
Gearing Up for Kindergarten
**Project Overview & Year-End Report for
2016-2017**

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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 11th year in 2016-17. *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 2016-2017 the program operated at 64 sites across North Dakota with 1,067 families enrolled. Fifty-one school districts participated and held a total of 88 course sessions. Response rate to the evaluation was 78.8% (773 total respondents). This executive summary provides highlights of findings gathered through evaluation of the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program's sessions in the program year 2016-17.

- **Program participation – 90% of participants indicated involvement in 75% or more of the program sessions of the program during the year, while another 6.5% 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 **78% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them.** Among participants in the 2016-17 program, 76% 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 87.5% among all participants.

- **General impacts of program participation** - Among participants, **55%** indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, **53%** noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much, **58%** felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and **51%** said it increased their parenting skills a lot or very much. Additionally, **80%** felt it changed their parenting behavior at least somewhat, and **85%** indicated that it influenced their relationship with their child positively.
- **Program value versus other information sources** - The results from the 2016-17 session of the program indicate that participants rated the school (3.78), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.78), and parents with children of a similar age (3.64) as among the most useful sources of information for them on parenting and preparing their child for school. However, **the Gearing Up for Kindergarten class and materials were rated higher than all other sources with a mean score of 4.07, 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 all of the 19 indicators between fall 2016 and spring 2017. This pattern was the same in each program model. This means that all 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.**
- **Parent knowledge of school readiness** - For parents in the program, **10 indicators of knowledge related to school readiness showed significant increases in their knowledge levels and ability to prepare their child for the school experience. For example, the parents showed increases of knowledge regarding social and emotional development in children, development of early reading and math skills, areas of competence for school readiness, and key elements of a supportive home learning environment.**
- **Parent confidence in child's preparedness for school** - For parents in the program, among 3 indicators of their confidence with a child's preparedness for school, **significant differences were measured on all 3 indicators between the beginning and end of the program. Findings showed that after going through the program, parents felt more confident in the child's level of preparedness for kindergarten, and also increased their confidence in the activities being done to prepare their child for school transition.**
- **Increases in children's academic readiness as determined by objective assessment** - Children overall and in each model of the program **made significant progress increasing their number counting ability, number identification ability, letter identification ability, and sound identification ability. These steps forward in early academic skills indicate children are making progress with regard to early literacy and early numeracy.**

- **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 were more attentive to finding age-appropriate books for their children. 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***
 - It reinforced the good things we were doing and also made me think about learning opportunities in everyday tasks and routines.
 - We are practicing letter sounds and higher numbers.
 - I have instituted a 20 minute family reading period at least 5 times a week.
 - I have been more intentional with the activities I do with my child to teach him specific skills.
 - Being in the program has made me more involved with preparing my child for kindergarten.
 - ***Improved Parenting Efforts in Specific Areas***
 - We've tried a few discipline techniques that seem to work for things when it wasn't working before.
 - The program has helped me to be more patient and seek to redirect negative attention as approval.
 - It helped us to pinpoint strategies and skills we could work on. It is also valuable to see our child in a school setting.
 - Putting my children to bed earlier to help them have a better day.
 - This class helped my husband to view things differently and helped us to understand more how we are as parents and things we can do together.
 - I have tried being more aware of my parenting style and to use different parenting strategies.
 - I have started to take more time to think about what I'm going to say, not raise my voice as often, enforce more consequences, and offer choices.
 - Bedtime routine discussion—we now stick to a strict routine.
 - ***Increased Awareness of Child's Specific Needs***
 - We have started talking about our feelings more often and started to understand our child's actions more.
 - This gave me a lot of information about my son and the type of child he is, while giving me tips about how to use the information to the fullest.
 - My child has autism. We finally created a chore chart and visual schedule.
 - I have learned more about my child's temperament and learning style.
 - I think some of the information on child development helps me relate to my child a little better and understand his learning style.
 - It has made me aware of his trouble areas so I can work on helping him build his confidence.
 - I enjoyed watching my child interact with kids the same age doing the same activities. It helped me see where she is developmentally.
 - I feel more understanding of my preschooler and his learning. It also makes me want to be a better parent.

- **Qualitative feedback on outcomes for 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***
 - My daughter has greatly improved. She has learned to socialize and is more knowledgeable about kindergarten concepts.
 - The experience overall has helped him to be more confident. He has made new relationships.
 - He’s better at listening and adapting to new situations and activities.
 - She is more comfortable on her own and working and playing with other kids.
 - She loved it! She is shy at first but got more comfortable each time we came.
 - He has said several times that he was nervous about kindergarten. Now I feel he has a better understanding of school settings and hopefully he has less nerves about it.
 - We used materials to help [our son] cope, he is now more social and is managing his feelings without outbursts.
 - She is much more social and is able to interact better with others when I’m not around.
 - ***Increased Pre-Academic Skills in Reading, Math and Other Subjects***
 - My child can now write his own name and knows most of his letters.
 - She has learned her letter sounds, counting, handwriting, and self-confidence has improved.
 - He has been more engaged in learning letters and numbers.
 - Loved to take home library books, and has increased interest in reading.
 - She has learned more letters and numbers and waits patiently to take turns.
 - He is more enthusiastic about books, reading, and going to kindergarten.
 - She is not as nervous, ready to learn. Willing to sit and read together much more.
 - ***Greater Awareness and Comfort with School Routines and Expectations***
 - He would cry anytime we even mentioned the word “school” and now he’s super excited and wants to go to school every day!
 - He’s more aware of how things will work next year as well as definitely ready for the next stage of his education. Great program!!
 - School building, classrooms, parents, students, and teachers are now familiar to her and that takes away the fear and distraction.
 - He was very apprehensive about kindergarten and did not want to go. He is now very excited about kindergarten.
 - My child really benefitted from the experience with respect to getting comfortable with school and experiencing the classroom environment.
 - Program allowed my child to get to know the school facilities, his teachers, and it was a great practice session for learning how to behave and participate in a school setting.

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 multi-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. This funding was ended at the close of the 2016-17 year due to statewide budget cuts.

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, Social Services, WIC, public libraries, and child care settings. News releases were published in local newspapers and Parent Resource Center newsletters. Local schools and 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 2016-2017 the program operated at 64 sites across North Dakota with 1,067 families enrolled. Fifty-one school districts participated and held a total of 88 course sessions. Response rate to the evaluation was 78.8% (773 total respondents). These sites were located in 50 separate North Dakota communities.

Small Communities (pop. 2000 or less)

- Beach, ND (southwest)
 - Lincoln Elementary School
- Buffalo, ND (southeast)
 - Maple Valley Elementary School
- Carson, ND (southeast)
 - Roosevelt Elementary School
- Cooperstown, ND (northeast)
 - Griggs County Central Public 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 Totten, ND (northeast)
 - Tate Topa (Four Winds) Elementary School
- Garrison, ND (central)
 - Bob Callies Elementary School
- Hankinson, ND (southeast)
 - Hankinson Public School
- Harvey, ND (north central)
 - B. M. Hanson Elementary School
- Hatton, ND (northeast)
 - Hatton-Eielson Public School
- Hunter, ND (southeast)
 - Northern Cass Elementary School
- Kenmare, ND (north central)
 - Kenmare Elementary School
- Kindred & Davenport, ND (southeast)
 - Kindred Elementary School
- Lakota, ND (northeast)
 - Lakota Public School
- Langdon, ND (northeast)
 - Langdon Public School
- Lignite, ND (northwest)
 - Burke Central Elementary School
- Linton, ND (south central)
 - Linton Preschool
- Mapleton, ND (southeast)
 - Mapleton Elementary School
- Milnor, ND (southeast)
 - Milnor Public School
- Mohall, ND (north central)
 - Mohall-Lansford-Sherwood Elementary School

- Mott, ND (southwest)
 - Mott-Regent Elementary School
- New Salem, ND (west central)
 - Prairie View Elementary School
- Northwood, ND (northeast)
 - Northwood Public School
- Ray, ND (northwest)
 - Ray Elementary School (Nesson District #2)
- Strasburg, ND (south central)
 - Strasburg Public School
- Thompson, ND (northeast)
 - Thompson Elementary School
- Tioga, ND (northwest)
 - Central Elementary School
- Trenton, ND (west)
 - Trenton Public School
- Turtle Lake, ND (north central)
 - Turtle Lake-Mercer Elementary 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
- Rugby, ND (north central)
 - Rugby Ely Elementary School
- Wahpeton, ND (southeast)
 - Zimmerman Elementary School
- Watford City, ND (northwest)
 - Watford City Elementary School

