

Kick Big Brother Out of School

BC Government Collecting “Sperm to Worm” Personal Data of All BC Children then Using it to Push All-Day Kindergarten

George Orwell’s novel, *1984*, envisioned Big Brother, a technology that lets the state know everything about the citizens. Big Brother II will soon be in BC kindergarten classes, again, in the form of the Early Development Instrument (EDI). Kindergarten parents are receiving letters about this soon from schools and have to actively reply to “opt out” their children from the EDI.

In a massive violation of privacy, parental, and children’s rights, the BC government is using schools to systematically collect the personal data of all BC children and their families without informed consent.

The goal is to collect “*person-specific*” data on “*all children in British Columbia*” [1] from “*pre-conception to young adulthood*” [2] and beyond, according to the website of the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) based at UBC, which conducts this fully tax-funded data-mining.

Data from many sources is collected, cross-referenced, and then “linked.” HELP works with the BC Linked Health Database and Canada Edudata to “*link person-specific databases*”[2].

Personal data available for “linkage” includes the following records: the kindergarten EDI, “electronic medical records” from school dental checks, school behaviour and achievement data, medical, birth, death, perinatal (could include parents’ medical data), mental health, injury, stress, daycare, child in provincial care, ethnicity, hospital, pharmaceutical, “socioeconomic census data”, and Workers’ Compensation Board [3].

Personal income tax data linkage is a goal HELP staff state in a Statistics Canada report [4]. What’s next – credit card data? Have they linked our library records already, recreation center program registrations?

What is H.E.L.P?

HELP was established by the BC government in about 2001 with epidemiologist and World Bank consultant/staff Dr. Clyde Hertzman [4a] as its guru-like Director. His World Bank work is not mentioned on his HELP biography. He leads the twin goals of (1) data collection and (2) expansion of daycare [5] -- now re-branded as all-day kindergarten with the goal to put ages 0-5 in “underutilized” schools. HELP/Hertzman both create daycare/kindergarten policy in such documents as *2007 A Bold Vision: Documenting the Pivotal Role of Schools in Early Child Development*, and promote it to the public in articles like “And Universal Preschool for All: A modest Proposal” [6].

What is the EDI?

The data-mining is made possible in part because the schools hand over personal data to HELP along with the EDI. The EDI is a long questionnaire done around February. It is filled in by kindergarten teachers. Children’s Personal Education Numbers (PEN) and postal codes (which connects with census data) are submitted with the EDI. Teachers are told to take at least 30 minutes per child filling in the form – about 2 days per class. They are given time off with substitutes hired to replace them at tax-payers’ expense. The EDI asks about reading, writing, toileting, speaking, thumb sucking, shyness, fighting, peer relationships, “problems at home”, previous daycare arrangements, Sunday school attendance, etc. [7]

The EDI was done in BC in 2003, 2006 and 2009. It is now to be done annually [8] on Hertzman’s request.

The EDI: A Toolkit for Data-Mining & Daycare Propaganda

You have perhaps heard the alarmist news: “nearly 30 percent” [13a] of children are “vulnerable,” “developmentally behind” [9], “not on track” [10], “at risk,” “not ready to learn,” or even “stunted.” These words are intended to tap into our sympathy for children, distracting us from the real goal: decreasing children’s time with their parents. Charles Pascal, in his report, “With Our Best Future in Mind,” on implementing expanded school/daycare in Ontario baselessly claims this mega-project is needed because: ***“More than one in four children enter grade one significantly behind their peers. Too many never entirely close the gap and go on to disruptive behaviour...Too many end up leading lives of misery, harmful to themselves and others.”***

HELP takes EDI data and creates voluminous elaborate colour-coded maps and charts, which are displayed at events around the province to impress all with visualized “data”: red is bad, green is good. So much for literacy and cognitive skills. It’s so easy, you don’t really need to think at all. See HELP’s handy [Toolkit for Change](#).

A Swedish government report on daycare there warns against such “mapping”: ***“there is also a risk that development plans (or other types of mapping), despite the fact that the original intentions were different, will in practice increasingly focus on the child’s shortcomings and become an instrument of normalisation, where the individual child is assessed on the basis of what a child should be expected to accomplish at a specific age. The evaluation also shows how mapping the child’s development has become linked to greater demands for evaluation”*** [10a].

