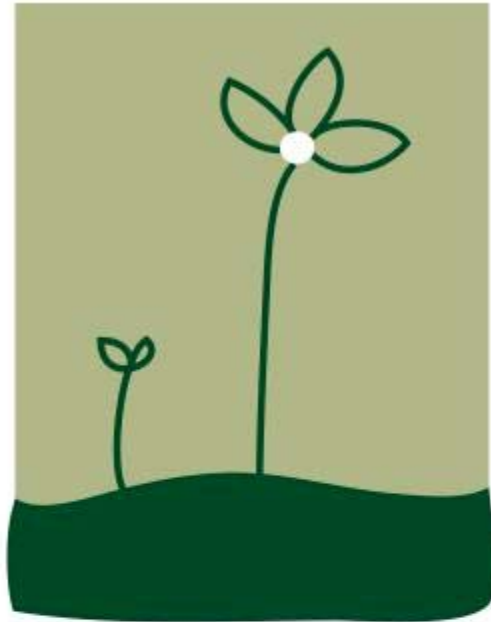


July 2003 Progress Report



TORONTO
FIRST
DUTY

Toronto First Duty Research Team

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Executive Summary

This report describes the implementation efforts in the Toronto First Duty project (TFD) during the official start-up year, from July 2002 to June 2003. In this phase, program development and organizational development within the sites have been major areas of accomplishment.

While real progress has been made in rolling out new programs for children and families and in site-level organization, external barriers have been impediments to progress. Some were expected, such as funding envelope constraints on creative new arrangements. Other expectable challenges in implementation are more internal to the project but are common in collaborative initiatives of this nature. Lack of clarity over the meaning of integration and associated struggles between top-down funder vision and site level interests and initiative is a major example. Another example is the struggle over professional work and identities when different professions and organizations come together in new ways.

Apart from site-level progress in the face of many major obstacles, another encouraging development is that partners in the project are working to address key problems and to reflect together as a basis for action. Different levels of the organization are beginning to function in “learning organizations” mode with discussion and problem-solving. Examples are described in this report, across different organizational levels from the TFD Steering Committee to the site program committees.

Data collection for this report focused on the program/organization strand of the project, but data on the child and family strand were also collected. Early Development Instrument (EDI) data on community populations of children were available for all sites and were analyzed in relation to community demographics. In addition, samples of children in TFD programs reported their experiences and views on programs via a variety of techniques including focus groups, drawings and photographs taken by children. As reported previously, most parents are very happy with TFD programs but feel that other parents may not know about the programs and that parents are not asked about what services they may like nor are consulted about the design of TFD programs. Children are positive about their experiences in the TFD integrated environments and are beginning to talk about the links among the programs.

The general themes in this report focus on the extensive data on the program and organization strand of the TFD project. In addition to document collection and participant observation by Research and Development Team members in meetings at all levels of the TFD project, data collection included observations on program environments at all sites. Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) ratings of the program environments ranged from adequate to excellent, with variations in different aspects of the programs both within and across sites. Across sites, the quality of interaction was good. At some sites, on some dimensions, such as physical space and facilities, the quality was more variable. In addition to descriptions of the program environments, for two sites featured in case study reports, ACCT and Bruce/WoodGreen, there were extensive interviews with managers and practitioners as well as focus groups with parents.

In order to interpret the themes emerging from the data on implementation, this report includes a conceptual framework on organizational and practice change. Organizational issues relating to the role of schools and service integration are given special attention. Major themes emerging from the conceptual analysis of the data on the program and policy strand are:

- Building Relationships:** The importance of taking the time to build relationships among and between practitioners, partner agencies, and community members is a consistent theme that surfaces throughout TFD. Tensions around professional work and identities ease when people get to know one another, become familiar with and understand professional philosophies, mandates, constraints, roles / responsibilities, as well as the programs and services offered by each partner agency.
- Defining Service Integration:** Sites have been uncertain about what service integration would /should look like in practice. Views varied within and between sites. One-on-one interviews with site management committee members and practitioners reflected varying individual views of service integration. The need for clarity around the TFD definition of service integration was raised following the January 2003 progress report. Sites wanted to know the funders' expectations around service integration. In response, the "TFD Indicators of Change" were developed to define the core elements of service integration and to specify a continuum of indicators along each of the core elements. This document clarifies the TFD definition of service integration and is being used by TFD sites as an assessment and planning tool.
- Focusing on Results:** Having a clear definition of service integration is facilitating the evolving consensus about desired results. Using the indicators documents as an assessment and planning tool in combination with the regular research and evaluation reports facilitates this focus on results. Research points to the importance of collectively analyzing outcomes as they occur to determine whether the desired results are being accomplished. Field observations and meeting minutes show that the discussion / reflection stimulated by the regular progress reports and the use of the indicators documents is leading to action planning that focuses on results. Practitioners, particularly in the lead pilot site, are questioning the results of their programming efforts on children and families.
- Community Awareness and Support:** An effective service system acknowledges and honors community contexts and enables sites to respond to site-specific strengths, challenges and priorities as determined by the community involved. Sites vary in the extent to which they have consulted with families and community residents. This is reflected in individual sites' community consultation processes/reports and in the feedback from parent focus groups. All of the sites have flagged the need for greater parent/community involvement in shaping the evolving service system.

Introduction and Overview

In the official start-up year for the Toronto First Duty project (TFD), from July 2002 to June 2003, implementation has been the major thrust, with developments in organization, programs, and professional practice. While real progress has been made in site-level organization and in rolling out new programs for children and families, external barriers are constant impediments to progress. Some were expected, such as funding envelope constraints on creative new arrangements. Other barriers, such as the degree of chaos in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) resulting from budget cuts and the provincial government takeover were not anticipated, although school reform, in less toxic doses, is a backdrop for other service reform efforts of this type. In the TDSB, the loss of vice-principals, the cuts to specialists supporting the early years and childcare, and the struggle over space and facilities regulations, sometimes feel like millstones around the neck of site initiative. In this context, TDSB leadership's being able to maintain the commitment to Toronto First Duty is a major feat, but there are continuing hits at the school and site level with space mothballing and the spectre of school closings being among the latest examples.

Other challenges in implementation are more internal to the project. These organizational and professional hurdles are expectable based on the literature and experiences of other service reform and collaboration efforts. For example, the major preoccupations with the need for clarity of the vision of integration and with professional issues, identified in the Steering Committee focus group in January and in various ways from the site level, are common concerns in other collaborations.

Apart from progress in the face of many major obstacles, another piece of the good news is that the project is working to address key problems and to reflect together as a basis for action. At the project-wide level, for example, the TFD Steering Committee reviewed a list of barriers in the March meeting and struck a working group on sustainability issues. In the January focus group meeting, the Steering Committee shared thoughts around progress and areas needing attention. In parallel, the TFD Research and Development Team has continued to review the literature and to look for ideas to help its own understanding of experience and data from First Duty developments. Since January, the team has looked at Organizational Change and Practice Change as crucial themes in the implementation phase of TFD. Developing conceptual frameworks around these areas will help in interpreting data and may help TFD and the sites to think about and address some of the practical issues. As noted, TFD is already functioning, more and more, as a learning organization. The conceptual framework and literature review in Appendix 1 is intended to contribute to the dialogue and to help in the interpretation of the data on the program and policy strand of TFD.

In the implementation year, the focus has been on the programs and policy strand, both in the project itself and in the evaluation. In this report, the progress in programming is noted in the case studies (see ACTT and Bruce WoodGreen case studies) as well as in the updates provided by the sites (see Site Updates, Appendix 11). Descriptions of some of the program environments across all sites are also provided in this report (see Data Reports: Program Environments).

In the next phase, we expect that more attention will be paid to the child and family and community strands. Child development and “readiness” are goals for the child and goals that parents seek. The perspectives of children and parents in First Duty programs are introduced in this report with focus group results (see Data Reports: Child Focus Groups); data on the developmental status of populations of children in TFD communities are provided in the EDI report (see Data Reports: Community Early Development Instrument Report); in future reports we hope to have direct data on individual children’s functioning in relation to their TFD experience.

In addition to reporting on data collected and related field work, this report also briefly describes other activities of the Research and Development Team including: development of a TFD Indicators of Change instrument, participation in the development of a TFD intake and tracking system led by Children’s Services of the City of Toronto, development support for the Learning Environment, and dissemination of preliminary findings (See Activities).

Data Reports

Community Early Development Instrument Report

The Community Early Development Instrument Report (see Appendix 2) summarizes data collected in North and South Toronto in spring 2001 and at Secord, Bruce and JR Wilcox schools in spring 2002. The report includes a description of the tool, how the data were analyzed and what the data tell us about early child development at each of the Toronto First Duty sites.

The results indicate:

- About 25% of all senior kindergarten children score in the bottom ten percent in at least one developmental domain. These children are vulnerable and may experience difficulties in making a successful transition and meeting learning expectations when they proceed into grade 1.
- There is a predictable gradient relationship between a community’s socio-economic status and its children’s readiness for school learning – there are fewer vulnerable children in more affluent neighbourhoods and the likelihood of problems is greater in poorer neighbourhoods. At the same time, children in some communities have higher or lower performance levels than are predicted by the community socioeconomic context. For example, in some schools located in affluent areas, more than 33% of the senior kindergarten children are vulnerable.
- Children at Queen Victoria school appear to be at the developmental levels that would be predicted by their social and economic characteristics. There are fewer children at the other four sites who are having developmental difficulties than would be predicted by socioeconomic context. Children attending Secord and Corvette schools, in particular, appear to be performing notably better than is predicted by their context.

There are other variations from site to site. For instance, about 14% of the children at Queen Victoria school are in the above average range for the language and cognitive development domain, while almost 25% of the children at Corvette fall in the above average category. The

individual site results may help to determine program priorities and resource allocations. For example, the management committee at Corvette Early Years reviewed the results and concluded that they would like to set a goal to increase in the numbers of children who are above average in the social competence domain. In concert with other information from parents, practitioners, etc., the EDI information may influence some of their discussions and decisions about program priorities and resource allocation in the Corvette community.

EDI data were collected in spring 2003 for all Junior Kindergarten children in the Toronto District School Board and for Senior Kindergarten children at the TFD schools. These data will allow the research team to use EDI data over two years as the baseline EDI scores for each site. The mapping of demographic data, community resources and the EDI data will continue and contribute to more detailed community profiles for each site.

The community EDI work to date and the ongoing analysis and reporting are undertaken in collaboration with Petr Varmuza at the City of Toronto, Magdalena Janus at the Canadian Centre for Studies of Children at Risk, McMaster University and Maria Yau and Valerie Sterling at the Toronto District School Board.

Program Environments

Each site has had two environment observations (one observation is not yet available for this report). Thus, there are nine environment observations in total. In each site the Parenting and Family Literacy Centre was observed as a “standard” environment in order to have some continuity in description across sites. In addition, each site chose one other area of their learning environment for the purpose of the observation.

Environment data

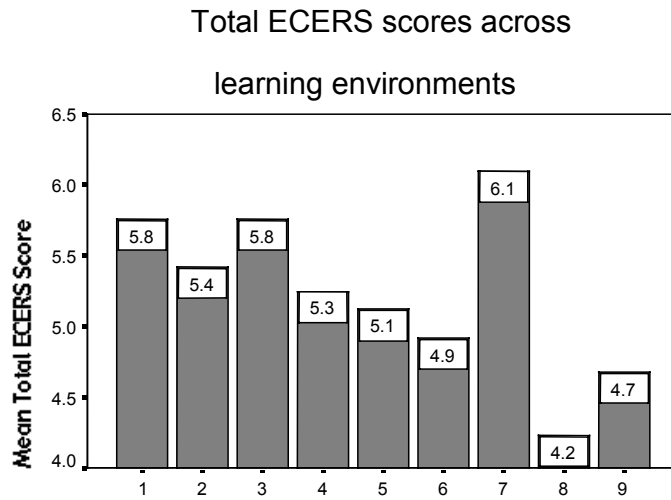
The environment observations consisted of two measures: The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised (ECERS-R) and a research measure that provides detailed description of Time, Space, People and Materials (TSPM). The ECERS-R is an internationally-known early environment measure. The majority of research studies involving environment ratings of early childhood settings employ the ECERS-R. However, the ECERS-R has limitations, particularly when applied to settings beyond standard child care. For example, it may be that the ECERS-R is not entirely suitable for Family Resource Centre observations and other environments in which there are numerous adults interacting with children. The research team employed this measure in order to be able to describe the TFD environment component using a recognized tool. In addition the research team employed another measure that describes without numerical rating, the TSPM.

Two trained observers visited each of the two areas at each site. One observer completed the ECERS-R, a checklist tool, through a guided observation procedure. The other observer completed a description of the time, space, people and materials in the site, following an observation framework. Generally the two observation measures required about 2.5 hours to complete. Data from the ECERS observations have been coded and entered onto a database. Summary descriptions from the TSPM measure have been produced for each environment.

ECERS Results

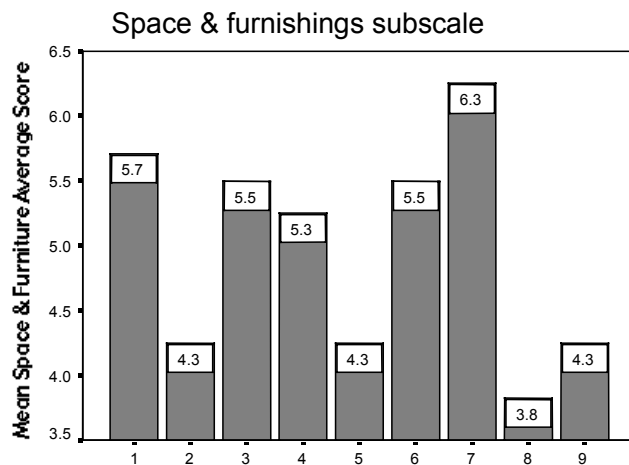
The ECERS profile provides a total environment rating score as well as individual subscale scores in each of seven areas. Each of the items is expressed as a 7-point scale with indicators for 1 (inadequate), 3 (minimal), 5 (good), and 7 (excellent). The graphs presented below represent the scores across the nine FD environments that have been observed to date. Identification numbers have been used, rather than site names and learning environments. Individual feedback sessions to sites will be provided by the research team. Note that the evaluative use of these scores are limited by the fact that the ECERS-R is not designed explicitly for use in these types of programs. However, the use of the score and the descriptive TSPM information is designed to draw attention to issues of quality of program environments and their potential for improvement.

The total average ECERS score (graph 1) represents the total score across all subscales. For detailed descriptions of the ECERS subscales, please refer to the ECERS-R manual provided to each site (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998).



