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*Gearing Up for Kindergarten*  
**Project Overview & Year-End Report for**  
**2015-2016**

Sean E. Brotherson, PhD & Divya Saxena, MS  
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June 2016



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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 10<sup>th</sup> year in 2015-16. *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 2015-2016 the program operated at 64 sites across North Dakota with 1,169 families enrolled. Fifty school districts participated and held a total of 90 course sessions. Response rate to the evaluation was 72.7% (850 total respondents). This executive summary provides highlights of findings gathered through evaluation of the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program's sessions in the program year 2015-16.

- **Program participation – 89% of participants indicated involvement in 75% or more of the program sessions of the program during the year, while another 6.8% 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 **74% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them.** Among participants in the 2015-16 program, 71% 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 81% among all participants.

- **General impacts of program participation** - Among participants, **52%** indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, **48%** noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much, **55%** felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and **47%** said it increased their parenting skills a lot or very much. Additionally, **81%** felt it changed their parenting behavior at least somewhat, and **85%** indicated that it influenced their relationship with their child positively.
- **Program value versus other information sources** - The results from the 2015-16 session of the program indicate that participants rated the school (3.63), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.72), and parents with children of a similar age (3.58) as among the most useful sources of information for them on parenting and preparing their child for other school. However, **the Gearing Up for Kindergarten class and materials were rated higher than all other sources with a mean score of 4.02, 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.**
- **Increases in children's school readiness as described by parents** - Among 19 indicators of school readiness assessed by parents regarding their children, **significant differences were measured on all of the 19 indicators between fall 2015 and spring 2016. This pattern was the same in each program model. This means that all of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. In analyzing all increases, the findings suggest growth in five primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (knowing the alphabet and numbers, etc.); (4) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities; and (5) ability to manage emotions and adapt in a new environment.**
- **Parent knowledge of school readiness** - For parents in the program, **10 indicators of knowledge related to school readiness showed significant increases in their knowledge levels and ability to prepare their child for the school experience. For example, the parents showed increases of knowledge regarding social and emotional development in children, development of early reading and math skills, areas of competence for school readiness, and key elements of a supportive home learning environment.**
- **Parent confidence in child's preparedness for school** - For parents in the program, among 3 indicators of their confidence with a child's preparedness for school, **significant differences were measured on all 3 indicators between the beginning and end of the program. Findings showed that after going through the program, parents felt more confident in the child's level of preparedness for kindergarten, and also increased their confidence in the activities being done to prepare their child for school transition.**
- **Increases in children's academic readiness as determined by objective assessment** - Children overall and in each model of the program **made significant progress increasing their number counting ability, number identification ability, letter identification ability, and sound identification ability. These steps forward in early academic skills indicate children are making progress with regard to early literacy and early numeracy.**

- **Parent-child reading interactions** – Parents indicated significant changes on a variety of parent-child reading interactions during the program. Areas of reading interaction that showed significant improvement were **parents became more likely to go to the library with their child, they were more likely to discuss contents of a book with their children, they read more often with children, and they were more attentive to finding age-appropriate books for their children. All of these items are important because they are actions that serve to facilitate a positive literacy environment for children in the home.**
  
- **Qualitative feedback on outcomes for parents in the program** – Parents who participated in the program shared a variety of comments that highlighted positive impacts in three areas:
  - ***More Time and Active Involvement with Children***
    - I am doing more activities at home with him to help prepare for kindergarten.
    - Program was great, we read and share our day a lot more.
    - This program has led me to do more activities, especially ones that will help my son be ready for kindergarten.
    - I feel like we think differently about how we can teach things at home. You gave us many ideas for science and math, which are areas we need to work on.
    - We've learned that family game nights are great for learning experiences: math, social, reading.
  - ***Improved Parenting Efforts in Specific Areas***
    - I liked when we talked about different parenting styles. We have been led to encourage our kids more and provide extra hands-on learning.
    - I have learned to be more patient when working with my child when I am teaching him stuff.
    - Our discussion about discipline has made me stop yelling as much and I have begun giving my child more responsibilities.
    - We've changed our T.V./ video game policies at home. That session was extremely interesting/beneficial.
    - After reading the sleep information, we moved everyone's bed time back 30 minutes, it has been very helpful.
    - We are more thoughtful in framing our conversations with our child in a way that will be encouraging and help her and us think through our actions.
    - I took the eating healthy information to heart and have changed all of my meal plans.
  - ***Increased Awareness of Child's Specific Needs***
    - We learned we need to do better at reading to our child and practice more numbers/letters since she isn't in preschool.
    - I learned a lot about how communication differences between my child and I seemed to be causing many of our behavior issues. Since changing how I present issues many behavior issues have subsided.
    - I changed the bed time and eating time of my child due to the program.
    - The parenting section of this program helped me to greater understand developmentally where my preschooler is and how to help her move forward to get ready for kindergarten.
    - The program helped me to recognize the different learning styles that my twin girls have and how to help them each differently.
    - My relationship with my child has dramatically changed to the better. He is free to express his feelings and is very eager to learn more and more.

- **Qualitative feedback on outcomes for children in the program** – Parents who participated in the program shared a variety of comments that highlighted positive benefits for children in three areas:
  - ***Increased Social Confidence and Positive Peer Interactions***
    - I think it was a good experience for my son to see how other (non-autistic) children interact with teachers, peers and their environment.
    - My daughter was terrified to go to school before this program, now she is willing to try it out.
    - She is much more comfortable emotionally about going to kindergarten. She is already familiar with her school and will know a few friends.
    - He has learned how to interact with other children as he does not go to daycare or preschool, so this was a good learning experience for him.
    - I worried about my daughter because she was painfully shy when Gearing Up started. She has really blossomed into a confident, self-assured person. It's been fun to watch the transformation.
    - She is very shy so just gaining some familiarity and comfort with the school, teachers, etc. has been great. She looked forward to attending every week.
  - ***Increased Pre-Academic Skills in Reading, Math and Other Subjects***
    - She has developed skills in sight reading, basic arithmetic and story structure.
    - When we started, my child knew very few letters. Now he knows all of them!
    - My son enjoys coming to Gearing Up because he loves learning new projects and he shows more interest in learning.
    - He has learned a lot more of his letters, numbers and sounds. He loves the interaction and new friends. He is becoming more patient with learning.
    - He is able to write his name, loves to draw/color and actively seeks out reading and learning activities.
    - He is more interested in reading and books than ever before.
  - ***Greater Awareness and Comfort with School Routines and Expectations***
    - My son did not know if he was ready for school until he came here to the school to meet the teachers and friends.
    - I like that my child has opportunity to become familiar with the school, teachers and peers so that she will be comfortable with this setting when she begins kindergarten next fall.
    - Hands on experience for my child. She was very “anti” kindergarten until we came to the first class. She has loved it since – I think this was a great asset for her.
    - This program has been great because it allows the children to see where the school is, what it will look like and what the expectations will be for them and the parents.
    - She is comfortable and confident in the school setting because of attending. Participating has gotten her very excited to start school.

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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## ***Gearing Up for Kindergarten*** **Project Overview & Year-End Report for 2015-2016**

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

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### **Curriculum Development and Description**

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

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

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

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

## **Session Objectives**

### **Session 1 - Orientation & What to Expect in Kindergarten**

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

### **Session 2 - Parenting Styles**

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

### **Session 3 - Brain Development in Infancy and Early Childhood**

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

### **Session 4 - Raising a Reader & Early Literacy**

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

### **Session 5 – Defining Discipline: Nurturance and Prevention**

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

### **Session 6 – Defining Discipline: Guidance and Consequences**

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

### **Session 7 - Developing Responsibility and Independence!**

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



### **Session 8 – The Importance of Good-Quality Sleep**

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

### **Session 9 – Learning Styles and School Readiness**

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

### **Session 10 - Children and Temperament**

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

### **Session 11 – Early Literacy and Math Skills**

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

### **Session 12 – Social & Emotional Development**

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

### **Session 13 – Screen Time vs. Real Life**

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

### **Session 14 – Feeding Healthy Habits - Children and Nutrition**

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

### **Session 15 – Safety Always**

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

### **Session 16 – A Parent’s Role in School Success**

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

## **Program Description**

### ***Gearing Up for Kindergarten***

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

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

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

The goals of the program are:

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

### **Family Recruitment and Program Sites**

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

Program sites are encouraged to facilitate recruitment of participant families more likely to need assistance with preparing children for school achievement (new immigrant families, economically challenged families, etc.). In 2015-2016 the program operated at 64 sites across North Dakota with 1,169 families enrolled. Fifty school districts participated and held a total of 90 course sessions. Response rate to the evaluation was 72.7% (850 total respondents). These sites were located in 50 separate North Dakota communities.

