

EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE

KINGSTON, FRONTENAC, LENNOX & ADDINGTON

2008 REVIEW



UNITED WAY SUCCESS BY 6
EVALUATION & MONITORING COMMITTEE

SUCCESS BY 6 EVALUATION & MONITORING COMMITTEE

Charlotte Rosenbaum, Chair
Charlotte Rosenbaum Consulting Services

Laura Austin
City of Kingston Children's Services

Rachelle Blanchette
Ministry of Community & Social Services, Ministry of Children & Youth Services

Laurie Dixon
Data Analysis Coordinator, Kingston and the Islands

Tara Donovan
KFLA Public Health

Mary Jo Dowker
Pathways for Children and Youth

Kim Greek
Frontenac County Child Care Centres

Kim Hockey
United Way serving KFL&A

Megan Hughes
Data Analysis Coordinator, Hastings, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington

Kathy MacRae
KFLA Public Health

Ray Peters
Better Beginnings, Better Futures Project Queen's University

Virginia Sheriff
Limestone District School Board

Bhavana Varma
United Way serving KFL&A

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW	4
1.1 Approach and Method	4
1.2 Overview – the big picture	5
1.3 Access to Quality Care	6
1.4 Human Resources	6
1.5 Questions for Consideration	6
2. REVIEW OF INDICATORS	7
2.1 Population Trends	7
2.2 Early Learning and Child Care Availability	9
2.3 Child Care Demand & Waiting Lists	12
2.4 Children with Special Needs	13
2.5 Subsidized Child Care Spaces	13
2.6 Funding	14
2.7 Readiness to Learn	14
2.7.1 Early Development Instrument (EDI)	14
2.7.2 EDI Results – KFL&A	15
2.6.3 Preschool/Kindergarten Program Development Instrument (PPDI)	16
2.6.4 Ontario Early Learning Advisor	17
2.8 Quality Standards	18
Centre-Based Care	18
Home-Based Care	18
Parent Education.....	18
2.9 Infrastructure	19
The Best Start Network.....	19
Barriers to Expansion	19
Centre Supports	19
2.10 Recruitment and Retention	20
3. STRENGTHS – AREAS TO BUILD ON	20
Awareness & Policy Changes	21
Access to Quality Care	21
Readiness to Learn	21
Quality Standards	21
Recruitment and Retention	21
4. RECOMMENDATIONS	22

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The groundbreaking work of the Hon. Margaret Norrie McCain and Dr. J. Fraser Mustard¹ provided both the neuro-scientific evidence of brain development from conception to age six as well as concrete recommendations to maximize children's learning capacity during these years. Subsequently, there have been many early learning initiatives in Ontario and throughout Canada.

In this report we refer to 'early learning' along with 'child care' to emphasize the essential link between the care of our young children and the learning environments in which this care takes place. We have defined 'early learning' using the Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning definition:²

The term "Early Learning" refers to: "*settings for young children that provide both care and education. A caring, nurturing environment that supports learning and early development is an essential component of a framework of early learning.*"

Every experience in a child's early life has an impact on his/her development now and in the future. Parents and families are the first and most powerful influence on children's early learning and development. Early learning programs need reciprocal partnerships with parents, families and communities.³

1.1 Approach and Method

It has been the Success By 6 Evaluation and Monitoring Committee's task to assemble a report on early learning and child care in KFL&A which will enable the Council of Partners to decide on how best to address early learning and child care opportunities and challenges.

The Evaluation and Monitoring Committee representation includes educators, researchers, and municipal and provincial representatives who have compiled and generously shared the information presented in this report.

The Committee has brought together national, provincial and local data to paint a picture of the early learning and child care environment. We have selected a number of indicators that are relevant to this analysis:

- population trends
- early learning and child care availability
- subsidized child care spaces
- child care demands and waiting lists
- funding
- readiness to learn
- quality standards
- infrastructure
- recruitment and retention

We have analyzed this information in terms of areas of strengths as well as barriers to early learning and child care and have drafted recommendations suggesting in what ways the Council of Partners may wish to take action.

The Committee's position on early learning and child care is straightforward, i.e. *that all parents should have access to high quality early learning environments for their children and they should have the tools and resources to make informed choices.*

Our analysis, while based on a wealth of information, was limited by availability of some data, i.e. lack of information on unlicensed care providers. The reader should not assume a bias toward a particular type of child care due to this lack of available information.

1.2 Overview – the big picture

National and provincial statistics show some clear trends⁴:

- The number of children 0-5 yrs is decreasing in all regions in Canada.
- More than half of children 6 mos to 5 yrs in Canada are in some type of non-parental care (60% of children (all ages) have mothers working outside the home).

Table 1 Proportion of children aged six months to five years in child care by age⁵

	1994-1995	2002-2003
	% in child care	
Total Children 6 months – 5 years	41.9	53.6
Child Age		
Six months to under one year	36.0	28.6*
One year	43.3	56.1
Two years	44.5	58.1
Three years	42.4	57.7
Four years	41.5	55.7
Five years	40.8	53.1
Ontario	43.8	50.5

*decline may be due to the amendment to the *Employment Insurance Act* that increased combined maternity and parental leave from 25 to 50 weeks.

- There has been an increase in percentage of children in licensed child care arrangements and a drop in the percentage of children in care with a non-relative in or out of the home.
- In Ontario over the last 20 years, child care policy has seesawed dramatically resulting in much wasted effort and resources; The 1999 Early Years Study⁶ put the importance of early learning on both the national and provincial agendas; currently the federal government and Ontario government have different philosophies & policies re: early learning and child care.

In a 2007 article in the *Toronto Star*⁷, Dr. Fraser Mustard claimed to be ‘giving up’ due to Canada’s failure to support early learning initiatives which would encompass a range of universally available programs and resources.

“Just one-third of parents are doing a great job. The rest are okay or even godawful.”

“If you want a highly competent population with limited behaviour problems and no violence, then you don’t have any choice but to invest in early childhood development... Since parents have the dominant effect on a child, you want to make damn certain you give parents every opportunity to be good.”

- The Canadian Labour Council issued a child care report card for Ontario 2000-2007. Evaluated on the basis of affordability, quality & staff wages, and accessibility, Ontario scored an overall grade of “D”.

1.3 Access to Quality Care⁸

- The majority of funding for child care comes from parent fees which limits access to early learning and quality care arrangements for many families.
- In all provinces, regulated child care spaces have increased; in Ontario, subsidy eligibility requirements have changed to allow more access.
- In Ontario, the plan (Sept 2010) to provide a full-day of learning for 4 and 5 year olds will be a significant change in access. See Ontario Early Learning Advisor in section 2.6.4.
- Quebec is the 'litmus test' for government financed universal child care at \$7/day – reports on quality have been mixed.