Large Communities (pop. 10,000 or greater)

- Bismarck, ND (central)
 - Light of Christ Catholic Schools – St. Mary’s School
- Dickinson, ND (southwest)
 - Heart River Elementary School
- Fargo, ND (east)
 - Eagles Elementary School
 - Ed Clapp Elementary School
 - Jefferson Elementary School
 - Kennedy Elementary School
 - Lewis & Clark Elementary School
 - Lincoln Elementary School

- Fargo, ND (east) (continued)
 - Madison Elementary School
 - McKinley Elementary School
 - Nokomis Child Care Center II
 - Oak Grove Lutheran Elementary
- Grand Forks, ND (northeast)
 - Century Elementary School
 - Viking Elementary School
 - Winship Elementary School
- Jamestown, ND (southeast)
 - Washington Elementary School
- Mandan, ND (central)
 - Fort Lincoln Elementary School
 - Red Trail Elementary School
- Minot, ND (north central)
 - Burlington-Des Lacs Elementary School
 - Northern Plains Elementary School
 - Sunnyside Elementary School
 - Surrey Elementary School
- West Fargo, ND (east)
 - West Fargo Kindergarten Center – Lodoen
 - West Fargo Kindergarten Center – Osgood
- Williston, ND (west)
 - McVay Elementary School

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 2016 and one in the spring of 2017, two 5-week family education sessions (fall and spring), or a 10-week session in spring 2017. 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 2016-2017 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 2016-2017 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 included in this summary.

Program Type

Program Type	Number of Sites	Percentage of Participants
Split Session – 16 weeks (8 weeks/fall, 8 weeks/spring)	1	4.1%
Continuous Session – 16 weeks	2	0.2%
Split Session – 10 weeks (5 weeks/fall, 5 weeks/spring)	15	27.3%
Short Session – 10 weeks (spring)	46	68.3%

Final Program Participation Summary – Gearing Up for Kindergarten in ND (2015-2016)

Communities and Program Models

- Total Number of ND Communities – 50
 - 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 Participating School Districts – 51
- Total Number of Program Sessions – 88
- Total Number of Short Session Programs (5-10 week sessions in spring) – 46
- Total Number of Split – Short Session Programs (5 weeks fall/5 weeks spring) – 15
- Total Number of Split – Long Session Programs (8 weeks fall/8 weeks spring) – 1

Families Served

- Number of Families in Full (Split) Sessions (16 Weeks)
 - Number of Families Total – 41
- Number of Families in Full (Split) Sessions (10 Weeks)
 - Number of Families Total – 271
- Number of Families in Spring (Short or 5-10 week) Sessions – 755

- Total Families Served – 1,067
- Total Families Served that Returned Evaluation – 773

Evaluation Project

- Number of Sites Participating in Project Evaluation – 64 sites

Map of 2016-17 North Dakota Sites for Gearing Up for Kindergarten

Gearing Up for Kindergarten Sites 2015-2016

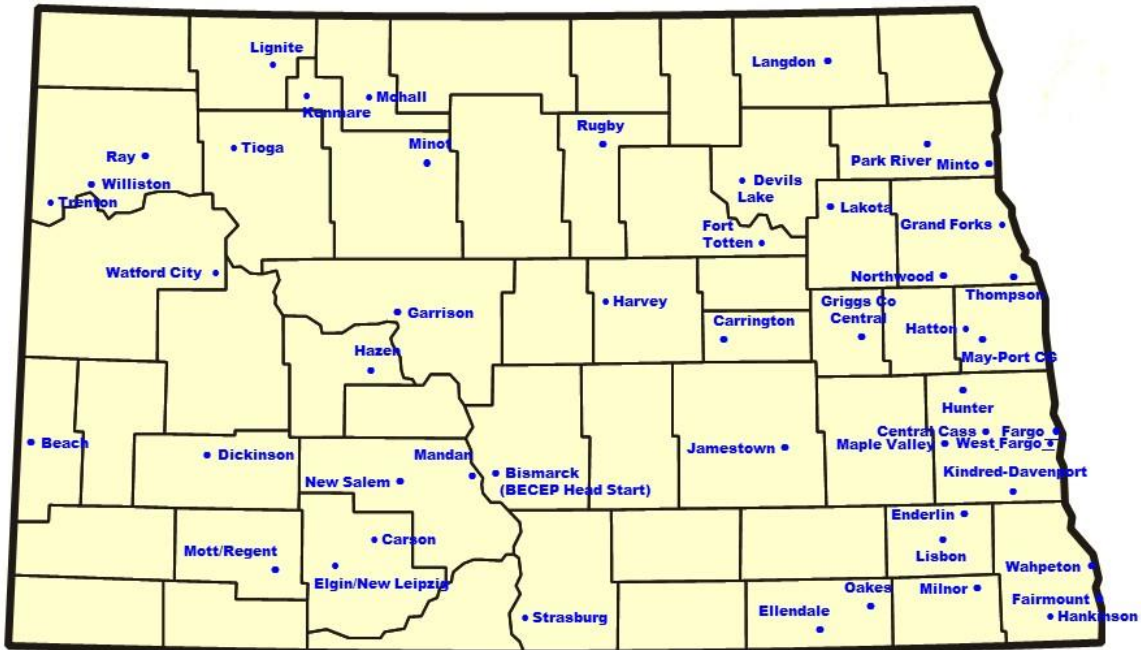


Chart of North Dakota Sites Served by Gearing Up for Kindergarten

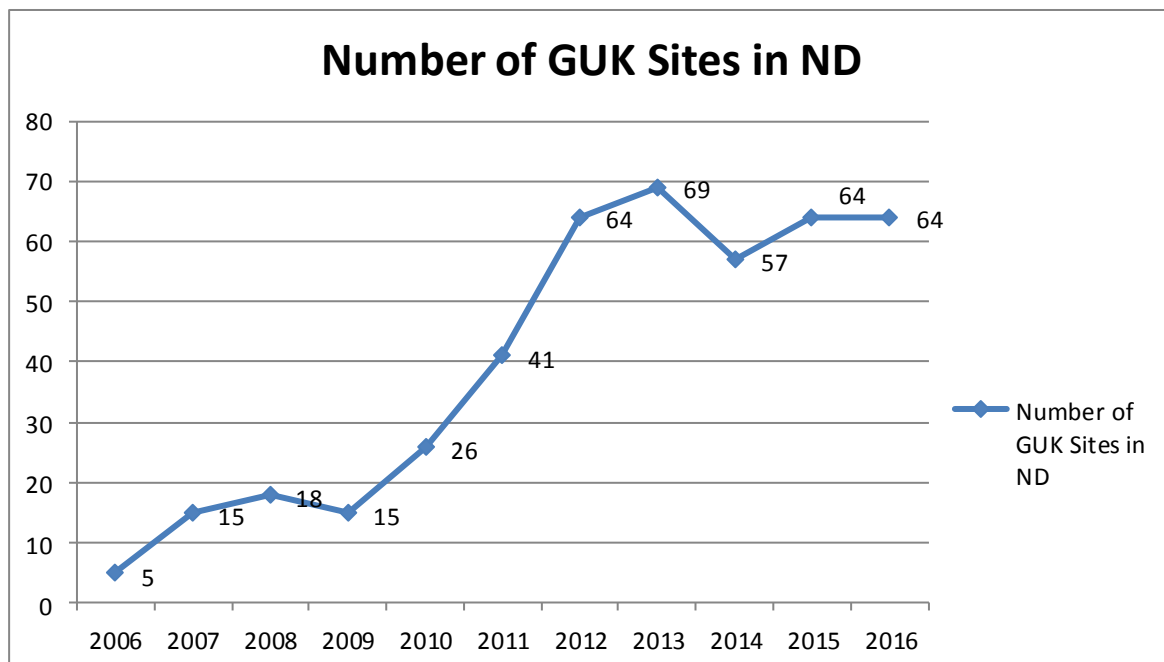
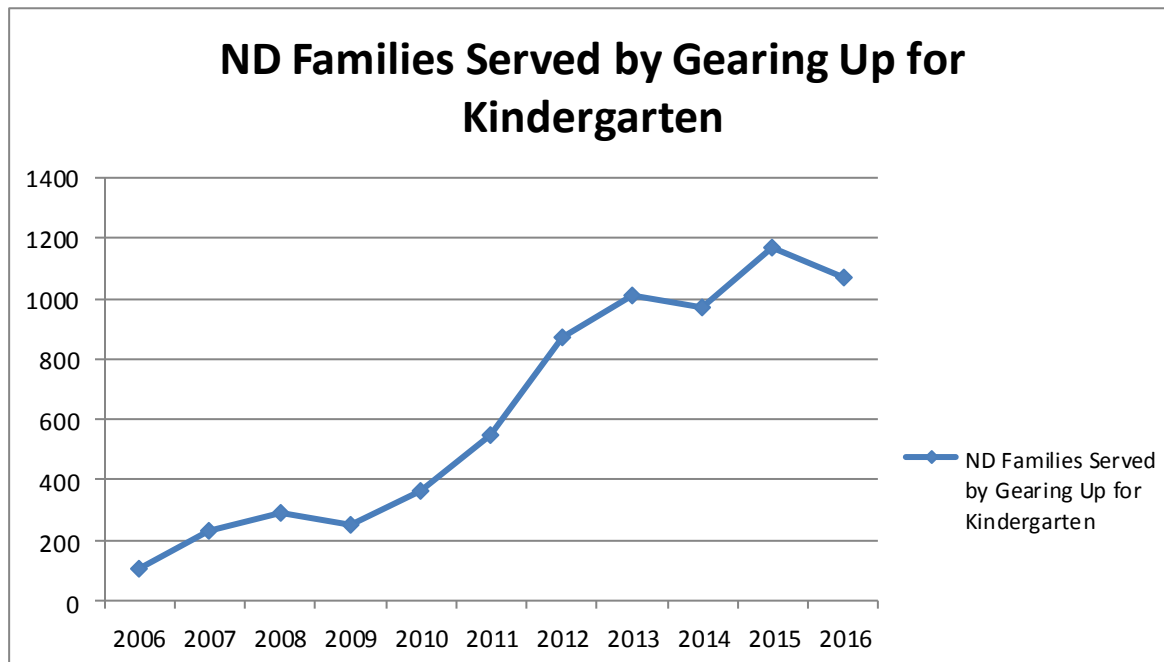


