



## RUSH NEUROBEHAVIORAL CENTER

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Dear School Administrator:

We are pleased to let you know of an opportunity for elementary and middle school districts to have free access to a new system for assessing children's social information processing, or social reasoning, skills.

Educators and other professionals have long recognized that social-emotional learning skills are critical for academic and life success. Children with a strong social-emotional learning foundation have better peer relationships, greater academic achievement, and better mental health. As a direct reflection of its importance, social-emotional learning curricula are being introduced in a wide range of school districts across the country. Meanwhile there are few tools available to measure these skills for benchmarking, screening, program evaluation, and progress monitoring.

Rush NeuroBehavioral Center and Soar Technology, Inc. recently created VESIP™ (Virtual Environment for Social Information Processing), an easy to use, web-based, direct assessment of children's social reasoning skills. It utilizes an interactive and immersive, simulation-style format to assess skills in children from grades 3-7 as they navigate several challenging social situations with peers. VESIP requires minimal administrator involvement and no reading skills on the part of the child. Please see the attached flyer describing VESIP in more detail.

As part of an Institute of Education Sciences Goal 5 grant, the researchers at Rush NeuroBehavioral Study are embarking on a large-scale validation study. To complete data collection for this endeavor, we are inviting schools nationwide who would like free use of VESIP while it is still in the development and validation phases for program evaluation purposes in exchange for de-identified data. We will provide technical assistance to teach partners how to use and interpret VESIP. Partners will administer VESIP independently to all students in participating grades. Schools may determine whether they wish to administer VESIP to general education students in all grades 3-7, or select specific grades or classrooms only.

**In addition, depending on proximity, we are looking for schools from which we can recruit students for an additional add-on study component to further our validation process.**

Please consider learning more about VESIP and this unique opportunity to participate during the 2016-2017 academic year. We will also be recruiting school districts under a similar partnership arrangement for data collection during the norming phase of this study in academic years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.

If you are interested in participating, please contact the Research Director at Rush NeuroBehavioral Center and Principal Investigator, Nicole Russo-Ponsaran, Ph.D., for more information ([nicole\\_russo@rush.edu](mailto:nicole_russo@rush.edu); 847-763-7927). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nicole Russo-Ponsaran, Ph.D.  
Research Director, Rush NeuroBehavioral Center  
Assistant Professor, Department of Behavioral Sciences  
Rush University Medical Center