






Public Sector To-Do List

MELF Blueprint Recommendations	2013 Progress Report	Minnesota's Grade, So Far
OVERALL GRADE		B+
√ EXPAND PARENT AWARE STATEWIDE. Make the Parent Aware Ratings available to all Minnesota parents, providers and children within three years.	Great progress. The Dayton Administration has initiated a county-by-county 4-year expansion plan. There are predictable growing pains to manage (see below), but the important thing is that the plans are moving forward.	A
√ KEEP PARENT AWARE RATINGS SIMPLE. Make Parent Aware simple and easily accessible for parents.	The Ratings are relatively simple, and officials are taking steps to reduce the complexity further in response to feedback. Better presentation of information on the website is necessary, but that is in progress.	B- Trending in a positive direction
√ MAKE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SIMPLE. Make the quality improvement system simple and easily accessible for providers.	In the areas where Parent Aware is being introduced, there was initially confusion about program details and rewards. The state seems to be addressing these issues, but the situation needs to be monitored.	C- Trending in a positive direction
√ LINK RATINGS AND SCHOLARSHIPS. Link the new scholarships to the Parent Aware Ratings.	New state scholarships and federal Race-to-the-Top grant scholarships can only be used with child care providers who can prove, through the Parent Aware Ratings, that they are using the best practices for preparing children for Kindergarten.	A+





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<p>✓ MAKE SCHOLARSHIPS EASY TO USE. Make the new scholarships simple and accessible for parents and providers.</p>	<p>The scholarships that were made available in 2012 and which will continue with some modifications into the future are being administered in a fairly straight-forward way. But capped scholarship amounts present a serious usability issue. Flexible amounts are necessary to ensure kids are getting the level of programming necessary to be school ready.</p>	<p>C Needs improvement</p> 
<p>✓ IMPROVE RATINGS STANDARDS. Strengthen Parent Aware Ratings standards whenever research supports stronger standards.</p>	<p>Post-MELF pilot, the state took steps to strengthen standards based on the MELF-funded evaluation. Not all of the changes were winners, but a genuine effort was made. State actors also have a continuous improvement plan in place. PASR will continue to evaluate the Ratings standards, and make recommendations as needed.</p>	<p>A- Trending in a positive direction</p>
<p>✓ REFORM PRE-MELF CHILD CARE PROGRAMS. Make the current government child care programs much more streamlined (for parents and providers), accountable and focused on school readiness.</p>	<p>The Dayton administration successfully negotiated for inclusion of a child care subsidy program reimbursement rate bonus for Parent Aware 3- and 4-star programs during the 2013 session. This change, along with several other quality-linked reforms, contribute to making Minnesota's nearly \$200 million subsidy program more accountable to kids and taxpayers.</p>	<p>B Incomplete</p> 
<p>✓ ACCELERATE EARLY ED REFORMS WITH FEDERAL HELP. Seek federal Race to the Top grant to fund an acceleration of reforms.</p>	<p>This was done, through a collaborative community effort. Minnesota was awarded a \$45 million federal grant that substantially integrated MELF reforms, such as a) funding scholarships, b) integrating Parent Aware with scholarships, c) increasingly aligning state quality improvement investments with Parent Aware, and e) implementing a data system to better track child progress and long-term outcomes. This has been a major impetus to accelerate the reforms measured in this Report Card.</p>	<p>A+</p>
<p>✓ IMRPOVE EARLY ED QUALITY THROUGH NEW TAX CREDITS. Enact the three tax credits MELF proposed in 2011 to reward quality improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For child care providers who volunteer for to enter Parent Aware • For child care workers who improve their education and stay on the job at rated programs • For private donors supporting quality improvement efforts and/or scholarships. 	<p>None of the three tax credits to incent quality improvements were approved, or even considered, by the Minnesota Legislature. In order to ensure that quality improvement rewards are sufficient, more work needs to be done to attract private investment in this area.</p>	<p>F Trending stagnant</p>
<p>✓ HELP POOR KIDS ACCESS HIGH QUALITY EARLY ED. After quality improvement reforms are in place, invest in improving low-income kids' access to quality.</p>	<p>Substantial progress has been made on this front. During the 2013 session the number of state-funded scholarships available each year grew from 460 to 4,067. Despite this increase, however, at least 17,000 eligible children will remain trapped on waiting lists or in low quality programming. To "move the needle" on school readiness, we need to get all low income Minnesota kids off of waiting lists and into high quality early education.</p>	<p>B Incomplete</p> 

