

**Windsor  
Public  
Library**

Session # 215

# **Defining the Future of Children's Services**

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# Windsor Public Library



*Universal Access to the Universe of Ideas*

Windsor  
Public  
Library

*“Honour the past,  
create the future”*

**Virginia A. Walter**

# Background

(or how I got here...)

- Dissatisfaction with children's services - need for direction and support
- Generated support for change from management
- Conducted a study of children's services
- *"Children's Services Consultant"*
- Short time line - six months, mostly part-time

# Results from Study

- Sixty page report was presented to management August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2001

# Purpose of Report

To recommend **new directions** for children's services based on:

- Research on **child development** and **library trends**
- Local community **needs, demographics,** internal functions and existing **services** to children

# The Report Contents

- Executive Summary
- Future Trends in Library Service
- Analysis of Collections & Programmes
- A Community Needs Assessment
- Analysis of Local Demographics
- Marketing and Outreach Plan

# **Contents** cont'd...

- Suggested goals and objectives
- A staffing proposal
- Summary of Recommendations
- References
- Appendixes (six total)

# Action Plan

## Goal:

- To develop a service plan with recommendations for the future of children's services at the Windsor Public library

# Project: Strategic Directions

1. Perform a needs assessment

2. Review current services and recommend new initiatives and directions

3. Build a network of information resources

4. Provide supporting evidence to position children's services as a priority

# Perform a Needs Assessment

- Action Plan: survey agencies that serve children in the community
- Survey parents and children
- Collect and analyze local demographic data on children
- Conduct focus groups

## **Review Current Services & Recommend New Initiatives**

- Study the Public Library's role in the early literacy
- Investigate early literacy programmes
- Evaluated existing services

## **Build a network**

- Initiate contact with other library systems for information & ideas
- Develop community liaisons and partnerships with children's agencies
- Participate in local children's committees and events

# Providing Supporting Evidence

- Recommend a budget for children's services
- Develop goals and objectives
- Demonstrate the need for a focus on early childhood development

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# Trends and Future Directions for Library Service to Children

Early literacy

The library environment

Outreach to the community

Supporting the Parents

Access to Information Technology

# Early Years Study

- A study of the relationship among early brain development, learning, behavior and health throughout all stages of life
- Goal of this report is to improve outcomes for all young children

# Why Early Years?

- *“It is clear that the early years from conception to age six have the most important influence of any time in the life cycle on brain development and subsequent learning, behaviour and health.”*

Early Years Study: Reversing the real brain drain. Mustard, 1999.

# Mustard's Profound Statement

*“The period of early child development is equal to or in some cases greater in importance for the quality of the next generation than the periods children and youth spend in education”*

Early Years Study: Reversing the real brain drain. Mustard, 1999.

# Mustard's Recommendations

- Universal Approach – available, accessible
- First five years - “readiness to learn”
- Early childhood development & parenting centers
- Partner with both public and private sector
- Lead a campaign to build public awareness

## *Five Trends...*

# Early Literacy; the library's role

- Public Library history
- Reading aloud
- Readiness to Learn
- “*Emergent literacy*” replaces “*Reading readiness*”
- Enhance awareness of early literacy
- Educating library staff & community

*Five Trends...*  
**Library Space  
for children**

- Library as learning environment
- Developmentally appropriate materials
- Emergent literacy environment
- Comfortable & welcoming spaces for families
- Library as community center

*Five Trends...*

# Outreach to Community

- *“Greatest challenge, greatest opportunity”*
- Seek out “hard to reach” populations  
i.e. multicultural community
- Take the library out to the community
- Focus on caregivers & parents

*Five Trends...*

# Support the Parents

- Help the parent to help the child
- Include parents in early literacy programming
- Model effective behavior
- Provide supportive materials
- Initiate parent focus groups

# Access to Information Technology

- Electronic Information literacy
- Software training for parents and children
- Emerging technologies
- Adopt educational role
- Remain relevant to future generations

# Needs Assessment

- Purpose: to identify issues, gaps, and problems in our service
- To find what the needs and expectations of the public are instead of making assumptions.

# Method

- Questionnaires for parents, children and agencies serving children
- Focus groups with parent, staff and children
- Interviews with city agencies

# Questions

What do you do at the library?

1. Borrow Materials (Market Probe)
2. Use the internet

What should library do better?

1. More current & popular materials
2. More programming for young children

# Gaps Identified by Needs Assessment

- Programming focus on young children
- Child-friendly spaces with toys
- Outreach to community agencies
- Computer literacy workshops for children
- Providing parents with resources to nurture their own children

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# Existing Services

- System wide programming: March Break, Summer & Storytime
- Why do we offer this programme?
- Are we meeting children's needs with this programming?
- Are we satisfied with the results?

