

**<<ON SCHOOL LETTERHEAD – GRADE 5 AND UP >>**

**<<DATE>>**

Dear Parent:

In February, the 5<sup>th</sup> through <<INSERT GRADES>> grade students in our school will be taking part in an **anonymous** survey. An anonymous survey is when the students do not give us their names. About 96,000 Maine students have been asked to take the survey. The survey will take about one class period. Below are the answers to some questions you may have about this survey.

***What questions are asked on the survey?***

The survey asks questions about health and health related behaviors. Some of the topics included are:

- Asthma
- What the student eats
- Physical activity
- Smoking
- Drinking
- Other drugs
- Preventing sunburn
- Disabilities
- Fighting and bullying
- Sex (grades 7-12 only)
- Depression and suicide (grades 7-12 only)
- Gambling (grades 7-12 only)

It also asks about factors at school, in their community, in their family and among their friends which may support or threaten a student's healthy choices. These questions include topics such as:

- Whether a student is likely to get caught if they are using tobacco or drugs
- Whether their friends use drugs
- Whether they take part in clubs or community service
- What support and rules they have at school and at home

**The questions vary by the grade level of the student. They are appropriate to the age of the students.** For example, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students are not asked about sex, most drugs, suicide or gambling. **You can look at the questions that will be asked, either by contacting your child's school or by visiting the MIYHS website.**

***What other data is being collected?***

The height and weight of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students will be measured. School nurses will be assisting us in gathering this information.

***Where does the survey come from?***

The survey is the joint effort of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Maine Department of Education (DOE). This survey will be used to learn more about all Maine students. The results may be used to get funding, to help decide what programs to offer, or to judge how well current efforts are working.

***Why should my child take this survey?***

The results of the survey will help state programs, community groups, and schools better serve your child.

***How can I be sure that the survey will not harm my child?***

- **Your child is free to do the survey or not.** If your child chooses to not take the survey, the teacher will give your child something else to do for the class period.
- Some students may find some questions to be sensitive. There is a risk that they may feel uncomfortable answering some questions.
- Any student can skip any question that he or she doesn't want to answer.
- If your child feels upset during or after the survey, school staff will be available to talk and provide resources.
- There is no penalty for not doing the survey or not answering all questions.
- Your child can also refuse to be measured.
- **The survey is designed to protect your child's privacy.**
- The answers from any one student are never reported individually. No student will ever be mentioned by name in any report.
- No information that connects your child to their own survey responses will be kept.

***What if I have more questions about the survey?***

- If you would like to see the survey, you may call the school office to set a meeting time before the survey date or visit the MIYHS website: [www.maine.gov/MIYHS](http://www.maine.gov/MIYHS)
- If you have questions about this survey, you may also call Reid Plimpton (MCDC) at 207-287-5084 or Nick Kamenos (DHHS-OCQI) at 207-626-8688 or Jean Zimmerman (DOE) at 207-624-6687.
- If you have questions about your rights or your child's rights as part of this survey, you may call the USM Human Protections Administrator at (207) 228-8434 and/or email [usmorio@maine.edu](mailto:usmorio@maine.edu). The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Southern Maine has approved the use of this survey. The IRB is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of survey participants.

If you do not wish your child to take the survey, please contact the school office. You may also refuse to have your child weighed and measured. If we do not hear from you, your consent to your child's participation is assumed. Your child can also decide not to take the survey on the day it is conducted.

Sincerely,

<<PRINCIPAL'S NAME>>

Principal