

Investing in the future

Niagara Nurtures



The Early Years Action Group-Niagara Region

Early Years Research in the Niagara Region

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The Importance of the Early Years

Development during the first six years of life establishes a foundation for learning, behaviour and health over the life cycle.

(McCain & Mustard, 1999 and Doherty, 1997)

The Case Community Research

Initial research on child development has shown that community factors may impact on child developmental outcomes, but only further research can show the magnitude of the impact and the mechanisms through which it occurs.



Moving From Research to Practice

Data gathered can give community leaders the information they need to make informed decisions about the best policies and most appropriate programs to serve families with young children.

Early Years Research in Niagara

- Niagara Falls is one of 12 communities across Canada participating in the Understanding the Early Years Project (UEY)
- The Ontario Early Years Initiative, is supporting the regional extension of components of the UEY research



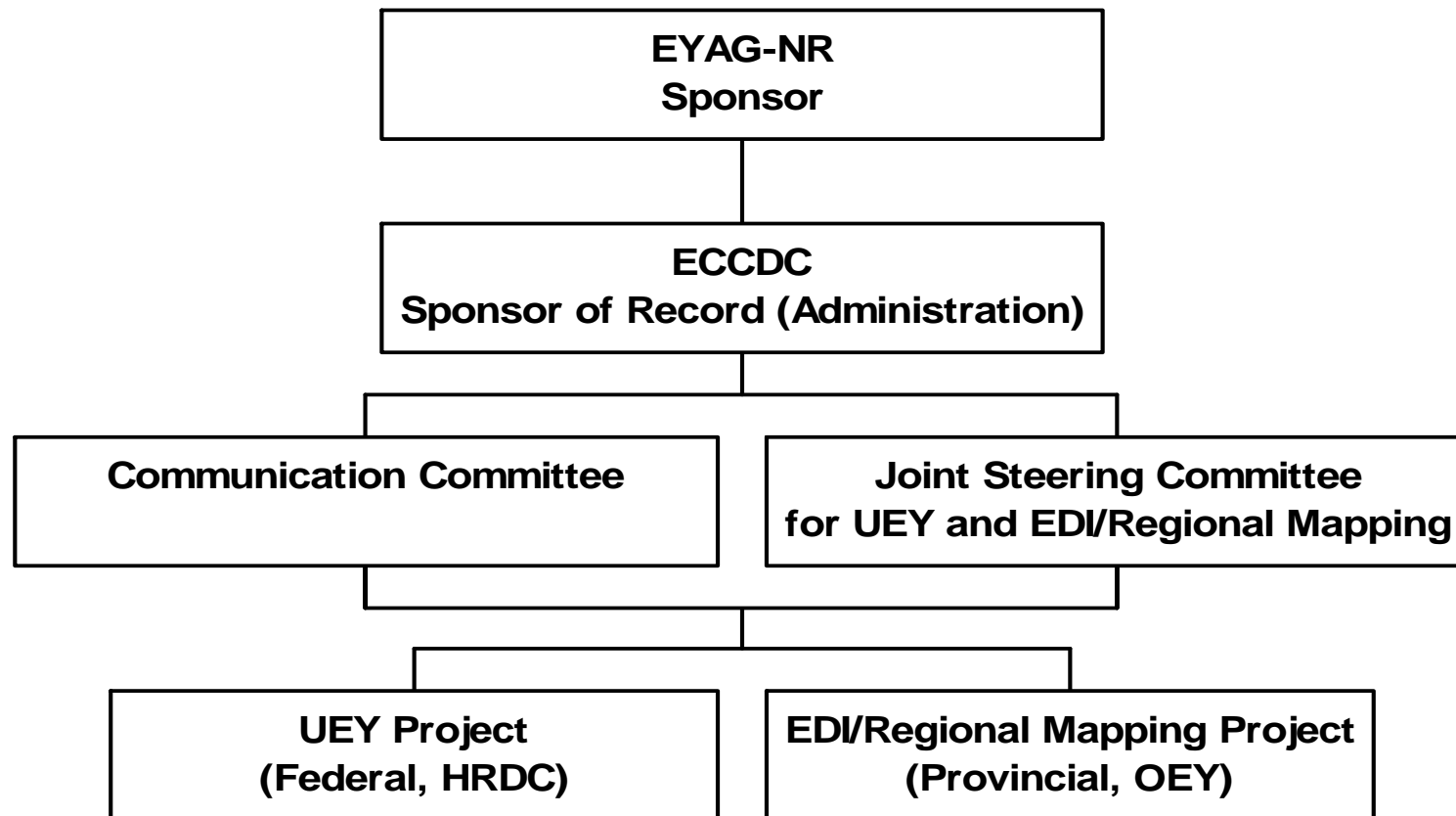
Who's Involved?

