



KINDERGARTEN COUNTDOWN 2014



Registered Nurse and volunteer from IU Health Julie Demerley leads a letter-recognition activity with a student. Coordinated with United Way of Greater Lafayette and Glen Acres School, this Kindergarten Countdown Camp is one example of the partnership between IU Health and Indiana Association of United Ways. School readiness is a top priority for Indiana's United Ways.

BACKGROUND

The Kindergarten Countdown (KCD) program was developed by United Way of Central Indiana (UWCI) to help families better navigate the education system and to be better prepared for the school year. IU Health, UWCI and Indiana Association of United Ways (IaUW) worked to expand the collaboration from 2011-2013. With grants from IU Health and Lilly Endowment, IaUW nearly doubled the reach for KCD and Kindergarten Readiness Projects (KRP) in 2014. The program consists of key strategies:

“It is amazing to see the growth in these children...in four short weeks, they go from not knowing how to write their name or stand in a line to being able to listen and follow directions and identify and write letters.” – a KCD volunteer

Kindergarten Registration or Kindergarten Readiness Awareness activities provide families with a "one-stop-shop" approach, providing access to school personnel for Q&A about the upcoming school year.



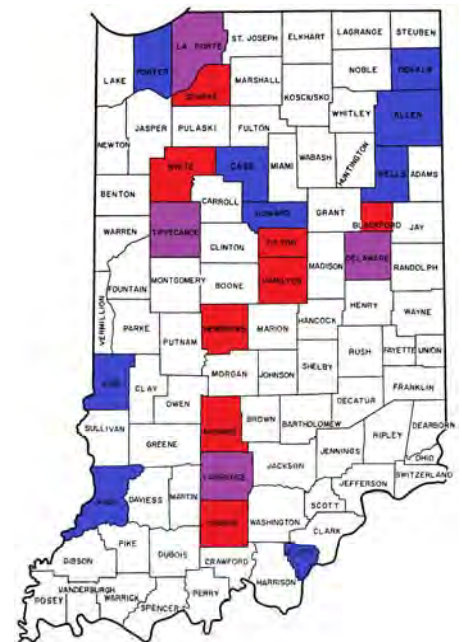
Glen Acres Teacher Bridget Scherer welcomes the Class of 2027

Kindergarten Summer Camps are offered to incoming kindergarteners who are at risk for falling behind their kindergarten classmates. “At risk” is defined as little to no prior pre-K experience, free/reduced lunch eligibility and/or low assessment scores. The orientation program provides essential academic and social development skills so that children are ready to learn on the first day of school. While each camp varies based on local needs and school availability, camps are typically half-days, 4 weeks in duration and include 20 children, a kindergarten teacher and assistant. Camps include a planned curriculum and activities that practice skills needed for success in school.

KINDERGARTEN CAMPS EXPAND

With growing attention on the need to increase kindergarten readiness of at-risk children, many counties requested funds to launch the camp model. The Kindergarten Countdown (KCD) program expanded beyond Central Indiana to eight additional counties in 2011 and to ten counties in 2012. IU Health funds supported KCD camps in counties where it has a hospital presence: Blackford, Delaware, LaPorte, Lawrence, Monroe, Orange, Starke, Tippecanoe, Tipton and White counties. IaUW grants, funded by Lilly Endowment, supported additional camps in IUH counties and nine other counties including Allen, Cass, DeKalb, Floyd, Howard, Knox, Porter, Vigo and Wells. With 2014 funds, fifty-two camps were held in 21 counties.

Twenty-one counties served by the camp model in 2014 included Allen (6 schools, 8 camps), Blackford, Cass, DeKalb, Delaware (2 schools, 2 camps), Floyd, Hamilton, Hendricks, Howard, Knox (2 schools, 2 camps), LaPorte (5 schools, 10 camps), Lawrence (3 schools, 3 camps), Monroe, Orange, Porter, Starke, Tippecanoe (9 schools; 10 camps), Tipton, Vigo, Wells (3 schools, 3 camps) and White.



All – supported by local cash and in-kind
 Red = supported by IU Health
 Purple – supported by IU Health and IaUW
 Blue = supported by IaUW grants

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

Local United Ways/United Funds, schools and communities value the strong outcomes from the Kindergarten Countdown (KCD) camp program. Using three funding sources, the IUW Grants Committee reviewed and approved applications. Below is a summary of the proposed goals and actual results.

