Center for Universal Education at BROOKINGS

Transcend
BUILDING BEYOND THE LIMITS OF SCHOOL DESIGN

REPORT
JANUARY 2025

THE DISENGAGEMENT GAP
WHY STUDENT ENGAGEMENT ISN'T WHAT PARENTS EXPECT

REBECCA WINTHROP, YOUSSEF SHOUKRY AND DAVID NITKIN

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Overview

One of the biggest challenges schools across the United States face at the start of 2025 is the persistently high levels of student chronic absenteeism. Having skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the latest data shows it remains almost double pre-pandemic levels, with approximately one in four students missing more than ten percent of school days each year. Frustratingly, for everyone involved, including school leaders, teachers, families and students themselves, schools have only seen marginal decreases in the years since the pandemic.[1]

Education leaders at all levels—from state chiefs to district superintendents to school principals—are searching for solutions. Many are talking to families about the importance of sending their children to school every day through awareness campaigns, by providing awards for good attendance, or by sending letters home to parents with warnings about potential consequences for children missing more school. But rarely do they talk with families about how engaged their children are at school.[2]

Yet, decades of evidence point to the importance of families in student motivation, engagement, and outcomes.[3] One significant review of evidence showed that the way parents and caregivers interact with their students at home was two times more predictive of students' interest and learning in school than socio-economic status.[4]

Boosting student engagement is an area ripe for family-school partnership. Not only do families play an especially important role alongside teachers and schools in supporting engagement, student engagement can change relatively quickly when students' contexts change.[5] But to work with schools to support student engagement, families have to know how engaged their children are. Our research shows that parents, which for the purposes of this report includes any adult caring for a child, are woefully unaware of how engaging their students' learning experiences are at school. This is not the fault of parents, who track their children's engagement in their learning at school based on the indicators schools typically provide, including attendance, grades, and biannual parent-teacher discussions. Parents are in the dark because schools rarely have in-depth discussions with families about the quality of students learning experiences which directly shapes their engagement in school.

The goal of this report is to elevate student engagement as an important indicator to not only combat chronic absenteeism but to help young people thrive in school. By sharing insights on both students' and parents' perspectives on their learning experiences, we aim to help focus the education conversation on how parents and educators can better understand student engagement, more accurately assess students' engagement in school, and ultimately help improve it.

One of the best ways to understand students' experiences and engagement is to ask them.[6] In this report, we share what we have learned from children in the U.S. about their engagement and experiences of school through a survey of over 65,000 third through twelfth grade students. We also share what parents' perspectives are on their

own children's schooling experiences from a survey of almost 2,000 parents who have children between third and twelfth grade. Both surveys are nationally representative by age, gender, SES, and race/ethnicity.

We found that parents consistently overestimate the quality of learning experiences that students report having in school. For example:

- Only 26 percent of 10th graders say they love school but 65 percent of parents with 10th graders think they do.
- Only 44 percent of 10th graders say most of the time they learn a lot in school while 72 percent of parents with 10th graders think they do.
- Only 29% of 10th graders say they get to learn things they are interested in while 71% of parents with 10th graders think they do.
- Only 33% of 10th graders say they get to develop their own ideas while 69% of parents with 10th graders think they do.
- Only 42% of 10th graders say they use their thinking skills rather than just memorizing things while 78% of parents with 10th graders think they do.
- Only 39% of 10th graders say most of the time they feel they belong at school while 62% of parents with 10th graders think they do.

In the first section we define student engagement, introducing the four modes of engagement framework. In the second section we review the conditions and experiences influencing student engagement. In the third section we discuss the importance of asking students about their learning experiences to understand how engaging and supportive their school is. In the fourth section we review the survey methodology. In the fifth section we discuss our four main findings and in the final section we share three recommendations for action.

> "Boosting student engagement is an area ripe for family-school partnership."

The Four Modes of Engagement

In this report, we define student engagement as what young people do with their motivation.[7] Whereas student motivation is the internal desire or the *why* a student wants to do something, student engagement is how that motivation translates into what students actually do, think, feel and initiate (See Box 1). In *The Disengaged Teen*, Anderson and Winthrop identify four modes of engagement—Resister, Passenger, Achiever, Explorer—that young people move through during their schooling depending on the learning experiences and environments they are in.

- Students in **Resister mode** "use what power they have to let you, and their teachers, know school is not working for them. They avoid or disrupt their learning, refuse to do homework, derail class, and skip school. These signals are usually obvious to see but often mask feelings of inadequacy which can be hard to understand and require work to reverse."
- Students in **Passenger mode** "are coasting in low gear, showing up, doing the bare minimum, sometimes bringing home high grades, but never fully engaging in their work. They are uninterested in what is taught, and at risk of not developing the learning habits necessary to navigate school and work."

- Students in **Achiever mode** "seem like they are at the top of the engagement mountain. They are highly motivated and expend tremendous energy doing well in school, getting top marks on exams and studying for hours on end. Teachers love them and encourage them. But they are often fragile. Achieving becomes all about grades. So much focus on the destination means they fail to spend any of the journey figuring out what matters to them. Endless praise makes them risk averse. Why stretch themselves if they could fail?"
- Students in **Explorer mode** are at the actual pinnacle of the engagement mountain, getting good grades but are also "resilient learners who build skills that help them thrive: They achieve but don't wilt when trying new things or stumbling a bit along the way. They feel confident enough to color outside the lines, flexing their creativity skills by proactively generating their own ideas to solve problems in school or on the sports field. They are deeply involved and engaged in their learning, finding meaning amid the hard work."[8]

The four modes seek to provide accessible language to parents, educators, and students themselves to describe the visible and hidden dimensions of engagement. Anderson and Winthrop developed the four modes based on a range of data, including the literature on student motivation and engagement (see Annex I). There is an emerging consensus in the academic literature that engagement has multiple dimensions, from what children do (behavioral engagement), to what they feel (emotional engagement), to what they think (cognitive engagement).[9] There is also an increasing recognition that these dimensions, while inter-related, do not always exist in tandem. Research on engagement profiles highlights the ways in which students can, for example, be behaviorally engaged but not cognitively engaged or can be cognitively engaged but not emotionally engaged.[10] The four modes of engagement illustrate how these dimensions of what students do, feel, and think can vary across students' experiences with the addition of one additional dimension. Anderson and Winthrop elevate the initiative students take in their learning or what professor Johnmarshall Reeve and his colleagues call "agentic engagement" defined as "the student's constructive contribution into the flow of instruction they receive."[11] Agentic engagement is when students *take the initiative* to create a more interesting and supportive learning environment for themselves. This includes offering suggestions, inputs, and asking for a say in how to do work (e.g. "can we have a little more time", "can I add a drawing to my essay", "can we work with a partner on this").[12] This proactivity is what sets agentic engagement apart from the other three dimensions. Anderson and Winthrop argue that it is particularly relevant for helping students develop the skills needed to navigate a rapidly evolving, AI world where to thrive young people will need to actively seek out the knowledge and help they need to solve whatever problem is ahead of them. They describe the four modes of engagement along two dimensions: engagement and agency.

Students in Passenger mode for example are passively participating in school. They are at a minimum behaviorally engaged from attending class and doing homework to following instructions and staying on task but not taking initiative and not cognitively or emotionally engaged in their learning. A frequent comment from students when they are in Passenger mode is "I'm bored."

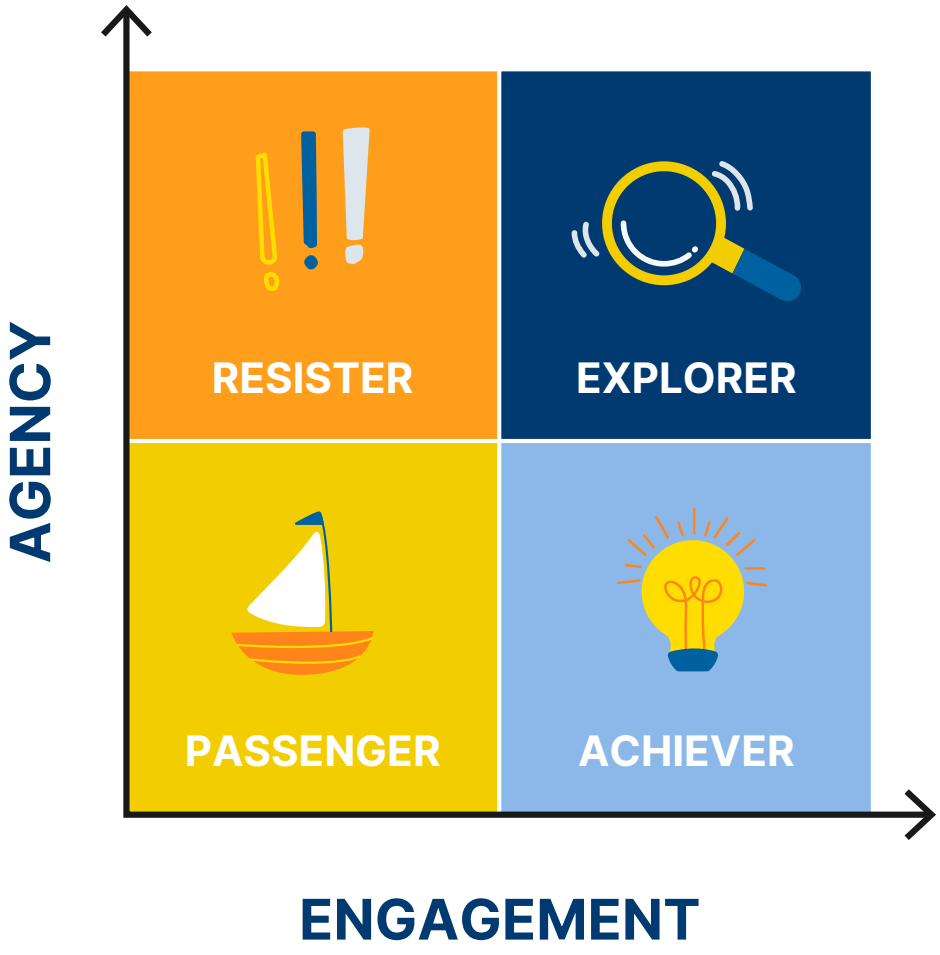
In Achiever mode, students are actively engaged in school both behaviorally and cognitively, they think and process as they learn including self-regulated and deeper learning strategies such as persisting when facing a challenge and connecting learning in school to their everyday life.[13] Sometimes they are emotionally engaged, enjoying school, feeling like they belong and being interested in what they are learning but often times they are emotionally disengaged, stressed, and risk burning out. A typical comment from students when they are in Achiever mode is "the most frustrating part of school is when the teacher isn't clear on what exactly i have to do to do an assignment right." In this mode, students are focused on responding to what is asked of them and not on influencing or shaping the flow of instruction to make it more interesting to them.

Students in Resister mode are certainly proactively influencing the flow of instruction with inputs and making their preferences heard. However, it just is not in a "constructive" manner that supports their learning. They are taking initiative but pointed away from their learning. They are disengaged on all fronts and it ranges from being the class clown, to disrupting class, to not doing homework or eventually not coming to class altogether. Frequently students in Resister mode say "school feels like prison."