Chart of North Dakota Families Served by Gearing Up for Kindergarten



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. 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. In 2013-14, the total number of participant families statewide increased to 1,008 families. The program maintained a large contingent of families served with 973 families engaged in 2014-15, and in the 2015-16 program year, participation reached its highest point yet with 1,169 families served by the program. In this past year, the program served 1,067 families in North Dakota.

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 five 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 next 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. The program reached nearly 12 percent of incoming kindergarten students for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years, and 13.2 percent for the 2016-17 year. Finally, the program reached about 12 percent again for the 2017-18 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 2015-2016 (10th year of the program) provides results gathered from the entire year of the program's operation in fall 2015 and spring 2016. 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.

All program sites were involved in the evaluation process but 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 Human Development and Family Science at NDSU.

Overall Program Evaluation – Retrospective Pre-Post Program Form

The first aspect of the evaluation process for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project was accomplished by gathering participant information through using a retrospective 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 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. On the survey, 19 items focused on children's school readiness. 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 retrospective assessment 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.

Child Assessment of School Readiness, Parent-Child Version

A third aspect of the evaluation process for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project focused on an objective parent assessment of a child's school readiness with regard to early literacy and early numeracy. The evaluation tool developed for this assessment was constructed by researchers at North Dakota State University. This instrument was added to the evaluation process based on participant and facilitator feedback and allows a direct, objective assessment of a child's developing abilities. For the 2015-16 program year, this assessment tool was used for the third time.

Parents were asked to complete the assessment tool once for each child, at the beginning of the program and also at the end of the program. The assessment allowed parents to provide a basic score related to the degree that a 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. Thus, the tool allows the program to provide feedback on a child that enables them to assess basic skills including identification of shapes and colors, number counting, number identification, letter identification, and sound identification. The assessment allows the program 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 acquisition of basic knowledge important to school readiness
- Assess a child's perceived development in relation to established domains of knowledge important to early learning and school readiness

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 773 participants from each of the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program sites completed the retrospective post-program evaluation survey in the program year for 2016-17. 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 508 from short 10-session sites (75.8% response rate), 233 from split 10-session sites (86.9% response rate), and 32 from split or continuous 16-session sites (74% response rate). The combined response rate for the three program types among sites that participated in the program evaluation was 78.8%.

Demographic characteristics of participants are reported here. Selected demographic characteristics of individuals participating in the program in 2016-17 who completed the survey are listed below.

- **Gender of parent** – 81% women, 19% men
- **Age** – Average of 33.95 years; parents and caregivers ranged in age from 19 to 64 years
- **Number of children** – Average of 2.64 children per parent
- **Location** – 72.2% live in an urban setting; 27.8% in a rural or farm/ranch setting (11.3%)
- **Family status** – Married (86.7%); Single (never married) (5.3%); remarried (1.4%); separated/divorced (4.3%); cohabiting (1.8%); widowed (0.5%)
- **Employment status** – Full-time employment (64.6%); employed 26-39 hours a week (9.1%); employed less than 25 hours a week (6.9%); seeking employment (1.6%); not seeking outside employment (14.2%); other (3.7%)
- **Education level** – High school/GED or less (11.9%); some college (18.9%); 2-year college degree (17.5%); 4-year college degree (38.4%); master's degree or higher (13.2%)
- **Income level** – Under \$15,000/yr. (4.1%); \$15,000 to \$25,000/yr. (5%); \$25,000 to \$40,000/yr. (15.3%); \$40,000 to \$60,000/yr. (18.8%); Over \$60,000/yr. (56.8%); No information provided (0%)
- **Racial or ethnic background** – Caucasian (95.3%); Native American (0.9%); African American (0.6%); Asian (1.6%); Hispanic (1%); other (0.5%)
- **First child to enter kindergarten** – 47% yes; 53% no
- **Child care** – No child care (17.2%); 6 hrs/wk or less (8.2%); 6-12 hrs/wk (12.3%); 12-20 hrs/wk (7.8%); 20 hrs/wk or more (54.6%)
- **Eligibility for food stamps** – 3.1% yes; 96.9% no
- **Gender of participating child** – 48.9% male, 51.1% female
- **Program participation** – 39.2% of participants indicated attending all program sessions, while 50.8% of participants were involved in 75% or more of the program sessions during the year (a total of 90%). Also, 6.5% 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 (2016-17)

Question	Program Type	Not Useful	Slightly Useful	Some what Useful	Very Useful	Extremely Useful
Overall value of the program to me:	All Combined	0%	2.5%	19.4%	44.2%	33.9%
	16-week model	--	--	15.6%	37.5%	46.9%
	10-week split	--	1.7%	24.9%	45.5%	27.9%
	10-week short	--	3%	17.1%	44.1%	35.8%
Handouts and activities provided to me in this program were:	All Combined	0.1%	2.8%	20.7%	43.3%	33%
	16-week model	--	0%	18.8%	34.4%	46.9%
	10-week split	--	3%	24%	47.6%	25.3%
	10-week short	0.2%	3%	19.3%	41.9%	35.6%
		NA	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Information presented in a clear and helpful manner:	All Combined	--	0.1%	0.3%	33%	66%
	16-week model	--	--	--	18.8%	81.3%
	10-week split	--	--	--	35.2%	64.8%
	10-week short	--	0.2%	0.4%	32.9%	66.5%
I was treated in a respectful manner:	All Combined	--	0.1%	0%	12.4%	87.5%
	16-week model	--	--	--	0%	100%
	10-week split	--	--	--	17.2%	82.8%
	10-week short	--	0.2%	--	11%	88.8%

Participants expressed positive feelings about the program thus far, with 78% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them. Among participants in the 2016-17 program, 76% said the handouts and learning activities were very useful to them. Finally, nearly all of them (99%) agreed that the information was presented well and they were treated respectfully, with those who strongly agreed they were treated well at 87.5% among all participants. There were slight variations in the numbers reported by program type but not enough to suggest substantial differences, although participants in the 16-week model of the program expressed overall higher satisfaction.

