MDi

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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HUMAN EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

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