January 25, 2018

Dear Parent:

We are researchers in the Gallaudet University Early Education Literacy Lab (EL2). Your child may have participated in our previous study, *The Early Education Longitudinal Study (EELS-I)*. We are now asking you and your child to participate in a follow-up study called *The Extended Education Longitudinal Study (EELS II)*. We seek participants both from the earlier study and from groups of children who share characteristics with the earlier participants. If your child was an EELS-I participant, we may have already contacted you, and you may have already agreed to participate in EELS II and completed the consent, registration, and survey forms. If so, we thank you. If you were not in the EELS I study, or if you have not yet registered for the current study, we ask that you review these materials and consider participating.

In EELS-I we collected data on early language and literacy development from deaf children between the ages of 3 and 7 during the period between the fall of 2010 and the spring of 2013. These data have provided important insights into how early language skills (be they spoken or signed) affect literacy skill development. Further analyses of these data are in progress; however, in the current EELS II project we are investigating how early skills and experiences contribute to reading, writing, and mathematics success in deaf children as they enter the middle and high school years.

We will be asking you to complete a brief survey related to your child’s early language and learning experiences as well as information about their educational and communication experiences throughout their school years to date. Additionally, we will administer short assessments of your child’s outcomes in the three key academic areas of reading, writing, and math. The reading evaluation covers the range of skills necessary to be a successful reader. A brief report will be sent to the school based on your child’s performance on this test. Additionally, your child will be asked to write and perform some tasks related to thinking about math and performing math computations. Some children who use sign language will also be asked to complete an online test of American Sign Language (ASL) skills.

Your child’s school has agreed to participate in this study and to have a teacher or specialist administer the assessments. Those assessments will occur this spring during regular school hours.

We will combine EELS II data with the data already collected during EELS I. This new combined data set will allow us to determine which early factors predict academic success in middle school, especially the successful transition from the process of learning to read to the ability to apply those reading skills to gain information that they will need to navigate the world through secondary school and beyond. This is a unique opportunity to use the extensive data collected on children during the pre-school and early elementary school period as well as information about early experiences of children who were not previous participants to help us better understand the factors that lead to success for deaf learners.

While your participation in this extension of the EELS project is entirely voluntary, we hope that you are able to offer your further participation. Furthermore, if you initially agree to participate by signing the consent form (either electronic or on paper), you are free to withdraw your consent at any time.

Registering as a participant in the EELS II project involves completing three separate forms, available online, in paper-pencil versions in both English and Spanish, and via live interview. These are:
1: Consent to Participate
2: EELS-II Enrollment Information
3: The EELS-II Parent Survey

• If you do not wish to participate, please indicate “No” on the response form included with this packet and return it in the stamped and addressed envelope also included.
• If you wish to participate, and you want to complete the three forms for registering using either paper-pencil forms (in English or Spanish) or through an ASL or Spanish interview, mark “Yes” on the response form, provide your mailing address, indicate your desired format and language, and return it in the stamped envelope. Or you may send us a request to el2@gallaudet.edu or call us at the number listed below to request a paper-pencil or interview format.
• If you wish to participate and you are willing and able to respond to forms online (in either Spanish or English), you may do so by going to the following website:

https://surveys.gallaudet.edu/surveys/?s=FN33L8TKKY

Note: If you have more than one child who is able to participate in this study, please complete one set of forms for each child who will participate.

We ask that you complete these forms, either electronically or complete and return the response selection form, within two weeks after receiving them. If you have any questions or concerns or need any explanations, please call, toll-free, 1-877-302-7449 (Voice), 1-202-568-8818 (VP) or email EL2@gallaudet.edu and leave a message (please indicate if you wish the contact to be in English, Spanish, or ASL) and someone will contact you to answer your questions or provide materials.

If you prefer not to answer an individual question on the survey, simply leave it blank and move on to the next question. Please finalize the electronic form or send the paper forms (once you receive them) back to us, whether or not you have completed all of the questions. All of your answers to these questions will remain confidential, and with the exception of the brief report to your child’s school about their performance on the tests (which may be used to enhance your child’s educational programming) none of the reports of this study will ever identify you, your child, or your child’s teacher.

We will be offering a $20 Amazon gift card as an expression of appreciation for completing the parent survey. We do hope you will agree to take part in this project! The summary reports we will send back to your child’s school based on our assessments should provide useful information to your child’s teacher. We believe the results of this study will have tremendous significance, and your participation is critical to its success.

Again, thank you for considering participating in this important project.

Sincerely,
The EELS-II Project leaders

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Director, Early Education and Literacy Lab
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