1.4 Human Resources

- Throughout Canada, the child care workforce is characterized by low wages and poor benefits—leading to recruitment problems, high turnover, and lower quality child care.⁹
- The Ontario government has recently established a college for early childhood educators. It is a professional self-regulatory body whose purpose is to protect the public with a focus on qualifications and quality standards of practice for early childhood educators. Other professions such as physicians, nurses, and social workers are regulated professionals with associated colleges.

1.5 Questions for Consideration

- What are the challenges faced by parents seeking high quality early learning and child care?
- What strategies, partnerships and community initiatives are needed to ensure high quality early learning and child care resources for all parents?
- What is the capacity/need for ECE graduates in early learning and child care in KFL&A?
- How can the local data be used to promote a better understanding and improvements in early learning and child care for individual communities?

The data presented in this report will begin to address these important considerations.

2. REVIEW OF INDICATORS

This section reviews in detail a number of indicators which will aid in understanding the early learning and child care environment in KFL&A.

2.1 Population Trends ¹⁰

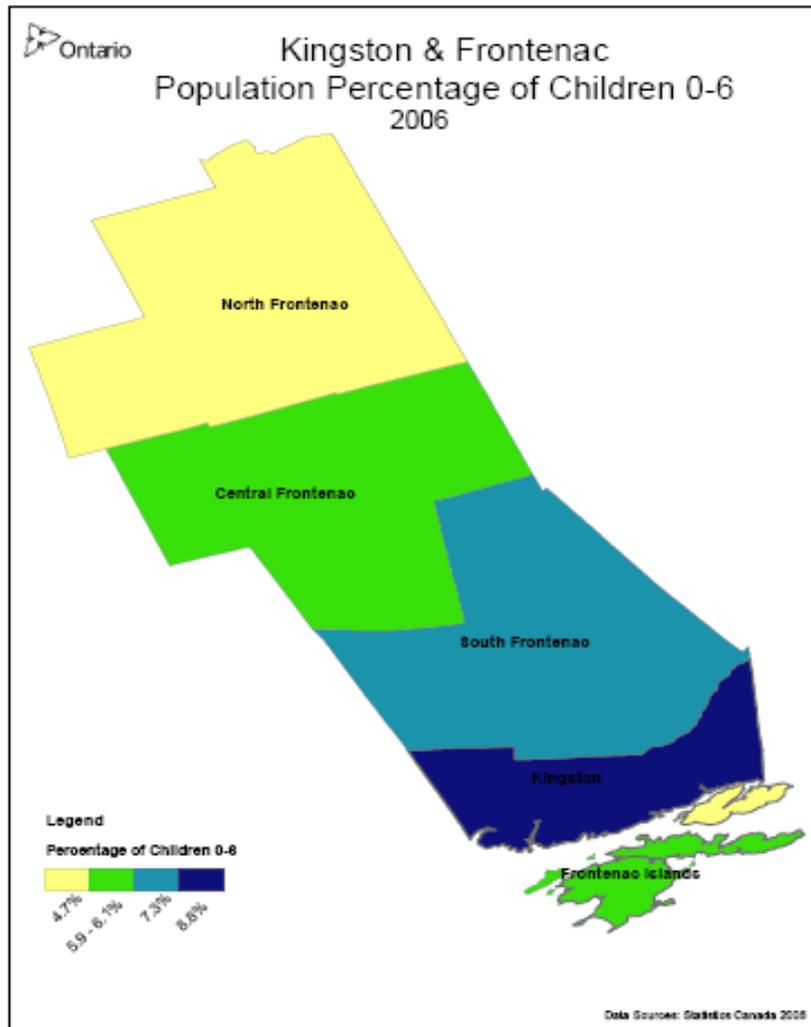
Key Points - Kingston and Frontenac:

- There were 12,085 children (8.4% of the population) between the ages of 0-6 yrs old in 2006;
- Although the percentage of 0-6 yrs dropped slightly from 2001, the absolute number of children in this age range increased due to an overall growth in population;

Map 1 shows that Kingston maintained the highest percentage of children in this age group, but South Frontenac showed an increase between 2001 and 2006.

- In Kingston, 2% of the population reported that they were French speaking at home; In Frontenac, the percentage was 1.4%.
- In Kingston and Frontenac, 2.3% of the population identified as aboriginal, with the largest percentage of aboriginal people residing in Central Frontenac.

