

WRCPC Agenda

February 14, 2020

9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (8:30 a.m. Networking)

Community Services and Public Health Building

99 Regina Street, South, Waterloo ON (Room #508)

Chair: Chris Cowie

Minutes: M.A. Allen

1. Welcome and Introductions – 2 min
2. Remembering Laurie Strome
3. Approval of Agenda – 2 min
4. Declaration of Conflict of Interest
5. Approval of the December 13, 2019 Business Minutes – 5 min (attached)
 - 5.1 Business Arising
6. Whiteboard Name Challenge (for action) David Siladi – 5 min
7. Inaugural Meeting: Carried Forward
 - 7.1 Thank you Courtney Didier - 5 minutes
8. Smart on Crime Evaluation Overview (presentation & questions) David Siladi – 20 min
9. Dialogue re WRCPC 2020 (discussion and approval) Christiane Sadeler – 90 min
 - a. Community Safety and Well-being Plan:
 - i. Criteria Selection
 - ii. Strategic Priorities Exercise
 - b. Design Team Efforts to Date:
 - i. Update (Chris Cowie)
 - ii. Changes to the Status Quo (Exercise)

10. Justice Dinner Review (presentation & discussion) Julie Thompson -10 min

11. Other Business:

- a. Goodbye Note from Alejandra Amezquita Gutierrez
- b. Federal and Provincial Budget 2020 Consultation

12. Adjournment

Next Meeting March 13, 2020

WRCPC Minutes

December 13, 2019

9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (8:30 a.m. Networking)

Kinbridge Community Association

200 Christopher Drive, Cambridge ON

Main Auditorium

Present: Arran Rowles, Carmen Abel, Cathy Harrington, Chris Cowie, Courtney Didier, Doug McKlusky, Hsiu - Li Wang, Irene O'Toole, James Bond, Janice Ouellette, Jennifer Hutton, Jonathan English, Joe-Ann McComb, Karen Redman, Kathryn McGarry, Kathy Payette, Kelly Anthony, Mark Pancer, Nikki Smith, Richard Eibach, Rosslyn Bentley, Sarah Shafiq, Sharon Ward-Zeller, Shayne Turner, Shirley Hilton,

Regrets: Andrew Jackson, Angela Vanderheyden, Barry Cull, Barry McClinchey, Bryan Larkin and Mark Crowell, Bill Wilson, David Jaeger, John Shewchuk, Kelly Bernier, Laurie Strome, Lu Roberts, Patricia Moore and Nicole Redgate, Peter Ringrose, Tom Galloway, Trisha Robinson

Staff: David Siladi, Julie Thompson, Michael Parkinson, Mary Anna Allen

Chair: Shayne Turner

Minutes: M.A. Allen

1. Welcome and Introductions:

Welcome and introductions were made

2. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Kathryn McGarry

Seconded by Doug McKlusky

Carried

3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest:

None.

4. Approval of the November 8, 2019 Business Minutes:

4.1 Business Arising

None.

Moved by Jonathan English

Seconded by Richard Eibach

David Siladi will be presenting **Upstream Determinants and Approaches to Community Safety and Wellbeing** to the Canadian Municipal Network via a Webinar on December 17, 2019. Council members interested in participating in the Webinar are asked to contact the WRPCPC office for the details.

WRPCPC is presenting **Rat Park** at the Central Kitchener Public Library on January 28, 2020 starting at 6:30 p.m. The Canadian feature film highlights upstream approaches to drug policy. The director and producer will be attending.

The WRPCPC office will be closed from December 27th 2019 to January 1, 2020.

Christiane Sadeler is due to be back in the office on January 6th, 2020.

Carried.

5. Approval of Smart Update (Consent Agenda):

Moved by Mark Pancer

Seconded by Rosslyn Bentley

Carried

6. WRPCPC Membership 2020:

The Facilitating Committee recommended leaving the WRPCPC Membership Slate as is for 2020, and to bring this recommendation to the WRPCPC for approval at its meeting of December 13, 2019. Because the Design Team is in the process of creating a model that aims to align the work of the WRPCPC and WWR it was suggested that this may not be a good time to make significant membership changes.

Motion:

That WRCPC re-affirm its current membership for the 2020 calendar year and reserves the right to fill any vacancies in 2020 at the discretion of the WRCPC membership.

Kathy Payette seconded the motion.

Discussion:

A request was made that the Nominating Committee re-affirm individual WRCPC members for 2020 and that WRCPC members contact Vice-Chair Cathy Harrington if there is an interest in participating on the Facilitating Committee.

Amended motion:

That the Crime Prevention Council reaffirms its current membership for the 2020 Council calendar year and reserves the right to fill any vacancies in 2020 at the discretion of the Council members.

Cathy Harrington seconded the motion

Chris Cowie added that if anyone is interested in participating on the Facilitating Committee to please forward your name to Vice-Chair Cathy Harrington. If there are WRCPC members interested in participating on the Facilitating Committee that currently do not sit on the Committee an election will be held at the next meeting of the WRCPC.

