
Gearing Up for Kindergarten
Project Overview & Year-End Report for
2010-2011

Sean E. Brotherson, PhD & Divya Saxena, MS
NDSU Extension Service
North Dakota State University – Fargo, ND
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16-Week Split Session Program

Executive Summary

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. *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* provides support by improving access to information, providing preschool and parent education classes, and partnering with organizations that work with young families to ensure school readiness.

North Dakota State University (NDSU) and the NDSU Extension Service, in partnership with their statewide network of Parent Resource Centers, operated this school readiness and parent education program for its 5th year in 2010-11. *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 preschool 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 2010-2011 the program operated at 26 sites across North Dakota with 362 families enrolled. This executive summary provides highlights of findings gathered through evaluation of the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program's 16-week session in fall 2010 and spring 2011.

- **Program participation – 86% of participants indicated involvement in 6 or more sessions of the program during the fall 2010 year (or first half of the program); 93% of participants in spring 2011 indicated involvement in 6 or more sessions of the program.** 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 in fall 2010 and 83% saying the same thing in spring 2011.** Among participants in fall 2010, 82% said the handouts and learning activities were very useful to them while 85% responded similarly in spring 2011. 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 82% in fall and 85% in spring.

- **General impacts of program participation** - Among participants, **55% in fall 2010 and 60% in spring 2011 indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, 59% noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much (62% in spring 2011), 64% felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and 51% said it increased their parenting skills a lot or very much (55% in spring 2011).** Additionally, **84% felt it changed their parent behavior at least somewhat (89% in spring 2011), and 91% indicated that it influenced their relationship with their child positively (92% in spring 2011).**
- **Program value versus other information sources** - The results from the fall session of the program indicate that participants rated parents with children of a similar age (3.67), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.76), the school (3.53), and their own parents (3.51) as 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 4.0, 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 spring session of the program were similar, with **participants rating the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program even higher at a mean score of 4.14, substantially higher than any other information source assessed.**
- **Impacts on parental practices** - Participants were asked to answer questions about their specific activities as parents in a number of areas, both before and after participating in the program. Participants noted **small to moderate changes in 6 of the 18 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 engaging in more active play with a child). These changes **suggested incremental improvement in key aspects of parental involvement and guidance, and the increases that occurred in parents' efforts with their children in specific areas were typically two to three times higher than would be expected to occur** due to random chance. This is a good indicator that the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program is having a positive impact.
- **Increases in children's school readiness as described by parents** - Among 52 indicators of school readiness assessed by parents regarding their children, **significant differences were measured on 38 of the 52 indicators between fall 2010 and spring 2011. This means that 73 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 22%, those who met a kindergarten**

teacher at their prospective school increased 27%, and those who met peers they will be with in kindergarten increased 26%. For parents, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased 25%, those who had met a kindergarten teacher at their child's prospective school increased 24%, and those meeting other parents who will have children in kindergarten increased 16%.

- **Children's comfort and familiarity with school** - For children in the program, among 8 indicators of comfort level and familiarity with school, **significant differences were measured on 6 of the 8 indicators between fall 2010 and spring 2011. Findings showed that children became more familiar with kindergarten routines and expectations, more comfortable with the school environment, more comfortable interacting with peers, and more excited about beginning school.**
- **Increases in children's school readiness as described by teachers** - Among 39 indicators of school readiness rated by teachers on a scale of 1 to 3, **significant differences were measured on 34 of the 39 indicators between fall 2010 and spring 2011. This means that 87 percent of the indicators for school readiness that were rated by teachers showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. In analyzing all significant increases in the findings, 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 and knowledge regarding language and literacy; (4) development of specific pre-academic skills and knowledge regarding math and science; and (5) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities.**
- **Child social and emotional development** - On two measures of child social and emotional development completed by parents, **significant differences were measured on all 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 ratings of child change** – Parents indicated substantive levels of change for pre-kindergarten children on a variety of key items related to school readiness, with **those areas described as “somewhat” to “much improved”:** (1) **ability to identify numbers and count (74%); (2) ability to identify letters and sounds from the alphabet (70%); (3) ability to get along with adults (70%); (4) willingness to follow instructions (69%); (5) ability to follow rules (69%); and (6) child self-reliance (66%).**
- **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***
 - I think I always asked questions and talked with my kids. Now I also incorporate the letters or math skills in our everyday conversations.
 - I spend more time with my children.
 - Reading more to my daughter has made it easier to get her on a routine bedtime schedule and also help calm her younger brother down at night also.

- ***Improved Parenting Efforts in Specific Areas***
 - This program has made it better at my house with all of my kids. Learning new techniques and refresher courses make me think before I act. I am a more positive parent.
 - Media awareness and exposure is much more relevant than I thought. I am much more careful and cautious about what my children watch and are exposed to on TV and radio daily.
- ***Increased Awareness of Child's Specific Needs***
 - I have very much appreciated the support and information I have been given during this program. I have learned that my daughter's temperament is not that uncommon and I have learned some interesting ways to approach different situations with her. Thanks!
 - I have valued the guidance and literature given to me to work on with my child. There is a lot of information out there but this has been a focused class on what is expected of a kindergarten-aged child. The literature and projects have given me more opportunities to sit down with my child.
- **Qualitative feedback on outcomes 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***
 - The interaction he got with kids his age was beneficial. It has helped with his interactions with his peers and with following instructions in a classroom.
 - He has become more open to others and willing to share information with the teacher. He's become excited for kindergarten and learning in general.
 - ***Increased Pre-Academic Skills in Reading, Math and Other Subjects***
 - I feel she can write and identify letters much better now she has attended the program. She is excited to go to kindergarten.
 - She has gained confidence in her reading and math skills.
 - We noticed an improvement in his number and letter recognition from the activities.
 - ***Greater Awareness and Comfort with School Routines and Expectations***
 - My son is much more excited to start kindergarten this fall. He has gained knowledge from the program to be more successful in his transition to kindergarten and has been able to apply this knowledge to everyday situations.
 - He gained the experience of seeing what a school setting will be and what kindergarten will be like. Listening and following directions from a teacher was a great experience.
 - My child met other children that will be in her class, became acquainted with the school, teachers and classroom.

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 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. *Gearing Up for 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.

North Dakota State University (NDSU) and the NDSU Extension Service, in partnership with their statewide network of Parent Resource Centers, have operated this school readiness and parent education program for its fifth pilot year in 2010-11. *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* is a Preschool/Parent Education opportunity for parents and their children who will be entering kindergarten in the following year.

Curriculum Development and Description

The *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program provides families with an intensive educational experience that combines preschool learning activities for pre-kindergarten children with parent education opportunities for adults. The curriculum has been piloted and refined over a four-year period to develop a high-quality educational program. The Preschool Education 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 Preschool Education 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 minutes in a preschool-style "circle time" for reading. Children then spend the remainder of the session in additional preschool learning activities that are planned by the program facilitators using the curriculum guide. The curriculum for the parent-child activity sessions was developed/ compiled by Sharon Query, Extension Specialist, 4-H Youth Development (NDSU Extension Service); Mandi McFadden, Gearing Up for Kindergarten Coordinator (NDSU Extension Service); and Sharon Rostad, Parent Facilitator and coordinator of the District 44 (ND) preschool program. Each site 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. Typically, the program model has been delivered in two 8-session split semesters (fall and spring sessions), or a single 10-session program. Individual sites may also offer modified program models based on their situation and needs. Parent education lesson modules were 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 handouts were written by Parents as Teachers and adaptations for New Americans were developed by Even Start. Learning topics for the initial 8 lesson modules in the parent education curriculum include: (1) Orientation and Getting Ready for Kindergarten, (2) Parenting Styles, (3) Brain Development in Infancy and Early Childhood, (4) Raising a Reader & Early Literacy, (5) Choosing Effective Discipline Techniques, (6) Being Media Wise, (7) Developing Responsibility and Self-Help Skills, and (8) Importance of Sleep. Learning topics for the subsequent 8 lesson modules in the parent education curriculum include: (9) Learning Styles and School Readiness, (10) Children and Temperament, (11) Early Literacy and Math Skills, (12) Social & Emotional Development, (13) Nurturance and Prevention Tools, (14) Children and Nutrition, (15) Children and Safety, and (16) A Parent's Role in School Success. Objectives for each lesson module in the series are outlined below.

Fall Session (Session I) Objectives

Session 1 - Orientation & Getting Ready for Kindergarten

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

Session 2 - Parenting Styles

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

Session 3 - Brain Development in Infancy and Early Childhood

- 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 – Being 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 and 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 (Session II) Objectives

Session 1 – Learning Styles and 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 - 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 3 – Early Literacy and Math Skills

- 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 – Nurturance and Prevention Tools

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

Session 6 – Children and 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 – Children and 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 – A 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.

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. Funding for the program development and original implementation in Cass County, ND came from the United Way of Cass-Clay. Funding from the North Dakota State Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) for additional sites across North Dakota was added in the 2007-2008 school year and has continued since that time.

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 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.

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 2010-2011 the program operated at 26 sites with 362 families enrolled. These sites were located in 15 separate North Dakota communities. Not all sites were involved in the evaluation process and so data reported here is limited, except for descriptive information, to those sites that conducted evaluations in collaboration with NDSU.

Small Communities (pop. 2000 or less)

- Abercrombie, ND (southeast)
 - Richland Elementary School
- Beach, ND (southwest)
 - Lincoln Elementary School
- Buffalo, ND (east)
 - Maple Valley Elementary School
- Davenport & Kindred, ND (southeast)
 - Davenport Elementary School
- LaMoure, ND (south central)
 - LaMoure Public School

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

- Carrington, ND (east central)
 - Carrington Elementary School
- Oakes, ND (south central)
 - Oakes Elementary School
- Rugby, ND (north central)
 - Rugby Ely Elementary School

Large Communities (pop. 10,000 or greater)

- Dickinson, ND (southwest)
 - Heart River Elementary School
 - Roosevelt Elementary School
- Fargo, ND (east)
 - Jefferson Elementary School
 - Madison Elementary School
 - McKinley Elementary School

- Grand Forks, ND (northeast)
 - Phoenix Elementary School
 - University Children’s Center
- Mandan, ND (central)
 - Fort Lincoln Elementary School
 - Mary Stark Elementary School
- Minot, ND (north central)
 - Burlington Elementary School
 - Sunnyside Elementary School
 - Surrey Elementary School
- West Fargo, ND (east)
 - West Fargo Kindergarten Center
- Williston, ND (west)
 - Hagen Elementary School
 - Lewis & Clark Elementary School
 - Williston Head Start

Program Implementation

Participants were involved in one of two primary program models used to implement the program. They typically attended either two 8-week parent education sessions, one in the fall of 2010 and one in the spring of 2011 (a few sites did shorter split sessions), or a 10-week session in spring 2011 (a few sites did shorter spring sessions). 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 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. On-site child care and refreshments were offered at each site. The program is facilitated by a team at each program site that includes preschool and parent facilitators, as well as 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 by the NDSU Extension Service with consultation from faculty in the Department of Child Development and Family Science at NDSU.

