



WILDER RESEARCH, CHILD TRENDS, SRI INTERNATIONAL,
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Parent Aware: Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System Pilot (QRIS)

Summary of the Parent Aware Final Evaluation Report

This fact sheet highlights findings from the Final Report of the Parent Aware Evaluation which examines data gathered through the fourth and final year of the pilot (July, 2010 - September, 2011). Child Trends analyzed data from a variety of sources to understand patterns in Parent Aware participation and scoring on the Parent Aware Rating Tool. To measure progress toward school readiness, developmental assessments were administered to children in the Fall and Spring prior to Kindergarten entry. In addition, their parents completed telephone interviews about their family characteristics and early care and education decisions. The goal of the Evaluation is to produce findings about the effectiveness of implementation and analysis of the Parent Aware Rating Tool that can inform decisions about the statewide expansion of Parent Aware.



What is Parent Aware?

Parent Aware is a voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for early care and education programs including licensed family child care programs, child care centers, Head Start, and School Readiness programs. It is being piloted in four Minnesota communities including the city of Minneapolis, the city of Saint Paul, the Wayzata school district, and Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties. **Three-hundred and eighty-eight (388) early care and education programs serving nearly 24,000 children are currently participating in Parent Aware.**

The primary purpose of Parent Aware is to support parents by providing information about the quality of early care and education programs. Parent Aware uses ratings to recognize quality and promotes quality improvement using a variety of resources. Together, these strategies aimed at parents and early care and education programs target an ultimate goal of improving children's school readiness.

How are ratings assigned to early care and education programs?

Programs submit documentation and receive visits from trained observers using nationally-recognized scales that measure their environment, practices, and interactions with children. Programs are awarded one to four stars depending upon the number of points earned in four categories that research indicates have significant influence on children's school readiness:

- Family Partnerships
- Teaching Materials and Strategies
- Tracking Learning
- Teacher Training and Education

Accredited child care centers, accredited family child care programs, School Readiness Programs and Head Start programs are awarded a 4-star rating automatically if they demonstrate compliance with licensing, or compliance with applicable state or federal program performance standards.

How do parents learn about the ratings?

Ratings are posted on the Parent Aware website (www.parentawareratings.org). Parents can search for programs by pilot area. Parents can also search the site in a variety of languages including English, Hmong, Spanish, and Somali, or they can call their local child care resource and referral agency for assistance.

How is implementation progressing?

As of June 2011, 388 programs have a Parent Aware rating.

- The majority of rated programs are automatically-rated 4-star programs including accredited child care centers and family child care programs (169), Head Start programs (23) and School Readiness programs (52) plus 3 provisionally rated programs.
- 144 programs currently have full ratings.



For a full report of these findings, please see

Evaluation of Parent Aware: Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System Pilot Final Evaluation Report

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Available at www.melf.us



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Programs in Parent Aware

- The overall participation rate of eligible programs across the pilot areas is 28%.
- Of the 144 fully-rated programs, 38% of programs received 4 stars, 44% received 3 stars, 15% received 2 stars, and 3% received 1 star.
- Measures of observed global quality (the Environment Rating Scales) and teacher-child interaction (the CLASS) receive minimal weighting in the Parent Aware Rating Tool used in the pilot. Programs can receive a 4-star overall rating even when scoring in the low range on the tools. The average ERS scores and CLASS instructional support scores were in a range indicating a need for improvement.
- Across observational measures used to assess global quality and teacher-child interaction, there was little evidence for a linear trend showing increasing quality across 2-star, 3-star and 4-star fully-rated programs. This finding indicates that further work is needed to strengthen the indicators and the construction of quality levels in Parent Aware. This work has already been initiated through Minnesota's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant application.
- Sixty percent of centers and 70% of family child care providers improved their rating by at least one star from their initial rating to their second rating. Family child care providers are more likely than center-based providers to improve their star level. Programs that gain one or more star levels tend to earn higher numbers of points in the Tracking Learning category than in other categories.
- Programs make small but significant gains on measures of observed global quality (ERS) as well as classroom organization and emotional support (CLASS subscales, for center-based preschool programs). Gains are not made on the CLASS instructional support subscale.
- Providers report high satisfaction with Parent Aware quality improvement supports. The majority of providers report that the Parent Aware staff (Provider Resource Specialists and ERS Consultants) who work with them are very or somewhat helpful. Providers also report that the provision of free training, quality improvement support dollars, and free curriculum materials were beneficial to their program.

Children and families served by Parent Aware programs

- Overall, the mean scores for the 701 children studied in the Evaluation were at or above national averages on standardized measures of language, literacy, and early numeracy.
- Children showed significant gains over the year in measures of expressive and receptive vocabulary, phonological awareness, print knowledge, pre-math concepts, social competence and approaches to learning. Gains were not seen on one measure of early math skills, and a slight increase was documented on a measure of anger-aggression. The magnitude of positive gains was larger for children from low-income families than it was for the full sample of children.



- Children in programs at different quality levels did not differ systematically from each other in their developmental gains.
- Approximately 34% of parents with a child in a Parent-Aware rated program have heard of Parent Aware, an increase of nearly 10% from the previous year.

Next Steps

- Results from the Evaluation will be used to inform targeted statewide expansion of Parent Aware to Hennepin and Ramsey counties, the White Earth Reservation and the three counties it covers - Becker, Clearwater and Mahnomen - as well as Itasca county.

