



Key indicators for Well-being Index

- Optimism
- Happiness
- Self-Esteem
- Absence of Sadness
- General Health

Assets in Asset Index

- Adult Relationships
- Peer Relationships
- Nutrition & Sleep
- After-school Activities

ASSETS, WELL-BEING & RESILIENCE

The MDI results help us better understand well-being and the individual assets that foster healthy development in all the environments where children spend their time. There are also two summary measures in the MDI that provide an overall picture of how children perceive their lives: The MDI Well-being Index shows how well children are thriving, and the MDI Assets Index highlights the quantity and quality of positive resources and influences present in their lives. Using these results as a signpost for action, we can impact children’s well-being by helping them build their social and emotional skills and enriching their assets.

research

GENERAL RESEARCH ON ASSETS, WELL-BEING, AND RESILIENCE

What are Assets?

Assets are resources present in children’s lives, such as supportive relationships and enriching activities. A key aspect of assets is that they are actionable – that is, assets are malleable and can be improved by outside forces in children’s contexts. Using a strength-based approach, the MDI Assets Index measures key assets that help promote children’s positive development and well-being. The four assets measured by the MDI Assets Index are *Adult Relationships*, *Peer Relationships*, *Nutrition and Sleep*, and *After-School Activities*. These assets were carefully chosen based on research that shows they promote well-being (Schonert-Reichl et al. 2013). Developing these assets has the potential to affect great change in children’s lives.

A Link Between Assets and Well-Being:

One of the key findings from research on the MDI, consistent across all participating jurisdictions, is that children’s self-reported well-being is related to the number of assets they perceive as being present in their lives. As the number of assets increases, a greater proportion of children report higher well-being (Gadermann et al., 2016; Guhn et al., 2012).

What is Resilience?

People sometimes refer to resilience as “beating the odds;” resilience means experiencing well-being and healthy development even in the face of great stress and challenges (Masten, 2018). Resilience involves many interactions, including individual characteristics, histories of children, and their environmental supports and experiences (Masten & Barnes, 2018). This means that resilience is unique to each child and context. The more assets a child has, the more likely they are to experience resilience (Twum-Antwi et al., 2020). A child’s resilience is constantly changing and developing based on the individual context each child experiences (Ungar, 2019). That is, resilience is a bidirectional, individual-context relational process in which children’s individual characteristics, such as temperament, motivation, and cognition interact with the social context (for example, families, schools, and neighborhoods). Together, these influence a child’s development (Theokas & Lerner, 2006).



ASSETS, WELL-BEING & RESILIENCE

AT HOME

- Ask your child about the relationships in their life that contribute to their well-being. Actively listen to them as they share their experiences. Help them identify people they can reach out to if they need more support at school or in other areas of their life (Gaderman et al., 2016; Magee et al., 2019).
- Take time to engage in activities that support your own well-being. When you experience well-being, it supports well-being and resilience in your child. (Twum-Antwi et al., 2020)
- Provide guidance, opportunity, and encouragement for your child to develop skills for initiating and maintaining healthy relationships with peers and other adults in their lives, such as self-awareness, empathy, kindness, and assertiveness (Divecha & Brackett, 2019).
- Help your family members develop a “growth mindset.” People with a growth mindset see challenges as an opportunity to grow and cultivate new strengths, which is related to their well-being (Zeng et al., 2016). Helping your children recognize and utilize their strengths is also linked to well-being (Waters et al., 2019).

AT SCHOOL

- Provide students with lessons or units that focus on identifying assets and developing well-being and resilience. Guiding questions for lessons may include:
 - How do we know when we are doing well?
 - How can we support each other, and who can we turn to when we need support?
 - How do I take care of my body? How does it make me feel?
 - What are my hobbies and passions?
 - What can I do when things get difficult? How can I overcome challenges?
- Insights learned from discussing these questions with students can increase awareness of where children may need additional support. Such support may include providing additional lessons on a specific topic, connecting with the caregiver of a child who needs additional support, or putting caregivers in touch with professional services to help provide the needed assets in a child’s life.

