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To: Editors of Local/Education News Desk

## **Lingnan University survey reveals that Children's Happiness Index in 2014 drops to the lowest in three years**

**According to the results of the Children's Happiness Index Survey released by Lingnan University's Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) today (17 April), the 2014 overall Children's Happiness Index dropped noticeably to 6.74 (on a scale of 0 to 10) from 7.23 in 2013. This is the lowest on record since the survey commenced in 2012 when the Index was tracked at 6.91. Drop in happiness has been recorded for children of all school grades and age groups.**

Commissioned by the **Hong Kong Early Childhood Development Research Foundation**, the 2014 Children's Happiness Index adopts methodology similar to previous surveys. A total of ten primary schools and ten secondary schools (excluding international schools) have accepted the survey invitation, involving 1,182 Primary 4 to Secondary 3 students and 1,763 parents. The ratio of primary to secondary school students is roughly 4:6.

### ***Drop in happiness may associate with political controversies***

The survey found that pressure arising from both school work and extra-curricular activities had actually declined. Parental relationship and discipline (family life score indices) did not show much change, while children's perception of financial wellbeing of the family actually improved. Neither the behavioural measure of family harmony nor the subjective measure of family happiness (happy family score) showed any decline in 2014; indeed they have increased.

"What is behind the decline in Children's Happiness Index is unclear, but this may be related to the Occupy Movement and the political controversies arising from it," said **Prof Ho Lok-sang, Director of the CPPS**.

Regression analysis did show that the adverse effect of academic pressure on family life and family happiness had gone up, suggesting that parents may have become more anxious about their children's academic performance.

### ***Life education nurtures happier children***

One important finding of the survey is that "life education" has an unambiguous positive effect on children's happiness. Children who very much agree that their schools offer life education command an average Happiness Index of 7.48. This is significantly higher than the average of 5.19 for those who disagree with that, and the average of 6.29 for those who agree to it "half-half". About 27% of the responding children, most of them from primary schools, very much agree that their schools offer "life education".

### ***Love and insight most crucial in determining happiness***

Among the four dimensions of mental capital, namely Love, Insight, Fortitude and Engagement (collectively known as LIFE), regression analysis has shown that Love and Insight carry the greatest weight in determining children's happiness. In this survey, Love is evaluated based on responses to questions on the child's willingness to do things for their parents and people in need, and Insight is based on questions relating to the child's perception of what constitutes success, reflections and learning from mistakes, sense of balance, etc.

It was also found that LIFE scores and self-reported happiness for children generally decline with age, suggesting that teenagers could be under greater stress.

Factors including caring parents, parents who respect the privacy of children, parents who show respect for children's opinions, good spousal relations, and perceived financial well-being of the family all contribute to nurturing Love in children. On the other hand, disciplining children is the single most important factor behind family disharmony.

### ***Good classmates make happy schooling***

The 2014 survey confirmed a previous finding that while happy schooling is associated with having good teachers and good classmates, the latter is a more important factor comparatively. About 66% of the surveyed children think that they have good teachers, and about 75% think they have good classmates. On the other hand, only about 39% of the children think that their school curriculum is interesting in 2014, down from 58% in the previous year.

The survey also found that while both happy school and happy family are important to children's happiness, the former seems to be more important. This reflects the fact that children spend much of their time at school and makes friends with schoolmates.

### ***Longest homework hours for Primary 4 students***

Among all the school grades, it turns out that Primary 4 students put in the longest hours on homework, with an average of 140 minutes per day. Secondary students generally put in 95 to 115 minutes on homework per day. Happiness is highest when sleeping time is closest to 8 hours. Children short of sleep are the unhappiest.

Please go to <http://www.ln.edu.hk/news/XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX> to download full report of the "Hong Kong Happiness Index Survey 2014" and photos of the press conference.