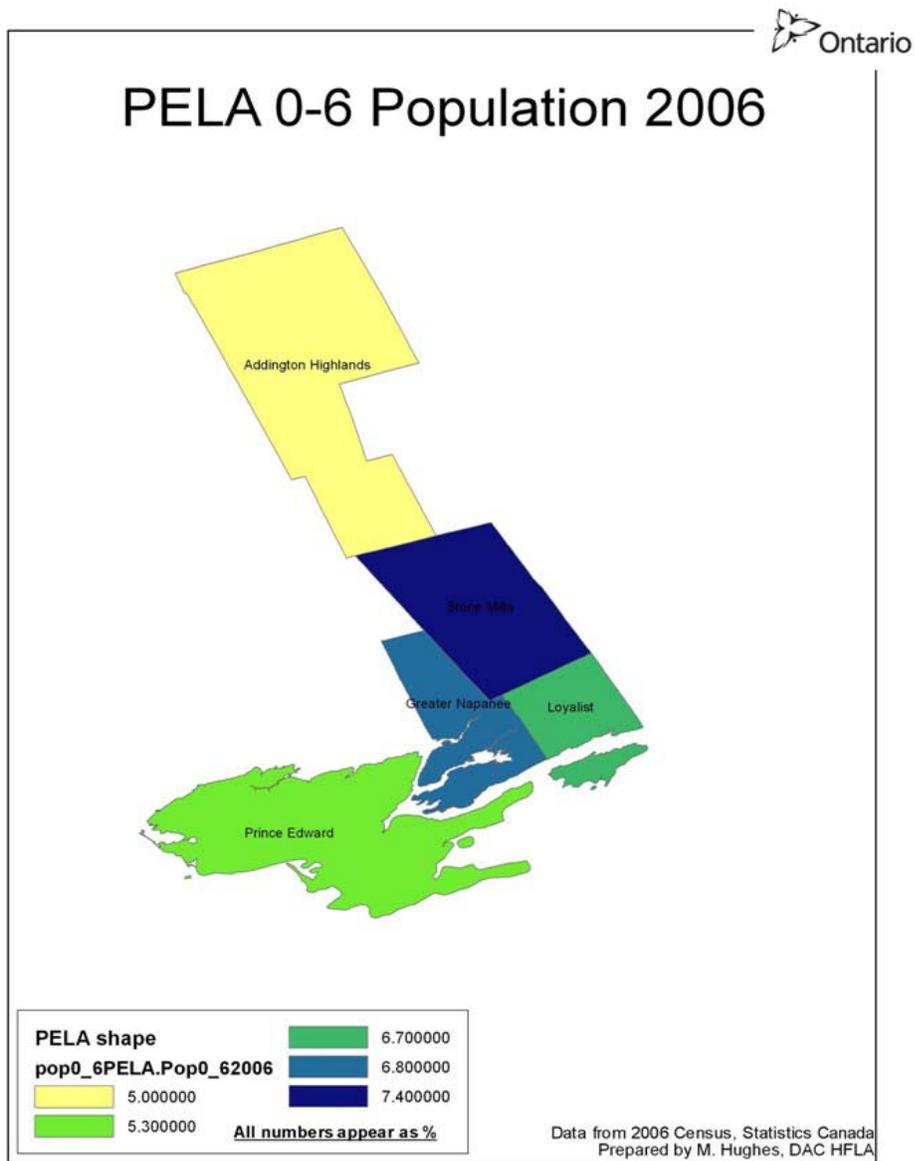
Map 1



Key Points - Lennox & Addington:

- There were 2,684 children ages 0-6 yrs (6.8% of the population) in 2006;
- The number of children in this aged group dropped between 2001 and 2006; Map 2 shows that Stone Mills, Greater Napanee and Loyalist Township have the highest percentage of children in L&A between the ages 0-6 yrs.
- .6% of the population reported that they spoke French at home.
- 3.1% of the population identified as aboriginal with the largest percentage of aboriginal people residing in Addington Highlands.

Map 2



2.2 Early Learning and Child Care Availability

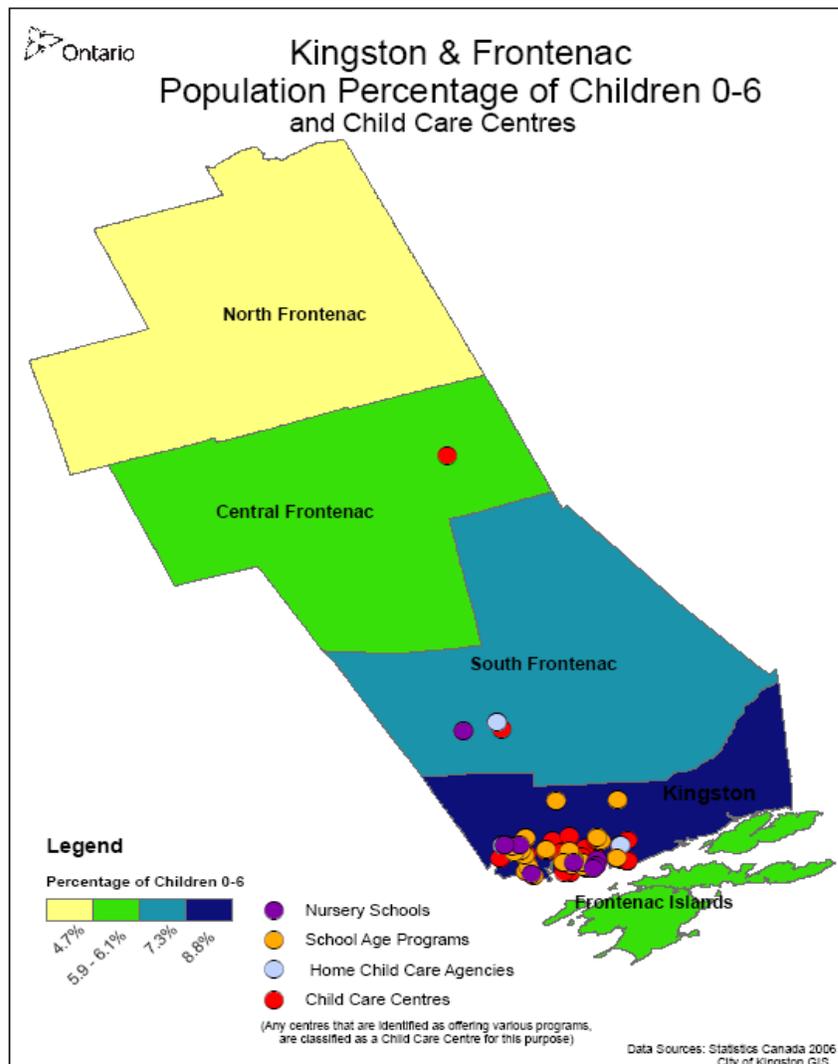
The population of children 0-6 years old has been mapped with the location of child care centres in KFL&A¹¹.

- The Kingston & Frontenac population Map 3 shows that most early learning and child care programs are located in Kingston which corresponds to both the greater population density and the highest percentage of children aged 0-6 years old.

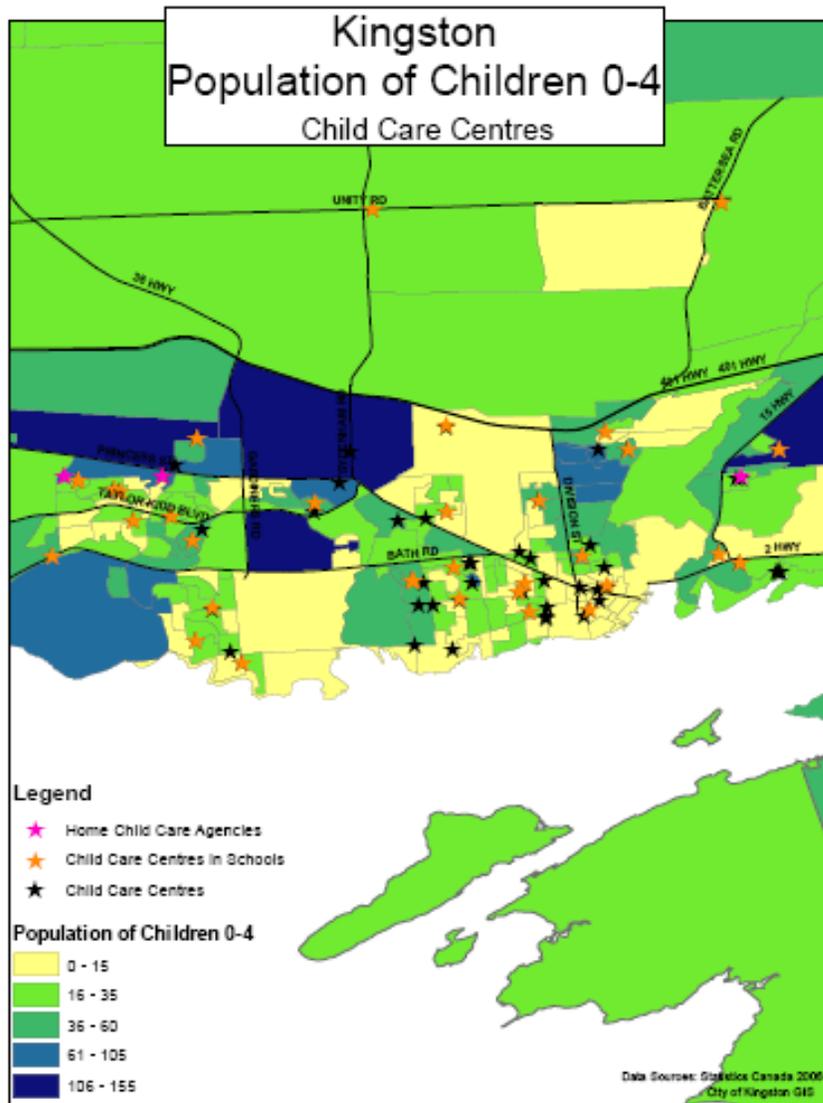
However, most of the early learning and child care programs are located in central Kingston, while population growth of young families is more concentrated in the west and east ends of the City. See Map 4.

