

# The Academic Impact of Responsiveness to Student Voice

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*Study of Chicago Public Schools finds that academic performance is related to schools' responsiveness to students' concerns*

## Research Question and Key Concepts

### When schools are responsive to the concerns and critiques of their students, what is the impact on students' academic achievement?

We identify three pathways by which responsiveness to student voice could be beneficial to student outcomes:

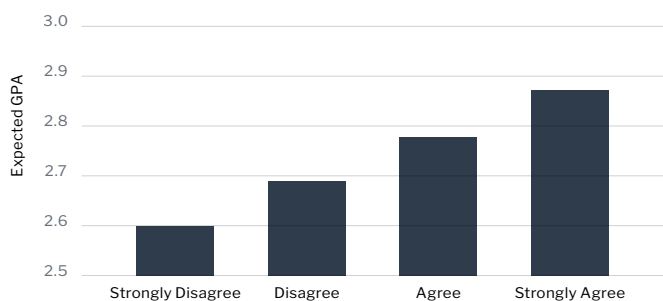
- At the **school** level, attentiveness to students' concerns may improve the way the school is organized and run.
- At the **classroom** level, teachers can be responsive to students' by adapting their curricula and instruction in response to students' feedback.
- At the **student** level, an environment that is responsive to student voice may lead young people to develop a greater sense of agency, of belonging to the school community, and of competence.

*Responsiveness to student voice entails teachers and administrators working to ensure that students' voices, ideas, and concerns are heard and respected.*

## What We Found

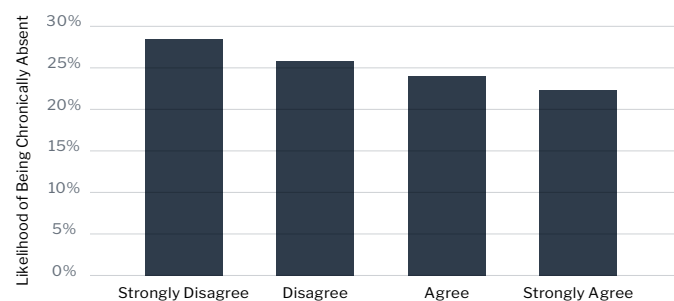
- Students in schools where their teachers and school leaders were seen as being responsive to students' concerns tended to have better academic outcomes than their peers in schools that were seen as being less responsive.
- Specifically, a school's responsiveness to student voice is associated with higher GPAs, higher attendance rates, and fewer chronically absent students.

Expected 9th Grade Point Average by Perceptions of School Leader and Teacher Responsiveness



Are School Leaders and Teachers Responsive to Students' Concerns?

Likelihood of 9th Grade Chronic Absenteeism by Perceptions of School Leader and Teacher Responsiveness



Are School Leaders and Teachers Responsive to Students' Concerns?

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## How Did We Find This?

- We matched the academic records of students in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to survey data from the district's 2019 5Essentials student survey.
- We focused on the cohort of students enrolled in 8th grade in 2017-18 and 9th grade in 2018-19: Overall, this includes 11,680 students from 86 CPS high schools.
- Responsiveness to student voice was measured with two questions on the survey that asked students to assess how well their school leaders and teachers responded to their concerns.
- By controlling for students' 8th grade attendance and academic achievement, as well as demographic variables, we were able to isolate the relationship between perceptions of responsiveness to student voice and 9th graders' academic outcomes.

## Why Is This Important?

- Our findings that 9th graders in high-responsiveness schools had higher GPAs and attendance rates could have lasting effects on these students' academic trajectories, as previous research demonstrates the importance of 9th grade to students' future academic achievement (Allensworth & Easton 2007; Neild et al. 2008).
- Enhancing students' senses of agency, belonging, and competence can lead to improved academic results, especially for marginalized populations (Benner et al. 2019; Gray et al. 2018; Toshalis & Nakkula 2012). Consequently, the benefits of responsiveness to student voice may be particularly important for students from marginalized groups and districts like Chicago that serve students of color and students from low-income households.
- School leaders and teachers have many opportunities throughout the school year to listen to, learn from, and partner with youth in shaping the curriculum and the school culture and climate. Student voice can be meaningfully integrated into decisions related to staffing, the school budget, research into challenges at the school, and continuous improvement.
- For resources related to the student voice initiatives coordinated by the Social Science and Civic Engagement Department in Chicago Public Schools [click here](#).

For a link to the full research article, visit **"Is Responsiveness to Student Voice Related to Academic Outcomes?: Strengthening the Rationale for Student Voice in School Reform"** in the *American Journal of Education*