
Gearing Up for Kindergarten
**Project Overview & Year-End Report for
2012-2013**

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Executive Summary

The academic and social expectations for children entering kindergarten today are more intensive than in previous generations. In order to aid their children in gaining knowledge and self-confidence, parents need to be made aware of and given supportive tools to prepare their children for kindergarten. Parents are a child's first and best teachers, and many parents need and want support in their role of preparing their children for success in school. *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* provides support by improving access to information, providing early learning activities and parent education classes, and partnering with organizations that work with young children and their families to ensure school readiness.

North Dakota State University (NDSU) and the NDSU Extension Service, in partnership with school districts across North Dakota and the statewide network of Parent Resource Centers, operated this school readiness and family education program for its 7th year in 2012-13. *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* is a family education opportunity for parents and their children who will be entering kindergarten in the following year. The *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program provides families with an intensive educational experience that combines early learning activities for pre-kindergarten children with parent education opportunities for adults. The key building blocks and objectives of the program are:

- *School Readiness for Children Entering Kindergarten*
- *Parent Education*
- *Early Awareness and Intervention*
- *Parent Involvement with Children's Learning & School*
- *Building Home-School-Community Partnerships*

In 2012-2013 the program operated at 64 sites across North Dakota with 870 families enrolled. This executive summary provides highlights of findings gathered through evaluation of the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program's sessions in the program year 2012-13.

- **Program participation – 86.8% of participants indicated involvement in 75% or more of the program sessions of the program during the year, while another 9% of participants indicated involvement in 51% to 75% of the program sessions.** This is a very high rate of participation and retention in a parent education program involving parents and children.
- **General value of the program** - Participants expressed very positive feelings about the general value of the program, with **86% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them.** Among participants in the 2012-13 program, 85% said the handouts and learning activities were very useful to them. Finally, all of them agreed that the information was presented well and they were treated respectfully, with those who strongly agreed they were treated well at 86% among all participants.
- **General impacts of program participation** - Among participants, **62% indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, 58%**

noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much, 60% felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and 53% said it increased their parenting skills a lot or very much. Additionally, 84% felt it changed their parenting behavior at least somewhat, and 87% indicated that it influenced their relationship with their child positively.

- **Program value versus other information sources** - The results from the 2012-13 session of the program indicate that participants rated the school (3.74), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.71), and parents with children of a similar age (3.64) as the most useful sources of information for them on parenting and preparing their child for other school. However, **the Gearing Up for Kindergarten class and materials were rated higher than all other sources with a mean score of 4.05, indicating that participants felt the class was more useful to them regarding parenting and school readiness than any other information source assessed. Participants rated the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program substantially higher than any other information source assessed.**
- **Increases in children's school readiness as described by parents** - Among 19 indicators of school readiness assessed by parents regarding their children, **significant differences were measured on 15 of the 19 indicators between fall 2012 and spring 2013. This means that 79 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. In analyzing all increases, the findings suggest growth in five primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (knowing the alphabet and numbers, etc.); (4) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities; and (5) ability to manage emotions and adapt in a new environment.**
- **School knowledge of parents and children** - For both parents and children, **indicators of school knowledge showed significant increases in preparation and knowledge for the school experience. For pre-kindergarten children, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased by 13%, those who met a kindergarten teacher at their prospective school increased 19%, and those who met peers they will be with in kindergarten increased 11%. For parents, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased 12%, and those who had met a kindergarten teacher at their child's prospective school increased 13%.**
- **Children's comfort and familiarity with school** - For children in the program, among 4 indicators of comfort level and familiarity with school, **significant differences were measured on all 4 indicators between fall 2012 and spring 2013. Findings showed that children became more familiar with kindergarten routines and expectations, more comfortable with the school environment, and more excited about beginning school.**
- **Increases in children's school readiness as described by teachers** - Among 27 indicators of school readiness rated by teachers on a scale of 1 to 3 indicating improvement, a **significant percentage of children showed improvement on each of the 27 indicators. In analyzing all significant increases in the findings, the findings suggest growth in five primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills and knowledge regarding language and**

literacy; (4) development of specific pre-academic skills and knowledge regarding math and science; and (5) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities.

- **Child social and emotional development** - On two measures of child social and emotional development completed by parents, **significant differences were measured on all 12 indicators. This finding indicates that parents identify significant progress in areas of social and emotional development in their pre-kindergarten children participating in the program.**
- **Parent-child reading interactions** – Parents indicated significant changes on a variety of parent-child reading interactions during the program. Areas of reading interaction that showed significant improvement were **parents became more likely to go to the library with their child, they were more likely to discuss contents of a book with their children, they read more often with children, and they observed their child interacting with books more often. All of these items are important because they are actions that serve to facilitate a positive literacy environment for children in the home.**
- **Qualitative feedback on outcomes for parents in the program** – Parents who participated in the program shared a variety of comments that highlighted positive impacts in three areas:
 - *More Time and Active Involvement with Children*
 - I talk with my child more and spend more time playing with her even when I am very busy.
 - I play with my daughter while teaching her and helping her learn through activities learned in “Gearing Up” sessions.
 - I work during the day and it has been very nice to have time with my son and interact with his new teachers and expectations for kindergarten.
 - We’ve decided on specific time for doing learning games, projects, puzzles, and computer activities each day of the week.
 - *Improved Parenting Efforts in Specific Areas*
 - We are working hard on letter recognition (upper and lower case), matching the letter sound with a word beginning with the same sound.
 - I am working to tailor my parenting and child’s involvement in activities more closely to her temperament instead of rushing her into things that she is not comfortable doing.
 - I am much more calm and patient with my son when he is misbehaving. I discipline him differently with more explanation.
 - We are taking more time to read and practice new skills.
 - *Increased Awareness of Child’s Specific Needs*
 - I have a better understanding of what my child should come to kindergarten knowing and leave knowing.
 - I like the emphasis on reading with kids and the importance of making sure kids are ready to start school.
 - This class has changed the way we read stories, involving the kids with the story and making sure they understand and re-tell the story. Also, since we did the learning styles lesson I have been paying more attention to my child’s learning needs.

- **Qualitative feedback on outcomes children in the program** – Parents who participated in the program shared a variety of comments that highlighted positive benefits for children in three areas:
 - ***Increased Social Confidence and Positive Peer Interactions***
 - I think the social interaction helped him. The first night he was clinging very badly to me. By the last night he was so comfortable with the other kids, teachers and the school environment.
 - My child made friends for the first time, learned how to leave me and spend time with others, and learned about sharing and teamwork.
 - Her confidence and readiness has increased. She went from being anxious about kindergarten to excitement – very fun to watch that progression.
 - ***Increased Pre-Academic Skills in Reading, Math and Other Subjects***
 - He enjoyed the center activities as well as large group activities. He is more aware of letters, numbers, parts of a book, and handwriting.
 - He has a greater variety of knowledge because of the hands on materials and science experiments.
 - She is excited about kindergarten. She loves reading and finding how to spell words.
 - ***Greater Awareness and Comfort with School Routines and Expectations***
 - My child benefitted by meeting future classmates, getting used to his future school, and learning some of the rules and procedures for next year. He also met both kindergarten teachers, which will benefit him next year. He speaks very enthusiastically about kindergarten.
 - The opportunity for my child to familiarize himself with his future classrooms, teachers, classmates, and roles and procedures in kindergarten was valuable.

The findings from the assessment process concerning changes in parenting and in children’s social, emotional, cognitive, and practical abilities related to school readiness show that many changes are occurring for children and families enrolled in the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program. Many significant changes are occurring that strengthen parental knowledge and practices and move children toward greater school readiness. These findings indicate that the program has a number of positive impacts on children and their school readiness, and that it is making a strong contribution to the well-being of children, families and schools in North Dakota.

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The academic and social expectations for children entering kindergarten today are more intensive than in previous generations. In order to aid their children in gaining knowledge and self-confidence, parents need to be made aware of and given supportive tools to prepare their children for kindergarten. Parents are a child's first and best teachers, and many parents need and want support in their role of preparing their children for success in school. *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* provides support by improving access to information, providing early learning activities and parent education classes, and partnering with organizations that work with young children and their families to ensure school readiness.

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Curriculum Development and Description

The *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program provides families with an intensive educational experience that combines early learning activities for pre-kindergarten children with parent education opportunities for adults. The curriculum has been piloted and refined over a seven-year period to develop a high-quality educational program. The Early Learning portion of the curriculum consists of a flexible, adaptive set of parent-child learning and activity sessions. The Parent Education curriculum consists of a series of structured educational sessions that focus on child development, school readiness, and healthy parenting.

The Early Learning curriculum centers on learning and activity sessions for parents and children. Parents and children participate in 45-minute sessions at different learning stations with activities that are designed to address knowledge and skills in math, science, reading/literacy, sensory awareness, motor ability, imagination, and social-emotional ability. Parents and children then spend 10 to 15 minutes in a preschool-style "circle time" for reading. Children then spend the remainder of the session in additional early learning activities that are planned by the program facilitators using the curriculum guide. The curriculum for the early learning activities and parent-child take-home activities was developed by a team of experienced early childhood educators, parent educators, and kindergarten teachers in North Dakota. Each site typically has two contracted facilitators for the child and parent sessions, as well as a classroom assistant, who are providing training and support in the program.

The Parent Education curriculum consists of 16 lesson modules designed to be adapted to the program model used for any specific site using the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program. The most common program models thus far have been delivery of the program in two 8-session split semesters (fall and spring sessions), a single 10-session program, or two split 5-session programs (fall and spring sessions). Individual sites may also offer modified program models based on their situation and needs. Parent education lesson modules were originally adapted from the

research-based curriculum *Bright Beginnings for Young Children*, developed by Dr. Sean Brotherson of the NDSU Extension Service, and other available parent education topics. Also, parent/child take-home activities and learning handouts were written or adapted by Parents as Teachers, Even Start, or other supporting organizations. Learning topics for the 16 lesson modules in the parent education curriculum include: (1) Orientation and What to Expect in Kindergarten; (2) Parenting Styles; (3) Brain Development in Infancy and Early Childhood; (4) Raising a Reader & Early Literacy; (5) Defining Discipline: Nurturance and Prevention; (6) Defining Discipline: Guidance and Consequences; (7) Developing Responsibility and Independence!; (8) The Importance of Good-Quality Sleep; (9) Learning Styles and School Readiness; (10) Children and Temperament; (11) Early Literacy and Math Skills; (12) Social & Emotional Development; (13) Screen Time vs. Real Life; (14) Feeding Healthy Habits - Children and Nutrition; (15) Safety Always; and (16) A Parent's Role in School Success. Objectives for each lesson module in the series are outlined below.

Session Objectives

Session 1 - Orientation & What to Expect in Kindergarten

- Parents and children will meet and interact with other parents and children.
- Parents and children will understand ground rules.
- Parents will gain an understanding of the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program.

Session 2 - Parenting Styles

- Parents will understand parenting styles, parenting style differences, and the effects of parenting styles on children and their behavior.

Session 3 - Brain Development in Infancy and Early Childhood

- Parents will gain a basic understanding about brain development in young children.
- Parents will recognize their role in their child's brain development and lifelong success.

Session 4 - Raising a Reader & Early Literacy

- Parents will understand the importance of reading to their kids.
- Parents will learn effective ways to encourage early literacy and reading in their kids.

Session 5 – Defining Discipline: Nurturance and Prevention

- Parents will understand nurturance and ways to build positive relationships with children.
- Parents will identify parenting difficulties and ways to prevent them with children.

Session 6 – Defining Discipline: Guidance and Consequences

- Parents will recognize that it is normal for children to test limits.
- Parents will understand effective guidance tools and how they work with nurturance, prevention, and consequences.
- Parents will develop skills for positive discipline.

Session 7 - Developing Responsibility and Independence!

- Parents will understand the importance of their child being able to do things for themselves like dressing, using the restroom, and caring for belongings.
- Parents will understand their role in developing responsibility in their children and some techniques to use.

Session 8 – The Importance of Good-Quality Sleep

- Parents will understand the link between their child’s behavior and missing sleep.
- Parents will recognize and correct factors occurring throughout the day and evening that interfere with their child’s sleep.
- Parents will utilize information about their child to minimize sleep difficulties and carry out effective bedtime routines.

Session 9 – Learning Styles and School Readiness

- Parents will understand more about their own and their child’s learning style.
- Parents will discuss things to consider when contemplating school readiness.

Session 10 - Children and Temperament

- Parents will learn the meaning of temperament and the importance of understanding it.
- Parents will understand that their child’s behavior is affected by their temperament.
- Parents will learn techniques in dealing with their child’s specific temperament.

Session 11 – Early Literacy and Math Skills

- Parents will understand the value engaging children in “everyday” learning activities.
- Parents will learn new and exciting ways to encourage math skills in their children.

Session 12 – Social & Emotional Development

- Parents will understand typical social and emotional development in young children and its importance to their growth and well-being.

Session 13 – Screen Time vs. Real Life

- Parents will be able to evaluate their family screen practices and the effects on their children.
- Parents will be able to help their children find other activities besides television or computer and limit media exposure.

Session 14 – Feeding Healthy Habits - Children and Nutrition

- Parents will understand their role in feeding a well-nourished child.
- Parents will understand ways to encourage their child toward healthy nutrition and fitness.

Session 15 – Safety Always

- Parents will evaluate their current safety practices in the home
- Parents will understand the importance of booster seats, safe playgrounds and equipment, and bike helmet safety.

Session 16 – A Parent’s Role in School Success

- Parents will understand their role in their child’s education and success in school.
- Parents will learn effective techniques for getting involved in their child’s school and approaching concerns.
- Parents will gain ideas for encouraging success at school.

