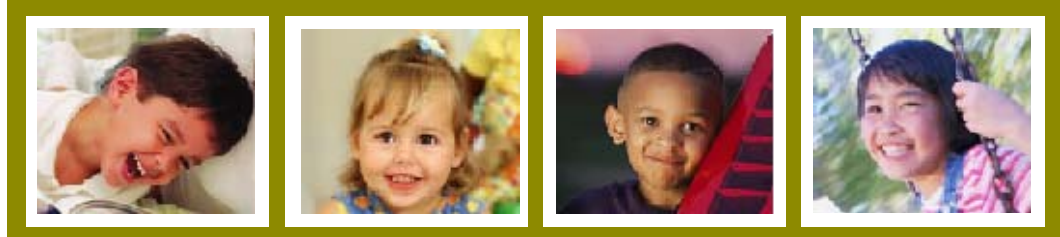




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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA.



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Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Evaluation

Annual Report: Year 2

SRI Project 18280

Submitted to

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Executive Summary



This is the second annual report on the evaluation of the pilot of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program. The purpose of this annual report is to describe how the scholarship model is being implemented and what has been learned thus far about its effects on children, families, early education programs, and the targeted community (the targeted pilot areas in Saint Paul, Minnesota).

The report begins with an overview of the scholarship model. Next we present data about the characteristics of participating children and families, about early education programs and the pilot community, and about the implementation activities, successes, challenges, and modifications made to address the challenges. The report ends with the next steps in the evaluation.

The qualitative and quantitative data presented in this report address key questions about the scholarship program's logic model.

- How have the three scholarship program interventions been implemented (i.e., parent mentoring, receipt of scholarship funds and attendance in high-quality early childhood education [ECE] programs, and participation in the Parent Aware program rating system)?
 - Who are the children, families, and programs participating in the Scholarship Program?
 - Who participated in the parent mentoring component of the Scholarship Program? What activities occurred during the visit and what topics were discussed?
 - Which types of ECE programs are responding to the Scholarship Program? How many high-quality ECE programs and slots are available in and near the pilot area? How has the supply of ECE programs and slots changed over the first 2 years of implementation?
- How does the development of scholarship participants compare to expected development for children their age?

Participation in the Scholarship Program

Approximately 650 children participated in parent mentoring and/or received scholarships during 2009. A total of 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 during this period. The outcome evaluation includes 256 of the 449 children who will attend up to 2 years of a high-quality ECE program and enter kindergarten in 2010 or 2011 and have consent to participate in the evaluation.

Table ES-1. Number of Participants in Scholarship Program, by Cohort

Cohort	Definition of Group	Projected	Actual	With Consent	Enrolled in ECE Program*
Cohort 1	Early enrollee group; expected to receive about 6–18 months of ECE program participation starting 1/1/08	100	129	94	79
Cohort 2**	Eligible to receive scholarship from 9/1/08 for 2 years, enter kindergarten in 2010	300	162	152	133
Cohort 3**	Eligible to receive scholarship from 9/1/09 for 2 years, enter kindergarten in 2011	300	158	138	132
Infant Cohort 1	Receiving parent mentoring, expected to enter ECE programs in fall 2010, receive scholarship for 1 year***	200	101	72	–
Infant Cohort 2	Receiving parent mentoring, eligible to enter ECE programs in fall 2011, no scholarship funds allocated	200	102	68	–
Total		1,100	652	522	344

* Ever enrolled in ECE program using scholarship funds, consented and nonconsented (i.e., consent for evaluation).

** These are the children who are included in the outcome evaluation.

*** Infant Cohort 1 will not be awarded scholarships in fall 2010 due to budget constraints.

Data collected from the administrative agency and from application forms completed by families provided information on the characteristics of children and their families.

- Many children are English language learners. A little over half of the families reported that their primary language was English (56%), with Karen (13%) and Hmong (9%) being the next most common home languages.
- An ethnically diverse group of children are participating in the scholarship program. 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 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.

Phone interviews with participating families and baseline assessments of children indicate the following:

- 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.

- 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.

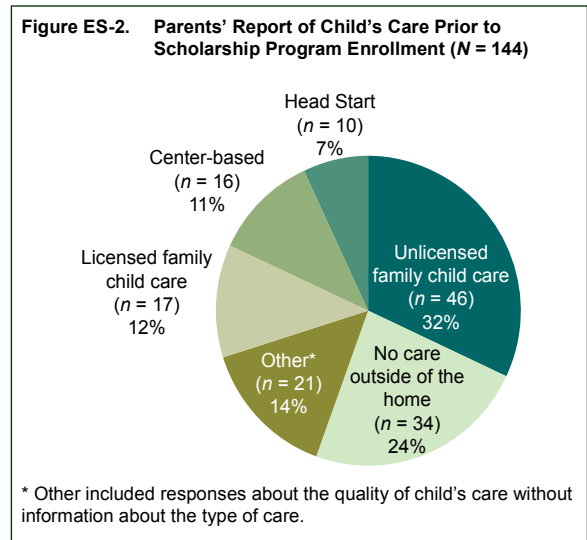
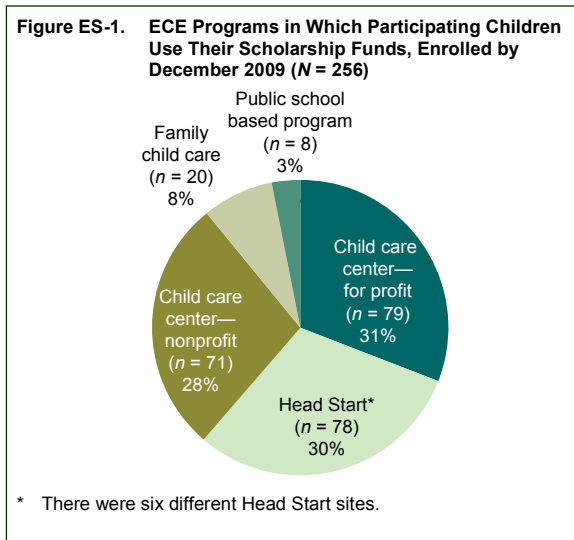
Parent Mentoring in the Scholarship Program

- 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 for most families.
- 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.

High-Quality ECE Programs Selected by Participating Families

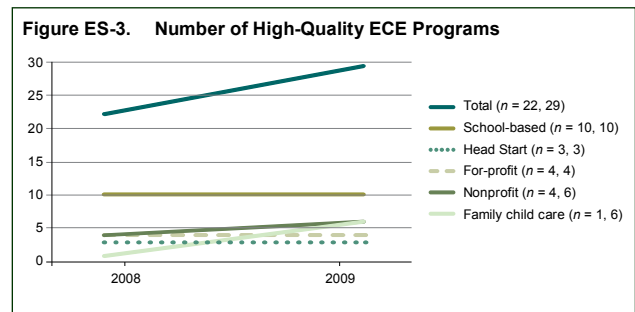
The children in Cohorts 2 and 3 who had enrolled in an ECE program by December 2009 ($N = 256$) were attending a variety of types of programs.

