

The EDI TEACHER NEWSLETTER



On behalf of the Provincial Healthy Child Manitoba Advisory Committee, I am pleased to introduce the third EDI Teacher Newsletter. Several years have passed since many school divisions first volunteered to collect the EDI data in 2003. Since then, we have seen tremendous progress and many important milestones.

In November 2009, the first pan-Canadian EDI Conference was held in Winnipeg. This event was a great opportunity for us to showcase how we use the EDI in our province. It was wonderful to see so many folks from across Canada and other countries, including Australia, and so many familiar faces from Manitoba as well. I know that the ripple effects from this conference will move us towards a pan-Canadian approach with the EDI, strengthening our collective efforts and work in the area of early childhood development. To see presentations and materials from this conference, visit www.manitoba.ca/healthychild/edi/edi_pan.html.

We are also looking forward to the upcoming release of Manitoba's newest EDI data. With the third wave of EDI data (2008/09), it's now possible for our analysts to examine year-over-year trends on how our children are doing in Manitoba. These new community EDI data reports, slated to be released this spring, will undoubtedly help us all in our work for Manitoba's children. The 2008/09 community EDI reports will be posted along with previous community EDI reports at www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/edi/index.html.

Manitoba recently celebrated the second anniversary of the Healthy Child Manitoba Act. The Act shows our province's commitment to the well-being of children and families and I believe it provides the foundation we can use to strengthen the Healthy Child Manitoba strategy. The EDI plays an important role in this strategy. It guides, monitors and evaluates our work so that we can make the best decisions to support the best possible outcomes for Manitoba's children. All of you - the educators of our young children and the collectors of the EDI - are instrumental in this work. So on behalf of the Provincial Healthy Child Advisory Committee, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to Manitoba's teachers, for the work you do for our children and for your contribution to Healthy Child Manitoba. Thank you so much!

Strini Reddy
Chair of Manitoba's Provincial Healthy Child Advisory Committee



A National Snapshot of Child Development from Australia

Hello from Australia! We are pleased to have this opportunity to share our EDI story with you. It has been a busy year, as 2009 marked the first year that the AEDI (Australian Early Development Index) was completed nationwide. The national roll-out of the AEDI, which is an adapted version of the EDI, was one of the biggest early childhood development ventures in Australia. It involved 261,203 children (97.5 per cent of the estimated national five-year-old population), 7,423 schools and 15,528 teachers. Now, unlike ever before, Australia has a national snapshot of children's development.

Adapting the EDI

In 2002, the EDI was first piloted in the northern metropolitan suburbs of Perth in Western Australia. After this preliminary phase, the Australian Government funded the Australian Early Development Index: Building Better Communities for Children Project (2004 – 2008), which allowed us to develop, evaluate and adapt the AEDI in 60 communities (rural and urban) across Australia. Two important studies were conducted to ensure the AEDI was culturally and linguistically appropriate--the AEDI Indigenous Adaptation Study (Centre for Developmental Health and the Kulunga Indigenous Research Network at Perth's Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, 2007) and the Language Background Other Than English Study.

This testing and evaluation phase resulted in an instrument very similar to the EDI (the majority of the adaptations made were to the EDI guide and not the instrument itself) and allowed us to implement, nationwide, a standardized tool that measures early childhood development and reflects the diversity of Australia's children.

Reporting the data results

Through a \$21.9 million investment by the Australian government, and the coordination of the Centre for Community Child Health and the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research in Perth, the AEDI was collected across Australia last spring. Data results were released in December.

The first nationwide AEDI report, *A Snapshot of Early Childhood Development in Australia – AEDI National Report 2009*, and an online community data map inventory provide community, government and research groups with a visual representation of the data results at a local level. It also helps them to pinpoint the types of services, resources and support that young children and their families need to give children their best possible start in life.

Putting data into action

The first few years of AEDI implementation have shown how communities can take the findings from the AEDI data and put them into action. Professor Frank Oberklaid, director of the Centre for Community Child Health, says that most children are doing well, but there are many children with developmental vulnerabilities in Australia.

