

**Through Different Lenses:  
West Virginia School Staff and Students  
React to School Climate**

An original research study by



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## Executive Summary

West Virginia students in schools with higher percentages of low-income pupils and African American students are not as positive about school climate as their predominantly white teachers. Such students rate their schools significantly lower on seven of eight aspects of schooling: academic expectations, instruction, course-taking, counseling about education options, respect, mentoring and caring relationships, and fairness. Regression analyses reveal that, regardless of achievement level or school poverty factors, African American students are much less satisfied with their school environments than are their white peers.

These and other findings surfaced during a 2005 survey of middle and high school students and school staff across West Virginia conducted by Edvantia (formerly AEL) at the request of The Education Alliance. The Education Alliance commissioned the study in order to expand upon the findings reported in its 2004 report, *Student Voice: West Virginia Students Speak Out about the Achievement Gap*. This executive summary uses a question-and-answer format to describe the study and researchers' findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

### Why Was This Study Conducted?

The Education Alliance's 2004 *Student Voice* report, based on eight focus groups of high school students in West Virginia, documented youth's perceptions that racism and classism posed substantial challenges to their academic lives. Unfair discipline practices, low expectations, lack of respect, and perfunctory classroom instruction were cited by African American and low-income white students as difficulties they encountered at their schools. Participating youth mentioned other issues as well, including neglect by counselors, teacher favoritism, lack of academic support, and uneasy peer relations.

Although The Education Alliance found the 2004 *Student Voice* conclusions to be revealing, these were exploratory, based on a purposive sample, and could not be generalized to the wider student population in West Virginia. The findings prompted the Alliance to explore whether the perspectives of high school youth in the *Student Voice* study were also prevalent among middle school students—and whether these perspectives were also shared by school staff at both the middle school and high school levels.

To study these issues, and to more fully understand the perceptions of low-income white students and African American students in particular, researchers conducted a survey of middle and high school students, teachers, and counselors. The surveys, conducted during 2005, asked for perceptions of school climate in respondents' schools.

## How Was the Study Conducted?

A sample of middle and high school students—and middle and high school teachers and counselors—from schools across West Virginia was surveyed. Survey data were then analyzed, using appropriate statistical procedures and qualitative analysis.

**Sample selection.** The researchers used a technique called *clustered random sampling* to identify which schools would be invited to participate in the survey. First, schools were stratified by the racial composition of the student population to ensure that an adequate number of African American students were included in the study. Next, 50 middle schools and 50 high schools in the state were randomly selected for invitation to participate in the first wave of surveys, which were conducted in April 2005. A second wave of sampling took place in September 2005.

A total of 2,931 students and 371 school staff from 19 schools completed and returned the surveys. This sample constitutes 4% of West Virginia's 167 middle schools and nearly 10% of the state's 127 high schools. Four of the participating schools were located in central cities, two in mid-size cities, three in small towns, and the remaining 10 in rural areas. These schools serve populations of African American students making up a range of percentages of the total student population, from 0.0% to somewhat more than 25%. The schools serve students qualifying for free or reduced-priced meals in percentages ranging from roughly 21% to nearly 68%.

**Survey development.** The surveys asked respondents for demographic information and for their perceptions of various aspects of school climate, particularly those related to equity. Specifically, the surveys addressed the eight aspects of schooling identified by students as most troubling in the 2004 *Student Voice* focus groups:

- Academic expectations
- Instruction
- Course-taking
- Counseling about education options
- Respect
- Mentoring and caring relationships
- Fairness
- Student relationships

**Data analysis.** Data were analyzed in several ways: *Descriptive statistics* were calculated and disaggregated by significant demographic variables including individual racial/ethnic identification, gender, school level, and achievement (self-reported) and by school-level variables such as the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals, the percentage of African American students in the total school population, and the rurality/urbanicity code for the school location. For race, researchers coded all responses as *white*, *African American*, or *other* to ensure that the experiences of African American and white students only were compared. *Tests of statistical significance* were used to explore the relationships between the eight aspects of schooling addressed in the

survey and individual and school-level variables. *Multiple linear regression* was used to explore the separate and combined influence of individual and school-level variables on the eight aspects of schooling addressed in the survey. *Qualitative analysis* was used to analyze responses to open-ended items by theme and by interview question, as appropriate. Significant data were categorized so that researchers could produce a quantitative analysis of the most salient and prevalent issues.

### **What Are the Limitations of This Study?**

Any study has various limitations arising from methodological and budget constraints, as well as from limitations associated with interpretation and theory. This study is, of course, no exception. Sampling and the measure of locale posed a challenge to this research. Also, too few counselors responded to the survey to allow for meaningful comparisons of their views with those of teachers (something researchers had hoped to do). These limitations are detailed in the full report.

Fortunately, none of these limitations seriously diminishes the utility or validity of this study. The sample includes enough individuals (a total of 3,302) to produce sufficient study power (Lohr, 1999; Niles, 2005). The four surveys and their constituent subscales all possess sufficient internal consistency reliability. In addition, appropriate measures were taken to accommodate study limitations.

### **What Are the Major Findings of the Study?**

West Virginia middle and high school students who responded to the 2005 survey are not as positive about their school climate, overall, as their teachers and school staff members. This may be in large part because the teachers and school staff respondents are overwhelmingly white and are not likely to have experienced racial or class discrimination themselves. Survey results show, however, that West Virginia students' perceptions of school climate are often related to individual factors (such as student race and academic achievement) and to school level (middle vs. high school) and locale (rural vs. nonrural).

*Student race plays an important role in students' evaluations of their school experiences.*

African American students rate their schools significantly lower than their white peers on seven of the eight aspects of schooling addressed in the survey: academic expectations, instruction, course-taking, counseling about education options, respect, mentoring and caring relationships, and fairness.

Even when controlling for other important factors, African American students are far more likely than white students to report that their teachers have low academic expectations for them. African American pupils are also less likely to indicate that there

are sufficient caring and mentoring relationships between students and teachers, and African American students report more often than white students that school staff treat students unfairly.

These findings are particularly troubling given that other significant variables, including achievement level and the percentage of African American and low-socioeconomic students in respondents' schools, are controlled. *This means that African American students, regardless of their academic performance and the demographics of their schools, are more likely to give low ratings to their schools in terms of academic expectations, caring and mentoring relationships, and staff fairness.* Thus, even high-achieving African American students in schools with relatively small populations of poor students are significantly less happy with their schooling experiences than their white peers.

***Achievement exerts a significant and positive influence on student perceptions of their school environment.***

Achievement, measured as student self-reports of their usual grades, clearly exerts a significant and positive influence on student perceptions of school environment. The higher the achievement, the more positively students rate their school experiences. Students who earn higher grades are much more likely than students with lower grades to report that their teachers hold high expectations for their academic performance.

Students who perform well are also more likely to indicate that their teachers provide interesting and varied instruction, encourage them to take higher-level courses, and provide caring and mentoring support to students. Staff respect for each other, students, and their parents is more highly rated by students who earn higher grades, as is their fairness. Youth with strong academic performance report more often than those with lower grades that they have received counseling about their postsecondary trajectories and that there are positive relationships between students. Academic performance, then, structures student experiences, or their perceptions of those experiences, to a significant degree.

***Two school-level variables—the percentage of African American students and the percentage of students eligible for subsidized meals—are related to student views in both positive and negative ways.***

School-level variables play important roles in student views, although not always in the expected manner. For instance, given earlier research (c.f., Anyon, 1997; Orfield, 2001), one might expect that students in schools serving larger percentages of African American students or students qualifying for subsidized meals would report less encouragement from teachers to complete higher-level courses or fewer opportunities to discuss postsecondary options with counselors than students in schools with smaller populations of African American and poor pupils. However, in this analysis, as the percentage of African American students in a school increases, and as the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals increases, so too does the likelihood

that respondents will report that they are encouraged by teachers to take higher-level classes and that they have talked with a counselor about their educational options following high school.

On the other hand, the composition of school populations has a negative effect on student perceptions of climate. Thus, students from schools with larger percentages of African American or poor youth are more likely to report low teacher expectations; disrespectful interactions between teachers, students, and parents; and unfair or inequitable treatment by school staff.

***Students attending schools that serve larger populations of African American students are more likely to give negative ratings to instruction and teacher-student relationships.***

The percentage African American students served plays an important role in student views of the degree to which their teachers' instruction is interesting, responsive, and sufficient, and the extent to which relationships between teachers and students are caring and supportive. In both instances, the larger the population of African American students, the less likely students are to assess instruction and student-teacher relationships positively.

***Students attending high-poverty schools are more likely to report poor relationships among students.***

The percentage of a school's student population who qualify for subsidized meals exerts a significant and negative influence on student views of relationships between students. That is, once other variables are controlled, students who attend schools serving more poor youth tend to rate the extent to which students treat each other well less highly than do students attending schools serving a wealthier population.

***Students in rural schools perceive their schools more positively.***

Once other variables (such as school poverty level) are controlled, the more rural a school, the more likely students are to report that staff are respectful and that students treat each other well. Students in rural schools are also more likely to indicate that staff encourage them to take higher-level courses and provide adequate counseling.

***Students rate their schools lower than school staff on all eight aspects of schooling addressed in the survey.***

Given the variables important to this study, school staff perceptions proved to be more troublesome to predict than student perceptions. In general, staff perceptions are more positive than negative—and staff have a more positive view of their school climates than do students. Researchers were also able to determine that staff ratings for some aspects of school climate are related to school level, school locale, and the percentage of African American students served in the school. Specifically, high school staff are much

more likely than middle school staff to indicate that students receive sufficient counseling about their educational or career plans following high school. However, high school staff are less likely than middle school staff to report that staff treat students fairly and equitably. Staff in rural schools perceive higher expectations than do staff in more urban schools. And staff working in schools serving larger percentages of African American students are less likely to indicate that students there treat each other well.

### **What Recommendations Resulted from the Study?**

Two major recommendations resulted from the study: (1) Include equity as a central concern in school reform efforts. (2) Investigate the characteristics of rural schools and middle schools that engender more positive student experiences, and replicate, to the degree possible, those policies and structures that are shown to improve the academic experience of pupils. Suggestions for operationalizing these recommendations are detailed below.

#### ***Include equity as a central concern in school reform efforts.***

Given the significance of race, achievement, and school demographics in structuring how students experience their academic lives, it is important for community members, parents, and school staff to acknowledge the extent to which stratification by such social phenomena undermines the aims of democratic education. Without attention to equity, some students will continue to receive substandard education, and social disparities will be maintained.

Thus, schools should address equity issues in their school plans. Although content and pedagogy remain meaningful components of many school improvement endeavors, attention to equity ensures that all students receive the benefits thereof. Students' and teachers' perception should be solicited in developing the schools' five-year plan.

**Consider conducting school-community forums or dialogues on race, achievement, and poverty.** Schools might begin the process of addressing equity through school community forums or dialogues on race, achievement, and/or poverty. Because social stratification is a difficult subject to discuss, a number of community dialogue protocols have been developed. Such protocols ensure that discussions are focused, respectful, and productive. Facilitators will find a variety of easily located protocols on the World Wide Web.

**Consider engaging teachers in equity study groups.** Schools may also consider employing study groups in which teachers read materials on equity, discuss them, plan and implement classroom strategies to support equity, and report on results. As with community dialogues, however, a facilitator would be helpful to assure that discussions are clearly focused and constructive.

**Create opportunities for school staff to discuss student perceptions on school climate and the achievement gap.** Discussions about students' experiences are particularly important given that school staff in this study are far more positive about school climate and issues of equity than are students. It might be useful for schools to explore these differences in perception, whether to address student concerns or to educate teachers about how students experience school climate and achievement in their schools.

**Recruit and hire more African American teachers.** School staff (who are nearly all white) and African American students report very different perceptions of school climate. African American students may benefit from teachers who share and understand their experiences. African American teachers might also play an important role in expanding the cultural repertoire of West Virginia's white teachers, thereby enhancing their ability to teach African American students.

**Clarify discipline policies and, if necessary, provide teachers with professional development on discipline.** Students in this study identified specific issues impeding their academic growth. Unfair and inequitable practices and treatment ranked high among student concerns. To address such concerns, schools and districts should clarify discipline policies and their implementation to assure that they are equitably and consistently applied. Teachers may require additional professional development on discipline to achieve this goal.

**Consider offering teachers job-embedded professional development on instructional strategies that meet the needs of diverse learners.** Teachers might also need job-embedded and ongoing professional development on using multiple instructional strategies, both to pique student interest in material and to meet the learning needs of students in heterogeneous classes. Many students in this study suggested that use of various instructional techniques would improve their learning experiences. Consideration should be given to providing more time for job-embedded professional development in the school calendar.

