



THE MIDDLE YEARS DEVELOPMENT
INSTRUMENT (MDI)



MDI DATA HIGHLIGHTS AND TRENDS | **2020-2021**

How are the Kids?

Children's Perspectives on their Health, Well-Being and Assets both Before and During a Global Pandemic through the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) in British Columbia, Canada

HUMAN
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Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl

HELP's Middle Years research is led by Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl. HELP acknowledges Dr. Schonert-Reichl for her leadership and expertise in social and emotional development research, her dedication to exploring children's experiences in the middle years and for raising the profile of children's voices, locally and internationally.

About the Human Early Learning Partnership

The Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) is an interdisciplinary research institute based at the School of Population and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, at the University of British Columbia. HELP's unique partnership brings together researchers and practitioners from across BC, Canada and internationally to address complex child development issues. HELP's research projects explore how different environments and experiences contribute to health and social inequities in children's development over their life course. The institute was founded by Drs. Clyde Hertzman and Hillel Goelman in 1999. Clyde's vision for HELP was to advance knowledge about child development and importantly, to apply this knowledge in communities. This report, and the work of HELP over two decades, would not have been possible without his vision and passion. To learn more please visit our website at earlylearning.ubc.ca.

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Key Findings: How are the kids?

Children's Perspectives on their Health, Well-Being and Assets both **Before and During a Global Pandemic** through the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) in British Columbia, Canada



Children in older grades reported lower levels of well-being in 2020-2021 as compared to previous years.

Within the same school districts, fewer Grade 7 children were identified as "Thriving" on the Well-Being Index in 2020-2021 (27%) as compared to Grade 7 children in the previous academic year (32%) (page 8). A decline in well-being was also seen following older children over time in the same school districts - fewer Grade 8 children were "Thriving" in 2020-2021 (27%) than Grade 7 children in the previous academic year (31%) (page 17). Confronting new stressors associated with early adolescence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic may have contributed to the declining trend in well-being.

Children's after-school time looked different during the pandemic.

Fewer Grade 4 and Grade 7 children reported participating in an organized after-school activity in 2020-2021 as compared to children in Grade 4 and Grade 7 in the previous academic year in the same school districts. Children also reported spending more time online, on screens, and connecting remotely with friends after school compared to the previous academic year. For example, 71% of Grade 4 children reported using the phone or internet to text or chat with friends after school compared to 60% in the previous academic year (page 9).



Children in younger grades reported higher well-being compared to children in older grades.

In 2020-2021, 38% of children in Grade 4 were identified as "Thriving" on the MDI Well-Being Index (page 6). There was an incremental decline in the percentage of children "Thriving" in Grades 5 (36%), 6 (33%), 7 (29%), and 8 (25%). Research has consistently documented significant declines in well-being as children enter early adolescence, however these declines are not inevitable through a focus on protective factors and promoting assets.

Children's self-reported well-being was positively related to the number of assets they perceive as present in their lives.

Assets are resources and influences present in children's lives, including supportive relationships and enriching activities. Children who reported more assets were more likely to report higher well-being, and each additional asset was associated with a further increase in well-being. Over 80% of children that reported the presence of all five assets on the MDI were in the "Thriving" or "Medium" categories of the MDI Well-Being Index in 2020-2021 (page 8).





How are the kids?



Children's Perspectives on their Health, Well-Being and Assets both **Before and During a Global Pandemic** through the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) in British Columbia, Canada

Middle childhood and early adolescence (ages 9 to 14) are critical transitional times in children's development due to the nature and pace of changes that occur across many levels - changes due to biology, emotional and cognitive development, and changes in the importance and influence of peers (Roeser & Eccles, 2014). The [Middle Years Development Instrument](#), or MDI, is a strengths-based tool that gathers children's voices during this developmental period. The MDI data represent one of the most comprehensive population-based datasets about children in the middle years and early adolescence over time in Canada, providing information from the perspectives of children on their social and emotional competence, mental and physical health, and well-being. It also provides information on the assets that exist in their lives, including connectedness to adults and peers, nutrition and sleep, school experiences, and use of time after school.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted routines and support systems for children and their families, including changes to work, education, child care, and health and support services (Children First Canada, 2020; Dove et al., 2020). Disruptions to these systems have impacted some families disproportionately, increasing existing inequities (Dove et al., 2020; Representative for Children and Youth BC, 2020). Educators, parents, and service providers have worked through challenging circumstances to create safe and caring environments for children to learn and connect through this time of uncertainty.

Schools closed to in-person learning in March of 2020 for most students in British Columbia (BC)¹, with voluntary, part-time return to in-person learning open to all students in June of 2020 (Dove et al., 2020). All students were welcomed back to in-person learning in September 2020, although some families opted to keep children at home, evidenced by a 32% increase in enrolment in Distributed Learning from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021². Schools remained open throughout the 2020-2021 academic year under enhanced health and safety measures (British Columbia Government, 2021).

¹ In-person learning was first offered to children of essential workers and later to children who needed additional supports through April and May, 2020 (Dove et al., 2020).

² Source: BC Schools - Student Enrolment and FTE by Grade. <https://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset/bc-schools-student-enrolment-and-fte-by-grade>

As evidenced by impacts of past pandemics and natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic is predicted to negatively impact children’s mental health (Waddell et al., 2020). Early evidence is emerging on the negative impacts of COVID-19 on parents’ mental health (Gadermann et al., 2021) and stress levels (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2020), and on the mental health of children and adolescents (Magson et al., 2020; Ravens-Sieberer et al., 2020; Schwartz et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2020). A recent rapid systematic review of the mental health of children and adolescents during COVID-19 and past pandemics found that “pandemics cause stress, worry, helplessness, and social and risky behavioral problems among children and adolescents” (p. 1; Meheralli et al., 2021).

The aggregations in this report represent population-based data collected in public school districts and independent schools in BC. Children and their parents/caregivers had the opportunity to opt out of participation, and children that were absent during MDI administration or had significant language or learning barriers are not represented in the data. In 2020-2021 there was an option to complete the MDI at home for those students that were remote learners.

Many school districts in BC participate in the MDI every 1 to 3 years to track trends in MDI data over time. Additionally, some school districts choose to follow cohorts of children year over year. This report highlights MDI data in relation to three different aggregations:

1. Across all (27) participating school districts and independent schools from grades 4 through 8 in BC in 2020-2021 (Table 1).
2. Across school districts that administered the MDI in each of the past three years (2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021) in Grade 4 (9 school districts) and districts that administered the MDI in each of the past three years in Grade 7 (10 school districts) (Table 2).
3. Across school districts that administered the MDI in:
 - a. Grade 4 in 2019-2020 and Grade 5 in 2020-2021 (7 school districts),
 - b. Grade 7 in 2019-2020 and Grade 8 in 2020-2021 (8 school districts) (Table 3).

Table 1: Number of school districts and children that participated in the MDI in 2020-2021

GRADE	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
4	13	9,901
5	12	9,287
6	4	2,821
7	14	7,877
8	12	8,988
Total	27 ³	38,874

³ Some school districts participated in more than one grade in 2020-2021.

