



early childhood community development centre

Understanding the Early Years



O R I E N T A T I O N :

The Best Start Possible

UEY NIAGARA REGION, ONTARIO

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Early Childhood Community Development Centre

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Intended outcomes of presentation

1. Enhance ability to generate ideas for engaging and mobilizing community.
2. Increase understanding of need to adapt project to community needs and changing conditions.
3. Identify and encourage development of creative strategies and solutions.
4. Inspire and motivate new UEY initiatives.

UEY Niagara Region Overview

The UEY Niagara Region initiative began in the **fall of 2005** and is scheduled to sunset in **September, 2008**. It is working with a **pre-established community coalition** (Early Years Niagara Planning Council/EYNPC) and its **research advisory group**, along with **two school boards** enrolling approximately **3,050 SK students** each year.

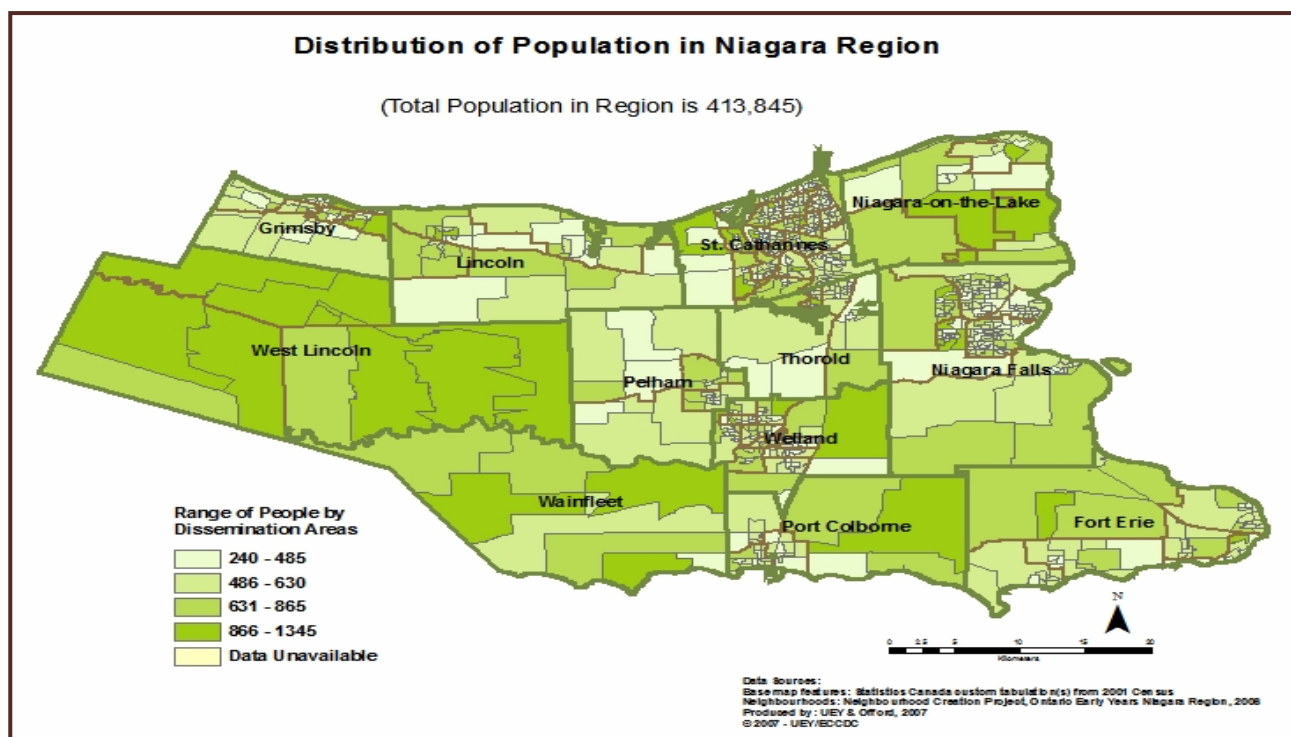
A significant Early Years Niagara accomplishment is the **Niagara Children's Charter of Rights**. Since its development in 2002, the Charter has been **endorsed by all twelve municipalities, the Regional Municipality of Niagara, all local school boards, and over 20 community organizations**. By endorsing the Niagara Children's Charter, the community has publicly pledged to contribute to improving the lives of children and families in the region.