Expand camps to reach more at-risk children

Goal for IU Health grant to IUW: Register approximately 20 children per camp in up to ten counties for a total of approximately 250 KCD campers in 15 camps. **Goal exceeded!**

Goal for IUW grants: Register approximately 20 children per camp in 15 additional camps for a total of 300 children. **Goal exceeded!**

Total Results: Registered over **1,000 campers** from **twenty-one counties** in **fifty-four camp classrooms** in **forty-three schools**. Camp attendance sizes ranged from 12 to 40 students.

Increase kindergarten readiness

Goal: Increase the average Get Ready to Read and teacher-based observation assessment scores by KCD participants from beginning to end of camp.

Results: From the Get Ready to Read pre- and post-tests, KCD expansion campers had a **20% average increase**, with average scores of 15 to 18 from the beginning to the end of camp. **Goal exceeded!**

Promote awareness of kindergarten readiness

Where timing allowed, KCD leaders coordinated with **kindergarten registration events** in local schools, libraries and in the media. Activities included distribution of printed materials, library card sign-ups and fun activities for children. KCD resulted in earned media in nearly every market touched by KCD camp expansion.

While not measured formally, KCD coordinators, teachers and parents report anecdotally about the **social and behavioral changes** for student campers—that they are more confident and excited about starting school.



Volunteer Monica Keys leads campers

“Students who attended KCD Camp walked into the building confident and ready to go... There were very few tears. Teachers already knew their names... The parents also had a better idea of school expectations.”
— a school principal



A student at Mayflower Elementary

Promote action-based learning and student portfolios

Action-based learning techniques were incorporated, because research shows the relationship between action-based learning techniques and improved academic learning and retention, as well as behavior.

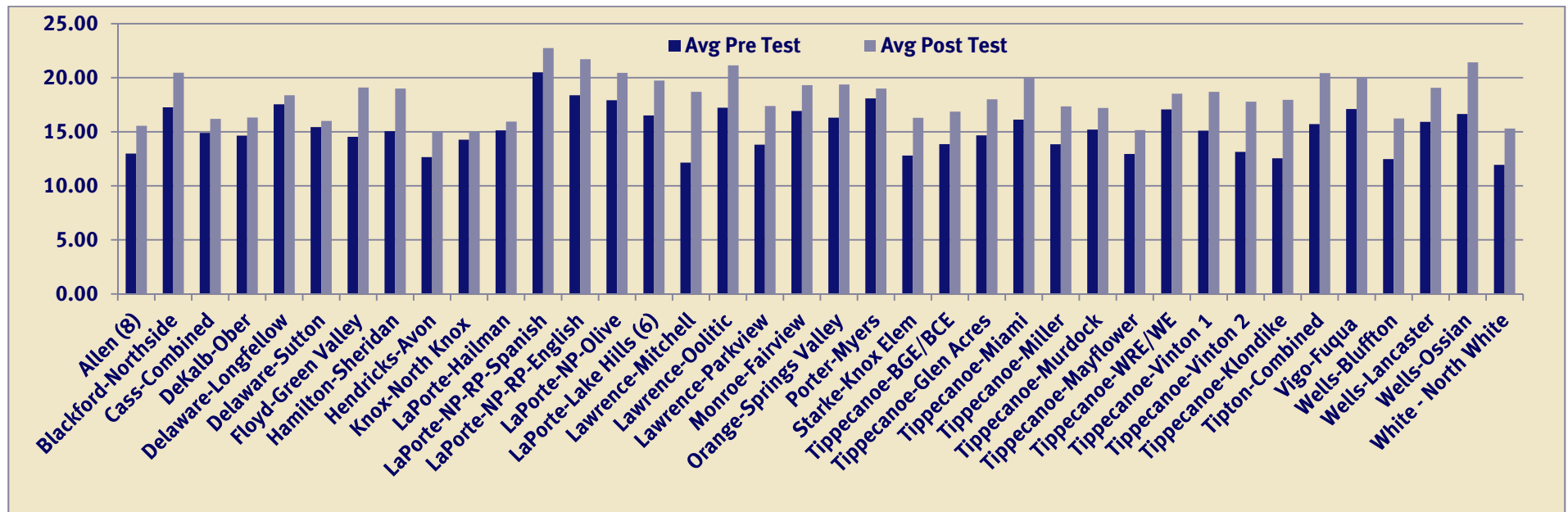
Student portfolios were developed in order to illustrate to the student, parents and teachers the skills and the progress of each student. Kindergarten teachers commented how much they appreciated the ability to know their incoming students before the first day.