- One-third of the children (30%) were using their scholarship funds to attend a Head Start program, and over half (58%) were using their scholarship funds to attend a center-based ECE 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 ES-1).
- About three-fourths (77%) of the children were using their scholarship funds to attend an ECE program full-time. More Cohort 3 than Cohort 2 children used their scholarship funds to attend an ECE program full time (85% vs. 69%).
- Prior to receiving a scholarship, the majority of children were being cared for in unlicensed care (56%), either by family members in the child's home or in unlicensed care in another's home (Figure ES-2).
- The most common reason for selecting an ECE program reported by parents was quality (34%). Parents ranked the quality of the program higher than either location or cost of the program.



ECE Program Supply and Quality in the Pilot Communities

Data showing families' selection of ECE programs over time and ECE programs' participation in Parent Aware provide a window into the market forces that are operating in the scholarship model pilot area. Figure ES-3 shows a summary of changes in supply including the following:



- 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.
- 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.

A section about qualitative findings on implementation follows. The Annual Report ends with a summary of the next steps in the evaluation, including plans for Year 3 data collection on children and their families and a cost study.

Introduction



This is the second annual report on the evaluation of the pilot of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program. It is a cumulative report but primarily covers the period from January to December 2009, the second full year of the program. Activities during the year included the following:

- Following the first cohorts of children and families over time through evaluation activities
- Enrolling the second cohort of children and families into the scholarship program and the evaluation beginning in Fall 2009
- Tracking eligible children's participation in Parent Aware-rated early education programs
- Continuing to track implementation of Parent Aware and the supply of early education programs and slots in districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul
- Continuing to monitor the implementation of the scholarship program (e.g., procedures, successes, challenges)

The purpose of this annual report is to describe how the scholarship model is being implemented and what has been learned thus far about its effects on children, families, early education programs, and the targeted community (the targeted pilot areas in Saint Paul, Minnesota). Thus, the report has both process and outcome components.

The report begins with an overview of the scholarship model. Next, we present Year 2 findings about the participating children and families, parent mentoring services, baseline developmental and family literacy activities, early education programs and the pilot community, and about the implementation activities, successes, challenges, and modifications made to address the challenges. The report ends with a summary and description of the next steps in the evaluation.

Overview of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Model



Model Description

The purpose of this evaluation is to test the effectiveness of a market-oriented early childhood scholarship model outlined by Rolnick and Grunewald.¹ This model, which views early childhood education as a wise investment in economic development terms, builds on the ever-growing early childhood research literature demonstrating the short- and long-term benefits of high-quality early education programs, particularly for children from low-income families (who often lack access to high-quality early education programs).

The developers (Rolnick and Grunewald) and individuals representing the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) were asked about the impetus for the pilot of the scholarship program and their vision of it addressing early childhood education issues. These respondents articulated key features of the model, including the following:

- The model rests on the assumption that in a market-driven system, people behave in their best interests (i.e., parents are invested in the best interests of their children; the child care workforce and early education program administrators want to make a living).
- In designing the scholarship model, the developers kept in mind three guiding principles:
 - **Provision of financial resources to families.** Parents from low-income families must be given the financial resources that will enable them to access high-quality early childhood education (ECE) programs for their children; if incentives to programs are increased, the market will respond.
 - **Increased accountability.** Early education programs must be held accountable for producing positive results (e.g., getting children ready to be successful in school); programs that produce positive results will be eligible to receive higher payments, in the form of scholarships, for the children they serve, thus incentivizing ongoing performance. If programs are provided with incentives to produce positive results, they will respond to produce positive results.
 - **Parent empowerment.** Parents benefit from an array of information that can help them make good choices about how best to support their children’s early learning and school readiness. If parents who are low-income are given the information about the characteristics and benefits of high-quality ECE programs for their

¹ Rolnick, A., & Grunewald, R. (2003, December). Early childhood development: Economic development with a high public return. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, *The Region (Supplement)*, 17(4), 6-12.

Grunewald R., & Rolnick, A. (2006). *A proposal for achieving high returns on early childhood development*. Minneapolis, MN: Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Available at <http://www.minneapolisfed.org/pubs/cd/07-4/melf.cfm>.

children's learning and school readiness and the monetary resources needed to access these programs, their empowerment will create demand, which in turn will promote long-term sustainability of the supply of high-quality early education programs.

In short, the model contends that the market must provide incentives for early childhood education programs to achieve high quality, programs must be accountable to parents and the public (who fund programs) for achieving positive child outcomes, and parent empowerment is predicted to drive demand for high-quality early education programs as well as promote sustainability. An additional principle is that the model should be cost-effective at a systems level; that is, the market will support those programs that achieve positive results, but those programs that do not will not be sustained or at the very least will not participate in a market-driven approach (i.e., not solicit scholarship funds because they do not meet high-quality standards).

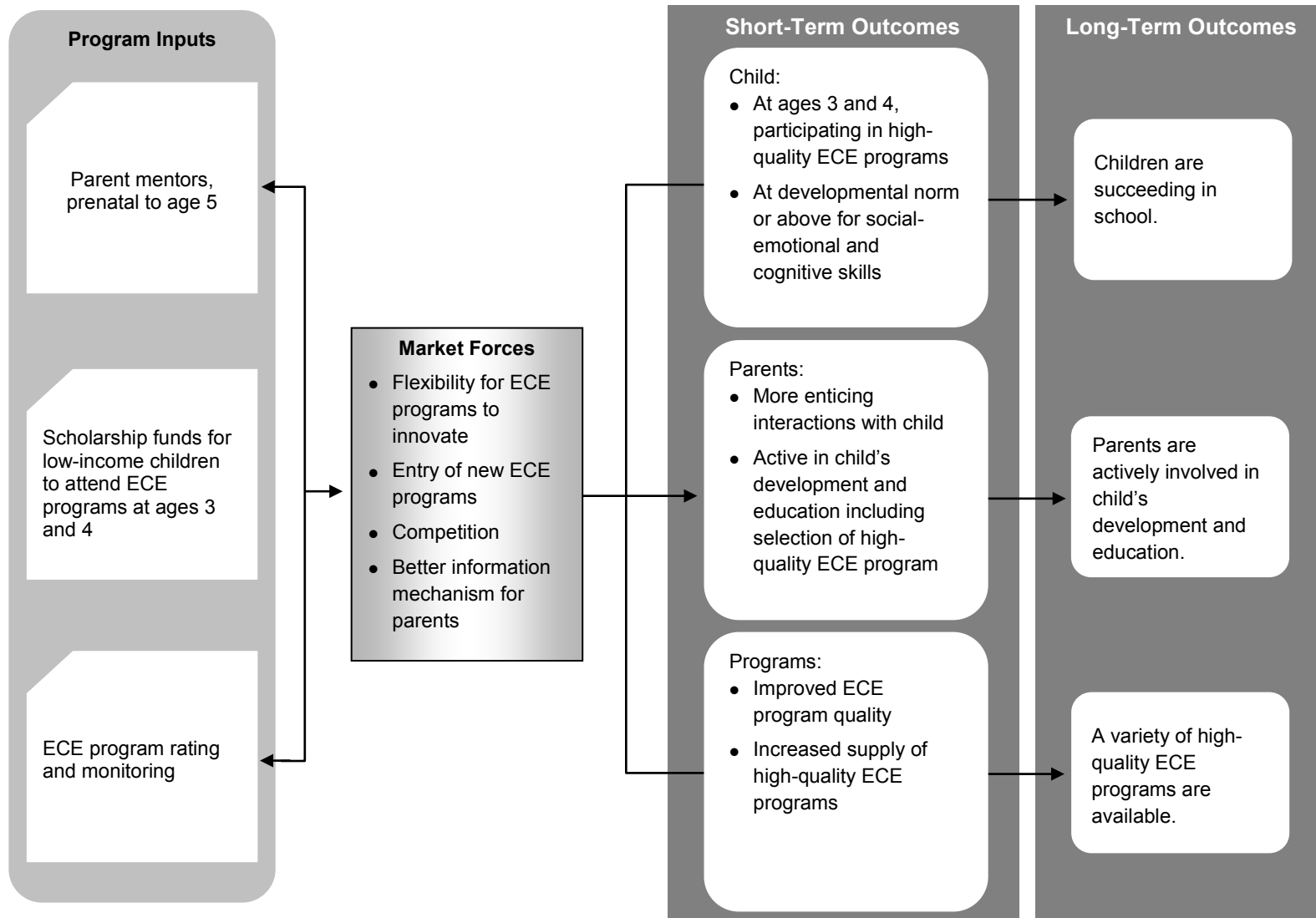
Figure 1 shows the logic model of the scholarship program designed by its developers. The model has three major interventions, shown as Program Inputs that map on to the three principles described above.

