

Get Set Learn Summary Report 2018

Get Set Learn is a holistic family literacy program that provides a foundation for families with literacy challenges to experience successful lifelong learning.



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The Regional Municipality of Waterloo Social Services funds the **Get Set Learn** program, coordinated by Project READ Literacy Network Waterloo-Wellington and hosted by community partners in Kitchener and Cambridge.

Project READ Literacy Network Waterloo-Wellington (PRLN) staff delivered the **Get Set Learn** program in 2017, and provided information for this report.

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A blue decorative graphic consisting of a series of overlapping, semi-transparent shapes that create a sense of depth and movement, resembling a stylized 'P' or a series of steps. It is positioned to the left of the section header.

Project READ Literacy Network Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide any adult or family in Waterloo Wellington with access to literacy training.

Get Set Learn Community Partners



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Get Set Learn 2018 - Outcomes achieved.....	8
Introduction	8
Get Set Learn Program Outcomes	9
How does the Get Set Learn program achieve these outcomes?.....	10
Get Set Learn 2018 Results.....	13
Successes, Challenges, and Recommendations.....	19
Get Set Learn 2018 – Community impact achieved	24
History of Get Set Learn	25
Impact on families	28
Get Set Learn 6-month Follow-up results	30
Get Set Learn 2018 – New initiatives achieved.....	32
Growing from our base	32
Get Set Learn 2018 Goals achieved.....	35
Get Set Learn 2019 Goals.....	36

Executive Summary

This report will summarize the outcomes and impact of the **Get Set Learn** program, its successes and challenges in 2018, and our goals for the program's future.

Get Set Learn is a literacy program for families. Our goals for the program focus mainly on the parents.

Our participants (parents) all experience low income and often arrive at the program experiencing multiple life challenges, which may include low literacy skills which often correspond with isolation and mental health issues. These challenges directly impact the ability to gain and maintain employment and to take part in and contribute to the community.

Our program outcomes include providing parents with opportunities to increase their skills and to participate in their community. In this way our program seeks to break the cycle that can occur when parents experiencing low literacy pass those challenges on to their children. When parent engagement and skills increase, outcomes for children improve. Our aim is an ambitious one, but we aim to raise literacy rates in our Region and to decrease the effects of poverty by improving the outcomes of parents.

This program guides parents to plan for their next steps on the path to employment. Project READ offers **Get Set Learn** participants access to a free literacy assessment to determine what they need to complete their education and supports them in their transition to further education. The program acts as a stepping stone to entry or re-entry into the workforce for parents who have been caring for a preschool-aged child. Families learn about community services and how to access them. Visits from Employment Services representatives further help parents move to their next steps.

Results of this year's programs were outstanding. Program outcomes were met or exceeded. We witnessed parents learning and using new skills and passing those skills on to their children, by participating in activities

together that can extend to the home. Our assessment results show that **Get Set Learn** continues to have a significant impact on families and continues to meet program outcomes. Parents self-report the positive impact of this program on their family life, their child's learning and development, and their own skills, attitudes, and confidence.

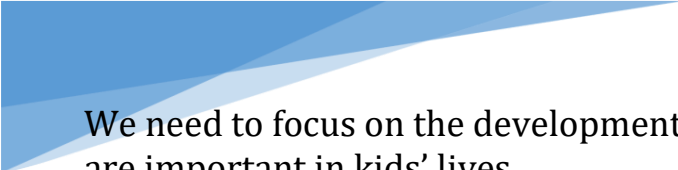
This year we began a follow-up evaluation with our participants to further determine the effects of our programs on the lives of parents and families. Our new follow-up initiative shows that at 6 months post-program, 80% of parents are participating in family literacy activities as a result of attending the program. This result means that in some cases parents are participating in family literacy activities in the home at an even greater rate than at post-program, which indicates longer-term impacts for participating families. These results show a marked positive impact on participants which continues after the program's end, increasing parents' potential to seek and gain employment.

In 2018, the **Get Set Learn** program was not without challenges. Two missed cheque inserts affected our participant numbers, as historically 70% of those that register for the program self-refer when they receive the insert. A new online referral process for caseworkers was a very successful addition to our partnership, and we intend to implement a plan to increase communication with caseworkers to ensure that this process will lead to increased participation. We will also continue to promote the program widely and within the community committees and tables on which we serve, and will begin fresh promotion initiatives including within our new Family Literacy Peer Worker Program recently fully funded by the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation. We continued to work successfully with our community partners to meet the increasingly complex needs of families.