- In South Frontenac where the population of children 0-6 yrs has grown significantly since 2001, there are only three programs.
- In central Frontenac with a 0-6 yrs population of 285 children, there is only one child care centre which offers nursery school, day care and after school programs.
- In North Frontenac with a 0-6 yrs population of 85 children, there are no early learning or child care programs available.

Map 3

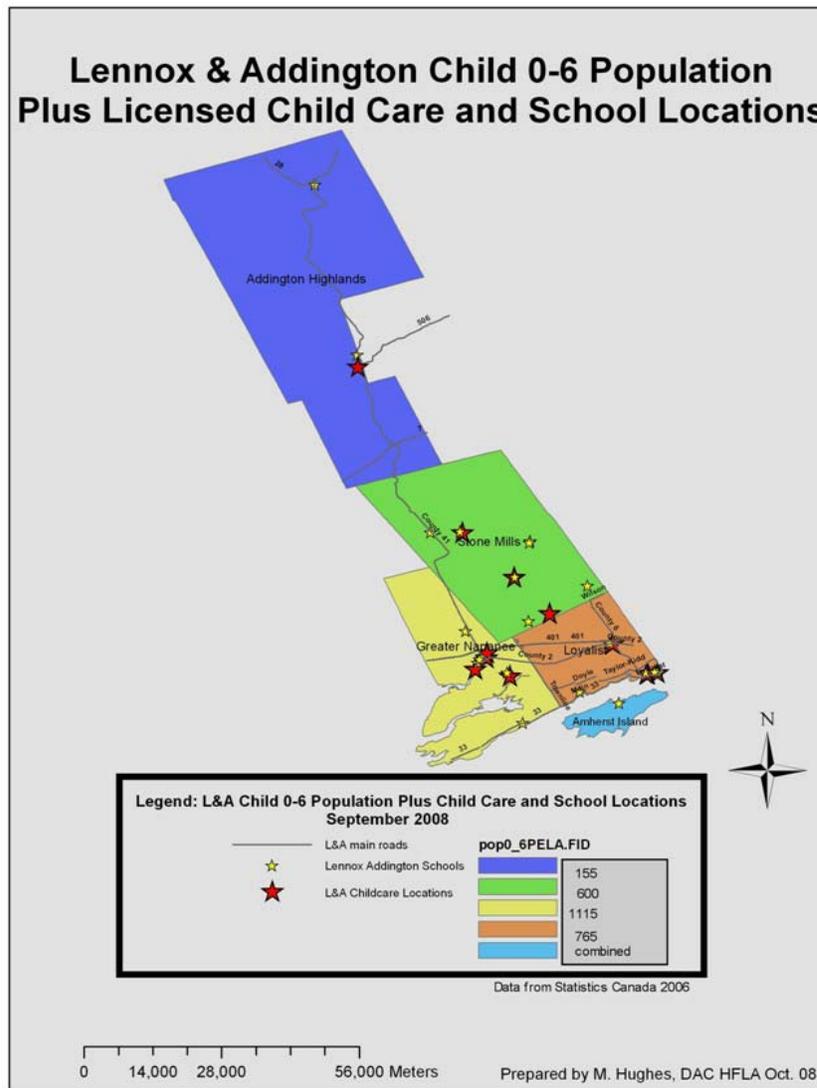


Map 4



- In Lennox & Addington, Map 5 shows early learning and child care programs correspond with the areas of highest population density of children 0-6 yrs: Greater Napanee, Loyalist and Stone Mills. Many of these are co-located in schools, providing convenience for parents with school-aged children. Nevertheless, distance and transportation remains an issue for families in these areas.
- The Addington Highlands has a small, widely dispersed population; For the 155 children aged 0-6 yrs there is only one early learning and child care centre; there is a school in close proximity to this centre.

Map 5



2.3 Child Care Demand & Waiting Lists

The information in this section refers to “licensed child care” which includes home-based child care, centre-based child care and school-aged child care. Licensed child care programs have to meet and maintain specific provincial standards. These minimum standards are set out in the *Day Nurseries Act* to insure that the basic health, safety and developmental needs of the children are being met.

Both the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care through Public Health make unannounced inspections of all licensed child care programs in accordance with *the Day Nurseries Act*. They ensure that provincial standards are being met, investigate complaints and monitor operators who are having difficulties meeting these standards.

- In Kingston and Frontenac there are 42 agencies in 74 locations with a mix of non-profit (74%) and commercial operators (26%); both English and French programs are available.

Licensed spaces are as follows:¹²

Kingston and Frontenac

- Centre-based spaces = 2,659
- private home day care 40 homes x 5 children max. = 200

Lennox & Addington

- Centre-based spaces = 303
- private home day care 25 homes x 5 children max. = 125

- 15.2% of children 0-6 yrs in Kingston & Frontenac and 4.2% of this age group in Lennox & Addington were in licensed child care spaces (includes infant, toddler and pre-school, excludes home-based care).

By comparison, 2006 national labour force participation rates show that nearly two-thirds of mothers whose youngest child was under six years old were in the workforce.¹³ This does not include self-employed mothers or students. If we can extrapolate from these rates, it appears that a relatively small percentage of children in our area who require child care have access to licensed and regulated child care.

- There are waiting lists for available spaces with demand for spaces higher than supply; and a shortage of Early Childhood Education (ECE) qualified staff in this area.
- Currently waiting list data are unreliable as parents in need of child care may put their children on several lists. In Ottawa, a centralized wait list with easy on-line access for parents has been successful. Individual centres maintain the option to implement their own policies, e.g. priority for children of staff working in the centre.

Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie are also looking into a centralized list, and MCYS has considered establishing a working group to explore a centralized list for the South East region. At present, separate waiting lists overlap; a centralized list provides an accurate overview of capacity and can be a useful planning tool.

2.4 Children with Special Needs

- The Special Needs Resourcing Program provides support for children with special needs to participate in a child care setting with their peers at no additional cost to families. These children are characterized as having disabilities, delays or disorders in the areas of physical, social, intellectual, communicative, emotional, and/or behavioural development.
- Funding is available primarily for Resource Consultants and enhanced support workers. Licensed Programs may receive some level of additional supports and/or consultation and training to assure the child's full participation in a community-based, "regular" child care programs. A regular child care setting is often the "early intervention program of choice" for children with special needs.
- For Kingston and Frontenac, 206 children were served in 2007 through the Special Needs Resourcing Program.

2.5 Subsidized Child Care Spaces

- In January 2007, Ontario moved, from a needs based testing criteria when applying for childcare subsidies, to an income based testing criteria which aligned Ontario with the rest of Canada. Income testing is less intrusive than previous needs testing and more families are qualifying.
- In January 2007, the City's Childcare Programs fee subsidy caseload was 660 children from 515 families; in January 2008, there were 805 children from 629 families on the caseload; an increase of 145 children and 114 families.

Childcare subsidies increased by almost \$700,000 more in 2007 than in 2006 and expenditures were close to \$ 3.3 million.

The City of Kingston may need to establish a waiting list for childcare subsidies due to the increase in the number of families eligible for child care. There is also a lack of available infant spaces.

Table 1 Subsidized Childcare Statistics *- Kingston and Frontenac for January 2008¹⁴
(rounded percentages)

Type of Care		Age Distribution		Family Status	
Centre-based	84%	Infants 0-18 mos	5%	Employed	55%
Licensed Home	13%	Toddlers	13%	Attend school	20%
Nursery School	3%	Pre-schoolers	25%	On referral**	23%
		Jr Kindergarten	14%	Looking for work	2%
		Sr Kindergarten	13%		
		School-aged	30%		

* Statistics fluctuate and are a 'snapshot' for the month of January 2008 only.

**A referral to access Childcare Subsidies as defined by the City of Kingston Childcare Programs is a referral that has been received by a community agency or doctor identifying additional family challenges, such as ailing health or delays in mental, physical, cognitive or social development for either the child and/or the parent.

2.6 Funding

Funding in child care centres is dependent on parent fees, either through direct pay from parents or through parent subsidies; centres are reluctant to raise fees to cover costs. Some centres have raised fees which causes inequities.

Wage Subsidies¹⁵

- Wage subsidies are provided through government funding, provincial and municipal, to child care staff in order to supplement wages that would otherwise be limited to income from parent fees alone.
- There are various funding formulas and criteria attached to the different wage subsidy programs, and not all employees and/or centres are eligible for all types of subsidies which include wage subsidy, pay equity and wage improvement.
- In Kingston, for example, some subsidy funding is made available at the beginning of the budget year, while other funding may be flowed later in the year, which makes financial planning difficult. Child care centre directors are advised to list these payments separately as they are subject to change and cannot be considered as part of the base wage.
- In 2007 the City of Kingston reported over \$ 3 million went to service providers in child care for wage subsidies (includes wage subsidy, pay equity and wage improvement). The number of FTE's (full-time equivalents) reported to receive this funding was approximately 300.
- Provincial guidelines state that the maximum wage subsidy per FTE is \$9,534. This does not include funding for pay equity and wage improvement. Not all service providers are entitled to pay equity and only program staff receive wage improvement. Also note that numbers of actual staff are higher as part time staff are added together to make a full-time equivalent.

2.7 Readiness to Learn

Readiness to learn is one of Success by 6's six pursuits, *'to ensure that all children enter school with the cognitive, social and emotional maturity to get along with others and are ready to learn'*. There are a number of tools developed to assess children's readiness to learn.

2.7.1 Early Development Instrument (EDI) ... Population-Based Measure for Communities

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) was developed at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University by Drs Magdalena Janus and Dan Offord in 1998 in response to the growing need to monitor status of child development at the cusp between the early years and school entry.¹⁶

- The EDI is designed to measure the outcomes of the children's early years as they influence their readiness to learn at school. Readiness to learn "refers to the child's ability to meet the task demands of school, such as being able to play and work with other children, listen to the teacher, remember and follow rules, be comfortable exploring and asking questions, and to benefit from the educational activities that are provided by the school"¹⁷

It contains 104 core items grouped into five developmental domains:

1. Physical Health and Well-Being
 2. Social Knowledge and Competence
 3. Emotional Health and Maturity
 4. Language and Cognitive Development
 5. Communication Skills and General Knowledge
- The EDI is a checklist completed by teachers for all senior kindergarten students within selected communities during the second half of the child's school year. It is not an individual child assessment or diagnostic tool, nor does it provide a measure of school performance.

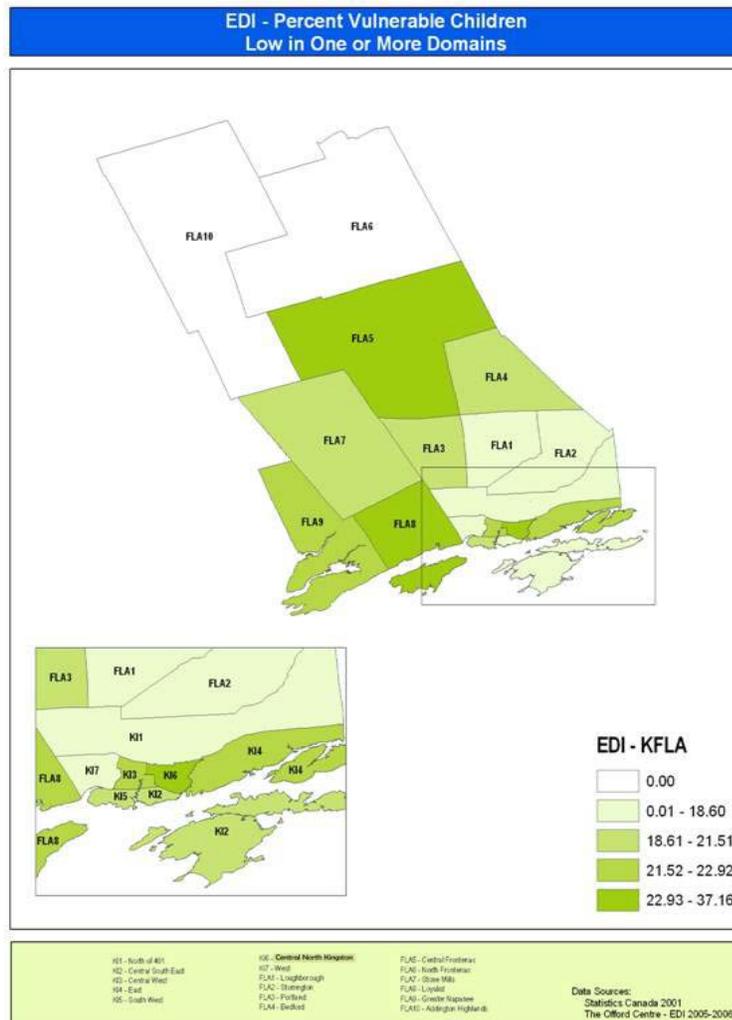
- The EDI is a population based measure on how prepared children are for entry into grade one. As such, the EDI takes a 'snapshot' of the early childhood years within a community. It measures the success of the Early Years System: all the agencies and organizations serving families of children 0-6 yrs.
- The EDI results are useful at the community/neighbourhood level and can be presented back to these groups for their use in community planning and assessment of program gaps.

