

INVEST IN A STRONG START FOR CHILDREN.

# Incredible Years® & Invest in Kids

## Problem

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New research has highlighted the importance of social and emotional development to children's success in school and in life.<sup>1</sup> Prolonged family stress can negatively affect a child's social, emotional, and cognitive development, while strong bonds with adults are protective and can help mediate other environmental stressors.<sup>2</sup> When a young child has behavior problems, however, those bonds are tested. Parents and caregivers need skills and techniques to support young children's healthy development and positively manage challenging behaviors, while children need age-appropriate tools and techniques for managing emotions.

## Solution

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Help children form strong and protective bonds with caring adults by providing comprehensive social-emotional and behavior management training to parents, children, and teachers.

## High Impact Opportunity

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The Incredible Years® curriculum, as implemented by Colorado-based non-profit organization Invest in Kids, is a series of in-classroom and small-group trainings that help children, parents, and teachers manage behavior and social-emotional development.

## How it Works

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This exemplar program is, in fact, two programs in one: Incredible Years® is an evidence-based curriculum, while Invest in Kids is one of several organizations delivering the curriculum. Other organizations also deliver the Incredible Years® curriculum, but Invest in Kids has a particularly successful model for delivery.

The **Incredible Years®** curriculum was developed in the early 1980s to help treat children with serious behavioral disorders.<sup>3</sup> It has since been adapted to provide preventative training and behavior management skills to children, as well as to adults caring for children with a high likelihood of behavioral issues: the goal is to prevent both the problem behaviors and the subsequent strain on a child's relationships. The curriculum includes video and discussion-based lessons designed for

parents, teachers, or children in a small group or classroom setting, with a suggested duration of 14-18 weeks. The Incredible Years® is now a for-profit company that sells its materials to implementing organizations.

**Invest in Kids** is a nonprofit umbrella organization that delivers evidence-based programs that serve children from low-income or unstable households. Invest in Kids employs facilitators certified by Incredible Years®, and deploys them to support implementation and evaluation of the curriculum in three program settings:

- **Skill Building for Children:** Classroom and small group activities build children’s skills in anger management, problem solving, emotional competence, empathy, and friendship development
- **Skill Building for Parents:** Facilitated weekly group discussions that offer parents support and activities to strengthen parenting skills, helping promote social competence and reduce behavior problems in their children
- **Skill Building for Teachers:** Video-based training and guided practice to provide teachers with proven classroom management strategies, including effective use of attention, praise, and encouragement to promote classroom success

All Invest in Kids implementation is in support of the preventative (rather than therapeutic) use of the Incredible Years® curriculum.

## What’s the Impact?

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All three program components—teacher-focused, child-focused, and parent-focused—have demonstrated significant positive effects on children’s behavior and reductions in harsh and unproductive parental discipline. This improvement can be considered positive impact on its own, but also has long-term benefits; better self-control and stronger relationships with parents and teachers have been linked to a higher likelihood of school success.<sup>4</sup>

Incredible Years® has been subject to numerous evaluations, including multiple randomized controlled studies. Each component of the curriculum has been assessed in isolation and in a range of combinations. For example, in a 2001 study of the combined preventative use of the parent and teacher training modules in a preschool setting serving low-income children, researchers observed that:

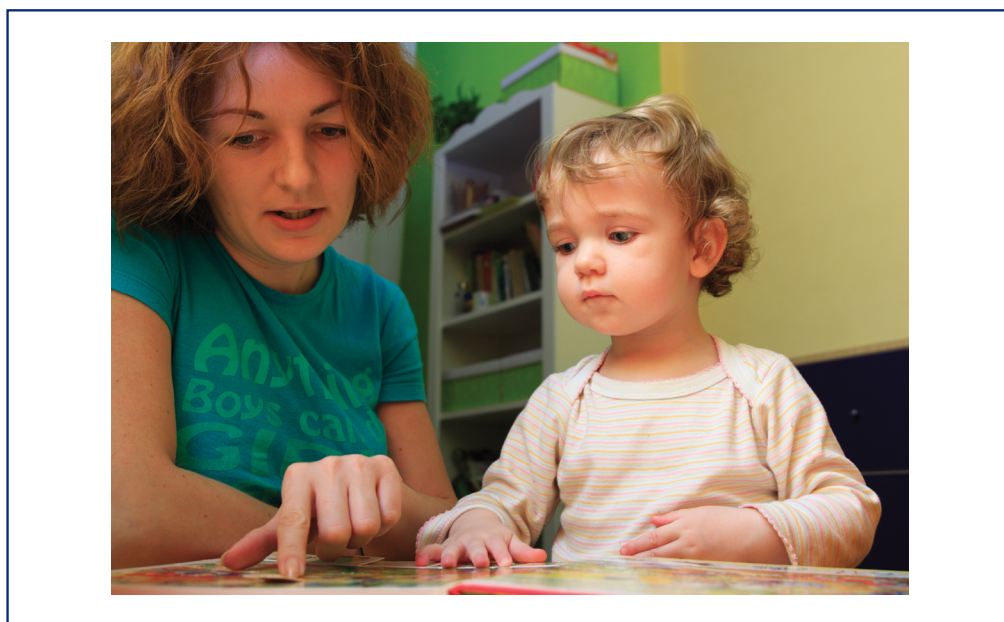
- At home, 58% of children whose parents and teachers received the program decreased their negative behavior, compared to 36% of children in the control group.
- At school, 96% of children whose parents and teachers received the program showed at least a 30% reduction on measures of non-compliance with teachers, compared to 56% of control children.

