



Flourishing School Culture Initiative **For Lifegate Christian School**

Introduction

Thank you for your school's participation in the Flourishing School Culture Instrument (FSCI). ACSI is pleased to partner with committed schools like yours across the country to collect and leverage empirical data in the pursuit of insight around how and why Christian schools flourish.

The first administration of the Flourishing Schools Culture Instrument (FSCI) tested 1,445 discrete variables across seven different survey groups: students; parents; alumni; teachers; leaders/administrators; support staff; and board members. Between Fall 2018 and Spring 2019, over 15,000 survey responses were collected from Christian schools of diverse size and geographic location, thereby making the FSCI the largest study of flourishing in Christian schools to date. In subsequent administrations since then, with Christian schools in both the United States and around the world, we continue to build upon the insights around flourishing in Christian schools to deliver validated and relevant insights.

The validated constructs identified through FSCI data analysis were mapped onto the first ever research-based model of Christian school flourishing—the Flourishing School Culture Model (FSCM). [Detailed information regarding the methodology utilized to generate the insights in this school-level report can be found in the FSCI national report, *Flourishing Schools: Research on Christian School Culture and Community*.] The FSCM clusters the validated constructs for all seven survey groups into five domains of flourishing: Purpose; Relationships; Teaching & Learning; Expertise & Resources; and Well-Being. These domains provide a compelling and comprehensive picture of the areas in which Christian schools can focus their efforts and resources in order to promote a flourishing school culture and community.

All of your school's data has been handled with the utmost care to ensure full confidentiality. Your school's profile, based on the results of the FSCI as mapped on to the FSCM, is designed to highlight areas of existing strength as well as opportunities for growth and improvement. Insights from the FSCI have the potential to inform strategic planning and budgeting, professional development decisions, programmatic priorities, marketing and promotional efforts, and much more.

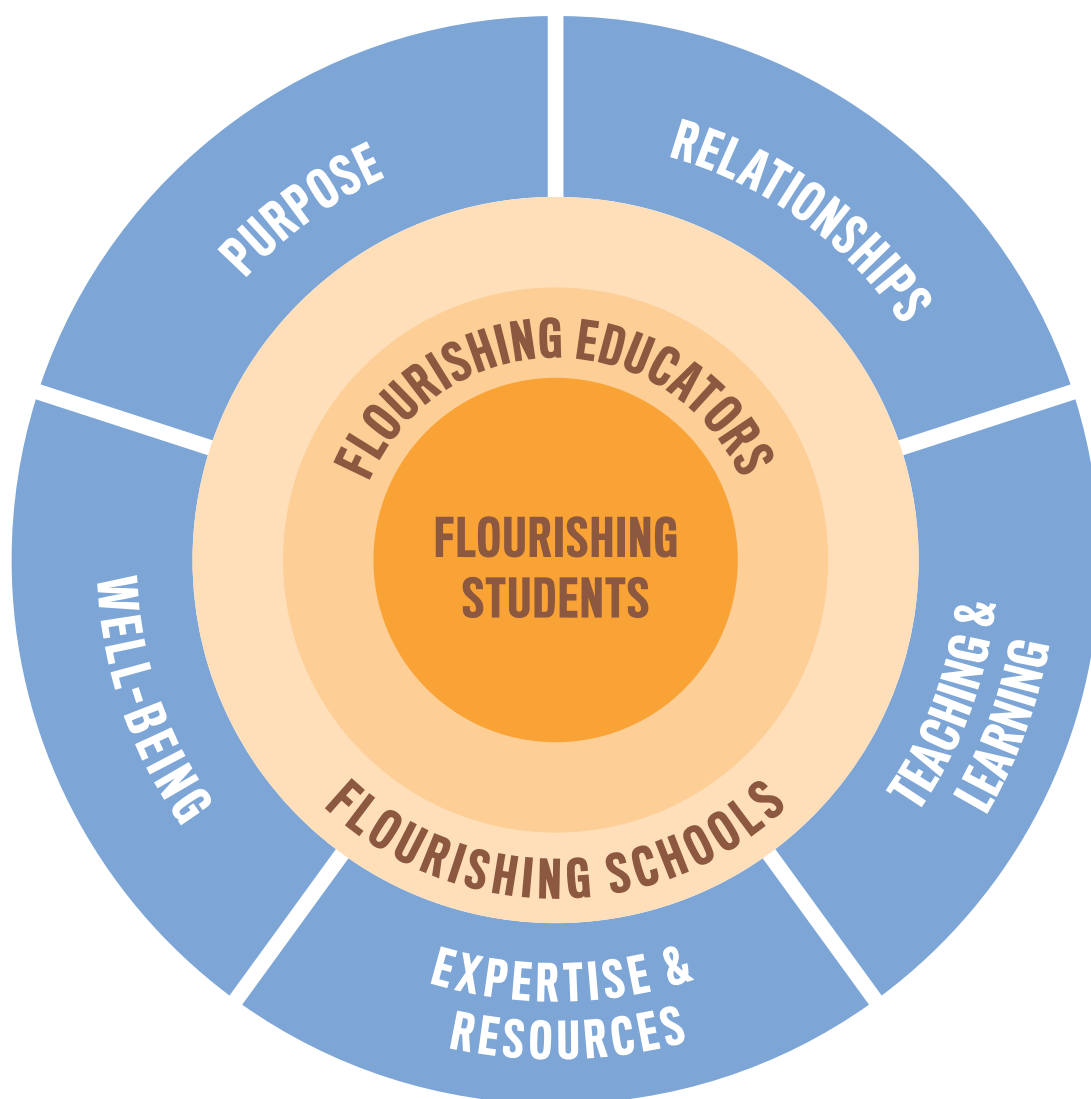
As with most institutional survey research, it is important to note that FSCI findings are best used when they are interpreted in light of school constituencies' lived experiences as collected through qualitative means. This means that schools will benefit the most fully from this report when data is used to generate reflection, dialogue, and collaborative planning for the present and the future. Please be sure to review the report section entitled "Responding to Your School's Results," on the last two pages of the report, for suggestions in this regard.

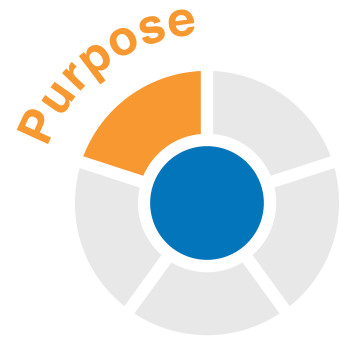
Thank you again for your school's participation in the FSCI. We pray the insights in this report will help your school to continue to grow in the five domains of Christian school flourishing, and that ultimately—"May the Lord cause you to flourish, both you and your children" (Psalm 115:14 NIV).

For questions regarding this report, please contact research@acsi.org.

Overview of the Flourishing School Culture Model

Analysis of the FSCI identified 35 validated constructs related to flourishing across the seven groups of participants. These constructs have been grouped into a model with five major domains of flourishing in Christian schools: *Purpose*; *Relationships*; *Teaching & Learning*; *Expertise & Resources*; and *Well-Being*. In the following pages, a definitional overview will be provided for these domains, followed by a listing of specific constructs that make up each domain.





Defining Purpose

A Christian perspective on education provides the *telos*, or purposeful aim, of Christian schooling. The FSCI identified a commitment on the part of all school constituencies to the central purposes of education as strongly connected with flourishing outcomes.