2.7.2 EDI Results – KFL&A¹⁸

Results from the 2006 EDI have been mapped to pinpoint the areas of highest need and those areas which are doing quite well. Map 6 demonstrates that there is a wide degree of variability in readiness to learn for children in KFL&A.

- In KFL&A, 18.6% of the children tested scored below the 10th percentile in one or more domains, and therefore are among the most seriously at-risk for problems in school; with the highest percentage of low scorers in Central Frontenac (28.6%) and North Kingston (37.1%).

Map 6



Note: EDI data in Addington Highlands and North Frontenac has been suppressed due to low numbers of students. A minimum of 25 students must be present to display results.

UNITED WAY SUCCESS BY 6 EVALUATION & MONITORING COMMITTEE
2008 REVIEW OF EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE IN KFL&A

- Table 2 breaks down the EDI results by the five domains. **Numbers in bold** indicate the areas that had the highest percentage of vulnerable children.
- Highlighted figures** indicate those areas that have the lowest percentage of children who are vulnerable.
- Again, North Kingston and Central Frontenac had high percentages of vulnerable children in most domains with physical health & well-being and social knowledge and competence distinctively higher than all other areas of KFL&A.
- West Kingston, the area North of the 401 and Loughborough & Storrington townships had the lowest percentages of vulnerable children.

Table 2 EDI Results 2005-2006¹⁹ Percentage of Vulnerable Children in KFL&A by Domain

	Communication Skills General Knowledge	Language Cognitive Development	Emotional Health & Maturity	Social Knowledge, Competence	Physical Health & Well Being	Low in One or More Domains
KFLA	6.9	7.9	8.3	8.6	7.7	18.6
North Kingston	12.6	12.0	12.6	15.8	21.9	37.1
Central Frontenac	14.3	14.3	10.7	17.9	21.4	28.6
Portland Bedford	5.9	11.8	13.2	10.3	11.8	26.5
Loyalist	7.8	13.9	12.2	9.6	8.7	23.5
Central West Kingston	12.1	10.0	10.0	9.3	7.11	22.9
East Kingston	10.4	6.2	18.8	11.5	5.2	22.9
Greater Napanee	12.1	8.7	10.1	8.1	12.1	22.8
South West Kingston	6.4	4.3	6.4	16.1	3.2	21.5
Stone Mills	8.3	9.7	12.5	8.3	4.2	20.8
Central SE Kingston	3.9	7.0	4.7	8.5	4.7	18.6
West Kingston	3.4	3.8	5.9	4.2	8.0	15.5
North of 401	5.0	9.5	8.0	8.0	5.0	15.0
Loughborough/Storrington	6.2	6.2	6.2	4.2	7.24	12.4

Note: EDI data for Addington Highlands and North Frontenac have been suppressed due to low numbers of students; a minimum of 25 students must reside in the area to display results.

2.6.3 Preschool/Kindergarten Program Development Instrument (PPDI)²⁰

The PPDI is a locally developed tool, which received funding support from Success By 6. It is based on observations of children. This information is used to develop programs that respond to the needs and strengths identified.

- It is designed to assist early childhood educators in understanding the social, emotional, personal, physical, language and cognitive skills that will help to measure children’s readiness to learn at school.

- It emphasizes the value of play as the basis of programming for young children and recognizes the importance of the partnership between parents and early childhood professionals in preparing children for school.
- The manual is rich with resources and teaching aids to assist educators to design programs customized to children's needs. It is designed to be administered three times per year.
- Approximately 130 Early Childhood Educators from 40 early learning and child care sites attended the orientation sessions for the PPD and the revised manual "School Readiness the Preschool and Kindergarten Years".

2.6.4 Ontario Early Learning Advisor - Full-day of Learning for 4 and 5 year olds

Currently in Ontario, full-day kindergarten refers to a program delivered by kindergarten teachers in a classroom setting, which is governed by the Ministry of Education. The Ontario government has been steadily moving along with plans to implement full-day learning for 4 and 5 year olds in the province. Its aim is to prepare four and five year olds to be 'successful learners' before formal schooling begins in Grade 1.

Ideally, this change will bring together early childhood learning principles and techniques with more traditional kindergarten teaching approaches. If successfully implemented, it may have a significant impact on children's readiness to learn in Ontario, particularly for those children who are disadvantaged due to a variety of social, developmental or economic issues.

- The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (www.omssa.com) has supported full-day learning for 4 and 5-year old children²¹. A full-day learning and child care system builds on strengths and enhances the existing system of services for young children—it is not a separate parallel system, but an integrated system in the continuum of service for children age 0 to 12 years.
- As well, recent provincial-municipal reviews have endorsed and recommended better integration of child care and children's services to improve readiness to learn and healthy child development outcomes.²²
- Locally, the Kingston Frontenac Early Learning and Child Care Network (KFELCCN) has provided feedback to the Early Learning Advisor supporting a full day learning program universally available to all children in Ontario. Key points from this feedback include:
 - A system wherein MCYS and the Ministry of Education work together to develop a specific curriculum for all 4 and 5 year olds;
This system would allow for parental choice and a curriculum framework that can be delivered according to the needs of the children in each setting.
 - Use of a tool which has been developed through a collaboration of early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers currently being used in many early learning programs in KFL&A.
 - Support for a six hour funded day of early learning to be paid to the program providing the service.
 - Support for ratios in keeping with the *Day Nurseries Act*, i.e. one professional to ten children.
 - Support for a system wherein quality assurance and accountability are ensured.
 - Support for fully funded training by the Province on the expectations and delivery of the curriculum for all full-day early learning professionals.²³

2.8 Quality Standards

At the Success By 6 Council of Partners meeting in February 2008, members defined the components of quality childcare, these included:

- Safe, stimulating, caring and nurturing environment
- Fun and learning environment
- Age-appropriate program structure
- Recognition of a child's special needs
- Individual care—small ratio of caregivers to children
- Competent and qualified caregivers
- Proper infection control
- Proximity to work and/or home
- Healthy nutrition
- Opportunities for socialization
- Affordability and flexible hours

Although these characteristics of quality learning and care are easy to articulate and agree upon, measuring quality can be challenging. There are several tools available for use both in centre-based child care settings and in the home child care environment. These include:

Centre-Based Care

- *The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale*²⁴ (ECERS) gives an overall picture of the surroundings that have been created for the children and adults who share an early childhood setting. Environment as defined in this scale includes: use of space, materials and experiences to enhance children's development, daily schedule, and supervision.

