

THE MISSING MIDDLE: THE GAP “IN BETWEEN” CHILD & YOUTH



March 2019

Focusing on the Middle Children: 10-14 years

Local health area 62 is a rapidly growing community with families that often have one or both parents with a lengthy commute to work each day. Projected growth of children and youth is approximately 400 each year for the next 10 years. The time is now to engage all community stakeholders in deepening existing collaborative relationships and prioritizing the allocation of space for development of an age appropriate programming and service hub that would meet an identified gap to ensure middle year's children are receiving transition specific services where they live and go to school.

“Middle years is a time of building self esteem”

The Missing Middle

FOCUSING ON THE MIDDLE CHILDREN: 10-14 YEARS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A rapidly growing community with a significant commuter population is a unique aspect of local health area 62 (LHA 62) which includes First Nations Communities of T'Sou-ke Nation, Scia'new Nation, and Pacheedaht Nation. Additionally, the sprawling and diverse communities of Colwood, Highlands, Langford, Metchosin, and Sooke collectively make up the Western Communities. The boundaries of LHA 62 match those of Sooke School District. The potential exists for middle years children and families to experience isolation and disconnection from community. With families that have one or both parents engaged in a lengthy commute to and from work each day, middle years children between the ages of 10 – 14, who are no longer required to be in licensed care; may not be involved in programs or activities; and may largely be on their own between the hours of 3 and 6 pm daily. With a lack of space and age appropriate programming, middle years children may be at home on their own, heading into the city, or be caring for younger siblings while parents work and commute.

The developmental needs of this age group are not homogenous and call for specific attention to their diverse developmental and transitional needs. The call to action being offered by this report is that space needs to be prioritized so that age appropriate services and programs can be centrally accessible and strengthened. The Middle Years Collaboration in Action working group believes that the opportunity exists for all middle years children to be thriving and engaged in collaborative community experiences as communities in LHA 62 continue to grow and develop.

Four key priority areas of focus that were identified as part of the middle years mapping and community input workshops included:

1. Increase community connection among peers, mentors, families and communities;
2. Increase inclusive parent support and engagement;
3. Identify technology best practices that will embrace both the challenges and the potential for positive impact for middle years children and their families;
4. Identify space for age appropriate programming for middle years children.

Limited space availability and multiple service providers who are seeking to use the space during the same period for programs further compounds the service delivery challenges for this unique community environment. Add to that a projected growth of children and youth at an increase of approximately 400 each year for the next 10 years, and the time is now to engage all community stakeholders in prioritizing the allocation of space for development of an age appropriate programming and service hub that would ensure middle years children are receiving services where they live and go to school.

The Healthy Schools, Health People (HSHP) Table serves as a collaborative regional committee to further the work of this project, and is the existing structure that is recommended to sustain the priorities that this project has identified.

Acknowledgements:

We wish to gratefully acknowledge the traditional territory of the Coast Salish and Nuu-chah-nulth people on whose lands we met, collaborated, learned, and shared together.

The Middle Years Collaboration in Action working group wishes to express their deep appreciation to the United Way for funding this project. The collaboration of Boys and Girls Club, Island Health, Sooke School District, and the Sooke Family Resource Society was instrumental in moving this project forward. Thank you to West Shore Parks and Recreation for making the space available for stakeholder and community consultation meetings to occur.

We also wish to thank the twenty community, agency and service provider organizations who participated in our collaboration in action workshops. The passion and caring for middle years children has been instrumental in helping us to prioritize actions for middle years children living and going to school in LHA62.

The “family experience on the West Shore with commuting, and both parents working. Quite a lot of before and after school time where parents may be stuck in traffic. We have a concern with service providers that service the West Shore and aren’t residents of the West Shore. The area is growing so fast that the social services can’t keep up with the growth”



Boys & Girls Club
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Background for this Project:

Background:

In spring 2018, Boys and Girls Club of Greater Victoria (BGCVIC) undertook a consultation on child, youth, and family services in the Westshore community. The intent was to guide BGCVIC, Youth Empowerment Society, and Power to Be in their strategic planning and create common platforms from which to discuss services in the Westshore. We invited community partner participation in visioning exercises across our joint network of services.

Our first finding was broad commitment to collaboration amongst Westshore agencies/practitioners. Of priority was to build on contextual learning from secondary interviews and socio-demographic research, further identifying the need to focus on middle years' service delivery. These findings aligned with SD62 community invitation completed in spring 2017.