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 2016-17, they responded as follows: (1) increased knowledge of child development (3.64); (2) increased knowledge of healthy parenting (3.61); (3) increased confidence in being a good parent (3.69); (4) increased parenting skills (3.54); (5) changed behavior as a parent (3.36); and (6) influenced the relationship with your child (3.51).

Table 2: General Impacts of Gearing Up for Kindergarten Program (2016-17)

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	0.6%	8.5%	36.1%	35.6%	19.1%
Increase your knowledge of healthy parenting	1%	8.9%	37.4%	33.2%	19.4%
Increase your confidence in being a good parent	2.2%	7.1%	32.9%	35.4%	22.4%
Increase your skills as a parent	2.1%	11%	36.1%	32.5%	18.4%
Change your behavior as a parent	4.1%	15.7%	37.8%	24.7%	17.7%
Influence your relationship with your child	3.7%	11.4%	34.8%	29.8%	20.3%

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 50 percent for sessions of the program across all sites.**

Among participants, 55% indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, 53% noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much, 58% felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and 51% said it increased their parenting skills a lot or very much. Additionally, 80% felt it changed their parent behavior at least somewhat, and 85% 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 2016-17 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 (2016-17)

Question Please rate how useful each of the following sources of information has been for you on parenting and school readiness	Overall Mean Score 1 (not useful) to 5 (very useful)
Information Source	Score
a. Your parents	3.47
b. Your child's other parent	3.67
c. Friends	3.35
d. Parents with children of a similar age	3.64
e. School	3.78
f. Preschool, Head Start or child care	3.78
g. Books, magazines or newspapers	3.12
h. Internet	3.05
i. <i>Gearing Up for Kindergarten</i> class and materials	4.07**
j. Other	--

** Highest ranking

The results from the 2016-17 session of the program indicate that participants rated the school (3.78), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.78), and parents with children of a similar age (3.64) as among 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 4.07, 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 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 that focus on these dimensions of parent knowledge were added to the assessment process. 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 4 represents the feedback with regard to parental confidence and beliefs about a child’s preparation and school readiness. Findings are presented in Table 4 for the participants in all program models in 2016-17. Specific findings related to each particular model of the program are available from the authors.

Table 4: Perceived Impacts on Parental Beliefs about School Readiness of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2016-17 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.	3.65	4.28	.63	Yes
2. I am confident in the activities we have engaged in at home to prepare our child for school transition and success.	3.65	4.28	.63	Yes
3. I am confident in the activities my child has participated in outside the home to become prepared for school transition and success.	3.80	4.36	.56	Yes

The next set of findings presented in Table 5 focuses on perceived impacts of the program on participant understanding of child development, healthy parenting, and school readiness.

Table 5: Perceived Impacts on Parent Knowledge and Beliefs of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2016-17 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.	3.64	4.09	.45	Yes
2. I understand social and emotional development in young children and its influence on learning and relationships.	3.67	4.15	.48	Yes
3. I understand how young children develop early reading, math and thinking skills.	3.51	4.07	.56	Yes
4. I understand parenting styles and discipline and their influence on young children.	3.77	4.24	.47	Yes
5. I understand key parenting practices that influence a young child's well-being and development.	3.76	4.22	.46	Yes
6. I understand the meaning and dimensions of school readiness.	3.62	4.23	.61	Yes
7. I understand the specific areas of knowledge and skill that my child is expected to demonstrate to be ready for school.	3.56	4.32	.76	Yes
8. I understand specific strategies I can implement in assisting my child to be prepared for entering kindergarten and achieving school success.	3.44	4.23	.79	Yes
9. I understand the key elements of a supportive home learning environment.	3.81	4.37	.56	Yes
10. I understand specific strategies for parent involvement in my child's education that can help my child to succeed in school.	3.73	4.32	.59	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 **moderate to substantial 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 a child 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 **moderate to substantial increases between .40 and .80 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 (.79), understanding of specific areas of knowledge and skills needed to be ready for school (.76), understanding of the meaning and dimensions of school readiness (.61), and understanding of strategies for involvement in a young child's education (.59).**
- 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 2016-17 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 about their activities 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 6 which indicate the pre-test score, post-program score, difference score and level of significance. The findings represented here present the information from participants in all of the program models during 2016-17.

Table 6: Parent-Child Reading Interactions – Parent Assessment

Question How often do:	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (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)?	4.21	4.42	.21	Yes
2. Your child(ren) ask to be read to?	3.99	4.28	.29	Yes
3. You go to the library with your child(ren)?	1.74	1.90	.16	Yes
4. Your child(ren) observe you reading books, magazines or other material at home?	3.52	3.75	.23	Yes
5. You discuss contents of a book with your child(ren)?	3.65	3.99	.34	Yes
6. Read for a period of 15 minutes or more with your child(ren)?	3.92	4.18	.26	Yes
7. Look for age-appropriate books to give to or share with your child(ren)?	3.75	3.99	.24	Yes
8. Observe your child(ren) looking at or interacting with books?	4.05	4.34	.29	Yes

Among the 8 indicators of parent-child reading interaction, significant differences emerged for all 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 were more attentive to finding age-appropriate books for their children. 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 2016-17, a retrospective survey approach was used with this portion of the evaluation.

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 once during the program, retrospectively at the end of 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 773 children was rated by parents on the PPASR in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program (this sample represents a response rate of approximately 78.8% 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), completing group scores (post-program score 2017), 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 7-11 cover the 16-week program, Tables 12-16 cover the 10-week split session program, and Tables 17-21 cover the 10-week continuous session program.

Table 7: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2016 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2017 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	3.70	4.40	.70	Yes
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	3.57	4.47	.90	Yes
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.27	3.83	.56	Yes
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.07	3.73	.66	Yes

Table 8: Friends and Social Interaction – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2016 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2017 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	3.57	4.20	.63	Yes
6. Takes turns with others.	3.57	4.33	.76	Yes
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	3.27	4.03	.76	Yes
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.60	4.13	.53	Yes
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.00	3.60	.60	Yes

Table 9: Knowing the Basics – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2016 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2017 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	3.23	4.23	1.00	Yes
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	3.70	4.40	.70	Yes
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	3.33	4.13	.80	Yes
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.33	4.13	.80	Yes

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2016 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2017 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.30	4.17	.87	Yes
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.27	3.83	.56	Yes
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.27	4.27	1.00	Yes
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.30	3.97	.67	Yes

Table 11: Practical Knowledge and Skills – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2016 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2017 (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).	2.67	3.57	.90	Yes
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.03	3.83	.80	Yes

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for **16-week split session programs** operated during the 2016-17 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 quite 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 nearly every item (of 19 items) was in the direction of the Proficient (3 or higher) or Advanced (4 or higher) category.
- **Moderate to substantial 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. All indicators showed evidence of change that reached statistical significance. 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 all of the 19 indicators between fall 2016 and spring 2017. This means that 100 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 all indicators. These changes included **11 significant increases between .50 and .80, and 8 large increases of .80 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:
 - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (1.00)**
 - **Adapts to new situations (1.00)**
 - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.90)**
 - **Participating in small groups (.90)**
 - **Talking about how others might feel (.87)**
 - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.80)**
 - **Creative in asking questions and solving problems (.80)**
 - **Awareness of who to contact for help (.80)**
 - **Takes turns with others (.76)**
 - **Remembers and follows simple directions (.76)**
 - **Explores environment and participates (.70)**
 - **Familiarity with numbers (.70)**
 - **Shares how he/she is feeling (.67)**
 - **Likes to work at solving problems (.66)**
 - **Works or plays cooperatively with friends (.63)**
- In analyzing all increases over .50 or higher, **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, 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 12: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2016 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2017 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	3.76	4.11	.35	Yes
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	3.89	4.30	.41	Yes
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.36	3.79	.43	Yes
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.24	3.77	.53	Yes

Table 13: Friends and Social Interaction – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2016 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2017 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	3.93	4.24	.31	Yes
6. Takes turns with others.	3.69	4.06	.37	Yes
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	3.63	4.09	.46	Yes
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.56	3.87	.31	Yes
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.22	3.60	.38	Yes

Table 14: Knowing the Basics – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2016 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2017 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	3.50	4.15	.65	Yes
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	3.94	4.45	.51	Yes
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	3.72	4.29	.57	Yes
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.65	4.06	.41	Yes

Table 15: Feelings and Families – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2016 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2017 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.54	3.94	.40	Yes
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.40	3.79	.39	Yes
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.45	3.95	.50	Yes
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.61	3.97	.36	Yes

