



Final Report of the TLC³ Project

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By TLC³ National Project Management Team
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1 Introduction

Support for local solutions to national issues has grown in recent years. The promise of community-based initiatives is that they can offer more relevant, integrated and sustainable programs than centrally planned services. This report briefly describes the development, implementation, evaluation outcomes and overall learnings of a project called TLC³ that operated in seven diverse local sites across Canada.

This five-year project focused on enhancing early language and cognitive development in the context of young children's relationships with parents and other caregivers. TLC³ stands for Thinking, Listening and Communicating, Tender Loving Care, and The Learning Centres.¹

The local project sites were culturally and linguistically diverse, operating in both urban and rural environments, working primarily with low-income families, but also with moderate or middle-income parents. The age of the children ranged from infants to preschoolers. The sites were located in Vancouver, British Columbia; Calgary, Alberta; Regina and Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan; Toronto, Ontario; Saint-Rémi, Quebec; and Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

Local sites generally used funding from TLC³ to build on their quality programs. Program enrichment was intended not only to benefit young children's language and cognitive development during the period of the project (1997-2002), but also to strengthen the capacity of parents and communities to provide optimal environments to promote children's learning over the longer term. Over the five years, more than 2,000 children and their parents were involved in a TLC³ program or participated in a TLC³-sponsored activity.

The Lawson Foundation, a private family foundation based in London, Ontario, funded the project, committing \$5 million over five years. The Hincks-Dellcrest Institute,² a registered charitable organization that is part of the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre, a children's mental health facility in Toronto, provided national project leadership and management. A National Advisory Committee was involved throughout the TLC³ period.

With the security of stable funding for five years and the support of a national project management team, the TLC³ sites developed a range of strategies appropriate to the needs of local families with children under age five. Overall, outcomes show that children and their parents, site organizations and their staff benefited from participation in the project. The TLC³ organizations were generally able to sustain the program improvements achieved through this project. At some sites, the influence of TLC³ reached beyond the local community to the provincial level.

This report begins by providing some background on how the concept for the project was developed, how TLC³ was implemented in the communities, and how the evaluation process

¹ In French, it stands for Tendresse, Lien et Communication, Tandem: Langage et Communication, and Théorie en Liaison avec la Communauté.

² Hincks-Dellcrest Institute operates as the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre, Gail Appel Institute.

evolved. Key outcomes from the evaluation findings are highlighted. Finally, overall learnings from the experience are explored.

2 Project Development

In 1996, the Lawson Foundation made a decision to provide funding that would reflect its interest in the well-being of children. The Board of the Foundation was particularly interested in the growing knowledge from research about the importance of stimulating and supporting child development in the early years of life. The Foundation chose the Hincks-Dellcrest Institute (HDI) to create and manage a multi-year, national project that would demonstrate community-based strategies to support Canadian families with young children.

Hincks-Dellcrest is known nationally and internationally for its work in the area of children's mental health and parent-child relationships. The Foundation committed funding for project management and evaluation, as well as local site programs. The HDI formed a small national project management team to develop the concept for TLC³, in consultation with the Foundation. This process took place over several months.

Purpose and Criteria

Early development of language and cognition (thinking) was identified as the key focus for the project. Language and thought are foundational skills that enable children to communicate their needs, socialize with others, and begin to figure out the world around them. Since children do not develop in isolation, the project mission situated early language and cognitive development in the context of young children's relationships with parents and other caregivers. It was also recognized that the local community environment has an influence on families and their children.

TLC³ was conceived as a promotion and prevention project that could benefit all children and families who participated rather than a treatment program for children with developmental delays or disabilities. It was designed to reflect the diverse contexts in which Canada's children grow up – in urban and rural communities, in at-risk and healthy populations, and in families with a range of incomes. In particular, the Lawson Foundation asked that TLC³ not focus solely on economically disadvantaged families, on the basis that all parents can use some help with fostering their children's development and parenting their children in the early years.

It was agreed that existing community organizations with suitable experience would be selected to receive TLC³ funding. That is, the organizations and/or the project site leadership should have a track record of establishing and operating quality community-based programs and have demonstrated the ability to work in partnership with other groups in their communities, particularly in the area of early childhood development.

Program evaluation to examine the process and outcomes of site activities was built into the project. (See more on the evaluation in Section 4.)

The project was also designed to link community practitioners with researchers and policy-makers at the national, regional and local levels. It was hoped that the project could help to close

the traditional gaps between the people who deliver community-based programs and the worlds of academia and government.

From the outset, it was made clear that TLC³ was not a research project; it was a community-based program demonstration project. This was a special concern of the Board of the Foundation. “The advice we got was that knowledge about early brain development needed to be put into practice,” then Board President Connie Gardiner said. “We wanted to see something happen in the field.”

To select sites, the HDI team asked its contacts in government, early childhood development policy, and the academic community to recommend community organizations and leaders. Once identified, the sites were required to develop a project proposal describing what programs they would deliver; how they would pursue TLC³ goals in ways that would best serve the local community; and to justify their approach, based on current research and best practices. The programs had to serve children from birth to age five, but within that age range, they could focus on infants, toddlers or preschoolers.

Six sites were selected in the beginning. To reflect the project’s diversity principle, among the six were one Francophone site in Quebec and one Aboriginal site in northwestern Saskatchewan. Both were rural settings. The other four were in large cities – Dartmouth (part of Greater Halifax), Toronto, Regina and Vancouver. The first three large city sites served low-income families. Vancouver had a range of low to middle-income families.

Each site received \$80,000 annually for five years. Designated funding of \$20,000 per year per site was also provided for evaluation.

The Foundation suggested that the HDI Team leave open the option of adding another site once the project was successfully underway, if there was enough funding. The additional site could be used to fill in potential gaps in knowledge. A seventh site (Calgary), which serves families that generally have higher incomes and higher education levels than many of the families at other sites, was added in 1999.

- to enhance language and cognitive development among children from birth to five years and to demonstrate useful and effective strategies for their parents and for professionals;
- to support and strengthen the capacity of families, organizations and communities to enhance early language and cognitive development;
- to learn more about how to build and sustain organizational and community capacity over the longer term;
- to create collaborative links between interested partners, including providers of programs, academics, educators, policy-makers, parents and other community members;
- to evaluate the effects of programs and approaches and develop an awareness among community-based project participants of the usefulness of evaluation in their local organizations; and
- to share information and learnings with communities, governments, professional groups and the general public.

National Management and Support

Another key part of initial project development was the creation of a national management and support system for the project. The HDI national project management team was not large (four core members, plus supporting staff involved in such tasks as setting up project databases). Consultants were brought in as needed (e.g., specialists in communications and information technology, a facilitator for the annual symposia).

The HDI team initiated three ongoing and integrated strategies that continued throughout the project:

- Annual site visits were made by the HDI Director of Research and the Evaluation Coordinator for the purpose of program monitoring and providing on-site guidance. The visits also afforded the opportunity to gather information for a cross-site process evaluation. A fuller description of the site visits is provided in Section 4.
- A National Advisory Committee (NAC) was created to bring together eminent people in the fields of education, research, policy, public affairs and advocacy on behalf of children and families. NAC members attended the TLC³ annual symposia and contributed to discussions with the site representatives. Before the symposia (and sometimes afterwards, as well), they met separately with the HDI team to discuss issues pertinent to project development. They were also available to the HDI team for consultation, as needed, during the project. NAC

members came from across the country, and some of them were actively involved in their local TLC³ site project. See Appendix A for a list of NAC members.

- Annual national symposia were organized for site representatives, the National Advisory Committee members, representatives from the Lawson Foundation, and the HDI team. These were three-day intensive events for learning and sharing information relevant to the project and for working together on project tasks and objectives. Every year, there was a prominent guest speaker to stimulate thinking. Other guests from government or private foundations were invited to attend the symposia and give their perspectives.³ A third-party facilitator managed the agenda. The symposia were useful for sharing information and knowledge, but they became increasingly important for their intangible benefits – helping the project to develop a sense of shared purpose and vision among people who were usually thousands of miles apart, fostering mutual respect and regard among participants from different backgrounds and disciplines, building morale, and creating the sense among diverse sites of being part of a national team.

3 Implementation in Communities

A key feature of the TLC³ project was the freedom and flexibility given to the local sites to make their own decisions about program content and delivery. The sites had to work within the general parameters and expectations set by TLC³ (i.e., mission, goals), and implementation was monitored by the HDI team. But it was a deliberate strategy on the part of the project management team to encourage the sites to do what they believed would work best for their own communities. The HDI team provided support and guidance when needed or requested.

“If you go to the trouble of carefully selecting organizations and leaders who are competent and creative, it seems only logical to trust their judgment,” said TLC³ Director of Evaluation, Nancy Cohen. “We felt the local sites knew better than we did what programs would be most effective for their families and communities.”

Site Programs and Strategies

To enrich and enhance existing community-based programs, the local project sites generally looked for packaged programs that were already available and that would be appropriate for local families and the age group of the children.

³ Among the distinguished speakers and guests were Fraser Mustard, Founders’ Network, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIAR); Dan Keating, Director, Human Development for CIAR and Atkinson Chair in Early Child Development and Education at University of Toronto/OISE; Allen Zeesman, Director General, Applied Research Branch, Strategic Policy, Human Resources Development Canada; Satya Brink, Federal Government, HRDC; Charles Pascal, Executive Director of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation; Nancy Birnbaum, CEO of Invest in Kids; and (the late) Dan Offord, Director of the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University.

The major exception was in Quebec, where a team from the Laboratoire d'étude du nourrisson de l'Université du Québec à Montréal (Laboratory of Infant Studies at the University of Quebec at Montreal) created a new interactive reading program, tailored to the needs of infants, toddlers and preschoolers. The *ALI* program was developed, tested and refined in collaboration with the community of Saint-Rémi. In Alberta, at the TLC³ site at the University of Calgary Child Care Centre, two new preschool programs were tested and refined (*Child as Scientist* and *Story Crafting*). These programs were brought to the Centre because of connections made through TLC³ with two departments at the university.

Some programs that were delivered at more than one TLC³ site included:

- *Parent-Child Mother Goose Program* (Vancouver, Calgary and Toronto, with Dartmouth offering a *Parent and Tot Program* based on *PCMG*);
- *Parents As Teachers Program* (Regina, Calgary);
- *Come Read With Me* (Meadow Lake Tribal Council, Regina);
- *You Make the Difference* (Dartmouth, Meadow Lake Tribal Council - First Nations edition).