Many of the distinctives of Christian education—meaning what is unique to Christian schools’ missions, values, and expected outcomes, as opposed to other sectors of education—fall within this domain. FSCI data analysis identified constructs related to the domain of Purpose for all seven survey groups (students; parents; alumni; teachers; leaders/administrators; support staff; and board members), below.

PURPOSE CONSTRUCTS

Responsibility – Leaders, teachers, and support staff feel a sense of shared ownership for school mission, success, and improvement.

Holistic Teaching – Teaching involves helping students develop spiritually and emotionally (teaching the heart and soul, as well as the mind).

Integrated Worldview – Christian worldview changes how we educate; there is no such thing as a secular sphere.

God’s Story – Students believe they are a part of God’s bigger plan and can be used by him to “make a difference.”

Questioning – Students have doubts about their faith, lack time to pray or study the Bible, and feel that most Christians are too judgmental.

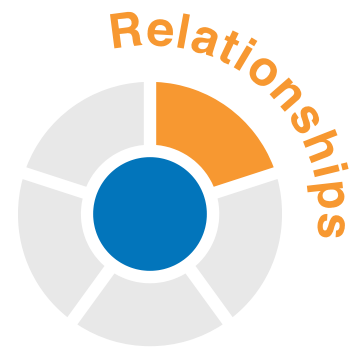
Partnership – Families feel they are a part of the school’s mission, and that their child’s spiritual development requires their partnering with and being involved at the school.

Spiritual Formation – Alumni report that their Christian faith is stronger thanks to attending a Christian school, and they believe people can change with God’s help.

Defining Relationships

Education is a relational enterprise by nature. For Christian schools in particular, relationships are important because of the incarnational nature of Christian faith, expressed through community and in discipleship (John 1:14, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Ephesians 4:16).

The FSCI identified trust-filled, supportive, and authentic relationships between all school constituencies, as well as with the surrounding community, as key to flourishing outcomes. The constructs related to Relationship were identified for all seven survey groups (students; parents; alumni; teachers; leaders/administrators; support staff; and board members), below.



RELATIONSHIP CONSTRUCTS

Supportive Leadership – Principals are trusted, teachers feel that leaders “have our backs,” and leaders empower teachers and staff to make decisions.

Leadership Interdependence – Board members have diverse backgrounds, and are transparent about and rely on others to offset their weaknesses.

Family Relationships – Teachers “get to know” families, and frequent and systemic communication facilitates positive relationships.

Community Engagement – The school engages with the surrounding community and local churches, and regularly taps into community resources including networking and resource-sharing with other schools.

Mentoring Students – Staff point out talent in each student, help students see how they fit in God’s bigger plan, and are aware of students’ struggles at school or home.

Insular Culture – The school shields students from the world’s brokenness, the school is independent from the surrounding community, and/or the student body lacks diversity.

Christlike Teachers – Teachers show Christlike love, kindness, and care to students. Families feel students are cared about individually, including their spiritual development.

Prosocial Orientation – Students not only enjoy helping others, but also are known by others (e.g., peers) for showing love and care.

Caring Environment – From the perspective of school graduates, teachers were kind, students felt included in class, and students were protected from bullying.

Defining Teaching & Learning

Schools are of course known as sites of learning for students. But if school cultures are to flourish, schools and educators themselves must also engage in learning. In fact, a school culture in which educators are committed to ongoing learning and improvement is linked to flourishing not only for the school and educators, but also for students.

FSCI data analysis identified constructs related to *Teaching & Learning* for five of the seven survey groups (alumni; teachers; leaders/administrators; support staff; and board members), as follows.



TEACHING & LEARNING CONSTRUCTS

Feedback – Feedback on teaching practice and classroom management is given regularly to facilitate adjustments in real-time.

Collaboration – Learning from and with other teachers drives and inspires better teaching.

Systems Thinking – When planning for change, the potential impact on the school, the classroom, students, and the overall system are considered.

Data-Driven Improvement – Data is used to gauge school results and effectiveness, determine goal attainment, and address problems the school faces.

Professional Development – PD is provided on-site and is subject- and role-specific.

Outcomes Focus – Process doesn't matter if it isn't producing results, and change is distracting if it doesn't lead to increases in student achievement.

Culture of Improvement – Guided by school leadership and focused on the future, the school is continually improving/makes necessary changes to improve.

Individualized Instruction – Students are helped to figure out how they learn best and to identify their natural strengths.

Best Practice Orientation – Keeping up with best practices is prioritized and resources for doing so can be identified.

Engaged Learning – Students engage in activities that nurture critical thinking, evaluating information, and problem solving.

Behaviors for Learning – The classroom is orderly and well-managed, and teachers are organized and consistent in supporting student behaviors that contribute to learning.

Defining *Expertise & Resources*

While a sense of purpose is essential for Christian school leaders and teachers, their ability to fulfill that purpose is necessarily dependent upon their expertise as educators. FCSI research shows that flourishing is connected to excellence in educational and school management practices.

Constructs related to expertise & resources were significant for five of the seven participant groups surveyed by the FCSI (parents; teachers; leaders/administrators; support staff; and board members).



EXPERTISE & RESOURCES CONSTRUCTS

Qualified Staff – New teacher hires are credentialed (licensed/certified) and have classroom experience.

Responsiveness to Special Needs – Teaching staff works together to serve students with special needs, aided by processes and resources for identifying and responding to those needs.

Resources – Materials and resources for teaching, including technology, are sufficient, and the school building is in good physical condition.

Resource Planning – A strategic financial plan and master facilities plan is in place, and financial planning is a strength of the board.

Resource Constraints – The school has financial resources to operate effectively; or, we could be more effective as a school if not for fiscal constraints, and we lack the resources we need to make changes in our school.

Defining Well-Being

Well-being is an important domain for both student and educator flourishing. The FSCI identified three constructs related to well-being—one for teachers and leaders (Stress), and two for students (Healthy Living and Resilience). This domain and related constructs demonstrate that the well-being of educators and students is not a secondary concern—but an essential contributor to flourishing outcomes.



WELL-BEING CONSTRUCTS

Stress – Constant feelings of stress and being overwhelmed accompany a lack of time to prepare for instruction (Teachers) or to focus on physical health (Leaders).

Healthy Living – Students are happy with their physical health, including sufficient exercise and a healthy diet.

Resilience – Students handle stress effectively and respond well to/bounce back from difficult situations.

★ Meaningful Strengths

Below are five strengths of your school in regard to creating and sustaining a flourishing school culture. These areas emerged from your school's overall FSCI profile (meaning these areas are *not* benchmarked against other Christian schools, but are the top five strengths that emerged from your school's data and are specific to your school's unique profile). Your school's meaningful strengths are areas to affirm, share, and celebrate with your school community as well as external audiences.

Constructs are identified as Key Strengths and Key Growth Opportunities based on a standardized measure of all schools' scores, rather than the raw scores themselves. These strengths and growth opportunities can be interpreted as your school's unique profile among private Christian schools.



Professional Development

Professional development is provided on-site and is subject- and role-specific.



Qualified Staff

New teacher hires are credentialed (licensed/certified) and have classroom experience.



Community Engagement

The school engages with the surrounding community and regularly taps into community resources, including networking and resource-sharing with other schools.



Resource Constraints

The school has financial resources to operate effectively.



Supportive Leadership



Teachers and support staff trust their principal(s) and feel that school leaders “have our backs.” Leaders empower teachers and staff to make decisions.

