



Supporting our Children, Building our Future

**Integrated Early Childhood Services for Families
In Low Income Neighbourhoods**

Phase Two Project Report

November 2012 - June 2013

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List of Abbreviations

ASD-S	Anglophone School District South – covers St. Stephen, Saint John and Hampton areas
BCAPI	Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative
CMHA	Canadian Mental Health Association
EECD	New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
ELC	Early Learning Centre
EYE-DA	Early Years Evaluation – Direct Assessment
FACE – Anglophone South	Family and Childhood Education – formerly Early Intervention – covers Saint Stephen, Saint John & Sussex areas
FRC	Family Resource Centre SJ Inc
PD days	Professional Development Days
SJECDL	Saint John Early Childhood Development Coalition
SJECDL/ECDC	Saint John Early Childhood Development Coalition
Talk with Me	Early Speech and Language service of Anglophone School District South
VSJ	Vibrant Communities Saint John
YMCA	YMCA-YWCA of Greater Saint John

Executive Summary

This report covers Phase II of the *Integrated Early Childhood Services for Families in Low Income Neighbourhoods* project, carried out by the Saint John Early Childhood Coalition (SJECD) between November 2012 and June 2013, with funding from the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Council (ESIC).

Phase I of this project (April - June 2012) focused primarily on research. Through interviews, visits, focus groups and a literature review, the ECDC created a snapshot of programs and activities available to young families, as well as gaps in services, in six low-income neighbourhoods. The groundwork was also laid to establish programs for parents and pre-schoolers in three neighbourhoods by offering *A Recipe for Literacy* in the Old North End, featuring articles on early learning in the spring issue of *Around the Block*¹, and preparing for a new play group at Glen Falls school.

Phase II focused on action, offering an integrated program of activities in three neighbourhoods: Waterloo Village, the Old North End and East Saint John (Glen Falls). In addition, the steering committee worked on building a comprehensive evaluation framework and strategies for strengthening family and community engagement in program planning and delivery.

This phase of the project exceeded its target in terms of participants. A total of 98 families participated in various programs between November 2012 and June 2013. In-kind supports, such as free space within community schools for play groups, increased, and several new program partners were added. A comprehensive evaluation process was put into place to regularly monitor the project's activities and to provide a means for the three neighbourhoods involved in Phase II activities to serve as demonstration sites for future early learning and school partnership development. Eight staff members from five organizations were provided with training. Significant progress was made towards building ongoing sustainability by putting together a "case for support" for parenting programs to be used in approaching potential new partners. Program evaluations and ongoing conversations with participants indicated a strong desire on the part of parents/caregivers to "pay it forward" through volunteering their skills and providing input on programming.

Even within the short time frame, the programs and activities offered in the three neighbourhoods appear to be meeting some of the needs identified in the Phase I research:

- Play groups in three neighbourhoods which did not have them before are offering opportunities for socialisation – for children and their parents/caregivers – and helping children get ready for school
- Through *Kids have Stress Too!* parents now have some strategies for coping with the high levels of stress they are experiencing, but even more importantly, they and their children now have tools for responding in a constructive way to some of the difficult behaviors children use as way of acting out their own stress.
- Through the Kindergarten Transition Program, the pre-k classrooms set up through various partnerships and *Fun to be Four*, 4 and 5-year olds, especially those who scored "yellow" or "red" on the EYE-DA testing were able to prepare for school entry in September 2013. Parents of these children were able to prepare for the coming school year as well. These sessions even uncovered some new areas where specific children could benefit from additional support in the early school years. School principals, who typically get to meet only about half of the children who will be attending kindergarten before their first day of school, were able to connect with families who will soon be joining their school communities.

¹ Saint John's community newspaper, published quarterly.

- Based on parent feed-back, the *Heart-to-Heart* program helped mothers and fathers of 0-2 year olds create positive bonds with their infants.

The principal needs identified in the Phase I research that have not been addressed are:

- Programs to support fathers
- Programs during the summer months and on weekends
- Recreational opportunities for very young children²
- Access to day care spaces (esp. for infants) and support for parents in evaluating the quality of available day care spaces

These needs were mentioned again by families and service providers during Phase II. However, in order to keep focussed on the core goal of building parents/caregiver's parenting skills, the project partners will need to look at how best to meet these needs going forward.

What worked well during this period included:

- focussing on three neighbourhoods
- positive and active collaboration with the community schools
- strong partnerships, including the active participation of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Anglophone School District South, that allowed activities and programs to be promoted through several channels, and provided a great deal of flexibility to respond quickly to new situations
- enriching program content and delivery through co-facilitation
- an efficient division of labour through the effective use of the steering committee, programming committee and working groups as needed

Challenges included:

- maintaining momentum while major organizational changes were taking place between summer 2012 and spring 2013
- delays in the start-up of the newest play groups (Old North End and Waterloo Village) meant less time to reach out to parents in these neighbourhoods and build up attendance
- setting aside time/resources for the ongoing nurturing of partnerships
- fitting new programs into already-full schedules
- defining what can realistically be accomplished in terms of evaluation - versus what is ultimately needed in order to build a strong case for support built on concrete data

The momentum for early childhood development in Saint John, that began during the Understanding the Early Years project in 2005-2008, and carried through Phase I of this project in Spring 2012, definitely continued to build during Phase II, and will very likely continue into any future activities.

The SJECD expresses its gratitude to the Economic and Social Inclusion Council for its support, and looks forward to continuing to work together towards a better future for the youngest citizens in Saint John's low-income neighbourhoods and their families.

² Most recreational programs offered at community centres start at 6 years, few green spaces in the priority neighbourhoods, none with age-appropriate equipment for pre-schoolers...

*In Saint John, 34% of
children under the age of six
are living in poverty*

Statistics Canada, 2006

Introduction

This report covers Phase II of the *Integrated Early Childhood Services for Families in Low Income Neighbourhoods* project, carried out by the Saint John Early Childhood Coalition (SJECD) between November 2012 and June 2013, with funding from the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Council (ESIC).

Phase I of this project (April - June 2012) focused primarily on research. Through interviews, visits, focus groups and a literature review, the ECDC created a snapshot of programs and activities available to young families, as well as gaps in services, in six low-income neighbourhoods. The groundwork was also laid for establishing programs for parents and pre-schoolers in three neighbourhoods by offering *A Recipe for Literacy* in the Old North End, featuring articles on early learning in the spring issue of *Around the Block*³, and preparing for a new play group at Glen Falls School.

Phase II focused on action, offering an integrated program of activities in three neighbourhoods: Waterloo Village, the Old North End and East Saint John. In addition, the steering committee worked on building a comprehensive evaluation framework for measuring outcomes, as well as strategies for strengthening family and community engagement and leadership in program planning and delivery.

The first section of this document will review the activities and accomplishments that took place towards reaching the project goals. It will be followed by an analysis of what worked well and what was challenging in carrying out the project. The third section of the report will look at two key evaluation questions: 1) *Is the project meeting the needs identified in the Phase 1 research?* and 2) *Are participants (parents/caregivers and children) satisfied with the programming that is being offered?* The report will end with some potential action items and suggestions for moving forward.

This report reflects the work of many partners, including parents and community organizations in the various neighbourhoods. This work was driven by a small, but very active and dedicated steering committee:

Silvia Borsic, Family Resource Centre SJ Inc.
Dr. Anne M. Murphy, Horizon Health Network
Cathy Wright, Vibrant Communities Saint John
Monica Chaperlin, Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative (BCAPI)
Gary Hall, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Laura Garland, *Talk with Me* Early Language Program, Anglophone School District-South
Janet Towers, YMCA-YWCA of Greater Saint John
Jenette Forbes, FACE⁴ – Anglophone South

³ Saint John's community newspaper, published quarterly.