Additionally, there are a **wide variety of networks, committees, planning bodies, and agencies** in place that serve families with young children. Much of the sector work focus has been on **breaking down silos** and **partnering** in order to best **coordinate, integrate, and implement the local early years agenda**.



What about other community conditions in the Region of Niagara? (continued)

the larger populated cities of St. Catharines and Niagara Falls, with their urban intensive features, to Wainfleet and West Lincoln with more rural or natural resources ... they all add to Niagara's economic and geographic diversity.
(<http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/region/default.aspx>, 2006 The Regional Municipality of Niagara)



The UEY Niagara Region generated map above outlines the **twelve municipalities** in the region, as well as population distribution by DAs organized into local neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods were identified through a consultative “Neighbourhood Creation Project” undertaken by the local Ontario Early Years Data Analysis Coordinator. UEY Niagara Region partnered extensively, in order to ensure comparability of neighbourhood level results across community initiatives and over time.

Other local community conditions of note include:

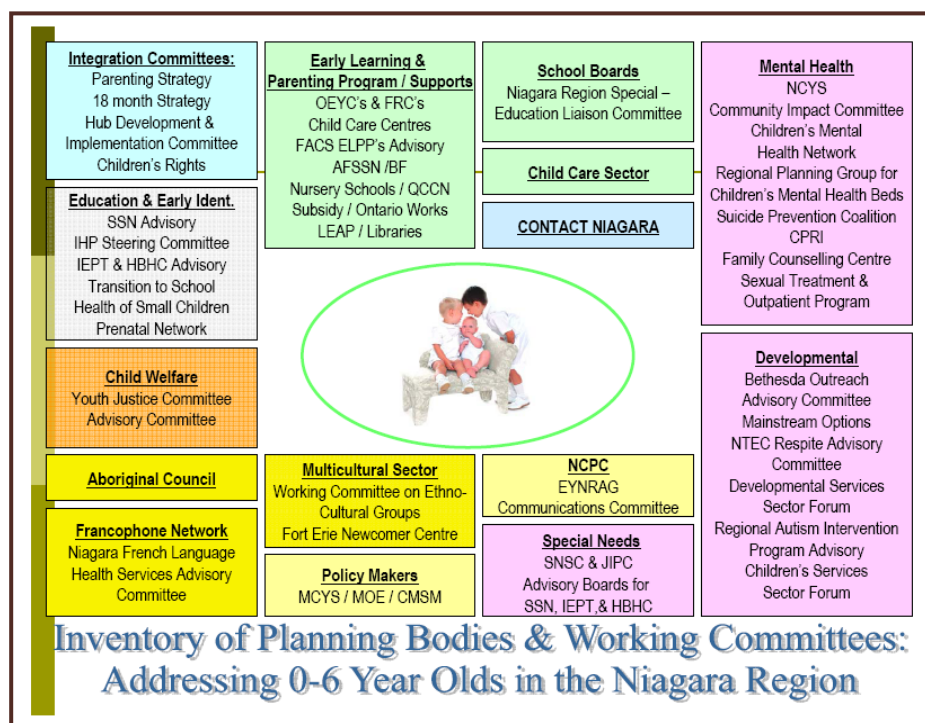
- High rates of **seasonal employment** due to tourism and service industry cycles, particularly in Niagara Falls,
- Significant **cuts to manufacturing sector** in St. Catharines and Welland,
- High levels of **agricultural employment** in rural areas (west),
- **Labour shortages** in **skilled trades and IT**,
- **Largest immigration point of entry** in country (Fort Erie),
- Generally **good access to services** across Niagara, although somewhat **under-utilized**,
- Generally **better socioeconomic conditions in western end of region**, except for Niagara on the Lake,
- **Pockets of poor socioeconomic conditions in many municipalities**, and
- Planning efforts aimed at **regional integration** and **smart planning**.

Pre-data Strategies

While preparing coalition and data partners for the implementation phase, **the approaches and strategies of other UEY sites were researched** (past and present). This helped gain a broad sense of the possibilities for UEY Niagara Region and identified other communities in similar situations with strategies that could easily be adopted.

This knowledge, in conjunction with an understanding of the community's needs, allowed the project to begin creatively moving forward. In terms of an **environmental scan of the local situation**, identifying the following information has been very useful:

- **Current trends and needs** in the community service, public health, early learning and care, and education sectors,
- Potential community partners; those having an interest in early development, learning or care, and/or other aspects of the information you'll be gathering (i.e. services related to EDI domains, socioeconomic conditions and community resources, and evidence-based or data-driven planning),
- **Planning needs and cycles of community**, with regard to the early years, and
- **Other early years knowledge, or related information**, being collected (local, provincial, and national).