In Explorer mode, students are behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively engaged but also agentically engaged. They participate, try hard when things get difficult but also try to "bend what I am learning in class to what I am interested in" by actively seeking out ways to make their learning experiences more fun, relevant, and interesting.

FIGURE 1

The Four Modes of Engagement



BOX 1

A short history of the fields of student motivation and engagement

Forty years ago, student engagement was a nascent field in the U.S. with limited research, definitional clarity, and measures.[14] In 1989, Jeremy Finn, a young professor at SUNY Buffalo, set out to examine the causes driving young people into the juvenile justice system. He was expecting to see a range of factors from drug use to poverty.[15] Instead what he found was a slow process over several years of children becoming increasingly detached from school.[16] In the decades that followed, student engagement research was heavily focused on questions still of major concern to education policy makers and practitioners today: how to help all children attend and complete school, how to prevent school pushout (i.e. drop out) and how can schools better support historically underserved students (e.g. low-income, Black and brown).

At the same time, in a separate and parallel corner of academia, research on what motivates human behavior was also developing. Initially, studies examining drivers of human motivation were primarily conducted with adults, often white, middle-class college students. The field of motivation science expanded and grew over the decades giving rise to multiple theories that helped describe human behavior for young and old alike. One of the most influential theories came from Richard Ryan and Edward Deci, professors at the University of Rochester. In 1985, they published a book setting out their *self-determination theory,* which argued that alongside basic biological needs (e.g. for food, sleep, sex), human behavior is shaped by basic psychological needs namely autonomy (the need to feel in control over your decisions and actions), competence (the need to feel effective and capable), and relatedness (the need to feel a sense of connection to others and belonging in social contexts).[17]

Today, the fields of student engagement and human motivation are at the same party, mixing and mingling, and partaking in animated discussion. There is an emerging consensus that student engagement is a multi-dimensional construct including behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement as set out by professor Jennifer Fredericks and colleagues in their influential 2004 review paper.[18] The field continues to develop, identifying new dimensions of student engagement, and engaging in collective debates as seen in the review volumes spearheaded by professors Sandra Christensen and Amy Reschly.[19]

These four modes are dynamic and can help parents and educators better see and address, student engagement but, should not be used as fixed labels that adults use to pigeonhole young people and how they approach school and learning. Rather, they should guide parents and educators on what types of supports young people need in their learning environments. Students frequently move between the modes depending on the context they are in, including the relationships they have within those contexts. Some students are in Passenger mode in their academic classes and Explorer mode in their electives and extracurricular activities (e.g. chess, photography, skateboarding, content creation for but not passive consumption of social media). Some children are in Resister mode in school but Achiever mode when focused on an activity they care about (e.g. passing the driver's test, earning money at a part-time job, mastering the perfect penalty kick in soccer).[20] Ultimately, student engagement can change quickly depending on their environment and learning experiences.[21]

So what are the factors and learning experiences that help or hinder student engagement? This is what we turn to next.

"These four modes are dynamic and can help parents and educators better see, and address, student engagement but should not be used as fixed labels that adults use to pigeonhole young people and how they approach school and learning."

Conditions Influencing Engagement

The reasons young people disengage from school vary by student and are shaped by their home, school, and community context. But there are several common themes that frequently emerge across contexts. Students experiences in their school, home, or broader community can get in the way of having their psychological needs met and hence reduce their motivation and engagement.[22] In Transcend's report *Designing for learning primer: A synthesis of key insights from the science of learning and development*, the authors identify four factors in learning environments that shape student motivation.[23] First, when students see value in what they are learning they are more motivated and engaged. This could be because what they are learning is directly applicable to helping them flourish in their daily lives. It could be because they are enjoying the learning experience. Or it could be because they get to work with peers with whom they have meaningful relationships. Second, students are likely to lose motivation and disengage if they do not believe they can succeed at a task, which is often referred to as lacking self-efficacy. Many students struggle to feel competent in school because the work is too hard, they become overwhelmed, and they do not have

the supports they need to succeed. When they lack the experience of trying something hard and succeeding they can internalize the belief that they are not capable. Third, when students have the autonomy to make decisions, even if small, over their learning (e.g. who they can study with, which of three homework options to do) they develop a sense of control that is motivating and satisfies the psychological need to be an author of our experience. Fourth, students' emotional state directly influences their motivation and engagement. When students are excited and interested in something they are learning it boosts motivation and engagement. But if, for whatever reason, students are anxious, tired or afraid, they have limited internal resources with which to attend to the learning task at hand and decreased motivation and engagement. In school students may be experiencing difficult peer environments, bullying, or discrimination. Lacking a sense of belonging among peers or within the school community hinders students need for relatedness from being met.

But, as professor Pedro Noguera argues, motivation is not everything. Highly motivated students can face direct, and sometimes structural, barriers to their engagement. He gives the example of a highly determined and high achieving but undocumented student who has no means of getting the financial aid he needs to enroll in university because he is in the country illegally.[24] Life events outside of the learning environments is one of the reasons young people leave school altogether.[25] They may want to engage but cannot due to a need to work to support their family, caretake for family members who are ill, or support themselves because they are on their own. Students may start by missing school regularly to care for younger siblings but then ultimately snowball into needing to leave school altogether. Or one can argue that it is less an issue of the life events themselves and more an issue of an inflexible school system that has not developed mechanisms for keeping young people with work or family duties enrolled.[26] Ultimately, Noguera argues, if the education community spends more time listening to students, it could be of great help in developing more responsive, motivationally supportive, and engaging schools:

> "If we were more willing to listen and solicit their opinions, we might find ways to engage students more deeply in their own education. The students may not have the answers to the problems confronting high schools, but perhaps if we engage them in discussions about how to make school less alienating and more meaningful, together we might find ways to move past superficial reports and break the cycle of failure."[27]

Listening to students' perspectives on their learning experiences in school is where we turn to next.

Asking Students About Their Learning Experiences and Environments

In 2022, Transcend developed a survey to capture students' perspectives on their learning experiences in school.[28] The goal was to bring young people's voices into the discussion of how to improve their learning environments. Students rated a wide range of experiences that all, if present, provide many of the conditions for engaging learning. For example, students ranked how rigorous and supportive their learning experiences were, whether they had support to catch up if they fell behind, or if they had the opportunity to go beyond memorizing things and explain their ideas and develop new ones. They assessed whether they felt safe, appreciated for who they are, and like they belong in school. Students responded to the relevance of their school experiences to their lives judging if it allows them to explore their interests. They also assessed how much opportunity they had to direct their own learning including having a say in how, when, where, and what they learn.

The survey does not directly measure student engagement but rather the learning experiences that influence it. In selecting the survey questions, Transcend developed questions for each of the ten "Leaps" that are the core of their work with schools and communities. The Leaps represent ten ways in which schools can support equitable, 21st-century learning and are based on evidence from the science of learning and development; education equity; and contemporary societal, political, economic, and scientific trends.[29] While there are strong similarities with instruments that directly measure student engagement, these surveys directly ask students about what they do, feel, think and initiate in school (e.g. I complete my assignments; I have friends at school; when doing schoolwork, I try to connect what I am learning with my own experiences; during class, I ask questions).

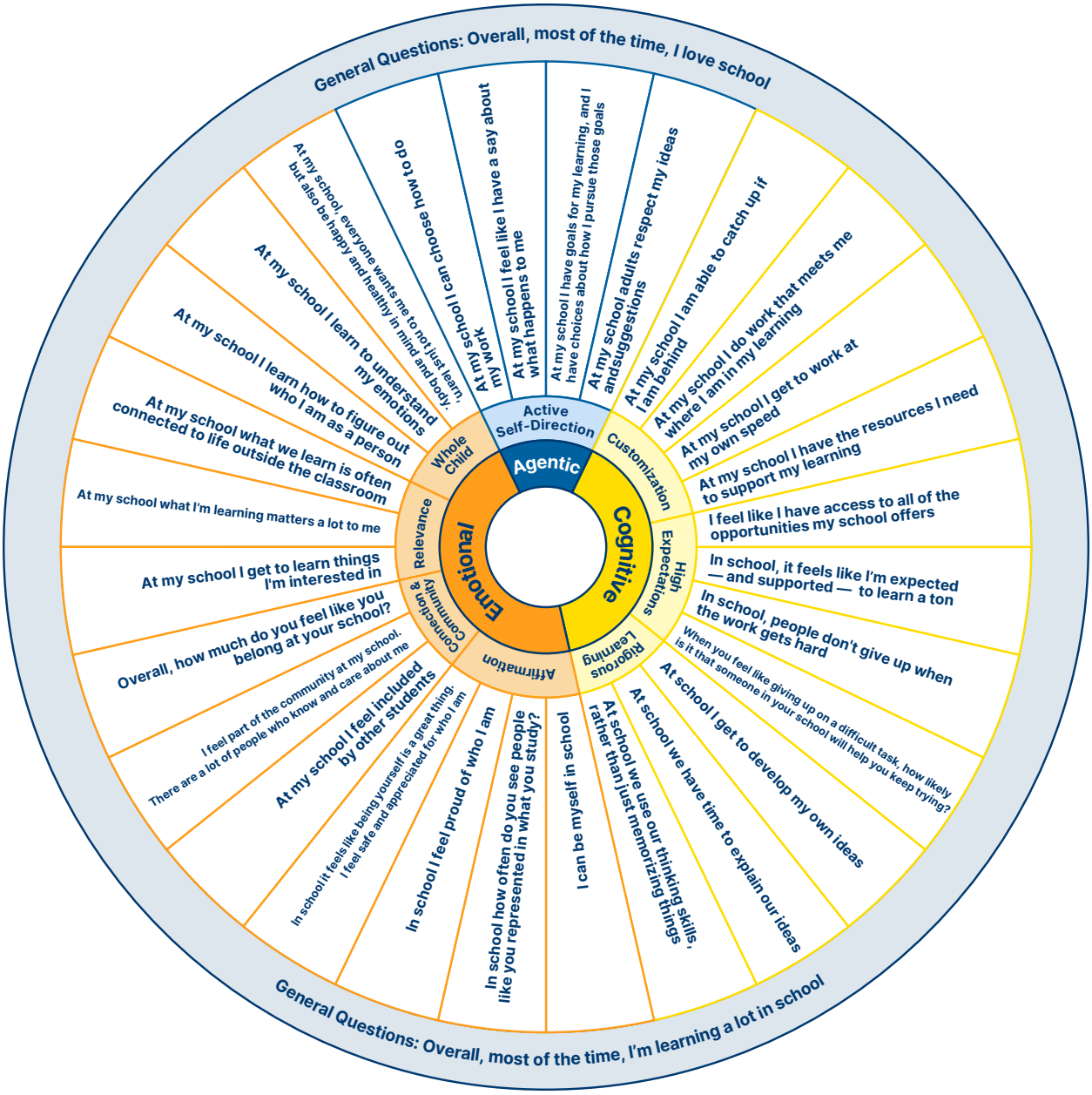
Transcend's survey questions, as seen in Figure 2 below, provide a rich picture of students' experiences. For example, students who respond that they do not feel proud of who they are in school, they do not feel they belong at school, they do not feel they are able to catch up if they fall behind, they do not learn things they are interested in, nor do they get to develop their own ideas or have a say about what happens to them in school are likely to have learning experiences that do not meet their psychological needs, sap their motivation and leads them operate in Resister mode, disengaged on all fronts. The reverse is also true. For example, students who respond that they can choose how to do their work, have choices about how to pursue their goals, that they feel their suggestions are respected, that they can be themselves in school, they feel included by other students, they have the resources they need to support their learning, what they are learning matters a lot to them, and school helps them figure out who they are as a person are more likely to have their psychological needs met, motivation boosted and operate in Explorer mode proactively engaging in their learning.

