

# The EDI TEACHER NEWSLETTER



## Welcome

On behalf of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet and the Government of Manitoba, I am pleased to introduce the fourth issue of Manitoba's Early Development Instrument (EDI) Teacher Newsletter.

It is truly a privilege to, once again, chair the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet as we, along with government departments, school divisions and community-based partners, fulfill the work of our Healthy Child Manitoba Strategy. As minister of the new department of Manitoba Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, I know that the key to a healthy and prosperous province is the prevention of illness and injury. And, because a healthy start in childhood sets the stage for lifelong health and well-being, supports for children and youth are an integral component of the work that we do at Manitoba Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors.

## Our Children Deserve the Best

The best possible results for Manitoba's children. This is the vision of Healthy Child Manitoba. With the recent release of Manitoba's third year of provincial EDI data, we have now reported on our progress toward this goal (View the new 2008/09 Provincial EDI Report at: [www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/edi/edi2008.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/edi/edi2008.pdf)). The good news is that, through our collective efforts, we have reduced vulnerability and increased school readiness, in children's language and thinking skills.

But there is still more to be done. Three years of provincial EDI data verifies that, unfortunately, one out of four Manitoba children is vulnerable at school entry. This means that, every year in Manitoba, over 3,000 Kindergarten students start school with significant developmental disadvantages. Because the EDI is a good predictor of children's school performances in later years and high school completion rates, the education forecast for these children is, unfortunately, poor. At the same time, the related health and social costs will be high.

## Prevention is Key

So what can we do? The key is prevention. Supporting children in their preschool years is absolutely critical to ensuring their fair start in school. This focus on early childhood development continues to be a key priority of Healthy Child Manitoba and its partners (view Healthy Child Manitoba's Early Childhood Development Progress Report at: [www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/ecd/ecd\\_reports.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/ecd/ecd_reports.html)).

Our provincial EDI data also tells us that children who live in poverty have a very high rate of vulnerability and risk. Manitobans agree that this inequity is unacceptable. We are working toward equity for all through supports such as:

- All Aboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Building Student Success with Aboriginal Parents Initiative
- Families First Home Visiting Program
- Bright Futures initiatives (ex: Community School Investigators' Summer Learning Program, Power Up, Career Trek)
- Student Success Initiative pilot
- Community Schools with on-site Parent-Child Centres pilot

Of course, we could not do this important work without the support and collaboration of our school-based and community-based partners. Equally important, we could not monitor and steer this work without Manitoba's EDI data. On behalf of Healthy Child Manitoba, I thank you for your important contribution in collecting Manitoba's EDI data and for the work that you do to support the best possible outcomes for Manitoba's children.

## Jim Rondeau

Chair of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet  
Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors

# My, how the EDI has grown!

From its beginnings in 2002/03 to its current biennial province-wide mandate, the EDI and its role in steering, monitoring and evaluating the provincial Healthy Child Manitoba Strategy has grown substantially. Following are some examples of how the EDI is being used within the Government of Manitoba, in Canada, and across the globe, to promote healthy early childhood development:

## Measuring performance

In Manitoba, the EDI is a widely accepted performance indicator in the progress measurement reports of many provincial government departments, such as Manitoba Education's Profile for Learning, Manitoba Civil Service Commission's Provincial Performance Measures Annual

Reports, Manitoba Conservation's Provincial Sustainability for Manitoba Reports and Healthy Child Manitoba's Early Childhood Development Progress reports.

## Influencing policy and program development

In Manitoba, the EDI continues to influence provincial and community level policy and program development to meet the evidence-based needs of communities, such as Triple P's Program Implementation Plan, Manitoba Education's Community Schools Partnership Initiative and Manitoba Family Services and Consumer Affairs' Family Choices Early Learning and Child Care Plan.

## Supporting national and international partnerships

The pan-Canadian EDI Committee, established in 2008, continues its work using the EDI as a national indicator of early childhood development across Canada. It launched the pan-Canadian Mapping Project ([www.councilecd.ca/?q=pancanadianedi\\_maps](http://www.councilecd.ca/?q=pancanadianedi_maps)).

