



Beyond the Headlines: Student Learning Growth and Well-Being in Independent Schools

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about erb

ERB is a not-for-profit member-based organization with a nearly century-long history of serving private and independent schools.





student well-being

What is it and why does it matter in schools?





student well-being is...

Student well-being is a student's overall sense of safety, connection, and purpose — the foundation that allows learning, relationships, and growth to take root.



student well-being matters

- It shapes how students **learn, connect, and grow**
- Emotionally secure students are more **engaged and resilient**
- Well-being fuels both **academic success and character formation**
- Schools thrive when students feel **safe, seen, and supported**



Broadening Student Growth

IQ

Measures what students *know* - skills, content, performance

EQ

Shapes *how* students learn - handling challenges, emotions, and relationships

Whole-Child Growth



Daily Observation (Informal)

- Simple check-ins: “one-word mood,” gratitude rounds, reflection journals
- Model emotional awareness & language
- Build trust through consistent, caring curiosity

Programmatic Reflection Practices (Informal)

- Include brief well-being questions in advisory or homeroom
- Use student listening circles or small-group feedback sessions
- Reflect after transitions or high-stress seasons
- Involve student voice in discussions about school culture

Data-Informed Tools (Formal)

- **ERB’s Check-In Survey:** belonging, engagement, and well-being data
- **ERB’s SelfWise:** deeper insight into emotional and social strengths
- Pair data with conversation and curriculum



Build a holistic
picture of
students
individually
and
collectively



Tailor
responsive
services for
the group and
individual level



Inform larger
school
initiatives

Why measure
student
well-being in
the school
setting?



whole child pilot study

Research shows that successful student outcomes are about more than academic instruction...

whole child

ERB's Whole Child Solution is focused on helping educators better understand students to help them reach their fullest potential

ctp

Summative Assessment
Taken Once a Year

milestones

Interim Assessment
Taken 2-3 Times a Year

selfwise

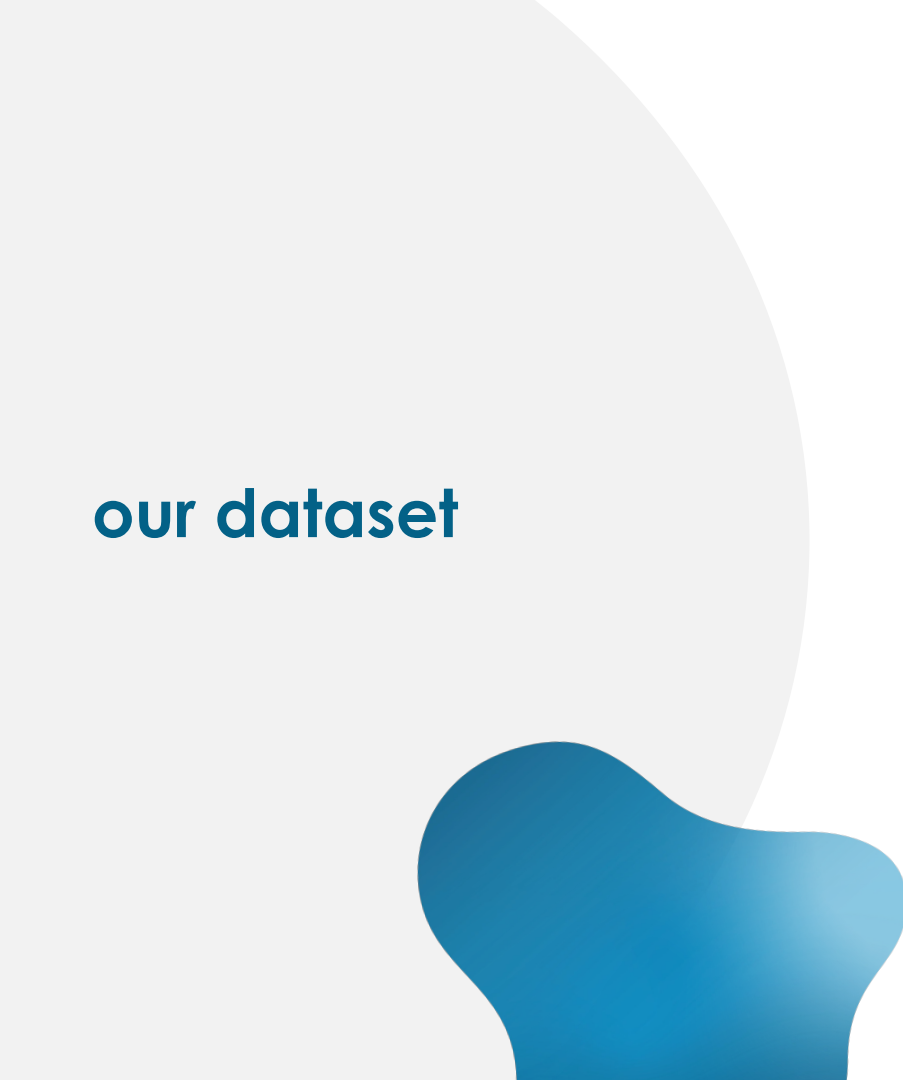
Social and Emotional
Skills Inventory

check-in survey

Survey on Student
Well-Being at School

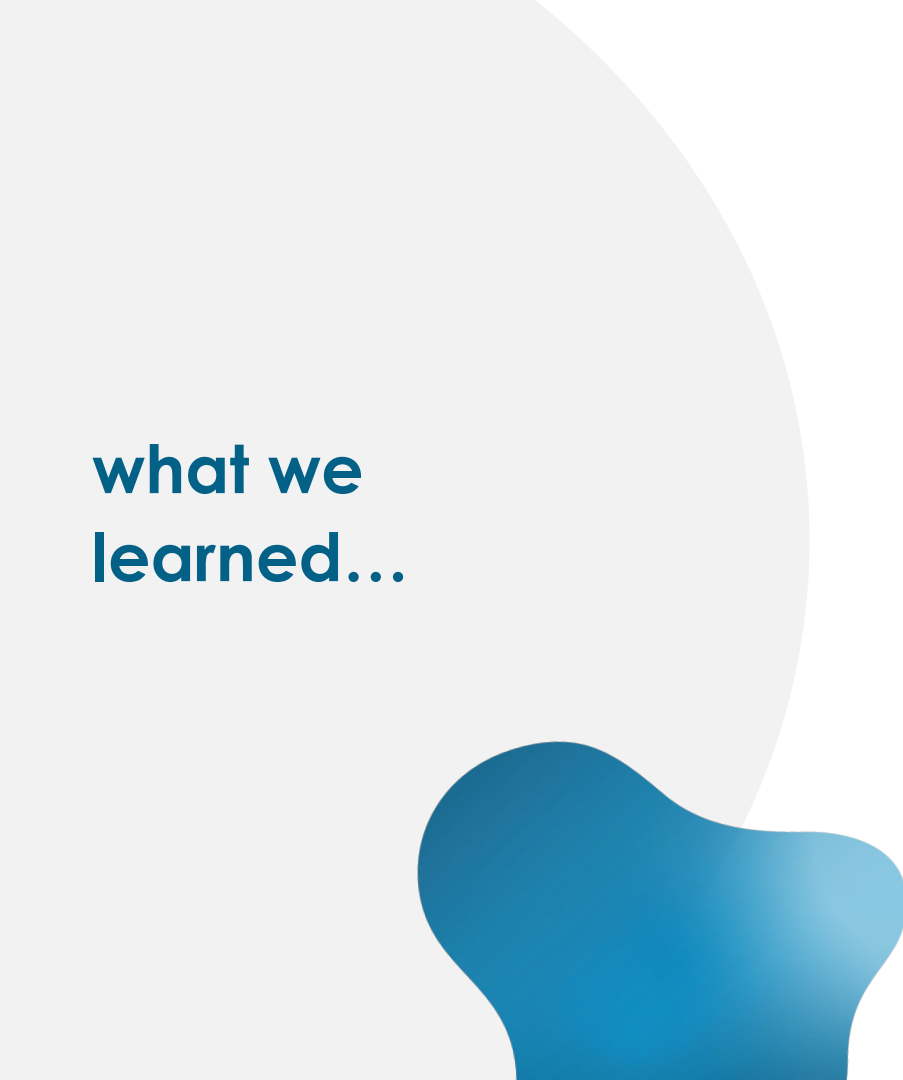
second step

Social and Emotional
Skills Learning Program



our dataset

- **2022-2023 Check-In Survey, SelfWise, and CTP data**
 - CIS: Fairness & Belonging, Emotional Well-Being, Academic Engagement
 - SW: Responsible Decision Making, Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Self Management, Relationship Skills
 - CTP: Reading, Math, Reasoning, Writing Skills
- **Grades 3-8**
 - 15 schools, 2000+ students



what we learned...

