



Toronto First Duty
Early learning & care for every child

*Informing Toronto's
Vision for Children*

**Toronto First Duty Phase 2
Research Progress Report:
December 2007**

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Overview

The general purpose of Toronto First Duty (TFD) Phase 2 is to promote system change through continuing research and dissemination. Is the TFD program blueprint informing a transformation of early childhood service delivery in Toronto, in Ontario and elsewhere? The TFD2 Research Team is working to answer this and related questions during the period January 2006 to December 2008 with support from the TFD partners, the Atkinson Charitable Foundation (ACF), the City of Toronto (City), and the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). This progress report covers research activities in the year 2007.

Over the last year we have focused the research on three areas of investigation springing from the TFD project. The first is an analysis of the continuing policy impact and dissemination of findings, ideas and tools from Phase 1 of the TFD project (2001-2005). The focus of this analysis is on how “Toronto First Duty has informed Toronto’s Best Start” (Toronto Best Start Network, 2006) and on how it can contribute to the developing provincial planning for full day learning for kindergarten-age children. This includes a description of the City of Toronto’s leadership of the Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children initiative, the continuing contribution of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), and the Atkinson Charitable Foundation’s leadership in dissemination of the TFD model and in policy change. Through the work of the TFD partners with support from the TFD2 research team, national and international attention to the TFD model continued through 2007.

The second area of investigation is the continuing case study of the Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre (BWELC). The site, one of the original five demonstration sites in TFD Phase 1 (TFD1), continues to operate as a prototype site with designated funding through June 2008 to continue the development of the TFD delivery model—integrating child care, kindergarten, and family support programs into a single program. The case study analysis shows the remarkable value of BWELC as a dissemination platform for TFD and prototype supporting Best Start implementation, but it also reveals continuing challenges to effective integration within the current systemic constraints and silos.

The third area of investigation during the past year is in-depth analysis of service integration carried out in two studies. The first is a descriptive case study of the implementation of an alternative model of integration, where the child care centre is the site for integration with kindergarten. This contrasts with the TFD model, where the site for integration was the school. The alternative care-based integration site is a joint venture between the TDSB at Huron School and the UofT’s Early Learning Centre (ELC-HS). Using dimensions of integration found to be important in the TFD Phase 1 study, we employed key informant interviews and program observations to describe how integration was working over the first year of implementation. This study speaks to the issue of where integration can take place and how different locations bring benefits and challenges with the new ways of operating. The study shows that good quality programs combining kindergarten and care can be mounted in a high quality child care centre where parents are keen for this model.

Another in-depth study explored how integrated child care and kindergarten affect the daily lives of parents and children. This study used a quasi-experimental design to compare samples from two TFD1 sites, BWELC and York Early Years-Wilcox (YEY-W), with samples at matched community sites where child care and kindergarten are not co-located. The report breaks new ground in examining how family stress and daily hassles relate to different ways early childhood services are offered. The findings show that integration of services with combined kindergarten and care reduces stresses for parents and leads to a more unified experience for children.

The report concludes with TFD2 Research Team plans for 2008 that connect to the aims of the TFD partners and to Toronto's Best Start and Vision for children. The work on these plans, as well as other activities of the team, is supported by the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at the University of Toronto.

Policy Impact and Dissemination of the TFD model

Local and Provincial Policy

From Pilot Project to System Change: Assessing Toronto First Duty's Policy Change Effort. Toronto First Duty began as a partnership between the City of Toronto and the Toronto District School Board, with support from the Atkinson Charitable Foundation. The Toronto First Duty partnership tested early childhood service integration but the prime goal was to influence public policy; to bridge the disconnect between child care, education and family support programs; and to demonstrate the advantages of comprehensive, universal service provision to policy makers, families and communities.

During Phase 1 (2002 - 2005) the TFD concept was tested at five representative sites. Neighbourhood schools partnered with community organizations to demonstrate the core features of service integration: integrated governance; seamless access; parent participation and an integrated early learning environment planned and delivered by a staff team. Over a three year period the sites documented and showcased both the successes and challenges.

The purpose of Toronto First Duty (TFD) was to test-drive new public policy for integrated early childhood programs that offered early learning and care for every child (Corter et al., 2002). Prior to the TFD initiative, numerous provincial reports have recommended moving to an integrated service delivery system for early childhood programs (for example, McCain & Mustard, 1999; Ontario Premier's Council on Health, Social Justice & Well-being, 1993; Royal Commission on Learning, 1994; Ontario Ministry of Community & Social Services, 1990).

Toronto First Duty was a made-in-Canada strategy for meeting the early learning and care needs of young children. The project aimed to combine kindergarten, child care and parenting supports into a single comprehensive program for children under 6 years of age. The design for the strategy drew on the international literature on effective early childhood programs, as well as on local reports and experiences. Local leaders used their on-the-ground expertise to provide senior governments with a blueprint of how to do integrated early childhood program delivery.

Then and Now: Context and Policy Environment. The political and policy environment that spawned the Toronto First Duty initiative in 1999 has changed. School boards, public health units and municipal governments were still adjusting to the human resource, administrative and financial implications of amalgamations into larger bureaucracies. In 1999, the Early Years Study (McCain & Mustard, 1999) reported to then Premier Harris, calling for a system of early child development and parenting centres. In 2000, the federal government announced its Early Child Development Agenda and the transfer of \$2.2 billion to provincial governments for early childhood programs over five years. The Harris government responded to the Early Years Study with the announcement of Ontario Early Years Centres to be established in every provincial electoral riding under the management of regional provincial offices. Family resource programs, recently

transferred from the provincial government to municipalities, faced closures as funding shifted to Ontario Early Years Centres in addition to new funding from the federal government's contribution. *Healthy Babies, Healthy Children*, managed by local public health units, continued to expand. Early child development funding was made available for an early literacy initiative, data analyst coordinators, and early intervention initiatives. At the same time, Junior Kindergarten was an optional program for local district school boards who were scrambling to make ends meet with the new provincial funding formula. Licensed child care programs were shut out of any additional funding allocations from the federal programs and communities and municipalities struggled to maintain existing programs.

The election of the Liberal government in 2003 and again in 2007 has brought shifts in policy directions. It established the Ministry for Children and Youth Services and moved child care programs, Early Years Centres, special needs resourcing, *Healthy Babies Healthy Children* and Preschool Speech and Language into the new ministry along with other child and youth programs. The federal government's Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) built on the earlier federal/provincial/territorial Early Child Development Agreement with funds designated for use in licensed child care programs, and the promise of additional federal funding was announced in the October 2004 federal government Throne Speech. In November 2004, the provincial government introduced the Best Start strategy and allocated the new federal dollars to expand licensed child care programs, particularly those located in schools, as a central component of the Best Start strategy. Local Best Start Networks with representation from municipalities, district school boards, public health, provincial government and community agencies began to develop plans to establish networks with improved levels of service and integration. However, the subsequent change of the federal government pulled back the latest round of funding for child care and left Ontario's Best Start initiative without any further new funding.

In November 2007, the provincial government announced it would proceed with its election promise to establish full-day early learning programs for 4- and 5-year-old children. The election announcement took place at Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre. The Early Learning Advisor will prepare an implementation plan for the new initiative.

The Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children Network is a now a partnership of 36 members representing two provincial ministries, four school boards, the City of Toronto, Toronto Public Health, representatives from the Francophone and Aboriginal communities, and special needs and community organizations. The Toronto Best Start Terms of Reference (Toronto Best Start Network, 2005) and the Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children (Toronto Best Start Network, 2006) envision a redesign of programs and services for young children with an emphasis on increased collaboration among kindergarten, child care and family support programs in Phase 1 and the development of clusters of services, providing a broader range of options for families in phase 2 (Toronto Best Start Network, 2007).

Theory of Change. Thinking about the potential benefits of a new policy approach or

program, such as the TFD model and its applicability to new contexts, is enhanced by being clear about the “theory of change” underlying the model. A theory of change in policy research explains how and why a program or project is expected to lead to policy changes (Guthrie, Louie, & Foster, 2006). It identifies concrete, desired program and policy changes and provides a roadmap to guide those changes. Along the same lines but at a different level of analysis, thinking about why programs work or fail is also enhanced by being clear about the theory of how a program works. This means being clear on the *processes* that connect programs to outcomes (Pelletier & Corter, 2006). In particular, how are child and family environments changed to support better developmental outcomes; what are the day-to-day changes for children and parents? For example, TFD1 research suggested that the model may support children’s development via integrated staff teamwork improving program environments and by increased parental efficacy and involvement in children’s learning (Corter, Patel, Pelletier, & Bertrand, 2008). However, to get to the point where the TFD model can operate effectively across communities and beyond a few demonstration sites will require system change (Corter et al., 2006) and broader theories of policy change and implementation. System change requires re-jigging related public policies, including funding and regulatory frameworks. This usually implies horizontal and vertical realignment of policies and practices.

