

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

**Phase III Project Report
September 2013 - June 2014**



**Prepared by Patricia Allan-Clark
Project Coordinator**

**Early Childhood
Development Coalition**

Supporting our Children, Building our Future

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List of Abbreviations

ASD-S	Anglophone South School District – covers St. Stephen, Saint John and Hampton education centres
BCAPI	Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative
CAPC	Community Action Program for Children – Public Health Agency of Canada
CMHA	Canadian Mental Health Association
CIN	Community Inclusion Network
CRC	<i>Communities Raising Children</i> program –NB Dept. of Education and Early Childhood Development
EECD	New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
ELC	Early Learning Centre/Early Learning Community
EYE-DA	Early Years Evaluation – Direct Assessment
ESIC	New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation
FACE – Anglophone South	Family and Childhood Education Anglophone South - formerly Early Intervention – covers St. Stephen, Saint John & Sussex areas
FRC	The Family Resource Centre SJ Inc.
PALS	<i>Partners Assisting Local Schools</i> program – providing volunteers and other resources from local businesses and organizations for Saint John’s community schools
PD days	Professional Development Days
SJECDC/ECDC	Saint John Early Childhood Development Coalition
Talk with Me	Early Speech and Language service of Anglophone South School District
VCSJ	Vibrant Communities Saint John; the local Community Inclusion Network (CIN)
YMCA/the Y	YMCA of Greater Saint John

Introduction/Executive Summary

The phrase “our children are our future” may be a platitude; but it also happens to be true. We create the future of our society today, in the here and now, among those of us who are both most vulnerable and most promising”¹

This report covers Phase III of the *Integrated Early Childhood Services for Families in Low Income Neighbourhoods* (ESIC) project - September 2013 to June 2014.

The chart that follows illustrates how this phase of the ESIC project fits into the overall vision of parents, community schools, service providers and neighbourhood leaders working together for the optimal development of all children in our community.

The past year has been focussed on putting into place key elements for the long-term journey ahead:

- Strengthening the anchor program (playgroups) in each priority neighbourhoods;
- Building local partnerships around early childhood development in each neighbourhood;
- Implementing an evaluation framework to begin measuring the impact of the activities and programs being offered; and
- Establishing a strong business case for supporting families in low-income neighbourhoods – with the goal of securing more long term, sustainable financial and program partnerships.

A total of 232 families from more than six neighbourhoods² participated in various programs and activities, including 160 families who are now involved in regular weekly playgroups, the “anchor program” in each neighbourhood.

Some very important work has been done on beginning to measure the impact of programs on children and families in the priority neighbourhoods in three key outcome areas:

- the link between playgroups and school readiness;
- how playgroups are helping parents/caregivers develop positive parenting skills, behaviours and attitudes; and
- encouraging family literacy and learning

Highlights from this year’s parent/caregiver playgroup evaluations show that preliminary results certainly appear to be heading in the right direction:

- 39/66³ respondents (59.09%) said their children sit quietly (for example: during story time, crafts, snack) for a longer time since coming to playgroup

¹ Margaret Norrie McCain. It’s time to pay it forward to our children. Telegraph-Journal. July 1, 2013

² Programs included some families from outside the 6 priority neighbourhoods

- 43/63 respondents (68.13%) said their children play with other children more since coming to playgroup
- 35/66 respondents (53.03%) said their children stick with a task (for example, putting together a puzzle, figuring out how a toy works) longer since coming to playgroup
- 40/65 respondents (61.53%) said they read and play together at home with their children more since coming to playgroup

Significant progress is also being made in terms of partnership-building at both the neighbourhood level and city-wide, with new partners becoming involved in program delivery, and the adoption of a common Theory of Change, vision, mission and values statement.

While momentum is growing very quickly in some neighbourhoods, other neighbourhoods are still proving to be challenging in terms of engaging parents/caregivers. Positive word-of-mouth, relationship-building and consistency remain the key building blocks in providing quality program and having a real impact on families.

The structure of this report is similar to last year's for the sake of continuity. Section 1 reviews the activities and accomplishments that took place, based on the yearly work plan. Section 2 looks at two key outcome-related questions: 1) *Are we beginning to make a difference?* and 2) *Are we making headway towards our vision?* Section 3 looks at what worked well and what was challenging in carrying out the project. The report concludes with some potential action items and recommendations for moving forward.

Once again, this report reflects the hard work of many people, including parents and community organizations in the priority neighbourhoods. The contributions of all project partners, especially the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, are gratefully acknowledged.