**Establish equity policies, active support from school administrators, and venues for committed community outreach.** Students—particularly African American and low-achieving students, and those in schools with large populations of African American and/or impoverished students—were clear that they had had teachers who held low academic expectations. Although professional development and community dialogue may help teachers articulate and confront their assumptions about student potential, such efforts must take place within larger programs for equity if they are to challenge entrenched deficit views of the aptitude of minority and poor youth. In other words, to effect meaningful change, professional development should be coupled with substantial equity policies, active support from school administrators, and committed community outreach.

*Investigate the characteristics of rural schools and middle schools that engender more positive student experiences, and replicate, to the degree*

*possible, those policies and structures that are shown to improve the academic experience of pupils.*

**Examine the structural, organizational, and school cultural factors differentiating middle and high school student experience and use findings to engage high school students more fully.** Because high school students have significantly more negative assessments of school climate than their middle school peers, school and district staff may consider investigating the structural, organizational, and school cultural factors differentiating the middle from the high school student experience. Findings from such studies could then be used to develop and implement improvement strategies to engage high school students more fully.

**Examine the characteristics of community in rural schools that engender more positive student experiences and, to the extent possible, seek to replicate those that are shown to improve the academic experiences of pupils.** Findings from this study suggest that, when other variables are controlled, students in rural schools report more positive student relationships and respectful treatment by teachers than students in non-rural schools. One way to explore how to support all students would be to examine what characteristics of the relationships in rural schools engender more positive student experiences. To the extent possible, school staff might seek to replicate the cultural and structural characteristics of rural schools that are shown to improve the academic experiences of pupils.

### **What Suggestions Do Students Offer?**

The final item on the student surveys posed an open-ended question: *What should schools do to help all students learn to the best of their ability?* Of the 2,931 respondents, 2,175 responded to this question. Responses tended to address one of nine themes. These themes, ranked in order of number of mentions (along with sample student comments) are as follows:

**Differentiated instruction.** Many students suggested that teachers use a variety of instructional strategies and offer alternative explanations of material. As one respondent advised, “Help students with their special learning styles and needs.” Another recommended that teachers “Make things more hands on.” “One on one” instruction was requested by quite a few students.

**Academic expectations.** Many students suggested that their learning experiences would improve if school staff held higher academic expectations. “Give them [students] a chance to do work that is hard instead of say[ing] they can’t do it,” wrote one such pupil.

**Interesting and fun school work.** Schools could help all students learn by making learning fun and interesting, according to many students. One student wrote, “Don’t do the same routine daily. It gets boring.” Another said, “Don’t talk in one tone and don’t do the same stuff over and over. Try new things.”

**Respect and fairness.** Quite a number of respondents expressed concern about the lack of respect teachers show students. One student recommended that teachers should “make sure they know what is going on with students.” Many suggested that school staff should treat students more equitably and fairly: “Teachers shouldn’t pick their favorites,” “Stop letting the people who play sports get off easy,” “Don’t disclose financial information about students to teachers,” “Stop being racist,” and “Stop treating the rich (preps) better than the poor.” (On the other hand, a few students wrote suggestions that indicated their own lack of respect for people of color.)

**Teacher attitudes.** Many students reported that teachers were often negative and unsupportive. One student wrote, “Teachers only care about paychecks.” Another advised, “Try listening to them [students] more when they have problems.” Several respondents addressed teacher and school staff quality issues. Wrote one respondent, “Make sure all teachers are qualified to do their job.” Another mentioned difficulties with a school librarian.

**Small class size.** Smaller class sizes appeared to be salient to many respondents. As one student suggested, “Schools should have a smaller amount of people in the class.” Another commented, “They should put us in small classes.”

**Changing school start time.** Many respondents held strong opinions about the time at which school begins. One respondent suggested, “Start school at 8:00 so we can get more sleep and be fully awake.” Several respondents noted that students often fall asleep in class.

**Distractions.** Students listed dress codes, lack of air conditioning, quality and quantity of school food, and the No Child Left Behind Act as distractions. One student wrote, “Pay attention to the actual learning experience instead of . . . dress code.” A few students advocated that the No Child Left Behind legislation should be eliminated or altered because of the undue pressure it puts on students and teachers.

**Safety.** Some students mentioned safety concerns. For instance, several students advocated the installation of security cameras in all classes. As one student put it, “Knowing that the kid next to me doesn’t have a gun or do LSD—that would make me safer.”

## INTRODUCTION

The Education Alliance contracted with Edvantia (formerly AEL), an education research and development organization, in January 2005 to conduct a research study of student, teacher, and counselor perceptions of school climate. The purpose of this study is to expand upon findings from *Student Voice: West Virginia Students Speak Out about the Achievement Gap* (The Education Alliance, 2004). Based on eight focus groups of high school students in the state, *Student Voice* documented youth's perceptions that racism and classism posed substantial challenges to their academic lives. Unfair discipline practices, low expectations, lack of respect, and perfunctory classroom instruction were cited by African American and low-income white students as difficulties they encountered at their schools. Participating youth mentioned other issues as well, including neglect by counselors, teacher favoritism, lack of academic support, and uneasy peer relations.

Although The Education Alliance found the *Student Voice* conclusions to be revealing, these were exploratory, based on a purposive sample, and could not be generalized to the wider student population in West Virginia. In addition, the Alliance sought to explore whether the perspectives of high school youth in the *Student Voice* study were also prevalent among middle school students and among middle school and high school staff.

To address these concerns, researchers proposed and conducted a survey of middle and high school students, teachers, and counselors. Procedures of and findings from the resultant study are presented here.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the extent to which findings from *Student Voice* are typical. That is, this study will address whether or not students from across the state share similar interpretations of their school environments with their peers in the earlier Alliance study. In addition, this research is intended to examine the views of middle school students and the views of teachers and counselors at both the middle and high school levels.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions addressed by the study described herein are as follows:

- What are student perceptions of climate, racism, and classism in their schools?
- What are teacher perceptions of climate, racism, and classism in their schools?
- What are counselor perceptions of climate, racism, and classism in their schools?

- To what extent and in what ways do student and teacher perspectives diverge, if at all?
- To what degree, if at all, do student, teacher, and counselor views differ across school level (middle vs. high school)?
- To what degree and in what ways do white and African American students' perspectives on school climate, racism, and classism differ or converge?
- To what degree and in what ways do poor and middle-class students' perspectives on school climate, racism, and classism differ or converge?
- To what degree and in what ways do low-achieving and high-achieving students' perspectives on school climate, racism, and classism differ or converge?
- To what degree and in what ways do rural and urban students' perspectives on school climate, racism, and classism differ or converge?

## **METHODS**

Described in this section are the research design, primary units of analysis, sampling method, instrumentation, and limitations of the study.

### **Research Design**

The design for this study is a clustered random sample survey of middle and high school students, and middle and high school teachers and counselors, from schools across the state of West Virginia.

### **Unit of Analysis**

The primary units of analysis in this study are at the individual level: students, teachers, and counselors.

### **Sampling**

Cluster sampling took place at the school level, in two waves. Before sampling, schools were stratified by the racial composition of student populations to ensure an adequate number of African American students in the study. Fifty middle schools and 50 high schools in the state were randomly selected for invitation to participate in the survey in April 2005. A second wave of sampling took place in September 2005. Another 50 middle schools and 50 high schools were selected, and previously identified schools that had not agreed to participate during the first wave were again invited to be involved in the study.

Two follow-up strategies were employed to solicit school participation. One week after the initial letter inviting participation was mailed, a reminder postcard was sent to those schools not yet responding. The following week, researchers, with the assistance of a standardized telephone script, telephoned schools not yet responding with an additional reminder of the study.

Many school principals who elected not to participate indicated to researchers that, although they were interested in the study, staff and students had recently completed up to three surveys from other organizations. Such principals reported that their school staff and students did not have sufficient time to complete additional instruments.

All students, teachers, and counselors at schools agreeing to participate were invited to complete the requisite survey.

A total of 19 schools elected to participate and returned completed surveys and consent forms. Of these, seven were middle schools and 12 were high schools. There are a total of 167 middle schools and 127 high schools. Thus, the sample includes 4% of West Virginia middle schools and nearly 10% of state high schools.

Four of the participating schools were located in central cities, two in mid-size cities, three in small towns, and the remaining 10 in rural areas. Schools in the sample served populations of African American students making up a range of percentages of the total student population, from 0.0% to somewhat more than 25%. Schools served students qualifying for free or reduced-priced meals in percentages ranging from roughly 21% to nearly 68%.

## **Instrumentation**

In collaboration with The Education Alliance staff, the principal investigator (PI) developed four data collection instruments. Successive revisions resulted in the final surveys, found in the appendix.

Two student surveys were designed, one for middle and one for high school pupils. Questions are identical across both surveys, with the exception that some wording varies as appropriate to address course-taking and counseling issues. For example, whereas an item on the middle school survey is phrased *My teachers want me to take higher level courses when I get to high school*, the same item on the high school instrument reads *My teachers want me to take higher level courses*. Both instruments ask a total of 47 closed-response option items, including four questions soliciting demographic information. The surveys also pose one open-ended question. Each instrument is two pages in length.

Similarly, two surveys were developed for teachers and counselors, one for those at the middle school level and another for those at the high school level. Questions are identical across both surveys, with the exception that some wording varies as appropriate to address course-taking and counseling issues. For example, whereas an item on the middle school survey is phrased *Teachers at this school try to get kids interested in higher-level classes when they get to high school*, the same item on the high school instrument reads *Teachers at this school try to get kids interested in higher-level classes*. Both surveys ask 49 closed-response option questions, six of which are items requesting demographic information. The teacher and counselor surveys are three pages long.

All four instruments pose questions falling into eight subscales. The subscales were based upon findings from the *Student Voice* report about areas students found most troubling in their school experiences. The final subscales are as follows:

- Academic Expectations
- Instruction
- Course-taking
- Counseling
- Respect
- Mentoring and Caring Relationships
- Fairness
- Student Relationships

Items were crafted and then edited in consultation with The Education Alliance staff for clarity and neutrality. Following these revisions, the instruments were formatted such that completed surveys could be scanned electronically. Items contributing to each subscale on the middle and high school teacher and counselor surveys, and the student surveys, are presented in the appendix.

After the instruments were administered, reliability statistics were calculated to assess the extent to which the overall instruments and the constituent subscales were internally reliable. Cronbach's alpha is one means by which to assess the degree to which items are intercorrelated and internally reliable. Nunally (1978) suggests that a Cronbach's alpha of at least .700 indicates sufficient internal consistency reliability. With a Cronbach's alpha of .942, the middle school student survey possesses sufficient internal consistency reliability as an overall instrument, as does the high school student survey, with a Cronbach's alpha of .956.

With a Cronbach's alpha of .970, the middle school teacher and counselor survey possesses very sufficient internal consistency reliability. Similarly, the high school version is internally consistent, with a Cronbach's alpha of .967.

As presented in the following table, subscales on each of the four surveys are internally consistent and reliable. Cronbach's alphas range from a low of .747 for the Student Relationships subscale on the middle school staff survey to a high of .945 for the Counseling subscale on the middle school staff survey.

**Table 1**  
**Internal Consistency Reliability Estimates for Survey Subscales**

	Student: Middle School	Student: High School	Staff: Middle School	Staff: High School
Academic Expectations	.784	.832	.895	.875
Instruction	.813	.857	.893	.850
Course-taking	.820	.840	.900	.887
Counseling	.845	.855	.945	.944
Respect	.807	.840	.859	.849
Mentoring and Caring Relationships	.834	.865	.886	.855
Fairness	.788	.799	.849	.819
Student Relationships	.809	.808	.747	.819

**Data Collection Procedures**

Once schools agreed to participate in the study, boxes of surveys were mailed or delivered by researchers to the school. Appropriate numbers of student, teacher, and counselor surveys were included, as well as consent forms for student participation. Each survey was placed in a separate brown envelope; consent forms were stapled to student

surveys. Principals were requested to follow specific procedures to ensure proper survey administration and to protect respondents' privacy.

Principals were requested to distribute the Student Surveys to all students. Principals were asked to instruct students to provide the consent form to their parents or guardians, obtain their parent or guardian signature should they agree to their child's participation, complete the survey fully, seal it in the brown envelope, and return the envelope to the principal.

Principals were also asked to distribute the Teacher/Counselor Survey to all the teachers and counselors in their schools. As with the Student Surveys, principals were requested to ask that teachers and counselors fully complete the survey, seal it in the provided brown envelope, and return to the principal.

Once principals received all the completed surveys, they were asked to return all the complete consent forms and surveys in their sealed envelopes to researchers in the provided prepaid and addressed boxes by specific dates. The deadline for the first wave of sampling and data collection was May 16, 2005, and the deadline for the second wave was set at 2 weeks following delivery of the blank surveys to the school. All data were delivered to researchers by October 2005.

### **Data Entry and Management**

Data were entered into databases using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Following this, initial descriptive analyses were conducted to locate outliers and to identify any errors in data entry. Once located, errors were researched and corrected. Cleaned datasets were then ready for analysis.

