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Human Early Learning Partnership
University of British Columbia
440-2206 East Mall Vancouver
BC Canada V6T 1Z3
www.earlylearning.ubc.ca

Understanding the World of Middle Childhood: The MDI Survey Parent/Guardian Information Letter (summary version)

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We are writing to inform you that your child is invited to participate in an important research project being conducted in his/her school this November. In this letter, we summarize some of the key information about this study. Detailed information about the project can be found in the letter that accompanies this summary.

Purpose of the project

The purpose of our study is to understand how children during the middle childhood years think and feel about their lives both inside and outside of school by having children complete. The Middle Years Development Instrument survey (MDI). This study is one of the first of its kind taking place in Canada. The information collected from this study will help inform educational and community efforts to improve the lives of children.

What is involved in project participation?

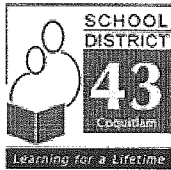
If you wish to remove your child's name from the participant list, please return the attached withdrawal form to your child's teacher within 4 weeks upon receiving this letter.

The School District will arrange for your child's Grade 7 teacher to administer the MDI survey to the class. The survey takes approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. Your child's participation is voluntary and will

not affect any services that your family receives from the School District. You have the right to withdraw your child from the research at any time. If you wish to remove your child's name from the participant list please return the attached withdrawal form to your child's teacher within 4 weeks upon receiving this letter. Also, we always respect a child's wish whether or not he/she wants to participate. Your child has the right to refuse or withdraw from the study at any time during data collection. Refusing to participate or withdrawal will not affect your child's education in any way.



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What data are collected?

The MDI asks questions about five areas of children's development and well-being: 1) social and emotional development; 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.

What are the benefits of the MDI?

The MDI enables children to report on their own experiences. The information gathered allows researchers, educators, parents, and policy makers to make decisions based on data rather than speculation. Combined with other data sources, this information helps researchers learn more about the factors that impact children's well-being and sense of competence.

Will my school, class or children be "ranked" in any way?

None of this information will be used to rank children or classes in any way. Findings will be publically presented at the neighbourhood level, and no school or child will be identified. Schools will obtain confidential reports regarding their own school findings and these will be contrasted to the overall School District findings. Any information that would identify teachers and/or students will be removed from any reports.

Where can I get more information?

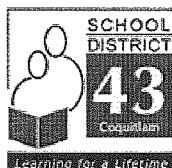
Further information can be found in the attached information letter and online at www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdi. For questions or concerns, or to view the MDI questions, please contact Gillian Corless, Implementation Manager, via email at gillian.corless@ubc.ca or by phone at 604-822-1836.

Sincerely,

Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl, Ph.D.

Faculty of Education & Human Early Learning Partnership
University of British Columbia
Telephone: 604-822-2215
Email: kimberly.schonert-reichl@ubc.ca





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Understanding the World of Middle Childhood: The Middle Years Development Instrument Survey

Parent/Guardian Information Letter (Expanded version)

Principal Investigator: Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl, Ph.D., Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia (Telephone: 604-822-2215)

Co-Investigators: Martin Guhn, Ph.D., Human Early Learning Partnership (Telephone: 604-827-5784)
Shelley Hymel, Ph.D., Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia (Telephone: 604-822-6022)

Project Office: 604-822-1836 (in Vancouver at UBC)

Project Contact: Gillian Corless, Implementation Manager

Date: October, 2013

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Please read the following form carefully. This letter contains information about a project in your child's elementary school and in all elementary schools in your School District. This project is administrated by the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at the University of British Columbia (UBC). We are writing this letter to tell parents and guardians more about the study.

What is involved in project participation?

The School District will arrange for your child's Grade 7 teacher to administer the *Middle Years Development Instrument* (MDI) survey (described below) to his/her Grade 7 students. The teachers have been informed on how to administer the survey.

You can view the MDI questions and learn more about the MDI project at: www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdi

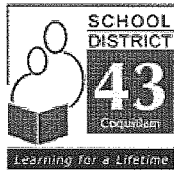
Your taking part is voluntary and will not affect any services that your family receives from the School District. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and you have the right to ask that your child not answer any of the questions. If you wish to remove

your child's name from the participant list, please return the attached withdrawal form to your child's teacher within 4 weeks upon receiving this letter. Also, we always respect a child's wish whether or not he/she wants to participate. Your child has the right to refuse or withdraw from the study at any

If you wish to remove your child's name from the participant list, please return the attached withdrawal form to your child's teacher within 4 weeks upon receiving this letter.



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time during data collection. Refusing to participate or withdrawal will not affect your child's education in any way.

