
Gearing Up for Kindergarten
Project Overview & Year-End Report for
2014-2015

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Executive Summary

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

North Dakota State University (NDSU) and the NDSU Extension Service, in partnership with school districts across North Dakota and the statewide network of Parent Resource Centers, operated this school readiness and family education program for its 9th year in 2014-15. *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* is a family education opportunity for parents and their children who will be entering kindergarten in the following year. The *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program provides families with an intensive educational experience that combines early learning activities for pre-kindergarten children with parent education opportunities for adults. The key building blocks and objectives of the program are:

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

In 2014-2015 the program operated at 57 sites across North Dakota with 973 families enrolled. Fifty-seven school districts participated and held a total of 71 course sessions. Response rate to the evaluation was 74.3% (721 total respondents). This executive summary provides highlights of findings gathered through evaluation of the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program's sessions in the program year 2014-15.

- **Program participation – 88% of participants indicated involvement in 75% or more of the program sessions of the program during the year, while another 7.4% of participants indicated involvement in 51% to 75% of the program sessions.** This is a very high rate of participation and retention in a parent education program involving parents and children.
- **General value of the program** - Participants expressed very positive feelings about the general value of the program, with **81% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them.** Among participants in the 2014-15 program, 78% said the handouts and learning activities were very useful to them. Finally, all of them agreed that the information was presented well and they were treated respectfully, with those who strongly agreed they were treated well at 88% among all participants.

- **General impacts of program participation** - Among participants, **57%** indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, **56%** noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much, **61%** felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and **51%** said it increased their parenting skills a lot or very much. Additionally, **82%** felt it changed their parenting behavior at least somewhat, and **87%** indicated that it influenced their relationship with their child positively.
- **Program value versus other information sources** - The results from the 2014-15 session of the program indicate that participants rated the school (3.71), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.83), and parents with children of a similar age (3.59) as among the most useful sources of information for them on parenting and preparing their child for other school. However, **the Gearing Up for Kindergarten class and materials were rated higher than all other sources with a mean score of 4.07, indicating that participants felt the class was more useful to them regarding parenting and school readiness than any other information source assessed. Participants rated the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program substantially higher than any other information source assessed.**
- **Increases in children's school readiness as described by parents** - Among 19 indicators of school readiness assessed by parents regarding their children, **significant differences were measured on all of the 19 indicators between fall 2014 and spring 2015. This pattern was the same in each program model. This means that 100 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.**
- **Parent knowledge of school readiness** - For parents in the program, **10 indicators of knowledge related to school readiness showed significant increases in their knowledge levels and ability to prepare their child for the school experience. For example, the parents showed increases of knowledge regarding social and emotional development in children, development of early reading and math skills, areas of competence for school readiness, and key elements of a supportive home learning environment.**
- **Parent confidence in child's preparedness for school** - For parents in the program, among 3 indicators of their confidence with a child's preparedness for school, **significant differences were measured on all 3 indicators between the beginning and end of the program. Findings showed that after going through the program, parents felt more confident in the child's level of preparedness for kindergarten, and also increased their confidence in the activities being done to prepare their child for school transition.**
- **Increases in children's academic readiness as determined by objective assessment** - Children overall and in each model of the program **made significant progress increasing their number counting ability, number identification ability, letter identification ability, and sound identification ability. These steps forward in early academic skills indicate children are making progress with regard to early literacy and early numeracy.**

- **Parent-child reading interactions** – Parents indicated significant changes on a variety of parent-child reading interactions during the program. Areas of reading interaction that showed significant improvement were **parents became more likely to go to the library with their child, they were more likely to discuss contents of a book with their children, they read more often with children, and they were more attentive to finding age-appropriate books for their children. All of these items are important because they are actions that serve to facilitate a positive literacy environment for children in the home.**
- **Qualitative feedback on outcomes for parents in the program** – Parents who participated in the program shared a variety of comments that highlighted positive impacts in three areas:
 - ***More Time and Active Involvement with Children***
 - We are watching less movies and TV time and reading more often and longer stories.
 - This program helped me a lot because now I spend more time with my daughter (reading, playing) and I know the importance of helping [her].
 - I have enjoyed this program and I now find ways to increase the educational interactions with my son.
 - The activities provided were wonderful and kept kids’ attention longer than other activities we had tried.
 - I try to read with [my son] more often and ask him questions about the books.
 - ***Improved Parenting Efforts in Specific Areas***
 - We work more on counting, the alphabet and memorization (e.g., address). I was unaware of how high the expectations were regarding these things for kids just entering the school setting in kindergarten.
 - The program has shown me how to look at parenting from a different perspective.
 - The sleep session helped me realize how important and how much sleep is needed and encouraged me to really work on an earlier bedtime routine so we won’t have such a hard adjustment when school starts.
 - I feel this is a great program. It has helped me understand and learn different techniques for my child to succeed in all different areas.
 - We have been striving to read more frequently to our child after attending this program, because we have learned the benefits of how important reading is to a child’s learning and development.
 - ***Increased Awareness of Child’s Specific Needs***
 - We are more aware of how we can help our child gain skills, practice safety and grow emotionally.
 - My daughter turns five right before the cut-off date, and going to the program has helped me see that she will be ready for kindergarten in the fall.
 - I work harder at being a good listener to my child.
 - Yes, I learned different techniques for learning activities and how to ask questions without making the answer obvious.
 - I have been a lot better at listening and slowing down from “adult duties” to take time to focus more on his needs and desires.
 - Eye opener that our son was not completely ready for kindergarten! Thank you for this opportunity to make his schooling much better for teacher, student and parent!
 - I have a much better idea of how to approach teaching my children now.

- **Qualitative feedback on outcomes for children in the program** – Parents who participated in the program shared a variety of comments that highlighted positive benefits for children in three areas:
 - ***Increased Social Confidence and Positive Peer Interactions***
 - The program has improved his socialization skills and will help him feel more comfortable with the transition from daycare to school.
 - My child has benefitted most by learning how to act/ behave in a group setting. How to follow instructions, learn from others, etc.
 - Helped him become less shy and improve his group interaction skills.
 - My child’s excitement for kindergarten and all it has in store is much higher after attending these sessions. She is much more confident in herself.
 - My child won’t be as shy and scared about starting kindergarten in the fall. He is more excited!
 - ***Increased Pre-Academic Skills in Reading, Math and Other Subjects***
 - Interest in books, reading and decision making has improved. They love coming each week.
 - Wants to read more often, is getting better at waiting his turn and cooperating with others.
 - Learned structure, rhyming, cooperation and better understanding of numbers.
 - He has gotten very excited to be attending kindergarten this fall and his letter recognition skills have advanced.
 - He has learned more and is more eager to practice numbers and letters at home.
 - She has learned patience with learning. At the beginning there was a lot of “I don’t know” followed by no trying. Now she will try longer and hasn’t been “giving up.”
 - ***Greater Awareness and Comfort with School Routines and Expectations***
 - Knowledge of the classroom, how to participate in a classroom setting, positive interaction with teachers and kindergarten activities.
 - I think this program has helped greatly in preparing him for the transition into kindergarten.
 - Becoming familiar with friends, teachers and the school will help with the transition. Also, he has learned a lot by attending this program.
 - Getting to know peers, classroom, teachers and some activities expected of her has been of great benefit.
 - He has been able to understand what the classroom experience will be like, so the transition will be much easier.

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

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

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Curriculum Development and Description

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

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

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

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

Session Objectives

Session 1 - Orientation & What to Expect in Kindergarten

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

Session 2 - Parenting Styles

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

Session 3 - Brain Development in Infancy and Early Childhood

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

Session 4 - Raising a Reader & Early Literacy

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

Session 5 – Defining Discipline: Nurturance and Prevention

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

Session 6 – Defining Discipline: Guidance and Consequences

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

Session 7 - Developing Responsibility and Independence!

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

Session 8 – The Importance of Good-Quality Sleep

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

Session 9 – Learning Styles and School Readiness

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

Session 10 - Children and Temperament

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

Session 11 – Early Literacy and Math Skills

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

Session 12 – Social & Emotional Development

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

Session 13 – Screen Time vs. Real Life

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

Session 14 – Feeding Healthy Habits - Children and Nutrition

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

Session 15 – Safety Always

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

Session 16 – A Parent’s Role in School Success

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

Program Description

Gearing Up for Kindergarten

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

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

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

The goals of the program are:

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

Family Recruitment and Program Sites

Recruitment brochures designed to inform families about the program were developed and distributed through a variety of cooperating agencies, including Head Start, Public Schools, Child Care Resource & Referral, Social Services, WIC, public libraries, and child care settings. News releases were published in local newspapers and Parent Resource Center newsletters. Local schools and districts spearheaded family recruitment in their specific locations.

Program sites are encouraged to facilitate recruitment of participant families more likely to need assistance with preparing children for school achievement (new immigrant families, economically challenged families, etc.). In 2014-2015 the program operated at 57 sites across North Dakota with 973 families enrolled. Fifty-seven school districts participated and held a total of 71 course sessions. Response rate to the evaluation was 74.3% (721 total respondents). These sites were located in 44 separate North Dakota communities.

Small Communities (pop. 2000 or less)

- Beach, ND (southwest)
 - Lincoln Elementary School
- Cooperstown, ND (northeast)
 - Griggs County Central Public School
- Elgin, ND (southwest)
 - Elgin-New Leipzig Public School
- Ellendale, ND (southeast)
 - Ellendale Public School
- Enderlin, ND (southeast)
 - Enderlin Area School
- Fairmount, ND (southeast)
 - Fairmount Public School
- Garrison, ND (central)
 - Bob Callies Elementary School
- Glen Ullin, ND (west central)
 - Glen Ullin Elementary School
- Hankinson, ND (southeast)
 - Hankinson Public School
- Hatton, ND (northeast)
 - Hatton-Eielson Public School
- Hunter, ND (southeast)
 - Northern Cass Elementary School
- Kenmare, ND (north central)
 - Kenmare Elementary School
- Kindred & Davenport, ND (southeast)
 - Kindred Elementary School
- Lakota, ND (northeast)
 - Lakota Public School
- Langdon, ND (northeast)
 - Langdon Public School
- Mayville, ND (east)
 - Peter Boe Jr. Elementary School
- Milnor, ND (southeast)
 - Milnor Public School
- Minto, ND (northeast)
 - Minto Public School District
- Mohall, ND (north central)
 - Mohall-Lansford-Sherwood Elementary School
- Mott, ND (southwest)
 - Mott-Regent Elementary School
- New Salem, ND (west central)
 - Prairie View Elementary School
- Northwood, ND (northeast)
 - Northwood Public School
- Park River, ND (northeast)
 - Park River Public School

- Ray, ND (northwest)
 - Ray Elementary School (Nesson District #2)
- Thompson, ND (northeast)
 - Thompson Elementary School
- Tioga, ND (northwest)
 - Central Elementary School
- Wishek, ND (south central)
 - Wishek Public School