IN COMMUNITY

- Engage youth and their families in the development of services that are responsive to their needs. Provide autonomy for youth to have an active voice in decision-making about what services are meaningful and relevant for them (Ungar, 2019).
- Offer training in multicultural competence for program leaders. Programs that are culturally sensitive and provide a sense of belonging contribute to well-being in youth (Smith et al., 2017).
- Provide skill-building opportunities for youth to reach their goals. Perhaps with inclusive structures and individualized instruction (Arbour-Nicitopoulos et al., 2018).
- Evaluate whether supports across schools, communities, and home complement each other. Community organizations and agencies can work collectively towards a shared vision to best support youth and their service providers to thrive (Twum-Antwi et al., 2020).

For more resources and ideas on how to use MDI data to catalyze action, visit discovermdi.ca.

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- Optimism
- Empathy
- Prosocial Behaviour
- Self-Esteem
- Happiness
- Absence of Sadness
- Absence of Worries
- Self-Regulation
- Responsible Decision-Making*
- Self-Awareness*
- Perseverance*
- Assertiveness*
- Citizenship & Social Responsibility*

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social and emotional development refers to the development of important personal and social competencies. The personal competencies measured on the MDI include: self-esteem, self-regulation, self-awareness*, optimism, happiness, perseverance*, and psychological well-being (absence of sadness and worries). The social competencies measured by the MDI include: empathy, prosocial behaviour, assertiveness*, citizenship and social responsibility*, and responsible decision-making*. These social and emotional competencies promote healthy development and resilience and protect against common risk factors (Thomson et al., 2018). They were chosen for the MDI because they are malleable and actionable; that is, with the right supports, these competencies can be nurtured and promoted in children. Social and emotional development is linked to mental health, social behaviour, and academic performance in children. Social and emotional competencies in childhood are also associated with important outcomes later in life (Schonert-Reichl, 2019). The promotion of students' social and emotional competencies are included in the BC Ministry of Education's new curriculum (<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca>).

* These measures are included in the Grades 6, 7, and 8 MDI only.

research

GENERAL RESEARCH ON SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Without intervention, social-emotional well-being tends to decline as children age (Eccles, 2004). A study conducted in British Columbia found that grade 6 and 7 students had significantly lower social and emotional well-being than students in grade 4 and 5 (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2011).
- Social and emotional learning (SEL) programs can improve children's social and emotional competencies and well-being, as well as their academic success (Greenberg et al., 2017).
- Improvements in social and emotional competencies from participating in SEL programs coincides with better academic performance, more positive social behaviours, and less aggression, emotional distress, and drug use (Schonert-Reichl, 2019).
- Young children with better social and emotional competencies are more likely to graduate from high school, earn a college degree, and find stable employment. These children are also less likely to engage in risky behaviour and criminal activity later in life (Jones et al., 2015).
- Children with higher social-emotional competencies are more likely to graduate from high school and be ready for post-secondary school, have greater success in their careers, more positive relationships at work and home, and better mental health throughout their lives (Domitrovich et al., 2017).
- Promoting social and emotional competencies can prevent bullying behaviours and victimization (Divecha & Brackett, 2019).
- Children require time for reflection and introspection to develop social and emotional competencies alongside explicit teaching and practice of social and emotional skills (Immordino-Yang et al., 2019).



SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

AT HOME

- Ask your children how they are feeling and show that you value all emotions. Talk about your own emotions. Doing so may help support children’s ability to recognize, express, and regulate their emotions (Castro et al., 2015; Sosa-Hernandez et al., 2020).
- When children are upset or distressed, respond with caring support and attention to help them self-regulate (Sosa-Hernandez et al., 2020). When you help children find calm through connection, you build social bonds and can work together to find solutions to problems (Barthel et al., 2018).
- Take time to share what you are thankful for with your family. Practicing gratitude promotes social and emotional well-being (Jans-Beken et al., 2019). It is also linked to prosocial behaviour (Ma et al., 2017).
- Model empathy, kindness, and compassion in your actions and encourage these positive behaviours in your child. Children are more likely to engage in positive social behaviours if they witness these behaviours in their parents and guardians (Döring et al., 2017).

