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The Effect of Gearing Up For Kindergarten on the Development of Letter Recognition In a group of Kindergarten Students

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The Effect of Gearing Up For Kindergarten on the Development of Letter Recognition In a
group of Kindergarten Students

A Project Presented to
The Graduate Faculty of
Minnesota State University Moorhead

By
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Reading

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the Gearing Up For Kindergarten program on a group of children and their letter recognition success. Specifically, the study looked at letter naming scores of students' entering Kindergarten and the correlation between their letter knowledge at the beginning of the academic year and attending Gearing Up for Kindergarten. Gearing Up for Kindergarten is a program that works with upcoming Kindergarten students. The program offers opportunities for students to meet their possible teacher, become familiar with the school setting, practice routines of Kindergarten, and meet new friends. Scores were recorded at the beginning of the Gearing Up For Kindergarten program and then they were recorded post intervention (at the beginning of school year). The pre-intervention letter recognition scores of students that attended Gearing Up for Kindergarten were higher than those that did not attend. The mean score for children that attended was 17.83 pre-intervention, and the score for the children that did not attend the program was 2.8 pre-intervention. The post-intervention mean score for students that attended was 26, and the post-intervention mean score for students that did not attend was 23.5. Both post intervention scores being higher than the pre-intervention scores. The most noticeable difference was the pre-intervention scores of those that didn't attend versus those that did attend. The non-attendees had a much lower score than the attendees which could suggest that the program had an effect on their letter recognition score.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

General Problem/Issue.

Early childhood education has always been an important topic to educators, but with the implementation of full day Kindergarten and NCLB, it has gained more interest in recent years. With the implementation of NCLB in 2001, Kindergarten students are expected to know more than ever before. Because of the standards in NCLB, what was normally taught in first grade is now being taught in Kindergarten. Kindergarten is no longer just for social skills and play. Kids entering Kindergarten are asked to recognize all letters in the alphabet and know the letter sounds associated with each letter. The daily work in Kindergarten consists of learning letters and sounds, listening to rhyming sounds, identifying sight words, etc. By the end of Kindergarten, children are expected to read fluently, know all of their letters and letter sounds, along with 45 sight words. Research shows that letter identification is one of the most important precursors to reading. Along with letter identification, the five pillars of literacy come into play as well when learning to read. These five pillars are often times referred to as the building blocks of reading. These building blocks consist of five areas, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Each pillar builds onto the pillar before it and creates a solid foundation for a child's reading ability. Children's knowledge of letter names and shapes is a strong predictor of their success in learning to read. "The single best predictor of first-year reading achievement is the child's knowledge of and the ability to recognize and name the upper- and lower-case letters of the alphabet. A child with automatic, accurate recognition of letters will have an easier time learning about letter sounds and word spellings than a child who does not know the letters of the alphabet" (McLemore & Wood). Many teachers described children's

letter identification skills as a prerequisite to improving phonological awareness. Children appear to acquire alphabetic knowledge in a sequence that begins with letter names, then letter shapes, and finally letter sounds. Not knowing letter names is related to children's difficulty in learning letter sounds and recognizing words (Texas Education Agency).

"What students already know about the content is one of the strongest indicators of how well they will learn new information relative to the content" (2004, p. 1). John Guthrie is equally adamant as he writes about reading comprehension as impossible without prior knowledge (2008, p. 11), and the National Research Council states definitively, "All learning involves transfer from previous experiences. Even initial learning involves transfer that is based on previous experiences and prior knowledge" (2000, p. 236). Phonological awareness, vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge are among the key early childhood precursors of later reading competence. Preschool children's ability to identify and manipulate the sound structure of words is strongly predictive of conventional literacy skills in kindergarten and elementary school. Children's understanding of word meanings is a significant predictor of later reading comprehension and achievement (Senechal, 2006). Reading and talking with children plays an important role in developing their vocabulary. Typically, more words are used in written language than in spoken language. The more you read to children, the larger vocabulary they will develop. Research has shown children learn new words by; hearing a word over and over, hearing words spoken by the important people in their lives: Mom, Dad, siblings, grandparents, and by hearing words in a meaningful context-during conversation at dinner, in the car, while playing and while reading (West Bloomfield Township Public Library). A person's background knowledge, often called prior knowledge, is a collection of "abstracted residue" (Schallert, 2002, p. 557) that has been formed from all of life's experiences. We all, whether a toddler or a

centenarian, bring diverse bits of background knowledge—consciously or subconsciously—to every subsequent experience, and we use them to connect or glue new information to old. Background knowledge is an essential component in learning because it helps us make sense of new ideas and experiences.