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

- Carrington, ND (east central)
 - Carrington Elementary School
- Casselton, ND (east)
 - Central Cass Elementary School
- Hazen, ND (west central)
 - Hazen Public School
- Lisbon, ND (southeast)
 - Lisbon Public School
- Oakes, ND (south central)
 - Oakes Elementary School
- Rugby, ND (north central)
 - Rugby Ely Elementary School
- Wahpeton, ND (southeast)
 - Zimmerman Elementary School
- Watford City, ND (northwest)
 - Watford City Elementary School

Large Communities (pop. 10,000 or greater)

- Bismarck, ND (central)
 - Liberty Elementary School
- Dickinson, ND (southwest)
 - Heart River Elementary School
- Fargo, ND (east)
 - Jefferson Elementary School
 - Kennedy Elementary School
 - Lincoln Elementary School
 - Madison Elementary School
 - McKinley Elementary School
 - Nokomis Child Care Center I
 - Nokomis Child Care Center II
 - Oak Grove Lutheran Elementary
- Grand Forks, ND (northeast)
 - Phoenix Elementary School
 - Viking Elementary School
 - Winship Elementary School
- Jamestown, ND (southeast)
 - Washington Elementary School

- Mandan, ND (central)
 - Fort Lincoln Elementary School
 - Mary Stark Elementary School
- Minot, ND (north central)
 - Burlington-Des Lacs Elementary School
 - Dakota Elementary School, Minot Air Force Base
 - Sunnyside Elementary School
 - Surrey Elementary School
- West Fargo, ND (east)
 - West Fargo Kindergarten Center – Loedoen
 - West Fargo Kindergarten Center – Osgood
- Williston, ND (west)
 - Williston Public School District #1

Program Implementation

Participants were involved in one of several primary program models used to implement the program. They typically attended either two 8-week family education sessions, one in the fall of 2014 and one in the spring of 2015, two 5-week family education sessions (fall and spring), or a 10-week session in spring 2015. The hour and a half sessions begin with 45 minutes of parent-child interaction activities focused on math, reading, sensory, science, art and imaginary play. The parents then separate for parent education (see list of topics). The children, with an early childhood education facilitator and classroom assistant, have circle time and other early learning activities. The child activities focus on getting along with others, listening, taking turns, responsibility, and cognitive and literacy skills. The families are able to check out a library book that they return. On-site child care and refreshments were offered depending on the site.

Program Participation

During the 2014-2015 year of operation in the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program in North Dakota, pre-kindergarten children and their families participated at 57 sites throughout the state. Support for the program was funded by the ND State Legislature, as well as local support from schools and other organizations. This section of the report provides a brief summary of program participation at the respective program sites across the state of North Dakota in the 2014-2015 year, as well as the type of program model each site implemented. It should be noted that the information included in this report only details limited information on sites that may have operated on their own initiative without involvement in the NDSU evaluation project. Programs that participated in the evaluation process with NDSU are included in this summary.

Program Type

Program Type	Number of Sites	Percentage of Participants
Split Session – 16 weeks (8 weeks/fall, 8 weeks/spring)	1	2.5%
Continuous Session – 16 weeks	0	0%
Split Session – 10 weeks (5 weeks/fall, 5 weeks/spring)	15	20.9%
Short Session – 10 weeks (spring)	41	76.6%

Final Program Participation Summary – Gearing Up for Kindergarten in ND (2014-2015)

Communities and Program Models

- Total Number of ND Communities – 44
 - Small Communities (pop. 2000 or less) – 27
 - Mid-Sized Communities (pop. 2000 to 10,000) – 8
 - Large Communities (pop. 10,000 or greater) – 9
- Total Number of GUK Sites in ND – 57
- Total Number of Participating School Districts – 44
- Total Number of Program Sessions – 71
- Total Number of Short Session Programs (5-10 week sessions in spring) – 41
- Total Number of Split – Short Session Programs (5 weeks fall/5 weeks spring) – 15
- Total Number of Split – Long Session Programs (8 weeks fall/8 weeks spring) – 1

Families Served

- Number of Families in Full (Split) Sessions (16 Weeks)
 - Number of Families Total – 25
- Number of Families in Full (Split) Sessions (10 Weeks)
 - Number of Families Total – 203
- Number of Families in Spring (Short or 5-10 week) Sessions – 745

- Total Families Served – 973
- Total Families Served that Returned Evaluation – 721

Evaluation Project

- Number of Sites Participating in Project Evaluation – 57 sites

Map of 2014-15 North Dakota Sites for Gearing Up for Kindergarten

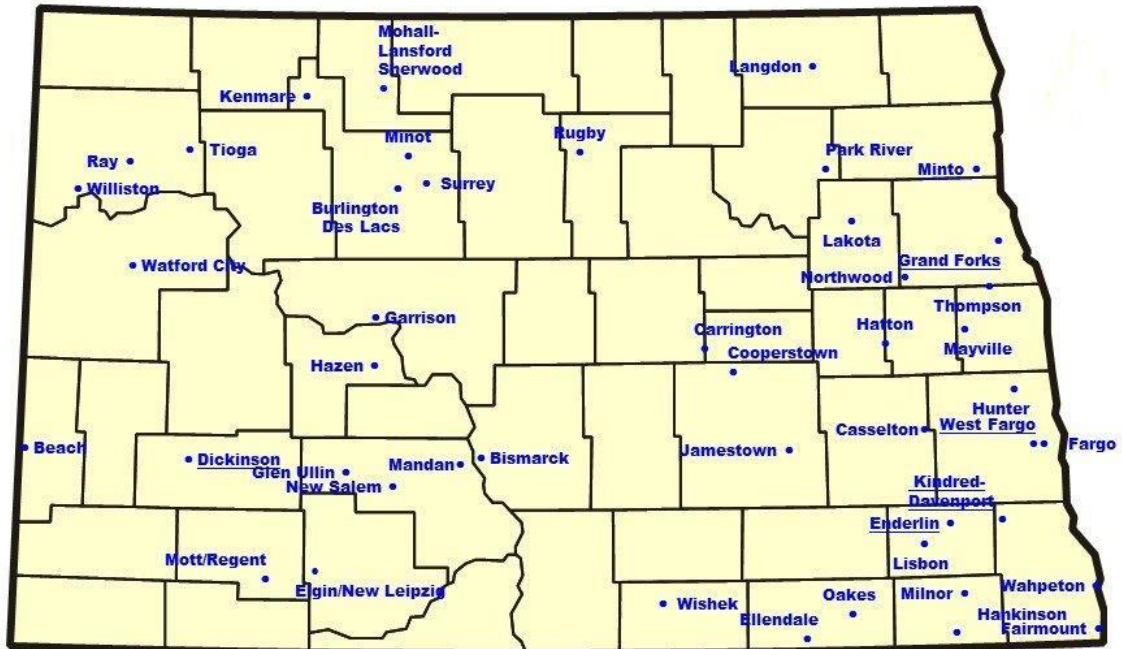


Chart of North Dakota Sites Served by Gearing Up for Kindergarten

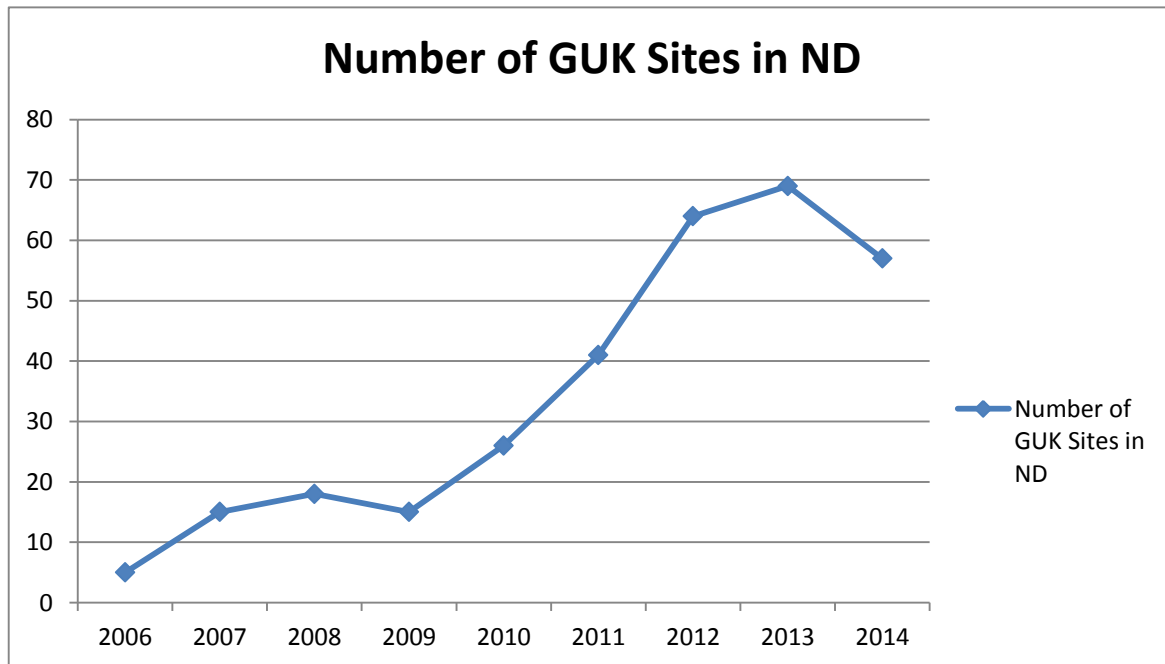
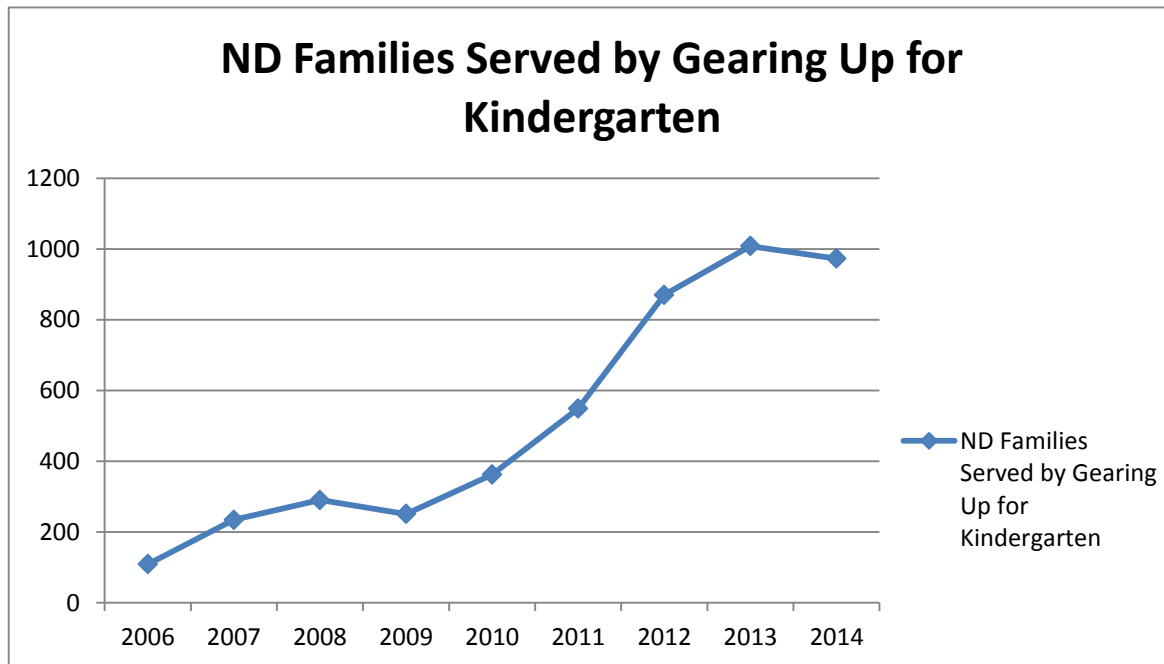


Chart of North Dakota Families Served by Gearing Up for Kindergarten



The number of families with children entering kindergarten in North Dakota that have been served by the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program has steadily increased. In the inaugural year of the program in 2006-07, 109 families in Cass County were served by the program. There were 234 families served in 2007-08, 290 families in 2008-09, and 251 families in 2009-10. The 2010-11 year saw a substantial increase in families involved in Gearing Up for Kindergarten with 362 families across North Dakota participating in the program. The first year of partnership funding with the ND state legislature in 2011-12 continued to accelerate growth and 549 North Dakota families participated in Gearing Up for Kindergarten with their children. The second year of partnership funding provided by the ND state legislature in 2012-13 fostered participation of 870 families statewide in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. In 2013-14, the total number of participant families statewide increased to 1,008 families. The program maintained a large contingent of families served with 973 families engaged in 2014-15.

