

Early Childhood Development Instrument

The early years in a child's life are the most critical for healthy growth and development, setting children on the path they will follow for the rest of their lives.

Since 2012, NWT kindergarten teachers have compiled data on five-year-old kindergarten students using the Early Development Instrument.

The Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University established the Early Development Instrument in 2000. The EDI is a standardized method of measuring readiness to learn at school and has been implemented in school districts all across Canada and in several other countries around the world. EDI does not diagnose individual children but instead provides a snapshot of the learning readiness of groups of five year olds as they get ready to enter grade one. Kindergarten teachers use a checklist with questions about the five areas of children's early development, and the results are compiled into a cohort group.

The five early development areas are Physical health and Well-Being; Social Competence; Emotional Maturity; Language and Cognitive Development; and Communication Skills and General Knowledge.

There is a sixth indicator currently being validated, with the Northwest Territories as the first group in Canada to use. The Sense of Identity Questionnaire (SIQ) has been developed to understand the role of cultural identity in child development. While this is a new initiative and further study is required, early findings suggest much can be learned from linking children's sense of identity with information on their developmental health.

The NWT EDI results provide statistically valid baseline data on early childhood development that will help the GNWT focus and target its investments where they will make the greatest positive impact to ensure that the needs of all NWT children and families are being met.

The EDI data reflect that many NWT children are not receiving the proper supports and rich early learning opportunities necessary for healthy growth and development and that immediate action is required to address this critical situation.

The Departments of Education, Culture and Employment and Health and Social Services are already undertaking many actions to ensure children have high quality early childhood learning and healthy development opportunities. Further action will be guided by *Right from the Start: Early Childhood Development Framework and Action Plan*, a 10-year strategy on early childhood development that addresses the need for enhanced early learning opportunities and the need for new programs and services in a realistic and managed way.

Media requests for interviews with Members of the Executive Council may be directed to:

Office of the Press Secretary • Premier/Cabinet
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Ensuring children receive the support they need in early childhood will take the cooperation of many groups and organizations. Building partnerships with quality organizations like Aboriginal Head Start, ensuring that Aboriginal Governments and community leaders are aware of the challenges and opportunities for children, and working with parents and families will secure a future where every child, family, and community in the NWT, particularly those most at risk, has access to high quality, comprehensive and culturally infused early childhood development programs and services.

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