



The Dufferin Basics Baseline Survey Results

December 2018



Background

In 2014, the Dufferin Coalition for Kids (DuCK) identified as one of their priorities the need to develop a culture of parental support and developmental awareness among service providers in Dufferin County. In response, DuCK created a Parental Support and Developmental Awareness (PSDA) action group to develop and implement action plans to accomplish this goal. The PSDA action group identified a parenting campaign called *The Basics* (from *The Basics Multi-City Network*) that would provide organizations across Dufferin County with consistent, evidence-based parenting messages to share with their clients who were parents or caregivers of children ages zero to three. The content for this program was developed by *The Achievement Gap Initiative (AGI) at Harvard University*. Originally this campaign was called *The Boston Basics*, but it has now been adapted by communities across North America.

The Basics are five evidence-based parenting principles that encompass much of what experts find is important to promote child development and foster school readiness:

- Maximize Love, Manage Stress
- Talk, Sing and Point
- Count, Group and Compare
- Explore through Movement and Play
- Read and Discuss Stories

The key messages related to each principle are captured in a series of videos and online resources aimed at parents or caregivers of children ages zero to three.

Before implementation of the Dufferin Basics campaign, an online survey was administered to parents/caregivers of children ages zero to three, to find out how much parents in Dufferin knew about the parenting principles provided in the campaign. This report provides a summary of the findings from the parent survey.

The Survey (Appendix A)

The survey (Appendix A) was administered online from August to November 2018 and consisted of a set of questions that tested the participants' knowledge of the parenting principles covered in each of the five *Basics* videos. The participants had not watched any of the videos before answering the survey. For each *Basics* principle, participants were given a series of statements and asked which statements they believed to be true. Those statements deemed to be "true" or not were based on the latest evidence from child development experts. Some of these items were adapted from the *Boston Basics* baseline survey conducted in 2015. The survey also had a series of demographic questions and a question about how participants prefer to access parenting information.

The survey was administered primarily to parents and caregivers who were participating in programs at three EarlyON Child and Family Centres in Dufferin County: Grand Valley, Orangeville, and Shelburne. Those who completed the survey received a free children's book.

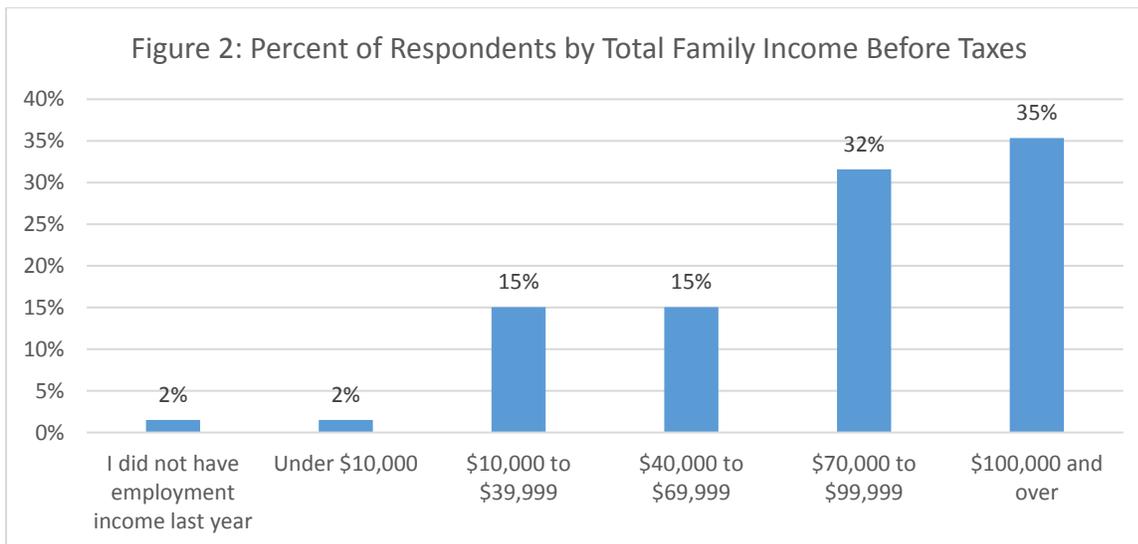
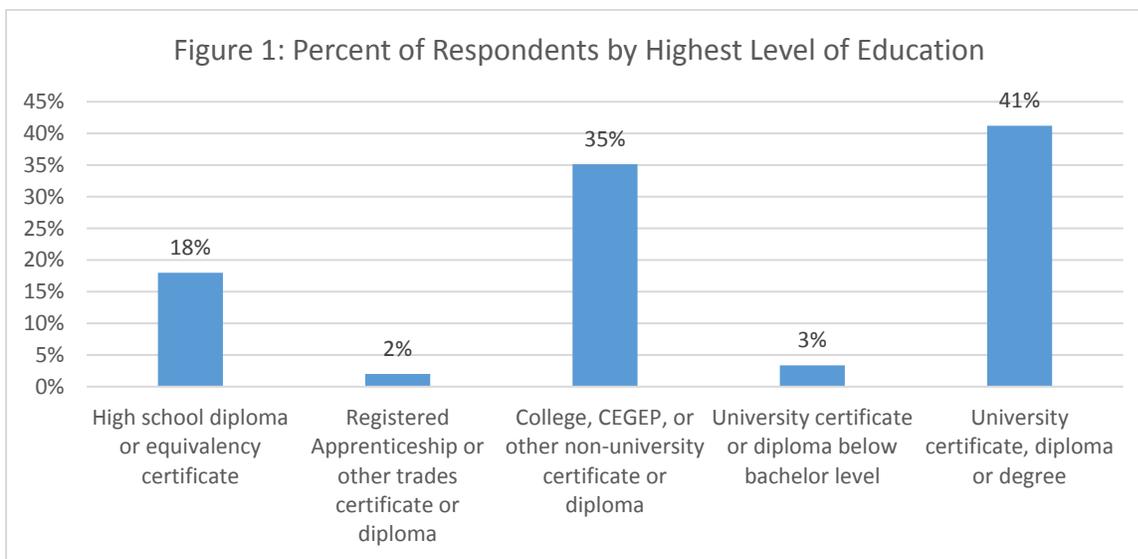
Demographics