The average yearly kindergarten enrollment in North Dakota public schools over the last decade has been nearly 7,000 children a year. That number has increased slightly over the past four years. A total number of 8,251 children were enrolled in public school kindergarten programs in North Dakota in the 2011-12 school year, and a total number of 8,575 children were enrolled in public school kindergarten programs in 2012-13. Based on these numbers, it is likely that the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program reached about 4.5% of incoming kindergarten children for the 2011-12 school year (served during the 2010-11 school year). The program's growth over the past two years suggests that the program then reached about 6.5% of incoming kindergarten children for the 2012-13 school year, and between 10 and 11 percent of incoming students for the 2013-14 school year. The program reached nearly 12 percent of incoming kindergarten students for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years. These numbers indicate a significant step forward in providing a systematic approach to helping families focus on education, family involvement and school readiness.

Evaluation Strategies for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten Project

A variety of evaluation strategies are being used to assess progress in meeting the program's objectives and the development of children and families who participate. This project report for 2014-2015 (9th year of the program) provides results gathered from the entire year of the program's operation in fall 2014 and spring 2015. These results were compiled using feedback gathered from program participants through several different evaluation tools. These tools are briefly summarized below. The project report is divided into sections presenting results derived from each aspect of the evaluation process. It should be noted that this report summarizes key aspects of the data available for analysis, while further ongoing studies and analysis continue to be conducted.

Nearly all program sites were involved in the evaluation process but data reported here is limited, except for descriptive information, to those sites that conducted evaluations in collaboration with NDSU. Evaluation instruments were developed by the NDSU Extension Service with consultation from faculty in the Department of Child Development and Family Science at NDSU.

Overall Program Evaluation – Retrospective Pre-Post Program Form

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

Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness (PPASR)

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

Child Assessment of School Readiness, Parent-Child Version

A third aspect of the evaluation process for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project focused on an objective parent assessment of a child's school readiness with regard to early literacy and early numeracy. The evaluation tool developed for this assessment was constructed by researchers at North Dakota State University. This instrument was added to the evaluation process based on participant and facilitator feedback and allows a direct, objective assessment of a child's developing abilities. For the 2014-15 program year, this assessment tool was used for the second time.

Parents were asked to complete the assessment tool once for each child, at the beginning of the program and also at the end of the program. The assessment allowed parents to provide a basic score related to the degree that a child was proficient on specific indicators of school readiness at both the beginning and end of the program. This process of completing two ratings for each child allows for comparison of a child's scores over a range of time. Thus, the tool allows the program to provide feedback on a child that enables them to assess basic skills including identification of shapes and colors, number counting, number identification, letter identification, and sound identification. The assessment allows the program to:

- Highlight areas of positive growth and development in a child related to school readiness
- Identify potential areas of perceived concern regarding a child's acquisition of basic knowledge important to school readiness
- Assess a child's perceived development in relation to established domains of knowledge important to early learning and school readiness

Open-Ended Responses

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

I. Overall Program Evaluation Results for Gearing Up for Kindergarten

Basic Characteristics of Program Participants

A total sample of 721 participants from 57 of the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program sites completed the retrospective post-program evaluation survey in the program year for 2014-15. Selected findings from participants in all three program types have been included in the analysis and are presented in both combined and separate formats. Among respondents there were 557 from short 10-session sites (74.9% response rate), 148 from split 10-session sites (73.6% response rate), and 16 from split or continuous 16-session sites (64% response rate). The combined response rate for the three program types among sites that participated in the program evaluation was 74.3%.

Demographic characteristics of participants are reported here. Selected demographic characteristics of individuals participating in the program in 2014-15 who completed the survey are listed below.

- **Gender** – 80.5% women, 19.5% men
- **Age** – Average of 34.47 years; parents and caregivers ranged in age from 21 to 69 years
- **Number of children** – Average of 2.48 children per parent
- **Location** – 74% live in an urban setting; 26% in a rural or farm/ranch setting (11.8%)
- **Family status** – Married (89%); Single (never married) (3.5%); remarried (1%); separated/divorced (4.2%); cohabiting (2.1%); widowed (0.3%)
- **Employment status** – Full-time employment (61.9%); employed 26-39 hours a week (10%); employed less than 25 hours a week (6.7%); seeking employment (1.4%); not seeking outside employment (16%); other (4%)
- **Education level** – High school/GED or less (13.9%); some college (16.8%); 2-year college degree (19.5%); 4-year college degree (37%); master's degree or higher (12.8%)
- **Income level** – Under \$15,000/yr. (3.2%); \$15,000 to \$25,000/yr. (5.1%); \$25,000 to \$40,000/yr. (18.6%); \$40,000 to \$60,000/yr. (18.5%); Over \$60,000/yr. (53.8%); No information provided (0.7%)
- **Racial or ethnic background** – Caucasian (93%); Native American (1.3%); African American (0.3%); Asian (1.8%); Hispanic (1.7%); other (1.7%)
- **First child to enter kindergarten** – 50.3% yes; 49.7% no
- **Child care** – No child care (18.2%); 6 hrs/wk or less (8.2%); 6-12 hrs/wk (12.1%); 12-20 hrs/wk (9%); 20 hrs/wk or more (52.4%)
- **Eligibility for food stamps** – 3.9% yes; 96.1% no
- **Gender of participating child** – 52.9% male, 47.1% female
- **Program participation** – 34.4% of participants indicated attending all program sessions, while 53.7% of participants were involved in 75% or more of the program sessions during the year (a total of 88%). Also, 7.4% indicated involvement in 51% to 75% of class sessions.

Overall Value of the Program – All Program Models

Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions about their perceptions of the program. The tables below report participant feedback regarding the overall program, specific impacts of the program, the value of specific topics addressed, and value of the program compared to other sources of information. In each table, findings are included to each question for each model of the program utilized.

As necessary, tables have been designed to include profiles of participant responses from each model of the program. However, where possible the responses for each program type have been

included in the same table, and the responses are marked as to whether they indicate the findings for Split session – 16 week, Split session – 10 week, or Short session – 10 week programs. The first table, Table 1, highlights responses of participants in general to the program and its value.

In general, the combined responses from all program types are very similar to the participant responses for specific program models. To illustrate this pattern, the combined total responses to these same questions as compared to the responses for each specific program type are included below in Table 1. Hereafter, findings are presented for all program types together rather than by specific program type, unless there are specific reasons to highlight a variation in findings.

Table 1: Comparison Table of General Value of GUK Programs (2014-15)

Question	Program Type	Not Useful	Slightly Useful	Some what Useful	Very Useful	Extremely Useful
Overall value of the program to me:	All Combined	0.3%	1.8%	16.9%	48.5%	32.5%
	16-week model	--	--	6.3%	31.3%	62.5%
	10-week split	0.6%	2.4%	16%	51.5%	29.6%
	10-week short	0.2%	1.7%	17.4%	48%	32.6%
Handouts and activities provided to me in this program were:	All Combined	0.4%	1.2%	20.3%	45.4%	32.7%
	16-week model	--	--	6.3%	25%	68.8%
	10-week split	1.8%	1.8%	16%	49.1%	31.4%
	10-week short	--	1%	22.1%	44.7%	32.1%
		NA	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Information presented in a clear and helpful manner:	All Combined	--	0.1%	0.1%	35.6%	64.2%
	16-week model	--	--	--	25%	75%
	10-week split	--	0.6%	--	32.5%	66.9%
	10-week short	--	--	0.2%	36.8%	63.1%
I was treated in a respectful manner:	All Combined	--	--	--	11.9%	88.1%
	16-week model	--	--	--	--	100%
	10-week split	--	--	--	14.8%	85.2%
	10-week short	--	--	--	11.4%	88.6%

Participants expressed positive feelings about the program thus far, with 81% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them. Among participants in the 2014-15 program, 78% said the handouts and learning activities were very useful to them. Finally, nearly all of them (99.8%) agreed that the information was presented well and they were treated respectfully, with those who strongly agreed they were treated well at 88% among all participants. There were slight variations in the numbers reported by program type but not enough to suggest substantial differences, although participants in the 16-week model of the program expressed overall higher satisfaction.

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 2014-15, they responded as follows: (1) increased knowledge of child development (3.67); (2) increased knowledge of healthy parenting (3.65); (3) increased confidence in being a good parent (3.75); (4) increased parenting skills (3.57); (5) changed behavior as a parent (3.41); and (6) influenced the relationship with your child (3.56).

Table 2: General Impacts of Gearing Up for Kindergarten Program (2014-15)

Question Overall how much, if at all, did this program:	Not at All	A Little Bit	Some What	A Lot	Very Much
Increase your knowledge about child development	0.8%	6.9%	34.9%	39.5%	17.9%
Increase your knowledge of healthy parenting	1.2%	7.2%	35.6%	37.7%	18.4%
Increase your confidence in being a good parent	1.3%	6.4%	31.3%	37.8%	23.2%
Increase your skills as a parent	1.4%	9.6%	37.7%	32.7%	18.5%
Change your behavior as a parent	3.3%	14.5%	37.7%	27.5%	17.1%
Influence your relationship with your child	3.5%	9.6%	35.9%	29.3%	21.6%

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 sessions of the program across all sites.**

Among participants, 57% indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, 56% noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much, 61% felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and 51% said it increased their parenting skills a lot or very much. Additionally, 82% felt it changed their parent behavior at least somewhat, and 87% indicated that it influenced their relationship with their child positively. These overall findings indicate that impacts of the program were largely similar in varied sessions of the program that were evaluated in the 2014-15 program year, except for a few minor differences. Participants valued their experience and felt that they had gained valuable knowledge and skills as a result of their participation.