Moved by Shayne Turner

Seconded by Irene O'Toole

Carried.

A letter will be sent to Regional Council after the inaugural meeting confirming the 2020 WRCPC Membership Slate.

7. Approval WRCPC January 10, 2020 Meeting Cancellation:

The Facilitating Committee recommended that the WRCPC cancel the January 10, 2020 meeting.

Motion:

That WRCPC cancel it's meeting of January 10th, 2020 and resume the regular meeting schedule in February 2020.

Moved by Sharon Ward-Zeller

Seconded by Cathy Harrington

Carried

8. Community Safety and Well-being Plan (CSWBP) Advisory Committee:

The CSWBP, is a provincially mandated requirement contained within the *Police Services Act* that compels municipalities to create and deliver a plan to the Province by January 1, 2021. The process for developing the CSWBP includes the establishment of an Advisory Committee with minimum specified requirements for it's membership.

Shayne Turner shared that the Design Team, at its last meeting on December 6th, 2019, discussed how to move the development of the Community Safety and Well-being Plan (CSWBP) forward.

Michael Parkinson shared that the work of the Design Team is to explore alignment of the work of the WRCPC and Wellbeing Waterloo Region (WWR) and is separate from legislated mandate for municipalities to develop and deliver a Community Safety and Well-being Plan. Michael noted that since at least 2003, the WRCPC has advocated to the Ontario government to create an Ontario Crime Prevention Secretariat. The CSWBP concept was based on the work of the WRCPC.

The development of the Plan is to be guided by a local Advisory Committee upon approval by a municipal council. The Region of Waterloo Chief Administrative Officer, the Waterloo Region Police Service Chief and WWR staff are recommending the Wellbeing Waterloo Region 'Systems Change Champion Table' as the CSWB Advisory Committee and will be submitting a report to Regional Council for approval in January 2020.

According to the provincial legislation WRCPC meets all of the membership criteria of the Advisory Committee and the System Change Table meets most of the requirements. See attached.

Michael presented five options to the WRCPC for consideration and asked for Council to approve and support one option:

1. WWR's 'Systems Change Table' as Advisory Committee
2. WRCPC as Advisory Committee
3. Joint collaborative of members from WWR and WRCPC
4. New Advisory Committee

5. Do nothing

Shayne Turner explained that he can not recommend the “do nothing” option and added that the System Change Table was recommended by others because it is already an established table. Shayne noted the Advisory Committee is to be a ‘rubber stamp’ interim measure for 2020 to move the development of the Plan forward. The work on the development of the plan is envisioned to be a collaboration of the RMOW (Lorie Fioze), WRPS (Margaret Gloade) and WRCPC (Christiane Sadeler). Shayne indicated that a report will go before Regional Council in January 2020, and that regional staff with WWR would appreciate WRCPC’s endorsement to appoint the WWR Systems Change Table as the CSWBP Advisory Committee.

WRCPC members had a discussion about both the local and provincial historical process undertaken by senior decision makers that brought us to this point. WRCPC’s catalyst role, staff expertise on issues of community safety and well-being and in strategic planning was noted.

There were concerns expressed by Council members about the possibility of the WRCPC being dismantled since the System Change Table is a table of Well-being Waterloo Region and is being recommended by Regional staff and WRPS to be the Advisory Committee of the CSWBP.

Some members noted that the WRCPC is a 25-year plus organization that has practical and theoretical knowledge on issues of prevention related to safety, wellness, health and the structural determinants of health. The two tables have very different mandates and are not interchangeable. During the introduction of the Prince Albert Model at the Bingemans’ conference in 2013, the WRCPC stated at that time that the Council is already ahead of most communities across Canada in fulfilling the objectives of community safety and wellness planning and implementation.

The question was asked as to why the RMOW does not see the WRCPC as the appropriate choice to represent the Advisory Committee even though the WRCPC is an existing table that meets the legislated membership criteria for the Advisory Committee and has been core funded by the Region since its inception.

It was explained that during the time that the Ministry of Community Safety and Corrections was looking at creating new well-being tables across Ontario the Province, and subsequently the RMOW, made the decision to support the creation of Well-being Waterloo Region rather than ask the WRCPC to take on the Plan.

There were some comments about combining the Connector’s Hub of WWR and WRCPC for a joint collaborative.

It is the understanding of some Council members that it would take some adjustments to the Systems Change Table to meet the legislation criteria for the Advisory Committee and more adjustments to the WRCPC table to meet the requirements. [Post meeting note: exactly the reverse is actually the case].

Some Council members noted that since the System Change Table is made up of people that can make changes within their systems to simply add individuals from the WRCPC could be a remedy to meet the legislative requirements.

Shayne Turner shared that Council has discussed options one and three as possibilities: The System Change Table with added members or a joint collaborative of members from WWR and WRCPC.

