

WHAT IS H.E.L.P.? (The Human Early Learning Partnership)

Instead of developing evidence-based policy, HELP invents ideological policy-based evidence to push for increasing institutional child care and decreasing the time children spend with parents.

The Human Early Learning Partnership is an ideologically driven institution. The policy agenda it promotes is called **“neo-liberal”** by HELP sociologist Paul Kershaw and **“neo conservative”** by a leading supporter, Carleton sociologist Rianne Mahon.

["Carefair: Gendering Citizenship 'Neo-Liberal' Style](#) ["Transnationalising \(Child\) Care Policy: the OECD and the World Bank"](#)

HELP's agenda is backed by the World Bank. Director Clyde Hertzman has long worked as staff and consultant for the World Bank, although this is not mentioned in his current publicity. Hertzman's colleagues at the Council for Early Child Development, Fraser Mustard (who says 17% of parents are “godawful”, only one third are “competent”) & the Royal Bank's Charles Coffey (who says parents are valuable in their roles as “employees and consumers”), and others at HELP also have on-going relationships with the World Bank.

HELP is directly funded by the BC government, and drives the neo-lib/con agenda for children and families. It vigourously markets policy to media, its corporate partnerships and its so-called “grassroots community,” which would more accurately be called an astroturf-grassroots community.

BC's government also funds HELP to create & interpret research, create & advise on policy, and evaluate programs. These multiple roles create a conflict of interest. HELP conducts a massive, Orwellian, privacy-violating data-mining project. HELP documents state that it collects **“person specific”** data on “all BC children” and their families **“from pre-conception to young adulthood”** and beyond. Without informed parental consent, HELP collects, “links,” and stores personal data including: medical, pharmaceutical, mental health, hospital, education, death, birth, census, and Work Safe BC, and the Early Development Instrument. Hertzman writes for Statistics Canada that income tax records should also be linked.

During his presentation to the World Bank entitled “The Case for the EDI as an International Outcome Indicator of Early Child Development,” Hertzman explained his rationale behind the EDI is, “philosophy: no measurement, no data; no data, no problem.” As President of the Council on Early Child Development he also endorses the concept “no data, no problem, no policy.” Instead of developing evidence-based policy, HELP invents ideological policy-based evidence to push for increasing institutional child care and decreasing the time children spend with parents.

Hertzman also told the World Bank that the EDI faces a “challenge” because there is “no consensus on the value of [the EDI] measurement.”

HOW DOES H.E.L.P. DEFINE AND MEASURE “VULNERABILITY”?

Children more likely to be labelled “vulnerable” are those born later in the year, those who speak English as a second language and boys.

HELP bases its “vulnerability” count on the EDI, a questionnaire completed by kindergarten teachers. HELP claims that nearly 1 in 3 children are “vulnerable,” “not ready for school” or “at risk,” but according to the website of the Early Development Instrument (EDI), **only 4.2%** or **“1 in 20 children enter kindergarten without the skills they need to learn.”** <http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/>
http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/pubs/2008_11_12_National_SK_Cohort.pdf p4

In its massive government-financed PR campaign HELP does not define what it means by “vulnerability” but nonetheless implies that this “vulnerability” causes failure at school, crime, ill-health and unemployment.

HELP and the BC government use the term “vulnerable” interchangeably with the label “not ready for school” and state that they seek to lower this number to 15% by the year 2015 (see report “15 by 15”). But EDI co-inventor, Dr Magdalena Janus, states these terms have different definitions: “vulnerable” are children scoring in the lowest 10th percentile on any one of 5 EDI “domains” while “school readiness” is based on having “multiple challenges” in 9 of 16 EDI “subdomains”.

http://worthwhile.typepad.com/worthwhile_canadian_initi/2010/09/kindergarten.html Janus' explanation

HELP's EDI publications are not peer-reviewed, nor is “15 by 15”; none of its authors has academic expertise in child development or neuroscience.

HELP's fear-mongering pronouncements declare a vulnerability rate over 10% “biologically unnecessary.” But statistically, HELP's use of the EDI guarantees a “vulnerability rate” of over 10% because all children in the 10th percentile *on any one of 5 EDI scales* are “vulnerable.” That's 5 chances for each child to be labelled “vulnerable,” ensuring that we will always have a “problem” needing “solutions” designed by HELP.

Children that are more likely to be rated “vulnerable” are: younger (born later in the year), ESL and boys.

http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/pubs/2008_11_12_National_SK_Cohort.pdf p11& p15

HELP'S “GROSS MISREPRESENTATION” OF RESEARCH BY NOBEL PRIZE ECONOMIST JAMES HECKMAN

In their report “15 by 15” and elsewhere, HELP purports to base their cost-benefit calculations on Nobel Laureate economist James Heckman's research on “investing” in extremely disadvantaged families. But Heckman opposes the universal programs (daycare, all-day kindergarten & pre-kindergarten) HELP pushes.

UBC economist Kevin Milligan: “it is really quite jaw-dropping to me how his **Heckman's work has been grossly misrepresented by the advocates of full-day kindergarten**. I think this comes from the fact that he is a Nobel Prize winner.... And for that reason, they want to ride on those coattails.... And to use his evidence as intellectual cover for the defense of a universal program is, I think, a **misuse of his evidence**.”

DR JAMES HECKMAN, NOBEL LAUREATE ECONOMIST, REGARDED AS THE LEADING AUTHORITY ON THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR INVESTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

"None of this evidence supports universal preschool programs."

["The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children](#), p. 35

"Advocates and supporters of universal preschool often use existing research for purely political purposes."

<http://v1.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20090616.COWENT16ART1956/TPStory/TPComment/>

"People are very worried about the central government inculcating values in their children that they don't agree with."

"It's essential that ... early childhood provision doesn't come to resemble a government bureaucracy,"

Heckman supports an approach targeting the “most disadvantaged” using “vouchers ...for private sector diversity and choice.” He lists “religious groups, social groups, and communities”, not large corporations.

“An Interview with James Heckman” pp 24-29 http://www.bernardvanleer.org/Family_stress_Safeguarding_young_childrens_care_environment