

Making a difference

NDSU EXTENSION SERVICE

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Teachers Describe Positive Benefits for Children from *Gearing Up for Kindergarten*

The Situation

Making the transition to kindergarten is not always easy for young children. In fact, nearly 1 in 2 children has difficulty with this transition, and children who fall behind their peers when kindergarten begins often remain behind in their progress. Research about the significance of a child's early years, the critical need for parent involvement, and an increased emphasis on school readiness have linked to trigger greater interest by parents, teachers and schools in helping young child prepare for a successful transition into school.

Extension Response

The NDSU Extension Service partners with local school districts to offer *Gearing Up for Kindergarten*, a family education program intended to enhance school readiness for families in North Dakota and beyond. During the 2014-15 school year, the program operated at 57 sites statewide with 973 families enrolled. The program operates in partnership with local schools and communities and combines parent-child learning activities, parent education, and school readiness activities for children.

Impacts

Based on open-ended interviews with teachers who facilitated the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program during the 2014-15 school year, the following positive outcomes for pre-kindergarten children were described:

Increased Awareness and Familiarity with kindergarten Setting and Expectations

- “The kids that I have in *Gearing Up*...know my teaching style...know the expectations...they have an advantage over [other] kids...they know the school too, so that helps in transition.”
- “I think the students that have been here before are familiar with the teachers...and just some of the expectations...and they seem to transition better [during the] first six to eight weeks of school.”

Improved Academic Knowledge and Skills

- “We can breeze through those [early] skills...When they come to school, a lot of kids...I just see an improvement on that. It allows us to be able to do more things in the classroom and progress through the curriculum much quicker.”

Enhanced Comfort with School Transition

- “The ones who participate in *Gearing Up for Kindergarten*, they are the most comfortable here with the teachers, staff...they were comfortable with the surroundings, and the transition was easier for the kids who attended.”

Expanded Social Confidence and Abilities

- “I saw definite improvement in social-emotional skills when they get separated from their parents...[in] cooperation between peers as they have been exposed to them...I really feel like the biggest benefit is the social-emotional learning.”

Enhanced Skill Development and Learning Initiation

- “The kids participate in activities that are presented in *Gearing Up for Kindergarten*. It brings out interest in some activities, whether it be reading, skill preparation, or math...So, I am sure that the learning process was starting [there], and I think helped definitely prepare them.”

Contact

Sean Brotherson, PhD
Extension Family Life Specialist
Dept. 7260, P.O. Box 6050, North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND 58108-6050
(701) 231-6143
sean.brotherson@ndsu.edu