- **Parent Mentoring**² through home visiting to provide parents with information about the characteristics and benefits of high-quality ECE programs
 - Mentoring leads to parent empowerment—Low-income parents are given information that can help them make good choices about how best to support their children's early learning and school readiness.
- **Scholarships** for low-income families to use to pay for high-quality ECE programs for their preschool children
 - Scholarships lead to access to markets—Low-income families are given the financial resources to enable them to access high-quality ECE programs for their children.
 - If incentives to programs are increased, the market will respond (i.e., with increases in program supply and quality).
- Implementation of an ECE **program quality rating system**, Parent Aware,³ to rate and monitor ECE program quality
 - A rating system leads to increased accountability—ECE programs are accountable for producing positive results (e.g., getting children ready to be successful in school).

² Parent mentoring services ended June 30, 2009, due to budget constraints. This change is described in more detail in the qualitative data findings that begin on p. 53.

³ For detailed information about Parent Aware, go to its website at <http://www.parentawareratings.org/>.

Figure 1. Logic Model of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program—Goal: Children from Low-Income Families Are Prepared to Succeed in School



ECE = Early Childhood Education

Evaluation

Evaluation Questions

The findings to be presented draw on this logic model to show how the scholarship model is working and what has been learned about its components. The qualitative and quantitative data presented in this report address key questions about the logic model.

- How have the three scholarship program interventions shown as Program Inputs been implemented (i.e., parent mentoring, receipt of scholarship funds and attendance in high-quality ECE programs, and program participation in the Parent Aware program rating system)?⁴
 - Who are the children, families, and programs participating in the Scholarship Program? What are the demographic and baseline developmental characteristics of children and families (ethnicity, income/SES, mobility, language, employment, etc.)? What factors do families identify that facilitate enrollment and participation into the scholarship program? What factors do families identify that serve as barriers to enrollment and participating in the scholarship program?
 - Who participated in the parent mentoring component of the Scholarship Program? How many visits did children and families receive? What activities occurred during the visits and what topics were discussed?
 - Which types of ECE programs are responding to the scholarship program by participating in Parent Aware and by enrolling children with scholarship funds? How many high-quality ECE programs and slots are available in and near the pilot area for families to choose for their children to use their scholarship funds? How has the supply of ECE programs and slots changed over the first 2 years of implementation? Have new programs entered the market in and near the pilot area?
- In addition to general participation data, we asked the following outcome evaluation questions.
 - Are parents who participated in the parent mentoring component better informed about the nature of high-quality preschool and child care? Are there other benefits to participation in the parent mentoring and home visiting program (e.g., parents are engaging in behaviors to promote children’s positive development and school readiness; parents are better able to attend to children’s social and emotional needs)?
 - How does the development of scholarship participants compare to expected development for children their age? Do children who participated in the scholarship program enter kindergarten better prepared to be successful in school? Do more children experience improved development, competencies, and skills in

⁴ These questions also provide initial data on the Short-Term Outcomes components of the logic model (e.g., children participating in high-quality programs, improved program quality, and increased supply of high-quality programs).

dimensions identified by the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP)? These include the following:

- Health and physical development
 - Emotional well-being and social competence
 - Approaches to learning
 - Communication skills (including vocabulary)
 - Cognition and general knowledge (including early literacy and math).
- Two earlier implementation reports in September 2008 and September 2009 are available on the MELF website (www.melf.us). Through site visit interviews with the scholarship implementation team and key stakeholders, we described in these previous reports the successes and challenges of the scholarship program implementation during the first 2 years. This annual report summarizes the information previously reported and continues to provide information about the following process evaluation questions:
 - How is the market forces component of the scholarship logic model working so far?
 - How are scholarship-eligible families choosing ECE programs for their children? Are parents using Parent Aware to inform their decisionmaking in selecting an ECE program for their child?
 - Is the planned 4 years for the pilot project long enough for supply to increase? Is 4 years long enough for programs to attain high quality if they are not yet of high quality? Is 4 years long enough for parents to create demand for the high-quality programs? Is a pilot project of the scholarship model on a short time frame and in a limited geographic area a too conservative or limited test of a model that emphasizes the operation of market forces?

Sources of Data

The evaluation design included collection of data from multiple sources.

- **Monthly exports.** Resources for Child Caring (RCC) sends monthly exports of the status of all children deemed eligible and consented to participate in the evaluation. The exports include data from the **application form** and information about the selected ECE program, the ECE start dates, and the child's ECE program attendance.
- **Parent phone interview.** Parents of children participating in the scholarship program were interviewed in Fall 2008, Spring 2009, or Fall 2009. For this report, we used only the first interview completed by all parents to provide baseline information about the background of children, parents, and families participating in the scholarship program.⁵

⁵ That is, for some children (Cohort 2), 2008 data are baseline data, while for others (Cohort 3), 2009 data are baseline data.

- **Direct assessments and teacher completed checklists.** Children were assessed at their selected ECE programs either in the fall of 2008 (when Cohort 2 children were 3 years old) or the fall of 2009 (when Cohort 3 children were 3 years old).⁶
- **NACCRRARware.** Data were also collected from NACCRRARware, a web-based public-use dataset available from the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies that provides information about ECE programs and from the **Parent Aware rating website**⁷ that documents the changes in program quality and participation in the pilot areas over time.

