

Understanding the Early Years

c/o

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RESEARCH COMMUNIQUÉ

for Early Learning & Care Providers

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Update on local and regional EDI results

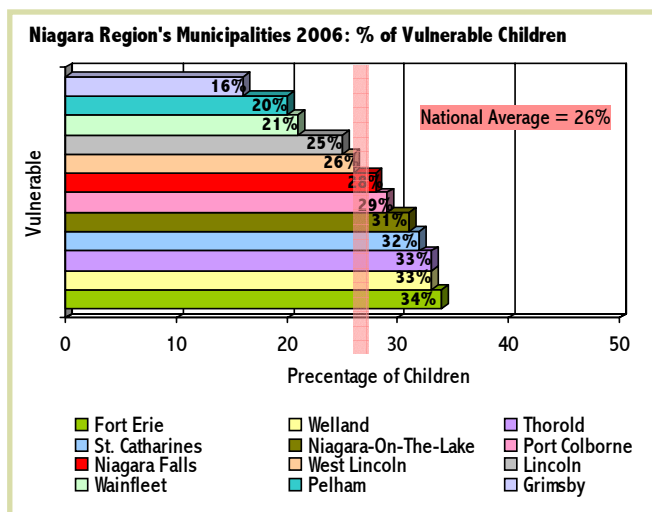
From Understanding the Early Years Niagara Region

UEY Niagara Region & Municipal Research Project Preliminary 2006 EDI Reports

Last spring, Senior Kindergarten teachers in the Niagara Region completed the Early Development Instrument questionnaire, or EDI, on their students' development. Five developmental domains affecting children's readiness to learn in school were assessed:

- physical health & well-being;
- social competence;
- communication skills & general knowledge;
- emotional maturity; and
- language & cognitive development.

Since that time, UEY has been hard at work developing preliminary EDI reports for the whole Niagara Region, along with reports for each of the twelve municipalities. The majority (77%) of children in the Niagara Region and its municipalities are on track across the EDI domains. However, children living in areas in which poor social and economic conditions exist were more likely to fall into the "at risk" or "vulnerable" categories, which could affect their readiness to learn in school, and ultimately, their potential for academic success.



Additional data is currently being collected by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (www.malatest.com), which has been contracted by Human

Resources and Social Development Canada to conduct the Parent Interview and Direct Assessment of Children Survey (PIDACS) for all UEY sites in Canada. The PIDACS involves asking parents about their children's health, behaviour, activities, and the family's use of community resources, as well as direct assessments of the children themselves, using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test - Revised, Who Am I, and the Number Knowledge Test.

With the support and assistance of the UEY staff team, Malatest has already started interviewing parents and conducting direct assessments on 500 children and their parents in the Region. Thanks to the District School Board of Niagara and the Niagara Catholic District School Board for continuing to be outstanding partners in their distribution and collection of consent forms for the PIDACS. Results from the PIDACS, including the Community Study being written by Doug Wilms, are anticipated in the fall of 2007.

Community Mapping Studies that include the EDI data mapped by municipality and neighbourhood, along with socioeconomic conditions and community resources, will be available this summer in hard copy, on CD Rom, and on UEY's new website, (click on UEY at: www.eccdc.org) which will be active in early April. This information, along with the PIDACS results, will enhance the community's understanding of the various factors that affect young children and their families.

To request a presentation, view the preliminary EDI report, or find out more, please contact Glory Ressler, UEY Coordinator at the ECCDC: 905•646•7311 or gressler@eccdc.org.

It takes a village to find answers and make them work

From Communities Collaborating for Impact

Tele-learning series by Paul Born and Mark Cabaj, Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement Coaches and Strategic Consultants (January, 2007)

Communities today face complex problems. Many minds are needed to find solutions. In fact, the more complex the issues, the more important collaboration and interconnected

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responses become. While multi-sectoral approaches to specific community conditions rarely happen on their own, they can be facilitated. In this unique teleconference, Paul Born outlined the six key factors that result in successful multi-sectoral collaborations:

- 1 Environment:** a community with a history of collaboration is more likely to succeed than one without this history.
- 2 Membership:** a diverse range of players, perspectives, skills, knowledge, and networks is generally more effective.
- 3 Purpose:** multi-sectoral approaches work best when the goal is something no single organization can do on its own.
- 4 Process & Structure:** flexibility and organizational structure increases the likelihood of success.
- 5 Communication:** quality of communication - as opposed to quantity - is key.
- 6 Resources:** members need to be willing to commit material and/or financial resources, not just their time.