The steering committee for Phase III included:

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

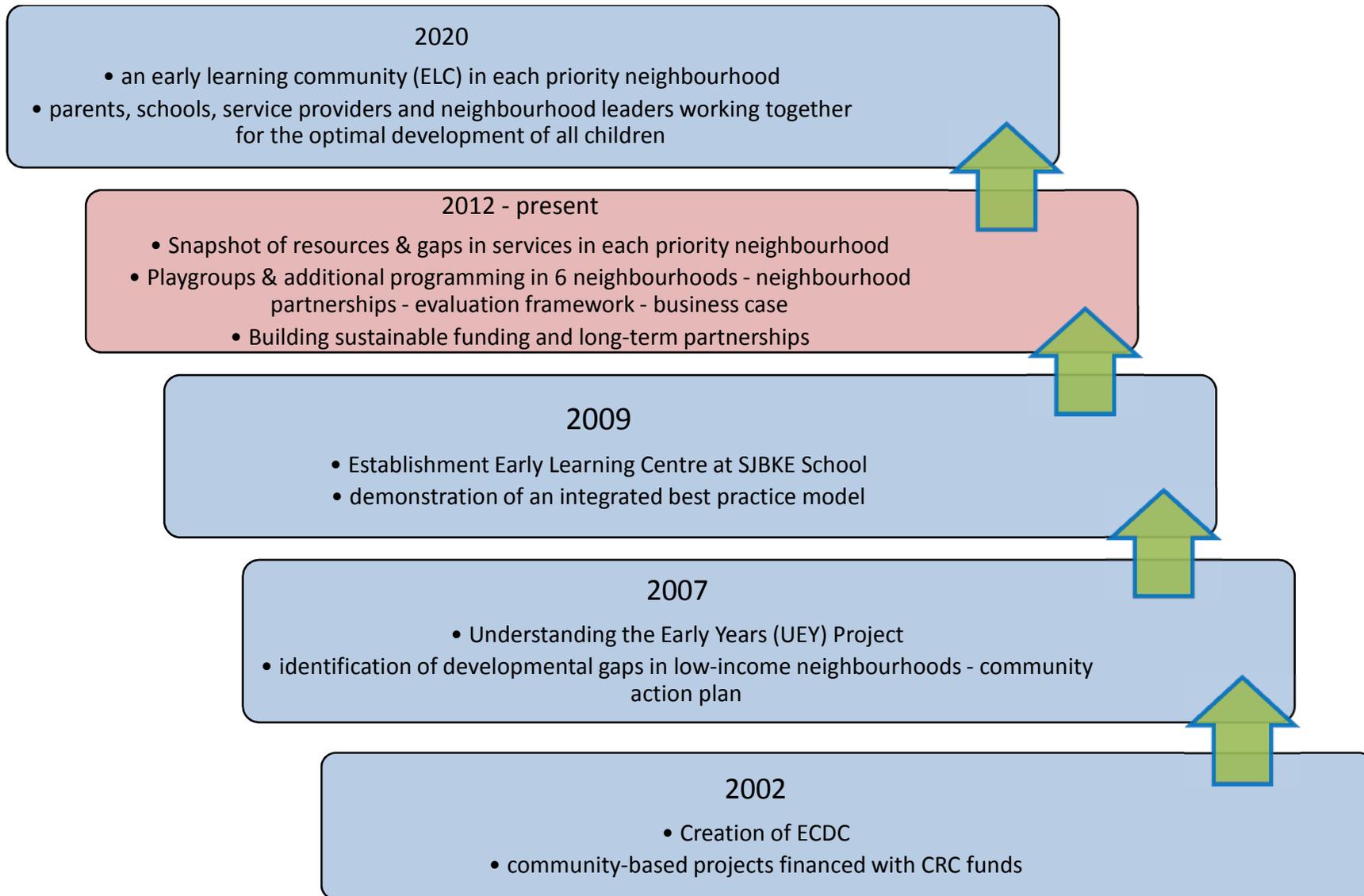


³ Note: Participation in the survey was 100% voluntary. Parents/caregivers also had the option of not responding to certain questions, or responding "does not apply, my child is too young" to these specific questions.

Patricia Allan-Clark, ESIC Project Coordinator, continued to provide “the gas and the glue” for partnership development, coordination, research and evaluation. In addition, the last four months of the project saw her preparing and submitting funding applications to a number of foundations to secure additional resources for 2014-15.

With the confirmation of ESIC funding for 2014-15, and a number of other funding sources either confirmed or “in the works”, the project partners are looking forward to another year of supporting families and young children in Saint John’s priority neighbourhoods.

Building long-term sustainability will remain an essential part of the work moving forward, as will be deciding who will be responsible over the long term for taking the lead in building ELCs in the priority neighbourhoods. As we work through these “big picture” questions in collaboration with other community partners and coalitions, the ESIC project will continue building support for early childhood development from the ground up in each priority neighbourhood.



Results

In this section of the report, we present a summary of what was accomplished during this phase of the project.

