
Countdown to Kindergarten
Project Overview & Year-End Report for 2007-2008
Preliminary Report for NDPIRC- final report completed by August 20
Sean E. Brotherson, PhD, Sharon Query, PhD, & Divya Saxena, MS
North Dakota State University – Fargo, ND
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The academic expectations of children entering kindergarten have changed a great deal from previous generations. In order to instill knowledge and self confidence in children parents need to be made aware of and given the correct tools to prepare their children for kindergarten. Parents are a child's first and best teachers, but many parents need and want support in their role of preparing their children for success in school. *Countdown to Kindergarten* has provided valuable and much needed support by improving access to information, providing preschool and parent education classes, and partnering with organizations that work with young families to ensure programs focus on early literacy.

The North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension Parenting Resource Centers have offered *Countdown to Kindergarten*, a Preschool/Parent Education opportunity for parents and their children who will be entering kindergarten in a year.

Program Description

Countdown to Kindergarten

Countdown to Kindergarten is a prevention-focused parent and family education program designed to facilitate child development and school readiness. The program was developed by the Region V Parent Resource Center in Fargo, ND, under the direction of the NDSU Extension Service and in collaboration with Fargo, West Fargo, and Northern Cass Public Schools; and SENDCAA Head Start. Funding for the program development and original implementation in Cass County came from the United Way of Cass-Clay. Funding from the North Dakota State PIRC for additional sites across North Dakota was added in 2008.

Targeted sites are intended 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 2008 the program operated at 15 sites with 234 families enrolled:

Cass County:

- Kindergarten Center, West Fargo
- Jefferson Elementary, Fargo
- Madison Elementary, Fargo
- SENDCAA Head Start, Fargo
- Kennedy Elementary, Fargo
- Kindred/Davenport Elementary, Davenport
- Northern Cass Elementary, Hunter
- Nokomis Child Care Center, Fargo
- Even Start, Fargo (program within a program)

Other North Dakota Sites:

- Sunnyside Elementary, Minot
- Dunseith Day School, Dunseith
- Mount Pleasant Elementary, Rolla
- Eight Mile Elementary, Trenton
- Wilkinson Elementary, Williston
- Heart River Elementary, Dickinson

Recruitment

Recruitment brochures were developed and distributed through a variety of cooperation agencies including, Head Start, Public Schools, Child Care Resource & Referral agencies, Social Services, WIC, public libraries, and child care settings. News releases were published in local newspapers and the Parent Resource Center newsletters carried information for both semesters. Several sites were identified by the ND Parent Involvement Center (NDPIRC) based in Minot. The NDPIRC targeted schools that did not meet the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) criteria as defined by the federal government.

Countdown Enrollment/ (# of families)

Site	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Jan-May 2008	Total families (unduplicated)	# of sessions
Cass County Sites					
Madison		7		7	8
Jefferson		7		7	8
West Fargo	20	22		22	16
Head Start	16	13		16	16
Northern Cass	19	28		28	12
Kindred/ Davenport	13	21		21	16
Kennedy	9	13		13	16
Even Start	23	23		23	16
Nokomis	7	8		8	16
Other ND Sites					
Minot			22	22	11
Dunseith	10	10		10	16
Rolla	10	10		10	16
Trenton			8	8	14
Williston			9	9	14
Dickinson			30	30	13
Total	127	162	69	234	

Participants were involved in either two eight-week parent education sessions, one in the fall of 2007 and one in the spring of 2008 or eleven to fourteen week sessions running from January through May, 2008. 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 (topics include guidance, media, importance of sleep, temperament, nutrition, brain development, and parenting styles). The children, with a preschool facilitator and classroom assistant, have circle time and other preschool activities. The child activities focus on sharing, getting along with others, listening, taking turns, responsibility, and cognitive and literacy skills.

All children have been enrolled in *Imagination Library*, if they had not already done so. The families are able to check out a library book that they return the following week.

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 age appropriate activities, developmental stages and brain development.

On site childcare and refreshments were offered at each site. The program is facilitated by 36 preschool and parent facilitators and 18 classroom assistants. The curriculum was developed by NDSU Extension staff, with enhancements by Even Start for New American families, and Parents as Teachers for weekly take home activities. Evaluation instruments were developed in conjunction with the NDSU Child Development Family Science department.

Curriculum Description

The parent education sessions were designed around the research based curriculum *Bright Beginnings*, developed by NDSU Extension, with parent/child take home activities written by Parents as Teachers and adaptations for New Americans developed by Even Start. Topics for the parent education sessions included: Getting Ready for Kindergarten, Brain Development in Infancy and Early Childhood, Assisting Your Child's Social Development, The Magic of Reading with Young Children, Media Wise, Guidance & Discipline, Developmental Stages, Responsibility, Sleep, Nutrition, Young Children and the Importance of Play, Self Help Skills, Understanding Young Children's Physical Development, Young Children and Emotional Intelligence, Learning Styles, and Temperament.

The curriculum for the child and parent sessions were developed/ compiled by Sharon Query, Extension Specialist/4-H Youth Development; Mandi McFadden, Countdown to Kindergarten Coordinator; and Sharon Rostad, Parent Facilitator and coordinator of the District 44 preschool program. They trained and supported each of the contracted program facilitators. Each site had two contracted facilitators for the child and parent sessions, as well as a classroom assistant.

Fall Session Objectives

Session 1- Orientation

- Parents will meet and interact with other parents.
- Parents will understand ground rules.
- Parents will gain an understanding of *Countdown to Kindergarten* program.

Session 2- Parenting Styles

- Parents will understand how their parenting style directly impacts their children's behavior.

Session 3- Brain Development

- Parents will gain a basic understanding about brain development in young children.

- Parents will gain knowledge about their role in their child’s brain development and success.

Session 4- Raising a Reader/ Early Literacy

- Parents will understand the importance of reading to their kids.
- Parents will learn new and exciting ways to encourage reading in their kids.

Session 5- Choosing Effective Discipline Techniques

- Parents will recognize that it is normal for children to test limits.
- Parents will identify discipline techniques that are ineffective and explain why they are ineffective
- Parents will develop skills for positive discipline.

