# Waterloo Region District School Board

## Safe Caring and Inclusive School Survey

## John Darling Public School

## Grades 4-6 School Level Report

## 2024–25 School Year

Report produced January 8, 2026

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE MDI

## About Safe Caring and Inclusive School Survey

In 2023-24 and 2024-25, the WRDSB used the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) as our Safe Caring and Inclusive School (SCIS) survey. This report shows the relationship between MDI dimensions and measures, and highlights which measures contribute to the Well-Being and Assets Indices.

## Why the Middle Years Matter?

Experiences in the middle years have critical and long-lasting effects. They are powerful predictors of adolescent adjustment and future success. During this time, students experience significant cognitive, social and emotional changes that establish their lifelong identity and set the stage for adolescence and adulthood.

The overall health and well-being of your students affects their ability to concentrate and learn, develop and maintain friendships, and make thoughtful decisions. It is important for educators to understand and have information on how their students are doing at this stage of their development.

## What is the Middle Years Development Instrument?

The Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) is a self-report questionnaire that asks students in Grades 4 to 12 about their thoughts, feelings and experiences in school and in the community. It is a unique and comprehensive questionnaire that helps us gain a deeper understanding of how students are doing at this stage in their lives. Researchers working at the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) are using results to learn more about students' social-emotional health and well-being. In addition, the MDI is being used across sectors to support collaboration and inform policy and practice.

The MDI uses a strengths-based approach to assess five areas of development that are strongly linked to well-being, health and academic achievement. In addition, the MDI focuses on highlighting the promotive and protective factors and assets that are known to support and optimize development in middle childhood. These areas are: Social and Emotional Development, Physical Health and Well-Being, Connectedness, Use of After-School Time and School Experiences. Each of these dimensions is made up of several measures. Each measure is made up of one or more individual questions.

Combining select measures from the MDI helps us paint a more comprehensive portrait of students' overall well-being and the assets that contribute to their healthy development. The results for key MDI measures are summarized by two indices: The Well-Being Index and the Assets Index.

# 5 DIMENSIONS OF THE MDI

## SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
**Measures**

Optimism
Self-Esteem
Happiness
Absence of Sadness

## PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
**Measures**

General Health
Eating Breakfast
Meals with Adults at Home
Frequency of Good Sleep

## CONNECTEDNESS
**Measures**

Adults at School
Adults in the Neighbourhood
Adults at Home
Peer Belonging
Friendship Intimacy

## USE OF AFTER-SCHOOL TIME
**Measures**

Organized Activities
Educational Lessons or Activities
Youth Organizations
Music or Arts
How students Spend their Time
Individual Sports
Team Sports

## SCHOOL EXPERIENCES
**Measures**

School Climate
School Belonging
Victimization and Bullying

A measure in the Well-Being Index

A measure in the Assets Index

# ABOUT THE DATA

The MDI was administered across the WRDSB in the spring of 2025. A link was sent to each student's WRDSB email address. A total of 66 students from John Darling Public School completed the survey. This report includes the responses of all students who voluntary participated in the survey. It also includes comparisons with Grades 4-6 Board averages.

This survey includes the five dimensions of the MDI, each with multiple items. The well-being index combines scores from the 15 items (three items each from optimism, self-esteem, happiness, absence of sadness, and one item from general health). The assets index combines scores from 23 items (three items each from adults at school, home and the neighbourhood/community, peer belonging, friendship and intimacy, nutrition and sleep, and five items from after-school activities). The survey also includes several students' demographic questions including gender identity, racial identity, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis identity, first language, disability status, and birthplace.

## Considerations when reviewing MDI data in this report

The data in this report focus on students' self-reported well-being. Most of the data are represented by 3 categories of Well-Being: High, Medium and Low. The percentages presented for demographics and MDI measures may not always total 100% due to rounding.

Many questions on the MDI allow students to provide multiple responses. This means that the number of respondents in a particular table/chart may exceed the number of actual participants, and that the percentages in some charts or tables may add up to more than 100%.

**Note:** At the school level, students from some schools provided only a single response to multiple-response questions, particularly those relating to gender identity and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit identity; thus, the percentages may add up to 100%.

When fewer than 16 students responded to a question or combination of questions, the results are suppressed to prevent the identification of individual students. Some percentages are shown as ranges (e.g., 45–55%) with two shades of color to protect the suppressed percentages. If no students selected a particular response, the count or percentage appears as "0%."

In the 2024–25 school year, an abbreviated version of the MDI was used, reducing the time required for students to complete the survey. Some results from previous reports are missing here; however, all necessary components to compute the Asset Index and Well-Being Index are available.

# RESULTS

## Total Number of Respondents

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| JDP Total School Sample: | 66; | Grades 4-6 Total Sample: | 11,205; | WRDSB Total Sample: | 26,720 |

**Number of Respondents by Grade:** The number of respondents by grade may not match the total number of respondents from JDP, because some students selected incorrect grades and were therefore excluded from participation by grade (Table 1) but included in all other tables and charts.

Table 1: Survey partricipation by Grade

| Grade | Count |
|---|---|
| 4 | 28 |
| 5 | 17 |
| 6 | 21 |

*Survey question: What grade are you in?*

# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Gender Identity

Gender identity is a person's sense of being a boy/man, a girl/woman, both, neither or having another identity on the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be different from the sex that was identified for them when they were born (such as female, intersex, or male). Students were provided with several gender identity options (boy, girl, non-binary, trans, and Two-Spirit) on the gender question including "Prefer not to answer" and a free response (a gender not listed above, please specify). For this report, gender identity is reported in three categories, boy, girl, and gender different from assigned sex. Students counted as 'gender different from assigned sex' counts in this report include those who identifies as non-binary, trans, Two-Spirit or as a gender different from those in the list provided." Students were able to select more than one answer.

Table 2: Gender identity

| Gender identity | School | Grades 4-6 |
|---|---|---|
| Boy | 47–57% | 50.6% |
| Girl | 43–53% | 48.5% |
| Gender different from assigned sex | n<16 | 1.7% |

*Multiple response analysis*

*Survey question: What is your gender identity?*

## Racial Identity

In our society, people are often described by their race or racial background. For example, some people are considered “White” or “Black” or “East Asian,” etc. Many people identify with more than one racial group. Students were able to select more than one racial group, if they identify as bi-racial or multi-racial. There is also an option “Prefer not to answer.”

