



Invest in Kids Foundation

News Conference

March 30, 1999

"The years before five last the rest of their lives."



INTRODUCTION

- Invest in Kids Foundation is a national organization founded in 1992 for a single purpose:
to promote the healthy development of children aged zero to five.
- These are the miracle years - the time of greatest human development.
- And this is the period when adults can most profoundly influence a child's future.



CONTEXT FOR ACTION

- We all want the best for our children.
- Unfortunately, too many children are not getting what they need.
... And we're seeing the consequences:
 - 25% of four year olds are seriously aggressive, and nearly 1/3 of seriously aggressive six year olds become anti-social adults.
 - almost 20% of school aged children have an identifiable emotional or behavioural disorder.
 - suicide among adolescents increased by 400% over the past three decades.



CONTEXT FOR ACTION, cont'd.

Fortunately, we now know what our children need to get the right start in life.

- **The first five years are pivotal in a child's ability to learn, to think and create, to love, to trust and to develop a strong sense of themselves.**

*...That's because 75% of brain development happens after birth
- primarily during the first five years of life.*

- **How we care for our children in their earliest years has a profound impact on how productive, resilient, compassionate and confident they will be as adults.**

*...A child's early experiences influence brain development
because they actually determine how the brain will be "wired".*



The Parent Poll

A national survey of parents of children under six.

HIGHLIGHTS



The Research Question

Why this survey?

The scientific information exists.

But do parents know?

Do parents of children under six have the knowledge, skills and confidence to ensure the best start in life for our youngest children?



The Parent Poll

About the Survey:

- **Who:** Canadian parents with at least one child under age six.
1645 households:
 - 245 single Mothers
 - 700 Fathers
 - 700 MothersRepresentative of English/French; income groups; regions.
- **When:** January 1999.
- **How:** Market Facts of Canada
- **Accuracy:** within 2.5 percentage points 95% of the time.



The Parent Poll

To determine Parents' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours about the early child-rearing years.

To see if parents:

- know the importance of early child development;
- understand their pivotal role as parents;
- have confidence in their parenting skills;

AND to see what parents actually believe, know and do.



The Parent Poll

92%

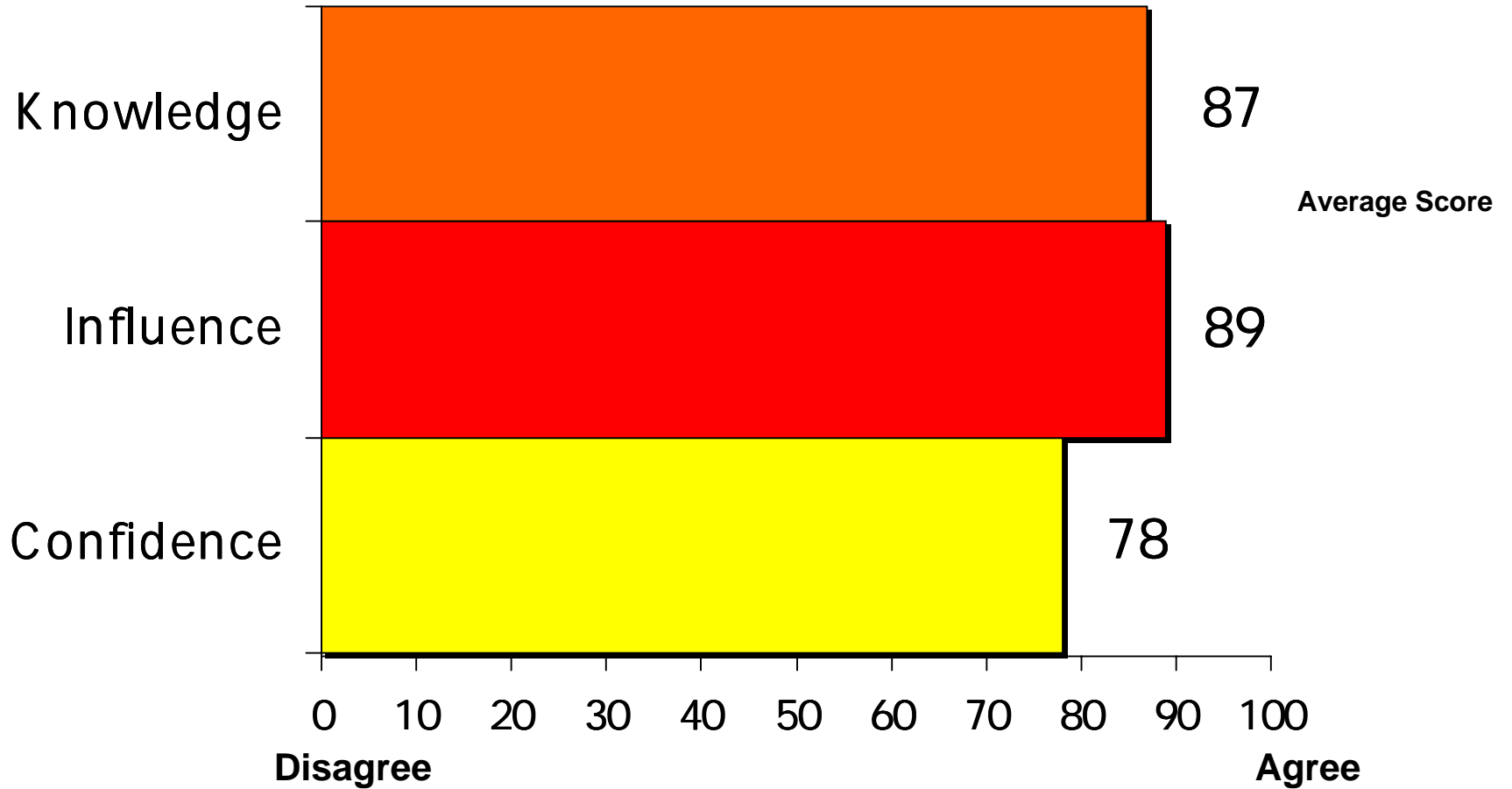
“Being a parent is the most important thing I can do.”

