

The Kindergarten Parent Survey

Bridging the gap between early environment and school readiness outcomes



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Outcomes & Abilities: The Early Development Instrument (EDI)



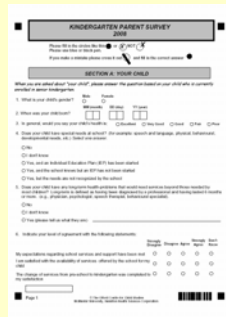
A short, teacher-completed instrument called the Early Development Instrument (EDI) was developed at the Offord Centre for Child Studies (OCCS) to measure children's readiness to learn at school in five general domains: physical health and well-being; social knowledge and competence; emotional health/maturity; language and cognitive development; and general knowledge and communication skills (Janus & Offord, 2007). Over the past seven years the EDI has been implemented in numerous communities across Canada and beyond. This has resulted in the successful accumulation of school readiness outcomes for over 500,000 children.

The missing piece....

While the EDI alone can provide information on children's abilities and skills as they enter school, a well-rounded picture of the health of a community's children is possible when it is used in conjunction with other measures. In particular, these complementary tools should target data on early experiences, demography, and on the availability, accessibility and use of community services and resources such as parks and playgrounds. Through the concurrent implementation of the EDI and a parent survey one can examine the specific and unique local (neighbourhood and community) factors that influence children's readiness to learn.

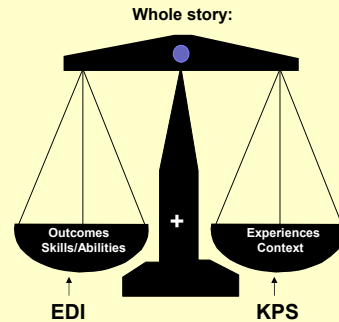
Experiences & Context: The Kindergarten Parent Survey (KPS)

The need for more information on family characteristics and experiences of children before entering kindergarten led to the development of a Kindergarten Parent Survey (KPS) which can be used as a companion document to the EDI (Janus et al, 2007). In 2003, the OCCS developed one such instrument, a parent survey, in collaboration with the Halton Region and Halton District School Boards. To provide context for understanding the outcomes of the EDI, parents' perspective is gathered through the 8-page KPS survey. This initiative is undertaken concurrently with the collection of the teacher completed EDI. The Kindergarten Parent Survey has a set of core questions divided into seven sections. The local participating communities have the option to add community-related questions tailored to community context. The KPS is a useful companion tool to the EDI as it provides information to assist communities in interpretation of EDI results.



The core KPS consists of seven sections:

- 1) child health and development
- 2) child care
- 3) pre-kindergarten
- 4) senior kindergarten
- 5) family
- 6) neighbourhood
- 7) background information



KPS Completion

To date, four communities have implemented the KPS with parents of children whose teachers completed the EDI, with 2 communities currently implementing. The response rates varied from 35% to 62%.

Region	Year	Response Rate
Halton, ON	2003	62%
Hamilton, ON	2005	35%
Wellington, ON	2006	49%
Dufferin, ON	2006	55%
Hamilton, ON	2008	Currently implementing
Niagara, ON	2008	Currently implementing

Initial findings:

- Results from the KPS are consistent with the literature in that children living in low-income, lone parent homes, in unsafe neighbourhoods, or who have parents who are in poor health or do not speak English fluently are more likely to experience poor outcomes.
- KPS results demonstrated that parental involvement expressed through volunteering in a child's school, and through the child's participation in community-based sessional activities had a stronger association with positive EDI outcomes than other forms of parental involvement.

KPS Validity & Reliability

Because the KPS covers such a wide range of topics, it cannot be considered a standardized uniform instrument, and therefore was not subjected to a detailed psychometric investigation such as the one applied to the development of the EDI. Nevertheless, a study conducted in 2005 revealed that the test-retest of items in the KPS, and parent consistency in reporting, were satisfactory.

The following tables illustrate the percentage of agreement from sections A and D of the Kindergarten Parent survey based on the responses of 207 parents who filled out the KPS two times over a period of two months in the Hamilton area in 2005.

Section A: Child Health & Development

	% agreement
In general what is your child's health?	80.7
Does child have any long-term problems?	94.1
Does child have any SN recognized by school board?	97.5
Enrolled child in school based on availability of special services?	83.3
Expectations regarding school services and support have been met	85.6
Satisfied with availability of services offered by school for my child	84.7
Change of services from preschool to kindergarten completed to my satisfaction	88.0

Summary:

There is good parental agreement on all item responses in the child health and development section. The percent agreement was over 80% in all cases and is indicative of the consistency in responses.

Section D: Senior Kindergarten

	% agreement
Did child attend a JK program?	97.5
Parent orientation meeting	95.4
Child's small group entry visit	93.8
Parent interview/observation days to share information	99.0
Information sessions/meetings for children with identified SN	95.3
My child enjoys going to school	98.0
The kindergarten schedule meets the needs of my child	89.3
The kindergarten schedule meets the needs of our family	92.2
I feel my child is able to manage the school day	96.9
Overall I am satisfied with the kindergarten program	93.1
Attended a general school meeting	87.3
Attended a parent-teacher conference	91.2
Attended a school/class event	93.2
Volunteered in the school	86.9

Summary:

Consistent responses to questions on the kindergarten program were obtained over time and were all above 85 percent agreement.

Final Notes:

By collecting information on children's skills and abilities when they enter school (through the EDI) and comparing these data to information gathered about their early experiences (through the KPS) we can provide a richer explanation of some of the factors that contribute to early development. The KPS survey generates a valuable body of knowledge with many applications. It can increase our understanding of children's growth and development; provide insight into the experiences of children and families in their communities; and help us to identify gaps in programs and services that need to be addressed. Furthermore, it permits service providers to assess the popularity of programs for preschool children; child care providers to obtain information of child care usage, barriers and satisfactions; and schools to measure parent satisfaction and engagement in various school initiatives.

References:

- Janus, M., Brinkman, S., Duku, E., Hertzman, C., Santos, R., Sayers, M., Schroeder, J., & Walsh, C. (2007). The Early Development Instrument: A population-based measure for communities. A handbook on development, properties and use. Hamilton, ON: McMaster University Press.
- 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 Behavioral Science, 39(1), 1-22.