

Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)

Information for Parents



Australian Early Development Index

Background

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) is a nation-wide program that looks at the development of young children.

This year, schools (both government and non-government) around Australia will be taking part in the national implementation of the AEDI.

This will give each community in Australia a snapshot of how children have developed in the years before they begin school. It will help communities and governments pinpoint the services, resources and support young children and their families need to give children the best possible start in life.



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

The Australian Government has provided \$15.9 million for the national implementation of the AEDI.

The importance of a child's early years

The early years are crucial to the healthy development of a child. During the first few years of a child's life, their brain develops at a rapid rate. Investing resources and energy into these early years will bring life-long benefits to children and the community.

Both nature and nurture influence our children's development

How the AEDI works

The AEDI gathers information in a similar way to a census. It involves compiling information on groups of children around Australia who are in their first year of full-time school. To do this, teachers complete a checklist – like a survey or questionnaire – for every child in their class.

Between May and July this year, schools will participate in the AEDI by completing checklists for children in their first year of full-time school.

The AEDI Checklist includes more than 100 questions that look at five areas of child development:

- Physical health and wellbeing
- Social competence
- Emotional maturity
- Language and cognitive skills (school based)
- Communication skills and general knowledge

Every child deserves the best start in life

The AEDI is designed as a population measure. This means it looks at whole groups of children in the community – not individuals. It is not a test or assessment of a child's development or performance in class.

The AEDI and your child

An AEDI Checklist is completed by your child's teacher.

There is no need for parents or children to provide any new or extra information to schools for the AEDI.

Children will not be taken out of class and do not need to be present while their teacher completes the checklist.



Has the AEDI been done before?

Yes. Between 2004 and 2008, 62 communities across Australia took part in the AEDI. During this time, the AEDI checklists were completed for more than 56,000 children (from government and non-government schools).

The AEDI is based on the Canadian Early Development Instrument (EDI). As of 2008, the Canadian EDI has been completed on more than 520,000 Canadian children.

How does the AEDI help my child and our community?

The AEDI provides communities with essential information about their children's development.

The findings from the AEDI will benefit the whole community – helping local schools, community groups and government understand what's working well in the community and what needs to be improved or developed to better support children and their families.

It will also help strengthen links between schools, kindergartens/preschools, playgroups, health centres, libraries and other local organisations who support children and families.

How is the AEDI Checklist completed?

The AEDI Checklist is like a survey or questionnaire.

Teachers complete checklists for every child in their first year of full-time school. They do this online using a secure, web-based program (developed especially for the AEDI by the Australian Council for Educational Research).

This program protects the privacy of all personal information and means that individual children cannot be identified.

Each checklist takes around 20 minutes to complete.

Teachers complete the checklists based on their knowledge and observations of the child in class. Teachers are highly skilled professionals with an understanding of early childhood development issues. This makes them well-placed to observe the development of children as they enter school.

Does my child have to participate in the AEDI?

Participation in the AEDI is not compulsory, however if you do not want your child's teacher to complete an AEDI Checklist for your child, you need to contact the teacher or school principal directly to opt-out. Unless you contact the school to opt-out of the AEDI, a checklist will be completed for your child.

When and how will I see findings from the AEDI?

Findings from the AEDI will be released at the community level (e.g. for each suburb) where children live. These findings provide a snapshot of how groups of children within the community have developed before they begin school.

The findings will be released in stages during 2009–10 through interactive, web-based maps and community and school profiles.

The first release of results will be at the end of 2009, available at www.aedi.org.au



Children need supportive and caring families and communities to thrive

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