

The EDI TEACHER NEWSLETTER



On behalf of the Government of Manitoba, as Minister of Conservation, I am pleased to introduce the second edition of Manitoba's EDI (Early Development Instrument) Teacher Newsletter. As you read this, you may be asking yourself, what does the EDI have to do with conservation? Well, that's easy to answer.

We know there is a strong relationship between Manitoba's education systems and the social and economic sustainability of our province. We also know that Manitoba's readiness for school data, as measured by the EDI, provides important information on Manitoba's youngest citizens, and the future learning potential of this next generation. Because Manitoba Conservation commits to providing Manitobans with vital information on the sustainability issues and trends in our province (find Manitoba's new 2009 Provincial Sustainability Report, soon to be released, at www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/sustainabilityreport), the EDI is one of several important indicators used to measure the sustainability of Manitoba's well-being and economy.

As indicated in the 2005 Provincial Sustainability Report for Manitoba, youth literacy in Manitoba is among the best in the world. However, as evidenced by the EDI, we know that some aspects of our children's readiness for school show the need for

stronger learning foundations during children's early years. Given what we know about school readiness as strong predictor of future learning (and earning) potential and achievement, instilling a strong learning foundation during children's early years is essential for the province's future well-being and economic prosperity.

I am heartened to know that through the work of the Healthy Child Manitoba strategy, led by the government departments, and community organizations and partnerships that comprise Healthy Child Manitoba, much progress has been made, and continues to be made, on building these strong foundations for children. And so, as the work of the Healthy Child Manitoba strategy continues, I'd like to extend my sincerest appreciation to you – the kindergarten teachers of Manitoba, and the collectors of the EDI data – for your valuable role in contributing to the social and economic prosperity and sustainability of Manitoba.

Thank you!



Stan Struthers
Minister of Conservation

The WSD Speech-Language Project, developed in 2001, was created to educate teachers and parents. The project provides:

- Workshops on language-development and language facilitation techniques for teachers and parents;
- Tools for participants to enhance language development; and
- Pre-reading strategies that are shared with teachers and parents to help build both language skills and a love for reading.

Kathy Gerylo

Area service director/
speech-language
pathologist
Child Guidance Clinic



Understanding the Early Years (UEY) Initiative

The Understanding the Early Years (UEY) Initiative is funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to enable members within participating communities to work together to address the needs of young children from birth to age six. Established in 1999 as a pilot research initiative, UEY became a national initiative in 2004. The UEY Initiative provides community members with important information, research and decision-making tools, including:

- Information on the development of kindergarten children (using the Early Development Instrument and Parent Interviews and Direct Assessments of Children survey);
 - Information on the parenting, family and community factors that influence children's development (using data from the Parent Interviews and Direct Assessments of Children survey, which is based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth); and
- Information on local resources that support young children and their families (using locally-developed community asset studies, including mapping); and socio-economic characteristics of the community (using census data).

UEY projects engage community members through partnerships and networks to increase awareness of the importance of children's early years and share knowledge amongst their local coalitions, service providers, parents, teachers, and other key decision-makers to help them address the identified needs of the children in their community by building upon their strengths and assets.

The early work of UEY helped inspire the Government of Manitoba to implement the EDI across our province. The ongoing work of UEY gives us examples of the EDI in action at the community level. The participating UEY communities in Manitoba are:

- Winnipeg School Division – 1999 to 2005 (sponsored by the Winnipeg School Division).
- South Eastman – 2001 to 2007 (sponsored by the South Eastman Regional Health Authority).
- DSFM – 2006 to 2008 (sponsored by la Division scolaire franco--manitobaine).
- Selkirk-Interlake – 2007 to present (sponsored by the Lord Selkirk School Division).



Winnipeg School Division (WSD) – 1999 to 2005

A celebration event on May 9th, 2005 marked the completion of our UEY initiative, and provided us with an opportunity to develop our post-UEY succession plan. In addition to showcasing several presentations from local expert early childhood development speakers, our event brought together the kindergarten teachers and administrators from our schools and the members from five local-area parent-child coalitions. Together, we shared lessons learned and developed future action steps towards our UEY goals and strategies. We are proud to say that many of the programs and partnerships that were developed through our UEY initiative have continued on since the 2005 wrap-up of our UEY site, including:

- The parent-child coalitions in our communities of Elmwood, Inkster, Point Douglas, Downtown, and River Heights/Fort Rouge which continue to offer programs and support to families and children, building that important bridge between children's communities and schools. To learn more about these coalitions, please visit <http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/parentchild/index>.
- The WSD's Early School Years Program, developed in 2002, which provides an enriched educational environment for children in nursery and kindergarten programs. Developed as a response to EDI data which identified some 'high risk' schools within our division, the primary focus of this program is to support parents in their involvement with their child's school program.
- The WSD's nursery school program which operates in all of the division's 58 elementary schools. With a current enrolment of over 1,700 children, the nursery school program demonstrates our school division's commitment to strengthening the opportunities for learning of all children in our community. To learn more about these programs and our school division, please visit www.wsd1.org.

