

**Building Human Capacity in Singapore's Population:
Testing Innovations in Human Development**

IMPROVING PRESCHOOL ATTENDANCE

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One of the biggest concerns of Singapore policymakers is the possibility of second or third generation poverty, i.e. a cycle of poverty. Specifically, the concern is that some youth from currently disadvantaged families will do poorly in school and integrate poorly into Singapore's increasingly 'high-tech' labor market. We propose an intervention aimed to help preschool children from disadvantaged families.

The current labor economics literature contains many research papers that argue/show that intervention at early ages can have very high payoffs; often quality preschool education is the intervention of choice for young children. Singapore can justly be proud of the fact that enrolment rates in preschool education are nearly universal, and income-based subsidies reduce the cost particularly for lower-income families to nearly negligible amounts. However, educators, policymakers, and social workers have noted that a subset of young children from especially disadvantaged families tend to have such poor attendance rates that they might as well not attend preschool.

Our proposal will implement a randomized control trial (RCT), with two treatment groups and a control group, to measure the effectiveness of two different treatments aimed at improving preschool attendance rates by motivating parents to commit their children to regular attendance. One treatment will be based on cash payments to the parents if their child meets certain attendance standards. Our second intervention will consist of 15 visits to the parents from a social worker.

We will also explore a nonexperimental evaluation of our interventions by using a comparable sample of children from the panel survey. Comparing the experimental and nonexperimental results will provide valuable information on how much the panel data can be used to draw comparison groups for treatments that do not have a control group.