Parents value their role highly.

* % Mostly Agree



The Parent Poll





The Parent Poll

So what's the problem?

Well, actually there are 4 ...



The Parent Poll

- ① When put to the test, parents' KNOWLEDGE is:**

“a mile wide and an inch deep.”



The Knowledge Quiz



PARENTS KNOW:

Q1. *Babies are learning from the moment they are born.*

Answer:

% Certain:

True

85%



The Knowledge Quiz



PARENTS DON'T KNOW the most basic facts about fostering healthy development:

	<u>Answer:</u>	<u>% Certain:</u>
Q2. <i>Parents' emotional closeness with their baby can strongly influence that child's intellectual development.</i>	True	51%
Q3. <i>If a baby does not receive appropriate stimulation -- like being read to, played with, or touched and held, his or her brain will not develop as well as the brain of a baby who does receive these kinds of stimulation.</i>	True	47%



The Knowledge Quiz



Parents don't know...

Q4. *The things a child experiences before the age of three will greatly influence his or her ability to do well in school.*

Answer: % Certain:

True

34%

Q5. *Every baby is born with a certain level of intelligence, which cannot be either increased or decreased by how parents interact with him or her.*

False

30%



The Knowledge Quiz



Parents don't know...

- Q6. *By age one, a baby's brain is fully developed.*
- Q7. *Infants as young as six months consciously know how to manipulate parents.*

Answer: % Certain:

False **26%**

False **18%**

... /



The Knowledge Quiz



Parents don't know...

	<u>Answer:</u>	<u>% Certain:</u>
Q8. <i>Preschoolers learn and think the same way as adults, they just don't know as much.</i>	False	16%
Q9. <i>Intellectual development is the most important part of a child's being ready for school.</i>	False	8%
Q10. <i>Babies less than six months old can get depressed.</i>	True	8%



The Parent Poll

KNOWLEDGE Summary:

- Most parents (85%) are certain babies are learning from the moment they are born.
- But only about half of parents are certain the stimulation and nurturing they provide influences how babies and young children grow and learn socially, emotionally and intellectually.
- Very few parents are certain about brain development and its relationship to the mental health and intellectual development of very young children.



The Parent Poll

② While parents recognize the importance of their role, they don't really know what to do.



The Parent Poll

“How sure do you feel that you know what signs to watch for that would indicate that a baby or young child’s _____ development is healthy and about right for his/her age?”

	<u>Totally Sure</u>
PHYSICAL	29%
EMOTIONAL	13%
SOCIAL	13%
INTELLECTUAL	17%

- Even knowledge of physical development is not high.



The Parent Poll

- Parents feel they have the most knowledge over the part of development where they have the least influence - **physical development.**

	<i>% rated</i>	<i>% rated</i>
	<u><i>Most Knowledge</i></u> [*]	<u><i>Least Influence</i></u> [*]
PHYSICAL	53%	45%
EMOTIONAL	18%	14%
SOCIAL	12%	20%
INTELLECTUAL	14%	17%

* Omitting respondents who did not answer.



The Parent Poll

- Parents feel they have the most influence over the part of development where they have the least knowledge - **emotional development.**

	% rated <u>Least Knowledge</u> *	% rated <u>Most Influence</u> *
PHYSICAL	9%	6%
EMOTIONAL	33%	42%
SOCIAL	26%	31%
INTELLECTUAL	29%	17%

* Omitting respondents who did not answer.