Key Growth Opportunities

Below are five areas of your school that represent key growth opportunities in regard to creating and sustaining a flourishing school culture. These areas emerged from your school's overall FSCI profile (again, meaning these areas are *not* benchmarked against other Christian schools, but emerged from your school's data and are specific to your school's unique profile). These areas can serve as potential focus points for long-range planning and school improvement efforts.

Constructs are identified as Key Strengths and Key Growth Opportunities based on a standardized measure of all schools' scores, rather than the raw scores themselves. These strengths and growth opportunities can be interpreted as your school's unique profile among private Christian schools.



Resource Planning

Financial planning is an area of improvement for the school board, and/or strategic planning relative to finances or facilities is needed.



Stress

Ways to improve teachers' and leaders' well-being should be explored, as educators feel stressed or overwhelmed in their roles.



Questioning

Many students view Christians negatively, and are more likely to be facing a time of spiritual disengagement or doubt.



Responsiveness to Special Needs

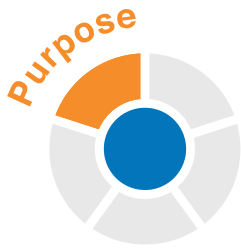
The way the school serves students with special needs can be improved, through efforts like greater collaboration among teachers and better processes for identifying and responding to student needs.



Outcomes Focus



Leadership may experience increased effectiveness by focusing more intentionally on outcomes (including student achievement) and results, rather than process and activity.



Purpose

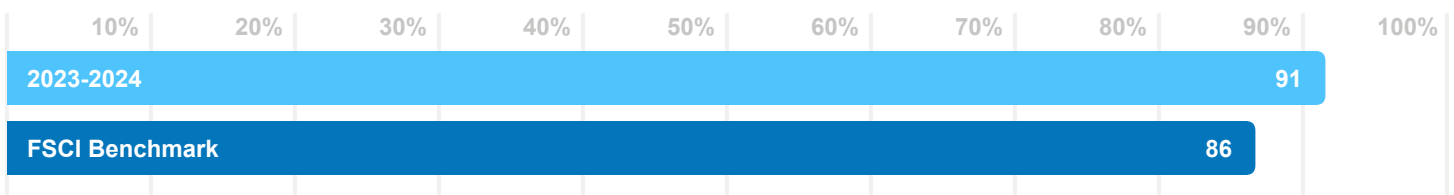
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Construct and benchmark scores are presented as raw scores converted to a 100-point scale (a common industry practice called criterion referencing). These scores give the reader some sense of how strongly respondents agreed with the items within a construct (school score), which is presented alongside the average respondent score in the normative sample (benchmark score). Benchmark data is not included for the purpose of scoring or ranking your school against other schools; rather, it is provided to help your school a) gauge priorities and b) track change over subsequent administrations of the FSCI at your school.

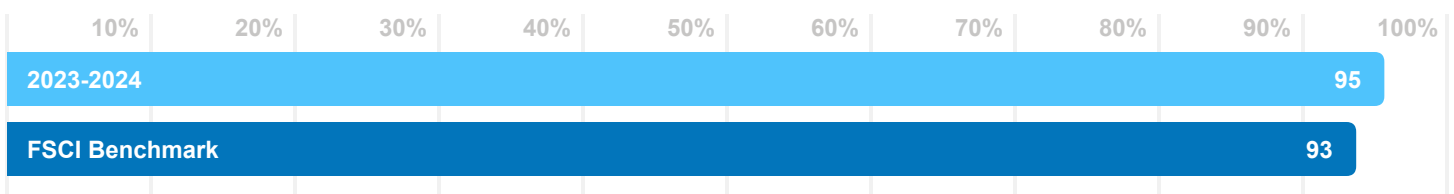
God's Story

Students believe they are a part of God’s bigger plan and can be used by him to “make a difference.”



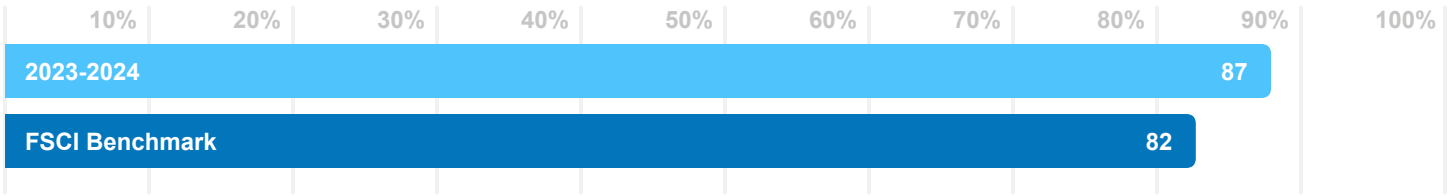
Holistic Teaching

Teaching involves helping students develop spiritually and emotionally (teaching the heart and soul, as well as the mind).



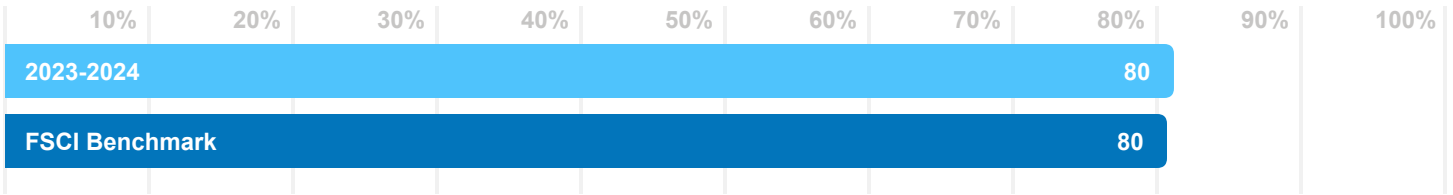
Integrated Worldview

Christian worldview changes how we educate; there is no such thing as a secular sphere.



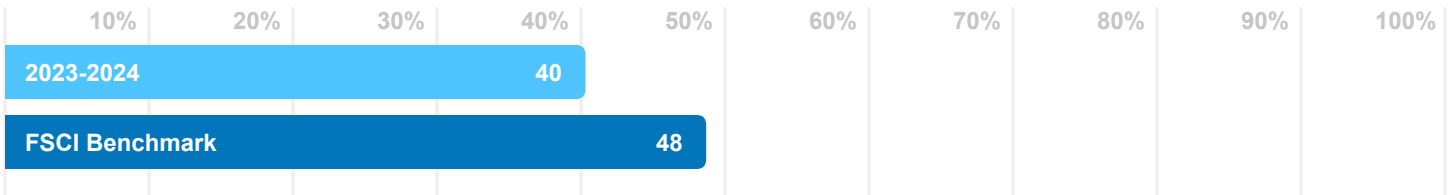
Partnership

Families feel they are a part of the school’s mission, and that their child’s spiritual development requires their partnering with and being involved at the school.