IN COMMUNITY

- Ask children what types of activities make them feel happy and connected to others. Involve children in choosing programs to meet these needs.
- Provide training for after-school staff in positive leadership skills and ways to model social and emotional skills (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017).
- Offer opportunities for young people to make meaningful contributions to the community. Helping others is a fundamental psychological need that becomes increasingly important as children age. Making contributions to one’s community supports young people’s social and emotional development and well-being (Fuligni, 2019).
- Engage youth in participatory action research to empower them to get involved in addressing community issues that affect them while promoting social and emotional competencies (Jagers et al., 2019).

AT SCHOOL

- Ask children what schools can do to promote their well-being and sense of belonging. Actively listen to what they have to say and involve children in creating a plan of action based on their suggestions (Sauve & Schonert-Reichl, 2019)
- Support adult SEL through professional development. Adult SEL should facilitate caring school climates, intercultural competence, social awareness of discrimination, and self-awareness to recognize and transform one’s own biases (Divecha & Brackett, 2019; Jagers et al., 2019; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).
- Supportive child-adult relationships are the foundation of social-emotional development. Build relationships by enthusiastically greeting children when they arrive, getting to know children’s interests, and employing supportive problem-solving and restorative practices rather than shame or punishment to address challenges (Sauve & Schonert-Reichl, 2019).
- Offer evidence-based SEL programs to explicitly teach social-emotional skills and to offer opportunities to practice these skills throughout the school day. School-wide and systemic approaches to SEL are especially effective (Mahoney et al., 2020; Schonert-Reichl, 2019).

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What the MDI Measures

- General Health
- Help-Seeking for Emotional Well-being
- Breakfast
- Meals with Adults in Your Family
- Junk Food
- Frequency of Good Sleep
- Transportation to and from School

PHYSICAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

The MDI asks children about key areas that research identifies as good indicators of children’s overall health. Physical health questions include asking children how they perceive their general health, and how they get to and from school. It also asks about their frequency of breakfast, meals with family, food consumption, and good sleep. To understand their mental well-being, children are asked who they seek help from if they feel sad, stressed, or worried. Children in the middle years who feel healthy are more likely to be engaged in school, have a feeling of connectedness with their teachers, perform better academically, and are less likely to be bullied or bully others (Forrest et al., 2013). Being physically active also promotes children’s mental health (Moeijes et al., 2018).

research

- Eating breakfast improves children’s concentration and memory (Adolphus et al., 2016). Consuming healthy fats as a part of breakfast, such as nuts or milk, may be particularly important for sustaining mental performance (Zipp & Eissing, 2019).
- Children ages 5-13 need 9-11 hours of uninterrupted sleep a night (Chaput & Janssen, 2016). Children who do not get enough sleep are more likely to have troubles at school, be involved in family disagreements, and display symptoms of depression (Buxton et al., 2015; Matricciani et al., 2019).
- Frequently eating meals together as a family is related to increased self-esteem and school success, and decreased chances of developing eating disorders, substance abuse, violent behaviour, and symptoms of depression (Jones, 2018). Families who enjoy meals together benefit from a greater sense of connection and better communication (Middleton et al., 2020).
- Children need a minimum of 60 minutes of energetic play each day, yet most Canadians are not getting this. Families, schools, and community all play crucial roles in helping young people stay physically active (ParticipACTION, 2020).
- Walking or wheeling to school is associated with better mental and physical health and an improved sense of connectivity in neighbourhoods (Buttazoni et al., 2019).
- Seeking help for emotional support can help prevent and address mental health issues (Rickwood et al., 2005; Xu et al., 2018).



PHYSICAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

AT HOME

- Encourage children to get involved in planning and preparing family meals. Children are more likely to eat healthy foods when they are involved in preparation, and helping in the kitchen can boost their mood and self-confidence (Allirot et al., 2016; van der Horst et al., 2014). Mealtimes don't have to be long to reap the benefits, but make sure to turn off screens to make the most of family time (Jones, 2018).
- Make being active a family priority. Children are more active when their parents and guardians are active (Garriguet et al., 2017). Participating with your children in physical activity sets a positive example and provides valuable time to socialize and connect as a family.
- Getting to and from school can be an opportunity to increase daily exercise (Buttazoni et al., 2019). If your family has a longer commute, consider getting off a few stops earlier if you take transit, or park the car further away from the school to enjoy some extra exercise and avoid the drop-off traffic jam.
- Create a set bedtime routine with a regular bed and wake time. Do quiet activities to prepare for sleep, like having a bath or listening to a story. Keep bedrooms quiet and dark. Avoid caffeine and screen use close to bedtime, and remove screens and media devices from bedrooms (Buxton et al., 2015; Galland & Mitchell, 2010).

AT SCHOOL

- Try to limit the amount of time children stay sitting as much as possible. Have standing workspaces and offer movement breaks. Include time for vigorous physical activity every day. Doing so will contribute to students' having a good night sleep to help them be alert and engaged in school. (ParticiPACTION, 2020).
- Team up with a community sponsor to host a breakfast club where kids can have a healthy meal before school starts. School breakfast programs have been shown to support students' concentration, memory, and academic performance, especially in undernourished children (Adolphus et al., 2016).

IN COMMUNITY

- Many families cannot afford to meet guidelines for healthy eating (Mulik & Haynes-Maslow, 2017). Include your neighbourhood food security network in efforts to ensure families have awareness of and access to affordable healthy food options (Miewald et al., 2012).
- Promote active transportation to schools by identifying and addressing barriers through discussions with children, families, and community members. Walking school busses, crossing guards, places to park bikes and scooters, and safety awareness campaigns can promote active school transportation (Buttazoni et al., 2019)
- Youth are less likely to seek help for emotional support if there is a public stigma associated with mental health. Community programs and initiatives to reduce mental health stigma and improve mental health literacy can promote help-seeking in young people (Nearchou et al., 2018).

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What the MDI Measures

- Adults in School
- Adults in the Neighbourhood
- Adults at Home
- Peer Belonging
- Friendship Intimacy
- Important Adults



CONNECTEDNESS

Feeling connected to others is an important source of children’s developmental health, well-being, and resilience (Oberle et al., 2014; Masten, 2018). Having even just one caring adult in a child’s life can make a positive, long-lasting difference (Werner & Smith, 2001). Middle childhood—especially between the ages of 10 to 13—is a time in which healthy peer relationships become important and influential (Eccles, 1999). Equally important to children’s well-being and healthy development is feeling connected to parents and guardians (Collins & Madsen, 2019), and teachers (Schonert-Reichl, 2019). Having many strong and supportive social connections can help promote resilience and minimize other risks in a child’s life (Masten & Barnes, 2018).

research

GENERAL RESEARCH ON CONNECTEDNESS

- Children with positive peer relationships feel better about themselves, experience greater mental health, are more prosocial, and perform better academically (Wentzel, 2017).
- Emotional attunement between parents/caregivers and children continues to be important throughout middle childhood and adolescence to buffer against risks and promote well-being. When parents and guardians provide a secure, supportive, and reliable home base, their children tend to have fewer behavioural and emotional difficulties (Oldfield et al., 2016).
- Feeling connected to one’s teacher is linked to emotional well-being (Garcia-Moya et al., (2015).
- Large-scale longitudinal studies have demonstrated that feeling connected to and supported by others helps children thrive in the face of adversity. Close bonds and consistent positive supports from family and teachers promote healthy development and well-being throughout childhood and adolescence. The benefits extend into adulthood, protecting children from negative outcomes (Werner, 2013).

