

SEP 24 1990

# Action on Child Poverty

• A one day conference •

Friday, October 12, 1990

8:45 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Centre for Education  
1 Kingsway, Edmonton, Alberta

***A strategy session for people  
who are interested in finding  
workable solutions to the  
problems children face as a  
result of poverty.***

Educators, parents, social service  
workers, politicians, lawyers,  
community workers, volunteers –  
*anyone who wants to help!*

***Exciting presentations  
by two very special guests:***

– Patricia Chauncey, from *End  
Legislated Poverty* in Vancouver, will  
talk about her group's work on the  
structural dimensions of poverty;

– Judge Andrée Ruffo of the Quebec  
Youth Court, will share her vision of  
justice for all young people.

• Registration Fee: \$20 (lunch included) •

*"No child in our city should have to grow up in poverty. People worry about the cost of helping more than 40,000 children living in poverty in Edmonton. But what is really costly is allowing the present situation to continue — illiteracy, unemployment, crime, ill health, and wasted potential. That is what our community truly cannot afford!"*

*"When I am hungry, I have a physical problem. When you are hungry, I have a moral problem."*

*— Gustavo Gutierrez*

More than 100,000 children in Alberta live in families with incomes below the poverty line. Almost half of those children live in Edmonton. These children are not responsible for their situation and are powerless to change it. They need the help of people from the wider community. People who understand the real cost of poverty — to the children and to society as a whole.

It is for this reason that the Child Poverty Action Group — Edmonton was formed in the fall of 1989. The goal is to take action on behalf of children living in poverty. Children who are some of our most vulnerable citizens.

That spring, 150 people had gathered for the "Workshop on Poverty and the Schools." They heard about the problems children from low-income families face every day — hunger, inability to concentrate on their school work, illness, violence. And they learned about programs that can give children living in poverty a fair chance

to take advantage of their education. Programs like "Head Start" and other pre-school programs.

Since the workshop, 40 people from a dozen agencies and departments have been meeting regularly as the Child Poverty Action Group — Edmonton. Agencies like the Edmonton Social Planning Council and the Family Services Association; Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation and Boyle Street Co-op; Edmonton Community and Family Services, church and Community League volunteers.

The group is organized into three subcommittees: Community Action, Public Education and Head Start. The first two committees are working on informing the wider community about child poverty and involving them in solutions. The Head Start committee is promoting the concept of pre-school, early intervention programs with the local school boards and the City and Provincial governments.

If you would like more information about the CPAG, or about how you can help end child poverty in Edmonton — please contact:

Margaret Duncan • 423-2031 or  
Martin Garber-Conrad • 424-7543

**Child  
Poverty  
Action  
Group —  
Edmonton**

JUL - 4 1990

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COUNCIL

## 1989-90 HIGH NEEDS PROJECT EVALUATION ST. SOPHIA SCHOOL

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The High Needs Project at St. Sophia School is a preschool program based on one developed by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. The 1989-90 program encompasses the following features:

Program Operation The program consists of 2.5 hours, 5 days a week of classroom instruction.

Curriculum The High/Scope curriculum has been precisely followed throughout the year.

Personnel (1) 0.5 F.T.E. teacher  
(2) 0.5 classroom aide  
(3) 0.1 F.T.E. program administration by the school principal

Class Size The program consists of 8 students.

Evaluation Tools (a) Evaluating the Program:

1. Program Implementation Profile (PIP)-High/Scope  
-Assesses the physical environment, daily routine, adult-child interaction, and adult-adult interaction within the program

-completed once by the teacher and classroom aide

-completed once by the school principal

2. Parent Input

(b) Evaluating Child Progress

1. Child Observation Record (COR)- High/Scope  
-Assesses language development, representation, classification, seriation, number concepts, spatial relations, temporal relations, movement, and social and emotional development.

-completed 3 times by the classroom teacher (in December, March, and June).

-completed by the child's parent/guardian in

November.

2. Daily Anecdotal Records
3. Portfolio of child's work
4. Parent input

#### Professional Development

1. The teacher and classroom aide have joined the district's Early Childhood inservices throughout the year and attended the Early Childhood Education Council annual conference.
2. The teacher and classroom aide have visited and received inservice at the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation and subscribe to the Foundation's publications.
3. The teacher has regularly attended meetings for the district's High Needs language development teachers.

#### Parental Involvement

1. Parents are welcome and encouraged to participate in the class at any time.
2. Parents are required to complete the High/Scope Parent Interview and Assessment Schedule communicating their concerns, needs and interests with regards to their child's education.
3. Parents are required to complete the High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR) communicating their observations of their own child.
4. Parents are required to attend two parent/teacher conferences.
5. Parents are required to attend field trips as well as classroom and school special events.
6. Parents are asked to provide ongoing input about their child's progress and about the effectiveness of the program, and to write an informal evaluation of the program.

## PROGRAM EVALUATION

### Program Operation

The Preschool staff found 2.5 hours per day to be sufficient in implementing the instructional component of the High/Scope Curriculum. However, the teaching staff had limited opportunity to incorporate the team-planning component of the curriculum. As well, there was little opportunity to work with parents and children on an individual basis.

### Curriculum

Evaluation tools indicate that the High/Scope curriculum is effective in enhancing cognitive, behavior, social, and emotional development of the child.

### Personnel

The number of personnel and their time allocations were found to be sufficient in implementing the High Needs project.

### Class Size

The preschool staff found 8 students to be the ideal class size during the initial implementation of the program. Successful, implementation of the program and increased familiarity with the curriculum during the first year will allow the preschool staff to effectively incorporate a larger number of students in future years. As of June 27, 1990 the program has received 16 applications for the 1990-91 High Needs program.