Table 1. Scholarship Program Evaluation Questions and Data Sources in 2008–09

Evaluation Questions	Source
1. Who are the children, families, and programs participating in the Scholarship Program? What are the demographic and baseline developmental characteristics of children and families (ethnicity, income/SES, mobility, language, employment, school readiness, etc.)? What factors do families identify that facilitate enrollment into the scholarship program? What factors do families identify that serve as barriers to enrollment into the scholarship program?	Application forms Parent phone interviews
2. Who participated in the parent mentoring component of the Scholarship Program? How many visits did children and families receive? What activities occurred during the visits and what topics were discussed?	RCC monthly export Parent Mentor Data Collection Form
3. Which types of ECE programs are responding to the scholarship program by participating in Parent Aware and by enrolling children with scholarship funds? How many high-quality ECE programs and slots are available in and near the pilot area for families to choose for their children to use their scholarship funds? How has the supply of ECE programs and slots changed over the first 2 years of implementation? Have new programs entered the market in and near the pilot area?	NACCRRARware Parent Aware website
4. Are parents who participated in the parent mentoring component better informed about the nature of high-quality preschool and child care?	Parent Mentor Data Collection Form
5. Are there other benefits to participation in the parent mentoring and home visiting program (e.g., parents are engaging in behaviors to promote children’s positive development and school readiness; parents are better able to attend to children’s social and emotional needs)?	Parent focus groups
6. How does the development of scholarship participants compare to expected development for children their age? Do children who participated in the scholarship program enter kindergarten better prepared to be successful in school? Do more children experience improved development, competencies, and skills in dimensions identified by the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP)?	Direct child assessments Parent phone interviews Teacher checklists

⁶ Cohort 2 children were also assessed in the fall of 2009 when they were 4 years old, but these data will not be included in this report.

⁷ Available at <http://www.parentawareratings.org/>.

Year 2 Findings: Participating Children and Families



Number of Participants in Scholarship Program

The children and families participating in the scholarship program were in five cohorts. Table 2 shows that 1,100 children were projected to participate and 652 completed an application and were deemed eligible to participate.⁸ The scholarship program provided scholarship funds to 344 (77%) of the 449 children who were age-eligible. These children used their scholarship funds at a high-quality ECE programs beginning in January 2008 through December 2009. An additional 203 children were not eligible (i.e., under 3 years of age) to receive the scholarship funds during the project timeline (and prior to the budget cuts).

Table 2. Number of Participants in Scholarship Program, by Cohort

Cohort	Definition of Group	Projected	Actual	With Consent	Enrolled in ECE Program*
Cohort 1	Early enrollee group; expected to receive about 6 to 18 months of ECE program participation starting 1/1/08	100	129	94	79
Cohort 2**	Eligible to receive scholarship from 9/1/08 for 2 years, enter kindergarten in 2010	300	162	152	133
Cohort 3**	Eligible to receive scholarship from 9/1/09 for 2 years, enter kindergarten in 2011	300	158	138	132
Infant Cohort 1	Receiving parent mentoring, expected to enter ECE programs in fall 2010, receive scholarship for 1 year***	200	101	72	–
Infant Cohort 2	Receiving parent mentoring, eligible to enter ECE programs in fall 2011, no scholarship funds allocated	200	102	68	–
Total		1,100	652	522	344

* Number ever enrolled in ECE program using scholarship funds, consented and nonconsented (i.e., consent for evaluation).

** These are the children who are included in the outcome evaluation.

*** Infant Cohort 1 will not be awarded scholarships in fall 2010 due to budget constraints.

Thus, three groups (Cohort 1 and the two infant cohorts) were not included in the evaluation. There are 129 children in Cohort 1 who were eligible for a scholarship beginning January 1, 2008. These children were considered the ramp-up cohort and could have received between 6 and 18 months of high-quality ECE program exposure depending on when the family

⁸ An additional 268 children in Cohort 3 had completed applications and were deemed eligible by July 2009, but, due to budget cuts, participation and enrollment were capped at 132 for Cohort 3. Additional information about these cuts is described in the implementation section that starts on page 53.

found a program to enroll their children in and when the children could enroll. At the close of the Cohort 1 enrollment period (September 2009), 79 of these children had enrolled in a Parent Aware-rated ECE program using their scholarship funds at some time during this period (January 2008 to September 2009). Cohort 1 is now closed to enrollment as many of these children have entered kindergarten (and were not included in the outcome evaluation). The 203 children who met eligibility requirements as part of the infant cohorts had approved applications to receive parent mentoring and were set to receive scholarships in (2010 [$N = 101$] Infant Cohort 1 or 2011 [$N = 102$] Infant Cohort 2). Detailed outcome data are not collected for these cohorts of children either. Children in the Infant Cohorts 1 and 2 will not receive scholarships due to the budget cuts.

Throughout the remainder of this report (except where indicated in the parent mentoring section), data are presented for **Cohorts 2 and 3** only because the children in these groups can participate in the outcome evaluation and are expected to have the most in-depth data, including school readiness and kindergarten outcomes, by 2011. Children in Cohorts 2 and 3 were considered fully participating in the scholarship if they were enrolled in an ECE program using their scholarship funds beginning between January 2008 and December 2009.

- **Cohort 2.** There were **162** children eligible for a scholarship to enroll in programs beginning September 1, 2008. These children are considered the first group to receive the maximum scholarship to enable them to attend 2 full years of a high-quality ECE program before entering kindergarten in 2010. As of December 2009, 133 of these children had enrolled or were currently enrolled in a Parent Aware-rated ECE program using their scholarship funds. Nearly all of these families (130 of 133, 98%), consented to participate in the evaluation, and detailed outcome and demographic data were collected for Cohort 2 children beginning in fall 2008.
- **Cohort 3.** There were **158** children eligible to enroll in an ECE program using their scholarship funds beginning September 1, 2009; they also have the potential to receive the maximum scholarship and ECE program attendance (i.e., 2 years) and are expected to enter kindergarten in fall 2011. As of December 2009, 132 children were in this group and had enrolled or were currently enrolled in a Parent Aware-rated ECE program. Most of the participants (126 of 132, 95%) consented to participate in the evaluation and detailed outcome and demographic data were collected for Cohort 3 children beginning in fall 2009.

Figure 2 shows the following for Cohorts 2 and 3 combined:

- In Cohorts 2 and 3, **320** applications for scholarship funds were deemed eligible.⁹
- Of the 320 eligible:
 - **30** families (9%) did not have signed consent to participate in the evaluation.
 - Seven of the 30 parents in these families declined to participate in the evaluation. The remaining were not asked to participate or never responded to repeated requests.
 - **290** parents (91%) signed consent for their children and families to participate in the evaluation.

⁹ Data are provided in monthly reports from Resources for Child Caring (RCC). These data reflect the data exported to SRI in January 2010.

- Some of these children (34, 12%) never enrolled in an ECE program and their files were subsequently closed. These families either moved out of the area or RCC was unable to find them to determine their status or had selected a program but were not able to figure out transportation to the ECE program.
- **256** children (88%) with signed consent enrolled in an ECE program during the course of implementation.
 - Some of these 256 children (24, 9%) enrolled and attended an ECE program using their scholarship funds, but have subsequently moved or left the program.