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

- Beach, ND (southwest)
  - Lincoln Elementary School
- Buffalo, ND (southeast)
  - Maple Valley Elementary School
- Carson, ND (southeast)
  - Roosevelt Elementary School
- Cooperstown, ND (northeast)
  - Griggs County Central Public School
- Elgin, ND (southwest)
  - Elgin-New Leipzig Public School
- Ellendale, ND (southeast)
  - Ellendale Public School
- Enderlin, ND (southeast)
  - Enderlin Area School
- Fairmount, ND (southeast)
  - Fairmount Public School
- Fort Totten, ND (northeast)
  - Tate Topa (Four Winds) Elementary School
- Garrison, ND (central)
  - Bob Callies Elementary School
- Hankinson, ND (southeast)
  - Hankinson Public School
- Harvey, ND (north central)
  - B. M. Hanson Elementary School
- Hatton, ND (northeast)
  - Hatton-Eielson Public School
- Hunter, ND (southeast)
  - Northern Cass Elementary School
- Kenmare, ND (north central)
  - Kenmare Elementary School
- Kindred & Davenport, ND (southeast)
  - Kindred Elementary School
- Lakota, ND (northeast)
  - Lakota Public School
- Langdon, ND (northeast)
  - Langdon Public School
- Lignite, ND (northwest)
  - Burke Central Elementary School
- Mapleton, ND (southeast)
  - Mapleton Elementary School
- Milnor, ND (southeast)
  - Milnor Public School
- Minto, ND (northeast)
  - Minto Public School District
- Mohall, ND (north central)
  - Mohall-Lansford-Sherwood Elementary School

- Mott, ND (southwest)
  - Mott-Regent Elementary School
- New Salem, ND (west central)
  - Prairie View Elementary School
- Northwood, ND (northeast)
  - Northwood Public School
- Park River, ND (northeast)
  - Park River Public School
- Ray, ND (northwest)
  - Ray Elementary School (Nesson District #2)
- Strasburg, ND (south central)
  - Strasburg Public School
- Thompson, ND (northeast)
  - Thompson Elementary School
- Tioga, ND (northwest)
  - Central Elementary School
- Trenton, ND (west)
  - Trenton Public School

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

- Carrington, ND (east central)
  - Carrington Elementary School
- Casselton, ND (east)
  - Central Cass Elementary School
- Devils Lake, ND (northeast)
  - Minnie H. Kindergarten Center
- Hazen, ND (west central)
  - Hazen Public School
- Lisbon, ND (southeast)
  - Lisbon Public School
- Oakes, ND (south central)
  - Oakes Elementary School
- Rugby, ND (north central)
  - Rugby Ely Elementary School
- Wahpeton, ND (southeast)
  - Zimmerman Elementary School
- Watford City, ND (northwest)
  - Watford City Elementary School

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

- Bismarck, ND (central)
  - Light of Christ Catholic Schools – St. Mary’s School
- Dickinson, ND (southwest)
  - Heart River Elementary School

- Fargo, ND (east)
  - Ed Clapp Elementary School
  - Jefferson Elementary School
  - Kennedy Elementary School
  - Lincoln Elementary School
  - Madison Elementary School
  - McKinley Elementary School
  - Nokomis Child Care Center I
  - Oak Grove Lutheran Elementary
- Grand Forks, ND (northeast)
  - Century Elementary School
  - Viking Elementary School
  - Winship Elementary School
- Jamestown, ND (southeast)
  - Washington Elementary School
- Mandan, ND (central)
  - Fort Lincoln Elementary School
  - Red Trail Elementary School
- Minot, ND (north central)
  - Burlington-Des Lacs Elementary School
  - Dakota Elementary School, Minot Air Force Base
  - Sunnyside Elementary School
  - Surrey Elementary School
- West Fargo, ND (east)
  - West Fargo Kindergarten Center – Lodoen
  - West Fargo Kindergarten Center – Osgood
- Williston, ND (west)
  - McVay Elementary School

## **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 2015 and one in the spring of 2016, two 5-week family education sessions (fall and spring), or a 10-week session in spring 2016. The hour and a half sessions begin with 45 minutes of parent-child interaction activities focused on math, reading, sensory, science, art and imaginary play. The parents then separate for parent education (see list of topics). The children, with an early childhood education facilitator and classroom assistant, have circle time and other early learning activities. The child activities focus on getting along with others, listening, taking turns, responsibility, and cognitive and literacy skills. The families are able to check out a library book that they return. On-site child care and refreshments were offered depending on the site.

## **Program Participation**

During the 2015-2016 year of operation in the *Gearing Up for Kindergarten* program in North Dakota, pre-kindergarten children and their families participated at 64 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 2015-2016 year, as well as the type of program model each site implemented. It should be noted that the information included in this report only details limited information on sites that may have operated on their own initiative without involvement in the NDSU evaluation project. Programs that participated in the evaluation process with NDSU are included in this summary.

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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)	2	4.3%
Continuous Session – 16 weeks	0	0%
Split Session – 10 weeks (5 weeks/fall, 5 weeks/spring)	22	23.1%
Short Session – 10 weeks (spring)	40	72.6%

## **Final Program Participation Summary – Gearing Up for Kindergarten in ND (2015-2016)**

### **Communities and Program Models**

- Total Number of ND Communities – 50
  - Small Communities (pop. 2000 or less) – 32
  - Mid-Sized Communities (pop. 2000 to 10,000) – 9
  - Large Communities (pop. 10,000 or greater) – 9
- Total Number of GUK Sites in ND – 64
- Total Number of Participating School Districts – 50
- Total Number of Program Sessions – 90
- Total Number of Short Session Programs (5-10 week sessions in spring) – 40
- Total Number of Split – Short Session Programs (5 weeks fall/5 weeks spring) – 22
- Total Number of Split – Long Session Programs (8 weeks fall/8 weeks spring) – 2

### **Families Served**

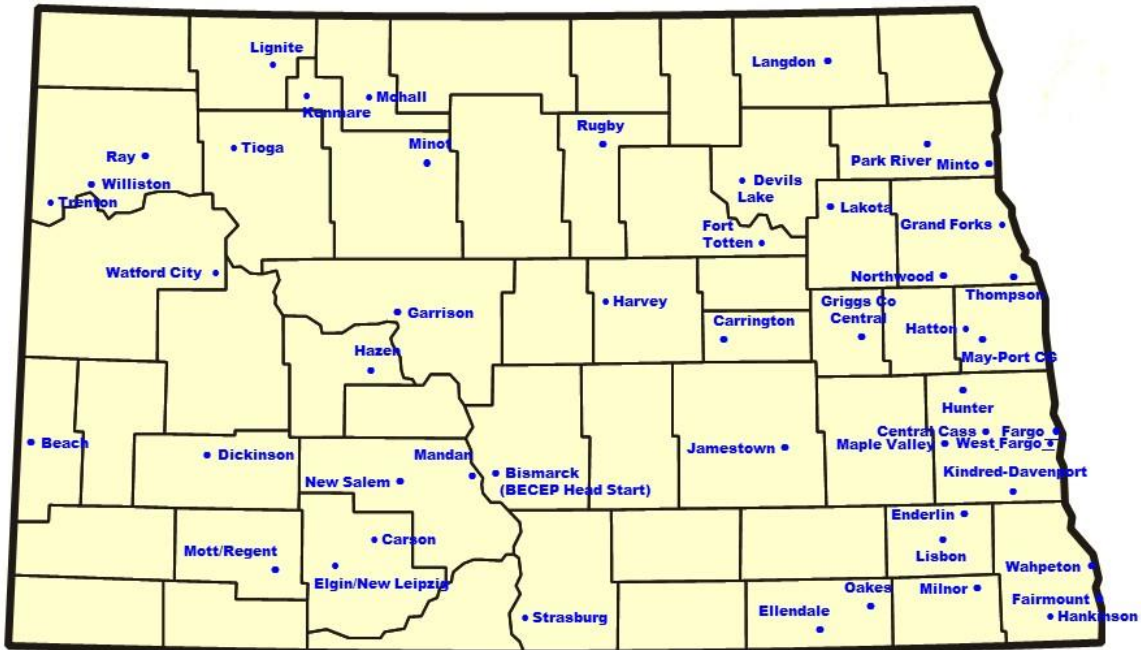
- Number of Families in Full (Split) Sessions (16 Weeks)
  - Number of Families Total – 50
- Number of Families in Full (Split) Sessions (10 Weeks)
  - Number of Families Total – 270
- Number of Families in Spring (Short or 5-10 week) Sessions – 849
  
- Total Families Served – 1,169
- Total Families Served that Returned Evaluation – 850

### **Evaluation Project**

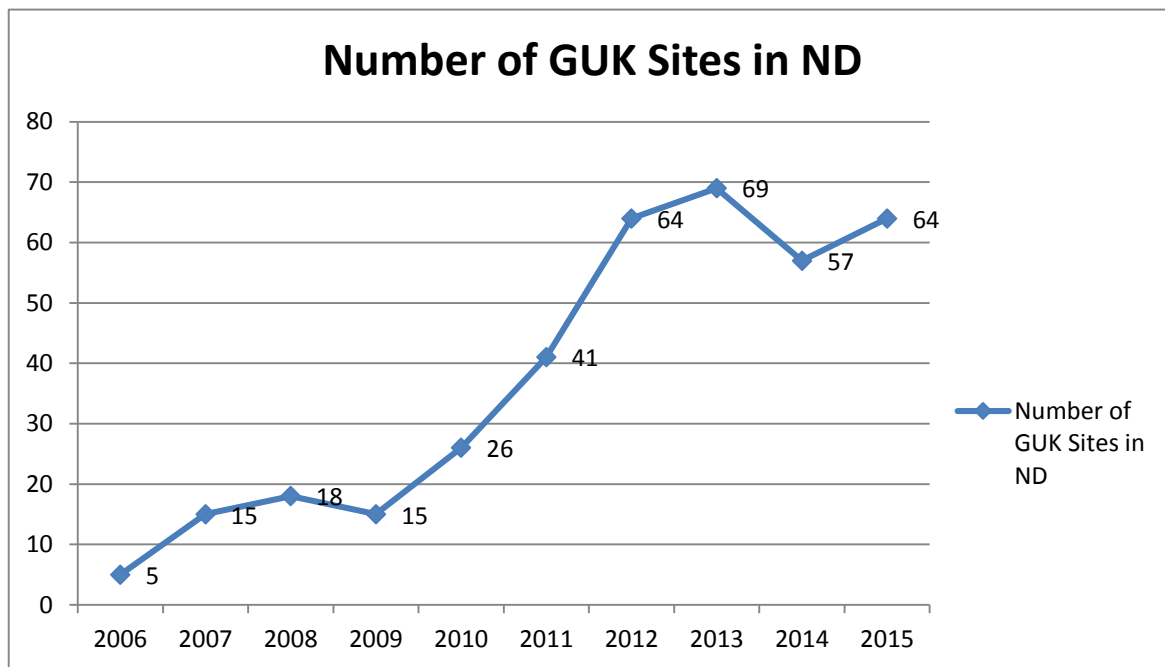
- Number of Sites Participating in Project Evaluation – 64 sites

