

Engaging our Students in a Faith Journey





Research indicates that ...

- Less than 25% of church membership spend daily devotional time
- Around 62% of Adventist youth leave the church by the time they are 30
- 75% of those who stay in the church aged 15-35 feel no assurance of salvation
- Society is becoming increasingly secularised
- Moral relativism is becoming the dominant paradigm
- Many people seem to come into the church without coming into Christ
- Doctrinal disagreement is not the major reason for leaving the church

School Climate

- School Satisfaction
- Relationships with teachers
- Connectedness to School
- Order, Safety & Discipline
- Academic Support
- Physical appearance of school
- Social atmosphere
- Participation in school activities
- Satisfaction with schoolwork
- Parental involvement



- academic achievement
- learning motivation
- school attendance
- Student involvement
- self-esteem
- depressive symptoms
- school delinquency
- general health outcomes
- risk taking behaviour
- general classroom behaviour
- resilience
- bullying perpetration
- teacher retention rates

Connections to School Climate (Correlates)



Faith Engagement

- Attitudes towards faith
- School impact on my faith
- Personal faith engagement



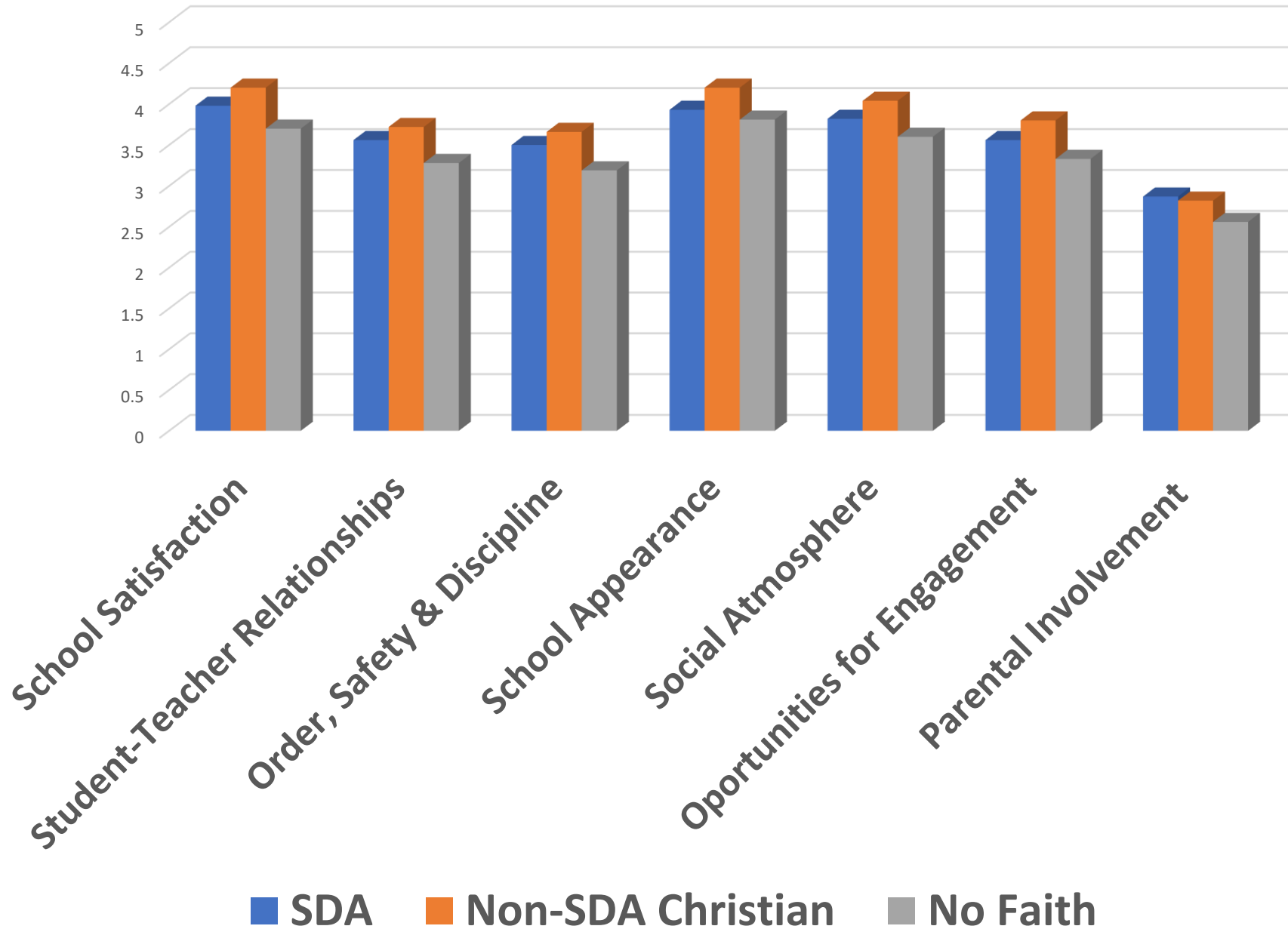
School Satisfaction and School Climate Scales - 2018