Value of Program Versus Other Sources of Information

Participants in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program were asked to rate the usefulness of various sources of information for them in learning about parenting their young child and preparing him/her to be ready for school. The information sources were rated on a scale of 1 to 5, ranging from 1=not at all useful to 5=very useful. This process for evaluating perceptions of the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program was added in 2008. It provides a clear sense of how participants rate the value of their program participation as compared to other sources of information on parenting and school readiness. A higher rating means that participants found that information source to be more highly useful to them. Participant ratings of each information source are included below in Table 3.

Table 3: Value of Specific Information Sources on Parenting and School Readiness (2014-15)

Question Please rate how useful each of the following sources of information has been for you on parenting and school readiness	Overall Mean Score from 1 (not useful) to 5 (very useful)
Information Source	Score
a. Your parents	3.33
b. Your child's other parent	3.58
c. Friends	3.31
d. Parents with children of a similar age	3.59
e. School	3.71
f. Preschool, Head Start or child care	3.83
g. Books, magazines or newspapers	3.11
h. Internet	2.99
i. <i>Gearing Up for Kindergarten</i> class and materials	4.07**
j. Other	--

** Highest ranking

The results from the 2014-15 session of the program indicate that participants rated the school (3.71), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.83), and parents with children of a similar age (3.59) as among the most useful sources of information for them on parenting and preparing their child for other school. However, the Gearing Up for Kindergarten class and materials were rated higher than all other sources with a mean score of 4.07, indicating that participants felt the class was more useful to them regarding parenting and school readiness than any other information source assessed. The results from the program indicate that participants rate the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program substantially higher than any other information source assessed.

Perceived Impacts on Participant Parenting Knowledge and School Readiness Beliefs

In the 2012-13 program year, a new set of assessment questions was developed to obtain feedback from participants regarding perceived program impacts on their knowledge of child development, healthy parenting, and school readiness. A primary purpose of Gearing Up for Kindergarten is to facilitate growth in the knowledge and understanding of these topics with parents who participate in the program. Ten questions that focus on these dimensions of parent knowledge were added to the assessment process. Each question is measured on a 5-point scale and participants rate their understanding of topics from 1=not at all to 5=to a great extent. In addition, a 3-item measure of parent beliefs about school readiness was added and parents assess their confidence level in their child’s preparation and readiness for school success. These areas of knowledge are regarded as important in assisting children toward school readiness.

By assessing the parents’ perceptions of their understanding of key topic areas with regard to child development, healthy parenting, and school readiness both before and after the program, it is possible to gain a sense of whether the program may have an impact on them. The scores communicated by parents were calculated as average scores, or mean scores, on the scale from 1 to 5. The average scores for each area of knowledge from “before participation” were compared with the average scores from “after participation.” The two scores were compared statistically to measure whether there was a significant difference before and after participation in the program, and if the difference was likely to be due to the program itself rather than random chance (a “paired sample T-test analysis”).

The first set of findings in Table 4 represents the feedback with regard to parental confidence and beliefs about a child’s preparation and school readiness. Findings are presented in Table 4 for the participants in all program models in 2013-14. Specific findings related to each particular model of the program are available from the authors.

Table 4: Perceived Impacts on Parental Beliefs about School Readiness of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2014-15 Program)

Question	Before Participation (Mean Score)	Now, After Participation (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. I am confident in my child’s level of preparedness for kindergarten and success in the school setting.	3.60	4.31	.71	Yes
2. I am confident in the activities we have engaged in at home to prepare our child for school transition and success.	3.63	4.27	.64	Yes
3. I am confident in the activities my child has participated in outside the home to become prepared for school transition and success.	3.76	4.34	.58	Yes

The next set of findings presented in Table 5 focuses on perceived impacts of the program on participant understanding of child development, healthy parenting, and school readiness.

Table 5: Perceived Impacts on Parent Knowledge and Beliefs of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2014-15 Program)

Question	Before Participation (Mean Score)	Now, After Participation (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. I understand basic aspects of child development related to a young child's learning, growth and development.	3.58	4.12	.54	Yes
2. I understand social and emotional development in young children and its influence on learning and relationships.	3.62	4.18	.56	Yes
3. I understand how young children develop early reading, math and thinking skills.	3.45	4.10	.65	Yes
4. I understand parenting styles and discipline and their influence on young children.	3.71	4.25	.54	Yes
5. I understand key parenting practices that influence a young child's well-being and development.	3.66	4.21	.55	Yes
6. I understand the meaning and dimensions of school readiness.	3.53	4.29	.76	Yes
7. I understand the specific areas of knowledge and skill that my child is expected to demonstrate to be ready for school.	3.46	4.37	.91	Yes
8. I understand specific strategies I can implement in assisting my child to be prepared for entering kindergarten and achieving school success.	3.37	4.26	.89	Yes
9. I understand the key elements of a supportive home learning environment.	3.76	4.39	.63	Yes
10. I understand specific strategies for parent involvement in my child's education that can help my child to succeed in school.	3.70	4.35	.65	Yes

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

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

- Participants noted **moderate to substantial changes in all of the 10 areas of parental knowledge associated with child development, healthy parenting and school readiness that were measured, with the changes showing positive increases in each area of knowledge** (e.g., understanding the skills is expected to demonstrate in being ready for school).
- The findings showed significant differences in parental knowledge for participants before and after their participation in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. These changes were **moderate to substantial increases between .55 and .90 in specific areas of parental knowledge, suggesting incremental improvement in key aspects of parent knowledge and beliefs related to child development, healthy parenting and school readiness.**
- Participants typically rated themselves quite highly already on most indicators of parental knowledge linked to child development, healthy parenting, and school readiness. The average beginning scores showed that most parents felt they had substantial knowledge in these areas, usually rating between “to a fair extent” and “to a significant extent” on the scale of understanding. This means that most participants already perceive themselves as quite knowledgeable in their understanding and there is limited opportunity for change.
- The **four largest significant differences** for participants occurred in the following areas: **understanding of specific areas of knowledge and skills needed to be ready for school (.91), understanding of specific strategies to assist in preparing children for kindergarten (.89), understanding of the meaning and dimensions of school readiness (.76), and understanding of specific strategies for parent involvement in a child's education (.65).**
- The **findings suggest that Gearing Up for Kindergarten has made some progress in assisting parents and influencing them in a positive manner to gain knowledge in ways that will help them assist their children toward school readiness and positive development.**

This set of findings from Gearing Up for Kindergarten was generated as a result of involvement in the 2014-15 year of the program at Gearing Up for Kindergarten sites in North Dakota. The findings indicate the program makes a positive difference with parents who are involved and increases both their knowledge base and confidence regarding preparation of a child for school readiness and success.

Parent-Child Reading Interactions

To assess program effects on parent-child reading interactions at home, a short measure consisting of 8 items was given to parents to complete both prior to and following the program. Parents described the frequency of interactions for each item related to early literacy and reading, including such items as going to the library with children, discussing contents of a book with children, and looking for age-appropriate books to share with children. Parents rated their frequency of reading interaction with children using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – “hardly ever” to 5 = “one or two times a day.” A higher score represents a more positive and frequent pattern of reading interaction on that item. Scores are provided in Table 6 which indicate the pre-test score, post-program score, difference score and level of significance. The findings represented here present the information from participants in all of the program models during 2014-15.

Table 6: Parent-Child Reading Interactions – Parent Assessment

Question How often do:	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. You or another family member read a book with your child(ren)?	4.08	4.40	.32	Yes
2. Your child(ren) ask to be read to?	3.90	4.29	.39	Yes
3. You go to the library with your child(ren)?	1.71	1.88	.17	Yes
4. Your child(ren) observe you reading books, magazines or other material at home?	3.53	3.81	.28	Yes
5. You discuss contents of a book with your child(ren)?	3.59	3.98	.39	Yes
6. Read for a period of 15 minutes or more with your child(ren)?	3.82	4.17	.35	Yes
7. Look for age-appropriate books to give to or share with your child(ren)?	3.81	4.09	.28	Yes
8. Observe your child(ren) looking at or interacting with books?	3.98	4.37	.39	Yes

Among the 8 indicators of parent-child reading interaction, significant differences emerged for all of the 8 items based on the final results of the assessment. The findings showed that **parents became more likely to go to the library with their child, they were more likely to discuss contents of a book with their children, they read more often with children, and they were more attentive to finding age-appropriate books for their children. All of these items are important because they are actions that serve to facilitate a positive literacy environment for children in the home.**

Further refinement of this measure and continuing investigation over time should provide additional insights into how Gearing Up for Kindergarten affects the experience of parent-child reading interactions in the home.

II. Parental Assessment of Children’s School Readiness

Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness

One of the identified goals for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program is that participating children will show significant progress in being prepared to be successful in cognitive, social, emotional, physical and practical domains as they enter kindergarten. To get a sense of where parents perceived their children to be in regard to school readiness, a brief assessment tool was developed called the Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness (PPASR). This short survey asks parents to rate their children on a 5-point scale in five key areas of development related to school readiness (a total of 19 items). Parents are asked to rate how their child typically thinks and behaves for each item. The range of responses that parents can give in rating their children goes from 1 to 5, with 1 = “hardly ever,” 2 = “once in a while,” 3 = “sometimes,” 4 = “often,” and 5 = “almost always.” In 2014-15, a retrospective survey approach was used with this portion of the evaluation.

Understanding What the Current PPASR Assessment Process Shows

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

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

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

- We can determine at what level parents in the program area rate their children to begin with in five key areas related to school readiness. We can also assess any variation in these ratings by age of the child, education of the parent, or other potentially important factors.
- We can determine whether parental ratings show a perceived change in children’s school readiness over time while participating in the program, and how great those changes are that do occur.

- We can prepare a feedback report for parents that shows their rating of a child on specific items related to school readiness, and how their rating compares to the overall ratings of children in the group (as well as the child's individual scores over time).
- We can examine whether particular categories of school readiness showed greater changes than others over time.

Participants in the PPASR Assessment

Participation in the Practical Parent Assessment of School Readiness required that parents fill out the PPASR survey once during the program, retrospectively at the end of the program. Only those parents who filled out a PPASR assessment for their child at both times were included in the analysis. A total sample of 723 children was rated by parents on the PPASR in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program (this sample represents a response rate of approximately 74.3% of participating children). Demographic characteristics were similar to those previously reported.

Findings on Parental Perceptions of Children's School Readiness

The key areas of school readiness selected for assessment by parents were: (1) *Learning and Exploration* (cognitive); (2) *Friends and Social Interaction* (social); (3) *Knowing the Basics* (academic); (4) *Feelings and Families* (emotional); and (5) *Practical Knowledge and Skills* (practical). Ten tables are included below, one of which covers each dimension, and there are beginning group scores (pre-program score), completing group scores (post-program score 2015), and difference scores (difference in the average group scores, or means) for each item.

The difference scores indicate progress (or lack thereof) that has occurred for children (as perceived by parents) on average in the group between participation at the beginning of the program and participation at the end of the program. The table indicates whether there is a "significant" difference between the scores, which may be due to program participation, individual growth, or other factors. The findings provided here are for the 16-week split session program, the 10-week split session program, and the 10-week continuous session program. Tables 7-11 cover the 16-week program, Tables 12-16 cover the 10-week split session program, and Tables 17-21 cover the 10-week continuous session program.