Goal	Deliverables from ESIC Phase III proposal	Major Activities and Accomplishments (Outputs)
<p>Deliver an integrated set of programs, activities, and services for parents and children 0 to 8 years old adapted to the needs of each neighbourhood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South End • Waterloo Village • Old North End • Crescent Valley • Lower West Side • Glen Falls 	<p>200 families in six low-income neighbourhoods participate in experiential learning opportunities related to building positive parenting skills and resilient children⁴</p> <p>Play groups operating in 6 neighbourhoods; average attendance of 15 parents/caregivers & children at each location</p> <p>14 parenting courses; 200 participants</p>	<p>Broad-based program input session held to identify key themes, activities and partners for 2013-14 (26 participants/6 neighbourhoods)</p> <p><u>Programs with parent + child involvement</u></p> <p><i>Playgroups</i> (6 neighbourhoods): 160 families (170 adults/216 children)</p> <p><i>Heart-to-Heart @ ELC</i> 8 families (10 adults/8 children)</p> <p><i>Heart-to-Heart @ Centennial</i> 5 families (8 adults/5 children)</p> <p><i>Leaping into 3 @ St. Patrick's School</i> 6 families (6 adults/6 children)</p> <p><i>Fun to be Four @ St. Patrick's School</i> 3 families (3 adult/3 children)</p> <p><i>Blast off to Kindergarten @ St. Patrick's School</i> 6 families (6 adults/6 children)</p> <p><i>Mother Goose @ St. Patrick's School</i> 4 families (4 parents/4 children)</p> <p><i>KinderConnection @ ELC</i> 10 families (projected⁵)</p> <p><u>Programs for Parents/Caregivers (with child care)</u></p> <p><i>Kids Have Stress Too! @ FRC</i> 10 families (13 adults/10 children)</p> <p><u>Special events:</u></p> <p><i>Field trip to East Side Fire Station</i> 20 families (approx.)/28 adults/37 children</p> <p>Total: 232 families from 6+ neighbourhoods⁶</p>

⁴ by FRC, Talk with Me, YMCA, FACE, community partners and schools delivered many other programs between Sept. - June. They are not included in these statistics because not funded through ESIC or CRC.

⁵ Program will take place in June-July

Goal	Deliverables from ESIC Phase III proposal	Major Activities and Accomplishments (Outputs)
<p>Grow and support parent engagement and leadership, using a community development approach</p>	<p><i>The building blocks for establishing a permanent “early learning community” in six low-income neighbourhoods will be in place, including mechanisms for ongoing parent/caregiver input and leadership</i></p> <p>Support & strengthen meaningful partnerships between schools, community-based organizations and parents</p> <p>Provide parents/caregivers with connections and referrals to other services, including education, training and employment-related services</p> <p>Create easy access for parents (and service providers) to information about programs, activities and services</p> <p>Begin set-up of a neighbourhood-based Early Learning Committee (Roundtable) in the South End; determine roles/goals, training needs & priority actions</p> <p>Train parent advisory committee at Saint John ELC site; begin regular meetings</p> <p>Outreach to assess interest in setting up Early Learning Roundtables in other priority neighbourhood</p>	<p>Promotion of playgroups at Welcome to Kindergarten events; playgroup info posted on school websites & parent info. boards; included in school newsletters</p> <p>Promotion of playgroups at Canada Learning Bond events (2 schools; (30+ families) + 2 neighbourhood info. fairs (40+ families) + informal events (e.g. “Yak + Snack” in Crescent Valley)</p> <p>Playgroup Coordinators and Program Facilitators provide one-on-one information and referrals to families as requested (ongoing)</p> <p>EECD developing an early childhood portal to be linked to ASDS website</p> <p>On hold until 2014-2015 (changes in ELC staffing; focus on ELC sustainability plan)</p> <p>Regular participation of ESIC Project Coordinator in neighbourhood stakeholder meetings; updates, inf. exchange, cross-promotion & coordination of events</p>

⁶ Programs included some families from outside the 6 priority neighbourhoods

Goal	Deliverables from ESIC Phase III proposal	Major Activities and Accomplishments (Outputs)
<p>Put into place and carry out an effective evaluation process in order to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ensure that programs and services are meeting the needs of parents/caregivers and children 2) Track the progress made towards meeting ESIC project goals 3) Identify challenges and opportunities for improvement and growth 4) Have concrete data to support the case for investing in early childhood development 	<p><i>The lessons being learned in Waterloo Village, East Saint John, and the Old North End will be shared with other neighbourhoods in Saint John – and other communities in New Brunswick - through ongoing evaluation and documentation</i></p> <p>Begin implementation of the evaluation framework developed in Phase II</p> <p>Build logic model and common evaluation tools</p> <p>Documentation of program results and participant feedback</p> <p>Submit project report to ESIC</p>	<p>Phase II report distributed to several networks through ESIC Steering Committee Members, incl. FRC Federal and Provincial funding partners; translated into French for distribution to French-speaking CINs & partners</p> <p>Theory of Change, Vision, Mission Values Statement adopted by ESIC Steering Committee⁷</p> <p>Playgroup Logic Model developed incl. outcome indicators⁸</p> <p>Playgroup evaluation framework developed; participant feed-back questionnaire revised to include questions on school readiness/family learning with input from program partners, Kindergarten teachers, Dept. of Healthy and Inclusive Communities⁹</p> <p>Parent evaluation sessions held at all playgroups; hand-outs added to help parents make link with school readiness and family literacy/learning</p> <p>Several research articles on collective impact, community schools, early childhood development, poverty and mental health circulated among SC members</p> <p>April-Sept. & Oct-March progress reports submitted to ESIC</p>