- During the year immediately following COVID, learning growth slowed to 50-70% of the typical rate for students in independent schools, but there was no evidence of learning loss
- Overall average gains suggest that academic performance has rebounded
- Recovery patterns vary based on achievement level, grade, and subject area

to truly flourish, students must be able to navigate both the **academic** and the **social** demands of school.

these competencies form the **foundation** for academic engagement and learning growth

Self-Awareness

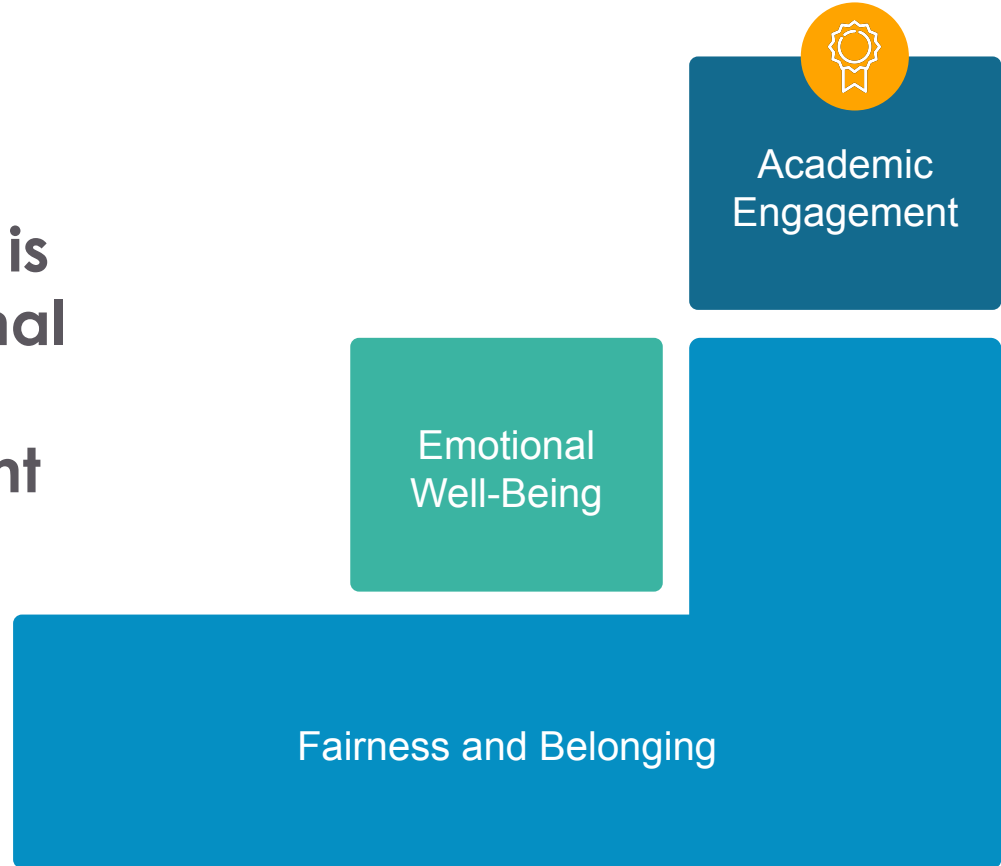
Self-Management

Social
Awareness

Relationship
Skills

Responsible
Decision
Making

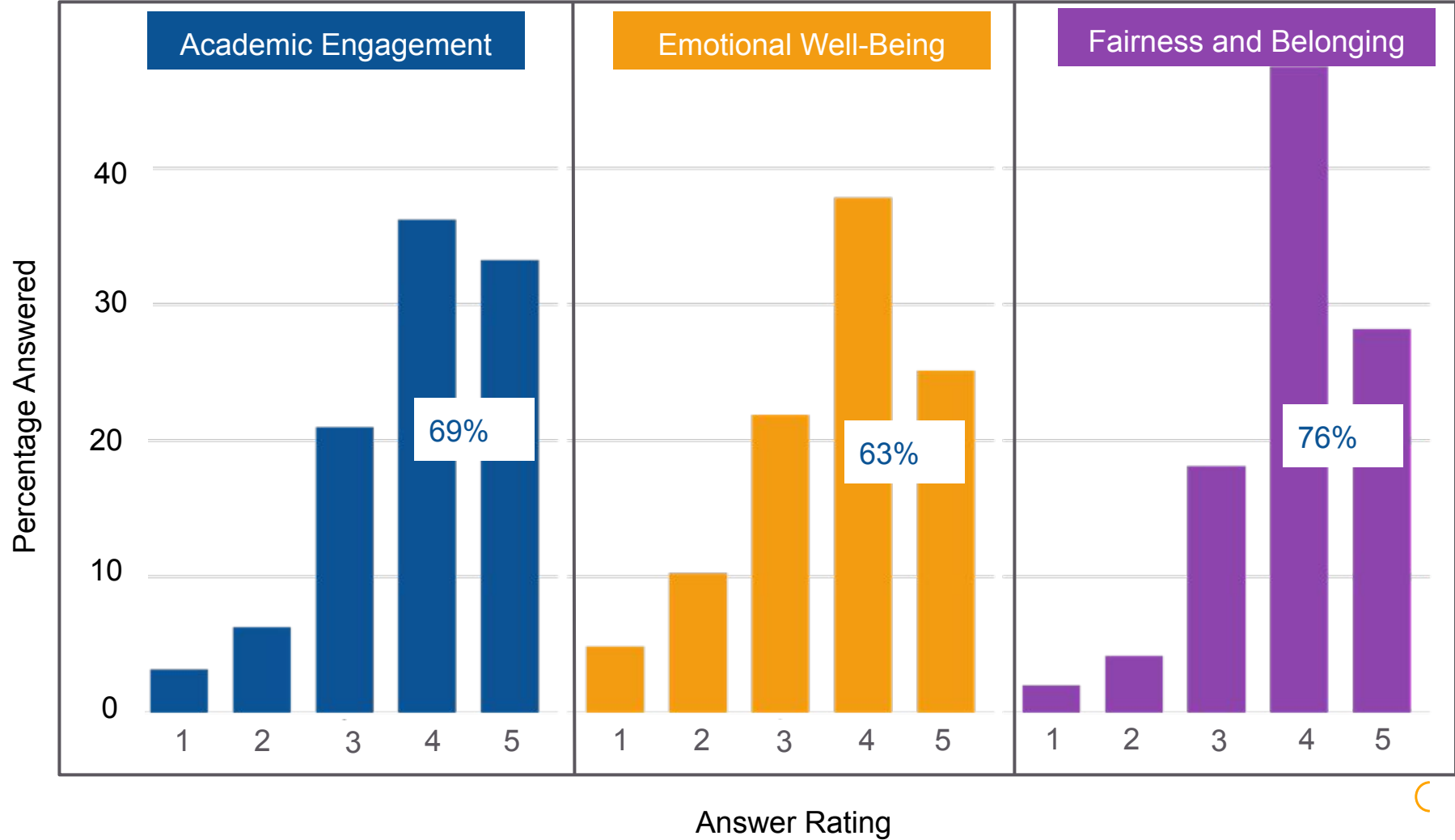
a student's sense of
fairness and belonging is
foundational to emotional
well-being and
academic engagement