“The AEDI is about helping communities to understand how well local children are developing in the critical early years before they start school, and where efforts would be best directed in addressing any vulnerabilities,” he said. “They help us look at how to best distribute resources to meet the needs of all children, and consider where targeting particular areas or resources might be more effective.”

At the Pan-Canadian EDI Conference, held in Winnipeg this past November, Dr. Sally Brinkman (epidemiologist for the AEDI at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research) delivered her keynote speech on Australia's experience with the nationwide implementation of the AEDI.

“It was fantastic to share our story,” she said. “Many in the audience have proudly watched Australia progress from a small sample of 200 children in 2002 to a nationwide collection in 2009. However the conference was also a reminder that in Australia, we still have much that we can learn from Canada's experience with the EDI. We look forward to the growing collaboration between Canada and Australia, and we welcome those other countries that are embarking on their own journeys with the EDI.”



Dr. Sally Brinkman



Members of the Australian EDI team

The AEDI has helped communities raise awareness about the importance of early childhood development. It has helped develop strategic plans and initiatives to improve outcomes for children and encouraged collaboration between agencies working with young children and their families. The AEDI has also given communities an evidence base for the development of community initiatives – like parent support, family and preschool literacy and nutrition to support children and their families — as well as providing evidence that supports grant or funding applications. The AEDI has helped schools plan and promote optimal transitions to school while developing partnerships with preschools and childcare centres.

To learn more about the AEDI and how Australian communities use the AEDI at the local level, visit: www.aedi.org.au.



A Message from the Offord Centre for Child Studies

I am delighted to have this opportunity to contribute to Manitoba's EDI Teacher Newsletter. First, let me extend my congratulations to the Province of Manitoba for their work in establishing an evaluation and monitoring system within the Healthy Child Manitoba Strategy. The data linkage capacity within your health, education, and social services databases – including the EDI – marks Manitoba as a national leader in using data to inform government policy and community action.

EDI data gathered across Canada and other countries contributes to our local and global understanding on the influences of healthy child development. There is much work being done – both nationally and internationally - with the EDI, and I would like to bring you up to date on some of that work.

The first national EDI conference “The Early Development Imperative: A Pan-Canadian Conference on Population Level Measurement of Children’s Development” was held in Winnipeg this past November, and it was a timely opportunity for community leaders, researchers and policy makers to come together and share ten years of learning on the influences of early childhood development. Together with colleagues and partners from BC, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Montreal, PEI and the Council for Early Child Development, we have been working on a Pan-Canadian Mapping Project, of which the first outcomes, Canada-wide EDI and socio-economic data maps, were launched at the conference. This Mapping Project (a work in progress) can be accessed at www.councilcd.ca/?q=pancanadianedi_maps.

Across Canada, the EDI data have been collected at the provincial level in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, PEI, Nova Scotia, the Yukon (2010) and parts of Quebec. This has yielded a national EDI database, housed at the Offord Centre for Child Studies, on over 660,000 children – a nearly full picture on how children develop in Canada.

The EDI has also gained recognition at the international level, and has been implemented nation-wide in Australia and across regions of the USA, Jordan, Mexico and Chile. It has also been used in Jamaica, New Zealand, Kosovo, Holland, England, Ireland and Mozambique in small-scale research and evaluation projects. An International EDI Conference will be held in Hamilton, Ontario on June 16-17, 2010.

The successes we have had using the EDI data at local, national, and international levels could not have happened without the contribution and support of our kindergarten teachers. On behalf of myself and my team, I would like to thank all of you for the important role you play in contributing to the knowledge on the development of Canada’s children and in our collective work towards promoting healthy child development. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our friends in Manitoba for their warm hospitality during the November Pan-Canadian EDI conference.

Thank you all!