Table 7: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	3.94	4.44	.50	Yes
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	3.69	4.38	.69	Yes
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.50	4.31	.81	Yes
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.0	3.94	.94	Yes

Table 8: Friends and Social Interaction – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	3.44	4.19	.75	Yes
6. Takes turns with others.	3.38	4.13	.75	Yes
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	3.25	4.0	.75	Yes
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.25	3.81	.56	Yes
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.13	3.88	.75	Yes

Table 9: Knowing the Basics – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	3.88	4.50	.62	Yes
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	4.0	4.63	.63	Yes
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	3.81	4.31	.50	Yes
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.44	4.06	.62	Yes

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

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.19	3.88	.69	Yes
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.38	3.94	.56	Yes
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.50	3.94	.44	Yes
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.38	3.81	.43	Yes

Table 11: Practical Knowledge and Skills – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
18. Can recite his or her name, parents' names and contact information (address, phone number).	3.38	3.94	.56	Yes
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.19	3.63	.44	Yes

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for **16-week split session programs** operated during the 2014-15 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 quite highly on most indicators of school readiness**. This means that there is somewhat limited room for change to be indicated across specific items. For example, the average beginning score on every item (all 19 items) was in the direction of the Proficient (3 or higher) or Advanced (4 or higher) category.
- **Moderate to substantial 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. All indicators showed evidence of change that reached statistical significance. The wide-ranging evidence of growth in children's specific domains of development related to school readiness is highly encouraging and evidence of program success.**

- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on all of the 19 indicators between fall 2014 and spring 2015. This means that 100 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in all five of the school readiness categories.**
- These findings showed significant differences in parental perceptions of children's school readiness from the beginning of the program to the end of the program on all indicators. These changes included **5 substantive increases between .30 and .50, and 14 significant increases of .50 or higher on specific items of school readiness.**
- The **15 most significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred by order of magnitude in the following areas:
 - **Likes to work at solving problems (.94)**
 - **Drawing and using art to express ideas or feelings (.81)**
 - **Works or plays cooperatively with friends (.75)**
 - **Takes turns with others (.75)**
 - **Remembers and follows simple directions (.75)**
 - **Trying to solve problems with friends (.75)**
 - **Participating in small groups (.69)**
 - **Talking about how others might feel (.69)**
 - **Familiarity with numbers (.63)**
 - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.62)**
 - **Creative in asking questions and solving problems (.62)**
 - **Getting along with others without fighting (.56)**
 - **Manages feelings without hurting others (.56)**
 - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.56)**
 - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.50)**
- In analyzing all increases over .50 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 (knowing the alphabet and numbers, awareness of personal contact information, etc.); (4) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities; and (5) ability to manage emotions and adapt in a new environment.**
- Assessing the five domains of development related to school readiness that are examined in the evaluation process, while all domains have specific items that demonstrate change after program participation, the areas that show the greatest impact as a result of the program are: **(1) Child Learning and Exploration; (2) Positive Peer Interactions and Social Development; (3) Knowing the Basics and Pre-Academic Skills; (4) Emotional Development and Management; and (5) Practical Awareness and Self-Care Skills.**

Table 12: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	3.73	4.10	.37	Yes
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	3.85	4.31	.46	Yes
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.56	3.93	.37	Yes
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.24	3.66	.42	Yes

Table 13: Friends and Social Interaction – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	3.95	4.29	.34	Yes
6. Takes turns with others.	3.71	4.11	.40	Yes
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	3.72	4.09	.37	Yes
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.64	3.95	.31	Yes
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.28	3.66	.38	Yes

Table 14: Knowing the Basics – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	3.66	4.19	.53	Yes
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	4.08	4.59	.51	Yes
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	3.78	4.30	.52	Yes
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.59	3.97	.38	Yes

Table 15: Feelings and Families – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.59	3.91	.32	Yes
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.41	3.77	.36	Yes
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.54	4.14	.60	Yes
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.64	3.92	.28	Yes

Table 16: Practical Knowledge and Skills – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program Fall 2014 (Mean Score)	End of Program Spring 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
18. Can recite his or her name, parents' names and contact information (address, phone number).	2.74	3.17	.43	Yes
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.36	3.68	.32	Yes

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for **10-week split session programs** operated during the 2014-15 year on perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. A number of important points did emerge as a result of these findings:

- Currently, parents of children in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely rate their children quite highly on most indicators of school readiness.** For example, the average beginning score on every item (all 19 items) was in the direction of the Proficient (3 or higher) or Advanced (4 or higher) category. In this program model, 18 of 19 items had a beginning average score below 4, while the other item was rated above 4 at the beginning of the program.
- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on all of the 19 indicators between fall 2014 and spring 2015.** This means that 100 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in all five of the school readiness categories.

- These findings showed significant differences in parental perceptions of children’s school readiness from the beginning of the program to the end of the program on 14 indicators. These changes included **1 small to moderate increase between .10 and .30, and 18 substantive increases between .30 and .60.**
- The **15 most significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred by order of magnitude in the following areas:
 - **Adapt to new situations (.60)**
 - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.53)**
 - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.52)**
 - **Familiarity with numbers (.51)**
 - **Participating in small groups (.46)**
 - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.43)**
 - **Likes to work at solving problems (.42)**
 - **Taking turns with others (.40)**
 - **Tries to solve problems with friends (.38)**
 - **Creative in solving problems (.38)**
 - **Explores the environment (.37)**
 - **Drawing and using art to express ideas or feelings (.37)**
 - **Remembers and follows simple directions (.37)**
 - **Manages feelings without hurting others (.36)**
 - **Works or plays cooperatively with friends (.34)**
- In analyzing all increases over .10 or higher (whether significant or not), **the findings suggest growth in three primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (using a pencil, knowing the alphabet and numbers, awareness of personal contact information, etc.).**
- In assessing the type of changes reported in each program model, a couple of interesting observations emerged. First, the changes in academic skills were slightly higher in the 16-week model of the program. Second, there were smaller changes in the categories of Learning and Exploration, Friends and Social Interaction (social development), or Feelings and Families (emotional development) for children in the 10-week program, while the changes were modest but larger in these areas for the 16-week program. This suggests a longer period of participation is helpful in assisting change in these areas that are more difficult to impact immediately. Finally, other areas that showed more change in the 16-week program such as trying to solve problems with friends indicate that some areas of development require more supportive effort over time to initiate desired change in a positive direction.

The development and usage of slightly differing program models allows us to compare basic outcomes reported by parents across these different program types. The final program model results emerged from the 10-week continuous session program. These programs all operated in the spring of 2015 and so results were reported in a more compact time frame. It is expected that the results will be positive but not as substantial as the other program types.

Table 17: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2015 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	3.67	4.15	.48	Yes
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	3.76	4.24	.48	Yes
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.37	3.82	.45	Yes
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.21	3.71	.50	Yes

Table 18: Friends and Social Interaction – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2015 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	3.85	4.25	.40	Yes
6. Takes turns with others.	3.66	4.09	.43	Yes
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	3.61	4.11	.50	Yes
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.62	3.95	.33	Yes
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.21	3.66	.45	Yes

Table 19: Knowing the Basics – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2015 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference?
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	3.69	4.29	.60	Yes
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	4.03	4.58	.55	Yes
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	3.70	4.26	.56	Yes
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.61	4.07	.46	Yes

Table 20: Feelings and Families – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2015 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.45	3.91	.46	Yes
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.40	3.78	.38	Yes
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.45	4.07	.62	Yes
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.68	4.0	.32	Yes

Table 21: Practical Knowledge and Skills – School Readiness Scores (10-week Short Session)

Question My Child Typically:	Beginning of Program 2015 (Mean Score)	End of Program 2015 (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
18. Can recite his or her name, parents' names and contact information (address, phone number).	2.82	3.45	.63	Yes
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.29	3.77	.48	Yes

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for 10-week short session programs operated during the 2014-15 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 quite highly on most indicators of school readiness.** This means that there is somewhat limited room for change to be indicated across specific items. For example, the average beginning score on every item (all 19 items) was in the direction of the Proficient (3 or higher) or Advanced (4 or higher) category. Eighteen of 19 items had a beginning average score below 4, and the other beginning score was above 4.
- **Small to moderate gains were noted for some indicators of school readiness in children. These gains are likely due to a combination of participation in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program, normal processes of child development, and other contributing factors. Other indicators showed no or limited evidence of change.**

- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on all of the 19 indicators between the beginning and end of the program in 2015. This means that 100 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in all of the school readiness categories.** It should be noted that the total number of participants is much larger in this category and this makes significant differences much more likely.
- These findings showed significant differences in parental perceptions of children's school readiness from the beginning of the program to the end of the program on all indicators. **These changes were all small to moderate increases between .30 and .60.**
- The **10 most significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred by order of magnitude in the following areas:
 - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.63)**
 - **Adapt to new situations (.62)**
 - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.60)**
 - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.56)**
 - **Familiarity with numbers (.55)**
 - **Likes to work at solving problems (.50)**
 - **Remembers and follows simple directions (.50)**
 - **Exploring the environment (.48)**
 - **Participating in small groups (.48)**
 - **Awareness of who to contact for help (.48)**
- In analyzing the increases noted here, **the findings suggest growth in three primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (using a pencil, knowing the alphabet and numbers, awareness of personal contact information, etc.).**
- In assessing the type of changes reported for this program model, a couple of interesting observations emerged. First, the changes in academic skills were relatively similar as with other programs. Second, again there were modest changes in the three categories of Learning and Exploration, Friends and Social Interaction, and Feelings and Families (emotional development) for children in this model of the 10-week program, while the changes were modest but larger in these areas for the 16-week program. As already noted, this suggests a longer period of participation is helpful in assisting change in these areas that are more difficult to impact immediately.

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

III. Child Assessment of School Readiness, Parent-Child Version

Child Assessment of School Readiness, Parent-Child Version

An important objective for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program is that participating children will show significant progress in being prepared to be successful in cognitive, social and practical domains as they enter kindergarten. As a new addition to the assessment of children, the program evaluation for 2014-15 also included an objective basic skills evaluation by the child's parent at the beginning and end of the program. This was the second year this tool was used.

This objective parent assessment of a child's school readiness focused primarily on early literacy and early numeracy. The evaluation tool developed for this assessment was constructed by researchers at North Dakota State University. This instrument was added to the evaluation process based on participant and facilitator feedback and allows a direct, objective assessment of a child's developing abilities.

