
Gearing Up for Kindergarten
Project Overview & Year-End Report for
2013-2014

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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 8th year in 2013-14. *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 2013-2014 the program operated at 70 sites across North Dakota with 1081 families enrolled. Fifty-seven school districts participated and held a total of 95 course sessions. Response rate to the evaluation was 93.2% (1,008 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 2013-14.

- **Program participation – 89% of participants indicated involvement in 75% or more of the program sessions of the program during the year, while another 7.4% 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 **84% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them.** Among participants in the 2013-14 program, 82% 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 83% among all participants.

- **General impacts of program participation** - Among participants, **59%** indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, **58%** noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much, **61%** felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and **53%** said it increased their parenting skills a lot or very much. Additionally, **82%** felt it changed their parenting behavior at least somewhat, and **87%** indicated that it influenced their relationship with their child positively.
- **Program value versus other information sources** - The results from the 2013-14 session of the program indicate that participants rated the school (3.78), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.80), and parents with children of a similar age (3.67) 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 4.02, indicating that participants felt the class was more useful to them regarding parenting and school readiness than any other information source assessed. Participants rated the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program substantially higher than any other information source assessed.**
- **Increases in children's school readiness as described by parents** - Among 19 indicators of school readiness assessed by parents regarding their children, **significant differences were measured on 15 of the 19 indicators between fall 2013 and spring 2014. This means that 79 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten.** In analyzing all increases, the findings suggest growth in five primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (knowing the alphabet and numbers, etc.); (4) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities; and (5) ability to manage emotions and adapt in a new environment.
- **School knowledge of parents and children** - For both parents and children, indicators of school knowledge showed significant increases in preparation and knowledge for the school experience. For pre-kindergarten children, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased by 12%, those who met a kindergarten teacher at their prospective school increased 19%, and those who met peers they will be with in kindergarten increased 13%. For parents, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased 14%, and those who had met a kindergarten teacher at their child's prospective school increased 14%.
- **Children's comfort and familiarity with school** - For children in the program, among 4 indicators of comfort level and familiarity with school, **significant differences were measured on all 4 indicators between fall 2013 and spring 2014. Findings showed that children became more familiar with kindergarten routines and expectations, more comfortable with the school environment, and more excited about beginning school.**
- **Increases in children's 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.**

- **Child social and emotional development** - On two measures of child social and emotional development completed by parents, **significant differences were measured on 11 of 12 indicators. This finding indicates that parents identify significant progress in areas of social and emotional development in their pre-kindergarten children participating in the program.**
- **Parent-child reading interactions** – Parents indicated significant changes on a variety of parent-child reading interactions during the program. Areas of reading interaction that showed significant improvement were **parents became more likely to go to the library with their child, they were more likely to discuss contents of a book with their children, they read more often with children, and they 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*
 - We have implemented a few ideas from this program but our favorite would have to be reading every night.
 - I have spent more time reading to my child, practicing counting, and properly disciplining.
 - This has been a fantastic program. I find myself interacting with my son much more intentionally.
 - It helped us to try different ways of doing things and brought us closer as a family and closer on parenting.
 - *Improved Parenting Efforts in Specific Areas*
 - I learned different approaches to help my child emotionally.
 - I've learned to ask more questions when I read books to him, and what questions to ask so that he will give answers.
 - This program really gave us some opportunities to look at the way we parent our children and things we can do differently to help them succeed as students and beyond.
 - We practice more math skills and word skills, and talk more about the environment.
 - Some of my communication skills, reasoning with emotions and feelings with my child have changed from the suggestions from the program. Positive result.
 - *Increased Awareness of Child's Specific Needs*
 - This program is very important because I learned many useful things for the development of my child, especially how to help a child in the teaching and learning process.
 - I now recognize and understand different learning styles.
 - I have been trying to incorporate more math in our daily activities along with numbers and letters to get him more familiar with them.
 - I have used more of a hands-on approach when teaching my child with great success. It was eye-opening!

- **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 timid/shy daughter needed this “practice” run through while we were just down the hall. She did a great job. Really matured!
 - My child is extremely shy so this program was so beneficial to get her comfortable being in the big school and classrooms.
 - Social interaction outside of school has helped him learn new things and has increased his willingness to share things with his peers.
 - She has learned how to interact with teachers and her peers. She feels comfortable navigating the school.
 - ***Increased Pre-Academic Skills in Reading, Math and Other Subjects***
 - My child is 100% more excited about “practicing kindergarten” at home after participating in GUK. She loves learning her letter sounds and has started reading!
 - Learned routines, met other children, did new fun activities, especially the science and art activities.
 - She has become more interested in numbers, letters, colors - she is excited when she knows she is going to the program.
 - She has really excelled at learning and becoming more focused on how she needs and what she needs to do to perform at school.
 - My child’s letter recognition has tremendously increased since beginning this course. I’ve been able to notice areas where he needs to work at growth.
 - She has improved with letters and has new LOVE for reading!
 - Learned letters of the alphabet, played with other kids, learned problem solving skills.
 - ***Greater Awareness and Comfort with School Routines and Expectations***
 - She has learned some of the basic etiquette for school - raising hands, being quiet, walking in line, and most importantly, we have worked on some of the key readiness skills at home - letters, letter and sound recognition, numbers, etc.
 - Being able to be in a classroom setting, understanding, taking turns and raising hands.
 - Child and parent feel extremely comfortable and prepared about kindergarten transition. I feel much more comfortable than prior to this class.
 - She is much more comfortable with and familiar with how kindergarten will be in the fall, the rules and routines. It made her more excited about school and about learning in general.

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

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

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Curriculum Development and Description

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

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

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

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

Session Objectives

Session 1 - Orientation & What to Expect in Kindergarten

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

Session 2 - Parenting Styles

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

Session 3 - Brain Development in Infancy and Early Childhood

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

Session 4 - Raising a Reader & Early Literacy

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

Session 5 – Defining Discipline: Nurturance and Prevention

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

Session 6 – Defining Discipline: Guidance and Consequences

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

Session 7 - Developing Responsibility and Independence!

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

Session 8 – The Importance of Good-Quality Sleep

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

Session 9 – Learning Styles and School Readiness

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

Session 10 - Children and Temperament

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

Session 11 – Early Literacy and Math Skills

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

Session 12 – Social & Emotional Development

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

Session 13 – Screen Time vs. Real Life

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

Session 14 – Feeding Healthy Habits - Children and Nutrition

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

Session 15 – Safety Always

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

Session 16 – A Parent’s Role in School Success

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

Program Description

Gearing Up for Kindergarten

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

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

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

The goals of the program are:

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

Family Recruitment and Program Sites

Recruitment brochures designed to inform families about the program were developed and distributed through a variety of cooperating agencies, including Head Start, Public Schools, Child Care Resource & Referral, 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 2013-2014 the program operated at 70 sites across North Dakota with 1081 families enrolled. Fifty-seven school districts participated and held a total of 95 course sessions. Response rate to the evaluation was 93.2% (1,008 total respondents). These sites were located in 52 separate North Dakota communities.

Small Communities (pop. 2000 or less)

- Beach, ND (southwest)
 - Lincoln Elementary School
- Bowman, ND (southwest)
 - Roosevelt Public School
- Buffalo, ND & Tower City, ND (east)
 - Maple Valley Elementary School
- Cannon Ball, ND (south central) (Standing Rock tribal community)
 - Solen-Cannon Ball Elementary School
- Carson, ND (southwest)
 - Roosevelt Elementary School
- Cooperstown, ND (northeast)
 - Griggs County Central Public School
- Dunseith, ND (north central) (Turtle Mountain tribal community)
 - Dunseith Elementary School
- Elgin, ND (southwest)
 - Elgin-New Leipzig Public School
- Ellendale, ND (southeast)
 - Ellendale Public School
- Enderlin, ND (southeast)
 - Enderlin Area School
- Fairmount, ND (southeast)
 - Fairmount Public School
- Fort Totten, ND (east central) (Spirit Lake tribal community)
 - Four Winds Elementary School
- Garrison, ND (central)
 - Bob Callies Elementary School
- Glen Ullin, ND (west central)
 - Glen Ullin Elementary School
- Hankinson, ND (southeast)
 - Hankinson Public 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
- Leeds, ND (northeast)
 - Leeds Public School
- Mayville, ND (east)
 - Peter Boe Jr. Elementary School

- Milnor, ND (southeast)
 - Milnor Public School
- Minto, ND (northeast)
 - Minto Public School District
- 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
- Park River, ND (northeast)
 - Park River Public School
- Ray, ND (northwest)
 - Ray Elementary School (Nesson District #2)
- Thompson, ND (northeast)
 - Thompson Elementary School
- Tioga, ND (northwest)
 - Central Elementary School
- Washburn, ND (central)
 - Washburn Public School
- Wishek, ND (south central)
 - Wishek Public School

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

- Carrington, ND (east central)
 - Carrington Elementary School
- Casselton, ND (east)
 - Central Cass Elementary School
- Devils Lake, ND (northeast)
 - Lake Region State College site
- Hazen, ND (west central)
 - Hazen Public School
- Lisbon, ND (southeast)
 - Lisbon Public School
- Oakes, ND (south central)
 - Oakes Elementary School
- Rugby, ND (north central)
 - Rugby Ely Elementary School
- Wahpeton, ND (southeast)
 - Zimmerman Elementary School

Large Communities (pop. 10,000 or greater)

