Facilitator's Guide

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

for Parents with Children Ages 6-12

A resource to strengthen parents' knowledge and skills to improve their child's social and emotional wellbeing

Parents Matter Project

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD MATTERS
—COALITION TORONTO—

Ontario Trillium Foundation
Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario
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Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto (MCMCT)

The Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto (MCMCT) is a group of 20 social service, child welfare, education, recreation, health organizations and parent leaders promoting and influencing a system that prioritizes children ages 6-12 (middle childhood), and their families. MCMCT envisions a city where children ages 6-12 and their families have equitable opportunities and resources to thrive.

The Coalition believes, and research states, that this is an important time in a child's life. To support children's healthy development during this stage, MCMCT promotes high quality, affordable, accessible and culturally appropriate out-of-school time programs (before and after school time, summertime and holidays). The Coalition was one of the driving forces behind the development of the City of Toronto's first Middle Childhood Strategy, which prioritizes programming for this age group.

Our member organizations work with thousands of parents and children across Toronto. MCMCT recognizes the vital need to educate and support parents, caregivers and adult allies living, working and caring for these children across Toronto.

Paediatric Residents' Advocacy Committee

The University of Toronto Paediatric Residents' Advocacy Committee was established in 2001 by residents who were passionate about the overall wellbeing of children and in response to the recognition by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada that advocacy is an integral part of a paediatrician's role.

This committee is resident-led and supervised by staff physicians from SickKids. Residents and staff volunteer their time and are committed to educating parents and children, running clinics, and advocating for children's issues at the national levels. The Parent Nights sub-committee develops curriculum and runs workshops for parents to provide health information to empower them to improve their child's overall wellbeing.

Learning sessions developed by the Paediatric Residents' Advocacy Committee:

- Sleep and Bedtime Routines
- Body Image and Self-esteem
- Healthy Eating and Nutrition
- Physical Activity

- Cognitive Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence
- Emotional Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence
- Social Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence

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INTRODUCTION

The Parents Matter Project endeavors to support and educate newcomer, low-income and racialized parents in Toronto with children ages 6-12 (middle childhood) on how to best improve developmental and social outcomes for their children. This includes the creation and implementation of topic-specific parent learning sessions. Parenting and family relationships provide the foundation from which children ages 6-12 can develop the skills to overcome challenges and thrive to adulthood. These parent learning sessions aim to build upon the assets, capabilities and strengths of parents to help increase their knowledge on a number of topic areas relevant to their child's social and emotional development.

This facilitator's guide provides practical learning sessions to increase familial relationships, including resources that can be utilized and accessed beyond the life of the session. This is grounded in the knowledge that families crave more meaningful time together and the need to have access to materials, tools and skill building knowledge on an ongoing basis that is accessible at all times. By attending a learning session, a parent will leave with more knowledge, awareness and confidence in their ability to parent throughout this developmental stage. The interactive activities and supplementary resources will help parents to solidify their learnings.

In addition to Social Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence, 15 evidence-based learning sessions have been developed in collaboration with experts in the fields such as:

- Sleep and Bedtime Routines

- Body Image and Self-esteem

- Healthy Eating and Nutrition

- Physical Activity

- We All Have Mental Health

- Growing Health Minds

- Children's Mental Health Challenges and Seeking Support

- Counting on Math

- Reading is Everywhere

- Keeping Children Safe Online

- More than Just Video Games

- Raising Responsible Digital Children

- Cognitive Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence

- Emotional Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence

FLOW OF THE LEARNING SESSION

LEARNING SESSION STRUCTURE	DESCRIPTION
Learning Objectives	What parent participants can expect to learn by attending each learning session.
Warm-up/ Check-in	An activity to introduce and ground parent participants. The purpose is to begin getting to know each other by creating an inclusive and welcoming environment where all voices are heard and valued.
Group Agreements	An opportunity to collectively co-create the conditions of how learning will unfold. Creating a group agreement demonstrates that the space is shared by all.
Reflection Moment	Guiding questions are used to prompt reflection on current knowledge of the topic presented.
Content Development	How the information will be delivered and resourced (learning discussions) how learning happens- what do we need to know.
Action Moment	Each learning session will motivate concrete actions for parent participants to go from "reflection to action-now what?" with tips, tools and hands-on experience.
Evaluation and Check-out	Reinforce new learnings, takeaways and evaluate the learning.