Better understanding student experiences at school can help parents and educators more accurately assess how engaged they are likely to be and importantly how to support them to become more engaged.

"In selecting the survey questions, Transcend developed questions for each of the ten "Leaps" that are the core of their work with schools and communities. The Leaps represent ten ways in which schools can support equitable, 21st-century learning and are based on evidence from the science of learning and development; education equity; and contemporary societal, political, economic, and scientific trends."

FIGURE 2

Assessing Student Experience: Illustrative Questions from Leaps Student Voice Survey



Survey Methodology

In 2023 and 2024, Center for Universal Education at Brookings joined forces with Transcend to better understand students' experiences at school and parents' perceptions of students' experiences through collaborative survey research and analysis.

In the first step of the research, CUE and Transcend conducted a novel analysis of 66,662 student responses to Transcend's *Leaps Student Voice Survey*. As described above, the survey captures students' perspectives of their school experience across ten dimensions or "Leaps" all of which are important for creating strong and engaging learning environments. For the purposes of this study, we examine eight of those dimensions including: active self-direction, affirmation of self and others, connection and community, customization, high expectations with unlimited opportunities, relevance, rigorous learning, and whole-child focus. Survey responses were collected from public, charter, and private schools across the US between October 2021 and March 2024. Of the student responses, 90% attended public schools and 10% attended charter and private schools, spanning grades 3 through 12 (see Annex II). The dataset was weighted to match the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) public school national averages along grade level, gender, family SES, and race/ethnicity

Grade Level

3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
12.6%	10.9%	10.2%	9.0%	9.6%	10.2%	11.1%	10.2%	9.1%	8.7%

Gender*

Male	Female	Non-Binary
49.1%	50%	<1%

Family SES *(based on school Free and Reduced-Price Lunch and At-Risk classifications)*

Low-SES Indicator	No Low-SES Indicator
51.1%	**48.9%**

Race/Ethnicity

White	Latino	Black	Asian	Two or More	American Indian or Alaska Native
43.7%	33.7%	12.9%	4.8%	3.8%	1.1%

*Does not sum to 100% due to rounding after weighting

ensuring it is representative of the U.S. student population along these dimensions. As seen in the weighted demographics of the sample.

Second, the team surveyed 1,895 parents in the US using an adapted *Leaps Parent Voice Survey* instrument. This survey captured parents' perspectives of their child's school experience across the same eight dimensions of the student survey (see Annex II). Qualtrics administered the survey to an independent sample (not matched with the student survey) of parents and caregivers of school-aged children (3–12 grade) from August 2023 to March 2024. Participants of the parent survey were selected such that the overall demographics of the sample closely resembled national demographics of families with students in the United States by grade level of the children, gender, household income, race/ethnicity. Below are the demographics of the sample.

The results of the student and parent surveys were analyzed by age, gender, SES, and race/ethnicity and by the location of schools in urban, suburban, or rural communities using NCES Locale designations.[30] Data from the student survey and the parent survey was compared across each survey item. The student and parent surveys were independent samples but were intentionally large and diverse in order to compare their perspectives.

To help visualize students' responses, we also analyzed the data using Anderson and Winthrop's four modes of engagement framework. We grouped

Grade Level

3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9.4%	9.4%	9.4%	8.9%	10.0%	10.1%	11.7%	11.2%	10.1%	9.8%

Household Income

Less than $50,000	Between $50,000 and $100,000	More than $100,000
32%	42.6%	25.4%

Gender of Respondent*

Male	Female	Non-Binary
43.1%	55%	<1%

Race/Ethnicity*

White	Latino	Black	Asian	Two or More	American Indian or Alaska Native
45.4%	29.5%	15.7%	5.8%	2.9%	1%

* Does not sum to 100% due to rounding after weighting

students' responses based on how they answered survey items on a five-point scale that ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 2 (Disagree) to 3 (Neutral) to 4 (Agree) to 5 (Strongly agree). We combined students whose average responses were strongly disagree and disagree because these students indicate that their experiences of school are not supportive of engaged learning. They do not feel supported to learn well, they do not feel they belong, they report finding little interest in their learning, they report not feeling cared about as a person, and they say they have little choice and voice in how they learn and do their work. These experiences are ripe for disengagement and we have classified them as "Resister mode experiences;" in other words, learning experiences that are likely to push students toward operating in Resister mode. We classifed students who reported an average answer of "Neutral" as having "Passenger mode experiences" those whose average answer was "Neutral" to the questions in the survey. These students report not having a particularly negative or positive experience, they do not feel they particularly belong or don't belong in school and what they are learning is not particularly of interest nor do they feel particularly supported to excel. Students who report these experiences are likely to be minimally engaged, participating passively but not deeply investing in their learning. We chose to group students whose responses ranged from 3.6 to 4.4 on the Likert scale together and categorize them as having experiences supporting "Achiever" mode experiences, and those with average Likert scores of 4.5 or greater as

having “Explorer” mode experiences. We did this because it is nearly impossible for a student to have an experience where they answer strongly agree for every single item, so there are no responses where the average is a 5. Therefore, students who predominantly answered agree, with an occasional neutral, were grouped together. These students reported experiences that somewhat support them to learn well. They reported feeling reasonably safe, seen, heard, interested and like they are expected to succeed. We classified these students as experiencing “Achiever mode experiences.” They have experiences that would likely motivate them to invest in their learning and supports to do well in school. For those students who largely answered a combination of strongly agree and agree, we classified them as having experiences that were conducive to Explorer mode. These student report very much or regularly feeling supported in their learning and development, regularly feeling like they belong at school, regularly feeling like what they learn is interesting and relevant to their lives, and regularly having a say over how they spend their time and do their work. These experiences are all likely to support deep student engagement.

It is important to note that the lowest score on the scale is 1, not 0. This should be kept in mind when interpreting the data, as the scale does not use zero as a baseline.

TABLE 1

REPORTED SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES	LIKERT SCALE RANGE	AVERAGE IN RANGE
Resister mode experiences	1–2.5	2.1
Passenger mode experiences	2.6–3.5	3.1
Achiever mode experiences	3.6–4.4	3.9
Explorer mode experiences	4.5+	4.7

Findings

The student and parent surveys revealed four major insights. First, less than ten percent of students report schooling experiences that are likely to regularly support Explorer mode. Second, as students age, especially once they transition to middle school, they report lower quality schooling experiences including enjoying school less and learning less. Third, parents are unaware of the quality of students schooling experiences and, especially as they get older, overestimate how much they enjoy and learn in school. Fourth, besides students age, the largest demographic difference in students reported schooling experience was by locale. Students in suburban schools report experiences that are more likely to support Achiever and Explorer mode than students in rural or urban schools. We discuss each of these four findings in turn.

#1 LESS THAN 10 PERCENT OF STUDENTS REPORT EXPERIENCES THAT LIKELY SUPPORT EXPLORER MODE

When we analyzed the student data by engagement mode, we found that the majority of students grade 3 through 12 reported schooling experiences that are likely to support Passenger and Achiever mode (44 and 38 percent respectively). In contrast, 12 percent

of students reported experiences supporting Resister mode and perhaps most worrisome of all only 7 percent of students report school experiences conducive to Explorer mode.

These figures shift markedly when we just look at students in middle and high school. In middle and high school many more students report Passenger mode experiences (49% and 50% respectively). 34 percent of middle school students report Achiever mode experience and 30 percent of high school students do. Students report increasing Resister mode experiences (13% for middle school and 16% for high school) while at the same time reporting decreasing Explorer mode experiences. Less than 4 percent of students across middle school and high school report experiencing learning environments that are supportive of Explorer mode. Surprisingly we found little difference in these responses across gender, family SES, and race/ethnicity.

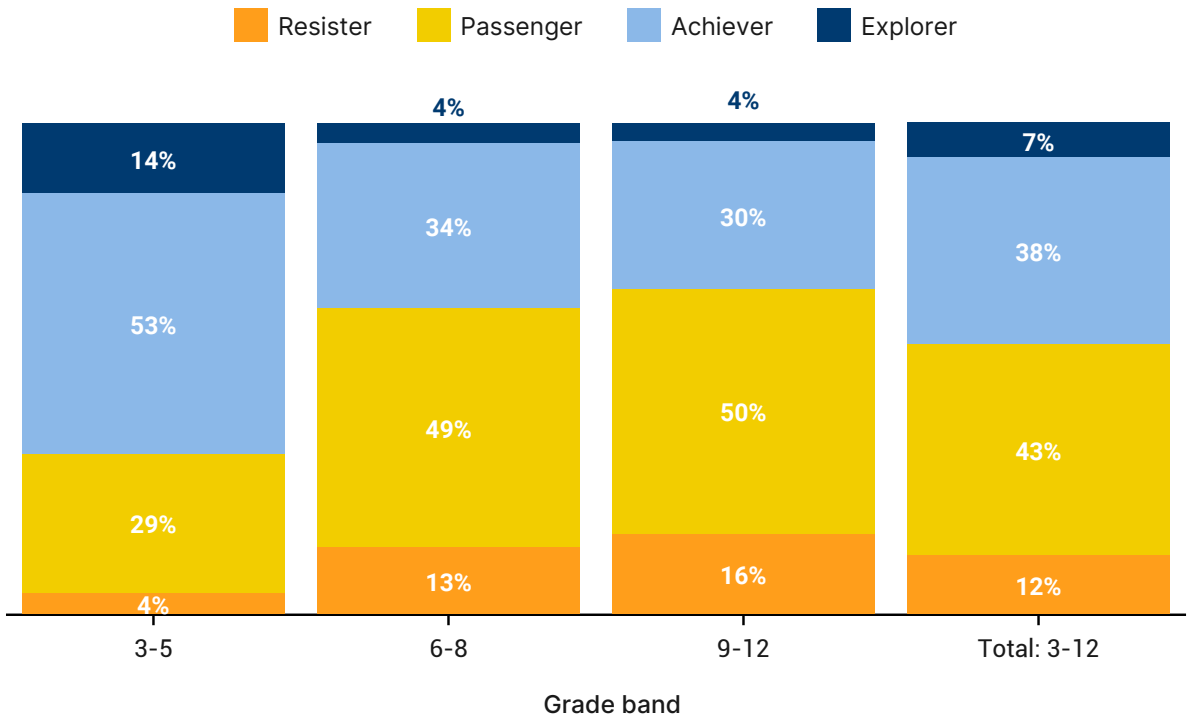
This means regardless of demographic background, very few middle and high students say, for example, that their school lets them develop their own ideas or learn things that are connected to life outside the classroom. For middle and high school students, we found only:

- 27% percent of students agree/strongly agree that "At my school what we learn is often connected to life outside the classroom"
- 28% percent of students agree/strongly agree that "In school, people don't give up when the work gets hard"
- 30% percent of students agree/strongly agree that "At my school I feel like I have a say about what happens to me"
- 36% percent of students agree/strongly agree that "At my school I get to develop my own ideas."

