

Using your school's AEDC data

Understanding the results

The AEDC measures five areas, or domains, of early childhood development that form the foundation for health, education and social outcomes.

Your school's AEDC results capture the developmental strengths and vulnerabilities of children entering your school. When viewed alongside community data, the results provide insights about the type of support children and families have good access to - or are potentially missing out on - in their communities.

With this knowledge, schools and communities can work together to identify and respond to the issues facing children in their local community. Over time, schools may begin to see positive shifts in the proportion of children starting school developmentally on track.

Why measure early child development?

There is a strong and persistent relationship between children's development when they begin school and their learning outcomes throughout primary school.

Research has also shown that the five AEDC domains are closely linked to predictors of adult mental health, education and social outcomes.

Being able to identify potential areas of developmental vulnerability early empowers schools to intervene and create better outcomes for children now and in the future.

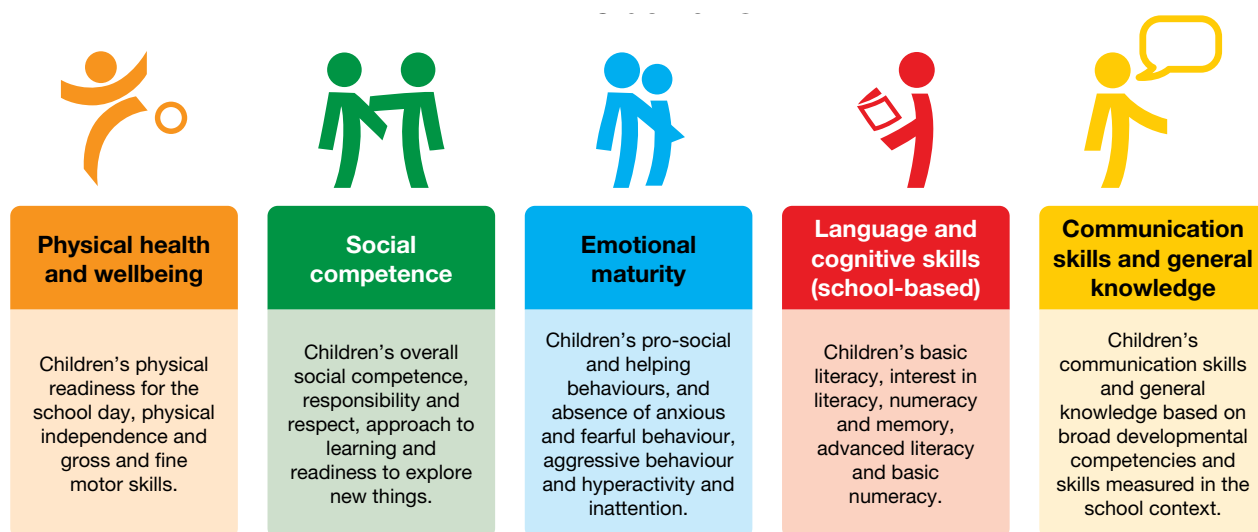


Figure 1. The five AEDC domains

Teacher's responses on the measure used to collect the data, the Australian version of the Early Development Instrument (AvEDI), are used to calculate a score between 0 and 10 for each domain. Using benchmark scores

calculated in 2009, these scores are then classified into three groups: developmentally on track, developmentally at risk, and developmentally vulnerable (see Table 1).

Developmentally on track	Children are considered to be developing well. Overall, it is desirable to see the percentage of children who are developmentally on track increase with each new AEDC collection cycle.
Developmentally at risk	Children are facing challenges in some aspects of their development. Changes in the percentage of children developmentally at risk needs to be considered alongside changes in the percentage of children on track and vulnerable. For example, a reduction in those who are developmentally vulnerable could coincide with an increase in those at risk which would signal an overall improvement. Alternatively, a reduction in those who are developmentally on track could coincide with an increase in those who are at risk which would signal an overall decline in development.
Developmentally vulnerable	Children are facing some significant challenges in their development. Overall, it is desirable to see the percentage of children who are developmentally vulnerable decrease with each new AEDC collection cycle.

Table 1: Description of developmental categories

Visit the [AEDC website](#) for domain descriptions for each of the developmental categories described in Table 1.

Trends in children's development

Your School Profile provides a snapshot of how children in your school are faring. Results from your school's first AEDC collection cycle can be used as a comparison for all future collections and are included in your School Profile. Comparing collections shows whether children's developmental outcomes are changing over time.

Your school's results also provide an opportunity to reflect on areas of development where children are thriving, and why this is the case.

Additional resources

- **Understanding the results** – read about the approaches taken to analysing and reporting AEDC results.
- **Video: Understanding the data** – watch how AEDC data is collected and used to calculate developmental vulnerability at a community level.
- Your **AEDC State and Territory Coordinator** can also help interpret your school results.

What if the children at our school don't live in the same community as the school?

If large proportions of children are from different local areas, it may help to explore the **Community Profiles** of the neighbourhoods in which the children live, to see if any trends can be identified.

For instance, are there any communities where developmental vulnerability appears to be higher? You could explore the potential barriers this community could be facing.

Are there any communities with significantly higher numbers of children classified as developmentally on track? Investigate what is working well in this community.

Responding to your school results

The AEDC results may highlight areas that require attention – e.g. high levels or increases in the percentage of children identified as developmentally vulnerable or at risk. It can also highlight areas of developmental strengths or where improvements have been made – e.g. high levels or increases in the percentage of children identified as developmentally on track.

The **Early Childhood Services and Schools User Guide** was developed to outline the steps early childhood services and schools can take to respond to AEDC data. It outlines best practice principles and practices for local action that are achievable and effective for creating change.