## Evaluation Tools

### (a) Evaluating the program

#### 1. Program Implementation Profile (PIP)

The preschool staff has made use of the PIP as a guide for implementation of the High/Scope program. The PIP was found to be effective in helping the preschool staff focus on the essential components of the program and a good tool for assessing the implementation of these components.

#### 2. Parent Input

The preschool staff found continuous parental input to be very important in evaluating the effectiveness of the program and adjusting the program to meet the needs of the parent and child. It should be noted that some parents were more willing to provide input and participate in program evaluation than others.

### (b) Evaluating Child Progress

#### 1. Child Observation Report (COR)

The COR was very useful in monitoring the childrens' progress throughout the year. Having the parents complete the COR in November enabled the teacher to better understand a child's performance and capabilities outside the school setting.

#### 2. Daily Anecdotal Records

The preschool staff and parent volunteers made anecdotal notes daily to help track the childrens' progress and record significant incidents in the classroom. These records were particularly helpful for the teacher when completing the COR and to communicate information to parents during parent/teacher conferences.

#### 3. Portfolio of Child's Work

Keeping a portfolio of each child's work allowed the teacher to closely examine the child's progress and was particularly useful when demonstrating this progress to parents.

#### 4. Parent Input

Information communicated to the staff by parents was recorded in the daily anecdotal records and was found to be very important in

understanding a child's capabilities and tracking a child's progress. Near the completion of the program, parents were asked to write a brief description of their feelings towards the program and its impact on their child. Although not all parents fulfilled this request, those who did so indicated that the program has been very beneficial for their child. These documents are included in this report.

### Professional Development

The teacher and classroom aide found all inservices to both informative and beneficial in implementing the High Needs program.

### Parental Involvement

While parental involvement is a key component of the High/Scope curriculum, the extent of parental involvement in this High Needs program varied considerably. While some parents were very willing to participate in the program, others were hesitant to participate or had other commitments (e.g. employment, caring for other children) which prevented them from becoming fully involved in the program. It should be noted that all parents participated in parent/teacher conferences throughout the year.

## EVALUATION RESULTS

### Program Implementation Profile (PIP)

Completed by Principal (September): 98/150

Completed by teacher and classroom aide (June): 128/150

### Child Observation Record (COR)

1st Reporting Period: Range 66/141 - 102/141  
Mean 88.7/141

2nd Reporting Period: Range 78/141 - 118/141  
Mean 102.9/141

3rd Reporting Period: Range 87/141 - 128/141  
Mean 113.6/141

Parent Input

Informal evaluation are attached to this report.



## **RECOMMENDATION FOR 1990-1991 PROGRAM**

1. Adjust the amount of classroom instruction to 2.5 hours per day, 4 days per week. Thus allowing 2.5 hours per week for working with an individual parent and child, small groups of parents and/or children, and for team planning.
2. Maintain the use of the High/Scope curriculum as a basis for the program.
3. Maintain the number of personnel involved in this High Needs program and their time allocation.
4. Increase the class size to 10 students.
5. Maintain the use of all evaluation tools.
6. Use the Program Implementation Profile (PIP) at regular intervals to see if program staff are maintaining or improving the level of implementation of the High Scope curriculum. This would involve having the principal complete the PIP three times during the year as well as having the teacher together with the classroom aide complete the PIP at three intervals.
7. Allow the teacher and classroom aide complete the High/Scope curriculum checklist at 3 intervals during the year as a means of insuring that the curriculum is being followed as effectively as possible.
8. Allow the teacher and classroom aide to continue attending the district's Early Childhood inservices and the Early Childhood Education Council annual conference as well as any local conferences which are applicable to this High Needs program.
9. Allow the teacher to continue to take part in meetings for the district's High Needs language development teachers.

10. Establish a schedule for parents to act as volunteer aides in the classroom and/or school.
11. Establish alternative forms of parental involvement for those parents who, due to other commitments, are unable to participate in the classroom.
12. Maintain the use of the Parent Interview and Assessment Schedule as a means of understanding the parents' concerns, needs, and interest with regards to their child's education.
13. Develop an evaluation form for parents to complete at the end of the school year for the purpose of evaluating the programs effectiveness.
14. Develop a list of attainable and measurable objectives for the program, as well as a revised program documentation.

June 27, 1990

Claudette Vague, Administrator

Margaret Carlson, Teacher

Debbie Sehn, Classroom Aide

I think the four year old program has  
helped Crystal so much.  
She talks much better. I could have a  
good conversation with her. Much more  
now that school started. She's really has  
~~to~~ come a long way since September. Am  
grown up in so many ways.  
This class was great. I really want  
to thank both teachers. Cause they both  
helped the kids to get ready in life.  
To start them up. To be ready for Kindergarten.  
Thank's again both also. St. Sophia School.

M. Lawrence.

This four year old program, has been very ~~helpful~~ <sup>helpful</sup> for my daughter. Her speech has greatly improved since September. She is more confident in the things she does and also in her decisions she makes. She is also ~~expressing~~ <sup>expressing</sup> herself better.

She has also enjoyed the teachers very much. She also enjoyed all her new friends.

The program has been very cheery and bright.

My daughter has enjoyed all the new songs they learnt.

This program has been very beneficial in many areas of my daughter's life.

Thanks for such a good program

Sharon Marshall

June 27, 1990

Mrs. Vague  
Principal  
St. Sophia Elementary School

Dear Mrs. Vague

Our son, Stephen William Poshtar, was a student in your Four-year-old program 1989-1990. We found the program beneficial and worthwhile for Stephen and our family.

Stephen had fun learning many valuable lessons in this program. Besides learning many academic skills (counting, colors etc), he learned many life skills that he would have not had the opportunity to learn so early. Most importantly are some social skills he will use for the rest of his life. Stephen is learning to be tolerant of others and work with others rather than always leading activities.