FACILITATION TIPS

- Prepare your session in advance; read content carefully and resources needed.

- Be clear and concise in your interactions.

- Listen to what is said.

- Remember to integrate important points that have not been raised by parent participants.

- Validate questions outside of the lesson plan raised by parent participants and direct them to their service provider.

- Be ready to accommodate changes and respond to your audience. Flexibility will be required from time to time and you may need to adapt the agenda in some situations.

- When appropriate, share your own lived experience as a parent or caregiver. However, be conscious not to dominate the conversation.

Useful Tips to Successfully Facilitate a Group Discussion

1. Adults learn better when:

- They are personally motivated and engaged.

- They have the opportunity to reflect on what they are learning.

- They can exchange knowledge and experiences with others.

- They can have better understanding of what they learn and the implementation of that learning at home.

2. Adapting for inclusion:

- Know the diversity within the group: who are the participants? What experiences do they bring?

- Integrate cultural experiences: consider how both the facilitator and parent participants can bring their cultural experiences into the session.

- Be sensitive to emotional responses: depending on parent participants lived experiences, sometimes exercises can trigger participants' emotions.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Overview

Middle childhood refers to the stage between early childhood and adolescence, usually defined as ages 6 through 12. During this critical period children go through significant changes in each of the five domains of development – cognitive, physical, emotional, social, communication and mental health.

It is time for learning, creativity, self-expression and increased autonomy and independence

The Ages and Stages Curriculum is a 3-part module focusing on cognitive, emotional and social development during middle childhood and adolescence. Each module will present developmental milestones and events taking place across one of these three areas. Each module also includes a case scenario to bring the information to life.

Learning Objectives

a. Understand the role of the family and how this role changes as children/teens become older

b. Describe the value placed on peer relationships

c. Describe the developmental task of forming a sexual identity and initiating sexual relationships

Materials and Supplies

FLIP CHART	**MARKERS**	**POST-IT NOTES**	**PENS**
FLIP CHART PAPER	**LEARNING TOOLS**	**ATTENDANCE FORM**	**EVALUATIONS**

LEARNING SESSION OUTLINE

Agenda	**Length of the learning session (1 hour)**
1. Welcome and Introduction	(5 minutes)
2. Check-in	(10 minutes)
3. Reflection Moment	(5 minutes)
4. Content Development	(25 minutes)
5. Action Moment	(10 minutes)
6. Evaluation and Check-out	(5 minutes)

1. Welcome and Introduction   (5 minutes)

Facilitator(s) will welcome parent participants and organization(s) supporting the learning session. Housekeeping items should be introduced: washroom facilities, fire exit and additional information needed for the learning session.

Materials needed: Pens

> **Appendix 1 – Tool 1.1** Agenda
>
> **Tool 1.2** Attendance and Photo Release Form
>
> **Tool 1.4** Evaluation (Pre)

2. Check-in   (10 minutes)

Getting to know each other: Introductions of parent participants   **(5 minutes)**

Facilitator asks parent participants to sit/stand in a circle; and share their name, their children's names and ages, and invites them to describe in one word the best memory of their adolescence.

2.a Group Agreements   (5 minutes)

Materials needed: post-it notes, markers, flip chart paper, pens.

Facilitator asks parent participants any of the following

? Guiding Questions

> **KEEP IN MIND !**
>
> If not brought up during group agreements, facilitator should explore the importance of **confidentiality** and sharing in a safe space.

- What do we need from each other and ourselves to create a safe learning space?

- How are we going to learn together in this space?

Parent participants are asked to write their answers on a post-it note and place it on the flip chart. Facilitator will read them out loud for parents' consensus.

The list should be posted visibly for the length of the learning session.