Session 6- Media Wise

- Parents will be able to re-evaluate the rules they have set on media and how it affects their children.
- Parents will be able to help their children find other activities besides television or computer.
- Parents will understand ways to limit media exposure.

Session 7- Developing Responsibility/Self Help Skills

- Parents will understand the importance of their child being able to do things for themselves like zipping their coat and backpack, using the restroom, and putting on their own boots.
- Parents will understand their role in developing responsibility in their children and some techniques to use.

Session 8- Importance of Sleep

- Parents will understand the link between their child’s misbehavior and missing sleep.
- Parents will recognize and mediate factors occurring throughout the day and evening that interfere with their child’s sleep.
- Parents will utilize information about their child’s temperament to decrease tension during the day and at bedtime.
- Parents will plan and carry out effective bedtime routines.

Spring Session Objectives

Session 1 – Learning Styles/ School Readiness

- Parents will become reoriented with the program.
- Parents will understand the importance of knowing their and their child’s learning style.
- Parents will discuss things to consider when contemplating school readiness.

Session 2- 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 3 – Early Literacy/ Math

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

Session 4- Social-Emotional Development

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

Session 5- Guidance and Discipline Tools

- Parents will identify strategies for managing conflict and teaching responsibility.
- Parents will identify strategies for teaching natural and logical consequences.

Session 6- Nutrition

- Parents will understand their role in feeding a well nourished child.
- Parents will understand ways to encourage their child to consume healthy foods.

Session 7- Safety

- Parents will understand the importance of having children use booster seats and sitting in the back seat.
- Parents will understand the importance of having the entire family understand fire escape routes in their house.
- Parents will understand the importance of having and wearing properly fitted bike helmets.

Session 8- Parent’s Role in School Success

- Parents will understand their role in their child’s 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.

Evaluation Strategies for the Countdown to 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 2007-2008 (second year of the program) provides results gathered from the entire year of the program's operation in fall 2007 and spring 2008. These results were compiled using feedback gathered from program participants through three 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 draft is a preliminary report based on the data available for analysis at the time (in mid-June 2008), and another final draft will be compiled once all remaining data has been gathered and analyzed.

Overall Program Evaluation – Single Retrospective Form

The first aspect of the evaluation process for the Countdown to Kindergarten project was accomplished by gathering participant information through the Single Retrospective Form, a brief parent survey that focuses 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 twice, once at the end of the fall 2007 program and once at the end of the spring 2008 program. The findings are presented for both the fall and spring aspects of the program separately.

Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness

A second aspect of the evaluation process for the Countdown to 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 Countdown to Kindergarten project, and is titled the Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness. Children were rated on a 5-point scale by their parents in six 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, 52 items focused on children's school readiness and 18 items on parenting practices. Parents were asked to complete this assessment in the fall at the beginning of the program and also in the spring 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.

A personalized report was developed for each child who participated in the Countdown to Kindergarten program, which allowed parents to see how they rated children in key areas and also a comparison of their child's scores to the overall average score of children in the program. This report was provided so that parents and teachers could have practical feedback specific to a child that could be used in discussing further needs regarding school readiness.

Behavior Assessment System for Children (2nd ed.), Parent and Teacher Rating Scales

The final aspect of the evaluation process for the Countdown to Kindergarten project focused on parent and teacher ratings of a child's social and emotional behavior in key areas. The evaluation tool selected for this was the Behavior Assessment System for Children (2nd ed.), or BASC-2, which is a highly regarded measure that allows children to be evaluated in comparison to national norms for children in their similar age group. It is a diagnostic tool used in the evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of developmental, learning, and behavioral disorders in children. It is multidimensional in that it measures numerous aspects of behavior and personality, including positive (adaptive) as well as negative (clinical) dimensions. Both parents

and teachers were asked to complete the assessment tool twice for each child, once in the fall at the start of the program and once in the spring at the end of the program.

Filling out the assessment twice allows for comparison of a child's scores over a range of time and also from both parental and teacher perspectives. Thus, the tool allows both parents and teachers to provide feedback on a child that enables them to:

- Highlight areas of positive growth and development in a child (adaptive skills)
- Identify potential areas of perceived concern regarding a child's development, learning or behavior
- Assess a child's perceived development and behavior in relation to established national norms (typical patterns) for children in a similar age group

Again, a personalized report was created for each child that explained the assessment and included both the parent and teacher ratings in key areas for fall and spring. This personalized report for a specific child is based on ratings of the child's behavior by both parents and teachers using the BASC-2 Parent Rating Scales (PRS) and Teacher Rating Scales (TRS) forms. It provides a graphical presentation of scores on a scale for each area assessed, a comparison of scores in fall and spring, and additional information about common childhood behavioral and emotional problems.

We are determining more specific findings from the BASC-2 Parent Rating Scales (PRS) and Teacher Rating Scales (TRS) as part of the ongoing evaluation at this time.

I. Overall Program Evaluation Results for Countdown to Kindergarten

Basic Characteristics of Program Participants

A total sample of 115 participants from eleven of the twelve Countdown to Kindergarten fall program sites completed the program evaluation survey in fall 2007, or in the case of the sites starting in January and running through May, their initial program evaluation is recorded as fall 2007.

In spring 2008, 113 participants from thirteen spring sites completed the second round of the survey. Total enrollment for fall 2007 was 173 families (Even Start does not use these evaluation instruments), so the response rate to the survey was 66%. Demographic characteristics of participants in spring 2007 were highly similar to those recorded for fall, so are not reported here. Selected demographic characteristics of individuals participating in the program in fall 2007 who completed the survey are listed below.

