



Waterloo Region District School Board

Safe Caring and Inclusive School Survey

Sandhills 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 140 students from Sandhills Public School completed the survey. This report includes the responses of all students who voluntarily 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

SHL Total School Sample: 140; 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 SHL, 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 participation by Grade

Grade	Count
4	59
5	38
6	43

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	42–52%	50.6%
Girl	46–56%	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	18%	10.0%
Multiracial	n<16	2.1%
South Asian	16%	14.6%
Southeast Asian	n<16	2.9%
White	35%	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)	n<16	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	67%	69.8%
English and another language	47%	33.2%
Other language(s)	45%	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	84%	73.2%
Not sure	n<16	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	22–32%	23.5%
In the country known as Canada	66–76%	72.8%
Don't Know	n<16	3.7%

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



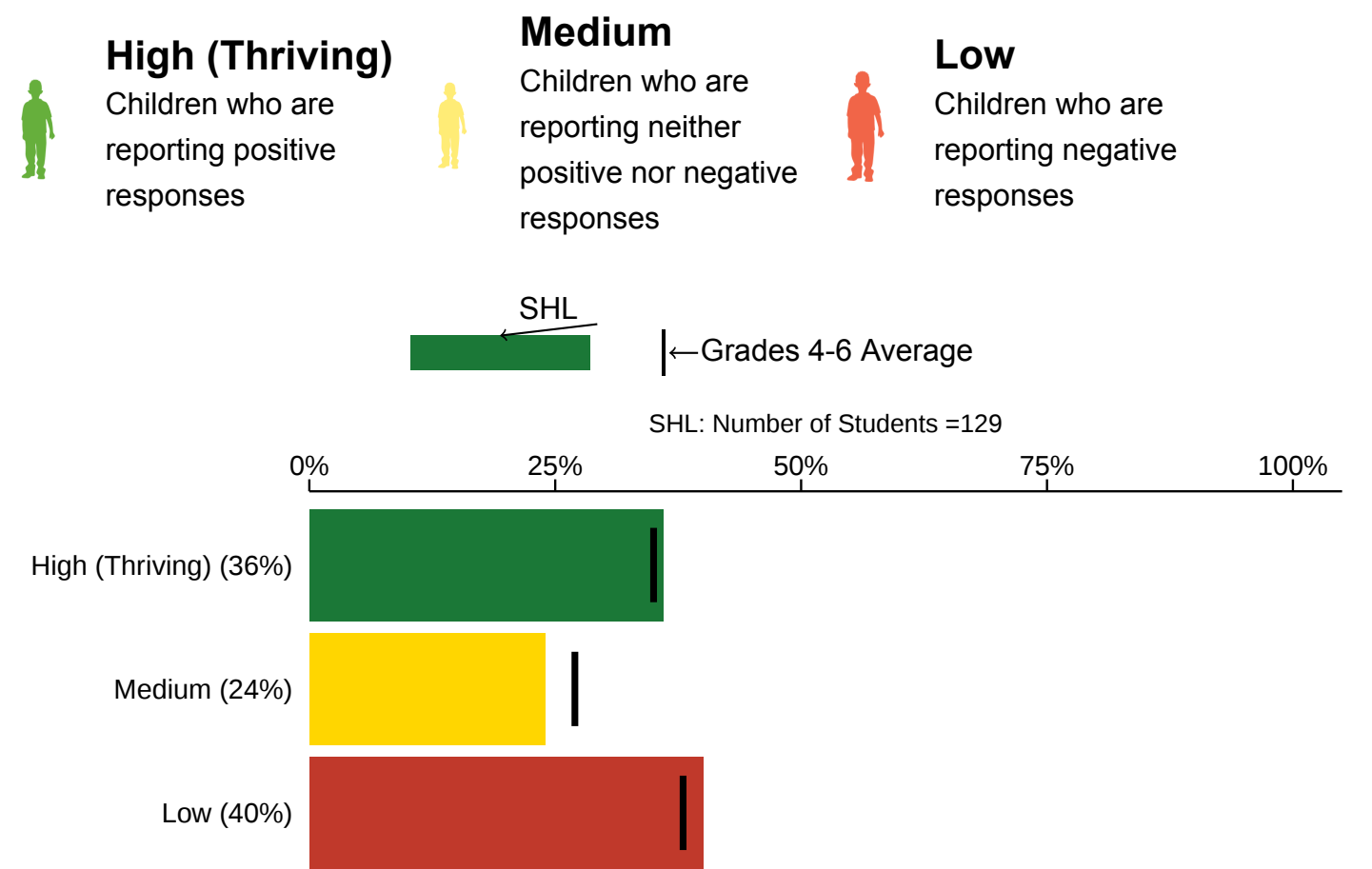
THE WELL-BEING AND ASSETS INDICES

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.

