

# CLIMBING THE LADDER OF LIFE SATISFACTION AND SUCCESS

## A SURVEY OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AT SCHOOLS EDUCATING BLACK STUDENTS



Health and wellbeing are associated with academic success among black boys and girls. Black students who report higher levels of life satisfaction and rate their health to be good or excellent, are also more likely to report good grades in school. A survey of principals and other school administrators of schools educating a sample of 2,985 black students from across the United States indicate that while most schools offer some form of mental health service, less offer services for specific mental health challenges; such as family services, drug treatment, and counseling for depression and stress.

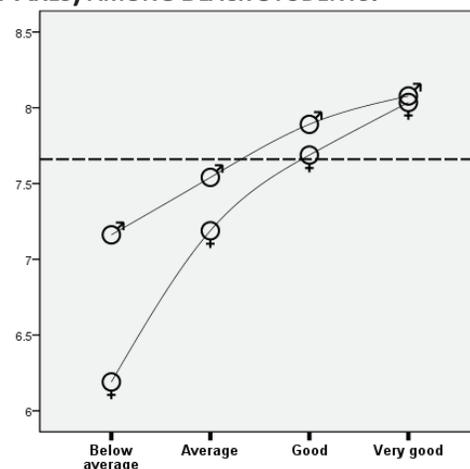
### Does your school offer the following services?\*

- Mental and social services (97.7%)
- Behavioral or social problems help at school (88.9%)
- **Family counseling (58.7%)**
- Group counseling (78.3%)
- Individual counseling (97%)
- Intake evaluation comprehensive assessment (60.3%)
- Peer counseling or mediation (75%)
- **Self help or support groups (58.7%)**
- **Alcohol or drug treatment (27.0%)**
- Crisis intervention for personal problems (81.8%)
- **Counseling of anxiety or depression (68.3%)**
- **Stress management (36.3%)**
- **Eating disorders treatment (23.4%)**
- Referral for physical, sexual, emotional abuse (78%)
- **Job readiness program (38.4%)**

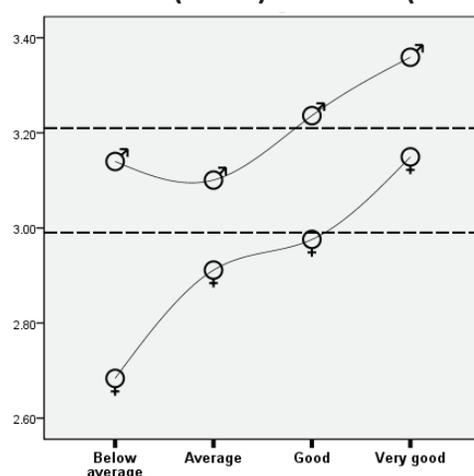
\*Figure in parentheses indicates the percentage of school administrators responding "yes."

**FIGURE 1: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER (SEPARATE PLOTS) AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT (X AXIS) ON LIFE SATISFACTION (Y AXES) AMONG BLACK STUDENTS.**

The question read: "Here is a picture of a ladder. The top of the ladder "10" is the best possible life for you and the bottom "0" is the worst possible life for you. In general, where on the ladder do you feel you stand at the moment?" The average rating among all Black students was about 7.75. This average rises among students with higher grades in school, and declines among students with lower grades. For boys and girls, the relationship between grades and life satisfaction is statistically significant ( $F = 30.6$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p < .001$ ).



**FIGURE 2: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER (SEPARATE PLOTS) AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT (X AXIS) ON HEALTH (Y AXES) AMONG BLACK STUDENTS.**



The question read: "Would you say your health is . . . ?" The response options were 1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; and 4=excellent. Again, students with better health reported higher levels of academic success. For boys and girls, the relationship between grades and life satisfaction is statistically significant ( $F = 19.1$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p < .001$ ), however girls were significantly more likely to report health problems. *Data from Health Behavior in School-Aged Children [United States] [Computer File]. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2008*

**Policy implications:** Educational policy should recognize the significant contribution of emotional wellbeing to the academic success of black students. Policies that increase funding for school counselors and require a smaller ratio of counselors to students could help to improve the emotional wellbeing of students. Since many black students deal with greater social and environmental pressures, greater emphasis should be placed on family counseling, loss and bereavement and community empowerment. Training for school counselors and teachers to recognize less obvious signs of depression, anxiety, and drug use is also important to support student growth.

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