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*Gearing Up for Kindergarten*  
**Project Overview & Year-End Report for  
2011-2012**

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April 2013



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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 6<sup>th</sup> year in 2011-12. *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 2011-2012 the program operated at 41 sites across North Dakota with 549 families enrolled. This executive summary provides highlights of findings gathered through evaluation of the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program's sessions in fall 2011 and spring 2012.

- **Program participation – 77.5% of participants indicated involvement in 75% or more of the program sessions of the program during the year, while another 13.6% 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 **83% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them.** Among participants in the 2011-12 program, 82% said the handouts and learning activities were very useful to them. Finally, all of them agreed that the information was presented well and they were treated respectfully, with those who strongly agreed they were treated well at 87% among all participants.

- **General impacts of program participation** - Among participants, **63%** indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, **60%** noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much, **60%** felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and **55%** 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 2011-12 session of the program indicate that participants rated parents with children of a similar age (3.64), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.71), the school (3.60), and their own parents (3.50) as the most useful sources of information for them on parenting and preparing their child for other school. However, **the Gearing Up for Kindergarten class and materials were rated higher than all other sources with a mean score of 4.02, indicating that participants felt the class was more useful to them regarding parenting and school readiness than any other information source assessed. Participants rated the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program substantially higher than any other information source assessed.**
- **Impacts on parental practices** - Participants were asked to answer questions about their specific activities as parents in a number of areas, both before and after participating in the program. Participants noted **small to moderate changes in 3 of the 10 parental practices related to school readiness that were measured, with all of the changes showing positive increases in a particular parental practice** (e.g., more actively discussing a story with children or engaging in more active play with a child). These changes **suggested incremental improvement in key aspects of parental involvement and guidance, and the increases that occurred in parents' efforts with their children in specific areas were typically two to three times higher than would be expected to occur** due to random chance. This is a good indicator that the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program is having a positive impact.
- **Increases in children's school readiness as described by parents** - Among 19 indicators of school readiness assessed by parents regarding their children, **significant differences were measured on 15 of the 19 indicators between fall 2011 and spring 2012. This means that 79 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten.** In analyzing all increases, **the findings suggest growth in five primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (knowing the alphabet and numbers, etc.); (4) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities; and (5) ability to manage emotions and adapt in a new environment.**
- **School knowledge of parents and children** - For both parents and children, **indicators of school knowledge showed significant increases in preparation and knowledge for the school experience. For pre-kindergarten children, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased by 20%, those who met a kindergarten teacher at their prospective school increased 27%, and those who met peers they will be with in kindergarten increased 13%. For parents, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased 18%, and those who had met a kindergarten teacher at their child's prospective school increased 17%.**

- **Children’s comfort and familiarity with school** - For children in the program, among 4 indicators of comfort level and familiarity with school, **significant differences were measured on all 4 indicators between fall 2011 and spring 2012. Findings showed that children became more familiar with kindergarten routines and expectations, more comfortable with the school environment, and more excited about beginning school.**
  
- **Increases in children’s school readiness as described by teachers** - Among 27 indicators of school readiness rated by teachers on a scale of 1 to 3, **significant differences were measured on all of the 27 indicators between fall 2011 and spring 2012. This means that 100 percent of the indicators for school readiness that were rated by teachers showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten.** In analyzing all significant increases in the findings, **the findings suggest growth in five primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills and knowledge regarding language and literacy; (4) development of specific pre-academic skills and knowledge regarding math and science; and (5) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities.**
  
- **Child social and emotional development** - On two measures of child social and emotional development completed by parents, **significant differences were measured on 6 of 12 indicators. This finding indicates that parents identify significant progress in areas of social and emotional development in their pre-kindergarten children participating in the program.**
  
- **Parent ratings of child change** – Parents indicated substantive levels of change for pre-kindergarten children on a variety of key items related to school readiness, with **those areas described as “somewhat” to “much improved”:** (1) **ability to identify numbers and count (66%); (2) ability to identify letters and sounds from the alphabet (61%); (3) ability to get along with adults (62%); (4) child self-reliance (59%); and (5) child self-esteem (59%).**
  
- **Qualitative feedback on outcomes for parents in the program** – Parents who participated in the program shared a variety of comments that highlighted positive impacts in three areas:
  - ***More Time and Active Involvement with Children***
    - I really enjoyed doing the projects with my girls. It is fun to see them have a fun time learning.
    - This program is very helpful to parents who are very busy. This gives them time to explore their own relationships with their children. Being an educator that works with families all the time, it proved to be a good reminder and gave me a chance to have time with my own child.
    - It has helped us to do more together as a family, play games, etc.
    - Try to do lots of reading each night so we are better prepared to start kindergarten.
  - ***Improved Parenting Efforts in Specific Areas***
    - This class made me more aware of my child’s learning style and I try to have more patience.
    - I have tried to change discipline techniques and have been successful.
    - Our story times are more detailed, we focus more on sounds and content.

- ***Increased Awareness of Child's Specific Needs***
  - I learned many things about a child's health, behavior, and learning methods that I did not know before the class.
  - I really had no clue what kindergarten was going to entail. I have a better sense of expectations of both my child and myself. I am also now monitoring more TV and what my children watch.
  - We got ideas for teaching early reading. Also, rewards for good behavior were such a hit with our child. We encourage him to complete self-care skills with verbal guidance instead of just doing it for him.
- **Qualitative feedback on outcomes children in the program** – Parents who participated in the program shared a variety of comments that highlighted positive benefits for children in three areas:
  - ***Increased Social Confidence and Positive Peer Interactions***
    - Helped my child in all aspects of character, attention, manners, etc.
    - Interaction with kids her own age has improved her social skills. She is very excited about kindergarten.
    - Since joining this class my daughter has really opened up socially with both kids and adults.
    - He enjoys it and I think he will be much better prepared for kindergarten. He has developed new social skills and confidence in addition to other learning.
  - ***Increased Pre-Academic Skills in Reading, Math and Other Subjects***
    - He now enjoys taking time out of a day to read a book or play a learning game.
    - He is more interested in books and games. He loves to practice his letters.
    - My child is starting to have more attention, as well as ability to sit and do work. Also, listening to instructions.
    - He enjoys being in the classroom and has benefitted from doing the different learning activities.
  - ***Greater Awareness and Comfort with School Routines and Expectations***
    - She loves to be in the classroom! I love that she is having that experience and that she is learning the expectations for kindergarten.
    - My child has been given a glimpse of what the day will be like next year, and I'm glad I'm not just throwing her into school without some kind of idea. I think my child has benefitted from the interaction with other kids her age and it's given her a positive outlook about school. She was scared of the idea of being away from me during the day but now that she has spent time with a teacher she keeps asking when she's going to school. This program is great and I hope you are able to do it in the future. Thank you!

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.

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 6<sup>th</sup> year in 2011-12. *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* is a family education opportunity for parents and their children who will be entering kindergarten in the following year.

### **Curriculum Development and Description**

The *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program provides families with an intensive educational experience that combines early learning activities for pre-kindergarten children with parent education opportunities for adults. The curriculum has been piloted and refined over a six-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 Guidance; (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 Guidance**

- 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 agencies, Social Services, WIC, public libraries, and child care settings. News releases were published in local newspapers and Parent Resource Center newsletters. Local schools and school 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 2011-2012 the program operated at 41 sites with 549 families enrolled. These sites were located in 32 separate North Dakota communities.

### **Small Communities** (pop. 2000 or less)

- Abercrombie, ND (southeast)
  - Richland Elementary School
- Beach, ND (southwest)
  - Lincoln Elementary School
- Buffalo, ND (east)
  - Maple Valley Elementary School
- Carson, ND (southwest)
  - Roosevelt Elementary School
- Cooperstown, ND (northeast)
  - Griggs County Central Public School
- Davenport & Kindred, ND (southeast)
  - Davenport Elementary School
- Elgin, ND (southwest)
  - Elgin-New Leipzig Public School
- Ellendale, ND (southeast)
  - Ellendale Public School
- Garrison, ND (central)
  - Bob Callies Elementary School
- Hebron, ND (southwest)
  - Hebron Public School
- Lakota, ND (northeast)
  - Lakota Public School
- Langdon, ND (northeast)
  - Langdon Public School
- Leeds, ND (northeast)
  - Leeds Public School
- Maddock, ND (northeast)
  - Maddock Public School
- Mandaree, ND (northwest)
  - Mandaree Public School
- Park River, ND (northeast)
  - Park River Public School
- Ray, ND (northwest)
  - Ray Elementary School

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

- Beulah, ND (southwest)
  - Beulah Public School
- Carrington, ND (east central)
  - Carrington Elementary School
- Grafton, ND (northeast)
  - Grafton Public School
- Lisbon, ND (southeast)
  - Lisbon Public School
- Oakes, ND (south central)
  - Oakes Elementary School

- Rugby, ND (north central)
  - Rugby Ely Elementary School
- Wahpeton, ND (southeast)
  - Zimmerman Elementary School

**Large Communities** (pop. 10,000 or greater)

- Dickinson, ND (southwest)
  - Heart River Elementary School
- Fargo, ND (east)
  - Jefferson Elementary School
  - Madison Elementary School
  - McKinley Elementary School
- Grand Forks, ND (northeast)
  - Air Force Base
  - Phoenix Elementary School
  - University Children’s Center
- Jamestown, ND (southeast)
  - Gussner Elementary School
  - Washington Elementary School
- Mandan, ND (central)
  - Fort Lincoln Elementary School
  - Mary Stark Elementary School
- Minot, ND (north central)
  - Air Force Base
  - Burlington Elementary School
  - Sunnyside Elementary School
  - Surrey Elementary School
- West Fargo, ND (east)
  - West Fargo Kindergarten Center – Loedoen
  - West Fargo Kindergarten Center – Osgood
- Williston, ND (west)
  - Hagen Elementary School
  - Lewis & Clark Elementary School
  - Williston Head Start

**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 2011 and one in the spring of 2012 (a few sites did shorter split sessions), two 5-week family education sessions (fall and spring), or a 10-week session in spring 2012. 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 sharing, 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 the following week. On-site child care and refreshments were offered depending on the site.

## **Program Participation**

During the 2011-2012 year of operation in the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program in North Dakota, pre-kindergarten children and their families participated at 41 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 2011-2012 year, as well as the type of program model each site implemented. It should be noted that the information included in this report only details limited information on sites that may have operated on their own initiative without involvement in the NDSU evaluation project. Programs that participated in the evaluation process with NDSU are highlighted by an asterisk (\*).