⁴ FACE – Family and Child Education (Formerly Early Intervention)

Debbie Fisher, Partners Assisting Local Schools (PALS) Program⁵

Patricia Allan-Clark, ESIC Project Coordinator, was responsible for partnership development and coordination, research and evaluation, as well as providing logistical support.

The steering committee engaged an external consultant, Ellen Snider, to complete a literature review of current best practices in parent/family supports, to assist in the development of an evaluation framework and to guide the committee in building a “business case” for investing in parenting/family supports. Ms. Snider has a background in Education, and worked with the SJECD on the Understanding the Early Years project in 2005-2008.

The contributions of all project partners and contributors are gratefully acknowledged.

"In this particular building, we work very, very hard to decrease the gap that poverty can create. To try to eliminate to the best of our ability the marginalization of children based on socio-economic status."

Tina Estabrooks, Principal, Centennial School⁶

"The sooner that we can work with the children to get them used to the social skills that they need, to get them used to the routines that they need, and to get them settled in as to what to expect as far as academics go when they get in to the classroom, the better off they will be...."

Anthony Doiron, Acting Principal, Hazen White-Saint Francis School⁷

⁵ Left the steering committee mid-project due to other work-related commitments.

⁶ Principal Receives Provincial Award, Saint John Telegraph Journal, June 6, 2013

⁷ Pre-Kindergarten Program Funding Renewed for Another Year. Saint John Telegraph-Journal, May 29, 2013

Project Results

Goal	Major Activities & Accomplishments (Outcomes)	Status
Through the engagement of low income families, establish early childhood programming for parents and children (0-5 years) tailored to the needs of three low-income neighborhoods in Saint John.	<p>Total participants: 98 families in 3+ neighbourhoods⁸ Phase 2 Target: 75 families in 3 neighbourhoods</p> <p>Parent/Caregiver & Child Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New play groups set up at Glen Falls school⁹ (30 families), Prince Charles school¹⁰ (7 families) and Centennial school¹¹ (15 families); Duration: ongoing; each playgroup open 1 day/week x 2 hours • <i>Heart-to-Heart</i> program delivered by Family & Child Education (FACE) at Y Prince Edward Square (8 families /11 parents & 10 children); Duration: 6 sessions, 1/week x 2 hours • <i>Fun to be Four</i> program delivered at Centennial school (8 families); Duration: 4 sessions; 1/week x 2 hours <p>Parent/Caregiver-Focused Activities¹²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kids Have Stress Too!</i> (KHST) program delivered by 	Activities completed

⁸ Some programs included families from neighbourhoods other than Waterloo Village, Old North End and East Side; number of families participating in *Kids Have Stress Too!* based on number of evaluation forms received (16, 5 & 9) as spouses often filled out evaluations together.

⁹ Community School for East Saint John

¹⁰ Community School for Waterloo Village

¹¹ Community School for Old North End

¹² Workshops designed specifically for parents; child care provided as needed.

Goal	Major Activities & Accomplishments (Outcomes)	Status
	<p>Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Saint John Branch/Family Resource Centre/Anglophone School District-South at Glen Falls school (21 parents/caregivers + 6 children), Centennial school (7 parents/caregivers + 1 child), and Prince Charles school (13 parents/caregivers + 7 children); Duration (Each course): 2 sessions; 1/week x 2 hours</p>	
<p>Establish partnerships that will help build sustainability for the programs started during the Phase 2 project and assist with the growth of new quality, accessible, early childhood programs and services for parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit by Margaret McCain to Saint John Early Learning Centre (February 15th); 25 community & business partners in discussions around next steps for NB pilot early learning centres • Playgroup space acquired free-of-charge in 3 community schools • Additional funding obtained from Communities Raising Children (CRC) program for neighbourhood-based initiatives • Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Saint John Branch new program delivery partner <i>for Kids Have Stress Too!</i> • Program content enriched by co-facilitation: ex Public Health participating in <i>Fun to be Four</i>; Family Resource Centre adding early childhood development expertise to <i>Kids Have Stress Too!</i> • FACE and Family Resource Centre delivered K-Readiness program in 6 schools, filling gap left by departure of Transition to School coordinators • Visits/presentations to organizations serving 	<p>Activities Completed</p>

Goal	Major Activities & Accomplishments (Outcomes)	Status
	children with special/additional needs: NBACL, social development , Child & Adolescent Mental Health, Stepping Stones, Community Autism Centre)	
Establish an effective Evaluation Process for the Phase II Project that will 1) regularly monitor the project's activities, 2) provide a means for the three neighbourhoods to serve as demonstration sites for future early learning and school partnership development, and 3) provide the necessary data to write a summary report to be used to support Phase III funding requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation framework in place; steering committee reviewing lessons learned in preparation for future programming. • Consultant hired to support evaluation/sustainability framework process • Evaluation form developed for play groups¹³ • Feed-back forms collected and compiled for all programs delivered during Phase II • Participation in 3 webinars on early childhood indicators, community schools involvement in early childhood development; social return on investment (SROI); contacts established and information exchanged with early childhood initiatives in Ontario and USA 	Activities Completed
Provide staff working in the neighbourhoods with training.	<p>Total staff trained: 8 staff from 5 organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Family Resource centre staff and Public Health Nurse from Anglophone School District South completed certification to become <i>Kids Have</i> 	In Progress

¹³ To be implemented in newest playgroups at 6-month mark

Goal	Major Activities & Accomplishments (Outcomes)	Status
	<p><i>Stress Too!</i> facilitators by taking lead facilitation roles at Glen Falls, Centennial & Prince Charles sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YMCA playgroup coordinator mentored by Early Learning Centre and Family Resource Center staff • Training provided by <i>Talk with Me</i> staff for 4 additional Fun to be Four facilitators/assistants • Discussions held with Early Childhood Director; EECD re. including early childhood educators & topics related to NB Early Childhood Development Curriculum Framework in 2013-2014 Professional Development (PD) days 	
Provide a one stop location for promoting Saint John early childhood programming in a parent-friendly way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>FoggyKids</i> Facebook page set up by 2 parents; currently has over 1,000 followers and growing rapidly • Discussion at Coalition table around expanding school websites and newsletters to include community-based events, and need for service-providers to have access to up-to-date calendar of programs and services - to be developed in tandem with ASD-S Early Childhood portal • Resources identified for expanding use of social media in promoting events & services 	In Progress
Provide outreach to parents in the three neighbourhoods through referrals from community partners, community events, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play groups and workshops promoted through word of mouth, Face book, e-mails, flyers distributed to day cares & community 	Activities Completed