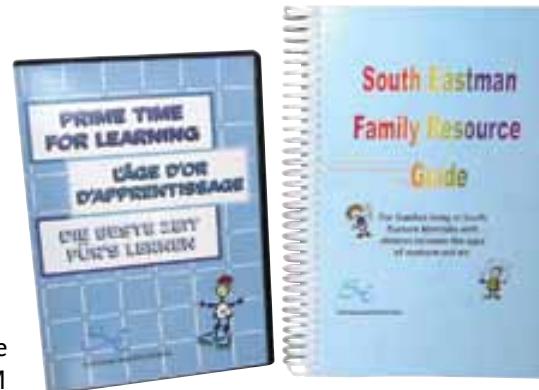
Doug Edmond, director

Research Planning and Systems Management
Winnipeg School Division

South Eastman – 2001 to 2007

Our UEY journey spanned almost seven years! South Eastman became the second site in Manitoba and the first site to be sponsored by a regional health authority. We worked in close partnership with five school divisions

- Hanover, Seine River, la Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM), Red River Valley and Border Land, all within our rural geography of 10,000 square kilometers. We were thrilled when DSFM later became a successful independent project.



Our UEY project was evolutionary. The initial years were focused on collecting important community data and developing partnerships and networks to apply that data to local solutions. One of the early lessons we learned was that data collection and interpretation could not happen in a vacuum – that context and partnerships were required to translate the research into relevant findings that could be used and understood by a wide range of community partners including schools, care providers and families.

That experience guided the evolution of the final years of the project to ensure the research had a lasting impact on our region. We focused our efforts in the following areas:

- Developing a series of communication tools including research reports, Prime Time for Learning DVD, learning activities and kits for parents and service providers to carry on early childhood development beyond the project end.
- Strengthening existing structures such as the early years parent-child coalition and facilitating new structures such as the Community Literacy Network to carry on with local literacy and early childhood development activities.

UEY in South Eastman was an opportunity to build countless relationships and understanding to continue to strengthen early childhood development activities long after its wrap up. UEY has taught us to treat the community as research partners. Research can be a catalyst, but results don't happen in isolation.

Ales Morga, project coordinator

South Eastman Health/Santé Sud-Est

DSFM – 2005 to 2008

La Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM) launched the Understanding the Early Years (UEY) project in January 2006. This three year adventure has been instrumental in promoting Early Childhood in our 20 school communities. Our project differs from the other Manitoban projects as our school division covers the southern part of the province.

The purpose of this evidence-based research project was to provide information about school readiness en français to education and community leaders. Two provincial forums were organized to develop awareness about early childhood education. The distinguished, Dr. Fraser Mustard attended our first forum and set the tone for the important work that lay ahead. Research results were shared at the second forum and the community leaders began to prepare early childhood community action plans. In all, 300 people attended these forums.

This project also supported parents by increasing awareness about school readiness en français. Six posters were created describing the EDI domains and parents attended workshops about school readiness. An inventory of community resources was completed and a guide was distributed to families in our communities. The EDI results were also analysed by language. This valuable information helped further our understanding of school readiness for children entering kindergarten who had limited language skills.

Our communities are engaged in ECE and partnerships have been established with many provincial francophone organizations. The UEY project has impacted our families and our communities and the effects will be long lasting.

Lucille Daudet-Mitchell, early years coordinator
La Division scolaire franco-manitobaine

Selkirk-Interlake – 2007 to present

UEY Selkirk-Interlake, sponsored by the Lord Selkirk School Division, partners with the Southeast Interlake Early Childhood Development Coalition (SEI-ECDC) to find ways that community service providers can work together to improve the development of our community's children.

Building public awareness of our existing parenting and family programs and services is a priority of our UEY site. Through our website, monthly newsletters, event

calendars and Inventory of Community Services and Programs, we can better promote our community and school programs to parents and families.

"The monthly newsletters and calendars that are developed through our UEY initiative makes it easy for us to share these resources with the parents and families in our community, and introduce them to the programs and services that are available to them, but that they may not otherwise know," said Kim Petaski, a public health nurse for Interlake Regional Health Authority in Selkirk.

In collaboration with our the coalition and our school division, our UEY Selkirk-Interlake site has also developed two new preschool programs to reach our community's families - French for Fun and Happy Tots.

In addition to providing resources and support to the parents, children and families in our community, another priority focus is on disseminating and reviewing the EDI data. School and community stakeholders are able to use local-level EDI data to assist them in making decisions on how to best support the children in our community. As the UEY coordinator, my role is to develop and share our school's EDI reports with these stakeholders, and present results at various community and school meetings and events.