**Map of 2015-16 North Dakota Sites for Gearing Up for Kindergarten**

**Gearing Up for Kindergarten Sites 2015-2016**

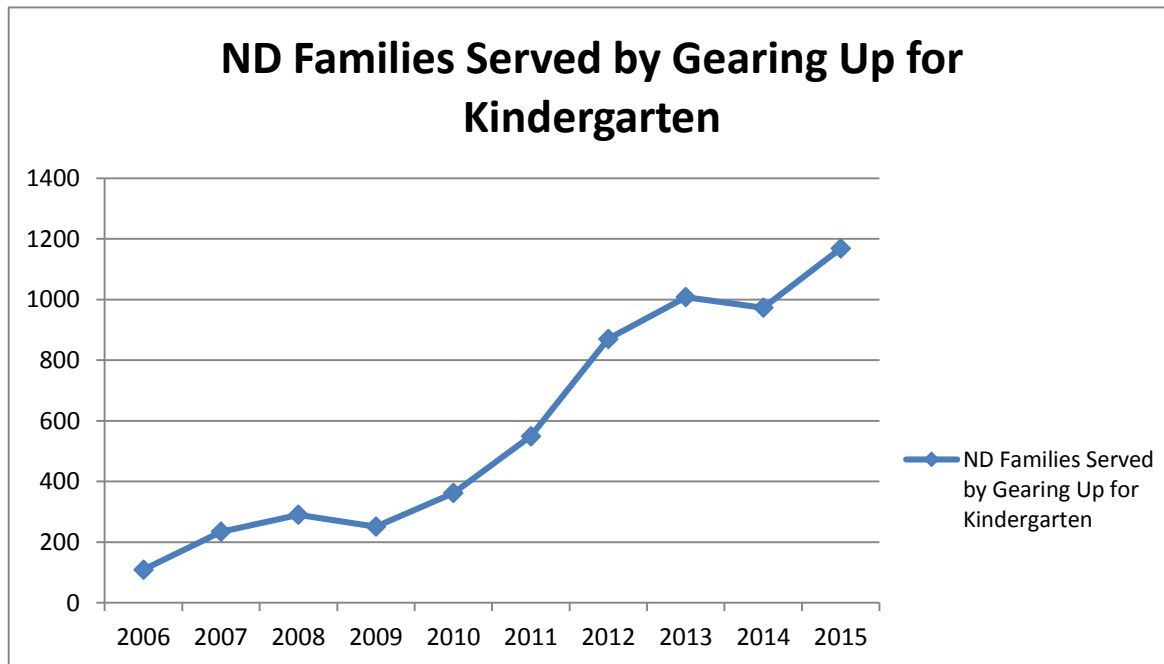


**Chart of North Dakota Sites Served by Gearing Up for Kindergarten**





## Chart of North Dakota Families Served by Gearing Up for Kindergarten



The number of families with children entering kindergarten in North Dakota that have been served by the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program has steadily increased. In the inaugural year of the program in 2006-07, 109 families in Cass County were served by the program. There were 234 families served in 2007-08, 290 families in 2008-09, and 251 families in 2009-10. The 2010-11 year saw a substantial increase in families involved in Gearing Up for Kindergarten with 362 families across North Dakota participating in the program. The first year of partnership funding with the ND state legislature in 2011-12 continued to accelerate growth and 549 North Dakota families participated in Gearing Up for Kindergarten with their children. The second year of partnership funding provided by the ND state legislature in 2012-13 fostered participation of 870 families statewide in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. In 2013-14, the total number of participant families statewide increased to 1,008 families. The program maintained a large contingent of families served with 973 families engaged in 2014-15, and in the 2015-16 program year, participation reached its highest point yet with 1,087 families served by the program.

The average yearly kindergarten enrollment in North Dakota public schools over the last decade has been nearly 7,000 children a year. That number has increased slightly over the past five years. A total number of 8,251 children were enrolled in public school kindergarten programs in North Dakota in the 2011-12 school year, and a total number of 8,575 children were enrolled in public school kindergarten programs in 2012-13. Based on these numbers, it is likely that the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program reached about 4.5% of incoming kindergarten children for the 2011-12 school year (served during the 2010-11 school year). The program's growth over the past two years suggests that the program then reached about 6.5% of incoming kindergarten children for the 2012-13 school year, and between 10 and 11 percent of incoming students for the 2013-14 school year. The program reached nearly 12 percent of incoming kindergarten students for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years, and perhaps just over 13 percent for the forthcoming 2016-17 year. These numbers indicate a significant step forward in providing a systematic approach to helping families focus on education, family involvement and school readiness.

## **Evaluation Strategies for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten Project**

A variety of evaluation strategies are being used to assess progress in meeting the program's objectives and the development of children and families who participate. This project report for 2015-2016 (10<sup>th</sup> year of the program) provides results gathered from the entire year of the program's operation in fall 2015 and spring 2016. 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.

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

### **Overall Program Evaluation – Retrospective Pre-Post Program Form**

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

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

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

### **Child Assessment of School Readiness, Parent-Child Version**

A third aspect of the evaluation process for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project focused on an objective parent assessment of a child's school readiness with regard to early literacy and early numeracy. The evaluation tool developed for this assessment was constructed by researchers at North Dakota State University. This instrument was added to the evaluation process based on participant and facilitator feedback and allows a direct, objective assessment of a child's developing abilities. For the 2015-16 program year, this assessment tool was used for the third time.

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

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

### **Open-Ended Responses**

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

## **I. Overall Program Evaluation Results for Gearing Up for Kindergarten**

### **Basic Characteristics of Program Participants**

A total sample of 850 participants from each of the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program sites completed the retrospective post-program evaluation survey in the program year for 2015-16. 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 562 from short 10-session sites (66.2% response rate), 257 from split 10-session sites (95.2% response rate), and 31 from split or continuous 16-session sites (62% response rate). The combined response rate for the three program types among sites that participated in the program evaluation was 72.7%.

Demographic characteristics of participants are reported here. Selected demographic characteristics of individuals participating in the program in 2015-16 who completed the survey are listed below.

- **Gender of parent** – 83.6% women, 16.4% men
- **Age** – Average of 33.95 years; parents and caregivers ranged in age from 19 to 64 years
- **Number of children** – Average of 2.64 children per parent
- **Location** – 74.8% live in an urban setting; 25.3% in a rural or farm/ranch setting (13.9%)
- **Family status** – Married (84.6%); Single (never married) (5.3%); remarried (1.4%); separated/divorced (4.8%); cohabiting (3.4%); widowed (0.4%)
- **Employment status** – Full-time employment (60.5%); employed 26-39 hours a week (12%); employed less than 25 hours a week (6.4%); seeking employment (0.7%); not seeking outside employment (16%); other (4%)
- **Education level** – High school/GED or less (14.5%); some college (15.9%); 2-year college degree (17.9%); 4-year college degree (38.5%); master's degree or higher (13.1%)
- **Income level** – Under \$15,000/yr. (5.4%); \$15,000 to \$25,000/yr. (4.7%); \$25,000 to \$40,000/yr. (16.8%); \$40,000 to \$60,000/yr. (18.2%); Over \$60,000/yr. (52.4%); No information provided (2.5%)
- **Racial or ethnic background** – Caucasian (92.8%); Native American (2.1%); African American (1.4%); Asian (1.5%); Hispanic (1.5%); other (0.6%)
- **First child to enter kindergarten** – 43.5% yes; 56.5% no
- **Child care** – No child care (17.1%); 6 hrs/wk or less (7.9%); 6-12 hrs/wk (11.5%); 12-20 hrs/wk (10.4%); 20 hrs/wk or more (53.2%)
- **Eligibility for food stamps** – 4.1% yes; 95.9% no
- **Gender of participating child** – 50.9% male, 49.1% female
- **Program participation** – 37.8% of participants indicated attending all program sessions, while 51.5% of participants were involved in 75% or more of the program sessions during the year (a total of 89%). Also, 6.8% indicated involvement in 51% to 75% of class sessions.

### **Overall Value of the Program – All Program Models**

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

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

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

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

**Table 1: Comparison Table of General Value of GUK Programs (2015-16)**

<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>0.2%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>24.5%</b>	<b>45.4%</b>	<b>28.1%</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	--	--	16.1%	51.6%	32.3%
	<b>10-week split</b>	--	1.2%	26.7%	47.8%	24.3%
	<b>10-week short</b>	0.4%	2.1%	24%	44%	29.5%
Handouts and activities provided to me in this program were:	<b>All Combined</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>43.6%</b>	<b>27.3%</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	--	6.5%	16.1%	41.9%	35.5%
	<b>10-week split</b>	1.2%	3.6%	29.1%	43.4%	22.7%
	<b>10-week short</b>	0.2%	2.8%	24.4%	43.8%	28.8%
		<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>0.2%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>38.2%</b>	<b>60.9%</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	--	--	--	25.8%	74.2%
	<b>10-week split</b>	--	--	1.2%	37.8%	61%
	<b>10-week short</b>	--	--	0.9%	39%	60.1%
I was treated in a respectful manner:	<b>All Combined</b>	--	--	0.2%	<b>18.8%</b>	<b>80.9%</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	--	--	--	12.9%	87.1%
	<b>10-week split</b>	--	--	0.4%	21.1%	78.5%
	<b>10-week short</b>	--	--	0.2%	18.1%	81.7%

**Participants expressed positive feelings about the program thus far, with 74% indicating it was very or extremely useful to them. Among participants in the 2015-16 program, 71% said the handouts and learning activities were very useful to them. Finally, nearly all of them (99.1%) agreed that the information was presented well and they were treated respectfully, with those who strongly agreed they were treated well at 81% among all participants. There were slight variations in the numbers reported by program type but not enough to suggest substantial differences, although participants in the 16-week model of the program expressed overall higher satisfaction.**

## Impacts of Program Participation

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

The average mean scores regarding how the program impacted participants in each of these areas were given on a scale between 1 and 5, with higher scores indicating a more positive impact of the program (scale of 1 = not at all to 5 = very much). For parents who completed the overall program evaluation in 2015-16, they responded as follows: (1) increased knowledge of child development (3.56); (2) increased knowledge of healthy parenting (3.52); (3) increased confidence in being a good parent (3.61); (4) increased parenting skills (3.48); (5) changed behavior as a parent (3.33); and (6) influenced the relationship with your child (3.52).

