Better Beginnings, Better Futures

Purpose:
A 25-year longitudinal prevention policy research demonstration project to provide information on the effectiveness of prevention as a policy for children.
> Initiated in 1991 by Ontario Government
GOALS

Prevention
- To reduce the incidence of serious, long-term emotional and behavioural problems in children living in high risk neighbourhoods.

Promotion
- To promote the optimal social, emotional, behavioural, physical and educational development in children.

Community Development
- To strengthen the ability of disadvantaged communities to respond effectively to the social and economic needs of children and their families.

PROJECT MODEL

High Quality Programs
- For children and families from conception to age 4 or from ages 4 to 8.

Integrated Programs
- Health and social service providers “blend and unite.”

Community Involvement
- Parents and local citizens participate as equal partners with service-providers in planning, designing and carrying out programs in the neighbourhood.
### Younger Child Sites (0 - 4 yrs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guelph</td>
<td>Willow Road</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston</td>
<td>Northern Area</td>
<td>876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Albion-Heatherington</td>
<td>552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Regent Park</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walpole Island First Nation</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Older Child Sites (4 - 8 yrs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Site/Program</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall</td>
<td>4 Francophone primary schools</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etobicoke</td>
<td>Highfield Junior School</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudbury</td>
<td>Flour Mill / le Moulin à Fleur and Donovan</td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### BOTTOM-UP PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Each community to undertake as many high quality programs as possible, which could be expected to produce positive child development outcomes, within the limits of available resources and local needs.
### PROGRAMS OFFERED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Younger Sites</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Sites</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12-19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Larry Schweinhart from Perry Preschool has called the Better Beginnings, Better Futures Project a “Meta Program.” We call it *A Strategy for Community-Based Early Childhood Development*.

### Better Beginnings, Better Futures: Overall Project Organization

- **8 Better Beginnings Project Sites**
- **Government Committee**
- **Research Coordination Unit**
**Planning Phase** (1991-1993)
Community residents, service-provider partners, and staff designed a comprehensive, ecological program model.

**Demonstration Phase** (1993-1998)
Project provided four years of intervention for children from birth to age 4 and their families in 5 sites (younger child sites) and for children 4 to 8 years of age and their families in 3 sites (older child sites).

**Data Collection**

Program funding of the eight sites began in April of 1991. It took 2½ years for local projects and programs to develop to the point where valuations could begin in the fall of 1993.

Extensive information was collected and reported by the Research Coordination Unit on “start up” processes.

Baseline measures on children, families, and neighbourhoods were collected in 1992-1993.
In 1993-94, a longitudinal research group of 1,400 children and their families was recruited in 8 project and 3 comparison sites. Outcome measures were collected on these children/families for 4 years. During this 4 year period, information was also collected regularly on:
- Project organization
- Local programs
- Resident participation
- Service integration
- Program costs

Data Collection (continued)

Short Term Findings
(click on http://bbbf.queensu.ca)

During the first 4 years, what effects did the Better Beginnings Projects have on:
- Project development and implementation?
- Child Outcomes?
- Parent and Family Outcomes?
- Neighbourhood Outcomes?
Short-Term Results Promising: 1993-1998

- Solid resident involvement
- Partnerships with other local service-providers
- Strong locally-owned & operated project organizations
- Modest program costs: approximately $800/family/year

And Positive Effects On:

- Children’s emotional problems & social skills
- Parent’s health promotion & disease-prevention behaviour
- Children’s nutrition
- Special education rates
- Neighbourhood safety & satisfaction

THREE WAVES OF LONGITUDINAL FOLLOW-UP DATA IN THE OLDER CHILD SITES

- First wave collected in 2001-2002 when children in Grade 6.
- Second wave collected in 2004-2005 when children in Grade 9.
- Third wave collected in 2007-2008 when children in Grade 12
BETTER BEGINNINGS,
BETTER FUTURES
Grade 12 Follow-up:
RESULTS

http://bbbf.queensu.ca

Overall Results

The 3 older child sites (Cornwall, Etobicoke and Cornwall) demonstrated long-term positive outcomes for children and families.
GRAD 12 FINDINGS – 9 Years AFTER Program

