

The Abecedarian Approach in a low-resource urban neighborhood in Canada: An impact evaluation in a child care setting ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Abstract

Despite the best efforts, persistent educational gaps remain between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children when they begin school. This evaluation explores the impact of the Abecedarian Approach for early education on the language development of First Nations and non-First Nations children, living in a low-resource, urban neighborhood in Canada. A treatment group received the Abecedarian Approach in a child care center, supplemented by home visiting, and comprised 20 families with 41 children of whom 51% were First Nations. The control group comprised 27 families with 39 children of whom 46% were First Nations. The analyses presented explore child language outcomes at the end of the second year of participation and take account of child and family characteristics, as well as the baseline language scores. Results indicate that children in the treatment group had stronger language outcomes than the control group. While First Nations children in the treatment group had lower levels of language development than non-First Nations children, at baseline, both groups progressed at about the same rate. While the findings do not guarantee that achievement gaps would close during the school years, improved language development in the years before school is likely to be associated with better achievement during school.

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