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early childhood community development centre

Understanding the Early Years

CHILD CARE BRIEF – NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO

Excerpts from:

Communities Survey (2002, 2005) - Statistics Canada

Early Development Instrument Preliminary Findings (2006) – UEY Niagara Region

Understanding the Early Years (UEY) is a Government of Canada national Initiative aimed at helping communities better understand how their young children are doing physically, socially, and cognitively and how families and the community are supporting their children. The Initiative involves the participation of parents, teachers, schools, school boards, community organizations, and others interested in the well-being of children. Niagara Falls, Ontario is one of seven communities that have participated, since 2001, in the second pilot phase (UEY-II Communities). The other six communities are Hampton, New Brunswick; Montreal, Quebec; Dixie-Bloor of Mississauga, Ontario; South Eastman, Manitoba; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; and Abbotsford, British Columbia.

As part of the UEY Initiative, Statistics Canada conducted two rounds of Communities Survey in Niagara Falls, which was adapted from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY). The first cycle of data was collected in 2001-2002 and the second in 2004-2005, using the same instruments and data collection procedures. Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) is producing a report that provides an update for the Niagara Falls Community, based on the analysis of these two cycles of data. This report will provide a portrait of kindergarteners in the Niagara Falls Community, in major domains of child development including physical health and well-being, cognitive skills, and behaviours. The report will also explore factors that may be related to children's developmental outcomes, by looking at changes in demographics, family processes, and community factors between 2002 and 2005.

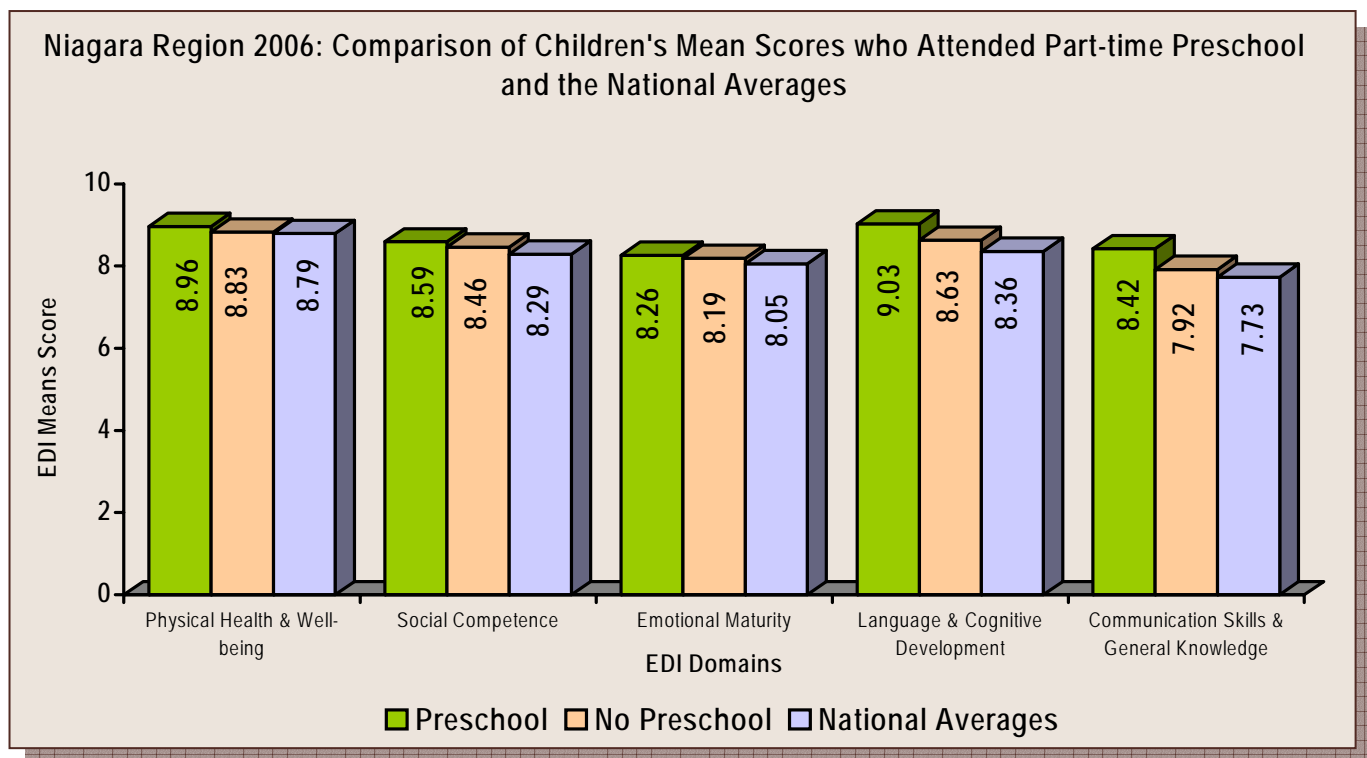
This brief is based on preliminary analysis of the data collected in the Communities Survey, the early childhood developmental outcomes in Niagara Falls, and changes between 2001 and 2005 that are related to child care.