Scale	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
School Satisfaction	344	3.6563	.85880
Student-Teacher Relationships	344	3.6493	.80829
Connection to School	344	3.1541	.94562
Academic Support	344	3.9993	.74439
Order, Safety & Discipline	345	3.5899	.86517
School Appearance	345	3.9761	.71399
Social Atmosphere	345	3.8174	.90781
Perceived Exclusion	346	2.9538	.98120
Opportunities for Engagement	346	3.6002	.84007
Parental Involvement	347	2.8405	.98358
Academic Satisfaction	347	2.9654	1.19256

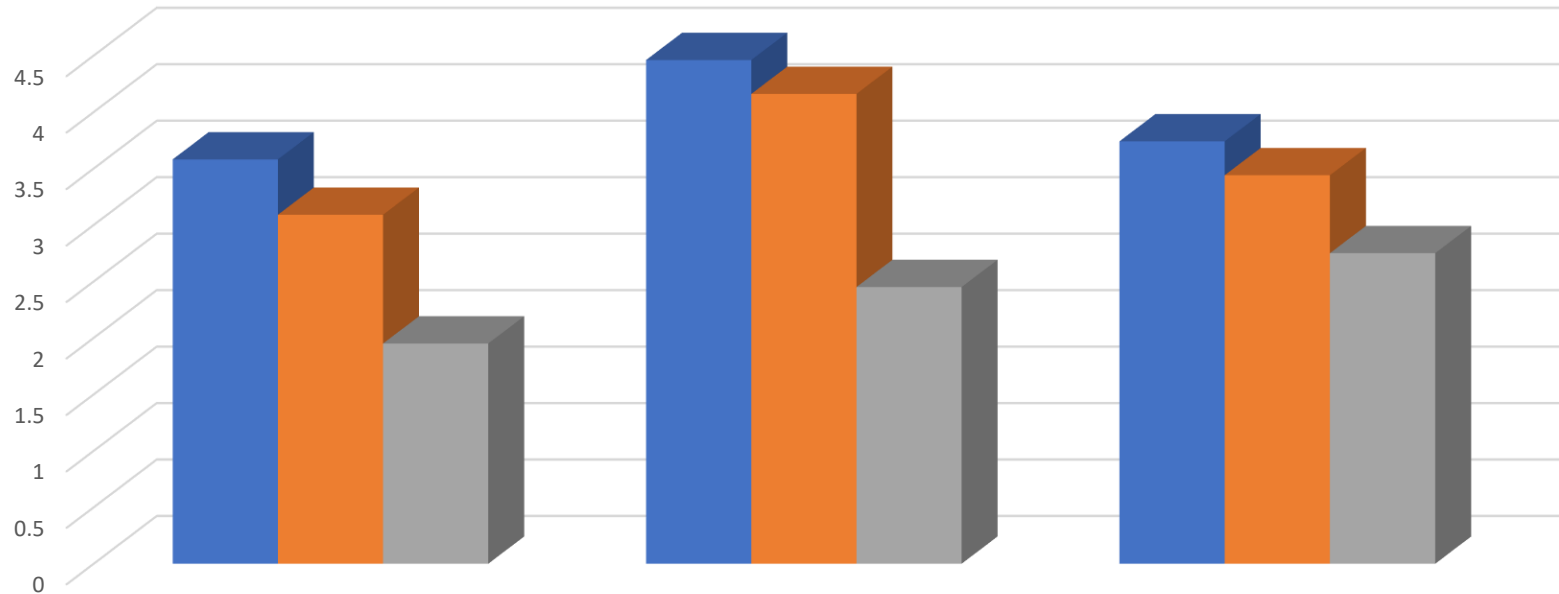
Overall Mean of Faith Engagement Scales

Scale	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal Faith Engagement	346	3.1091	1.10164
Attitudes to Christian Practice	346	3.8775	1.22874
School Influences on my Faith	347	3.4967	.84992

