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INSIGHTS + EVIDENCE

The State of Relationships:
Young People's Relationships
with Adults in Minnesota Schools
and Out-of-School Time Programs

A SEARCH INSTITUTE REPORT BY

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INTRODUCTION

While all Minnesota youth need positive relationships with adults to grow and thrive, little is known about how Minnesota schools and out-of-school time (OST) programs invest in these important relationships. Search Institute, therefore, is conducting a multi-phased, mixed methods study on the state of relationships in the lives of Minnesota youth called **Cultivating Connections**. As a first step in this important work, Search Institute conducted the following review of what is already known about young people's relationships with adults across Minnesota. This includes information about Minnesota schools' and OST programs' investments in young people's relationships and a summary of existing Minnesota-specific relationships-focused data. Key findings from these data include:

- Most Minnesota youth reported having positive relationships with parenting adults.
- About half of Minnesota youth reported having positive relationships with teachers and other adults in their community.
- Experiences of relationships varied by youth demographics and context.
- Young people's perceptions of relationships differed from teachers' and/or program staff perceptions.

Findings from this report will be used to help identify gaps where more information is needed and where there are opportunities to learn more through the *Cultivating Connections* study.

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Roughly one in four Minnesotans is a young person under the age 18; that's 1.3 million young people who represent the future of Minnesota (Minnesota State Demographic Center, 2018). Investing in Minnesota youth is essential to Minnesota's well-being. Young people play important roles in addressing state issues, are active contributors to Minnesota's communities and economy, and are ultimately the state's future changemakers. Money invested in Minnesota young people yields an overwhelming return. As an example, a study found that every dollar spent on quality youth programs yields a $4.89 return (Wilder Research, 2014).

One of the most effective ways to invest in Minnesota's youth is by ensuring that all young people have adults they can turn to when they need support and resources. A century of scientific evidence intrinsically links positive relationships to well-being and thriving among young people (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). Research shows that youth who have stable and high-quality youth-adult relationships are more likely to stay in school (Center for Promise, 2015; Sinclair et al., 2005), experience academic gains (Scales et al., 2019; Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001), exhibit fewer behavior problems (Keating et al., 2002; Somers et al., 2008), and be resilient in the face of persistent challenges (Konopka, 1973; Werner & Smith, 2001).

Relationships are the "oxygen of human development" (Benson, 2008, p. 46). Their importance is unquestioned; yet, little is known about the strategic investment that schools and out-of-school time (OST) programs place in promising relationship-building efforts and practices. Over the last five years at Search Institute, we have been conducting applied research with school and OST program leaders that suggests that while schools and OST programs value relationships, this is often not matched with the same level of investment. For example, schools and OST programs often experience an array of barriers to building relationship-rich organizations, including lack of investment in the resources and professional development that are needed to promote positive youth-adult relationships (Pekel et al., 2017). In addition, little is known about what (if any) systematic data is collected on youths' experiences of relationships in these spaces. This type of data is essential for understanding young people's experiences of relationships in these settings and to drive continuous relationship-building efforts and improvements at the school and organizational level.

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Wilder Research, 2014

Thus, to better understand Minnesota's investment in relationships, we are conducting a multi-phased, mixed methods study on the state of relationships in the lives of Minnesota youth called *Cultivating Connections*. With support from the Carlson Family Foundation, this is the first systematic study in the nation that seeks to understand the degree to which schools and OST programs across an entire state are focused on, and invest in, youth-adult relationships.

As a starting point in this important work, we conducted the following review of what is already known about young people's relationships with adults across Minnesota. This includes information about Minnesota schools' and OST programs' investments in young people's relationships as well as a summary of existing Minnesota-specific relationships-focused data. We collected this information by combing through numerous school and OST program websites and by putting out a call to over 70 school and OST leaders, researchers, and foundations to share what (if any) data they are currently collecting on youth-adult relationships.

While the following report provides a portrait of what we currently know about youth-adult relationships in Minnesota, it is not exhaustive of all relationships across Minnesota schools and OST programs. Rather, this review serves as an important starting point to the *Cultivating Connections* study. This report helps to identify gaps where more information is needed and where there are opportunities for further exploration to gain new insights that can positively impact young people's relationships.

ROOTS FOR SUCCESS:
YOUTH-ADULT RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

All young people need positive relationships in order to thrive and reach their full potential. Parenting adults[1] are essential in the social and emotional health of their children. However, young people also need additional adults within their schools and communities that can have a positive influence on their development. These nonfamilial adults may include teachers, neighbors, religious leaders, coaches, and youth development workers at afterschool and out-of-school time (OST) programs. These adults are often considered natural or informal mentors and have been shown to play an important role in young people's lives (Chang et al., 2010; DuBois et al., 2011).

Research shows that positive youth-adult relationships promote a myriad of positive youth developmental outcomes including social-emotional competence, healthy behaviors, and academic success (McCormick et al., 2013, Sieving et al., 2017; Spilt et al., 2012). Positive relationships with adults may also serve as the impetus for changing the direction of a young person's life even when they face significant challenges or barriers. In fact, a positive relationship with an adult has been found to be one of the most common protective factors that leads to resilience among youth (Legault et al., 2006; Luthar et al., 2014; Rutter, 1987; Syvertsen et al., 2020).

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1 "Parenting adults" refers to any adults who serve as primary caregivers for youth, including biological parents, foster parents, parenting grandparents, or others.

Although the benefits of high-quality relationships are well supported, a nationally representative study found that one in three young people report not having a formal or informal mentor outside of their family while growing up (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). While adults in youths' communities provide social support and play an important role in their development, not all young people, particularly young people from marginalized communities have equitable access to resources and non-familial relationships that can facilitate social capital and mobility (Erickson et al., 2009; Putnam, 2015). For example, research shows that as early as kindergarten, children perceived by their teachers as disadvantaged were 32% less likely to report positive relationships with their teachers several years later when they were in fourth grade (Fitzpatrick et al., 2013). This relational gap is due to interpersonal, institutional, and systemic forms of discrimination in policies and practices that have led to inequities in the distribution of power and resources across lines of race and socioeconomic status (Baciu et al., 2017). Schools with a higher percentage of students from low-income households, for example, are more likely to have high student-to-teacher ratios, be underfunded, and have fewer curriculum resources (Borman & Dowling, 2010; Garcia-Moya et al., 2018). Due to a multitude of challenges in underfunded schools, it is likely that some teachers and school staff have fewer opportunities and/or capacity to develop close relationships with students compared to staff in more affluent schools (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Minnesota is no exception to these inequities. While by many quality of life metrics, Minnesota is considered one of the best places to live in the United States (Pioneer Press, 2019; U.S. News & World Report, 2019), research also shows that Minnesota is one of the worst states in the nation when it comes to racial disparities in educational attainment, employment, homeownership, and poverty (Furst and Webster, 2019; Helmstetter, 2016; Myers & Ha, 2018). These disparities extend to Minnesota's youth of color. Minnesota's high school graduation rates among youth of color rank near the bottom relative to other states and young people of color are less likely to enroll in four-year colleges than their White peers (Minnesota Compass, 2017; Report of the Minnesota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2013). The roots of these racial and economic disparities can be traced back to an ongoing and complex history of school and neighborhood segregation, redlining and racial covenant practices, and other discriminatory policies in the state of Minnesota (Myers & Ha, 2018).

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young people report not having a formal or informal mentor outside of their family while growing up

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These inequities provide an important context when examining youth-adult relationships in Minnesota. For example, it will be critical to identify the barriers and inequities that young people of color and/or youth from lower socioeconomic communities experience when considering how schools and OST programs invest in enhancing positive relationships. To ensure that Minnesota's youth are able to reach their full potential, it is imperative that *all* young people are able to access and experience these high-quality relationships in their families, schools, and communities.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, now is an especially important time to understand ways that adults can foster positive relationships with Minnesota youth. Data from the Centers for Disease Control, for example, show that mental-health related hospital emergency department visits rose 24% for children (ages 5-11) and 31% for adolescents (ages 12-17) from March through October (Sparks, 2020). The pandemic has created a new set of stressors for young people, especially as they transition back into a school environment. Minnesota youth may be experiencing the loss of loved ones, parental unemployment, and increased food and housing insecurity. Additionally, many young people are feeling the effects of social isolation while trying to navigate making meaningful connections in virtual spaces and following necessary social distancing measures. Positive relationships are an incredible resource for young people during this difficult time, yet they have never been more challenging to build. Thus, in addition to understanding the current state of youth-adult relationships and how they are currently measured, we also seek to identify through *Cultivating Connections* promising practices to overcome these relationship-building barriers so that all young people can reap the benefits of positive relationships during a time in which they desperately need it.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS VS. *DEVELOPMENTAL* RELATIONSHIPS: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

This report includes data on both relationships broadly defined as positive relationships and data on what we at Search Institute call *developmental relationships.*

Relationships are written and talked about in a lot of different ways. Words like *strong, positive, caring, and supportive* are often used to describe the kinds of youth-adult relationships that provide the space and opportunities youth need to learn and grow. When it comes to measuring youths' relationship experiences, the approach varies widely. Some measures focus on specific aspects of the relationship (e.g., communication, attachment, affect), while others measure more generalized feelings of trust and bonding. These measures, while typically not comprehensive, provide important insights into how young people experience their relationships.

