

Why are the early years a smart investment?

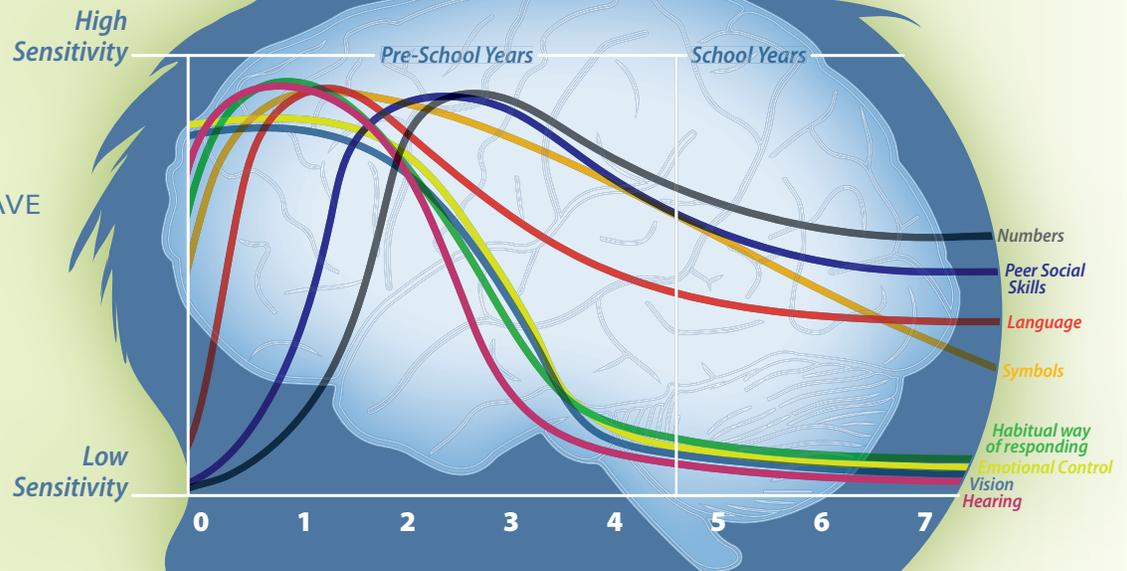
You may already know

that because of the way the brain develops after birth, **A CHILD'S FIRST YEARS HAVE A PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE REST OF THEIR LIFE.**

During these first years, "WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY" open wide and investments into children are maximized.

This chart ▶

shows how the preschool years are the **MOST ACTIVE PERIODS** of brain development, and most sensitive to development opportunities.



2x

A three-year old's brain is twice as active as an adult's

Investments in a child during these **EARLY YEARS** **PAY DIVIDENDS** to society and the economy **THEIR WHOLE LIFE THROUGH** including in the form of savings to the healthcare, education, justice, and social service systems.

In fact, some economists project that **INVESTMENTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD** provide more return on investment than formal education or job training — one study suggests investments in children aged 0–3 produces a benefit of **10 to 1** (Heckman, goo.gl/SDHnXh)

There's an infinite number of ways to help young children develop, and everyone has a role to play. **THE GOOD NEWS IS** that we're learning more each day about how best to invest in that **WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY.**

Why are the early years important to a child's healthy development?

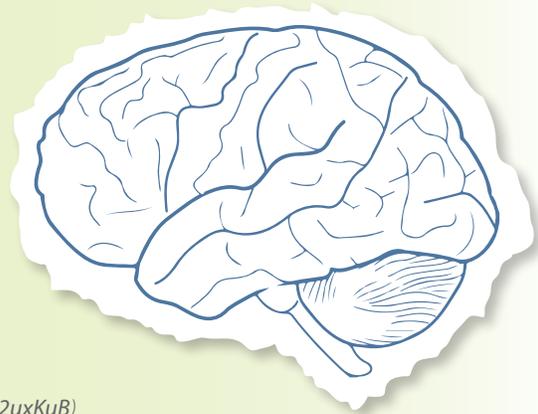
The evidence

is starting to stack up. It says that a child's **FIRST SIX YEARS** can have a major impact on their personality, **BRAIN**, and **FUTURE** prospects.



The brain is the only organ not fully developed at birth.

(Karen Kearns, goo.gl/2uxKuB)



During a child's first years, important synapse connections are made that form the **BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE** that the rest of their brain development will rely on.