Examining trends in MDI data through different aggregations demonstrates to school districts, governments, and communities the capability and power of the MDI to comprehensively monitor the social and emotional competence, well-being, mental and physical health, and assets of successive cohorts of children; to track populations of children over time; and to assess influences of large-scale events such as the global pandemic on children’s mental and physical health, well-being, and assets.

Key Finding:
 A larger percentage of children in younger grades were identified as “Thriving” on the MDI Well-being Index compared to children in older grades in 2020-2021.

1. WELL-BEING AND ASSETS IN 2020-2021, GRADES 4 THROUGH 8

The [Well-Being Index](#) represents a composite score that is computed based on children’s self-reports on five measures of child well-being: Happiness, Optimism, Self-Esteem, Absence of Sadness, and Overall Health (Guhn et al., 2012). This composite score is then sorted into three categories of well-being: 1. “Thriving” (also considered “High Well-Being”), 2. “Medium Well-Being” and, 3. “Low Well-Being”. In general, there were fewer children with scores in the “Thriving” range in older grades when compared to children in the younger grades (Figure 1). However, it is important to note that there was variation regarding the percentage of children “Thriving” across school districts and grades - with ranges in “Thriving” from a low of 20% to a high of 63% in Grade 4, and a low of 18% to a high of 31% in Grade 8.

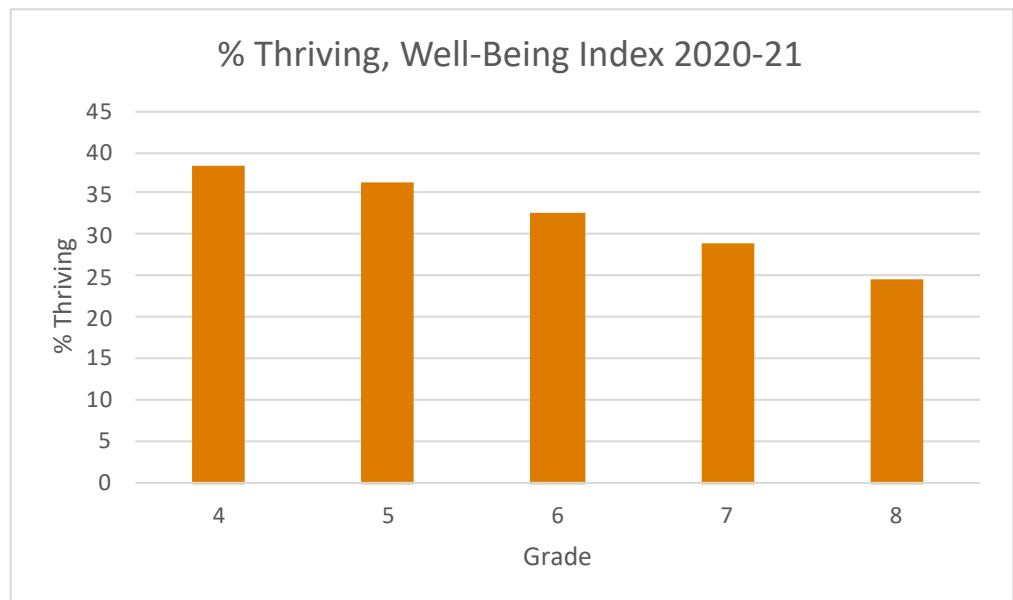


Figure 1: Percent of children “Thriving” on the Well-Being Index 2020-2021, Grades 4 through 8



Key Finding:
A larger percentage of children in younger grades reported the presence of assets in their lives compared to children in older grades in 2020-2021.

The MDI [Assets Index](#) combines measures that represent important external “actionable” factors that can support children’s well-being, and includes measures in the following areas: Adult Relationships, Peer Relationships, Nutrition and Sleep, and After-School Activities⁴. As can be seen in Figure 2, in general, a higher percentage of children in younger grades reported assets in their lives in 2020-2021 compared to the percentages of children in older grades. These differences between younger (Grades 4 and 5) and older (Grades 6, 7, and 8) children were particularly evident with regard to the assets related to Adult Relationships, Nutrition and Sleep, and After-School Activities.

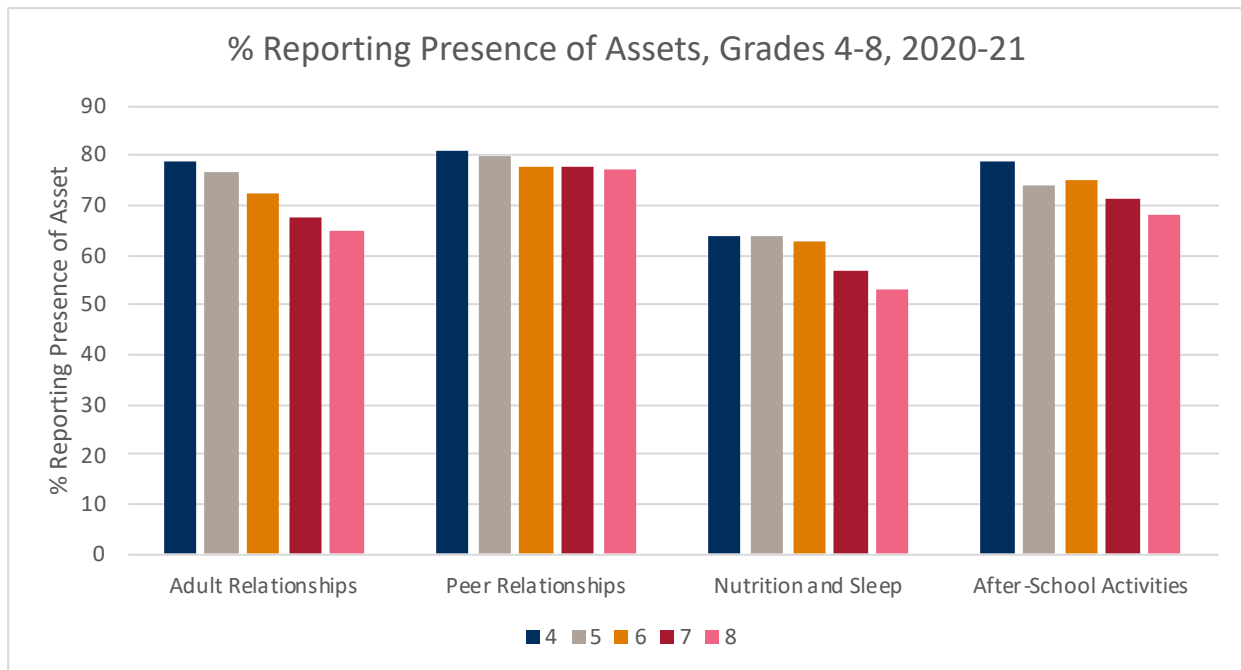


Figure 2: Percent of Children Reporting Presence of Assets, Grades 4 through 8, 2020-21

⁴ The School Experiences asset data are not reported as part of the Assets Index to deter the ranking of individual schools or districts.

Key Finding: Children who reported the presence of assets in their life were more likely to be experiencing well-being in 2020-2021.

Research with MDI data illustrates the positive relation between the number of assets present in children’s lives and their well-being (Guhn et al., 2012). This relationship holds true with Grade 4 and 7 data from 2020-2021 (Figure 3). Those children who reported more assets in their lives were also more likely to be in the “Thriving” or “Medium” categories on the Well-Being Index.