UEY Niagara Region also found that it was important to begin **networking and participating in community meetings and relevant committees** in order to **promote and position UEY and an understanding of the importance of the early years generally**. The various types of individuals, committees, and meetings UEY Niagara Region participated in included:

- Local **parent, teacher, and early childhood educator events and conferences**,
- Early years **program, child care and related public health managers, and related networks and/or committees**,
- **Individuals, committees, and meetings** recommended by the sponsoring agency, coalition, and its members, and
- Active **social justice, poverty, and children's issues groups in the local community**.

The information and contacts gained from these types of activities allowed the UEY Niagara Region initiative to **anticipate changes and adapt and integrate its project workplans with current community needs and conditions**. For example, when learning about a delay on the release of 2005 EDI data that was collected through the Ontario Best Start initiative in the region, UEY was able to adjust its workplans and timelines in order to better coordinate knowledge release to the community (i.e. adjust release date and content of UEY's 2006 EDI data). As a result, UEY now partners extensively with Ontario Early Years Niagara Region and its Centres, and the Region of Niagara's Public Health Department which administers the Best Start initiative locally.

In response to local concerns about the use of the EDI data, UEY Niagara Region met to discuss and subsequently partnered to develop the statement found below.

The EDI is a population and not a diagnostic measure, and the results are one source of data only. For the purposes of planning and decision-making, it is best to also utilize other reliable and relevant information, such as is found on the Regional Municipality of Niagara's website: http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/health_wellness/reports/default.aspx

The statement has been viewed as a success in that it addresses the fundamental local concern, builds capacity for robust evidence-based planning, and allows UEY to use the Region's and Public Health Department logos on all EDI community reports and communiqués; which has significantly promoted the credibility of UEY Niagara Region, and the knowledge it has gathered, in the community.

Examples of Pre-data Activities and Products

Is Your Child Ready for School? **eccdc**
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Understanding the Early Years
A study of our children's readiness to learn

Children who are ready for school show a variety of skills and interests. Check the chart below to see how you can help your child prepare for school.

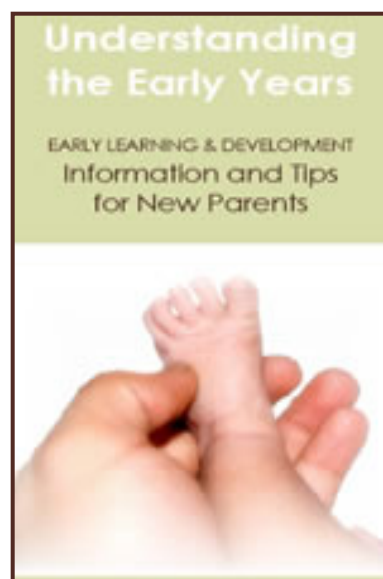
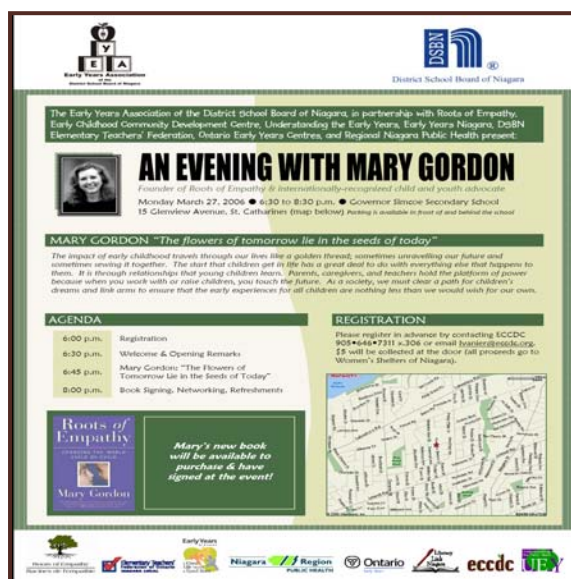
Developmental Area	Skills and interests that show your child is ready for school	Ways to help prepare your child for school
Physical Health and Well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is able to choose healthy snacks and foods. Is developing daily living skills and washroom independence. Enjoys a variety of physical activities (e.g., running, swimming, ball games). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a variety of foods from all food groups. Encourage personal hygiene, dressing, and tidying up. Encourage physical and outdoor activities. Limit computer and television times and monitor games and programs.
Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows curiosity about the world and eagerness to try new experiences. Cooperates/plays with 1-2 children of similar age. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support your child in taking small "risks" (e.g., learning to ride a bike). Arrange play times with other children.
Emotional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is developing the ability to cope with small challenges. Is persistent in repetitive but necessary tasks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stand back (providing situations are safe), as your child takes on small challenges. Encourage your child in these tasks and celebrate attempts as well as successes.
Communication and General Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates his or her own needs, speaks clearly for the most part, and understands others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read and talk about books and stories. Talk about topics of interest to your child. Use appropriate language, not "baby-talk".
Language and Thinking Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has favourite books, stories, and magazines. Enjoys rhymes, songs, chants, and simple number games. Enjoys solving age appropriate riddles and puzzles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk with your child about stories and poems you read/recite together. Play simple games (e.g., "I Spy..." and matching games).