Questioning

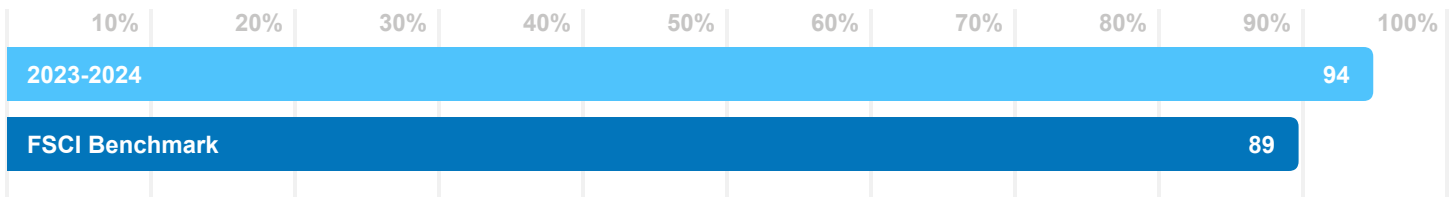
Students have doubts about their faith, lack time to pray or study the Bible, and feel that most Christians are too judgmental.*



* The higher the score on this construct, the more respondents disagreed with the construct’s items. Thus, in general, a higher score would mean that fewer respondents had doubts about their faith, lacked time to pray or study the Bible, and/or felt that most Christians are too judgmental. However, schools should consider this specific construct of Questioning in light of their mission and vision for faith formation and discipleship; in other words, student questioning may not be viewed as something problematic to be “solved,” but rather as an opportunity to meaningfully engage students in mentorship, discussion, and other life-on-life discipleship efforts.

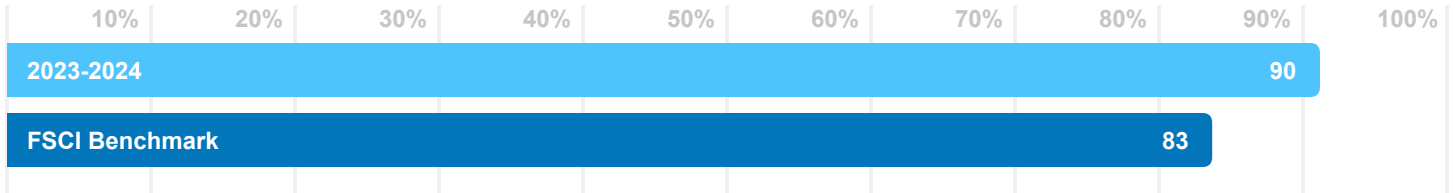
Responsibility

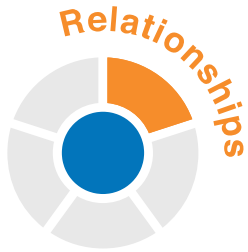
Leaders, teachers, and support staff feel a sense of shared ownership for school mission, success, and improvement.



Spiritual Formation

Alumni report that their Christian faith is stronger thanks to attending a Christian school, and they believe people can change with God’s help.





Relationships

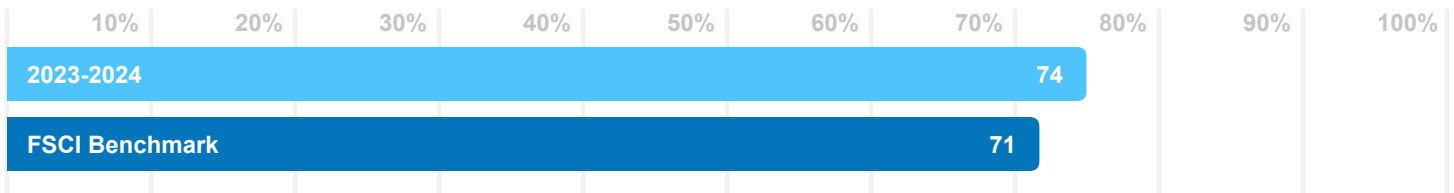
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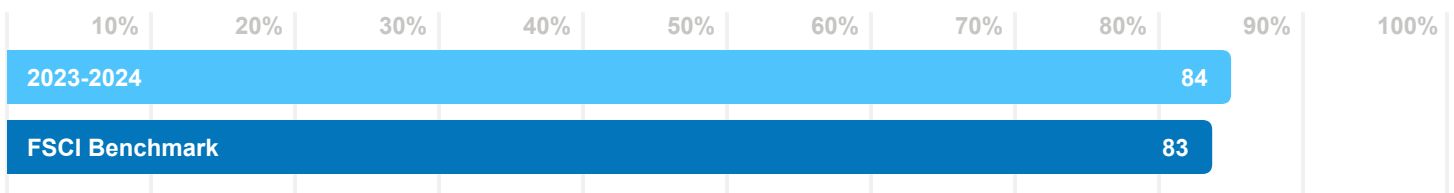
Caring Environment

Teachers were kind, students felt included in class, and students were protected from bullying.



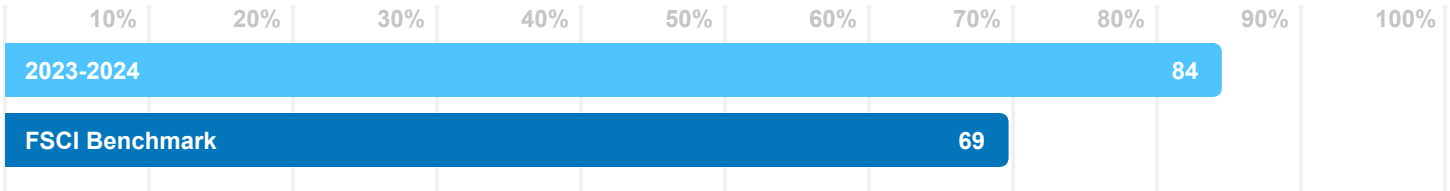
Christlike Teachers

Teachers show Christlike love, kindness, and care to students. Families feel students are cared about individually, including their spiritual development.



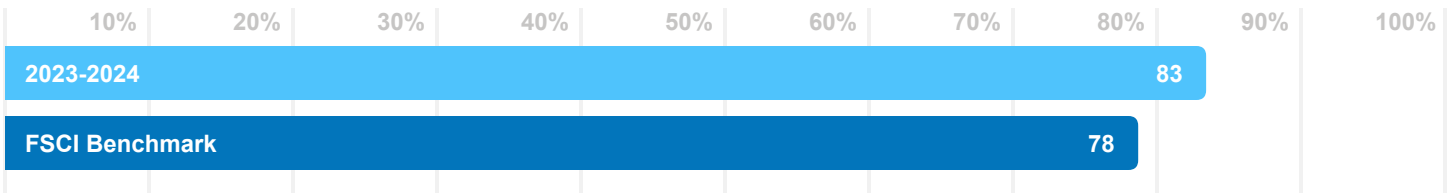
Community Engagement

The school engages with the surrounding community and local churches, and regularly taps into community resources including networking and resource-sharing with other schools.



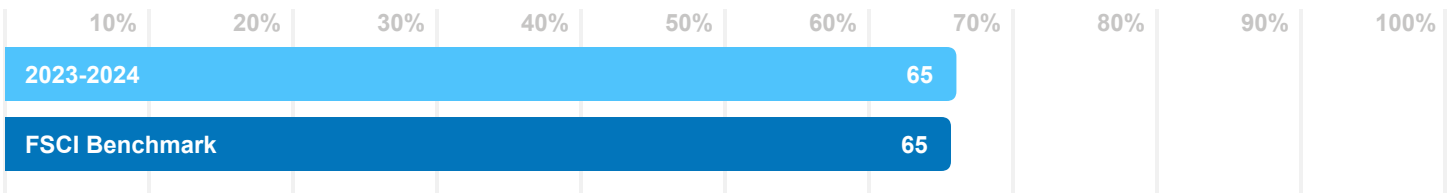
Family Relationships

Teachers “get to know” families, and frequent and systemic communication facilitates positive relationships.



