



Supporting Early Brain Development: *What do Parents Need?*

best start
meilleur départ

by/par health *nexus* santé

Who we are...

The Best Start Resource Centre:

- Provides information, consultations, resources and training in the areas of maternal health and early child development to service providers
- Is a program of Health Nexus (www.healthnexus.ca), a designated bilingual organization
- Is partly funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services



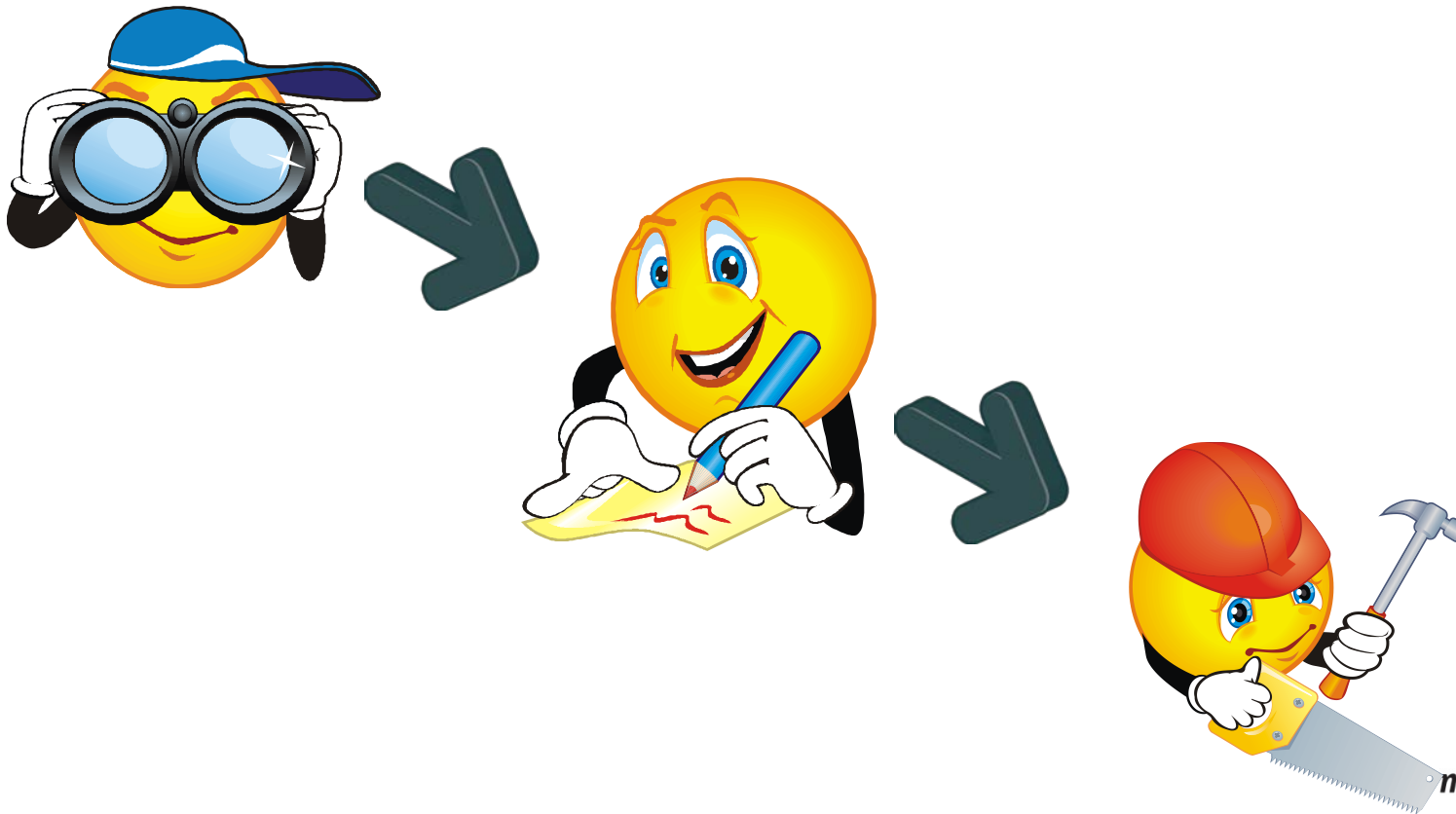
Services of the Best Start Resource Centre

