In March 2008, 14 of Canada’s leading researchers of early child development committed to work closely together for at least the next 7 years.

Known as the Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development, the network will make sure that parents, educators, community group leaders, and government policy makers have information about how children develop between pregnancy and the first day of school. This task takes on particular importance given the well-documented links of positive, nurturing experiences early in life with later success, and given the context of the National Children’s Agenda (NCA) adopted several years ago by federal and provincial ministers to support the healthy development of children.

The Cluster has received almost $300,000 per year from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and $100,000 from both Université Laval and Université de Montréal, along with in-kind contributions from groups within universities located across the country (University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, University of Calgary, McMaster University, University of New Brunswick, University of Ottawa, Queens University, University of Toronto, and University of Western Ontario). Collaboration is also expected from more than 20 nonacademic, private organizations and international and national governmental agencies specialized in the field.

Plans to convey information include an annual conference to bring researchers, students, and partners’ organizations to meet face to face. Knowledge mobilization work will also take the form of review papers, policy briefs, and consultations, all under the coleadership of Michel Boivin from Université Laval and Richard E. Tremblay from Université de Montréal. Both hold Canada Research Chairs in child development and can be counted on to foster collaboration across Canada while nurturing international research associations that will extend the network beyond national borders.

BY TRACEY ARIAL