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### **Program Type**

<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Number of Sites</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
Split Session – 16 weeks (8 weeks/fall, 8 weeks/spring)	9	32.4%
Continuous Session – 16 weeks	1	3%
Split Session – 10 weeks (5 weeks/fall, 5 weeks/spring)	7	22.7%
Short Session – 10 weeks (spring)	26	41.9%

**Program Type – Short Session of 5 to 10 Weeks (Spring 2012)**

<b>Program Site</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Total # of Families</b>	<b>Sessions Attended</b>	<b>Attendance Percentage</b>
Beach, ND* - Lincoln Elementary	State GUK; School District funding	7	63/70	90%
Beulah, ND – Beulah Public School	State GUK	7	50/70	71.4%
Burlington, ND* - Burlington Des Lacs United	State GUK; Community funding	10	61/100	61%
Buffalo, ND - Maple Valley Elementary	State GUK	8	59/80	73.7%
Carson, ND – Roosevelt Elementary	State GUK	11	<i>Not Available</i>	NA
Cooperstown, ND* - Griggs County Central	State GUK; School District funding	9	66/90	73.3%
Elgin, ND* - Elgin School District	State GUK; Title I funding; School funding	13	96/130	73.8%
Grafton, ND – Century Elementary School	State GUK	8	68/80	85%
Hebron, ND* - Hebron Public School	State GUK	9	76/90	84.4%
Jamestown, ND – Gussner Elementary School	State GUK	5	35/50	70%
Lakota, ND – Lakota Elementary School	State GUK; ND-PIRC; School District funding; School funding; Community support	15	127/150	84.7%
Langdon, ND* - Langdon Area Elementary School	State GUK	12	90/120	75%
Leeds, ND* - Leeds Public School	State GUK	6	41/60	68.3%

<b>Program Site</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Total # of Families</b>	<b>Sessions Attended</b>	<b>Attendance Percentage</b>
Maddock, ND* - Maddock Public School	State GUK; School District funding; Title I funding	11	85/110	77.3%
Mandan, ND - Fort Lincoln Elementary	State GUK; School District funding; Title I funding	15	125/150	83.3%
Mandan, ND - Mary Stark Elementary	State GUK; School District funding; Title I funding	24	177/240	73.7%
Minot, ND* - Air Force Base – Dakota Elementary School	State GUK	9	74/90	82.2%
Minot, ND* - Sunnyside Elementary	State GUK; Title I funding; Community funding	12	107/120	89.2%
Minot, ND* - Surrey Elementary (every other week)	State GUK; School funding	16	152/160	95%
Park River, ND* - Park River School	State GUK; School funding	18	161/180	89.4%
Ray, ND – Ray Public School	State GUK	6	47/60	78.3%
West Fargo, ND* - Kindergarten Center (Osgood)	State GUK; United Way of Cass-Clay	27	198/260	76.2%
Williston, ND – Hagan Elementary	State GUK	15	107/150	71.3%
Williston, ND – Lewis & Clark Elementary	State GUK	12	90/120	75%
Williston, ND – Rickard Elementary	State GUK	13	92/150	71.5%
Williston, ND – Wilkinson Elementary	State GUK	15	128/150	85.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>26 sites</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>2375/3030</b>	<b>78.4%</b>

**Program Type – Split Session of 10 Weeks (5 weeks Fall 2011/5 weeks Spring 2012)**

Program Site	Site Funder	Total # of Families (unduplicated)			Attendance Percentage	
		Fall	Spring	Total	Fall	Spring
Carrington, ND* - Carrington Elementary (5wk)	State GUK; Local Donations	9	10	12	91.1%	78%
Ellendale, ND* - Ellendale Public School	State GUK; Local donations	9	11	11	91.1%	92.7%
Garrison, ND* – Bob Callies Elementary	State GUK; Family Engagement grant; Community funding	11	10	14	72.7%	94%
Lisbon, ND* - Lisbon Public School	State GUK	16	13	16	88.7%	96.9%
Oakes, ND* – Oakes Public School	State GUK; Small Rural Schools Achievement Program	13	13	13	93.8%	96.9%
Rugby, ND* - Ely Elementary School	State GUK; School District funding	10	10	10	NA	NA
Wahpeton, ND* - Zimmerman Elementary School	State GUK; School funding	9	9	9	86.7%	88.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 Sites</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>87.5%</b>	<b>91.8%</b>



**Program Type – Split Session of 16 Weeks (8 weeks Fall 2011/8 weeks Spring 2012)**

Program Site	Site Funder	Total # of Families (unduplicated)			Attendance Percentage	
		Fall	Spring	Total	Fall	Spring
Abercrombie, ND* – Richland Elementary	State GUK; Local funding	9	8 55/64	11	98.4%	86%
Davenport & Kindred, ND - Davenport Elementary (2)	State GUK; United Way of Cass-Clay; School District funding	25	25 171/200	21	84.5%	85.5%
Dickinson, ND* - Heart River Elementary (2)	State GUK; Dickinson Public Schools	22	20 114/160	21	89.6%	71.2%
Fargo, ND* - Jefferson Elementary	State GUK; United Way of Cass-Clay	10	10 80/80	10	100%	100%
Fargo, ND* - Madison Elementary	State GUK; United Way of Cass-Clay	13	13 86/104	13	82.7%	82.7% %
Fargo, ND* - McKinley Elementary	State GUK; United Way of Cass-Clay	7	7 46/56	7	80.4%	82.1%
Grand Forks, ND* - Eielson Air Force Base *Continuous for 16 weeks	State GUK	12	10 59/80	12	83.3%	73.7%
Grand Forks, ND* - Lake Agassiz Head Start (3)	State GUK; Grand Forks Public Schools	52	44 334/352	52	90.1%	94.9%
West Fargo, ND* - Kindergarten Center (Loedoen)	State GUK; United Way of Cass-Clay	17	17 99/119	19	92.6%	84.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9 Sites</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>85.9%</b>

## **Final Program Participation Summary – Gearing Up for Kindergarten in ND (2011-2012)**

### **Communities and Program Models**

- Total Number of ND Communities – 32
  - Small Communities (pop. 2000 or less) – 17
  - Mid-Sized Communities (pop. 2000 to 10,000) – 7
  - Large Communities (pop. 10,000 or greater) – 8
- Total Number of GUK Sites in ND – 42
- Total Number of Short Session Programs (5-10 week sessions in spring) – 26
- Total Number of Split – Short Session Programs (5 weeks fall/5 weeks spring) – 7
- Total Number of Split – Long Session Programs (8 weeks fall/8 weeks spring) – 13

### **Program Funding (based on available data)**

- Sites with Gearing Up for Kindergarten State Funding (state) – 42 (All)
- Sites with Title I funding (state/federal) – 5 sites
- Sites with Local School Funding (district/school) – 14 sites
- Sites with United Way funding (local) – 6 sites
- Sites with Other – Community funding – 7 sites
- Sites with Other – Grant funding – 3 sites

### **Families Served**

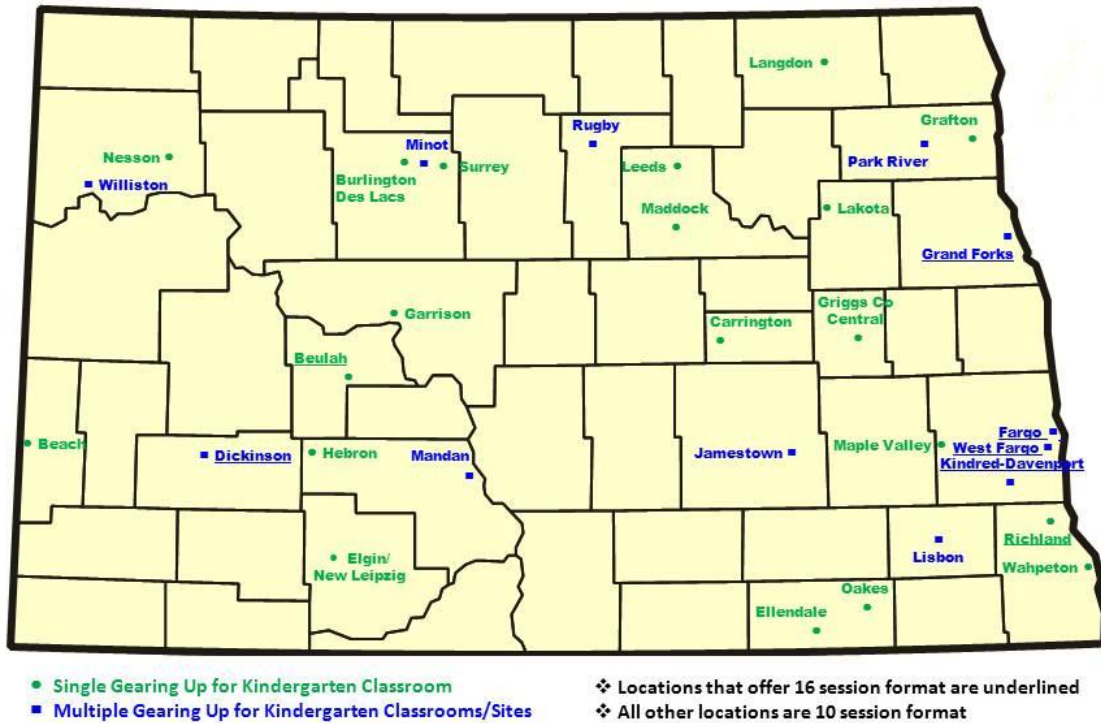
- Number of Families in Full (Split) Sessions (16 Weeks)
  - Number of Families in Fall Sessions – 167
  - Number of Families in Spring Sessions – 154
  - Number of Families Total – 166
- Number of Families in Full (Split) Sessions (10 Weeks)
  - Number of Families in Fall Sessions – 77
  - Number of Families in Spring Sessions – 76
  - Number of Families Total – 85
- Number of Families in Spring (Short or 5-10 week) Sessions – 313
  
