

# Steps

## ECMap Newsletter



Early Child Development Mapping Project

Summer – June 2011

## First round of EDI data collected

Since our first *STEPS* newsletter in November, the first round of Early Development Instrument (EDI) data collection has been completed for all of Alberta! Thank you to all the kindergarten teachers of the province for completing the questionnaires on the kids in your classes! As a result of your efforts, we have EDI questionnaires for more than 21,000 children in the data file and the remaining 12,000 will be available for analysis in the next couple of months.

From our analysis so far, indications are that the majority of Alberta's children are developing appropriately. However, the preliminary results show that 26 per cent are experiencing great difficulty in at least one of the five areas of

development surveyed by the EDI. By way of comparison, the national average of children experiencing great difficulty in one or more areas of development is 27 per cent.

We will be able to finish the analysis and put the results on maps when all the round one data is in. By fall we will have a more complete provincewide analysis and a better idea of the early childhood outcomes in Alberta.

Communities are working hard to develop coalitions and establish their boundaries for mapping. More than 25 communities have developed their boundaries and are now ready to receive information packages for



Dr. Susan Lynch, director, ECMap

their communities. The packages will contain EDI results, as well as demographic and socio-economic information for communities. We will also be working together with communities to gather and map information on the resources and assets that are available in each community for raising healthy, happy and competent children.

We will keep you posted as more results emerge.



Grayson Matheson celebrates his first birthday with his parents and grandparents. An Alberta survey shows that Albertans need to better understand the milestones of early development. See page two.

**we engage**

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# Early childhood development

## Healthy development critical to Alberta's future

The report from the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy highlights the importance of early childhood development to Alberta's long-term prosperity and future.

The report, *Shaping Alberta's Future*, says that early development "should be a matter of intense interest" to government, business and economic leaders, as well as educators, health care providers, social service agencies, parents and families. Children's early experiences have a lifelong impact on health, learning and behaviour. Every dollar invested in the early years yields three times as much as a dollar invested in school-aged children and eight times as much as a dollar for adult education, the report notes.

"Ensuring that every child receives the best possible start is therefore an important investment in the future prosperity and quality of life for all in the province," concludes the report, released on May 5.

*Shaping Alberta's Future* was authored by a blue-ribbon, 12-member council of government, business and economic leaders, headed by David Emerson, former federal minister of international trade, foreign affairs and industry.

To download a copy, please go to [http://www.premier.alberta.ca/plansinitiatives/economic/RPCES\\_ShapingABFuture\\_Report\\_web2.pdf](http://www.premier.alberta.ca/plansinitiatives/economic/RPCES_ShapingABFuture_Report_web2.pdf)



## How much do Albertans know about early development?

The Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research wanted to find out how much Albertans know about child development.

This is an important question because evidence suggests that children tend to do better when parents and other adults who interact with them understand early

development and are able to respond appropriately and effectively.

The centre invited more than 1,400 Albertans to participate in a 20-35 minute phone survey. After talking with participants, the centre concluded that Albertans' general knowledge about child development was, in a word, "limited."

Participants tended to have a better understanding of physical and cognitive development than of social and emotional development. Even so, less than a third were able to correctly answer half or more questions about physical development milestones (such as crawling and walking). Only seven per cent were able to answer half or more questions about social milestones and less than 2 per cent about emotional milestones.

The report, *Alberta Benchmark Survey: What Adults Know about Child Development*, recommended that "these important gaps in knowledge" of child development be addressed.

To download a copy of the report, go to [http://www.research4children.com/public/data/documents/BenchmarkFINALfinal\\_reportOct108pdf.pdf](http://www.research4children.com/public/data/documents/BenchmarkFINALfinal_reportOct108pdf.pdf)

### Test your knowledge

Try answering these survey questions. Circle the correct response.