Again this year we were able to build on the **Get Set Learn** program through grant-funded initiatives. We received funding to further assist low-income parents in our programs. We were chosen by the Region to deliver parent workshops at schools with potentially high at-risk levels as part of the Healthy Kids Community Challenge Power Off and Play initiative. We were again able to further our support to newcomers to

Canada, deliver **Get Set Learn** to a group of newcomers to Canada, and again able to reach out to a new demographic group: newcomers to Canada who are English Language Learners, all within funding from the KW Community Foundation. We continued to develop and test prototypes for increased scaling and sustainability of family literacy programs in our Region, and recently learned we were fully funded by the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation to move into the implementation phase of this process, in which we will develop and run a Family Literacy Peer Worker Program within our **Get Set Learn** classes, and also develop and offer training and certification in family literacy to other community agencies. The continued support of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo Social Services has provided a base on which to expand our programs and help more parents and families.

This report will show how our goals for the Get Set Learn program in 2018 were achieved, and will detail our goals for a successful 2019, with your continued support.



We need to focus on the development of the adults who are important in kids' lives.

Harvard University

Retrieved from: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/building-adult-capabilities-to-improve-child-outcomes-a-theory-of-change/>

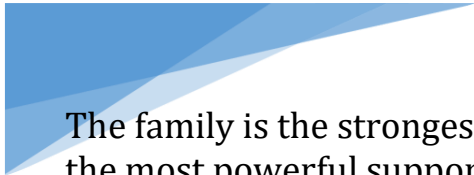
Get Set Learn 2018 - Outcomes achieved

Introduction

Get Set Learn is a literacy program for families. Our goals for the program focus on the parents. Our program outcomes include providing parents with opportunities to participate in their community and increase their own skills.

Parents who attend **Get Set Learn** programs learn and practice skills they can carry to further education and to employment.

Our program also seeks to break the cycle that can occur when parents experiencing low literacy pass those challenges on to their children.



The family is the strongest element in shaping lives. It is the most powerful support network there is. It's where the cycle of learning begins, where the attitudes of parents about learning become the educational values of their children.

Through education of more than one generation, family literacy programs build on families' strengths and provide the tools and support they need to become stronger and more self-sufficient.

National Centre for Family Literacy 2015

Retrieved from: <http://www.familieslearning.org/>

This report will show how the **Get Set Learn** program **met outcomes** in 2018.

Get Set Learn Program Outcomes

Get Set Learn gives parents knowledge, skills and opportunity:

- to see themselves as their baby or child's first and most important teacher
- to engage in family literacy activities on a regular basis (talk, read, sing, draw and play with shapes and numbers) so that children are more successful at school
- to engage in positive discipline practices so that family literacy activities are more successful
- to develop relationships with other parents that help them not to feel alone
- to advocate for themselves and their children to get the help they need
- to develop community connections that can help them move forward with their goals

When our programs achieve these outcomes, parents

- **demonstrate increased confidence and skills** which they can carry forward to their next steps,
- **are more ready to use community services** to help them reach their goals, and

- **have begun to develop a plan for their future.**

How does the Get Set Learn program achieve these outcomes?

The **Get Set Learn** program can appear to the casual observer as a preschool program. The families meet for 2 hours twice a week, and the first hour, or Parent and Child Together (PACT) time, consists of play, singing, story time, snack, and crafts or games.

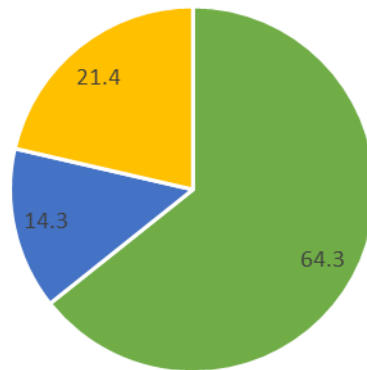
But there is a lot going on in that first hour of PACT time. **Get Set Learn** facilitators and staff help parents learn and practice the skills they need to interact and play with their children in literacy-rich ways. For example, facilitators and staff might

- model how to get a toddler interested in reading a book together
- help parents develop strategies for getting children ready for school, such as by encouraging parents to teach children to listen, share, ask, say please and thank you
- show parents ways to discipline that are positive, using praise and teaching methods

Parents have the opportunity to try out the skills they are learning, together with other parents, in a friendly and supportive environment.

This graph illustrates parents' self-assessment of new communication skills as a result of attending this program.

Listening, making eye-contact, and having back and forth conversations during play and learning time helps children and parents "connect" to each other. I feel that my child and I "connect" during learning and play time



- More now that I have attended the program
- A lot more now that I have attended the program
- Same as before

As well, parents see first-hand how their literacy skills influence their child's growing skills. Parents become inspired to increase their own skills to improve outcomes for their children.

In the second hour of each **Get Set Learn** class, parents participate in their own program separate from their children. The parent program facilitator guides parents through a series of lessons, with topics such as

- how do we learn?
- read with your child
- be a role model
- your child starting school
- take care of health
- technology and your child
- your future story

Parents use a workbook to follow along with and complete lessons, and actively participate in discussions and homework. The skills parents learn during these lessons can transfer to further education and employment.