Research in the past two decades has greatly increased knowledge concerning the beginnings of successful academic trajectories for children. Such work has established that young children's emerging understandings of numbers, letters, and sounds are important predictors of later academic achievement. As a result, benchmarks for knowledge of these concepts in preschool and kindergarten are being set forth by federal, state, and professional organizations and these are often used to make important educational and fiscal decisions. For students to succeed in reading, two components must be in place in our early childhood classrooms: a focus on letters of the alphabet and systematic phonics instruction (Wood & McLemore). One example of such a benchmark comes from the Office of Head Start, in which programs are legislatively mandated to collect data on children's progress at least three times annually toward identifying "at least ten letters of the alphabet, especially those in their own name." (Piasta, Justice, & Petcher (2012).

Subjects and settings

Description of subjects. The class being studied consists of 14 students from a rural Midwestern elementary school. There are 9 girls and 5 boys all of whom are Caucasian. 20% of the class is low income, 75% is middle class, and 5% is upper class. Two of the students are from a single parent household and 12 of them are from a two-parent household. Of the 12 students that are from a two-parent household, two of them are in shared custody homes in which

they go back and forth between parents on their preferred parenting schedule. One student is on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Selection criteria. I chose students from my own kindergarten classroom. I chose these students because they just started their school career and I worked with them all year and was able to monitor their progress.

Description of setting. The study took place in a small rural town in North Dakota where factory work at the Bobcat Company in the neighboring town is prevalent along with farming. Because of these occupations, many two-parent households are really a one-parent household. In many of these households, parents work opposite shifts so that one parent can care for the children while the other is at work, this includes night shifts. Farm families also face these similar challenges during planting and harvest seasons. The school is well known for wrestling and track, most students participate in extracurricular activities that keep them constantly on the go. The community is small and caring, everyone knows everyone and there is always someone there to lend a hand if needed.

Informed consent. The school district has given me permission to complete the study. The superintendent and the elementary principle where I conducted the study have both approved for the study to be completed. I have also followed the school district's IRB procedures as well as MSUM's IRB procedures. Both schools have granted me permission to complete the study. The parents of the kindergarten students received a letter explaining the research procedure and the purpose of it. All information was confidential and names were not released in the reports. Parents were made aware of this, pseudonyms were used where necessary. Because of the age of the participants, parents had the option to opt their child/children out of the research by signing and returning a permission slip.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the Gearing Up For Kindergarten program on a group of children and their letter recognition success in Kindergarten. Letter and sound knowledge are part of the literacy foundations for beginning readers.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

Preschool and letter knowledge play a role in what kind of readers children will become. Huang (2017) stated that the preschool years are viewed by many as an important time for children to gain prerequisite skills that foster and support future literacy development. A review of studies on student reading reported that children that mastered letter knowledge in preschool and kindergarten became better readers. One skill in particular, letter knowledge has often been used to assess a child for future reading difficulty and to predict future reading achievement (Adams, 1994; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Studies show that poorly developed letter name knowledge has consistently shown to be reliable predictor of later reading difficulty (Huang, 2017). Children appear to acquire alphabetic knowledge in a sequence that begins with letter names, then letter shapes, and finally letter sounds. The alphabetic principle is the idea that letters and letter patterns represent the sounds of a spoken language (Texas Education Agency 2002).

Definition of Terms. For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

Letter recognition- the ability to recognize/name any given letter from the alphabet correctly. Students will be scored using the Aimsweb letter naming fluency (LNF) assessment.

