

The Program

The *Get Ready for School* program was designed as an intervention program to reduce the gap in literacy and school readiness skills that often exists at the time of school entry for children from low-income families, and those learning English as a second language. Children receive **88 hours of instruction** through a curriculum that focuses on **emergent literacy skills**, such as phonological awareness and vocabulary development, and involves highly predictable classroom routines.



The Participants

The expansion of the *Get Ready for School* program continued in 2016 with the addition of four new sites to the returning twelve. Across the 16 sites, 318 children were enrolled in the program. Participating children were 3-4 years of age, entering junior kindergarten in the fall of the same year.

The Gains

To help determine the impact and effectiveness of the program, each child was given a **pre-test** and **post-test** on a number of literacy measures and on one behaviour measure (table below shows average scores*). Overall, children made significant gains on all these tasks as a result of participating in the program. *A comprehensive version of this report is available upon request.

One of the best predictors of a child's reading ability is **phonological awareness**. It is the ability to focus on and manipulate the sounds in spoken language. Through activities that involve identifying letter sounds, segmenting syllables, rhyming words, and blending sounds to make words, the children in the *Get Ready for School* program improved their phonological skills and identified on average 9 more letter sounds by the end of the program.

Children in the program also significantly increased their **vocabulary knowledge**, a critical prerequisite for reading comprehension and reading achievement, completing the program with an average vocabulary size that was larger than 63% of their same-age peers. An astounding **27% of children** experienced a **full year's growth** in their vocabulary with **10%** of children gaining **a year and a half** of vocabulary knowledge. This growth was facilitated by allowing children to experience words in a meaningful context, through sorting, storytelling, and book reading.

Assessment	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain
Letter Sounds Knowledge (x/26)	0.9	10.3	9.4
Phonological Awareness Task (x/30)	0.3	1.6	1.3
Receptive Vocabulary Task (percentile)	53	63	10
Learning Behaviours (x/36)	26.0	31.5	5.5

Lastly, the children were introduced to classroom **learning behaviours**, such as raising their hands, following instructions, taking turns and sharing. After completing the program, the children were able to perform many of these actions independently. Improvement in these social competencies is important in helping the child feel confident in school, and thus shape the attitudes and views he or she will have towards school and education.

The Impact

Our consistent program results provide further evidence that the *Get Ready for School* program is effective in the development of emergent literacy and school readiness skills. The many positive testimonials shared by parents each year, speak to the importance of this program for their child*. Ultimately, the *Get Ready for School* program impacts reading achievement and school success, and has the potential to reduce the frequency and severity of future reading problems. Literacy matters! *Copies of parent letters available upon request.