Experiences Matter: The Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ) as a Tool for Supporting Families in the Early Years

Early Years Conference
January 30, 2020
• Early experiences create a foundation for later learning and develop
• Provide opportunities for exploration and creativity
• Expose children to new people, providing chances to learn and practice social skills
How do we measure early experience?
Developed through a collaborative process

- scientific experts
- parents/caregivers
- educators
- children
- community members
CHEQ Basics:

- Completed by parents/caregivers
- Administered at the beginning of Kindergarten (September) in schools
- Completed online at school or home
- ~25 minutes to complete
- Two sections:
  1. Experiences
  2. Family socio-economic indicators (private)
CHEQ Reports

Reports for Schools:

- Individual
- Classroom Full Report
- Classroom Snapshot
- School Full Report
Snapshot Reports

- Developed by educators, for educators
- Questions aggregated into 5 key areas

The Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ) is used to better understand and support children’s experiences prior to Kindergarten. This Classroom Snapshot features data on select areas captured in the CHEQ that are relevant to school and community planning. Details on these areas are provided on page 2 of this report.

This child has had ...
CHEQ Participation

2018: 9 Districts
2019: 15 Districts
Total CHEQs by Year in BC

- 2017 (11 districts): 1248 CHEQs
- 2018 (9 districts): 2208 CHEQs
- 2019 (15 districts): 2996 CHEQs
What does research show are important early experiences?
Talking About Emotions

FINDINGS:

• Family talk about emotions at age 2 predicted greater emotional understanding at age 6

• Higher frequency of conversations related to higher peer acceptance and teacher-rated competence in preschool and Kindergarten

On the **CHEQ** we ask

How often have you had the chance to talk with your child about:

- Their emotions or feelings?
- Your emotions or feelings?
- Others’ emotions or feelings?
Talking with your child about their emotions or feelings

- Not yet to less than once a month: 5%
- A few times a month to about once a week: 12%
- A few times a week to most days or everyday: 84%
Talking with your child about your emotions or feelings

- Not yet to less than once a month: 10%
- A few times a month to about once a week: 24%
- A few times a week to most days or everyday: 67%
Talking with your child about **others'** emotions or feelings

- Not yet to less than once a month: 8%
- A few times a month to about once a week: 25%
- A few times a week to most days or everyday: 66%
Community Programs & Activities
Participation in Community Activities

FINDINGS:

• Participation in arts programs is related to improved motor skills, language development, decision making skills, and provide opportunities for making friends, expressing emotions

• Participation in organized sports related to better health, fewer emotional and behavioral problems, better academic outcomes, fewer problems with peers

Felfe, Lechner, & Steinmayr (2016) PLoS One
On the CHEQ we ask
In which of the following activities has your child participated/used?
- Sports programs
- Art, Music and/or Drama programs
- Cultural activities
- Story Time
- StrongStart
- Local Family Place
- Public Library
- Aboriginal Family Drop-in
- Family Resource Centre

What are the barriers?
Were there any local activities the parent/caregiver wanted to do with their child but couldn't? ANSWERED: 1883

- Yes: 36%
- No: 64%

Barriers to participation
ANSWERED: 665

- Hours the program operates: 44%
- Not having enough time: 41%
- Cost: 37%
- Available spaces: 28%
- Distance from home/work: 14%
- Other: 13%
- Transportation: 12%
- Didn't know the activity was offered: 6%
- Not inclusive of special needs: 4%
- Not meeting language/cultural needs: 1%
FINDINGS:

• Opportunities for socialization with peers, community and environment
• Reduces feelings of isolation
• Builds interpersonal skills
• Facilitates physical fitness and healthy development

On the **CHEQ** we ask

How often did your child play outside in their neighborhood?

