



LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Henry J. Mroz Administration Office
155 Merrimack Street
Lowell, Massachusetts 01852

Abigail Anderson
Director of Research and
Accountability

Tel: (978) 674-2164
E-Mail: aanderson@lowell.k12.ma.us

To: Liam Skinner, Chief Schools Officer
From: Abigail Anderson
RE: Research Proposal, Megan Curin and Devin Gilmore
Date: March 8, 2023

Health educators, city prevention specialists, and UML education researchers want to conduct research to improve the quality of health education delivered to students. The goal of this research project is to understand middle school students' perspectives on health because collecting information on the specific health needs of middle school students in each population may increase support and adequate tools for health educators to develop comprehensive curriculum materials. Our study will utilize student focus groups to collect data from middle school students to further understand middle school students' health needs and generate our findings.

This research group proposes to interview roughly 500 students in grades 5-8. Students will be split up into groups of 5-8 within their classroom. Each group of students will participate in an ice breaker activity with their facilitators to create a welcoming environment for students. Students will be informed of what they are expected to do in the study in simple language that outlines the clear objectives of the study. Students will be informed that they do not have to talk, participate, or engage in research if they do not want to. Children will not be required to sign documents to obtain their assent to participate. Students will be asked general questions about their perspectives on health. Researchers will not be asking students questions related to reproductive health however, these topics may be mentioned by other students. Students will participate in writing activities related to their opinions on health. Students will be prompted to talk about the strengths and weaknesses of their current health education. The focus groups will end when the health class period for students ends within their school day. Review of the data will occur with de-identifying data and students' identities will be deleted from all records. Students identifying information will not be included in any publicly available data. All data records will be stored in the PI's files.

The insight gained regarding middle school students' perspectives on their health education can inform the development of curricular resources that address the needs and backgrounds of current students. This can improve the educational experiences of students and ultimately improve the likelihood of students benefiting from their health education in the short- and long-term.

The work conforms with Policy LC. I recommend approval by the school committee.