Building a group agreement with parent participants is an important step to take when working with groups. It invites members to co-create a safe space for sharing where all voices are heard and valued.

3. Reflection Moment   (10 minutes)

Facilitator asks parent participants the following:

? Guiding Question

What kinds of social changes do you expect to see in your children as they get older?

Discussion Points

- Children will move from being reliant on parents to wanting more independence and autonomy.

- This is one of the most challenging developmental tasks but important to complete for children to grow into adults who can navigate the outside world.

- During this time there is also an increasing importance on peer and sexual relationships.

- By the end of adolescence, peer relationships decline in importance and relationships become future oriented.

- This period of transition is full of conflict.

- It is important for parents to remind their children that their door is always open if they need help.

4. Content Development   (25 minutes)

Materials needed: Flip chart, flip chart paper, markers, post-it notes and pens

> **Appendix 2 – Learning Tool 2.1** Overview of Social Development during Middle Childhood and Adolescence.
> **Learning Tool 2.2** Areas of Social Development

Facilitator asks parent participants the following.

❓ Guiding Question

As children move through middle childhood to early adolescence, their relationships with family, peers and sexual relationships change. Can you describe those changes in each relationship?

Parent participants are asked to write their answers on a post-it note and place it on the flip chart.

💡 Facilitator Tip

Have each of the following titles written separately on the flipchart paper for parent participants to add their post-it notes.

Family Relationships | Peer Relationships | Sexual Relationships

Read answers out loud for parents to discuss and hand out the **Learning Tool 2.1** Overview of Social Development during Middle Childhood and Adolescence.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

- The main task as children move from middle childhood to adolescence is to become **emotionally independent from parents**.
- In middle childhood, children are reliant on their parental/family relationships to function.
- As they enter early adolescence, they appreciate a need to have more privacy and independence.
- The need for emotional separation from the family and autonomy can be a challenging transition, especially for parents.
- This need for autonomy can be a large source of conflict in the home.
- It is important to encourage your child to continue to be open with you but also to allow them to explore.
- By facilitating an open relationship, they will feel safe coming to you if they need help.
- Being non-judgmental is imperative to building a strong relationship with your increasingly independent son/daughter.

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

- In middle childhood, children have more of an interest in same sex peer groups.
- As they move toward adolescence, the formation of same sex peer groups coincide with a decreasing interest in family activities and parental advice.
- During this time, there is a strong influence from peers rather than from parents.
- In early adolescence, they may be more concerned with how they appear to others.
  » May use clothing, hairstyles, language and other accessories to fit in.
- As they near the end of adolescence, the importance of peer opinions and peer groups decrease and the individual will start to form opinions of their own.
  » This coincides with the progression of cognitive development in that they start to become more logical thinkers and are better able to look at all possibilities.

SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

- During middle childhood, children are less pre-occupied with their bodies, and physically, there are not a lot of changes that take place during this time.

- As children enter puberty, more questions and anxiety arise around body image and the changes that are occurring.

- Because of these changes, and because of increasing need for independence, children will likely seek more privacy when it comes to their bodies.

- As children enter adolescence, they start to get involved in relationships.

- Early on in adolescence, these relationships may take the form of dates or hanging out at/after school.

- As the child gets older, they will want to explore themselves and others sexually.

  » This includes raising questions about their own sexual identity (homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, transgender).

  » They will also have questions about sexual relationships with others.

  » It is important to note that during this time in development, teens will likely try to answer these questions using the internet or their peers.

  » Remind them that you, as a parent, are available if they need someone to talk to.

- Once they are nearing the end of adolescence, they will have a clearer vision of who they are as a sexual being and will seek out more long-term/stable relationships.

Facilitator Tip

Hand out **Learning Tool 2.2** Areas of Social Development and ask parent participants to identify one change that they have observed on their child.