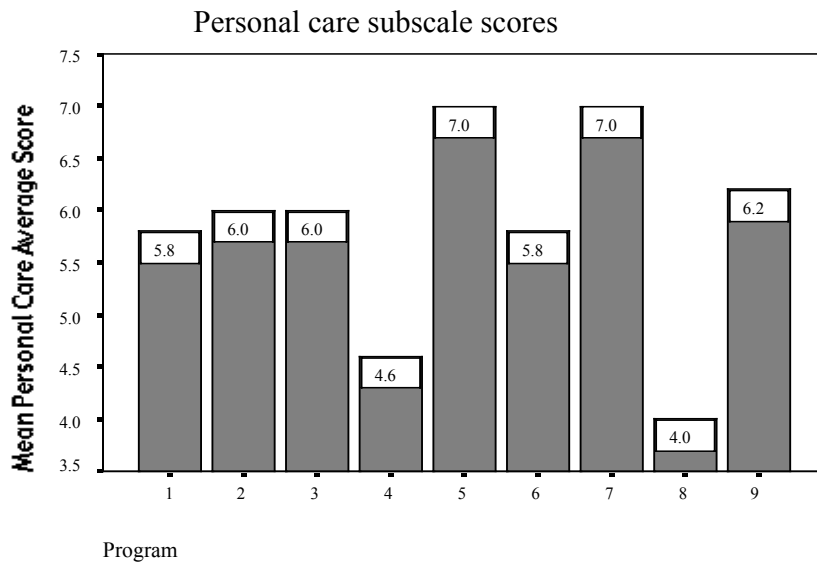
Program

Results of the total ECERS analysis show some variability across sites; however it is important to note that the axis scores shown in the graph only range from 4.0 to 6.5. Thus all sites have overall ECERS scores that are in the upper range.

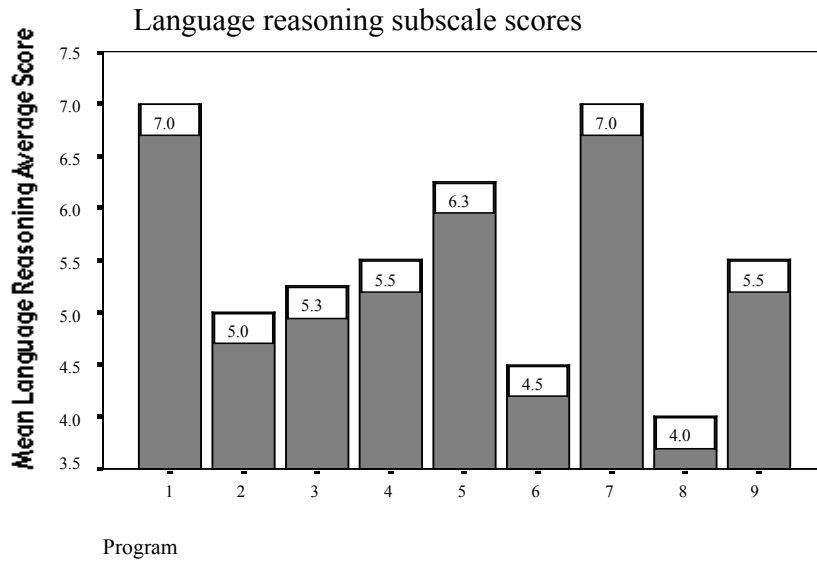


Program

The Space and Furnishings subscale includes indoor space, furniture for care and learning, furnishings for relaxing and comfort, room arrangement for play, space for privacy, child-related display, space for gross motor play, and gross motor equipment. Scores across site all fell in the top half.

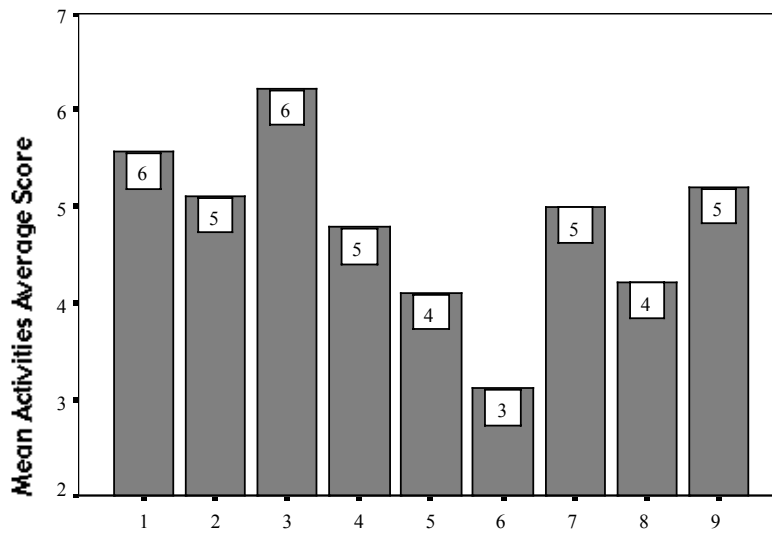


Personal Care Routines subscale items include greeting and departing routines, meals and snacks, nap/rest time if applicable to that environment, toilet/diapering, health practices and safety practices. Scores across sites fell in the top half; two sites obtained a maximum score of 7.



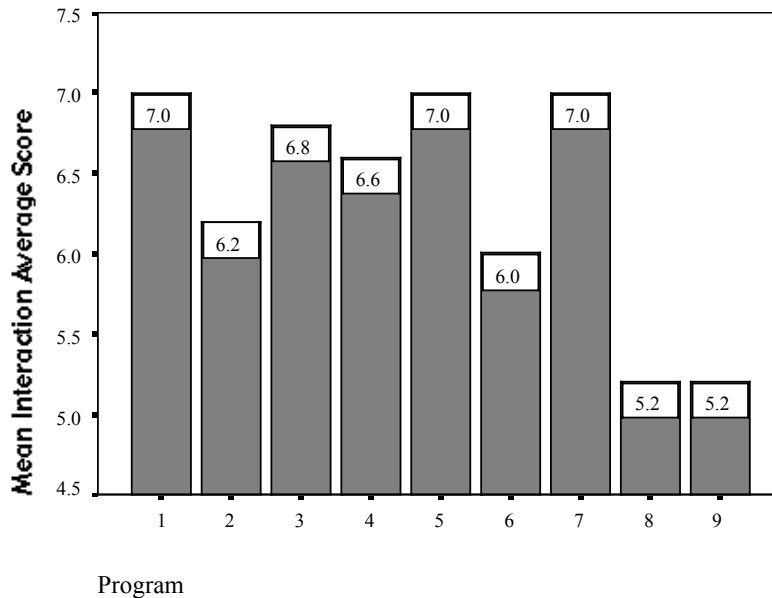
Language reasoning includes availability of books and pictures, encouraging children to communicate, using language to develop reasoning skills, and good informal use of language. Again, all sites fell in the top half of this index, with two sites obtaining a maximum score of 7.

Activities subscale scores



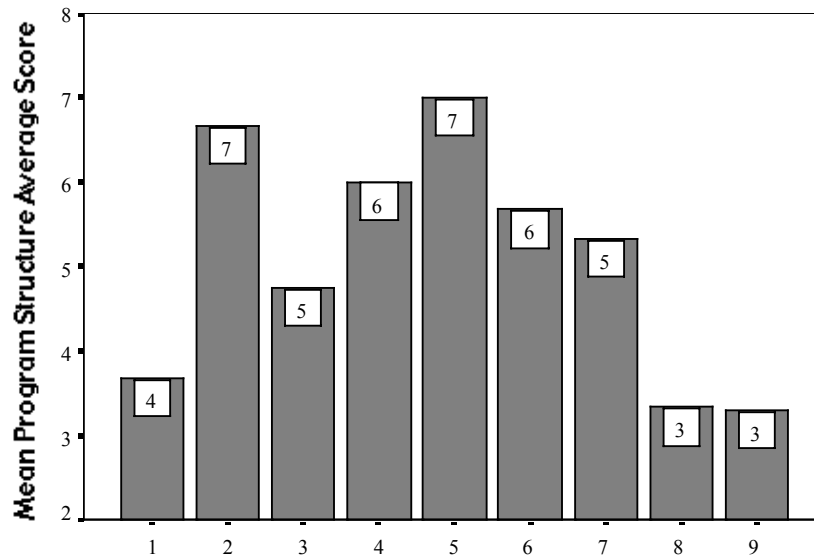
The Activities subscale relates to items observed or available in the environment, including: finite motor, art, music and movement, blocks, sand and water, dramatic play, nature and science, math/number, use of technology, and promotion of acceptance of diversity. Across sites, scores ranged between 3 and 6 overall which for the most part, represents the upper half of the scale.

Interaction subscale scores



The Interaction subscale includes supervision of gross motor activities, general supervision of children (other than gross motor), discipline practices, staff-child interactions, and interactions among the children themselves. Scores across sites were very high on this subscale, ranging from 5.2 to a maximum score of 7 at three sites.

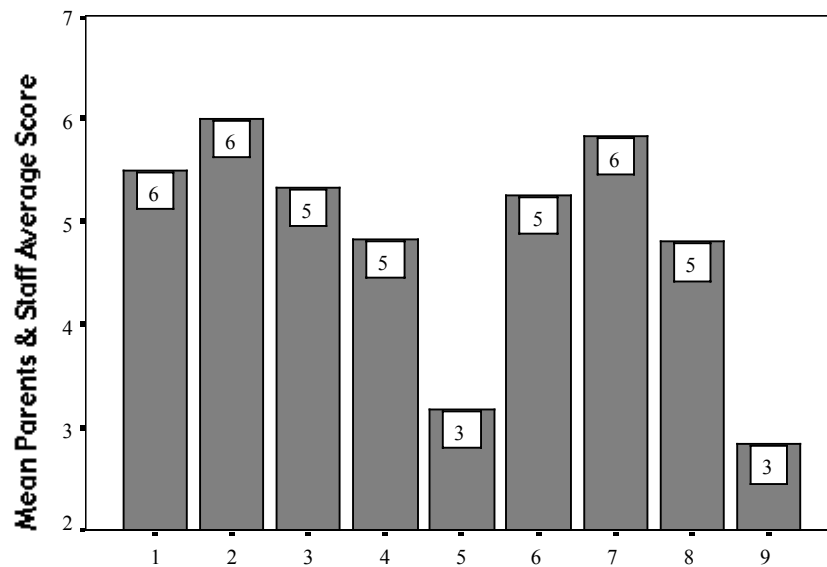
Program structure subscale scores



Program

Program relates primarily to schedules. Items include the daily schedule, free play time, group time and provisions for children with disabilities, where applicable. Scores ranged from adequate to excellent on this subscale, with two sites obtaining a maximum score of 7.

Parents and staff subscale scores



Program

The Parents and Staff subscale relates to the provisions for staff and parents. Items include provisions for parents, provisions for the personal needs of staff, provisions for the professional needs of staff, staff interaction and cooperation, supervision and evaluation of staff, and opportunities for professional growth. Average site scores ranged from adequate to very good on this item.

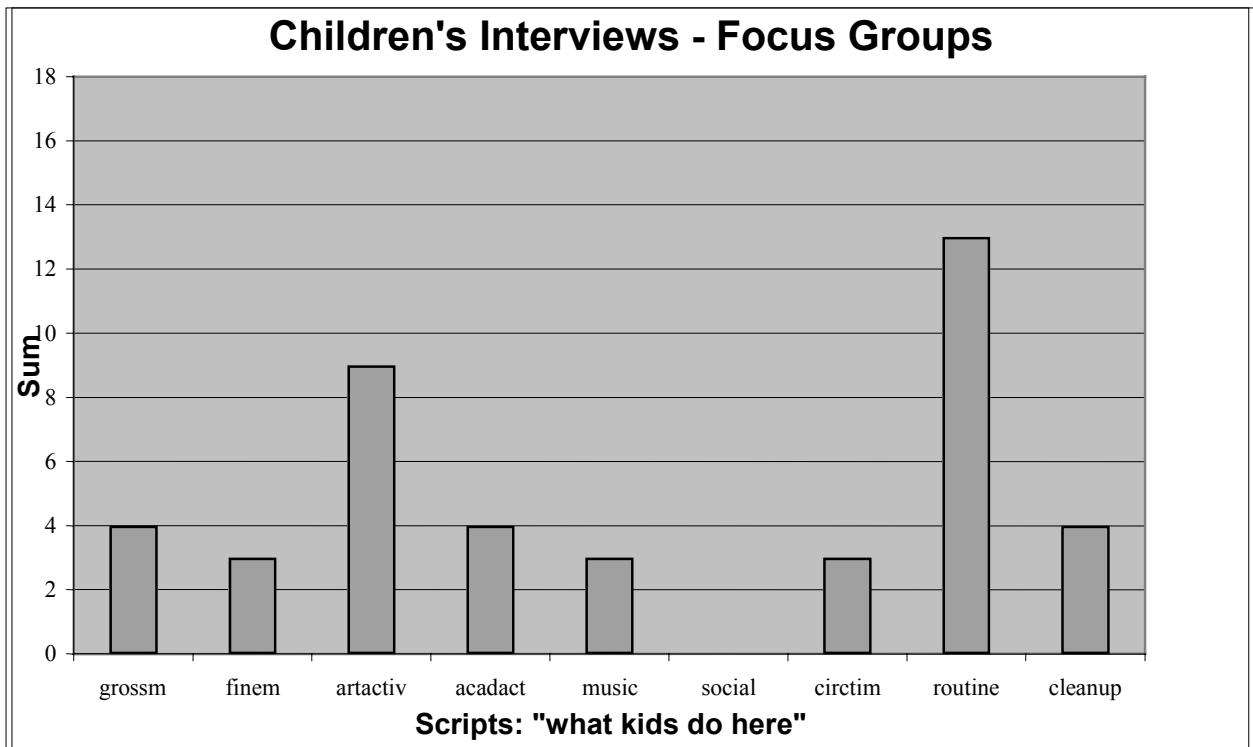
The summaries of the Time, Space, People, Materials observations for ACCT, Corvette, Queen Vic and YEY may be found in Appendix 11. The Bruce WoodGreen summaries may be found in the Bruce WoodGreen case study in this report (see Appendix 6).

Child Data

Children from each site participated in activities that were designed to get children’s points of view and their impressions of their learning environment. These activities included: child focus groups, drawing a picture about “school” and taking three photographs of things that they considered to be important to tell kids about the learning environment.

