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## Understanding Middle Childhood: The Middle Years Development Instrument

### Parent/Guardian Information Letter

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<b>Date:</b>	October 2017

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Dear parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s),

Please join me in acknowledging that we live, work and learn on the unceded traditional lands of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish Coast Salish Peoples.

We invite your child to take part in a study aimed at gathering important information about the health and well-being of 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade children inside and outside of school. Specifically, the **Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI)** is an online survey that students complete in schools in November/December. The survey takes about 1-2 class periods and is supervised by school staff. This study is led by researchers at the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at the University of British Columbia (UBC), and is sponsored by your school or school board, the United Way of the Lower Mainland, and the Government of BC.

### What is the purpose of the study?

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 MDI was developed at UBC in collaboration with educators, parents, and students, and has been used in Canadian schools since 2009. Researchers, schools, and governments use the study results to inform programs and services for children.

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/mdi](http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdi).

### Participation is voluntary

It is your choice whether your child takes part. Your child can also choose to not take part. The choice will not affect your child's standing in their classroom or school, and it will not affect any services that your family receives from the school or school board. *If you DO NOT wish your child to take part, please return the attached withdrawal form to your child's teacher within 4 weeks upon receiving this letter.* If your child doesn't take part, they will work on an activity that is related to their regular school work.

## What will happen?

To get started, the school will give HELP information about your child including their name, Personal Education Number (PEN), date of birth, gender, and postal code. Your child's name is only used so that they can log into the survey. It is removed from survey responses once the survey is complete. School staff are not able to see your child's answers at any time during the survey or afterward.

There are some questions on the survey that ask your child about any problems that they may be having. The survey has a place where your child can ask for help. If your child asks for help, the teacher and principal will be sent an email and they will follow school procedures for making sure your child gets help.

## How is my child's privacy protected?

Your child cannot be identified in this study by name, and your child's answers will not be available to you or any school or school board staff. This is to ensure that children's answers are **private and confidential**. No information is added to your child's school record from the study. If MDI information is used in research publications or in public documents, your child and your child's school will not be identified in any way.

## How will the MDI data be used and stored?

Your child's date of birth, Personal Education Number (PEN), and postal code are personal information that is stored separately from your child's answers to the survey. This is to protect your child's privacy. Your child's personal information is kept in a secure research environment at UBC, to be used only for approved linkage and research projects. HELP is responsible for keeping all MDI study data safe and only approves access to data for research **under provincial privacy laws**. Researchers who receive permission to use the MDI data for research or statistical purposes will be provided data that cannot be connected to any individual student.

The data from the study may be linked at the individual level with other data to learn about the factors that influence children's well-being, health, and school success. Other data may include education and health information such as the Early Development Instrument (EDI), which is a survey on children in kindergarten. The data that are linked **can only be used for research or statistical purposes by HELP approved researchers, under an approved Research Agreement**. For concerns related to the privacy of your child's survey data, please contact HELP's Privacy Officer at [privacy@help.ubc.ca](mailto:privacy@help.ubc.ca).

## 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 school board, neighbourhood, and province. School reports are shared with districts and schools, and are not shared publicly. The MDI study will not be used to rank schools, students, or classes in any way. HELP researchers create neighbourhood maps and community reports of the survey results that are public: [www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/maps/mdi](http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/maps/mdi).

Guided by our Aboriginal Steering Committee, HELP respects the First Nations principles of OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) or other community based ethics codes, with regard to MDI data for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children. This means that Aboriginal Nations and organizations have access to group-level data for the First Nations, Métis and Inuit children in their area, to support Aboriginal self-determination and inform program and policy creation. As part of this commitment, HELP never publically reports Aboriginal MDI data or uses it for comparison with other data. HELP has established a clear process for sharing MDI data for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children. For more information, please contact Kimberley Bayer, the HELP Aboriginal Community Liaison Coordinator at [aboriginal.liaison@help.ubc.ca](mailto:aboriginal.liaison@help.ubc.ca).

## How will your school and community benefit?

The MDI study results give educators, program planners, and community members access to information about the lives of children through the voices of the children themselves. The MDI results can show where

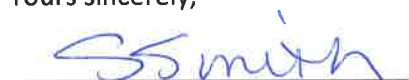
there are similarities and differences in the number of children who are healthy and feel supported by schools and communities. Your school and community can use the results to improve the lives of children. We do not think that there is anything in this study that could harm your child or be bad for you or your child.

### Where can I get more information on the study?

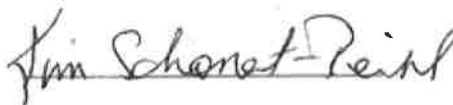
For more information please visit HELP's website at [www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdi](http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdi). If you have any questions or concerns about your child's participation, please contact Maddison Spenrath, Project Contact, via email at [maddison.spenrath@ubc.ca](mailto:maddison.spenrath@ubc.ca) or by phone at 604-827-4050. If you do not wish your child to complete the survey, please sign the attached withdrawal form and return it to your child's teacher.

If you have any concerns about your child's rights as a research participant taking part in this project, contact the Research Subject Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at the University of British Columbia at 604-822-8598, or if long distance, e-mail [RSIL@ors.ubc.ca](mailto:RSIL@ors.ubc.ca) or call toll free 1-877-822-8598. You can also contact the principal investigator at the number or email provided below.

Yours sincerely,



Selma Smith, Vancouver School Board MDI Contact  
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**If you want to withdraw your child, please, sign and return this section to your child's teacher.**

Please return this form to the classroom teacher by October 27, 2017 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 in November

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