Program Participation

During the 2010-2011 year of operation in the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program in North Dakota, pre-kindergarten children and their families participated at 26 sites throughout the state. Support for the program was funded by the ND Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) and the United Way of Cass-Clay, 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 2010-2011 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 highlighted by an asterisk (*).

Program Type – Short Session of 5 to 10 Weeks (Spring 2011)

Program Site	Funding Source	Total # of Families	Sessions Attended	Attendance Percentage
Beach, ND* - Lincoln Elementary (10wk)	American Recovery & Reinvestment Act funds (federal)	15	68/90 (reported)	75.5%
Buffalo, ND - Maple Valley Elementary (10wk)	School District funding	12	<i>Not Available</i>	75%
Carrington, ND - Carrington Elementary (5wk)	Local Donations	15	53/75	71%
LaMoure, ND - LaMoure Public Elementary (5wk)	School-wide Title Funding	10	35/50	70%
Mandan, ND* - Fort Lincoln Elementary (10wk)	ND-PIRC	21	178/210	84.8%
Mandan, ND* - Mary Stark Elementary (10wk)	ND-PIRC	13	122/130 (reported)	93.8%
Minot, ND* - Burlington Elementary (10wk)	ND-PIRC	6	60/60	100%
Minot, ND* - Sunnyside Elementary (10wk)	ND-PIRC	11	102/110	92.8%
Minot, ND* - Surrey Elementary (10wk)	ND-PIRC	15	114/150	76%
Rugby, ND - Rugby Ely Elementary (10wk)	Title I funding	12	<i>Not Available</i>	75%+
Williston, ND – Hagen Elementary (8wk)	ND-PIRC	11	59/88	67%
Williston, ND – Head Start (8wk)	ND-PIRC	9	58/72	80.5%
Williston, ND – Lewis & Clark Elementary (8wk)	ND-PIRC	13	100/104	96.2%
Total	13 sites	163	1129/1379	81.9%

Program Type – Split Session of 16 Weeks (8 weeks Fall 2010/8 weeks Spring 2011)

Program Site	Site Funder	Total # of Families (unduplicated)			Attendance Percentage	
		Fall	Spring	Total	Fall	Spring
Abercrombie, ND – Richland Elementary	Local funding	15-20 <i>(est.)</i>	15-20 <i>(est.)</i>	20 <i>(est.)</i>	95%	95%
Davenport & Kindred, ND* - Davenport Elementary	United Way of Cass-Clay	15	15	21	86.7%	88.3%
Dickinson, ND* - Heart River (2) & Roosevelt Elementary	ND-PIRC; United Way of Dickinson; Dickinson Public Schools	34	26	38	56.3%	92.5%
Fargo, ND* - Jefferson Elementary	ND-PIRC; United Way of Cass-Clay	16	11	16	71%	75%
Fargo, ND* - Madison Elementary	ND-PIRC; United Way of Cass-Clay	6	6	7	70.8%	81.3%
Fargo, ND* - McKinley Elementary	ND-PIRC; United Way of Cass-Clay	13	12	13	83.7%	81.7%
Grand Forks, ND* - Phoenix Elementary (2) and University Children's Center	ND-PIRC; Grand Forks Public Schools	40	35	40	69.7%	64.6%
Oakes, ND – Oakes Elementary School	Oakes Public School District	15	12	15	98.5%	95.6%
West Fargo, ND* - West Fargo Kindergarten Center	ND-PIRC; United Way of Cass-Clay	23	16	24	83.5%	80.5%
Total	13 Sites	182	153	194	79.5%	83.8%

Final Program Participation Summary – Gearing Up for Kindergarten in ND (2010-2011)

Communities and Program Models

- Total Number of ND Communities – 15
 - Small Communities (pop. 2000 or less) – 6
 - Mid-Sized Communities (pop. 2000 to 10,000) – 3
 - Large Communities (pop. 10,000 or greater) – 7
- Total Number of GUK Sites in ND – 26
- Total Number of Short Session Programs (5-10 week sessions in spring) – 13
- Total Number of Split Session Programs (8 weeks fall/8 weeks spring) - 15

Program Funding

- Sites with ND-PIRC funding (federal) – 18 sites
- Sites with ARRA funding (federal) – 1 site
- Sites with Title I funding (state/federal) – 2 sites
- Sites with Local School Funding (district/school) – 9 sites
- Sites with United Way funding (local) – 7 sites
- Sites with Other – Community funding – 2 sites

Families Served

- Number of Families in Full (Split) Sessions
 - Number of Families in Fall Sessions – 182
 - Number of Families in Spring Sessions – 153
 - Number of Families Total – 194
- Number of Families in Spring (Short or 5-10 week) Sessions – 163

- Total Families Served – 357

Evaluation Project

- Number of Sites Participating in Project Evaluation – 16 sites

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 2010-2011 (5th year of the program) provides results gathered from the entire year of the program's operation in fall 2010 and spring 2011. 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.

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 four times, once at the beginning and end of the first 8 weeks of the program, and also at the beginning and end of the second 8 weeks of the program. Modified surveys were used for the 10-session program. The findings are presented for both the first and second halves of the program separately.

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 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. Additionally, parents completed 13 items about their child and 13 items about themselves that focused on school knowledge and familiarity. 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.

A personalized report was developed for each child who participated in the Gearing Up for 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.

Teacher Assessment of School Readiness, Teacher Rating Scale (TASR)

A third aspect of the evaluation process for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project focused on teacher ratings of a child's school readiness in key areas. The evaluation tool selected for this was the School Entry Profile, which we re-titled the Teacher Assessment of School Readiness (TASR), which is a highly regarded measure that allows children to be evaluated regarding their school readiness in several domains with key indicators. This instrument was added to the evaluation process based on participant and facilitator feedback from the first 2 years.

Teachers were asked to complete the assessment tool twice for each child, once at the start of the program after they had come to know the child and once 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 the teacher's perspective. Thus, the tool allows teachers to provide feedback on a child that enables them 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 development, learning or behavior
- Assess a child's perceived development and behavior in relation to established domains of development important to early learning and school readiness

Family Information Form (FIF)

A fourth dimension of the evaluation process, newly added in 2009-2010, focused on collecting information from parents on various aspects of social and emotional development, as well as parent-child reading interaction. 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.

Ratings of Change Form (RC)

A final aspect of the evaluation process, also newly added in 2009-2010, involved the parents completing a single post-program participation form called the "Ratings of Change" form. This form allowed parents to consider their own and their pre-kindergarten child's behavior and rate the degree of change on each item. Children were rated on 10 items using a 7-point response scale from "much worse" to "no change" to "much improved." Parents also rated themselves on 11 items. This tool allows us to gain a sense of how parents perceive change in themselves and their child as a result of participating in the program.

I. Overall Program Evaluation Results for Gearing Up for Kindergarten

Basic Characteristics of Program Participants

A total sample of 94 participants from 8 of the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program sites completed the pre-program and post-program evaluation survey in fall 2010 or when the first 8-week session began. Participants from the thirteen 10-session sites were included in a separate analysis which is outlined in a separate report. In spring 2011, 116 participants from 10 16-week sites completed the second round of the survey.

Total enrollment for the first half of the program at the participating evaluation sites was 107 families, so the response rate to the first program survey was 87.8%. Total enrollment for the second half of the program at the participating evaluation sites was 121 families, so the response rate to the second program survey was 95.9%. Demographic characteristics of participants in spring 2011 were highly similar to those recorded for fall, so are not reported here. Selected demographic characteristics of individuals participating in the first half of the program in fall 2010 who completed the survey are listed below.

- **Gender** – 87% women, 13% men
- **Age** – Average of 32.1 years; parents ranged in age from 19 to 43 years of age
- **Number of children** – Average of 2.37 children per parent
- **Location** – 77.4% live in an urban setting; 22.6% in a rural or farm/ranch setting (2%)
- **Family status** – Married (75.5%); Single (never married) (13.2%); remarried (1.3%); separated/divorced (6%); cohabiting (3.3%); widowed (0.7%)
- **Employment status** – Full-time employment (49.7%); employed 26-39 hours a week (15.9%); employed less than 25 hours a week (7.3%); seeking employment (4%); not seeking outside employment (19.9%); other (3.3%)
- **Education level** – High school/GED or less (15.9%); some college (19.2%); 2-year college degree (17.9%); 4-year college degree (37.7%); master's degree or higher (9.3%)
- **Racial or ethnic background** – Caucasian (87.4%); Native American (2%); African American (2%); Asian (2.6%); Hispanic (2.6%); other (3.3%)
- **First child to enter kindergarten** – 47% yes; 53% no
- **Child care** – No child care (2.8%); 6 hrs/wk or less (10.5%); 6-12 hrs/wk (9.8%); 12-20 hrs/wk (11.9%); 20 hrs/wk or more (65%)
- **Gender of participating child** – 59% male, 41% female
- **Program participation** – 86% of participants indicated involvement in 6 or more sessions of the program during the fall 2010 year (or first half of the program); 93% of participants in spring 2011 indicated involvement in 6 or more sessions of the program.

Overall Value of the Program – Full 16-Week Split Program

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 both the fall 2010 (or first half) and the spring 2011 (or second half) portions of the program.

As necessary, tables have been separated to include profiles of participant responses during both fall and spring portions of the program. However, where possible the 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 2010 (F10) or spring 2011 (S11). The first table, Table 1, highlights responses of participants in general to the program and its value to them.