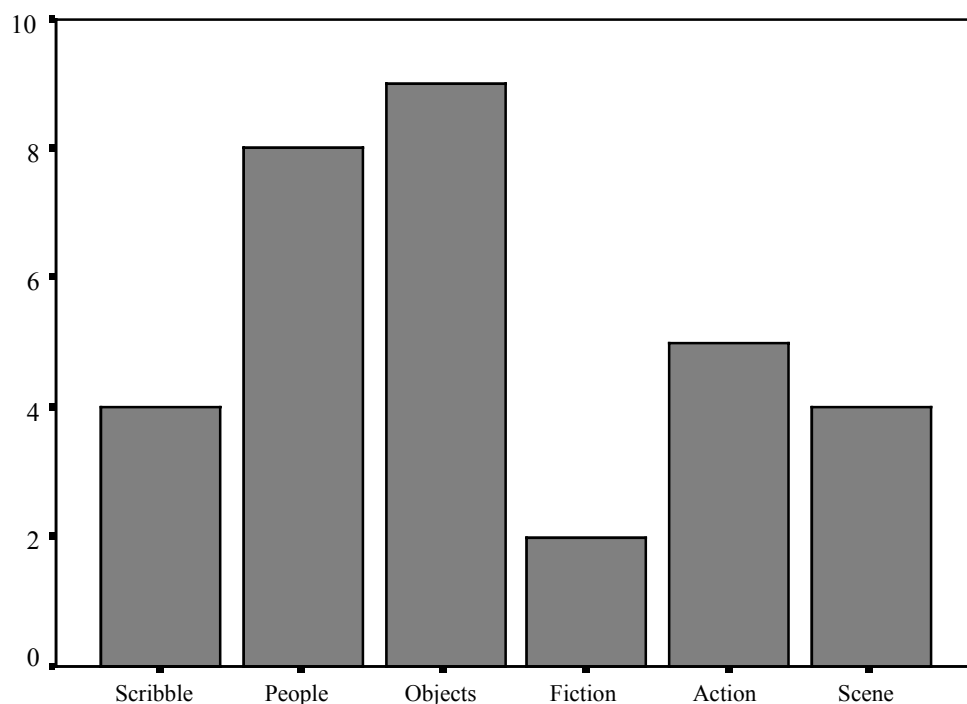
Focus groups. Children from the early learning programs were withdrawn in small groups to participate in “child focus groups”. Children were asked to tell about their day at the site from the time they get there until they go home and were asked what kinds of things they did at the site.

The first graph illustrates children’s reports of what they do at the site. Data here are reported across sites. Not surprisingly children mention routines and rules most often, followed by specific activities such as art, academic activities, music, circle time, clean up time and gross/fine motor activities.



Drawings. Children were given a piece of paper and coloured crayons and markers and were asked to draw a picture about something important in their learning environment. Children most often depicted objects in their drawings, for example, buildings, playgrounds, vehicles and toys. Many children also included people in their drawings. Interestingly, girls tended to produce more “people” drawings and boys tended to produce more “object” drawings. Drawings also included aspects of their learning program, for example, areas in the school or the learning environment, scenery, fictitious characters and sometimes just “action” (explosions, movement).

Child drawing themes



"Draw something important about being here"



*"My friends are the specialest in the class. My best friends are the best friends of all and everyone is my best friend."
age: 5*



"Listen to teacher, we have to play nicely, can't kicking, can't pushing, can't run in room, can't yelling in the room"
age: 6

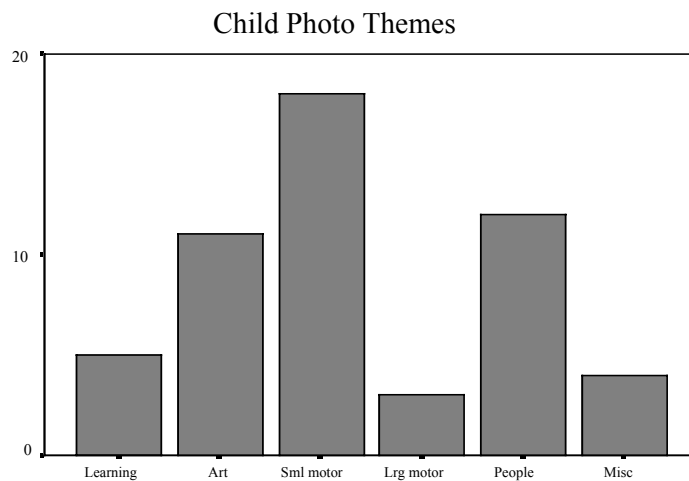
Examples of two other drawing narratives:

Drawing of a flower, sun, in marker: *"I love painting. I want a flower - a flower, a big flower. I want to draw a bigger one!"*
Preschooler

Drawing of a blue person, books: *"I like to read books. This is a book."*
age: 4

Photographs. Each child was assisted by a researcher to take three photographs of his/her learning environment. Children were given digital cameras and asked to take pictures of things that are important for kids to know about “school” (i.e. “about being here”).

Children most often took photographs of activities that involve fine motor development, for example, sand, playdough, lego, puzzles. Many children also wanted to take photographs of people including their teacher, themselves or parts of themselves, such as their arms in the sand centre. Art activities were another important theme for children – pictures, drawings, crafts. Academic and large motor activities were less often chosen as photograph topics.



"Take 3 pictures of what is important here"

Taken together, the children’s impressions of their learning environments suggest that they are aware of rules and routines, a finding that is not uncommon in this form of data collection with young children on the topic of school...rules for listening, rules for bathrooms, rules for eating, and rules for how to use one’s time all provide young children with a familiar framework within which to explore. Rules are not a bad thing; in fact, once rules are known, children feel comfortable knowing how they and others will operate in the environment. In the focus groups, many of the TFD children reported specific activities that they enjoy and the importance of these activities was reinforced in their drawings and choice of environment photographs. Unlike some earlier research with young children in Kindergarten (Pelletier, 1998, 1999), the TFD children did not focus on “play” materials or pretend play areas in the room. Perhaps it is the case that the TFD children are drawn to the richness of the learning materials that perhaps are less available in their home environments. Alternatively the TFD children may enjoy the semi-structured learning opportunities rather than pure dramatic play. It may be the case that the TFD children are less familiar with sociodramatic forms of play, do not have extended time blocks for dramatic play, do not know each other well enough to engage in this kind of activity, or are encouraged by adults, particularly parents, to pursue crafts and other fine motor learning activities. It will be interesting to track children’s impressions of their learning environments as the project continues to unfold.

Case Studies

ACTION FOR CHILDREN TODAY AND TOMORROW SECORD DAWES TORONTO FIRST DUTY SITE

Overview

ACTT (Action for Children Today and Tomorrow) is a community-based coalition of service providers and community members formed to help improve the life chances of children, prenatal to six years old, in East York and East Toronto. ACTT's Toronto First Duty site is Secord Dawes, one of four Neighbourhood Access Points in which ACTT hopes to build a comprehensive and seamless system of services for children from birth to 6 years and their families. This TFD site is unique in that it is working on TFD program design and implementation while simultaneously playing a key role in ACTT's advocacy and participation in the development and design of policy and funding infrastructure/s to support a seamless system of services. This broad systems perspective is reflective of the process used to found the ACTT organization. It began in March 1998 through a thorough and comprehensive community consultation process, which included a two-day "Search Conference" where a coalition of residents, parents, educators, social service agencies, community-based organizations, children's health and mental health service providers, childcare centres, family resource programs, faith communities, child welfare agencies, service clubs, policy advisors, and politicians at every level of government came together for mutually beneficial purposes. The coalition's stated purpose is to increase community capacity in providing services and support to young children and their families and to do this "in a spirit of continual cooperation and collaboration." This approach emphasizes broad community engagement and advocacy at the political level as well as the development of programs and services that build capacities and strengths within local neighbourhoods.

Vision Statement and Objectives

ACTT's vision is embedded in a "Promise to Our Children:" to do everything possible so as to make East York and East Toronto a place where:

- All children grow up loved, valued and cared for by their families and their community
- All children grow up strong in body and in spirit, safe from harm, fear and hunger
- All children grow up with healthy learning minds, free from prejudice, proud and accepted for who they are in our richly diverse community
- Every person in our community feels responsible for the well being of our children and families, and works with us to keep this promise to our children.

In keeping this promise, ACTT will value:

- Every child, ensuring attention to those with special needs, whether the needs are physical, developmental, intellectual, social, emotional or economic; and,
- Every member of a family, regardless of race, sexual orientation, economic status, ethno-cultural background, is involved in our community;

- A collaborative process that includes ongoing reflection and evaluation that enables ACTT and the community to work together to support children and families in ways that uphold our promise, values and goals;
- All families, recognizing that families and families are composed in many different ways, and that most children up to age 6 live in diverse families.

ACTT's Goals:

- To focus attention on issues affecting young children, i.e. from prenatal to 6 years of age.
- To raise community awareness and understanding of the importance of investing in children and families.
- To build community capacity to take positive actions on behalf of children and families.
- To work towards comprehensive community supports for children and families that includes early childhood education and care; public education; universal health care; recreation; and social services.
- To advocate for all families having the means to meet their basic needs and requirements.
- To ensure that parents and caregivers have access to information and support to make informed choices about services for their children
- To monitor, support, and improve children's "readiness to learn", health, well being and optimal development.

The ACTT TFD Second Dawes site shares this vision, and builds upon it by highlighting two particular goals as part of its TFD project: to integrate service delivery to provide seamless service for children and families within their catchment area, and to coordinate outreach and marketing of all partner agencies' programs and services as part of working towards the development of a seamless service system. This second goal is related to and nested within ACTT's other goals: that of focusing attention, raising awareness and understanding, ensuring access to the information needed to make informed choices, building community capacity for positive action and advocacy, and developing its community's capacity to monitor, support and improve its efforts in support of children and their families.

The ACTT TFD Second Dawes site intends to actualize this vision through the following program components:

- Peri-natal / post-natal bridging programs for women with babies aged 3 months to 1 year, to provide parent support and education about child development, nutrition and play and to foster bonding and attachment between mothers and infants. This program thrust will also link parents with other community resources – in particular health and childcare and local family resource programs.
- Preliteracy and school readiness / school bridging programs for children 3 1/2 to 6 years to familiarize them with a kindergarten setting, to develop and enhance their school readiness skills, to familiarize parents with the kindergarten program and expectations, and to orient parents to the role they can play in preparing their children for school.
- Family /childrearing support programs which include the introduction of cultural - linguistic and special needs support staff into partner agency program sites in the community's key languages, provision of parenting /caregiver workshops, and provision of childcare to enable parents to attend the workshops. These programs will be carefully integrated with existing programs and expansion will be based on assessed need.

- Community outreach and marketing of its partner agencies existing programs and services as well the new program components added under Toronto First Duty. A major focus is the development and implementation of strategies that bring community members, families in particular, together with service providers as part of increasing community connections and support, facilitating community members' participation in the decision-making around program design and delivery, and their advocacy for the development of a policy and funding infrastructure that supports a seamless system of services for children and families.

Partners

ACTT Secord Dawes' core partners include Secord Public School, Neighbourhood Centre, the East York Creche, East York /East Toronto Family Resources, East York Healthy Beginnings, Toronto Public Health, and ACTT Steering Committee Members.

There is already a history of these community partners working together. For example, Neighbourhood Centre, Toronto Public Health and East York / East Toronto Family Resources already jointly operate with other partners the East York Housing Outreach Program and Rent Bank. The Creche, Secord School, Y School Age Childcare, Neighbourhood Centre, and Parks and Recreation are all located in the same building and work collaboratively together in many ways. East York Healthy Beginnings works closely with a number of local organization including faith communities, The Neighbourhood Centre, and Toronto Public Health. All of the partners are also members of and have signed on as partners in ACTT and are committed to working collaboratively to improve the life chances for children living in the community.

Secord Elementary School

Secord School serves over 900 students representing a diverse ethnocultural and multilingual population. Approximately 53% of the students speak English as a second language, 15% have lived in Canada 2 years or less, 11 % have lived in Canada for 3 to 5 years. The School offers programs from Kindergarten to Grade Six. The school's regular instructional programs include:

- Languages - English, English as a Second Language, and French
- Mathematics, Science and Technology
- Arts - Music, Visual Arts, Drama and Dance
- Social Studies, Health and Physical Education

The School has specialized classes including the Crèche's day treatment program for children 3-1/2 to 6 years, and four special education classes. It is one of the schools involved in the TDSB Early Literacy Project. The Early Literacy Project focuses on the improvement of student literacy through a school-wide approach. It is a comprehensive program that involves assessment, instruction (including Reading Recovery), professional development and home / school partnerships. The School's focus for 2002-2003 School Year is:

- to concentrate on students' literacy skills through the Early Years Literacy Project
- to continue to build on the literacy / numeracy focus established two years ago
- to further develop programs based on the new science curriculum
- to continue development of the computer technology program

- to further align assessment and evaluation practices with those of the Toronto District School Board and the Ministry of Education

East York /East Toronto Family Resources

The lead agency for ACTT's TFD Secord Dawes site is East York / East Toronto Family Resources (EYET). EYET operates family resource programs in three locations including the Secord Dawes community. It is also a partner with other neighbourhood groups in the operation of mobile family resource programs in several underserved, high-risk neighbourhoods in East York East Toronto. EYET's services aim to operate interdependently; they are closely linked and work in a complementary way to respond to the needs of the families they serve. The array of services reflects this: parent / caregiver education and support, children's and youth programs, material support and nutrition programs, mobile programs / outreach support, housing related programs and services, employment support and community economic development, as well as community development and advocacy.

For example, in response to recent cutbacks in social assistance that have made it difficult for some families to meet their basic needs, the *Material Support and Nutrition Programs* include clothing exchanges; distribution of donated furniture; provision of transit fares (to assist participants to access community services and volunteer opportunities); bulk food purchasing (good food boxes, including staples and produce); and emergency food supplies. *The Mobile Drop-In Programs* provide the full range of EYET services to various underserved, high-risk neighbourhoods; this benefits people unable to access mainstream services for reasons such as poverty, disability, mental health issues, language barriers and lack of transportation. *Housing Related Programs and Services*, provided in partnership with The Neighbourhood Centre and Public Health, include: a Housing Help Service that helps clients maintain their existing housing, locate new housing, and provides advocacy and mediation as required; a Rent Bank Service that provides interest free loans and supports to families with children who have employment income but who are behind in their rent and at imminent risk of eviction to maintain housing; Resources Exist for Networking and Training (RENT) provides training, information, best practices sharing and networking opportunities for housing workers city-wide; and the AT Home Project, funded by the Women's Directorate, that focuses on documenting barriers for women-led families in accessing affordable housing, as well as policy review and analysis of the housing field to make recommendations and produce advocacy initiatives. *Employment Support and Community Economic Development* includes assistance to parents and home childcare providers to support them in their transition to employment and training, in order to improve their financial circumstances and to provide opportunities for personal development. *Community Development / Education, Leadership Development and Advocacy* includes EYET's participation in a variety of public education campaigns to raise awareness about the needs of children, youth and families in EYET's local communities, as well as provincially and nationally. As a member of ACTT, EYET has played a significant advocacy role in the development of the federal government's childcare policy and funding infrastructure announced in April 2003. These efforts have culminated in its designation as the lead agency for the Early Years Centres in two provincial ridings, thereby expanding further the East York East Toronto community's capacity to serve its children and families – both ACTT's, EYET's and the TFD Secord Dawes pilot's primary goal.

EYET's Dawes Road Family Resource Centre is the site where many of TFD Secord Dawe's services are delivered; for example, Infant ACTTion and Parent ACTTion. It also acts as "home base" for the TFD Secord Dawes Project Coordinator and Early Learning Team members (i.e. the three early years staff, the three cultural linguistic workers, and the special needs support worker).