Table 3: Racial group identity

| Racial group identity | School | Grades 4-6 |
|---|---|---|
| Black | n<16 | 10.2% |
| East Asian | n<16 | 7.8% |
| First Nations/Inuit/Métis | n<16 | 3.3% |
| Latino/Latina/Latinx | n<16 | 2.5% |
| Middle Eastern/North African/West Asian | n<16 | 10.0% |
| Multiracial | n<16 | 2.1% |
| South Asian | n<16 | 14.6% |
| Southeast Asian | n<16 | 2.9% |
| White | 62% | 48.6% |

*Multiple response analysis*

*Survey question: Which racial group(s) best describe(s) you?*

## First Nations, Métis, and Inuit

First Nations, Métis (Michif) and Inuit are the terms used to identify Indigenous people in the land now known as Canada. For students to identify as an Indigenous person in this survey, they do not need to have documents or papers to prove that you they are First Nations, Inuit, and/or Métis (Michif). Students were able to select more than one Identities if identify as Indigenous. There is also an option "Prefer not to answer."

Table 4: First Nations, Inuit and/or Métis (Michif)

| First Nations, Métis, and Inuit identity | School | Grades 4-6 |
|---|---|---|
| First Nations | n<16 | 3.1% |
| Métis (Michif) | 0% | 1.1% |
| Inuit | 0% | 0.6% |

*Multiple response analysis*

*Survey question: Do you identify as First Nations, Inuit and/or Métis (Michif)?*

## Languages at Home

Students were able to select more than one language spoken at home. There is also an option "Prefer not to answer."

Table 5: First language spoken at home

| First language | School | Grades 4-6 |
|---|---|---|
| English | 88% | 69.8% |
| English and another language | n<16 | 33.2% |
| Other language(s) | n<16 | 34.9% |

*Multiple response analysis*

*Survey question: What is the first language you learned at home?*

## Person with a disability

Some people identify as having a disability that makes it difficult for them to feel good and work well at school or in their community. Disabilities may be felt in the body or in the mind. It may be hidden or visible. Some students who have disabilities may have a special plan at school to help them (an Individual Education Plan or IEP), but some do not. Students are able to select one option (Yes, No, Not sure, Prefer not to answer).

Table 6: Persons with a disability

| Disability | School | Grades 4-6 |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | n<16 | 7.7% |
| No | 57–67% | 73.2% |
| Not sure | 20–30% | 19.1% |

*Survey question: Do you consider yourself to be a person with a disability?*

## Students born in another country outside of Canada

Students were able to select one option (Yes, No, Don't Know, Prefer not to answer).

Table 7: Student birthplace

| Place of birth | School | Grades 4-6 |
|---|---|---|
| In a country or region outside Canada | n<16 | 23.5% |
| In the country known as Canada | 82% | 72.8% |
| Don't Know | n<16 | 3.7% |

*Survey question: Were you born in another country outside of Canada?*

# THE WELL-BEING AND ASSETS INDICES

Combining select measures from the MDI helps us paint a fuller picture of students' overall well-being and the assets that contribute to their healthy development. The results for key MDI measures are summarized by two indices. This section of the report focuses on results for the Well-Being Index and the Assets Index.

## THE WELL-BEING INDEX

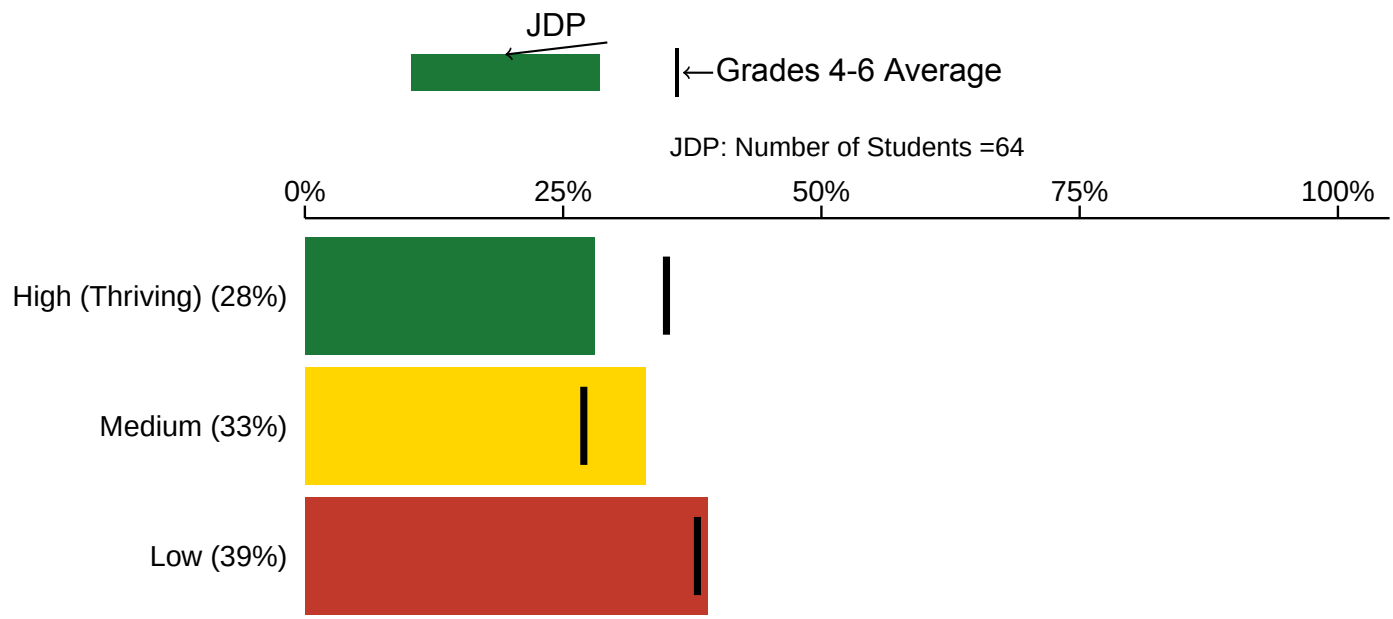
**The Well-Being Index** combines MDI measures relating to students' physical health and social and emotional development that are of critical importance during the middle years. These are: Optimism, Happiness, Self-Esteem, Absence of Sadness and General Health.

Scores from these five measures are combined and reported by three categories of well-being, providing a holistic summary of students' mental and physical health: 'Thriving,' 'Medium to High' well-being, or 'Low' well-being.