Less than half of middle and high school students say, for example, that they feel part of the school

FIGURE 3

Learning Experiences by Mode of Engagement and Grade Band



community and that they have time to explain their ideas. We found:

- 44% percent of students agree/strongly agree that “Adults at my school respect my ideas and suggestions”
- 48% percent of students agree/strongly agree that “I feel part of the community at my school. There are a lot of people who know and care about me”
- 48% percent of students agree/strongly agree that “At my school we use our thinking skills, rather than just memorizing things”
- 49% percent of students agree/strongly agree that “At my school we have time to explain our ideas.”

On the brighter side, it appears schools have instead been heavily focused on helping students who are struggling to improve. Almost 60% of students, one of the most favorable responses, said they could catch up if they were behind.

- 58% percent of students agree/strongly agree that “At my school I am able to catch up if I am behind”.

#2 AS THEY GET OLDER STUDENTS REPORT DECREASING ENJOYMENT AND LEARNING IN SCHOOL

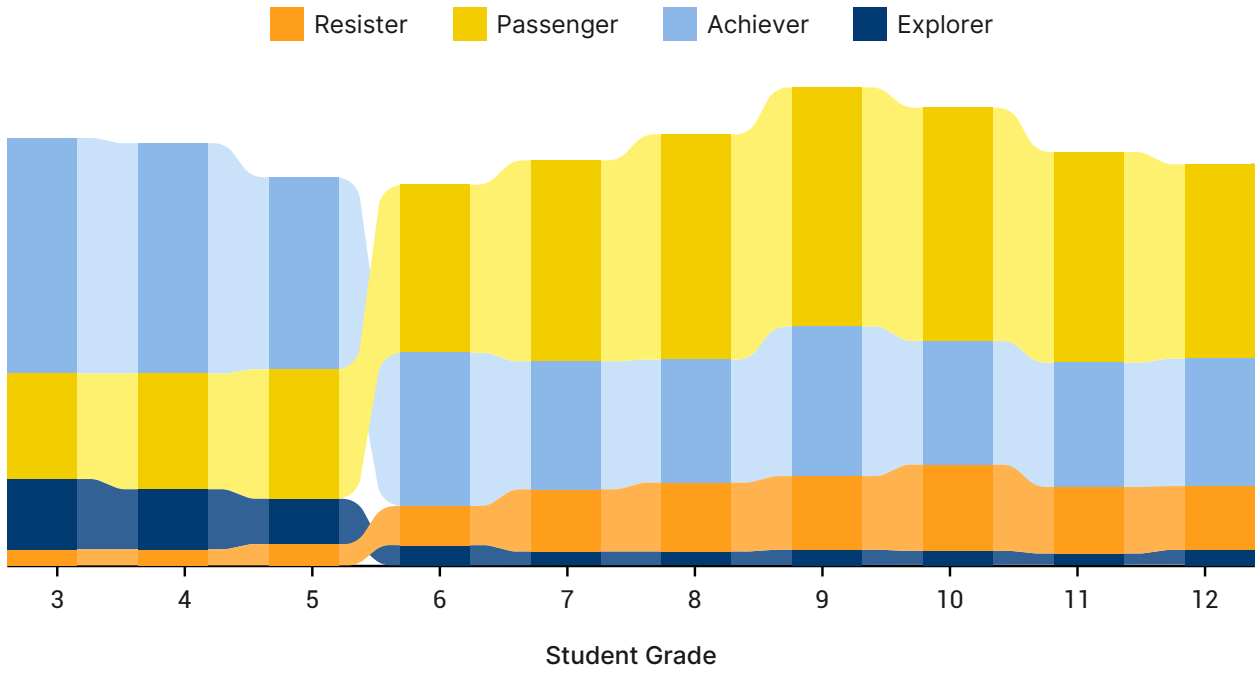
By far the biggest demographic difference in student responses is by age. This is perhaps easiest to see in students’ response to two questions:

- Overall, most of the time I love school.
- Overall, most of the time, I am learning a lot in school.

For both questions, the older students were, the less they love school and less they report learning a lot. We found that both these questions—whether students most of the time love school and perceive that they learn a lot in school—are a useful

FIGURE 4

Learning Experiences by Mode of Engagement and Grade



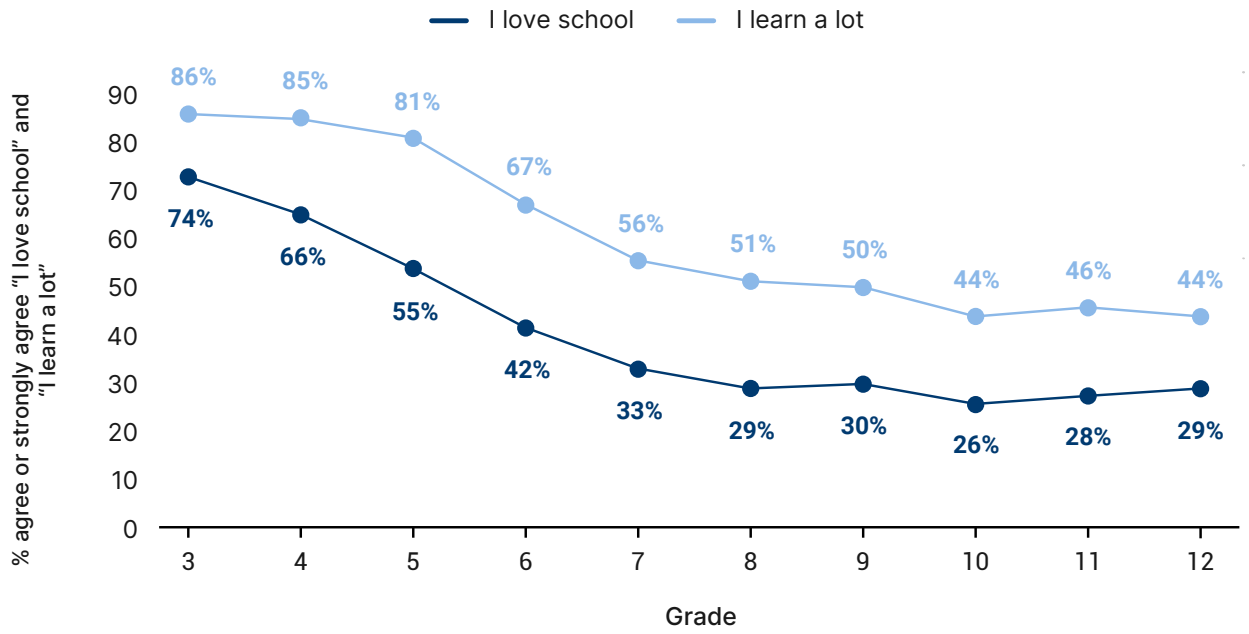
indicator of their overall schooling experience. In 3rd grade, 74 percent of students report they love school (as indicated by them selecting one of the top two options on the five-point Likert scale, corresponding to "agree" or "strongly agree"), which drops drastically to 42 percent, when most students enter middle school, and by 10th grade only 26 percent of students say they love school. In the last two years of high school, as students approach graduation, the percent of students saying they love school rises slightly to 28 and 29 percent for 11th and 12th grade.

While more students report that they learn a lot in school than they enjoy school, there is a similar decline the older students are. Surprisingly, given that most schools' curriculum increases in rigor as young people age, students say they learn less the older they get. In third grade, 86 percent of students say they learn a lot in school which drops to 67 percent in 6th grade and 44 percent by 10th grade.

It is notable that students report learning less and loving school less the older they are. Adolescence is a time of active brain development and young people are primed to soak in information, make meaning of the world around them, seek connection, and find a way to "stand out to fit in."[31] Across the country, students report that schools somehow manage not to unleash their learning potential but to limit it. It is also notable that students report learning a lot in school more frequently than loving school. Helping children learn is the core business of school and learning can be hard. But learning well can also be thrilling—the sense of accomplishment in mastering hard things, the rewards of following your curiosity—and we find it worrisome that many students report their experience is largely one of learning without joy. This does not bode well for supporting student engagement in school and a culture of lifelong learning beyond it.

FIGURE 5

Percent of students who report: "I love school" and "I am learning a lot" by grade



#3 PARENTS OVERESTIMATE THE QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

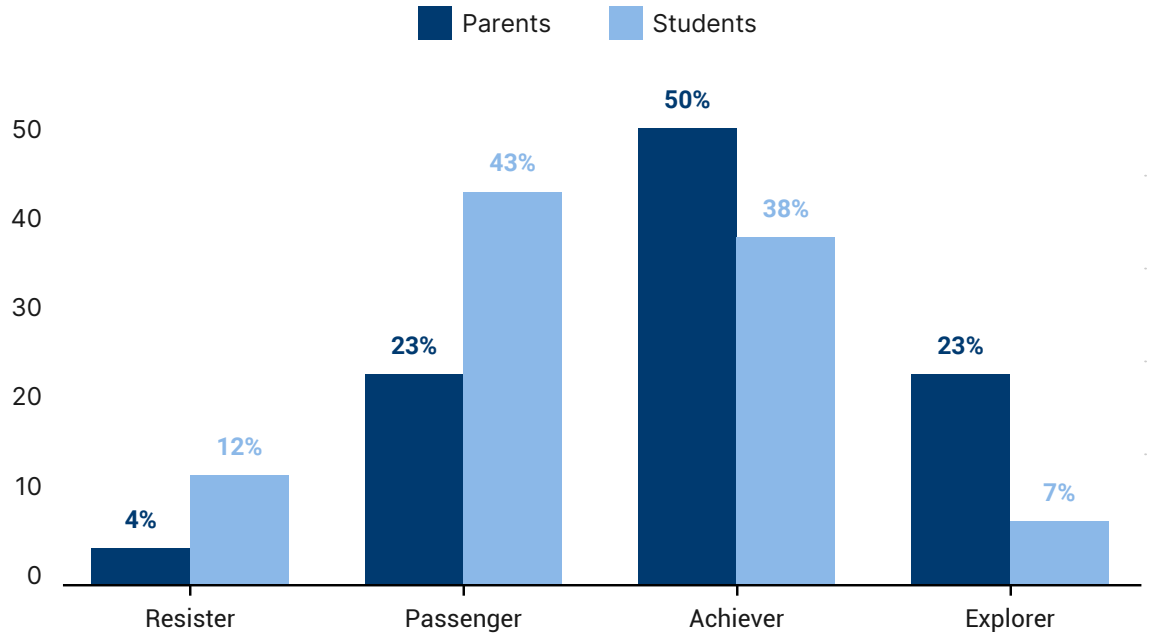
Parents, across all demographic categories, appear to overestimate the quality of students' schooling experiences. For example, more parents thought students were having learning experiences that supported Explorer mode than students themselves reported. Similarly, fewer parents believed students were having learning experiences that supported Passenger mode than students themselves reported. Most students between 3rd and 5th grade report they have experiences supportive of Achiever mode followed by Passenger, Explorer and finally Resister mode. But at the beginning of middle school, things switch and by 6th grade most students report Passenger mode experiences followed by Achiever, Resister and Explorer mode. In contrast, parents overestimate the quality of students learning experiences. For students in third through fifth grade, they believe students are primarily having experiences that support Achiever and Explorer mode – significantly higher than reality. And although they do report that the quality of children's experiences decline when they enter middle school, they underestimate the depth of that drop.

