

SURREY/WHITE ROCK MIDDLE CHILDHOOD MATTERS

RESEARCH BRIEF



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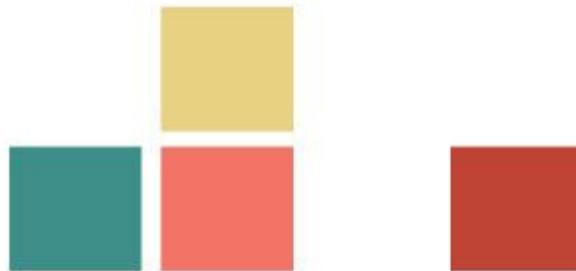
Acknowledgement

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The Surrey/White Rock Middle Childhood Matters Steering Committee (MCM), whose focus is the geographical area of School District 36 and the two municipalities of Surrey and White Rock, was formed in 2007 with funding support from the United Way of the Lower Mainland. The MCM committee is comprised of a diverse group of professionals and community members who are dedicated to ensuring that our community examines the needs of our children during their middle childhood years. The Committee meets on a bi-monthly basis to collaborate, research and coordinate middle childhood initiatives. The goal of MCM to ensure that the importance of middle childhood is well understood and that the necessary supports in the form of quality child care and after-school programming are available to as many children as possible whose families are seeking these programs.

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Five Key Important Principles to Working with the Middle Years Children (6-12 Years Old)

1. **The middle years is a unique period of growth and development, particularly around social and emotional domains.** Middle years children need appropriate healthy environments and supports to work through these developmental tasks to build a successful foundation for lifelong health and wellbeing.
2. **Every child needs to have at least one caring and connected adult, beyond family members.** Literature show the importance of having at least one, ideally five (but the more, the better!), caring adults for every child to support their resiliency and school success.
3. **Out of school time hours are prime time to engage middle years children in quality, enriching programming.** The average child in their middle years has approximately 67 hours of discretionary time each week during the school year, which is more time than they spend in school. Providing developmentally enriching activities during this period can reduce children engaging in high-risk behaviours.
4. **Children need to be supported within the context of the family.** While children in this age group are becoming increasingly independence, the strength of their relationship with the family, and supporting them within the context of their home environment, are essential to ensuring optimal development.
5. **Even within the middle childhood years, there are two distinct groups, early middle childhood (ages 6-8) and late middle childhood (ages 9-12), each requiring different engagement approaches.** Grade 5 is an especially sensitive transition and needs deliberate, developmentally-appropriate engagement to ensure continued connections to caring adults and community.

Middle Years Research Brief

Introduction

Middle childhood, sometimes called the middle years, refers to the years between six and twelve. Building upon the experiences and skills acquired during early childhood, middle childhood is a time for children to forge a personal identity, establish their orientation toward achievement, navigate new relationships, and learn how to engage within the community as an individual, while remaining strongly connected to and supported by their families.

For the most part, children during their middle years are attending school for a full day. Although school plays a significant role in a child's life during this period, it is important to recognize that much of a child's day is outside of the classroom; this includes critical hours before and after school, weekends, professional days and extended Winter, Spring and Summer Breaks, when there is no supervision by teachers and increasingly parents may not be available. It is during these discretionary hours, that children can explore other skills and interests, expand and enhance their overall competency, and observe and learn from adults acting in different social roles as well as interacting with different adults acting in similar roles. Yet without appropriate guidance and support, problems can arise that if not quickly identified and addressed, can lead to unhealthy coping strategies and behavioural patterns that are only exacerbated by the changes and challenges of puberty and adolescence.

Responding to the need for constructive out-of-school activities and greater adult supervision, a patchwork of community and commercial services has emerged for 6 to 12 years olds. Recent research has found that these services may not always be evidenced based, developmentally appropriate, accessible, affordable or successful in supporting and strengthening the essential child/family connection.

There is a significant opportunity to influence this critical period of development to ensure that children reach their full potential. In recognizing this, the Surrey/White Rock Middle Childhood Matters Steering Committee (MCM) wants to ensure that the importance of middle childhood is well understood and that the necessary supports for quality programming are available to as many children as possible whose families are seeking these programs.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight middle years research and five key takeaways that relate to the middle childhood population and their families. This paper is not intended to be an exhaustive literature review, but a sampling of notable research to date.