We created the Developmental Relationships Framework to capture a multidimensional understanding of relationships that has been validated by empirical research and authenticated by the practical ways it has been used by adults working with youth. We define a developmental relationship as a close connection through which young people discover who they are, gain abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to interact with and contribute to the world around them. This builds on previous youth-adult relationship research (Li & Julian, 2012; Pianta et al., 2012; Wubbels et al., 2016) by sharpening and naming what happens in day-to-day relational interactions that helps young people thrive, while also providing a comprehensive measurement of the experience. The Developmental Relationships Framework goes beyond just caring and the provision of emotional support by combining five interconnected elements: express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities. Our growing body of research has found that when a diverse range of young people experience developmental relationships with adults and peers, they report a wide range of positive outcomes (Pekel et al., 2018; Scales et al., 2019). For the full Developmental Relationships Framework, see Appendix A.

In this report, the term *positive relationships* is used to describe young people's experiences of strong connections that support their healthy development, but which were not measured using our measures of developmental relationships. Where applicable, we indicate which data draw from these more general indicators of young people's relational experiences and which data are based on the Developmental Relationships Framework.

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WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT MINNESOTA'S INVESTMENT IN YOUTH-ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

Minnesota youth spend a large portion of their time in schools and out-of-school time (OST) programs. Both of these environments are well-positioned to provide youth access to positive relationships with adults. This section summarizes what we know about how these organizations invest in relationship-building with young people.

Minnesota Schools

In 2019, Minnesota schools served roughly 900,000 students across 327 school districts. This encompasses over 2,000 public schools and 400 non-public schools (i.e., charter, private, alternative, and tribal schools; Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). Students spend roughly half of their waking hours in school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008), making it one of the most important developmental contexts in their lives. The positive relationships young people build with teachers and other school support staff have consistently been shown to impact their engagement in learning activities, academic motivation, and achievement (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Roorda et al., 2017). Studies have also shown that student-teacher relationships that are characterized by high levels of closeness and low levels of conflict impact important aspects of young people's social-emotional development, including emotional well-being (Oberle et al., 2014) and fewer behavioral problems (Graziano et al., 2007; O'Connor et al., 2011).

One way Minnesota schools and educational organizations show that they value positive youth-adult relationships is through the time and financial investments they spend in bolstering school climate, social-emotional learning (SEL), and restorative practices. All of these practices are known to promote relationship-building.

School Climate

School climate has been defined as the quality and character of school life (National School Climate Council, 2020). This refers to the holistic patterns and experiences of the social, emotional, academic, and physical dimensions of school environments that students, parenting adults, and school staff members encounter throughout the school day. A positive school climate is one that fosters positive youth development and learning. There is an extensive body of research that shows a positive school climate has a profound effect on a range of positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Payton et al., 2008; Thapa et al., 2013; Way et al., 2007).

Minnesota schools have made school climate reform an important component of school improvement. The Minnesota Department of Education, for example, provides schools and districts with resources on _best practices_ for improving school climates. This includes a myriad of tools and practices such as ways to promote parental involvement, the creation of classroom norms and guidelines, ongoing discipline policy review, the creation of student-centered alliances, the development of morning meetings with students, and many more. Data inquiry is also an important component of a school climate improvement model. The Minnesota Department of Education and the National School Climate Center recommend the use of the _13 Dimensions of School Climate_ assessment. This assessment includes thirteen dimensions believed to be critical to a positive school climate, including indicators of positive youth-adult relationships such as mutual respect and social support.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

SEL is defined as the process through which young people build awareness and skills that support success in school, employment, and overall life. A deep well of compelling research links SEL competencies—like self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making—to positive social behavior, greater academic performance, fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress,

SCHOOL CLIMATE:
The quality and character of school life.

and less drug use (see Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). The Minnesota Department of Education provides an implementation guide for best practices on integrating SEL into school environments and building teacher and school support staff competence in SEL practices (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020). The SEL implementation guide recommends incorporating CASEL's *Theory of Action Framework* for comprehensive districtwide SEL implementation. This includes building foundational support and a plan for integrating SEL into the school environment, strengthening teacher and school staff SEL competencies and capacity, promoting and adopting evidence-based SEL programs and practices, and establishing processes to reflect on SEL data for continuous improvement. The Minnesota Department of Education also provides a comprehensive list of resources for schools, school districts, and parenting adults on implementing and assessing SEL competencies (see SEL Resource List here).

Restorative Practices

Restorative practices are both formal and informal practices drawn from the traditions of Indigenous people and communities of color (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020). These practices are used with the goal of creating a community that honors the importance of relationships among its members and repairs relationships when they have been harmed (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020). Restorative practices have also been used to reform school discipline by minimizing punitive disciplinary measures and improving relationships (Vaandering, 2010). Common restorative practices include exploring implicit bias and historical trauma, building a community among school staff, practicing empathetic communication, and facilitating restorative conversation circles. Whole-school implementation of restorative practices has been linked to greater levels of trust, empathy, and respect among students and teachers (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012) as well as reductions in behavioral referrals and suspensions (Passarella, 2017). The Minnesota Department of Education supports the use of restorative practices and provides an implementation guide and resources to schools and school districts with strategies for incorporating restorative practices into their school environments.

The value placed in building relationship-rich Minnesota schools also shows up in the mission, work, and guiding frameworks of many of Minnesota's 70+ educational associations and organizations, including— among others—Generation Next, Reimagine MN, and the BARR Center.

Several of these organizations are responsible for Minnesota initiatives that are centering relationships in schools. For example, the BARR Model is a school-improvement intervention originating out of St. Louis Park High School. The BARR Model uses eight interlocking strategies for building intentional relationships within a school environment. Several evaluations and research studies have shown that the BARR Model has positive effects on student-teacher relationships including increased student attendance, increased math and English language arts achievement test scores, and decreased behavior issues.

LOVE IS LISTENING, and an education system organized around love is one in which students' relationships to teachers, to each other, and to the institution are carefully and constantly cultivated, tended, and mended.

See the report: Expanding the Vision of Reimagine Minnesota

These organizations also collaborate to advance education policies and practices that are essential for enhancing positive student-teacher relationships. Superintendents with the Association of Metropolitan School Districts, for example, collaborated with the University of Minnesota, The Minneapolis Foundation, the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation, and Greater Twin Cities United Way to develop a collective action plan to ensure all Minnesota students receive an equitable and excellent education. This work led to the recent report, *Expanding the Vision of Reimagine Minnesota: A Collective Education Roadmap for Action*. This report highlights the need to prioritize evidence-based solutions and practices (e.g., eliminate adult behaviors that lead to disproportionality, elevate student voice, recruit more teachers of color) that address Minnesota's unacceptable gap in education opportunity, access, and achievement. An underlying theme across all of these solutions is the importance of relationships. The report calls attention to the need to better understand the structural forces that create barriers to building positive student-teacher relationships and offers practical solutions that teachers and school staff can implement to further support equitable relationship-building.

Finally, these organizations often serve as the voice of educators, parenting adults, and students. Many are composed of advocates, superintendents, educators, administrators, parents, and other school support staff (e.g., school psychologists, nutrition staff, nurses) who play a critical role in shaping educational policy, rallying support for learners and educators, and working to address the barriers and disparities that exist in Minnesota's education landscape. These organizations play an important part in starting a larger discussion around and driving a greater investment in relationships within schools so that all young people are surrounded by the relationships they need to thrive.

