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TORONTO FIRST DUTY PHASE 1 FINAL REPORT:
Evidence-based Understanding of Integrated Foundations
for Early Childhood

October 2007

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1. Project Capsule	5
1.1.1 Aims of the Project	5
1.1.2 Development and Implementation	6
1.1.3 Looking ahead	6
1.2 Context Revisited	7
1.2.1 International	7
1.2.2 National: Canada	8
1.2.3 Provincial: Ontario	10
1.2.4 Local: Toronto	11
1.3 Methodology: Evidence-informed Understanding	13
1.3.1 Evaluation Plan	14
1.3.2 Data Collection	15
1.3.3 Analysis Framework	20
2. FINDINGS	22
2.1 Programs, Practice, and Policy	22
2.1.1 Utilization	22
2.1.2 Economic Analysis	27
2.1.3 Indicators of Change	34
2.1.4 Program Quality and Improvement (ECERS-R)	39
2.1.5 Front-line Staff in the Crucible of Integration	41
2.1.6 Organizational Change and Sustainability	46
2.1.7 Impact on Public Policy	53
2.2 Parents and Children	54
2.2.1 Support for Parents and Parent Involvement in Toronto First Duty	54
2.2.2 Children	62
2.3 Community/Public Awareness	65
2.3.1 Community engagement	65
2.3.2 Community Early Child Development Reporting	69
2.4 Site Case Study Capsules	72
2.4.1 Action for Children Today and Tomorrow/Secord Dawes	72
2.4.2 Bruce/WoodGreen Early Learning Centre	73
2.4.3 Corvette Early Years	74
2.4.4 Queen Victoria Partners for Early Learning	76
2.4.5 York Early Years-Wilcox	77
3. CONCLUSIONS	79
3.1 Key Research Findings from Phase 1	79
3.1.1 Practice, Programs, and Policy	79
3.1.2 Children and Parents	81
3.1.3 Community	81
3.1.4 Putting it All Together	81
3.2 Evidence for Economic Impact	82
3.2.1 Effects of Integrated Services – Staff and Parents	82
3.2.2 Effects of Integrated Services – Children	83
3.3 Successes, Failures, Learning, and Sustainability	86
3.3.1 Defining the First Duty Model	86
3.3.2 Sustaining Professional and Organizational Change	86
3.3.3 Implementing the Vision	86
3.4 Adapting to context and site differences	87
3.5 Potential Benefits of Toronto First Duty	87
3.5.1 Developmental Effects of Better Quality	88
3.5.2 Effects on Employment	89
3.6 Next Steps	89
3.6.1 Expand and Consolidate Existing Programs	89

3.6.2	Leveraging TFD Tools and Expertise.....	90
3.6.3	Professional Development, Planning and Staff Release Time.....	90
3.6.5	Schools as Community Intersection Points.....	91
3.6.6	Strengthening Toronto Best Start Network.....	91
3.6.7	Provincial System Infrastructure.....	92
REFERENCES	93
APPENDICES	99

Tables and Graphs

Tables

Table 1 Data Collection Schedule 2001-2005	21
Table 2 Utilization Hours in TFD Sites July 2004 - June 2005.....	24
Table 3 Comparing Costs.....	33
Table 4 Summary of Toronto First Duty Key Elements and Program Indicators	35

Graphs

Graph 1 Cumulative Total TFD-Supported Hours 2004-2005	25
Graph 2 Cumulative Total TFD- & Partner-Supported Hours 2004-2005	26
Graph 3 Utilization of TFD by Age, 2004-2005.....	27
Graph 4 Tracking TFD Dollars: Development, Start Up, & Implementation	28
Graph 5 Total Annual Site Expenditures	29
Graph 6 Total Site Expenditures 2000- 2005	30
Graph 7 Direct Program, Administration/Coordination, & Development Site Expenditures	31
Graph 8 TFD ECERS-R Total Scores 2003 & 2005	40
Graph 9 Cross-site Change in ECERS-R 2003-2005	41
Graph 10 Staff Views.....	44
Graph 11 Framework for Building Sustainability	51
Graph 12 Parents' Program Goals by Site.....	55
Graph 13 Intake and Tracking, June 2005 - Maternal Education.....	56
Graph 14 Parent Survey - TFD vs. Single vs. No EC Service.....	59
Graph 15 Parent Survey 2003 and 2005 - "My opinion is valued"	60
Graph 16 EDI Total Scores across Sites and Years.....	63
Graph 17 Vocabulary Raw Scores Time 1 and Time 2	64
Graph 18 Children's Interviews	65
Graph 19 Community engagement.....	67

TORONTO FIRST DUTY PHASE 1 EVALUATION REPORT

TFD Timeline

TFD Development Phase:

- January 2000 - July 2002

TFD Phase I:

- Start Up - Year 1: July 2002 – June 2003
- Implementation - Year 2: July 2003 – June 2004
- Implementation - Year 3: July 2004 – June 2005

TFD Phase 2:

- Year 1: July 2005 – December 2008

1. INTRODUCTION

The ‘Toronto First Duty Phase 1 Final Report’ summarizes the evaluation of the initiative from July 2002 to June 2005. It offers an evidence-informed understanding of integrated foundations for early childhood programs.

1.1. Project Capsule

Toronto First Duty is designed to provide early learning and care for *every child*; it aims to support the healthy development from conception to entry to Grade 1 *at the same time* as it supports parents to work or study and in their parenting role. Toronto First Duty (TFD) envisions regulated child care, kindergarten and family support programs consolidated into a single, accessible program delivery platform that is located in primary schools and coordinated with early intervention and family health services.

In Phase 1 of the TFD initiative (2002–2005), five Toronto demonstration sites were selected to implement the TFD delivery model in their communities. They faced many of the predictable challenges that come from combining services with different cultures and legislative frameworks. However, each site made progress towards the TFD vision and contributed to building a ‘zero-to-six’ system for young children and their families, as recommended in Ontario’s 1999 *Early Years Study*.

What we envision will be a first "tier" program for early child development, as important as the elementary and secondary school system and the post-secondary education system. The system should consist of community-based centres operating at the local level within a provincial framework... (McCain & Mustard, (1999), p. 20.)

1.1.1 Aims of the Project

TFD Phase 1 aimed to test-drive new public policy and to evaluate its implementation and results. This report describes how each site developed and the impact on children, families, communities, and existing public policies. To meet the evaluation goal of evidence-informed understanding, the research design drew on different research approaches and mixed methods to marshal together various sources of information for analysis.

1.1.2 Development and Implementation

In 1999, the Atkinson Charitable Foundation (ACF) approached the Toronto Children's Advocate with a proposal to jointly sponsor a project that would demonstrate the development of an early years system. In April 1999, on a motion from the Toronto Children's Advocate, Toronto City Council allocated funds to contribute to a partnership for a multi-year Early Childhood Education, Development and Care (ECEDC) project. ACF launched a 'Million Dollar Early Years Challenge' to support innovative approaches. The city and ACF were joined by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) to manage and fund a feasibility study on integrated early childhood programs. ACF and the city established a funding partnership to support the York Early Years Wilcox (YEW-W) Project. In 2001, the partnership went forward: four demonstration sites were added; the Toronto District School Board began active participation, along with contributions from the Canadian Auto Workers for communication and Human Resource Development Canada for research and development. Evaluation and evidence-based understanding of the project were critical features of the project plan. In 2002 a research team including faculty from the Atkinson Centre and the Institute of Child Study at the University of Toronto and Ryerson University was commissioned to carry out a four-year study of Phase 1 of Toronto First Duty.

The partnership was organized around the TFD Steering Committee. It began with representation from the City of Toronto, the Toronto District School Board, the Atkinson Charitable Foundation, Toronto Public Health, and the lead agencies from each site (Macaulay Child Development Centre, WoodGreen Community Services, Child Development Institute, East York and East Toronto Family Resources, and Not Your Average Daycare). The steering committee expanded to include representatives of the Toronto Region Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, the Toronto Teachers Federation, and the Toronto Child Care Coalition. In the development and start-up phases of TFD the steering committee met monthly. As TFD moved into implementation the meetings occurred bi-monthly.

During the start up and implementation of TFD Phase 1 (July 2002 to 2005), the five sites worked towards the vision of integrated early learning environments, early childhood staff teams, local governance, seamless access, and parent participation.

1.1.3 Looking ahead

In July 2005, TFD commenced with TFD Phase 2. Four of the five sites did not receive specialized funding past August 2006. TFD is moving from a demonstration model to a dissemination role informing the expanded delivery of early childhood services. The goal is to sustain integrated programming, policies, and practices.

One site, Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre (BWELC), continues to operate with designated funding for three years. The site is a prototype that continues to expand the First Duty delivery model—integrating child care, kindergarten, and family support programs into a single program and serves as a prototype model for the implementation of the Best Start Strategy in Toronto and across Ontario. Research continues to monitor

the policy impact of Toronto First Duty and the further development of the TFD prototype at BWELC.

1.2 Context Revisited

Public and political interest in early child development has bubbled at unprecedented levels over the last decade in many countries around the globe. Interest in early brain development; readiness for school and school reform; integrated and comprehensive services for early childhood programs; parent/community involvement in children's services; child care as a developmental program for children as well as a support to parental labour force participation, and the cost effectiveness of investments in early childhood, all fuel the interest in comprehensive delivery models.

The public policy contexts in Toronto, Ontario, and Canada have dramatically changed since the inception of Toronto First Duty. Changes in governments and renewed interest and investments in early learning and child care and kindergarten opened up new possibilities for expansion and collaborations.

1.2.1 International

Nine Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries have now integrated their entire early childhood education and care (ECEC) systems for children from birth to age 6 under one government department. They regard ECEC as an essential part of the preparation of children for public school, as an important component of the supports for families, in particular for those with employed parents, and finally, as a venue for identifying children and families who will need special services (OECD, 2001). There has been very little research and evaluation of these system changes.

In the United States, numerous policy studies and reports recommend the coordination and/or amalgamation of fragmented programs and systems into a more holistic approach to early learning and child care. Examples of state-wide initiatives include:

- Smart Start in North Carolina is a state-wide initiative that aims to enhance the quality of child care centre and to ensure partnerships with family support programs. Children who attend quality Smart Start child care centres (which have collaborative partnerships with family support programs and enhanced staff training and compensation) do better on measures of cognitive, language, and social skills, regardless of family or cultural background (Smart Start Evaluation Team, 2003). Children who receive Smart Start services are better prepared cognitively when they enter school and do better on kindergarten assessments (Johnson & Lee, 2003). Data collected from over 180 child care centers in 12 counties implementing the Smart Start community initiative reported that the quality of child care increased, as measured by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (Bryant, Maxwell & Burchinal, 1999). The evidence suggests that a comprehensive community initiative can improve child care quality if significant funds and activities are focused on the issue.
- Proposition 10 established First 5 California in November 1998. First 5 California distributes the tobacco tax to 58 California counties. County Commissions allocate

these funds to support local programs that serve children from before birth to age 5 and their families to improve child health, child development, family functioning, and systems of care. The initial school readiness results indicate that children who attend such programs do better than children who do not (Government Finance Officers Association & Altmayer Consulting Inc, 2005). The results also found an association between children's overall health and measures of school readiness. Healthier children were more likely to be assessed as ready for school learning. Children whose families regularly read to them and engage in other literacy activities have a higher mastery of the skills needed for school than do other children. First 5 California efforts seem to be influencing state public policy. Efforts to expand preschool for all children have been supported by First 5 Commissions and increased investments are expanding access, integration, and work towards improvements in the quality of programs and skills and compensation of the workforce.

1.2.2 National: Canada

The Canadian context has witnessed increased investments, public scrutiny, and policy attention in early childhood programs since the start-up of Toronto First Duty in 2002. Child care policy and funding have dominated the discussions. In March 2003, and building on the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Early Childhood Development Agreement of 2000, the Ministers Responsible for Social Services agreed to a framework to improve access to affordable, high quality, provincially- and territorially-regulated early learning and child care programs and services. The objective of this Multilateral Framework Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) was to further promote early childhood development and support the participation of parents in employment or training by improving access to affordable, high quality early learning and child care programs and services. In the first two years of the agreement, \$100 million was transferred through the Canada Health and Social Transfer to the provinces and territories for regulated early learning and child care programs for children under six, primarily for direct care and early learning for children in settings such as child care centres, family child care homes, preschools, and nursery schools. By the fifth year \$350 million will be transferred to the provinces and territories. The 2004 federal budget increased funding by \$75 million annually for both 2004/05 and 2005/06.

In the 2004 federal election campaign, the Liberal Party's election platform included a 5-year, \$5 billion "Foundations" program to accelerate the establishment of a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. In the October 2004 Speech from the Throne and the February 2005 federal budget, the Government of Canada committed an additional \$5 billion over 5 years to an early learning and child care system that would be based on the principles of quality, universal inclusion, accessibility, and developmental (QUAD). A series of preliminary bilateral agreements for ELCC were signed with each of the provinces. Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba signed funding agreements with the federal government. A subsequent election of a Conservative government negated these agreements. In spite of considerable opposition, the current federal government announced that it would terminate the signed agreements in March 2007.

The uptake of expanded parental leave and benefits put more parents at home for longer periods of time after their child's birth. The numbers of claimants and the duration of the benefit have increased. Early results on take-up suggest that eligible parents are taking a significantly longer period at home following the birth or adoption of a child; in 2001 61% of women received benefits, compared with 54% in 2000, and 52% in 1995, and Employment Insurance benefits for maternity and parental leave have almost doubled from \$1.2 billion in 1995.

The recent context was captured in the Canadian OECD review, completed in 2004, and the two reports summarize the policy context and delivery of child care (and other ELCC) programs in Canada (Doherty, Friendly, & Beach, 2003; OECD, 2004). The review centred on the ELCC programs in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Prince Edward Island. They focused attention on the problems created by the two solitudes: education and child care. The OECD review team stressed the need to heal the rift between kindergarten programs and child care and emphasized the need to "Build bridges between child care and kindergarten education, with the aim of integrating ECEC both at ground level and at policy and management levels" (OECD, 2004, p.7).

Across Canada, new policy and program initiatives recommend alignment and coordination of programs and other initiatives and promote consolidation of existing programs. For example:

- British Columbia's 2004/2005 Child and Youth Officer – Jane Morley – has recommended a neighbourhood hub approach that will encourage local child care, family support, family health, and early intervention programs to coordinate efforts, possibly co-locating in primary school space. The 2004/2005 annual report stipulates that regulated child care should be a central component of the hubs and that a funding envelope with appropriate accountability mechanisms should be given to community tables for planning and program delivery (Morley, 2005).
- A community-research project conducted from 2003 to 2004 found promising practices in three groups of First Nations in Canada that are working to coordinate early child development programs. The findings suggest a model of ELCC that views the programs as a hook for mobilizing community involvement in strategies to support young children and families and as a hub for organizing coordinated, intersectoral service delivery (Ball, 2005).
- In 2004 La Commission Nationale des Parents Francophones conducted a pan-Canadian tour to determine the early child development-related needs of its members and their communities. The tour identified strong support for an integrated services model, summarized as universal access to high quality, affordable services within a community structure managed by parents (Lafreniere-Davis, 2005). Similar conclusions had been reached in multiple stakeholder consultations among francophones in Ontario (Deloitte & Touche, 2000).

1.2.3 Provincial: Ontario

TFD began under a provincial Conservative government that had reduced expenditures in child care, allocated new federal resources to ‘anything but child care,’ and threatened to eliminate provincial funding for child care. The Early Years Challenge Fund, Early Years Plan, and the reorganization of family resource programs into Ontario Early Years Centres were parallel initiatives in the early days of TFD.

In September 2003, Ontarians elected a new Liberal government with a decidedly different approach and perspective on early learning and care. At the same time, the federal government introduced the funding initiatives directed to regulated child care, rather than to the broader early child development sector, targeted by the earlier Federal/Provincial/Territorial Early Child Development Agreement.

In November 2004, the province launched Best Start, a major 10-year redesign of the services that support children and families from birth through Grade 1. The Best Start vision suggests the transformation of an array of existing services and programs into a cohesive, coherent system to support early child development. Local Best Start Networks must include representation from Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) or District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs), school boards, public health units, regional Ministry of Children’s and Youth Services (MCYS), and can also include child care and children’s services providers, services for children with special needs, municipalities, provincial MCYS regional offices, parents, and other child and family services. In addition, four regional French language networks will be created with broader boundaries. The local CMSM or DSSAB was responsible for convening the first meeting of the community partners to establish the local Best Start Networks. Existing planning networks (e.g., Healthy Babies, Healthy Children networks, Ontario Early Years Centres networks, or cross-sectoral coalitions such as Early Years Action Groups or Success By 6) may become, or be incorporated into, local Best Start Networks. The MCYS regional offices are responsible for establishing and coordinating the regional French Language Networks.

The Best Start Networks have the potential to leverage system change and integration of early years’ programs but the responsibilities and authority for the delivery of early years programs remains unchanged. The allocation of the now-limited federal child care funding and administration of regulated child care programs remains the responsibility of CMSMs/DSSABs. Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Preschool Speech and Language programs, and Infant Hearing Program are administered and managed by local Public Health Units. Ontario Early Years Centres, Data Analyst Coordinators, Early Literacy Consultants, and Infant Development Programs are the responsibility of regional MCYS offices. Junior and Senior Kindergarten and school-run parenting and early literacy/readiness programs are managed by local district school boards.

Best Start community hubs are put forward as the service delivery model that will bring together screening, assessment, treatment, child care, and family support programs, with direct links to other children’s services, such as mental health services and speech and language resources. The initial momentum came from the anticipated, and now reduced, federal funding for early learning and care and expanded allocation for child care located

in, or near, schools, primarily for four- and five-year olds. The Schools First policy means that more regulated child care will be located in elementary schools alongside junior and senior kindergarten programs. However, a truly seamless day of programs for four- and five-year-olds will require further collaboration among staff as well as curriculum planning. It is unclear how kindergartens will align and integrate with other programs and services in the Best Start hubs.

Best Start Expert Panels are intended to address specific implementation issues. The panel on the Early Learning Program is developing a framework for programs for children 2½ to 5 years. Initially, the program will link to the junior/senior kindergarten program and ultimately will be an early learning framework for children 2½ to 5 years. The panel on Quality and Human Resources will make recommendations on how to create a knowledgeable and skilled early childhood workforce by examining factors that impact on quality, including education and training, remuneration, recruitment, and retention challenges in the regulated child care sector.

The 2005 provincial Auditor General's report (Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, 2005) includes a chapter on child care activity. The scope of the audit includes quality of child care services and transfer payments to CMSMs. The report makes a number of recommendations related to the quality and funding of child care programs including the development a child care curriculum, increased pre-requisite ECE qualifications and work experience for child care supervisors, guidance for on-going professional development and funding reform.

1.2.4 Local: Toronto

The City of Toronto is committed to a vision for all children living within its boundaries:

Regardless of the socio-economic status of his/her family and community every child has the right to childhood experiences which promote the chances of developing into a healthy, well-adjusted and productive adult (Toronto Report Card Working Group, 2003, p. 1).

The City of Toronto plans, manages, and funds a range of children's services. The licensed child care programs serving almost 50,000 children and families in more than 800 centres and hundreds of child care homes are the core of the city's children's infrastructure. The city's child care budget is about \$300 million—more than any individual province or territory with the exception of Quebec. Half of Ontario's licensed child care spaces are in Toronto. About 8,000 individuals make up the child care workforce in Toronto.

The city faced relentless financial pressures on its child care budget through 2003. However, increased federal funding for child care and a new provincial government reversed the reduction of funding for child care fee subsidies and new funding was available to the city's child care programs. The result was an increase in fee subsidies and capacity for child care.

During the 2003 municipal election campaign, then mayoral candidate, David Miller, pledged a Mayor's Roundtable to focus on children and youth, with a specific focus on expanding the Toronto First Duty model of integrated early childhood services. Once elected, Miller established the Mayor's Roundtable on Children, Youth and Education, with representation from federal, provincial, and municipal governments. In 2005, the Roundtable concluded its work and the subsequent policy document and report *Best Generation Yet* (Mayor's Roundtable on Children, Youth, and Education, 2005) was adopted by Toronto City Council.

Regardless of the socio-economic status of his/her family and community, every child has the right to childhood experiences, which promote the chances of developing into a healthy, well-adjusted and productive adult.
(Toronto Report Card Working Group, 2003, p. 1)

The *Best Generation Yet* (Mayor's Roundtable, 2005) sets out directions for developing a 10-year plan to achieve a comprehensive system of integrated, inclusive, and high quality services that will support the best outcomes for Toronto's children age 0–12. It provides the framework for city divisional plans for children, and ties this to the initiatives from other levels of government. Under *Best Generation Yet*, the city will set goals, strategies, and benchmarks to measure progress towards success and to identify the funding needed and the sources of funding available to achieve the goals of universal and equitable access to services for children. The *Best Generation Yet* provides the framework for the expansion and integration of Toronto's services for children 0–12 and for the implementation of the Toronto Best Start 10-year plan for children 0–6.

Toronto's Best Start Network has adopted a planning framework to implement more integrated early childhood programs (see Toronto Best Start Network, 2006). The principles and elements of Toronto First Duty were adopted as part of the framework, along with the slogan "Toronto First Duty informs Toronto Best Start". As TFD enters Phase 2, the city hired one of the site coordinators to assist in the implementation of Best Start and encourages new child care sites to seek out specific opportunities for increased integration with family support programs and kindergarten.

Since the start of TFD, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has undergone several changes. In March 2004, TDSB established a work group to develop an early years policy that would provide direction and a framework for identifying, coordinating, and delivering the early years programs needed to ensure student success. The adoption of this formal early years policy brings cohesion to related policies which presently address aspects of the early years, including:

- parent, community and student involvement
- child care in schools
- early and ongoing identification
- optional attendance
- external partnerships
- nutrition foundation
- space accommodation for child care facilities in schools

Another important change is that increased provincial funding has lessened the pressure on local schools to reduce operational costs, although issues related to the funding formula remain. This change reduces some of the barriers to offering integrated programs at school sites. TDSB also recently announced a new pilot project in inner city schools that extends service integration from the preschool and kindergarten level to higher grade levels.

1.3 Methodology: Evidence-informed Understanding

TFD allocated significant resources to developing a comprehensive research approach that would document both process and impact. The partners who came together to plan and implement TFD wanted to have a detailed description of how programs and people came together, what the obstacles were on the frontlines, and what policies might best support a coherent early childhood system. They also wanted to see how an integrated delivery model affected young children, their families, and communities. The partners wanted the research to report on what happened but they also wanted to know how it happened.

The approach for the study can best be described as a mixed-methods, longitudinal case study analysis, which combines quantitative and qualitative data to understand the design, implementation, and possible effects of TFD (Pelletier & Corter, 2006). The narrative information helped to explain the quantitative data.

Each of the five sites was treated as a separate case study to explore how a common approach would work in five different communities. Each case study combined information about changes in service access and delivery over time, evidence about the impact on children and families, and descriptions of the community context.

In addition, the implementation and management of the project was treated as a case study of organizational development, placed in the context of the city, school board, and charitable foundation working together in a complex social and policy context. The policy context for TFD had been assessed in the *Starting Gate Report* (Corter, Bertrand, Griffin, Endler, Pelletier, & McKay, 2002), carried out in 2001, and is revisited in this report.

The research approach also combines an emergent and collaborative approach with one that is more predetermined and evidence-based. The evaluation was adapted to new TFD site program designs as they developed and to changing circumstances. The approach includes formative evaluation that provides information and evidence to help sites refine

program design and delivery. The approach aims to deliver information in a non-technical way that allows practitioners, managers, and community members to put ideas into practice and policy. Non-technical reporting is also designed to enable the dissemination of the findings to communities.

Part of the collaborative/formative strategy was to support each site's capacity to function as a learning organization and to use feedback and self-evaluation to guide development. One of the goals of the evaluation process was to build community capacity by using information to make changes and allocate resources.

The research sought to provide accessible information to assist in understanding both the process and results of implementing seamless early years programming. It sought to make the experiences of the TFD sites accessible to other communities seeking to integrate early childhood programs by describing the process and disseminating "lessons learned". The research was also designed to identify the policy framework needed to support an integrated system for young children 0 to 6 years and their families.

Detailed bi-annual progress reports (see <http://www.toronto.ca/firstduty/reports.htm>) outline the journey of each TFD site in establishing integrated learning environments and staff teams, local governance structures, seamless access, and parent involvement. The research framework allows future data collection to capture what long-term impact TFD has on children's outcomes, community capacity, and program/policy reforms.

1.3.1 Evaluation Plan

The TFD evaluation tracked the development, implementation, and impacts at the five sites within three "strands," or levels of analysis, using multiple measures and perspectives. The three strands are:

A. Program, Policy, and Services: Researchers monitored the progress and dynamics of service integration and utilization. Research team members documented activities and interactions and described the successes and challenges as each site worked to create seamless programs. Researchers tracked and documented changes in the ways in which services for young children and their families were implemented. Information about the availability and utilization of programs was collected. The record of program inputs allowed researchers to calculate some of the costs and begin to measure utilization. Analysis of public policy initiatives related to early learning and care enabled researchers to consider how the TFD experience was influencing those policies and their implementation. The evaluation also tracked the journey of the Toronto First Duty partner institutions (the City of Toronto and the TDSB) and the joint steering committee.

B. Children and Parents: The evaluation measured how changes in services and programs are perceived by children and their families at each TFD site. The research team asked parents about what programs they want (and need) for their children and described how parents view changes in hours of operations, types of program activities, staffing, and program costs. Parents were asked about their need for expanded and integrated services and programs. Children's experiences in program and activities were captured through

interviews, photographs, and drawings. The evaluation also considered the early impact of TFD on children's development and on parenting capacity.

Demonstrating changes in child outcomes and the full impact on parent satisfaction and program/policy changes require longer than three years to determine the long-term benefits. Atkinson Charitable Foundation plans to support research activities for at least five to seven years to ensure that possible longer-term effects for children, families, and communities can be adequately tracked.

C. Community and Public Awareness: On-going interactions with individuals and groups within each of the sites ensured that the evaluation captured how community capacity and public awareness developed over the life of the project. The evaluation described community/public awareness of early childhood issues and programs with particular attention to awareness about TFD and other early childhood and family support programs in the site neighbourhood. Researchers described changes in community capacity including the application of new information, the development of partnerships and collaborations, the ability to respond to information about services and programs, the ability to sustain new models of service delivery, and the resolution of issues.

1.3.2 Data Collection

The research team used a variety of techniques to gather data, including document collection, meeting notes and observations, focus groups, interviews, direct observation, and surveys. Continuous monitoring of program utilization also took place.

In addition to the continuous data collection at the sites, intensive qualitative and quantitative data collection was carried out in two time periods: early implementation (2002-03) and at full implementation (2004-05). Table 1 shows the types of information gathered and the three "strands" they were designed to assess in the research design: program and policy, child and parent, and community. Most measures were collected at both time points, but a community survey was carried out during the second period only. Because of limited research resources, the community survey and some of the child and parent data collection during the second period were limited to three of the five sites: BWELC, Corvette Early Years (CEY), and York Early Years-Wilcox (YEY-W). These sites were selected for intensive case study because they were the closest to implementing the integrated hub model with kindergarten, care, and parenting programs developing on site.

Data collection tools and approaches appear in the list below and are organized by the three strands of the evaluation design. Copies of surveys, interview protocols, and details on other measures are available in Appendix 1.

Programs, Policies & Practices Strand

- **Literature Review:** The academic literature on children's service integration was reviewed (Pelletier & Corter, 2006; Cleveland, Corter, Pelletier, Colley, Bertrand, & Jamieson, 2006).