- Bismarck, ND (central)
 - Liberty Elementary School
 - Northridge Elementary School
- Dickinson, ND (southwest)
 - Heart River Elementary School
- Fargo, ND (east)
 - Jefferson Elementary School
 - Kennedy Elementary School
 - Lincoln Elementary School
 - Madison Elementary School
 - McKinley Elementary School
 - Nokomis Child Care Center I
 - Nokomis Child Care Center II
 - Oak Grove Lutheran Elementary
- Grand Forks, ND (northeast)
 - Air Force Base at Eielson
 - Century Elementary School
 - Immanuel Christian Children's Center
 - Lake Agassiz Head Start
 - Lewis & Clark Elementary School
 - Viking Elementary School
 - Wilder Elementary School
- Jamestown, ND (southeast)
 - Washington Elementary School
- Mandan, ND (central)
 - Fort Lincoln Elementary School
 - Mary Stark Elementary School
- Minot, ND (north central)
 - Burlington-Des Lacs Elementary School
 - Dakota Elementary School, Minot Air Force Base
 - Sunnyside Elementary School
 - Surrey Elementary School
- West Fargo, ND (east)
 - West Fargo Kindergarten Center – Loedoen
 - West Fargo Kindergarten Center – Osgood
- Williston, ND (west)
 - Williston Public School District #1

Program Implementation

Participants were involved in one of several primary program models used to implement the program. They typically attended either two 8-week family education sessions, one in the fall of 2013 and one in the spring of 2014, two 5-week family education sessions (fall and spring), or a 10-week session in spring 2014. 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 2013-2014 year of operation in the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program in North Dakota, pre-kindergarten children and their families participated at 70 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 2013-2014 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)	3	5.2%
Continuous Session – 16 weeks	1	1.2%
Split Session – 10 weeks (5 weeks/fall, 5 weeks/spring)	22	32.2%
Short Session – 10 weeks (spring)	44	61.4%

Final Program Participation Summary – Gearing Up for Kindergarten in ND (2013-2014)

Communities and Program Models

- Total Number of ND Communities – 52
 - Small Communities (pop. 2000 or less) – 35
 - Mid-Sized Communities (pop. 2000 to 10,000) – 8
 - Large Communities (pop. 10,000 or greater) – 9
- Total Number of GUK Sites in ND – 70
- Total Number of Participating School Districts – 57
- Total Number of Program Sessions – 95
- Total Number of Short Session Programs (5-10 week sessions in spring) – 44
- Total Number of Split – Short Session Programs (5 weeks fall/5 weeks spring) – 22
- Total Number of Split – Long Session Programs (8 weeks fall/8 weeks spring) – 4

Families Served

- Number of Families in Full (Split) Sessions (16 Weeks)
 - Number of Families Total – 64
- Number of Families in Full (Split) Sessions (10 Weeks)
 - Number of Families Total – 328
- Number of Families in Spring (Short or 5-10 week) Sessions – 616

- Total Families Served – 1,081
- Total Families Served that Returned Evaluation – 1,008

Evaluation Project

- Number of Sites Participating in Project Evaluation – 70 sites

Map of 2013-14 North Dakota Sites for Gearing Up for Kindergarten

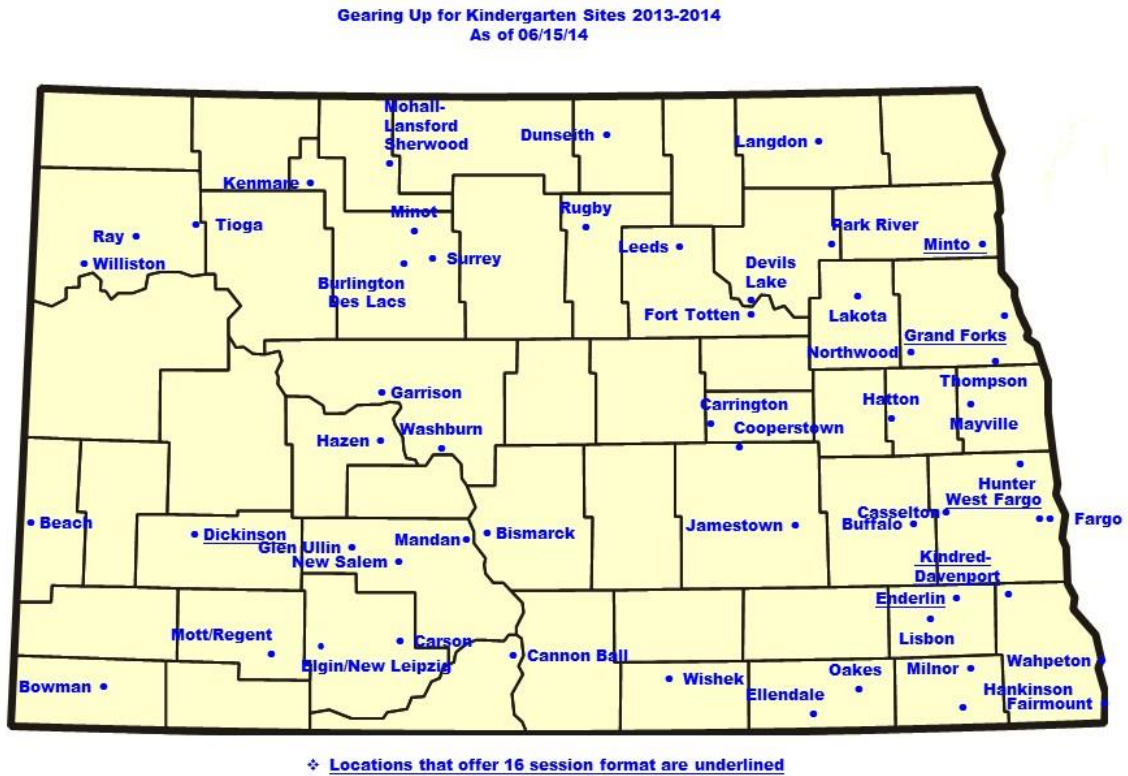


Chart of North Dakota Sites Served by Gearing Up for Kindergarten

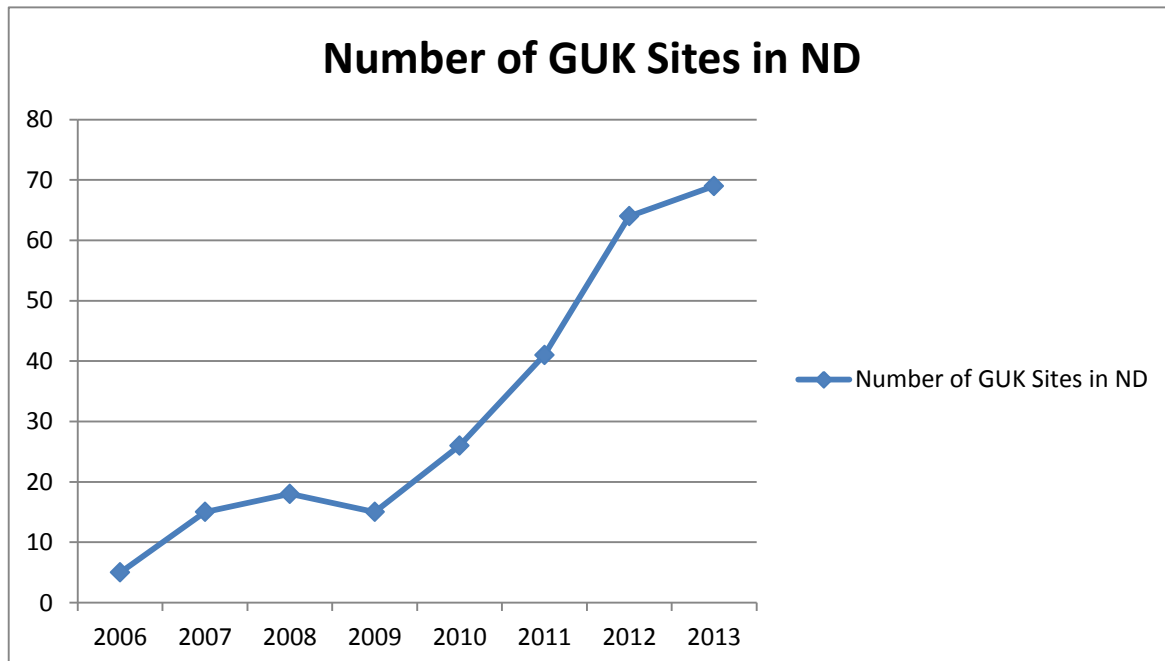
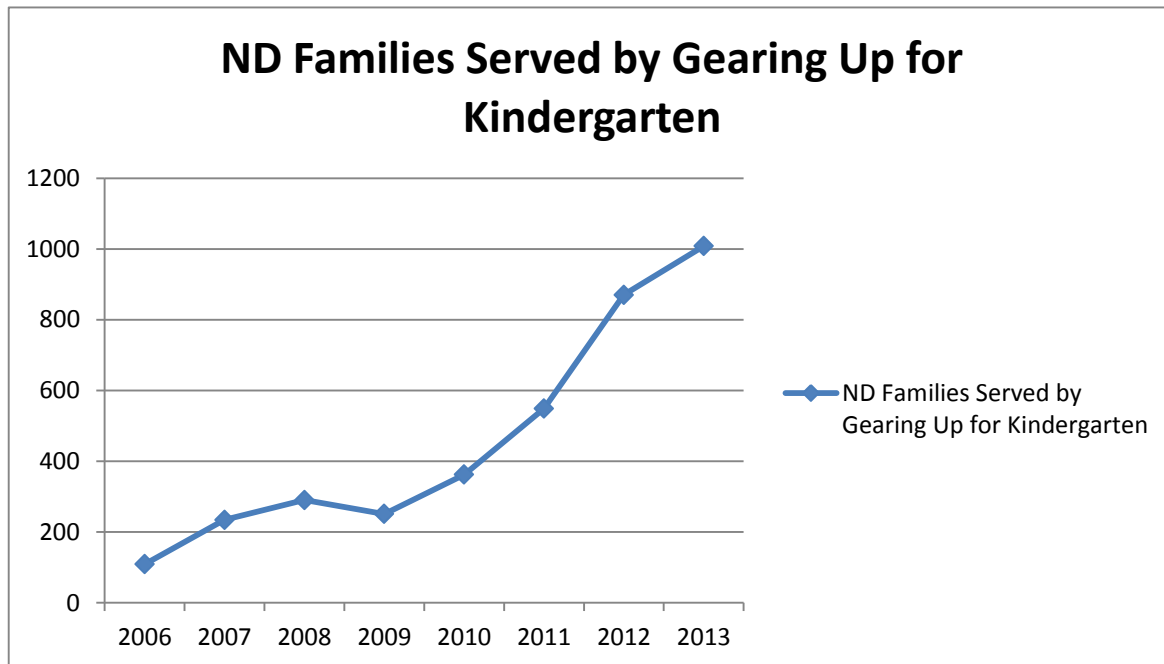