⁷ Included in Appendix I

⁸ See Appendix II

⁹ See Appendix III

<p>Develop and put into action a sustainability plan that will ensure that essential supports for families with young children living in the priority neighbourhoods are available over the long term</p>	<p><i>Membership in the SJECD and number of active partnerships will be expanded</i></p> <p>Early Childhood Educators participate in ASDS professional development days</p> <p>Continue to refine and implement a sustainability framework that will assist with the leveraging of existing and new community resources and opportunities.</p> <p>Set specific targets for contributions by private sector, foundations, and other sources, including local fundraising efforts.</p>	<p>2 FACE staff trained in Heart-to-Heart program 15 individuals and groups added to SJECD contact list</p> <p>Weekly/yearly playgroup costs established</p> <p>3 working sessions held to develop an overall yearly budget and identify specific partners to approach</p> <p>1-page business case document + PowerPoint presentation prepared; being used to secure new funding and program partners</p> <p>Project Coordinator working with schools and community orgs. hosting playgroups to secure snacks & craft materials for 2014-15</p> <p>Steering Committee reps. met with Scott MacAfee (ESIC) re. Phase IV funding</p> <p>Funding applications submitted to: Sisters of Charity, NB Children’s Foundation, ESIC, Green Shield Foundation, Greater Saint John Community Foundation; RBC Children’s Mental Health Project; United Way</p> <p>Participation in <i>Living SJ</i> process: Community Advisory Committee and Families & Children working group</p> <p>\$62,595 in grants and \$63,250 in in-kind contributions secured for 2014-15</p>
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Impact

With two years of intensive work in the priority neighbourhoods through this project, we can begin measuring outcomes; specifically the impact programs and activities are having on the children and parents/caregivers who are participating. The questions we will focus on in this section of the report are:

- “Are we making a difference?”
- “Are we making headway towards our vision, that is, children in low-income neighbourhoods developing to their fullest potential through purposeful and supportive family and community partnerships?”

Because the evaluation function within this project is being carried out with no additional resources, the project partners decided to 1) concentrate on the playgroups (anchor program involving the largest number of families, operating in all six neighbourhoods) and 2) use information that is readily available (all parents/caregivers are invited to fill out a feed-back form each April-May, with support as needed to understand questions and fill out the form.)

The project partners also decided to concentrate on three key outcome areas:

- the link between playgroups and school readiness;
- how playgroups are helping parents/caregivers develop positive parenting skills, behaviours and attitudes; and
- encouraging family literacy and learning¹⁰

These outcomes can be linked to the following areas from a national study done on CAPC projects in 2011¹¹:

Child positive behaviour	The extent to which the child interacts well with others and exhibits self-control
Child emotional well-being (i.e. emotional disorder and anxiety)	The extent to which the caregiver perceives the child is unhappy, fearful or nervous and lacks independence
Caregiver-child learning & literacy	The extent to which the caregiver talks to and reads to the child and the extent to which the child participates in learning activities such as looking at books

¹⁰ In 2007, the Understanding the Early Years (UEY) project identified social/emotional and pre-literacy skills as areas where children in the priority neighbourhoods were lagging behind children in other neighbourhoods. They continue to be areas where children in low-income neighbourhoods tend to have some difficulty in the annual EYE-DA testing.

¹¹ Community Action Program for Children National Study 2011, The CAPC program of the Public Health Agency of Canada is a primary funding source for Family Resource Centres and similar projects across Canada.

Child-caregiver positive interaction	The level of positive engagement between the caregiver and child (e.g. the extent to which the caregiver plays with and praises the child)
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The organizations involved in front-line program delivery - including the FRC and the Y who run the playgroups - revised the existing participant feed-back form to include some specific questions about school readiness, family literacy/learning activities, and a space for parents to share what they are learning about parenting through attending playgroups.¹² Kindergarten teachers at Saint John the Baptist/King Edward School added their input on the revised questionnaire to make sure it included essential kindergarten readiness skills. An evaluation consultant from the Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities also provided some in-kind technical advice around the phrasing of the questions and making sure the questions actually produced the desired information in an easily tabulated format.

A few highlights from the school readiness/family literacy questions:

- 39/66¹³ respondents (59.09%) said their children sit quietly (for example: during story time, crafts, snack) for a longer time since coming to playgroup
- 43/63 respondents (65.15%) said their children play with other children more since coming to playgroup
- 35/66 respondents (53.03%) said their children stick with a task (for example, putting together a puzzle, figuring out how a toy works) longer since coming to playgroup
- 40/65 respondents (61.53%) said they read and play together at home with their children more since coming to playgroup

It is very important to keep in mind that this is only the first year parents/caregivers have been asked these questions, and our data collection methods are still very much “a work in progress”¹⁴. However, this additional information does seem to point in the direction that parent/caregivers are finding playgroups are helpful in developing these essential pre-learning skills. There is also value in encouraging parents to observe these changes by adding these questions to the annual feed-back survey. They generated a lot of discussion about school readiness, especially among parents/caregivers of 3-4 year-olds.

¹² See appendix II. The plan is to eventually include some of these questions when evaluating other programs, such as Heart-to-Heart, Fun to be Four, etc. in order to build a common data set across neighbourhoods and across programs.