- On a social competence scale (a measure of peer interaction), 71% of program children whose initial scores were outside the normal range moved into the normal range, compared to 37% of control children.
- These gains were maintained in a one-year follow-up to the initial study: 80% of the program children were considered within the normal range for conduct problems at home compared to 48% of the control children.<sup>5</sup>

## Additional Social Impact

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**Improved classroom management by teachers:** all students (whether at high or low risk for behavior issues) benefit from improved classroom management, as it leads to increased time for instruction and learning.



*Image provided by Incredible Years*

## What Does it Cost to Implement?

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Materials and certification training prices for Incredible Years® are fixed by the for-profit program developers. Once the implementing organization purchases the curriculum materials and trains their facilitators, those costs do not reoccur except with facilitator turnover. Nonetheless, implementation costs vary considerably by location, program type (parent group, teacher, or child training), and whether the program is in a start-up or mature phase.

Invest in Kids estimates that, across all programs, phases, and locations, their average per-child cost of providing the Incredible Years® curricula is about \$120, while the per-family cost is around \$200.<sup>6</sup> These estimates include costs related to provision of evaluation and technical assistance

services, which Invest in Kids subsidizes to lower costs for local level program implementers. Programs are funded through a combination of philanthropic donations and a range of government funding streams. Donors interested in Incredible Years® may want to consider funding an umbrella organization like Invest in Kids, as centralizing the start-up costs of facilitator training, curriculum purchase, evaluation, and technical assistance can help lower start up and some implementation costs for a group of smaller, community-based organizations.

## Cost per Impact

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Combining Invest in Kids' cost data with impact information from the 2001 study on implementation of Incredible Years® in a comparable setting, we estimate that it costs roughly between \$625 and \$2,075 to move an additional child at-risk for conduct problems into a normal range. The total cost depends on phase of program (whether start up or mature), and cost-of-living differences across sites.<sup>7</sup>

For additional information on linking cost and impact, click [here](#).

## Take Action

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Use this [online mapping tool](#) to locate organizations implementing Incredible Years®. Click [here](#) to find out about other ways to weave a web of support for children and their families.

### SNAPSHOT

**CORE PRACTICE:** Comprehensive social-emotional and behavior management training for parents, children, and teachers.

**TARGETED BENEFICIARIES:** Incredible Years® can be used with all groups; Invest in Kids targets low-income families and teachers working with vulnerable children.

**IMPACT ACHIEVED:** 32% percent improvement over control group for child conduct problems after one year; better self control and strong bonds with parents are linked with a higher probability of school success and a productive life.

**COST/IMPACT OR COST-BENEFIT:** Roughly \$625 to \$2,075 to move an additional child at risk for conduct problems into normal range (variance depends on program phase - whether start up or mature - and cost of living differences across sites).

<sup>1</sup> Duckworth A. L & Seligman, M. Self discipline outdoes IQ in predicting academic performance of adolescents. *Psychological Science* 16(12) 939-944. Also, Moffit et.al A gradient of self control predicts health, wealth, and public safety. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol 108, no.7 2693-2698.

<sup>2</sup> National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2007). *The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. Retrieved 2/08/14 from: [http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/reports\\_and\\_working\\_papers/science\\_of\\_early\\_childhood\\_development/](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/reports_and_working_papers/science_of_early_childhood_development/)

<sup>3</sup> Professor Carolyn Webster-Stratton at the University of Washington founded the program.

<sup>4</sup> Duckworth A. L & Seligman, M. Self discipline outdoes IQ in predicting academic performance of adolescents. *Psychological Science* 16(12) 939-944. Also, Moffit et.al A gradient of self control predicts health, wealth, and public safety. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol 108, no.7 2693-2698. Also, Lopez Turley, R., Desmond, M. & Bruch, S.K. (2007) Unanticipated educational consequences of a positive parent child relationship. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, October 2007, 1377-1390.

<sup>5</sup> Webster-Stratton, C. Reid, M. J. and Hammond, M. Preventing Conduct Problems, Promoting Social Competence: A Parent and Teacher Training Partnership in Head Start. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology* 2001, vol. 30, no. 3 283-302.

<sup>6</sup> Based on total enrollment in 2013.

<sup>7</sup> To estimate the high point of this range, we used sample program start-up budgets provided by Invest in Kids. Start-up Parent Group - \$9,500 (assuming a group of 16); Start-up Classroom Program (2 classrooms) - \$4,500; One time Teacher Classroom Management training - \$1,130.



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