



National Collaborating Centre  
for Determinants of Health

Centre de collaboration nationale  
des déterminants de la santé

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## Background

The National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health facilitates knowledge synthesis, translation and exchange for public health practitioners. This poster describes one of our knowledge translation activities an “Environmental Scan of School Readiness for Health: Definitions, Determinants, Indicators and Interventions” conducted by Dr. Jayne Pivik, Apriori Research.

## Purpose

Explore school readiness from a health perspective

1. Clarify the definition
2. Explore how it is evaluated
3. Identify best practices for public health practitioners and communities in the promotion of school readiness

This environmental scan: identifies those interventions which include a health component; expands the definition of school readiness to include child health, safety, social-emotional development and mental health; and, presents new trends and programs being considered for enhancing school readiness from an ecological framework.

## Methodology

National and international scientific and organizational sources were reviewed using an ecological lens.

Definitions, determinants, indicators and interventions associated with school readiness were identified and documented.

# Supporting Children to be Ready for School: An Environmental Scan

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## Definition

Influences on school readiness include: health, social, intellectual and developmental aspects of the child; family functioning, practices and status; neighbourhood influences; community services, programs and opportunities; and societal influences and supports.

## Interventions

Interventions to address children’s readiness to learn should include access to: medical screening and early interventions; health practitioners and education professionals; adequate nutrition; parent education and support; health education for early care; and, an integrated approach serving both children and their families.

The environmental scan describes a number of instances where the Early Development Instrument (EDI) is being used as a population measure to help assess the impact of interventions.

This scan supports findings by Emel and Alkon (2006), where school readiness should include consideration of the child’s: medical/physical condition; vision; oral health; social and emotional development; and, mental health.

Nineteen proven interventions were identified that had a health component, addressed prenatal education or children from 0-5 years, identified positive child outcomes and focused on school readiness or healthy/safe children.

All of the interventions in the “proven” category have shown significant differences in the following children’s outcomes: cognitive/achievement, behavioural/emotional, educational, child maltreatment, and/or health.

Promising practices include comprehensive service programs (health, education, family support) as well as practices which support transition to kindergarten and promote child friendly cities and communities.

Please note that the proven interventions and promising practices identified are not considered an exhaustive list but rather, reflective of the areas identified as important for school readiness from a health perspective.

## Proven

### *Developmental Assessment and Access to Early Interventions*

1. Developmentally Supportive Care: Newborn Individualized Developmental Care and Assessment Program (NIDCAP)
2. The Infant Health and Development Program (IHDP)
3. The Healthy Steps Approach
4. Reach Out and Read
5. Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT)

### *Family Support Services*

1. Nurse Family Partnership (NFP)
2. Healthy Families New York (HFNY)
3. DARE to be You
4. Triple P--Positive Parenting Program
5. Families and Schools Together (FAST)
6. Incredible Years

### *Early Childhood Care, Education and Family Support*

1. Early Head Start
2. Carolina Abecedarian Project
3. Child-Parent Centers
4. Perry Preschool Project

### *Early Childhood Social-Emotional Interventions*

1. Primary Project
2. Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)
3. Al’s Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices
4. Fast Track

## Promising Practices

The promising practices section includes comprehensive service programs (health, education, family support) as well as practices on supporting transitions to kindergarten and promoting child friendly communities.

1. Toronto First Duty
2. SmartStart
3. Sure Start
4. Supporting Transitions from Preschool to Kindergarten
5. Promoting Child Friendly Cities and Communities

## Key Conclusions

The following are some of the main conclusions.

1. Early childhood is a “prime” time for positively influencing a child’s physical, social-emotional and mental health and development.
2. Families have the greatest influence on a child’s school readiness. Caring, secure and stimulating environments have the power to influence neurological development of the brain; with important and lasting implications for children’s capacity to learn.
3. Living in poverty is one of the greatest predictors of poor school readiness.