

Early childhood development is multifaceted, and all aspects of development must be fostered for children to thrive. Vulnerabilities in any one of the areas of development may be predictive of a student's academic performance in later grades. Each domain and subdomain of the Early Development Instrument (EDI) can help school leaders focus on specific actions to take.

Below are some examples of how schools, local education agencies, and child development centers have used the EDI.



Physical Health & Well-being

The subdomains:

- Physical readiness for schoolwork, physical independence, and gross and fine motor skills

This domain captures:

- Absence of disease, access to appropriate nutrition, and necessary gross and fine motor skills

Why does this matter?

- Being healthy and well-fed are essential for children to learn throughout their lives. Children need necessary gross and fine motor abilities for early childhood activities, including later primary skills such as using a pencil.

Examples of questions posed to teachers:

- Can the child hold a pencil? Is the child underweight or overweight?

Questions your school or center can consider:

- How can we continue to support students in developing strong fine and gross motor skills? When/how?
- How can we advocate for strong nutrition and health services for your students and families? Are there other institutions across the city that could be involved?

Actions schools and centers can take:

- Ensure strong resources for your families around accessing food with the [DC Food Finder](#)
- Create opportunities for gross motor movement in all weather and seasons with the [Let's Move campaign](#)
- Consider ways to incorporate food, cooking, nutrition, and gardening experiences into your science and math learning by discussing measuring, mixing, and predicting.



Social Competence

The subdomains:

- Competence with peers, respect/responsibility, approaches to learning, and readiness to explore new things

This domain captures:

- General standards of acceptable behavior, cooperation with others, showing respect for adult authority, and communicating feelings and needs

Why does this matter?

- Children need to cooperate with others, including adults, and communicate their own feelings and needs.

Examples of questions posed to teachers:

- Does the child share with others? Is the child self-confident?

Questions your school or center can consider:

- How can we continue to support students in developing strong social skills?
- How can we harness this area of strength for DC children in our work? What is working well now? How can we build upon this foundation?

Actions schools and centers can take:

- Training for teachers on referrals for development and mental health issues and cues
- Help consider well-rounded policies and practices to support families with [attendance](#) so kids can be an integral part of the school community
- Build opportunities: through curriculum, schoolwide routines, or classroom habits, for students to act independently and develop trust



Emotional Maturity

The subdomains:

- Prosocial and helping behavior, anxious and fearful behavior, aggressive behavior, and hyperactive and inattentive behavior

This domain captures:

- A balance among a child's curiosity about the world, an eagerness to try new experiences, and some ability to reflect before acting

Why does this matter?

- A child who is fearful and reluctant to engage in new activities misses learning opportunities that are seized upon by a child with a positive approach to life.

Examples of questions posed to teachers:

- Is the child able to concentrate? Would the child help someone who is hurt or upset?

Questions your school or center can consider:

- How can we advocate for services for families that support early learning and health experiences to build emotional maturity?
- How can teachers, staff, families, and communities model social emotional skills, both in day-to-day work and in scalable ways?

Actions schools and centers can take:

- Offer parent trainings and classes on [development](#), behaviors, and [milestones for children](#)
- Build intentional opportunities for transition before school and between grades for children, teachers, and families
- [Support teachers](#) and [families' competencies](#) to encourage social competence and emotional maturity
- Consider ways to [employ strong attachment](#) between adults and students in your classroom



Language & Cognitive Development

The subdomains:

- Basic literacy skills, interest in literacy/numeracy and memory, advanced literacy skills, and basic numeracy skills

This domain captures:

- Abilities with reading, writing, and numbers; shape recognition; and interest in books

Why does this matter?

- Language skills refer to vocabulary size and a child's ability to name letters and attend to the component sounds within words. Cognitive skills involve the ways in which children perceive, organize, and analyze information. (Please note that the advanced literacy skills subdomain links most closely with Common Core kindergarten standards, and DC's normed data compares 4-year-olds to kindergarteners.)

Examples of questions posed to teachers:

- Is the child interested in reading and writing? Can the child tell a short story?

Questions your school or center can consider:

- How are you building classroom environments for strong language modeling?
- What are the additional resources families need to support rich conversations, reading, and discussions. What are the institutions that can help connect you with these resources?

Actions schools and centers can take:

- Expand or grow partnerships with nonprofits working for strong outcomes with children's literacy skills
- Encourage preschoolers' families and families with children 0-5 to sign up for [Books from Birth](#) from the DC Library
- Help families sign up for [Vroom](#), a family-friendly app



Communications Skills & General Knowledge

The subdomains:

- No subdomains in this domain

This domain captures:

- Understanding verbal communications and the ability to communicate experiences, wishes, and feelings

Why does this matter?

- Children must be able to understand verbal communications with other adults and children and verbally communicate experiences, ideas, wishes, and feelings in a way that can be understood by others.

Examples of questions posed to teachers:

- Can the child communicate his/her own needs? Can the child communicate with adults and children?

Questions your school or center can consider:

- Does the school provide opportunities for children to talk with peers, resolve conflicts, and advocate for themselves?
- What would expanding student voice look like in your community? How could your students identify their own solutions?

Actions schools and centers can take:

- Build strong school-to-home connections with trainings and ongoing communication
- Explore [Ready Rosie](#) accounts for families and teachers
- Build partnerships with early care providers in the neighborhood
- Help advertise city resources available to all families, especially from the [Department of Parks and Recreation](#)