

# Starting early: Teaching, learning and assessment: Linking early-childhood development with academic outcomes—a detailed look <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Source:** Education Quality and Accountability Office, Ontario

**Format:** Report

**Publication Date:** 4 Jun 2013

## AVAILABILITY

Full report in pdf <sup>[2]</sup>

Excerpts from the news release:

TORONTO, June 4, 2013—Almost one in three (29%) Ontario kindergarten students were deemed by their teachers to be "vulnerable" or "at risk" in their language and cognitive development. These students were much less likely to meet the provincial standards for reading, writing and math when they reached the end of Grade 3 than those deemed "ready" or "very ready." These and other findings are reported in a study on the early-years progress of over 72 000 English-language students in Ontario released today by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO).

When looking specifically at reading achievement, only 30% of the Grade 3 students who had been rated by their kindergarten teachers as "vulnerable" in language and cognitive development and 49% of those who had been rated "at risk" met the provincial standard for reading in Grade 3. By comparison, 68% of students who had been rated "ready" and 82% who had been rated "very ready" in kindergarten met the provincial reading standard in Grade 3. These findings show how significant a factor early development is on student learning.

"Two important lessons can be drawn from this study," said Marguerite Jackson, EQAO's Chief Executive Officer. "First, the early nurturing and development of the whole child clearly matters and, second, the education system must continue to structure its programs in ways that account for and support students at all developmental stages at the start of schooling."

It's important to note that not all students who were on track in kindergarten achieved the academic standards in Grade 3. In fact, of the students who had been deemed "ready" or "very ready" in kindergarten, 25% did not meet the standard for reading in Grade 3. At the same time, many of the students who had been deemed "vulnerable" or "at risk" in kindergarten did achieve the provincial standard in Grade 3. "Clearly, a child's readiness for school in kindergarten neither guarantees nor prevents later academic achievement," affirmed Ms. Jackson.

"Overall, Ontario's school system is doing well at bringing most students up to the expected standards for literacy and math after just a few years of schooling, including many who had been identified as 'vulnerable' or 'at risk' at the end of kindergarten," said Marguerite Jackson. "This research shows us that indicators of early childhood development are an important piece of information that both parents and educators should pay attention to as they work together to support the progress of each child."

EQAO's study, titled *Starting Early: Teaching, Learning and Assessment-Linking Early-Childhood Development with Academic Outcomes-A Detailed Look*, followed the progress of students who were in kindergarten between the years 2005 and 2008, when they were assessed by their teachers using the Early Development Instrument (EDI), through to their provincial reading, writing and mathematics test when they were in Grade 3, between the years 2008 and 2011. The collection of student results in this report predates the introduction of full-day kindergarten, which began in 2010.

The EDI, developed at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University, is a checklist completed by the kindergarten teacher that measures a child's development and readiness for school in five domains: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge. EQAO's provincial assessments measure student achievement of the reading, writing and mathematics expectations of The Ontario Curriculum at the end of key stages of schooling.

## Related news articles:

29% of Ontario kindergarten students not meeting Grade 3 targets: study <sup>[3]</sup>, City News, 4 Jun 13

How kindergarten fails to predict success in later grades <sup>[4]</sup>, Globe and Mail, 4 Jun 13

'Achievement gap' between older, younger kindergarten students persists into high school: study, <sup>[5]</sup> Ottawa Citizen, 4 Jun 13

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[6]</sup>

**Tags:** child development <sup>[7]</sup>

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