For more information on community factors that support readiness to learn or to access local research results, please contact the Early Childhood Community Development Centre at: 905-646-7311.

Canada The Understanding the Early Years Initiative is funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada. For further information, visit www.hrsdc.gc.ca

The various types of activities UEY Niagara Region undertook, and products it developed in the pre-data stage included:

- **Introductory presentations and communiqués** (i.e. on UEY, early childhood development, EDI, and related local knowledge),
- **Developing local community resource and early years research inventories,**
- **Gathering feedback on UEY knowledge dissemination, data-driven dialogue, and planning activities** at coalition and other community partner meetings,
- **Developing local community resource and early years research inventories,**
- Providing **displays and/or workshops** at community events and conferences,
- **Partnering** on relevant community events and conferences,
- **Participating** on UEY Coordinator Conference **calls and email** exchanges,
- **Supporting knowledge gathering efforts** of the coalition and other community partners,
- Dissemination of **joint communication products** (ex. New Parent Tips brochure, Back To School calendar, newspaper supplement), and
- Working on **communications and workplans** (i.e. developing, revising, etc.).



Post-data Strategies

The pre-data activities were intended to help piece together the puzzle that constitutes the local situation and community planning needs and begin developing the partnerships that would maximize knowledge dissemination and use. This has allowed UEY Niagara Region, once results were available, to:

- Target, and then customize, its communications products and presentations for key community partners,
- Gather support and begin plans for community events/forums,
- Develop joint articles, initiatives, and communiqués, and
- Respond to evidence-based planning and knowledge gathering requests and anticipated needs.

In the UEY Niagara Region experience to-date, the key has been **sharing relevant information, in a variety of forms, with community partners as soon as possible**. In the complex environment UEY Niagara Region operates in, the best approach has been something like, **'servant leadership'**, in that the project attempts to serve the needs and priorities of the local community while also achieving its own mandate.

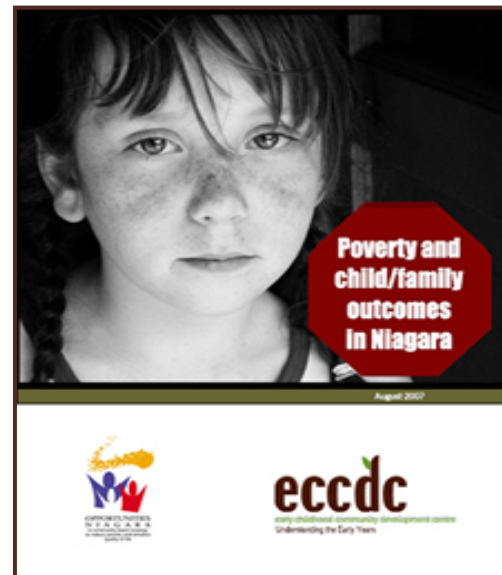
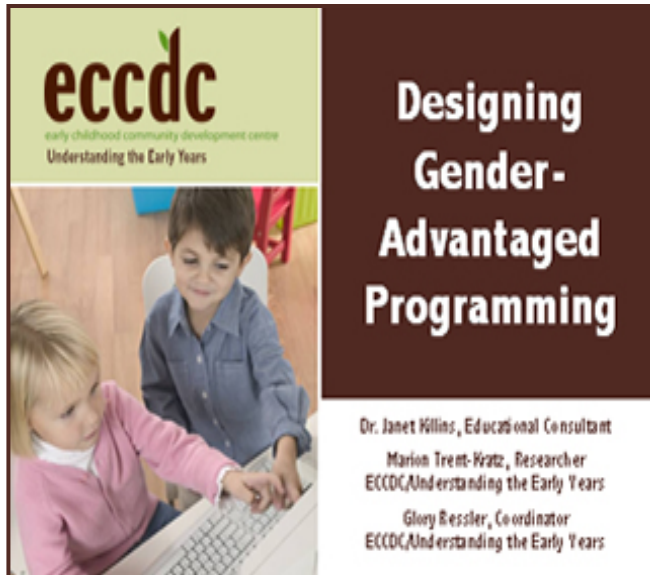
Examples of Post-data Activities and Products To-date