**High (Thriving)**
Children who are reporting positive responses

**Medium**
Children who are reporting neither positive nor negative responses

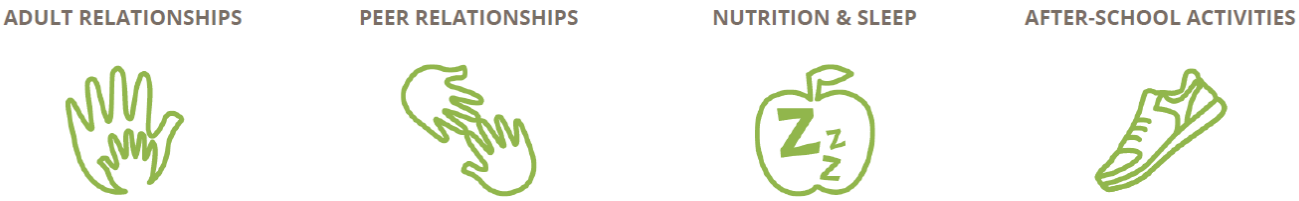
**Low**
Children who are reporting negative responses

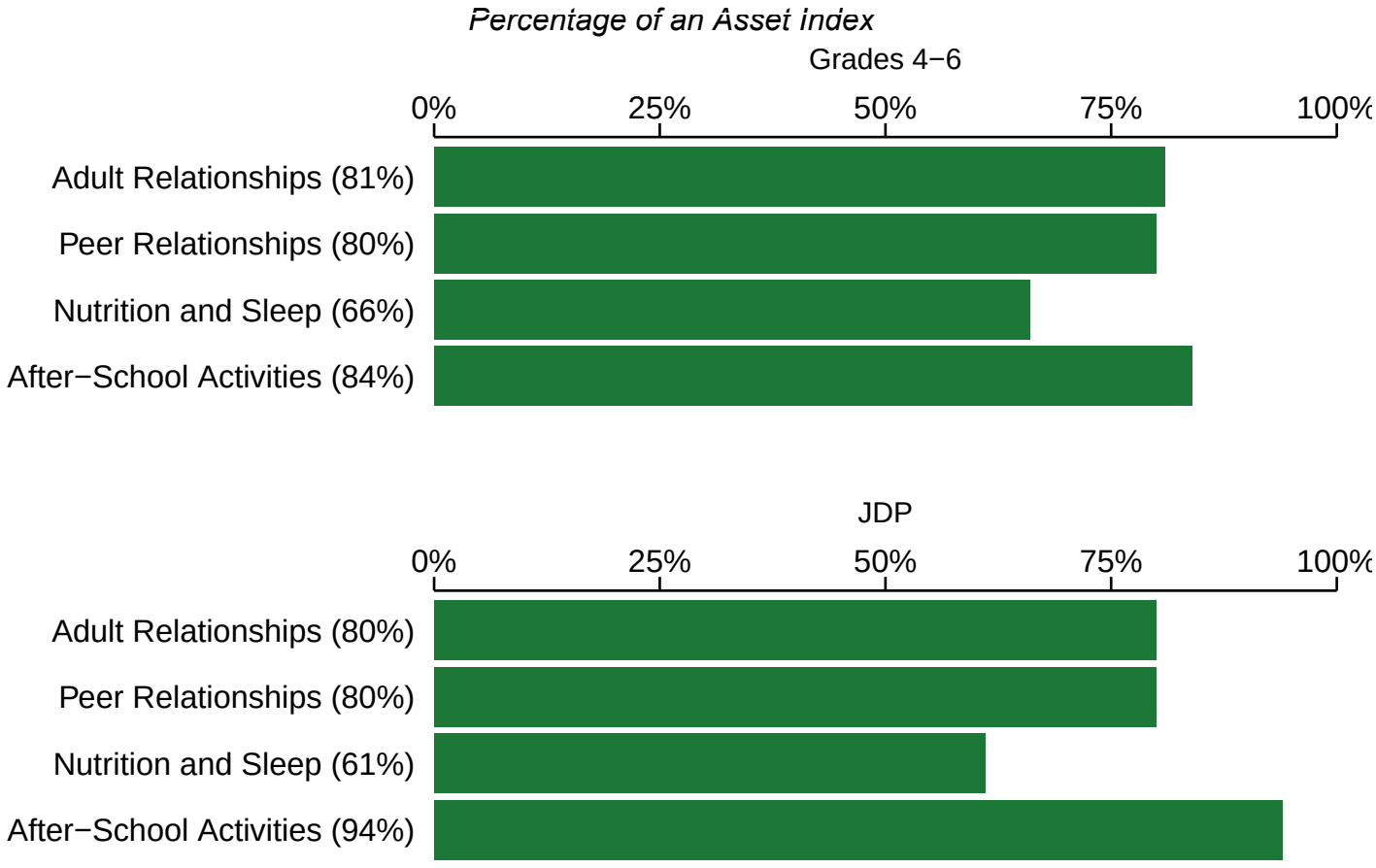


## THE ASSETS INDEX

**The Assets Index** combines MDI measures that highlight four key assets that help to promote students' positive development and well-being. Assets are positive experiences, relationships or behaviours present in students' lives. Assets are considered actionable, meaning that schools and communities can focus their efforts in these areas to create the conditions and contexts where students can thrive.

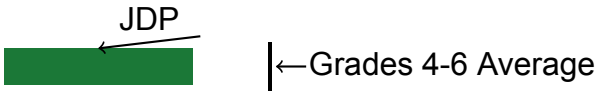
Note: School Experiences are also considered to be an asset that contributes to students' well-being; however, this asset is not reported as part of the Assets Index to prevent the ranking of individual schools or districts. Please refer to the School Climate and Bullying and Victimization measures for data related to this asset.



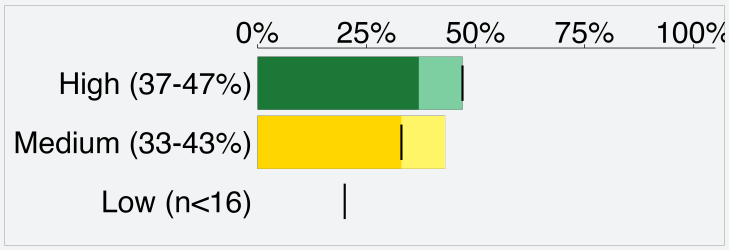
# SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The development of social and emotional skills, including empathy, optimism and self-esteem, are important for supporting positive mental health during middle childhood and at all ages to follow. These skills help students understand and manage their emotions, build and maintain positive relationships, and regulate their own behaviour. Opportunities to develop social and emotional skills can be created in many supportive environments: at school with teachers and peers, in the home with elders, family or caregivers, and during after-school programs with community members.



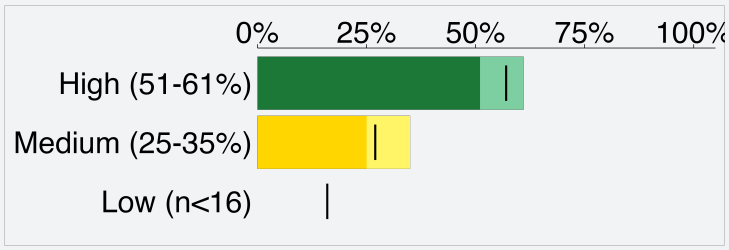

## Optimism

Optimism refers to the mindset of having positive expectations for the future. e.g. “I have more good times than bad times.”



