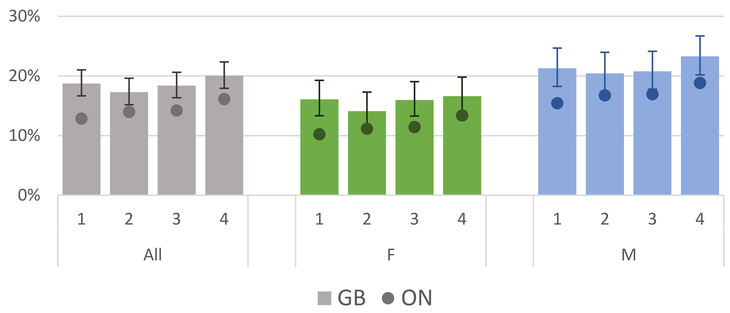
UTILIZING A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ACTION

PUBLIC HEALTH
GREY BRUCE HEALTH UNIT

BACKGROUND

Early Development Instrument (EDI) measurements showed that children in Grey Bruce, overall and by sex, were consistently more likely than Ontario children to score as vulnerable in the Physical Health and Well-Being domain. EDI data has been collected in Ontario over four cycles beginning in 2003.



Percentage of Children Scoring in the Vulnerable Range in the Physical Health and Well-being Domain by EDI Cycle and Sex, Grey Bruce and Ontario.

Collaborating with multiple sectors to improve the health of populations is a key role for public health. The Grey Bruce Health Unit (GBHU) used a collaborative approach to foster a shared vision and prepare a call-to-action paper to address the issue of motor skill development in children.

OBJECTIVES

1. To engage community partners and strengthen partnerships in the development of a call-to-action paper.
2. To increase awareness of school readiness indicators such as the EDI.
3. To use research and local data to identify evidence informed strategies that will support a child's school readiness in Grey Bruce.

METHODS

The GBHU Healthy Growth and Development Team established a working group with stakeholders from various sectors. A call-to-action paper was developed based on literature, local data and an understanding of existing community programs and services. The GBHU Extranet was used to share relevant resources and drafts of the paper with the working group. In person meetings and consultations were held to engage and gather feedback from stakeholders and partnership tables. Following the development of the call-to-action paper, a stakeholder engagement survey was distributed to evaluate the initial phase of the project and gather lessons learned.

CALL-TO-ACTION STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE MOTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY ACTION

- INVOLVING CAREGIVERS & FAMILIES
- FACILITATING CONNECTION AND COLLABORATION
- TRAINING SERVICE PROVIDERS
- SUPPORTING INCLUSION FOR ALL CHILDREN
- INCORPORATING PLAY THROUGH DAILY ACTIVITIES
- ENVIRONMENT FOR PLAY
- CONTINUED MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Partnerships involving key sectors are important in forming local solutions and supporting community action.

KEY SECTORS

- Childcare and Early Learning Centres
- Health Care Providers and Early Intervention Services
- School Boards, Schools & Educators
- Municipalities and Community Organizations
- Parents and Caregivers

OUTCOMES

1. Multi-sectoral stakeholders were engaged and partnerships were strengthened.
2. Collaborative call-to-action paper was developed that outlines strategies for community action.
3. Supplementary toolkits were developed to raise awareness of school readiness indicators and support the implementation of strategies that support motor skill development.
4. Facilitators and barriers to using a collaborative approach were identified.

ALL SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATED THAT IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO DEVELOP THE PAPER COLLABORATIVELY.

"I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING HOW THE PAPER IS USED BY VARIOUS SECTORS". – STAKEHOLDER

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH: LESSONS LEARNED

- Ensure project goals, objectives and scope are specific and well-defined.
- Use a strategic approach to engage key stakeholders throughout the project.
- Develop and share a project evaluation framework early in the project.
- Seek, acknowledge and value diverse perspectives and input from stakeholders.

FACILITATORS

- LEADERSHIP: SHARE THE VISION; BE OPEN AND RESPONSIVE; BUILD TRUST; INSPIRE OTHERS
- PARTNERSHIP: INVOLVE PASSIONATE AND INTERESTED PARTNERS; ENGAGE MULTIPLE SECTORS; ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT ACTIVE PARTICIPATION; BE RESPECTFUL
- COMMUNICATION: BE INCLUSIVE AND OPEN; USE A VARIETY OF METHODS; CONSIDER ACCESSIBILITY; COMMUNICATE REGULARLY

"THE PROJECT LEADERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGED AND RESPECTED THE VARIOUS SECTOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS – MADE US FEEL CREDIBLE". – STAKEHOLDER

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

- Technology limitations
- Limited time and competing priorities
- Engaging and reflecting diverse perspectives

NEXT STEPS

This project has illustrated how public health can implement a collaborative approach to review evidence and address a public health issue. Findings from the call-to-action paper suggest that community action will be strengthened by engaging multi-sectoral stakeholders to set priorities and implement recommendations. Lessons learned through this project can be used to inform future collaborative work led by local public health units.

The GBHU gratefully acknowledges the many partners, organizations and committees who participated in the research, writing and stakeholder consultation throughout the project.

For more information contact the Grey Bruce Health Unit's Healthy Growth and Development Team.
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