

The Gallup Student Poll Technical Report

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The Gallup Student Poll Technical Report

Abstract

For over 40 years, Gallup has provided its expertise and tools to drive student success at school districts and communities across the United States. In 2009, Gallup launched the Gallup Student Poll, a school-based online survey for students in grades 5 through 12 that measures three variables: hope for the future, engagement with school and wellbeing. Gallup defines hope as the ideas and energy we have for the future. Engagement is a student's level of involvement in and enthusiasm for school. Wellbeing is how we think about and experience our lives.

The history behind these three constructs and the use of the core 20 items is reviewed. Some items have been tested and in use for decades through Gallup's workplace and education research, through global survey research, and most recently through the Gallup World Poll and Gallup nightly poll. The measure, developed through rational and empirical processes, has been subjected to psychometric examination, and a summary of reliability and validity evidence gathered to date is presented.

The primary application of the Gallup Student Poll, as an online measure of non-cognitive metrics that predict student success in academic and general youth development settings, is discussed.

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Introduction

The Gallup Student Poll* is a school-based online survey that measures three theoretically and psychometrically distinct constructs (hope, engagement, and wellbeing) shown to be related to student outcomes and malleable via intentional change efforts. The primary application of the Gallup Student Poll is as a measure of non-cognitive metrics that predicts student success in academic and general youth development settings and that initiates conversations about how to capitalize on the best in students and improve the conditions that promote learning and growth. The Gallup Student Poll is not designed or validated for use as a risk survey or in student selection or mental health screening.

The Gallup Student Poll Technical Report describes the development and application of the Gallup Student Poll and summarizes psychometric examinations to date, in accordance with the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999). As scale validation is an ongoing process, this report will be revised as new psychometric studies become available.

Purpose and Initial Development of the Gallup Student Poll

The Gallup Student Poll was originally conceived by Donald Clifton to determine what is on the hearts and minds of our students. A Gallup team led by Connie Rath, Shane Lopez, and Gary Gordon managed the first three rounds of Gallup Student Poll development culminating in the 2009 launch of the Gallup Student Poll, focusing on hope, engagement, and wellbeing, theoretically and psychometrically distinct constructs, each measured by a small number of items.

The first iteration of the poll (2006 version) focused exclusively on engagement — a student's involvement in

and enthusiasm for school — and related student behaviors. Initial work on developing the poll began with review of the entire bank of engagement items and initial validation work involved 27 items (12 items were modified versions of items on the Gallup employee engagement measure [Q¹²] and 15 additional items were developed by members of the Gallup Education Division and other stakeholders) and 48,182 students (grades 5-12) at 113 schools (83 schools provided achievement data). A predictive validity study (Gordon, 2006) examining engagement and achievement revealed that group responses to 11 of the poll items were reliable (as evidenced by a high degree of internal consistency with Cronbach's Alpha of 0.84) and differentiated groups of students that had performed above and below the state average on achievement measures. These items were included in the next round of scale development.

During July 2007 members of the Gallup Education Division along with Clifton Strengths Scholars and Mentors and regional educational leaders met to discuss expanding the scope of the poll and to experiment with items that would reflect both student engagement (potentially predictive of academic achievement based on the 2006 study) and student wellbeing (an outcome in itself and another potential predictor of academic achievement). Additional constructs that met the basic criteria of being measurable (with a small number of items), meaningful (associated with positive youth outcomes), and malleable (modifiable via deliberative effort) were also being considered. The original items were retained and additional items were developed following a literature review and presentations by experts in self-efficacy (Lisa Flores, University of Missouri) and student wellbeing (Scott Huebner, University of South Carolina), a poll update by Gary Gordon, and a discussion of critical aspects of wellbeing led by Shelley Taylor (UCLA). Over 100 items were developed in an attempt to measure a more robust engagement construct, to account for more variance in academic achievement, and to tap wellbeing in children and youth. Accordingly, items that measured enthusiasm for

* The Gallup Student Poll was originally referred to as the Gallup School Poll (2006-2008). The name was changed in 2009 to emphasize the focus on the student voice.

school and school work, academic agency (i.e., belief that you can do well in school), and student wellbeing (extracted from a psychometrically sound measure of student life satisfaction and related measures) were added (as well as the Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale, commonly known as the “ladder of life” scale, that has been in use since the 1940s). The existing and new items were reviewed and considered for inclusion in further validation trials.

The Gallup Student Poll is a 20-item measure of hope, engagement, and wellbeing. Gallup researchers targeted these three variables because they met the following criteria:

- They can be reliably measured
- They have a meaningful relationship with or impact on educational outcomes
- They are malleable and can be enhanced through deliberate action
- They are not measured directly by another large-scale survey
- They are not associated with a student's FARL status or parent's household income

Figure 1. Criteria for Inclusion

After considering past psychometric evidence on items and redundancy across the pool, 28 items (including the eleven original items) were administered as part of a cognitive lab study to a group of seventy-eight ethnically diverse fifth and sixth graders and ten high school students. Inferences from the psychometric data are based on the responses of the elementary students whereas recommendations for further item and instrument development are based on all respondents' data and comments about the items collected during post-survey focus groups.

Exploratory factor analyses were conducted yet interpreted with caution given the small number of participants and large number of items. It appeared that items measuring aspects of engagement were distinct from those measuring wellbeing, student satisfaction, and agency.

