

A snapshot of EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN MANITOBA



Are Manitoba children ready for school?

“The quality of a child’s early years is a critical influence on the course and outcome of that child’s life. Children’s development from before birth to age 6 can affect their schooling, occupational choices and even their lifelong health and well-being.”

Dr. Clyde Hertzman,
Director, Human Early Learning Partnership (B.C.)

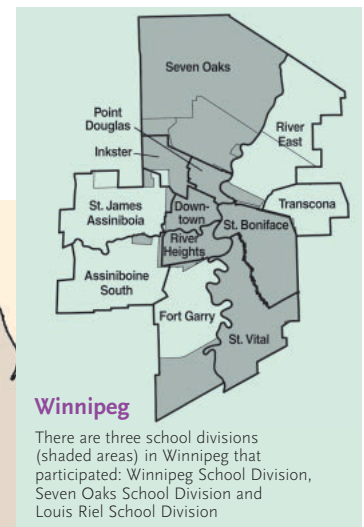
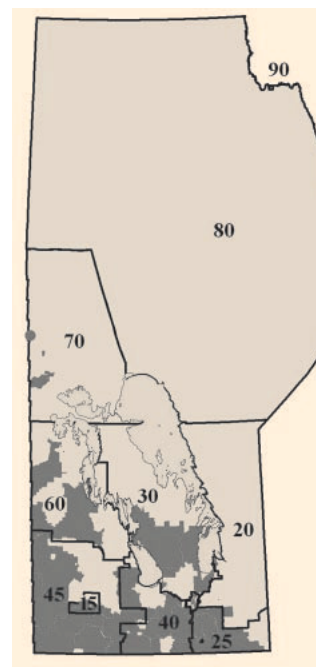
In February 2003 the readiness to learn of approximately 8000 children entering school across Manitoba was measured using the Early Development Instrument (EDI). The EDI will be conducted annually to help communities prepare children for school entry. The EDI measures 5 major areas of early childhood development (see p. 3).

The results from the first year of provincial EDI data collection in Manitoba show that among the participating kindergarten children in 2003:

- Over 1 in 2 (57 percent) children were considered well prepared (in the top 75th percentile) in at least 1 of the 5 areas of early development. Over 1 in 3 (36 percent) were considered well prepared in at least 2 areas.

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School Divisions Participating in the 2003 EDI



Manitoba

- 15 - Brandon
- 20 - North Eastman
- 25 - South Eastman
- 30 - Interlake
- 40 - Central
- 45 - North and South Assiniboine
- 60 - Parkland
- 70 - Norman
- 80 - Burntwood
- 90 - Churchill

Notes on the above two maps:

The Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM) consists of French language schools located throughout the province.

Participating school divisions are shaded. Regional Health Authority and Winnipeg Community Area boundaries are in thick black lines.



Putting children and families first

How do Manitoba children compare to the rest of Canada?

Are Manitoba children ready for school?

continued from page 1

- Girls were better prepared than boys in all 5 areas of the EDI.
- Older children were better prepared than younger children in all 5 areas of development.
- Children whose first language was *not* the language of instruction in school were as well prepared as their counterparts in physical health and well-being, but were not as “school-ready” in the other 4 areas, especially in communication skills and general knowledge.
- Nearly 1 in 3 (29 percent) children had a problem with at least 1 readiness component, while about 1 in 7 (15 percent) had a problem with 2 or more components.

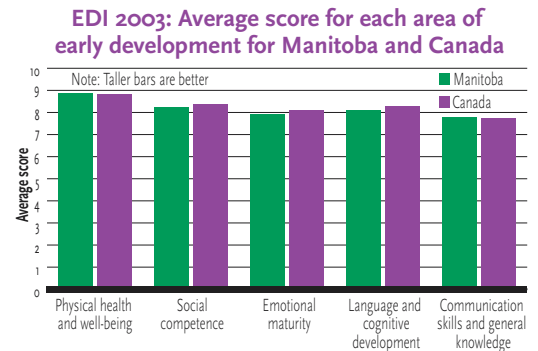
Research tells us what makes a difference in the early years:

- playing with your child
- reading with your child
- talking with your child (lots!)
- making sure your child has breakfast everyday
- quality early learning and child care programs

Page one of this report explains the percentage of Manitoba kindergarten students who were well prepared to succeed at school in the 2002-03 school year.

