

Executive Summary

Research supports the African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child”. Children interact with and depend on their families, neighbourhoods, and societies as each system has roles, norms, and rules that impact a child’s development. The service providers in Peel Region have a history of being an integral part of ensuring that every child in Peel thrives. The Peel community and service providers work tirelessly to create an environment that responds to the needs of parents/caregivers and their children.



The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is one source of information used by Peel service providers to assess their community’s ability to support children. It reflects developmental outcomes and milestones that children should be able to achieve and is a tool that helps communities understand their effectiveness in preparing children for Grade 1. This report complements school-level EDI reports as it examines ward-level characteristics and the supports available for children before school entry.

The intent of this report is to support service and collaborative planning, the varied local advocacy initiatives, and the funding applications that are occurring across Peel Region to support healthy early childhood development. This report forms the basis of an EDI tutorial to explore the formal and informal processes that are influencing EDI results in each ward. It presents the beginnings of a framework for how to move forward. The data presented is limited to selected Census indicators and, therefore, it is important to bear in mind the many other determinants of school readiness. When taken together, these factors form a more comprehensive equation that may explain EDI scores. The service provider tutorial raises questions around these other social determinants of health that are necessary to provide the optimal conditions for school readiness.

This report, highlighting 2007 EDI data, begins to shed light on how Peel service providers can use EDI data to plan for responsive service delivery that will support healthy early child development and school readiness. In conjunction with service provision, research shows^{1,2,3} that social determinants of health (i.e., socio-economic status, family structure, parental education, and immigration) deeply impact children’s outcomes and cannot be left out of the early childhood development dialogue. The EDI, used in combination with other data (such as Census, family, health, and community indicators), begins to reveal the relationship between service provision and child development outcomes. Taken together, these data provide a more complete picture of the societal, familial, and individual characteristics that can affect early child development.

Across our wards in Peel, EDI results are both encouraging and concerning. In each municipality there are wards that are excelling in aspects of school readiness while lagging behind in others. It is interesting to note that the Communications and General Knowledge domain yielded the lowest scores in all wards in Brampton and Mississauga while scoring the highest in two Caledon wards. The Physical Health and Well-being domain produced the highest mean scores across all wards in Brampton and Mississauga and two wards in Caledon. Also of note is that our children perform relatively poorly on the Emotional Maturity domain regardless of municipality.

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- 1 Lapointe, V., Ford, L., and Zumbo, B., (2007). Examining the Relationship Between Neighbourhood Environment and School Readiness for Kindergarten Children. *Early Education and Development* Vol 18(3)473-496.
 - 2 McCain, M., Mustard, F., and Shanker, S., (2007). *Early Years Study 2: Putting Science into Action*.
 - 3 Lesaux, N., Vukovic, R., Hertzman C., and Siegel L., (2007). Context Matters: The Interrelatedness of Early Literacy Skills, Development Health and Community Demographics. *Early Education and Development* Vol 18(3)497-518.



Peel's culture of collaboration gives us hope that the synergy in our partnerships can make a difference. In this report, we begin an exploration of the disconnect between the socio-economic status of children less than 6 years old and EDI scores across wards in Peel. Socio-economic status is but just one piece of the puzzle. In the future, Peel can assess EDI scores in combination with a variety of developmental determinants and examine the extent to which a change in one or more of these determinants can impact school readiness. An understanding of these relationships will give service providers the information necessary to respond to areas of vulnerability, plan for responsive services and enable them to leverage assets in their communities.


According to the Census indicators presented, some of Peel Region's children are living in challenging circumstances. The population of Peel Region grows by 100 people a day. The planning and implementation of community infrastructure and human service delivery is lagging behind this fast and diverse population growth. As indicated in the maps provided, wards are striving to ensure that early years supports and infrastructure are available for parents/caregivers and their children. The reality, however, is that early years services in some wards are few and far between.



The Census indicators presented indicate that while some wards are thriving and vibrant this is not reflected in EDI scores. The inverse is also true, since in some wards where socio-economic conditions are less than favourable, EDI results indicate that children are ready for school. This misalignment of Census data and EDI results highlight the need for further dialogue on not only the factors that may be impacting EDI scores, but most important, on how to use this knowledge to generate action.



The EDI tutorial furthers the discussion around unknown variables that are affecting EDI results. This discussion will provide a more wholesome understanding of how service providers have been successful in buffering the negative impacts and enhancing the positive effects of socio-economic conditions on EDI in our program planning and service delivery.

For an explanation of terms used in this report, please refer to the glossary, marked by , on page 9.