There are two basic approaches to system change: incremental change and transformational change. In incremental change, the operating system is adjusted, tweaked, and expanded, but remains fundamentally the same at the core. There may be new software and some enhancements to the hardware but everyone is still working with the same core hardware - that is, the same core funding and regulatory frameworks. Transformational change requires a jump to a new core operating system. It is a jolt that transforms operations.

The goal of TFD was to demonstrate a prototype that illustrates transformational change on the ground and pushes for transformational change in public policies related to early childhood programs. “Early learning and care for every child” is the central goal. The blending of existing resources and programs is the process to achieve the goal.

Benchmarks: The Toronto First Duty Indicators of Change. Theories about change and process leading to successful implementation of new models are not enough; monitoring and measures are also needed. In TFD1, the Indicators of Change was a tool developed to identify specific integration benchmarks for each of the key elements (local governance, seamless access, early learning environment, early years staff team and parent participation) that define the service integration goals of Toronto First Duty model. The model continues to underpin our research approach. It also informs Toronto’s Best Start Plan and is being used in other Best Start planning tables in the province. An outline of the integration dimensions is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Toronto First Duty Indicators of Change
Benchmarking dimensions of early childhood service integration

1. Local Governance

- 1.1 Program Mandate, Policies & Practices
 - Establish a single governance structure that is responsible for financial, human resource, and operational decisions.
 - Use joint program statement for the common early learning and care program that meets all relevant requirements.
- 1.2 Service Planning & Monitoring
 - Carry out common service planning and monitor use of early learning and care program within the defined catchment area.
- 1.3 Allocation of Financial, Space & Program Resources
 - Manage and administer a pooled funding envelope, space and program resources for the common early learning & care program.
- 1.4 Human Resources
 - Use common human resource policies and practices for the early childhood staff team.

2. Seamless Access

- 2.1 Capacity
 - Provide access to a common early learning and care program for all children 0–6 and their parents in the catchment area, regardless of parents’ work status, family SES, age, or special needs.
 - Have links to early intervention, community health, and social services in a common program that are accessible as needed
- 2.2 Child Care Provision & Affordability
 - Expand provision of flexible nonparental care through a common early learning and care program that accommodates the changing needs of families in the area with young children 0–6 years.
 - Use Support integrated early learning and care with base funding and standard, affordable fees for some of the programs.
- 2.3 Intake, Enrollment & Attendance
 - Use a common intake form and attendance system for all common early learning and care programs.
 - Monitor utilization to ensure participation includes all groups within the community.

3. Early Learning Environment

- 3.1 Curriculum Framework & Pedagogical Approach
 - Establish and implement program philosophy, goals, and objectives that support children’s early development as part of common early learning & care program.
- 3.2 Daily Routines and Schedules
 - Use a single schedule for a common early learning and care program with a variety of activities available to young children and their families.
- 3.3 Use of Space
 - Redefine combined common early learning and care program space by its function, rather than the program operator.
- 3.4 Children’s Development & Progress
 - Use a common mechanism/approach to track children’s development, identify difficulties, and provide early intervention where appropriate.
- 3.5 Program Quality
 - Use a common mechanism to monitor & ensure program quality.

4. Early Childhood Staff Team

- 4.1 Program Planning & Implementation
 - Plan and deliver consolidated activities in the common early learning and care program.
- 4.2 Behaviour Guidance/ Child Management
 - Carry out common behaviour guidance protocol.
- 4.3 Roles & Responsibilities
 - Establish common roles and responsibilities for the early childhood staff team.
 - Revise job descriptions of the early childhood staff team and supervisors to reflect expectations.
- 4.4 Staff Development
 - Provide common staff development for combined early childhood team.

5. Parent Participation

- 5.1 Parent Input & Participation in Programs
 - Establish a common approach to ensure meaningful parental input into programming decisions.
 - Encourage regular parent participation in all aspects of the common early learning and care program.
- 5.2 Parenting Capacity
 - Involve parents in regular, ongoing activities that benefit parenting abilities
- 5.3 Relationships with Families
 - Establish common policies and practices that build responsive, reciprocal relationships with families.

Methodology for Tracking TFD's role in Toronto's Best Start. During 2007, we followed TFD impact on local and provincial policy via a focus group, key informant interviews, and monitoring the development of the Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children Survey and its initial findings.

A focus group was held at the meeting of Best Start: Toronto Vision for Children, Implementation Steering Committee on June 14, 2007. Four interviews were held with key informants from the ACF, the City and TDSB in June 2007. Questions for the focus group and interviews included:

1. How have the research findings and resources to date, and your experiences with Toronto First Duty influenced the implementation of Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children?
2. Is the goal of Best Start Plan/Toronto First Duty to transform the early childhood system?
3. Are the priorities for innovation and further integration at Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre useful to the ongoing implementation of Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children?
4. What research questions are important to answer in implementation and in further "innovation" related to Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children?

The Toronto Best Start Survey was developed by the Toronto Best Start Implementation Steering Committee in the spring of 2007 to assess the level of collaboration among child care centres, kindergarten and family supports across Toronto (Toronto Best Start Network, 2007). The design of the survey built on the TFD Indicators of Change and focused on two key elements: high quality early learning and care environments and early years staff teams. The survey questions were based on modifications to the Indicators of Change benchmarks and continuum for these two elements. They were customized for child care centres, schools and family support programs. The questions were designed to find out how early childhood staff (that is, early childhood educators, family support staff and kindergarten teachers) work together, how space is shared and how programs are planned and delivered. Analysis was meant to show each sector is collaborating with the other two sectors and with other services.

In total, 1796 surveys were distributed to elementary schools, licensed child care centres and family support programs. The surveys were distributed to school principals, child care supervisors and family support program coordinators/directors. It was sent electronically to schools and available online or in hard copy to child care centres and family support programs. Overall results were summarized by City staff and show low levels of baseline integration across program types (kindergarten, care and family support) with some pockets of higher levels of working together; a summary report is available online (http://www.toronto.ca/children/bs/bs_survey_report_final.pdf).

Findings on Dissemination of Lessons Learned

Participants in the focus group, key informant interviews and the construction of the Best Start survey identified the Indicators of Change as a foundation tool for monitoring progress towards integration and the development of strategies to support progress along the continuum. The Indicators of Change framework was the source for the TDSB Working Together documents and is being used by the Toronto Catholic District School Board as well. The Indicators also provided the organizational framework for the TFD Guide to Service Integration. TFD provided support, knowledge and leadership to Best Start/inner city sites at TDSB sites. Examples of what can continue without additional resources were frequently highlighted. The research findings related to staff satisfaction during Phase 1 of TFD are seen by informants as important in getting teachers, ECEs and parenting/family support staff to the table.

The Best Start Community Engagement presentations used the TFD Indicators of Change from TFD to reinforce the continuum from co-location to integration. Although the final goal of integration as outlined in the benchmarks may not always be attainable, the Indicators pointed to steps along the way that were doable.

The TFD sites are viewed as resources and early leaders in moving forward on the Best Start initiatives. They provide examples and leadership to other sites attempting to bring together different early childhood programs. TFD, particularly Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre, is a practical example of sustainable integration that is possible within the boundaries of current public policies related to the delivery of early childhood programs. Examples of coordination and collaboration continue at the four other TFD sites. The Toronto Best Start Implementation Steering Committee is looking to BWELC for the next steps in how to push forward on further integration, particularly related to curriculum and parent participation.

Institutional Innovation

Within institutions, changes towards the delivery of integrated services vary.

