



# Middle Years Development Instrument

The Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) is a questionnaire completed by Northwest Territories (NWT) students in Grades 4 and 7 that provides information about the health and well-being of students in those grades. This fact sheet offers a glimpse of these results for the 2021-22 school year and a comparison to previous years of MDI results.

The MDI includes five areas of development:

- Physical health and well-being
- Connectedness
- Social-emotional development
- School experiences
- Use of after-school time

These five areas of development are strongly connected to well-being, health and academic achievement. As part of the MDI, the 'Well-Being Index' provides a summary of children's social, emotional and physical health. It combines five measures from the MDI:

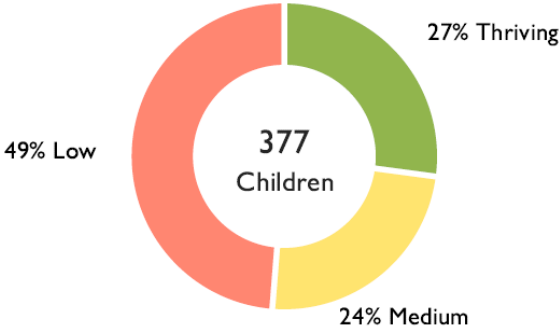
- Optimism
- Self-esteem
- Happiness
- Absence of sadness
- General health

Depending on how children respond in these five areas of well-being, they are assigned an overall result that is either *THRIVING*, *MEDIUM TO HIGH WELL-BEING*, or *LOW WELL-BEING*.

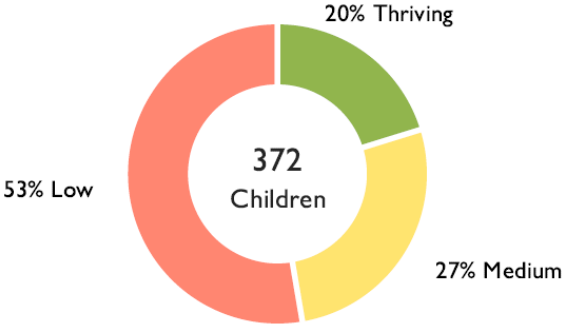
The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) and schools evaluate MDI results annually to assess health and well-being trends of students in those grades. The expectation is that, as the NWT Junior Kindergarten to Grade –12 (JK-12) school system becomes better able to reflect the cultures of the NWT and support students to flourish as capable and healthy persons, MDI *THRIVING* scores should increase.

MDI results in recent years should be interpreted with some caution. There has been lower MDI participation in the NWT since 2019-20, which aligns with the COVID-19 pandemic. Other jurisdictions have also seen lower participation. Given the lower participation rate, MDI results are not necessarily representative of the student population.

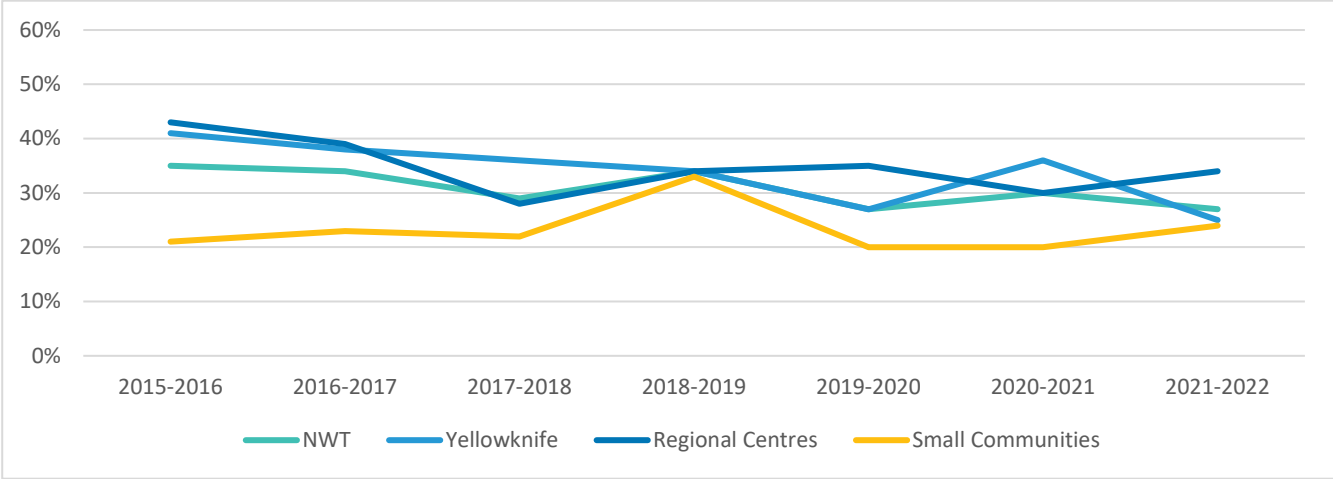
**Figure 1: Well-Being Index for NWT Grade 4 students, 2021-22**