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BRIGHT SPOTS: EXAMPLES OF HOW MINNESOTA SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS MEASURE YOUTH-ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

In 2019, about 80% of public school districts administered the Minnesota Student Survey. Many schools, school districts, and educational organizations supplement Minnesota Student Survey data with additional metrics that assess the quality of relationships that are formed between students and other adults in their school through self-selected (and, in some cases, self-designed) surveys. The following are a few examples of the kinds of additional relationship-focused data being collected in Minnesota schools.

Minneapolis Public Schools

Minneapolis Public Schools administers a yearly School Climate Survey to all students in grades 4, 6, 8, and 10 that includes three items about teacher-student relationships. In their most recent survey (2018-2019), they found:

- 63% of students reported their teachers are interested in getting to know students.
- 79% of students reported their teachers care about their students.
- 71% of students reported their teachers listen to students.

Itasca Area Schools Collaborative

This joint collaboration of six school districts, in partnership with SPARK (the local community collaborative) and Search Institute, administers a Youth Voice Survey for students in grades 6-12. Findings from the 2018 survey revealed that 28% of students reported having no strong relationships with parenting adults, teachers, friends, or another adult. Further, the data showed that when students did have stronger relationships with their teachers and school staff, they were 2.5 times more likely to work hard to learn in school, and two times more likely to see a future for themselves.

Osseo Public Schools

Osseo Public Schools administers Stakeholder Surveys to students (grades 3-12), parents/guardians, and staff with the goal of measuring progress towards their mission to "inspire and prepare all students with the confidence, courage, and competence to achieve their dreams; contribute to community; and engage in a lifetime of learning." These surveys include several relationship-focused items. Here are examples of what they found in their most recent (2018) student survey:

- 81% of students reported that adults treat them with respect.
- 79% of students reported that adults at their school trust them.
- 69% of students reported that adults at their school act on their concerns when possible.
- 60% of students reported that someone who works at their school has helped them set goals so that they can get closer to achieving their dreams.

Eden Prairie High School

Eden Prairie High School partnered with their students to co-develop and analyze their own annual survey. The survey includes several items that capture students' perceptions of school belonging, academic engagement, and whether they feel they can achieve success. The survey captures these constructs by asking students three interconnected questions of "Do I belong here, is this meaningful, and can I do this?" Here are the examples of what they found in their most recent (2019) student survey:

- 89% of students reported that they feel they belong.
- 88% of students reported that school is meaningful.
- 97% of students reported that they feel confident that they can do this.

Minnesota Out-of-School Time (OST) Organizations

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For every Minnesota student in an afterschool program

1 MORE

would participate if there was a program available to them

Minnesota OST programs are also essential to promoting positive relationships among Minnesota's young people. Participation in OST programs and other enrichment activities (e.g., sports, arts, community service), where young people have access to supportive and caring adults, has been associated with positive youth development outcomes including higher grades and academic achievement, more prosocial behaviors, and reductions in delinquency and other problem behaviors (Durlak et al., 2010; Lauer et al., 2006). Research suggests that OST programs are an ideal setting for youth to establish positive relationships with non-parental adults. Youth program staff often serve formally or informally as mentors and help facilitate a wide range of important life skills including conflict resolution, how to navigate different social settings, and goal setting. These types of community programs are especially valuable for youth who experience challenges in traditional school settings for a variety of reasons, including marginalization, systemic barriers, or different learning needs. Many young people even refer to these types of community programs as a "second home" (Hirsch, 2005).

Roughly 60% of Minnesota students participate in some combination of enrichment activities for three or more days per week (Minnesota Student Survey, 2019). Unfortunately, not all Minnesota youth have access to these types of enrichment activities. Roughly 150,000 young people are waiting to get into such programs. For every Minnesota student in an afterschool program, one more would participate if there was a program available to them (Afterschool Alliance, 2020). Many of Minnesota's OST programs are dedicated to addressing this gap in access and have made it a part of their mission to increase access, while also supporting the many afterschool and OST programs that currently exist statewide.

Youth organizations and networks such as Ignite Afterschool and Youthprise are helping bring together afterschool allies and programs across the state by combining resources and expertise in order to improve the availability and quality of afterschool programming for all young people in Minnesota. Many of these organizations in Minnesota recognize the importance of relationships within OST programs. For example, Ignite

Afterschool highlights supportive relationships as one of the essential building blocks of a quality afterschool program in their *Believe It. Build It. Workbook* (Ignite Afterschool, 2015).

Some of Minnesota's OST programs are specifically designed and structured to provide a high-quality, formal mentoring relationship to a young person. There are over 200 such mentoring programs across Minnesota (Mentor MN, 2020), including Big Brothers Big Sisters, The BrandLab, Simpson Housing, Bolder Options, Guadalupe Alternative Programs, Mentors for Success, Free Arts, Rebound, and many more. Research shows that participation in mentoring programs has the potential to increase opportunities for healthy development and more equitable outcomes among youth by providing young people with the confidence, access to resources, and ongoing support that they need to achieve their full potential (e.g., DuBois et al., 2011; Erickson et al., 2009; Schwartz et al., 2011). Mentoring programs are theorized to be effective in producing positive youth development outcomes through the provision of a quality relationship with a mentor that is characterized by mutuality, trust, and empathy (Rhodes, 2005). Although many of these programs have found positive youth outcomes following participation, studies also show that some youth benefit more than others (DuBois et al., 2011). It will be important to better understand the qualities of a strong mentoring relationship that are needed to ensure that all youth benefit equitably.

While a significant number of Minnesota's OST programs have made positive relationships central to their missions, not all young people have equitable access to the positive youth-adult relationships that many of these organizations provide. Some of Minnesota's OST programs are specifically designed to provide a formal mentoring relationship to a young person and others do so informally through the provision of quality youth workers and staff. Yet, gaps remain in how many youth have access to these promising programs, which limits the number of youth who have opportunities to build positive relationships with adults within these programs.

BRIGHT SPOTS: EXAMPLES OF HOW MINNESOTA OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME (OST) ORGANIZATIONS MEASURE YOUTH-ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

OST programs across Minnesota are also collecting data on the quality of youth-adult relationships formed in their programs. Examples of what that work looks like are provided below.

Ignite Afterschool

Many OST alliances such as Minnesota's Ignite Afterschool encourage afterschool programs to collect data. To support this, they also offer the supports and facilitative processes city and regional OST networks need in order to interpret and use their data to drive program improvement. Ignite's *Making Meaning with Multiple Data Sets* (M3) is a facilitator-lead process that supports organizations in using multiple data sets to intentionally reflect, plan, and identify action steps to improve their program. This process includes helping programs leverage any data that they are collecting on youth-staff relationships. These organizations often draw on existing surveys to understand their program impact including the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), Holistic Student Assessment (HSA), and Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes — Youth Survey (SAYO-Y) among others. All of these surveys capture aspects of youth-adult relationships either through youth-staff observation or youth surveys.

4-H

4-H engages in regular evaluation efforts that include items focused on 4-H'ers relationships with others. Data in their *Center for Youth Development 2020 Impact Report* show that 66% of 4-H'ers said that they had a caring adult to support them to learn more about a project.

MENTOR Minnesota

Via its national affiliation, MENTOR Minnesota provides a Measurement Guidance Toolkit to mentoring programs throughout the state. This toolkit includes validated measures of mentoring relationship quality like social support and rejection, match characteristics, youth and mentor relationship strength, mentor-youth alliance, mentor support for racial/ethnic identity, and group mentoring climate. Many of these measures are designed to gather both the mentee and mentor perspective on the relationship. Although this measurement toolkit is widely available, data has not been collected about how widely-used this toolkit is among the 200+ Minnesota-based mentoring programs.

Project Success

Project Success works with 16,000 6th-12th grade students, building relationships over a seven-year period with students and families, and formally collects data on youth-adult relationships through independently conducted evaluations, pre- and post-program surveys with students and their families, and partner teacher surveys twice each year. Based on three independent comprehensive evaluations conducted by the University of Minnesota Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, 8 in 10 teachers report that Project Success has a positive impact on students' relationships with teachers. One example of program-specific data on relationships from the 2019 middle school musical program: the pre- and post- surveys identified that 13% of students moved from "sometimes or rarely" to "often or almost always" when answering the question "I have support from adults other than my parent/guardian" after completion of the eight-week program.

# WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF YOUTH-ADULT RELATIONSHIPS IN MINNESOTA

While it is clear that Minnesota schools and out-of-school time (OST) organizations value and know that relationships matter for young people's positive development, findings suggest that many Minnesota youth are still lacking access to positive relationships with adults in schools and OST programs. In addition to understanding young people's access to positive relationships, it is important to understand the quality of these relationships and how youth are currently experiencing these relationships across different contexts and with different adults in their lives.

The following section summarizes what we know about youth-adult relationships across Minnesota. Outreach across the state revealed that the schools and OST programs that do collect data on youths' experiences of relationships primarily do so by relying on self-developed survey tools, or by accessing a validated survey instrument that includes some relationship-focused items (e.g., SAYO - Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes Survey; Panorama Student Survey; 5Essential Survey). These measures likely provide quality data that can be used by individual schools and programs to drive improvement. However, their ad hoc use makes it difficult to get a full picture of the youth-adult relationship landscape across Minnesota. Without a clear picture of what is happening statewide, it is difficult to monitor and ensure that all Minnesota young people are equitably experiencing positive relationships with adults. Having systematic access to high-quality, community-based data on youth-adult relationships better equips Minnesota to make informed decisions and policies that positively affect Minnesota young people and communities (Chase, 2019).

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That said, there are two data sources that offer a useful state-level snapshot: (1) the Minnesota Student Survey, and (2) Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Survey. See Appendix B for a description of each of the survey instruments. Four key findings emerged from these surveys:

- Most Minnesota youth reported having positive relationships with parenting adults.
- About half of Minnesota youth reported having positive relationships with teachers and other adults in their community.
- Experiences of relationships varied by youth demographics and context.
- Young people's perceptions of relationships differed from teachers' and/ or program staff perceptions.

Over 80% of youth reported that they can talk to a parent or guardian about a problem, but far fewer said they have other adults they can talk to.
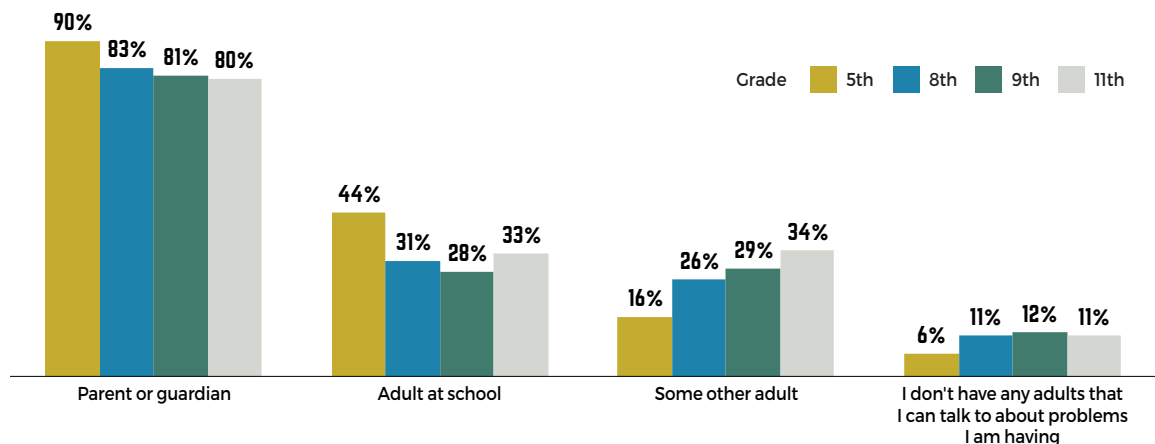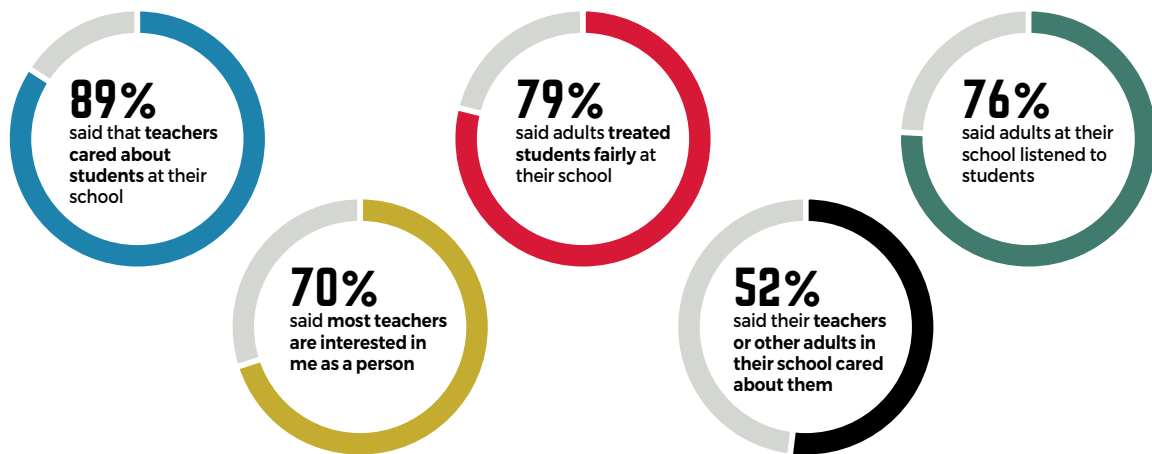

Percents represent the number of Minnesota youth who reported they could go to these adults with a problem they were having. Youth were asked to select all of the adults that applied. Data comes from the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey (*n* = 170,128).

While it is positive that more than 80% of Minnesota young people felt that they could go to a parent or guardian when they have a problem, far fewer felt that they could go to an adult at school (28% - 44%) or some other adult (16% - 34%). Perhaps more concerning is the fact that roughly 6% - 12% of Minnesota youth reported that they have no adults that they could go to when they have a problem. These findings suggest that young people's relationships with adults in schools and their community can and should be strengthened.

Not unexpectedly, these experiences varied by young people's grade levels. A higher percentage of 5th graders felt that they could go to a parent or guardian or an adult at school compared with all other grade levels. A higher percentage of 8th, 9th, and 11th graders reported that they could go to some other adult with a problem relative to 5th graders (16%). It may be developmentally appropriate, however, for older youth to have more relationships with "other adults" than younger youth. As youth age, they have increased opportunities to interact and engage with non-parental adults such as mentors, coaches, and other adults in their community.

Most Minnesota youth felt that adults in their school cared about students, listened to students, and treated students fairly. Yet, only half (52%) said their teachers cared about them personally.

89%
said that **teachers cared about students** at their school

70%
said **most teachers are interested in me as a person**

79%
said adults **treated students fairly** at their school

52%
said their **teachers or other adults in their school cared about them**

76%
said adults at their school listened to students

Percents represent the number of Minnesota youth who said they "agree" or "very much agree" to the following statements: "teachers care about students," "teachers treat students fairly," "teachers listen to students," and "teachers are interested in me as a person." The last statement, "teachers or other adults in my school care about me," was asked separately. The percent represents the number of Minnesota youth who said their teachers or other adults in their school care about them "quite a bit" or "very much." Data comes from the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey (*n* = 170,128).

Although less than half of Minnesota youth said they would go to an adult in their school with a problem they were having, the majority of Minnesota youth felt positive about their school climate. Students agreed that teachers and adults at their school cared about students, listened to students, and treated students fairly. Most students also felt that teachers at their school were interested in them as a person.

Yet, when Minnesota youth were asked how much their teacher or other adults in their school care about them personally, just over half of Minnesota youth (52%) said that their teachers or other school staff cared about them "quite a bit" or "very much." Further analysis showed that the percentage of youth who felt that their teachers and other school support staff cared about them differed by grade level. A higher percentage of 5th graders reported that their teachers or other adults in their school cared about them relative to other grade levels. This suggests that as youth age, they may begin to feel that their teachers and other adults in their school care about them less. This finding is consistent with previous research that shows that younger youth tend to report stronger student-teacher relationships than older youth (Jellesma et al., 2015; Koomen et al., 2012).
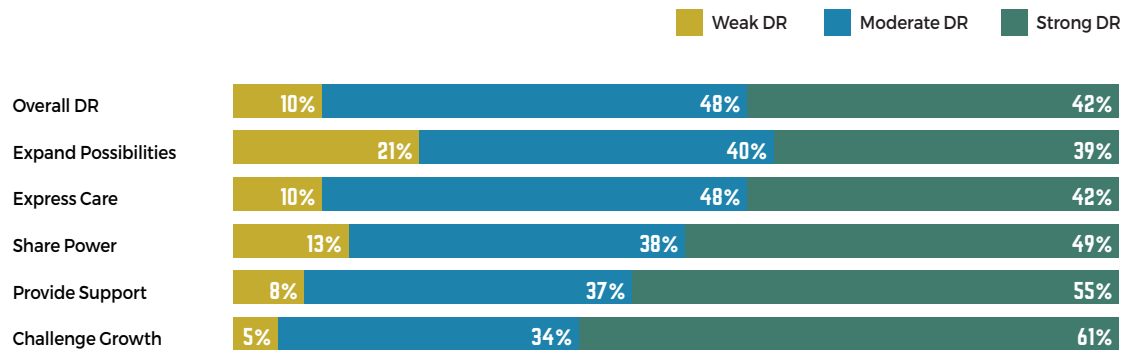
Less than half (43%) of Minnesota youth said they have a non-parenting adult in their community that cares about them.