The East York Creche

The East York Creche is part of The Creche Child and Family Centre, a United Way Agency, serving children 0 to 6 years of age and their families. The Creche provides a spectrum of services ranging from childcare to clinical services for families with a child who has social, emotional or behavioral problems. The East York Creche is located in Secord Community Centre which is located in a wing of Secord Public School. It has office space on the second floor of the Community Centre and a classroom in Secord School. The East York Creche provides the following services:

- A section 19 classroom staffed and administered jointly by the Toronto District School Board and The Creche. It consists of a small, self-contained, morning and afternoon kindergarten / day treatment program staffed by a TDSB special education teacher and by a Creche child and community worker and social worker. The program accommodates 12 children. The children who attend have been referred because they are unable to manage in a regular kindergarten.
- Social Skills Groups for kindergarten children are offered at 5 TDSB schools: Secord, Crescent Town, George Webster, Selwyn and Thorncliffe. These groups meet weekly for 10 weeks during the school day and are led by a child and community worker.
- Parenting Program and Social Skills Group: "The Incredible Years": A concurrent parent training and child social skills program that meets weekly for 12 weeks. Parents attend a group led by Creche social workers while their children participate in an activity group designed to build social skills.
- Family and Community Counselling Service: A range of services for families of young children from birth to six years with social, emotional developmental and/or behavioral challenges. This may include family or individual counseling play therapy, parenting support and child management training.
- Intake and referral: Access to all the Early Intervention Services available throughout The Creche and collaboration and consultation with community service providers and partners such as A.C.T.T. members, Beaches/East York riding table, and Toronto First Duty.

In spite of this array of services, the East York Creche has identified the following service gaps: parent relief, more speech services, more occupational therapy services, more specialized daycare settings, more play based activity groups for "at risk" preschoolers, after school activity groups for 5 year olds, more social skills groups in the schools, the means to better educate the community as to what clinical intervention can do, more parenting groups, and more offering service to specialized groups, i.e., fathers groups, single parent groups.

East York Healthy Beginnings

East York Healthy Beginnings is a coalition of community-based service providers that developed out of the work of one of ACTT's subcommittees. It was a response to the significant

demand for peri-natal and post-natal programs in East York where existing resources from Health Canada and community partners fell short of community need and resulted in program access being limited to three months from the original six months. Healthy Beginnings is a bridging program that targets peri-natal and post-natal mothers of infants zero to 3 months and extends the focus on infant stimulation with parents whose culture has not traditionally emphasized infant stimulation. The program focus includes prenatal and postnatal nutrition, social support, education / awareness building, community linkages and development. Its goal is to make a significant impact on the health, birth outcomes and life chances of women and their babies in East York - low birth weights being a continuing concern in this community. Healthy Beginnings addresses this goal by increasing the connections and involvement of women and their families in the community, and by providing them with information, support, referral, and linkages to other needs-based services and supports. Parents are hooked into CNCP through Healthy Beginnings. When they graduate from Healthy Beginnings they can move to the Secord Dawes Infant ACTTion program. From there they can connect with one of the parent / child drop in programs (i.e. EYET's Family Resource program) and/ or one of the local childcare programs. Prior to school entry both child and parents can participate in a preschool readiness program. They enter junior kindergarten at 4 years. Through Healthy Beginnings, parents become aware of and can access an array of parenting support programs. It is proving to be an effective mechanism for engaging parents in their child's development and connecting them with community supports from the very beginning - hence the name "Healthy Beginnings." The program is delivered one afternoon a week for 2 1/2 hours in two locations - the Dawes Road Family Resource Centre and the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office. The fact that the program is delivered in the same facility as the CPNP program and the parent-child drop-in program facilitates parents' connections with other programs and program staff. It is delivered by a multi-disciplinary staff team currently composed of 3 public health nurses, 1-2 dietitians, 1-2 peer support staff, each representing the program and predominant cultural group of participants, 3 childcare staff, one project coordinator working on site within programs, and various volunteers. The nurses and dietitians are staff members provided in-kind by partner organizations. Staffing priorities change in response to participants changing needs. Its Steering Committee is comprised of representatives of its partner agencies. A second organizational committee comprised of direct service staff deals with operational concerns, such as program planning and scheduling, emerging service delivery issues, client advocacy, and the training needs of front line staff. Program participants help steer the program by providing input and feedback informally, through focus groups, anecdotal data, and input from participant volunteers.

Muppets Childcare Centre

Muppets Children's Centre is a government licensed and supervised daycare facility located within a five-minute walk of Secord Public School and the Main subway station. They maintain full day and preschool programs for 141 children from 3 months to 6 years of age. Government subsidy for services is available to families in cases of financial need. Their stated philosophy is "to create a stable, caring environment to allow each child to feel secure and loved. When a child feels good about them self, he or she is willing to try new experiences and build on existing skills."

The Neighbourhood Centre

The Neighbourhood Centre is located in the Secord Community Centre, a wing of Secord School, and just steps away from the Main Street subway station. Its mission statement says it seeks to empower the residents of East York /East Toronto through the provision of easily accessible information and direct service, paying particular attention to the elderly, low income earners, single parents and newcomers to Canada. It does this through the provision of the following services: information and referral, housing outreach (it houses the Rent Bank and the Housing Help program), income support assistance and form filling, a childcare registry, a clothing depot, computer internet access and training, a handyman / home repair registry, and a legal clinic.

Toronto Public Health

Healthy Babies, Healthy Children (HBHC) is a provincial prevention and early intervention initiative to provide support and services to families with children from before birth up to six years. Toronto Public Health began to implement HBHC programs locally in January 1998. The goals of the Program are to: provide optimal physical, cognitive, communicative and psychosocial development in children; and, act as a catalyst for a coordinated, effective, integrated system of services and supports for healthy child development. The Program works with hospitals, doctors, public health nurses, home visitors and service agencies in the community. HBHC and local community partners have compiled information into an *Inventory of Services* for children to link families to suitable resources and to identify gaps and plan new programs. The early identification thrust of the program is to develop work plans to: design a comprehensive system of monitoring healthy child development and early risk identification of children from infancy to school entry; promote healthy child development and a range of child and family support services that emphasize family well-being; and, link children who may be at risk, but who were not identified at other screening points, with referrals to intervention services quickly and effectively. In keeping with this thrust, Toronto Public Health's East York East Toronto Manager sits on Secord Dawes's Steering Committee and chairs the site's Nipissing / Early Identification Committee. The Committee's work is a pivotal part of the site's efforts to provide a "seamless" system of services and supports.

Community Profile

ACTT is situated in East York and East Toronto, a community of approximately 350,000, in the area bordered by the lake in the south, the boundaries of the former Borough of East York in the north, the Don Valley Parkway in the west, and Victoria Park Avenue in the east. The ACTT Secord Dawes site is located within this area, in the former Borough of East York. Its catchment area is smaller and consists of Danforth Ave. to the south, Lumsden to the north, Chisholm to the west and Dawes Road to the east. It is a predominantly working-class community with small, single family dwellings and a few high-density, high-rise apartments. It is also a community in transition. The 1996 Census projects a 34 % increase in population by 2016, and highlights a shift in demographics from what was traditionally a seniors community to a community of young families with limited supports and services for children zero to 6 years. Between 1991 and 1996, the number of children less than six years of age increased by 21%. Forty percent of households now have children. Twenty percent of families are lone parent families. Fifty-six percent are living below the poverty line. The median income in East York fell by 6.5% from 1991 to 1996

and household poverty rates rose by 10.1%. Of households with children, 11% are unemployed. Recent immigrants in the community increased by 41%. Twenty seven percent of the population arrived in the past five years.

Most of the recent immigrants are from South Asian countries. Many others are from Eastern Europe. The most common languages in the community, other than English, are Mandarin, Cantonese, Urdu, Bengali and Romanian. Another language emerging as important is Tibetan. It is therefore a very diverse community both linguistically and culturally. Many families are unfamiliar with Canadian cultural traditions and struggle to balance their old traditions with those of their new home country. They do not understand the Canadian education system, or the various systems of supports and services potentially available to them and their children. However, as noted in the parent focus groups, they do value the supportive nature of their community, including the concern for children and the services provided. Some families are not aware of or know how to access services; language and cultural barriers make it difficult for them to find out on their own. High rates of poverty also mean that many families have difficulty covering the basic necessities of life.

Interviews with direct service staff (i.e. public health nurses, teachers, family resource staff and child and community support workers) provides further understanding of the community served and the difficulties many families face. Affordable housing is hard to find, as is affordable, flexible childcare – particularly when jobs are part time, evenings and weekends. As fortunes improve and/ or decline, families move in search of better-paying jobs, affordable housing and or suitable childcare. This makes for a highly mobile and transient population and can disrupt and delay the development of informal support networks. Many families, particularly women with young children, removed from their own culture and familiar system of supports, feel isolated and depressed. Maternal depression tends to negatively impact children's healthy development. Attachment is often a major issue. Parents fear leaving their children with strangers. Sometimes, if they are able and available, grandparents take care of the children. While this provides much needed support, many of these grandparents do not speak English and are unconnected to the community.

This sketch of community demographics has significant implications for Secord School and other service providers in the community. The Secord School principal indicates that about 20 % of the school population moves in and out of the school from year to year. Teachers at Secord School report a steady decline in school readiness among children entering kindergarten in the past three years. Much of this is attributable to children's / families limited knowledge of English – at least half of the children entering school have little or no English. (In one of Secord School's kindergarten classes only 6 of 21 students are first language English). Families' low economic levels also mean children have limited access to learning opportunities and resources impacting not only their school readiness but often their health and well-being as well.

History

Community Consultation

The TFD Secord Dawes site has drawn its initial direction from an extensive community consultation conducted in 2002 for ACTT, East End Community Health Centre, and Riverdale Community Health Centre. The community consultation included:

- Thirty seven key informant interviews and eight focus groups with representatives of agencies (ranging from small grass-roots to large publicly funded organizations) serving 2–6 year olds and their families in East York East Toronto. Two of the eight focus group agencies also provided key informant interviews, making forty three the total number of agencies giving input;
- Six focus groups with parents and caregivers. Three of the six groups consisted of women who are clients of the local community health centres, including two Chinese women’s groups and participants of an *Enjoy Your Toddler* group. The other three groups included a TDSB English as a Second Language (ESL) class, clients of a Child-Parent Centre, and clients of a Family Resource Centre;
- 186 Surveys with parents and other caregivers conducted at a local shopping centre (Gerrard Square), Daycare Connection, Beaches Recreation Centre, Main Street Daycare, and Glen Rhodes Community Kitchen; and,
- Drawing activities with three groups of children aged 4-7 years (54 children provided 100 drawings). These drawings took place at a local school and Daycare Connection. The information sought from parents and agencies fell under four categories: services available, service gaps / needs, implementation tactics, and partnerships.

Its findings are summarized in the *Community Consultation Report Regarding Supports and Services For Children 2-6 Years-Old and Their Families in East York and East Toronto*. The report provides insight into what barriers families face in accessing existing services, what needs are not being fulfilled, and how these barriers can be overcome and needs met. It is intended to be a resource to assist agencies in working together to effectively address the needs of children and their families. Based on the data from the community consultation, the needs identified as the top eight priorities are: child development assessments, counselling, information about existing services, mobile or geographically accessible services, multilingual/ culturally sensitive programming and outreach, and respite childcare. Other needs that ranked very high included: daycare, parent-child resource and drop-in centres, extended service hours (afternoon, weekends, and summer), aid for families in need, single and/or young parent support, newcomer services, family relationship building and monitoring, nutrition skills development, life skills development, and housing assistance.

There were also specific strategies recommended for delivering programs, overcoming resource shortages, and overcoming barriers to access. Hiring more staff was recommended the most, indicating a perceived need for more people working to provide services and programs for children and families. Providing new training to existing staff, more specifically, hiring multilingual staff and training all staff in cultural sensitivity were recommended often. Another frequently recommended strategy for overcoming resource shortages was working in partnerships and sharing resources, including staff, with cross-training between organizations

when appropriate. A common sentiment was that partnerships must go beyond meeting and sharing information, to being action-oriented involving genuine sharing of staff, materials, supplies, and facilities as well as information. Resource sharing with clients was also commonly recommended, in the form of clothing, book and toy exchanges or lending, as an inexpensive way to help those in need overcome financial difficulties while still providing their children with opportunities for healthy development.

In response to the identified need for more information about existing services, recommendations fell mainly under two categories: *outreach* and *promotion*. *Outreach* was recommended twice as often as promotion; it involves a relationship-building approach whereby parents are not only told about services, but given the opportunity to take ownership of programs for their own and their children's benefit. Several informants recommended conducting ongoing community consultations and needs assessments, and also engaging with parents, having them design programming for their families. Those recommending outreach often commented that people rarely respond to promotional materials, especially if their literacy or English skills are limited, which is often the case among vulnerable populations. Connecting with informal community leaders was recommended, as well as working with parents and advocating on their behalf, by lobbying powerful people in their lives such as landlords, social assistance administrators, and professionals in the legal system. When using written materials for promotion, informants indicated a need for these materials to be provided in the languages of the populations being served, as well as the need for multilingual staff to receive non-English speakers when they respond to promotional materials. A third but less frequently recommended method for information sharing with parents is via telephone, in the form of an information or crisis hotline.

Once potential clients / families are aware of a program or service, there are often numerous other barriers to accessing that service, such as lack of transportation, a lack of financial resources, inconvenient programming hours, too many other responsibilities, especially caring for one or more children, and once again, language barriers. Informants recommended striving to overcome such barriers by providing childcare at programming, providing transportation to and from programs or providing subsidies or TTC tokens, holding programs at varying times of the day or week, including evenings, weekends, and during the summertime, and providing food at programs or grocery vouchers to assist families with low incomes in meeting their basic nutritional requirements.

These recommendations are shaping the approach to service delivery in the Secord Dawe's site. We see this reflected in the array of services and supports provided by the partner agencies, as well as in the new program components introduced under TFD and in the work of the various committees currently underway.

Out of the Gate

In the first phase of the project the site spent a lot of time building the partnership, exploring partnership possibilities, pulling in new members and building a structure. This required many meetings but has paid off because as Steering Committee members noted in a focus group: "We now have a strong structure and it is easier to get programs off the ground because of that

structure and the relationships built in the beginning.” The following is a description of how the Secord Dawes site has evolved up to this point in time along each of TFD’s key elements / goals.

The Learning Environment

In the Secord Dawes site, unlike several of the TFD sites, the childcare, parenting drop-in program and kindergarten programs are not located in the school. Secord School is unable to provide space either for childcare or the family resource program. This makes integration of their learning environments far more challenging. The school is not the hub for service delivery in the same way as sites in which these programs are co-located; rather, the “neighbourhood” is the site for service delivery. Or, as ACTT notes, the neighbourhood is a “Neighbourhood Access Point” for service delivery. The Muppets Childcare Centre and the Family Resource Centre are within a 10 minute walk of Secord School; and Secord Community Centre which is located in a wing of the School provides space for the Y school-aged childcare, the East York Creche, The Neighbourhood Centre and Parks and Recreation. Services are in close proximity. Given their proximity, and the fact that families are already utilizing various services, the Secord Dawes site intends to pay careful attention to the co-ordination and documentation of “entry” into the service system – thus addressing TFD’s goal of “seamless access.” However, in the first year of implementation the site has focused primarily on the provision of the new program components described in more detail below. These new programs build on and expand existing services and provide enhanced access through the provision of cultural linguistic and special needs support. For a description of two learning environments within ACTT TFD array, see Appendix 10.