Gearing Up For Kindergarten Program- The Gearing Up For Kindergarten program was developed by NDSU extension service specialists and Parent Resource Center coordinators to assist parents and their children in preparing for the transition to Kindergarten.

Literacy is defined as the ability to read and write. Literacy consists of five pillars, these are referred to as the five pillars of reading. The pillars are building blocks and work together to create the end result of a fluent reader. The five pillars are; phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify,

manipulate and substitute phonemes-the smallest units of sound that can differentiate meaning-in spoken words. Phonics is the ability to understand that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (the letters that represent those sounds in written language) in order to associate written letters with the sounds of spoken language. Phonics instruction teaches students how to build relationships between sounds and letters and letter combinations and how to use those relationships to build words. Fluency is the ability to read text accurately, quickly, and expressively, either out loud or to oneself. This is the ability to read as well as one speaks and to make sense of what is being read without having to stop or pause to decode words.

Vocabulary is the growing, stored compilation of words that students understand and use in their conversations and recognize in print. Most vocabulary is learned through every day conversations, reading aloud, or reading independently. Vocabulary is important because it is how students' comprehend what they are reading. They must know what the words mean in order to understand the text. Comprehension is the fifth pillar, it is the ability to understand, remember, and make meaning of what has been read. Students with developed reading comprehension abilities can predict, infer, analyze and make connections to what is being read. Beginning literacy skills in kindergarten usually revolve around letter-recognition fluency. Lessons reinforce students' knowledge of the alphabet and then work on expanding students' recognition of both lowercase and uppercase letters. Students usually then learn to match up letters to their sound and begin forming different sounds by putting two letters together (Cooper, 2017). The ability to name the letters of the alphabet during preschool and kindergarten is a well-established predictor of children's later literacy skills (Piasta, Shayne, Justice, Laura, Petscher, Yaacov. 2012).

In this study, I explored letter recognition in a group of Kindergarten students. Letter recognition is the ability to recognize/name any given letter from the alphabet correctly. These letters must be successfully identified out of order, not just named while looking at an alphabet line. I compared scores of several children and conclude whether or not the Gearing Up For Kindergarten had an impact on their letter recognition ability.

Educators are continually searching for the best ways to introduce letters of the alphabet and phonics to young children. An approach of teaching letters implicitly as they occur in children's literature combined with systematic phonics instruction is one suggestion. This combined approach will develop students who not only can read but also who chose to read for pleasure. Teachers are encouraged to provide letter instruction to students in enjoyable ways. Some suggestions for best instructional practices in teaching letters and sounds to young children are:

- Teach and sing alphabet songs
- Read alphabet books regularly
- Keep alphabet charts in the classroom, posted at the students' eye level.
- Focus on letters that have special meaning to the students such as those in their names.
- Use letter games and word games that identify letters, sounds, and words.
- Keep plastic, magnetic, tile, or wooden letters available for children to manipulate.

The Gearing Up For Kindergarten program is an intensive parent education and school readiness program designed to help parents and children prepare for school. This program combines early learning opportunities for pre-kindergarten children with parent education opportunities for adults. The program was developed and piloted by the North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension Service, in collaboration with local public schools in eastern

North Dakota. The program consists of two five-week sessions that run for 90 minutes each time. The program is designed for families and children to participate during the year prior to entering kindergarten. Usually scheduled for 5 weeks in the fall and 5 weeks in the spring of the pre-kindergarten year. During a typical session, the children join with an early childhood teacher and classroom assistant to engage in circle time and other early learning activities. The child-focused activities center on a variety of developmental tasks, such as getting along with others, listening, taking turns, responsibility, and literacy skills (Brotherson, Saxena & Query, 2013).

The single best predictor of first-year reading achievement is the child's knowledge of and the ability to recognize and name the upper-and lower- case letters of the alphabet (Adams, 1990; Riley, 1996). Although many children enter kindergarten with a basic concept of print awareness, other children have limited exposure to literacy experiences and come to kindergarten with limited print knowledge (McLemore & Wood, 2001).