43%
reported an **adult in the community cares** about them
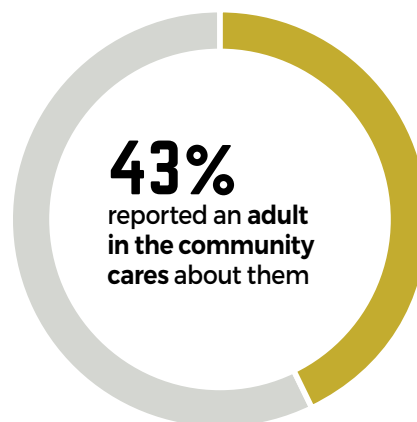
Percent represents the number of Minnesota youth who said they have an adult in their community that cares about them "quite a bit" or "very much." Data comes from the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey (*n* = 170,128).

Only 43% of Minnesota youth reported that they have an adult in their community that cares about them "quite a bit" or "very much." The percentage of youth that felt they have an adult in their community that cares about them trends downward as youth become older, with a sharp decline between 5th (56%) and 8th (41%) grade before leveling off in 9th (38%) and 11th (37%) grade.

Less than half (42%) of Minnesota youth reported experiencing a strong developmental relationship.

Legend: Weak DR | Moderate DR | Strong DR

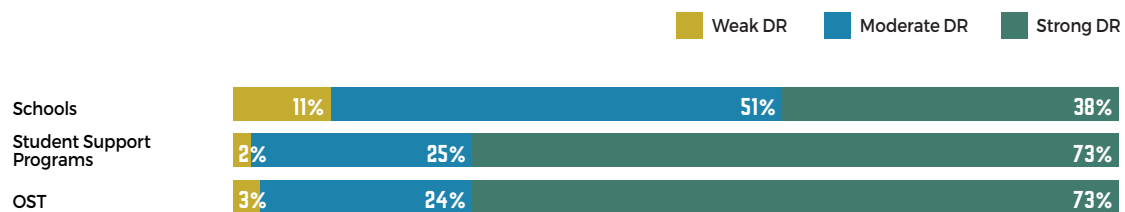| Element	Weak DR	Moderate DR	Strong DR
Overall DR	10%	48%	42%
Expand Possibilities	21%	40%	39%
Express Care	10%	48%	42%
Share Power	13%	38%	49%
Provide Support	8%	37%	55%
Challenge Growth	5%	34%	61%

Developmental relationships (DRs) were assessed with a 20-item scale capturing the five elements of Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Framework: Express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities. Participants responded to each item using a 4-point agreement or "like me" scale (*a little like me to extremely like me*). An overall DR score was calculated by averaging all items (α = .94). Scores were also calculated for each element. DR scores were transformed onto a 100-point scale and categorized into three levels: weak (0 to 33.32); moderate (33.33 to 66.66); and strong (66.67 to 100). Data comes from the 2019 Developmental Relationships Survey (n = 5,373).

Minnesota youths' reports of their developmental relationships (DRs) align with findings from the Minnesota Student Survey: 42% reported having strong developmental relationships with teachers or program staff, 48% reported moderately strong relationships, and 10% reported weak relationships. In the Developmental Relationships Survey, young people were asked to report on their relationships with either teachers within a school setting or with program staff in student support programs (e.g., programs that are separate from school but provide support to students during the regular school day) or OST programs (e.g., supervised programs in the school or community that youth attend outside of the regular school day); this varied based on the context in which the youth participated in the survey.

The findings presented here build upon the Minnesota Student Survey findings by examining multiple elements of relationship quality. The Minnesota Student Survey questions focus only on students' perceptions of a caring relationship. While a caring relationship is essential and lays the groundwork for a healthy relationship with an adult, young people also need to experience other attributes of high-quality relationships (e.g., expand possibilities, share power, provide support, and challenge growth) to ensure that they reach their full potential. Findings from the Developmental Relationships Survey provide some insight into how Minnesota youth perceive elements beyond caring that are important to high-quality youth-adult relationships.

Findings showed that Minnesota youth tended to experience "expand possibilities" (i.e., actions that connect young people with people, places, and ideas that broaden their worlds) the least and "challenge growth" (i.e., actions that push young people to keep improving) the most in their relationships with teachers or program staff.
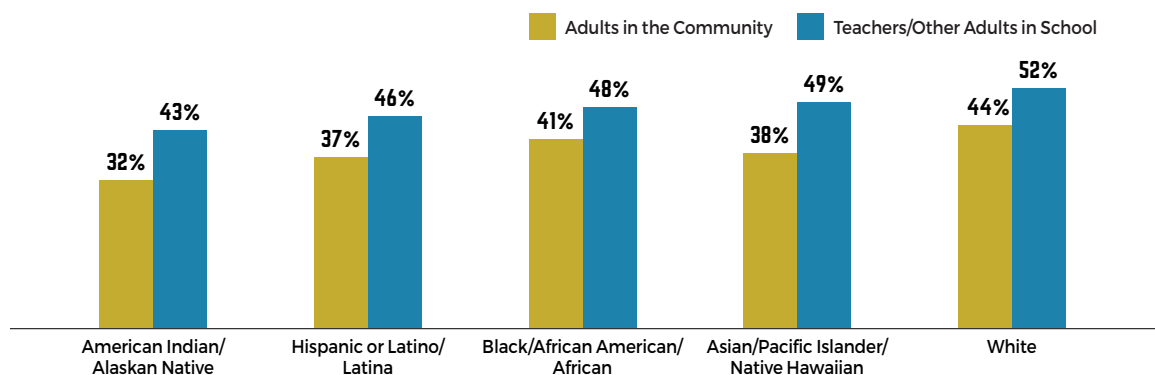
Minnesota youth in OST programs reported stronger developmental relationships with program staff than youth in other settings.

Legend: Weak DR | Moderate DR | Strong DR

	Weak DR	Moderate DR	Strong DR
Schools	11%	51%	38%
Student Support Programs	2%	25%	73%
OST	3%	24%	73%

Developmental relationships (DRs) were assessed with a 20-item scale capturing the five elements of Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Framework: Express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities. Participants responded to each item using a 4-point agreement or "like me" scale (*a little like me to extremely like me*). An overall DR score was calculated by averaging all items (α = .94). Scores were also calculated for each element. DR scores were transformed onto a 100-point scale and categorized into three levels: weak (0 to 33.32); moderate (33.33 to 66.66); and strong (66.67 to 100). Data comes from the 2019 Developmental Relationships Survey (*n* = 5,373).
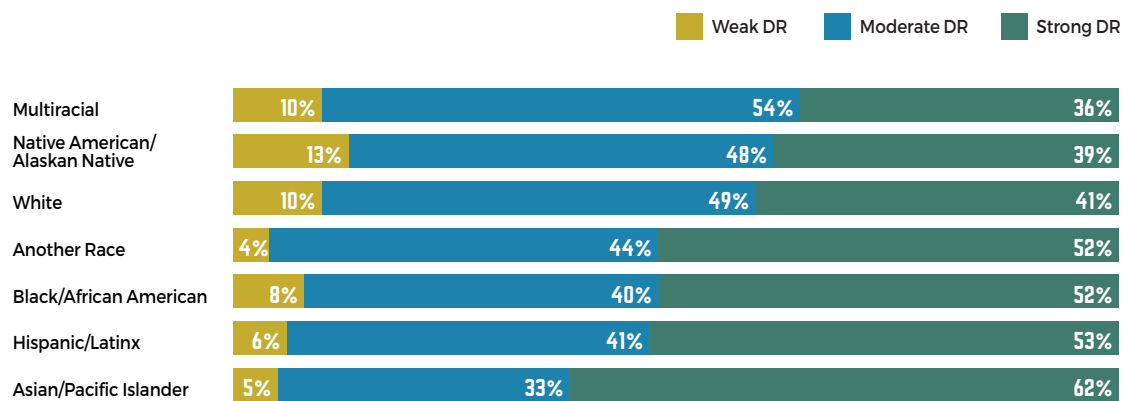
Because young people need different things from different people, developmental relationships vary across settings (e.g., schools, OST programs). Findings show that young people tend to report stronger developmental relationships with OST (73% strong) and student support program staff (73% strong) than with teachers within a school environment (38% strong).[2]

Minnesota youths' relationship experiences with adults varied by race/ethnicity.