A total of 149 participants completed the survey.

The respondents were:

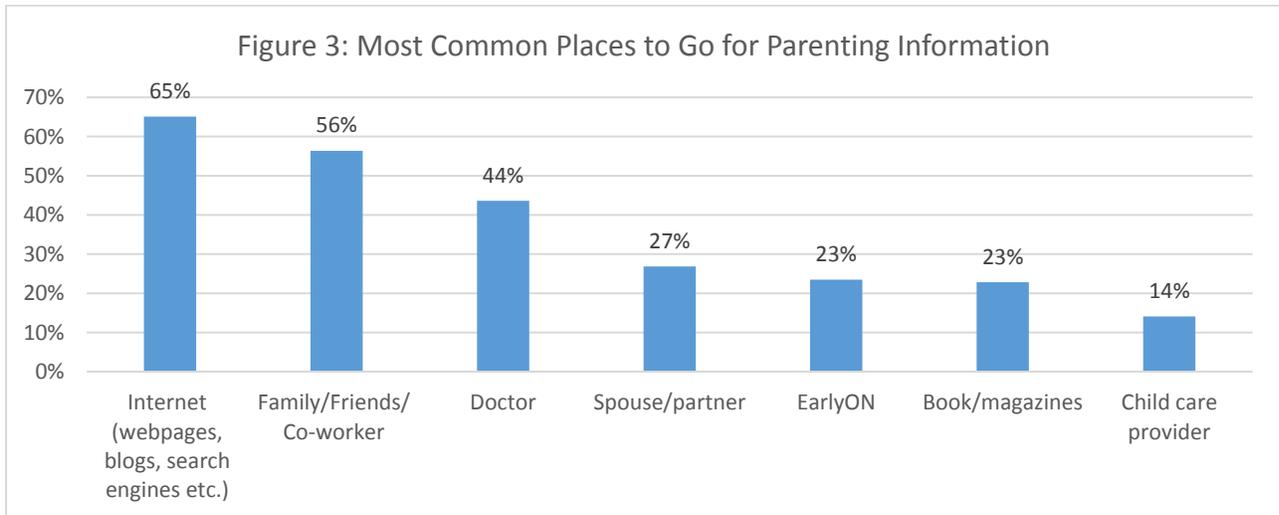
- 91% female; 6% male; 3% prefer not to answer
- 93% parents; 4% grandparents; 3% caregivers
- 91% between the ages of 25 to 44; 6% over 45; 3% under 25
- living in Orangeville (52%); Shelburne (19%); Mono (7%); Grand Valley (6%); another Dufferin County township (6%); Wellington County (5%) or outside Dufferin or Wellington (5%).

