

We have the opportunity to spark action around new data on young children's development to create a more equitable city.

Our Children, Our Community, Our Change

Imagine a city where children are nurtured from birth with positive learning experiences, where families have supports that foster safe and supportive neighborhood and community conditions, and where every child starts kindergarten ready to learn. What would a thriving community look like? How would we each contribute?

Purpose

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is an internationally recognized tool that provides a citywide snapshot of young children's health, development, and school readiness. The EDI is a population-level measure that shows children's development in five areas, or domains. We can harness this data to look back and make decisions about how the community can holistically support our city's children from birth, as well as to look forward to address the needs of ongoing needs of early elementary grade students.

Our Children, Our Community, Our Change is a partnership of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and Raise DC. It's a citywide engagement campaign that seeks to build a movement of organizations, institutions, and citizens working across the District to enhance practices and policies to better support young children and their families. By exploring the EDI, we hope you'll have an additional tool to react to, equipping you to move this vision forward.

Together, we will:

- Create strong environments so all young children and families can thrive.
- Work to build more equitable communities across our city.
- Spark actions in our work, policies, and practices that create change.

This action guide is designed to lift up your experiences, perspective, and expertise, and empower you to take actions to better community conditions for children. It is designed to help you quickly and easily understand the Early Development Instrument (EDI) and use its results for your own context, building on the other resources available at RaiseDC.org/ourchildren.

We hope you can utilize this guide to:

- Identify your purpose, audience, and approach so you can set your group conversation up for success.
- Facilitate briefings and conversations about the Early Development Instrument (EDI) data.
- Create space for your group to take action and share out your commitments to inspire others!

Our Children

Early childhood experiences are crucial to shaping a child's health and behavior across a lifetime, and early childhood is a period when brains are developing at a rapid rate. Children's early experiences – on the bus, at home, at child care, at the doctor's office, at the store – impact their development. Research tells us that high-quality exposure and community conditions, such as strong parental attachment, great healthcare, and a rich language environment promote thriving children and strong developmental outcomes, which, in turn, enable lifelong social and academic success.

Our Community

The EDI data provides us a powerful lens for examining how children's lives in DC are impacted within specific neighborhoods in the city. A child's initial environment is shaped by parents and families, but also by early educators, neighbors, and others within a community. In addition, the services, laws, attitudes, and policies in a city, community, and neighborhood directly contribute to safe and supportive environments for children's healthy development.

All of us are part of many communities – as residents and city leaders or through our work, volunteer, civic, or faith communities. As we consider our role in our neighborhoods, we can think about the ways any of us – including those with and without children and those who work in many different fields – can creatively impact conditions for families to thrive.

Our Change

If you are part of a parent-teacher association, a member of a faith community, an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner (ANC), a government agency employee, or a philanthropic organization, you can use the EDI data to enable your community to create more equitable environments.

If you are a funder, a business leader, or are invested in K-12 education or healthy outcomes in the city, this guide and the full campaign toolkit are for you.

You have a role to play in creating strong community conditions for children and families in Washington, DC. You might identify a new opportunity, scale a promising practice, determine how to allocate resources, or advocate for citywide policy change.

Join Our Children, Our Community, Our Change and build the movement of parents, citizens, and leaders to utilize the EDI data to spark action so all of our children thrive.

Step 1: Learn more about the Early Development Instrument in DC

Understand the EDI

Learn more about Early Development Instrument (EDI) with our one-page overview, located at RaiseDC.org/ourchildren. We want you to be able to share and communicate the EDI data! Visit the website at RaiseDC.org/ourchildren for an in-depth exploration of the tool and resulting high-level outcomes.

While the EDI data shows a moment in time, remember that four years of a child's life and corresponding experiences led to that moment. As we think about the data, it's helpful to consider all of the life points that can matter for positive intervention.

