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early childhood community development centre

Understanding the Early Years

LITERACY BRIEF – NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO

Excerpts from:
Communities Survey (2002, 2005) - Statistics Canada

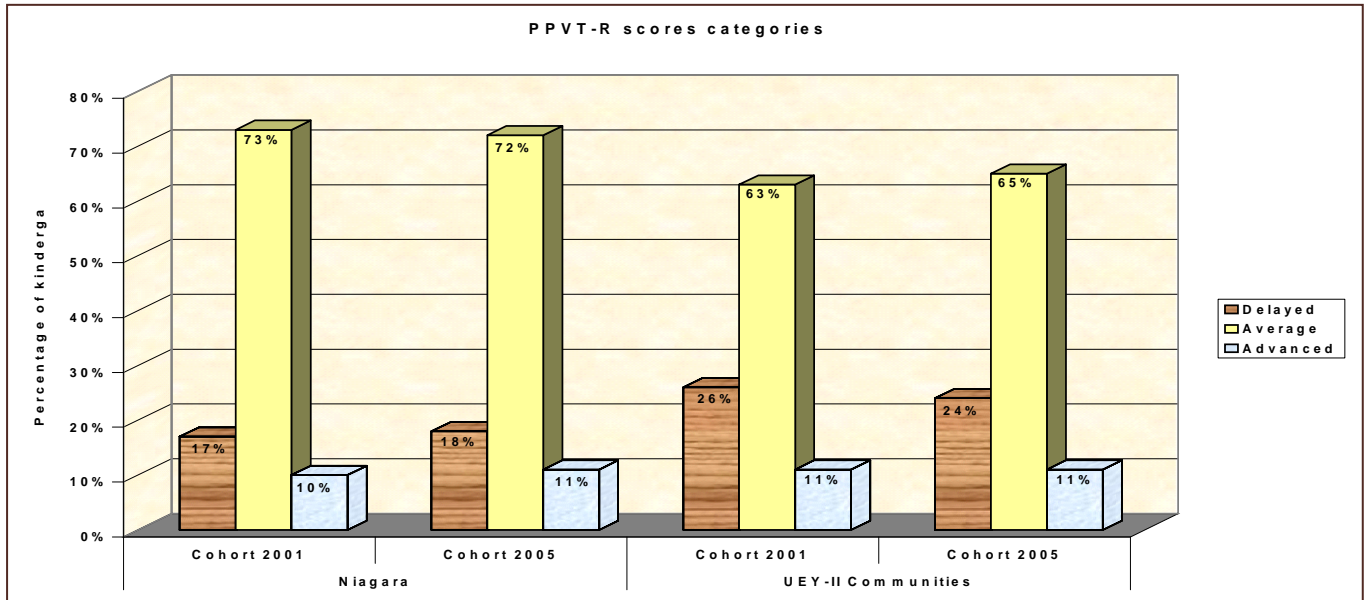
Understanding the Early Years (UEY) is a Government of Canada national Initiative aimed at helping communities better understand how their young children are doing physically, socially, and cognitively and how families and the community are supporting their children. The Initiative involves the participation 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 the 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 learning activities children engaged in at home that support literacy.

LITERACY BRIEF

Percentage of kindergarten children classified as being delayed, on average, or advanced in their receptive vocabulary skills assessed with PPVT-R (2001 and 2005)



The graph shows that in both 2001 and 2005, about 83% of Niagara Falls children were at the level of ‘average’ (PPVT standard scores between 85-115) or ‘advanced’ (PPVT standard scores higher than 115) in their English vocabulary development. On the other hand, less than 20% of Niagara Falls children received a low PPVT score that signifies being ‘delayed’ (PPVT standard score below 85) in the English vocabulary development. If a Niagara Falls child scored under 85 in the PPVT test, it means that this child’s English vocabulary skills were lower than the majority or 85% of Canadian children of the same age from the NLSCY. By comparison, more children in the combined data of the seven U.E.Y.-II communities than in Niagara Falls were classified as being ‘delayed’ in vocabulary development in both 2001 and 2005.

Additionally, in the Number Knowledge assessment, considerably more children in 2005 reached the 6-year-old equivalent level of number knowledge than in 2001 (68% vs.57%).

Literacy-related activities that parents do with their children can have a major influence on their development. In particular, studies find that the amount a parent reads to their child can significantly affect their development regardless of family socioeconomic status. In the Communities Survey, parents were asked to provide information on whether and how often they were engaged with their children in learning activities at home. These activities are outlined in the table on page 3 and they include reading, telling stories and singing songs to their children, teaching them numbers and words, teaching them how to read, and encouraging them to use numbers in daily activities.

Distribution of kindergarten children by literacy practices at home (e.g. reading to children, teaching children numbers and words), Niagara Falls and UEY-II Communities (percentage, 2001 and 2005)					
		Niagara Falls		UEY-II Communities	
		2001	2005	2001	2005
How often read to child?	Daily	70.2	70.3	58.1	67.9
	A few times a week	24.9	25.8	30.2	25.2
	Once a week	3.0	2.7	5.5	3.1
	A few times a month	0.8	0.5	2.4	1.8
	Rarely	1.2	0.8	3.8	1.9
How often teach child numbers?	Daily	59.4	61.0	45.7	53.4
	A few times a week	31.5	29.1	38.3	33.4
	Once a week	5.2	5.3	7.7	6.3
	A few times a month	2.0	2.0	3.7	2.3
	Rarely	1.8	2.3	4.7	4.2
How often teach child words?	Daily	59.0	59.5	39.9	48.5
	A few times a week	27.2	28.8	31.3	29.8
	Once a week	4.6	6.9	8.3	7.2
	A few times a month	3.0	1.4	4.6	3.0
	Rarely	6.2	3.0	15.9	11.2
How often tell stories to child?	Daily	57.6	61.2	46.3	55.7
	A few times a week	28.9	26.6	31.0	28.6
	Once a week	6.2	7.4	8.6	6.6
	A few times a month	3.5	2.4	5.7	4.4
	Rarely	3.8	2.3	8.4	4.3
How often sing songs with child?	Daily	47.4	52.3	33.8	42.5
	A few times a week	28.3	28.2	34.6	30.3
	Once a week	12.6	7.2	12.1	11.2
	A few times a month	4.6	3.8	7.2	5.7
	Rarely	7.0	8.1	12.3	10.0
How often encourage child to use numbers?	Daily	75.7	72.4	57.0	66.3
	A few times a week	17.8	19.2	27.4	21.0
	Once a week	1.2	3.6	4.7	4.2
	A few times a month	2.0	1.4	3.1	2.3
	Rarely	3.2	3.5	7.7	5.8
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

The data in the table is from both 2001 and 2005 surveys and indicate that the vast majority of Niagara Falls parents had been actively engaged in providing for their children a home environment filled with stimulating learning activities.

Around nine in ten parents in Niagara Falls read to their child, taught their child numbers and words, and encouraged their child to use numbers, either daily or at least a few times a week. Of the variety of activities parents did with their children, reading to their children and encouraging them to use numbers appeared to be the most frequent activities at home: about 70% of Niagara Falls parents would do these activities with their children on a daily basis. In contrast, about 50% of parents would help their children learn by singing songs to them everyday. Overall, Niagara Falls parents had maintained about the same level of engagement in learning activities with their children between 2001 and 2005. This level of engagement was higher than the UEY-II average, despite a significant increase in parents' engagement across UEY-II communities during the same period.

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.