

Invitation for School to participate in the *Promoting Better Learning at School Project*

Dear Middle School Principal,

You are being invited to enroll your middle school classrooms in a study conducted by the Universidad Intercultural Indígena de Michoacán (UIIM) and the Asociación San Andrés Pescador non-profit foundation.

This study is intended to gather information about preparing children for a calming learning environment, in order to foster resilience in children experiencing adverse childhood experiences. Secondary aims of the study are to improve the overall learning environment by reducing absenteeism, reducing disciplinary actions, and improving reading and math scores as noted by the teachers.

Children in two middle schools in an area with similar demographics but geographically separated will have accepted an invitation to participate. Both schools will be informed that we are testing possible ways to reduce the effects of trauma and enhance the learning ability of middle school children increase their ability to focus in the classroom. Two different approaches to creating a calm learning environment will be studied and compared at two different schools. The students in each of the two classrooms would participate in one of two interventions throughout the 2023 Spring semester. At the study's finish, if the improvement in one school classroom, significantly surpasses the improvement in the other school's classroom, all teachers who wish to participate will be given the opportunity to be trained to conduct the more effective treatment in their classrooms for the following semesters.

In your middle-school classroom(s) the children will take part in a ten-minute teacher-led group art-activity each school-day-morning at a teacher-designated time. The teacher(s) and any other staff that wants to attend will participate in a one-half-day training prior to the start of the school semester. The training will be conducted by an art teacher who will train the teachers in being supportive of the children but not guiding them in their artwork.

The children in middle school classrooms that participate in this study will be children whose parents or caretakers have given their signed permission to take part in the study. The students and their parents/caretakers will be assessed on three occasions by UIIM graduate student who is being professionally supervised by UIIM professor, Dr. Pedro Regalado, with on-the-ground supervision being provided by Lic. Leonor Zarazua Menchaca of the Asociación San Andrés Pescador. The first assessment will take place at the beginning of the semester and the second will take place six-weeks into the semester and the third close to the end of the semester.

Lic. Leonor Zarazua Menchaca, study coordinator representing the non-profit, study sponsor San Andrés Pescador, will arrange for the utilization of cell phone cameras to video-record the teachers (not the students) leading the interventions in both groups. Treatments in the two groups. These will be assessed for intervention fidelity by study coordinators, Lic. Leonor Zarazua Menchaca and Suzanne Connolly, LCSW, with periodic live supervision by Lic. Leonor Zarazua Menchaca.

**The Assessment Process:** The students and their caretakers will be assessed at school in a secluded area with only the student or caretaker (never both at the same time) and the graduate-student-assessor present at appointed times. There will be a pretest at the beginning of the study a posttest at six weeks, and a follow up close to the end of semester. The student will be assured of confidentiality by the graduate-student-assessor, advised of any legal limits to confidentiality and instruct the child in how to use the tablet to take the test.

The graduate-student-assessors will not see the children's questions or answers. The tablet, programed by the statistician, will allow the child to read and answer one question at a time; it will disappear into a secure database and bring the child to the next question and so on to the end of the survey. The child will not be asked to talk about any of the questions but if they do the graduate-student-assessor will listen carefully and be empathetic and supportive. The testing instrument will be the Spanish version of the Child and Adolescent Trauma Screening (CATS) for 7–17-year-olds, for both children and their caretakers. The students will attend a pretest at the beginning of the study a posttest at six weeks, and a follow up close to the end of semester.

Additionally, teachers will track students' grades in reading and math, behavioral problems, and absenteeism. They will report this information without names to Dr. Hector Figueroa Palafox the study's statistician. The CATS will be administered using a tablet as described above. The key code to the names and numbers will be available only to Lic. Leonor Zarazua Menchaca, who will not have access to the children's answers. The graduate-student-assessors will not see the children's questions or answers, as the children will be responding to the questions on a tablet that will require an answer on each item, in order to move on to the next. Graduate-student-assessors might potentially be aware of some problems as there is some chance the child might decide to talk about something that happened to them during the interview. If this should happen, the graduate-student-assessors will respond with empathy and support and normalize as much as possible. They will be taught to do this during their training as recommended by CATS recommended standards. The graduate-student-assessors will visit the children and their schools at specified times and their caretakers, separately at specified times.

The parents or caretakers will be able to withdraw their child from participating in this study at any time without needing to give a reason. To withdraw their child from the study, the parent or guardian will simply need to notify the teacher who will notify Lic. Leonor Zarazua Menchaca. We do not expect any adverse experiences to occur as the result of participating in this study. However, if there any adverse reactions a child is experiencing as a result of participating in the study, we will instruct the teacher to report them to Leonora Zarazua at (Phone: 55519077988, email: leonorzarazua@me.com) The teacher will be given a form with which to do this.

The risks to children's participation in this study include, remembering present or past experiences that might make them feel sad or unhappy during the survey or art-activity time. If this should happen and they could talk to their teacher or get a referral for professional help if needed.

The benefits to children participating in this study, are that they may experience a calmer learning environment and increase their ability to learn as demonstrated by less absenteeism,

Principal Invitation for Group 2

fewer behaviour problems, and higher scores in reading and math. They may build resilience to adverse childhood experiences as measured by the CATS.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to have the children in one or more middle-school classrooms in your school participate in this study pending consent forms signed by their parent or guardian. A sample of both parent/guardian consent forms (one for each group) is attached.

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Principal's signature

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Date

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School

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Principal's printed name