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### **Appendix: Key statistics of the Children's Happiness Index Survey 2014**

### **About the Children's Happiness Index Survey**

Designed and conducted annually by the Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) of Lingnan University since 2012, the Children's Happiness Index Survey tracked and measured the level of happiness of children in Hong Kong on a scale of 0 to 10. The Survey in 2014 marks the third consecutive year the survey has been conducted.

The survey was commissioned by the **Hong Kong Early Childhood Development Research Foundation** with the assistance of the **Public Governance Programme of Lingnan University**. CPPS would like to express its gratitude for the Foundation, the Programme as well as all participating schools for their support.

### **About the Centre for Public Policy Studies of Lingnan University**

The Centre for Public Policy Studies of Lingnan University was established in 1994. Apart from self-initiated studies, the Centre offers support on public policy research to Lingnan's researchers and conducts commissioned studies on various aspects of public policy.

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### Key statistics of the Children's Happiness Index Survey 2014

Survey parameters	Year	Happy children (Happiness $\geq$ 6)	Unhappy children (Happiness $\leq$ 4)	t-test
Parents' Relationships	2012	M = 4.14, N = 560	M = 3.63, N = 76	t(634) = 4.47; p = 0.000
	2013	M = 4.11, N = 786	M = 3.23, N = 91	t(875) = 7.93; p = 0.000
	2014	M = 4.01, N = 784	M = 3.38, N = 154	t(936) = 6.49; p = 0.000
Disciplining Score	2012	M = 2.37, N = 556	M = 2.60, N = 76	t(630) = 2.19; p = 0.03
	2013	M = 2.46, N = 803	M = 2.75, N = 96	t(897) = 3.43; p = 0.000
	2014	M = 2.44, N = 784	M = 2.67, N = 159	t(941) = 3.29; p = 0.000
Children's pressures (academic)	2012	M = 2.92, N = 698	M = 3.60, N = 134	t(830) = 7.15; p = 0.000
	2013	M = 2.68, N = 797	M = 3.44, N = 101	t(896) = 7.78; p = 0.000
	2014	M = 2.83, N = 807	M = 3.43, N = 167	t(972) = 8.26; p = 0.000
Children's pressures (activities)	2012	M = 2.11, N = 695	M = 2.78, N = 132	t(825) = 5.14; p = 0.000
	2013	M = 2.04, N = 813	M = 2.61, N = 103	t(914) = 4.10; p = 0.000
	2014	M = 2.17, N = 807	M = 2.57, N = 169	t(971) = 4.50; p = 0.000
Children's perception on financial wellbeing	2012	M = 4.06, N = 575	M = 3.69, N = 77	t(650) = 3.42; p = 0.000
	2013	M = 4.01, N = 802	M = 3.25, N = 93	t(893) = -7.7; p = 0.000
	2014	M = 4.06, N = 801	M = 3.43, N = 164	t(963) = 6.97; p = 0.000
Children's age	2012	M = 11.99, N = 697	M = 12.34, N = 135	t(830) = 1.98; p = 0.048
	2013	M = 11.90, N = 808	M = 12.07, N = 102	t(908) = 0.92; p = 0.355
	2014	M = 12.02, N = 809	M = 12.14, N = 170	t(977) = 0.67; p = 0.253
Family Life Score	2012	M = 1.16, N = 678	M = 0.30, N = 131	t(807) = 97.42; p = 0.000
	2013	M = 1.29, N = 809	M = 0.25, N = 102	t(909) = 9.38; p = 0.000
	2014	M = 1.31, N = 702	M = 0.42, N = 134	t(834) = 9.46; p = 0.000
Happy Family Score	2012	M = 4.04, N = 697	M = 3.07, N = 133	t(828) = 8.05; p = 0.000
	2013	M = 4.17, N = 806	M = 3.10, N = 101	t(905) = 9.07; p = 0.000
	2014	M = 4.12, N = 774	M = 3.36, N = 151	t(923) = 8.20; p = 0.000

\*M = mean value

N = number of respondents