Overall, parents overestimate the quality of students' schooling experiences. While 12 percent of children 3rd through 12th grade report experiences that support Resister mode, only 4 percent of parents believe their children have such learning experiences. On the other end of the spectrum, 23 percent believe their children have Explorer mode experiences, while only 7 percent of children report they do. Parents also underestimate students' Passenger mode experiences by 20 percentage points and over estimate their Achiever mode experiences by twelve percentage points (see Figure 6).

We again see a striking difference between parents' and students' perspectives when we compare their responses to the survey questions on enjoyment of and learning in school. As discussed above in

FIGURE 6

Learning Experiences by Mode of Engagement: Parent versus Student Perception

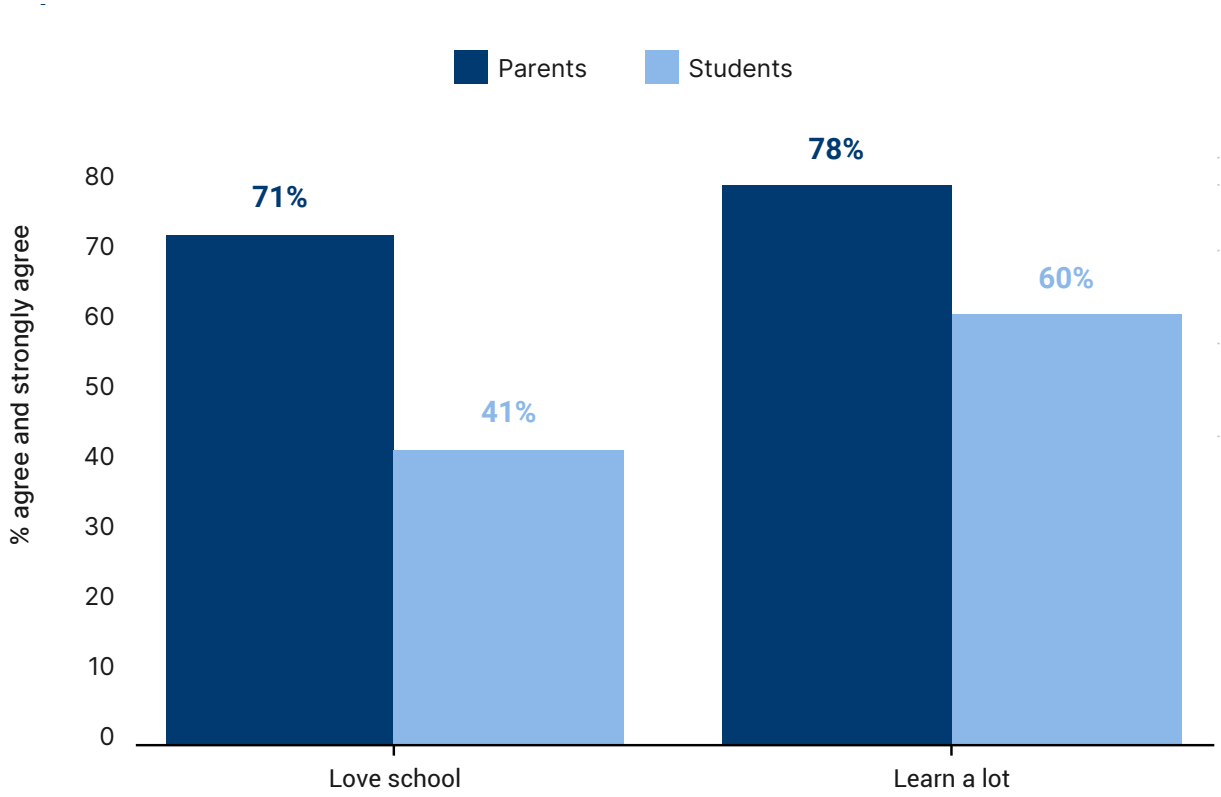


Finding 2, how much students report they enjoy and learn in school drops notably the older they are, particularly once entering middle school. Parents do perceive that students' enjoyment and learning decreases as they get older but they perceive the decrease to be much smaller than students report. We compared the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the questions below:

- *Student:* Overall, most of the time I love school.
- *Parent:* Overall, most of the time my child loves their school.
- *Student:* Overall, most of the time, I am learning a lot in school.
- *Parent:* Overall, most of the time, my child learns a lot in school.

FIGURE 7

Percentage of students who report "I love school" and "I learn a lot" versus Percentage of parents who think their children love school and learn a lot



We found parents with third graders have a slightly sunnier view of their children's love of school with 85% believing their children love school most of the time whereas only 74 percent of students report they do. However what starts as a 11 percentage point gap grows into a chasm by the final years of high school. In 12th grade, only 29% of students reported loving school most of the time whereas 61% of parents of 12th graders believed they do. On average across all grades, 41% of students between 3rd and 12th grade reported that most of the time they love school while 71% of parents thought they did, a massive, 30 percentage point difference.

Parents also overestimated how much their students report they learn in school, although less so than on students' love of school. Again parents did correctly perceive that how much their children learned in school declined as they aged but they did not perceive the drop was as great as students reported. Parents of third graders accurately perceived students reported learning in school (86 percent of students say they learn a lot in school and 85 percent of parents believe they do). But the gap opens in 6th grade when 80 percent of parents report their students learn a lot in school but only 67 percent of students report they do. By 12th grade there is a 31 percentage point gap, with 44 percent of students reporting they learn a lot and 75 percent of student believing they do.

FIGURE 8

Percentage of students who report "I love school" versus Percentage of parents who think their children love school

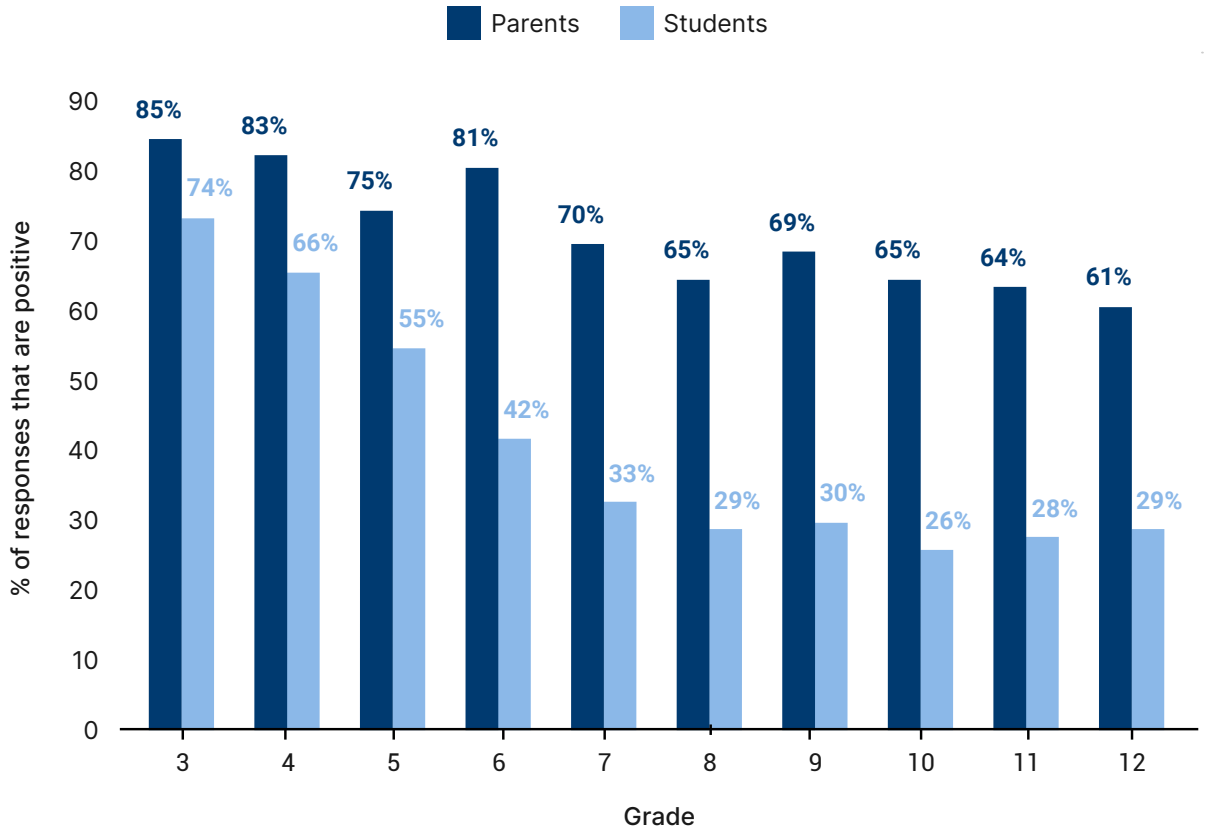
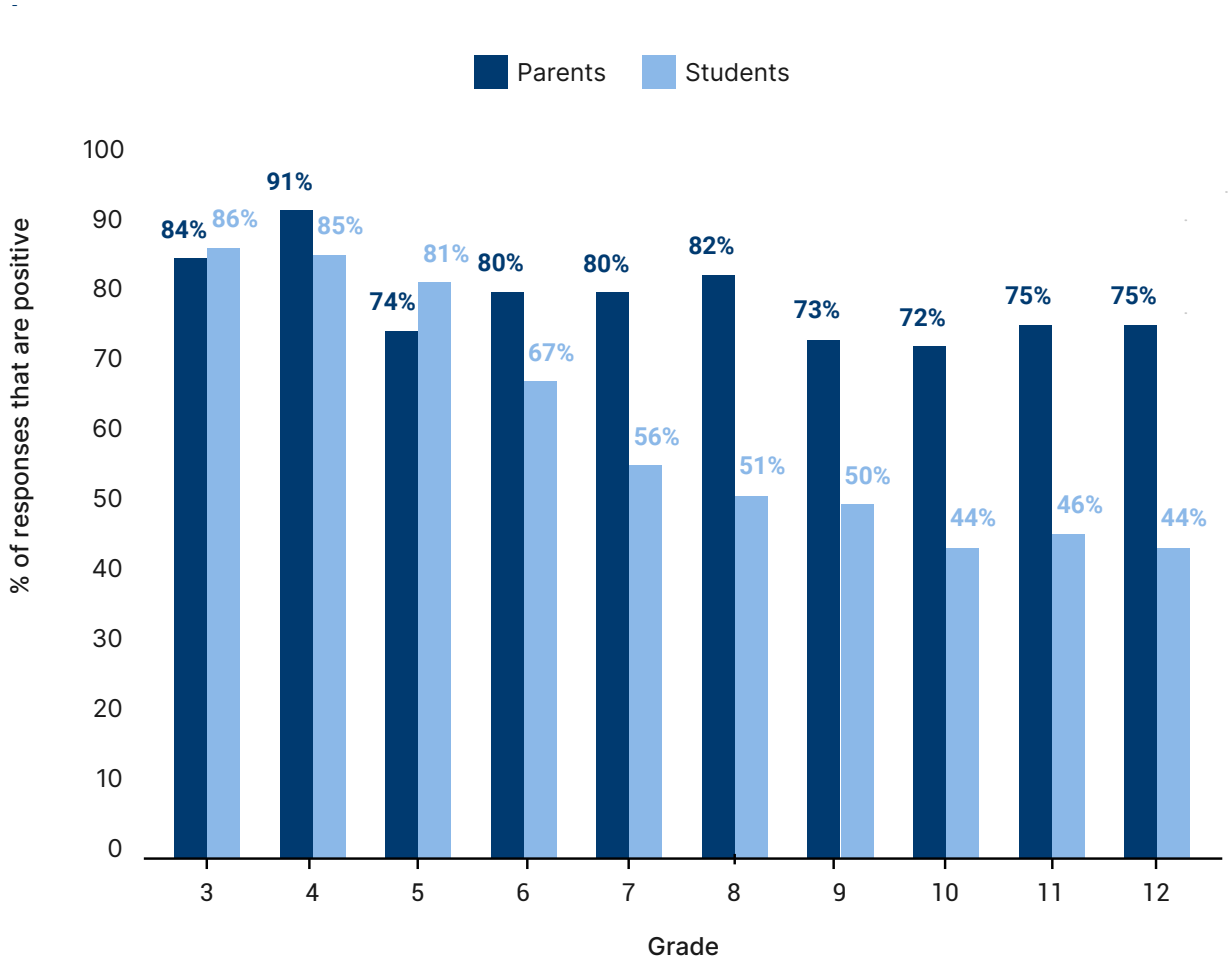