- **Policy Document Review:** A review of federal, provincial, and municipal documents, which includes relevant public policy/legislation, public databases, position papers, and documents. The review establishes the policy context for TFD, at the point of development and implementation and then again three years into the project. Examples of specific Canadian policy initiatives designed to increase integration in the early childhood sector were reviewed in more detail. Selection criteria and analysis were based on: government position that the initiatives represent integration; review of policy, funding, and program change; challenges and their resolution; presence of training supports to facilitate integration; evaluation of impact on services; and, outcome analysis, if available.
- **Document Analysis:** A detailed review of related operational and policy research considered the methodologies and findings to date from Better Beginnings, Better Futures (see <http://bbbf.queensu.ca/>); Understanding the Early Years (see http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/sd/300_UEYInfo.shtml); Community Action Programs for Children (see http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/programs-mes/capc_main_e.html); Smart Start (Smart Start Evaluation Team, 2003; see <http://www.ncsmartstart.org/>); Sure Start (see <http://www.surestart.gov.uk/>); Organization for Economic and Co-operative Development's Early Childhood Care and Education Review (see http://www.oecd.org/document/3/0,3343,en_2649_34819_27000067_1_1_1_1,00.html); The National Institute for Child Health and Human Development's Early Care Study (see <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/research/supported/seccyd.cfm>); and First 5 California (see <http://www.cfc.ca.gov/>). The initiatives were selected based on their relevance to Toronto First Duty's goals. The researchers identify specific child, family, and community outcomes; policy and program barriers and opportunities; and evaluation methodologies for each initiative.
- **Process Records:** Researchers reviewed records of process such as meeting notes from the TFD Steering Committee, professional development events, and site management meetings, coordinator's network meetings, site reports, and other existing documentation from the site partners (such as mission statements, descriptions of existing programs, service levels, operations and any existing, and relevant evaluation data from the agencies such as client satisfaction data). The research design ensured that the actual steps of implementation and changes to service delivery were described and considered in the context of the specific goals and core elements of the Toronto First Duty project.
- **Key Informant Interviews:** Selected individuals were interviewed to comment on the local, municipal, and provincial political and policy contexts for the project. Individuals were identified as key informants because of their role or position within a particular context. For example, Assistant Deputy Ministers in provincial government ministries have special insight into the provincial government's perspectives and priorities as they pertain to their own department's sphere of responsibility and as they relate to those of the project. The same is true of key officials at the municipal level and community leaders at the local level. Their views shed light on the degree of support that exists at the various levels, the issues which

must be addressed, and why these issues are significant. A copy of a generic version of key informant questions is available in Appendix 1.1.

- **Front-line Staff Interviews and Surveys:** Interviews were held with agency staff members individually and in small groups to understand their perspectives. Staff members are responsible and accountable to implement integrated program delivery at the demonstration sites. Therefore their understanding of what the sites are trying to achieve, their definition of service integration, their implementation issues and concerns, how they address them, and how their issues and concerns change over time, were particularly important to an understanding of the implementation process and both the anticipated, hoped for outcomes, as well as any unanticipated outcomes. Staff surveys were conducted to sample staff characteristics (e.g., professional experience/background) and/or to determine staffs' perceptions of the characteristics and effectiveness of the inter-agency and inter-professional collaboration which exist, and/or their project's capacity to improve outcomes for children and families. The front-line staff survey was conducted at each site and at both time periods, to assess professional experiences and views on the TFD approach (see section 2.1.5 of this report). As with all of the research data collected by the research team, participation was voluntary but the majority of professional staff members who were directly involved at the sites did participate. The survey was developed on the basis of interviews conducted during 2002-03 with professionals representing the different sites and participating professions (see Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2003e; a copy of the staff survey is included in Appendix 1.2).
- **Direct Program Observation:** Evaluation team members visited the demonstration sites to observe the programs and services provided to both children and families. They also attended management and staff meetings, networking and professional development sessions, as well as some of the demonstration sites' community awareness and information sessions. These direct observations allowed evaluators to experience the program first hand and to gain a feel for the organizational community climate and to provide concrete descriptions of what the programs entail. The research team used two specific tools to gather information about the quality of program environments: the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R) (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998) and the Infants and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) (Harms, Cryer, & Clifford, 1990) and a more descriptive tool for assessing the environment - Time, Space, People and Things (see Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2003b).
- **Together We Can:** This is a questionnaire that considers how groups have progressed in the processes of integrating governance, funding, and programs activities (Melaville, Blank, Asayesh, 1993). Researchers completed the questionnaire with each site's management committee over the course of the start-up phase of the project and repeated the process in the final year of the project.

- **Indicators of Change:** Researchers worked together with the TFD Steering Committee and the sites to develop a set of indicators for each of the five key criteria that are identified in the Terms of Reference, which is a document created in March 2002 (cited in Corter et al., 2002). The indicators tracked movement along the continuum from co-existence to coordination to integration in five categories: the early learning environment, the early childhood staff team, governance, seamless access, and parent participation. The tool assesses how integration worked across all strands in the research design. A copy of definitions for the continuum along the 5 dimensions is included in Appendix 1.3.
- **Intake and Tracking:** The administrative Intake and Tracking System for TFD, designed by the City of Toronto, included a single intake form for each family participating at a TFD site, an electronic database to record attendance at each site, and the capacity to produce reports at a site or across sites (see Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2003b). A copy of the User Guide for inputting data into the Intake and Tracking system is available in Appendix 1.4. The database was built on an Oracle platform and is based on a unique identifier number for each child. If the data are input into the software, it is possible to monitor attendance across program activities for each child at each site. It is also possible to aggregate administrative data for program activity type. The Intake and Tracking System test-drives an attendance tracking system that is designed for integrated programs.
- **Expenditures:** The research team and the City of Toronto worked together to track the expenditures of the TFD funds.

Child and Parent Strand

- **Parent Focus Groups:** Focus groups were held in the first year of the project to obtain parents' views on what supports they feel they need to fulfill their role as parents and to facilitate their children's learning and healthy development. The focus groups discussed what parents feel is working, what they need more of, what would be more helpful if it was provided in a different way, and/or what is missing in efforts to enhance their capacity as families to support their children's learning and development. The focus groups informed the development of the parent survey.
- **Parent Surveys:** A survey of junior and senior kindergarten parents was conducted at each TFD site in the early implementation period. It was repeated in the second time period at the three sites selected for intensive evaluation (BWELC, CEY, and YEY-W). The survey was developed after preliminary focus groups and a few individual interviews with parents in 2002-03; children took surveys home to parents and returned them to the school. A copy of the parent survey is available in Appendix 1.5
- **Early Development Instrument (EDI):** The EDI (Janus and Offord, 2000) is a questionnaire completed by kindergarten teachers to assess readiness for school learning during the kindergarten years. It considers children's social, emotional, physical, language, cognitive, and general knowledge development. It is not an individual assessment tool; rather, it is used to assess how groups of children (e.g.,

within a school catchment area) are doing and can be used to assess impact of changes in environment, including widespread access to early years programs. EDI data for children in senior kindergarten were collected from each of the sites in 2001 or 2002 and in the spring of 2003 and 2005.

- **Direct Child Measures:** Researchers collected child outcome measures from a small number of kindergarten children whose parents participated in the parent interview. These direct measures assessed children's vocabulary and early reading, and number and fine motor skills. In addition researchers talked with or interviewed small groups of children to obtain their views on what activities or services are important, most helpful, most enjoyable, contribute to their feelings of belonging, support, safety, and care. Children also drew pictures and were asked to take photographs to represent their experiences and to give them further voice, which seemed appropriate, given that the first duty of the project is to children. (more details on the protocol for direct child measures is available in Appendix 1.6). The direct child outcome measures and EDI scores were collected again in spring 2005 from another sample of kindergarten children.

Community and Public Awareness Strand

- **Community Public Awareness Survey:** A community survey was carried out at the three intensive case sites during the second period only. The survey was designed to sample attitudes about the community, general services, and early childhood services and Toronto First Duty in particular. A copy of one of the versions is available in Appendix 1.7. Some of the questions overlapped with the parent survey given to kindergarten parents, the majority of whom were TFD participants. In each community site, the survey was presented to three different groups of respondents who were not TFD respondents:
 - (1) in person, to members of the public in grocery store parking lots, parks, and other public locations,
 - (2) it was taken home from site schools to parents of children in Grades 5 & 6, and
 - (3) it was mailed out to parents of newborns in the site catchment area. Return rates for the parents of infants was too low to warrant analysis (less than 10 %).
- **Community Service Provider Survey:** The research team worked with sites to develop a template that can be used to interview community service providers individually and in small groups in each of the areas served by the demonstration sites. The template was designed to gain insight into their understanding of the demonstration sites and of service integration, whether or not the demonstration sites respond to the needs of the children and families in their specific community (as they have identified their needs), to understand their continuing issues and concerns, and how the sites might address them. The template can also be adapted to a survey format.
- **Communication Monitor:** The research team worked with TFD's communication strategists to monitor local, partner, and public communications about the project.

- **Community Mapping:** Multiple maps of the demographics, resources, and outcome measures at each site drew together data collected in the child/family and program/service strand with population data available for the whole community. The research team worked with the city to produce maps of each of the TFD sites, drawing on the approach reflected in the *Toronto Report Card on Children* (Toronto Report Card Working Group, 2003). These reports tracked changes in the condition of Toronto's children, measured progress in improving the situation of children, built public awareness and understanding of the needs of children, served as planning tools for service providers and elected officials so that they could make decisions about the allocation of resources, and acted as a stimulus for political and community action to improve the situation of children and families.

1.3.3 Analysis Framework

The multiple lines of evidence were considered together to describe how the sites were developing, services merging, and the impact they were having on young children, families, and communities.

Cross-Site Analyses

Cross-site analyses were carried out on quantitative data where there were strong common threads across sites. These analyses included intake and tracking data on TFD participants, ratings on the progress of integration, survey data from practitioners and parents, environmental ratings on integrated learning environments, and teacher ratings of children's readiness on the EDI. For the parent surveys, community comparison groups were also used to gauge the possible influence of TFD on parents.

Site Case Studies

Mixed methods were used to collect the information needed to describe and analyze the development, implementation, and impacts of the TFD program at each of the five sites. From the beginning of the project there was continual qualitative monitoring of organizational and programming development. One member of the research team who was the "site specialist" generally attended each site's monthly management meetings, along with the community research coordinator from the team. Site specialists wrote field notes and collected meeting minutes and handouts, as well as other documents produced at the site, including regular updates produced by the sites for accountability and communication with the funders. Site specialists also wrote an in-depth case study at the beginning of implementation and then filed periodic site progress reports as part of the regular reporting on the overall project (see progress reports at <http://www.toronto.ca/firstduty/reports.htm>). Draft versions of the site reports were shared with the sites to check the accuracy of facts and interpretations. Site specialists also reported back to the sites on general findings from the progress reports, as well site-specific findings. This process was intended to provide formative feedback to the sites for improvement and knowledge building.

The case studies paid particular attention to dimensions of organizational change as service integration unfolded; these dimensions included the challenges of merging cultures, resources, and staff, as well as the construction of new programming approaches

The child and parent data were analyzed and described in conjunction with data that were collected about programs and community capacity. They provide a data baseline that allows tracking of longer-term effects beyond the life of the three-year pilot project.

Progress Reports

Progress reports conveyed the findings from data collected during the period 2001–2005 (see Table 1).

Table 1 Data Collection Schedule 2001-2005

STRAND	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Policy/Program/ Practice	Key informant interviews	Program observations		Program observations, key informant interviews
		Indicators of Change		Indicators of Change
		‘Together We Can’ survey		‘Together We Can’ survey
	Document analysis			Document analysis
	Literature review			
	Site observations & document collection			
		Staff interviews	Staff survey	Staff survey
Child & Parents		Parent focus group	Parent survey	Parent survey
			Direct child outcomes JK/SK	Direct child outcomes JK/SK
			Child focus group	Child focus group
	EDI	EDI - JK/SK		EDI - JK/SK
Community/ Public Awareness	Community consultations			Community survey

The *Starting Gate Report* (Corter et al., 2002) documented the beginning stages of the TFD project. It presents the shared understanding of the aims of the project, its development, progress to date, and the evaluation process. The report was designed primarily to communicate among the TFD project funding partners, site partners, and other key stakeholders. It was based on analysis of documents, meetings notes, and other

background literature, as well as key informant interviews conducted with provincial, city, and school board officials and with several TFD demonstration site leaders.

The research team prepared and distributed semi-annual progress reports to the city and Atkinson Charitable Foundation and to the TFD Steering Committee. The reports summarized specific research activities conducted and data collected during the previous six-month period. They provided an update on the progress towards the program integration goals of the project and raised specific issues for discussion. The research team presented and discussed the reports' conclusions and issues raised with the TFD Steering Committee.

Research and Development Committee

The research team reported to and participated in the TFD Research and Development Committee. The committee included representation from each of the sites and the core partners (the City of Toronto, the Toronto District School Board, and Atkinson Charitable Foundation).

2. FINDINGS

The Toronto First Duty evaluation is intended to describe the process of development of TFD through development, start-up, and implementation. The findings are presented within the framework of the three strands of evaluation that shaped the research design.

2.1 Programs, Practice, and Policy

The research tracks actual steps of implementation and changes to service delivery. Programs, practices, and policies are described and considered in context of the specific goals and core elements of the TFD Phase 1.

2.1.1 Utilization

The Intake and Tracking System was the “test-drive” of an attendance-tracking system designed for integrated programs. It was intended to monitor families who registered or enrolled at TFD sites and to track how often and what they attended. The city managed the intake and tracking (I&T) data and provided anonymous versions of the data to the research team for analysis. In addition to its use in accountability and evaluation, it was hoped that hard information on enrolment and use would also help the sites to improve program delivery.

Its development was a major task and its consistent use was an ongoing struggle. The database is a tool in development. Attendance and participation data were incomplete for many who were registered or enrolled in activities. Some families were entered with no attendance entries. Some of the drop-in participants did not complete an intake form and were not in the database. Missing data, for example on parental education, were also a problem. Attendance data from licensed child care programs were entered directly from the Children's Services database at the city but did not include parent demographic information unless the family was also registered through the TFD intake process. Data for children enrolled in the TDSB kindergarten programs were not incorporated into the

Intake and Tracking System but have been estimated based on numbers of children enrolled.

The result is incomplete data but they are able to suggest utilization rates and patterns for the last year of TFD Phase 1. In 2004–2005, concerted efforts to improve the quality of the data resulted in increased numbers of families entered into the system and increased hours of participation in site activities. Up to June 2005, there were approximately 1511 parents across the five sites registered in the system. The I&T database also provided initial answers to other questions it was intended to answer. For example, *who uses TFD and what do they use and how much do they use?*

Developing and Using the System

An extensive review of the system in the summer of 2005 via site interviews by a member of the TFD research team analyzed how the system works and made recommendations to reduce frustrations and improve its usefulness. Three sets of issues emerged in the development and implementation of the system: computer hardware/software, inputting of data, and administrative reports.

- The dial-up Internet link was slow and hampered efficient data entry and lack of printers hampered users' ability to print and use reports at the site level. There were problems of data entry when the intake form was incomplete or non-existent.
- Sites found the process of completing and inputting intake forms and inputting actual attendance to be cumbersome. One of the central issues may have been that the system was designed for integrated programs and most of the sites were operating coordinated, but administratively-separate programs, under the TFD umbrella. Hence there was a need for duplicate systems that must be transferred from original attendance to TFD attendance. Also, many program activities relied on a sign-in sheet for tracking attendance, with only the name of the adult who brought in the child. Because different adults may bring children on different days, this created additional work to sort out when attendance data are input into the system. None of the sites were using attendance sheets that include a child identifier number. The completion of the intake form was another issue. It was often an additional, rather than an integral, part of the registration/intake process and the staff members were not comfortable collecting family demographic and socioeconomic information. Finally, a lack of clarity around the service delivery definitions persisted throughout the project.
- The Intake and Tracking System was designed with the capacity to generate site-level reports on family usage patterns and other information that could be used in planning and service delivery. The system also provides administrative data that monitor utilization and allocation of financial resources. It was an accountability tool that could become increasingly important in making decisions about resources and future developments. The emphasis in Phase 1 of TFD was on getting the system up and running. TFD Phase 2 affords an opportunity to explore its use for planning and resource allocation.

Types of Service Use

The Intake and Tracking System logs the approximate number of hours children and their families spend in each of the service categories. Five service categories were identified:

1. **ECE-Child:** Programs that children attend without being accompanied by an adult, including child care, nursery school, and kindergarten
2. **Child-Adult:** Programs that children attend with an adult (a family member or caregiver), including Ontario Early Years Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, and Family Resource Programs
3. **Adult:** Programs that parents or other caregivers attend without children, including parenting workshops
4. **Outreach/Referral:** Activities outside of other program time that reach out to families and offer links to other services, including health screenings and open houses
5. **Special Needs:** Specialized early interventions outside of other program time

The special needs category was not tracked so has been eliminated from the reporting and analysis of the intake and tracking data.

Attendance data are captured in hourly units, based on the specific length of the activity (e.g., a 2.5 hour preschool program) or an average estimate (e.g., 8 hours for a day's attendance in a full-time licensed child care program). Table 1 summarizes hourly participation in TFD supported and partner supported programming.

Table 2 Utilization Hours in TFD Sites July 2004 - June 2005

Action for Children Today and Tomorrow/Secord-Dawes (ACCT/SD)			
Hours by Type	TFD Supported	Partner Supported	TOTAL
ECE - Child	812	Chn Service 142,695 TDSB Kinder 85,500	229,007
Child-Adult	3247	10,115	13,362
Adult	1103		1,103
Outreach/Referral	129		129
TOTAL	5291	259,087	264,378
Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre (BWELC)			
Hours by Type	TFD Supported	Partner Supported	TOTAL
ECE - Child	39,271	TDSB Kinder 36,625	75,896
Child-Adult	10,229	16,043	26,272
Adult	216		216
Outreach/Referral	27		27
TOTAL	49,743	52,668	102,411

Corvette Early Years (CEY)			
Hours by Type	TFD Supported	Partner Supported	TOTAL
ECE - Child	10,431	Chn Services 52,808 TDSB Kinder 59,375	122,614
Child-Adult	5096	5277	10,373
Adult	327		327
Outreach/Referral			
TOTAL	15,854	117,460	133,314

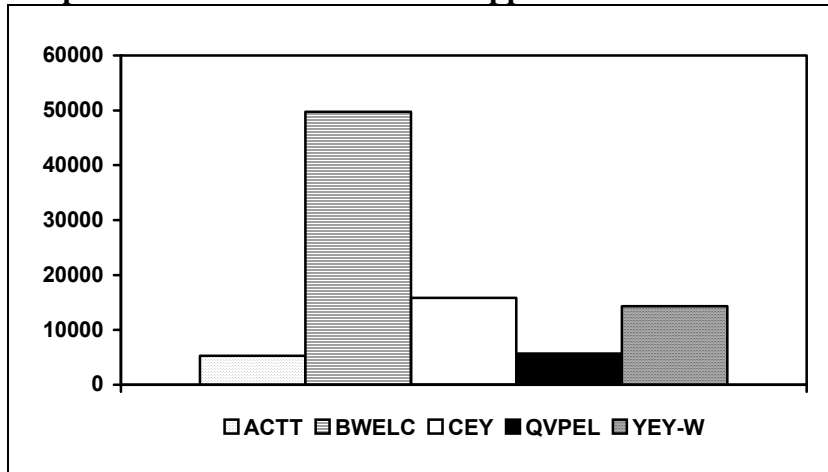
Queen Victoria Partners Early Learning (QVPEL)			
Hours by Type	TFD Supported	Partner Supported	TOTAL
ECE - Child	1358	Chn Services 112,264 TDSB Kinder 104,500	218,122
Child-Adult	3280	15,492	18,772
Adult	438		438
Outreach/Referral	648		648
TOTAL	5724	232,256	237,980

York Early Years-Wilcox (YEY-W)			
Hours by Type	TFD Supported	Partner Supported	TOTAL
ECE - Child	10,028	Chn's Services 101,680 TDSB Kinder 38,000	149,708
Child-Adult	3585	14,755	18,340
Adult	691		691
Outreach/Referral			
TOTAL	14,304	154,435	168,739

The total numbers of hours of both TFD-supported and partner-supported participation at each site corresponds to the relative population size of the host school's catchment area. Queen Victoria Public School and Secord Elementary School have catchment areas that are ten times larger than the catchment population at Bruce Junior Public School.

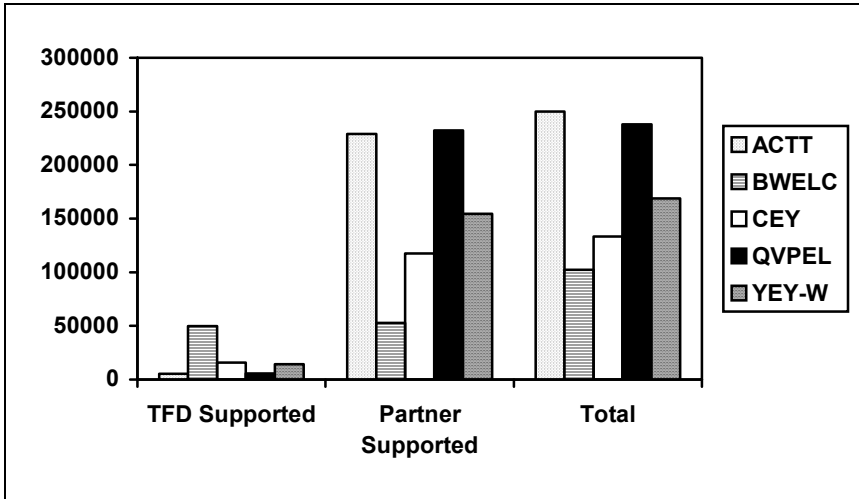
Graph 1 presents the cumulative total of hours of early child development, child-adult, adult, and outreach/referral activities for each site.

Graph 1 Cumulative Total TFD-Supported Hours 2004-2005



Graph 2 compares the total number of TFD hours compared to the total number of hours of programming offered by partner programs, including licensed child care and kindergarten.

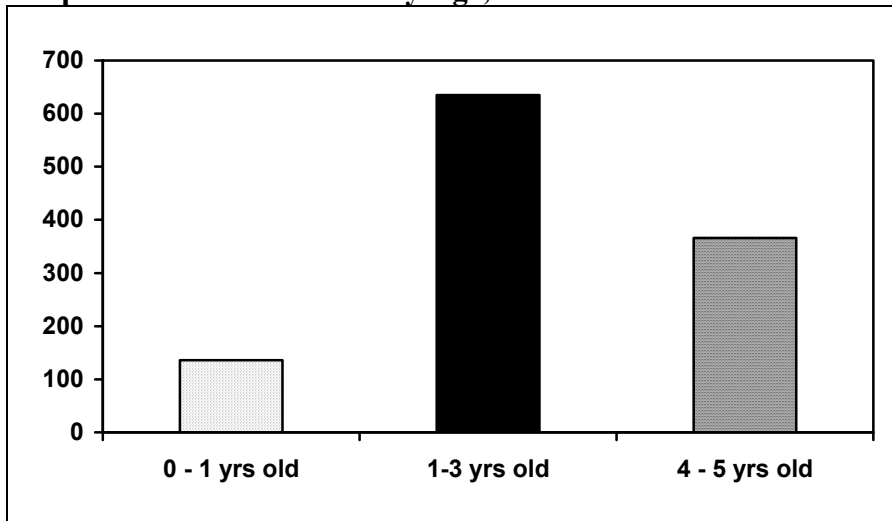
Graph 2 Cumulative Total TFD- & Partner-Supported Hours 2004-2005



The differences between the sites point to different populations in the community and the balance between supporting and enhancing existing early childhood and family activities versus expanding programming. For instance, the BWELC site has the highest number of hours of expanded programming across all of the TFD sites but the lowest number of partner hours. Queen Victoria Partners Early Learning (QVPEL) and Action for Children Today and Tomorrow-Dawes/Secord (ACCT/SD) had the lowest number of hours of expanded programming but much higher numbers of partner hours. BWELC concentrated on expanding access to programs while QVPEL and ACCT/SD appear to have focused on working to enhance and coordinate partner programs rather than increasing programming activities.

The intake and tracking data for 2004–2005 provide information about the range and distribution of the children registered in the intake and tracking system and using TFD supported activities. Graph 3 illustrates that there was participation across the 0–6 age group in the TFD sites.

Graph 3 Utilization of TFD by Age, 2004-2005



2.1.2 Economic Analysis

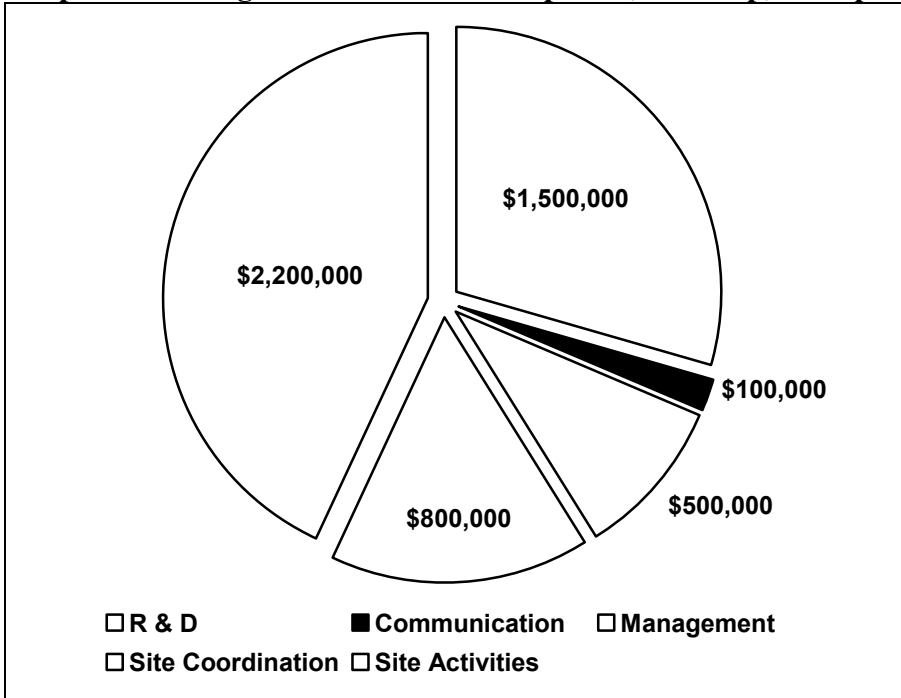
The economic analysis of the Toronto First Duty five demonstration sites seeks to answer four questions:

1. How much did TFD cost?
2. Did the use of TFD resources result in expanded program delivery (defined by an increase in hours of programming and/or numbers of participants)?
3. What would a traditional use of resources (in child care, kindergarten, and family support programs) have achieved in service delivery?
4. Is TFD a cost-effective model to deliver early learning and care programs to children and families?

Costing Toronto First Duty

Program costs represent the value of the resources used to deliver TFD programs in addition to the existing costs of the various pre-existing program components. Program costs comprise the direct expenditures used to operate and enhance programs. The analysis of expenditures separates out the costs for site coordination/administration, research and development and communication (including expenditures that were part of a pilot but will not be ongoing) from direct operating costs for expanding programming options, outreach and information/referral, and program enhancement (without an expansion of the hours or number of children/family involved). Graph 4 illustrates overall expenditures from 2000–2004.