This paper is part of a two-part series, spearheaded by the Surrey/White Rock Middle Childhood Matters Steering Committee, to shed light on importance of supporting middle years children. The companion paper is entitled *Profile and Context of Surrey-White Rock Middle Years' Children*.



Why Do the Middle Years Matter?

Middle childhood is a unique period during which brain development undergoes a dramatic shift. The resulting maturation in all developmental domains, particularly the social and emotional, builds upon experiences and skills acquired during the early childhood years. Middle childhood is a prime time for children to:

- Forge their personal identity
- Master new academic, critical thinking and healthy lifestyle skills
- Establish their orientation toward learning and achievement
- Navigate new relationships
- Understand and practice decision-making, personal responsibility, and peaceful conflict resolution
- Find healthy ways to cope with the difficulties and stress of everyday living
- Become less dependent on their families, while still remaining strongly connected to and involved in family life
- Learn how to engage within the community as individuals, and contribute as active citizens

However middle years' children need the appropriate healthy environments, and positive relationships, experiences and supports to work through these developmental tasks and successfully make the transition to adolescence.

Given all the changes in family composition, growing household mobility, flattening of family incomes, increased parental employment rates, heightened concerns about community safety, the inundation of technological developments, and the complexity of living in a diverse, fast paced, consumer driven global economy, just to name a few of the pressures surrounding children today, it is not surprising that we need to re-think what is required to support our middle years' children. With almost 34% of Surrey/White Rock children already developmentally vulnerable in at least one domain at time of entry into kindergarten¹, it is imperative that we find effective ways to promote healthy life trajectories and foster the resiliency of all children, as well undertake strategic interventions to support those children who experience serious challenges that place them at undue risk.



What does the literature say?

The middle years is a unique period of growth and development, particularly around social and emotional domains. Middle years children need appropriate healthy environments and supports to work through these developmental tasks to build a successful foundation for lifelong health and wellbeing.

Middle Childhood and Brain Development

Recent brain development research has revolutionized our understanding of the architecture of the brain and the neural plasticity possibilities over an individual's lifespan. During middle childhood, it is now recognized that there is an important and sensitive shift away from the rapid growth in the size of the brain and the synaptic production of 700+ new neural connections per second that occurs during the early years. Instead improvements begin to emerge in pre-frontal cortex functioning, the area of the brain responsible for executive thinking.² Further, during the middle years, the brain circuits focus on increasing their efficiency and complexity through an intentional 'synaptic pruning' process that consolidates and enhances regularly-used neural pathways based on the child's everyday activities and experiences, and selectively reduces those less used.² The brain during middle childhood is highly influenced by and susceptible to both positive and negative experiences as it refines and adapts in multi-dimensional, cumulative and integrative ways.

A prime example of this complex interplay of experience and brain development is physical exercise. Middle years' children who are physically active for at least the recommended one hour a day, not only have healthier, stronger bodies and higher levels of coordination and dexterity, but also a greater sense of social/emotional wellbeing, and improved attention, memory and concentration skills.² This speaks to the importance of always looking at middle childhood strategies in a holistic way and providing middle years' children with a very broad range of developmentally appropriate enrichment experiences that stimulate brain development.

Developmental Assets Framework

Over the last fifty years, the Search Institute (SI) in Minneapolis has been testing and refining their Developmental Assets framework which identifies the key building blocks for growing up healthy, caring and responsible.³ The original SI research was focused on adolescence, but it has now been adapted and broadened to consider the development of children three-year-old through to young adults. Twenty (20) *internal factors* have been identified that support children's commitment to learning, acquisition of positive values, social competency and positive identity and 20 *external factors* related to family, school and neighbourhood support, child empowerment and safety, boundaries and expectations, and the constructive use of time outside of school.

Results based on the surveys of four million children and youth, consistently found that the greater the number of the 40 developmental assets children have in place, the better they feel about themselves, the more successful they are in school and the more positive their connection and contribution to their family and their community; whereas the fewer the assets, the more challenges children face and the greater likelihood that they are involved in unhealthy risky behaviours.