Overall, most participants were highly educated (76% had either a college or university diploma/degree) and were earning more than \$70,000 a year (67%) (Figure 1 and 2).



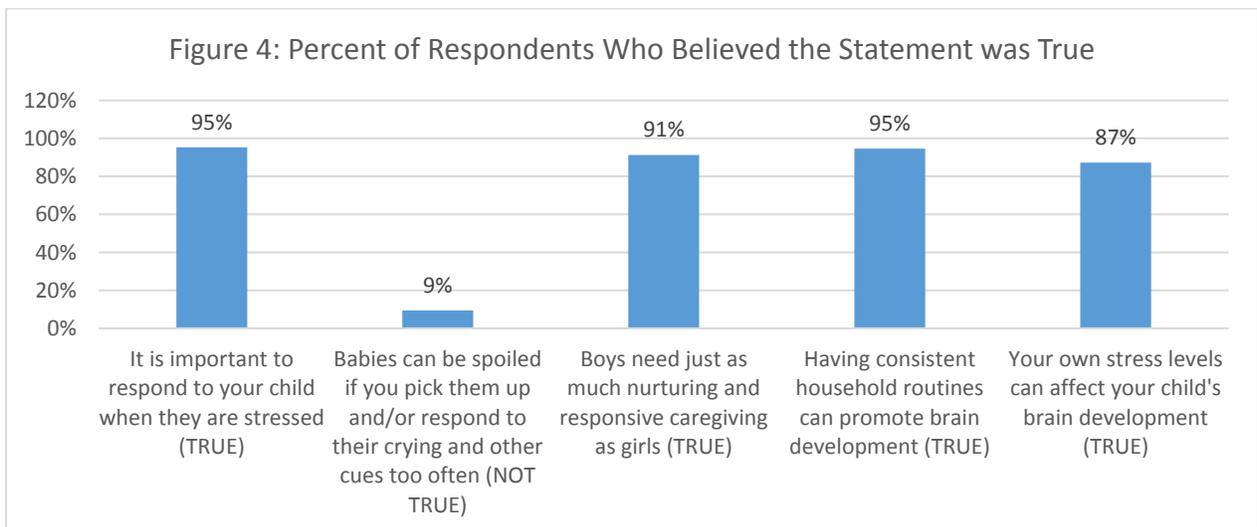
Sources for Parenting Information

Respondents were asked to indicate the top three places they went for parenting information. The most common places they went were the internet, family/friends/coworkers, and their family doctor (Figure 3).