FIGURE 9

Percentage of students who report "I learn a lot in school" versus Percentage of parents who think their children learn a lot in school



Overall, 60 percent of students between 3rd and 12th grade say they learn a lot in school while 78% of parents think they do while 41 percent of students say they love school and 71 percent of parents believe they do. Generally although parents perceive their children's enjoyment of and learning in school decreases over time, they are in the dark about how precipitously it drops for middle and high school students.[a]

a One interesting observation we noted during the research process was that teachers may have a much closer read on students love of school. Lee Jenkins, an educational consultant, over the course of many workshops, asked 3,000 teachers across the U.S. what grade level they taught and what percent of their students loved school. Although this was from an entirely different data set, we found that his data on teachers' perceptions of students love of school closely mirrored our own student data. John Hattie, professor at the University of Melbourne, dubbed Lee Jenkins findings "The Jenkins Curve". For more information, see Lee Jenkins, Education's greatest challenge. Education Today (2021).

#4 STUDENTS LIVING IN SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES REPORT BETTER SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES THAN THOSE IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS

In addition to students' age, where students live—in urban, suburban, or rural communities—appears to measurably influence their schooling experiences. When we analyzed the learning experiences by mode of engagement across different locales we found rural and urban students reporting similar experiences. For example, 5 and 6 percent of rural and urban students, respectively, reported learning experiences likely to support Explorer mode. Similarly 44 and 45 percent of rural and urban students respectively reported Passenger mode experiences. In contrast, students in suburban areas report more positive learning experiences,11 percent of students describing Explorer mode experiences and only 35 percent Passenger mode experiences. Various factors may contribute to better learning experiences in suburban schools including the fact that they struggle less with filling open teaching roles or retaining teachers long-term compared to urban and rural schools.[32]

Interestingly, when we examined student responses by locale and other demographic factors we found little meaningful difference by gender and family SES but we did find differences in relation to race/ethnicity. As noted above, we found very little meaningful difference when examining students' overall responses by gender and family SES. When we examined students schooling experiences by mode of engagement and race/ethnicity we found many similarities and only limited differences (see Figure 11).

But we did find some notable differences in students' experiences across race/ethnicity when we analyzed their responses by locale. Overall, as seen in Figure 12, students across all racial groups in suburban areas report more positive experiences compared to their peers in other settings. Between

FIGURE 10

Learning experiences by Mode of Engagement and Locale

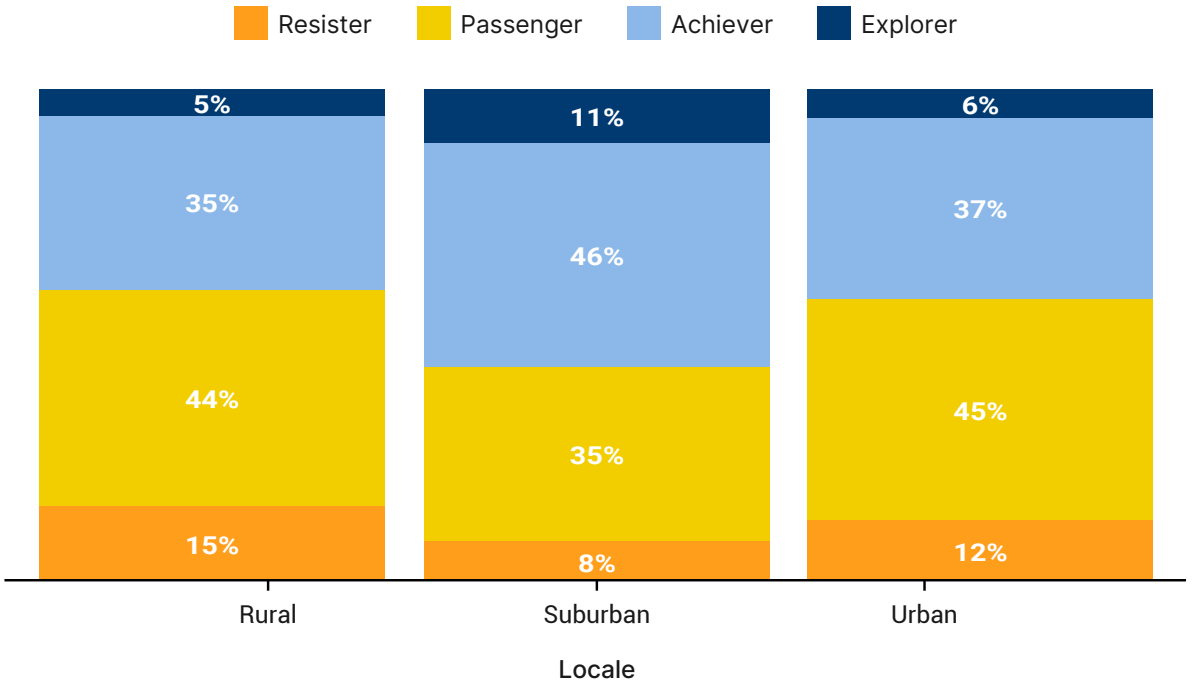
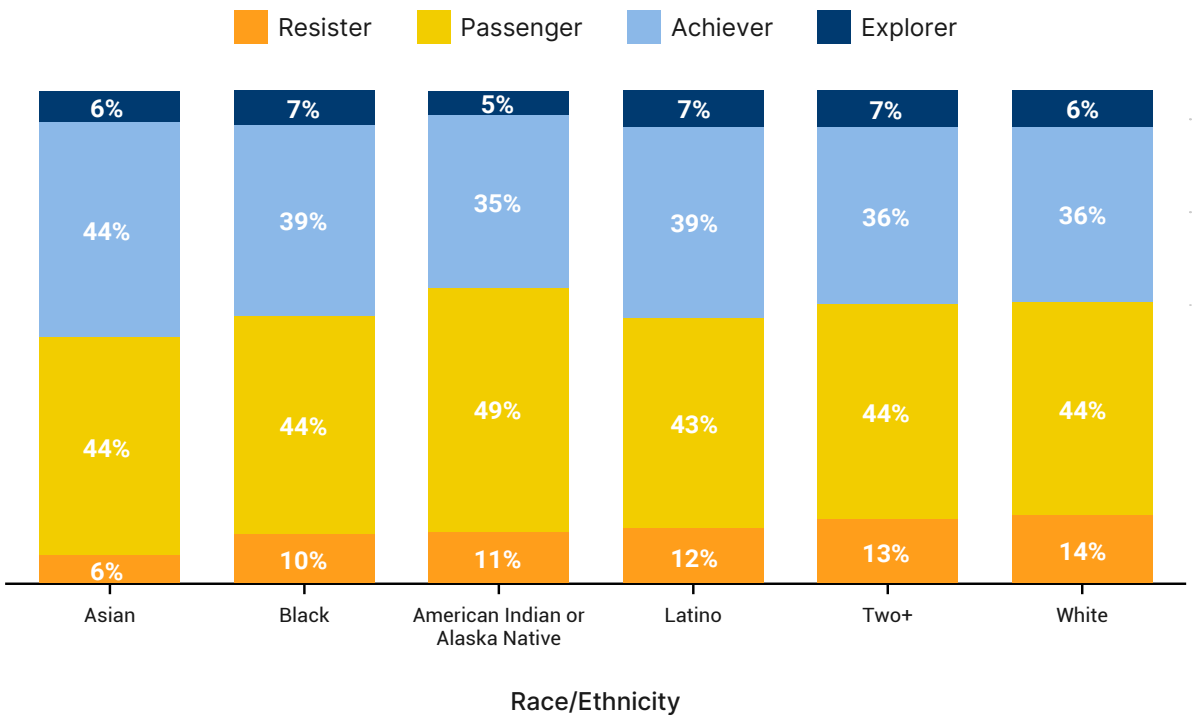