As a result, an initiative to further support health and well-being was created. The Healthy Schools, Healthy People Table (HSHP) was established by SD62 to focus on promoting the health and well-being of our communities (children, youth, and adults). In this capacity, the HSHP offered the following considerations:

- Demand often outstrips supply - recognition that the traditional models of service delivery are insufficient and need exists to expand focus on strengthening "upstream" efforts;
- Strong partnerships/relationships exist within our community;
- Good practices are ongoing across our district -interest exists in addressing fragmentation, duplication and incorporating evidence-backed approaches
- Our population is experiencing immense growth;
- Our district is committed to supporting implementation of a comprehensive school health approach.

Both consultations demonstrated a mutual interest exists in LHA 62 to move forward, and to discuss how we can jointly make use of the commitment shown by our service partners in ways that benefit us all, but mostly to benefit the children, youth, and families of our communities. And it began to highlight that while there had been a focus on early years and youth, there was a gap in understanding about middle years children services and opportunities.

This was a collaborative project between various Community Service Providers, the School District and Island Health. The work was overseen by a project committee made up of the fiscal host organization, Boys and Girls Club, along with a representative from Island Health, School District 62, and Sooke Family Resource Society. The data collection and community engagement consultations were facilitated by Beth Page of Dream Catcher Consulting, and her work was guided by the project committee.

Desired Project Outcomes:

This project focused attention on identifying service needs for children in the middle years, defined as transitional years between middle childhood and adolescence, recognizing this developmental stage provides unique programming challenges and opportunities. These children are attached to their community through school but, especially with working parents, have portions of their lives where they require alternate care and/or alternate programming.

Successfully engaging children can prevent social and family issues from developing as they age and move into adolescence. The Healthy Schools, Healthy People Table has identified that services and supports within the middle years are not well understood - how they collaborate, how families access supports, and areas of needs or service gaps.

The Healthy Schools, Healthy People Table has consulted with middle years' service providers to gain an understanding of the gaps, strengths and interconnectedness of middle years services and within our region.

We looked at how families are able to access and interact with middle years' service providers and how 'primary systems' (ex: MCFD) interact with 'secondary systems' (also known as community programs).

A systems mapping exercise was used to collect data. System mapping is an iterative, participatory process that draws on the experiences and insights of many people familiar within a given system. In this context we are focusing on the middle years system within the region of LHA 62. We used a consultative approach with groups and individuals to identify programs and services currently offered to middle years children.

Ongoing Desired Project Outcomes:

Identify systems of support for the Middle Years children with a focus on transitions:

- An Action Plan for the middle years that is supported by key stakeholders in the region.
- Commitment by key stakeholders to implement the action plan.
- Commitment by municipalities within the region to include relevant actions within their municipal plans.

The information gathered through this project will inform organizations in the Health Schools, Health People Table on the priorities for the middle years, which will support them in their individual and collaborative planning. The information will support the middle years sector in both the coordination of services and also in enhancing accessibility for families and children.

“Exploring ways to increase access to what exists. What is the barrier to what we have for that population - is it transportation, timing, financial resources, program design?”

Community Strengths:

As part of the Collaboration in Action 2 workshops, the following assets and strengths of LHA 62 were identified:

There are well established service providers in the area. Existing providers are seen as 'kid-first' thinkers.

Existing Community is seen as safe, with easy access to nature which results in diversity in programming. For example, there is ample open space, parkland, and greenspace. LHA 62 offers a coastal communities experience. The affordability of land, offers a potential to expand services that are currently available. Existing Facilities located at SEAPARC, West Shore Parks and Recreation, and SD62 to name a few, offer assets that are strengths within the community.

As a result of the rural and urban diversity, public transportation experiences vary, and in the west shore there is a developed public transportation infrastructure which enables middle years children to attend activities.

Solid collaboration exists between providers and services. For example: school counsellors, early intervention, and non-profits in LHA 62.

Key Priority Areas of Focus to Support Middle Years:

As a result of the Collaboration in Action 2 workshops, four priority action areas were identified to further build off the existing strengths. They included:

1. Increase community connection among peers, mentors, families and communities:
 - Youth engagement with broad representation to include mentor middle years with senior years. Use a council model as a vehicle for feedback, needs identification. This would be a neutral/shared oversight to reduce the alignment with a specific mandate or organization rather than a regional broad youth voice
 - Shared assessment committee – follow the format that exists in other regions in south Vancouver Island. Assist with connecting resources to youth and families that are in need of multiple service supports and interventions
2. Increase inclusive parent support and engagement
 - Engage early
 - Acknowledge multiple hats/roles that parents wear and use those as places for engagement
 - Recognize the complex challenges parents are facing and broaden engagement beyond parenting groups.
3. Identify technology best practices that will embrace both the challenges and the potential for positive impact for middle years children and their families
 - Seek evidence based promising and best practice in the use of technology in the middle years children and families for best outcomes and risk mitigation
 - Investigate how best to influence and impact the technology experience for middle years youth and their families
 - Access technology expertise to assist as required
4. Identify Space
 - Space audit and inventory is needed
 - Identification and/or development of family friendly accessible space is needed
 - Creative out of the box thinking to plan for current and future space needs is crucial

Recommended Next Steps:

The Healthy Schools, Healthy People Table is an important system and community collaborative for West Shore communities in the CRD. The Network is led by SD 62 and other key stakeholders including Island Health, and community organizations that serve the region. The Network is committed to building the capacity of all stakeholders and partners to have more informed and coordinated planning for service and programs for the middle years. This project will continue to support the collection of key information to inform this planning.