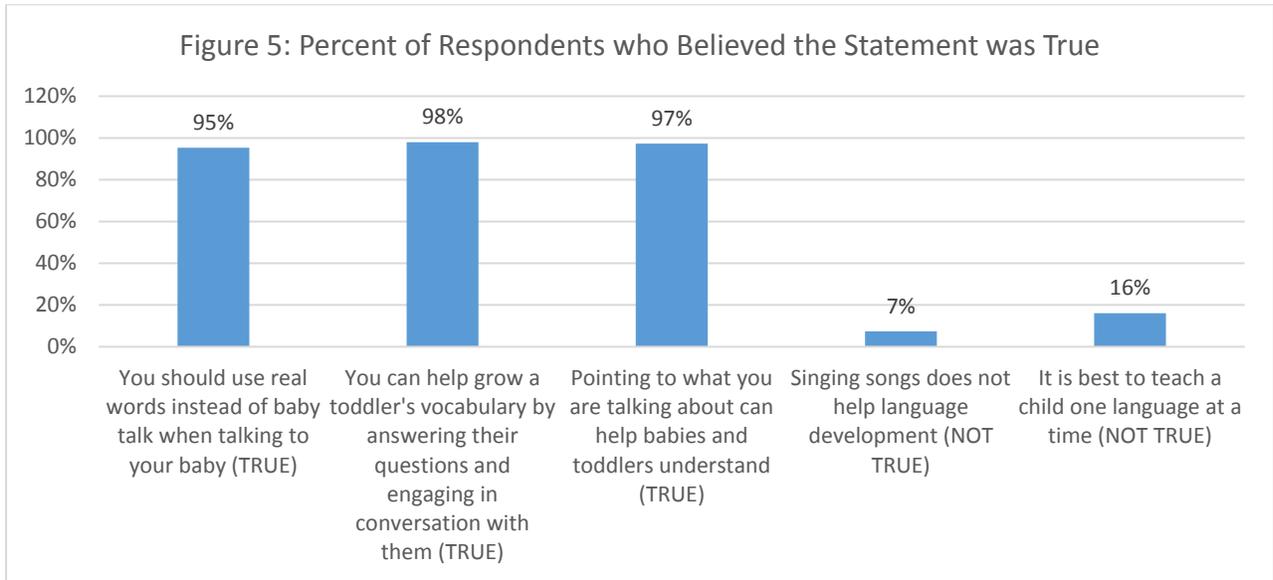
Maximize Love, Manage Stress

Participants were provided five statements related to the parenting principle of “maximize love, manage stress” and asked to indicate which ones they believed to be true. Figure 4 shows the statements and which ones were deemed to be “true” or not based on evidence from child development experts. The three areas respondents were most likely to have misconceptions were “babies can be spoiled” (9% believed this to be true; 91% did not), “your own stress levels can affect your child’s brain development” (87% believed this to be true; 13% did not), and boys need as much nurturing as girls (91% believed this to be true; 9% did not) (Figure 4).



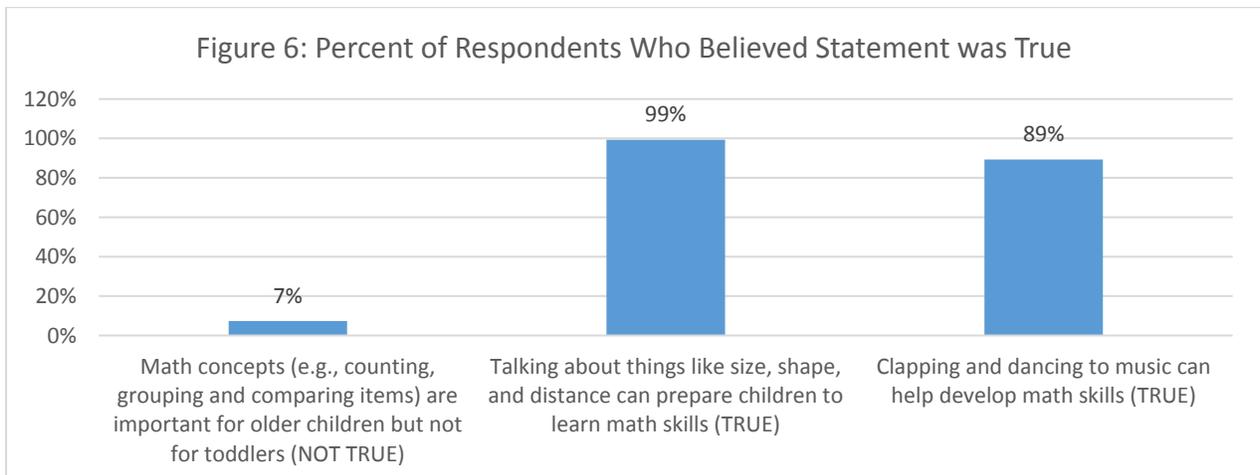
Talk, Sing and Point

Participants were provided five statements related to the parenting principle of “talk, sing and point” and asked to indicate which ones they believed to be true. Figure 5 shows the statements and which ones were deemed to be “true” or not based on evidence from child development experts. The one statement that parents were most likely to have a misconception about was “it is best to teach a child one language at a time” (16% believed it to be true) (Figure 5).