Insular Culture

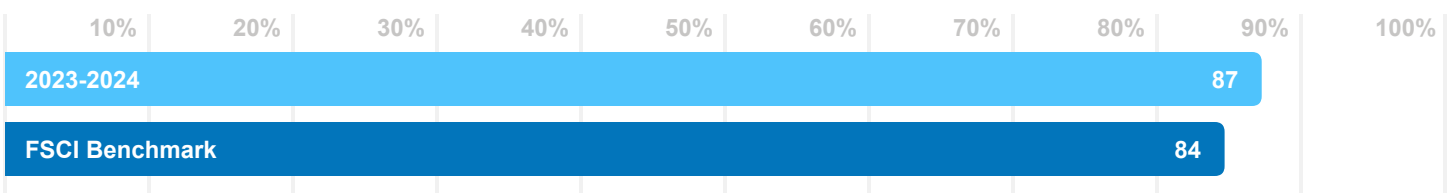
The school shields students from the world’s brokenness, the school is independent from the surrounding community, and/or the student body lacks diversity.*



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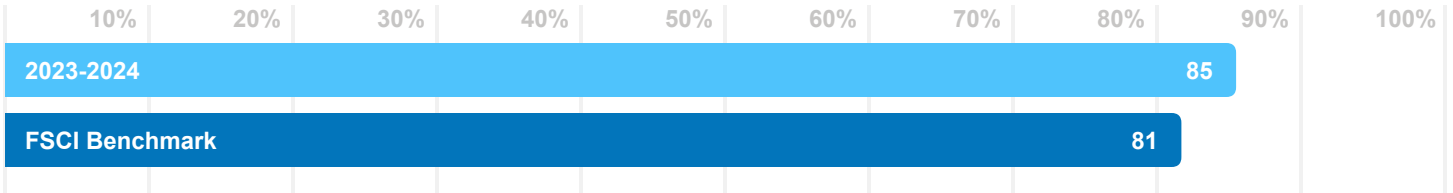
Leadership Interdependence

Board members have diverse backgrounds, and are transparent about and rely on others to offset their weaknesses.



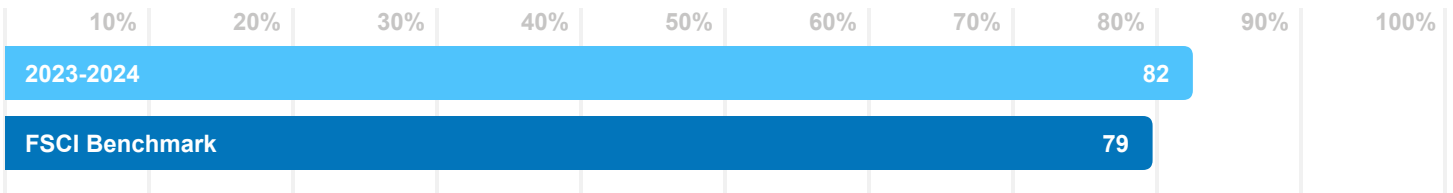
Mentoring Students

Staff point out talent in each student, help students see how they fit in God’s bigger plan, and are aware of students’ struggles at school or home.



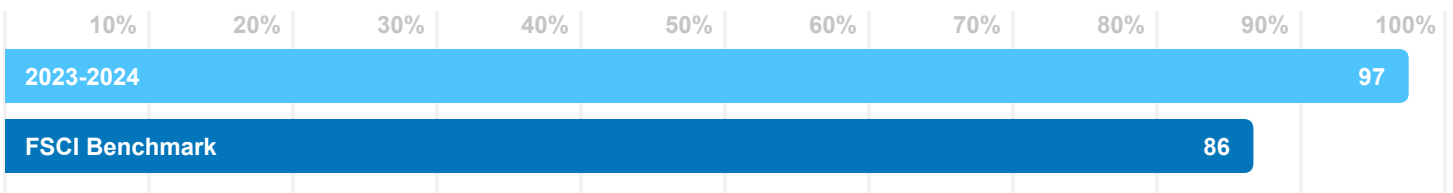
Prosocial Orientation

Students not only enjoy helping others, but also are known by others (e.g., peers) for showing love and care.



Supportive Leadership

Principals are trusted, teachers feel that leaders “have our backs,” and leaders empower teachers and staff to make decisions.





Teaching & Learning

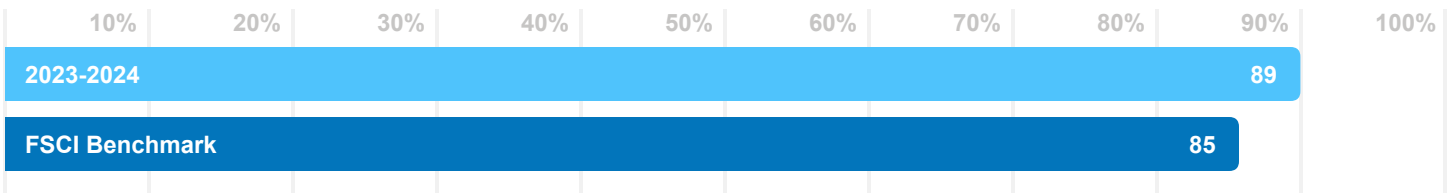
Schools are of course known as sites of learning for students. But if school cultures are to flourish, schools and educators themselves must also engage in learning. In fact, a school culture in which educators are committed to ongoing learning and improvement is linked to flourishing not only for the school and educators, but also for students.

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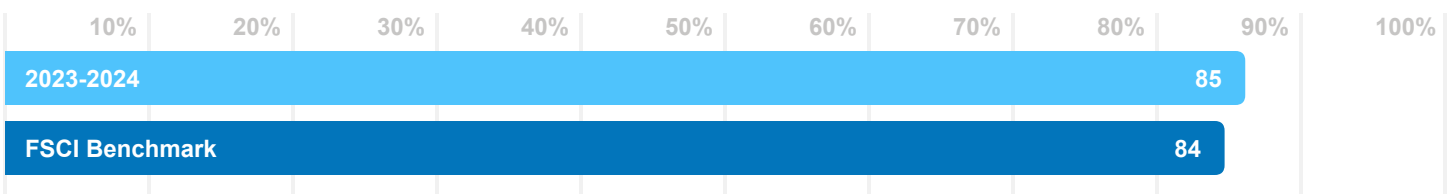
Behaviors for Learning

The classroom is orderly and well-managed, and teachers are organized and consistent in supporting student behaviors that contribute to learning.



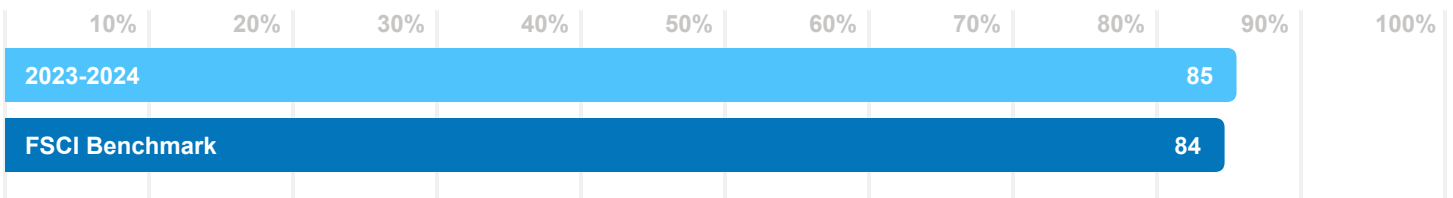
Best Practice Orientation

Keeping up with best practices is prioritized and resources for doing so can be identified.