FIGURE 11

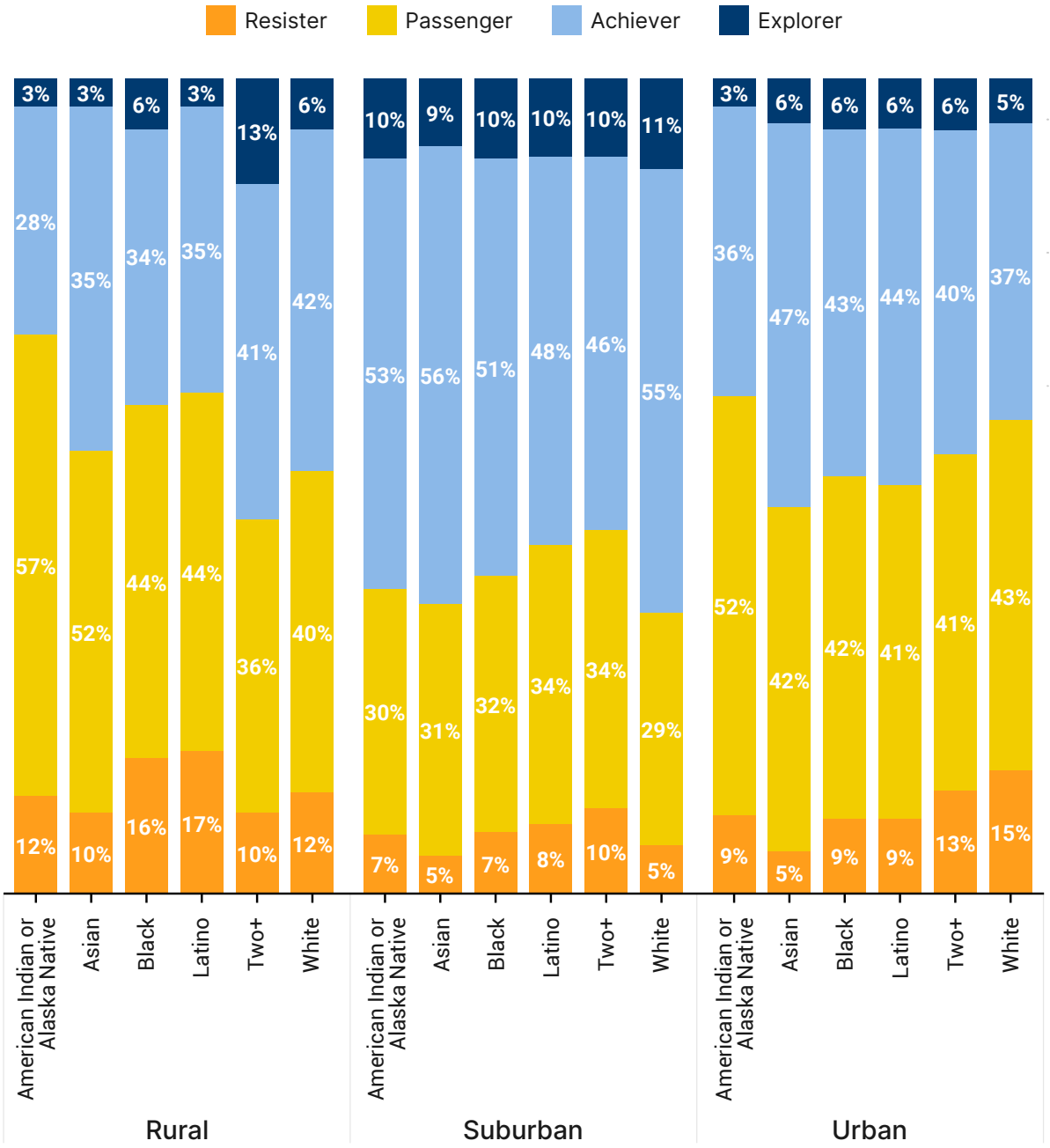
Learning experiences by Mode of Engagement and by race/ethnicity



9 and 11 percent of them reported Explorer mode experiences unlike their peers in urban and rural communities where except for mixed race students, between 3 and 6 percent of students reported Explorer mode experiences. Interestingly, the highest number of students reporting Explorer mode experiences, 13 percent, are mixed race students in rural areas. Mixed race students in rural areas appear to have the most positive schooling experiences compared to their rural peers of other races as they more often report not just Explorer mode but also Achiever mode experiences. This does not appear to be the case for mixed race students in suburban or urban areas. In contrast, the highest number of students reporting Resister mode experiences are Latino (16 percent) and Black (17 percent) students in rural areas and white (15 percent) and mixed race (13 percent) students in urban areas. The highest number of students reporting Passenger mode experiences are American Indian or Alaskan Native in rural communities (57 percent), Asian students in rural communities (52 percent), and American Indian or Alaskan Native in urban communities (52 percent). Overall, students in suburban communities are more likely to report Explorer and Achiever mode experiences and less likely to report Passenger and Resister mode experiences than their rural and urban peers.

FIGURE 12

Learning experiences by Mode of Engagement, race/ethnicity, and locale



Conclusion and Recommendations

These findings provide a sober picture of students' experiences in school. It is, in our estimation, a tragedy that students lose their love of school the longer they stay in it. Schools should be places the help students fall increasingly in love with learning, not disengage from it. They should be places where all students say they regularly can develop their own ideas and have time to explain them or that their school allows them to have a say about what happens to them and respects their ideas. The learning experiences young people have in school shapes how engaged they are and ultimately their success in school and beyond it. It influences, alongside external and home factors, whether students show up every day, put in the work, learn the material, develop the skills and graduate ready to face the world of work or college. But even more than that, how children spend their days shapes the capabilities they develop. How adolescents learn today builds their learning and coping skills for tomorrow. If we never give children the chance to make meaningful decisions, how will they ever learn?

Below we share our three main takeaways for action to help boost student engagement and ultimately not only keep students in school but help them develop the skills they need to thrive.

TAKEAWAY 1: SCHOOLS ARE SHORTCHANGING STUDENTS IF THEY ARE NOT REGULARLY TRACKING THE QUALITY OF THEIR EXPERIENCES AND ENGAGEMENT

Students do not wake up one day and decide they do not want to come to school. Disengagement often happens over time in small and hard to see ways.[33] This means that if schools regularly track students' experiences, they are more able to get a full picture of when and how they are disengaging and can intervene sooner to address it. The early warning signs of school drop out—poor attendance, behavior problems, and struggling academically—remain important to track through schools' administrative data.[34] But focusing on the full picture of students' learning experiences is akin to using a preventative medicine approach. The more schools are able to hear from students what is and isn't working, the more easily they make the changes before students end up regularly missing school and at risk of drop out. Adults from educators to parents are reliable judges of student behavior but not necessarily if students are emotionally or cognitively engaged. One of the best ways to understand this is to ask students directly.[35] Many students in Passenger mode, for example, are participating in school—regularly attending and turning in homework—but have essentially dropped out of learning.

We recommend that state, district and school leaders regularly track students' learning experiences to better understand the full picture of their engagement. This would include systematically getting students' perspectives alongside administrative data and teacher feedback. Transcend's Leaps Student Voice Survey is one useful and freely available tool schools can use to do this but there are a range of tools schools can use. Then schools need to reflect on the data and use it to help improve students' experiences and engagement. This should be an ongoing process and not used for high-stakes accountability measures. Schools can use fast, iterative cycles of learning from data, planning adjustments, implementing those responses, then tracking student experience data and seeing whether it has improved. This type of rapid learning cycle can lead to quick learning and improvement in student experiences and engagement. Regardless of the instrument used to track students' perspectives on their learning experiences and engagement levels, the benefits come from discussing and taking action on the data's insights. Education leaders can do this by sharing the data with staff, families, and students themselves and bringing together diverse stakeholders to generate potential strategies to improve the quality of learner experiences.[36]

As the country grapples with persistently high levels of chronic absenteeism, namely students missing 10% of school for whatever reason, more attention to the full picture of student engagement can help. High expectations, including the expectation that students attend school every day, are not sacrificed when education leaders center student engagement in their efforts to address student absenteeism. Rather high expectations help drive engagement, especially when paired with proactive and consistent support. Afterall, from whom little is expected, little is received. The non-profit Attendance Works, a leader in the field, includes this as part of their positive engagement approach to addressing chronic absence.[37]

TAKEAWAY 2: SCHOOLS ARE NOT GIVING PARENTS THE FULL PICTURE OF THEIR CHILD'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ENGAGEMENT

Every parent wants their child to succeed. Unfortunately, their ability to help their children is limited by how unaware they are of their children's learning experiences and engagement. This is not parents' fault. Not only do schools need to regularly track students' learning experiences and engagement but they also need to share that information with parents and families. Parents act based on the information they have, which includes report cards, calls home from the school, and their child's own description of their educational experience. Parents also bring their own

worldviews to the education of their children, which are as diverse as the U.S. itself. But regardless of any differences in perspectives, all parents have an essential need to understand the quality of their children's learning experiences and their level of engagement in school.

We recommend that state, district, and school leaders work alongside family facing organizations to help parents understand the importance of student engagement and what they can do to support it. Parents are searching for more nuanced feedback from schools. A recent national survey shows parents trusting teacher feedback over grades when assessing their child's performance.[38] Education leaders and family facing organizations can use Anderson and Winthrop's four modes of engagement framework as a powerful, yet accessible way for parents to understand student engagement. In their book, *The Disengaged Teen: Helping Kids Learn Better, Feel Better, and Live Better*, Anderson and Winthrop also have a toolkit for parents to help them identify spot which mode they are in when. For example, to understand if their child spends a lot of time in Passenger mode, Anderson and Winthrop suggest parents can look for tell-tale signs such as:

- racing through homework with no interest in doing it well or checking it;
- complying with school requirements but never doing more than what is asked of them;
- focusing on the minimum requirements of assignments and not the content;
- becoming distracted by life events (e.g. a love interest starting or ending, friendship or family problems);
- regularly procrastinating doing homework or school assignments (e.g. do they not know how to get started? Do they feel lost? Or are they simply bored by it?).[39]

Once parents better understand their children's mode of engagement, they will be better equipped to support them. This could include strategies they use at home to help coasting kids in Passenger mode or struggling kids in Resister mode. It could also include working collaboratively with the children's schools to help remove barriers to engagement and provide more supportive and interesting learning environments. Collaboration is particularly important as schools with trusting relationships between adults at school and at home are ten times more likely to be improving across a range of outcomes, including academic performance.[40]

TAKEAWAY 3: SCHOOLS LIMIT STUDENTS' EXPLORER MODE OPPORTUNITIES

When students struggle academically, many schools take away their ability to participate in enrichment programs and extracurricular activities. School policies that require students to maintain a minimum GPA to play on sports teams or take part in model UN are justified as an incentive for students to invest in their academic learning. The problem is that the out-of-school activity or community learning opportunities are what keeps many struggling students engaged. Removing these opportunities could only increase their disinterest in school and fuel further disengagement. When students are interested in what they are learning they are much more likely to invest time, effort, attention and perform well. It also energizes them which can spill over into their engagement in other classes or activities.[41] Unfortunately, there is a large gap between students who struggle at school versus those who are high achieving in relation to their opportunity to participate in out-of-school activities. For example, 58% of straight A students participate in art, music and dance out-of-school activities versus only 31% of students who mainly bring home Cs and Ds. This pattern holds true for sports as well with 66% of straight A students participating and only 40% of students with mainly Cs and Ds.[42] Limiting students' ability to pursue an interest is only one way that schools limit their opportunity to explore.