Kinder ACTTion and Kinder Camp are both school readiness programs for children currently attending JK and their families, or, who *will be* attending Kindergarten in the upcoming school year. It is offered three times throughout the school year – fall, winter and spring – for eight to ten half day sessions on Saturday mornings, and once during the summer over a two week period. Kinder Camp was offered for the first time last summer (2002) and will run again this summer (2003). Both programs are held in one of Secord School’s kindergarten classrooms which allows access to the Kindergarten space and materials, but only at times when the kindergarten programs are not running. This gets around the difficulty of access to school space, so in spite of the school’s space constraints, these new programs are able to share space and resources with the existing kindergarten programs, greatly reducing the cost of implementation and at the same time expanding services. *Kinder ACTTion* can accommodate 10 to 25 families each time the program is offered. Potentially, it can serve 30 to 75 families over the course of a school year. In this, its start-up year, it has accommodated 40 families, while *Kinder Camp* accommodated 16 families last summer (2002) and will serve many more families this summer (2003).

The school readiness programs provide structured focused activities for both children and parents. Children’s activities emphasize the development of specific skills considered essential for academic achievement (phonological awareness and discrimination, early numeracy, the ability to attend to and follow directions, as well as the ability to get along with one’s peers). They are consistent with the Ontario Kindergarten Program’s learning outcome expectations and with the kindergarten routines and learning activities offered at Secord School – the Secord School kindergarten teachers had input in the programs’ design. Parents and caregivers

participate in the program along side staff members and for a portion of each morning session they participate in workshops about children's development. The goal is for parents to have an increased knowledge of school readiness attributes and strategies and a greater understanding of their child's development. Siblings are welcome to attend as long as parents agree to supervise them. Siblings are helpers and encouragers of the kinders, the goal being to provide meaningful activities that develop their creativity and ability to share with and nurture younger children within an age-appropriate setting. The program is staffed by members of the site's Early Learning Team. The outreach strategy for these programs includes information sessions / presentations during JK kindergarten registration and orientation, community forums / fairs, distribution of flyers through Secord School, the local day care centres (Main Square and Muppets), McCordic Parenting and Family Literacy Centre, as well as the EYET Family Resource Centre on Dawes Road.

ACTTion for Infants is a parenting program for parents of infants ranging from three months to one year. It is intended as a "bridging" program for families involved in CPNP perinatal and postnatal programs, such as East York Healthy Beginnings, or, for those families who did not access or have access to perinatal / postnatal programs during pregnancy. Its goal is to strengthen parent's capacity to become better parents by learning about the importance of attachment, play, and involvement in their infant's development. Like the Healthy Beginnings program it emphasizes: creating social support networks among participants thereby breaking down social isolation; education / awareness building through workshops / discussions on various topics including labor and delivery, breastfeeding, nutrition, attachment, stress / coping, and relationships; as well as community linkages via referrals, guest speakers, and program tours.

The program can accommodate 10 to 25 families and operates 50 out of 52 weeks a year. Parents attend a group with their babies for two and half-hours every Wednesday afternoon and meet with other parents and infants. The program also provides a structured playgroup for older siblings to enhance their school readiness skills. The ACTTion for Infants staff team consists of three early years staff members. This team works closely with, and draws on, the resources of, Toronto Public Health, Toronto Children's Aid Society, Centennial College's Early Childhood Education Program, the Toronto Association for Community Living, and one of the provincial government's Early Years Literacy consultants. The program has served 57 families in its start-up year.

Parent ACTTion provides family / childrearing support through workshops and parenting courses offered at various locations – family resource programs, childcare centres, the school, and other community based organizations. For example, *Nobody's Perfect*, a parenting group for parents with young children zero to five years was offered on Friday afternoons from March to May by one of Toronto Public Health's public health nurses and the Toronto First Duty project coordinator. A second course is being offered by a public health nurse and the site's Early Learning Team, from May to July at EYET's Family Resource Center on Dawes Road. Its focus is on why children act the way they do, how to help children behave, how to keep children safe, happy and healthy, how to feel good about oneself as a parent and how to enjoy children.

The need for a parenting group for families without custody was identified and discussed with the Children's Aid Society's community development representative on the site's Steering

Committee. The possibility of offering *Beyond the Basics* in the Secord Dawes neighbourhood on Wednesday evenings in the fall for parents without custody is being explored. Another course currently being offered in 9 sessions from May to July for two hours on Wednesday afternoons is *Making The Connection*. This is offered to two groups of 10 to 12 parents as a component of the *Infant ACTTion* program. The groups are held at the same time in different rooms at EYET's Family Resource Centre on Dawe's Road. All of the parenting courses offered provide onsite childcare for parents as well as refreshments. It is the site's intention to expand opportunities and increase access by offering approximately half of their parenting courses outside of agencies' regular hours on evenings and weekends in order to accommodate working parents. Several are being planned for the fall of 2003.

Cultural Linguistic / Special Needs Support

East York's service providers consistently flag as a priority the need for parenting supports and services in several languages in addition to English. However, with low staff turnover rates, and programs functioning with only one or two staff in each location, service providers have difficulty finding staff members with the linguistic ability to serve a wide range of languages. To respond to this need ACTT established the position of "Cultural Linguistic Support Worker" and recently hired three Cultural Linguistic Support Workers and one Special Needs Support Worker. Each worker works 14 hours a week. The cultural linguistic staff are fluent in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Farsi / Persian, Urdu, Hindi and Bengali. While hired as part of the Secord Dawes Early Years Team, they work not only in the new program components – *Kinder ACTTion*, *Kinder Camp*, *ACTTion for Infants*, and *Parent ACTTion* – they are also shared with partner agencies. For example, each Cultural Linguistic Worker spends three hours a week at the Family Resource Centre on Dawes Road, as well as a morning and an afternoon in the Kindergarten program at Secord School. Ten of their fourteen hours are spent in direct service delivery, while approximately four hours are spent in provision of supports, like translation of flyers, newsletters and other community outreach strategies. The Special Needs Worker spends two mornings a week at the Family Resource Centre responding to all parents' questions regarding their child's development, as well as one morning at the Muppets Childcare Centre. She provides support for children with special needs through the development of interim strategies and programming, referrals, family support and integration within programs. She also provides workshops for childcare and family resource staff as well as parents, and is planning workshops for home childcare providers.

Given that existing programs are operating at capacity, and that the extent of this capacity is determined by staffing levels and their time availability, the addition of these new staff offers the possibility of extending program hours, as well as increased accessibility through the provision of multilingual staff. The sharing of Cultural Linguistic Workers between existing programs also facilitates the transition of families using their home language and helps them integrate into the mainstream. Both the cultural linguistic and special needs positions expand the capacity of existing programs by increasing their accessibility to a broader range of families. The Cultural Linguistic Support Workers reflect the site's commitment to the provision of culturally relevant programming and the need for continual bridging in the ESL community – linguistically and culturally – to help families access mainstream programs and acculturate prior to children entering the formal school system. This is entirely appropriate, and recognizes that for children to be successful upon entering the formal school system, it demands the involvement of the

whole family. Both of these new positions, therefore, provide important parent / caregiver support.

Early Years Staff Team

The ACTT Secord Dawes Early Learning Team currently consists of a full time Project Coordinator, three Early Years workers, three cultural linguistic worker (fourteen hours a week) and one Special Needs support worker (fourteen hours a week). They work as part of an integrated early learning team. The Cultural Linguistic Workers and the Special Needs Support Worker are viewed both as way of “enhancing the knowledge base and services of partner agencies” and as “a way of taking the project out into the community and integrating across partner sites.” One of the striking characteristics of the site’s Early Learning Team is its cultural linguistic diversity. In this sense it is particularly representative of the community it serves. While all team members have knowledge of early childhood development and are experienced in working with parents, they represent a variety of professional backgrounds (i.e., early childhood education, psychology, family resource, social work and teaching). This diversity benefits the team in that they are able to learn from one another by sharing their cultural and professional knowledge, thereby enhancing their skills as team members. In this first year, as they engaged in developing, implementing and refining the new programs, they have “jelled” as a team. One significant strategy that has contributed to this “team spirit” is the scheduling of “debriefing sessions” following each program session. This practice, established by the site’s Project Coordinator in the first days of program implementation, engages the staff involved in program delivery in an ongoing evaluation of program activities with a view to constantly improving them and ensuring that they respond to participants needs and interests. Team members discuss what works, what didn’t and why, and what could be done better next time. More emphasis is placed on the “debriefing sessions” than on “set up” because they are seen as an important part of planning. These sessions reflect the site’s commitment to critical reflection on practice and the importance of creating a learning environment not only for children and families but for the practitioners as well. Each team member in one on one interviews with the research team identified the “debriefing sessions” as a valued activity that contributed to the team’s and their personal growth and development.

One of the Early Learning teams’ goals is to make connections with the local childcare, family resource, and kindergarten staff / programs. While the cultural linguistic and special needs workers’ presence in these programs and the support they provide are beginning to facilitate these connections, they have only recently been introduced. Another strategy utilized by the Site Project Coordinator is her weekly “walkabout” when she “drops in” to the school, family resource and childcare programs; thus maintaining TFD’s visibility and “building relationships” in an informal, but planned way. She started attending the Kindergarten teachers’ meetings (although these meetings were suspended during “work to rule”) and Secord School’s Home and School meetings. There is a need to “expand” the site team to include the kindergarten, family resource and childcare staff. Considerable headway has been made with the family resource staff through their participation in Infant ACTTion and Parent ACTTion activities that also include public health staff. Much work remains, however, to connect with both kindergarten teachers and childcare staff before they become members of an “expanded” early years team. The school principal and project coordinator have communicated regularly and have developed a good

working relationship. The school guidance / resource teacher has been a regular participant in the Site's Steering Committee meetings and acts as a liaison between the Steering Committee and the school administration – although some committee members expressed the desire for the principal's direct participation in Steering Committee meetings. The next step was to move to regularly scheduled meetings of the kindergarten teachers, childcare, parenting resource staff and the site's early learning program staff. These meetings could not be initiated due to the elementary teachers' dispute with TDSB and the introduction of "work to rule". This has significantly delayed progress although plans are in place to initiate meetings and joint workshops once the dispute is resolved. Recently approved Challenge Fund monies will facilitate the provision of some release time for teachers and childcare staff to participate in both meetings and joint professional development activities of the site's partner agencies as well as across TFD sites. A recent development is the school's participation in meetings of the site's Childcare Committee – both the Secord School principal and one of the Kindergarten teachers attend these meetings, as do representatives of the local childcare providers. This has for the first time brought school and childcare staff together to address common concerns, and represents a first step in building relationships between the two groups.

Governance

Secord Dawes has a Steering Committee and several subcommittees. It took some time in the beginning to clarify who the core partners were, and how the TFD Secord Dawes initiative fit within the broader ACTT framework. This was clarified through the development and signing of the site's "partnership agreement" that specifies who the partners are, the organizational structure/s, roles and responsibilities, what the partners expect from one another, and what the partnership entails. The agreement elaborates on how decisions are made, how conflicts are resolved, and how the partnership's workplans are developed and monitored. It also lists the activities of its various organizational structures, and specifies each of the core members' contributions to the partnership. The agreement includes, as well, a description of its current array of services, its catchment area, its proposed service delivery model, and a communication plan for connecting with and engaging the community.

Secord Dawes was slow to establish subcommittees. They now have four: the *Childcare Committee*, the *Nipissing / Early Intervention Committee*, the *Special Needs Committee*, and the *Engaging Community Committee*. They have made a huge difference in moving the site forward. As one committee member commented ... "The subcommittee allows us to concentrate on one particular issue in a focused way and set some goals. ... We need these highly focused work groups to do things and carry the project forward." An important feature of the subcommittees is that they provide a mechanism for broadening and dispersing the decision making beyond the Steering Committee. For example, the childcare representatives on the Steering Committee found that much of the discussion at the Steering Committee table was only indirectly related to their concerns. Recognizing the need to engage the childcare community in a more meaningful way, the site established a "childcare work group". This has been very effective in pulling in the childcare community and in addressing the issues that affect them directly. Initially this work group included the Directors of Muppets Children's Centre and Main Square Day Care Centre, the City of Toronto's Child Care Consultant, TDSB's former Child Care Advisor (now a community representative), a representative of Toronto Community Living and Secord Dawes's

Project Coordinator. Membership has expanded and now includes representation from Day Care Connections (the home childcare providers network) as well as the Secord School Principal and one of the school's kindergarten teachers (whose release time is covered by the school budget). The expanded membership confirms the relevancy of the Committee's work and has helped build relationships among the childcare providers, the childcare community and the school, and engaged both groups more fully in addressing Secord Dawes TFD goals in relation to childcare.

The subcommittee structures enable the site to draw in people with special knowledge of the community who can provide support and direction to the site, even though they are not official partners. They are, nevertheless, part of the Secord Dawes community. This also encourages broader representation from the partner agencies themselves. Thus building knowledge of TFD within the partner agencies as well as within the community. This is essential in order to build the "critical mass" required to bring about "system change."

Seamless Access

Seamless access at Secord Dawes is being addressed in several ways. First, the site's "bridging" programs – *ACTTion for Infants*, *Kinder ACTTion*, *Kinder Camp* and *Parent ACTTion* – provide a continuum of programs that connect, and fill in the gaps between, existing programs provided by public health, childcare, family resource and kindergarten. Second, through the focus on early identification and special needs support, the site is addressing another dimension of seamless access – "inclusiveness." To be inclusive the service system must attend to those families that require additional kinds of supports in order to participate. These may be cultural linguistic supports, or, the additional supports that enable children with special needs and their families to access and successfully participate in programs. Seamless, integrated service systems must provide these special supports to be inclusive of *all* children's and families' needs, not just some.

Both the *Special Needs* and the *Nipissing / Early Identification Committees* address inclusiveness and seamlessness, as does the site's provision of both cultural linguistic support workers and the special needs support worker. The *Special Needs Committee* is a support group /resource network for the special needs worker and the early learning team. The Committee put a lot of work into the special needs worker's role description, oriented the new worker to the community and its resources, and connected her with Toronto Community Living, and the Special Needs Resource Teacher Network. The *Nipissing / Early Identification Committee* is focusing on early identification issues and making connections between public health's HBHC early identification initiative, Toronto Community Living's efforts, and TDSB's new initiatives around early identification. The committee is chaired by the Manager of Toronto Public Health for East York East Toronto, who sits on the Secord Dawe's Steering Committee. Membership includes an Instructional Leader from TDSB's Early Years Team, a representative of Toronto Community Living, the TFD Project Coordinator for the City, who is also a member of public health's Early Identification – HBHC Implementation Committee, the Secord Dawe's Project Coordinator and Special Needs Support Worker, as well as a community volunteer (a former Secord School vice-principal). The Committee is taking the lead in addressing the following questions: How can we make real integration happen for children and families? How can we create a seamless system for the child and family? What screening tools are currently in use and by whom? Are the tools

in use appropriate for the ESL population? Do the screenings reach the hard-to-serve? How is screening information utilized? How can information be shared across agencies and systems? How does the information from public health screenings connect with the EDI and to waiting lists for services? How are screenings making a difference at school entry? The committee's work has triggered discussion across First Duty sites and has raised issues for the Toronto First Duty Steering Committee. Certainly, its work is moving the local site forward and contributing to the thinking and planning around the development of a "seamless system of services and supports" in their own community, as well as citywide.

