

THE MIDDLE YEARS DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT

Measuring and promoting children's social and emotional health, well-being, and assets with the Middle Years Development Instrument.



Middle childhood, between 6 to 12 years of age, marks a significant period in human development. Children experience important cognitive, social and emotional changes that establish their identity and set the stage for development in adolescence and adulthood. While it is a time of heightened risk, it is also a time of opportunity. (Del Giudice, 2014).

The Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) is a self-report questionnaire that asks children in middle childhood about their thoughts, feelings and experiences. The MDI is the first survey of its kind to gather information about the lives of children both in school, in the home and in the community, from their own perspective. The survey uses a strengths-based approach to assess five dimensions of child development that are strongly linked to social and emotional well-being, health, academic achievement, and overall success throughout the school years and in later life.

What is the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI)?

- The MDI is a population-level survey that gathers comprehensive information on the lives of children in Grades 4 and 7, from the children themselves. The survey is being used extensively in British Columbia, and in pilot sites across Canada and internationally.
- The MDI was created to address a gap in available, population-level data on the social and emotional health, well-being and developmental assets of children in middle childhood inside and outside of school.
- The survey is not used for individual diagnosis or assessment of children, or comparison of individual teachers, classrooms or schools.



Social & Emotional Development

Optimism, empathy, happiness, prosocial behaviour, self-esteem, self-regulation, sadness and worries, responsible decision-making*, self-awareness*, perseverance*, and assertiveness*..



Physical Health & Well-being

General health, body image, nutrition, meals with family members, and sleeping patterns.



Connectedness

Presence of supportive adults in schools, families, and neighbourhoods, sense of belonging with peers, and friendships.



Use of After-school Time

Time spent participating in organized and unorganized activities including team and individual sports, lessons (e.g. music, art, academic), watching TV (e.g. online streaming of TV, movies and videos), playing video games, socializing with friends, reading, homework, working* and volunteering*.



School Experiences

Academic self-concept, school climate, school belonging, future goals and victimization (bullying).

Learn more about these five areas of development by visiting: <http://www.discovermdi.ca/understanding-the-mdi/dimensions/>

*Only children in Grade 7 are asked to report on these areas.

The MDI was developed by a collaborative group of researchers at the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), educators and community members interested in tracking trends and patterns in children's social and emotional health, well-being and developmental assets. The MDI was developed with the goal of providing policy makers, educators and community organizations with essential data to support decision-making aimed at creating the conditions in which children can flourish.

The MDI is supported by funding from The United Way of the Lower Mainland, the BC Provincial Ministries of Education, Health and Children and Family Development, as well as participating school district (boards) in BC.



The MDI...

- Uses a strengths-based approach and focuses on children's positive assets;
- Helps us understand the development of the whole child;
- Offers children a voice and an opportunity to share their thoughts, needs and wishes; and
- Provides a reliable and valid way to assess children's development and well-being.

WHY THE MIDDLE YEARS MATTER

Middle childhood is a time of enormous physical, emotional, and cognitive growth, accompanied by changes in peer and adults relationships and, both home and school environments. Research shows that a child's overall health and well-being during this critical period of development affects their ability to concentrate and learn, develop and maintain friendships, and navigate thoughtful decision-making.

As the elementary school years progress it is common to observe declines in children's self-reported confidence, self-concept, optimism, empathy, satisfaction with life and social responsibility. However, these declines are not inevitable. During these transitional years there are many opportunities within school and community environments to promote resiliency and buffer children from these risks. These include positive adult relationships at home, in school and in community, as well as assets. Children in their middle years can develop social and emotional competencies and lifelong patterns of behavior that will help them thrive.

CHILDREN'S VOICES MATTER

Children's voices matter. One of the core beliefs of the MDI is that children's voices deserve to be heard. Asking children for their input is valuable because it provides us with rich data on child well-being that we couldn't otherwise access — data which we can use to create environments and interactions which help children thrive. It is also powerful because it tells children that we value their thoughts and feelings, and grants them a say in how their schools and communities make changes to support them.

WHY MEASURE AND MAP CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING?

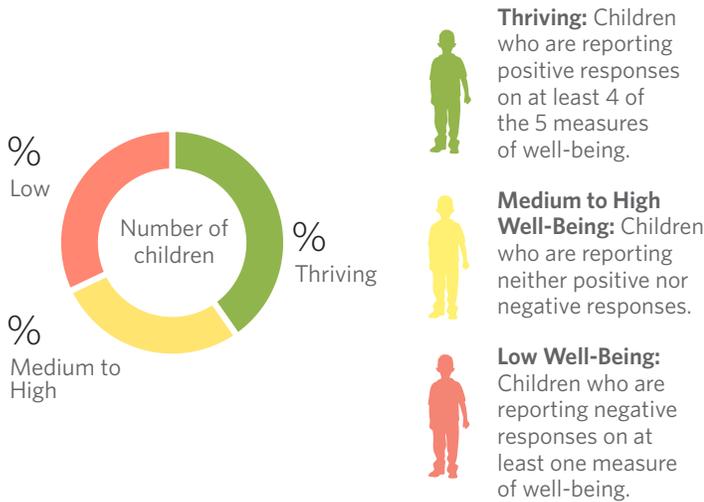
With an emerging focus on the importance of social and emotional competencies, there is an increasing need for quality, population-level data to guide policy development and program investments.