Take inspiration from examples of how other communities have used the EDI outcomes:

Community-level Change

Advocates in Pasadena, Calif., noticed in reviewing the EDI data there was a need for a new, integrated approach to improve the coordination of care for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. Thus, they have broadened the political conversation from a focus only on schools to how the entire community can make changes to impact children's health, development, and well-being by establishing a new dedicated government office, the Office of Children's Well-being, that includes a multi-year, multi-stakeholder plan funding.

Program-level Change

A community organization in Hartford, Conn., brought parents together in peer-to-peer conversations about the EDI data. Parents identified an opportunity to help students with fine motor skills, from which emerged an area of need based out of their conversation about the EDI results. As a result, Hartford Public Libraries now make children's scissors easily accessible to check out with activities designed to help strengthen fine motor skills. This concrete change was a result of local decision-making.

Policy-level Change

School officials in San Antonio, Texas, compared access to bus routes to the EDI data and found that the most vulnerable children were often those with the least access to transit options. The officials have used this finding to advocate for improved access to transportation for all San Antonio students.

Step 2: Plan for a conversation to spark action

[Our Children, Our Community, Our Change](#) is committed to meeting the needs of stakeholders across the city.

Identify your context

With whom are you seeking to start a conversation around the EDI, community conditions, and children's development? With an existing organization, coalition, group, or institution? Or could you create a conversation in your neighborhood with people from different parts of the community? Who is in your community, and who are the leaders and contributors?

A conversation with diverse representatives across your neighborhood or city can be a particularly powerful way to discuss data about children's developmental outcomes. Consider a group with parents, educators, advocates, business leaders, neighborhood-level leaders, and government. Could you invite members of faith communities, your Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC), government agencies, nonprofits, and others who work in your community? What can you do together to focus on children's outcomes in one place? How might you learn from each other's perspectives on the data?

Access resources for your context

Use the best resources for your audiences, all of which are available on the website:

- **Resources for all schools and centers**
 - [Taking Action on EDI Domain Data](#): The number one resource for any school or center to use EDI information!
 - [Using the EDI in a School or Center](#): Quick tips on using the citywide data
- **Resources for schools and centers participating in the EDI**
 - [Understanding the School Report](#): Use this as a quick reference for questions on how to use your school or center's EDI report.
 - [Sample Teacher Letter](#): Convey the city's thanks to your teachers and encourage them to stay active
- **Neighborhood-level conversations**
 - The EDI is a great tool for conversations at the ward and neighborhood cluster levels. Find your ward and your Advisory Neighborhood Commission, DC's most local elected government body, [here](#).
 - Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and their committees are well-positioned to use the EDI data. As a DC resident, you can easily engage with your commission and commissioners, including sharing the EDI outcomes. Since ANCs focus on local neighborhoods – from traffic patterns to beverage permits to public safety – they are poised to think about and discuss levers for improving neighborhood conditions. The EDI provides a readily understood look at neighborhoods for ANCs, so it can be a tool to engage commissioners and citizens in a conversation about children's development.
 - Check out [DC Action for Children's website](#) for additional indicators by neighborhood cluster. Here, you can view other important factors that impact children's development citywide and by neighborhood: child care and school data, health factors, neighborhood assets, and more.
 - [NeighborhoodInfoDC](#) has additional information to help you decode the data of overlapping political structures.

- **Sample language to use in a newsletter or email**
- **Pre-work for discussion facilitator:** Use the companion [Our Children, Our Community, Our Change Moving to Action](#) template to take notes as you go, leaving with a strong plan for your context to identify actions to take in light of the EDI outcomes.

Define your purpose: Why are you hosting this conversation? What do you hope your group will do by engaging in a conversation around community conditions and children's development using EDI?

Define your timing: Does your group already meet? Will this be one discussion or a series of discussions? If you can extend your conversation over several standing meetings, you'll have a more powerful discussion!