Engage parents and community volunteers

Parental engagement has a direct relationship with student success. KCD camp leaders created opportunities to increase parent engagement in their children’s learning by sending home materials, hosting events and recruiting parent volunteers.

Volunteers from IU Health, schools, retiree groups, faith communities and businesses provided invaluable support in planning and conducting camp activities.

ASSESSMENTS SHOW GROWTH IN PRE-LITERACY SKILLS



The chart above represents the average pre- and post-test scores on *Get Ready to Read* assessments.

Comments about scores:

- The *Get Ready to Read* (GRTR) assessment measures **pre-literacy readiness** only. This tool was selected because it may be administered by trained volunteers as a pre-test and post-test. It does not measure social, emotional or behavioral outcomes associated with the KCD model.
- The actual administration of the GRTR assessment varied among sites—on the days of the camp, the number of camp days between pre- and post-tests, who administered the test and the level of distraction for children being assessed.
- Some schools conducted additional assessments, such as ISTAR-KR, DIBELS or Brigance, in order to determine the baseline of the students’ skills upon entrance in kindergarten.
- Most KCD students started and ended camp within the same “step.” Most started with scores illustrating “emergent skills” and ended with either emergent or “solid skills.”

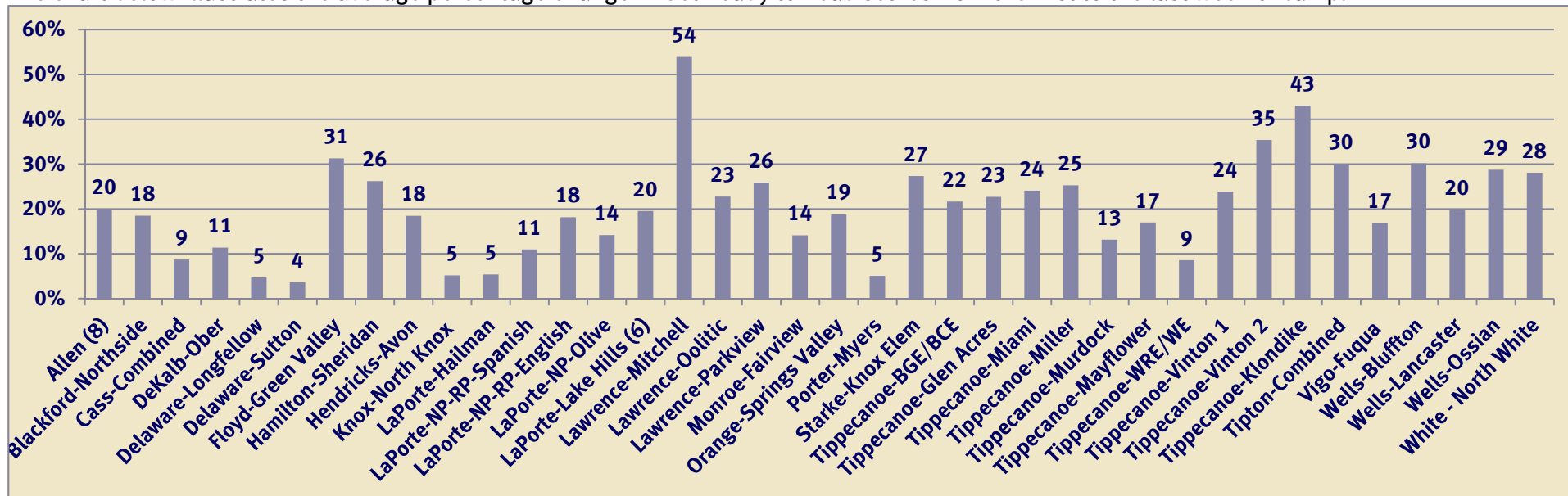
GRTR By The Numbers

- Pre-test scores ranged from 3 to 24 among students.
- Post-test scores ranged from 7 to 25 among students.
- Pre-test averages by classroom ranged from 11.94 to 20.5.
- Post-test averages by classroom ranged from 15.0 to 22.75.
- Average percentage growth ranged from 4% to 54%, with campers averaging 20% growth from beginning to end of camp.