Table 1: General Value of Gearing Up for Kindergarten Program (2010-11)

Question	Not Useful	Slightly Useful	Some what Useful	Very Useful	Extremely Useful
Overall value of the program to me:	--	--	16% (F10)	58.5% (F10)	25.5% (F10)
	--	0.9% (S11)	16.4% (S11)	47.4% (S11)	35.3% (S11)
Handouts and activities provided to me in this program were:	--	--	18.1% (F10)	57.4% (F10)	24.5% (F10)
	--	3.4% (S11)	11.2% (S11)	50% (S11)	35.3% (S11)
	NA	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Information presented in a clear and helpful manner:	--	--	1.1% (F10)	38.3% (F10)	60.6% (F10)
				35.3% (S11)	64.7% (S11)
I was treated in a respectful manner:	--	--	--	18.1% (F10)	81.9% (F10)
				15.5% (S11)	84.5% (S11)

Participants expressed positive feelings about the program thus far, with 84% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them in fall 2010 and 83% saying the same thing in spring 2011. Among participants in fall 2010, 82% said the handouts and learning activities were very useful to them while 85% responded similarly in spring 2011. 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 82% in fall and 85% in spring.

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 fall 2010 and spring 2011, they responded as follows: (1) increased knowledge of child development (3.53 in fall 10, 3.72 in spring 11); (2) increased knowledge of healthy parenting (3.61 in fall 10, 3.73 in spring 11); (3) increased confidence in being a good parent (3.66 in fall 10, 3.78 in spring 11); (4) increased parenting skills (3.46 in fall 10, 3.66 in spring 11); (5) changed behavior as a parent (3.32 in fall 10, 3.41 in spring 11); and (6) influenced the relationship with your child (3.62 in fall 10, 3.75 in spring 11).

Table 2: General Impacts of Gearing Up for 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	1.1% (F10)	7.4% (F10)	36.2% (F10)	47.9% (F10)	7.4% (F10)
	--	4.3% (S11)	36.2% (S11)	43.1% (S11)	16.4% (S11)
Increase your knowledge of healthy parenting	--	7.4% (F10)	34% (F10)	48.9% (F10)	9.6% (F10)
	--	3.4% (S11)	34.5% (S11)	47.4% (S11)	14.7% (S11)
Increase your confidence in being a good parent	1.1% (F10)	4.3% (F10)	30.9% (F10)	55.3% (F10)	8.5% (F10)
	1.7% (S11)	3.4% (S11)	28.4% (S11)	47.4% (S11)	19% (S11)
Increase your skills as a parent	2.1% (F10)	5.3% (F10)	41.5% (F10)	46.8% (F10)	4.3% (F10)
	0.9% (S11)	4.3% (S11)	39.7% (S11)	38.8% (S11)	16.4% (S11)
Change your behavior as a parent	4.3% (F10)	11.7% (F10)	36.2% (F10)	43.6% (F10)	4.3% (F10)
	1.7% (S11)	9.5% (S11)	44% (S11)	35.3% (S11)	9.5% (S11)
Influence your relationship with your child	2.1% (F10)	7.4% (F10)	29.8% (F10)	47.9% (F10)	12.8% (F10)
	0.9% (S11)	6.9% (S11)	29.3% (S11)	42.2% (S11)	20.7% (S11)

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 50 percent for both sessions of the program across all sites.**

Among participants, 55% in fall 2010 and 60% in spring 2011 indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, 59% noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much (62% in spring 11), 64% felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and 51% said it increased their parenting skills a lot or very much (55% in spring 11). Additionally, 84% felt it changed their parent behavior at least somewhat (89% in spring 11), and 91% indicated that it influenced their relationship with their child positively (92% in spring 11). These overall findings were largely similar in both sessions of the program evaluated (fall 2010 and spring 2011), except for a few minor differences.

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 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 2010 session (first half of program - see Table 3) and the spring 2011 session (second half of program - see Table 4).

In fall 2010 or the first session of the program, the **most highly rated sessions were on parenting styles (3.67), brain development (3.48), and raising a reader (3.48)**; 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 2010 session are listed below in Table 3.

Table 3: Value of Specific Topics in Gearing Up for Kindergarten Program (Fall 2010)

Question Please rate the following class topics in the GUK program	Overall Mean Score from 1 (not useful) to 5 (extremely useful)
Gearing Up for Kindergarten Orientation	3.41
Parenting Styles	3.67
Brain Development	3.48
Raising a Reader	3.48
Choosing Effective Discipline Techniques	3.40
Media Wise	3.03
Developing Responsibility and Self Help Skills	3.29
Importance of Sleep	2.88

In spring 2011, the **most highly rated sessions were on learning styles and school readiness (3.95), social and emotional development (3.94), and child temperament (3.84)**, and many topics were rated very highly at 3.50 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 2011 session are listed below in Table 4.

Table 4: Value of Specific Topics in Gearing Up for Kindergarten Program (Spring 2011)

Question Please rate the following class topics in the GUK program	Overall Mean Score from 1 (not useful) to 5 (extremely useful)
Learning Styles and School Readiness	3.95
Child Temperament	3.84
Early Literacy and Math Skills	3.63
Social and Emotional Development	3.94
Nurturance, Guidance and Prevention Tools	3.46
Nutrition and Children	3.48
Child Safety	3.48
Parent's Role in School Success	3.69

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, assessed in both sessions of the program, are included below in Table 5.

Table 5: Value of Specific Information Sources on Parenting and School Readiness (Fall 2010 & Spring 2011)

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	First Session (Fall 10)
a. Your parents	3.51	3.44
b. Your child's other parent	3.28	3.59
c. Friends	3.38	3.59
d. Parents with children of a similar age	3.67	3.78
e. School	3.53	3.62
f. Preschool, Head Start or child care	3.76	3.91
g. Books, magazines or newspapers	3.19	3.35
h. Internet	2.79	3.15
i. <i>Gearing Up for Kindergarten</i> class and materials	4.00**	4.14**
j. Other	--	--

** Highest ranking

The results from the fall session of the program indicate that participants rated parents with children of a similar age (3.67), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.76), the school (3.53), and their parents (3.51) as 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 4.0, 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 spring session of the program were similar, with participants rating the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program even higher at a mean score of 4.14, substantially higher than any other information source assessed. The other sources rated in the spring which were somewhat close were preschool/Head Start/child care (3.91) and parents with children of a similar age (3.78).

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 18 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. 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 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 6 for the participants who completed a full session of the program. The findings show, based on the statistical analysis, that **participants experienced significant differences in 6 of the 18 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 6 of the 18 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 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 .15 and .35 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.

Table 6: Perceived Impacts on Parental Practices of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2010-11 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.	4.05	4.20	.15	Yes
2. Do arts and crafts, puzzles or other hands-on activities with my child.	3.76	4.10	.34	Yes
3. Get down and actively play with my child.	3.86	4.00	.14	Yes
4. Go walking, swimming or do other physical activities with my child.	4.04	4.12	.08	No
5. Provide my child with hands-on materials, such as crayons and paper, scissors, play dough, etc.	4.42	4.50	.08	No
6. Give my child opportunities to be physically active (tumbling, playing at the park, dancing, playing ball, etc.).	4.49	4.50	.01	No
7. Arrange for my child to play with other children his or her age.	3.77	3.85	.08	No
8. Talk with my child about how to get along with others even when they have a disagreement.	4.03	4.19	.16	Yes
9. Assist my child to begin play or interact with other children.	3.63	3.69	.06	No
10. Read with my child each day.	4.17	4.34	.17	Yes
11. Discuss contents of a book or story with my child when we read.	3.95	4.22	.27	Yes
12. Talk, laugh, sing, and converse with my child.	4.74	4.64	.10	No
13. Respond quickly to my child's cues for attention (crying, questions).	4.43	4.31	.12	No
14. Help my child identify feelings such as sadness or fear.	4.28	4.25	.03	No
15. Discuss with my child how to handle feeling sad or upset.	4.19	4.21	.02	No
16. Teach my child self-care skills such as brushing teeth, using the toilet, etc.	4.69	4.63	.06	No
17. Provide my child with regular routines at home.	4.49	4.53	.04	No
18. Work together on simple chores.	4.23	4.30	.07	No

- The **largest six differences** for participants occurred in the following areas: **doing arts and crafts or other hands-on learning activities with children (.34), discussing contents of a book or story with child (.27), reading with the child daily (.17), talking to children about how to get along with others (.16), giving children a variety of learning experiences (.15), and engaging with children actively in play (.14).**
- The **increases that occurred in parents' efforts with their children in specific areas were typically two to three times higher than would be expected to occur** due to random chance, and so this is a good indicator that the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program is having a positive impact.
- The **findings suggest that Gearing Up for 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 Gearing Up for Kindergarten was generated as a result of involvement in the 2010-11 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.

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 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.”

In addition, for the third year a section of evaluation was added to 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 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, 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 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 2010 and once in spring 2011 during 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 105 children was rated by parents in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program in both the fall and the spring (this sample represents a response rate of approximately 66% 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 Gearing Up for 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 2010), completing group scores (spring 2011), and difference scores (difference in the average group scores, or means) for each item. The data collection and analysis for this important section of the evaluation was the most rigorous yet completed on this project.

