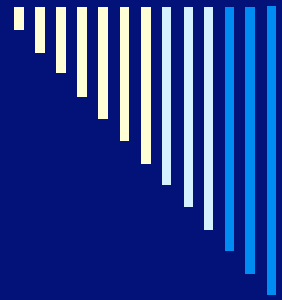


# Developing a Measure of Health Literacy for Canadian Schools

**Canadian Public Health  
Association**

**September 16-19, 2007**

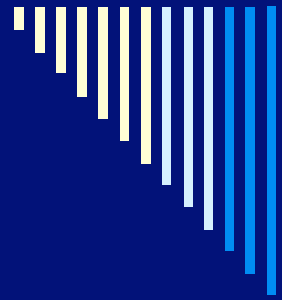
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# Acknowledgements

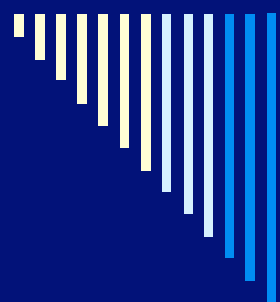
- Funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research



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# Research Team

- Irving Rootman (PI) - UVIC
  - Deborah Begoray (Co-PI)-UVIC
  - Jim Frankish Co-I, UBC
  - Marjorie MacDonald, Co-I – UVIC
  - Joan Wharf Higgins, Co-I – UVIC
  - Bruno Zumbo Co-I, UBC
  - Sandy Vamos, Collaborator, UBC
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## Project Goal

To develop an empirically/  
theoretically-driven  
measurement tool appropriate  
for assessing health literacy in  
secondary school students

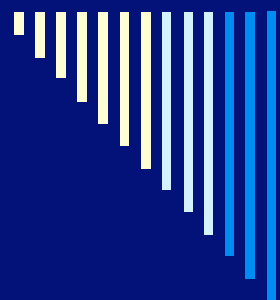
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# Objectives

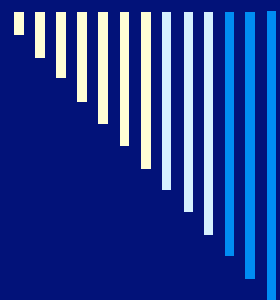
- ❑ Develop and validate measures of health literacy for use in the school context
  - ❑ Test the relevance and utility of these measures in diverse school districts in BC
  - ❑ Examine differences in health literacy among gender, cultural, socio-economic, urban-rural, and other groups in the school population in BC
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## Our Definition

- Health literacy is the ability to access, understand, evaluate and communicate basic health information
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# Progress to Date

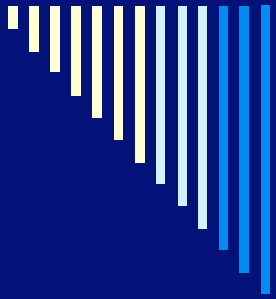
- Reviewed health literacy literature
- Developed an operational definition, framework, and standards
- Gathered preliminary data from experts, teachers, and students
  - Initial focus group with experts
  - Web-based and telephone interviews with key informants
  - Student surveys
  - Teacher and student focus groups



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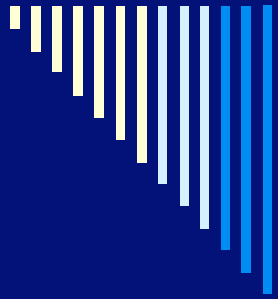
# Progress to Date

- Based on data from experts, students, teachers we developed a web-based measurement tool
    - Students and teachers identified most important health topics
    - Students identified major source of health information was the internet
  - Created cartoon scenarios that students sought health information to respond to
  - Pilot tested two scenarios within the tool
-



- Our next step was to have been revising the tools and collecting data using all scenarios

HOWEVER.....



# Challenges to Our Approach

- ❑ Getting beyond student self-report
- ❑ Health literacy does not exist independently from the underlying literacy skills
- ❑ Lack of congruence between our evolving measures of health literacy and standard measures of literacy
- ❑ We need task-based measures of health literacy with clear criteria for measuring performance on the tasks



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# New Directions

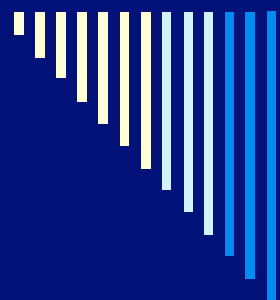
- We will no longer use our cartoon scenarios
  
  - We will use the five IALS levels of literacy proficiency (500 point scale)
    - Normally distributed in the population
    - Spread through all SES levels
    - 48% of adults in Canada have limited proficiency
  
  - For the “understand” domain, we will identify and use passages that we can code for the complexity of literacy tasks using Evetts and Gautier (2003) method and develop questions
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# New Directions

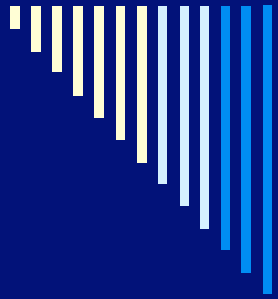
- Our coders will be trained to use the Evetts and Gautier method to rate the difficulty of tasks related to prose, document, and numeracy literacy
  - For the access, evaluate, and communicate domains of our definition, we will use the Information Literacy Standards, and the BC Ministry of Education standards for reading and writing to develop tasks and items
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## New Directions

- We will pilot the new measures with 300 students in four schools in February 2008



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## For More Information

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