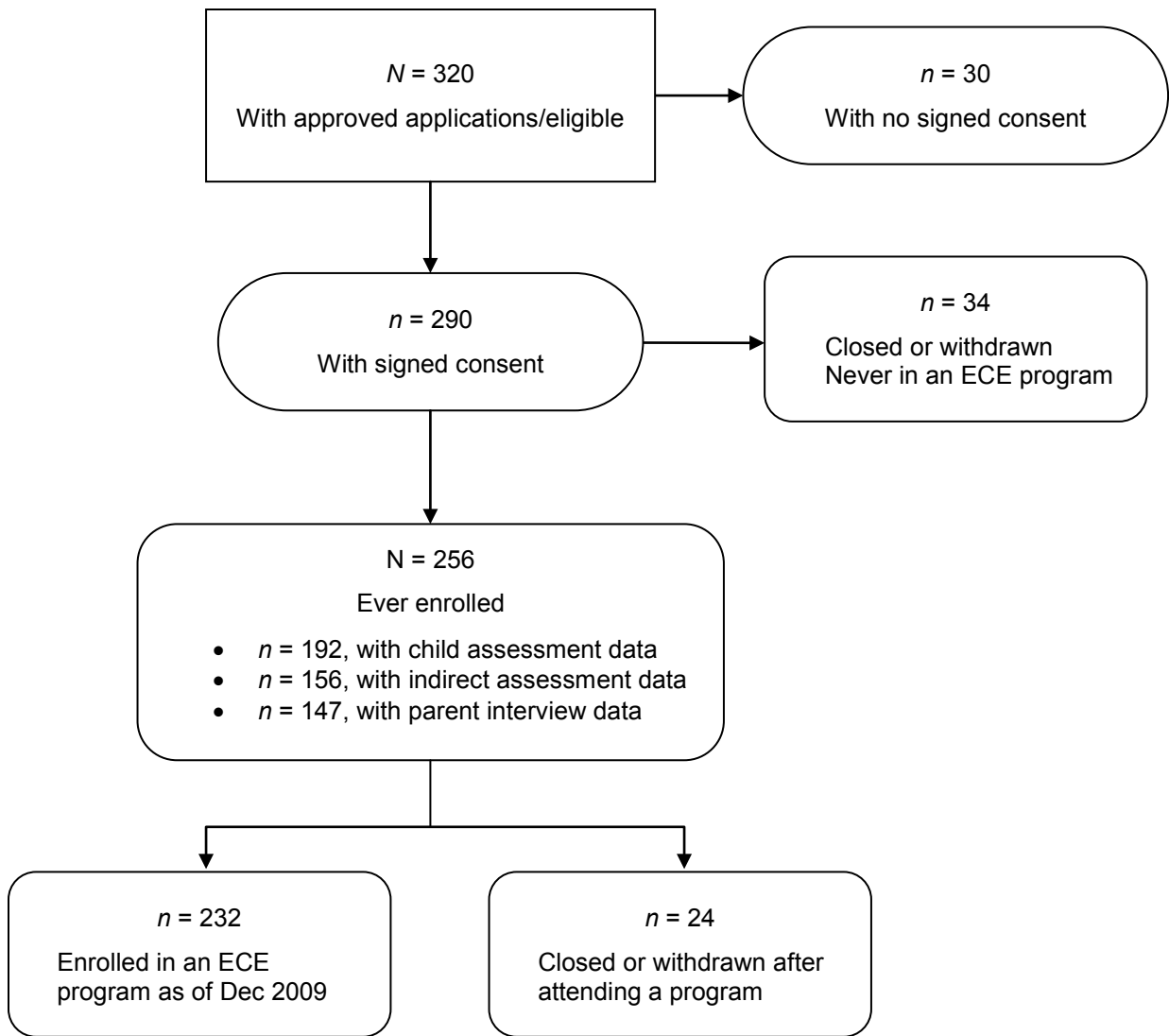
Figure 2 also shows the status of data collection begun in fall 2008 and continuing through 2009 for the outcome evaluation (child assessments and parent phone interviews). To increase our chances of reaching the families who were participating in the evaluation and because we did not have final numbers of participants until December 2009, SRI attempted to reach a larger number of parents through the phone interviews than actually ended up participating.¹⁰

- Of the 256 children, 147 (57%) families completed the phone interview.
- Of the 256 children, baseline child assessments were completed for a total of 192 children (75%) when the children ranged in age from 37 to 51 months, ($n = 77$, 59% for Cohort 2 and $n = 114$, 90% for Cohort 3).¹¹
 - A total of 44 children (17%) were not assessed at baseline because they were not yet enrolled in an ECE program. Most of these children (43, 98%) are in Cohort 2, and 1 child (2%) is in Cohort 3.
 - The other 21 missed direct assessments were because the children were no longer participating in the scholarship program by the time the assessment was attempted or were repeatedly absent or uncooperative with the testing.

¹⁰ For example, SRI attempted to reach a total of 341 families beginning in August 2009 even though some of the children in these families never enrolled in an ECE program. Thus, an additional 43 families from Cohort 3 were interviewed, but did not participate in the scholarship program.

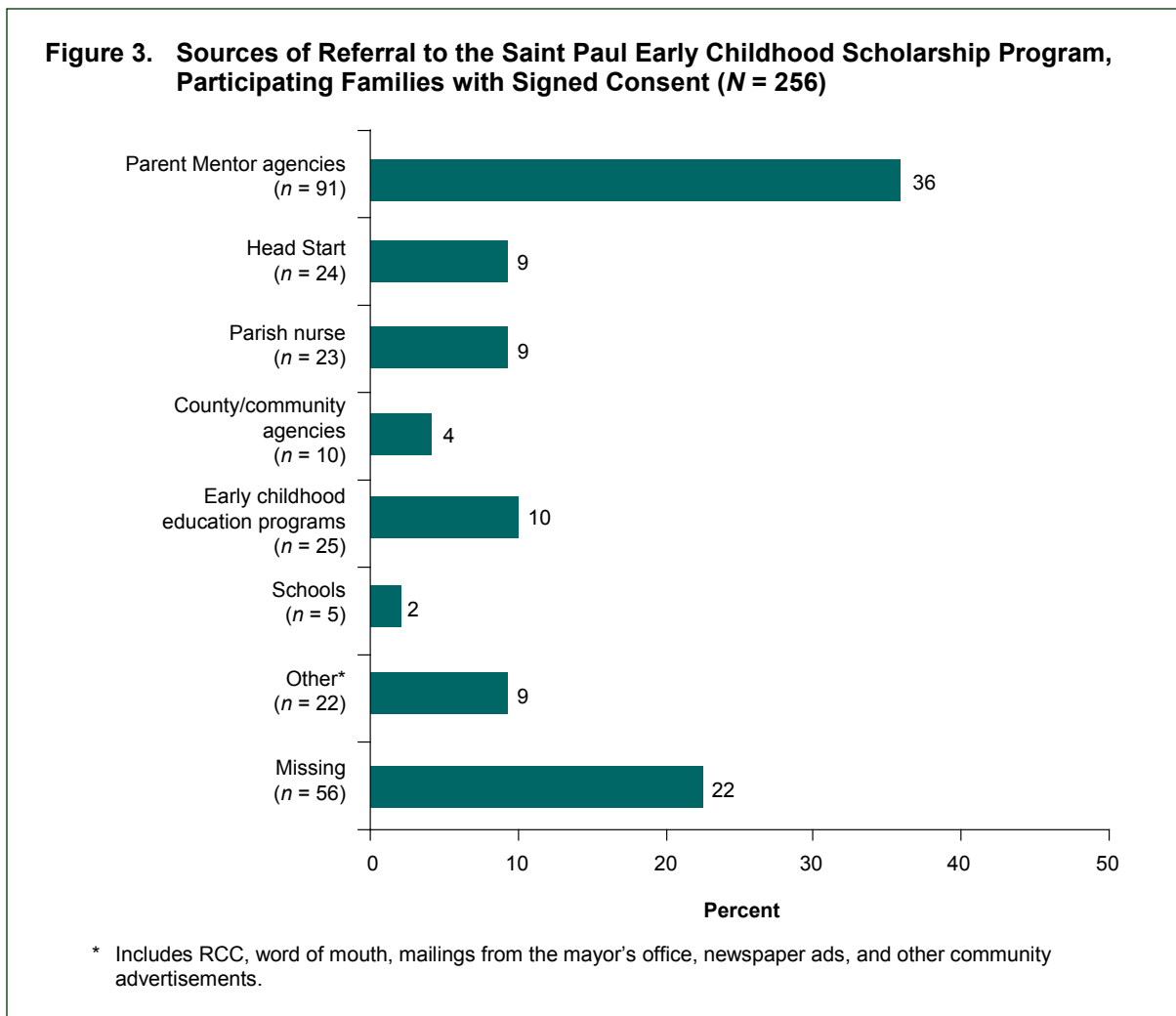
¹¹ Baseline assessment took place in fall 2008 for Cohort 2 and in fall 2009 for those in Cohort 3. Multiple obstacles to data collection in fall 2008 resulted in a lower response rate; several issues were resolved during 2009 including identifying participating children early and making repeated attempts to follow a subset of children as they moved from one program to another. An additional 64 children in Cohort 2 were also assessed in fall 2009 at the beginning of their second year of participation.