### **Variables**

The dependent variables in this study are the eight subscales. These assess teacher academic expectations for students, use of interesting and differentiated instruction, the extent to which teachers encourage students to take higher-level courses, the degree to which students are provided counseling about their educational options, respectful school environments, mentoring and caring student-teacher relationships, school staff fairness, and positive student relationships. All are continuous variables.

The independent variables include respondent racial identification, gender, school level, and student achievement. Achievement is assessed using a self-report item on the student survey, in which respondents are asked to indicate which sorts of grades they usually receive.

In addition, three school-level variables are employed. These include the percentage of African American students and the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-priced school meals (the traditional education research proxy variable for socioeconomic status) at each school. Such variables are included for two primary

reasons. First, much research suggests that school-level variables often account for significant amounts of variance in outcome measures (c.f., deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Entwistle, Alexander, & Olson, 1997; Halsey, Lauder, Brown, & Wells, 1997; McLeod, 1987; Oakes, 1990; Orfield, 2001; Riordan, 1997; Roscigno, 2000). Second, data on eligibility for subsidized school meals were not available for analysis on the individual level, nor could a valid means to obtain such information from students be devised. In this analysis, then, student-level socioeconomic status data are not available. However, the socioeconomic makeup of each participating school is used here as a proxy instead.

Locale is another school-level variable. Locale codes were extrapolated from the Common Core of Data (CCD), which collects data on American public schools annually. The locale codes employed in the CCD were developed in the early 1980s by the U.S. Bureau of the Census to correct problems with earlier locale codes. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, “This coding system is based on both the proximity to metropolitan areas and on population size and density. As a further aid to users, these codes are assigned based on the addresses of the individual schools and are assigned at the school level. Thus, it is possible to identify areas within school districts as being different types of localities” (NCES, 2005).

The locale codes are

1. Central city of a Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) or Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with population of 250,000 or more.
2. Central city of a CMSA or MSA but not designated as a large central city.
3. Place within the CMSA or MSA of a large central city.
4. Place within the CMSA or MSA of a mid-size central city.
5. Place not within a CMSA or MSA but with a population of 25,000 or more and defined as urban.
6. Place not within a CMSA or MSA with a population of at least 2,500 but less than 25,000.
7. Place not within a CMSA or MSA and designated as rural.
8. Place within a CMSA or MSA designated as rural (this code not available prior to 1998).

For the purposes of this study, codes 7 and 8 were merged to create one rural code. In the multiple linear regression equations, the locale codes are treated as a continuous variable, ranging from more urban to more rural.

Several variables were recoded to accommodate multiple regression calculations. For one, achievement is treated as a continuous variable, ranging from higher grades to lower grades. In addition, this variable was reverse coded for regression to ease interpretation. Thus, reverse coded, the higher the achievement rating, the better the grades. Gender and race were transformed into dummy variables. For gender, *male* was coded 0 and *female* 1. In the analyses presented here, gender is employed as a control variable. For race, *White* was coded 0, *African American* was coded as 1, and all other responses were coded as “system missing” (this ensures that the experience of African

American and white students only are compared). School level was recoded for regression, such that *middle school* was coded as 0 and *high school* as 1.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) were first calculated to provide overall analyses of student, teacher, and counselor perceptions. Descriptive statistics were then disaggregated by significant demographic variables, including individual racial/ethnic identification, gender, and several school-level variables, such as the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals, the percentage of African American students in the total school population, and the rurality/urbanicity code for the school location.

Exploration of the relationships between dependent and independent variables began with tests of statistical significance. Nonparametric tests of statistical significance were conducted to determine whether observed differences between the perceptions of various groups were statistically significant or simply artifacts of measurement error or chance. Nonparametric tests were conducted because the units of analysis—students, teachers, and counselors—were not randomly selected, although the schools in which they worked were randomly chosen. In such a case, nonparametric tests are appropriate because they accommodate the violation of the assumption of randomness in tests of statistical significance. In other words, nonparametric tests are correct for this violation. Depending on the type of comparisons, the Mann-Whitney U test or the Kruskal-Wallis H test was employed.

To determine the contribution of each independent variable (such as race, free/reduced-priced meal status, locale) to each dependent variable (mean subscale scores), multiple linear regression analyses were performed (Kachigan, 1991). Multiple linear regression attempts to model the relationship between two or more explanatory variables and a response variable by fitting a linear equation to observed data. The technique is appropriate for exploring the separate and combined influence of multiple independent variables on a dependent variable.

Replies to qualitative survey items were analyzed by theme and by interview question, as appropriate. Data were segmented into passages through coding. Emerging themes were identified, and data were reviewed for replicating categories. These categories were given broad codes. Once significant data were categorized, finer coding was employed using patterns emerging within each coded set. Themes were then detailed and tabulated to provide a general, quantitative analysis of the most salient and prevalent issues.

### **Limitations**

Any study has various limitations arising from methodological and budget constraints, as well as from limitations associated with interpretation and theory. This study is, of course, no exception.

Sampling posed a challenge to this research. Although researchers conducted cluster sampling across the state, many schools reported that they were either overwhelmed by other priorities competing for their attention, or that they had already completed several surveys earlier and were not interested in participating in another. The total number of individual participants ultimately provided sufficient study power, but representation from more schools would have been preferable.

Relatedly, there are some disadvantages associated with the form of cluster sampling employed here. Although the technique provides some degree of random selection, at the cluster level, individuals within clusters were not randomly chosen. Thus, it is likely that some variance in scores may be associated with school-level factors not included in the study. On the other hand, cluster sampling optimizes resources, allowing for the inclusion of more individuals than might otherwise be possible via simple random sampling.

To the extent that they were meaningful to the study, several school-level variables were included. A limitation of this, however, is that using school-level variables in multiple linear regression sometimes leads to overestimates of the significance of such variables in predicting dependent variables. Multi-level modeling, or hierarchical linear modeling, is one strategy for correcting this problem. Unfortunately, the number of level two cases in this study (that is, schools) is not sufficient for the valid conduct of multi-level modeling, particularly given the number of outcome measures and independent variables (Snijders, 2005).

Another limitation is that too few counselors responded to the survey to allow for meaningful comparisons of their views with those of teachers. The result was that researchers were unable to answer one of the study's research questions.

The measure of locale posed another challenge. The NCES locale codes represent an attempt to account both for urbanicity-rurality and population size, with the result that the codes are not a clear continuum from more urban to more rural. Thus, for instance, 7 represents full rural areas whereas 8 represents places designated as metropolitan areas within rural areas. To ease interpretation, researchers merged the two codes to form one rural code. Nonetheless, readers should interpret findings related to locale with some caution.

Fortunately, none of the above limitations seriously diminishes the utility or validity of this study. The sample includes enough individuals (a total of 3,302) to produce sufficient study power (Lohr, 1999; Niles, 2005). The four surveys, and their constituent subscales, all possess sufficient internal consistency reliability. In addition, appropriate nonparametric tests of statistical significance were used to accommodate the assumption of violations, and multiple linear regression was employed to allow for analysis of the independent and combined influence of the factors under investigation on the dependent variables.

## FINDINGS

### Student Sample Characteristics

A total of 2,931 West Virginia middle and high school students completed and returned the student survey. Two thirds (66.5%) were high school students, and the remaining (33.5%) were middle school pupils. More than half (53.8%) were female.

The majority (81.9%, N = 2,351) of student respondents identified themselves as White. A total of 9.3% (N = 267) identified themselves as African American. These demographics are somewhat different than those of the larger West Virginia population, in which 95.0% of residents are white and 3.2% identify themselves as African American (U.S. Census, 2006). However, the larger percentage of African American students represented in the sample is to be expected given sample stratification by school demographics.

One point two percent (1.2%) each identified as Hispanic or Latino/a (N = 33) or as American Indian/Alaska Native (N = 35). Only 0.9% (N = 25) were Asian and 0.5% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (N = 14). Five percent (5.0%, N = 144) selected the *Other* response option. Of these, the majority specified that they were biracial or of mixed race. *Other* students specified various ethnic identities (e.g., Irish, Italian). Several students wrote “redneck” in the space provided, while another wrote “human.”

As shown below, more than half (52.2%) of the student sample attended schools located in rural areas. Slightly more than a quarter (25.9%) attended schools in a central city. Only 7.8% attended schools in small towns.

**Table 2**  
**Locale of Schools: Students**

Locale	Frequency	Percentage
Central city	758	25.9
Mid-size city	413	14.1
Small town	230	7.8
Rural	1530	52.2

Nearly two thirds (61.8%) of students went to schools serving smaller populations of African American students than the national percentage, 17.3%. A little more than a quarter (25.2%) of student respondents attended schools serving student populations in which 50% or more were eligible for subsidized school meals.

Student respondents are roughly equally distributed across grade levels, with relatively smaller percentages represented in the fifth, sixth, and eighth grades. Ninth graders represent the largest percentage in the sample at 19.4%. Data are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Grade Levels: Students**

Grade Level		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Valid	5th Grade	106	3.6	3.8
	6th Grade	278	9.5	10.0
	7th Grade	347	11.8	12.4
	8th Grade	240	8.2	8.6
	9th Grade	542	18.5	19.4
	10th Grade	474	16.2	17.0
	11th Grade	457	15.6	16.4
	12th Grade	349	11.9	12.5
	Total	2793	95.3	100.0
Missing		138	4.7	
Total		2931	100.0	

Students were asked to select the response option best representing their achievement level. As presented below, more than half (56.9%) indicated that they usually receive A's or B's. Only 2.1% reported earning D's or F's.

**Table 4**  
**Student Achievement Levels**

Achievement		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Valid	I usually get A's or B's	1598	54.5	56.9
	I usually get B's or C's	914	31.2	32.5
	I usually get C's or D's	238	8.1	8.5
	I usually get D's or F's	59	2.0	2.1
	Total	2809	95.8	100.0
Missing		122	4.2	
Total		2931	100.0	

### **Student Perceptions**

Mean subscale scores for the entire sample are presented in Table 5. Means ranged from 3.22 (Academic Expectations) to 2.33 (Counseling) on the 4-point scale. Standard deviations, indicating the extent to which scores vary, are smallest for the Academic Expectations subscale (SD = 0.54) and largest for the Counseling subscale (SD = 0.81). However, no standard deviations are larger than 1.0, indicating relative agreement on subscale ratings.

**Table 5**  
**Mean Subscale Scores: Students**

Subscale	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Academic Expectations	2781	3.2186	.54384
Instruction	2815	2.8786	.59376
Course-taking	2820	2.6514	.72383
Counseling	2825	2.3281	.81424
Respect	2765	2.8545	.56618
Mentoring	2770	2.8691	.63035
Fairness	2699	2.8298	.61951
Student Relationships	2882	2.4210	.72142

As seen in Table 6, male students have somewhat lower mean scores on the Academic Expectations subscale, whereas female students' scores are lower than males' on the Student Relationships subscale. Disparities on both subscales are statistically significant. However, male and female students' scores on the remaining subscales are roughly equivalent.

**Table 6**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by Gender: Students**

	Male	Female
Academic Expectations***	3.1865	3.2556
Instruction	2.8772	2.8881
Course-taking	2.6306	2.6766
Counseling	2.3316	2.3329
Respect	2.8611	2.8561
Mentoring	2.8777	2.8672
Fairness	2.8325	2.8347
Student Relationships**	2.5151	2.3471

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Middle school students have higher scores on six of the eight subscales: Academic Expectations, Instruction, Course-taking, Respect, Mentoring and Caring Relationships, and Fairness (see Table 7). Middle school students thus appear to perceive their schools more positively than their high school counterparts. On the other hand, high school students have higher ratings on the Counseling subscale, which is not surprising given that most counseling for postsecondary options takes place at that level. Differences between middle and high school students on seven of the subscales are statistically significant. Scores on the Student Relationships subscale are roughly equivalent.

**Table 7**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by School Level: Students**

	Middle School	High School
Academic Expectations***	3.4144	3.1203
Instruction***	3.0280	2.8044
Course-taking***	2.7447	2.6049
Counseling***	1.7758	2.5974
Respect***	3.0402	2.7614
Mentoring***	3.0804	2.7628
Fairness***	3.0526	2.7170
Student Relationships	2.3617	2.4508

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

White students rate their school climates more highly than their African American peers, as presented in Table 8. White students have higher mean subscale scores on seven of the eight subscales, although their ratings are nearly equivalent on the Counseling subscale (which does not achieve significance). It appears, then, that African American students are less sanguine about their school environments, and to a statistically significant degree on most measures.