Goal	Major Activities & Accomplishments (Outcomes)	Status
meeting with families to assess their interests and desires for specific programs.	<p>organizations in each neighbourhood, local radio stations; meetings with key neighbourhood groups; school voice-mails to parents, web sites & newsletters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 Family Resource Centre play groups¹⁴ visited by FRC Executive Director & Board member; evaluation included feed-back on play groups + suggestions for future parent-based workshops and opportunities for parents to volunteer time/skills; 	
Support and strengthen meaningful partnerships between schools, community-based organizations and parents in providing the best possible support to families with young children, so that each understands and appreciates the other's role and expertise (e.g. family literacy programs, early speech and language development, 3.5 screenings, pre-kindergarten readiness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group held with 4 ELC parents/grandparents to obtain feed-back on ELC operations, specific projects for parent involvement, and begin process of establishing a neighbourhood-based "Parent Advisory Committee" in South-End • 40 playgroup parents indicated they are interested in volunteering in various aspects of program development & promotion • Active participation of ASD-S Director of Early Childhood Services in Project Steering Committee and Coalition Meetings; regular updates and discussions on evolution of services and formation of EECD Early Childhood Networks • New/returning partners at ECDC table include: United Way, Boys & Girls Club, Social Development, day care operators 	Activities Completed

¹⁴ Includes play groups in South End, West Side, East Side, Crescent Valley (priority neighbourhoods) + rural outreach

Goal	Major Activities & Accomplishments (Outcomes)	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-facilitation of <i>Fun to be Four</i> (Talk with Me, Public Health & Family Resource Centre); <i>Kids Have Stress Too</i> (CMHA, Family Resource Centre, Healthy Learners); <i>K-Readiness</i> (FACE-Anglophone South + Family Resource Centre) 	
Provide parents with connections and referrals to other services including education, training and employment-related services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings with Saint John Learning Exchange, Power Up, Learn & Go¹⁵ and Saint John Volunteer Centre to introduce ECDC and explore partnering options for supporting parents' return to work, education, community involvement Ongoing information & support provided to parents through one-on-one conversations with play group coordinators and program facilitators in response to specific requests Regular visits by <i>Talk with Me</i> and staff from other service providers to playgroups; one-on-one discussions with parents on specific questions Process started to have a day-care assistance worker from Social Development at Early Learning Centre on regular basis (weekly visits); can also serve other south-end residents 	In Progress
Develop, refine, and begin implementation of a sustainability framework that will assist in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultant guided Coalition members in establishing a "Business Case" for investing in 	

¹⁵ Neighbourhood-based leadership development programs run by Vibrant Communities Saint John, Urban Core Support Network and Saint John Community Loan Fund.

Goal	Major Activities & Accomplishments (Outcomes)	Status
<p>leveraging existing and new community resources and opportunities that will contribute to providing essential supports for families with young children living in the three neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>activities and programs supporting parents/caregivers of young children; tools developed for presenting this case to potential new investors (Appendix C)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase III proposal submitted to ESIC on April 12th, includes goal of \$5,000 in new contributions • Internet research completed on sustainability strategies and tools 	<p>Activities completed</p>
<p>Complete a summary report that describes the programs and partnerships, reports on their effectiveness and potential for sustainability, and defines next steps in the development of parent and early childhood programs in the three neighbourhoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitted to ESIC June 2013 	<p>Activities Completed</p>

Analysis

This section of the report will take a step back from the list of activities and accomplishments in order to provide some analysis of the overall project experience.

What worked well?

Given the short time frame, and the significant changes happening within several partner organizations¹⁶, it was extremely helpful to **focus on three neighbourhoods**, rather than working in all six low-income neighbourhoods researched in Phase I.

This was also helped along by a very **positive and active collaboration with the community schools** in these 3 neighbourhoods – Glen Falls, Centennial and Prince Charles. School principals and staff were very helpful in making space and equipment available for playgroups and evening programs, getting the word out to parents via voicemails, websites and bulletin boards, and welcoming parents attending programs into their schools. The community school coordinators also played a critical role in reaching out to each neighbourhood.



Creative play time at East Side (Glen Falls) play group, January 2013

The strong working partnerships among SJECD members meant that **activities and programs were promoted through several networks**. It also meant that there was a great deal of **flexibility to respond quickly to new situations**. A key example of this partnership and flexibility in action: When it became clear that there would very likely be no K-readiness programs offered this year in the school district, because of the departure of the transition-to-school coordinators and other changes linked to the integration of Early Childhood Services and Education, it was possible to pull together a new kindergarten transition program within one month. The 3-week Kindergarten Transition (KTP) Program was delivered in six schools between May 14th and May 31st, and was co-facilitated by staff from FACE Anglophone South and the Family Resource Centre. SJECD members knew that three other schools were offering kindergarten readiness activities, either through partnerships with private-sector firms or other funding sources. They were then able to target Centennial, the only community school that was not going to be covered, to deliver *Fun to be Four*. This

¹⁶Arrival of Director, Early Childhood Services in September 2012; integration of Early Childhood Services, *including Talk with Me* (and eventually early intervention) into Anglophone School District South, including a physical move into Ecole Millidgeville North, amalgamation of three early intervention agencies into one regional agency, changes in Community School Coordinators...

program was co-facilitated by staff from *Talk with Me*, Public Health and the Family Resource Center. The overall combined effort resulted in K-readiness programs being offered in this area which were very similar to those offered by the school district in the past.

Programs were enriched through co-facilitation. Staff from different organizations brought a variety of expertise to program delivery, which significantly enriched the programs for parents. For example, facilitators from the Family Resource Centre were able to combine their knowledge of early childhood development with CMHA's knowledge about managing stress and building mental wellness to provide a broader knowledge base for parents attending *Kids have Stress Too*. A public health nurse was able to provide parents with hands-on experience testing new recipes at each *Fun to be Four* session, as well as suggestions for healthy school lunches and snacks. This nicely complimented the work *Talk with Me* staff were doing to prepare parents and children for Kindergarten through reading, songs, word games and crafts.



Wherever and whenever needed, staff from the YMCA Early Childhood Centres provided reliable, stimulating child care while parents attended sessions. These types of collaborations are good examples of situations where “the whole adds up to more than the sum of its parts” and benefitted both participants and program partners.

The project was given a tremendous boost by the fact that **the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Anglophone School District South have been active partners.**

Having the Director of Early Childhood Services for Anglophone as the project steering committee was especially helpful in this time of transition. In return, the Steering Committee has also been able to support the Department and School District in these transitions with its collective expertise and community connections.

The **project steering committee** was small enough to be manageable, yet included all the necessary players to provide essential input and direction. It met at just the right points during the project to keep activities moving ahead at a good pace. A program committee and smaller **working groups for each program** took care of details, without holding up the larger group. Overall, there was a very **efficient division of labour** between partners.

What was tricky? (challenging)

Major organizational changes taking place between summer 2012 and spring 2013 resulted in some temporary gaps in service for families, and some confusion for parents/caregivers, as to where to access services (ex: K-Readiness). As information became available, front-line staff in different community organizations who were in direct contact with these families were able to provide some guidance and referrals.

Nurturing partnerships takes time and effort, even among partners that have been working together for several years. In a project like this, which involves many partners and programs, it is always important to explicitly recognize and value each organization's complementary contributions and strengths. However, it has not always been easy to do so when time and resources to produce the required outcomes are limited. Opportunities for co-facilitation and mentorship/cross-training between organizations have been a key element in the relationship-building process, especially for front-line staff.

Fitting new programs into already-full schedules is an ongoing challenge for community organizations, school principals and, most of all, for families. It is also becoming clear that the organizations involved are reaching maximum capacity, especially in terms of the number of skilled facilitators available to lead parenting programs. One hopeful note in this area is that the expanded mandate for FACE Anglophone South has opened the door to adding new staff and more group-based activities within that organization.