Table 16: Practical Knowledge and Skills – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2016 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2017 (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	3.30	.58	Yes
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.32	3.76	.44	Yes

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for **10-week split session programs** operated during the 2016-17 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, all 19 items had a beginning average score below 4.
- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on all of the 19 indicators between fall 2016 and spring 2017. This means that 100 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 18 indicators. These changes included **13 substantive increases between .30 and .50, and 6 significant increases of .50 or higher.**
- The **15 most significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred by order of magnitude in the following areas:
 - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.65)**
 - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.58)**
 - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.57)**
 - **Likes to work at solving problems (.53)**
 - **Familiarity with numbers (.51)**
 - **Adapt to new situations (.50)**
 - **Remembers and follows simple directions (.46)**
 - **Awareness of who to contact for help (.44)**
 - **Drawing and using art to express ideas or feelings (.43)**
 - **Participating in small groups (.41)**
 - **Creative in solving problems (.41)**
 - **Talking about how others might feel (.40)**
 - **Manages feelings without hurting others (.39)**
 - **Tries to solve problems with friends (.38)**
 - **Taking turns with others (.37)**
- In analyzing all increases over .30 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 slightly higher in the 16-week model of the program. Second, there were smaller changes in the categories of Learning and Exploration, Friends and Social Interaction (social development), or Feelings and Families (emotional development) for children in the 10-week program, while the changes were modest but larger 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 2017 and so results were reported 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 17: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2017 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2017 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	3.86	4.26	.40	Yes
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	3.97	4.36	.39	Yes
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.47	3.85	.38	Yes
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.37	3.69	.32	Yes

Table 18: Friends and Social Interaction – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2017 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2017 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	4.03	4.30	.27	Yes
6. Takes turns with others.	3.86	4.17	.31	Yes
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	3.81	4.15	.34	Yes
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.78	4.01	.23	Yes
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.39	3.73	.34	Yes

Table 19: Knowing the Basics – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2017 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2017 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	3.84	4.30	.46	Yes
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	4.20	4.63	.43	Yes
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	3.89	4.42	.53	Yes
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.72	4.09	.37	Yes

Table 20: Feelings and Families – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2017 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2017 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.53	3.85	.32	Yes
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.52	3.78	.26	Yes
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.56	4.06	.50	Yes
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.71	3.99	.28	Yes

Table 21: Practical Knowledge and Skills – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2017 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2017 (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).	2.79	3.34	.56	Yes
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.46	3.80	.34	Yes

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for 10-week short session programs operated during the 2016-17 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 quite 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. Seventeen of 19 items had a beginning average score below 4, and the other beginning score was above 4.
- **Moderate to substantive gains were noted for most 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.**

- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on all of the 19 indicators between the beginning and end of the program in 2017. This means that 100 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 of the school readiness categories.** It should be noted that the total number of participants is much larger in this category and this makes significant differences much more likely.
- 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 all indicators. **These changes were almost all small to moderate increases between .30 and .60.**
- 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 (.56)**
 - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.53)**
 - **Adapt to new situations (.50)**
 - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.46)**
 - **Familiarity with numbers (.43)**
 - **Explores environment and participates (.40)**
 - **Participating in small groups (.39)**
 - **Drawing and using art to express ideas or feelings (.38)**
 - **Creative in asking questions (.37)**
 - **Awareness of who to contact for help (.34)**
- 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 (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. Second, again there were modest changes in the three categories of Learning and Exploration, Friends and Social Interaction, and Feelings and Families (emotional development) for children in this model of the 10-week program, while the changes were modest but larger 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.

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.

III. Child Assessment of School Readiness, Parent-Child Version

Child Assessment of School Readiness, Parent-Child Version

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 and practical domains as they enter kindergarten. As an additional way to assess the growth of children, the program evaluation for 2016-17 also included an objective basic skills evaluation by the child's parent at the beginning and end of the program. This was the fourth year this tool was used.

This objective parent assessment of a child's school readiness focused primarily on early literacy and early numeracy. The evaluation tool developed for this assessment was constructed by researchers at North Dakota State University. This instrument was added to the evaluation process based on participant and facilitator feedback and allows a direct, objective assessment of a child's developing abilities.

Parents were asked to complete the assessment tool once for each child, at the beginning of the program and also at the end of the program. The assessment allowed parents to provide a basic score related to the degree that a 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. Thus, the tool allows the program to provide feedback on a child that enables them to assess basic skills including identification of shapes and colors, number counting, number identification, letter identification, and sound identification. The assessment allows the program 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 acquisition of basic knowledge important to school readiness
- Assess a child's perceived development in relation to established domains of knowledge important to early learning and school readiness

The key domains assessed in the Child Assessment for School Readiness, Parent-Child Version included (1) *Shapes* (4 items), (2) *Colors* (8 items), (3) *Counting Knowledge*, (4) *Number Identification* (12 items), (5) *Letter Identification* (12 items), (6) *Sound Identification* (12 items), and (7) *Practical Knowledge* (name, address, etc.). Each domain was scored on a range from zero to the number of items possible (e.g., 0 to 12), except the last category which was a Yes/No response category.

Understanding Findings from the Child 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 objective parent assessment allows examination of a child's developing knowledge and skills across areas that are important to school readiness.
- Second, the instrument has been newly developed and so it is in a "pilot phase" regarding its utility. While we feel confident about its quality, further usage and research will enable refinement of its potential as an assessment tool for children in this age category.
- Third, the assessment is designed to allow 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 the child's proficiency in the beginning. If children already score

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).

- Fourth, 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.
- Fifth, 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 objective parent assessment of school readiness does allow us to do the following:

- We can determine at what level children appear 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 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 Assessment

Participation in the Child Assessment of School Readiness, Parent-Child Version required that parents sit with the child and complete the assessment scoring process at the beginning and completion of the program. Only those children who had an assessment completed at both times were included in the analysis. A total sample of 1006 children was assessed by parents in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program in the 2016-2017 program year. Of these, 747 children had matched data for both time periods, so the final response rate was 74.25%.

Findings on Ratings of Children’s School Readiness

The key areas of school readiness assessed by teachers were: (1) *Shapes* (4 items), (2) *Colors* (8 items), (3) *Counting Knowledge*, (4) *Number Identification* (12 items), (5) *Letter Identification* (12 items), (6) *Sound Identification* (12 items), and (7) *Practical Knowledge* (name, address, etc.).

Five tables (Tables 22-26) are included below, each of which covers one or two dimensions assessed with the child. Each table shows the score of the children on that item at the start of their enrollment in Gearing up for Kindergarten. Also, the score of the children on that item at the end of the program is included. Participants in all program types were included in this assessment, and a breakdown by program type is also included. The scores indicate progress (or lack thereof) that has occurred for children in the group during the 2016-17 program year.

Table 22: Identification of Shapes – Child Assessment Scores

Question	Program Type	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
Identification of Shapes (range of 0 to 4)	All Combined	3.41	3.64	.23	Yes
	16-week model	2.81	3.57	.76	Yes
	10-week split	3.31	3.62	.31	Yes
	10-week short	3.47	3.65	.18	Yes

Table 23: Identification of Colors – Child Assessment Scores

Question	Program Type	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
Identification of Colors (range of 0 to 8)	All Combined	7.71	7.86	.15	Yes
	16-week model	7.38	7.86	.48	Yes
	10-week split	7.71	7.88	.17	Yes
	10-week short	7.73	7.86	.13	Yes

Table 24: Number Counting Knowledge – Child Assessment Scores

Question	Program Type	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
Number Counting Ability (range of 0 to 100)	All Combined	28.54	39.45	10.91	Yes
	16-week model	17.19	30.90	13.71	Yes
	10-week split	23.64	40.21	16.57	Yes
	10-week short	30.91	39.50	8.59	Yes

These three tables summarize findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the overall program and three program session types operated during the 2016-17 year. A number of things emerge as a result of these findings:

- Most children are **already scoring high on identification of shapes**. The program does not specifically target this ability, and this is apparent because children overall make only small gains in their ability to identify shapes (exception in the 16-week program model).
- Most children are **already scoring high on identification of colors**. Again, there are only small increases in the ability of children to identify colors during participation in the program.
- Children overall and in each model of the program **make significant progress increasing their number counting ability**. Children in each of the “split models” of the program progress more than children in the 10-week short model, and this is likely due to increased time for parents and teachers to facilitate this learning.

