THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Early Child Development Mapping Project: The Early Development Instrument

Parent/Guardian Information Letter

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Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Please read the following form carefully. This letter contains information about a project in your school and in school districts across BC. This project is administrated by the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

Project Background and Purpose
Children who are ready for school from the day they start kindergarten have a better chance to do well in each grade and finish high school. Being ready for school is more than knowing the "A,B,Cs and 1,2,3s", it also involves social and emotional maturity, good physical health and more. Canadian researchers, with the help of kindergarten teachers and principals, have developed a questionnaire called the Early Development Instrument (also called the EDI) to help learn more about children's development when they start school. The EDI has been used for over nine years in various Canadian provinces, including British Columbia. The BC government Ministries of Children and Family Development, Education, and Healthy Living and Sport fund this work.

School Districts in British Columbia, including School District #__, working with HELP at UBC, are doing a study using the EDI in February, 2010. The results from this study will help your child's school, school district, and community better understand what needs to be done in your community to make sure that all children are ready for school. We are writing this letter to tell parent and guardians more about the study.

What data are collected?
The EDI asks questions about five areas of development: 1) physical health and well-being; 2) social knowledge and competence; 3) emotional health and maturity; 4) language and cognitive development; and 5) general knowledge and communication skills. The school will also let the researchers know your child's Personal Education Number (PEN), which will be connected with EDI data and used to assist with approved research linkages.

How is the EDI done?
Kindergarten teachers in the School District will fill out the EDI questionnaire for each student in their class; there is no questioning of or direct involvement of the students. Questionnaires are then sent to UBC for data entry, secure storage, and analysis. Students' names are never collected on the EDI. School district contacts work directly with kindergarten teachers and the HELP project administrator to ensure safe handling of all student data.

How are the data reported?
The EDI is a population health measure. Results are reported only at the level of the group (neighbourhood, school district or school). As part of our annual reporting cycle, HELP provides each school district with reports of the EDI results for each individual school. Teachers have access to their class report in the fall of each year. For reasons of privacy, if any schools have less than five students HELP does not provide results back. HELP researchers also create and make public maps and provide written community summaries of the results. This information is posted on HELP's website. As always, student identification information is not connected in any way to the research findings.

How will the School District and your community benefit?
In addition to receiving reports, school districts and communities will benefit from the research in a number of ways. For example, the research helps show where there are large neighbourhood differences in the number of children who are healthy and ready for school; where groups of children are ready for school across communities, regions, and the province; and how social and economic factors may affect children's early development. The information from this project can help schools, program planners, and community members become more aware of ways to create environments to help children in their community thrive.

How will the EDI data be used and stored?
Each student's EDI information will be stored in a secure database. Personal identification data, such as PEN numbers, date of birth and postal code are needed for data linkage purposes only. For confidentiality reasons this identification data is stored separately from the EDI data in a secure research environment. All EDI questionnaires are stored at HELP. Your child's school does not keep a copy of the questionnaire and no information is added to your child's school record. Because the results of the study are reported at the group-level only, your child's own specific questionnaire information will never be made public in any way.

Help will share EDI data with Population Data BC. The purpose of Population Data BC is to facilitate access to data for *bona fide*, public-interest research purposes, while at the same time ensuring protection of privacy and confidentiality of individuals. Access to data for research purposes under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act will* be approved by HELP, the Data Steward, who is responsible for EDI data. Each research application will be assessed on its own merits and must be used consistently for the purposes for which the data was obtain or complied pursuant to FIPAA section 34(1).

Why are data being linked?

The data may be combined with other data sources in order to learn more about the factors that impact children's readiness for school. Other data sources may include education and health information. The linked data can *only* be used for research or statistical purposes.

What is involved in project participation?

Your School District will arrange for your child's kindergarten teacher to complete some EDI questions about your child's development. You can view the EDI questions at: http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/EDI_viewonly.html. The teachers have been trained to complete the questionnaire. If you have any questions about the questionnaire you may contact Gillian Corless the EDI Implementation Manager at HELP via email at gillian.corless@ubc.ca or by phone at 604-822-1836 in Vancouver. There are no risks involved with this study.

Your taking part is voluntary and will not affect any services that your family receives from School District #___. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and you have the right to ask that your child's teacher not answer any of the questions. If you wish to remove your child's name from the participant list, please contact your child's teacher within 4 weeks upon receiving the letter.

If at any time you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a person who takes part in this project, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at the University of British Columbia at (604) 822-8598.
If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, you may contact any of the HELP researchers at the numbers provided above or by email at: lori.irwin@ubc.ca.

Where can I get more information on the study?

Please visit HELP's website at www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/EDI/. If you have any questions about this project and the collection and disclosure of information, please contact me, (name), School District EDI Contact, at (insert location), Telephone: (insert phone number); Email: (insert email address).

Yours sincerely,   and

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