

Making a difference

NDSU EXTENSION SERVICE

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

***Gearing Up for Kindergarten* Helps Parents Increase Support for Child School Readiness**

The Situation

The academic and social expectations of children entering kindergarten are important for parents to understand. In North Dakota and across the country, new pre-kindergarten standards have emerged to guide parents and teachers in preparing children for school transition and success. Parents are a child's first and best teachers. However, many parents need and want support in their role of preparing their children for success in school. Research on the importance of children's early years, increased high standards as children enter kindergarten, and an emphasis on school readiness have combined to trigger greater interest by parents in helping young children enter school successfully.

Extension Response

The NDSU Extension Service offers a prevention-focused parent and family education program, *Gearing Up for Kindergarten*, in association with local school districts to facilitate healthy parenting and school readiness for children in North Dakota. In the 2014-15 school year, the program operated at 57 sites across North Dakota with 973 families participating. The program, offered in the year before a child enters kindergarten, combines parent-child learning activities, parent education, and school readiness skills for children.

Impacts

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

- Parents who participated in *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* showed significant increases in their level of confidence regarding their child's preparedness for kindergarten and success in the school setting.
- Parents in the program indicated they were significantly more confident following the program in the activities they had engaged in at home to prepare their child for school transition and success.
- Parents in the program indicated they were also significantly more confident following the program in the activities their child had engaged in outside the home to prepare for school transition and success.
- Parents showed significant increases in their understanding of specific strategies they can use to help prepare their child for school entry and success.
- Parents made significant gains in their understanding of the specific areas of knowledge and skill that their child was expected to demonstrate to be ready for school.
- Parents demonstrated significant increases in their knowledge of specific ways they can be involved as a parent in their child's education and facilitate positive growth.

Feedback

- *"Being a first time parent [getting] involved with school, it has opened my eyes to how much is involved with their education."*
- *"Our child feels more comfortable with what to expect in kindergarten and we have learned more about what we need to work on to get ready for school."*

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