Following completion of the report, dissemination of key recommendations will be shared with participants and key stakeholders via the Healthy Schools, Healthy People Table. Key actions and stakeholders who can lead various projects will continue to be identified.

Many of the participants in the Collaboration in Action workshops have or have had, families with middle years children. The Middle Years Collaboration in Action Working Group is committed to engaging with the changing community demographics of LHA 62. Specific opportunities to further engage Indigenous and new Canadian children and their families exists so that the diverse voices of the area can be fully embraced and honored. The ultimate goal is to be of service to all middle years children and their families.

Opportunities for additional shared service delivery options will be explored. Specifically, additional services that would encourage middle years children to spend their out of school time in LHA 62, rather than heading into Victoria is an area in need of exploration. There is an opportunity to engage the regional middle years' service providers who don't currently reside in LHA 62 as an area of focus. Specifically, there is a need to identify what services exist in Victoria and elsewhere which could benefit from being replicated in LHA 62, for the benefit of middle years children and their families living and going to school in the area.

Working groups need to be initiated for the four priority areas of focus that were identified as part of the Collaboration in Action workshops.

Further, municipalities will continue to be consulted, so that their expertise and support can continue to be accessed in service of informing future space planning and development needs for LHA 62.

“There are some cool things happening and be able to expand services, and a space to expand into. We need more services embedded in the West Shore.” “It is also about, access and availability, not just weekday availability it's also weekends.”

Concluding Remarks:

What we are celebrating:

- The middle years mapping activity is completed.
- This project engaged broad and diverse stakeholders from twenty organizations, such as community planners, service providers, education, recreation, and health advocates.
- We have caring, passionate professionals working in this area.
- The community has strengths and expertise to move this project forward.
- Through this broad consultation, participants were engaged in examining, identifying and prioritizing key actions that with continued effort, will result in enhanced programs and services for middle years children and their families.

What we learned:

A gap has been noted between the prevention years of early years (0-9) and the intervention years of middle years children (10-14). Specifically, there is a lack of systemic points of connection between agencies who are wishing to respond to the development needs of this group. Key to addressing these concerns include recognizing the opportunity for additional mentoring relationships to support appropriate interventions for middle years children. Also, additional opportunities exist to connect service providers, particularly those providers who are providing services to middle years children, but do not provide those services using permanently occupied anchor space in LHA 62.

Our Continuing Commitment to Collaboration in Service of Middle Years Children:

The work of the Middle Years Collaboration in Action working group is ongoing. The existing Healthy Schools, Healthy People (HSHP) Table serves as a regional collaborative network for inclusion of diverse stakeholder. HSHP will serve as the ongoing forum for continuing to engage with providers to serve middle years children and their families. HSHP is a significant strength within LHA 62. It serves as a collaborative structure that can be further leveraged to assist the Middle Years Collaboration in Action working group in moving forward with this important work in service of middle years children and their families.

Identifying centrally located and age appropriate space that can facilitate collaboration of the regions service providers is a key priority. This will better serve middle years children and their families in the Western Communities.

As one of our workshop groups articulated, a big question for our middle years children who may experience falling into a gap in service delivery between early years and youth is, "What about me?" An interview participant observed, "we have an office of early years at MCFD...we don't have anyone focusing on middle years."

Appendix A – Collaboration in Action Logic Model and Work Plan

The following logic model was generated as part of the original United Way funding application