**Table 8**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by Race: Students**

	White	African American
Academic Expectations **	3.2671	2.9731
Instruction **	2.9170	2.7242
Course-taking***	2.6750	2.4923
Counseling	2.3295	2.4046
Respect***	2.9027	2.6437
Mentoring***	2.9224	2.6033
Fairness***	2.8900	2.5191
Student Relationships	2.4470	2.2859

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

In general, ratings on seven of the eight subscales appear to increase along with student achievement (see Table 9). Thus, for example, students with higher grades are more likely to rate their teachers' academic expectations for them highly. This pattern is not evident, however, on the Counseling subscale, with students reporting that they usually earn A's or B's having lower subscale scores than students who report earning B's and C's and those earning C's and D's. All differences are statistically significant.

**Table 9**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by Achievement Level: Students**

	I usually get D's or F's	I usually get C's or D's	I usually get B's or C's	I usually get A's or B's
Academic Expectations **	2.5154	2.9845	3.1517	3.3272
Instruction***	2.1959	2.6462	2.8318	2.9744
Course-taking***	1.8816	2.1824	2.4326	2.8831
Counseling***	2.0103	2.3144	2.4334	2.2903
Respect***	2.0987	2.5943	2.8092	2.9560
Mentoring***	2.1131	2.5978	2.8053	2.9806
Fairness***	2.1133	2.5513	2.7507	2.9496
Student Relationships***	1.9881	2.3206	2.3825	2.4850

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Student ratings on five of the subscales (Academic Expectation, Instruction, Respect, Mentoring and Caring Relationships, and Fairness) appear to be related to the percentage of African American students in schools, as shown in Table 10. Student demographics, then, appear to play some role in students' evaluations of school climate. Course-taking, Counseling, and Student Relationships subscale scores, however, appear roughly equivalent, although differences on both the Counseling and Student Relationships subscales achieve statistical significance.

**Table 10**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by Percentage of African Americans in School Student Population: Students**

	Percentage of African Americans in school student population: Below national percentage	Percentage of African Americans in school student population: At or above national percentage
Academic Expectations***	3.3175	3.0627
Instruction***	2.9697	2.6705
Course-taking	2.6599	2.6515
Counseling***	2.2349	2.3619
Respect***	2.9625	2.6561
Mentoring***	2.9632	2.6909
Fairness***	2.9617	2.6015
Student Relationships***	2.4088	2.3262

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Interestingly, students in schools with more than half of students qualifying for subsidized school meals tended to have noticeably higher scores on five of the subscales: Academic Expectations, Instruction, Respect, Mentoring and Caring Relationships, and

Fairness. Thus, it appears that students in schools with larger populations of low-socioeconomic students rate their schools more highly than schools with wealthier populations. However, students in wealthier schools do have higher scores on the Counseling subscale, indicating that such students may receive more counseling about their postsecondary educational options than their poorer counterparts. Differences in scores on the Course-taking and Student Relationships subscales are not statistically significant. Details are provided in Table 11.

**Table 11**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by Percentage of Students Eligible for Subsidized Meals in School Student Population: Students**

	Percentage of students eligible for subsidized meals in school student population: Below 50%	Percentage of students eligible for subsidized meals in school student population: At or above 50%
Academic Expectations***	3.1680	3.3817
Instruction***	2.8084	3.0016
Course-taking	2.6412	2.7036
Counseling***	2.4331	1.8242
Respect***	2.7950	2.9977
Mentoring***	2.7910	3.0602
Fairness***	2.7550	3.0283
Student Relationships	2.3902	2.3390

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Students attending schools located in small towns tended to have higher ratings on the Academic Expectations, Instruction, Course-taking, Respect, Mentoring and Caring Relationships, and Fairness subscales (see Table 12). Small-town and mid-size-city students scored similarly on the Counseling subscale, and students in all four locale categories scored equivalently on the Student Relationships subscale. The central city, mid-size-city, and rural students tended to have similar mean ratings. Statistical significance in subscale scores were located in all subscales except Student Relationships.

**Table 12**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by Locale: Students**

	Central City	Mid-size City	Small Town	Rural
Academic Expectations***	3.2869	3.1832	3.5075	3.1500
Instruction***	2.9550	2.8275	3.1998	2.8072
Course-taking*	2.6506	2.5675	2.7352	2.6621
Counseling***	2.0474	2.4202	2.0661	2.4793
Respect***	2.9136	2.8379	3.2029	2.7775
Mentoring***	2.9552	2.7768	3.1867	2.8037
Fairness***	2.9227	2.8481	3.1830	2.7269
Student Relationships	2.4148	2.4244	2.4846	2.4136

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Multiple linear regression provides additional information about the separate and combined effects of independent variables (in this case, race, achievement, school level, and school demographics) on dependent variables (subscale scores, in this instance). The technique allows for analysis of the effect of independent variables together, rather than in isolation. Thus, it is able to account for the individual influence of each independent variable, controlling for the others, on the dependent variable.

As shown in Table 13, the equation predicting mean scores on the Academic Expectations subscale achieves statistical significance, and the combined independent variables explain 16% of the overall variance in scores ( $Adj R^2 = .16$ ,  $F(7, 2168) = 60.906$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In addition, five of the variables achieve significance independently. Thus, being in high school exerts a statistically significant and negative effect on the extent to which students report that high academic expectations are held for them. African American students are also significantly less likely than White students to indicate that their teachers have high academic expectations for them.

On the other hand, the achievement variable exerts a positive influence on subscale scores. That is, students who report earning higher grades indicate higher teacher expectations for their achievement.

Two school-level variables achieve significance. The larger the percentage of African American students, and students eligible for subsidized meals, in a school, the more likely students are to cite depressed teacher expectations for student performance.

Locale and gender do not exert significant effects on mean Academic Expectations subscale scores. However, it is interesting to note the direction of the relationships. Females are more likely to report high expectations, and the more rural a school location, the more likely students are to indicate that school staff have high expectations for their academic performance.

**Table 13**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the Academic Expectations Subscale: Students**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	3.812	.069		55.440	.000
Female	.039	.021	.037	1.887	.059
High school	-.315***	.031	-.293	-10.157	.000
African American	-.125***	.036	-.073	-3.500	.000
Achievement	.133***	.015	-.181	-8.937	.000
Percent African American	-.007***	.001	-.152	-7.329	.000
Percent subsidized meals	-.003*	.001	-.062	-2.437	.015
Locale	.006	.006	.024	1.049	.294

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .162 ( $p < .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .47647

N 2175

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The equation predicting mean scores on the Instruction subscale attains statistical significance (see Table 14). The independent variables together are able to account for 12% of the total variance in subscale scores ( $Adj R^2 = .12$ ,  $F(7, 2184) = 44.038$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Several variables also achieve significance. Being in high school, as opposed to middle school, exerts a significant negative effect on Instruction subscale scores. Thus, high school students are more likely to indicate that instruction is uninteresting and that teachers do not provide a variety of instructional techniques to support student learning. There is also a positive relationship between achievement and Instruction subscale scores. The higher a student's grades are, the more likely the student is to report that instruction is interesting and differentiated. Conversely, of course, students earning lower grades tend to rate instruction as uninteresting.

Two school-level variables attain significance. The larger the percentage of African American students served by a school, the more likely students are to have low mean scores on the Instruction subscale. On the other hand, the more rural a school, the more likely students are to report that their classes are interesting and their teachers inventive and supportive.

Gender, racial identity, and the percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced-priced meals in a school do not exert statistically significant effects on Instruction subscale scores.

**Table 14**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the Instruction Subscale: Students**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	3.403	.076		44.573	.000
Female	-.001	.023	-.001	-.053	.958
High school	-.276***	.035	-.234	-7.965	.000
African American	.024	.040	.013	.603	.547
Achievement	.131***	.017	-.164	-7.892	.000
Percent African American	-.010***	.001	-.195	-9.179	.000
Percent subsidized meals	-.002	.001	-.047	-1.787	.074
Locale	.013*	.007	.047	1.987	.047

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .121 ( $p < .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .53434

N 2191

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 15**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the Course-taking Subscale: Students**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	2.871	.094		30.407	.000
Female	.011	.029	.008	.391	.696
High school	.000	.043	.000	.007	.995
African American	-.054	.049	-.023	-1.102	.271
Achievement	.396***	.020	-.392	-19.331	.000
Percent African American	.005**	.001	.071	3.437	.001
Percent subsidized meals	.006**	.002	.088	3.456	.001
Locale	.017*	.008	.047	2.047	.041

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .162 ( $p < .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .65676

N 2192

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Regression estimates predicting scores on the Course-taking subscale are significant, as shown in Table 15. The independent variables explain 16% of the overall variance in scores ( $Adj R^2 = .16$ ,  $F(7, 2185) = 61.548$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In addition, several variables achieve significance independently. The higher students report their grades to be, the more likely they are to indicate that they are encouraged to or are interested in taking higher level courses. All three school-level variables attain significance as well, all with positive relationships. Thus, the higher the percentage of African American and

students eligible for subsidized meals, and the more rural a school, the more likely students are to have higher mean scores on the Course-taking subscale. Gender, high school level, and being African American, however, do not exert statistically significant influences on Course-taking subscale scores.

The equation predicting scores on the Counseling subscale is statistically significant, as seen in Table 16, with the independent variables explaining roughly 27% of the total variance ( $Adj R^2 = .27$ ,  $F(7, 2189) = 114.429$ ,  $p < .001$ ). All but two of the variables exert significant influences on subscale scores; neither gender nor race is able to predict the extent to which students report that they have received counseling about their current academic careers and their postsecondary plans.

Achievement level, reported by students as the grades they usually receive, plays a significant and positive role in Counseling scores. That is, students who earn higher grades are more likely to indicate that they receive counseling about their educational lives than are students reporting lower achievement levels. High school status, the percentage of African American students and students eligible for subsidized school meals, and locale also exert significant positive influences on subscale scores.

**Table 16**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the Counseling Subscale: Students**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	1.378	.099		13.943	.000
Female	.006	.030	.004	.201	.841
High school	.868***	.045	.519	19.195	.000
African American	.019	.051	.007	.360	.719
Achievement	.070**	.022	-.062	-3.267	.001
Percent African American	.007***	.001	.090	4.651	.000
Percent subsidized meals	.006**	.002	.079	3.314	.001
Locale	.026**	.009	.065	3.016	.003

Note:  $R^2 adj. .266$  ( $p < .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .69037

N 2196

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The multiple linear regression equation predicting scores on the Respect subscale is statistically significant, and the independent variables account for 15% of the total variance in scores ( $Adj R^2 = .15$ ,  $F(7, 2150) = 57.229$ ,  $p < .001$ ). All but two of the independent variables, gender and race, achieve significance (see Table 17).

Being in high school, versus middle school, and being African American, versus being white, exert a significant negative effect on the degree to which students report that teachers, parents, and students treat each other with respect. Thus, high school and

African American students perceive less respect throughout their schools than do middle school and white students. Students with higher grades tend to rate the level of respect in their schools higher than students who earn lower grades.

All three school-level variables are significant. The percentage of African American students and of pupils eligible for free or reduced-priced meals plays significant and negative roles on subscale scores. Thus, the level of respect in schools is rated lower by students in schools with higher percentages of African American students and students of low-socioeconomic status.

Locale, on the other hand, exerts a positive influence on subscale scores. In other words, the more rural a school location, the higher are student ratings of respect.

**Table 17**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the Respect Subscale: Students**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	3.545	.073		48.872	.000
Female	-.032	.022	-.029	-1.473	.141
High school	-.329***	.033	-.293	-10.022	.000
African American	-.047	.038	-.026	-1.250	.212
Achievement	.152***	.016	-.197	-9.598	.000
Percent African American	-.009***	.001	-.176	-8.361	.000
Percent subsidized meals	-.004**	.001	-.088	-3.405	.001
Locale	.014*	.006	.051	2.200	.028

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .154 ( $p < .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .49929

N 2157

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Accounting for approximately 14% of the overall variance, the equation predicting student scores on the Mentoring and Caring Relationships subscale is statistically significant ( $Adj R^2 = .14$ ,  $F(7, 2153) = 50.581$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (see Table 18). In addition, four of the independent variables attain significance. High school status exerts a significant negative influence, such that high school students are less likely than their middle school peers to indicate supportive and caring relationships with teachers. Race likewise plays a negative role. African American students and those with lower grades report more often that they do not have caring, mentoring relationships with teachers in their schools.

The relationship between achievement level and subscale scores is positive, however. That is, students who perform better are more likely to report that there are caring and mentoring relationships in their school.

One school-level variable is statistically significant: the percentage of African American students in the school population. Thus, the larger the percentage of African American students served in a school, the more likely students there are to have low scores on the Mentoring and Caring Relationships subscale.

Gender, the percentage of students qualifying for subsidized school meals, and locale do not achieve statistical significance in this equation.

