

Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)

Information for Teachers



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.

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

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 and piloting of the AEDI visit the website at www.aedi.org.au.

How will teachers be involved?

The AEDI will be completed across Australia between May and July 2009. All teachers 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 and identifying information is not recorded.

Teachers will be provided with a detailed training CD-Rom and an AEDI Guide for Teachers to assist with completing the AEDI Checklists. To ensure national consistency, it is crucial that every teacher takes the time (one hour) to complete the training and read the guide. It takes teachers on average 20 minutes per child to complete the AEDI Checklists. Schools will be provided with funding for teacher relief to enable teachers to complete the AEDI Checklists.

Teachers input the information about each child into a secure online web-based data entry system developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research. Teachers who have completed the AEDI between 2004 and 2007 (n=1,601) have reported that completing the AEDI has been easy (96%), and that it is beneficial both for their community and their own work.

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

The AEDI enables teachers to reflect on the development of children in their first year of full-time school

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. The AEDI 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.

Teachers taking part in the AEDI have reported they value the opportunity to systematically reflect on each child's development when they complete the AEDI checklists.



The AEDI raises awareness about the importance of the early years

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