Graph 4 Tracking TFD Dollars: Development, Start Up, & Implementation



The research and development costs were a substantial proportion of the expenditures. Included are the costs of the initial development, evaluation, cross-site professional development activities, and resources from 2000 to 2005. The initial phase (2000–2002) of the evaluation focused on the design and the melding of two evaluation initiatives (parallel to the ACF Million Dollar Challenge and the city’s Early Child Development, Education and Care projects). It began with the preparation of the *Feasibility Study* and included individual site selection and development and cross-site development before the start-up at the sites themselves. Some methodologies proposed during the development of the research design were explored but rejected (e.g., use of NLSCY data to provide a ‘virtual’ comparator community).

The evaluation of Toronto First Duty required the preparation and field testing of several new instruments including the parent survey and staff survey. The Indicators of Change was designed during the course of 2002-2003 to clarify the vision of TFD and to monitor progress along a continuum of integration. It was used as both a site development tool and a process-measurement tool by the research team.

Between 2002 and 2005, TFD hosted six cross-site professional development sessions that were attended by front-line and partner staff members from each of the sites. A web-based resource, discussion boards, and a listserv were attempted to engage and support front-line staff. In addition to the expenditures reflected in the costings, the TDSB contributed staff release time for kindergarten teachers (approximately \$4,500 in 2003, 2004, and 2005) to attend cross-site professional development days.

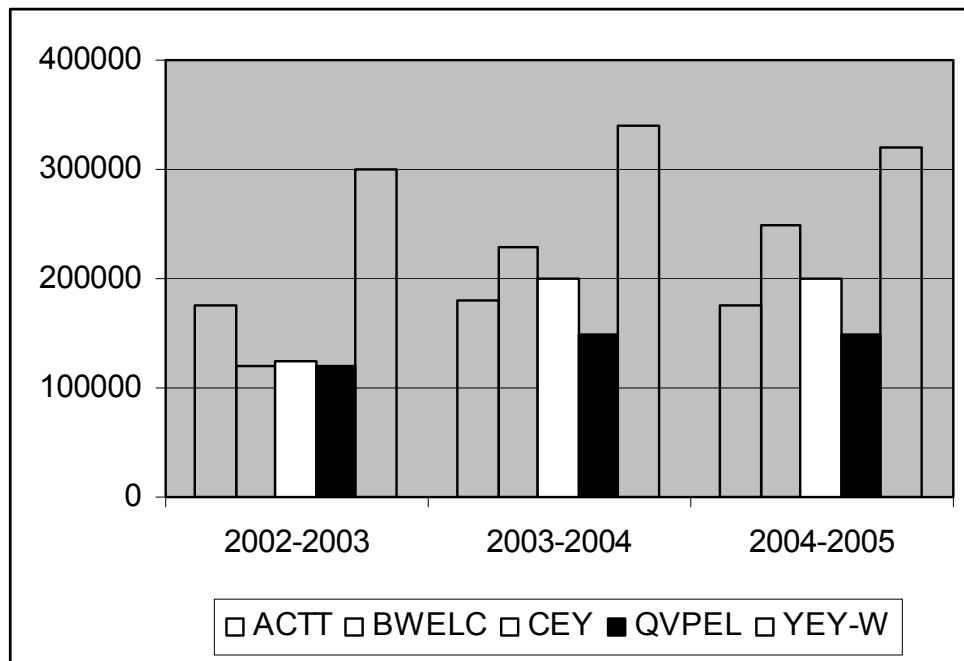
The research design tools – the Indicators of Change – and resources developed for the professional development days are now available as resources for use in other communities that may want to track the process and impact of service integration. In this way, the substantial cost of development can then be avoided at future implementation sites.

The sites individually and collectively developed templates for policies and tools to assist the process of integration that are now applicable in other sites. These are now collected into a manual (*Toronto First Duty Guide to Early Childhood Service Integration*) which is available on the TFD website (see <http://www.toronto.ca/firstduty/guide/index.htm>) and on a CD-ROM.

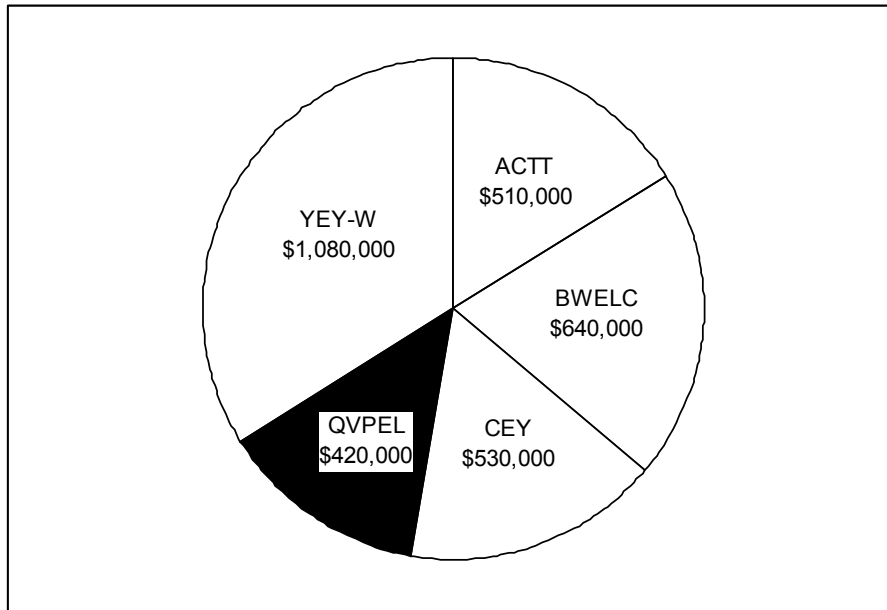
Site Expenditures

Graph 5 illustrates the annual expenditures of each site and Graph 6 presents the total site expenditures.

Graph 5 Total Annual Site Expenditures



Graph 6 Total Site Expenditures 2000- 2005

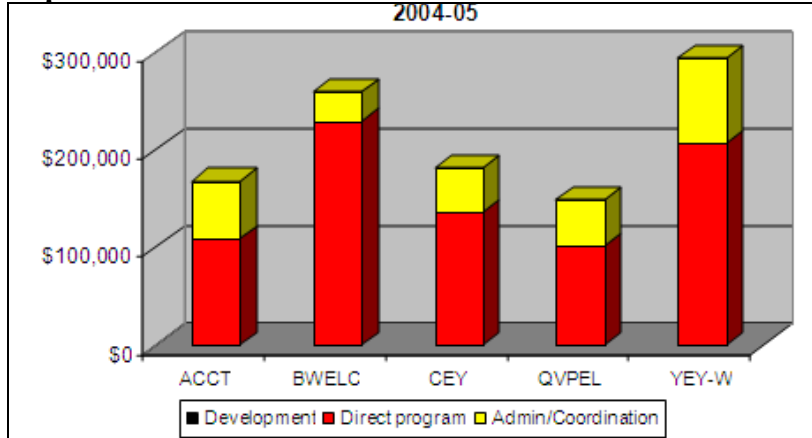


York Early Years-Wilcox's (YEY-W) spent more than the other sites—it was the “Early Leader” and has been operating the longest. Also YEY-W received a higher level of annual support than the other sites.

YEY-W and CEY generated a small amount of supplemental income from parent fees for flexible child care options in 2004-2005. YEY-W, CEY, and QVPEL received additional funding from other sources (e.g., the Early Years Challenge Fund (see <http://wwwFOUNDERS.net/ey/communities.nsf/0/e30b9f3d649057e5852569350066d399?OpenDocument>), Ontario Early Years Centres (see <http://www.ontarioearlyyears.ca/oeyc/oeyc.htm>), and the Foundation for Student Success (see <http://www.studentsuccess.ca/>). BWELC received its funding from ACF and parent fees for the full-day and extended day options.

The site expenditures can be considered in three categories: development, administration and coordination, and direct programming.

Graph 7 Direct Program, Administration/Coordination, & Development Site Expenditures



The variation in expenditures reflects differences in how the sites were organized and to what extent activities were expanded and/or enhanced. They are consistent with the differences in patterns of the utilization hours illustrated in Graph 2. At BWELC the coordination position assumed the child care supervisor position that typically exists for each licensed child care programs. Its additional administration costs were about 11% of the total budget. In the two sites with the largest numbers of children in the catchment area (ACCT/SD and QVPEL) and the partner programs, the costs of administration and coordination were about 35 %.

In addition to the direct expenditures, there were indirect costs. The TDSB did not charge for space in the schools unless programs were operating outside of normal caretaking hours. (The City of Toronto pays for occupancy costs for regulated child care centres located in school buildings). The TDSB provided financial resources for supply staff so that kindergarten teachers could attend cross-site events. At BWELC, the TDSB supported some additional release time for teachers and the principal to facilitate planning and meeting times. The lead agencies contributed management expertise and often administrative backup to the sites.

Comparison of TFD and Traditional Program Delivery

The question of how to compare the costs of TFD delivery of early learning and care programs with the costs of licensed child care centres, family resource program, and other existing program delivery is challenging. If program activities are re-engineered to be delivered in a consolidated format, it becomes difficult to pull the inputs apart and compare them to the costs of fragmented delivery of individual programs. The following comparison considers the direct, front-line costs of providing child care and early learning to 4- and 5-year-old children in a TFD delivery model with the costs of providing a child care program that wraps around kindergarten. The intent is to keep as many of the costs as similar as possible to analyze if there are differences in costs that are attributable to integration rather than other factors.

Typically, parents pay, through fees or fee subsidies, for a full day of child care and children also attend a publicly funded 2½-hour kindergarten program. Child care staff

supervise child care 4- and 5-year-old children through the transitions back and forth to half-day kindergarten in the morning or afternoon. Child care staff also provide programming for those hours when the children are not in kindergarten. If child care centre is not located in a school building, the children likely attend two or more schools, requiring additional staff to supervise the transitions from multiple locations.

Direct Costs: Table 3 compares the “front-line,” direct costs of providing early learning and child care programs with integrated and non-integrated programming. The costs of non-integrated programming are based on resource use at a centre operated by WoodGreen Community Services in a public school. The centre provides care for kindergarten and school-aged children. The 4- and 5-year-old children attend the kindergarten program in the school for 2.5 hours a day and are in child care for the remaining hours. The costs of integrated programming are based on resource use at BWELC which is a Toronto First Duty site that provides kindergarten and child care seamlessly within Bruce Junior Public School.

- Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and other child care staff persons’ wages and benefits are established by the same collective agreement. Both are located in school buildings and have program groups for other age groups. Therefore early morning and late day groups can be combined to maximize staffing and ensure that at least two ECEs are on site at all times.
- Most of the children attending the WoodGreen child care centre are subsidized so the parent fee is comparable to the flat fee of \$7–12 a day, paid by BWELC parents whose children were enrolled in more than the 2.5 hour program.
- In both sites a WoodGreen Child Care Manager is responsible for the operation of the four- and five-year old program and for programs for other age groups. At BWELC, the TFD coordinator acts as the Child Care Manager working with the school principal to oversee the integrated program, including parenting supports. There are no additional TFD positions.
- The costs of the TDSB kindergarten staffing and the manager and organization-wide administration are assumed to be the same for both sites and are not included in the calculation.
- Operating costs are based on actual 2005 expenditures and estimated 2006 expenditures at each of the programs and are assumed to be the same per child costs in both models.

Table 3 Comparing Costs

	Number	Wages ¹	Benefits ²	Operating Costs ³	Admin/Su- pervision ⁴	Total
JK/SK Child Care - Delivery Model based on WoodGreen Child Care Centre						
ECE	3	114,954				
Replacement Staff		11,4955				
TOTAL		126,449	25,290	40,700	46,000	238,439
Cost/child/year	24					9,935
Cost/child/month	24					828
Cost/child/day	24					38.21
Seamless Day 4 & 5 yr old - Delivery Model Based on TFD - Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre⁶						
ECE	2.5 FTE	95,795				
Replacement Staff		21,7957				
TOTAL		117,590	23,518	40,700	46,000	227,808
Cost/child/year	24 FTE8					9,492
Cost/child/month	24 FTE					791
Cost/child/day	24 FTE					36.37

¹ Wages & benefits based on WoodGreen child care programs 2006 estimates—ECD average 38,318

² Based on 20% of total wages

³ Based on per-child operating costs at WoodGreen Child Care Centre which were higher than those reported from BWELC

⁴ Includes cost of WoodGreen administration plus on-site proportional cost of on-site child care manager/supervisor who is shared with other age groups in both sites

⁵ Calculated at 10% of program staff wages. Replacement staff costs are the costs for sick days, holidays, and professional development.

⁶ Children are enrolled in a combined child care/kindergarten program for half-day, full school-day, morning (7:30 am to lunch), long afternoon (lunch to 6:00 pm), short afternoon (lunch to 3:30 pm), or an extended day and that 1 kindergarten teacher and 0.25 educational assistant are part of the staffing complement in addition to the ECEs. There is no child care-kindergarten transition.

⁷ Calculated at 10% of program staff wages plus replacement costs for TDSB staff and ECE to participate in regular joint staff meetings and professional development. Also includes additional 0.5 ECE staffing for 70 non-school days to replace staffing provided by TDSB staff.

⁸ Full Time Equivalent: Based on an enrolled capacity that would be equivalent to 24 full-time children. In practice, 24 full-time spaces translate into occasional, full school-day, morning plus lunch, lunch to 6:00 pm, and extended-day attendance (from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm) for 40 children, based on BWELC utilization for 2004/05. Children may change their attendance pattern (increasing or decreasing hours enrolled) during the course of the year or they may attend for varying amounts of time on a regular basis but the social and physical environment remain consistent.

The main message of this table is that the direct costs of offering integrated programming are certainly no more than offering non-integrated programming for children who are 4- or 5-years of age. In fact, approximately half a person-day of time is used in moving children and their possessions from one teaching/care site to another and back again, twice a day. If anything, this makes direct costs higher for non-integrated programming. The qualifications and pay levels of the staff required to deliver programs are similar or identical across integrated and non-integrated programs.

Indirect Costs: Three areas of indirect costs contributed to inputs to BWELC: professional development, principal's expertise, and lead agency expertise. BWELC benefited from professional development opportunities offered by the TFD Research and Development team and the TDSB Early Years team without any direct costs (beyond staff release time which is included in the costing calculations). The principal of BWELC incorporated responsibilities for management and leadership and worked closely with the site coordinator/child care manager. Responsibilities for TFD were incorporated into the principal's job description. Although there was no TFD coordinator position in addition to the typical supervisory staff for kindergarten and child care, the principal's input was significant and an indirect cost to BWELC. The third indirect cost was the expertise contributed by WoodGreen Community Services. As a long-established multi-service agency working in the local community, BWELC drew on its resources including child care management, special needs resourcing, services for newcomer families and translation services to assist communication with English-as-a-second-language (ESL) families. Because WoodGreen Community Services provides these same supports to its other child care programs, these indirect costs were no higher for BWELC.

Conclusions

The challenges in assessing the costs and matching with utilization data mirror challenges reported in other community-based programs with multiple partners and local decision-making. Ontario's Better Beginnings Better Future (Peters et al, 2000), the United Kingdom's Sure Start (National Evaluation of Sure Start Team, 2005) and North Carolina's Smart Start (Smart Start Research Team, 2003) are three initiatives that attempted to track utilization across multiple programs. They report the same challenges that Toronto First Duty faced in implementing a detailed tracking system of individual child participation. Nevertheless tracking individual participation and knowing 'how much of what' children receive from broad based initiatives with multiple entry routes and options for participation provides critical information that is necessary to determine the impact on children. The Intake and Tracking System developed for TFD has the potential to provide better data that could allow for more extensive economic analysis. The first step is better data collection.

2.1.3 Indicators of Change

The research team developed the TFD Indicators of Change as a technical assistance tool to support the understanding and implementation of integrated community child care/early childhood education, family support programs and kindergarten programs that

are linked to early intervention, community and public health, and social services. As the sites started up in 2002-2003, they had questions about what the funders meant by ‘integration’. The January 2003 *Progress Report* (Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2003a) indicated that the overarching vision was clear but more specific goals and expectations were not clear. The Indicators of Change tool was constructed to clarify goals and provide a guide to achieving them.

Several service integration initiatives have developed a continuum scale to measure the integration process (Konrad, 1996; Ryan & Robinson, 2002 in Browne et al, 2004; Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2003b; Vanderwoerd, 1996). *Together We Can* (Melaville, Blank, & Asayesh, 1993), a checklist that monitors organizational change across five overlapping and recursive stages, was used by the research team at each TFD site. Typically the continuum begins at the minimal and informal end, with activities such as information sharing and communication, moves through co-operation to collaboration and finally to integration or consolidation of services, programs, and agencies. The Service Integration Scale developed in Ontario as part of the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program uses a variation of this continuum (Ryan, 2005). A recent study about how service providers perceive and understand service integration in Ontario reports that it is usually defined as a process along an integration continuum defined by five domains: awareness, communication, cooperation, collaboration, and fusion (Ryan, 2005).

Development and Implementation

In spring 2003, the TFD Research Team prepared a detailed list of indicators to measure the sites’ incremental changes towards the integration goal. The site coordinators and lead agencies asked for a tool that included a scale and specific, defined steps and milestones for each of the five TFD core elements—early learning environment, early childhood staff team, local governance, seamless access, and parent participation. The *2003 Indicators of Change* included 24 program indicators, which are listed in Table 4. The description of the 24 items and their benchmarks are included in the Toronto First Duty *June 2003 Progress Report* (Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2003b).

Table 4 Summary of Toronto First Duty Key Elements and Program Indicators

Key Element 1: Create high quality learning environments that combine learning expectations, activities, and routines from existing kindergarten, early childhood education/child care, and parenting/family support programs. [Note: kindergarten, child care/early childhood education and parenting/family support programs are essential program partners at each Toronto First Duty site.]	
Program Indicator 1.1	Curriculum framework
Program Indicator 1.2	Pedagogical approach
Program Indicator 1.3	Daily routines and schedules
Program Indicator 1.4	Use of space
Program Indicator 1.5	Children’s development and progress
Program Indicator 1.6	Program quality
Key Element 2: Develop an early childhood staff team that works together to deliver and achieve program goals.	
Program Indicator 2.1	Program planning and implementation
Program Indicator 2.2	Behaviour guidance
Program Indicator 2.3	Roles and responsibilities
Program Indicator 2.4	Staff development activities

Key Element 3: Form a **local governance** structure to determine the allocation of resources, service planning and monitoring, and program policies.

Program Indicator 3.1	Decision-making
Program Indicator 3.2	Allocation of financial resources
Program Indicator 3.3	Service planning and monitoring
Program Indicator 3.4	Program policies
Program Indicator 3.5	Human resources

Key Element 4: Provide **seamless access** to an expanded and comprehensive early learning and care program providing a continuum of supports and services to all families and children.

Program Indicator 4.1	Capacity
Program Indicator 4.2	Child care provision
Program Indicator 4.3	Child care affordability
Program Indicator 4.4	Intake, enrollment, and attendance
Program Indicator 4.5	Responsiveness to community
Program Indicator 4.6	Inclusion

Key Element 5: Increase **parent participation** in children's early learning and development through direct involvement in programs, planning, and decision-making.

Program Indicator 5.1	Parent input into program decisions
Program Indicator 5.2	Parent participation in programs
Program Indicator 5.3	Parenting capacity
Program Indicator 5.4	Relationships with families

Benchmarks track progress along a continuum of co-existence to coordination, collaboration, and integration for each of the program indicators. The benchmarks are organized on a five-point scale from 1 (co-existence) to 5 (integration).

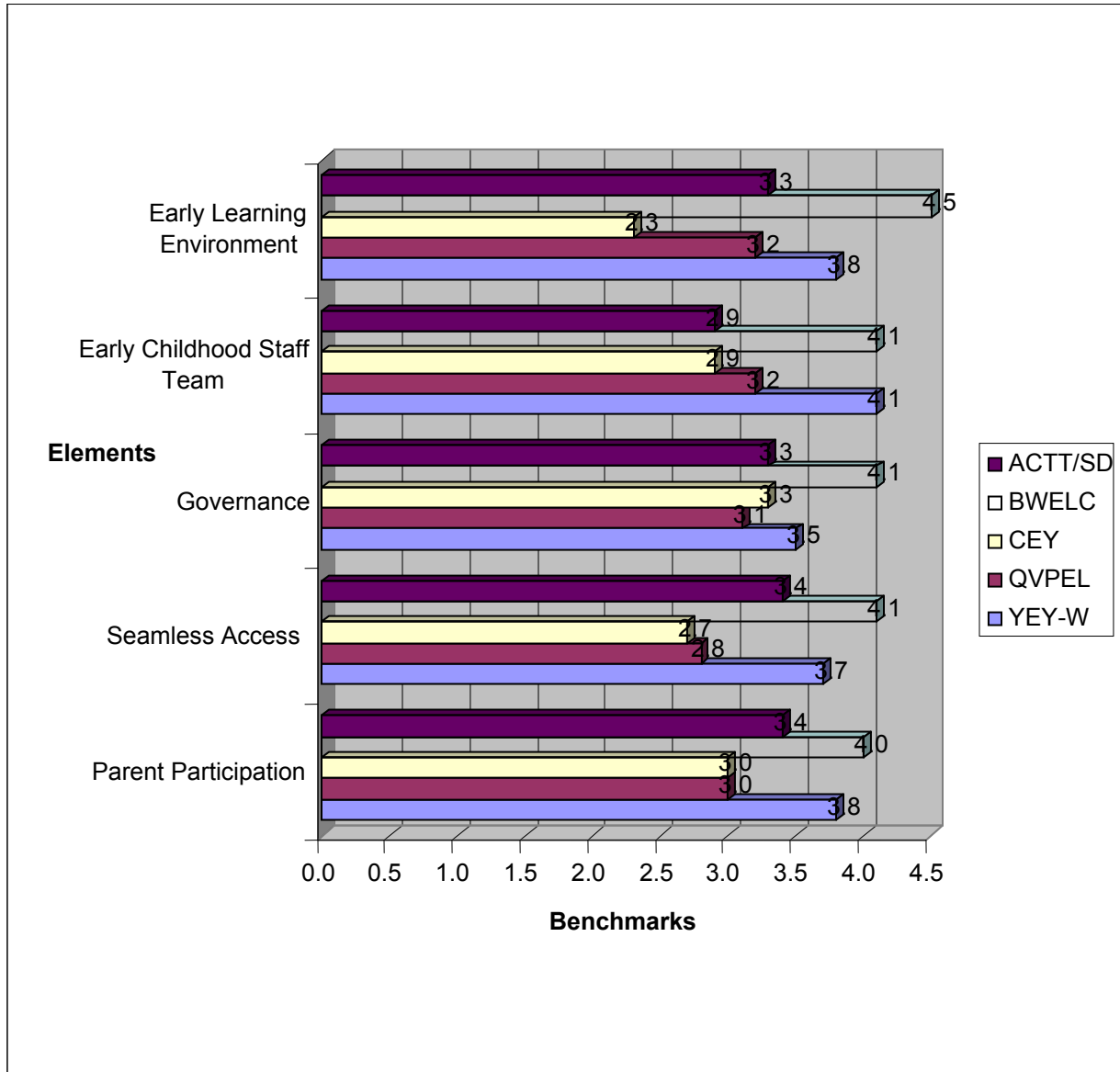
The sites completed the initial Indicators of Change worksheets in 2003. The site management committees met with a facilitator and research team member to assess their progress on each of the indicators and identified the benchmark point that they hoped to achieve by June 2005. The research team used the reports to prepare site update reports for the *December 2003 Progress Report* (Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2003e).

Each site reassessed their progress in June 2005. Input was gathered from front-line staff members as well as the site management committee members. The June 2005 Indicators of Change reports are used to complete the site case studies included here in the TFD *Phase 1 Final Report*.

Graph 8 summarizes the average benchmark scores for each category of program indicator in June 2005. The benchmark scores indicate varying degrees of integration across the sites and across each of the elements. Increased integration was most apparent in the early learning environment, early childhood staff team, and seamless access elements. The variation among sites at Time 3 was greatest in the early learning environment indicator items—average early learning environment benchmark scores ranged from 2.25 to 4.5. All of the sites reported some activity beyond co-existence in the governance indicator items. However, the growth to increasingly integrated governance (and related decision-making) was less than for other categories – perhaps indicating the systemic limitations. The benchmark scores for the indicators of seamless access indicate

that all of the sites increased programming options for young children and families and their responsiveness to families. All of the sites were able to expand child care options. The parenting capacity indicator shows that all of the sites made progress towards increasing activities intended to increase parents' and other caregivers' abilities to be active participants in their children's early development and learning.

Graph 8 Indicators of Change: Average Benchmark Scores, June 2005



All of the sites moved towards integration between start up and June 2005 on each of the program indicators. The narrative comments and explanations for the indicator benchmarks often point to systemic barriers that limit further integration. For instance, rigidity of child care funding and child care regulations are identified as barriers to further progress on child care access at some sites. Differences between the funding, training, labour affiliations, compensation, and work environments of kindergarten

teachers and other early childhood staff are viewed as barriers to creating a fully integrated staff team. In some sites the lack of the school principal's commitment, visible support, and resources for staff release time are cited as barriers in moving forward in integrating kindergarten with other site activities. Loss of initial momentum at one site is largely attributed to a change in principal and a change from 'in the background' strong support to benign neglect, resulting in a breakdown of communication and collaboration with kindergarten staff.

Sites made significant progress towards integration, in spite of the systemic barriers. For instance, staff changes occurred frequently across the sites. At some sites TDSB actively sought out individuals who wanted to participate in TFD. Sites tried innovative approaches to use of child care capacity and child care space. Sources for staff release time, including kindergarten teachers, were repeatedly identified as a necessary support if staff members are to plan for and implement joint activities or programs.

Expanding child care programming was reported to be more difficult than expanding adult-child activities or enhancing existing children's programming. The city's agreement to allow flexible use of underutilized child care spaces without including the full administration costs resulted in expansion of non-parental care at two of the sites in 2004-2005.

Conclusions

The Indicators of Change is a tool that succeeded in focusing the attention of site partners and staff teams on the process of integration. It was used as a planning and monitoring tool and guided decision-making. The results of the Indicators of Change process indicate that Toronto First Duty encouraged increased coordination and collaboration at each of the sites. However, the amount of change and in particular areas of change varied across the sites. Although there are individual variations in the site indicators of change summaries, a few consistent patterns emerged across sites.

- For each site the level of integration for individual elements was consistent with each other. That is, sites tended towards an overall level of integration across the elements and the program indicators.
- Variation among the sites was greatest for the early learning environments and early childhood staff teams. Program indicators range from a coordination level to high collaboration/emerging integration at other sites.
- Joining existing programs and services, particularly those with more formal institutional requirements and cultures (e.g., kindergarten and licensed child care) presented more difficulties than expanding existing family and child programs that are encumbered with fewer regulatory requirements.
- Joint professional development and responsiveness to community both showed consistent movement towards integration across all of the sites.
- Site scores are most similar for the parent participation category. All sites reported at least initial collaboration for each item.

Based on the experiences using the tool, the indicators were revised and reduced from 25 to 19 items to create the First Duty Indicators of Change, Revised 2006. The full TFD

Indicators of Change 2003 can be found in the Appendices of the *June 2003 Progress Report* (Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2003b). Worksheets for recording Indicators levels are included in Appendix 1.3.

2.1.4 Program Quality and Improvement (ECERS-R)

An important question is whether the efforts to integrate the early childhood programs of Toronto First Duty sites improved the quality of early learning environments. Comparisons of program environments at early implementation and at full implementation a year and a half later show that program quality generally improved as integration unfolded. The site case studies suggest that improvement in some sites was based on using information on program quality early in implementation to plan for improvement. In other words, improvement in program quality was an explicit goal guided by staff review of evidence.

