

What Predicts a Sense of School Connectedness?



Context

In May 2023, EQAO presented a study to the American Educational Research Association annual meeting. The study analyzed secondary students' sense of connectedness to their schools during the pandemic to identify the strongest predictors of self-reported school connectedness.

What Is School Connectedness?

School connectedness is defined as a perception of closeness or relatedness to the people in the school community (Barber & Schluterman, 2008; Libbey, 2004). It is known to be strongly related to mental health and well-being. Pandemic-era research showed that both the school connectedness and the mental health of students have decreased significantly since March 2020 (Krause et al., 2022).

Further research on what student characteristics and attitudes are associated with school connectedness can provide important insights for policy-makers and educators to improve students' school connectedness and mental health.

Key Takeaways

In spring 2021, EQAO asked students how connected they felt to other students, and to their teachers at their school. The EQAO study found that

- engagement with online learning was by far the strongest predictor of student connectedness, being six times greater than technological access at home.
- among students with the same level of engagement in online learning, other student demographics (including technology at home, sex or gender identity, literacy test scores) did not meaningfully contribute to the prediction of school connectedness.

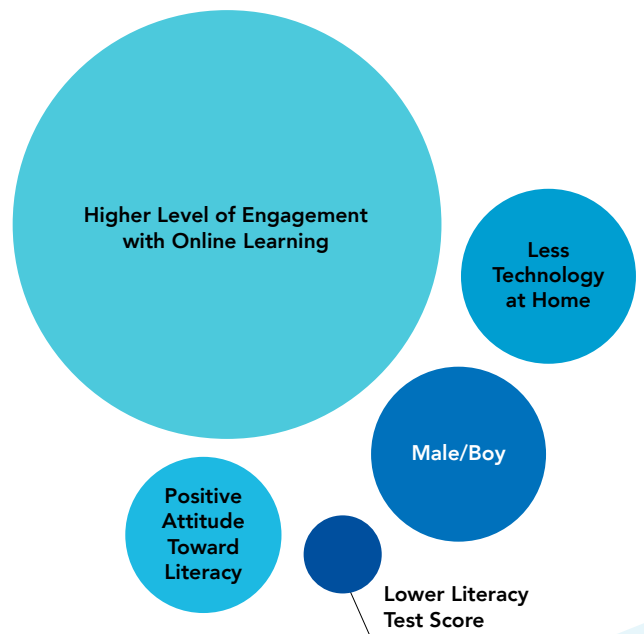
The statements used to measure engagement with online learning were

"I feel as supported when I am learning online as I do when learning in a school building."

"I am confident using online learning applications."

"I am motivated to work on online learning activities."

Predictors of School Connectedness During the Pandemic



Conclusion

This study highlights the pivotal role engagement with online learning played in nurturing students' sense of school connectedness and overall well-being during the pandemic era. To establish a supportive and engaging remote learning environment, policy-makers and educators can adopt various strategies, such as utilizing interactive and user-friendly online learning platforms, tailoring learning experiences to address individual student needs, and fostering a strong sense of virtual community.

References

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