Legend: Adults in the Community | Teachers/Other Adults in School

	Adults in the Community	Teachers/Other Adults in School
American Indian/Alaskan Native	32%	43%
Hispanic or Latino/Latina	37%	46%
Black/African American/African	41%	48%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	38%	49%
White	44%	52%

Percents represent the number of Minnesota youth who said their teachers/other school adults and adults in their community care about them "quite a bit" or "very much." Data comes from the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey (*n* = 170,128).

Troubling trends emerge when examining the single item measure of feeling cared about by race/ethnic groups in the Minnesota Student Survey. Youth who identify as White were more likely to report that their teachers and other school adults care about them than youth who identify as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, Black/African American/African, Hispanic or Latino/Latina, and Native American/Alaskan Native. This same trend holds when youth reported on whether they felt cared about by adults in the community. Across all racial/ethnic backgrounds, a higher percentage of Minnesota youth reported having a teacher or another adult in their school who cares about them relative to having an adult in their community that cares about them.

| | Weak DR | Moderate DR | Strong DR |

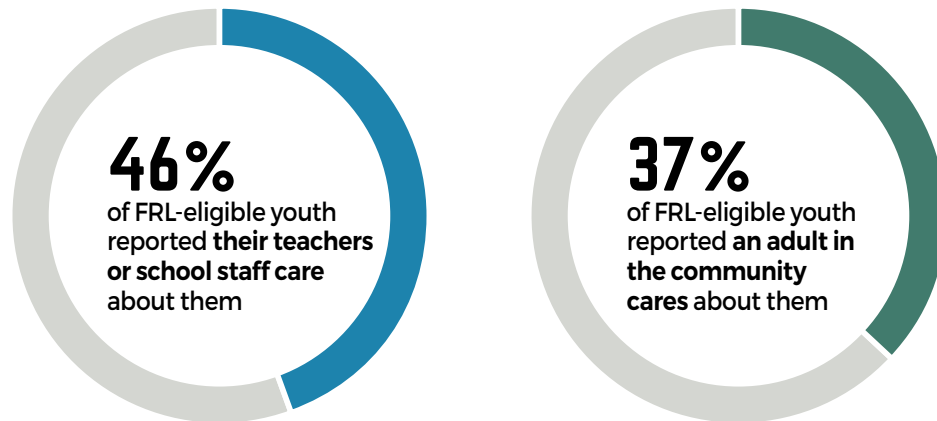|	Weak DR	Moderate DR	Strong DR
Multiracial	10%	54%	36%
Native American/Alaskan Native	13%	48%	39%
White	10%	49%	41%
Another Race	4%	44%	52%
Black/African American	8%	40%	52%
Hispanic/Latinx	6%	41%	53%
Asian/Pacific Islander	5%	33%	62%

Developmental relationships (DRs) were assessed with a 20-item scale capturing the five elements of Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Framework: Express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities. Participants responded to each item using a 4-point agreement or "like me" scale (*a little like me to extremely like me*). An overall DR score was calculated by averaging all items (α = .94). Scores were also calculated for each element. DR scores were transformed onto a 100-point scale and categorized into three levels: weak (0 to 33.32); moderate (33.33 to 66.66); and strong (66.67 to 100). Data comes from the 2019 Developmental Relationships Survey (*n* = 5,373).

The data on young people's developmental relationships by race, interestingly, tell a somewhat different story: Minnesota youth who identify as Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latinx, Black/African American or another race reported experiencing stronger developmental relationships with teachers or program staff relative to youth who identify as White, Native American/Alaskan Native, or Multiracial.

Additional data is needed to fully unpack and understand the differences in how young people with different racial/ethnic identities experience relationships with adults. Although findings on the Minnesota Student Survey and the Developmental Relationships Survey were discrepant, it is important to note that the Minnesota Student Survey includes only one indicator of relationship quality (i.e., caring) whereas the Developmental

Relationships Survey includes multiple indicators to capture different elements of a developmental relationship. For example, it is possible that elements of a developmental relationship that go beyond expressing care, such as shared power and challenge growth, may resonate with youth of some racial/ethnic identities more than others.

Minnesota youths' relationship experiences with adults varied by socioeconomic background.

46%
of FRL-eligible youth reported **their teachers or school staff care** about them

37%
of FRL-eligible youth reported **an adult in the community cares** about them

FRL = Free or reduced-price lunch. Percents represent the number of Minnesota youth who said their teachers/other school adults, and adults in their community care about them "quite a bit" or "very much." Data comes from the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey (n = 170,128).
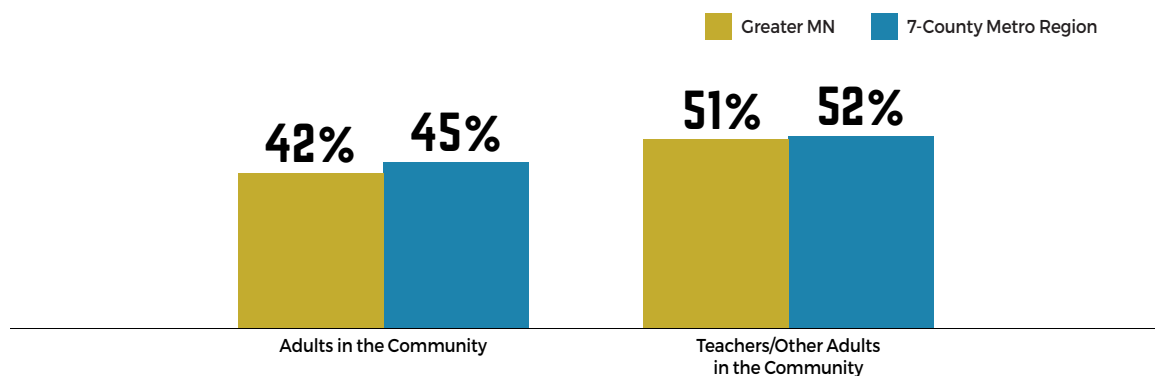
Youth in different socioeconomic groups appear to experience relationships with teachers and other adults in their school versus adults in their community differently. Only 46% of youth eligible for free or reduced-price lunch reported that their teachers or other school staff care about them "quite a bit" or "very much" relative to 54% of youth who were not eligible. Thirty-seven percent of youth eligible for free or reduced-price lunch reported that an adult in their community cares about them "quite a bit" or "very much" relative to 63% of youth who were not eligible.

	Weak DR	Moderate DR	Strong DR
No food or housing insecurity	9%	47%	44%
Has food and/or housing insecurity	11%	52%	37%

Developmental relationships (DRs) were assessed with a 20-item scale capturing the five elements of Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Framework: Express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities. Participants responded to each item using a 4-point agreement or "like me" scale (*a little like me to extremely like me*). An overall DR score was calculated by averaging all items (α = .94). Scores were also calculated for each element. DR scores were transformed onto a 100-point scale and categorized into three levels: weak (0 to 33.32); moderate (33.33 to 66.66); and strong (66.67 to 100). Data comes from the 2019 Developmental Relationships Survey (n = 5,373).

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Consistent with the Minnesota Student Survey, the Developmental Relationships Survey also showed that young people's experiences of developmental relationships vary by socioeconomic background. A smaller percentage of Minnesota youth who experience food and/or housing insecurity reported experiencing a strong developmental relationship with teachers or program staff (37%) relative to youth who do not experience food or housing insecurity (44%). Prior research has found similar results. For example, one study found that developmental relationships with teachers were lower and became worse over the academic school year for students in lower-income households relative to their peers in higher-income households (Scales et al., 2020). At the same time, research also shows that relationships may be even more impactful on positive outcomes for youth in lower-income households (Roorda et al., 2011; Wentzel, 2012). Thus, understanding how schools and OST programs intentionally focus on increasing positive youth-adult relationships for youth from lower socioeconomic backgrounds is needed.