Chart of North Dakota Families Served by Gearing Up for Kindergarten



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 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 three years. A total number of 8,251 children were enrolled in public school kindergarten programs in North Dakota in the 2011-12 school year, and a total number of 8,575 children were enrolled in public school kindergarten programs in 2012-13. Based on these numbers, it is likely that the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program reached about 4.5% of incoming kindergarten children for the 2011-12 school year (served during the 2010-11 school year). The program's growth over the past two years suggests that the program then reached about 6.5% of incoming kindergarten children for the 2012-13 school year, and between 10 and 11 percent of incoming students for the 2013-14 school year. The program reached nearly 12 percent of incoming kindergarten students for the 2014-15 school year. These numbers indicate a significant step forward in providing a systematic approach to helping families focus on education, family involvement and school readiness.

Evaluation Strategies for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten Project

A variety of evaluation strategies are being used to assess progress in meeting the program's objectives and the development of children and families who participate. This project report for 2013-2014 (8th year of the program) provides results gathered from the entire year of the program's operation in fall 2013 and spring 2014. 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.

Nearly 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 Child Development and Family Science at NDSU.

Overall Program Evaluation – Pre and Post Program Forms

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

Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness (PPASR)

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

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 2013-14 program year, this assessment tool was used for the first 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

Family Information Form (FIF)

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

Open-Ended Responses

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

I. Overall Program Evaluation Results for Gearing Up for Kindergarten

Basic Characteristics of Program Participants

A total sample of 776 participants from 70 of the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program sites completed the pre-program and post-program evaluation survey in the program year for 2013-14. 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 478 from short 10-session sites (77.6% response rate), 242 from split 10-session sites (73.8% response rate), and 52 from split or continuous 16-session sites (81.3% response rate). The combined response rate for the three program types among sites that participated in the program evaluation was 77%.

Demographic characteristics of participants are reported here. Selected demographic characteristics of individuals participating in the program in 2013-14 who completed the survey are listed below.

- **Gender** – 83.4% women, 16.6% men
- **Age** – Average of 33.76 years; parents and caregivers ranged in age from 19 to 65 years
- **Number of children** – Average of 2.52 children per parent
- **Location** – 78.9% live in an urban setting; 21.1% in a rural or farm/ranch setting (10.3%)
- **Family status** – Married (84.6%); Single (never married) (4.8%); remarried (1.1%); separated/divorced (5.9%); cohabiting (2.9%); widowed (0.7%)
- **Employment status** – Full-time employment (55.5%); employed 26-39 hours a week (12%); employed less than 25 hours a week (8%); seeking employment (1%); not seeking outside employment (18.8%); other (4.7%)
- **Education level** – High school/GED or less (14.3%); some college (18.3%); 2-year college degree (19.2%); 4-year college degree (37.3%); master's degree or higher (10.9%)
- **Income level** – Under \$15,000/yr. (5.9%); \$15,000 to \$25,000/yr. (8.5%); \$25,000 to \$40,000/yr. (18.3%); \$40,000 to \$60,000/yr. (19.5%); Over \$60,000/yr. (47.5%); No information provided (0.3%)
- **Racial or ethnic background** – Caucasian (90.9%); Native American (2.5%); African American (0.8%); Asian (1.9%); Hispanic (2.1%); other (1.8%)
- **First child to enter kindergarten** – 50.2% yes; 49.8% no
- **Child care** – No child care (15.5%); 6 hrs/wk or less (7.1%); 6-12 hrs/wk (13.1%); 12-20 hrs/wk (10.4%); 20 hrs/wk or more (53.8%)
- **Eligibility for food stamps** – 6.4% yes; 93.6% no
- **Gender of participating child** – 54.4% male, 45.6% female
- **Program participation** – 34.4% of participants indicated attending all program sessions, while 54.6% of participants were involved in 75% or more of the program sessions during the year (a total of 89%). Also, 7.4% 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 (2013-14)

Question	Program Type	Not Useful	Slightly Useful	Some what Useful	Very Useful	Extremely Useful
Overall value of the program to me:	All Combined	0.1%	3.1%	12.9%	45.4%	38.4%
	16-week model	--	--	15.4%	38.5%	46.2%
	10-week split	0.4%	3.3%	12.9%	44.8%	38.6%
	10-week short	--	3.3%	12.6%	46%	38.1%
Handouts and activities provided to me in this program were:	All Combined	0.1%	2.7%	15.1%	47.2%	34.8%
	16-week model	--	5.1%	10.3%	56.4%	28.2%
	10-week split	--	3.3%	16.6%	44.8%	35.3%
	10-week short	0.2%	2.1%	15.3%	47.1%	35.4%
		NA	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Information presented in a clear and helpful manner:	All Combined	--	0.1%	0.3%	34.9%	64.7%
	16-week model	--	--	--	20.5%	79.5%
	10-week split	--	0.4%	--	36.1%	63.5%
	10-week short	--	--	0.4%	35.1%	64.4%
I was treated in a respectful manner:	All Combined	--	0.1%	0.1%	16.7%	83.1%
	16-week model	--	1.2%	--	5.1%	94.9%
	10-week split	--	0.4%	0.4%	18.7%	80.5%
	10-week short	--	--	--	16.3%	83.7%

Participants expressed positive feelings about the program thus far, with 84% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them. Among participants in the 2013-14 program, 82% said the handouts and learning activities were very useful to them. Finally, nearly all of them (99.6%) agreed that the information was presented well and they were treated respectfully, with those who strongly agreed they were treated well at 83% among all participants. There were slight variations in the numbers reported by program type but not enough to suggest substantial differences.

Impacts of Program Participation

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

The average mean scores regarding how the program impacted participants in each of these areas were given on a scale between 1 and 5, with higher scores indicating a more positive impact of the program (scale of 1 = not at all to 5 = very much). For parents who completed the overall program evaluation in 2013-14, they responded as follows: (1) increased knowledge of child development (3.67); (2) increased knowledge of healthy parenting (3.65); (3) increased confidence in being a good parent (3.70); (4) increased parenting skills (3.56); (5) changed behavior as a parent (3.39); and (6) influenced the relationship with your child (3.56).

Table 2: General Impacts of Gearing Up for Kindergarten Program (2013-14)

Question Overall how much, if at all, did this program:	Not at All	A Little Bit	Some What	A Lot	Very Much
Increase your knowledge about child development	0.8%	7.1%	33.4%	41.4%	17.3%
Increase your knowledge of healthy parenting	1.2%	8.3%	33%	39.8%	17.7%
Increase your confidence in being a good parent	1.6%	8.3%	29%	41.4%	19.8%
Increase your skills as a parent	1.8%	9.6%	35.8%	36.1%	16.7%
Change your behavior as a parent	3.5%	14.6%	35.3%	32.3%	14.2%
Influence your relationship with your child	2.1%	11.4%	32.7%	36.1%	17.7%

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

Among participants, 59% indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, 58% noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much, 61% felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and 53% said it increased their parenting skills a lot or very much. Additionally, 82% felt it changed their parent behavior at least somewhat, and 87% indicated that it influenced their relationship with their child positively. These overall findings indicate that impacts of the program were largely similar in varied sessions of the program that were evaluated in the 2013-14 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 (2013-14)

Question Please rate how useful each of the following sources of information has been for you on parenting and school readiness	Overall Mean Score from 1 (not useful) to 5 (very useful)
Information Source	Score
a. Your parents	3.47
b. Your child's other parent	3.59
c. Friends	3.42
d. Parents with children of a similar age	3.67
e. School	3.78
f. Preschool, Head Start or child care	3.80
g. Books, magazines or newspapers	3.19
h. Internet	3.06
i. <i>Gearing Up for Kindergarten</i> class and materials	4.02**
j. Other	--

** Highest ranking

The results from the 2013-14 session of the program indicate that participants rated the school (3.78), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.80), and parents with children of a similar age (3.67) 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 4.02, indicating that participants felt the class was more useful to them regarding parenting and school readiness than any other information source assessed. The results from the program indicate that participants rate the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program substantially higher than any other information source assessed.