**Table 2: General Impacts of Gearing Up for Kindergarten Program (2015-16)**

<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	1.4%	8.8%	38.3%	35.7%	15.9%
Increase your knowledge of healthy parenting	1.9%	9%	41.4%	31.2%	16.6%
Increase your confidence in being a good parent	2.4%	7.5%	35.3%	36.3%	18.6%
Increase your skills as a parent	1.7%	10.7%	40.6%	32%	15%
Change your behavior as a parent	4.3%	14.9%	39.5%	26.3%	15%
Influence your relationship with your child	2.3%	12.6%	36.3%	29.1%	19.8%

In general, participating parents indicated very positive impacts from being involved in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. For example, **the percentage of participants indicating that the program impact was “a lot” or “very much” in a variety of areas generally held near or above 50 percent for sessions of the program across all sites.**

**Among participants, 52% indicated the program increased their knowledge of child development a lot or very much, 48% noted it increased their knowledge of healthy parenting a lot or very much, 55% felt it increased their confidence in being a good parent a lot or very much, and 47% said it increased their parenting skills a lot or very much.** Additionally, 81% felt it changed their parent behavior at least somewhat, and 85% 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 2015-16 program year, except for a few minor differences. Participants valued their experience and felt that they had gained valuable knowledge and skills as a result of their participation.

### Value of Program Versus Other Sources of Information

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

**Table 3: Value of Specific Information Sources on Parenting and School Readiness (2015-16)**

Question Please rate how useful each of the following sources of information has been for you on parenting and school readiness	Overall Mean Score from 1 (not useful) to 5 (very useful)
Information Source	Score
a. Your parents	<b>3.28</b>
b. Your child's other parent	<b>3.45</b>
c. Friends	<b>3.21</b>
d. Parents with children of a similar age	<b>3.58</b>
e. School	<b>3.63</b>
f. Preschool, Head Start or child care	<b>3.72</b>
g. Books, magazines or newspapers	<b>3.10</b>
h. Internet	<b>2.95</b>
i. <i>Gearing Up for Kindergarten</i> class and materials	<b>4.02**</b>
j. Other	--

\*\* Highest ranking

The results from the 2015-16 session of the program indicate that participants rated the school (3.63), preschool/Head Start/child care (3.72), and parents with children of a similar age (3.58) as among the most useful sources of information for them on parenting and preparing their child for other school. However, the Gearing Up for Kindergarten class and materials were rated higher than all other sources with a mean score of 4.02, 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 on Participant Parenting Knowledge and School Readiness Beliefs**

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

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

The first set of findings in Table 4 represents the feedback with regard to parental confidence and beliefs about a child’s preparation and school readiness. Findings are presented in Table 4 for the participants in all program models in 2015-16. Specific findings related to each particular model of the program are available from the authors.

**Table 4: Perceived Impacts on Parental Beliefs about School Readiness of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2015-16 Program)**

<b>Question</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. I am confident in my child’s level of preparedness for kindergarten and success in the school setting.	3.65	4.33	.68	<b>Yes</b>
2. I am confident in the activities we have engaged in at home to prepare our child for school transition and success.	3.60	4.27	.67	<b>Yes</b>
3. I am confident in the activities my child has participated in outside the home to become prepared for school transition and success.	3.80	4.39	.59	<b>Yes</b>



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

**Table 5: Perceived Impacts on Parent Knowledge and Beliefs of Gearing Up for Kindergarten (2015-16 Program)**

<b>Question</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. I understand basic aspects of child development related to a young child's learning, growth and development.	3.66	4.17	.51	<b>Yes</b>
2. I understand social and emotional development in young children and its influence on learning and relationships.	3.68	4.19	.51	<b>Yes</b>
3. I understand how young children develop early reading, math and thinking skills.	3.48	4.16	.68	<b>Yes</b>
4. I understand parenting styles and discipline and their influence on young children.	3.75	4.32	.57	<b>Yes</b>
5. I understand key parenting practices that influence a young child's well-being and development.	3.71	4.25	.54	<b>Yes</b>
6. I understand the meaning and dimensions of school readiness.	3.58	4.27	.69	<b>Yes</b>
7. I understand the specific areas of knowledge and skill that my child is expected to demonstrate to be ready for school.	3.54	4.35	.81	<b>Yes</b>
8. I understand specific strategies I can implement in assisting my child to be prepared for entering kindergarten and achieving school success.	3.41	4.26	.85	<b>Yes</b>
9. I understand the key elements of a supportive home learning environment.	3.78	4.38	.60	<b>Yes</b>
10. I understand specific strategies for parent involvement in my child's education that can help my child to succeed in school.	3.72	4.35	.63	<b>Yes</b>

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

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

- Participants noted **moderate to substantial changes in all of the 10 areas of parental knowledge associated with child development, healthy parenting and school readiness that were measured, with the changes showing positive increases in each area of knowledge** (e.g., understanding the skills a child is expected to demonstrate in being ready for school).
- The findings showed significant differences in parental knowledge for participants before and after their participation in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. These changes were **moderate to substantial increases between .50 and .90 in specific areas of parental knowledge, suggesting incremental improvement in key aspects of parent knowledge and beliefs related to child development, healthy parenting and school readiness.**
- Participants typically rated themselves quite highly already on most indicators of parental knowledge linked to child development, healthy parenting, and school readiness. The average beginning scores showed that most parents felt they had substantial knowledge in these areas, usually rating between “to a fair extent” and “to a significant extent” on the scale of understanding. This means that most participants already perceive themselves as quite knowledgeable in their understanding and there is limited opportunity for change.
- The **four largest significant differences** for participants occurred in the following areas: **understanding of specific strategies to assist in preparing children for kindergarten (.85), understanding of specific areas of knowledge and skills needed to be ready for school (.81), understanding of the meaning and dimensions of school readiness (.69), and understanding of how young children develop early reading, math, and thinking skills (.68).**
- The **findings suggest that Gearing Up for Kindergarten has made some progress in assisting parents and influencing them in a positive manner to gain knowledge in ways that will help them assist their children toward school readiness and positive development.**

This set of findings from Gearing Up for Kindergarten was generated as a result of involvement in the 2015-16 year of the program at Gearing Up for Kindergarten sites in North Dakota. The findings indicate the program makes a positive difference with parents who are involved and increases both their knowledge base and confidence regarding preparation of a child for school readiness and success.

## Parent-Child Reading Interactions

To assess program effects on parent-child reading interactions at home, a short measure consisting of 8 items was given to parents about their activities both prior to and following the program. Parents described the frequency of interactions for each item related to early literacy and reading, including such items as going to the library with children, discussing contents of a book with children, and looking for age-appropriate books to share with children. Parents rated their frequency of reading interaction with children using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – “hardly ever” to 5 = “one or two times a day.” A higher score represents a more positive and frequent pattern of reading interaction on that item. Scores are provided in Table 6 which indicate the pre-test score, post-program score, difference score and level of significance. The findings represented here present the information from participants in all of the program models during 2015-16.

**Table 6: Parent-Child Reading Interactions – Parent Assessment**

Question  How often do:	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
1. You or another family member read a book with your child(ren)?	4.17	4.45	.28	<b>Yes</b>
2. Your child(ren) ask to be read to?	3.98	4.35	.37	<b>Yes</b>
3. You go to the library with your child(ren)?	1.76	2.19	.43	<b>Yes</b>
4. Your child(ren) observe you reading books, magazines or other material at home?	3.53	3.87	.34	<b>Yes</b>
5. You discuss contents of a book with your child(ren)?	3.66	4.06	.40	<b>Yes</b>
6. Read for a period of 15 minutes or more with your child(ren)?	3.91	4.26	.35	<b>Yes</b>
7. Look for age-appropriate books to give to or share with your child(ren)?	3.81	4.12	.31	<b>Yes</b>
8. Observe your child(ren) looking at or interacting with books?	4.08	4.42	.34	<b>Yes</b>

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

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

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

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

One of the identified goals for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program is that participating children will show significant progress in being prepared to be successful in cognitive, social, emotional, physical and practical domains as they enter kindergarten. To get a sense of where parents perceived their children to be in regard to school readiness, a brief assessment tool was developed called the Practical Parent Assessment for School Readiness (PPASR). This short survey asks parents to rate their children on a 5-point scale in five key areas of development related to school readiness (a total of 19 items). Parents are asked to rate how their child typically thinks and behaves for each item. The range of responses that parents can give in rating their children goes from 1 to 5, with 1 = “hardly ever,” 2 = “once in a while,” 3 = “sometimes,” 4 = “often,” and 5 = “almost always.” In 2015-16, a retrospective survey approach was used with this portion of the evaluation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Participation in the Practical Parent Assessment of School Readiness required that parents fill out the PPASR survey once during the program, retrospectively at the end of the program. Only those parents who filled out a PPASR assessment for their child at both times were included in the analysis. A total sample of 850 children was rated by parents on the PPASR in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program (this sample represents a response rate of approximately 72.7% of participating children). Demographic characteristics were similar to those previously reported.

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

The key areas of school readiness selected for assessment by parents were: (1) *Learning and Exploration* (cognitive); (2) *Friends and Social Interaction* (social); (3) *Knowing the Basics* (academic); (4) *Feelings and Families* (emotional); and (5) *Practical Knowledge and Skills* (practical). Ten tables are included below, one of which covers each dimension, and there are beginning group scores (pre-program score), completing group scores (post-program score 2016), and difference scores (difference in the average group scores, or means) for each item.

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

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2015 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2016 (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.	3.84	4.42	.58	<b>Yes</b>
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	4.06	4.48	.42	<b>Yes</b>
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.84	4.32	.48	<b>Yes</b>
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.10	3.81	.71	<b>Yes</b>

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2015 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2016 (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.	3.68	4.23	.55	<b>Yes</b>
6. Takes turns with others.	3.58	4.03	.45	<b>Yes</b>
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	3.42	4.06	.64	<b>Yes</b>
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.45	4.0	.55	<b>Yes</b>
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.16	3.81	.65	<b>Yes</b>

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2015 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2016 (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.	3.55	4.39	.84	<b>Yes</b>
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	3.61	4.52	.91	<b>Yes</b>
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	3.65	4.35	.70	<b>Yes</b>
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.65	4.23	.58	<b>Yes</b>

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2015 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2016 (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.	3.39	4.03	.64	<b>Yes</b>
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.42	3.90	.48	<b>Yes</b>
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.68	4.32	.64	<b>Yes</b>
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.45	4.10	.65	<b>Yes</b>

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2015 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2016 (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).	2.48	3.52	1.04	<b>Yes</b>
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	2.97	3.81	.84	<b>Yes</b>

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for **16-week split session programs** operated during the 2015-16 year on perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. A number of important points emerge as a result of these findings:

- Currently, parents of children in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely rate their children quite highly on most indicators of school readiness**. This means that there is somewhat limited room for change to be indicated across specific items. For example, the average beginning score on nearly every item (of 19 items) was in the direction of the Proficient (3 or higher) or Advanced (4 or higher) category.
- **Moderate to substantial gains were noted for many indicators of school readiness in children**. These gains are likely due to a combination of participation in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program, normal processes of child development, and other contributing factors. All indicators showed evidence of change that reached statistical significance. The wide-ranging evidence of growth in children's specific domains of development related to school readiness is highly encouraging and evidence of program success.

- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on all of the 19 indicators between fall 2015 and spring 2016. This means that 100 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in all five of the school readiness categories.**
- These findings showed significant differences in parental perceptions of children's school readiness from the beginning of the program to the end of the program on all indicators. These changes included **4 substantive increases between .30 and .50, and 15 significant increases of .50 or higher on specific items of school readiness.**
- The **15 most significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred by order of magnitude in the following areas:
  - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (1.04)**
  - **Familiarity with numbers (.91)**
  - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.84)**
  - **Awareness of who to contact for help (.84)**
  - **Likes to work at solving problems (.71)**
  - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.70)**
  - **Trying to solve problems with friends (.65)**
  - **Shares how he/she is feeling (.65)**
  - **Remembers and follows simple directions (.64)**
  - **Talking about how others might feel (.64)**
  - **Adapts to new situations (.64)**
  - **Explores environment and participates (.58)**
  - **Creative in asking questions and solving problems (.58)**
  - **Works or plays cooperatively with friends (.55)**
  - **Getting along with others without fighting (.55)**
- In analyzing all increases over .50 or higher (whether significant or not), **the findings suggest growth in five primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (knowing the alphabet and numbers, awareness of personal contact information, etc.); (4) ability to express themselves through art and hands-on creative activities; and (5) ability to manage emotions and adapt in a new environment.**
- Assessing the five domains of development related to school readiness that are examined in the evaluation process, while all domains have specific items that demonstrate change after program participation, the areas that show the greatest impact as a result of the program are: **(1) Child Learning and Exploration; (2) Positive Peer Interactions and Social Development; (3) Knowing the Basics and Pre-Academic Skills; (4) Emotional Development and Management; and (5) Practical Awareness and Self-Care Skills.**



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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2015 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2016 (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.	3.73	4.18	.45	<b>Yes</b>
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	3.89	4.33	.44	<b>Yes</b>
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.31	3.82	.51	<b>Yes</b>
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.14	3.72	.58	<b>Yes</b>

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2016 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2016 (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.	3.81	4.26	.45	<b>Yes</b>
6. Takes turns with others.	3.67	4.11	.44	<b>Yes</b>
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	3.67	4.14	.47	<b>Yes</b>
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.64	4.04	.40	<b>Yes</b>
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.28	3.77	.49	<b>Yes</b>

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2015 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2016 (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.	3.55	4.31	.76	<b>Yes</b>
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	3.91	4.49	.58	<b>Yes</b>
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	3.66	4.29	.63	<b>Yes</b>
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.81	4.12	.31	<b>No</b>

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2015 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2016 (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.	3.45	3.97	.52	<b>Yes</b>
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.44	3.88	.44	<b>Yes</b>
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.43	4.04	.61	<b>Yes</b>
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.64	4.04	.40	<b>Yes</b>

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program Fall 2015 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program Spring 2016 (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).	2.77	3.53	.76	<b>Yes</b>
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.28	3.89	.61	<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 2015-16 year on perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. A number of important points did emerge as a result of these findings:

- Currently, parents of children in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely rate their children quite highly on most indicators of school readiness.** For example, the average beginning score on every item (all 19 items) was in the direction of the Proficient (3 or higher) or Advanced (4 or higher) category. In this program model, all 19 items had a beginning average score below 4.
- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on 18 of the 19 indicators between fall 2015 and spring 2016.** This means that **95 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 18 indicators. These changes included **9 substantive increases between .30 and .50., and 9 significant increases of .50 or higher.**
- The **15 most significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred by order of magnitude in the following areas:
  - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.76)**
  - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.76)**
  - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.63)**
  - **Adapt to new situations (.61)**
  - **Awareness of who to contact for help (.61)**
  - **Likes to work at solving problems (.58)**
  - **Familiarity with numbers (.58)**
  - **Talking about how others might feel (.52)**
  - **Drawing and using art to express ideas or feelings (.51)**
  - **Tries to solve problems with friends (.49)**
  - **Remembers and follows simple directions (.47)**
  - **Explores the environment (.45)**
  - **Works or plays cooperatively with friends (.45)**
  - **Participating in small groups (.44)**
  - **Taking turns with others (.44)**
  - **Manages feelings without hurting others (.44)**
- In analyzing all increases over .30 or higher (whether significant or not), **the findings suggest growth in three primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (using a pencil, knowing the alphabet and numbers, awareness of personal contact information, etc.).**
- In assessing the type of changes reported in each program model, a couple of interesting observations emerged. First, the changes in academic skills were slightly higher in the 16-week model of the program. Second, there were smaller changes in the categories of Learning and Exploration, Friends and Social Interaction (social development), or Feelings and Families (emotional development) for children in the 10-week program, while the changes were modest but larger in these areas for the 16-week program. This suggests a longer period of participation is helpful in assisting change in these areas that are more difficult to impact immediately. Finally, other areas that showed more change in the 16-week program such as trying to solve problems with friends indicate that some areas of development require more supportive effort over time to initiate desired change in a positive direction.

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

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program 2016 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program 2016 (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.	3.84	4.30	.46	<b>Yes</b>
2. Enjoys participating in small groups to play games or do learning activities.	3.98	4.41	.43	<b>Yes</b>
3. Draws and uses art to express ideas or feelings.	3.44	3.94	.50	<b>Yes</b>
4. Likes to work at solving problems.	3.28	3.86	.58	<b>Yes</b>

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program 2016 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program 2016 (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.	3.98	4.31	.33	<b>Yes</b>
6. Takes turns with others.	3.73	4.32	.59	<b>Yes</b>
7. Remembers and follows simple directions in playing games.	3.68	4.17	.49	<b>Yes</b>
8. Gets along without quarreling or fighting.	3.62	3.98	.36	<b>Yes</b>
9. Tries to solve problems with friends.	3.33	3.80	.47	<b>Yes</b>

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program 2016 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program 2016 (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.	3.82	4.36	.54	<b>Yes</b>
11. Is familiar with (or able to recognize) numbers between 1 and 10 (or higher).	4.17	4.61	.44	<b>Yes</b>
12. Is able to do counting, understanding of basic numbers (adding items together, etc.)	3.79	4.31	.52	<b>Yes</b>
13. Is creative in asking questions or trying to solve problems.	3.70	4.25	.55	<b>Yes</b>

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program 2016 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program 2016 (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.	3.56	4.09	.53	<b>Yes</b>
15. Manages feelings, such as anger or frustration, without hurting or being mean to others.	3.53	3.93	.40	<b>Yes</b>
16. Can adapt to new situations within a reasonable period and feel comfortable.	3.70	4.20	.50	<b>Yes</b>
17. Regularly shares how he/she is feeling with me or other adults.	3.73	4.10	.37	<b>Yes</b>

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

<b>Question</b> <b>My Child Typically:</b>	<b>Beginning of Program 2016 (Mean Score)</b>	<b>End of Program 2016 (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).	2.79	3.50	.71	<b>Yes</b>
19. Is aware of who to contact if he or she needs help.	3.35	3.86	.51	<b>Yes</b>

These five tables summarize the findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for 10-week short session programs operated during the 2015-16 year on perceived changes in children's school readiness on specific items. A number of important points emerge as a result of these findings:

- Currently, parents of children in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely rate their children quite highly on most indicators of school readiness.** This means that there is somewhat limited room for change to be indicated across specific items. For example, the average beginning score on every item (all 19 items) was in the direction of the Proficient (3 or higher) or Advanced (4 or higher) category. Eighteen of 19 items had a beginning average score below 4, and the other beginning score was above 4.
- **Moderate to substantive gains were noted for most 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.**

- Among 19 indicators of school readiness, **significant differences were measured on all of the 19 indicators between the beginning and end of the program in 2016. This means that 100 percent of the indicators for school readiness showed positive growth in children participating in Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Positive increases occurred on indicators in all of the school readiness categories.** It should be noted that the total number of participants is much larger in this category and this makes significant differences much more likely.
- These findings showed significant differences in parental perceptions of children's school readiness from the beginning of the program to the end of the program on all indicators. **These changes were almost all small to moderate increases between .30 and .60.**
- The **10 most significant differences for children** (as perceived by parents) occurred by order of magnitude in the following areas:
  - **Ability to recite family names and contact information (.71)**
  - **Takes turns with others (.59)**
  - **Likes to work at solving problems (.58)**
  - **Creative in asking questions (.55)**
  - **Familiarity with letters of the alphabet (.54)**
  - **Talking about how others feel (.53)**
  - **Ability to count and do basic numbers (.52)**
  - **Awareness of who to contact for help (.51)**
  - **Drawing and using art to express ideas or feelings (.50)**
  - **Adapt to new situations (.50)**
- In analyzing the increases noted here, **the findings suggest growth in three primary areas: (1) social skills and positive interaction with others; (2) ability to function more independently and learn actively in a guided environment; (3) development of specific pre-academic skills or knowledge that applies to a school setting (knowing the alphabet and numbers, awareness of personal contact information, etc.).**
- In assessing the type of changes reported for this program model, a couple of interesting observations emerged. First, the changes in academic skills were relatively similar as with other programs. Second, again there were modest changes in the three categories of Learning and Exploration, Friends and Social Interaction, and Feelings and Families (emotional development) for children in this model of the 10-week program, while the changes were modest but larger in these areas for the 16-week program. As already noted, this suggests a longer period of participation is helpful in assisting change in these areas that are more difficult to impact immediately.