**Figure 2: Well-Being Index for NWT Grade 7 students, 2021-22**

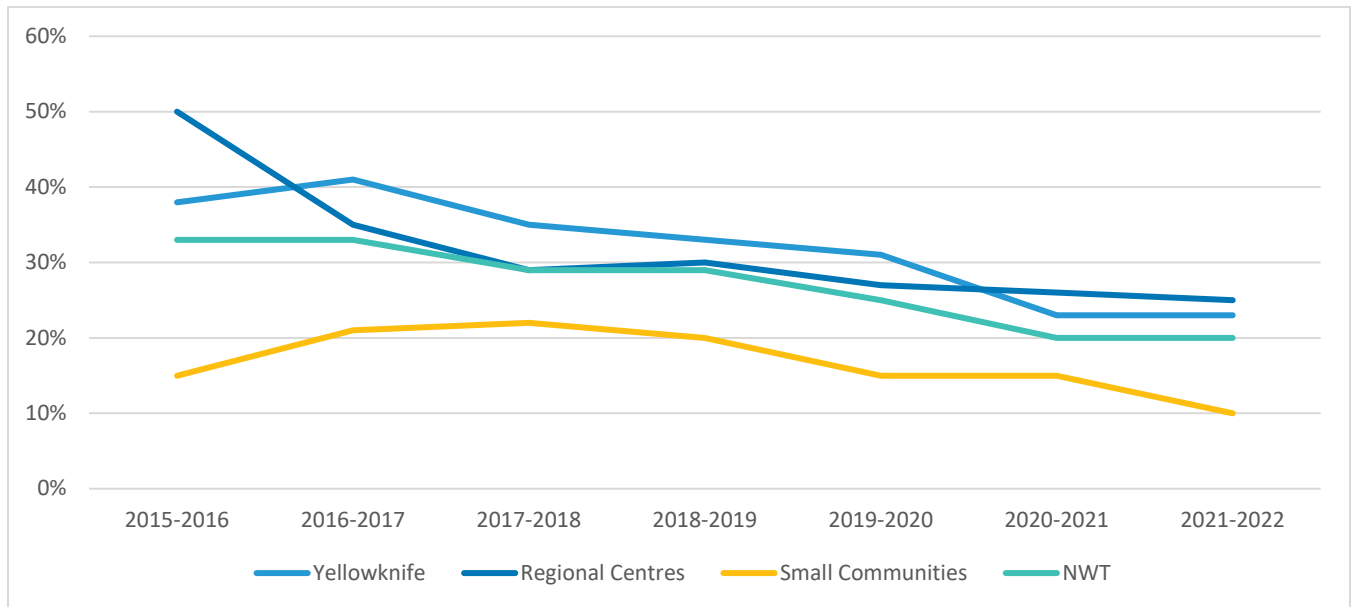


**Figure 1: Percent of Grade 4 students who are *THRIVING* by community type\* over time.**



\*Regional Centres include Hay River, Inuvik, and Fort Smith. Small communities are those outside Yellowknife and the Regional Centres.