Parents were asked to complete the assessment tool once for each child, at the beginning of the program and also at the end of the program. The assessment allowed parents to provide a basic score related to the degree that a child was proficient on specific indicators of school readiness at both the beginning and end of the program. This process of completing two ratings for each child allows for comparison of a child's scores over a range of time. Thus, the tool allows the program to provide feedback on a child that enables them to assess basic skills including identification of shapes and colors, number counting, number identification, letter identification, and sound identification. The assessment allows the program to:

- Highlight areas of positive growth and development in a child related to school readiness
- Identify potential areas of perceived concern regarding a child's acquisition of basic knowledge important to school readiness
- Assess a child's perceived development in relation to established domains of knowledge important to early learning and school readiness

The key domains assessed in the Child Assessment for School Readiness, Parent-Child Version included (1) *Shapes* (4 items), (2) *Colors* (8 items), (3) *Counting Knowledge*, (4) *Number Identification* (12 items), (5) *Letter Identification* (12 items), (6) *Sound Identification* (12 items), and (7) *Practical Knowledge* (name, address, etc.). Each domain was scored on a range from zero to the number of items possible (e.g., 0 to 12), except the last category which was a Yes/No response category.

Understanding Findings from the Child Assessment of School Readiness

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

- First, the objective parent assessment allows examination of a child's developing knowledge and skills across areas that are important to school readiness.
- Second, the instrument has been newly developed and so it is in a "pilot phase" regarding its utility. While we feel confident about its quality, further usage and research will enable refinement of its potential as an assessment tool for children in this age category.
- Third, the assessment is designed to allow for tracking a sense of progress over time. The level of growth or change that can be tracked in a given child's development, or for a group of children, depends on the child's proficiency in the beginning. If children already score

very highly on indicators of school readiness at the beginning, then the scale cannot reveal further growth for that child (there is no “room” left on the scale for growth).

- Fourth, usage of a comparison group for participants in Gearing Up for Kindergarten will allow us, once the findings are complete, to assess whether a similar group of children without the program would show similar results or changes in their scores regarding school readiness.
- Fifth, children in their early years between ages 3 and 5 are already developing on a continuous basis, and so it is somewhat difficult to know whether changes are due to participation in the program, predictable patterns of normal growth over time, or other factors (involvement with new friends, going to child care, etc.).

However, the objective parent assessment of school readiness does allow us to do the following:

- We can determine at what level children appear to be at in several key areas related to school readiness. We can also assess any variation in these ratings by age of the child, gender of the child, or other potentially important factors.
- We can determine whether ratings show a perceived change in children’s school readiness over time while participating in the program, and how great those changes are that do occur.
- We can examine whether particular categories of school readiness showed greater changes than others over time.

Participants in the Assessment

Participation in the Child Assessment of School Readiness, Parent-Child Version required that parents sit with the child and complete the assessment scoring process at the beginning and completion of the program. Only those children who had an assessment completed at both times were included in the analysis. A total sample of 733 children was assessed by parents in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program in the 2014-2015 program year.

Findings on Ratings of Children’s School Readiness

The key areas of school readiness assessed by teachers were: (1) *Shapes* (4 items), (2) *Colors* (8 items), (3) *Counting Knowledge*, (4) *Number Identification* (12 items), (5) *Letter Identification* (12 items), (6) *Sound Identification* (12 items), and (7) *Practical Knowledge* (name, address, etc.).

Five tables (Tables 22-26) are included below, each of which covers one or two dimensions assessed with the child. Each table shows the score of the children on that item at the start of their enrollment in Gearing up for Kindergarten. Also, the score of the children on that item at the end of the program is included. Participants in all program types were included in this assessment, and a breakdown by program type is also included. The scores indicate progress (or lack thereof) that has occurred for children in the group during the 2014-15 program year.

Table 22: Identification of Shapes – Child Assessment Scores

Question	Program Type	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
Identification of Shapes (range of 0 to 4)	All Combined	3.23	3.43	.20	Yes
	16-week model	2.95	3.37	.42	Yes
	10-week split	3.31	3.47	.16	Yes
	10-week short	3.22	3.42	.20	Yes

Table 23: Identification of Colors – Child Assessment Scores

Question	Program Type	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
Identification of Colors (range of 0 to 8)	All Combined	7.35	7.45	.10	No
	16-week model	5.89	7.11	1.22	No
	10-week split	7.33	7.46	.13	No
	10-week short	7.40	7.46	.06	No

Table 24: Number Counting Knowledge – Child Assessment Scores

Question	Program Type	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
Number Counting Ability (range of 0 to 100)	All Combined	27.92	37.89	9.97	Yes
	16-week model	33.68	48.26	14.58	Yes
	10-week split	24.29	35.21	10.92	Yes
	10-week short	27.73	38.28	10.55	Yes

These three tables summarize findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the overall program and three program session types operated during the 2014-15 year. A number of things emerge as a result of these findings:

- Most children are **already scoring high on identification of shapes**. The program does not specifically target this ability, and this is apparent because children in each version of the program (and overall) make only small gains in their ability to identify shapes.
- Most children are **already scoring high on identification of colors**. Again, there is no increase in the ability of children to identify colors during participation in the program (except in the 16-week model).
- Children overall and in each model of the program **make significant progress increasing their number counting ability**. Children in each of the “split models” of the program progress more than children in the 10-week short model, and this is likely due to increased time for parents to facilitate this learning.

Table 25: Number, Letter and Sound Identification – Child Assessment Scores

Question	Program Type	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
Number Identification (range of 0 to12)	All Combined	6.73	8.09	1.36	Yes
	16-week model	6.47	7.68	1.21	No
	10-week split	5.79	7.87	2.08	Yes
	10-week short	7.0	8.17	1.17	Yes
Letter Identification (range of 0 to12)	All Combined	7.56	8.95	1.39	Yes
	16-week model	7.68	8.63	0.95	No
	10-week split	6.72	8.74	2.02	Yes
	10-week short	7.79	9.01	1.22	Yes
Sound Identification (range of 0 to12)	All Combined	5.75	7.35	1.60	Yes
	16-week model	6.79	9.0	2.21	Yes
	10-week split	4.90	6.66	1.76	Yes
	10-week short	5.96	7.48	1.52	Yes

Table 25 summarizes findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the overall program and three program session types operated during the 2014-15 year. Specifically, it shows results associated with number identification ability, letter identification ability, and sound identification ability. These abilities are important in school readiness because they underlie early numeracy and early literacy development. A number of things emerge as a result of these findings:

- Children in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely start at or close to the mid-point on the rating scale for each of these areas of ability.** The variation that exists is likely due to different starting points for the assessment due to the program models beginning at different times in the pre-kindergarten year, as well as sample variation.
- **Small to moderate gains were noted for each indicator of school readiness in children. These gains are likely due to a combination of participation in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program, normal processes of child development, and other contributing factors. Increases in ability to identify numbers, letters and sounds furnishes a positive signal for those children participating in the program.**
- Children overall and in each model of the program **made progress increasing their number identification ability, letter identification ability, and sound identification ability.** Children in each of the “split models” of the program tend to progress more than children in the 10-week short model, and this is likely due to increased time for parents to facilitate this learning. The highest gains typically occurred for children in either of the split session models of the program.

Table 26: Practical Knowledge – Child Assessment Scores

Question	Program Type	% Proficient at Beginning	% Proficient at End	Percentage Increase Score
1. Can say his/her full name.	All Combined	86.2%	92%	+5.8%
2. Can say parent's first and last name.	All Combined	77.5%	82.6%	+5.1%
3. Can say his or her complete address.	All Combined	8.7%	19.3%	+10.6%

Table 26 summarizes findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the overall program during the 2014-15 year. It illustrates results associated with a child's expression of practical knowledge, specifically, the ability to repeat one's own name, a parent's full name, and one's full address. This knowledge is often called "practical knowledge" because it is useful for daily functioning. The results were modest, however, some things did emerge from these findings:

- Most children in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely know their own full name and a parent's full name at the start of the program experience.** There is a small measured increase in the total percentage of children who express this ability by the end of the program (increase of 5 to 6 percent of the total children).
- Only a few children in Gearing Up for Kindergarten express the ability to identify one's own full address correctly at the start of the program experience. However, this ability typically increases also so that **the total percentage of children who express this ability by the end of the program approximately doubles.**

These findings regarding changes in children's cognitive and practical abilities related to school readiness show that positive changes are occurring for children enrolled in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. These findings indicate that the program likely has a number of positive impacts on children and their school readiness.

IV. Parent Feedback on Gearing Up for Kindergarten

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

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

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

Qualitative feedback provides a different kind of view of how participants reacted to and experienced the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. The responses are more descriptive, personal and wide-ranging. We conducted a brief thematic analysis of the main response categories that were shared by participants and have selected a variety of responses for each question that highlight the responses of participants. Not all participant comments are selected here for purposes of brevity. The responses included here come from the 2014-15 program year.

Qualitative Feedback from Parents about Gearing Up for Kindergarten

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

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

More Time and Active Involvement with Children

- I enjoyed how the program is organized with hands-on activities prior to the teaching sessions.
- Using opportunities to teach. For example, asking him if he can count 50 jumps while jumping on the trampoline. The time interaction with my child.
- Helped to continue [our] focus on preparing for school; it has increased amount of time [we] spend each week.
- Yes, [we are now] sitting down every night to do a short lesson.
- [I liked] the projects for home and working with my child on things he might not have learned at home.
- Take more time from my everyday schedule and sit with her to do an activity or talk or read or count.
- My son loved everything about it. His favorite was the activities we would do together as soon as we got there, and all the projects I would do for us.
- We have been reading a lot more at home.
- I feel these sessions strengthened the relationship between my child and I because it was something special for us to do together without siblings.
- Engaging in more activities with my child. Lots of activities to use to help my daughter to be successful in school.
- More learning activities with my child.
- We are watching less movies and TV time and reading more often and longer stories.
- This program helped me a lot because now I spend more time with my daughter (reading, playing) and I know the importance of helping [her].
- I have enjoyed this program and I now find ways to increase the educational interactions with my son.
- Trying to play more games that involve math/counting.
- Yes, arts and crafts with my child usually does not happen. I was able to sit and learn how to connect with him on that level.
- The activities provided were wonderful and kept kids' attention longer than other activities we had tried.
- I try to read with [my son] more often and ask him questions about the books.
- I have limited his screen time and read to him more each week.
- [We] spend more uninterrupted time doing the activities.
- The parent/child interaction in the beginning was a great experience. My son really benefitted from the program.
- I have tried to play more games with my child.

Improved Parenting Efforts in Specific Areas

- I have learned so much on how to communicate better with my child.
- Being more aware of day to day activities that can be useful for getting our child ready for kindergarten. Communicating more.
- Enforcing bedtime, building confidence in my son.
- Learning different tools to improve parenting and learning with my daughter.