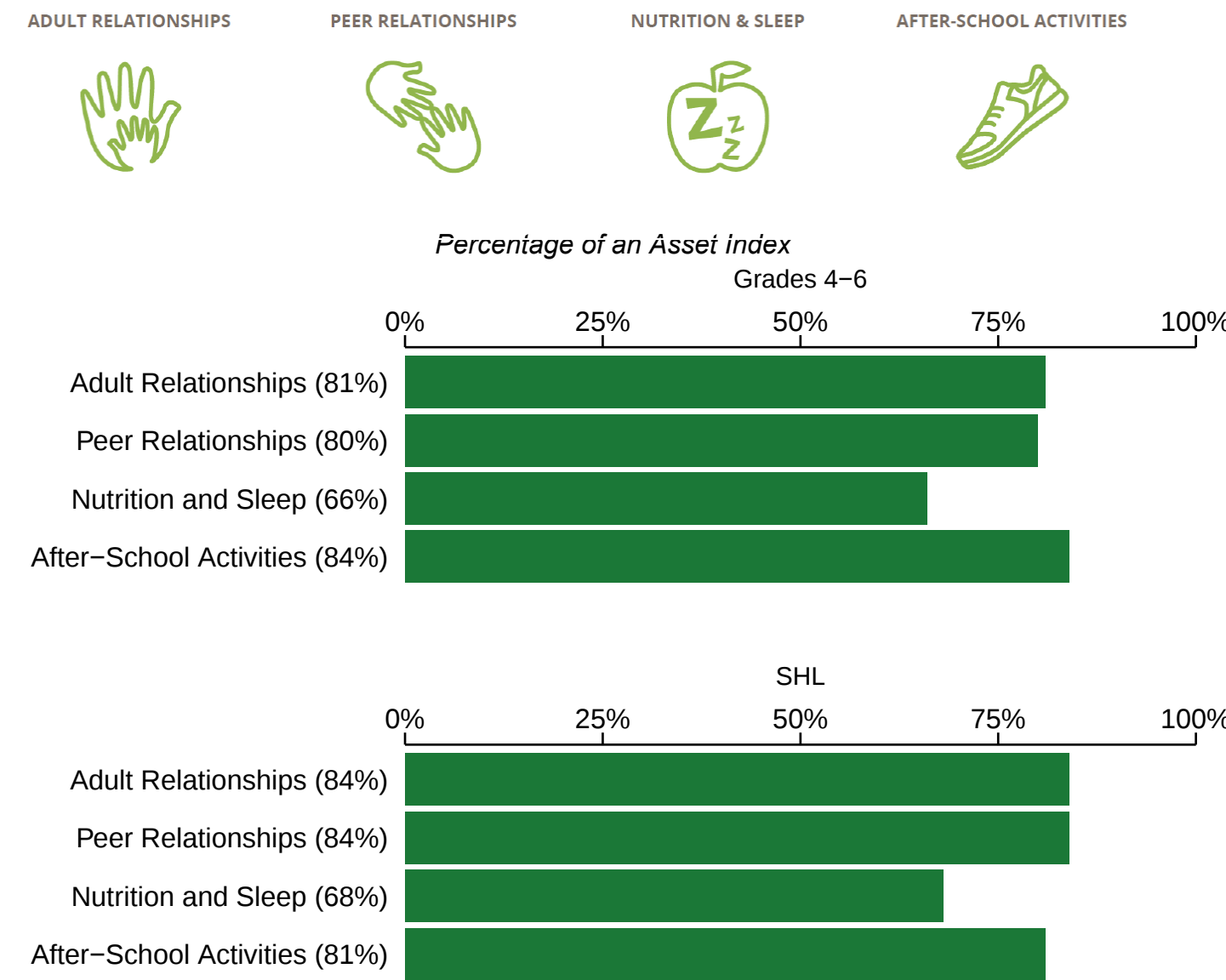
Scores from these five measures are combined and reported by three categories of well-being, providing a holistic summary of students’ mental and physical health: ‘Thriving,’ ‘Medium to High’ well-being, or ‘Low’ well-being.



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.