- **Gender** – 82% women, 18% men
- **Age** – Average of 34.1 years; parents ranged in age from 24 to 64 years of age
- **Number of children** – Average of 2.35 children per parent
- **Location** – 57% live in an urban setting; 43% in a rural or farm/ranch setting (8.7%)
- **Family status** – Married (87%); Single (never married) (6.1%); separated/divorced (6.1%)
- **Employment status** – Full-time employment (62.6%); employed 26-39 hours a week (8.7%); employed less than 25 hours a week (7%); not seeking outside employment (20%); other (1.7%)
- **Education level** – High school/GED (14.8%); some college (22.6%); 2-year college degree (22.6%); 4-year college degree (31.3%); master's degree or higher (8.7%)
- **Racial or ethnic background** – Caucasian (93%); Native American (5.2%); other (1.7%)
- **Program participation** – 76% of participants indicated involvement in 6 or more sessions of the program during the fall 2007 year; 89% of participants in spring 2008 indicated involvement in 6 or more sessions of the program.

Overall Value of the Program

Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions about their perceptions of the program as a whole and some of its effects on them. The tables below report participant feedback regarding the overall program, specific impacts of the program, and the value of specific topics addressed in the program. In each table, findings are included to each question for both the fall 2007 and the spring 2008 portions of the program (each an 8-week cycle of the program).

Where necessary, tables have been separated to include profiles of participant responses during both the fall and spring portions of the program. However, where possible the participant responses for both program portions have been included in the same table, and the responses are marked as to whether they indicate the findings for fall 2007 (F07) or spring 2008 (S08).

The first table, Table 1, highlights responses of participants in general to the program and its value to them as well as the quality of their experience.

Table 1: General Value of Countdown to Kindergarten Program

Question	Not Useful	Slightly Useful	Some what Useful	Very Useful	Extremely Useful
Overall value of the program to me:	--	1.7% (F07)	13.9% (F07)	54.8% (F07)	29.6% (F07)
	.9% (S08)	--	3.5% (S08)	62.8% (S08)	32.7% (S08)
Handouts and activities provided to me in this program were:	--	.9% (F07)	10.4% (F07)	63.5% (F07)	25.2% (F07)
	.9% (S08)	--	9.7% (S08)	68.4% (S08)	31% (S08)
	NA	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Information presented in a clear and helpful manner:	--	--	--	39.1% (F07)	60.9% (F07)
				45.1% (S08)	54.9% (S08)
I was treated in a respectful manner:	--	--	--	20% (F07)	80% (F07)
				24.8% (S08)	75.2% (S08)

Participants expressed positive feelings about the program thus far, with 84% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them in fall 2007 and 96% saying the same thing in spring 2008. Among participants in fall 2007, 89% said the handouts and learning activities were very useful to them while 99% responded similarly in spring 2008. Finally, all of them agreed that the information was presented well and they were treated respectfully, with those who strongly agreed they were treated in a respectful manner going from 80% to 75% between fall and spring.

Impacts

Parents described positive impacts as a result of participating in the first portion of Countdown to 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 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 fall 2007 and spring 2008, they responded as follows: (1) increased knowledge of child development (3.62 in fall 07, 3.69 in spring 08); (2) increased knowledge of healthy parenting (3.55 in fall 07, 3.62 in spring 08); (3) increased confidence in being a good parent (3.64 in fall 07, 3.61 in spring 08); (4) increased parenting skills (3.47 in fall 07, 3.53 in spring 08); (5) changed behavior as a parent (3.32 in fall 07, 3.34 in spring 08); and (6) influenced the relationship with your child (3.48 in fall 07, 3.49 in spring 08).

Table 2: General Impacts of Countdown to Kindergarten Program

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	--	5.2% (F07)	42.6% (F07)	37.4% (F07)	14.8% (F07)
	--	4.4% (S08)	39.8% (S08)	38.1% (S08)	17.7% (S08)
Increase your knowledge of healthy parenting	--	7% (F07)	45.2% (F07)	33.9% (F07)	13.9% (F07)
	1.8% (S08)	7.1% (S08)	37.2% (S08)	35.4% (S08)	18.6% (S08)
Increase your confidence in being a good parent	2.6% (F07)	4.3% (F07)	33% (F07)	46.1% (F07)	13.9% (F07)
	2.7% (S08)	9.7% (S08)	27.4% (S08)	44.2% (S08)	15.9% (S08)
Increase your skills as a parent	.9% (F07)	7% (F07)	47% (F07)	34.8% (F07)	10.4% (F07)
	.9% (S08)	7.1% (S08)	39.8% (S08)	38.1% (S08)	13.3% (S08)
Change your behavior as a parent	.9% (F07)	20% (F07)	40.9% (F07)	22.6% (F07)	15.7% (F07)
	.9% (S08)	15% (S08)	46% (S08)	25.7% (S08)	12.4% (S08)
Influence your relationship with your child	1.7% (F07)	13.9% (F07)	36.5% (F07)	30.4% (F07)	17.4% (F07)
	1.8% (S08)	9.7% (S08)	36.3% (S08)	38.1% (S08)	13.3% (S08)

In general, participating parents indicated very positive impacts from being involved in Countdown to 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 above the 50% point or more from fall 2007 to spring 2008.**

Among participants, 52% in fall 2007 and 56% in spring 2008 indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, 48% noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much (54% in spring 08), 60% felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and 45% said it increased their parenting skills a lot or very much (51% in spring 08). Additionally, 79% felt it changed their parent behavior at least somewhat (84% in spring 08), and 84% indicated that it influenced their relationship with their child positively (88% in spring 08). These overall findings were nearly identical in both fall 2007 and spring 2007, except with the few minor differences noted.

Value of Specific Topics to Parents

Participants were also asked to rate the usefulness of different class topics on a scale of 1 to 5, ranging from 1=not useful to 5=extremely useful. The perceived value of specific class sessions that they participated in helps to provide insight into what topics may be most helpful to parents relative to the issue of school readiness. The findings for class topics are provided for both the fall 2007 session (see Table 3) and the spring 2008 session (see Table 4).

In fall 2007, the **most highly rated sessions were on parenting styles (3.85) and reading with children (3.79)**; however, all sessions were rated as at least somewhat to very useful for participants in the program. The ratings for each specific topic covered in the fall 2007 session are listed below in Table 3.