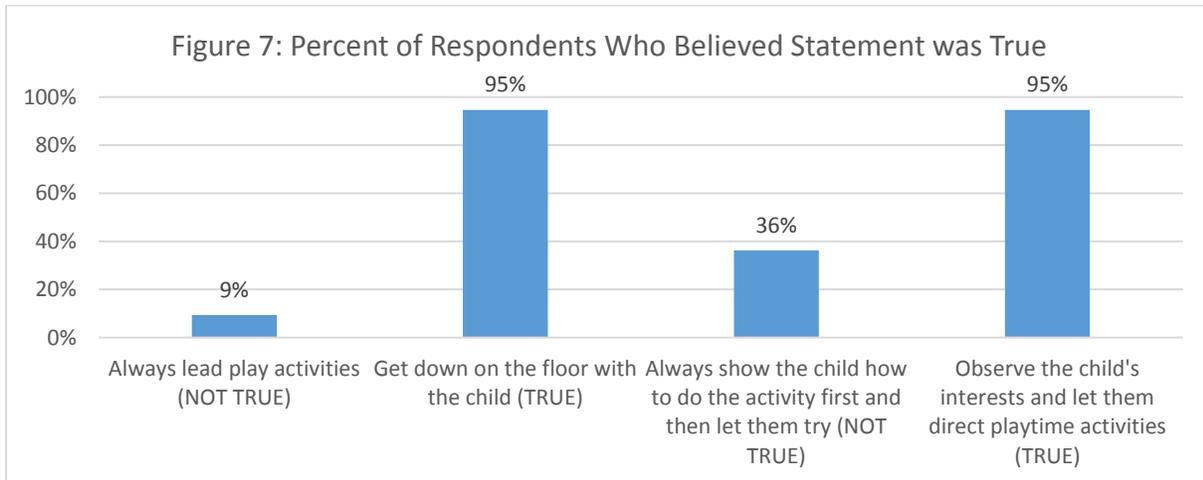
Count, Group and Compare

Participants were provided three statements related to the parenting principle of “count, group and compare” and asked to indicate which ones they believed to be true. Figure 6 shows the statements and which ones were deemed to be “true” or not based on evidence from child development experts. The statement that parents were most likely to have a misconception about was, “clapping and dancing to music can help develop math skills” (11% did not believe this was true) (Figure 6).



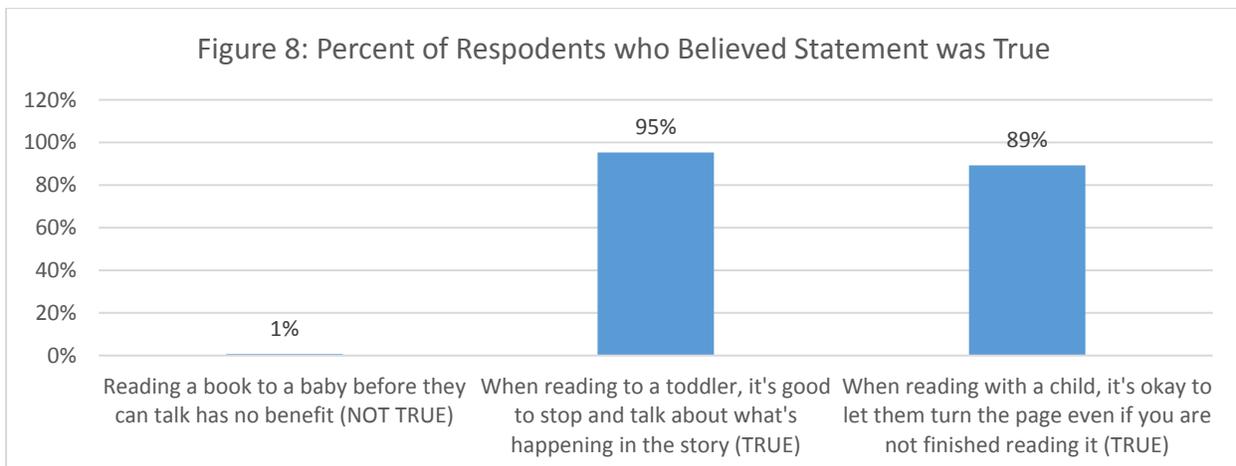
Explore through Movement and Play

Participants were provided four statements related to the parenting principle of “explore through movement and play” and asked to indicate which ones they believed to be true. Figure 7 shows the statements and which ones were deemed to be “true” or not based on evidence from child development experts. The area that parents are most likely to have a misconception about is the need to lead children in play activities rather than allowing the child to take the lead. Thirty-six percent believe you should, “always show the child how to do the activity first and then let them try” and nine percent believed you should, “always lead play activities” (Figure 7).



Read and Discuss Stories

Participants were provided three statements related to the parenting principle of “read and discuss stories” and asked to indicate which ones they believed to be true. Figure 8 shows the statements and which ones were deemed to be “true” or not based on evidence from child development experts. The statement respondents were most likely to have a misconception about was “when reading with a child, it’s okay to let them turn the page even if you are not finished reading it” (11% did not believe this was true) (Figure 8).



