

READINESS TO LEARN:

How well are we doing in preparing our children?



UNDERSTANDING THE EARLY YEARS COMMUNITY FORUM

February 21, 2006



eccdc

Sponsoring Agency

Early Childhood Community Development Centre

Canada

Funded by the Government of Canada under the
Understanding the Early Years Initiative

Financé par le gouvernement du Canada dans le cadre de
l'initiative Comprendre la petite enfance

What do we mean by 'readiness to learn'?

This refers to the ability to meet the task demands of school, such as:

- being comfortable exploring and asking questions,
- sitting quietly and listening to the teacher,
- playing and working with other children, and
- remembering and following rules.

In short - to benefit from the educational activities that are provided by the school!

A child's first years at school are very important. A good start in school increases the likelihood that children will feel good about themselves; complete high school; find and retain employment; and become caring, contributing members of society. 'Readiness to learn' is a good indicator of early development.

What is UEY?

- A national research initiative on early childhood development
- A knowledge transfer strategy that provides communities with the necessary information to enhance resources and services

What are the goals of UEY?

- Increased understanding of the importance of the first 6 years in child development
- Increased understanding of the community factors that influence early development
- Support community learning and success – in using research evidence to achieve progressively better outcomes for children

How is UEY implemented?

PHASE I

The first phase of UEY gathers and develops local capacity to research community factors influencing early child development using three main tools:

The Early Development Instrument (EDI), in combination with resource inventories and community maps, addresses how well our communities are doing in preparing our children for school ('readiness to learn')

Results in each EDI domain are scored on a scale of 0-10 with higher scores indicating better "readiness to learn"

The ideal for communities would be to have all children achieve a score of 10 on each domain



1 The Early Development Instrument (EDI)

The EDI measures early child development, in terms of children's readiness to learn at school, across five (5) domains. The EDI provides data about how groups of children are doing in all areas of development prior to grade one. It is not an assessment of individual children, schools, or teachers.

2 The Community Survey

Gathers detailed information about how family, friends and community influence the physical, behavioural, and learning development of children.

3 The Community Mapping Study (CMS)

Examines community characteristics believed to play a significant role in children's developmental health including the socio-economic and physical environment, and the availability of community resources.

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Jason Ramsay, Ph.D.

Canadian Institutes of Health Research Strategic Fellow Centre for Research on Inner City Health, St. Michael's Hospital

Born in Niagara • Honours BA from Brock (Psychology) • Graduate work at Carleton and OISE/U of T • Internship at Bloorview Children's Centre • Fellowship at St. Michael's Hospital • Developmental and population health research with the Centre for Research on Inner City Health (with Dr. Jim Dunn)

Keynote Highlights

- ▶ Brain development underpins readiness to learn
- ▶ Adverse effects can impinge on early brain development
- ▶ The lynchpin for continued, competent development are the executive functions
- ▶ Neighbourhood and parental variables interact to put children at risk for poor executive function development and this has a lifelong, cascading effect
- ▶ Social capital is an important concept for community development, and thus child development (see "Bowling Alone" by Putnam)
- ▶ Social entrepreneurship builds a brain friendly community of lifelong learners

PHASE 2

The second phase of the project shifts the emphasis from providing research information to communities, to learning more about how this research precipitates the development of strategies and decision-making to improve child development within communities. The primary objective of this phase is knowledge transfer and application through an interactive process involving the dissemination, adoption and integration of knowledge for action within the community. Successful knowledge transfer leads to community learning and success in using research evidence to achieve progressively better outcomes for children.

What is the history of Uey in Niagara?