A WRCPC member asked about the possibility of ensuring a great diversity of voices to option number three - the WRCPC-WWR collaborative option. There was concern expressed about the lack of diversity and representation from the marginalized community at the Systems Change Table. It was added the WRCPC has some work to do in this area as well. It was suggested that there be a 50 percent or more representation from the marginalized community and 50 percent or less representation from the systems. It was acknowledged that the Design Team has had the discussion about the lack of diverse representation on the Systems Change Table. It was also shared that although the Advisory Committee is an interim table for 2020, the community will still be dealing with the same legislation and the issue of the lack of a diverse representation beyond 2020.

Shayne Turner called for a vote on options one and three, with option one being the Systems Change Table with modifications by adding some seats to fill the gaps and meet the requirements of the legislation.

Fifteen Council members supported option number one with one abstention.

Shayne Turner asked for a vote on option number three supporting a joint table made up of WRCPC and WWR members.

Seven members of Council voted in favour of option number three.

Region of Waterloo staff will be informed of WRCPC's decision to make the Systems Change Table as the Advisory Committee of the CSWBP with a request for additional members from the WRCPC to meet the legislative criteria.

9. **Justice Dinner Review (presentation & discussion) Julie Thompson: Carried forward**
10. **Smart on Crime Evaluation Overview (presentation & questions) David Siladi: Carried forward**
11. **Sunnydale Neighbourhood Better Beginnings Waterloo Evaluation Presentation:**

Mark Pancer, provided a presentation about the history and beginnings of Better Beginnings and Better Futures (BBBF) and its research findings. Jeremy Horne and Heather Powers provided a presentation of Better Beginnings Waterloo and Geoff Nelson, Ph.D. Emeritus Professor of Psychology, Department of Psychology with Wilfrid Laurier, presented the Evaluation findings. The Final Evaluation Community Report October 30, 2019 is attached to the meeting minutes.

BBBF was a neighbourhood-based research demonstration project focused on disadvantaged children and families that began in 1989.

There are three major goals of Better Beginnings: 1) prevention of problematic issues in young children; 2) promotion of health and well-being in young children and 3) community development.

There were three communities in Ontario that were involved in the research project: 1) Cornwall (primarily Francophone); 2) Highfield in North Etobicoke (culturally diverse), and 3) Sudbury (with Indigenous, Francophone and Anglophone peoples).

There are four key qualities to the program: 1) Universal, high quality, multi-year prevention programs; 2) Ecological, comprehensive programs; 3) Integrated programs and 4) Community involvement in programs:

One of key elements of Better Beginning was that community members were involved in both program development and via participating in the programs. Every steering committee of BBBF has to have at least 51 percent community membership.

There was a long term evaluation of BBBF project in the three Ontario communities along with two comparison communities. The evaluation demonstrated positive impacts on children, parents/families, and communities, in the short- term (Grade 3), medium-term (Grades 6 and 9), and the long-term (Grade 12) and currently when participants are 27-28 years of age.

During the first four years (SK, Grades 1, 2, 3), Better Beginnings led to:

- Reduced children's emotional problems and improved social skills
- Improved parent's health promotion & disease-prevention behaviour
- Enhanced neighbourhood safety and satisfaction

In Grades 6 and 9, Better Beginnings led to:

- Reduced children's emotional and behavioural problems, improved academic achievement, and lower rates of special education placement
- Improved social support and family functioning
- Enhanced neighbourhood involvement & satisfaction

The long term impact of Better Beginnings:

- Children/Youth – lower rates of special education, better school performance for BB youth, and fewer property offenses
- Parents – lower rates of clinical depression
- Community – youth viewed their communities as less deviant in terms of substance use, violence, and theft; parents rated their communities as more cohesive

The cost per participants for Better Beginnings on average, \$748/year, or \$2,992 for 4 years. The cost offsets are lower rates of spending on education and social services for BB families relative to comparison families. Compared using 2005 Canadian dollars, the return on investment was positive: by age 14, for every \$1 invested, governments saved \$1.30 and by age 19, for every \$1 invested, governments saved \$2.50

The hope 30 years ago when BBBF started was that if the evaluation showed positive impacts, BB would be supported and scaled up across the Province however core funding and other support for expanded implementation has been elusive.

Jeremy Horne with Adventure4change provided a historical backdrop to the introduction of Better Beginnings Waterloo in his community. Jeremy explained that in his community a group began an afterschool program. During the same time period, Laurie Strome asked if Jeremy could help to engage 3 young people from the same community. The young people formed a group called Sunnydale Connect. Now after 12 years approximately 100 young people meet on a regular basis for programing.

In 2012 the North Waterloo residents, Principal of Cedarbrae school and House of Friendship came together to address neighbourhood concerns. In 2014 a grant was submitted with success to the Hallman Foundation for Better Beginnings Waterloo (Cedarbrae and Winston schools). Between 2015-2017 the House of Friendship was

the sponsor organization and in 2018 to the present Adventure4Change is the sponsor organization. The project became headquartered in the Hub.