Attending the program in and of itself represents a series of steps toward employability, as parents use a calendar, get out of the house, plan to attend a class on time or report ahead if they cannot attend, work with others and work in a group, find out about community resources and other programs, and choose other programs to attend. Parents often report increased self-confidence as a result of taking these steps into the community, which are all steps toward employability and employment.

As the program progresses, parents think about next steps in their lives once their children have started school. Project READ provides a free literacy assessment for participants and refers them on to literacy training, further education, or employment services. Many parents are able to take advantage of this service. Of those that do not, the reasons include that they have recently had a baby, they have already accessed this assessment in the past, or they already have a post-secondary education. Those that can benefit from the literacy assessment but do not access it at the program's end often register for it at a later date after having learned about it in the program.

This year, 9 parents registered for and completed this literacy assessment directly as a result of participating in **Get Set Learn**. This opportunity, accessed free through the program, allows parents to increase their readiness for employment.

How do we measure program outcomes?

Parents attending **Get Set Learn** programs complete an assessment (survey) at the beginning and end of the program.

By analysing survey results, we can see a marked increase in parent awareness and skills.

Get Set Learn 2018 Results

- **These results were drawn from the post-program parent survey in the Spring 2018 session.**

We asked parents to complete an evaluation at the end of the program. Questions and raw data are below. Results are outstanding. Here are some highlights of the results:

- parents who report that they talk more with their child as a result of attending the program: 80%
- parents who report feeling they connect with their child either “more” or “a lot more” as a result of attending the program: 83%
- parents who report knowing where to get help for themselves or their child if they need it, either “more” or “a lot more,” as a result of attending the program: 88%

Results:

1. Did the program meet your needs?
 - a. Yes 88%
 - b. Partly 12%
 - c. No 0 %

(Note: Parents have opportunity to write comments after this question. Those who answered “partly” were unable to fully participate in the parent learning hour as children are not always ready to separate. These parents were keen to repeat the program when their child is ready so they can receive the full benefit of the program).

2. I see myself as my child’s first and most important teacher:
 - a. More now that I have finished GSL 41 %
 - b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 29 %
 - c. The same as before 29 %

3. I know other parents who I can spend time with:
 - a. More now that I have finished GSL 53 %
 - b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 12 %
 - c. The same as before 35 %

4. I know how to ask for the things that my child and I need:
 - a. More now that I have finished GSL 82 %
 - b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 6 %
 - c. The same as before 12 %

5. I know where to get information or help for my child and myself if I need it:
 - a. More now that I have finished GSL 69 %
 - b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 19 %
 - c. The same as before 20 %

6. I use “Positive Discipline” with my child:
 - a. More now that I have finished GSL 53 %

	b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL	29 %
	c. The same as before	18 %
7.	I talk with my child:	
	a. More now that I have finished GSL	80 %
	b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL	7 %
	c. The same as before	13 %
8.	I read with my child:	
	a. More now that I have finished GSL	59 %
	b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL	6 %
	c. The same as before	35 %
9.	I sing with my child:	
	a. More now that I have finished GSL	56 %
	b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL	6 %
	c. The same as before	38 %
10.	I draw with my child:	
	a. More now that I have finished GSL	47 %
	b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL	6 %
	c. The same as before	47 %
11.	I play with shapes and numbers with my child:	
	a. More now that I have finished GSL	35 %
	b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL	18 %
	c. The same as before	47 %

12. I feel that my child and I “connect” during learning and play time:
- | | |
|--|------|
| a. More now that I have finished GSL | 71 % |
| b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL | 12 % |
| c. The same as before | 18 % |

- **The following results were drawn from the post-program parent survey for the Fall 2018 session.**

We asked parents to complete an evaluation at the end of the program. Questions and raw data are below. Results are outstanding. Here are some highlights of the results:

- parents who report using positive discipline practices “more” or “a lot more” as a result of attending the program: 79%
- parents who report they know other parents they can spend time with (reducing isolation in the community) either “more” or “a lot more” as a result of attending the program: 93%
- parents who report knowing how to ask for help for themselves or their child if they need it, either “more” or “a lot more,” as a result of attending the program: 72%

Results:

1. Did the program meet your needs?
- | | |
|-----------|-----|
| a. Yes | 93% |
| b. Partly | 7 % |
| c. No | 0 % |

(Note: Parents have opportunity to write comments after this question. Those who answered “partly” were unable to fully participate in the parent learning hour as

children are not always ready to separate. These parents were keen to repeat the program when their child is ready so they can receive the full benefit of the program).