This tool contains checklists of scales and subscales to rate various aspects on a scale of 1 to 7 from inadequate to excellent. This tool can be used by early learning educators/teachers to objectively assess their own programs as well as directors, boards and external assessors to measure quality standards.

- *The Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale*²⁵ (ITERS) is an adaptation of ECERS developed especially for infant/toddler group care. The ITERS consists of 35 items for the assessment of the quality of center-based care for children up to 30 months of age. The ITERS has been evaluated for validity and reliability.

It can be used to measure quality care and learning environment in the same way as the ECERS.

Home-Based Care

There are three home-based child care agencies in Kingston-Frontenac licensed by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services which provide child care in individual homes that are screened and monitored as directed by the *Day Nurseries Act*.

One of these has developed a checklist which they administer monthly that reviews a range of environmental factors to assess safety, care, nutrition, supervision, play and activities.

Parent Education

Educating parents in the importance of early learning and quality child care will help to raise quality standards.

- The Ontario Early Years Centre – Kingston and the Islands has published a booklet on how to select a child care provider and radio ad spots have been aired on local radio.

- Many children in KFL&A are receiving care informally through friends and family or through unlicensed care providers. At present, there is no formal way to assess the quality of this care. There are resources in the community to assist all caregivers—parents, family members, unlicensed providers to provide a high quality early learning environment. Ontario Early Years Centres offer a range of well-attended programs throughout KFL&A.

However, a participant survey in 2007 by the Ontario Early Years Centre – Kingston & the Islands indicated that only 10% of the respondents who completed the surveys were caregivers other than a parent. These findings suggest that caregivers such as in-home providers, relatives or neighbours caring for young children are not making use of the early learning resources available through Early Years Centres.

2.9 Infrastructure

The Best Start Network

In the fall of 2005 the Kingston Frontenac Best Start Network was established to plan local initiatives to meet the Province's strategy to expand quality and affordable child care and invest in children's healthy development. Originally, the Network developed a plan to rapidly expand child care spaces. A change in the federal government in 2006, led to the termination of the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement and the plan had to be substantially scaled back and the number of new spaces reduced.

The revised Transition Plan²⁶ outlines the budget requirements for infrastructure improvements to support child care programs, i.e. capital funding, technological upgrades, planning, and wage subsidy and wage improvement.

Barriers to Expansion

In April 2008, the Best Start Network conducted a survey of Licensed Child Care operators in the City of Kingston and Frontenac County regarding the barriers to expansion. There were twenty-two responses (approx. 50%) to the survey.

- Even though funds for capital expansion were made available, many barriers to actually accessing this money were identified, including:
 - availability of qualified staff
 - availability of wage subsidy
 - capital expenditure, e.g. to purchase buildings
 - narrow criteria, complex Ministry requirements, timelines
 - understanding of RFP, preparing proposals
- Service providers requested that the City of Kingston put together an easy to understand list of building requirements, with associated costs, to meet their requirements to open a day care centre. As a result, the City's Child Care Programs, with the assistance of the Planning Dept., put together a brochure: Childcare Expansion – Recommendations and Requirements.

Centre Supports

Many early learning and child care program and centre directors also provide direct care to children. The ECE program at St. Lawrence College does not provide any courses in budget development and planning or financial management. Directors can be challenged by both time demands and capacity to manage extremely complex funding arrangements. Some ECE programs in other cities do provide basic skills training in this area.

Nevertheless, the complexities of the financial management of subsidized spaces, three different methods of wage enhancements, each with separate criteria and time allocations, and 'after the fact' funding would be a challenge to the most skilled financial expert.

2.10 Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment and retention of qualified ECE staff is a problem in KFL&A. In the Best Start survey, lack of available qualified staff and related wage subsidies has been a barrier to expansion.

- Despite the fact that St. Lawrence College has an Early Childhood Education program, there is shortage of qualified ECE graduates in KFL&A. Graduates are not choosing to work and/or are unable to find work in this area. St. Lawrence College statistics for the current graduating class showed that, of the 44 graduates:
 - 14 were working outside Kingston
 - 14 were available for work
 - 9 were returning to school
 - 2 were not looking for work
 - No data was available for 5

The latest information from St. Lawrence College on enrolment is that second year returnee numbers are good, but that first year enrolment is down substantially from last year. The College also reported that enrolment in the ECE program is often used as a stepping stone to becoming a teacher or for other higher education goals.

- MCYS has new training funds for staff in child care centres that do not have ECE qualification.
- Recruitment of qualified staff is very difficult in French child care centres; of the six French/bilingual centres, only three have qualified ECE staff. Currently there are 211 French spaces with 75 of those school-age spaces; there also 30 bilingual school-age spaces.
- Wage subsidy allocations are not guaranteed each year; an annual review is conducted to determine each agency's eligibility for funding based on provincial formulas and program criteria; job security is an issue.

A new model in wage subsidy distribution has been implemented in Kingston to improve access to wage subsidy and create a more equitable system.

3. STRENGTHS – AREAS TO BUILD ON

This section summarizes some of the strengths and challenges that have been identified. Resources and programming aimed at readiness to learn appear to be strengths in our area. The provincial full-day learning initiative will have a dramatic impact on early learning for all 4 and 5 year olds in Ontario.

At present, access to quality care remains problematic for many families, along with recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

Tools are available for providers to measure quality standards and for parents to make informed decisions – the extent to which these are used is not fully known.

Awareness & Policy Changes

- ▶ There is a growing awareness in the community about the importance of early learning; scientific evidence re: brain development and the crucial role that parents play has led to new provincial programs and initiatives.
- ⊘ Due to changing commitment and approaches to early learning and child care provincially and nationally, improvements have lagged behind the evidence demonstrating the importance of early child development.

