

The Early Impact Program



Strengthening Child Competencies.

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Overview

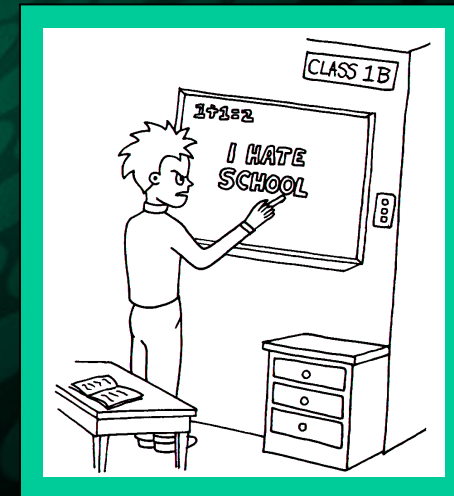


- **Background**
- **Challenging behaviour – issues for teachers and parents**
- **Pathways to maladjustment – risk factors**
- **Existing models of early intervention and prevention**
- **The Early Impact (EI) Program**
- **Initial findings of a controlled inquiry**
- **Future implications**

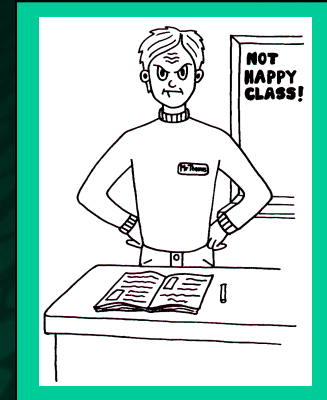
Background Research Domain

Child Psychology:

- Challenging Behaviour.
- At-risk infant aged children.
- Early Intervention and Prevention.
- Strength-based practice.



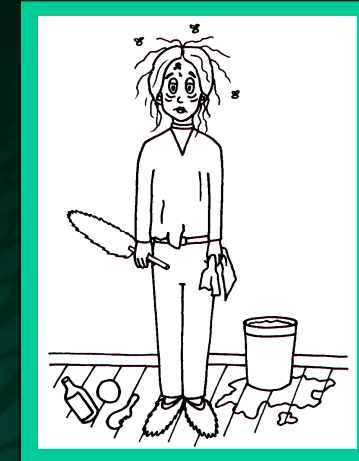
Challenging Behaviours: The Challenge for Teachers



Teachers are faced with the challenge of working with a diverse population of children

Issues associated with 'teacher preparedness' in terms of the mainstream classrooms

Challenging Behaviours: The Challenge for Parents



Parents of children with challenging behaviours encounter significant challenges at the home level

Increasing pressures with limited support

Developmental Pathways

Multiple Pathways to Maladjustment

Risk factors:

Individual:

temperament; genetic disposition

Family:

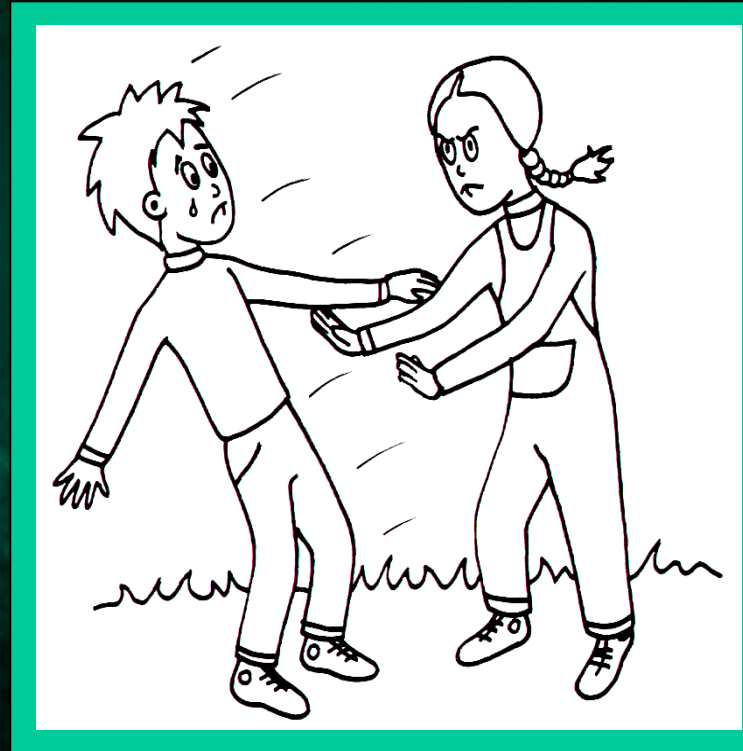
harsh parenting practices; negative parent/child interactions; marital discord; poverty

School:

School organisation; class size; support structures

Models of Early Intervention and Prevention

Universal
Selected
Indicated



Children and adolescents referred for challenging behaviours would generally participate in selected and indicated forms of intervention.