2. I see myself as my child's first and most important teacher:
 - a. More now that I have finished GSL 36 %
 - b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 36 %
 - c. The same as before 28 %

3. I know other parents who I can spend time with:
 - a. More now that I have finished GSL 72 %
 - b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 21 %
 - c. The same as before 7 %

4. I know how to ask for the things that my child and I need:
 - a. More now that I have finished GSL 43 %
 - b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 29 %
 - c. The same as before 28 %

5. I know where to get information or help for my child and myself if I need it:
 - a. More now that I have finished GSL 58 %
 - b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 16 %
 - c. The same as before 26 %

6. I use "Positive Discipline" with my child:
 - d. More now that I have finished GSL 57 %
 - e. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 22 %
 - f. The same as before 21 %

7. I talk with my child:
- a. More now that I have finished GSL 43 %
 - b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 21 %
 - c. The same as before 36 %
8. I read with my child:
- a. More now that I have finished GSL 43 %
 - b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 21 %
 - c. The same as before 36 %
9. I sing with my child:
- a. More now that I have finished GSL 50 %
 - b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 29 %
 - c. The same as before 21 %
10. I draw with my child:
- a. More now that I have finished GSL 43 %
 - b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 7 %
 - c. The same as before 50 %
11. I play with shapes and numbers with my child:
- a. More now that I have finished GSL 43 %
 - b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL 14 %
 - c. The same as before 43 %
12. I feel that my child and I “connect” during learning and play time:
- a. More now that I have finished GSL 71 %

- | | |
|--|------|
| b. A lot more now that I have finished GSL | 12 % |
| c. The same as before | 18 % |

As well, this year we were able to implement a process for tracking child outcomes in our programs. We are still in the process of collecting and analysing this data.

Successes, Challenges, and Recommendations

Get Set Learn facilitators and staff document observations in the form of learning stories or success stories, that further allow us gauge our programs' effects.

The following success stories stem from documented observations from the facilitator in two of our Fall 2018 **Get Set Learn** classes.

Families loved the discussion during the parent time. It was heartening to see how supportive they are of each other.

A three-and-a-half-year-old who loves books was very happy to receive books from the program. His mom would always share his picture reading the books and doing the crafts from the program at home. It was amazing to see that he had learned to read most of the books we gave him.

A mom going through a very rough phase of her life shared how this program has helped her and her son to be in a routine.

With the help of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, this year we were able to increase referrals from caseworkers to our programs, by being able to provide information sessions for caseworkers, and through the creation of an online referral system. This change represents a marked success in our partnership, as caseworker awareness and involvement in recruiting clients will help us reach those who will most benefit from participation in our programs.

We received a total of 17 referrals from 9 caseworkers. Some parents referred by caseworkers, when contacted before program's start, chose not to participate in the program, due to changes of plans in the time between

referral and the program start. Of the referrals, 8 parents registered to participate in the program. Of those 8 registered, 7 parents did not attend or complete the program for a variety of reasons: one had secured employment which prevented attendance, one felt they could not travel to a program site due to distance, and the others discontinued contact with us. Every effort was made to encourage referred parents to attend. Of those referred, one parent completed the program. We are thrilled with this new referral process and will continue to work together with our partners at the Region to improve participation rates from referrals. We will continue to examine the path from referral to attendance for the gaps that may be addressed. For example, when referrals are made months before the program takes place, in some cases clients are not contacted until registration begins. We will contact clients more quickly after the referral takes place so clients are more likely to remember the referral when we contact them before the program starts. We will put in place a follow up process with the referring caseworker to ensure that every effort is made to contact and recruit the referred client if appropriate. We welcome your input in making this process work best.

In 2018, 37 parents were served by the **Get Set Learn** program. This number was lower than anticipated due to a number of factors. Unfortunately, weather can be a factor, as parents traveling by bus, often more than one bus, with a baby, young child or children sometimes don't attend due to poor weather. This challenge was felt throughout the fall session from the first class.

Two missed cheque inserts (one in the spring session, one in the fall session) affected the number of self-referrals, typically our greatest source of participants. Historically 70% of those contacting us to register for the program self-refer after receiving a cheque insert (the other 30% are referred by a caseworker, a community worker, the hosting community centre, or the Project READ Educational Assessor). We recognize that this interruption in inserts can't be helped, and we continue to appreciate the support of the Region in distributing our cheque inserts when possible.