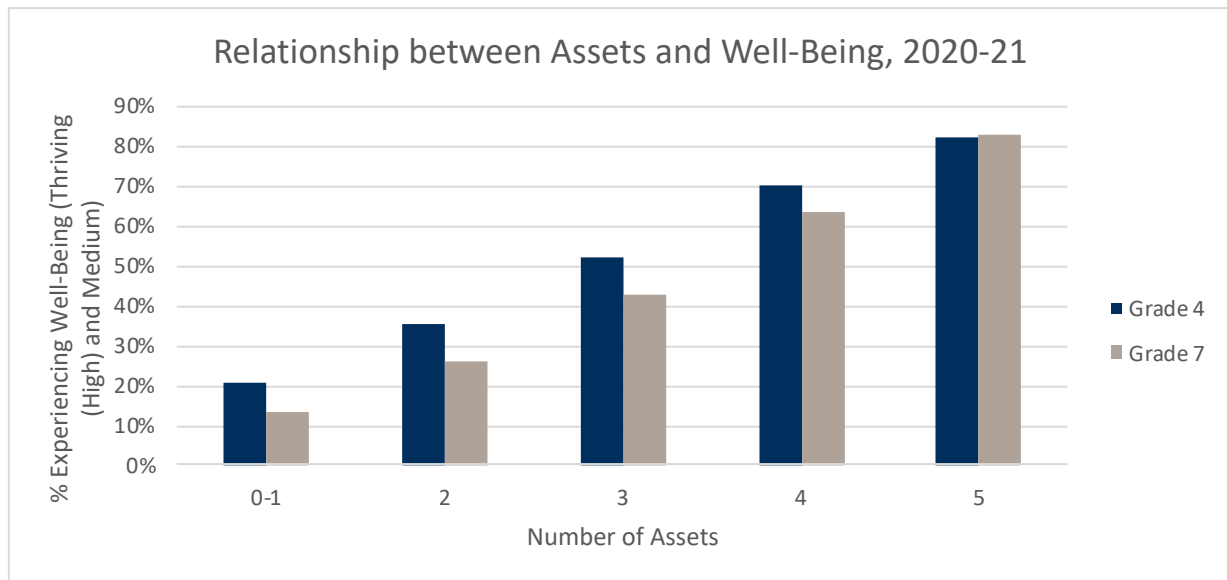


Figure 3: Relationship between Assets and Well-Being, Grade 4 and 7, 2020-2021

2. THREE YEAR DATA TRENDS FOR CHILDREN IN GRADES 4 AND 7

MDI data were collected between January and March across the past three academic years, so viewing data trends from those school districts that participated in each of the last three years can highlight the ways in which the pandemic may have impacted children’s lives. These aggregations for Grade 4 and Grade 7 include a mix of large urban school districts from the Lower Mainland of BC as well as small and medium sized school districts outside of the Lower Mainland (Table 2).

Table 2: School districts that participated in the MDI 2018-2019, 2019-2020 & 2020-2021

GRADE	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
4	9	7499 across 3 years
7	10	9313 across 3 years

Key Finding: The well-being of Grade 4 children has remained stable over the past three years whereas the well-being of Grade 7 children has declined.

Within districts that implemented the MDI with their Grade 4 and/or Grade 7 children in each of the last three years, findings revealed different patterns. Specifically, in 2020-2021, 38% of Grade 4 children were categorized as “Thriving” on the Well-Being Index, a percentage which is consistent with previous years (37% in 2019-2020 and 39% in 2018-2019). For Grade 7 children, 27% were categorized as “Thriving” on the Well-Being Index in 2020-2021, a percentage which is a decrease from previous years (32% in 2019-2020 and 33% in 2018-2019).

 **Key Finding:**

For the 2020-2021 school year, children reported less participation in organized after-school activities and more time online and connecting remotely with friends compared to children from the previous two years.

Use of After-School Time

On the MDI, children are asked about their participation in organized and unstructured activities during the [after-school period](#) (3pm – 6pm). The MDI data from 2020-2021 showed a decline in children's participation in organized after-school activities in comparison to previous years. More specifically, in the 2020-2021 school year, 77% of Grade 4 children reported participating in an organized after-school activity compared to 86% in 2019-2020 and 85% in 2018-2019. These trends were also found in Grade 7 in which 71% of Grade 7 children reported participating in an organized activity in 2020-2021 compared to 83% in 2019-2020 and 80% in 2018-2019.

In 2020-2021, and as might be expected given the pandemic, children in Grades 4 and 7 were more likely to report socializing and spending time using phones and/or computers after-school compared to children in Grade 4 and 7 in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 (Figures 4 and 5). For example, 71% of Grade 4 children reported using the phone or internet to text or chat with friends after-school compared to 60% in 2019-2020. The percent of Grade 7 children reporting playing video or computer games after-school increased from 72% in 2019-2020 to 82% in 2020-2021. Although excessive use of screen time has been found to be associated with lower well-being in middle childhood (Oberle et al., 2020), the greater use of screen time in 2020-2021 reported by students may have been a result of children's regular after-school activities being unavailable or offered virtually. Grade 7 children reported less time working and volunteering after-school in 2020-2021, with 20% of students volunteering and 30% working in 2019-2020 compared to 10% volunteering and 21% working in 2020-2021 (Figure 5).