Other programs chosen by the site projects included:

- *Parents' Roles Interacting with Teachers (PRINTS)* (Regina);
- *Learning Language and Loving It, Baby Talk* based on *Keys for Care-giving Program* (Dartmouth);
- *Bright Start Cognitive Curriculum, It Takes Two to Talk, Let's Be Social* (Meadow Lake Tribal Council).

See Appendix B for a list of program internet sources.

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) site faced the challenge of helping families and training caregivers in widely dispersed, northern First Nations within the MLTC. It was difficult for the small TLC³ team to spread themselves across such a large geographic area. Moreover, parents were often reluctant to sign up for (or dropped out of) programs that took place over an extended period of time. No major changes were made to the packaged programs, but this site reported that it adapted delivery by emphasizing the essential core program elements, using smaller-sized groups, and condensing the program into fewer sessions.

At all the TLC³ sites, new resource materials were created for children, parents and staff. For example, at the University of Calgary Child Care Centre, a toy and resource library was designed and stocked with toys and books. "Tips and Quips" were created to tell parents how best to use the toys to stimulate their children's early development. At the Meadow Lake Tribal Council site, a parenting manual was created for First Nations families.

In addition to delivering programs and creating resource materials, the sites trained and guided staff to focus more attention on children's language and thinking. They worked with staff in the site project organizations, which included child care centres, family resource centres and preschools, and at other sites, like libraries, out in the community. They used training, coaching and modeling techniques to advance the goals of TLC³.

A thumbnail sketch of the programs⁴ and strategies at each TLC³ site follows.

Vancouver

The TLC³ program delivery site was in two Neighbourhood Houses, Kiwassa and Collingwood, in a mixed-income area in the east end of the city. The Vancouver project, called *Connections*, was created through a partnership of the Infant Development Program of B.C., Developmental Disabilities Association, and the Alan Cashmore Centre, Vancouver Community Mental Health Service of the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority.

Staff at the partner organizations worked with staff at the Neighbourhood Houses to provide the *Parent-Child Mother Goose Program* for infants up to two years of age and their parents. Parents who became trained as leaders over the course of TLC³ ran a toddler group. *Connections* also offered developmental screening for infants and toddlers by the speech-language pathologist who led the project. In total, 174 families participated in *Parent-Child Mother Goose Program* sessions during the five years of TLC³. Developmental screening was provided at least twice to 106 families.

Calgary

This site was at the University of Calgary Child Care Centre, serving 80 preschool children whose parents are faculty, staff and students at the university. Parents were generally well-educated and, on average, had higher incomes than families at the other sites. Through a partnership with the Calgary Family Connections Society, the TLC³ project delivered the *Parent-Child Mother Goose Program* to a total of 28 families of preschoolers and to another 19 families who attended a weekend outreach program for children under age three and their parents. About 20 families participated in the *Parents as Teachers* program that is delivered in the home.

A toy and resource lending library was developed. Information sheets prepared for parents, called “Tips and Quips”, on the value of play and appropriate use of the materials were provided. The library was used by parents of the Centre’s preschool children and by the parents who attended the weekend outreach sessions.

Early childhood educators, teachers, parents and other caregivers from across Calgary attended the *Knowing and Growing Together* TLC³-supported lecture series. These two-hour lectures provided caregivers and parents with information on topics relevant to language and cognitive development during infancy and the preschool years.

Two new preschool programs, *Child as Scientist* and *Story Crafting*, created by university professors who became involved with the Centre through TLC³, were tested with children aged four and five. The preschool science program aimed to augment children’s knowledge of various topics in biology and thereby also increase their understanding, reasoning and theory development in biology. The story crafting program was designed to improve the storytelling skills of kindergarten children to a greater extent than typical strategies.

⁴ Appendix B includes program references.

Meadow Lake

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC), the umbrella political and administrative structure of nine Dene and Cree First Nations, was the TLC³ site in rural northwestern Saskatchewan. The original plan for TLC³ was to fund programs at one already existing child care centre. However, just as TLC³ began, the MLTC launched a major plan to develop child care centres in all of their First Nations. The Meadow Lake Tribal Council felt it was important to include all the child care centres in TLC³. As a result, six child care centres that were in the process of being established over the period in which TLC³ was operating were included. One First Nation declined to participate, and another had a parent-run playschool.

The TLC³ program, called *One Foot Forward*, was developed in cooperation with the MLTC Child Care Program and played an essential role in helping establish the new child care centres and enhance the already existing centre. TLC³ funding was used to furnish the centres and purchase equipment, toys and books. TLC³ staff provided training to child care staff, developed curriculum, held workshops for parents, and made important links with relevant professionals, such as dentists.

The Aboriginal families served in these remote communities were mainly low income. A total of 165 children participated in TLC³ over the five years. The primary objective of TLC³ was to enhance the child care programs, by providing resource materials, training and advice to child care workers and parents. Four areas of early childhood development were targeted: language, cognition, social skills and literacy skills. Literacy skills were addressed as part of the MLTC economic development plan, and social skills were added in recognition of First Nations social justice issues. TLC³ core programs were:

- *The Bright Start Cognitive Curriculum* for promoting cognitive development, including an accompanying training program for day care workers and a handbook for parents;
- *It Takes Two to Talk Program* designed to promote social and linguistic development in young children based on the relationship between caregiver and child;
- *You Make the Difference* (First Nations edition) designed to promote early language development within important relationships;
- *Come Read With Me Program* promoting early child literacy; and
- *Let's Be Social Program* to help preschoolers learn pro-social skills.

Regina

The TLC³ site was the Regina Early Learning Centre, which is well known for its work since 1977 with low-income, mainly Aboriginal, families from across the city. Maximum enrolment at any one time was 96 children. The families whose children (aged 3-5) attended the Regina Early Learning Centre were disadvantaged (78% of families had annual incomes of less \$20,000 and more than half (52%) were single-parent households). During the TLC³ years, the Centre augmented its preschool curriculum by:

- enhanced cognitive programming through introduction of High Scope strategies (the plan-do-review process in particular) and the integration of a Reggio Emilia approach (which

emphasizes the importance of enabling children to direct their own learning, with adults as facilitators) into classroom activities;

- enhanced language programming through an increase in speech-language pathologist services;
- enhanced child assessment practices through the adoption of the Preschool Evaluation Scale and major refinements in the documentation of children's learning portfolios;
- increase in staff skills related to cognitive and language development and assessment through ongoing professional development; and
- regular parent-staff supper meetings, which included an educational component.

The TLC³ project enabled the Centre to expand into programs for children under age three, specifically with the *Parents as Teachers Program*, a home visiting program. The Centre also added the literacy programs *Come Read With Me* and *PRINTS* (Parents' Roles Interacting with Teachers) to its Family Outreach initiatives.

Toronto

The Toronto site was in St. James Town, a high-rise, very high-density neighbourhood where many new immigrants start their life in Canada. This site was linguistically and culturally diverse, and most families were living on low incomes. About 68% of the families involved in TLC³ at this site were Tamil-speaking. Only 8% of the families spoke English, and the rest spoke 12 other languages.

TLC³ was part of *Growing Together*, a prevention, health promotion and early intervention program, created in 1993 to improve the health, well-being and development of infants, young children and their families in St. James Town. *Growing Together* is a partnership of the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre and the City of Toronto Department of Public Health. It provides a range of services, open to the whole community and delivered by a multidisciplinary, multilingual and culturally diverse team.

The TLC³ site in Toronto was an exception to the general criteria that sites run promotion and prevention programs. Instead it followed a clinical model that assessed children for developmental delays and provided targeted interventions.

Within this context, the TLC³ team assessed and identified young children with cognitive and/or language delays. There were 110 children who participated in the TLC³ program at Growing Together. Most of the families involved with the program were new immigrants struggling to become fluent in English, find decent jobs, and adapt to a new cultural environment. Because of a large Tamil population in the community, the *Growing Together* TLC³ program had Tamil and Tagalog speaking staff.

TLC³ delivered an early learning play and theme-based intervention program, called *Jumpstart*, for children aged 30 months to five years. Home visiting was provided in English and Tamil to families with infants and young children in the TLC³ program. *Jumpstart* and the home visiting program were linked through the home visitors who co-facilitated *Jumpstart*. The early

childhood consultant provided group programs, such as the *Parent-Child Mother Goose Program*, for parents and their young children. Consulting services in early childhood development and speech and language services were also provided. Children were referred to other agencies for more intensive services, such as speech therapy, as needed.

Saint-Rémi

In Quebec, the project funding was administered differently from the other sites in that it was not provided to a community organization from the beginning. Initially, a university research group received the funding because the small rural community site in Saint-Rémi needed time to develop the capacity and infrastructure to assume leadership and provide administration. Funding was eventually transferred to a non-profit corporation in the community.

The Quebec site of Saint-Rémi was located in a relatively isolated, rural, Francophone community south of Montreal. The Laboratory for the Newborn Infant at the University of Quebec in Montreal created a new interactive reading program for young children, which its developers tested and revised, with the collaboration of the Saint-Rémi community.

The *ALI* program includes age-appropriate strategies for infants (*Ali-Bébé*), toddlers 15 to 34 months (*Ali-Bambin*) and preschoolers age three to five years (*ALI-Explorateur*). For each component, there are techniques for parents or other caregivers to use to engage the child in reading related activities. Training is given to parents and caregivers at each stage. *ALI-DAC* is a screening program for children with developmental delays. *ALI Tells a Story* is for community group reading activities, and *ALI-Kindergarten* is for children starting kindergarten. More than 477 children were involved in an *ALI* program at the Saint-Rémi site during the TLC³ period.

Dartmouth

The Nova Scotia site was located at the Dartmouth Family Resource Centre, situated in a low-income area of North Dartmouth, which is part of Greater Halifax. Nova Scotia TLC³ hired a speech language pathologist to be the TLC³ coordinator and to work on a team basis with families and staff in this community-based, non-clinical setting. The TLC³ coordinator delivered programs, provided coaching to parents, trained staff and parent facilitators, and worked with staff to incorporate language and cognitive development strategies into all programs of the Family Resource Centre. A preschool program was established in partnership with the Dartmouth Boys and Girls Club, with programs and training to enhance language development. There were 21 spaces for children in the preschool, three of which were reserved for children with special needs. Approximately 84 children participated in TLC³ parent-child programs.