Learning Tool 2.2 Areas of Social Development

	FAMILY	PEERS	SEXUAL
Middle Childhood (age 6-9)	• Involved in the family unit • Reliant on parental support	• Same sex peer affiliations	• Lack of interest around sexual relationships • Questions start to arise around what sex is
Early Adolescence (age 10-13)	• Increased need for privacy and independence	• Same sex peer affiliation but start to befriend peers of the opposite sex	• Anxiety and questions around body changes • Increased interest in sexual autonomy
Middle Adolescence (age 14-16)	• Conflicts over control and independence • Struggle for autonomy	• Preoccupation with peers • Strong behavioural influence from peers	• Initiation of relationships and sexual activity • Questions sexual orientation
Late Adolescence (age 17-20)	• Emotional and physical separation from family • Increased autonomy	• Peer groups and values recede in importance	• Consolidation of sexual identity • Focus on intimacy and formation of stable relationships planning for future and commitments

Adapted from Neinstein's Adolescent and Young Adult Health Care: A Practical Guide Summary provided by Dr. Alene Toulany, adapted with permission

5. Action Moment   **(10 minutes)**

Facilitator reads aloud the following case scenario.

CASE SCENARIO

You are the parent of 12-year-old Jonathon. He has just come back from a party at a friend's house and he tells you that there were older kids there, drinking alcohol and smoking.

? Guiding Questions

What are things that you could say to Jonathon?
What would you advise with regards to this friend group and the activities they take part in?
Why is it an important developmental task for young people to "take risks"?
What is harm reduction?
Why is it important for young people to develop peer groups?

Discussion Points

- Adolescence is a time for exploration and risk taking. It is part of how they develop their own identity, learn right from wrong and develop independence

- Peer groups are important to discover differing values and beliefs from the family unit and to help form self-identity

- As children get older, they are able to evaluate what values are best in alignment with their new formed self-identity and this remains fluid throughout their lives

Facilitator Tip

You can use this as a starting point to discuss substance use, risks of substance use, harm reduction and peer pressure with Jonathon.

Discussion Points

- Harm reduction is a term used to describe reducing the harms associated with certain behaviours, i.e. underage drinking

- An example of harm reduction in this scenario would be to ensure that a parent is at home supervising while the party is going on and that someone of legal age who is sober is able to drive people home

- Examples of what to say to Jonathon, both now and later as he gets older, include:
  - » Ensuring he has a safe space to talk to you about his use of alcohol and/or drugs
  - » Ensuring that he is safe if he is drinking or using substances (no driving)
  - » Ensuring that someone responsible is present when this is occurring
  - » Ensuring that this is not impacting his daily life i.e. missing school, dropping grades
  - » Ensuring that he does not need to drink or use substances to fit in
  - » Educating him on the overuse of alcohol and/or substances

6. Evaluation and Check-out   (5 minutes)

Materials needed: Pens,
                    Appendix 1 – Learning Tool 1.5 Evaluation Form (Post)

Evaluation: Facilitator hands out **Learning Tool 1.5** and invites parent participants to give their feedback. Provide participants with pens and evaluation forms to be filled out. Encourage them to be honest. Their responses are anonymous and they do not have to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable answering.

Check-out: Thank parent participants for their participation and time.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Tool 1.1 Agenda - Social Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence

Tool 1.2 Attendance and Photo Release Form

Tool 1.3 Facilitator's Check List

Tool 1.4 Evaluation (Pre)

Tool 1.5 Evaluation (Post)

APPENDIX 2

Learning Tool 2.1 Overview of Social Development during Middle Childhood and Adolescence.

Learning Tool 2.2 Areas of Social Development

APPENDIX 3

References

Tool 1.1 Agenda - Social Development In Middle Childhood and Adolescence

1. Welcome and Introduction	(5 minutes)

2. Check-in	(10 minutes)

3. Reflection Moment	(5 minutes)

4. Content Development	(25 minutes)

5. Action Moment	(10 minutes)

6. Evaluation and Check-out	(5 minutes)

Tool 1.2 Attendance and Photo Release Form

FULL NAME	EMAIL	PHONE NUMBER	DO YOU CONSENT TO HAVE YOUR PHOTO TAKEN?	SIGNATURE REQUIRED
1.			□Y □N	
2.			□Y □N	
3.			□Y □N	
4.			□Y □N	
5.			□Y □N	
6.			□Y □N	
7.			□Y □N	
8.			□Y □N	
9.			□Y □N	
10.			□Y □N	
11.			□Y □N	
12.			□Y □N	
13.			□Y □N	
14.			□Y □N	
15.			□Y □N	
16.			□Y □N	
17.			□Y □N	
18.			□Y □N	
19.			□Y □N	
20.			□Y □N	