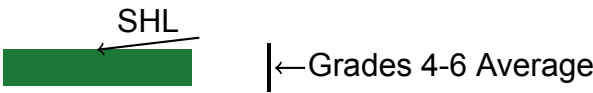
Note: School Experiences are also considered to be an asset that contributes to students’ well-being; however, this asset is not reported as part of the Assets Index to prevent the ranking of individual schools or districts. Please refer to the School Climate and Bullying and Victimization measures for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

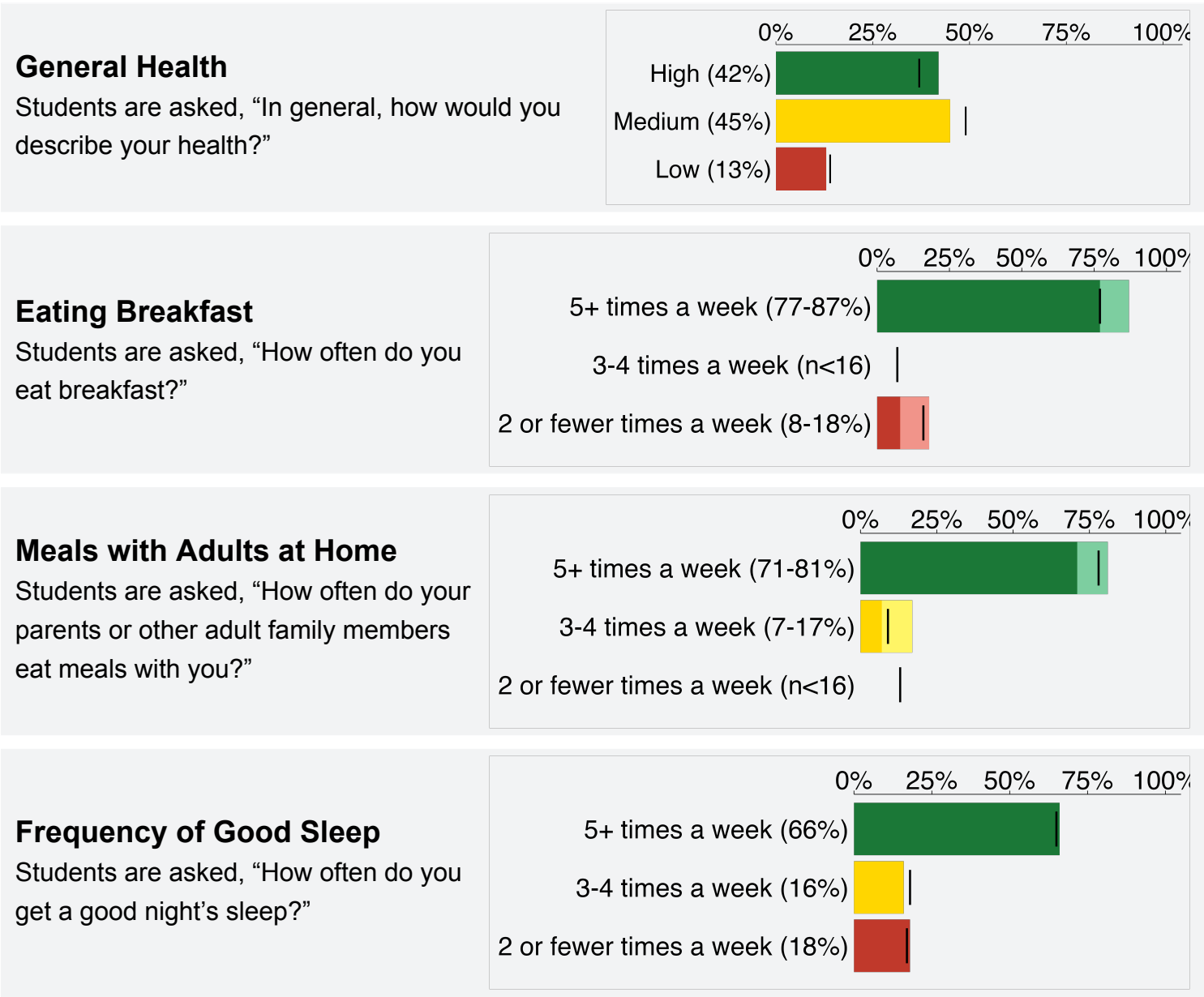
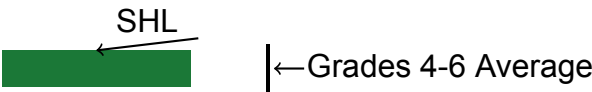


Optimism Optimism refers to the mindset of having positive expectations for the future. e.g. “I have more good times than bad times.”	0%25%50%75%100% High (43%) Medium (38%) Low (19%)
Self-Esteem Self-esteem refers to a person’s sense of self-worth. e.g. “A lot of things about me are good.”	0%25%50%75%100% High (59%) Medium (27%) Low (13%)
Happiness Happiness refers to how content or satisfied students are with their lives. e.g. “I am happy with my life.”	0%25%50%75%100% High (72-82%) Medium (11-21%) Low (n<16)
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.	0%25%50%75%100% High (47%) Medium (31%) Low (21%)



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.