Perceived Impacts of Gearing Up for Kindergarten on Participants

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

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

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

Findings are presented in Table 4 for the participants in all program models in 2013-14. Specific findings related to each particular model of the program are available from the authors.

Table 4: Perceived Impacts on Parental Practices of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2013-14 Program)

Question As a Parent, I:	Before Participation (Mean Score)	Now, After Participation (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Give my child a variety of activities and learning experiences.	3.96	4.07	.11	Yes
2. Do arts and crafts, puzzles or other hands-on activities with my child.	3.81	3.90	.09	Yes
3. Get down and actively play with my child.	3.97	4.04	.07	Yes
4. Provide my child with hands-on materials, such as crayons and paper, scissors, play dough, etc.	4.36	4.43	.07	Yes
5. Arrange for my child to play with other children his or her age.	3.68	3.72	.04	No
6. Talk with my child about how to get along with others even when they have a disagreement.	4.11	4.13	.02	No
7. Read with my child each day.	4.12	4.23	.11	Yes
8. Discuss contents of a book or story with my child when we read.	3.99	4.12	.13	Yes
9. Respond quickly to my child’s cues for attention (crying, questions).	4.17	4.16	-.01	No
10. Discuss with my child how to handle feeling sad or upset.	4.13	4.20	.07	Yes

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

The findings show, based on the statistical analysis, that **participants experienced significant differences in 7 of the 10 parental practices related to school readiness** as a likely result of their participation in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. There are several important points to make as a result of these findings:

- Participants noted **small to moderate changes in 7 of the 10 parental practices related to school readiness that were measured, with the changes showing positive increases in a particular parental practice** (e.g., engaging in more active play with a child).
- The findings showed significant differences in parental practices for participants before and after their participation in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. These changes were **small to moderate increases between .07 and .15 in specific parental practices, suggesting incremental improvement in key aspects of parental involvement and guidance.**
- Participants typically rated themselves quite highly already on most indicators of parenting linked to school readiness. The average beginning scores showed that most parents felt they performed most of these practices well, usually rating between “often” and “almost always” on the scale of performance. This means that most participants already perceive themselves as well-adjusted in their parenting efforts and there is minimal opportunity for change.
- The **three largest significant differences** for participants occurred in the following areas: **discussing contents of a book or story (.13), giving children a variety of learning activities (.11), and reading with a child daily (.11).**
- The **findings suggest that Gearing Up for Kindergarten has made some progress in assisting parents and influencing them in a positive manner to behave in ways that will help their children toward school readiness and positive development.**

This set of findings from Gearing Up for Kindergarten was generated as a result of involvement in the 2013-14 session of the program at Gearing Up for Kindergarten sites in North Dakota. The findings suggest the program has positive impacts on parents who are involved and aids them in making incremental improvements in parenting practices that link to school readiness. Further research on how differing program models affect parenting practices will be valuable for understanding the program and its influence on families.

Perceived Impacts on Participant Parenting Knowledge and School Readiness Beliefs

In the 2012-13 program year, a new set of assessment questions was developed to obtain feedback from participants regarding perceived program impacts on their knowledge of child development, healthy parenting, and school readiness. A primary purpose of Gearing Up for Kindergarten is to facilitate growth in the knowledge and understanding of these topics with parents who participate in the program. Ten questions 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 5 represents the feedback with regard to parental confidence and beliefs about a child’s preparation and school readiness. Findings are presented in Table 5 for the participants in all program models in 2013-14. Specific findings related to each particular model of the program are available from the authors.

Table 5: Perceived Impacts on Parental Beliefs about School Readiness of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2013-14 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.	3.91	4.23	.32	Yes
2. I am confident in the activities we have engaged in at home to prepare our child for school transition and success.	3.93	4.21	.28	Yes
3. I am confident in the activities my child has participated in outside the home to become prepared for school transition and success.	4.10	4.33	.23	Yes

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

Table 6: Perceived Impacts on Parent Knowledge and Beliefs of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2013-14 Program)

Question	Before Participation (Mean Score)	Now, After Participation (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. I understand basic aspects of child development related to a young child's learning, growth and development.	3.89	4.03	.14	Yes
2. I understand social and emotional development in young children and its influence on learning and relationships.	3.93	4.09	.16	Yes
3. I understand how young children develop early reading, math and thinking skills.	3.83	4.02	.19	Yes
4. I understand parenting styles and discipline and their influence on young children.	4.04	4.14	.10	Yes
5. I understand key parenting practices that influence a young child's well-being and development.	3.98	4.12	.15	Yes
6. I understand the meaning and dimensions of school readiness.	3.88	4.08	.20	Yes
7. I understand the specific areas of knowledge and skill that my child is expected to demonstrate to be ready for school.	3.89	4.17	.28	Yes
8. I understand specific strategies I can implement in assisting my child to be prepared for entering kindergarten and achieving school success.	3.79	4.14	.35	Yes
9. I understand the key elements of a supportive home learning environment.	4.10	4.27	.17	Yes
10. I understand specific strategies for parent involvement in my child's education that can help my child to succeed in school.	4.0	4.23	.23	Yes

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

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

- Participants noted **small to moderate changes in all of the 10 areas of parental knowledge associated with child development, healthy parenting and school readiness that were measured, with the changes showing positive increases in each area of knowledge** (e.g., understanding the skills is expected to demonstrate in being ready for school).
- The findings showed significant differences in parental knowledge for participants before and after their participation in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. These changes were **small to moderate increases between .15 and .35 in specific areas of parental knowledge, suggesting incremental improvement in key aspects of parent knowledge and beliefs related to child development, healthy parenting and school readiness.**
- Participants typically rated themselves quite highly already on most indicators of parental knowledge linked to child development, healthy parenting, and school readiness. The average beginning scores showed that most parents felt they had substantial knowledge in these areas, usually rating between “to a fair extent” and “to a significant extent” on the scale of understanding. This means that most participants already perceive themselves as quite knowledgeable in their understanding and there is limited opportunity for change.
- The **four largest significant differences** for participants occurred in the following areas: **understanding of specific strategies to assist in preparing children for kindergarten (.35), understanding of specific areas of knowledge and skills needed to be ready for school (.28), understanding of specific strategies for parent involvement in a child's education (.23), and understanding of the meaning and dimensions of school readiness (.20).**
- 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 2013-14 year of the program at Gearing Up for Kindergarten sites in North Dakota. The findings indicate the program makes a positive difference with parents who are involved and increases both their knowledge base and confidence regarding preparation of a child for school readiness and success.

Parent-Child Reading Interactions

To assess program effects on parent-child reading interactions at home, a short measure consisting of 8 items was given to parents to complete both prior to and following the program. Parents described the frequency of interactions for each item related to early literacy and reading, including such items as going to the library with children, discussing contents of a book with children, and looking for age-appropriate books to share with children. Parents rated their frequency of reading interaction with children using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – “hardly ever” to 5 = “one or two times a day.” A higher score represents a more positive and frequent pattern of reading interaction on that item. Scores are provided in Table 7 which indicate the pre-test score, post-program score, difference score and level of significance. The findings represented here present the information from participants in all of the program models during 2013-14.

Table 7: 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)?	4.36	4.46	.10	Yes
2. Your child(ren) ask to be read to?	4.17	4.29	.12	Yes
3. You go to the library with your child(ren)?	1.76	1.89	.13	Yes
4. Your child(ren) observe you reading books, magazines or other material at home?	3.84	3.92	.08	Yes
5. You discuss contents of a book with your child(ren)?	3.89	4.03	.14	Yes
6. Read for a period of 15 minutes or more with your child(ren)?	4.06	4.20	.14	Yes
7. Look for age-appropriate books to give to or share with your child(ren)?	3.92	4.05	.13	Yes
8. Observe your child(ren) looking at or interacting with books?	4.28	4.31	.03	No

Among the 8 indicators of parent-child reading interaction, significant differences emerged for 7 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 addition, a section of evaluation was used in the process which examined both parent and child feelings and experiences related to school knowledge and familiarity. Parents were asked to assess their child’s familiarity with school, peers, and routines, as well as their feelings and comfort level in varying aspects of the school-related experience. Similarly, parents rated themselves also on familiarity with school, teachers, and routines, as well as comfort level and familiarity with school personnel and routines. These questions were asked either on a “yes/no” basis or a response scale of 1 to 4, with 1 = not at all to 4 = to a great extent.

Understanding What the Current PPASR Assessment Process Shows

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

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

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

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

Participants in the PPASR Assessment

Participation in the Practical Parent Assessment of School Readiness required that parents fill out the PPASR survey twice during the program, at the beginning and 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 630 children was rated by parents on the PPASR in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program (this sample represents a response rate of approximately 72.4% of participating children). Demographic characteristics were similar to those previously reported.

Findings on Parental Perceptions of Children’s School Readiness

The key areas of school readiness selected for assessment by parents were: (1) *Learning and Exploration* (cognitive); (2) *Friends and Social Interaction* (social); (3) *Knowing the Basics* (academic); (4) *Feelings and Families* (emotional); and (5) *Practical Knowledge and Skills* (practical). Ten tables are included below, one of which covers each dimension, and there are beginning group scores (pre-program score), completing group scores (post-program score 2014), and difference scores (difference in the average group scores, or means) for each item.

