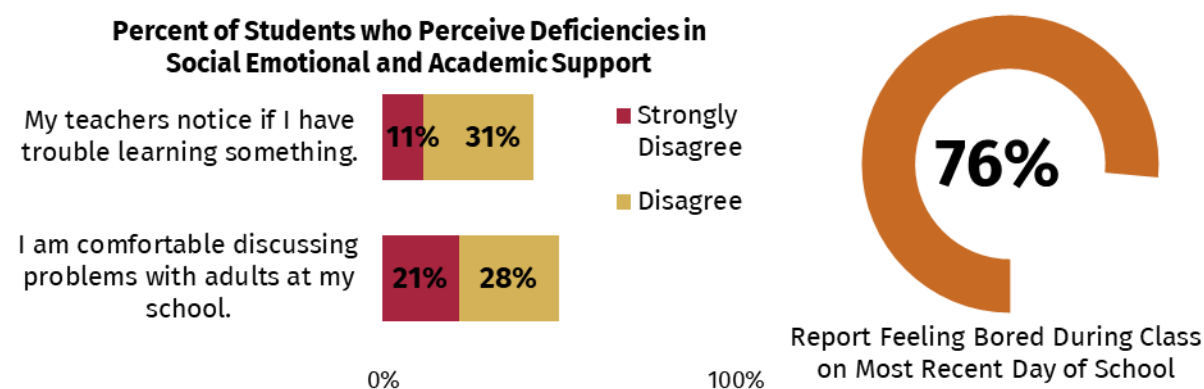


Executive Summary

The West Virginia Department of Education launched the *Education Survey for Students* to coincide with the *West Virginia's Voice Education Forums*. The survey was designed to inform the special legislative session on education with greater insight from the experience of students in grades 6-12 in West Virginia public schools. Less than four percent of eligible students responded and those that did are not demographically representative of eligible students. Because of this, results should be interpreted as representing the experiences of those who responded rather than of West Virginia students generally.

Nonetheless, the survey still provides useful insights into the experience of more than 5,000 West Virginia public school students from all 55 counties. These students are generally satisfied with their school experience. Still, to help all students thrive, the public education system in West Virginia needs to **find new ways to engage students during class** and **address the needs of struggling students**, whether their challenges are academic or social emotional.



Overwhelming majorities of student respondents feel safe at school and are satisfied with their current teachers. At the same time, most respondents report being disengaged, and a majority of respondents said they witness mental health problems in school on at least a weekly basis. Furthermore, many respondents do not feel supported. Four in ten respondents do not believe teachers notice when they struggle academically. Similarly, half do not feel comfortable talking about their problems with school staff.

Respondents' sense of self-efficacy and high post-secondary aspirations paint a bright picture. However, if students are to realize the potential they see in themselves, the public education system must address the areas for improvement highlighted by these survey results. The recommendations below will not alone resolve identified needs, but they are reasonable first steps towards providing West Virginia's students the education they deserve:

- Increase funding so schools can equip themselves to **offer enhanced social emotional supports to students**;
- Ensure educators have a **wide range of professional learning offerings** from WVDE and other organizations to help them better engage and support struggling students; and
- Streamline administrative rules and work so that districts and schools have **time and flexibility to develop new ways to deliver instruction** and other services to students.

Background

The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) launched the *Education Survey for Students* to coincide with the West Virginia’s Voice Education Forums held at eight locations around West Virginia. Forums began on March 18, 2019 and ended on April 3, 2019. The purpose of the forums was to gather feedback from a range of stakeholders on what strategies the state should use to improve student outcomes. The forums allowed participants to discuss ideas in four primary policy topics (“Funding Opportunities,” “Instructional Quality,” “School Choice and Innovation,” and “Social Emotional Supports for Students”). Participants also had the opportunity to raise other education reform ideas that had not yet been included in the discussions that began during the 2019 West Virginia Legislative Session.

The WVDE conducted the *Education Survey for Students* to provide students, the most important stakeholders, an opportunity to inform the discussion of public education by describing their educational experiences. The following summarizes the key findings from the 5,119 responses received from March 18 through April 3.

Respondent Demographics

The 5,119 responses represent a 3.8% response rate.¹ The students who responded are disproportionately white (>95%²) and female (57%). Response rates were also higher for students in middle school (MS) grades (6-8) than those in high school (HS) grades (9-12). Because of these facts, results should be interpreted as representing the experiences of respondents rather than of West Virginia students generally.