**Table 18**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the Mentoring and Caring Relationships Subscale: Students**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	3.353	.082		40.998	.000
Female	-.029	.025	-.023	-1.158	.247
High school	-.317***	.037	-.251	-8.533	.000
African American	-.119**	.043	-.059	-2.788	.005
Achievement	.152***	.018	.176	8.531	.000
Percent African American	-.007***	.001	-.130	-6.125	.000
Percent subsidized meals	.000	.001	.002	.066	.947
Locale	.013	.007	.042	1.767	.077

Note:  $R^2$  adj. .138 ( $p < .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .56574

N 2160

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Explaining roughly 19% of the total variance, the equation predicting scores on the Fairness subscale is statistically significant ( $Adj R^2 = .19$ ,  $F(7, 2110) = 69.457$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (see Table 19). All but two of the independent variables, gender and locale, attain significance.

Four of the variables achieving significance exert negative influences on subscale scores. Thus, being in high school and being African American render students more likely to indicate that school staff do not treat students fairly or equitably. In addition, school demographics appear to influence subscale scores negatively. Students at schools with higher percentages of African American students and pupils eligible for subsidized meals are less sanguine about the fairness of their teachers than students in schools with lower percentages.

However, achievement plays a significant positive role on Fairness subscale scores. In other words, the higher grades students receive, the more likely they are to report that staff in their school treat students fairly and equitably.

**Table 19**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the**  
**Fairness Subscale: Students**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	3.731	.080		46.858	.000
Female	-.046	.024	-.038	-1.918	.055
High school	-.374***	.036	-.300	-10.379	.000
African American	-.139**	.041	-.071	-3.404	.001
Achievement	.151***	.017	-.176	-8.647	.000
Percent African American	-.011***	.001	-.207	-9.939	.000
Percent subsidized meals	-.006***	.001	-.103	-4.007	.000
Locale	.001	.007	.002	.093	.926

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .185 ( $p < .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .54335

N 2117

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

As presented in Table 20, the equation predicting scores on the Student Relationships subscale attains significance, although it accounts for only about 4% of the total variance ( $Adj R^2 = .04$ ,  $F(7, 2217) = 12.856$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Four independent variables also achieve significance. Gender and the percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced-priced meals exert independent and significant negative effects on subscale scores. In other words, female students, and those attending schools with higher percentages of students eligible for subsidized meals, are more likely to perceive that student relationships at their schools are negative or unsupportive.

On the other hand, achievement level and locale play significant and positive roles in subscale scores. Thus, higher achieving students tend to rate the extent to which positive student relationships are apparent at their schools higher than do lower achieving students. In addition, the more rural a school, the more likely students there are to report that student relationships are positive.

Three variables, however, do not have significant effects on subscale scores. High school status, race, and the percentage of African American students do not play significant roles in the degree to which students perceive positive student relationships in their schools.

**Table 20**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the Student Relationships Subscale: Students**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	2.853	.098		29.100	.000
Female	-.175***	.030	-.124	-5.890	.000
High school	-.083	.044	-.057	-1.874	.061
African American	-.074	.051	-.032	-1.449	.148
Achievement	.130***	.021	-.131	-6.068	.000
Percent African American	.000	.001	-.003	-.135	.893
Percent subsidized meals	-.006***	.002	-.096	-3.562	.000
Locale	.029**	.009	.083	3.396	.001

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .036 ( $p < .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .68925

N 2224

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

### Student Suggestions

The final item on the student surveys posed an open-ended question: *What should schools do to help all students learn to the best of their ability?* Of the 2,931 respondents, 2,175 responded to this question. Responses tended to address one of nine themes, listed below.

1. Differentiated instruction
2. Academic expectations
3. Interesting and fun school work
4. Respect and fairness
5. Teacher attitudes
6. Small class size
7. Changing school start time
8. Distractions
9. Safety

Many students suggested that teachers use a variety of instructional strategies. As one respondent advised, “Help students with their special learning styles and needs.” Another recommended that teachers “teach things in many different ways.” Similarly, another student advised that teachers should “try different methods of teaching.” Yet another suggested, “Make things more hands on.” One respondent specified that teachers should “teach to all five learning styles so all students can retain information and be successful.”

Providing individualized instruction and offering alternative explanations of material were recommended by many of those students suggesting that teachers use differentiated instruction. One student recommended that teachers “take time to help us when we ask for it and not get mad when we need help.” “One on one” instruction was requested by quite a few students.

Many students also suggested that their learning experiences would improve if school staff held higher academic expectations. “Give them [students] a chance to do work this is hard instead of say[ing] they can’t do it,” wrote one such pupil. Another recommended that teachers “push them [students] to do more and encourage them to do their best.” Yet another advised that teachers should “provide more challenging learning opportunities” to students.

Schools could help all students learn by making learning fun and interesting, according to many students. One respondent advised, “Make it [instruction] interesting and enjoyable for everyone.” Another suggested, “Let us do more fun activities instead of always making us do bookwork and worksheets.” One student noted of the monotony of day-to-day classes: “Make learning fun. Don’t do the same routine daily. It gets boring.” Another responded similarly: “Make learning fun. Don’t talk in one tone and don’t do the same stuff over and over. Try new things.”

Quite a number of respondents expressed concern about the lack of respect teachers show students. As one student recommended, “[Teachers should] treat all students with respect and actually care to make sure they know what is going on with students.” Another suggested that teachers should “stop talking to us and treating us like ignorant babies.”

Similarly, many students suggested that school staff should treat students more equitably and fairly. Said one such student, “Teachers shouldn’t pick their favorites and help them all the time and give them every benefit possible. They should treat us all fairly and equally.” Some students reported that they had witnessed favoritism. “Stop letting the people who play sports get off easy,” wrote one such student. Other students noted that they had observed discrimination. As one respondent suggested, “Don’t disclose financial information about students to teachers.” “Treat people the same way and not pay attention to the rich kids more and letting them get by with everything,” wrote another. Still another advised, “Be polite to every student. A teacher of mine doesn’t help a Hispanic boy and [an] Asian girl if they need it.”

Several students also indicated that discrimination was a challenge to academic experiences and suggested that more equitable instruction would be of benefit. Comments included “Stop segregation,” “Stop being racist,” “We need to learn more about black history,” and “Stop treating the rich (preps) better than the poor.” (On the other hand, a few students made suggestions such as “Take all the black people out,” and “Segregate them so that all the crack smokin’, lazy n\*\*\*\*\*s who don’t want to learn won’t be costing us tax money.”)

Many students reported that teachers were often negative and unsupportive. One such respondent opined, “Teachers only care about paychecks.” Another respondent concurred, suggesting, “Have teachers that are nice and not just in it for the money.” Yet another said, “Don’t hire teachers who only care about money.” One respondent said, “Teachers should be nicer and more willing to help kids.” Another advised, “Start caring more about the students. Try listening to them more when they have problems.” Several respondents addressed teacher and school staff quality issues. Wrote one respondent, “Make sure all teachers are qualified to do their job.” Another mentioned difficulties with a school librarian: “The current librarian [at my school] deters students from utilizing resources at the library to further their learning. The staff [are] aware of her unprofessional behavior and attitude, but they continue [to let it go].”

Smaller class sizes appeared to be salient to many respondents. As one student suggested, “Schools should have a smaller amount of people in the class.” Likewise, another respondent recommended, “They should put us in small classes.”

Many respondents held strong opinions about the time at which school begins. One respondent suggested, “Start school at 8:00 so we can get more sleep and be fully awake.” Similarly, another recommended, “Go to school an hour later—that way the students have enough rest and are more focused.” Several respondents advised the school day should start at 8:00 a.m. Other respondents advocated starting the school day at 7:30 in the morning. Several respondents noted that students often fall asleep in class. One recommended “not to have school so early in the morning because students would probably pay more attention and not fall asleep in class.”

Distractions, identified by students as dress codes, lack of air conditioning, quality and quantity of school food, and the No Child Left Behind Act appeared to weigh on some respondents. One respondent wrote, “Don’t pay so much attention to dress code.” As another advised, “Pay attention to the actual learning experience instead of ... dress code.” Several respondents reported they would learn better if their schools were air conditioned. Others indicated that their concentration would improve if they had access to better school food and if portions were increased. A few students mentioned No Child Left Behind, advocating that the legislation should be eliminated or altered because of the undue pressure it puts on students and teachers. As one respondent phrased it, “Get rid of No Child Left Behind!”

Finally, some respondents mentioned safety concerns. For instance, several students advocated the installation of security cameras in all classes. As one student put it, “Knowing that the kid next to me doesn’t have a gun or do LSD—that would make me safer.”

### **Teacher and Counselor Sample Characteristics**

A total of 371 middle and high school teachers, counselors, and other school staff completed and returned the Teacher and Counselor survey. Nearly two thirds (61.4%) were female, and 96.0% (N = 340) identified themselves as White. Only 2.0% (N = 7)

identified themselves as African American, 0.6% (N = 2) as American Indian or Alaska Native, and 1.4% (N = 5) as *Other*. Those selecting the *Other* response option specified their racial identity as American, European American, Scots-Irish American, and Human.

As presented below, nearly two thirds (62.3%) of respondents worked in schools located in areas designated as rural. No respondents worked in schools in large cities.

**Table 21**  
**Locale of Schools: School Staff**

Locale	Frequency	Percentage
Central City	44	11.9
Mid-size City	66	17.8
Small Town	30	8.1
Rural	231	62.3

The latest data indicate that 17.3% of the national student population is African American (NCES, 2005). Fully three quarters (75%) of respondents in the sample work in schools with smaller populations of African American students than the national percentage. The majority (83.0%) of respondents work in schools serving student populations in which less than 50% of students are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals.

Nearly three quarters (74.1%) of respondents were employed in high schools. More than three quarters (77.7%) were regular classroom teachers; 11.2% were special education teachers, and 2.0% were counselors. The remaining 9.2% described selected the *Other* response option. Of these, three each were school administrators, Title I teachers, and librarians, and two each were physical education teachers, long-term substitutes, and speech therapists. The remainder included an adult educator, alternative education teacher, automotive technology teacher, co-teacher, reading specialist, nurse, psychologist, secretary, extracurricular support, shop teacher, support service coordinator, technical education teacher, and vocational teacher. One respondent indicated teaching both regular and special education classes.

Teachers were asked to indicate all the grade levels they currently taught. Their responses are shown in Table 22.

As presented in Table 23, 11.0% of the sample had earned a bachelor's degree, and nearly a third (32.9%) had a bachelor's degree and 15 or 30 additional credit hours. Seven percent had acquired a master's degree, and 8.7% had the degree plus 15 hours. More than a third (36.3%) of respondents had earned a master's degree plus 30 or more credit hours.

**Table 22**  
**Grade Levels: Teachers**

Grade level	N	Percentage*
5	17	4.6
6	48	12.9
7	63	17.0
8	66	17.8
9	157	42.3
10	175	47.2
11	190	51.2
12	184	49.6

\*Percentages do not total to 100% because respondents were able to select multiple response options.

**Table 23**  
**Education Level: School Staff**

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Valid	Bachelor's	39	10.5	11.0
	Bachelor's + 15	75	20.2	21.1
	Bachelor's + 30 or more	42	11.3	11.8
	Master's	25	6.7	7.0
	Master's + 15	31	8.4	8.7
	Master's + 30 or more	129	34.8	36.3
	Education Specialist	3	.8	.8
	Doctorate	2	.5	.6
	Other	9	2.4	2.5
	Total	355	95.7	100.0
Missing		16	4.3	
Total		371	100.0	

Teachers were asked to select all the subject areas they currently taught from a list provided on the survey; results are presented in Table 24. Teachers who selected the *Other* response option taught a wide range of subjects, from agriculture and business to creative writing and foreign language.

**Table 24**  
**Subjects Taught by Teachers**

Subject	N	Percentage
All Subjects	24	65.0
Reading/Language Arts	57	15.4
English	52	14.0
Math	67	18.1
Science	58	15.6
Social Studies	52	14.0
Music/Art	15	4.0
Physical Education/Health	24	6.5
Title I	1	0.3
Other	90	24.3
Not applicable	18	4.9

### **School Staff Perceptions**

As presented in Table 25, mean school staff scores on the subscales range from 3.47 (Academic Expectations) to 3.00 (Student Relationships) on the 4-point scale. Overall, staff in the sample perceive their schools more positively than negatively.

Standard deviations range from 0.44 (Respect) to 0.71 (Counseling). Relatively small, the standard deviations indicate that scores in each subscale tended not to vary too widely across individuals.

**Table 25**  
**Mean Subscale Scores: School Staff**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Academic Expectations	354	3.4685	.44481
Instruction	357	3.3002	.46178
Course-taking	355	3.2979	.50017
Counseling	344	3.1822	.71275
Respect	351	3.2133	.44889
Mentoring	360	3.4116	.43961
Fairness	359	3.3214	.49732
Student Relationships	357	3.0037	.51928

Male staff have higher scores on all subscales than females (see Table 26). Such differences are statistically significant for the Respect, Fairness, and Student Relationships subscale. Thus, male staff are more likely to report that their school climates are respectful and fair, and that positive student relationships are present.

