



Overview of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

The AEDC is a resource to inform planning

The purpose of this resource is to provide guidance for Prep teachers and school leadership teams around using the AEDC in planning for children's transition to school.

This resource will:

- provide an overview of the AEDC, what it measures and the relevance of the AEDC as an indicator for schools
- describe the AEDC data available to schools and how this can be accessed
- offer strategies and approaches to using the AEDC data at a school level.

The AEDC provides schools with contextual information about children's holistic development and helps schools to consider what might impact on children's future learning. Much like a health indicator – such as the rate of immunisation tells us something about the future health needs of a population – the AEDC provides population trends and helps schools to identify local issues that are likely to impact on children's development and wellbeing, and in turn the school and the school community.

The AEDC is a nationwide census of early childhood development, collected triennially since 2009. It provides a holistic measure of development which can support schools in their planning.

Validation studies have shown that the AEDC is a valid and reliable predictor of children's literacy and numeracy outcomes throughout their primary school years and later in life (Brinkman, Zubrick & Silburn, 2012).

About the AEDC

Early childhood experiences have a decisive impact on the architecture of the brain, and on the nature and extent of adult capacities (Gable & Hunting, 2000; Shore, 1997).

The AEDC data gives all communities critical information about the development of their children. As such, it provides a starting point for schools, communities and governments to identify and respond to issues facing children and families.

Understanding the characteristics and skills children display when they are on track on each domain, and the challenges children face if they are developmentally at risk or vulnerable, can help schools to consider how best to support children's learning and development in Prep.

Children's experiences in the earliest years contribute substantially to their later health, wellbeing, and educational success.

Prepared in partnership by the Telethon Kids Institute and The University of Queensland for the Department of Education.



Understanding developmental vulnerability measured by the AEDC

The AEDC measures foundational skills and capabilities of children. Those children with scores in the developmentally at risk and developmentally vulnerable bands are likely to face challenges in coping with the social and learning environment of school. Consider the AEDC domain descriptions below and the impact these have on children’s ability to engage with the curriculum, their teachers and their peers.

AEDC domain	Children developmentally on track	Children developmentally at risk	Children developmentally vulnerable
 <p>Physical health and wellbeing <i>Children learn best when they are healthy, independent and physically ready for each day.</i></p>	<p>Almost never have problems that interfere with their ability to physically cope with the school day. These children are generally independent, have excellent motor skills, and have energy levels that can get them through the school day.</p>	<p>Experience some challenges that interfere with their ability to physically cope with the school day. This may include being dressed inappropriately, frequently late, hungry or tired. Children may also show poor coordination skills, have poor fine and gross motor skills, or show poor to average levels of energy levels during the school day.</p>	<p>Experience a number of challenges that interfere with their ability to physically cope with the school day. This may include being dressed inappropriately, frequently late, hungry or tired. Children are usually clumsy and may have fading energy levels.</p>
 <p>Social competence <i>Children do well in social settings when they are confident, happy to try new things and can get along well with their peers.</i></p>	<p>Almost never have problems getting along, working, or playing with other children; are respectful to adults, are self-confident, are able to follow class routines; and are capable of helping others.</p>	<p>Experience some challenges in the following areas: getting along with other children and teachers, playing with a variety of children in a cooperative manner, showing respect for others and for property, following instructions and class routines, taking responsibility for their actions, working independently, and exhibiting self-control and self-confidence.</p>	<p>Experience a number of challenges with poor overall social skills. For example, children who do not get along with other children on a regular basis do not accept responsibility for their own actions and have difficulties following rules and class routines. Children may be disrespectful of adults, children, and others’ property; have low self-confidence and self-control, do not adjust well to change; and are usually unable to work independently.</p>
 <p>Emotional maturity <i>Children adapt best to a classroom environment when they can consider others, concentrate, have patience and are beginning to manage their emotions.</i></p>	<p>Almost never show aggressive, anxious, or impulsive behaviour. Children will have good concentration and will often help other children.</p>	<p>Experience some challenges in the following areas: helping other children who are hurt, sick or upset, inviting other children to join in activities, being kind to other children, and waiting their turn in activities. They will sometimes experience problems with anxious behaviours, aggressive behaviour, temper tantrums, or problems with inattention or hyperactivity.</p>	<p>Experience a number of challenges related to emotional regulation. For example, problems managing aggressive behaviour, being prone to disobedience, easily distracted, inattentive, and impulsive. Children will usually not help others and are sometimes upset when left by their caregiver.</p>