TLC³ programs covered the age range from infants to preschoolers:

- *Baby Talk*, a modification of the *Keys for Care-giving Program* to encourage a parent's sensitivity and responsiveness to baby's cues;
- *You Make the Difference*, which focuses on developing children's communicative competence through parent-child interactions;
- *Parent and Tot Program*, which teaches rhymes, songs and stories, modified from the

Parent-Child Mother Goose Program;

- TLC³ language-enhanced preschool where staff were trained in *Learning Language and Loving It*, parents were encouraged to be involved in the preschool, and the focus on language and literacy was knit into the fabric of the learning environment.

Growth and Evolution

The site projects all went through a process of learning and evolving. Time was probably the greatest pressure for everyone in the early implementation phase – time to listen to the community and to involve other partners, time to finalize all the administrative and budgetary details with the Hincks-Dellcrest Institute, and time to recruit and train staff, develop a sense of teamwork, and find space for programs to be delivered. At some sites, uncontrollable external factors (like a huge ice storm that paralyzed parts of Quebec) intervened, which necessitated adjustment in the timetable for implementation.

In the early days, the site leaders expressed some anxiety about the flexibility and responsibility they were being given to develop the best ideas for their communities to meet the TLC³ goals. They were accustomed to a more traditional granting process, which prescribes a detailed list of requirements within which community projects must try to fit. As one site participant put it: “We are used to being told: Here are the criteria. Here is what you have to do to comply. This time, we were given more scope.” Another said: “We didn’t know if we were doing the right thing.”

After the first year of implementation, however, anxiety about meeting the national project’s expectations gave way to growing confidence. The sites had some programs up and running, and they could see parents and children responding. In fact, they experienced the positive problem of higher than expected demand for their programs from families. Another factor was growing comfort with the relationship with the HDI team. The sites learned that the HDI team trusted them to deliver the most appropriate programs for their communities.

By the mid-point of the project, every site had encountered and overcome a variety of challenges in implementation. One site, for example, ended a partnership that was not working well and forged a new relationship with another organization. Another site adapted to a change in leadership in the sponsoring organization that had an important impact on the local TLC³ team. More than one site had to scramble to adapt when key staff moved away or became ill.

4 The TLC³ Evaluation Process

Evaluation is a systematic means of describing a project, its goals, key elements, processes and outcomes. Evaluation was a key component of TLC³ from the conception stage of the project. There were several reasons why evaluation was built into the project plan. First, the Lawson Foundation wanted to know that its funding had been well used to benefit children and families across Canada. The Foundation and the HDI team were interested in information on both process and outcomes – what programs the TLC³ sites delivered to children and parents, the organizational and community context in which they worked, and how

successful the sites were in achieving overall project goals. The evaluation provided a form of accountability by ensuring that the sites went through a deliberate and systematic process of identifying their program objectives, selecting appropriate evaluation instruments and measuring outcomes. Both the funder and the project managers also planned to distill key learnings from the evaluation findings that could be of interest to, and shared with, a wider audience in the field of early childhood development.

In addition, the HDI team hoped that TLC³ could help local project participants gain a deeper understanding of the value of evaluation and acquire experience in doing an evaluation. It is well recognized among researchers and evaluators that community-based service-providers often view evaluation as a burden or a threat, rather than a process to help improve their programs. To assist the sites with their evaluations and to pursue the TLC³ goal of creating bridges between research and the program delivery, the HDI team encouraged the sites to connect with a university-based researcher or evaluation consultant.

The TLC³ evaluation included the following elements:

- cross-site process evaluation;
- Management Information System; and
- site-specific outcome evaluation.

Cross-Site Process Evaluation: Site Visits

TLC³ Director of Evaluation Nancy Cohen visited every site once a year, usually accompanied by the TLC³ Evaluation Coordinator to monitor the project sites, to document program process over the five years of the project and to be a resource for problem solving. The site visits were intended not only to update the HDI team on how the sites were doing, but also to give the sites the opportunity to reflect on their experience in a systematic way. The focus of the semi-structured site visit interviews changed in keeping with the stage of the project. In the early years, HDI documented that implementation was going as the sites had expected, and the site visits included the following topics:

- program activities, changes in programs, participation levels, staffing;
- planning and problem-solving;
- parent involvement;
- community connections; and
- lessons learned and success stories.

The site visit interviews around the mid-point of the project continued to track the state of programs and lessons learned on implementation, but began to probe the sites' thinking on such issues as:

- sustaining the local project beyond the five-year funding commitment of the Lawson Foundation;
- the impact on the sites of being part of a national project;
- what additional help or guidance might be needed from the HDI team; and
- plans for the evaluation and relationships with the site's university-based researcher or

evaluation consultant.

Finally, in the last two years of the project, when the evaluation was underway, the site visit interviews included discussions of:

- progress of the evaluation, including obstacles overcome and outstanding challenges;
- local and national communications;
- update on sustainability (given that the project was coming to a close); and
- perceived impacts on parents, project staff, and partners.

The site visits provided a regular opportunity for Dr. Cohen to ask about challenges faced by the local program delivery teams. “Sometimes, just talking over things that may not be working as well as you had hoped provides that little extra nudge to make a change,” she said. “First-hand observation also helps. At one site, I asked them how activities in a child care centre run by a partner organization fit with their goals. As it turned out, the local project coordinator was becoming increasingly frustrated. The site recognized that the partnership was a mismatch in values and priorities and decided to find a new partner.”

She emphasized that at this and other sites, decisions were made at the local project sites, not by the HDI team. “We were there to support, monitor and encourage. Occasionally we might suggest or remind sites of project goals and expectations. But we wanted to empower the sites to do what they do best.”

In addition to the site visits, the local projects were required to submit annual reports and annual budget statements to the HDI project management team in Toronto. The site leaders also presented oral and written overviews and updates, highlighting achievements and challenges, to their colleagues and others at the annual national symposia.

Cross-Site Process Evaluation: Management Information System

A Management Information System (MIS) was developed to gather descriptive information about participants in the various site programs in terms of demographics, child health and development, parent-child language and literacy activities. To gather this information, each participating family was interviewed by a member of the local TLC³ evaluation team when they began participating in TLC³. Information was not gathered from all participants because the MIS was not implemented until the third year of the project. Also at some sites, some parents chose not to complete the interview.

The demographic information collected using the MIS interviews confirmed the diversity of the TLC³ participants at the different sites. Below are some examples of how the site participants differed. A more complete profile of the participants can be seen in Appendix C.

The average age of participating children ranged from 7.7 months in Vancouver to 3.38 years in Regina.

In Dartmouth and Regina, the main language spoken by program participants in the home was

English. In St. Remi, 94% spoke French as their main language, and in Toronto, 68% spoke Tamil as their main language.

In family composition, at some sites almost all the families were two-parent households (i.e., 96% in Toronto, 93% in Vancouver, 90% in Calgary, 88% in St. Remi). In Regina, however, 52% were single-parent households, and in Dartmouth, 45% of the families interviewed were single parents. At MLTC, 40% were single parents.

Families also differed in terms of the country where the parents were born. Focusing specifically on the mothers, at the Regina site, 100% were born in Canada, and in MLTC and St. Remi, 98% were born in Canada. In Vancouver, 50% of the mothers were born in Canada, and at far end of the scale, in Toronto, only 5% were Canadian born.

There was a large difference between average highest levels of parents' education across the sites. In Toronto, for example, 69% of the mothers had less than a Grade 12 high school diploma, and in Regina, 47% had less than Grade 12. In Calgary, 88% of mothers had a post-secondary diploma, certificate or degree. In Vancouver, 68% of the mothers had a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree, and another 18% had some post-secondary education.

In Calgary, 78% of mothers and 80% of fathers were in the workforce, full-time or part-time. In Vancouver, 21% of mothers and 94% of fathers were in the workforce. In Regina, only 25% of mothers and 36% of fathers were in the workforce. In Toronto, 91% of the fathers were working, but only 9% of the mothers were in the workforce.

The families' source of income also varied considerably across sites. For example, 85% of families in St. Remi and 87% in MLTC received their main source of income from salaries, wages or self-employment. In Dartmouth, 39% of the families' main source of income was social assistance, and in Regina, 31% reported that their main source of income was social assistance and 28% reported the child tax benefit as their main source.

In terms of income levels, many families reported annual incomes of less than \$20,000 (i.e., Regina 78%, MLTC 58%, Dartmouth 56%, Toronto 49%). At some sites, however, some families had incomes of more than \$60,000 a year (i.e., Calgary 79%, St. Remi 38%, Vancouver 28%).

Site-Specific Outcome Evaluation

The original plan for the evaluation included a cross-site outcome evaluation that would use a common set of measures of language and cognition at each site that could be compared to provincial and national statistics. The HDI team planned to design this evaluation with the advice of the national advisors, focusing on common elements across all the sites. The difficulty with this plan surfaced relatively early. The sites were simply too different. They offered programs to different age groups, from infants to preschoolers. They operated in very different contexts. They delivered different programs.

Members of the National Advisory Committee were involved in discussions about the evaluation. “We let go of plans for a cross-site evaluation only reluctantly when it became clear that it was not feasible,” said Dr. Cohen. “For those of us who are accustomed to controlled settings and common protocols, having every site do something different was not optimal. On the other hand, a diversity of programs and settings generates a rich base of findings from which to draw common themes.”

“There were some financial considerations. We found that collecting additional measures to make our findings comparable to other provincial and national statistics was going to be very expensive. But the overriding concern, from my point of view, went right to the essence of this project. This was very much a community-driven initiative. To impose a rigorous national evaluation protocol would have required us to strictly limit the program options of the local sites. That would have undermined our effort to support and strengthen the capacity of local families, organizations and communities to enhance children’s early development.”

Site-specific outcome evaluation was also part of the original evaluation plan, and those local evaluations proceeded. Each local site designed its own outcome evaluation and submitted its findings to the HDI team.