Health Powers with Aventure4Change shared that Better Beginnings Waterloo programs and events not only include community participation but participants are encouraged to volunteer as well. From January to August, 2019 there were 700 children in programs, 45 parents in programs, 1432 individuals in community events, 75 parent volunteers, 186 other adult volunteers, 311 youth volunteers.

As part of the grant from the Hallman foundation, Geoff Nelson explained that an evaluation was performed on the short term impacts of the Waterloo Better Beginnings. There was a baseline group from 2015 made up of parents, children and families that were not involved with Better Beginnings that were compared to 2018 to 2019 data collected from those that were involved with Better Beginnings. Those involved in the Better Beginnings program experienced fewer behavioral issues, parents felt supported and equipped to support children, and the participants felt a stronger connection to their community and subsequently became more involved in their neighbourhood.

In summary, the Better Beginnings Waterloo program resulted in the prevention of children's emotional and behavioural issues, the promotion of parent and family well-being, community development and improvement and the promotion of parent and family well-being.

A challenge is that the program may not meet the needs of children and youth that have been subjected to intergenerational deficiencies in access to opportunities. More research on this aspect may be valuable.

These programs make sense from a financial, social and health viewpoint. The question was asked as to why these types of programs are not core funded? Why does there seem to be resistance from systems leaders and structures to invest resources in prevention? The evaluators remain puzzled by the absence of funding foresight. The Evaluation Report was provided to the Council members.

12. Sector Updates: Neighbourhoods:

Courtney Didier, Executive Director of Alison Neighbourhood Community Centre (ANCC), presented an overview of the work of the organization.

The ANCC is part of the Cambridge Neighbourhood Association. The hashtag is #Lookwhatwedo. The organization is in the midst of a neighbourhood that is burdened

by opioid-related harms, issues of mental health, issues of immigration and settlement etc. The ANCC facilitates services in the community.

The mission vision statement, similar to other neighbourhood associations, is as follows:

Mission: ANCC encourages individual and community growth by providing enriching opportunities close to home.

Vision: An inclusive and thriving neighbourhood where residents can grow together

The Alison Neighbourhood Community Centre is found in East Galt (Cambridge in Ward 7) and Kinbridge Community Association is just south in Ward 6.

The Cambridge Neighbourhood Organizations is a non-profit corporation or charities. This is mainly the difference between Cambridge and Kitchener neighbourhood group models. The Cambridge collaborative includes 10 neighbourhood associations.

Alison Neighbourhood Community Centre's approach to community development is as follows:

- To provide a safe place for youth to belong
- To connect people to their community and provide the support they need
- To help build skills, build confidence, and to build leaders
- Help others to achieve their potential
- Work with people to find solutions to problems
- Work with people of all ages to make the community a safer and more fulfilling place for all to enjoy

This includes significant efforts related to addressing the root causes of crime and working to reduce risk factors, increase protective and resiliency factors. The ANCC works with community partners to provide a holistic, youth and family-driven way of responding to issues such as poverty, food insecurity, mental health and behaviour, and social isolation, among other social determinants of health.

Among the opportunities that are offered at ANCC are breakfast club, afterschool club, youth drop in, neighbourhood events and programs from 0 to 6 years of age etc. The ANCC has approximately 19,000 visits per year and there were approximately 122,518 program visits across the entire collaboration. Some programs are universal and some targeted.

ANCC's financial budget is approximately \$250,000 per year. ANCC is currently working with Kelly Anthony to research and develop some supports for youth and families based on aspects of the Iceland Model.

Both ANCC and Kinbridge work with the school boards to help students early on to work towards their mandatory volunteer hours' requirement to graduate from high school.

Both ANCC and Kinbridge work with new Canadians and immigrants to provide support.

ANCC with the support of the Cambridge Vineyard Christian Fellowship provides a breakfast club for the community.

ANCC also provides summer playground camps for the community and customize according to the community needs so that no one gets left behind.

ANCC partners with WRPS, Lutherwood and its local school to help mitigate behavioral issues through a holistic approach that includes physical fitness and well-being discussions.

ANCC is also participates in town hall discussions with the municipal government.

Joe-Ann explained that the municipality provides 1.2 million dollars in core funding and the neighbourhoods leverage enough resources to make the overall budget 3.2 million dollars.

Joe-Ann explained the neighbourhoods are not isolated to the day to day issues experienced across the region. She also shared that early intervention work from the collaborative neighbourhood organizations help to prevent issues down the road.

Joe-Ann shared that the neighbourhoods work as a network to meet all the organization and community needs to support one another and the community as a whole.

The breadth and depth of collaborative efforts for community health and safety is extensive and deeply impressive. Joe-Ann and Courtney were thanked for their work and for taking the time to share an overview of neighbourhood-based social development with WRCPC members.