Demographics – Invitees vs. Respondents

	Eligible / Invited		Respondents		
	Counts	% of Total	Counts	% of Total	% of Eligible
Gender					
Female	65,024	48%	2,926	57%	4%
Male	69,818	52%	2,193	43%	3%
Race					
American Indian or Alaska Native	130	<1%	-- ²	-- ²	-- ²
Asian	1,003	1%	27	<1%	3%
Black or African American	6,070	5%	68	1%	1%
Hispanic or Latino	2,554	2%	45	<1%	2%
Multi-Racial	3,671	3%	71	1%	2%
Pacific Islander	65	<1%	-- ²	-- ²	-- ²
Unknown	7	<1%	0	0%	0%
White	121,342	90%	>4,880 ²	>95% ²	4%
Grades					
6	19,971	15%	1,129	22%	6%
7	19,303	14%	906	18%	5%

¹ Survey responses were collected online using SurveyMonkey. Invitations to participate were sent to students’ “@k12.wv.us” email addresses.

² Response counts for groups with less than 10 responses are suppressed. Approximate values for the largest group are reported to complement this suppression and prevent calculation of actual counts for suppressed groups.

	Eligible / Invited		Respondents		
	Counts	% of Total	Counts	% of Total	% of Eligible
8	19,475	14%	911	18%	5%
9	21,076	16%	536	10%	3%
10	19,249	14%	575	11%	3%
11	17,755	13%	564	11%	3%
12	18,013	13%	498	10%	3%
County School Districts	55	-	55	-	-
Middle Schools & High Schools	304	-	239	-	-

School Climate and Safety

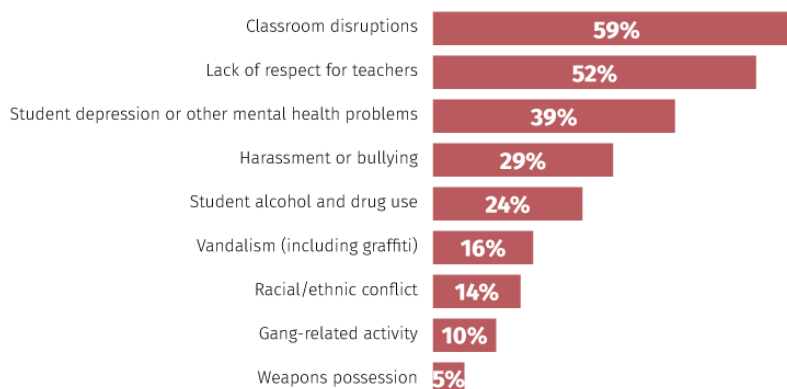
Student respondents view schools as safe and friendly places, but classroom disruptions are frequent, teachers are not given respect, bullying is common, and students are struggling with mental health issues. Furthermore, many students **may not receive the support they need at school**.

Schools appear to be friendly and safe. Three-quarters (75%) of respondents agree that people are friendly to them at school. Strong majorities of MS and HS respondents feel safe in classrooms (MS – 87% / HS – 85%), hallways (76% / 78%), and common areas (77% / 72%).

While respondents have a general sense of safety in schools, they witness numerous problems with disturbing frequency. Roughly four in five (78%) respondents state that classroom disruptions are a daily (59%) or weekly (19%) occurrence. About seven in ten (70%) also report that a lack of respect for teachers was demonstrated in their schools at least weekly, with 52% of students saying that it occurred daily.

More than half of respondents (54%) report seeing signs of depression and other mental health problems in their schools on a weekly daily basis. In fact, about four in ten (39%) indicate they see these issues daily. Half of respondents (50%) witness bullying or harassment at least weekly. Given the issues students are facing, it is particularly disturbing that half

Many students observe behavior and mental health issues on a daily basis.

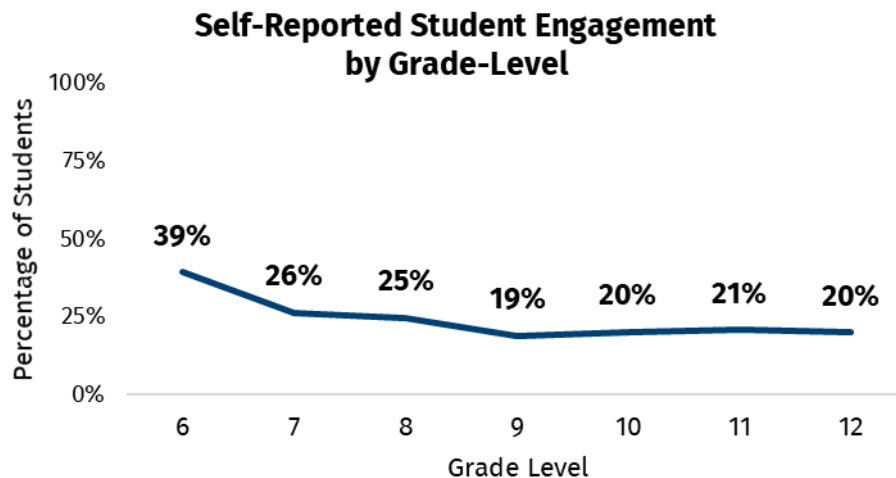


(50%) of respondents do not feel comfortable discussing problems with adults at their schools. Furthermore, half (49%) do not believe discipline at their school is fair, which may contribute to their discomfort reaching out for support.

