



# TOUCHSTONES<sup>®</sup>

## DISCUSSION PROJECT

BUILDING CRITICAL THINKERS & COLLABORATIVE LEADERS


[WWW.TOUCHSTONES.ORG](http://WWW.TOUCHSTONES.ORG)



# WHAT IS THE TOUCHSTONES DISCUSSION PROJECT?

TOUCHSTONES WAS FOUNDED IN 1984 TO FOSTER STUDENT-CENTERED CLASSROOMS IN WHICH DISCUSSION, ACTIVE LEARNING, AND COLLABORATION ARE CENTRAL ACTIVITIES.

Since then, research has consistently shown that Touchstones accomplishes its goals through its unique programmatic approach. Through discussion-based learning curricula designed by teachers for teachers, all students in Touchstones develop the social-emotional and cognitive skills they need for success in school and life.



# TOUCHSTONES® GOALS

Touchstones programs yield demonstrable, measurable, and replicable growth in:

- Cooperative Learning
- Public Speaking
- Active Listening
- Self-confidence and Self-efficacy
- “Close” Reading
- Reflective Thinking and Self-awareness
- Critical Thinking and Analytical Reasoning
- Leadership



# QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

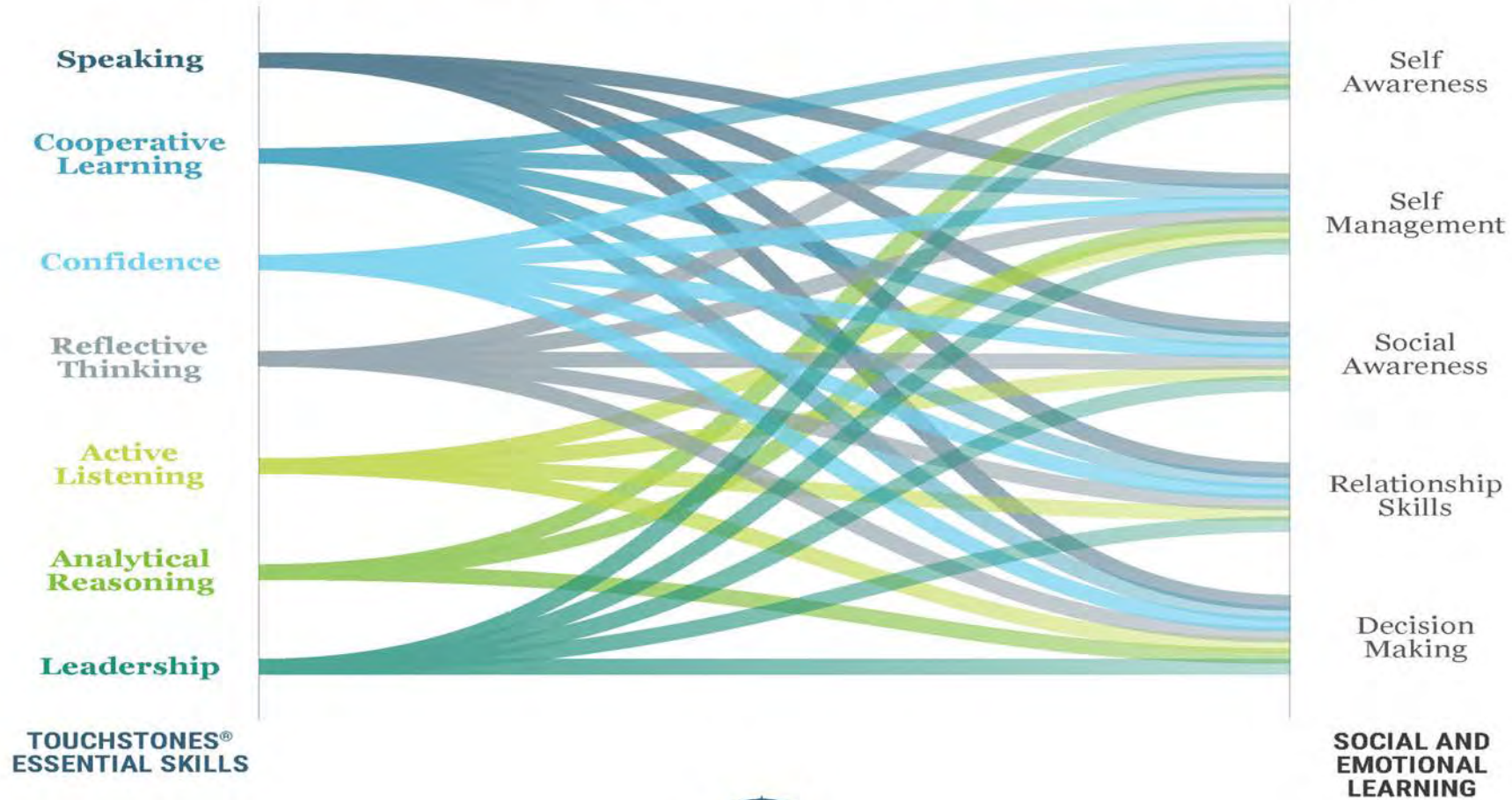
## *From Teachers*

- “I think Touchstones has done its part to change the lives of my students...Touchstones has equalized the intellectual capital in our classrooms.”
- “I believe that the altercations in the hallways have decreased as a direct result of using Touchstones in our classes across the building.”
- “I love the process materials that are provided with each discussion text. Your work in this area alone makes the process worthwhile.”

## *From Students*

- “After we finish you feel empowered and strong, like a gust of wind.”
- “I now fully consider other people’s views and opinions. Prior to this, I was only half listening.”
- “Our ideas in Touchpebbles are as unique as our fingerprints.”
- “I believe this course has the power to transform the social, intellectual, and organizational dynamics at our university, for the better.”

## Touchstones® Discussions are Social and Emotional Learning





# QUANTITATIVE FEEDBACK

## AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TOUCHSTONES STRENGTHENS ACADEMIC OUTCOMES IN LITERACY



In one Touchstones project funded by the Abell Foundation and reported in ASCD's *Educational Leadership*, Dunbar High School in Baltimore used *Touchstones Volume I* in classrooms with students of varying academic ability.

- 9th, 10th, and 11th graders' **test scores rose an average of 15 to 25 percent over the course of the program.**
  - The average score on a pretest was similar for all three grades, which suggests the increase in score was not due to the natural maturation of the student but rather to the Touchstones experience.
  - Students were also less likely to leave any answers blank on the post-test, which indicates an increased sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy.

