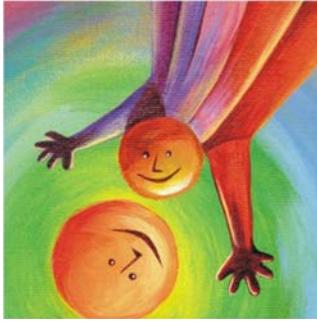


**Understanding the Early Years
Dixie Bloor Neighbourhoods
Mississauga, Ontario**



**Understanding the Early Years (UEY)
Dixie Bloor Neighbourhoods
Mississauga, Ontario
KNOWLEDGE ACTION PLAN 2005-2007**



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Gratitude is expressed to the many individuals who have contributed their thoughts, suggestions, and ideas through the knowledge action plan consultation process. We would like to thank Success By 6 Peel, the Understanding the Early Years (UEY) Action Group Steering Committee, the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board for working together to develop the knowledge action plan for the Dixie Bloor Neighbourhoods of Mississauga, Ontario. We would like to highlight the dedication of the UEY Action Group Steering Committee members:

- Dixie-Bloor Neighbourhood Centre
- Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
- Havenwood Public School
- Institute of Child Study at OISE/University of Toronto
- Ministry of Children and Youth Services
- Peel Children's Centre
- Peel District School Board
- Peel Infant Development, Trillium Health Centre
- Peel Region Health Department
- Social Planning Council of Peel
- St. Alfred Catholic School
- Success by 6 Peel

We would like to further express our thanks to our key community partners:

- Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
 - o St. Basil Catholic School
 - o St. Sofia Catholic School
 - o Sts. Martha and Mary Catholic School
 - o Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Catholic School
 - o St. Thomas More Catholic School
 - o St. Edmund Catholic School
 - o St. Alfred Catholic School
 - o Queen of Heaven Catholic School
- Peel District School Board
 - o Burnhamthorpe Public School
 - o Dixie Public School
 - o Silverthorn Public School
 - o Forest Glen Public School
 - o Havenwood Public School
 - o Neil C. Matheson Public School
 - o Westacres Public School

Their support is greatly appreciated, and their invaluable contributions have been critical for determining future directions for the UEY project in Dixie Bloor, Mississauga. Appreciation is also extended to Social Development Canada (SDC) for funding the project.

Paul Favaro PhD
Chief, Assessment and Accountability Department
Peel District School Board

Aimee Wolanski EdD
Research Officer
Peel District School Board

Seema Taneja MA
UEY Research Coordinator

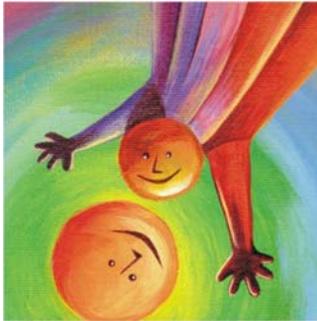
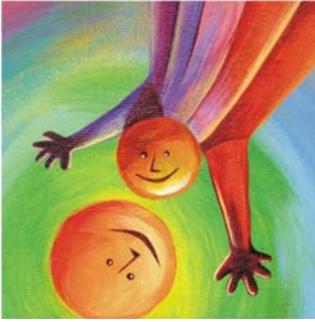


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1: Overview	1
Section 2: Knowledge Action Plan Objectives	2
Section 3: Learning About the Children in Our Community	3
Section 4: The Knowledge Action Plan	5
<i>Sharing Research Information with Dixie Bloor and the Peel Region Community</i>	5
<i>Sustaining a Local Early Years Research Agenda</i>	6
<i>Promoting Community Participation</i>	6
Section 5: Conclusion	8
References	9

FOR ADDITIONAL DETAILS ABOUT THE UEY PROJECT, COMMUNITY MAPPING STUDY, EDI REPORT, AND KNOWLEDGE ACTION PLAN, PLEASE CONTACT THE PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD, ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY DEPARTMENT AT 905-890-1010 EXT. 2610. THIS REPORT MAY ALSO BE FOUND ON THE INTERNET: [HTTP://UEY.PEELSCHOOLS.ORG](http://uey.peelschools.org)



SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

Understanding the Early Years (UEY) is a national initiative of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). In 2004, responsibility for the UEY project was transferred to Social Development Canada (SDC). UEY is based on the premise that children do well when their families live in well-resourced and supportive communities [Connor & Brink, 1999; Doherty, 1997; Keating & Hertzman, 1999; McCain & Mustard, 1999, 2002; Pelletier & Corter, 2005 (in press); Willms, 2002]. This initiative identifies factors within communities that influence child development and family well-being, and gathers information about children's readiness to learn. An additional project goal was to enhance the capacity of communities to use the research findings to promote sustainable neighbourhood supports for young children and their families.

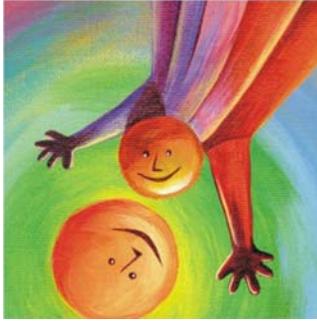
The UEY project in Dixie Bloor has three key local partners: Success By 6 Peel, the Peel District School Board, and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. Success By 6 Peel is the project's community sponsor.

The knowledge action plan outlines the action goals, strategies, and recommended approaches for the UEY Dixie Bloor project for 2005 - 2007. It is intended for three key audiences: the project funder, the project partners (project sponsors, steering committee), and the Dixie Bloor, Mississauga community. In creating this plan, action elements and recommendations from existing UEY reports (Favaro, Russell, & Gray, 2003a, b) were incorporated into the plan, as well as additional steps that key community partners identified as important goals and strategies for action in the Dixie Bloor community.

There are five sections in this report. Section 1 provides an overview of the UEY project and the knowledge action plan. Section 2 outlines the knowledge action plan goals and objectives. Section 3 summarizes the learning from the UEY project regarding the children in our community. Section 4 presents the guiding principles, strategies and action areas for the knowledge action plan. Section 5 provides a summary and concluding statements.

The knowledge action plan presents practical and concrete strategies for action in three key areas:

- (1) Sharing research information with the Dixie Bloor community and the Peel Region.
- (2) Sustaining a local early years research agenda.
- (3) Promoting community participation.

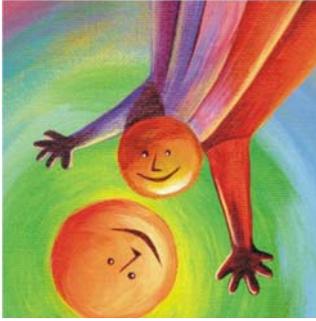


SECTION 2: KNOWLEDGE ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

The UEY project has two main goals: (1) to identify demographic and community factors that influence early childhood development, and (2) to provide communities with research-based evidence to assist them in improving early child development outcomes.

This report focuses on the knowledge transfer and application of the UEY results at the local community level. The report outlines the strategies for sharing the results of the UEY research through a participatory process that involves the communication and integration of the UEY research findings for action within the community. The knowledge transfer process to the community is intended to foster better developmental outcomes for children.

The dissemination of the UEY research findings provides one vehicle for increasing community knowledge for improving outcomes for children. UEY also works to promote collaboration and participation at all levels within the community with the explicit purpose of enhancing the social fabric of the community.



SECTION 3: LEARNING ABOUT THE CHILDREN IN OUR COMMUNITY

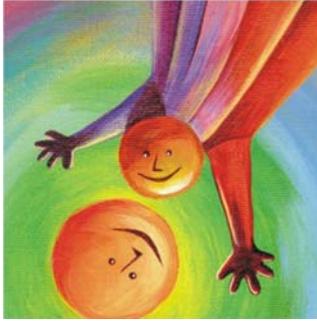
The UEY Dixie Bloor Mississauga project has been collecting, analysing, and disseminating community and child-related data since 2001. Two measures used in the UEY project include the Early Development Instrument (EDI) and the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY).

