MINNESOTA EARLY LEARNING FOUNDATION
RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

Wilder Research, Child Trends, SRI International, and Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota.

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Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Evaluation: Year 2

Summary of Year 2 Annual Report

This fact sheet summarizes the Year 2 Annual Report on the evaluation of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program. The summary includes what has been learned thus far about its effects on children, families, early care and education (ECE) programs, and the targeted communities in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

What is the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program model?

The model has three major interventions.

- **Parent Mentoring** through home visiting to provide parents with information and resources
- **Scholarships** for low-income, 3- to 4-year old children to attend high-quality ECE programs
- **ECE program quality rating system** (called Parent Aware) to rate and monitor ECE program quality

Eligible families in the Thomas-Dale and North End (and beginning in Fall 2009, Payne/Phalen) neighborhoods apply for scholarships to use for their children to attend ECE programs rated as high-quality by Parent Aware.

Who has enrolled in the scholarship program so far?

- Approximately 650 children participated in parent mentoring and/or received scholarships.
- 449 children were eligible to use their scholarship funds during 2009, and 344 of them were enrolled in an ECE program using their scholarship funds.[1]

What are the child and family characteristics of participants in the outcome evaluation?

- A little over half of the families reported that their primary home language was English (56%), with Karen (13%) and Hmong (9%) being the next most common home languages.
- Of those reporting ethnicity on the application forms, 21% of parents identified their children as African-American and 18% of parents identified their children as Asian.
- About three-fourths of the families (71%) had household incomes below 100% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG); the incomes of the remainder were between 100% and 185% FPG.
- About half of the families (46%) were receiving financial assistance from Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) and almost one-fifth (17%) were receiving assistance from Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) at the time the application form was completed.
- Many parents reported that they engage in one or more activities with the child care program to support their children's learning and development including talking with the teacher about child's behavior and accomplishments, volunteering in the child's classroom, going on class trips and working on skills and knowledge at home.
- At baseline, approximately half (51%) of the children scored below average on a standardized language assessment measure, and approximately one-fifth (19%) of the children performed below average on tests of mathematical abilities and skills.

How was parent mentoring implemented?[2]

- Parent mentor agencies (Saint Paul Ramsey County Public Health, Neighborhood House, Lifetrack Resources, Minnesota Literacy Council, Saint Paul – Early Childhood Family Education [ECFE]) provided home visiting for many of the families. Families received an average of 7 home visits, with each visit lasting about an hour. Parent mentoring and home visiting lasted for 8 months on average.
- Parent mentors were valued by the scholarship families, providing information about the benefits of high-quality child care and how to select a program. Parent mentors also provided information about language and literacy, positive parenting practices, child health and nutrition, and information to support children's development and school readiness.

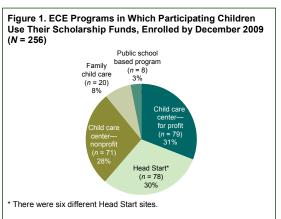[1] The outcome evaluation includes only 256 of the 449 children who can attend 2 years of a high-quality ECE program, enter kindergarten in 2010 or 2011, and were consented to participate in the evaluation.

[2] More information about parent mentoring is included in the full report.

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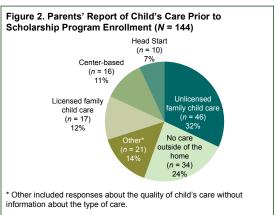
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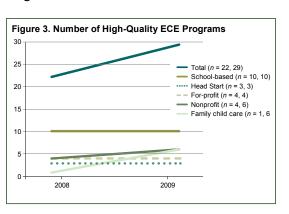
What ECE programs are children attending?

- Over half (58%) were using their scholarship funds to attend a center-based ECE program, and one-third of the children (30%) were using their scholarship funds to attend a Head Start program. A small percentage of children (8%) were using their scholarship funds at a family child care program, and 3% of the children attended a public school-based program (Figure 1).

- About three-fourths (77%) of the children were using their scholarship funds to attend an ECE program full time.

- Prior to receiving the scholarship, the majority of children (56%) were being cared for either in the child's home or in unlicensed family child care (Figure 2).

Figure 1. ECE Programs in Which Participating Children Use Their Scholarship Funds, Enrolled by December 2009 (*N* = 256)

Public school based program (*n* = 8) 3%
Family child care (*n* = 20) 8%
Child care center—for profit (*n* = 79) 31%
Child care center—nonprofit (*n* = 71) 28%
Head Start* (*n* = 78) 30%

* There were six different Head Start sites.

Figure 2. Parents' Report of Child's Care Prior to Scholarship Program Enrollment (N = 144)

Head Start (*n* = 10) 7%
Center-based (*n* = 16) 11%
Licensed family child care (*n* = 17) 12%
Other* (*n* = 21) 14%
Unlicensed family child care (*n* = 46) 32%
No care outside of the home (*n* = 34) 24%

* Other included responses about the quality of child's care without information about the type of care.

How has ECE Program Supply and Quality Changed from 2008 to 2009?

- At baseline in 2008, 221 programs were licensed to provide care in and near the pilot areas. Prior to the Parent Aware rating system, the only indicator of quality was licensure. This number of licensed programs was used as a proxy for the available programs that could choose to participate in Parent Aware, and subsequently enroll children with scholarship funds. Thus, approximately 10 to 13% of possible ECE programs in and near the pilot areas were participating in Parent Aware.

- ECE programs' participation in Parent Aware increased from 2008 to 2009 (Figure 3). High-quality ECE program supply increased over the first 2 years of the scholarship program implementation, with family child care programs increasing the most.

- The evaluation findings indicate the mobility and flexibility in families' use of scholarship funds. In 2008, 90% of families were using the scholarship for programs in the pilot area, compared to 73% in 2009.

Figure 3. Number of High-Quality ECE Programs

— Total (*n* = 22, 29)
— School-based (*n* = 10, 10)
···· Head Start (*n* = 3, 3)
-- For-profit (*n* = 4, 4)
— Nonprofit (*n* = 4, 6)
— Family child care (*n* = 1, 6

What are the next steps?[3]

SRI will continue to collect data on children and their families in 2010. A cost study will also be implemented.

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[3] Information about implementation successes and challenges can be found in the Issue Brief 2: Implementation in Year 2