Parent Participation / Community Engagement

One of ACTT's first activities in response to the April 2002 *Community Consultation Summary Report Regarding Supports and Services For Children 2-6 Years-old and Their Families in East York and East Toronto* was a *Community Forum* held in the Secord Community School gym during Kindergarten Registration. The forum was intended as the community's introduction to the TFD Secord Dawes project. All parents registering their child for JK in the fall were provided information about Kinder Camp and were invited to participate in the school readiness program over the summer. The gym was filled with information tables/ booths about existing services for children and families, and a brief overview of each was provided during the forum. Most of the incoming JK children and families were in attendance. Children and families registered not only for JK but for Kinder Camp as well. The forum was considered a success. This year a similar event – a *June Fun Fair* – was held outdoors on the Secord School schoolgrounds. The *Fun Fair* provided information about programs and services, as well as fun activities (i.e. bubbles, playdough) and refreshments for children and families. Each child /family also received a take-home package of materials that included things like playdough, and suggestions / recipes for games and activities over the summer. These events are conscious efforts to outreach and promote the TFD Secord Dawe's programs and services to the community.

Both the ACTT and TFD Secord Dawes Steering Committees have parents as members, although their participation has waxed and waned over the course of this first year. The site has recently struck an *Engaging Families Committee* to plan strategies for more fully engaging parents and community. The Committee includes the Project Coordinator, the Children's Aid Society representative on the Steering Committee – a community development worker who also acts as the Committee Chair – and three families from the community. They are working on a strategy to outreach to more families and to increase awareness of TFD as well as reach parents who have indicated on their intake form / interview that they would like to be involved in organizing a special event, serve on a committee, or give input to the project. A *Community Dinner* is being organized for June 19th, the goal is to start building parental capacity to work in committee structures, form a parental advisory committee for the site and eventually to form a school advisory council that links with the site council. First, however, the Committee believes there must be plentiful opportunities for families to simply get together, to get to know one another, and to enjoy one another's company. As relationships build and issues emerge, small work groups can be formed to address the issues most relevant to them, as has been the case with the childcare workgroup, and the early identification workgroup.

Summary of Progress to Date

The preceding sections describe and document the progress at ACTT Secord Dawes. The account is summarized below in point form according to the three interconnected strands of 1) Programs, policy and services, 2) Children and parents, and 3) Community.

Programs, Policy, and Services

- Clear structure/s for decision making
- Partnership agreement specifying partner agencies' roles and responsibilities, protocols around decision making and conflict resolution, workplan development and monitoring
- Broadly dispersed leadership and decision-making through subcommittee/workgroup structures
- Alignment of ACTT Secord Dawes efforts with those of the broader community through its participation in the ACTT coalition, as well as EYET Family Resources' role as lead agency for the "early years centres" in two provincial ridings as well as for the Secord Dawes TFD project
- The new "bridging" programs build on and expand existing services
- Enhanced access to services through the provision of cultural linguistic and special needs support
- Links with specialized services (i.e. mental health, housing, settlement services) and public health to meet the needs of children and families with identified challenges
- Improved relationships between childcare, family resource and kindergarten programs with plans for further collaboration through joint planning and professional development activities

Children and Parents

- Increased services for both children and parents through the provision of bridging programs: Saturday and summer school readiness programs, infant stimulation programs and parenting support programs
- Increased access to programs and services for children and families experiencing cultural linguistic barriers and / or having identified special needs/challenges
- Parents' feedback sought on an ongoing basis through participation in programs and activities, through committee work, and through surveys/questionnaires and focus groups
- Parents know more about existing programs and services and how to access them through their participation in the "bridging" programs, through jointly planned information sessions held during kindergarten registration, the annual "Fun Fair", and parenting workshops
- Families have more opportunities to connect with other families / community members through participation in programs and community events (i.e. Community Dinner, Fun Fair)

Community

- Extensive community consultation and outreach shaped the initial approach to service planning and delivery
- Jointly planned kindergarten registration /orientation evening for all incoming kindergarten parents
- Community information sessions to increase awareness of programs and services (i.e. Fun Fair)
- Community events for families (i.e. Community Dinner)
- Subcommittee focus on ways to engage families and the broader community
- Joint work with public health around early identification
- Participation in the ACTT coalition
- Participation in the provincial Early Years Centres planning tables

Evaluation and Knowledge Building

Since the first days of program implementation the ACTT Secord Dawes site embedded evaluation in their planning through their “team debriefing sessions.” The debriefing sessions are built into the daily schedule and reflect the site’s commitment to a critical reflection on practice and the importance of creating a learning environment not only for children and families but the practitioners involved in service delivery. The site seeks parents/families feedback both informally through daily interactions and through written questionnaires following participation in one its programs/community events. In addition, a portion of each Management committee meeting is dedicated to learning about one of its partner organization’s mandate, current array of services, service priorities and gaps with a view to how they are aligned and could be integrated with those of Toronto First Duty and the ACTT coalition. These activities, in addition to the June 2002 community consultation report, inform program planning and decision making. The Site’s Management recently participated in the process of completing the Indicators of Change document. They are taking their assessment of where they are on the indicators of change back to their subcommittees and the “expanded” Early Years Team for further discussion around next steps. The one-on-one interviews with Management Committee members and the Early Years Team, the Management Committee, parent and child focus groups, and learning environment observations conducted by the research team for this case study has stimulated individual and group reflection on progress to date. The site intends to schedule further focus group discussions around the case study profile and the June progress report with members of the Management committee and subcommittees, the Early Years Team and parents. This will engage the site’s community in a reflection on the lessons learned from their own experience thus far, as well as the experiences across TFD sites, and the implications for Secord Dawes’ as well as ACTT’s future planning. The site is emerging as a learning organization engaged in a continuous cycle of planning, implementation, reflection and future planning that focuses on building the community’s capacity to support children and families.

Issues for Discussion

Specific issues that emerged at the Secord Dawes site stem in large part from the fact that up until now the neighbourhood and not the school was considered the “hub” for service delivery. This was due primarily to the school’s crowded conditions and lack of free classroom space/s,

but it also reflects the site's emphasis on building broad community capacity to support children and families.

An issue for this site has been *how to create an integrated, seamless service system in the absence of co-location*. Creating an integrated learning environment is particularly challenging in such a context. However, the Secord Dawes site was beginning to find ways of achieving this through the use of the kindergarten facilities on Saturdays and in the summer, and by involving kindergarten teachers in the planning of the preschool readiness programs. Through subcommittee / workgroup structures and processes they have begun to build relationships among childcare providers, between childcare and kindergarten staff and brought together both groups for joint planning around transitions for the children they have in common. They have initiated planning around early identification that is coordinating public health's efforts with those of childcare, the schools, and mental health agencies. The sharing of cultural linguistic and special needs support across partner agencies is creating further links and building relationships across traditional boundaries. The site is establishing a different route to TFD goals that responds to the specific constraints they face vis a vis the school, as well as the priorities identified by their local community.

For the funders of Toronto First Duty the issue initially was *how much prescription is appropriate?* The expectation was that services integration would look different in each site; at the same time there must be a recognizable consistency in each site's approach. What does the TFD model look like? How will success be determined by the funders? By the evaluators? Is it a set of guiding principles grounded in a particular set of values rather than a fixed/static model? This is an important issue, particularly for a site where the core programs of childcare, parenting support and kindergarten cannot be colocated. The guiding principles reflected in the core elements provide direction to the site, while the indicators of change document identifies specific criteria against which to measure progress in the desired direction. By focusing on principles, TFD acknowledges and honors community contexts and enables sites to respond to site-specific strengths, challenges and priorities, while at the same time ensuring a consistent, recognizable approach to service provision for children and families.

A particular strength of the ACTT Secord Dawes site is its participation in a broader community coalition that focuses on *aligning efforts not just among its partner organizations but outside the partnership itself*. While TFD was not intended to focus on community building in its broadest sense, perhaps the understanding of what constitutes a "learning environment," an "integrated team," and/or what is implied by "seamless access" will change over the course of implementation. *Definitions may evolve, broaden, and deepen*. Already questions have been raised by Secord Dawes Management Committee about what is meant by parent involvement. Is there a difference between parent involvement and parent engagement? Shouldn't parents assume a greater leadership role in the decision making? What are the implications for governance? Finally, isn't greater parent and community engagement necessary to ensure sustainability and expansion? This site's recognition of the importance of community awareness and advocacy, and their active participation in the political process provincially – they were active participants in the "Early Years planning tables" in four provincial ridings – as well as federally – through ACTT's involvement in the development of a federal childcare infrastructure – expands current definitions of parent /community involvement and notions of governance.

These questions emerged in discussions of next steps around parent and community engagement. This site seems particularly sensitive to an important finding that has emerged from the research: services integration requires integration at all levels – policy, administrative, supervisory, and direct service – in order to be successful. To sustain it beyond the pilot stage and bring it to scale requires a multi-level approach that integrates levels of governance (federal, provincial, municipal and local) and integrates services horizontally across systems, agencies, and functions. *What then are the implications for planning around the development of community awareness and support for TFD goals?*

For a list of information and data collected for this case study report, please see Appendix 5. Appendix 3 contains the questionnaires completed by the research team and the ACTT Secord Dawes site to review system progress to date.

BRUCE/WOODGREEN SITE CASE REPORT: JUNE 2003

Overview

The Bruce/WoodGreen Toronto First Duty site, although having suffered a few slowdowns out of the starting gate, has made progress in leaps and bounds over the last few months. Some of the initial delays were the natural consequences of uncertainty about space that dominoed into related uncertainty about programs, children and staff. One slowdown was the unsuccessful but well-intentioned bid to initiate an infant-toddler care program which ultimately required capital funds that were not obtained. The funds had been intended for renovations to either relocate the kindergartens or the library. Following initial excitement about architectural plans, it became clear that the funding was not going to happen as hoped. In spite of barriers around funding, age groups and space, BruceWood/Green has forged ahead along the paths that were possible to pioneer. The program was licensed for care in accordance with the Day Nurseries Act in January 2003. Today, a bustling Early Learning Centre is operating; it offers an integrated early learning environment that brings together the three early streams of kindergarten, child care and parenting supports into one comprehensive, high-quality program. Parents can now access the Early Learning Centre for a full or part day, as needed by individual families; an extended day option will begin in September 2003. The full-day program operates between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. daily. Expanded hours for the parenting program mean increased flexibility and choice for parents as well as greater coordination with other early learning programs such as kindergarten. Symbolically, even the letterhead has become integrated, combining Bruce School with WoodGreen Community Centre and the City of Toronto into a single logo that parents can identify as “Toronto First Duty Bruce/WoodGreen Early Learning Centre”.

The Bruce/WoodGreen Early Learning Centre includes:

- a high-quality learning environment for care, education and parenting to help children prepare for Grade 1
- an integrated staff team comprised of kindergarten teachers, educational assistants, special needs assistant, parenting workers and early childhood educators who work together to develop and deliver early learning activities
- local decision-making
- seamless access to early learning, care and family supports
- parent participation in activities, planning and decision-making

Features of the BWG Early Learning Centre

The BWG Early Learning Centre is a learning environment for young children and their families; there is a special emphasis on literacy development at this site due to the school’s status as a TDSB early literacy school. For a description of environments in the Early Learning Centre, see Appendix 10. Children take part in small and large group activities under the supervision of parenting workers, teachers and early childhood educators who work together.

The Parenting/Early Learning component targets children from birth to six years with their parents and caregivers. Family literacy and numeracy activities are designed to help prepare children for formal schooling. Children and adults take part together in art, play with toys, puzzles and sand, snack time, story time and music. Parent participation means that parents can

more readily make links to the school system; for example, parents receive information about local community resources and are supported in their roles as parents. This part of the program runs Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for the duration of this year and will run from Monday to Thursday beginning in September 2003, with special parenting support and early learning activities on Fridays.

The Kindergarten/Early Learning component targets children from 3.8 to 5 years of age. Activities are designed to develop the early literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, emotional and social skills that children require for formal schooling. The Ontario Kindergarten Program provides the curriculum base and meets the needs of the TDSB and the provincial legislation for education and child care. A range of participation options are being made available. Beginning September 2003, this part of the program will be available on a half-day basis (9 to 11:30 am or 1 to 3:30 pm), on a full-day basis (8:30 am to 4 p.m.) for a cost of \$5/day, and on an extended-day basis (8:30 am to 6 pm) for a cost of \$10/day. A \$2 lunch is available for families who opt not to bring a lunch.

The Bruce School Nutrition Program offers lunch for all Bruce/WoodGreen Early Learning Centre participants and students who attend Bruce Public School. The cost is \$2/day and includes nutritious snacks two times a day. All kindergarten children receive a morning and afternoon snack whether they bring their lunch or participate in the \$2/day program. Staff oversees and monitors lunch items to ensure that Canada Food Guidelines are met.

A proposed summer program is planned to extend the four key principles of the BWG Early Learning Centre: universal access, voluntary/parental choice, high quality services, build on existing community capacity. The program will be open to families in the current program and to new families in the community. The program will be housed in Bruce School in order to familiarize families with the Early Learning Centre site. A goal of the program is help to prepare children and families for the early learning programs at BWG. Other goals include the provision of a safe, stimulating and fun educational program for children 0-6 years, with options for caregiver involvement and the provision of a variety of indoor and outdoor activities to address all areas of development. There will be a focus on literacy and numeracy, the outdoor environment, and community awareness. The summer program is in keeping with the BWG Early Learning Centre vision and principles. The program will offer two main components: An Early Learning Summer Camp Program and an Early Learning Centre Parenting Centre. The camp program will be offered mornings from 9:00 to 12:30, will serve ages 3.6 – 5 years in groups of 15 or fewer. This program will require pre-registration. The parenting centre will be offered as a drop-in program, serving children from 0-6 years who participate with a caregiver.

The summer program will run from July 2-25, Monday through Friday. Cost will be \$15/week, which includes program supplies and a daily snack. Summer program staff will consist of the Site Coordinator, an educational assistant, and a parenting worker.

Recent developments at the BWG site that contributed to progress

The hiring of the Site Coordinator in August 2002 was a significant step in moving ahead with the implementation of the proposal plans. The Bruce School, Parenting and Literacy program

and WoodGreen Community Centre partners had already articulated the vision, set the objectives and had begun the planning including the formation of a Steering Committee, but project movement was somewhat slow until the coordinator was in place. In January 2003, DNA licensing was obtained. In February 2003, there was further rapid development with the arrival of the new school principal who was able to set a number of plans in motion.

Vision

The BWG Early Learning Centre vision builds on a community hub model of service integration and seamless programming. Specifically, it is community-based, bringing together a range of service sectors to ensure that children have opportunities to reach their full potential. This service model provides all young children and their families with education and care programs. The Centre provides a holistic, quality learning environment supporting physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. It provides children with an important early start that will help them to be successful in school and in life. The Centre is committed to sound accountability and evaluation procedures and to sharing demonstrated practices with policy makers, funders, the education system and the community.