The EDI (Janus & Offord, 2000) is a teacher-rating measure of kindergarten children's school readiness. It was developed by the Canadian Centre for Children at Risk at McMaster University. Kindergarten children's school readiness is rated on five developmental areas: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge. Children whose EDI scores fall in the lowest 10th percentile on one or more areas are considered to be at risk for future problems in school. From the EDI administration, UEY Dixie Bloor project findings include:

- 28% of the children in the Dixie Bloor neighbourhoods were not ready to learn.
- Schools with the highest proportion of children not ready to learn at school were located in high social risk schools (e.g., higher unemployment, lower household income).
- The children in Dixie Bloor scored highest in the physical health and well-being area. They scored lowest in the communication skills and general knowledge area.
- Children who attended junior kindergarten scored higher than children who did not attend junior kindergarten in all five of the developmental areas.
- Children who spoke English as a first language scored higher than English as a Second Language (ESL) students in all five developmental areas.
- Girls scored higher than boys in four developmental areas: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, and communication skills and general knowledge.

The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (Statistics Canada, 1996) is a national project which investigates factors affecting the overall development and well-being of children in Canada. Since 1994, data have been collected on children, families, and schools through interviews, questionnaires, and direct assessments. From this survey, results for the Dixie Bloor community include:

- Children scored well on: (1) copying and writing tasks that were not dependent on the use of language, (2) their understanding and use of numbers, and (3) overall cognitive development.
- One in three children have difficulties in the language and cognitive development areas. This is three times above the national average.
- Children scored below the national average for receptive vocabulary (i.e., hearing a word and pointing to the corresponding picture).



THESE RESULTS PROVIDE A BASELINE FOR TRACKING CHILD DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES IN DIXIE BLOOR. ONGOING RESEARCH AND DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES ARE REQUIRED IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY THE LONGITUDINAL PATTERNS THAT EMERGE AND TO DEVELOP EVIDENCE-BASED COMMUNITY ACTION PLANS.

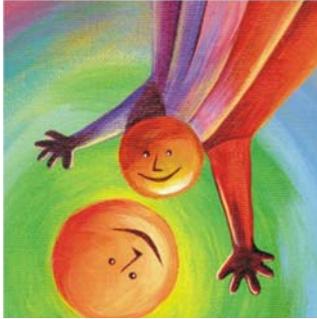
- 15% of parents described their children as being hyperactive.
- Parents gave less than average ratings on measures of social support (i.e., support received from community, family, and friends).

Within the Dixie Bloor community, there are many community-based programs and services that are available to families with young children. Many faith-based organizations are available in the community. The majority of child-centred programs and services available in Dixie Bloor were located where children needed them the most. Many of these programs and services were accessible by public transportation. A wide range of public parks offer waterfront greenbelt, playground, and athletic facilities.

The UEY Dixie Bloor project has advanced our understanding of key issues facing children and families. The research reports have been shared with a wide variety of organizations – social service agencies; municipal, provincial, and federal governments; school boards; and local service, faith-based, and community groups.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE UEY KNOWLEDGE ACTION PLAN:

- PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION FOCUS
- CHILD-FOCUSED AND FAMILY-CENTRED
- NEIGHBOURHOOD-BASED AND COMMUNITY-DRIVEN
- GRASS ROOTS PARTICIPATION
- UNIVERSAL ACCESS
- REFLECTS AND RESPECTS DIVERSITY/EQUITY
- CAPACITY-BUILDING, ASSET-BASED APPROACH
- INCLUSIVE
- ENCOURAGES COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS



SECTION 4: THE KNOWLEDGE ACTION PLAN

The knowledge action plan summarizes information from several sources: (1) key informant interviews, (2) community focus groups, and (3) a review and analysis of the UEY project reports. The knowledge action plan outlines guiding principles, action areas and strategies for translating knowledge into action and developing healthy communities that foster better developmental outcomes for young children.

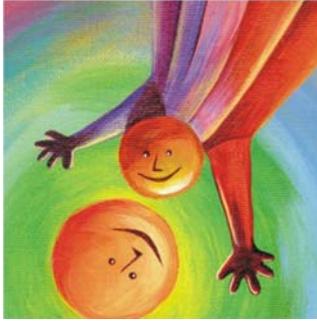
This section identifies and discusses three key action planning areas suggested for further development: (1) sharing research information with Dixie Bloor and the Peel Region community, (2) sustaining a local early years research agenda, and (3) promoting community participation. Concrete strategies, tasks, and functions are identified for each of these three action-oriented goals.