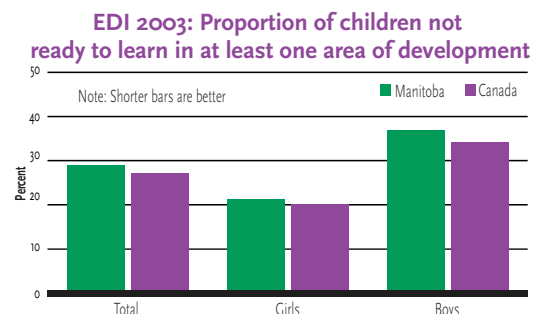
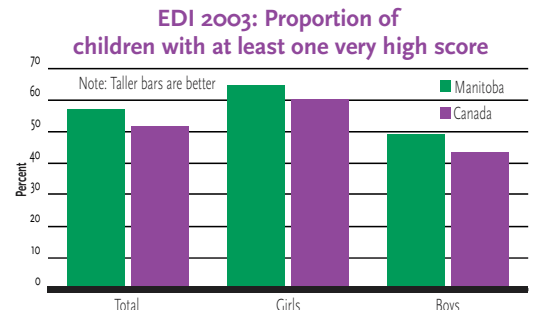
How do their results compare to children across Canada? Is Manitoba doing better or worse and why? The following graph shows the average scores in each of the five areas of development (see page 3) for children in Manitoba and in Canada who participated in the EDI in 2003.

- On average, Manitoba kindergarten children were doing about the same as Canadian kindergarten children.
- Manitoba children were doing a little better on physical health and well-being, communication skills and general knowledge.
- Manitoba children were doing slightly less well on social competence, emotional maturity and language and cognitive development.



What about the differences between boys and girls as mentioned on page 1? In Manitoba, there appear to be two distinct groups of boys: those that do very well and those that face significant challenges.

- Some Manitoba boys did significantly better than Canadian boys - 49 percent versus 44 percent - with very high scores in at least one area of development. However, other Manitoba boys – 37 percent compared to 34 percent of Canadian boys – were not ready for school in one or more areas of development.
- In contrast, Manitoba girls were similar to Canadian girls, with around 20 percent not ready for school in one or more areas of development.



Communities are looking at this data and linking it with other information to build supports so that every child can succeed and enjoy their school experience.

This is an exciting time in Manitoba. Across the province, communities have demonstrated they want to help children and families. Now we have an opportunity to measure how well we are doing and make the necessary changes to support all Manitoba families.

What is the EDI?

The EDI is a questionnaire which kindergarten teachers complete. It looks at **5 areas of early childhood development** that have been shown to have the greatest impact on children's readiness to learn when they start school. **These 5 areas are:**

- physical health and well-being,
- social competence,
- emotional maturity,
- language and cognitive development,
- communication skills and general knowledge.

Some questions the EDI tries to answer are:

- Do children have the physical and emotional capacity to spend a day at school?
- How are their motor skills?
- How well are they able to play and get along with other children?
- How well do they follow the directions of adults?
- How well are they able to work independently in class?
- How much aggressive, anxious or impulsive behaviour do they exhibit?
- How interested are they in books, reading, writing and numbers?
- How are their communication skills?



The EDI can help communities as they work together to prepare children for school entry (see. p. 4). Developed by the Offord Centre for Child Studies (formerly the Canadian Centre for Studies of Children at Risk) at McMaster University, the EDI is a population-based, community-level monitoring tool. Kindergarten teachers complete the EDI in February of each school year for each student. The EDI is designed: a) to measure the relative success of communities in facilitating healthy early childhood development, and b) to predict the “readiness to learn” of groups of children as they enter school. In 2003, the EDI was implemented in 47 sites across Canada (approximately 65,000 children).