- **Information sharing**
 - MNCHP Listserv & Bulletin
 - Information requests & networking
- **Resources**
 - Child Development
 - Environmental Health
 - Nutrition
 - Postpartum Mood Disorders
 - Reproductive Health, etc
- **Consultations (on-site, off-site)**
- **Training**
 - Regional Workshops
 - Annual Conference

For info: www.beststart.org



The campaign: from research to activities...



A Campaign on Early Brain Development?



What do parents know?

What do parents not know?

**How are we going to tell them
what they need to know?**

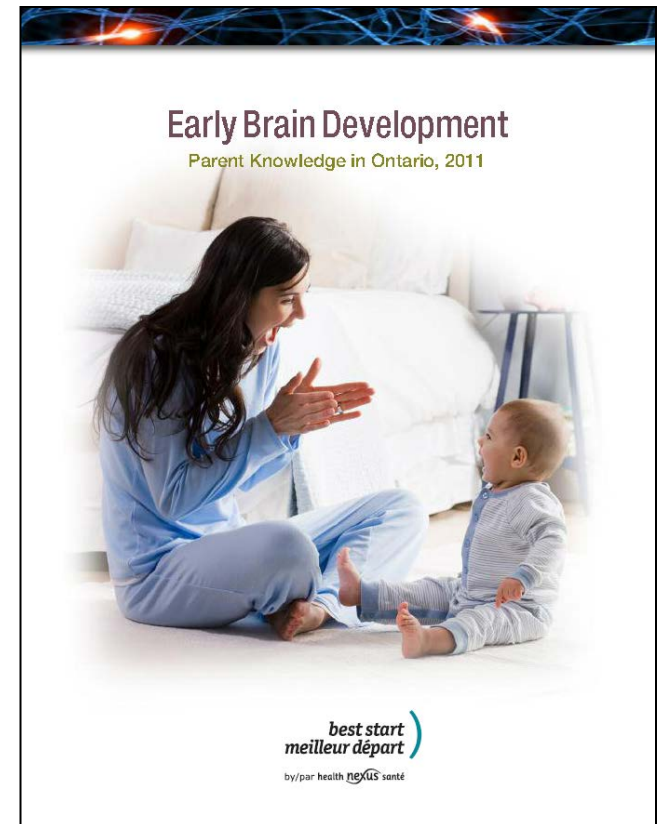
Early Brain Development

Pre-Campaign Research

- An environmental scan
 - 14 key informant interviews
 - A targeted internet search
- A parent survey

Parent survey available at:

beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev



Key Informant Interviews

“The pre-survey survey”

14 Key informants interviewed on:

1. Awareness of other parent surveys on early brain development
2. Awareness of other campaigns on early brain development
3. Suggestions for questions to be included in the parent survey
4. Suggestions for the upcoming campaign
5. Other key experts whom Best Start should speak to



Key Findings

- **No existing parent surveys or large scale awareness campaigns on early brain development**
- **Should make use of existing resources as much as possible**
- **Tone of the campaign should be positive and helpful**
- **Need basic key messages grounded in research**



Parents Survey

- **Purpose:** to determine parental knowledge on early brain development and gauge information needs
- **On-line, January 2011, Leger Marketing.**
- **512 Ontario residents, parents of children aged 0-6 years and/or pregnant**



How Much do Parents Know???



Perceptions and Understanding of Early Childhood Development

Most parents know that:

- **Infants are able to communicate using facial expressions, sounds, cries, gestures and body language (96%)**
- **Social and emotional skills are as important for school readiness as intellectual skills (95%)**
- **The average one year old can understand many more words or phrases than they can say (93%)**



However...