Table 3: Value of Specific Topics in Countdown to Kindergarten Program (Fall 2007)

Question Please rate the following class topics in the CTK program	Overall Mean Score from 1 (not useful) to 5 (extremely useful)
Countdown to Kindergarten Orientation	3.52
Parenting Styles	3.85
Brain Development	3.78
Raising a Reader	3.79
Choosing Effective Discipline Techniques	3.53
Media Wise	3.01
Developing Responsibility and Self Help Skills	3.33
Importance of Sleep	3.35

In spring 2008, the **most highly rated sessions were on child temperament (3.90) and social-emotional development (3.95)**, and five of eight topics were rated very highly at 3.75 or above. It seems clear that participants valued the specific topics they learned about and gained value from the learning experience. The ratings for each specific topic covered in the spring 2008 session are listed below in Table 4.

Table 4: Value of Specific Topics in Countdown to Kindergarten Program (Spring 2008)

Question Please rate the following class topics in the CTK program	Overall Mean Score from 1 (not useful) to 5 (extremely useful)
Learning Styles and School Readiness	3.89
Child Temperament	3.90
Early Literacy and Math Skills	3.56
Social and Emotional Development	3.95
Guidance and Discipline Tools	3.81
Nutrition and Children	3.30
Child Safety	3.38
Parent's Role in School Success	3.76

Perceived Impacts of Countdown to 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 Countdown to Kindergarten program. 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 activities that parents were asked about link to things that they were learning about in the Countdown to Kindergarten program, and so the items asked about were slightly different in the fall 2007 and spring 2008 sessions.

It is important to note three things in explaining this portion of the Countdown to Kindergarten interim evaluation. First, the method used with parents to get their perceptions was what is called a “retrospective” evaluation, in which they rate themselves at the current time and also, looking back to their actions before the program, rate themselves according to where they were at that time. This makes it easier to gather the information than in using a traditional “pre” and “post” approach, and some argue this lets them make a more accurate perception of themselves, but others would disagree. Second, since the parents rate themselves it is likely that they may rate themselves higher in these parenting activities than others might rate them. Finally, the scores they use to rate themselves are on a 1 to 5 scale, with answers ranging from “hardly ever” (1) to “sometimes” (3) to “almost always” (5). It is also important to note that since there is no control group of other parents not receiving this program that is also being evaluated at the same time, it cannot be said with certainty that perceived impacts of the program are due to participation in Countdown to Kindergarten. It can reasonably be assumed, however, that any differences measured are likely (though not certain) to occur due to participation in Countdown to Kindergarten.

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 “now, 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 for both the fall 2007 and spring 2008 sessions of the program, followed by brief discussion points regarding the findings.

Fall 2007 Session – Perceived Impacts on Parents

Findings from the fall 2007 session of Countdown to Kindergarten are reported below in Table 5.

Table 5: Perceived Impacts on Parenting of Countdown to Kindergarten (Fall 2007)

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. Deal well with the personal impacts of being a parent.	3.93	4.23	.30	Yes
2. Pay attention to factors that affect my growing child.	3.87	4.48	.61	Yes
3. Avoid anger or harshness in the parenting style I use with my child.	3.63	4.22	.58	Yes
4. Hold, hug, and snuggle with my child.	4.66	4.85	.19	Yes
5. Give my child a variety of activities and learning experiences.	3.80	4.38	.58	Yes
6. Talk, laugh, sing, and converse with my child.	4.41	4.69	.28	Yes
7. Read with my child each day.	4.16	4.55	.39	Yes
8. Discuss contents of a book or story with my child.	3.71	4.37	.65	Yes
9. Am patient in realizing my child tests limits as he or she grows.	3.46	4.15	.68	Yes
10. Focus on using positive discipline or guidance with my child.	3.69	4.37	.68	Yes
11. Set and enforce rules to guide my child's use of media.	3.46	4.19	.73	Yes
12. Help my child find other activities besides watching TV or using a computer.	3.59	4.27	.68	Yes
13. Assist my child in practicing self-care skills (like using the toilet, zipping coat, etc.).	4.01	4.30	.29	Yes
14. Give my child choices in small areas and guide those choices.	3.73	4.33	.60	Yes
15. Understand the link between my child's sleep and their behavior.	3.95	4.58	.63	Yes
16. Set and follow a structured bedtime routine with my child each night.	4.02	4.43	.41	Yes

The findings show, based on the statistical analysis, that **participants experienced significant differences in ALL of the 16 parental practices related to school readiness** as a likely result of their participation in the Countdown to Kindergarten program. There are several important points to make as a result of these findings:

- Participants noted **moderate to large changes in all of the 16 parental practices related to school readiness that were measured, with all of the changes showing positive increases in a particular parental practice** (e.g., more actively discussing a story with children or helping a child find other activities besides watching TV).
- The findings showed significant differences in parental practices for participants before and after their participation in Countdown to Kindergarten. These changes included **one small increase of .20 or less in a specific practice, 5 increases between .25 and .45 in difference, and 10 larger increases of nearly .60 or higher in specific parental practices.**
- The **largest eight differences** for participants occurred in the following areas: **setting and enforcing rules to guide media usage (.73), helping children find activities besides use of TV or computers (.68), being patient with a child who tests limits (.68), using positive discipline and guidance practices (.68), discussing contents of a book or story with the child (.65), understanding the link between children’s behavior and sleep (.63), paying attention to factors that affect child development (.61), and giving children choices and guiding them (.60).**
- The increases **that occurred in parents’ efforts with their children in specific areas were typically five to eight times higher than would be expected to occur** due to random chance, and so this is a good indicator that the Countdown to Kindergarten program is having a positive impact.
- The **findings suggest that the Countdown to Kindergarten has made good 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 participants in the Countdown to Kindergarten was generated as a result of involvement in the fall 2007 session of the program, or the first half of the program, at Countdown to Kindergarten sites in ND. The findings suggest a positive first step to the program’s beginnings in terms of its initial impact on parents who are involved.

Spring 2008 Session – Perceived Impacts on Parents

Findings from the spring 2008 session of Countdown to Kindergarten are reported below.