¹³ Note: Participation in the survey was 100% voluntary. Parents/caregivers also had the option of not responding to certain questions, or responding “does not apply, my child is too young” to these specific questions.

¹⁴ In particular, this year’s responses indicate the phrasing and lay-out of these questions could be improved to ensure all parents/caregivers understand them clearly.

***A parent-first approach isn't
just the right choice; it's the
smart choice.¹⁵***

In terms of building positive parenting skills, behaviours and attitudes, here is a sample of responses to the question: *“From attending playgroup, what I have learned about being a parent is:*

- *(I am) not alone in the world with problems*
- *everyone has challenges*
- *Kids are curious, always learning & need our attention and approval.*
- *positive reinforcement – consistency*
- *socialization; starting early is very important and beneficial*
- *there are many different positive parenting methods & always more to learn*
- *I (have learned) more about building community around the kids & working with the other parents to ensure that all the kids happy & comfortable*
- *(I have) opened my comfort zone*
- *how important (it is) for children to interact with other kids*
- *(We) all have our own way of doing things*
- *Love is spelled T.I.M.E.!*

If partnerships are the foundation of any collective initiative, including building early learning communities in priority neighbourhoods, there are some concrete signs in this area too that progress is taking place.¹⁶

Common Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory of Change, Vision, Mission, Values Statement adopted by ESIC Steering Committee • Priority themes, activities and partners identified with input from stakeholders from all 6 priority neighbourhoods • Participation in <i>LivingSJ</i> Families & Children focus group; identification of early childhood development issues and priorities
Shared Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playgroup Logic Model; incl. outcome indicators developed • Common participant feed-back form used across all 6 playgroups; key questions to be included in other program evaluations as appropriate

¹⁵ Nicole Letourneau and Justin Joschko. Address the roots of poverty and ill health. Telegraph-Journal June 27, 2013

¹⁶ Based on: Fay Hanley Brown, John Kania & Mark Cramer, Channeling Change, Making Collective Impact Work, Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2011.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRC project allocations added to work in progress in the priority neighbourhoods; more programs and development of stronger partnerships • Co-facilitation & collaboration in program delivery
Continuous Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular updates to neighbourhood stakeholder groups • Circulation of program flyers, research articles, brochures (ECDC + FRC mailing list) • Playgroup update in “Around the Block” community newspaper • Outreach to families and neighbourhood leaders at community and school events • Regular meetings of ESIC Steering Committee; follow-up on action items • Working sessions on evaluation, sustainability planning, business case
Backbone Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active steering committee representing non-profit, business and government sectors • Project coordinator 30 hrs/wk (secured through June 2015) • Office space, administrative support, ongoing guidance and direction supplied by Family Resource Centre; regular coordination/planning meetings with Executive Director

Some very important work has been done this year on starting to measure the impact of programs on the children and families in the priority neighbourhoods, and the progress being made in terms of partnership-building. The results definitely appear to be heading in the right direction. This type of hard data is essential for ongoing learning and improvement, and for engaging new investors and program partners. Going forward, additional resources in terms of time, money and expertise would make it possible to develop and refine evaluation activities even further, keeping in step with the work in the priority neighbourhoods as it grows and evolves.



Analysis

In this section of the report we look at what went well and what was challenging during this phase of the project.

It was very helpful to have **a full-time community schools coordinator in each neighbourhood.**¹⁷ Along with their Principals, they were important partners in promoting programs, coordinating space and supplies and connecting to families. They have also been active collaborators in neighbourhood stakeholder groups.

Positive word of mouth is still the most effective way to grow participation in playgroups and programs. The feedback from parents/caregivers consistently points to how much they value the supportive relationships and the safe, non-judgemental atmosphere created in each playgroup and program. The majority of playgroup parents/caregivers reported first hearing about the playgroup through a friend or family members. The Glen Falls playgroup, for example, which is only in its second year, now has approximately 60 participants (adults and children), making it one of the largest playgroups.

One of the very important roles of the playgroup coordinators is to spend some one-on-one time with each parent/caregiver to offer individual support, answers questions and provide information and referrals as needed and requested. While it has been very exciting to see such rapid growth and strong support from the host school, **the Glen Falls play group has outgrown**



its space and the abilities of one staff person to meet the individual needs of participants.

The South End playgroup, which runs three days a week, is also at maximum capacity in terms of space and staffing. Although this could be considered “a good problem to have”, it certainly needs to be taken into account when looking at available human resources and planning for sustainability

On the other hand, **it has been especially challenging to engage families in the Waterloo Village neighbourhood.** There may be a number of reasons for this: a more transient neighbourhood; growing the relationship between the school and neighbourhood families, several busy roads dividing the neighbourhoods up into different geographic “chunks” so it is difficult to get around, parking at Prince Edward Square/Prince Charles school. On the other hand, there have also been some positive signs: a significant increase in the number of parents

¹⁷ In previous years, each Coordinator divided her time between two schools.

pre-registering for Kindergarten; good attendance at the school's family fun fair and "Welcome to Kindergarten" events; the highest number of children registered for Canada Learning Bonds out of all six events organized by Vibrant Communities. One of the outreach strategies being considered is door-to-door visits in August to promote the start up of the playgroup in September, with the participation of local neighbourhood associations.

