

Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)

Fact Sheet



Australian Early Development Index

Background

Research shows that investing resources and energy into children's early years, when their brains are developing rapidly, will bring life-long benefits to them and to the whole community.

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) is a measure of how young children are developing in different communities. This information enables communities and governments to pinpoint the types of services, resources and supports young children and their families need to give children the best possible start in life.



The AEDI is conducted by the Centre for Community Child Health (at The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne and a key research centre at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute), in partnership with the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Perth.

To date, the AEDI has been undertaken across 62 Australian communities from seven states and territories (with the exception of the Northern Territory). From 2004 – 2008, AEDI Checklists have been completed on over 56,000 children in their first year of full time school by more than 3,000 teachers from both government and non-government schools.

National implementation

In recognition of the need for all communities to have early childhood development information, and the national and international work completed to date, the Federal Government has provided \$15.9 million for the national implementation of the AEDI. The AEDI will be completed across all Australian schools in 2009.

This means every community across Australia will have a comprehensive picture of the early childhood development outcomes for children in their community.

Every child deserves the best start in life

What is the AEDI?

The AEDI is based on the Canadian Early Development Instrument (EDI) and is a population measure of young children's development from a teacher-completed checklist and measures five developmental domains:

- Physical health and wellbeing
- Social competence
- Emotional maturity
- Language and cognitive skills
- Communication and general knowledge

A population measure places the focus on all children in the community. Therefore the AEDI examines early childhood development across the whole community.

It is now known that moving the focus of effort from the individual child to all children in the community can make a bigger difference in supporting efforts to create optimal early childhood development.

The AEDI can be used by communities, schools and policy makers in conjunction with other resources (such as state and national statistics) to plan and evaluate efforts to create optimal early childhood development outcomes.

Both nature and nurture influence our children's development



The AEDI is a national progress measure of early childhood development

What are the benefits of the AEDI for communities?

The AEDI delivers essential information about early childhood development and provides insights into how children's community and social environments affects their outcomes. For communities the primary aim of the AEDI is to provide data to help them in the development and reorientation of services, supports, systems and infrastructure, thereby enabling communities to improve the health and wellbeing of young children.

The AEDI results helps communities in a number of ways. These include:

- Providing a snapshot about how children in their area are faring in each of the developmental domains of the AEDI.
- Utilising the implementation process of the AEDI to assist in the development and strengthening of relationships between key agencies and stakeholders in the community.
- Facilitating community mobilisation and the development of forward planning and action, based on the results of the AEDI.
- Enabling communities to monitor progress on early childhood development outcomes.

Being part of the AEDI program provides communities with the opportunity to strengthen collaborations between schools, early childhood services, and local agencies. Along with a range of other community indicators and information, communities can use the AEDI results to plan and evaluate local initiatives for children so that all children get the best possible start in life.

The AEDI pinpoints strengths in communities as well as what can be improved

Strong communities are good for children

How can schools use the AEDI?

Supporting children in the years before school greatly increases their chances of successful transitions and better learning outcomes. The AEDI can help schools to:

- Initiate conversations and partnerships with community early childhood services and local agencies to explore new ways of working together to ensure children get the best possible start.
- Reflect on the development of children in the community as they enter school and to consider and plan for optimal school transition through into the early primary years.
- Reflect on all aspects of children's development, including social and emotional development, in the first year of school.
- Look at the needs of students before entering school and help with planning for the needs of children once at school.



The AEDI provides information about how communities have supported the development of their children before school

For more information please visit www.aedi.org.au