

The Australian Early Development Index – National Implementation Update

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All Australian states and territories will implement the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) in 2009. The Australian Government is funding a national roll-out as one component of its early childhood education strategy. In Queensland, all schools (state, Catholic and independent) with prep students will participate in the implementation.

What is the AEDI?

The 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. As a population measure, the AEDI focuses on all children in the community and examines early childhood development across the whole community.

The AEDI is an adapted version the Canadian Early Development Instrument (EDI) and, between 2004 and 2007, the AEDI has been implemented in 60 communities across Australia involving a total of over 37,000 children from over 1,000 schools (both government and non-government). The AEDI provides data on populations of children and is reported back to communities at the suburb or local area of the child's residence. It is not used to assess or identify individual children.

It is 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.

National implementation

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

The importance of the early years is widely recognised. This, coupled with the greater emphasis being placed on evidence-based policy and decision-making, adds value to the data gathered through the AEDI.

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 information about individual children is de-identified (all individual data is anonymous).

Teachers will be provided with a detailed training CD-ROM and an *AEDI Guide for Teachers* to assist with completing the AEDI Checklists. Teachers will be funded for one hour to undertake the AEDI CD-ROM training package and 30 minutes for each completed the AEDI Checklist.

The checklist is completed using a secure online web-based data entry system developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research.

How will the AEDI be used?

The national AEDI will provide evidence that can be used to support policy, planning and action for health, education and community support across Australia, and will provide all communities with the opportunity to strengthen collaborations between schools, early childhood services, and local agencies to support children and families. Communities will be able to use the national AEDI results to develop and evaluate their efforts to improve children's outcomes and mobilise communities around early childhood, enabling them to place children's development as a high priority and work towards enabling all children get the best possible start in life.

Information about the background and trial of the AEDI across Australia is available on the AEDI National Support Centre website www.aedi.org.au or at <http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/aediqueensland/index.html> on Queensland's Department of Education, Training and the Arts AEDI website. Early childhood professionals can access Fact Sheets for principals, teachers and parents about implementation and a set of parent information posters.