In fact, evidence suggests:

90%

OF BRAIN DEVELOPMENT OCCURS IN THE **FIRST 6 YEARS** OF A CHILD'S LIFE.

(Arkin, Braveman, Egerter, & Williams, goo.gl/E7snxM)

Early experiences

impact many aspects of an individual's **DEVELOPMENT**. These are sometimes classified as:

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT,
which refers to a child's ability to solve problems and learn

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
which includes the ability to interact with others, to help oneself, and to use self-control

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT,
which means using and understanding language

FINE AND GROSS MOTOR SKILLS,
which allow children to use small and large muscles

(HealthLink BC. Milestones for 5-year-olds. goo.gl/b9gPqL)

If a child enters kindergarten without a foundation of healthy development, they may struggle to catch up throughout their school years and beyond. **FORTUNATELY, WE CAN ALL HELP** create opportunities for children to grow and learn so that every child starts out with a healthy foundation.



Provincial Office
for the Early Years

Why should we support vulnerable children?

Canadian children SHOW AVERAGE OR ADVANCED LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT IN COMPARISON WITH CHILDREN WORLDWIDE.

(Government of Canada, goo.gl/u4fQP6)

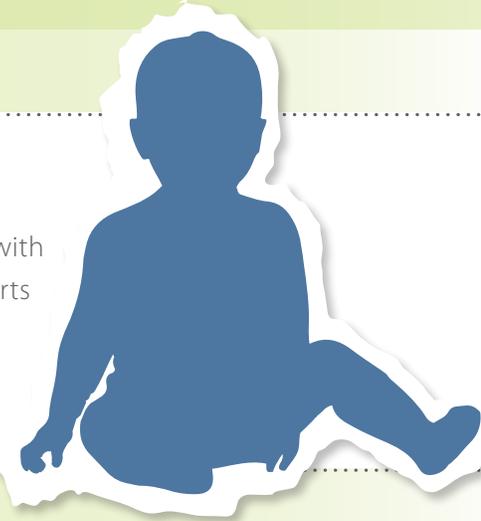
However, not all of our children have an equal chance at healthy development.

FOR EXAMPLE, children from families with lower

incomes are more likely to have cognitive difficulties, behavioural issues, and struggle with hyperactivity and obesity.

MEANWHILE, immigrant and Aboriginal children

may face barriers to healthy development if they are not provided with culturally relevant supports provided in a language themselves and their parents understand.



Through no fault of their own, children who face barriers during early childhood can experience lifelong consequences. **THESE CONSEQUENCES CAN INCLUDE:**



LOWER educational attainment



WEAKER literacy and communication skills

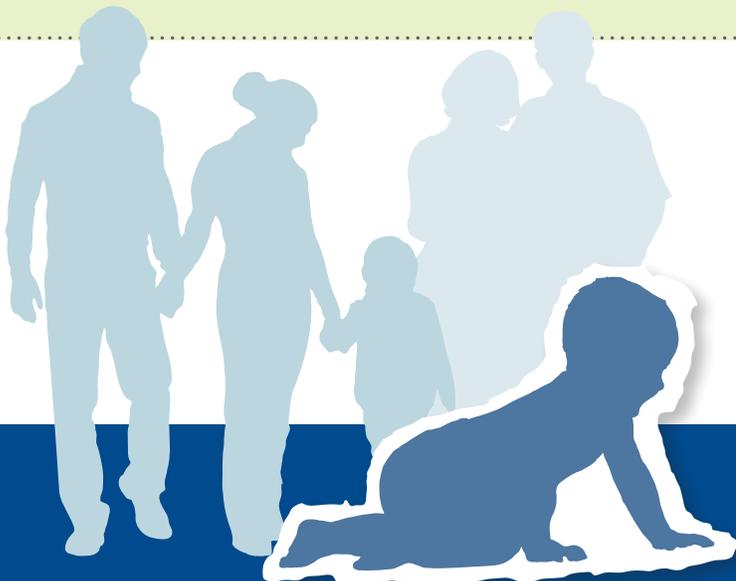


FEWER employment opportunities



POORER physical and mental health

(Government of Canada, goo.gl/Z1tNSi)



And that's not fair.

NOT ONLY IS IT UNFAIR, but it means everyone risks missing out on the potential that lies within each and every child.

FORTUNATELY, we can

take advantage of the window of opportunity that opens during a child's early years to help ensure they overcome barriers on the path to a healthy and happy adulthood.