(1) Sharing research information with Dixie Bloor and the Peel Region community.

Ongoing dissemination of research-based evidence is a key objective of UEY. These data should be used as a learning tool within the community. The sharing of information regarding research relevant to the early years will assist in the development of new early years programming and services, research projects, and plans to monitor the progress of children. The UEY research findings need to be communicated in meaningful ways to various groups that can utilize this information to facilitate community and early childhood development.

Strategies

- Dissemination efforts need to target groups not yet reached – e.g., health care professionals, child care providers, leaders of faith-based organizations, business professionals, and isolated parents/caregivers.
- Dissemination efforts need to incorporate a variety of venues and strategies – community forum, developmental calendar, short reports, fact sheets, multi-language radio stations, community newspapers, public awareness campaigns, parent/caregiver fairs, etc. The communication products need to be tailored to the information needs of the audience. Communication must be in multiple languages.
- Expand the UEY website to provide early childhood and community development research reports, resources, and recommendations from local, provincial, federal, and international organizations.
- Contribute to the development and distribution of a Success By 6 Peel report card on the health and well-being of children in the Peel Region.



THIS KNOWLEDGE ACTION PLAN FOR DIXIE BLOOR, MISSISSAUGA IS INTENDED TO BE A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNICATING THE KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM THE PROJECT AND FOR FOSTERING EFFORTS TO BUILD CHILD AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS.

(2) Sustaining a local early years research agenda.

There is an ongoing need to support evidence-based research on early years issues in the Peel Region. It is important to ensure that policy and decision makers in the Region have the most recent and reliable data in order to base actions on these data. Enhanced data sharing among Peel community groups will be instrumental in developing a more comprehensive picture of child development.

Strategies

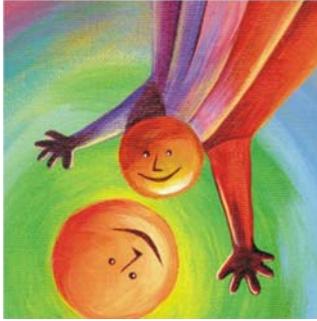
- Contribute to the region-wide community mapping project, and to the training and implementation of the EDI across Peel Region.
- EDI data, census data, and other contextual data need to be tracked in order to identify long-term trends in Dixie Bloor.
- Extend the mandate of UEY to facilitate early years research dialogue in Dixie Bloor and the Peel Region to leverage support for ongoing research.
- Support and encourage evaluation efforts of local early years organizations by providing evaluation resources and training.
- Conduct an evaluation of the impact of the UEY Dixie Bloor project on facilitating early childhood development, community engagement development, and knowledge transfer.

(3) Promoting community participation.

Parents/caregivers, representatives of government, public bodies, and businesses need to increase their awareness of the importance of investing in child and family initiatives. Their active participation in Dixie Bloor and in each Peel community is essential and needs to be encouraged. Collaborative partnerships provide an opportunity for all who work with children and families to make a difference collectively. Community participation involves providing residents with the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue about their communities. Celebrating diversity and practicing inclusiveness are the cornerstones of participation in the Dixie Bloor community.

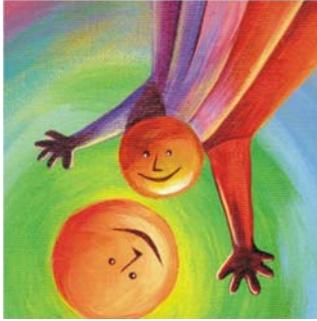
Strategies

- Develop strategies for engaging businesses in an effort to share strategies for workplace practices that support families and young children, and share funding opportunities for programs and resources that support early childhood development in Dixie Bloor.



THE GOAL OF THE UEY PROJECT IS TO HELP COMMUNITIES UNDERSTAND HOW THEIR CHILDREN ARE DOING AND HOW AS A COMMUNITY, THEY CAN BEST RESPOND TO THEIR CHILDREN'S NEEDS.