Program Description

Gearing Up for Kindergarten

Gearing Up for Kindergarten is a prevention-focused parent and family education program designed to facilitate child development and school readiness. The program focuses on engaging families with a child entering kindergarten in the next 1-2 years. The key building blocks and objectives of the program are:

- ***School Readiness for Children Entering Kindergarten***
- ***Parent Education***
- ***Early Awareness and Intervention***
- ***Parent Involvement with Children's Learning & School***
- ***Building Home-School-Community Partnerships***

The program was developed by the NDSU Extension Service at North Dakota State University and the Region V Parent Resource Center (NDSU Extension Service) in Fargo, ND, in collaboration with Fargo, West Fargo, and Northern Cass Public Schools; and SENDCAA Head Start. Program updates have been guided by the NDSU Extension Service program team. Funding for the program development and original implementation in Cass County, ND came from the United Way of Cass-Clay. Significant funding from the North Dakota State Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) and other sources for additional sites began in 2007-08. Funding to pilot increased statewide implementation of the program came from the North Dakota State Legislature beginning in 2011-12.

The goals of the program are:

- Children participating in Countdown to Kindergarten will show significant progress in being prepared to be successful in cognitive, social, emotional and physical domains as they enter kindergarten.
- Parents will become more active in their child's development prior to entering kindergarten.
- Parents will increase their knowledge of child development, school readiness, and healthy parenting.
- Parents will increase their intent to be involved in their child's schooling and build linkages with the school system.

Family Recruitment and Program Sites

Recruitment brochures designed to inform families about the program were developed and distributed through a variety of cooperating agencies, including Head Start, Public Schools, Child Care Resource & Referral agencies, Social Services, WIC, public libraries, and child care settings. News releases were published in local newspapers and Parent Resource Center newsletters. Local schools and school districts spearheaded family recruitment in their specific locations.

Program sites are encouraged to facilitate recruitment of participant families more likely to need assistance with preparing children for school achievement (new immigrant families, economically challenged families, etc.). In 2012-2013 the program operated at 64 sites with approximately 870 families enrolled. These sites were located in 48 separate North Dakota communities.

Small Communities (pop. 2000 or less)

- Abercrombie, ND (southeast)
 - Richland Elementary School
- Beach, ND (southwest)
 - Lincoln Elementary School
- Bowman, ND (southwest)
 - Roosevelt Public School
- Buffalo, ND & Tower City, ND (east)
 - Maple Valley Elementary School
- Cando, ND (northeast)
 - North Star Elementary School
- Cooperstown, ND (northeast)
 - Griggs County Central Public School
- Crosby, ND (northwest)
 - Divide County Elementary School
- Davenport & Kindred, ND (southeast)
 - Davenport Elementary School
- Dunseith, ND (north central)
 - Dunseith Elementary School
- Elgin, ND (southwest)
 - Elgin-New Leipzig Public School
- Ellendale, ND (southeast)
 - Ellendale Public School
- Enderlin, ND (southeast)
 - Enderlin Area School
- Fairmount, ND (southeast)
 - Fairmount Public School
- Fort Yates, ND (south central)
 - Standing Rock Community Elementary School
- Garrison, ND (central)
 - Bob Callies Elementary School
- Glenburn, ND (north central)
 - Glenburn Public School
- Hankinson, ND (southeast)
 - Hankinson Public School
- Hebron, ND & Glen Ullin, ND (southwest)
 - Hebron Public School
- Hunter, ND (southeast)
 - Northern Cass Elementary School
- Lakota, ND (northeast)
 - Lakota Public School
- Langdon, ND (northeast)
 - Langdon Public School
- Leeds, ND (northeast)
 - Leeds Public School
- Mayville, ND (east)
 - May-Port-C-G Public School

- Milnor, ND (southeast)
 - Milnor Public School
- Minto, ND (northeast)
 - Minto Public School District
- Mott, ND (southwest)
 - Mott-Regent Elementary School
- New Salem, ND (west central)
 - Prairie View Elementary School
- Northwood, ND (northeast)
 - Northwood Public School
- Park River, ND (northeast)
 - Park River Public School
- Ray, ND (northwest)
 - Ray Elementary School
- Thompson, ND (northeast)
 - Thompson Elementary School
- Washburn, ND (central)
 - Washburn Public School

Mid-Sized Communities (pop. 2000 to 10,000)

- Carrington, ND (east central)
 - Carrington Elementary School
- Casselton, ND (east)
 - Central Cass Elementary School
- Hazen, ND (west central)
 - Hazen Public School
- Lisbon, ND (southeast)
 - Lisbon Public School
- Oakes, ND (south central)
 - Oakes Elementary School
- Rugby, ND (north central)
 - Rugby Ely Elementary School
- Wahpeton, ND (southeast)
 - Zimmerman Elementary School

Large Communities (pop. 10,000 or greater)

- Bismarck, ND (central)
 - BECEP Head Start
- Dickinson, ND (southwest)
 - Heart River Elementary School
- Fargo, ND (east)
 - Jefferson Elementary School
 - Kennedy Elementary School
 - Lincoln Elementary School
 - Madison Elementary School
 - McKinley Elementary School

- Fargo, ND (east) (continued)
 - Nokomis Child Care Center I
 - Nokomis Child Care Center II
 - Oak Grove Lutheran Elementary
- Grand Forks, ND (northeast)
 - Air Force Base at Eielson
 - Century Elementary School
 - Immanuel Christian Children's Center
 - Lewis & Clark Elementary School
- Jamestown, ND (southeast)
 - Gussner Elementary School
- Mandan, ND (central)
 - Fort Lincoln Elementary School
 - Mary Stark Elementary School
- Minot, ND (north central)
 - Burlington-Des Lacs Elementary School
 - Dakota Elementary School, Minot Air Force Base
 - Roosevelt Elementary School
 - Sunnyside Elementary School
 - Surrey Elementary School
- West Fargo, ND (east)
 - West Fargo Kindergarten Center – Loedoen
 - West Fargo Kindergarten Center – Osgood
- Williston, ND (west)
 - Williston Public School District #1

Program Implementation

Participants were involved in one of several primary program models used to implement the program. They typically attended either two 8-week family education sessions, one in the fall of 2012 and one in the spring of 2013, two 5-week family education sessions (fall and spring), or a 10-week session in spring 2013. The hour and a half sessions begin with 45 minutes of parent-child interaction activities focused on math, reading, sensory, science, art and imaginary play. The parents then separate for parent education (see list of topics). The children, with an early childhood education facilitator and classroom assistant, have circle time and other early learning activities. The child activities focus on getting along with others, listening, taking turns, responsibility, and cognitive and literacy skills. The families are able to check out a library book that they return. On-site child care and refreshments were offered depending on the site.

Program Participation

During the 2012-2013 year of operation in the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program in North Dakota, pre-kindergarten children and their families participated at 64 sites throughout the state. Support for the program was funded by the ND State Legislature, as well as local support from schools and other organizations. This section of the report provides a brief summary of program participation at the respective program sites across the state of North Dakota in the 2012-2013 year, as well as the type of program model each site implemented. It should be noted that the information included in this report only details limited information on sites that may have operated on their own initiative without involvement in the NDSU evaluation project. Programs that participated in the evaluation process with NDSU are highlighted by an asterisk (*).

Program Type

Program Type	Number of Sites	Percentage of Participants
Split Session – 16 weeks (8 weeks/fall, 8 weeks/spring)	10	15.9%
Continuous Session – 16 weeks	1	2.1%
Split Session – 10 weeks (5 weeks/fall, 5 weeks/spring)	16	26.3%
Short Session – 10 weeks (spring)	37	55.7%

Final Program Participation Summary – Gearing Up for Kindergarten in ND (2012-2013)

Communities and Program Models

- Total Number of ND Communities – 48
 - Small Communities (pop. 2000 or less) – 32
 - Mid-Sized Communities (pop. 2000 to 10,000) – 7
 - Large Communities (pop. 10,000 or greater) – 9
- Total Number of GUK Sites in ND – 64
- Total Number of Short Session Programs (5-10 week sessions in spring) – 47
- Total Number of Split – Short Session Programs (5 weeks fall/5 weeks spring) – 22
- Total Number of Split – Long Session Programs (8 weeks fall/8 weeks spring) – 17

Program Funding (based on available data)

- Sites with Gearing Up for Kindergarten State Funding (state) – 64 (All)
- Sites with Title I funding (state/federal) – 8 sites
- Sites with Local School Funding (district/school) – 32 sites
- Sites with United Way funding (local) – 10 sites
- Sites with Other – Community funding – 8 sites
- Sites with Other – Grant funding – 2 sites

Families Served

- Number of Families in Full (Split) Sessions (16 Weeks)
 - Number of Families Total – 158
- Number of Families in Full (Split) Sessions (10 Weeks)
 - Number of Families Total – 228
- Number of Families in Spring (Short or 5-10 week) Sessions – 484

- Total Families Served – 870

Evaluation Project

- Number of Sites Participating in Project Evaluation – 64 sites

Map of 2012-13 North Dakota Sites for Gearing Up for Kindergarten

Gearing Up for Kindergarten Sites 2011-2013

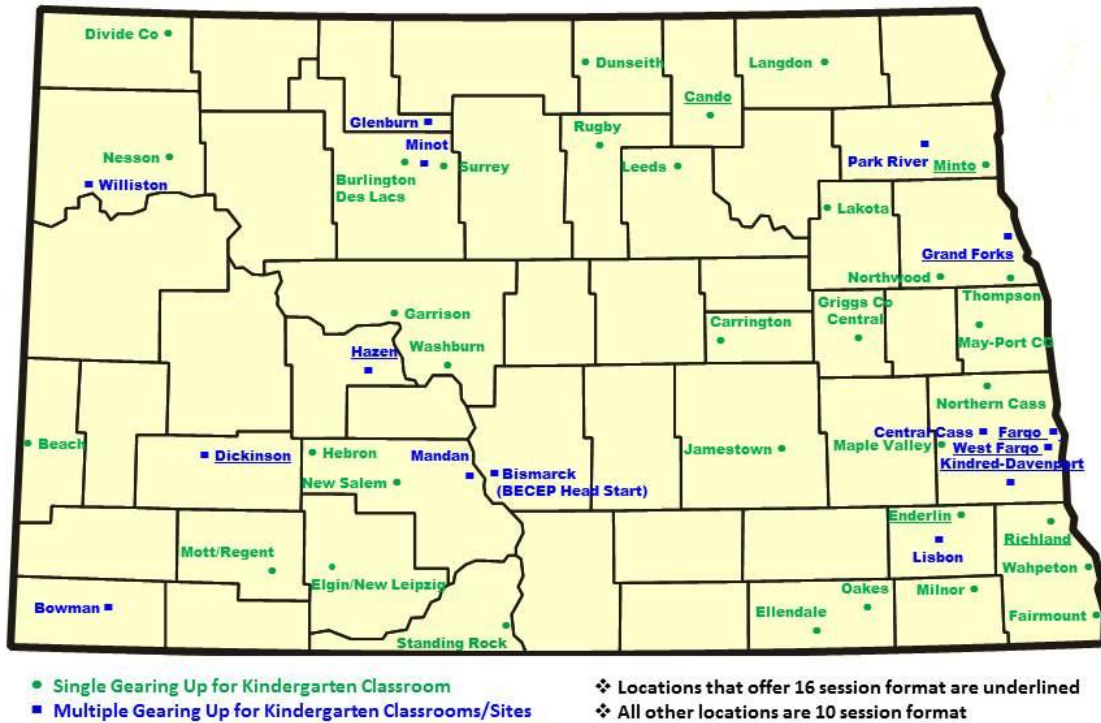


Chart of North Dakota Sites Served by Gearing Up for Kindergarten

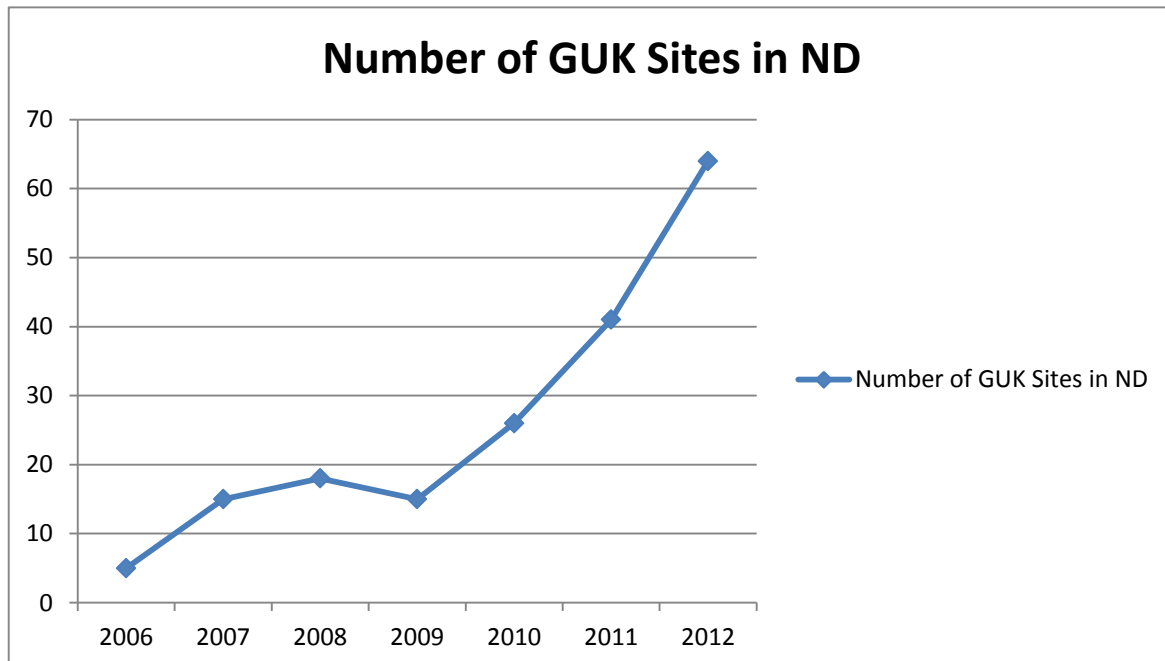
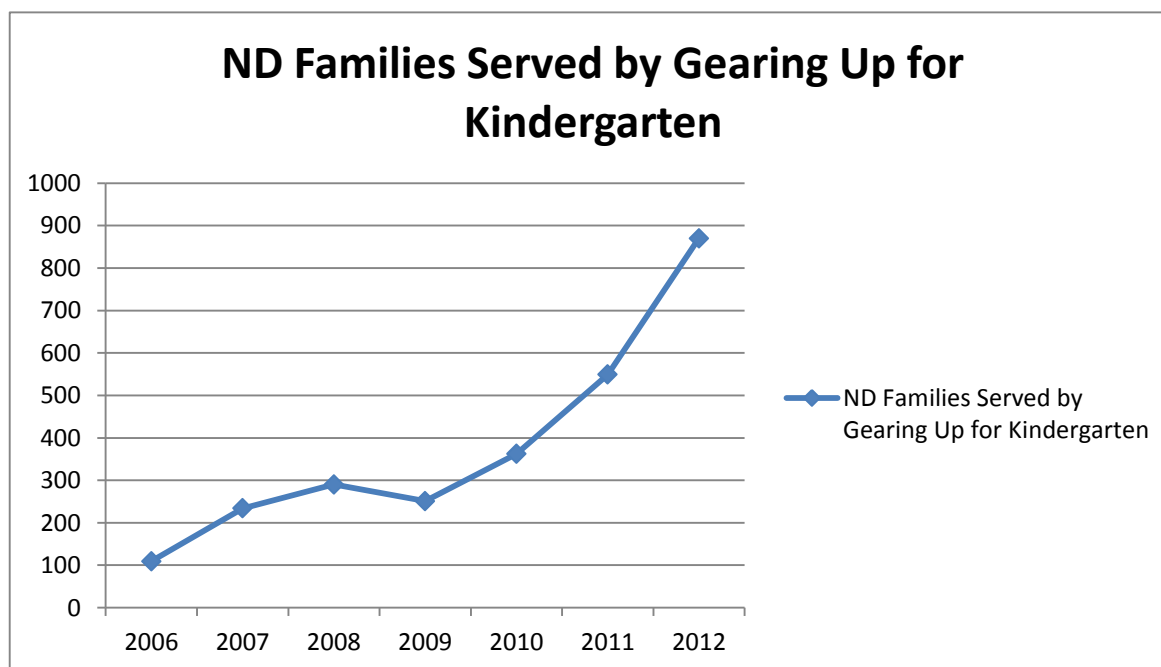


