

## Hope, Academic Success, and the Gallup Student Poll

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Intelligence and aptitude are not the only determinants of a student's academic success (Dweck, 1999) and future success in the job market. Therefore, it is important to understand the many factors that keep students on track and in pursuit of their educational and vocational goals. Hope, the ideas and energy for the future, is one of the most potent predictors of success of our youth.

### Hope and Academic Success

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, in press) 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).

Hopeful students see the future as better than the present, and believe they have the power to make it so. These students are energetic and full of life. They are able to develop many strategies to reach goals and plan contingencies in the event that they are faced with problems along the way. As such, obstacles are viewed as challenges to overcome and are bypassed by garnering

support and/or implementing alternative pathways. Perceiving the likelihood of good outcomes, these students focus on success and, therefore, experience greater positive affect and less distress. Generally, high-hope people experience less anxiety and less stress specific to test-taking situations.

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**Hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust predictors of college success than high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores.**

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Stuck or discouraged students may lack the energy to get things done. These students may give up when encountering barriers to goals simply because they cannot think of other pathways around the obstacles or cannot get the support they need. This often results in frustration, a loss of confidence, and lower self-esteem (see Snyder, 1994). Students with low hope experience high anxiety, especially in test-taking situations. Stuck or discouraged students do not use feedback from failure experiences in an adaptive manner so as to improve performances in the future (Onwuegbuzie, 1998).

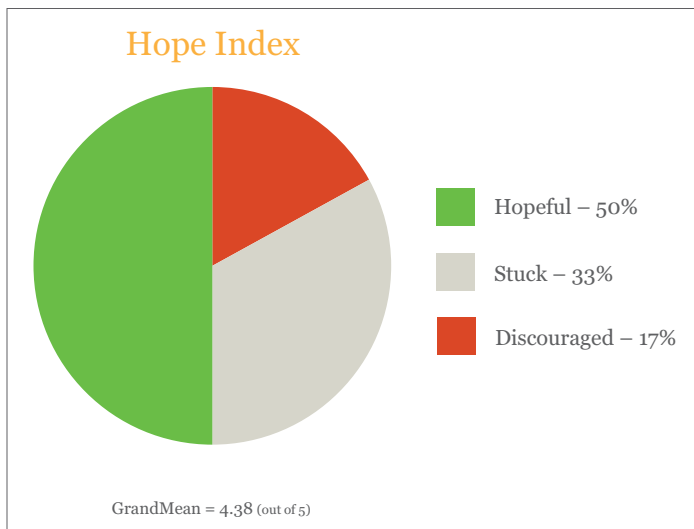
### Hope and Findings From the March 2009 Gallup Student Poll

The Gallup Student Poll surveyed 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. The following items, which constitute an internally consistent scale ( $\alpha=0.76$ ), were used to measure hope:

- 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.

Based on the Gallup Student Poll, half of American students are hopeful; these students possess numerous ideas and abundant energy for the future. The other half of students are stuck (33%) or discouraged (17%), lacking the ideas and energy they need to navigate problems and reach goals. Hope varies little across grade levels. Across participating schools, class size was negatively associated with hope (larger the class, lower the hope) and the percentage of students on free and reduced lunch was not associated with hope.



## Doubling Hope

Hope is malleable (Gallup, 2009c; Lopez, Rose, Robinson, Marques, & Pais Reibero, 2009) and 50% of American students need support from parents, school, and the community to build their energy and ideas for the future. Through a focused effort from people who care about the future of youth, we can double hope in America.

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