AEDC domain	Children developmentally on track	Children developmentally at risk	Children developmentally vulnerable
<p>Language and cognitive skills</p> <p><i>Children love to learn new things at school when they have developed an early interest in reading and counting, and can recognise numbers and shapes.</i></p>	<p>Children will be interested in books, reading and writing, and basic math; capable of reading and writing simple sentences and complex words. Will be able to count and recognise numbers and shapes.</p>	<p>Have mastered some but not all of the following literacy and numeracy skills: able to identify some letters and attach sounds to some letters, show awareness of rhyming words, know writing directions, able to write their own name, count to 20, recognise shapes and numbers, compare numbers, sort and classify, and understand simple time concepts. Children may have difficulty remembering things and show a lack of interest in books, reading, maths and numbers, and may not have mastered more advanced literacy skills such as reading and writing simple words or sentences.</p>	<p>Experience a number of challenges in reading or writing and with numbers; unable to read and write simple words, will be uninterested in trying, and often unable to attach sounds to letters. Children will have difficulty remembering things, counting to 20, and recognising and comparing numbers; usually not interested in numbers.</p>
<p>Communication skills and general knowledge</p> <p><i>Children who are successful learners are able to communicate their needs and thoughts to adults and other children.</i></p>	<p>Children will have excellent communication skills, can tell a story and communicate easily with both children and adults, and have no problems with articulation.</p>	<p>Have mastered some but not all of the following communication skills: listening, understanding and speaking effectively in English, being able to articulate clearly, being able to tell a story and to take part in imaginative play. Children may not know some basic general knowledge about the world, such as knowing that leaves fall in autumn, apples are fruit and dogs bark.</p>	<p>Children will have poor communication skills and articulation; have limited command of English (or the language of instruction), have difficulties talking to others, understanding, and being understood; and have poor general knowledge.</p>

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Suggested strategies and approaches to using and responding to the AEDC data at your school

Schools can respond to their community's AEDC data and vulnerabilities on a variety of levels, beginning with: getting to know their community, connecting with transition partners and developing an action plan.

Get to know your community

What other community data have you collected and what information might be missing?

Considered alongside other local data, the AEDC helps schools to build a picture of their local community. A community brings together diverse information about children, families and the local area. Documenting what you already know, what you are unsure about, and where you have gaps in your understanding is a great way to get started. Importantly, a community profile can help schools get a clear picture about what might get in the way of their efforts making the difference they hope to make.

The following list is a suggested starting point in building a picture about children and families in the community.

Information	Source
Vision and expectations for children's learning Issues faced by children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School staff• Anecdotal information and knowledge from families, Elders, community members, children• Local service providers
Community vision for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Families, Elders, community members, local businesses, children
Children's developmental strengths and needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AEDC website, community and school profiles, State School Early Years Data Profile, Queensland AEDC report
Population data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Health Atlas, Australian Bureau of Statistics
Transition partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Families, Elders, community groups, local service providers, neighbouring schools, children

Connect with transition partners in your community

When schools reflect on and are responsive to the experiences of children, their strengths, and their needs, starting school can be a positive milestone that fosters a love of learning. A collaborative approach to children's transitions is better placed to meet the needs of the community than what a school might achieve working alone (Arimura et al., 2011). The AEDC provides a common language through which schools and their transition partners can identify shared goals for children.

In bringing together transition partners to respond to the AEDC, consider who in the community could or should be involved in bringing about better outcomes for children. Try to ensure the role of transition partners is clearly identified.

The questions posed in 'Respect for diversity' (p.6 of the [Supporting successful transitions: School decision-making tool](#)) guide schools through a reflective practice that can help to identify how well schools address diversity and access inequities.