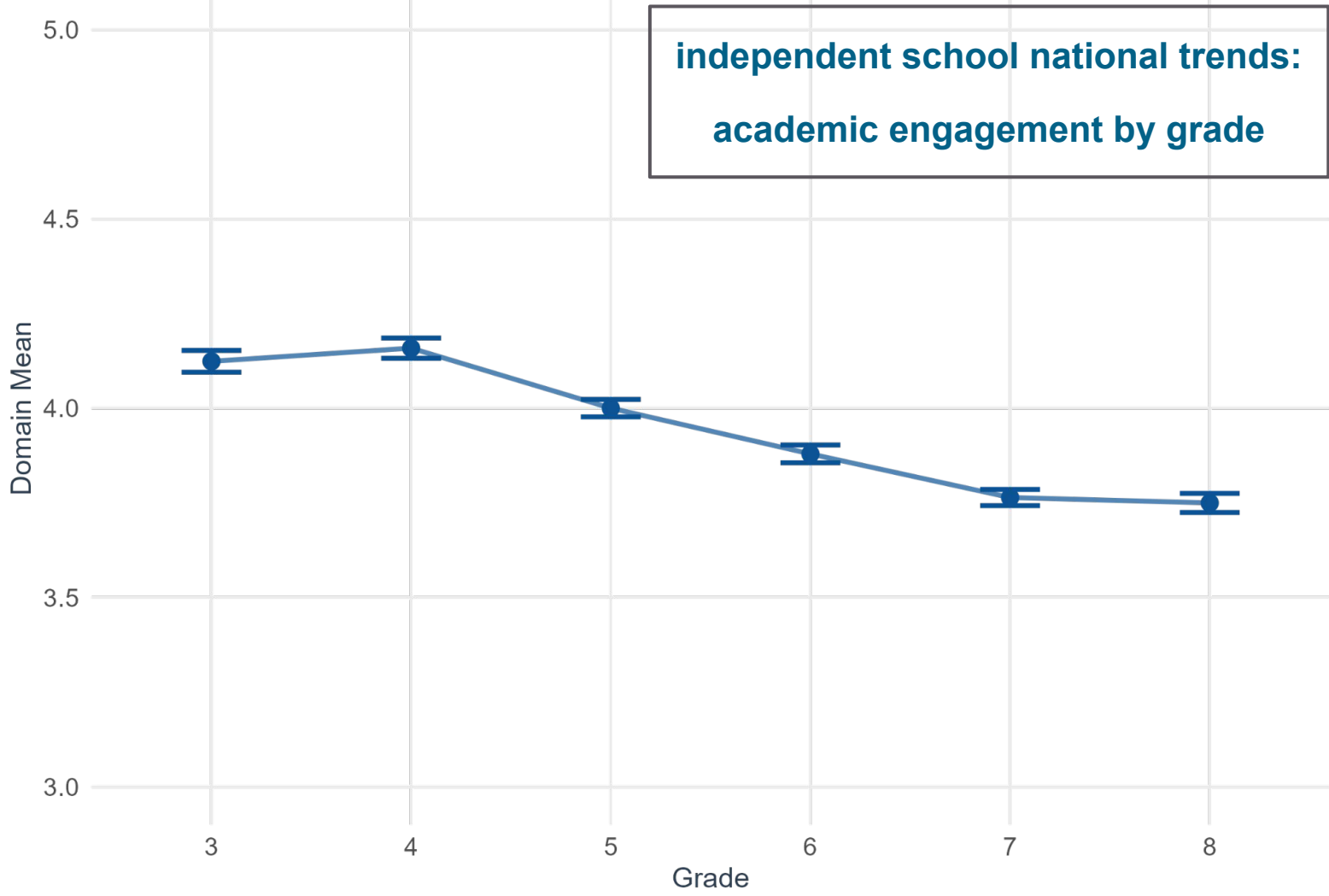


independent school student well-being

A 2024-2025 analysis of 15,084
students in grades 3-8, representing
40 independent schools