Chart of North Dakota Families Served by Gearing Up for Kindergarten



The number of families with children entering kindergarten in North Dakota that have been served by the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program has steadily increased. In the inaugural year of the program in 2006-07, 109 families in Cass County were served by the program. There were 234 families served in 2007-08, 290 families in 2008-09, and 251 families in 2009-10. The 2010-11 year saw a substantial increase in families involved in Gearing Up for Kindergarten with 362 families across North Dakota participating in the program. The first year of partnership funding with the ND state legislature in 2011-12 continued to accelerate growth and 549 North Dakota families participated in Gearing Up for Kindergarten with their children. Finally, the second year of partnership funding provided by the ND state legislature in 2012-13 fostered participation of 870 families statewide in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program.

The average yearly kindergarten enrollment in North Dakota public schools over the last decade has been nearly 7,000 children a year. That number has increased slightly over the past two years. A total number of 8,251 children were enrolled in public school kindergarten programs in North Dakota in the 2011-12 school year, and a total number of 8,575 children were enrolled in public school kindergarten programs in 2012-13. Based on these numbers, it is likely that the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program reached about 4.5% of incoming kindergarten children for the 2011-12 school year (served during the 2010-11 school year). The program's growth over the past two years suggests that the program then reached about 6.5% of incoming kindergarten children for the 2012-13 school year, and between 10 and 11 percent of incoming students for the 2013-14 school year. These numbers indicate a significant step forward in providing a systematic approach to helping families focus on education, family involvement and school readiness.

Evaluation Strategies for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten Project

A variety of evaluation strategies are being used to assess progress in meeting the program's objectives and the development of children and families who participate. This project report for 2012-2013 (7th year of the program) provides results gathered from the entire year of the program's operation in fall 2012 and spring 2013. These results were compiled using feedback gathered from program participants through several different evaluation tools. These tools are briefly summarized below. The project report is divided into sections presenting results derived from each aspect of the evaluation process. It should be noted that this report summarizes key aspects of the data available for analysis, while further ongoing studies and analysis continue to be conducted.

Not all program sites were involved in the evaluation process and so data reported here is limited, except for descriptive information, to those sites that conducted evaluations in collaboration with NDSU. Evaluation instruments were developed by the NDSU Extension Service with consultation from faculty in the Department of Child Development and Family Science at NDSU.

Overall Program Evaluation – Pre and Post Program Forms

The first aspect of the evaluation process for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project was accomplished by gathering participant information through using a traditional pre and post-program survey. Participants completed a brief parent survey that focused on program perceptions and impacts. This brief survey tool provides information on basic demographics of program participants, parent perceptions of the general value and impacts of the program, their perceptions on the value of specific topics in the program, and perceived impacts of the program on parent participants. This survey was offered to parents at the beginning and end of the program. The findings are presented for all program models.

Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness (PPASR)

A second aspect of the evaluation process for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project focused on gathering parent perceptions of their child's level of performance on a variety of indicators of school readiness. This evaluation tool was developed specifically for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project, and is titled the Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness. Children were rated on a 5-point scale by their parents in five key areas of development related to school readiness. Additionally, parents were asked to rate themselves on a number of key parenting practices related to preparing children for school. On the survey, 19 items focused on children's school readiness and 10 items on parenting practices. Additionally, parents completed 7 items about their child and 7 items about themselves that focused on school knowledge and familiarity. Parents also completed an 8-item parent-child reading interaction measure. Finally, parents completed a 10-item assessment of their parenting knowledge and beliefs and also a 3-item measure of their beliefs about school readiness. Parents were asked to complete this assessment at the beginning of the program and also at the end of the program. This approach allows for comparison of parent perceptions of a child's readiness in key areas over time that may be affected by program participation.

Teacher Assessment of School Readiness, Teacher Rating Scale (TASR)

A third aspect of the evaluation process for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project focused on teacher ratings of a child's school readiness in key areas. The evaluation tool selected for this was the School Entry Profile, which we re-titled the Teacher Assessment of School Readiness (TASR), which is a highly regarded measure that allows children to be evaluated regarding their school readiness in several domains with key indicators. This instrument was added to the

evaluation process based on participant and facilitator feedback from the first 2 years. For the 2012-13 program year, a modified short version of the TASR instrument was used for the first time.

Teachers were asked to complete the assessment tool once for each child, completing the assessment at the end of the program after they had come to know the child. The assessment allowed teachers to provide a rating of whether the child was proficient on specific indicators of school readiness at both the beginning and end of the program. This process of completing two ratings for each child allows for comparison of a child's scores over a range of time and also from the teacher's perspective. Thus, the tool allows teachers to provide feedback on a child that enables them to:

- Highlight areas of positive growth and development in a child related to school readiness
- Identify potential areas of perceived concern regarding a child's development, learning or behavior
- Assess a child's perceived development and behavior in relation to established domains of development important to early learning and school readiness

Family Information Form (FIF)

A fourth dimension of the evaluation process focused on collecting information from parents on various aspects of social and emotional development. This instrument consists of well-developed and research-based measures and was instituted to more closely examine parent involvement and other issues among participants in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Parents were asked to complete this assessment form twice, once at the start of the program and again at the end of the program. Filling out the assessment twice allows for a comparison of the parent's perceptions over time both prior to and following participation in the program.

Open-Ended Responses

Parents also responded to open-ended feedback questions on the feedback form that were analyzed for thematic responses.

I. Overall Program Evaluation Results for Gearing Up for Kindergarten

Basic Characteristics of Program Participants

A total sample of 630 participants from 61 of the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program sites completed the pre-program and post-program evaluation survey in the program year for 2012-13. Selected findings from participants in all three program types have been included in the analysis and are presented in both combined and separate formats. Among respondents there were 349 from short 10-session sites (72.1% response rate), 169 from split 10-session sites (73.8% response rate), and 112 from split or continuous 16-session sites (71.8% response rate). The combined response rate for the three program types among sites that participated in the program evaluation was 72.4%.

Demographic characteristics of participants are reported here. Selected demographic characteristics of individuals participating in the program in 2012-13 who completed the survey are listed below.

- **Gender** – 83.9% women, 16.1% men
- **Age** – Average of 33.6 years; parents ranged in age from 21 to 61 years of age
- **Number of children** – Average of 2.44 children per parent
- **Location** – 75.5% live in an urban setting; 24.5% in a rural or farm/ranch setting (10.6%)
- **Family status** – Married (82.5%); Single (never married) (7.5%); remarried (1.2%); separated/divorced (4.9%); cohabiting (3.7%); widowed (0.2%)
- **Employment status** – Full-time employment (58.9%); employed 26-39 hours a week (10.8%); employed less than 25 hours a week (7%); seeking employment (1.2%); not seeking outside employment (17.4%); other (4.7%)
- **Education level** – High school/GED or less (16.5%); some college (18.5%); 2-year college degree (20.5%); 4-year college degree (36%); master's degree or higher (8.5%)
- **Income level** – Under \$15,000/yr. (4.9%); \$15,000 to \$25,000/yr. (8.4%); \$25,000 to \$40,000/yr. (17.8%); \$40,000 to \$60,000/yr. (20.6%); Over \$60,000/yr. (38.9%); No information provided (9.3%)
- **Racial or ethnic background** – Caucasian (91.7%); Native American (3.5%); African American (0.7%); Asian (1%); Hispanic (2%); other (1.2%)
- **First child to enter kindergarten** – 48.8% yes; 51.2% no
- **Child care** – No child care (18.9%); 6 hrs/wk or less (8.4%); 6-12 hrs/wk (8.3%); 12-20 hrs/wk (11%); 20 hrs/wk or more (53.4%)
- **Eligibility for food stamps** – 7.1% yes; 92.9% no
- **Gender of participating child** – 50.3% male, 49.7% female
- **Program participation** – 33.4% of participants indicated attending all program sessions, while 53.4% of participants were involved in 75% or more of the program sessions during the year (a total of 86.8%). Also, 9% indicated involvement in 51% to 75% of class sessions.

Overall Value of the Program – All Program Models

Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions about their perceptions of the program. The tables below report participant feedback regarding the overall program, specific impacts of the program, the value of specific topics addressed, and value of the program compared to other sources of information. In each table, findings are included to each question for each model of the program utilized.

As necessary, tables have been designed to include profiles of participant responses from each model of the program. However, where possible the responses for each program type have been

included in the same table, and the responses are marked as to whether they indicate the findings for Split session – 16 week, Split session – 10 week, or Short session – 10 week programs. The first table, Table 1, highlights responses of participants in general to the program and its value.

In general, the combined responses from all program types are very similar to the participant responses for specific program models. To illustrate this pattern, the combined total responses to these same questions as compared to the responses for each specific program type are included below in Table 1. Hereafter, findings are presented for all program types together rather than by specific program type, unless there are specific reasons to highlight a variation in findings.

Table 1: Comparison Table of General Value of GUK Programs (2012-13)

Question	Program Type	Not Useful	Slightly Useful	Some what Useful	Very Useful	Extremely Useful
Overall value of the program to me:	All Combined	0.3%	2.1%	11.9%	44.7%	41%
	16-week model	--	1.2%	14.1%	38.8%	45.9%
	10-week split	--	1.8%	11.4%	49.7%	37.1%
	10-week short	0.6%	2.3%	11.7%	43.8%	41.5%
Handouts and activities provided to me in this program were:	All Combined	--	2.9%	12.3%	46%	38.9%
	16-week model	--	3.5%	15.3%	41.2%	40%
	10-week split	--	3%	12%	52.1%	32.9%
	10-week short	--	2.9%	11.7%	44.7%	40.7%
		NA	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Information presented in a clear and helpful manner:	All Combined	--	--	1%	32.6%	66.4%
	16-week model	--	--	--	32.9%	67.1%
	10-week split	--	--	--	35.9%	64.1%
	10-week short	--	--	1.7%	30.9%	67.3%
I was treated in a respectful manner:	All Combined	--	0.2%	--	14.2%	85.8%
	16-week model	--	1.2%	--	14.1%	84.7%
	10-week split	--	--	--	14.4%	85.6%
	10-week short	--	--	--	14.6%	85.4%

Participants expressed positive feelings about the program thus far, with 86% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them. Among participants in the 2012-13 program, 85% said the handouts and learning activities were very useful to them. Finally, all of them agreed that the information was presented well and they were treated respectfully, with those who strongly agreed they were treated well at 86% among all participants. There were slight variations in the numbers reported by program type but not enough to suggest substantial differences.

Impacts of Program Participation

Parents described positive impacts as a result of participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. The set of evaluation questions reported here were intended to assess how parents felt about the general impact of the program on their overall parenting capacity and knowledge as parents. A detailed frequency analysis of the findings is shared in Table 2 below.

The average mean scores regarding how the program impacted participants in each of these areas were given on a scale between 1 and 5, with higher scores indicating a more positive impact of the program (scale of 1 = not at all to 5 = very much). For parents who completed the overall program evaluation in 2012-13, they responded as follows: (1) increased knowledge of child development (3.71); (2) increased knowledge of healthy parenting (3.64); (3) increased confidence in being a good parent (3.70); (4) increased parenting skills (3.58); (5) changed behavior as a parent (3.41); and (6) influenced the relationship with your child (3.60).