The difference scores indicate progress (or lack thereof) that has occurred for children (as perceived by parents) on average in the group between fall 2010 and spring 2011. 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 8: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (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.	4.36	4.47	.11	No
2. Works with hands in putting together puzzles or building with blocks.	4.24	4.41	.17	Yes
3. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	3.98	4.01	.03	No
4. Learns and recites familiar songs, nursery rhymes, finger plays or stories.	4.13	4.34	.21	Yes
5. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	4.10	4.26	.16	Yes
6. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.57	4.02	.45	Yes
7. Is able to work independently on a task (painting, picking up clothes, etc.)	4.13	4.20	.07	No
8. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.43	3.70	.27	Yes
9. Is persistent when solving problems.	3.30	3.61	.31	Yes

Table 9: Physical Skills and Abilities – School Readiness Scores

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
10. Holds a pencil or crayon with fingers (not fist).	4.44	4.69	.25	Yes
11. Can button, snap or zip pants or coat.	4.31	4.56	.25	Yes
12. Moves easily from place to place when walking.	4.92	4.84	-.08	No
13. Creates things using hands and paper, crayons, scissors, etc.	4.38	4.60	.22	Yes
14. Is able to cut with scissors.	4.38	4.69	.31	Yes
15. Can catch or pick up a rolled or thrown soft ball.	4.57	4.65	.08	No
16. Shows large motor skills, such as hopping, skipping, running, jumping or throwing	4.88	4.81	-.07	No

Table 10: Friends and Social Interaction – School Readiness Scores

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
17. Shares with other children (such as toys, crayons, etc.)	3.99	4.09	.10	No
18. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	4.02	4.16	.14	Yes
19. Listens in a group situation.	3.85	4.22	.37	Yes
20. Takes turns with others.	3.83	4.10	.28	Yes
21. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	4.00	4.30	.30	Yes
22. Enjoys talking to or playing with other children.	4.45	4.59	.14	Yes
23. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.60	3.87	.27	Yes
24. Understands and follows rules that are explained.	3.84	4.10	.26	Yes
25. Understands how to enter into talking or play with other kids.	3.80	4.02	.22	Yes
26. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.37	3.74	.37	Yes

Table 11: Knowing the Basics – School Readiness Scores

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
27. Is familiar with books and enjoys having others read to him.	4.75	4.72	-.03	No
28. Tries to learn/use new words.	4.24	4.42	.18	Yes
29. Is able to speak and communicate thoughts, needs and feelings in a way others understand.	4.36	4.48	.12	No
30. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	3.90	4.43	.53	Yes
31. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	4.15	4.61	.46	Yes
32. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	3.88	4.34	.46	Yes
33. Can sort things into basic groups, (such as by color, shape, things that match, etc.)	4.55	4.71	.16	Yes
34. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	4.08	4.30	.23	Yes

Table 12: Feelings and Families – School Readiness Scores

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
35. Feels loved and supported from family members at home.	4.88	4.84	-.04	No
36. Spends time away from me in a variety of settings (child care, friend's house) without too much anxiety.	4.33	4.62	.29	Yes
37. Can identify his or her feelings (such as sad, happy, angry).	4.37	4.50	.13	No
38. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.86	4.10	.25	Yes
39. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.45	3.79	.34	Yes
40. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.92	4.22	.30	Yes
41. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.99	4.17	.18	Yes
42. Appreciates getting to know new people or friends through time.	4.19	4.37	.18	Yes

Table 13: Health, Fitness and Practical Skills – School Readiness Scores

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (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.	4.56	4.70	.14	Yes
44. Eats a variety of snacks and foods.	4.29	4.44	.15	No
45. Is active and enjoys physical movement.	4.76	4.79	.03	No
46. Can recite his or her name, parents' names and contact information (address, phone number).	2.82	3.41	.59	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.).	3.03	3.54	.51	Yes

48. Has experience with following a routine at home, child care or preschool (such as bedtime routine, lunch routine, etc.).	4.49	4.65	.16	Yes
49. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.55	4.00	.45	Yes
50. Has experience using school-related supplies, such as pencils, paper, markers, backpack, etc.	4.54	4.76	.22	Yes
51. Is able to put on clothes (coat, shoes, etc.), and take care of belongings (book, etc.).	4.50	4.66	.16	Yes
52. Assists with simple household chores and is able to complete them with guidance.	4.25	4.40	.15	No

These six tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the 2010-11 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 52 items) was in the direction of the Proficient (3 or higher) or Advanced (4 or higher) category. Only 20 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 Gearing Up for 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. 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 52 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on 38 of the 52 indicators between fall 2010 and spring 2011. This means that 73 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 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 38 indicators. These changes included **24 small to moderate increases between .10 and .30, 11 substantive increases between .30 and .50, and 3 significant increases of .50 or higher on specific items of school readiness.**

- The **20 largest significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred in the following areas:
 - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.59)**
 - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.53)**
 - **Awareness of locations and moving between them (.51)**
 - **Familiarity with numbers (.46)**
 - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.46)**
 - **Drawing and using art to express ideas or feelings (.45)**
 - **Awareness of who to contact in case of a need for help (.45)**
 - **Listening in a group situation (.37)**
 - **Trying to solve problems with friends (.37)**
 - **Ability to manage feelings of anger and frustration (.34)**
 - **Persistence in solving problems (.31)**
 - **Ability to cut with scissors (.31)**
 - **Following directions that are given (.30)**
 - **Adapt to new situations (.30)**
 - **Spending time away without anxiety (.29)**
 - **Taking turns with others (.28)**
 - **Likes to work at solving problems (.27)**
 - **Getting along without quarreling or fighting (.27)**
 - **Following rules that are explained (.26)**
 - **Holding a pencil (.25)**

- 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 six 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.**

The findings from the assessment process concerning changes in children's social, emotional, physical, 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. Five of these questions were asked on a “yes/no” basis and 8 questions were answered on a response scale of 1 to 4, with 1 = not at all to 4 = to a great extent. There were 13 items asked of the parent and 13 items asked regarding the parent’s perception of the child. The findings related to this aspect of the program evaluation are provided in Tables 14-17.

Table 14: Children in Gearing up for Kindergarten – School Knowledge (2010-11)

My child:	Beginning of Program		End of Program	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
1. Has visited the school or kindergarten classroom.	44.8%	55.2%	22.9%	77.1% (+21.9)
2. Has met a kindergarten teacher at the school he/she will attend.	59%	41%	32.4%	67.6% (+26.6)
3. Knows how he/she will get to and from school.	37.1%	62.9%	18.1%	81.9% (+19)
4. Knows where he/she will go before and after school.	45.7%	54.3%	21.9%	78.1% (+23.8)
5. Has met peers who will be in kindergarten at the same school.	57.1%	42.9%	31.4%	68.6% (+25.7)

Table 15: Parents in Gearing up for Kindergarten – School Knowledge (2010-11)

As a parent, I:	Beginning of Program		End of Program	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
1. Have visited the school or kindergarten classroom.	36.2%	63.8%	11.4%	88.6% (+24.8)
2. Have met a kindergarten teacher at the school my child will attend.	47.6%	52.4%	23.8%	76.2% (+23.8)
3. Know where my child will go before and after school.	18.1%	81.9%	14.3%	85.7% (+3.8)
4. Have met other parents who have children or will have children in kindergarten.	36.2%	63.8%	20%	80% (+16.2)
5. Have discussed going to kindergarten with my child.	10.5%	89.5%	2.9%	97.1% (+7.6)

Table 16: Children in Gearing Up for Kindergarten – School Comfort and Familiarity

Question My Child:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
6. Is excited about beginning kindergarten.	3.50	3.70	.21	Yes
7. Is familiar with the routines and expectations that exist in kindergarten (raising hands, etc.).	2.64	3.31	.68	Yes
8. Is comfortable with the environment of the school setting.	3.04	3.57	.53	Yes
9. Talks positively about going to kindergarten.	3.52	3.70	.18	Yes
10. Is comfortable interacting with peers of a similar age who will be in kindergarten.	3.45	3.70	.26	Yes
11. Is comfortable separating from me as a parent.	3.35	3.48	.13	No
12. Is comfortable participating in a group with other children.	3.41	3.61	.20	Yes
13. Is curious about school and the experiences he/she will have there.	3.56	3.70	.14	No

Table 17: Parents in Gearing Up for Kindergarten – School Comfort and Familiarity

Question As a parent, I:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
6. Am excited about my child beginning kindergarten.	3.59	3.68	.09	No
7. Am familiar with the routines and expectations for children that exist in kindergarten.	3.46	3.70	.25	Yes
8. Am comfortable with being in a school setting.	3.80	3.85	.05	No
9. Am comfortable interacting with school personnel or teachers.	3.75	3.86	.11	Yes
10. Have a good idea of how my child acts with peers in a group setting.	3.44	3.64	.20	Yes
11. Understand the general ability level of the average kindergartner.	3.30	3.61	.31	Yes
12. Am curious about school and the experiences that he/she will have there.	3.72	3.81	.09	No
13. Am comfortable leaving my child in the care of others.	3.53	3.71	.18	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 22%, those who met a kindergarten teacher at their prospective school increased 27%, and those who meet peers they will be with in kindergarten increased 26%. For parents, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased 25%, those who had met a kindergarten teacher at their child's prospective school increased 24%, and those meeting other parents who will have children in kindergarten increased 16%.**
- For children in the program, among 8 indicators of comfort level and familiarity with school, **significant differences were measured on 6 of the 8 indicators between fall 2010 and spring 2011. Findings showed that children became more familiar with kindergarten routines and expectations, more comfortable with the school environment, more comfortable interacting with peers, and more excited about beginning school.**
- For parents involved in Gearing Up for Kindergarten, **significant differences were measured on 5 of the 8 indicators regarding comfort level and familiarity with school between fall 2010 and spring 2011. Findings showed that parents became more familiar with kindergarten routines and expectations for their child, more aware of their child's behavior with peers and the ability level of average kindergarten children, and more comfortable leaving their child in the care of others.**

III. Teacher Assessment of Children’s School Readiness

Teacher Assessment for School Readiness

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, emotional, physical and practical domains as they enter kindergarten. In addition to the perceptions of parents, the program evaluation for 2010-11 also included an independent evaluation by the child’s preschool facilitator/teacher in the program.

This aspect of the evaluation focused on teacher ratings of a child’s school readiness in key areas. The evaluation tool selected for this was the School Entry Profile, which we re-titled the Teacher Assessment of School Readiness (TASR), which is a highly regarded measure that allows children to be evaluated regarding their school readiness in several domains with key indicators. This instrument was added to the evaluation process based on participant and facilitator feedback from the first 2 years. Teachers were asked to complete the assessment tool twice for each child, once at the start of the program after they had come to know the child and once 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 the teacher’s perspective. Thus, the tool allows teachers to provide feedback on a child that enables them 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 development, learning or behavior
- Assess a child’s perceived development and behavior in relation to established domains of development important to early learning and school readiness

The seven domains assessed in the Teacher Assessment for School Readiness included (1) *Symbolic Development* (4 items – creativity, etc.), (2) *Communication* (13 items – language, literacy, etc.), (3) *Mathematical/Physical Knowledge* (6 items), (4) *Working with Others* (7 items – social skills, etc.), (5) *Learning to Learn* (9 items – learning, emotions, etc.), (6) *Physical Development* (4 items), and (7) *Conventional Knowledge* (8 items – basic pre-academic skills, practical knowledge, etc.). The first five domains and their corresponding items were rated by teachers on a 3-point scale ranging from 1 = “not yet/almost never” to 3 = “almost always.” The last two domains were rated using simple “yes/no” response options.