The observations reported in this section are based on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R) (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998), a widely-used research instrument. It provides a total learning environment rating score as well as individual subscale scores in seven areas: space and furnishings, personal care routines, language reasoning, activities, interaction, program structure, and parents/staff. Subscale and total average scores have a possible range of 1 (inadequate) to 7 (excellent). A minimum quality score is 3. To calculate a score, observations of specific program criteria are made and scored. If a site is observed to have met all the criteria for one score (e.g., 3) and some criteria for another (e.g., 5), the site receives a mid-point score for that item (e.g., 4). A score of 7 for a particular subscale indicates that the site was observed to meet all of the criteria for excellent quality in that area. The ECERS-R (Harms et al., 1998) is not designed *explicitly* for use in all of the types of programs offered through the Toronto First Duty project. Nevertheless, the ECERS-R (Harms et al., 1998) provides a useful gauge for measuring change in the early learning environments at each site and across the project more generally.

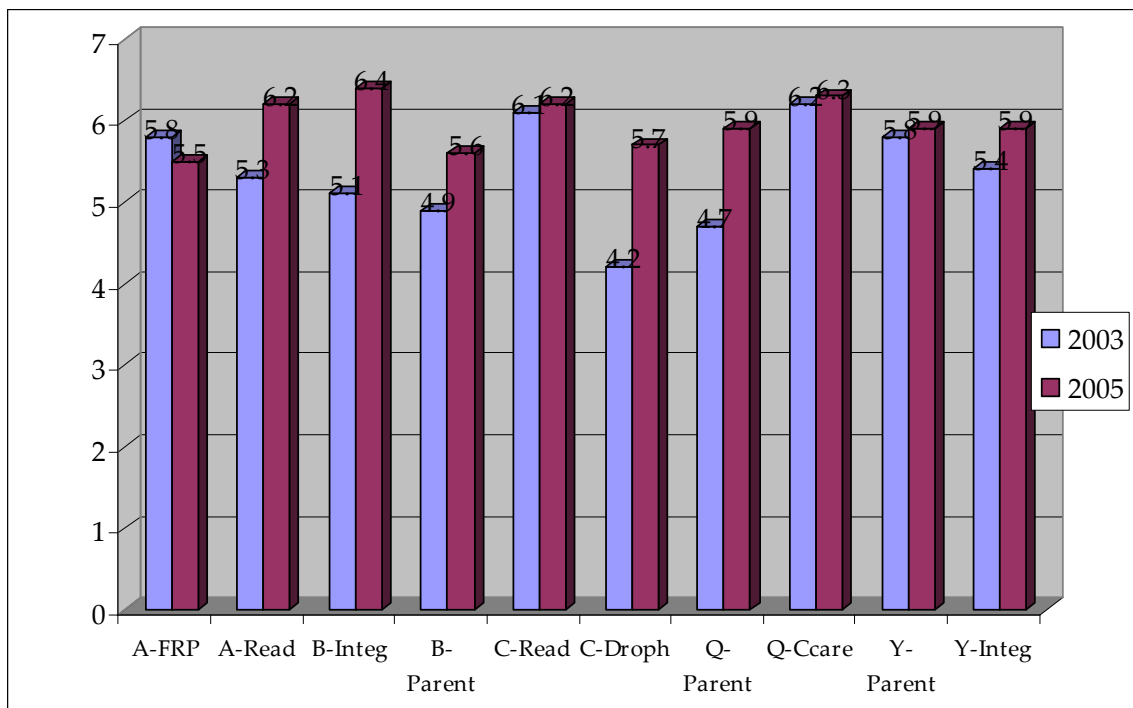
To compare early learning environments across time and across the five sites, one common program environment across the sites (the parenting and family literacy centre or the family resource program) was measured. In addition, a second program environment was chosen at each site and was measured over time. This second space varied across sites and included child care, kindergarten, combination kindergarten/care, or family resource rooms. Choice of a second space varied but was generally the most ‘integrated’ space. Details on the findings for each site are also presented in the expanded case studies in Appendices 2 - 6.

The TFD Research and Evaluation Team carried out the ECERS-R (Harms et al., 1998) observations at two time points: in the fall of 2003 and in the spring of 2005. The 2003 ECERS-R evaluation revealed that the TFD early learning environments were generally of good quality during the early implementation phase of the integrated services but that there was still room for improvement in at least some dimensions of quality. Following the initial environment observations detailed results were shared with the sites. At the site level, program committees discussed the results and set goals to improve particular areas

of their early learning environments. Field notes collected at the site level showed that front-line staff members and managers were eager to use the feedback to improve the quality of the integrated learning environments. Compared to 2003 data, analyses of the 2005 data reveal higher overall ECERS-R ratings in 9 of 10 environments in 2005.

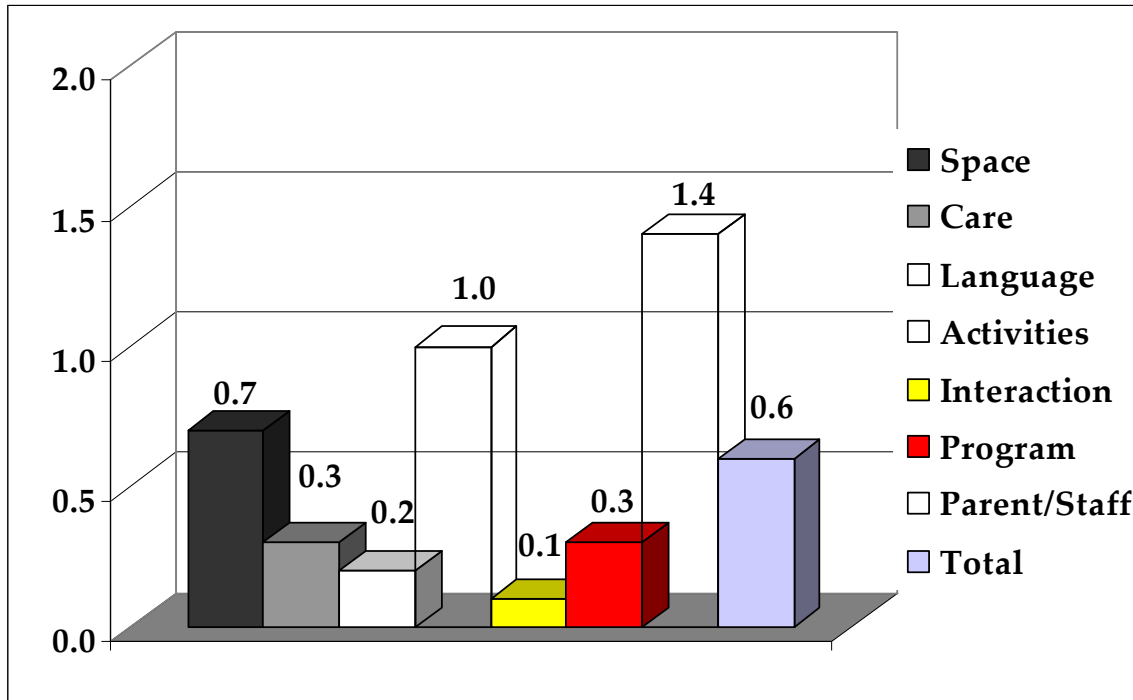
Graph 9 depicts these positive changes in the overall ECERS-R scores across both environments at each of the five sites. Although we cannot be certain of the reasons for change in this small sample of cases, the changes are consistent with the targeted efforts by the sites to improve the quality of the early learning environments. Even though there was improvement, we should note that quality was generally good at the initial evaluation in 2003. Seven of 10 environments rated above “good” (5) on the ECERS-R scale.

Graph 8 TFD ECERS-R Total Scores 2003 & 2005



Graph 10 illustrates the positive changes in each of the seven environment subscale scores across sites. The graph represents the “change scores” from the first observation to the second. Although all of the subscale areas improved, the most significant changes were in the areas of parents and staff, program activities and space. This finding may not be surprising given the strong focus on parent and community involvement, the attention to early learning experiences for children, and the thought given to physical restructuring of space to accommodate an integrated early learning and care experience for children. It should also be noted that change on some dimensions, such as “language” and “interaction,” was limited by ceiling effects; most environments were quite high on these dimensions at the initial observation.

Graph 9 Cross-site Change in ECERS-R 2003-2005



Conclusions

In summary, it appears that the TFD project succeeded in its goal to provide a high-quality early learning and care environment for young children and their families. In addition, participation in the project resulted in the articulation and implementation of explicit program goals that likely translated into improvements in program. Although the results presented here only represent the numerical findings of the ECERS-R ratings, the case studies highlight the many complementary qualitative findings and, importantly, the improved outcomes for children and families.

2.1.5 Front-line Staff in the Crucible of Integration

The evidence shows that the on-the-ground success of a TFD model depends on the front-line staff. When front-line staff have time and professional supports to move together towards the common purpose of improving children’s program environments and outcomes, good things happen and professional barriers to integration are reduced. Each case study in this report describes the efforts in this area and the Indicators of Change chart the progress. Several of the site case studies describe the successful evolution of integrated staff teams over several years of implementation. Nevertheless, the success stories did not come without struggle and the successes are qualified by the need for systems change to make it easier to replicate successes in new settings.

Early Struggles

No one thought that implementing the TFD model would be easy. Professional differences are predictable barriers to integration, according to the research literature describing integrated service efforts (e.g., Desimone, Payne, Fedoravicius, Henrich & Finn-Stevenson, 2004). Early childhood professionals generally are not trained for interdisciplinary collaboration, much less for the kind of “transdisciplinary work” envisioned in TFD, where there are overlapping roles and seamless staff teams. Furthermore, their work experience generally takes place in service ‘silos,’ so their training and on-the-job experiences do not prepare them to integrate. In addition to being asked to take on the unknown of integrated professional work, front-line workers also faced the reality that the TFD model is a service reform effort requiring considerable change, which invariably means more work than continuing the status quo, at least in the short- to mid-term. Even when reform takes place within a silo like the school/education system, the process requires time for teachers to meet and to take ownership. In larger-scale educational reform efforts, top-down pressure and supports are also required to move the effort forward across local sites (Fullan, 2001).

In the initial stages of implementation of TFD, disputes over turf, concern over loss of status, resistance to push-down academics, and fear of loss of identity were stumbling blocks which were documented from interviews and focus groups with front-line staff (see *December 2003 Progress Report*, Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2003e) as well as in key informant interviews. Some key informants at the sites thought that the practitioners were hit with the new initiative without sufficient time to buy-in. Although some of the buy-in is philosophical, there must also be a willingness to negotiate practical details; for example, at one site, child care and kindergarten traditions clashed over whether circle time should be 30 or 45 minutes.

As the project unfolded, staff grappled with issues of professional role identity: *What are my roles/responsibilities? What is the team’s role/responsibility?* Staff also reported lacking awareness of each other’s work. A staff hierarchy seemed to be in place with child care professionals reporting that their role was subordinate to kindergarten teachers. Staff members were anxious and ambivalent towards integration, particularly the kindergarten staff. A lack of clear purpose and vision were reported as challenging aspects of collaboration and integration. Staff were struggling with the meaning of integration. The majority of front-line staff cited organizational challenges, including lack of regular meeting times, scheduling differences, and working with parents.

(We) need time to plan/work together... need to be familiar with other agencies -their mandate and role... need time dedicated to ‘getting to know one another’ ...should have developed a philosophy together first. I felt that we can do this ‘integration’- we had already been doing it...Developing the philosophy first might have facilitated communication and identified our ‘common philosophy’ and the roles of frontline staff...what is the hierarchy?
(Early Childhood Educator)

It is exhausting work and I think a lot of people think that it is easy. I am committed to my role as a teacher but I see my own limits in terms of collaboration. It has been insightful because I learned about myself, I do think of myself as a team player but this degree of teamwork is too much...we are all making a lot of big decisions. (Kindergarten teacher)

Despite the struggles, many staff members were eager to work on building a new vision of supporting young children and their families.

Integration is a multi-level kind of concept... about creating an integrated environment ... creating a seamless system of learning ... and recognizing that learning extends beyond school, beyond childcare, and beyond the home ... learning is happening with every breath children take ... by integrating parents and programs ...different agencies ... well I see it as an integration of ideas ... it doesn't have to be a physical integration ... one person from each agency working in the same room... I really believe that integration is an integration of ideas, a philosophy... that's what First Duty is all about in my mind. (Kindergarten teacher)

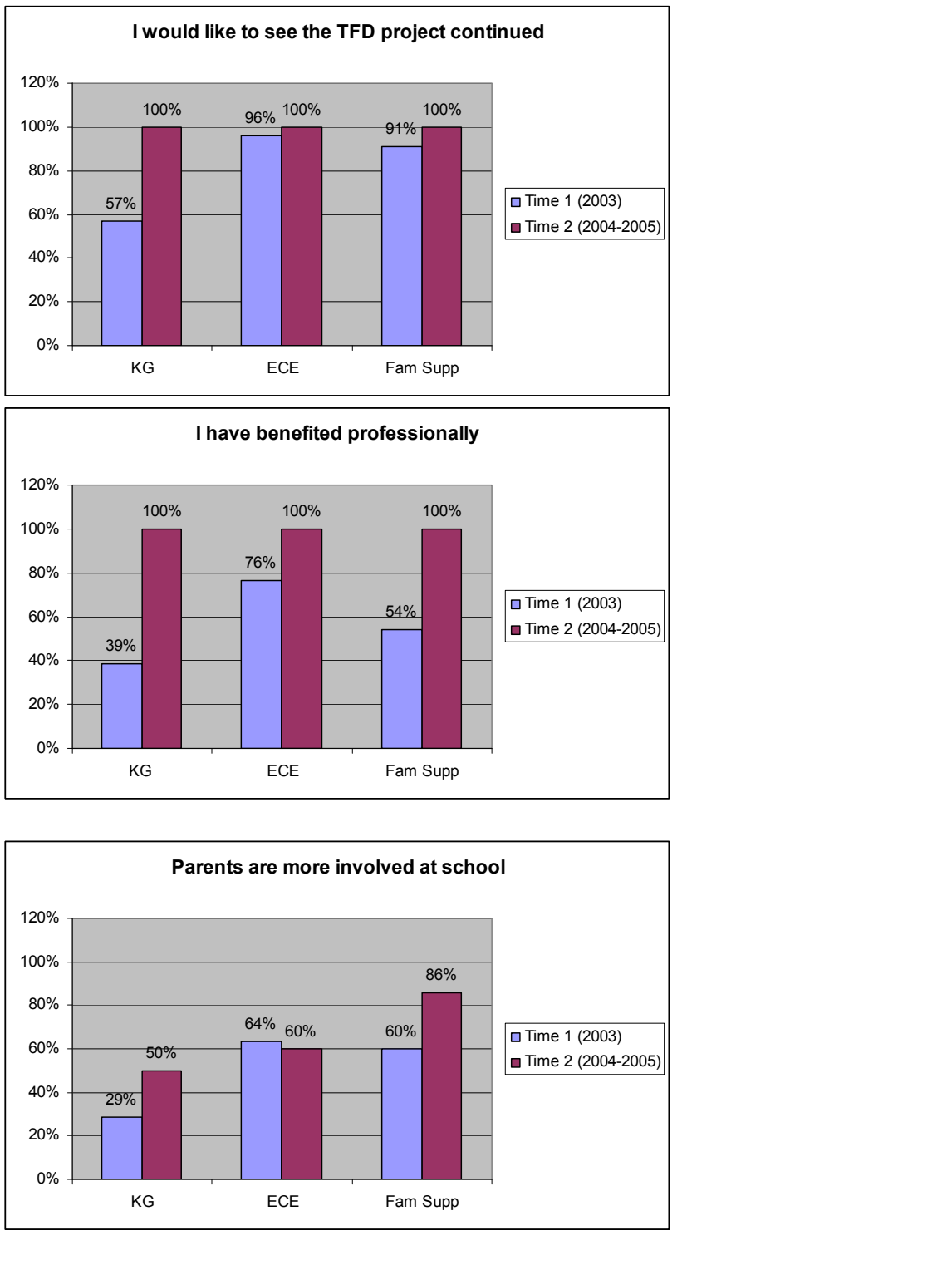
Surveys of developing success

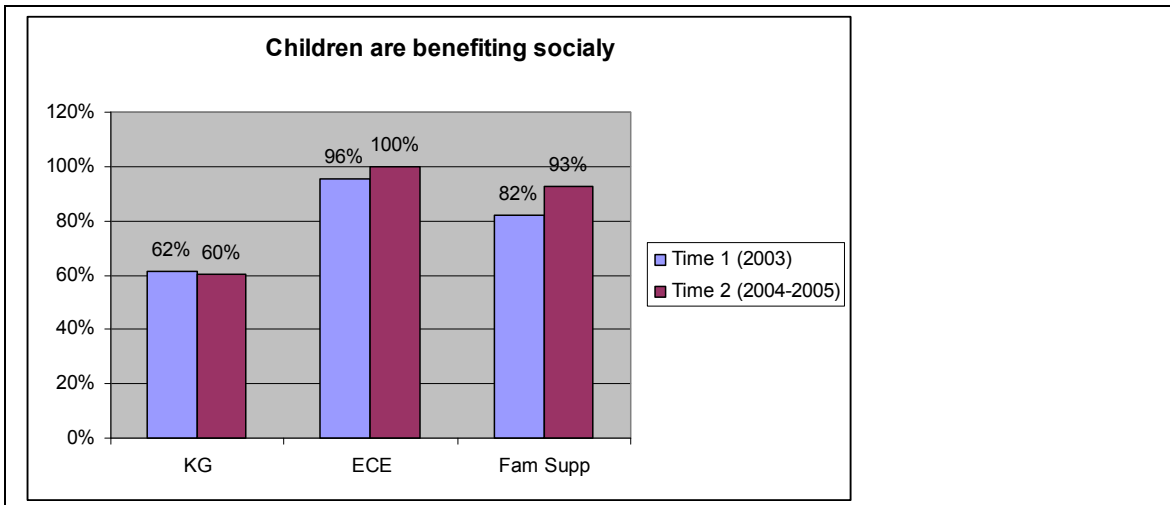
To check back on how practitioners were handling the challenges and possibilities of the TFD model, a “front-line” survey was developed and distributed at all five sites during the fall of 2003, and then again during the spring of 2005 (See Appendix 1.8). The anonymous survey checked on staff perceptions of challenges, benefits for children and parents, as well personal benefits for the professional. The majority of staff in the sites fell into categories of child care/early childhood educator, kindergarten teacher, and family support professionals.

In 2003, during early implementation of TFD Phase 1, the most pressing challenge reported across all practitioner categories was the need for more time to meet with opportunities to communicate and build a team. The second most pressing set of challenges clustered around organizational issues, including problems of coordination and hierarchical decision-making. Other challenges included continued concerns about clarity of professional roles and lack of preparation for dealing with culturally-diverse families. By the spring of 2005, some of these challenges were less apparent in the survey returns. Staff members seemed to be dealing less with professional roles and the meaning of integration and more with program planning and results for children. Nevertheless, having time to meet remained a critical concern across sites and professional categories.

Despite the challenges, front-line professionals were generally positive about the benefits of TFD for children, for parents, and for themselves. Attitudes were even more positive in 2005, particularly for kindergarten teachers, who had been somewhat more ambivalent than other staff team members earlier in implementation. Remarkably, despite the struggles, every kindergarten teacher, early childhood educator, and family resource respondent indicated that they “would like to see the TFD project continued at my school”. Staff views are illustrated in the Graph 11 below.

Graph 10 Staff Views





How was success achieved?

Many factors seemed to contribute to the increasing integration and enthusiasm of front-line staff members. For example, key informant interviews with principals in the spring of 2005 suggested that kindergarten teachers became more enthusiastic as they saw the benefits of TFD for children and parents adapting to school. Furthermore, the strong signals from the TDSB and the Elementary Teachers Federation Ontario and the Toronto Teachers Federation that TFD was an important experiment may have also contributed to the jump in kindergarten teachers’ buy-in. Overall, seeing benefits for children was probably a big part of overcoming early reservations for all professional groups. Comments from surveys in 2005 showed some of the front-line perspectives on immediate benefits for children.

More meaningful child-adult interactions, more time for small group activities, better management of large groups [because] there are more adults, more parental/family supports, better understanding of each other’s roles/disciplines. (Teacher)

The benefits are for the children and families to have easy access to all services. It creates more of a family feel in the school and transitions are easier for children. (Family support worker)

Some other factors that may have helped all professionals come together were suggested by key informant interviews and by the site case studies. These included:

- regular time to meet
- joint professional development
- work on concrete problem solving with common goals in mind
- site leadership with the coordinator, principal, and agency heads
- system support and affirmation (e.g., kindergarten teachers seeing that the project is important to the principal, the board, and the teachers’ federation).

It should be noted that these success factors varied across sites and accounted for differential progress on integrated staffing. In some sites, for example, early child care staff were still concerned about a “status hierarchy” in responding to the 2005 survey. Clearly there is room for further progress.

Conclusion

The success of scaling-up the TFD model will depend on engaging and supporting front-line staff members. Direct supports need to be built in to allow the staff to have time to meet and plan together. System redesign could remove many barriers. However, it is essential that staff are motivated to become part of an integrated early childhood workforce which means blending professional education and development, as well as developing equitable compensation and working environments. Professional training can help prepare practitioners to work across professional boundaries. It can also provide preparation in knowledge building approaches focusing on results for children (e.g., Ricks, 2004; Corter & Institute of Child Study staff, 2005). When staff ask “How can we improve our programs?” and “How do we know it’s working for children?” as they did in this change initiative, good things happen.

2.1.6 Organizational Change and Sustainability

An extensive series of key informant interviews were completed during Phase 1 of the TFD project. Leaders from the five sites, the lead partners, advocacy groups, TDSB trustees, Toronto city councilors, provincial government officials, and social policy researchers were interviewed to gain their perspectives on TFD and implications of the outcomes of the project. Three major themes emerged from the interviews: professional change, organizational change, and sustainability.

Professional Change

The key informant interviews supported much of the data collected in other parts of the project regarding professional change, particularly amongst practitioners, including principals. There is strong evidence that the informants believed that change in professional practice would be sustained beyond the life of TFD. Experimentation with new ways of working reportedly led to significant transformations in the professional practice of many of the staff members working at the sites.

The findings from practitioner surveys illustrated that front-line staff believed that the project supported and created lasting professional change. Similarly, the key informants concluded that there was permanent professional change amongst the practitioners. One principal described the way the staff members worked together to look at the children, using real measures of children’s progress as “a textbook example of the reform ideal.” The opportunity for all staff members to think and work creatively provided the prospect of reflecting on and changing professional roles and behaviours.

I would say there have been a number of successes – tremendous changes we are seeing in the attitude and openness of the front line staff and at the management level as well. Kinds of creative activity around developing curriculum. This will be sustained beyond the length of this project. (Partner agency director)

An ongoing challenge that led to significant professional change was the demand for a change in the leadership approach of the principals. With the school as the physical center of the integrated programs, the support and direct involvement of the principals was necessary. The principals and project participants struggled with the need to define and clarify the role of the principals in the projects. A major challenge was to assist the principals in developing a focus that was wider than academic education and to hire principals who were willing and able to change or evolve in their professional practice.

That is a challenge, finding the people, finding the time for those people to develop that shared vision. The leadership has been a challenge in terms of the principals. I have always felt since the beginning – if we were to do this again we have learned we would have been much more involved with the principals at the front end so they really understood what they were buying into in terms of time commitment and interest in the early years. I think we have always been a step behind them in a sense. They bought in because they saw there would be a program out there that would be good for their community, not that they would be taking a profound leadership role in terms of making it work. That has been a challenge and it still is a challenge in terms of demands. (TDSB staff person)

From the key informant interviews a number of conclusions about professional change are clear:

- Participation in the projects resulted in sustained changes in practice of the participants.
- Keys to the changes were ongoing support and professional development.
- One legacy of TFD is in the number of people who have examined and changed their ways of working with children and families. The challenge is to share this legacy with others as they embark on Best Start initiatives and similar projects.

There absolutely has to be a coordinating structure, some leadership, somebody with the overall picture in their head. Each of the pilot projects is a piece of the puzzle but there has to be someone who knows what the puzzle looks like when it's all put together. Maybe it is more than one person. I don't know if that means a coordinator at every level but there has been something in place to keep the vision clear. No one can see how it does and I think if people can't see how they are part of a bigger package or a bigger vision.... (City of Toronto staff person)

Organizational Change in the Toronto District School Board's Participation

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has grown in its commitment to, and support of, Toronto First Duty. Initially, the TDSB was not directly involved in the development, of the call for proposals, or the selection of the TFD sites. However, after four years of participation in TFD and its steering committee, TDSB was making considerable contributions to the project, including providing teacher release time for TFD professional development, giving workshops related to curriculum, assisting with collection and analysis of EDI data, and participating actively on the TFD Funders' Group, Communications Committee and Steering Committee. The 2004 TDSB policy on the Early Years recognizes that the period from birth to junior kindergarten sets the foundation for what happens once children enroll in schools, even though there is no funding for this from the Ministry of Education. The TDSB positions its early years' focus as a 'coordinated approach' with a seamless day as the goal. There is now an Early Years Team to support early childhood programs throughout the TDSB. According to key informants, participation in the project was a catalyst for many of these changes in the Board.

To really flow...there is a need for building ideas together, not just the frontline, but management and supervisory staff as well. The Early Years Team was often called upon by the principals and/or site coordinators to facilitate that because as a group we had a vision and were asked to share that vision and help guide collaborative planning at the site level. We didn't have the resources to provide this support at every site. To do that we need to expand the number of people providing support...particularly in the early stages of collaboration. (TDSB Early Years Team member)

The emerging TDSB infrastructure for the early years is seen as a support to the evolution of Best Start with more child care located in schools and perhaps integrated with Kindergarten, as well as better coordination with other family support and early intervention programs. TDSB senior management recognizes that TFD-influenced Best Start requires change in the roles and responsibilities of kindergarten teachers, educational assistants, parenting workers in the Parenting Family Literacy Centres, principals, and superintendents.

A central challenge is the role of the principal in taking on TFD, given the already overwhelming nature of their responsibilities. Support for principals is a critical element in scaling up TFD-like approaches. It is difficult to sustain as an additional program in a landscape that is crowded with pilots and projects. Several TDSB key informants commented that clear direction and commitment from the political and senior management at TDSB is essential to move TFD from a pilot among many pilots to a new *modus operandi*. Informants identified different levels of understanding and commitment among the TFD principals as a significant factor in the level of integration that was possible at each site.

Supporting the principal is the superintendent's role. The superintendents must be visible and promote it from their end. (TDSB Early Years Team member)

In principle, TDSB support for a seamless delivery model is evident. The key informants expressed overall support for a seamless day approach, with the exception of some pushback from those involved with the parenting centres who may have been concerned with losing their identity and unique funded position within the TDSB.

... Philosophically TDSB embraced the First Duty model. There was support at the top, from the Associate Director, who is now the Director, who believed this is the way to operate and also had experience with it... (Early Years Team member)

... TFD is perceived as unifying the goals of student success, parent involvement and community success. It has given a context for the work we do... (Senior management, TDSB)

In practice, the TDSB has made organizational changes under the influence of TFD. TDSB's involvement with TFD grew organically as the TDSB joined the City of Toronto and ACF in management of YEY-W at JR Wilcox Community School. It has had an impact on the organization of the TDSB Early Years Team. Not having to move the large bureaucracy at the TDSB all at once has probably allowed for the incubation of a vision to a greater extent than would otherwise be possible.