Two specific items on the work plan took longer than expected to get started. Working through the set-up of the playgroup spaces at Centennial and Prince Charles schools, and finding the right coordinator for these play groups, took three months longer than originally planned, and resulted in less time to reach out to the community to build up the number of parents and children attending on a regular basis. Although still small, these playgroups are now established, are well-appreciated by the parents and children who are attending, and are seen by their school principals as an important part of their school communities. Given time to grow, the new play groups should be able to provide an "anchor" for community outreach and other programs in these neighbourhoods.

Defining what could realistically be accomplished in Phase II in terms of evaluation - versus what is ultimately needed in order to build a strong case for support built on concrete data - was challenging for both the Consultant and the steering committee members. That said, the end product delivered by the consultant will be very useful to the Steering Committee and the broader Early Childhood Development Coalition. The project coordinator and consultant are continuing to work together to build the comprehensive evaluation framework needed to support the project moving forward.¹⁷ (See Appendix D)

*"Thank you for
helping my family
to blossom. If
there is ever
anything I can
do, just ask."*

¹⁷ The specific evaluation framework for Phase II is included in the appendices to this document. The comprehensive evaluation framework will be finalized by the Steering Committee in September 2013.

Thank you card to the Family Resource Centre
June, 2013

Conclusion

This section of the report will refer back to the Phase I research findings, and look at direct feed-back from participants in the programs offered between October 2012 and June 2013, to

answer the following questions: 1) Are we meeting the needs identified in the Phase One Research? and 2) Are participants (parents/caregivers and children) satisfied with what is being offered?



“Circle Time”, Fun to be Four, May 2013

Are we meeting the needs identified in the Phase I Research?

Even within the short time frame, it does appear that the programs and activities offered in the three neighbourhoods are meeting some of the needs identified in the Phase I Research:

- By focussing on the East Side, Old North End and Waterloo Village, the project zeroed-in on the neighbourhoods that were identified in Phase I as under-served in terms of accessible, quality programs for young families. This is especially important when combined with the transportation challenges faced by parents travelling with a stroller or with more than one young child, also part of the Phase I research findings.
- There are now playgroups in three neighbourhoods which did not have them before. This responds directly to feed-back from parents/caregivers in these neighbourhoods who expressed a need for more activities that prepare their children for school and offer opportunities for socialisation, both for their children and for themselves. In several studies, playgroups have been shown to meet a definite need in preparing children to learn.
- Having difficulty meeting basic needs is a definite stress factor on parents and, the mental health challenges of parents and children are a growing issue. Some parents become so overwhelmed they literally “check out” and leave the parenting to community organizations and schools.¹⁸ Based on the number of registrations, and the active dialogue during sessions, The *Kids have Stress Too!* program appears to have given parents some strategies for coping with the high levels of stress they are experiencing, but even more importantly, given them and their children tools for responding in a constructive way to some of the difficult behaviors children use as way of acting out their own stress. Coping with difficult behaviours was also a common theme in Phase I interviews and focus groups. In the broader context, EYE-DA results in Saint John’s low-income neighbourhoods have typically been lower in the areas of social and emotional development, and the tools parents learn to help their young children through *Kids Have Stress Too!* directly influence young children’s social and emotional development.

¹⁸ Phase I interviews with parents and community partners.

- Connecting with families whose 4-year olds will soon be attending kindergarten was mentioned by community school principals in the Phase I research as an important, ongoing challenge. A number of school principals said that they typically get to meet only about half of the children who will be attending kindergarten before their first day of school. Some children may not have gone through EYE-DA testing, so the first two months of the school year are often spent identifying potential problems, helping these children in particular adjust to routines and catch up to other children in the classroom.¹⁹ Parents had, and still have, many concerns about understanding EYE-DA results, and about how to help their children who score “yellow” (experiencing some difficulty); and red, or “red” (experiencing significant difficulty) on EYE-DA testing get ready for school - keeping in mind that, overall, children in Saint John’s low-income neighbourhoods are still at higher risk of scoring poorer EYE-DA results. Even with a shortened time-frame for the Kindergarten transition program, when combined with the work done through other partnerships and resources, and the *Fun to be Four* session in the Old North End, Phase II of the project was able to respond to some of these needs.²⁰
- Service providers, especially those involved in home visits (Public Health and Family and Child Education), mentioned the critical importance of parent-child bonding in the first months of life to the future well-being and success of the child, and the well-being of the family unit as a whole. Based on parent feed-back, the *Heart-to-Heart* program offered during Phase II, appears to have been very helpful in this area for parents of 0-2 year olds. It was especially positive to see three fathers attending, and really appreciating, this program.

The principal needs identified in the Phase I research that have not been addressed are:

- Programs to support fathers
- Programs during the summer months and on weekends
- Recreational opportunities for very young children²¹
- Access to day care spaces (esp. for infants) and support for parents in evaluating the quality of available day care spaces

These needs were mentioned again by families and service providers during Phase II. However, in order to keep focussed on the core goal of building parents/caregiver’s parenting skills, the project partners will need to look at how best to meet these needs going forward.

¹⁹ It is interesting to note that a number of school districts and community organizations in the United States are also putting an emphasis on encouraging parents to register early for Kindergarten into order to help bridge any potential learning gaps, especially in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

²⁰ With the new mandate given to FACE Anglophone South to administer the EYE-DA tests, the 2013-2014 transition to kindergarten program should be able to start in the fall. It should also be much stronger overall, given the expanded mandate of several organizations to work with children up to the age of 8 years old.

²¹ Most recreational programs offered at community centres start at 6 years, few green spaces in the priority neighbourhoods, none with age-appropriate equipment for pre-schoolers...

That said, the Steering Committee is confident that the project and its activities will continue to address the needs identified by parents as time and resources allow.

Are participants (parents/caregivers and children) satisfied with what is being offered?

Without going into the specific evaluations of each program²², it is possible to say that the response of participants, both children and their parents/caregivers, to the programs and activities offered during Phase II was overwhelmingly positive. Here is a sampling of comments from various evaluation forms that touch specifically on what parents/caregivers gained from their participation:

"I enjoyed learning the different cues and play and the different things to do with our kids. I really enjoyed the scrapbooking. It was my first time. The class was awesome. It was nice to get to be with other parents."

Heart-to-Heat participant, March 2013

"(My child has learned) how to play with other children. I have learned to respect other ways of parenting and that every child is different and special"

Glen Falls playgroup parent, April 2013

"I would say it is a good program"

"I would definitely be interested in returning if the play group is re-offered in the fall."

Centennial playgroup parents, June 2013

"I Think..."

- *That this class was helpful. It opened my eyes to what I'm doing right and didn't realize it. I'm also seeing where my husband and I can improve."*

"I Feel..."

- *Grateful that this program was offered as I have several stresses in my life at the present time.*
- *I am better equipped to handle my own stress, and can make better choices to assist my kids with the stressors we are facing as a family these days.*
- *That I will be better able to cope with the stresses my kids experience in life."*

A change I noticed in my child...

- *She wants to talk about things.*
- *They are smiling more and the tantrums are becoming less frequent.*

Kids Have Stress Too! participants, April, May, June 2013

²² Summaries of all program evaluations are included in the appendices to this report.

"Seeing my son smile and interact with everyone was the best (thing about the program)"

"(I would recommend this service to a friend, family member or co-worker) because it's good to help the kids get ready for school."

Fun to be Four participants, May 2013

Program participants also had some very useful feed-back on how programs could be improved, particularly around the best time of day to offer programs, and how accessibility could be improved even further by making transportation available to all participants. However, perhaps the most important suggestion for improving the programs is best summed up in the following comment from a *Kids Have Stress Too!* participant:

"I Wish ...