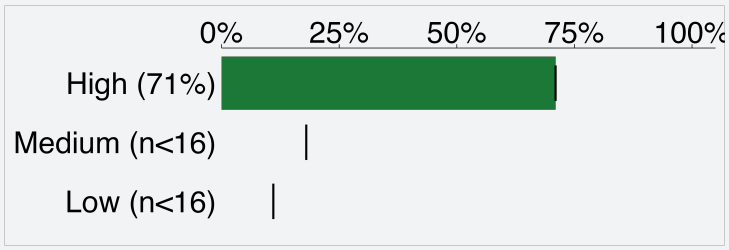

## Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to a person’s sense of self-worth. e.g. “A lot of things about me are good.”



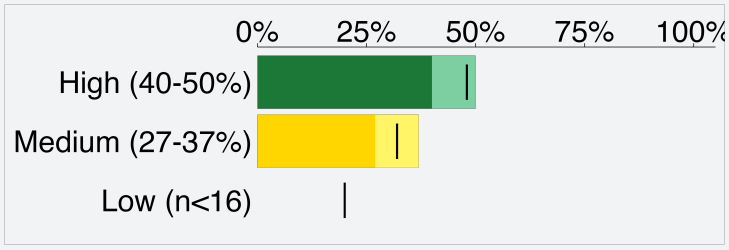

## Happiness

Happiness refers to how content or satisfied students are with their lives. e.g. “I am happy with my life.”



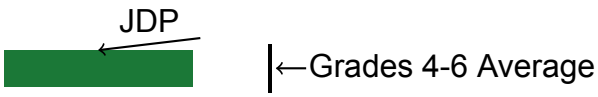

## Absence of Sadness

Sadness measures the beginning symptoms of depression. e.g. “I feel unhappy a lot of the time.” *Note: this item is “reverse coded, ”so a student who agrees “a lot” or “a little” to these questions will be coded as “low” in this dimension.



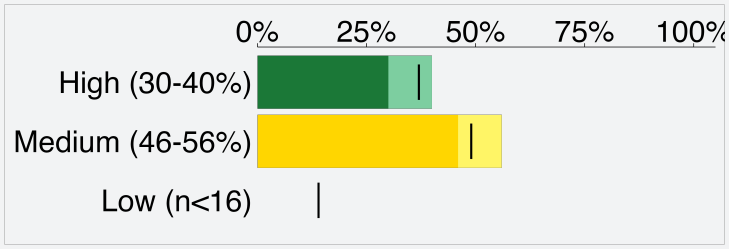
# PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Promoting student's physical health and well-being in the middle years lays the foundation for a healthy life. Students who report feeling healthy are more likely to be engaged in school, have a feeling of connectedness with their teachers, and are less likely to be bullied or bully others. Students benefit from guidance and opportunities that support the development of healthy habits, which they can carry forward into adolescence and adulthood. These habits include regular physical activity, quality sleep and healthy, social meals.



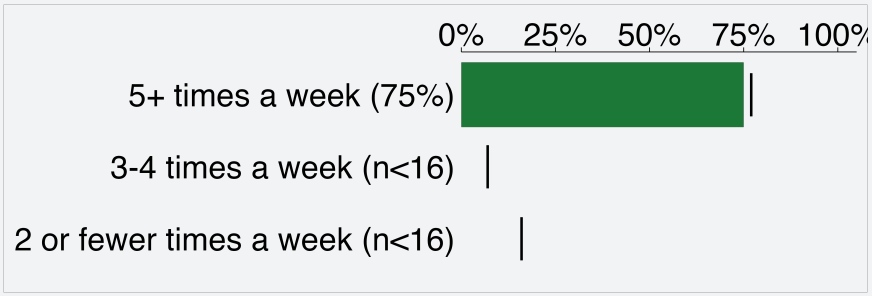

## General Health

Students are asked, "In general, how would you describe your health?"



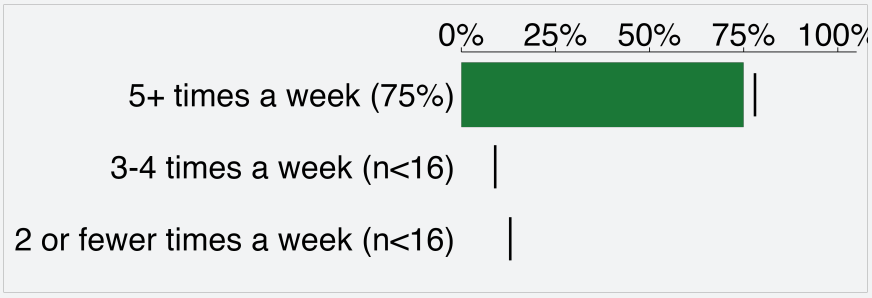

## Eating Breakfast

Students are asked, "How often do you eat breakfast?"



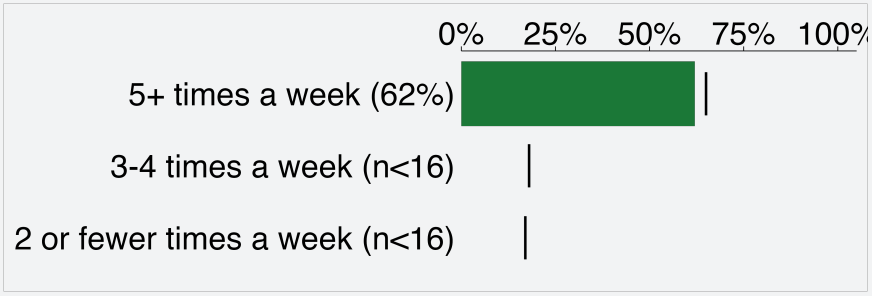

## Meals with Adults at Home

Students are asked, "How often do your parents or other adult family members eat meals with you?"




## Frequency of Good Sleep

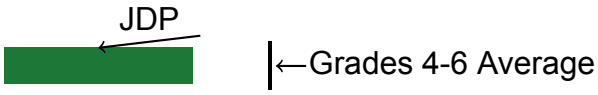
Students are asked, "How often do you get a good night's sleep?"



# CONNECTEDNESS

Strong and supportive social connections play an important role in students' healthy development. Close relationships and a sense of belonging with adults and peers at home, in school, and in the community, can promote positive mental health and minimize risks that may be present in students' lives.

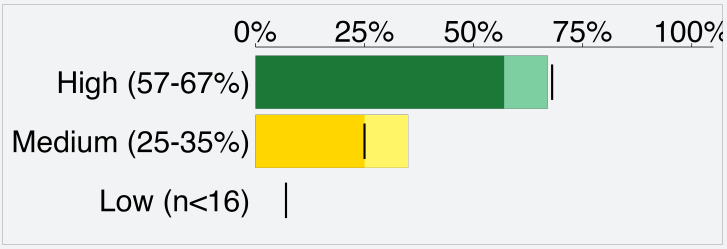
Having one adult, such as a parent or auntie, an elder or a coach, who cares about them, listens to them and believes in them can make a powerful difference in a child's life. For students, connectedness to extended family, community, as well as land, language, and culture also play an important role in encouraging a strong and healthy sense of identity.