At this time, UEY Niagara Region is in the **process of generating additional EDI reports** and its **Community Mapping Study**. To-date the project has undertaken various types of activities and products in its efforts to serve the local community and meet its deliverables. These have included:

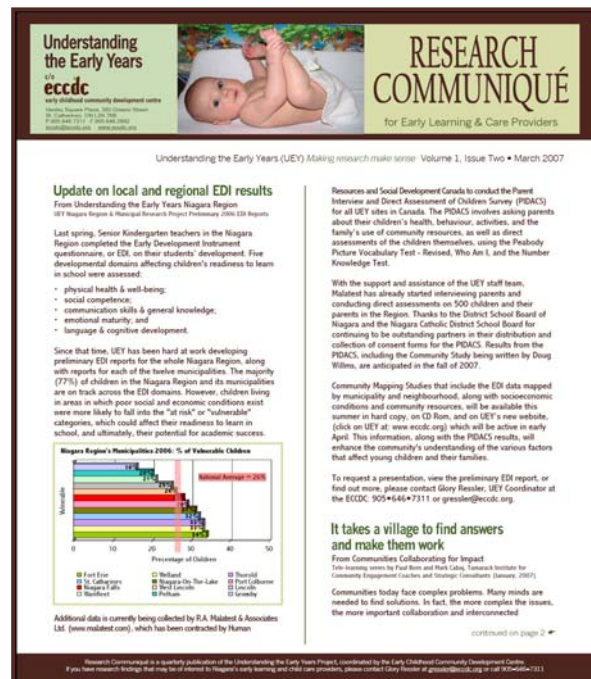
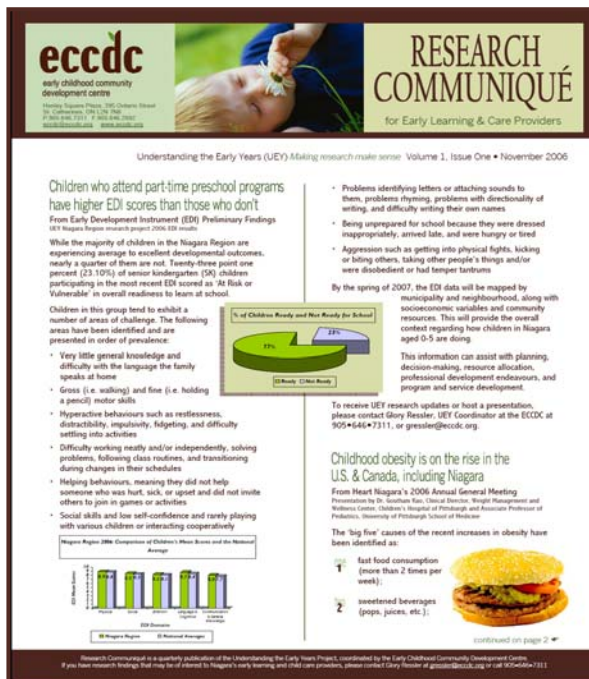
- Sending **press releases** and giving **interviews** with local media,

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- Developing and disseminating **joint articles and workshops** (ex. Designing Gender Advantaged Environments, Quiet Times and OEYC newsletters, and Poverty and Child/Family Outcomes Report),



