



WILDER RESEARCH, CHILD TRENDS, SRI INTERNATIONAL,
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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA.

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Parent Aware: Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System Pilot (QRIS)



Summary of the Parent Aware Year 3 Evaluation Report

This fact sheet highlights findings from the Year 3 Evaluation of Parent Aware which examines data gathered through the second and third years of the pilot (July, 2008 - August, 2010). Child Trends analyzed data from a variety of sources to understand patterns in Parent Aware participation and scoring on the Parent Aware Rating Tool. In addition, developmental assessments were administered to children in the Fall and Spring prior to Kindergarten entry, and 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 strategies and analysis of the Parent Aware Rating Tool that can inform decisions about statewide implementation of a QRIS.

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 thirty-nine (339) early care and education programs serving nearly 22,000 children are 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 July 2010, 339 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 (147), Head Start programs (23) and School Readiness programs (53) plus 3 provisionally rated programs.
- 110 programs currently have full ratings, a 38% increase since December, 2009.



For a full report of these findings, please see

Evaluation of Parent Aware: Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System Pilot Year 3 Evaluation Report

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Programs in Parent Aware

- The overall participation rate of eligible programs is 14%, with higher participation rates (between 30% and 45%, depending on the pilot area) for center-based programs. There are a total of 1,198 programs in the pilot area: 23% are center-based programs and 77% are family child care programs.
- Of the 110 fully-rated programs, 25% of programs received 4 stars, 42% received 3 stars, 29% received 2 stars, and 4% received 1 star.
- Programs score higher, on average, in the Family Partnerships category (8.4 points out of 10 points) and lower, on average, in the Teaching Materials and Strategies (4.4 out of 10 points) and the Tracking Learning (4.7 points out of 10 points) categories.
- Measures of observed global quality (the Environment Rating Scales) and teacher-child interaction (the CLASS) receive minimal weighting in the current Parent Aware Rating Tool. 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.
- On average, fully-rated programs at higher star ratings have higher scores on measures of global quality and teacher-child interaction than programs at lower star ratings. This pattern provides preliminary evidence that the Parent Aware star ratings capture important differences in observed quality.
- 48 programs have been re-rated (an annual requirement for fully-rated programs participating in the pilot). Nearly two-thirds (65%) increased their rating by at least one star, while only 6% decreased their star rating. Family child care programs increased by one star, on average, while center-based programs increased by half a star.
- Programs with a rating of 3 stars or less receive quality improvement supports (including technical assistance from consultants and financial support to purchase materials, equipment and training). Providers report positive perceptions of these supports and report that they have made significant improvement to their programs as a result of Parent Aware.
- Overall, providers have positive impressions of Parent Aware and describe benefits such as training opportunities, funds for supplies and equipment, support from Parent Aware staff, and positive responses from parents to participation in Parent Aware.
- In each year of the pilot, new Parent Aware programs have received higher ratings, on average, than new programs that entered the year before. This may be due to actual quality differences in the programs that entered the pilot in later years or provision of pre-supports to programs. Incentives may be needed to encourage lower quality programs to participate in Parent Aware.

Children served by Parent Aware programs

- Across the sample of children studied in the Evaluation (3/4th of whom are children in 4-star, automatically rated programs), the majority of children scored 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 and social competence. Gains were not seen on measures of early math skills. The effect sizes on measures of language and literacy were slightly larger for children from low-income families than they were for the full sample of children.
 - Approximately 25% of parents with a child in a Parent-Aware rated program have heard of Parent Aware indicating that marketing efforts are needed to increase visibility of Parent Aware.

Next Steps

- The Evaluation will collect additional data from programs, children and families. A report on the final year of the pilot will be released fall, 2011.

