



... is a coalition of over 100 organizations and individuals knowledgeable and passionate about the importance of a healthy start for children in their first 6 years. We are committed to creating a better future for children, their families and their communities in BC's Capital Region.

To learn more, visit our website at:

www.playvictoria.org

Or contact our Coordinator,
Jan White at: earlyyears victoria@shaw.ca

EDI: The Early Development Instrument

Some of you may already be familiar with the Early Development Instrument, commonly known as the EDI. For many, it will be completely new.

The EDI is a survey completed by kindergarten teachers for each of their students. It was done in 2003 and 2006 in all public elementary schools in our region, and throughout British Columbia. The information is intended to help create a picture of how well children's environments **prior to school entry** have supported their physical, emotional, social, cognitive, language and communication development. It is not an assessment of individual children, but a tool to monitor populations of children over time.

Some of our EDI results are now public and were presented to our community in November 2006 by our academic partners at the University of British Columbia (<http://ecdportal.help.ubc.ca/data.htm>). Results have sparked lots of discussion and many questions!

Through the Understanding the Early Years project of PLAY (see page 2 for more information), an Advisory Committee is thoughtfully engaged in trying to understand what our results are really telling us about the lives of young children, their families and the places they live. Our goal, and challenge, is to discover from those who live and work with young children the stories and circumstances that lie behind the numbers.

We chose to highlight two areas of the results as a way to share the questions, issues, possible explanations and stories that emerged for us as we begin to look over the numbers. We welcome you to also question and engage in discussion and exploration of what you see and read here.

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Feedback!

Do you have any ideas, questions or concerns about anything you've read in this newsletter? Please, contact Stephanie Gabel at 385-0716 or stephanie@playvictoria.org.

Communities in Action for the Early Years!



PENINSULA PARKS & PLAY SPACES...

is an initiative facilitated by Peninsula Connections for Early Childhood (PCEC) to increase awareness and use of parks and play spaces as local resources that can help foster the health and development of young children. The project has two aspects—the development of a map of the parks and play spaces on the Saanich Peninsula and three "Play Days in the Parks" in May of 2007.

Peninsula Parks and Play Spaces: A Community Green Map is being developed through funding from Success by 6[®] and Beacon Community Services, in-kind support from Saanich School District and LifeCycles Project Society, and assistance from UVIC Geography Department cartographers. As well, the expertise of members of the PCEC network has enabled us to engage in this work. We are doing so because we believe:

- Young children and their families are valued members of the community.
- All young children need to play.
- Through play, children learn about themselves and others, their communities, and the world.
- Playing outdoors, in safe places, promotes health and physical development.
- Interacting with children as they play fosters children's language and intellectual development, as well as their emotional and social well-being.
- As people populate parks and play spaces, opportunities to meet and get to know our neighbours increase and these areas become safer for people of all ages.
- Children who play outdoors develop appreciation for nature and respect for the environment.
- Use of parks and play spaces provides opportunities for making connections, sharing information, and building strong communities.

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The process of map-development has been fascinating! From the time we received the grant from Success by 6[®] until now, we have accomplished much. LifeCycles staff identified the local parks and play spaces and developed an inventory of facilities. Interviews were conducted with park users and people with young children who access services at Panorama Recreation Centre and Saanich Commonwealth Place. Parents and caregivers in local First Nations communities and participants in programs offered through Beacon Community Services were also interviewed. All survey information was then analyzed.

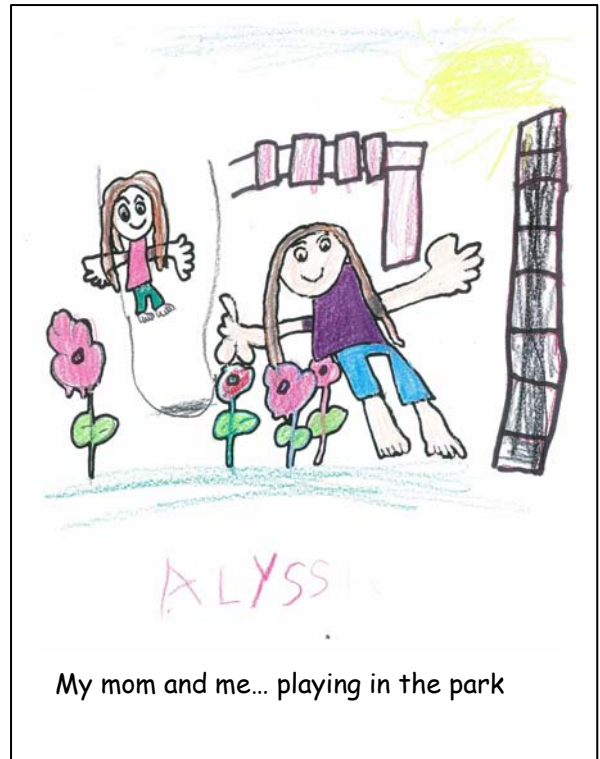
Community feedback was also collected in November at the PCEC sponsored celebration for 'National Child Day'. Soon, we will be ready to go to print—anticipating a “first run” of 7000 copies of the map.