**Table 26**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by Gender: School Staff**

	Male	Female
Academic Expectations	3.5191	3.4452
Instruction	3.3470	3.2907
Course-taking	3.3289	3.2921
Counseling	3.2774	3.1263
Respect*	3.2900	3.1758
Mentoring	3.4236	3.4167
Fairness**	3.4227	3.2790
Student Relationships**	3.1119	2.9423

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Middle school teachers tend to have higher subscale scores than their high school colleagues, as indicated in Table 27. However, scores on the Counseling subscale are higher for high school staff, which is not surprising given that much counseling takes place at the high school level. This difference attains statistical significance.

**Table 27**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by School Level: School Staff**

	Middle School	High School
Academic Expectations	3.5181	3.4510
Instruction	3.3530	3.2816
Course-taking	3.2661	3.3092
Counseling*	2.9754	3.2533
Respect	3.2204	3.2107
Mentoring	3.4681	3.3916
Fairness	3.3935	3.2962
Student Relationships	2.9362	3.0279

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

There are some differences across school role groups, but none achieves statistical significance (see Table 28). For instance, counselors rate academic expectations, course-taking, counseling, and fairness more highly than their colleagues but not to a significant degree. In addition, comparisons between school staff are misleading given that there are so few counselors in the sample.

**Table 28**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by Role: School Staff**

	Regular Classroom Teacher	Special Education Teacher	Counselor	Other	Total
Academic Expectations	3.4737	3.4430	3.6667	3.4667	3.4736
Instruction	3.3199	3.2939	3.2381	3.3065	3.3140
Course-taking	3.3094	3.2628	3.5000	3.2742	3.3047
Counseling	3.1588	3.1441	3.7619	3.1667	3.1707
Respect	3.2315	3.0952	3.4694	3.2238	3.2198
Mentoring	3.4265	3.3120	3.5952	3.4301	3.4172
Fairness	3.3371	3.1946	3.6286	3.3935	3.3327
Student Relationships	3.0268	2.9145	3.2857	2.9355	3.0108

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Some differences may be observed in Table 29 between school staff of varying levels of education. Staff who had earned an Education Specialist or doctorate degree had somewhat higher scores on the Academic Expectations, Course-taking, Counseling, and Fairness subscales, but not to a statistically significant degree. Although there is some variation across role groups on the remaining subscales, none is significant.

**Table 29**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by Education Level: School Staff**

	Bachelor's	Master's	Education Specialist or Doctorate
Academic Expectations	3.4966	3.4600	3.5333
Instruction	3.3234	3.3148	3.1000
Course-taking	3.2917	3.3212	3.4000
Counseling	3.1690	3.2328	3.6333
Respect	3.2295	3.2143	3.1143
Mentoring	3.4112	3.4343	3.3667
Fairness	3.3280	3.3392	3.4000
Student Relationships	3.0287	2.9963	2.8667

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

White school staff have slightly higher scores on the Course-taking subscale, and African Americans score somewhat higher on the Student Relationships subscale, but these differences are not statistically significant. Scores on the remaining subscales are roughly equivalent. Data are presented in Table 30.

**Table 30**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by Race: School Staff**

	Black or African American	White
Academic Expectations	3.4762	3.4749
Instruction	3.2619	3.3167
Course-taking	3.1786	3.3112
Counseling	3.2381	3.1735
Respect	3.3878	3.2154
Mentoring	3.3571	3.4219
Fairness	3.2286	3.3378
Student Relationships	3.2857	3.0040

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

With the exception of scores on the Student Relationships subscale, subscale scores from staff working in schools serving fewer than the average national percentage of African American students are very similar to scores from staff working in schools serving more than the national average (see Table 31). But staff in schools serving percentages smaller than the national average have statistically significantly higher scores on the Student Relationships subscale. Thus, staff perceive more positive relationships among students in such schools than those serving larger percentages of African American pupils.

**Table 31**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by Percentage of African Americans in School Student Population: School Staff**

	Percentage of African Americans in school student population: Below national percent	Percentage of African Americans in school student population: At or above national percent
Academic Expectations	3.4730	3.4188
Instruction	3.2751	3.3419
Course-taking	3.3053	3.3045
Counseling	3.2535	3.2342
Respect	3.2083	3.2088
Mentoring	3.4160	3.4069
Fairness	3.3268	3.2684
Student Relationships*	3.0286	2.8803

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

School staff in schools serving populations of 50% or more students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals give somewhat higher ratings on all but the Counseling subscale than do their counterparts in schools serving populations with less than 50% of student qualifying for subsidized meals (see Table 32). In other words, staff in schools

serving larger populations of poor students rate their school climates better than those in schools with fewer poor students. Statistical significance is achieved on the Mentoring and Caring Relationships subscale, with staff in schools serving larger populations of poor students perceiving supportive relationships between students and teachers to a greater degree than their colleagues in schools serving fewer poor students.

However, school staff in schools serving populations with less than half qualifying for subsidized meals had higher scores on the Counseling subscale, although not to a significant degree.

**Table 32**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by Percentage of Students Eligible for Subsidized Meals in School Student Population: School Staff**

	Percentage of students eligible for subsidized meals in school student population: Below 50%	Percentage of students eligible for subsidized meals in school student population: At or above 50%
Academic Expectations	3.4393	3.5641
Instruction	3.2714	3.3879
Course-taking	3.2929	3.3657
Counseling	3.2707	3.1285
Respect	3.1959	3.2698
Mentoring*	3.3903	3.5303
Fairness	3.2923	3.4192
Student Relationships	2.9913	3.0000

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

In general, staff employed in schools located in mid-size cities had lower subscale scores than their colleagues in other locales, as shown in Table 33. Some differences on subscale scores achieve statistical significance. There are significant differences by locale on the Academic Expectations, Instruction, Course-taking, Counseling, and Mentoring and Caring Relationships subscales.

As presented in Table 34, the multiple linear regression equation predicting staff scores on the Academic Expectations subscale does not achieve statistical significance and is able to explain only 2% of the overall variance ( $Adj R^2 = .02$ ,  $F(7, 286) = 1.766$ ,  $p > .001$ ). In addition, only one independent variable—locale—exerts a significant influence on scores. Thus, the more rural a school, the more likely school staff there are to rate academic expectations highly.

**Table 33**  
**Mean Subscale Scores by Locale: School Staff**

	Central City	Mid-size City	Small Town	Rural
Academic Expectations*	3.5000	3.3122	3.5287	3.4992
Instruction**	3.3798	3.0926	3.2816	3.3461
Course-taking*	3.2256	3.1333	3.2583	3.3605
Counseling**	2.9730	3.2240	2.8333	3.2527
Respect	3.2279	3.0843	3.2808	3.2374
Mentoring*	3.4228	3.2552	3.4828	3.4447
Fairness	3.3381	3.1969	3.3467	3.3507
Student Relationships	2.8837	3.0000	2.9885	3.0300

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 34**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the Academic Expectations Subscale: School Staff**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	<i>t</i> value	Sig.
(Constant)	3.543	.159		22.264	.000
Female	-.048	.054	-.052	-.894	.372
High school	-.131	.071	-.133	-1.843	.066
African American	-.031	.190	-.010	-.165	.869
Education level	-.069	.052	-.080	-1.323	.187
Percent African American	-.002	.003	-.052	-.856	.393
Percent subsidized meals	-.002	.003	-.058	-.751	.454
Locale	.045*	.019	.161	2.412	.017

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .018 ( $p > .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .44485

*N* 293

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Statistical significance is not achieved for the regression equation predicting scores on the Instruction subscale ( $Adj R^2 = .01$ ,  $F(7, 291) = 1.421$ ,  $p > .001$ ) (see Table 35). Moreover, the equation is able to account for only 1% of the total variance in subscale scores. Only one variable contributes significantly to predictions of scores. As rurality increases, so too do teacher and counselor scores on the Instruction subscale. Put another way, teachers in more rural schools are more likely to perceive differentiated and interesting instruction in their schools than are their colleagues in more urban places.

**Table 35**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the Instruction Subscale: School Staff**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	3.289	.164		20.035	.000
Female	-.040	.055	-.042	-.723	.470
High school	-.132	.071	-.131	-1.854	.065
African American	-.143	.196	-.043	-.727	.468
Education level	-.055	.053	-.061	-1.036	.301
Percent African American	.003	.003	.056	.936	.350
Percent subsidized meals	-.002	.003	-.036	-.490	.625
Locale	.044*	.019	.153	2.308	.022

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .010 ( $p > .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .45891

N 298

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The equation predicting scores on the Course-taking subscale is not significant and cannot explain any of the variance ( $Adj R^2 = .00$ ,  $F(7, 291) = 1.004$ ,  $p > .001$ ). In addition, none of the independent variables makes significant contributions to the variance in scores (see Table 36).

**Table 36**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the Course-taking Subscale: School Staff**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	2.978	.176		16.891	.000
Female	-.032	.059	-.032	-.549	.583
High school	.065	.075	.061	.862	.390
African American	-.122	.209	-.035	-.582	.561
Education level	.004	.056	.004	.073	.942
Percent African American	.000	.003	.009	.149	.882
Percent subsidized meals	.003	.003	.059	.797	.426
Locale	.033	.021	.105	1.584	.114

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .000 ( $p > .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .48963

N 298

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The equation predicting scores on the Counseling subscale attains statistical significance, accounting for 7% of the total variance ( $Adj R^2 = .07$ ,  $F(7, 282) = 4.142$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

.001). However, only one variable is significant, such that school staff in high schools are significantly more likely than those in middle schools to report that students at their schools have received counseling about their postsecondary educational options. Data are presented in Table 37.

**Table 37**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the Counseling Subscale: School Staff**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	2.729	.222		12.295	.000
Female	-.108	.075	-.083	-1.446	.149
High school	.445***	.098	.317	4.544	.000
African American	-.114	.262	-.026	-.435	.664
Education level	-.014	.073	-.012	-.195	.845
Percent African American	.000	.004	.005	.091	.928
Percent subsidized meals	.006	.004	.102	1.355	.177
Locale	.009	.027	.023	.353	.724

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .071 ( $p < .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .61266

N 298

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Able to explain less than 1% of the total variance on the Respect subscale, the equation below does not achieve statistical significance ( $Adj R^2 = .00$ ,  $F(7, 287) = 1.170$ ,  $p > .001$ ). Moreover, none of the independent variables is significant. Data are provided in Table 38.

The equation for Mentoring and Caring Relationships also is not statistically significant and is not able to explain any of the total variance ( $Adj R^2 = .00$ ,  $F(7, 293) = 1.024$ ,  $p > .001$ ). In addition, none of the independent variables makes significant contributions to the variance in scores. Table 39 presents data for this equation.

Accounting for only 2% in total variance, the equation predicting scores on the Fairness subscale is not significant ( $Adj R^2 = .02$ ,  $F(7, 290) = 1.955$ ,  $p > .001$ ) (see Table 40). Two independent variables, however, exert statistically significant influences on subscale scores, both negatively. Thus, women staff tend to rate the degree to which school staff treat students fairly and equitably lower than do men, and those employed in high schools tend to have lower Fairness subscale ratings than those in middle schools.

**Table 38**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the**  
**Respect Subscale: School Staff**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	3.308	.160		20.635	.000
Female	-.107	.054	-.116	-1.970	.050
High school	-.064	.070	-.066	-.919	.359
African American	.090	.190	.028	.470	.639
Education level	-.042	.052	-.048	-.805	.421
Percent African American	.000	.003	-.012	-.190	.849
Percent subsidized meals	-.002	.003	-.058	-.763	.446
Locale	.031	.019	.111	1.652	.100

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .004 ( $p > .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .44557

N 294

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 39**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the**  
**Mentoring and Caring Relationships Subscale: School Staff**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	3.271	.154		21.213	.000
Female	.018	.052	.020	.347	.729
High school	-.079	.067	-.083	-1.189	.236
African American	-.079	.185	-.025	-.426	.670
Education level	-.014	.050	-.017	-.287	.774
Percent African American	-.001	.003	-.015	-.256	.798
Percent subsidized meals	.001	.003	.032	.428	.669
Locale	.029	.018	.107	1.611	.108

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .001 ( $p > .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .43352

N 300

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 40**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the Fairness Subscale: School Staff**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	3.575	.176		20.316	.000
Female	-.123*	.060	-.119	-2.060	.040
High school	-.199*	.077	-.183	-2.571	.011
African American	-.148	.210	-.042	-.705	.482
Education level	-.007	.057	-.007	-.120	.905
Percent African American	-.002	.003	-.043	-.713	.477
Percent subsidized meals	-.005	.003	-.105	-1.383	.168
Locale	.032	.021	.104	1.571	.117

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .022 ( $p > .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .49034

N 297

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Overall, the equation predicting Student Relationships subscale scores does not achieve statistical significance and accounts for only about 4% of the total variance (*Adj*  $R^2 = .04$ ,  $F(7, 290) = 2.569$ ,  $p > .001$ ) (see Table 41). Nonetheless, two variables are significant. Women staff tend to score lower on the subscale than men, and staff in schools serving larger percentages of African American pupils tend to have lower scores on the subscale than those in schools serving smaller percentages.