We will continue to use our promotion methods to recruit clients to **Get Set Learn**, including:

- distribution of promotional materials at community centres, literacy agencies and adult schools, libraries, and service organizations
- email blast to all service organizations and contacts
- attendance at community committees and events to promote **Get Set Learn**, such as Kitchener and Cambridge Mobilizations teams, Early Literacy Alliance of Waterloo Region, Children and Youth Planning Table, and Positive Parenting Waterloo-Wellington, and Family Literacy Day
- information presentations at Region OW caseworker team meetings as well as a variety of community agencies
- promotion efforts in cooperation with our community partners at the centres where the program is offered

We will also implement new recruitment procedures, including

- working within our new Family Literacy Peer Worker Program to increase word of mouth recruitment and provide testimonials of the impact of the program

Testing of a Family Literacy Peer Worker Program model has already begun in 2018. Peer Workers are former **Get Set Learn** participants who are trained and contracted to support parents in this program, as part of family literacy initiatives funded by the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation. Peer worker programs offer many benefits to both participants and peer workers alike, as well as to program promotion. Peers will be a valuable asset during the recruitment phase, as clients can identify with someone who has previously participated and can express and model the positive effects of program participation.

Peers could also give testimonials to further interest from agencies who refer clients to our programs.

- working with caseworkers to follow up with clients with whom contact is lost

We will create and implement a follow-up process for referrals.

- increasing promotion within our adult literacy network

Project READ is an umbrella agency supporting adult literacy programs in our Region. We will look for and follow up on new promotion avenues for our programs within our network.

In summary, in 2018 the Get Set Learn program met its program outcomes.

Parents learned and practiced skills which they can carry forward to their next steps.

Parents learned about and accessed community resources to help them move toward their goals.

Parents developed plans for their future and their family's future.

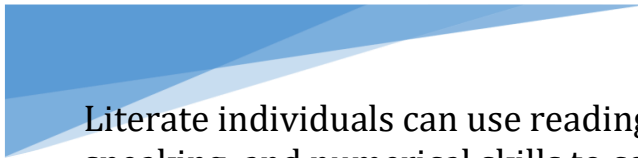
Get Set Learn 2018 – Community impact achieved

The effect of low literacy rates

We live in a community that is rich with resources. However, statistics show that a high number of community members live with low literacy skills.

48% of Canadian adults have inadequate literacy skills.¹

Literacy is more than knowing how to read and write. Literacy includes all the skills needed to participate fully in school, work, and life.



Literate individuals can use reading, writing, speaking, and numerical skills to communicate and to understand the world around them. These skills are vital to an individual's ability to function and build security and wellbeing in their lives.

Project READ Literacy Network

For example, those experiencing low literacy skills might struggle to fill out forms, understand prescriptions, pay household bills, or seek information or services they need.

Low literacy skills can prevent a person from accessing community resources needed to achieve their goals. Low literacy skills often coincide with lack of employment, poverty, isolation, and mental health issues.

¹ Retrieved from: <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/education/adlt-lowlit.aspx>

Literacy skills are vital to securing and maintaining employment. These skills allow a person to function and be a productive member of our community.

History of Get Set Learn

In early 2000, the Literacy Service Planning Committee of Waterloo Region noticed that some low-literate parents were not able to attend a literacy program, since they had preschool children at home. They identified a need for a program that would offer parents a place to learn with their preschoolers. As well, parents wanted a quality program for their children. Research showed that parents are more likely to attend a program for their children than one that is solely for them².

Project READ researched and piloted a family literacy program in 2003. The program would act as a transition or bridging program to ease parents into further education and employment readiness, while also providing children's programming as the parents learned.

What Get Set Learn does today

Since 2003, the **Get Set Learn** program has developed into what it is today, an 8-week program for parents receiving Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and their preschoolers, who live in Waterloo Region. Our community partners host **Get Set Learn** programs in locations across Kitchener and Cambridge. These programs help parents improve literacy skills and move toward further education and employment.

² Sauve, L. (2006). *Get Set Learn! A Case Study of a Family Literacy Program in Waterloo Region*. Kitchener, Ontario: Project READ Literacy Network.

In 2018, Get Set Learn programs funded by the Region were offered in 6 sites/locations in spring and fall sessions.

Our community partners who hosted these programs included

- Stanley Park Community Association
- Highland-Stirling Community Group
- Kinbridge Community Association

As well, with the support of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, Project READ continues to build community relationships to better serve our participants.

For example, we connect **Get Set Learn** participants with employment counseling and programs offered by the Regional Municipality of Waterloo. Where possible, we engage a speaker from the Region to present information on employment supports available to our **Get Set Learn** participants. This year a speaker visited all 6 program sites and parents received valuable support and information. Several parents made follow-up appointments for additional guidance.