## CONNECTEDNESS WITH ADULTS

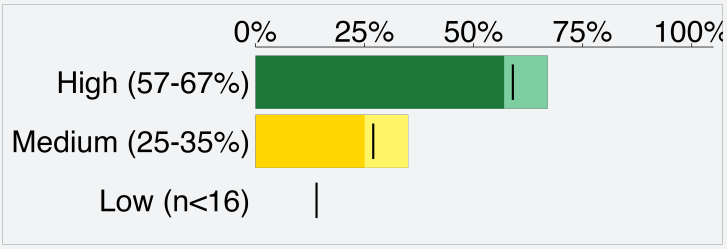
### Adults at School

Assesses the quality of relationships students have with the adults they interact with at school. e.g. "At my school there is an adult who believes I will be a success."'



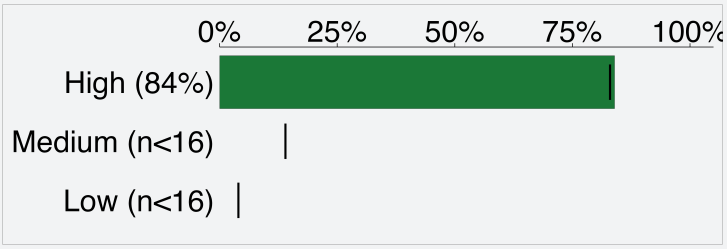

### Adults in the Neighbourhood

Assesses the quality of relationships students have with the adults they interact with in their neighbourhood or community. e.g. "In my neighbourhood/community there is an adult who really cares about me."




### Adults at Home

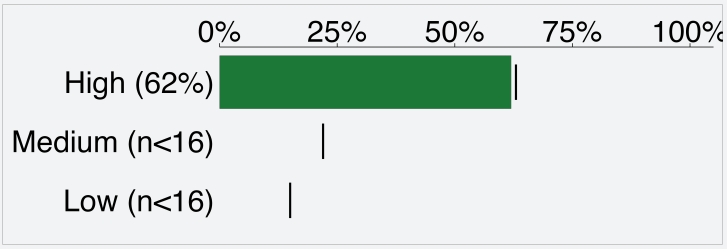
Assesses the quality of relationships students have with the adults in their home. e.g. "In my home there is a parent or other adult who listens to me when I have something to say."'



# CONNECTEDNESS WITH PEERS

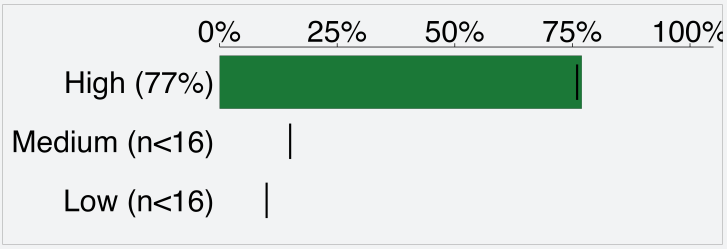
## Peer Belonging

Measures students' feelings of belonging to a social group. e.g. "When I am with other kids my age, I feel I belong."



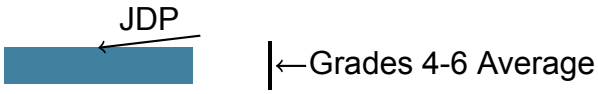

## Friendship Intimacy

Assesses the quality of relationships students have with their peers. e.g. "I have a friend I can tell everything to."



# USE OF AFTER-SCHOOL TIME

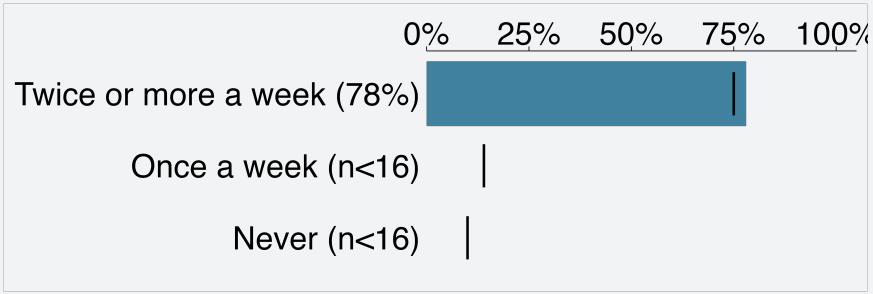
Participation in activities after school provides important developmental experiences for students in their middle years. These activities create a variety of opportunities for students to build relationship skills and gain competencies. Research has consistently found that students who are engaged in after-school activities are more likely to experience greater academic and social success.




## How students Spend Their Time

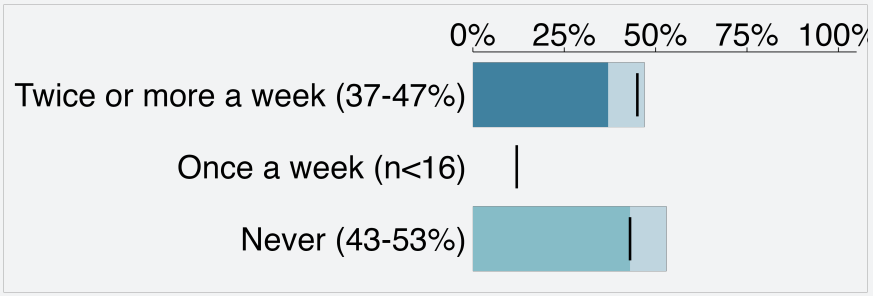
### Any Organized Activity

Students who participated in any after-school activity that was structured and supervised by an adult. (e.g. educational lessons, youth organizations, music or art lessons and sports practice)



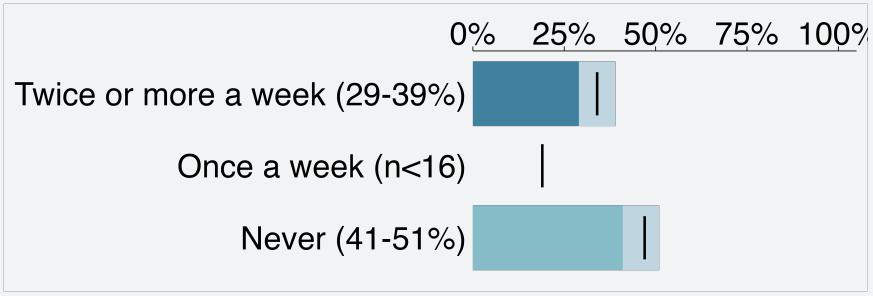

### Educational Lessons or Activities

For example: Tutoring, attending a math school, foreign language lessons, or some other academic related activity.



