

# Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)

## Information for Principals



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

Childrens 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 commencing in 2009.

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

### 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.

The AEDI is a national progress measure of early childhood development



Photo: Matt Blyth



The AEDI raises awareness about the importance of the early years

Every child deserves the best start in life

## How has the AEDI been developed?

The AEDI is an adapted version of the Canadian Early Development Instrument and has been extensively validated and piloted in 62 Australian communities on over 56,000 children from 2004 to 2008. The AEDI has also been adapted for Indigenous children and children from language backgrounds other than English. For more information on the development of the AEDI visit the website at [www.aedi.org.au](http://www.aedi.org.au).

## How are schools involved?

The AEDI checklists will be completed across all Australian schools between May and July 2009. More information will be provided by the respective State or Territory AEDI Coordinator about the data collection period for schools in your community.

The teacher(s) of children in their first year of formal full-time schooling will be asked to complete the AEDI Checklist based on their knowledge and observations of each child in their class. Children are not required to be present while teachers complete the checklists. The checklist is completed online using a secure web-based data entry system developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research.

Schools will be provided with funding for teacher relief to enable teachers to complete the AEDI Checklists. One hour of funding is provided to schools for each teacher to complete the training CD-Rom and read the AEDI Guide for Teachers before commencing the checklists. Although to date teachers have taken an average of 20 minutes to complete each checklist, for national rollout schools will be funded for 30 minutes per completed child. When each teacher in the school has finished entering the data, principals will be able to invoice the AEDI National Support Centre for payment using the web-based data entry system.

Since the AEDI is a population measure, all data are reported at the suburb or post code level and no identifying information about the children is provided in the data sent to the AEDI National Support Centre. Parents can choose to 'opt-out' if they do not want the AEDI checklist to be completed on their child.

More information about the AEDI data collection process will be provided in the AEDI Guide for Schools to be sent in early 2009.

## How will your school benefit from being involved?

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

- Initiate conversations and partnerships with community early childhood services and local agencies and 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.

Once community level information has been released, in the form of an AEDI Community Profile, each school will be able to download their own AEDI School Profile which includes the AEDI results for children in their school. Schools can use their School Profile, along with the local Community Profile, to look at how their children are faring developmentally when they begin full time school, compared with children in their local community and nationally. The AEDI School Profile will only be made available to the school, and is not publicly released.



The AEDI allows schools to reflect on the development of children as they enter school

For more information please visit [www.aedi.org.au](http://www.aedi.org.au)