Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)

Information for Parents

Background

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) is a nation-wide population measure that looks at the development of young children. In 2012, schools (both government and non-government) will be taking part in the second national implementation of the AEDI. This will give each community in Australia a snapshot of how children have developed by the time they start school. It will help schools, communities and governments to pinpoint the services, resources and support that young children and their families need to give children the best possible start in life.

The Australian Government and State and Territory Governments are working in partnership with the Centre for Community Child Health at The Royal Children’s Hospital, Melbourne, the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, and the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Perth, to deliver the AEDI. The Social Research Centre, Melbourne will manage the 2012 data collection.

Following the success of the first national implementation of the AEDI, the Australian Government has made a commitment to collect this important data every three years. This represents a total investment of $28 million per collection cycle. The ongoing funding will ensure that governments, communities and schools continue to have important information about children’s development to help make a difference in the lives of young children and their families.

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.

How the AEDI works

Like a census, the AEDI involves collecting information on groups of children around Australia who are in their first year of full time school. This helps to create a snapshot of early childhood development in communities across Australia. To do this, teachers complete a checklist — like a survey or questionnaire — for every child in their class.

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

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- communication skills and general knowledge.

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.

Between May and July 2012 schools will participate in the AEDI by completing checklists for children in their first year of full time school.

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. Individual results for children are not reported.
Has the AEDI been done before?

In 2009 the AEDI was completed nationwide for the first time. AEDI Checklists were completed for 261,147 children (97.5 per cent of the estimated five-year-old population) across Australia. This involved 15,522 teachers from 7,422 Government, Catholic and Independent schools (95.6 per cent of schools with eligible 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 and 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 an AEDI Checklist for every child in their first year of full-time school. Each checklist takes around 20 minutes to complete.

Teachers complete the checklists based on their knowledge and observations of the child in class.

Whenever teachers complete AEDI checklists, they may choose to consult with specialised staff, including ESL teachers; Teachers’ Aides (Multicultural Education or Ethnic); Bilingual Support Officers including Bilingual School Services Officers and/or School Learning Support Officers (Ethnic); or Community Liaison or Information Officers.

If the classroom teacher is not Indigenous, it is recommended that they draw on the support and knowledge of an Indigenous Cultural Consultant when completing the AEDI Checklist for an Indigenous child.

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 are released at the community level where children live. Results for individual children are not reported.

Results from the 2012 data collection will available in 2013 through reports, online maps, community profiles and school profiles.

To see results from the first national implementation of the AEDI go to www.aedi.org.au

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