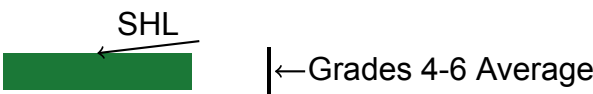




CONNECTEDNESS

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.”

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

High (69-79%)

Medium (14-24%)

Low (n<16)

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.”

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

High (48-58%)

Medium (32-42%)

Low (n<16)

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.”

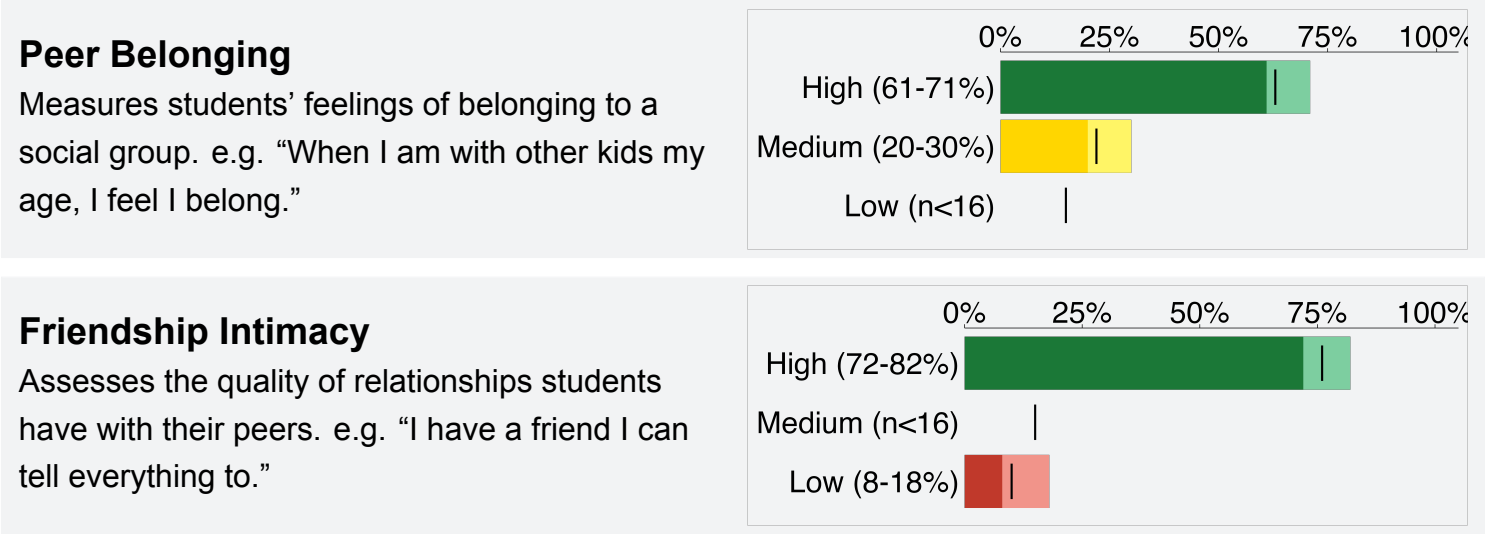
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

High (76-86%)

Medium (9-19%)

Low (n<16)