- Total Families Served – 564

### **Evaluation Project**

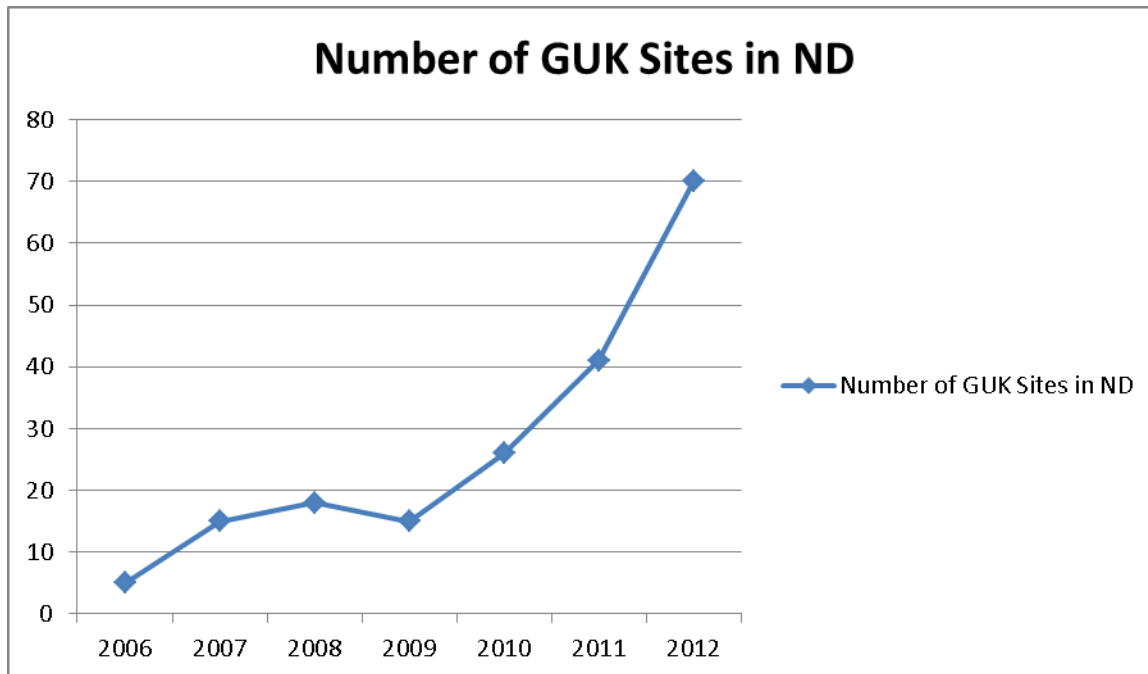
- Number of Sites Participating in Project Evaluation – 29 sites

# Map of 2011-12 North Dakota Sites for Gearing Up for Kindergarten

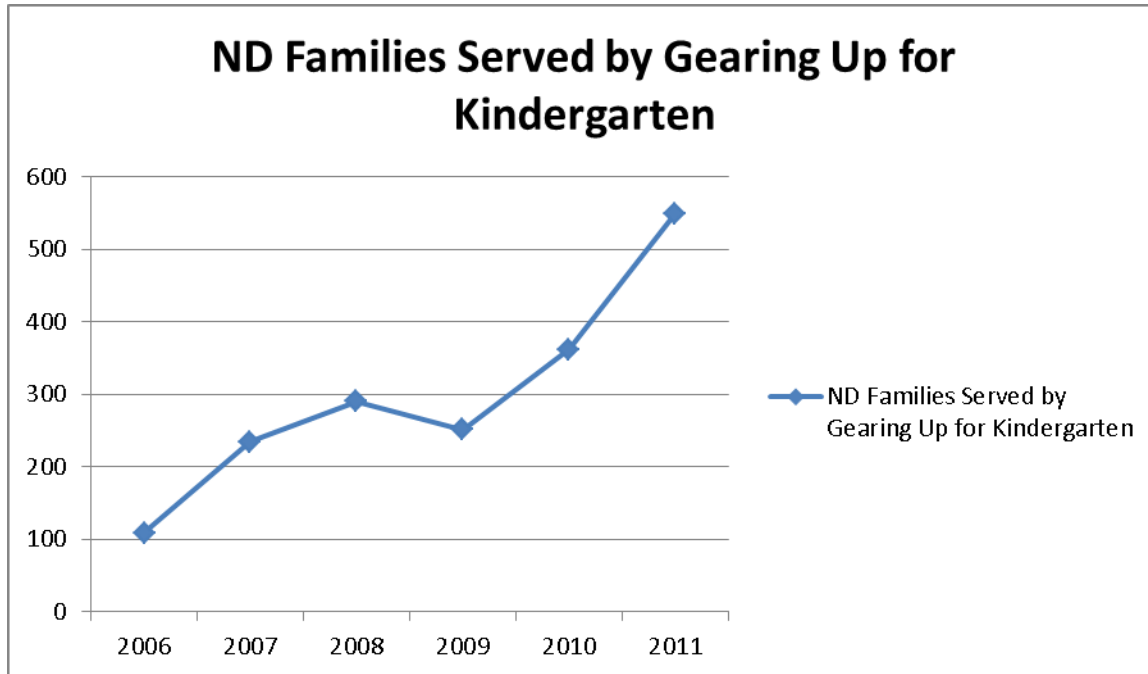
## Gearing Up for Kindergarten Sites 2011-2012



# 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. Finally, 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. A total number of 8,236 children were enrolled in public school kindergarten programs in North Dakota in the 2011-12 school year, while the average yearly kindergarten enrollment over the last decade has been nearly 7,000 children a year. These numbers indicate that Gearing Up for Kindergarten likely reached 6.7% to 7.8% of entering kindergarten children in the current school year (2012-13), 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 2011-2012 (6<sup>th</sup> year of the program) provides results gathered from the entire year of the program's operation in fall 2011 and spring 2012. 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.

Not all program sites were involved in the evaluation process and so data reported here is limited, except for descriptive information, to those sites that conducted evaluations in collaboration with NDSU. Evaluation instruments were developed by the NDSU Extension Service with consultation from faculty in the Department of Child Development and Family Science at NDSU.

### **Overall Program Evaluation – Pre and Post Program Forms**

The first aspect of the evaluation process for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project was accomplished by gathering participant information through using a traditional pre and post-program survey. Participants completed a brief parent survey that focused on program perceptions and impacts. This brief survey tool provides information on basic demographics of program participants, parent perceptions of the general value and impacts of the program, their perceptions on the value of specific topics in the program, and perceived impacts of the program on parent participants. This survey was offered to parents at the beginning and end of the program. Modified surveys were used for the 10-session program. The findings are presented for all program models.

### **Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness (PPASR)**

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

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

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

Teachers were asked to complete the assessment tool twice for each child, once at the start of the program after they had come to know the child and once at the end of the program. Filling out the assessment twice allows for comparison of a child's scores over a range of time and also from the teacher's perspective. Thus, the tool allows teachers to provide feedback on a child that enables them to:

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

### **Family Information Form (FIF)**

A fourth dimension of the evaluation process focused on collecting information from parents on various aspects of social and emotional development. This instrument consists of well-developed and research-based measures and was instituted to more closely examine parent involvement and other issues among participants in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. This evaluation form was only used with the 16-week session sites. Parents were asked to complete this assessment form twice, once at the start of the program and again at the end of the program. Filling out the assessment twice allows for a comparison of the parent's perceptions over time both prior to and following participation in the program.

### **Ratings of Change Form (RC)**

A final aspect of the evaluation process, newly added in 2009-2010, involved the parents completing a single post-program participation form called the "Ratings of Change" form. This form allowed parents to consider their own and their pre-kindergarten child's behavior and rate the degree of change on each item. Children were rated on 10 items using a 7-point response scale from "much worse" to "no change" to "much improved." Parents also rated themselves on 11 items. This tool allows us to gain a sense of how parents perceive change in themselves and their child as a result of participating in the program. Parents also responded to open-ended feedback questions on this 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 280 participants from 28 of the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program sites completed the pre-program and post-program evaluation survey in the program year for 2011-12. 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 114 from short 10-session sites (71.7% response rate), 56 from split 10-session sites (65.9% response rate), and 110 from split 16-session sites (75.9% response rate). The combined response rate for the three program types among sites that participated in the program evaluation was 72%.

Demographic characteristics of participants are reported here. Selected demographic characteristics of individuals participating in the program in 2011-12 who completed the survey are listed below.

- **Gender** – 86.7% women, 13.3% men
- **Age** – Average of 33.2 years; parents ranged in age from 22 to 59 years of age
- **Number of children** – Average of 2.47 children per parent
- **Location** – 76.6% live in an urban setting; 23.4% in a rural or farm/ranch setting (12%)
- **Family status** – Married (84.9%); Single (never married) (5.8%); remarried (1.5%); separated/divorced (4.9%); cohabiting (2.6%); widowed (0.3%)
- **Employment status** – Full-time employment (59.8%); employed 26-39 hours a week (10.5%); employed less than 25 hours a week (8.5%); seeking employment (1.5%); not seeking outside employment (18.4%); other (1.5%)
- **Education level** – High school/GED or less (16.3%); some college (23.9%); 2-year college degree (12.8%); 4-year college degree (34.1%); master's degree or higher (12.8%)
- **Racial or ethnic background** – Caucasian (90.7%); Native American (1.7%); African American (0.9%); Asian (2.3%); Hispanic (2.3%); other (2%)
- **First child to enter kindergarten** – 47.4% yes; 52.6% no
- **Child care** – No child care (5.1%); 6 hrs/wk or less (9.6%); 6-12 hrs/wk (18.6%); 12-20 hrs/wk (9.6%); 20 hrs/wk or more (56.9%)
- **Eligibility for food stamps** – 10.2% yes; 89.8% no
- **Gender of participating child** – 49.4% male, 50.6% female
- **Program participation** – 77.5% of participants indicated involvement in 75% or more of the program sessions of the program during the year, while another 13.6% of participants indicated involvement in 51% to 75% of the program 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 participants 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 (2011-12)**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Not Useful</b>	<b>Slightly Useful</b>	<b>Some what Useful</b>	<b>Very Useful</b>	<b>Extremely Useful</b>
Overall value of the program to me:	<b>All Combined</b>	--	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>14.6%</b>	<b>46.1%</b>	<b>37.1%</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	--	4.5%	20%	40.9%	34.5%
	<b>10-week split</b>	--	1.8%	5.4%	58.9%	33.9%
	<b>10-week short</b>	--	--	15.2%	42.4%	42.4%
Handouts and activities provided to me in this program were:	<b>All Combined</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>15.7%</b>	<b>47.9%</b>	<b>33.9%</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	0.9%	2.7%	20.9%	46.4%	29.1%
	<b>10-week split</b>	--	3.6%	5.4%	58.9%	32.1%
	<b>10-week short</b>	--	1%	13.1%	43.4%	42.4%
		<b>NA</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Information presented in a clear and helpful manner:	<b>All Combined</b>	--	<b>0.4%</b>	--	<b>32.9%</b>	<b>66.8%</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	--	0.9%	--	40.9%	58.2%
	<b>10-week split</b>	--	--	--	28.6%	71.4%
	<b>10-week short</b>	--	--	--	26.3%	73.7%
I was treated in a respectful manner:	<b>All Combined</b>	--	<b>0.4%</b>	--	<b>12.9%</b>	<b>86.8%</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	--	0.9%	--	15.5%	83.6%
	<b>10-week split</b>	--	--	--	8.9%	91.1%
	<b>10-week short</b>	--	--	--	13.1%	86.9%

**Participants expressed positive feelings about the program thus far, with 83% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them. Among participants in the 2011-12 program, 82% said the handouts and learning activities were very useful to them. Finally, all of them agreed that the information was presented well and they were treated respectfully, with those who strongly agreed they were treated well at 87% among all participants. There were slight variations in the numbers reported by program type but not enough to suggest substantial differences.**



## Impacts of Program Participation

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

The average mean scores regarding how the program impacted participants in each of these areas were given on a scale between 1 and 5, with higher scores indicating a more positive impact of the program (scale of 1 = not at all to 5 = very much). For parents who completed the overall program evaluation in 2011-12, they responded as follows: (1) increased knowledge of child development (3.78); (2) increased knowledge of healthy parenting (3.75); (3) increased confidence in being a good parent (3.72); (4) increased parenting skills (3.59); (5) changed behavior as a parent (3.43); and (6) influenced the relationship with your child (3.60).