SI is acknowledged particularly for its championing of the importance of:

- Multiple reciprocal nurturing “developmental relationships”
- Involvement in creative activities in addition to community programs that encourage physical activity, healthy peer interaction, and social connections
- Involvement in values-based programming that supports social-emotional wellbeing, personal reflection, self-regulation, pro-social skill development, service to others, and peaceful conflict resolution
- Development of cultural identity and cross-cultural competency
- Programs and activities that support and strengthen the developmental assets of the whole family
- Community engagement and collective impact strategies that support children in their homes, schools, neighbourhoods, and communities

Social and Emotional Learning

There is a great deal of literature that focuses on the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) to academic and life success. SEL refers to “the process of integrating thinking, feeling, and behaving in order to become aware of the self and of others, make responsible decisions, and manage one’s own behaviors and those of others”.⁴ It begins in a rudimentary way during the early years, and through the scaffolded guidance of caring adults and interactive experience with peers, family, school and community, can become integrated into a way of being during the middle childhood and beyond. The SEL movement which comes out of 1990’s research on Emotional IQ, has identified five core SEL competencies⁵:

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship management
- Responsible decision making

These critical social-emotional competencies involve skills that enable children to calm themselves when angry, initiate friendships and resolve conflicts respectfully, make ethical and safe choices, and contribute constructively to their community.⁶ Gaining these competencies in the middle years support positive development in children and later success in adolescence and adulthood.

Middle Years Developmental Instrument

Building on this 2006 research, a University of British Columbia research team, led by Dr. Kim Schonert-Reichl, in collaboration with the United Way of the Lower Mainland, developed and tested a comprehensive, population-wide tool called the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI). This self-reporting questionnaire, completed in school by children in grades 4 and 7, asks them how they think and feel about their experiences both inside and outside of school. The questionnaire focuses on five areas of development that are strongly linked to well-being, health and academic achievement: physical health and well-being, connectedness, social and emotional development, school experiences and use of after-school time.⁷

Initial results from the MDI assessment tool are now available for 26 BC school districts. The preliminary data indicates that the children who are thriving, reported four or five of the following assets:

- Multiple supportive adult relationships across home, school and community,
- A sense of belonging and friendship with their peers
- Good nutrition and sleep habits
- Opportunities to participate in meaningful activities
- Positive experiences at home, in school and in the community including freedom from bullying⁸

Children with only one or none of the above assets reported low health and wellbeing.

Middle Years Health Issues

In 2007, UNICEF published its first international report about child and youth wellbeing that to the shock of Canadian health officials, ranked Canada in the bottom half of 30 OECD nations.⁹ Dr. Leitch, the first appointed Canadian advisor on healthy children and youth, was asked by the federal government to make recommendations particularly in regards to the three lowest ratings:

- Preventable childhood injuries and safety
- Childhood obesity and healthy lifestyles
- Mental health and chronic illness¹⁰

Noting that preventable injuries and safety issues are the top cause of childhood death in Canada, Dr. Leitch made specific recommendations regarding booster seat safety for 4-8 year olds, improved helmet standards, playground and backyard safety, toy and consumer product information, institutional and pharmaceutical safety, and limiting the exposure of children to environmental contaminants.⁸

To address obesity and promote healthy nutrition and lifestyles, her report focused on the importance of increasing physical activity during and after school for all children including those with disabilities, by reducing children's screen time and improving access to recreational facilities and outdoor spaces through such measures as reciprocal joint use agreements between schools and municipalities. The report also proposed bans on child-focused junk food advertising, the need for improved food security measures, and the need for more public education about the importance of at least 60-90 minutes of physical activity for children per day.

In her review of child and youth mental health issues, Dr. Leitch highlighted that while the most serious mental illnesses generally present later during adolescence, signs of mental distress due to anxiety, bullying in and out of school, low self-esteem and insecurity are increasing in the middle years. She encouraged all levels of government to develop child and youth mental health plans, noting

*“Children and youth with mental distress and mental disorders are often identified and referred into the system too late - their problems getting worse with time. **Fortunately, with the appropriate investments and access to treatment, it is estimated that 70% of childhood cases of mental health problems can be solved through early diagnosis and interventions.** Early interventions can help these children and youth to lead normal productive healthy lives and save the costs that would otherwise be incurred by providing them with social services throughout their adult lives”.*⁸

While some limited progress has been made on Dr. Leitch's recommendations, the second UNICEF report released in 2013 still ranked the overall wellbeing of Canada's children in the bottom half of the OECD nations and 27th out of 29 in the category of health and safety.¹¹

Every child needs to have at least one caring and connected adult, beyond family members.