The national and international profile of the EDI has risen dramatically as more and more Canadian jurisdictions and countries adopt the EDI (ex: B.C., ON, AB, Sask., U.S, Australia, Jamaica, Kosovo, Chile, Mexico and New Zealand) to get a global measurement of children's well-being.

The first-ever International EDI conference, hosted by the Offord Centre for Child Studies, was held in Hamilton in June 2010. Speakers from around the globe gathered to share their stories about how the EDI is being used to support healthy early childhood development in their countries. For conference presentations and resource materials, go to [www.offordcentre.com/readiness/SRL\\_project.html](http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/SRL_project.html)

## Shaping the Future

Preparing for its fourth provincial EDI collection this spring, Manitoba continues to further the success of the EDI by sharing local level data maps with the community. Our thanks to the Kindergarten teachers who collect the EDI, the school divisions that support the collections and the community stakeholders who use their EDI data to support the best possible outcomes for their community's children.



# Bridging and Building in River East

Creating student success is the goal of all community programming initiatives developed and implemented over the past several years in the River East Transcona School Division (RETSD). A critical factor to student success is family involvement in education – beginning at birth and continuing throughout the preschool and school years.

By intentionally creating stronger links and partnerships with parents, agency professionals, service providers and the community at large, we can enhance the school experiences of our students and increase their chances for a successful education and life.

## Early Childhood Programs

RETSD, as part of the Early Childhood Matters Coalition (a Healthy Child Manitoba initiative), offers a variety of free programs designed for parents and their preschool children to attend and enjoy together. Families may register to attend weekly programs or single-session programs. These programs, developed through the collaboration of early childhood professionals and division curriculum consultants, include Baby Bumblebees, 1, 2 Buckle My Shoe, Once Upon a Rhyme and many more. Parents may also choose to drop in with their child at one of the many Stay & Play programs located throughout the community.

As these preschool children get closer to entering Kindergarten, the school division provides a range of transition supports to help raise the comfort level and lower the anxiety of children and their parents as they experience this significant life milestone. These

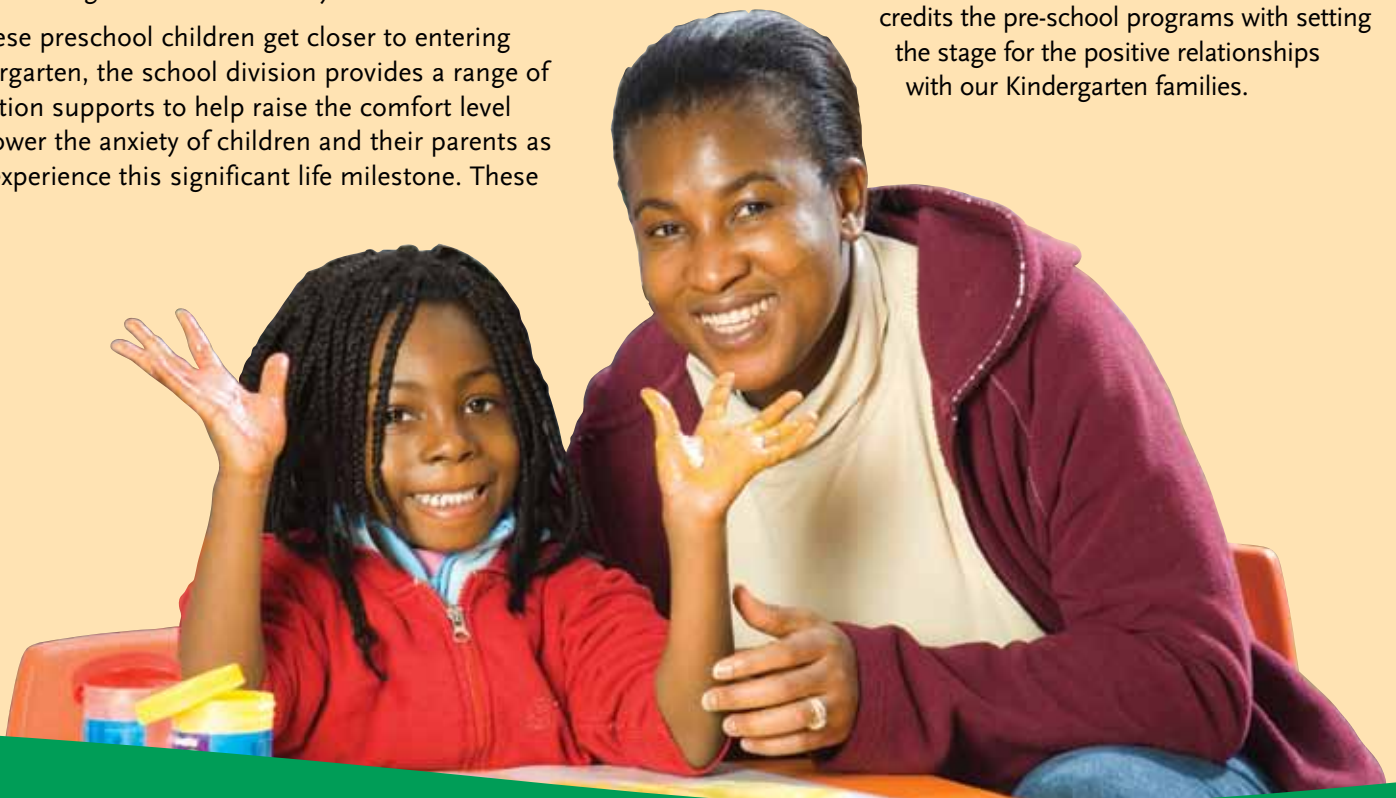
supports include Welcome to Kindergarten bags, a series of Growing & Learning Days, Kinder Camps and the Literacy Links home visiting program. These supports begin in the early spring and run until the end of August each year.