This program and more parenting programs were more often at this school."

In response to the request from parents in the Glen Falls neighbourhood for a second playgroup morning each week, the Family Resource Centre offered a *Crafts, Crafts, Crafts* program at this location in April/May. During Phase I, parents on the Lower West Side had also made a very clear request for a second play group morning in that neighbourhood, if resources become available.

In summary, we can conclude that the momentum for early childhood development in Saint John, that actually began during the Understanding the Early Years project in 2005-2008, and carried through to Phase I of this project in Spring 2012, has continued to build during Phase II, and will very likely to continue into any future activities.

"The Early Learning Centre helps us when we need it and shows us how we can help others when they need it too. We like it here and wouldn't go anywhere else because our kids are happy and learning a lot for school."

Excerpt from "Krystal's Story";
YMCA-YWCA of Greater Saint John

Next Steps

The SJECD and Vibrant Communities Saint John have submitted a proposal to ESIC for Phase III of the *Integrated Early Childhood Services for Families in Low Income Neighbourhoods* project, to take place September 2013 - April 2014.

Key elements of this project will be:

1. Moving from pilot programs in three neighbourhoods to working in all six low-income neighbourhoods where Vibrant Communities and the community schools program are active, the ultimate goal being the establishment of an “early learning centre”²³ in each of these neighbourhoods, involving parents/caregivers, schools, community agencies, neighbourhood groups and private sector partners
2. Building program integration and sustainability. This will include continuing to work in close collaboration with Anglophone School District – South, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the future Early Childhood Development Networks, as well as using the business case for investing in parent/family supports developed in Phase II to identify and secure new funding partners and capacity
3. Implementing a comprehensive evaluation framework and strategies for strengthening parent engagement and leadership

Based on the experience to date, incorporating the following points in the Phase III work plan will help make the project even stronger going forward:

- Continuing to enrich program delivery - for the benefit of parents and staff - through co-facilitation and introducing new curriculum elements using the diversity of program partners’ expertise
- Developing human resources, both in terms of number and the skill set of facilitators, through cross-training, (i.e. opportunities for staff to learn from staff in other organizations) and mentoring, and by including early childhood educators and family educators in professional development opportunities offered by Anglophone School District South.
- Creating a set of program definitions and benchmarks for (ex. “playgroups”, “parenting programs”) that will help program partners adopt some common practices and expectations, while respecting the uniqueness of each organization, facilitator and neighbourhood. This will also mean that, even though each neighbourhood is unique, parents will be able to have some consistency and continuity in service across programs and neighbourhoods.

²³ An “early learning centre” may look quite different in each neighbourhood, but will include the core elements of day care, parenting supports, kindergarten readiness, and regular access to key services such as public health, speech-language development, etc. - all linked to a community school as the central “hub”.

- Establishing a common set of indicators and common evaluation tools that can measure outcomes and concrete data across programs and over time
- Maintaining flexibility in “testing out” different forms of parent engagement and leadership development, in order to find what works best in each neighbourhood
- Diversifying resources to ensure sustainability and build program capacity

Once again, the SJECD expresses its gratitude to the Economic and Social Inclusion Council for its support. We look forward to continuing our work together towards a better future for the youngest citizens in Saint John’s low-income neighbourhoods and their families.

“If a seed of lettuce will not grow, we do not blame the lettuce. Instead, the fault lies with us for not having nourished the seed properly.”

Buddhist Proverb

Appendices:

- A. Updated SJECDL backgrounder
- B. SJECDL Contact list
- C. Parenting Programs for Families in Saint John's Priority Neighbourhoods: A Case for Support (Consultant's Report)
- D. Phase II Evaluation Framework
- E. Program Evaluation Summaries

Early Childhood Development Coalition

Supporting our Children, Building our Future

Saint John Early Childhood Development Coalition (SJECD)

The SJECD was formed in March of 2002 with the following vision:

For the benefit of children and families, stakeholders will collaborate together on key issues and strategies to develop, promote and celebrate quality early childhood education and development in Greater Saint John, accessible to all.

The Saint John Early Childhood Development Coalition (SJECD) is a partnership of individuals from business, government and the community who are committed to working together to strengthen the capacity of Saint John neighbourhoods to support families with children 0-5 years of age.

Members of the SJECD understand how positive learning experiences during the earliest years of life are critical to a healthy childhood and success as adults. They also know that every dollar invested in quality early childhood education has tremendous returns later on in life. There are also long term social and economic benefits for individuals, families and communities.

Over the years, the SJECDL has supported a number of initiatives that have helped to improve early childhood outcomes and readiness for school:

- Information, education and training sessions for service providers;
- A family-focused website - SJ Kid (Discontinued in 2012 due to lack of funding);
- An electronic childcare database (<http://sjhdc.ca/community-database/>);
- Assisting the community to provide various neighbourhood-based early childhood programs and outreach services;
- Special community events for young families;
- An *Understanding the Early Years* (HRSD-C) research project that measured every child's readiness for school in School District 8 (2008);
- Establishing the Early Learning Centre at St. John the Baptist-King Edward School in 2009 - Saint John's first comprehensive early childhood development centre bringing together education, health and child care services under one roof, to serve young children and their parents;

In 2012, with funding from the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC) and other sources, the SJECDL involved over 220 families and community members in defining and developing new opportunities for Saint John's youngest citizens and their families in low-income neighbourhoods. A report highlighting the resources and opportunities in each neighbourhood laid the foundation for work now taking place that is demonstrating high quality parenting and parent-child programs for families in the Old North End, Waterloo Village and East Saint John. The SJECDL and neighbourhood leaders are building on many strong partnerships in order to reach out to young families and involve them in putting together the programs and services they need. The SJECDL plans to expand its work to three more neighbourhoods in 2013-2014.

Member Organizations of the SJECDL:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anglophone School District South • NB Dept. of Social Development • Horizon Health Network • Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative (BCAPI) • Vibrant Communities Saint John • The Family Resource Centre (S.J.) Inc. • Family and Early Childhood Education (FACE) – Anglophone South • Saint John YMCA-YWCA • First Steps Housing • Learning Disabilities Association SJ • PALS Community Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saint John Boys and Girls Club • United Way of Greater Saint John • Canadian Mental Health Association • UNB • NBCC • City of Saint John • Saint John Human Development Council • Quality Learning New Brunswick • Early Childhood Care and Education NB • Sisters of Charity I.C. • Crescent Valley Resource Centre • ONE Change
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For more information, please contact:

Silvia Borsic

c/o The Family Resource Centre (S.J.) Inc.

