

Early Child Development (ECD) Mapping Initiative



The ECD Mapping Initiative is a five-year research activity that will give Alberta school authorities, communities and parents a comprehensive range of information on children's development prior to kindergarten. This Initiative is funded by Alberta Education and supports the Minister's priority to improve broad-based supports and early intervention initiatives for at-risk children to improve their learning outcomes.

What is the Early Child Development (ECD) Mapping Initiative?

The ECD Mapping Initiative uses the Early Development Instrument (EDI), developed by the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario to measure the development of all children during their kindergarten year. In addition to the EDI information, the Initiative will also gather information on family and community factors that influence children's development as well as local programs and services that help children develop to their full potential.

All of this information will be used to produce community maps to help identify how both the resources available in communities and service gaps that may exist influence the development of children.

The information gathered by the ECD Mapping Initiative will help to:

- illustrate where programs and resources are located, and how accessible these programs are to those they were designed to support
- identify community differences in the nature of children's development prior to school
- reveal how socio-economic factors may influence children's early development
- heighten awareness of the importance of early child development.

What is the EDI (Early Development Instrument)?

The EDI is a scientifically validated questionnaire used to gauge the 'developmental readiness' of populations of 5-year olds. The questionnaire collects information on children's development in five areas:

- Physical health and well-being – child is healthy, independent, ready each day
- Social competence – child plays, gets along with others and shares, is self-confident
- Emotional maturity – child is able to concentrate, help others, is patient
- Language and cognitive development – child is interested in reading and writing, can count and recognize numbers, shapes
- Communication skills and general knowledge – child can tell a story, communicate with adults and children.

Results from the EDI are designed to be interpreted at the group level. It is a population-based measure, similar to a census, and no individual child will be identified.

How is EDI administered?

In February and March, kindergarten teachers complete a questionnaire for each child in their classroom. The process is reflective; children are not 'tested', asked any questions or even in the room while teachers complete the survey.

How will the information be used?

In addition to the EDI, the Initiative is also utilizing Statistics Canada socio-economic data and is working with communities to collect information about community assets (facilities, programming and services for young children). This data will be 'plotted' on maps for every community in the province. This type of information can help to learn more about the differences across communities in child development; and where strengths and gaps exist in programming, facilities and services. Communities can then use this information to work together to meet the needs of their young children and families.

Who is participating in the initiative?

By the spring of 2011, over 85 school authorities in the province will have participated, and EDI data will have been collected for over 50,000 children. We hope that by the end of the project, every kindergarten in Alberta will have collected EDI data at least twice so we have a complete picture of the development of young children in the province.

How will this help my child/my community?

To know how to best support healthy child development, we need to know how children are doing. By implementing EDI, mapping child development and gathering community information province-wide, parents, educators, key decision-makers, and others interested in the well-being of children will be able to assess how well communities are doing in supporting young children and families as well as identify and better understand the influences of socio-economic and community factors that contribute to success in school and in life.

Who can I contact to find out more about the ECD Mapping Initiative?

For more information, please go to www.ecdmapping.alberta.ca or contact:

Pat Chemerys, Early Learning Branch, Alberta Education, at 780-638-3385 or by email at pat.chemerys@gov.ab.ca

or Vicki Cooke, Early Learning Branch, Alberta Education at 780-644-2285 or by email at vicki.cooke@gov.ab.ca