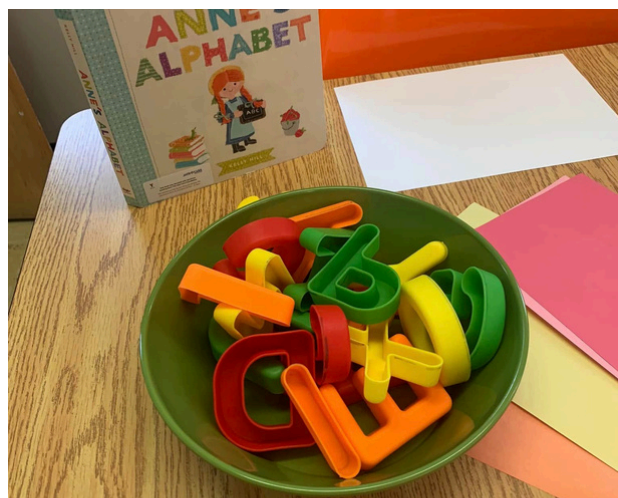


North End Early Childhood Hub

YMCA of Southwestern NB

The primary objective of the Hub, located in Hazen White St. Francis school (HWSF), is to support families to maximize their children's development by proposing a single point of access to early childhood education; one of the 3 key areas identified in GNB's 10-year Education Plan. Additional learning (including language and vocabulary) and social supports will provide more equitable opportunities for children attending the site who are systemically marginalized and excluded: 50% of children attending HWSF have language barriers in addition to economic barriers, which are shared by 90% of the school population. We aim to increase child and family well-being by reducing the isolation of parents with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers through the provision of resources and adult programming for healthy child development, positive parenting, and education and employability skills. Space at the Centre will be provided to community partners, such as health care providers, to facilitate the alignment of support services.

The Early Childhood Hub offers a holistic education model (with 19 spaces) for pre-kindergarten children who are not eligible for a subsidy under the current criteria (all parents do not work full-time or attend post-secondary full time), but who need developmental interventions to increase their chance for success in school and life. This model emphasizes the comprehensive development of a child, focusing on not just academic success but also emotional, social, physical, and creative growth.



"The SIF funding and working with the Community Foundation has been an incredible experience. Seeing the potential in this project come to a brighter future has been wonderful. Working alongside many people at the foundation has been both an honour and a pleasure. They were there for the support that we needed and even when we didn't know we needed the support. As we encountered any barriers they were there for the support to discuss, brainstorm and at the end celebrate our decisions." (Avril Toner, Project Manager)

Changing the way things work:

Being part of the SIF increased the visibility of our Hub to decision makers and potential funders. Continued interest from our Steering committee in the Canada Wide Access project has also resulted in continued focus on the Hub project and enabled us to extend our range to include documenting participating families journeys. This shift towards looking at the project more as a journey, rather than a destination has helped us identify what and where we need to go next.

*With the success of the “When Children Succeed” ASD-S project demonstrating the impact of additional educators to respond to greater need in some communities/schools, we used some SIF funding to bring a third educator into the Pre-K classroom at the Hub, and it is clear from the first project evaluation data that having a third educator in our Pre-K classroom was a game changer. The educators were able to spend increased one on-one time with the children and more personalized interventions. While the full return on investment will take a few years to be demonstrated as these children make their way through the school system, we know that being able to keep the third educator in place to maintain these outcomes and to collect data with the same classroom structure in place over a number of years is important to continuing to demonstrate the model’s success. When SIF funds wrapped in 2023, we had secured funding to allow that to happen over the next four years.

*The data demonstrated that these children, when given the right social/educational environment and correct supports, can match their more socio-economically advantaged peers.

*Parent engagement sessions have been a great way to show our valuing of participating families for their time and showing them how they can support their children and family by taking aspects of the NB Framework for Early Learning and Care into their care and teaching at home. We have seen some true growth within these family units.

Over the course of the SIF project we removed as many barriers as we could. Our registration process has been difficult for some parents/families to navigate, so we adapted it into a much easier process. Our Community Coordinator role is a key component for family involvement: The coordinator works alongside the family to bring all aspects together while at the same time building trust. We have observed that when families become comfortable and trusting of our coordinator it fosters parent engagement.

Decision Making:

We have over the course of the last two years shifted our thoughts from us telling these families what they needed to listening to what they needed.

Partnerships:

- FACE and Talk with Me are visible in the Hub providing services and programs to children and families alike. Partnerships have been created between Social Peds and the Sophia Recovery Centre. These partnerships keep expanding as we all learn everyone's expertise. Newcomers are a new yet wonderful addition.
- It became clear that our Steering committee needed a change in governance. Over the past year we have engaged Tanya Chapman as the chairperson of that committee. As such, Tanya has engaged all members to re-fit the committee to best meet our goals. A strategic plan has been put in place which has also given the committee clear direction.
- Over time it was clear that we needed to look at how we would support the North Hub with programming. We have brought an entirely newly re-vamped committee together. Engaging our community partners to establish and clearly define the workings at the Hub and around the community.

Access to resources:

- Childcare at the North Hub is full with a waitlist for spaces. The PreK program is full with a waitlist for the 2024/25 school year.
- During the project the YMCA partnered with PETL and NBCC to offer a Job Seeker program. Thirteen learners started the program and 10 completed it. This was considered a huge success. One learner secured employment with the John Howard Society, one decided to return to school and the YMCA hired the remainder as support workers. A year later all remain employed.