**Table 2: General Impacts of Gearing Up for Kindergarten Program (2011-12)**

<b>Question</b> <b>Overall how much, if at all, did</b> <b>this program:</b>	<b>Not at</b> <b>All</b>	<b>A Little</b> <b>Bit</b>	<b>Some</b> <b>What</b>	<b>A Lot</b>	<b>Very</b> <b>Much</b>
Increase your knowledge about child development	0.4%	5.7%	31.1%	41.4%	21.4%
Increase your knowledge of healthy parenting	0.4%	7.9%	31.8%	36.4%	23.6%
Increase your confidence in being a good parent	1.4%	5.7%	33.2%	38.6%	21.1%
Increase your skills as a parent	0.7%	10.7%	33.9%	38.6%	16.1%
Change your behavior as a parent	2.1%	15.7%	35%	31.8%	15.4%
Influence your relationship with your child	2.5%	10.4%	30.4%	38.2%	18.6%

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 60 percent for sessions of the program across all sites.**

**Among participants, 63% indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, 60% noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much, 60% felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and 55% 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 2011-12 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 Specific Topics to Parents

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

In the 2011-12 program year, the **most highly rated sessions were on learning styles and school readiness (3.96), social and emotional development (3.82), parenting styles (3.81), brain development (3.80), and choosing effective discipline (3.79)**; however, all sessions were rated as at least somewhat to very useful for participants in the program. The ratings for each specific topic covered are listed below in Table 3.

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

<b>Question Please rate the following class topics in the GUK program</b>	<b>Overall Mean Score from 1 (not useful) to 5 (extremely useful)</b>
Gearing Up for Kindergarten Orientation	<b>3.74</b>
Parenting Styles	<b>3.81</b>
Brain Development	<b>3.80</b>
Raising a Reader	<b>3.70</b>
Choosing Effective Discipline Techniques	<b>3.79</b>
Media Wise	<b>3.56</b>
Developing Responsibility and Self Help Skills	<b>3.64</b>
Importance of Sleep	<b>3.67</b>
Learning Styles and School Readiness	<b>3.96</b>
Child Temperament	<b>3.61</b>
Early Literacy and Math Skills	<b>3.51</b>
Social and Emotional Development	<b>3.82</b>
Nurturance, Guidance and Prevention Tools	<b>3.31</b>
Nutrition and Children	<b>3.66</b>
Child Safety	<b>3.36</b>
Parent's Role in School Success	<b>3.58</b>

It seems clear that participants valued the specific topics they learned about and gained value from the learning experience.

### 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 4.

**Table 4: Value of Specific Information Sources on Parenting and School Readiness (2011-12)**

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)
<b>Information Source</b>	<b>Score</b>
a. Your parents	<b>3.50</b>
b. Your child's other parent	<b>3.38</b>
c. Friends	<b>3.35</b>
d. Parents with children of a similar age	<b>3.64</b>
e. School	<b>3.60</b>
f. Preschool, Head Start or child care	<b>3.71</b>
g. Books, magazines or newspapers	<b>3.15</b>
h. Internet	<b>2.97</b>
i. <i>Gearing Up for Kindergarten</i> class and materials	<b>4.02**</b>
j. Other	--

\*\* Highest ranking

The results from the 2011-12 session of the program indicate that participants rated parents with children of a similar age (3.64), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.71), the school (3.60), and their parents (3.50) as the most useful sources of information for them on parenting and preparing their child for other school. However, the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* class and materials were rated higher than all other sources with a mean score of 4.02, indicating that participants felt the class was more useful to them regarding parenting and school readiness than any other information source assessed. The results from the program indicate that participants rate the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program substantially higher than any other information source assessed.

### **Perceived Impacts of Gearing Up for Kindergarten on Participants**

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

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

however, that any differences measured are likely (though not certain) to occur due to participation in Gearing Up for Kindergarten.

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

Findings are presented in Table 5 for the participants who completed a full 16-week session of the program. Findings related to the 10-week model of the program are available from the authors.

**Table 5: Perceived Impacts on Parental Practices of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2011-12 Program)**

<b>Question As a Parent, I:</b>	<b>Before Participation (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Now, After Participation (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
1. Give my child a variety of activities and learning experiences.	4.21	4.31	.10	No
2. Do arts and crafts, puzzles or other hands-on activities with my child.	4.05	4.21	.16	No
3. Get down and actively play with my child.	4.11	4.26	.15	<b>Yes</b>
4. Provide my child with hands-on materials, such as crayons and paper, scissors, play dough, etc.	4.49	4.69	.20	<b>Yes</b>
5. Arrange for my child to play with other children his or her age.	4.01	4.20	.19	<b>Yes</b>
6. Talk with my child about how to get along with others even when they have a disagreement.	4.23	4.31	.08	No
7. Read with my child each day.	4.52	4.58	.08	No
8. Discuss contents of a book or story with my child when we read.	4.35	4.40	.05	No
9. Respond quickly to my child’s cues for attention (crying, questions).	4.46	4.44	-.02	No
10. Discuss with my child how to handle feeling sad or upset.	4.32	4.44	.12	No

The findings show, based on the statistical analysis, that **participants experienced significant differences in 3 of the 10 parental practices related to school readiness** as a likely result of their participation in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. There are several important points to make as a result of these findings:

- Participants noted **small to moderate changes in 3 of the 10 parental practices related to school readiness that were measured, with the changes showing positive increases in a particular parental practice** (e.g., engaging in more active play with a child).
- The findings showed significant differences in parental practices for participants before and after their participation in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. These changes were **small to moderate increases between .15 and .20 in specific parental practices, suggesting incremental improvement in key aspects of parental involvement and guidance.**
- Participants typically rated themselves quite highly already on most indicators of parenting linked to school readiness. The average beginning scores showed that most parents felt they performed most of these practices well, usually rating between “often” and “almost always” on the scale of performance. This means that most participants already perceive themselves as well-adjusted in their parenting efforts and there is minimal opportunity for change.
- The **three significant differences** for participants occurred in the following areas: **providing children with hands-on learning materials (.20), arranging for children to play with others (.19), and engaging with children actively in play (.15).**
- The increases **that occurred in parents’ efforts with their children in specific areas were typically two to three times higher than would be expected to occur** due to random chance, and so this is a good indicator that the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program is having a positive impact.
- The **findings suggest that Gearing Up for Kindergarten has made some progress in assisting parents and influencing them in a positive manner to behave in ways that will help their children toward school readiness and positive development.**

This set of findings from Gearing Up for Kindergarten was generated as a result of involvement in the 2011-12 session of the program at Gearing Up for Kindergarten sites in North Dakota. The findings suggest the program has positive impacts on parents who are involved and aids them in making incremental improvements in parenting practices that link to school readiness. Further research on how differing program models affect parenting practices will be valuable for understanding the program and its influence on families.



## **II. Parental Assessment of Children's School Readiness**

### **Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness**

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

In addition, a section of evaluation was added to the process which examined both parent and child feelings and experiences related to school knowledge and familiarity. Parents were asked to assess their child's familiarity with school, peers, and routines, as well as their feelings and comfort level in varying aspects of the school-related experience. Similarly, parents rated themselves also on familiarity with school, teachers, and routines, as well as comfort level and familiarity with school personnel and routines. These questions were asked either on a "yes/no" basis or a response scale of 1 to 4, with 1 = not at all to 4 = to a great extent.

### **Understanding What the Current PPASR Assessment Process Shows**

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

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

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

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

### **Participants in the PPASR Assessment**

Participation in the Practical Parent Assessment of School Readiness required that parents fill out the PPASR survey twice, once in fall 2011 and once in spring 2012 during the program. Only those parents who filled out a PPASR assessment for their child at both times were included in the analysis. A total sample of 178 children was rated by parents on the PPASR in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program (this sample represents a response rate of approximately 31.6% of participating children). Demographic characteristics were similar to those previously reported.

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

### **Findings on Parental Perceptions of Children's School Readiness**

The key areas of school readiness selected for assessment by parents were: (1) *Learning and Exploration* (cognitive); (2) *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 (fall 2011), completing group scores (spring 2012), and difference scores (difference in the average group scores, or means) for each item.

The difference scores indicate progress (or lack thereof) that has occurred for children (as perceived by parents) on average in the group between fall 2011 and spring 2012. 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 and the 10-week split session program. Tables 6-10 cover the 16-week program while Tables 11-15 cover the 10-week program.



**Table 6: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)**

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	4.15	4.38	.23	<b>Yes</b>
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	4.11	4.35	.24	<b>Yes</b>
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.69	3.86	.17	No
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.58	3.86	.28	<b>Yes</b>

**Table 7: Friends and Social Interaction – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)**

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	4.15	4.38	.23	<b>Yes</b>
6. Takes turns with others.	3.96	4.19	.23	<b>Yes</b>
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	4.04	4.35	.31	<b>Yes</b>
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.98	4.11	.14	No
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.51	3.77	.26	<b>Yes</b>

**Table 8: Knowing the Basics – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)**

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference?</b>
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	4.16	4.52	.36	<b>Yes</b>
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	4.23	4.67	.44	<b>Yes</b>
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	4.05	4.43	.38	<b>Yes</b>
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	4.02	4.32	.30	<b>Yes</b>

**Table 9: Feelings and Families – School Readiness Scores (16-week Split Session)**

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program</b> <b>Fall 2011</b> <b>(Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program</b> <b>Spring 2012</b> <b>(Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference</b> <b>Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	4.10	4.14	.04	No
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.85	4.06	.21	Yes
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	4.01	4.28	.27	Yes
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	4.12	4.30	.18	Yes

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program</b> <b>Fall 2011</b> <b>(Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program</b> <b>Spring 2012</b> <b>(Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference</b> <b>Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
18. Can recite his or her name, parents' names and contact information (address, phone number).	3.04	3.62	.58	Yes
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.93	4.06	.14	No

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for 16-week split session programs operated during the 2011-12 year on perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. A number of important points emerge as a result of these findings:

- Currently, parents of children in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely rate their children very highly on most indicators of school readiness.** This means that there is somewhat limited room for change to be indicated across specific items. For example, the average beginning score on every item (all 19 items) was in the direction of the Proficient (3 or higher) or Advanced (4 or higher) category. Only 8 of 19 items had a beginning average score below 4, and the remainder were all average beginning scores above 4.
- **Small to moderate gains were noted for many indicators of school readiness in children. These gains are likely due to a combination of participation in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program, normal processes of child development, and other contributing factors. Other indicators showed no or limited evidence of change. Sometimes this was due to the fact that the children were already perceived as highly developed on that indicator, while on others there was change but it was not enough to reach statistical**