However, the interviews reveal that TFD still seems on the margins of TDSB central operations as Phase 2 begins. For example, informants pointed out that only Bruce Junior Public School features TFD participation as an integral part of the school in the fall 2006 school description on the TDSB website. JR Wilcox Community School references TFD as a child care project located in the school.

.... There was never a systemic look at how the projects would unfold in the schools and a plan that said this is something we're going to address and deal with as a Board.(TDSB Early Years Team member)

In addition, TFD does not seem to have had a significant impact yet on the political decision-making or changed regular practice for principals in elementary schools.

.... My sense is [TFD] will carry on for a couple of years – the funding will close, the funding not being available the program will fall apart and then another program will takes its place... (TDSB Trustee)

Organizational Change in the City's Participation

The City of Toronto's Children Services Division entered the TFD initiative with a strong commitment to expand children's services and a commitment to a more integrated

delivery of those services. Early key informant interviews with the Children’s Advocate and other elected officials emphasized the importance of TFD as a vehicle to change public policy and move towards integration. However, early interviews with senior management staff persons revealed a more cautious view of TFD. Given the provincial policies that were further restricting funding of regulated child care programs and the introduction of Ontario Early Years Centres that would reorganize family resource programs, several early informants expressed concerns that child care would be marginalized in TFD.

The city’s Children’s Services staff clearly had a challenge as it entered into TFD. The expectation of changing their way of working to fit the TFD vision was placed within the context of maintaining services under tight funding and ensuring that child care remained a core component in the development of TFD.

Five years later, the city’s vision of service developed for Best Start includes:

- a universally available system of supports to children and families
- a preschool/child care system with a strong learning component
- a common, developmentally appropriate curriculum for 2 1/2 to 5 years olds
- facilitation of transitions/linkages to school and to specialized support services
- developmental checks, early identification, and intervention
- a single point of access to a system of specialized supports/services
- supports for parenting role

One city manager defined seamlessness in the following way:

I conceived “seamless” not as an integrated learning environment/ curriculum, but as a seamless, coordinated continuum of services for the family. Meaning that there is a range of services available, there is less fragmented delivery of services, families move in and out of services as their needs change, and at the end of the day there is not just one way of doing things. ... I see it as a flow of information, a team approach to planning and a system responding to families’ need. The glue is the strong staff team... for that to happen it doesn’t mean that all the walls come down and there are no separate entities ... professional disciplines. It’s more about flow. (City official’s perspective/ TFD program manager)

Through its strong support of TFD, the city has recognized the need for change and has acted to create change as needed. Key informants note that the city has played an active role at all levels of governance and has responded with flexibility to changes in their usual way of working in the projects. This sets a clear mandate to continue to respond flexibly and to make major changes in their way of working as TFD and Best Start models become the norm.

At the same time, lead agency and other community informants point out that the city’s Children’s Services is continuing business as usual in many aspects of its work. The spring 2005 allocation of new Best Start funding for regulated child care did not focus on

integration as could have been possible. There is recognition that the timelines to allocate the funding were very tight, making it easier to revert to ‘business as usual.’

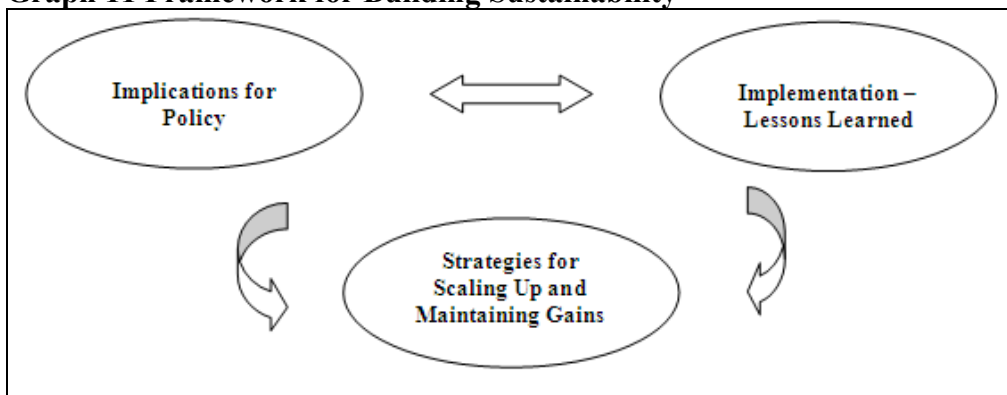
...I think both provincial and federal have put in a lot of money recently but everybody wanting to be the boss of that money..... Everybody is flowing money differently and sometimes they don't jive with what each one is trying to do. (City of Toronto official)

The Steering Committee's Work on Sustainability

The steering committee for TFD has focused much of its efforts on sustainability. A subgroup of the steering committee was convened in the spring of 2003 to explore strategies for maintaining and replicating the successful outcomes of TFD. The group struggled with strategies and moved to a conclusion that their work should be at a macro level. It hoped to have an impact on policy and funding so that flexible and integrated service models could be implemented, benefiting young children and families in a wide range of communities. The group worked with great energy to develop an advocacy document that can serve as the basis for lobbying and policy development. The task in itself was massive, but as the group worked, some of the ideological and policy differences in the group became evident. The group was undeterred and continued, coming to consensus on each issue as successive drafts were tabled. The completed document is now being used to influence policy, and particularly to shape and influence the province's Best Start initiative.

In the second phase of TFD (July 2005 - June 2008), finances have been directed towards outreach and support to sites that are developing TFD style programs. This outreach is planned to disseminate the model and to sustain and duplicate the successes of TFD. The steering committee's work fits into the “Framework for Building Sustainability,” outlined in earlier TFD reports. From the data about the projects and the committee's extensive work on sustainability they have identified implications for policy. They are using the lessons to develop and implement strategies for scaling up and maintaining gains. Through the outreach work currently underway the committee is assuring that TFD gains and knowledge are sustained.

Graph 11 Framework for Building Sustainability



Moving from Pilots to Public Policy

I think one of the challenges overall for projects like [Toronto First Duty], when does the society, when does the government stop seeing it like a nice little project and when does it become a continuum that we say – look it, this is a value to kids and we need to implement it, we need to be there and as we talked earlier, have some sustainable funding that allows these programs to take place. (Ontario Teachers’ Federation member)

To implement Best Start along the lines of the TFD vision will require further organizational change in the day-to-day operations of city Children’s Services and related departments (e.g., Toronto Public Health, TDSB, and community agencies).

The discussions on sustainability and key informant interviews identified four public policy barriers that limited how far the local sites could move forward in implementing the TFD vision:

- Separate policies, funding, and legislation of provincial ministries (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services), the City of Toronto and the Toronto District School Board, plus community agencies and a charitable foundation provides many challenges including issues of liability.
- Combining universal and targeted programs for children ages 0-6 is a primary barrier. Kindergarten is available with no fee to parents for all children 4- and 5-year-olds. Parenting centres and other programs, such as the provincial Early Years Centres, have no or very low fees and, where they are available, are open to all preschoolers who attend with their parents. Child care serves 23% of Toronto’s 0-6 child population. Families that cannot afford the full fees and that are ineligible for fee assistance face affordability barriers. This fractured funding structure is a primary barrier to integration. It locks the partners into their silos and prevents sites from offering parents the full and flexible range of services.
- Some provisions of Ontario’s *Day Nurseries Act* limit program flexibility, including the sole recognition of Early Childhood Education credentials in ratios and restrictions of age groupings, playground requirements, and window requirements.
- Integrating the three early childhood professions including kindergarten teachers, early childhood educators, and parenting staff was accomplished on a site-by-site basis with good will and good faith, despite the disparity in remuneration and working conditions among the three professions.

Several key informants—both internal to First Duty activities and external stakeholders and policy researchers—point to the need for a re-engineering of public policy if the TFD vision is to live beyond the life of the funded demonstration sites. They repeatedly

pointed out that it is not possible for local governments and communities to move further on integration without systemic changes that address the barriers.

TDSB, City of Toronto's Children's Services, and Toronto Public Health key informants consistently identified several conditions that would facilitate a smoother reorganization, integration, and expansion of programs for young children. This list includes:

- A provincial infrastructure to support the integration of kindergarten with child care and family support programs.
- Professional development and staff release time for front-line staff members (from child care, family support programs, and kindergarten) to focus on results for children and program quality.
- Language supports and translation are required if outreach is going to work.
- Adoption of the Indicators of Change as a standard practice among the school and community programs for young children and their families located in the school or in the school neighbourhood.
- Changes in education and child care regulations; *The Education Act* comes up for review in the fall of 2006 and school council regulation will be one focus, as a new Ministry of Education Parent Involvement Policy kicks in.

...What do we mean by concepts like integration? ...Everybody had a bit of a different idea of what it would look like. Tools like [the Indicators of Change] help build that understanding. In the very beginning we didn't have anything like that to guide us. (TDSB senior management member)

....The Indicators of Change are useful in two ways. You could see where you started and how far you had come. You can lose perspective thinking that you haven't moved much. But then you see where you were, where you are now, and where you could possibly end up (TDSB Early Years Team member)

2.1.7 Impact on Public Policy

The key informant interviews with policymakers and staff in local and provincial governments provide some insights into the impact of the TFD implementation on public policy. News of the TFD experiment has traveled to the Ontario provincial government. The provincial Best Start initiative, announced in late 2004, and initially buoyed by new dollars from the federal government, included guiding principles that are similar to those of TFD. When interviewed, provincial officials often referenced TFD as an example of the Best Start Community Hubs.

What is occurring in TFD is very helpful from the standpoint of sort of showing the way and reporting the learnings of that project so that it will stimulate thinking. It may not translate into a one-for-one duplication in the Best Start initiative but in forming the Best Start initiative. (Government of Ontario official)

...what do we do to ensure alignment of the goals of Best Start and the goals of various ministries and we have a very de-centralized education system in Ontario and we have a very big challenge and the way government does that is by legislation... (Government of Ontario official)

...another piece to the TFD project is about the parents – is bringing the parents in to learn their role in learning for themselves but also for their children but it's the connection with the school. One of the things that probably would be useful for the principal to know is parent's reaction to being drawn in this way... (Government of Ontario official)

2.2 Parents and Children

2.2.1 Support for Parents and Parent Involvement in Toronto First Duty

Parent and community involvement is one of the core elements of integration in the TFD model. It relates to the principle of equity of access and outreach to marginalized groups who have been traditionally underserved. These were concerns in the context of the development of TFD, including Toronto's Report Cards on children, as described earlier in this report. Parent and community involvement also underpins the TFD principle that the core model should be adapted to the particular needs and strengths of each community. It relates as well to the TFD design principle that parents within a community should have flexibility in choosing the particular array of services needed by each family.

As TFD got underway, connections to parents began with a formal parent-community consultation process at each site. These consultations and their role in program plans were described in the initial case study descriptions in early progress reports. Throughout Phase 1, there were continuing efforts by the sites to seek input from parents and community members and to strengthen their role in governance structures. These efforts were described at the midpoint of implementation in the *June 2004 Progress Report* (Toronto First Duty Research, 2004a); concrete details of more recent efforts are described in the expanded case studies appended to this report (Appendix 2). Challenges to getting parents involved in governance and committee work have been documented in the literature (e.g., Corter & Pelletier, 2005) and in the experience of the sites. Some of the challenges noted by sites are: parents' lack of perceived interest and comfort with these roles; parent facility in English; availability of time and child care resources; rates of resident relocation and turnover; and in some cases, availability of transportation. By the end of Phase 1, hand-to-hand recruitment efforts have increased the number of parents on management committees and sub-committees. A dazzling variety of ways of getting input from a greater range of parents and doing outreach to parents and the community have also been tried across sites: including updated parent-community consultations with focus groups; formal and informal evaluation at the end of some sessions and programs; regular newsletters to parents and community; community flyers; Bengali teas; health screening days; and even door-to-door visits by community outreach

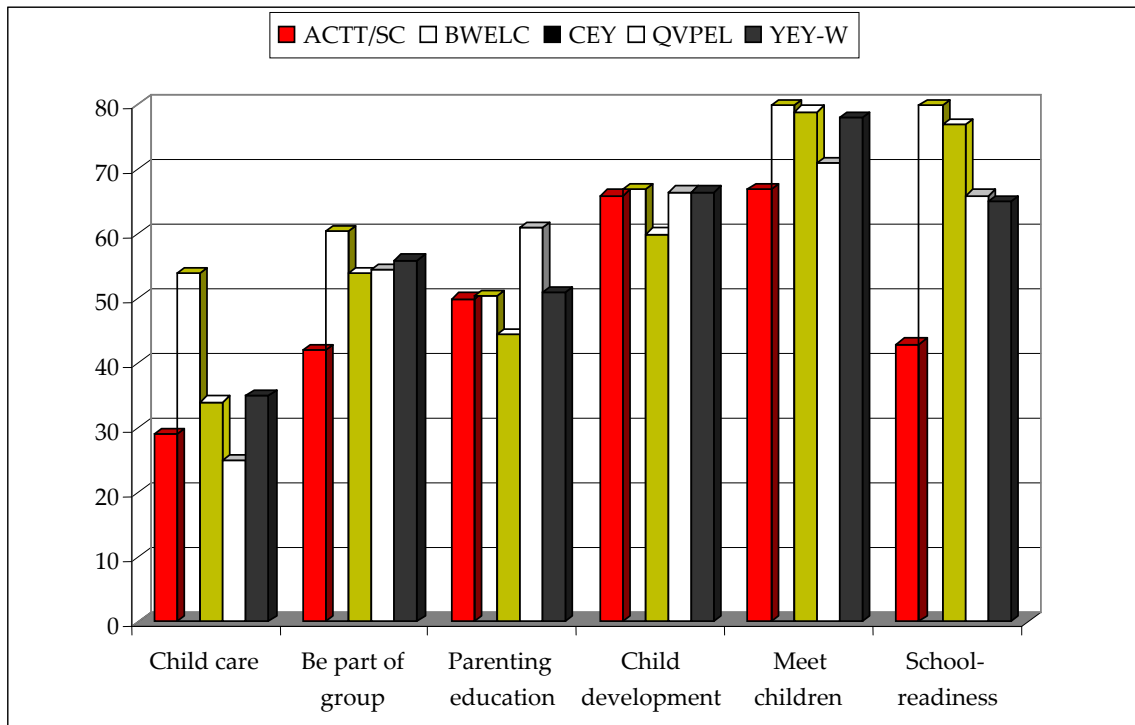
workers. Enrolling parents in programs and equitable access has been a major motivation for these efforts.

A variety of information sources were used to assess the efforts at parent and community involvement. The site management committees registered their views on progress in parent involvement and support by taking part in the Indicators of Change assessment process, which included input from front-line staff. Front-line staff members also reported their perceptions of parental involvement and possible benefit for parents in surveys. Input from parents themselves was a key part of exploring their involvement and the value of TFD in supporting parents and their aims for fostering their children’s development. The research team held focus groups and interviews with parents early in the implementation process, which set the stage for larger-scale surveys with parents in 2003 and 2005. The intake and tracking process also gave a picture of varied parent goals as they joined TFD activities, as well as uptake of services. It should be noted that this report uses “parent” in a general sense to mean the adult(s) who deal(s) with the service/centre/school as parent, guardian, grandparent, etc.

Data on Parents from Intake and Tracking

At intake, parents were asked about their goals for their children and for themselves, and they also provided demographic information about their family. Graph 13 shows that most parents had multiple goals in joining TFD (additional goals were also noted; those depicted here are illustrative and include the highest ranked goals); it gives the percentages of parents who endorsed various goals for each of the five sites.

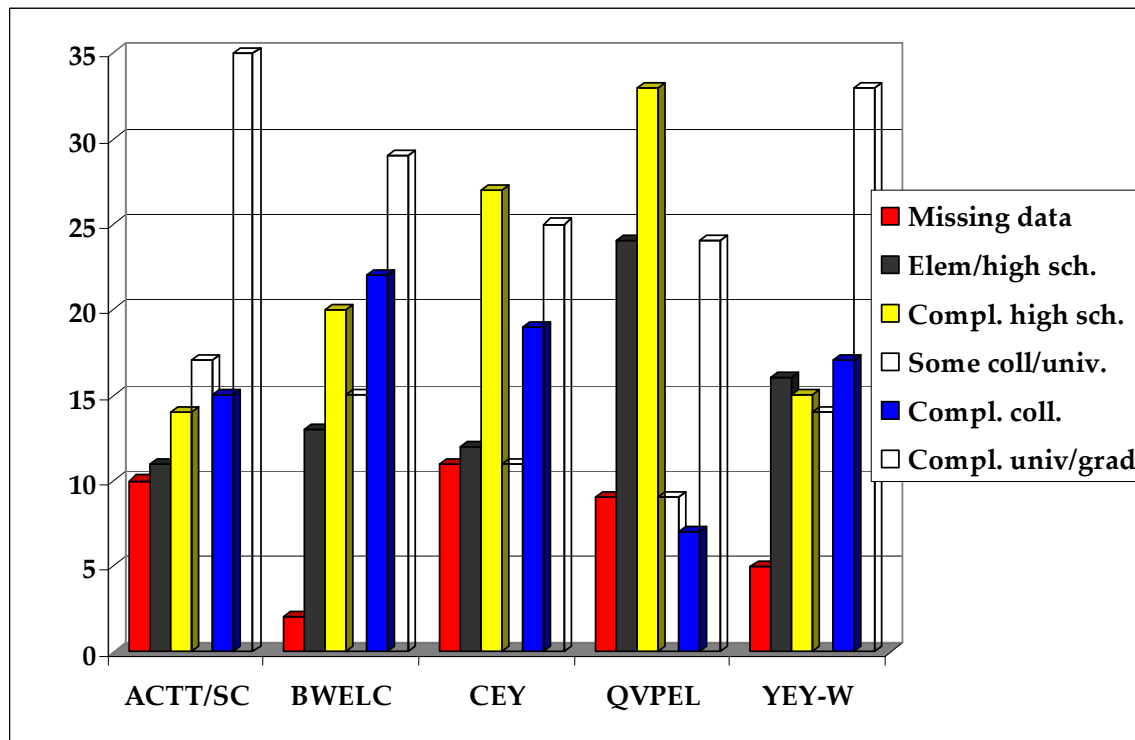
Graph 12 Parents' Program Goals by Site



The graph also illustrates several other general points. First, there is variation in parents' goals across sites. For example, accessing child care was of interest to 34% of parents enrolling in TFD at the QVPEL site and to 52% of parents at the BWELC site. Second, goals for children generally outranked parents' goals for themselves. For example, 'socializing with other children' and 'readiness for school' outranked 'parents' interest in being part of a group' or 'learning about parenting'. Nevertheless, it is clear that participating parents value the TFD multi-pronged aims of supporting child development and supporting parents, both in their roles as parent and in their needs for child care.

The intake and tracking data also help to answer the critical question of how well outreach efforts have worked and whether TFD programs engage families who are representative of the communities they serve. Data for maternal education, illustrated in Graph 14, show that the demographics of the participants are varied within and across sites.

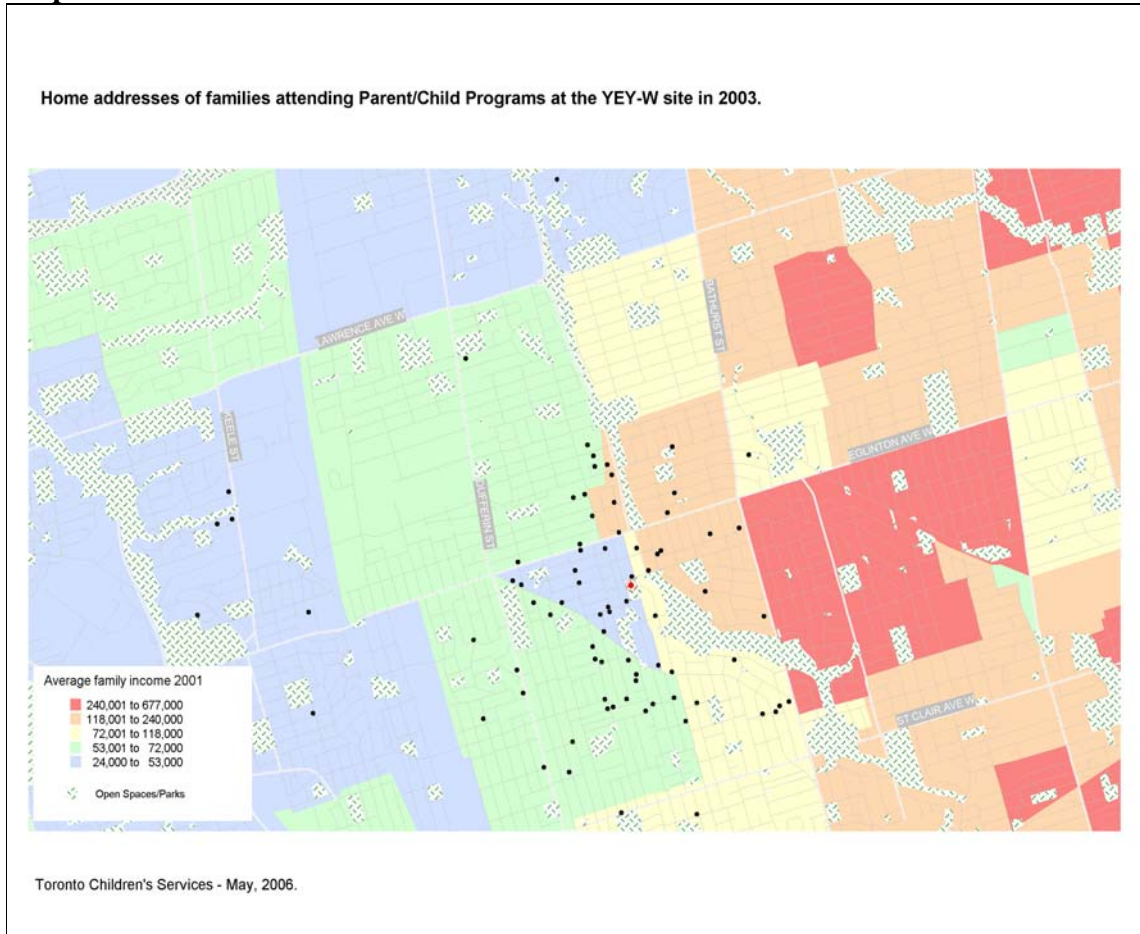
Graph 13 Intake and Tracking, June 2005 - Maternal Education



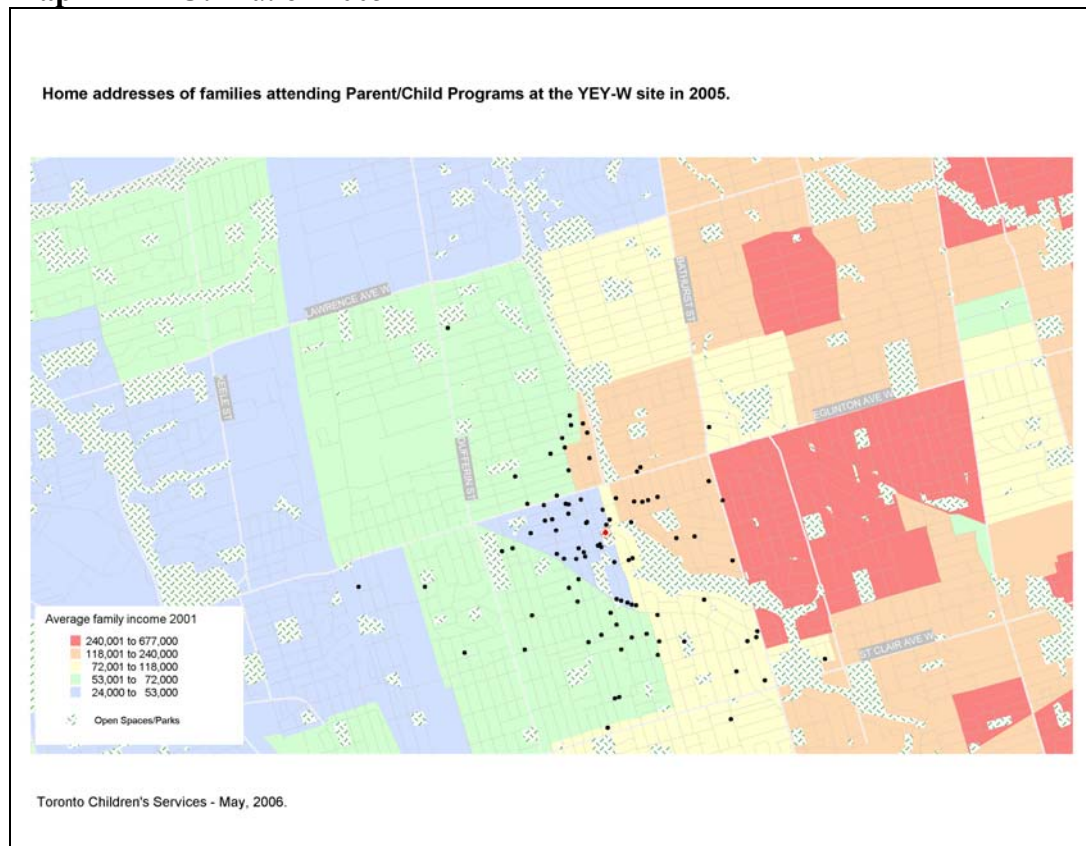
For example, the QVPEL site has participants with somewhat lower levels of education compared to the other four sites. More than 20% of participants at QVPEL have not completed high school, yet almost the same percentage have completed university. This suggests that the TFD model has universal appeal. Similar patterns for diversity in language are seen across sites. Overall, 60.2% of the participating families have English as an additional language, but the figure varies from 35% to 87% across sites.

The universal reach of TFD is also illustrated by the Maps 1 & 2. Both maps show where participating families reside for the YEY-W site. This site is interesting because there is a demographic divide between east and west. On the east is the affluent Forest Hill area of Toronto, and on the west is an area with concentrations of families living below the poverty line, more lone parent families, and more language minority and immigrant families. However, the maps show that families from both areas are taking up the TFD services. The patterns of utilization between 2003 and 2005 indicate an increase and intensification in the immediate school neighbourhood.

Map 1: YEY-W Utilization 2003



Map 2 YEY Utilization 2005



Interviews and Surveys with Parents

Findings on parent involvement based on focus groups and interviews early in the implementation of TFD were outlined in the *December 2003 Progress Report* (Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2003e). These early discussions showed that participating parents were happy with the services but also felt that they weren't consulted in the planning of what was offered: "Nobody asked us." Despite the early parent community consultation, only a small minority of parents had been consulted at this earlier point. The need for continued and improved communication was signaled by these early findings.