- City of Toronto - The Children's Services Division has championed the Toronto Best Start Network and used the management committee structure of TFD as a blueprint for the establishment of the Implementation Steering Committee. The City's leadership in the TBS network continues the "knowledge building approach" of TFD1 in which partners come together regularly to share information (e.g., the TBS survey) and ideas and to discuss next steps. Numerous reports and references to TFD are available on the City of Toronto website. A search on the site lists 131 documents or pages referring to "Toronto First Duty" including reports to Council and the Community and Recreation committee. The City has also developed a working together section that will expect child care centres to collaborate and work towards joint management and staff teams, however, criteria for movement towards integration have not yet been fully incorporated into the City of Toronto's Operating Criteria.
- Atkinson Charitable Foundation: The initial \$1 million investment in TFD was an experiment in grant-making. Rather than continue with individual grants to early childhood programs, the foundation decided to consolidate its resources, leverage others and focus the funding on initiatives that could demonstrate a transformation in

the delivery of early childhood programs and that could influence significant policy changes. The ACF has worked to strategically disseminate findings at the local, provincial and national level.

- Toronto District School Board: During TFD Phase 1, the TDSB established the Early Years team, Early Years policy and Early Years Advisory Committee (which includes external and internal representatives). In addition to many organizational and policy changes to support the early years, TFD1 also contributed to the TDSB's integration of early years programs (kindergarten, child care and parenting centres), a central part of their early years vision. The TDSB is monitoring a number of integration "experiments" and models, including 13 Best Start sites, the Toronto First Duty sites, 3 Inner City Model Schools, and 4 Kindergarten in Child Care programs. The latter group includes the Huron-Early Learning Centre program at the University of Toronto described later in this report.
- Other Institutions: Community agencies that were involved with TFD and are now participants in the Toronto Best Start network report a willingness to invest time in coordination and collaboration efforts, in spite of the setbacks witnessed since the initiation of the provincial Best Start strategy.

Progress Towards System Integration

The Toronto Best Start Network is the meeting place for public and community early childhood service providers. The family support program sector reported that TFD has resulted in less isolation from other early childhood programs.

The Best Start Survey achieved an overall 47% response rate. The Best Start Survey results illustrate low levels of coexistence to coordination and collaboration/integration across Toronto early childhood programs. In total, 7% of respondents scored at the level of collaboration/integration, while 77% scored at the co-existence level and 16% at the coordination level.

Key informants identified the advantages of TFD in preparing for the Best Start Network. The TFD sites were tangible models of what was possible to do through better communication and the coordination of some resources. However, they also acknowledged the need for legislative change to underpin systemic change.

At the community and program level, the model of TFD and the concept of moving forward on a continuum of integration are well-received.

Discussion of Local Dissemination and Policy impact

The project's findings influenced the Ontario government and are reflected in its Best Start strategy. The core elements of the First Duty model are incorporated into the Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children. Now, TDSB and City are joined by Toronto District Catholic School Board, the French language school boards, community agencies, Toronto Public Health, and family support programs in expanding service integration and moving forward on systems change. The goals and objectives of First Duty are now contained within Toronto Best Start. The training and assessment tools developed for First Duty are now part of tools available for Toronto Best Start. The learning from TFD

continues to inform the ongoing implementation of Toronto Best Start. In short TFD fulfilled its goal of making integrated service provision public policy.

The original TFD project sites are now rolled under Toronto's Best Start and within the Toronto District School Board's Early Years Leaders group. They are a demonstration of the TFD vision along the continuum from coordination and collaboration to integration and are joined by other sites that are demonstrating collaborative efforts through staff teams and high quality early learning environments.

TFD was a forerunner to the province's and city's Best Start strategy that shares a common vision of transforming fragmented programs into an early childhood system. Best Start is motivated by improved school readiness. TFD research indicates that by making it easier for parents to find and use services, the benefits extend beyond the individual child into the family and community.

Alignment with Best Start

Best Start shares the common vision of TFD - both reference a model of delivery highlighted in the Early Years Study (McCain & Mustard, 1999). But the implementation of Toronto Best Start is incremental not transformational. The emphasis is on coordination, networks and hubs that bring players together - in communities and across provincial government departments and ministries. Incremental changes are made in practices while maintaining the same operating systems.

At the Toronto Best Start Network, discussions focus on how to better coordinate programs through joint professional development and information sharing. Reports from key informants and focus group participants suggest that the Best Start survey galvanized interest and stimulated ideas about more communication and coordination. At the same time, the survey results indicate most of the time there is little action among programs that operate in the same communities, sometimes in the same building.

Good Will is Not Enough

TFD did demonstrate what was possible - the integration of existing early childhood programs that were beneficial for children, families, staff and the bottom line. It provided a grass-roots, "from the ground-up" experience that paved the way to a broader application within the Best Start framework. It allowed the Toronto Best Start Network to move forward with a systems approach rather than isolated Best Start hub sites.

However, TFD required a supportive infrastructure to mitigate public policies for separated regulations, different staffing requirements and fragmented funding. The Best Start strategy is founded on coordination and collaboration within communities while maintaining separate provincial funding and legislative. Cooperation among its participants is predicated on good will. The initial expansion of funding for expanded child care to be located in schools wherever possible was a new resource and provided some initiative to draw in the local partners, and if it had continued, might have been enough to effect more systemic change at the local level. That funding was cut-back (due to changes in federal government), leaving good will to stand on its own as an incentive to push towards further collaboration or integration.

For the most part, early childhood programs in Toronto continue with “business as usual”. Awareness of other programs in the same community has increased. Probably institutional readiness for public policy that consolidates existing program fragments is greater because of TFD.

Indicators of Change

The Indicators of Change proved to be a popular tool for participants in Toronto First Duty sites. It encouraged many staff to engage the model in a concrete way. In effect Indicators of Change bridge incremental change and transformational change. The level 5 benchmarks define an integrated system - one that would require a new operating system, including consolidated legislation, governance and funding. They also outline incremental steps that are possible in local communities within the existing policy context.

The Toronto Best Start Network and TDSB have used the Indicators of Change as a reference point to develop tools that are simpler and clearly focused on immediate incremental change. The Toronto Best Start survey selected two elements - early learning environment and early years staff team - as the starting points.

At this point in time, no one is actively working on transformational policies and practices necessary to implement the vision of TFD, articulated in level 5 of the Indicators. Criteria for movement towards integration have not yet been fully incorporated into the City of Toronto’s Operating Criteria.

Next Steps

Policy research is “research on, or analysis of, a fundamental social problem in order to provide policy makers with pragmatic action-oriented recommendations for alleviating the problem” (Majchrzak, 1984, p. 12 in Huston, 2005, p. 3). Policy research informs the development and improvement of the regulation and delivery of services and allocation of funding to those services. Typically, policy research includes:

- baseline and trend information that describes the status, condition or characteristics of a population, in this case, young children and their families or the providers of services for young children and families.
- program performance information that may demonstrate the coverage of the population by the service, the referrals, intake, type of services, cost, providers and proportion of eligible individuals who use the service.
- evaluative information that is concerned with how well services meet their objectives. Outcomes attributed to the services are examined. The research may examine outcomes and attribute them to multiple conditions and interventions.

The final research report of TFD Phase 2 will review baseline information from 1999 with that of 2008 and consider emerging trends in how early childhood programs and services are working in Toronto. The system level progress towards achieving the level 5 benchmarks will be assessed as well as consideration of overall changes in population characteristics and child outcomes as assessed by EDI. Given the focus of the newly

announced provincial Early Learning Advisor, the final report will pay particular attention to the impact of TFD on 4- and 5-year-old children.

Other Dissemination of the TFD Model

As noted above the TFD model has influenced the general development of the provincial Best Start initiative and has supported the Toronto Best Start Network. As well, the model has been shared with a number of other Best Start planning networks in the Province. The Research Team has provided materials to a number of planning tables from Niagara to Kenora and has consulted on the evaluations of the Hamilton and Peel Region Best Start initiatives. A member of the City of Toronto Children’s Services staff has traveled to Rainy River to share lessons from TFD (<http://www.rrdssab.ca/RRBestStartOct2007Newsletter.pdf>). City representatives have also presented at Thunder Bay and SouthEast region Best Start network conferences and have also traveled to Carlton, Ontario, to present to several Best Start Networks.

The Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre (BWELC) has been the most remarkable channel for direct dissemination of the TFD model, with site visitors coming from across the region, the province and beyond (see Appendix 2). From the Province, a number of Ontario delegations visited in 2007, and Premier Dalton McGuinty chose the BWELC site to announce in December the implementation of full-day learning for preschoolers.

Looking beyond Ontario, the list of visitors to BWELC shows that the dissemination of TFD is reaching across Canada and into other countries. In 2007, visitors came from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. New Brunswick is now poised to implement an early childhood system incorporating ideas from the TFD model. International delegations have included visitors from Australia, Egypt, and New Zealand.

