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NEWS RELEASE

Study shows at-risk children get boost from daycare Early intervention counteracts effects of multiple risk factors in preschoolers

Montreal – Access to high quality daycare at a young age would help at-risk children be prepared for school and give them a better chance of succeeding later in life, according to a study released by the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

The study, “Factors of Risk, Vulnerability and School Readiness among Preschoolers: Evidence from Quebec,” by Christa Japel (Université du Québec à Montréal), examined how risk factors like health status at birth, low income and poor parenting practices relate to children’s cognitive ability and behaviour. The study found that more than one in five children in Quebec have lived with four or more risk factors for at least three years before reaching the age of six years. As children are exposed to more risk factors, their behavioural difficulties increase and their cognitive performance decreases, according to Japel.

Japel found that while all children’s performance on tests measuring vocabulary and pre-math skills is improved by prolonged attendance at a child care service, the more a child is exposed to a life context with multiple risks, the less likely he or she is to have attended such a service.

“From a very young age, these kids are already behind,” says Japel. “There needs to be early, intensive and continuous intervention from pregnancy to school, and more space in daycares reserved for children with special needs.”

The study used data gathered by the Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development, which followed over 2,000 children born in Quebec between October 1997 and July 1998. “Factors of Risk, Vulnerability and School Readiness among Preschoolers: Evidence from Quebec,” by Christa Japel, can be downloaded free of charge from www.irpp.org.

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