Table 25: Number, Letter and Sound Identification – Child Assessment Scores

Question	Program Type	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
Number Identification (range of 0 to 12)	All Combined	6.82	8.25	1.43	Yes
	16-week model	4.86	6.81	1.95	Yes
	10-week split	6.31	8.40	2.09	Yes
	10-week short	7.10	8.25	1.15	Yes
Letter Identification (range of 0 to 12)	All Combined	7.83	9.33	1.50	Yes
	16-week model	5.38	9.05	3.67	Yes
	10-week split	7.22	9.41	2.19	Yes
	10-week short	8.17	9.30	1.13	Yes
Sound Identification (range of 0 to 12)	All Combined	5.86	7.63	1.77	Yes
	16-week model	3.67	5.81	2.14	Yes
	10-week split	5.20	7.57	2.37	Yes
	10-week short	6.21	7.73	1.52	Yes

Table 25 summarizes findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the overall program and three program session types operated during the 2016-17 year. Specifically, it shows results associated with number identification ability, letter identification ability, and sound identification ability. These abilities are important in school readiness because they underlie early numeracy and early literacy development. A number of things emerge as a result of these findings:

- Children in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely start at or close to the mid-point on the rating scale for each of these areas of ability.** The variation that exists is likely due to different starting points for the assessment due to the program models beginning at different times in the pre-kindergarten year, as well as sample variation.
- **Small to moderate gains were noted for each indicator 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. Increases in ability to identify numbers, letters and sounds furnishes a positive signal for those children participating in the program.**
- Children overall and in each model of the program **made progress increasing their number identification ability, letter identification ability, and sound identification ability.** Children in each of the “split models” of the program tend to progress more than children in the 10-week short model, and this is likely due to increased time for parents and teachers to facilitate this learning. Also, these children are measured over a longer time span and so higher gains are more likely. The highest gains typically occurred for children in either of the split session models of the program.

Table 26: Practical Knowledge – Child Assessment Scores

Question	Program Type	% Proficient at Beginning	% Proficient at End	Percentage Increase Score
1. Can say his/her full name.	All Combined	86.8%	90.6%	+3.8%
2. Can say parent’s first and last name.	All Combined	80.7%	84.4%	+3.7%
3. Can say his or her complete address.	All Combined	7.3%	18.7%	+11.4%

Table 26 summarizes findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the overall program during the 2016-17 year. It illustrates results associated with a child’s expression of practical knowledge, specifically, the ability to repeat one’s own name, a parent’s full name, and one’s full address. This knowledge is often called “practical knowledge” because it is useful for daily functioning. The results were modest, however, some things did emerge from these findings:

- A majority of children in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely know their own full name and a parent’s full name at the start of the program experience.** There is a small measured increase in the total percentage of children who express this ability by the end of the program (increase of 4 to 5 percent of the total children in this year).
- Only a few children in Gearing Up for Kindergarten express the ability to identify one’s own full address correctly at the start of the program experience. However, this ability typically increases also so that **the total percentage of children who express this ability by the end of the program approximately doubles.**

These findings regarding changes in children’s cognitive and practical abilities related to school readiness show that positive 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. 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 2016-17 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 am attempting to read more books at home.
- I plan to work on additional preschool information to prepare for kindergarten.
- We started implementing the cards and she is doing great!
- We make learning more fun. The three games given to us were helpful.
- I now take time in reading stories to sound out words and help them follow along in the book.
- I plan to read together more often.
- Read, color, and play more. Less T.V. and games.
- Read more and ask more questions.
- Questioning my child about stories and practicing rhymes, etc., at home.
- See more opportunities for learning in everyday life.
- Practice more spelling and reading.
- More reading time at our house has motivated him to learn more.
- More learning activities at home.
- More family games and reading.
- More positive discipline and reading more books as a family.
- Making sure what she needs to know for kindergarten.
- Look at giving more responsibility at home.
- Less screen time, more choices.
- Trying to do more reading at home every day!
- Just to give my daughter her own one on one time. With other siblings it wasn't happening as much as it should.
- It's a great program and the references/activities given were wonderful.
- It was wonderful to be a part of my daughter's learning.
- Doing a lot more learning games. Asking about letters in books, magazines, and while in the vehicle.
- It was a nice way to prepare children as well as parents for the changes that come with entering school.
- It reinforced the good things we were doing and also made me think about learning opportunities in everyday tasks and routines.
- It has reinforced the need to be varied in learning approaches with my child.
- I wish more would attend. It is such a great program. We are practicing letter sounds and higher numbers.
- I make sure to talk to my son more while also teaching at the same time, such as counting when walking, etc.
- I have instituted a 20 minute family reading period at least 5 times a week.
- I have been more intentional with the activities I do with my child to teach him specific skills.
- Being in the program has made me more involved with preparing my child for kindergarten.

Improved Parenting Efforts in Specific Areas

- Trying to change my tone when disciplining.
- We have started implementing the nurturing hearts style of parenting.

- We've tried a few discipline techniques that seems to work for things when it wasn't working before.
- Trying to implement a bed time routine.
- Trying different methods at home and found one that works.
- Try to be calmer while disciplining.
- To keep a routine going and always follow through. Don't get lazy or assume they know it.
- Ways to get out of the house quicker in the mornings. Healthy eating.
- Discussing parenting styles, picky eaters, etc. has been helpful.
- Thank you! Thinking outside the box for learning!
- The program has helped me to be more patient and seek to redirect negative attention as approval.
- The love and logic strategies were very useful!
- Slow down a bit and let things come when he is ready.
- Sleep schedules—great class.
- Reinforcement of parenting techniques, such as not threatening and giving options.
- It helped us to pinpoint strategies and skills we could work on. It is also valuable to see our child in a school setting.
- Putting my children to bed earlier to help them have a better day.
- Provided an opportunity for both parents to connect and learn together—it is hard to find that time.
- More positive discipline and reading more books as a family.
- This class helped my husband to view things differently and helped us to understand more how we are as parents and things we can do together.
- Brought me and my husband more on the same page. To make stronger positive impacts than we had.
- Less phones, more reading, more math games.
- Learning bedtime schedule and calendar schedule.
- Helps parents understand how to productively encourage and discipline your child.
- Less screen time.
- Good ideas to get my child on better routines.
- I work on applying conscious discipline. I also recognize areas that my child will need to work on.
- I have tried being more aware of my parenting style and to use different parenting strategies.
- I have started to take more time to think about what I'm going to say, not raise my voice as often, enforce more consequences, and offer choices.
- I learned how different parenting styles can affect each child.
- Be more patient and consistent.
- Be more consistent, friendly, and firm.
- Bedtime routine discussion—we now stick to a strict routine.
- After doing the evaluation the first night, I realized what we needed to work on.

Increased Awareness of Child's Specific Needs

- More aware of my child's readiness.
- We have started talking about our feelings more often and started to understand our child's actions more.
- We have been more aware of reading and the importance of repetition.
- We got a better understanding of parenting styles versus child's wants/needs.
- Very good refreshers on things I learned in the past.
- This program was very beneficial to my child. Now I have more tools to continue working with him.
- I see things a little better through my child's eyes.

- This gave me a lot of information about my son and the type of child he is, while giving me tips about how to use the information to the fullest.
- Opens your eyes to different viewpoints.
- More aware of my daughter's learning style. Made things more hands-on.
- My child has autism. We finally created a chore chart and visual schedule.
- More interest in the focus on age appropriate behavior and discipline. We have modified our approaches.
- More understanding of child development and more patient.
- I have learned more about my child's temperament and learning style.
- Learned to listen more to my child.
- I have learned how to teach my child better.
- It has reinforced the need to be varied in learning approached with my child.
- I think some of the information on child development helps me relate to my child a little better and understand his learning style.
- I really appreciate this program because it helped me develop knowledge about me and my child.
- I learned interesting things on brain development.
- I learned fun and different ways to get my twins to participate in clean-up.
- This program informed me on what is expected of my children in kindergarten.
- I feel parenting has no preparation or training but this is as close as it gets.
- I feel more understanding of my preschooler and his learning. It also makes me want to be a better parent.
- I enjoyed the temperament of the child section. It aided me in remembering the diversity of personalities among children and the different approaches geared to different types.
- Helped me understand my two boys with very different personalities.
- I am able to listen to my daughter more and understand her feelings better.
- Be more patient and encouraging with my children as they are learning because everyone learns in a different way.
- More understanding and patient.
- Helped me know how to care for my child.
- Learning the different learning styles.
- Knowing what my child needs to know and work on before starting school.
- Program was great. He was excited each time he went. It gave us more tools to better ready him for kindergarten.
- It has made me aware of his trouble areas so I can work on helping him build his confidence.
- It is full of good information to help my child develop.
- I have more confidence that my child is ready for kindergarten and how I can help him.
- I enjoyed watching my child interact with kids the same age doing the same activities. It helped me see where she is developmentally.
- Found it very helpful in making sure we are doing the right things. Getting reading level ready books, for example.