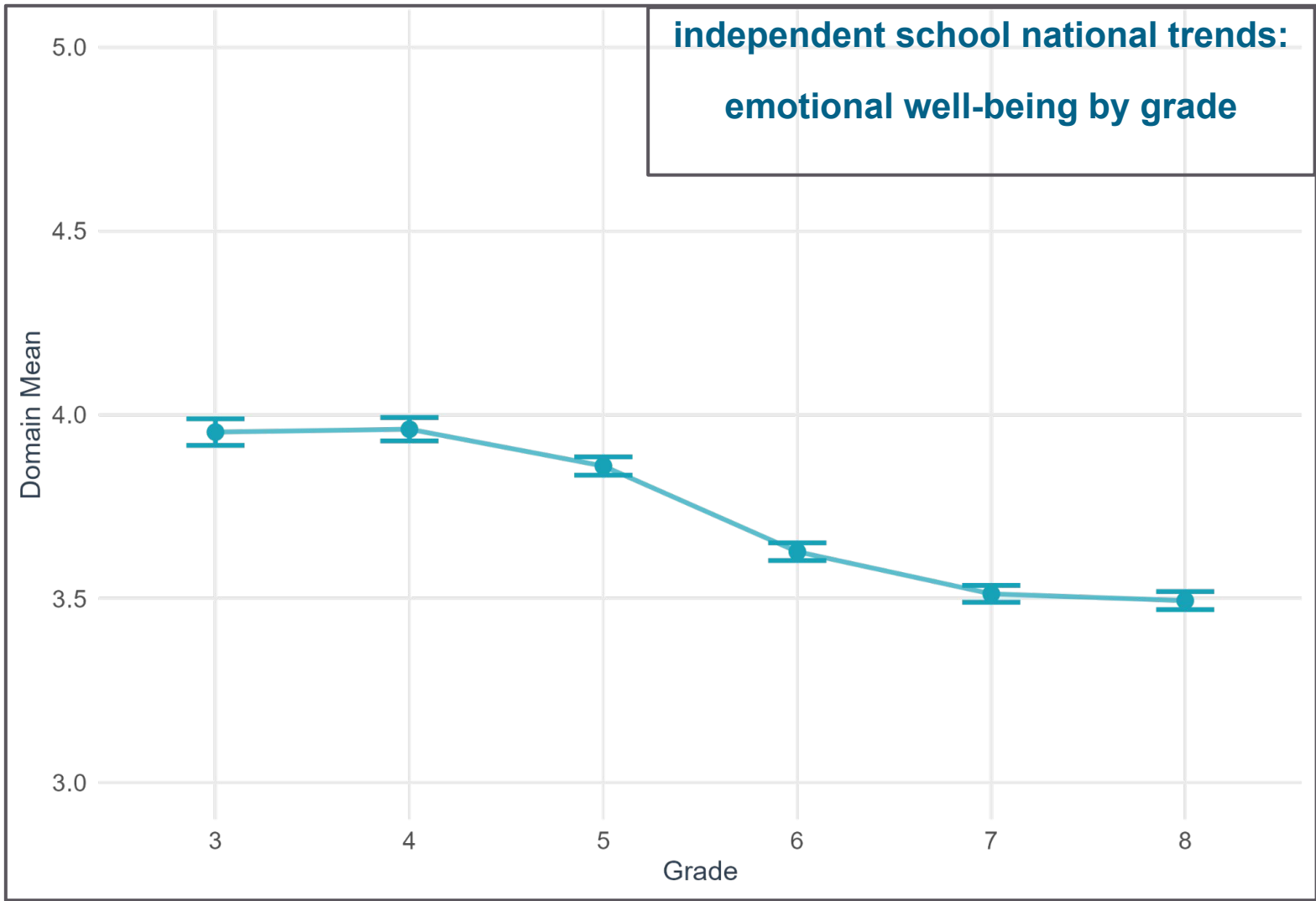


**independent school national trends:
academic engagement by grade**

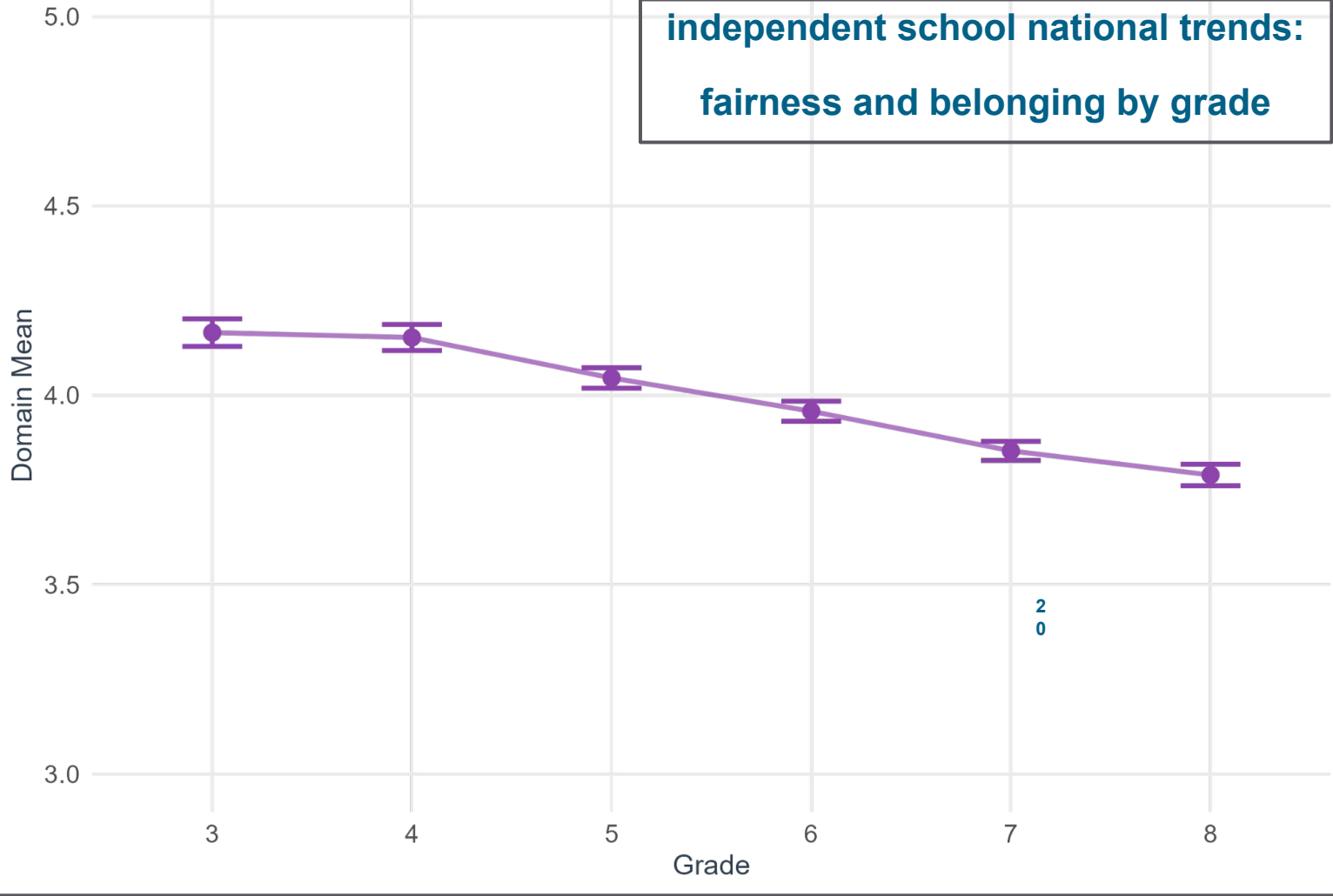


Check-In Survey
response scale = 1-5

**independent school national trends:
emotional well-being by grade**



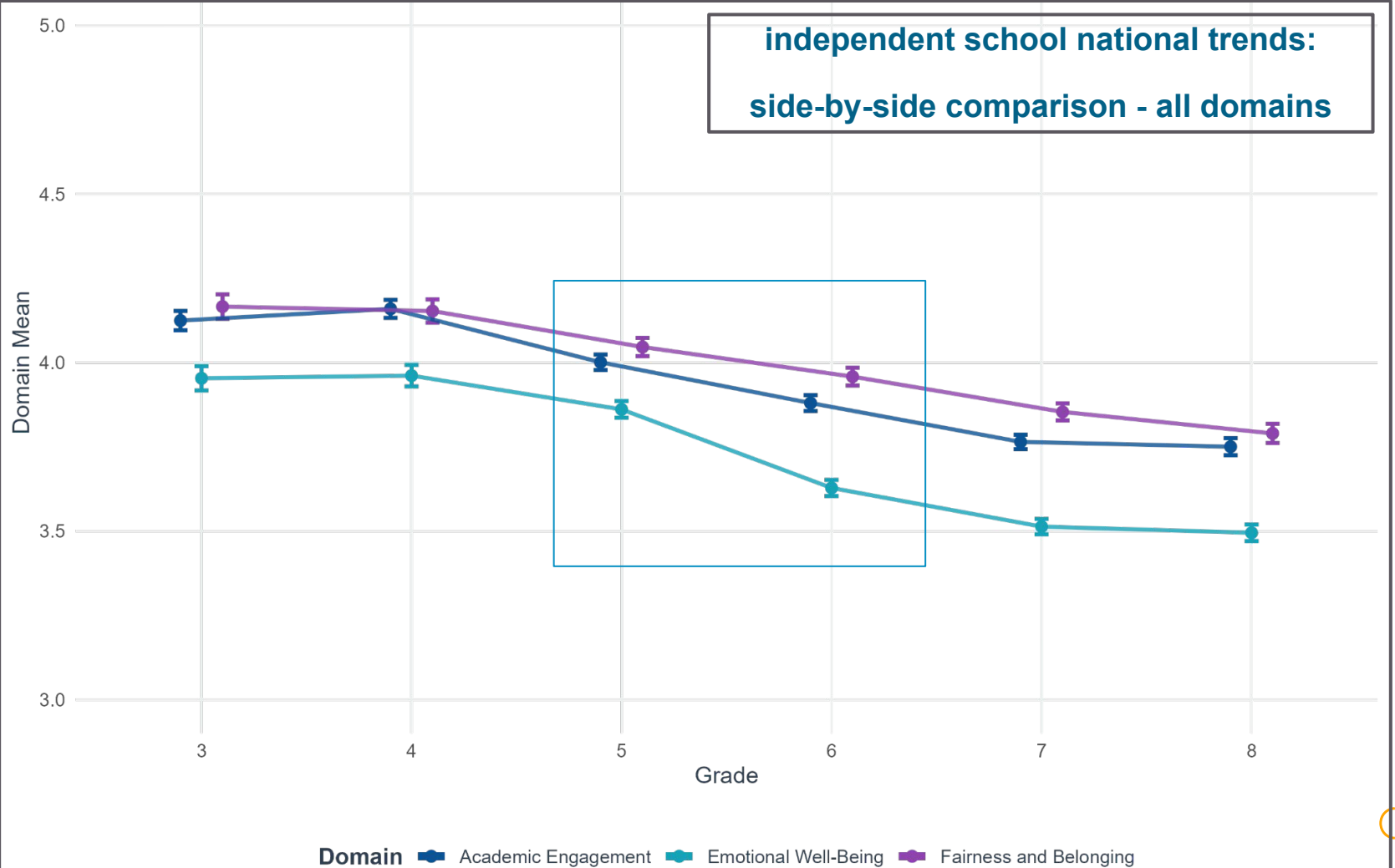
**independent school national trends:
fairness and belonging by grade**