**YOUTH - Advantage to Better Beginnings**

**Education – special education**
13% Better Beginnings  
19% Comparison

**Education – grades in HS**
Better Beginnings youth higher

**Health – regular exercise**
81% Better Beginnings  
72% Comparison

**Crime – property offenses**
29% Better Beginnings  
40% Comparison

**Community – neighbourhood deviance**
Better Beginnings youth rated their neighbourhoods less deviant drug use, violence, and theft.
**PARENTS**

*Advantage to Better Beginnings*

**Health** –

*Alcohol Consumption*
Better Beginnings parents drank alcohol less.

1 other smoker in the house
25% Better Beginnings
33% Comparison

*Emotional Issues – clinical depression*
18% Better Beginnings
27% Comparison

**Community - neighbourhood cohesion**
Better Beginnings parents rated their neighbourhoods as more cohesive
(“I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood.”)
ECONOMIC ANALYSIS


19 indicators that could be given a dollar value and that cost the government money for the child and the adult in his/her family that was interviewed.

COST SAVINGS RESULTS

COSTS:

BETTER BEGINNINGS: $2,991/ family
ADD’L HEALTH COSTS: + $1,067/ family
TOTAL $4,058/ family

COST SAVINGS:

EDUCATION: $5,316/ child
SOCIAL SERVICES: + $3,311/ parent
TOTAL $8,627/ family
NET SAVINGS to government:
$4,569 per family

$1 in; $2.5 back

LONGITUDINAL FOLLOW-UP OF CHILDREN IN GRADES 1 AND 3 FROM THE YOUNGER SITES

- 531 children of the families from the 5 younger child Better Beginnings neighbourhoods
- 164 children of the families from the comparison neighbourhoods
FINDINGS

- 9 significant differences across the sites, 7.5%
- 3 favored Better Beginnings
- 6 favored Comparison Sites
- Similar to CCDP outcomes (St. Pierre et al, 1997)

WHY SUCH NEGATIVE FINDINGS IN THE LOGITUDINAL STUDY OF THR YOUNGER (0-4) SITES?

- Mandate of Better Beginnings, Better Futures too broad
- Resources too few
Costs of Model Programs for Very Young Children (0 to 4) and their Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Name</th>
<th>Average Cost per child per year</th>
<th>Number of years</th>
<th>Total Program Cost per Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abecedarian *</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHDP *</td>
<td>$23,582</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$70,747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCDP</td>
<td>$10,800</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$54,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Head Start</td>
<td>$10,100</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$30,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perry Preschool*</td>
<td>$15,069</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$30,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Child-Parent Centers *</td>
<td>$7,617</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$15,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse Home Visitation *</td>
<td>$5,250</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>$13,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sure Start</td>
<td>$2,357</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$9,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Beginnings, Better Futures</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$3,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All dollar values are in 2005 Canadian dollars.
* Indicates programs with at least one significant long-term positive effect.

• Older child sites organized around the school
• No such universal system available for children 0-4
NEXT STEPS

- **Follow-up in mid-20’s**
  - Anticipate even more net savings!
- **Evidence published in high quality research journal: SRCD Monograph, December 2010**
- **TOOLKIT “How to Start a Better Beginnings, Better Futures Project”**
  - 2012 - Manual & DVD
  - 2013 - workshops in every province and territory
The Better Beginnings, Better Futures Community-Based Early Childhood Development Project
October 30th, 2009

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- Chapter 7: Working with Government and Other Partners

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE
Better Beginnings, Better Futures
AN EFFECTIVE AND AFFORDABLE PREVENTION PROJECT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN
HIGHLIGHTS OF BETTER BEGINNINGS, BETTER FUTURES
RESEARCH FINDS HIGH AT GRADE 8
A substantial investment in early child development will be necessary if we are to improve the competence, health and well-being of our population.

-Fraser Mustard