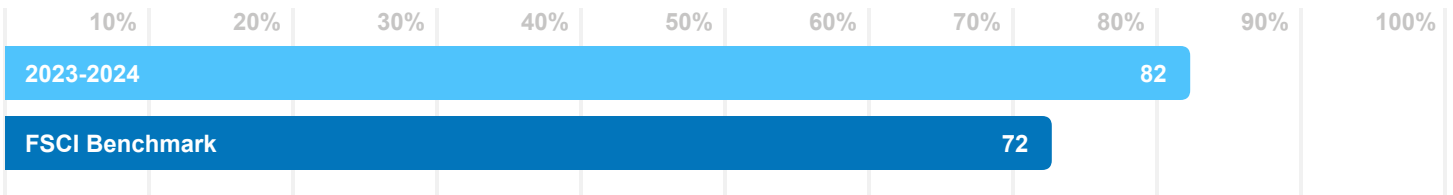
Collaboration

Learning from and with other teachers drives and inspires better teaching.



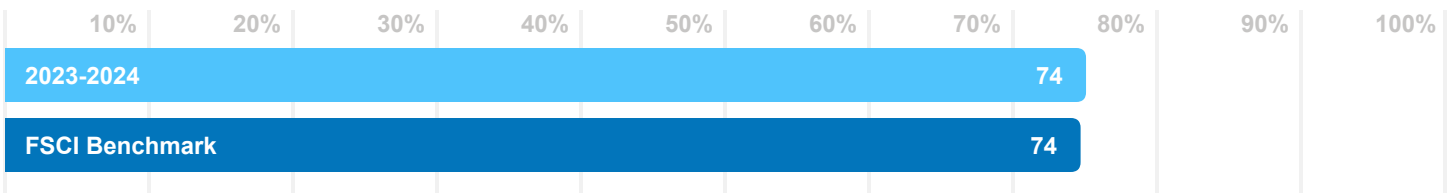
Culture of Improvement

Guided by school leadership and focused on the future, the school is continually improving/makes necessary changes to improve.



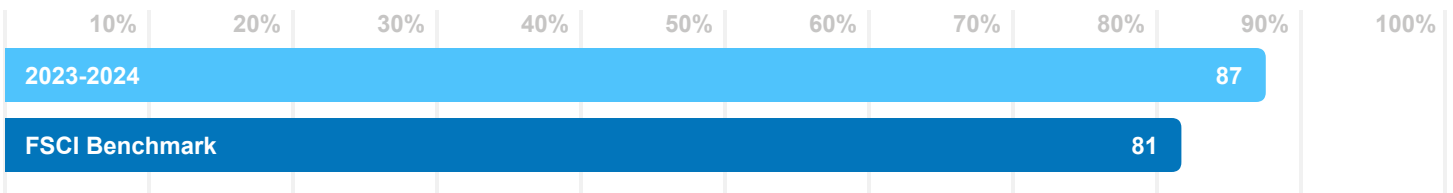
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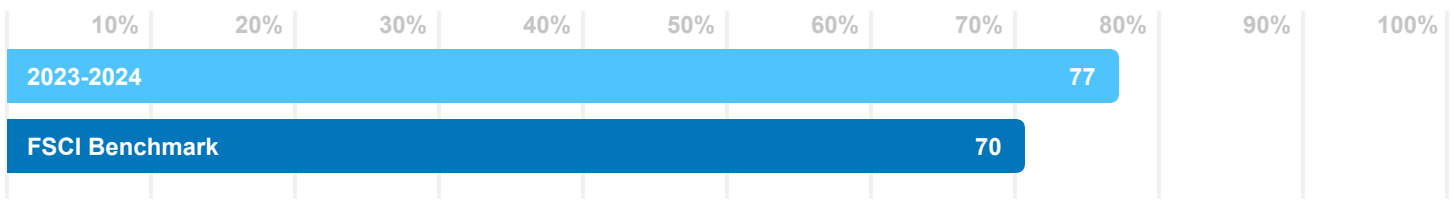
Engaged Learning

Students engage in activities that nurture critical thinking, evaluating information, and problem solving.



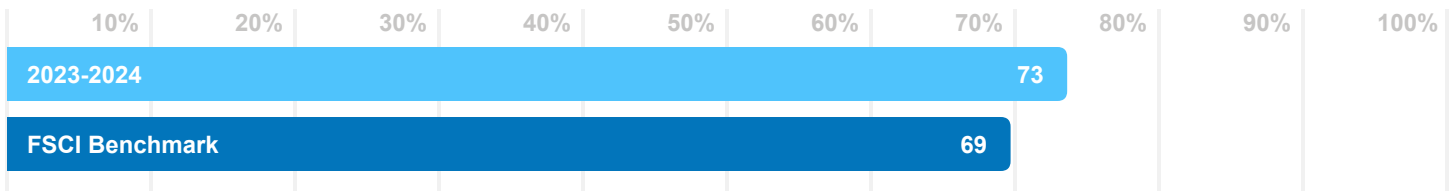
Feedback

Feedback on teaching practice and classroom management is given regularly to facilitate adjustments in real-time.



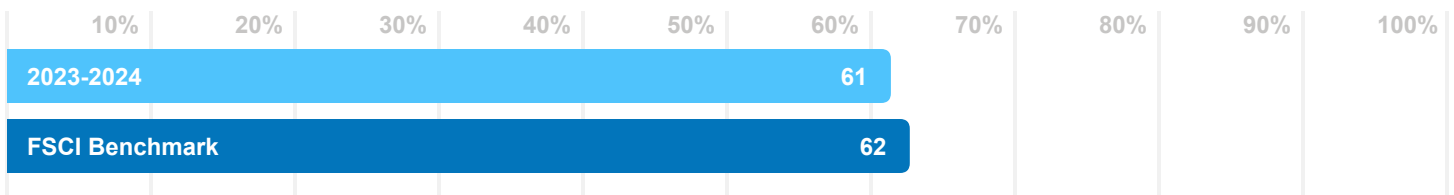
Individualized Instruction

Students are helped to figure out how they learn best and to identify their natural strengths.



