

The Benefits of Family and School Interventions for Reducing Intergenerational Poverty

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Families living in poverty are more likely to raise children who will continue to live in poverty as adults. One of the major reasons for this is that poverty increases stress among parents that undermines their skill and ability to nurture the social, emotional, and cognitive skills that children need to establish nurturing friendships and to succeed in school. However research over the past thirty years indicates that family and school interventions have the potential to significantly improve children's life chances of escaping from poverty.

A variety of family programs have been shown to significantly improve the quality of parent and child interactions, improve parents' skill in helping their children develop, and prevent the development of problems that make academic and social difficulties more likely (Biglan, 2015). However, only a small number of these programs have tested whether the prevention of social and academic problems prevents the advent of poverty as adults.

Two family interventions have been found to improve families' economic wellbeing. Parent Management Training Oregon was found to increase family income over an eight year period as well as the stress experience by parents about financial matters.

The Nurse Family Partnership has been found to reduce dependency on welfare and food stamps at the same time that it produces multiple benefits for the health and development of children (Miller, 2015).

School interventions that help children develop social, emotional, and academic skills also have the potential to prevent inter-generational poverty. School programs that teach social skills and promote emotional regulation have been shown to improve academic performance and contribute to higher income as adults (Hawking et al. 2008). And the Good Behavior Game, a simple approach to teaching elementary school children to cooperate and concentrate has been found to improve high school graduation and college attendance (Bradshaw et al., 2009).

In sum, existing evidence strongly suggests that we can prevent much inter-generational poverty through family and school interventions that nurture the social, emotional, and academic skills of children. Many interventions help children develop the social, emotional, and academic skills are needed to get a good education and succeed in their social and work life. However, we need more research that documents the impact of these programs in preventing inter-generational poverty.

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