

PIDACS DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS BRIEF (June 2008)

As part of the Understanding the Early Years (UEY) Niagara Region project, information was collected from parents, kindergarten children, and their teachers on the development of children in the community, using the Parent Interviews and Direct Assessments of Children Survey (PIDACS) and the Early Development Instrument (EDI). The Understanding the Early Years initiative is funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada. For further information, visit www.hrsdc.gc.ca.

PIDACS was designed to collect information about children's developmental outcomes and their family and neighbourhood environments and experiences.

The information presented in this brief is based on a sample of 836 children enrolled in kindergarten in 2006-07 in the Niagara Region (DSBN, NCDSB). Of this sample, 683 parents or guardians were interviewed, and 755 children completed the direct assessments. The PIDACS sample size is large enough to provide accurate estimates of the mean scores for the measures of children's outcomes and for various aspects of family and community context. For example, the average score on the measure of receptive vocabulary is 101.8. The standard error for this measure is 0.4. If we could repeat the study a number of times, the estimates of receptive vocabulary would lie within a range of plus or minus two standard errors, or between 101.0 and 102.6, about 19 times out of 20.

Results from the preliminary analysis of this data are outlined in the following pages. Additional analysis, at the municipal and neighbourhood levels, is currently underway and will be available in the summer/fall of 2008.

The PIDACS direct assessments of the children include measures of children's receptive vocabulary, number knowledge, and pre-literacy.

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The **Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Revised** (PPVT-R) assesses the vocabulary children understand when they hear spoken words. This is called receptive vocabulary.

The **Number Knowledge** assessment assesses children’s intuitive knowledge of numbers by assessing their understanding of quantity (more vs. less), their ability to count objects, their understanding of number sequence, and their ability to do simple arithmetic.

An assessment of children’s pre-literacy skills was based on the **Who Am I?** assessment which involves various copying and writing tasks.

TABLE 2-1. Mean Scores on the Direct Assessments

	NIAGARA REGION		CANADIAN AVERAGE (PIDACS)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Receptive Vocabulary (n = 754)	101.8	11.0	100.0	15.0
Number Knowledge (n = 755)	100.5	14.3	100.0	15.0
Pre-Literacy Skills (n = 755)	101.5	14.3	100.0	15.0

Note: Figures in bold text differ significantly from the Canadian PIDACS average.
Source: PIDACS, 2006-07.

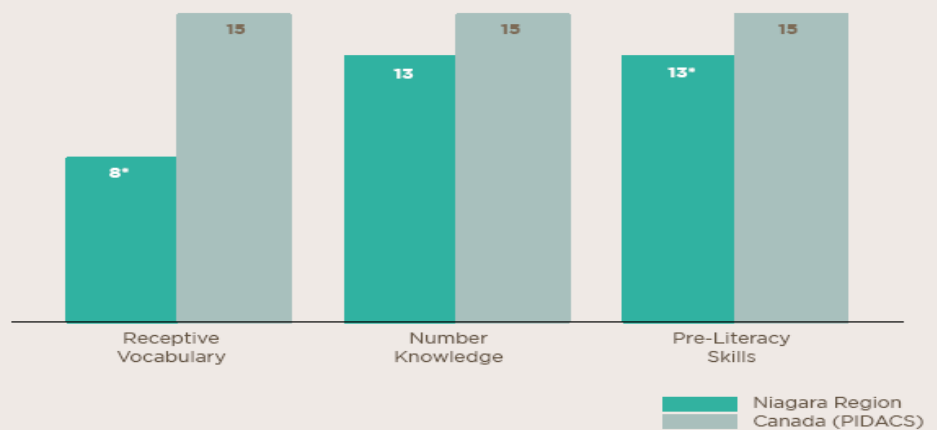
Table 2-1 shows that children in the Niagara Region sample had an average score of 101.8 on the assessment of receptive vocabulary. This is significantly above the Canadian PIDACS average. The average score on the assessment of number knowledge was 100.5, which is comparable to the

Canadian PIDACS average. On the assessment of pre-literacy skills, the children of Niagara Region had an average score of 101.5, which is also significantly above the Canadian PIDACS average.