Including the family in the program was also a positive aspect of the program. Mrs. Carlsen was always willing to discuss Stephen's progress and offer helpful and practical advice.

We feel that Stephen has grown in many positive ways this year, and that this program has definitely helped prepare Stephen for Kindergarten. We highly recommend this program.

Sincerely,

*Ron + Gail Poshtar*

Ronald and Gail Poshtar  
3812 - 123 Ave  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5W 5B3  
474 - 6974

**HEAD START:**  
**INVESTING TODAY IN ALBERTA'S**  
**TOMORROW**

A proposal prepared for:

Hon. Jim Dinning  
Minister of Education

and

Hon. John Oldring  
Minister of Family and Social Services

by

**The Child Poverty Action Group**

July, 1990

Contact:

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**HEAD START:  
INVESTING TODAY IN ALBERTA'S TOMORROW**

**I. An Introduction to Head Start**

**What is "Head Start"?**

Head Start is a pre-school program for children aged 3 and 4 who are economically and otherwise disadvantaged.

Research shows that these children are at risk of failure in school and have very limited chances for success in later life.

Head Start programs provide opportunities for **children and parents** to share valuable experiences that are essential for early childhood development.

**Head Start is not kindergarten.** Children have experiential development needs in the early years in the areas of cognitive, social and emotional development. These are the basic building blocks for success in school and later in life. **Head Start is not day care** as day care is currently delivered or proposed to be delivered in Alberta.

**Does "Head Start" really work?**

Yes! Long-term studies of children who attended Head Start programs in the United States clearly show that at age 19 these children are:

- more likely to be employed
- more likely to graduate high school
- more likely to attend college or vocational classes
- more likely to score well on standardized tests

*and*

- less likely to be detained or arrested
- less likely to experience teen pregnancy
- less likely to require special education classes

as compared with their counterparts who did not participate in the Head Start Program.

**Is Head Start cost effective?**

For every \$1 spent on Head Start, \$5 - 7 dollars are saved later in remedial education, criminal justice and income security costs.

## II. Proposed Head Start Program

### A. What's needed now.

#### Goal:

That Alberta lead the nation in provision of outstanding early childhood development programming through provision of Head Start Programs to every child in need in the Province.

#### Rationale:

Approximately 30% of Alberta's students do not complete high school. We also experience a high rate of teen pregnancy, unacceptably high rates of unemployment, and too many children spending too many years repeating grades. We also know that crime rates are higher and crimes are more violent in impoverished communities.

Parental involvement and support are key to a child's success in school. Parental involvement is essential and is frequently a required component of Head Start programming.

In a follow-up study of 57 children who completed Elves Memorial Child Development Centre ABC/Head Start Program, 51 were reported to have continued involvement in their children's education.

At Elves' ABC/Head Start, St. Sophia Head Start, Norwood Community Centre Head Start and Oliver School Centre for Children, **Head Start is working now in Edmonton!**

#### Who are the children in need?

Every child has the same basic developmental needs. There is, however, great variation in families' abilities to meet these needs. Among the children who are at risk for developmental delay are:

- Children who live in poverty.
- Children with handicaps.
- Children of women who work.
- Children of families in which English is a second language.



**B. What would the program look like?**

**Child Development Based Curriculum**

Successful programs follow an early child development based curriculum, e.g., High/Scope. These curricula are based on needs all children have but some children are deprived of having met.

A solid child development based curriculum includes:

- development of self esteem and social competence
- development of trust in responsible adults
- development of self control and a sense of responsibility
- development of speech skills
- development of early childhood cognitive skills
- development of motor skills
- development of **parents'** skills in meeting the needs of their children

**Parental Involvement**

Successful Head Start Programs make herculean efforts to involve parents.

We recommend strongly encouraging broad involvement based on whether the parents are working outside the home. Minimal involvement, e.g., parent/teacher conferences should be required.

Parental involvement would include as many of the following activities possible:

- parents on boards of directors and planning committees
- parent aides as classroom teachers
- parent support and development groups
- home education provided to parents
- parent/teacher conferences

## **Staffing**

Classroom Ratio: 1:5

Required staff:

*In the classroom:*

Classroom teacher, B.Ed. Degree or Grant MacEwan Diploma

Teacher's Aide, Grant MacEwan Diploma

Parent Aide, parent with child in the program

*Additional staffing requirements:*

Social Worker, BSW, to facilitate development of parents' skills and provide counseling, case management, advocacy and referral services

Speech Therapist to facilitate development of children's speech.

Program Administrator to provide direction, programming, supervision and ensure staff development

Community Volunteers to provide role modelling, extra family support, etc.

## **Additional components:**

### **Nutrition**

Two-thirds of a child's daily nutritional needs are to be provided during program hours as a regular daily part of the program.

### **Transportation**

We recommend that whenever it is necessary for a child's participation in the program, full transportation service be provided to ensure such participation.

## **Days/Hours**

It is recommended that the program be provided 5 days/week for half days.

In cases where parents are working full time, children would spend half days in Head Start Programs and half days in Day Care Centres or alternative care.

## Existing Head Start Programs in Edmonton

### 1) Elves Memorial Child Development Centre

The Elves Memorial Centre has offered the ABC/Head Start program since 1985. It runs in three locations throughout the city:

- a) St. James United Church - 15 children
- b) Pilgrim United Church - 15 children
- c) St. Stephens United Church - 15 children.

There are currently 45 children in the program between the ages of 3 1/2 and 5 1/2. There is an extensive waiting list for Elves.

### 2) Norwood Community Service Centre

The Head Start program at Norwood is the longest running, having been in operation for over 25 years. It has the capacity to accommodate 25 children per year but receives many more than 25 applications annually. Norwood, like the other Head Start centres in Edmonton, has a waiting list of parents who hope that their child can enter the Head Start program.