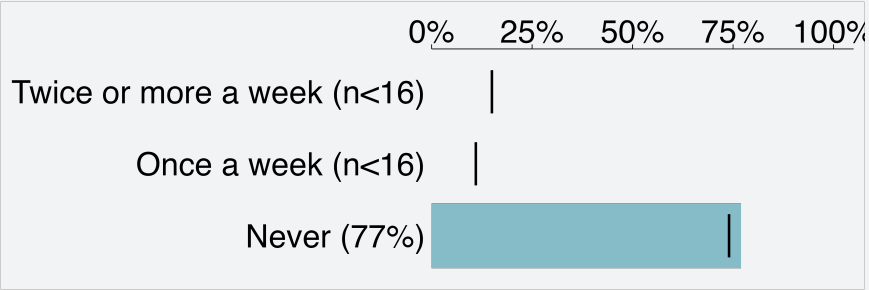

### Music or Art Lessons

For example: Drawing or painting classes, musical instrument lessons or some other activity related to music or art.



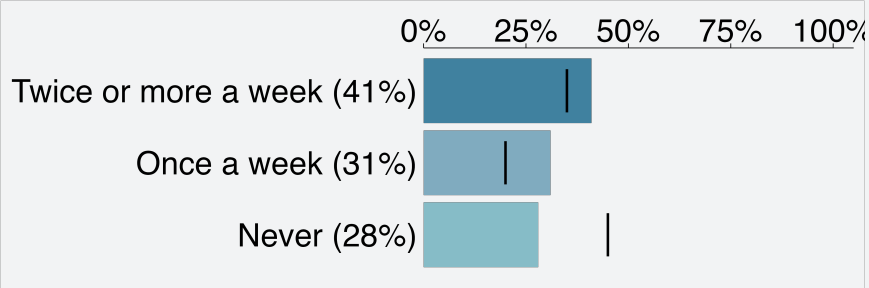
## Youth Organizations

For example: Scouts, Girl Guides, Boys and Girls Clubs, or some other group organization.



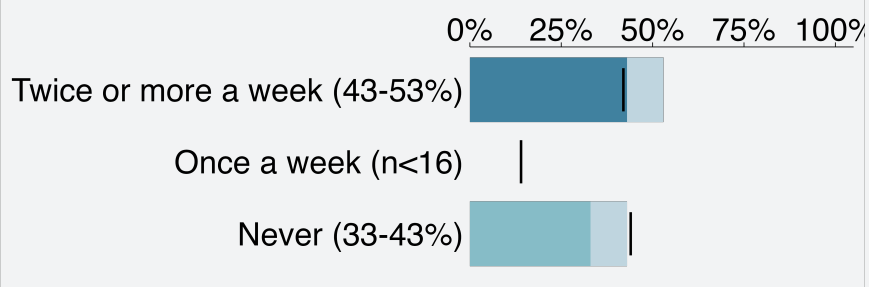

## Individual Sports (with a Coach or Instructor)

For example: Swimming, dance, gymnastics, ice skating, tennis or another individual sport.



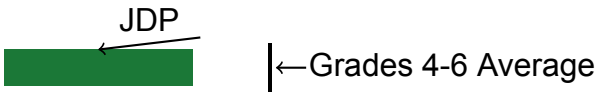

## Team Sports (with a Coach or Instructor)

For example: Basketball, hockey, soccer, football, or another team sport.



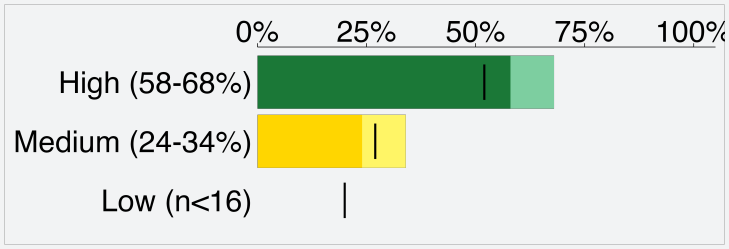
# SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

Students' school experiences are important for their personal well-being and academic success. When students have positive experiences at school, they are more likely to believe they have a valued role in the school, feel more engaged in class and achieve higher academic performance. Understanding students' school experiences improves our ability to cultivate school environments that are safe, caring, and supportive.



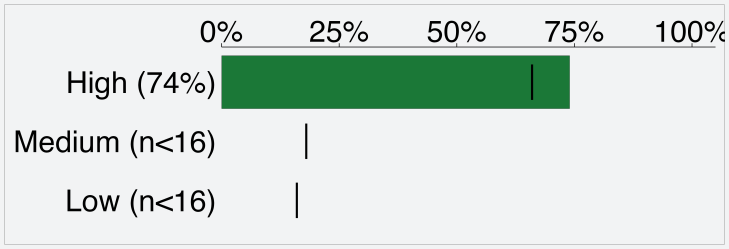

## School Climate

The overall tone of the school environment, including the way teachers and students interact and how students treat each other. e.g. "People care about each other in this school."




## School Belonging

School belonging is the degree to which students feel connected and valued at their school. e.g. "I feel like I am important to this school."

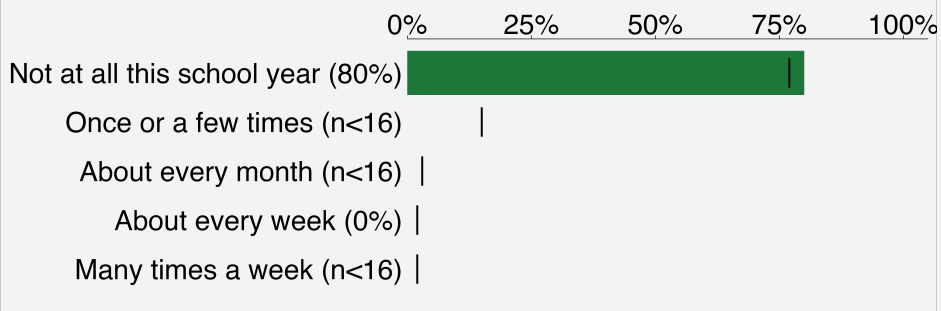


## VICTIMIZATION AND BULLYING AT SCHOOL

Bullying is a distinct form of aggressive behaviour in which one student or a group of students act intentionally and repeatedly to cause harm or embarrassment to another child or group of students who have less power. **Students are asked: 'During this school year, how often have you been bullied by other students in the following ways?'**

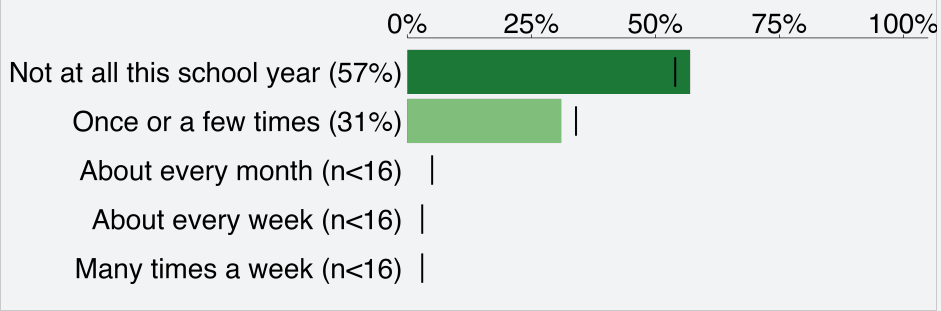
### Cyber Bullying

For example, someone used the computer or text messages to exclude, threaten, embarrass you, or to hurt your feelings.