Table 2: General Impacts of Gearing Up for Kindergarten Program (2012-13)

Question Overall how much, if at all, did this program:	Not at All	A Little Bit	Some What	A Lot	Very Much
Increase your knowledge about child development	0.8%	6.8%	31%	43.1%	18.4%
Increase your knowledge of healthy parenting	1.9%	7.7%	32.6%	39%	18.7%
Increase your confidence in being a good parent	2.3%	6.5%	31.1%	38.7%	21.5%
Increase your skills as a parent	1.8%	9%	36.3%	34.2%	18.7%
Change your behavior as a parent	2.6%	13.9%	38.1%	29.8%	15.7%
Influence your relationship with your child	2.1%	11.3%	31.8%	33.4%	21.5%

In general, participating parents indicated very positive impacts from being involved in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. For example, **the percentage of participants indicating that the program impact was “a lot” or “very much” in a variety of areas generally held near or above 60 percent for sessions of the program across all sites.**

Among participants, 62% indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, 58% noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much, 60% felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and 53% said it increased their parenting skills a lot or very much. Additionally, 84% felt it changed their parent behavior at least somewhat, and 87% indicated that it influenced their relationship with their child positively. These overall findings indicate that impacts of the program were largely similar in varied sessions of the program that were evaluated in the 2012-13 program year, except for a few minor differences. Participants valued their experience and felt that they had gained valuable knowledge and skills as a result of their participation.

Value of Program Versus Other Sources of Information

Participants in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program were asked to rate the usefulness of various sources of information for them in learning about parenting their young child and preparing him/her to be ready for school. The information sources were rated on a scale of 1 to 5, ranging from 1=not at all useful to 5=very useful. This process for evaluating perceptions of the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program was added in 2008. It provides a clear sense of how participants rate the value of their program participation as compared to other sources of information on parenting and school readiness. A higher rating means that participants found that information source to be more highly useful to them. Participant ratings of each information source are included below in Table 3.

Table 3: Value of Specific Information Sources on Parenting and School Readiness (2012-13)

Question Please rate how useful each of the following sources of information has been for you on parenting and school readiness	Overall Mean Score from 1 (not useful) to 5 (very useful)
Information Source	Score
a. Your parents	3.51
b. Your child's other parent	3.53
c. Friends	3.42
d. Parents with children of a similar age	3.64
e. School	3.74
f. Preschool, Head Start or child care	3.71
g. Books, magazines or newspapers	3.26
h. Internet	3.07
i. <i>Gearing Up for Kindergarten</i> class and materials	4.05**
j. Other	--

** Highest ranking

The results from the 2012-13 session of the program indicate that participants rated the school (3.74), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.71), and parents with children of a similar age (3.64) as the most useful sources of information for them on parenting and preparing their child for other school. However, the Gearing Up for Kindergarten class and materials were rated higher than all other sources with a mean score of 4.05, indicating that participants felt the class was more useful to them regarding parenting and school readiness than any other information source assessed. The results from the program indicate that participants rate the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program substantially higher than any other information source assessed.

Perceived Impacts of Gearing Up for Kindergarten on Participants

Participants were also asked to answer questions about their specific activities as parents in a number of areas, both before and after participating in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. Parents responded to 10 questions regarding their parental practices that link with healthy parenting and school readiness. These activities by parents are linked with assisting children toward school readiness in a variety of areas.

By assessing the parents' perceptions of their activities with children both before and after the program, it is possible to gain a sense of whether the program may have an impact on them.

The scores received by parents were calculated as average scores, or mean scores, on the scale from 1 to 5. The average scores for each area of parenting from “before participation” were compared with the average scores from “after participation.” The two scores were compared statistically to measure whether there was a significant difference before and after participation in the program, and if the difference was likely to be due to the program itself rather than random chance (in this case, it is called a “paired sample T-test analysis”).

Findings are presented in Table 4 for the participants in all program models in 2012-13. Specific findings related to each particular model of the program are available from the authors.

Table 4: Perceived Impacts on Parental Practices of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2012-13 Program)

Question As a Parent, I:	Before Participation (Mean Score)	Now, After Participation (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Give my child a variety of activities and learning experiences.	3.93	4.09	.16	Yes
2. Do arts and crafts, puzzles or other hands-on activities with my child.	3.75	3.87	.12	Yes
3. Get down and actively play with my child.	3.93	4.03	.10	Yes
4. Provide my child with hands-on materials, such as crayons and paper, scissors, play dough, etc.	4.35	4.42	.07	Yes
5. Arrange for my child to play with other children his or her age.	3.67	3.75	.08	No
6. Talk with my child about how to get along with others even when they have a disagreement.	4.09	4.10	.01	No
7. Read with my child each day.	4.14	4.18	.04	No
8. Discuss contents of a book or story with my child when we read.	3.91	4.10	.19	Yes
9. Respond quickly to my child’s cues for attention (crying, questions).	4.18	4.18	.00	No
10. Discuss with my child how to handle feeling sad or upset.	4.14	4.19	.05	No

It is important to note three things in explaining this portion of the Gearing Up for Kindergarten evaluation. First, the method used with parents to get their perceptions was a traditional pre and post-program assessment of their behaviors in various aspects of parenting. Second, since the parents rate themselves it is likely that they may rate themselves higher in these parenting activities than others might rate them. In fact, parents often rate themselves so highly that it is difficult to detect any potential differences over time. Finally, the scores they use to rate themselves are on a 1 to 5 frequency scale, with answers ranging from “hardly ever” (1) to “almost always” (5). It cannot currently be said with certainty that perceived impacts of the program are due to participation in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. It can reasonably be assumed, however, that any differences measured are likely (though not certain) to occur due to participation in Gearing Up for Kindergarten.

The findings show, based on the statistical analysis, that **participants experienced significant differences in 5 of the 10 parental practices related to school readiness** as a likely result of their participation in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. There are several important points to make as a result of these findings:

- Participants noted **small to moderate changes in 5 of the 10 parental practices related to school readiness that were measured, with the changes showing positive increases in a particular parental practice** (e.g., engaging in more active play with a child).
- The findings showed significant differences in parental practices for participants before and after their participation in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. These changes were **small to moderate increases between .15 and .20 in specific parental practices, suggesting incremental improvement in key aspects of parental involvement and guidance.**
- Participants typically rated themselves quite highly already on most indicators of parenting linked to school readiness. The average beginning scores showed that most parents felt they performed most of these practices well, usually rating between “often” and “almost always” on the scale of performance. This means that most participants already perceive themselves as well-adjusted in their parenting efforts and there is minimal opportunity for change.
- The **three largest significant differences** for participants occurred in the following areas: **discussing contents of a book or story (.19), giving children a variety of learning activities (.16), and engaging in hands-on activities with children (.12).**
- The **findings suggest that Gearing Up for Kindergarten has made some progress in assisting parents and influencing them in a positive manner to behave in ways that will help their children toward school readiness and positive development.**

This set of findings from Gearing Up for Kindergarten was generated as a result of involvement in the 2012-13 session of the program at Gearing Up for Kindergarten sites in North Dakota. The findings suggest the program has positive impacts on parents who are involved and aids them in making incremental improvements in parenting practices that link to school readiness. Further research on how differing program models affect parenting practices will be valuable for understanding the program and its influence on families.

Perceived Impacts on Participant Parenting Knowledge and School Readiness Beliefs

In the 2012-13 program year, a new set of assessment questions was developed to obtain feedback from participants regarding perceived program impacts on their knowledge of child development, healthy parenting, and school readiness. A primary purpose of Gearing Up for Kindergarten is to facilitate growth in the knowledge and understanding of these topics with parents who participate in the program. Ten questions were added to the assessment process which focus on these dimensions of parent knowledge. Each question is measured on a 5-point scale and participants rate their understanding of topics from 1=not at all to 5=to a great extent. In addition, a 3-item measure of parent beliefs about school readiness was added and parents assess their confidence level in their child’s preparation and readiness for school success. These areas of knowledge are regarded as important in assisting children toward school readiness.

By assessing the parents’ perceptions of their understanding of key topic areas with regard to child development, healthy parenting, and school readiness both before and after the program, it is possible to gain a sense of whether the program may have an impact on them. The scores communicated by parents were calculated as average scores, or mean scores, on the scale from 1 to 5. The average scores for each area of knowledge from “before participation” were compared with the average scores from “after participation.” The two scores were compared statistically to measure whether there was a significant difference before and after participation in the program, and if the difference was likely to be due to the program itself rather than random chance (a “paired sample T-test analysis”).

The first set of findings in Table 5 represents the feedback with regard to parental confidence and beliefs about a child’s preparation and school readiness. Findings are presented in Table 5 for the participants in all program models in 2012-13. Specific findings related to each particular model of the program are available from the authors.

Table 5: Perceived Impacts on Parental Beliefs about School Readiness of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2012-13 Program)

Question	Before Participation (Mean Score)	Now, After Participation (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. I am confident in my child’s level of preparedness for kindergarten and success in the school setting.	3.95	4.26	.31	Yes
2. I am confident in the activities we have engaged in at home to prepare our child for school transition and success.	3.94	4.24	.30	Yes
3. I am confident in the activities my child has participated in outside the home to become prepared for school transition and success.	4.10	4.35	.25	Yes

The next set of findings presented in Table 6 focuses on perceived impacts of the program on participant understanding of child development, healthy parenting, and school readiness.

Table 6: Perceived Impacts on Parent Knowledge and Beliefs of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2012-13 Program)

Question	Before Participation (Mean Score)	Now, After Participation (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. I understand basic aspects of child development related to a young child's learning, growth and development.	3.89	4.06	.17	Yes
2. I understand social and emotional development in young children and its influence on learning and relationships.	3.94	4.12	.18	Yes
3. I understand how young children develop early reading, math and thinking skills.	3.80	4.05	.25	Yes
4. I understand parenting styles and discipline and their influence on young children.	4.06	4.21	.15	Yes
5. I understand key parenting practices that influence a young child's well-being and development.	3.97	4.18	.21	Yes
6. I understand the meaning and dimensions of school readiness.	3.89	4.11	.22	Yes
7. I understand the specific areas of knowledge and skill that my child is expected to demonstrate to be ready for school.	3.87	4.17	.30	Yes
8. I understand specific strategies I can implement in assisting my child to be prepared for entering kindergarten and achieving school success.	3.77	4.13	.36	Yes
9. I understand the key elements of a supportive home learning environment.	4.12	4.32	.20	Yes
10. I understand specific strategies for parent involvement in my child's education that can help my child to succeed in school.	3.99	4.26	.27	Yes

The evaluation findings on parental confidence and beliefs about school readiness indicate that **participants showed significant increases in confidence in all 3 of the dimensions of belief regarding a child's school readiness. Parents were more confident in their child's level of preparedness following the program, and also expressed greater confidence about activities the child had participated in both inside and outside the home to prepare for a successful school transition.** The changes indicated were moderate but significant.

In addition, the findings also show, based on the statistical analysis, that **participants experienced significant differences in all of the 10 areas of parental knowledge associated with child development, healthy parenting and school readiness.** These differences occurred as a likely result of their participation in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. There are several important points to make as a result of these findings:

- Participants noted **small to moderate changes in all of the 10 areas of parental knowledge associated with child development, healthy parenting and school readiness that were measured, with the changes showing positive increases in each area of knowledge** (e.g., understanding the skills is expected to demonstrate in being ready for school).
- The findings showed significant differences in parental knowledge for participants before and after their participation in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. These changes were **small to moderate increases between .15 and .35 in specific areas of parental knowledge, suggesting incremental improvement in key aspects of parent knowledge and beliefs related to child development, healthy parenting and school readiness.**
- Participants typically rated themselves quite highly already on most indicators of parental knowledge linked to child development, healthy parenting, and school readiness. The average beginning scores showed that most parents felt they had substantial knowledge in these areas, usually rating between “to a fair extent” and “to a significant extent” on the scale of understanding. This means that most participants already perceive themselves as quite knowledgeable in their understanding and there is limited opportunity for change.
- The **four largest significant differences** for participants occurred in the following areas: **understanding of specific strategies to assist in preparing children for kindergarten (.36), understanding of specific areas of knowledge and skills needed to be ready for school (.30), understanding of specific strategies for parent involvement in a child's education (.27), and understanding of how young children develop early reading, math and thinking skills (.25).**
- The **findings suggest that Gearing Up for Kindergarten has made some progress in assisting parents and influencing them in a positive manner to gain knowledge in ways that will help them assist their children toward school readiness and positive development.**

This set of findings from Gearing Up for Kindergarten was generated as a result of involvement in the 2012-13 year of the program at Gearing Up for Kindergarten sites in North Dakota. The findings indicate the program makes a positive difference with parents who are involved and increases both their knowledge base and confidence regarding preparation of a child for school readiness and success.

Parent-Child Reading Interactions

To assess program effects on parent-child reading interactions at home, a short measure consisting of 8 items was given to parents to complete both prior to and following the program. Parents described the frequency of interactions for each item related to early literacy and reading, including such items as going to the library with children, discussing contents of a book with children, and looking for age-appropriate books to share with children. Parents rated their frequency of reading interaction with children using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – “hardly ever” to 5 = “one or two times a day.” A higher score represents a more positive and frequent pattern of reading interaction on that item. Scores are provided in Table 7 which indicate the pre-test score, post-program score, difference score and level of significance. The findings represented here present only the information from participants in the 16-week split session program model during 2012-13.

Table 7: Parent-Child Reading Interactions – Parent Assessment

Question How often do:	Beginning of Program Fall 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. You or another family member read a book with your child(ren)?	4.44	4.47	.03	No
2. Your child(ren) ask to be read to?	4.20	4.39	.19	Yes
3. You go to the library with your child(ren)?	1.65	1.80	.15	No
4. Your child(ren) observe you reading books, magazines or other material at home?	3.91	3.84	-.07	No
5. You discuss contents of a book with your child(ren)?	3.84	4.05	.21	Yes
6. Read for a period of 15 minutes or more with your child(ren)?	4.02	4.21	.19	Yes
7. Look for age-appropriate books to give to or share with your child(ren)?	3.85	4.08	.23	Yes
8. Observe your child(ren) looking at or interacting with books?	4.29	4.52	.23	Yes

Among the 8 indicators of parent-child reading interaction, significant differences emerged for 5 of the 8 items based on the final results of the assessment. The findings showed that **parents became more likely to go to the library with their child, they were more likely to discuss contents of a book with their children, they read more often with children, and they observed their child interacting with books more often. All of these items are important because they are actions that serve to facilitate a positive literacy environment for children in the home.**

Further refinement of this measure and continuing investigation over time should provide additional insights into how Gearing Up for Kindergarten affects the experience of parent-child reading interactions in the home.