Data Limitations

- The survey respondents were parents who were participating in an EarlyON Centre program. These parents may have a higher level of parenting knowledge than parents/caregivers who do not attend EarlyON programs.
- The majority of the participants were mothers making it difficult to generalize these findings to fathers or other types of caregivers.
- The majority of the participants were highly educated and had an annual income of \$70,000 or more making the finding less generalizable to those with lower education or income.
- The survey measures parent/caregiver's knowledge of the principles covered in *The Basics* but did not assess how much they apply this knowledge to their daily parenting practices.

Conclusions/Recommendations

Overall, the findings suggest that mothers in Dufferin County had a good baseline knowledge of the parenting concepts that are covered in *The Basics*. The most prevalent parenting misconceptions were:

- Some respondents believed that their own stress levels could not affect their child's brain development.
- Some respondents believed that it is best to teach a child one language at a time
- Some respondents believed that clapping and dancing to music could not help develop math skills
- Many respondents believed they should always show the child how to do the activity first and then let them try
- Some respondents believed that when reading to a child, it's not okay to let them turn the page even if you are not finished reading it

Practitioners could place an extra emphasis on these areas when implementing *The Basics*.

The most common places for parents to go for parenting information were the internet, friends/family and their doctor. This underscores the importance for *The Basics* to have a strong presence on the internet and to be championed and promoted by health care providers.

Appendix A:

Dufferin Basics Caregiver Knowledge Questionnaire

Start of Block: Introduction

Welcome to the Dufferin Basics Caregiver Knowledge Survey! The purpose of this survey is to understand more about beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours among parents and caregivers in Dufferin.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary and your feedback will remain anonymous and confidential. You can skip any questions you do not want to answer. There are no consequences if you choose to stop at any time. Information that you share is not connected to other services you receive at EarlyON Centres, Public Health, Jean Hamlyn Day Care, or elsewhere in the community.

To be eligible to complete this survey, you must care for at least one child between the ages of 0 and 3.

The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. You'll receive a Scholastic book for you and your child to enjoy as a token of our appreciation. Instructions regarding how to pick up your complementary book from your local EarlyON Centre will be provided at the end of the survey.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Anna Vanderlaan at Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health- anna.vanderlaan@wdgpublichealth.ca.

If you have any general questions about your child's health or parenting, you can speak to a public health nurse between 9:00am – 4:00pm, Monday – Friday by calling Let's Talk Parenting, 1-800-265-7293 ext. 3616.

Do you wish to participate in this survey? (After you've selected your response, scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the red "next" button)

Yes (1)

No (2)

End of Block: Introduction

Start of Block: Eligibility

Do you care for a child aged 0-3?

Yes (1)

No (2)

End of Block: Eligibility

Start of Block: Demographics

What is your relationship to the child (aged 0-3) that you care for? (Select one response)

Parent (1)

Stepparent (2)

Foster parent (3)

Grandparent (4)

Other (please specify): (5) _____

How many children (in the following age groups) do you care for?

Children under the age of 1 (Infants) (1)	▼0 (1) ... 3 or more (4)
Children aged 1-3 (Toddlers) (2)	▼0 (1) ... 3 or more (4)
Children 4 and over (3)	▼0 (1) ... 3 or more (4)

In what town or township do you live? (Select one response)

- Orangeville (1)
 - Shelburne (2)
 - Town of Grand Valley (3)
 - Mono (4)
 - Amaranth Township (5)
 - East Garafraxa Township (6)
 - Melancthon Township (7)
 - Mulmur Township (8)
 - Other (please specify): (9) _____
-

What is your age?

▼Under 18 (1) ... 65 or older (7)

What is your gender?

- Male (1)
 - Female (2)
 - I identify as: (3) _____
 - Prefer not to answer (4)
-

Were you born in Canada?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't know/ Can't recall (3)
- Prefer not to answer (4)

Skip To: Q59 If Born in Canada = Yes

Skip To: Q59 If Born in Canada = Don't know/ Can't recall

Skip To: Q59 If Born in Canada = Prefer not to answer

What is your immigration status in Canada?