School Climate by Faith Background



Faith Engagement by Faith Background



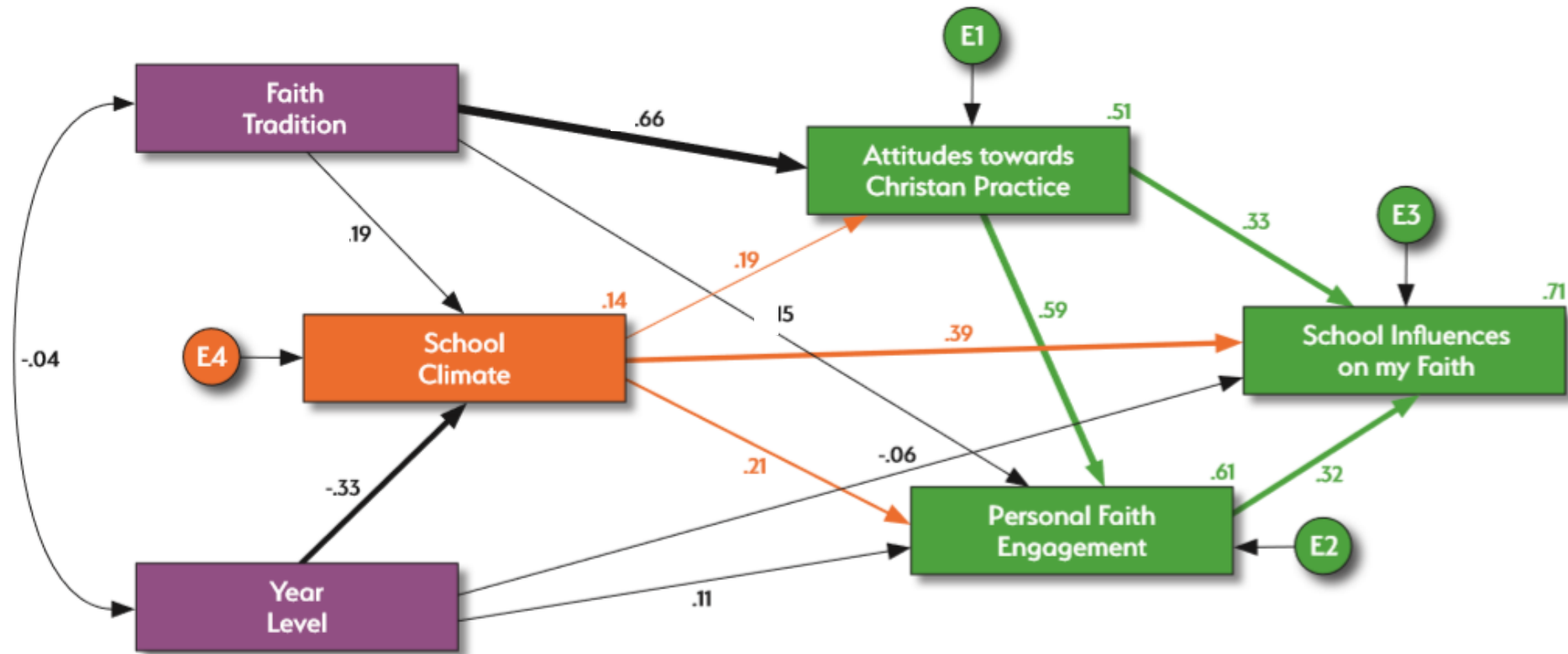
Personal Faith
Engagement

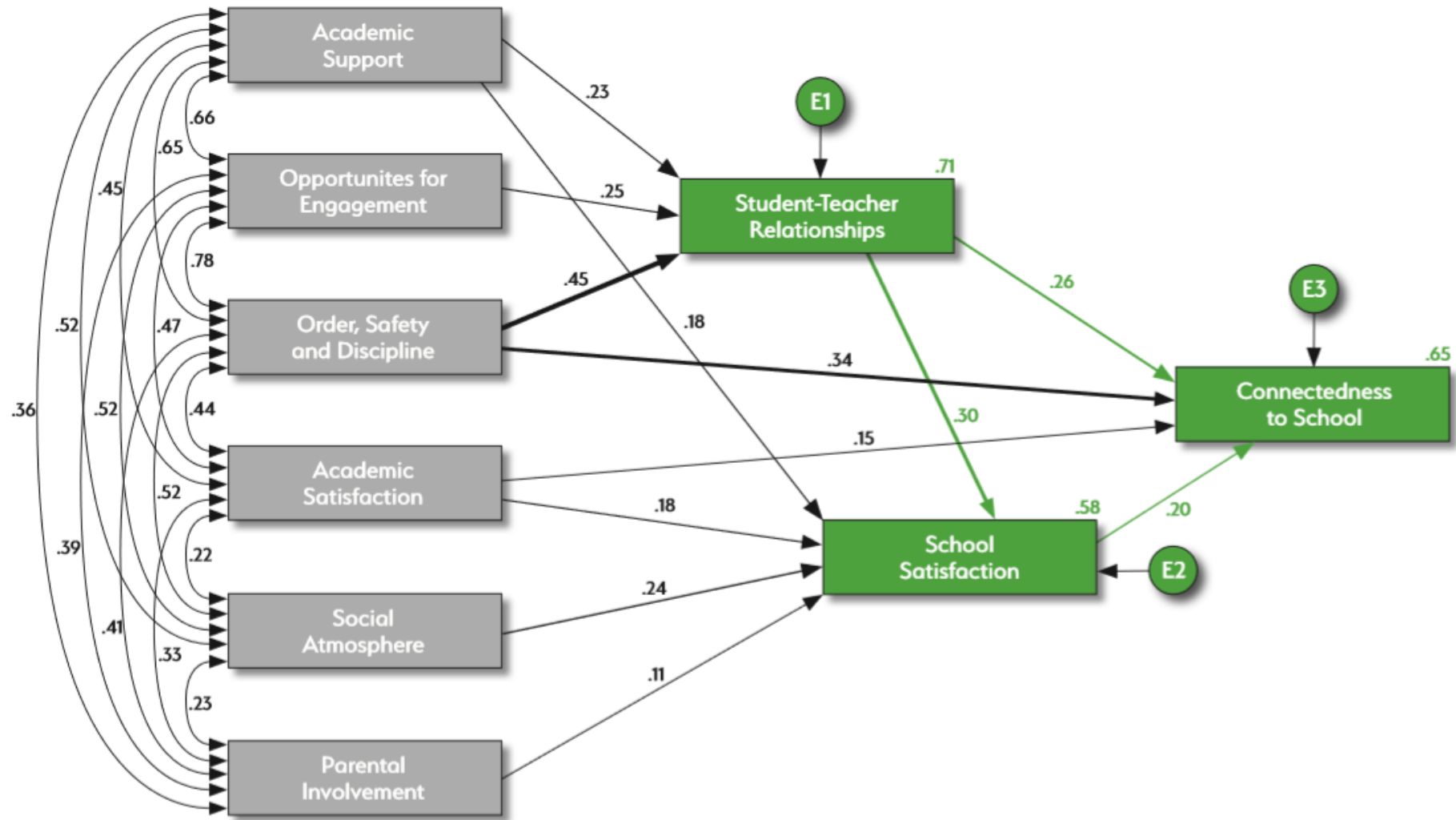
Attitudes
Towards
Christian
Practice

School
Influences on
my Faith

■ SDA **■ Non-SDA Christian** **■ No Faith**

School Climate Variables	Faith Engagement Variables		Correlations (Pearson)
Student-Teacher Relationships	Personal Faith Engagement	.303	small r = .10 to .29; medium r = .30 to .49 large r = .50 to 1.0
Student-Teacher Relationships	School Influences on my Faith	.565	
Connection to School	Attitudes to Christian Practice	.305	
Connection to School	Personal Faith Engagement	.350	
Connection to School	School Influences on my Faith	.619	
School Rules, Safety, Discipline	School Influences on my Faith	.578	
Opportunities for Engagement	School Influences on my Faith	.613	





Student Comments: What makes the biggest positive difference in my faith journey, at school? (2018-2019 project)

- the teacher taking a personal interest in their life;
- the chance to be open, honest and 'different';
- respecting their personal journey;
- teachers sharing their personal journey;
- authentic stories of people and the difference faith made;
- student involvement & personal sharing;
- no pressure!