Table 6: Perceived Impacts on Parenting of Countdown to Kindergarten (Spring 2008)

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. Know my own and my child's learning style.	2.96	4.17	1.21	Yes
2. Explore issues to consider related to my child's school readiness.	3.09	4.18	1.09	Yes
3. Understand how my child's behavior is affected by his or her temperament.	3.15	4.20	1.05	Yes
4. Use appropriate techniques in dealing with my child's temperament.	3.19	4.14	.95	Yes
5. Engage my child in learning in "everyday" activities.	3.45	4.24	.79	Yes
6. Encourage the development of math skills in my child in daily activities.	3.19	4.07	.88	Yes
7. Am attentive and understanding with my child's social and emotional abilities.	3.42	4.22	.80	Yes
8. Practice social skills with my child including sharing, taking turns, and not interrupting.	3.79	4.42	.63	Yes
9. Encourage my child to think on his or her own.	3.53	4.36	.83	Yes
10. Use natural and logical consequences with my child during discipline.	3.49	4.25	.76	Yes
11. Support my child in eating healthy foods.	3.65	4.25	.59	Yes
12. Take steps in providing healthy food choices to my child.	3.75	4.38	.63	Yes
13. Have my child use booster seats while driving in the car.	4.69	4.83	.14	Yes
14. Teach my children to understand fire escape routes in our home.	2.74	3.78	1.04	Yes
15. Have my child wear properly fitted bike helmets.	3.64	4.06	.42	Yes
16. Understand my role in my child's success at school.	3.84	4.52	.68	Yes
17. Plan on getting involved in my child's school.	3.92	4.50	.58	Yes

The findings for the spring 2008 session indicate, based on the statistical analysis, that **participants experienced significant differences in ALL of the 17 parental practices related to school readiness** as a likely result of their participation in the Countdown to Kindergarten program. There are several important points to make as a result of these findings:

- Participants noted **moderate to large changes in all of the 17 parental practices related to school readiness that were measured, with all of the changes showing positive increases in a particular parental practice** (e.g., using appropriate techniques in dealing with a child's temperament or providing healthy food choices to a child).
- The findings showed significant differences in parental practices for participants before and after their participation in Countdown to Kindergarten. These changes included **6 substantive increases of between .40 and .70 in a specific practice, and 10 large increases of .75 or higher in specific parental practices.**
- The **six largest differences** for participants occurred in the following areas: **knowing one's own and a child's learning style (1.21), exploring issues related to school readiness (1.09), understanding how temperament affects a child's behavior (1.05), teaching children to understand fire escape routes (1.04), using appropriate techniques in dealing with a child's temperament (.95), and encouraging the development of math skills (.88).**
- The significant differences documented during spring 2008 included an **additional ten parental practices that showed moderate changes, including being attentive to a child's social and emotional abilities (.80), using reasonable consequences during discipline (.76), support of healthy eating habits (.59), and planning to get involved in the child's school (.58).**
- The increases **that occurred in parents' efforts with their children in specific areas were typically five to eight times higher than would be expected to occur** due to random chance, and so this is a very good indicator that the Countdown to Kindergarten program is having a positive impact.
- The **findings suggest that the Countdown to Kindergarten has made a good first step in developing a sound program that assists parents and influences them in a positive manner. Parents who are involved in the program tend to indicate changes that may help them behave in ways that will help their children toward school readiness and positive development.**

II. Parental Assessment of Children's School Readiness

Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness

One of the identified goals for the Countdown to 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 six key areas of development related to school readiness (a total of 52 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."

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 newly developed instrument and so understanding of how well it allows parents to gauge a child's school readiness across different areas is just emerging.
- 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, since there is no comparison group at present for this year's program of Countdown to Kindergarten, we do not know if 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 six 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, once in fall 2007 and once in spring 2008 during the program. Only those parents who filled out a PPASR assessment for their child at both times were included in the analysis (**Note:** Data collection for the PPASR at these sites is still occurring, so assessment is based only on current information available). A total sample of 37 children were rated by parents in the Countdown to Kindergarten in both the fall and the spring (this sample represents approximately 18% of participating children). Demographic characteristics were similar to those previously reported.

Each parent received a PPASR Report Sheet that highlighted their individual child's score on each item and the comparison score for the entire group. A single example of a PPASR Report Sheet is included at the end of this section (with no identifying information) to show how the findings from this process were used to provide individualized feedback to parents with children in the Countdown to Kindergarten program. These report sheets are meant to facilitate insight, reflection and discussion for parents and teachers on school readiness for a child. The score given for a child on each specific item was designated as either "developing" (score of 1 or 2), "partly proficient" (3), "proficient" (4), and "advanced" (5).

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) *Physical Skills and Abilities* (physical); (3) *Friends and Social Interaction* (social); (4) *Knowing the Basics* (academic); (5) *Feelings and Families* (emotional); and (6) *Health, Fitness and Practical Skills* (practical). Six tables are included below, one of which covers each dimension, and there are beginning group scores (fall 2007), completing group scores (spring 2008), 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 fall 2007 and spring 2008. The table indicates whether there is a "significant" difference between the scores, which may be due to program participation, individual growth, or other factors.

Table 7: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2007 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2008 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Is curious and asks questions to learn more about the topic.	4.41	4.54	.13	No
2. Works with hands in putting together puzzles or building with blocks.	4.41	4.51	.10	No
3. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	4.00	4.05	.05	No
4. Learns and recites familiar songs, nursery rhymes, finger plays or stories.	4.00	4.16	.16	No
5. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	3.73	4.0	.27	No
6. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.38	3.92	.54	Yes
7. Is able to work independently on a task (painting, picking up clothes, etc.)	3.97	4.27	.30	Yes
8. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.11	3.81	.70	Yes
9. Is persistent when solving problems.	2.92	3.57	.65	Yes

Table 8: Physical Skills and Abilities – School Readiness Scores

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2007 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2008 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
10. Holds a pencil or crayon with fingers (not fist).	4.38	4.62	.24	No
11. Can button, snap or zip pants or coat.	4.11	4.57	.46	Yes
12. Moves easily from place to place when walking.	4.89	4.95	.06	No
13. Creates things using hands and paper, crayons, scissors, etc.	4.30	4.73	.43	Yes
14. Is able to cut with scissors.	4.27	4.78	.51	Yes
15. Can catch or pick up a rolled or thrown soft ball.	4.59	4.68	.09	No
16. Shows large motor skills, such as hopping, skipping, running, jumping or throwing	4.78	4.84	.06	No