Given the data, and its limitations, no changes were made to the 2007 pool of poll items with the exception of deleting the following item: “How satisfied are you with this school as a place to go to school?” Several elementary students struggled with the wording and meaning of the question and alternative wordings also were poorly received. Students,

some of whom struggled with the abstraction of a “ladder of life” item, recommended that the question be accompanied by a computer graphic of the ladder. A static graphic was developed; now an interactive graphic accompanies the item.

To follow the trends in the data and increase the probability of predicting academic achievement, the scale development group recommended that the engagement items be retained, that wellbeing items be expanded to measure both evaluative wellbeing (i.e., life satisfaction and ladder items) and experienced wellbeing (i.e., experience of positive affect), and that numerous efficacy/agency items be added.

Hope, Engagement, and Wellbeing: Measureable, Meaningful, and Malleable Constructs

Gallup conducted an extensive review of the economic, educational, psychological, and sociological literature associated with students' academic success and, more broadly, positive youth development. With the inclusion criteria (see Figure 1) in mind, continued literature searches and reviews focused on three domains: student engagement and school satisfaction; student motivation with an emphasis on hope, self-efficacy, and self-determination; and wellbeing, life satisfaction, and quality of life. Given the inclusion criteria, extant literature, Gallup's historical emphases, and the goal of focusing on distinct constructs that account for unique variance in student success, hope, engagement, and wellbeing were selected of the constructs of future interest. A brief literature review details how each construct is measureable, meaningful, and malleable.

Hope —The ideas and energy for the future.

Hope, the ideas and energy for the future, is one of the most potent predictors of success of our youth. C. R. Snyder (1995) developed a psychological theory and cognitive motivational model of hope that is based in goal-directed thinking. Hope theory involves a person's ability to conceptualize the future along with clear goals, develop specific ideas, strategies or

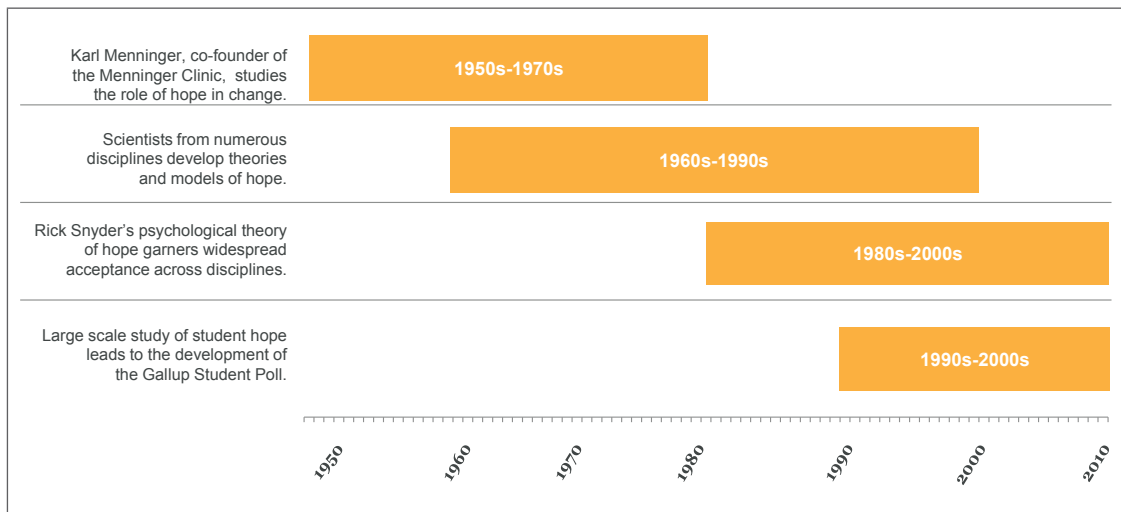


Figure 2. Hope Research through the Decades

pathways to reach those goals, and initiate and sustain the energy or agency for using those strategies.

The formal assessment of hope according to Snyder's hope theory has a long history, beginning with the development and validation of the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) that is for people fifteen years and older. Original and subsequent psychometric examinations suggest that reliability of that instrument is strong with Cronbach's Alphas from 0.74 to 0.84 and test-retest correlations of 0.80 or higher at ten-week and greater intervals (Snyder et al., 1991). The instrument also is concurrently valid with instruments examining similar psychological processes, such as optimism and self-efficacy. The Children's Hope Scale for aged 8 to 16 (Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997) was developed in 1997. Internal and test-reliabilities of the scale have been documented. Appropriate studies also support the convergent, discriminant and incremental validities (Moon & Snyder, 1998; Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997).

Hope is not significantly related to native intelligence (Snyder, McDermott, Cook, & Rapoff, 2002) or income (Gallup, 2009a), but instead is linked consistently to attendance and credits earned (Gallup, 2009b) and academic achievement. Specifically, hopeful middle school students have better grades in core subjects (Marques, Pais-Ribeiro & Lopez, 2009) and scores on achievement tests (Snyder et al., 1997). Hopeful high school students (Gallup, 2009a; Snyder, Harris, et al., 1991; Worrell & Hale, 2001) and beginning college students (Gallagher & Lopez, 2008;

Snyder et al., 2002) have higher overall grade point averages. In these studies, the predictive power of hope remained significant even when controlling for intelligence (Snyder et al., 1997), prior grades (Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Snyder, Harris, et al., 1991; Snyder et al., 2002), self-esteem (Snyder et al., 2002), and entrance examination scores (Gallagher & Lopez, 2008; Snyder et al., 2002).