Objectives

The Steering Committee has recorded its commitment to the following objectives:

- an integrated early years curriculum that blends kindergarten, child care, and parenting and family literacy
- an integrated early years teaching team, formed from the three early years streams
- an integrated governance model that includes representation from service partners and the parent community
- universal services for all families (not targeted)
- one door access through the Early Learning Centre
- high quality services based on current knowledge
- leading edge model with improved outcomes for children, greater parent satisfaction and superior utilization of resources

Partners

The core partners represent the three major areas of child care, education and parenting and family literacy.

WoodGreen Community Centre of Toronto is the lead agency. For years it has provided leadership in child development, child care, recreation and parent support services in the South Riverdale area. As the lead agency, WG facilitates links between the BWG Early Learning Centre and its users into WG's extensive network of services. Some of these services include adult literacy, ESL training, youth services, employment and housing services, and anti-violence programs. A range of programs for new Canadians and seniors is available to BWG Early Learning Centre families.

Bruce Public School houses the school facilities including kindergarten, early literacy programs, administration and nutrition programs. The school serves a student population of approximately 280 children of whom 65% are in JK-Grade 3. More than half of Bruce's children speaks a language other than English. Approximately 40% speak Chinese, 5% Vietnamese and 9% speak

other first languages. The school receives support through the Early Years Coordinator and receives community liaison through its Student and Community Services Department. The Continuing Education Elementary Programs Department of the TDSB supports family literacy development. Senior administrative personnel of the school provide valuable administrative input and integrated program facilitation.

Parenting and Family Literacy Programs of the Toronto District School Board are celebrating their 22nd year of operation. Bruce School has been fortunate to serve as a site for one of these programs that are universally recognized as promoting family transition to school and promoting “school readiness” as defined within an ecological perspective of families being more ready for school and schools being more ready for families.

Atkinson Foundation. The Atkinson Foundation provides the financial support for the BWG site programs and shares the cost of the evaluation component with the City of Toronto.

Additional partnerships are a current goal of the Management Committee and these may include: Toronto Preschool Speech and Language, Toronto East General Hospital, Toronto Public Health, Toronto Public Library, South Riverdale Community Health Centre, and The Crèche Child and Family Services.

History

The history of BWG grows out of some earlier connections among the partners. For example, WoodGreen Community Centre and the Toronto District School Board had worked together through WoodGreen’s quality child care centres that operate in some TDSB schools. Similarly Bruce Public School housed one of the TDSB’s renowned Parenting and Family Literacy Centres. The current partnership reflects the union of the three streams: child care, early schooling and parenting. Although the child care stream suffered the mischance of lack of funding for the infant/toddler program, it continues to drive a mission of resurrection and has served to unite the Management Committee in a shared understanding of possibilities and limitations for the program.

Interestingly, another form of partnership between TDSB, the Atkinson Foundation and the parents had developed much earlier over the issue of the impending closure of Bruce Public School. A strong parent voice representing Bruce’s school community was further strengthened when the local trustee joined in the battle to keep the school open. A creative bid was made to both the Atkinson Foundation’s and the provincial government’s Early Years Challenge Funds to turn an ominous situation into a hopeful one. In a fortuitous turn of events, despite the province’s rejection of the bid, the Atkinson Foundation was persuaded by the partnership proposal to fund the BWG project, resulting in keeping the school open and in enlivening the school with this early years project.

Reflecting on the BWG history highlights several messages. Perhaps the most notable in this case is “persistence pays off” – thus the shift in direction from threat of school closure to today’s hubbub of early years activity. This persistence represents a community effort, one that bubbled up from a shared mission – there is power in sector representation. Another lesson to be extracted from this history is that although doors may seem closed for the moment, others may

open. Consider the history here: Atkinson made a contingent agreement to fund if the province did. In spite of the unsuccessful bid to the province, Atkinson agreed to go ahead with the project. Applying this message of persistence to the current BWG context, past experience suggests that although the infant/toddler care stream did not materialize when hoped, it may pay to persist in this mission as well.

Out of the Gate

a) Governance

The members of the Management Committee came together for the most part as representatives of their individual organizations. The Director of Childcare Services at WoodGreen Community Centre as lead representative of the lead agency now serves as Chair of the Management Committee, after an initial period in which she and the Manager of the Parenting and Literacy Centre and had served as Co-Chairs. The Site Coordinator was hired by the lead agency and is a member of the Management Committee. The Parenting and Literacy Centre group has two members on the Management Committee, a lead instructor along with the manager of the program. Bruce Public School is represented by the school principal- a new principal whose personal vision and experience is directly in line with the mission of the BWG project and with the TFD initiative as a whole - came into the project in February 2003, following the retirement of the previous principal. Other key members of the Management Committee include the children's services advisor for TDSB, the regional superintendent of education for TDSB, the local trustee, a parent representative, the program manager and children's services consultant, a representative from the research team, and a representative from the funding agency. Transcripts of focus groups and individual interviews with partners suggest that this is an agreeable group who, as a whole, report that they work well together and are able to work through conflicts by talking them through in their meetings. The infant/toddler program was one issue that presented numerous opportunities for conflict but also for unity, in the shared initial excitement then ultimate disappointment. While committee members felt that these discussions might be viewed in retrospect as a significant waste of time that slowed down the progress in other areas, they simultaneously felt that these discussions served other purposes such as fine-tuning the details of their collaborative mission and building interpersonal relationships.

Applying number of meetings as a rough measure of "out of the gate" progress, BWG has come a long way. Meetings take place across various groups and levels, some of which intersect. The Management Committee, described earlier, meets once a month. Some of the larger issues addressed through the Management Committee include planning for the infant/toddler program and addressing the fallout after the initial disappointment, establishment of other integrated programs including care for JK/SK children in the integrated environment, recruitment of community members, hours of operation, communication, and funding. Major accomplishments were the development and approval (February 2003) of Terms of Reference, Governance Framework, and a Partnership Agreement. Recent developments include finalizing plans for the summer program. At the most recent meeting (May 2003), all conditions set by the committee had been met and the summer program is set to begin at the beginning of July. The Committee is currently working on a program statement that will bring together the policies, procedures and practices from WoodGreen, Parenting and Bruce School. This program statement will define the

program framework for the rest of the current year and into September 2003. The Management Committee has produced a communications protocol in order to delineate the steps for addressing media and other publicly-aired issues. Recently TVO produced a special televised feature about Toronto First Duty that was taped at the BWG site. A work group within the Management Committee was established to create a brochure or communications text that can be used in future communications; this brochure will be distributed to the community. The Management Committee has also participated as individual members and as a group in interviews with the research team.

In addition to face-to-face meetings, members of the Management Committee have been regular and frequent virtual communicators. One piece of evidence in this regard is the sheer number of emails among Committee members, for example, regarding the finalization of the Summer Program dates and the communication brochure. The Management Committee members are faithful readers and contributors to the email communications for BWG.

The Program Committee includes members of the Early Learning Centre staff and administration. This committee deals with issues related directly to the integrated learning environment program. This committee meets once a month, although due to the labour unrest in the TDSB, the committee has been unable to meet in recent months. However, the ECE staff, parenting worker and site coordinator participated in two on-site workshops led by a TDSB early years consultant. The workshops provided the staff with a better understanding of the Kindergarten Program, i.e., the Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum program for the kindergarten years. The “front-line” staff meet weekly to discuss issues, share experiences and provide updates on the day-to-day events of the centre. It is anticipated that the two new teachers (hired at the kindergarten level) will become members of this working group and the Program Committee.

A Fund Development Committee was established to discuss funding goals and to put in place a fund-raising effort. Members of this committee have met once.

b) Parents

As previously mentioned, one effort of the Management Committee has been to recruit more parents. Through the focus group and individual interviews with parents, it becomes evident that parent involvement, in the eyes of the parents, has taken a different shape since the First Duty project began at Bruce School. A previously tight-knit community fought to keep the school open. Some of these former advocates and school fund-raisers feel that they were not consulted in early meetings about the implementation of the integrated Early Learning Centre and some parents have opted not to attend parent group meetings any longer. In spite of some of these negative feelings, a smaller group of parents has committed itself to seeing the project through and to offer their services in recruiting new families to the Centre. One of the ongoing issues for parents is child care. Parents would like to have more care and more flexibility in hours of operation. For example, many parents would like to have care for their children who are in Grade 1 and beyond. To illustrate, here is an excerpt from a parent focus group:

“ If you are a stay at home, they want you to bring your kids home for lunch because they don’t

have the supervision of entire school worth of kids. They are asking for parents to volunteer to cover the lunch hours.”

“It doesn’t make sense either, I can leave my younger one here all day in the full day program and then I have to come and pick up my Grade 1 for lunch?”

Another issue comes back to the perceived lack of communication. For example, some parents were under the impression that the Early Learning Centre opportunities should extend beyond the kindergarten years, in order to help families with child care.

“We were asked to send out a questionnaire before we even started up to see what people wanted and it was child care, it wasn’t really infant. We kept hearing there is going to be this great infant and toddler care, not just at our school, but we said we wanted things for older children, for after 4 pm. We need extended until after 5 pm. We need the older children care because we have latch-key kids around...”

“...I think that’s the biggest problem with the whole thing – I mean communication straight out, not just between the teachers. The teachers were confused, for a long time they would come to me and ask me because I was on the committee, but I had no idea.” (Note that this individual was commenting on the early proposal development, and not on the current context).

“When we first started, the first few days, we were told it was a community project and it was community run and community based and we had no idea what they were talking about...all these people came and they knew what was going on because they were from the board and WoodGreen and we were sort of under the idea that our input was going to do everything, that it was going to guide everything and then over time we realized...we didn’t know there were other projects out there and gradually we learned all that.”

It seems a contrast that what began as a grass-roots community effort to save the school now feels “top-down” to many of those same parents. Ironically, the Toronto First Duty project precisely aims to have community-based and community-driven programs for families, yet this very community no longer feels that this is the case. Perhaps there will be a back and forth process between the top-down and bottom-up “feel” to implementation at this site.

Very recently, BWG held a parent information and orientation evening at the school to tell parents about the process of registering their child for the Early Learning Centre, about the range of program opportunities for families and about the research that is underway. The evening was well-attended by existing families and by new families who had not been to the school previously. Parents seemed interested in the continuum of early learning opportunities for their child and in participation opportunities for themselves. There was a buzz of excitement in that group, so perhaps this group will embrace the First Duty Project as something that they can nurture from the ground up, rather than as something that has been changed “on them” or that is already planned.

At the community level, there has been extensive outreach activity involving direct telephone calls and mailings to promote the BWG ELC programs, with particular focus on the September

2003 registration for the half-day, full-day, extended-day, and parenting programs. At the May 27 evening Orientation meeting, presentations were made to families about the programs and about the research activities associated with the First Duty project. The site coordinator is an active liaison among the community, the school, the parenting programs and the lead agency. For example, she participates in community-oriented activities at the school, such as family barbecues and is an official BWG representative on the School Council Committee. The BWG Management Committee recognizes the need for outreach and for additional representation in governance by members of the BWG community and is actively pursuing a number of routes to address that need.

b) The learning environment

BWG's two JK/SK classes have combined in the morning, bringing together two teachers, two education assistants, and two ECE's. The staff is team teaching. The afternoon has only one JK/SK class, thus only one kindergarten teacher is part of the team during that time. A full-day schedule has been created and is implemented during regular school hours on a trial and error basis, from 9 - 4 p.m. It is a common program with the half-day kindergarten. The children are blended in the morning and the full-day children stay for lunch under the care of the ECE staff. Progress is evaluated on an ongoing basis and changes are made accordingly. The daily schedule was created by the kindergarten and ECE teachers together to accommodate the full-day program. A common program sheet has been developed for use in the JK/SK program. This draft is amended as needed.

The Parenting and Family Literacy Program is open from 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. The parenting worker is included in team program periods. The position is supported by TDSB from 9 – 1 four days a week and from project funds for the remaining hours. The PFLP attendance has increased from 20 families to approximately 40 since operating hours were extended. A priority for BWG management is to integrate the parenting and JK/SK programs and some crossflow of children and parents has begun.

There are currently 55 children in the integrated program who are registered for JK/SK one half day and 15 full-day children remain in the program for the other half day. The ELC is licensed for 48 children although only 15 full-day additional spaces have been allocated to date in order to work through initial details with a smaller number of children. The cost is \$5 per day plus \$2 per day for lunch (lunch is optional).

At this time, the original plans for child care including the infant/toddler program are on hold due to space limitations and lack of funding. Plans were to start up in September 2003; however this has been changed to September 2004 in the hope that the Fund Development Committee will be successful in obtaining support.

Detailed descriptions of two areas of the Early Learning Centre at BWG are available in Appendix 6: the first is a description of the Parenting and Family Literacy space in its current location. The second is a description of the integrated K/Care environment.

Summary of Progress to Date

The descriptions above document the progress at Bruce WoodGreen. The account detailed above is summarized below in point form according to the three interconnected strands of the process and impacts involving 1) Program and policy, 2) Child and family, and 3) Community.

Programs, Policy, and Services

- Organization building with meetings of the Management Committee, the Program Committee, the Staff Committee and the newly-formed Fund Development Committee
- Agreements/policies/protocols
- Expanded services with integrated programs and expanded Parenting and Family Literacy Centre hours
- licensing for care under DNA
- Integrated Learning Environment; process established and some service implementation
- Good shared leadership across wide range of sector representation
- Immediate plans to develop a program statement that will bring together the policies, procedures and practices from WG, Parenting and Bruce School (TDSB). This will define the program framework for the balance of the year and for September 2003

Child and Parents

- An active outreach effort is underway to bring more parents into governance representation roles and involvement in programs
- Information was gathered from focus groups and questionnaires with groups of parents
- A School Council parent representative contributes to the Management Committee
- Efforts to implement an infant/toddler program were unsuccessful due to funding. This issue will be revisited in future management meetings
- Children are beginning to receive integrated programming. JK/SK children may attend for full-day care and education.
- Implementation of summer programs in June 2003
- Parents will be participating in a school council Barbecue Night at which the Site Coordinator will be doing outreach to the community
- Parents have been invited to a FD potluck lunch that includes the kindergarten programs and parenting programs
- Parents and children have access to longer Parenting and Literacy Centre hours

Community

- Extensive outreach to community (phone calls, mailings)
- Orientation Evening at school
- Site coordinator attending parent meetings and Community Barbeque
- Contacts have been made with Public Health and the Creche regarding future involvement in FD

Bruce/WoodGreen Knowledge Building and Evaluation

The evaluation team is describing the process and outcomes of BWG's integration and innovation, as well as contributing to the accountability of the project. The research aims to foster reflection and understanding that will improve the process of integration. More

importantly, the Bruce/WoodGreen Management Committee and staff are contributing to the evaluation process and to their own reflection through individual and group interviews and by reviewing the progress reports of their own site. The Management Committee is currently in the process of completing the Indicators of Change assessment. An initial working group has examined the report and a facilitated meeting is scheduled for this month. The document will be discussed in detail and goals will be established for the future.

