

Improving Student Life Satisfaction and Well-being

PRESENTED BY:

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Draw A Picture of:

Life Satisfaction

Happiness

About the Presenter

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- Joined ISM in 2013
- 14 years in independent school leadership as Vice President, Associate Head, Head of Upper School, Dir. of Guidance, Dir. Of College Advisement, Teacher, Varsity Golf Coach, IT Supervisor
- Ph.D., In Clinical Psychology, M.S., In Psychology, MBA
- Former Clinical Psychologist specializing in family and adolescent therapy and psychological testing



Advancing school leadership—enriching the student experience.

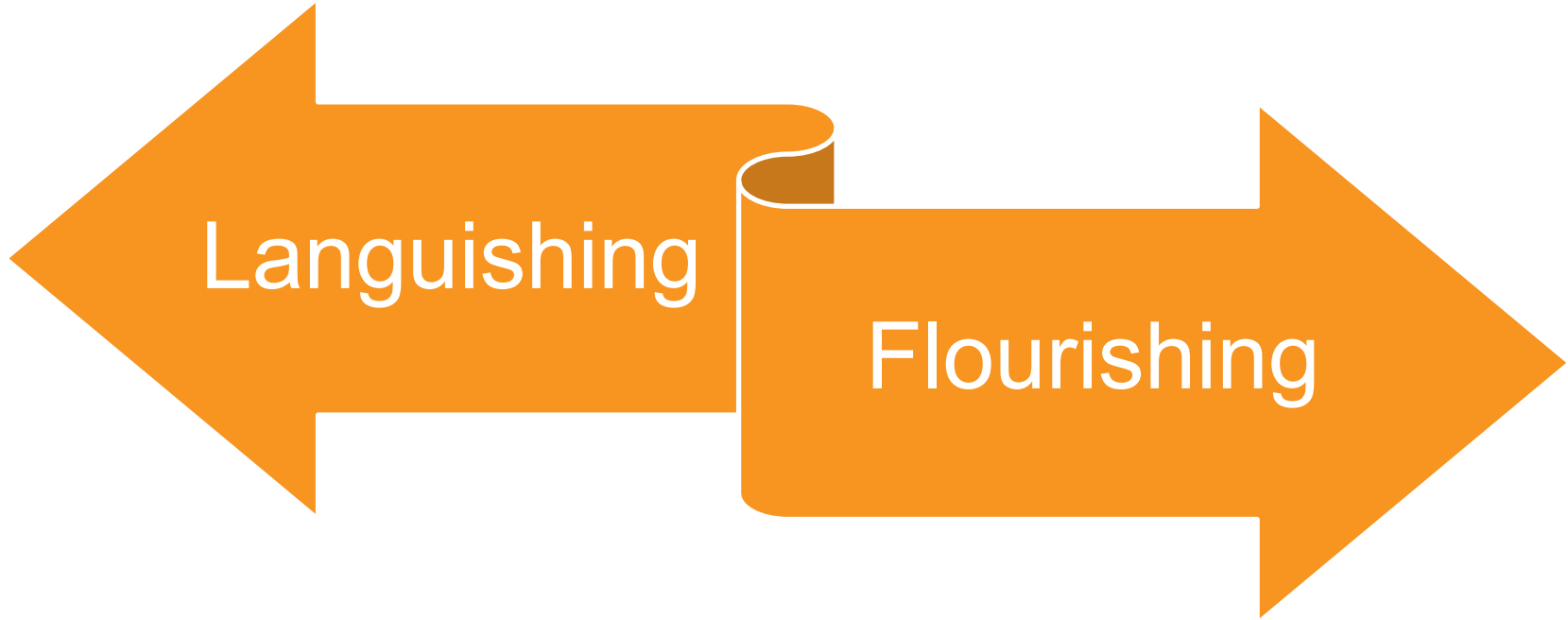
ISM is dedicated to the advancement of school management.
We provide creative strategies by combining extensive research,
proven management techniques, and personalized service.



