

Understanding Middle Childhood: The Middle Years Development Instrument

Parent/Guardian Information Letter

Dear parent(s)/guardian(s),

In 2017-2018 and again in 2019-2020, the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB) conducted a research study to gather important information about the health and well-being of children in select grades using the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI). The MDI is an online survey developed by researchers at the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at the University of British Columbia (UBC). The MDI was developed at UBC in collaboration with educators, parents, and students, and has been used in Canadian schools since 2009. This Spring, DPCDSB will administer the MDI to students in Grades 6, 8, and 10, to assess the impact of programming to improve the well-being of DPCDSB students. The results of this survey will assist our school, researchers, DPCDSB, and governments to inform programs and services for children. This study is consistent with the duties of DPCDSB under the *Education Act* to promote student achievement and well-being.

Your child is invited to participate in the study subject to the terms outlined in this letter.

Why do we want to hear from your child/children?

The purpose of this study is to better understand and measure areas of middle child development that contribute to children's well-being, health, and school success by asking children themselves about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in school and in the community. The survey includes questions about:

- 1) Social and emotional development, such as self-esteem, optimism, happiness, and empathy;
- 2) Feelings of connectedness to school, family, friends, and communities;
- 3) School experiences;
- 4) Physical health and well-being; and
- 5) Time use during the after school hours, as well as children's wishes for after school time.

If you'd like to learn more about the MDI please visit www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdj.

What will happen?

Participating students will complete the survey online during class under the supervision of school staff. The survey will be available from **April 1, 2022, through April 29, 2022**. To get started, **your child will receive an email to their student email account** (studentnumber@educ.dpcdsb.org). This email will contain a personalized survey link they can use to complete the MDI during class. Completing the survey using the link in the email will automatically record your child's student number along with their survey responses. Note that the link your child receives is only for them and should not be shared with or completed by anyone else. This will allow ongoing study of student well-being, as measured by the MDI, and student achievement over time.

Study Results

Your child's answers will be combined with those from other students in their school and community to be analyzed. Study results are reported only at the group level, for example: school or the whole DPCDSB. School reports are shared with the DPCDSB and its schools. The MDI study will not be used by the DPCDSB to rank schools, students, or classes in any way.

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How will the MDI data be used and stored?

The data will be used by DPCDSB research staff to link student responses at the individual level with other data to learn about the factors that influence children's well-being, health, and student achievement. Examples of other data that will be linked include report card and Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessment data. Anonymized findings from the linked data will be reported on only at the group level, for example: school or DPCDSB. School reports will be shared with DPCDSB and schools. School staff will not have access to your child's individual survey responses at any time, but will receive grade level and school level results.

Your child's survey responses and linked data will be kept in a secure computer network to be used by DPCDSB research staff as outlined above. In addition, a de-identified data file of all survey responses will be provided to the HELP group at UBC for research purposes. Researchers who receive permission to use the MDI data through HELP for research or statistical purposes will be provided data that cannot be connected to any individual student.

How is my child's privacy protected?

The information collected through the MDI is confidential, but it is **not anonymous**. The MDI uses student emails containing student numbers for survey distribution to help link the school/grade and improve the data collection process. Although the survey is distributed through student emails, **individual student responses will never be shared**. Only DPCDSB research staff will have access to personally identifiable information about your child and results will only show findings from group analysis. Reporting results using group analysis ensures that a student's identity remains confidential. During all analyses, researchers will follow standard practices to maintain confidentiality of the personal information. No information from the study will be added to your child's school record. No personal information that could identify your child will be reported on at any time or used in research publications or public documents.

For questions or concerns related to the privacy of your child's survey data, please contact the school principal or DPCDSB's Manager, Records Management, Access and Privacy at (905) 890-0708, ext. 24443.

How will your school and community benefit?

The MDI study results give educators, program planners, and community partners access to information about the lives of children through the voices of the children themselves. The MDI results can show where there are similarities and differences in the number of children who are healthy and feel supported by schools and communities. Your school and community can use the results to improve the lives of children.

Does my child have to participate in the DPCDSB MDI Survey?

Participation in the DPCDSB MDI Survey is strictly voluntary. Staff will tell students about the purpose of the survey and students will have a chance to decide whether they wish to participate. Even if they decide to participate, they can skip any questions they do not wish to answer, or they may choose to stop participating at any time. If your child does not participate, they will work on regular schoolwork. **The choice to participate or not participate will not affect your child's marks or treatment in their classroom or school, and it will not affect any services that your family receives from the school or from DPCDSB.**

What if I do not want my child to participate in the DPCDSB MDI Survey?

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It is your choice whether your child takes part in this survey. If you consent, your child can still choose not to participate in the survey. ***If you DO NOT wish your child to participate, please [click this link](#) and enter their full name, school, and student number by Wednesday, March 30, 2022.*** If you use the link to withdraw your child, they will not receive the survey email.

Where can I get more information on the study?

For more information please visit HELP's website at www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdj. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's participation, please contact your child's school principal. You can also contact the board research staff at 905-890-1221.

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Papaloni

Superintendent – Mississauga Brampton Central
Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, 905-890-1221

Max Vecchiarino

Superintendent – Equity, Policy, Strategy, Research
Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, 905-890-1221