Never >>>> Everyday
CHEQ 2019 Provincial Data

Frequency of Outdoor Play in Neighbourhood

- 6 days a week or more: 67%
- 4-5 days a week: 23%
- 2-3 days a week: 8%
- Once a week or less: 1%
CHEQ 2019 Provincial Data

Energetic Physical Activity (per day) - Unorganized

- More than 120 min: 21%
- 61-120 min: 33%
- 31-60 min: 31%
- 15-30 min: 10%
- Fewer than 15 min: 3%
- No unorganized activities: 2%
Social Support
Social Support

• Social bonds
• Supportive relationships

FINDINGS:

• Prevent and alleviate stress
• More resilient to stressful situations
• Promotes positive parenting behaviors (warmth, monitoring)
• Increases feelings of parental efficacy

Cohen & Willis, 1985; Thomson, Flood & Goodwin, 2006; Burchinal, Follmer, & Bryant, 1996
On the **CHEQ** we ask

• How many people can you depend on in your neighborhood?

• Generally, can neighbors be counted on to look out for children in the neighborhood?
Degree to which neighbours can be counted on to look out for their children in parent/caregiver's neighbourhood

28% Yes
72% No

Number of people in their neighbourhood that the parent/caregiver can depend on

- 5 or more: 22%
- 4: 10%
- 3: 13%
- 2: 22%
- 1: 15%
- 0: 18%

ANSWERED: 2802
Early Literacy Experiences
Early Literacies

“During this critical pre-K period, children are highly vulnerable to disparities in cognitive stimulation, especially spoken language, as well as toys and books promoting constructive parent-child engagement.”

Hutton, Horowitz-Kraus, Mendelsohn, DeWitt, Holland 2015 – C-Mind Group at Cincinatti Children’s, Pediatrics, 2015
Reading Together

• Exposure to high amount of language input
• Sparking interest in books
• Providing factual information about the world
• Awareness of letter-sound relations
• Opportunity for warm and sensitive interaction with caregiver
• Impacts the developing brain
On the **CHEQ** we ask...

- In the last six months, how often did you or another important person in your child’s life:
  - Read books or tell stories with your child?
  - Talk with your child about pictures, signs, and words they experience in daily life?
  - Do rhymes with your child?
  - Read books, magazines or newspapers when your child is around?
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  • Talk with your child about pictures, signs, and words they experience in daily life?
  • Do rhymes with your child?
  • Read books, magazines or newspapers when your child is around?
CHEQ 2019 Provincial Data

Read books or tell stories:
- Most days or every day: 68%
- A few times a week: 23%
- About once a week: 5%
- A few times a month or less: 4%
- Not yet: 1%

Talk with child about pictures, signs and words they experience in daily life:
- Most days or every day: 68%
- A few times a week: 24%
- About once a week: 4%
- A few times a month or less: 3%
- Not yet: 1%
Sing songs, make music, do rhymes or dance with their child

- Most days or every day: 52%
- A few times a week: 34%
- About once a week: 8%
- A few times a month or less: 5%
- Not yet: 1%

Read books, magazines or newspapers when their child is around

- Most days or every day: 29%
- A few times a week: 35%
- About once a week: 15%
- A few times a month or less: 16%
- Not yet: 5%
What is CHEQ data used for?

Together, we can use data to...

- Better understand early experiences
- Improve classroom planning
- Develop district-wide programs and policies in BC
- Make evidence-based decisions around community programming & services
Moving CHEQ Data to Action

CHEQ data can be used to:

• Develop district-wide programs and policies in BC
• Make evidence-based decisions around community programming & services
• Support children & families
Moving CHEQ Data to Action

The CHEQ helps us hear from parents/caregivers to understand the lived-experience of children and families in communities.
Moving CHEQ Data to Action

The CHEQ is a companion tool to the EDI as it provides insights into how children’s early experiences may influence vulnerability.
Thank You!

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Discussion questions:

What intrigues you most about the CHEQ approach and data?

How could you use CHEQ and other similar data to support your work?
Moving CHEQ Data to Action

The CHEQ also provides access to individual-level data which allows educators to provide targeted supports.

Classroom and school-level reports are also produced to allow for planning and programming in schools.
• Children need opportunities for a variety of experiences
• Use data to show where and what is missing
What are people across the province saying about the CHEQ?

“There isn't a week that goes by in a year that I'm not referring to the CHEQ data in some way, shape, or form. If I didn't have this data, it would be by guess, by golly, or by gut.”

-District Leader, SD6