13. KPMG Service Review:

The Ontario government has provided funding for communities across the province to evaluate participating municipalities' non-essential services with a view to uncovering cost savings. Regional Council engaged KPMG to review the services in the RMOW.

The KPMG report identified the WRCPC as a non-mandated area where RMOW could find some cost savings by eliminating the initiative.

It was acknowledged by KPMG that more consultations are needed about what might be community and operational impact before decisions can be made.

A report will go forward to Regional Council in January 2020 with the steering committee's recommendation.

Considerations might change given the provincial mandate to Ontario's municipalities to develop a CSWBP.

14. Other Business:

None.

15. Adjournment: Moved at 11: 56 by Courtney Didier.



Waterloo Better Beginnings: Final Evaluation Community Report
October 30, 2019

How to cite this document: Nelson, G., Hasford, J., Luis Zatarain, C., Gilmer, A., Worton, S.K., & Eid, M. (2019). *Waterloo Better Beginnings: Final Evaluation Community Report*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University.

Acknowledgements: This research was funded by a grant from the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation. We thank the Better Beginnings staff, teachers and the Principals of Cedarbrae and Winston Churchill schools, and members of the Better Beginnings Waterloo Research Committee for their assistance with the research, and Salma Bangash for conducting the baseline interviews.

Main Messages

- ❖ In partnership with the Waterloo Region District School Board, the Lakeshore South Community Association and Sunnydale Community Centre, the House of Friendship, Better Beginnings Waterloo (BBW) was implemented by Adventure4Change in two North Waterloo school communities (Cedarbrae and Winston Churchill) that are characterized by low levels of income and high percentages of visible minorities and immigrants.
- ❖ BBW is based on the Better Beginnings, Better Futures (BBBF) model and research, which is an ecological (focusing on the child, parent, family, and community), community-driven, evidence-based approach to primary prevention for children ages four to eight.
- ❖ The original BBBF research showed positive impacts on children, parents/families, and communities in the short-term (Grade 3), medium-term (Grades 6 and 9), and the long-term (Grade 12), including a cost savings to government of \$2.50 for every dollar invested.
- ❖ BBW includes programs and activities for children, parents, and families, the majority of which are provided at Cedarbrae School.
- ❖ BBW research included qualitative interviews with parents and quantitative measures of outcomes obtained by parent interviews and teacher reports.
- ❖ A baseline group of participants in 2015 with no involvement in BBW programs and activities were compared with a group of BBW participants in 2018 and 2019.
- ❖ Cedarbrae children and parents participated in more activities than their counterparts from Winston Churchill, with children averaging six activities, and parents/families averaging six activities. Program-collected data on participation in 2019 indicate that 700 children participated in children's programs/events; 45 parents participated in parent programs/events; and 1432 individuals participated in community events.
- ❖ There is evidence that BBW achieved its goal of preventing emotional and behavioural problems of Grades 1 and 2 children, according to teacher reports.
- ❖ There is evidence that BBW achieved its goal of resident engagement. Thus far in 2019, there has been a total of 572 volunteers in programs and events: 75 parents, 186 other adults, and 311 youth.
- ❖ There were significantly increased levels of social support for parents participating in BBW activities and programs at Cedarbrae compared with the baseline sample.
- ❖ BBW also has a goal of community improvement. There were significantly lower levels of neighbourhood dissatisfaction among the BBW parents compared with the baseline group.
- ❖ In summary, the short-term findings indicate that BBW is achieving its main goals of prevention, resident/parent engagement, and community improvement.

WHAT IS BETTER BEGINNINGS WATERLOO?

Better Beginnings Waterloo (BBW) is an ecological (parent, child, community), community-driven, evidence-based, primary prevention program for children ages four to eight and their families. BBW is a program of Adventure4Change (A4C). In partnership with the Waterloo Region District School Board, the Lakeshore South Community Association and the Sunnyside Community Centre, and the House of Friendship, BBW was implemented in the North Waterloo, Ontario, school communities of Cedarbrae and Winston Churchill. These communities are characterized by low levels of income and high percentages of visible minorities and immigrants. The lead agency for the program is A4C, which is based at a storefront centre, the Hub, mid-way between the two schools.

BBW is based on the Better Beginnings, Better Futures (BBBF) model and research, which has received international recognition for preventing emotional and behavioural problems of children ages four to eight. The original BBBF research included three low-income, Ontario communities and two comparison communities and showed positive impacts on children, parents/families, and communities in the short-term (Grade 3), medium-term (Grades 6 and 9), and the long-term (Grade 12), including a cost savings to government of \$2.50 for every dollar invested.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF BETTER BEGINNINGS WATERLOO?

There are three goals for BBW (1) to prevent children's emotional and behavioural problems and to promote positive child development; (2) to enhance resident participation and positive outcomes for parents and families; and (3) to promote community development and improve community well-being.