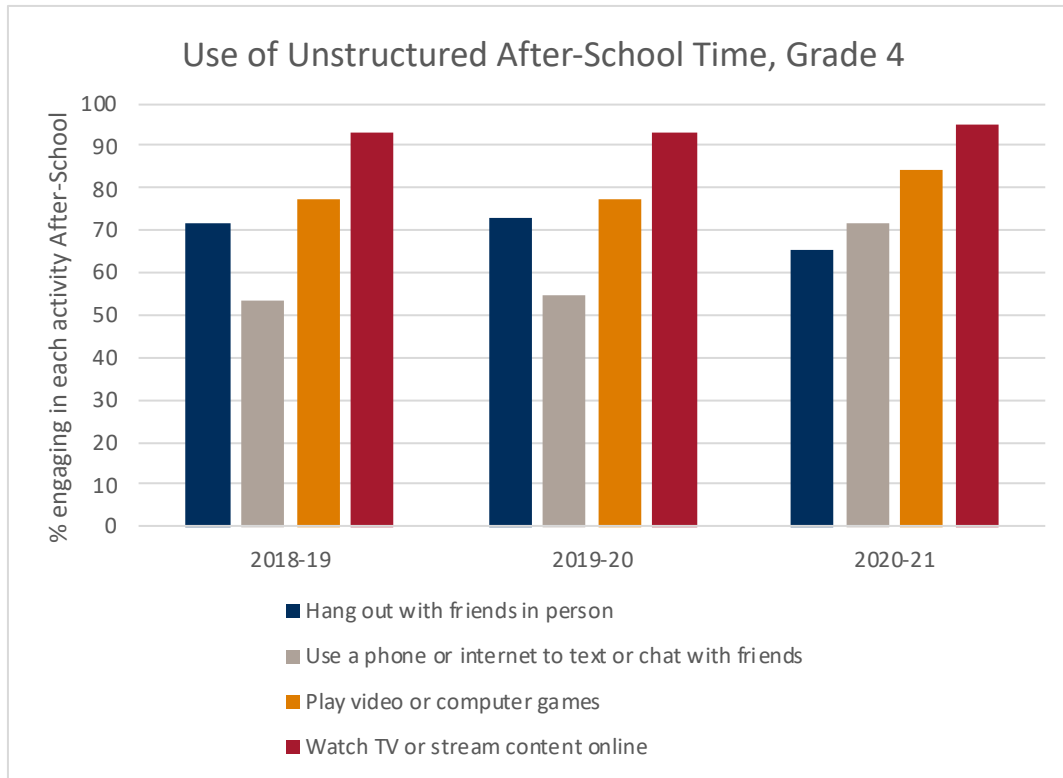


Figure 4: Three Year Trend in Grade 4 Use of Unstructured After-School Time

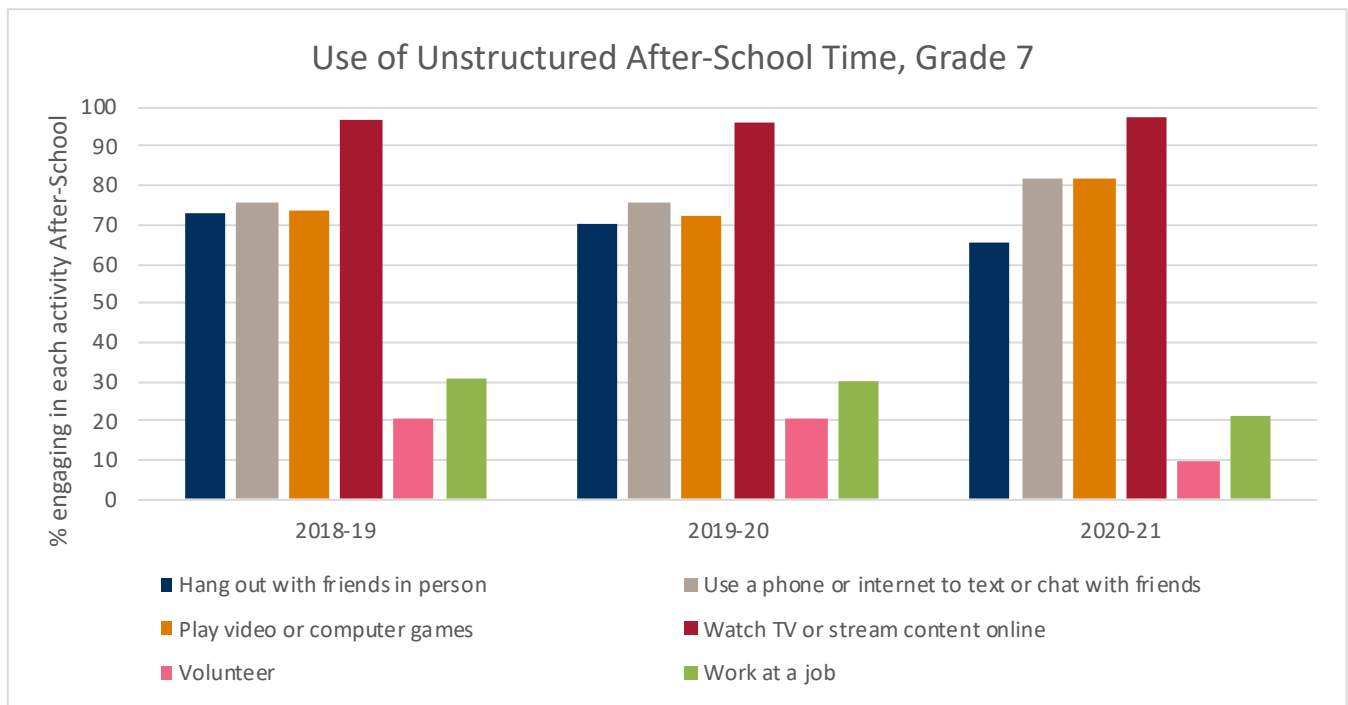


Figure 5: Three Year Trend in Grade 7 Use of Unstructured After-School Time



 **Key Finding:** Children reported eating meals with adults in their family as often in 2020-2021 as in previous years, but reported getting a good sleep and eating breakfast less frequently in 2020-2021 in comparison to previous years.

Nutrition and Sleep Assets

The MDI asks children about key areas that research identifies as important indicators of overall [physical health and well-being](#), including frequency of eating meals with adults in their family, the frequency with which they eat breakfast, and the quality of their sleep on a weekly basis. With regard to eating breakfast in 2020-2021, the MDI data revealed that fewer children reported eating breakfast at least 5 times per week, particularly in Grade 7 (61% compared to 67% in 2019-2020) (Figures 6 and 7). Although research has shown that older children are less likely to regularly eat breakfast than younger children (Lillico et al., 2014), the decline in the number of children regularly eating breakfast may be related to the lack of access to food for families living in poverty due to COVID-19 (Statistics Canada, 2020).

For some families, the pandemic has meant more time spent together at home (Gadermann et al., 2021). With regard to sleep, MDI data indicate that staying closer to home this year did not translate to getting a better sleep for Grade 7 children: 48% reported getting a good sleep at least 5 times a week in 2020-2021 compared to 53% in 2019-2020. Older children typically report getting fewer hours of sleep than younger children, mostly due to later bedtimes (Chaput & Janssen, 2016). Stress can also impact sleep quality (Jamieson et al., 2020), which may have been a contributor for older children's report of sleep this year.

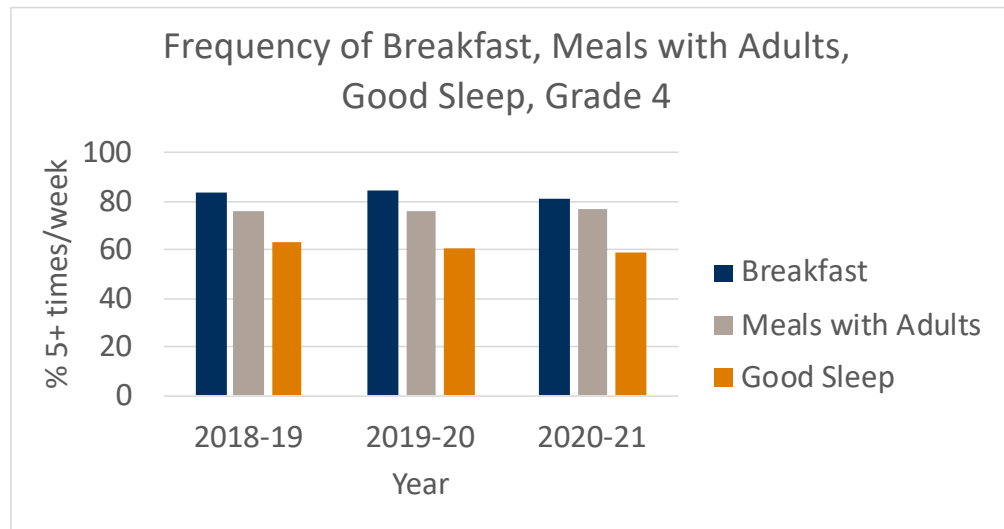


Figure 6: Three Year Trends of Frequency of Breakfast, Meals with Adults, Good Sleep, Grade 4

