

Early Child Development Program of Research: Early Development Instrument Parent / Guardian Information Letter

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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 in various Canadian provinces since 1999, including British Columbia. The BC government Ministries of Children and Family Development, Education, and Health fund this work.

You can view the EDI questions and learn more about the EDI project at:
www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/ediparent

School Districts in British Columbia are working with HELP at UBC to do a study using the EDI in February. 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. This work will also support provincial program evaluation and

inform policy development at a provincial level. We are writing this letter to tell parents and guardians more about the study.

My Child’s Participation

Your School District will arrange for your child’s kindergarten teacher to complete some EDI questions about your child’s development. 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. We can identify no risks involved with this study.

HELP has privacy professionals involved at all stages of the collection, use, storage and disclosure of EDI data. HELP ensures that all their practices and policies meet or exceed the criteria for the protection of privacy and the safeguarding of confidentiality as laid out in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)*, including monitoring and enforcing these criteria with the researchers who receive EDI data under an approved Research Agreement and the ministries who receive EDI data under a signed Information Sharing Agreement.



If you wish to remove your child's name from the participant list, please contact your child's teacher within 4 weeks upon receiving this letter.

In other words, HELP uses every tool available to make sure that your child's personal information is not at risk of being made public.

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. For concerns related to the privacy of your child's data, please contact HELP's Privacy Officer at privacy@help.ubc.ca.

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: gillian.corless@ubc.ca.

Your taking part is voluntary and you need not return this form to have your child participate. Participation will not affect any services that your family receives from your 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.

What data are collected?

The EDI asks questions about five areas of development: 1) physical health and well-being; 2) social competence; 3) emotional health and maturity; 4) language and cognitive development; and 5) general knowledge and communication skills. The school will also provide HELP with your child's Personal Education Number (PEN), which will only be used to assist with approved research or program evaluation. The school uses your child's name to administrate collection of the EDI, but does not disclose the name to HELP for research purposes. Your child's name is NOT on their EDI questionnaire.

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. HELP's Privacy Officer ensures that collection is allowed under all of BC's applicable privacy legislation.

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. For reasons of privacy, if any schools have fewer 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. We use only the answers to the questionnaire to create these summaries, and never identifiers such as the Personal Education Number.

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 matching purposes, to be reported at the neighbourhood or group level only. This identification data is stored separately from the EDI data so that your child cannot be re-linked with their answers individually. 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, also at UBC. 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 obtained and compiled pursuant to FIPPA.

We also disclose the EDI data to the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Children and Family Development, and the Ministry of Health for program evaluation and policy development purposes at a group level. The Ministries will never be using the data to make individual-level decisions about your child.

The ministries of Children and Family Development, Health and Education will be using the EDI data for program evaluation and policy development. They will never be using the data to evaluate any child individually.

HELP and the School Districts remain co-stewards of EDI data throughout its lifecycle.

Why are data being linked with Population Data BC information?

HELP researchers may use EDI data that has been linked with other data sources in order to learn more about the factors that impact children's development. Other data sources may include education and health information. The linked data can *only* be used for research or statistical purposes, by HELP-approved researchers, under an approved Research Agreement.

Where can I get more information on the study?

Please visit HELP's website at www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/ediparent. If you have any questions about this project and the collection and disclosure of information, please contact Gillian Corless, EDI Implementation Manager, at gillian.corless@ubc.ca.

Yours sincerely,

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