The dissemination of TFD also takes place through other channels. A Google search of “Toronto First Duty” in early 2008 turned up approximately 100 unique websites relevant to Toronto First Duty (see figures 1 and 2). Analysis of the dates of postings suggests that dissemination of TFD via the Internet continues to grow.

Number of "Toronto First Duty" postings by year

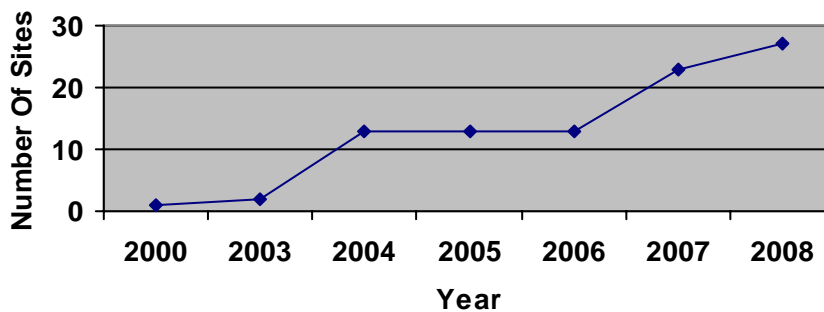


Figure 1: Number of “Toronto First Duty” postings by year

Analysis of the websites also showed that most were hosted locally/provincially, but some were hosted nationally or internationally. National websites include the Council of Early Childhood Development's notice of the Early Years Study 2 report (McCain, Mustard, & Shanker, 2007) that liberally cites findings from TFD. International sites include a notice on the World Bank's website of a new book edited by Mary Young (2007), *Early Child Development: From measurement to action*, which includes analysis of the TFD project, including a chapter by Jane Bertrand.

Dissemination of TFD findings also continues in the academic literature and through presentations and conference papers. A list of 2007 papers and manuscripts in progress is presented in Appendix 1.

Postings by Site Location

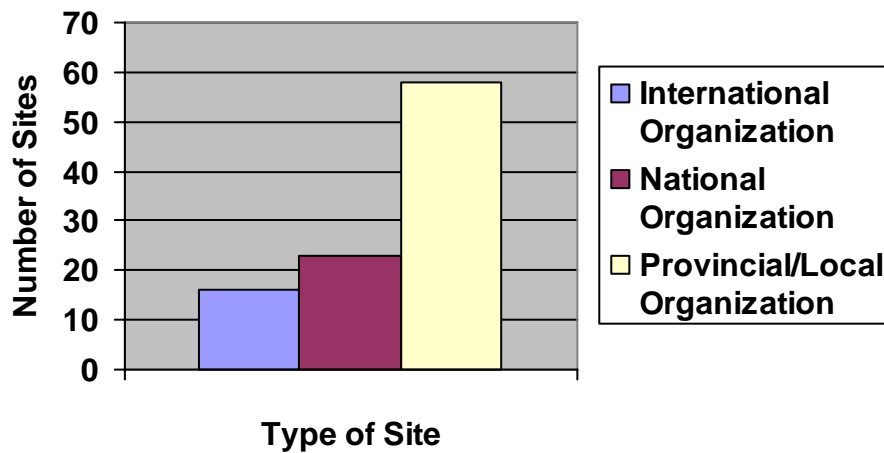


Figure 2: Postings by Site Location

Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre Case Study

Summary

The Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre (BWELC) serves as the prototype and test bed for further development of the TFD model. Its role in disseminating the model through direct site visits continued as an unqualified success as detailed in Appendix 2. Nevertheless, the case study reveals that progress is not always smooth. Monitoring of the level of integration and program quality revealed that there was slippage in both areas as compared to the increases in quality and integration noted in previous reports on the site. These slippages are informative in several ways. First, they demonstrate the need for continual monitoring of results in the operation of any ongoing service program or system. The results also suggest that program quality is tied to the effectiveness of integration, particularly in the dimensions of integrated staffing and learning environment. There are many possible reasons for the slippage. Among them are the demands that the dissemination role and the procession of visitors places on site leaders and staff, changes in staff that took place, and taking on more programming during the past year. And of course there is the continuing challenge of trying to make integration work locally when larger systems remain separate. Nevertheless, challenges to successful integrated work are inevitable. The bottom line story is that the site is now addressing the monitoring information and using results to build improvement. The early years staff team are now engaging in intensive professional development focused on the integration of curriculum and pedagogy. They are working closely with a curriculum specialist who is modeling the role of “pedagogue”, or programming leader, to enhance program quality, integration of curriculum and seamless approach to program development. The team is test-driving new provincial curriculum framework, *Early Learning for Every Child* as part of the process.

Moving into Phase 2

At the end of TFD Phase 1, Bruce WoodGreen’s Early Learning Centre was operating at full capacity in the full- and extended-day programs. Children had been supported by a multidisciplinary team including TDSB staff and educational assistants, early childhood educators and early childhood assistants, a special needs resource teacher, a parenting worker, parents and other caregivers. The child-adult ratio was maintained at approximately 10:1 for the 3.8- to 5-year-old children. Today, the staff team continues to meet regularly to plan the program. Students on teaching placements continue to participate in the Early Learning Centre and work alongside program staff. Parents and caregivers with children 0-6 years continue to participate in all parts of the program. As an extension of the early years initiative, BWELC decided to implement a Grade 1 transition program to meet the needs of children who had come through the Early Learning Centre. The Grade 1 transition program has now evolved into a more-or-less full-fledged school age program for children 6 and up to grade 3. The specialized programs to address the social and emotional needs of the Bruce WoodGreen (BWG) children along with public health, dental and nutrition support are ongoing. Families

continue to be welcomed to BWG and are given supports in a variety of areas including referrals to partner agencies both on and off site. As planning for the provincial Best Start program is now underway across the province, Bruce WoodGreen is continually asked to share its learning. There is a constant influx of visitors from across the province and indeed, from around the world, as Bruce WoodGreen serves its role as the prototype of the model developed in Toronto First Duty.

As TFD Phase 1 ended and Phase 2 began with BWELC as the continuing integrated TFD program model, the site experienced some bumps in the road. First, while the child care and kindergarten integration had been working together in an integrated fashion, the parenting and family literacy staff at the site were still not as well integrated with the rest of the staff team. Another bump concerned parent involvement; the site's goal was to improve the parent connection in all aspects of the integrated program, yet that was not happening in the way that the partners had envisioned. There were also the continuing demands of working "in the spotlight" and taking on new programming, for example, in the transition to Grade 1. As BWELC moved through Phase 2, there was a decline in working together for integration and in the quality of the program. The evidence for these declines came from qualitative and anecdotal reports from funding representatives and from ongoing discussions in site meetings, as well as from three measurement tools: 1) The Indicators of Change, 2) the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised, and 3) the City of Toronto's Children's Services Operating Criteria. Summaries of the findings are given below. More detailed results will be provided in the December 2008 TFD2 Final Research Report.

Sustaining and Monitoring Change

Indicators of Change

The Indicators of Change is a tool developed by the research team to assess the TFD sites' progress along a continuum of co-existence to coordination, collaboration and finally integration, using a scale from 1 to 5. This is done in five dimensions: local governance, seamless access, early learning environment, early childhood staff team, and parent participation. Each of these dimensions is addressed in turn, to show change from the previous assessment in June 2005 to November 2006.

Local Governance. In 2005, BWELC received a benchmark score of 4 across each of the areas of program mandate, policies and practice, service planning and monitoring, allocation of financial, space and program resources, and human resources. However, in November 2006, it received a lower score of 3.5 for service planning and monitoring. The site also received a lower score of 3.5 in the area of human resources.

Seamless Access. In 2005, the site received a score of 4 in the area of capacity and in 2006 the score remained a 4. In June 2005 the site received a 4.5 for intake, enrolment and attendance because of the full implementation of the seamless access model, but in November 2006 the site received a score of 4.

Early Learning Environment. In June 2005 in the area of curriculum and pedagogy, BWELC received a score of 4.5, but in November 2006, this score had dropped to 3.5. Whereas in 2005 the curriculum framework blended common learning outcomes from the provincial kindergarten program with emergent curriculum and the school's early literacy plan, by the end of 2006, there was less integration. The site's score also went down marginally in the areas of daily routines and in children's development and progress, from 4 to 3.5. Finally in the area of program quality, the site's scores decreased from 4 to 3.