633-2182

saintjohn@frc-crf.com

Saint John Early Childhood Development Coalition

List of Partners

June, 2013

Sharon, Amirault, Executive Director, First Steps Housing Inc.
Wendy Barron-Belmore, ONE Change Inc.
Pam Bolton, Coordinator, Child Care Centres - Anglophone School District South
Silvia Borsic, Executive Director, Family Resource Center SJ Inc.
Jane Breckenridge, Program Manager, Dept. Social Development
Cheryl Brown, Quality Learning NB/Director, West Side Coop Preschool
Monica, Chaperlin, Coordinator, Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative (BCAPI)
Mona, Clark, Director, South End Day Care
Jeff Collette, Manager, Child & Youth Program, Community Mental Health Services, Horizon Health Network
Scott Crawford, Community Development; Horizon Health/ONE Change
Carla Daniels, Executive Director, Centenary Queen Square Care Centres
Lori Doyle, Principal, Prince Charles School
Anne Driscoll, Executive Director, Crescent Valley Resource Centre
Lynn Ann Duffley, Dept. Healthy & Inclusive Communities
Emily English, Workplace Essential Skills, NB Dept. Post-Secondary Education, Training & Labour
Tina Estabrooks, Principal, Centennial School
Debbie Fisher, Coordinator, PALS program
Jenette Forbes, F.A.C.E. – Anglophone South
Sharon Gainforth, Executive Director, Stepping Stones
Laura Garland, Coordinator Talk with Me – Early Language Program Anglophone School District South
Melody Griffin, Director, Saint John Pregnancy Resource Centre
Gary Hall, Director, Early Childhood Services; NB Dept. Education & Early Childhood Development
Randy Hatfield, Executive Director, Saint John Human Development Council
Meggin Huisman, Hampton Alliance for Lifelong Learning/CMHA
Sarah Ingalls, Parent
Erica Lane, Community Engagement Coordinator; Anglophone School District - South
Lori Lofstrom, Guidance Consultant/ SJ Education Centre & West Side Guidance Team
Wendy MacDermott, United Way of Greater Saint John
Megan McCann, Social Worker, Special Needs Children, Social Development
Debbie McDonald, Executive Director, Community Autism Centre
Sandra McGowan, Program Services Manager, Saint John Boys & Girls Club
Fabienne McKay, Office Coordinator, Learning Disabilities Association, Saint John
Lissa McNaughton-Dickie, Coordinator, Child Care Centres - Anglophone School District South
Anne M. Murphy, M.D., Developmental Pediatrician; Horizon Health Network
Stephanie Ness, Executive Director, Kings County Family Resource Centre (Sussex)
Debbie Nichol, Special Needs, Dept. of Social Development

Dawn O'Dell, Executive Director, CMHA, Saint John Branch
Brenda Phillips, Public Health; Horizon Health Network
Terry-Lynn Pollock, Child Development Specialist, First Steps Housing Inc.
Sylvie Poulain, Healthy Communities Coordinator, ASD-S
Margot Ringuette, Director, SJ Early Learning Centre
Christine Roy, Principal, Saint John the Baptist/King Edward School
Isabel Savoie, Dept. Health & Inclusive Communities,
Amy Shanks, Executive Director, Saint John Boys & Girls Club
Vicki Smith, Coordinator, Child Care Centres - Anglophone School District South
Alberta Stanton, Healthy Learners, Saint John Education Centre, Anglophone School District South
Lidwina Taylor, Public Health; Horizon Health
Janet Towers, Vice-President, Child & Family Development, YMCA-YWCA of Greater Saint John
Cathy Wright, Social Planner, Vibrant Communities SJ
Kathy Young, Principal, Glen Falls School

Integrated Early Childhood Services in Low Income Neighbourhoods (ESIC) Project – Phase II
Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Question	Data Collection	Resp./Timeline
What are the primary characteristics of a quality, accessible parenting program in a priority neighbourhood?	Literature review (library/internet)	Consultant June 30th
Do the three pilot priority neighbourhood programs meet the defined characteristics of a quality, accessible parenting (or parent/child) program?	Case for Support Document: <i>What are the characteristics of a quality parenting program?</i>	List of Characteristics finalized by Steering Committee (June/Sept)
Do the programs offered meet the needs identified in the priority neighbourhoods in Phase I?	Phase I report (summary chart by neighbourhood; key themes)	Project Coordinator June 30th
Are participants satisfied with the programs being offered?	Participant Surveys Feed-back from program facilitators/lead organizations for each program	Distributed by Program Facilitators (Feb-June) Compiled by Project Coordinator June 30 th Review by Program Committee (Sept.)
What additional resources are required to sustain/grow these activities in the priority neighbourhoods?	Interviews w/Steering committee & key community partners → Business Case Template	Consultant June 30th

**Heart-to-Heart
February-March 2013
Summary of evaluations (Total: 8)**

Baby's Face Check

- 7 very happy baby faces
- 1 happy baby face

Comments:

- She enjoyed the songs and playing with other babies. Was kept calm when I was in class.
- XXX liked playing with the toys and kids. Didn't like it when I left him. They were good at keeping him distracted while I left.
- He got to play with other children. He got to play with other children outside of home.
- He is a happy baby
- She met new friends and time to play with others
- This was good for XXX and I. We love coming here. We will miss it. XXX had so much fun meeting everyone here
- He was able to interact with other children
- Good care during course. Good place for care.

Parents' Face Check:

- 8 very happy faces

Comments:

- I enjoyed learning the different cues and play and the different things to do with our kids. I really enjoyed the scrapbooking. It was my first time. The class was awesome. It was nice to get to be with other parents.
- The people were really nice and awesome. Learned new things about baby cues and moods
- It was an OK program
- Love the people and the children, and learned a lot from XXX and XXX (the Facilitators) Thank You
- I had time to meet with other parents and we met other babies and got to do different things
- I think this was good. You guys are all nice. Going to miss it. Thank you for everything.
- I got to bring my child to a program where I could interact with all the other parents and watch how all the kids grow and interact.
- Good leaders. Really good parents. Had fun with scrapbook.

Compiled by Patricia Allan-Clark
April 4, 2012



211 Wentworth Street

Saint John, N.B. E2L 2T4

E-mail: saintjohn@frc-crf.com

Website: <http://www.frc-crf.com>

Summary: Playgroup Participant Feedback Questionnaire 2013

(15 evaluations)

Playgroup Location: Glen Falls School

Date: April 9, 2013

1 How did you first hear about the Playgroup?

- Public health nurse
- Friend (6)
- Family (3)
- East Side Motivators
- A family member whose child comes to this school
- Face Book (2)
- FRC Main Centre (2)

- Someone who was already coming (3)²⁴

2 Thinking back, why did you decide to come to the Playgroup? When did you first start coming to the Playgroup?

- Wanted to start socialisation
- I have (an extended family member) who would benefit from interaction; if he came, I knew mom would come too
- Get my only child time with other children
- Because I think that my baby can socialize more and get used to playing with other children and to be prepared later on to go to school
- To allow my child to socialize outside of the home, to learn to get along in a structured environment, to help prepare for school
- For my child to interact with children her age
- I wanted my child to have set routine; to get him in a social environment
- To break up the day. For fun and social interaction. To ready a 5-year old for kindergarten
- I feel it's important for my children to interact with other children
- Socialization
- To give my (grandchild) around others and learn to share; be social and respect others
- For my (grandchild) to be with kids
- To have my (child) be social with other children, and also to help prepare him/her for the idea of school
- I provide child care, and this group is great for socializing with new kids, and also for the adults to socialize
- To get my granddaughter around other children

3 When did you first start coming to the Playgroup?

Sept. 2012 (4)

Oct. 2012 (3)

Jan 2013 (3)

Feb 2013 (3)

March 2013

²⁴ Could also be a friend or family member

April 2013

4 How often do you come to the Playgroup?

13 Every week or try for every week (13)

14 Often (1)

15 1 day/week – would love more!