“No Data, No Problem, No Policy”

Hertzman’s World Bank colleague, blood specialist, Dr Fraser Mustard, explained to the Senate: ***“Remember: No data, no problem, no policy. We developed a data system... called the ECDI...”*** [11]. Hertzman had earlier stated the same problem-creation strategy to the World Bank: we need to ***“create an infant mortality rate of the EDI. Philosophy: no measurement, no data; no data, no problem”*** [11a]. The funding for the creation of the EDI was provided by the big-bank big-corporation funded charity, Invest In Kids [12]. “Vulnerability” is the “problem” revealed by “data” from the EDI. This “vulnerability” problem is then vigorously employed as the key factoid to push desired “policy”: decrease time parents spend with children, aka all-day and earlier kindergarten and daycare. The EDI was intended to be a propaganda tool: the EDI Handbook states: ***“The EDI scores can provide a powerful catalyst for influencing policy and programming decisions”*** [13].

Lately, using their paper, “15 by 15: A Comprehensive Policy Framework for Early Human Capital Investment in BC,” written for the Business Council of BC, HELP’s number-two man, sociologist Dr. Paul Kershaw, is lobbying the federal government with ludicrous claim that ***“unnecessary early vulnerability costs Canada the equivalent of investing \$3.1 trillion, nearly 7-times the Government of Canada’s current debt”*** [13a]. BC alone is predicted to save over \$400 billion by eradicating the menace of “early vulnerability” [13b] in the ***“future stock of human capital”*** [13a] with the help of daycare and school all day for little kids [14]. However, the hard evidence is against their premise that less time with parents produces ***“reductions in crime,”*** and improves health [13a] or any of children’s long term outcomes.

H.E.L.P. Lies: Claims Support of Anti-Universal State Daycare Nobel Prize Economist

HELP abuses the research of Nobel prize-winning economist, Dr. James Heckman, to support this miraculous claim of economic benefits. Heckman is routinely deliberately misleadingly quoted, for example, to the Finance Committee: ***“Investing in young children gives you double benefits – stimulus from the extra spending now, and the increase in human capital in years to come.”*** [13a] However in the speech this is extracted from, Heckman is speaking about ***“low-skilled immigrant families and others outside the mainstream”*** in the US, not all children. He strongly rejects HELP-type ***“universal services provided by governments.”*** Such programs have often ***“offended”*** parents: ***“people are very worried about the central government inculcating values in their children that they don’t agree with.”*** He recommends cash ***“vouchers”*** for these parents to spend in private sector

programs provided by “*private...religious [and] social groups*” so “*that early childhood provision doesn’t come to resemble a government bureaucracy.*” He advocates for diverse and innovative programs “*openly competing*” and intensely involving parents exercising “informed choice” because “*the best programme is almost certainly one that hasn’t been tried yet.*” Elsewhere he states that “*advocates and supporters of universal preschool often use existing research for purely political purposes...the solid evidence for the effectiveness of early interventions is limited to those conducted on disadvantaged populations*” and, “*none of this evidence supports universal preschool programs*” [14a].

How does HELP Define “Vulnerability”?

The reality is that 100% of children are “vulnerable” – that is the very nature of childhood. HELP’s media coverage on the epidemic of vulnerability fails to define what “vulnerability” – or whatever they call it at the time – is [14b]. The EDI uses percentiles, thus it is a relative measure. This use of percentiles rather than an objective standard guarantees that there will always be a “problem.” The EDI creators simply state they “*recommend that percent of children deemed as ‘not ready to learn’ is the percent of children who score in the lowest 10th percentile on one or more scales*”: physical, language, cognitive, social, emotional maturity. However they also say, “*we know that children are born ready to learn*” [15]. “Vulnerability” is just the latest it-word. Not surprisingly, those born later in the year, boys, and ESL children are more often in this range [16]. Thus many children rated “vulnerable” are not actually “developmentally behind” or “not on track” at all. This indicates that the EDI is unscientific and designed to fear-monger through inflated statistics. The proliferation of this expensive, non-scientific “instrument” goes on even though, as Hertzman himself admits to the World Bank, there is a “challenge” because there is “*no consensus...on value of [the EDI] measurement*” [26].

Canadian Kids Academically Out-Perform Big Daycare Nations

Despite all the “early vulnerability” here, Canadian teens score near the top academically in international tests, well above nations with huge state daycare and preschool programs like Sweden and France, and well above the OECD average. You won’t hear that from HELP and other daycare-lobbyists. See OECD PISA test score results at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-590-x/81-590-x2007001-eng.pdf> pp. 60-64. Alberta – which spends the least on daycare per child and has the second fewest children in daycare centres (under 8%) [17] – scores highest in Canada; big daycare Quebec scores considerably lower. Finland – where schooling starts at age 7 – has the highest scores.