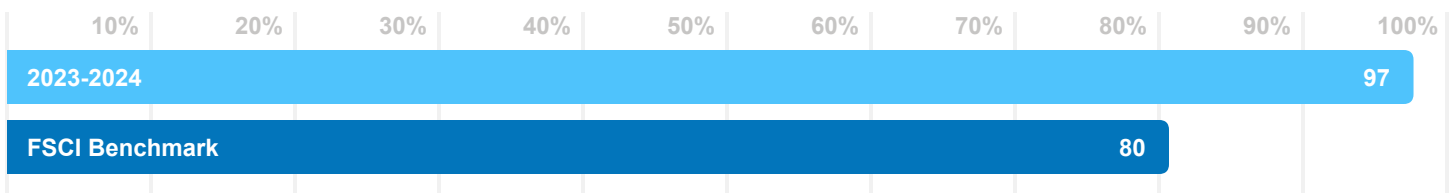
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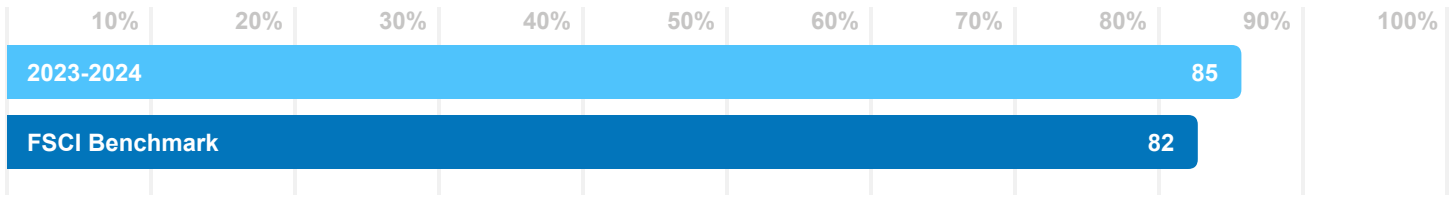
Professional Development

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Systems Thinking

When planning for change, the potential impact on the school, the classroom, students, and the overall system are considered.





Expertise & Resources

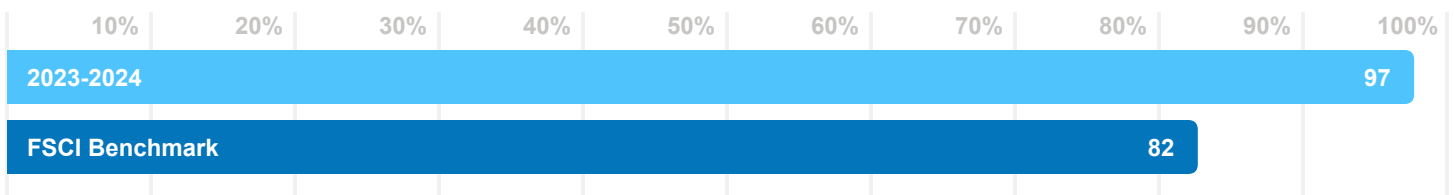
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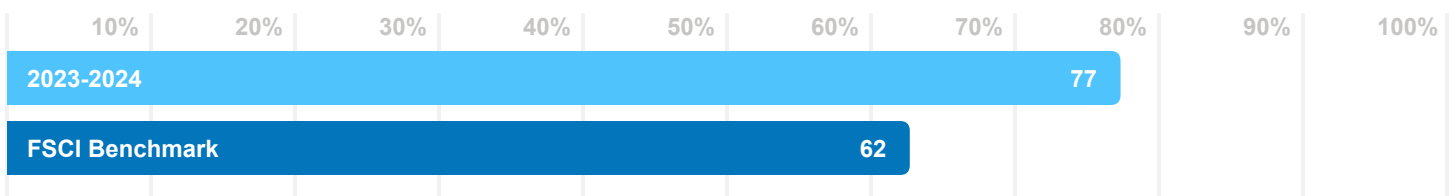
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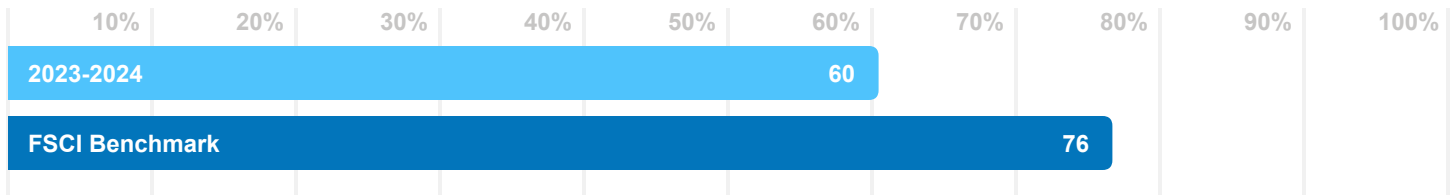
Resource Constraints

The school has financial resources to operate effectively; or, we could be more effective as a school if not for fiscal constraints, and we lack the resources we need to make changes in our school.



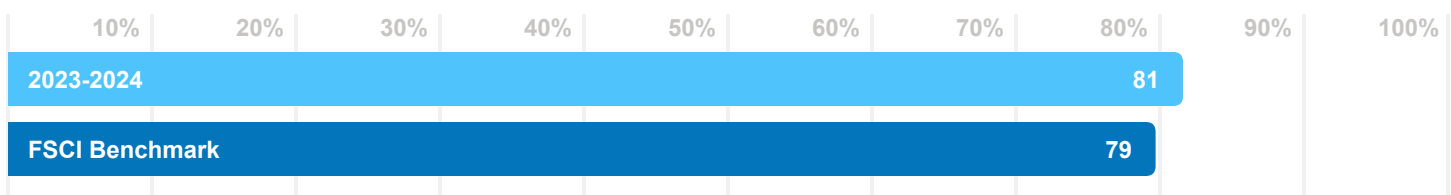
Resource Planning

A strategic financial plan and master facilities plan is in place, and financial planning is a strength of the board.



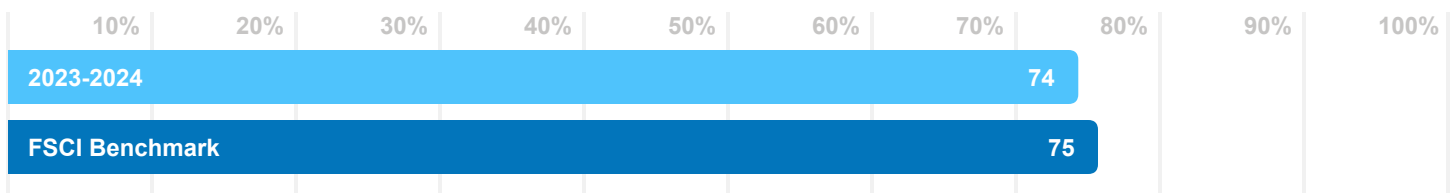
Resources

Materials and resources for teaching, including technology, are sufficient, and the school building is in good physical condition.



Responsiveness to Special Needs

Teaching staff works together to serve students with special needs, aided by processes and resources for identifying and responding to those needs.





Well-Being

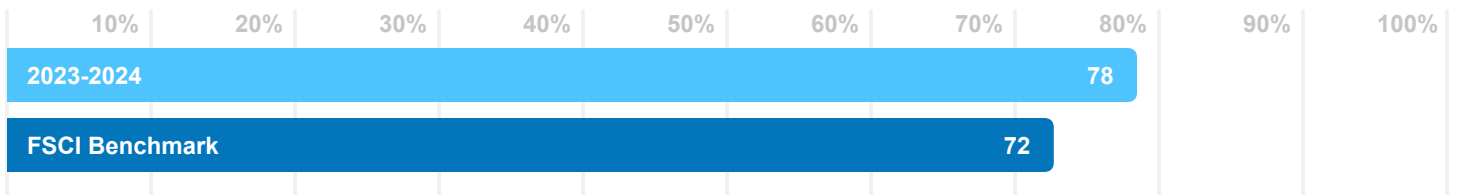
Well-being is an important domain for both student and educator flourishing. The FSCI identified three constructs related to well-being—one for teachers and leaders (Stress), and two for students (Healthy Living and Resilience). This domain and related constructs demonstrate that the well-being of educators and students is not a secondary concern—but an essential

contributor to flourishing outcomes.

