

Success by 6/6 ans et gagnant

Introduction

Success by 6[®] is a movement that is sweeping North America, bringing communities together around the concept of giving young children the foundation they need to get a good start in life.

Initiated by the United Way movement, it is not a single program, nor is it funded or 'owned' by any one agency or organization. *Success by 6* is a partnership that involves the whole community in supporting families to enable them to better meet the needs of their children.

Success by 6 is based on the belief that one of the major stumbling blocks to improving conditions for young children is the lack of awareness and information about young children's well-being. The initiative:

- builds unique partnerships among the public, private and voluntary sectors to raise awareness of the importance of early childhood development

- develops a community-wide response to the needs of families with young children
- builds on local strengths and priorities
- enhances collaboration and cooperation among service providers
- raises significant funds, over and above traditional United Way campaign targets, to increase investment in services known to make a difference for young children.

Ottawa-Carleton is one of more than 200 communities across North America, including six in Canada, that have embraced *Success by 6*.

A strong basis in research

Research has shown that investing in prevention and early intervention (from the prenatal period to age 6) as well as building the capacity

of communities increase the likelihood that children will succeed in school and enhance their lives. The latest neuroscientific research underscores the critical importance of these early years. It indicates that the development of the brain is even more highly influenced by early experiences than was previously believed.

Research also has shown that, when children enter school ready to learn, major social problems such as illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, crime and abuse can be substantially reduced. The groundbreaking research conducted by the Perry Preschool Project in Michigan demonstrated that for every dollar spent on the quality of life of children at risk, seven dollars can be saved through reduced need for remedial education and social and criminal justice services.

In many communities, *Success by 6* initiatives have been a focal point for the building of partnerships among agencies and connections

with the private sector, and have resulted in new funds being leveraged to benefit families with young children.

The case for Success by 6 in Ottawa-Carleton

Ottawa has long been considered an affluent city – ‘Fat City’ to those in other areas of Canada. But the recession of the 1990s, combined with extensive downsizing, restructuring and layoffs, hit the region hard. Cutbacks to Employment Insurance led to higher demands for social assistance, and greater numbers of people turned to food banks. The homeless in Ottawa-Carleton now include more than 100 children living in shelters.

As the demand for health and social services grew, these same services were undergoing major changes in funding and delivery. Community organizations were increasingly hard-





pressed to meet the growing demands. The United Way/Centraide identified the need to develop new solutions to address these issues and undertook a study to explore how other communities were responding to these challenges.

It was obvious that a new approach was necessary. “We have been seeing social conditions threatening the well-being of too many families with young children in Ottawa-Carleton in recent years,” says Dr. Rob Cushman, the Region of Ottawa-Carleton Medical Officer of Health and Chair of the Funders’ Working Group that is sponsoring *Success by 6* in the region. “The root of many of our most serious social problems is our failure as a society to prepare large numbers of children for life. We need to involve the whole community if we want to make a difference.”

Consultation with the community

The first step for United Way/Centraide was to organize a series of consultations with people living on low incomes and representatives of the network of agencies serving them. In keeping with the partnership approach of *Success by 6*, this work was done in conjunction with the Region of Ottawa-Carleton Social Services Department and Community Health and Resource Centres across Ottawa Carleton.

Information from this process provided clear direction on what was needed: solutions that would enhance the capacity of communities and low-income families while targeting high-risk groups (especially young children). With these findings in hand, the United Way/Centraide con-



ducted a study to determine the feasibility of a *Success by 6*-type initiative in Ottawa-Carleton. Results of the study demonstrated that excellent opportunities existed for collaboration among the many organizations involved in providing health, education and social services to young children and their families.

The United Way/Centraide Board of Directors decided to move forward with the initiative and began to approach other key funders of health, education and social services already working in this area. According to Michael Allen, the CEO of United Way/Centraide of Ottawa-Carleton, the response was staggering. “It was a real convergence of priorities,” he notes. “The *Success by 6* model met their needs. And once we had reviewed the report of the feasibility study and collectively developed a work plan, we all came through with financial support.”

Putting the structure in place

United Way/Centraide made an initial commitment of \$25,000 to *Success by 6*. This contri-

bution was augmented by a \$15,000 grant from the Trillium Foundation and \$25,000 from each member of the Funders’ Working Group. The group was comprised of major funders of health and social services in the region, including the Region of Ottawa-Carleton Departments of Health and Social Services, the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the United Way/Centraide in partnership with the Champlain District Health Council and the Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton.

With startup funding in place, the Funders’ Working Group expanded its leadership base by inviting the Boards of Education to be partners, identified other potential community partners and began the work necessary to develop the initiative into something that was responsive to the needs of Ottawa-Carleton. A Co-Management Steering Committee was formed, and consultants were engaged to move the initiative through its development phase from September 1998 to June 1999.

Dr. Rob Cushman is proud of how the initiative has progressed. “Much has been achieved to move *Success by 6* forward,” he says. Accomplishments include the production of a concept paper, *Early Childhood: The Foundation for Our Children’s Future*. It was circulated widely to publicize the rationale and timetable for the development of the initiative in Ottawa-Carleton.

An extensive outreach campaign was undertaken to obtain the support of other stakeholders in the community including: the Child Care Council of Ottawa-Carleton and *le Regroupement des services de garde de langue française*; the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario and the CHEO Foundation; the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Steering Committee; the Young Single Parent Support Network; First Words Speech and Program of Ottawa-Carleton;

the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres; Family Resource Centres; the Children's Aid Society, the Champions for Children Foundation; United Way/Centraide member agencies; the Community Foundation of Ottawa-Carleton; and service organizations in the network of health, education, social services and recreation.

