



Understanding Middle School Student Needs to Support School Success

Year 1: Spring 2019 - Sixth Graders
Project Description & Summary of Survey Data

Dr. Rachel Garthe
Dr. Jennea Bivens

Project Description

Collaboration between **Urbana Middle School** and **University of Illinois School of Social Work**

- Dr. Klingenberg (Bivens) & Dr. Garthe

Middle school is an important period for adolescents' social and emotional development, as well as their academic development and mental health

Understanding middle school student needs → **strengthen or add new programs, services, or supports for our students**

Spring 2019 Participation

Spring 2019:

- All sixth-grade students invited to participate in a survey (administered via electronic tablets)
- Parent/caregiver letters and consent forms were sent home to families prior to survey participation
 - Parents/caregivers could send back form if they did NOT want their child to participate
- 316 sixth graders completed the survey, representing 93.77% of sixth graders at Urbana Middle School



2019-2020 School Year

2019-2020 School Year:

- Surveys in the fall and spring for seventh graders
- Surveys in the fall and spring for the new cohort of sixth graders

- Sixth and seventh grade teachers and school staff will be asked to participate in a survey
- A parent/guardian of sixth and seventh grade students will be asked to participate in a survey this fall

Informational meetings, data discussions, and resource planning

Sixth Grade Students

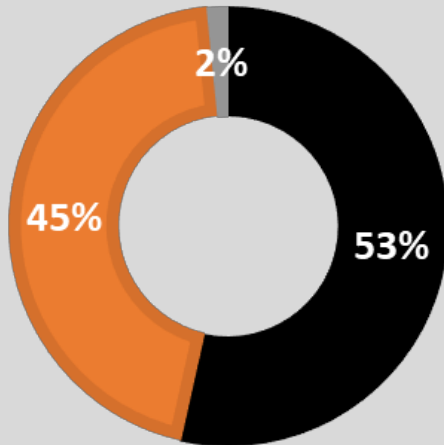
OVERVIEW OF SURVEY DATA

Demographics: who are our sixth graders?

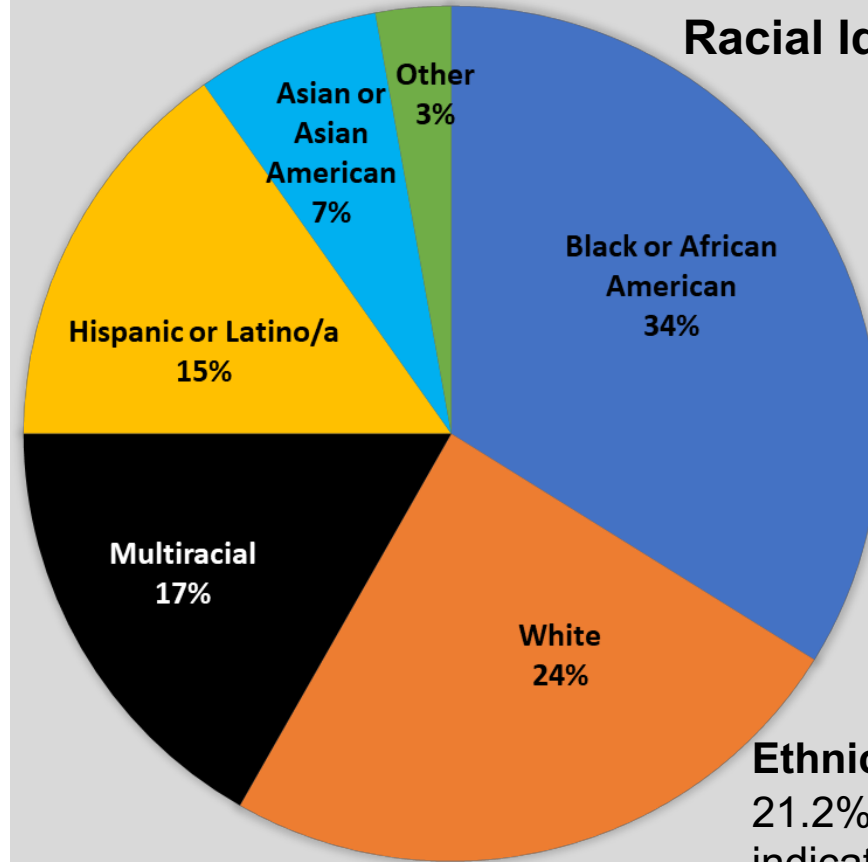
Age: Ranged in age from 11 to 13 (average age = 11.66)