**significance. However, the wide-ranging evidence of growth in children's specific domains of development related to school readiness is highly encouraging and evidence of program success.**

- **Among 19 indicators of school readiness, significant differences were measured on 15 of the 19 indicators between fall 2011 and spring 2012. This means that 79 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in all five of the school readiness categories.**
- **These findings showed significant differences in parental perceptions of children's school readiness from the beginning of the program to the end of the program on 15 indicators. These changes included 9 small to moderate increases between .10 and .30, 5 substantive increases between .30 and .50, and 1 significant increase of .50 or higher on specific items of school readiness.**
- **The 15 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 (.58)**
  - **Familiarity with numbers (.44)**
  - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.38)**
  - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.36)**
  - **Following directions that are given (.31)**
  - **Creative in asking questions or solving problems (.30)**
  - **Likes to work at solving problems (.28)**
  - **Adapt to new situations (.27)**
  - **Trying to solve problems with friends (.26)**
  - **Participating in small groups (.24)**
  - **Exploring the environment (.23)**
  - **Playing cooperatively with friends (.23)**
  - **Taking turns with others (.23)**
  - **Ability to manage feelings of anger and frustration (.21)**
  - **Shares feelings with parent or other adults (.18)**
- **In analyzing all increases over .20 or higher (whether significant or not), the findings suggest growth in five primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (using a pencil, knowing the alphabet and numbers, awareness of personal contact information, etc.); (4) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities; and (5) ability to manage emotions and adapt in a new environment.**
- **Assessing the five domains of development related to school readiness that are examined in the evaluation process, while all domains have specific items that demonstrate change after program participation, the areas that show the greatest impact as a result of the program are: (1) Child Learning and Exploration; (2) Positive Peer Interactions and Social Development; (3) Knowing the Basics and Pre-Academic Skills; (4) Emotional Development and Management; and (5) Practical Awareness and Self-Care Skills.**

**Table 11: Learning and Exploration – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)**

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
1. Explores the environment and participates in new opportunities.	3.80	3.83	.03	No
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	3.93	4.07	.14	No
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.68	3.70	.02	No
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.63	3.56	-.07	No

**Table 12: Friends and Social Interaction – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)**

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
5. Works or plays cooperatively with friends.	3.95	4.37	.42	<b>Yes</b>
6. Takes turns with others.	3.88	4.15	.27	<b>Yes</b>
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	4.20	4.49	.29	<b>Yes</b>
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.83	3.95	.12	No
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.46	3.54	.08	No

**Table 13: Knowing the Basics – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)**

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference?</b>
10. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) letters of the alphabet.	3.71	4.34	.63	<b>Yes</b>
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	3.90	4.66	.76	<b>Yes</b>
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	3.80	4.41	.61	<b>Yes</b>
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.95	4.05	.10	No

**Table 14: Feelings and Families – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)**

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
14. Can talk about how others might feel.	3.88	3.93	.05	No
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.98	3.93	-.05	No
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.88	3.95	.07	No
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.95	4.00	.05	No

**Table 15: Practical Knowledge and Skills – School Readiness Scores (10-week Split Session)**

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
18. Can recite his or her name, parents' names and contact information (address, phone number).	3.22	3.71	.49	<b>Yes</b>
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.63	4.07	.44	<b>Yes</b>

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for 10-week split session programs operated during the 2011-12 year on perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. As this is the first year such program models operated, findings should be considered as tentative. 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 very highly on most indicators of school readiness**. However, parents of children enrolled in the 10-session split program routinely rated their children as beginning at a lower point on the rating scale for each item. This means that there was greater 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. In this program model, 18 of 19 items had a beginning average score below 4, while only 9 items were rated below 4 for those in the 16-week program.
- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on 8 of the 19 indicators between fall 2011 and spring 2012**. This means that 42 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in

**Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in three of the five of the school readiness categories – social development, academic skills, and practical knowledge.**

- 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 8 indicators. These changes included **2 small to moderate increases between .10 and .30, 3 substantive increases between .30 and .50, and 3 significant increases of .50 or higher on specific items of school readiness.**
- The **8 significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred by order of magnitude in the following areas:
  - **Familiarity with numbers (.76)**
  - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.63)**
  - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.61)**
  - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.49)**
  - **Awareness of who to contact for help (.44)**
  - **Playing cooperatively with friends (.42)**
  - **Following directions that are given (.29)**
  - **Taking turns with others (.27)**
- In analyzing all increases over .20 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 larger in the 10-week program, reflecting the lower starting point of children in that program. Second, there were no changes in the two categories of Learning and Exploration or Feelings and Families (emotional development) for children in the 10-week program, while the changes were modest but consistent in these areas for the 16-week program. This suggests a longer period of participation is helpful in assisting change in these areas that are more difficult to impact immediately. Finally, other areas that showed change in the 16-week program such as persistence in solving problems or trying to solve problems with friends (but not in the 10-week program) indicate that some areas of development require more supportive effort over time to initiate desired change in a positive direction.

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

### Findings on School Knowledge and Familiarity

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

Parents were asked to assess their child’s familiarity with school, peers, and routines, as well as their feelings and comfort level in varying aspects of the school-related experience. Similarly, parents rated themselves also on familiarity with school, teachers, and routines, as well as comfort level and familiarity with school personnel and routines. Three of these questions were asked on a “yes/no” basis and 4 questions were answered on a response scale of 1 to 4, with 1 = not at all to 4 = to a great extent. There were 7 items asked of the parent and 7 items asked regarding the parent’s perception of the child. Findings are summarized for all program models combined. The findings related to this aspect of the program evaluation are provided in Tables 16-19.

**Table 16: Children in Gearing up for Kindergarten – School Knowledge (2011-12)**

My child:	Beginning of Program		End of Program	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
1. Has visited the school or kindergarten classroom.	32.6%	67.4%	12.9%	87.1% (+19.7)
2. Has met a kindergarten teacher at the school he/she will attend.	47.2%	52.8%	20.2%	79.8% (+27)
3. Has met peers who will be in kindergarten at the same school.	32%	68%	19.1%	80.9% (+12.9)

**Table 17: Parents in Gearing up for Kindergarten – School Knowledge (2011-12)**

As a parent, I:	Beginning of Program		End of Program	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
1. Have visited the school or kindergarten classroom.	28.7%	71.3%	10.7%	89.3% (+18)
2. Have met a kindergarten teacher at the school my child will attend.	34.8%	65.2%	18%	82% (+16.8)
3. Have met other parents who have children or will have children in kindergarten.	19.7%	80.3%	13.5%	86.6% (+6.3)

**Table 18: Children in Gearing Up for Kindergarten – School Comfort and Familiarity**

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program</b> <b>Fall 2011</b> <b>(Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program</b> <b>Spring 2012</b> <b>(Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference</b> <b>Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
4. Is excited about beginning kindergarten.	3.51	3.68	.17	<b>Yes</b>
5. Is familiar with the routines and expectations that exist in kindergarten (raising hands, etc.).	2.89	3.27	.38	<b>Yes</b>
6. Is comfortable with the environment of the school setting.	3.14	3.51	.37	<b>Yes</b>
7. Talks positively about going to kindergarten.	3.47	3.68	.21	<b>Yes</b>

**Table 19: Parents in Gearing Up for Kindergarten – School Comfort and Familiarity**

<b>Question</b> <b>As a parent, I:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program</b> <b>Fall 2011</b> <b>(Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program</b> <b>Spring 2012</b> <b>(Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference</b> <b>Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
4. Am excited about my child beginning kindergarten.	3.62	3.63	.01	No
5. Am familiar with the routines and expectations for children that exist in kindergarten.	3.56	3.68	.12	<b>Yes</b>
6. Have a good idea of how my child acts with peers in a group setting.	3.47	3.60	.13	<b>Yes</b>
7. Understand the general ability level of the average kindergartner.	3.44	3.67	.23	<b>Yes</b>

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

- For both parents and children, **indicators of school knowledge showed significant increases in preparation and knowledge for the school experience. For pre-kindergarten children, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased by 20%, those who met a kindergarten teacher at their prospective school increased 27%, and those who met peers they will be with in kindergarten increased 13%. For parents, the percentage who had visited a school or kindergarten classroom increased 18%, those who had met a kindergarten teacher at their child’s prospective school increased 17%, and those meeting other parents who will have children in kindergarten increased 6%.**
- For children in the program, among 4 indicators of comfort level and familiarity with school, **significant differences were measured on all 4 indicators between fall 2011 and spring 2012. Findings showed that children became more familiar with kindergarten routines**



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

- **For parents involved in Gearing Up for Kindergarten, significant differences were measured on 3 of the 4 indicators regarding comfort level and familiarity with school between fall 2011 and spring 2012. Findings showed that parents became more familiar with kindergarten routines and expectations for their child, as well as more aware of their child's behavior with peers and the ability level of average kindergarten children.**



### **III. Teacher Assessment of Children’s School Readiness**

#### **Teacher Assessment for School Readiness**

An important objective for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program is that participating children will show significant progress in being prepared to be successful in cognitive, social, emotional, physical and practical domains as they enter kindergarten. In addition to the perceptions of parents, the program evaluation for 2011-12 also included an independent evaluation by the child’s preschool facilitator/teacher in the program.

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

- Highlight areas of positive growth and development in a child related to school readiness
- Identify potential areas of perceived concern regarding a child’s development, learning or behavior
- Assess a child’s perceived development and behavior in relation to established domains of development important to early learning and school readiness

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

#### **Understanding Findings from the TASR Assessment of School Readiness**

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

- First, the TASR is a carefully developed research instrument and so results from it tend to be valid and reliable. It allows trained pre-school teachers/facilitators to gauge a child’s school readiness across five different areas.
- Second, the TASR allows for tracking a sense of progress over time. The level of growth or change that can be tracked in a given child’s development, or for a group of children, depends on where a teacher rates the child in the beginning (pre-test). If teachers already rate a child very highly on indicators of school readiness at the beginning, then the scale cannot reveal further growth for that child (there is no “room” left on the scale for growth).
- Third, usage of a comparison group for participants in Gearing Up for Kindergarten will allow us, once the findings are complete, to assess whether a similar group of children without the program would show similar results or changes in their scores regarding school readiness.

- Fourth, children in their early years between ages 3 and 5 are already developing on a continuous basis, and so it is somewhat difficult to know whether changes are due to participation in the program, predictable patterns of normal growth over time, or other factors (involvement with new friends, going to child care, etc.).

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

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

### **Participants in the TASR Assessment**

Participation in the Teacher Assessment of School Readiness required that preschool teachers/facilitators fill out the TASR survey for each child twice, once in fall 2011 and once in spring 2012 during the program. Only those children who had a TASR assessment completed at both times were included in the analysis. A total sample of 122 children were assessed by teachers in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program in both the fall and the spring. Demographic characteristics were similar to those previously reported.