## Parents, teachers praise programs

“I participated in multiple pre-school programs with both of my children and I was extremely impressed with the quality of the programs,” says Cheryl Blahey, a parent of two young boys. “The program facilitators were extremely enthusiastic and engaged both the parents and the children. The programs allowed parents to connect with their children and other members of the community.

“There was definite benefit in having these programs located within the schools, as it made my son’s transition to Kindergarten much easier.”

Laura Macey, a RETSD Kindergarten teacher, credits the pre-school programs with setting the stage for the positive relationships with our Kindergarten families.



# Transcona School Division

"The programs reach out to parents and build partnerships with families long before children come to Kindergarten," says Laura. "Families of preschool children are engaged in high quality learning experiences that get children and their parents excited about the upcoming adventure of Kindergarten. Participating in these programs allows parents to come to Kindergarten knowing that we care deeply about their children and their children's early learning experiences."

## Programs for New Parents, New Manitobans

"As a new mom, attending early learning programs with my baby was such a positive and rewarding experience," says Kelly Martino, a program participant turned program co-ordinator. "We loved the songs/rhymes and quality time with other families and looked forward to attending each week. I feel so incredibly fortunate to have been given the opportunity to facilitate these programs and share the joy of reading/rhyming with other parents/grandparents.

"I know, from personal experience, how important and special these programs are to the young participants and their families. Through the years, my daughter and I have grown together in our passion for learning and I now feel a deeper connection to my community."

Vera Schroeder, settlement co-ordinator, celebrates the development of local, community-based language programs that successfully build ongoing connections with newcomers to Canada and their preschool children.

"Newcomer women, often isolated in the community due to the responsibilities of caring for preschool children, find a warm, welcoming environment in which to learn English," says Vera. "While mothers are accessing multi-level language learning, their preschool children learn and grow through the high quality early learning program offered simultaneously."

Cathy Spack, speech-language pathologist in the division and one of the program facilitators for the preschool programs, sees the benefits first-hand.

"Parents receive modelling for interaction with their children that supports school experience and promotes literacy,

communication, and academic skills," says Cathy. "As well, parents network and continue to stay connected after the program is over which builds a real sense of community."