II. Parental Assessment of Children's School Readiness

Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness

One of the identified goals for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program is that participating children will show significant progress in being prepared to be successful in cognitive, social, emotional, physical and practical domains as they enter kindergarten. To get a sense of where parents perceived their children to be in regard to school readiness, a brief assessment tool was developed called the Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness (PPASR). This short survey asks parents to rate their children on a 5-point scale in five key areas of development related to school readiness (a total of 19 items). Parents are asked to rate how their child typically thinks and behaves for each item. The range of responses that parents can give in rating their children goes from 1 to 5, with 1 = "hardly ever," 2 = "once in a while," 3 = "sometimes," 4 = "often," and 5 = "almost always."

In addition, a section of evaluation was used in the process which examined both parent and child feelings and experiences related to school knowledge and familiarity. Parents were asked to assess their child's familiarity with school, peers, and routines, as well as their feelings and comfort level in varying aspects of the school-related experience. Similarly, parents rated themselves also on familiarity with school, teachers, and routines, as well as comfort level and familiarity with school personnel and routines. These questions were asked either on a "yes/no" basis or a response scale of 1 to 4, with 1 = not at all to 4 = to a great extent.

Understanding What the Current PPASR Assessment Process Shows

Several important points should be made about using the findings from this assessment tool and process to gauge children's progress.

- First, the PPASR is a developing instrument and so understanding of how well it allows parents to gauge a child's school readiness across different areas continues to emerge.
- Second, the PPASR encourages parents to think of their children's development of skills on a continuum, not as either-or categories of development. This allows for tracking a sense of progress over time.
- Third, the level of growth or change that can be tracked in a given child's development, or for a group of children, depends on where a parent rates the child in the beginning (pre-test). If parents already rate their children very highly on indicators of school readiness at the beginning (e.g., parent says the child is already at "5" on "can sort things into basic groups by color, shape, etc."), then the scale cannot reveal further growth for that child (there is no "room" left on the scale for growth).
- Fourth, it is a common characteristic for parents to rate their children highly on varying measures of development.
- Fifth, usage of a comparison group with participants in Gearing Up for Kindergarten will allow us, once the findings are complete, to assess whether a similar group of children without the program would show similar results or changes in their parental scores regarding school readiness.
- Sixth, children in their early years between ages 3 and 5 are already developing on a continuous basis, and so it is somewhat difficult to know whether changes are due to participation in the program, predictable patterns of normal growth over time, or other factors (involvement with new friends, going to child care, etc.).

So, with all of those beginning points, what does the parental assessment of school readiness allow us to know?

- We can determine at what level parents in the program area rate their children to begin with in five key areas related to school readiness. We can also assess any variation in these ratings by age of the child, education of the parent, or other potentially important factors.
- We can determine whether parental ratings show a perceived change in children's school readiness over time while participating in the program, and how great those changes are that do occur.
- We can prepare a feedback report for parents that shows their rating of a child on specific items related to school readiness, and how their rating compares to the overall ratings of children in the group (as well as the child's individual scores over time).
- We can examine whether particular categories of school readiness showed greater changes than others over time.

Participants in the PPASR Assessment

Participation in the Practical Parent Assessment of School Readiness required that parents fill out the PPASR survey twice, once in fall 2013 and once in spring 2013 during the program. Only those parents who filled out a PPASR assessment for their child at both times were included in the analysis. A total sample of 630 children was rated by parents on the PPASR in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program (this sample represents a response rate of approximately 72.4% of participating children). Demographic characteristics were similar to those previously reported.

Findings on Parental Perceptions of Children's School Readiness

The key areas of school readiness selected for assessment by parents were: (1) *Learning and Exploration* (cognitive); (2) *Friends and Social Interaction* (social); (3) *Knowing the Basics* (academic); (4) *Feelings and Families* (emotional); and (5) *Practical Knowledge and Skills* (practical). Ten tables are included below, one of which covers each dimension, and there are beginning group scores (pre-program score 2012), completing group scores (post-program score 2013), and difference scores (difference in the average group scores, or means) for each item.

The difference scores indicate progress (or lack thereof) that has occurred for children (as perceived by parents) on average in the group between participation at the beginning of the program and participation at the end of the program. The table indicates whether there is a "significant" difference between the scores, which may be due to program participation, individual growth, or other factors. The findings provided here are for the 16-week split session program, the 10-week split session program, and the 10-week continuous session program. Tables 8-12 cover the 16-week program, Tables 13-17 cover the 10-week split session program, and Tables 18-22 cover the 10-week continuous session program.

Table 8: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	3.84	4.15	.31	Yes
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	4.04	4.34	.30	Yes
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.50	3.88	.38	Yes
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.36	3.69	.33	Yes

Table 9: Friends and Social Interaction – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	3.93	4.30	.37	Yes
6. Takes turns with others.	3.73	4.13	.40	Yes
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	3.91	4.21	.30	Yes
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.70	3.95	.25	Yes
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.16	3.68	.52	Yes

Table 10: Knowing the Basics – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	4.14	4.54	.40	Yes
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	4.17	4.72	.55	Yes
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	4.10	4.45	.35	Yes
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.98	4.19	.21	Yes

Table 11: Feelings and Families – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.87	4.06	.19	No
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.66	3.84	.18	No
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.70	4.01	.31	Yes
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.80	4.03	.23	Yes

Table 12: Practical Knowledge and Skills – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
18. Can recite his or her name, parents' names and contact information (address, phone number).	2.80	3.37	.57	Yes
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.37	3.79	.42	Yes

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for **16-week split session programs** operated during the 2012-13 year on perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. A number of important points emerge as a result of these findings:

- Currently, parents of children in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely rate their children very highly on most indicators of school readiness**. This means that there is somewhat limited room for change to be indicated across specific items. For example, the average beginning score on every item (all 19 items) was in the direction of the Proficient (3 or higher) or Advanced (4 or higher) category.
- **Small to moderate gains were noted for many indicators of school readiness in children. These gains are likely due to a combination of participation in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program, normal processes of child development, and other contributing factors. Only two indicators showed limited evidence of change, and there was change but it was not enough to reach statistical significance. However, the wide-ranging evidence of growth in children's specific domains of development related to school readiness is highly encouraging and evidence of program success.**

- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on 17 of the 19 indicators between fall 2012 and spring 2013. This means that 89 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in all five of the school readiness categories.**
- These findings showed significant differences in parental perceptions of children's school readiness from the beginning of the program to the end of the program on 17 indicators. These changes included **5 small to moderate increases between .10 and .30, 9 substantive increases between .30 and .50, and 3 significant increases of .50 or higher on specific items of school readiness.**
- The **15 most significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred by order of magnitude in the following areas:
 - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.57)**
 - **Familiarity with numbers (.55)**
 - **Trying to solve problems with friends (.52)**
 - **Awareness of who to contact in times of need (.42)**
 - **Taking turns with others (.40)**
 - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.40)**
 - **Drawing and using art to express ideas or feelings (.38)**
 - **Playing cooperatively with friends (.37)**
 - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.35)**
 - **Likes to work at solving problems (.33)**
 - **Exploring the environment (.31)**
 - **Adapt to new situations (.31)**
 - **Participating in small groups (.30)**
 - **Following directions that are given (.30)**
 - **Gets along without quarreling or fighting (.25)**
- In analyzing all increases over .20 or higher (whether significant or not), **the findings suggest growth in five primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (using a pencil, knowing the alphabet and numbers, awareness of personal contact information, etc.); (4) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities; and (5) ability to manage emotions and adapt in a new environment.**
- Assessing the five domains of development related to school readiness that are examined in the evaluation process, while all domains have specific items that demonstrate change after program participation, the areas that show the greatest impact as a result of the program are: **(1) Child Learning and Exploration; (2) Positive Peer Interactions and Social Development; (3) Knowing the Basics and Pre-Academic Skills; (4) Emotional Development and Management; and (5) Practical Awareness and Self-Care Skills.**

Table 13: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	4.02	4.13	.11	No
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	4.10	4.28	.18	Yes
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.49	3.63	.14	No
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.35	3.64	.29	Yes

Table 14: Friends and Social Interaction – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	3.85	4.05	.20	Yes
6. Takes turns with others.	3.70	4.03	.33	Yes
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	3.90	4.07	.17	Yes
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.54	3.73	.19	Yes
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.28	3.54	.26	Yes

Table 15: Knowing the Basics – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	3.96	4.37	.41	Yes
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	4.13	4.50	.37	Yes
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	4.01	4.36	.35	Yes
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.83	4.13	.30	Yes

Table 16: Feelings and Families – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.68	3.83	.15	No
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.43	3.55	.12	No
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.66	3.89	.23	Yes
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.73	4.00	.27	Yes

Table 17: Practical Knowledge and Skills – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
18. Can recite his or her name, parents' names and contact information (address, phone number).	2.72	3.24	.52	Yes
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.29	3.70	.41	Yes

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for **10-week split session programs** operated during the 2012-13 year on perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. A number of important points did emerge as a result of these findings:

- Currently, parents of children in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely rate their children quite highly on most indicators of school readiness.** For example, the average beginning score on every item (all 19 items) was in the direction of the Proficient (3 or higher) or Advanced (4 or higher) category. In this program model, 15 of 19 items had a beginning average score below 4, which is the same number of items rated as the 16-week program.
- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on 15 of the 19 indicators between fall 2012 and spring 2013.** This means that 79 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in all five of the school readiness categories.

- These findings showed significant differences in parental perceptions of children's school readiness from the beginning of the program to the end of the program on 15 indicators. These changes included **9 small to moderate increases between .10 and .30, 5 substantive increases between .30 and .50, and 1 significant increase of .50 or higher on specific items of school readiness.**
- The **15 significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred by order of magnitude in the following areas:
 - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.52)**
 - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.41)**
 - **Awareness of who to contact for help (.41)**
 - **Familiarity with numbers (.37)**
 - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.35)**
 - **Taking turns with others (.33)**
 - **Creative in solving problems (.30)**
 - **Likes to work at solving problems (.29)**
 - **Shares feelings with me or other adults (.27)**
 - **Tries to solve problems with friends (.26)**
 - **Adapt to new situations (.23)**
 - **Playing cooperatively with friends (.20)**
 - **Gets along without quarreling or fighting (.19)**
 - **Participating in small groups (.18)**
 - **Following directions that are given (.17)**
- In analyzing all increases over .20 or higher (whether significant or not), **the findings suggest growth in three primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (using a pencil, knowing the alphabet and numbers, awareness of personal contact information, etc.).**
- In assessing the type of changes reported in each program model, a couple of interesting observations emerged. First, the changes in academic skills were relatively similar in both programs. Second, there were fewer changes in the two categories of Learning and Exploration or Feelings and Families (emotional development) for children in the 10-week program, while the changes were modest but consistent in these areas for the 16-week program. This suggests a longer period of participation is helpful in assisting change in these areas that are more difficult to impact immediately. Finally, other areas that showed more change in the 16-week program such as trying to solve problems with friends indicate that some areas of development require more supportive effort over time to initiate desired change in a positive direction.

The development and usage of slightly differing program models allows us to compare basic outcomes reported by parents across these different program types. The final program model results emerged from the 10-week continuous session program. These programs all operated in the spring of 2013 and so reports were resulted in a more compact time frame. It is expected that the results will be positive but not as substantial as the other program types.

Table 18: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	4.09	4.23	.14	Yes
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	4.20	4.32	.12	Yes
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.66	3.82	.16	Yes
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.56	3.69	.13	Yes

Table 19: Friends and Social Interaction – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	4.14	4.19	.05	No
6. Takes turns with others.	3.96	4.05	.09	Yes
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	4.01	4.08	.07	No
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.78	3.83	.05	No
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.54	3.70	.16	Yes

Table 20: Knowing the Basics – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	4.28	4.46	.18	Yes
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	4.48	4.67	.19	Yes
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	4.23	4.35	.12	Yes
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	4.08	4.18	.10	Yes

Table 21: Feelings and Families – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.90	3.98	.08	No
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.71	3.77	.06	No
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.88	3.96	.08	No
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	4.09	4.12	.03	No

Table 22: Practical Knowledge and Skills – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
18. Can recite his or her name, parents' names and contact information (address, phone number).	3.23	3.53	.30	Yes
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.73	3.98	.25	Yes

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for 10-week short session programs operated during the 2012-13 year on perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. A number of important points emerge as a result of these findings:

- Currently, parents of children in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely rate their children very highly on most indicators of school readiness.** This means that there is somewhat limited room for change to be indicated across specific items. For example, the average beginning score on every item (all 19 items) was in the direction of the Proficient (3 or higher) or Advanced (4 or higher) category. Only 10 of 19 items had a beginning average score below 4, and the remainder were all average beginning scores above 4.
- **Small to moderate gains were noted for some indicators of school readiness in children. These gains are likely due to a combination of participation in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program, normal processes of child development, and other contributing factors. Other indicators showed no or limited evidence of change.**

- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on 12 of the 19 indicators between the beginning and end of the program in 2013. This means that 63 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in four of the five school readiness categories.**
- These findings showed significant differences in parental perceptions of children’s school readiness from the beginning of the program to the end of the program on 12 indicators. **These changes were all small to moderate increases between .10 and .30.**
- The **10 most significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred by order of magnitude in the following areas:
 - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.30)**
 - **Awareness of who to contact for help (.25)**
 - **Familiarity with numbers (.19)**
 - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.18)**
 - **Trying to solve problems with friends (.16)**
 - **Drawing and using art to express ideas or feelings (.16)**
 - **Exploring the environment (.14)**
 - **Likes to work at solving problems (.13)**
 - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.12)**
 - **Participating in small groups (.12)**
- In analyzing the increases noted here, **the findings suggest growth in three primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (using a pencil, knowing the alphabet and numbers, awareness of personal contact information, etc.).**
- In assessing the type of changes reported for this program model, a couple of interesting observations emerged. First, the changes in academic skills were relatively similar as with other programs; however, the impacts were not as large (likely due to the more limited time period). Second, again there were few or no changes in the two categories of Learning and Exploration or Feelings and Families (emotional development) for children in this model of the 10-week program, while the changes were modest but consistent in these areas for the 16-week program. As already noted, this suggests a longer period of participation is helpful in assisting change in these areas that are more difficult to impact immediately. Finally, the magnitude of changes noted on items was significant but only about a third to half of the gains noted in the other two program models.