### 3) St. Sophia Catholic Elementary School

The Head Start program at St. Sophia is called High/Scope. The children at St. Sophia must be residents of their school district in order to be eligible to enter the program. One of their goals is to examine the potential of preschool education for the long term development of children. In the 1989/90 term there were 8 children enrolled in the program. Due to the great number of referrals they receive, this quota will increase to 15 children as of Sept. 1990.

### 4) Oliver Centre for Children

The Head Start program at the Oliver Centre started in 1984. It accepts children as young as 19 months old up to age 5. It is also open longer than the other centres (7:00 AM - 5:45 PM) in order to accommodate those parents who are working or going to school fulltime. Another distinctive feature of the Head Start program at the Oliver Centre is that it runs 52 weeks/year. There are currently 30 children enrolled in the program but as of September 1990, due to a high demand and long waiting list, this quota will increase to 40 available spaces.

## Who the Head Start Program Currently Serves?

1) Pre-kindergarten children - children (generally 3 or 4 year olds) from low income families, or with English as a second language (ESL), or from single parent families who are at risk of developmental delay in the areas of:

- speech
- cognition
- behavior and discipline
- motor and muscle coordination
- social competence
- emotional adjustment.

## 2) Parents of Head Start Children

Parents of children in the Head Start program generally do not have the necessary skills or financial resources to provide adequate mental and physical stimulation for their children. This program of early intervention is appropriate for parents who have English as a second language (ESL), single parents and low-income parents who may otherwise not be able to provide a pre-kindergarten experience for their children.

Because of the beneficial effects of parental involvement in Head Start, parents play a paramount role in the overall program and their participation is strongly encouraged at all four centres (often compulsory). In a follow-up survey of the ABC/Head Start program, 51 out of 57 parents involved at the preschool stage continued to participate in their children's education in subsequent years. This study suggests that Head Start programs can enhance learning and support in the home and can also facilitate a healthy working relationship between parents and the school personnel. The Head Start program then, benefits not only the children but the entire family.

## Current Facilities Used for Headstart Programs

- 1) Schools
- 2) Churches
- 3) Community league buildings

## Current Program Schedules

- |    |                   |                    |               |
|----|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1) | <u>Elves</u>      | half day           | - 4 days/week |
| 2) | <u>Norwood</u>    | half day           | - 5 days/week |
| 3) | <u>Oliver</u>     | 7:00 AM to 5:45 PM | - 5 days/week |
| 4) | <u>St. Sophia</u> | half day           | - 5 days/week |

## Staffing Requirement

The staffing requirements and children per staff member ratios vary among the different Head Start centres in Edmonton. The staff to children ratios range from 1:5 to 1:8 at the various centres. The following provides some details about the staff qualifications.

- 1) Classroom teacher - All Head Start centres require qualified Early Childhood Education teachers (minimum B. Ed. Degree or Grant McEwan Diploma).
- 2) Teacher's Aide - Most have diplomas from Grant McEwan.
- 3) Community Volunteers - Most of the volunteers are trained from the community at large. Many are mothers of children in the program who want to contribute to the development of the children. They provide good public relations, role modelling, and extra family support.
- 4) Social Worker or Home Educator - Social workers or home educators assist with the parental/familial aspects of the Head Start program. They lead the group in discussions and also provide family counselling when necessary.
- 5) Speech Therapy - An in-house speech pathologist is available for consultation at the Elves Memorial Centre. At the Oliver Centre, children with problems in the area of speech are referred to qualified speech pathologists at the Woodcroft Health Unit.
- 6) Program Administration - Each the Head Start centres in Edmonton is headed by an Executive Director. This person is responsible for staffing, programming and the day-to-day running of the centre. This person may be assisted by a Program Supervisor or Childcare Worker. Each paid staff member at any of the centres at is ultimately responsible to his/her respective Board of Directors. At the Oliver Centre, the Board is composed solely of parents of children in the program
- 7) Community Volunteers - At the Elves Centre, Classroom Assistants and Home Educators are trained from the community at large. Many of the volunteers are mothers of children in the program. They provide good public relations, role modelling, and extra family support.

# Child Poverty Action Group

## Information Sheet

### What is the Head Start Program?

**What is "Head Start"?** - Head Start is a pre-school program for economically disadvantaged children aged 3 and 4. Research shows that these children are at risk of failure in school and have limited chances for success in later life. Head Start programs provide opportunities for children and parents to share valuable experiences that are vital for early childhood development.

**How does it work?** - Head Start programs typically run four or five half-days per week. The classroom setting is designed around the social, behavioral, physical and educational needs of young children.

**What about the parents?** - Parental involvement is the key to the long-term success of Head Start programs. Parents sit on advisory committees and boards of directors. They participate in support groups, assist in teaching the children in the classroom, and receive home visits from Head Start staff and volunteers. In fact, the whole family benefits!

**Is Head Start something new?** - Head Start began in the United States in the 1960's as part of the War on Poverty. In Edmonton, the Head Start program at Norwood Community Service Centre has been around for almost 25 years.

**Are there any other programs in Edmonton?** - The ABC/Head Start program was started five years ago by **Elves Memorial Child Development Centre** and now operates at three locations. The **Oliver Centre for Children** operates an enriched program for pre-school as well as school age children at Oliver School. **St. Sophia Catholic School** began offering the High/Scope (Head Start) program in the fall of 1989.

**How many more do we need?** - Edmonton's Head Start programs have room for about 150 children. Of the 41,000 children living in poverty in Edmonton, more than 7,000 are pre-school age - just the right age to benefit from Head Start program!