**“The
Good
Life”**



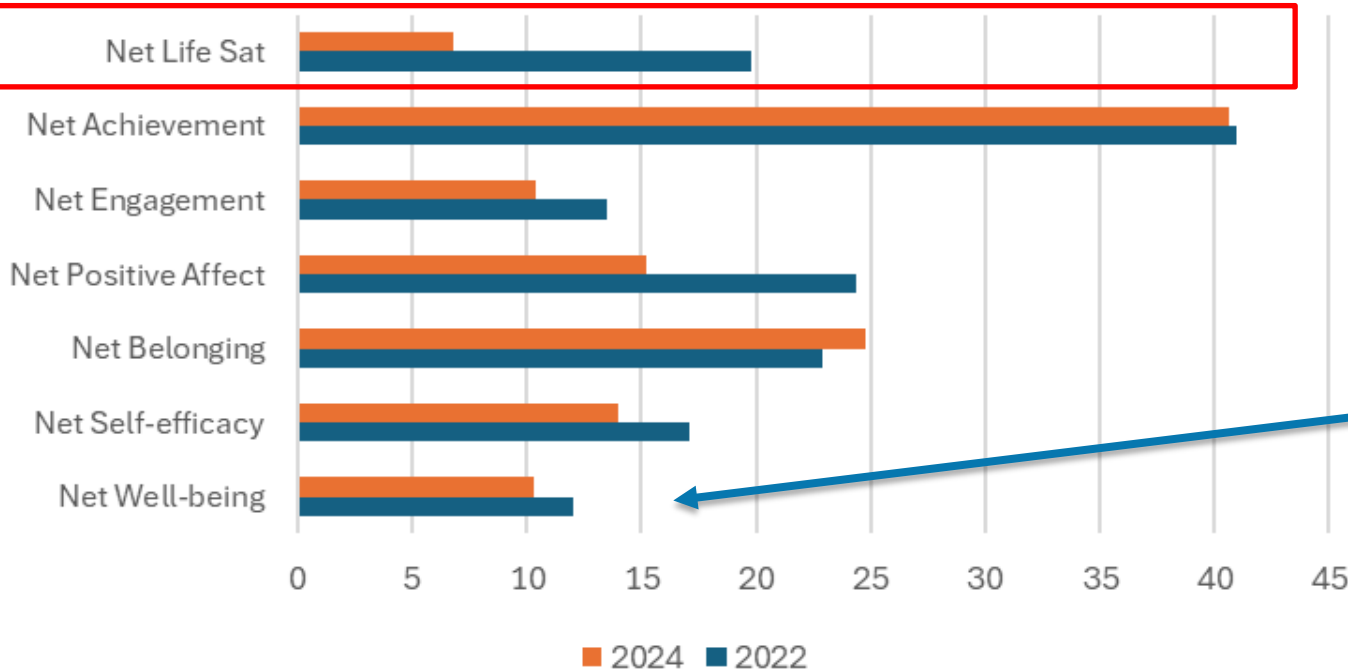
Well-Being Continuum



The ISM Well-being Model



Net Well-being Comparison 2022 vs 2024



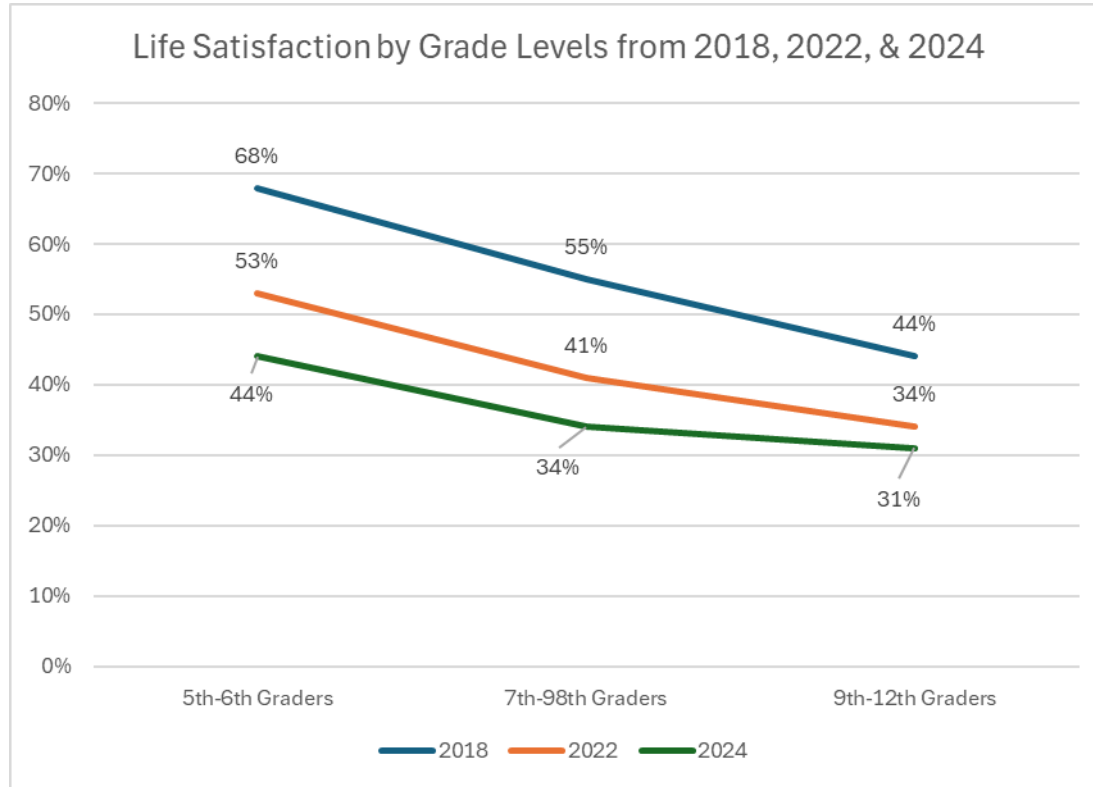
Aggregate results 5-12 saw consistent small declines across 5 of 6 factors and in total Net Well-being.

12.0 ('22) vs 10.3 ('24)

Significant Declines:

- Life Satisfaction
- Positive Affect

Life Satisfaction is Down (Again)