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

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

#### **Child Assessment of School Readiness, Parent-Child Version**

An important objective for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program is that participating children will show significant progress in being prepared to be successful in cognitive, social and practical domains as they enter kindergarten. As an additional way to assess the growth of children, the program evaluation for 2015-16 also included an objective basic skills evaluation by the child's parent at the beginning and end of the program. This was the third year this tool was used.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Participants in the Assessment**

Participation in the Child Assessment of School Readiness, Parent-Child Version required that parents sit with the child and complete the assessment scoring process at the beginning and completion of the program. Only those children who had an assessment completed at both times were included in the analysis. A total sample of 822 children was assessed by parents in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program in the 2015-2016 program year.

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

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

Five tables (Tables 22-26) are included below, each of which covers one or two dimensions assessed with the child. Each table shows the score of the children on that item at the start of their enrollment in Gearing up for Kindergarten. Also, the score of the children on that item at the end of the program is included. Participants in all program types were included in this assessment, and a breakdown by program type is also included. The scores indicate progress (or lack thereof) that has occurred for children in the group during the 2015-16 program year.



**Table 22: Identification of Shapes – Child Assessment Scores**

Question	Program Type	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
Identification of Shapes (range of 0 to 4)	<b>All Combined</b>	<b>3.30</b>	<b>3.57</b>	<b>.27</b>	<b>Yes</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	3.36	3.57	.21	Yes
	<b>10-week split</b>	3.13	3.56	.43	Yes
	<b>10-week short</b>	3.38	3.57	.19	Yes

**Table 23: Identification of Colors – Child Assessment Scores**

Question	Program Type	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
Identification of Colors (range of 0 to 8)	<b>All Combined</b>	<b>7.57</b>	<b>7.84</b>	<b>.27</b>	<b>Yes</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	7.50	7.93	.43	Yes
	<b>10-week split</b>	7.46	7.75	.29	Yes
	<b>10-week short</b>	7.63	7.87	.24	Yes

**Table 24: Number Counting Knowledge – Child Assessment Scores**

Question	Program Type	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
Number Counting Ability (range of 0 to 100)	<b>All Combined</b>	<b>27.37</b>	<b>36.38</b>	<b>9.01</b>	<b>Yes</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	30.68	38.61	7.93	No
	<b>10-week split</b>	23.74	36.67	12.93	Yes
	<b>10-week short</b>	28.87	36.13	7.26	Yes

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

- Most children are **already scoring high on identification of shapes**. The program does not specifically target this ability, and this is apparent because children in each version of the program (and overall) make only small gains in their ability to identify shapes.
- Most children are **already scoring high on identification of colors**. Again, there are only small increases in the ability of children to identify colors during participation in the program.
- Children overall and in each model of the program **make significant progress increasing their number counting ability**. Children in each of the “split models” of the program progress more than children in the 10-week short model, and this is likely due to increased time for parents to facilitate this learning.

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

Question	Program Type	Beginning of Program (Mean Score)	End of Program (Mean Score)	Significant Difference Score	Is there a significant difference in this area?
Number Identification (range of 0 to 12)	<b>All Combined</b>	<b>6.55</b>	<b>8.08</b>	<b>1.53</b>	<b>Yes</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	6.46	7.86	1.40	Yes
	<b>10-week split</b>	5.98	8.12	2.14	Yes
	<b>10-week short</b>	6.81	8.08	1.27	Yes
Letter Identification (range of 0 to 12)	<b>All Combined</b>	<b>7.59</b>	<b>9.10</b>	<b>1.51</b>	<b>Yes</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	6.96	8.57	1.61	Yes
	<b>10-week split</b>	6.80	9.15	2.35	Yes
	<b>10-week short</b>	7.98	9.10	1.12	Yes
Sound Identification (range of 0 to 12)	<b>All Combined</b>	<b>5.91</b>	<b>7.59</b>	<b>1.68</b>	<b>Yes</b>
	<b>16-week model</b>	5.39	7.32	1.93	Yes
	<b>10-week split</b>	4.94	7.62	2.68	Yes
	<b>10-week short</b>	6.38	7.59	1.21	Yes

Table 25 summarizes findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the overall program and three program session types operated during the 2015-16 year. Specifically, it shows results associated with number identification ability, letter identification ability, and sound identification ability. These abilities are important in school readiness because they underlie early numeracy and early literacy development. A number of things emerge as a result of these findings:

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

**Table 26: Practical Knowledge – Child Assessment Scores**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Program Type</b>	<b>% Proficient at Beginning</b>	<b>% Proficient at End</b>	<b>Percentage Increase Score</b>
1. Can say his/her full name.	<b>All Combined</b>	<b>83.6%</b>	<b>93.4%</b>	<b>+9.8%</b>
2. Can say parent’s first and last name.	<b>All Combined</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>85.8%</b>	<b>+10.8%</b>
3. Can say his or her complete address.	<b>All Combined</b>	<b>7.3%</b>	<b>17.8%</b>	<b>+10.5%</b>

Table 26 summarizes findings from the Gearing Up for Kindergarten project for the overall program during the 2015-16 year. It illustrates results associated with a child’s expression of practical knowledge, specifically, the ability to repeat one’s own name, a parent’s full name, and one’s full address. This knowledge is often called “practical knowledge” because it is useful for daily functioning. The results were modest, however, some things did emerge from these findings:

- A majority of children in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program **routinely know their own full name and a parent’s full name at the start of the program experience.** There is a small measured increase in the total percentage of children who express this ability by the end of the program (increase of 10 to 11 percent of the total children).
- Only a few children in Gearing Up for Kindergarten express the ability to identify one’s own full address correctly at the start of the program experience. However, this ability typically increases also so that **the total percentage of children who express this ability by the end of the program approximately doubles.**

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

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

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

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

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

Qualitative feedback provides a different kind of view of how participants reacted to and experienced the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. The responses are more descriptive, personal and wide-ranging. We conducted a brief thematic analysis of the main response categories that were shared by participants and have selected a variety of responses for each question that highlight the responses of participants. Not all participant comments are selected here for purposes of brevity. The responses included here come from the 2015-16 program year.

## **Qualitative Feedback from Parents about Gearing Up for Kindergarten**

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

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

#### ***More Time and Active Involvement with Children***

- I liked the parent/kid interactions at the beginning. You need to stop and do those things with your kids. Take the time and it's neat to see their little minds at work.
- We now read books every night and play more games with family and talk through things more.
- I feel like I am more aware of how I parent. We've also been reading a lot more and playing the educational games.
- I read more with my kids by conscious effort and we work on sounds more.
- Loved it! Great bonding time and learning experience for all!
- I have been led to do more hands-on activities with my daughter.
- I have set more time aside for letter identification, sounds and counting.
- Work more on writing/drawing/fine motor skills.
- We play the games at home that we did in class.
- I read more to the children and let them try.
- I am doing more activities at home with him to help prepare for kindergarten.
- As a father I read a lot more. They really listen to me.
- Program was great, we read and share our day a lot more.
- It was a good time to spend one on one with our child and he looked forward to it every week.
- This program has led me to do more activities, especially ones that will help my son be ready for kindergarten.
- Bedtime, making more routines, less stuff on our schedule.
- We are working at home with the basic skills needed for kindergarten readiness.
- I have been reading a lot more to her every night. Bought age appropriate reading books.
- Trying to do more reading at home every day!
- My child is third out of three brothers, participating has encouraged me to make time for many of the educational activities I had more time with for my older children.
- I feel like we think differently about how we can teach things at home. You gave us many ideas for science and math, which are areas we need to work on.
- It has shown me different ways to engage in learning with my child.
- We do more things together to learn at home. Try to use methods in everyday situations.
- I love the time that I got to spend with my son and we had a lot of fun.
- I enjoyed doing activities with my son and learning about what skills he can practice.
- We've learned that family game nights are great for learning experiences: math, social, reading.
- Take home activities were educational and fun to do with my child.
- Focused more on reading and "fun" activities to encourage learning.
- One thing I've tried to do more of is spending more one-on-one time with my 3 children.
- This program has gotten me to read more with all my children.

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

- Trying to talk more calmly to my son and get him to understand.
- Yes, I listen and understand more versus using a traditionalist parenting approach.
- I feel like a more confident parent after this program.

- It is very useful, especially to be aware of other parenting styles.
- We are more thoughtful in framing our conversations with our child in a way that will be encouraging and help her and us think through our actions.
- Try to make everything an opportunity for learning.
- I liked when we talked about different parenting styles. I would've liked a little more information on discipline strategies. We have been led to encourage our kids more and provide extra hands-on learning.
- I took the eating healthy information to heart and have changed all of my meal plans.
- I have learned to be more patient when working with my child when I am teaching him stuff.
- I listen to her more and I don't rush things as much as I used to do.
- I have learned so many tips and tricks for learning and teaching young children. I have a home daycare and felt I could relate to every session taught.
- I thought it was useful and did learn what to expect from kindergarten. Yes, my parenting techniques have changed.
- We have learned to be more calm and explain ourselves better in our daily parenting.
- Our discussion about discipline has made me stop yelling as much and I have begun giving my child more responsibilities.
- I have tried to turn off my electronics and play with my child.
- We've changed our T.V./ video game policies at home. That session was extremely interesting/beneficial.
- I feel like many of the techniques we talked in class we already use at home. A couple of things we learned here we have added at home, such as, a safe spot and more positive reinforcement.
- Altered parenting style a bit. Trying to use more conscious discipline.
- Providing a more positive environment to learning at home. Less screen time!
- I have my child do different activities in his spare time instead of watching TV.
- I pay more attention to the way I react or respond to my child in difficult situations.
- I'm spending more time and listening better to each individual child.
- We enjoyed the sessions, our kids especially. This has certainly helped their confidence grow. As parents we have started an earlier and more firm bedtime. It's been a very good thing overall.
- After reading the sleep information, we moved everyone's bed time back 30 minutes, it has been very helpful.
- I have really thought about my parenting style and what works and what doesn't work.
- Really liked all they teach us mostly eating and sleep and how can it affect kids. Been doing that and it does help.
- It helped me realize how important bed time is and I am trying to enforce a better schedule for sleeping in our household.
- I've tried to focus more on positive behaviors and actions of my kids.
- I have learned to be more forward thinking with my child and have more patience.