If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

— Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Hope is malleable (Gallup, 2009c; Lopez, Rose, Robinson, Marques, & Pais Reibero, 2009) and all American students need support from parents, school, and the community to build their energy and ideas for the future. Indeed, with a focus on clarifying the future and goals thinking, increasing ideas and flexible pathways thinking, and boosting energy and agency, program developers have been able to significantly increase hope over 5 to 12 sessions. Trained counselors typically facilitated these hope enhancing

programs and the counselor to client ratio was quite low, not exceeding 1 to 12.

Engagement — Involvement in and enthusiasm for school.

After decades of studying the world’s best workers and students through surveys and focus groups, Gallup researchers found that engagement in a role was more important to individuals and organizations than satisfaction with a role. Engagement, or the involvement in and enthusiasm for school or work, is the focus of intense workplace and school research resulting in the Q¹² measure of engagement (see the Q¹² meta-analytic study, Harter, Schmidt, Kilham, & Agrawal, 2009) which has been administered to over 15 million employees worldwide and the five engagement items of the Gallup Student Poll have been administered to nearly 450,000 students.

Being engaged promotes productivity and retention (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). The research on employee engagement is clear, and the latest research on student engagement (Gallup, 2009a; Gordon, 2006) and student achievement makes a strong case for building engaged schools. Engagement data provides school leaders with information about the conditions that keep students and

staff involved in and enthusiastic about school. These data provide a leading indicator of future performance. In a series of studies, Gallup research has demonstrated that student and teacher engagement is associated with future performance on high-stakes tests. For example, engaged students are more than twice as likely to outperform a comparison group of randomly selected students on standardized tests (Gallup, 2009a). In a study of three Texas districts, schools with an engaged professional staff passed more students on standardized tests than did schools with a less engaged staff (Gallup, 2009a). Furthermore, student engagement appears to be associated with a school’s commitment to developing the strengths of each student (Gallup, 2010).

**I never teach my pupils. I only attempt
to provide the conditions in
which they can learn.**

— Albert Einstein

Principals engage the staff by getting them excited about the future. When Gallup studied the impact that leaders have throughout an organization, the single most powerful question was whether their leadership made them “feel