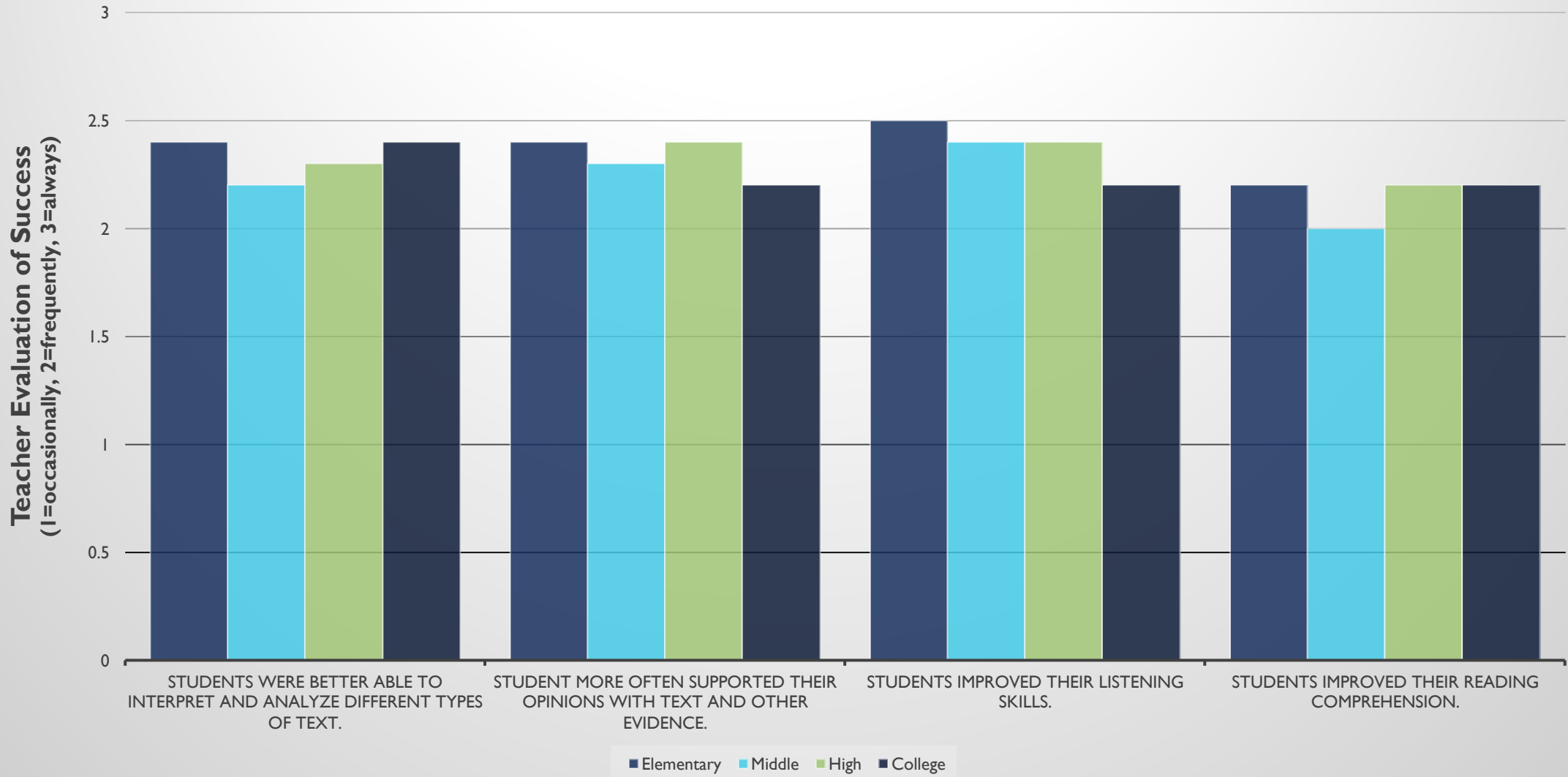


# COGNITIVE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

60 TEACHERS WERE SURVEYED TO ASSESS OUTCOMES IN THEIR CLASSROOMS AFTER TOUCHSTONES.

