Meaningful Measures

Research Brief

Our measures are based on current leading-edge educational research, producing reliable and valid results on known factors that affect academic achievement and other school outcomes.

The measures used by The Learning Bar are developed by internationally renowned education researcher Dr. J. Douglas Willms in collaboration with other subject-matter experts. One of the advantages of our surveys is that we use construct-building questions that produce measures, as opposed to the discrete questions of most school surveys.

When developing our measures, we take a number of steps to ensure they are the most representative of the construct under investigation. We begin with the broad construct (or domain) that we would like to measure – for example, the concept of Sense of Belonging or Anxiety – then we conduct a thorough examination of the existing literature and consult with subject matter experts. Following that, we narrow these broad concepts into a working definition that will fit the context or environment we are surveying. For instance, how would we define sense of belonging within the school environment? What are the markers of anxiety for a student?

A bank of questions is then developed that are intended to reflect the construct. The questions are then rigorously tested, to ensure only those questions that most accurately reflect the construct are included. Questions are selected for inclusion based on a number of statistical analyses, survey taker feedback, as well as subject matter expert feedback.

The advantage of using a measure comprised of multiple questions versus a single question is that it allows us to gather information on a particular concept using a multi-dimensional approach. We also know that measures are more reliable when they include a number of well-formulated questions, as this allows us to more accurately differentiate between students. For example, a reliable measure will allow us to differentiate between students with high versus low levels of anxiety. Using a measure that is reliable will also ensure that if we were to ask students to respond to the same questions at a later date their responses would be similar.

The Learning Bar

Essentially, we are removing the guess work for you. No need to worry about having to devote time to developing questions on your own. You can trust that the measures you are using to asses topics known to affect learning outcomes are both valid and reliable as they have been repeatedly tested using our expansive database of over 7 million students.