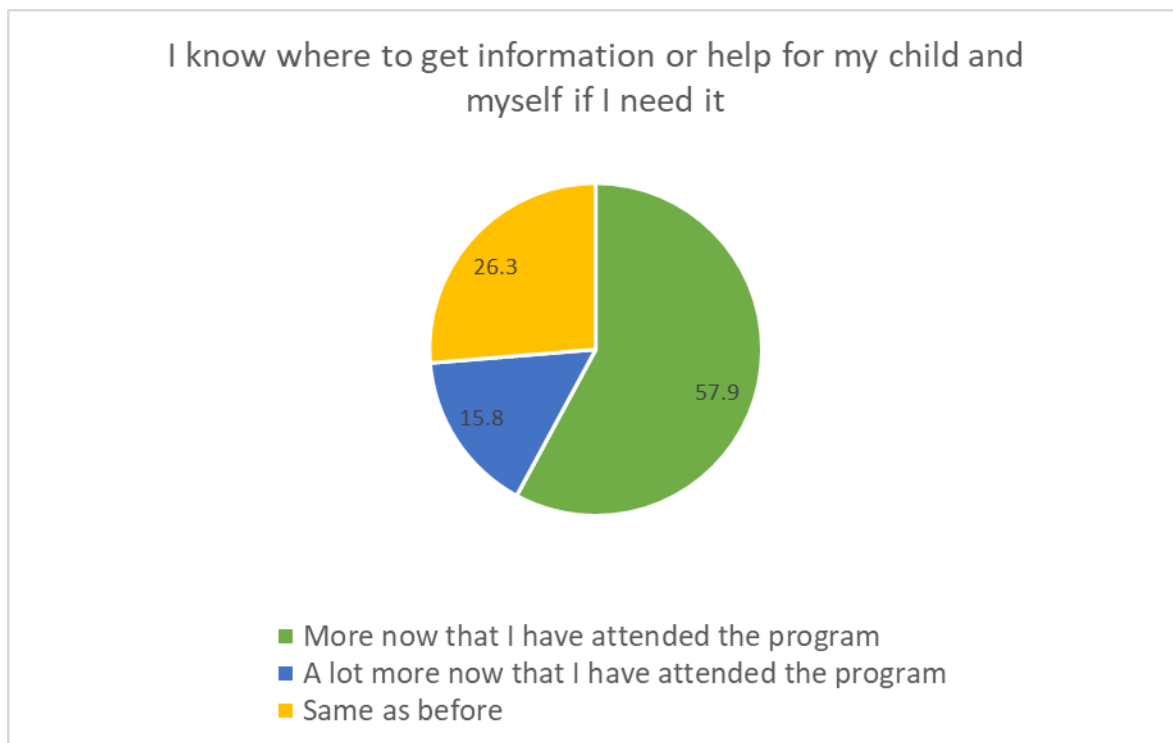
Families also have the chance to find out about community services they can access. For example, as part of the **Get Set Learn** program families will

- take a field trip to the public library, where parents get a library card and learn what resources are available, as library services are available
- learn about how to access the leisure card for participation in community activities
- receive information and support to attain the Canada Learning Bond for their families

As well, we frequently refer or guide families to access community services such as

- help with basic needs such as through the food banks or House of Friendship Family Outreach services
- mental health resources through Carizon
- speech and language services through KidsAbility
- parenting and mental health support through KW counselling
- additional programs for parents and children held in community centres, libraries, and schools

The chart below illustrates parents' self-assessment of the increase in their ability to access community services as a result of attending **Get Set Learn** in the fall 2018 programs.



Also, Project READ **continues its participation in several community committees and tables** to promote our programs and to share and receive resources and ideas for best practices in family literacy.

Our memberships include

- Children's Planning Table
- Positive Parenting Community Committee
- Early Literacy Alliance of Waterloo Region (ELAWR)
- Family Literacy Day
- Let's Read

Impact on families

Get Set Learn works with parents to build their confidence and skills.

Programs that focus on building parents' confidence and skills have **noticeable impacts on their children's future outcomes.**

When parents' skills improve, children experience a greater level of success in school. This impact affects a child's life in an ongoing way. Children grow into adults with **more opportunities in life and employment**, and are better able to take part in and contribute to their communities.

The National Literacy Trust in the UK report on their long standing research into the role of families and literacy reinforces these findings.



In the last three decades, several strands of research have produced compelling evidence justifying a focus on the family with a particular emphasis on early years in order to raise literacy standards.

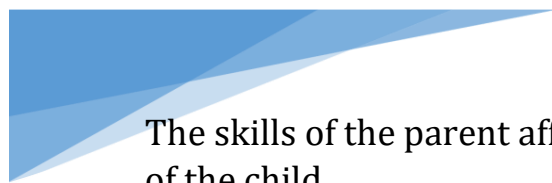
National Literacy Trust, UK

Their key research findings:

- A parent's involvement in their child's literacy practices exerts a more powerful influence on academic success than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education.
- The home is crucial. Families and parents are the most important factor influencing a child's future.
- Early intervention is vital. Learning begins at birth. The earlier parents understand and act on their role in their children's literacy development, the more impactful and long-lasting the result.³

Children are the future of our community. When parents receive the help they need to support their children's learning and literacy, our community grows stronger.