Investing in the early years is a priority issue in many circles. Some examples of this are in-kind and cash contributions by local groups and businesses to various playgroups, several front-page articles on early literacy in the Telegraph-Journal, the Greater Saint John Poverty Reduction Strategy, *LivingSJ* (Children & Families working group), [Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan 2014-2019](#), and an excellent edition of DOCZONE on CBC television.

By linking this year's allocation for CRC projects to the work in progress in the priority neighbourhoods, it was possible to tap into **\$20,000 in programming funds**. These funds helped support three playgroups, programs for 3 and 4 year-olds at St. Patrick School in the Lower West Side, and a Kindergarten Readiness program at the Early Learning Centre in the South End (*Kinderconnections*), *Care for Kids* and *Kids Have Stress Too!* (1 session each).

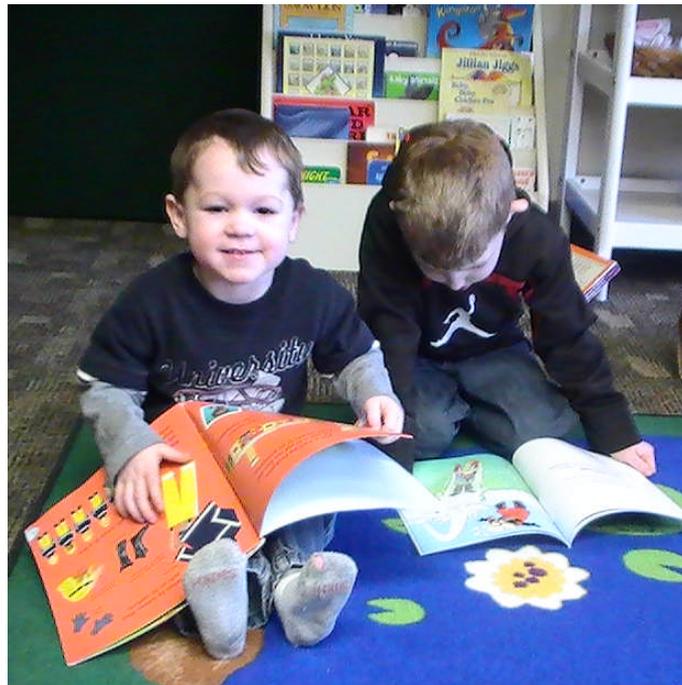
New partnerships have also had a "multiplier effect" on programming. For example, thanks to contributions from FACE, Centennial school, the YMCA, and the CE (Nick) Nicolle Community Centre in the North End, we were able to stretch the budget for one Heart-to-Heart session far enough to cover two sessions (13 families).

By **reducing the Project Consultant's weekly hours** starting in January, she was able to continue working between April and June – a key period for programming, evaluation and grant-writing. However, this meant scaling back her outreach and partnership-building activities.

Keeping consistency in programming has been a challenge. Some factors, such as a higher-than-average number of storm days, were beyond everyone's control, but there were also changes in staffing at the Early Learning Centre and the playgroups at Centennial and Prince Charles schools, which definitely had an impact on relationship-building and establishing/maintaining the children's routines.

According to work by UNB researcher Doug Willms, outcomes can be determined as early as seven or eight years old, with a 60 percent possibility that children who still lag in literacy proficiency by Grade 2 will never bounce back, becoming effectively unemployable in their future years. The issue has also been shown to tie in to things like teen pregnancy rates, mental illness and the percentage of the population requiring some sort of social assistance..... "To think that at age seven, their future could be written for them, because we as a society didn't act, it's not right" Roxanne Fairweather, CEO Innovatia

The **EECD Early Childhood Network is not yet in place**. This leaves some important “big picture” questions unanswered, such as how the work being done in the priority neighbourhoods will fit into the overall transition to school process, and what the process for allocating CRC funds will be going forward. On the other hand, many of the elements that were “unknowns” last year at this time in terms of the integration of FACE and Talk with Me with ASDS Early Childhood Services have since become much clearer, allowing programming and collaboration to move ahead.



Literacy starts for a child well before he or she learns to read and write. By playing with books and by recognizing that letters can be found everywhere, like on posters on the walls, in envelopes received by mail or on an electronic tablet, the child shows interest in literacy. Overcoming Poverty Together The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan 2014-2019.

Next Steps

With the confirmation of ESIC funding for 2014-15, and a number of other funding sources either confirmed or “in the works”, the project partners are looking forward to another year of supporting families and young children in Saint John’s priority neighbourhoods.

Building long-term **sustainability** will remain an essential part of the work moving forward. This means continuing to develop the organizational capacity, human and material resources, partnerships and community engagement needed to keep everything going “for the long haul”.



Central to developing sustainability is the question of **leadership**. The coming year will be pivotal in deciding who will be responsible for taking the lead over the long term in building ELCs in the priority neighbourhoods - the EECD early childhood network(s)? The Saint John Early Childhood Development Coalition?¹⁸ Others?

As we work through these “big picture” questions in collaboration with other community partners and coalitions, the ESIC project will continue to focus on building support for early childhood development from the ground up in each priority neighbourhood.