The project sites were assisted in getting started on their evaluation in the early phase of TLC³. At the annual symposium after the first year of implementation, they were given a workbook that took them through a series of structured questions that would help them to build a logic model for their program. More specifically, it asked them to list what they expected to achieve for children, parents and (if relevant) other community members as a result of TLC³ programming, to articulate the specific activities that were required to achieve their goals, and to identify indicators or signposts for their anticipated outcomes. Further steps included listing potential means of measuring outcomes and design issues.

The site teams worked on their logic model in their own small groups, with the support of a NAC member. The sites were not expected to finish the logic model on the spot, but Dr. Cohen wanted to ensure that they had received an explanation of the process and had made a good start on their model, with some expert help on hand to guide them.

Most of the site leaders were not researchers – they had experience in delivering services, but not in evaluation. They were expected to rely not only on advice from the HDI team and the NAC

members, but also on their local research/evaluation advisors. Having to do their own evaluation put pressure on the local sites, but it also stimulated learning. They had some struggles with the process, but emerged at the other end knowing a lot more about evaluation and its value. “It also helped several of the sites respond to government and other funders who wanted to know what they had achieved,” Dr. Cohen said.

5 Project Outcomes

While evaluation planning began early, gathering data for the evaluation did not begin until the third year of the project when the site programs were generally considered to be mature; that is, they were operating consistently and at their optimal standard.

For the outcome evaluation, the TLC³ sites looked at whether children who participated in their programs showed improvements in language and cognitive functioning.⁵ They also looked for changes in parent attitudes and behaviours, and changes in the local organizations, staff and partnerships.

The sites used various evaluation tools and techniques, including standardized developmental measures, structured observation, teacher ratings, parent feedback forms and questionnaires, and key informant interviews. These tools and techniques are documented in the reports of the site outcomes that follow.

Outcomes for Children

The outcomes for children were identified using standardized development measures, including direct measures of child development; parent reports on changes in children’s abilities and behaviour using feedback surveys and interviews; and structured observation by staff who recorded changes in children’s language and cognition and associated developmental progress, such as social skills. See Appendix D for a list of standardized measures used by the sites.

Because of the diversity of the sites, different developmental measures were used at each site. Taken together, however, children showed:

- improvement on direct tests and standardized measures of language and cognition in relation to age norms.

In feedback surveys and interviews, parents reported that their children showed:

- increased knowledge and language skills;
- improved self-esteem and confidence; and
- increased social skills (e.g., cooperation, respect).

Based on staff and teacher reports, the children showed:

⁵ It should be pointed out that the outcome evaluation was not about whether the specific goals of the packaged programs that many sites delivered were met. The focus was on the goals of the TLC³ project. The programs were chosen because they were appropriate for the TLC³ project, but the project’s goals were broader than specific program goals.

- more initiative for learning and literacy activities;
- improved problem-solving skills; and
- increased social connectedness and social skills.

Snapshots of the site findings follow.

Vancouver: Children who participated in the *Parent-Child Mother Goose Program* showed significant gains in speech, symbolic thinking and social development, based on an assessment by a speech-language pathologist using the Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales – Developmental Profile (CSBS-DP). Both children with normal development and language delays demonstrated significant gains. Results from the parent-completed version of the CSBS, before and after being involved in the program, also showed that the children demonstrated significant gains relative to norms on the speech subscale, the symbolic subscale, and the total scale. Children with identified difficulties tended to stay in the program longer, and were referred for additional therapy if needed. Both parents and staff also observed children’s increasing comfort and competence in socializing with both adults and other children.

Calgary: Parents of children who participated in the *Parent-Child Mother Goose Program* reported that the program stimulated their children’s interactive play with other children. Improving children’s language skills was not as common a theme in parent reports as might have been expected by the program staff, but this could have been because the children’s verbal and memory skills were already developing well.

The TLC³ children in the *Parent Child Mother Goose Program* were compared to children at another child care centre in Calgary, using the Preschool Language Evaluation Scale-3 and the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventories. The differences in improvement in language development were not significant, but this result was not considered surprising, given that the comparison group of children were also in a high-quality child care centre.

The TLC³ children who took the *Story Crafting* program were compared to children taking another story-telling program. They outperformed the comparison group in their ability to generate a solution to problems in their stories. However, there were no other significant differences. Both the TLC³ children and the control groups were enrolled in quality child care programs and were already performing at a high level. From the evaluation of the *Child as Scientist* program, it was concluded that preschoolers can be taught to improve their biological reasoning and that stories are an effective method of instruction for teaching children about biological inheritance. Parents whose children participated in the program reported that their children showed enthusiasm for learning about science.

Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC): The MLTC site obtained responses from interviews with 72 parents whose children attended the child care programs. Parents indicated what they believed were the main benefits of TLC³ for their children. In order of the frequency of responses, parents reported improvements in their children’s:

- social skills and ability to get along with others, including improved sharing and playing together with other children;

- ability to learn, including developed learning skills, improved understanding of learning process, improved memory;
- communication and language skills, including improved speech, increased talking, enhanced ability to express himself or herself;
- willingness to/interest in/ability to read books and stories; and
- behaviour, including fewer tantrums, better manners, increased cleaning up after himself or herself, less bottle feeding, increased friendliness, more frequent hand washing, putting away toys, increased independence, and being more outgoing and willing to participate.

Parents felt the best things about TLC³ were its provision of an intentional, structured learning environment, opportunities for positive socializing involving children and adults, opportunities for talking, speaking and listening, and its emphasis on books.

There were 81 key informants, primarily day care staff and directors, interviewed during the last two years of TLC³. They rated the following as the key improvements they perceived in children being involved with TLC³:

- improved turn-taking and sharing abilities;
- development of more complex language skills;
- ability to communicate more spontaneously, without stress or frustration; and
- improved cognitive abilities.

Analyses of the pre-and-post scores from direct assessment with standardized tests of the children's abilities were not reported due to some difficulties experienced in the collection of the data. For example, there were high turnover rates among the children attending the child care programs so that it was difficult to find and test enough children who had experienced a full program. A further complication for the local evaluators was distance. It was difficult to get to all the child care centres to obtain before-and-after scores in a timely manner. The First Nations that participated in TLC³ were spread over a very large geographic area.

Regina: Children who experienced the preschool program enriched by TLC³ showed positive changes in their cognitive, language and social emotional development, based on the Preschool Evaluation Scale (PES). The number of children with delays in these three areas decreased between program entry and completion. In addition to children who improved from having a severe or moderate delay to no delay at all, a number of children with a severe delay improved to the extent that, by the end of the program, the delay was considered moderate.

Portfolios were used to document a child's life at the preschool, including photos and drawings, descriptions of projects and comments. Teachers were given a common outline to follow on what information to collect from the children. A review of a representative sample of children's portfolios by an external evaluator showed improvement in children's cognitive, language, social emotional development, creativity and planning. In creativity, for example, teachers noted that children participated more in, and were more enthusiastic about, activities such as art, music and creative play. With respect to planning, children were more able to explain coherently what they

planned to do, follow through on their plans, and verbally recall them.

On questionnaires, parents of children in the preschool program reported that their children's social-emotional skills had improved – they had increased skill in interacting with others, cooperating and showing respect and good manners. Parents also noted increased language and cognitive skills, increased self-esteem and self-confidence, and greater understanding of Aboriginal culture.

The parent educators who delivered the *Parents as Teachers (PAT) Program* reported that the participating children showed improvement in speech. Parents who participated in *Come Read With Me* said their children's attention span and interest in books increased. Parents in the PRINTS program reported that their children's enjoyment in learning and desire to learn increased.

Toronto: Using the Diagnostic Inventory for Screening Children (DISC), this site found that over 95% of the children tested at entry to the program showed at least one concern in one of the language or cognitive dimensions. Some of the children had severe developmental delays, while delays in other children were less severe and were related to environmental risks. In particular, 86% of the children had a possible or probable delay in expressive language, 77% in receptive language, 83% in auditory attention and memory, and 71% in visual attention and memory.

Children who completed both the pre-program and post-program DISC assessments showed significant improvement in expressive language, receptive language, auditory attention and memory, and visual attention and memory. Comparison of TLC³ children to a group of children not participating in the program showed that children who participated in TLC³ had significantly better expressive and receptive language than the comparison children. Although there were also differences in this direction between the two groups in auditory and visual attention and memory, the results were not statistically significant.

A behaviour questionnaire filled out by parents indicated that children's behaviour was not considered a problem going into the program and, therefore, it was not surprising that improvement in behaviour after the program was not statistically significant.

Saint-Rémi: The *ALI* program involves interactive reading activities tailored to different age groups: infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Children were tested at entry to the *ALI* program and after six months and after one year, using the Bayley Scales for infants and the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test for older children.

The evaluation showed significant gains at the six-month mark in cognitive development for all the *ALI* programs combined. When the age groups were examined separately, significant gains were observed for the infant (*ALI-Bébé*) and toddler (*ALI-Bambin*) groups. Findings after one year indicated that most of the gains were made in the first six months of the program and sustained at one year.

When gains in cognitive development among the preschool children in the *ALI Explorateur* program were not found to be significant at the six-month mark, the team from the Laboratory

for the Newborn Infant at the University of Quebec at Montreal revised the program to make it more enriching for the preschool group.

Dartmouth: Children who attended the TLC³ language-enhanced preschool were compared after their first year in kindergarten to children who had not attended preschool. The TLC³ preschool group scored significantly better on measures of expressive vocabulary, phonological awareness, and narrative skills. However, when a second year of data was added, the effects disappeared. Because these children were not pre-tested, it is not possible to explain the combined results. One possibility is that the two groups of children were not matched developmentally prior to the onset of TLC³. It is also not uncommon for the immediate positive effects of preschool programs to disappear quickly, only to reappear in positive life outcomes many years later.

Outcomes for Parents

At almost all sites, information was collected from parents on feedback questionnaires and during interviews. Staff also recorded observations of parental behaviour at some sites.

Across this national project, parents reported that they learned:

- how they can help their child develop;
- how to engage in a responsive parent-child interactional style.

According to parent reports and staff observations, parents also:

- gained confidence in parenting;
- established positive relationships with other parents;
- sought and received training to become program leaders and home visitors;
- gained more respect for their child;
- experienced pleasure in parenting; and
- shared more positive experiences with their child.