Figure 2. Number of Children in Cohorts 2 and 3 Participating in the Scholarship Program and Evaluation



Characteristics of Children and Families in Cohorts 2 and 3

Data from the application forms for the children in Cohorts 2 and 3 indicate that families learned about or were referred to the scholarship program from a variety of sources (Figure 3). These children were defined as participating in the evaluation if their parents had signed informed consent and they were ever enrolled in an ECE program using their scholarship funds ($N = 256$).



Source: Application forms.

- More than half of the families (57%) reported that they learned about the scholarship program from entities that receive payment from the scholarship program, including the Parent Mentor agencies (36%), Head Start (9%), schools (2%), and other early childhood education programs (10%).
- More than one-eighth of the families (13%) learned about the scholarship program from community agencies (4%) or other community sources, including Resources for Child Caring (the local child care referral agency), word of mouth, mailings from the mayor's office, or newspaper ads and other community advertisements (9%).

- For about one-fifth of the families (22%), the referral service was not reported on the application.

Table 3 shows the demographic characteristics of children and families enrolled in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program for Cohorts 2 and 3, as well as their participation status as of December 2009. These data show the following:

- Most of the children who were eligible, enrolled in an ECE program, and began participating in the scholarship evaluation (91%) were continuing to participate.
 - A number of families in Cohort 2 (23, 18%) who completed an application and were found to be eligible for a scholarship discontinued participation because of the family’s mobility and/or because the child left the ECE program.¹²
- 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.
- Ethnicity was not reported on the application forms for nearly half of the families (48%), but for those reporting, the majority of the families were African-American (21%) or Asian (18%).
 - Nearly three-fourths of families (71%) had household incomes below 100% FPG although eligibility for the program was up to 185% of the FPG.

Other data from the application forms and RCC participation data indicated the following:

- Across all cohorts, nearly two-thirds of the families (64%) have one child participating in the scholarship program, more than one-quarter (28%) have two children participating, and about 7% have three or more children participating.

¹² However, because the procedures for processing eligibility changed for Cohort 3, the numbers in the table do not reflect the total number of families who completed an application and were found to be eligible. For example, 268 applications from Cohort 3 families had been processed and deemed eligible for a scholarship as of July 16, 2009, but scholarships were subsequently capped such that only 132 Cohort 3 children were given scholarships. These additional 136 children are not reflected in Table 3 or Figure 2 because their records were subsequently dropped from the exports to SRI.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Children and Families Enrolled in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program, with Consent in Cohorts 2 and 3 (N = 256)

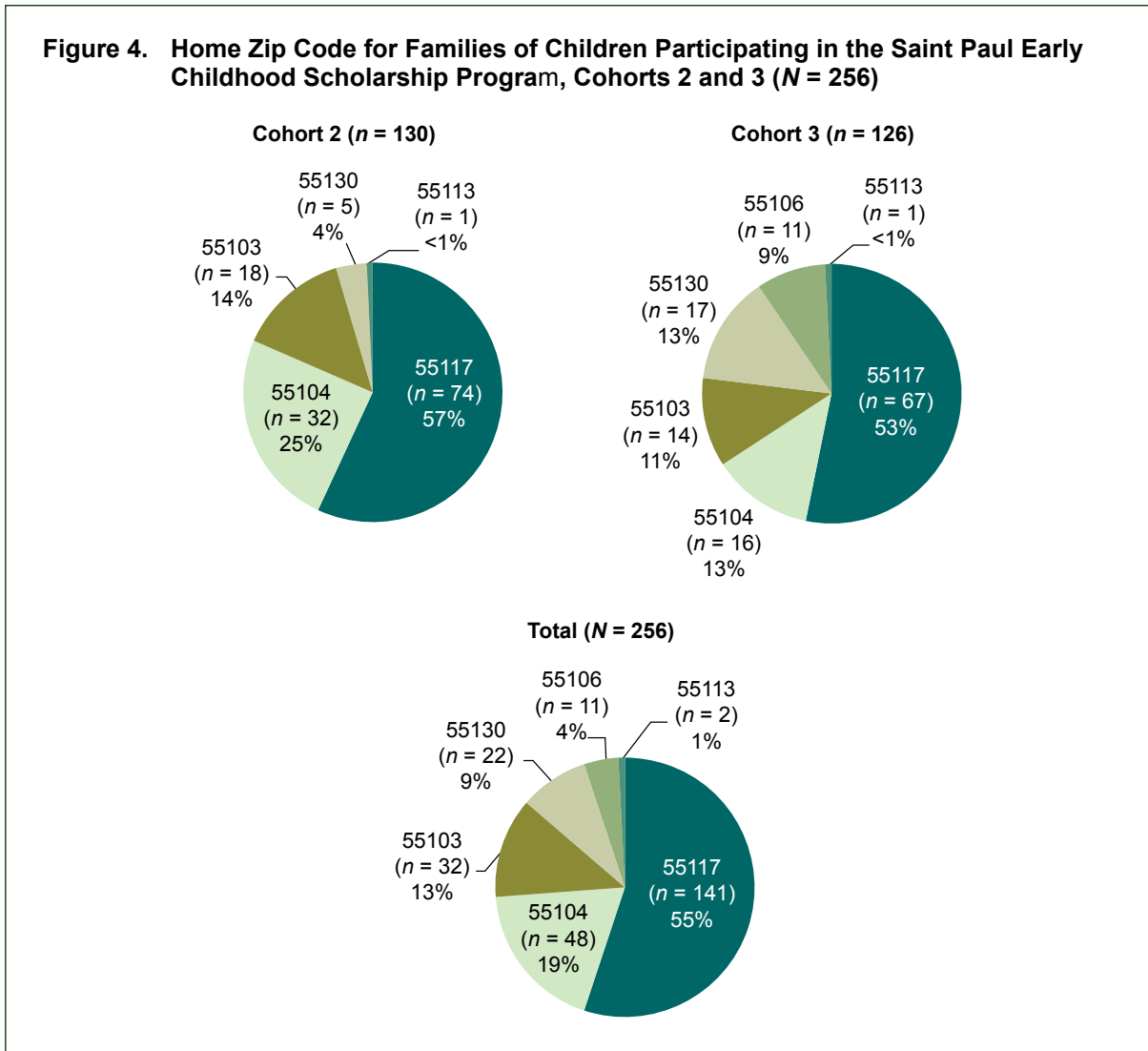
	Cohort 2 (n = 130)	Cohort 3 (n = 126)	Total (N = 256)
	<i>n (%)</i>		
Status as of December 2009			
Total eligible	130 (51)	126 (49)	256 (100)
Participating	107 (82)	125 (99)	232 (91)
Closed*	22 (17)	1 (<1)	23 (9)
Withdrawn*	1 (<1)	0	1 (<1)
Primary home language			
English	77 (59)	66 (52)	143 (56)
Spanish	7 (5)	10 (8)	17 (7)
Hmong	13 (10)	9 (7)	22 (9)
Somali	2 (2)	2 (2)	4 (2)
Karen	16 (12)	17 (13)	33 (13)
Other	8 (7)	7 (6)	15 (6)
Missing	7 (5)	15 (12)	22 (9)
Ethnicity			
African-American	39 (30)	14 (11)	53 (21)
Asian	29 (22)	17 (13)	46 (18)
Latino	7 (5)	5 (4)	12 (5)
White	7 (5)	2 (2)	9 (4)
Other	11 (8)	1 (<1)	12 (5)
Missing	37 (28)	87 (69)	124 (48)
Gender			
Male	65 (50)	65 (52)	130 (51)
Female	65 (50)	60 (48)	125 (49)
Household Income			
100–185% FPG	39 (30)	34 (27)	72 (28)
<100% FPG	91 (70)	92 (73)	182 (71)