- Citizen (1)
- Permanent Resident (Landed Immigrant) (2)
- Work permit holder (3)
- International students (4)
- Refugee (5)
- Don't know/ Can't recall (6)
- Prefer not to answer (7)

Skip To: Q59 If Immigration status = Work permit holder

Skip To: Q59 If Immigration status = International students

Skip To: Q59 If Immigration status = Refugee

Skip To: Q59 If Immigration status = Don't know/ Can't recall

Skip To: Q59 If Immigration status = Prefer not to answer

What year did you immigrate to Canada? (YYYY)

Which education programs have you completed? (Select all that apply)

- High school diploma or equivalency certificate (1)
- Registered Apprenticeship or other trades certificate or diploma (2)
- College, CEGEP, or other non-university certificate or diploma (3)
- University certificate or diploma below bachelor level (4)
- University certificate, diploma or degree (5)
- Prefer not to answer (6)

What was your total family income before taxes last year?

▼ I did not have employment income last year (1) ... Prefer not to answer (15)

How many people does this income support?

▼1 (1) ... 5 or more (5)

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Dufferin Basics Knowledge

The following section will ask you questions about child development and parenting practices. If you have any questions about the answers to the questions below please feel free to discuss them with EarlyON staff or you can speak with a public health nurse between 9:00am – 4:00pm, Monday – Friday by calling Let's Talk Parenting, 1-800-265-7293 ext. 3616.

Which of the following statements about parenting do you believe are true? (Select all that apply)

- It is important to respond to your child when they are stressed (1)
- Babies can be spoiled if you pick them up and/or respond to their crying and other cues too often (2)
- Boys need just as much nurturing and responsive caregiving as girls (3)
- Having consistent household routines (e.g. times for eating and sleeping) can promote brain development (4)
- Your own stress levels can affect your child's brain development (5)

Page Break

Answer: Which of the following statements about parenting do you believe are true? (Select all that apply)

- ✓ It is important to respond to your child when they are stressed
- ✗ Babies can be spoiled if you pick them up and/or respond to their crying and other cues too often
- ✓ Boys need just as much nurturing and responsive caregiving as girls
- ✓ Having consistent household routines (e.g. times for eating and sleeping) can promote brain development
- ✓ Your own stress levels can affect your child's brain development

Feedback from child development experts: Infants and toddlers thrive when their world feels loving, safe, and predictable. When you express your love and respond to their needs, you teach them that they can count on you. Too much stress can affect a child's brain development and make it harder for them to learn when they get older. Young children are affected by your emotions, whether you are happy or upset. So, it is important to find practical strategies that help you cope with stress. Caring for yourself helps you care for your child.

If you have any questions about your child's health or parenting, you can speak to a public health nurse between 9:00am – 4:00pm, Monday – Friday by calling Let's Talk Parenting, 1-800-265-7293 ext. 3616.

Which of the following statements about language development do you believe are true? (Select all that apply)

- You should use real words instead of baby talk when talking to your baby (1)
- You can help grow a toddler's vocabulary by answering their questions and engaging in conversation with them (2)
- Pointing to what you are talking about can help babies and toddlers understand (3)
- Singing songs does not help language development (4)
- It is best to teach a child one language at a time (5)

Answer: Which of the following statements about language development do you believe are true? (Select all that apply)

- ✓ You should use real words instead of baby talk when talking to your baby
- ✓ You can help grow a toddler's vocabulary by answering their questions and engaging in conversation with them
- ✓ Pointing to what you are talking about can help babies and toddlers understand
- ✗ Singing songs does not help language development
- ✗ It is best to teach a child one language at a time

Feedback from child development experts: Don't just use "baby talk," also use real words. The more words your baby hears, the larger their vocabulary will grow. Every time you talk, sing, or point to what you are talking about, you provide clues to the meaning of what you are saying. As your child gets older, talking to them and answering their questions teaches them about the world. Singing songs is a fun way for children to learn language. It doesn't matter what language you speak with your child. All languages are equally beneficial. It's a common myth that teaching a child two languages at a time will confuse them.

If you have any questions about your child's health or parenting, you can speak to a public health nurse between 9:00am – 4:00pm, Monday – Friday by calling Let's Talk Parenting, 1-800-265-7293 ext. 3616.

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Which of the following statements about math skill development do you believe are true? (Select all that apply)

- Math concepts (e.g., counting, grouping and comparing items) are important for older children but not for toddlers (1)
- Talking about things like size, shape, and distance can prepare children to learn math skills (2)
- Clapping and dancing to music can help develop math skills (3)

Page Break

Answer: Which of the following statements about math skill development do you believe are true? (Select all that apply)

- Math concepts (e.g., counting, grouping and comparing items) are important for older children but not for toddlers
- Talking about things like size, shape, and distance can prepare children to learn math skills
- Clapping and dancing to music can help develop math skills

Feedback from child development experts: Becoming good at math begins long before a child enters school. By building on their natural skills and interests, you will be boosting their brain development and preparing them to do well in school. Clap and dance with your child. Your child will be learning about patterns while having fun.