**Figure 2: Percent of Grade 7 students who are *THRIVING* by community type over time.**



- The percentage of Grade 4 students who participated in the MDI who are *THRIVING* has increased in regional centres and small communities between 2020-21 and 2021-22.
- There are no obvious trends over time for Grade 4 students across community types. Results show sharp changes year to year.
- The percentage of Grade 7 students who participated in the MDI who are *THRIVING* continues to be on a downward trend in the NWT overall and across all community types.

It is important to note that MDI *THRIVING* scores are affected by more than just students' experiences in school. Students' lives and experiences outside of school also affect their sense of well-being and influence how students feel when they arrive at school. These results may also reflect the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Decreases in *THRIVING* scores suggest the NWT education system needs to continue to collaborate with the health system to support well-being in students throughout the middle grades.

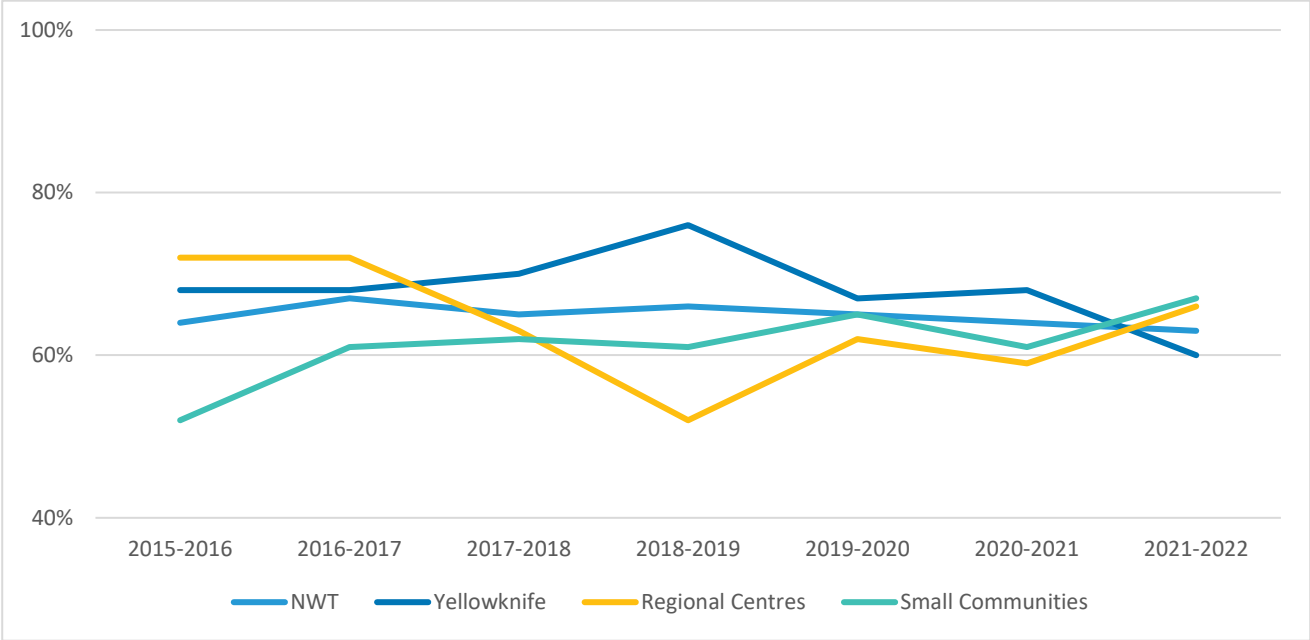
## Meaningful relationships at school

Data from students' MDI questionnaires has shown that their well-being is significantly and positively related to the number of "assets" in their lives. Assets include their relationships with adults and peers, after-school activities, nutrition, sleep and school experiences.