Construct and benchmark scores are presented as raw scores converted to a 100-point scale (a common industry practice called criterion referencing). These scores give the reader some sense of how strongly respondents agreed with the items within a construct (school score), which is presented alongside the average respondent score in the normative sample (benchmark score). Benchmark data is not included for the purpose of scoring or ranking your school against other schools; rather, it is provided to help your school a) gauge priorities and b) track change over subsequent administrations of the FSCI at your school.

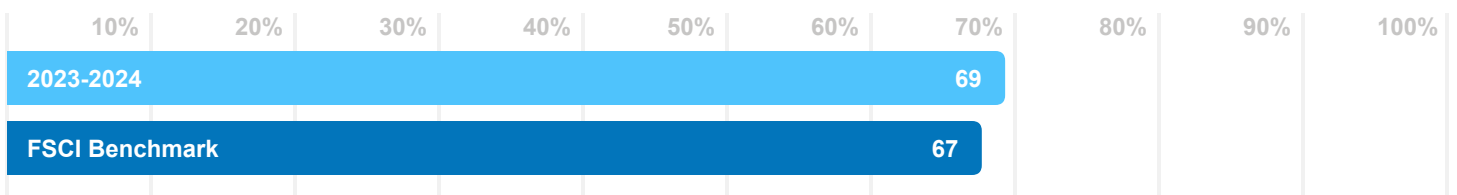
Healthy Living

Students are happy with their physical health, including sufficient exercise and a healthy diet.



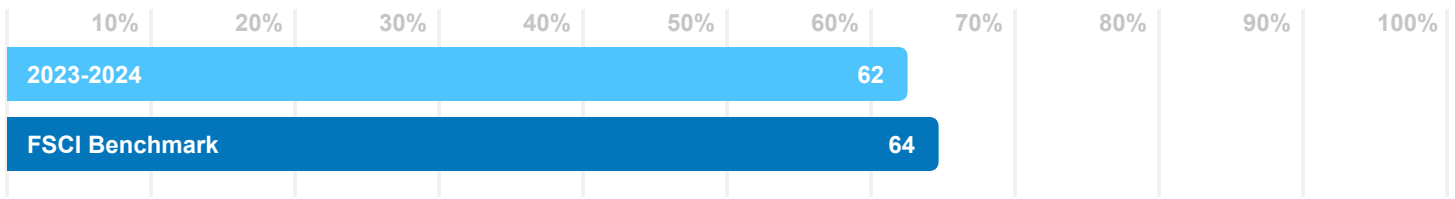
Resilience

Students handle stress effectively and respond well to/bounce back from difficult situations.



Stress

Constant feelings of stress and being overwhelmed accompany a lack of time to prepare for instruction (Teachers) or to focus on physical health (Leaders).*



* The higher the score on this construct, the more respondents disagreed with the construct's items. Thus, in general, a higher score would mean that fewer respondents felt constantly stressed and overwhelmed.

Responding to Your School's Results

Responding to Meaningful Strengths

This report shared five strengths of your school identified by the FSCI in regard to creating and sustaining a flourishing school culture. These areas emerged from your school's overall FSCI profile (meaning these areas are *not* benchmarked against other Christian schools, but are the top five strengths that emerged from your school's data and are specific to your school's unique profile). These strengths are unique to your school and, as such, represent areas to affirm, share, and celebrate with your school community, as well as external audiences. Some suggestions for how to do this are:

- **Share your school's strengths.** School families will want to know what makes their children's school unique. Consider communicating these research-based findings through school correspondence, on social media, and at school gatherings.
- **Celebrate internally.** Provide positive feedback to school constituents who contribute directly or indirectly to making these areas key strengths of your school.
- **Communicate externally.** External stakeholders should know your school cares about flourishing, and the FSCI provides quantitative validation of your school's success in these areas. Along these lines, determine which of these strengths could be shared in marketing to/recruitment of prospective students and families.
- **Build on momentum.** Discuss with relevant internal stakeholders (board, leaders, staff) ways in which areas of strength can be reinforced and built out further.
- **Go deeper.** Study whether any quantifiable outcomes that your school tracks can be tied to the strengths identified by the FSCI, and/or conduct qualitative interviews or focus groups with stakeholders around these strengths. This will give you a greater understanding of why and how these are areas of strength for your school.
- **Track growth.** Keep track of any changes, programs, and initiatives, so you can understand what might be driving any shifts in future years' results.

Responding to Key Growth Opportunities

This report shared five areas of your school that represent key growth opportunities identified by the FSCI, in regard to creating and sustaining a flourishing school culture (again, meaning these areas are *not* benchmarked against other Christian schools, but emerged from your school's data and are specific to your school's unique profile). These areas can serve as potential focus points for long-range planning and school improvement efforts. Some suggestions for how to do this are:

- **Reflect together.** Every school has its own areas where focused efforts will deliver a meaningful return, and the FSCI helps to identify those areas. Instead of thinking of these areas as "problems" to solve, gather a group of various stakeholders and discuss what it might look like to grow constructively in these areas.

- **Go deeper.** Study whether any quantifiable outcomes that your school tracks can be tied to areas for growth identified by the FSCI, and/or conduct qualitative interviews or focus groups with stakeholders around these areas. This will give you a greater understanding of why these are areas for growth in your school, as well as how to address them successfully.
- **Use insights in existing efforts.** Whether in strategic planning, school improvement planning, or accreditation efforts, the growth opportunities identified by the FSCI can help inform your ongoing efforts to shape and strengthen your school culture.
- **Develop new targeted efforts.** Consider developing a new program or initiative to address a key growth opportunity identified by the FSCI. Start by researching best practice in this area and/or visiting other schools with demonstrated success in this area. Be sure to include input from multiple stakeholders in the development process for new programs and initiatives.
- **Track growth.** Keep track of any changes, programs, and initiatives, so you can understand what might be driving any shifts in future years' results.

Responding to Other Profile Results

FSCI research demonstrates that school flourishing is not “one-size-fits-all.” Every school has a different culture profile, along with potentially different ways of arriving at the same flourishing outcomes. Thus, the benchmark results based on all participating schools are not included for the purpose of scoring or ranking your school against other schools. Rather, they are provided to your school for two key reasons:

1. **To help your school gauge priorities**, by providing your school with data about areas of relative strength and areas to target for growth. It could be said that the FSCI takes the cultural “temperature” of your school in these areas. To learn more, and as mentioned above, consider “going deeper” for constructs that relate to school priorities (i.e. by studying related quantifiable outcomes that your school tracks and/or conducting qualitative interviews or focus groups with stakeholders).
2. **To provide benchmark data for each construct**, so that you can track any changes over time as measured by repeat assessment with the FSCI. In order to do this—as suggested above—keep track of any changes, programs, and initiatives, so you can understand what might be driving any shifts in future years' results.

Finally, while reviewing your school's profile results, **consult the FSCI national report on an annual basis** for linkages identified between constructs and flourishing outcomes. If your school's areas of strength and/or growth opportunities identified by the FSCI match the outcome linkages highlighted in the national report, you may wish to prioritize those in terms of investing energy and resources, given the predictive nature of those linkages.

For More Information

For more information about the FSCI, as well as to download the FSCI national report, *Flourishing Schools: Research on Christian School Culture and Community*, visit <https://community.acsi.org/flourishingschools/home>. Specific questions regarding the FSCI and/or your school's results can be directed to research@acsi.org.

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