Understanding Findings from the TASR 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 TASR is a carefully developed research instrument and so results from it tend to be valid and reliable. It allows trained pre-school teachers/facilitators to gauge a child’s school readiness across seven different areas.
- Second, the TASR allows 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 where a teacher rates the child in the beginning (pre-test). If teachers already rate a child 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).
- Third, 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.

- Fourth, 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 teacher assessment of school readiness does allow us to do the following:

- We can determine at what level teachers operating the program perceive children 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 teacher 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 TASR Assessment

Participation in the Teacher Assessment of School Readiness required that preschool teachers/facilitators fill out the TASR survey for each child twice, once in fall 2010 and once in spring 2011 during the program. Only those children who had a TASR assessment completed at both times were included in the analysis. A total sample of 59 children were assessed by teachers in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program in both the fall and the spring (this sample represents a response rate of approximately 48% of participating children who were administered the assessment – not all sites used the assessment). Demographic characteristics were similar to those previously reported.

Findings on Teacher Ratings of Children's School Readiness

The key areas of school readiness assessed by teachers were: (1) *Symbolic Development* (4 items – creativity, etc.), (2) *Communication* (13 items – language, literacy, etc.), (3) *Mathematical/Physical Knowledge* (6 items), (4) *Working with Others* (7 items – social skills, etc.), (5) *Learning to Learn* (9 items – learning, emotions, etc.), (6) *Physical Development* (4 items), and (7) *Conventional Knowledge* (8 items – basic pre-academic skills, practical knowledge, etc.). Seven tables (Tables 18-24) are included below, one of which covers each dimension, and there are beginning group scores (fall 2010), completing group scores (spring 2011), and difference scores (difference in the average group scores, or means) for each item. For the last two tables, the scores represent percentages and simple percentage changes.

The difference scores indicate progress (or lack thereof) that has occurred for children (as perceived by preschool facilitators in the program) on average in the group between fall 2010 and spring 2011. The table indicates whether there is a “significant” difference between the scores, which may be due to program participation, individual growth, or other factors. Again, in Tables 18-22 the scores are represented on a scale between 1 and 3, with higher scores indicating greater preparation or readiness on a specific item.

Table 18: Symbolic Development – Teacher School Readiness Scores

Question This Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Takes part in interactive play with others.	2.56	2.75	.19	Yes
2. Creates or responds to music.	2.63	2.75	.12	No
3. Uses art to convey feelings and ideas.	2.39	2.66	.27	Yes
4. Talks about his or her creations.	2.54	2.63	.09	No

Table 19: Communication – Teacher School Readiness Scores

Question This Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Uses language to communicate ideas, feelings, questions, or to solve problems.	2.61	2.76	.15	Yes
2. Uses language to pretend or create.	2.53	2.75	.22	Yes
3. Responds to questions.	2.59	2.78	.19	Yes
4. Follows directions.	2.54	2.71	.17	Yes
5. Shows interest in reading and books.	2.64	2.83	.19	Yes
6. Exhibits book-handling skills.	2.54	2.76	.22	Yes
7. Identifies letters in the alphabet.	2.42	2.73	.31	Yes
8. Recognizes that there is a relationship between letters and sounds.	2.12	2.51	.39	Yes
9. Recognizes that written spellings represent spoken words.	2.12	2.58	.46	Yes
10. “Reads” simple books.	1.81	2.39	.58	Yes
11. Scribbles with intended meaning.	2.22	2.76	.54	Yes
12. Uses some letters in writing.	2.05	2.63	.58	Yes
13. Recognizes first name in print.	2.76	2.88	.12	No

Table 20: Mathematical/Physical Knowledge – Teacher School Readiness Scores

Question This Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Writes some numbers.	2.08	2.59	.51	Yes
2. Determines “same,” “more than” and “less than” by comparing.	2.34	2.71	.37	Yes
3. Shows understanding of sequence of daily events.	2.32	2.80	.48	Yes
4. Classifies objects used in daily experiences or identifies similarities and differences.	2.53	2.73	.20	Yes
5. Makes one-to-one correspondence.	2.44	2.81	.37	Yes
6. Experiments with objects to produce effects.	2.54	2.63	.09	No

Table 21: Working with Others – Teacher School Readiness Scores

Question This Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
1. Uses adults as resources.	2.59	2.81	.22	Yes
2. Initiates conversation with familiar adults.	2.39	2.64	.25	Yes
3. Works cooperatively with others in a give-and-take manner.	2.42	2.71	.29	Yes
4. Uses peers as resources.	2.36	2.66	.30	Yes
5. Shares resources with others.	2.49	2.73	.24	Yes
6. Shows sensitivity and respect for others.	2.49	2.80	.31	Yes
7. Suggests appropriate solutions to conflicts.	2.02	2.51	.49	Yes

Table 22: Learning to Learn – Teacher School Readiness Scores

Question This Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Shows curiosity and interest.	2.73	2.80	.07	No
2. Explores and tries new things.	2.76	2.71	-.05	No
3. Takes responsibility for belongings.	2.36	2.73	.37	Yes
4. Makes choices.	2.61	2.85	.24	Yes
5. Stays focused and productive while playing/working independently.	2.42	2.81	.39	Yes
6. Stays focused and productive while playing/working in a group.	2.49	2.66	.17	Yes
7. Shows pride in accomplishments.	2.57	2.90	.33	Yes
8. Copes with frustration and failure.	2.27	2.64	.37	Yes
9. Talks about what he or she is learning.	2.36	2.61	.25	Yes

Table 23: Physical Development – Teacher School Readiness Scores

This Child typically:	Beginning of Program		End of Program	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
1. Is physically active.	--	100%	--	100% (--)
2. Demonstrates gross motor skills.	--	100%	--	100% (--)
3. Demonstrates fine motor skills.	5.1%	94.9%	3.4%	96.6% (+1.7)
4. Appears to be healthy.	--	100%	--	100% (--)

Table 24: Conventional Knowledge – Teacher School Readiness Scores

This child typically:	Beginning of Program		End of Program	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
1. Tells first and last name.	10.2%	89.8%	6.8%	93.2% (+3.4)
2. Knows first and last names of an adult family member.	23.7%	76.3%	8.5%	91.5% (+15.2)
3. Knows age.	5.1%	94.9%	5.1%	94.9% (--)
4. Knows birth date.	55.9%	44.1%	50.8%	49.2% (+5.1)
5. Recognizes some basic shapes.	8.5%	91.5%	5.1%	94.9% (+3.4)
6. Identifies basic colors.	1.7%	98.3%	3.4%	96.6% (-1.7)
7. Counts by rote to 10.	10.2%	89.8%	3.4%	96.6% (+6.8)
8. Recognizes and names some numbers to 10.	11.9%	88.1%	6.8%	93.2% (+5.1)

These seven tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the 2010-11 year on teacher's perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. The following points can be made from the findings:

- As with parents, teachers in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely rate pre-kindergarten children quite highly on most indicators of school readiness.** This suggests that most children are already developing quite well in their preparation for the school experience. It also means that there is somewhat limited room for change to be indicated across specific items.
- **The findings on school readiness of children across several domains are quite similar to the parent-rated findings for children in the program. These findings from an independent second source of assessment for children on school readiness reaffirm and strengthen the findings as provided by parents of children. 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. 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. 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 39 indicators of school readiness rated by teachers on a scale of 1 to 3, **significant differences were measured on 34 of the 39 indicators between fall 2010 and spring 2011. This means that 87 percent of the indicators for school readiness that were rated by teachers showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for**

Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in all five of the school readiness categories using this rating scale.

- These findings showed significant differences in teacher perceptions of children’s school readiness from the beginning of the program to the end of the program on 34 indicators. These changes included **16 small to moderate increases between .10 and .30, and 18 substantive increases between .30 and .70.**
- The **16 largest significant differences for children** (as perceived by teachers) occurred in the following areas:
 - **“Reads” simple books (.58)**
 - **Uses some letters in writing (.58)**
 - **Writes with intended meaning (.54)**
 - **Writes some numbers (.51)**
 - **Suggests appropriate solutions to conflicts (.49)**
 - **Shows understanding of sequence of daily events (.48)**
 - **Recognizes written spellings represent spoken words (.46)**
 - **Recognizes that there is a relationship between letters and sounds (.39)**
 - **Stays focused/productive while working independently (.39)**
 - **Determines “same,” “more than” and “less than” by comparing (.37)**
 - **Makes 1-to-1 correspondence (.37)**
 - **Takes responsibility for belongings (.37)**
 - **Copes with frustration and failure (.37)**
 - **Shows pride in accomplishments (.33)**
 - **Identifies letters in the alphabet (.31)**
 - **Shows sensitivity and respect for others (.31)**
- For children in the program, **indicators of school readiness related to physical development showed little or no change (not surprising as no room existed for change) while indicators related to practical knowledge showed a few substantive increases. For pre-kindergarten children, the percentage who knew the names of an adult family member increased by 15%, and those who were able to count by rote to 10 or recognize and name some numbers from 1 to 10 increased between 5% and 10%.**
- In analyzing all significant increases in the findings, **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 and knowledge regarding language and literacy; (4) development of specific pre-academic skills and knowledge regarding math and science; and (5) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities.**

These findings regarding changes in children’s social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and practical abilities related to school readiness show that many changes are occurring for children enrolled in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. While teachers indicate children are already doing well in most categories, there are also many significant changes 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.

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 2010-11 so that greater understanding of program impacts (or the lack thereof) could be investigated. Three small measures were included that examined the following areas: (1) social and communication patterns of children; (2) emotional patterns of children; (3) parent-child reading interactions. 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. Thus, only a brief report on the investigative assessments is included here. Seventy participants were included in each of these assessments – a response rate of 58% based on the available population at the sites selected.

