



TORONTO
FIRST
DUTY

Pilot Project Overview
2001-2005

WELCOME TO TORONTO FIRST DUTY

Toronto First Duty brings together early education, family support and child care into a single program in five local Toronto neighbourhoods.

The three year project (2002 - 2005) each site will:

- Create a high quality **learning environment** that combines learning expectations, activities and routines from existing kindergarten, early childhood education/child care and parenting programs.
- Develop an **early childhood staff team** that works together to deliver and achieve program goals.
- Form a **local governance** structure to determine the allocation of resources, service planning and monitoring, and program policies.
- Provide **seamless access** to an expanded and comprehensive early learning and care program providing a continuum of supports and services to all families and children.
- Increase **parent participation** in their children's early learning and development through direct involvement in programs, planning and decision-making.

Toronto First Duty demonstrated how existing early childhood and family programs can be transformed into a system for children 0 - 6 years. At the end of the three year project, each site will be a working model of universal early learning and care.

The Toronto First Duty model supports parents' need for child care whether they are at home and require respite time or are earning or preparing to earn a living.

The Toronto First Duty model provides young children with consistent early learning and development opportunities.

The Toronto First Duty model recognizes mounting scientific evidence that the young children are active learners and that good experiences have a positive impact on later learning, behavior and well-being.

The Toronto First Duty model respects the primary role of parents and other family members and promotes learning opportunities at home.

Toronto First Duty Workplan

July 2001 – June 2002	Planning & Early Leader Start Up
July 2002 – June 2003	Start Up, Site & Infrastructure Development, Baseline Data Collection, Communication Launch (January 2003)
July 2003 – June 2005	Implementation of Early Learning Environments, Staff Team, Local Governance, Seamless Access & Parent Participation

Background

The project began in 1999 when the Atkinson Charitable Foundation (ACF) approached the Toronto Children's Advocate with a proposal to jointly sponsor a project to demonstrate the development of an early years system. In April 1999, on a motion from the Toronto Children's Advocate, Toronto City Council allocated funds to contribute to a partnership for a multi-year Early Childhood Education, Development and Care (ECEDC) project. ACF launched a Million Dollar Early Years Challenge. The City and ACF were joined by the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board to manage and fund a feasibility study on integrated early childhood programs. ACF and the City of Toronto established a funding partnership to support the York Early Years Wilcox Project. Since that time the partnership has grown with four additional sites and the active participation of the Toronto District School Board and contributions from the Canadian Auto Workers for communication and Human Resource Development Canada for research and development.

TORONTO FIRST DUTY PILOT SITES

Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre

The Bruce WoodGreen project brings together Bruce Junior Public School and the WoodGreen Community Centre in an innovative neighbourhood partnership. The combination of two established and trusted community institutions will be the base for a center for early child development, care and education, including parenting, and a particular focus on literacy. Bruce Public School provides kindergarten, parenting and family literacy, early literacy, nutrition and other programs; WoodGreen Community Centre provides childcare and child development services, recreation and parent support programs. WoodGreen's participation provides additional links to adult literacy, English as a Second Language training, youth service and employment, housing, anti-violence programs, and programs for new Canadians and seniors.

Vision: Bruce WoodGreen's vision is to help all children to "reach their full potential" by bringing all sectors together in a community-based hub that will provide an integrated, seamless service model of education and care. The Centre aims to serve as a model early years "system" whose philosophy and practice can be shared with policy-makers, the community and the public. The vision is based on four principles: 1) universal access, 2) voluntary/parental choice, 3) high quality services, and 4) building on existing community capacity.

Corvette Early Years

The Corvette Early Years project intends to bring together and integrate early years services to children and families in the Corvette community. Corvette Junior Public School will be the hub for early childhood experiences for young children from conception through to kindergarten and primary school years. The initial partnership was led by Not Your Average Day Care (a community-based child care centre) and Corvette Junior Public School. Other partners included Seneca's Kindergarten Readiness Program, Corvette Family Resource Centre operated by East Scarborough Boys & Girls Club and Toronto Public Health. Community Living Toronto and Aisling Discoveries Child and Family Centre joined the partnership during the start-up phase.

Vision: Corvette Early Years Project's initial vision statement called for the integration and seamless delivery of existing programs located at Corvette Junior Public School in response to identified community needs. It called for a "community that recognizes and values early years services as essential to the optimal growth and development of young children." The Corvette Early Years Project participants are committed to the potential of a community school as the hub and heart of a community. They have identified a significant health and well-being component to the project that includes plans for a community garden – a "greening" of the concrete, barren outdoor into a space that includes space for activities such as cricket and a park like setting.

Queen Victoria Partners for Early Learning Project

The Queen Victoria Partners for Early Learning Project (QVPELP) began as a partnership among Queen Victoria Public School, the Parenting and Family Literacy Centre School and The Crèche Child and Family Centre. The QVPELP's original coalition of organizations is now joined by four additional organizations: Parkdale Beach Child Care, Queen Victoria Public School, St. Christopher House, and Toronto Public Health. The project is described by its partner agencies as a multi-year plan to break new ground in creating focused, seamless and integrated service strategies for the families of children in the inner city area anchored by Queen Victoria Public School.