## Giving children their best start

Sarah French, program co-ordinator says that participating actively from the earliest years is an important and positive way to ensure children feel secure, are valued and have a sense of belonging.

"The RETSD preschool programs have been designed to develop this and to broaden the range of children's learning experiences," says Sarah. "The programs also help them to be confident, eager and enthusiastic learners who are looking forward to school.

"Our goal is to create positive attitudes towards oneself and others. We want to create an atmosphere that encourages exploration, appreciation and respect for their environment and stimulates children's interest and imagination."

## Strengthening community-school partnerships

"We want to build relationships with parents, as early as we can," says Sandra Herbst, RETSD assistant superintendent. "These relationships are the foundation of a critical partnership between home and school. Our early learning parent-child programs allow us to do that and everyone benefits – the children, their parents, the teachers, and the community at large. We recognize that parents are their children's first teachers and it is this belief that supports and enhances the success of our students throughout their school years.

Building connections between our schools and parents is the key to our approach at RETSD, and to ensure that our approach is working, we look to our EDI data. According to our most recent 2008-09 EDI report, which shows extremely positive results, we are confident that our division's approach to bridging and building relationships between schools and community is working."

# Tansi from Opaskwayak Cree Nation

OCN is a thriving community in the NOR-MAN region, home to over 4,500 people of Cree descent. With a strong economic base, our self-governing First Nations community offers a diverse range of programs and activities for children and families, including Aboriginal culture camps, canoe races, fishing derbies, arts and crafts, festivals, parks, sports and recreation, walking trails, pow-wow competitions and more.

## Education is key

Quality education is a key priority for our community. We have over 1,020 children who attend our community's K to 12 school – Joe A. Ross School. We have over 150 students attending post-secondary institutions across Canada.

Joe A. Ross School has been in operation for over 20 years. It offers an English academic program to prepare students for university or college entry. It also has a co-operative education program that prepares students to enter the workforce after graduation. Some examples of our school programming include the Virtues character building program, life skills programming and reading and math recovery programs.

## Cultural and co-curricular activities

We also offer a wide variety of co-curricular activities including music, intramural and competitive team sports, clubs, student council, social activities and field trips. The school also provides cultural education through our Cree Immersion program (K-Grade 4) and outdoor/northern ecology education program, for grades K-12. Our goal is to create bright futures for our students as they become multilingual leaders who are knowledgeable in Opaskwayak traditions, culture, heritage and language.

Of course, we recognize the importance of children's early years in laying the foundation for lifelong successful learning. As such, our community's early childhood programs – the Hilda Young Child Care Centre, Aboriginal Head Start program and our nursery program – work with young children, their parents and families to provide traditional, intellectual, emotional, social and physical activities to promote healthy child development.



## Our First EDI Collection

My role with Joe A. Ross School is to provide services and programming that meet the educational and developmental needs of our youngest students. To help in this planning process, we made the decision to implement the EDI in our school in 2008/09. We are proud to be the first Band school to collect the EDI in Manitoba. We will continue to use it in the following ways:

- identifying and planning for the education needs of students in the early years (K to Grade 3) – We have shared our school's EDI results with our administration and Board of Education staff. Our EDI data builds on the results of our Dial 3 assessments conducted in pre-Kindergarten. While not an individual assessment tool, completing the EDI has been a support for teachers in identifying students that need monitoring for possible difficulties and early interventions.

- social skill development – We have identified social development in the early years as a priority in our school. We will use the EDI to track our progress in this area as we organize Positive Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) workshops, life skills training, Roots of Empathy and Healthy Buddies.
- We have also shared – and will continue to share – our school's EDI data with our community stakeholders, including the NOR-MAN parent-child coalition, our Aboriginal Head Start, child care centre, nursery program, Maternal Child Health and Public Health Authority and parents.

Joe A. Ross School is well into another busy school year and we look forward to collecting our second wave of EDI data this spring. Ekosi!

### Ida Moore

EDI Co-ordinator for Joe A. Ross School