Stahl (1997) found that a child with automatic, accurate recognition of letters will have an easier time learning about letter sounds and word spellings than a child who does not know the letters of the alphabet. After children learn the names of the letters, they learn to recognize their corresponding shapes, and then establish the concept of letter-sound correspondence. Children learn that letters, when blended together, make sounds. By the end of pre-kindergarten, most children know the letters of the alphabet and the sounds these letters make. Instruction on letters of the alphabet is clearly important because one of the beginning reader's biggest responsibilities is to figure out how our alphabetic language works, (Cunningham & Allington).

The Importance of Early Letter-Naming Ability

Research on letter naming and its role in preparing children for literacy success has a long history in the United States (Durell, 1980; Foulon, 2005; Groff, 1984; Mason, 1984; Piasta

& Wagner, 2010; Treiman & Kessler, 2003. The ability to name the letters of the alphabet during preschool and kindergarten is a well-established predictor of children's later literacy skills (Hammill, 2004; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Scarborough, 1998; Schatschneider, Fletcher, Francis, Carlson, & Foorman, 2004). In learning about individual letters, children develop their initial understanding of the symbolic nature of written language. Ultimately, they learn that written letters represent the sounds of spoken language and can be used to map print to speech (i.e., the alphabetic principle). This beginning understanding is evident in children's early reading and writing attempts. The implications of these findings are the children with high letter-naming abilities in preschool and kindergarten are likely to experience success in literacy learning, whereas children with low letter-naming abilities are likely to experience later literacy difficulties (Piasta, Justice, & Petscher, 2012).

Factors associated with letter-sound knowledge

Letter-sound knowledge is necessary for children to begin reading and writing, and kindergarteners who know only a few letter sounds are at risk for later reading difficulties. Alphabet knowledge in young children has been consistently and empirically shown to be an important early literacy skill and one of the strongest predictors of later reading ability (Foulin, 2005, Hammill, 2004; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008;Puranik et al., 2012 and Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998). Alphabet knowledge includes alphabet recognition, letter-name knowledge, letter-sound knowledge, and letter production (Puranik et al., 2011 and Scanlon et al., 2010). Letter-sound knowledge contributes to a child's early literacy in three ways. First, letter-sound knowledge helps children fully grasp the alphabetic principle, the understanding that language is made up of discrete sounds and that letters represent those sounds in a systematic way (Lieberman, Shankweiler, & Liberman, 1990). Second, letter-sound knowledge is necessary for

children to begin accurately decoding words. Third, letter-sound knowledge provides the basis for phonics instruction in which children must use letter-sound associations to understand increasingly complex spelling features like consonant blends. As a result, letter-sound knowledge is potentially “one of the most optimal predictors” of later reading success (McBride-Chang, 1999, p.304). Children who fail to master letter-sound correspondences may fall behind in their literacy development and be at risk for later reading and writing difficulties (Hammill, 2004, Storch and Whitehurst, 2002 and Treiman et al., 1998).

Adams (1994) and Treiman, Kessler, & Pollo (2006) found being able to identify the letters of the alphabet by name is an essential foundational skill in early literacy development. Understanding that the alphabet is a symbolic system that represents speech sounds is an important stage in a child’s literacy growth (Foulin, 2005 and Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998). The ability to name letters in the alphabet in preschool and kindergarten has historically been identified to be one of the best predictors of future reading ability (Catts, Fey, Tomblin, & Zhang, 2002).

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the impact that the Gearing Up For Kindergarten program has on letter recognition on a group of Kindergarten students?

Chapter 3- Methodology

As a Kindergarten teacher, I have always been interested in how children learn and what growth takes place during the first year of school. I see kids that come in knowing all of their letter names and sounds, some that know some of each, and some that do not know any. I have taught Kindergarten for 10 years now, and children entering Kindergarten are expected to know more and more each year.