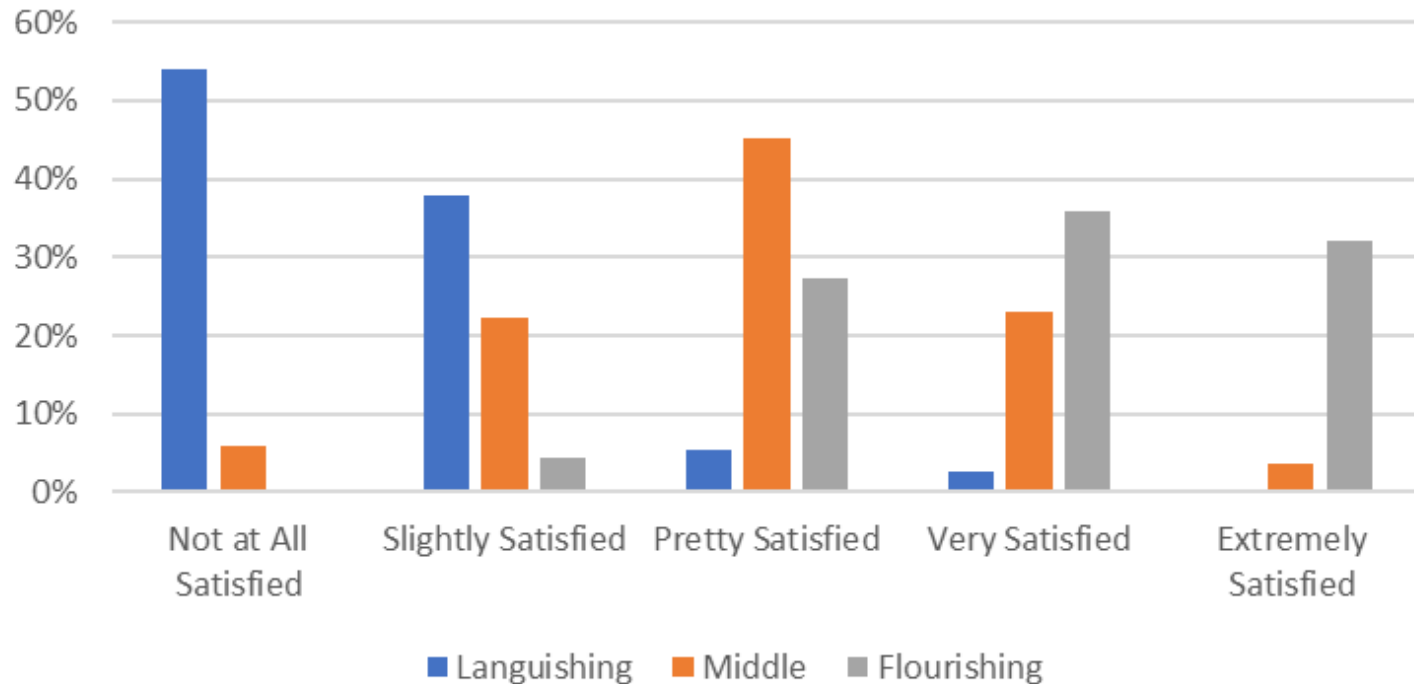


Net Life Sat 2022 19.8

Net Life Sat 2024 **6.8**

Life Satisfaction by Flourishing Category

"How Satisfied are you with Your Life?"



Ideally, we would reduce the decline from 5th to 12th grades.

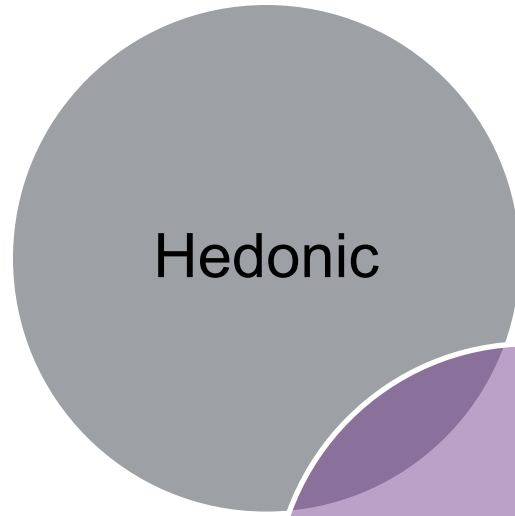
However, reversing the downward trend overall is critical

What is “Life Satisfaction”?



People's subjective, overall evaluation their life as a whole

The extent to which a person finds life rich, meaningful full or of high quality.



Hedonic

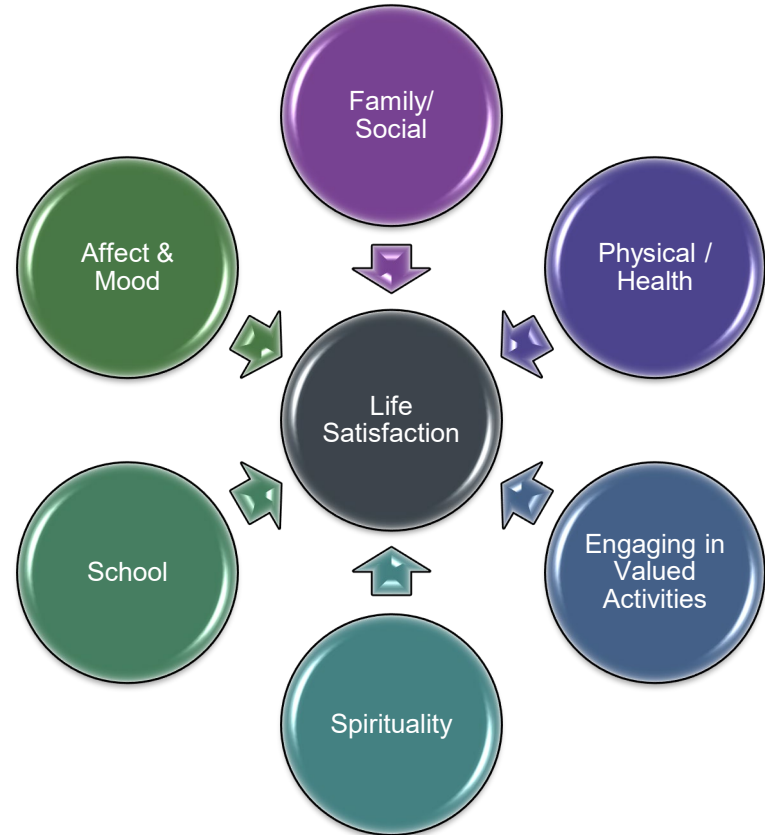
Affective components
Pleasure and enjoyment
Here and now

Cognitive components
Meaning and purpose
Reaching the “true self”
Past (legacy) or Future
(becoming)