Family Literacy programs such as the **Get Set Learn** program are vital to the health and success of our community, and we thank the Regional Municipality of Waterloo for its continued support for our program.



The skills of the parent affect the skills of the child.

Essential Skills Ontario

Retrieved from: <http://www.essentialskillsontario.ca/>

³ Retrieved from: http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/7901/Research_review-importance_of_families_and_home.pdf

Get Set Learn 6-month Follow-up results

Our new research initiative includes a follow-up procedure 6 months after the parent exits the **Get Set Learn** program. The following results reflect the information gathered from 6-month follow-up with parents who participated in the 2017 sessions of **Get Set Learn**.

During a phone interview, parents are asked a number of questions to determine the longer-reaching impact of attending the **Get Set Learn** program.

Parents were asked the following question:

What is the one thing that you learned or gained during GSL that has made the MOST difference to your family over the last 6 months?

After 6 months, 80% of participants reported that the one thing they learned or gained during GSL that has made the most difference to their families is that they engage in daily literacy activities (talking, singing, reading, drawing, playing with shapes and numbers) with their child as a result of attending **Get Set Learn**.

This percentage exceeds the typical response rate at program's end when parents indicate whether they are engaging in literacy activities with their child at home "more" or "a lot more."

This finding suggests a longer-term impact of the **Get Set Learn** program. Not only are parents continuing to practice their skills in raising literacy levels in the home, even more parents are indicating that the program changed the rate at which they are using those skills at 6 months post-program, which seems to indicate that over time, participants are absorbing or finding new ways to use the strategies they learned.

This result demonstrates the importance of programs that build parent confidence and skills.

Other results from this 6-month follow up survey:

Parents who reported that they are still using the tools and strategies learned in the **Get Set Learn** program: 73%

Parents who reported that they kept in touch with other families they had met at **Get Set Learn**: 43%

Parents who reported that they access community services they'd been introduced to in the **Get Set Learn** program: 79%

It is clear from these results that the **Get Set Learn** program creates a lasting effect on families who participate. As well, these results point to parents experiencing increased life and employment opportunities as a result of participating in **Get Set Learn**.

During the course of the program, parents learn and use skills that they retain and continue to use. Parents make friends, decreasing social isolation and increasing contacts within the community and sense of belonging. Parents participate in community events and access community services at a much higher rate after attending the program. These changes all place parents in a more positive position to move to their next steps toward employment.

We will continue to use in-kind funds to gather 6-month follow-up data from participating families in order to examine the impact of this program in our community.

Get Set Learn 2018 – New initiatives achieved

Growing from our base

Support from the Regional Municipality of Waterloo has allowed **Get Set Learn** to fill a vital role in our community since 2003. These programs have provided a base for family literacy in our community. **Get Set Learn** has become well-known and the impact of family literacy is becoming more widely understood.

This year, two schools contracted us to deliver family literacy events, which increase parent engagement in children's school success and help parents learn the importance of a home environment that supports learning. We intend to continue to offer this fee-for-service program.

In 2018, we were able to continue to acquire grant funding to grow our programs and our scope for family literacy initiatives in the community.

1) Zonta Club

We received funding to help low-income women in our programs to have what they need to participate. This grant directly impacted the participants of **Get Set Learn**.

2) Region of Waterloo, Healthy Kids Community Challenge (HKCC)

We received funding to offer 2 parent workshops on screen time as part of the HKCC **Power Off and Play** initiative. These workshops were offered at schools showing lower EDI and EQAO scores in neighbourhoods statistically showing a large percentage of low-income households. We used what we have learned from our adult program delivery and research in offering the **Get Set Learn** program to prepare these workshops.

3) KW Community Foundation

Within this project, and with the help of our community partners Victoria Hills Neighbourhood Association and the City of Kitchener, we were able to

- build on our previous experience serving newcomers to Canada in our **Get Set Learn** programs
- deliver **Get Set Learn** to a group of newcomers to Canada
- develop and deliver a unique offering of **Get Set Learn** for newcomers to Canada with lower English levels, using an ESL-learning model
- help newcomers become established in our community and build a sense of belonging and participating
- help newcomers make the transition to further education or employment

4) Lyle S. Hallman Foundation

Within this project, we continued to

- raise awareness of family literacy needs in our community, the links between literacy levels and poverty, and the positive impact of literacy and family literacy programming
- work toward identifying a sustainable model for scaling up the impact of family literacy in our community, with the help of Capacity Canada
- test program and idea prototypes for sustainability

Within this project funding also developed and implemented a children's program guide, including outcomes and evaluative tools, to inform and support the children's program hour of Get Set Learn. Once fully

implemented these new outcomes and tools will directly benefit OW families and the data will be communicated in these summary reports.