Gender Identification

■ Female ■ Male ■ Transgender/Other



Racial Identification



Ethnicity

21.2% of students (N = 67) indicated a Spanish/Hispanic/Latino/a ethnic identity.

Demographics: who are our sixth graders?

Family Structure

- **49.4%** of students lived with their mother and father
- **40.2%** of students lived with their mother
- **12.9%** had a grandparent living in their household

Special Education

- 16% of students were in special education

Dual Language

- 16.1% of students were in the Dual Language Program (80.4% of these students were English Language Learners)



Attendance & GPA

Attendance

There were 9 periods a day for which attendance was taken. There was an average of 36.70 tardies across students (ranging from 0 to 248 periods tardy).

Students also had unexcused absences (on average 31.03 periods or about 3.45 days) and excused absences (on average 6.76 periods or .75 days).

Grade Point Average (GPA)

GPA is measured on a 5-point scale (5 is an A+ GPA).

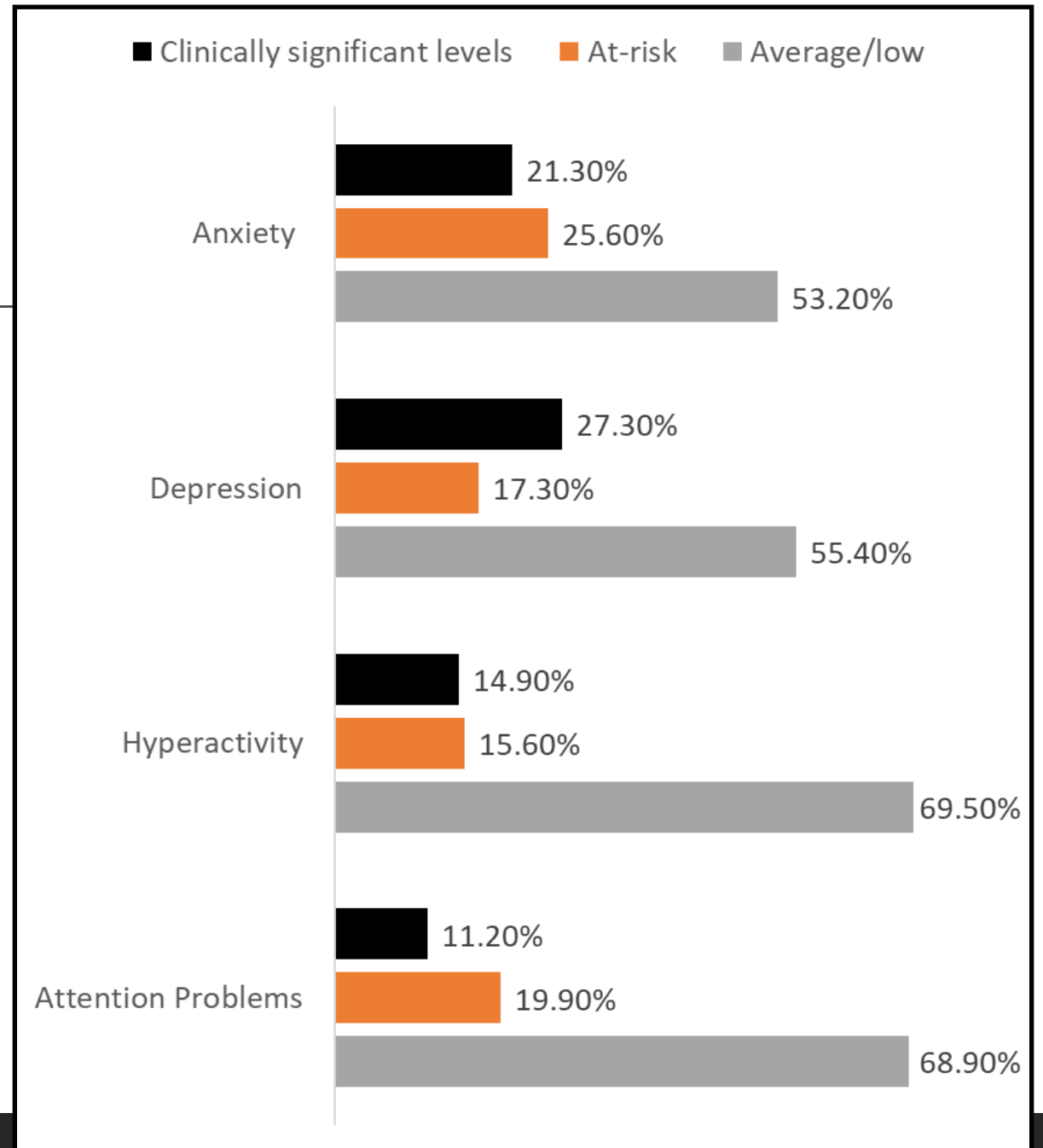
Students' GPA ranged from 1.89 to 5.00

Average GPA = 4.08 (SD = 0.77)

Mental Health

Clinically significant levels of **anxiety** among 21.3% of students

Clinically significant levels of **depression** among 27.3% of students



Violence & Victimization

In the past year...

47.6% indicated that another student at school has bullied them by calling them names

38% have been threatened to be hurt by another student at school

29.8% have had another student bully them by hitting, punching, kicking, or pushing them

5.1% have had a boyfriend/girlfriend physically hurt them on purpose

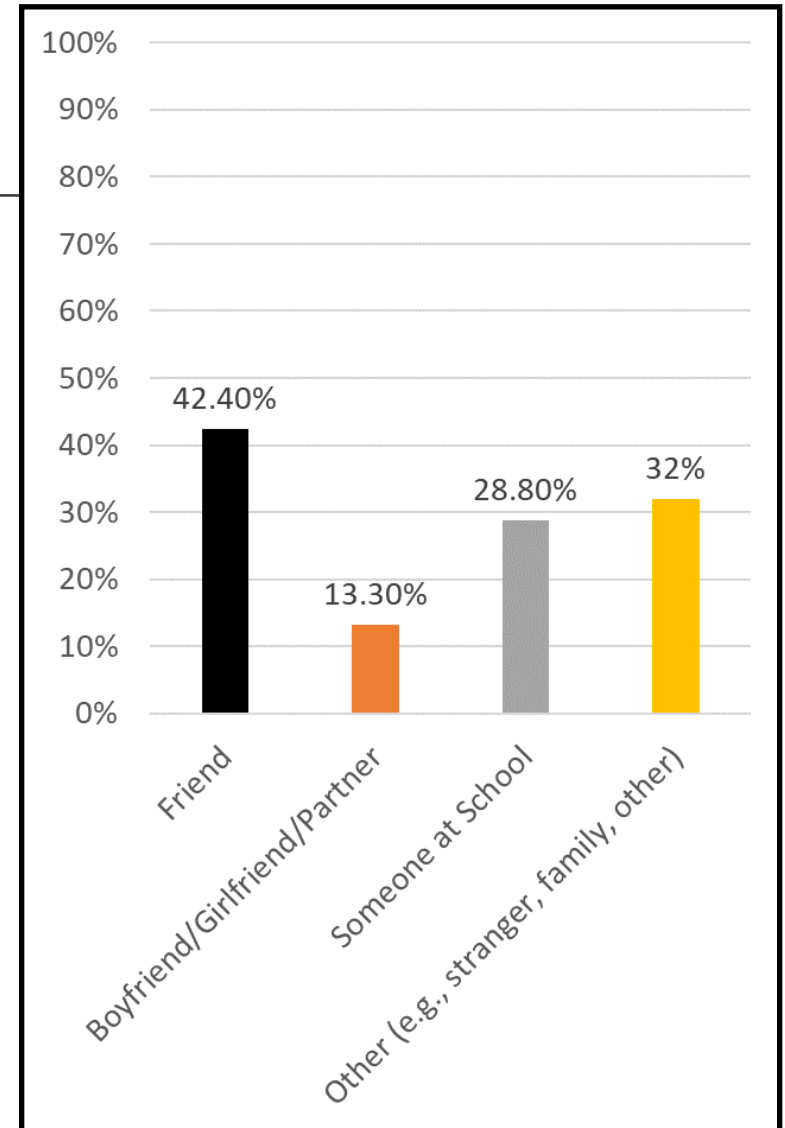
9.6% have had a boyfriend/girlfriend put them down or tried to control them