Vision The following value statements reflect the aspirations of the Queen Victoria Partners for Early Learning Project in the initial proposal:

- Services will be universally accessible to all families, particularly those whose children will likely attend Queen Victoria Public School
- Services will be operated as close to the school as possible
- Services will be culturally responsive and address equity perspectives
- Services will not duplicate existing services and will be respectful of current systems
- Make direct service a priority and maximize the extent to which funding achieves face to face service.

York Early Years Wilcox Project

York Early Years -Wilcox (YEY-W) was the Early Leader site for the Toronto First Duty pilot projects and is located in JR Wilcox Community School. Accelerated progress is being made in the complex process of integrating and extending the services provided by the participating agencies, while involving the relevant organizations and the community. The partners, led by Macaulay Child and Family Centre, have a long history of collaboration among agencies in this community and the capacity to take on the Toronto First Duty challenge.

Vision YEY-W's vision was "to create a community where early years services are recognized and valued as an essential support to children and families; where parents have access to and can choose from a range of seamless early years services; and where all children, including those with special needs, have access to early years services that enable them to develop their full potential.

In the YEY community, early years programs for children, families and caregivers are readily available, affordable and culturally appropriate. More families and caregivers use these important services and each child, family and community may use a broader range of programs and services to meet their evolving needs.

Our vision also includes information other communities about our work to contribute their building a seamless integrated service that involves, like YEY, parent/caregivers, families and all other sectors."

The vision for establishing YEY-W outlined 5 core program/service areas:

- ECE, part and full-time
- Parent/Caregiver Programs alone and with children (including home based)
- Pre and Postnatal Supports
- Other Community Responsive Resources
- Facilitated Access to service

ACTT Secord-Dawes Hub

ACTT (Action for Children Today and Tomorrow) Neighbourhood Access is a community-based coalition with projects encompassing four (4) neighbourhoods. The Dawes/Secord pilot is in one of these neighbourhoods and is led by East York East Toronto Family Resource Program. The project intends to bring together and integrate early years services to children and families in the Secord/Dawes community. Secord Elementary Public School will be involved in the project, but at this stage it will act as a 'virtual' hub for early childhood education, development and care for the young children in this area.

Vision The ACTT approach to supporting families is based on building capacities and strengths within the local communities. Its initial vision statement proposed enhanced components of early childhood development in the Secord-Neighbourhoods. The ACTT vision is based on the development of four neighbourhood-based access points for early childhood education and care. The Secord site is one of these neighbourhood points. The ACTT Project participants were committed to the potential of a community school as a virtual hub and a base for the community.

The early childhood development components included a mobile family resource program aimed at offering resources to the entire community and a care, development and play program available to all parents, children and families.

TORONTO FIRST JOINT STEERING COMMITTEE

A Toronto First Duty Steering Committee meets regularly to oversee the development and implementation of the project. It was established to support partnerships between Toronto Children's Services and Social Development and Administration divisions, Toronto Public Health, Toronto District School Board, the Atkinson Charitable Foundation and communities involved in the Toronto First Duty Project. It includes representation from all of the partners involved in the project (i.e., those organizations contributing financial or in-kind resources of the project), lead agencies at the local sites, and the research and development team. The Steering Committee has developed a Terms of Reference and has signed a Partnership Agreement.

Members are taking on the development of new approaches to service delivery through constructive participation and building on the work that has already been done in the early years field. These partners will work collaboratively to test and

integrate early years programming. Community involvement, leadership and flexibility are integral to building a seamless service that is inclusive and dismantles barriers to families and children's participation.

TORONTO FIRST DUTY COORDINATORS' NETWORK

The coordinators from each of the five sites, the Toronto First Duty Project Manager, and representatives from the research and development team meet on a regular basis to discuss implementation issues and create operational policies and procedures in response to the activities and needs that are emerging at the sites. The group is developing a network that will support learning from each other as the nuts and bolts issues of implementation and change arise. The network is also a vehicle to build each site's capacity to become knowledgeable about application issues and solutions.

TORONTO FIRST DUTY CURRICULUM & STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Toronto First Duty sites will blend together different early childhood curriculum streams to create integrated learning environments and a staff team of teachers, early childhood educators and family support workers with different backgrounds and education.

The development activities will:

- promote the development of integrated learning environments at Toronto First Duty sites;
- ensure that Toronto First Duty sites are linked to other community early child development sites in Canada; and
- share information about Toronto First Duty learning environments.

In-service workshops and seminars on current early child development knowledge, curriculum planning, content and assessment topics will be organized in response to identified needs. Support is available for the development and delivery of site-based workshops for team-building activities.