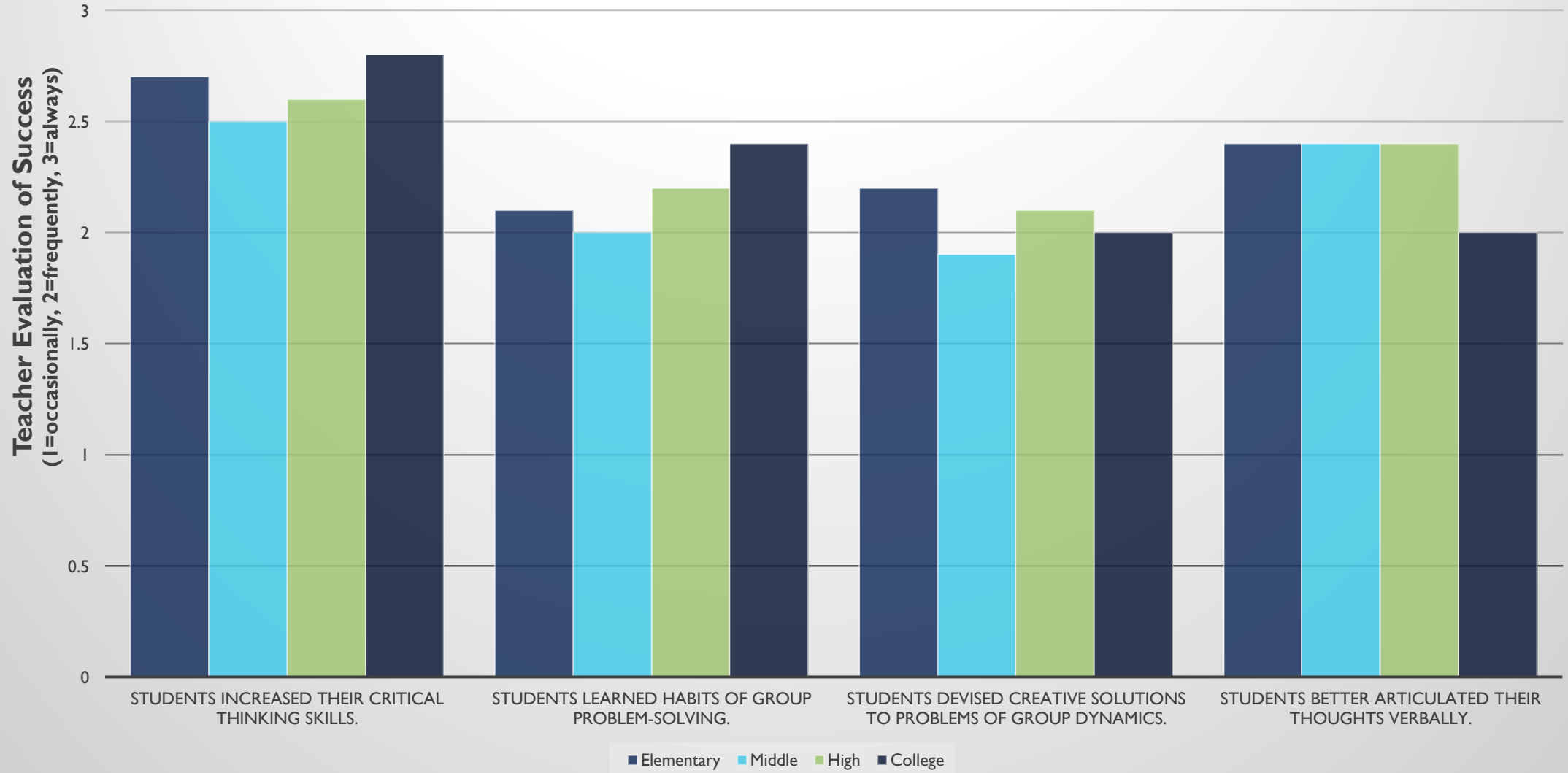
Teachers were asked to evaluate student progress on a range of skills, using a scale from 0 to 3. The data indicates a high degree of positive change across a range of cognitive skills.

# ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT after using Touchstones for one school year





# COGNITIVE SKILL DEVELOPMENT after using Touchstones for one school year



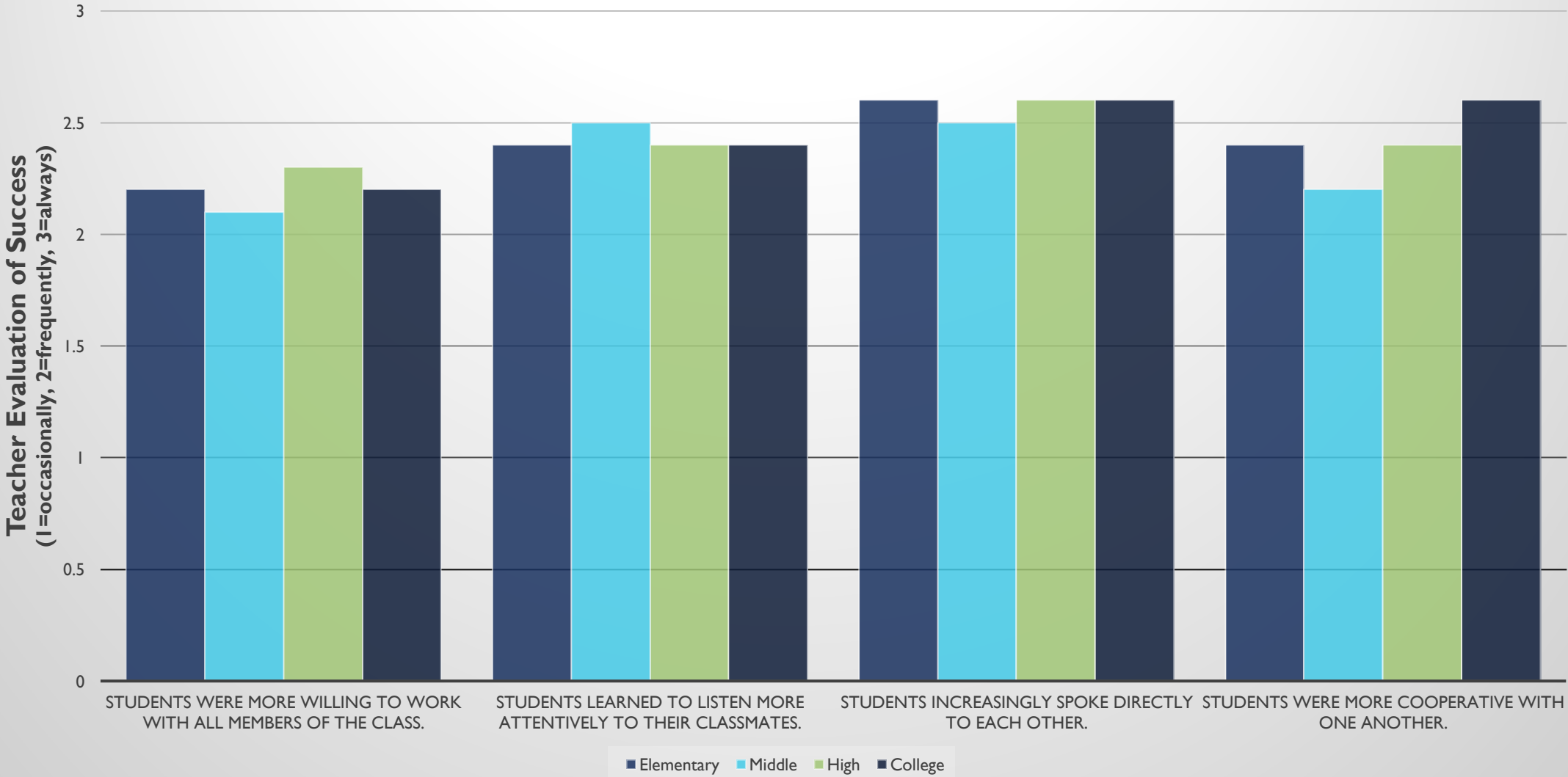


# SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING

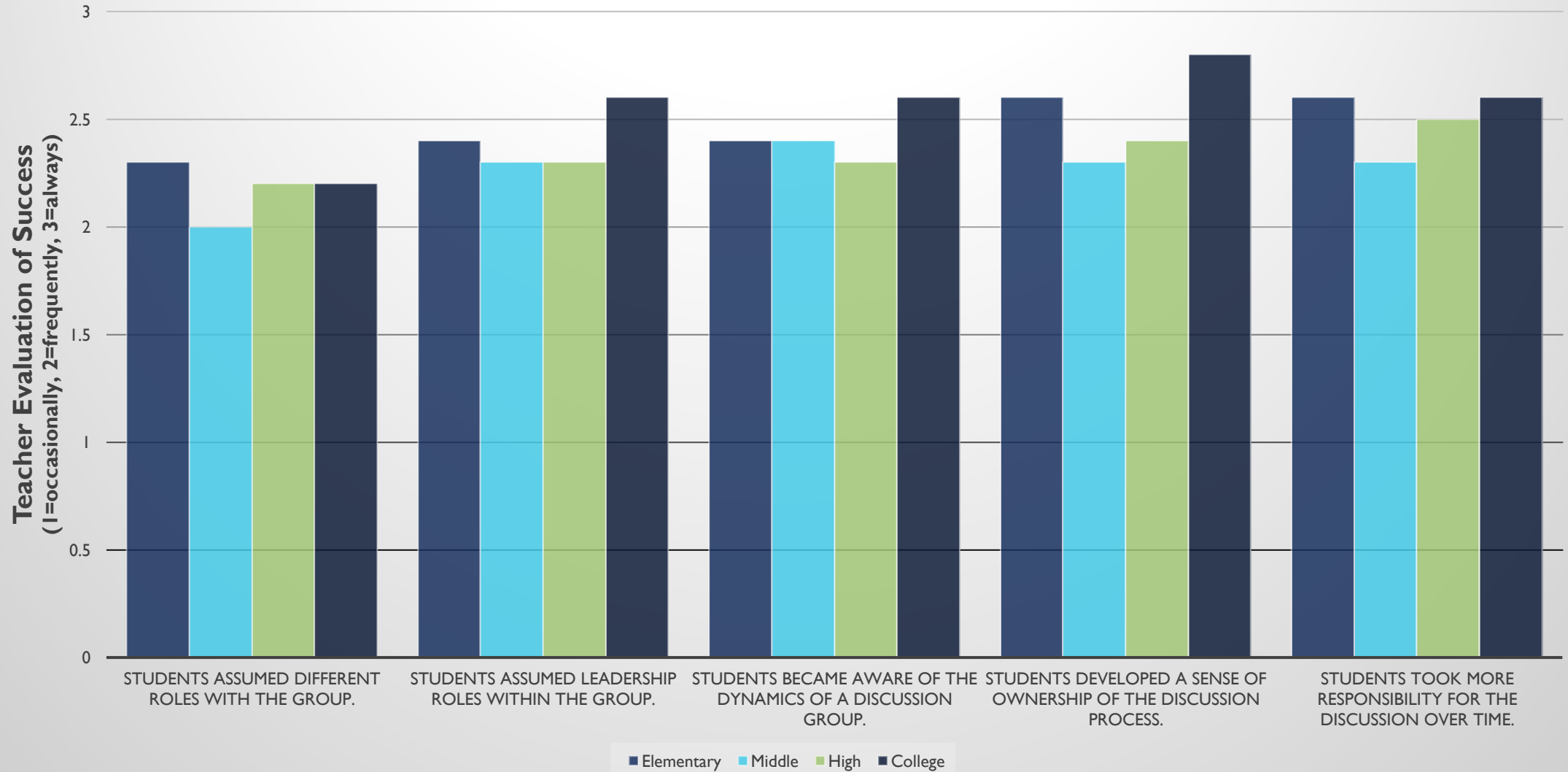
TOUCHSTONES ESSENTIAL SKILLS DIRECTLY SUPPORT SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE CLASSROOM.

The following data reflects how Touchstones skills align to support Social and Emotional Learning in students of all backgrounds. Additional studies in a Maryland district where students in grades 3-12 engaged in Touchstones classes weekly documented a decrease of bullying by more than 20% in the first year of implementation alone. Students in Touchstones also routinely report a greater sense of security, belonging, and connectedness to others in school.

# SOCIAL AWARENESS AND RELATIONSHIP SKILLS after using Touchstones for one school year



## GROUP DYNAMICS AND SELF-MANAGEMENT after using Touchstones for one school year







“Weekly practice in leadership, active and inclusive listening, civil discussion, and consensus building through Touchstones large and small group work is invaluable.”