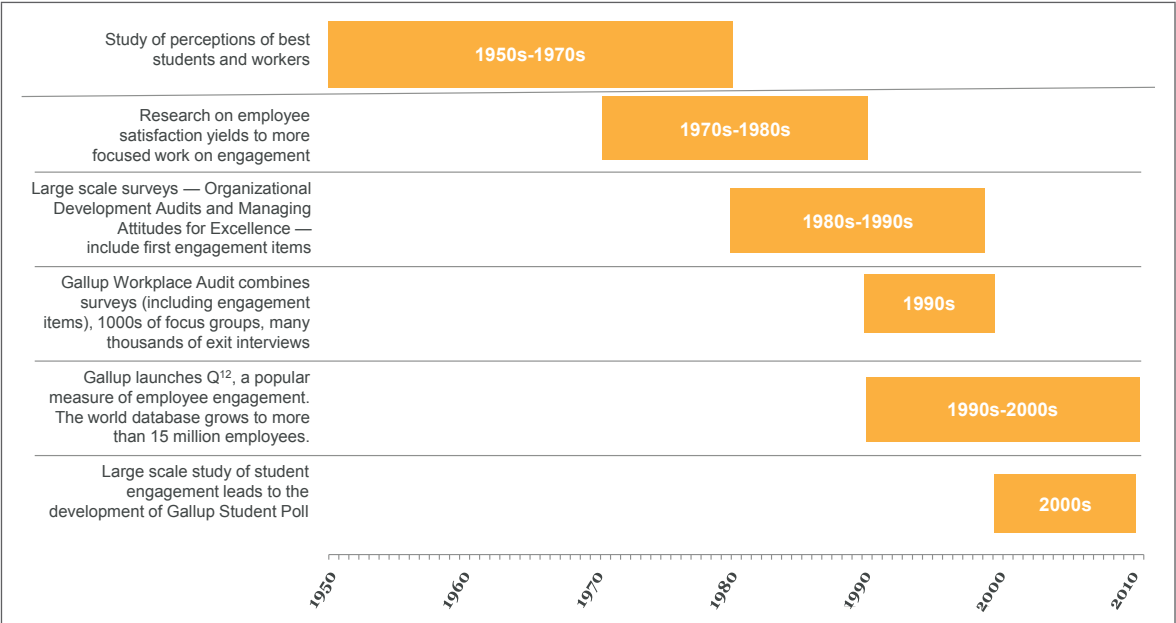


Figure 3. Gallup Engagement Research through the Decades

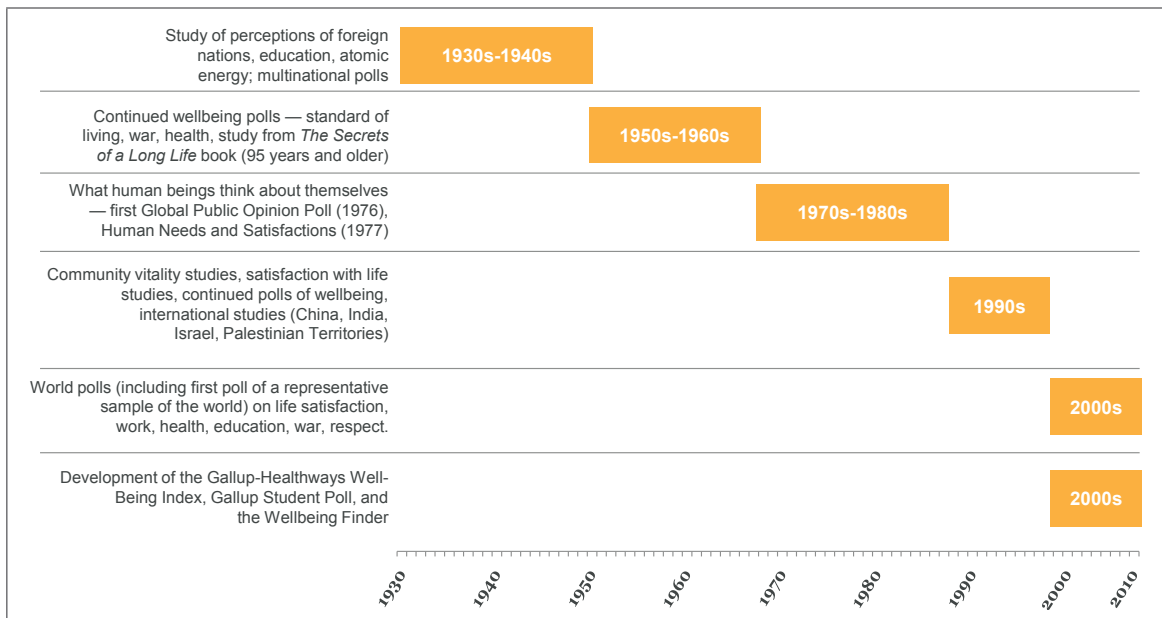


Figure 4. Gallup Wellbeing Research through the Decades

enthusiastic about the future.” The results showed 69% of employees who strongly agreed with this statement were engaged in their jobs, compared to a mere 1% of employees who disagreed or strongly disagreed. In turn, engaged teachers get students excited about their future. Together, engaged students, teachers, and principals build engaged schools.

Wellbeing — How we think about and experience our lives.

Wellbeing, how we think about and experience our lives, tells us how our students are doing today and predicts their success in the future.

The Gallup Student Poll items that measure wellbeing reflect a broad view of the concept. Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman makes note of the distinction between evaluative wellbeing and experienced wellbeing. As described by Kahneman, evaluative wellbeing is the way people remember their experiences after they are over and experienced wellbeing is concerned with momentary affective states and the way people feel about experiences in real-time. Evaluative wellbeing is rooted in the remembering self and includes individual assessments of life. On the other hand, experienced wellbeing seeks to bypass the effects of judgment and memory and capture emotions as close to the subject’s immediate experience as possible.

Our greatest contribution is to be sure there is a teacher in every classroom who cares that every student every day learns, and grows, and feels like a real human being

— Donald O. Clifton

Recent research suggests that wellbeing leads to success in both school (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005) and work (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Judge & Hurst, 2008). Wellbeing is malleable (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009; Suldo, Huebner, Michalowski, & Thalji, in press). We can boost wellbeing by focusing on students’ thoughts and feelings.

The Hope Index, an indicator of respondents’ excitement about and strategies for the future, is based on six items measuring the ideas and energy people have for the goals they set. The scoring of the items is proprietary. No weights are used in scoring. High-hope results are categorized as “hopeful,” low-hope results are labeled “discouraged,” with the remaining being “stuck.”

- I know I will graduate from high school.
- There is an adult in my life who cares about my future.
- I can think of many ways to get good grades.
- I energetically pursue my goals.
- I can find lots of ways around any problem.
- I know I will find a good job after I graduate.

Figure 5. Hope Index: Items And Scoring

The Engagement Index, an indicator of respondents' involvement in and enthusiasm for school, is based on five items measuring the passion for and commitment to school. The scoring of the items is proprietary. Weights are used in scoring. High scores are categorized as "engaged," low scores are labeled "actively disengaged," with the remaining being "not engaged."

- I have a best friend at school.
- I feel safe in this school.
- My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important.
- At this school, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
- In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork.

Figure 6. Engagement Index: Items And Scoring

The Wellbeing Index, a global representation of a person's life evaluation, is based on the Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale, which asks people to evaluate their present and future lives on a scale with steps numbered from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst possible life and 10 is the best possible life. Those that rate today a "7" or higher and the future an "8" or higher are considered to be "thriving." Those that rate today and the future a "4" or lower on the scale are considered to be "suffering."

- Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you.
- On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?
- On which step do you think you will stand about five years from now?

Figure 7. Wellbeing Index: Items and Scoring

Further Development and Initial Validation of the Gallup Student Poll

The Gallup Student Poll was developed as an online measure of non-cognitive metrics that predict student success in academic and general youth development settings. The psychometrics of the poll are considered in light of the purpose of the measure. This section of the technical report highlights the reliability and validity of the Gallup Student Poll comprised of the final twenty items. Six items measure hope, five items measure engagement, and one item measures wellbeing. The remaining items measure the wellbeing construct more broadly and/or positive youth development practices or habits. The focus of the psychometric

examinations will be on the items associated with hope, engagement, and wellbeing (evaluative). Additional analyses of other items and scales will be released as addenda to this report and incorporated into the body of the report in future years.

