



What the MDI Measures

Optimism
Empathy
Prosocial Behaviour
Self-Esteem
Happiness
Absence of Sadness
Absence of Worries
Self-Regulation (Short-Term)
Responsible Decision-Making*
Self-Awareness*
Citizenship & Social Responsibility*
Concern for the Environment

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social and emotional development refers to the acquiring of skills and knowledge to manage emotions, make responsible decisions, and establish supportive relationships. These social and emotional competencies promote healthy development and resilience and protect against common risk factors (Thomson et al., 2018). The competencies were chosen for the MDI because they are malleable and actionable; that is, with the right supports, they 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). First Nations have been teaching social and emotional skills for generations by fostering children's inner qualities and relationships with community and the land (First Nations Health Authority). The promotion of students' social and emotional competencies and The First People's Principles of Learning 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

- There is evidence of declining well-being and mental health for children and youth that has worsened in light of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Gadermann et al., 2022; Jones et al., 2022)
- Social and emotional learning (SEL) programs can improve children's attitudes, classroom behaviour, academic success, and emotional well-being into adulthood (Mahoney et al., 2021).
- 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).
- Rapid brain development during childhood and adolescence makes them an ideal time for learning and developing social and emotional skills (Immordino-Yang et al., 2019).
- Social and emotional skills in childhood are linked to higher graduation rates, career success, positive relationships with peers and adults, and better mental health over the lifetime (Jones et al., 2015; Domitrovich et al., 2017).
- Promoting social and emotional competencies can prevent bullying behaviours and victimization (Divecha & Brackett, 2019).
- Social and Emotional learning should be promoted by all levels of the school system, families and the community to maximize the benefit for children (Mahoney et al., 2021).



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 own 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 social and emotional learning (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., 2021; Schonert-Reichl, 2019).

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

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