

## 'Baby PISA' study to go ahead in autumn <sup>[1]</sup>

The main study for the controversial OECD International Early Learning and Child Well-Being Study, known as 'Baby PISA', is to go ahead in autumn 2018, following last autumn's field trial with 450 five-year-old children.

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### AVAILABILITY

[Read online](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

### EXCERPTS

Details of the research project were revealed last week at an event organised by Carolyn Silberfeld of the Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network, at which several early years experts criticised its implementation.

Three countries are taking part in IELS this year – England, the US and Estonia.

The Department for Education said that England was involved in IELS because of the high priority of early years; to gain internationally comparable evidence on children's early learning and development; to complement existing evidence; and to learn from other countries.

Four early learning domains will be measured in IELS, which is being carried out by NFER in England.

- Emerging literacy skills: oral language and listening comprehension; vocabulary; phonological awareness
- Emerging numeracy skills: working with numbers; numbers and counting; shape and space; measurement; pattern
- Self-regulation: working memory; mental flexibility/adaptability; self-control
- Social and emotional skills: trust; empathy; prosocial behaviours
- NFER project lead Rebecca Wheeler said that these domains are measured by direct assessment with tablet-based interactive activities overseen by a study administrator. Two domains are assessed per day, each taking 15-20 minutes.

Indirect assessment of cognitive and socio-emotional skills is done through online and paper-based parent and staff questionnaires, with parents also providing information on the child's history of ECEC, individual characteristics and home learning environment.

The field trial involved 32 schools, sampled to be nationally representative, and more than 450 children, mostly from Year 1, with a minority from Reception. Ms Wheeler said that the trial had very good response rates and that study administrators reported that children enjoyed taking part, feeling 'special'.

The main study in October to December 2018 will expand to 200 schools and 3,000 children, with 15 five-year-olds randomly sampled in each school. A report on the field trial is due out in the next few months, with international and national reports on the main study to be published in autumn 2019 or spring 2020.

## Democratic deficit

Responding, Professor Peter Moss of the Institute of Education University College London argued that IELS suffered from a 'serious democratic deficit', as it had been discussed and decided by OECD and member state governments without wider participation.

IELS was an example, he argued, of 'the political reduced to the technical', with no room for diversity – what Malaguzzi termed 'Anglo-Saxon testology.' He was concerned, he said, about 'a growing standardisation and narrowing of early childhood education, as the IELS tail increasingly wags the early childhood dog', as countries would align their curricula more closely to what is measured.

This was a wasted opportunity, he concluded, to build on the work of the OECD's original Starting Strong project, instead adopting 'a crude, uninformative and potentially damaging approach'

## Going forward

Ms Silberfeld said, 'I feel that the excellent speakers illustrated the breadth of the issues at stake. The quality of the panel discussion, which followed the presentations, and the thought provoking questions from the participants who broadly represented the field of those with interest in early childhood made it well worth while.

'Following the evaluation we hope to take this forward to have further informative and discursive events.'

For more information, please contact [Carolyn.silberfeld@btinternet.com](mailto:Carolyn.silberfeld@btinternet.com) [3] or the Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network at <http://www.ecsdn.org> [4].

[IELS.enquiries@education.gov.uk](mailto:IELS.enquiries@education.gov.uk) [5]

[www.oecd.org/edu/international-early-learning-and-child-well-being-study...](http://www.oecd.org/edu/international-early-learning-and-child-well-being-study...) [6]

-reprinted from Nursery World

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[3] <mailto:Carolyn.silberfeld@btinternet.com>

[4] <http://www.ecsdn.org>

[5] <mailto:IELS.enquiries@education.gov.uk>

[6] <http://www.oecd.org/edu/international-early-learning-and-child-well-being-study.htm>

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