Ages 0 and up Included in Data-Mining

Students and their families who are not in kindergarten also have their data mined. In 2004 HELP claimed to have “*completed linkage of 97 percent of BC school-aged children’s personal education and personal health numbers.*” This took place in a few months after “Ministerial” approval was given [2]. Families of 0-5 year olds who register in StrongStart school drop-in programs can expect to be data-mined.

Parents Receive EDI Letters

Parents of kindergarten students may receive a letter by Hertzman from school about the EDI before it takes place in February. It may indicate they can “opt out” their child by mailing in a letter stating so. Letters to parents from 2006 and 2009 can be seen at <http://www.kidsfirstcanada.org/bigbrother.htm>.

BC Civil Liberties Assoc. Support for Privacy Complaint

In 2006, kindergarten parents received a brief letter [5] about the EDI that failed to mention the data linkage and did not ask for consent. Parent, James Ward, and Kids First Parent Association of Canada made a complaint with support from the BC Civil Liberties Association.

'Opt out' Option Offered – Sort of

The 2009 letter [18] provided very incomplete information about data linking. Also parents are offered the possibility of “opting out” of the EDI. However, opting out required parents to actively request to do so. This assumption of consent lacks legitimacy and is the reverse of standard procedure in which a response is necessary for participation and a non-response is assumed to be an “opt out.” This methodology means that families are having their data mined without informed consent.

Both the 2006 and the 2009 letters informed parents that their child's name will not be used. However, this is a false assurance of privacy as names are not needed when personal numbers are used. These changes in the letters to parents indicate that the BC government knows there are grave privacy violation problems with the data collection process.

HELP and the World Bank

HELP's director, Dr Hertzman, has presented BC's data collection methods to the World Bank as a model for international use [20]. His colleague, Mustard, has become a Bank consultant. They all seek “***strong partnerships between the public and private sectors.***” [21] He and Mustard both advise the big-bank and corporate-backed charity, Invest In Kids [21a].

The World Bank sees early childhood development as an “***industry***” and a “***business imperative,***” which includes data collection [22] and is now spending over US\$1.5 billion yearly on its early childhood initiatives [23].

What's Wrong with “Partnerships” between Banks & Corporations and Parents?

The corporate sector easily dominates politically unorganized, voiceless, time-stressed parents in any “partnership.” Parents are not even a sector invited to the “stakeholders” table. Leading child development experts are kept from the policy table, for example internationally renowned BC-based developmental psychologist, Dr Gordon Neufeld, who opposes all-day kindergarten. “Research” is created, screened and interpreted by those that are corporate- or bank-backed. Mustard – called an international leader in child development – admitted his lack of qualifications to the Senate: “***When you achieve fame for something you were never trained in, it is amazing what your contacts are. I have been working for the World Bank and the bank for Latin America***” [24]. Issues corporations want to avoid get sidelined or left out all together. Labour-force attachment is emphasized over parent-child attachment. You won't hear breastfeeding advocacy from HELP. Living on less and the poor quality of most daycare go unmentioned. There's no outcry about toxins in food, babies' pacifiers, children's toys and other products; pollution; excessive prescription of drugs for children; harms of TV, other electronic media, and junk food; exploited child labour; or elimination of welfare for parents. They won't talk about supporting parents by raising wages, tax equity, equitable financial support, reducing traffic, or increasing parks.

Hertzman/World Bank promotion of the EDI internationally has resulted in questionable claims such as poor children in Mexico doing better than Canadian children [25].

Hertzman also led the government's creation and evaluation of StrongStart school drop-ins for 0-5 year olds [27] along with other World Bank consultants [28] and a long-time daycare lobbyist [29]. StrongStart kids must register and get a PEN. In 2007 BC legislation was changed to allow PEN's for children under school age. The government states: “***with the new legislation, information may now be collected about children participating in StrongStart BC centres***” [30].

Lunch & Lobby at Taxpayers' Expense

As part of its “community mobilizing” [31] aka lobbying, HELP has hosted “free” tax-payer funded events province-wide, sometimes including “*host bar [free booze] and hot and cold canapés,*” or a meal at hotels including the Pan Pacific to promote both the EDI and more funding for daycare [32].

Contact the Premier and HELP-funding ministries: the Minister of Education, the Minister of Children and Families, and the Minister of Sport and Healthy Living and ask that...