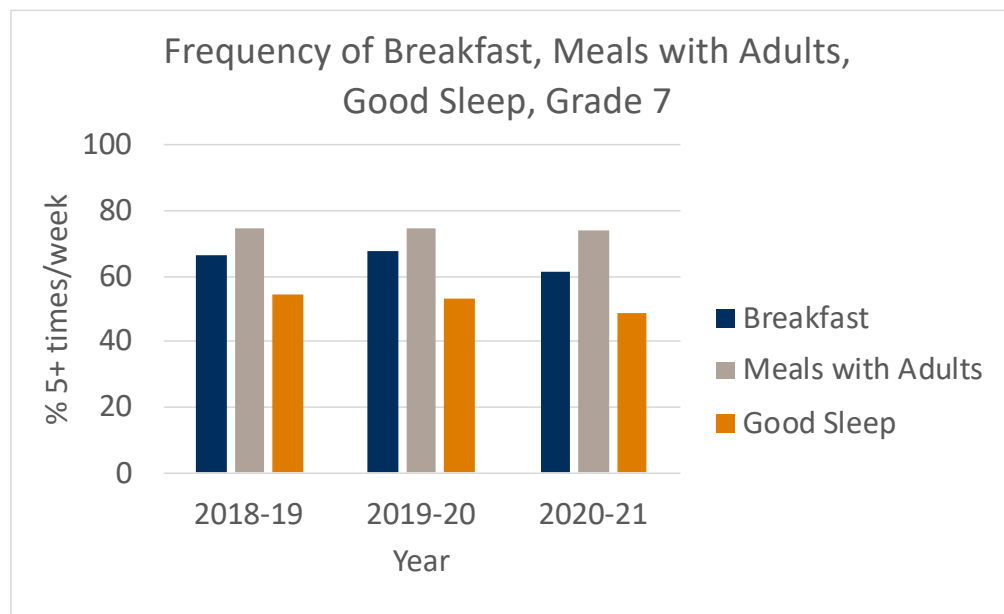


Figure 7: Three Year Trends of Frequency of Breakfast, Meals with Adults, Good Sleep, Grade 7

Key Finding:
 In 2020-2021, children in Grade 4 reported feeling connected to adults at the same high rates as in previous years. In contrast, children in Grade 7 reported feeling somewhat less connected to adults in 2020-2021 as compared to previous years.

Connectedness to Adults

Despite the many changes within school and home environments during the COVID-19 pandemic, one important trend that emerged in our data was that children in Grade 4 had similarly high levels of feeling [connected to adults at home, at school, and in their neighbourhood/community](#) across the 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021 academic years (Figure 8). For Grade 7 children in the 2020-2021 academic year, there were declines in the percentage reporting feeling connected to adults. The biggest difference was in connectedness to adults at home, with 74% of Grade 7 children who reported high connectedness to adult at home compared to 80% in 2019-2020 (Figure 9).

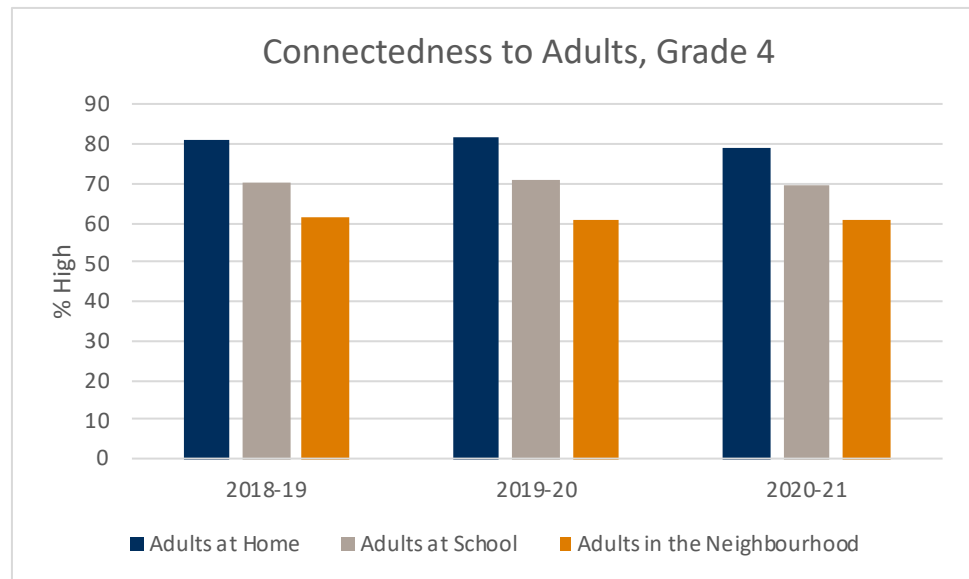


Figure 8: Three Year Trend in Connectedness to Adults at Home, School and Community, Grade 4

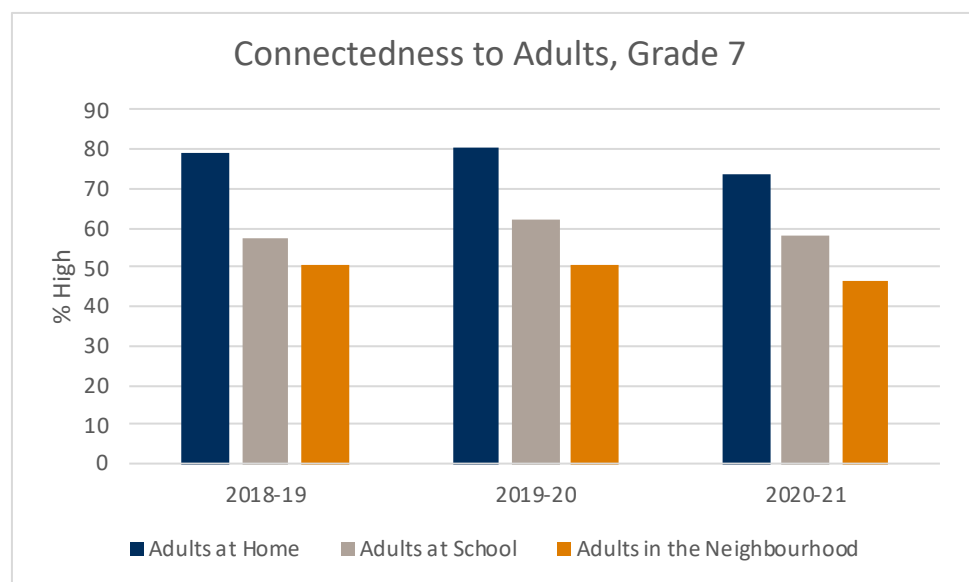


Figure 9: Three Year Trend in Connectedness to Adults at Home, School and Community, Grade 7



 **Key Finding:**
Grade 4 children reported similar levels of school belonging and academic self-concept in 2020-2021 as in previous years. In contrast, Grade 7 children reported lower levels of school belonging and academic self-concept in 2020-2021 compared to previous years.