WHAT ARE THE PROGRAMS OF BETTER BEGINNINGS WATERLOO?

Like the original BBBF programs in Ontario, BBW provides programs for children, parents/families, and the community. Programs for children in Grades Junior Kindergarten to Grade 2 include Running and Reading at Cedarbrae, Run and Learn at Winston Churchill, a home reading program for Cedarbrae students, music, dance, nutrition, and yoga programs, a tutoring program, and March break and summer camps and programs. For parents and families, there are parents' groups at Cedarbrae and at the Hub, family days, family trips, English classes, and a parents' night out. Community activities include a variety of events, including a program with the KW Symphony, and community celebrations. Most programs are offered to

Cedarbrae students and parents, as Winston Churchill has less accessible space for programs.

WHAT WAS THE RESEARCH APPROACH USED TO EVALUATE BETTER BEGINNINGS WATERLOO?

The research was guided by a Research Committee comprised of BBW staff, community residents, teachers, and the researchers. The research was led by a team from the Community Psychology Program of Wilfrid Laurier University. A mixed methods approach, including qualitative and quantitative methods, was used to evaluate the impacts of BBW programs and activities on children, their parents/families, and the community. In 2018 and 2019, the researchers conducted qualitative interviews with parents ($n = 47$) of Grade 1 and 2 children who participated in BBW programs. As well, parents who volunteered in BBW ($n = 3$) and parents who participated in a parents' group ($n = 4$) were interviewed in two separate focus group interviews.

On the quantitative side, a baseline-BBW focal cohort design was used. The BBW cohort of Grade 1 and 2 children participating in BBW in 2018 and 2019 was compared with a baseline comparison group of children from Grades 1 and 2 in the same communities prior to the commencement of BBW programs in 2015. Baseline data on the children and parents were gathered through parent interviews ($n = 34$) and teacher reports ($n = 68$). In 2018-2019, the same data were collected for Grade 1 and 2 children through parent interviews ($n = 47$) and teacher reports ($n = 46$) for children participating in BBW. One problem encountered using the baseline-BBW cohort design was that a minority of the baseline sample was from Cedarbrae, while the majority of the BBW sample was from Cedarbrae. Since the two groups are not equivalent in terms of the school the child was attending, the outcomes were tested separately by school, comparing baseline Cedarbrae with the BBW cohort for Cedarbrae and baseline Winston Churchill with the BBW cohort for Winston Churchill.

WHAT WERE THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH ON BETTER BEGINNINGS WATERLOO?

BETTER BEGINNINGS WATERLOO PROMOTES RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

The findings on child and parent participation in BBW programs were compared by school. There were higher rates of participation in BBW programs at Cedarbrae compared with Winston Churchill. The findings regarding participation

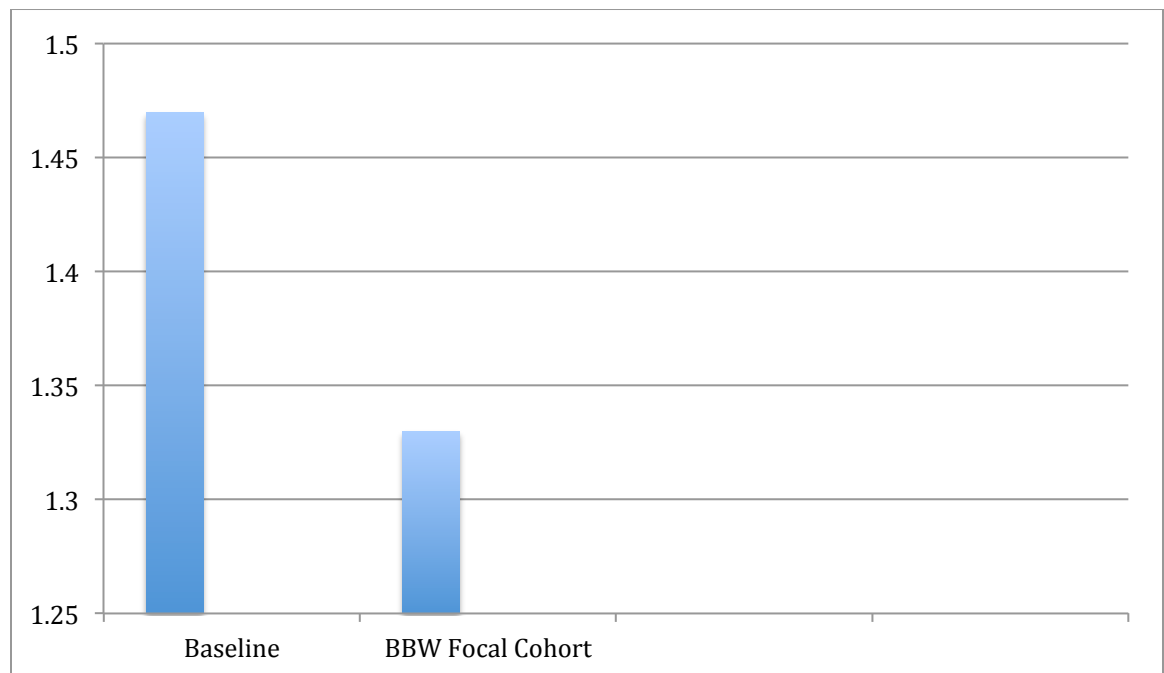
are not unexpected given that more programs are offered at Cedarbrae. Also, the quality of the participation according to parents did not differ by school, indicating that participants from Winston Churchill found the quality of their participation similar to the participants from Cedarbrae.