- **One discussion:** We recommend leading your gathering with a presentation you tailor and focus to the context of your participants. This will allow more time for a discussion about the data and for identifying opportunities to define relevant actions from the data.
- **Series:** If you plan to discuss the EDI data more than once with the same group, we recommend dividing up content and discussion. For example, the first meeting might be the platform to share the data, and the group could identify where they will focus their attention next time. In following gatherings, you can facilitate a group discussion.

Adapt the provided presentation to your conversation's goals: Use the overarching [Our Children, Our Community, Our Change](#) PowerPoint presentation, available at RaiseDC.org/ourchildren, to introduce participants to the EDI's goals and data, but tailor and shorten the presentation toward your goals. You'll see clear notes to help you adapt this presentation to your needs throughout, with "notes to facilitator" and "suggested talking points" on each slide.

Focus your conversation: Given the many needs of children and communities, how might you focus your discussion? Consider choosing either a domain or a geographic area (ward/neighborhood). All of the maps could elicit powerful conversations, but one or two maps might be more useful for a focused discussion.

- **If your group's purpose is to focus** on one of the EDI domains, then subdomains will be helpful.
- **If your group's purpose is to spark** change in your ward, neighborhood, or area of the city, then narrowing your conversation to just a ward or neighborhood will allow you to be more specific in identifying your actions.

Ensure concise content: It's easy to make data presentations long on information. Keep in mind the goal: to spark conversation about participants' understanding of what is driving conditions, and identify their own changes. Focus on the information that is essential for participants to have this conversation. Your aim as the facilitator is to create the conditions for participants to have insights around complex factors impacting children.

Bring in subdomain data, if needed: The maps of the EDI data spark the most powerful conversations. If you are honing in on one domain, or think your group will have additional questions in its quest for action, consider pulling in relevant subdomain information to your presentation.

Consider the powerful World Café Model: One way to design a respectful, simple, and effective large group dialogue is the [World Café model](#), where you define the setting, welcome and introduction, small group rounds, questions, and harvest (sharing). At their website, you can view a hosting toolkit and strong resources to try this model with your group.

Two potential DC examples of planning and implementation (next page):

Example 1

A neighborhood association – a civic organization pulling from 10 city blocks – is interested in understanding community data to improve conditions not only for children, but for all residents. The association hasn't had data that showed the impacts of inputs on the neighborhood's residents, and they want to explore how the data resonates with residents' experiences. The facilitator focuses the first conversation on: 1. Understanding the EDI tool; 2. Reviewing the results in all domains for their neighborhood cluster; and 3. Identifying one domain to focus on. The group discussion notes that, though neighbors are friendly, there aren't enough intentional opportunities for children (and adults) to form strong relationships. Given that the social competence domain is also a need, the group picks this domain to focus on.

For the second conversation the next month, the facilitator brings large sheets of paper, markers, and subdomain information. Focusing on the social competence subdomains, the residents brainstorm 10 ideas for improving conditions in their neighborhood. After sharing these out, they narrow them down to three ideas to commit action and resources to over the next year, including: an intergenerational meet-up at the Oklahoma Avenue playground, sharing the EDI data with the two churches in the neighborhood, and publicizing opportunities for how adults can help with children (such as volunteering at the nearby elementary school) and opportunities for all children, such as visiting the community garden (for home-based child care providers). One member is the "lead" for each project and shares out results – and impact – to the group each month. The group also attends its ANC meeting, pushing for a few local policy changes that would better support such connections.

Example 2

A DC nonprofit focused on healthy outcomes for families across the city wants to use the EDI results to inform its own practices. The facilitator focuses the conversation on physical health and well-being and emotional maturity, two EDI domains in which the subdomains match the team's professional expertise. The goal of the conversation will be to focus on the vulnerability maps in these two domains and reflect on how the nonprofit can improve its own practices. In the discussion, staff identify ways to build this data into their client and site discussions in the next three months. Lingering questions about a broader conversation around emotional maturity, though, have the group realizing it needs to share internal data with policymakers, including DC Council staff, to better inform how to improve the system for families accessing mental health services. Over the next three months, the nonprofit partners with other collaborative groups and nonprofits that are engaged on this issue, bringing both their conclusions from the EDI data and ongoing questions. The nonprofit shares the information with the Council – ending with a specific ask for a broader campaign to supporting young children's funding in the city.