* Closed = RCC closed the file, Withdrawn = Family dropped out of program or closed its file for some reason.

** FPG = Federal Poverty Guidelines.

Source: Application forms.

Families of the children in Cohorts 2 and 3 reside in six zip codes in districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul (Figure 4). The main difference between cohorts is that eligibility was expanded to include families who live in district 5 or Payne/Phalen (i.e., which includes the 55106 zip code area) beginning in September 2009. Thus, Cohort 3 includes some children from this area of Saint Paul.



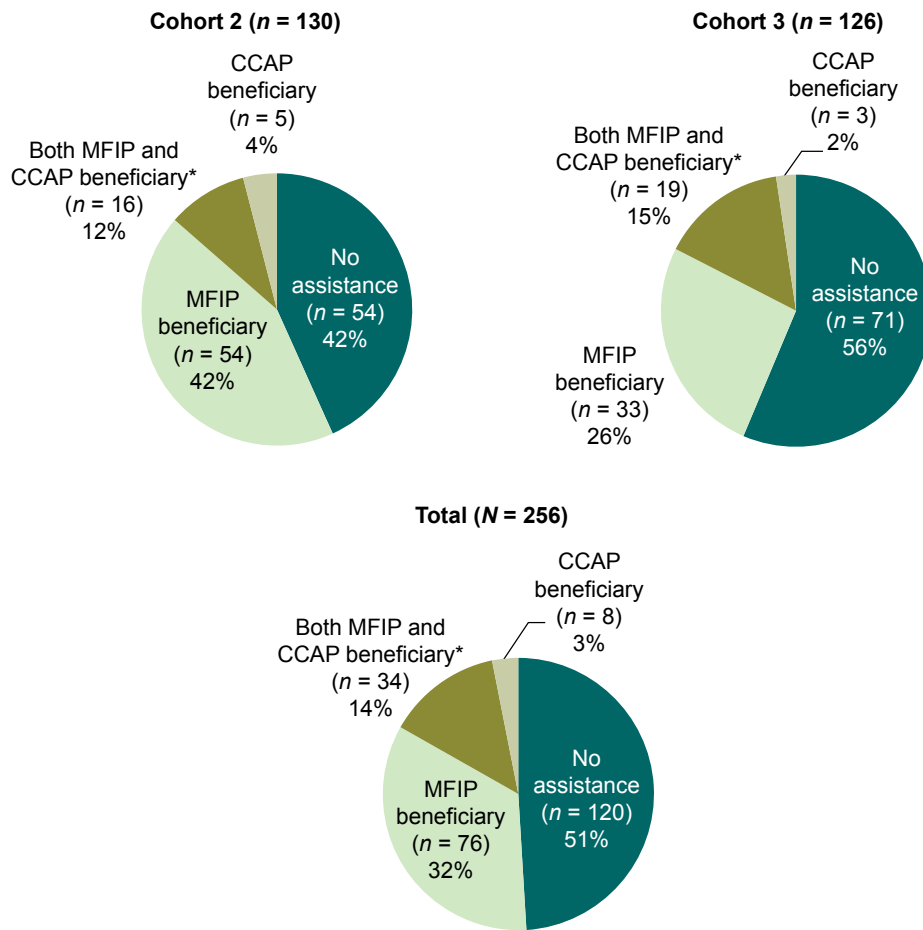
Source: Application forms.

Many of the families in Cohorts 2 and 3 were receiving one or two forms of public assistance (Figure 5).

- About half of families (48%) were receiving financial assistance from either the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), or from both programs.
 - Almost half of the families (46%) were receiving financial assistance from MFIP (MFIP and MFIP plus CCAP).

- Almost one-fifth (17%) were receiving assistance from CCAP (CCAP and MFIP plus CCAP).
- 14% of the families were receiving assistance from both assistance programs (MFIP and CCAP).
- Families in Cohort 3 were less likely to report MFIP only compared to Cohort 2 and more likely to report no assistance.

Figure 5. Families' Participation Rates in MFIP and CCAP Financial Assistance Programs, Cohorts 2 and 3, Families with Signed Consent (N = 256)



* MFIP = Minnesota Family Investment Program; CCAP = Child Care Assistance Program.