Eudaimonic

Student Life Satisfaction

How you do in specific life domains,
influences your life satisfaction



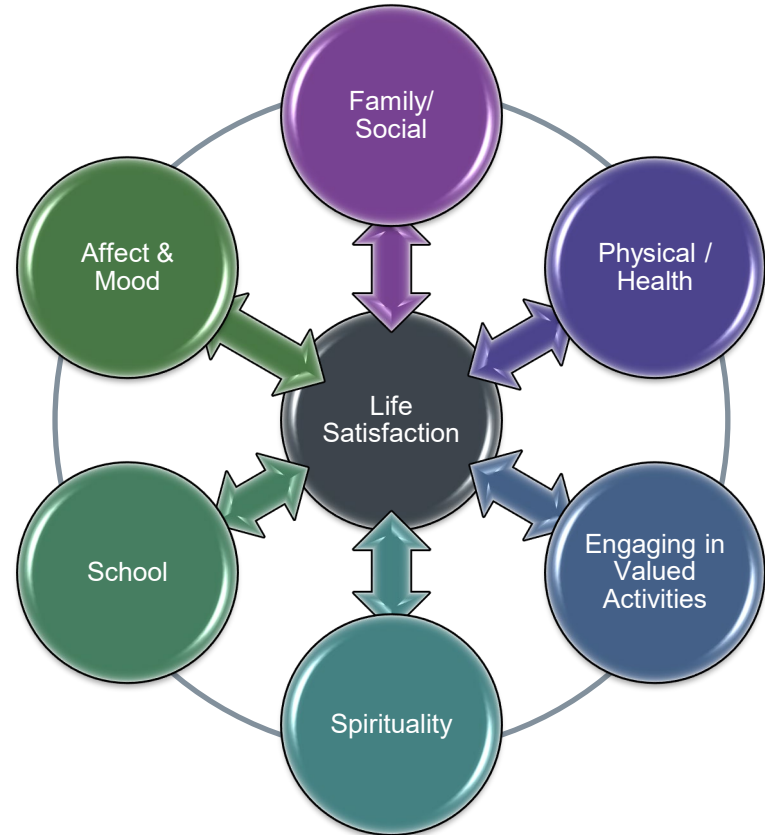
Student Life Satisfaction

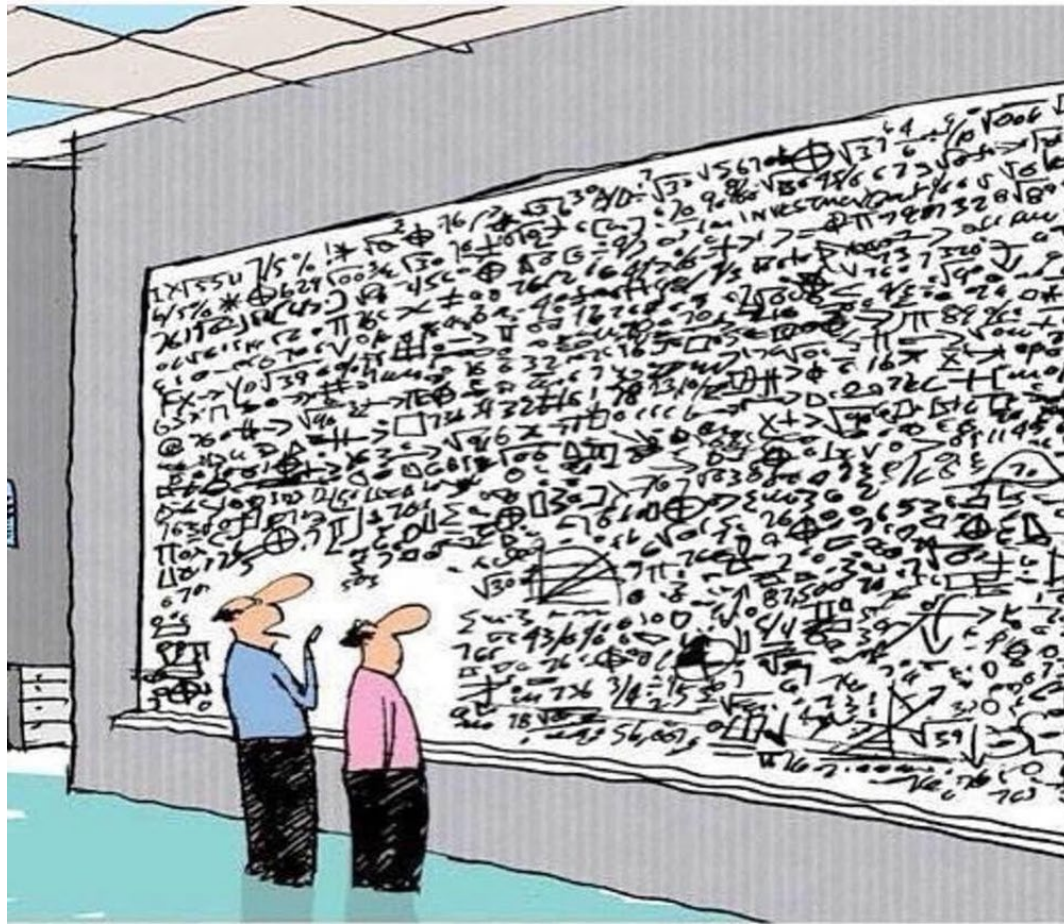
How you do in specific life domains,
influences your life satisfaction

However, global life satisfaction likely
influences one's appraisal of each
domain

Enhancing any one area is a
pathway to improve
satisfaction.

Positively influence their
appraisal of their life
experience in other areas.





“So according to this, your overall life satisfaction is slightly below average, but I am not sure I carried the 2 over here.”

How Much Influence Do We Have?

Life Satisfaction is not school specific and other factors have a major influence on life satisfaction (e.g., family situations). Yet...

- Students often are *required* to spend 12 hours a day on school and school-related activities.
- “Getting good grades” is the #1 reported stressor, by far, for students.
- School Climate, along with self-efficacy, has been shown to be associated with both well-being and life satisfaction

Parent Involvement and Life Satisfaction in Early Adolescence (5th-8th)

School-Related and
Individual Predictors of
Subjective Well-Being and
Academic Achievement
Ricarda Steinmayr , Anke
Heyder, Christian
Naumburg, Josi Michels,
Linda Wirthwein

Table 2.

Pearson correlations among the main measures.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Life satisfaction	–				
2. Paternal involvement	0.311 ^{***}	–			
3. Maternal involvement	0.327 ^{***}	0.398 ^{***}	–		
4. Age	–0.189 ^{***}	–0.122 [*]	–0.095	–	
5. School climate	0.452 ^{***}	0.217 ^{***}	0.282 ^{***}	–0.241 ^{***}	–
6. SES	0.028	0.116	0.074	–0.069	0.057

[Open in a new tab](#)