Early Childhood Staff Team. The area of program planning decreased from a score of 4 to a score of 3. In 2005 the staff team were planning together but acknowledged they wanted to bring the parenting worker on board. But by the end of 2006, only the teams of 4- and 5-year-olds were sharing ideas within rooms but not across rooms nor across age groups. The area of child management received a score of 4 in June 2005 and maintained that score in November 2006. The area of roles and responsibilities declined from 4 to 3.5 over the year and a half. Finally in the area of staff development the score decreased from 4.5 to 3.5. There were fewer opportunities for professional development than there had been and fewer joint staff development events.

Parent Participation. Scores in the area of parent participation did not change much between June 2005 and November 2006, with only a small drop from 4.5 to 4 in the area of parenting capacity.

ECERS-R Ratings: Early Learning Environment

The environment observations were based on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R) (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998). The ECERS-R is a widely used rating scale. The research team employed this measure in order to be able to describe BWELC's environment using a recognized tool and over time from Phase 1 to Phase 2.

BWELC has been assessed three times since 2003. In 2003 the kindergarten, child care and parenting program scores were in the range of good quality; across the five TFD sites there was room for improvement. By 2005, quality improvements were found in all subscale areas (across all five sites), with the greatest improvements in use of space, program activities, and parent/staff communication. This can be explained in part by the efforts to incorporate the Toronto First Duty goals that emphasize parent participation and using space in new ways to accommodate the integrated program.

In November 2006, the BWELC parenting and family literacy centre, Room 3, Room 9 and Room 2 were observed. One trained observer completed the ECERS-R (Harms et al., 1998) through a guided observation procedure. Comparisons with the assessment in June 2005 indicated an overall reduction in quality practices in the rooms that had been assessed at both time points.

The decline in the language subscale in both rooms comes particularly in areas related to adult-child communication with children. Detailed information and graphs of scores in 2005 and 2006 will be provided in the December 2008 TFD2 Final Research Report.

The total scores of 4.75 for the Parenting and Family Literacy Centre, 4.76 for the Preschool room, 5.02 for Room 9 and 5.69 for Room 3 are in the average to very good range. The previous scores were in the very good to excellent range. The language-reasoning scores were lower in all rooms in 2006. Thus the environment ratings were consistent with dips in quality and provided meaningful input for the site to re-orient and move forward.

City of Toronto Children's Services Operating Criteria

The Toronto Operating Criteria are used to evaluate the City of Toronto's child care quality. Child care centres with a fee subsidy contract are assessed annually by Toronto Children's Services. The tool provides a rating of the child care program, activities, learning, health, safety, adult/child interactions and nutrition by comparing scores to the standards of the Toronto Operating Criteria. A score of 3.0 indicates that expectations are being met and 4 is an "exceeds expectations" quality rating. On December 7, 2007, a City of Toronto Children's Services consultant carried out the evaluation of BWG's three rooms for children aged 2.5 to 5, since the evaluation is intended only for child care centres, not for other BWG programs. BWELC scored below the City's average score. Although BWG's preschool rooms did receive an acceptable overall score of 3.2, it was below the City's average rating of 3.6 for their 900 programs.

It is important to note that BWELC has viewed this, along with the other indices of a drop in quality and integration, as an opportunity to reflect on many aspects of their program in order to improve the overall quality of the BWELC. Management has now taken steps to provide additional support to the integrated staff team. It is also important to communicate that early leaders for change pave the way to allow others to learn from their successes and to avoid their mistakes. The BWELC team is motivated to use this slip in quality and integration to re-orient and to focus on the vision that led to the early successes.

Where we are today

The Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre continues to receive TFD project funding from the Atkinson Charitable Foundation through June 2008 to serve as a laboratory for Toronto's Best Start. Its mandate is to showcase the "year ten" vision of Best Start to track community outcomes and to push further towards a fully integrated program delivery model and curriculum. In the spring of 2007, BWELC committed itself to actively pursue three areas of integration: 1) to increase the integration of curriculum and pedagogical approaches and the early years staff team, 2) to integrate parenting activities with other program activities, and 3) to develop and use integrated communication messages that emphasize the seamless day for children and families. Goals and funding support beyond June 2008 are under discussion. There has been much ongoing work with BWELC's management committee to institute the Phase 2 goals. Details of professional development and program implementation efforts will be provided in the December 2008 TFD2 Final Research Report. As Phase 2 draws to a close over the next few months, it is anticipated that BWELC will have made significant leaps forward in integrated programming, family involvement, staff cohesion and environment quality. The influx of visitors to the site has not subsided and many more visits are planned (see

Appendix 2, Visitors to BWELC in 2007). An overall summary of BWELC Phase 2 achievements to date in the three TFD evaluation strands is provided in Table 2).

Table 2: BWELC Phase 2 achievements to date

Evaluation Strand	Phase 2 Achievements
Program	<p>Levels of integration dipped during Phase 2 and environment quality decreased in some areas. After receiving assessment reports, the site quickly rallied to address the problems in maintaining the high levels of integration achieved in Phase 1. Some of the problems related to increasing numbers of visitors to the site and less time for staff to work together to plan the integrated program. Language began to revert to language of cooperation and coordination rather than of integration, for example, use of the terms “kindergarten” and “preschool” rather than age group. In order to turn this around, management and school administration provided support for staff to begin intensive professional development workshops and use of the new provincial curriculum framework, <i>Early Learning for Every Child Today</i> (ELECT). These workshops have resulted in revisioning of the program statement, in articulation of specific goals and strategies in integrated programming including use of portfolios to track individual child development, group profiles, and learning centre changes. Expertise and leadership in early childhood curriculum (a Pedagogue) was brought into the site to work with staff. Significant changes have been made to organization and space, including a “clean-up” and program focus. Staff are now clearer on where they are to be and when. There is a renewed sense of calm and purpose. As part of the ongoing work to inform the renewed focus, partners from the TDSB and George Brown College facilitated a series of professional development sessions. The professional dialogue began with the question, How can we observe individual children in a group setting? The goal was to foster understanding of the ELECT framework and the connections to the Kindergarten Program document. The staff team observed children in a video clip and identified links to the indicators in the developmental continuum from ELECT and the learning expectations from the Kindergarten Program document.</p>
Child & Family	<p>Enrollment and participation in all BWELC programs have been similar to previous years. Fee increases meant that some families left the site and there was somewhat lower participation in the 9:00 – 3:30 program. There are 59 children in the 4 & 5 year old program and of those, about half participate in additional time blocks such as extended day. The parenting and family literacy numbers are similar to previous years, currently about 25 regular members, including many new families. The 2.5-3.8 year old program is full each morning; there is some space in the afternoon. The school-age program has 24 children. Child Development Institute staff continue to deliver a social skills program for children. Management discussed the need for families to apply for fee subsidies since fees will be raised. Families will be able to put their names on a waitlist through the City of Toronto’s website. A Family Literacy night was held in February 2008 with a particular focus on “questioning.” Site management have been keeping in touch with parents about the site’s quality assessments and staff changes.</p>
Community	<p>Many community partners continue to provide services to BWELC. Public Health Screening Days are held about twice a year at the nearby South Riverdale Community Health Centre and at Bruce School. The school nutrition program continues and this year was improved with community volunteers from WoodGreen Community Services. Other community initiatives include community barbeques, Halloween dances run by the parents and school council, Kids Have Stress Too workshops, the Incredible Years parenting program and others. BWELC participates in Ontario Best Start meetings and conferences including the Best Start Implementation Committee with the City of Toronto. A significant community achievement has been the large contingents of local, national and international visitors to the BWELC site, including Ontario’s Premier, who used the location as a venue for his announcement of the full-day early learning program.</p>

Early childhood service integration at a child care centre: A case study of the Early Learning Centre-Huron School partnership.¹

Summary

This report describes the Toronto District School Board's and the University of Toronto's Early Learning Centre's (ELC) pilot project on integrated child care and kindergarten education during the first year of implementation in 2006-2007. In this model of integration a kindergarten teacher from Huron Street Public School teaches together with early childhood staff at the ELC; rather than being school-based, it is child care centre-based integration. To describe this approach we used case study methods of staff and parent surveys and direct observation of program quality. The Early Learning Centre-Huron School (ELC-HS) partnership project had some of the same challenges seen in TFD1 sites with staff trying to catch up to the roll-out of integration and not enough time to meet as a team. Nevertheless, staff reports revealed very successful team-building and staff satisfaction over the first year and generally high regard for the integrated program they produced. Observations of the program quality with the ECERS-R showed that most program dimensions were in the good to high range although "activities" and "language" were rated lower. Parents were generally very positive and articulate about the program and staff. A minority had issues with communication, space, and program content that related to the integrated nature of the program and its location outside a school. Given the current Ontario context, the issue of the location for full-day kindergarten learning experiences (school vs. community site) is central. This case suggests that anticipating parents' needs and issues will need to be part of the planning and site considerations.