- Early Years Action Group - Niagara Region
- Early Childhood Community Development Centre
- School Boards
- Community Service Providers
- Government - Municipal, Regional, Provincial, Federal - (*Elected Officials and Staff*)
- Citizens of Niagara

Objectives

- Help determine the extent and nature of community influences on child development, both locally, and on a national scale.
- Enhance community capacity to use this data to create effective community-based responses.

Structure



Research Components

- Early Development Instrument (EDI)
- National Longitudinal Study (NLSCY)
Community Study - *specific to UEY*
- Community Mapping Study (CMS)



The EDI

Measures the outcomes of early development as they influence “readiness to learn” at school in terms of:

- Physical Health and Well-being;
- Emotional Maturity;
- Social Competence;
- Language and Cognitive Development; and,
- Communication Skills and General Knowledge.

“Readiness to Learn”

Children who enter school ready to learn:

- have the ability to get along well with others;
- use basic coping strategies; and,
- are open to new experiences.



In short,
they are equipped to take advantage
of the academic and social,
opportunities that school presents.

The importance of being ready to society

Lack of readiness can have serious costs:

- increased government expenditures (special education services and grade repetition)
- lost government revenue due to students who leave high school without obtaining a diploma;
- decreased ability to be competitive in the global market; and provide essential functions.

Supporting Early Development

- For communities that want to ensure that all children are able to enter school ready to learn, the EDI provides feedback on how their young children are doing.
- This feedback can assist in the mobilization of resources to support children's development in their first five years of life.

The EDI in Niagara

EDI 2000/2001 Niagara Falls

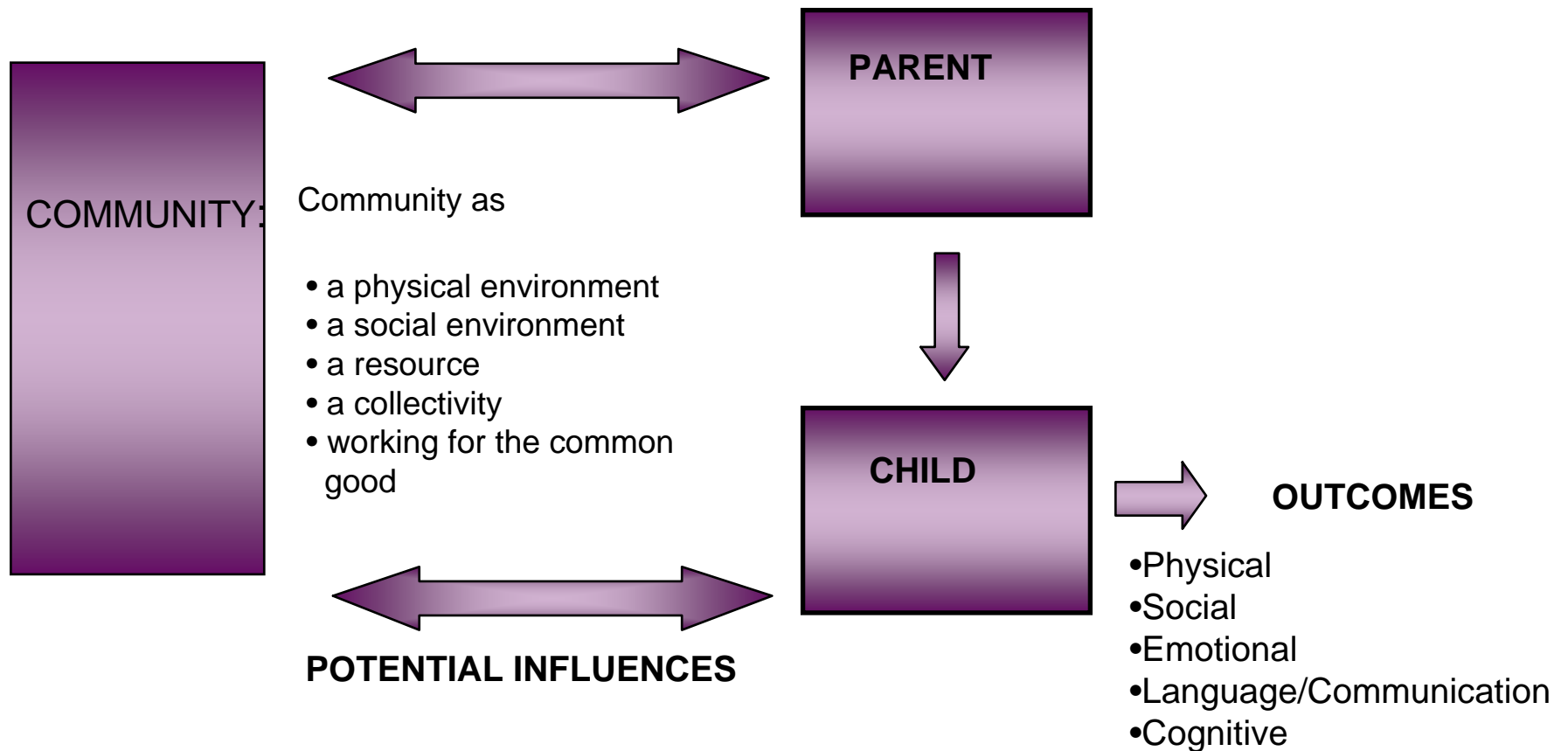
- approximately 900 SK children
- 2 School Boards