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

- Emphasis on more sleep and learning what is expected when she enters kindergarten.
- Useful info on internet safety - I am more careful.
- We learned we need to do better at reading to our child and practice more numbers/letters since she isn't in preschool.
- We are more aware of engaging in learning opportunities during daily routine. We feel more prepared to develop a routine for kindergarten days.
- I am an early childhood para working with special needs children. The information given was great and very useful. It was a great review for me.
- We have started to really focus on skills needed to begin kindergarten.

- Yes, more attentive to taking different steps for bedtime and also with talking about feelings.
- I learned a lot about how communication differences between my child and I seemed to be causing many of our behavior issues. Since changing how I present issues many behavior issues have subsided.
- I take reading time and bed time more seriously, even higher priority!
- My goal was to work on separation and nervousness my daughter will have in the first week of school and she has improved from week one of this program to now.
- I liked the temperament sheet we filled out and compared.
- I changed the bed time and eating time of my child due to the program.
- It gave me an opportunity to reflect on when my oldest came to kindergarten and that they are 2 individuals and will respond to things differently and that's okay.
- The lesson on how a child learns (physical, visual, auditory) made me more aware to a lot of the challenges I faced with my kids.
- The parenting section of this program helped me to greater understand developmentally where my preschooler is and how to help her move forward to get ready for kindergarten.
- It was a great source of information, good to know the things I'm not doing and should be. And also good to know the things I AM doing and that they are good!
- I feel that it was good for my child in the school aspect and just to see what she needs to improve on.
- The program helped me to recognize the different learning styles that my twin girls have and how to help them each differently.
- My relationship with my child has dramatically changed to the better. He is free to express his feelings and is very eager to learn more and more.
- It's beneficial to gain an understanding of developmental aspects as well as preparedness for academic understanding for kindergarten.
- I understand a lot more about kids her age and feel more confident in helping her succeed.
- This program showed me that my child is not prepared for school as I thought she would be.
- It led me to understand how to work with my child better, she is a physical learner and I didn't understand that before.
- I am more aware of the things my child needs to work on before kindergarten – numbers, writing.
- Great at finding the gaps in learning. Trying to focus more on recognition (letters, not just sounds).
- It helped my son who has anxiety feel more at ease. I hope to have more patience with his abilities. All learn at different rates.
- I am working with sight words and discussing what going to school full time is going to be like.
- This program reminded me to focus on kindergarten preparation and provided useful materials.
- Gave me good ideas of different things to try for learning and be aware of their learning style.

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

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

- Great for the kids' interaction with other kids and great for parents.
- The confidence it has built in our soon -to-be kindergartener.
- My child loved this class! He was excited to go each week.
- I like that children are able to come into the school environment and make friends before school starts.
- Gives the kids a chance to socialize in a school environment without the pressure of being in class.
- My child is so excited for school, Gearing Up adds to the excitement, which I believe will help her be successful in school.
- He can understand and calmly express his emotions. Story time is quiet time unless he is engaging positively to the story teller.
- The interaction my child has with other children. She didn't have a lot of interaction prior to this.
- I think it was a good experience for my son to see how other (non-autistic) children interact with teachers, peers and their environment.
- My daughter was terrified to go to school before this program, now she is willing to try it out.
- He has become more comfortable sharing in a group and looks forward to doing his homework.
- He's very excited to start kindergarten, he has matured out of a preschool attitude.
- She is not nervous about kindergarten. I think without it she would have been.
- She's learned how to listen and do activities with others.
- She is much more comfortable emotionally about going to kindergarten. She is already familiar with her school and will know a few friends.
- He is very excited to start kindergarten in fall. This program did that for him. It gave him an idea of what to expect.
- Learned to make different friends and to be taught by a new teacher.
- He is now excited about kindergarten instead of just nervous.
- Meeting other kids his age. Participating in a program with teachers from the school. Becoming more confident in himself.
- I believe he has; he seems to be a lot more excited to go to kindergarten instead of being scared.
- He has learned how to interact with other children as he does not go to daycare or preschool, so this was a good learning experience for him.
- I worried about my daughter because she was painfully shy when Gearing Up started. She has really blossomed into a confident, self-assured person. It's been fun to watch the transformation.
- He has gained confidence and likes going to the school and is looking forward to the Fall.
- She is excited to meet new friends instead of scared. Feels like teachers are her friends.
- More outgoing. Interacting with teachers and kids in a more structured educational setting has helped his behavior in preschool.
- She has met some new friends and has become even more excited about starting kindergarten next year.
- He learns to participate in group learning and sharing things with them.
- She is very shy so just gaining some familiarity and comfort with the school, teachers, etc. has been great. She looked forward to attending every week.
- He acquired one-on-one attention that has helped him feel comfortable with the prospect of kindergarten.
- He has learned how to interact with kids a lot better.



- She has gained confidence! She has also learned how to look at a problem from different angles to find a solution.
- She has become more outgoing.
- She is more excited about going. She was nervous but was excited when she met new friends the first couple of weeks. She is looking forward to something new and something different than daycare.
- She is more confident and excited instead of nervous and scared.
- Social skills and confidence in own abilities.
- I think he has become more comfortable with group activities and with the idea of attending kindergarten.
- He is more confident and excited about school and more willing to try things without me at his side.
- She was scared to come in the beginning but is now looking forward to next school year.
- She is more social and confident since the beginning of the program.
- It has helped him to gain confidence in being prepared for school.
- Her confidence has grown when having to be put into situations that usually got her stressed.
- She has made new friends and feels important about having others care about her.
- Getting to know how to appropriately interact with other children and learning things from someone who was essentially a stranger, yet was able to listen and try new things.
- Getting used to being with other adults without a parent.
- He has learned more how to behave in a large group as far as waiting and taking turns. His knowledge of what he needs for kindergarten has improved as well.
- I see my son's confidence in getting to know other kids has increased.
- He can participate in group activities without feeling scared. He has come a long way at sitting still at story time. He understands the program routine now.
- She is very shy so this class helped her more by getting used to kids.
- Learned to control emotions/express himself in a healthy way!
- Wouldn't leave my side before, now she is willing to just let me go knowing I'll come back for her.
- This has helped him in transitioning situations as that was often difficult for him.
- Her communication skills have gotten better. Her attitude has improved both at home and in social situations.
- My child is very reserved, so the early interaction with her teachers and peers has been very beneficial. Thank YOU!
- He went from being fearful and crying about attending school this fall to being very excited.
- She has become more confident in social situations and has gotten much better at interacting with her peers.

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

- The centers were fun and engaging for my child. She looked forward to coming every week.
- Very interactive for the kids, hands on and very educational to spark their little minds and big imaginations.
- She has developed skills in sight reading, basic arithmetic and story structure.
- More curious, spelling and writing much more than she did.
- When we started, my child knew very few letters. Now he knows all of them!
- He seems more prepared and ready to start kindergarten; he also has improved in his skills.
- Numbers and letters – she understands more.
- He has an idea now of what can be expected of him in kindergarten academically.
- My son enjoys coming to Gearing Up because he loves learning new projects and he shows more interest in learning.
- He found new things he enjoys and is no longer scared to start kindergarten.

- Social skills, organization, preparedness, reading, writing, letters and numbers, own name, parents' name, and following directions.
- He has learned to do what the class is working on instead of his own thing.
- It was an extra way to get some learning and educational ideas across to him which was always beneficial.
- She is getting more confident and is getting better at recognizing letters and numbers.
- My daughter has grown socially and academically during this program.
- He has learned a lot more of his letters, numbers and sounds. He loves the interaction and new friends. He is becoming more patient with learning.
- My son really enjoys writing and enjoys the letter tracing handouts.
- Expanding on number and letter recognition. Learning to interact in a new environment when uncomfortable, follow directions and teacher commands.
- He is able to write his name, loves to draw/color and actively seeks out reading and learning activities.
- Wanting to do more learning with pre-K worksheets, practice writing, color more.
- Learned letters, number – more eager to learn.
- Exposure to centers, story time, and science experiments showed her what school will look like.
- He has learned a lot more science projects from the science centers the teachers put together! Still loves to read even more!
- He knows more numbers, letters and sounds.
- She has gotten much better at counting.
- A lot of benefits in letter recognition and number recognition. Socially being able to learn how to react to others.
- She loved coming. Art, stories and the classroom are the things she loved most.
- More interested in learning and excited for kindergarten and feels comfortable about going to school.
- He is more interested in reading and books than ever before.
- She loved the take home activities that I did in the parenting class for her to do at home. She learned a lot from the different games.
- He is more interested in educational activities, practicing letters, letters, numbers, reading, etc.

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

- My child loves getting used to the school.
- This program is excellent for kids with no previous school setting experience.
- Good program – gets kids familiar with the school, helps me teach my child a little more to get ready.
- The kid portion of the program is amazing! She is so excited to come every week and is looking forward to kindergarten.
- My son did not know if he was ready for school until he came here to the school to meet the teachers and friends.
- Nice opportunity for my daughter to see a different school setting (other than preschool) with schedules and routines.
- I think my daughter will feel very comfortable the first day of kindergarten. It will not be scary, because she knows what to expect.
- I liked that my child was able to get acquainted with the school, teachers and classmates.
- I like that my child has opportunity to become familiar with the school, teachers and peers so that she will be comfortable with this setting when she begins kindergarten next fall.
- Children getting to interact with each other and get comfortable about being at school.
- Teacher interaction, meeting other kids that will be in his classes, getting comfortable with the school.