The following psychometric studies (each with particular psychometric focus) were completed in 2008-2010:

2008 Expert Review of Gallup Student Poll Constructs and Items (Content Validity)

2008 Gallup Student Poll Pilot Study (Reliability, Factor Structure, Predictive Validity)

March 2009 Gallup Student Poll Nationwide Pilot Study (Reliability, Factor Structure)

May 2009 Representative Panel Study (Reliability, Factor Structure)

October 2009 Gallup Student Poll Validation Study (Reliability, Factor Structure, Concurrent Validity)

July 2010 Representative Panel Study (Reliability, Factor Structure, Concurrent Validity)

The results of each study are summarized with the findings from the October 2009 Gallup Student Poll Validation Study and the July 2010 Representative Panel Study are described in some detail. Reliability findings are summarized by Cronbach's Alphas for scales and for scales if items are deleted. Validity findings are based upon Principal Components Analyses with Varimax rotation and reported as Eigenvalues, percentage of scale variance accounted for, and factor loadings. Concurrent and predictive validity estimates are reported as correlations.

2008 Expert Review of Gallup Student Poll Constructs and Items

In an effort to examine content validity, seventeen hope, engagement, and wellbeing experts were invited in the fall of 2008 to comment on each item and how they related to the designated scale. The experts were contacted via e-mail and asked to comment on each item and construct. Feedback was gathered via e-mail, by phone, and in person. Some experts offered a brief review whereas others worked side-by-side with Gallup Student Poll developers to improve items and overall coverage of constructs.

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, Claremont Graduate School, Adolescence and flow

Angus Deaton, Princeton University, Wellbeing across countries

Ed Diener, University of Illinois, Wellbeing

Lisa Flores, University of Missouri, Agency in Latino/as

Barbara Fredrickson, University of North Carolina, Positive emotions

Gary Gordon, Gallup, Student engagement

Jim Harter, Gallup, Engagement and wellbeing

Colleen Howell, Private, Wellbeing in less developed countries

Ryan Howell, San Francisco State University, Experienced wellbeing

Scott Huebner, University of South Carolina, Hope and wellbeing in students

Danny Kahneman, Princeton University, Wellbeing and money

Briana Keller, University of Washington, Strengths and career development

Christy Khan, University of Kansas, Hope in students

Richard Lerner, Tufts University, Self-regulation and adolescent development

Shigehiro Oishi, University of Virginia, Wellbeing and culture

Sarah Pressman, University of Kansas, Positive affect and health

Shelley Taylor, UCLA, Wellbeing and health

The experts were specifically asked to review the comprehensiveness and appropriateness of content. Feedback was gathered and aggregated and responded to with minor changes and additions. In no case was an item judged to be inappropriate or was a scale considered less than comprehensively measured.

2008 Gallup Student Poll Pilot Study

A freshman class at a Midwestern high school was the first group in the country to participate in the Gallup Student Poll, completing the core twenty items and demographic questions (see Appendix A) via a secure website. The Gallup Student Poll data from the 198 freshmen were combined with student performance data, including attendance, credits earned, and grade point average.

The 2008 Gallup Student Poll Pilot dataset was analyzed to determine the internal consistency, factor structure, and predictive validity as it relates to attendance, credits earned, and GPA. The Hope Index is an internally consistent scale ($\alpha = 0.74$), with all six items loading on a single factor (Eigenvalue = 2.69) with that factor accounting for nearly 45% of the scale variance. In this sample the Engagement Index had questionable internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.58$; 0.63 if “best friend” item deleted), and all five items loaded on a single factor (Eigenvalue = 1.95) with that factor accounting for 39% of the scale variance, with the “best friend” item as the sole outlier. The Wellbeing Index is measured by two items ($\alpha = 0.60$), with a 0.53 correlation between the “ladder now” and “ladder future” items. The correlations between the three core scales ranged from 0.28 for engagement and ladder future to 0.50 for hope and engagement.

Regarding predictive validity, it was hypothesized that hope, of the three Gallup Student Poll constructs, would be the best predictor of the student performance variables. Simple correlation analyses run on Gallup Student Poll results at the beginning of a school term and attendance, credits

earned, and GPA data at the end of the term suggested that hope (more precisely the hope total score, or sum of the responses to the six hope items) was the best predictor of each variable: attendance (0.29), credits earned over the course of the first semester of the freshmen year (0.30), and total GPA at winter break (0.36). The hope item focused on confidence in graduating was the best predictor of positive student behaviors and outcomes. Engagement (represented by the sum of the responses of the five engagement items) was also a significant predictor of these credits earned (0.21) and GPA (0.23), and the “praise and recognition” item does appear to be the item that accounted for engagement’s association with desirable student behaviors/outcomes. The individual “ladder of life” responses were not related to these markers of student success. When results were analyzed by hope, engagement, and wellbeing classifications, hopeful and thriving students did better than students with lower hope and wellbeing classifications. Additional analyses regarding the utility of these classifications will be discussed in an addendum to this report.

March 2009 Gallup Student Poll Nationwide Pilot Study

In March 2009, the core 20 items of the Gallup Student Poll were piloted with 70,078 students in grades 5 through 12 from 335 schools and 59 districts located in 18 states and the District of Columbia. The online poll was completed on school computers during one of four March fielding options; polls were open Tuesday through Friday during school hours. Based on the March 2009 data, the six hope items constitute an internally consistent scale ($\alpha = 0.76$) and the five engagement items constitute an internally consistent scale ($\alpha = 0.71$).

May 2009 Representative Panel Study

Results are based on a Gallup Panel study and are based on mail and Web surveys completed by 328 youth aged 13 to 18, conducted in May 2009. Gallup Panel members are aged 13 and up, and are recruited by phone through random selection methods and can be surveyed across multiple modes of data collection. Teens aged 13 to 17 were invited to participate in the online survey either via e-mail or by mailing a letter to them through USPS. A total of 1855 surveys were sent, and 328 were received, for an overall 18% completion rate. The panel is weighted so that it is demographically representative of the U.S. youth population.