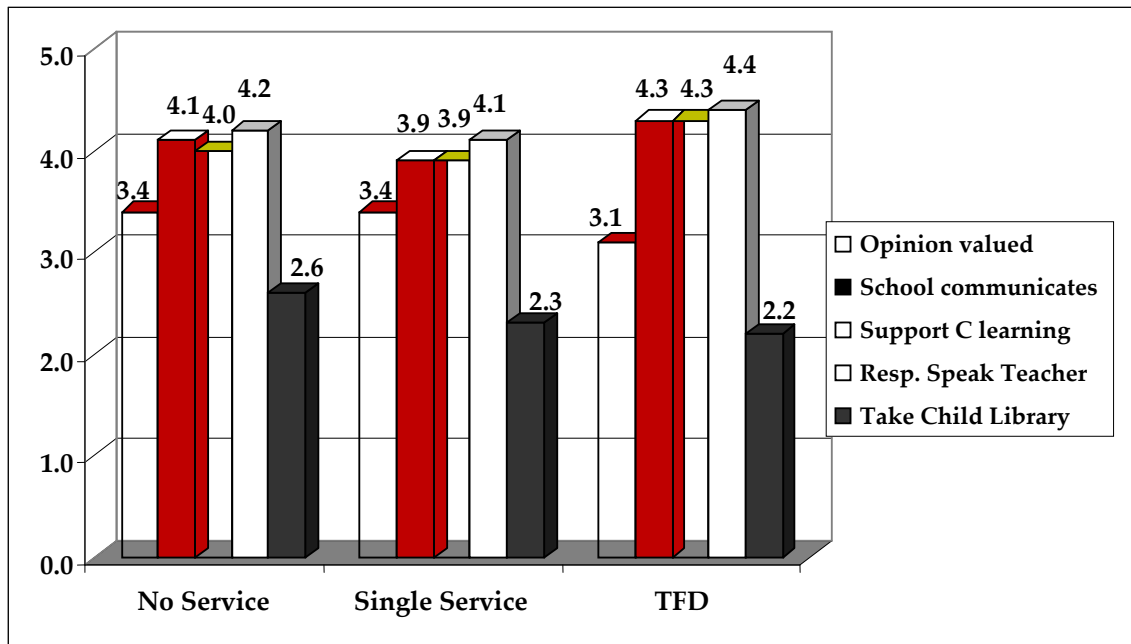
Based on the early discussions with parents and on the literature on parent involvement with children's services, the research team developed a survey to hear from more parents, (Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2004a). The survey asked about attitudes towards TFD, parental engagement with learning and schools, perceptions of school openness to parental involvement, and parental self-efficacy. Based on other findings in the literature, we hypothesized that the TFD experience might increase parents' capacity to relate to services, with the school being a prime example of a service to which parents would become better connected.

The survey was given at two time points. In late 2003 parents of kindergarten-aged children across the five TFD demonstration sites were sampled. At the same time point, parent survey data were also collected from matched comparison TDSB school sites that were not part of TFD. Quasi-experimental comparisons between these sites and the five

TFD sites were designed to test whether experience with TFD integrated services might increase parents' capacity for involvement with their children's learning and school. At the second time point, early in 2005, surveys were collected again at three TFD sites. These were the three sites that were chosen for intensive analysis of children's, and parents' outcomes. Detailed results for these samples are available in other reports (Patel & Corter, 2005, 2006).

The comparisons of TFD parents with parents at control sites in 2003 showed that TFD parents were more likely to feel empowered to talk to their child's kindergarten teacher and to help their child learn at home. This suggests that the experience with integrated preschool services may have increased parents' confidence in helping their children learn and their capacity to communicate with the school and teachers in kindergarten. This capacity building worked for parents who are immigrants as well as for those born in Canada. Paradoxically, TFD parents were somewhat less likely to report that their opinions about programs and services were valued, perhaps because expectations for input had been raised and parents felt more responsible to give input. TFD parents and parents at schools with a single preschool service (e.g., Parenting and Family Literacy Centre or other family support program) also reported fewer trips to the library, presumably because books and literacy activities were available at the school site. Graph 15 illustrates these significant differences between parents at TFD sites with multiple, integrated services and comparison sites with a single preschool service, or no preschool services.

Graph 14 Parent Survey - TFD vs. Single vs. No EC Service



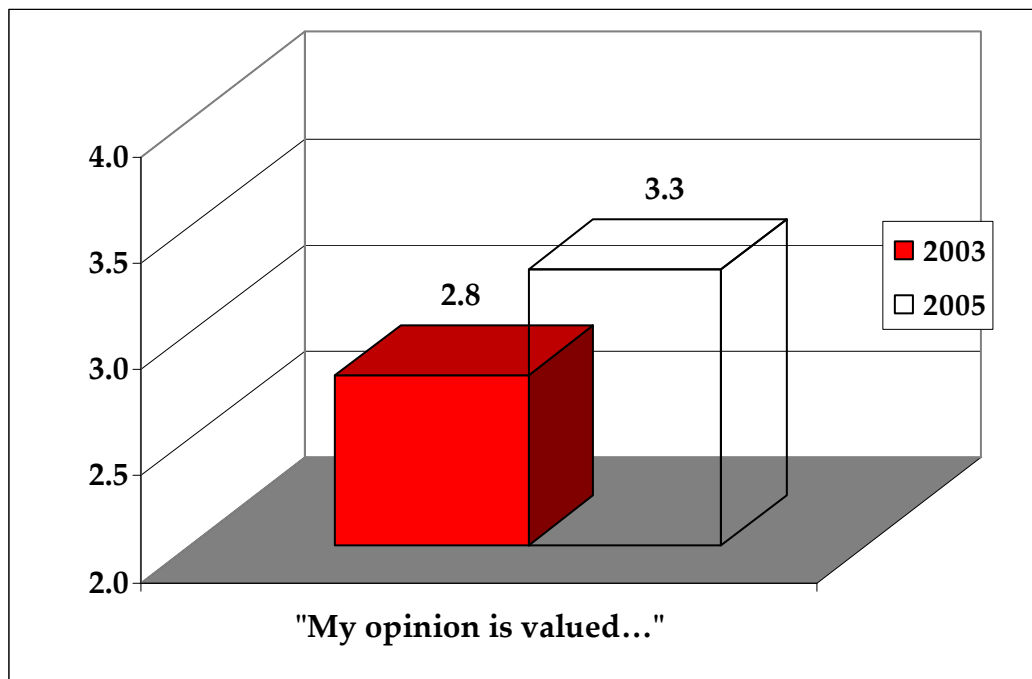
Overall, TFD parents sampled at both time points (2003 and 2005) had positive attitudes about the TFD project and the concept of integration of services. For example, in 2003, the majority of TFD parents reported that they felt that their child had benefited from the

programs/services for children and families, with 61.1% of parents agreeing, 18.9% unsure, and only 9.5% disagreeing. Similarly, most TFD parents reported that they were happy with the quality of the programs/services for children and families, with 60% of parents agreeing, 25.3% unsure, and 8.5% disagreeing. Almost two-thirds of parents (65.3%) reported that they enjoy the programs/services, with approximately one quarter being unsure (25.3%), and only 3% disagreeing. Three quarters (74.7%) of TFD parents reported that their child enjoys the programs/services. Over three-quarters (76.8%) of the TFD parents agreed with the notion that when programs and services work together they are better and easier to find out about. These positive levels of support were duplicated in the sample collected in 2005 from three of the sites.

Despite the positive view of programs, access to programs/services was an issue in the 2003 survey. The majority of TFD parents reported that they had not been able to use many of the programs/services for children and families, with over half of parents agreeing (56.9%); the rest were not sure (15.8%), or disagreed (16.8%). Also, as noted above, parents' input into services was an issue. When asked whether they felt that their opinion was valued and teachers/staff asked their opinion about programs/services, the results were mixed. While over a third agreed that their opinion mattered (35.8%), about as many (30.5%) were unsure, and 22.1 % disagreed.

From early implementation in 2003 to full implementation in 2005, improvements in these areas of parents' concerns were noted at the TFD sites. In particular, TFD parents sampled in 2005 were more likely to report that their opinion was valued and that staff/teachers asked their opinion about programs/services, than those parents who were sampled in 2003. This difference is illustrated in Graph 16.

Graph 15 Parent Survey 2003 and 2005 - "My opinion is valued"



In addition, TFD parents sampled in 2005 appear to feel somewhat more connected to programs and services than those parents who were sampled in 2003. In particular, the percentage of parents who reported that they have not been able to use many of the programs/services for children was considerably lower (35.6%) compared to the majority who agreed that access was a problem in 2003 (56.9%). These differences in parent reports of being heard and having access are statistically modest but significant. They may reflect the documented efforts of sites to increase access through program flexibility and scheduling and to increase channels of communication with parents. At the same time they leave room for improvement, with a significant minority of parents still wanting more access and input.

Views of Site Management and the Front-line Staff

The Indicators of Change tool and the Front-line Staff Survey revealed that the managers and practitioners in TFD sites reported that connecting to parents was more challenging in the early stages of TFD. For example, interviews with front-line staff members in 2002-2003 found that “involving parents” was the most frequently mentioned challenge in the new TFD integrated service arrangements across sites (Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2003e). Particular issues included the diversity of parents (language and culture) as well as location of services. By 2005, surveys of staff members indicated that parent involvement was a major challenge only in one site, although concerns about dealing with language diversity were mentioned across sites (see Appendix 1.2). From the standpoint of site management teams, the Indicators of Change showed that all dimensions of parent integration were seen to improve, from parents having input, their direct involvement in children’s programs, provision for parent education and support, and in relationship-building between staff and parents.

Conclusions

The various lines of evidence show gains for parents from the TFD experiment that go beyond client satisfaction. Converging evidence from parents, site management, and staff members demonstrates improvements in parental input and access to services. Intake and tracking data show that the uptake of services reaches out across the demographic diversity of TFD neighborhoods. The quasi-experimental comparison of parents at TFD sites and matched school sites suggests that experience with integrated services may increase parents’ capacity to communicate with the school and their own confidence in helping their children learn. The evidence also shows there is room for continuing improvement. Having more voice and access to services are still areas of concern for some parents. Although TFD outreach nets diverse clients, there is always the concern that within the diverse language and socio-economic groups, the service may not be reaching those who need it the most. Despite these qualifiers, the evidence of tangible progress is notable. Parent involvement and outreach are critical success factors for early childhood services, schools, and other child and family services. There are many exhortations in the professional and academic literature to do better but little actual evidence of what works. The experiences in Toronto First Duty provide some of this evidence but no single ‘magic bullet.’ The message is that concerted efforts, flexible arrangements, and lots of hard work are required.

2.2.2 Children

Children: The Focus of Toronto First Duty

The principal aim—the first duty—of TFD is to support the development of children. A number of lines of evidence suggest that TFD had begun to meet this aim. Although the initial evaluation planned for TFD did not include child outcomes, additional funding was secured from Human Resources and Development Canada to analyze Early Development Instrument (EDI) data from teachers' reports on kindergarten children. EDI data were collected by the TDSB at several time points over Phase 1 of TFD. In addition, the research team used other funds to collect direct information from samples of children at the sites in 2003 and in 2005; these data included children's reports on their experiences in TFD and direct assessment of child development by research staff (Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2003c). Perceptions of benefits for children were also collected from both parents and front-line staff members through surveys, as described earlier in this report. The majority of parents and practitioners felt that children are benefited from TFD, especially in the social realm.

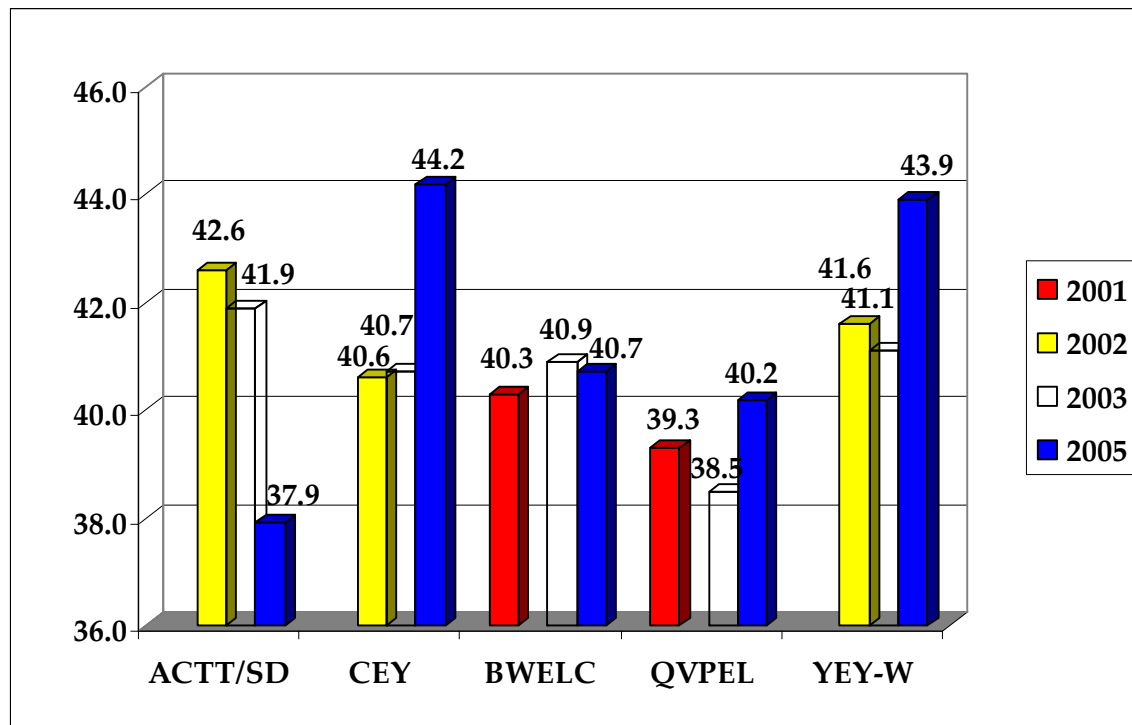
Early Development Instrument (EDI) Findings

In the spring of 2005, at the end of the implementation period, the EDI was used to examine the community-level impact of TFD by looking at change over time in the schools that are part of TFD. The EDI is a rating scale that kindergarten teachers complete for each child in their class. It is made up of over 100 items categorized into five domains. The EDI measures: physical health/well-being; social knowledge and competence; emotional health/maturity; language and cognitive development; and communication skills and general knowledge (Janus & Offord, 2000).

Community-level EDI scores can serve as an indicator of change in child development outcomes in a specific neighbourhood. Analysis of EDI scores in the TFD sites over "baseline" years (2001-2003) indicated that community-level data were stable, so that subsequent changes could serve as an indication of improvement related to TFD (see Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2004a). Two data points were used to assess baseline stability of the EDI. Senior kindergarten EDI data were collected from Bruce Junior and Queen Victoria public schools in 2001 and 2003. The same data were collected from senior kindergarten classes from Secord Elementary, Corvette Junior Public, and JR Wilcox schools in 2002 and 2003. For each of the TFD sites' total mean EDI scores there were no significant within-site differences between these earlier years. There were significant data collection problems at two of the sites. At Bruce Junior Public School, there were only 17 and 19 senior kindergarten respectively in 2001 and 2003. Therefore the sample size is too small to provide a reliable community sample. At Secord Public School, changes in staffing and in the demographics and family characteristics of the kindergarten children make comparisons between years problematic. These limitations illustrate the problems in reporting EDI results by school, particularly small schools with fewer than 40 senior kindergarten children or schools with significant changes in child population or teaching staff. EDI reporting by neighbourhoods rather than by smaller school catchment areas is preferable (Kershaw, Irwin, Trafford, & Hertzman, 2006).

In 2005, EDI data were collected at all sites. It should be noted that EDI data collection at TFD sites in 2005 occurred at the end of February whereas data collection in 2001, 2002, and 2003 took place in May. Since age plays a significant role in the EDI ratings, this factor was statistically controlled in comparing 2005 and 2003; statistical comparisons were limited to these two years since they were the only years in which all sites were evaluated. Graph 17 shows total EDI scores across sites and years. Total scores improved significantly in three of the five sites and were statistically unchanged in the other two.

Graph 16 EDI Total Scores across Sites and Years

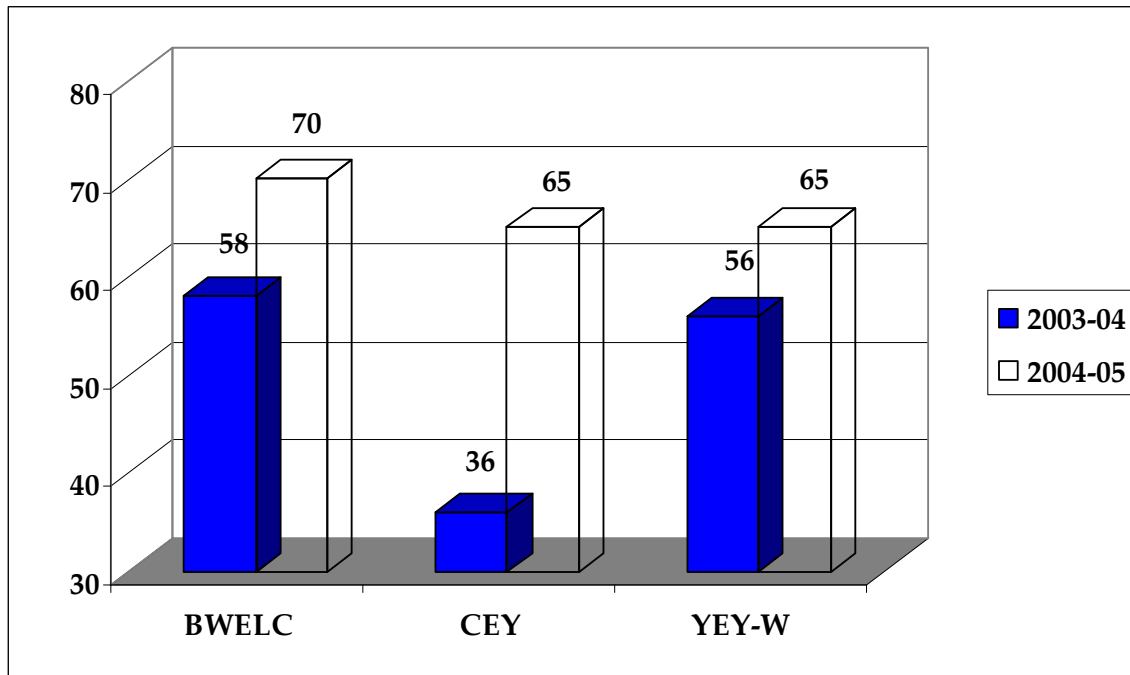


The total score is a blunt way of looking at child development; it is more informative to examine change within the five subscales. Analyses of change within the five dimensions of development on the EDI showed change in some areas but not others (see expanded case studies in Appendices for details of individual sites). For all sites combined, significant improvements were seen in two of the five dimensions: social, and emotional development. Changes were not seen in physical development, language, or communication/general knowledge. Physical development was generally not a target in programming at the sites. Communication/general knowledge is strongly and negatively associated with minority language status; the fact that roughly 60% of the children in TFD programs have English as an additional language may moderate improvements in this area and in language itself. In any case, the fact that improvement on the EDI was found in social-emotional development and the complementary fact that several sites had explicit aims for programming and child improvement in social-emotional development, suggest that there may be causal connections between TFD programs and improved outcomes for child development.

Direct Child Measures and Interviews

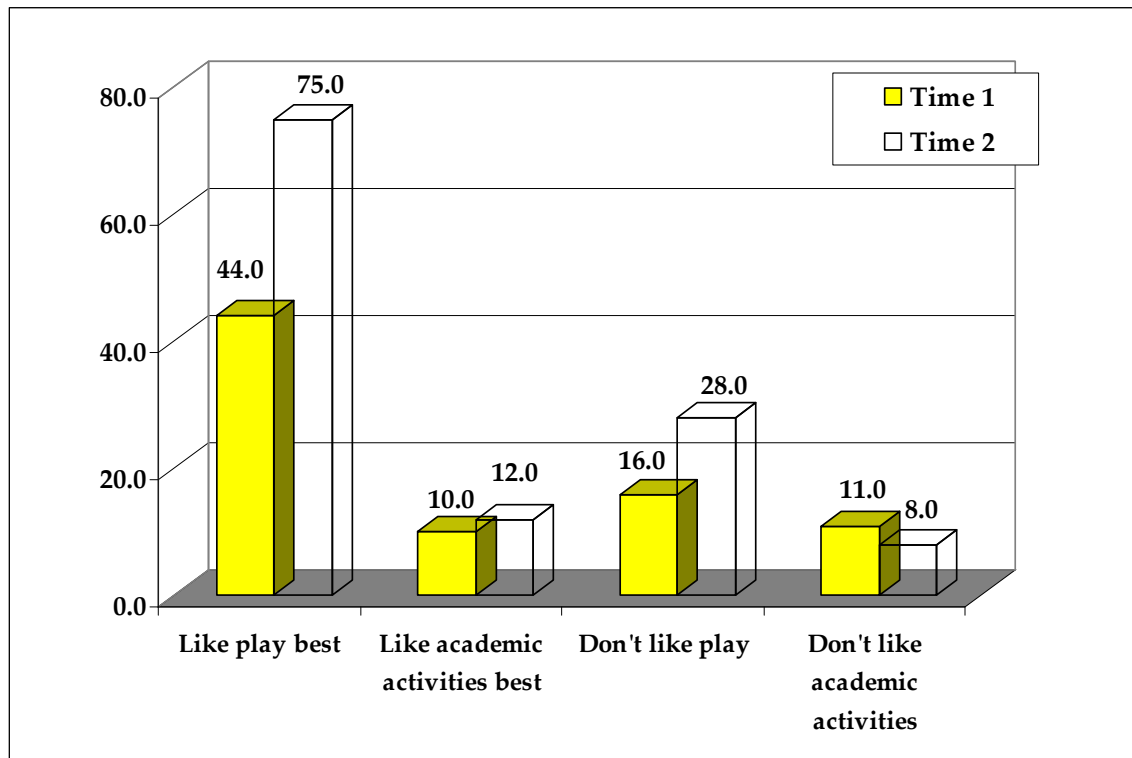
During the spring of 2003 direct child measures were collected on a sample of 76 children across the sites. Measures were repeated in the spring of 2005 with a sample of 125 children from three of the sites. Data collection was limited to three sites because of research resource limitations. The measures comprising the child outcome database are Vocabulary-Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III) (Dunn & Dunn, 1997), Test of Early Reading Ability (TERA-III) (Reid, Hresko, & Hammill, 2001), Number Sense, and Social Understanding (i.e., the child interview). Although the demographics from the samples appear to match the neighborhood profiles, the relatively small convenience samples are an issue, particularly in looking at the site level of analysis. Nevertheless, the data provide some converging support for the EDI findings: there were significant improvements across the three sites sampled in 2003 and 2005. Significant differences were found for language development (vocabulary), total TERA (measuring dimensions, like print awareness and comprehension), and number knowledge. As an illustration, differences in PPVT-III scores appear in Graph 18.

Graph 17 Vocabulary Raw Scores Time 1 and Time 2



In addition to participating in standardized assessments, children were interviewed about their experiences in TFD. They were asked to describe their day at the site from the time they get there until they went home and were asked what kinds of things they did at the site. Specific probes included asking what they liked and didn't like and what they were good at and not so good at. An important point is that "play" was the runaway winner when responses to "what do you like best" were categorized. Academic-related responses, crafts and activities, etc., have some appeal but are far less salient. Even more interesting is that play also leads the list of things that children "don't like"; play can go bad when other children "don't let you play," "don't play nice," etc. The salience of play did not change across the two samples of children as Graphs 19 illustrates.

Graph 18 Children's Interviews



These findings are a reminder that children and their experiences need to be part of the program planning for quality early years programs.

2.3 Community/Public Awareness

2.3.1 Community engagement

Toronto First Duty has the goal of engaging broader communities, as well as parents, in the sites. Community engagement can be defined in a number of ways. One way is in terms of *community input* into the development and implementation of TFD sites, via consultations or community members' participation in governance. A second way is as the *impact on community awareness* of the project and early childhood in general. A third way is *building the service community* by developing further connections to other service agencies or organizations.

Community input into TFD

An intensive parent/community consultation process took place at each site in the design phase of TFD. These consultations were documented in the initial case studies for each site, which appeared in earlier progress reports. In general, these consultations included focus groups, surveys, and key informant interviews, with most input coming from parents and community service agencies. Systematic representation from other community sectors (e.g., ethno-cultural, business, faith-based, volunteer, etc.) was not

generally included. Throughout implementation, community input to the TFD sites came mainly through parents.

A review of site reports, partnership agreements, governance documents, and interviews with site coordinators in 2004 (see Toronto First Duty Research Team, 2004a) revealed that provision is made for parent participation in (sub)committees at each TFD project site, generally including allocation of a management or steering committee seat to a parent member.

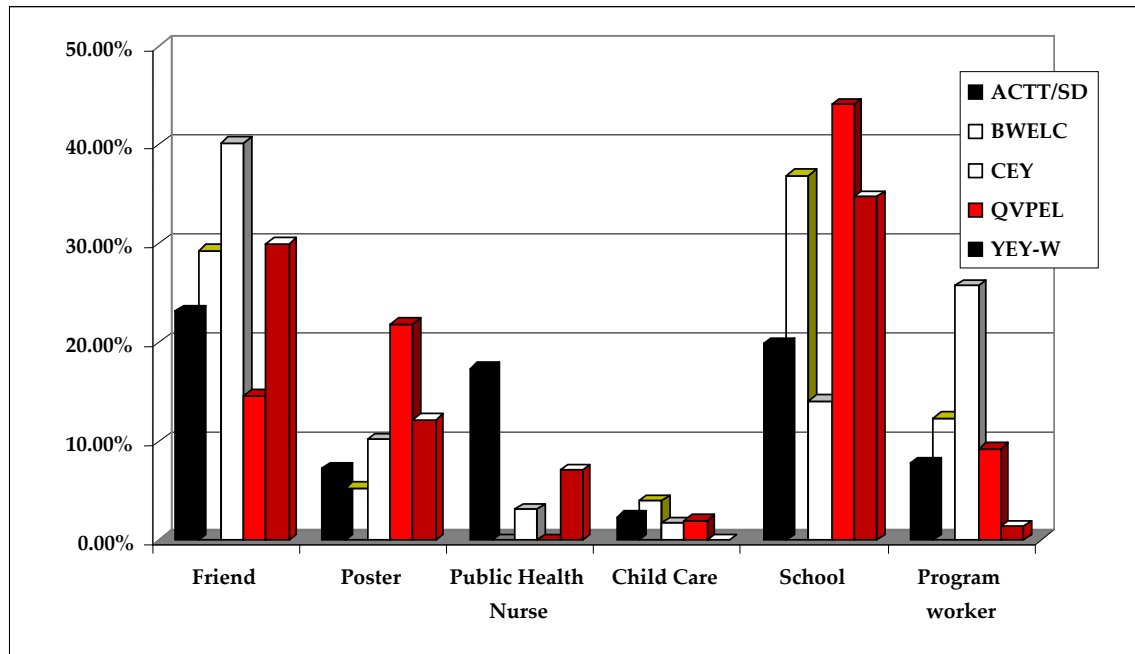
Each site also employs a number of formal and informal methods of eliciting feedback from parents at the end of a program or session, as well as face-to-face communication during the programs. In some sites, parent-community outreach workers also relay parent perspectives. In some sites, there are formal links to the parent/school council. These efforts to “listen” to parents appear to have increased during implementation and may have strengthened client satisfaction, as noted in the previous section on parent survey data. In contrast to the centrality of parents to the project, involvement of other community members on committees has not generally occurred at the sites. Site governance documents do not appear to specify the process of involving community members in committee work, what appropriate roles might be, length of term of service, and so on.