Step 3: Host a conversation

Lead a discussion that sparks action: We want you to feel empowered to host a conversation that spurs additional action for children and communities.

Activate a vision for children in DC: Ask participants to imagine the future they want for children and families in DC. What does that vision look like?

Trust your group's ability to identify solutions: You may notice people are at first reluctant to share ideas about actions to take in response to the data. Remind participants of their unique perspective about their neighborhood, school, or community. Let participants generate their own solutions and ideas in response to the data. Not only will this approach help your group consider more good ideas, but participants will feel more invested in the resulting solutions.

Ask participants to share reactions, observations, and questions:

- What do you notice? What does this map make you think?
- Knowing this is illuminating existing conditions, what else do you know about what is contributing to these outcomes? • What questions does this spark?
- When at a crossroads in the conversation, refocus to what the EDI outcomes seem to be indicating. "What is the data saying?" "What is it revealing?"
- Since EDI data is demonstrating one life point, what are the full opportunities and needs that would promote healthy development up to now?
- Where do you want to focus?

Encourage participants to bring their own knowledge to the interpreting of the data

- Why might these be the trends in our city? What do you know that would explain the domain or geographic data you are seeing?
- Why does this matter? What are the stakes for children, families, neighborhoods, and our city?
- What are participants' life experiences relating to the domain or neighborhood? Does it resonate, explain, or refute the EDI outcomes?

Try to start with personal reflections: Start with each person taking a minute to reflect on his/her own – and perhaps jot a few ideas down on a post-it. This ensures everyone's diverse perspectives are activated – rather than group think or a few voices dominating. Move then to a small group conversations – perhaps in pairs or around a table. Sharing to the whole group can be powerful once the small groups have been generative.

Expect discomfort: We shouldn't be surprised that information – either new or confirming their understanding – might make the group reluctant to think about long-term ideas to tackle the causes and solutions. As an action facilitator, we encourage you to acknowledge this, and demonstrate to participants that it is something you expect.

Create time for grappling with dissonance: You are trying to spur participants to move past their "business as usual" stance, which will likely create some discomfort among your group. Help the group to pause and understand the multitude of factors that have created these outcomes – and can strengthen the results.

Think about action over time:

- **Who:** Who might be well-positioned to impact these outcomes? Who else should see and discuss the data? Who can help us shape long-term outcomes on the EDI?
- **How:** How can we take responsibility for changing outcomes for children and families in our city? How can we commit to specific actions in our approach?
- **Where:** Where can we see our practices changing in light of this data? Where can we commit our resources to change outcomes? Where can we ask questions or work with others?
- **This group:** If your group is an established community, consider what you are well-positioned to do.

Individuals and consensus: What do individuals feel they should do? Are there common points of consensus?

Follow-up: What additional data do you need to solve for these questions? What technical questions do you have?

Use a framework of "look back" and "look forward":

- **Look back:** What would you do to change the early experiences for the youngest children in DC? What about the many moments in a life from birth to age 4 when systems, policies, and practices could impact a population of children?
- **Look forward:** As your group generates ideas, shift to a different lens: What are the strengths of children in DC from ages 5 through 8? How might the city or your institution think about the needs of DC children as they move through early elementary grades? How do we understand how children are doing as they progress?

Plan for action: Document conversation themes, questions, and specific proposed actions in your notes:

- **What:** What do we notice? What does this make us think?
- **Why:** Why does this matter? Why are we focusing on this in our own work?
- **Now what:** How can we act in light of this data? What actions have we identified? What actions are we best positioned to accomplish?
- Which actions will have the most impact?

Step 4: Follow through to ensure action toward change

Help your group consider how to define and sustain actions.