5 How do you get to the Playgroup?

Bus: 1 person

Cab: 1

My own vehicle: 12

Other (Sister-in-law): 1

6 How many children do you bring to Playgroup?

1: 9 people

2: 3

4-5: 2

No answer: 1

7 Please check all of the categories that apply to you²⁵:

8 I am the mother of the child (ren) that I bring to Playgroup

5 I am the grandmother of the child (ren) that I bring to Playgroup

2 I am the sitter/child care provider of the child (ren) that I bring to Playgroup

I am the caregiver of the child (ren) that I bring to Playgroup

0 I am the father of the child (ren) that I bring to Playgroup

²⁵ 1 double answer (mother/child care provider)

0 I am the grandfather of the child (ren) that I bring to Playgroup

8 Have you and/or your child (ren) benefited from the Playgroup? If so, how?

- Though limited specifics, know that child is benefiting from interactions with other children
- Yes, time out of the house without costing me; (child) seeing other children – interacting
- My (child) plays with other children and s/he really enjoys it
- My children have learned fair play; as well as my youngest has learned interaction with new children
- She now plays with other children. She is very shy and doesn't let me out of her sight
- I find my grandchild is very shy and she needs other children around so in two weeks, she is doing better
- Very much (my child) looks forward to it every Tuesday and is very happy afterwards. S/he sings the songs, talks about other kids
- Yes – meet a lot of nice people. Teaches children to play in a group! Structure, routine
- Yes – they are learning how to play with others, as well as share and talk. I get to interact with other moms. Plus it gets us out of the house.
- Playgroup gives us a break from routine. Exposure to circle time, new crafts
- Great social day, crafts, songs and just learning different things
- 100% great bunch of people... (My grandchild) loves it!
- My (child) loves it! I started bringing my little cousin/nephew. He is 2 and has not been around many children. I found this has made a huge difference with his sharing and he is speaking
- Yes, the kids love it and look forward to Tuesdays! Love the crafts and the energy + enthusiasm the leader brings to the group
- She is learning to take turns and to wait her turn

9 What are you and your child's/children's' favorite activities in Playgroup?

- Songs/singing (8)
- Crafts (6)
- Story time (5)
- Free play (2)
- Play dough (2)
- Action games
- Everything! (2)
- Trucks
- Just sitting and looking at the children
- Watching "big kids" play
- Dolls & dress-up
- Play with other kids
- Access to new toys

10 What is the most important skill you and your child (ren) have learned in Playgroup?

- Both have learned to navigate/negotiate with others (not one to make any sort of spectacle. – Just remove child from situation)
- Sharing (2)
- How to play with other children. I have learned to respect other ways of parenting and every child is different and special
- Just to be with other people and children
- Playing calmly & not tearing around
- It's good for children and adults to interact
- White glue & glitter are evil (Ha! Ha!)
- To respect others and things
- Learning songs that he will use later on
- To share and play with other children
- I would say sharing, patience. She loves coming to see the other kids and helping her cousin learn
- I think the social skills practiced at this group are beneficial for the kids I bring, as most of them are going to school in the Spring

11 Has attending the Playgroup changed how you are or what you do with your child (ren) at home?

- Not particularly, am laid-back at home & find structure of play group encourages that
- She always shares with me, but I see that it is different when someone has a new toy, and she would like it. Sometimes it is too hard to wait.
- She is more able to play by herself now, so she became more independent
- We do a lot of the same structure at home
- I have more patience at home and I have learned to talk to her to find out what she needs
- Yes, the songs – pick up on learning – (my child) helps clean up
- More awareness. Sometimes use playgroup as how to behave all the time (ex. Boy's potty talk)
- We sing new songs, play new games
- He cleans up after himself, sings and takes off his own coat and jacket and puts them away
- Yes, we sing the songs from playgroup
- No
- No – we have always been very busy with many various activities, etc. songs, schooling, reading, crafts – but I have seen others who say it helps with sharing, etc. now. I would just say it's a bonus to our week now.
- Not really, it's just a bonus to our week

12 What is your highest praise of the Playgroup?

- Very much enjoy the low-pressure un-structured environment; the approach which allows children to participate (or not) with each activity at will
- (The Coordinator) plays with all the children and she makes you feel welcome
- My children love to come to play group, they have a great time playing with other children, singing, creating crafts, stories and learning
- Everything – nothing in particular!
- Lots of different toys
- That all people are equal, and are treated that way
- I feel the children can get to play with other children and see how each other can learn
- The extra things that (the coordinator) does for the parents & children as far as preps. For crafts, fresh fruit and the Christmas event/party we had
- Everyone is respectful & cooperative. We work together.
- Atmosphere – love the dynamic of the new group
- (The Coordinator) is great; puts on a really good playgroup
- I think (the Coordinator) is wonderful. Very organized.
- Well organized! Kids love it! Always fun
- (The Coordinator) She's great with organizing the activities and interacting with the kids

13 How do you recommend that the Playgroup could be improved?

- More space; outdoor activities
- To me, it doesn't need improving
- Offered twice a week – Tuesday/Thursday
- Would love to be able to come more days as we live on the East Side
- More days!
- Maybe more days a week
- Give Carolyn the 2nd day a week that she would love to have :o)

14 Do you have any comments about the Coordinator and/or the Playgroup in general?

- The Coordinator) is a warm, calming, inviting presence. I feel lucky to have this sort of person in charge
- Both (the Coordinator) and the playgroup are wonderful
- (The Coordinator) is great! She is wonderful with the kids and parents
- The Coordinator is helpful!
 - (The Coordinator) is a wonderful person with the children and adults. She has a special way with the children
 - I think she is very good and makes us feel good coming here
 - She's wonderful! She appreciates each child's growth and individuality
 - (The Coordinator) is always friendly and knows how to get her point across
 - I really enjoy and look forward to coming every week
 - Love (the coordinator's) positive attitude and structure
 - A great place, great people!

- Wonderful We love it
- (The Coordinator) is wonderful! My daughter and nephew love her. She is very good with children; patient, kind-hearted and I can tell a genuinely wonderful person.
- Keep up the great work

15 Is there anything else you would like to tell us about?

- More days would be great!
- We are very lucky to have some place where we can take our children and they enjoy it and also learn to be with other children
- Thank you!
- We are glad to have this playgroup. Something for the good of the children and family.
- Enjoy it very much. Wouldn't miss a day. It's good for the both of us! Thank you!
- It's all good

**Parent Evaluation of Play Group
Centennial School (Old North End)
June 4, 2013
(7 Evaluations)**

1. How did you hear about the play group?

- Friend (3)
- Flyer (3) – flyer sent home with kids – flyer handed out
- Another parent(1)

2. Would you recommend it to family & friends?

- Yes (7)
- I have
- I would say it is a good program

3. What did you like about it the most?

- Everything (4) – location, crafts, etc.
- That the kids got together and played
- Learning activities for kids
- There is structure and routine

4. What did you like about it the least?

- Nothing (4)
- That it's only 1 day a week
- I like everything
- No comment (2)

5. What other services would you like to see offered in your area?

- Parenting programs, swimming lessons
- Summer programs (4)
- Shuttle bus during cold weather
- Cooking classes
- Sewing lessons

- Mother Goose

6. Did the play group offer the opportunity for you and your child to socialize with other families in your community?

- Lots of times
- Yes (7)
- :0)

7. What components of programming would you like in future playgroups?

- More often
- Some outdoor activities/Outdoor play in nice weather (3)
- More advertising
- Parent courses

8. If the play group is re-offered in the fall at this location would you be interested in attending

- Definitely!
- Yes (4)
- Yes, I come every week from the east side to attend at this location with the people who are here
- Of course – sad it's almost over!
- Yes!!!!

