MDi

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.

MDi Middle Years Development Instrument
discovermdi.ca

HUMAN EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

UBC

references

*MDI Research Studies

Abry, T., Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., & Curby, T. W. (2017). Are all program elements created equal? Relations between specific social and emotional learning components and teacher–student classroom interaction quality. *Prevention Science*, 18(2), 193-203. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-016-0743-3

Bornstein, M. H. (2015). Children's parents. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science: Vol. 4. Ecological settings and processes* (7th ed., pp. 55–132). New York, NY: Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/ 9781118963418.childpsy403

Collins, W.A., & Madsen, S.D. (2019) Parenting during middle childhood. In M.H. Bornstein (Ed.) *Handbook of parenting: Volume 1* (3rd ed. pp. 81-110). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429401695

Dewar, G (2017). Student-teacher relationships: The overlooked ingredient for success. *Parenting Science*, 1-10. http://www.parentingscience.com/student-teacher-relationships.html

DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91. https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100611414806

García-Moya, I., Brooks, F., Morgan, A., & Moreno, C. (2015). Subjective well-being in adolescence and teacher connectedness: A health asset analysis. *Health Education Journal*, 74(6), 641-654. https://doi.org/10.1177/0017896914555039

*Guhn, M., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Gadermann, A. M., Marriott, D., Pedrini, L., Hymel, S., & Hertzman, C. (2012). Well-being in middle childhood: An assets-based population-level research-to-action project. *Child Indicators Research*, 5(2), 393-418. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-012-9136-8

*Guhn, M., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Gadermann, A. M., Hymel, S., & Hertzman, C. (2013). A population study of victimization, relationships, and well-being in middle childhood. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 14(5), 1529-1541. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-012-9393-8

Eccles, J.S. (1999). The development of children ages 6 to 14. *The Future of Children*, 9, 30–44. https://doi.org/10.2307/1602703

Eccles, J.S, Roeser, R.W. (2011). Schools as developmental contexts during adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21, 225–241. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118133880.hop206013

*Emerson, S. D., Mâsse, L. C., Ark, T. K., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Guhn, M. (2018). A population-based analysis of life satisfaction and social support among children of diverse backgrounds in British Columbia, Canada. *Quality of Life Research*, 27(10), 2595-2607. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-018-1922-4

Farmer, T. W., Hamm, J. V., Dawes, M., Barko-Alva, K., & Cross, J. R. (2019). Promoting inclusive communities in diverse classrooms: Teacher attunement and social dynamics management. *Educational Psychologist*, 54(4), 286-305. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1635020

MDi Middle Years Development Instrument
discovermdi.ca

HUMAN **EARLY LEARNING** PARTNERSHIP

UBC

Ma, T. L., Zarrett, N., Simpkins, S., Vandell, D. L., & Jiang, S. (2020). Brief report: Patterns of prosocial behaviors in middle childhood predicting peer relations during early adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence*, 78, 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2019.11.004

*Magee, C., Guhn, M., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Oberle, E. (2019). Mental well-being among children in foster care: The role of supportive adults. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 102, 128-134. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.05.005

Masten, A. S. (2018). Resilience theory and research on children and families: Past, present, and promise. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 10(1), 12-31. https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12255

Masten, A. S., & Barnes, A. J. (2018). Resilience in children: Developmental perspectives. *Children*, 5(7), 98. https://doi.org/10.3390/children5070098

Moretti, M. M., Obsuth, I., Craig, S. G., & Bartolo, T. (2015). An attachment-based intervention for parents of adolescents at risk: Mechanisms of change. *Attachment & human development*, 17(2), 119-135. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616734.2015.1006383

Noddings, N. (2006). Handle with care. *Nature*, 440(7087), 990–991. https://doi.org/10.1038/440990a

*Oberle, E., Guhn, M., Gadermann, A. M., Thomson, K., & Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2018). Positive mental health and supportive school environments: A population-level longitudinal study of dispositional optimism and school relationships in early adolescence. *Social Science & Medicine*, 214, 154-161. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2018.06.041

*Oberle, E., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Guhn, M., Zumbo, B. D., & Hertzman, C. (2014). The role of supportive adults in promoting positive development in middle childhood: A population-based study. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 29(4), 296-316. https://doi.org/10.1177/0829573514540116

Oldfield, J, Humphrey, N and Hebron, J (2016) The role of parental and peer attachment relationships and school connectedness in predicting adolescent mental health outcomes. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 21 (1). pp. 21-29. ISSN 1475-357X. https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12108

Sabol, T. J., & Pianta, R. C. (2012). Recent trends in research on teacher–child relationships. *Attachment & Human Development*, 14(3), 213-231. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616734.2012.672262

Sauve, J. A., & Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2019). Creating caring classroom and school communities: Lessons learned from social and emotional learning programs and practices. In *Handbook of Student Engagement Interventions* (pp. 279-295). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-813413-9.00019-x

Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2019). Advancements in the landscape of social and emotional learning and emerging topics on the horizon. *Educational Psychologist*, 54(3), 222-232. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1633925

*Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Guhn, M., Gadermann, A. M., Hymel, S., Sweiss, L., & Hertzman, C. (2013). Development and validation of the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI): Assessing children's well-being and assets across multiple contexts. *Social Indicators Research*, 114(2), 345-369. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-012-0149-y

REFERENCES CONT'D

Ungar, M. (2015). Resilience and culture: The diversity of protective processes and positive adaptation. In L.C. Theron, L. Liebenberg, & M. Ungar (Eds.), *Youth and resilience in culture: Cross-cultural advancements in positive psychology* (pp. 37-48). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9415-2

Vinoski, E., Graybill, E., & Roach, A. (2016). Building self-determination through inclusive extracurricular programs. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 48(5), 258-265. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059915626127

Wang, C., Hatzigianni, M., Shahaeian, A., Murray, E., & Harrison, L. J. (2016). The combined effects of teacher-child and peer relationships on children's social-emotional adjustment. *Journal of School Psychology*, 59, 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2016.09.003

Wentzel, K. R. (2017). Peer relationships, motivation, and academic performance at school. In A. J. Elliot, C. S. Dweck, & D. S. Yeager (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation: Theory and application* (p. 586–603). The Guilford Press.

Werner, E.E. (2013). What can we learn about resilience from large-scale longitudinal studies? In S. Goldstein & R.B Brooks (2013). *Handbook of resilience in children* (pp.87-102). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-3661-4

Werner, E. E., & Smith, R. S. (2001). *Journeys from childhood to midlife: Risk, resilience, and recovery*. Cornell University Press.