**Does Head Start really work?** Yes! Long-term studies of children who attended Head Start programs in the United States clearly show that these children are: **more likely to graduate high school, go on to post-secondary training or education, and find employment, than are economically disadvantaged children who weren't in Head Start programs.** Moreover, children who attended Head Start programs were **less likely to need remedial classes in school, become pregnant as teenagers, or get in trouble with the law.**

**But is it worth it?** - For every \$1 spent on Head Start programs, \$5 - \$7 are saved later on in special education, welfare, health care and criminal justice costs.

*Head Start is an excellent, cost-effective investment  
in the future of Alberta's children!*

# ALBERTA FACTS

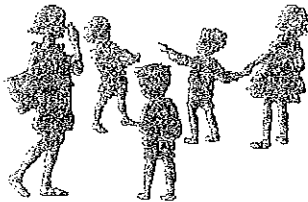
Number 6

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## Children in Poverty: On the Outside Looking In

We live in a country where everyone's needs are met, at least those of children — right? **Wrong!** In Canada, one child in six lives in poverty. One child in six does not have basic needs met. In Alberta, one child in six means that **93,600** children live in poverty.



*One Child in Six  
Lives in Poverty*

What does being poor mean to these children?

### What being poor means to Jenny

The average girl living with her mom stands a 50-50 chance of being poor. Jenny's mom doesn't make much money: she earns minimum wage. She can't always afford nutritious meals, so Jenny gets sick a lot.

Jenny and her mom move around often, and Jenny feels she's always changing schools. She finds it hard to have to make new friends all the time.

Jenny has one pair of jeans, and she doesn't have a bike or get birthday presents or have neat snacks to take to school. Sometimes Jenny finds it embarrassing.

But what Jenny finds hardest about being poor is that *she feels different* from all the other children.

### What is a poor family?

According to Statistics Canada, a family is considered "a low income family" if they spend more than an average of about 60 per cent of their income on food, clothing and shelter (depending on where they live and the size of family). According to The National Council of Welfare, these families "live in poverty."

For example, in an Albertan city, the poverty line for a family of four is \$23,521 (before deductions); for a family of three, the poverty line is \$20,411 (before deductions).

### Poverty Line in Alberta

| <i>Family size</i> | <i>Income before deductions</i> |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Family of four     | \$23,521                        |
| Family of three    | \$20,411                        |

SOURCE: 1988 Poverty Lines,  
National Council of Welfare

## Families of Poor Children

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| Female-headed<br>single parent families     | 1 in 2 |
| Families with parents<br>under 25 years old | 1 in 4 |
| Families with three<br>or more children     | 1 in 3 |

SOURCE: Poverty Profile 1988,  
National Council of Welfare

## Poor families mean poor children

Poor children are most likely to live in families:

- headed by female single parents
- headed by a parent under 25 years old
- with three or more children
- of Native people

Most low-income families are the "working poor." Although these parents have jobs, they and their families just manage to get by.

For example, a single parent with one child who earns minimum wage has an income more than \$6,000 below the poverty line. *This means this parent would have to work 68 hours per week to support a child at the poverty line.*

## The Working Poor

Minimum wage = \$4.50 per hour  
x 40 hours per week = \$180 per week  
x 50 weeks = \$9,000 (gross) per year  
\$15,258 (poverty line, 2 person family)  
-9,000 (income at minimum wage)  
**\$6,258 BELOW the poverty line**

## Poor children often are sick children

Babies from poor families die at almost **twice** the rate that babies from wealthy families do. For babies from Indian families the picture is much worse. They die at a rate almost 4 1/2 times greater than other Alberta babies.

And, poor children suffer more from cancer, respiratory diseases, congenital anomalies and pneumonia than other children.

These higher disease and death rates are closely tied to nutrition, health care, and housing conditions.

## Are housing costs really accommodating?

The average cost of a two-bedroom apartment in Edmonton was \$482 in October, 1988. After paying rent, the single parent with two children, earning minimum wage, has \$238 left. With this money, she must pay utilities, household, laundry, child care, prescriptions, and travel expenses PLUS buy food and clothing for her children.

This family qualifies for a social allowance subsidy of about \$500 per month. Often people are unaware of this subsidy. Others, who may be aware of the subsidy, wish to avoid the social allowance system because of the stigma attached.

## Does money affect education?

Children from wealthy families are far more likely to finish high school and continue their education than children from poor families. Children from poor families skip school twice as much as children from other families.

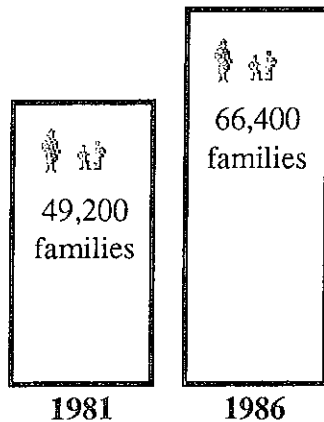
Studies point out that family income affects how well children do in school and how much they join school activities.

While no figures exist for all Native people, only 20% of Indian students finish high school—compared to a national average of 70%.

What does this mean for children? People with less education have a greater chance of being out of work and therefore a greater chance of being poor. In other words, poor children are more likely to become poor adults.



## Alberta's Poor Families Increase



SOURCE: Poverty Profile 1988,  
National Council of Welfare

### Are families a priority for the Alberta Government?

The typical cost of feeding and clothing two boys, aged 10 and 11, was about \$310 a month in December, 1988, according to Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Social allowance provides about \$225 for food and clothing for these two children. Foster care provides about \$415. Why do parents living on social allowance and caring for their own children receive less than the estimated cost for food and clothing? (And nothing for toys, books, or Christmas and birthday presents.)

Why is there such a gap between what natural parents receive for their children and what foster parents receive for other people's children?

