



From Data to Practice: The Influence of Findings on School Readiness on the Creation of Community Projects and Programs



Introduction Since 1999, the Offord Centre for Child Studies (OCCS) at McMaster University has been the national depository for data on the early development of children, collected using the Early Development Instrument (EDI). Difficulties that children have in their early years at school can have a detrimental effect on their long-term academic achievement and success in their later years. With the awareness of the importance of early development, communities are increasingly interested in tracking their children's progress and assessing whether or not various initiatives are improving developmental outcomes. This knowledge is a valuable tool that can influence policies and decisions around resources for children and families.

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a short, teacher-completed instrument, implemented in kindergarten. It is a feasible, affordable, and psychometrically sound tool, used internationally. The EDI measures children's readiness to learn at school in five general domains:

- Physical Health and Well-Being
- Social Knowledge and Competence
- Emotional Health/Maturity
- Language and Cognitive Development
- General Knowledge and Communication Skills.



As a result of the EDI, many school boards are observing that children from certain neighborhoods are entering kindergarten at a disadvantage in terms of their readiness to learn. With the knowledge of their weakest areas of school readiness, communities may move forward to institute various community projects and programs that help improve early development.

Purpose A community survey, developed at the OCCS, was sent to communities throughout Ontario and Manitoba which had participated in previous EDI implementations. The purpose of this survey was to investigate the community use of the EDI results in bringing about change in local programming for children and families. A corresponding objective was to assess whether community action reflected the status of child development in the community.

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Methods

FIGURE 1

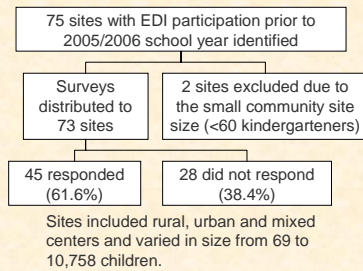
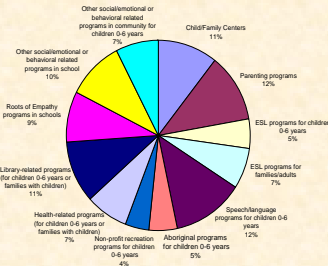


FIGURE 3

Distribution of Programs Implemented as a Result of the EDI



Program types were fairly evenly implemented across the spectrum (N=161 programs).

Results

FIGURE 2

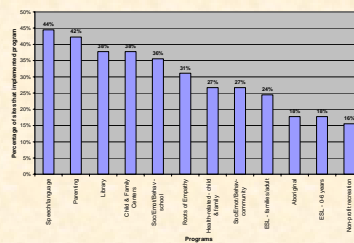
Amount of Change for those who Responded:

Number that responded:	45
Number that indicated change:	33
% that indicated change:	73.3%

Site coordinators indicated that the EDI was helpful in directing program selection or in supporting proposed implementations.

FIGURE 4

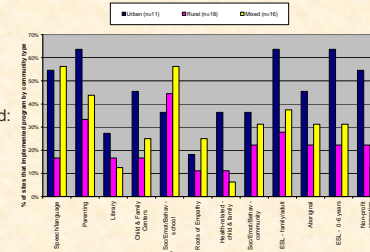
Program Implementation by Type as a Result of the EDI



Initiatives occurred in community and school settings, providing both problem-targeted and broad-spectrum supports.

FIGURE 5

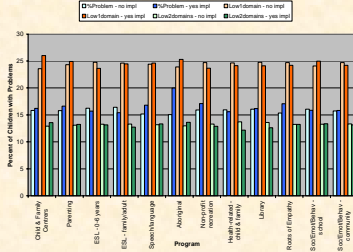
Distribution of Program Implementation in Various Community Types



Urban sites were more likely to implement programs, reflecting the varied demographic of their constituency as well as their resources.

FIGURE 6

Program Implementation by Percent of Children with Problems



Due to varied timelines, it is too early to determine whether implemented programs are as yet having an effect in reducing problem areas.

FIGURE 7

Significant Findings from the Association Between Programs Implemented and EDI results

Program	Low on 1 EDI domain	% children in sites not implementing programs	% children in sites implementing programs	P value
Child/Family Centers	Low on 1 EDI domain	23.4	26.0	.016
Aboriginal	% children with problems	15.0	20.0	.011
	% Aboriginal population	5.3	18.7	.006
Health-related	Low on 2 EDI domains	13.7	12.2	.008
	Library	Low on 2 EDI domains	13.6	12.6

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Conclusions

Our results indicate that communities are making some use of the EDI data to address problem areas. Of particular interest is the placement of Child and Family Centers which serve to support young children in a variety of capacities. Follow-up work is needed to observe the trajectory of problem areas in response to these initiatives.

Reference

Janus, M. & Offord, D. (2007). Development and psychometric properties of the Early Development Instrument (EDI): A measure of children's school readiness. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science* 39(1), 1-22.