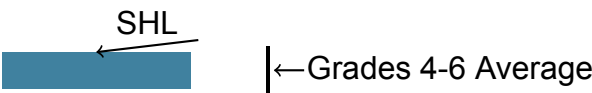
CONNECTEDNESS WITH PEERS



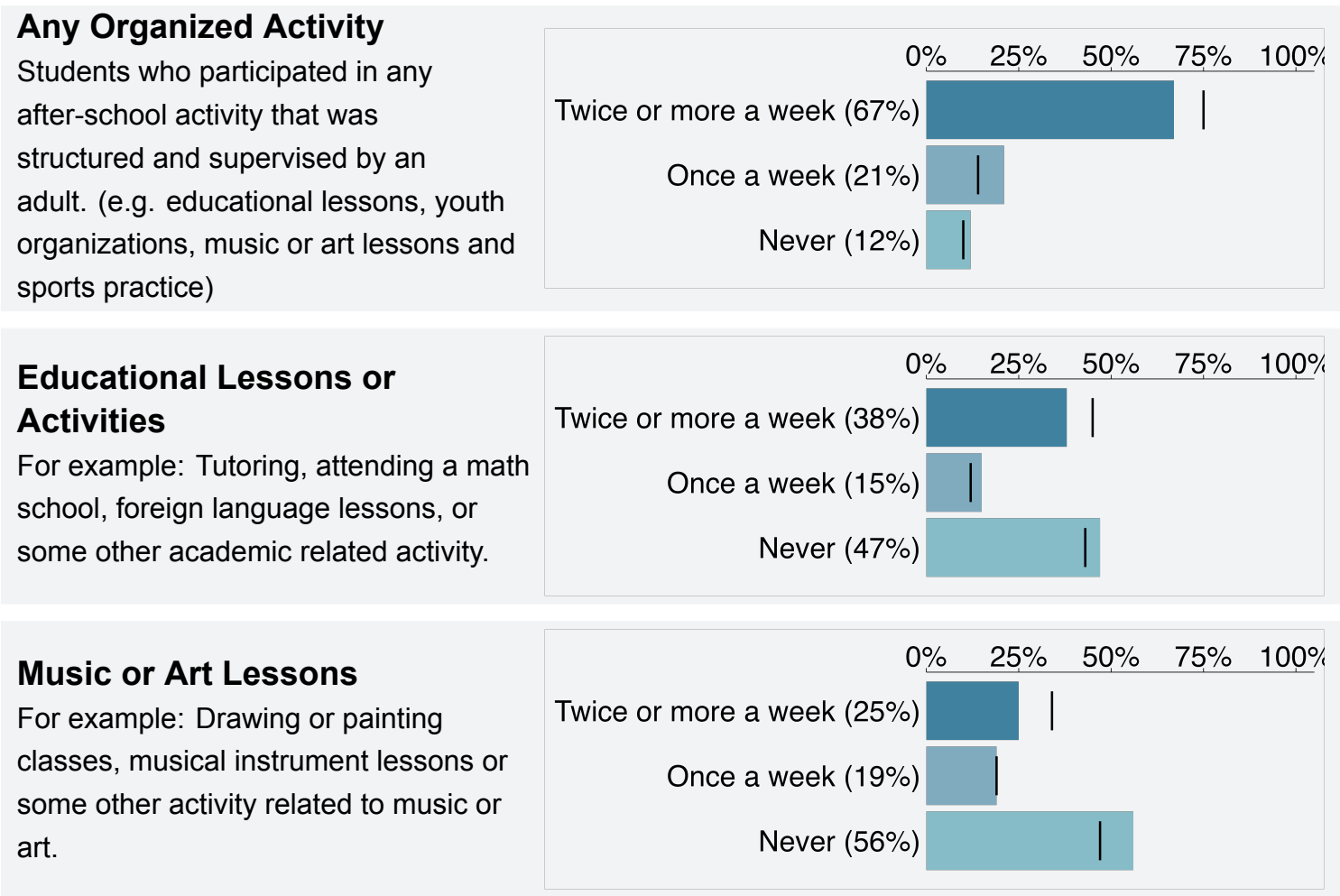


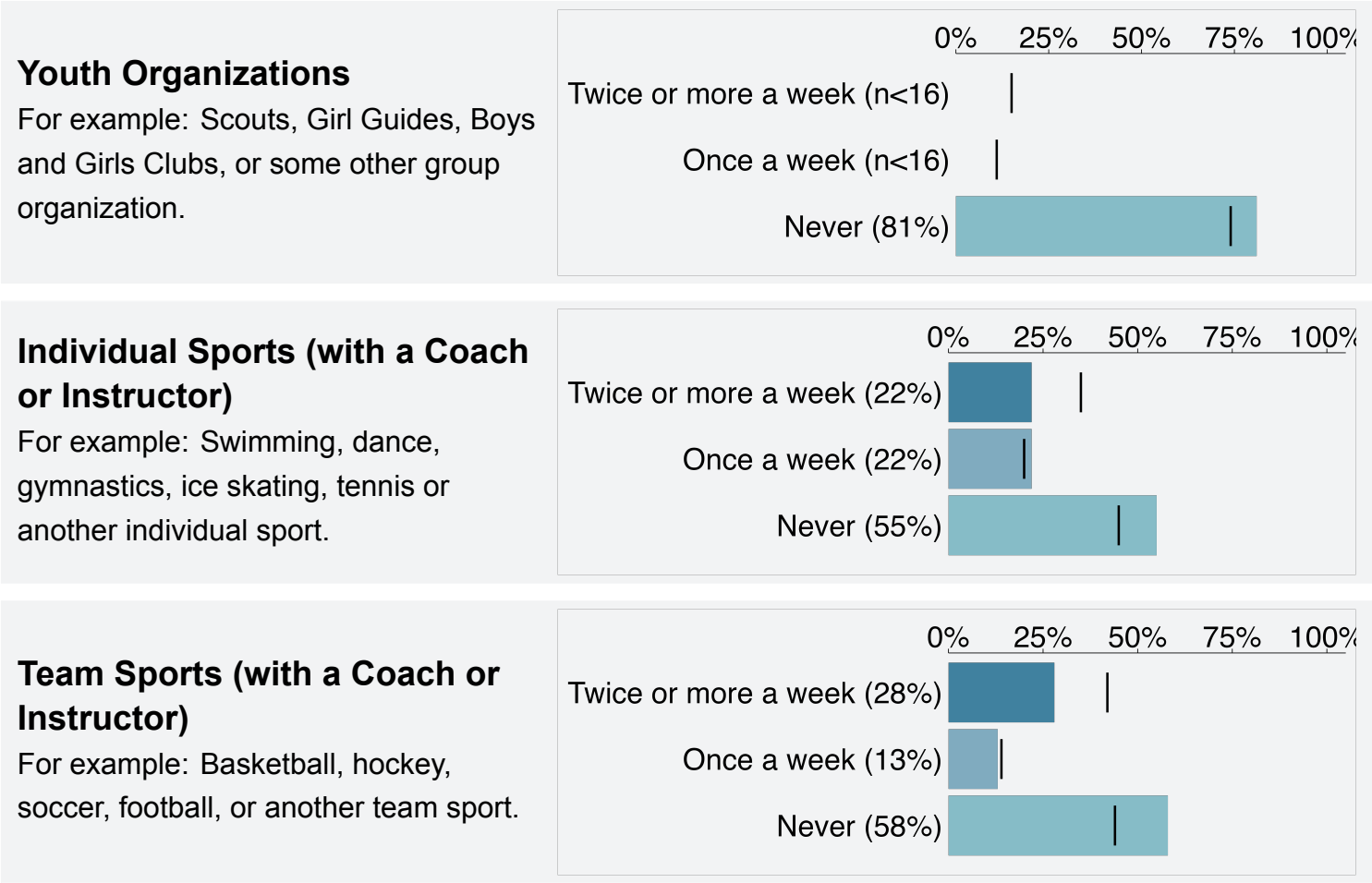