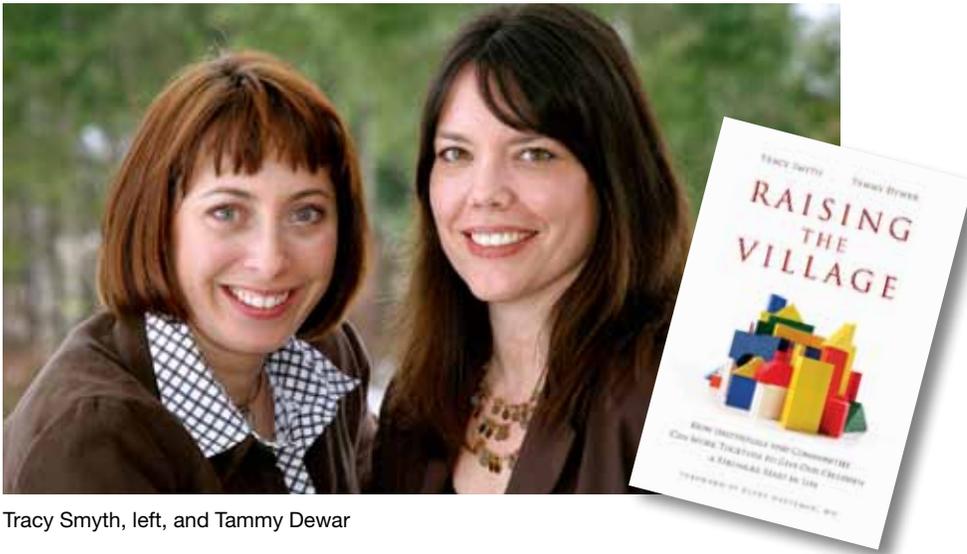
Milestone	4-6 months	7-12 months	1-2 years	2-3 years	3-6 years
Share toys with others	A	B	C	D	E
Recognize other's emotions	A	B	C	D	E
Engage in pretend play	A	B	C	D	E
Begin counting	A	B	C	D	E
Follow simple instructions	A	B	C	D	E
Bond with a parent	A	B	C	D	E

Answers: E, B, B, C, D, C, A

# Community coalitions



## Raising the village that raises the child



Tracy Smyth, left, and Tammy Dewar

It takes a village — or community — to raise healthy, happy children.

We now know, thanks to an abundant body of research, that communities play a crucial role in shaping early environments and early childhood development (ECD).

But how can communities provide children with the good start in life they need?

Communities are wrestling with this question as local data on early development becomes more widely available through ECD mapping in Alberta and elsewhere in Canada.

Community developers Tracy Smyth and Tammy Dewar have tackled the issue in a how-to book called *Raising the Village*. The book presents a theoretical approach and practical tools, and is based on the authors' ten years of experience in organizing community coalitions in British Columbia.

"It's been a learning process all the way," says Smyth, who is the coordinator for Alberni Children First Network. "One of the most common dilemmas faced by coalitions is: How do we collectively deal with all the data that we now have at our fingertips? How do we make sense of it? How do we translate it into action? It can be overwhelming."

B.C. began collecting Early Development Instrument (EDI) data on kindergarten children in 2001. Port Alberni, a forestry- and tourism-based town on Vancouver Island, was one of three communities that participated in a provincial pilot program to encourage local planning and action around early development.

"We found lots of fantastic information about group processes, but nothing specific to the early years," says Dewar, an early childhood educator and social service worker for more than 20 years. "What we were hearing from communities all over the province was 'So, we've brought everyone together and now what?' People were hungry for a process and there were no resources available."

Smyth and Dewar put together a blueprint for community development that is based on three strategies:

- **building relationships** – making the essential connections for collective, collaborative action;
- **framing leadership** – figuring out how the group will work together;
- **constructing relevance** – finding shared meaning and strength.

Smyth and Dewar offer the following advice to coalitions that are in the early stages of organization and preparing to receive their first data.

**Get to know each other.** Find out what background, expertise and strengths each coalition member brings to the table. This will help you to make the best use of your talent pool and determine how you can best work together. Don't worry too much about how many people show up initially. Work with those who do. Remember that building good relationships is an important part of your group process.

**Reach out broadly to the community.** Spread your message to groups and potential allies that are not immediately related to ECD, but may have a significant indirect link. Think business, the arts community, multicultural organizations, churches and other faith communities, seniors groups and urban planners, for example. Show a real interest in what other organizations are doing. Let them know that you'd like them to get involved and why.

