family member or other adult outside of school whom you can count on to help you no matter what?

Do you have a friend from school whom you can count on to help you no matter what?

Questions Answered by Sample D

Valuing School

How interesting do you find the things you learn in your classes?

How often do you use ideas from school in your daily life?

How important is it to you to do well in your classes?

How much do you see yourself as someone who appreciates school?

How useful do you think school will be to you in the future?

Supportive Relationships

Do you have a teacher or other adult from school whom you can count on to help you no matter what?

Do you have a family member or other adult outside of school whom you can count on to help you no matter what?

Do you have a friend from school whom you can count on to help you no matter what?

Do you have a teacher or other adult from school whom you can be completely yourself around?

Do you have a family member or other adult outside of school whom you can be completely yourself around?

Do you have a friend from school whom you can be completely yourself around?

Questions Answered by Sample E

Teacher-Student Relationships

If you walked into class upset, how many of your teachers would be concerned?

If you came back to visit class three years from now, how many of your teachers would be excited to see you?

When your teachers ask you how you are doing, how many of them are really interested in your answer?

How many of your teachers would you be excited to have again in the future?

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Contents

About This Work

During SY22-23, **Education Forward DC** and **Youth Invest Partners** supported a cohort of Washington, D.C., public charter schools in administering selected domains of the Panorama SEL survey to students in grades 3-12. The organizations partnered with Bellwether to analyze the schools' survey data and develop a report published in April 2023, Students Speak: A Snapshot of Student Well-Being in the District of Columbia. The report was the first in a multiyear effort and is intended to aid educators, policymakers, and communities in interpreting the survey results, monitoring progress over time, and identifying strengths and areas for growth in student well-being. This report is the continuation of last year's work, analyzing student responses on the Panorama SEL survey while using data collected in SY23-24 to summarize the current state of student well-being across participating D.C. LEAs.

Education Forward DC
An organization that invests in the transformation of public schools in the District of Columbia by funding, supporting, and connecting the work of education leaders committed to ensuring that students thrive. Learn more at **edforwarddc.org**.

Youth Invest Partners
Youth Invest Partners, formerly Venture Philanthropy Partners+Raise DC, led social change by making sustained investments in community organizations and spearheading partnerships between businesses, community members, funders, government, nonprofits, and philanthropists. Through direct financial investments and strategic assistance to strengthen organizational capacity, Youth Invest Partners deployed more than $110 million to organizations serving more than 57,000 children and young adults in our region, leading to improved academic achievement, higher graduation rates, and brighter futures for greater Washington youth ages 0-24. Youth Invest Partners ceased operations and sunset during the first quarter of 2024. Learn more at **youthinvestpartners.org**.

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About Bellwether

Bellwether is a national nonprofit that exists to transform education to ensure systemically marginalized young people achieve outcomes that lead to fulfilling lives and flourishing communities. Founded in 2010, we work hand in hand with education leaders and organizations to accelerate their impact, inform and influence policy and program design, and share what we learn along the way. For more, visit **bellwether.org**.

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