

THE MIDDLE YEARS DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT (MDI)

HUMAN
EARLY LEARNING
PARTNERSHIP



Experiences in the middle years — especially between the ages of 10 to 13 — have critical and long-lasting effects. During this time, children experience significant cognitive, social, and emotional changes that establish their lifelong identity and set the stage for successful development in adolescence and adulthood.

The Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) is a self-report questionnaire that is completed online and asks students in Grades 4 through 8 about their experiences in school, in the home, and in the community. It is a valid and reliable measure with strong scientific evidence. It focuses on highlighting the protective factors and assets that are known to support and optimize development in middle childhood.

To date, the MDI has been implemented with over 140,000 students in BC.

Five dimensions of the MDI



Physical Health & Well-Being

Children evaluate their own physical well-being in the areas of overall health including help-seeking for emotional well-being, transportation to and from school, nutrition, and sleeping habits.



Connectedness

Children are asked about their experiences of support and connection with the adults in their schools and neighbourhoods, with their parents or caregivers at home, and with their peers.



Social & Emotional Development

Children respond to questions about their current social and emotional competencies in several areas such as optimism, self-esteem, happiness, empathy, prosocial behaviour, sadness, worries, self-awareness, and self-regulation.



School Experiences

Children are asked about their school experiences in 4 areas: academic self-concept, school climate, school belonging, and experiences with peer victimization (bullying).



Use of Out-of-School Time

Children are asked about the time they spend watching TV, doing homework, volunteering, reading, hanging out with friends, and playing video games.



The MDI at a glance

- The MDI uses a strengths-based approach to assess five dimensions of child development that are scientifically linked to social and emotional well-being, health, academic achievement, and overall success through school and life.
- Students complete the survey during class time in January or February through a secure, online portal hosted by the University of British Columbia.
- The MDI project is voluntary. School administrators, teachers, parents or caregivers, and the children themselves are able to choose whether or not they wish to participate.
- The questionnaire is administered by an educator and takes one to two class periods to complete.
- Teachers and other school staff are fully supported by the MDI team including training, presentations and a variety of online and printed resources.
- Within two months of the MDI being complete, administrators can access Online School Reports, a comprehensive overview of MDI results for all questions and measures. MDI reports include data and infographics that are easy to interpret and share.

Five things to know about the MDI

1 Children’s overall health and well-being affects their ability to flourish and thrive, concentrate and learn, develop and maintain positive relationships with adults and peers, and navigate thoughtful decision-making. The MDI takes a “whole child” approach to understanding their health and well-being.

2 Children’s social and emotional skills not only predict academic success, but also physical health and mental well-being in adolescence and adulthood. The MDI collects data on the factors that are associated with resilience, including supportive relationships with adults at home, in school, and in the community, as well as their nutrition and sleep, and their constructive use of time during the after-school hours.

3 The MDI aligns with multiple initiatives within BC’s curriculum as well as existing research frameworks on social and emotional learning and mental health in schools. Questions on the MDI shine a light on facets of children’s Personal and Social Competencies, Physical Education and Health, and other factors that support health and well-being.



4 The MDI upholds Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that children have a right to give their opinion and be heard by the adults around them. The MDI provides children with opportunities for self-reflection and to safely share their experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

5 MDI data are a powerful tool for encouraging exploration of ways to promote children’s personal and social competencies in the classroom, in schools, and with parents and caregivers, educators, and leaders in the community. It provides the information needed to take action to support the well-being of children at school and beyond.

The MDI is not used for individual diagnosis or assessment of children, or comparison of individual teachers, classrooms or schools.

Instead...

Our goal is to support schools, families, and the children themselves in charting their own course toward improving the lives of children during these critical years of growth and transition.

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Discover MDI

Our online resource – Discover MDI: A Field Guide to Promoting Well-Being in Middle Childhood – provides a wide-range of practical strategies and tools that support schools and communities to build an understanding of the MDI along with information on how to promote the well-being of children in middle childhood. The Field Guide provides a supported, step-by-step journey that will help you gain familiarity with the MDI measures, make sense of your MDI data, and guide approaches to building dialogue and action within schools, and communities.