Current Treatments

Predominantly Clinic Based

Family interventions (Prinz & Miller, 1996; Sanders, 1999).

Social-cognitive treatments (Kazdin, Siegel & Bass, 1992).

School interventions



Treatments Issues

Family interventions accommodate a younger target group.

The child is dependent on the parent seeking treatment.

Social-cognitive treatments cater for older children and adolescent populations.

Evidence indicates that young at-risk children and their families are not readily accessing treatment.

Treatments Issues (cont...)

Many models of treatment apply reactive strategies.

Such strategies focus on child and family deficits.

Further, such models of treatment fail to recognise or draw upon competencies in the child and family that serve to ameliorate some of the factors that place children at-risk.

Promising Early Intervention and Prevention Frameworks

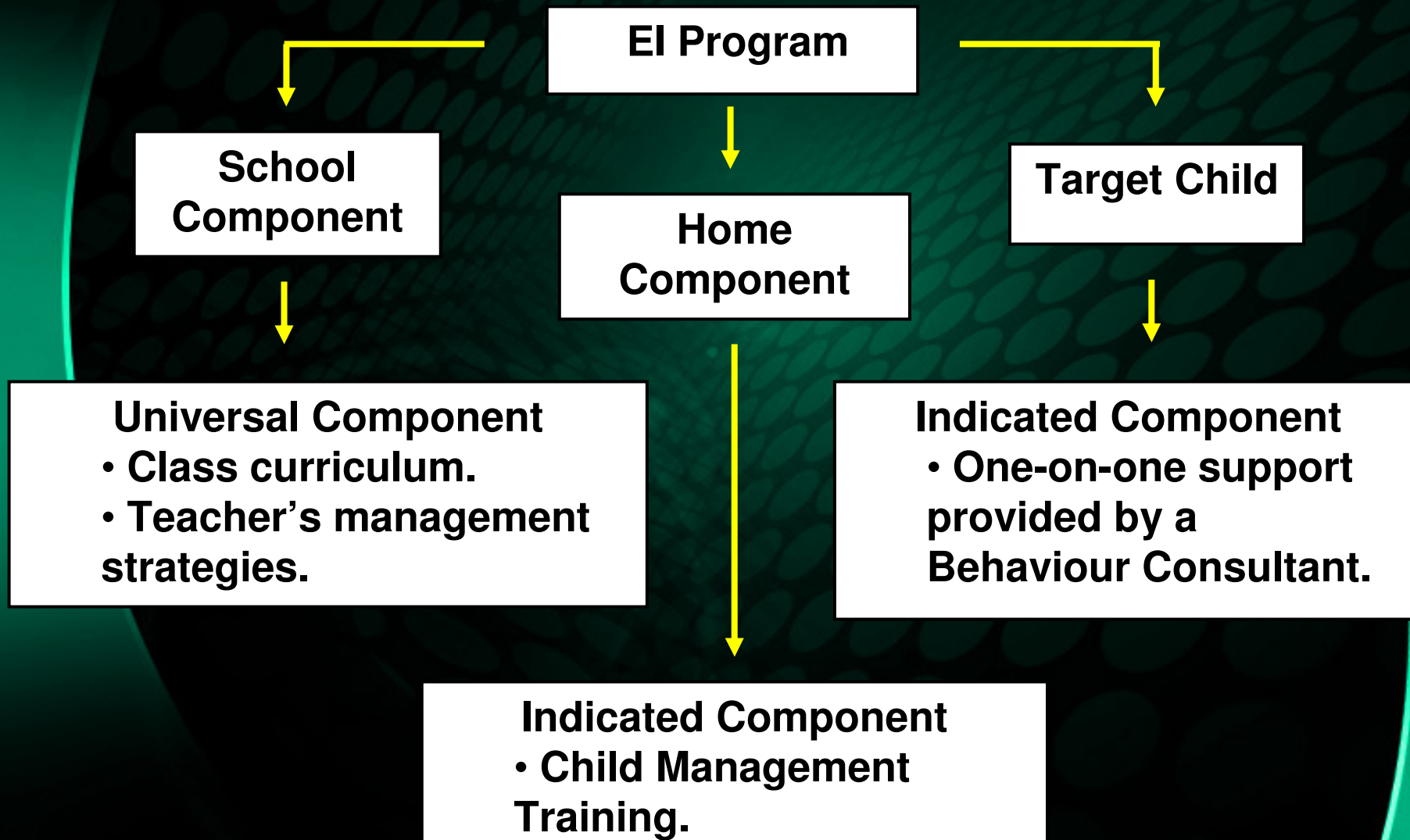
‘Head Start’ (Webster-Stratton, 1998)