The questions posed in 'Reciprocal relationships' (p.7 of the [Supporting successful transitions: School decision-making tool](#)) guide schools through a reflective practice to consider how they work with their transition partners.

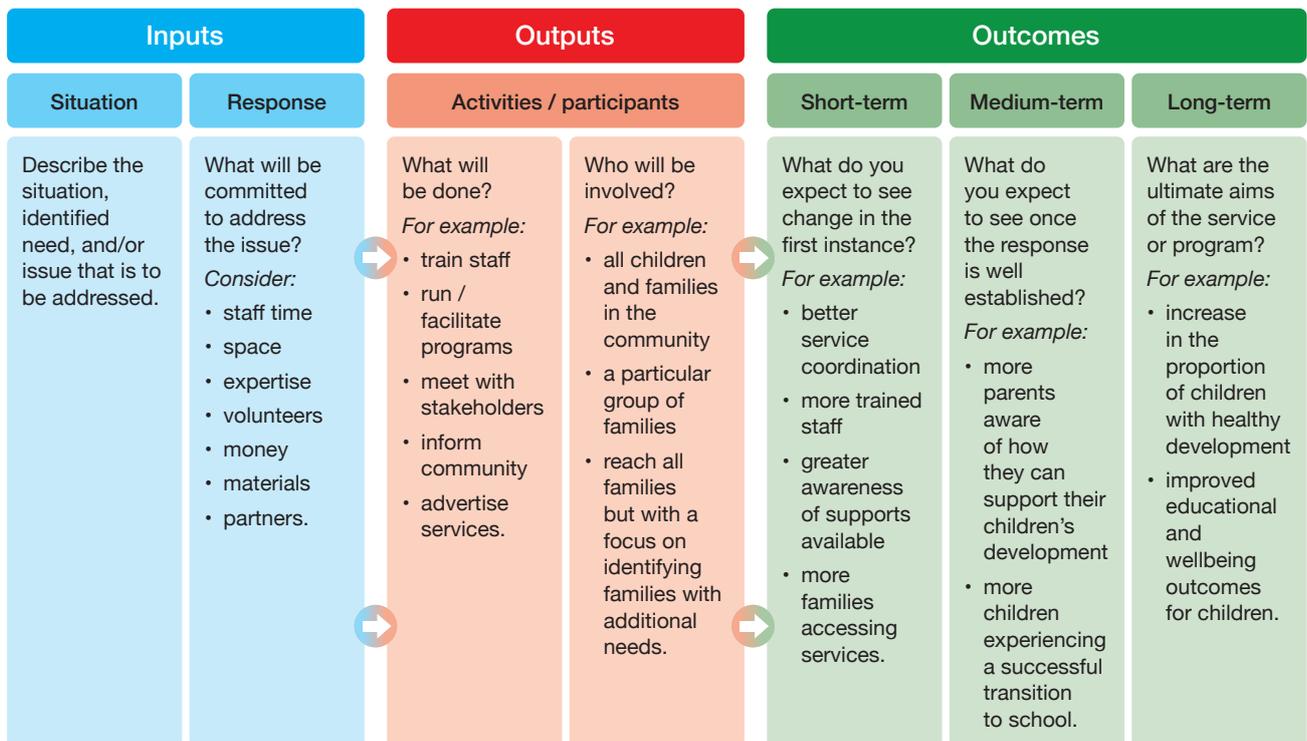
Develop an action plan

The *Supporting successful transitions: School decision-making tool* can be used to assist schools to reflect on their current practices and support approaches to strengthening transitions. The four-step process can assist schools in their reflection, planning, action and review process.



The action area *Effective use of data* outlines how AEDC data can be used to identify strengths and vulnerabilities within the local community, and to think about how the Australian Curriculum can be delivered in a manner that is responsive to vulnerabilities observed across the AEDC domains.

Clearly documenting the plan can help to identify what can be achieved with the available resources. A clear and actionable set of objectives and what will be done to achieve those objectives should be documented and the link between these should be clear. Objectives can be divided up into short-, medium- and long-term outcomes.