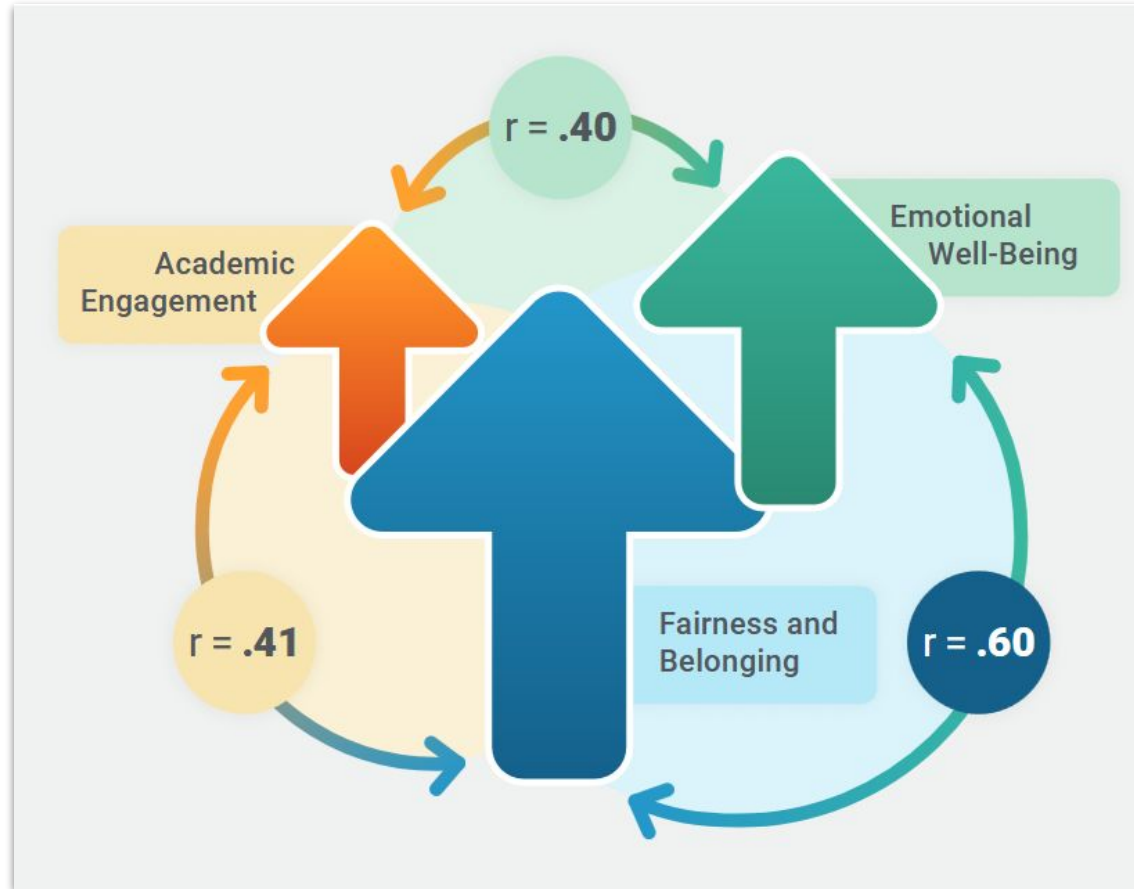
20



independent school national trends:
side-by-side comparison - all domains



How Belonging Affects Emotional Well-Being and Academic Engagement





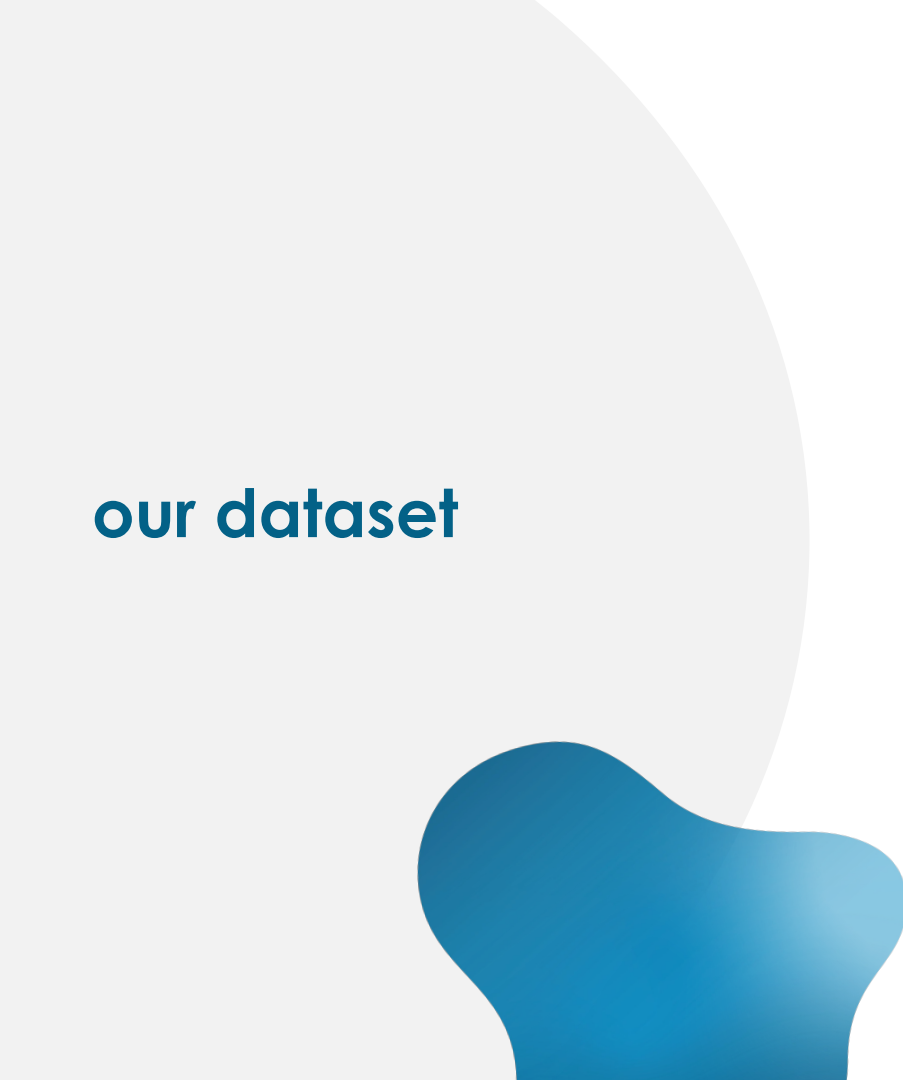
Students who have a higher sense of well-being

- Develop and improve concentration, motivation and energy levels
- Develop coping skills for life
- Build and maintain better relationships
- Successfully overcome difficulties
- Continue with and to be successful in their academic studies



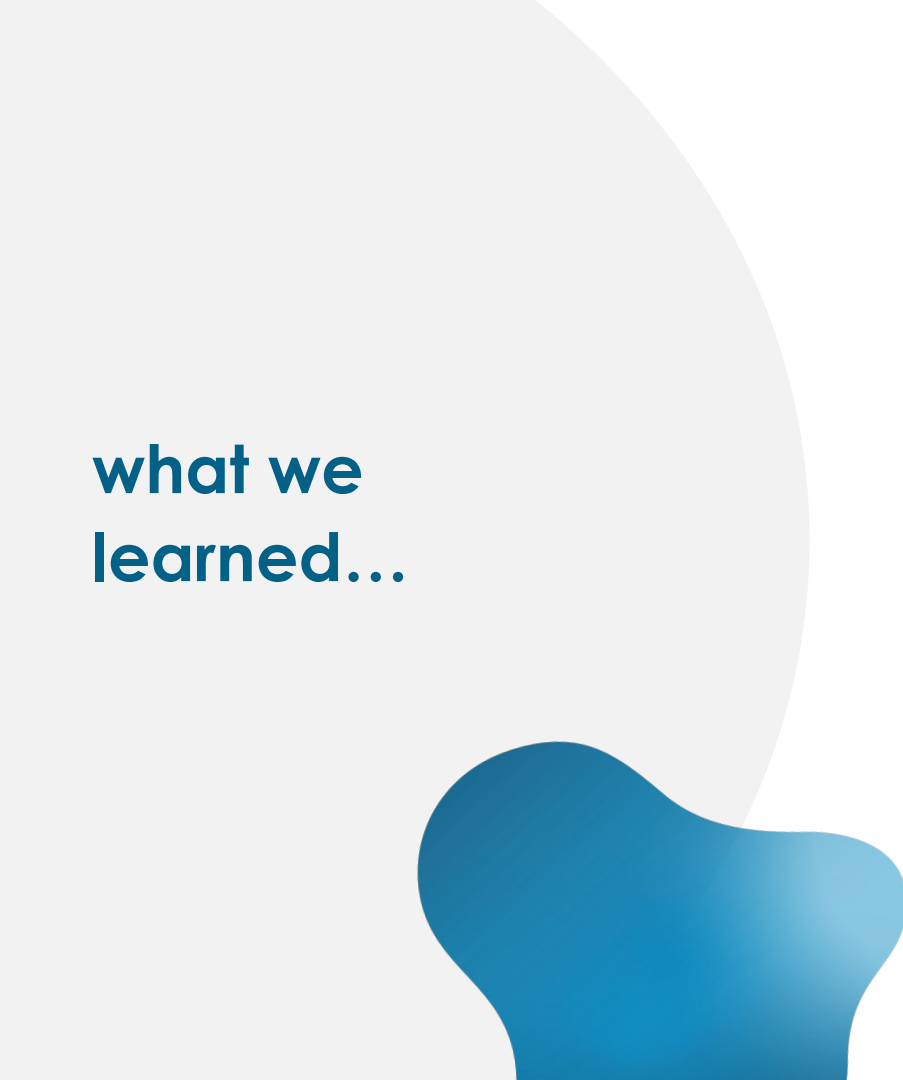
academic achievement in independent schools post-COVID

A story of resilience, recovery, and
nuance.