Collaboration in Action – Project Logic Model/Work Plan

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Projected Outcomes	Timeline
<p>United Way of Greater Victoria Funding.</p> <p>Healthy Schools, Healthy People Network time and support.</p> <p>Project consultant expertise.</p> <p>System mapping engagement methodology.</p> <p>Staff time and engagement from various community agencies.</p> <p>Input from system and government representatives – SD 62, MCFD, Island Health, Municipalities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop project working group and terms of reference. 2. Review project geographic scope and determine project parameters. 3. Determine project participants (agencies to be engaged) and process for data engagement-system/relationship mapping. 4. Data collection to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better understand how programs and services interact; ▪ Identify linkages between service and programs; ▪ Understand the level of engagement between actors within the middle years system; ▪ Identify gaps and missing components of services and programs; and ▪ Ultimately to develop strategies to address identified issues. 5. Recommendations/Call to action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with project partners to determine next steps in terms of action items that can be addressed. ▪ Identify key partners and systems to be part of the action plan. ▪ Work with key system representatives to move forward the call to action. 	<p>Working group established to oversee project.</p> <p>System mapping process in place.</p> <p>Community and system representatives identified.</p> <p>Mapping meetings (group and individual).</p> <p>Middle Years system data.</p> <p>Call to action.</p> <p>Action plan.</p>	<p>Short term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A list of current programs and services for the middle years for Sooke and West Shore. ▪ Increased understanding of how the various programs and services within the middle years interact. ▪ Identification of strengths and gaps within the middle years system. ▪ Increased understanding of how families and children access services. <p>Medium term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased commitment to work together to address service gaps. ▪ Increased engagement with all system players, community and government. <p>Long-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expanded services for children and families within the middle years. ▪ Enhanced access for families and children. 	<p>Working group and system mapping process in place by October 31, 2018</p> <p>Community and system representatives identified and invitations sent out by November 15, 2018</p> <p>Data collection phase:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A minimum of 3 group mapping sessions completed by January 15th 2) Individual mapping meetings (minimum of 6) to be completed by February 28, 2019 <p>Data analysis and action plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Preliminary recommendations and action plan by March 15, 2019 2) Stakeholder review process re: recommendations and concrete action steps by March 31, 2019

Appendix B – Stakeholder Consultation Process

As previously articulated, a United Way Funding application was completed to identify the specific needs of middle years children in the rapidly growing commuter community of Langford, Westshore and Sooke (also known as the local health area 62/LHA 62).

The Middle Years Collaboration in Action working group applied for and received funding to complete a middle years mapping project that sought to identify the programs and services that were specifically available to support middle years children. A day in the life of middle years children program and services map was developed and compiled into an excel spreadsheet.

In advance of the community consultations workshops, seven individual interviews were scheduled with key informants who are involved in providing programs and services to middle years children.

In addition, two Collaboration in Action community stakeholder workshops took place (see Appendix B for participating organizations) on January 10, 2019 and February 25, 2019.

An appreciative approach to identifying assets and key priority areas of focus was used. SOAR is an appreciative strategic planning approach (see <http://designresearchtechniques.com/casestudies/appreciative-inquiry-business-planning-using-soar/> for more information and additional references). Examples of reflective questions that are part of the SOAR process are included below.

<p>Strengths</p> <p>What are we doing well?</p> <p>What can we build on?</p> <p>What makes us unique?</p> <p>What key resources and areas of expertise give us an advantage?</p>	<p>Opportunities</p> <p>What changes in demand do we expect to see over the next few years?</p> <p>What are key areas of untapped potential exist in our organization?</p> <p>How can we reframe perceived challenges to be seen as opportunities?</p> <p>What are our community members asking for?</p>
<p>Aspirations</p> <p>What do we care deeply about?</p> <p>What vision are we passionate about?</p> <p>If there were no limits, what would we dare to accomplish?</p> <p>What does our richly imagined future look like?</p>	<p>Results</p> <p>How will we know we are succeeding?</p> <p>What resources are needed to implement our most vital projects and initiatives?</p> <p>What are the 3-5 key outcomes we would like to accomplish?</p> <p>What programs, projects, or processes would support our aspirations</p>

Stakeholders were involved in identifying the key strengths, opportunities, and aspirations for LHA 62. The second middle years Collaboration in Action 2 workshop was used to synthesize the information from the first workshop and identify the key priority areas of focus for middle years children and their families living in LHA 62 which are identified in the executive summary, and offered in further detail earlier in this report.

Appendix C - Organizations Represented (in alphabetical order)

Aboriginal Child and Youth Mental Health
Boys & Girls Club of Greater Victoria
Children's Health Foundation
City of Colwood
City of Langford
Dunsmuir Middle School
Edward Milne Community School Society
Island Health
John Stubbs
Journey Middle School
Military Family Resource Centre
Ministry of Children and Family Development
Pacific Centre Family Services
Sooke Family Resource Society
Sooke Region Community Health Network
Sooke School District
Sooke Parents' Education Advisory Council
Spencer Middle School
Town of View Royal
Victoria Literacy Connection
Victoria Women's Transition House – Peace Program
West Shore Parks and Recreation
YMCA YWCA Vancouver Island

We have an opportunity in community to come together so “folks aren’t spending time figuring out where services are. They can find services quickly and access them”

Appendix D – Middle Years Map of “A Day in the Life”

[Middle Years Map of “A Day in the Life”](#)