Bring out many ideas: The [World Café model](#) can help you access concise ways to guide a group through a discussion.

Explore the root causes: The [Five Whys](#): Based off what your group identifies as a problem/question, how can you uncover what the group might focus on? What is actually underlying the first thing you notice?

Coming to consensus

Brainstorming and voting: Consider putting up all the ideas you have you can tackle. Could you form small groups that are equipped to tackle different projects? Try "voting on your feet" or voting with dot stickers to start to understand the group's energy for action.

Make a long-term vision for your group's actions: What would success look like in one year? In two years?

Make a short-term plan for success: Who will be responsible for initial implementation? Help individuals feel accountable for key actions.

Try turning your aim into a SMART goal: Especially if you are picking a programmatic goal that could be accomplished in the next year or so, make your goal a "SMART" goal. Try this quick tool so you can easily make your vision easier to imagine – and attain!

SMART Goals

S: Specific M: Measurable A: Attainable R: Reasonable T: Time-bound

Example: Let's say your vision is, based off your conversation about the EDI data in your neighborhood and listening to your neighbors, "expand library access for child care." If you have identified that you want to expand the number of opportunities for child care providers in your ward to access libraries, how can you make this goal even more specific (For example: online or in person)? How will you count the visits (For example: measuring or using surveys)? Do you have the right group engaged to attain this goal?

In this example, a SMART goal might be, "By 2017, all licensed child care providers in Ward 6 will have had two meaningful touch points with a DC Public Library."

Is this goal reasonable to execute, or is this a long-term vision? If it is longer term, how could you further focus this goal? For example, "Four volunteers will ensure each provider has accessed a free DC Library Ready Rosie account from the DC Public Libraries."

Our Children, Our Community, Our Change is building a movement of organizations, institutions, and citizens working across the District to move practices, policies, and systems to better support young children and families. Together, we can identify barriers, establish citywide priorities, and create stronger systems to support children and families.

Step 5: Share your plans

We can build strong outcomes: Share back the themes, ideas, and committed actions that emerged from your conversations through our [online form](#).

Let us know what you need: We want to make sure you are successful. Reach out to us via the [Our Children, Our Community, Our Change](#) request form, and tell us what resources would be helpful to continue your impact.

Change can be difficult: Plan for a way to bring your group back together, or have a small group assume that real accountability will take commitment. Make this easier by committing to a public “next step” at the end of your gathering. If your group meets regularly, add to your standing agenda – but share out results of your actions, rather than process-oriented observations.

Resources for following up, located on the website:

- [Sample language to follow up in your newsletter or email](#)
- [Sample follow-up email](#)

Involve your group in citywide actions: Our collective campaign depends on champions who are passionate about improving community conditions for children and families. Challenge participants to become proactive champions for harnessing data to create change that supports children’s development. Ask for three things from your group: (1) host a conversation in another context; (2) share back your actions to inspire others across the city; and (3) stay committed to continuing to create thriving communities for children and families.

(1) Host a conversation: Are there participants from your group who want to host another conversation? Help them use the EDI outcomes and the [Our Children, Our Community, Our Change](#) toolkit at RaiseDC.org/ourchildren. Anyone can host a conversation at an organization, a faith-based community, a school, an office, or an Advisory Neighborhood Commission.

(2) Share back your actions: [Our Children, Our Community, Our Change](#)’s impact relies on your commitment. We look forward to hearing about your ideas, successes, as well as how other organizations, institutions, and groups can support your work. Share back the themes, ideas, and committed actions that emerged in your conversations through the quick survey on the campaign’s website.

(3) Stay committed to creating thriving communities for children and families: You and your group have identified some of the opportunities, needs, projects to scale, or long-term, multi-year changes you want to help create. Stay engaged for the long haul.

Thank you for your interest in [Our Children, Our Community, Our Change](#). We can create strong environments so all children and families can thrive; work to build more equitable communities across our city; and harness the chance to spark actions in our work, policies, and practices to create change for our children.