- Continue to support the community use of schools to improve access to services for children and families – e.g., family literacy and numeracy nights, school hubs/readiness centres.
- Develop relationships among leaders within the community to tap into informal networks, cultural organizations, and faith groups. In collaboration with community leaders and/or community outreach workers, develop appropriate engagement/participation strategies. Develop community outreach strategies for engaging the diverse immigrant communities and other groups in Dixie Bloor. Creative strategies for engaging and empowering community members are required.



SECTION 5: CONCLUSION

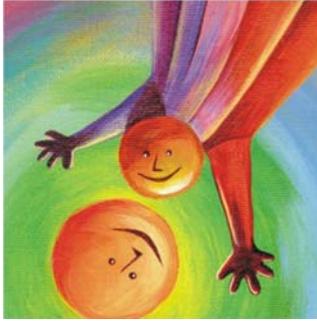
The purpose of this knowledge action plan has been to summarize the overall work of the UEY Dixie Bloor Mississauga project and to clearly map out the project's action steps for the future. Implementation of these three core action priority areas is considered essential to achieving the UEY vision for the Dixie Bloor neighbourhoods of Mississauga.

UEY is a unique project within the Dixie Bloor neighbourhoods of the city of Mississauga. The UEY project has clearly identified the need to strengthen families and children and the need to build healthy communities. This need is particularly urgent given that the UEY project has demonstrated that the early childhood development of the children in Dixie Bloor is embedded in the social fabric of the community.

We must continue to gather new and useful information about the health and well-being of the children who live in Dixie Bloor and the Peel Region. It is imperative that this information be presented and communicated in ways that are useful and relevant to the various audiences in our community.

As a next step, UEY seeks to communicate to a wider audience. It aims to expand the involvement of parents/caregivers and community groups to broaden its research mandate to include greater support for early childhood development research in the Peel Region, and to create new and innovative partnerships with the public and private sector.

THE WHOLE COMMUNITY WILL BENEFIT FROM AN AWARENESS OF THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES, AND FROM THE POLICIES, PROGRAMS/SERVICES, AND RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP LOCAL CHILDREN REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.



REFERENCES

- Connor, S., & Brink, S. (1999). *Understanding the early years: Community impacts on child development*. Working Paper No. W-99-6E. Ottawa: Applied Research Branch, Strategic Policy, Human Resources Development Canada.
- Doherty, G. (1997). *Zero to six: The basis for school readiness*. Research paper No. R-97-8E. Ottawa: Applied Research Branch, Strategic Policy, Human Resources Development Canada.
- Favaro, P., Russell, K., & Gray, E. (2003a). *Community mapping study: Dixie Bloor neighbourhoods, Mississauga, Ontario*. Mississauga: Peel District School Board.
- Favaro, P., Russell, K., & Gray, E. (2003b). *Readiness to learn: Early Development Instrument (EDI), Dixie Bloor neighbourhoods, Mississauga, Ontario*. Mississauga: Peel District School Board.
- Janus, M., & Offord, D. (2000). Readiness to learn at school. *Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, 1, 71-75.
- Keating, D.P., & Hertzman, C. (Eds.). (1999). *Developmental health and the wealth of nations: Social, biological, and educational dynamics*. New York: Guilford Press.
- McCain, M., & Mustard, J.F. (1999). *Early years study: Reversing the real brain drain*. Toronto: Ontario Children's Secretariat.
- McCain, M., & Mustard, J.F. (2002). *The early years study: Three years later*. Toronto: Ontario Children's Secretariat.
- Pelletier, J., & Corter, C. (2005, in press). Integration, Innovation, and Evaluation in School-Based Early Childhood Services. In B. Spodek and O. Sarracho (Eds.), *Handbook of research on the education of young children*, 3rd edition. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Statistics Canada (1996). *Growing up in Canada: National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth*. Ottawa: Human Resources and Development Canada.

Willms, J.D. (Ed.). (2002). *Vulnerable children: Findings from Canada's National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth*. Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press.