34.8% have been in a physical fight

Electronic Victimization

60.8% of students had experienced a form of victimization electronically (e.g., text messages, social media, online messages, chats, etc.)

Students experienced victimization from friends, boyfriend/girlfriend/dating partners, someone at school, and other:

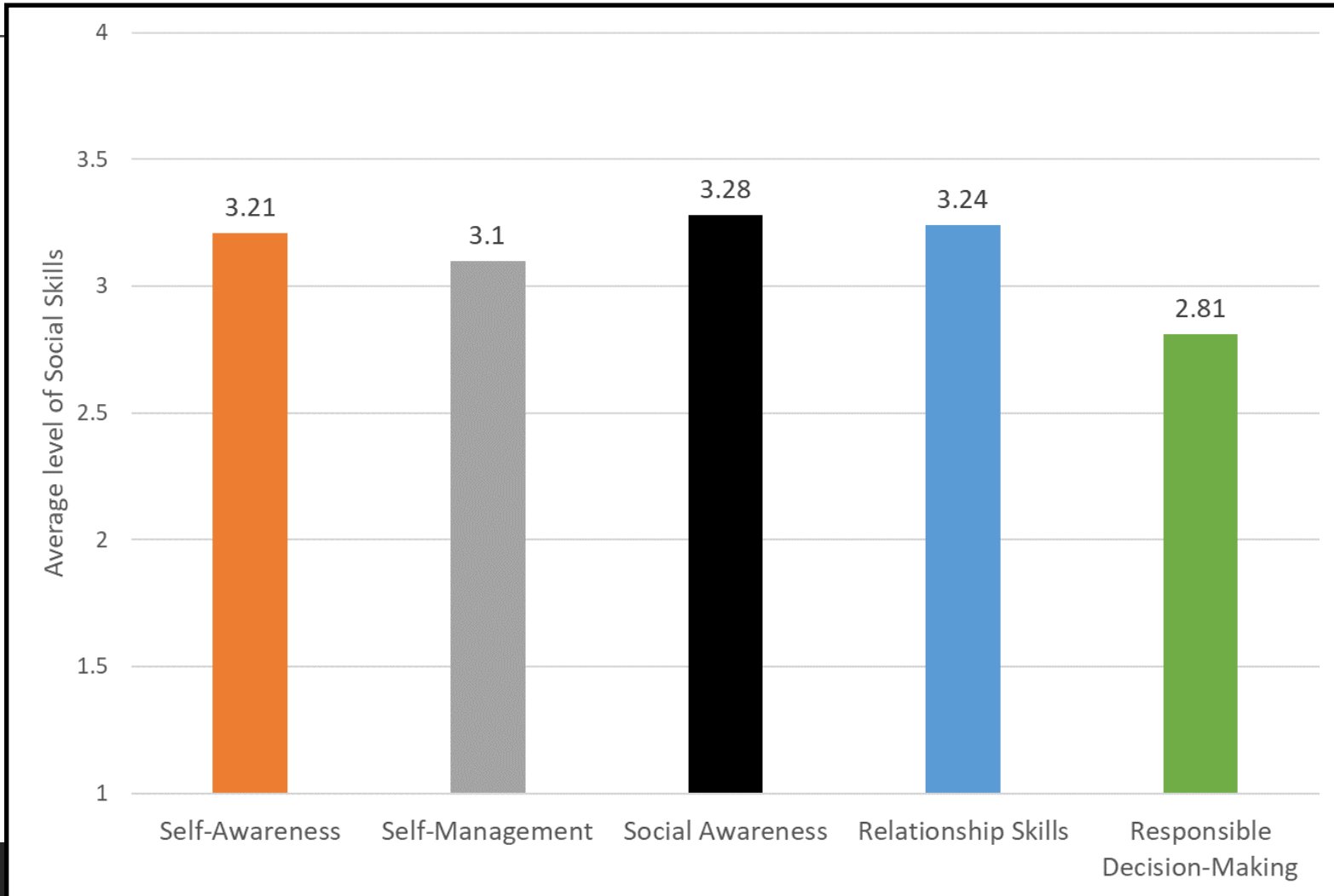