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 25 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 26 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 25: Child Social and Communication Patterns – Parent Assessment

Question Description of Child	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (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.	2.77	3.31	.54	Yes
2. My child is very good at understanding other people's feelings.	3.30	3.77	.47	Yes
3. My child shares things with others.	3.50	3.87	.37	Yes
4. My child is helpful to others.	3.93	4.17	.24	Yes
5. My child listens to others' points of view.	3.17	3.60	.43	Yes
6. My child can give suggestions and opinions without being bossy.	2.91	3.46	.55	Yes

Table 26: Child Emotional Patterns – Parent Assessment

Question Description of Child	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. My child can accept things not going his/her way.	2.59	3.14	.56	Yes
2. My child copes well with failure.	2.49	3.09	.60	Yes
3. My child thinks before acting.	2.81	3.43	.62	Yes
4. My child can calm down when excited or all wound-up.	3.03	3.50	.47	Yes
5. My child does what he or she is told to do.	3.47	3.91	.44	Yes
6. My child controls his/her temper when there is a disagreement.	2.94	3.36	.42	Yes

These two tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the 2010-11 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 6-month 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 all of the 12 indicators between fall 2010 and spring 2011. This means that all of the indicators for social and emotional**

development that were rated by parents showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. These changes included **moderate to substantial increases between .25 and .60.**

- The **6 largest significant differences for children** occurred in the following areas:
 - **Child thinks before acting (.62)**
 - **Child copes well (.60)**
 - **Child can accept things not going his/her way (.56)**
 - **Child can give suggestions without being bossy (.55)**
 - **Child resolves differences with other children individually (.54)**
 - **Child is good at understanding others' feelings (.47)**

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.

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 27 which indicate the pre-test score, post-program score, difference score and level of significance.

Table 27: Parent-Child Reading Interactions – Parent Assessment

Question How often do:	Beginning of Program Fall 2010 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2011 (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)?	4.43	4.54	.11	No
2. Your child(ren) ask to be read to?	4.27	4.33	.06	No
3. You go to the library with your child(ren)?	1.64	2.46	.82	Yes
4. Your child(ren) observe you reading books, magazines or other material at home?	3.70	4.07	.37	Yes
5. You discuss contents of a book with your child(ren)?	3.76	4.10	.34	Yes
6. Read for a period of 15 minutes or more with your child(ren)?	4.27	4.29	.02	No
7. Look for age-appropriate books to give to or share with your child(ren)?	3.96	4.11	.15	No
8. Observe your child(ren) looking at or interacting with books?	4.43	4.49	.06	No

Among the 8 indicators of parent-child reading interaction, significant differences emerged for 3 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, their children observed them reading more often at home, and they were more likely to discuss contents of a book with 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.

V. Parent Ratings of Child and Adult Change

One barometer of how children and parents are affected by the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program is how parents describe whether any perceived change has occurred in the abilities and behavior of their children or themselves as a result of participation. In order to assess perceptions of change in children and adults, parents completed a post-program Ratings of Change Form in the 2010-2011 program year. This brief survey allowed them to record their observations regarding whether there had been negative change, no change, or positive change in the abilities and behavior of themselves and/or their participating child during the program year.

The Ratings of Change Form was filled out a single time following the conclusion of the program. Each question asked parents to rate the perceived degree of change on specific items related to their own or their child's abilities and behavior. Parents responded to 10 questions regarding the perceived degree of change in their child's abilities and behavior, including such items as self-esteem, ability to follow rules, ability to identify numbers and count, and level of conflict with other children. Each item referred to a specific ability or behavior linked with school readiness. Additionally, parents responded to 11 questions regarding the perceived degree of change in their own abilities and behavior relative to parenting issues, such as difficulty in parenting their child, amount of praise given to the child, and how well the parent and child get along with each other. Each item was rated by parents on a 7-point scale ranging from -3 = "Much worse" to 0 = "No change" to 3 = "Much improved." For purposes of analysis, the scale was modified to a 1 to 7 scale. Therefore, listed scores represent the following:

- 1 to 3 – Much worse to A little worse
- 4 – No change
- 4 and above to 7 – A little improved to Much improved

Participants in the Ratings of Change Form

Participants in completing the Ratings of Change Form were individual parents whose children were involved in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program from fall 2010 to spring 2011. These families participated in the split 16-session model of the program, and the Ratings of Change Form was completed once at the conclusion of the program by parents. Parents provided feedback on perceived ratings of change for their participating pre-kindergarten child and also for themselves. A total sample of 77 participants responded to the form, resulting in a response rate of 64%.

Findings on Parent Ratings of Child and Adult Change

The key areas of change assessed by parents related to school readiness and healthy parenting were: (1) *Child School Readiness Items* (10 items), (2) *Adult Healthy Parenting Items* (11 items). Two tables (Tables 28-29) are included below, one of which covers each category, and there are mean group scores for each item. Again, in Tables 28-29 the scores are represented on a scale between 1 and 7, with higher scores between 4 and 7 indicating greater perceived change on a specific item. Also, the combined frequency scores for each item indicating the percentages that parents rated as "somewhat improved" or "much improved" are also included.

Table 28: Ratings of Change – Child School Readiness Items (2010-11)

Question How much change has there been in:	Mean Score – Perceived Change	Combined Frequency Score (“Somewhat” & “Much Improved”)
1. Your child’s self-esteem.	5.65	58.5%
2. Your child’s ability to get along with other children.	5.71	61.1%
3. Your child’s ability to get along with adults, such as the teacher in the program and you.	5.86	70.2%
4. Your child’s ability to follow rules.	5.81	68.8%
5. Your child’s self-reliance.	5.78	66.2%
6. Your child’s ability to identify letters and sounds from the alphabet.	5.90	70.2%
7. Your child’s ability to identify numbers and count.	5.97	74.1%
8. Your child’s willingness to follow your instructions.	5.83	68.9%
9. Your child’s ability to stop and calm down when excited or upset.	5.29	44.2%
10. Your child’s level of conflict with other children.	5.23	39%

Table 29: Ratings of Change – Adult Healthy Parenting Items (2010-11)

Question How much change has there been in:	Mean Score – Perceived Change	Combined Frequency Score (“Somewhat” & “Much Improved”)
1. Your ability to increase your child’s positive behavior.	5.70	59.8%
2. Your ability to decrease your child’s negative behavior.	5.58	57.2%
3. Your satisfaction with being a parent to your child.	5.92	71.5%
4. Difficulty in parenting your child.	5.18	45.5%
5. Your ability to stop and calm down when upset with your child.	5.47	46.8%
6. Amount of yelling at your child.	5.39	52%
7. Amount of praise you give to your child.	5.83	65%
8. Your ability to clearly state what you want your child to do.	5.58	55.9%
9. Your ability to follow through on instructions or directions that you have given your child.	5.58	53.3%
10. Your ability to discipline your child effectively when necessary.	5.56	53.3%
11. How well you and your child get along with each other.	5.70	59.8%

These two tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the 2010-11 year on perceived changes in child and adult abilities and behaviors, as stated by parents. The following points can be made from the findings:

- Parents perceive significant levels of change for pre-kindergarten children on a variety of key items related to school readiness. For each of the 10 items related to school readiness, parents indicated a substantial amount of change during the course of the program. **The five areas in which parents assigned the highest degree of perceived change were: (1) ability to identify numbers and count; (2) ability to identify letters and sounds from the alphabet; (3) ability to get along with adults; (4) willingness to follow instructions; and (5) ability to follow rules.** In addition, parents noted a significant level of perceived change on the other items related to school readiness as well.
- As with their perceptions of children, parents also suggest that there are significant levels of change for many adults who participate in the program on key items related to healthy parenting. For each of the 11 items related to healthy parenting, parents indicated moderate levels of change during the course of the program. For adults, **the five areas in which they assigned the highest degree of perceived change were: (1) satisfaction in being a parent to the child; (2) amount of praise given to the child; (3) how well parent and child get along with each other; (4) ability to increase the child's positive behavior; and (5) ability to decrease the child's negative behavior.**
- On most items of potential change identified, approximately one half to two-thirds of the children or participants are noted as experiencing "some" or "much" change in a positive manner. Thus, among participants, the program seems to be associated with having a significant impact on a majority of children and parents who participate over a 16-week period. The wide-ranging evidence of growth in children's specific abilities and behavior, as well as that of adults, related to school readiness and healthy parenting is highly encouraging and evidence of program success.

These findings amplify our understanding regarding potential changes in children's abilities related to school readiness. The responses of parents suggest that many changes are occurring for children enrolled in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. Furthermore, there are also substantive changes indicated for adults who become involved in the program and make incremental changes to their parenting approaches.

IV. 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; however, it is interesting to note that of all the written comments there was nothing negative written about the program or its influence. The responses included here come from the 2010-11 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

- One-on-one time with my kindergarten age child.
- I try to engage in more activities with my child, and take time to enjoy each other.
- I am trying to play with the kids more and not watch so much TV, letting them help cook dinner, etc.
- We read more as a family and find other things to do besides watch TV.
- We have learned to talk out problems and arguments – that has been helpful.
- Doing take-home activities has been fun!
- I have shut the TV off and played games with my child.
- I have looked for more ways to encourage learning around the house.
- I think I always asked questions and talked with my kids. Now I also incorporate the letters or math skills in our everyday conversations.
- I spend more time with my children.
- Reading more to my daughter has made it easier to get her on a routine bedtime schedule and also help calm her younger brother down at night also.
- I try to talk more with my child about the stories we are reading.

Improved Parenting Efforts in Specific Areas

- We give more effort towards consistent discipline and routines.
- The program makes me more aware of my parenting and what I can do to be a better parent.
- I have used the website on parenting and reading (Starfall) as given/shown in class.
- I try to use positive discipline to encourage desired behavior.
- More consistent bedtime, less T.V.
- Identified types of parenting styles, which allows me to see what characteristics I want/need to change to be more positive.
- When reading, we are asking more “comprehension” questions.
- This program has made it better at my house with all of my kids. Learning new techniques and refresher courses make me think before I act. I am a more positive parent.
- I try to be more patient. I realize how important even the smallest things can be for my child.
- I am working on better discipline techniques and more positive reinforcement.
- I’ve started discussing books a little more.
- Media awareness and exposure is much more relevant than I thought. I am much more careful and cautious about what my children watch and are exposed to on TV and radio daily.
- I have learned that I might have to make more opportunities to give my child choices and responsibilities to learn from.
- I don’t know if it changed the way we parent, but this program gave us more tools to use when parenting.
- I have started giving my children more choices and cut back a little of the TV.
- I learned a lot about child nutrition and have applied some of that knowledge immediately by purchasing healthier snacks, encouraging more drinking of milk, etc.
- More conscious discussion at dinner time. More daily learning activities.
- I have learned to be a little more patient.