The core 20 items of the Gallup Student Poll were completed by the representative sample of 328 students in grades 5 through 12. Based on these May 2009 representative panel data, the six hope items constitute an internally consistent scale ($\alpha = 0.65$), and are best described by a single factor solution (Eigenvalue = 2.24) accounting for 37% of the scale variance, though the component matrix suggested cross loading of an item. In this sample the Engagement Index has adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.70$) and all five items load on a single factor (Eigenvalue = 2.4) accounting for 48% of the scale variance. The Wellbeing Index is measured by two items ($\alpha = 0.63$), with a 0.46 correlation between the “ladder now” and “ladder future” items.

October 2009 Gallup Student Poll Validation Study

The online Gallup Student Poll was completed in American schools by a convenience sample of 246,682 students in grades 5 through 12. The survey was conducted from September 28 through October 30, 2009. There were 905 schools from 93 districts in 33 states and the District of Columbia that chose to participate in the poll. Schools participating in the Gallup Student Poll were not randomly selected and were neither charged nor given any incentives beyond receipt of school-specific data. Participation rates for schools ranged from 1.3% to 100% of the total student population.

The October 2009 Gallup Student Poll dataset was analyzed to determine the internal consistency and factor structure of each of the three scales. The Hope Index is an internally consistent scale ($\alpha = 0.78$), with all six items loading on a single factor (Eigenvalue = 2.89) with that factor accounting for nearly 48% of the scale variance. The Engagement Index is internally consistent ($\alpha = 0.72$), and all five items load on a single factor (Eigenvalue = 2.39) with that factor accounting for 48% of the scale variance. The Wellbeing Index is measured by two items ($\alpha = 0.60$) with a 0.43 correlation between the “ladder now” and “ladder future” items. Factor loadings, alphas, means, and standard deviations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Factor Loadings, Reliability Estimates, Means, and Standard Deviations for Hope, Engagement, and Wellbeing Items (October 2009; $n = 246,682$)

	Factor Loading	Reliability If Item Deleted	Mean	SD
HOPE INDEX*		0.78	4.37	0.54
Know I will graduate	0.72	0.74	4.74	0.70
Adult	0.64	0.76	4.74	0.74
Ways to get good grades	0.73	0.73	4.30	0.90
Energetically pursue goals	0.73	0.73	4.12	0.92
Ways around any problem	0.60	0.77	3.80	1.04
Good job after graduation	0.72	0.73	4.44	0.87
ENGAGEMENT INDEX**		0.72	3.99	0.79
Best Friend at School	0.50	0.73	4.40	1.12
Safe in school	0.72	0.66	3.93	1.19
Schoolwork is important	0.76	0.64	4.13	1.09
Do what I do best	0.77	0.64	3.95	1.17
Recognition or praise	0.68	0.68	3.49	1.42
WELLBEING				1.42
Ladder Now			7.28	2.18
Ladder Future			8.46	1.73

*Eigenvalue = 2.89, Percentage of Variance Accounted for = 48

**Eigenvalue = 2.39 Percentage of Variance Accounted for = 48

A closer examination of factor structure across specific ethnic group yielded information about the cultural

equivalence of the scales. These analyses will be presented in an addendum to this report.

Concurrent validity studies focused on the associations between the hope, engagement, and wellbeing scales and supplemental scales that were administered to a subgroup of the sample. Supplemental scales include an additional engagement scale based on Gallup research, student satisfaction scales (Huebner, Seligson, Valois, & Suldo, 2006), Strengths Awareness items (Gallup), the Strengths Self-Efficacy Scale (Tsai, Zhao, Chaichanasakul, Flores, & Lopez, 2009), a gratitude scale (Froh et al., 2010), the SOC-4H measure (Zimmerman et al., 2007; Gestsdottir et al., 2009), an entrepreneurial potential index (Gallup), a brief wellbeing finder (Gallup), and a good worker scale (Gallup), all of which had alphas greater than 0.70. It was hypothesized that the correlations between the three core scales and the supplemental scales would be positive. The concurrent validity results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlations between Hope, Engagement, and Wellbeing and Gallup Student Poll Supplemental Scales (All Correlations Are Positive and Significant)

	Eng2	Satisfaction	Strengths 1	Strengths 2	Gratitude	SOC	EPI	WB	GWJ
Hope	0.48	0.51	0.48	0.61	0.58	0.63	0.46	0.50	0.61
Engagement	0.71	0.54	0.59	0.48	0.51	0.51	0.26	0.56	0.55
Wellbeing	0.25	0.30	0.25	0.30	0.32	0.32	0.23	0.29	0.25

One supplemental scale was assigned randomly to each student respondent. More than 12000 students completed each index.

Wellbeing is represented by the response to the Ladder Future item. Eng2 = Engagement Supplement, Satisfaction = Brief Multidimensional Student Satisfaction with Life Scale, Strengths1 = Strengths Awareness, Strengths2 = Strengths Self-efficacy, SOC = Selection-Optimization-Compensation Index, EPI = Entrepreneurial Potential Index, WB = Wellbeing Finder Short Form, GWI = Good Worker Index

All correlations between the core scales (hope, engagement, and wellbeing) and the supplemental scales were positive and significant. Hope was most strongly correlated (0.6 or higher) with agentic measures (i.e., strengths self-efficacy, SOC) and a brief measure of wellbeing. Engagement was most strongly correlated with the supplemental engagement scale. All correlations between Wellbeing and supplemental scales were between 0.20 and 0.32 in magnitude, including the correlation between Wellbeing and the Wellbeing Finder Short Form.