**Table 41**  
**Multiple Linear Regression Estimates for Variables Predicting Scores on the Student Relationships Subscale: School Staff**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t value	Sig.
(Constant)	3.196	.186		17.204	.000
Female	-.126*	.062	-.117	-2.029	.043
High school	.006	.081	.005	.072	.943
African American	.291	.219	.078	1.326	.186
Education level	-.053	.059	-.053	-.900	.369
Percent African American	-.006*	.003	-.118	-1.978	.049
Percent subsidized meals	-.005	.004	-.114	-1.520	.130
Locale	.039	.021	.121	1.837	.067

Note:  $R^2$  *adj.* .036 ( $p > .001$ )

SS<sub>Error</sub> .51315

N 297

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## A Comparison of Student and Staff Perceptions

As shown in Table 42, student scores are consistently lower than school staff scores on all eight subscales. Moreover, all differences are statistically significant. Most dramatically, with a differential of 0.85, students rate the extent to which they have received counseling about their postsecondary educational options far lower than do school staff. Overall, these data suggest that students have a less positive view of their school climates than do staff.

**Table 42**  
**Student and Staff Mean Subscale Scores**

	Students	School Staff
Academic Expectations subscale***	3.2186	3.4685
Instruction subscale***	2.8786	3.3002
Course taking subscale***	2.6514	3.2979
Counseling subscale***	2.3281	3.1822
Respect subscale***	2.8545	3.2133
Mentoring subscale***	2.8691	3.4116
Fairness subscale***	2.8298	3.3214
Student relationships subscale***	2.4210	3.0037

\* $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

West Virginia African American middle and high school students, and those in schools with larger low-income and African American student populations, who responded to the 2005 survey are not as positive about their school climate, overall, as their teachers and school staff members. This may be, in part, because the experience of life in school is very different for students, who are compelled to attend and have less organizational power than adults in schools, as noted by education sociologists' deMarrais and LeCompte (1999). More significantly, however, the large majority (96.0%) of teachers and school staff responding to the survey identify themselves as white and are therefore unlikely to have experienced racial discrimination directed toward themselves.

Survey results show, on the other hand, that West Virginia students' perceptions of school climate are often related to individual factors (such as student race and academic achievement) and to school level (middle vs. high school) and locale (rural vs. nonrural). For example, regression analyses reveal that, regardless of achievement level or school poverty factors, African American students are much less satisfied with their school environments than are their white peers.

#### **Student race plays an important role in students' evaluations of their school experiences.**

African American students rate their schools significantly lower than their white peers on seven of the eight aspects of schooling assessed by the survey: academic expectations, instruction, course-taking, counseling about education options, respect, mentoring and caring relationships, and fairness.

Even when controlling for other important factors, African American students are far more likely than white students to report that their teachers have low academic expectations for them. African American pupils are also less likely to indicate that there are sufficient caring and mentoring relationships between students and teachers, and African American students report more often than white students that school staff treat students unfairly.

These findings are particularly troubling given that other significant variables, including achievement level and the percentage of African American and low-socioeconomic-level students in respondents' schools, are controlled. This means that African American students, *regardless of their academic performance and the demographics of their schools*, are more likely to give low ratings to their schools in terms of academic expectations, caring and mentoring relationships, and staff fairness. Thus, even high-achieving African American students in schools with relatively small populations of poor students are significantly less happy with their schooling experiences than their white peers.

**Achievement exerts a significant and positive influence on student perceptions of their school environment.**

Achievement, measured as student self-reports of their usual grades, clearly exerts a significant and positive influence on student perceptions of school environment. The higher their achievement, the more positively students rate their school experiences. Students who earn higher grades are much more likely than students with lower grades to report that their teachers hold high expectations for their academic performance.

Students who perform well are also more likely to indicate that their teachers provide interesting and varied instruction, encourage them to take higher-level courses, and provide caring and mentoring support to students. Staff respect for each other, students, and their parents is more highly rated by students who earn higher grades, as is staff fairness. Youth with strong academic performance report more often than those with lower grades that they have received counseling about their postsecondary trajectories and that there are positive relationships between students. Academic performance, then, structures student experiences, or their perceptions of those experiences, to a significant degree.

**Two school-level variables—the percentage of African American students and the percentage of students eligible for subsidized meals—are related to student views in both positive and negative ways.**

School-level variables play important roles in student views, although not always in the expected manner. For instance, given earlier research (c.f., Anyon, 1997; Orfield, 2001), one might expect that students in schools serving larger percentages of African American students or students qualifying for subsidized meals would report less encouragement from teachers to complete higher-level courses or fewer opportunities to discuss postsecondary options with counselors than students in schools with smaller populations of African American and poor pupils. However, in this analysis, as the percentage of African American students in a school increases, and as the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals increases, so too does the likelihood that respondents will report that they are encouraged by teachers to take higher level classes and that they have talked with a counselor about their educational options following high school.

On the other hand, the composition of school populations tends to have a negative effect on student perceptions of climate. Thus, students from schools with larger percentages of African American or poor youth are more likely to report low teacher expectations; disrespectful interactions between teachers, students, and parents; and unfair or inequitable treatment by school staff.

**Students attending schools that serve larger populations of African American students are more likely to give negative ratings to instruction and teacher-student relationships.**

The percentage of African American students served plays an important role in student views of the degree to which their teachers' instruction is interesting, responsive, and sufficient, and the extent to which relationships between teachers and students are caring and supportive. In both instances, the larger the population of African American students, the less likely students are to assess instruction and student-teacher relationships positively.

**Students attending high-poverty schools are more likely to report poor relationships among students.**

The percentage of a school's student population who qualify for subsidized meals exerts a significant and negative influence on student views of relationships between students. That is, students who attend schools serving more poor youth tend to rate the extent to which students treat each other well less highly than do students attending schools serving a wealthier population.

**Students in rural schools perceive their schools more positively.**

Interestingly, once other variables (such as school poverty level) are controlled, the more rural a school, the more likely students are to report that their teachers encourage them to take higher-level courses and that they have met with a counselor to discuss their postsecondary education options and plans. But the strongest associations are between rural place and measures of relationships and community in schools: Students located in more rural schools are far more inclined to indicate that staff are respectful and that students treat each other well.

**Students rate their schools lower than school staff on all eight aspects of schooling addressed in the survey.**

Given the variables important to this study, school staff perceptions proved to be more troublesome to predict than student perceptions. In general, staff perceptions are more positive than negative—and staff have a more positive view of their school climates than do students. This may be largely in part because most teachers in the study are white and therefore are unlikely to have experienced racial discrimination personally. Researchers were also able to determine that staff ratings for some aspects of school climate are related to school level, school locale, and the percentage of African American students served in the school. Specifically, high school staff are much more likely than middle school staff to indicate that students receive sufficient counseling about their educational or career plans following high school. However, high school staff are less likely than middle school staff to report that staff treat students fairly and equitably. Staff in rural schools perceive higher expectations than do staff in more urban schools. And staff working in schools serving larger percentages of African American students are less likely to indicate that students there treat each other well.

## Recommendations

Two major recommendations are made based upon the conclusions of this study. First, conclusions suggest that equity should be an issue in school reform efforts. Second, communities, districts, schools, and researchers may want to investigate the characteristics of rural schools and middle schools that engender more positive student experiences, and replicate, to the degree possible, those policies and structures that are shown to improve the academic experience of pupils. Suggestions for operationalizing these recommendations are detailed below.

### **Include equity as a central concern in school reform efforts.**

Given the significance of race, achievement, and school demographics in structuring how students experience their academic lives, it is important for community members, parents, and school staff to acknowledge the extent to which stratification by such social phenomena undermines the aims of democratic education. Without attention to equity, some students will continue to receive substandard education, and social disparities will be maintained.

Thus, schools should address equity in their school plans. Although content and pedagogy remain meaningful components of many school improvement endeavors, attention to equity ensures that all students receive the benefits thereof. Students' and teachers' perceptions should be solicited in developing the schools' five-year plan.

**Consider conducting school-community forums or dialogues on race, achievement, and poverty.** Schools might begin the process of addressing equity through school community forums or dialogues on race, achievement, and/or poverty. Because social stratification is a difficult subject to discuss, a number of community dialogue protocols have been developed. Such protocols ensure that discussions are focused, respectful, and productive. Facilitators will find a variety of easily located protocols on the World Wide Web.

**Consider engaging teachers in equity study groups.** Schools may also consider employing study groups in which teachers read materials on equity, discuss them, plan and implement classroom strategies to support equity, and report on results. As with community dialogues, however, a facilitator would be helpful to assure that discussions are clearly focused and constructive.

**Create opportunities for school staff to discuss student perceptions on school climate and the achievement gap.** Discussions about students' experiences are particularly important given that school staff in this study are far more positive about school climate and issues of equity than are their students. It might be useful for schools to explore these differences in perception, whether to address student concerns or to educate teachers about how students experience school climate and achievement in their schools.

**Recruit and hire more African American teachers.** School staff (who are nearly all white) and African American students report very different perceptions of school climate. African American students may benefit from teachers who share and understand their experiences. African American teachers might also play an important role in expanding the cultural repertoire of West Virginia’s white teachers, thereby enhancing their ability to teach African American students.

**Clarify discipline policies and, if necessary, provide teachers with professional development on discipline.** Students in this study identified specific issues impeding their academic growth. Unfair and inequitable practices and treatment ranked high among student concerns. To address such concerns, schools and districts should clarify discipline policies and their implementation to assure that they are equitably and consistently applied. Teachers may require additional professional development on discipline to achieve this goal.

**Consider offering teachers job-embedded professional development on instructional strategies that meet the needs of diverse learners.** Teachers might also need job-embedded and ongoing professional development on using multiple instructional strategies, both to pique student interest in material and to meet the learning needs of students in heterogeneous classes. Many students in this study suggested that use of various instructional techniques would improve their learning experiences. Consideration should be given to providing more time for job-embedded professional development in the school calendar.

**Establish equity policies, active support from school administrators, and venues for committed community outreach.** Students—particularly African American and low-achieving students, and those in schools with large populations of African American and/or impoverished students—were clear that they had had teachers who held low academic expectations. Although professional development and community dialogue may help teachers articulate and confront their assumptions about student potential, such efforts must take place within larger programs for equity if they are to challenge entrenched deficit views of the aptitude of minority and poor youth. In other words, to effect meaningful change, professional development should be coupled with substantial equity policies, active support from school administrators, and committed community outreach.

**Investigate the characteristics of rural schools and middle schools that engender more positive student experiences, and replicate, to the degree possible, those policies and structures that are shown to improve the academic experience of pupils.**

**Examine the structural, organizational, and school cultural factors differentiating middle and high school student experiences and use findings to engage high school students more fully.** Because high school students have significantly more negative assessments of school climate than their middle school peers, school and district staff may consider investigating the structural, organizational, and school cultural factors differentiating the middle from the high school student experience.

Findings from such studies could then be used to develop and implement improvement strategies to engage high school students more fully.

**Examine the characteristics of community in rural schools that engender more positive student experiences and, to the extent possible, seek to replicate those that are shown to improve the academic experiences of pupils.** Findings from this study suggest that, when other variables are controlled, students in rural schools report more positive student relationships and respectful treatment by teachers than students in nonrural schools. One way to explore how to support all students would be to examine what characteristics of the relationships in rural schools engender more positive student experiences. To the extent possible, school staff might seek to replicate the cultural and structural characteristics of rural schools that are shown to improve the academic experiences of pupils.

