

Making a difference

NDSU EXTENSION SERVICE

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Families Improve Reading Practices Following Involvement in *Gearing Up for Kindergarten*

The Situation

The first five years of life and critical and early learning influences a child's long-term outcomes and success. Young children are born "ready to learn," but they need guidance and help from parents to develop language and early reading skills that are critical for school readiness. Children exposed to reading in a family setting experience a variety of learning options with one simple activity. Through reading experiences in their early years, children gain knowledge and abilities that help them develop their own reading skills and prepares for learning in a school setting.

Extension Response

The NDSU Extension Service partners with local school districts to offer *Gearing Up for Kindergarten*, a family education program focused on furthering child development, healthy parenting, and school readiness for families with children entering kindergarten. During the 2014-15 school year, 973 families participated in the program across North Dakota at 57 different sites. The program offers a unique educational opportunity for families with children entering kindergarten. Parents and children come together to participate in learning activities, become familiar with school environment and expectations, build parent-child relationships, and enhance skills associated with school readiness.

Impacts

Based on responses by parents who engaged with their child(ren) in the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program during the 2014-15 school year, the following impacts were reported:

- Parents indicated that participation in the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program provided a greater benefit to their child in preparing for school than any other source of information or support.

- Children who participated in the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program were significantly more likely to ask their parents to be read to following the program than they were before the program.
- Children who participated in the program were significantly more likely to look at and interact with books following participation in the program than they were prior to their participation.
- Parents who participated in the program with their child looked for age-appropriate books to share with their child significantly more often than they did before the program.
- Parents showed significant gains in discussing contents of a book with their child following involvement in the program when compared to their efforts at the start of the program.
- Children experienced significant increases in reading for at least 15 minutes a day with a parent following participation in *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* when compared to their level of reading prior to the program.

Feedback

- "We have been striving to read more frequently to our child after attending this program, because we have learned the benefits of how important reading is to a child's learning and development."
- "Interest in books, reading and decision making has improved. [My kids] love coming each week."

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