The Alberta Government says it believes in families and wants to help them. How are they supporting poor families?

*"It is our belief that the dollars supplied for food allowance are sufficient and that if families have a problem managing within that amount, they should seek the counselling that's available to them."*

— Hon. Connie Osterman

When a school lunch program was suggested in the Legislature in April, 1988, the then Social Services Minister Connie Osterman said, "It is our belief that the dollars supplied for food allowance are sufficient and that if families have a problem managing within that amount, they should seek the counselling that's available to them."

## Average Family Incomes

\$49,797

*Married*

\$37,869

*Male Single Parent*

\$23,108

*Female Single Parent*

SOURCE: Statistics Canada, Income Distributions by Size in Canada #13-207, 1987

### The future: more than a family affair

The number of single parent families grew by almost 50 per cent in the 10 years from 1971 to 1981. Single parent families represented 13 per cent of all families by 1986. The number of two-parent families also increased, but only by 22 per cent.

If these trends continue, it is likely that more and more children will grow up poor.

What responsibility do we share for all Alberta's children?

### Questions for Discussion

1. What are the future consequences of providing less than minimum care for Alberta's children?
2. The Alberta Government says it wants to help families. How do you think it can best do this?
3. Who will advocate for Alberta's poor children?
4. How would we all benefit if fewer children grew up poor?

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## ***What can you do?***

- Support raising social allowance benefits to ensure that children can be adequately fed and clothed.
  - Support equalizing wages between men and women so single mothers can support their children.
  - Write letters to your Member of Parliament (MP) and your Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) to encourage the above changes.
- 

## ***Recommended Reading***

Baum, Gregory. *Ethics in Economics*. Toronto: Lorimer, 1984.

Campbell, C.C., et al. *Hunger, Poverty and Malnutrition: The Nutritional Implications of Food Insecurity in Canada*. Toronto: Food Advocacy Coalition of Toronto, 1986.

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Canadian Child Welfare Association, Canadian Council on Children and Youth, Canadian Council on Social Development, Canadian Institute of Child Health, Child Poverty Action Group, Family Service Canada, and Vanier Institute of the Family. *A Choice of Futures: Canada's Commitment to Its Children* [a series of five fact sheets]. Toronto, 1988.

Canadian Council on Social Development. *Not Enough: The Meaning and Measurement of Poverty in Canada*. Ottawa, 1984.

Clarke, Michelle. *Wasting our Future: The Effects of Poverty on Child Development*. Ottawa: The Canadian Council on Children and Youth, 1988.

Deroo, Remy. *Witness of Justice*. Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979.

The Child Poverty Action Group. *A Fair Chance for all Children: the Declaration on Child Poverty*. Toronto, 1986.

Waxman, Chaim I., *The Stigma of Poverty*. New York: Pergamon Press, 1983.

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***Children in Poverty: On the Outside Looking In*** is one of a series of fact sheets on social issues produced by the Edmonton Social Planning Council. This edition was produced with financial support from the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation. Copies are available in bulk for classes and study groups.

The Edmonton Social Planning Council is an independent, non-profit social action agency which seeks social justice through policy analysis, applied research, community development, and training and consultation.

For more information about the Council, its regular publications ***First Reading*** and ***Alberta Facts***, or other publications, please contact:



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# NOW EVERYONE LOVES HEAD START

*The preschool program is cheap, effective, and due for major expansion. The money should be used to raise teachers' salaries, not just student enrollment.* ■ By Ronald Henkoff

**S**UDDENLY Head Start is on nearly everybody's agenda. Calling the \$1.4 billion federal preschool program "something near and dear to all of us," President Bush proposes to spend an additional \$500 million on it next year. That increase, by far the largest in Head Start's 25-year history, would create places for another 180,000 children, raising nationwide enrollment to 670,000. In Congress the House child care bill, passed in March, earmarks \$100 million more. Leading Demo-

crats in both houses are sponsoring legislation that would swell the program's budget to \$7.7 billion by 1994. The goal: to ensure a slot for every income-eligible child between ages 3 and 5, some 2.5 million kids in all.

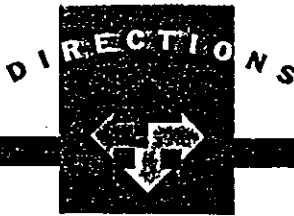
Business leaders, too, are calling for a bigger and better Head Start. "We must intervene as early as possible in the lives of disadvantaged children, in order to prevent failure before it happens," says James Renier, CEO of Honeywell. Other champions of expansion include the National Governors'

Association, the National Conference State Legislatures, and the business-led Committee for Economic Development. Wade Horn, who supervises the program as commissioner of the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, is overjoyed. "It's just a terrific time for Head Start. These forces are coming together and saying 'This is a program that works.'"

A survivor of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, Head Start has become that rarest of rare birds, a government education initiative

And many happy returns: Boston children celebrate Head Start's 25th anniversary. Washington wants to increase the budget by at least \$500 million.





that is cheap, lean, and thick with success stories. Horn's agency, part of the Department of Health and Human Services, employs only 225 bureaucrats to oversee Head Start. It spends \$2,885 per child per year for a half day, slightly more than half what elementary and secondary schools spend for a full day. But the preschool classes have two teachers for every 20 students, vs. one teacher for 25 on average in public schools. Head Start also provides more services.

Study after study demonstrates that Head Start by and large does what it was designed to do. The program is *not* an all-purpose antitoxin for the multiple afflictions of modern-day poverty. But it does enable most participants to enter kindergarten better prepared intellectually, emotionally, and socially than their non-preschool peers.

Head Start typically introduces kids to such educational basics as the alphabet and

logical counseling. It also offers a mainstream classroom experience to some 60,000 handicapped children.

