

AEDC School Pack fact sheet

About the AEDC

This fact sheet provides a general overview of the Australian Early Development Census.

About the census

What is the AEDC?

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is an Australian Government Initiative. It measures the developmental progress of children as they start their first year of full-time school and looks at groups of children in the community, not individuals.

The census involves teachers of children in their first year of full-time school completing a research tool, the Australian version of the Early Development Instrument. The Instrument collects data relating to five key areas of early childhood development.

Who uses the AEDC results?

The census is used by early childhood educators and health services, local councils and community groups, schools and governments. The AEDC is used to help plan and allocate the right type of services, resources and support for communities.

Why is the census completed in the first year of full-time school?

Research shows that the experiences and relationships that babies and children have during the early years strongly affect their future development. Providing the right kinds of services, resources and support during the early years brings life-long benefits to children and the whole community.

How long has the census been running?

In 2009, the AEDC (formerly known as the Australian Early Development Index or AEDI) was conducted nationally for the first time, with a second national collection in 2012. More than 95 per cent of schools with eligible children participated in each collection.

Participation

Why should schools participate?

The AEDC provides information for schools, communities and governments to more effectively allocate the services, resources and support that will help shape the future and wellbeing of children in Australia.

At the school level, teachers reported that participating in the census raised their awareness of the needs of individual children, as well as the needs of the class as a whole. They also reported that completing the AEDC assisted their planning for transition to school and developing programmes of work for their class.

Results from previous data collections have been used to help young children and families in a range of ways:

- Communities start new playgrounds and parental services;
- Schools seeing improved student performance through new literacy programmes; and
- Governments using the data as evidence to develop better policies for children.

Data collection

Who collects the census data?

After participating in training, teachers assess each child in their class and answer around 100 questions across five important areas of early childhood development. Teachers

Links to resources and AEDC Help

Copies of this fact sheet and links to other resources are available from www.aedc.gov.au/schoolpack

The AEDC team is also here to help with any enquiries: helpdesk@aedc.gov.au or phone 1800 092 548.

 **Read this fact sheet first**

will complete the Australian version of the Early Development Instrument for each child in their class. The data is then submitted online through a secure data collection system for processing, and published the following year.

What is assessed during data collection?

The Instrument measures five key areas of early childhood development:

- Physical health and wellbeing
- Social competence
- Emotional maturity
- Language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- Communication skills and general knowledge.

Teachers complete an assessment on each child, but the published data only represents groups of children at community, state/territory and national levels. Individual children and individual schools are not identified in the final reports.

What is required of each child?

Nothing, children do not need to be present; teachers use the Instrument to record their observations.

How reliable is teacher reporting?

Teachers will undertake one hour of training and be provided with detailed information to help them accurately complete the Instrument for the children in their class.

Studies have confirmed the reliability of teacher reporting by using different teachers to report on the same children.

Reporting

How is the census data reported?

Data are publicly available on the AEDC website, and are reported as groups of anonymous children at community, state/territory and national levels.

Each participating school will receive access to an AEDC School Profile. This profile will provide information about the number of children attending the school who are considered to be developmentally vulnerable, and those performing well, compared with all other children across Australia.

The AEDC School Profile can be used for school planning, but is not intended for general publication. The school will decide how it shares and uses its School Profile.

What is the information used for?

AEDC data is used for policy and planning, data analysis and statistical and research purposes. Results are reported at the national, state and territory, community, and local community level to help create a snapshot of early childhood development in Australia.

Data may also be linked with information from other organisations to improve programmes and policies for young children. When the data is linked with other data, extreme care is taken to ensure individual children cannot be identified.

You can read more about how AEDC data is published and how it has helped communities on the AEDC website www.aedc.gov.au.

Who is responsible for the data?

The Australian Government and State and Territory Governments are working in partnership with various organisations to deliver the AEDC. The Social Research Centre in Melbourne collects and manages the AEDC data, which is available in two forms: a public version with summary reports on the AEDC website, and as unit record files, accessible to researchers through an application to the AEDC Data Management Team.

Privacy

Will parents/carers get individual results for their child?

The AEDC is not like the National Assessment Programme in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) where individual reports are provided to parents/carers. For the AEDC, your child's data will be combined with data from the other children living within the same community. AEDC results for individual children are not reported and the AEDC is not used as an individual diagnostic tool. This means that an individual child report is not produced.

Are children's names included in the report?

Children's names and other identifying information are recorded by the teacher but data is de-identified before being made public or made available to researchers. Teachers use a secure data collection system allowing for the safe collection of data.

What if a parent does not want their child to participate in the census?

Participation in the AEDC is voluntary, and parents/carers can notify schools if they wish to opt out of the census.

Who should parents/carers contact if they have more questions about privacy?

All enquiries about the privacy of AEDC information should be directed in writing to the Australian Government Department of Education and Training at aedc@education.gov.au.

There is also a range of information on privacy available from the AEDC website www.aedc.gov.au/privacy.