Table 9: Friends and Social Interaction – School Readiness Scores

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2007 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2008 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
17. Shares with other children (such as toys, crayons, etc.)	3.65	3.92	.27	Yes
18. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	3.86	3.97	.11	No
19. Listens in a group situation.	3.92	4.08	.16	No
20. Takes turns with others.	3.62	4.0	.38	Yes
21. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	4.05	4.11	.06	No
22. Enjoys talking to or playing with other children.	4.30	4.35	.05	No
23. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.65	3.92	.27	Yes
24. Understands and follows rules that are explained.	3.95	4.14	.19	No
25. Understands how to enter into talking or play with other kids.	3.62	3.76	.14	No
26. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.24	3.73	.48	Yes

Table 10: Knowing the Basics – School Readiness Scores

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2007 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2008 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
27. Is familiar with books and enjoys having others read to him.	4.78	4.86	.08	No
28. Tries to learn/use new words.	4.35	4.51	.16	No
29. Is able to speak and communicate thoughts, needs and feelings in a way others understand.	4.57	4.51	-.06	No
30. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	4.11	4.54	.43	Yes
31. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	4.11	4.57	.46	Yes
32. Is able to do counting, understanding basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	3.81	4.51	.70	Yes
33. Can sort things into basic groups, (such as by color, shape, things that match, etc.)	4.65	4.89	.24	Yes
34. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	4.14	4.35	.21	No

Table 11: Feelings and Families – School Readiness Scores

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2007 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2008 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
35. Feels loved and supported from family members at home.	4.84	4.89	.05	No
36. Spends time away from me in a variety of settings (child care, friend's house) without too much anxiety.	4.14	4.38	.24	No
37. Can identify his or her feelings (such as sad, happy, angry).	4.49	4.57	.08	No
38. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.81	4.14	.32	Yes
39. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.41	3.73	.32	No
40. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.76	4.03	.27	Yes
41. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	4.08	4.14	.06	No
42. Appreciates getting to know new people or friends through time.	4.11	4.32	.21	No

Table 12: Health, Fitness and Practical Skills – School Readiness Scores

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2007 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2008 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
43. Independently uses basic self-care skills, such as brushing teeth, using the toilet, washing hands, etc.	4.59	4.70	.11	No
44. Eats a variety of snacks and foods.	4.19	4.41	.22	No
45. Is active and enjoys physical movement.	4.76	4.78	.02	No
46. Can recite his or her name, parents' names and contact information (address, phone number).	3.0	3.54	.54	Yes
47. Is able to understand location and get him or herself from one place to another (walk to a friend's house, ride a bike to the playground, etc.).	3.35	3.65	.30	No

48. Has experience with following a routine at home, child care or preschool (such as bedtime routine, lunch routine, etc.).	4.49	4.54	.05	No
49. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.49	3.95	.46	Yes
50. Has experience using school-related supplies, such as pencils, paper, markers, backpack, etc.	4.54	4.70	.16	No
51. Is able to put on clothes (coat, shoes, etc.), and take care of belongings (book, etc.).	4.51	4.57	.06	No
52. Assists with simple household chores and is able to complete them with guidance.	4.27	4.30	.03	No

These six tables summarize the findings from the Countdown to Kindergarten project currently available for the 2007-08 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 Countdown to Kindergarten program **routinely rate their children very highly on most indicators of school readiness**. This means that there is often limited room for change to be indicated across specific items. For example, the average beginning score on every item (all 52 items) was in the direction of the Proficient (3 or higher) or Advanced (4 or higher) category. Twenty of 52 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 many indicators of school readiness in children. These gains are likely due to a combination of participation in the Countdown to Kindergarten program, normal processes of child development, and other contributing factors. Other indicators showed no or limited evidence of change. Sometimes this was due to the fact that the children were already perceived as highly developed on that indicator, while on others there was change but it was not enough to reach statistical significance. The small sample size may also have limited the likelihood of assessing significant changes over time in the indicators used.**
- Among 52 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on 19 of the indicators between fall 2007 and spring 2008. Positive increases occurred on indicators in all six 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 19 indicators. These changes included **4 small increases between .20 and .30, and 15 substantive increases of .35 or higher on specific items of school readiness.**
- The **largest significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred in the following areas: **working at solving problems (.70), counting and understanding basic numbers (.70), persistence in solving problems (.65), drawing and using art to express ideas or feelings (.54), ability to recite family names and contact information (.54), ability to cut with scissors (.51), trying to solve problems with friends (.48), ability to**

button or snap or zip pants or coat (.48), familiarity with numbers (.46), awareness of who to contact in case of a need for help (.46), creating things with hands and materials (.43), and familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.43).

- In analyzing all increases over .20 or more (whether significant or not), **the findings suggest growth in four primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently in a guided environment; (3) development of specific skills or knowledge that apply to a school setting (using a pencil, knowing the alphabet and numbers, awareness of personal contact information, etc.); and (4) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities.**

The findings from the assessment process concerning changes in children's social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and practical abilities related to school readiness show that some changes are occurring for children enrolled in the Countdown to 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.

An example of the PPASR Report Sheet that was created for feedback from the program to parents concerning their children is included on the next two pages. It highlights the specific indicator for school readiness, the child's rating by the parent in either the fall or spring, the child's perceived level of performance, and the comparison score of the entire Countdown to Kindergarten group as a whole.

Qualitative Feedback from Parents about Countdown to Kindergarten

As we look at the difference that Countdown to Kindergarten has made, we asked parents a number of response questions. Some of their answers are shared below:

What have you been led to do differently as a parent as a result of Countdown?