Minnesota youths' relationship experiences varied by geographic location.

Legend: ■ Greater MN   ■ 7-County Metro Region

Adults in the Community: 42% (Greater MN), 45% (7-County Metro Region)

Teachers/Other Adults in the Community: 51% (Greater MN), 52% (7-County Metro Region)

Percents represent the number of Minnesota youth who said their teachers/other school adults and adults in their community care about them "quite a bit" or "very much." Data comes from the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey (n = 170,128).

A slightly higher percentage of youth in the 7-County Metro Region of Minnesota (45%) reported that an adult in their community cares about them "quite a bit" or "very much" relative to youth in Greater Minnesota (42%). It is possible that young people in rural communities may have fewer opportunities to build relationships with adults from their community than youth living in a denser region of Minnesota. In contrast, youth in the 7-County Metro Region experienced relationships with teachers and other adults in their school fairly consistently with youth in Greater Minnesota (51% vs. 52%).
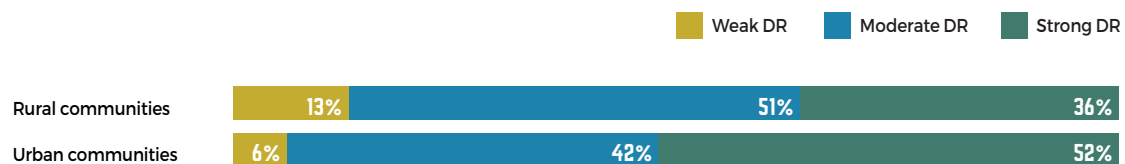
	Weak DR	Moderate DR	Strong DR
Rural communities	13%	51%	36%
Urban communities	6%	42%	52%

Developmental Relationships Framework: Express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities. Participants responded to each item using a 4-point agreement or "like me" scale (*a little like me to extremely like me*). An overall DR score was calculated by averaging all items α = .94). Scores were also calculated for each element. DR scores were transformed onto a 100-point scale and categorized into three levels: weak (0 to 33.32); moderate (33.33 to 66.66); and strong (66.67 to 100). Data comes from the 2019 Developmental Relationships Survey (*n* = 5,373).

Differences in young people's experiences of developmental relationships across urban and rural areas of Minnesota were more stark than what was found in the Minnesota Student Survey. Using urban versus rural designations made by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, findings show that a higher percentage of young people in urban regions of Minnesota reported strong developmental relationships (52%) with teachers or program staff relative to young people living in rural areas of Minnesota (36%). As noted above, it is possible that youth living in rural regions of Minnesota have fewer opportunities to build developmental relationships with program staff. However, further analysis showed that a smaller percentage of youth in rural areas of Minnesota (35%) also reported experiencing a strong developmental relationship with their teachers relative to young people in urban areas of Minnesota (42%). Further investigation of young people's experiences of relationships with adults both in the school and OST environment across all regions of Minnesota is needed. This investigation may be especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic, as it is possible that these findings may be exacerbated for rural youth during a time of social distancing.

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Minnesota youth and teachers/program staff perceived developmental relationships with each other differently.
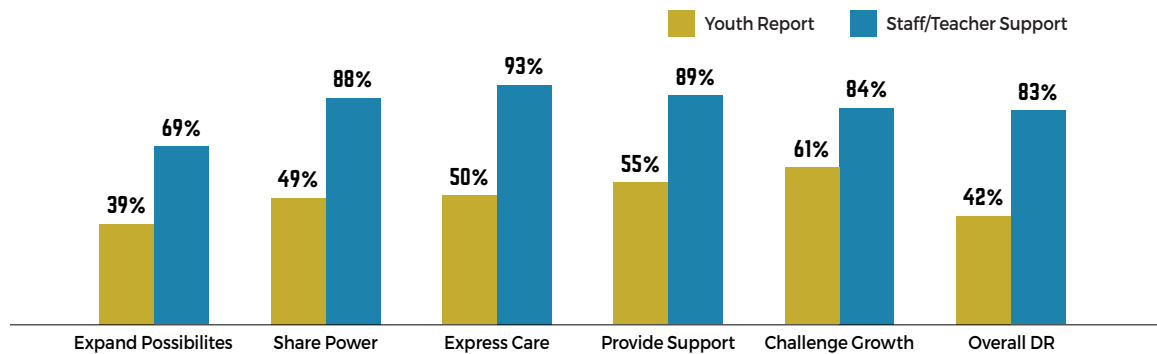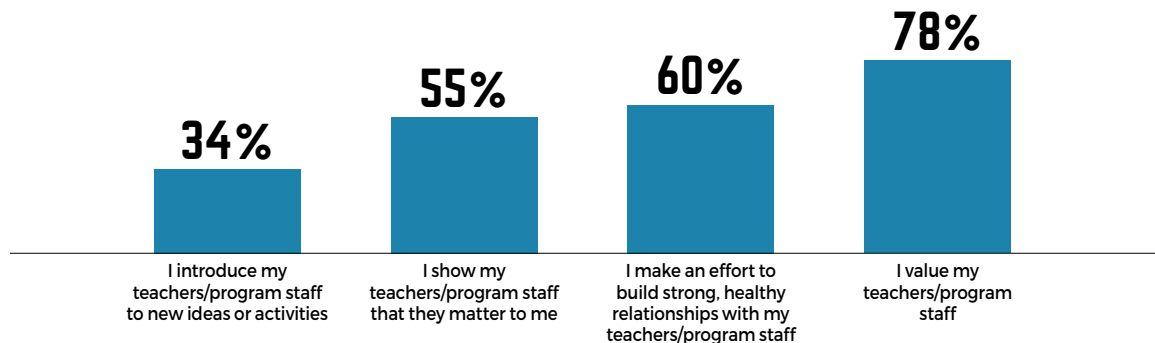

Developmental relationships (DRs) were assessed with a 20-item scale capturing the five elements of Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Framework: Express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities. Participants responded to each item using a 4-point agreement or "like me" scale (*a little like me to extremely like me*). An overall DR score was calculated by averaging all items (α = .94). Scores were also calculated for each element. DR scores were transformed onto a 100-point scale and categorized into three levels: weak (0 to 33.32); moderate (33.33 to 66.66); and strong (66.67 to 100). The percentage reported in the chart above represents the percentage of youth and teachers/program staff who reported a strong DR. Data comes from the 2019 Developmental Relationships Survey (n = 5,373 youth; *n* = 428 teacher/program staff).

The Developmental Relationships Survey included both a youth and a teacher/program staff survey. As part of this survey, teachers and program staff also reported how often they engage in behaviors aligned with each of the five developmental relationship elements in their interactions with young people. Staff overwhelmingly reported engaging in these behaviors more than youth reported experiencing them. The largest discrepancy was on "express care" and the smallest discrepancy was on "challenge growth."

Finding that staff and youth perceived their relationships differently is not entirely surprising. It is possible that there are actions that adults intentionally take to build positive relationships with youth that youth do not perceive or receive in the same way. It is also possible that teachers and program staff responded in ways that are more reflective of their teaching philosophy or how they strive to show up in the classroom rather than from their actual behavior. Finally, teachers and program staff may have been reflecting on the young people that they build the best relationships with, rather than with all the young people they work with. Deepening our understanding of this disconnect may reveal important information about unmet relational expectations in schools and OST settings, along with ways this gap can be remediated.

Minnesota youth reported that they value and make an effort to build positive relationships with teacher/program staff.

Percents represent the number of Minnesota youth who reported each item was "mostly" or "extremely like me." Data comes from the 2019 Developmental Relationships Survey (*n* = 5,373).

Over half of Minnesota youth reported that they value teachers/program staff, make an effort to build strong, healthy relationships with teachers/program staff, and show teachers/program staff that they matter. Far fewer youth reported that they introduce their teachers/program staff to new ideas or activities.

A selected sample of youth were prompted on the survey to write examples of ways they build relationships with teachers or program staff. As reflected in the quantitative results, youth shared that they express care to adults by having fun with them, getting to know them, and showing that they appreciate them. Yet, many youth in schools described an environment that was not conducive to building relationships with their teachers. The ways they built relationships were based on compliance or participation as a "good" student, such as completing homework, following classroom rules, or being in control of their behavior. Stronger relationships were forged when youth had the opportunity to "be myself" or share more about themselves with their teachers or program staff. As one youth noted, "I don't just want to be a kid that they teach." Many youth and adults desired relationships where each knew more about the other beyond their role in any given institution.