The **Evidence for Learning** website is a resource schools can use to identify evidence-based interventions that align with each of the five AEDC domains.

AEDC School Stories can also help schools draw inspiration when undertaking curriculum planning and responding to the AEDC data.

School Story:

Westfield Park Primary School, WA

In 2009, Westfield Park Primary School's AEDC results showed very high levels of developmental vulnerability. Since then, the school has seen significant improvement across subsequent AEDC collection cycles.

72%
of children
developmentally
vulnerable in 2009

29%
of children
developmentally
vulnerable in 2015

The school used their AEDC data alongside other evidence to partner with key agencies to increase its services. Three key strategies were implemented based on the identified needs of children and families:

- Community development to build stronger local connections.
- A focus on early intervention.
- Building a stronger student services team.

The school engaged a community development worker to strengthen partnerships between the home, school and community; established two parent-led playgroups; hosted adult education programs; and extended educational and recreational activities for children out of school hours. Early intervention strategies included screening in playgroups, school-based interventions and/or referral to external agencies. The student services team was strengthened to enable it to have a more holistic view of children's development and address barriers to learning.

What if we don't have the resources we need to take action?

If funding is a barrier to taking action, consider grants your school may be eligible for. **See Community grants: a quick guide to key internet links - Parliament of Australia**. Your school's AEDC results can be used as evidence in applications for the need for certain supports or services, and to measure the impact of interventions over time.

Additional resources

- **Resources for schools** - information on how schools can use AEDC data to support children's development.
- **WA-led AEDC Engagement Kit** - a package of resources to assist schools and early childhood services to engage with and build a deeper understanding of the AEDC.
- **Video: Informing your planning** - watch how the AEDC can be used to improve the provision of services and supports to children and families.
- **Choosing effective interventions** - this fact sheet focuses on the planning stage of responding to AEDC data and taking an evidence-based approach to program development, monitoring and evaluation.

Connecting with local services

The AEDC results provide a shared language that can facilitate communication between schools and early years services. Planning together for improvement helps to ensure that children entering school in the future are starting school developmentally ready, and fewer resource demands are placed on schools during the primary school years.

There are many types of services schools can connect with to start conversations about AEDC results (see Figure 2).

Conversations with local community services can help schools to consider which factors have affected children's current developmental strengths or vulnerabilities as reflected in the AEDC results.



Figure 2. Schools can collaborate with many services to respond to their AEDC results

Factors that may influence children's early childhood development include:

- whether families are able to access a wide range of relevant and timely services or supports in the community
- children's participation in early childhood education and care services including playgroups, preschool or informal care from the extended family
- whether primary caregivers have positive relationships with their child's teachers, school and other parents or friends locally.

Sometimes families may be unaware of local services available to them. Engaging with families can help to raise their awareness and connect them with the services they need. Local government websites are a good source of information about child and family early years services available in the local area.

Additional resources

- Your School Profile, downloadable from the AEDC data collection system upon completion of the AEDC.
- **School Stories** – showcasing the AEDC in action in schools across Australia.
- **Community Stories** – showcasing the AEDC in action in communities across Australia.



School Story: Kings Langley Public School, NSW

The 2021 AEDC outcomes for Kings Langley Public School showed significant improvements in all five AEDC domains between 2018 and 2021. The school was successful in attaining community grant funding to respond to their AEDC results and driving change at their school.

Initiatives led by the school included:

- establishing a Community Hub onsite in 2021 to connect families with school staff, community members and services
- establishing a playgroup at the school open to the wider community and supported by a Kings Langley Public School teacher and social worker to support children to develop age-appropriate social skills, communication skills and self-help skills
- running an early childhood expo at the school to connect families with community agencies and health organisations
- transition to school initiatives including
 - delivering the Strong Start to School Program targeting three AEDC domains that were identified as priority areas for children starting school
 - running the Ten Busy Fingers Program to help children develop their fine motor skills in the year before school and identify children requiring additional support and referral
 - having an occupational therapist and speech therapist involved as part of the transition to school program to assist with early identification of developmental needs
 - partnering with the Community Hub, allied health professionals and local early childhood services to deliver the Strong Start to School Program.

Domain	Developmentally on track (2018)	Developmentally on track (2021)
Physical health and wellbeing	60.9%	83.1%
Social competence	59.8%	76.6%
Emotional maturity	66.3%	84.4
Language and cognitive skills (school-based)	68.5%	90.9%
Communication skills and general knowledge	72.8%	87.0%

Community Story: Rocklea-Acacia Ridge, QLD

Rocklea-Acacia Ridge 2009 community data showed 59.3% of children were developmentally vulnerable on one or more domain. This had almost halved to 30.6% in 2018.

A Community Hub was established in 2010, bringing various services together for a comprehensive service delivery system for families and children. The Community Hub, established at an early years centre and kindergarten, provides long day care and kindergarten, free child health services, playgroups, a toy library and parenting support programs. Located on school grounds, the Community Hub is one of the Department of Education's Early Years Places.

A child health service is co-located on the site facilitated by Children's Health Queensland.

Additionally, the Circles of Care program was established in 2013 to provide school-based support to families and children. The program focuses on parent and community engagement and partnerships, as well as strengthening children's wellbeing and resilience.

The strong relationships that exist across various community organisations has been identified as key to achieving better outcomes for children and families in Rocklea-Acacia Ridge. These relationships help to link various services, schools and early childhood services together to provide more cohesive support to families and children.

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Since 2002, the Australian Government has worked in partnership with eminent child health research institutes, the Centre for Community Child Health at The Royal Children's Hospital and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Melbourne, and the Telethon Kids Institute, Perth to deliver the Australian Early Development Census program to communities nationwide. The Australian Government continues to work with its partners, and with state and territory governments to implement the AEDC.