Social Skills & Self-Esteem

Average to high levels of social skills across five domains:

62.4% of students indicated average to high levels of self-esteem

37.6% had low levels of self-esteem



Relationships with Caregivers

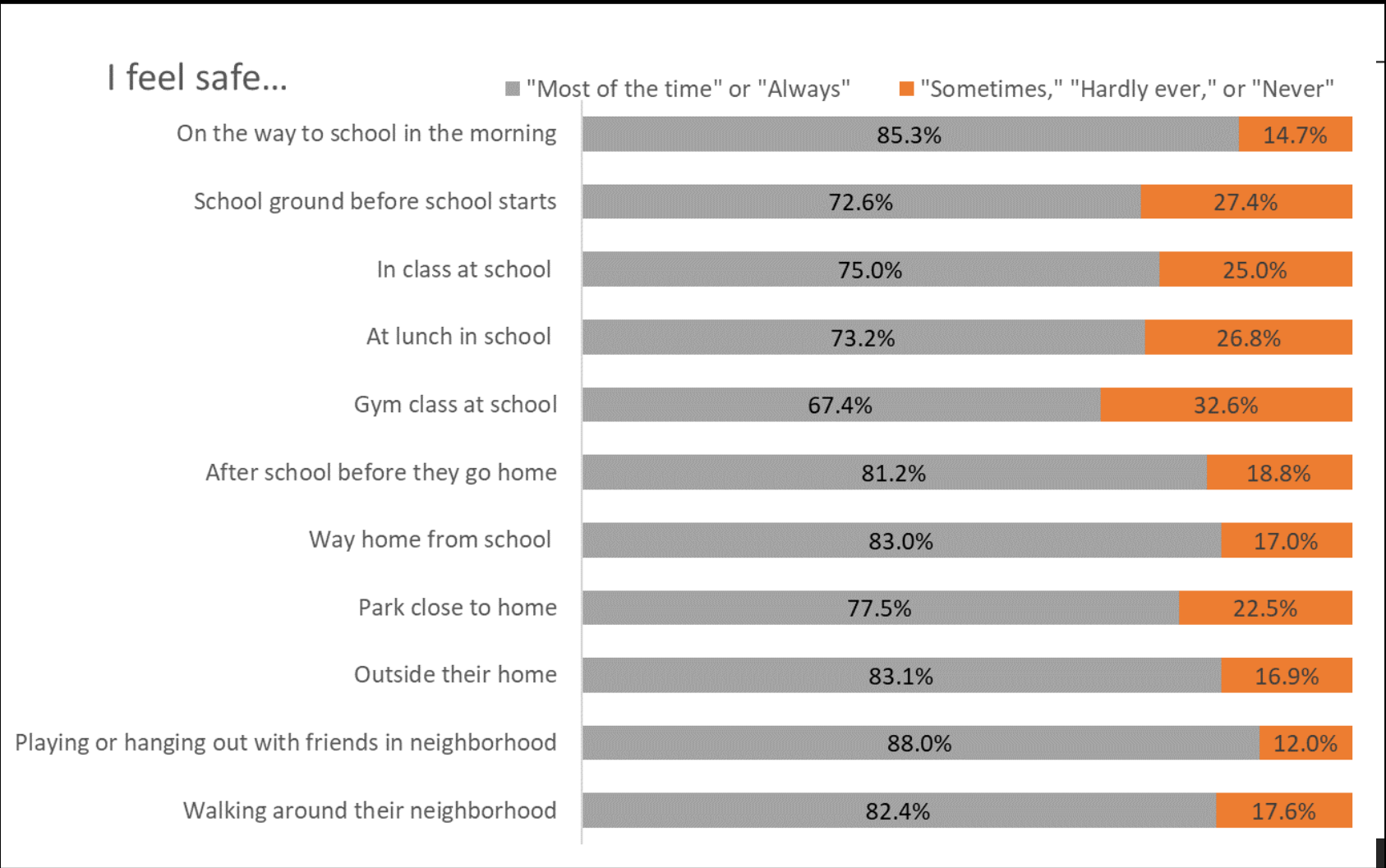
On average, students felt that their caregivers had high levels of monitoring behaviors