July 2010 Representative Panel Study

The Gallup Student Poll representative survey was conducted with Gallup Panel members from Monday, June 11 through Tuesday, July 6, 2010. 2,555 survey invitations were delivered to youth aged 10 to 18 years and 642 usable surveys were returned (25% completion rate).

Gallup Panel members are aged 13 and up and are recruited by phone through random selection methods and can be surveyed across multiple modes of data collection. In order to identify the sample of 10 to 18 year olds, Gallup identified households within the Panel that were known to either have a panelist in this age range, or whose household was known to have a child in the age range (as verified in a January 2010 profile survey). The survey was conducted by both mail and Web to accommodate those households that lack internet access or who do not prefer to respond to surveys online. The survey was mailed or e-mailed directly to the young panelists in the specified age range and also e-mailed or mailed to the parents of the young panelists, seeking their consent for their child to respond to the survey.

The Panel is weighted so that it is demographically representative of the U.S. youth population. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 4.95 percentage points. Margins of sampling errors vary for individual subsamples. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of polls. Regarding concurrent validity, hope, engagement, and wellbeing are positively correlated with financial literacy behavior and skill.

Table 3. Factor Loadings, Reliability Estimates, Means, and Standard Deviations for Hope, Engagement, and Wellbeing Items (July 2010; n = 642)

	Factor Loading	Reliability If Item Deleted	Mean	SD
HOPE INDEX*		0.76	4.44	0.54
Know I will graduate	0.75	0.73	4.88	0.47
Adult	0.59	0.75	4.91	0.48
Ways to get good grades	0.76	0.70	4.48	0.81
Energetically pursue goals	0.71	0.71	4.12	0.95
Ways around any problem	0.69	0.72	3.99	0.95
Good job after graduation	0.64	0.74	4.21	0.97
ENGAGEMENT INDEX**		0.76	4.17	0.79
Best Friend at School	0.55	0.76	4.52	0.95
Safe in school	0.68	0.73	4.43	0.92
Schoolwork is important	0.83	0.67	4.18	1.05
Do what I do best	0.80	0.68	3.98	1.12
Recognition or praise	0.71	0.73	3.78	1.39
WELLBEING				
Ladder Now			7.71	1.65
Ladder Future			8.32	1.50

*Eigenvalue = 2.86, Percentage of Variance Accounted for = 48

**Eigenvalue = 2.60, Percentage of Variance Accounted for = 52

The core 20 items of the Gallup Student Poll were completed by the representative sample of 642 students in grades 5 through 12. Based on these June 2010 data, the six hope items constitute an internally consistent scale (alpha = 0.76), and are best described by a single factor solution (Eigenvalue = 2.86) accounting for 48% of the scale variance. In this sample the Engagement Index has adequate internal consistency (alpha = 0.76) and all five items load on a single factor (Eigenvalue = 2.60) accounting for 52% of the scale variance. The Wellbeing Index is measured by two items (alpha = 0.64), with a 0.47 correlation between the “ladder now” and “ladder future” items. Factor loadings, alphas, means, and standard deviations are presented in Table 3.

Reliability and Validity of the Gallup Student Poll — A Summary

Hope, Engagement, and Wellbeing are theoretically and psychometrically distinct constructs, each measured by a small number of items. The three core scales have adequate internal consistency; stability estimates have not been examined. Single factor solutions best describe each of the constructs. Concurrent and predictive validity have yielded findings consistent with hypotheses.

Gallup Student Poll Psychometric Overview

Hope | ideas and energy we have for the future

6 items constitute an internally consistent scale (Alphas > 0.70)

Stability analyses needed

Single factor solution best describes structure

Positive correlations with related measures

Ongoing predictive validity analyses

Engagement | involvement in/enthusiasm for school

5 items constitute an internally consistent scale (Alphas typically > 0.70)

Stability analyses needed

Single factor solution best describes structure

Positive correlations with related measures

Ongoing predictive validity analyses

Wellbeing | how we think about and experience our lives

Stability analyses needed

Single factor solution best Positive correlations with related measures

Ongoing predictive validity analyses

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Appendix A: The Gallup Student Poll Core 20 Items and Demographic Questions

Measuring the Hope, Engagement, and Wellbeing of America's Students

1. Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?

On which step do you think you will stand about five years from now?

2. I know I will graduate from high school.
3. There is an adult in my life who cares about my future.
4. I can think of many ways to get good grades.
5. I energetically pursue my goals.
6. I can find lots of ways around any problem.
7. I know I will find a good job after I graduate.
8. I have a best friend at school.
9. I feel safe in this school.
10. My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important.
11. At this school, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
12. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork.
13. My school is committed to building the strengths of each student.*
14. In the last month, I volunteered my time to help others.

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

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

For more information, visit www.gallupstudentpoll.com.

* This item was added to the core 20 items of the Gallup Student Poll in spring 2010, replacing the item, "If I miss school, an adult from school calls home to ask how I am doing."

Appendix B: The Gallup Student Poll Data Collection and Scoring Process

The national Gallup Student Poll is administered once during each school year and is free for public schools and districts. The survey goes live via a secure website, accessible only by registered school- and district-level users. The survey is designed for students in grades 5 through 12. It is a census-style survey, meaning every student in the district or school in those particular grades should have the opportunity to participate. The survey takes an average of less than 10 minutes to complete.

