## **Early Child Development Program of Research: Early Development Instrument**

**Teacher Letter**

**Principal Investigator:**

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Dear Kindergarten Teacher,

This year your school will be participating in the **Early Development Instrument (EDI)** project. We are writing this letter to tell you, as a Kindergarten teacher, more about the study. The EDI is a questionnaire that includes questions on children’s social and emotional development, health and well-being, language and cognitive development, and communication skills. The EDI was developed by child development experts and researchers in Canada and with the help of Kindergarten teachers and school administrators and it has been used in 12 of 13 Canadian provinces and territories. In British Columbia (BC), the Ministries of Children and Family Development, Education, and Health have funded the collection and use of the EDI for over 19 years.

**AT A GLANCE**

* Kindergarten teachers will complete the EDI on each of their students in February, 2021;
* The EDI questionnaire is designed to help us understand trends in children’s development at the population level, such as in a census;
* The EDI is **not** an individual assessment of a student, and a student’s EDI results will never be reported individually, instead their information will only be reported in a summary with other students;
* If a parent/guardian wishes to withdraw their child from participating in the EDI research, they can do so by contacting you or the EDI team at the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) (see contacts above);
* The EDI questionnaire and further information are available at: [www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/ediparent](http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/ediparent).

# **What is the purpose of the project? How will your school and community benefit?**

The purpose of collecting information using the EDI is to improve our understanding of children’s development as they start school. Information from the EDI has proven essential to educators, school districts, health professionals, early years service providers and community members in planning programs and supports for children and families. Public institutions, including schools, use EDI information (data) in their planning. Schools and communities use EDI information to understand how children are doing in key areas of development, and to plan interventions. The information from the EDI also supports provincial investment, policy development, and program planning and evaluation.

Research using EDI data reveals that there is variability across neighbourhoods – with some neighbourhoods showing a high percentage of children who are vulnerable in key areas of their development, while other neighbourhoods have low percentages. EDI data can provide insight into how Kindergarten children are doing and encourage discussions about the factors affecting children's early development in neighbourhoods across the province. The information from the EDI is used to increase awareness of the ways in which we can create environments in which children can thrive.

Now is a time like no other for us to be focusing our attention on children’s health and well-being. The stress and disruption brought about by COVID-19 are of great concern. All children and families, but particularly those that are more vulnerable, are at risk of experiencing increased challenges. It is critical to continue to collect data that help us reflect and understand the short- and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on BC’s children and families. Thank you for supporting this effort.

# **Participation is voluntary**

The EDI is voluntary and a parent/guardian may withdraw their child’s data from the EDI within four weeks of receiving the Parent/Guardian Informed Passive Consent Letter by notifying you, their child’s teacher, or the EDI team at HELP (edi@help.ubc.ca). There is a withdrawal slip on the informed passive consent letter that parents/guardians can complete and submit to you. You or the EDI team at HELP can then withdraw the child’s data from the system. For all participating children, data from the EDI questionnaire will be included in the EDI reports and program of research.

# **What will happen?**

In January, teachers will participate in standardized training on how to complete the EDI questionnaire. In February, teachers complete the questionnaire online based on their observations of each student in their class. Teachers will answer questions about five areas of development: 1) physical health and well-being; 2) social competence; 3) emotional maturity; 4) language and cognitive development; and 5) general knowledge and communications skills. Students are never involved directly in the completion of the questionnaire.

# **How are Kindergarten teachers compensated?**

HELP reimburses Kindergarten teachers (through their school) for completing their EDI training and questionnaires. Teachers are reimbursed for their training time and for the dollar equivalent of 20 minutes of teacher replacement time for each EDI completed. Some schools may instead opt to provide time in lieu or an honorarium to their teachers as opposed to paying a Teacher on Call. The completion of this work by teachers is voluntary.

# **How will the EDI data be protected, stored and used?**

Teacher responses to the survey questions are **private and confidential**. No information is added to students’ school records from the EDI questionnaire. When EDI data are used in research publications or in public documents, your students and school are never identified.

To facilitate accurate completion of EDI questionnaires, your school gives HELP/UBC information about your students, including their name, Personal Education Number (PEN), date of birth, gender, and postal code. Your students’ names are only used so that you can complete the questionnaire. The names are removed from the EDI data set once the EDI questionnaire has been completed.Personal information such as your students’ PEN, date of birth, and postal code is stored separately from your answers to the EDI questionnaire to protect your students’ privacy. HELP is responsible for keeping all EDI data safe and secure and all EDI data are stored in a secure research environment at UBC. More information is available at:

<http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/safeguarding-personal-information/>

EDI data held at HELP can only be used for approved research projects **under Federal and Provincial/ Territorial privacy laws**. Researchers who receive permission to use the EDI data for research or statistical purposes will be provided data that cannot be connected to any individual student (individual EDI records are de-identified). The data gathered using the EDI may be linked at the individual level to other data to learn about the factors that influence children’s well-being, health, and school success. For example, EDI data can be linked with education data to show the relationship of Kindergarten children’s social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development and well-being to successful achievement in high school. This research then can be used to inform school planning and interventions aimed at promoting students’ high school success in BC. The data that are linked **can *only* be used for research or statistical purposes by HELP approved researchers, under an approved Research Agreement.**

As the license-holder of the EDI, the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University receives a copy of HELP’s individual-level EDI data, which is protocol for all jurisdictions that administer the EDI. The data sent to the Offord Centre does not include student names, PEN or date of birth. Postal code, gender and month of birth (not day or year) are included to enable approved national research about neighbourhoods. These variables are stored separately from the EDI data.

HELP discloses individual-level EDI results (data) to the Ministries of Children and Family Development, Education and Health for specific purposes of program evaluation and planning. The Ministries are prohibited from using the data to make individual-level assessments or decisions about your students.

# **EDI Reports**

HELP’s EDI reports combine data from students in your school and community. EDI Reports are prepared for individual schools and school districts, neighbourhoods, and the province as a whole. School reports are provided directly to schools, and are never shared publicly. EDI data are not used to rank teachers, schools, students, or classes in any way. HELP publishes public community reports and neighbourhood maps of the data to support decision making towards improving policies, programs and services for children and families. These reports and maps are available at: <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/maps/edi/>.

HELP’s Aboriginal Steering Committee has established a protocol regarding the reporting of data for Indigenous children. This protocol ensures the data are used to support Indigenous self-determination toward improving developmental outcomes for Indigenous children. While Indigenous children attending public schools and Independent schools that participate in EDI data collection are included in EDI data, HELP never publicly reports EDI data for Indigenous children separately, nor uses it for comparison. For more information, please visit http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/edi/aboriginal-EDI/.

# **Where can I get more information on the project?**

For more information, please visit HELP’s website at www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/edi. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Brandon Schulmeister, EDI Implementation Lead, via email at edi@help.ubc.ca or by phone at 604-822-3361.

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or your students’ rights, please contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at the University of British Columbia at 604-822-8598,or if long distance, e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598. You can also contact the principal investigator at the number or email provided below.

We recognize that there is much uncertainty about the year ahead. We will be monitoring COVID-19 – and the impact on schools – closely and will be in touch with your school district administrators should there be a need to adjust plans for the EDI project as a result. We are deeply appreciative to you for all you are doing in support of children and their families during this challenging time.

Yours sincerely,

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Name, School Board EDI Contact

Title within School Board

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