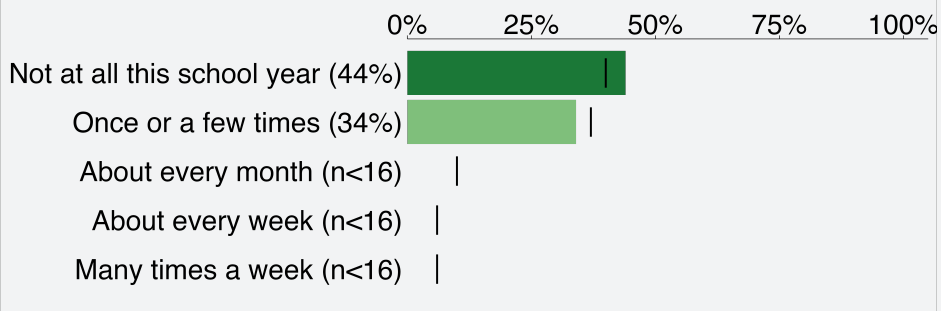

### Physical Bullying

For example, someone hit, shoved, or kicked you, spat at you, beat you up, or damaged or took your things without permission.



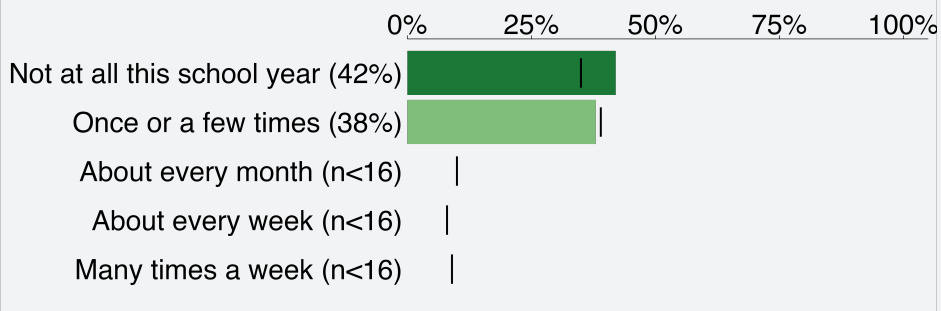

### Social Bullying

For example, someone left you out, excluded you, gossiped and spread rumours about you, or made you look foolish.




### Verbal Bullying

For example, someone called you names, teased, embarrassed, threatened you, or made you do things you didn't want to do.

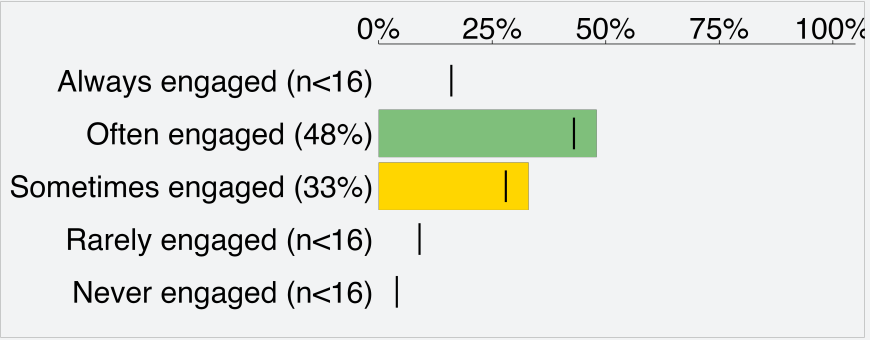


# ENGAGEMENT

When students are engaged, they feel motivated, interested, confident, and supported while attending school.

**Engagement**

Students show engagement by participating actively in learning and other school-based activities and by interacting with their peers and with the staff at school.




# CONCLUSION

The MDI report provides detailed information about students' social and emotional lives. This report illustrates the relationship between MDI dimensions, and measures. It also highlights which measures contribute to the Well-Being and Assets Indices. The well-being index includes optimism, self-esteem, happiness, the absence of sadness, and general health. While the assets index includes adults at school, adults in the neighborhood, adults at home, peer belonging, friendship intimacy, eating breakfast with adults at home, frequency of good sleep, and organized activities. The results can help us learn more about students' social-emotional health and well-being, track trends over time, identify strengths and growth areas, support equity-based planning, foster collaboration, encourage data-driven dialogue, and inform action across schools and the WRDSB.

# RESPONSE OPTIONS AND SCORING OF DIMENSIONS

Each of the five dimensions of well-being are comprised of several measures that combine answers to one or more questions on the questionnaire. The data in the reports are visualized in different ways to allow for easy understanding.

For some of the measures, MDI reports use bar graphs to display these data. For example, some bar graphs show the percentage of students categorized as being low, medium, or high on each respective measure as indicated below.

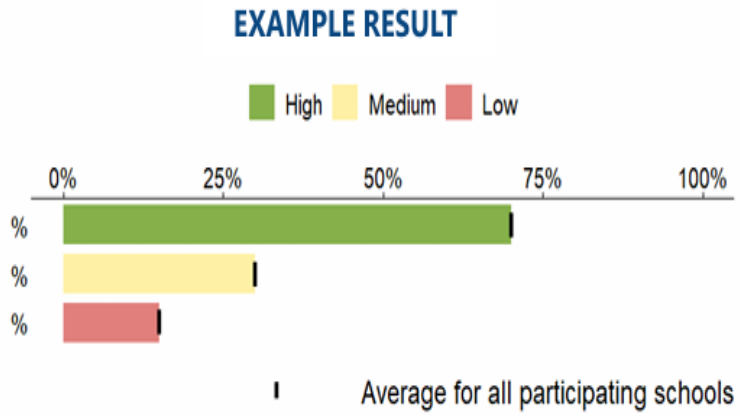
Each figure shows an example result for each dimension/measure, which compares school (the horizontal-colored bar) with Grades 4-6 Board averages (the vertical, black line).

## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Response options:** Agree a lot, Agree a little, Don't agree or disagree, Disagree a little, Disagree a lot

### SCORING

- High: Students whose average responses were 'Agree a little' or 'Agree a lot'.
- Medium: Students whose average responses were 'Don't agree or disagree" or those who reported a mix of positive and negative responses.
- Low: Students whose average responses were 'Disagree a little' or 'Disagree a lot'.

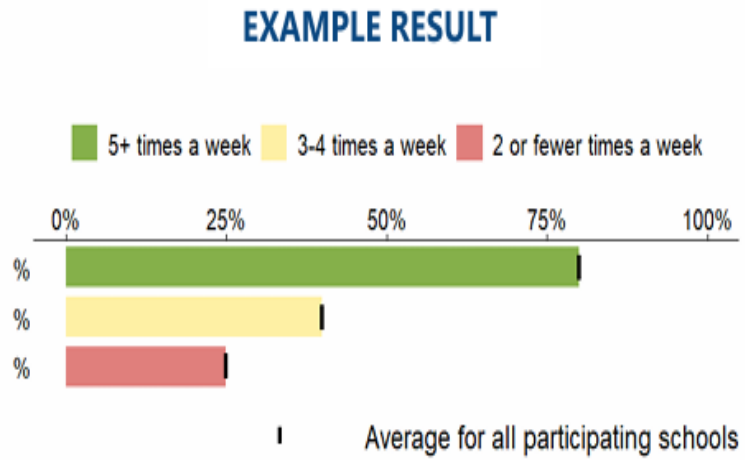


## PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

**Response options:** 5 or more times per week, 3-4 times per week, 2 or fewer times per week

### SCORING

- High: 5 times a week.
- Medium: 3 times a week.
- Low: 2 or fewer times per week.

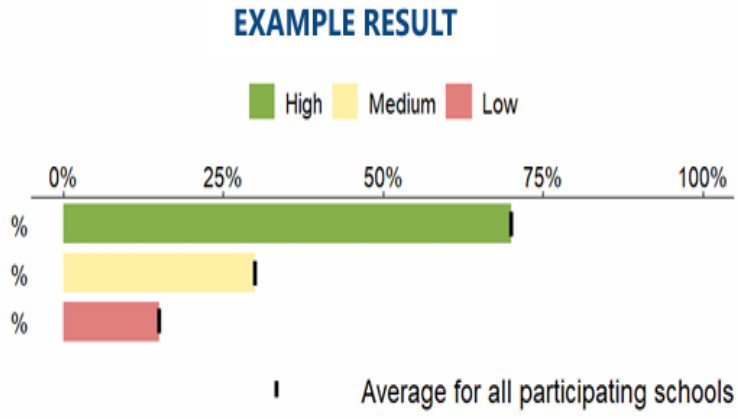



## CONNECTEDNESS

**Response options:** Very much true, Pretty much true, A little true, Not at all true

### SCORING

- High: Students whose average responses were ‘pretty much’ or ‘very much’ true.
- Medium: Students whose responses were ‘a little true’ or those who reported a mix of positive and negative responses.
- Low: Students whose responses were on average ‘not at all true’.



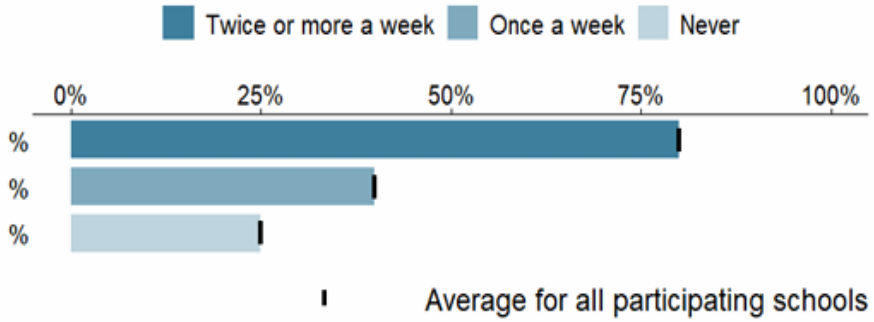
## USE OF AFTER-SCHOOL TIME

**Response options:** 5 times a week, 4 times a week, 3 times a week, Twice a week, Once a week, Never

### SCORING

- 5, 4 and 3 times a week + Twice a week
- Once a week
- Never

**EXAMPLE RESULT**

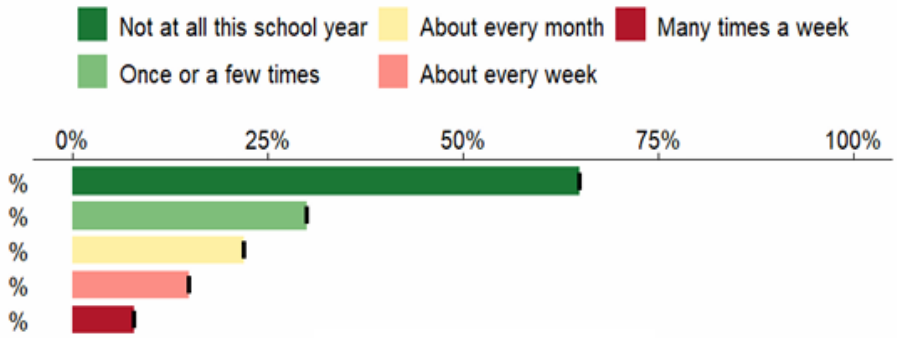



## SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

### SCORING

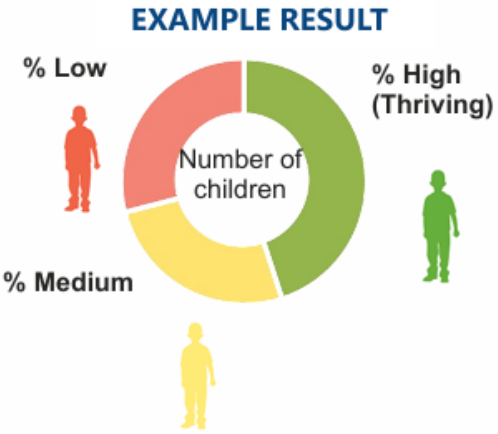
- Not at all this school year
- Once or a few times
- About every month
- About every week
- Many times a week

**EXAMPLE RESULT**



## THE WELL-BEING INDEX

**Response options:** Agree a lot, Agree a little Don't agree or disagree, Disagree a little, Disagree a lot.

### SCORING

- High Well-Being (Thriving): Students who score in the high range on at least 4 of the 5 measures of well-being and have no low-range scores.
- Medium Well-Being: Students who score in the high range on fewer than 4 of the 5 measures of well-being, and have no low-range scores.
- Low Well-Being: Students who score in the low range on at least 1 of the 5 measures of well-being.'