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

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	4.10	4.37	.27	Yes
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	4.07	4.54	.47	Yes
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.20	3.85	.65	Yes
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.41	3.80	.39	Yes

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	4.12	4.15	.03	No
6. Takes turns with others.	3.80	3.88	.08	No
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	4.07	4.12	.05	No
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.63	3.76	.13	No
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.32	3.71	.39	Yes

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	3.90	4.56	.66	Yes
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	3.93	4.76	.83	Yes
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	4.0	4.61	.61	Yes
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.98	4.35	.37	Yes

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.88	4.24	.36	Yes
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.46	3.78	.32	Yes
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.83	4.10	.27	Yes
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.80	4.12	.32	Yes

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2014 (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).	2.76	3.29	.54	Yes
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.44	3.95	.51	Yes

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for **16-week split session programs** operated during the 2013-14 year on perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. A number of important points emerge as a result of these findings:

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

- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on 15 of the 19 indicators between fall 2013 and spring 2014. This means that 79 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in all five of the school readiness categories.**
- These findings showed significant differences in parental perceptions of children's school readiness from the beginning of the program to the end of the program on 15 indicators. These changes included **2 small to moderate increases between .10 and .30, 7 substantive increases between .30 and .50, and 6 significant increases of .50 or higher on specific items of school readiness.**
- The **15 most significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred by order of magnitude in the following areas:
 - **Familiarity with numbers (.83)**
 - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.66)**
 - **Drawing and using art to express ideas or feelings (.65)**
 - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.61)**
 - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.54)**
 - **Awareness of who to contact in times of need (.51)**
 - **Participating in small groups (.47)**
 - **Likes to work at solving problems (.39)**
 - **Trying to solve problems with friends (.39)**
 - **Creative in asking questions and solving problems (.37)**
 - **Talking about how others might feel (.36)**
 - **Manages feelings without hurting others (.32)**
 - **Shares feelings with adults (.32)**
 - **Exploring the environment (.27)**
 - **Adapt to new situations (.27)**
- In analyzing all increases over .20 or higher (whether significant or not), **the findings suggest growth in five primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (using a pencil, knowing the alphabet and numbers, awareness of personal contact information, etc.); (4) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities; and (5) ability to manage emotions and adapt in a new environment.**
- Assessing the five domains of development related to school readiness that are examined in the evaluation process, while all domains have specific items that demonstrate change after program participation, the areas that show the greatest impact as a result of the program are: **(1) Child Learning and Exploration; (2) Positive Peer Interactions and Social Development; (3) Knowing the Basics and Pre-Academic Skills; (4) Emotional Development and Management; and (5) Practical Awareness and Self-Care Skills.**

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	4.12	4.21	.09	Yes
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	4.25	4.29	.04	No
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.59	3.71	.12	Yes
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.49	3.63	.14	Yes

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	4.15	4.12	-.03	No
6. Takes turns with others.	3.85	4.03	.18	Yes
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	4.02	4.10	.08	No
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.69	3.81	.12	Yes
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.45	3.63	.18	Yes

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	3.98	4.29	.31	Yes
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	4.32	4.62	.30	Yes
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	4.01	4.23	.22	Yes
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	4.0	4.12	.12	Yes

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.85	3.99	.14	Yes
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.62	3.68	.06	No
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.78	3.93	.15	Yes
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.87	3.92	.05	No

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
18. Can recite his or her name, parents' names and contact information (address, phone number).	3.0	3.24	.24	Yes
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.58	3.80	.22	Yes

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for **10-week split session programs** operated during the 2013-14 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, 12 of 19 items had a beginning average score below 4, while the other 7 items were all rated above 4 at the beginning of the program.
- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on 14 of the 19 indicators between fall 2013 and spring 2014.** This means that 74 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 14 indicators. These changes included **12 small to moderate increases between .10 and .30, and 2 substantive increases between .30 and .50.**
- The **14 significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred by order of magnitude in the following areas:
 - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.31)**
 - **Familiarity with numbers (.30)**
 - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.24)**
 - **Awareness of who to contact for help (.22)**
 - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.22)**
 - **Taking turns with others (.18)**
 - **Tries to solve problems with friends (.18)**
 - **Adapt to new situations (.15)**
 - **Likes to work at solving problems (.14)**
 - **Talks about how others might feel (.14)**
 - **Drawing and using art to express ideas or feelings (.12)**
 - **Gets along without quarreling or fighting (.12)**
 - **Creative in solving problems (.12)**
 - **Explores the environment (.09)**
- In analyzing all increases over .10 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 two to three times higher in the 16-week model of the program. Second, there were fewer changes in the two categories of Learning and Exploration or Feelings and Families (emotional development) for children in the 10-week program, while the changes were modest but consistent in these areas for the 16-week program. This suggests a longer period of participation is helpful in assisting change in these areas that are more difficult to impact immediately. Finally, other areas that showed more change in the 16-week program such as trying to solve problems with friends indicate that some areas of development require more supportive effort over time to initiate desired change in a positive direction.

The development and usage of slightly differing program models allows us to compare basic outcomes reported by parents across these different program types. The final program model results emerged from the 10-week continuous session program. These programs all operated in the spring of 2014 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 18: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	3.99	4.18	.19	Yes
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	4.17	4.33	.16	Yes
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.66	3.76	.10	Yes
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.35	3.56	.21	Yes

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	4.11	4.15	.04	No
6. Takes turns with others.	3.88	3.98	.10	Yes
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	3.97	4.03	.06	No
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.71	3.79	.08	Yes
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.41	3.56	.15	Yes

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	4.06	4.29	.23	Yes
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	4.36	4.50	.14	Yes
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	4.06	4.24	.18	Yes
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.94	4.06	.12	Yes

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.76	3.87	.11	Yes
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.55	3.64	.09	Yes
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.76	3.87	.11	Yes
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.88	3.95	.07	No

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2014 (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).	2.92	3.29	.37	Yes
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.47	3.72	.25	Yes

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for 10-week short session programs operated during the 2013-14 year on perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. A number of important points emerge as a result of these findings:

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

- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on 16 of the 19 indicators between the beginning and end of the program in 2014. This means that 84 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 16 indicators. **These changes were all small to moderate increases between .10 and .35.**
- 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 (.37)**
 - **Awareness of who to contact for help (.25)**
 - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.23)**
 - **Likes to work at solving problems (.21)**
 - **Exploring the environment (.19)**
 - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.18)**
 - **Participating in small groups (.16)**
 - **Trying to solve problems with friends (.15)**
 - **Familiarity with numbers (.14)**
 - **Creative in solving problems (.12)**
- In analyzing the increases noted here, **the findings suggest growth in three primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (using a pencil, knowing the alphabet and numbers, awareness of personal contact information, etc.).**
- In assessing the type of changes reported for this program model, a couple of interesting observations emerged. First, the changes in academic skills were relatively similar as with other programs; however, the impacts were not as large (likely due to the more limited time period). Second, again there were limited 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 consistent in these areas for the 16-week program. As already noted, this suggests a longer period of participation is helpful in assisting change in these areas that are more difficult to impact immediately. Finally, the magnitude of changes noted on items was significant but only about a third to half of the gains noted in the other two program models.

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

Findings on School Knowledge and Familiarity

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

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

Table 23: Children in Gearing up for Kindergarten – School Knowledge (2013-14)

My child:	Beginning of Program		End of Program	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
1. Has visited the school or kindergarten classroom.	21.5%	78.5%	9.8%	90.2% (+11.7)
2. Has met a kindergarten teacher at the school he/she will attend.	36.7%	63.3%	17.7%	82.3% (+19)
3. Has met peers who will be in kindergarten at the same school.	21%	79%	8.4%	91.6% (+12.6)

Table 24: Parents in Gearing up for Kindergarten – School Knowledge (2013-14)

As a parent, I:	Beginning of Program		End of Program	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
1. Have visited the school or kindergarten classroom.	23.1%	76.9%	9.3%	90.7% (+13.8)
2. Have met a kindergarten teacher at the school my child will attend.	29%	71%	14.5%	85.5% (+14.5)
3. Have met other parents who have children or will have children in kindergarten.	14.7%	85.3%	6.1%	93.9% (+8.6)

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

Question My Child:	Beginning of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
4. Is excited about beginning kindergarten.	3.57	3.73	.16	Yes
5. Is familiar with the routines and expectations that exist in kindergarten (raising hands, etc.).	2.95	3.27	.32	Yes
6. Is comfortable with the environment of the school setting.	3.29	3.54	.25	Yes
7. Talks positively about going to kindergarten.	3.55	3.70	.15	Yes

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

Question As a parent, I:	Beginning of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
4. Am excited about my child beginning kindergarten.	3.65	3.65	.00	No
5. Am familiar with the routines and expectations for children that exist in kindergarten.	3.60	3.71	.11	Yes
6. Have a good idea of how my child acts with peers in a group setting.	3.52	3.65	.13	Yes
7. Understand the general ability level of the average kindergartner.	3.45	3.62	.17	Yes

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

- **For both parents and children, indicators of school knowledge showed significant increases in preparation and knowledge for the school experience. For pre-kindergarten children, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased by 12%, those who met a kindergarten teacher at their prospective school increased 19%, and those who met peers they will be with in kindergarten increased 13%. For parents, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased 14%, those who had met a kindergarten teacher at their child’s prospective school increased 14%, and those meeting other parents who will have children in kindergarten increased 9%.**
- **For children in the program, among 4 indicators of comfort level and familiarity with school, significant differences were measured on all 4 indicators between the beginning and end of the program in 2013-14. Findings showed that children became more familiar with**

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

- **For parents involved in Gearing Up for Kindergarten, significant differences were measured on 3 of the 4 indicators regarding comfort level and familiarity with school between the beginning and end of the program in 2013-14. Findings showed that parents became more familiar with kindergarten routines and expectations for their child, as well as more aware of their child's behavior with peers and the ability level of average kindergarten children.**

III. 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 a new addition to the assessment of children, the program evaluation for 2013-14 also included an objective basic skills evaluation by the child's parent at the beginning and end of the program.