EDI 2001/2002 Niagara Region

- approximately 4000 SK children
- 4 School Boards

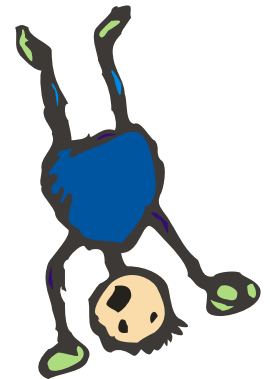
The Impact of Community



The NLSCY Community Study

NLSYC Community Study - Longitudinal research (HRDC and Statistics Canada) collects detailed information from families about:

- use of community resources and their impact on early child development.
- children's interactions, development and socialization



The Community Mapping Study

The CMS geographically maps information on:

- physical and socio-economic characteristics of neighbourhoods
- kinds of programs and services
- location of programs and services



The result is a visual representation of the city's socio-economic & physical environment

Putting It All Together

- Summarize EDI results by postal code
- Take results out of school context and place them in neighbourhoods where children live
- Provide a detailed picture of the geographic area and information for the mobilization of resources

Putting It All Together

- Examine patterns of results from the EDI against neighbourhood characteristic data
- Use data on existing services, programs & neighbourhood demographics to assist in interpreting readiness to learn findings

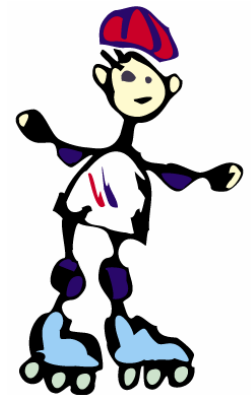


Putting It All Together

- Combined EDI, NLSCY & CMS data provides insight into how children's family, friends, and community influence development in terms of readiness to learn at school.
- Information will be provided to communities and governments so that they can develop programs, services and policies that best promote the well-being of children.

Anticipated Outcomes

- Identify strengths and challenges in specific neighbourhoods
- Develop a Knowledge Action Plan to share results and put research into practice
- Show how government and communities can help children become ready to learn



Expected Results

- Improved decision making process allowing community to effectively plan, prioritize & allocate resources for families and children
- Increased knowledge, co-operation, collaboration and communication
- Baseline measure established for ongoing monitoring to track the well-being of families and young children

Next Steps

- Share results and reports in spring 2003 beginning with UEY in Niagara Falls
 - Niagara Falls EDI Report (January)
 - Niagara Falls CMS Report (January)
 - Niagara Falls Integrated Report (April)
- Regional Extension results as they become available (target June for completion)

Next Steps

- Engage community in data driven dialogue
- Knowledge Action Plan for Niagara Falls developed in 2003
- Ongoing evaluation and monitoring– second EDI in Niagara Falls, January 2003
- Local Council - continued opportunities to shape future services for citizens.

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