‘First Step to Success’ (Walker, Severson, Feil, Stiller & Golly, 1998)

‘Fast Track’ (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2001).



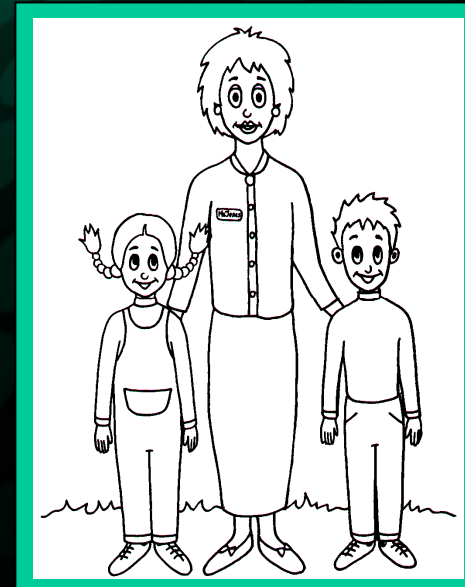
The Early Impact (EI) Program



Theoretical and Applied Contributions

Building and extending upon existing early intervention frameworks:

- Broader ecological approach.
- Earlier screening and program implementation.
- Teacher management component.
- Less reliance on external consultation
- Targets infants aged 4-6 years.
- Cost effectiveness
- **STRENGTH BASED EMPHASIS**

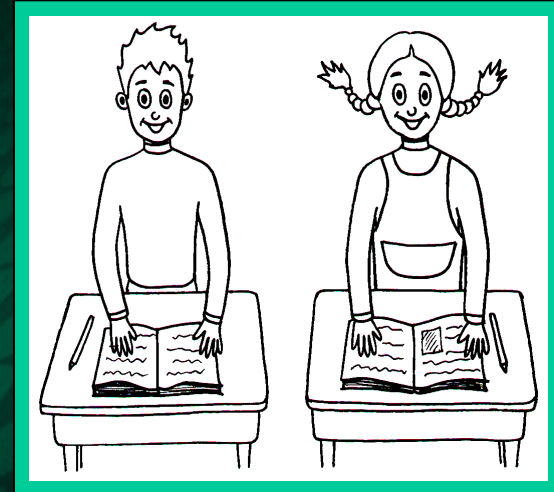


The EI School Component

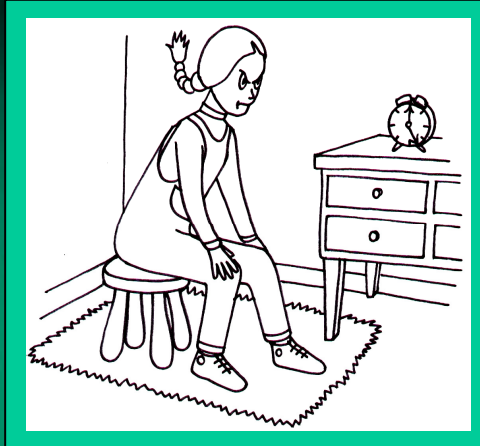
**School
Component**



- Universal Component**
- **Class curriculum.**
 - **Teacher's management strategies.**



