Middle Years Development Instrument

HUMAN EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

MDI QUESTIONS BRIEF

This brief highlights questions on the Middle Years Development Instrument that children could potentially find sensitive or uncomfortable.



What questions are on the MDI?

The Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) is a self-report questionnaire that asks children in middle childhood about their thoughts, feelings and experiences. The MDI is the first survey of its kind to gather information about the lives of children both in school, in the home and in the community, from their own perspective. The survey questions align with the BC Ministry of Education's K-12 curriculum which includes a focus on promoting children's personal and social competencies. The MDI includes questions related to five areas of children's lives and experiences:

Social & Emotional Development

Children respond to questions about their current social and emotional functioning in these areas: optimism, self-esteem, happiness, self-regulation, and sadness.

Physical Health & Well-being

Children evaluate their own physical well-being in the areas of overall health including active transportation, nutrition and sleeping habits.

Connectedness to Peers and Adults

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

School Experiences

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

Use of Out-of-School Time

Children are asked about the time they spend engaged in organized activities such as sports, music and art, as well as the time they spend watching TV, doing homework and playing video games.

Can I see the MDI questionnaire?

The entire MDI questionnaire, including questions referenced in this brief is available online at earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdi.



Important Links

For resources to promote children's mental health and wellness:
keltymentalhealth.ca

For information on bullying or where to find help for your child:
www.prevnet.ca/bullying/parents
www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/erase

For more information and ideas on how to talk with your children about family diversity and gender identity:
www.sogieducation.org/parents

Contact Us

If you have further questions or do not want your child to participate in the MDI, please contact the project staff:

mdi@help.ubc.ca
1-888-908-4050 (toll free)
604-822-1310

HUMAN EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

UBC

Could any of the questions make children uncomfortable?

Generally, most children who participate in the MDI enjoy the opportunity to share their opinions and experiences. We worked with children on the development of the MDI and from them we have learned what questions they believe are important to ask. In our attempt to gather a complete picture of children's experiences, there may be questions that children could potentially find sensitive or uncomfortable.

We work hard to minimize any potential negative emotional impact on children. First, children are given the choice whether or not to participate. They can also skip questions, stop, or withdraw from the survey at any time. In addition, we provide them with the opportunity to request to speak with an adult at their school confidentially.

The MDI asks questions about happiness and experiences of victimization at school:

- **Happiness:** Children with a positive, friendly attitude are more likely to attract positive attention from peers and adults, thus broadening and strengthening their social resources. The MDI questionnaire asks children about how happy and satisfied they are with their lives. These questions could potentially be uncomfortable for some children if they are very unhappy, unsatisfied with their life, or depressed. However, children's responses provide schools and communities with important information on the mental health of their children, which can inform programming to promote well-being.
- **Victimization at School:** Being bullied may have a lasting effect on a child's self-esteem and negative thoughts can continue long after the bullying stops. The MDI questionnaire asks children about how often they have experienced four different types of bullying: Cyber, Physical, Social, and Verbal. Although these questions could be sensitive for children who have been bullied, the information gathered by asking questions on bullying and the school environment could prompt teachers and principals to take action to create safer and more caring schools.

Will children have any questions for me after completing the MDI?

Some of the questions on the MDI might be on topics that are new to children and therefore might cause them to ask their parents/caregivers or teachers questions about these topics.

- **Gender Identity:** Gender identity and expression are protected under the BC Human Rights Code. It is important for schools to be inclusive and safe spaces for children of all gender identities. On the MDI, children are asked if they describe their gender as "boy," "girl", "non-binary" or, if they describe their gender "in another way," they may describe their gender using their own words.
- **Parents and Caregivers:** In order to understand the family structures of the children who take the survey, children are asked which adults they live with most of the time. The possible responses include: one parent, two parents, part time with each parent, step-parent(s), grandparent(s), foster parent(s), or other adults.