- Hands on experience for my child. She was very “anti” kindergarten until we came to the first class. She has loved it since – I think this was a great asset for her.
- Opportunity for kids to socialize, kids to work with kindergarten teacher, play with kids in classroom. My child has benefitted from having the classroom experience, even with having preschool.
- Got familiar with school and teachers and then got an understanding of how to go to classrooms.
- She had the opportunity to meet kids, teachers and has become less worried about different environments.
- By attending it has helped my daughter to feel comfortable with the building that she will be attending in the Fall and also have some familiar faces.
- He is comfortable with the school layout and structure as opposed to coming in scared and not knowing what’s going to happen.
- This program has been great because it allows the children to see where the school is, what it will look like and what the expectations will be for them and the parents.
- Becoming more familiar with the school, classrooms and the teachers!
- Becoming familiar with the facility and teachers, more confident interacting with new kids/teachers, learning about kindergarten.
- Learning how to be quiet when needed, how to line up, and follow the teacher’s instructions.
- It helped prepare her for kindergarten with the school setting and routine for school even for a small amount of time we had each evening.
- She is comfortable and confident in school setting because of attending. Participating has gotten her very excited to start school.
- Attending this class has really helped us as parents to learn what our child needs to work on, so we have focused more in those areas which is really benefiting her. Being in new environments also helps her confidence a lot.
- Yes, he is more comfortable with the school and his teacher for next year.
- He is lot more comfortable being here and also being with the teacher.
- By getting more familiar with the teachers and kindergarten space, she is even more excited for kindergarten next year!

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

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

- Doing different activities with her and myself learning many things.
- I feel this program mostly benefitted my daughter and myself because we had some time together that was carved out for just her and me.
- Child interaction with students and teachers.
- The activities were good. He liked them.
- Spending dedicated time with one of my 3 children.
- I like how the individual activities were a great way to see how my child performed them.
- The interaction between the kids and parents is great. Also, the information given was very good as well as the parent and individual group meetings.
- I liked the child/parent centers, as well as splitting into two different groups.
- I like that the parents come with the children and that the parents are able to learn too.
- Child-parent interaction time. Hearing about kindergarten expectations.
- Hands-on learning with my child and parent time. I love the way each child is remembered and made to feel important regardless of who they are. Everyone is so sweet; I am so grateful this is around.\*
- 1 on 1 activity time with my child.
- The activities we do with our children.
- Getting to participate with him doing projects.
- The time spent one on one with the child prior to the split section.
- My child knows this is an event we go to just for him and looks forward to spending time one on one.
- I enjoyed the interaction with the variety of activities with my child.
- I liked the learning centers and doing the projects with my child.
- I liked learning new and fun ways to teach and explore though learning situations.
- Spending time with my child, watching her make connections.
- Spending time with my child at the learning centers.
- The interaction with your child and watching them grow and become more confident.
- It is a great opportunity to have bonding one-on-one time with my child.
- The parent-child learning stations and my child getting to interact with the teacher.
- Learning stations with my child – allowed us to be interactive and hands on in the learning process.
- The parent/child interaction in the beginning really helps in building relationships.
- The one-on-one time with the child doing activities to prepare for kindergarten.
- It was great to be able to interact with my child one on one and get to know the other kids and parents.
- My son loves the activities they take part in within the classroom and he enjoys “playing” like he is in school.
- I like that I could see my child do school activities well. I liked to see how much he enjoyed being here.
- Activities at the beginning of the sessions, it was nice to just to have time to interact with my child, without distractions.
- I enjoyed the parent-child interaction activities.
- We really liked the activity stations at the beginning of each night. And I liked the parent break-out sessions.
- I really liked how it brought parents and kids together and formed relationships!

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

- Getting kids more familiar with classroom and kindergarten expectations.
- The opportunity to have your preschooler in a kindergarten environment. I attended last year also with my oldest child. It also supported me in knowing what to expect a little. Kindergarten is different than when I went.
- The opportunity for my child to get an idea what kindergarten may feel like.
- I enjoyed the interaction with teachers, parents and students that will be involved in school next year.
- I found these classes very helpful and my daughter is very excited to be in kindergarten.
- I feel like this program gave a good idea of what kids need to know going into kindergarten.
- I love that my child had a chance to familiarize himself with the class setting and meet classmates before school starts.
- Our child loves the program. She asked every day if it was the day for “her school.”
- Exposure to the school setting for my child.
- Getting my child familiar with the school and K teachers.
- Child’s interaction with other kids and learning in the classroom.
- The opportunity for our child to become familiar with her school.
- It was great for her to interact with other children her age. Also, having her see an actual classroom is great too!
- It gave me an idea of what my child needed to know before entering school.
- My child is now familiar with the building and excited to start kindergarten (easier transition).
- Being among peer group parents and having the resource of a kindergarten teacher with personal experiences to share.
- My child gets a preview before next year. My child does something without needing me. The games and handouts.
- The kids get a chance to be more familiar with school, rooms and expectations.
- I liked that it gave my child a chance to participate with other kids his age and that it was held at the kindergarten center. I think he will be more confident next year when school starts because he was here for this.
- Child gets to be more comfortable in the environment, meeting teachers and classmates.
- I like that this program allows my child to get comfortable with the teachers and become excited about school.
- Just getting our daughter aware and used to kindergarten, she wants to go and knows what to expect.
- I like that not only are you preparing the child for school but also the parents.
- The chance for parents to do activities with our kids and then leaving them with a teacher is a great way to ease the kids into the school setting.
- My daughter got to interact with her future teacher and classmates and “practice” being in kindergarten.
- Exposure to teachers, classrooms and peers. Learning in group situations.
- How it helped my daughter prepare for kindergarten in a setting other than preschool.
- I like that the kids get to interact in the classroom and meet the teachers so that the transition goes smoother when school starts.
- My child loved being able to come to the school and have the kindergarten teachers as their teachers.
- I liked that my child could go to school and get to know the other kids, teacher and do activities. Also, seeing the classroom in action.
- I like that my child has the opportunity to experience the school setting along with using educational materials that we may not have at home.
- It has helped my child get ready for kindergarten and get very excited about it.

- I liked all the information that we received to continue to help teach what's needed for kindergarten.
- I like the amount of time the kids can spend with classmates and teachers. I think it helps them feel more prepared and comfortable.
- The ability for my child to interact with other children around her age and for myself to do the same with other parents.
- It helps children become comfortable with the school and expectations for kindergarten. Great activities for kids. Speakers were great.
- This was a great way for my daughter to get excited for kindergarten and feel comfortable.
- It's preparing my child for kindergarten and getting her used to being in a classroom setting and being around other children.
- The opportunity for my child to become familiar with the school, teachers, and classmates.
- Showed her what to expect in the classroom, introduced her to her teacher and future classmates.
- Getting a better understanding of what children would be expected to do in kindergarten as well as how to prepare them.
- I like that it allows my child to experience what kindergarten would be like and I was able to see how he may adapt.
- It helped me feel ready to send her to kindergarten.
- I appreciate that the child gets to see other kids and is allowed to experience the environment beforehand. This will allow for a much smoother transition.
- Learning what is expected of my child at her age level and what is expected of her as she enters school.
- Getting to know about kindergarten, the teacher, the classroom and the other kids/parents.
- I liked most about this program was that my child was able to get the feel of the school and meet some future classmates.

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

- I enjoyed the handouts and the parent information. It reinforced things we were already doing and gave new ideas on handling situations.
- I find the handouts to be useful at home and look at them frequently.
- I thought the information was very good. It's great information for parents that are not familiar with early childhood practices.
- It's interesting seeing other parenting skills.
- As a teacher going to this class, I can say the information shared with parents is useful and appreciated.
- I enjoyed learning about the different parenting styles. Talking/discussing with other parents was also very beneficial to me.
- It was fun getting to know so many different families.
- Whenever I went, I felt like I needed the class most of all. Very helpful for me as a parent.
- Group discussions with peers.
- Better parenting advice than any book I've read!
- The parent education time.
- Meeting the teachers/other parents.
- I enjoyed most that there was separate time after the group activities for parents so that the parents could really absorb the information without distraction.
- It's great for kids to get prepared for kindergarten. Also, it was nice to visit with the other parents and see how they parent.
- I really enjoyed the parent education and discussions. It helps to get different perspectives on different topics. I also really enjoy the centers to work with our children on different skills.

- Being able to discuss with other parents, meet other parents and getting my child comfortable with the school, teachers and his peers.
- It gave parents a way of talking about different situations and come up with different ways to deal with things.
- Learning different ways of parenting and hearing how others parent.
- The parent group is comfortable. I like that the atmosphere is supportive.
- I did like the brain development session. I also appreciated the similar situation the adults and kids were put in as far as being put together with a group of people we don't know. It made me appreciate how my kid must feel in the classroom.
- I enjoyed being with parents in the same situation as me, all together sharing their feelings, knowledge and stories.
- This program has taught me a lot more about how to help and understand my child.
- The teacher/parent class was excellent!
- Talking and being around other people who have kids at kindergarten level.
- This program provided so much useful information.
- We enjoyed it very much and found the parent group discussions very insightful.
- Great parent information and ideas.
- The program gave me a lot of great parent advice.
- I like that the school is getting the parents involved and teaching skills to families. I like that my son gets comfortable with his teacher and environment before he starts kindergarten.
- I enjoyed getting to know other parents and discussing issues and solutions.

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

- Thank you for putting this on, we find it very beneficial!
- What a great team of teachers and wonderful resources for families in our community – very kind, caring and helpful! Keep up the good work!!
- The program was very informative for myself and my family.
- Great program. Our child looked forward to it each week.
- Great program. Very good instructors. Love the I Love You rituals – use them daily.
- It was simply great and an EYE-OPENER on many things I take for granted about children.
- We looked forward to attending Gear Up. I think my son enjoyed and learned new material. I feel like I have a good understanding of child development and parenting skills but it was always nice to hear an educator's ideas and perspectives.
- Excellent program, especially for first child in school.
- This program is amazing! I appreciate the focus on factoring in more learning skills to get ready for kindergarten.
- I really appreciated the information and the attention and care of the teachers.
- I felt that this was a very good program for me as a parent and for my child. Hope they can continue the program in the future.
- I believe that program is extremely useful. I didn't learn a whole lot of new information because I used to teach parenting skills in the past. But I think this is an amazing program. Taught very well, my son really enjoyed it.
- The teachers are actively engaged in helping the children develop. They make it like a team process to help them learn.
- The involvement of each step of learning was well coordinated among tutors (teachers), parents and child.
- It's a great program. As an elementary teacher myself I already know what was discussed, but my son got a lot out of it. He loves school work and reading his new book every week was a highlight in his day.
- I enjoyed learning all of the information in a respectful environment.
- So well done. Very organized. Great information.

- I loved the friendliness of the teachers who are very warm and welcoming.
- I was super excited for this program. My daughter did not get the chance to go to Head Start.  
Can't wait for kindergarten.