We recommend that educators—including state, districts, and school leaders alongside teachers and other education personnel—find ways to

maximize students' opportunity to explore. This could be through a wide variety of strategies including:

- *Support interest development through extracurricular activities and enrichment programs.* Schools can actively help all students, regardless of their academic performance, connect with a club or activity they are interested in. To expand the options available if there are limited clubs in the school, schools can partner with community members from the parks department to local churches to help students find activities of interest.
- *Support teachers to give students more agency in their classrooms.* Schools can support teacher professional development that helps scaffold increased student agency in the daily flow of the class period. Research by Johnmarshall Reeve and his colleagues across 18 countries and 35 randomized control trials, shows how this can be done effectively regardless of the curriculum, standards, or disciplinary approach. In this case, teachers incorporated seven instructional practices from offering manageable choices (e.g. on homework options, essay topics) to explaining the reasons behind an assignment to asking students at the start of a lesson what they are most curious about regarding the topic for the day's class.[43] This is one of many approaches to help teachers provide students more opportunities to develop agency over their learning.
- *Redesign school to center Explorer mode opportunities.* All schools have a design, which means they can also be redesigned. Schools can shift many factors—including space, time, learning tasks, and the role of students and adults—to help put Explorer mode intentionally at the center of student experience. Schools don't all need to design original solutions from scratch. There are a range of organizations that document school designs and models that advance student agency, including Transcend's Innovative Model Exchange resource.[44] This also does not have to be something schools pursue alone. In fact, it is better to pursue a collaborative and local process that brings together young people, educators, administrators, parents, and experts to redesign the learning environment. Transcend has found that this approach provides a richer picture of what is possible and builds important relationships and partnerships.[45]

To thrive in a future we cannot fully predict, young people need to build a wide range of knowledge, skills, and mindsets. Disengagement makes it hard to do this. Learning experiences that truly engage students are one of the best ways to prepare young people to navigate and shape their path forward—in work, life, and citizenship.

> "We recommend that educators—including state, districts, and school leaders alongside teachers and other education personnel—find ways to maximize students' opportunity to explore."

Annex I – Developing the Four Modes of Engagement

The four modes of engagement were developed to provide a more user-friendly framework around student engagement for educators, parents, and even learners themselves. The goal was to provide clear language describing different ways in which students engage that is easy to understand for anyone, especially for those without a technical education background.

Amy Berry, a researcher with the Australian Council of Educational Research, has developed based on teacher perspectives a continuum of engagement that ranges from students avoiding and disrupting their learning to investing and driving their learning. She argues that providing teachers and schools with information about the multiple dimensions of student engagement (e.g. behavioral, emotional, cognitive, agentic) can be useful background information but can be difficult to translate to changed practice. “It is just not a useful lens for teachers in the practice of the classroom” she says.[46]

Within the four modes are both Berry's engagement actions that teachers see in the classroom and the different dimensions of engagement identified in the academic literature. But unlike Berry's Continuum of Engagement, the modes are also easily accessible to parents who play an essential, if often overlooked, role in supporting student motivation and engagement. The modes were developed with four steps that brought together insights from teachers, education leaders, students, and parents alongside an extensive review of related literatures.

The first step in developing the four modes was to understand the academic conceptualization and evidence underpinning student engagement. This was done through both an extensive review of relevant literatures including on student engagement and human motivation and through in-depth interviews with over 50 researchers in the field. This highlighted the wide variety of ways in which student engagement is measured, the diversity of terms used, and the array of definitions employed, including different definitions of the same terms. It also highlighted the research on engagement profiles, namely that students can be engaged in some dimensions at the same time as they are disengaged in others. For example, a child who regularly attends class may be behaviorally engaged but not necessarily emotionally or cognitively engaged in their learning.[47]

The second step was to examine teachers' perspectives on what engaged and disengaged students look like in their classrooms. This was done through both interviewing over 30 educators on their experiences and perspectives on motivating and engaging students and through using Amy Berry's continuum of engagement. Berry's book *Reimagining Engagement: From Disrupting to Driving* spells out the continuum that she developed based on interviewing teachers. The six-part continuum provides descriptions of student actions that go from disengaged to engaged. Students are either disrupting, avoiding, participating in, investing in, or driving their learning. Berry notes that at the most disengaged end of the spectrum, when students are disrupting and avoiding their learning they are actively disengaging including by interrupting the teacher or looking for reasons to leave the classroom. Whereas students are more passive when they withdraw including not trying to do the work or when they are simply participating including doing the work and responding to teachers' questions. When students become actively engaged they invest in their learning by asking questions about the lesson among other things and they drive their learning by setting goals for themselves and seeking feedback. Halfway through the interview and focus group process with teachers, a question was added to get feedback on the provisional four modes.

The third step was to hear from students themselves. Using a snowball methodology, almost 100 shared their perspectives on learning, school and what factors supported their motivation and engagement and what factors got in the way. Young people were from England and 15 states across the U.S. representing all regions of the country. The sample included approximately equal numbers of girls and boys. Young people came from diverse demographics by SES, school type, and race, and included neurodivergent and neurotypical learners. Students were from a mix of public, charter, and private schools. Approximately 40 percent of young people participated in open-ended key informant interviews and 60 percent in focus group discussions. Students were predominantly between the ages of 10 and 18 years old. Midway through the interview and focus group process, the responses were analyzed for emerging themes and compared to academic constructsb

b The definitions of behavioral, emotional, and agentic engagement followed Ming-Te Wang and Steven Peck's description in the 2013 article Adolescent educational success and mental health vary across school engagement profiles and the definition of agentic engagement followed Johnmarshall Reeve and colleagues' work in their 2022 book Supporting Students' Motivation: Strategies for Success.

and Berry's continuum of engagement. An initial framework with modes of engagement were developed. For the second half of the interviews and focus groups, an additional question was added namely getting feedback from students on the provisional modes of engagement.

The fourth step was to get insights from and stress test the provisional modes of engagement with parents and caregivers. This included interviews and focus group discussions with over 30 primary caregivers to learn about their experiences with their children and their children's schools. These perspectives helped inform the development of the four modes. Like with students, halfway through the interview and focus group process with parents and caregivers, we added a question to get feedback on the provisional four modes. At this time, we also sought feedback on the four modes from a range of education leaders largely in schools and non-profits. Care was given to the language used in addition to the description of the modes. Ultimately, the framework was revised to include four modes of engagement: Resister, Passenger, Achiever, and Explorer.

Annex II – Developing the Leaps Student and Parent Voice Surveys

Transcend's *Leaps Student Voice Survey* measures the quality of experiences young people are having in school through the lens of Transcend's Leaps for Equitable, 21-Century Learning. These experiences are important both as leading indicators of learning outcomes and as important ends in their own right. The Leaps Student Voice Survey consists of a set of eleven psychometric scales:

- **Deep Dive Leaps Scales** (ten standalone assessments) aimed at providing deeper understanding and insight related to learner experiences for each Leap, and
- **Leaps Pulse Check Survey** that serves as a quick, diagnostic tool to measure learner experiences related to all ten Leaps.

The survey was built in partnership with outside psychometricians. They have gathered significant evidence of its validity and reliability across diverse settings and student groups, giving us a high degree of confidence in the accuracy of its results.

You can read more about the Leaps Student Experience survey and the process to build and validate it in our survey technical reports.[48]

Students responded to survey questions using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 for "Strongly disagree" to 5 for "Strongly agree" or from 1 for "Not at all" to 5 for "Very much." When analyzing the data, responses in the 1-2 range (strongly disagree) indicate students are having quite negative experiences in school. Responses around 3 suggest students are having neutral or average experiences in school. Conversely, responses closer to 4 and 5 indicate that students are having more positive experiences in school. It is important to note that the lowest score on the scale is 1, not 0. This should be kept in mind when interpreting the data, as the scale does not use zero as a baseline.

Students respond to the survey electronically via Qualtrics. The survey also includes read-aloud functionality that students can choose to utilize if desired.

For student data, the analysis used all but two of the Leaps Survey constructs (known as Leaps in the tool). The items for the Leaps Social Responsibility & Action and Anytime, Anywhere Learning were not used so as to more closely align to other student engagement frameworks.

For the parent survey, items were selected from those used in the student analysis, prioritizing the highest item-construct correlations for each construct. This selection process aimed to streamline the survey, reducing length and mitigating respondent fatigue, while ensuring methodological rigor in the analysis. Items were adapted to facilitate responses from the parent perspective about the student experience.

TABLE 2

Leaps Questions - Students

Leap	Question
Active Self-Direction	At my school I can choose how to do my work.
Active Self-Direction	At my school I feel like I have a say about what happens to me.
Active Self-Direction	At my school I have goals for my learning, and I have choices about how I pursue those goals.
Active Self-Direction	At my school adults respect my ideas and suggestions.
Affirmation of Self & Others	I can be myself in school.
Affirmation of Self & Others	In school how often do you see people like you represented in what you study?
Affirmation of Self & Others	In school I feel proud of who I am.
Affirmation of Self & Others	In school it feels like being yourself is a great thing. I feel safe and appreciated for who I am.
Connection & Community	At my school I feel included by other students.

Leap	Question
Connection & Community	I feel part of the community at my school. There are a lot of people who know and care about me.
Connection & Community	Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?
Customization	At my school I am able to catch up if I am behind.
Customization	At my school I do work that meets me where I am in my learning.
Customization	At my school I get to work at my own speed.
Customization	At my school I have the resources I need to support my learning.
General Questions	Overall, most of the time, I love school.
General Questions	Overall, most of the time, I'm learning a lot in school.
High Expectations with Unlimited Opportunities	I feel like I have access to all of the opportunities my school offers.
High Expectations with Unlimited Opportunities	In school, it feels like I'm expected -- and supported -- to learn a ton.
High Expectations with Unlimited Opportunities	In school, people don't give up when the work gets hard.
High Expectations	When you feel like giving up on a difficult task, how likely is it that someone in your school will help you keep trying?
Relevance	At my school I get to learn things I'm interested in.
Relevance	At my school what I'm learning matters a lot to me.
Relevance	At my school what we learn is often connected to life outside the classroom.
Rigorous Learning	At school I get to develop my own ideas.
Rigorous Learning	At school we have time to explain our ideas.
Rigorous Learning	At school we use our thinking skills, rather than just memorizing things.
Whole Child	At my school I learn how to figure out who I am as a person.
Whole Child	At my school I learn to understand my emotions.
Whole Child	At my school, everyone wants me to not just learn, but also be happy and healthy in mind and body.

TABLE 3

Leaps Questions - Parents

Leap	Question
Active Self-Direction	My child's school gives them choices about how they do their work.
Active Self-Direction	My child's school helps them set goals for their learning.
Affirmation of Self & Others	My child can be themself at school.
Affirmation of Self & Others	My child feels safe and appreciated for who they are at school.
Connection & Community	My child has good friends at their school.
Connection & Community	Overall, how much does your child feel like they belong at their school?
Connection & Community	There are a lot of people who know and care about my child at their school.
Customization	How much do staff at your child's school know them as an individual?
Customization	The work my child does at school meets them where they are in their learning.
General Questions	Overall, most of the time, my child learns a lot in school.
General Questions	Overall, most of the time, my child loves their school.
High Expectations with Unlimited Opportunities	My child is expected – and supported – to learn a ton at school.
High Expectations with Unlimited Opportunities	My child's school gives them helpful feedback on their work.
Relevance	My child is interested in the things they learn at school.
Relevance	My child's school teaches things that will help them when they become adults.
Rigorous Learning	At school my child gets to develop their own ideas.
Rigorous Learning	At school my child uses their thinking skills, not just memorizes things.
Whole Child	My child's school teaches them how to figure out who they are as a person.
Whole Child	My child's school teaches them to understand their emotions.
Whole Child	My child's school wants them to not just learn, but also be happy and healthy in mind and body.

End notes

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