“My child has never attended pre-school, no Head Start, so this was a big step for my son.”
– an appreciative parent

Average percentage change

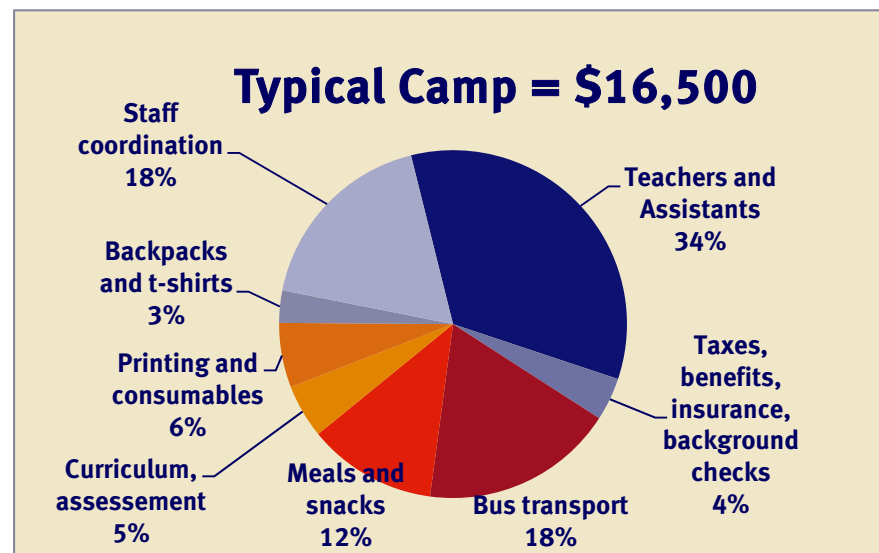
The chart below illustrates the average percentage change in Get Ready to Read scores from the first to the last week of camp.



COSTS OF CAMP

A typical 4-week camp with 20 students costs about \$16,500, but out-of-pocket cash expenses can be as low as \$5,500 per camp if the school, organizations and businesses provide in-kind contributions. Typical expense breakdown of a camp includes: teachers and teacher assistants; taxes, benefits; insurance and background checks; bus transportation; meals and snacks; curriculum and assessments; printing and consumables; backpacks and t-shirts; and staff coordination. Most schools donate use of the classroom. Some schools contribute a portion of meals and bus transportation. Organizations and businesses most often support book drives, backpacks, printing and supplies.

Total cash invested in 2014 camps included a \$90,000 grant from IU Health, \$120,000 from laUW Kindergarten Readiness Project grants, plus other campaign matching grants from laUW and additional local government and community-based grants made directly to local United Ways. Lilly Endowment supports laUW KRP and campaign matching grant programs.



LEARNINGS AND MOMENTUM FOR CHANGE

Key Learnings

- Kindergarten Countdown(KCD)/Kindergarten Readiness Project (KRP) Camp is **effective, popular and a quality project** for Indiana’s United Ways/Funds of all sizes.
- The program has **measurable outcomes** and **strengthens relationships** with schools and some nontraditional partners.
- The program works best when local implementers follow the **KCD Camp model**, which includes a 4-week, half-day program, certified teacher(s), aide(s), volunteers, action-based learning, parental and community engagement and targets children who are most at risk.
- Local United Ways are creative in their resource development to mobilize volunteers and in-kind resources. However, **demand outpaces capacity and resources to meet needs in most communities**. Even if more grants are available to certain communities, there is inadequate staffing to coordinate and execute a quality program to meet the need for all children who score low on readiness assessments or who are otherwise at risk.
- The **same trained staff should do all assessments** to ensure consistency. *Get Ready To Read*, which is relatively inexpensive and easy-to-administer, is only one measure of pre-literacy. Ideally, we would capture other teacher observations and use a common Kindergarten readiness assessment tool.



Campers and their parents take a field trip to Eagle Marsh in Allen County

A little boy who went through the program had not spoken much since being with his foster family. The last day of camp he was running and playing with his classmates. “Please do this again,” - his foster parent

Context for Quality Early Education

- The KCD/KRP Camps are being held during a period of **intense attention on kindergarten readiness**.
- Funders and policy makers are joining forces with business leaders and early education advocates to **strengthen the early learning continuum**, which starts with prenatal health and continues as 85% of the brain is developed by age 5.
- Within the last year, the **State of Indiana has:**
 - Enacted **legislation to increase quality of child care**, especially for child care paid with taxpayer subsidy;
 - Implemented the **Early Learning Advisory Committee**, which issued its first report and is guiding implementation of the pre-K pilot and a longitudinal study;
 - Released the first **Early Education Matching Grants** targeted at providers of high-quality programs;
 - **Increased reimbursement rates for child care providers** participating in Paths to Quality rating system; and
 - Enacted the **first pre-K pilot program** within 5 counties (Allen, Jackson, Lake, Marion and Vanderburgh).
- More work is needed. Help us keep up the momentum. ***Please join us by giving, advocating and volunteering*** to improve early education opportunities in Indiana.