Barriers to community collaboration were identified as:

- **Lack of community reciprocity:** members need to feel included and empowered in making change happen.
- **Too many silos:** over-specialization within communities.
- **Too much competition:** usually for what are perceived as too few resources.
- **Lack of trust among members:** this can result in poor sharing of information.
- **Lack of leadership:** this may manifest in a lack of shared goals.

Under the right conditions, multi-sectoral collaborations are more effective than isolated solutions when addressing complex problems because activities are undertaken that can result in long-lasting systemic change. Niagara's early learning and child care industry is fortunate to have several multi-sectoral collaborations already underway. These include:

- **The Regional Municipality of Niagara's Child Care Plan 2005-2008**
www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/children/ccp_2005-2008/default.aspx
- **The Niagara Children's Planning Council's Best Start Integrated Community Plan**
www.earlyyearsniagara.org/923BF17D183E456D8447B71E0ED0BC84.htm
- **The Niagara Children's Charter**
www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/children/pdf/NiagaraChildrenCharter.pdf
- **Early Years Niagara**
www.earlyyearsniagara.org

*Coming together is a beginning,
staying together is progress, and
working together is success*

~ Henry Ford



UEY has benefited from this collaborative foundation through the advice, partnerships, and guidance provided by members of the Early Years Niagara Research Advisory Group. The *UEY Niagara Falls Community Mapping Study Report* provides numerous examples of multi-sectoral collaboration and the positive outcomes that have resulted. UEY will continue to work collaboratively with community partners in finding solutions to complex social challenges and is currently gathering input on the Niagara Falls Action Plan.

To participate in upcoming teleconference trainings by Tamarack, visit: <http://tamarackcommunity.ca/>. For more information on multi-sectoral collaboration, click: <http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g3s21.html>.

To obtain your copy of the *Niagara Falls Community Mapping Study Report*, or to contribute to the Action Plan, please contact Glory Ressler at: 905•646•7311 or gressler@eccdc.org.

Canadians believe in the power of lifelong learning

From 2006 Survey of Canadian Attitudes Towards Learning
An annual survey administered by the Canadian Council on Learning (<http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/SCAL/?Language=EN>) and Statistics Canada (<http://www.statcan.ca/>) interviewing more than 5,000 Canadians about learning throughout the lifespan

Children begin learning from the moment they're born. In fact, the first five years of life lay the groundwork for school success in the years ahead. The results of a recent survey



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reflect Canadians' appreciation of these facts. When Canadians were asked about early childhood learning they said:

- while it is important to learn math and our ABCs (the basics), it is just as important to cultivate a love for learning;
- early positive learning experiences are crucial to Canadians' continued desire to learn throughout their lives; and
- governments can best facilitate early childhood learning by raising awareness regarding the importance of early childhood learning.

To access the Canadian Council on Learning's 2007 Report on the State of Early Childhood Learning in Canada, visit: <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/StateofLearning/SOLREarlyChildhood.htm>.

Niagara has initiatives, resources, and materials aimed at laying this foundation, including:

Quality Child Care Niagara (QCCN): The Regional Municipality of Niagara, child care owners and managers, and 14 other community partners have implemented a standardized approach to enhancing the quality of programming in the area's licensed child care centres. Since 2003, over 90% of child care personnel have participated in QCCN training. In 2005 alone, this benefited nearly 2,500 children and parents. www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/children/reports/2006/COM39-2006.pdf

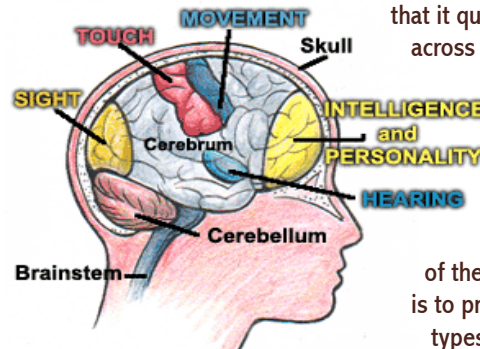
The Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC): This community-based charity provides parents/caregivers with current child care information, including brochures about finding quality care, and an online registry of local providers. The ECCDC also provides child care programs and home child care providers with affordable access to the products, services, and information they need to deliver outstanding child care. www.eccdc.org

The Off-To-School Calendar: All parents who register their children for kindergarten in Niagara are entitled to receive a calendar with information about early learning and development outlined on each page. This unique approach to public awareness is made possible through the collaboration of Early Years Niagara's Transition to School Working Group and Research Advisory Group, UEY, and numerous other community organizations. www.earlyyearsniagara.org

The amazing brain: improving with age

From: History of Neuroscience in Developmental Psychology
Child and Youth Studies 2006 Colloquium Series presentation made by Dr. Sid Segalowitz, University of Brock Professor and Chair of Psychology Department (January 25, 2006)

Early work in Developmental Psychology did not consider the brain as developing over time. James Baldwin, Sigmund Freud, and especially Jean Piaget began challenging this assumption and psychologist Arnold Geselle went on to explicitly state that the brain is a developmental organ. However, it has only been in the last 20 years that this notion has been seriously considered. The technology that has allowed researchers to investigate this theory further has only existed for the last 10. What they have discovered is that, unlike other organs in the body, the brain never stops developing and that it qualitatively continues to develop across a person's lifespan.