The EI Home Component

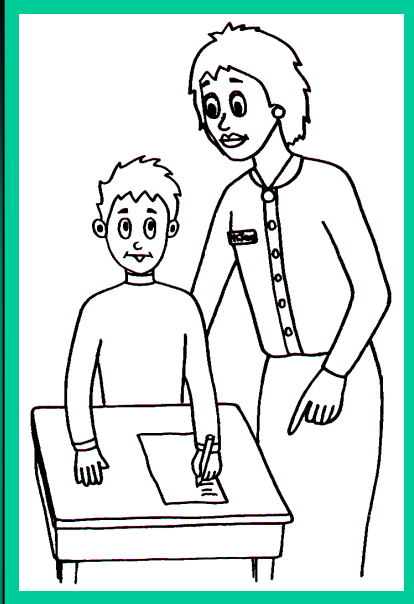


**Home
Component**



Indicated Component
• **Child Management
Training.**

The EI Individual Component



Target Child



Indicated Component
• One-on-one support
provided by a
Behaviour Consultant.

The EI Program Evaluation: A Randomised Trial

Participating Schools:

Selected from Education Queensland's Mt Gravatt District.

Paired and matched on size and socio-economic status.

Randomly assigned to experimental or control conditions.

The EI Program Evaluation

Sample:

Population n=455.

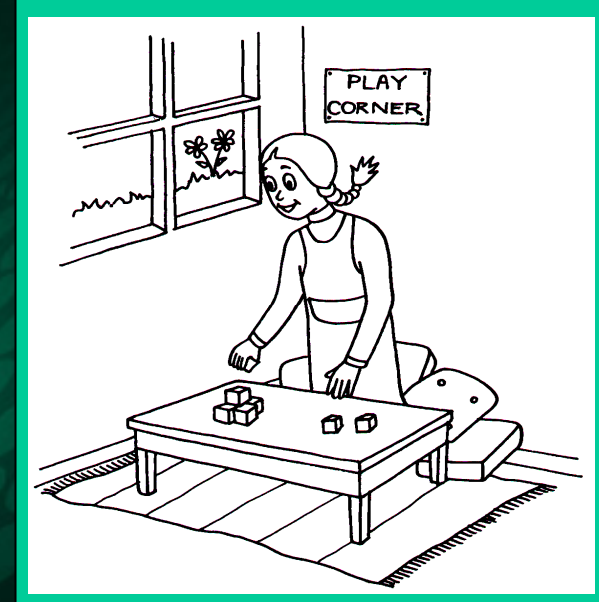
Experimental Group n=212.

Control Group n=243.

Age of participants (4-5 years).

Drawn from participating school's pre-school cohort.

Indicated participants identified as at-risk for the development of conduct problems.



The EI Program's Initial Findings

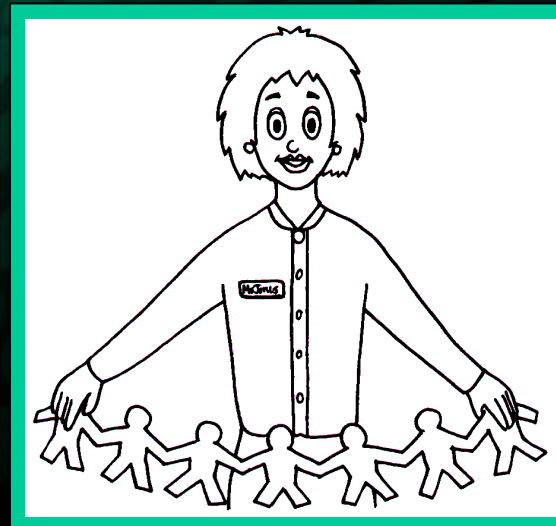
Effectiveness of the EI Program?

Intervention Effect:

- Significant reduction in challenging behaviours at the school level

Social Validity:

- 87% retention rate
- High satisfaction rates



Future Implications

Further research needs to:

- examine the significance of programs that are strength based and that draw on the capacities, competencies and resources inherent within the child, family and school.
- be centred upon factors beyond child management strategies and social skills training.
- investigate alternative treatments to successfully engage more at-risk families.
- give consideration to the development of treatment programs that can be easily disseminated into regular school settings.
- be directed towards the significance of home-school partnerships in assisting children at-risk of problem behaviour.