MDi

Benefits of a positive school climate:

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). The school environment includes promotive factors like a sense of school connectedness as well as risk factors such as peer bullying. When children have positive experiences at school, they are more likely to feel they belong at their school, feel more motivated and engaged in class, achieve higher grades and better overall well-being (Wang & Degol, 2016; Rose et al., 2022). Having a sense of belonging at school even reduces the negative impact of bullying (Arslan & Allen, 2021). Schools provide an excellent opportunity to bolster children's well-being through supportive adult-student relationships and safe, supportive environments in which all children can thrive.

research

GENERAL RESEARCH ON SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

- Students reported higher well-being, better grades and behaviour, and more motivation when allowed choice and autonomy in the classroom (Kincade et al., 2020).

- School-wide programs that include parents and caregivers, teachers, and community members are the most effective in improving overall student well-being and creating a positive school environment (Goldberg et al., 2019).

- 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, have higher grades are more likely to graduate and succeed in college (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 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).

MDI FINDINGS ON SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

- MDI data from 2022/23 show that children who reported that an adult at school cared about them had better well-being and academic self-concept than those who didn't. The MDI data also show that 65% of children in Grades 4 and 5 reported high levels of school belonging and 51% of children in Grades 7 and 8 did. Children who feel they belong at school are less likely to be late or absent. They also show lower emotional distress and fewer negative behaviours, such as bullying (Allen et al., 2018).

SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

AT HOME

- Discuss with your child ways to build positive relationships with their teachers, peers, and other people within the school community.

- 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 caregivers in school contributes to a positive learning climate (Park et al., 2017).

IN COMMUNITY

- 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).

- Out-of-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

- Cultivate supportive relationships between students and adults at school by activities such as greeting students when they arrive at school, asking about their interests, and showing empathy toward student experiences. Students had better academic performance in harmonious school environments (Sauve & Schonert-Reichl, 2019).

- Collaborate with community organizations such YMCA, BGC and Friendship Centres to offer programs and services to your school community.

- For students experiencing challenges at school, ensure they have a positive relationship with at least one adult who is checking in with them regularly.

- Collaborate with students to create an anti-bullying pledge for your school. Role-play some scenarios with students on what they can do if they witness or experience bullying.

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

MDi Middle Years Development Instrument
discovermdi.ca

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WEBSITE RESOURCES

YMCA website: https://www.ymca.ca

BGC South Coast website: https://www.bgcbc.ca

National Association of Friendship Centres website: https://nafc.ca/?lang=en

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