### **Findings on Teacher Ratings of Children’s School Readiness**

The key areas of school readiness assessed by teachers were: (1) *Symbolic Development* (2 items – creativity, etc.), (2) *Communication* (7 items – language, literacy, etc.), (3) *Mathematical/Physical Knowledge* (6 items), (4) *Working with Others* (6 items – social skills, etc.), and (5) *Learning to Learn* (6 items – learning, emotions, etc.). Five tables (Tables 20-24) are included below, one of which covers each dimension, and there are beginning group scores (fall 2011), completing group scores (spring 2012), and difference scores (difference in the average group scores, or means) for each item. Only participants in programs that occurred in the fall and spring (“split session” programs) were included in this analysis.

The difference scores indicate progress (or lack thereof) that has occurred for children (as perceived by preschool facilitators in the program) on average in the group between fall 2011 and spring 2012. The table indicates whether there is a “significant” difference between the scores, which may be due to program participation, individual growth, or other factors. Again, in Tables 20-24 the scores are represented on a scale between 1 and 3, with higher scores indicating greater preparation or readiness on a specific item.

**Table 20: Symbolic Development – Teacher School Readiness Scores**

<b>Question This Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
1. Uses art to convey feelings and ideas.	2.08	2.69	.61	<b>Yes</b>
2. Talks about his or her creations.	2.10	2.75	.65	<b>Yes</b>

**Table 21: Communication – Teacher School Readiness Scores**

<b>Question This Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
1. Shows interest in reading and books.	2.29	2.82	.53	<b>Yes</b>
2. Identifies letters in the alphabet.	2.17	2.70	.53	<b>Yes</b>
3. Recognizes that there is a relationship between letters and sounds.	1.95	2.57	.62	<b>Yes</b>
4. Recognizes that written spellings represent spoken words.	1.89	2.57	.68	<b>Yes</b>
5. “Reads” simple books.	1.75	2.43	.68	<b>Yes</b>
6. Scribbles with intended meaning.	2.18	2.68	.50	<b>Yes</b>
7. Uses some letters in writing.	2.16	2.71	.55	<b>Yes</b>

**Table 22: Mathematical/Physical Knowledge – Teacher School Readiness Scores**

<b>Question This Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
1. Writes some numbers.	1.97	2.58	.61	<b>Yes</b>
2. Determines “same,” “more than” and “less than” by comparing.	2.11	2.67	.56	<b>Yes</b>
3. Shows understanding of sequence of daily events.	2.17	2.75	.58	<b>Yes</b>
4. Classifies objects used in daily experiences or identifies similarities and differences.	2.12	2.72	.60	<b>Yes</b>
5. Makes one-to-one correspondence.	2.17	2.70	.53	<b>Yes</b>
6. Experiments with objects to produce effects.	2.26	2.78	.52	<b>Yes</b>

**Table 23: Working with Others – Teacher School Readiness Scores**

<b>Question This Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference?</b>
1. Initiates conversation with familiar adults.	2.25	2.77	.52	<b>Yes</b>
2. Works cooperatively with others in a give-and-take manner.	2.26	2.71	.45	<b>Yes</b>
3. Uses peers as resources.	2.10	2.64	.54	<b>Yes</b>
4. Shares resources with others.	2.25	2.70	.45	<b>Yes</b>
5. Shows sensitivity and respect for others.	2.31	2.72	.41	<b>Yes</b>
6. Suggests appropriate solutions to conflicts.	2.03	2.60	.57	<b>Yes</b>

**Table 24: Learning to Learn – Teacher School Readiness Scores**

<b>Question This Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
1. Takes responsibility for belongings.	2.25	2.82	.57	<b>Yes</b>
2. Makes choices.	2.38	2.86	.48	<b>Yes</b>
3. Stays focused and productive while playing/working independently.	2.28	2.78	.50	<b>Yes</b>
4. Stays focused and productive while playing/working in a group.	2.22	2.66	.44	<b>Yes</b>
5. Copes with frustration and failure.	2.18	2.63	.45	<b>Yes</b>
6. Talks about what he or she is learning.	2.10	2.78	.68	<b>Yes</b>

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the 2011-12 year on teacher's perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. The following points can be made from the findings:

- As with parents, teachers in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely rate pre-kindergarten children quite highly on most indicators of school readiness.** This suggests that most children are already developing quite well in their preparation for the school experience. It also means that there is somewhat limited room for change to be indicated across specific items.
- **The findings on school readiness of children across several domains are quite similar to the parent-rated findings for children in the program. These findings from an independent second source of assessment for children on school readiness reaffirm and**

**strengthen the findings as provided by parents of children. Small to moderate gains were noted for many indicators of school readiness in children. These gains are likely due to a combination of participation in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program, normal processes of child development, and other contributing factors. However, the wide-ranging evidence of growth in children’s specific domains of development related to school readiness is highly encouraging and evidence of program success.**

- **Among 27 indicators of school readiness rated by teachers on a scale of 1 to 3, significant differences were measured on all of the 27 indicators between fall 2011 and spring 2012. This means that 100 percent of the indicators for school readiness that were rated by teachers showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in all five of the school readiness categories using this rating scale.**
- **These findings showed significant differences in teacher perceptions of children’s school readiness from the beginning of the program to the end of the program on 27 indicators. These changes included 27 substantive increases between .40 and .70.**
- **The 16 largest significant differences for children (as perceived by teachers) occurred in the following areas:**
  - **Recognizes written spellings represent spoken words (.68)**
  - **“Reads” simple books (.68)**
  - **Talks about what he or she is learning (.68)**
  - **Talks about his or her creations (.65)**
  - **Recognizes that there is a relationship between letters and sounds (.62)**
  - **Uses art to convey feelings and ideas (.61)**
  - **Writes some numbers (.61)**
  - **Classifies objects (.60)**
  - **Shows understanding of sequence of daily events (.58)**
  - **Suggests appropriate solutions to conflicts (.57)**
  - **Takes responsibility for belongings (.57)**
  - **Determines “same,” “more than” and “less than” by comparing (.56)**
  - **Uses some letters in writing (.55)**
  - **Uses peers as resources (.54)**
  - **Shows interest in reading and books (.53)**
  - **Identifies letters in the alphabet (.53)**
- **In analyzing all significant increases in the findings, the findings suggest growth in five primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills and knowledge regarding language and literacy; (4) development of specific pre-academic skills and knowledge regarding math and science; and (5) ability to express themselves through art and creative activities.**

These findings regarding 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. These findings indicate that the program likely has a number of positive impacts on children and their school readiness.





## **IV. Additional Parent and Child Assessments**

### **Additional Parent and Child Assessments**

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

To further refine the program evaluation process with Gearing Up for Kindergarten, a small variety of additional parent and child assessments were included in the evaluation process in 2011-12 so that greater understanding of program impacts (or the lack thereof) could be investigated. Two small measures were included that examined the following areas: (1) social and communication patterns of children; (2) emotional patterns of children. It was not expected that there would be significant findings in relation to each of these areas. Rather, these measures were included as an investigative process to understand more fully how the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program does or does not seem to affect participants. These measures were only included at the intensive research sites operating the 16-week Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. Thus, only a brief report on the investigative assessments is included here. Sixty-three participants were included in each of these assessments.

### **Social and Communication Patterns in Children**

Social development and communicative ability is an important aspect of a child's readiness to enter the schooling experience. To further assess the perceived influence of the program on social and communication patterns in pre-kindergarten children, an existing measure which examined 6 items was included in the assessment. Parents rated their children both before and after participation in the program on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – "not at all" to 5 = "very well." A higher score represents a more positive assessment of the child's patterns. Scores are provided in Table 25 which indicate the pre-test score, post-program score, difference score and level of significance.

### **Emotional Patterns in Children**

Developing the ability to handle anxiety and process emotions in a group or learning environment is another important domain of child development related to school readiness. Similar to social and communicative ability, an existing measure was used to examine emotional patterns in children. Again, 6 items were assessed by parents. Parents rated their children both before and after participation in the program on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – "not at all" to 5 = "very well." A higher score represents a more positive assessment of the child's patterns. Scores are provided in Table 26 which indicate the pre-test score, post-program score, difference score and level of significance. More in-depth results are provided for these two measures because the results were of greater significance.

**Table 25: Child Social and Communication Patterns – Parent Assessment**

<b>Question Description of Child</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
1. My child resolves problems with friends or brothers or sisters on his/her own.	2.95	3.29	.34	<b>Yes</b>
2. My child is very good at understanding other people's feelings.	3.56	3.81	.25	<b>Yes</b>
3. My child shares things with others.	3.75	4.00	.25	<b>Yes</b>
4. My child is helpful to others.	4.22	4.25	.03	No
5. My child listens to others' points of view.	3.41	3.63	.22	<b>Yes</b>
6. My child can give suggestions and opinions without being bossy.	3.16	3.37	.21	No

**Table 26: Child Emotional Patterns – Parent Assessment**

<b>Question Description of Child</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2011 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2012 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Significant Difference Score</b>	<b>Is there a significant difference in this area?</b>
1. My child can accept things not going his/her way.	3.05	3.29	.24	<b>Yes</b>
2. My child copes well with failure.	2.94	3.08	.14	No
3. My child thinks before acting.	3.13	3.32	.19	<b>Yes</b>
4. My child can calm down when excited or all wound-up.	3.40	3.43	.03	No
5. My child does what he or she is told to do.	3.67	3.68	.01	No
6. My child controls his/her temper when there is a disagreement.	3.40	3.51	.11	No

These two tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the 2011-12 year on parent assessments of children's social and emotional patterns. The following points can be made from the findings:

- Parents noted growth in the capacities of children in both the social and communicative and emotional domains over the 6-month period of the program. This growth mirrors similar patterns found in other assessments done with children in the program. Change and growth in such abilities is a common feature of development in early childhood.
- Among 12 indicators of social and emotional development rated by parents on a scale of 1 to 5, **significant differences were measured on 6 of the 12 indicators between fall 2011 and spring 2012. This means that several of the indicators for social and emotional development that were rated by parents showed positive growth in children**

**participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten.** These changes included **moderate to substantial increases between .20 and .35.**

- **The 6 largest significant differences for children** occurred in the following areas:
  - **Child resolves differences with other children individually (.34)**
  - **Child is good at understanding others' feelings (.25)**
  - **Child shares things with others (.25)**
  - **Child can accept things not going his/her way (.24)**
  - **Child listens to others' points of view (.22)**
  - **Child thinks before acting (.19)**

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



## **V. Parent Ratings of Child and Adult Change**

One barometer of how children and parents are affected by the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program is how parents describe whether any perceived change has occurred in the abilities and behavior of their children or themselves as a result of participation. In order to assess perceptions of change in children and adults, parents completed a post-program Ratings of Change Form in the 2011-2012 program year. This brief survey allowed them to record their observations regarding whether there had been negative change, no change, or positive change in the abilities and behavior of themselves and/or their participating child during the program year.

