

THE READY, SET, GO PROGRAM – 2010 PROGRAM EVALUATION RESULTS

The *Ready, Set, Go* program is a school readiness program that includes both child and parent group components. The children's program assists in developing self-confidence and independence skills required for Junior Kindergarten. It also addresses the basic issues of school transition, i.e. separation from caregiver, rules and routines in the classroom, and social skills. The parent's group addresses subjects related to child development, understanding of the school system, and the parenting skills that support the child's transition into school. It also promotes involvement and communication between the parent and the school. *Ready, Set, Go* is a ten-session program, running daily for two weeks, operating in the summer months in several schools in high-need neighbourhoods in the Scarborough community of Toronto.

Evaluation

The evaluation of the *Ready, Set, Go* program looked at the program's effects on children, parents, as well as kindergarten teachers in seven schools.

Children: To evaluate whether the program was successful at teaching children skills required for Junior Kindergarten, children's school-readiness competencies were rated at the beginning of the program, then again at the end of the program. At the start of each program (Day 1 or 2), staff completed a 15-item observational checklist of school-readiness competencies for all children participating in the program. Each child was rated as *Yes* or *No* on whether he or she demonstrated the behaviours listed on the checklist. Examples of the school-readiness competencies include "*Able to respond during attendance*" and "*Able to separate from caregiver.*" A greater number of *No* scores indicated lower school readiness. At the end of the program, staff once again rated the children's competencies on the same checklist.

Parents: To evaluate whether the parents benefitted from *Ready, Set, Go's* parent's program, parents were asked, at the end of the program, to fill out an evaluation form that asked about their experiences and what they learned.

Teachers: In the Fall, after the beginning of school, the Junior Kindergarten teachers of schools that participated in the *Ready, Set, Go* program were asked to provide feedback on whether they noticed more readiness in the students. Teachers met as a focus group, with a facilitator asking questions and taking notes.

Participants: A total of 281 children participated in the *Ready, Set, Go* program across ten schools. Pre- and post-evaluation data was received for a total of 229 (81%) children. Also, 352 parents participated in the parents' program, and 226 (64%) completed a pre-program survey that looked at the characteristics of the parents. Furthermore, 241 (68%) parents completed an end-of-program survey. In addition, of the ten schools that were evaluated, 16 school staff members were interviewed.

Results

Children: Of the 229 children that participated in evaluation, 45% started the program lacking the skills necessary to start Junior Kindergarten. By the end of the program, 83% of the children had the skills necessary to be "ready for school."

Parents: Overall, 99% of parents reported that the program gave their child an experience similar to starting school. Also, 99% of parents reported that it was helpful to meet with other

parents to discuss children and expectations for them at school. When asked about the topics parents had learned, 80% indicated that they learned how to help their child do well at school and 79% specified that they learned about positive discipline with their child. In the end, 99% of parents indicated that they would recommend the *Ready, Set, Go* program to another parent.

Teachers: School staff/teachers were very happy with the program, and all stated that they would support holding the program again. At the start of school, teachers noticed that children were more relaxed, with children who had attended the *Ready, Set, Go* program settling in better compared to peers who had not attended.

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