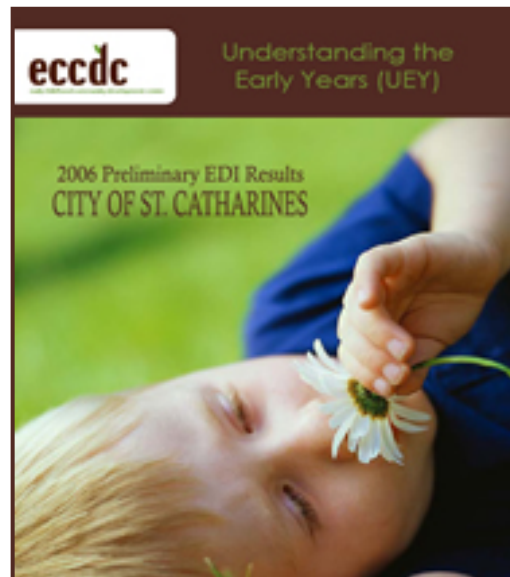
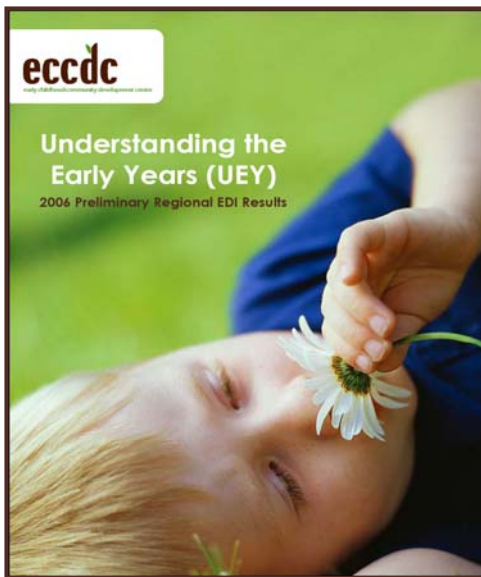
- Distributing **UEY Research Communiqués** (targeted to ECEs and other frontline professionals)



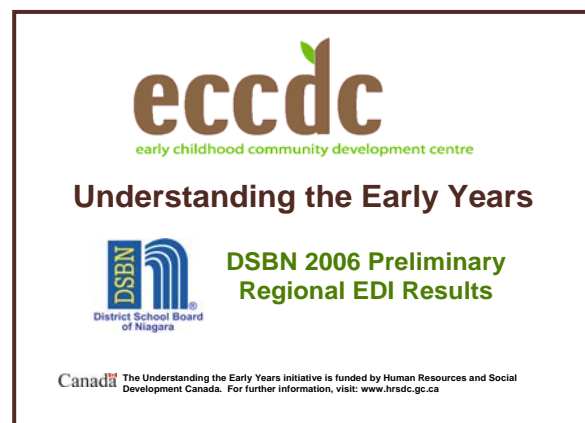
- Delivering **customized knowledge presentations** to target audiences,

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- Disseminating preliminary EDI results and/or mapped data in **custom briefs and updates**,



- Regularly **gathering input** on who else might be interested in/able to use UEY knowledge,
- Developing and delivering **related workshops** that include some local knowledge (ex. Science of Early Childhood Development, Data-driven Planning),
- Providing available UEY knowledge (aggregate, customized) for **presentations and workshops by community partners**,
- Providing available UEY information (customized) for **planning purposes** (ex. School Board, Speech Services Niagara),





REMINDER!
STAY INFORMED!
ACT ON YOUR
COMMITMENT TO THE
NIAGARA CHILDREN'S
CHARTER ...
REGISTER NOW!


Wednesday, November 28, 2007
**Bridging Knowledge and Action:
The Early Years Niagara Story**
Quality Hotel Parkway Convention Centre
327 Ontario Street, St. Catharines
7:00 a.m. Registration - 7:30 a.m. Breakfast
AGENDA
Moderator - Dr Robin Williams, MD, D.P.H., F.R.C.P. (C), Medical Officer of Health and Commissioner of Public Health
Opening - Aaron Bell, Ojibway Storyteller
Community Plans - Early Years Niagara Planning Council on behalf of Integrated Community Plan, Best Start Network, Quality Child Care Niagara and other early learning and development initiatives
Community Data and Dialogue - Early Development Instrument results, socioeconomic and community resource data
Community Initiatives - Free The Children / Niagara Branch, Niagara Falls Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee, Canadian Tire Financial Services

There is no cost to attend. Breakfast will be served. Seating is limited.
• RSVP ASAP by emailing eccdc@eccdc.org or calling 905.646.7311

Sponsored by the ECCDC and its Niagara Region Understanding the Early Years (UEY) project, in partnership with Early Years Niagara and the Early Years Niagara Research Advisory Group's Forum Planning Committee.

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Please join us...
Parents, Teachers, and Early
Childhood Educators and
Service Providers
REMINDER!