Background

The context for this report extends beyond the experiment with integration at this particular site. As noted in other reporting on the TFD1 project, TDSB has transformed its Early Years organization and policies over the last several years and has started many new initiatives. Although key informants suggested that participation in TFD1 was a major catalyst for these developments, the board has moved ahead on many new fronts, some of them unrelated to TFD (Connelly, 2007). However, service integration and community links for the Early Years remain a focus for TDSB.

In addition to school participation in 13 Best Start sites, many other TDSB schools have been identified as early leaders in terms of integrated service delivery including 5 Toronto First Duty Phase 1 sites, 3 Inner City Model Schools, and 4 Kindergarten in Child Care programs (Connelly, 2007). Thus the ELC-HS site is one of many in the board where variations on the integration theme are being tried out and results are being monitored and is one of several where integration of care and kindergarten education is taking place outside the school.

¹ This report is based on a Masters Qualifying Research paper carried out by Danielle Brown.

The issue of school-based hubs vs. other locations for early childhood service integration has been discussed in the literature (e.g., Corter, 2001; see Arimura, 2008, for a review). There are pros and cons on the arguments for one type of site vs. the other, but relatively little research evidence. For example on the pro side of using school sites, major reasons offered are that schooling is universal and it is normative—a service almost every parent expects to connect to, whatever the diversity of their backgrounds and their child’s special needs. On the con side, some argue that school settings may foster inappropriate push-down academic instruction and often lack a community orientation. Research on the question of site effects is sparse. Although one U.S. study found that out-of-school sites for universal prekindergarten produced more problems in behaviour manageability than school-based sites, this was a large scale national study where programs were of generally low quality without integration of care and learning (Magnuson, Ruhm, & Waldfogel, 2007).

In the absence of a body of evidence on the effects of site location, the preferred option of school based sites for the Province’s Best Start initiative (and likely in the move to full-day kindergarten learning experience) is not challenged by contrary evidence. However, it is likely that this preference will bend regularly under the weight of realities in community variations in availability of space in different settings, logistical considerations for families, service and school organization, etc. Thus, another kind of research that is needed is more analysis of the challenges and successes of site variations that go beyond the TFD1 model of service integration in school-based hubs. This case study was intended to provide this kind of analysis for ELC-HS.

Study Design and Method

Data collection for the report focused on program implementation and included interviews and surveys with staff/administrators and parents, use of the Indicators tool, and program quality assessment. The conceptualizations of integration from Phase 1 of TFD helped to frame the findings of this study. The Indicators of Change tool (Corter et al., 2007) was used to review the degree of integration in each of the five core elements of First Duty: local governance, seamless access, early learning environment, early childhood staff team and parent participation.

The interview and survey data from staff and parents were used to examine the five core dimensions of integration with particular emphasis on implementation challenges and successes associated with integrated programming, staff team development, and parent participation. To assess the quality of the integrated program during the implementation year, we also evaluated the early childhood learning environment using the ECERS-R (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale- Revised; Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998). The program evaluation was limited to the integrated child care and Kindergarten classroom at the ELC-HS.

Findings

Staff Team and Program Development

At the beginning of the pilot project staff were not sure of how to move forward in an integrated way. There were predictable feelings of things happening too quickly and not enough time for staff to meet. Nevertheless, within the first year, staff reported very positively on the cohesiveness of the integrated staff team and on the integrated learning environment. Support from leaders and TDSB were factors in this success.

Overall, the early childhood staff team members had generally positive responses to the program describing it as “well-rounded”, an “ideal teaching/learning environment” and as a “wonderful experience.” The teachers also described the children and their parents as being happy with the program; the children have fewer transitions and longer periods of play. Children were also said to benefit from the variety of teaching styles within continuous programming across the three teachers. According to one staff member, the “early learning environment is the most successful part of the integrated program.”

Other program strengths mentioned by staff respondents included:

- Better understanding of each child because of communication between the ELC teachers and the TDSB teacher;
- More in-depth learning; concepts and skills are re-visited/reinforced throughout the day;
- Teachers (ELC and TDSB) learn from each other and inspire each other;
- The whole child’s development is well-covered (physical/emotional/social/cognitive)
- Smaller ratios.

Staff felt that a number of factors were critical to the program strengths. In particular, teamwork was seen as being key by all staff: good communication and relationships, complementary strengths and teaching styles, and mutual inspiration of the common mission. A second success factor was support and leadership from the ELC and TDSB administration and strong support by the TDSB Early Years team. Helpful supports included specific training sessions on integration as part of staff professional development and visits to two TFD sites to see integration in action. Several staff reported that previous professional experience with integrated care and schooling helped them at this site.

Despite being positive overall, the staff also pointed to problems in the program and challenges to the integrated work. Resources were a concern for several respondents. For example, the Kindergarten teacher teaches at Huron Street Public School in the morning, which means that all of her teaching materials are at the school. When she comes to the ELC in the afternoon to teach, she needs to select and bring materials. In addition, fewer books are available at the ELC as compared to the school library and kindergarten classroom at HS. Even into the second half of the school year the teachers were trying to build up classroom resources (emergent reader books, big books, pocket cards, easel, etc.). In general staff felt that not enough funding was provided for materials. It was observed that the child care budget doesn’t include school-type items (e.g., leveled books).

Another common theme was “not enough time to meet” as a whole team. In addition, staff also said that even though the professional development that they had was helpful, there wasn’t enough of it. These challenges were seen as more pressing because of the “quick start-up”. Other challenges mentioned were scheduling and time management. One ELC staff member also reported that having a kindergarten teacher with more educational credentials exacerbated feelings of inadequacy in dealing with very-well educated parents, especially when parents sought out the KG teacher for advice.

Staff felt that parents were supportive of the teachers and their work and were happy with the ELC-HS program. Interestingly, the ELC-HS pilot project did not have explicit programming for parent involvement. This may not be critical for two reasons: (1) demographics and (2) context. Parents of children who attend the ELC are generally well-educated and well resourced and appear to be comfortable in the environment and in participating in their child(ren)’s learning. In addition, parent involvement in child care, as compared to schools, is said to occur more naturally in drop-off and pick-ups and via the shared caregiving roles of parent and staff.

Parents’ Experiences and Attitudes

An important point to note is that the parents using the joint ELC-HS are a self-selected group. It was their choice to put their children in this program. Other parents who potentially could have chosen the program opted to put their children in a separate kindergarten located at the school. A staff respondent suggests that they were motivated by wanting their children and themselves to be part of the school community.

For parents at ELC-HS, the reasons for choosing to enroll their child(ren) in the integrated program often included location (i.e., close to work). As well, several parents indicated that the reputation of the ELC was an important factor in their decision. Five parents indicated that they chose this program to ease their child’s transition to school. These parents also chose the ELC-HS program as an alternative to splitting their children’s attendance at two sites.

Overall, most of the parents’ levels of satisfaction with various elements of the program were in the Good to Excellent range. They believed that this program helps to limit the number of changes to their child’s schedule, provides a better ratio, ensures the least disruption to their child and to the family and provides a consistent environment across their child’s early years care and education experience. The majority of parents listed their level of satisfaction concerning both communication and the reporting process as either “completely satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied.” Almost all are satisfied that this program is getting their child ready for school. Among the comments were:

- “This program just seems simpler for the children, especially at this age because they are within one environment they have known over the years.”
- “Daily interaction at any time of the school day, especially with ELC staff, is very helpful.”

- “The structure of the program followed by ELC for the Kindergarten ages is consistent with school setting. Also, learning is extended and reinforced throughout the day.”
- “JK is introduced without the disruption of changing schools. The ratios are fantastic which has given our child increased learning opportunities.”
- “It has the same structured two-and-a-half hours for SK, and the teacher teaches in both environments (ELC/HSPS).”
- “They integrate a range of learning approaches and provide a balance between the ‘school day’ and wrap-around programs.”
- “The curriculum being followed is in collaboration and complements each other.”