**Look beyond the data.** Get to know your community. Share your stories. "This will help people to understand the numbers better and put them into a context," says Smyth. "You are also more likely to get people involved and engaged."

Raising the village takes time, say the two women who are now working on a follow-up to their first book. This will be an activity guide to designing effective group processes.

"It took a while for us to be able to work together as a community and to use the data meaningfully," says Smyth. "It was not an overnight process. We had to undergo a huge paradigm shift and look at early development beyond our specific mandates and personal perspectives. We had to take a more collective approach to healthy development and ask ourselves 'How can we serve our children *together*?' That was a really significant turning point for our coalition."

Tracy Smyth and Tammy Dewar's website: <http://www.raisingthevillage.ca>

Weekly blog: <http://raisingthevillage.blogspot.com>

ECMap is providing every coalition in Alberta with a copy of *Raising the Village*.

# Profiles

## Mapping community destinations



Dianna Souveny, ECMap community development coordinator for zone 5

Before she sets out from her home in Red Deer to visit communities in her zone, Dianna Souveny consults her well-used Alberta road map.

If she's heading out to Wainwright some 250 kilometers away, for example, she'll pull out her map first and explore her options. Then she'll choose the best route to get to her

destination. The same goes for Killam, Tofield, Lloydminster, and the other towns and villages in the east-central region of Alberta that she serves as ECMap's zone 5 community development coordinator.

Souveny relies on road maps not only for driving, but in her community development work with early childhood development (ECD) coalitions.

"I like to use mapping as an analogy for community building," she says. "You have to know where you want to go. Then you have to plan how to get there. My role is to assist communities during this process."

Souveny, who has a BA in psychology and a post-graduate diploma in executive leadership, sees her job largely as coaching. In her work with coalitions, Souveny uses a five-step process to assist them in reaching their destination. The first thing that she does is encourage coalition members to articulate their hopes and dreams for their young children.

"I get them to ask themselves, 'What are our ECD goals as a community?' " says Souveny. "The next question is: 'So, how do we get there?'"

The second step is to look at existing strengths and opportunities. The third step is to examine the obstacles that stand in the way of achieving goals. The fourth step is to put together strategies to reach objectives and plan direct actions. The fifth is to evaluate how successfully goals have been achieved.

"As a coach, I help communities to get where they want to go," says Souveny. "I accompany them on their journey towards healthy development for every child in their community."

Dianna Souveny can be reached at [dsouveny@ualberta.ca](mailto:dsouveny@ualberta.ca) or 403-391-1459. *Zone 5 includes the counties of Wetaskiwin, Camrose, Flagstaff, Beaver, Ponoka, Lacombe, Vermilion River, Minburn and the M.D.s of Wainwright and Provost.*

### Links

Check out the Government of Alberta's revamped **Raising Children** website [www.raisingchildren.alberta.ca](http://www.raisingchildren.alberta.ca). The site lists all the services and programs available for families, parents and caregivers for newborns up to age six. You can Google map services near you and subscribe to Raising Children eNews.

**Australia** has made a commitment to collect the **Early Development Instrument (EDI)** every three years. Australia is the first country to implement the EDI, which was designed in Canada, nationally. To find out more, go to [http://www.rch.org.au/aedi/resources.cfm?doc\\_id=14637&utm\\_source=newsletter10&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=aedi](http://www.rch.org.au/aedi/resources.cfm?doc_id=14637&utm_source=newsletter10&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=aedi)

### Contact us

The Early Child Development Mapping Project (ECMAP) is part of the Early Child Development Mapping Initiative, which is funded by Alberta Education. ECMP is led by the Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth and Families (CUP), Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta.

For further information, please go to [www.ecdmapping.alberta.ca](http://www.ecdmapping.alberta.ca) and click on our logo

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If you are not on our subscription list and would like to receive the newsletter, please contact Olenka Melnyk, communications coordinator at [olenka.melnyk@ualberta.ca](mailto:olenka.melnyk@ualberta.ca) or 780.492.4057. We welcome your story ideas, resources, links, provincewide event listings and feedback.

*Mapping a bright future for Alberta's young children*