Is the Bruce/WoodGreen First Duty site a learning organization?

The partners of Toronto First Duty Bruce/WoodGreen Early Learning Centre have experienced rapid growth in recent months following a period of slowdowns caused by funding and licensing issues. Now that the ball is rolling, there is opportunity to reflect on what has happened to date, to consider current realities, and to plan for the future. Certainly the research and evaluation has provided a strong forum for this kind of reflection. Partners have had opportunities to consider together what they have learned, primarily through joint focus groups in collaboration with the research team. Prior to that, the order of the day could be summarized in three words: business, business, business.

An example of this emerging learning organization is the plan to reflect on the policies, procedures and practices that have been implemented to date at BWG. This reflection will cycle into a program statement, consolidating the state of present knowledge and move it into the next stage, for example, detailing the logistics for the integrated program (schedules, groupings, environment). Through a continuous cycle of planning, implementation, reflection and further planning, we see the emergence of a learning organization. The now-famous motto of “Ready, Fire, Aim” (Fullan), applies well to the way the BWG learning organization succeeds at change.

Issues for discussion

The following represent a few general issues that emerge from the observations, interviews and focus groups. They are ordered here in terms of contrasts – true “issues” that lend themselves to questions, reflection and perhaps action down the road.

Not fast enough/Too fast. For whom is progress not fast enough? For whom is it too fast? Do these contrasting pictures co-exist at BWG? It is not difficult to imagine that “top” level administrators and funders may see progress as not fast enough. Were the expectations for progress unrealistic from the start? What would lead people to believe that progress should/could have been faster? What slowed things down? For whom is progress too fast? One can well imagine that for front-line staff who did not choose to be involved from the start in Toronto First Duty, a sudden edict to open one’s environment to other children and adults, to alter one’s way of doing things (which, by the way, had been quite successful over the years), might be a somewhat stressful prospect. Practitioners would like it to slow down, to have time for workshops, for visits to other sites, for meetings among all front-line staff, for quiet reflection and planning.

- Top-down/Bottom-up. The parent and staff focus groups and interviews spoke most strongly to this contrast. On the one hand, parents began a movement in a grass-roots effort to save the

school, certainly a bottom-up bubbling-up of community spirit. When Toronto First Duty brought on Bruce/WoodGreen as a pilot site, there was some pressure from “the top” to take action. This perceived top-down period of time led some parents to leave their grass-roots organization and left some staff feeling as though there was no consultation nor support for their participation. The questions remain, is this the natural result of the process and will it always be the case that there is a dance between top-down and bottom-up integration? If yes, what can the BWG partners do to facilitate the process in the future?

- Kindergarten accountability/Care accountability. While certainly true at BWG, it is also the case at other sites that the issues of accountability are perceived to be different for kindergarten and for child care. School staff view kindergarten teachers as more accountable than ECEs due to pressures on the primary staff to prepare children initially for Grade 1 and ultimately for Grade 3 EQAO tests. In contrast, ECEs view themselves as more accountable due to licensing and inspection pressures. When the two sectors merge into one environment, all staff feel the impact of accountability for both – the environment must meet regulations for care and the program must meet outcome goals. If kindergarten children are in the care of the EC, then licensing requirements dictate procedures, whereas if they are in the care of the kindergarten teacher, then curriculum expectations dictate procedures. Staff at BWG is certainly grappling with these issues. What creative solutions could be enacted to address these concerns?

- Too many meetings/No time to meet. On the one hand, some BWG Management Committee interviews suggest that perhaps there are too many meetings for busy people and that these meetings should be more than updates. Meetings should be a forum to put forward ideas. In contrast, other Management members feel that there is not enough time to simply discuss ideas, as a quorum has to be reached in order to vote on policies and procedures. Program/front-line staff report that they need to meet more often, that due to different schedules, there is not enough time for meetings. What is the happy medium regarding meetings at BWG? What can be done through email? What needs to be done in meetings? How can time be best used in meetings? How can people find time to meet – what supports need to be in place?

- Integration=parts/Integration=whole. In response to the question, “What does integration mean to you?” during the one-on-one interviews, there seemed to be a contrast in opinions. In broad terms, this contrast might be viewed as those that reflect the parts and those that reflect the whole. An example of “parts” is viewing integration as pieces of a puzzle that are assembled in separate areas or clusters. These clusters can operate somewhat independently of the whole yet still be under the umbrella organization of the “big picture”. Thus, having child care children visit a kindergarten class several times a week and get to know the ECE teacher, the kindergarten teacher and perhaps an educational assistant would be considered integration to some. An example of “whole” is viewing integration as the complete assimilation of environments, roles and sectors. At the heart of this issue seems to be the individual’s interpretation and ability to make it happen. Thus for practitioners a “parts” approach seems more do-able. For management, a “whole” approach fits the vision. How will the partners at BWG address this challenge? Should everyone have the same view of integration?

For a list of information and data collected for this case study report, please see Appendix 6.

Report on Activities

Data Collection and Research Liaison for the Period of January to June 2003

Participant Observation. At the project-wide level, members of the Research and Development Team attended the Steering Committee meetings and the Project Coordinators meetings. In addition, team members attended meetings of each of the site management or steering committees. Documents were also collected from these meetings, including minutes and reports from subcommittees and working groups.

Site Information Sessions. Research and Development Team members met with parents at each of the sites and provided information about the project evaluation. These meetings also provided an occasion for sites to inform parents about TFD and the local programs. Theresa Griffin, the Community Research Coordinator, also conducted information sessions for several site management committees and curriculum / program sub-committees as part of their regular meetings. In addition, she also presented information sessions at several Project Coordinators meetings and at a Lead Agency Head's meeting (a special meeting for that purpose).

Program Environment Observations. At each site two environments were observed by two observers using different instruments. One measure, the ECERS-R, is a commonly used rating scale of environmental dimensions and the other measure is a detailed description of time, space, people, and materials in the program.

Child Focus Groups. At 4 of the 5 sites, groups of children ranging in number from 6 to 8 took part in group discussions of their experiences in TFD and were given the opportunity to draw pictures and take photographs representing their views on the programs. The child focus group at the fifth site is pending.

Focus Groups. Two project-wide focus groups were held. In January, Research and Development Team members facilitated a focus group with TFD Steering Committee members examining issues from the January 2003 Report. In May, team members facilitated a focus group with the Project Coordinators.

Case Study Data Collection. In the two case study sites, ACTT Secord Dawes and Bruce WoodGreen, additional data were collected from management, front-line staff and from parents (See Appendices 5 & 6 for details). A parent focus group and a management focus group were held at each site. In addition, more than a dozen individual interviews were held with staff and management at each site.

Toronto First Duty Indicators of Change

The R&D Team's January 2003 Report and related TFD Steering Committee discussion sharpened questions about what the implementation of Toronto First Duty should actually look like. The lead agencies asked the funders to clarify specific expectations. The five core elements needed more detail and description. Also the group wanted to have some benchmarks that would allow the Steering Committee and each site to monitor progress in attaining the goals of the overall project and the goals of each site.

The Indicators of Change grew out of this and subsequent discussions to support the development of Toronto First Duty. The indicators and their related benchmarks define the funding partners' vision and expectations. It is not an evaluation tool. There are no right or wrong answers. It will not be used as an audit of the use of funds. Rather, the tool is meant to be a support to planning and priority setting at the sites. It is also intended to feed discussions at the broader Steering Committee.

The Indicators of Change document, and the revised worksheet template, are included in as Appendices 2 & 3. The sites will use the tool to review progress to date and identify goals that they wish to achieve by June 2005. In September 2003, the Steering Committee will receive a summary report of this work.

Learning Environment Development Activities

The curriculum development activities have shifted to the site level over the past six months. Sites have supported opportunities for collaboration among front line staff and partners who are able to offer specific areas of expertise. The TDSB Early Years staff have participated in on-going discussions and provided their expertise in staff development activities at each of the sites. The individual site reports highlight some of these activities.

The work-to-rule situation at the TDSB during the past few months did limit the possibilities for kindergarten teacher participation in these activities and forced the cancellation of a cross-site frontline workshop. However, it is anticipated that this will be rescheduled to the end of September, 2003 with an emphasis on topics that the staff and coordinators at the sites have identified (literacy and numeracy, working with parents and team building).

Development of the First Duty Intake and Tracking System

Children Services Division of the City of Toronto has developed an information system for intake and tracking of First Duty participation. Data from the system will be used for administration and accountability purposes by project management. Anonymous data records will also be made available to the research team to help answer evaluation questions that require information about demographics of users and patterns of use across programs. One meeting of a working group on the intake and tracking system has been held. It included members of the system design team, project managers, and the research team. The working group will develop a

list of in-depth questions to be answered with intake and tracking data; these questions will be consistent with the general questions of the evaluation plan. In the working group meeting Steve Dunets of the Children Services Division provided a report on the development of the system and first steps in implementation at the early leader site. An updated version of the report appears below.

The screens to record the standard intake form are now coded and tested. Currently we are finalizing security arrangements and testing throughput speed from the office at York Early Years-Wilcox site. The intake screens follow the format of the paper intake form (see 5 attached pictures in Appendix 9). Currently one developer is working full time on First Duty.

The project is divided into 3 phases. Phase one, now complete, is the detailed database design and the form intake screen. The database design includes tables to track program schedules and multiple registrations per family member. Once the form intake screen is functioning satisfactorily at YEY- Wilcox, it will be installed at the other First Duty sites. Backlog and new intake forms can then be keyed in. Phase two is a detailed attendance tracking and reporting system. For a given session, an attendance sheet with names will be printed at the site office. Actual attendance can be recorded through a simple check off process, reducing the workload on staff. Phase 3 is the reporting and analysis of collected information. Family demographics, program descriptions, attendance and participation history will be extracted from the City of Toronto database, converted to an anonymous format, and transferred to the research team databases. Once the process is set up, it can be repeated for new families and new programs. Summary reports will also be produced that can be run directly from the City database.

Dissemination

Inside the project, Research Team members led an information session for parents on First Duty and the evaluation process at each of the sites. These sessions served the purposes of outreach and increasing awareness of both the project and the evaluation activities that involve some parents and children. Parents in attendance represented considerable cultural diversity; some had used First Duty services and some had not. Dan Keating also met with the Corvette Steering Committee in April to review the Community EDI report and discuss its implications for planning and priorities. He is available to participate in similar meetings at the other sites.

Outside the project, Theresa Griffin, Jan Pelletier, and Carl Corter gave papers (Griffin, 2003; Corter & Pelletier, 2003), which included preliminary reports on First Duty, at the April meetings of the American Education Research Association in Chicago (Cortier, & Pelletier, 2003; Griffin, 2003). They also participated in a series of meetings organized by the AERA interest group in Schools and Community Services for Children and Families, and talked with colleagues from Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the U.S. who are engaged in research on similar projects.

The June 2nd launch of the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at OISE/UT and the Centre for Early Childhood Development at George Brown College highlighted the Toronto First Duty research initiative as an example of community partnership research.

Summary Themes

The following four themes summarize findings from the data on implementation of program and organizational change in the Toronto First Duty project over the last six months. The themes also draw on the literature on organizational change and practice change. They focus on the program and policy strand of the project but also intertwine with the child/family and community strands.

- Building Relationships:** The importance of taking the time to build relationships among and between practitioners, partner agencies, and community members is a consistent theme that surfaces throughout TFD. Tensions around professional work and identities ease when people get to know one another, become familiar with and understand professional philosophies, mandates, constraints, roles / responsibilities, as well as the programs and services offered by each partner agency. This requires time for sharing information, opportunities for discussion, time to meet and plan together and to collectively reflect on vision, values, goals, actions taken and outcomes as they occur. Time for these activities must be built into daily schedules, team and committee meetings, be reflected in roles and responsibilities, be supported through professional development activities, work incentives, hiring and promotion practices, as well as results and performance accountability measures. Taking the time to build relationships is critical to the development of service integration and requires attention to collaborative processes.

- Defining Service Integration:** Sites have been uncertain about what service integration would /should look like in practice. Views varied within and between sites. One-on-one interviews with site management committee members and practitioners reflected varying individual views of service integration. The need for clarity around the TFD definition of service integration was raised following the January 2003 progress report. Sites wanted to know what were the funders' expectations around service integration? What criteria would be used to evaluate service integration efforts? How prescriptive is the funders' definition of service integration? Is it flexible enough to respond to site-specific contexts? For example, can a site/community create a seamless, integrated system of service delivery in the absence of co-location of core services? In response, the "TFD Indicators of Change" were developed to define the core elements of service integration and to specify a continuum of indicators along each of the core elements. This document clarifies the TFD definition of service integration and is being used by TFD sites as an assessment and planning tool. It provides direction to action planning and clear indicators against which to measure progress.

- Focusing on Results:** Having a clear definition of service integration is facilitating the evolving consensus about desired results. Using the indicators documents as an assessment and planning tool in combination with the regular research and evaluation reports facilitates this focus on results. Research points to the importance of collectively analyzing outcomes as they occur to determine whether the desired results are being accomplished. All the players need to be involved in this process – funders, policymakers, managers/ agency heads, supervisors, practitioners and parents / community residents – particularly those most directly involved in

implementation (practitioners/service providers) and those programs / services are intended to serve (children and families). Field observations and meeting minutes confirm this. The discussion / reflection stimulated by the regular progress reports and the use of the indicators documents is leading to action planning that focuses on results. Practitioners, particularly in the lead pilot site, are questioning the results of their programming efforts on children and families. Are efforts leading to a more inclusive, comprehensive system of services. Do the services respond better to families/ needs? Do they fail to respond to some families' needs? What could be done differently to enable them to be more inclusive and effective? As practitioners identify the factors that facilitate and impede planning, they are identifying barriers that need removing and the supports required to implement more flexible, responsive programs and services. These issues are in turn shared with the site Management Committees and the Steering Committee and point to systemic policy issues which require an alignment of efforts at the legislative and policy level in order to move forward and to sustain service integration beyond the pilot stage. The focus on results requires mechanisms / processes that facilitate communication and feedback vertically across levels of the service system (hierarchy), that is between front line, supervisory and senior staff, policy makers and funders, as well as horizontally across functions/ agencies/ systems. This contributes to the alignment of efforts and creates the synergy research suggests is critical to the development of a seamless, integrated service system. Policies, programs and services must support one another and ensure a consistent, congruent approach

•Community Awareness and Support: An effective service system acknowledges and honors community contexts and enables sites to respond to site-specific strengths, challenges and priorities as determined by the community involved. Sites vary in the extent to which they have consulted with families and community residents. This is reflected in individual sites' community consultation processes/reports and in the feedback from parent focus groups. All of the sites have flagged the need for greater parent/community involvement in shaping the evolving service system. Questions have been raised about the meaning of parent involvement. Is there a difference between parent involvement and parent engagement? Should parents assume a greater role in decision making? What are the implications for governance? Isn't greater parent and community engagement necessary to ensure sustainability and expansion of TFD efforts? These are as yet unanswered questions. However, identifying these issues as priorities to be addressed indicates a belief that more emphasis must be placed on parent/ community engagement.