^{*} $p < 0.05$,

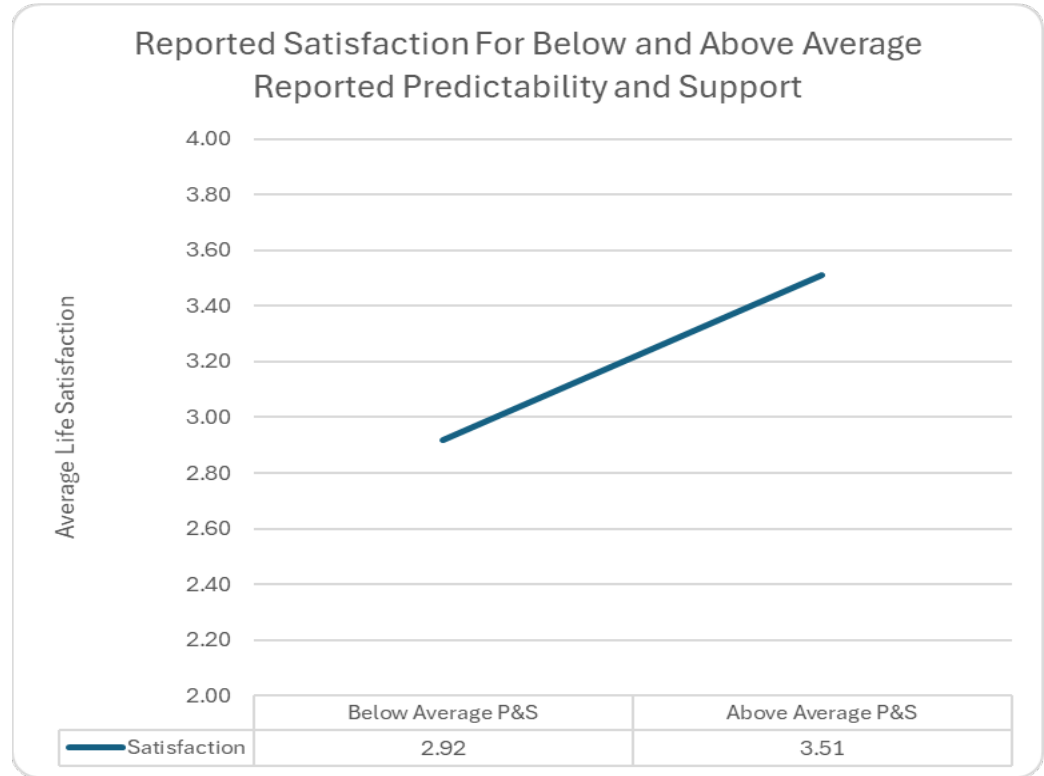
^{***} $p < 0.001$. Significance tests adjusted for multiple comparisons with Bonferroni correction.

How Much Influence Do We Have?

ISM Research.

Life Satisfaction is correlated with

- School Achievement $r=0.60$
- School Belonging $r=.50$
(Emotionally Safe .50)
- Student Self-efficacy $r=.49$
- Affect Ratio (Positive/Negative affect) $r=0.58$
- School Stress -0.42
- Students with above average P&S report significantly higher Life Sat







Connectedness - The feeling of belonging, social connection, and a sense of shared purpose or relationship with others, nature, or even one's inner self.

“I don’t belong here. I don’t fit in.”

“I have friends here, but I never see them. We don’t have time to hang out.”

“Teachers only care about their subject”

“They say this is a place where everyone is known, but I don’t feel that.”

We all Need People:



To talk to

Who we trust/trust us

To have fun with

Who care about us

Enhancing Connectedness

1. **It must come from the faculty!** The students' relationship with faculty largely determines if they like school.
 - Assure teachers **know what their job** is and give them permission to do it.
 - **Hire teachers** based on their ability to be relational.
 - They **set the tone** for emotional safety.
 - Inventory who is truly **known and unknown**. Consider a **dossier** for teachers/advisors
 - Focus on **faculty culture**. Support and trust must be extended from leadership.

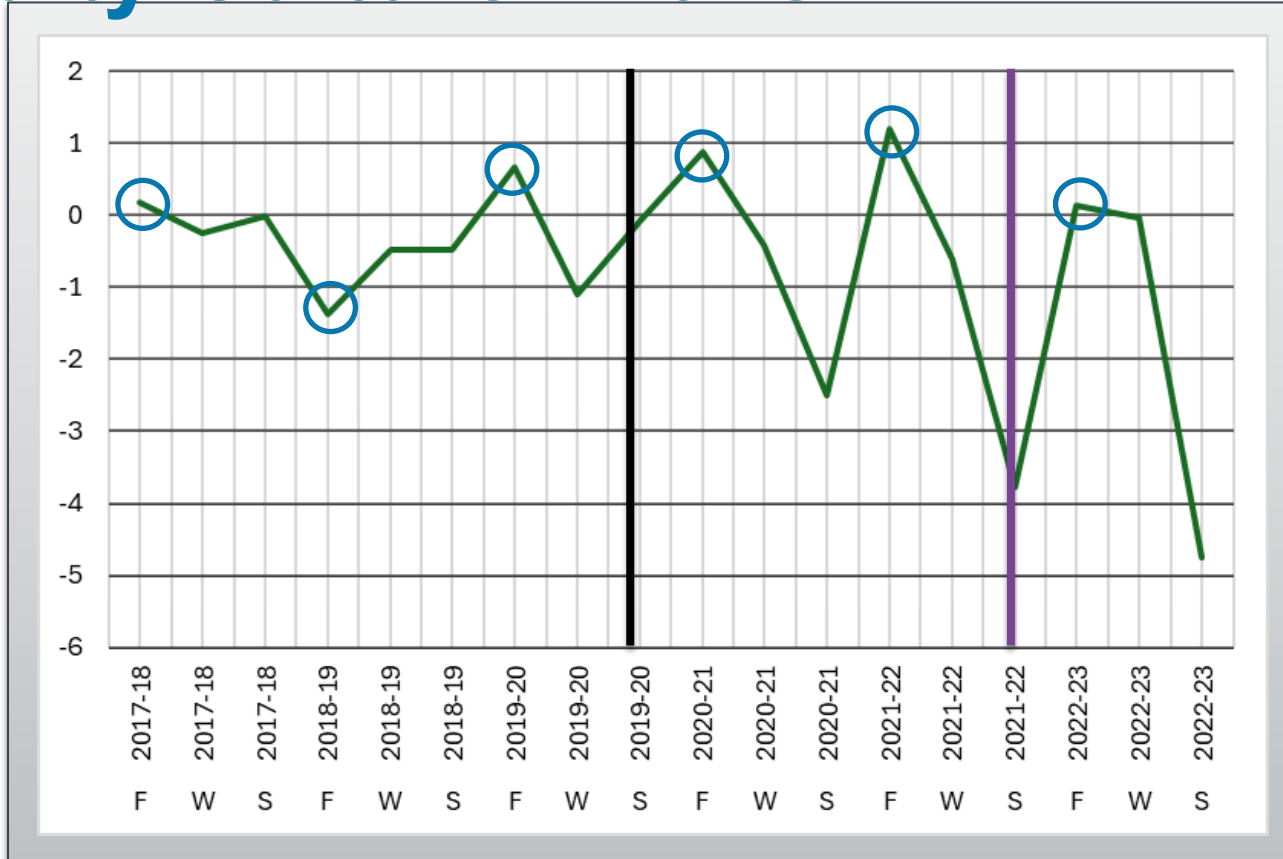
Teacher Reflections

“I fall short of [building relationships] throughout the progress of the school year. It is something that must be practiced regularly and built upon. Yes, **we all do the first day getting to know you games and icebreakers, but then we just stop.** We do not foster the progression of these relationships with our students or for our students within the classroom.”