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 748 children was assessed by parents in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program in the 2013-2014 program year.

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 27-31) 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 2013-14 program year.

Table 27: 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	3.36	3.29	-.07	No
	16-week model	3.20	3.20	.00	No
	10-week split	3.44	3.27	-.17	No
	10-week short	3.35	3.33	-.02	No

Table 28: 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	7.52	7.14	-.38	Yes
	16-week model	7.40	7.20	-.20	No
	10-week split	7.64	7.14	-.50	Yes
	10-week short	7.49	7.18	-.31	Yes

Table 29: 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	27.72	36.51	8.79	Yes
	16-week model	17.50	30.90	13.40	Yes
	10-week split	24.76	37.26	12.50	Yes
	10-week short	29.58	36.17	6.59	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 2013-14 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 in each version of the program (and overall) make no identified gains in their ability to identify shapes.
- Most children are **already scoring high on identification of colors**. Again, there is no increase 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 to facilitate this learning.

Table 30: 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 to12)	All Combined	6.76	8.09	1.33	Yes
	16-week model	5.40	7.50	2.10	Yes
	10-week split	6.26	8.00	1.74	Yes
	10-week short	7.09	8.17	1.08	Yes
Letter Identification (range of 0 to12)	All Combined	7.78	9.15	1.37	Yes
	16-week model	5.50	8.45	2.95	Yes
	10-week split	7.37	9.14	1.77	Yes
	10-week short	8.12	9.22	1.10	Yes
Sound Identification (range of 0 to12)	All Combined	5.78	7.26	1.48	Yes
	16-week model	4.10	5.50	1.40	No
	10-week split	5.40	7.44	2.04	Yes
	10-week short	6.12	7.29	1.17	Yes

Table 30 summarize findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the overall program and three program session types operated during the 2013-14 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.
- **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 progress more than children in the 10-week short model, and this is likely due to increased time for parents to facilitate this learning. The highest gains typically occurred for children in the 16-week split session model of the program.

Table 31: 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	84.6%	90.3%	+5.7%
2. Can say parent’s first and last name.	All Combined	78.3%	85.1%	+6.8%
3. Can say his or her complete address.	All Combined	8.1%	17.2%	+9.1%

Table 31 summarizes findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the overall program during the 2013-14 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:

- Most 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 5 to 8 percent of the total children).
- 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. Additional Parent and Child Assessments

Additional Parent and Child Assessments

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

To further refine the program evaluation process with Gearing Up for Kindergarten, a small variety of additional parent and child assessments were included in the evaluation process in 2013-14 so that greater understanding of program impacts (or the lack thereof) could be investigated. Two small measures were included that examined the following areas: (1) social and communication patterns of children; (2) emotional patterns of children. It was not expected that there would be significant findings in relation to each of these areas. Rather, these measures were included as an investigative process to understand more fully how the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program does or does not seem to affect participants. A brief report on the investigative assessments is included here. Five hundred and ninety-six participants were included in each of these assessments.

Social and Communication Patterns in Children

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

Emotional Patterns in Children

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

Table 32: Child Social and Communication Patterns – Parent Assessment

Question Description of Child	Beginning of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. My child resolves problems with friends or brothers or sisters on his/her own.	3.04	3.22	.18	Yes
2. My child is very good at understanding other people's feelings.	3.52	3.63	.11	Yes
3. My child shares things with others.	3.70	3.77	.07	Yes
4. My child is helpful to others.	4.08	4.17	.09	Yes
5. My child listens to others' points of view.	3.28	3.43	.15	Yes
6. My child can give suggestions and opinions without being bossy.	3.16	3.27	.11	Yes

Table 33: Child Emotional Patterns – Parent Assessment

Question Description of Child	Beginning of Program 2013 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2014 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. My child can accept things not going his/her way.	2.85	3.01	.16	Yes
2. My child copes well with failure.	2.79	2.91	.12	Yes
3. My child thinks before acting.	3.02	3.15	.13	Yes
4. My child can calm down when excited or all wound-up.	3.09	3.24	.15	Yes
5. My child does what he or she is told to do.	3.56	3.61	.05	No
6. My child controls his/her temper when there is a disagreement.	3.11	3.23	.12	Yes

These two tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the 2013-14 year on parent assessments of children's social and emotional patterns. The following points can be made from the findings:

- Parents noted growth in the capacities of children in both the social and communicative and emotional domains over the period of the program. This growth mirrors similar patterns found in other assessments done with children in the program. Change and growth in such abilities is a common feature of development in early childhood.
- Among 12 indicators of social and emotional development rated by parents on a scale of 1 to 5, **significant differences were measured on 11 of the 12 indicators in the 2013-14 program year. This means that all of the indicators for social and emotional development showed positive growth in children.**

- The **6 largest significant differences for children** occurred in the following areas:
 - **Child resolves problems with others on his/her own (.18)**
 - **Child can accept things not going his/her way (.16)**
 - **Child listens to others' points of view (.15)**
 - **Child can calm down when excited or wound up (.15)**
 - **Child thinks before acting (.13)**
 - **Child copes well with failure (.12)**
 - **Child controls temper in a disagreement (.12)**

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

V. Parent Feedback on Gearing Up for Kindergarten

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

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

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

Qualitative feedback provides a different kind of view of how participants reacted to and experienced the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. The responses are more descriptive, personal and wide-ranging. We conducted a brief thematic analysis of the main response categories that were shared by participants and have selected a variety of responses for each question that highlight the responses of participants. Not all participant comments are selected here for purposes of brevity. The responses included here come from the 2013-14 program year.

Qualitative Feedback from Parents about Gearing Up for Kindergarten

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

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

More Time and Active Involvement with Children

- I enjoyed how the program is organized with hands-on activities prior to the teaching sessions.
- It made me think about spending more time with my child.
- I do more craft and learning activities with my son.
- Getting one-on-one time with my child and learning how to prepare him more for kindergarten.
- We do more math and science activities.
- Just take more time to be with him and help him learn.
- Do more activities, less screen time, engage with them more.
- Read to my child more
- We have implemented a few ideas from this program but our favorite would have to be reading every night.
- I have spent more time reading to my child, practicing counting, and properly disciplining.
- Do more one-on one time with my son since he is the youngest of the three children.
- Be more interactive with my daughter at home, completely cut out TV time.
- I am more conscious of spending more one-on-one time with each of the children.
- Spend more time together on learning activities.
- Yes, as a parent I chose to do more hands-on activities with my child at home.
- Involve my child more in my daily activities.
- Take time out of each day to listen to my child - even when we are busy.
- Take more time to read, listen and play from daily activities.
- Try to set more time aside to read with my children.
- This has been a fantastic program. I find myself interacting with my son much more intentionally.
- It helped us to try different ways of doing things and brought us closer as a family and closer on parenting.
- Yes, I am more active with my child.

Improved Parenting Efforts in Specific Areas

- I posted some of the discussion items on our refrigerator to help constantly remind me of helpful parenting skills.
- The topics have made me more self-aware of my actions as a parent and what an impact they have on my child further down the road.
- I learned different approaches to help my child emotionally.
- We implemented a chore chart.
- I have realized my son is old enough to remember his phone number, and this has led me to teach him about other things.
- I try to read more often to my child and now I don't feel guilty.
- It has made me more aware of different ways to teach and interact with my child.
- Now I make sure he gets enough sleep.
- I've learned to ask more questions when I read books to him, and what questions to ask so that he will give answers.

- This program really gave us some opportunities to look at the way we parent our children and things we can do differently to help them succeed as students and beyond.
- Make everyday things a learning opportunity.
- We try to do more activities geared towards learning. I've tried to go more into depth on my explanation of things.
- We practice more math skills and word skills, and talk more about the environment.
- Have had a wake-up call about how just working on numbers and letters and such is not enough. I can display or model the correct way.
- I have learned how to parent a different way and it has worked so much better. Making charts have helped my child and I communicate better.
- I have tried to use the tips from the handouts at home.
- I have tried some new parenting methods, and I also read the book "How much is enough" that was recommended in class. Great book!
- Great program-helped with discipline and strategies to improve your child's learning.
- I've tried to adjust bedtime so they get more sleep.
- Reading more with my child
- While reading books is not as prominent, we do discuss them far more as well as engage in discussions to activate and enhance the imagination.
- I've attempted more patience.
- It has changed how we have been getting our child ready for kindergarten.
- Great Program! Thank you All! Your lesson on chores helped us with responsibility at home.
- Try to be more structured with routines at home.
- I learned how to implement a better schedule that has benefitted both me and my son.
- The program did change how we thought about discipline for our son.
- Making up a better bedtime routine and daily schedule for not only my kindergarten age child, but also my other kids.
- Some of my communication skills, reasoning with emotions and feelings with my child have changed from the suggestions from the program. Positive result.
- Reading more, giving more time without electronics, better bed time routine, trying new foods.