The findings from the assessment process concerning changes in children’s social, emotional, cognitive, and practical abilities related to school readiness show that many changes are occurring for children enrolled in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. Parents largely rate their children as already doing well in most categories, and some significant changes are occurring that move children toward greater school readiness. These findings indicate that the program likely has a number of positive impacts on children and their school readiness.

Findings on School Knowledge and Familiarity

Since parental involvement in children’s learning and children’s preparation for school are key objectives in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program, an element was added to the evaluation process in the 2008-09 year that asked parents to respond regarding their and their child’s knowledge and familiarity with school expectations, routines, and relationships.

Parents were asked to assess their child’s familiarity with school, peers, and routines, as well as their feelings and comfort level in varying aspects of the school-related experience. Similarly, parents rated themselves also on familiarity with school, teachers, and routines, as well as comfort level and familiarity with school personnel and routines. Three of these questions were asked on a “yes/no” basis and 4 questions were answered on a response scale of 1 to 4, with 1 = not at all to 4 = to a great extent. There were 7 items asked of the parent and 7 items asked regarding the parent’s perception of the child. Findings are summarized for all program models combined. The findings related to this aspect of the program evaluation are provided in Tables 23-26.

Table 23: Children in Gearing up for Kindergarten – School Knowledge (2012-13)

My child:	Beginning of Program		End of Program	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
1. Has visited the school or kindergarten classroom.	23.7%	76.3%	11%	89% (+12.7)
2. Has met a kindergarten teacher at the school he/she will attend.	37.5%	62.5%	18.7%	81.3% (+18.8)
3. Has met peers who will be in kindergarten at the same school.	22.4%	77.6%	11.9%	88.1% (+10.5)

Table 24: Parents in Gearing up for Kindergarten – School Knowledge (2012-13)

As a parent, I:	Beginning of Program		End of Program	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
1. Have visited the school or kindergarten classroom.	22.8%	77.2%	11%	89% (+11.8)
2. Have met a kindergarten teacher at the school my child will attend.	28.9%	71.1%	16.1%	83.9% (+12.8)
3. Have met other parents who have children or will have children in kindergarten.	12.5%	87.5%	7.4%	92.6% (+5.1)

Table 25: Children in Gearing Up for Kindergarten – School Comfort and Familiarity

Question My Child:	Beginning of Program 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
4. Is excited about beginning kindergarten.	3.55	3.74	.19	Yes
5. Is familiar with the routines and expectations that exist in kindergarten (raising hands, etc.).	2.92	3.27	.35	Yes
6. Is comfortable with the environment of the school setting.	3.17	3.51	.34	Yes
7. Talks positively about going to kindergarten.	3.49	3.76	.27	Yes

Table 26: Parents in Gearing Up for Kindergarten – School Comfort and Familiarity

Question As a parent, I:	Beginning of Program 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
4. Am excited about my child beginning kindergarten.	3.62	3.65	.03	No
5. Am familiar with the routines and expectations for children that exist in kindergarten.	3.61	3.73	.12	Yes
6. Have a good idea of how my child acts with peers in a group setting.	3.49	3.62	.13	Yes
7. Understand the general ability level of the average kindergartner.	3.46	3.60	.14	Yes

These four tables summarize the findings on reported changes regarding school knowledge, comfort level and familiarity for both children and parents in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Several substantial changes emerged in these findings:

- For both parents and children, **indicators of school knowledge showed significant increases in preparation and knowledge for the school experience. For pre-kindergarten children, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased by 13%, those who met a kindergarten teacher at their prospective school increased 19%, and those who met peers they will be with in kindergarten increased 11%. For parents, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased 12%, those who had met a kindergarten teacher at their child’s prospective school increased 13%, and those meeting other parents who will have children in kindergarten increased 5%.**
- For children in the program, among 4 indicators of comfort level and familiarity with school, **significant differences were measured on all 4 indicators between the beginning and end of the program in 2012-13. Findings showed that children became more familiar with**

kindergarten routines and expectations, more comfortable with the school environment, and more excited about beginning school.

- **For parents involved in Gearing Up for Kindergarten, significant differences were measured on 3 of the 4 indicators regarding comfort level and familiarity with school between the beginning and end of the program in 2012-13. Findings showed that parents became more familiar with kindergarten routines and expectations for their child, as well as more aware of their child's behavior with peers and the ability level of average kindergarten children.**

III. Teacher Assessment of Children’s School Readiness

Teacher Assessment for School Readiness

An important objective for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program is that participating children will show significant progress in being prepared to be successful in cognitive, social, emotional, physical and practical domains as they enter kindergarten. In addition to the perceptions of parents, the program evaluation for 2012-13 also included an independent evaluation by the child’s preschool facilitator/teacher in the program.

This aspect of the evaluation focused on teacher ratings of a child’s school readiness in key areas. The evaluation tool selected for this was the School Entry Profile, which we re-titled the Teacher Assessment of School Readiness (TASR), which is a highly regarded measure that allows children to be evaluated regarding their school readiness in several domains with key indicators. This instrument was added to the evaluation process based on participant and facilitator feedback from the first 2 years. Teachers were asked to complete the assessment tool using a retrospective approach for each child at the end of the program. This approach allows for comparison of a child’s scores over a range of time and also from the teacher’s perspective. Thus, the tool allows teachers to provide feedback on a child that enables them to:

- Highlight areas of positive growth and development in a child related to school readiness
- Identify potential areas of perceived concern regarding a child’s development, learning or behavior
- Assess a child’s perceived development and behavior in relation to established domains of development important to early learning and school readiness

The five domains assessed in the Teacher Assessment for School Readiness included (1) *Symbolic Development* (2 items – creativity, etc.), (2) *Communication* (7 items – language, literacy, etc.), (3) *Mathematical/Physical Knowledge* (6 items), (4) *Working with Others* (6 items – social skills, etc.), and (5) *Learning to Learn* (6 items – learning, emotions, etc.). The five domains and their corresponding items were rated by teachers as “proficient” or “not proficient” at the beginning and end of the program. Also, teachers noted on a 3-point scale whether participating children “got worse,” showed “no change,” or “got better” on each item.

Understanding Findings from the TASR Assessment of School Readiness

Several important points should be made about using the findings from this assessment tool and process to gauge children’s progress.

- First, the modified TASR allows trained pre-school teachers/facilitators to gauge a child’s school readiness across five different areas.
- Second, the modified TASR allows for tracking a sense of progress over time. The level of growth or change that can be tracked in a given child’s development, or for a group of children, depends on where a teacher rates the child’s proficiency in the beginning. If teachers already rate a child very highly on indicators of school readiness at the beginning, then the scale cannot reveal further growth for that child (there is no “room” left on the scale for growth).
- Third, usage of a comparison group for participants in Gearing Up for Kindergarten will allow us, once the findings are complete, to assess whether a similar group of children without the program would show similar results or changes in their scores regarding school readiness.

- Fourth, children in their early years between ages 3 and 5 are already developing on a continuous basis, and so it is somewhat difficult to know whether changes are due to participation in the program, predictable patterns of normal growth over time, or other factors (involvement with new friends, going to child care, etc.).

However, the teacher assessment of school readiness does allow us to do the following:

- We can determine at what level teachers operating the program perceive children to be at in several key areas related to school readiness. We can also assess any variation in these ratings by age of the child, gender of the child, or other potentially important factors.
- We can determine whether teacher ratings show a perceived change in children's school readiness over time while participating in the program, and how great those changes are that do occur.
- We can examine whether particular categories of school readiness showed greater changes than others over time.

Participants in the TASR Assessment

Participation in the Teacher Assessment of School Readiness required that preschool teachers/facilitators fill out the TASR survey for each child at the completion of the program. Only those children who had a TASR assessment completed by a teacher were included in the analysis. A total sample of 640 children was assessed by teachers in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program in the 2012-2013 program year.

Findings on Teacher Ratings of Children's School Readiness

The key areas of school readiness assessed by teachers were: (1) *Symbolic Development* (2 items – creativity, etc.), (2) *Communication* (7 items – language, literacy, etc.), (3) *Mathematical/Physical Knowledge* (6 items), (4) *Working with Others* (6 items – social skills, etc.), and (5) *Learning to Learn* (6 items – learning, emotions, etc.).

Five tables (Tables 27-31) are included below, each of which covers one dimension assessed on the TASR. Each table shows the percentage of the children who were deemed already proficient at the start of their enrollment in Gearing up for Kindergarten. The tables then show the percentage of non-proficient children who were rated as having improved. Some of those who got better may still not have reached proficiency by the end of the program. Thus, the table also shows the percentage of the sample who were deemed proficient by teachers at the end of their time in the program, and whether the increase in this percentage was statistically significant. Participants in all program types were included in this assessment. The scores indicate progress (or lack thereof) that has occurred for children (as perceived by early childhood facilitators in the program) in the group during the 2012-13 program year.

Table 27: Symbolic Development – Teacher School Readiness Scores

Question This Child Typically:	% Proficient at Beginning	% of Not Proficient who Got Better	% Proficient at End	Significant Increase in % Proficient?
1. Uses art to convey feelings and ideas.	68%	59%	83% (+15)	Yes
2. Talks about his or her creations.	66%	62%	83% (+17)	Yes

Table 28: Communication – Teacher School Readiness Scores

Question This Child Typically:	% Proficient at Beginning	% of Not Proficient who Got Better	% Proficient at End	Significant Increase in % Proficient?
1. Shows interest in reading and books.	83%	66%	92% (+9)	Yes
2. Identifies letters in the alphabet.	68%	60%	73% (+5)	Yes
3. Recognizes that there is a relationship between letters and sounds.	52%	49%	68% (+16)	Yes
4. Recognizes that written spellings represent spoken words.	55%	51%	71% (+16)	Yes
5. “Reads” simple books.	42%	37%	58% (+16)	Yes
6. Scribbles with intended meaning.	75%	53%	84% (+9)	Yes
7. Uses some letters in writing.	71%	55%	80% (+9)	Yes

Table 29: Mathematical/Physical Knowledge – Teacher School Readiness Scores

Question This Child Typically:	% Proficient at Beginning	% of Not Proficient who Got Better	% Proficient at End	Significant Increase in % Proficient?
1. Writes some numbers.	66%	52%	78% (+12)	Yes
2. Determines “same,” “more than” and “less than” by comparing.	57%	47%	71% (+14)	Yes
3. Shows understanding of sequence of daily events.	72%	53%	83% (+11)	Yes
4. Classifies objects used in daily experiences or identifies similarities and differences.	66%	44%	76% (+10)	Yes
5. Makes one-to-one correspondence.	71%	65%	85% (+14)	Yes
6. Experiments with objects to produce effects.	75%	64%	90% (+15)	Yes

Table 30: Working with Others – Teacher School Readiness Scores

Question This Child Typically:	% Proficient at Beginning	% of Not Proficient who Got Better	% Proficient at End	Significant Increase in % Proficient?
1. Initiates conversation with familiar adults.	63%	70%	84% (+21)	Yes
2. Works cooperatively with others in a give-and-take manner.	68%	61%	84% (+16)	Yes
3. Uses peers as resources.	52%	45%	69% (+17)	Yes
4. Shares resources with others.	68%	57%	83% (+15)	Yes
5. Shows sensitivity and respect for others.	76%	57%	86% (+10)	Yes
6. Suggests appropriate solutions to conflicts.	50%	34%	64% (+14)	Yes

Table 31: Learning to Learn – Teacher School Readiness Scores

Question This Child Typically:	% Proficient at Beginning	% of Not Proficient who Got Better	% Proficient at End	Significant Increase in % Proficient?
1. Takes responsibility for belongings.	73%	62%	87% (+14)	Yes
2. Makes choices.	83%	73%	94% (+11)	Yes
3. Stays focused and productive while playing/working independently.	64%	53%	78% (+14)	Yes
4. Stays focused and productive while playing/working in a group.	61%	60%	77% (+16)	Yes
5. Copes with frustration and failure.	59%	46%	73% (+14)	Yes
6. Talks about what he or she is learning.	65%	57%	82% (+17)	Yes

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the 2012-13 year on teacher's perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. The following points can be made from the findings:

- As with parents, teachers in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely rate pre-kindergarten children quite highly on most indicators of school readiness.** This suggests that most children are already developing quite well in their preparation for the school experience. It also means that there is somewhat limited room for change to be indicated across specific items. Over 70 percent of participants were already deemed proficient upon beginning the program on 9 indicator items, while the other 18 indicator items had from 40 to 70 percent of participants deemed as proficient.