- 12% of parents felt that babies' cries and signals did not indicate a genuine need for parental attention (babies < 1 year old)
- 31% of respondents believed that picking up an infant every time they cry will spoil them



Perceptions and Understanding of Early Brain Development

- **Most parents understand that there are periods when the brain is more responsive to stimulation from the environment (81%)**
- **There was a high level of knowledge about a number of factors that affect early brain development**



However...

Parents believed that:

- **Products that claim to increase infant intelligence are grounded in strong scientific research (41%)**
- **More on learning the basics (reading, writing, arithmetic) in preschool and less play time will help increase a child's intelligence (40%)**



Parental Behaviours to Support Early Brain Development

Most parents correctly identified a number of activities that could have a positive impact on their child's development during the first three years:

- Playing with them (94%)
- Stimulating their five senses (93%)
- Reading to them (93%)
- Providing a healthy diet (93%)
- Providing daily physical activity (90%)



When to start? Right at birth! (90%)

However...

... Many parents felt that nurturing their child's brain required special equipment and toys:

- Flash cards (34%)
- Tools designed for babies and toddlers (e.g., TV, DVDs, computer programs, website activities or games) (32%)



Information Needs

Top things parents want to know about brain development in babies and young children: *(unprompted)*

- **Diet/ Nutrition (33%)**
- **Activities to support brain development (22%)**
- **Research recommendations (do's and don'ts - 14%)**

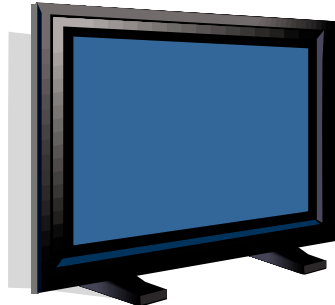


Which media do parents see/hear the most?

Internet (94%)



Television (82%)



Radio (72%)



Where Would they Access Child Development Information?

Health care providers (92%)



**Parent programs such as
Ontario Early Years
Centres (75%)**



So.... What do Parents Want?

- **Simple, research-based information to help them in doing what's best for their child, at each stage of development**
- **This includes:**
 - **Basic messages about early brain development and what it means for infants, toddlers and their parents**
 - **Characteristics of safe, engaging environments for babies and you**



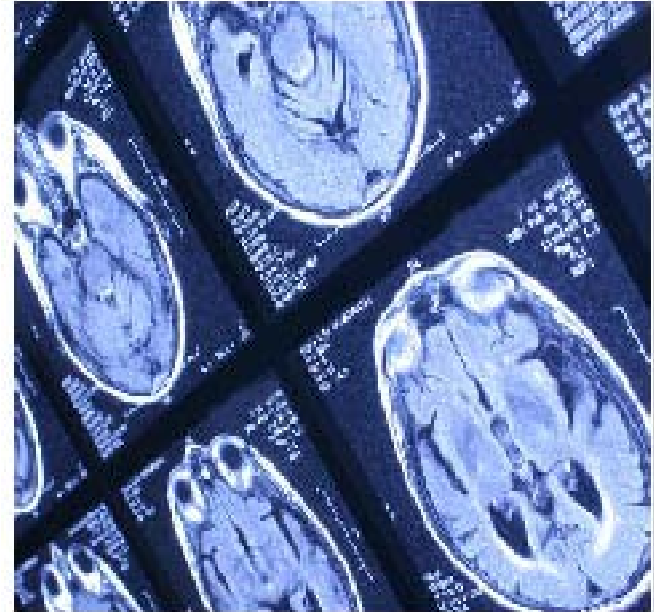
However... What they don't want/need is:

- **Generic messages about the importance of the early years, the critical role parents play, and the lifelong influence of a child's early experiences**
- **Detailed explanations regarding the science of early brain development**



Key Messages Needed...