Instruction and Student Engagement

Students respect the content knowledge of their teachers but report a **sense of disengagement at school**, and a substantial minority report **insufficient attention from teachers when they struggle**. These problems are particularly acute among HS students who participated in the survey.

The engagement results are particularly troubling. Only one-fifth (20%) of HS students and three in ten (31%) MS students report being engaged during their most recent day at school.³ The chart contains the results by grade-level. Three-quarters of respondents overall (76%) report feeling bored on their most recent day of school, and less than half report being excited about learning (44%) and that their classes were about interesting things (42% say statement is mostly or very true).



On the bright side, eight in ten students in MS (81%) and HS (78%) believe teachers are knowledgeable about their subject area. However, responses from HS students raise questions about whether all students are receiving the support they need. Half (49%) of HS respondents do not agree that teachers notice when they have trouble learning, and four in ten (39%) do not agree that teachers provide a different explanation when students are confused. Responses from MS students are more positive, but four in ten (38%) and three in ten (29%) respectively still do not agree that teachers notice when they are struggling and provide alternate explanation to address students’ confusion.

Finally, while student performance in math is low in West Virginia, respondents have positive perceptions of the amount they learn from math teachers relative to other teachers. In fact, more respondents feel they learn the most from their math than feel that way about teachers of other subject areas (MS – 35%, HS – 24%). Social studies teachers rank second for MS students at 21%. English Language Arts teachers rank second for HS students at 19%.

Academic Expectations and Learning Conditions

Survey results suggest that students in West Virginia have a **strong sense of self-belief** and have **high aspirations for post-secondary education**. Unfortunately, the survey provides mixed results about whether conditions in schools enable students to meet their dreams.

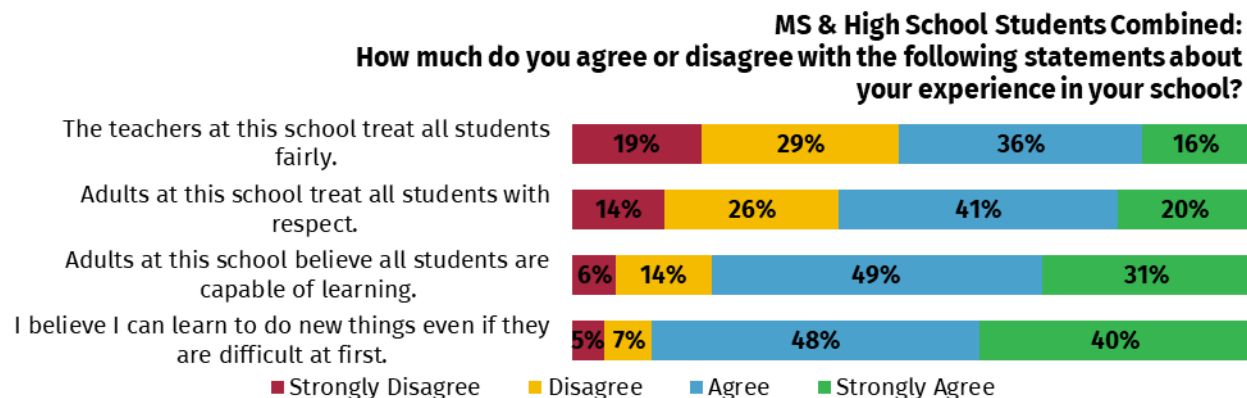
Around nine in ten students in MS (87%) and HS (90%) believe they can learn to do things even if they are difficult at first. Building on this sense of self-efficacy, a majority (53%) of all respondents believe it is

³ Aggregation of Questions 1-3 based on the *Engagement* instrument from TNTP. 2018. “Student Engagement Survey” from *The Student Experience Toolkit* (2018) by TNTP, Inc., available at <https://tntp.org/student-experience-toolkit>. An anchored item response theory calibration was performed to verify model-data fit between our survey responses and the item parameters used to construct the original scoring process. This analysis yielded sufficient model-data fit and supports the application of the same scoring process despite adaptation of questions for this survey.

very likely they will complete a four-year college degree while another three in ten (29%) believe it is likely. Eight in ten (81%) respondents also believe it is very likely or likely they will complete graduate or professional school.