- I work and focus on being more patient.
- Listen more to what my children have to say. Interact and play more with my children and create craft projects.
- While we have always read to our children I now take more time in being sure that he understands the story. I also ask more for his input about the story regarding predictions.
- I would not have thought giving four-year old choices would be wise, but after trying it; it really works and makes things less stressful around home.
- I have tried to not let frustration get in the way as much when working with my child.
- Being my first child this has been extremely helpful. I have learned different ways to deal with issues.
- I think my attitude and patience has changed for the better. Taking time to listen. It's very useful information to use for my other kids!
- I have learned a lot. I have really changed my parenting skills since coming to this. Before this class, I really wasn't sure on what to do and how to do things!
- The information on media and sleep really opened my eyes. I didn't realize how much my children were affected by both.
- Found information on media very interesting. Motivated me to decrease TV time and increase family time.
- I have given my son more responsibilities at home and it has gone really well.
- Being more aware of parenting styles.
- I have become more patient with my kids and am trying to make them more self reliant.

- This was excellent! The discipline and media have helped to change what we do; we do more activities with children.
- I think about actions more.
- I definitely had an eye opener with the media discussion. When asked if our son watched violence on T.V. I thought "Cops" and shows like that and said no. But I realize he watches power rangers, ninja turtles, and these cause "play fighting."
- Yes, be more consistent
- The sleeping pattern has changed along with watching TV. She studies and plays more than watching TV.
- Listen more not just superficial
- Ask more questions to encourage her to think about different situations.
- To be more patient and a little less rigid with discipline and consequences
- Try not to yell and take time to teach.
- Reading to my child more often.
- Having my child become more independent. Giving choices when it comes to discipline, letting her know how her choices affect situations.
- Trying harder to at least read one book a day if we haven't had the chance earlier in the day, even if it is little past bedtime.
- I have begun paying more attention to my child and giving her more patience. I have learned that she goes at her own speed. She does not like to be rushed.
- I loved the session on developing responsibility - the checklists have been a big hit in our house - we use on for both a.m. and p.m.
- How important reading is. I was not read to very often as a child and the important connections weren't made. I never did like reading and still don't. But I love reading to my kids.
- I got most out of the information about child's temperament and my own and how each affects the other. Second was the discussion and information on my role once my child is in school.
- I have learned that I need more patience with my kids. I'm also learning how to use a calmer voice.
- We have planned a fire escape plan, which I didn't really think about before
- This program helped me establish more consistent discipline.
- Try to be a role model for child.
- More safety conscious, healthier eating habits.
- I find myself thinking about different techniques of learning, eating, behavioral issues, safety, etc. because of this class and utilizing to the best of our abilities, the processes we've learned while in this class. It's been very beneficial!
- I wish I would've had the opportunity of this service for my first child. Very useful information that will make the transition to kindergarten much easier.
- Discipline techniques, reassurance behavior are related to sleep, food, emotion and are normal.
- When it comes to snack time at home, I will offer a more healthy snack after having a nutrition speaker.
- Increased understanding of his need for socialization with his peers therefore increased play dates.
- I have seen a change in myself in how I handle some situations. I tend to talk through more with my son and am calmer about most situations.
- The fire alarm discussion really opened my eyes about how important it is to practice fire escape routes and not panicking.
- I think my knowledge of discipline strategies has increased and improved how I guide my children. I really liked the parent sessions and all the topics we discussed.

- This has provided me with the opportunity to see my son in a kindergarten environment, it has given me the assurance I needed to know my son will be ok and do well in kindergarten. It really helped me out.
- I know I have worked more on preparing my second child for Kindergarten, than I did my oldest child.
- I feel more comfortable with my child entering into school. I do pay more attention to how he expresses his emotions. We work on skills to be prepared to attend school more often.
- I have learned a lot about how to get my daughter ready for Kindergarten. I wasn't very sure what to do before. It has helped me a lot to realize how important my role is to help. And also how I can improve as a parent.
- Yes, we read every night, turned off the TV. Monitoring cartoons watched, especially cutting out certain ones we did watch like Spiderman, SpongeBob, Power-rangers etc. Not losing temper when correcting behavior that is negative.

How has your child benefited from Countdown to Kindergarten?

- My children have learned a lot while attending this program.
- My shy child is doing more things on her own. She is not afraid to try new things.
- This was great program. It really helped our son understand what kindergarten is and get to know the school.
- My son is becoming familiar with the school, class room teacher and being separated from mom.
- The program also brings the children together and gets used to the routine and working with others.
- The overall lessons and skills are very helpful in orienting my child for her new kindergarten experiences.
- I like the connection it allows the child to acquire with the school and staff
- My son loved getting acquainted with the school and the teacher. This has definitely helped decrease his anxiety about going to kindergarten and has helped him mature.
- My son is much more prepared and comfortable about going to school than he was before.
- My child loves coming and is eager to learn because of the great teachers.

What did you like most about the program?

- The topics discussed were good refreshers for me as reminders and gave some new ideas how to make learning fun. I think it also gave me and my child one on one time.
- Great teachers and program.
- Great opportunity to interact with other parents and kids.
- Found the written and verbal presentations very informative.
- Gives one-on-one time to interact with a specific child (for those who have more than one at home). Very nice to have child care as an option right on-site during the sessions.
- This program was wonderful and very helpful. I'm so glad it was available in my area.
- It made me more aware of different parenting styles and how kids are different too. It's good to hear different parents' stories, how they relate, and what they do (charts, for example)
- The opportunity to spend quality time with our children and watch how they interact with other children. Very nice snacks for children and adults
- Being with my son, yet having our own parent time too!
- Just being a part of this program makes me a little more at ease about my daughter starting kindergarten in fall
- The program provided some "new" ideas to me as far as discipline and helping children develop self-care skills. It was also beneficial to hear suggestions/tips from the other parents.
- The education is good and being able to spend time with my boys doing things to help them grow is wonderful.