Literature show the importance of having at least one, ideally five (but the more, the better!), caring adults for every child to support their resiliency and school success.

“Power of 5”

Derek Petersen, past Child and Youth Advocate for Alaska and founder of the Institute for Community and Adolescent Resiliency, has extensively studied the importance of adult/child relationships for child and youth resiliency and school success. His research shows that thriving child and youth needs to have and maintain a web of support of **at least 5** caring and connected adults from within and outside the nuclear family who can act as anchors (someone who have and communicate high expectations for them) and dream-catchers (someone who filters out the bad that comes into the child's life and keeps in only the good).¹² In 2013, the Richmond Children First table identified this concept as *the Power of Five*.¹³ This simple but powerful concept has strongly resonated within their community, helping adults to understand the important role they personally can play in the lives of the children and youth they know, and mobilizing them to act.

Out of school time hours are prime time to engage middle years children in quality, enriching activities. The average child in their middle years has approximately 67 hours of discretionary time each week during the school year, which is more time than they spend in school. Providing developmentally enriching activities during this period can reduce children engaging in high-risk behaviours.

Out-of-school time (OST), also often called after-school hours, are defined as the discretionary hours before and after-school, and on evenings, weekends and holidays. A particularly critical time is those hours between the end of the school day and the end of the working day, typically 3-6 p.m. Nowadays with over 80% of Canadian parents of middle years' children in the paid labour-force, many parents are still at work during these hours and children are in community programming, formal or informal child care arrangements, or in self-care either alone or with friends.¹⁴

The growing group of middle years' children who are regularly in self-care after school is of significant concern. In 2009, 13% of BC's children were estimated to be in self-care, primarily children in grades 4-7.¹⁵ Yet research has shown that without "after-school programming, and left on their own, children and youth will engage in more high-risk behaviours, including crime, socially isolating behaviours, higher use of technology including TV, gaming consoles and the computer, and be at risk for drug and alcohol use, leading to increased vulnerability."¹⁴

Importance of After-School Hours

The United Way of the Lower Mainland initiated a 2007 research study of 1,266 Grade 4 and 7 students drawn from eight local school districts. The children were surveyed; they also kept a daily diary in which they documented their activities from the previous day, specifically the after-school to dinner period, and then during the evening.¹⁴

This study found:

- The average child in their middle years has approximately 67 hours of discretionary time each week during the school year, which is more time than they spend in school
- About 50% of the children regularly participate in sports, lessons, clubs or after-school programming; the other half were at home or in informal care arrangements and were more often involved in sedentary activities, such as watching television, on-line gaming, and texting
- Children who engaged in after-school structured activities scored higher across almost all dimensions of wellbeing than those students who did not participate
- Children engaging in more than two hours a day of technology use during their out-of-school hours, had lower levels of wellbeing
- Grade 7 children were less optimistic, and felt less connected to their families and schools than children in Grade 4. They were also spending more time alone at home and their use of technology had increased by 15%

- Over 85% of children reported that they would like to spend more time in physical activities, music and drama, being with friends, doing hobbies and spending time with family. Only 8% wanted to spend more time on technology
- Children’s social and emotional health indicators were higher on every measure with higher levels of parental connectedness
- Relationships with peers and adults in school and in the community were central in fostering children’s social and emotional competence

Quality OST Time Programming

The Harvard Family Research Project did an extensive review of after-school program research in 2008 and determined that participation in high quality OST programs is associated with:

- Decreased behavioural problems; improved social and communication skills and/or relationships with peers and adults; increased self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy; lower levels of depression and anxiety; development of initiative; improved feelings and attitudes toward self and school; and increased academic success
- A positive impact on a range of prevention outcomes, including avoidance of drug and alcohol use, decreases in delinquency and violent behavior, increased knowledge of safe sex, avoidance of sexual activity, and reduction in juvenile crime
- Healthier lifestyles, improved body image, reduction in obesity, improved blood pressure, and increased knowledge of nutrition and exercise¹⁶

Quality after school program environments foster inquiry, critical thinking, and engagement in learning, and these features can support a range of positive academic and developmental outcomes. As such, after school programs are uniquely poised to support in-school learning and development.¹⁶

Children need to be supported within the context of the family. While children in this age group are becoming increasingly independence, the strength of their relationship with the family, and supporting them within the context of their home environment, are esesntial to ensuring optimal development.