TFD impact on community awareness

Each site engaged in varied outreach efforts to parents and others in the community, as documented in the detailed site case studies in this report. For example, partner agencies such as libraries and public health distributed information about the project, sometimes by displaying posters and sometimes directly via professional staff. In some sites, open houses were held, with targets ranging from an ethnic group (e.g., Bengali teas) to local politicians, to the general community. In one case, a local apartment complex was invited to hold their residents’ meeting at the school to build the community connection. In some sites there was flyer distribution and door-to-door visiting by program workers to build the profile of the TFD project and advertise the availability of the service. The intake and tracking data on how parents became aware of TFD services in Graph 20 indicates that these efforts had some success, at least in parental awareness of TFD programs. For example, the percentage of parents finding out about TFD programs from posters ranged from 5% to 22% across sites. Referrals from child care and public health workers in the community accounted for smaller percentages. Direct contact with TFD program workers accounted for more awareness, ranging from 8% to 26% across sites. However, the school was generally the biggest channel for building parental awareness, with 22% to 44% of parents saying that’s how they heard about TFD. Interestingly, hearing about TFD from friends was nearly as common, with the percentages ranging from 15% to 40% across sites. The latter indicates a healthy flow of communication within the community, outside of the professional channels. Note, however that these channels differ in their relative importance across sites. For example, at the QVPEL site, “friends” were a less important channel and the “school” was more important than at other sites. Demographic information shows that this site has the greatest cultural linguistic diversity and the

highest transience of the five sites, and these factors would likely reduce the social networks that would support communication among “friends”.

Graph 19 Community engagement



The research team also assessed community awareness through surveys with a number of community groups in the spring of 2005. These surveys were limited to the same three intensively-studied sites where parent and child data were collected at the same time: BWELC, CEY, and YEY-W. To gauge impact and awareness beyond the target families of preschoolers and kindergarten children, two other groups of respondents were sampled at the three sites. The first group consisted of heterogeneous convenience samples of the “general public” or persons approached outside grocery stores, malls and in other public places within the school catchment areas. Overall, these samples provided opinions from a mixed group of individuals who varied in age (from 18 to 64+), gender (50% male), education (35% high school or less education) and parental status (44% non-parents).

The second group consisted of parents of children in grades five and six at the 3 case study schools; this group was used to gauge community opinions from parents who were not directly involved in TFD programs but who might also be familiar with school activities and community programs for young children. In addition to these two groups, kindergarten parents in the three schools were surveyed to measure the “ceiling” for interest in, and awareness of, early childhood programs. This group of respondents was demographically similar to the parents of children in grade 5 and 6: across both parent samples 33% had high school or less education; mothers were more likely to have completed the surveys (78%); respondents were more likely to have been born outside Canada (69%); and none were older than 54.

The survey (see Appendix 1.7) considered a number of areas in addition to awareness of TFD, including attitudes about integrated early childhood services, support for early childhood education as compared to support for other levels of education, and ideas about who bears the responsibility to prepare children for school-entry.

Although some differences emerged among the three groups of respondents, as well as between males and females, there were more similarities than differences across respondent groups. Furthermore, across sites there were very few differences.

There was little knowledge of TFD by name among the community respondents. The percentage who said they were aware of the project was 7% in the general public sample, 24% in the grade 5/6 parent sample, and 72% in the kindergarten parent sample. Nevertheless, an overwhelming majority in all three categories agreed (25%) or strongly agreed (72%) that they “support the idea of incorporating services such as child care, parenting & family support services, public health, nutrition, early intervention, and summer readiness programs within the school system.” Similarly, an overwhelming majority agreed (33%) or strongly agreed (57%) that daycares and schools should coordinate their efforts by sharing information. This positive view mirrors the results from a recent general survey of the Ontario public (Livingstone & Hart, 2005). Thus, support for integration of services is not limited to parents who have experienced this new approach (i.e., kindergarten parents in TFD sites); enthusiasm is shared across demographically-diverse community members. These results replicate and extend those of Johnson and Mathien (1998) who explored attitudes towards integration among parents and professionals in several Canadian provinces.

There was also general support for “early childhood education” and integrated early childhood services. For example, 82% of the respondents agreed that there should be publicly funded, full-day junior kindergarten. Furthermore, this support was not just philosophical agreement; the majority of all respondents agreed to strongly agreed (64%) that they would be willing to pay more taxes to improve the quality of early childhood education. This is comparable to the numbers agreeing to pay more tax to support the elementary (68%) and secondary levels (64%) of education but higher than the number supporting the college and university levels (46%). Despite the support for early childhood services, the respondents all agreed on the importance of parents to early child development. When asked who is responsible for preparing children for school, there was overwhelming agreement to strong agreement, that parents were responsible (94%); there were somewhat lower levels of agreement that schools (65%) and the community (47%) were responsible.

Overall these findings show that recognition of the TFD program “label” or “brand” doesn’t extend much beyond those parents who are directly involved. Only about a quarter of parents of children in grades 5 and 6 recognized the name, even though the program was operating in the school that their children attended. Nevertheless, there is strong community support for integrating services and for strengthening early childhood services even if it means paying more taxes, as indicated by the general public sample. It is unlikely that Toronto First Duty played a major part in creating this support since there

was little public awareness of the project. It is more likely that it reflects the general public's support for early childhood programs and coordination of services, which has been found in recent general surveys of the Ontario public (Livingstone & Hart, 2005).

TFD and building the service community

Across time, the sites expanded their connections to other agencies and programs in their communities. These connections are described in the detailed case studies in Appendices 2 - 6. In a common type of connection, other agencies or organizations offered additional programs using the TFD platform. In some cases an individual professional, such as a public health nurse, used the platform as part of his or her community work. In some cases, agencies or organizations joined the partner agencies at the site on the management committee and in service delivery. As noted earlier, sites also employed other community agencies, such as libraries and off-site child care programs for outreach and promotion of TFD services. In two sites, the connections to the community included a connection to Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs). At the YEY-W site the OEYC-funded programs at the site. At ACTT/SD, the lead agency in the TFD partnership became an OEYC.

Service networks were active at the two sites which were the least "hub-like": ACTT/SD and QVPEL. These sites did not integrate child care, kindergarten, and parent programs on school sites, but they did work at linking services outside the school and in creating referral networks. Health screenings or public health "Nipissing" screenings made multiple connections between families and services as detailed in the case studies for these sites.

2.3.2 Community Early Child Development Reporting

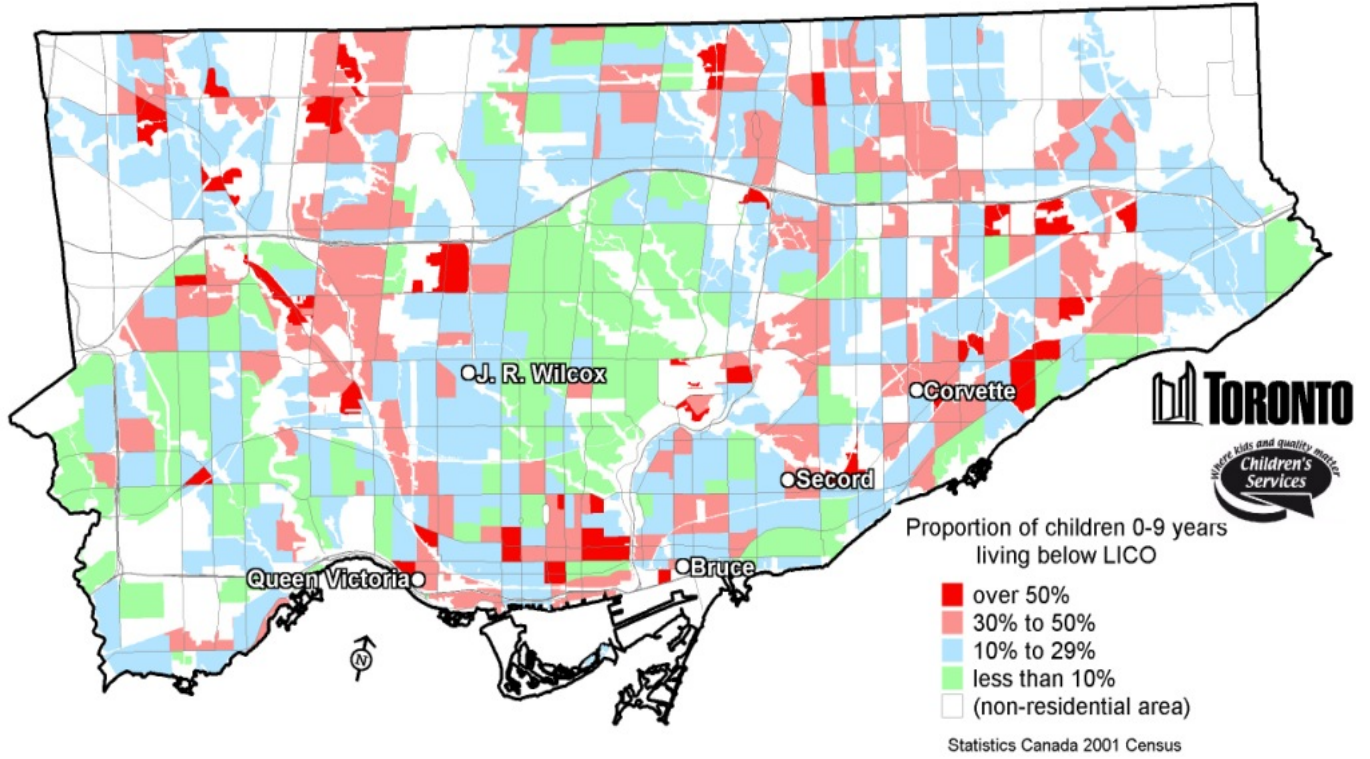
The EDI can be used to illustrate how well communities are doing in supporting young children and their families before entry into mandatory schooling into Grade One. EDI results help us to develop descriptive profiles of the Toronto First Duty communities. The data can be analyzed to look at relations to other community level data (e.g., such as what resources are available for young children and their families; socioeconomic indicators such as family income levels; other family characteristics).

Map 3 shows the distribution of children living in low income families and the location of the Toronto First Duty sites. This U-shaped pattern is found in the distribution of other demographic factors such as immigrant and lone parent status. The map shows that each of the sites includes poorer families but that several of the sites also encompass middle class areas.

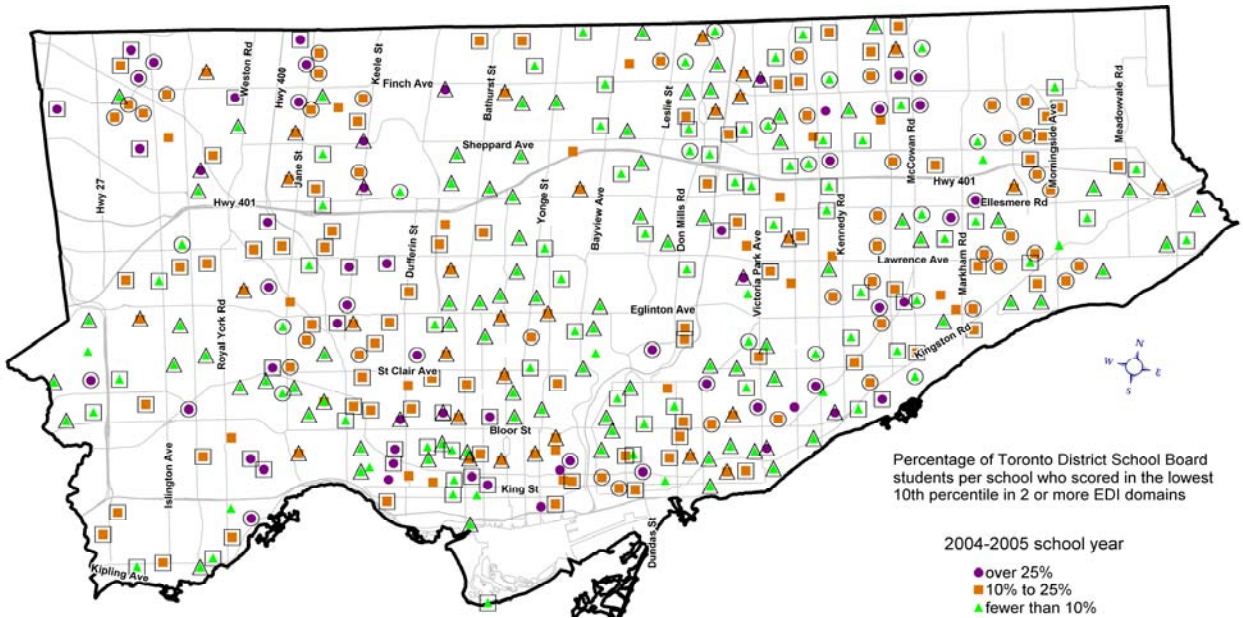
Map 4 illustrates the distribution of five year old children who are vulnerable (that is appear to have developmental difficulties) and the five TFD sites again. The distribution of child vulnerability follows the same pattern as demographic risk factors such as family poverty. Reducing vulnerability in all children including those at risk is a primary goal of TFD.

Map 4 Children living in low income families

Toronto First Duty sites & Children living in low-income families



Map 5 Mapping early child development



2.4 Site Case Study Capsules

TFD set out to demonstrate to policymakers how existing early childhood and family programs could be transformed into a delivery system for children 0–6 years. At the end of TFD Phase 1, much has been learned. The achievements and disappointments at each of the five sites illustrate what is possible on the frontlines of programs and communities and what will require systemic change. Five full case studies that detail the journey at each of the sites appear in Appendix 2. The following site case study capsules provide the highlights of what was accomplished and the impact on programs, families, and communities.

2.4.1 Action for Children Today and Tomorrow/Secord Dawes

ACTT/SD is nested within Action for Children Today and Tomorrow (ACTT), a broad community-based coalition of service providers, community members and political representatives whose goal is to increase community capacity to support young children and their families. East York East Toronto Family Resource Program (EYET) is the lead agency for ACTT/SD and it is linked to Secord Elementary School. During TFD Phase 1, EYET Family Resources became the lead agency for Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs) in the area.

Bridging and Connecting

ACTT/SD focused on developing a comprehensive continuum of programs and services. It created “bridging” programs and staff to fill gaps in existing programs and services, linking families to the program/service continuum, and facilitating their transition/s from one program/service to another. To ensure greater continuity and consistency across the program continuum, it used ACTT’s and its own strategic planning processes to harmonize community/partner agencies’ policies, priorities, and practices to ensure they worked in a complementary fashion. It offered joint professional development and networking opportunities around best practices in early years programs/ services for partner agencies’ staff, volunteers, community board, and committee members

The Child Care Challenge

ACTT/SD did not begin with a lead partner that provided regulated child care and there were no child care programs located in the school. Regulated child care programs located in the community participated in the site management committee but opportunities to collaborate beyond meetings were limited. In the third year of Phase 1, space did become available in the school and it became the home base for the site coordinator, staff team and some parent-child drop-in programming. This increased the opportunities for more communication with the kindergarten staff members and local child care centres. At the end of Phase 1, when a second room became available, ACTT/SD selected EYET Family Resources to become the operator of a regulated child care program.

Outreach and Organizational Capacity

ACTT/SD is committed to an inclusive approach that removes barriers for the full participation of young children and their families. ACTT/SD created special needs and cultural linguistic worker positions that responded to identified community needs. They provided support to all early years programs and actively engaged in outreach activities at

social events and community gathering places. The positions became part of OEYC staffing structure. All of the ACTT/SD staff members received training in early identification and intervention and in working with families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The Nipissing / Early Identification Committee facilitated connections between Toronto Public Health's early identification initiatives, Toronto Community Living, and TDSBs early and ongoing identification for kindergarten children with special needs. The Nipissing District Developmental Screen (NDDS) is now used as part of a joint effort that involves Secord Elementary School staff, public health, and OEYC staff at kindergarten registration and in health screenings.

Community Capacity

ACTT/SD brought together community members, particularly families, to various social events as a way of increasing community connections and support. There are now four parent representatives on ACTT/SD's Management Committee, several parents on the Engaging Communities Committee, and some parents are active in the ACTT coalition. Parents participated in the site's Open House and met with political representatives to tell their story of the evolving service system and its effect on their lives

2.4.2 Bruce/WoodGreen Early Learning Centre

Bruce/WoodGreen Early Learning Centre (BWELC) began with a partnership between two established community institutions in the neighbourhood—Bruce Junior Public School and WoodGreen Community Services. The school served 240 students from junior kindergarten to Grade 6 and included a Parenting and Family Literacy Centre.

Saving the School

The central impetus for the conception of BWELC as a collaborative community initiative was the impending threat of Bruce Junior Public School's closure in 2001. Without any child care facilities on the school premises, the school enrollment had sunk. Less than 60 children attended the junior and senior kindergarten program and the total school enrollment was about 270. The local school trustee drew together a working group from TDSB (including the school principal, manager of the TDSB Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, and early years curriculum coordinator), the WoodGreen Community Services' Director of Child Care Services, and Atkinson Charitable Foundation to develop a proposal to be a TFD site. At the same time, an impressive list of early years champions, including Fraser Mustard, who joined the call to keep the school open and build an integrated early years program. The campaign was successful and won a reprieve from the TDSB. WoodGreen Community Services, the lead agency and the programs operating with the Bruce Junior Public School became a TFD site.

Licensing Kindergarten under the Day Nurseries Act

Junior and senior kindergarten programs and the Parenting and Family Literacy Centre functioned separately and there was no licensed child care in the school. Early in 2002, the kindergarten classrooms were licensed (under the authority of WoodGreen

Community Services) to provide child care, allowing families the option of half-day, full school-day, or extended day enrollment for their kindergarten-aged children. The on-site Parenting and Family Literacy Centre continued to operate and to expand its reach into the full-day program by having some coordinated sessions each week. Children were supported by a multi-disciplinary team that includes TDSB staff and educational assistants, early childhood educators and early childhood assistants, a parenting worker, special needs resource staff parents, and other caregivers. The integrated early learning program met the requirements of both the Ministry of Education's Kindergarten Program and the Ministry of Children and Youth legislation through the *Day Nurseries Act*. The child-adult ratio was maintained at approximately 8:1. The staff team met formally on a weekly basis and informally on a daily basis to plan the program based on a clear set of program goals.

The Early Childhood Staff Team

BWELC developed a strong and cohesive staff team. The front-line staff saw themselves as a "staff team" rather than as a group of individual role-holders, further evidence of integration. BWELC moved beyond its goals of "collaboration" among the staff to "full integration," particularly in the areas of program implementation, attention to child behaviour, and staff development. WoodGreen Community Service's long history of community-based child care delivery and special needs resourcing have supported the development of the staff team and has increased BWELC's ability to meet the needs of individual children.

Integrated Platform

The combination of the half-day, full-day and extended day program for 4- and 5-year-old children and the parenting centre established an integrated, seamless platform that invites young children and their families into BWELC from infancy onwards. Support for parents was evident throughout the program and parents are welcomed and able to participate alongside their children whenever they wish. Additional supports for parents and children, such as *Incredible Years Parenting Program* and *Kids Have Stress, Too* (Toronto Public Health), were delivered from this platform.

Sustainable Model

BWELC operated with the same staffing as a stand-alone kindergarten, child care centre, and parenting centre located in a school setting. The roles and responsibilities of the staff have changed but the overall numbers and qualification of staff did not. The funding from the Atkinson Charitable Foundation afforded the opportunity to re-allocate resources and test-drive a funding model that is an alternative to the child care fee subsidy.

2.4.3 Corvette Early Years

Corvette Early Years (CEY) is located at Corvette Public School in the Kennedy/Eglinton area of Scarborough. Administered by the lead agency, Not Your Average Daycare (NYAD), CEY built on a history of innovative collaborations.

A Strong Start

The CEY group came together to respond to the city of Toronto's call for proposals in August 2001. The project intended to integrate early years services for children and families in the Corvette community. Its early vision of merged programs and an integrated staff team built on past successful collaborations between NYAD and Corvette Public School. In the first two years, CEY made remarkable progress in developing new programming options, integrating staff and curriculum, and building a base in the community.

CEY began with considerable buy-in and commitment from the child care staff and kindergarten teachers. The family resource program staff participated in joint planning and was open to changes in how they planned and delivered program activities for children. Additional staff, made possible through the CEY funding, worked across the three programs throughout Phase 1 of TFD.

New Program Collaborations

CEY expanded access to early learning and child care, piloted an innovative flexible model of child care, introduced a summer program that was visible in the community and attracted the interest and involvement of families in the community, and designed curriculum approaches that combined the knowledge base of kindergarten, early childhood education, and family resource programs.

CEY programs (including the family resource program, kindergarten, and child care) have worked towards a coherent continuum of early years programming, including TRIBES (social skills program) and the First Steps to Reading/Writing program. Together the staff developed the curriculum for the Learning Together Preschool Program that joined the kindergarten program and the emergent curriculum that was championed at the NYAD child care centre.

The CEY Summer Program was the realization of a far-reaching vision of what a neighbourhood outdoor child and family learning environment could be. Located on the corner yard of the school and visible to passers-by, the CEY Summer Program was a visible, vibrant demonstration of what is possible. It was initially created from the collective resources and experiences of the staff and from the partners. In the first year, ECE faculty from Seneca College contributed to the development of an outdoor, creative environment, based on an earlier outdoor integrated program at Trinity Bellwoods Park. Toronto Parks and Recreation incorporated their summer programming resources and staff into the daily mixture of activities and resources. The framework of emergent curriculum from NYAD provided a common focus and daily debriefing sessions were the key to ongoing program planning.

Committees with representation from front-line staff from all programs and other partners worked together to develop a shared vision, philosophy, and guiding principles. CEY program activities (including the Learning Together Preschool Program, Learning Together Drop-In, and the summer program) were based on the joint philosophy and pedagogical approach. With support from TDSB and the research team, the curriculum

approach merged the kindergarten program, emergent curriculum and respect for parents' preference for activities with a direct, explicit link to early literacy and numeracy.

Difficulties Sustaining Early Gains

The initial opportunities for team building, joint planning and collaborative programming that occurred in the start up and first year of CEY became less frequent during the following two years. Changes in key staff positions, including a kindergarten teacher “champion” and the principal, certainly reduced opportunities for staff team opportunities and collaborations, as evidenced in the early childhood staff team Indicators of Change elements. Some rebuilding of the frontline early childhood staff team in the final months of the final year of Phase 1 brought together new and existing staff from the child care, family support, and kindergarten streams.

Sustained Benefits

The early learning environment Indicators of Change items show that initial progress was stalled in the last couple of years. On some items the level of integration (e.g., use of space and shared schedules and routines) actually regressed. But early efforts appear to have had a positive impact on both the program quality and children's outcomes.

The site management committee has remained committed and consistent over the course of Phase 1. New partners joined CEY during Phase 1, including Toronto Children's Aid Society and Scarborough Southwest Early Years Centre and began active participation on the management committee.

2.4.4 Queen Victoria Partners for Early Learning

Queen Victoria Partners for Early Learning (QVPEL) was based at Queen Victoria Public School, a large school with 6 kindergarten classes and a parenting and family literacy centre. The Child Development Institute was the lead agency. The school neighbourhood, in the Parkdale community, is densely populated and culturally and linguistically diverse.

Coordinating Many Partners

QVPEL was established in a community with a multitude of agencies and networks of complex relationships. The governance structure for QVPEL reflected the complexity of the community and its agencies and worked towards coordinating efforts and resources to expand opportunities for young children and their families. A management committee included all community agencies interested in the project, as well as parent representatives. Each agency signed a partnership agreement. Initially there were 14 community partners and the number grew over the course of Phase 1. A program committee brought together practitioners to generate and implement new programming activities. The structure allowed new community groups to join, first as participant observer members and then as partners.

Vehicles for Outreach and Collaboration

QVPEL developed two programs that harnessed the collective interests of many of the partners. One was a summer school-readiness program and the other a Healthy Child

Screening. Both initiatives were shaped by collaborations among the partners and their efforts involved young children and their families who were not connected with early years programs. By continuing to pool resources and share coordination, it is possible that these two initiatives could be sustained beyond TFD Phase 1.

Connecting with the School

QVPEL was one of many projects located in Queen Victoria Public School that actively sought out opportunities to enhance its programming and better meet the multiple needs of its diverse student group. QVPEL was a low priority for the school leadership in the early stages of TFD Phase 1. This led to slow team development with the kindergarten teachers. During the final year (2004-05) the funders asked for more involvement with the school. A series of meetings among the kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators in the four community centres provided an opportunity for information exchange which led to improved understanding of each groups' respective programs.

Leadership Challenges

Members of the Early Years Staff Team for QVPEL has changed frequently. Cheryl La Joie, the founding site coordinator for the project, became ill and subsequently passed away. The loss of Cheryl's vision and energy was significant for the project.

The school principal did not champion a more seamless approach to programming for 4- and 5-year-olds or use of school space for QVPEL, but did support use of QVPEL resources to improve school readiness and to enrich kindergarten classes.

2.4.5 York Early Years-Wilcox

York Early Years-Wilcox (YHEY-W) was a partnership of the lead agency, Macaulay Child Development Centre, and several other agencies in the community that had a history of collaborating. The partners joined with JR Wilcox Public School, which included a child care centre and a parenting and family literacy school, to establish YHEY-W.

Early Leader

The YHEY-W site was designated as the "early leader" among the five TFD demonstration sites. Project funders saw value in supporting one site to begin work earlier and to provide examples of how implementation of integration and improvement of services could begin to unfold. In the YHEY-W community a number of family and child agencies had a long tradition of working together, as documented in the *Starting Gate Report* (Corter et al., 2002), and they were eager to take on implementation of the TFD model. In fact, governance and organizational structures developed smoothly with the establishment of effective committee structure and working groups, procedural protocols, and policies. Some of the early successes were shared in the *Starting Gate Report* and in cross-site meetings of site coordinators. The leadership of the YHEY-W site coordinator and lead agency head was central to the organizational successes.

Knowledge Building

The TFD emphasis on improving quality through integrated staffing and programming with a “knowledge-building” approach was a major part of the YEY-W success story. The site improved quality by monitoring data on program quality and on the needs of children. With this information in mind, the integrated staff team worked together to make changes that would make a difference for children. For example, based on findings early in the implementation process, the Wilcox kindergarten children were found to be behind TDSB averages in social and emotional development as assessed by the Early Development Instrument (EDI). Therefore, social-emotional development was identified as a priority area for programming by the site. At the same time, areas where program quality could be improved were also identified via the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R). Weekly meetings of the integrated staff team became a place to discuss improvements in programming and quality and how to monitor results. A common approach to social-emotional development and management was adopted in the care and kindergarten environments. The principal arranged for joint professional development for all staff to be trained in the common approach. Findings at the end of Phase 1 showed improvement in environment quality in the integrated care and kindergarten setting and corresponding improvement in child outcomes as indicated on the EDI..

From Apprehension to Collaboration

Initially YEY-W faced “people issues,” including apprehension on the part of the different professional groups at blending their work. There were tangible tensions. Some kindergarten teachers felt “roped in” and resisted joint work. Key informants felt change happened too fast and without sufficient participation by front-line staff in the planning process. At the end of Phase 1 professionals worked together in the integrated care and kindergarten setting with respect for one another. Some role differentiation continued. For example, input from all staff were incorporated into children’s progress reports, but the kindergarten teachers assumed responsibility for the final reporting to parents.

Organizational Change

Front-line staff, parents, a succession of principals, and agency representatives have formed a cohesive management partnership, which went beyond the formal management structure and agreements. Observations at the site show that there was a “team” approach built on strong leadership by the coordinator and lead agency head. In the management committee, representatives of different agencies and parents seemed comfortable in expressing different points of view before coming to agreement in problem solving. The coordinator also provided ongoing leadership in building an integrated, and increasingly cohesive, front-line staff team, which came to focus on program improvement and child outcomes. As Phase 1 of the project came to an end, front-line staff and agency representatives were taking a strong initiative in helping to develop new levels of integration and innovation in programming.