WHAT WE NEED TO BETTER UNDERSTAND ABOUT CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS ACROSS MINNESOTA

The emerging findings in this portrait of youth-adult relationships show that Minnesota schools and out-of-school time (OST) programs recognize the importance of relationships. Yet, many young people across Minnesota are still missing important positive relationships in their lives. Furthermore, findings from the Developmental Relationships Survey and the Minnesota Student Survey show that young people are not experiencing these relationships equitably. Findings show that young people's experiences of relationships with adults vary by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic situation, and geographic region. Based on these initial findings, several recommendations for further investigation through the *Cultivating Connections* study have emerged:

Identify the specific and practical ways Minnesota schools and OST programs intentionally invest in developmental relationships with young people

+   While this report shows that schools and OST programs clearly value positive relationships, there is no systematic information about the extent to which schools and OST programs intentionally invest in these relationships. More research is needed to identify if, and in what ways, school and OST leaders provide training, support, structures, and promising practices that support a relationship-rich organization, where positive relationships between youth and adults can flourish.

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Understand how Minnesota schools and OST programs are measuring relationships and outcomes associated with relationships

+   Many Minnesota schools and OST programs are relying on the Minnesota Student Survey for their main source of data on young people's relationships with adults. Through the *Cultivating Connections* study, it will be important to better understand what other tools (if any) that OST programs may be using to collect this data, as well as ways in which the measurement of these relationships could be strengthened to better inform practice.

Examine how young peoples' experiences and access to developmental relationships differs across contexts and settings

+   Findings from both the Minnesota Student Survey and the Developmental Relationships Survey show that not all young people have access to and experience positive relationships equitably. It will be important to identify why these disparities exist and how youth-adult relationships look different across different settings (e.g., school, family, OST), geography (e.g., rural vs. urban), and identities (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status).

Unpack the challenges and barriers that schools and OST programs face when building positive relationships with young people

+   The *Cultivating Connections* study will unpack barriers and challenges that parenting adults, school and OST program leaders and staff, and youth see as pernicious barriers. It will be important to collect data from a variety of perspectives. This data will be instrumental in informing the development of tools and resources to strengthen developmental relationships in these settings.

Understand developmental relationships in the context of COVID-19

+   The 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacts Minnesota schools' and OST programs' capacity for building positive relationships with young people. The virtual world that we find ourselves in poses new challenges for building relationships. At the same time, these relationships are essential to the well-being of young people who may be feeling increasingly disconnected and isolated from important adults in their lives. It will be important for the *Cultivating Connections* study to understand the role and impact the pandemic has had on developmental relationships across Minnesota.

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Over the coming months, we will be convening an advisory committee composed of statewide school and youth development leaders, and a parallel youth advisory committee. These advisory committees will work with our staff to provide input on the *Cultivating Connections* study, champion the study through their networks, and—ultimately—become early allies for creating a statewide network committed to advancing positive youth-adult relationships. Equipped with the information that results from this important work, we can:

- Identify gaps in the supports and structures needed to create relationship-rich settings.
- Make informed decisions about the kinds of supports and resources that need to be developed (or that already exist, but are not widely known or available at scale) to support youth-adult relationship-building.
- Better support schools and OST programs in strengthening the investments that they have already made in developing high-quality relationships for young people.
- Track progress towards the goal for *all* Minnesota youth to have access to relationship-rich settings where they are known, valued, and supported.
- Expand the narrative in Minnesota education policy by adding relationship-focused indicators to the heavily administrative data dashboards used to gauge educational progress across the state.

The *Cultivating Connections* study will be our first step in ensuring that *all* Minnesota youth have equitable access to high-quality, youth-adult relationships.

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THE DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS FRAMEWORK

1. Express Care
Show me that I matter to you.

• **Be dependable**	Be someone I can trust.
• **Listen**	Really pay attention when we are together.
• **Believe in me**	Make me feel known and valued.
• **Be warm**	Show me you enjoy being with me.
• **Encourage**	Praise me for my efforts and achievements.

2. Challenge Growth
Push me to keep getting better.

• **Expect my best**	Expect me to live up to my potential.
• **Stretch**	Push me to go further.
• **Hold me accountable**	Insist I take responsibility for my actions.
• **Reflect on failures**	Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks.

3. Provide Support
Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.

• **Navigate**	Guide me through hard situations and systems.
• **Empower**	Build my confidence to take charge of my life.
• **Advocate**	Stand up for me when I need it.
• **Set boundaries**	Put in place limits that keep me on track.

4. Share Power
Treat me with respect and give me a say.

• **Respect me**	Take me seriously and treat me fairly.
• **Include me**	Involve me in decisions that affect me.
• **Collaborate**	Work with me to solve problems and reach goals.
• **Let me lead**	Create opportunities for me to take action and lead.

5. Expand Possibilities
Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.

• **Inspire**	Inspire me to see possibilities for my future.
• **Broaden horizons**	Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places.
• **Connect**	Introduce me to people who can help me grow.

DESCRIPTION OF SURVEY INSTRUMENTS AND SAMPLE

Minnesota Student Survey

Since 1989, students across the state of Minnesota have been participating in the Minnesota Student Survey (Minnesota Student Survey, 2019). It is typically administered every three years and all types of school districts (e.g., public, charter, tribal, non-public schools) are invited to participate. In the most recent administration of the survey (2019), roughly 81% of public school districts voluntarily participated, which included a total of 170,128 students. The survey was administered only to students in grades 5, 8, 9, and 11. Approximately 66% of fifth graders, 68% of eighth graders, 66% of ninth graders, and 54% of eleventh graders across the state participated in the 2019 survey.

The survey collects information on a number of topics including school climate, bullying, participation in and quality of enrichment activities, healthy eating, emotional health, substance use, and connections with school and family. Due to the large range of topics covered, the survey is long and complex, requiring students to think about a wide range of issues. Thus, it is not feasible to probe any one of these topics too deeply, as the survey would become too difficult for many students to complete and for schools to organize data collection. There are a select number of items that assess young people's relationships with adults. This includes a single item about young people's communication with adults (e.g., parent/guardian, adult at school, some other adult), items about students' perceptions of the school climate, and items that assess students' perceptions of how much parents/guardians, teachers, and other adults in their communities care about them.

Developmental Relationships Survey

At Search Institute, we recently conducted a national study funded by the Whitney and Elizabeth MacMillan Foundation between October 2019 and April 2020 of more than 14,000 young people through the Developmental Relationships Survey. The survey is a 67-item self-report instrument that includes measures of developmental relationships; academic, civic, and social-emotional competence outcomes; and contextual variables. These data were independently collected in schools and out-of-school time (OST) organizations across the U.S. by organizations and community coalitions in partnership with Search Institute. Many of the schools and OST programs that participated in this study were from Minnesota. For the purposes of this report, we pulled a subsample of data from young people from Minnesota to better understand their experiences of developmental relationships. The Minnesota Developmental Relationships Survey sample included 5,373 youth in grades 4-12 enrolled in schools (88%), OST programs (6%), and student support programs (6%).

SURVEY SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

	Minnesota Student Survey	Developmental Relationships Survey	
	(n = 107,128)	Youth Survey (n = 5,373)	Staff Survey (n = 428)
Gender Identity			
Female	50%	53%	69%
Male	50%	35%	31%
School Level [a]			
Elementary	26%	4%	7%
Middle	26%	47%	44%
High	48%	49%	81%
Race/Ethnicity			
White	76%	66%	92%
Hispanic/Latinx	9%	12%	1%
Black/African American	11%	9%	2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	10%	5%	2%
Native American/Alaskan Native	5%	5%	<1%
Multiracial	—	12%	3%
Another Race	—	4%	2%
Geography [b]			
Rural/Greater Minnesota	47%	65%	60%
Urban/7-County Metro	53%	35%	40%

Note. Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number. — = Not reported on.

a Teachers may have reported teaching more than one grade level, thus grade level categories are not mutually exclusive (sums of percentages do not add up to 100).
b Minnesota regions were classified differently for the two survey instruments. The urban and rural designations on the Developmental Relationships Survey were determined by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. Youth who participated in the Minnesota Student Survey were designated as attending a school either in the 7-County Metro region or in Greater MN.