HS students largely (81%) believe they can schedule classes that will prepare them for their next steps. Both MS and HS students spend almost all or most of their class time learning (MS – 79%, HS – 70%), but most of such responses land in the most category. Only one-third (33%) of MS and one-fifth (20%) of HS students report spending almost all of their class time learning, suggesting lost learning time is an issue in many classrooms. Furthermore, only four in ten (39%) HS and half (52%) of MS students report that their classes on their most recent day of school were worthwhile.⁴

Finally, students report concerning beliefs about the perceived attitudes of teachers and staff in their school. While strong majorities of MS (85%) and HS (71%) students agree that adults believe all students can learn, it remains concerning that nearly three in ten (29%) HS students disagree. Furthermore, a majority (56%) of HS respondents do not believe that teachers treat all students fairly and half (49%) do not feel that school staff treat all students with respect. For MS students, results are more positive with six in ten (57%) and two-thirds (68%) agreeing that teachers treat all students fairly and with respect.

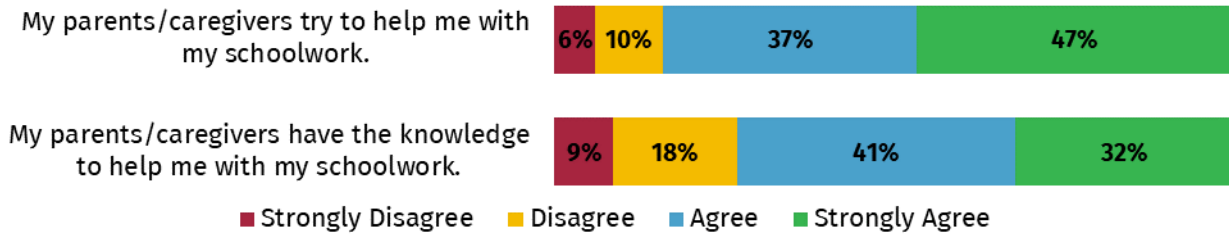


Parent Engagement and Involvement

Students who responded to the survey have **involved parents who try to help with schoolwork and communicate with their children’s schools**. Eight in ten (84%) students indicate that their parents try to help them with their schoolwork. A slightly smaller percentage (73%) report that their parents have the requisite knowledge to help with their schoolwork, with one-third (32%) strongly agreeing.

⁴ Aggregation of Question 19 based on the *Engagement* instrument from TNTP. 2018. “Student Engagement Survey” from *The Student Experience Toolkit* (2018) by TNTP, Inc., available at <https://tntp.org/student-experience-toolkit>. An anchored item response theory calibration was performed to verify model-data fit between our survey responses and the item parameters used to construct the original scoring process. This analysis yielded sufficient model-data fit and supports the application of the same scoring process despite adaptation of questions for this survey.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your parents / caregivers?

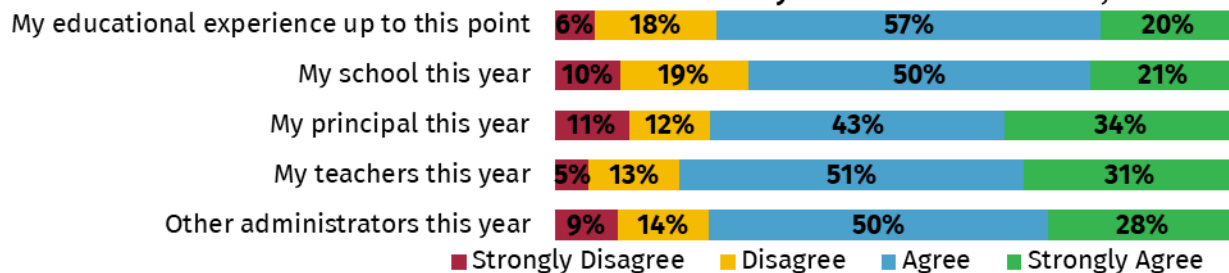


In general, student respondents perceive that their parents and their schools communicate on a consistent basis, but the frequency and type of communication varies widely. Between a third and half of respondents report at least weekly communication on various topics. However, many others—again between a third and half—report that such communication happens only a few times a year or never. For instance, four in ten (40%) respondents report parent-school communication around individual academic progress occurring at least weekly, but four in ten (42%) report it happening a few times a year or never.

Overall Satisfaction

Students are generally satisfied with their educational experience, with their **strongest satisfaction being with their educators this year**. Respondent satisfaction with other aspects of their educational experience suggests public there is room for improvement.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your education? I am satisfied with...



Student satisfaction with staff at their schools is generally high. Around eight in ten respondents report satisfaction with their current teachers (82%), principal (77%), and other administrators (77%). Seven in ten (71%) are satisfied with their school this year. Three-quarters (76%) are satisfied with their educational experience up to this point, but only one-fifth (20%) are strongly satisfied.