Project Background and Purpose

Being successful in school and in life requires more than knowing the “A,B,Cs and 1,2,3s”, it also involves social and emotional well-being, good physical health, using time constructively, and being supported by families, schools, and communities. What are the ways in which we can help children experience success and feel supported during the elementary school years? What do children need to lead them on a positive path to becoming caring and capable citizens of tomorrow? What can children *tell us* about what *they* need to give them a sense of competence in their achievements and to feel supported in their families, schools, and communities? The answers to these questions are not yet known for children during the elementary schools years in Canada. What we do know is that what happens during the middle childhood years – the ages between 9 and 12 years of age – is critical and has long lasting effects. This is a time period in which important changes occur across almost every aspect of children’s lives – intellectual/cognitive changes, physical changes, and social and emotional changes. Middle childhood is also a time when children spend time outside their families with their peers, and in schools, neighbourhoods, and the larger community setting.

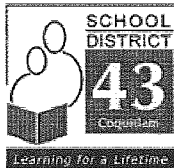
Canadian researchers, with the help of educators and community members, have developed a survey called the MDI to help learn more about children’s development and well-being during the middle childhood years. For this study, teachers will administer the MDI to Grade 7 children attending elementary schools in your School District. The specific purpose of our study is to understand how Grade 7 children think and feel about their lives both in and outside of school. This study is one of the first of its kind taking place in Canada and is being undertaken by researchers at UBC, educators at your School District, and individuals at the United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM) who all share an interest in developing a better understanding of child development and well-being during the middle childhood years. There is a clear need for more information about children during middle childhood – specifically, information is needed that is directly from the children themselves so that it reflects *the perspectives of the children*. The results from this study will help your child's school, School District, and community to better understand what needs to be done in your community to make sure that all children experience success and are provided with the resources and opportunities to reach their fullest potential.

What data are collected?

The MDI asks children to answer questions about five areas of children’s development and well-being: 1) social and emotional development; 2) feelings of connectedness to school, family,



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friends, and communities; 3) school experiences, 4) physical health and well-being; and 5) time use during the after school hours. More specifically, the survey asks children questions about their classrooms and school, as well as their perceptions of their relationships with peers, parents/guardians, and other important adults such as neighbours. Children are then asked to

Note that students' PENs will not be connected to students' names when the surveys are brought to UBC for data entry and analysis.

provide information about their perceived physical health. In the final section of the survey, children are asked to provide information about how they spend their time after school during a typical week. In this section we not only ask children to provide information about what they do after school but also what they wish they could

be doing during after school hours. Because there are four questions on the MDI that ask your child about problems that he/she may be having with classmates, we have inserted a form at the end of the survey that asks if your child would like to be contacted by his/her teacher or school counsellor for help. If your child answers with a "yes" he/she is asked to also print his/her name. This form will be removed from the survey by your child and handed separately to his/her teacher. The teacher will follow the procedures outlined by your school for assisting students requiring such help.

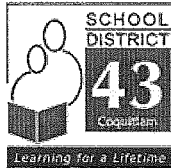
How is my Child's privacy protected?

The School District will let the researchers know your child's Personal Education Number (PEN) (without your child's name), which will be connected with MDI data and used to assist with approved research data linkages. Future data linkages will only include other data sets for research purposes, such as linking data with the Early Development Instrument, which collects information on kindergarten children.

Note that students' PENs will not be connected to students' names when the surveys are brought to UBC for data entry and analysis. The steps for obtaining PENs from the School District and separating PENs from students' names will occur. Your child's privacy is protected in the following manner:

- The School District contact prepares a class list (including PENs) for participating students.
- A unique MDI ID number is generated for each student, so that student PENs do not need to be shared during data collection.
 - Children's names are collected on class lists so that teachers can accurately verify which students are participating in the MDI research study, but they are not included anywhere on the MDI.





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- For schools that use the paper version (as opposed to the electronic), the School District contact provides class lists with MDI ID numbers to teachers.
 - The School District contact instructs teachers to include their class list(s) with their completed surveys.
- Class lists are temporary data records which, by privacy law, are destroyed immediately by the district contact after they have been used by teachers.
- The completed, de-identified MDI surveys are sent from the School District contact to the MDI statistical analyst at HELP who stores students' survey data in a separate file from students' PENS.
- On the electronic survey, teachers print their own class list containing students' names and unique passwords for the survey site. These passwords are only valid during school hours on the survey date selected by the teacher and are shredded once they have been used.
 - Like the paper survey, the data that are recorded are de-identified and distinguished only by MDI ID number.

How is the MDI done?