The school that I conducted my study at takes part in the Gearing Up For Kindergarten program. Gearing Up for Kindergarten is a Preschool/Parent Education opportunity for parents and their children who will be entering kindergarten in the following year. The program is free of cost and is offered to any student in the school district. This program does a nice job introducing kids to school and the expectations of Kindergarten. For example, children are in an actual Kindergarten classroom with one of their possible teachers. The program offers experiences with daily routines the children will learn as well, such as, lining up, taking bathroom breaks, walking down the hallway. It also exposes the children to the different areas of the school, library, cafeteria, playground, etc. The following were identified in children through involvement in Gearing Up For Kindergarten: Increase in children's school readiness as described by parents. Parents of students that have attended Gearing Up For Kindergarten have stated that their child felt more comfortable coming to school on the first day. Parents also express that their children had less anxiety and fear on the first day of school. Increases in child knowledge and skills occurred in social skills and positive interactions with others, ability to function more independently and learn in a guided environment, and development of specific

pre-academic skills or knowledge (knowing the alphabet, numbers, etc.). Gearing Up For Kindergarten promotes 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 (Brotherson, Sean, Saxena, Divya, Kranzler & Brooke, 2017). This is also an opportunity for the parents to learn about what their child will be learning in Kindergarten. Some of the things focused on in the program are social skills, hands on play, letter knowledge games, and art projects, just to name a few. Even though this is a wonderful program for students coming into Kindergarten, I believe students need exposure to these things earlier on as well. After thinking about my experience as a Kindergarten and Gearing Up For Kindergarten teacher, I came up with this research question:

1. What is the effect that Gearing Up For Kindergarten program has on letter recognition on a group of Kindergarten students?
2. Further researching this question created an understanding of the importance of Gearing Up For Kindergarten in students' letter knowledge and reading abilities.

Research Plan.

Methods. The Aimsweb letter recognition test was the measuring instrument used in this research study. The Aimsweb letter recognition test was given two weeks before school started to assess students' prior knowledge and get a baseline. The data from this test was stored in each student's individual files and in the Aimsweb database so teachers were able to see which students needed work in particular areas and so individual student growth could be measured.

There were set benchmark goals that Kindergarteners need to meet in the fall and winter. When the goals are not met, the students were then progress monitored until their goal was reached. AimswebPlus takes data from the very first test and graphs their scores throughout progress monitoring until it is time for the exit test. Interventions based on individual student needs were used in the classroom to help students meet their goals. Gearing Up For Kindergarten exposure was measured using attendance records obtained from the school.

Schedule. This research study took place throughout half of the 2018-2019 school year (August-December). The research summarized the data on what the students knew at the very beginning of the year. After all surveys were collected, I compared the AimswebPlus data to the surveys and looked for correlations between low scores and whether or not the student attended Gearing Up For Kindergarten. By using data in December, I was able to see the progress each student had made and whether or not their goals were met. I also carefully examined the low scores from the beginning of the year and compared them to the middle of year scores to see if the problems were overcome and if Gearing Up For Kindergarten had an impact on the child's mid year scores. Individual student scores were also compared with the national norm. I did not encounter any ethical issues during my study.

Data Collection. Once I received all consent forms, I began looking at the data I had collected since the beginning of the school year. I collected all students' scores from the letter recognition testing from August of 2018 to December 2018. At the beginning of the school year, the kids were benchmarked (assessed) on their letter names using our school's letter recognition assessment. The kids were also re-assessed using the letter recognition assessment in December 2018. It was important to compare their winter scores to their fall scores. Comparing the scores showed me if there had been improvement since the beginning of the year in these areas. The

students that fell below the target score (17) in the fall were progress monitored throughout the school year. I have a significant amount of data for these students, as they were progress monitored weekly. I also collected data through our school's Gearing Up For Kindergarten attendance records. These records showed me if the child attended Gearing Up or not, and how many sessions they attended if they did attend.

After looking over the data, I put them into groups based on whether or not they attended Gearing Up For Kindergarten. I was able to figure out the amount of exposure based on the number of sessions the child attended.

Six of the children attended all ten sessions of Gearing Up For Kindergarten. Eight students did not attend Gearing Up For Kindergarten at all.