We are now planning the “Play Days in the Parks” from 10:00 to 2:00 in three locations:

**Tulista Park (May 5th),
Centennial Park (May 12th) and
Elk Lake Park (May 26th).**

We have invited local politicians, dignitaries and champions. There will be entertainment, activities, snacks and give-aways, and prize draws. We invite all young children and their families to attend—rain, or shine!

For more information, please contact: Janis Johnson, Coordinator, Peninsula Connections for Early Childhood peninsulaconnections@beaconcs.ca



“Play is essential to development as it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth. Play also offers an ideal opportunity for parents to engage fully with their children.”

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2006)
The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds

Understanding the Early Years

The Understanding the Early Years project (UEY) is a federally funded local research and community capacity building initiative being undertaken by Partnership in Learning and Advocacy for Young Children (PLAY) focused on **gathering, interpreting and sharing meaningful information and resources that can positively affect children 6 and under in local communities**. The project covers all municipal, electoral and school district jurisdictions within BC's Capital Region. UEY Greater Victoria is sponsored by the Community Council (www.communitycouncil.ca).

Our goal is to inspire an informed community of people willing and ready to respond to the needs of children in the region.

What is the project doing?

- a. **Identifying assets and strengths** that support young children and their families.
- b. **Collecting data:**
 - i. from parents and children in the region to learn more about young children's development and the needs of families and communities to best support them.
 - ii. to better understand our regional child care needs and what steps can be taken locally to monitor and plan.
- c. **Preparing Early Years Reports** for each municipality in the region to share our early childhood research results and maps.
- d. **Distributing research briefs** to provide current information and clear requests for action to each municipality, on specific issues.
- e. **Hosting inter-active workshops** with parents and young children.
- f. **Creating an early childhood atlas** with stories, maps, information and pictures to put a spotlight on important themes.
- g. **Preparing an action plan** for our coalition to identify next steps and goals to work toward.

EDI: EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT

Early Care and Learning

As evident in the table below, our region shows a decrease between 2003 and 2006 in how well children scored across all of the areas of child development measured by the EDI.

Change in Average Scores from 2003 and 2006 in each area of child development the EDI measures. Scores range from 0 to 10. An average of 2340 children's scores are included.									
Physical		Social		Emotional		Cognitive/Language		Communication	
2003	2006	2003	2006	2003	2006	2003	2006	2003	2006
8.6	8.2	8.3	7.9	8.0	7.4	8.2	7.6	7.7	7.2

(Results are taken from the Human Early Learning Partnership website at: www.help.ubc.ca/data.htm).

Over half of Canadian children 6 months to five years of age were in some form of childcare by 2001. The trend that children are being cared for outside their own homes is likely not going to change given the numbers of women in the workforce, high costs of living requiring dual incomes, as well as the high numbers of single parent households. For example, in 2001 lone parent families made up between 7% and 26% of households in various Greater Victoria neighbourhoods.

During the past few years, we also know that parents of young children in our region have faced critical challenges in accessing any, let alone affordable, options in child care. Child care provides many young children, particularly those of employed parents, with valuable early learning experiences (for example, opportunities to socialize with other children and to engage in exploratory and collaborative play). Additionally, child care centres and service providers have faced equally challenging circumstances. Here is just a brief overview:

- Shortage in Qualified Child Care Providers: many centres can not find qualified staff to fill child care staffing positions. This has led to child care spaces being reduced, child care centre closures, and increase work loads for existing staff, (just to name a few impacts).
- Lack of Child Care Spaces: there are just not enough spaces for the numbers of children who need care. For example, in the City of Victoria, a quick tally of numbers shows that there is approximately 1 child care space for every 3 children under the age of 5. Parents are forced onto long wait lists, putting their child into centres that do not meet their needs or standards, longer commutes, and in some cases, moving out of the region.
- Funding for Child Care is Uncertain: it is anticipated that due to recent cuts to the child care sector, centres will likely have to increase their fees. Increases may range from \$50/month, up to \$100/month for infant/toddler care, as infant/toddler care is more costly, as well as the most difficult to find available spaces.