There is no fixed curriculum. Federal regulations set broad goals, such as "encouraging children to explore, experiment, and question." The 1,300 local programs—operated by city agencies, nonprofit organizations, and public school systems—decide exactly what takes place in the classroom. The programs must answer to policy councils made up of parents and other members of the community.

Head Start also provides a kick start for parents. The program has hired thousands as assistant teachers and inspires countless others to return to school and seek new careers. It can become a pivotal point in the lives of entire families.

*When Marlene Holloway, now 29, moved to Minneapolis from Gary, Indiana, four*

*chairs the local Head Start Policy Council.*

*Tall, slender, and visibly self-confident, Holloway has separated from her husband. She is also enrolled in a state-funded continuing education course at the Minnesota School of Business, where she has posted a 3.5 grade point average. Says she: "Before I got involved in Head Start, my life was going haywire. Now I'm going to get myself off welfare and support my family."*

**A** MID ALL the euphoria over Head Start, however, there is a real danger that the program, which serves only 18% of today's income-eligible children, will be expanded too quickly. The freshet of money proposed by the President would be used exclusively to increase enrollment. Complains Yale psychology professor Edward Zigler, a founder of Head Start: "The emphasis seems to be on getting those numbers of children up, without worrying about quality control."

The National Head Start Association, which represents the local programs, thinks new funding should be used first to bolster meager teacher salaries and to make up for an erosion of 46% in real spending on training and technical assistance since 1970. Some 47% of Head Start instructors earn \$10,000 or less in 1988, and many have no health insurance or pension plans. Many staffers defect to state-run early-childhood programs, which tend to pay more.

Commissioner Horn, who holds a doctorate in child psychology, acknowledges that salaries are low. But he worries that raising them too much could jeopardize the program's role as an employer of parents. Nearly 29,000 of Head Start employees, some 36% of the entire work force, have children currently or previously enrolled in the program. Make the pay too attractive, says Horn, and these parents will be crowded out by eager, college-educated applicants.

As Head Start becomes larger and more visible, it runs the risk of tripping over great expectations of ardent supporters who believe it can head off juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, incarceration, and a host of other social ills.

"We ever hope to control rising taxes, preschool education is the way to go," asserts David Weikart, president of High/Scope Educational Research Foundation in Ypsilanti, Michigan. "But it is only part of the solution."

High/Scope has tracked the performance of 123 children in five successive classes



**Picnic in Phoenix: Head Start stresses nutrition, health, and social skills more than the ABCs.**

gives them the opportunity to socialize and develop motor skills. But it works because its definition of education extends well beyond counting and coloring, singing and sharing. The program provides pupils with nutritionally sound meals, comprehensive medical and dental exams, critical childhood inoculations, and individual psycho-

REPORTER ASSOCIATE Temma Ehrenfeld

*years ago, she was an isolated and unemployed mother of five, married to an abusive, alcoholic husband. Her son, Melvin, now 6, was so shy that he used to run upstairs whenever visitors came to the house. "Head Start brought Melvin out of his shell," says Holloway. It did the same for her. First she volunteered as a bus attendant, then as a classroom assistant. Now she*

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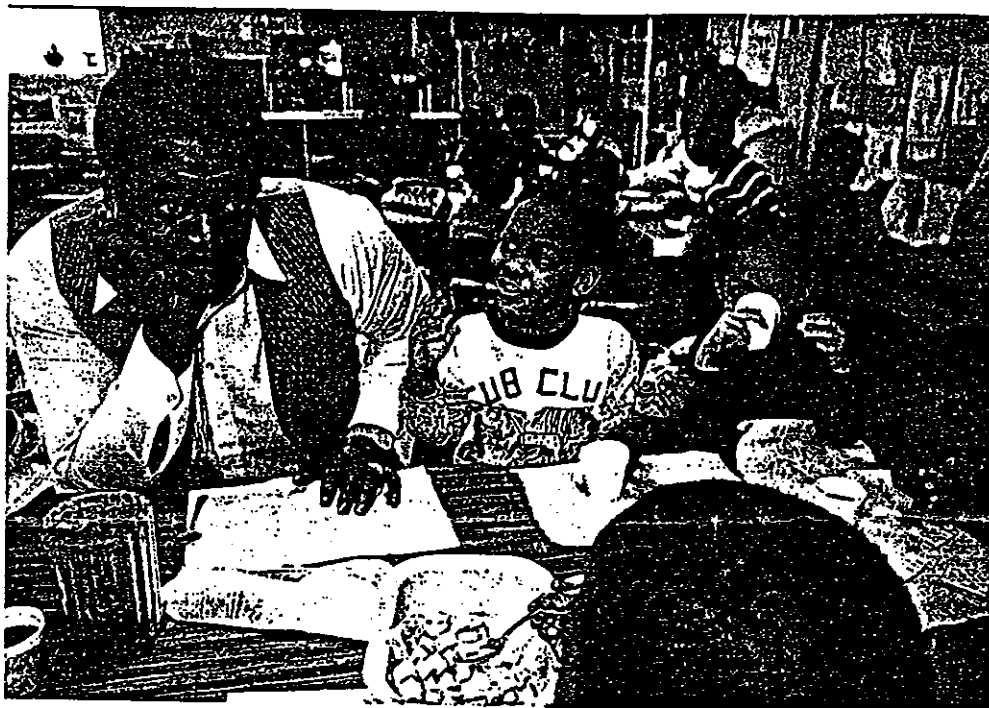
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DIRECTIONS



After ten years of teaching in Dayton, Robert Neal Jr. earns just \$14,000 a year. He is worth more.

poor, black students in Ypsilanti's Perry Preschool during the 1960s, comparing their lives from childhood to young adulthood with those of non-preschool control groups. The foundation's most striking conclusion: One public dollar spent on preschool can generate as much as six dollars in accumulated social benefits, chiefly by reducing expenditures on public assistance and criminal justice.