Private Sector To-Do List

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<p>✓ ORGANIZE TO PUSH EARLY ED REFORMS. Form non-governmental group to promote and protect the Parent Aware Ratings.</p>	<p>Done. Parent Aware for School Readiness (PASR) was officially formed in the summer of 2012, is actively fundraising, is marketing and advertising to parents and is protecting the Ratings from weakening. While this was a major 2012 achievement, much more private fundraising is needed to achieve PASR goals.</p>	A
<p>✓ RAISE PRIVATE MONEY TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT PARENT AWARE. Raise non-governmental money to adequately fund PASR work.</p>	<p>Though several pioneering donors have stepped forward, more private fundraising is needed to achieve PASR goals.</p>	C+ Trending in a positive direction
<p>✓ BUILD AN EFFECTIVE PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN. Through PASR, fund parent-targeted advertising and promotions to empower parents and create market rewards for rated providers.</p>	<p>In the areas where Parent Aware is being introduced, PASR a) developed marketing kits for providers, b) developed a radio, TV and digital ad campaign aimed at parents, c) formulated a post-card campaign to promote Parent Aware to providers, and d) designed a system for evaluating and improving the campaign's effectiveness. The campaigns are built, but the challenge for next year will be to do more private fundraising to purchase sufficient media weight. Without that media weight, the campaign cannot succeed.</p>	B- Trending in a positive direction
<p>✓ PUSH IMPROVEMENTS INFORMED BY EVALUATIONS. Through PASR, use evaluation results to recommend continuous improvement of the rating system.</p>	<p>PASR recommended a number of ways that the Dayton Administration could improve child care provider rewards and communication about the Rating program, and those adjustments were adopted.</p>	A Trending in a positive direction
<p>✓ PROTECT RATINGS STANDARDS. Fight any efforts to weaken Rating standards.</p>	<p>No efforts have yet been made to weaken Rating standards, so a grade is not relevant in this category. Vigilance is necessary here in years to come.</p>	NA
<p>✓ ENCOURAGE HOME ASSESSMENTS. Through employers, encourage parents to focus at home on their child's school readiness, including use of the PASR-supported www.IsYourChildReady.com.</p>	<p>More work is required to encourage parents to use the website. Plans are underway to build a strong connection to the IsYourChildReady quiz from the Parent Aware website, where scores of Minnesota parents of young children will be driven via the ad campaign.</p>	D Incomplete
<p>✓ EXPAND BUSINESS COALITION. Expand the size and level of commitment of the business coalition supporting early education reforms.</p>	<p>PASR has added business leaders to its Board, and maintained strong relationships with the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, the Minnesota Business Partnership and several large employers. It is organizing a sign-on drive for business leaders to express their support for early education reforms.</p>	B Incomplete

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<p>√ LOBBY FOR FURTHER REFORMS. Speak out in favor of MELF reforms: a) reform existing government programs; and b) Enact the three tax credits MELF proposed in 2011 to reward quality improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For child care providers who volunteer for to enter Parent Aware • For child care workers who improve their education and stay on the job at rated programs • For private donors supporting quality improvements efforts and/or scholarships. 	<p>During the 2013 session the business community backed both reforms and an increase in funding to help low-income children access quality early education experiences. While access investments were made in scholarships and rate bonuses, a key reform that would have fully linked Minnesota's nearly \$200 million child care subsidy program to Ratings in 2018 stalled. Tax credits were not considered during the 2013 session.</p>	<div style="text-align: right;"></div> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">B</p> <p>Incomplete</p>
<p>√ SPEAK OUT FOR POOR KIDS WHO CAN'T ACCESS HIGH QUALITY EARLY ED. After quality improvement reforms are in place, invest in improving low-income kids' access to quality.</p>	<p>The Dayton administration, a bipartisan group of Legislators, and the broad MinneMinds coalition (on which PASR plays a leadership role) worked together during the 2013 legislative session to dramatically increase the availability of early learning scholarships for low-income 3- and 4-year-olds. The \$40 million increase in scholarship funding was accompanied by the introduction of a rate bonus for programs with high Parent Aware ratings in Minnesota's long-standing child care subsidy program. Continued advocacy is needed to give complete access to 17,000 children who need it.</p>	<div style="text-align: right;"></div> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">B+</p> <p>Incomplete</p>