our dataset

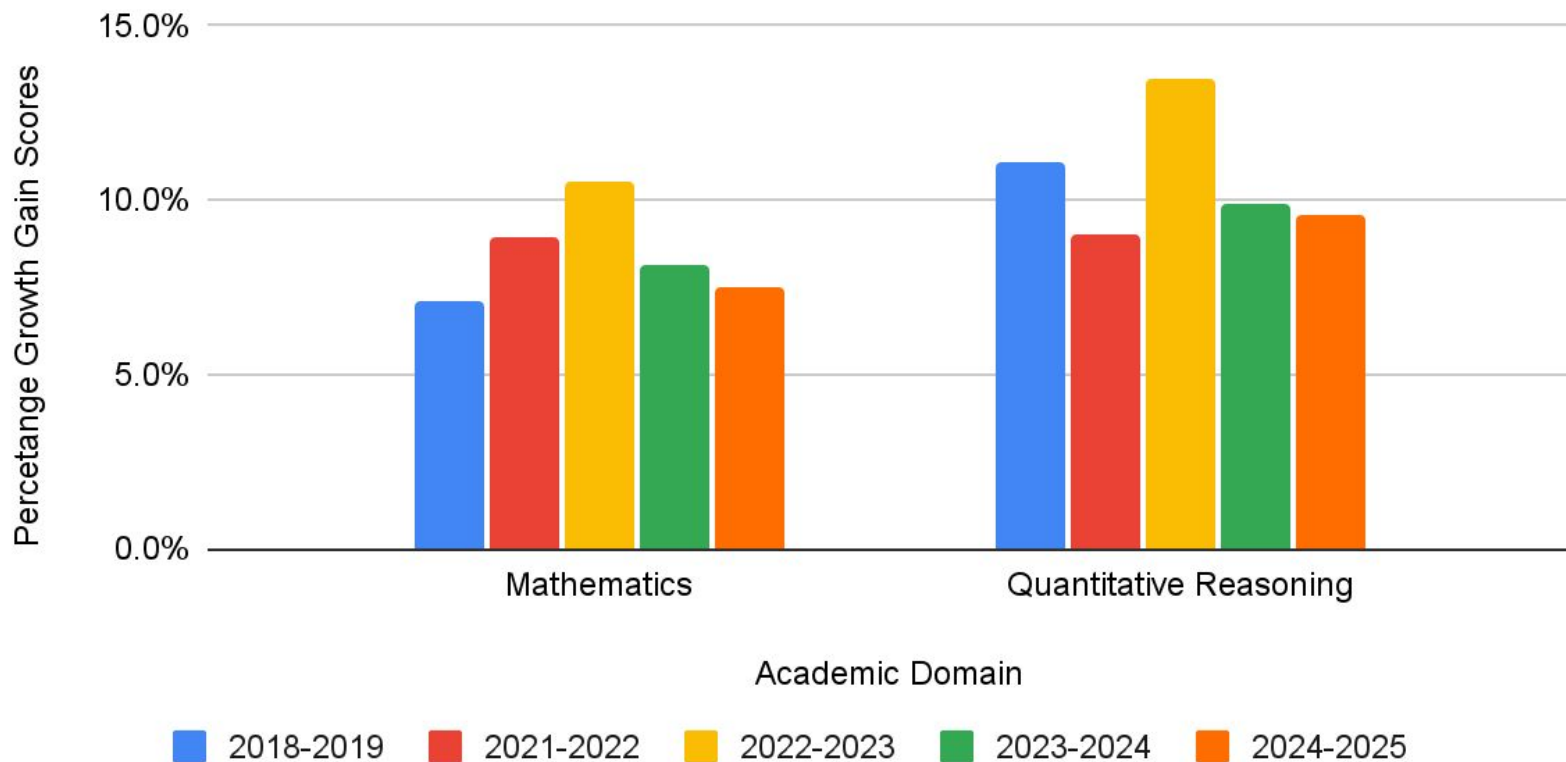
- **CTP data between 2018-2025**
 - Reading Comprehension
 - Mathematics
 - Verbal Reasoning
 - Quantitative Reasoning
 - Writing Concepts & Skills
- **Grades 3-8**
 - NAIS: 30,000-55,000 students per year across domains



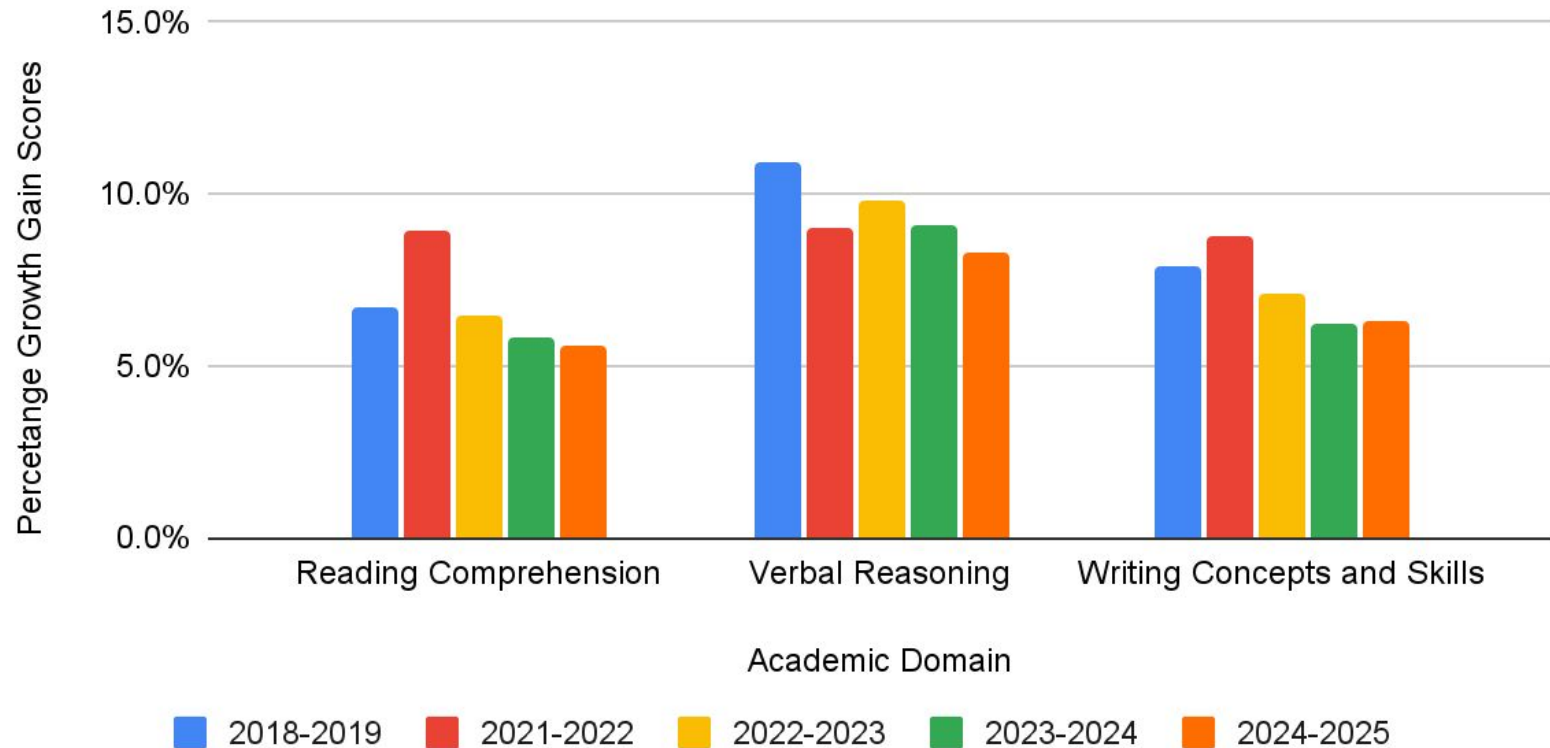
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NAIS Year-Over-Year Student Percent Learning Gains: Math/QR



NAIS Year-Over-Year Student Percent Learning Gains: RC/VR/WCS





what does it all mean...

- Independent schools students, on average:
 - Have recovered rates of learning growth 5 years after the COVID disruption
 - Are academically engaged and have a strong sense of emotional well-being and fairness and belonging
 - Many factors contribute to understanding individual student journeys and data should be considered in context
- Research on the impacts of student well-being on learning and growth in independent schools is ongoing (white paper available in early 2026)



every student can thrive

Educators can unlock *powerful* opportunities to support student learning and growth through data-informed practices



understanding the whole child empowers educators

expands our view

allows us to zoom in
and out to see different
perspectives

empowers collaboration

builds stronger teams,
bringing important
perspectives together to
examine student growth
in a multi-faceted way

acknowledges and prioritizes

showcases the
interconnected nature of
our students' experiences

multiple opportunities

collecting data over the year
gives immediate feedback and
provides opportunity for
celebration and adjustment

a whole
child view
provides
powerful
insight

Chloe Baer, Grade: 7, School Year: 2023-2024, Test Season(s): Fall, Winter, Spring

Summary

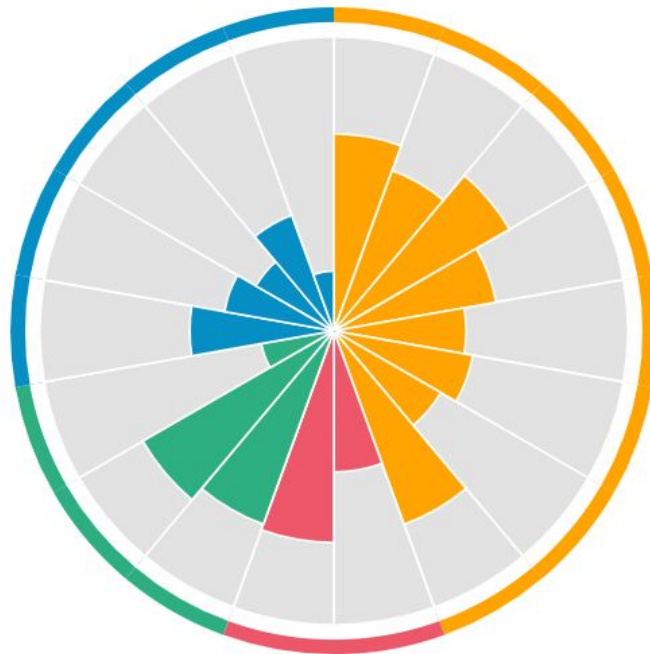
Chloe Baer completed 18 ERB measures from August of 2023 to April of 2024. Performance on learning achievement subtests was consistent with typical grade 7 independent school students in Quantitative Reasoning and Reading Comprehension. It was above average in Mathematics, Science, and Vocabulary and below average in Writing Mechanics, Writing Concepts and Skills, and Verbal Reasoning. On well-being measures, Chloe Baer's self-reporting was lower on Academic Engagement and average on Emotional Well-Being and Fairness and Belonging. Chloe Baer's self-reporting on SelfWise measures is lower in Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making. Chloe Baer should focus academically on core areas of Verbal Reasoning where performance is lowest. The skills to practice are Analogical Reasoning, Categorical Reasoning, Logical Reasoning, DOK 2, and DOK 3.

