

Region IV Parent Information Center: Gearing Up for Kindergarten

The Situation

A prevention-focused preschool/parent involvement program for parents and their children who will be entering kindergarten in the following year, *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* (GUK) is designed to;

- facilitate child development and school readiness,
- provide families with an educational experience that combines preschool learning activities for pre-kindergarten children with parent education and involvement opportunities,
- and, focus on engaging these families in the next 1-2 years.

Program objectives include: (a) School Readiness for Children Entering Kindergarten, (b) Parent Education, (c) Early Awareness and Intervention, (d) Parent Involvement with Children's Learning & School (e) Building Home-School-Community Partnerships and (f) Transition-to-School Knowledge and Practices.

Extension Response

The NDSU Extension Service / Region IV Parent Information Center collaborated on a record number of classes with the Grand Forks Public Schools in the fall of 2011.

Gearing Up for Kindergarten has been very well attended in 2011 with 236 families' enrolled and 488 parents participating in classes.

Supporting partners include; Phoenix School, University Children's Center, (where we used a total of six classrooms) and Grand Forks Head Start and Lake Agassiz School, (where we utilized three classrooms) for parent education and onsite childcare for siblings.

Gearing Up for Kindergarten is funded by the legislative Education Bill #2150. Other financial partners include United Way and Grand Forks Schools. Costs for holding one series that provides parent involvement and school readiness education are approximately \$5000.

Impacts

Parent involvement in children's education is clearly demonstrated to be a benefit for student achievement and emotional and social growth. Schools and families who work well together have a greater support system and are likely to experience success in high school and in decision making.

The research is clear that teachers and schools do impact the likelihood of parent participation in their child's education. Teachers do have the ability to influence involvement through their attitude and beliefs about parent involvement.

Survey questions include the impact on knowledge, confidence, skills, behavior and relationship with their child. A striking number of parents (49.6%) indicated that participation in *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* increased their confidence in being a good parent by "A lot" or "Very Much".

Documented program impact, when compared to a control group, indicates that familiarity with numbers was 4 times higher and familiarity with the alphabet was 2.5 times higher for children who participated, compared with those who did not.

Feedback

Post programming outcome survey responses:

- "He was very proud to share what he did with his dad once we got home!"
- "We had a great time...he is EXCITED to go to school. "
- "It was well planned, who could predict such a HUGE turnout, BUT that's a great problem!"

Contact

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