From:

www.cyh.com/HealthTopicDetailsKids.aspx?p=335&np=152&id=1528#1

New findings also underscore the fact that stimulating early experiences result in the healthy growth and functioning of the brain, and hence how crucial it is to provide young children with these types of activities and opportunities. Consider for instance the course of brain development prior to birth and during the early years: billions of nerve cells (neurons) build connections with each other that let

them communicate and control the body's organs, glands, and muscles. The communication connections between neurons are referred to as neural pathways, or brain "wiring." Neural pathways that are stimulated and used are strengthened; those that aren't are eliminated. The result of these two processes is known as brain "sculpting." For example, emergent literacy is wired and sculpted in the early critical periods of language development.

In these early days and months of life, the quality of brain stimulation, or nurturing, shapes the development of the neural pathways. Stress and the stress-related hormone, cortisol, shape unhealthy neural pathways that affect a child's ability to cope and be resilient. McCain and Mustard (Early Years Study, 1999) examined how high and somewhat high risk levels generated by the presence of multiple socioeconomic risk factors in neighbourhoods, such as low income, residential instability, and reliance on social assistance, may mirror the negative effects of stimulation

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deprivation. Specifically, McCain and Mustard (1999) found that developmental outcomes for children in neighbourhoods with multiple risk factors were similar to the poor developmental outcomes of children living in extremely unhealthy environments and who received little or no external stimulation.

UEY Niagara Falls' knowledge appears to replicate the findings of McCain and Mustard.

Children in neighbourhoods with multiple socioeconomic risk factors scored below the national averages on the EDI (UEY & OEYNR, 2005). Additionally, higher percentages of children in these higher risk areas were considered vulnerable, meaning they were more likely to have trouble adjusting to school (UEY & OEYNR, 2005).

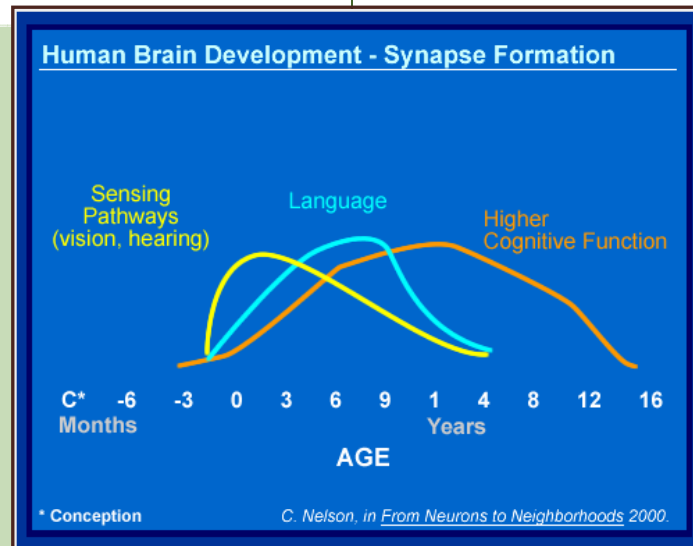
When early learning and care providers understand neuroscience, they can create learning environments and orchestrate learning activities that help nurture and sculpt children's brains for school success. Working closely with parents, early learning and care providers can make a real difference in children's developmental outcomes by getting families interested in early brain development and helping them enhance the learning environment at home.

If you'd like to learn more about this fascinating subject, there are a number of opportunities to do so this spring:

The Science of Early Child Development is an interactive, online course developed by Manitoba's Red River College (<http://www.scienceofecd.com/index.php>). It is available through the ECCDC Resource Library. To find out more about this five-disc set or ECCDC membership, you may call 905•646•7311 or email eccdc@eccdc.org.

The Science of Early Child Development Power Breakfast, sponsored by UEY and the ECCDC, will take place on Thursday May 3 and will offer an inside look at this new, interactive learning program. To register, please use the ECCDC contact information above.

Speech Services Niagara (905•688•3550 or 1•800•896•5496) will be offering workshops on language and literacy development and on supporting parents. These sessions will take place at the ECCDC in April, May, and June. For details, please see the current issue of *Esteem*.



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

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