**Parent Evaluation of Play Group
Prince Charles School (Waterloo Village)
June 13, 2013
(3 Evaluations)**

1. How did you find out about the play group?

- A friend told me about it.
- Giant Tiger
- School Principal

2. Would you recommend it to family and friends?

- Yes, my children had so much fun – staff are so friendly
- Yes
- yes

3. What did you like about it the most?

- Chance to play with my children
- Fun stuff
- Staff were amazing

4. What did you like about it the least?

- Wish it was more often
- It was over lunch time
- Location was inconvenient

5. What other services would you like to see offered in your area?

- More childcare activities
- Don't know
- I live on McDonald St., so more programming eastside

6. Did the play group offer the opportunity for you and your child to socialize with other families in the community?

- Yes – I really enjoyed this
- Yes
- Yes, just not my community

7. What components of programming would you like to see in future play groups?

- Parenting programs
- I don't know
- It was all good.

8. If the play group is reoffered in the fall at the location, would you be interest in attending again?

- Yes – and I would tell family and friends :0)
- Yes
- Yes



May 30, 2013

Ms. Silvia Borsic

Family Resource Centre (SJ) Inc.

211 Wentworth Street
Saint John, NB E2L 2T4

Dear Silvia,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Canadian Mental Health Association Saint John Branch, staff volunteers and more importantly the citizens of greater Saint John, I wish to express our sincere gratitude for your ongoing support of our *The Kids Have Stress Too!* program.

Kids Have Stress Too! is a program developed by the Psychology Foundation of Canada. The *Kids Have Stress Too!* program is about helping parents, caregivers and people who have a vested interest in children understand childhood stress and how to provide kids from age 4 to 9 years with the tools to deal with stress effectively. It is a broad-based primary prevention program. The mission is to "*provide parents, caregivers and communities with the knowledge, awareness and skills to help children become healthier and more resilient through learning how to manage their stress effectively*".

The *Kids Have Stress Too!* program is designed to influence young children's social and emotional development. Research shows that a child's ability to manage stress effectively reduces their anxiety levels and can be preventative. Symptoms of unmanaged stress are often mistaken; therefore, children may be reprimanded by teachers or parents for actions that are really stress reactions rather than intentional misbehaviour or poor cognitive ability.

According to *Learning: Everybody's Project 2026*, a citizen-led engagement initiative launched to engage New Brunswicker's in a collaborative process to help shape a "culture of learning":

- Nearly 1 in 5 New Brunswick children are at-risk of having difficulty at school because they do not have the knowledge and skills that they need for a successful beginning.
- Only 38% of preschoolers in New Brunswick participate in organized activities, which help them be ready for school.
- Early learning and child care centers in the province are essential players in supporting positive child development and school readiness through their delivery of an approved curriculum offered by trained staff.

The Psychology Foundation of Canada supports the research that shows that even very young children can be taught stress management techniques. Once learned, these techniques will help them cope with stress as they grow and develop into the teenage years and later in adult life. *Kids Have Stress Too!* starts with the premise that

empowering parents to see stress from the child's point of view will enhance the parent-child relationship and improve family life.

Within today's society, our children are the most vulnerable demographic. *Kids Have Stress Too!* is a universal program which provides links to services within the community and identifies gaps. Canadian Mental Health Association Saint John Branch then in turn advocates on behalf of these children.

During the Spring 2013, we have coordinated three *Kids Have Stress Too!* programs within three lowincome / priority neighborhoods in Saint John (Eastside, Old North End, Waterloo Village); below are the program outcomes:

Glen Falls School March 19th & March 26th

Facilitated by Meagin Huisman and Carolyn Glenn

21 parents and caregivers completed the 2two hour sessions with 16 evaluations being completed.

Centennial School April 23rd & April 30th

Facilitated by Debbie McCormack and Alberta Stanton

7 parents and caregivers completed the 2two hour sessions with 5 evaluations being completed.

Prince Charles School May 7th & May 14th

Facilitated by Debbie McCormack and Karen Kincade

13 parents and caregivers completed the 2two hour sessions with 9 evaluations being completed.

The *Kids Have Stress Too!* program was initially promoted via the schools to ensure parents and caregivers from the lowincome / priority neighborhoods had the opportunity to attend. Depending on availability, Canadian Mental Health Association Saint John Branch promoted the *Kids Have Stress Too!* programs via email distribution, Facebook page, and public service announcements.

Feedback from program participants include:

I Think...

- This is a very important program for all parents. It makes you look at things from your child's perspective.
- That this class was helpful. It opened my eyes to what I'm doing right and didn't realize it. I'm also seeing where my husband and I can improve.
- This program is very beneficial for those dealing with children.

I Feel...

- Grateful that this program was offered as I have several stresses in my life at the present time.
- I am better equipped to handle my own stress, and can make better choices to assist my kids with the stressors we are facing as a family these days.
- That I will be better able to cope with the stresses my kids experience in life.

I Wish ...

- That learning what I have learned will benefit me and the children in my life and the people surrounding me (that they will benefit too).
- This program and more parenting programs were more often at this school.
- That there were more courses available, ranging in ages.

A change I noticed in my child...

- She wants to talk about things.
- They are smiling more and the tantrums are becoming less frequent.
- Differences in behavior when encountering different life situations.

Comments:

- Real examples were helpful. The presenters were both excellent with good interaction.
- I sincerely enjoyed the program! I honestly think myself and my boys will learn to cope with stress in a more positive way! Thank you for your gift!
- Great program! Would recommend the program to anyone who has children in their life (moms, aunts, dads, grandparents, etc).

***Kids Have Stress Too!* program expenses:**

Program Materials	\$550
Includes <i>KHST!</i> Toolkits, brochures, program folders and name tags	
Nutrition / Snacks	\$300
Childcare	\$128
Transportation	\$ 18
Program Promotion	\$150
Facilitator Mileage	\$ 60
Program Administration and Facilitation	<u>\$800</u>

Total: **\$2,006**

Silvia, with the remaining funding we have ordered additional program materials for future *Kids Have Stress Too!* programs within the community.

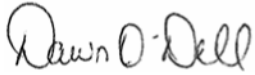
Overall, we believe that the programs were beneficial and provided vital information to the program participants. In the future we recommend the following:

- Connect with School Principals to ensure collaboration.

- Programs to be held during the evening to ensure that Canadian Mental Health Association has the ability to cross promote the program if necessary.
- Program coordination led by Canadian Mental Health Association.
- Establish a deadline for program registrations.

Once again, thank you for supporting the work of the Canadian Mental Health Association Saint John Branch. Please feel free to contact me at 506 652 1447 or email at dawn.odell@nb.aibn.com should you wish to discuss further.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Dawn O'Dell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dawn O'Dell Executive
Director

cc: Patricia Allan-Clark

Summary – Fun to be Four Program @ Centennial School
May 7, 14, 21 & 28
(5 evaluations)

Would you recommend the service you received to a friend, family member, or co-worker?

Yes – 5

No - 0

Why?

- Good to help the kids get ready for school
- It gets them ready for school
- There is lots of interaction for the kids and healthy snack ideas
- Really great experience. My child loved everything they did
- It's a great program – learning lots

What did you like best?

- The interaction with the kids
- Story time and crafts and singing
- Seeing my son smile and interact with everyone was the best
- The sounding out words
- The staff and interaction is great

What could we do differently?

- We enjoyed our time in the program – I think it is great
- Nothing
- Longer program, gas vouchers – different hours – maybe morning instead of afternoon
- Not a thing – it was awesome