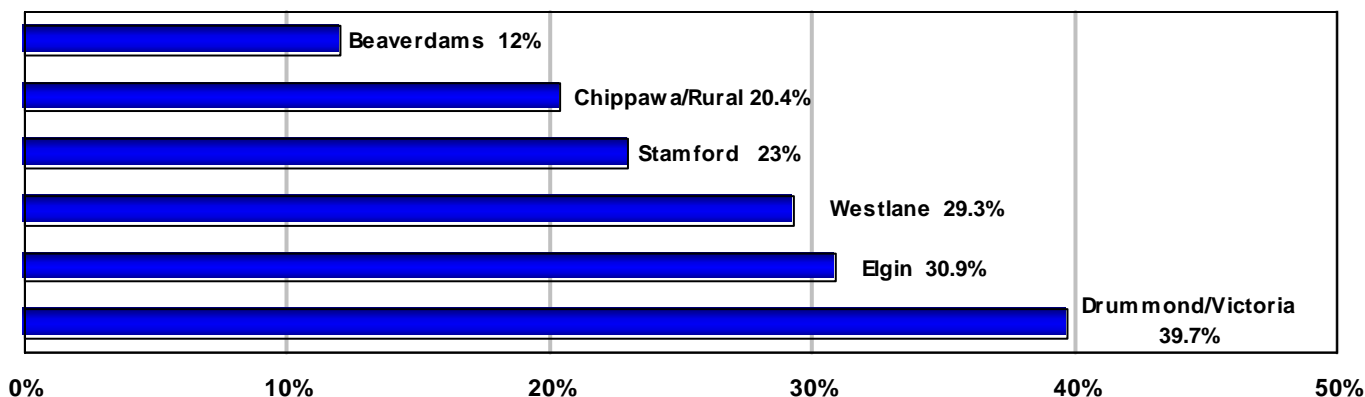
Niagara Falls has been a 'UEY Community' since 2001. Reports have been generated on the 2001, 2003 and 2005 data. The EDI was administered during 2002 (sponsored by the Region) and in 2005 (sponsored by Ontario's Best Start Initiative).

Communication pieces, such as the following, have been distributed

- A newspaper tabloid, produced in partnership with Osprey Media, was distributed to some 60,000 homes in the Niagara Region (one also scheduled for 2006)
- School readiness calendar ('Off to School' 2005 and 2006) circulated to parents through our schools
- A feature sheet for business highlighting the "Economic Benefits to Business"
- A feature sheet on social and emotional growth for community agencies and schools
- The Uey 2004 Action Plan identified the need to share information with community stakeholders. As a result, the 'Niagara Region Early Years Research Inventory (2004-2005 Edition)' was created, on behalf of the Early Years Niagara Research Advisory Group.

Niagara Falls research evidence, such as the following, has been shared:

Proportion of Vulnerable Niagara Falls' Children (2001) by Neighbourhood
(scored in the lowest 10% on one or more developmental domains)



Niagara Falls 2003 EDI Highlights

- ▶ 23% of SK children were not emotionally ready for school
- ▶ 17% lacked pro-social or helping behaviours
- ▶ 13% showed signs of hyperactivity and inattention including: restlessness; difficulty settling at activities; and distractible, impulsive and fidgeting behaviours

While it should be noted that these figures are the result of teacher assessment and are not diagnostic, teachers reported similarly low scores in emotional maturity when the EDI was implemented in 2001 and 2002. In addition, results of the 2001 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) Community Study showed that parental reports on children's hyperactive behaviours in Niagara Falls was one and one half times the national norm.

Niagara Falls 2005 EDI Results

- 28.5% of SK children were emotionally ready for school. However, 26.4% of SK children were not emotionally ready for school.
- 71% lacked pro-social and helping behaviours
- 44.5% showed signs of hyperactivity and inattention including: restlessness; difficulty settling to activities; and distractible, impulsive and fidgeting behaviours
- 23.5% displayed some aggressive behaviours including: getting into physical fights; kicking and biting others; were disobedient; had temper tantrums; and took other people's things

National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) Community Study

This study gathers detailed information about how children's family, friends and community influence their physical, behavioural and learning development.

What are the potential benefits of the UEY initiative?

EDUCATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data available that is useful for resource allocation decision-making • Improvement in 'readiness to learn' of children - better able to take full advantage of all our education system offers!
GOVERNMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional, municipal and neighbourhood level research data available that is useful for resource allocation, decision-making and planning • Increased community involvement in achievement of progressively better outcomes for children of Niagara!
BUSINESSES, PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND SERVICE CLUBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local corporate social responsibility and partnering opportunities tied to quality research and identified need • Enhance current and future economic prosperity by understanding, and advocating for, the importance of early years' services and resources - they contribute to good employees of the future and happier parent employees in the present!
PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased understanding of, and supports for, early childhood development • Increased knowledge of neighbourhood resources and services and other community factors affecting early childhood development • Opportunity to make a difference, in your local neighbourhood, and achieve better outcomes for your children!
COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND AGENCIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality data available that is useful for resource allocation, funding proposals, and outcome measurement • Support for your community capacity building and planning activities which utilize UEY research!

What actual local benefits have we achieved, so far?

FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL & REGIONAL APPLICATIONS

- ▶ Contributed to the national data collection of community research on child development
- ▶ Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services reviewed findings when planning for relocation of a critical program/service.
- ▶ Region of Niagara has used research to assist with site planning and selection.
- ▶ Town of Fort Erie utilized findings to support a proposal for the development of a community health centre.

IMPACT ON COMMUNITY PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- ▶ Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC) used findings:
 - ▶ To plan sites for mobile resources and satellite services;
 - ▶ To purchase resources and develop programming
 - ▶ In a successful program bid ("Count Me In")
- ▶ Findings framed the development of information forums, community conferences and communication materials to increase general public knowledge of the importance of the Early Years.

USE BY SCHOOL BOARDS

- ▶ NCDSB used findings in conjunction with own research for programming purposes and resource allocation and to plan professional development for principals.
- ▶ DSBN cited findings to support a successful program proposal focusing on Social Emotional development

Updated 2005 Niagara Falls Results:

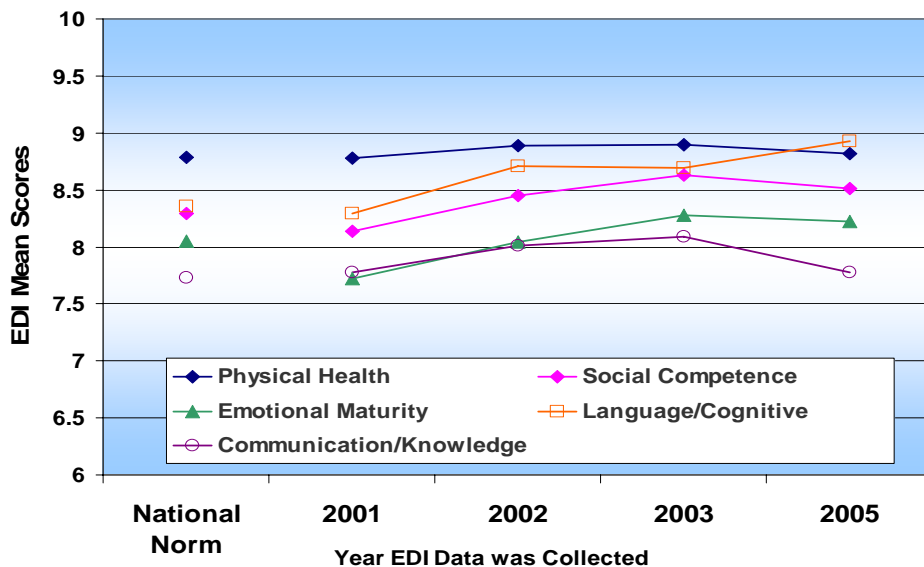
Great on following sub-domains:

- 90% ready to learn re: physical independence
- 89% demonstrating basic literacy and numeracy skills
- 88% with no anxious and/or fearful behaviours
- 85% ready to explore new things
- 84% demonstrating responsibility and respect