If you have any questions about your child's health or parenting, you can speak to a public health nurse between 9:00am – 4:00pm, Monday – Friday by calling Let's Talk Parenting, 1-800-265-7293 ext. 3616.

Page Break

Which of the following statements about babies do you believe are true? (Select all that apply)

Babies should spend time on their stomachs:

- Every day (1)
- Multiple times per day (2)
- Only if they enjoy it (3)
- Never (4)

Page Break

Answer: Which of the following statements about babies do you believe is true? (Select all that apply)

Babies should spend time on their stomachs:

- ✓ Every day
- ✓ Multiple times per day
- ✗ Only if they enjoy it
- ✗ Never

Feedback from child development experts: Give infants regular “tummy time.” When they lift their heads to look around, they strengthen the upper body and prepare muscles to crawl. They also get a new view of their surroundings! Don't be discouraged if your infant doesn't seem to enjoy tummy time at first. Keep trying in short sessions.

If you have any questions about your child's health or parenting, you can speak to a public health nurse between 9:00am – 4:00pm, Monday – Friday by calling Let's Talk Parenting, 1-800-265-7293 ext. 3616.

Page Break

How can you promote your child's brain development during play-time? (Select all that apply)

- Always lead play activities (1)
- Get down on the floor with the child (2)
- Always show the child how to do the activity first and then let them try (3)
- Observe the child's interests and let them direct playtime activities (4)

Page Break

Answer: How can you promote your child's brain development during play-time? (Select all that apply)

- Always lead play activities
- Get down on the floor with the child
- Always show the child how to do the activity first and then let them try
- Observe the child's interests and let them direct playtime activities

Feedback from child development experts: Movement and play are good for children's bodies and brains. Movement and play keep children healthy and build their coordination and strength. Young children are like scientists—curious and excited to learn about their surroundings. See where your child's curiosity takes them, and build on their interests.

If you have any questions about your child's health or parenting, you can speak to a public health nurse between 9:00am – 4:00pm, Monday – Friday by calling Let's Talk Parenting, 1-800-265-7293 ext. 3616.

Page Break

Which of the following statements about reading do you believe are true? (Select all that apply)

- Reading a book to a baby before they can talk has no benefit (1)
- When reading to a toddler, it's good to stop and talk about what's happening in the story (2)
- When reading with a child, it's okay to let them turn the page even if you are not finished reading it (3)

Page Break

Answer: Which of the following statements about reading do you believe are true? (Select all that apply)

Reading a book to a baby before they can talk has no benefit

When reading to a toddler, it's good to stop and talk about what's happening in the story When reading with a child, it's okay to let them turn the page even if you are not finished reading it

Feedback from child development experts:

It is never too early to begin reading! Stories expose children to words and ideas that they would not otherwise experience. Your toddler will learn the most if you have discussions while you read. Respond to their comments and questions about the story. Ask questions that get them thinking. "Why is the boy sad?" "What do you think is going to happen next?" Your toddler may want to turn the page before you've finished it. If they can't sit still for the whole book, that's okay.

If you have any questions about your child's health or parenting, you can speak to a public health nurse between 9:00am – 4:00pm, Monday – Friday by calling Let's Talk Parenting, 1-800-265-7293 ext. 3616.

Page Break

Where do you go most often to find parenting information? (Drag and drop your answers into the box provided. You can select a maximum of three options)

Select up to 3 options

-
- Spouse / partner (1)
 - Family member/ Friends/ Co-worker (2)
 - Family/pediatric doctor (3)
 - Nurse/Public health nurse (4)
 - Dietician (5)
 - Child care provider (6)
 - Internet (webpages, blogs, search engines etc.) (7)
 - Facebook (8)
 - YouTube (9)
 - Instagram (10)
 - Twitter (11)
 - Book/magazines (12)
 - Public Health (13)
 - EarlyON Centres (14)
 - Telehealth Ontario (15)
 - Public library (16)
 - Other (please specify): (17)

End of Block: Dufferin Basics Knowledge