- **These findings from an independent second source of assessment for children on school readiness reaffirm and strengthen the findings as provided by parents of children. Small to moderate gains were noted for many indicators of school readiness in children. These gains are likely due to a combination of participation in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program, normal processes of child development, and other contributing factors. However, the wide-ranging evidence of growth in children’s specific domains of development related to school readiness is highly encouraging and evidence of program success.**
- **Among 27 indicators of school readiness rated by teachers on a scale of 1 to 3, significant differences were measured on all of the 27 indicators regarding the number of children who were proficient between the beginning and end of programs in 2012-13. This means that 100 percent of the indicators for school readiness that were rated by teachers showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in all five of the school readiness categories using this rating scale.**
- **These findings showed significant differences in teacher perceptions of children’s school readiness from the beginning of the program to the end of the program on 27 indicators. For every item, the increase in the percentage of children proficient in that category from start to finish was statistically significant.**
- **The average increase in the percentage of children proficient on a specific school readiness indicator was 13.6 percent. The largest increases in the percentage of proficient students occurred for the following items (as perceived by teachers):**
 - **Initiates conversations with familiar adults (+21%)**
 - **Talks about his or her creations (+17%)**
 - **Uses peers as resources (+17%)**
 - **Talks about what he or she is learning (+17%)**
 - **Recognizes that there is a relationship between letters and sounds (+16%)**
 - **Recognizes written spellings represent spoken words (+16%)**
 - **“Reads” simple books (+16%)**
 - **Works cooperatively with others (+16%)**
 - **Stays focused and productive while working in group (+16%)**
 - **Uses art to convey feelings and ideas (+15%)**
 - **Experiments with objects to produce effects (+15%)**
 - **Shares resources with others (+15%)**
 - **Determines “same,” “more than” and “less than” by comparing (+15%)**
 - **Makes one-to-one correspondence (+14%)**
 - **Suggests appropriate solutions to conflicts (+14%)**
 - **Takes responsibility for belongings (+14%)**
 - **Stays focused and productive while working independently (+14%)**
 - **Copes with frustration and failure (+14%)**
- **The greatest proportion of non-proficient children improving was seen with the following items: (1) Makes choices (73%); (2) Initiates conversation with familiar adults (70%); (3) Shows interest in reading and books (66%); (4) Makes one-to-one correspondence (65%); and (5) Experiments with objects to produce effects (65%).**

- In analyzing all significant increases in the findings, **the findings suggest growth in five primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills and knowledge regarding language and literacy; (4) development of specific pre-academic skills and knowledge regarding math and science; and (5) ability to express themselves through art and creative activities.**

These findings regarding changes in children's social, emotional, cognitive, and practical abilities related to school readiness show that many changes are occurring for children enrolled in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. These findings indicate that the program likely has a number of positive impacts on children and their school readiness.

IV. Additional Parent and Child Assessments

Additional Parent and Child Assessments

As the Gearing Up for Kindergarten educational program has been assessed each year, a recurring question that has been asked focuses on whether existing assessment efforts are capturing the full story of parent and child experiences in the program. For example, parents may describe outcomes associated with their child's involvement in the program that are simply not asked about directly in current assessment efforts. Also, an assessment question may ask about impacts on a parent's behavior that is unlikely to be affected by the program since the program may not target the behavior in question. Refining assessment efforts to match identified program objectives and targeted outcomes is a continuing process in evaluation.

To further refine the program evaluation process with Gearing Up for Kindergarten, a small variety of additional parent and child assessments were included in the evaluation process in 2012-13 so that greater understanding of program impacts (or the lack thereof) could be investigated. Two small measures were included that examined the following areas: (1) social and communication patterns of children; (2) emotional patterns of children. It was not expected that there would be significant findings in relation to each of these areas. Rather, these measures were included as an investigative process to understand more fully how the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program does or does not seem to affect participants. A brief report on the investigative assessments is included here. Five hundred and ninety-six participants were included in each of these assessments.

Social and Communication Patterns in Children

Social development and communicative ability is an important aspect of a child's readiness to enter the schooling experience. To further assess the perceived influence of the program on social and communication patterns in pre-kindergarten children, an existing measure which examined 6 items was included in the assessment. Parents rated their children both before and after participation in the program on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – "not at all" to 5 = "very well." A higher score represents a more positive assessment of the child's patterns. Scores are provided in Table 32 which indicate the pre-test score, post-program score, difference score and level of significance.

Emotional Patterns in Children

Developing the ability to handle anxiety and process emotions in a group or learning environment is another important domain of child development related to school readiness. Similar to social and communicative ability, an existing measure was used to examine emotional patterns in children. Again, 6 items were assessed by parents. Parents rated their children both before and after participation in the program on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – "not at all" to 5 = "very well." A higher score represents a more positive assessment of the child's patterns. Scores are provided in Table 33 which indicate the pre-test score, post-program score, difference score and level of significance. More in-depth results are provided for these two measures because the results were of greater significance.

Table 32: Child Social and Communication Patterns – Parent Assessment

Question Description of Child	Beginning of Program 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. My child resolves problems with friends or brothers or sisters on his/her own.	3.04	3.20	.16	Yes
2. My child is very good at understanding other people's feelings.	3.55	3.66	.11	Yes
3. My child shares things with others.	3.72	3.85	.13	Yes
4. My child is helpful to others.	4.10	4.20	.10	Yes
5. My child listens to others' points of view.	3.25	3.45	.20	Yes
6. My child can give suggestions and opinions without being bossy.	3.10	3.31	.21	Yes

Table 33: Child Emotional Patterns – Parent Assessment

Question Description of Child	Beginning of Program 2012 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. My child can accept things not going his/her way.	2.84	3.05	.21	Yes
2. My child copes well with failure.	2.70	2.93	.23	Yes
3. My child thinks before acting.	2.94	3.17	.23	Yes
4. My child can calm down when excited or all wound-up.	3.09	3.29	.20	Yes
5. My child does what he or she is told to do.	3.54	3.63	.09	Yes
6. My child controls his/her temper when there is a disagreement.	3.09	3.25	.16	Yes

These two tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the 2012-13 year on parent assessments of children's social and emotional patterns. The following points can be made from the findings:

- Parents noted growth in the capacities of children in both the social and communicative and emotional domains over the period of the program. This growth mirrors similar patterns found in other assessments done with children in the program. Change and growth in such abilities is a common feature of development in early childhood.
- Among 12 indicators of social and emotional development rated by parents on a scale of 1 to 5, **significant differences were measured on all of the 12 indicators in the 2012-13 program year. This means that all of the indicators for social and emotional development showed positive growth in children.**

- The **6 largest significant differences for children** occurred in the following areas:
 - **Child copes well with failure (.23)**
 - **Child thinks before acting (.23)**
 - **Child can give suggestions without being bossy (.21)**
 - **Child can accept things not going his/her way (.21)**
 - **Child listens to others' points of view (.20)**
 - **Child can calm down when excited or wound up (.20)**

These findings simply provide further positive evidence that the program seems to be linked with positive growth in the areas of social and emotional development for children.

V. Parent Feedback on Gearing Up for Kindergarten

In addition to the detailed information gathered from participants in Gearing Up for Kindergarten, a final and important aspect of the program evaluation involved gathering feedback through having parents respond to open-ended questions about the program. In the post-program surveys, parents were asked to respond to the following three questions:

- Is there anything you would like to share from your participation in this program? What, if anything, have you been led to do differently as a result of Gearing Up for Kindergarten?
- How has your child benefited from attending Gearing Up for Kindergarten?
- What do you like most about the program?

Parents were able to respond to each question and share their thoughts, experiences, and feelings related to their participation in the program with their child. The first question allowed parents to share feedback on *outcomes from their experience as a parent in the program*. The second question allowed parents to share feedback on *outcomes for their child as a result of participation in the program*. Finally, the third question allowed parents to describe *most useful or helpful elements of the program that were important to them*.

Qualitative feedback provides a different kind of view of how participants reacted to and experienced the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. The responses are more descriptive, personal and wide-ranging. We conducted a brief thematic analysis of the main response categories that were shared by participants and have selected a variety of responses for each question that highlight the responses of participants. Not all participant comments are selected here for purposes of brevity. The responses included here come from the 2012-13 program year.

Qualitative Feedback from Parents about Gearing Up for Kindergarten

As we examined the difference that Gearing Up for Kindergarten has made for participants and their children, we asked parents a number of response questions. Some of their answers are shared below to highlight key categories that emerged in the analysis of their responses.

What have you been led to do differently as a parent as a result of Gearing Up for Kindergarten?

More Time and Active Involvement with Children

- I enjoyed the “center time” at the beginning of each session and all of the “take home” books, activities and manipulatives.
- We do more learning activities together now as a family.
- We spend more time doing "hands on" activities such as coloring and play dough.
- Been more active with home exercises.
- I love all the activities for and with the kids! It’s made me want to do more fun things at home.
- Because of the parent-child activities we are more actively getting ready for kindergarten.
- I talk with my child more and spend more time playing with her even when I am very busy.
- I play with my daughter while teaching her and helping her learn through activities learned in “Gearing Up” sessions.
- I work during the day and it has been very nice to have time with my son and interact with his new teachers/expectations.
- More activities with my child, more one on one time together.
- I try to make reading even more of a priority.
- Interact more with my child.
- I liked the parent/child activities.
- We’ve decided specific time for doing learning games, projects, puzzles, computer activities each day of the week.
- I enjoyed the activities with my child the most and seeing her get excited.

Improved Parenting Efforts in Specific Areas

- We have successfully used positive reinforcement.
- I have worked on taking time to read to and listen to my kids. This program has given me many tips on tweaking my parenting skills.
- I am more considerate of my daughter’s temperament. I try to be more intentional in my parenting and how my actions today will shape her future.
- We made some changes to screen time based on education we received.
- Yes, taking more time to read and practice new skills.
- Overall, the program is fantastic. I’m so happy we were able to participate. Yes! The parenting techniques were helpful and great reminder for any parent.
- I have tried to spend more time discussing stories, instead of just reading them.
- Reading - more and more.
- Now I look for learning opportunities in all situations.
- The program helped me be more positive when handling disagreements, timeouts.
- Enjoyed parenting skills segments. I have limited the internet access and the amount of T.V.
- I have taken some practical things from this class, like giving my daughter a chance to do some things independently (like tie shoes, etc.).
- We are working hard on letter recognition (upper and lower case), matching the letter sound with a word beginning with the same sound.
- I am working to tailor my parenting & child’s involvement in activities more closely to her temperament instead of rushing her into things she was uncomfortable with.

- Work with my child on letters, counting, recognizing both more at home.
- I am much more calm and patient with my son when he is misbehaving. I discipline him differently with more explanation.
- I did make chore chart and a few other ideas. Found it all very helpful and interesting.
- We ask a lot more critical thinking questions.
- Yes, working on more hours of sleep and eating healthier.

Increased Awareness of Child's Specific Needs

- Thinking about different learning styles.
- Good reminders of child development and personalities.
- Better understanding of what my child should come to kindergarten knowing and leave knowing.
- I have been reminded of stages of development and how to better handle strong emotions.
- I loved the physical fitness ideas (rackets & balloons), and the focus on social-emotional readiness.
- After participating in this program, I was able to tell that my child needs one more year of preschool.
- This program helped ease my mind about my child's readiness for school in a major way.
- I have learned a lot of things from this program on how to take care of and protect my children.
- I like the emphasis on reading with kids and the importance of making sure kids are ready to start school.
- The sleep information provided was very helpful, and also different ways to focus on the positive rather than the negative.
- Listen more and help my child with what he needs.
- Yes, I learned about the importance of a child's daily routines, especially her sleep requirements.
- It has made me more aware of how my attitude and parenting style affects my child. I've been more quick to keep my patience in check.
- We have been working on increasing her sleep required.
- The way we read stories, involving the kids with the story and making sure they understood/retell the story. Since we got the learning style lesson I have been paying more attention to their learning needs.
- Have more knowledge to help my child with school learning, bedtime routines etc.
- I think I am even more attentive, particularly how I respond to my kids. I have tried to really focus on them when we are together.
- I learned a lot about different types of children's temperament and how to handle them.
- Became aware of the different learning and parenting styles. Try to adopt new ideas in parenting.

How has your child benefited from Gearing Up for Kindergarten?

Increased Social Confidence and Positive Peer Interactions

- This has been great for my daughter, especially in regards to coming to a new building and interacting with new children.
- My child is more confident.
- Interaction with other parents & teachers, activities with other children, watching my child become more comfortable in surroundings.
- Becoming more social with peers and teachers as well as the school setting.
- He's met new friends.
- She feels comfortable in a school setting and has become better about taking turns/sharing.
- She is more comfortable around more adults. She's more comfortable playing with kids she just met
- Learning how to be part of a group, taking turns, etc.
- He is more confident and more willing to try and learn new things.
- Improved focus, following directions, social skills, has a lot of enthusiasm for school now.
- He always looks forward to coming so he can play and do activities with other children.
- She has gotten to know other pre-K kids and the kindergarten classroom. She loves it!
- More comfortable with the school and interacting with other children.
- He is more confident about starting school & is less nervous about meeting new children.
- Confidence.
- Not as shy.
- Sharing, working with others, meeting teacher, visiting classroom.
- I think the social interaction. The first night he was clinging very badly to me. By the last night he was so comfortable with the other kids, teachers and the school environment.
- Met new friends, works harder to be ready for school.
- Getting familiar with kindergarten teachers, other classmates, learning to take turns when someone else is talking.
- My daughter used to be shy. She has overcome this greatly, with a HUGE part being this class & other kids. Teachers were great and welcoming. She had a great time & so did we. Thank you.
- She is more socially aware and knows the routines and what's expected of her.
- Socially he is much more comfortable. For the first half he had his older sister join him during "classroom" time as he cried and was very nervous/anxious without her. For the last half of his class, he had no problems whatsoever when I left the room.
- Confidence, collaboration, reinforcement of skills learned at home and preschool.
- Expanding her social skills.
- She is more social, less shy.
- Her confidence and readiness has increased. She went from being leery about kindergarten to excitement with an "I got this" attitude. Very fun to watch that progression.
- It was great for her social skills to meet a new group of friends, routine for listening to a new teacher. She looked forward to going every week!
- He is much more confident about how smart he really is and about going to school.
- Made friends for the first time, learned how to leave me and spend time with others, learned about sharing/teamwork.
- He is starting to not be so shy getting used to a new setting and people. He is excited for school.
- He is more confident in himself and ready to go to kindergarten.
- I feel my child will not have the fear my older children had coming on the first day of school. She met the children in her class and already made many new friends. She also met and got to know her teacher.

