

THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT



THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT (EDI)

The EDI is a questionnaire that is used province-wide. It was developed by researchers at the Offord Centre for Child Studies to measure patterns and trends in child development in populations of children. The questionnaire is completed by kindergarten teachers for children in their classes. They are filled out in February, after teachers have had the chance to get to know their students. This ensures that teachers are able to answer the questions for each student knowledgeably. The EDI includes 104 questions and measures five important areas of early child development. These areas are good predictors of adult health, education and social outcomes.

EDI SCALES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

The EDI...

- is a Canadian-made research tool developed at Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University;
- has been used in BC since 1999;
- is used to measure developmental trends and change in populations of children;
- is NOT used to diagnose individual children;

It is important to note that individual, identifiable data are not released.



Physical Health and Well-being

Can the child hold a pencil? Is the child able to manipulate objects?



Social Competence

Is the child able to follow class routines?
Is the child self-confident?



Emotional Maturity

Does the child comfort a child who is crying or upset?



Language and Cognitive

Is the child interested in reading and writing?
Can the child count and recognize numbers?



Communication Skills

Can the child tell a story? Can the child communicate with adults and children?

By evaluating data gathered from the EDI questionnaire, researchers are able to measure population-based vulnerability rates by geographical area, allowing us to understand child vulnerability across the province. Vulnerable children are children who, without additional support and care, may experience future challenges in school and society. Knowing how children are actually faring in the province means that communities and governments are able to provide better supports and services for families and young children.

“Reducing inequality in child development will require us to bring about enduring social change...”
- Clyde Hertzman, Founding Director, Human Early Learning Partnership

Leading Research in Child Health and Well-being

HELP is committed to the quality of its research and reviews its data collection processes regularly to ensure that results are reliable and valid. HELP works collaboratively with a network of trainers and teachers in every district to ensure there is consistency in the way that they assess the children in their classes.

The EDI was developed to measure trends in child development across large populations, and has been adopted and implemented all over the world including Australia and Chile.



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CREATING POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH RESEARCH

To contribute to positive social change, HELP creates maps, graphics and reports that summarize EDI results. EDI results are reported annually for the province, school districts and neighbourhoods. The results give each community in BC a snapshot of how their children have developed in the years before they begin school. HELP works with over 100 community stakeholders who use the data and their own local knowledge and resources to better support children and families in their area.

EDI research shows patterns of child development – both across the province and within local communities. It is a starting point to inform how we introduce policies and programs to best support child development.

The EDI:

- Increases awareness of the importance of the early years;
- Identifies areas of strength and weakness in children’s development;
- Provides evidence based research to support community initiatives for healthy child development;
- Strengthens relationships between researchers and communities; and
- Provides communities with information to support future planning and service development.

GUIDING COMMUNITY ACTION

In Powell River, EDI scores provide important information used to plan new programs that support families and their young children. One program of note is the ORCA (On the Road with Children’s Activities) bus, a mobile early learning activity bus that has made it possible to bring early development programming to children in more remote areas of the community.

In North Vancouver, EDI results provided the catalyst to create better supports and services for families. The results allowed community early child development stakeholders, like Fran Jones, to show that even in BC’s most affluent neighbourhoods there were a number of vulnerable children. Because of this recognition, they were able to build services and support hard for reach families with the WHEELS program.

INFORMING POLICY

Policy monitoring is an important research focus for HELP. It is our goal to support development of evidence-based policy recommendations that are consistent with our understanding of the science of early development and that address vulnerability rates. We also know that children thrive when their families thrive and therefore, supporting children’s development requires policy to address families’ needs for time, resources and community supports in caring for their children.

The EDI, specifically, provides population-based data about early child development to communities and governments so that they can put into place programs and policies to support healthy child development in all families. Illustrating with data the disparities in children’s development inspires action to redress these inequities.