- I have learned some different discipline techniques. I have a better understanding of my child's learning style, and I have learned about some areas where she might need help more than others.

Increased Awareness of Child's Specific Needs

- Seeing my child interact in a group this structured is very interesting. The music and dance that he has been exposed to reminds me to do more of it at home.
- I am definitely more aware of providing positive reinforcement and noticing cues from my child.
- It made me realize that my child was "normal"! It also made me look at TV viewing differently, and I paid closer attention to his behavior when watching certain programs, which helped us eliminate a few shows he's allowed to watch.
- I like being able to understand my child more.
- We have family rules now that we all have assisted in creating. This makes it easier to enforce since they are clearly stated in child's language and posted where we can all see them.
- I am getting her to follow a better routine and get her stuff done that she needs to do by a certain time.
- It has provided more options for me on different techniques on helping my child with learning needs.
- I have very much appreciated the support and information I have been given during this program. I have learned that my daughter's temperament is not that uncommon and I have learned some interesting ways to approach different situations with her. Thanks!
- I am trying new foods with him. It has helped him want to try different things.
- I liked the temperament lecture and it helped me to help my daughters express their feelings and deal with things on their own.
- I am trying to understand my child more and read his learning style more. I am trying to get him on a better schedule and get him to bed earlier.
- This program has helped me understand my child's emotional readiness, along with cognitive readiness, for school.
- My daughter is left handed. This class has helped us to see how to help her with her writing.
- I am talking with her about her feelings and how others feel.
- We try to be more aware of our child's learning style and adaptability, letting those insights guide us on making choices on what activities we choose to do as a family. We try to work around his weaknesses to find better ways for him to learn.
- I think about how to interact with my child more and how to better accommodate her learning style.

How has your child benefited from Gearing Up for Kindergarten?

Increased Social Confidence and Positive Peer Interactions

- My child developed social skills with other kids.
- My child met new friends and developed good social skills.
- My child is more confident and excited about school.
- She enjoys learning, feels more grown-up, and loves being with her friends.
- Became friends with new children, learned new songs, did new actions.
- Social skills, making new friends, and following directions.
- More confident about starting school next year.
- Getting to know some other kids and having group time with peers.
- The time for our daughter to socialize with other children, as we don't have friends with young children. She has benefitted from increased social interaction and having different adults to be seen as role models.
- She is more confident and self-assured.
- He is getting more confident in group settings.
- Socialization with peers and early exposure to kindergarten environment.
- He has become more open to others and willing to share information with the teacher. He's become excited for kindergarten and learning in general.
- She has gained more independence and become more interested in school.
- My child learned to interact with other children, and also got a knowledge and view of what kindergarten will be like.
- She met new friends and felt positive in a learning environment.
- Good social interaction and being with new friends.
- More socialization in a structured environment.
- Being interactive around other kids she doesn't know. Separating from me with people she doesn't know.
- She loved coming out and meeting new friends. She also liked to attend the sessions to see what kind of fun projects were given for us to take home and work on.
- The interaction he got with kids his age was beneficial. It has helped with his interactions with his peers and with following instructions in a classroom.
- Playing with other children her age and performing learning activities.
- Social skills and more exposure to other children.
- I like that my son has met some new friends and that he has come out of his shell a bit more.
- Got to meet other kids and learn to play with other children besides his brother.
- I think it really helped him to be more social around other kids.
- Being able to spend more time with kids her age and learn new things.
- She has met other children outside her normal preschool class, and so she will know many different friends when she starts school.
- She has been more open to talk to her teachers without prompting.
- The program let my child be involved with kids his age and let him see some things he is expected to do next year.
- Having my child meet peers and get comfortable in a new school setting.
- She's been acting a lot better and not wanting to act out. She wants to do a lot more things by herself and also help with her younger brother.
- Since she is shy by nature, this program allowed her to become comfortable with her peers.
- She went from "I don't want to go" to really liking the program and overcame her separation anxiety.
- More social and less anxious about being left in the class or school.

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

- He has shown a huge interest in learning and reading. I feel his confidence has been increased due to his presentation of his assignments.
- Becoming familiar with the building, focusing on learning letters and sounds, following directions, learning to raise hands for comments.
- New toys and puzzles to play with. The small group let him play with many new topics. Our son enjoyed the library books. Also, our son enjoyed “showing off” and was very proud of his work, his weekly home projects.
- I think my child is a little smarter than before and she also started reading books every day.
- She is more willing to read and listen to stories. She is starting to try and read the books by looking at pictures and making up what she thinks is going to happen.
- It has helped in many ways – turn taking, interaction with other children, hands-on activities to learn and get ready for school, better understanding of the ABC’s.
- He is now more apt to pick a book to read at home rather than watch TV.
- I feel he gained self-confidence and a thirst for knowledge.
- I feel she can write and identify letters much better now she has attended the program. She is excited to go to kindergarten.
- She has gained confidence in her reading and math skills.
- We noticed an improvement in his number and letter recognition from the activities.
- She has learned more than she came with, is more eager to learn, and this program taught us some easier ways to teach her.
- He has learned to pick out his numbers and is learning more to pick out his letters.

Greater Awareness and Comfort with School Routines and Expectations

- He is familiar with this school setting and feels some connection to it. He has learned new activities other than what we normally do at home.
- My child became very comfortable in the classroom setting, and developed easier interactions with children and adults.
- Better manners, better listening at home, looks forward to class every week, is excited about starting school.
- It has given him greater exposure to learning with different teachers. This builds confidence.
- More confident, respect for teachers, responsibility for library books.
- He has more confidence and excitement for school. The activities taught here are fun and very constructive. It’s nice to have activities to work on with him.
- I think the biggest thing is that it helped make school not so scary. It also made him really excited for school because he now has expectations of what school is.
- She is excited to continue these activities in kindergarten – there is no fear at all!
- Homework, activities, checking out and returning library books, responsibility.
- He’s never been in a day care or any place he was left while parents were away. He was very afraid the first week, but has adjusted well and now loves it. Being in the school he will attend, and seeing kindergarten classrooms, reassures him more about going to kindergarten.
- He has gained confidence and excitement for kindergarten.
- Learning the rules at school and concentrating on one activity at a time. He does experience frustration a lot as he wants to get things right away, but is slowly coming around to just relax and try again.
- Our son loves to come to “school” and is very excited to start kindergarten.
- The school exposure for our son has given him more confidence.
- I believe that she has benefitted by getting used to the school.
- Our child has benefitted from Gearing Up for Kindergarten by the excitement we have created to attend the weekly class. He is very enthusiastic to attend school and has a very positive outlook.

- She looks forward to it, has made new friends, and enjoys the structure she has learned. She liked all the books we borrowed too.
- More comfortable with school and interacting with other children. Enjoyed the learning activities in each session.
- This program lets my child get used to going to school before she has to do it full time.
- It prepared him better for what school will be like.
- This was a great opportunity for our son to be in the school environment and help him prepare for kindergarten.
- My child met other children that will be in her class, became acquainted with the school, teachers and classroom.
- My child is a lot more comfortable with attending kindergarten and has a clearer understanding of what to expect.
- She benefitted from the kids' interaction with each other and with teachers. My daughter became more and more excited about school the more we came to the class.
- I have seen a great improvement to my child's attitude because of this program. She is more excited to attend kindergarten because she will know some of her classmates.
- My son is much more excited to start kindergarten this fall. He has gained knowledge from the program to be more successful in his transition to kindergarten and has been able to apply this knowledge to everyday situations.
- He gained the experience of seeing what a school setting will be and what kindergarten will be like. Listening and following directions from a teacher was a great experience.

What did you like most about the program?

Time Spent Together in Learning Activities with Child

- I enjoyed the interaction with my child and other parents.
- One-on-one activities with our child in a kindergarten setting.
- Spending time together in a school setting.
- He really enjoys coming. It's nice to have that one-on-one time with him also, a special class, and it makes him excited about starting school.
- I like participating and being with my child when she is going to the various centers.
- One-on-one activities with my child.
- The activities we get to do with the kids and hearing from different parent experiences.
- Doing activities and stations with my child.
- Interacting with my son during activities.
- Having time to spend with my daughter, just the two of us – she has two siblings at home so she doesn't get a chance to spend a lot of time alone with one parent.
- The games and activities you take home from the class are great for learning and teaching to take turns.
- Spending time with my child – just the two of us.
- The different stations for play – the time for parents to spend one-on-one with their child.
- The hands-on time with my child was beneficial. My child enjoyed it and looked forward to the class.
- It's been fun doing activities in the classroom with my child.
- The very educational “play” activities that we do with the kids for the first 45 minutes.
- I thought the information was very useful and had fun doing activities with my child.
- It has been a good thing for just he and I to do together. He is always having to do the things that his older brother and sister do.
- Spending time with my child one-on-one.
- My daughter had a lot of fun and really enjoyed it. The sessions were very informative for adults and I loved the hands-on experiments and time together with the kids.
- My daughter enjoys the parent-child activities and I felt the information given to parents was valuable.
- I enjoyed specific activities set up for the child and time set aside for parents to interact with their child without siblings.
- I enjoyed the hands-on activities and interaction between kids and their parents.
- The parent-child “play time” in the classroom gave me lots of ideas for activities at home.

Preparation of Parent and Child for Kindergarten Experience

- I have really taken big steps to make sure my child is ready for kindergarten. As a family we have all helped him learn and give him praise for his achievements.
- One-on-one time with my pre-K children, parent education, and the school setting.
- Helps prepare my child in small ways each day for kindergarten, not just “school” skills, but growing healthy kids with family and helpful parenting tips.
- I like that my child gets to experience a school setting. He gets to start to understand how school will “look and feel.” And he gets to socially interact with children he doesn't know.
- I liked having the opportunity to come to the building on a consistent schedule so my son can become more familiar with how kindergarten “works.” I like being taught what is most helpful for my child to know before he enters kindergarten.
- It gives the kids a chance to see what kindergarten is really like.
- Introducing the kids to a kindergarten setting, separating the kids and parents for the second half of the session – and it's free!
- My little girl gets to exercise her independence in a classroom without me.

