

# Analyzing the Greater Saint John Early Childhood Hubs: Preschool Program



*The YMCA in Greater Saint John offers free preschool through two Early Childhood Hubs. This program aims to help low-income families access quality learning and better prepare their children for Kindergarten.*

*Is the preschool program reaching families who need it most?*

## The Study

The New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training explored the backgrounds of families who enrolled in the preschool program at any point over two school years:

**Year 1** September 2021 - June 2022

**Year 2** September 2022 - June 2023

We compared families in the program with similar families who did not enroll, and with as the general population of families across Saint John and New Brunswick.

Our study shows if the preschool program is accessible to families in need, and it helps predict which families are the most likely to enroll in the preschool program in future.

This summary shares key findings and can be used for planning purposes. With more time, and more data, we can learn even more about families in the preschool program - including whether preschool helped improve their children's grades.

## Who used the program?



### Immigrants

Only 13% of young families in Saint John are immigrants, but **35%** of preschool families are. That's 3 times the rate.



### Low-Income

Before tax, the average income per person in Saint John is \$41,000. In preschool families' neighbourhoods, it's much lower: **\$26,000**.



### Single Parents

**36%** of preschool families are single-parent homes. But in Saint John, 47% of young families are single-parent homes.





## What Did We Learn?

Overall, the Early Childhood Hubs preschool program is being used by many families who have different needs, especially immigrants and families in low-income neighbourhoods.

### Here are a few more things we learned along the way:

Single-parent homes are more common among families in need - so it was surprising to learn there were fewer single parents among preschool families. This could be due to the high rate of immigrant families in the program. Immigrant families are more likely to have two-parent homes, but they're also more likely to face other challenges, like learning a new language and settling into a new culture.

We learned that preschool children's language grades in Kindergarten were closer to the NB average than their math scores. This suggests the preschool program may be supporting children's language learning - an important skill when preparing for Kindergarten.

We also learned that preschool families have higher rates of emergency department visits than other families - both before and after their time in the program. The preschool program isn't causing health issues - so what does this mean?

For many immigrants and low-income families, the ER might be their first or only accessible place to receive healthcare. The higher rate of ER visits might indicate that preschool families have a need for ongoing support systems outside of preschool.

### ↳ Using This Information to Plan for Success

Along with childcare, the Hubs are well-positioned to provide community supports, like:

- Helping immigrant families learn about local resources (like language support)
- Sharing information about healthcare services families could use before visiting the ER