2018-2019

One Adventist School in NSW – 368 participating students

2021-2026

25 schools across the South Pacific Division (K-12)

Australia	6 schools
Fiji	1 schools
New Zealand	7 schools
PNG	6 schools
Samoa	1 school
Solomon Is.	2 schools
Tonga	1 school
Vanuatu	1 school



Project Purpose: 2021-2026

What can Adventist Schools in the South Pacific Division do to enhance student engagement in a meaningful faith journey?

Faith Engagement

- Attitudes towards faith
- School impact on my faith
- Personal faith engagement

- Student perception of parental interest in their faith journey



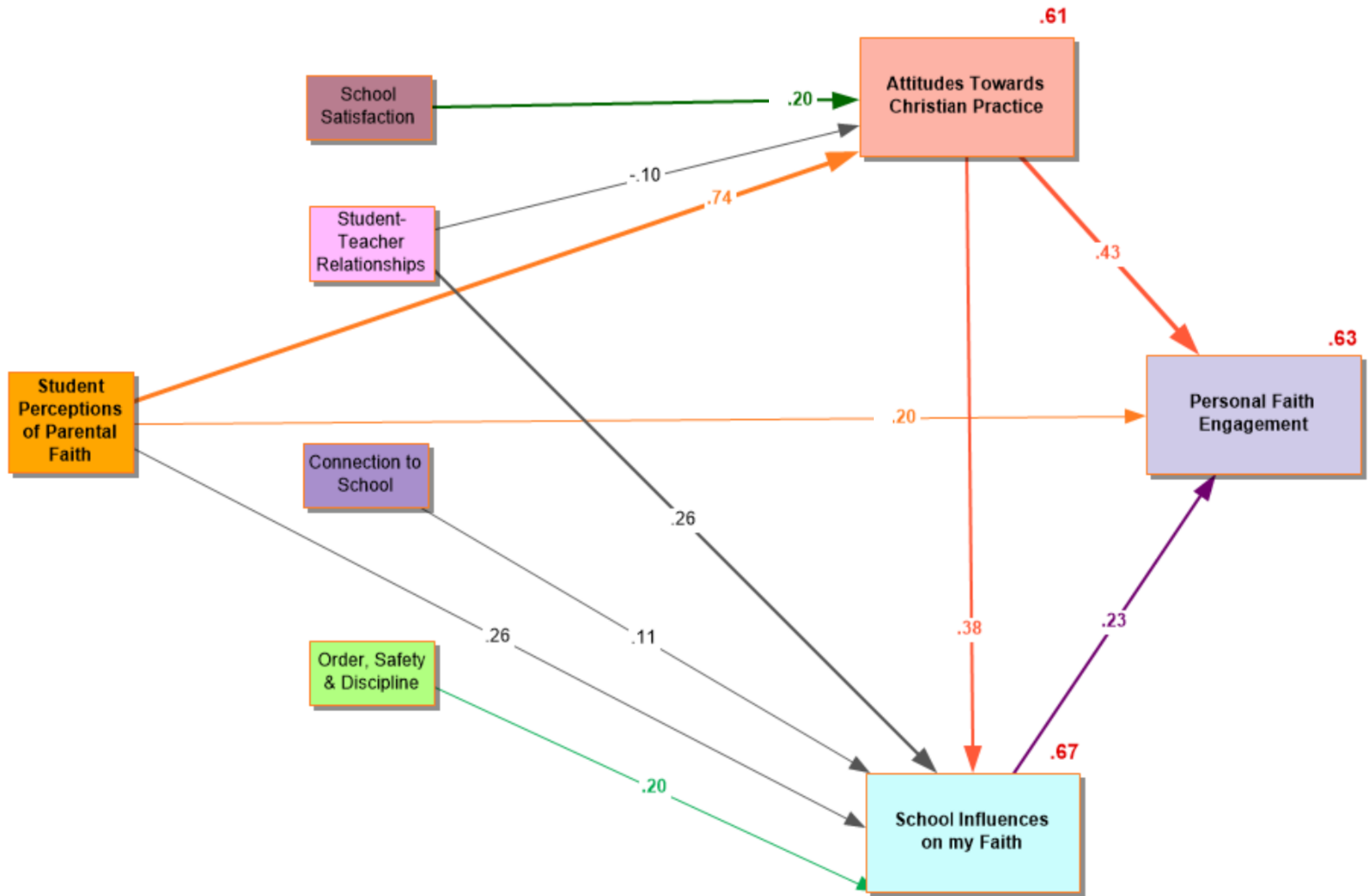
44 focus groups across six countries

Examples of Correlations between Faith Engagement & School Climate

	School Satisfaction	Student Teacher Relationship	School Connectedness	Safety & Discipline	Participation & Engagement
Attitudes to Christian Practice	.418	.262	.372	.407	.320
Personal Faith Engagement	.456	.354	.450	.427	.336
School Impact on Personal Faith	.604	.577	.614	.638	.525

Correlations (Pearson)

small $r = .10$ to $.29$; medium $r = .30$ to $.49$ large $r = .50$ to 1.0



“And the fact that the teachers are so connected with God, and our Christian living teacher, for instance, has walked the journey with God for years and is willing to share her experiences with us so that we may get to know God better. So that's pretty special.”

(Year 11-13 group, NZ)

“All the teachers love God and have their own personal relationship with Him. They do a good job at turning lessons into a life lesson with Christian morals.”

(Year 9 male, Australia)

'Mr S' letting us ask questions and being okay with us having differences.

[Yr 9, Male, Australia]

Open discussions in classes about God and being able to ask questions that wouldn't usually be asked.

[Yr 10, Female, Australia]

Some teachers will strike up faith based conversations in which they ask for our personal opinions in a genuine manner.

[Yr 11, Male, New Zealand]

Teachers let us ask questions and try to answer as many as possible. Some teachers also take time out of their busy schedules to help us in our faith journey. When teachers are interested in our beliefs and other practices and show knowledge in various areas and do not dismiss our points, that also shows that teachers genuinely care about our faith journey.

(Age 13, Male, Australia)

The parts of school life that helps build my faith is some of the chapels, teachers who are genuinely open minded, non judgemental and help me learn new things in terms of God and faith. Teachers that share their journeys and do not force religion upon me and instead are curious about my faith, influence me positively, causing me to want to learn more about other ideas and beliefs.