USE OF AFTER-SCHOOL TIME

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

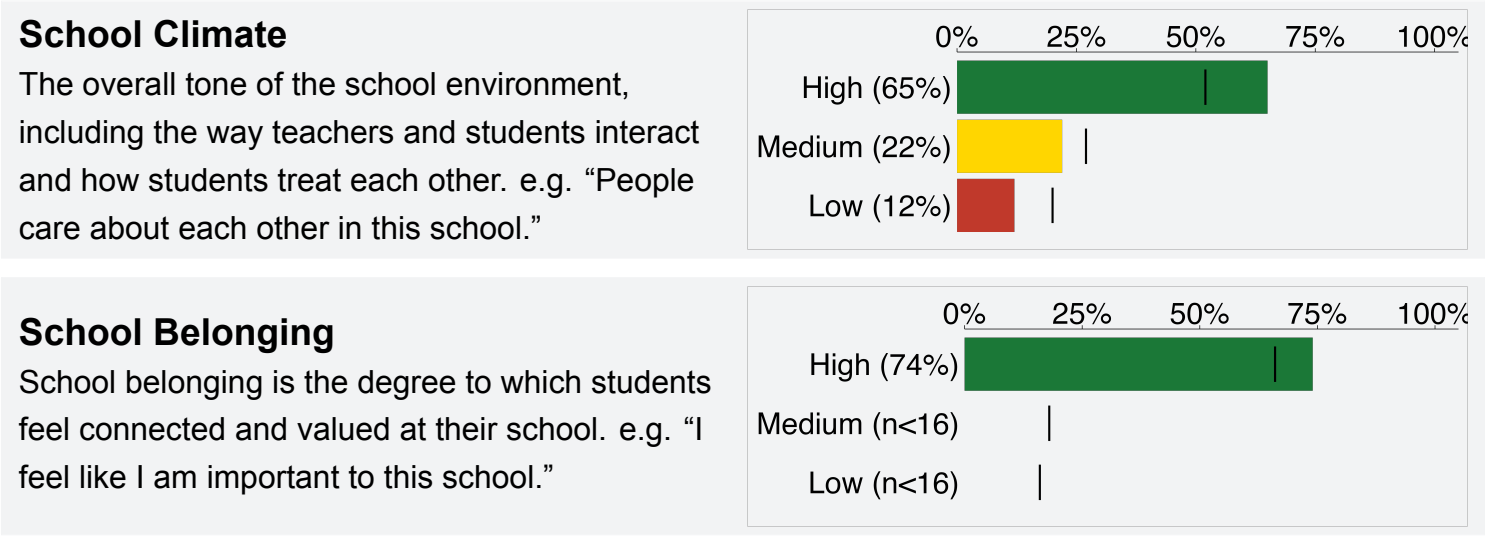
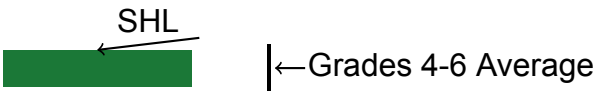