- Example items:
 - “the rules in my family are clear”
 - “when I am not home, one of my parents or caregivers knows where I am and who I am with”

Scores could range from 1 (low monitoring) to 5 (high monitoring)

Average score: 4.36

Safety



Discrimination

54.7% of students indicated that they experienced at least one form of discrimination

- 21.6% Watched closely or followed around by security guards or store clerks at a store or mall...
- 14.3% Gotten poor or slow service at a restaurant or food store...
- 7% Gotten poor or slow service at a store...
- 23.2% Accused of something you didn't do at school...
- 17.5% Treated badly or unfairly by a teacher...
- 21.1% Feeling that someone was afraid of you...
- 25.3% Someone made a bad or insulting remark about your race, ethnicity, or language...
- 27.8% Called you an insulting name...
- 25.3% Someone was rude to you...
- 21.3% Have seen your parents or family members treated unfairly...

...because of the color of their skin, language or accent, or because of their culture or country of origin.

Relationships with Teachers and Staff

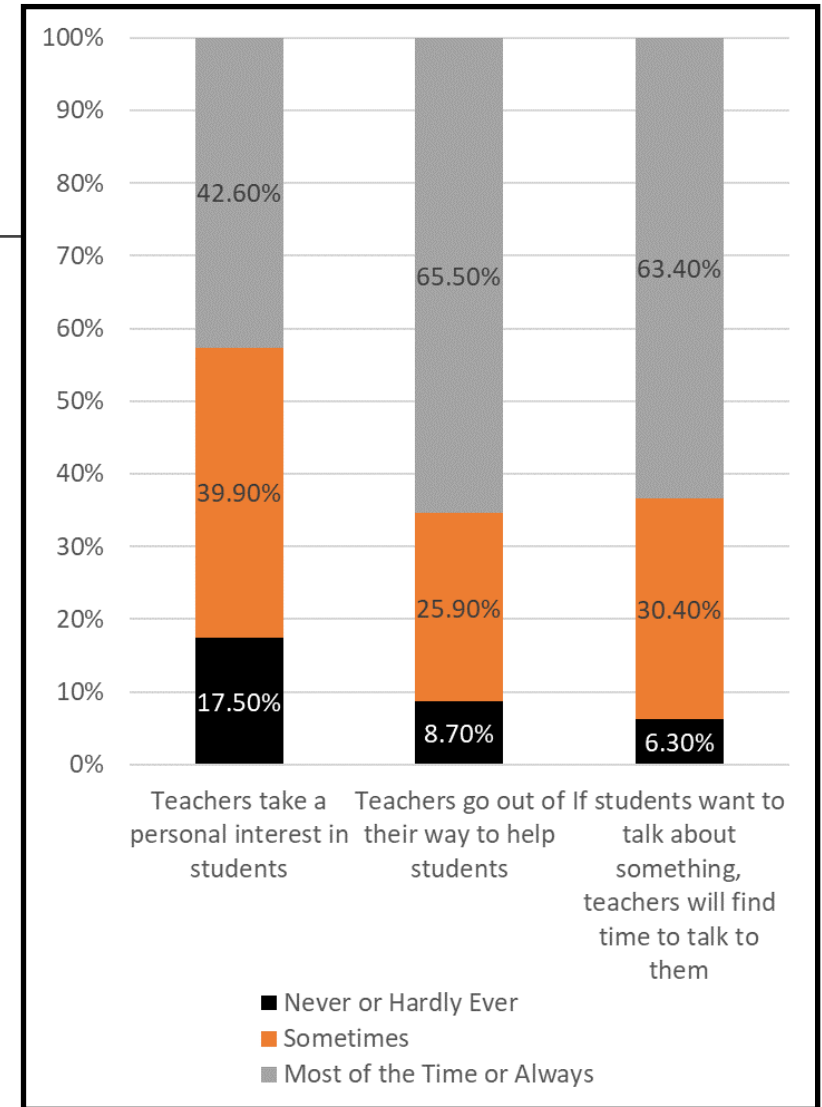
Students felt that teachers and school staff would help *most of the time or always* if:

A student is making fun of and teasing another student **(71.7%)**

A student is spreading rumors or lies about another student **(60.2%)**

A student is using texts or social media to tell lies or make fun of another student **(52.9%)**

Student(s) are pushing, shoving, or trying to pick a fight with another student **(78.6%)**



Preliminary Analyses

Relationships between mental health symptoms and GPA:

More symptoms of depression, hyperactivity, and attention problems were associated with a **significantly lower GPA among students.**

Mental Health & GPA	β
Anxiety	-
Depression	-.22**
Hyperactivity	-.28**
Attention Problems	-.33**