School Experiences

With regard to [school experiences](#), for the 2020-2021 academic year, a greater percentage of Grade 4 children reported a high level of positive school climate in 2020-2021 (74%) compared to reports from 2019-2020 (68%) (Figure 10). Additionally, the percentage of Grade 4 children reporting a high sense of belonging at school and high academic self-concept in 2020-2021 were similar to levels reported in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 (Figure 10).

In contrast, a somewhat different trend emerged for Grade 7 children. Specifically, compared to previous academic years, a lower percentage of Grade 7 reported feeling a high level of belonging at school in 2020-2021 (44%) compared to 2019-2020 (50%) and 2018-2019 (48%). In addition, a lower percentage of Grade 7 children reported a high level of academic self-concept in 2020-2021 (68%) compared to 2019-2020 (73%) and 2018-2019 (72%). As for school climate, Grade 7 students reported similarly high levels of school climate in 2020-2021 as compared to their reports from previous years (Figure 11).

One potential reason for the differences in trends between Grade 4 and 7 children could be due to the ways in which the learning environment was organized for Grade 7 students compared to students in younger grades in BC during the COVID-19 pandemic (BC Teachers' Federation, 2021). Additionally, given that students in Grade 7 are in a transitional development phase of early adolescence – a time period characterized as a “stress pileup” (Roeser & Eccles, 2014) due to the many biological, social, emotional, and cognitive changes that occur in a relatively short-time period -- it may be that the level of stress among Grade 7 children was intensified by the COVID pandemic, resulting in declines in their positive school experiences.

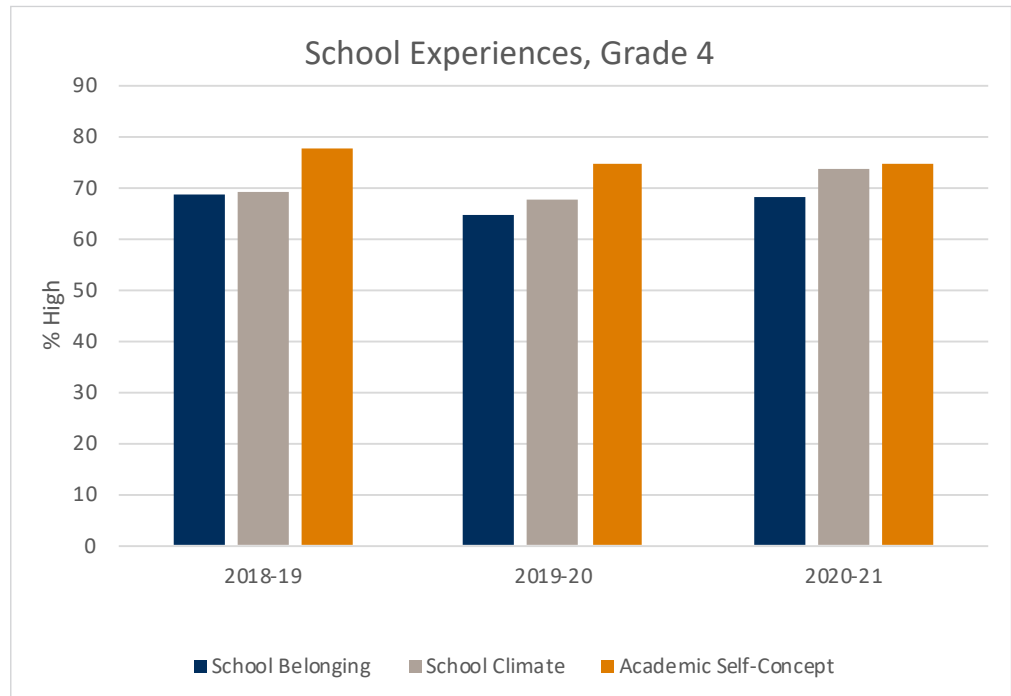


Figure 10: Three Year Trends in School Experiences, Grade 4

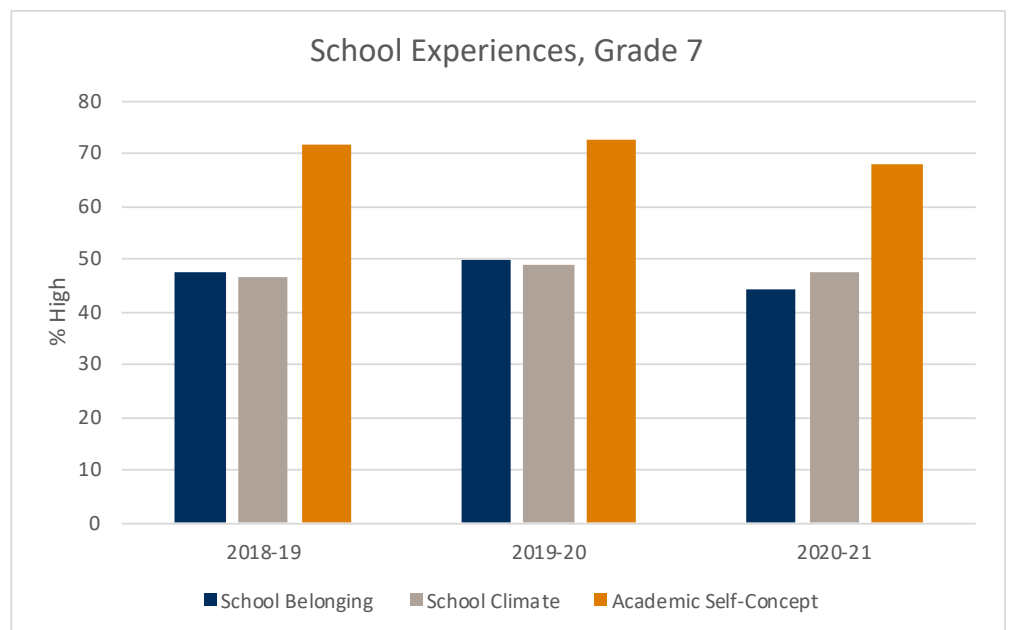


Figure 11: Three Year Trend, School Experiences, Grade 7

Help-Seeking for Emotional Well-Being

On the MDI, children were asked to identify the sources of support to whom they would turn if they were feeling sad, stressed, or worried. Their responses highlight both similarities and differences for help-seeking among children across different grades (see Figure 12). For example, across grades, family members remained important resources, although there were declines in older grades. In contrast, friends as sources of support remained relatively high across all grade levels. These data can help guide future efforts to support the emotional well-being of children by providing information and support to the help-seeking resources children identified.