- I ask more questions. We have better conversations at home.
- Sleep timing helps us learn how much he needs to be alert and focused for school.
- Yes, we are trying to stick to a bedtime routine.
- To point at the positives more and accentuate when she is doing something positive.
- We work more on counting, the alphabet and memorization (e.g., address). I was unaware of how high the expectations were regarding these things for kids just entering the school setting in kindergarten.
- Have tried different reward/discipline strategies.
- Different tools to use with behaviors.
- [We now] consider our parenting styles.
- The program has shown me how to look at parenting from a different perspective.
- The sleep session helped me realize how important and how much sleep is needed and encouraged me to really work on an earlier bedtime routine so we won't have such a hard adjustment when school starts.
- I have learned to push him more at exceeding in learning information that would be helpful to him when he goes to school. His other sibling has helped him a lot too.
- Try to do more reading to my child.
- More patience with [my] child and different discipline practices.
- [I] read more to my child.
- Made us focus more on the activities we do with our children at home.
- Slightly changed [my] discipline style.
- How important reading is. We read every day now.
- I'm grateful for the ideas of how to get my children to think about the activities versus just playing.
- The love and logic session really stuck with me, as did the other sessions. I have been asking my kids a lot more questions and giving them more choices/control.
- You've opened up new resources for me to check out, new books for my daughter to read, and a few helpful learning techniques (example cups).
- I feel this is a great program. It has helped me understand and learn different techniques for my child to succeed in all different areas.
- I am reading a parenting book suggested at one of the sessions (Nurtured Heart Approach).
- Use simple daily activities as a learning experience, be more attentive to focusing on his learning and positive reinforcement.
- We have been striving to read more frequently to our child after attending this program, because we have learned the benefits of how important reading is to a child's learning and development.
- I learned some tricks that I have used at home. [The teacher] showed us things she used with her own kids. I thought those examples are awesome!
- This program was great for me in two ways – it assured me that I'm not as humble of a parent as I sometimes think, and it gave me ideas to help me become a better parent.

Increased Awareness of Child's Specific Needs

- We are more aware of how we can help our child gain skills, practice safety and grow emotionally.
- I feel it has been good for my husband and I as parents to be informed and prepared.
- Able to work with him on areas he needed help as far as letter sounds, lower case letters, address.
- My daughter turns five right before the cut-off date, and going to the program has helped me see that she will be ready for kindergarten in the fall.
- Be more aware of overindulgence and how that can impact a child coming to school.
- Just being aware of our excitement for learning. It inspires our child.

- As a parent, the program supports and assists me by providing good information about child development.
- I have learned to be more patient with teaching her.
- I work harder at being a good listener to my child.
- I had no idea about the expectations for a child to read before school.
- I was taught to be more encouraging and to not worry so much about always having “right” answers, but enjoying the process.
- Yes, learning how to deal with a child and their emotional state.
- It was interesting to learn that disposition is something that children are born with, I always thought a child’s disposition was a direct result of parenting techniques.
- Yes, understanding the concepts of what works with teaching children and resources for further education.
- Yes, I learned different techniques for learning activities and how to ask questions without making the answer obvious.
- I learned what my daughter is strong in and what subjects to work on.
- I have been a lot better at listening and slowing down from “adult duties” to take time to focus more on his needs and desires.
- Just realizing what his weaknesses are and being able to work on them more often.
- Eye opener that our son was not completely ready for kindergarten! Thank you for this opportunity to make his schooling much better for teacher, student and parent!
- Reminds me about sleep and its effect on learning.
- Let him use his logic for problem solving. Discovered gaps in his learning so we could address those issues.
- I have a much better idea of how to approach teaching my children now.
- Read more to her and it has taught me what we need to focus on with her learning.
- To be more understanding of child behaviors.
- Enjoyed learning about learning styles and how to help in areas that she is different than I am.

How has your child benefited from Gearing Up for Kindergarten?

Increased Social Confidence and Positive Peer Interactions

- Meeting kids he will go to school with. Being independent from other brother in a school setting.
- She is so excited for school to start-this was a great experience!
- He has become more confident and has a feeling for what kindergarten is.
- Learning new activities and taking turns.
- She is feeling more confident in herself to be ready for kindergarten.
- I feel that he is more prepared to be on his own in a social setting, without mom and dad there. This was most valuable to us because our child has been home with mom mostly since birth.
- Better at separation.
- The glimpse into the social and educational setting has helped him get excited for kindergarten.
- She knows what kindergarten would be like and she's excited about it, rather than nervous.
- He has been able to meet other kids and step out of his comfort zone.
- Helped with his timidity, adapting to change.
- His confidence increased as did his comfort level of groups and change.
- She is engaging with her peers more than when she started.
- Enjoyed being with kids that will be in her class next year.
- More comfortable with peers and separating from parents.
- It has been good to be in a structured setting and socially it has helped him to interact with other kids.
- He is not as nervous about school.
- Learned skills on how to get along with others, better relationships.
- Ability to make new friends.
- He loves it and is no longer nervous about attending a new school-he has enjoyed the classroom and activities.
- He is familiar with the teachers and other students, he loves coming to the school.
- He feels more prepared to make the change to kindergarten. He is excited about it because he has spent time with the teachers. It has also helped him "come out of his shell."
- It has been good for her to interact with other children her age.
- It makes her more comfortable being around other kids in a different environment.
- More outgoing, better with playing with other kids.
- He has become more confident and less scared about starting school.
- It has helped him socially, and hopefully will decrease anxiety at beginning of school.
- I believe it has helped her be more comfortable about starting school.
- It has given my daughter the emotional aspect of it (confidence, feeling of readiness) and also excited her for school.
- She has been less shy and willing to try new things. She is excited about learning.
- Has become more patient and more school excitement, excited to come, excited to see friends and teachers. Likes to explain and tell stories.
- He has been able to play/interact with more kids his age.
- Likes to share more and play with others.
- He has opened up more and is taking more chances socially.
- The program has improved his socialization skills and will help him feel more comfortable with the transition from daycare to school.
- Yes, it has made her more confident in starting school.
- My child has benefitted most by learning how to act/ behave in a group setting. How to follow instructions, learn from others, etc.

- Helped him become less shy and improve his group interaction skills.
- [My son] has grown tremendously in behavior, attitude, knowledge.
- His comfort level with the school and teachers has greatly improved. He is very excited and confident about starting in the fall.
- He has really enjoyed being here and it has helped him to make some new friends.
- He has become more involved with other children and wanting to learn problem solving.
- My child's excitement for kindergarten and all it has in store is much higher after attending these sessions. She is much more confident in herself.
- My child won't be as shy and scared about starting kindergarten in the fall. He is more excited!
- Socialization in school type setting.
- She seems more confident in the environment.
- Learning, listening, social interaction.
- He is more calm about kindergarten. He was very nervous.
- He has received the confidence and excitement he needs to attend kindergarten comfortably.
- My daughter has confidence now to communicate with other children and teachers and also having the exposure of what's going to be in store for her at school. Everything is new for my daughter and this program helps a lot.
- He has come out of his shell and become more open with other adults and children.
- It has helped them open up in communicating with others. It has also gotten them excited about starting school.
- My child has learned more about what is socially acceptable when working in groups.
- More social, more structured, more confident.
- Our child is shy and has difficulty with transition. I think this program will make her transition into kindergarten much easier.
- Has learned how to interact better with other kids.
- Became more confident about starting kindergarten.
- Helped in social emotional skills. He has learned more self-confidence and wants to learn.
- She is excited to go to school. She was scared before we started this.
- Definitely we have a lot more work to do but feel more confident and the social part of it has helped her greatly.

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

- Interest in books, reading and decision making has improved. They love coming each week.
- He has gained confidence in his academic ability. He has also learned some of the kindergarten routines.
- She is very good at writing.
- English language learning.
- She loves the experiments and stations.
- Wants to read more often, is getting better at waiting his turn and cooperating with others.
- He has learned to use the information at home in everyday life. He wants to do more "school activities" more than other play activities.
- She liked the experiments, something we don't do often at home.
- Learning new projects and reading books, playing well with others.
- Learned structure, rhyming, cooperation and better understanding of numbers.
- She loves to read and draw.
- He has learned to be around other kids the same age. Learned more numbers.
- He learned and practiced more learning activities at home.
- Has grown academically and gotten comfortable with teachers and school.
- He has gotten very excited to be attending kindergarten this fall and his letter recognition skills have advanced.

- He is getting more confident in his learning abilities and will try harder before giving up.
- He has benefitted by seeing where he was at and what we need to work on during the summer.
- Yes, they helped her to get an interest about the books.
- He will try to focus on learning the alphabet for longer periods of time now.
- On so many levels! She has gained more knowledge with her letters and numbers, as well as her reading level. Every day I am amazed at how many new words she has learned when we read. Mixture between preschool and kindergarten.
- She is coming out of her shell now that she has met her classmates. She is more willing to practice writing.
- He has learned more and is more eager to practice numbers and letters at home.
- She knows her letters and numbers better.
- In so many ways, she is more expressive in her words and eager to learn. Yes!
- He wants to read more and learn more. Asks a lot more questions.
- He has been more excited about doing homework and reading stories at home.
- Confidence in knowledge of letters and numbers.
- He has improved in his focus and on numbers and letters.
- She loves all the different activities and games that we can learn and do at home.
- Speaking, writing and making new friends.
- She has learned patience with learning. At the beginning there was a lot of “I don’t know” followed by no trying. Now she will try longer and hasn't been “giving up.”

Greater Awareness and Comfort with School Routines and Expectations

- The course has been more helpful for [my son] to open up and get used to more environments than I could have exposed him to.
- My child was extremely excited to go every night the sessions were available. We had to miss 2 sessions because of illness and work related conflicts and she cried both times and was extremely disappointed in her parents.
- Our daughter has a spring birthday, so it gave us the tools to make sure she is ready and also gave us all (parents and child) the confidence to start school. I wish my parents had this for me!
- More comfortable in the school setting, with the teachers and other kids.
- Got to know children his age and interact with K teachers.
- Familiarity with teachers and school and basic structure.
- It's gotten her comfortable in the school setting and has allowed her to meet her future classmates and teachers.
- She is more familiar with the school, she enjoyed the activities and learned from them, she is confident with the peers.
- She has seemed to learn a little more about what to expect from kindergarten and the fact that it was at the school she will be attending was so helpful.
- Gained confidence and became familiar with the kindergarten building and rooms.
- She is excited for school! She is ready to learn and has gotten excited again to read. We enjoy this program as we are unable to go to preschool. My husband and I work fulltime and go to a home daycare. Daycare does work with her too, but this is a perfect program for our family.
- She has familiarized herself with the building and environment.
- Environment is a big thing for him. He is now comfortable with the surroundings.
- Yes, he has a more clear understanding of what a kindergarten classroom will be like. He also is familiar with some of the classroom rules/expectations.
- Knowledge of the classroom, how to participate in a classroom setting, positive interaction with teachers and kindergarten activities.
- Getting to know teachers, classroom and participation/patience with classroom setting.

- Learning what school will be like, learning what's expected in a classroom setting, social interaction with peers.
- Introduced my child to the school and teachers. Transition into kindergarten will go much smoother because of this program.
- He was able to interact with teachers and friends in a non-threatening environment.
- Meeting other children and teachers and basic understanding of what kindergarten will be like.
- I think this program has helped greatly in preparing him for the transition into kindergarten.
- He has been helped in getting more used to the school environment.
- Yes, she loves the activities, kids and teachers. She got used to the school and room.
- Becoming familiar with friends, teachers and the school will help with the transition. Also, he has learned a lot by attending this program.
- Getting to know peers, classroom, teachers and some activities expected of her has been of great benefit.
- Getting to know other kids and learning the routines and rules that will come with attending school.
- He has been able to understand what the classroom experience will be like, so the transition will be much easier.
- She is much more excited about kindergarten since she knows the room and her teachers.
- She is feeling more comfortable with her surroundings and the structure of school.
- He has become comfortable and familiar with the classrooms. He is now excited to go to school.
- She is more prepared/accustomed to school environment and what is expected of her.
- He got to see what school is like, he has not attended any preschool so I am happy that he had this opportunity. He is excited for kindergarten.
- He has been exposed to the classroom structure and has an experience in the classroom before entering school.
- It was good practice of separating in a new/school environment. It was fun working with my daughter on skills we need to learn and practice and giving creative ways to do it.
- Giving the children an opportunity to meet their future teachers and classmates and seeing how excited they get to come and experience the "big school."

