

# Gallup Student Poll National Report

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GALLUP® Student Poll



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## The Gallup Student Poll National Report

The Gallup Student Poll is a landmark new measure that will track for 10 years the hope, engagement, and well-being of students across the United States. Through a Web-based survey administered in America's schools, cities and school districts are partnering with Gallup and America's Promise Alliance to gather sound, actionable data that can explain and address the graduation crisis.

The youth voice is a critical missing part of the national dialogue about the graduation crisis, and the Gallup Student Poll gives America's young people a voice to convey their daily experiences and aspirations for the future. Research has shown that hope, engagement, and well-being are positioned as actionable targets and indicators of success, with links to grades, achievement scores, retention, and employment. Poll data facilitates new family, school, and community conversations and solutions that lead to community engagement and school and student success.

## Measuring the Hope, Engagement, and Well-Being of America's Students

The conversation about the future of American youth starts with a shared understanding of what is right with our students, rather than what is wrong. Through a review of social science and educational research, Gallup researchers chose three variables (hope, engagement, and well-being) as the target of the Gallup Student Poll because they met the following four criteria: (1) they can be reliably measured, (2) they have a meaningful relationship with or impact on

educational outcomes, (3) they are malleable and can be enhanced through deliberate action, and (4) they are not measured directly by another large-scale survey or testing program. After an extensive literature review, pilot testing of engagement items with 97,000 students and well-being items with 48,000 students, and a predictive study examining academic achievement and attendance data of 198 high school freshmen, here are the fundamental findings that are incorporated into the Gallup Student Poll project.

**Hope** - the ideas and energy we have for the future. Hope drives attendance, credits earned, and GPA of high school students. Hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust predictors of college success than are high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores.

**Engagement** - the involvement in and enthusiasm for school. Engagement distinguishes between high-performing and low-performing schools.

**Well-being** - how we think about and experience our lives. Well-being tells us how our students are doing today and predicts their success in the future. High school freshmen with high well-being earn more credits with a higher GPA than peers with low well-being. Specifically, the typical student who is thriving earns 10% more credits and a 2.9 GPA (out of 4.0), whereas a student with low well-being, completing fewer credits, earns a 2.4 GPA.

## Launching the Gallup Student Poll

The Gallup Student Poll surveyed 70,078 students in grades 5 through 12 from 335 schools and 59 districts located in 18 states and the District of Columbia. (Gallup, America's Promise Alliance, and the American Association of School Administrators invited 130+ school districts to participate in the March 2009 poll. A wide range of school districts was included in this invitation from America's Promise 100 Best Communities for Youth and America's Promise 24 Dropout Prevention Summit cities to Gallup Education client districts.) The online poll was completed on school computers during one of four March fielding options; polls were open Tuesday through Friday during school hours.

Key findings from the Gallup Student Poll include: \*

- Half of students are hopeful; these students possess numerous ideas and abundant energy for the future. The other half of students are stuck or discouraged, lacking the ideas and energy they need to navigate problems and reach goals.

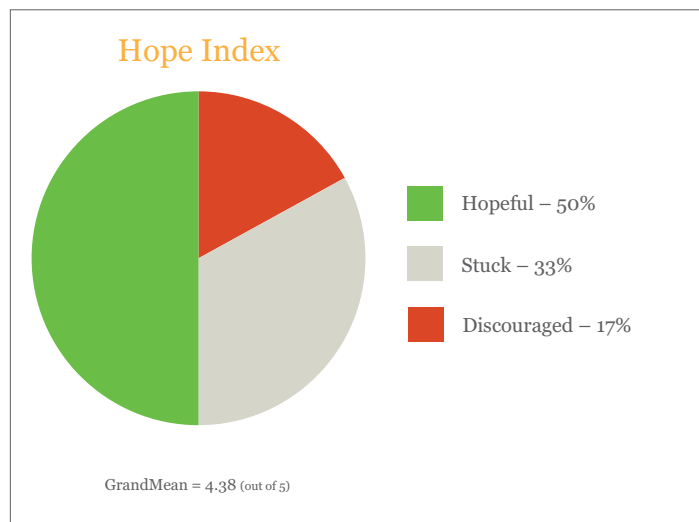
Hope varies little across grade levels. Most students (95%) agree or strongly agree with the statement: "I know I will graduate from high school." The belief that a student will graduate from high school is positively correlated with student responses to the following items: "There is an adult in my life who cares about my future" and "I can find lots of ways around any problem." Unfortunately, there is a slight disconnect between this expectation for graduation and the potential outcome suggested by data on the dropout crisis. While 95% of today's students say they will graduate, fewer than 75% of students will receive a high school diploma.

\* Findings are supported by a nationally representative sample of students collected in April 2009.

- Half of students are engaged; they are highly involved with and enthusiastic about school. The other half of students are either going through the motions at school or actively undermining the teaching and learning process.

Student engagement peaks during elementary school, decreases through middle school and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and plateaus through the rest of high school — seemingly after some of the most actively disengaged students drop out of school. This downward trend suggests that we may be losing the hearts and minds of some students in middle school, with involvement in and enthusiasm for school declining from 5<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Student responses to "My teachers make me feel my school work is important" account for some of the engagement decline across the grade levels, suggesting that students see school as less important and relevant as they advance through grades. Student responses suggest that a lack of recognition or praise in the last seven days and too few opportunities to do what they do best also may contribute to the engagement slide.