What we ponder as we see the EDI scores falling in our region is: what if we did invest and create an affordable, quality, universal system of child care services in our region, would this be a key intervention that might help us realize better child development outcomes on measures such as the EDI? What do you think?

Esquimalt & EDI Scores

The EDI has been viewed by the Esquimalt Early Years Committee as a resource to aid in planning for services and setting Committee priorities that will support improved outcomes for children. They examine the EDI results in light of their experience and knowledge of the community they serve.

EDI results for Esquimalt between 2003 and 2006 showed some improvement in each area of child development. The Committee reports no significant change in levels of early childhood services, programs, or funding to Esquimalt between 2003 and 2006. Their committee, along with others, have put forward some considerations that may have influenced the EDI findings:

- Even in a low income community such as Esquimalt, increasing housing costs have meant that families who rent accommodation have moved out to areas of less cost.
- The Esquimalt recreation centre had a very limited number of programs offered during the 2003 period due to facility renovations.
- Service providers to young children and families in Esquimalt have become better networked and informed of services in the community since 2003.
- A change over in Kindergarten (K) teachers has occurred since 2003, including recent graduates leading K classes in some schools in 2006. Additionally, new EDI training was provided in 2006 for K teachers, raising the possibility that there may be variations in interpretation of children's school readiness by teacher, given differences in teaching experience and training in the EDI.

GET INVOLVED!

We welcome members of the community to join us in our work to make our region a healthy, liveable community for young children and families. There are Early Years committees in many parts of the region. Visit the Play website to learn more about these groups and their activities: www.playvictoria.org/involved_networks.aspx

Western Communities Early Childhood Development Committee: Covers the communities of Colwood, Langford, Metchosin, Sooke up to Port Renfrew.

Contact: Nicky Logins Tel: 642-5152 Email: nlogins@sookefamilyresource.ca

Esquimalt Early Childhood Committee (includes View Royal).

Contact: Diana Bosworth Tel: 385-2635 Email: dbosworth@enh.bc.ca

Saanich Early Years Committee

Contact: Colleen Hobson Tel: 360-1148 Email: sn-place@telus.net

Peninsula Connections for Early Childhood: Covers the communities of Central Saanich, North Saanich, Sidney and areas of Saanich.

Contact: Janis Johnson Tel: 743-2950

Email: peninsulaconnections@beaconcs.ca

Gulf Islands Coalition for Children and Families: Covers Salt Spring and the Southern Gulf Islands

Contact: Janice Shields Tel: 653-4411 Email: janmar@uniserve.com

Acknowledgements and Thanks You!

Over 1000 parents have agreed to participate in PIDACS so far! THANK YOU to all PARENTS and CHILDREN for your participation.

The UEY project would like to thank School District 61 (Victoria), 62 (Sooke), 63 (Saanich) and 64 (Gulf Islands), as well as all the **kindergarten teachers** who have played such an integral part of helping collect local data on early childhood development. THANKS!

A big thank you to Daphne Macnaughton, Janis Johnson, Enid Eliot, Diana Bosworth, Sharon McDonough, and the UEY Advisory Committee for your contributions to the newsletter!

This newsletter was funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada under the Understanding the Early Years Initiative.

PARENT INTERVIEWS

If you are a parent of a kindergarten child this year, you may have received a letter to request your participation in **PIDACS** (parent interview and direct assessment of children survey). **PIDACS** is one of the research tools that the Understanding the Early Years (UEY) project is using to inform us about young children and families in our community. Parents of kindergarten children have been asked to participate in a survey, and to have their children assessed at school. A report will be prepared for our community and will be made available by summertime 2007.

The parent survey asks primary care providers/ parents about such things as the safety of their community, the kinds of services they use, the child care their children received, parenting style, and general questions about their children.

Visit our website for **PIDACS**, **EDI** and **UEY** updates: www.playvictoria.org/projects_uey.aspx



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