A small minority of parents were disappointed in particular aspects of the integrated arrangements. One parent rated the program Poor overall and indicated that this was because communication between ELC and Huron School was poor (e.g., newsletters from HSPS did not reach them, they were not aware of in-school events such as concerts, etc.). Another parent objected to moving younger children into the integrated program to “meet centre needs” to accommodate funding and numbers issues. In the parent’s view, this undermined “the ratio, program, and promises for curriculum”. A few parents mentioned communication challenges related to shared staffing. One noted that the staff member present at pickup wasn’t necessarily the one who had the information on what happened earlier in the day’s programming. Several parents mentioned limitations on the space, such as “Lack of access to gym, library, outdoor space, etc., constrained the experience.”

Program quality

Program quality was assessed in June over two half-day visits. The scores for the Program Structure and Parents and Staff checklist items were at ceiling and the Space and Furnishings, Personal Care, and Interaction dimensions are in the good to excellent range. The scores for Language-Reasoning and Activities were in the fair to good range.²

Future Work

- Staff are keen to have more opportunities for ELC and TDSB teachers to meet all together for planning, workshops, etc.
- Staff and parents want more connection with Huron School (e.g., visits, concert, gym, better communication).
- Scattered parental concerns about the integrated day.
- Staff want more community awareness and using community resources, including, in this case, the university community.
- Staff are keen to follow/track the success of students in this program as they continue through school.

The positive overall findings on this first year of the experiment are promising and deserve followup study.

² Quality assessment in the Fall of 2007 with the City of Toronto Operating Criteria suggest that quality is high in all areas and has improved since the first year of implementation of the ELC-HS. Anecdotal information from staff also suggests that many kindergarten children in the program are reading above kindergarten grade level.

Daily routines, parenting hassles, and social support: The role that early childhood services play in parents' and children's daily life³

Summary

This study explored the impact of integrated services consisting of kindergarten, child care and family support programs on the daily lives of parents and their kindergarten-aged children. The quasi-experimental design compared the daily experiences of parents and children accessing integrated versus traditional forms of kindergarten and child care services. Intervention group participants consisted of parents and children who attended a school site that had implemented the Toronto First Duty (TFD) model of integrated early childhood services. Comparison group participants consisted of parents and children who attended separate kindergarten and child care programs. Comparison group participants were recruited from sites that matched TFD sites based on an index of demographic risk called the Learning Opportunities Index (TDSB, 2007). Thirty-eight parents completed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews regarding daily routines, daily parenting hassles, social support networks, and views about early childhood services. Sixteen children participated in a semi-structured interview that assessed their views about their daily routines. Analyses indicated that service integration is associated with lower levels of daily parenting hassles, greater satisfaction with some forms of support, and greater levels of continuity in children's days. The results are discussed in relation to implications for future research, practice, and policy.

Background

Does integration of early childhood services change the daily lives of parents and children outside of direct experiences in programs? Over the course of the implementation of TFD anecdotal testimonials from parents suggested that families' lives improved and stresses declined. This study collected systematic data to test whether integrated services had benefits for parents and children in two of the original TFD sites with integrated, on-site, child care and education.

Literature on Family Life and Integrated Early Childhood Services

Previous TFD research investigating the benefits of coordinated access to quality early childhood services has found that school-based programs are associated with positive developmental outcomes for children and increased parent involvement among families from all social and economic backgrounds (Corter et al., 2006). Studies of Edward Zigler's 21C (Schools for the 21st Century) in the U.S. have also offered limited evidence on the similar benefits (Finn-Stevenson, Desimone, & Chung, 1998; Henrich, Ginicola, Finn-Stevenson, & Zigler, 2006). However, implementation studies have largely ignored the implications of integrated delivery of early childhood services on the day-to-day experiences of parents and children. These experiences may mediate other outcomes but are also important in their own right.

³ This report is based on an MA thesis carried out by Tomoko Arimura (Arimura, 2008).

This study was also designed to contribute to the literature on family stress and daily hassles, which may have negative effects on both parenting and child outcomes. These links have been explored and documented in a variety of ways over the last two decades. However, an important conceptual gap in the conceptualization and measurement of stress and “daily hassles” is the failure to consider the challenges parents and children may have in negotiating separate services. In this study we revised existing measurement tools from the literature to examine the gap and also to gauge the impact on the parents’ social networks.

For the purposes of this study, we investigated the relations between integrated early childhood services and parent’s experience of daily hassles and children’s perceptions of their day spent in kindergarten and child care.

Research Questions and Methods

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- Do parents from integrated TFD school sites experience lower levels of daily parenting hassles associated with early childhood services compared to parents from non-integrated sites?
- Are there any differences in the way children from the integrated TFD sites experience their day spent in kindergarten and child care compared to children from non-integrated sites? Specifically, do children from integrated sites perceive a higher level of continuity in their day compared to children from non-integrated sites?
- Do more parents from the integrated sites perceive early childhood services as an integral part of their social support network compared to parents from the comparison sites?

Study Participants

A total of 38 parents and 16 children from 35 families participated in the study. Families had at least one child who was enrolled in a kindergarten (i.e., junior or senior kindergarten) and child care program. Of the 35 families, 21 families were recruited from TFD school sites and 14 families were recruited from school and child care sites that operated separately (i.e., non-integrated sites).

The majority of parent participants were mothers, married, had on average had two children and worked on a full-time basis. The mean age of the group of children who participated in a child interview was 5.1 years. Ten out of 16 child participants were female (62.5%) and all of the children spoke English as their primary language. At the time of the interview, 9 children were enrolled in a JK program and 7 were enrolled in a SK program.

Questions for parents and children

During the parent interview, parents were asked to answer questions pertaining to: (1) their daily routines, (2) levels of parenting hassles associated with general parenting responsibilities, (3) levels of hassles associated with parenting a young child enrolled in

early childhood services, and (4) the type and extent of social support that they received from others.

Children were asked to describe their day (e.g., “I want to know about your day here. Tell me about your day here from the time you leave your home until you go home”). If necessary, prompts were given to encourage the child to continue describing the routines (e.g., “What happens next?”). Children were also asked to answer specific questions about aspects of their daily activities (e.g., “What things do you like best?” “What things don’t you like?”).

Findings

Do parents from integrated TFD school sites experience lower levels of parenting daily hassles associated with early childhood services compared to parents from non-integrated sites?

Findings suggest that on average TFD parents experienced fewer hassles and lower levels of daily stress associated with having a young child enrolled in a kindergarten and child care program compared to parents from non-integrated sites. For example, TFD parents experienced lower levels of stress associated with approaching the teacher or other people at the school to talk about the child, finding information on how to deal with the child’s behaviour, or finding information on how to help the child learn.

Are there any differences in the way children from TFD integrated sites experience their daily routines compared to children from the non-integrated sites?

Findings based on analyses of children’s narratives about their daily routines suggest that TFD children experienced greater continuity in their day compared to children from non-integrated sites. For example, whereas children in non-integrated settings used vocabulary such as “kindergarten” and “daycare” to describe parts of their day, TFD children did not acknowledge that they spent part of their day in child care. For these groups of children, their day was organized around activities and who (i.e., staff member) they spent time with in the mornings or afternoons. Interestingly, several children from the non-integrated sites voiced their understanding of the difference between the type of activities they engaged in at school and at the child care centre (e.g., “We have to learn a lot in kindergarten but we mostly play at daycare”). Overall, these findings suggest that children in integrated early childhood service settings perceived their day in a more integrated manner compared to children who attended separate kindergarten and child care programs.

Do more parents from TFD integrated sites perceive early childhood services as an integral part of their social support network compared to parents from the comparison sites?

Contrary to expectations, TFD parents did not have a larger social network comprising of individuals from the child’s school/child care programs compared to parents from the non-integrated sites. However, there were qualitative differences with regard to *who* parents selected as important sources of daily support. For TFD parents, teachers, early childhood educators and program coordinators were equally mentioned as important members of parents’ social network. In comparison, parents from the non-integrated sites

selected staff and parents from the child care centre as important members of their social network. This is likely as a result of the regular contact that these parents had with the child care setting. Unlike TFD parents who were in contact with both the kindergarten teacher and ECE staff on a daily basis, parents from the non-integrated sites typically bypassed the daily interaction with school staff as they primarily dropped off and picked up their child from the child care centre. Consequently, for these parents, ties with child care staff may have been much stronger than ties with the child's school.