Parenting Skills during Middle Childhood

In a Search Institute (SI) research report entitled ‘Don’t Forget the Families’¹⁷, over 1,000 parenting adults with children aged 3 – 13 across the United States, were asked to provide information about their use of five key relationship strategies that SI has identified are key for developing children’s character strengths and enhancing positive life outcomes:

1. **Express Care:** Show that you like me and want the best for me.
2. **Challenge Growth:** Insist that I try to continuously improve.
3. **Provide Support:** Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.
4. **Share Power:** Hear my voice and let me share in making decisions.
5. **Expand Possibility:** Expand my horizons and connect me to opportunities.

While most parents surveyed regularly used the first three strategies, *Share Power* and *Expand Possibility* approaches were significantly lower.¹⁸ This is a concern because *Share Power* is most consistently associated with positive life outcomes. The report suggests that many parents are unaware of the important skills developed through sharing power and decision-making, and/or parents themselves, may not have much experience in their own lives to draw upon. The SI study also noted that families with older middle years' children, step-parents, and families facing financial difficulties, were the least likely to have strong developmental relationships with their children.¹⁸

Vulnerable Family Environments

It is well established that poverty, especially during childhood, is linked to a variety of physical, social and economic disadvantages later in life. Children living in poverty require greater support to live and to fulfil their potential. A Canadian study in 2013 revealed three clear tiers of child poverty¹⁹: the first tier, the often-cited national poverty rate of 12%, excludes Indigenous, racialized and immigrant children. The second tier of child poverty includes racialized children who suffer a poverty rate of 22%, first generation immigrant children whose poverty rate is 33%, and Métis, Inuit and non-status First Nations children at a poverty rate of 27%. The third tier is perhaps the most shocking, where is that fully half—50%—of status First Nations children live below the poverty line.

The growing number of working yet poor families indicates the struggle that parents are having finding jobs with sufficient hours, pay and benefits to lift their families out of poverty. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of all jobs are now precarious: contract, temporary, part-time and self-employed. Job insecurity and stress are increasingly important threats to family life as parents struggle to meet their work and parenting responsibilities. Some parents are juggling multiple part-time jobs with no time or energy left to spend with their children. Parents trying to survive on welfare incomes are typically struggling to pay the rent and feed their children.²⁰

Challenging home environment exposes children to elevated chronic toxic stress, impacting their development and likelihood to thrive.²¹ A 2011 report from the United Kingdom, noted the urgent need for more evidence based intervention programming for parents with their own mental health and/or substance use issues, and for families immersed in domestic violence, separated by incarceration, and/or living inter-generational poverty²².

Even within the middle childhood years, there are two distinct groups, early middle childhood (ages 6-8) and late middle childhood (ages 9-12), each requiring different engagement and program approaches. Grade 5 is an especially sensitive transition and needs deliberate, developmentally-appropriate engagement to ensure continued connections to caring adults and community.

Given the incredible growth and development a child experiences in childhood, while identified as a broad category of 'middle childhood', a child at age 6 is vastly different from a child at age 12, requiring different engagement approaches and activities to promote optimal developmental (See Figure 1 (Stages of Middle Childhood, adapted from Children's Partnership Surrey-White Rock Middle Childhood Development Guide (2013).

STAGES OF MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATER
what children do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to control their bodies • Have a lot of energy • Enjoy manipulating objects • May find handling small objects or performing fine motor tasks challenging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy moving and being active • Enjoy sports, dancing and physically intense games • Can play until they are exhausted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience physical changes, especially girls • Have variable energy levels • May find it difficult to control their emotions
what children can understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn best by doing • Need instructions to be few and simple • Have a limited attention span and are easily distracted by their environment • Are very imaginative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are curious and enjoy learning new things • Learn best when involved in a concrete project • May become frustrated when things do not turn out as expected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to develop abstract thinking skills • Learn well through imitating role models • Are adventurous and enjoy change • Have a good attention span
what types of relationships children can have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be somewhat self-centered • Play better in pairs than in groups • Need to be constantly reminded of the group rules • Like to express themselves, but must be asked directly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place increasing importance on friendships • Enjoy playing and taking up group challenges • Are sometimes competitive • Can express what they like or do not like, but their judgment is sometimes not well developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy working in teams • Seek the approval of their peers • Are more independent and begin to question authority • Enjoy projects that involve helping others and social justice