- **You can't spoil a baby with too much attention or love**
- **You don't need special products to develop your child's brain**
- **Stimulating activities do not always mean structured ones**
- **Talk with your baby to create interactive, language-rich environments from birth**



The Bicycling Babies




The Campaign - Process

- ✓ Assess needs, strategies, etc.
- ✓ Form an advisory committee
- ✓ Develop key messages
- Develop materials (in progress)
- Focus test materials
- Implement/Disseminate (launch Oct 2012)
- Evaluate



The Campaign – Key Messages

- 
- ***Start early***
 - ***Love builds brains***
 - ***Playing builds brains***
 - ***Health builds brains***
 - ***Baby's world matters***

The Campaign – Main Deliverable

A bilingual website

- 14 short videos (2-5 mins)
- 1 « keystone video »
- Additional information
- Links to other websites

www.HealthyBabyHealthyBrain.ca
www.BebeEnSanteCerveauEnSante.ca



The Campaign – Development Issues

- **Bilingual from the start!**
- **Need « real » families people can identify with**
- **Need expert comments**
- **Need simple language**
- **Need to cover a large number of sub-topics**
- **Needs appeal....**









The Campaign – Main Deliverable



www.HealthyBabyHealthyBrain.ca

Key Players in Dissemination

- **Parent Programs (e.g., OEYC)**
- **Health Care Providers**



Additional Supports for Service Providers

Bilingual magnets with support display

- Free mail distribution to OEYCs
- Additional materials available for purchase from Best Start



Additional Supports for Service Providers

Bilingual tear-off pads

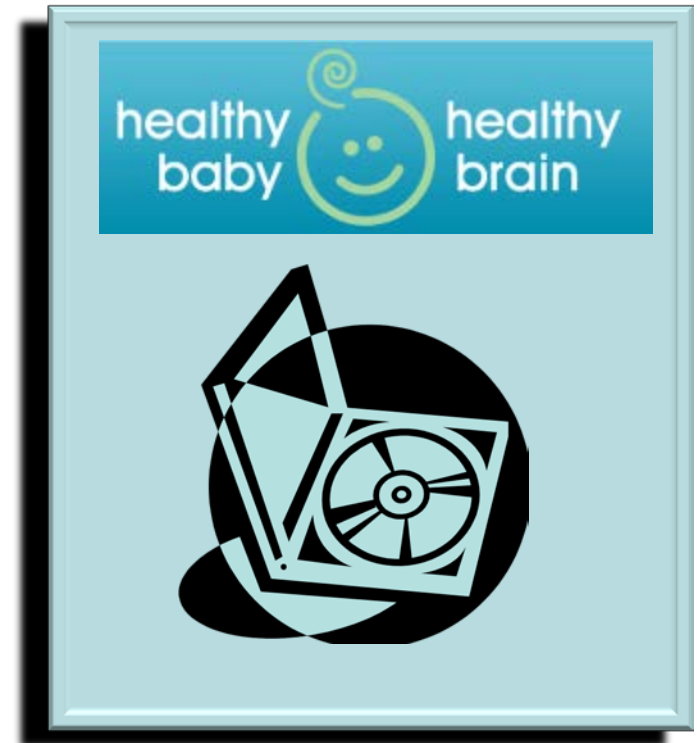
- Initial free distribution to health care providers at select conferences (family physicians, obstetricians)
- Additional materials available for purchase from Best Start



Additional Supports for Service Providers

Bilingual ready-to-use workshop

- DVD & Facilitator Guide
- For group or one-on-one use
- Priority groups: OEYCs
- Additional materials available for purchase from Best Start
- Online versions also available



Additional Supports for Service Providers

Paid advertising (some...)