Program-collected data on participation indicate that 700 children participated in children’s programs/events in 2019; 45 parents participated in parent programs/events; and 1432 individuals participated in community events. Note that these are attendance figures and the same children and parents could have participated more than once. The BBW project has actively engaged parents in the project. There was a total of 572 volunteers in programs and events thus far in 2019: 75 parents, 186 other adults, and 311 youth. Note again that these are attendance figures and the same individuals could have volunteered more than once.

BETTER BEGINNINGS WATERLOO PREVENTS CHILDREN’S EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS

Children in the BBW cohort at Cedarbrae were rated by their teachers as having significantly lower level of emotional and behavioural problems than those in the baseline sample, suggesting that BBW was effective in preventing children’s emotional and behavioural problems.

Teacher-rated Emotional and Behavioural Problems for Children



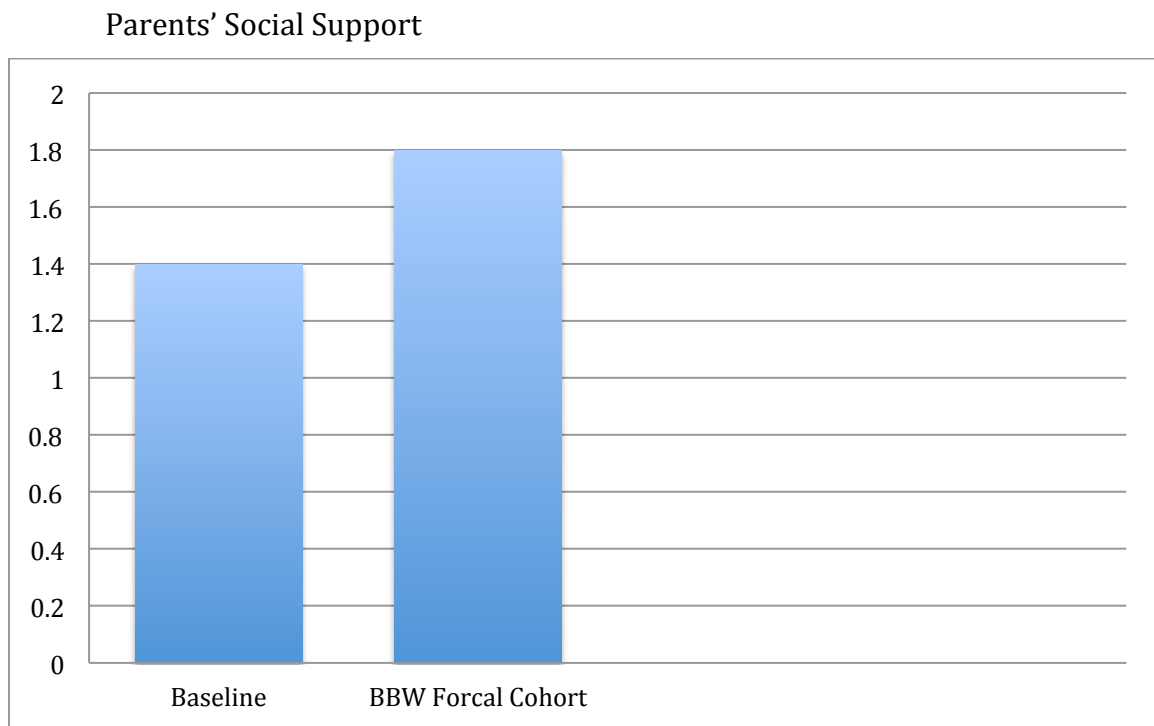
Parents noted positive impacts of their children’s participation in BBW programs and events on their well-being, social connections and academic motivation.

“My kid is willing to take more on himself. As a parent, the feeling of accomplishment gives me self-confidence.” (Parent, individual interview)

“It helped my kids to socialize getting out of their comfort zone. Also helped their reading a lot.” (Parent, individual interview)

BETTER BEGINNINGS WATERLOO INCREASES PARENTS’ SOCIAL SUPPORT

The quantitative data showed significantly higher levels of social support for parents participating in BBW activities and programs at Cedarbrae. Similarly, the qualitative data showed reduced social isolation and making new friendships for parents. Winston Churchill BBW parents showed significantly lower levels of stressful life events than their baseline counterparts. These findings are consistent with the original BBBF quantitative and qualitative research.