(Age 13, Female, Australia)

They talk in what I believe in, and what similarities I have in my culture compared to the Christian world.

[Yr 9, Female, Australia]

They asked me what belief I am, if I say Hindu, some teachers say, 'isn't that the oldest religion'. Each teacher knows that my faith is growing by the day goes past.

[Yr 10, Male, Australia]

“Well, I am going through family struggles at the moment and it's stopping me from focusing on school, focusing on God. I always get told to not let what I go through stop me but it's very hard when I don't have the right people supporting me especially living away from my Mama. I guess all I want is for someone to encourage me each day and let me know that God is listening and God is there for me because sometimes my faith just comes and goes.”

(Age 18, Female, New Zealand)

They're always open and they've always got time, even if they have something on, they will stop it for a few minutes to help explain. Or if they... Sometimes teachers don't always know the answers and so they sometimes open the Bible themselves and look at it and they don't rush you.

[Australia, year 7-8]

This one teacher just asks me sometimes, 'how are you doing'?

[Year 8, Australia]

... one teacher has taken ... personal interest in my educational journey and she's been pretty consistent. Every year she asks me how I'm going or what I'm doing and where I want to go.

[Year 12, Australia]

One teacher takes Bible studies for myself and a group of friends during a lunchtime every week.

[Yr 10, Male]

“Bible studies after school on Fridays ...”

[Yr 5, Male]

“The year 9 challenge class.”

[Yr 10, Male]

Student 1

The school camp we went on this year, we all got together, in morning and at night, to do a Bible study as a class and work with the teachers and they'd share their testimony and their story and it just brings us all closer together. We're so much closer, now, than what we were because of the camp and because we got all brought together.

Student 2

And the activities that we do on camp, whether it be building each other up and trying to find each other's strengths and weaknesses and there was certain trust exercises that we had to do that brought us all together, and just the teachers helping us with that. And afterwards, the Bible studies that we did were always really fun and they weren't just sitting there trying to tell adults, they were trying to involve us with it.