Vancouver: On feedback questionnaires, parents reported that they felt they benefited from the social connection they had with the other parents in the program. They also felt they benefited from the opportunity to learn about parenting strategies and suggestions for activities to do with their children. In some cases, the whole family had picked up on the songs, storytelling and rhymes from the TLC³ program. Nine parents received training and became qualified as *Parent-Child Mother Goose* leaders.

Calgary: For parents who attended the *Parent-Child Mother Goose Program*, the most important benefit reported was that it provided them with an opportunity to spend quality time during the day with their child. They also enjoyed the chance to get together in a group with other parents and children. Parents who used the toy and resource library reported that it was an excellent resource.

Meadow Lake Tribal Council: The two impacts of TLC³ reported most often by parents were increased knowledge about child development and improved parenting skills. Key informants

also reported that they perceived parents to have improved their awareness of child development and that they had adopted more positive parenting behaviours and had better communication with their young children. According to key informants, parents were spending more time reading with their children and learning and applying new language-building strategies in the home.

Regina: Parents of children in the preschool program reported that the home visits by teaching staff strengthened the home-preschool link. They also reported that the home-visits allowed them to learn more about their children's strengths and challenges.

Parents who participated in *Parents as Teachers* and family literacy programs (*Come Read With Me* and *PRINTS*) reported that they:

- gained information, knowledge and skills about the importance of reading and playing with their children;
- used the practical handouts, activities and advice they were given;
- experienced more enjoyment in playing with and reading to their children;
- improved the quantity and quality of their interactions with their children; and
- appreciated the chance to connect with other parents and learn in a fun and relaxed atmosphere.

Toronto: In Toronto, the parents completed a standardized measure, the Parenting Stress Index (PSI), before and after they and/or their children participated in TLC³. The results indicated that the parents experienced a statistically significant reduction in parenting distress while participating in TLC³. No other changes were statistically significant. Another measure, the Home Observation Measurement of the Environment (HOME), was completed by a researcher after spending some time in the home observing parent-child interactions. The results of this measure indicated significant improvement in parents' stimulation of their child's language skills, but little change in other areas. It also identified a significant decrease in modeling behaviours, which could be attributable to the parent letting the child take the lead in activities that they did together.

Saint-Rémi: Parents were observed by TLC³ staff to have increased awareness of the importance of spending time reading with their young children. Through training and use of the *ALI* program, parents gained confidence in their ability to help their children's development. Some parents became involved in their child's day care program and, later, in their school.

Dartmouth: At the Dartmouth site, data were gathered from parents during interviews, on questionnaires and by observing and rating parent-child relationships.

For the *Baby Talk* program, pre-and-post program behaviour ratings were completed. Specific behaviours included caregiver's sensitivity to baby's cues, establishing joint attention, engagement and positive social interaction, and responsiveness during feeding. Summary scores showed significant positive gains on all measures except mother-child interaction during feeding. The exception was not surprising because mothers were already providing safe and comfortable environments for feeding their infant in the pre-program ratings.

For the *You Make the Difference* parent training program, videotapes of parent-child interactions were analyzed. Participating parents increased their use of naming, adding new words, and highlighting important words when talking to their children. In interviews after the program, parents said that they had learned useful strategies to support their children's learning, had become more patient, and were more willing to allow their children to learn through play.

Parents who participated in the *Parent and Tot* program reported that they had expanded their use of books, storytelling, singing, and rhyming with their young children. Parents of children in the preschool program reported reading to their children significantly more often than comparison parents of children not in the program.

Outcomes for Staff, Site Organizations and Sustainability

The people who were involved in working on TLC³ at the local sites reported that they, and the organizations in which they worked, changed too. Program managers/coordinators and some staff members were interviewed during annual site visits by the HDI team. At some of the sites, managers and staff were interviewed as part of the local evaluation process. As well, key informants in the community were interviewed for their observations.

Staff involved with the TLC³ project at all sites reported that they:

- gained greater understanding of the importance of promoting early language and cognition;
- received training in specific strategies and tools to use with young children and parents;
- built positive, respectful and warm relationships with parents;
- developed new professional skills and gained confidence in their abilities;
- made new contacts in their professional fields;
- gained appreciation of the value of evaluating programs and learned about how evaluations are done;
- found being part of a project team, locally and nationally, personally fulfilling; and
- were proud of their involvement in this project and its accomplishments.

A typical concern with time-limited projects is that the programs and activities will end when the funding runs out. In the case of TLC³, the HDI team made a point of urging the sites to think about sustainability early and to think about it creatively.

On a national basis, a year after the end of program funding, program managers, staff and key informants reported that:

- host and partner organizations had generally been able to sustain the benefits of TLC³;
- in some provinces, the project's reach went well beyond the local community;
- partnerships forged during this project continued to flourish; and
- host organizations were recognized in their communities as leaders in early childhood development and programming.

Sustainability was achieved in different ways:

- Several sites reported a year after the end of TLC³ program funding that TLC³ programs were being continued with the help of new funding from government or other sources.
- Some new resources to support and stimulate early childhood development were created, including: the Meadow Lake Tribal Council Parent Handbook; the *Child as Scientist* program developed at the University of Calgary Child Care Centre; and the *ALI* interactive reading program in Quebec, which is being translated from the French for use in English Canada.
- Specific program training received by staff and parents meant that those programs could continue to be offered to families.
- Through professional development, coaching, modeling and other techniques used by TLC³ coordinators/directors, a focus on early language and cognitive development was integrated into everyday practices and programs in preschools, child care centres, family resource centres and other community settings.
- Local and national networks of people and organizations committed to promoting optimal early child development had been built.

Vancouver: According to personal testimonials of the two people who were on the original team at this site and who remained active until the end, TLC³ was a uniquely rewarding experience. One called it “one of the richest and most meaningful experiences of my career”. Staff leaders of the *Parent-Child Mother Goose Program* felt they had grown professionally and had become more confident. They identified the value of teamwork among professionals with different expertise.

Short-term funding was obtained for a provincial coordinator of the *Parent-Child Mother Goose Program*, and for two mentoring sites in the Kiwassa and Collingwood Neighbourhood Houses, where TLC³ had run its programs. The developmental screening for participating families that was part of the site program was not continued.

What can be described as a “ripple” effect of this site project was the training of more than 950 people from different disciplines in operating the *Parent-Child Mother Goose Program*. While this training was not funded by TLC³, it would not have happened were it not for the organizational partnerships that were forged to create the TLC³ site project. The Infant Development Program of B.C., a partner in the Vancouver TLC³, sponsored and coordinated the training. Two of the TLC³ project leaders trained leaders around the province. A year after

TLC³, one of them continued to do so as provincial coordinator of the *Parent-Child Mother Goose Program*.

Calgary: Staff at the University Child Care Centre quickly integrated additional strategies for stimulating early language and cognitive development into everyday activities. They were more likely to use songs or story-telling during transitions and routines in the children's day than before TLC³.

Before TLC³, the Child Care Centre had not had close relations with the University or the Calgary child care community at large. That has changed. Two professors who became involved with the TLC³ arranged for masters or doctoral students to work on projects, including the toy and resource lending library and two new classroom programs. They were also instrumental in developing a lecture series, called *Knowing and Growing Together*, for the child care, education and broader community.

Because of outreach to other child care centres, as part of TLC³, the University Child Care Centre became part of a group of centres that successfully applied for a grant under the federal-provincial Early Childhood Development Initiative to do a project similar to TLC³.

Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC): The program resources provided to child care centres and the training of child care staff in the First Nations are considered a positive legacy of TLC³. Changes in attitudes are always difficult to measure, but this site concluded that communities were beginning to understand better that all parents can use some education and help with parenting – it is not just for parents who are struggling.

From the evaluation, a number of suggestions were made, including that:

- working with parents should be considered an integral part of the professional child care services provided in communities;
- home visiting should be built into the program as a core component; and
- more training was needed for child care staff (at their request), particularly to help children with special needs or behaviour problems.

Overall, the evaluation concluded that advocates for young children need to have a stronger voice in these communities.

Regina: The Regina Early Learning Centre (ELC) was already well known in Saskatchewan, but being part of TLC³ raised its profile further. It is regarded as an effective model for other organizations to follow. The ELC has become a service delivery partner for Saskatchewan's new KidsFirst Initiative. The Director of the Early Learning Centre noted that the Centre has redefined itself because of TLC³. The re-visioning of the Centre reflects the new capacities that it developed in the preschool and in the outreach to families with children under age three.

The Director and other staff reported that they had expanded their own learning, gaining new insights into the learning of small children and renewing their respect for the job that parents do. They reported that program effectiveness depends on continuous improvement in the form of

ongoing professional development, a best practices approach, willingness to change, and the nurturing of positive relationships.

Toronto: Staff at the Toronto site reported that they gained new skills and greater confidence through TLC³. They said that individual expertise and experience were validated through an interdisciplinary team that brought people together to strategize on how best to help young children and parents. Teamwork encouraged shared learning as each staff person was able to bring their unique skills and point of view to the table.

The Toronto TLC³ project was able to build new partnerships with a number of organizations and institutions, including Toronto Preschool Speech and Language Services and the University of Toronto, to bring services on-site for children and parents on an ongoing basis. The TLC³ programs that were part of *Growing Together* were successfully absorbed into the larger project when TLC³ funding ended, mainly because *Growing Together* was able to obtain a new, three-year provincial government grant. That does not mean that funding challenges were over, however, even in the short term. *Growing Together* depends on at least 17 funders to keep its programs running.

Saint-Rémi: Staff involved at the local site said they learned that the following personal qualities are essential to this kind of community-based project:

- openness of spirit;
- respect and validation of the ideas and the work of others;
- a positive vision of the project to work towards;
- collaboration and cooperation;
- a belief in the project and a positive attitude; and
- determination to face problems and solve them together.

A year after TLC³ ended, the *ALI* program was being disseminated to child care centres around Quebec. The University of Quebec team made the program available, on condition that child care staff be trained in the proper use of the materials and implementation of the program.

The TLC³ funding for this site was initially given to the university program developers because the local community did not have an organization that could take on this role. When capacity had been developed in the community, towards the end of the five-year funding period, a not-for-profit organization was incorporated. The new organization, called *Apprendre en Coeur*, was hoping to expand the programs it could offer to families and to reach out to communities beyond Saint-Rémi. A year later, however, fund-raising to keep the organization afloat remained a challenge.

