

Success Combating Poverty's Impact on Preschool Children: A Multi-Strategy Intervention Program is Proven Effective



Children, enrolled in a preschool program for low income families, improve their receptive vocabulary after just 10 months, scoring above the average Canadian child. Receptive vocabulary is where spoken words are matched to pictures. Even more pronounced are the improvements in receptive vocabulary for Aboriginal children and for those who have developmental delays. This short-term result released in August 2006 was uncovered as part of a longitudinal study of preschool children attending the Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS) One World Child Development Centre (One World). See <http://www.cupshealthcentre.com/oneworld.htm>



By late 2007, preliminary results will be available from the first group of CUPS One World preschool children who reached seven years of age, and will measure whether their early success extends into their elementary school experience. The CUPS One World preschool program is designed to address the side effects of living with low income, one of which is recognized to be developmental delays.

Designed as a multiple intervention program, CUPS One World aims to provide a safe, supportive, stable environment for preschool children and their families. It offers a centre-based early childhood education, nutritious lunches and snacks, and transportation to and from the centre for the child and caregiver. The program goes further than addressing the child's needs by providing parenting education and family support including home visits and referrals for support such as shelter, food and other resources.

During each school term, approximately 50 preschool children and their caregivers attend CUPS One World. The study identified these participant attributes:

Children:

- ✦ On average, were almost 4 years old
- ✦ Half were boys
- ✦ Slightly more boys than girls had developmental delays



Caregivers:

- ✦ On average, were 31 years old
- ✦ More than two-thirds had completed high school
- ✦ One in four was employed
- ✦ Over half had a partner (married or common-law)
- ✦ Three-quarters had a family income of less than \$1,510 per month
- ✦ Nearly one in three caregivers had been in contact with child welfare when they were children
- ✦ Almost half had child welfare involvement with their own children

The results also showed that caregivers experienced positive changes such as slightly less stress associated with being a parent, slightly decreased risks for child maltreatment and slightly improved self-esteem.



Karen Benzies is the author and lead researcher for the study at CUPS One World. She is an Associate Professor in Nursing at the University of Calgary. These summary results are from "The CUPS One World Child Development Centre: A multiple intervention preschool program for children living in extreme poverty," a research report conducted by: K. Benzies, S. Tough, N. Edwards, K. Rotstein, M. Johnson, B. Marokus, G. Bowen & C. Donnelly (2006, August 31) University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. If you have questions about this program or early childhood education for children in low income families, please contact the author at benzies@ucalgary.ca