Access to Quality Care

- ▶ Ontario has changed its criteria for eligibility for subsidized child care enabling more families to qualify.
- ⊘ As a result, demand for subsidized care has outstripped available funding.
- ⊘ Reliance on parent fees limits access to quality child care for many families.
- ⊘ There are waiting lists for child care spaces and no central list to help parents and providers plan and accurately assess capacity and need.
- ⊘ There is a lack of flexibility in formal child care arrangements for parents who work shift or irregular hours.

Readiness to Learn

- ▶ Ontario plans to introduce 'full day learning' for 4 and 5 year olds which will combine play-based learning with more traditional kindergarten teaching.
- ▶ The Early Development Instrument (EDI) provides valuable information on how 'ready to learn' children are when they enter grade one; it presents a community profile of areas of strengths and weaknesses.
- ▶ The locally developed Preschool/Kindergarten Program Development Instrument (PPDI) is widely available as a program planning tool geared to the strengths and areas for improvement for children in early learning and child care programs.
- ⊘ There is evidence that only a small percentage of caregivers, other than parents, access community early learning resources.

Quality Standards

- ▶ In addition to oversight under the *Day Nurseries Act*, which sets minimum standards, there are several tools available to assess quality standards both in centre-based and home-based care.
- ▶ The Ontario Early Years Centres have developed a guide to assist parents in choosing quality early learning and child care.
- ▶ A college for early childhood educators has been established as a self-regulatory body to set quality standards and qualifications.

Recruitment and Retention

- ⊘ There is a lack of qualified early childhood educators in this area—graduates from St. Lawrence College are either unwilling or unable to locate here; this has been cited as one of the barriers to infrastructure development.
- ⊘ Throughout the country wages are low for those working in early learning and child care programs.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee has drafted a number of recommendations for consideration by the Council of Partners along with some suggestions for key partners. They are as follows:

RECOMMENDATION	KEY PARTNERS
1. Investigate the set-up of a centralized wait list	Municipalities, MCYS, UW, Childcare Providers, Community
2. Make better use of EDI data through more in-depth analysis of the factors that influence variation in scores throughout KFL&A; share EDI data and analysis across sectors and with the public.	School Boards, Community leaders
3. Share this report widely: a communication package can be prepared with key messages	United Way, Media
4. Launch a campaign to reach parents about the importance of early learning and child care.	Success By 6 Committee: Making KFL&A Child Friendly
5. Monitor and prepare for the switch to all day learning for 4 and 5 year old—what will be the impact? What will work best for our community?	Evaluation & Monitoring Committee / Best Start to monitor
6. Link with St. Lawrence College regarding recruitment and retention in our area and professional development for program directors.	St. Lawrence College, Success By 6
7. Recommend to the United Way that annual budgeting and financial workshops be made available to program directors	Through United Way Leadership Development Services Program
8. Assist early learning and child care programs to develop infrastructure, e.g. RFP development, capital funding options.	Draw on business experience of Success By 6 Council of Partners??
9. Set up an 'Investment in Early Learning Fund' to support a range of early learning initiatives in KFL&A.	t.b.d.

Next Steps:

The Council of Partners will need to consider the proposed recommendations and determine:

- Which recommendations are of the highest priority?
- Are there other recommendations that should be considered?
- Who will take the lead in addressing the recommendations?
- As a result of our actions, what do we expect to change/improve?
- What resources are required to carry out our priorities?

Endnotes:

-
- ¹ McCain MN, Mustard JF The Early Years Study: Reversing the Real Brain Drain, Final Report April 1999. Ontario Children's Secretariat, Toronto, Ontario
- ² Early Learning for Every Child Today – A Framework for Ontario early childhood settings. Produced by the Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning – December 2006
- ³ Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning – Members Shared Beliefs, Spring 2005
- ⁴ Statistics from Child Care in Canada (2002-03); Trends & Analysis 2007; Ontario Childcare Resources & Research Unit.
- ⁵ Child care: an eight-year profile. Statistics Canada. The Daily, Wed, April 5, 2006
- ⁶ Op. cit. McCain, Mustard
- ⁷ Toronto Star "Canada is failing its Kids" April 30, 2007
- ⁸ Child Care Wages & Quality Child Care System
- ⁹ Ibid
- ¹⁰ DAC Data Collection Template, MCYS BSN Report Submission-June 30, 2008 [source: Statistics Canada 2006]; Maps: City of Kingston GIS
- ¹¹ Source: Statistics Canada; City of Kingston GIS
- ¹² Source: Ministry of Children and Youth Services, August 2008
- ¹³ Statistics Canada. Women in the Workplace: Work Chapter Updates. April 2007
- ¹⁴ Source: City of Kingston
- ¹⁵ Source: City of Kingston Community and Family Services
- ¹⁶ Janus, M. (2006) "Measuring Community Early Child Development" *Canadian Association of Principals Journal*, 14(3)
- ¹⁷ Offord Centre for Child Studies (2004). "Early Development Instrument (EDI): Population-based Measure for Communication Fact Sheet". McMaster University
- ¹⁸ The Offord Centre – EDI 2005-2006
- ¹⁹ Kingston & Frontenac MCYS Best Start Network Submission – June 30, 2008
- ²⁰ Developed by: Members of the Network Steering Committee School Readiness Subcommittee, 2007; funded by KFL&A United Way Success By 6
- ²¹ Ontario Municipal Social Services Association. 'Full-day learning for 4 and 5 year-old children: building a stronger early learning and child care system in Ontario. October 2008
- ²² Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Deliver Review: Facing the Future Together. Province of Ontario, Ontario Association of Municipalities, City of Toronto. Fall 2008
- ²³ Kingston Frontenac Early Learning and Child Care Network correspondence to Dr. Charles Pascal, Early Learning Advisor, October 29, 2008
- ²⁴ Harms T and Clifford RM *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale*, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, Univ. of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Teachers College Press, N.Y. 1980
- ²⁵ Harms T, Cryer D, Clifford RM *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale*, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, Univ. of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Teachers College Press, N.Y. 1990
- ²⁶ Kingston-Frontenac Best Start Network Transition Plan Addendum May 2006

Additional Resource Materials:

- Ontario Early Years Centre-Kingston & the Islands Child Care Directory
http://www.gov.on.ca/children/oeyc/en/location/SouthEast/Kingston_and_the_Islands/Services/Childcare/index.html
- Quality Child Care: It's Your Choice; A publication by: Ontario Early Years Centre, Kingston & the Islands
- 2008 Ontario Report Card on Child & Family Poverty
<http://www.campaign2000.ca/on/FINALOntarioReportCard-Nov08.pdf>
- 2008 Report Card on child and Family Poverty in Canada
<http://www.campaign2000.ca/C2000ReportCardFINALNov10th08.pdf>