RESEARCH ON CONNECTEDNESS USING MDI DATA

- Children’s life satisfaction is related to their sense of belonging with peers and their supportive relationships with adults at home and school, even more so than family income or personal health (Gadermann et al., 2015; Oberle et al., 2014). This is true across cultures (Emerson et al., 2018).
- Whereas supportive peer and adult relationships are associated with positive self-esteem, being bullied or excluded by peers is associated with symptoms of depression and anxiety (Guhn et al., 2012).
- Higher levels of peer and adult support and lower levels of victimization at school are linked to higher optimism, an important indicator of mental health (Oberle et al., 2018).
- For children in foster care, supportive relationships with adults at home and school are important for their emotional well-being (Magee et al., 2019).



CONNECTEDNESS

AT HOME

- Ask children: “What do you love the most about our family? What family activities do you enjoy the most? What do you want our family to do more?”
- When children show problem behaviors, it is helpful if caregivers focus on regulating their own emotions first so that they do not act out of anger or frustration. Recognize that children need caring and comfort when they are struggling and acting out. Respond with sensitivity and constructive boundary setting rather than punishment (Moretti et al., 2015).
- Create family traditions and a strong cultural identity while being open towards other cultures. Take part in community celebrations (Ungar, 2015).

IN COMMUNITY

- Ask children: “Who do you feel supported by? Who do you go to when you need help?” Help them identify supportive adults in the community.
- Model empathy, helping, and sharing behaviours in community programs to increase your participants’ peer acceptance. If you are unconditionally kind and understanding to all children regardless of their behaviour, their peers are likely to follow your lead (Wang et al. 2016).
- Ensure community opportunities are inclusive to all children and families by providing universal programming (Vinoski et al., 2016).
- Host evidence-based mentorship programs, such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Mentorship programs promote positive social, emotional, behavioural, and academic outcomes (DuBois et al., 2011).

AT SCHOOL

- Ask children: “What are three things that adults in the school do to show that they respect and believe in you? What are three things that you wish they would do?” When teachers engage in meaningful dialogue with children, it shows children that their teachers care (Noddings, 2006).
- Pay attention to the quality of peer relationships among the students in your class. When teachers are attuned to how children are treating one another, they are able to cultivate a greater sense of belonging among peers (Farmer et al., 2019).
- Offer explicit instruction and practice of social skills by integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) into your classroom (Schonert-Reichl, 2019). Children with positive social skills are less likely to experience present and future problems with peers (Ma et al., 2020).
- Empower children to be involved in decision-making and problem-solving when challenges arise (Sauve & Schonert-Reichl, 2019).
- If children are demonstrating problematic behaviours, lead with compassion and ask children how they are feeling as a way to understand why they are behaving in the way they are. Find out what else is going on in their lives that might be affecting their behaviour and show that you care. Shaming or punishing children for their behaviour can have a negative impact on your relationship and shut down learning (Dewar, 2017).
- Create a consistent way to check in with each student on a daily basis, for example greet them at the door when they arrive (Sauve & Schonert-Reichl, 2019) and conducting daily classroom morning meetings (Abry et al., 2017).

For more resources and ideas on how to use MDI data to catalyze action, visit discovermdi.ca.