Results. According to the classroom observation and assessments, Student G was the “at-risk” student. Student G came into Kindergarten unable to write their name or recognize it when asked to find it on personal items in the classroom. When looking at this student's survey, they did not attend Gearing Up For Kindergarten. This student knew one letter on the letter recognition assessment in the fall of 2018. This student has been receiving Title 1 services 4 times a week since the middle of September. Our school also has access to a paraprofessional that has taken the student out to work on letter recognition twice a week for 15 minutes. During the first three months of school, the student required constant teacher support to complete their daily classroom work. In the December 2018 testing, Student G was able to identify all 26 letters on the letter recognition assessment.

Student A's letter recognition score for fall of 2018 was two. This child was not in Gearing Up For Kindergarten. At the beginning of the school year, this student was able to name two out of 26 letters on the letter recognition assessment. This student received Title 1 services

five days a week for 20 minutes at a time. This student is also on an IEP and sees the special education teacher five times a week for 30 minutes. In December of 2018, this student was able to identify 14 of the 26 letters on the letter recognition assessment.

Student I attended all 10 sessions of Gearing Up, at the beginning of the school year, this student was able to name six out of 26 letters on the letter recognition assessment. This student received regular classroom instruction, with the addition of occasionally working with a paraprofessional on letter flash cards. In December of 2018, the student was able to identify all 26 letters of the alphabet.

Student M attended all 10 sessions of Gearing Up and at the beginning of the school year, could identify 11 of 26 letters. This student received regular classroom instruction with the addition of occasionally working with a paraprofessional on letter flash cards. In December of 2018, this student was able to identify all 26 letters of the alphabet.

After reviewing all of the scores from my kindergarten students, I was able to put the data into tables and determine the effects that Gearing Up For Kindergarten program had on students' letter recognition ability.

Chapter 4- Results

The purpose of this study was to determine what effect the Gearing Up For Kindergarten program had on Kindergarten students' letter recognition ability/scores in Kindergarten. The instruments used in this study to obtain data were the Aimsweb letter naming fluency (LNF) probe, and attendance from the Gearing Up For Kindergarten program.

Table 1.

Participant Demographic Information

Student	Gender	IEP	Free/Reduced Lunch
A	F	Yes	Yes
B	M	No	No
C	M	No	No
D	F	No	No
E	F	No	No
F	F	No	Yes
G	F	No	No
H	M	No	No
I	M	No	No
J	F	No	No
K	M	No	No
L	F	No	No
M	F	No	No

N

F

No

Yes

Table 2.

Student Scores- Did not attended Gearing Up

Student	Letter recognition score pre- intervention	Letter recognition score post- intervention
A	6	17
B	5	26
C	3	26
D	1	26
E	3	26
F	1	26
G	2	15
H	2	26
Totals	23	188
Mean Score	2.88	23.5

Table 3.

Student Scores-Did attend Gearing Up

Student	Letter recognition score pre-intervention	Letter recognition score post-intervention
I	6	26
J	21	26
K	24	26
L	24	26
M	11	26
N	21	26
Total	107	156
Mean Score	17.83	26

Conclusions

After reviewing all of the data and comparing the scores of students who attended Gearing Up For Kindergarten and those that did not attend the program, the studies show that four of the six students that attended Gearing Up had higher scores on the letter recognition test at the beginning of the year. Two students that attended Gearing Up knew less than 11 letters at the beginning of the year when tested on letter recognition. Therefore, Gearing Up may have helped their overall readiness, but had no major impact on their letter recognition score. The students that did not attend Gearing Up scored lower on the letter recognition test at the beginning of the year. However, all but two of these students were able to recognize all 26 letters of the alphabet by December of 2018 with regular classroom instruction plus interventions such as working with a paraprofessional practicing alphabet flash cards, Title 1 (if qualified) and/or IEPs (if qualified). The two students that were not able to identify 26 of the letters entered kindergarten on IEPs and qualified for Title 1 services. These students were considered “at risk” from the beginning of the year, so it was not surprising that they did not master 26 letters by December of 2018.