Increased Awareness of Child's Specific Needs

- I learned how to think of my child as a developing child still and be more understanding.
- A great program to help us learn about child's development.
- It helped me to remember how little control children can have over their emotions and to be more patient
- This program is very important because I learned many useful things for the development of my child, especially how to help a child in the teaching and learning process.
- I love everything this program has taught me, especially the review about the importance of sleep.
- I now recognize and understand different learning styles.
- I have been trying to incorporate more math in our daily activities along with numbers and letters to get him more familiar with them.
- More aware of how to handle issues that may come up in the school year.
- More understanding of how kids learn.
- Looking for more learning opportunities all around, not just pencil and paper memorization.
- I have used more of a hands-on approach when teaching my child with great success. It was eye-opening!
- I have a better understanding of different learning opportunities available.
- These classes reminded me how important it is to work side by side with your children.

- Good class discussions. Made me more aware of different personalities and became more aware of them.
- This program has made me realize how easy it is to find/make up fun ways to teach numbers and letters, rather than just flash cards.
- I have become more aware of how empowering my son to do things on his own greatly improved his social/emotional development.
- It made me aware of how I should prepare my child better such as letting them be more independent and having him prepare his own clothes and snacks.
- My parenting style versus my child's learning style.
- The beginning assessment showed that we needed to improve math skills. We used the provided materials along with print books and Internet activities to improve these skills.
- I look at different ways to teach my child about things. The emotional development was VERY helpful.
- I am more aware of what my child needs for his age and what to expect as he grows.
- As a foster parent the kids had just come to my home and this program has helped me to assess where the kids are compared to others their age and to find their weak points!
- This program significantly calmed some fears for my special needs child.
- Good reminders of child development and personalities.

How has your child benefited from Gearing Up for Kindergarten?

Increased Social Confidence and Positive Peer Interactions

- My timid/shy daughter needed this “practice” run through while we were just down the hall. She did a great job. Really matured!
- Less shy about sharing.
- He’s gained confidence by coming to class and learning.
- She is more confident in front of other children in class.
- My daughter benefitted spending time with her friends.
- He is super excited about kindergarten and a lot less shy!
- He has gained more confidence in himself and his excitement level tripled about attending kindergarten!
- She gets nervous in new situations. I hope this helped to ease her into a new environment. She was able to see her school, meet some kids. It really is a great program! Thank you all!!
- Socializing, learning opportunities.
- He seems more confident about school and being with new kids.
- Gained confidence in not having mom & dad around. Social skills with peers.
- She is very excited to start kindergarten. She got over her fears.
- Yes, growing confidence in himself and being around other kids.
- Confidence, reduced fear of school and separation from parents.
- I think he is less nervous about coming. His excitement level is much higher!
- She has made new friends and has a better understanding of what will be expected of her.
- Social interaction with future classmates, confidence in being at school.
- Learned how to learn in a group setting. It has made him more confident.
- He’s learning to be more independent and to listen to another adult and to transition from one activity to another.
- He has been able to be more social and get a better understanding of how kindergarten is going to be.
- She is very confident and knows a more of what to expect. Made kindergarten less scary.
- He is excited for school and asks regularly if he gets to start school today. He has seemed to open up to others and not be such a momma’s boy. He doesn’t like change so for him to meet his teacher along with all the school will make for our first day of being a success! Thank you.
- More confidence being around other children. Takes initiative to include herself in activities and approach other kids.
- My child has been able to be with a teacher that is not me. It has helped prepare him socially in this way.
- She enjoyed it and has helped with her shyness!
- Yes, he was shy. So being able to visit the classroom and teachers helped him to just walk right in for kindergarten screening.
- Our son interacts with other kids better.
- He wants to be shy and clingy and has gotten better about joining activities.
- Yes, more assertive when interacting with children he doesn’t know.
- Learning how to share, learning about feelings and emotions, being more responsible.
- My child is extremely shy so this program was so beneficial to get her comfortable being in the big school & classrooms.
- Social interaction outside of school has helped him learn new things and has increased his willingness to share things with his peers.
- She has learned how to interact with teachers and her peers. She feels comfortable navigating the school.
- Built confidence, increased school skills, adjusted to new people.
- Yes, he enjoyed it and I think it helped to settle some nerves.

- She has gained a lot of self-confidence and is very excited for school.
- Socially more ready and prepared.
- She has met her fellow classmates, is more comfortable with me not being right next to her.
- Her confidence (in herself and her learning) has really increased through this program.
- She is more confident in separating from me and joining her peers.

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

- The program helped me encourage my son to read books by the images. There are different ways to read. He has been more excited for story time and even offers to “read” the bed time story. PRICELESS moments.
- I feel he has been more interested in art, games and other activities.
- He is more likely to stick around and learn than to get fed up.
- It helped him get into the mood for learning, seeing that other kids were learning too.
- Getting better at numbers and letters and sitting for story time better.
- Loves coming, loves counting games, can start spellings and recognizes sounds of letters.
- Feeling more comfortable in the school and classroom, practicing educational skills, such as math and letter recognition.
- Getting used to different activities like cutting, gluing, puzzles.
- Has learned quite a bit more academic skills.
- My child is 100% more excited about “practicing kindergarten” at home after participating in GUK. She loves learning her letter sounds and has started reading!
- We’ve engaged in many of the activities at home. She is excited about them because they are from her “kindergarten” class.
- Learned routines, met other children, did new fun activities, especially the science and art activities.
- Knows a significant amount more of his letters and numbers.
- He has shown much more interest in letters, counting, etc. because it is coming from the “real” teachers.
- She has become more interested in numbers, letters, colors - she is excited when she knows she is going.
- He learned a lot of different activities. With this program I learned what my child should know and it is helping us in teaching him.
- He is really starting to enjoy doing projects. Follows simple game rules and really tries hard on his projects and homework.
- More familiar with the sounds of the alphabet.
- She uses her knowledge and intelligence a lot more frequently and strives to learn a lot more information.
- My child has learned more about numbers and reading.
- Letter recognition significantly increased, better able to separate from me at times when the teacher took the kids and the parents did their lesson.
- Socially advanced in education of letters, numbers and math.
- She has really excelled at learning and becoming more focused on how she needs and what she needs to do to perform at school.
- He has improved in his counting.
- My child’s letter recognition has tremendously increased since beginning this course. I’ve been able to notice areas where he needs to work at growth.
- She has improved with letters and has new LOVE for reading!
- Has grown in learning and likes to spend time doing hands on activities.
- He’s getting better at his ABC’s and counting.
- Learned letters of the alphabet, played with other kids, learned problem solving skills.

- He has enjoyed the program. We focused on math skills and they are improving. This program took away the fear of attending a new school. It's made him comfortable.
- Before the program I couldn't get my son to read. Now we read all the time. He also has become more independent because he wants to impress the teacher.
- Can do letters and numbers. More accepting, excited to go to kindergarten.
- He enjoyed coming and doing different activities each week, gave us time to reinforce some of his counting skills or ABC skills.

Greater Awareness and Comfort with School Routines and Expectations

- He has been helped in getting more used to the school environment.
- She feels more comfortable in the school setting. Looks to be less anxious.
- It has helped him learn what will be expected of him when kindergarten starts.
- He loves it and is much more comfortable in the school and with the idea of going to school.
- Became familiar with the school, teachers, peers and environment. Was a great social skill builder for us.
- I feel that she knows what to expect in kindergarten and is very excited about the fall!
- Better understanding of what kindergarten would be like. Opportunity to play with friends, separate from parents.
- Confident in attending kindergarten, became more excited about it - more familiar with room, school and school settings.
- He is more ready for kindergarten and not so scared.
- More comfortable with our kindergarten center. Less anxiety.
- He has an expectation of rules and a comfort level with this big change. He talks about this to friends and teaches his sister about school.
- This is his one exposure to a school setting besides daycare. Helps mentally prepare him for a school environment. It is nice to see how he has progressed with his teacher, classroom & peers since the first night.
- She has met classmates and teachers. She has experienced the school & where her classroom will be located.
- She has benefitted by being given the opportunity to experience classroom activities and follow direction from teachers. This is her first real "classroom" experience.
- He has been able to see how he is supposed to behave in a school setting.
- Familiarity with the kindergarten classroom and teachers.
- He has a better understanding of the expectations he will have for next school year.
- More comfortable at the school since they were familiar with it. Got to know the teachers and other students.
- My child got to meet kids she will be going to school with as well as becoming familiar with the school and its teachers.
- He enjoyed seeing his friends, teachers and reading stories.
- Yes, she enjoys coming and she is learning with new teachers and in a new setting which will better prepare her for kindergarten.
- She has learned some of the basic etiquette for school - raising hands, being quiet, walking in line, and most importantly, we have worked on some of the key readiness skills at home - letters, letter and sound recognition, numbers, etc.
- He had never been to the school before and now he's really excited about starting school.
- Yes, he got to meet the teachers and some other children who will be in his class. He also got to become familiar with the school.
- She's learned more patience with activities and is more prepared for school guidelines.
- Got used to the kindergarten setting and working more with his peers.
- She has been able to meet with some of her classmates and participate in group activities.
- Being able to be in a classroom setting, understanding, taking turns and raising hands.