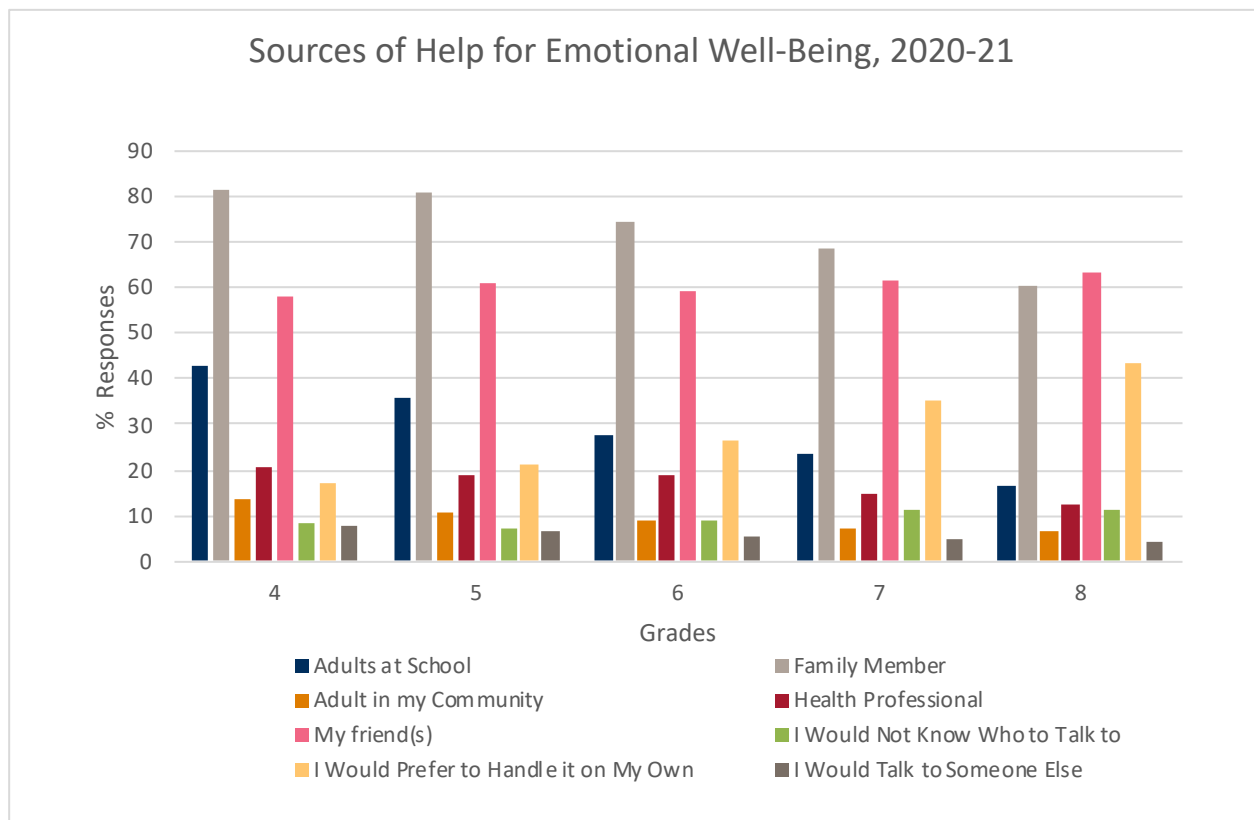


Figure 12: Sources of Help for Emotional Well-Being, 2020-21

3. FOLLOWING CHILDREN OVER TIME: WELL-BEING AND SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

School districts could choose to administer the MDI in Grades 5, 6, and 8 for the first time in 2020-2021. Many districts chose to administer the MDI following the same groups, or cohorts of children from year to year. For example, a number of districts chose to administer the MDI with students in Grade 5 in 2020-2021 in order to follow many of the same children that participated in the Grade 4 MDI in 2019-2020, and/or administer the MDI with students in Grade 8 this year for many of the children that participated in Grade 7 in 2019-2020 (Table 3). The districts that participated in this cohort approach include a mix of large urban school districts from the Lower Mainland and small- and medium-sized districts elsewhere in BC.

Table 3: School Districts that followed cohorts of children from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021

GRADE (YEAR)	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN ⁵
4 (2019-2020), 5 (2020-2021)	7	4781 (2019-2020), 4780 (2020-2021)
7 (2019-2020), 8 (2020-2021)	8	6167 (2019-2020), 6157 (2020-2021)

Key Finding: Grade 5 children that participated in 2020-2021 reported similar levels of well-being as Grade 4 children that participated in 2019-2020 in the same school districts. In contrast, Grade 8 children that participated in 2020-2021 reported lower levels of well-being than Grade 7 children that participated in 2019-2020 in the same school districts.

Well-Being

The percent of children identified as “Thriving” on the Well-Being Index in Grade 4 in 2019-2020 and Grade 5 in 2020-2021, remained consistent at 37%. However, the percent of children identified as “Thriving” in Grade 7 from 2019-2020 to Grade 8 in 2020-2021 decreased from 31% to 27%. This decrease was reflected across all dimensions comprising the Well-Being Index (Figure 13). In other words, students in Grade 8 reported feeling less healthy, less happy, more sad, less optimistic, and to have lower self-esteem as compared to students in Grade 7 in 2019-2020 in the same school districts.

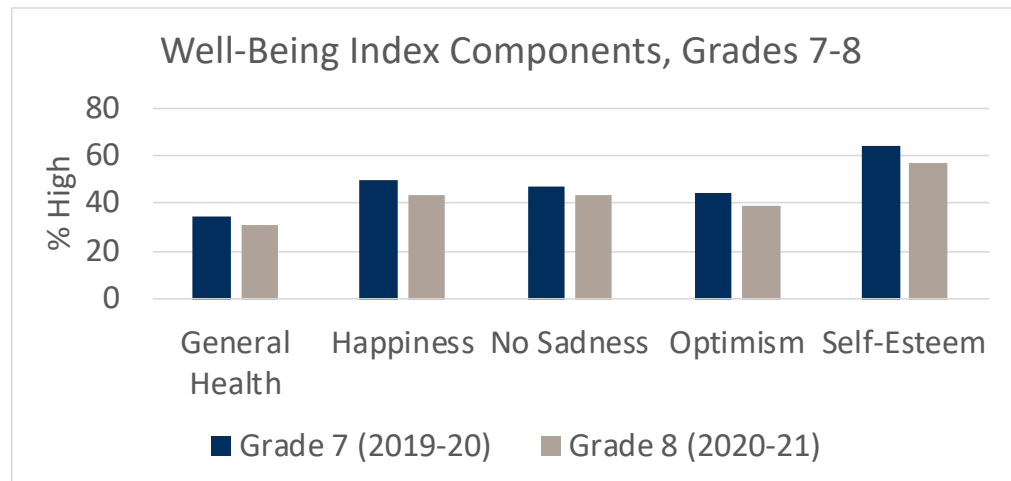


Figure 13: Well-Being Index Components, Grade 7 to Grade 8

⁵ Many of the same students participated in the MDI over the two years, but the groups are not individually linked.

Key Finding:
Grade 5 and Grade 8 children reported lower levels of short- and long-term self-regulation this year compared to Grade 4 and Grade 7 children last year.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation refers to a person’s ability to adapt their behaviour, thoughts, or emotions in the context of their environment to meet a particular goal (Blair & Diamond, 2008), and develops throughout middle childhood and adolescence into young adulthood (Steinberg et al., 2018). Additionally, self-regulation is positively associated with academic achievement, social skills, health, and well-being, and negatively associated with depression, behavioural problems, and substance abuse (Pandey et al., 2018). Short-term self-regulation specifically involves responding to situations “in the heat of the moment,” such as controlling an impulsive reaction, trying not to fidget in class, or focusing one’s attention on an immediate project or activity (Moilanen et al., 2018). Long-term self-regulation involves planning and adapting one’s behaviour in the present to achieve a goal several days, weeks, or even months in the future.

