

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**, including letter knowledge, phonological awareness and vocabulary development, and involves highly predictable classroom routines and repetitive activities and games.

The Participants

In 2015, the *Get Ready for School* program was expanded to 12 community sites within Waterloo Region, adding four new sites to the returning eight. Participating children were 3-4 years of age, entering junior kindergarten in the fall. Across the 12 sites, 238 children were enrolled in the program. Expansion will continue into 2016, with the addition of four new sites, bringing our total offering to 16 sites.



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 (e.g., phonological awareness and vocabulary knowledge) 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 children'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 showed improvements in their phonological skill and identified 9 more letter sounds by the end of the program.

Assessment	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain
Letter Sounds Knowledge (x/26)	2.8	12.3	9.5
Phonological Awareness Task (x/30)	0.4	1.9	1.5
Receptive Vocabulary Task (percentile)	58	70	12
Learning Behaviours (x/36)	25	31	6

Children in the program also improved their **vocabulary knowledge**, which is critical for reading achievement and reading comprehension. Based on results, children completed the program with an average vocabulary size that was

larger than 70 percent of their same-age peers. This growth is facilitated by activities that allow children to experience words in a meaningful context, such as sorting games, storytelling activities, and book reading.

Lastly, the children were introduced to classroom **learning behaviours**, such as raising their hands, following instructions, and sharing. After completing the program children were able to perform many of these actions independently. Improvement in these social competencies are 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 uses effective strategies that promote emergent literacy skills and school readiness. Ultimately, this program impacts reading achievement, and has the potential to reduce the frequency and severity of future reading problems that children may experience later in the elementary years. Each year we receive an overwhelming response from parents speaking to the importance of this program for their child. *Copies of parent letters available upon request.*