Some specific objectives to include in the 2014-15 work plan will be:

- Maintain and grow the playgroups in the six neighbourhoods – September to June
- Offer at least one parenting program in each priority neighbourhood between September and June, involving a total of 50 families
- Engage parents/caregivers in many different ways in program development and promotion, for example, inviting other families in their neighbourhood to come to playgroup, discussions with program facilitators, focus groups, volunteering, etc., in other words, incorporating opportunities for parents to “give back” and develop leadership skills within every program and activity
- Refine our evaluation methods and tools – Including feedback from other partners such as the schools and organizations hosting playgroups; linking playgroup evaluations to data from other early childhood initiatives such as the Polka Dot Room (pre-school) at Hazen-White St. Francis school and EYE-DA assessments in order to establish a solid baseline for comparison in future years.

¹⁸ Note: As a coalition of organizations, the ECDC does not have any permanent staff or formal structure.

- Maintain and intensify efforts to secure new funders and program partners
- Continue to strengthen partnerships between early childhood educators and community schools
- Develop a deeper common understanding of programs and a common terminology - including for the term “playgroups”. This will further enhance communication among partners and with the wider community. It will also help capture the scope and importance of the work being done to build strong families and resilient children.

Raising Canada to the average level of early childhood investment in other advanced economies would cost \$3 to \$4 billion.¹⁹ That’s about the same amount taxpayers spend annually on prisons.²⁰

¹⁹ TD Bank Economics report, 2013

²⁰ Correctional Investigator of Canada, 2012

List of Appendices

1. Theory of Change – Vision – Mission – Values Statement
2. Playgroup Logic Model
3. Revised Playgroup Participant feed-back questionnaire
4. Parenting Programs in Saint John's Priority Neighbourhoods: A Case for Support
(business case document)

Theory of Change for ESIC Project: Parents & Children Together in Priority Neighbourhoods (January 30/14)

Theory of Change:

If families with young children, who experience challenges related to income, emotional and physical health are provided with parent and child programs and supports through community partnerships in their neighbourhoods, then every child will have a starting chance for strong academic, social, emotional, behavioural, health and wellbeing outcomes.

Rationale

There is a large body of research and science that points to the need to create nurturing environments where children can develop along a healthy trajectory physically, cognitively, emotionally, behaviourally, and socially. Healthy child development is foundational to education achievement, life success and community well-being. When adverse childhood experiences occur, healthy child development can be derailed causing serious lifelong consequences. Families who live in poverty are at greatest risk. However, when parents, communities and governments learn together and work together to ensure “at risk” children have the right start in life, more children succeed in school, and stronger communities are built.

Our Mission (Why We Exist)

To provide a consistent, supportive and quality early learning environment in each of Saint John’s priority neighbourhoods/schools that enables parents, early childhood providers and other community partners to work together for the optimal development of children.

Our vision (Desired end state)

Children in low-income neighbourhoods develop to their fullest potential through purposeful and supportive family and community partnerships.

Values:

- Provide neighbourhood based programming that is accessible, inclusive and of the highest quality, based on best practices.
- Reach all families, involving parents and children together in activities and programs.
- Work in partnership with parents, building on what families tell us they want and need.
- Bring together all stakeholders involved in early childhood development – parents, caregivers, neighbourhood organizations, public and non-profit service providers, and community/neighbourhood schools to provide coordinated and responsive programs.
- Early Childhood Development is a community responsibility, supported by government.
- Relationship between schools, parents or caregivers and the child, starting in the early years is integral to a child’s successful transition to school.

Playgroup Logic Model

Target Group

Children 0 to 6 years, Parents and caregivers of children 0 to 6 years

Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes	Indicators of Success	Measurement Tools
<p>Early learning activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play opportunities • Structured and unstructured activities • Peer interaction • Creative arts and crafts • Gross/small motor activities • Music and movement • Storytelling, language games, rhymes and finger plays <p>Parent/caregiver support and education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information/referrals • Adult/children book lending library • Interaction and support opportunities between staff, parents and caregivers and children • Early assessments- Speech/language, Public Health, etc. • Nutritious snack for parent and child • Facilitate collaboration between teachers and Early education providers • Access to Parenting programs/education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of children served • # of visits by children • # of early learning activities • # of parents/caregivers served • # of visits by parents/caregivers • # of referrals • # of items loaned • # of playgroup/school combined activities • # of playgroup /community activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access to early learning activities • Increased access to age appropriate activities • Increased parent/caregiver knowledge of early years activities • Increased access to available resources • Increased knowledge of available resources • Increased access to nutritional food • Increased knowledge of how schools function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation of children in early learning activities • Increased skills of parents/caregivers • Increased parent/teacher relationship building activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased physical health and well-being of children • Increased emotional maturity of children • Increased social skills of children • Increased language and cognitive development of children • Improved confidence in child • Improved confidence in parents/caregivers • Improved parent/caregiver and child relationships • Improved positive parent/teacher relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved family functioning • Children ready for school in the areas of cognitive, social, emotional, language, health, physical development • Parent ready for their child's school 	