We applied for and recently learned that we have been fully funded through the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation for a second 2-year project, which will allow us to implement 2 major program/idea streams to scale the impact of family literacy in Waterloo Region.

Through this funding, we will

- develop and run a Family Literacy Peer Worker Program within our existing **Get Set Learn** programs
- develop training and program materials for the Family Literacy Peer Worker Program
- develop a process of training and certification in family literacy programming and practices
- implement training and certification in family literacy to increase family literacy programming in our Region

These growth initiatives stem directly from the base we have been able to build through our work with the **Get Set Learn** program in our community, and so, through the continued support of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo. These initiatives, such as the increase in resources for newcomers to Canada and the development of updated learning materials, will benefit the participants in all of our **Get Set Learn** programs.

Get Set Learn 2018 Goals achieved

In summary, beyond meeting program outcomes, in 2018 our goals for the **Get Set Learn** program included

- continue to research and test methods to create a sustainable model to scale up the impact of family literacy in our community (achieved)
- increase the number of referrals to our **Get Set Learn** program (achieved)
- continue to work with community partners to serve families in need of literacy support (achieved)
- develop outcomes and methods to track outcomes for children attending the program (achieved)
- continue to measure links between program attendance and increased life and employment opportunities (achieved)

Get Set Learn 2019 Goals

In 2019, we aim to

- **continue to create a sustainable model to scale up family literacy programming**

We recognize a strong need for family literacy programming in our community. Through funding from the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation, we will continue to work toward developing a sustainable model for scaling up the impact of family literacy in our community.

We will focus our work with new funding from the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation on two main idea/program areas. We will

- develop and implement a Family Literacy Peer Worker Program within our **Get Set Learn** program
- develop and implement a training and certification process for family literacy practices and programming

Family Literacy Peer Worker Program

Testing of a Family Literacy Peer Worker Program model has already begun in 2018. Peer workers are former **Get Set Learn** participants who are trained and contracted to support parents in this program. Peer worker programs offer many benefits to both participants and peer workers alike, as well as to program promotion. Participants may learn more effectively, as they perceive that the peer understands their needs and perspective. Participants can learn from peer modeling which can make goals appear more attainable and increase initiative to pursue goals. Peers gain valuable leadership and transferable skills, and employment experience. We will also have peers assist in our promotion efforts to recruit participants for **Get Set Learn**. Through this initiative **Get Set Learn** aims to ready more parents for employment. As well, parents who are hired as peers will have attained employment as a direct result of attending **Get Set Learn**.

Training and certification

We have had contact from several community organizations seeking our services to offer family literacy information and programming. Using our expertise built over years of experience offering the **Get Set Learn** program and other related programs, we are in a unique position to train others to incorporate family literacy background knowledge and practices into their portfolio of client services. A certification process will ensure that community agencies' services and programming adhere to family literacy principles. Using this training and certification model we aim to impact more adults and families in our Region through family literacy initiatives.

In partnership with the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, we will

- **continue to increase referrals to our Get Set Learn programs**

With the assistance of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo in 2018 we successfully increased referrals to our programs through information presentations to caseworker teams and through the creation of an online referral system. We will continue to work to keep caseworkers informed of our programs, and to provide information about client life cycle with Project READ and how **Get Set Learn** impacts participants' journey to further education and employment.

- **work with caseworkers to follow up on referred clients**

In 2018 we identified a gap between referral and participation. Although not every referral can transfer to a participant due to a variety of circumstances (for example, client and child needs change, client availability at program times changes) we will monitor client sign-up/attendance and put in place, with input from the Region of Waterloo, a system of contacting the referring caseworker if communication is recommended.

- **implement new initiatives for program promotion**

These initiatives will include working with our Family Literacy Peer Workers to foster word-of-mouth peer-to-peer advocacy and promotion, and working within our literacy network to improve referral rates.

- **continue to work with community partners to serve families in need of literacy support**

We value the input and assistance of our community partners in determining and meeting the needs of families in our **Get Set Learn** programs. We will continue to build on our relationships with our community partners through open communication and sharing information to best meet participants' needs.

- **continue to track longer-term impact of the Get Set Learn program on parents and families**

The results from our 6-month follow-up process demonstrate the continued impact of the **Get Set Learn** program on participants and their families, and with that demonstrate the successful achievement of outcomes which points to the efficacy of these programs. We will continue to monitor 6-month follow-up results using in-kind funds as a method of demonstrating the positive impact of **Get Set Learn** in the lives of parents and children served by these programs.



The Regional Municipality of Waterloo Social Services funds the **Get Set Learn** program, coordinated by Project READ Literacy Network Waterloo-Wellington and hosted by community partners in Kitchener and Cambridge.