- ❖ HELP's funding be terminated
- ❖ The EDI be abandoned
- ❖ The data collected and data 'linked' without informed consent by HELP be destroyed

Ministry of Children and Family Development and Minister Responsible for Child Care

MCF.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Honourable Mary Polak

Telephone: [250 387-9699](tel:2503879699)

Facsimile: 250 387-9722

Ministry of Education and Minister Responsible for Early Learning and Literacy

Honourable Margaret MacDiarmid

Minister.Educ@gov.bc.ca

Telephone: 250 387-1977

Facsimile: 250 387-3200

Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport

Honourable Ida Chong

HLS.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Telephone: 250 387-3504

Facsimile: 250 387-3420

Notes

[1] [HELP Child & Youth Developmental Trajectories Research Unit \(CYDTRU\) Research](#)

[2] [HELP Health-Education Data Crosswalk](#)

[3] [Child and Youth Developmental Trajectories Research Unit \[CYDTRU\]](#)

[CYDTRU Linked Databases](#)

[UBC CHSPR: Our Role in Data](#)

[4] [National Data Sets: Sources of Information for Canadian Child Care Data](#)

[4a] [Hertzman World Bank Staff](#) p. 58

Consultant:

[Index of /uweek/archives](#) See 1998.10.OCT_01/_article24.html
[The World Bank, Brown Bag Series](#)

[5] see [British Columbia Early Childhood Development Action Plan May 2002](#)

[6] [“A Bold Vision: Documenting the Pivotal Role of Schools in Early Child Development”](#)

and [“And universal preschool for all: A Modest Proposal”](#)

[7] see [EDI](#)

and [EDI Guide for Teachers](#)

[8] [HELP Newsletter to Schools, Winter 2009](#)

[9] [HELP October 27, 2009 News Release](#)

[10] p 42 [The Early Development Instrument: A Population-based Measure for Communities](#) p. 3

[10a] p 38 [“Pre-school in Transition”](#) Swedish Ministry of Education

[11] [Mustard to Senate Committee 2007](#)

[11a] [The World Bank, Brown Bag Series](#), Nov 13 2006: Hertzman Power Point slide 3

[12] [The Early Development Instrument: A Population-based Measure for Communities
A Handbook on Development, Properties, and Use](#), p. 3

and [Invest in Kids corporate and bank sponsors](#)

[13] [The Early Development Instrument: A Population-based Measure for Communities
A Handbook on Development, Properties, and Use](#), p. 9

[13a] [HELP submission to federal Finance Committee Pre-Budget Consultations Sept 2009](#)

[13b] [15 by 15: A Comprehensive Policy Framework for Early Human Capital Investment in BC](#)

[14] [Early Vulnerability in BC: The Looming Debt that Threatens BC’s Long-Term Economic Strength](#)

[14a] [Wall Street Journal “Protect Our Kids from Preschool”](#)

and p 35 of [The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children](#)

[14b] [HELP/EDI Factsheet](#)

[HELP Newsletter to Schools Winter 2010](#)

[15] [Offord Centre School Readiness to Learn Project](#)

[16] Girls vs boys and age of child on p 11, ESL on p15 of [School Readiness to Learn National SK Cohort Results](#)

- [17] [Use of daycare centres by province](#)
and [Provinces' expenditures of daycare total and per child](#)
- [18] Letters posted at <http://www.kidsfirstcanada.org/bigbrother.htm>
- [19] [Canadian health policy expert to speak on population health](#)
- [20] see EDI and Janus, Mustard, and Hertzman presentations at [The World Bank, Brown Bag Series](#)
- [21] Dec 8, 2007 Vancouver Sun p.B5 [Researcher is child advocate on global scale; Clyde Hertzman is a natural to ask for advice on the best way to help our children develop](#)
http://www.investinkids.ca/ContentPage.aspx?name=Our_Partners_CorporatePartners
- [21a] [Invest in Kids, Board of Advisors](#)
- [22] see speech at [World Bank by RBC VP C Coffey](#)
- [23] see [World Bank Early Child Development \(ECD\) Projects](#)
and [Integrated policies for early childhood education and care: challenges, pitfalls and possibilities](#)
- [24] [Mustard to Senate](#)
- [25] Toronto Star, July 29, 2008,. pg. A-4
- [26] see Hertzman Power Point presentation to World Bank "The Case for the EDI as an International Outcome Indicator of Early Child" Development" slide 35
at [The World Bank, Brown Bag Series](#)
- [27] [Strong Start BC Evaluation](#)
- [28] World Bank consultants doing StrongStart evaluation:
[Jane Bertrand](#)
[Judith Evans](#)
- [29] daycare lobbyist [Jane Beach](#)
- [30] [Q & A: PEN, Attendance, Reporting and Data Requirements](#)
- [31] [ECD Mobilization](#)
- [32] The author has attended [HELP public events](#) with free meals, though most of this information has been removed from events info on the HELP website

[Numerous videos of HELP daycare \("child care"\) lobbying events](#) are viewable