To access the survey on school computers, a user for the school or district must register an account at www.gallupstudentpoll.com. It is recommended that students take the survey in a computer lab environment where all computers can be logged in and ready for polling prior to student arrival. However, any school computer with access to the Internet can be used. Survey administrators will need to create a personal account on their school's portal at the Gallup Student Poll website. The user must log into every computer used for polling. By logging into the school's account and accessing the survey, each complete registered through that account is assigned to that school's data and scorecard.

After a student completes the survey, the survey window returns to the choose language page. The next student can then take the survey. Users log out of the computer once polling is complete. The survey is available in English and Spanish. The Hope Index on the scorecard is reported in a pie chart that shows the percentage of students in the district or school who are hopeful, stuck, or discouraged. The pie chart is color coded: green denotes hopeful; gray denotes stuck; and red denotes discouraged. Hopeful students possess numerous ideas and abundant energy for the future. The Hope Index is calculated from items 2-7 of the survey. (See Appendix A.) The overall GrandMean (out of five) for these six items is reported on the scorecard. The grade-level means are also reported. Data is only reported for those grades in which there was a sufficient sample size. (A minimum of ten students must respond to the survey in each grade in order for data to be reported for that grade. Likewise, ten students in the school or district must respond in order to report the Hope Index in the pie chart.)

Items 8-12 are used to calculate the Engagement Index. (See Appendix A.) Unlike the Hope and Wellbeing Indexes, to calculate the Engagement Index, at least 30 valid student responses are required to report the percentage of engaged students. At least 100 valid student responses are required to report the full Engagement Index, i.e., percentage of engaged, not engaged, and actively disengaged students. The overall GrandMean (out of five) is reported for these five items on the scorecard. The Engagement Index on the scorecard is also reported in a pie chart that shows the percentage of students in the district or school who are hopeful, stuck, or discouraged. The pie chart is colored: green denoting hopeful, gray denoting stuck; and red denoting discouraged.

The Gallup Student Poll measures evaluative and experienced wellbeing. Evaluative wellbeing is measured by the ladder items in the survey. Experienced wellbeing is measured by the Positive Yesterday Index: items 15-18. Items 19-20 measure physical and social wellbeing components, respectively. The Wellbeing Index is also reported in a pie chart, which shows the percentage of students who are thriving, struggling, and suffering. The pie chart is also color coded by wellbeing categories: green denotes the percentage of thriving students; gray denotes the percentage of struggling students; and red denotes the percentage of suffering students. The Wellbeing Index is calculated using student responses to both ladder items. The overall GrandMean for wellbeing is reported (out of 10) on the scorecard and is calculated only from the ladder future item. Grade-level GrandMeans are reported for wellbeing (for those grades with at least ten respondents).

Appendix C: Frequently Asked Questions

“Aren’t academic confidence and success significant determinants as to whether students are engaged in school?”

There are numerous determinants of student engagement (i.e., involvement with and enthusiasm for school). Recent Gallup research reveals that teacher talent and teacher engagement drive student engagement. Furthermore, student engagement appears to be linked to a school’s focus on the development of students’ strengths and to students’ hope (closely associated with academic confidence) and experienced wellbeing. Student success is outcome of high student engagement.

Engagement data from the Gallup Student Poll give schools and communities what they need to create the conditions conducive to student success. Impact planning around item-level data empowers schools, parents, and community leaders with data that is malleable and actionable and that influences student achievement.

“How does GSP relate to or complement the YRBS (Youth Risk Behavior Survey) and the Profile of Student Life measure of 40 Developmental Assets, two tools that many communities use?”

The Gallup Student Poll, launched in 2009, measures three theoretically and psychometrically distinct positive constructs, hope, engagement, and wellbeing. Each scale is reliable and predictive of some positive youth outcomes. The Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors, developed in the 1980s, also measures positive constructs, commonly referred to as the forty Developmental Assets (20 internal, 20 external), and a number of risk factors. Half of the asset scales derived from the Profiles measure fail to meet basic psychometric standards of reliability and, therefore, predictive validity of the scales is limited.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey, launched in 1990, is also used to gather data from youth. Contrary to the positive focus of the Gallup Student Poll and the Search Institutes Profiles, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey measures health risk behaviors (Tobacco Use, Unhealthy Dietary Behaviors, Physical Inactivity, Alcohol & Other Drug Use, Sexual Behavior/STD’s/HIV/AIDS/Unintended Pregnancies and Violence/Injury) that contribute to the leading causes of social problems, disability, and death among youth and adults in the United States. The measure’s results can be used to evaluate and improve school and community programs. Except for a few suspect items, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, produces reliable results and predictive validity varies by scale.

In sum, all three measures are used to gather data from youth and the results are used to promote change in schools and communities. Gallup Student Poll (administered to convenience samples and representative samples) and the Profiles of Student Life (administered to convenience samples) were developed to measure the positive qualities of youth and the conditions that promote their development. The Poll results are easier to understand (score reports highlight three scales rather than 40 assets) and are more psychometrically sound. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (administered to representative samples) focuses on risk factors associated with future social and health problems and attends to no positive youth or environmental characteristics.

“How is the Gallup Student Poll administered?”

Gallup measures the hope, engagement, and wellbeing of students via a Web-based survey administered in America’s schools. District and school administrators register an account through the Gallup Student Poll website by providing the school’s National District and National School ID number, as well as general school information. During live polling periods, the survey can be accessed through the Gallup Student Poll website immediately after the account has been registered and a field period selected. The survey is available Tuesday through Friday during school hours.

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