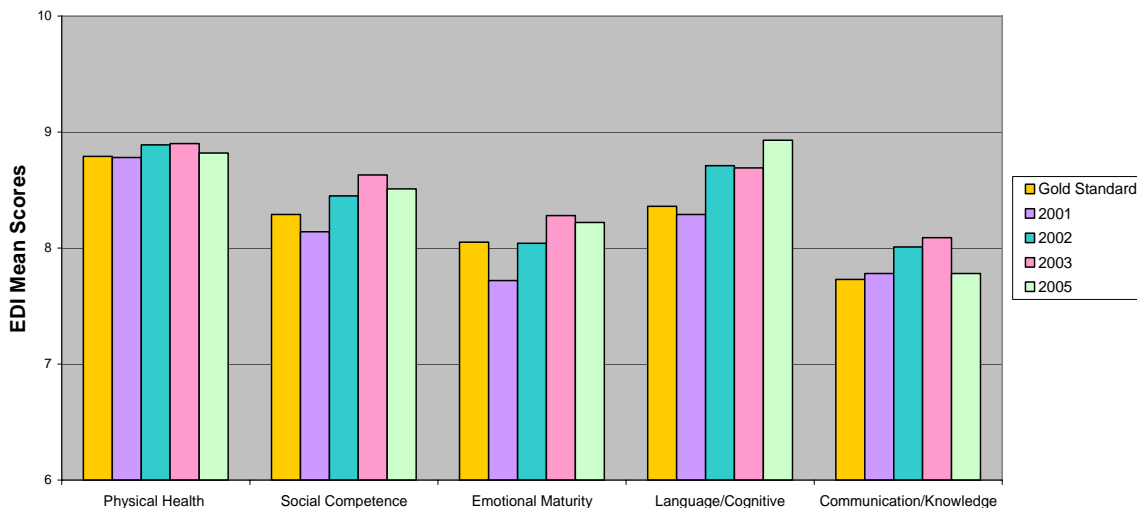
Good overall results ...

Since 2003, Niagara Falls scores have been above the national EDI averages!

EDI Means
Niagara Falls Compared to National Normative Means



EDI Means for Niagara Falls (2001, 2002, 2003 and 2005)