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What the MDI Measures

- Organized Activities
- How Children Spend their Time
- After-School People
- After-School Places
- Children's Wishes & Barriers

AFTER-SCHOOL TIME

How children spend their after-school time can have a considerable impact on their well-being, including their personal and social development, feelings of connectedness at school, academic success, and positive behaviours (Durlak et al., 2010). A healthy balance of structured after-school programs, social opportunities, and physical activity as well as play and rest are important experiences that promote children's thriving and resilience. The after-school hours between 3pm and 6pm have been identified as the "critical hours," because it is during this time that children may be left unsupervised and may engage in more risky behaviours (Vandell et al., 2020). It is important to note that there is mismatch between the end of the school day and the end of the work day which may leave many children with a lack of opportunities that could help them flourish and thrive.

research

GENERAL RESEARCH ON AFTER-SCHOOL TIME

- Taking part in organized after-school programs in the middle years is linked to higher scores on academic assessments, greater social confidence, and less risk-taking and impulsivity at age 15 (Vandell et al., 2020).
- Children who participate in a variety of after-school programs (sports plus other activities, such as art and music) have more positive developmental outcomes than those children who do not participate in after-school programs or participate only in sports (Linver et al., 2009).
- Challenging and enjoyable after-school programs can improve youth's ability to reason and problem solve, exercise choice and discipline, and be creative and flexible, which are strong predictors of academic, career, and life success. These abilities are greatly hindered when children are lonely, sad, stressed, or not physically fit (Diamond & Ling, 2016).
- After-school programs should include a variety of activities. For example, quiet reflection time is just as essential to brain health and social-emotional development as are active and focused activities (Immordino-Yang et al., 2019).

- Relationships with caring adults can boost children's social and emotional skills and well-being. After-school programs offer opportunities for these important relationships to develop (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017).

RESEARCH ON AFTER-SCHOOL TIME USING MDI DATA

- Students who shifted from not participating in after-school programs in Grade 4 to participating in after-school team sports in Grade 7 had a greater sense of peer belonging and, in turn, better mental health than those who did not take part in after-school activities in Grade 7 (Oberle et al., 2019).
- Children who engaged in after-school programs that included team sports demonstrated higher psychological well-being than children who participated in no activities or only individually-focused activities, such as educational programs (Oberle et al., 2019).



AFTER-SCHOOL TIME

AT HOME

- Ask children what types of after-school activities they would like to take part in. If they are not offered in your community, reach out to your school or community centre to suggest the activity. After-school programs offer opportunities for children to reap benefits from activities that may not be available during the school day (Simpkins et al., 2019).
- Plan ahead to avoid barriers – find out about subsidies and transit/carpool options at your school or community program.
- After-school programs can be a source of bonding for families and provide a connection to the community (Simpkins et al., 2019). Discuss with your children what they are learning in their programs.

AT SCHOOL

- Ask children: “What is your school already doing well to help you and your friends participate in interesting after-school programs?” Then make a commitment to continue to do so.
- Encourage children who are not taking part in after-school programs to try them. Coordinate with community programming to offer space in your school to reduce barriers to participation, improve school attendance, and school connectedness.
- Organize volunteers to pick up students at school and walk them to nearby programs so that children whose parents cannot pick them up can also participate in after-school programs.
- Invite students to talk about their experiences in after-school programs with classmates and integrate their new interests and skills into classroom learning.

IN COMMUNITY

- Ask children: “What after-school programs would you like to participate in?”
- Look at MDI results to see what barriers children report for after-school time. Work together with others in your community to address these barriers. Ensure programs are inclusive and welcoming to children of all cultures and abilities.
- Provide training for community program leaders in modelling and promoting social and emotional skills in children (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017).
- Evaluate programs for their ability to foster a sense of autonomy, belonging, and competence. When these needs are met in children, they experience greater motivation to participate, greater psychological health, and gain more benefits from the programs. Letting children know that you believe they can succeed leads to even greater gains (Ntoumanis et al., 2020).
- Youth benefit most from programs that allow them to create positive relationships, stay connected to the community, gain new skills, and experience a sense of agency (Rose-Krasnor & Hamey, 2018).

For more resources and ideas on how to use MDI data to catalyze action, visit discovermdi.ca.