With regard to children’s reports of short-term and long-term self-regulation as assessed on the MDI, there was a decline from Grade 4 to Grade 5, and also from Grade 7 to Grade 8 among those students in districts that completed the MDI in 2019-2020 and again in 2020-2021 (Figures 14 and 15). This finding was particularly evident with regard to short-term self-regulation. Specifically, in 2020-2021, 48% of Grade 5 children reported high levels of short-term self-regulation compared to 52% of Grade 4 children in the same school districts in 2019-2020. In 2020-2021, 40% of Grade 8 children reported high levels of short-term self-regulation compared to 45% of Grade 7 children in the same school districts in 2019-2020. The stress associated with the pandemic may have played a role in the declines observed. Indeed, previous research has shown the adverse effects of stress on the ability to self-regulate (Muraven, & Baumeister, 2000), especially among children experiencing chronic stress and living in poverty (Blair, 2010).

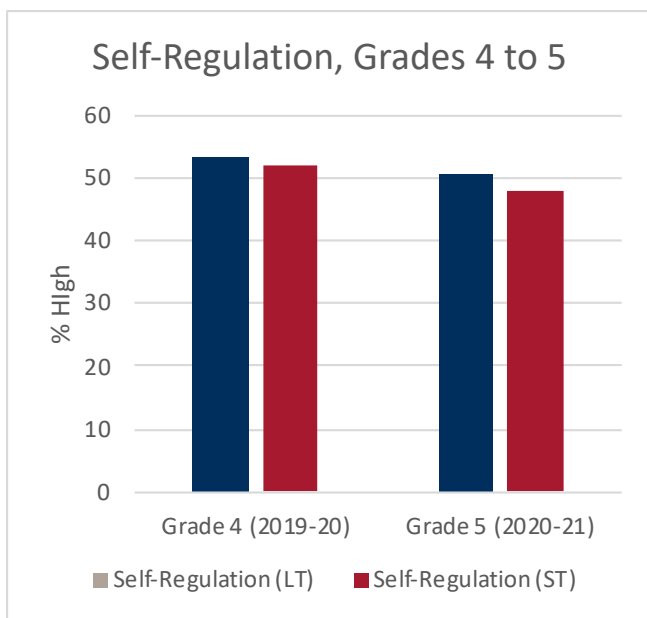


Figure 14: Short and long-term self-regulation from Grade 4 (2019-20) to Grade 5 (2020-21)

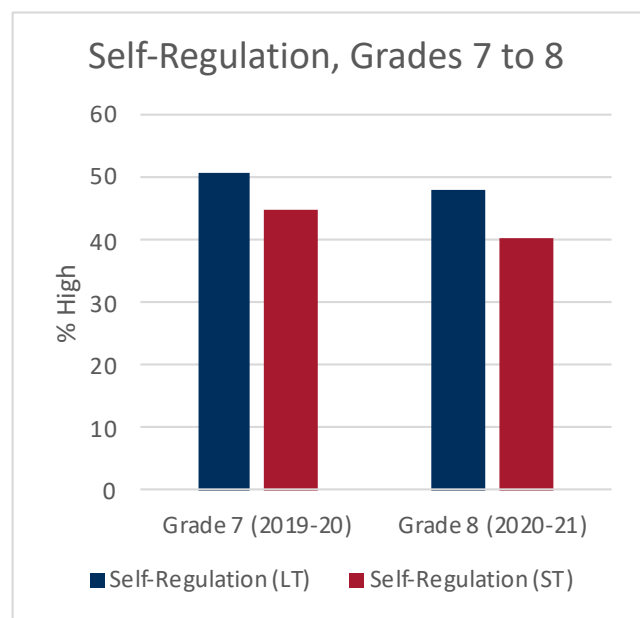


Figure 15: Short and long-term self-regulation from Grade 7 (2019-20) to Grade 8 (2020-21)



4. CREATING A NEW NORMAL

As communities and schools look forward to returning to normal, or working together to create a new normal, children's perspectives on their lives shared through the MDI can provide valuable and actionable information for creating contexts where all children can flourish and thrive.

The MDI data presented in this report reveal a trend of fewer older children (Grades 7 and 8) identified as "Thriving" compared to younger children (Grades 4 and 5) in 2020-2021, and as compared to Grade 7 children in previous years. Research has consistently documented significant declines in well-being as children enter early adolescence (Goldbeck et al., 2007; WHO, 2016) and, over the years, researchers have explored why these declines occur. One possible explanation that has been identified is a "stress pileup" that occurs as individuals make the transition from childhood to early adolescence (Roeser & Eccles, 2014). Indeed, the transition to early adolescence has been identified as a time in which young people are confronted with a myriad of new stressors with which they must cope – both related to context (e.g., increased academic demands) and developmental changes (e.g., cognitive development), and changing peer and parent relationships. For instance, during early adolescence children gain entry to new settings, such as middle schools and high schools, that lead them to encounter pressures that present them with new developmental challenges – namely, an entire new world of expectations for their success. Confronting new stressors in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic with the associated disruptions may have been particularly challenging for children in Grades 7 and 8, and could have contributed to the declining trend in well-being.

Although middle childhood and early adolescence is a time of transition, it should not only be thought as a risk promoting time in development – transitions may also be thought as "windows of opportunity." In other words, these are times in the early lifecourse in which positive development can be cultivated and fostered through opportunities provided to the individual in their environment that promote success, and serve as "protective" factors that move the individual onward and upward to a pathway filled with competence (Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996).



The data presented in this report indicate that now, more than ever, school districts, families and communities must work together to support the mental health and well-being of students. This includes a focus on creating conditions of thriving by supporting assets such as connections with peers and adults, healthy nutrition and sleep behaviours, after-school activities, and positive school experiences. A focus on children's connectedness is critical looking forward to a new academic year. Singh et al. (2020) list many ways that parents, educators, helping professionals and peers can support the mental health of school-age children and adolescents in the context of the pandemic. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted vulnerable children and their families (Children First Canada, 2020; Dove et al., 2020; Representative for Children and Youth BC, 2020), it is critical to develop approaches that prioritize and promote equity between populations of children (Waddell et al., 2020).

Additionally, as noted by Luthar and colleagues (2021) in their recent study of risk and resilience of adolescents during the pandemic: "we must strictly avoid statements to the public that 'most people are resilient' (children or adults). Several months into the pandemic with no clear end in sight, the mental health of all adults is threatened, given ongoing uncertainties of health, jobs, schooling, the economy, and child care. It is inappropriate and unwise for scientists to imply that anyone is immune or invulnerable" (p. 578). Communities, school districts, and governments should work together to insure that all children (and adults) are provided with the supports that will promote the well-being and thriving of all during this unprecedented time in history.

School districts and communities can utilize data from their local [MDI reports](#) to make comparisons between MDI data collected before and during the global pandemic, as well as use their MDI data to follow groups of children over time, taking their local context into consideration. For more practical strategies, tools and resources to assist in understanding and supporting children's well-being and positive development in the middle years, visit [Discover MDI - the Field Guide for the MDI](#), or contact the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) MDI team at mdi@help.ubc.ca.

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