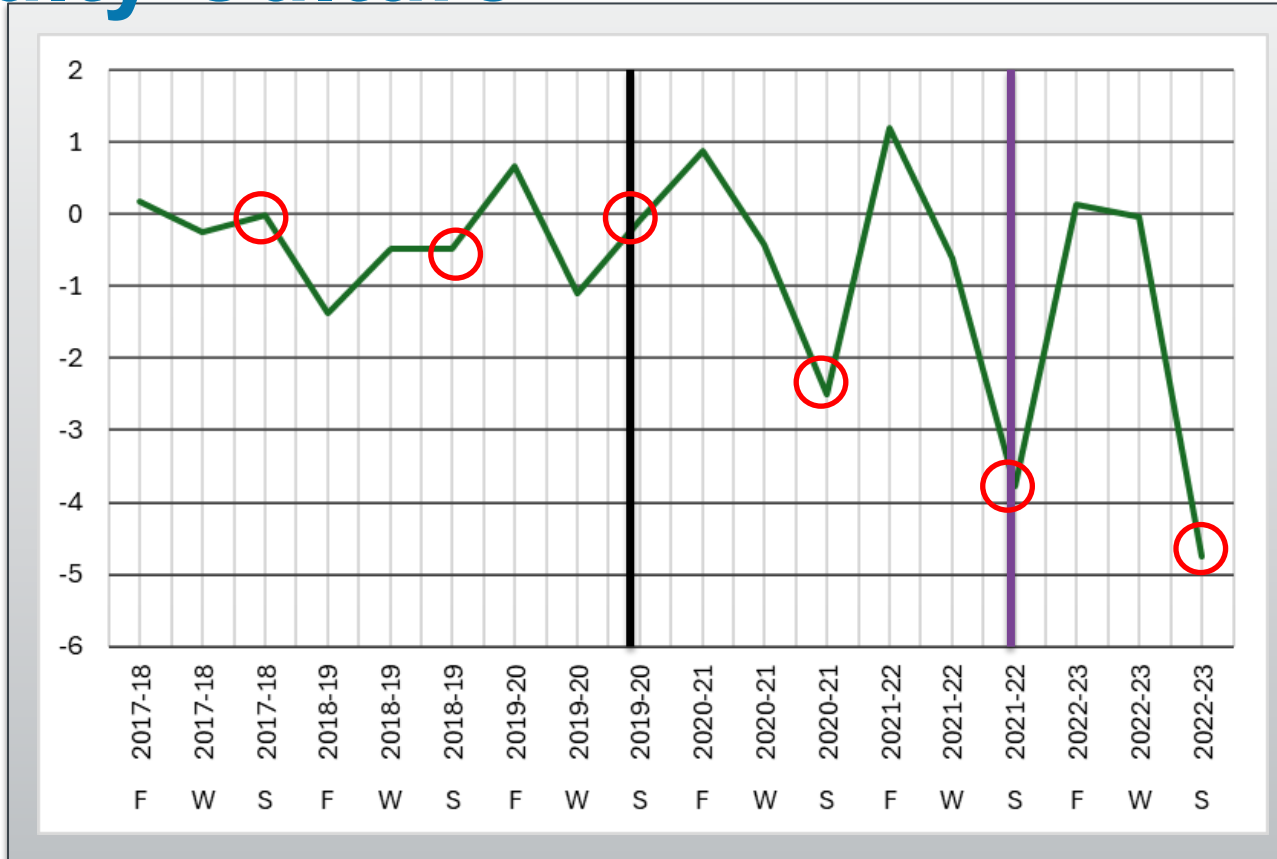
“I would be better prepared...if I would **veer from the curriculum just a bit and spend time building better relationships with my students.**”

<https://olj.onlinelearningconsortium.org/index.php/olj/article/view/2486/1017>

Faculty Culture - Falls



Faculty Culture



Enhancing Connectedness

2. The daily structure must provide opportunities for connection.

- Adopt a **student-centered schedule** that builds in 90-110 minutes for community-building.
- Create time for teachers to get to know children. **Prescribe time for building relationships.**
- Use pedagogical approaches, fitting that structure where students are **engaged** in the classroom.
- Assure advisory programs have sufficient **time and focus** on bonding
- Re-consider crowd-control **policies** that prevent students from spending time with their friends

The Magic of Vertical Time

Common Schedule

With Passing Time

Daily

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
8:00	HR	HR		HR	HR
8:10	50	A	G	Late Start	D
9:00					
9:05	50	B	A	F	E
9:55	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10:10	50	C	B	G	F
11:00					
11:05	50	D	C	A	G
11:55	Lunch / Recess	Lunch / Recess	Lunch / Recess	Lunch / Recess	Lunch / Recess
12:40					
12:45	50	E	D	B	A
1:35					
1:40	50	F	E	C	B
2:30	Sports / Co-Curricular	Sports / Co-Curricular	Sports / Co-Curricular	Sports / Co-Curricular	Sports / Co-Curricular
3:45					

Advanced Schedule

No Transitions

Daily

8:00	70
9:10	Break
9:25	70
10:35	Adv/Asb/ WIN
11:25	70
12:35	Lunch / Recess
1:20	70
2:30	Sports / Co-Curricular
3:45	

7 Day Cycle

Day 1 Day 2 Day 3 Day 4 Day 5 Day 6 Day 7

A	E	B	F	C	G	D
Break	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
B	F	C	G	D	A	E
Adv/Asb/ WIN	Adv/Asb/ WIN	Adv/Asb/ WIN	Adv/Asb/ WIN	Adv/Asb/ WIN	Adv/Asb/ WIN	Adv/Asb/ WIN
C	G	D	A	E	B	F
Lunch / Recess	Lunch / Recess	Lunch / Recess	Lunch / Recess	Lunch / Recess	Lunch / Recess	Lunch / Recess
D	A	E	B	F	C	G
Sports / Co-Curricular	Sports / Co-Curricular	Sports / Co-Curricular	Sports / Co-Curricular	Sports / Co-Curricular	Sports / Co-Curricular	Sports / Co-Curricular

Wed

Late Start
65
Break
65
65
Lunch / Recess
70
Sports / Co-Curricular

Enhancing Connectedness

3. Experiences done together build belonging

- Create **unique experiences** that enhance their perspective
- Engage in experiences that **challenge their current limits**



Joy – Experience of great happiness as the result of something that has meaning for the person.