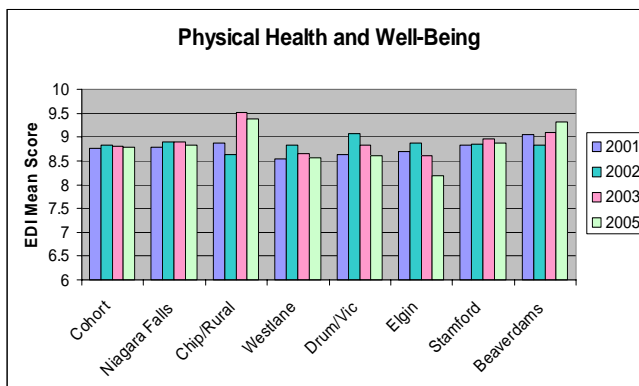


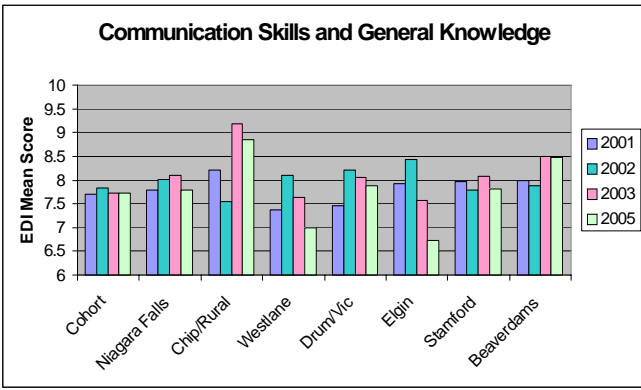
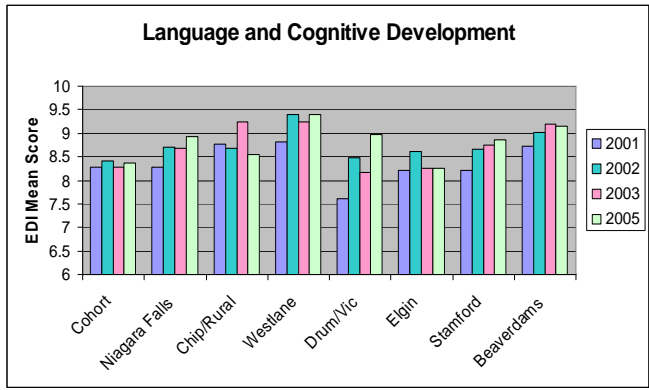
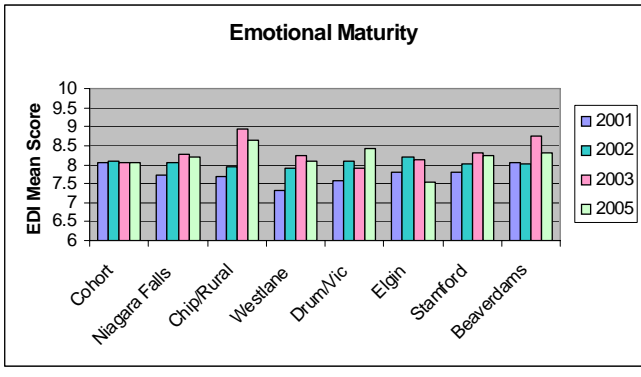
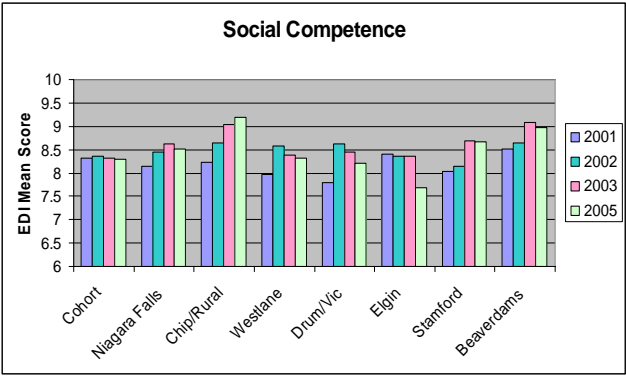
2005 EDI Results by Domain / Sub-domain:



5	PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	<p>103 children scored in the bottom 25% in 2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 91% (93) of those children are having difficulty with their gross and fine motor skills 30% (31) are having problems with their physical readiness for the school day
4	LANGUAGE AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT	<p>114 children scored in the bottom 25% in 2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 45% (51) are having difficulty with their advanced literacy 43% (49) of these are having difficulty with interest in literacy and numeracy and memory 26% (30) are having problems with basic literacy and numeracy
3	SOCIAL COMPETENCE	<p>126 children scored in the bottom 25% in 2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30% (38) of these are having problems with their overall social competence 30% (38) of those children are having difficulty with their approach to learning
2	EMOTIONAL MATURITY	<p>141 children scored in the bottom 25% in 2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 71% (100) of these are having difficulty with their pro-social and helping behaviour 43% (61) are having difficulty with hyperactivity and inattention 23% (32) are having problems with their aggressive behaviour
1	COMMUNICATION SKILLS/GENERAL KNOWLEDGE	<p>150 children scored in the bottom 25% in 2005</p> <p>These children are having difficulty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using the English language effectively; understanding what is said on the first try; communicating their needs in a way that is understandable; and answering questions showing knowledge about the world.