To learn more about our
UEY initiative, please visit:
www.lssd.ca/ueyselkirkinterlake

Arlene Kinden, coordinator
Selkirk-Interlake UEY
Lord Selkirk School Division



It takes a village to raise a child

A community story

In the small rural communities of Langruth, Plumas, Amaranth, Alonsa, McCreary and Laurier, an idea became a reality: high quality, family-centered support for rural parents and their young children. The Childcare – Family Access Network (C-FAN) was established in 1990 as a rural integrated hub model that offers programs and services to parents and children - ranging from full-time multi-age child care, to nursery school programs, to parent and child drop-in programs, to outreach parenting support services.

Cathy Cyr, child care coordinator for the Manitoba Child Care Program, credits the C-FAN model for the successful development and delivery of early learning and child care within a rural context.

Child care is a growing need for today's rural families, as many families have two people working either on the farm or outside of the home. It can be very challenging to build childcare programs in small communities; however, joining with an existing program in a neighbouring community is often a great way to achieve success. The C-FAN model has been a wonderful way to mentor others to build rural childcare programs. We solicited support from the local agricultural corporate sector, we built upon the capacity and skill level of local early learning and childcare educators and most importantly, by working together, we have been able to provide rural children with high quality childcare in a safe, caring, educational, and fun environment.

C-FAN executive director Sharron Arksey says that part of the reason for the program's success lies in the connections and partnerships that exist in C-FAN communities.

We work together with school divisions, parent child coalitions, health authorities, municipalities and local businesses and organizations. Our relationship with local schools is particularly strong. As an example, we have partnered with

the Turtle River School Division (TRSD) to run nursery school programs, which are located right in the schools. Right now we have three nursery school programs in TRSD. It's a great community and school partnership.



Laurie Ann Conrad, director of Alonsa Nursery School, says that, with the great community and education support she receives, she can't help but think that the nursery school program is providing her students with a great start to kindergarten.

I have heard many comments from teachers and principals who tell me that they can tell which children have attended our program. The Alonsa school staff are always eager and willing to help out in any way, and being located right in the kindergarten room is an added bonus. By the end of the children's time with me, I feel confident that they are ready for their next educational step.

Mindy Zalluski, a parent from the community, has sent her two children to Alonsa Nursery School and she describes herself as one of the program's biggest fans.

My children, as well as other children in the area, have benefited from such a well-organized and energetic program. The Alonsa Nursery School program benefits children and families in several ways. They learn the alphabet and some sounds, numbers, shapes, colours, how to print their names, and perhaps even more importantly, they learn those important social and emotional skills. And because the nursery school is located in the school, the children become familiar with the classroom setting, and the teachers and staff, giving them a jumpstart when it comes time to begin kindergarten.

Superintendent of the Turtle River School Division (TRSD), Bev Szymesko, is pleased with the three nursery school programs and the other early childhood development initiatives that are offered to the families within her division.

Our nursery school and 'Kindergarten Here I Come' programs are quality investments that help our community's children get the best start to school. We know that this great start to school will set the stage for their future successes in learning as they progress through their school years.

Tammy Gingras, TRSD's 'Kindergarten Here I Come' program instructor, finds that her preschool program reaches out to those parents and children within the TRSD area who are unable to access the school nursery program.

The 'Kindergarten Here I Come' program offers children with six half-day sessions and one full-day session, providing an opportunity for these children to become familiar with their school prior to kindergarten entry. This free program ensures all our community's children have this important start to kindergarten. The first year of the program was in 2007 and it was a tremendous success.

Teresa Mayer, senior data and statistical analyst at the Healthy Child Manitoba Office notes that the EDI is Manitoba's method for monitoring children's school readiness across communities, and over time.

While we can't yet use the EDI to directly measure the impacts of particular programs such as C-FAN, we can analyze community-level EDI data to determine if there have been significant changes in a community's EDI results over time. The analysis of EDI data within the RM's of McCreary, Alonsa and Lakeview shows some positive trends. The EDI results within these rural municipalities significantly improved in the areas of emotional maturity, and communication skills and general knowledge. As well, EDI results improved in social competence, though these gains were not statistically significant. While these positive trends are the markings of an EDI community success story, we can't attribute these improved scores to any particular program, including C-FAN. However, we do know from other research that high quality child care, early childhood programs, support and resources for parents, and strong school/community relationships – all of which are happening within this community – do support children's school readiness.



For more information on Manitoba's EDI, visit the Healthy Child Manitoba website at: www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/edi/index.html

For more information on the pan-Canadian approach to using the EDI, visit the Offord Centre for Child Studies' website at: www.offordcentre.com/readiness/SRL_project.html