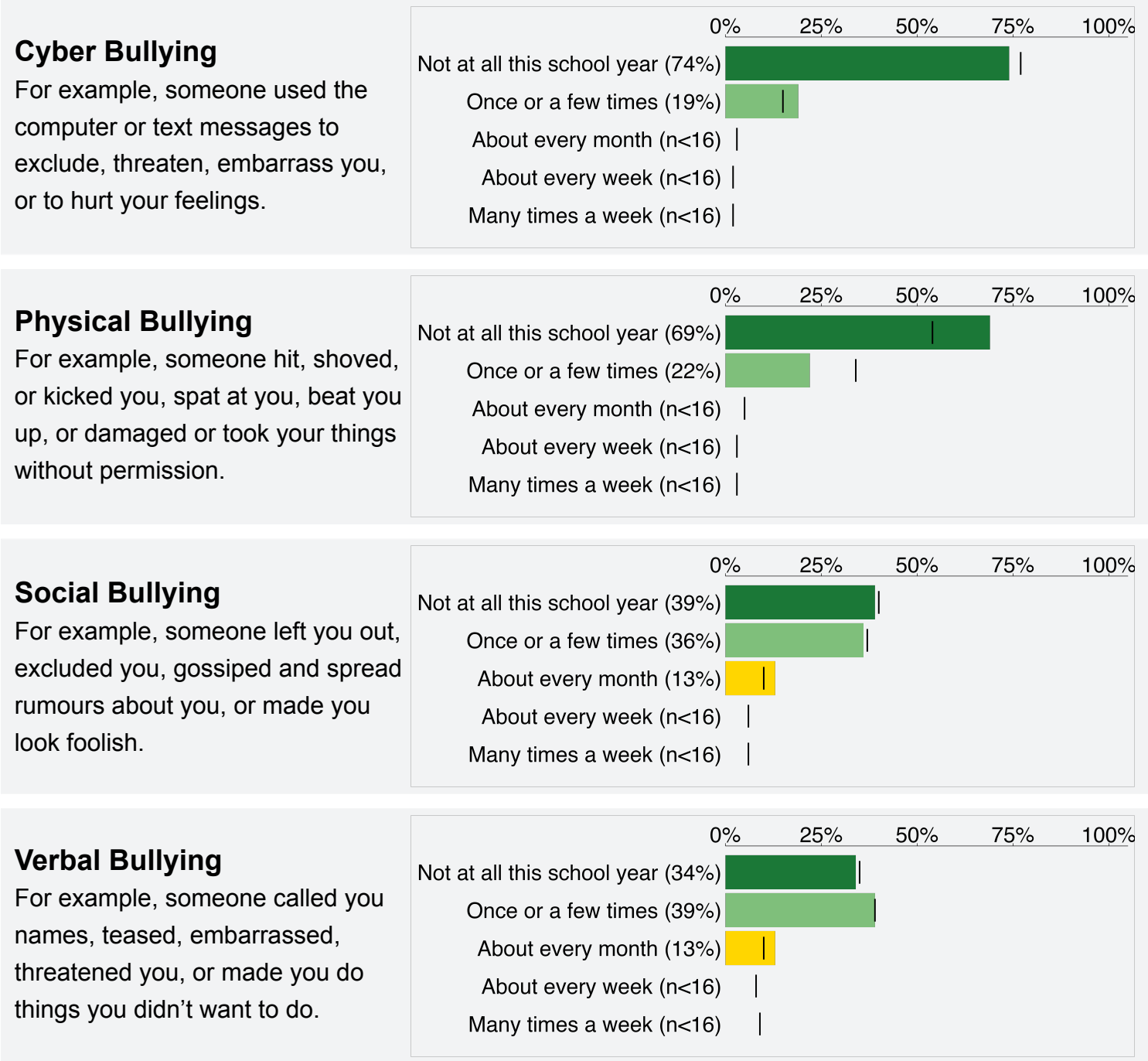
SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

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.