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**Bridging Knowledge and Action:
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Quality Hotel Parkway Convention Centre
327 Ontario Street, St. Catharines
5:30 p.m. Registration & Cash Bar / 6:00 p.m. Dinner
AGENDA
Dr. Andrea Feller MD, MS, FAAP, Associate Medical Officer of Health
Aaron Bell, Ojibway Storyteller
Community Plans - Early Years Niagara Planning Council on behalf of Integrated Community Plan, Best Start Network, Quality Child Care Niagara
Community Data Overview and Dialogue - Early Development Instrument results, socioeconomic and community resource data
Community Initiatives - Free The Children / Niagara Branch, Niagara Falls Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee, Canadian Tire Financial Services

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- Holding **community meetings and forums** (ex. Power Breakfast, Lunch and Learn, Community Dinner),
- Providing **other research projects** available UEY information (aggregate, customized),
- Generally **supporting knowledge gathering efforts of the coalition and other community partners**, and
- Developing UEY Niagara Region **website** and uploading presentations and communiqués (www.uey.eccdc.org).

Check out the new online resources and services powered by the ECCDC and its Understanding the Early Years Project

Attention: all who care about Niagara's children and their families & communities ...

STAY CONNECTED!

www.eccdc.org
We've finally done it! The documents have been uploaded and the text, links, and functions double-checked... Now we're inviting you to explore some of the amazing features including:

- All new-weather information for your area
- Tips for finding child care and Child Care Choices service
- Special "login area" for Licensed Child Care Programs to update vacancies and record Quality Child Care Niagara monthly statistical data
- Child Care Choices - now maps your Licensed Child Care Program by geographic area and individual
- Menu Plans by month including recipes
- Special bulletin board/updates feature (Child Care Sector)

Also coming soon...

- A new Member access area
- Special Needs Steering Committee section
- Online training and events registration
- New resource catalogue listing

www.uey.eccdc.org
Interested in learning about community conditions, their influence on the early development & readiness to learn outcomes of Niagara's children, and how this knowledge has been used so far? Visit the Understanding the Early Years sister website where you'll find information, downloadable resources, and links on:

- The UEY initiative, and its intended outputs, outcomes, and components (Community Development)
- UEY's contribution to local action (Community Development)
- Local knowledge including Community Reports on both the Niagara Falls and Niagara Region projects
- Resource Library - where additional research and resources can be accessed
- UEY Communiqués & Presentations
- Websites related to early childhood learning, health and development (national, provincial and local), and the Early Years Studies
- Upcoming Events and examples of Press Releases and Media Coverage

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To enquire about an ECCDC membership, provide feedback on the websites, or request information on UEY, email eccdc@eccdc.org or call 905.646.7311

Top 10 Lessons Learned *(by Brenda Ives and Glory Ressler)*

TEN	There's never enough time. Let it go ... do as much as you can, when you can, and keep moving (unless you're sleeping ... that would just be dangerous). ☹
NINE	Timelines associated with workplans shift, usually due to reasons beyond the control of the messenger. It's tempting to unleash. Let it go ... prioritize and strategize as best you can and don't worry - your neck and stomach will thank you!
EIGHT	Planning is essential and we can become attached. Let it go ... learning to adapt serves the project, along with your sanity.
SEVEN	Change is chaotic and often unpredictable - even when you're aware of trends. Let it go ... in order to avoid the unpleasant side-effect of bitterness, try to see the opportunities hidden in the hassles. Don't be afraid to ask for help in gaining perspective, if required.
SIX	There's never enough data at the right time and both 'enough' and 'time' are relative constructs. Let them go ... get as much accurate knowledge as you can, when you can, and share it. Voila! Observe how the community embraces UEY!
FIVE	UEY is one piece of the community puzzle and you may never get the box top with the complete picture on it. Let it go ... gather your community pieces and then find your community niches – these connections make the work easier.
FOUR	The hardest part about engaging the community is the relationships. You won't necessarily like everyone. Let it go ... stay out of personality conflicts and focus on solutions or risk enabling a 'dysfunctional community dynamic' or 'intervention'. Yikes!
THREE	Leadership through service to the community is effective but some people don't want to be served. Let it go ... use your charm and sell the benefits to the other but when all else fails remember that 'if a door closes, a window opens' or at least have a cocktail (after work, of course).
TWO	Problems will arise and they're irritating. Finding solutions together helps but identifying blame doesn't. Let it go! Look for a work-around, bust through, burrow under, and give-a-little/get-a-little opportunities. You'll feel better and people will like you more ☺
ONE	Only you can maintain the integrity of your project, in relation to funder requirements, changes, and local community conditions and needs. You don't need to be like other sites. Let it go ... you do need to produce agreed upon deliverables and required reports. Do NOT let these go ... they may even help you review, reflect, and creatively adapt!