- We love this program and have both learned so many positive things. She has learned so much about school and respecting the protocols of school. I have learned more about expectations of what my child will have to do.
- It helped us be more aware of what our child is going to be learning so that we could help prepare for school. We have started reading books differently.
- The opportunity for my daughter to experience firsthand what kindergarten will be like in a fun setting. She has gotten to see there are many different things to learn and also developed excitement for learning.
- It is helpful being there to see how your child learns and reacts to kindergarten.
- I like how much my daughter enjoys coming. She doesn't tell me how much or what she does in preschool, so it's nice to see her doing things.
- I like that it gets him ready for school. He really enjoys coming and I love watching that.
- I really liked having my son in a real classroom with a real teacher and kids his age. The parental interaction and information was great too.
- I have valued the guidance and literature given to me to work on with my child. There is a lot of information out there but this has been a focused class on what is expected of a kindergarten-aged child. The literature and projects have given me more opportunities to sit down with my child.
- It clarified kindergarten expectations.
- I appreciate the focus on the main areas they'll need to be prepared for in kindergarten.
- I liked my child having a chance to be in a kindergarten classroom.
- I understand what he needs to be ready for school in the fall – great information!
- It made me a little more prepared for them to go to kindergarten. They are my youngest two children and I think I am the one unprepared and they are ready to go!
- I had a lot of apprehension about him starting kindergarten, but this program helped ease my worries. I saw him interact with different groups of kids than he was used to from day care and he did good at all of the activities.
- This program gave my daughter an understanding of what school is about. We enjoyed coming weekly, doing the assignments, and just being a part of the learning experience.
- He became familiar with school and comfortable going there. He was scared and didn't want to go to kindergarten before the program – now he is excited to go.

Parenting Discussion and Support

- Having open discussion with other parents gave me a lot of useful information.
- It is nice to have other parents to visit with and relate with, also to learn other parenting ideas.
- This program taught me a lot. I like how my child can attend a class at the same time I stay in the school and take the parenting class too.
- Interacting with other parents who have children the same age as mine. It is easy to relate to their situations when the kids are the same age.
- It was fun and I learned from other parents, other ideas that were helpful we discussed.
- I really enjoyed my time here and enjoyed the discussions. I did learn many things.
- Receiving feedback from other parents and insights on different approaches has been helpful.
- Parent interaction and ideas, discussion.
- Being able to share ideas with other parents.
- I really enjoyed learning what other parents are thinking. The sessions made me aware what I as a parent still need to work on.
- Connecting with other parents and being assured as a parent that we are on track doing the right stuff.
- Interacting with other parents.
- I liked it when we were split up and presented the different parenting topics and the kids did their own learning sessions.

- I enjoyed the overall focus – helping parents to help their kids.
- It was nice to hear other parents’ stories – to know that I am not the only one going through a certain situation.
- Being able to meet other parents that are experiencing the same thing that I am – it is nice to know that I am not alone!
- Being able to meet other parents with similar age kids and discuss problems and solutions.
- There was a lot of very helpful information given. It was also nice to see similarities we have with other parents.

Quality of the Program Experience

- Love the activities teacher has for kids. Enjoy meeting the other parents. The program does a marvelous job!
- I like the parent sessions and the interaction the kids get with other kids and teachers.
- Thank you for offering this. This is so much better than what I remember from my kindergarten experience.
- My child really benefitted from Gearing Up for Kindergarten. She is 90% ready for kindergarten now.
- My child’s enthusiasm about the class, instructors are nice and knowledgeable.
- Good for our child to interact with other kids in a small, less intimidating group. Good for us to see how kindergarten teachers will interact with our child. Good time of day and day of week, along with free child care – makes it easier to attend.
- I like this program a lot. My child is getting better every day because of this program. Thank you very much.
- I would like to say thank you for everything you shared in this program.
- I like this program so much. The way we deal with the children in my country was different, and this program helped me to deal with children perfectly. Thanks for making me a part of this program.
- The teachers were so great and caring. Wonderful!
- This program has been great! It gave me reminders on parenting skills that I have forgotten. My children have already learned so much and can’t wait to come.
- My child loved the program – it was the highlight of her week. Thank you!
- Everything . . . it was a great learning experience for me and my son. The people were great! It helps with my son’s social skills.
- The stories, the songs, the staff, and hearing the experiences of other parents.
- Lots of great information – I think it should have been mandatory for all parents of preschool children.

APPENDIX A

FEEDBACK REPORT PROVIDED TO PARENTS ON CHILD 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 Gearing Up for Kindergarten group as a whole.

CHILD'S IDENTIFYING CODE AND NAME

Head Start, Fargo

ITEMS	CHILD'S PERCEIVED LEVEL	INDIVIDUAL SCORE	GROUP SCORE
LEARNING AND EXPLORATION: My child			
is curious and asks questions to learn more about a topic	Proficient	4	4.29
works with hands in putting together puzzles or building with blocks	Proficient	4	4.41
explores the environment and participates in new opportunities	Proficient	4	4.09
learns and recites familiar songs, nursery rhymes, finger plays or stories	Proficient	4	4.54
enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities	Proficient	4	4.18
draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings	Developing	2	3.66
is able to work independently on a task (painting, picking up clothes)	Proficient	4	4.07
likes to work at solving problems	Partly Proficient	3	3.53
is persistent when solving problems	Partly Proficient	3	3.26
PHYSICAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES: My child			
holds a pencil or crayon with fingers (not fist)	Proficient	4	4.44
can button, snap or zip pants or coat	Partly Proficient	3	4.18
moves easily from place to place when walking	Advanced	5	4.88
creates things using hands and paper, crayons, scissors, etc.	Proficient	4	4.47
is able to cut with scissors	Proficient	4	4.63
can catch or pick a rolled or thrown soft ball	Advanced	5	4.59
shows large motor skills, such as hopping, skipping, running, jumping or throwing	Advanced	5	4.84
FRIENDS AND SOCIAL INTERACTION: My child			
shares with other children (such as toys, crayons, etc.)	Partly Proficient	3	4.07
works or plays cooperatively with friends	Proficient	4	4.19
listens in a group situation	Partly Proficient	3	4.12
takes turns with others	Proficient	4	4.00
remembers and follows simple directions in playing games	Proficient	4	4.09
enjoys talking to or playing with other kids	Proficient	4	4.49
gets along without quarreling or fighting	Proficient	4	3.97
understands and follows rules that are explained	Partly Proficient	3	3.99
understands how to enter into talking or to play with other kids	Proficient	4	3.84
tries to solve problems with friends	Partly Proficient	3	3.29
KNOWING THE BASICS: My child			
is familiar with books and enjoys having others read to him or her	Proficient	4	4.82
tries to learn and use new words	Partly Proficient	3	4.46
is able to speak and communicate thoughts, needs and feelings in a way others understand	Proficient	4	4.65
is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet	Proficient	4	4.24
is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher)	Proficient	4	4.50
is able to do counting, understand basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	Partly Proficient	3	4.15
can sort things into basic groups (such as by color, shape, things that match, etc.)	Advanced	5	4.75
is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems	Proficient	4	4.07
FEELINGS AND FAMILIES: My child			
feels loved and supported from family members at home	Advanced	5	4.91
spends time away from me in a variety of settings(child care, friend's house) without too much anxiety	Proficient	4	4.37

ITEMS	CHILD'S PERCEIVED LEVEL	INDIVIDUAL SCORE	GROUP SCORE
can identify his or her feelings (such as sad, angry, happy)	Proficient	4	4.56
can talk about how others might feel	Proficient	4	4.13
manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or mean to others	Proficient	4	3.84
can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable	Proficient	4	4.04
regularly shares how he or she is feeling with me or other caring adults	Proficient	4	4.22
appreciates getting to know new people or friends though time	Proficient	4	4.26
HEALTH, FITNESS AND PRACTICAL SKILLS: My child			
independently uses basic self-care skills, such as brushing teeth, using the toilet, washing hands, etc.	Proficient	4	4.54
eats a variety of snacks and foods	Advanced	5	4.38
is active and enjoys physical movement	Advanced	5	4.82
can recite his or her name, parents' names and contact information (address, phone number)	Partly Proficient	3	3.50
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.)	Advanced	5	3.85
has experience with following a routine at home, child care or preschool (such as bedtime routine, lunch routine, etc.)	Proficient	4	4.50
is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help	Developing	2	3.88
has experience using school-related supplies, such as pencils, paper, markers, backpack, etc.	Proficient	4	4.71
is able to put on clothes (coat, shoes, etc.) and take care of belongings (book, etc.)	Proficient	4	4.54
assist with simple household chores and is able to complete them with guidance	Partly Proficient	3	4.26
AS A PARENT, I			
give my child a variety of activities and learning experiences	Proficient	4	4.09
do arts and crafts, puzzles or other hands-on activities with my child	Proficient	4	4.18
get down and actively play with my child	Proficient	4	4.25
go walking, swimming or do other physical activities with my child	Proficient	4	4.28
provide my child with hands-on materials, such as crayons and paper, scissors, play dough, etc.	Advanced	5	4.63
give my child opportunities to be physically active (tumbling, playing at the park, dancing, playing ball, etc.)	Advanced	5	4.54
arrange for my child to play with other children his or her age	Partly Proficient	3	3.75
talk with my child how to get along with others even when they have a disagreement	Proficient	4	4.34
assist my child to begin play or interact with other children	Proficient	4	3.85
read with my child each day	Partly Proficient	3	4.56
discuss contents of a book or story with my child when we read	Partly Proficient	3	4.25
talk, laugh, sing and converse with my child	Proficient	4	4.71
respond quickly to my child's cues for attention (crying, questions)	Partly Proficient	3	4.38
help my child identify feelings such as sadness or fear	Proficient	4	4.37
discuss with my child how to handle feeling sad or upset	Proficient	4	4.26
teach my child self-care skills such as brushing teeth, using the toilet, etc.	Proficient	4	4.75
provide my child with regular routines at home	Proficient	4	4.46
work together on simple chores	Proficient	4	4.21
age of the participating parent		29	34.55
number of children in the family		1	2.34
age of child for this assessment		4	4.418