SelfWise (1-99)

- 49 ▼ Self-Awareness
- 38 ▼ Self-Management
- 31 ▼ Social Awareness
- 42 ▼ Relationship Skills
- 21 ▼ Responsible Decision-Making

Check-in Survey (1-5)

- 3.8 = Emotional Well-Being
- 4.0 = Fairness and Belonging
- 2.0 ▼ Academic Engagement



CTP (0-99%)

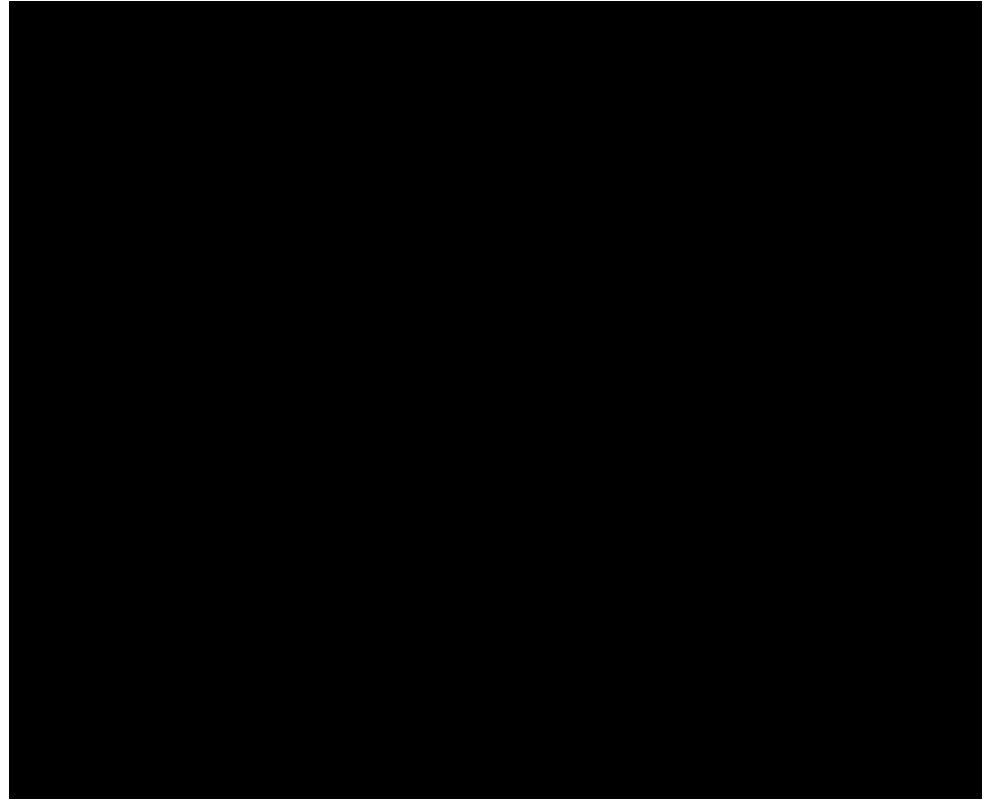
- 67% ▲ Mathematics
- 58% = Quantitative Reasoning
- 69% ▲ Science
- 56% = Reading Comprehension
- 45% ▼ Writing Mechanics
- 48% ▼ Writing Concepts and Skills
- 42% ▼ Verbal Reasoning
- 70% ▲ Vocabulary

Milestones (0-99%)

- 48% = Mathematics
- 72% = Reading Comprehension



**every child is
unique and so is
their learning
journey**





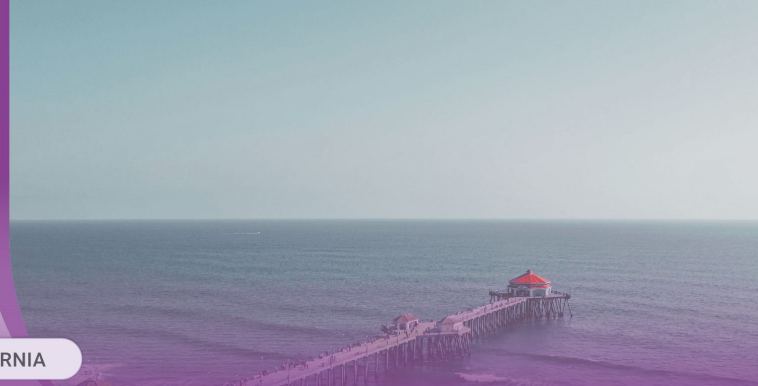
join us!



TENNESSEE

regional

January 14, 2026
Harding Academy
Nashville, TN



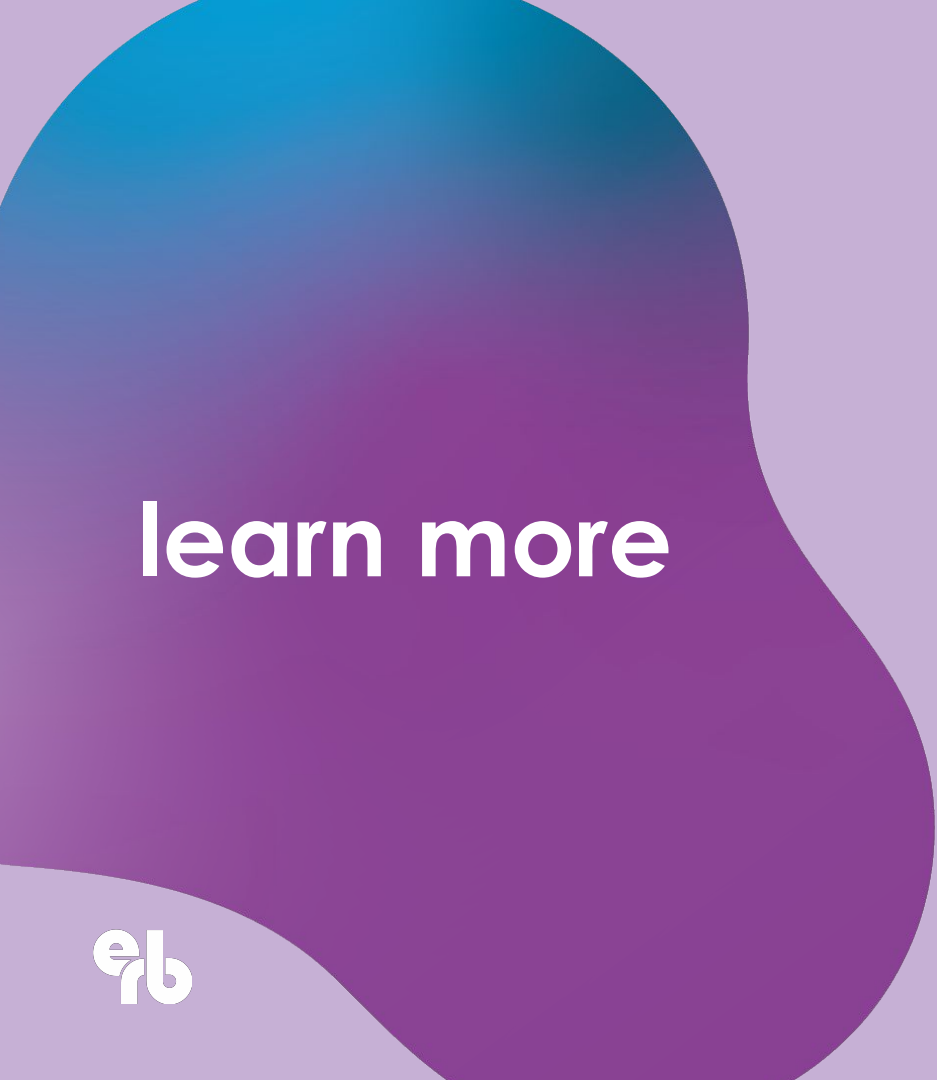
CALIFORNIA

regional

March 16, 2026
Pegasus School
Huntington Beach, CA

Registration now open!