Student 3

There's some songs, as well, that they brought in the guitars and ukuleles and stuff and sang songs like that. Head school leader did that.

[Year 7-8, Australia – non-faith group]

Student 1

I enjoy chapel. It's one of my favorites. Just listening. No one else is talking or interrupting, most of the time, and the people who are speaking the stories are entertaining and really cool.

Student 2

It's led by the year 12 students. I do I like that because it's the students telling their journey and their story with God, and yeah, I look up to that.

Student 3

I think it's pretty fascinating because you see these kids every day and you don't really think that they have a backstory, and then they go up and tell that about themselves, and yeah.

[Year 8-9]

And I haven't been able to ask my pastor because ... I don't know why. I just find it hard to talk to him. But our chaplain, Pastor L, he's really opened up to me. So I was able to ask him about baptism and I'm currently sort of doing studies. We're still trying to figure out when we can chat about it. [Yr 6, Female, New Zealand]

Wednesdays we have group bible studies and either Wednesday afternoons or Thursday afternoons, Miss C [Chaplain] comes in and I have private Bible studies with her and my faith grows. [Yr 4-6 group, Australia]

What could the school do to support you, once you have finished school?

... I could probably go to revisit the chaplain again, probably ask him for more advice or even just other teachers that I know that have a relationship with God and then just have a real big, real big, deep and meaningful talk about what it is to be in that journey and how I'm going in my journey and whether if I need them to help to pick me up.

[Yr 13, New Zealand]

We learn about the same stories all the time it gets boring no one cares anymore we need to learn about different things not the same boring stuff.
[Yr 8]

Be less pushy ... it comes across as harsh and pressuring.
[Yr 12]

Not be so forceful sometimes. Some people need to understand that some personal journeys take different amounts of time.
[Yr 12]

I think, I feel like there's a lot of double standards. If we are late to class, it's a big deal. Whereas I know that there's some teachers that are usually late and they just have different excuses every time. And it's just, it would be nice if we were on the same level and we were treated all fairly because it's not fair that they're allowed to be late, whereas we are not. Even though if they're late, it's impactful because they can't teach us. Whereas if we are late, we're not impacting anyone because we're just learning. [Year 11]

If the teacher is strict and ... I don't know. This one teacher, he burns people ... [Year 12]

When I had to go to detention, I had to write notes. And on it, it said, "God wouldn't want me to wear that uniform". [Year 11]

Data Collection 2023-2024

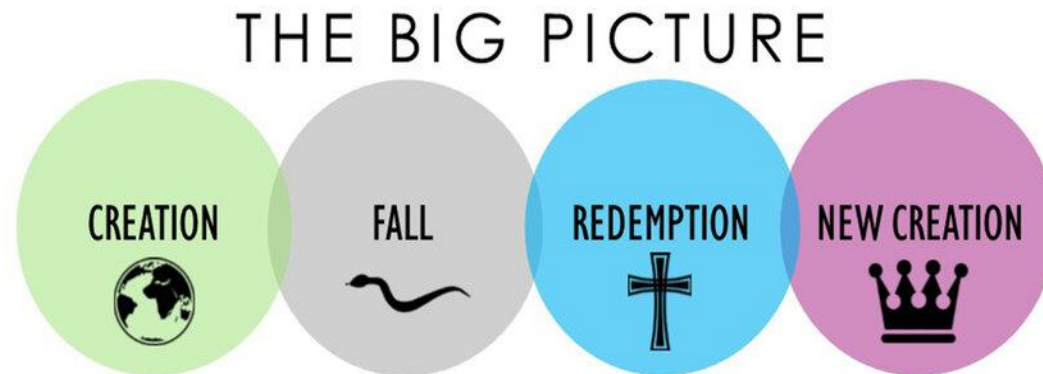
- Parental influences on faith engagement
- Classroom management approaches that make a difference
- Connectedness & belonging
- The lived experience of those not from a faith background

Belonging & Connectedness

- Common identity
- Equitable treatment
- Psychological Safety
- Needed by the group
- Ceremonies, rituals & routines



- Children/youth need to see the ways in which teachers are responding to God's story.
- Children/youth need to understanding how they fit into God's story.





“Every youth, every child, has a work to do for the honour of God and the uplifting of humanity.”

— *E. G. White (Education)*