Children with very low scores on the direct assessments used in PIDACS are at risk of experiencing slow development in their reading skills as they proceed through the elementary grades.

Figure 2-1 shows the percentage of children in Niagara Region with scores below 85 on the three direct assessments.

FIGURE 2-1. Children with Low Scores on the Direct Assessments
 Percentage of Children



Note: Statistically significant differences are indicated with an asterisk.
Source: PIDACS, 2006-07.

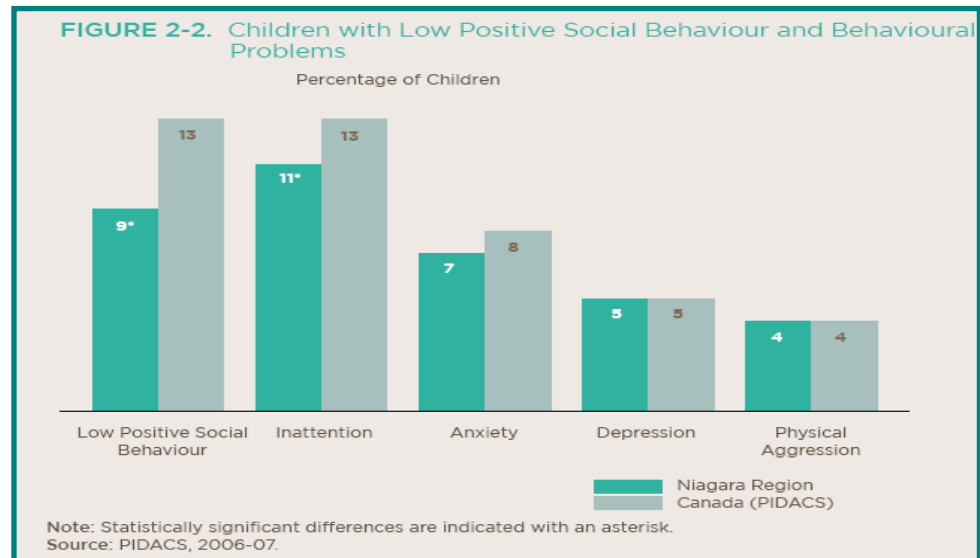
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About 8% of the children had low scores on the assessment of receptive vocabulary. This is a statistically significant lower prevalence of vulnerability than in the Canadian PIDACS population. On the assessment of pre-literacy skills, 13% scored below 85, which is also a lower prevalence than in the national cohort.

In contrast, 13% of the children in Niagara Region had low scores on the assessment of number knowledge, which is a level comparable to the Canadian PIDACS population.

Parents or Persons Most Knowledgeable (PMKs) were also interviewed concerning their child's social or behavioural challenges. Figure 2-2 shows these responses and indicates that the prevalence of children

with behavioural problems was generally low, with relatively few children with inattention problems or poor social behaviour. In fact, across five behavioural measures, children in the Niagara Region either had below or similar percentages as compared to national averages.



The prevalence of children with significant health problems was comparable to the Canadian average, and less than 1% of the parents considered their children to be in poor health.

The assessments provided by the kindergarten teachers on the 2006 Early Development Instrument (EDI) also suggest that the children in the Niagara Region overall were above the national average in all domains assessed.

As the community works towards further developing and implementing its Integrated Action Plan, it can consider strengths and weaknesses uncovered by this PIDACS brief, along with any additional local information available.

The findings of this report may vary among regions within this UEY community. The UEY initiative stresses the importance of a coordinated approach that involves families, teachers/schools, and the wider community to determine the best programs and services to meet children's needs during their formative years.

This report, along with additional information on early learning and development results for Niagara's children, based on the Early Development Instrument (EDI), can also be found online at: www.uey.eccdc.org/reports.php.