Conclusion

This study explored the impact of integrated services consisting of kindergarten, child care and family support programs on the daily lives of parents and their kindergarten-aged children. Overall, the findings of this study support the conclusion that integrated delivery of early childhood services is associated with lower levels of daily parenting hassles and the inclusion of the school community as a source of support for parents. Children may benefit from these improvements in family life and from greater levels of continuity in their experience of care and learning.

Looking ahead to the December 2008 Final Phase 3 Report

As noted earlier, the final research report of TFD Phase 2 will review baseline information from 1999 in comparison to 2008 and consider emerging trends in how early childhood programs and services are working in Toronto. The system level progress towards achieving the level 5 benchmarks will be assessed as well as consideration of overall changes in population characteristics and child outcomes as assessed by EDI. Given the focus of the newly announced provincial Early Learning Advisor, the final report will pay particular attention to the impact of TFD on 4- and 5-year-old children (Atkinson Centre, 2007).

The report will also situate findings from the BWELC case study in the context of the work of the Toronto Best Start Implementation Steering Committee. Focused projects in collaboration with the ISC and TFD2 partners currently include in-depth analyses of the Toronto-wide Integration Survey data. One aim will be to examine the reliability and validity of the instrument and its relation to full-scale administration of the Indicators of Change tool. Another aim will be to examine factors that contribute to varying levels of integration across communities in Toronto.

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Appendix 1

TFD2 Reports and Presentations 2007-2008

Arimura, T. (2008). *Daily routines, parenting hassles, and social support: The role that early childhood services play in parents' and children's daily life*. Unpublished masters thesis, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Bertrand, J. (2007). *Integrated Early Childhood Programs: What, Why and How*. Canberra, Australia. August 29, 2007.

Bertrand, J. (2007) "Measuring early child development in Canada: Longitudinal Research. Young, M.E. (Ed.) 2007 *Early Child Development From Measurement to Action*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

Bertrand, J., Arimura, T., & Corter, C. (2008). Indicators of change in early childhood service integration: A case study. In preparation.

Corter, C. & Pelletier, J. (2007). Building a community base for early childhood: A Canadian experiment in service integration. Invited talk to members of OMEP (Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire). Auckland, New Zealand, 19 March.

Corter, C. & Pelletier, J. (2007). Evaluation methodology for complex innovations: Integrating preschool services in schools. Invited talk to the education faculty at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand, 7 March.

Corter, C., Patel, S., Pelletier, J. & Bertrand, J. (2008). The Early Development Instrument as an evaluation and improvement tool for school-based, integrated services for young children and parents: the Toronto First Duty Project. *Early Education and Development*. In Press.

Corter, C., Pelletier, J. & Wolanski, A. (2008). Community-University Research Collaboration for Early Childhood Development. Invited presentation to the Third Annual Ontario Education Research Symposium. Toronto. February.

Ioannone, P. & Corter, C. (2008). Early childhood professionals' experiences with integrated school-based services. In preparation.

Patel, S. & Corter, C. (2008). Building capacity for parent involvement through school-based preschool services. In preparation.

Patel, S., Corter, C., & Pelletier, J. (2008). What do Families Want? Understanding their goals for early childhood services. In M. Cornish (Ed.) *Promising Practices for Partnering with Families In the Early Years*. Family School Community Partnership Monograph series. Information Age Publishing. In Press.

Pelletier, J. & Corter, C. (2007). Promoting Family Literacy in Diverse Canadian Contexts. Invited talk to the education faculty at Massey University, practitioners and community. Palmerston North, New Zealand, 8 March.

Appendix 2

Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre Site Visitors 2007

International:

Penny Haworth
School of Educational Studies
New Zealand

Dr Reesa Sorin
Academic Advisor, Early Childhood Education
Coordinator, Early Childhood Education/ ECE Online
School of Education, James Cook University
Australia

Michael Sawyer, MBBS, PhD
Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
Head, Research and Evaluation Unit
Children, Youth and Women's Health Service
Women's and Children's Hospital
North Adelaide
Australia

Michelle Ortlipp
Professor, Early Childhood
Charles Sturt University
Australia

Dawson Ruhl
Executive Director
Marymead
Canberra, Australia

Louise Lamont
Catholic Family Services
Canberra, Australia

Delegation of eight from Egypt from the Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project supported by Agriteam Canada, including representatives of the Ministry of Education, academics, curriculum specialist and kindergarten teachers.

Out of province:

Cape Breton Delegation

Council for Early Childhood Development Fellows:

- Anne Biscaro, Director, Population Health Division Niagara Region Public Health Department
- Jean Clinton, Child Psychiatrist
- Wendy Church, Program and Policy Consultant, Healthy Child Manitoba Office
- Michelle Craig, Regional Manager, School and Preschool Services, Community Health Services, Capital Health, Edmonton and Area
- Elena DiBattista, Program Director Success By 6 Peel
- Carol Gott, Co-manager Rural Voices
- Janet Mort; Human Early Learning Partnership (British Columbia)
- Sheila Murdock, Fisher River Cree Nation
- Jim Mustard, Coordinator Roots of Empathy, Nova Scotia
- Linda Nosbush, Saskatchewan Rivers School District, Prince Albert
- Joanne Schroeder, Provincial Advisor, Ministry of Children and Family Development, Children First Initiative Early Childhood Development.

New Brunswick Premier Sean Graham and party

New Brunswick delegation:

- Laura Garland Preschool Speech and Language;
- Developmental Paediatrician
- EC Social Worker
- Family Resource Centre Manager
- Principals
- Community Schools Coordinator

Saskatoon school board:

- Karen Anderson, Deputy Director of Education
- Barry MacDougall, Superintendent of Education
- Kim Newlove, Superintendent of Education
-

St. John New Brunswick Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative Inc.

- J.K. Irving, Chair, J.D. Irving Limited
- Wayne Wolfe, Vice-President, Irving Forest Services
- Gary Lawson, Lawson and Creamer (Lawyers)
- Bev MacDonald, Director of Education, School District 8 (Saint John)
- Anne Marie Maloney, Manager, N.B. Department of Social Development

Sandi Roberts, Director of Alberta Children and Youth Initiatives

Pat Hauck, Alberta Education

John McLellan
Departments of Community Health Sciences, Psychiatry, and Paediatrics University of
Calgary

Annette Carroll,
Family and Children's Program Manager, YWCA
Halifax

Ontario

Ontario Provincial Government

- Premier Dalton McGuinty and Mrs. McGuinty
- Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education
- Deb Matthews, Minister of Children and Youth Services
- Maria Boutrianni, Minister of Children and Youth Services

Ontario Premier's Office

- John Brodhead
- Pierina DeCarolis
- Alex Johnson

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board Delegation.

Early Learning and Child Development Branch of the Ministry of Children & Youth
Services Delegation

Elementary Teachers Federation Ontario:

- David Clegg, President
- Sam Hammond, First Vice-President
- Barbara Burkett, Vice-President
- Hilda Watkins, Vice-President
- Executive members: Jane Bennett; Johanna Brand; Janet Millar Grant
Staff: Joan Littleford; Vivian McCaffrey.

Fanshaw College ECE Faculty Delegation

Garden Avenue Public School, Toronto District School Board:

- Executive Margaret McIntosh, Principal and Staff Team

Inner City Schools Conference Delegation

Integration Network Conference Delegation

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care; Executive Board and Network Delegation

Toronto Catholic District School Board delegation

Winchester Public Schools Delegation

York Catholic District School Board:

- Claire Laughlin Coordinator, Special Programs (Elementary)
- Mary McGuire, Consultant, Early Years
- Fran Zeppieri, Manager, Child Care

Individuals

Angie Bonilla
George Brown College student, Toronto

Paula Fletcher
Toronto City Councillor

Steve Kanellakos
Deputy City Manager, Ottawa and the Director of Child Care Services, Ottawa

Donna E. Palmer
Acting Manager, Best Start Integration, Region of Peel, Children's Services

Kathleen Williams
Instructional Co-ordinator-Early Years, Curriculum, Instruction and Special Education
Support Services, Peel District School Board

Phyllis Hession White
TDSB Early Years Advisory Committee, Elementary Teachers of Toronto Executive
Officer

Jane Bauer
Exec Dir of Children's Community Network, Sudbury

Karen Dominick,
Community Programs Supervisor, Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB

Dr. Elizabeth Lee Ford-Jones
Infectious Diseases Specialist and Clinical Researcher, The Hospital for Sick Children
Professor of Paediatrics, University of Toronto

Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain
Toronto

Michele Wiwchar,
Parent
Toronto