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Monitor progress

Monitoring progress towards goals will help schools identify what is working and what needs to be adjusted.

Questions schools might ask themselves could include:

- How will we know if there was an improvement in our focus priority?
- How well are families engaging with the program/service?
- Were there particular people or groups in the community who seemed to miss out?
- What supported or hindered participation of families or groups?

Plan to collect data along the way by identifying what data will be collected, by whom, and where it will be recorded. Determine how this data will be analysed so you can measure the success of your efforts and adjust your approach in the future to best meet the needs of children and families.

Additional resources

There are a number of resources available to schools to assist them in using their AEDC data, planning transitions and supporting early childhood development.

Supporting successful transitions

The department's *Supporting successful transitions* initiative provides a framework for schools to identify, plan and implement transition strategies and practices that meet the needs of their community. The framework can be downloaded from the Department of Education's website: www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/early-years/transitions/moving-to-school

Age-appropriate pedagogies

The department's Age-appropriate Pedagogies (AAP) program supports the transition-to-school initiative with its focus on continuity of learning for young children. This project complements the use of effective pedagogies by supporting teachers to respond to children's development across all five AEDC domains. A Foundation Paper has been developed providing key messages from a review of international research to inform the approach to be taken in implementing age-appropriate pedagogies. More information and resources can be found at www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/early-years/age-appropriate-pedagogies

AEDC resources

The department has released a suite of practical resources to support early childhood education and care services to use the AEDC in their programming and planning. The resources are available online at www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/about-us/publications-and-research/australian-early-development-census/AEDC-resources/resources-for-eccec-services

Additional AEDC publications relevant to schools include:

AEDC school profile

School summaries provide an overview of trend data for all collection cycles in which a school has participated. Results include details about the number and percentage of children considered to be developmentally vulnerable, at risk or on track on each of the five AEDC domains. School profiles provide in-depth information about the cohort of children captured in the AEDC data collection for a single year.

Schools can access AEDC data at the school, local community (generally at a suburb level), community (local government area), state/territory, and national level. School-level data for the AEDC is not publicly available and can only be accessed by the school principal. School Profiles and School Summaries are made available to school principals after each collection. School principals are notified via email with instructions on how to log in to the AEDC secure website to download their profile and summary.

Principals who require help to access a copy of their AEDC School Profile and/or School Summary can contact the [AEDC Help Desk](#) or your state and territory [AEDC Coordinator](#).

AEDC Community Profile

The AEDC Community Profile contains important information about early childhood development outcomes. It shows AEDC results at a community level as well as providing contextual information for the whole community. Community profiles are available online at www.aedc.gov.au (search for 'Community profiles').

Geographically mapped AEDC local community data

National, state/territory, community and local community level data is available from the AEDC website at www.aedc.gov.au/data

State school early childhood data profile

The *State school early childhood data profile* has been developed to assist schools to build a picture of their community, bringing together key demographic, early childhood education and care and Australian Early Development Census data.

Demographic data

Various sociodemographic data linked to the AEDC results is available through the [AEDC data explorer](#). Contexts available include whether the child has attended a preschool program, if the parent/caregiver has completed Year 12, if they have a different address to 12 months ago, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) score, single parents under 25-years-old and unemployment.

Social health atlases

The Social Health Atlases of Australia provide a range of data on health and its determinants in Australia. It is available by population health area, local government area and primary health network. Data is also available by quintile of socioeconomic disadvantage of area and remoteness area, as well as for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

The Social Health Atlas is available online at www.phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases.

Indicators/topics available include:

- population statistics (e.g. projections, Indigenous status, age distributions, birthplace and non-English speaking residents, non-English speaking countries of birth)
- education
- early childhood development: Australian Early Development Census
- housing/transport.

Queensland's Early Childhood Development Story

Queensland's Early Childhood Development Story has been created by partners around our State to share with parents, services and communities. It is the story of how children grow well, simply explaining that everyone in Queensland has a role to play in supporting and loving children and connecting them to their culture, community and local services. When our children do well, we all do well.

Watch and read about Queensland's Early Childhood Development Story: www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/early-years/early-childhood-development-story.

References

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