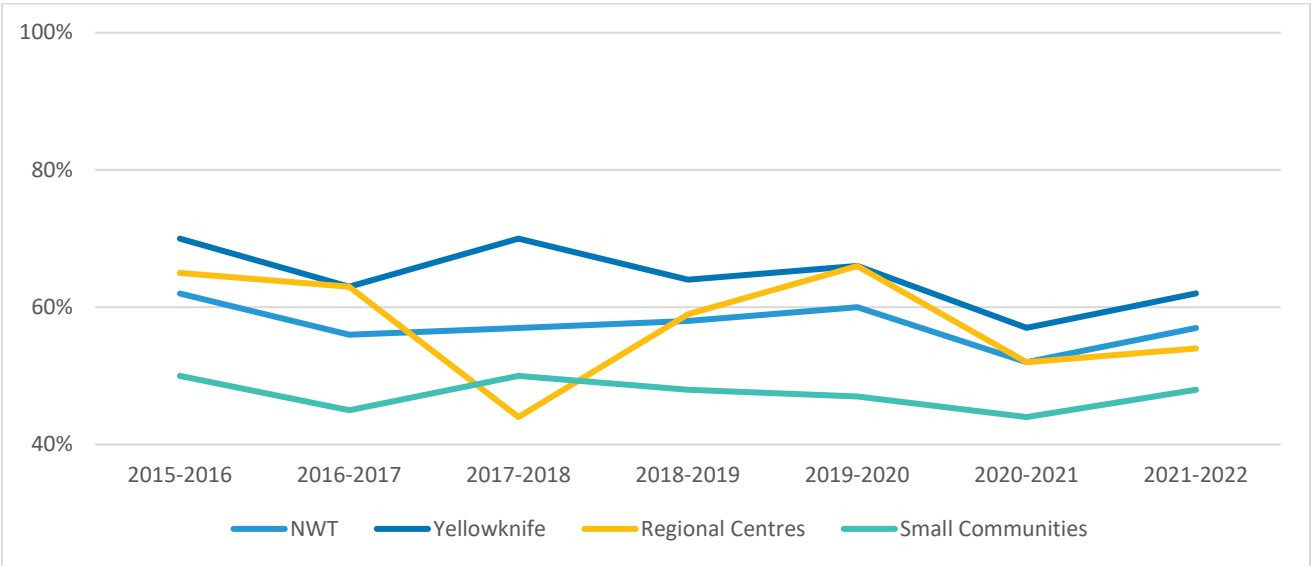
Adults at school, such as teachers, principals, and school staff, are in a unique position to form meaningful bonds with students. Research shows that good relationships with adults at school promote

mental health and overall well-being. A sense of connectedness in a student-adult relationship means there are one or more adults at school who the student feels listen, believes and cares about them.

**Figure 3: Percent of Grade 4 students who reported *HIGH WELL-BEING* in their relationships with adults at school.**



**Figure 4: Percent of Grade 7 students who reported *HIGH WELL-BEING* in their relationships with adults at school.**



In the NWT overall, 63% of Grade 4 students and 57% of Grade 7 students who participated in the MDI reported *HIGH WELL-BEING* in their relationships with adults at school in the 2021-22 school year. Results for the NWT have remained relatively stable over time.

However, in the last two years, in most community types there has been an increase in the percentage of both Grade 4 and 7 students who report *HIGH WELL-BEING* in their relationships with adults at school. The exception is Grade 4 students in Yellowknife, which saw a decrease in that same timeframe.

This increase across grades and community types is likely explained by the return to in-person learning after the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in school closures. While there were still disruptions to the NWT education system in the 2021-22 school year, schools were better able to adapt to these circumstances as time went on. Schools adapting to learning disruptions and the return to consistent in-person learning likely allowed students to better connect with adults at school and build meaningful relationships that promote *HIGH WELL-BEING*.

## In Summary

### **The developmental health of children is a shared responsibility.**

The MDI results reflect the experiences of children in Grades 4 and 7 in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Information about health and wellness is connected to several areas of development, including well-being, health, academic achievement and overall success throughout the school years and later in life. The MDI illustrates the importance of multiple settings in students' lives, including home, school and community. Together, everyone contributes to nurturing positive experiences and supporting children's well-being as they grow.

MDI reports will continue to be shared with education partners, Indigenous Governments, and the public to reinforce the shared responsibility of supporting the well-being of children in schools and in communities.

For more information on the MDI overall, [visit the University of British Columbia website](#).