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**Appendix**  
**Student and Staff Surveys**

**The Education Alliance/AEL  
2005 Student Survey: Middle School Version**

Please read each statement carefully. Then rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the scale provided by completely filling in the bubble that best represents your answer. Please feel free to respond honestly as your name will never be associated with your answers. *Thank you!*

**Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree    2 = Disagree    3 = Agree    4 = Strongly Agree**

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. My teachers expect me to do well in school.....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 2. My class work is interesting .....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 3. My teachers want me to take higher-level classes when I get to high school.....        | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 4. A counselor has talked to my parents about sending me to college .....                 | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 5. I feel respected by the adults at this school .....                                    | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 6. My teachers know me well.....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 7. The teachers in this school are fair.....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 8. Students in this school treat each other well.....                                     | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 9. My teachers encourage me to do good work.....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 10. If I don't understand something, my teachers will explain it to me another way .....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 11. My teachers encourage me to take challenging classes when I am in high school.....    | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 12. A counselor has talked to my parents about ways to pay for college .....              | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 13. Teachers at this school treat students with respect.....                              | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 14. My teachers care about me.....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 15. This school's principal is fair .....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 16. Most students here get along .....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 17. My teachers expect me to get good grades.....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 18. My teachers try to help when I ask .....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 19. My teachers encourage me to take advanced classes when I get to high school.....      | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 20. A counselor at my school has talked to me about the classes I am taking .....         | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 21. My parents feel respected by my teachers.....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 22. I can tell that my teachers really care about me.....                                 | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 23. I am called on in class as much as anyone else.....                                   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 24. Students here treat each other well, even if they are different from each other ..... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |

- |  |                         |                         |                         |                         |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 25. My teachers expect me to work hard .....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 26. My teachers try to make learning interesting.....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 27. I am interested in taking higher-level classes when I get to high school .....                     | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 28. I have talked with a counselor about my classes .....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 29. My parents feel comfortable coming to school to ask questions.....                                 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 30. My teachers want the best for me .....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 31. Teachers treat all students equally well.....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 32. Teachers at this school expect as much from African American students as from White students ..... | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 33. I like most of my classes .....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 34. My teachers use different ways of teaching to help students learn.....                             | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 35. I have talked with a counselor about my plans for the future                                       | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 36. Teachers treat each other with respect in this school .....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 37. There are adults at this school who I can turn to for help...                                      | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 38. Teachers here treat you fairly if your family is poor.....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 39. Teachers at this school expect as much from poor kids as from middle-class kids .....              | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 40. Students here treat teachers with respect.....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 41. Parents of students here treat teachers with respect .....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 42. Teachers here are mentors for me .....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 43. Teachers here treat you fairly if you are African American   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |

Please answer the following questions. Select only one answer per question.

44. What grade are you in?

- 5     8     11  
 6     9     12  
 7     10

45. What is your gender?

- Female  
 Male

46. Which of the following best describes you?

- American Indian or Alaska Native  
 Asian  
 Black or African American  
 Hispanic or Latino/a  
 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander  
 White  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

47. Which statement describes you best?

- I usually get A's or B's.  
 I usually get B's or C's.  
 I usually get C's or D's  
 I usually get D's or F's.

48. What should schools do to help all students learn to the best of their ability?

**The Education Alliance/AEL**  
**2005 Student Survey: High School Version**

Please read each statement carefully. Then rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the scale provided by completely filling in the bubble that best represents your answer. Please feel free to respond honestly as your name will never be associated with your answers. *Thank you!*

**Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree**

- |   |                         |                         |                         |                         |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. My teachers expect me to do well in school.....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 2. My class work is interesting .....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 3. My teachers want me to take higher-level classes .....                                 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 4. A counselor has talked to me about college .....                                       | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 5. I feel respected by the adults at this school .....                                    | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 6. My teachers know me well .....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 7. The teachers in this school are fair .....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 8. Students in this school treat each other well.....                                     | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 9. My teachers encourage me to do good work.....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 10. If I don't understand something, my teachers will explain it to me another way.....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 11. My teachers encourage me to take challenging classes                                  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 12. A counselor has talked to me about ways to pay for college.....                       | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 13. Teachers at this school treat students with respect .....                             | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 14. My teachers care about me .....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 15. This school's principal is fair.....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 16. Most students here get along .....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 17. My teachers expect me to get good grades.....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 18. My teachers try to help when I ask .....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 19. My teachers encourage me to take advanced classes..                                   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 20. A counselor at my school has talked to me about the classes I am taking .....         | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 21. My parents feel respected by my teachers.....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 22. I can tell that my teachers really care about me.....                                 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 23. I am called on in class as much as anyone else .....                                  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 24. Students here treat each other well, even if they are different from each other ..... | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 25. My teachers expect me to work hard .....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |

- |  |                         |                         |                         |                         |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 26. My teachers try to make learning interesting .....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 27. I am interested in taking higher-level classes .....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 28. I have talked with a counselor about my classes .....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 29. My parents feel comfortable coming to school to ask questions .....                                | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 30. My teachers want the best for me .....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 31. Teachers treat all students equally well.....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 32. Teachers at this school expect as much from African American students as from White students ..... | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 33. I like most of my classes .....  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 34. My teachers use different ways of teaching to help students learn .....                            | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 35. I have talked with a counselor about my plans for the future .....                                 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 36. Teachers treat each other with respect in this school..  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 37. There are adults at this school who I can turn to for help   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 38. Teachers here treat you fairly if your family is poor ..   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 39. Teachers at this school expect as much from poor kids as from middle-class kids .....              | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 40. Students here treat teachers with respect.....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 41. Parents of students here treat teachers with respect....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 42. Teachers here are mentors for me .....   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| 43. Teachers here treat you fairly if you are African American .....                                   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |

Please answer the following questions. Select only one answer per question.

44. What grade are you in?

- 5     8     11  
 6     9     12  
 7     10

45. What is your gender?

- Female  
 Male

46. Which of the following best describes you? 47. Which statement describes you best?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> American Indian or Alaska Native          | <input type="radio"/> I usually get A's or B's. |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian                                     | <input type="radio"/> I usually get B's or C's. |
| <input type="radio"/> Black or African American                 | <input type="radio"/> I usually get C's or D's. |
| <input type="radio"/> Hispanic or Latino/a                      | <input type="radio"/> I usually get D's or F's. |
| <input type="radio"/> Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander |   |
| <input type="radio"/> White                                     |   |
| <input type="radio"/> Other _____                               |   |

48. What should schools do to help all students learn to the best of their ability?

**The Education Alliance/AEL**  
**2005 Teacher and Counselor Survey: Middle School Version**

Please read each statement carefully. Then rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the scale provided by completely filling in the bubble that best represents your answer. Please feel free to respond honestly as your name will never be associated with your answers. *Thank you!*

**Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree**

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Teachers here expect students to do well in school   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 2. At this school, teachers make learning interesting.....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 3. Teachers at this school want students to take higher-level classes when they get to high school..... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 4. Counselors at this school talk to all students about going to college .....                          | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 5. Teachers at this school treat students with respect.....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 6. Teachers here know their students well.....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 7. The teachers in this school are fair .....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 8. Students in this school treat each other well.....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 9. Teachers here encourage kids to do good work.....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 10. If students don't understand something, teachers here will explain it another way .....             | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 11. Teachers here encourage students to take challenging classes when they go to high school...         | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 12. Counselors here talk to students about ways to pay for college.....                                 | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 13. Teachers at this school express consistent respect for students' abilities .....                    | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 14. At this school, teachers care about their students ..   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 15. This school's principal is fair with students .....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 16. Most students here get along.....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 17. Teachers at this school expect their students to get good grades .....                              | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 18. Teachers here help students when they ask for it...   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 19. Teachers here encourage kids to take advanced classes when they get to high school.....             | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 20. Counselors at this school talk to kids about the classes they are taking .....                      | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 21. Teachers here treat all parents with respect.....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 22. I can tell that the teachers at this school really  |   |   |   |   |

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| care about students .....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 23. Teachers here ensure that all kids have equal chances to participate in their classrooms .....               | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 24. Students here treat each other well, even if they are different from each other.....                         | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 25. Teachers here expect students to work hard .....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 26. Teachers here use a variety of techniques to help kids learn.....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 27. Teachers at this school try to get kids interested in higher-level classes when they get to high school..... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 28. Counselors at this school help students plan the classes they will take .....                                | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 29. Teachers here feel comfortable with most parents, even those who are different from them...                  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 30. Teachers at this school want the best for all students .....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 31. Teachers at this school treat all students equally well  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 32. Teachers here expect White and African American kids to perform equally well .....                           | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 33. Teachers at this school persist even if a child doesn't seem to want to learn.....                           | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 34. Counselors here talk with students about their plans for the future .....                                    | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 35. Teachers at this school treat each other with respect.....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 36. There are adults at this school who students can turn to for help.....                                       | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 37. Teachers here treat White and African American students equally well .....                                   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 38. Teachers here expect poor and middle class students to perform equally well.....                             | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 39. Teachers support each other in trying to teach all students .....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 40. Counselors at this school talk with all students about their education .....                                 | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 41. Students at this school treat teachers with respect .  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 42. Teachers here are mentors for their students .....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 43. Parents of students here treat teachers with respect.....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |

Please answer the following questions. (Select all answers that apply.)

44. What is your role in this school?

45. What grades do you teach?

- Regular classroom teacher
  - Special education teacher
  - Counselor
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5
  - 6
  - 7
  - 8
  - 9
  - 10
  - 11
  - 12

46. Select the one category that best describes the degree and credits you have now.

- Bachelor's
- Bachelor's + 15
- Bachelor's + 30 or more
- Master's
- Master's + 15
- Master's + 30 or more
- Education Specialist
- Doctorate
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

47. Please indicate which subject(s) you currently teach. (Choose all that apply.)

- I teach all subjects
- Not applicable
- Reading/language arts
- English
- Math
- Science
- Social studies
- Music/art
- Physical education/health
- Title I
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

48. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

49. Which of the following best describes you?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**The Education Alliance/AEL**  
**2005 Teacher and Counselor Survey: High School Version**

Please read each statement carefully. Then rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the scale provided by completely filling in the bubble that best represents your answer. Please feel free to respond honestly as your name will never be associated with your answers. *Thank you!*

**Scale:    1 = Strongly disagree    2 = Disagree    3 = Agree    4 = Strongly Agree**

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Teachers here expect students to do well in school.....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 2. At this school, teachers make learning interesting .....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 3. Teachers at this school want students to take higher-level classes .....                        | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 4. Counselors at this school talk to all students about going to college.....                      | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 5. Teachers at this school treat students with respect .....                                       | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 6. Teachers here know their students well .....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 7. The teachers in this school are fair .....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 8. Students in this school treat each other well .....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 9. Teachers here encourage kids to do good work.....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 10. If students don't understand something, teachers here will explain it another way .....        | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 11. Teachers here encourage students to take challenging classes.....                              | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 12. Counselors here talk to students about ways to pay for college.....                            | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 13. Teachers at this school express consistent respect for students' abilities .....               | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 14. At this school, teachers care about their students.....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 15. This school's principal is fair with students.....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 16. Most students here get along .....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 17. Teachers at this school expect their students to get good grades.....                          | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 18. Teachers here help students when they ask for it .....   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 19. Teachers here encourage kids to take advanced classes .....                                    | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 20. Counselors at this school talk to kids about the classes they are taking .....                 | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 21. Teachers here treat all parents with respect.....  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 22. I can tell that the teachers at this school really care about students .....                   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 23. Teachers here ensure that all kids have equal chances to participate in their classrooms ..... | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |

24. Students here treat each other well, even if they are different from each other..... ① ② ③ ④
25. Teachers here expect students to work hard..... ① ② ③ ④
26. Teachers here use a variety of techniques to help kids learn..... ① ② ③ ④
27. Teachers at this school try to get kids interested in higher-level classes ..... ① ② ③ ④
28. Counselors at this school help students plan the classes they will take..... ① ② ③ ④
29. Teachers here feel comfortable with most parents, even those who are different from them..... ① ② ③ ④
30. Teachers at this school want the best for all students .... ① ② ③ ④
31. Teachers at this school treat all students equally well ... ① ② ③ ④
32. Teachers here expect White and African American kids to perform equally well..... ① ② ③ ④
33. Teachers at this school persist even if a child doesn't seem to want to learn ..... ① ② ③ ④
34. Counselors here talk with students about their plans for the future ..... ① ② ③ ④
35. Teachers at this school treat each other with respect..... ① ② ③ ④
36. There are adults at this school who students can turn to for help ..... ① ② ③ ④
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38. Teachers here expect poor and middle-class students to perform equally well ..... ① ② ③ ④
39. Teachers support each other in trying to teach all students..... ① ② ③ ④
40. Counselors at this school talk with all students about their education ..... ① ② ③ ④
41. Students at this school treat teachers with respect..... ① ② ③ ④
42. Teachers here are mentors for their students..... ① ② ③ ④
43. Parents of students here treat teachers with respect..... ① ② ③ ④

Please answer the following questions. (Select all answers that apply.)

44. What is your role in this school?
- Regular classroom teacher
  - Special education teacher
  - Counselor
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
45. What grades do you teach?
- 5    8    11
  - 6    9    12
  - 7    10
46. Select the one category that best describes the degree and credits you have now.
- Bachelor's
  - Bachelor's + 15
  - Bachelor's + 30 or more
  - Master's
  - Master's + 15
  - Master's + 30 or more
  - Education Specialist
  - Doctorate
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
47. Please indicate which subject(s) you currently teach. (Choose all that apply.)
- I teach all subjects
  - Not applicable
  - Reading/Language arts
  - English
  - Math
  - Science
  - Social studies
  - Music/art
  - Physical education/health
  - Title I
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
48. What is your gender?
- Female
  - Male
49. Which of the following best describes you?
- American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Asian
  - Black or African American
  - Hispanic or Latino/a
  - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

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