TFD Vision versus YEY-W

YEY-W found that its own interests in developing integrated early identification and intervention programs and strategies have not evolved as far as they had hoped. From the

site's perspective, responding to the funders' emphasis on the integrated learning environment and provision of more child care has limited the time and energy for other initiatives. This is another example of the tension caused by "reform" or "change" efforts and the need to balance "top-down" pressure/support and "bottom-up" initiative. In fact, pressure and support by one of the funders was part of the impetus for the renovation of space and fuller physical integration of care and kindergarten achieved in the last year of Phase 1. Although this goal had been part of the original planning by the site, it became an immediate priority when tied to funding for the last year of Phase 1. In this case, top-down pressure and support worked to trigger local initiative, perhaps partly because it tapped nascent interest on the part of the site.

Although a general goal of the TFD project was to increase the number of child care access, YEY-W did not make enhancements in this area, as noted in the economic analysis in this report. There were a number of limiting factors here, including space and quality concerns. The coordinator and lead agency head also pointed out that, in trying to build flexible arrangements, it is problematic to mix low cost part-time child care with full-day child care funded through the usual mix of parent fees and subsidies.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Key Research Findings from Phase 1

The research findings on Phase 1 of Toronto First Duty chart the development, implementation, and impacts of the TFD model at five school-community sites. Changes, benefits, and challenges are described at three levels: practice, programs, and policy; children and families; and communities.

3.1.1 Practice, Programs, and Policy

TFD had an impact on frontline staff, program quality and the establishment of integrated, school-based hubs:

- For frontline staff, working in integrated staff teams meant overcoming predictable professional barriers to find a common purpose in improving program environments and improving outcomes for children. Staff teams worked most seamlessly and effectively when they had time to meet on a regular basis, access to joint professional development, were able to develop shared goals for program improvement and specific aims for children.
- For programs, the rated quality of early childhood program environments (on the ECERS-R (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998)) generally increased as implementation of the TFD approach unfolded.
- For successful integrated early childhood school hubs, organizational change and leadership are required. For example, the TDSB reorganized its approach to the early years partly as a result of participating in TFD. This, in turn, supported the work at TFD demonstration sites. At the school level, the leadership of the principal

determined how far the sites were able to move further towards the integrated model than others.

Joining existing early childhood programs appears to be more difficult than starting new program activities. Most of the new programming activities across the sites began as new activities that shared TFD and site partner resources but did not require transformation of existing program delivery. Site case studies and the Indicators of Change reveal that all of the sites made more progress in starting new activities (as separate activities or as an expansion of an existing program) under the TFD umbrella than in consolidating existing, partner resources into a redesigned program. Some of the sites were successful in using an existing program as a platform to expand into new types of programming.

Integration can be tracked along a continuum that begins with co-location. Increased integration is based on a mix of opportunity, community need, and support/direction. Tracking at the TFD sites was facilitated by a technical assistance tool, the Indicators of Change. This tool helped bridge the gap between the abstractions of the TFD integration model and concrete steps at the sites along 5 dimensions: integrated learning environment, staff team, access, governance, and parent involvement.

Phase 1 of TFD demonstrated that the integration of child care, parenting, and kindergarten programs does not cost more than traditional service delivery and can offer more stable and flexible options to more children and their families.

The TFD model influenced policy in the City of Toronto and Ontario. Ontario's Best Start Strategy (see <http://www.children.gov.on.ca/CS/en/programs/BestStart/default.htm>) shares a common long-term vision of an early childhood system for children zero to six years-old. It proposes a common curriculum and enhanced standardized training for professionals working with young children. The Best Start design envisions community hub models that combine child care, family support, and kindergarten programs linked to, or located in, local primary schools. As with TFD, these hubs provide a platform for other services, including early identification and intervention. The Toronto Best Start Network is informed by TFD and has incorporated key components into its initial planning documents.

The TFD model has been highlighted in two pan-Canadian initiatives—The Integration Network Project (see <http://www.inproject.ca/>) and the YWCA Building Community Architecture for Early Childhood (Mayer, 2006). It has been visited by provincial, national and international delegations including education and children's services officials and delegations of academics and educators from every province in addition to officials from Australia, Japan, the United States, Britain and Denmark. The TFD model has been presented at numerous national and international conferences.

The TFD public profile includes a documentary developed by TV Ontario. The TFD model was highlighted as an innovative model on CBC's *The National* and has been the subject of feature articles in the *Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Star*. In addition to local TV

and print coverage, TFD has been to subject of popular publications such as Today's Parent, Toronto Life and Ideas Magazine.

3.1.2 Children and Parents

For parents, experience with integrated preschool services in TFD appeared to increase their capacity and confidence in helping their children learn and in communicating with the school and teachers in kindergarten. This capacity building worked for parents who are immigrants as well as for those born in Canada.

Parents also reported high levels of satisfaction with TFD programming and with the concept of integrated services. From early implementation to full implementation, parents reported being consulted more about services and programming and having better access to the range of programming as scheduling became more flexible.

For children, the evaluation was not designed to directly test outcomes. However, kindergarten teacher ratings of school readiness on the Early Development Instrument and direct assessments by the researchers suggest that children have benefited socially and developed pre-academic skill.

3.1.3 Community

Sites began their work with community consultation and worked on outreach to all parents. Intake and tracking data show that they were successful in bringing in families who represent the diversity of neighborhoods they serve. Despite broad participation of parents and children, awareness of the TFD programs and "brand" was minimal among other community members.

3.1.4 Putting it All Together

Despite the demonstrated successes, barriers remain.

- Separate funding, governance, and legislative structures for education, child care, and other family and children's services make it difficult to integrate people and programs at the local level. Differences in staffing requirements, regulations, and funding structures become obstacles to making seamless environments. Long-term change and sustainability requires an overhaul of legislative requirements, professional education and development of staff, and local governance structures.
- The on-the-ground success of a TFD model depends on the front-line staff. System redesign will remove many barriers. However, it is essential that the staff is motivated to become part of an integrated early childhood workforce, which means blending professional education and development as well as developing equitable compensation and working environments.

- Although child care is central to the range of options necessary to support young children and their families, it remains the program component that is most difficult to incorporate and expand in an integrated model. It is the only program that relies on parent fees (paid directly by parents or through child care fee subsidies) and is the most regulated component. Experience in several sites shows how these factors act as barriers to innovation and integration.

3.2 Evidence for Economic Impact

Toronto First Duty was (and is) a project designed to demonstrate an innovative and integrated way of delivering early learning and child care services to families. Its objectives were to demonstrate how those integrated services could be delivered, to determine the conditions that would affect success in integration, and, as much as possible, to evaluate the costs and the benefits of integration. The fundamental question that an economic analysis of TFD should try to answer is “Is the integration of programs for young children worthwhile?”

This question is an important part of determining whether this experiment should be repeated and expanded in other cities and across Toronto. There are many elements to consider in such a judgment, most of which are discussed more fully throughout the summary report, but are also drawn together here.

3.2.1 Effects of Integrated Services – Staff and Parents

There are a number of indicators of the effects of integration on staff and parents. Perhaps the strongest evidence of positive effects comes from quality evaluations on TFD sites completed by the research team in 2003 and 2005. In the early stages of Phase I (in 2003), the research team used the Early Childhood Environments Rating Scale: Revised Edition (ECERS-R) (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998) to measure program quality at all five demonstration sites. Two programs were chosen at each site (10 programs in total) for this evaluation. The quality measurement exercise was repeated in each of these programs in 2005. Program quality was generally good to begin with; in 7 out of 10 programs, quality was rated at “good” or above in 2003.

The most relevant finding, however, is that the biggest improvement in measured quality came on the subscale which measures quality in relation to parents and staff. The “parents/staff” subscale includes six separately-measured items. The first item is provisions made for parents by the program (e.g., communication, information, involvement). The next two items are provision for the personal needs of staff and provision within the program for the professional needs of staff. The fourth and fifth items are staff interaction and co-operation and the supervision and evaluation of staff. The final item is staff opportunities for professional growth. Although other items discussed later show important improvement, these items show the most dramatic improvement over the course of the TFD project.

This improvement is not a surprise. After the 2003 ECERS-R results (and some measurements of child outcomes from EDI), there were extensive discussions at each one

of the sites about how to improve quality in weaker areas, including the parents/staff area. Measures to improve quality were determined and implemented. All TFD participants knew that there would be another round of quality measurement to test for success. Nonetheless, these measures had important effects.

There are other measures of parent and staff effects as well. Parent surveys collected from TFD and matched comparison sites yielded mostly positive results in parents' opinions about programs and their own involvement with those programs. The final analysis of front-line staff surveys, collected in 2003 and 2005, showed very strong positive opinions about the professional benefits of participating in the program and the desire that TFD be continued in their schools.

These positive staff results were not achieved without considerable attention to the issues of front-line staff. In the early stages of TFD, there were disputes over turf, concerns over the loss of status, and issues related to redefining the roles and responsibilities of different staff members. But the TFD process of communication and change brought staff members to a very different place by the end of Phase I.

3.2.2 Effects of Integrated Services – Children

One of the strongest findings in the science of early childhood development (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) is that the quality of non-parental care services is the central and most consistent factor determining the effects of those services on children. Therefore, the ECERS-R quality evaluations at TFD in 2003 and 2005 provide a proxy measure of the effects of TFD services on children.

As discussed above, those quality evaluations found that the initial quality of services at the five TFD sites was, on average, already good. Over the course of the TFD demonstration project, these already high levels of quality were raised further, and on every subscale measured by ECERS-R, including those that have the greatest impact on children. The Program Activities subscale is composed of 10 items: fine motor activities, art, music/movement, blocks, sand/water, dramatic play, nature/science, math/number, use of TV, video and/or computers, and promoting acceptance of diversity. The Space and Furnishings subscale is composed of eight items: indoor space, furniture for routine care, play and learning, furnishings for relaxation and comfort, room arrangements for play, space for privacy, child-related display, space for gross motor play, and gross motor equipment. It appears clear that the TFD project was able to engineer important changes in improved activities for children, and better use of space and facilities in order to raise the quality of services for children.

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) collects data from kindergarten teachers when children first enter kindergarten. The EDI measures five dimensions of children's developmental status: physical health and well-being, social knowledge and competence, emotional health and maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge. EDI data for all junior and senior kindergarten children were collected in both 2003 and 2005 at the five schools housing TFD sites. The total

EDI score, aggregated across developmental domains, fell in one school (Secord Elementary), rose in three, and remained the same in one (Bruce Junior Public). Both the increases and the decrease were statistically significant at conventional levels. (At both Secord Elementary and Bruce Junior Public Schools data collection issues present problems in making comparisons between the two points of EDI.) The main improvements across all sites were in social, emotional, and language/cognitive skills.

Direct child measures from relatively small samples of children were collected in 2003 and 2005 on a series of standard development instruments. This included the Picture Peabody Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III) (Dunn & Dunn, 1997) which is a test of received vocabulary, the Test of Early Reading Ability (TERA-III) (Reid, Hresko, & Hammill, 2001), and tests of number sense and social understanding. Measured at conventional levels of significance, there were significant gains in vocabulary, total early reading ability, and number awareness for each of the three sites tested (BWELC, CEY, and YEY-W).

Direct and Indirect Costs

Making the transition from the status quo (separate kindergarten, child care, and parent support programs) to integrated programs (a consolidated program-delivery model with seamless access to a variety of programs, together with seamlessly-integrated child care and half-day kindergarten) is not costless. There are one-time-only set-up costs (designing the nature of integration, reconfiguring space, integrating curriculum, revising job descriptions, creating new professional development materials, adapting regulatory and statutory regimes to permit delivery of integrated services, etc.). Toronto First Duty has now developed the pilot for most of these changes, so these costs will be lower for any future jurisdiction interested in integrated services.

There are also transitional costs, which each new service and staff group will face. These costs include those to change operating styles, record-keeping, methods of communication with other staff and with parents, and building an integrated early childhood workforce. Some of these are built into the comparative cost document (e.g., extra replacement staff to cover organized inter-staff communications sessions and additional professional development).

Implementation and reform of program structure and delivery requires substantial effort and time which bring direct and indirect costs. All of the TFD sites are still in transition and have not moved into a steady state of operation. The costs of re-engineering delivery remain. The development of TFD resources and tools should reduce the indirect and direct costs that come along with innovation and reorganization. Changes in operational and public policies will reduce the indirect costs as new program delivery shifts from continuous innovation to more predictable policies and practices.

Drawing a Balance Sheet on Toronto First Duty

TFD is more of an approach and an objective than a 'cookie-cutter' program. It has several fundamental features, the most obvious of which is the development of integrated services for 4- and 5-year-old children. The key aspect of this is the integration of half-

day kindergarten and rest-of-day child care services, so that children experience a seamless early learning and child care program and staff with different backgrounds develop complementary roles and responsibilities to provide an optimum, unified daily experience for children. Supporting parents to be more active participants in their children's early development and learning is viewed as an integral aspect of the integrated kindergarten and child care program.

However, there are many other parent and child support services that also come under the integration umbrella. Part of the Toronto First Duty objective is to provide a neighbourhood with seamless access to a wide range of parent and child services and activities to promote development of children and families with different needs.

To accomplish this, support from principals and school boards is necessary, and early childhood educators, family support staff, and teachers who have quite different backgrounds, education, and (perhaps) educational philosophies must come together to work out a unified curricular approach, set of activities, methods of record-keeping, and methods of communication with each other and with parents.

This rather complex new program was implemented in five different situations in five different communities and schools. The implementation of the TFD vision and the degree of integration have not been uniform across the five sites.

There are not sufficient data to do a benefit-cost analysis of TFD. There is good evidence of improvements in quality over the course of the TFD project. There is evidence of benefits for most children participating at the different sites. However, we have no means of putting a dollar value to the benefits.

On the other hand, there is evidence that the direct costs of providing integrated services are no higher than of providing similar services in a non-integrated fashion. It seems likely that the indirect costs (the costs of determining new integrated curriculum, of testing quality and measuring effects on children, of planning integrated activities, of determining how space will best be used in an integrated program, and the costs of accelerated professional development) are ones that are directly related to the increases in quality observed over the course of the TFD project. The result appears to be an intensity of experiences for children and a pooling of staff knowledge and expertise that reaches into the daily lives of children.

Many alternative ways of enhancing the quality of services for 4- and 5-year-old children would be very expensive (e.g., improving staff-child ratios, or hiring more staff at higher levels of education). TFD provides a way of working on the "soft" side of quality improvement for 4- and 5-year-old children by breaking down an institutional barrier to quality enhancement and providing a means for staff to rethink and rework the nature of the early learning experience for these young children. The more integrated staff teams intensify the ecological reach into children's daily lives. The staff members work together to focus on improving the program quality to get results for children.

In that sense, the economic evaluation of TFD is quite positive. Done right, it delivers more quality for children, parents, and staff at a similar level of direct cost. Continuing efforts appear to be closely related to the quality benefits received by children, parents, and the staff.

3.3 Successes, Failures, Learning, and Sustainability

3.3.1 Defining the First Duty Model

TFD set out to redefine the delivery of programs and services for young children. “First duty” was selected early to identify the new service delivery model that offered seamless days for young children and their families. For some, this meant moving beyond coordination to the consolidation of kindergarten, child care, and family support programs into a new entity. But for others, it meant keeping program operations and identities separate and working together to ensure children and families could move more easily between them. The Indicators of Change partly addressed the confusion and was viewed by participants at all five sites as a pivotal development in the implementation of TFD. However, different interpretations continue to dilute the identity and definition of a TFD delivery model.

3.3.2 Sustaining Professional and Organizational Change

Sustainability of closer collaborations at the ACTT/SD, CEY, QVPEL, and YEY-W sites in TFD Phase 2 will rely heavily on the depth of change to daily practice that continues in the partners’ organizational networks. The convergence of these initiatives with the implementation of Toronto Best Start may help to solidify changes in practice and encourage further integration. The use of healthy child screens and drop-in programs for families with young children provide a service and information to parents. They also draw them into a network of programs and activities. They are an effective outreach mechanism that contributed to TFD’s success in attracting families across socioeconomic and cultural/ethnic groups in their communities. The use of additional resources—cultural-linguistic workers and special needs resource teachers—across child care centres, kindergarten, and family resource programs may have translated into changed practices among staff members that can be sustained beyond Phase 1. Joint professional development and staff release time for planning and discussion are levers that can sustain and expand the professional and organizational changes that have occurred at the TFD sites in Phase 1. TFD sites have identified and experimented with additional resources that enhance the delivery of existing core programs and they can be alert to opportunities to enhance programs accordingly.

3.3.3 Implementing the Vision

The BWELC is the prototype site in TFD Phase 2. The re-engineering of human resources and program structure is an opportunity for further experimentation, including offering the flexible options of half-day, full day, and extended day attendance to younger children, and monitoring the implementation of a base funded system and income-tested fee subsidy eligibility. Without additional funding, BWELC could transition to a purchase-of-service agreement with the city of Toronto for parent child

care fee subsidies and continue to operate (with higher parent fees for those families not eligible for a fee subsidy) a consolidated program for children from 2½- to 6-years and their families. The site has already demonstrated its ability to survive the change of key staff members, including those in all leadership positions.

3.4 Adapting to context and site differences

Each site came with its own history, opportunities, challenges, and community needs. Partners bring in differing types of resources. The size of the school-community child population varies. The differences influenced site decisions about how to allocate resources and determine specific activities.

The sites were also influenced by the directions of the funders' group (that included the City of Toronto, the Atkinson Charitable Foundation, and the Toronto District School Board). The funders' group began with a vision of integrated early learning and care that incorporated licensed child care, kindergarten, and family support programs. The vision became more detailed through the development of the Indicators of Change. In September 2004, sites submitted proposals to extend their funding from January to June 2005 and were directed by the funders' group to ensure that resources were directed to promoting the full integration. Thus, sites were influenced to emphasize the kindergarten-early childhood education connection and to take steps towards integration.

The two sites (BWELC and YEY-W) that achieved the greatest levels of integration were also the two that received funding from the Atkinson Charitable Foundation. Along with the funding came more direction (top-down pressure and support) towards program integration (particularly for child care and kindergarten), and towards the expansion of child care capacity.

3.5 Potential Benefits of Toronto First Duty

There were two key aspects in Phase 1 of the TFD project. The first was the integration of child care and kindergarten services into a unified, seamless day experience of early learning and care. The second was the establishment of a hub that would organize and provide access to a range of early learning, child care, and parent support services in a local school setting. If the model were expanded across elementary schools in Toronto, the potential benefits are:

1. More families would use centre-based care for their preschool children.
2. There would be an increase in the quality of the centre-based services used at this age. If the TFD findings of improved ECERS-R quality are replicated, the integration experience would improve the developmental quality of early learning services for children.
3. It is possible that there would be an increase in labour market attachment of mothers with children in this age range. Integrated services at this age may be better for children, but they are also more convenient for adults because children are cared for seamlessly, rather than having to be transported from one service to another during the day, or cared for with patched-together family arrangements.
4. As a result of the "hub" of access to child and parent services in the local school, easier access to services could mean more use of services, more equitable use of

services, better quality of family life with fewer daily hassles, to improved parenting, and more rapid response to problems in childhood.

The TFD project has been oriented towards demonstration of the viability of integration, rather than the measurement of its short- and long-term potential benefits. Accordingly, the existence and magnitude of these potential benefits is not known with certainty. The evidence of improvements in quality and better scores on the EDI is suggestive but not conclusive of benefits for children. Potential benefits were also found for staff and parents.

Results in the research literature suggest some positive benefits could be expected from an extension of a TFD approach.

3.5.1 Developmental Effects of Better Quality

Research studies find a positive relationship between child care quality and all aspects of children's development; poor quality child care is associated with poorer developmental outcomes, while high quality programs are associated with better child outcomes (Peisner-Feinberg, Burchinal, Clifford, Culkin, Howes, & Kagan, 2001; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development & Duncan, 2003). "The influence of child care is not as large as the influence of the family environment, but it emerges repeatedly in study after study, using different measures, and for children of different ages and living in different circumstances" (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, pp. 313-4).

A series of findings on the positive effects of preschool experiences on children in this age range may predict positive effects from a TFD-type program. Of course, kindergarten already provides 2½ hours of preschool per day, but TFD can be interpreted as an extension of preschool-like experiences throughout the child's day.

- The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Cohort has followed a large number of children through kindergarten in the United States and has analyzed the effects on children in the early years of school (Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm and Waldfogel, 2004; Magnuson, Ruhm and Waldfogel, in press). Preschool experiences (including nursery school, preschool, day care, or prekindergarten) were found to raise school readiness and decrease the likelihood of being retained in Grade Three. There are especially large effects for prekindergarten (effect sizes of .16 at school entry and 25% reduced likelihood of being retained in Grade Three). Prekindergartens in the U.S. are typically located in schools and are funded by local school districts, with a defined curriculum and other requirements and, therefore, might be more similar to a TFD model. There are bigger effects found for children who are more disadvantaged and for those spending a greater number of hours in prekindergarten (full-day rather than part-day). Interestingly, longer hours in preschool, including prekindergarten, are also associated with more behaviour problems, but not for children attending prekindergarten in the same school as their kindergarten.

- The findings of the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) study in England were similar. A large sample of English-speaking children was followed from preschool to school entry and into elementary school. Children who attended preschool entered school at a cognitive advantage compared to those without preschool. Again, the largest effects were for the most disadvantaged and for those spending more hours in preschool.
- These findings mirror those found with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) study. NICHD and Duncan (2003), in a very careful analysis separating the effects of quality from the effects of type or amount of care, find that an increased proportion of the child's time spent in centre care (including preschools) between 27 and 54 months of age has a positive effect on cognitive development.

3.5.2 Effects on Employment

Employment of mothers with 4- and 5-year-old children is already high. Statistics Canada data show that in 2003 68.8% of mothers across Canada with children 3-5 were employed. However, inadequate, expensive, or inconvenient child care arrangements are an important barrier to increased labour force attachment. Recent findings on the employment effects of Quebec child care reforms reaffirm this; employment of mothers of young children in Quebec went from substantially below the Canadian average to above it over the course of about 5 years. In fact, making regulated child care widely available at \$5 per day increased every aspect of labour force attachment (part-time to full-time work, number of weeks worked in the year, income earned by employed mothers, employment vs. being outside the labour force) was positively affected by the reforms. And, these labour force effects were, if anything, more substantial amongst mothers with lower education (less than high school) who are particularly affected by barriers to employment. The effects of TFD on mothers' employment would certainly be positive, rather than negative, but it is difficult to predict their magnitude.

3.6 Next Steps

The documented successes and failures at the five TFD sites and findings from the evaluation identify a series of recommended next steps to sustain the progress made to date and to move forward on the development of a comprehensive system for all children from birth to age 6.

3.6.1 Expand and Consolidate Existing Programs

TFD demonstrates that it is possible to bring together early childhood programs that cross over funding, regulatory, and organizational boundaries. Community agencies, schools, public health, and Toronto Children's Services can work together to provide new program activities that expand options and opportunities for families. Existing early childhood programs can incorporate and benefit from additional resource staff and new opportunities for professional development.

Expanding capacity and consolidating existing organizational structures is a more complex undertaking. However, if the goal is seamless access for all children and their families, new resources should be directed towards the simultaneous expansion of capacity and consolidation of individual programs. Without clear incentives to integrate existing services the tendency is to develop new programs without changing the existing service structures or operations.

3.6.2 Leveraging TFD Tools and Expertise

TFD developed, piloted, and refined several practical tools, including the Indicators of Change, and the Guide to Early Childhood Service Integration that includes templates, sample procedures, and protocols and a short documentary. The tools are timely and the expertise of a cadre of early childhood professionals and managers, who can lead and coach others, is available across the TDSB, the city of Toronto, and the TFD sites. A small amount of additional resources would allow the tools and expertise to be used across Toronto as various programs and communities prepare to respond to the Best Start strategy.

3.6.3 Professional Development, Planning and Staff Release Time

Joint professional development and planning time supported by paid staff release time, were identified as critical elements in implementing any aspects of the TFD model. These are the primary resources needed to move forward with the integration of programs. If the partners (the City of Toronto, TDSB, and ACF) wanted to select one leverage point to continue to support with a small amount of financial resource, this is it.

Focused professional development that grows out of team discussions about results for children propels the cohesion of a staff team, which in turn improves quality. Joint planning time allows for discussions and group identification of needs. Professional development opportunities are tailored to support staff members' skills and knowledge in addressing those needs and improving their programs accordingly.

3.6.4 Monitoring Costs and Benefits

There may be opportunities for expanded research on the prototype TFD model which is now in Phase 2 at BWELC. The focus of Phase 1 research was the integration process and resulting organizational change. However, in Phase 1, there were only partial efforts made to measure and calculate the potential benefits of TFD for children, families, and society. Now that the model is established, it would be possible to consider a research design that could more completely evaluate potential costs and benefits of an integrated approach. This would require itemizing the main employment, social, financial, and developmental benefits that might be expected from TFD, and determining ways of measuring these at different points in time. To determine the effects of TFD, it would be necessary to have a control group. An alternative would be to find a matched control site with similar "benefit" measurements being taken. A second alternative would be to compare the "benefits" accruing to children and families who use different amounts of TFD (e.g., "full" participants, "part-time, part-year" participants, etc.). This second alternative would require rigorous attention to incoming utilization data in the intake and tracking system, as well as continuing measurement of child and parent outcomes and

financial analysis of spending.

Measuring costs and benefits is costly in both human and financial resources. Before embarking on such an ambitious course, there are fundamental decisions to be made about the kind and level of evaluation worth doing. Sober and careful planning with detailed discussion about what the evaluation is intended to accomplish, what data would be needed to pursue a cost benefit analysis, and whether the resource costs justify a full-blown or more modest research approach should take place in advance.

3.6.5 Schools as Community Intersection Points

TFD began with a bias towards the integration of early childhood programs with elementary schools. All of the sites were required to have a school partner and base. (One site, ACTT/SD, was based off the school site at the start of TFD. However, by September 2004, there was space within the school building and this seemed to trigger increased interaction and coordination between the school's staff and other community partners.) Schools may not be able to house all programming for young children and their families. But space constraints do not prohibit a central role for neighbourhood schools in comprehensive, community-based program delivery.

3.6.6 Strengthening Toronto Best Start Network

The TFD Steering Committee functioned as the overseeing body that monitored progress, took on systemic barriers, and made it possible to remove constraints that would likely have thwarted further progress if left at the site level. Because the membership of the steering committee included partner representatives and funders with sufficient seniority and decision-making responsibility, it was possible to discuss roadblocks and negotiate solutions, rather than simply to pass along issues.

From its beginnings in 2002, the steering committee remained engaged and attendance remained reasonably high, considering the time commitment and multiple, competing demands on the individual members. The committee worked together to develop its Terms of Reference that articulated a common vision and elements of TFD. The development of the first version of the Indicators of Change tool in 2003 pushed the steering committee to clarify the vision and to articulate more specific goals.

The Toronto Best Start Network could fulfill a similar function in shepherding in a more rational delivery of programs within the Best Start framework in Toronto. Ensuring that representatives on the Best Start Network are senior enough to make decisions and allocate resources would send a strong signal. Even more important would be evidence of a willingness to share resources and successful negotiation of systemic barriers to implement the Best Start vision.

3.6.7 Provincial System Infrastructure

Ultimately, the success of the TFD or the Best Start vision will depend on the redesign of the provincial infrastructure for early childhood programs, including child care, family support programs, kindergarten, and early identification and intervention. The infrastructure needed for a First Duty/Best Start system that is able to offer seamless early learning and care to every child and supports to every parent requires a provincial and a local locus of responsibility for decision-making, a single funding envelope, equitable compensation for early childhood professionals, consolidated regulatory requirements, and expanded financial investment.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Inventory of Measurement Tools

Appendix 2: Site Case Study Reports