The MDI provides a reliable method for assessing children's social and emotional development, physical health, relationships, experiences in school and community and participation in after-school activities. It offers children an opportunity to share their experiences and opinions related to these areas of their lives. They are also able to share their wishes and perceived barriers related to their participation in after school activities. Learning from children directly - in their own voices - about their experiences at home, in school and in the community provides important information to support evidence-based decisions on funding allocation, program delivery and policy development across sectors.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The MDI was developed based on five decades of research on resiliency and risk in the field of child development. There are now four studies that have been conducted to test the validity of the MDI survey, in both urban and rural communities in BC. Results from these studies show the MDI has both strong reliability and validity as a measure of children's overall wellbeing. See References for details of these four studies.

FIG 1: THE WELL-BEING INDEX



MEASURING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING & ASSETS

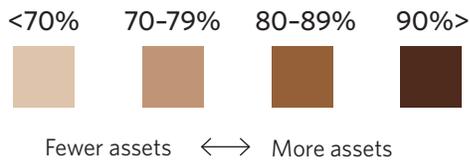
The MDI consists of measures relating to children’s physical health and social and emotional development that are of critical importance during the middle years: Optimism, Happiness, Self-Esteem, Absence of Sadness, and General Health. Scores from these five measures are combined to create the MDI Well-Being Index, which assesses three categories of well-being: ‘Thriving,’ (or experiencing ‘High’ well-being), experiencing ‘Medium to High’ well-being, or ‘Low’ well-being. (Fig. 1)

Assets are positive, everyday influences and resources that are known to protect children against vulnerability and promote positive well-being during the middle years. The MDI Assets Index measures qualities present in children’s lives that make a difference: Positive Adult Relationships, Positive Peer Relationships, After-school Activities, and Nutrition & Sleep. (Fig.2) Each asset is calculated and reported as the percentage of children reporting the presence of the asset in their lives.

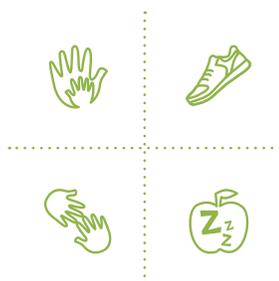
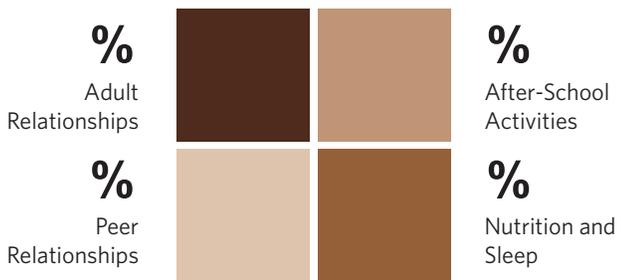
Resiliency research shows that assets are qualities in children’s lives that promote positive development. This aligns with one of the key findings of the MDI that indicates children’s self-reported health and well-being is related to the number of assets they perceive in their lives. As the number of assets in a child’s life increases, they are more likely to report higher levels of well-being.

FIG 2: THE ASSETS INDEX

Percentage of children reporting the presence of assets in their lives:



All Participating Districts



HOW ARE MDI DATA REPORTED?

Data collected from the MDI are used to create comprehensive maps and reports that are shared with schools and communities in BC and across the country. The information collected supports governments, educators, health professionals and community organizations to make evidence-based decisions, offering valuable insight about the impact of programs, practices and policies designed to improve the well-being of children in schools and in communities. Learning how children are currently faring across neighbourhoods and school districts means that supports and services can be tailored to families and children where and when they are needed.

MDI reports and maps are powerful tools for use in planning and community mobilization. HELP reports and maps MDI data both by school district and by children’s home postal code, providing an opportunity to explore results for children by neighbourhoods.

School District and Community Reports are made publicly available at www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/maps/mdj/nh

Please visit www.discovermdi.ca/understanding-the-mdi/mdj-101/ to see answers to the most Frequently Asked Questions related to the MDI.



DISCOVER MDI: A FIELD GUIDE TO WELL-BEING IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

Our goal is to support communities, schools, families and children to chart their own course toward improving the lives of children during these critical years of growth and transition. Discover MDI: A Field Guide to Well-Being in Middle Childhood is an online tool designed to help do just that. Discover MDI is a companion to your MDI reports and features shareable resources for key MDI concepts and research related to healthy middle childhood development, tools and tips for presenting your MDI data, and recommendations for using the MDI to initiate conversations and change in your schools and communities.

RELATED RESEARCH & REFERENCES

Why the middle years matter

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