

## How research in early learning can help make a decision on Election Day

Lots of studies show us that the early years are crucial for how we manage as adults. We have an election coming up tomorrow. We encourage you to think about main features of a child's environment that affect two particular aspects: reading and school readiness. These are strong indicators of later achievement.

In our research we examined two important environments: i) family and ii) neighbourhood. In the family, the parent-child relationship is crucial. For example, parents who are sensitive to their children's needs facilitate their children's mastery of language and reading skills in their early years. However, that being a sensitive parent is not easy and is much less likely to happen in low-income families. The research tells us that reducing the economic disparities across our country is a key to giving all children a fair chance at school.

The second environment is the children's neighbourhood. Our research shows that children in high-income neighbourhoods show better language abilities and reading skills. To improve school readiness is by providing social programs that help develop children's language skills. Recreation programs, neighbourhood events are obvious and important. Library programs, library workshops and family support programs also help provide children with better school readiness.

We can use this research to help us determine which programs and policies are most effective. One of the most powerful tools that we possess as individuals is the ability to vote. We should represent our interests. If we value the well-being and academic success of our children, we should support programs that support all families and particularly those families who are most at risk.

In the long term, better-educated children will become productive members of our economy, generating economic gains through increased employment levels and reduced spending on social services. These long-term gains outweigh the short-term savings that are achieved through reduced spending on education and social services. With the benefit of research, we are in a better position to decide about which parties will be effective in helping families and youth. We should use this information when making decisions about who to vote for in the upcoming election.

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