Tool 1.3 Facilitator's Check List

Materials and Supplies:

☐ Markers

☐ Flip Chart (if needed)

☐ Flip Chart Paper

☐ Post-it Notes

☐ Pens

☐ Learning Tools

☐ Attendance Form

☐ Evaluation Forms (Pre & Post)

PARENT EVENT: ____ / ____ / 20___

Please answer the questions below.

PART 1: About You

1. **Your gender:** ☐ Female   ☐ Male   ☐ Trans   ☐ I describe my gender in a different way

2. **Your children's age(s):** ☐ 0-5   ☐ 6-12   ☐ 13+

3. **Parenting status:** ☐ I'm a single parent   ☐ I'm **not** a single parent

4. **What country were you born in:** _____

5. **What is your postal code:** _____

6. **Do you have any relatives living with you at home?** ☐ Yes   ☐ No
   If YES how many? _____

PART 2: About the Event

7. **How did you hear about this event?** ☐ Friend/Family   ☐ Another Organization
   ☐ Internet   ☐ Flyers   ☐ Other (please specify):_____

8. **Please rate your knowledge on:** (*Circle* **ONE** *answer per question*)

		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	DON'T KNOW
a	Social development of children	H	M	L	DK
b	How children form relationships at different ages	H	M	L	DK
c	The difference between family and peer relationships	H	M	L	DK
d	How to encourage healthy social development in my child	H	M	L	DK
e	How to talk with my child about sexual identity	H	M	L	DK
f	I can identify one (1) resource to support my child's cognitive development.	Yes		No	

PART 3: About your Learning

9. **What do you hope to learn today?**

_____

_____

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX 1.5 - EVALUATION (POST)

PARENT EVENT: ____ / ____ / 20___

Please answer the questions below.

PART 1: About the Event

1. **Please rate your knowledge on:** *(Circle **ONE** answer per question)*

		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	DON'T KNOW
a	Social development of children	H	M	L	DK
b	How children form relationships at different ages	H	M	L	DK
c	The difference between family and peer relationships	H	M	L	DK
d	How to encourage healthy social development in my child	H	M	L	DK
e	I can identify one (1) resource to support my child's cognitive development.	Yes		No	

PART 2: About your Learning

2. **What did you learn today?**

_____

_____

PART 3: About your Satisfaction

1	How often will you use what you learned today with your child(ren)? *(Circle **ONE** answer)*	Never	Sometimes	Always
If never, please tell us why not?				

2	How informative was the facilitator? *(Circle **ONE** answer)*	Not Informative	A little Informative	Very Informative
3	How satisfied are you with this event overall? *(Circle **ONE** answer)*	Not Satisfied	A little Satisfied	Very Satisfied
4	If we could improve ONE THING – what would it be?			

THANK YOU!

Learning Tool 2.1 Overview of Social Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence

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- This need for autonomy can be a large source of conflict in the home.
- It is important to encourage your child to continue to be open with you but also to allow them to explore.
- By facilitating an open relationship, they will feel safe coming to you if they need help.
- Being non-judgmental is imperative to building a strong relationship with your increasingly independent son/daughter.

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  » They will also have questions about sexual relationships with others.

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  » Remind them that you, as a parent, are available if they need someone to talk to.

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Learning Tool 2.2 Areas of Social Development

AREAS OF
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	FAMILY	PEERS	SEXUAL
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Resource Share

Cognitive Development in School-Age Children. AboutKidsHealth Sickkids.
**https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/
Article?contentid=711&language=English&hub=YourSchoolagechild**

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Article?contentid=713&language=English&hub=YourSchoolagechild**

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