The Canadian national data indicate that about half of children aged 0-5 years were in child care for substantial duration while their parents were engaged in paid work or further

CHILD CARE BRIEF

education and training. For these children, non-parental child care can be an important factor affecting their healthy growth.

The chart below that shows data collected on over 3,000 senior kindergarten children in the Niagara Region indicated that children who attended preschool part-time had significantly higher early development scores in five of the readiness to learn domains (Physical Health & Well-being, Social Competence, Emotional Maturity, Language & Cognitive Development, and Communication Skills & General Knowledge) than those who had not attended preschool (Early Development Instrument, 2006, UEY Niagara Region). Also observed across UEY-II communities with the 2005 cohort were children being 20% more likely to be in non-parental child care (46% in 2001 vs. 55% in 2005).



In Niagara Falls, according to parents, the proportion of children receiving child care has been increasing: 44.5% of their children in 2001 were in a variety of non-parental child care arrangements; in 2005, the same figure was up by 23%, reaching a total of 54.8%. The same trend was also observed across UEY-II communities with the 2005 cohort children being 20% more likely to be in non-parental child care (46% in 2001 vs. 55% in 2005).

The table on page three outlines the percentage of kindergarten children in Niagara Falls and the various types of care arrangements, in both 2001 and 2005, compared with the figures for the combined data of the seven UEY-II communities, over the same period.

Distribution of kindergarten children by main type of child care arrangement, Niagara Falls and UEY-II Communities (percentage, 2001 and 2005)

Main type of child care arrangement	Niagara Falls		UEY-II Communities	
	2001	2005	2001	2005
Other's home – non-relative	22.8	16.6	23.9	27.4
Own home – non-relative	6.0	3.9	6.0	4.8
Other's home – relative	31.4	27.9	12.5	15.8
Own home – relative (non-sibling)	14.6	16.3	9.0	9.3
Own home – sibling	1.4	2.5	1.6	2.0
Daycare Centre	21.4	23.2	11.4	11.5
Before/after school programs	1.9	3.6	30.6	26.3
Nursery/preschool	-	0.3	3.1	1.2
Child in own care	-	3.5	0.5	0.6
Other	0.5	2.2	1.4	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Of the Niagara Falls children who used non-parental child care services, the most common type in both survey periods was care provided by a relative either at home or outside the home: more than 40% of children who needed child care used this type of care arrangement. This was followed by the care provided by a non-relative either at home or outside the home, although the percentage dropped from 22.8% in 2001 to 16.6% in 2005. Daycare centres were another popular form of care arrangement, attended by a little more than 20% of children in both 2001 and 2005.

*Source: Communities Survey 2001-02 and 2004-05, Statistics Canada

On the whole, compared to the 2001 figures, 2005 saw a drop in the use of non-relative care and an increase in the use of daycare centres and before/after school programs; however, the use of relatives to take care of young children remained fairly steady during the period. Overall, in Niagara Falls, children were much more likely to be in a non-institutional care service provided by relatives or non-relatives, with only one in four attending daycare centres, before/after school programs, or nursery/preschools.

Summary

The function of UEY projects is to provide community-specific information on:

- the development of kindergarten children;
- family and community factors that influence children's development;
- local programs and services for young children and their families; and
- local socioeconomic characteristics.

With this information, community organizations and individuals can identify gaps in services and programs for young children and their families and foster partnerships among community groups and individuals to make informed decisions about the best programs and services for young children to thrive.

For information on the availability of the full HRSDC community study for Niagara Falls, and other inquiries concerning the Understanding the Early Years, Niagara Falls project, please contact Glory Ressler, Understanding the Early Years Coordinator, by calling 905.646.7311 ext. 319, email gressler@eccdc.org, or visit the website at www.uey.eccdc.org.