How has your child benefited from Gearing Up for Kindergarten?

Increased Social Confidence and Positive Peer Interactions

- Social interaction and understanding how to behave in a classroom.
- She is more confident in a class setting with other kids her age.
- More comfortable introducing himself to new kids.
- She has greatly improved. She has learned to socialize and is more knowledgeable about kindergarten concepts.
- Opportunity for my child to meet and interact with future classmates.
- Seeing how excited she was each time we came and how she has progressed since day one.
- Introducing and engaging with new classmates!
- The experience overall has helped him to be more confident. He has made new relationships.
- Knows more about the schools and teachers. Met other kids.
- More social, learning classroom settings and how to behave.
- It made him get along with other kids better.
- He has become more comfortable with groups of kids without parents being there.
- Met teachers, comfortable with them and other students, better understanding of what's to come.
- Interacting with children and teachers. Taking turns, getting to know elementary school.
- Interacting with new teachers. Learning to share with his sister.
- He is very excited to start school. Glad he met his teacher and got to have time in his future classroom.
- He's better at listening and adapting to new situations and activities.
- More outgoing, excited about school.
- Made new friends and got more comfortable with school.
- More exposure socially to other children his age and different environments.
- It helped her meet future classmates and teachers.
- It made a difference in his attitude about attending kindergarten this fall. He's more positive.
- Very excited for kindergarten.
- She is more comfortable on her own and working and playing with other kids.
- She has gotten more comfortable around other adults (teachers) and other children.
- Loves the environment of school setting. He's even more excited now for kindergarten.
- Became more outspoken than before.
- Lots of great and positive social interaction.
- She has learned a lot and the interaction has helped her a lot.
- My child is opening up more.
- My son is less shy and this helped him.
- Not afraid or shy now. Feels comfortable with teacher and school. Loves the projects and now has confidence.
- She is more verbal and tried harder at participating in activities.
- Gained confidence and eased anxiety about starting kindergarten.
- She has more of a love for learning!
- My son was excited for kindergarten prior to starting this program. He's even more excited now at the end of the program to start kindergarten.
- She has become confident, familiar, and more excited about attending kindergarten this coming fall.
- He is more comfortable being left in the classroom without me. He is learning to take turns better.
- She has made friends and learned every week she came.
- She loved it! She is shy at first but got more comfortable each time we came.

- He has said several times that he was nervous about kindergarten. Now I feel he has a better understanding of school settings and hopefully he has less nerves about it.
- Used materials to help him cope, more socializing and managing his feelings without outbursts.
- Given her confidence in going to kindergarten.
- She has learned how to participate in activities with others and what it's like to be part of a class.
- He is no longer resistant to the idea of going to kindergarten.
- She is excited to see the teachers and to come. This program makes her feel important. She has learned so much!
- She has become more involved and grown up. She is less scared and will stay without mom there.
- She is much more social and is able to interact better with others when I'm not around.
- I have noticed she's more focused and patient with whom she interacts.
- Confidence, friendship, and perspective.
- She just loves coming and spending time with all her new friends. It has made her so excited for school next year.
- He is less shy and has come out of his shell a bit more.
- Its great socialization for my child and good practice being away from parents in a classroom setting.
- Social skills, interacting with other children her age has improved.
- He is very excited for kindergarten. I feel like this program takes the "scary" out of starting kindergarten for both student and parents.

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

- It provided great social experiences and learning projects.
- My child can now write his own name and knows most of his letters.
- He wants to write and color and also learn letters now.
- Helped reinforce things that he has been exposed to and learned.
- She has learned her letter sounds, counting, handwriting, and self-confidence has improved.
- More confident in skills.
- He has learned a lot and come a long way.
- He has become much more interactive.
- I noticed attention span started to be longer.
- He loves seeing what they'll be doing—especially the science experiments!
- Socially and is more interested in learning.
- Identifying letters of the alphabet.
- Listening to instructions and following them more easily.
- I think she will be better prepared for kindergarten next fall.
- He has been more engaged in learning letters and numbers.
- Loved to take home library books. And increased interest in reading.
- Excited to start school and eager to learn to he can go to school.
- He has shown growth in confidence doing school activities.
- Gets excited to take books home and read them.
- More focus on reading, sharing, and scheduled meetings.
- She's learned a lot more letters and other things to be ready for school.
- She is able to recognize more letters than when she started.
- I have noticed she is better at some things based on the activities she has done.
- He likes science experiments the best and has fun once he gets here.
- What to expect while at school. Getting correct names of shades.
- Counting and patience.

- He is focusing on books and what is being said.
- He has been given an idea of how to better follow directions.
- More confident with numbers and letters and her readiness for starting school.
- She has learned more letters and numbers and waits patiently to take turns.
- More willing to do learning activities.
- Activities at the program make him want to play more like that at home.
- He loves getting a book and reading it every night.
- Her letters have improved—writing her name correctly.
- We are starting to learn how to read with the handouts.
- He has learned how to apply hands on activities to his learning experience.
- He is more enthusiastic about books, reading, and going to kindergarten.
- Prepared him socially for starting school next year. Games and take homes prepared him for the academics of next year.
- She is not as nervous, ready to learn. Willing to sit and read together much more.
- Learned new games and improved with counting and letters.

Greater Awareness and Comfort with School Routines and Expectations

- Great opportunity to get our child ready for kindergarten and meet the teachers!
- Has helped him in what to expect and calmed fears.
- He would cry anytime we even mentioned the word “school” and now he’s super excited and wants to go to school every day!
- My son always reminded us to come. He learned a lot about how to behave in a school setting.
- He now knows his way around school. He learned how lunch time will go.
- More comfortable in a school setting. Helping her to learn what to expect.
- Getting to know more kids and more routines of school.
- He’s more aware of how things will work next year as well as definitely ready for the next stage of his education. Great program!!
- Help them feel comfortable at school and with their teachers.
- Learned that she will be on her own and that it’s okay to be nervous at first.
- School building, classrooms, parents, students, and teachers are now familiar to her and that takes away the fear and distraction.
- It helped her get to know the school she will be going to, so she isn’t nervous.
- She sees the need for structure in a learning environment.
- He is more comfortable being here, he was unsure before.
- Night and day difference; more confident/excited for school in the fall.
- Helped her get used to the classroom environment.
- Met teachers, comfortable with them and other students, better understanding of what’s to come.
- He is very excited about school. Glad he met his teacher and got to have time in his future classroom.
- She will be more comfortable since she has been in the surroundings before her first day.
- It has helped her meet future classmates and teachers.
- Loves the environment of school setting.
- Chance to experience the building, meet other classmates and teachers.
- Becoming familiar with her surrounding, classroom, classmates, and teacher.
- He was very apprehensive about kindergarten and did not want to go. He is now very excited about kindergarten.
- The kindergarten setting and seeing our investment in the importance of school.
- He has been able to be in a classroom with kids his age and know how to listen and what to expect.

What did you like most about the program?