Given the nature of the Ottawa-Carleton community, a French translation of *Success by 6* was developed: *6 ans et gagnant* has become the trademarked French name and logo for North America. An environmental scan was conducted by members of an interagency committee to compile a profile of children in the community and the services that exist for them. A background paper highlighting known best practices and a framework to assess measurable outcomes was prepared. A Community Profile Report was pro-

duced compiling relevant documentation on the status of children in Ottawa-Carleton, highlighting data from the 1996 Census, the environmental scan, and more than 35 studies undertaken in the community throughout the 1990s.

Highlights of this information were compiled in the form of a workbook that served as the framework for a community forum involving 250 people from all sectors of the community, held in April 1999. The aim of the day-long forum was to develop a common vision for *Success by 6* in Ottawa-Carleton, and to identify preferred strategies for implementation and measurable outcomes to assess the effectiveness of the initiative. This forum was the beginning of the Community Action Plan upon which *Success by 6* would be based.



Dr. Dan Offord, Director of the Centre for Studies of Children at Risk at McMaster University and a supporter of the Ottawa-Carleton *Success by 6* initiative, gave the keynote address. He underscored the importance of children's early years and highlighted the challenges that children face in today's society. "Growing up is a race," he said. "And we need to make sure the race is fair. If we make sure that all children enter school ready to learn, then we can improve the life chances of all children within one generation."

Launching the Program

The public launch of *Success by 6/6 ans et gagnant* in Ottawa-Carleton was held on June 16, 1999, at Carleton University. In front of a large, diverse and very enthusiastic audience, partners in *Success by 6* released the Community Action Plan and announced their commitment to financially support the initiative. It was an impressive partnership of service providers and funders pledging to build a more responsive, coordinated service delivery system.

The Community Action Plan was lauded as both timely and relevant. Dr. Rob Cushman believes that the strong support for the goals and objectives outlined in the Plan is based on the fact that the Plan is a distillation of what the community believes is important.

"Our key objectives are to support parents; promote healthy births; promote healthy early development, early learning and school readiness; protect children from abuse and neglect; and support neighbourhoods in building safe and caring communities," he says. "By basing strategies on best practices that are known to make a difference for children, and by bringing together a wide range of partners who are committed to investing in the initiative, we are actually modelling how innovative partnerships can work."

The announcement also highlighted a creative approach to fundraising. The Funders' Working Group set a target of \$10 million in new investment to be raised for *Success by 6* over five years. This funding is being sought from corporate and government sources, foundations and the United Way/Centraide Millennium Fund. Other local foundations, including Champions for Children (the foundation of the Children's Aid Society), the Children's Hospital Foundation and the Community Foundation also will support *Success by 6* with their advice and expertise.

Nancy MacNider, Executive Director of St. Mary's Home, an agency serving young single mothers and their children, says the innovative approach to fundraising convinced her of the value of the program. "Initially, there was scepticism in the community about how this initiative would be funded. We were concerned that money would be taken from other high-risk groups," she notes. "The announcement of increased resources from a range of sources will inspire buy-in from the community."

Beth Allan, consultant for all phases of the *Success by 6* initiative in Ottawa-Carleton, notes that other communities interested in developing a *Success by 6* model have to remember that the approach is all about building momentum toward a common goal. "Because *Success by 6* is not one single program or funder, partnerships are crucial. They demonstrate that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts." She emphasizes that another crucial lesson is to take the time to do it right. "Always ensure that the necessary groundwork has been undertaken before embarking on a high profile initiative."

The other precursors to a successful initiative that will make a real and lasting difference in the community and in the lives of children are an involved community and an active, committed leadership. Ottawa-Carleton is fortunate to

have developed and sustained a strong working partnership of community agencies that aim to enrich the lives of young children and their families. The strength of this partnership and its collective vision for the community has resulted in *Success by 6/6 ans et gagnant* being named by the Ontario Government as one of five demonstration sites for early child development and parenting initiatives in response to the *Early Years Study*.¹

Judith Nolté

Judith Nolté is a health and social policy consultant who worked on feasibility studies for the Success by 6 initiative in Ottawa-Carleton.

Endnote

1. The *Early Years Study* is the work of a 10-member reference group co-chaired by Dr. Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain. The report concludes that a child's brain development in the first six years of life sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health.

To date, the members of the *Success by 6/6 ans et gagnant* partnership, led and supported by the United Way/Centraide Ottawa-Carleton, are: the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton; The Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services; Ottawa-Carleton District School Board; Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board; *Conseil des écoles publiques de l'est de l'Ontario*; *Conseil scolaire de district catholique de Centre-Est de l'Ontario*; Champlain District Health Council; Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton; Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario; Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Foundation; Children's Aid Society of Ottawa-Carleton; Champions for Children Foundation; Community Foundation of Ottawa-Carleton; and The Trillium Foundation.

For more information on Ottawa-Carleton's *Success by 6/6 ans et gagnant* initiative, contact Suzanne O'Byrne of the United Way/Centraide Ottawa-Carleton, at (613) 228-6703.

The translation of this paper was made possible through the generous support of the United Way/Centraide Ottawa-Carleton.

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