<https://www.erblearn.org/regionals/>



learn more



Website:

www.erblearn.org

Email:

- Whole Child Solution:
erbsupport@erblearn.org
- Second Step:
secondstep@erblearn.org

Webinar Questions:

- kbornmann@erblearn.org





thank
you



appendix

Product Details: ERB's Whole Child Solution



whole child

ERB's Whole Child Solution is focused on helping educators better understand students to help them reach their fullest potential

ctp

Summative Assessment
Taken Once a Year

milestones

Interim Assessment
Taken 2-3 Times a Year

selfwise

Social and Emotional
Skills Inventory

check-in survey

Survey on Student
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Social and Emotional
Skills Learning Program



whole child bundles

max

4 PRODUCTS

Bundle all **four** of our flagship Whole Child assessments and measurement tools at discounted pricing.

standard

3 PRODUCTS

Bundle **three** of our Whole Child assessments and measurement tools at discounted pricing.

mini

2 PRODUCTS

Bundle **two** of our Whole Child assessments and measurement tools at discounted pricing.



Summative Assessment

The **Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP)** helps educators identify their students' strengths and weaknesses in a variety of subject areas to help refine curricula and develop targeted instructional interventions.

grades

Covers the Spring of Grade 1 through the Fall of Grade 11

subjects

Full battery of subtests covering reading, listening, vocabulary, writing, mathematics, and science based on NCTE, NCTM, and ILA standards

formats

Choose paper tests, online tests, at-home tests, or a combination that suits your needs

frequency

Administered once a year, either in the Spring or Fall

norms

Large norm pools including independent school, national, and association norms

milestones

Interim Assessments

Used independently or paired with the CTP summative assessment, ERB **Milestones** interim assessments serve as regular checkpoints throughout the year to provide data that inform instruction and support student growth.

grades

Covers the fall of Grade 3 through the spring of Grade 8

subjects

Includes Reading Comprehension and Mathematics based on NCTE, NCTM, and ILA standards

formats

Online format only for immediate results and ease of use

frequency

Administer three times a year, or administer twice a year alongside CTP

norms

Large norm pools including independent schools and national norms

sample item

Students respond to multiple-choice items by clicking or bubbling in their choice.

Student Name: _____ Levels 4-6 Mathematics
Quantitative Reasoning Question: 3 of 8

Directions (Question 3): This kind of question is followed by four choices. Read each question and decide which one of the choices best answers the question. Select the option you think is the correct answer.

Sample Question B

Which of these is equal to 1?

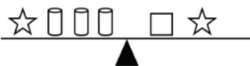
☐ A $\frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4}$

☐ B $\frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{3}$

☒ C $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}$

☐ D $\frac{1}{1} + \frac{1}{1}$

The correct answer to this question is C, since $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = 1$.
Therefore, bubble C is marked.

3. 

Each side of the balance scale shown has 10 pounds on it.

How many pounds does each  weigh if each  weighs 4 pounds?

☐ A 1

☐ B 2

☐ C 3

☐ D 6

 Help  Mark  Back  Next

check-in survey

Survey on Student
Well-Being at School

The **Check-In Survey** enables schools to quickly evaluate student attitudes about their emotional well-being, academic engagement, and fairness and belonging in their school community, providing options to monitor progress over time and foster a supportive student growth tool.



check-in survey dimensions

Fairness and Belonging

Overall perception of a fair and inclusive school environment.

Sample items:

- *At school, I feel like I belong.*
- *I can be myself at school.*

Academic Engagement

Overall interest and engagement in the classroom.

Sample items:

- *I feel it is important to do well in school.*
- *I can succeed at school if I try.*

Emotional Well-Being

Overall happiness and stress levels at school.

Sample items:

- *I often feel happy.*
- *I feel stressed about school work.*

grades

Covers Grade 3 through Grade 12

measures

Items are derived from Character Lab's Thriving Index, includes optional mission-aligned modules

formats

Online format only for immediate results

frequency

Track progress over time by implementing the survey throughout the school year



Catholic Schools

Helps to assess how effectively schools integrate Catholic values into academics and school life while supporting students in their spiritual development and personal growth.

Christian Schools

Helps to assess how effectively schools integrate Christian values into academics and school life while supporting students in their spiritual development and personal growth.

Episcopal Schools

Helps ensure the nurturing of faith-based growth, and alignment with a mission of affirming the spiritual dimension of learning.



Girls' Schools

Helps ensure the cultivation of a supportive and nurturing environment where girls can thrive, and conveys key principles to students.

Middle East Conflict

Helps gauge student understanding, critical thinking about positions taken, and sense of fairness and psychological safety.

Custom

A custom module consists of a set of items developed by a school to collect unique data insights that align with a school's vision and mission.

sample item

I feel it is important to do well in school.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☒ Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

items

1 I often feel happy.

2 I often feel sad. *

3 I feel stressed about schoolwork. *

4 I feel stressed about relationships with other students. *

5 I feel good about my life.

6 At school, I feel like I belong.

7 I am treated fairly at school.

8 I can be myself at school.

9 I feel valued and appreciated at school.

10 I feel like I am part of my school community.

11 I feel it is important to do well in school.

12 I find my classes interesting.

13 I can succeed in school if I try.

14 I enjoy thinking or talking about ideas from class when not in school.

15 I enjoy what I learn at school.

The logo for Selfwise, featuring the word "selfwise" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The "self" is in a dark blue color and the "wise" is in a lighter blue color.

Social and Emotional
Skills Inventory

SelfWise inventory of the CASEL competencies can help educators identify pathways to student growth and better understand the whole child – including how students’ ability to navigate the school environment may affect their academic growth.



Self-Awareness

The ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.

Self-Management

The ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.

Social Awareness

The ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts



Relationship Skills

The ability to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups

Responsible Decision-Making

The ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

grades

Available across three grade spans: Grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12

measures

Students choose a rating from a scale as they respond to statements tied to each CASEL competency

formats

Takes roughly 15 minutes to complete online and consists of 45 multiple-choice items

frequency

Recommended for administration twice a year (fall and spring)

sample selfwise items

Item Analysis

^ 1 Item

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | I stay calm and focused when completing my schoolwork. |
| 2 | I have many good ideas. |
| 3 | When I have a problem at school, I am good at figuring out what to do. |
| 4 | I think things through before I act. |
| 5 | I can concentrate in class for long periods of time. |
| 6 | I am well behaved at school. |
| 7 | When I am excited, I can still manage to sit still and listen. |
| 8 | When I am upset about something, I am more careful about what I say or do. |
| 9 | When other kids are upset, I can normally understand why they are feeling that way. |
| 10 | I avoid behaviors that could lead to other people getting hurt. |
| 11 | I have a good sense of what other people are feeling. |

second step

Social-Emotional Learning
curriculum

Second Step® programs help students build social-emotional skills—like nurturing positive relationships, managing emotions, and meeting goals—so they can thrive in school and in life

Free 30-Day Trial:
secondstep@erblearn.org.



grades

Available for PreK - Grade 12 including Early Learning, Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools plus SEL for Educators

measures

Measures a variety of research-based CASEL-aligned curriculum plus a professional learning program.

formats

Both digital programs and physical classroom kits are available depending on grades used.

frequency

Designed for year-long implementation with varied subscription lengths available.

The Second Step® Family of Programs

- Second Step® Early Learning (PreK)
- Second Step® Elementary (K–5)
- Second Step® Middle School (6–8)
- Second Step® High School (9–12)
- Second Step® SEL for Adults





how it works

Early Learning

This physical Classroom Kit helps littlest students build listening skills, manage their feelings and behavior, and get along with others so they can be safe, supported, and ready to learn.

Lower School

Teach lower school students foundational social-emotional competencies like empathy and kindness, problem-solving, and growth mindset with either a digital program or physical Classroom Kit.

Middle School

This digital program continues to strengthen social awareness, perspective-taking, and other vital skills that help them communicate, collaborate, and set and reach goals.



Upper School

This digital program helps create a school culture where all students can build confidence, resilience, and the competencies they need to thrive in the classroom and beyond.

Adults

This digital, professional development program is designed to help K-12 educators build trust, manage stress, explore equity and belonging, and cultivate resilience and efficacy.