Note. ** $p < .001$. Blank cell indicates a non-significant relationship.

Preliminary Analyses

Relationships between victimization experiences, discrimination, and GPA:

Most victimization experiences and discrimination were associated with a **significantly lower GPA among students.**

Victimization & GPA	β
Been in a physical fight	-.36**
Physical/Psych. Dating Violence	-.22**
Electronic victimization	-.22**
Threats to be hurt	-.13*
Physical Bullying	-
Verbal Bullying	-
Discrimination	-.12*

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$. Blank cell indicates a non-significant relationship.

Preliminary Analyses

Generally, a **more positive school climate** was associated with **fewer mental health symptoms**:

Additionally, if students were victimized, but perceived their teachers to be supportive and responsive, they were less likely to experience anxiety and depression.

	Anxiety	Depression	Hyper-activity	Attention Problems
<u>School Climate Factor</u>	β	β	β	β
Teacher Support	-.20**	-.32**	-	-
Consistency and Clarity of Rules and Expectations	-.16*	-.23**	-.13*	-.20**
Student Commitment/Achievement orientation	-.17*	-.16*	-	-
Positive Peer Interactions	-.19*	-.27**	-.12*	-.18**
Support for Cultural Pluralism	-	-	-	-

*Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$.
Blank cell indicates a non-significant relationship.*

Take-aways

- Many of our sixth graders are experiencing at-risk or clinical levels of mental health symptoms
- Many sixth graders are experiencing victimization (in-person and online) and discrimination
- Discrimination, victimization, and mental health symptoms are related to students' GPA

- Generally perceive teachers and school staff to be supportive and responsive
- These positive relationships are related to fewer mental health symptoms
- Teachers and staff can be particularly helpful for students who experience victimization