Time Spent Together in Learning Activities with Child

- Activities in the beginning along with the handouts. Child loved them.
- The ability to both interact with my child doing fun activities and then also see them interact with teachers and other students.
- Time set aside to be intentional in activities with my son.
- My child is extremely happy to come each week for all of the activities.
- The first part of the session where parents and kids learn together.
- The games sent home with the children.
- The participation of the teachers.
- The children's involvement in stories and songs.
- Our favorite part is taking the time to do projects and experiments with just one of our children.
- The bonding the kids and parents get before the first day of kindergarten.
- The stations at the beginning of classes.
- Meeting the other children and parents in my child's class. The one on one time I get to spend focusing on my child and the interaction in the learning projects.
- The information and the time with my child.
- The interaction between parents and kids.
- Having special one on one time with my child.
- The teacher and parent/child activities.
- Lots of useful information and games we can play with kids.
- The homework assignments were fun.
- That is at his school he will be attending. All the activities, books, and social interaction.
- The 1:1 time we got to spend with my child.
- Activities with my child were fun; bonding. Meeting other parents.
- I love the games we make and take home.
- I loved all the activities me and my daughter did together.
- Being able to watch our child interact in a school setting. Doing the games with her.
- Time for my child and interactive stations.
- Games and classroom time!
- Parent-child interaction and activities.
- The activities I was able to do with my son and help him learn.
- The opportunities for interaction between preschoolers and the kindergarten teachers and also between parents.
- Love the activities with my child and educational information for parents.
- Being with my daughter in an environment among other children who are there for a shared purpose.
- Station work with child and opportunity for child to work independently.
- The kid/parent activities. My child and I laughed a lot and enjoyed our time together and also made new friends.
- I enjoyed being able to do structured educational activities with my child.
- The activities here are exciting for them and she looks forward to seeing my "homework".
- Center activities with my child, activity cards with suggestions for what to do at home were nice.
- Gives good examples of activities to do at home to help reinforce learning.
- The parent-child activity time is a great opportunity to spend one on one time with my child and see his skills.
- Hands on projects were great. Each station was set up to be done in a short time to keep kids entertained.

Preparation of Parent and Child for Kindergarten Experience

- Very informational and allows the kids to experience getting familiar with the school and teachers before starting kindergarten.
- It gives the students a taste of what kindergarten will be like.
- The socialization and knowledge/comfort gained by our son in being ready for this big transition.
- The time the kids spend in a class setting without parents.
- Familiarizing my child with the school and some procedures.
- Knowing/learning what is expected of my kindergartener.
- Learning about how expansive their little minds are and how much information they are fully capable of retaining.
- It gets children used to the school setting.
- It really focuses on how to help your child be successful in learning.
- It allows the kids to participate in a school like environment before going full time and being overwhelmed.
- Acclimation to the school environment.
- Finding out that my daughter is ready for kindergarten by discussing what is expected of them at school.
- Interaction; adapts children to environment.
- Seeing how much our son changed even in the short time.
- Learning how to help prepare kids for school.
- Program was great. He was excited each time he went. It gave us more tools to better ready him for kindergarten.
- Kids being in their soon to be school. Getting familiar with school.
- The opportunity for my child to interact with their peers and their teachers.
- It gives the kids an idea of what to expect, come kindergarten.
- My child really benefitted from the experience with respect to getting comfortable with school and experiencing the classroom environment.
- I like that my child got to experience a classroom setting for a short period of time. She did not attend pre-school or daycare, so this is a good experience for her.
- Gets the child excited about school and belonging.
- Loved this program! My child was scared to go to kindergarten and now can't wait to go!
Thank you!
- Learned what else she needed to know to get prepared.
- It was a nice way to prepare children as well as parents for the changes that come with entering school.
- Gets you familiar as a parent with what will be expected from your child in a school setting.
- Chance for child to be in his future school and experience the kindergarten classroom.
- I thought it was very helpful for us as parents to get our children ready for kindergarten.
- I think this program is great for lessening the anxiety for starting school.
- I think this class is very important for getting kids comfortable and letting parents know what will be expected.
- I think it is a great idea for the kids to get to know other kids, the classrooms, and teachers so when they start it is familiar to them.
- I liked getting familiar with expectations, other parents, teachers, kids, and classrooms.
- Seeing my son comfortable with me leaving the room. Seeing him in a classroom setting doing well.
- The information the parents also received on how to better help and prepare the kids.
- What I like most is I have materials and knowledge to get her ready for the fall.
- It isn't only about getting your child ready. This is my first and it was very helpful to know what to expect.

- I feel more confident sending him to school knowing the skills they expect of my child.
- That my child has been exposed to the school and teachers. I learned a lot of useful techniques.
- It's an opportunity for my child to get comfortable with the school, teacher, and some other classmates.
- Knowledge of what goes on inside the classroom and what is expected of children and parents.
- I enjoyed the separate portion of the class—good for both his independence and for parents to relate and discuss issues.
- I enjoyed it, my daughter as well, very much. I feel confident in her school readiness and in the knowledge, I have been preparing her well.
- I absolutely loved bringing my daughter to this program. It made my child more comfortable with the idea of school. I feel it will be extremely useful when my child starts kindergarten.
- Helpful because the instructor/teacher help the youngsters learn what to expect for kindergarten.
- Program allowed my child to get to know the school facilities, his teachers, and it was a great practice session for learning how to behave and participate in a school setting.
- It helps me feel more comfortable sending my child to school and I think it will help her to feel more confident this fall.
- It benefits the parents as much as the kids.
- Getting involved with other parents and preparing kids for the first day of kindergarten makes that transition so much easier.

Parenting Discussion and Support

- We really enjoyed the interaction with the other parents and seeing what others do.
- The social interaction for the kids and parents. Being able to learn from other parents.
- This is a great program. Good to have conversations with other parents.
- The handouts are very helpful!
- The parent information.
- Sharing about parenting is very helpful.
- Hearing from the teachers. Getting to know other kids and parents.
- Open communication between parents.
- Nice to share ideas with other parents.
- Discussing day to day issues with other parents.
- Brought me and my husband more on the same page. To make stronger impacts that we had.
- My child has fun while learning and the parent education is helpful to me to learn new things.
- Getting to know other parents, students, and staff members.
- I like that the kids and parents get to know each other and the teacher ahead of time.
- Networking for parents and socialization for kids.
- It was nice to talk with other parent and hear their concerns and experiences.
- Realizing I'm not alone...
- I like the way you taught us how to increase the knowledge of our kids.
- I liked the reference sheets to use at home and useful ideas for parenting.
- I liked that other parents had similar struggles and the lessons taught me new ways to approach issues.
- The helpful tips from the instructor and different views of other parents about parenting.
- Learning about parenting.
- The activities that the children are engaged in and the chance to talk to other parents are two big things I like the most.
- The tips and reinforcement of what parents do at home helps the child.
- I get to know other teachers and parents better.

- The helpful tips on parenting. Also seeing many other parents are going through the same things.
- All of the helpful tips and how well they work with child and family.
- Great parenting advice and techniques.
- Getting to know the families and kids my daughter will go to kindergarten with.
- Meeting the other children and parents in my child's class.
- I really liked the material that was brought home. I thought it was very useful.
- Community feeling, everyone is valued.
- Parent groups and sharing ideas; speakers' Q & A.
- I liked the parent led centers most.

Quality of the Program Experience

- Wonderful teachers!
- Wonderful experience, would highly recommend.
- We found the course to be very beneficial. The teachers did a fantastic job.
- Very helpful to both kids and parents.
- This is my 3rd child of which 2 have attended GUK it is a great program!
- This is a great program. I had 2 children attend and found it beneficial for both.
- The teachers are prepared, knowledgeable, and attentive to the needs of the parents and children.
- Thank you for reminding us how important reading is to our children.
- The staff have been awesome!
- The parent sessions were amazing!
- Thank you for providing childcare.
- Thank you for all the time and hard work that was put into this program. I am glad there was no cost.
- Teachers have done a great job in preparation, participation, and leadership.
- Teachers are friendly and caring. My son loved all of them.
- So helpful and such a great learning and growing experience.
- Really great class. Good information, had lots of fun with it.
- Lots of activities to keep her attention—very informative.
- How organized it is! The teacher was very invested in the kids.
- My child has loved the program.
- How excited my daughter was to come each week.
- Loved this experience 4 years ago with my oldest and still loved it now with my youngest.
- It was very informative, wish we would've done this with our oldest.
- It continues to be a great program with valuable information. This is the 3rd time I have attended.
- It has been a great experience and very beneficial to my son.
- I would like to share my extreme gratitude to everyone involved in this program. What an amazing program—thank you!
- The teachers were great—interesting, funny, and friendly.
- I liked the structure and format of the class.
- I enjoyed the program—it reiterated the importance and motivated me.
- I feel this program is very beneficial for so many reasons, e.g. schedules and basic day-to-day tasks.
- Great job this year! Great intention! All delivered in a fun and helpful manner! Kudos ladies!
- GUK is a great program for parents and children to learn about their school.
- Amazing program, feels like an advantage over kids who don't attend Gearing Up.
- My son loves to come and get ready for kindergarten.
- Fun and engaging.