Dartmouth: One of the primary goals of TLC³ at this site was to embed not only the programs but also the philosophy of TLC³ into practices at the Dartmouth Family Resource Centre (DFRC) and its partner, the Dartmouth Boys and Girls Club. One of the original TLC³ team members described the philosophy as starting with “wellness, empowerment and trust”. According to staff reports, a clear focus on language and cognitive development and on parent and community involvement in programs has been incorporated into a wide range of activities for children and

families.

In Nova Scotia, at the end of TLC³ period, two important initiatives contributed to sustainability. The DFRC became a *Growing Together* site, a national initiative of the Invest in Kids Foundation and the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre. *Growing Together* provides assessments of newborns, home visiting and other interventions for families at risk. The TLC³ coordinator became part of *Growing Together*. On a broader scale, TLC³ in Dartmouth provided the model for a new government-funded, province-wide early language and learning initiative. It is called TLC⁴. The fourth TLC stands for “Through Linking Communities”. Members of the TLC³ team shared their knowledge and experience to help develop the new province-wide initiative and the DFRC became a regional centre for this initiative.

Summary of Evaluation Outcomes

Overall, children from diverse life circumstances who participated in TLC³ showed improved language and cognitive development identified through a variety of standardized measures and from qualitative reports. Their parents reported increased awareness of the importance of supporting children’s early language and cognitive development and used the practical information they were given.

Professionals in the site organizations also increased their understanding of the importance of stimulating children’s early language and cognitive development and acquired new skills to do this. They also learned more about the value of systematic evaluation. The site organizations were strengthened and managed to sustain activities and programs initiated through TLC³ in a variety of ways.

While celebrating these successful outcomes, we must acknowledge the challenges inherent in evaluation of community-based programs in early childhood development. There are many influences on a child’s development, in their family circumstances and in neighbourhood conditions, that are beyond the control of program managers.

Without the benefit of laboratory-controlled conditions, it is difficult to prove that a specific program directly caused the developmental advances made by a group of children. It was not possible at most of the sites to examine the outcomes of TLC³ children in relation to a comparison group in the same community. Where there were comparison groups, in some cases, the comparison children were also receiving high-quality programs to stimulate and support their development. It is difficult to find a group of children who are not involved in any programs.

Another challenge is that change cannot always be captured by the standardized measures available. Freda Martin, retired director of the Hincks-Dellcrest Institute and leader of the HDI team for TLC³, notes that some important positive changes may not be perceptible on a test or in a structured observation. But the long-term impacts may be very real. “If you can start kids on a different trajectory – because they learn to talk more, they feel secure, they have more confidence, they build better relationships – they may end up somewhere quite different from the life they might have led.”

This evaluation could only capture what happened in the period immediately or soon after children and parents participated in programs at the sites. The HDI team obtained funding to do some limited follow-up on TLC³ children at the end of Kindergarten, on the brink of entry to Grade 1. When children were directly tested, the findings showed that TLC³ children had some advantage over comparison children from the same community.

The literature in this area indicates that developmental improvements found in young children at the end of a program tend to fade after a year. But some large-scale research projects that have conducted long-term follow-up studies found significant differences between participants and comparison groups when the children had grown into their late teens and early adulthood.⁶

TLC³ illustrates that there are many different ways to help set children on a positive life trajectory. “The sites worked with all kinds of families from different cultures and backgrounds in diverse communities and delivered a variety of programs – and children and parents benefited,” said Dr. Cohen. “A large part of the success of TLC³ was because it respected the wisdom of the local organizations to deliver appropriate programs in sensitive ways to the families they served.”

6 Communications

To share information and learnings with communities, governments, professional groups and the general public was a goal of the project.

Communicating widely and at a number of levels was a goal of TLC³ and has been a continuous stream running throughout the project since its inception and was part of the project’s success.

Site Level

All the sites put continuous effort into communicating with parents, communities, other organizations, institutions, partners and governments. The sites were highly successful in their communication efforts using a variety of methods, including newsletters, presentations, special community events, workshops and trainings. Sites became a source of stimulation and resource locally and regionally. The profile and credibility of the site organizations increased. Team members at two sites were invited to sit on committees developing implementation plans for new government programs. Detailed accounts of site communications were reported in the annual reports to the Foundation.

HDI Level

The TLC³ National Symposia (1997 to 2003). As mentioned earlier, a national symposium was held annually and was attended by site representatives, the National Advisory Committee, the Hincks-Dellcrest team and representatives from the Lawson Foundation. In addition, each year

⁶ The Early Years Study, co-chaired by Dr. Fraser Mustard and the Hon. Margaret McCain, reviewed some of these studies in its Final Report, entitled *Reversing the Real Brain Drain*, Toronto: 1999, pp. 45-52.

prominent guest speakers and guests were invited to attend the symposium. At the symposium, they shared their expertise with the project participants and learned about the TLC³ project, its development and its impact on children and families.

Cross-Canada Videoconference - *Early Childhood: How to spend scarce dollars effectively (November 2003)*. In November 2003, the Hincks-Dellcrest Institute hosted a one-day national videoconference from Toronto. The seven TLC³ sites across Canada participated via video in their home communities. Each site invited a range of individuals who represented different social service agencies, national organizations, government departments, university departments and community based workers. Funders and Government representatives attended the host site in Toronto. The keynote address was given by Dr. Fraser Mustard. The objectives of the videoconference were: 1) to present one innovative funding method that had proved effective (TLC³) and 2) to stimulate a cross country discussion around how to effect a balance of factors (or create synergistic relationships) that would, on the one hand, encourage local autonomy, program flexibility, ultimate sustainability and ability to change within the program, while on the other hand, maintain accountability to the funder. Each site facilitated discussion groups within their own communities as well as participating in the cross site videoconference. The conference was intended to address the following issue: while researchers and funders have clear knowledge about the importance of programs and services for young children, the best way to implement and fund these programs is much less clear. The conference was stimulated by the positive experience of the Hincks-Dellcrest team in managing and evaluating the TLC³ project. The HDI team received considerable positive feedback from all who participated.

***National Evaluation Conference - Meaningful Evaluations of Community-Based Programs for Children: A Conversation: (April 2004)*.** To keep the conversation going, in the spring of 2004, the HDI team hosted a small national evaluation conference with a group of Canadian experts in research and evaluation of community based projects. The purpose of the 2-day meeting was to discuss the challenges in evaluating community-based programs and to consider different ways of ensuring that the outcomes of these evaluations are relevant and genuinely useful. Small group and large group discussions focused on the following three topics: 1) Being realistic about outcomes and measuring them effectively, 2) Practical but meaningful designs for community-based evaluations, and 3) Building evaluation capacity in community organizations.

Local, national, and international conference presentations. The HDI team with responsibility for local, national and international communications implemented a broad communication strategy that enabled TLC³ to share its experiences and learnings and seek out the experience and knowledge of others. Members of the HDI team have made numerous presentations at national and international conferences, meetings and symposia; produced journal articles; and met with interested individuals in government and research and with providers of services to children and families to talk about what was learned through TLC³. Appendix E lists conference and meeting presentations and posters, and journal articles.

7 Overall Learnings

One of the goals of the TLC³ project was to share knowledge and learnings. What follows is a summary of the project learnings based on final reports and on discussions among representatives of the sites, the Lawson Foundation, the National Advisory Committee, and the HDI team.

Balancing accountability and creativity

This project started with a commitment of stable, multi-year funding from the Lawson Foundation. It was “stable” funding in that the sites did not have to worry about losing financial support while they worked through implementation challenges. The funding was given on the basis of a site project proposal that had to fit within the criteria and goals of TLC³. But within those parameters, the sites were given freedom and were allowed to change implementation plans if they were not working well. It was assumed that the sites would evolve, and learning was considered a valuable part of the process.

Accountability was maintained through annual reporting, site visits, and attendance at the annual symposia. The funders chose not to impose rigid accountability mechanisms that would limit creativity. For example, some funders require projects to follow original proposals to the letter (whether or not plans are working out as expected) and to demonstrate that interim objectives have been met. Failure to comply on either count can be grounds for reduction or withdrawal of funding.

There was general consensus among TLC³ participants about the importance of stable, multi-year funding in allowing the local projects to blossom. Site projects were permitted to take risks, even to make mistakes, knowing they had time to recover and still make a success of their project.

Another positive factor that was identified was the level of personal interest shown by representatives of the Lawson Foundation. They avoided micro-managing the project, but made a point of getting to know the people involved at the sites and the national advisors personally. They made themselves available to the HDI management team for consultation at any time. This involvement gave them a deeper appreciation of the strengths and challenges of the project than they might otherwise have gained, had they chosen to exercise more remote control.

Connie Gardiner, who was President of the Board of the Foundation throughout the TLC³ period, said the experience with this project affirmed the wisdom of balancing “accountability with trust” and acting as a “supportive rather than an adversarial” partner with grant recipients. She said the Foundation learned that grant recipients can feel isolated and that it is a good idea to spend time getting to know and understand them.

Nurturing Site Projects

There was general agreement among the sites that the freedom to be creative and take risks allowed TLC³ to “take off” at the community level. They attributed that freedom and flexibility not only to the Foundation’s approach to funding, but also to the management style of the HDI team.

The HDI team framed its management style as being consistent with good parenting. The same factors that make for good parenting of young children – appropriate stimulation, supportive structures, and a secure, reflective, non-intrusive but reliably present relationship – also make for good management of competent and creative people and organizations. “I don’t think we expressed our approach in quite those terms in the beginning of this project,” said Dr. Cohen. “But I think it is an appropriate way to describe what we were aiming for – a nurturing of the optimal development of community site projects.”

Some of the structure created by the HDI team included: clear criteria for participation in TLC³ and a set of realistic goals, reasonable requirements for reporting on programs and budgets, and the necessity of evaluation. Appropriate stimulation was an important purpose of the annual symposia, which included the sites, the national advisors and the Lawson Foundation. Important concepts were explored at these events, including what sustainability meant for the TLC³ sites. The symposia also afforded opportunities for relationship-building among participants from different disciplines and different parts of the country.

The annual site visits provided another form of stimulation. Dr. Cohen saw the visits as opportunities for the sites to reflect on what they were doing and talk about problems in a non-threatening atmosphere of inquiry. The visits were a form of accountability. The sites were sent an outline of questions in advance so that they could think about and discuss their responses within their own group before the HDI team arrived. The visits also helped to build and sustain relationships between the management team and the sites. They helped to demonstrate that while HDI respected the sites’ ability to solve their own problems, the team was interested in the sites’ challenges and achievements and was available to give advice or support, as needed or requested.