Improved Pre-Academic Skills in Reading, Math and Other Subjects

- Academic activities.
- My child is more interested in books since he can choose books to check-out from the library.
- He has benefitted from his parents having more knowledge on how to do more learning activities together.
- Interaction with other children his age in a class setting, working on letters and numbers.
- Additional time spent with a parent directly (one-on-one) is beneficial to my child.
- He has started to want to learn now where before he could care less.
- His math has gotten a lot better!
- Enthusiastic about learning.
- Has made a friend and has been introduced to science.
- He has a greater variety of knowledge because of the hands on materials and science experiments.
- Better with letters.
- She is more active in numbers and letters.
- She is excited about kindergarten. She loves reading and finding how to spell words.
- He is excited to attend school and now is much more engaged in his learning and wanting to learn more.
- Being able to do science experiments and feeling confident to explore around.
- She has really enjoyed the social aspect as well as recognizing more of her letters.
- The science projects have really got him excited to learn new things.
- Since joining the program, my son has become more interested in learning and preparing for kindergarten.
- He enjoyed the center activities as well as large group. He is more aware of letters, numbers, parts of a book, and handwriting.

Greater Awareness and Comfort with School Routines and Expectations

- My son greatly enjoyed coming! After his classes he always asked when he gets to go to kindergarten.
- It's a great way for my child to see what will happen when going into kindergarten.
- My child becoming familiar with kindergarten teachers.
- My child was able to experience the daily routine in a kindergarten classroom. Also, my child was able to meet with future classmates.
- She has a clearer understanding of what a large school and kindergarten looks like and how they function.
- Meeting his teachers, peers and parents-seeing his classroom was terrific. Routines, such as raising hands. Hands down this is a magnificent program.
- She's excited about school.
- She has become excited and confident about starting kindergarten next fall.
- Very much, he is more excited about kindergarten now that he has attended this course.
- She is familiar with the school and some teachers and other peers now. She is excited about the activities.
- He has enjoyed coming to kindergarten and getting exposed to the building and classroom.
- Got to know other kids and feel comfortable with teachers, classrooms etc.
- He is really looking forward to being in school and he is less anxious about it.
- Better understanding of classroom expectations and routines.
- Getting to spend time with an actual Kindergarten teacher was very beneficial.
- She is more confident in her abilities and now knows what to expect when the time comes for that exciting first day of kindergarten.
- Started to understand a classroom environment & the appropriate behaviors in a classroom.

- She will be very familiar and therefore very comfortable with the teacher, school and classmates. Transition into kindergarten will be smooth.
- Interaction with staff and facility.
- Much more comfortable with settings & activities of kindergarten.
- It has been great for him to get to know the building and his teachers. It has been fun getting to know the other kids and other parents.
- Familiarity with school, more excited about kindergarten.
- The exposure to different kindergarten rooms and teachers will be such a great benefit. Time spent in the classroom without parents will also be a big plus.
- She made some new friends and got an idea of what school is and what she does in school!
- He has been able to get familiar with the teachers and classroom.
- She has become more confident & excited to start kindergarten! THANK YOU!!
- He has learned how to act in a classroom setting and benefitted from being around other kids his age.
- Learned what school will kind of be like. Got comfortable with the school setting and staying without a parent. Loved all the activities.
- It helped her be more comfortable in the classroom setting and go to a school the size she will go to next year.
- She has been able to become comfortable with the school setting without the pressure of an actual academic workload. When the learning begins she will be ready without feeling alone or in a strange place.
- He got to experience being in the classroom and learn some expectations of him for next year.
- Much more comfortable with the school, teachers and peers.
- By learning the rules, and where he gets to go to school and meeting his teachers.
- My child benefited by meeting future classmates, getting used to his future school and some of the procedures and rules for next year. He also met both K teachers, which will benefit him next year. He speaks very enthusiastically for K.
- She has been able to be more comfortable with the school and the different surroundings.
- He has been more and more excited each time he came. He has been extremely open to new expectations.
- She is a lot more comfortable meeting her teachers, classroom and new kindergarten friends. She is excited and knows more of what to expect.
- Increased knowledge of classroom behavior & expectations.
- She has gotten to meet her kindergarten teachers, been exposed to some of the classroom routine, and explored the classroom.
- The ability for kids to learn the routine of school. It has let our child know that she is ready for and will enjoy kindergarten.
- Getting to meet the teacher & seeing the classroom, other peers, has gotten him excited & eager to start kindergarten.
- Her comfort level with beginning school has increased. She knows her teachers, classmates and expectations.
- Got to meet some of his classmates. Learned some of the routines of the class.
- She is less nervous about attending next year, now that she has gone through the process and is able to engage and explore her would-be environment & expectations of school.
- He is getting used to the classroom setting as well as interacting with kids he normally is not around.
- Learning kindergarten expectations and feeling comfortable in kindergarten settings.
- The program was great for our son to meet classmates and get to know who he'll go to school with, also to be more comfortable with the teachers as well.

What did you like most about the program?

Time Spent Together in Learning Activities with Child

- Taught me how I can participate and contribute to my child's learning.
- My daughter loved Gearing Up. She had so much fun. She is upset that tonight is the last night, but excited for the program!
- She has enjoyed the activities and gained more confidence in attending kindergarten.
- Quality time playing together. All my attention was on her.
- More quality time without siblings.
- One on one time with me and time with other kids she'll be in kindergarten with.
- We enjoyed the parent-child part of the program and it's been a good experience for my child.
- I appreciated the child/parent together time as well as the separation so she puts herself "out there" with new or unfamiliar people.
- The time I got to spend one on one with my child.
- We enjoyed 1-on-1 time with our daughter thanks to the child care provided. I am thrilled she was able to spend a lot of time in her future school and in a real kindergarten classroom.
- Have enjoyed the hands-on activities, and so has our child.
- Parent-child activities were great.
- Parent/child time.
- The one on one time with my child in the classroom.
- Getting to know my son on a new level.
- Interactive play with kids and parents.
- Spending time with my child.
- I felt that classroom learning centers were very awesome and age appropriate. Very good hands-on, play-based learning.
- Being able to do hands-on-activities with him.
- I enjoyed the parent/child activities. I felt they were useful and provided different teaching points and ideas.
- I liked the one on one activities with my child. I was able to see where he was with learning in a busy surrounding.
- Fun activities for preschoolers and parents to do together.
- Parent and child interaction. Great one on one time.
- Having the time for one-on-one activities with my child (individual attention).
- Interacting with my son in the classroom and the take home activities.
- I like the play and learning time before the actual program the most. He has had more of an interest in reading and writing. He also participates more with other classmates.
- The individual time I got to spend with my daughter to help her with activities and watch her learning!
- Interactive games at the beginning of each session.
- Spending quality time one on one with our child.
- The parent/child activities.
- Getting time to spend with your child doing activities.
- The activities between parents and children were a lot of fun. My daughter looked forward to coming each week.
- Activity time with my child, take home activities, tip cards.
- Interactive activities with my child, parent sessions and topics.
- I really liked the hands on activity part with my child.
- Spending time in the classroom with my daughter. We enjoyed the activities & the cuddle time as the book was read.
- I really enjoyed learning with my child and getting to be with her for the activities.

Preparation of Parent and Child for Kindergarten Experience

- I am a kindergarten teacher and love all the information that is given out. Very useful and helps promote what kindergarten actually is. There is still a big misconception on what kindergarten is really like! It's not like it was when the parent(s) went to school!
- We are going to wait one more year before attending kindergarten.
- Great opportunity for kids. My daughter was very excited every week to come here. She's not in a preschool and therefore this was her first experience with school.
- I liked how the kids got to experience the classroom and teachers. This really helped with my child's anxiety and nervousness about starting school.
- The amount they are supposed to know is scary at this age. It gave me the confidence in knowing that he is truly ready for school.
- I really enjoyed the program. It has been a huge help in knowing more about my child and what he needs to know.
- I think the program was very helpful in making parents really take a good look at whether or not their child is ready. Hearing what is expected of a kindergartener really makes us as parents re-evaluate.
- I think this is a wonderful program. It helps calm the nerves of starting kindergarten for both children and parents.
- She really grew, she wants to learn & get better. Now I feel ready as a parent for kindergarten. The only downside is not enough space on this form for my comments! Great program. Thank you!
- My child will be more prepared for school expectations when she begins school in the fall. She is very nervous in new situations so this program was ideal for her.
- Besides loving his teacher, the whole idea of going to school enthralled him.
- He was unsure of coming to class & kindergarten in general - now he is excited to be a kindergartener! No more tears when we leave him, and that alone makes this very worth the time.
- She looked forward to attending all week! It was great for her to become more familiar with teachers and schoolrooms.
- He was excited to be with the teachers in their rooms each week. I think that will be very helpful at the beginning of the school year.
- He got to spend time with the teachers and see his classroom which makes us both feel better prepared and more at ease.
- He is super excited for school now and not apprehensive at all. I, as a parent, feel better also. The information has been awesome to get.
- The children get to learn what is expected of them and get used to the idea of being a kindergartener.
- It gives your child a sense of how kindergarten works and gets to familiarize the child with the staff and facility.
- The opportunity for my child to become familiar with the kindergarten classroom and teachers as well as others that will be in their classroom.
- Letting my child go through the routines of kindergarten as I am with her.
- My child was able to get comfortable with the school, classroom, teacher, and other kids.
- How helpful it is for both the parent and child to ease into the school setting.
- Giving my child the opportunity to get a crash course in what kindergarten will be like in the fall. It helps to make the transition much easier, knowing what to expect.
- My daughter is even more excited to start school in fall. It was great for her to be in a school and classroom so she knows more what to expect.
- The teachers are great and I love that my child gets to experience kindergarten before he goes.
- Seeing the children getting to know the kindergarten teachers & routine prior to starting kindergarten.

- The opportunity for my child to familiarize himself with his future classrooms, teachers, classmates and learn some of the roles and procedures for kindergarten.
- The exposure to school settings is awesome for kids like my daughter who haven't had to leave home for daycare or pre-school.
- I liked that my daughter was able to come and get used to being at the school, and get used to the teachers. She is very excited to start next year.
- It made me to become more familiar with the teachers, environment, and expectations on my child for the upcoming year. It was good to meet parents and kids that my child will be going to school with.

Parenting Discussion and Support

- I have enjoyed socializing with other parents and having an atmosphere where we can learn and bond together more. It helped me realize where my son stands and appreciate more of what he does.
- Was very helpful to discuss issues with other parents and gather ideas.
- This was a good course, I also liked being able to meet the other parents.
- I love interacting with other kindergarten parents and getting ideas from them.
- Discussions with the teacher and other parents. We've shared a lot of experiences, that has helped! The activities have helped us with ideas for learning at home.
- Talking to other parents.
- Getting to know the other parents.
- Meeting other parents.
- The adult portion of the class is interesting.
- Handouts and parent information meetings.
- Discussion with other parents.
- Meeting other parents and group discussions.
- Loved all the education for parents: discipline, social-emotional, math skills.
- Having all the different parents say their ideas so you have more ideas for yourself, your child and your household.
- Talking with other parents about common challenges.
- I liked getting the opportunity to hear other parents' ideas on different subjects.
- Discussions with other parents, handouts and discussions on learning styles, development.
- A lot of good materials for younger parents with 1st or 2nd children to be that better parent in today's times.
- Sharing with other parents.
- Parenting information provided regarding temperament. Types of learning styles (auditory, visual, kinesthetic).
- All the information provided by the program, and the opportunity to interact with other parents and teachers and get tips on "how to" help my child with learning.
- I enjoy the sharing with other parents and opportunities for uninterrupted interactions/activities with my child.
- Talking with other parents who have similar age kids, concerns, etc.
- The program refreshed our excitement for starting school as well as reminded us of how important it is to read her daily.
- Different topics covered each week. Each one was helpful and useful.
- I enjoyed the parent information sessions.
- The wealth of knowledge and information provided to parents. The program is very comfortable and creates a welcoming environment. The teachers are very patient and knowledgeable.

Quality of the Program Experience

- Learned a lot . Great guest speakers. Please keep this program funded and continuing.
- It's a very good program & recommend it to others.
- Very, very good program.
- Wonderful!
- Great Program.
- Very glad we participated, it was helpful to learn what to expect the first year of school.
- I feel this program is a wonderful benefit for the children and their parents. Keep up the great work!!
- GREAT PROGRAM! All staff friendly and helpful, great group, fun to meet other parents.
- This program was helpful and informative.
- Great program, very helpful with helping raise a healthy child.
- Great program for any parent, great information & staff - highly recommended.
- I attended Gearing Up last year with my daughter. It is an amazing program and taught me all I have done this year with my son.
- This was an awesome class. I enjoyed the time with my child and the other parents & children.
- We love the program and feel we grew together throughout the process.
- I greatly enjoyed the program and found it very useful.
- Very useful program and extremely pleased that this was offered.
- Excellent program! Teachers were outstanding! Learned a lot as a parent.
- Thought the program overall was very good and delivered well.
- Yes, we both learned so much. Love this program. Thank you!!
- My child and I enjoyed all aspects of this program.
- All teachers were well prepared, excited to work with the kids. They were AWESOME! More confident, learned some routines that will be used in classroom.
- Yes! Prior to this program he was unsure about kindergarten now he wants to go to kindergarten every day! Thanks, this has really been helpful!!
- I enjoyed everything about this program. The teachers were outstanding! I liked to learn more about how to be a better parent. My daughter has grown since coming here. The handout and homework was fun. It was great to have child care for our 2 yr old. Having knowledge of new activities to play and teach our kids was great!
- The program is well-organized and very helpful.
- Child's exposure to kindergarten teachers, classrooms and classmates. Parent and child together and separate time; emphasis on parent role in school success during parent classes.