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

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

### **Participants in the Ratings of Change Form**

Participants in completing the Ratings of Change Form were individual parents whose children were involved in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program from fall 2011 to spring 2012. The Ratings of Change Form was completed once at the conclusion of the program by parents. Parents provided feedback on perceived ratings of change for their participating pre-kindergarten child and also for themselves.

### **Findings on Parent Ratings of Child and Adult Change**

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

**Table 28: Ratings of Change – Child School Readiness Items (2011-12)**

<b>Question</b> <b>How much change has there been in:</b>	<b>Mean Score – Perceived Change</b>	<b>Combined Frequency Score (“Somewhat” &amp; “Much Improved”)</b>
1. Your child’s self-esteem.	5.62	58.9%
2. Your child’s ability to get along with other children.	5.49	56.1%
3. Your child’s ability to get along with adults, such as the teacher in the program and you.	5.70	62.4%
4. Your child’s ability to follow rules.	5.55	55.2%
5. Your child’s self-reliance.	5.64	59%
6. Your child’s ability to identify letters and sounds from the alphabet.	5.75	61%
7. Your child’s ability to identify numbers and count.	5.81	66.1%
8. Your child’s willingness to follow your instructions.	5.60	59.7%
9. Your child’s ability to stop and calm down when excited or upset.	5.14	37.1%
10. Your child’s level of conflict with other children.	5.07	35.3%

**Table 29: Ratings of Change – Adult Healthy Parenting Items (2011-12)**

<b>Question</b> <b>How much change has there been in:</b>	<b>Mean Score – Perceived Change</b>	<b>Combined Frequency Score (“Somewhat” &amp; “Much Improved”)</b>
1. Your ability to increase your child’s positive behavior.	5.62	55.9%
2. Your ability to decrease your child’s negative behavior.	5.48	50.9%
3. Your satisfaction with being a parent to your child.	5.62	57.3%
4. Difficulty in parenting your child.	4.91	31.9%
5. Your ability to stop and calm down when upset with your child.	5.30	44.6%
6. Amount of yelling at your child.	5.26	42.1%
7. Amount of praise you give to your child.	5.75	63.6%
8. Your ability to clearly state what you want your child to do.	5.64	55.9%
9. Your ability to follow through on instructions or directions that you have given your child.	5.53	52.7%
10. Your ability to discipline your child effectively when necessary.	5.46	50.9%
11. How well you and your child get along with each other.	5.46	52.3%

These two tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the 2011-12 year on perceived changes in child and adult abilities and behaviors, as stated by parents. The following points can be made from the findings:

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

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





#### **IV. Parent Feedback on Gearing Up for Kindergarten**

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

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

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

Qualitative feedback provides a different kind of view of how participants reacted to and experienced the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. The responses are more descriptive, personal and wide-ranging. We conducted a brief thematic analysis of the main response categories that were shared by participants and have selected a variety of responses for each question that highlight the responses of participants. Not all participant comments are selected here for purposes of brevity; however, it is interesting to note that of all the written comments there was nothing negative written about the program or its influence. The responses included here come from the 2011-12 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***

- The program allowed us to spend one-on-one time with her.
- My son and I have had so much fun with the classroom activities in each session, and we choose one or two activities to “show off” to his siblings at home.
- I have enjoyed the great activities to do with my child.
- I have enjoyed the fun activities, like folder games with my child.
- I really enjoyed doing the projects with my girls. It is fun to see them have a fun time learning.
- This program is very helpful to parents who are very busy. This gives them time to explore their own relationships with their children. Being an educator that works with families all the time, it proved to be a good reminder and gave me a chance to have time with my own child.
- It has helped us to do more together as a family, play games, etc.
- Try to do lots of reading each night so we are better prepared to start kindergarten.
- We have been reading more and doing activity books several days a week.
- I try to have more family meal times.

#### ***Improved Parenting Efforts in Specific Areas***

- The class made me more aware of my child’s learning style and I try to have more patience.
- We have changed many habits that we didn’t realize were having such a negative effect on our children.
- I have tried to change discipline techniques and have been successful.
- I have tried fairly successfully to be patient (not lose temper) and use positive reinforcement.
- We have worked on homework more often – writing, cutting, glueing.
- I try to monitor the TV more, keep her in the other room more often, and let her have her art supplies out all the time.
- It was very useful and informational, my kids enjoyed all the activities, and I think a lot more now before actions are allowed or taken.
- We really liked the parenting sessions, it helped us to focus on how we are responding to our children.
- I am more patient with my child and explain things more.
- It made me think about how I can change some of my parenting skills to better assist my child.
- I really try to praise my children more.
- Our storytimes are much more detailed. We focus much more on sounds and book content.
- I am allowing my child to make choices instead of just directing my child to my choice – it allows for more independence and self-confidence.
- A great program! I liked the chore chart idea, along with other ideas and techniques for parenting.
- I think my idea of discipline has changed somewhat, and now I find myself encouraging her first instead of immediately giving discipline.
- We praise positive behavior more often.
- I have spent more time talking about books with my kids.

- I am taking a look at my parenting styles to make sure I am using them all in making my kids responsible and having choices, not doing everything for them.
- My discipline style has changed and I am more patient with my children.

### ***Increased Awareness of Child's Specific Needs***

- I learned many things about a child's health, behavior, and learning methods that I did not know before the class.
- We utilized the sleep information to work with earlier bedtimes, teaching kids how important sleep is.
- Closer attention to sleep habits.
- I have been monitoring what she watches on TV as well as finding alternatives to TV.
- I have tried taking a step back and letting him do things himself even if takes a while longer.
- The media session was interesting to me and I learned a lot.
- I really had no clue what kindergarten was going to entail. I have a better sense of expectations of both my child and myself. I am also now monitoring more TV and what my children watch.
- We are giving more attention to her habits, sleeping, and media control.
- I am helping my child to do more self-help and reinforcing this message, as well as avoiding bartering and other ineffective styles of parenting.
- I've become more aware of his feelings and it is easier for me to adapt to how he is feeling and think about how to react.
- We got ideas for teaching early reading. Also, rewards for good behavior were such a hit with our child. We encourage him to complete self-care skills with verbal guidance instead of just doing it for him.
- This class should be given as soon as your child can talk. It helps to know what to teach your child.
- It made me aware of everything that is expected of my child before kindergarten.
- The class reminds you to keep in mind the basics about parenting – bedtimes, reading, etc.
- I get my child to bed earlier and my child is much happier now.
- I thought that the lessons on parenting and understanding my child's learning abilities was very helpful.
- I am very glad that they offered this class. Sometimes I realize that I am trying to change the way I would like my son to learn and it's not his learning style.
- The nutrition information was very helpful.
- The nutrition and discipline topics were of the most value to me. Definitely new habits at home on my part as a mother.
- Love all of the information on the importance of sleep and reading to my child.

## **How has your child benefited from Gearing Up for Kindergarten?**

### ***Increased Social Confidence and Positive Peer Interactions***

- My child is more confident.
- Helped my child greatly, less separation anxiety.
- Helped my child in all aspects of character, attention, manners, etc.
- More outgoing, not as shy.
- More confident or comfortable in starting school.
- Social skills.
- He really enjoys the classes and interaction with other children.
- Interaction with kids her own age has improved her social skills. She is very excited about kindergarten.
- We have all benefitted. I am a better mom and so she acts better.
- He is calmer, more patient, and willing to try new things.
- I think it is helping her (and me) in building confidence and skills as a pre-kindergarten child.
- She has benefitted from the peer connection as she is a shy child. When asked what she enjoyed the most or what they did each week she would say, "Had snack and did other things."
- Confidence in the kindergarten setting.
- Met new friends, more confident, enjoys program.
- More socially ready for kindergarten.
- He really loved coming. He got more confident.
- Taught him how to interact with other children, share, follow directions, and know he is okay without me right there.
- He is excited about attending and is able to feel confident in his abilities.
- My son has learned to interact with other children his age, and how important it is to listen when in a group, and I think this will benefit him greatly when he starts school.
- She is playing and interacting with other kids. She is excited for school.
- He is showing more pride in himself.
- Yes, I think that my daughter's self-confidence is improving. She separates from me a little easier and she raises her hand in circle/story time.
- Since joining this class my daughter has really opened up socially with both kids and adults.
- He enjoys it and I think he will be much better prepared for kindergarten. He has developed new social skills and confidence in addition to other learning.
- It has helped him with his confidence and his independence. It helped him get excited about going to school.
- More outgoing and is very excited to come each week.
- Socialization with other kids and talking to adults.
- She has become more comfortable in larger groups of children and a classroom environment.
- Less separation anxiety, more accepting of being independent. She can stay without a friend or family member remaining with her.
- He made friends and got to interact with his teacher.
- It has helped him gain confidence.
- My child enjoyed meeting her future classmates.
- Additional structured experience was beneficial for my child and I feel the social interaction with other children is always a positive for children's development.
- I believe it has created a greater interest in going to school and increased his confidence level.
- Yes! He is much more outgoing and wanting to experience school.
- My child is excited to attend school now, while previously my child was scared.
- My son has gained confidence in himself and it also made him want to be more independent.
- Yes! He has become more talkative and open so he has come a long way.

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

- She realizes that learning can be fun! She also is very aware of negative behaviors such as watching too much TV, or not getting enough sleep.
- I have made more routines and I have learned many ways to enhance my child's learning.
- Yes, experiencing different activities and learning from them has helped her.
- He has learned patterns and grouping.
- It opened her mind more.
- Opening up and learning better.
- He's more excited about going to kindergarten now and he also wants to learn more.
- Yes, he feels proud of the activities he is participating in and excited.
- Loves it and looks forward to activities each week.
- He enjoys his time here and learning activities. It's great that he is learning. He has to listen to the teacher (someone other than mom).
- Involvement in learning activities.
- He enjoys taking time out of a day to read a book or play a learning game.
- He is more interested in books and games. He loves to practice his letters.
- He is now learning lower-case letters.
- My child is starting to have more attention, as well as ability to sit and do work. Also, listening to instructions.
- Increased excitement about learning and starting school, as well as more focus.
- He enjoys being in the classroom and has benefitted from doing the different learning activities.
- It was a good reinforcement. He now has learning activities he can pull out all summer. Also, as busy as we all are, that one-on-one time with Mom and Dad was special for him and me too.
- She likes to share her homework and liked to get it done.
- He is very excited for school. He has learned from the projects we did together.
- Her routines have gotten better and she is more responsible.
- Learned the phonetic sounds of the alphabet.