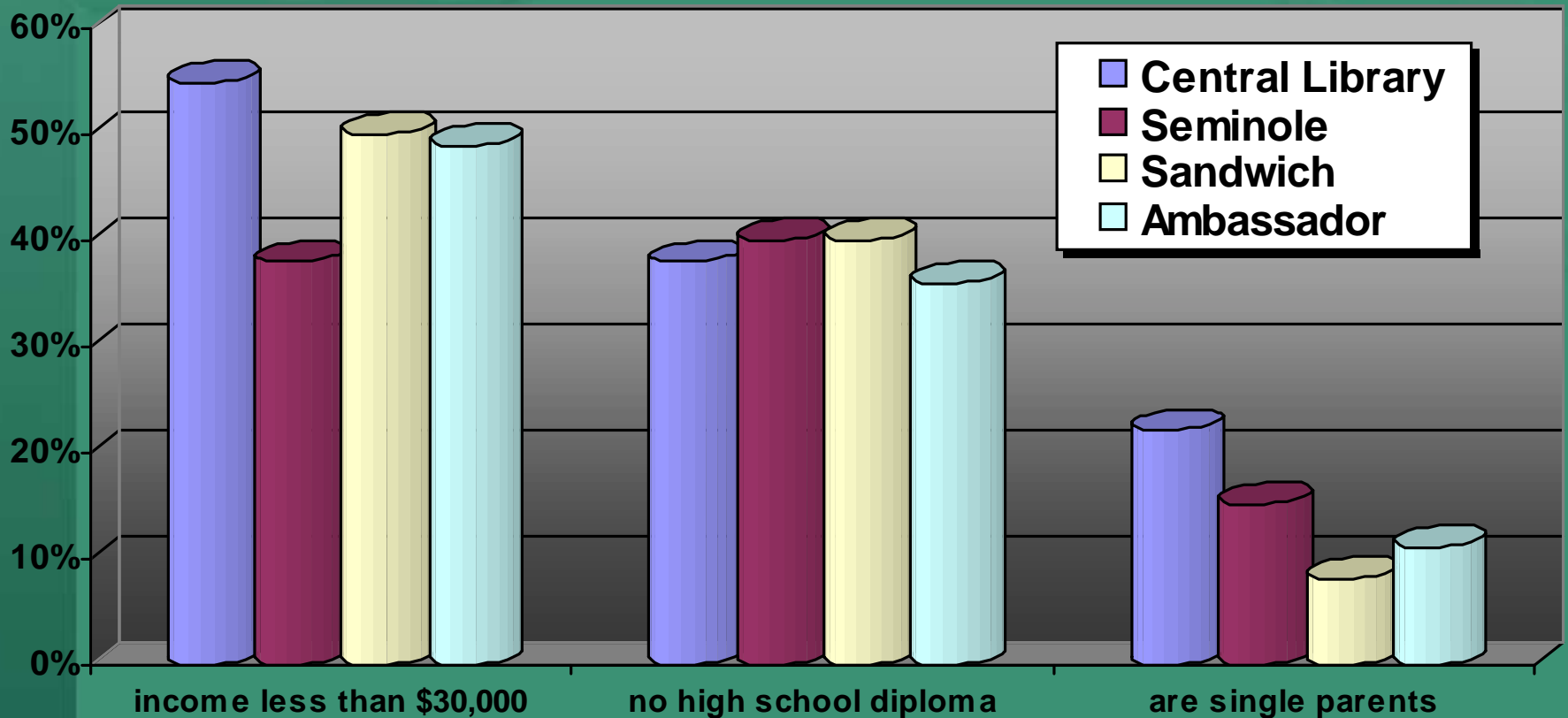
# Storytime

- For developing early literacy skills
- Focus storytimes on 0-3
- Based on developmental age
- Training staff in developmental stages
- Partnership for storytime

# Demographic Profile

- Data collection
- Data presentation
- Analysis

# Identify High Needs Neighborhoods



# Children's Collections

- Activity(circ) doesn't equal success
- Core collection vs. popular high demand
- Reallocate resources to early years collections
- Indicate possible areas of development
- Compare with other libraries?

# Promotion/ Awareness

- Price Waterhouse study
- Objectives for promotion
- Target Market
- Outlined potential projects
- Message

# Goals & Objectives

Created a vision statement for children's services:

**“Primary Destination”** for families

# Goals for Children's Service

- To assist parents in meeting the early literacy needs of their children
- To ensure that all children in our community have the opportunity to develop a love of reading as a basis for lifelong learning

## **Goals** cont'd...

- To enhance the awareness of children's library service in the community
- To contribute to the positive development of the child

# Recommendations to WPL Administration

- Create an early childhood resource center
- Create a capacity for early years needs
- Make early literacy programmes, services and collections a priority
- Reinvigorate outreach services
- Web page links for parents
- Marketing our services to families

# **Community Partnerships**

- Health Unit
- Information Windsor
- ELF Centers – Early Learning and Family Centers
- South Asian Center
- St. Clair Community College
- Great Beginnings Child Cooperative

# Community Partnerships cont'd...

- Unemployed Help Center
- Learning Disabilities Association
- Ready, Set, Go (Neighbourhood org)
- New Canadians Center
- Greater Essex County School Board
- Arts Council of Windsor

# **New Directions**

- Early Years Center
- Early Years Advocate for Libraries
- Focus on children 0-6, especially infants
- Family Gateway on our web page
- Multicultural resources
- Community collaboration

# Early Years Center

- Designated space in the Central Library uniquely designed for the comfort, exploration and development of the young child including developmentally appropriate toys, materials and furnishings for children infant to six years.

# Early Years Advocate

- The primary focus is on collections and services to children 0-6 and their caregivers, outreach to agencies and groups serving children 0-6 years.
- To advance the cause of child and family literacy.

# Other Features

- Parenting collections in the early years center including a parenting kiosk of information
- Family Gateway: a gateway to online parenting resources
- Expansion of infant & multilingual resources

# Follow-up

For this presentation

# Questions...?

➤ [www.windsorpubliclibrary.com](http://www.windsorpubliclibrary.com)

For a copy of the report:

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