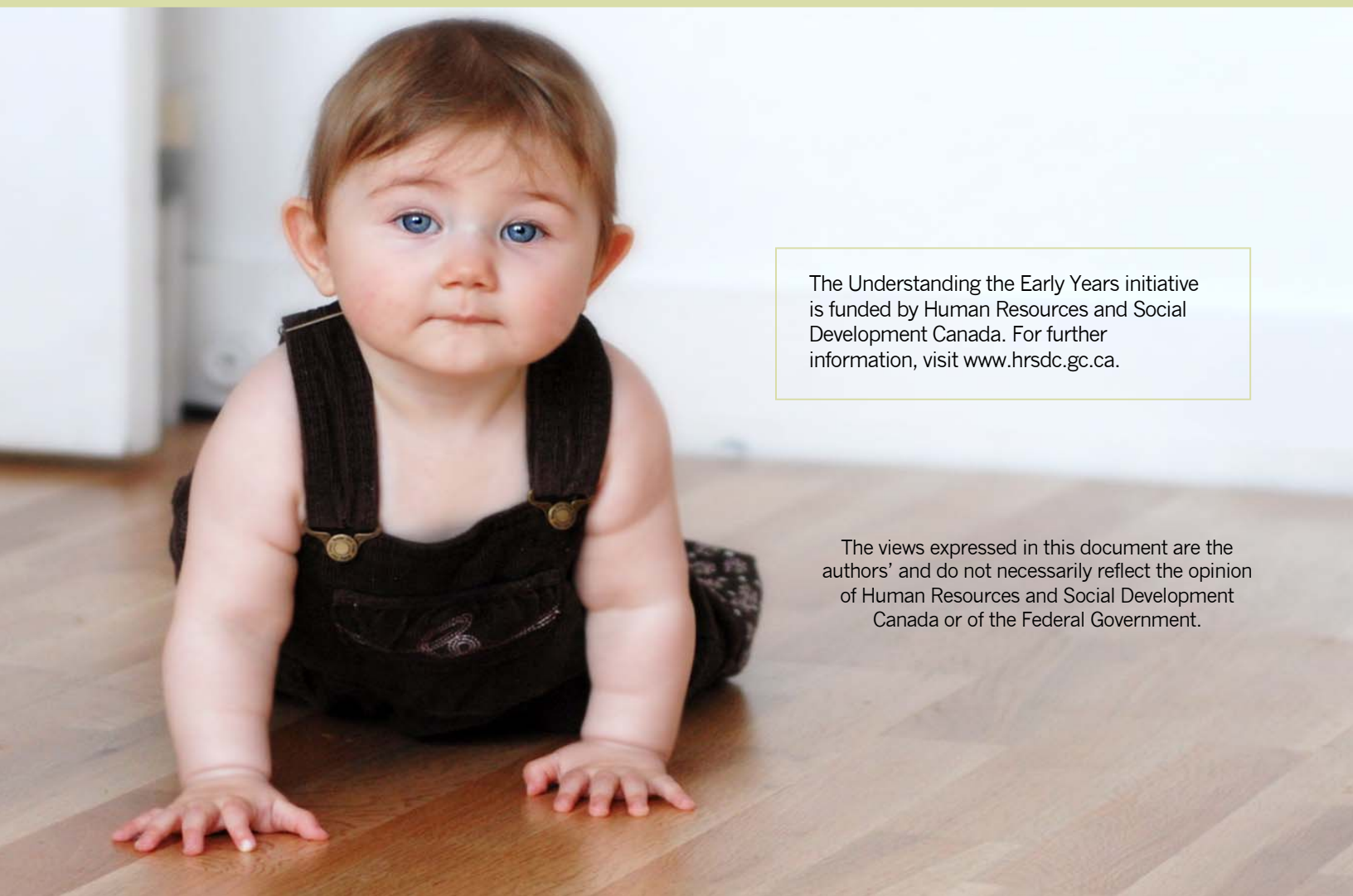
Discussion

Are there any comments, questions, or items you'd like to discuss?

Additional Notes:

Thank you for your time and attention!

~ Glory



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