The Gearing Up For Kindergarten program didn't have much of an impact on the student's overall scores. All but two of the students that did not attend the program were able to reach the goal of 26 letters by December 2018 with just the regular classroom instruction and some interventions (which all students received). The Gearing Up For Kindergarten helps expose children to the school and routines, along with teachers/staff, but it does not have a major impact on students' ability to recognize letters.

The mean score for students that didn't attend the Gearing Up program was 2.8 pre-intervention. The score for students that did attend the Gearing Up program had a mean score of 17.83 pre-intervention. According to this comparison, the Gearing Up program may have had an impact on the students' pre-intervention scores, but it could also mean that the students' parents of those students that attended Gearing Up worked on letter recognition at home. It is clear that the students that didn't attend Gearing Up were at a disadvantage in pre-intervention, both from not being in the program, but I would also gather from my own professional opinion and observation that these students may not have had the parental support and involvement that the students that attended Gearing Up. The Gearing Up program requires parents to be present with the child during the sessions. Some parents, due to work, health, transportation, or lack of interest, choose not to bring their child to Gearing Up. By the end of the academic year however, students that did not attend the Gearing Up program had a post-intervention mean score of 23.5 and the students that did attend the Gearing Up program had a post-intervention mean score of 26. Here again, the post-intervention scores are higher for the students that attended the program but these students also received interventions and one on one time working on letter recognition. The mean score of the students that did not attend the Gearing Up program went up an incredible amount, from 2.8 to 23.5. This shows that even though these children didn't attend the Gearing Up program, their time spent in the classroom learning with their teacher was successful. These students made huge improvements by the post intervention scores which is wonderful.

So, even though we may not get every child to attend the Gearing Up program, all children will still have great opportunities to learn and succeed when they come to Kindergarten. The Gearing Up program is just a nice introduction and kind of a "jump start" to Kindergarten.

Chapter 5- Implications for Practice

Action Plan

As a school district and community, I feel that it is important to work together in order to offer children exposure to letter knowledge before they begin their education. Our school provides Gearing Up For Kindergarten, which provides two sessions, the first has parents and children working together doing science, literacy and math activities. Parents and children work together to solve problems and work together during this time. The second session is just for the parents, this session gives parents information and examples of activities to do at home and how to support their child in becoming a lifelong learner. This is a great opportunity for parents, even if their child is a year out of Kindergarten, they are educated on the importance of literacy before kindergarten and this knowledge can be used with younger siblings as well.

I am a strong believer in this and have worked with our school secretary to make sure the Gearing Up For Kindergarten registration forms go out at the end of summer so parents have plenty of time to return them. I also make phone calls to those that do not register just to make sure they have received the information and to answer any questions. I feel that by doing this, it gives parents a better understanding of the program and also makes them feel more welcome by having someone reach out to them. I am very passionate about this program and do my best to get as many pre-kindergarten children enrolled in it.

Plan for Sharing

The findings of my research confirmed my beliefs and feelings towards early childhood education and providing learning experiences before kindergarten. As an educator, I feel it is important to share this knowledge with others. I will continue to share my knowledge through the Gearing Up For Kindergarten program each year. I have spoken to the preschools and daycares in

town about the importance of this program and have asked them to help me spread the word by handing out information sheets to the parents of upcoming students. I also plan to share my findings with my fellow co-workers during our staff meetings we have on a bi-weekly basis.

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APPENDIX

AIMSweb® Letter Naming Fluency - Progress Monitor Assessment #4

Given To: _____ Given By: _____ Date: _____

u o L P K b E j H h / 10 (10)

S c a U I K T N L Y / 10 (20)

k B H Y M g o Q p W / 10 (30)

U W u Q O s A n P i / 10 (40)

G o n Z I c L X U i / 10 (50)

m E d l j Y p G v B / 10 (60)

P c r H K x M i O W / 10 (70)

W A N x k l a u Q d / 10 (80)

z N X M L e g l C p / 10 (90)

A F k j H U z s l L / 10 (100)

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