The survey will be completed by your child during school hours. The entire survey takes children approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. Due to the language-based nature of the surveys, teachers will determine if children who are English learners or have difficulty understanding the questions will be able to participate in the study. Students will be able to ask for teacher assistance at their own discretion. Each participating teacher will have the option to conduct the survey as a paper and pencil questionnaire or electronically. Completed paper surveys will be sent to HELP for data entry, secure storage, and analysis. Data from the electronic survey will be encrypted and received in HELP's secure research database at UBC. Students' names are not collected on the MDI. School District contacts will work directly with Grade 7 teachers and the HELP Project Coordinator to ensure safe handling of all student data.

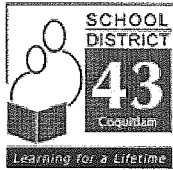
HELP requests that the School District contact (i) collects class lists with completed surveys, and then (ii) shreds class lists once they are received.

Participation in the project is voluntary.

It is important to note that we are not in any way "testing" the children. We simply want to know how children are feeling and doing as well as how children understand themselves and others.

Participation in the project is voluntary. Because these surveys will be administered during class time, your child has the right to refuse or withdraw from the project at any point before, during, or after completion of the survey. Your child can also refuse to answer any question





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that he/she does not want to answer. If a child chooses not to participate, his/her classroom teacher will provide an alternate activity that is related to the regular school curriculum.

What are the benefits of the MDI?

This is one of the first surveys of its kind in Canada that obtains comprehensive information on the lives of Grade 7 children inside and outside of school from the children themselves. What we know is that listening to what children tell us and making their voices heard provides information that is critical for assisting parents, educators, community leaders, and researchers learn more about children during middle childhood and find ways to promote positive development for all children.

How are the data reported?

The MDI is a population health measure. Results are reported only at the level of the group (neighbourhood, School District or school). HELP will provide the School District with reports of the MDI results for each individual school. To secure against the identification of any students, schools that have less than five Grade 7 students will not receive results back from HELP. HELP researchers will also create and make public maps and provide written community summaries of the results. This information will be posted on HELP's website (www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/maps/mdi/nh). As always, student identification information is not connected in any way to the research findings.

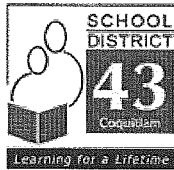
How will the School District and your community benefit?

The MDI provides schools and communities important information about whether their programs and services meet the needs of their children. Sample reports and maps can be found online.

Receiving reports from HELP will benefit the School District and community in a number of ways. For example, the research helps identify where there are large neighbourhood differences in the number of children who are healthy and feel supported by schools and communities, where groups of children are doing well across communities, and how social and economic factors may affect children's development.



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How will the MDI data be used and stored?

Each student's MDI information will be stored in a secure database. Personal identification data, such as PEN numbers, date of birth, and postal code are needed for data linkage purposes only. For confidentiality reasons this identification data is stored separately from the MDI data in a secure research environment. All MDI surveys are stored at HELP. Your child's school does not keep a copy of the survey and no information is added to your child's school record. Because the results of the study are reported at the group-level only, your child's own specific survey information *will never* be made public in any way.

HELP will share MDI data with Population Data BC, also part of UBC. The purpose of Population Data BC is to facilitate access to data for *bona fide* public-interest research purposes, while at the same time ensuring protection of privacy and confidentiality of individuals. Access to data for research purposes will be approved by HELP, the Data Steward, who is responsible for safeguarding the MDI data under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA). Each research application will be assessed on its own merits. Access to MDI data will be provided, upon request, to researchers for *bona fide* public-interest research purposes, while at the same time ensuring protection of privacy and confidentiality of individuals. Researchers who apply to use the MDI data for research or statistical purposes will be provided research data that is de-identified to maintain the confidentiality promised in the consent. No PENs will be associated with what is provided. This de-identified data is referred to as a research abstract.

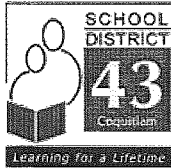
Why are data being linked?

The data may be combined with other data sources in order to learn more about the factors that impact children's well-being and sense of competence. Other data sources may include education and health information. The linked data can *only* be used for research or statistical purposes.

Where can I get more information on the study?

If you have any questions about the survey, or want to view the MDI questions, you can view the MDI website at: <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdi> or contact Gillian Corless, Implementation Manager, via email at gillian.corless@ubc.ca or by phone at 604-822-1836.





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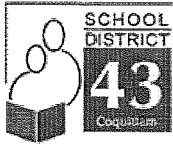
If you have any concerns about your child's treatment as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line at the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Sincerely,

Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl, Ph.D.
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MDI Parent Withdrawal Form

Please return this form to the classroom teacher by **NOVEMBER 1st, 2013** if you **do NOT** want your child to participate.

I do not consent for my child [NAME] _____ to participate in the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) survey taking place this November.

Parent name: _____

Date: _____

School: _____

Classroom teacher's name: _____