- He has had a chance to experience what it is going to be like in a classroom setting and expectations that come with it.
- He feels more confident knowing some of the teachers and being in the classroom. He didn't want it to end!
- She is more comfortable and more excited to start school and has learned how things are going to be in school.
- Classroom setting, meeting peers, meeting a teacher.
- She's more aware of classroom routines and has gained a lot of knowledge from the activities.
- He was able to meet his teacher and some classmates. He was able to see his classroom and learn what the classroom setting is like.
- Child and parent feel extremely comfortable and prepared about kindergarten transition. I feel much more comfortable than prior to this class.
- Learning skills needed for kindergarten, getting comfortable with the classroom and other students and teachers.
- She has learned what will be expected from her when she is in kindergarten next year. She knows most of the kids that will be with her next year.
- Definitely benefits the kids being able to meet their classmates, teacher and what to expect in class next fall.
- Exposure to classroom settings, environment, expectations.
- He is certainly excited to start kindergarten this fall based on the program.
- She is much more comfortable with and familiar with how kindergarten will be in the fall, the rules and routines. It made her more excited about school and about learning in general.
- Classroom environment, less anxiety, looking forward to kindergarten, not as fearful. Increase in love of learning, excited to check out books.

What did you like most about the program?

Time Spent Together in Learning Activities with Child

- One on one time with my child.
- Activities with kids.
- Time with just her, away from siblings
- Kid & Parent time.
- A lot of great information. Time to interact with child one on one.
- Hands-on activities and parent involvement.
- The time spent with my child. It's our date night!
- Getting my child used to a learning environment (especially the school he will attend). Parent sessions were great.
- The parent/child activities and the last parent session.
- The one on one time with my child and being with him in a classroom/school setting.
- Classroom activities with the children.
- Bonding time with child and other parents.
- The class time with our child.
- Hands-on and one on one time at the beginning.
- Getting the craft and learning activities.
- The take home activities have been very useful in learning!
- The activities that all the kids got to do.
- I think the interaction and things taught were very helpful in preparing him.
- Spending time with my child & doing the exercises.
- That I got to spend quality time with my child.
- Being able to do activities with my child.
- Hands-on experience about math, science, etc., and the parent class.
- One on one time with child in the classroom doing learning activities.
- New learning opportunities with my child.
- I liked the interactive time with my child at the start of class. It gives us one-on-one time that is rare at home.
- The opportunity to work alongside our child and the parenting portion.
- Time spent as parent and child together learning. Quality time with child.
- The opportunity to be with my child for half of the time. Parent class is helpful too.
- Being able to do different activities with my child that are set up. Spend a little time with one of my kids, one-on-one.
- The chance to get to do something with her that was just for her. One on one time with her.
- The one on one time I had with my son doing different projects.
- The activities my child and I got to do. The staff was very organized and helpful.
- Activities and projects were great. Everyone was helpful and I know my child has made new friends.
- Family activities are enjoyable for kids and parents.
- The projects we did with our child each time.
- The learning opportunity for parents and for children is great.
- The together time with my child and the reading circle - it prepares them for kindergarten and my child has a clearer expectation for his behavior.
- Hand on activities with children in the classroom.
- Working on projects with my son.
- The child and parent activities, fun interactive ways to learn new skills.
- I really enjoyed the handouts that were given to us to work with our child.
- The activities we did with my child helped me learn a lot about him.

- Our child was very excited to have one-on-one time with his parents and away from his other siblings. He grinned ear to ear!
- The one-on-one time with my little boy. It was special time with just him.
- What I like the most was spending more time with my child and we both learned a lot.

Preparation of Parent and Child for Kindergarten Experience

- This is a wonderful program! It really shows the child a lot before they begin school. They get to get used to their teacher and classmates!
- Meeting other parents and children that will attend our son's school.
- My child interacting with teachers and peers.
- It's a great preparation for school.
- Great information and a great way to get the kids comfortable with kindergarten.
- Social interaction for my child.
- I love all the examples of games or other things to do at home. Also, the teacher has been amazing in this class.
- I like that it gives my child a strong understanding of kindergarten, and gets him used to the classroom.
- I appreciated the introduction to a classroom setting that was in the actual kindergarten my son will be attending. It helps ease anxiety for both child and parent.
- The ability for my son to be around the school environment.
- I enjoyed being in the atmosphere where she will attend kindergarten and seeing how she behaves.
- I think it was great for my daughter to see where she will be going to kindergarten. It helps that she will be familiar with how things will go.
- I liked that we got to see the school and get my child familiar with the layout so she will feel more comfortable when school starts.
- The children get to interact with kindergarten teachers and peers.
- My child is getting social interaction with children he will attend school with.
- Interaction my child gets with the teachers & kids and school setting. She has experienced the activities she will do in school.
- Gaining an understanding of the knowledge/skills expected of children getting ready for kindergarten.
- It's a great resource to expose the kids to transition to kindergarten.
- Exposure to school setting and expectations.
- The confidence and comfort level it gave my child about starting kindergarten.
- I like that it makes the kids so much more confident to start kindergarten. It takes away so much anxiety.
- My daughter enjoyed it and it gave her an idea of what school would be like.
- Children's exposure to the classroom & classroom expectations.
- How it prepares not only the children but the parents as well for kindergarten.
- It helped get my child ready & eager to go to kindergarten.
- Helps the child feel comfortable with the school, teachers and peers. This is a very big step for the child.
- My child engaged with peers his own age in a classroom setting to prepare for the upcoming year.
- Getting the children prepared for a school setting and having the parents be included in activities with the children.
- I am a stay at home mom and do preschool activities with my children so I have not sent my child to any programs outside the house or day care, so I like that my child has had this opportunity to be exposed to the school routine before he starts in Fall.

- I like that it gives our child a chance to come to school and start to learn what he will need to do in kindergarten and meet other kids his age that will be in school too.
- It has given my child an opportunity to see what school will be like, which is awesome.
- Ability for child and parent to familiarize themselves with school and peers.
- Giving us insight about what teachers' expectations are for kindergarten. Has gotten my daughter excited for next year.
- This is an amazing program to prepare our kids for kindergarten. Love that they get to experience the lunchroom procedure. Love the special one on one time with parents and kids. Great for the kids to get away from the parents also and experience class time.
- It has given us a chance to become familiar with kindergarten. Being my son is our oldest, I'm so thankful we had this opportunity to become familiar with what to expect.
- The value of this time spent at the school getting to know it and the teachers is invaluable. I feel so prepared now and I know my daughter does too.
- It gives the children an idea of the everyday processes of kindergarten.
- My child got to meet his teacher and other classmates and get familiar with school surroundings.
- We were able to prepare our kids more to be ready for school. Very good parenting tips and the time we share with our kids makes more good memories.
- It gave me an idea of what I need to work on for kindergarten and what is expected.

Parenting Discussion and Support

- Really enjoyed the program-I enjoyed hearing other people's parenting tips and challenges, it was helpful to relate.
- Open group discussions, child separation time, take home materials.
- The parent education was also wonderful. I am an elementary ed. teacher as well so a lot was review, but great information for parents.
- Liked the parenting information - was very helpful to have more strategies for raising/disciplining our children.
- Open discussion.
- I liked the information given to us as parents.
- Parent education and talking with other parents of a kindergartener.
- As a parent, I liked the development and behavioral pieces.
- Meeting other parents - not a lot of opportunities to do that.
- Hearing other parenting techniques/ideas of other parents.
- Being with and talking with other parents.
- A lot of good information and tools for learning and helping my child develop.
- Parent education, learned a lot of good things to try.
- Getting to meet other parents of my child's friends. Talking about common issues with the transition to kindergarten.
- Other people's input on how to do things. Sharing with others.
- Social aspect of meeting with other parents.
- Being able to ask questions and learning different ways to parent.
- Interacting with other parents with children the same age. Getting ideas on troubleshooting and parenting tips. What works for one child doesn't always work for the next, so it was refreshing to be able to chat with others.
- The parent classes were very informative.
- Interacting with other parents. Parent/child games and experiments.
- I liked the discussions with other parents. I learned a lot of good behavior methods to try for the future.
- Loved talking with other parents and how they do things.

- I liked the ideas and information teaching the parents what to do to help prepare their child for kindergarten and be better parents.
- The skills I learned to become a more effective parent in kindergarten years.
- Getting to meet other parents.
- The parenting and child development education and that there was child care for other children.
- I loved the parent portion - getting the handouts and information. Also, hearing how other parents handle various situations in the home. The take-home activities are great - would like those every session.
- Meeting other parents. Lots of great ideas for activities to do with my child.
- I have enjoyed socializing with other parents and having an atmosphere where we can learn and bond together more. It helped me realize where my son stands and appreciate more of what he does.

Quality of the Program Experience

- Excellent program. Glad we attended. Well presented. Opened my eyes about the school system.
- Excellent program, so glad you have offered it. It helped my child immensely, especially to separate with me.
- An awesome program and I will advise others to attend.
- I believe this program is very beneficial to both the parents and the children. I enjoyed it very much.
- I think we are very lucky to have this offered to us and feel my child gained valuable experience for starting kindergarten next fall.
- It is very well organized in a very good way and talks about all that we need to know and how to act and work with our kids.
- I liked the diversity of the group and the acceptance of the program.
- I think the teachers were great with the kids & also very good in their discussions with the parents.
- My child has enjoyed it and looked forward to every session.
- I appreciated all the helpful information on parenting and making sure my child is ready for kindergarten. Also, all the fun activities I got to do with my child, having one on one time.
- My child loved Gearing Up. Was always super excited to attend.
- Amazing!
- She thoroughly looked forward to coming to those classes!!