It is important to understand that the EDI is not interpretable at the individual level and results are never reported on individual children.

The EDI is not an individual assessment tool and cannot be used that way. The EDI is useful *only* at the community level. The privacy of each child is protected and as such, EDI information is reported only about groups of children.



Manitoba's investment in children

Funding provided by the Government of Manitoba through Healthy Child Manitoba supports the phased-in voluntary implementation of the EDI. In the first year of the EDI (2002-03), 24 school divisions (representing over 8,000 children) participated in the EDI, including those divisions involved in Social Development Canada's Understanding the Early Years (UEY) project.

To learn how all of Manitoba's young children are doing, it is hoped that all 38 school divisions in the province will

be implementing the EDI by 2005, representing over 12,000 kindergarten children. The EDI will be collected annually throughout Manitoba.

The EDI information will enable the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet to make better-informed and co-ordinated decisions about our public investments in Manitoba's children, youth and families.

Since April 2000, the Government of Manitoba has increased investments in the early years by over \$50 million,

including \$18.5 million provided through the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Early Childhood Development agreement. Manitoba is committed to learning how we are doing and how we can do better. Healthy Child Manitoba has developed a provincial evaluation strategy to measure our progress. One component of this strategy is the use of the Early Development Instrument (EDI).

Helping communities work together to improve early childhood development

The EDI provides a snapshot of how children across Manitoba are doing at a very important time in their development – as they enter school. EDI information will be provided at regional and community levels to inform the Parent-Child Coalitions (see Building on Manitoba’s commitment below) funded by Healthy Child Manitoba across the province. For example, if language and communication skills are found to be relatively poor among young children in a given community, then the Parent-Child Coalition may decide to focus its efforts on early literacy supports.

The knowledge gained from the EDI every year will provide a broad provincial picture of how well prepared each new group of Manitoba children are as they begin school. The EDI can help school divisions plan for the future. This information is being made available at the school and division level, so that teachers, principals and superintendents are better able to plan school programs that meet the unique needs of their children. The EDI information can also assist school

divisions with planning for other government initiatives such as Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth’s Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI).

The knowledge gained from ongoing evaluation and measurement of early childhood development will be shared with community partners, such as parents, schools, regional health authorities, child welfare agencies, child care centres and non-profit organizations.

By creating partnerships and using data on children’s development to inform policy, Manitoba is moving closer to realizing its Healthy Child vision – the best possible outcomes for Manitoba’s children.



Building on Manitoba’s commitment

EDI results are already being used throughout Manitoba to inform the work of Parent-Child Coalitions. These coalitions bring together parents, community organizations, school divisions, and health professionals to support parenting, improve children’s health and literacy, and build community capacity to assist families within their community. Examples of activities supported across the province include book and toy lending libraries, parenting programs, parent-child programs, grandparent-child programs and much more.

The EDI will be conducted annually throughout Manitoba. Healthy Child Manitoba will expand on the results in future reports. Plans are also underway to help communities access customized EDI reports online.

Parent-Child Coalition and school division reports

In addition to individual annual reports provided to each school division by the Offord Centre for Child Studies, Healthy Child Manitoba is providing summary reports of the EDI for each participating Parent-Child Coalition and for each participating school division. These brief reports are provided to both groups as special inserts to this summary report.

For more information about the EDI, please call the Healthy Child Manitoba office at (204) 945-2266 or toll-free at 1-888-848-0140.

For information about the Parent-Child Coalition in your area, please call Healthy Child Manitoba at (204) 945-2266 or toll-free at 1-888-848-0140.

More information can also be found at the Healthy Child Manitoba website at www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/

Cette information existe également en français. Composez le 1 888 848-0140.