Magdalena Janus
Co-author of the EDI Offord Centre for Child Studies



The Offord Centre for Child Studies Team

For more information on the pan-Canadian approach to using the EDI, visit the Offord Centre for Child Studies' website at: www.offordcentre.com/readiness/SRL_project.html

The St. James – Assiniboia Parent-Child Coalition

Over the last three years of participating in the EDI, the St. James – Assiniboia community has embraced this community research and has made great strides in understanding and using the EDI.

Sharing our data

The parent child coalition began examining and sharing local-level EDI data by hosting three community breakfasts with a wide representation of community stakeholders, including the school division, resource and service providers, the child care community and parents.

“The huge benefit that came from reviewing our EDI results was the direction and focus it gave the coalition,” said Bonnah Demeulenaere, a former family resource coordinator with the community. “Over the last three

years, the EDI has helped us in our PATH process, planning our programs and in working with our school division. It has shown our community partners how important everyone’s role is in ensuring the children in our community have the best start.”

One of the coalition’s priorities is to share EDI data with community partners, including the child care community, so the data can help them make decisions on how best to support the children in the community.

“The EDI scores for our community have become a part of discussions at our St. James Directors Support Group and at my own centre’s staff meetings,” said Ron Blatz, executive director of Discovery Children’s Centre Inc. “We know that social and emotional development in our community is a need according to our EDI data, so I encourage our staff to see every social problem that arises in our play-based program as a learning opportunity for our children.”

Working together

Overall, the EDI data shows many strengths in the community. However, some neighbourhoods have low scores in social and emotional development. To address the needs in these neighbourhoods, partnerships with the school division and a local community centre have been established. These partners provided free facility space to open two parent child centres. The response to these centres, located in Sansome School and Deer Lodge Community Centre, has been excellent. In fact, a third site opened this fall in Crestview School, building on these successes.

“St. James-Assiniboia School Division recognizes that the first years of a child’s life are critical to their success as a learner,” said Tanis Pshebniski, assistant superintendent of the St. James – Assiniboia School Division. “The parent child centres provide parenting resources, activities and programming to families with preschool children that will enhance those very important first years.”



"I started coming to the parent child centre when my youngest was a few months old, said Charlene Knutt, one of the participating parents. "Originally, I came to give my two year old an outing and a chance to play with other kids, but I got so much more than that - activities for the kids, the chance to connect with other parents who know what I'm going through and the knowledge that although motherhood can be tough, there are supports to help me through it. I really appreciated the support of the other moms, as well as the program coordinator. I would absolutely recommend it for all parents."

Digging deeper

Because EDI results are mapped by neighbourhood, it was easy to see strengths and needs within our community. However, the EDI maps didn't explain why these strengths and needs exist. As the people involved became more and more knowledgeable with the EDI data, it became time to dig deeper and to examine other data in the community.

This led to a community mapping project. Census data was mapped to show the demographics of the community and the structure and socio-economic make-up of community families. The locations of community programs (child care sites, schools, recreation programs, supported housing) were added to these maps to determine if any service gaps existed. While the EDI showed us the strengths and needs of our community, the mapping project painted an even fuller picture of what might be contributing to the EDI results. It was a huge undertaking, though well worth the time and effort, and we know that the commitment to our mapping project will be on-going as we continue to update our maps with new census, community asset and EDI data.

Building momentum

Over the past year, the division's school teams (school administrators, kindergarten and resource teachers, curriculum coordinators and clinical staff) met to examine school-level EDI data. Participants brainstormed on how to meet the needs of the children entering school.

"What was most exciting about our most recent EDI sharing day was to hear the buzz in the room as school teams discussed what could be done through school and community partnerships, especially with the child care community, to ensure our children have the best start to school," said Deidre Sagert, Literacy Links coordinator. "I know our children will benefit from these partnerships."

Another community forum is being planned to bring together the school division, the coalition and community partners to share and examine the new EDI data this spring. These new results provide the first look at the EDI data trends in the community. The people involved look forward to the next forum as a way to spark even more partnerships and collaboration. The community is truly proof of the proverb that it takes a village to raise a child.



For more information on Manitoba's EDI, visit the Healthy Child Manitoba website at: www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/edi/index.html