The project will document the experiences of the sites as they develop their integrated learning environments. The documentation will be formatted as a multi-media guide to curriculum development in early child development settings that integrate different program components and will be made available to communities across Canada.

The Toronto First Duty intranet website provides an environment to share experiences and resources among participants at each of the sites.

TORONTO FIRST DUTY COMMUNICATION

Toronto First Duty has a communication plan and accompanying protocols. The Steering Committee is responsible for setting the overall plan and key messages, providing approval for media releases and response protocol, and identifying

spokespersons. Toronto First Duty sites will be delivering the key messages in their communities.

The communication plan will:

1. Build and consolidate support within the Toronto First Duty partnership. The partners are influential organizations, each with their own capacity to influence senior levels of governments and public opinion.
2. Direct communications with public and private sector decision-makers through a range of messengers and strategies.

The official public launch of Toronto First Duty will take place in January 2003. Development of a public website and logo are underway.

TORONTO FIRST DUTY RESEARCH

The Toronto First Duty evaluation aims to track the development, implementation and impacts of the pilot sites within three strands:

- program, policy and services;
- children and parents; and,
- community and public awareness.

The research design employs multiple measures and perspectives. These include:

- Progress and dynamics of service integration and utilization.
- Evidence about children's developmental outcomes related to well-being and school achievement.
- Changes in communities and public awareness.

Demonstrable changes in child outcomes and the full impact on parent satisfaction and program/policy changes require longer than three years to determine the long term benefits. The Atkinson Charitable Foundation will sustain research activities for at least five to seven years to ensure that longer-term effects for children, families, and communities can be adequately tracked.

The kinds of information and analysis carried out in the Toronto First Duty research can be summarized in six research questions that were identified in the Final Evaluation Plan (Spring 2001):

1. What is the general backdrop for Toronto First Duty in terms of the academic literature and evidence?
2. What is the local and provincial political and policy context for Toronto First Duty?
3. How do the Toronto First Duty sites develop models that meet the project's vision and honour the selection criteria (population, partnerships, increased access, sustainability, accountability and funding)?

4. What does service integration and innovation mean in practice at each of the sites and across the wider stakeholder groups?
5. How are children and parents involved and affected by the ongoing development of the Toronto First Duty sites?
6. How does the external evaluation process work in relation to the goals of the funders and sites to increase understanding of program implementation for children and families in new and better ways?

The research team will:

- a. Use a variety of techniques to gather data, including document collection, meeting notes and observations, focus groups, interviews, direct observation and surveys.
- b. Consider multiple lines of evidence to describe how the sites develop and how services merge and have an impact on young children, families and communities.
- c. Combine an emergent and collaborative approach with one that is more predetermined and evidence-based.
- d. Provide useful information and evidence to help sites refine program design and delivery.
- e. Ensure that the experiences of the Toronto First Duty sites are accessible to other communities across Canada who are seeking to integrate early childhood programs.

At the end of the three year project, a detailed report will outline the journey of each Toronto First Duty site to establish early learning environments and staff teams; local governance structures; seamless access; and parent involvement. The research framework allows future data collection to capture the long-term impact Toronto First Duty has on children's developmental outcomes, community capacity and program/policy reforms.

Starting Gate Report and Progress Reports

The Starting Gate Report documents the Toronto First Duty project as it gets off the mark. It presents the shared understanding of the aims of the project its development, progress to date, and the evaluation process. The report is designed primarily to communicate among the Toronto First Duty project funding partners, site partners and other key stakeholders. It is based on analysis of documents, meeting notes and other background literature as well as key informant interviews conducted with provincial, city, and school board officials and with several Toronto First Duty pilot site leaders.

The research team prepares and distributes semiannual progress reports to the City of Toronto and Atkinson Charitable Foundation and to the Toronto First Duty Steering Committee. The reports summarize specific research activities conducted and data collected during the previous six months period. They provide an update on the progress towards the program integration goals of the project and raise specific issues for discussion. The research team presents and

discusses the reports' conclusions and issues with the Toronto First Duty Steering Committee.

Reports are available at www.toronto.ca/firstduty

Research and Development Committee

The Toronto First Duty Research and Development Committee meets regularly to guide the evaluation process and development initiatives designed to support the integrated learning environments. The committee includes representation from the sites, Toronto District School Board research department, the City of Toronto, Atkinson Charitable Foundation, and the research team.

Strand	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Policy/ Program Services	YEY-W Key informant interviews Focus groups Observation	4 sites Key informant interviews Focus Groups Observation Staff interview	5 sites Key informant interviews Focus groups Observation	Analysis & report writing 5 sites – Parent interview
Child & Family	YEY Parent/child focus groups Parent survey EDI	5 sites Parent/child focus group Parent interview EDI Direct child	5 sites Parent/child Focus groups	EDI Direct Child Program Observation
Community/ Public Awareness	YEY Public focus group Community survey	4 site Public focus groups Community survey	5 sites Public focus groups Community survey	