The Parent Poll

INFLUENCE Summary:

- Parents are not sure what signs to look for to tell them their infant or young child healthy or about right for his/her age.
- Their knowledge about physical development is low, and social/emotional development even lower.
- Parents feel they have the most influence over emotional development, but this is the area where they have the least knowledge.

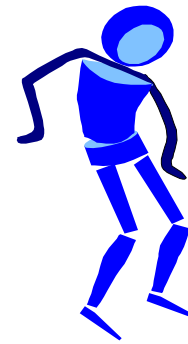


The Parent Poll

③ Below the surface, many parents are:



Unsure



&

Insecure



Parents' Confidence

“I find it hard to understand my child’s feelings and needs.”

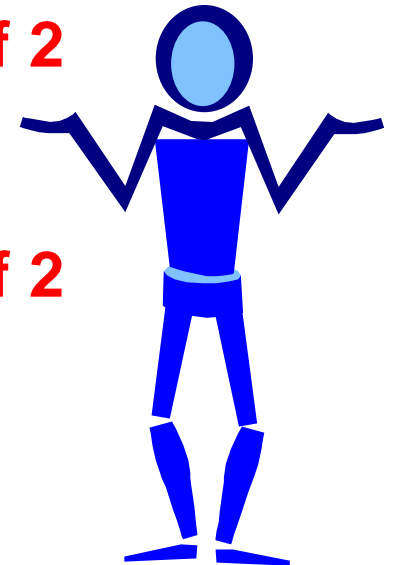
1 out of 3

“I lack confidence in my parenting skills.”

1 out of 2

“I don’t know how to handle difficult situations with my child.”

1 out of 2





Parents' Confidence

**After our first baby
was born...**

“I felt afraid of doing
something wrong.”

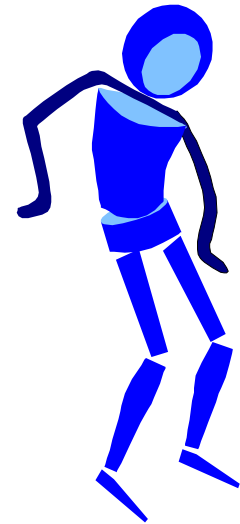
2 out of 3

“I felt unsure about what
to do a lot of the time.”

2 out of 3

“I felt afraid of not being
a good parent.”

3 out of 4





The Parent Poll

Parents are hungry for knowledge:

Mostly Agree:

“There is always room for improvement in parenting skills.”

90%

“Before our first baby was born I tried to prepare for parenthood by reading, advice, etc.”

70%

“I would be interested in learning more about brain development and how young children learn.”

65%



The Parent Poll

CONFIDENCE Summary:

- While parents claim they know how to make sure their children develop fully, underneath they are unsure of their skills, their children's feelings and needs and how to handle difficult situations.
- Parents are especially insecure around the birth of their first child.
- Parents want to know more to improve their parenting skills.



The Parent Poll

Are there differences between
Moms and Dads?

- Mostly NO, in knowledge, influence and confidence.
- Only a few, ...primarily in behaviours.



The Parent Poll

Preparation:

“Before our first baby was born I tried to prepare for parenthood by reading, asking advice, etc.”

55% of Dads

70% of Moms



The Parent Poll

- ④ Parents do not feel supported in their parenting responsibility...**



The Parent Poll

*“When I first became a parent, I felt I received enough **emotional** support.”*

52%

*“When I first became a parent I felt I received enough **practical** support”*

56%



The Parent Poll

40%

“I think Canada values its young children.”

But, even more disturbing...

-- Only 40% of parents think Canada values young children.



SUMMARY

- ① **KNOWLEDGE:** When put to the test, parents lack basic knowledge about child development.
- ② **INFLUENCE:** Parents think they have the most influence in the area of emotional development, where they have the least knowledge.
- ③ **CONFIDENCE:** Beneath the surface, parents are unsure and insecure about parenting.
- ④ **SUPPORT:** But parents do not feel supported when their first baby arrives; only 40% of parents think Canada values young children.



CONCLUSIONS

1 We need to create a climate supportive of healthy child development .

- Parents cannot do this alone.

2 We need to fill parents' knowledge and skill gap.

- More knowledge and skills will drive increased confidence and application.



Our Vision:

A generation of children who can meet life with confidence, competence and enthusiasm.



Our Goals:

- Enhance the understanding of all Canadians about the healthy development of children, aged of 0 - 5.
- Create a climate of support for healthy child development for all Canadian children.
- Motivate the adoption of best early child development practices, skills and policies.



Our Work:

- Research
- Training
- Public Awareness and Education