KCD CAMPS AND IU HEALTH

IU Health is a key partner in supporting Kindergarten Countdown Camps in Blackford, Delaware, Hamilton, Hendricks, LaPorte, Lawrence, Monroe, Orange, Starke, Tippecanoe, Tipton and White counties.



An IU Health volunteer leads an activity

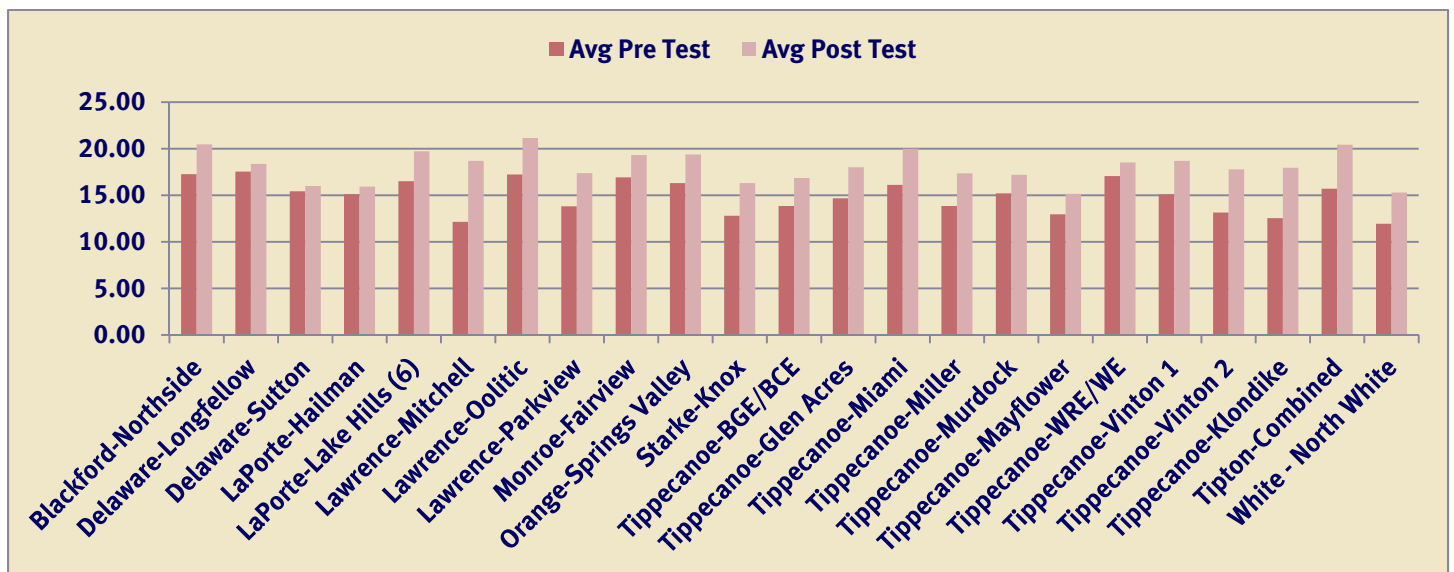


Healthy snacks as a caterpillar

IU Health provides far more than the **\$90,000 grant** to IaUW and separate funding to United Way of Central Indiana for Hamilton and Hendricks counties. Additionally, IU Health provides **books, backpacks and t-shirts**. Certain hospitals provided **nutritional snacks and meals, on-site volunteers** and **in-house printing and marketing**. IU Health's in-kind contributions help to keep the out-of-pocket costs lower than in other communities without similar support.

While not measured formally, KCD coordinators reported that KCD developed or **strengthened relationships** among United Ways/Funds and the IU Health hospital employees, local schools, students and families.

Camps in targeted areas by IU Health experienced an average increase of **21% in Get Ready To Read pre-literacy skills**, as illustrated in the graph below.



Volunteers from IU Health provide critical support to camps. Teachers sincerely appreciate that volunteers enable **hands-on instruction** and **personal attention** to children who need extra help. Parents and teachers both report increased readiness and confidence for the first days of kindergarten.



Indiana University Health

Indiana Association of United Ways
www.iauw.org

