

Gearing Up for Kindergarten – Key Findings Show Impacts on School Readiness and Parenting

The situation

The academic and social expectations of children entering kindergarten have changed a great deal from previous generations. National research suggests that teachers estimate 32% of kids have some problems entering kindergarten and another 16% have difficult entries into kindergarten. Current research also shows that quality early childhood programs produce more successful students, better transitions between home and school, and increased abilities of children to navigate their world. In North Dakota, nearly 47,000 children between ages 0 and 5 are preparing for their entry into school and needing to gain knowledge and skills for success.

Extension response

Since the fall of 2006, the NDSU Extension Service has worked to develop a prevention-focused parent and family education program designed to facilitate child development and school readiness for families in North Dakota. In the 2008-09 school year, the program operated at 18 sites across North Dakota with 290 families participating. The 16-week program, offered in two 8-week sessions in the spring and fall year before a child enters kindergarten, combines parent-child learning activities, parent education, and school readiness skills for children. An intensive control group study evaluated outcomes for parents and children who participated in *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* versus those who did not.

Impacts

Based on responses by families who participated with their child(ren) in the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program or the control group during the 2008-09 school year, the following impacts were reported:

- Parents and children in *GUK* showed significantly higher increases than non-participants on 12 of 13 measures of parenting and child school readiness.

- Participants rated *GUK* as a significantly more valuable source of information on parenting and school readiness than any other source.
- On social skills and development, children in the *GUK* group had an increase 3 times higher than children who did not participate.
- On pre-academic skills and development, children in the *GUK* group had an increase 3 times higher than children who did not participate.
- On emotional skills and development, children in the *GUK* group had an increase 2 times higher than children who did not participate.
- On familiarity with numbers, children in the *GUK* group had an increase 4 times higher than children who did not participate.
- On familiarity with the alphabet, children in the *GUK* group had an increase 2.5 times higher than children who did not participate.
- On solving problems with peers, children in the *GUK* group had an increase 4 times higher than children who did not participate.
- On parent-child interactions, parents in the *GUK* group had an increase 2 times higher than adults who did not participate.
- On parent-child reading, parents in the *GUK* group had an increase 4 times higher than adults who did not participate.
- On parent-child practical knowledge, parents in the *GUK* group had an increase 9 times higher than adults who did not participate.

Contact

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