“I don’t hate school, but its just...[meh, boring]”

“Middle school is where they suck all the fun out of school.”

“Why are we learning this?”

“I have no time for what I want to do.”

“All we do is take notes and tests.”

Positive Affect: Joy, Happiness, and Fun

Students perceive that adults define fun as taking breaks, being passive, or escaping from their work lives.



Student Definition of “Fun”

A thing might be fun if it is:

- active;
- intrinsically enjoyable (there is a love or passion to do it);
- Challenging;
- relational (done with friends or with caring adults); and
- mastery-oriented (you are good and/or can get better at it).



Enhancing Joy

1. Make the everyday enjoyable.

- Leverage emotional contagion. Teachers who and are **passionate**, invite students to share that positive energy.
- Assure **choice/agency**. Find ways for students to select assignments or generate content in ways of their choosing.
- Use effective active learning pedagogical approaches to increase agency. Limit passive learning experiences.
- Always post the **purpose** of the lesson.
- **Re-consider** what you require
- Get into the **habit** of orienting to the positive (e.g., What went well/3 Good Things/Patronus Charm)

Enhancing Joy

2. Make events student-led and special

- If you have assemblies, put **students in charge**
- If you have advisory, **let them lead**, especially in US.
- Every 6 weeks, every student should have a **rally point**—an event that students look forward to, enjoy doing, and talk about favorably afterwards. Be sure they are scheduled throughout the school year.

Enhancing Joy

3. Eliminate unnecessary experiences that increase negativity or cause undue stress.

- Do not publish **passing time**.
- Reduce the **frenetic pace of day**
- Look at the **24-hour day**. How much of the day are you willing to take?



Mastery – Sense of self-efficacy, inner competence and control of one's life gained through experiences. Collectively they provide belief that you are growing, can continue to do so, and that you have influence on your environment and future.

“Being at this school means giving up what you like to do.”

“The kids have no resiliency; they are always being rescued.”

“It's too easy”

“It's too stressful, I just pick what to focus on to survive”

Self-Efficacy and Sense of Achievement

The belief in one's ability to navigate challenging situations to achieve a desired performance level.

Sense of Achievement is the belief you have accomplished much in your life for which you are proud.

Combined they mean you have the belief you have achieved and can achieve more.

Success following
perseverance
breeds
confidence



Enhancing Mastery

1. Find ways and means to authentically pursue success that is meaningful to the student.
 - Provide wide **opportunities** for students to **choose** electives, clubs, co-curricular activities to find their purpose.
 - Similarly provide a **menu of opportunities** to demonstrate learning within a class. Balance required tasks and choice.
 - Assure each student is **challenged appropriately**.
 - Always post the **purpose** of the lesson.

Enhancing Mastery

2. Help students acknowledge, recognize, & celebrate their achievements

- Use assemblies, advisory, and class time to **acknowledge success**, ideally promoted by peers.
- Teach students to **reflect** on performance **in healthy ways**. That is be sure they **attribute success internally** and learn from areas in which they can improve
- Help faculty understand how encouragement requires **authenticity and a relationship** for it to be maximally effective.

Enhancing Mastery

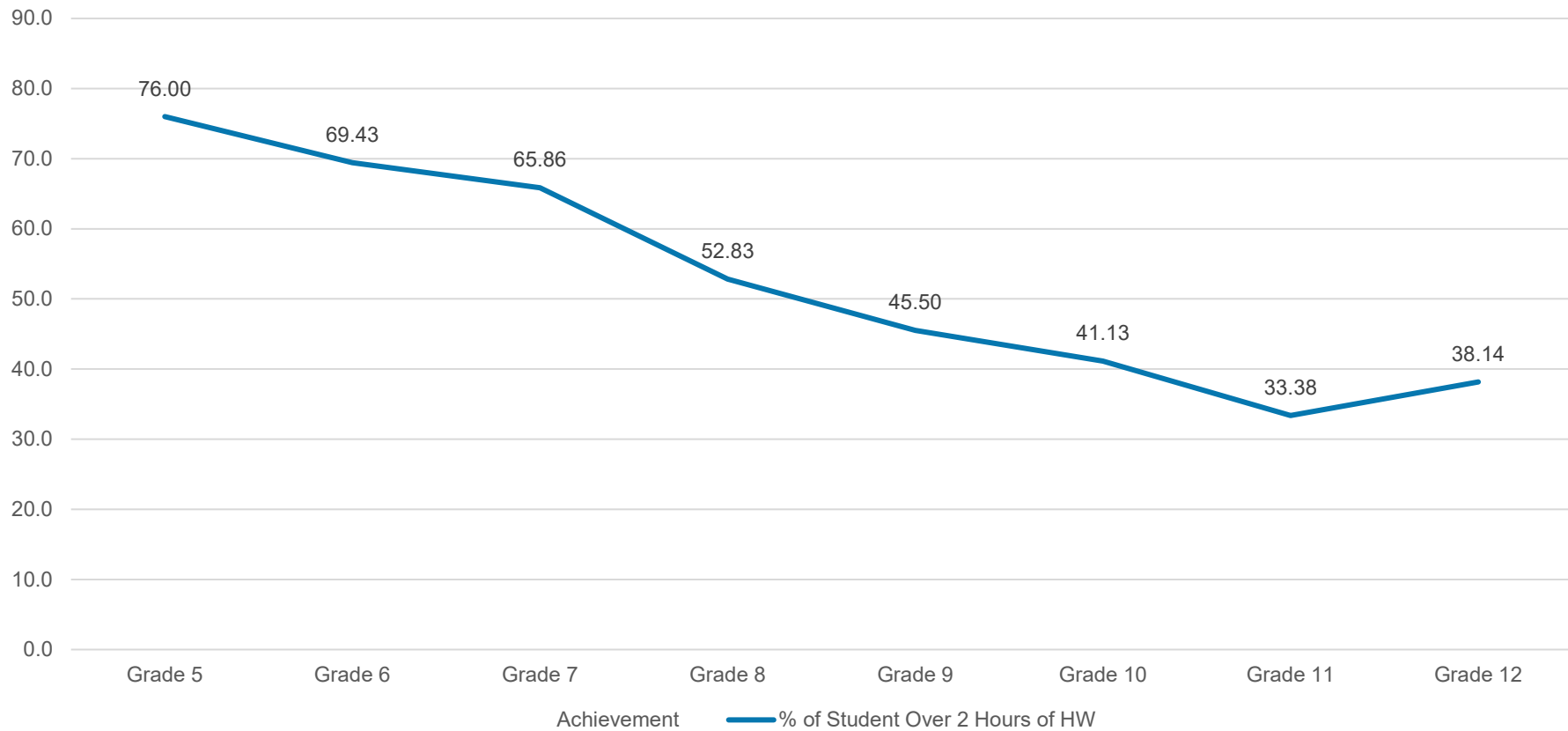
3. Help the community redefine achievement and reframe failure.