**H**IGH SCOPE'S STUDIES have been extraordinarily influential in mustering political support for Head Start. "Perry Preschool is the most important piece of research in education since the Coleman Report," declares Senator Edward Kennedy's top education aide, making a comparison to the landmark 1966 study of school segregation. Often lost in the debate, however, is the fact that Perry was not a Head Start program at all, but a special preschool directed by child psychologists and staffed by well-trained teachers.

Nationwide, hundreds of Head Start programs have adopted, or emulated, the High Scope curriculum, a program based on the premise that children learn best when they are given a chance to plan, pursue, and then recount their own activities. But whatever the merits of the High Scope approach, it is important to remember that social conditions have changed radically since the kids who were studied went to school. Many

poor children now inhabit a world of substandard housing, drug addiction, child neglect, and domestic violence. "The problems that poor kids face are bigger than Head Start can deal with," asserts Douglas Besharov, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. "Kids who have to step over hypodermic needles on their way to the classroom aren't going to get to college because of 3½ hours of play school."

Perhaps not. But Head Start *does* have an impact that goes beyond preparing children for kindergarten. In 1985, CSR Inc., a Washington consulting firm hired by the government, published an analysis of 210 follow-up studies of Head Start participants. Their conclusions: Head Start graduates score higher on cognitive tests and are less likely than their non-Head Start peers to be held back in grade (a well-known early indicator of school failure) or placed in special education classes.

CSR also found that Head Start grads tend to lose their edge in cognitive testing after the first grade. To combat this problem, which Head Start officials euphemistically call the transition issue, Commissioner Horn is working with the Department of Education to develop follow-up programs—perhaps in the form of individual counseling—for Head Start graduates. But the leveling-down may be less the fault of the program than an indictment of America's public school systems.

continued

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*Donald R. Beall*

Donald R. Beall  
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer

DIRECTIONS



Both Head Start and the schools should pay more attention to the role played by parents. Children whose parents were highly involved in Head Start do consistently better on cognitive tests, the CSR study found. Says Zigler of Yale: "What causes the long-term benefits is really the parents. They tell their children that school is important. They encourage success."

Good Head Start centers make herculean efforts to get parents involved. They urge them to volunteer in the classroom, to read to their children every day, to sit on policy councils. For many mothers and fathers, the local center becomes a combination clubhouse and support group. Guest speakers offer them seminars on diverse topics—nutrition, substance abuse, household budgeting, assertiveness training, and resume-writing. And Head Start's resident family services worker often acts as a personal *Theseus*, guiding baffled parents through the labyrinthine world of government services—welfare, public housing, health care, drug counseling, and family courts.

Jeffrey (not his real name), a blond, lanky 5-year-old, suffered physical and mental abuse at the Arizona home of his mother and her boyfriend. Jeffrey's baby brother was so severely injured that doctors gave him only a 50% chance of survival and virtually no chance of ever walking or talking. Today, both boys are in the custody of their father, and Jeffrey is enrolled in Head Start. "Jeff has progressed three years in the last year and a half," says the father, an auto mechanic. "And he's helped me teach his brother." Now 2½, the younger boy has learned to run, count, and smile.

Many Head Start directors think the family outreach aspects of the program need to be strengthened. "A lot of these families are in a big hole that they just can't get out of," says Mary Ann Perez, director of the 100-student Cartwright Head Start program in Phoenix. In just the past few months, Perez has dealt with child abuse, attempted suicide, homicide, drug addiction, wife beating, and accidental drowning. The caseworker who counsels at Cartwright has to handle 180 families.

The betting in Washington is that Con-

gress and the President will agree on an infusion of from \$500 million to \$1 billion for next year. Head Start deserves the money, but spending it efficiently will require care—even a well-run private corporation can get into trouble when it tries to expand too rapidly. Some of the funds should go to higher teacher salaries and benefits, more training and inspection, and lightening social worker caseloads. Congress should also be careful about calling for more full-day and full-year classes. They make sense up to a point, but if Head Start becomes just a glorified baby-sitting program for low-income parents, it could lose its educational focus.

Business can also play a larger role, and not just by speaking up for Head Start—although that certainly helps. In Minneapolis leading employers routinely donate money, toys, clothes, food, and playground equipment to Parents in Community Action (PICA), a countywide Head Start program serving 872 children. In Dallas, Texas

Instruments has pledged \$288,000 to help fund a new full-day, full-year program, which the company hopes will become a nationwide showcase for preschool education.

Robert Neal Jr. runs the full-day Head Start class at Dunbar Manor, one of Dayton, Ohio's most troubled public housing projects. Formerly a professional pop singer, the stocky and goateed Neal is nattily attired in a pink shirt, vest, dark pants, and cowboy boots. With exquisite patience, he induces a

shy girl in cornrows to describe the features of her latest creation, which appears to be nothing more than an amorphous lump of clay. It is, explains the girl proudly, actually a giraffe.

Neal, who has been teaching in Head Start for ten years, still receives visits from some of his earliest students. They stop by to thank him. A married father of two and one of Head Start's few male teachers, Neal earns just \$14,000 a year, a far cry from the \$60,000 a year he sometimes made as a singer. "I feel like I'm worth more," he says, "but when the kids leave here at the end of the day feeling good about themselves, I know that I've been rewarded."

With increased funding, judiciously applied, Head Start should be good for another 25 years of little success stories. E

**FACT**

General intelligence appears to develop as much from conception to age 4 as it does during the 14 years from age 4 to age 18.

— Benjamin Bloom

in Stability and Change in Human Characteristics