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Dear Parents or Guardians:

We invite your child to participate in a new research project conducted by the University of Maryland Social and Moral Development Laboratory team. We are interested in how children make friends. We specifically want to learn what factors children take into account when deciding whom to include or exclude in peer group contexts. We would like to ask permission to interview your son or daughter for this project.

We will be telling children short stories about hypothetical children who are in after-school clubs. Each club has to pick a new member and participants are asked what they think the club members will do, how favorable they think the club members will be towards a new member, and what factors underlie children's perceptions of similarity among peers. The factors include different social group categories that children belong to. There are no right or wrong answers, and this is not a test. By asking children about peer relationships we gain valuable information regarding age-related changes in how children make friends, resolve conflicts, and include others in social group contexts.

Trained research assistants from the University of Maryland will conduct the interviews. The interview is a one-time administration and will take about 20 minutes to complete. All interviews will be audio recorded and participation is strictly voluntary. All information is confidential.

Children who have participated with us in the past have found this interview to be a fun experience. **Please look over the description on the reverse side of this letter. If you are willing to have your child participate in the project, please fill out the information and return the form to the director.**

The information from our past research and our work with children and schools has helped teachers, policy makers, counselors and school administrators design curriculum and interventions to promote mutual respect among children and positive social environments for all children. This current research project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland. We thank you, in advance, for reading this letter, and for your willingness to allow your daughter/son to participate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melanie Killen".

Melanie Killen, Ph.D.
Professor of Human Development and Quantitative Methodology
Associate Director, Center for Children, Relationships, and Culture