Playgroup Participant Feedback Questionnaire 2014

Playgroup Location: _____

Date: _____

1. How did you first hear about the Playgroup?

____ A friend ____ A Family Member ____ My Child's School ____ Newsletter
____ Flyer ____ Facebook ____ Other (Please specify) _____

2. Thinking back, why did you decide to come to the Playgroup?

3. When did you first start coming to the Playgroup?

(month/year) _____

4. How often do you come to the Playgroup? ____ 3 times a week ____ Once a week ____ Once a month Other

5. How do you get to the Playgroup?

____ Bus ____ Cab ____ My own vehicle
____ Other (Please specify) _____

6. How many children do you bring to Playgroup? ____ 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4

7. How old is the child (or the children) you bring to Playgroup?

Child # 1 _____ Child # 2 _____ Child #3 _____

8. I am the

____ mother ____ father
____ grandmother ____ grandfather of the child (ren) that I bring to Playgroup
Other _____

9. Do you or your friends have difficulty getting to playgroup? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, why? ____ transportation ____ time of the group ____ location of the group,

Other _____

10. Have you and your child (children) changed since coming to Playgroup?
(Put an ✓ or X beside the best answer for each question)

a) He/she sits quietly (for example, during story time, crafts, snack)

____ For a longer time ____ For a shorter time ____ About the same
____ Does not apply - my child is too young

b) When angry or frustrated, my child uses words to tell me how he/she is feeling

____ More ____ Less ____ About the same ____ Does not apply - my child is too young

c) He/she sticks with a task (for example, putting together a puzzle, figuring out how a toy works)

____ For a longer time ____ For a shorter time ____ About the same
____ Does not apply - my child is too young

d) He/she plays with other children

____ More ____ Less ____ About the same ____ Does not apply - my child is too young

e) He/she uses scissors and crayons/pencils

____ More ____ Less ____ About the same ____ Does not apply - my child is too young

f) We read and play together at home

____ More ____ Less ____ About the same

11. From attending playgroup, what I have learned about being a parent is:

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

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

Thank-you for taking the time to share your feed-back!

The Case for Supporting Parenting Programs In Saint John's Priority Neighbourhoods

Who are we?

The Saint John **Early Childhood Development Coalition** (SJECD) is a partnership of organizations from the business, government and community sectors working together to improve outcomes for young children and their families using a **collective impact approach**. Since 2012, a committee of the ECDC has been focussing on bringing more early childhood programs and services to Saint John's priority neighbourhoods.

The partners in this project include: Anglophone South School District
Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative
Family and Child Education (FACE) Anglophone South Inc.
The Family Resource Centre (SJ) Inc.
Horizon Health Network
NB Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Talk with Me Early Language Services
Vibrant Communities Saint John
YMCA of Greater Saint John
New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC)

The Challenge

A large body of evidence points to the need to create the right conditions in early childhood in order for children to develop physically, cognitively, emotionally, behaviourally, and socially. Healthy development in the early years is the starting point for education achievement, life success and community well-being.

Adverse circumstances and experiences in early childhood can have serious lifelong consequences. **In Saint John, one in three children between 0 and 6 years of age lives in poverty. We cannot afford the economic and social costs of so many children being left behind at the starting gate.**

The Solution

If low income families are provided quality early childhood programs and services in their neighbourhoods, then their children will have a better chance at getting the right start in school and in life. Building parents' skills and confidence in caring for their young children builds stronger families and a more prosperous community.

Our Vision

An early learning community (ELC) in each of Saint John's priority neighbourhoods, where parents, schools and community partners work together for the optimal development of all children.

"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."

Krystal, Mother of three

This is a nationally-proven best practice model that has been piloted locally at St. John the Baptist/King Edward School since 2009.

Our Project

Adapting and expanding the ELC model to each priority neighbourhood is a long term goal of the project partners. However, the funding needed to do this is not yet available, so we have put into place a step-by-step plan to build Early Learning Communities, one program at a time.

Thanks to seed funding from the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC), and contributions in time, space and human resources from local partners, weekly playgroups, the first vital component of the ELC model, are operating in six (6) priority neighbourhoods. **Over 160 families are now attending playgroups, opening the door to other programs and activities.**

Evaluations have proven that playgroups have a positive impact on:

- **Developing children’s social, emotional and pre-literacy skills, critical to kindergarten readiness**
- **Building positive parenting skills, attitudes and behaviours**
- **Increasing parental involvement in their child’s development and learning**

“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”
Playgroup Parent

and

- the more parents participate in playgroups and other programs with their children, the greater the impact
- that impact continues through the elementary school years...and beyond.

How Can You Help?

\$1,500 will cover the cost of 1 family to attend a playgroup for a full school year

\$5,000 will cover the cost of healthy snacks for 2 playgroups for a full school year

\$10,000 will cover the cost of staffing 1 playgroup for a full school year

You can also contribute healthy snacks or craft materials in kind, sponsor a field trip or special event

What’s in it for you?

- The opportunity to invest in breaking the cycle of poverty
- Ensuring the viability of your future workforce
- When Saint John thrives, your business thrives
- Public recognition of your contribution