- I enjoy the open parent discussions. It's good to get feedback from other parents and realize we are all in the same "boat."
- The handouts with ideas of things to do. Sometimes you just forget about little things that can be so fun for kids.
- Meeting other parents and watching my child interact socially.
- Reinforces me and my decisions. Getting new ideas how to handle situations.
- Being able to be a part of the children's activities, but also they being able to interact without a parent there all the time
- This is a good program for my child to meet people in her class and for me to meet some of the other parents.
- Non-threatening atmosphere, very useful information. Leaders that don't act like experts (even though I am sure they are).
- Time with my child without being interrupted by my younger child. I like to see how much my child has grown to not be so shy with other kids.
- I really enjoyed allowing my child to have some experience in the kindergarten setting before actually starting school.
- Getting acquainted with the Kindergarten Center. Introduction to activities that are similar to actual kindergarten routines. My grandson was very excited to attend.
- The ideas that other parents share about the things that work for them. The information has been very helpful.
- Gets my child familiar with the facility he will be at next year. Social Interaction. Parent education.
- Having time for my child to "get ready" for kindergarten. It's nice for the kids to come to school and be familiar with the school and school setting!
- Not only does it help the child get prepared for kindergarten it helps the parents prepare for it!
- Having something for my son to do at night, for him to get to play with other kids, and for me to have other parents to talk to.
- Very specific ways to implement the ideas. Also like to be able to participate with my child in the activities.
- The interaction for the kids. The parent/teacher session, I found them to be very helpful and use a lot of the suggestions given.
- I loved the fact that we were able to spend a half hour with just our children doing what they wanted to do at the stations.
- The information given and that we as parents can get together and share information.
- The fact that my son is getting used to the school and teacher's learning and he is having fun.
- The interaction with other parents. Setting the time aside each day to spend time with my son.
- The different stations that offer so many diverse things.
- I think this program is beneficial to parents learning how to be aware of different parenting skills, strengths and weaknesses.
- The class room structure for the kids. The social skills have helped her know what to expect in kindergarten.
- Preparing my son for a classroom setting.
- Having my child show me what she is capable of doing in class.
- My child enjoys coming and seems to be learning a lot.
- The confidence and skills my son is learning.
- Activities done with children in classroom, my child's excitement to be going to kindergarten.
- The opportunity to be involved in hands on activities of the kindergarteners. See a glimpse of what is expected of my child in kindergarten. Being allowed to learn along side my child.
- The excitement my child has towards beginning kindergarten.
- Having the transition being easier for my daughter as she begins the "real" thing!

- Everything, I am thankful for the opportunity to participate. The teachers were wonderful and my child is looking forward to kindergarten.
- Learning how she interacts. It has helped me teach her new things and how to be more creative. Also to accept how she does things. She has her own way which brings out her personality.
- It provided my child a chance to learn what to expect in kindergarten. I also like that it is taught by an actual kindergarten teacher.
- I really enjoyed the session that the parents received to educate a little more on parenting. That was very useful information received! I also thought that having the child without the parent was a great idea also.
- EXCEPTIONAL!!
- Meet other children, opportunity to learn about mine and my child's learning style. It was good to talk to moms with children the same age as my own.
- Time to play with my child and learning how to be a better parent. Thank You!
- Creative ideas to keep my daughter interested in learning.
- Giving an opportunity for kids to become familiar with the school atmosphere.
- Getting familiarized with the school and letting my child get to know it some, before jumping into full days.
- The child/adult interaction together, the parent/teacher one on one.
- Getting more information on positive parenting/influence
- It provides an opportunity for the child to get familiar with the school and other kids.
- Meeting the different instructors and teachers, and all the parents! I think it's very helpful to meet and get to know other parents.
- Early involvement for the next 12 years
- Allowing the children to experience the school before their actual "First Day."
- The thing I enjoyed the most was allowing my child to have the ability to experience kindergarten life before actually attending.
- I like the set-up of the class. Student-parent time then the parent educational part.
- My child is comfortable with the Kindergarten center and really enjoyed coming. I think it made him more excited to start kindergarten this fall.
- I like that the children get to see a kindergarten room, a teacher, so it is not going to be so new and overwhelming
- Getting the kids confident that they can handle kindergarten.
- Kids and parents time. Parents learning and sharing. Books for kids.
- I like that they are able to spend time in the school before they start kindergarten and are used to where they will be going.
- I found the program to be very helpful in learning the topics covered. My son loved the program and looked forward to coming.
- Helpful hints in parenting, letting the kids to know one another, a lot of fun activities.
- Handouts so that I can share with other parents and refer back to.
- It was a great opportunity for my son to experience what the school was and interact with other children that he will go to school with.
- It is great to get acquainted with the parents beforehand and also let the kids get familiar with their surroundings so that their first days aren't as frightening.
- Conversation and respect given to parents and kids.
- The opportunity to meet and socialize with other parents and children that will make up my daughter's class. I am glad we both had the chance to become comfortable with the school layout and the teachers :)
- Being able to have that one on one time with Emily with no distractions.

- I really looked forward to meeting each week and reviewing things. It was nice to see how different each family's children and living situations were as well as to see how similar the kids were. I appreciated the teachers taking their time each Thursday.
- Learning new things about parenting and reviewing. I like being involved in my kid's school. Learning styles were also interesting.
- I liked how child friendly it was. Learning what I can do to help them get ready for kindergarten. Understanding the difference between academic readiness and social/emotional readiness.
- Meeting with other parents with same aged children. We were treated with respect and our ideas and input was valued. I love that it was taught by kindergarten teachers. The thing I liked most about this program is my daughter got familiar with the school and teacher. It was very helpful because my daughter will be attending the same school as where it was held.
- It helped prepare her for classroom activities
- Really saw my child grow and enjoyed watching her progress.
- Interacting with my daughter in the classroom.
- Watching my son participate in class like a big "kindergartener", and his excitement of things he learned and did in class, and that we'd have our own countdown to when the next class was.
- I like that the children get time in a classroom with other children and a teacher.
- It brings parents together to discuss ideas and challenges. How it introduced the kids to a kindergarten classroom.
- That we have the chance to learn how to make our kids successful and that others actually care enough to help us do that. I would definitely recommend this class to everyone. I've learned and also my child has learned so much.
- The structure, Great information, "Mini Parenting" session. Awesome program.
- Spending time in a real classroom learning with my child to see what is expected as a kindergarten student.
- My child was very uncooperative at times and they did not give up on him and had ideas to get around this.