What did you like most about the program?

Time Spent Together in Learning Activities with Child

- Thank you for creating this program, my child especially loves the 1:1 time with me.
- I've seen the benefit of spending time with my child in a one on one scenario.
- [My son] was always very excited to come. He really enjoyed hands-on-projects. He liked making things he could bring home.
- Interaction with [my] child in 1-on-1 activities, developmental information.
- Interactive activities to do together.
- I like spending dedicated time with my child at the stations. Learning science, math, etc. I also like being in the school, having my child get used to it. Story time has been awesome too.
- The time to interact in a classroom setting with my child. I value the one on one time.
- Interacting with my child in the classroom setting.
- One on one time with my child.
- Allows time together as child/parent, but also independently, the activity stations were great.
- One on one night with our son, preparing for kindergarten.
- I really enjoyed doing the activities with my son and also liked the discussion we had with the parents group.
- Interacting with my child.
- I liked the interactive stations.
- Spending time with my child.
- Designated one -on-one time that it is sometimes difficult to get in a busy household.
- This program allowed our child to get one-on-one attention from us and also gave her a chance to get a feel for what school will be like.
- The individual time my child gets with me!
- Time one-on-one with my child.
- It engages both kids and adults: learning is fun with all the different creative activities; great time to spend alone with my child.
- One on one time spent with my child.
- Get one on one time with my child.
- Bonding time and having fun.
- All the fun centers we got to do. [My son] really liked the science ones.
- The kid portion, both interacting with the child in activities and the time they were away from their parents.
- The hands-on activities the kids get to do, lots of different ideas.
- I am more in-tune with my child. Watching my child work on the projects taught me how much they know and how they learn.
- Classroom activities/take home projects.
- I've enjoyed the activities. They have given me so many ideas to work on at home.
- The one on one time with my child doing activities. Helpful hints for helping my child.
- The take-home activities to do with my child.
- Activities you can do with your child so you are both involved.
- The activities shared to do with children at home.
- Spending time one on one with my son.
- Helpful worksheets/games to do at home.
- The one on one time to dedicate to my child.
- I liked the specific time set aside weekly to spend with your child. Many families are so busy, we forget to play. He gained confidence in his social skills.
- The ideas, examples and hands-on how-to activities. I really found the teachers useful as they provided me examples on how to interact and ask questions to help me interact with my children.

- I loved the one on one activities with him.
- Interacting with my son during the first half of each day of the program.
- The interaction while playing learning games and the information packets.
- The take home activities, mainly the alphabetical ones, since my child does not recognize most letters.
- Parent-child activities in the classroom.
- Great information and one-on-one time with my child.
- The hands-on-learning activities we were able to do with our child.
- The activities are great! I love the parent/child time and that my son also got to have time with the teacher without me.
- I loved the one on one activities I was able to do with my child.

Preparation of Parent and Child for Kindergarten Experience

- It has been fun & useful to see my sons interact with peers and educators.
- I think the program helps both my child and I prepare for the kindergarten and the separation.
- It made my child that much more excited about kindergarten and got us thinking about how to prepare our child.
- Major benefit for child to become acclimated to surroundings, classroom, and expectations.
- I feel it is a great program to get the shy kids more comfortable with school.
- My son has gotten to know his peers better.
- My student loved Gearing Up, he looked forward to class and told everyone he was gearing up.
- Before this program, I had my doubts about whether my daughter was ready or not. Now I am fully confident that she is!
- It is great to see the children comfortable with the school and their teachers.
- I now try to work counting and other skills into our daily activities. I like that the kids get to become more comfortable with the classroom and their classmates and teachers. [My daughter] is more comfortable and confident in the classroom now.
- I'm very impressed how it helped my child become better at listening to directions.
- I think it is a good program. It's nice the kids will be used to the classrooms before K starts.
- I do strongly see the need for children to attend Pre-K. I am very thankful all of my children were able to go and without it they all would have started behind and been discouraged.
- Being a first time parent [getting] involved with school, it has opened my eyes to how much is involved with their education.
- I was feeling overwhelmed, however Gearing up helped calm my nerves and prepare us as a family.
- Love the program for introducing my son to the school system and routine, classroom.
- I love this program for my child. It has given her great confidence to go to kindergarten.
- I appreciated learning about how important reading with my child is. I feel like the program will help me communicate with my child's teacher better.
- I feel confident in sending her to kindergarten after attending this class.
- He is very excited for K! He will already know where the K classrooms are and recognizes his teachers. I love that I was also able to get to know not only the K teachers but other staff members as well, such as counselors, etc.
- Our child feels more comfortable with what to expect in the fall and we have learned more about what we need to work on over the summer to get ready for school.
- Letting my son get acquainted with the school, classrooms, teachers.
- I love that it gives time for kids to be prepared for kindergarten with and without their parent(s).
- My child's ability to interact with the kindergarten environment and learn the expectations.
- I have a better understanding of what skills my daughter needs going into kindergarten.

- The classroom time my child received, it gave my child confidence in a classroom setting and got her used to the idea of kindergarten.
- [I like the] structure – being able to view my child in a classroom setting, ability to speak with teachers, ask questions, learn what’s expected in school.
- I love that the kids get to become familiar with the classroom and school they would be attending.
- Being able to interact with the K. teachers and allowing my child to explore the classroom and get to know his teachers.
- I like how it helps the child become comfortable with the school and kindergarten teachers. I also like the activities and interaction my child received from other students and teachers.
- I like that my daughter can get used to her classroom and the environment of the school before school actually starts.
- The kids getting to know the teacher, acclimated to the school and potential classmates.
- Letting my child get used to the school setting, seeing the classroom and meeting the teachers.
- It allows our child to become comfortable with the kindergarten setting and make the transition much easier.
- The way the teachers helped my child engage in the activities and how excited he was to come every week.
- It helps to assess your child’s readiness for kindergarten.
- I liked that my child got to see all the kids and get used to them as well as the school because she is so shy.
- It helped our daughter know about kindergarten. She went from not wanting to go to being excited to go! Thank you!!
- Information for the parents like myself going through it for the first time. Getting an idea of what they should know going into K-garten and what we need to work on.
- This program helps children to become familiar with the classroom setting and helps to set their expectations for the upcoming year.
- It gave us and our child a chance to get to know the school and the teachers prior to starting in the fall.
- It allows the kids to get more comfortable with the teacher and the classroom. She loved it which made us more comfortable sending her to kindergarten in fall.

Parenting Discussion and Support

- Interesting to interact with other parents on different issues.
- Fun to interact with other parents.
- Nurtured Heart Approach, never heard of it before but [now am] taking a local class for more information.
- Getting together with other parents of children of the same age group.
- Loved being able to discuss [with other] parents on different learning strategies.
- I enjoyed the K teachers coming in and talking to the parents. The info they provided to prep the kids was very useful.
- Interactive sharing was the most interesting.
- We love the online courses offered, books, etc.
- Great learning experience for parents.
- I loved the styles of parenting content.
- The handouts and information given to parents is extremely useful! I feel reading to your young children is so important! Make it interesting to them. Information and handouts shared with parents. I also liked the fun activities you can do with your child.
- Started using the Nurtured Heart Approach more, adding more positive energy and it has helped a lot with tantrums and removal of negative energy.

- Became more aware of sleep importance, opportunity for child to acclimate to setting, participate with others, and sharing of ideas with other parents.
- Interacting with the parents, learning from them. Child gets to see the actual classroom and school.
- Interacting with other parents.
- The parenting part of it. I like to learn new ways to do things.
- Talking with other parents that have kids the same age.
- Parent discussion in the library.
- Meeting other parents with children [in the] same age group.
- All the useful information and getting to know other parents with kids the same age and being able to share experiences.
- The coparenting lesson was great!
- The knowledge that was passed on not just from the teacher but other parents.
- Parent breakout sessions were valuable.
- Interactions, handouts – I learned a lot about myself as a parent.
- The information shared with parents.
- It's a great program and the information is very useful for parents. My husband learned a lot from the program.
- Getting to know other parents and discussing these children with them.
- Opened my eyes to a lot that I never thought of [about] discipline, development, etc.
- I enjoyed talking to other parents and sharing ideas.
- I really enjoyed the presentations on child development.
- A lot of great resources for a first time kindergarten mom and dad.
- Interaction with the other parents and finding out they have the same problems.
- I really like the child development parts and how they relate to helping my child.
- Getting to know other parents of children.
- I liked the resources and the information provided. There are things I have learned and tried that I would have never thought of doing or trying to help him excel.
- The information and websites about reading and hearing other parents' stories.
- Lots of helpful parenting tips.
- The parent class time and watching/seeing how my kid acts during story time.
- Meeting and visiting with other parents. Learning about my child's development through the parent sessions.
- Hearing other parents share similar concerns/developments.

Quality of the Program Experience

- [The teacher] is excellent. I have learned that I cannot control who my daughter will be with in school, but after observing [this teacher], I'm confident in the teachers and the [public school] system and that she'll be in great hands.
- This was not our 1st child or 1st time in this program, therefore I already knew a lot of the information coming into it. But it is a very useful program. My kids have benefitted.
- Excellent!
- I really think it's a great program.
- Excellent, wonderful program. Third child in Gearing Up for Kindergarten – very beneficial for each one in different ways.
- It has been very informative and we appreciate having it offered.
- I love it and I would recommend to other parents.
- It should be better advertised for parents! It's a great program and more people should be involved! I have really focused on giving [my child] choices and making him feel empowered.
- Great and useful program.

- I think this is a good program and I am thankful for the work and time [the teachers] put into it.
- Great program, lots of helpful handouts and information. Would highly recommend this program, so glad our school offers it!
- I think this program is great. It has given me so many great ideas. It's hard to find time to do them all.
- Great program!
- I think this is an amazing program.
- Handouts very useful and activities.
- I thought this program was very useful!
- This is my first time to attend this kind of program and I personally find it very helpful and productive, especially in our case as a new immigrant.
- Being a H.S. Math teacher for 22 years, I was a little skeptical of the program. But it seems to be a complete "how to" to prepare your child and you for kindergarten.
- It was very informative, child and I enjoyed coming and learning together. He's very excited about kindergarten.
- I enjoyed that the teachers made me feel at ease, very friendly, welcoming and helpful.
- [I appreciate] that it's available. I consider us lucky to have had the opportunity to participate.
- This program offers a place where kids can play and learn at the same time.
- My child loved it! All of it! It was a great source of information!
- We loved everything about this program! Wonderful for both the students and the parents.
Thank You!
- It was a great program to get my child prepared for kindergarten.