- Expand students' **definition of success**, emphasizing effort and process over straight outcomes.
- Teach the community about the **ills of neurotic perfectionism**
- Teach students to **interpret their emotional states** without a negative bias, to take **learning stance** towards failure, and **normalize struggle**.
- Adopt **mastery approaches** to learning and assessment with aim of shifting away from grade-based ends to standards achievement. *Make learning/achievement the constant and time the variable.*

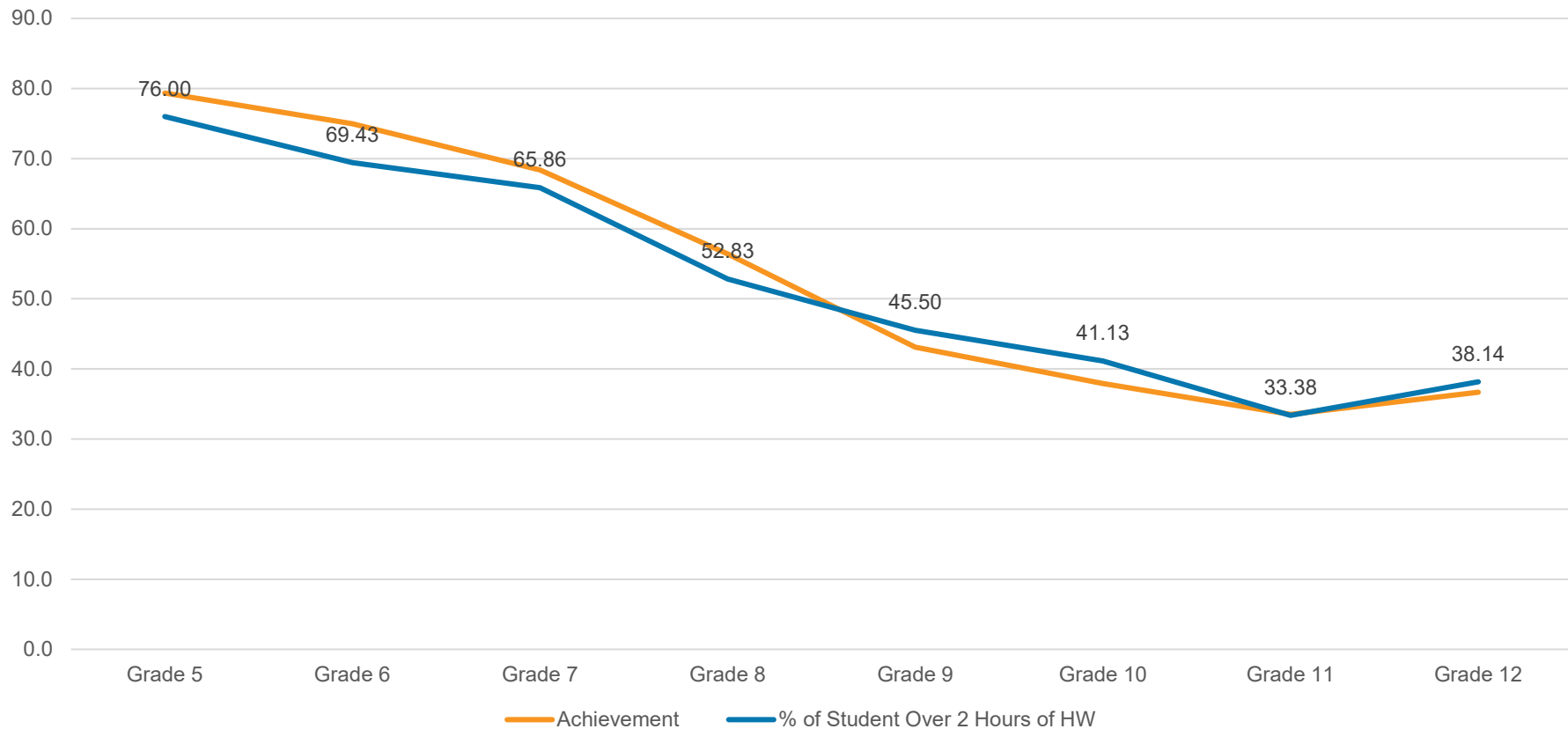
Enhancing Mastery

4. **Consider how your program and requirements may enhance or limit a sense of mastery**
 - **Reducing the number of classes** a student is taking at a time.
 - Study how might you **personalize learning**.
 - Consider the impact your requirements have on everything else on their plate and if that will lessen choice/agency.
 - Keep homework to **~90 minutes** at most.

% of < 2 Hours of Homework



Net Achievement and < 2 Hours of Homework



To Take this Further, Ask:

- What is my faculty's capacity to drive it?
- Do they see that as their priority?
- How can I enhance our structure to facilitate belonging?

Connectedness



- Do adults make it enjoyable & meaningful here?
- Do students have choices to make it more enjoyable/meaningful to them?
- Does the schedule include fun & reduce stress?

Joy



- Can students to pursue what matters to them?
- How do we define success, & do we celebrate that?
- Do we teach students to fail?
- How can we restructure our day?

Mastery



Thank you!

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