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?’**





ENGAGEMENT

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

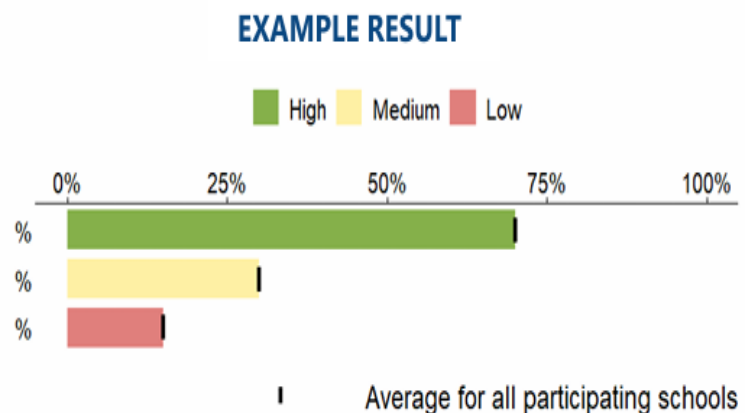
Each figure shows an example result for each dimension/measure, which compares school (the horizontal-colored bar) with Grades 4-6 Board averages (the vertical, black line).

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'.



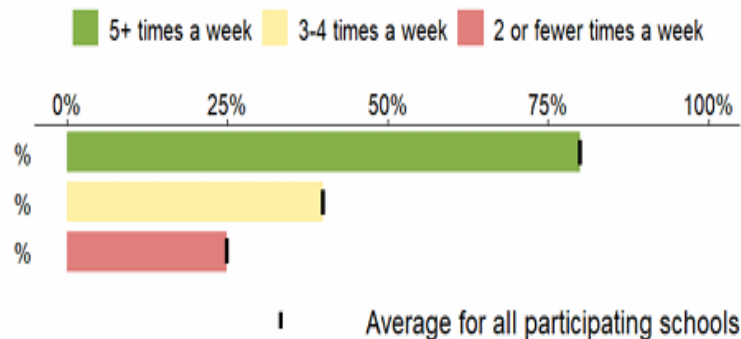
PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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.

EXAMPLE RESULT



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'.

EXAMPLE RESULT

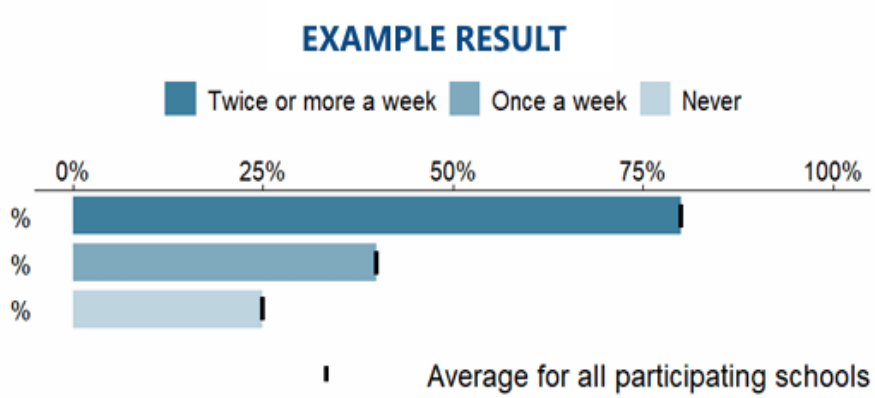


USE OF AFTER-SCHOOL TIME

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

SCORING

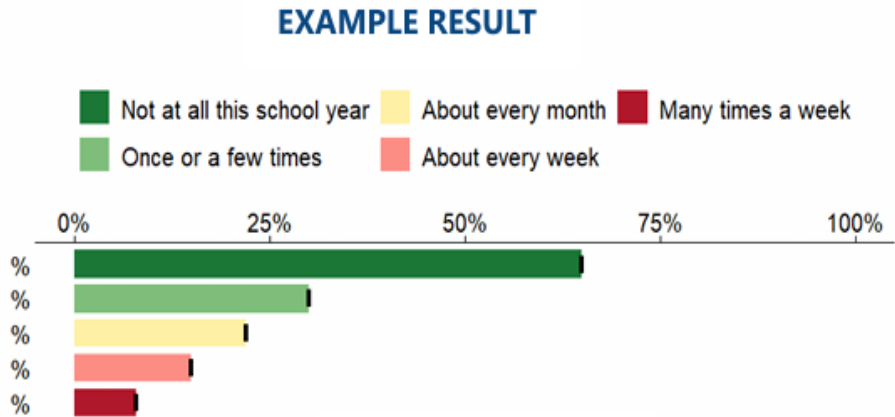
- 5, 4 and 3 times a week + Twice a week
- Once a week
- Never



SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

SCORING

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



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.'