“There is no substitute for direct, personal contact,” said Dr. Cohen. “Seeing the programs in operation and sitting down with the people involved for in-depth discussions gave me an understanding of the sites I would not have had, viewing them from an office in Toronto. The site visits served several purposes – reflection, accountability, management and support. After these visits, our Evaluation Coordinator would write up what we heard, and I would debrief our team at HDI to let them know if there was some response needed from us or if there was some situation we should be keeping an eye on.”

The relationship between the HDI team and the sites was based on mutual respect. “You tend to trust the people you know,” said Freda Martin. “We got to know each other. We trusted them and they trusted us.” Dr. Martin called attention to “parallel” relationships of trust, between the Lawson Foundation and the Hincks-Dellcrest team, between the HDI team and the sites, and ultimately between the sites and the families they served.

Sue Formosa, director of the Vancouver project, defined the cascading effect from a site perspective: “They were very respectful. We said: what do you want us to do? And they said to us: what do you think will work for you? Their approach gave us confidence, and then we turned around and did the same for the families. We truly turned the program over to the parents. We saw our role as guiding them to discovery of their relationship with their child. It worked wonderfully.”

Both Dr. Cohen and Dr. Martin noted that, in retrospect, the HDI management style worked well with program development, but slightly less well with the evaluation. The local project coordinators had less experience with evaluation, and some of them would have liked more direction and hands-on assistance. However, the HDI team could not do the evaluation for them. Since they were all so different and so geographically dispersed, it was simply not possible to hand out a template for everyone to use. “They tended to adopt fairly elaborate evaluation plans,” said Dr. Cohen. “One of the things that might have helped early on was to emphasize that the evaluation plans should be simple.”

Some Implementation Factors

Selecting site organizations with an existing administrative structure and a capacity for community development was seen as a good way to implement best practices for children and families quickly. This approach allowed TLC³ to maximize the available financial resources by contributing to program enrichment and enhancement, rather than investing in building a new organization. The host organizations had enough experience to be confident introducing new programs, seeking out new partners, managing a local project, identifying problems and solving them locally, and sharing what they learned.

The site organizations identified the importance of time and planning to put in place quality programs that meet the needs of local communities. Being inclusive – whether you are talking about including parents in programs, finding out what programs work for the community, involving staff in changing practices, or bringing partners on side – takes a lot of time and effort.

Having a shared vision for the project and feeling part of a community of interest – people committed to improving children’s life chances through early childhood development programs – helped to sustain the morale of local site teams through difficult periods in the implementation of their programs. It also inspired them to exceed their own expectations. It was recognized that both within the site teams and across the country, TLC³ stood for some shared principles, including:

- all families can benefit from help in nurturing their young children’s development;
- parents should be encouraged to get involved in programs for their young children;
- programs should build on the strengths of parents and children; and
- programs must be sensitive to cultural, linguistic and community diversity.

Every site had some implementation challenges to overcome. Some lost key staff members. Community economic circumstances and government funding regimes changed over the TLC³ period, creating ripple effects on organizations. Having a local team that could work together and problem-solve was considered an important success factor in overcoming such obstacles.

Building Bridges

There were different kinds of links developed through TLC³. Building bridges, particularly across traditional disciplinary divides, contributed to the project’s success.

At the local sites, a variety of professionals with different expertise worked together on behalf of young children and their parents. Speech language pathologists, early childhood educators, preschool teachers, home visitors, librarians, and other professionals all collaborated on TLC³ programs. The host TLC³ organizations developed new partnerships. In B.C., a spin-off of the partnerships created by the project led to the training of almost one thousand professionals in the *Parent-Child Mother Goose Program*. Bridges were also built at TLC³ sites between professionals and parents, and some parents were trained to cross over and become program leaders and facilitators.

At the local and national levels, links were encouraged between the academic community and the service provider community. Bridging the academe-community gap remains a challenge. Sites that encountered some difficulties finding a good fit with a researcher or evaluation consultant suggested that positive relationships are possible only if there is mutual respect, willingness to work as a team, and an appreciation of the complexity of measuring outcomes in the changing contexts of family and community life.

Where the relationships were a success, which was in most cases, they were not one-way, with researchers transferring their knowledge to the community. There was a knowledge exchange. The national advisors to TLC³ all talked about what they had learned from the sites and how impressed they were with the expertise and experience of the site participants. The advisors also said they learned from each other. They identified a culture of knowledge-sharing that had been created through this project. The site participants said they learned not only from the advisors and the HDI team, but from each other as well.

Sustainability

It was important to consider the issue of sustainability relatively early in the process. There was a certain amount of stress created when sustainability was raised around the mid-point of TLC³, but it prompted site teams to start thinking about what sustainability would look like. Some formed special committees to examine options for the future.

Sustainability could be interpreted in different ways. In one sense, gains achieved through TLC³ were sustained through training of professionals and parents and changes in organizational cultures so that language and cognitive development strategies became part of a range of programs for young children. Sustainability was also achieved through new partnerships that had not existed before TLC³ came along. New resources that were created to stimulate early language and cognitive development, like the *ALI* program, were another form of sustainability.

It must be said, however, that the main strategy for sustainability was fundraising – finding a new local community funder or becoming part of a government-funded initiative. There were no easy solutions for the funding challenge. However, it helped that the TLC³ site organizations had earned credibility in their communities.

It should also be pointed out that some TLC³ activities were sustained at all the sites one year after the end of TLC³ funding, but there is no guarantee that the host organizations will not run

into financial difficulties down the road. Unless or until there is a public system for early childhood development accessible to all families, voluntary sector community organizations, like those involved in TLC³, that rely on private donors and/or insecure, time-limited, piecemeal government funding will continue to struggle to make ends meet.

8 Final Thoughts

This report began by noting the growing interest in local solutions to national issues in early childhood development. The TLC³ sites across Canada demonstrated local capacity to provide a range of strategies, appropriate to local needs, to stimulate early language and cognition. Young children and their parents benefited from participation in the programs.

Such findings point us not in the direction of a single solution for how to optimize early childhood development – nor was anyone expecting to discover a “magic bullet” – but rather towards an appreciation of the multiple, creative pathways that can be used to successfully and sensitively support young children and their parents and caregivers.

The learnings of TLC³ also suggest that there is no magic in what community organizations need. They need adequate time to develop suitable strategies, stable and sufficient funding, the flexibility necessary to foster innovation, balanced against reasonable expectations for accountability and evaluation.

TLC³ started out with organizations that had experience in offering quality programs and listening to their communities. Such organizations blossomed with management/funder support and advice that was consistently available, but not overly prescriptive or intrusive.

A shared mission helped to keep this project on track, as did a shared sense of being part of a team of people across the country who were working on behalf of young children and their parents. Personal contact and ongoing communication over the years helped to build trust among diverse participants within the project and to widen the project’s sphere of influence to wider networks.

Sustainability does not have to be measured exclusively in terms of new funding. Training in new approaches and modeling new behaviours can also create some lasting effects, as can the creation of new resources for early childhood educators and parents to use to support early language and cognition.

The experience with TLC³ confirms what the late, great Dr. Dan Offord of the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton was always saying: we should help all kids and reach out to those at risk. TLC³’s site organizations were well positioned to offer programs for all families in a neighbourhood or at a centre, while at the same time ensuring that the children and parents most in need of support would get it.

One of the interesting features of this project was that it operated at the local and at the national level in a way that was, according to participants, beyond the ordinary. It has created a small,

but widening, community that draws on people across Canada to brainstorm ideas. The HDI team has worked to keep the lines of communication open and strengthen the ties among geographic communities and communities of interest. In the process, community and national networks in early childhood development have been strengthened.

When he spoke to the wrap-up symposium on the TLC³ evaluation in 2003, Dan Offord said that this project was “on the fringe” where the risks are high, but so are the potential rewards. If, at the beginning, the risks seemed very high to all those involved in TLC³, in the end the rewards have more than compensated.

Appendix A.

National Advisory Committee Members
Dana Brynelsen , Infant Development Programme of BC - Office of the Provincial Advisor
Carol Crill Russell , Invest in Kids
Jane Fitzgerald , Nova Scotia Community Services, Family & Children's Services
Robert Glossop , The Vanier Institute of the Family
Hillel Goelman , University of British Columbia*
Sharon Griffin , Clark University, Frances L. Hiatt School of Psychology*
Mandy Kay-Raining Bird , Dalhousie University, School of Human Communication Disorders
Gerard Malcuit , Universite du Quebec a Montreal, Department de Psychologie
Anne McKeough , The University of Calgary, Department of Educational Psychology
Alan Pence , University of Victoria, School of Child and Youth Care
Ray Peters , Queens University, Department of Psychology
Genese Warr-Leeper , University of Western Ontario, Elborn College, Communication Sciences and Disorders

* Not on committee for entire project

Appendix B.

Programs used by the TLC³ Sites

ALI – University of Quebec at Montreal – Dr. Gerard Malcuit

Baby Talk – based on Keys to Caregiving - www.ncast.org/p-keys.asp

Bright Start Cognitive Curriculum – www.charlesbridge.com/school/brightstart.htm

Child as Scientist - University of Calgary – Dr. Anne McKeough

Come Read with Me – www.nald.ca

High Scope strategies - www.highscope.org

It Takes Two to Talk -- www.hanen.org

Keys to Caregiving – www.ncast.org/p-keys.asp

Learning Language and Loving It - www.hanen.org

Parents As Teachers – www.patnc.org

Parent Child Mother Goose Program – www.nald.ca/mothergooseprogram

PRINTS (Parents' Roles Interacting with Teachers) – www.nald.ca/prints

Reggio Emilia approach – many websites e.g., <http://www.latelier.org/usefullinks/>

Story Crafting – University of Calgary– Dr. Anne McKeough

You Make the Difference –) - www.hanen.org

Appendix C.