Figure 1: Stages of Middle Childhood, adapted from Children's Partnership Surrey-White Rock Middle Childhood Development Guide (2013)

Appropriately reflecting the distinctiveness of the two phases, there are two Search Institute frameworks – one for children aged 5 to 9 years and one for children aged 8 to 12. This reflects the relative independence of older children, and their shift to abstract thinking as well as the increasing impact of gender, culture and sexual orientation in their lives.²³

Quality Middle Childhood Programming

The Harvard Family Research project identified the following as key to quality after-school programming²⁴

- Adequate physical and psychological safety
- Effective management practices
- Well prepared, caring staff who understand the fundamental importance of developmental relationships with and among children and families
- Intentional program planning with opportunities for autonomy, choice, creativity, and leadership
- Opportunities for children to pursue individual interests
- Special tailored programs for 9-12 year olds
- Affordability and accessibility issues addressed in order to have the best reach and outcomes
- Families engaged in planning and service delivery
- Family support programming and activities that strengthen the child/family bond
- School - community agency partnerships
- Intentional integration of school and non-school supports into a system with a shared vision, mission, and outcomes.

The city of Toronto undertook a comprehensive study of the best practice literature for middle childhood programming and found that high quality after-school programs²⁵:

- Develop important interpersonal skills through interactions more informal than those that take place in school
- Safely explore independence, peer relationships, leadership and the formation of long lasting relationships with adults outside of their families
- Encourage regular physical activity, healthy eating and learning to manage stress
- Explore their interests and aptitudes in areas such as arts, music, languages and sports
- Develop more self-discipline by setting a routine for time spent out of school
- Achieve academic advantages which increase the chances for future success
- Develop interests outside of school that will continue as they mature
- Build resiliency and develop self-reliance leading to positive long-term outcomes.

Meantime the social-emotional learning research specifically warns against programs that:

- “focus too narrowly on specific social or emotional variables such as preventing bullying, substance abuse, unhealthy sexual practices, delinquency, or violence; or promoting character development, career preparation, family life, community service, or physical or mental health are introduced in a piecemeal, unsystematic fashion.”²⁶

Instead programs that weave and integrate social and emotional learning into all components of their program activities and adult/child interactions have been found to be the most effective in affecting long-lasting positive outcomes.

Promising Programs for Older Middle Years Children 9 -12 Years Old

A comprehensive international literature review of best practices in programs, specifically for 9-12 years olds, was completed in 2010.²⁷ The review highlights the following contextual factors as associated with best practice, quality provision and the most significant outcomes for children:

- Positive and supportive relationships are crucial to achieving the best outcomes that after-school programs produce. This feature is universally identified in the literature.
- Children benefit most when programming is grounded in relevant theory and evidence, specific activities are designed to meet the needs and extend the interests of children and are intentionally delivered by well-trained staff who understand children and their development.
- Adequate training, particularly in pre-/adolescent development, programming, behaviour management and cultural competence and opportunities for staff ongoing professional development are associated with effective programs
- Adequate resources to support quality and effective staffing, access to equipment, materials, excursions and other resources.
- Partnerships and links with the community. Partnerships bring additional resources to programs and build the social and cultural capital of centres and participants.
- Strengthening the quality of providers' internal evaluation processes and for increased external evaluation and related research to continue to build the body of knowledge of best practice.

Conclusion

There is a growing body of research that identifies the middle years as a critical period of developmental growth, laying the foundation for success later in life. The following are five key takeaways that would ensure all middle years children are supported to thrive:

1. **The middle years is a unique period of growth and development, particularly around social and emotional domains.** Middle years children need appropriate healthy environments and supports to work through these developmental tasks to build a successful foundation for lifelong health and wellbeing.
2. **Every child needs to have at least one caring and connected adult, beyond family members.** Literature show the importance of having at least one, ideally five (but the more, the better!), caring adults for every child to support their resiliency and school success.
3. **Out of school time hours are prime time to engage middle years children in quality, enriching programming.** The average child in their middle years has approximately 67 hours of discretionary time each week during the school year, which is more time than they spend in school. Providing developmentally enriching activities during this period can reduce children engaging in high-risk behaviours.

4. **Children need to be supported within the context of the family.** While children in this age group are becoming increasingly independence, the strength of their relationship with the family, and supporting them within the context of their home environment, are essential to ensuring optimal development.
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