- Web-based
- Radio, newspapers (News Canada)
- Magazine



Additional Supports for Service Providers

Additional supports

- Camera-ready ads
- Articles
- Text for radio PSAs
- Web buttons
- Sample press releases



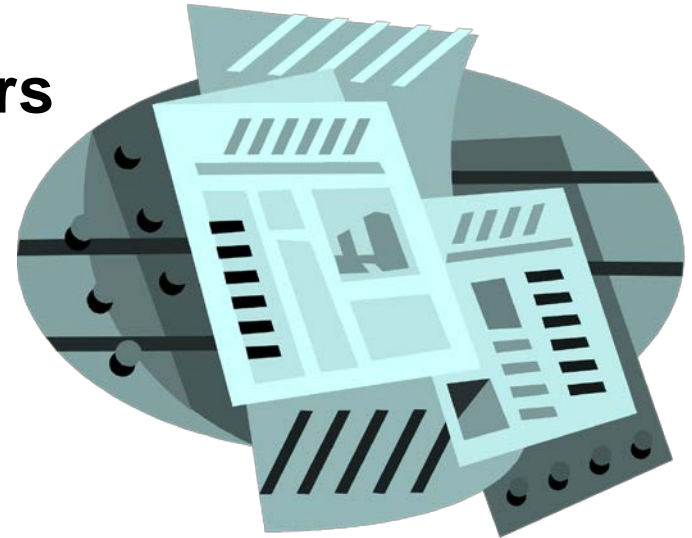
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The Campaign – Additional Outreach

Open to all free options!

- **Links from other websites**
- **Articles in association newsletters**
- **Articles / mention in listservs**
- **Presentations at conferences**
- **Etc.**



Focus Testing...

Planned for April

- Need some French & English parents



Other cool websites

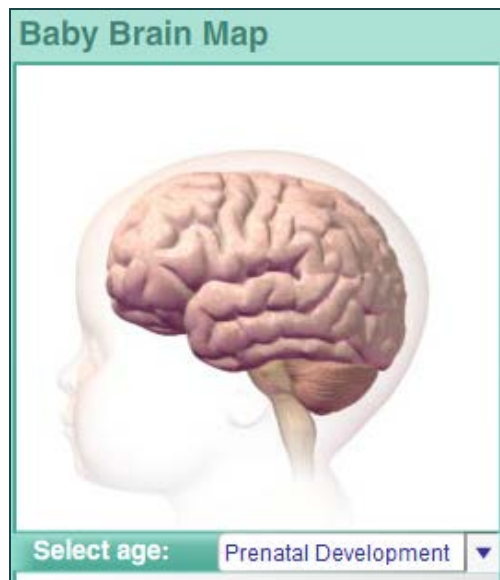
Center on the Developing Child – Harvard University



developingchild.harvard.edu/index.php/resources/multi-media/videos/brain_hero/

Other cool websites




Zero to Three – Baby Brain Map



www.zerotothree.org/baby-brain-map.html

Other cool websites

Parents2Parents

| | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| 2 Months | 31 to 36 Months | 7 to 9 Months |
| <p>As your baby enters his second month, he will gain new skills right before your eyes. At this stage you will notice that your baby is beginning to turn his head to both sides, follow objects with his eyes and more.</p> | <p>By now, you'll have a real sense of your child's personality. She also has more self-esteem and confidence - she's not as afraid of abandonment now, and is generally optimistic and cheerful.</p> | <p>By now, your baby can make some gestures to show what he wants, such as raising his arms when he wants to be lifted.</p> |
| Read More » | Read More » | Read More » |
| ★★★★☆ | ★★★★☆ | ☆☆☆☆☆ |

www.parents2parents.ca/my-childs-development

Other cool ideas

Quebec campaign – Help Them Grow



fondationchagnon.org/en/index.aspx

Another cool idea...



Coming in October 2012....



www.HealthyBabyHealthyBrain.ca

www.BebeEnSanteCerveauEnSante.ca

Thank you!

**Best Start: Ontario's Maternal, Newborn
and Early Child Development Resource Centre**

416-408-2249 or 1-800-397-9567

www.beststart.org