- Nearly two-thirds of students are thriving; they think about their present and future life in positive terms, and they tend to be in good health and have strong



social support. Just over one-third of students are struggling or suffering.

When students were asked to respond to this classic well-being item: “Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?” the average response was 7.32. When asked: “On which step do you think you will stand about five years from now?” students’ average response was 8.42.

Well-being varies little across grade levels. However, there is a downward well-being trend when positive daily experiences associated with well-being are considered (treated with respect yesterday, smiled or laughed a lot yesterday, learned or did something interesting yesterday, had enough energy to get things done yesterday). About 80% of students indicated that they smiled or laughed a lot yesterday.

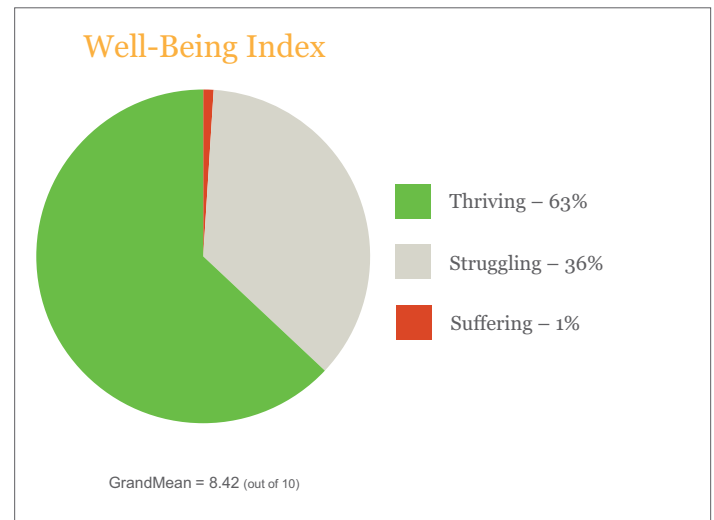
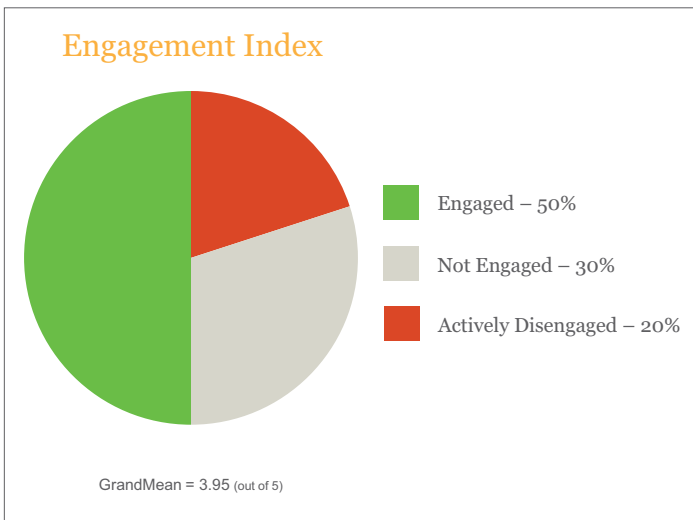
- One-quarter of responding students meet the criteria for the classifications of hopeful, engaged, and thriving. These students have abundant energy and ideas about the future and are enthusiastic about school and what it has to offer.

### Registering for the Fall 2009 Fielding of the Gallup Student Poll

Beginning May 6, 2009, district and school administrators may register at [www.gallupstudentpoll.com](http://www.gallupstudentpoll.com) for the fall administration of the Gallup Student Poll. There are four possible field periods. Fall administration will begin Tuesday, September 29 and end Friday, October 30, 2009.

### Starting a Community Discussion About the Gallup Student Poll and Raising the Graduation Rate

The Gallup Student Poll gives American students a voice. It also provides schools and communities with meaningful data about their young people. With this new information, communities can expand discussions about solutions to the dropout crisis. Involved youth, concerned parents, educators, after-school program staff, and business and community leaders are charged with the goals of doubling hope, building engaged schools, boosting well-being, and raising the graduation rate.



# Measuring the **Hope, Engagement, and Well-Being** of America's Students

1. Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?  
On which step do you think you will stand about five years from now?
2. I know I will graduate from high school.
3. There is an adult in my life who cares about my future.
4. I can think of many ways to get good grades.
5. I energetically pursue my goals.
6. I can find lots of ways around any problem.
7. I know I will find a good job after I graduate.
8. I have a best friend at school.
9. I feel safe in this school.
10. My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important.
11. If I miss school, an adult from school calls home to ask how I am doing.
12. At this school, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
13. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork.
14. In the last month, I volunteered my time to help others.

**Please think about yesterday, from the morning until the end of the day. Think about where you were, what you were doing, who you were with, and how you felt as you respond to the next six items.**

15. Were you treated with respect all day yesterday?
16. Did you smile or laugh a lot yesterday?
17. Did you learn or do something interesting yesterday?
18. Did you have enough energy to get things done yesterday?
19. Do you have health problems that keep you from doing things other people your age can do?
20. If you are in trouble, do you have family or friends you can count on whenever you need them?

**For more information, visit [www.gallupstudentpoll.com](http://www.gallupstudentpoll.com).**