Site Demographic Information

	Dartmouth	St. Remi	Toronto	Regina	MLTC	Calgary	Vancouver
Number of Participating Children	N=350	N=477	N=110	N=681	N=165	N=140	N=174
Number of Children with MIS	N=74	N=112/N=50	N=110/N=63	N=199	N=146	N=49	N=57
Programs Involved in							
	Baby Talk Parent and Tot You Make the Difference Preschool	ALI – Bebe ALI – Bambin ALI- Explorateur	Jumpstart PCMG Tamil Homevisitor HANEN Group Speech Language Pathologist	Come Read With Me Preschool PRINTS PAT Crafts Community Kitchen	Daycare	PAT PCMG Toy and Book Lending Library	PCMG
Age of children							
Mean range	2.93 years 0-6 years	2.37 years 2 m – 5.5 years	2.76 years 0.61-4.89 years	3.38 years 0-5 years	2.40 years 0-6 years	1.62 years 4 m – 3.75 years	7.7 months 1-15 months
Sex of children							
Boys Girls	51% 49%	47% 53%	61% 39%	41% 58%	48% 52%	39% 61%	47% 53%
Main Language Spoken							
English Dene Chinese Napalese French Tamil Other	100% 0 0 0 0 0 0	6% 0 0 0 94% 0 0	8% 0 1% 0 0 68% 14%	100% 0 0 0 0 0 0	97% 3% 0 0 0 0 0	91% 0 6% 3% 0 0 0	74% 0 13% 0 0 0 13%
First Nations Ancestry	13%		0	84%	91%	2%	9%
Childcare							
In childcare Not in childcare	30% 70%	63% 37%	21% 79%	27% 73%	91% 9%	88% 12%	17% 83%
Method of childcare							
Childcare centre In own home by relative In other home by relative In own home by non-relative In other home by non-relative Brothers and Sisters Other	5% 32% 9% 14% 27% 14% 0	55% 6% 10% 3% 26% 0 0	46% 0 0 7% 15% 0 31%	15% 23% 15% 17% 31% 0 0	90% 2% 8% 0 0 0 0	81% 0 2% 0 16% 0 0	0 20% 20% 30% 30% 0 0

	Dartmouth	St. Remi	Toronto	Regina	MLTC	Calgary	Vancouver
Number of hours per week in childcare							
Less than 20 hours	46%		54%	32%	31%	7%	40%
20 – 39 hours	45%		38%	49%	23%	35%	50%
40 hours +	9%		8%	19%	53%	58%	10%
Parent's highest priority for their child							
Language	30%	39%	79%	26%	48%	30%	25%
Hearing Problems	10%	0	0	13%	5%	7%	5%
Motor Development	1.5%	12%	2%	0	0	5%	5%
Sleeping	1.5%	2%	0	5%	2.5%	2%	14%
Eating	1.5%	2%	3%	2%	5%	0	21%
Behaviour Management	0	22%	0	3%	10%	2%	7%
Emotional Regulation	6%	2%	2%	13%	5%	0	5%
Social Interaction	16%	2%	8%	5%	12.5%	11%	3%
Parent-child interactions	1.5	5%	0	18%	2.5%	5%	2%
Attachment	8%	0	0	0	0	0	2%
Other	24%	20%	4%	15%	2.5%	39%	9%
Frequency of literacy activities							
Tell stories without books	69%		46%	70%	63%	53%	45%
Read storybooks	96%		59%	95%	87%	92%	88%
Look at picture books	90%		63%	86%	86%	88%	86%
Sing children's songs	89%		62%	80%	82%	92%	95%
Recite nursery rhymes	69%		62%	72%	77%	80%	83%
Write or pretend to write	63%		59%	75%	75%	37%	5%
General health of child							
Excellent	56%	49%	11%	35%	49%	67%	52%
Very good	37%	37%	45%	31%	35%	27%	35%
Good	4%	14%	29%	29%	14%	6%	12%
Fair	0	0	15%	5%	0	0	0
Poor	0	0	0	0	2%	0	2%
Ear infections							
Yes	58%	54%	70%	51%	61%	45%	14%
No	42%	46%	30%	49%	39%	55%	86%
Frequency of ear infections							
1-2 times	38%	37%	41%	45%	50%	46%	100%
3-4 times	30%	26%	34%	23%	25%	36%	0
5 or more	32%	37%	25%	32%	25%	18%	0

	Dartmouth	St. Remi	Toronto	Regina	MLTC	Calgary	Vancouver
Marital status (mother)							
Two parent household	55%	88%	96%	48%	60%	90%	93%
One parent household	45%	12%	4%	52%	40%	10%	7%
Country born (mother)							
Canada	92%	98%	5%	100%	99%	78%	59%
U.S.A.	3%	0	0	0	0	4%	0
Lebanon	1.5%	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indonesia	1.5%	0	0	0	0	0	0
Germany	0	0	0	0	1%	0	0
Australia	0	0	0	0	0	2%	0
China	0	0	1%	0	0	2%	9%
England	0	0	0	0	0	2%	4%
Hong Kong	0	0	0	0	0	2%	5%
Iran	0	0	0	0	0	2%	0
Korea	0	0	0	0	0	2%	4%
Nepal	0	0	0	0	0	2%	0
Tanzania	0	0	0	0	0	2%	0
Venezuela	0	0	0	0	0	2%	0
India	0	0	3%	0	0	0	2%
Malaysia	0	0	0	0	0	0	4%
Bosnia	0	0	0	0	0	0	2%
Laos	0	0	0	0	0	0	2%
Mexico	0	0	0	0	0	0	2%
Peru	0	0	0	0	0	0	2%
Phillipines	0	0	5%	0	0	0	7%
France	0	2%	0	0	0	0	0
Sri Lanka	0	0	67%	0	0	0	0
Vietnam	0	0	2%	0	0	0	0
Sudan	0	0	2%	0	0	0	0
Pakistan	0	0	2%	0	0	0	0
Jamaica	0	0	2%	0	0	0	0
Ethiopia	0	0	2%	0	0	0	0
Bangladesh	0	0	2%	0	0	0	0
Algeria	0	0	1%	0	0	0	0
Somalia	0	0	1%	0	0	0	0
Kenya	0	0	1%	0	0	0	0
Guyana	0	0	1%	0	0	0	0
Eritrea	0	0	1%	0	0	0	0
Brazil	0	0	1%	0	0	0	0

	Dartmouth	St. Remi	Toronto	Regina	MLTC	Calgary	Vancouver
Main language spoken at home with children							
English	97%	10%	8%	100%	89%	92%	75%
French	1.5%	90%	0	0	0	0	0
Lebanese	1.5%	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dene	0	0	0	0	9%	0	0
Cree	0	0	0	0	3%	0	0
Chinese	0	0	1%	0	0	4%	13%
Napalese	0	0	0	0	0	2%	0
Spanish	0	0	1%	0	0	2%	4%
Korean	0	0	0	0	0	0	2%
Ilokano	0	0	0	0	0	0	2%
Ilonggo	0	0	0	0	0	0	2%
Urdu	0	0	1%	0	0	0	2%
Tamil	0	0	68%	0	0	0	0
Hindi	0	0	4%	0	0	0	0
Tagalog	0	0	3%	0	0	0	0
Arabic	0	0	3%	0	0	0	0
Vietnamese	0	0	3%	0	0	0	0
Tigrinya	0	0	1%	0	0	0	0
Amheric	0	0	1%	0	0	0	0
Haradic	0	0	1%	0	0	0	0
Bengali	0	0	1%	0	0	0	0
Somali	0	0	1%	0	0	0	0
Highest level of education (mother)							
Less than grade 12	18%	21%	69%	47%	33%	0	7%
Grade 12 diploma	26%	13%	9%	26%	23%	4%	7%
Some post-secondary education	28%	21%	12%	21%	17%	8%	18%
Diploma or certificate	11%	23%	4%	2%	12%	12%	16%
Bachelor's degree	15%	15%	7%	4%	12%	25%	45%
Master's degree	3%	3%	0	0	1%	33%	7%
PhD, professional degree (MD etc.)	0	3%	0	0	0	18%	0
Highest level of education (father)							
Less than grade 12	16%	29%	73%	38%	52%	0	8%
Grade 12 diploma	27%	15%	5%	25%	12%	14%	6%
Some post-secondary education	36%	24%	6%	16%	19%	10%	8%
Diploma or certificate	2%	15%	5%	5%	8%	6%	19%
Bachelor's degree	9%	12%	7%	16%	8%	20%	46%
Master's degree	7%	3%	5%	0	0	16%	14%
PhD	4%	3%	0	0	0	27%	0

	Dartmouth	St. Remi	Toronto	Regina	MLTC	Calgary	Vancouver
Mother's main activity							
In the workforce full-time or part-time	39%	55%	9%	25%	64%	78%	21%
Stay-at-home parent	60%	35%	90%	63%	8%	2%	79%
School	0	3%	2%	9%	24%	22%	0
Looking for work	1%	3%	0	1%	0	2%	0
Other	0	5%	0	2%	3%	0	0
Fathers main activity							
In the workforce full-time or part-time	83%	92%	91%	36%	73%	80%	94%
Stay-at-home parent	5%	0	2%	34%	0	7%	0
School	2%	3%	2%	14%	14%	11%	6%
Recovering from illness/on disability	7%	3%	2%	3%	0	0	0
Looking for work	2%	0	4%	13%	1%	0	0
Other	0	3%	0	1%	12%	2%	0
Main source of income							
Wages or salaries (including self-employment)	58%	85%	77%	26%	87%	96%	91%
Social assistance	39%	5%	21%	31%	6%	2%	5%
Child Tax Benefit	1%	2%	0	28%	3%	0	0
E.I., Old Age Security	0	2%	2%	5%	0	0	0
Other	1%	5%	0	10%	5%	2%	4%
Total annual income							
less than \$20,000	56%	8%	49%	78%	58%	0	19%
\$21,000 - \$40,000	27%	19%	44%	19%	33%	16%	17%
\$41,000 - \$60,000	13%	35%	7%	2%	13%	27%	36%
\$61,000 - \$80,000	4%	23%	0	0	3%	34%	13%
\$81,000 +	0	15%	0	0	0	45%	15%

Appendix D.

Standardized measures used in evaluation

Vancouver

Communications and Symbolic Behavioral Scales – Developmental Profile – Wetherby, A. M., & Prizant, B. M. (2002). Paul Brookes Publisher: Baltimore, MD.

Language Use Inventory – not yet published, Contact Dr. Daniela O’Neill, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Waterloo.

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Appendix E.

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