- Neighbourhood Study Areas:**
- Beaverdams
 - Chippawa/Rural
 - Drummond/Victoria
 - Elgin
 - Stamford
 - Westlane





Summary of Neighbourhood Areas by Strength and Need:

Chippawa Rural

Strength in all 5 domains

Stamford

Strength in all 5 domains

Beaverdams

Strength in all 5 domains

Drummond/Victoria

Strengths

- Social Competence
- Emotional Maturity
- Language and Cognitive Development
- Communication Skills and General Knowledge

Areas of Need

- Physical Health and Well-Being

Westlane

Strengths

- Social Competence
- Emotional Maturity
- Language & Cognitive Development

Areas of Need

- Communication Skills and General Knowledge
- Physical Health and Well-Being

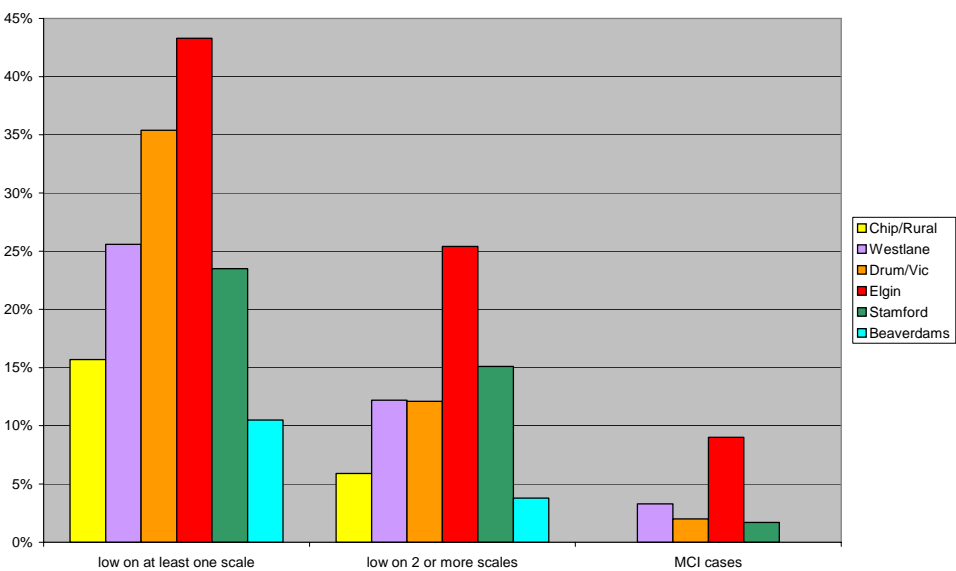
Elgin

Areas of Need

- Physical Health and Well-Being
- Social Competence
- Emotional Maturity
- Language and Cognitive Development
- Communication Skills and General Knowledge

... all 5 major domain areas

Percent of Vulnerable Children within each Neighbourhood Study Area



Next Steps

Heightened Niagara Falls Phase 2 Activities

- Updated 2005 maps, in partnership with Regional Niagara Public Health Department, that will link EDI results with community resources and factors (overall and for each neighbourhood).

Anticipate new local insights!

- Community reports and presentations on final Niagara Falls research data available mid-April through early 2007
- Community engagement and action planning through early 2007



Niagara Falls Wrap-up

- UEY Knowledge Action Plan available in April 2007

The launch of UEY Niagara Region Initiative – Phase I!!

- Research already underway - 200+ SK teachers collecting EDI data across Niagara.

Thank you school boards and teachers!

- Region-wide Community Resource Inventory Survey and Mapping, in partnership with Region of Niagara

Additional Information

For questions regarding how the results will be shared and used in the community or to book a presentation contact:

Glory Ressler, UEY Project Coordinator

E-mail: gressler@eccdc.org

Tel: 905-646-7311 ext. 319

Early Childhood Community Development Centre
395 Ontario Street, St. Catharines, ON L2N 7N6

For research related questions contact:

Nancy Russell, Lead Researcher

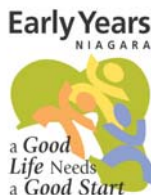
E-mail: nrussell@eccdc.org



Canada

Funded by the Government of Canada under the
Understanding the Early Years Initiative
Financé par le gouvernement du Canada dans le cadre de
l'initiative Comprendre la petite enfance

Thank you!



eccdc

Niagara Region



NIAGARA CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



District School Board
of Niagara