### ***Greater Awareness and Comfort with School Routines and Expectations***

- It has given her confidence and familiarity with school.
- Good to come to the school and meet some teachers.
- Following instructions, directions with activities.
- More comfortable with teacher, potential classmates.
- She is very excited to start school. She is starting to catch on to many of the activities.
- She is more prepared for kindergarten.
- She has matured in controlling her emotions. She is familiar with the school staff and surrounding areas which makes her feel comfortable. She has met some friends that will be in her class.
- I think she was ready for kindergarten before but now she is more excited about school.
- Social interaction, classroom and luncheon setting. She does not want the nights to end.
- I think she has a better sense of what school and kindergarten is all about.
- Feels more comfortable about the school setting.
- Being with other kids and seeing what kindergarten will be like.
- She is starting to realize what kindergarten really is. She is soooo excited!
- She is so excited about getting ready for kindergarten – we talk about it a lot.
- Readiness for kindergarten and association with classmates.
- Meeting the teacher and some of the students she will be going to school with in the fall.
- Met teachers and other kids, helped ease fears about starting kindergarten.
- Meeting kids and teachers, learning about the classroom.

- She was hesitant about starting kindergarten and is now excited.
- It allowed my child to get comfortable with the school and teacher he will have when starting kindergarten.
- Child's interaction with other children; child's knowledge of school activities; plus, he gets to know the teachers!
- Learning more about kindergarten, more excited to attend kindergarten.
- She is more ready for the kindergarten transition.
- She loves coming to class, it helped her get an idea of a classroom setting.
- Feels more comfortable in the larger group setting and we now work on skills at home.
- She has grown to know more about what school is about.
- Experiencing classroom settings and activities, also interacting with other children and teachers. Thank you!
- Got more comfortable with a classroom setting and things she needs to know for kindergarten.
- She loves to be in the classroom! I love that she is having that experience and that she is learning the expectations of the classroom.
- He's more comfortable with the school setting than he was previously.
- She seems more confident about attending kindergarten as she became more familiar with the teachers and the building.
- My child learned how to listen in a classroom setting and it also made him more excited to learn.
- My child has been given a glimpse of what he day will be like next year, and I'm glad I'm not just throwing her into school without some kind of idea. I think my child has benefitted from the interaction with other kids her age and it's given her a positive outlook about school. She was scared of the idea of being away from me during the day but now that she has spent time with a teacher she keeps asking when she's going to school. This program is great and I hope you are able to do it in the future. Thank you!
- My child has learned some of the things to expect in kindergarten, and it also helps my child be more at ease about school.
- I believe it has given him a taste of what kindergarten is going to be like and he became so much more comfortable with the separation at the midpoint of the session when kids and parents are separated.
- Introduction to his teacher and the environment for next year.
- She now has the idea of what kindergarten looks like and is going to be like when she starts school.

## **What did you like most about the program?**

### ***Time Spent Together in Learning Activities with Child***

- I enjoyed the separate parent-child activities. The teachers were great with both parents and children.
- I liked the interaction between parents and students, the information and the way it was presented. Good program!
- The shared activities with our children.
- The activities I do with my son.
- I enjoyed seeing my son do the different activities which I don't see that he does in pre-school, and I love sharing those moments with him.
- I liked doing hands-on activities in the classroom with the kids and watching them learn.
- I loved the classroom activities and the different school subjects that were covered kindergarten style.
- I like that it involves the parents.
- The sharing of experiences with my daughter.
- The activities and introducing her to her classroom and classmates.
- Different activities to do with my child.
- Interacting with my child – one of the few times a week I can spend one-on-one time due to work and other children.
- I really liked the hands-on educational activities we do with the kids and then how we break out individually.
- Time to grow together and learn new things.
- The time spent doing activities with my child and the parent class.
- Interaction with my child and seeing others interact as a group.
- Doing activities with kids and learning with other parents.
- Parent-child activities and child interaction with same age group.
- Activities and one-on-one time with my child while he is enjoying learning.
- I like the time with my daughter doing new activities.
- Time with my child at activity stations.
- Interacting with my child during class at activities.
- One-on-one time with my child.
- Having time to spend with my child.
- The hands-on activities that we make to use with our kids.
- The time I spent following him in the activity he chose to do at the beginning of class was fun.
- The activities at the beginning of the class.
- Doing the projects with my child was my favorite part. I enjoyed watching him learn and it gave me a better understanding of what concepts he knows and what areas we need to work on.
- The time spent one-on-one with my child, also talking with other parents.
- I like the book library where the kids get to take home books each week, and I like the learning and craft centers we do for 30 minutes before class starts.
- Parent-child activities.
- The activity time with my child and learning tips about parenting issues.
- Parent-child center (activity) time.
- I like that this program lets me understand my child better. I also love that it gives different activities to do together.
- Being able to do activities with my child. I love interacting with him and seeing what he loves to do.
- The time spent with my son learning and then being able to break away and learn myself.

### ***Preparation of Parent and Child for Kindergarten Experience***

- I wish I would have known about this program with my first child, it has been very helpful and there are a lot of great resources.
- The games were very helpful. The program helped greatly for what we are to expect when we get to the kindergarten stage.
- This program has helped me a lot with being prepared for kindergarten. My child has no previous schooling and I want to make the transition as easy as possible. I'm getting my daughter more involved in learning the things around her.
- I have learned a lot through this program. It has helped me become more comfortable with my child going to kindergarten.
- Getting my child comfortable with the school.
- There was a lot of good information. Great program! Very educational for parents of future kindergarten children.
- I liked the interaction with other kids and parents. My daughter has observed other kids act nervous, which in turn has helped her understand she isn't the only one.
- Getting my son ready for kindergarten and what it is going to be like.
- Learning what kindergarten will be like.
- Allowed my child to meet teachers and see the classroom before school and become used to it.
- Preparing my son for kindergarten, helping him interact with other children.
- Exposure to the kindergarten setting and learning new parent-child activities.
- My child has gotten to socialize with other children his age and learn what school will be like.
- I appreciated the opportunity my child had to get comfortable with the school setting and socializing with peers during this program.
- Useful information regarding the way a child learns and thinks. My son was very excited to attend each week and interact with other children his age.
- I like that my child was so excited to attend each week. Great information and activities provided each week.
- Getting my child used to a classroom setting with fun activities.
- It's given my children more of an experience of learning with other children and they love coming!
- To learn about what the really important things are that he needs to know for kindergarten; also, getting the handouts and information to meet those goals.
- I liked to get information to help me make my decision about kindergarten for my child.
- It helped me decide whether my child is ready for school and also to make sure I work more with my other child who will start school the following year.
- The information gained about kindergarten; meeting the kids and parents in our child's class; and meeting the teachers she'll be in contact with for kindergarten.
- My son enjoyed it and he was excited to go each night, especially he really enjoyed the different centers and themes, and he liked taking a new book home each week.
- The interaction and introduction to the classroom and teachers.
- I liked that it got him to try out school before kindergarten started and he learned how to be there by himself.
- Helps kids get used to the school environment.
- It gave the kids a chance to meet other students, get to know the school, see the classroom and meet the teacher.
- I like the way it introduces school to the children and also provides us as parents with tips on improving our relationship with our children.
- Being able to get my child used to a classroom setting before the first day of school.
- The experience my child has had in a classroom setting and getting to meet a teacher and classmates.



- I liked that my child got to see what school is going to be like and got to meet his teacher for next year.
- I really enjoyed watching my child become more comfortable with the classroom activities (away from me as a parent) as the program went on.
- The fact that my child gets used to the school setting before entering kindergarten.
- It has given me a good idea of the skills and knowledge my daughter has in preparing for kindergarten next fall and what we may need to work on.
- A structured time for kids to learn in a school-like setting.
- My son loved interacting with other children in a classroom setting.
- Seeing whether or not my daughter is developmentally ready to go to kindergarten.

### ***Parenting Discussion and Support***

- The program helped me feel confident that the things I am already doing are effective and I am on the right track. As a stay-at-home mom who lives 17 miles from the highway, exposure to other people and ideas was helpful.
- I enjoyed the parent sessions and learned a lot about various parenting skills and child development.
- I really enjoyed the parenting tips along with all of the handouts and different ideas. I will continue to use these tools and ideas.
- Really enjoyed the program! Learned a lot from other parents as well as the teachers.
- It was nice to share with the other parents, and see the kids socialize with other kids.
- Interaction with other pre-kindergarten parents.
- It helps to have feedback from other parents in a group.
- I like that the program gives a broad knowledge base to many aspects of parenting and provides resources for continued learning.
- It makes you realize some of the important things about parenting and not worry about the petty things of parenting.
- The classes and subjects on parenting were very helpful. I appreciate the tools provided.
- Interaction with the other parents – it has helped me to realize my child and I are normal.
- For parents, we got to meet each other before school starts and so we got to visit about our own styles at home and realize it is not only your child that does certain things.
- The educational information – not only was the information provided, but our discussions helped me with the understanding.
- Networking with other parents.
- Talking with other parents.
- Discussion time with other parents.
- Parent education sessions and ideas, how to encourage learning.
- Hearing other views on parenting, as well as the information and activities.
- I really do enjoy the parenting sessions, they are helpful.
- All of this is rewarding – parent interaction with others is my favorite.
- Opportunities to interact and gain information from others experiencing similar situations.
- Opportunities to meet new people and discuss parenting issues.
- The feedback from other parents in similar situations.
- Sharing ideas and techniques with other parents.
- I enjoyed the interaction with the children and parents together, and then being able to discuss different issues with other parents.
- The camaraderie of parents and how we all learned something from one another.
- Being able to hear that other parents are going through similar situations with their child and that my child is now familiar with the school setting.
- The different topics that were discussed were very helpful.
- Overall the aspects of parenting and seeing different styles and discipline techniques.

### ***Quality of the Program Experience***

- I love this program. Very beneficial!
- It has been very useful and helped me be a better parent.
- The program was run very well – we enjoyed it!
- This is a great program with a lot of great information.
- It was a great program. Please continue to offer it in the future.
- I thought this was an excellent program. I found all of the information useful.
- This is the third time I have been through this program, and I feel like the content has really helped me to be a better parent and understand my kids.
- Great learning experience for both parents and children.
- Thank you so much. I am very happy this program was offered.
- This was an amazing program I would recommend to anyone. I definitely learned a lot. It really opened my eyes to things that myself and my son can work on.
- Both of my children liked going to the class. Anything positive talked about at the classes was worthwhile.
- Warm classroom environment for kids, great topics for parents.
- I like this program very much. It gave us great ideas and knowledge for my child.
- The instructors are knowledgeable on what they are teaching and super, sweet ladies.
- Class participation with other parents. I could see my child interact in a classroom setting. Free child care was very helpful.
- This program gives good ideas, good knowledge and activities.
- My daughter loved it. She is totally ready for kindergarten.
- My son is very excited to start kindergarten and has loved this class and asks all the time when the next class is going to be.