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Benefits of a positive school climate:

Motivation

Belonging

Engagement in Learning

Resilience

Kindness

Positive Outlook

SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

Children's school experiences are an important predictor of their personal well-being and academic success (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2017). When children have positive experiences at school, they are more likely to feel they belong within their school, feel more motivated and engaged in class, and achieve higher academic performance (Wang & Degol, 2016). The MDI asks children about their academic strengths (academic self-concept) and how confident and engaged they are in school. It also asks how they view their school climate and whether they feel that they belong at school. Additionally, the MDI for children in grades 6, 7, and 8 includes questions about motivation and future goals. Children's responses can help adults understand what types of experiences children are having within their schools. Their responses can guide educators to provide a safe, caring, and supportive environment in which all children can thrive.

research

GENERAL RESEARCH ON SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

- A healthy school climate promotes healthy development and reduces stress that can be a barrier to learning. Children who attend schools that are focused on developing all aspects of the child (academic, social, and emotional) feel more positive about school, achieve at higher levels, are more likely to graduate, and are more likely to succeed in college (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018).
- Feelings of school belonging are associated with more positive views of learning, better academic motivation and competence, higher self-esteem, and greater happiness. Children who feel they belong at school are less likely to be late or absent and more likely to complete high school. They also show lower emotional distress and fewer negative behaviours, such as bullying (Allen et al., 2018).
- Children's perception of kindness within a school is an indicator of a positive school climate. Students who see kind behaviours in students, teachers, and staff are more likely to describe their class environments as being supportive places to learn (Binfet, Gadermann, & Schonert-Reichl, 2015).
- Higher reports of peer victimization, such as bullying and social exclusion, are linked to higher levels of depression and anxiety, whereas feeling connected to one's peers is linked to lower depression and anxiety (Guhn et al., 2013).
- 50 years of research has demonstrated that social and emotional learning (SEL) programs positively impact academic learning (Corcoran et al., 2018).



SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

AT HOME

- Ask your child to describe the qualities of their school that support their well-being and develop a sense of community. Then discuss with your child ways to build positive relationships with their teachers, peers, and other people within the school community.
- Help children recognize that making mistakes is an important part of learning. Have a conversation regarding what they can learn from difficult experiences. Doing so may help them develop a growth mindset, which can help them persevere in the face of challenges and boost their academic competence (Sarrasin et al., 2018).
- Practice prosocial behaviour yourself and encourage it in your child – when you value kind and helpful behaviour, your child is likely to value it as well (Döring et al., 2017).
- Check in with your child’s teacher and school on a regular basis. Let them know that you are invested in the school community. If available, volunteer for school functions. Positive involvement from parents and guardians in school contributes to a positive learning climate (Park et al., 2017).

IN COMMUNITY

- Ask children how they want to contribute to their community. Every child has something to offer others and can gain a sense of competence, belonging, and mastery when they are able to make an impact in an area they care about. Children who contribute to their community are also more likely to be accepted by peers (Fuligni, 2019).
- Create an action plan in collaboration with your local school to support the needs of your community. Identify the areas that your community organization can address to help support greater community connection and the development of a positive community climate (Fuligni, 2019).
- After-school program and activity staff should receive training in how to cultivate positive relationships with children and create a positive peer climate. Doing so can promote social and emotional skills and prosocial behaviour among children (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017).

AT SCHOOL

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) helps teachers meet students’ individual needs to promote an inclusive school environment. UDL can provide students with a sense of academic competence and success at school. Professional development in UDL supports teachers in meeting the learning needs of a wider range of students than traditional one-size-fits-all curricula (Capp, 2017).
- Children learn best when they feel safe and supported at school and have skills to manage stress (Darling-Hammond et al., 2018). Evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs help build a positive school climate while teaching valuable stress management skills.
- Be aware of the “hidden” messages your school environment may be providing children about the school climate. Is the school trophy case the first thing you see when you walk in the school door? What message does this send to students? What changes could you make to the school environment that indicates everyone is welcome and valued? (Schonert-Reichl, 2019).

For more resources and ideas on how to use MDI data to catalyze action, visit discovermdi.ca.

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