The parents spoke of increased social connections, skills, and well-being from their participation in BBW.

“...for me ... I learned from the program...instead of sitting in the house and being depressed all the time, I leave the house, I make friends. I meet a lot of people, I laugh with them, I talk with them...they give me advice and I give them advice...when we sit at home we have no one to ask. We don't have family here...” (excerpt from parent focus group)

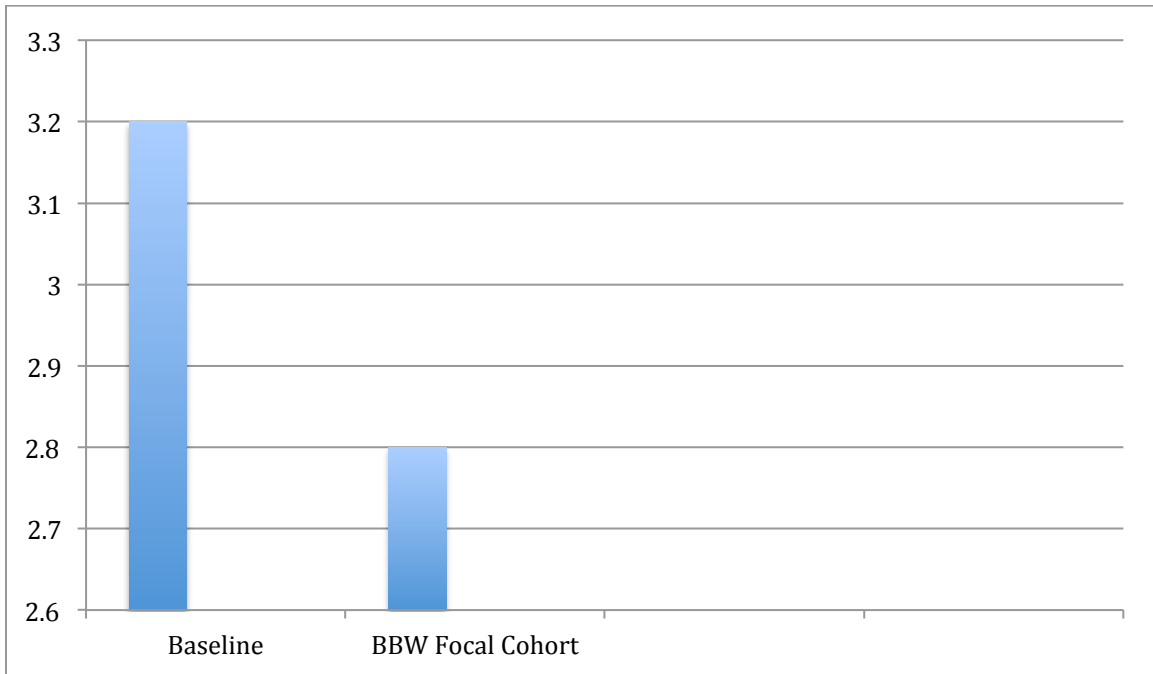
“They brought me out of my bubble. I was stuck home all the time suffering from anxiety. Now I have a different attitude and I have a purpose.” (Parent, individual interview)

“[Better Beginnings has had] a big impact. If it were not for BB I would not have that much support from which I consider a family.” (Parent, individual interview)

BETTER BEGINNINGS WATERLOO REDUCES RESIDENTS' DISSATISFACTION WITH THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD

BBW also has a goal of community development and community improvement. The quantitative data showed lower levels of neighbourhood dissatisfaction among the BBW focal cohort compared with the baseline group for Cedarbrae.

Parents' Ratings of Neighbourhood Dissatisfaction



Parents spoke of the impacts of BBW on the community. These impacts included community-building, cultural bridging, inclusion, and safety.

“It brought people together. The Hub is not just a place to hang out, it is a place where people from different cultures and backgrounds can connect forming a community.” (Parent, individual interview)

“[The impact Better Beginnings has had in the community is] to bring people together eating, playing, and having fun.” (Parent, individual interview)

“It is an opportunity to give everyone a chance to be involved. Opening doors for everyone, even if you think you cannot.” (Parent, individual interview)

SUMMARY OF THE BETTER BEGINNINGS WATERLOO RESEARCH

In summary, longitudinal research on BBBF has shown positive impacts on children, parents, and communities, and that the program is cost-effective. BBW is the first new Better Beginnings program in Ontario since the original three BBBF programs were implemented in the 1990s. Just as the original research showed, it took BBW more than two years to be staffed and implemented since funding was obtained in 2015, with the project facing numerous implementation challenges. The quantitative and qualitative short-term findings from the BBW research have shown similar positive impacts to those achieved in the original BBBF research.