

Early intervention essential to success for at-risk children: study

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Children living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are more likely to succeed if they participate in a community-based prevention program, according to findings released recently from a multi-year research study based at Queen's University.

Children participating in the Better Beginnings, Better Futures (BBBF) project showed improved social and academic functioning. The project also impacted positively on families and on neighbourhoods.

"The results from our study indicate that the project has been a success," says Queen's psychology professor emeritus Ray Peters, the lead researcher on the study. "The project was designed to prevent young children in low-income, high-risk neighbourhoods from experiencing poor developmental outcomes, and to decrease the use of expensive health, education and social services. The study has proven that goal to be attainable."

The BBBF study is the most ambitious research project of its kind in Canada to date. 601 children between four and eight years old and their families as well as 358 children and their families from sociodemographically-matched comparison communities participated in the study. Extensive follow-up data were collected when the children were in Grades 3, 6, 9 and 12.

The researchers found marked positive effects in social and school functioning domains in Grades 6 and 9 and evidence of fewer emotional

and [behavioural problems](#) in school. In Grade 12, study results continued to show positive effects on school functioning for BBBF [children](#), who were also less likely to have committed property offences. Parents from BBBF sites reported greater feelings of social support and more positive ratings of [marital satisfaction](#) and general family functioning, especially at the Grade 9 follow-up. Positive neighborhood-level effects were also evident.

Economic analyses also showed BBBF participation was associated with significant government savings per child.

Provided by Queen's University

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