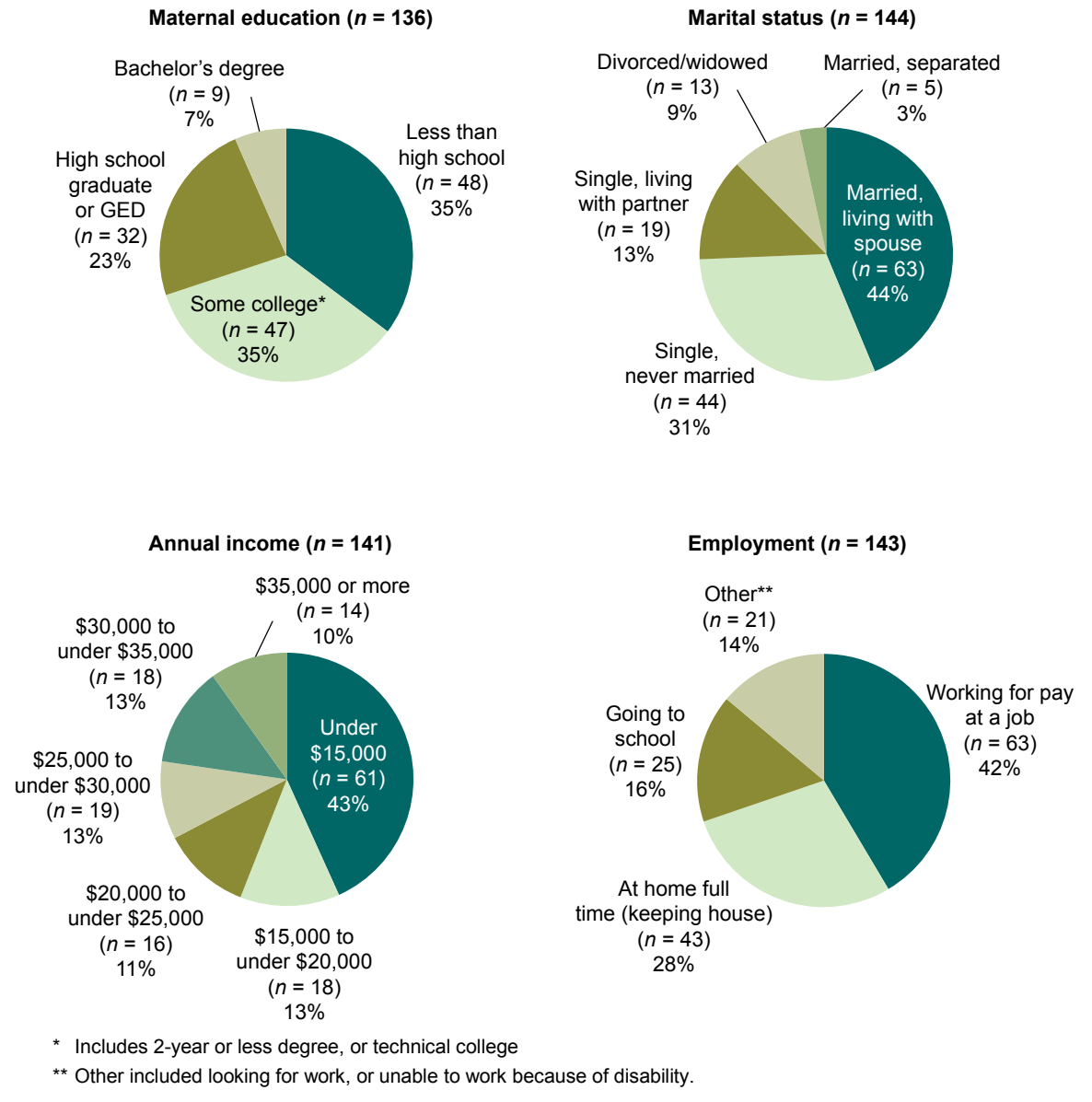
Source: Application forms.

Data displayed below include only the families that completed the parent phone interview ($n = 147$, 57%). In these and subsequent data, Cohorts 2 and 3 are combined, except where indicated.¹³

- The educational background of parents completing the phone interview ranged from less than a high school education to a bachelor's degree and was evenly distributed across these categories. More than one-third of the parents had less than a high school education (35%) and one-third (35%) had completed some additional vocational training or college following high school.
- Nearly half (44%) of the parents were married and living with a spouse at the time of the interview, and one-third (31%) were single and never married.
- About two-fifths (42%) of the parents were working for pay at a job and approximately one-fifth (18%) were going to school.
- Over half (56%) reported having an annual household income below \$20,000.
- Three-fourths (72%) of children see their father or father-figure on a daily basis.

¹³ Most of the interview respondents identified themselves as the biological mother (84%) or the biological father (11%). The respondents are identified interchangeably as parents or caregivers throughout the report.

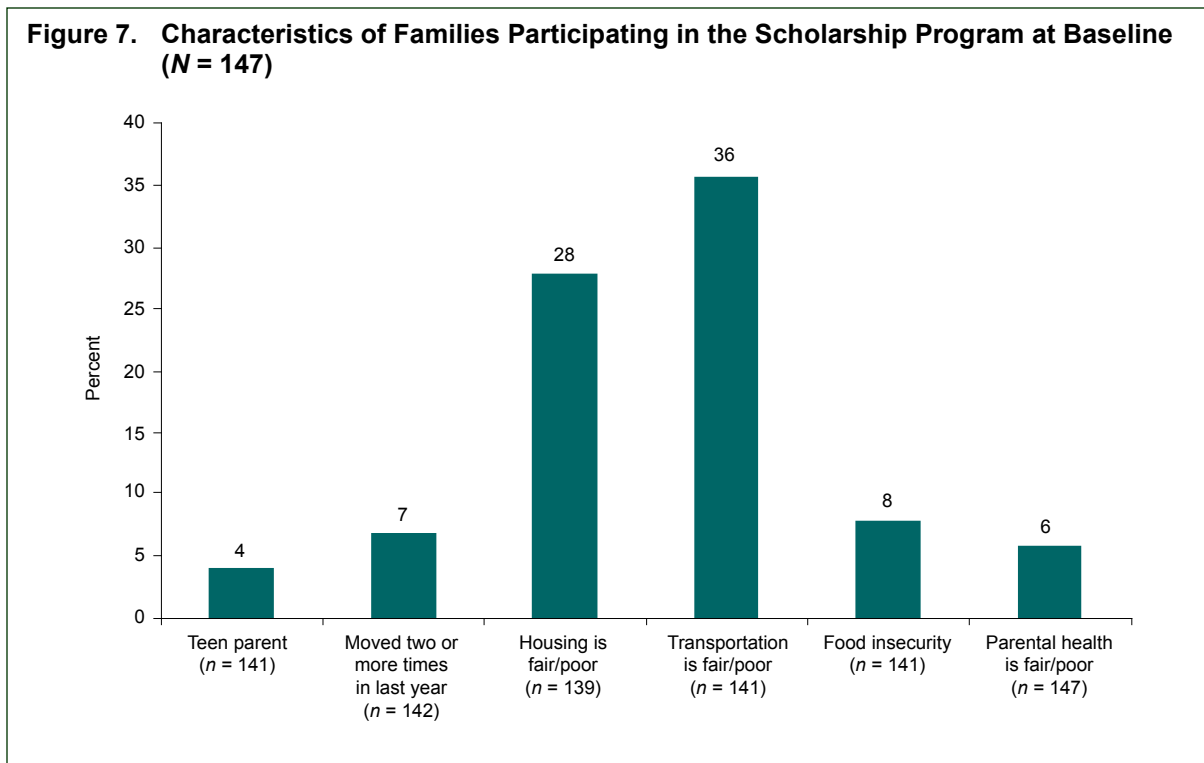
Figure 6. Demographic Characteristics at Baseline of Children and Families Participating in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program (N = 147)



Source: Parent phone interviews.

Some family or child risk factors impact children’s learning, development, and school readiness. These risk factors are displayed in Figures 7 through 9 and show the following:

- A small percentage of children (4%) were born to teen mothers, and a small percentage (7%) of children moved more than two times in the previous year.
- Close to one-third of families feel their transportation and/or housing conditions are not meeting their needs. In particular, 36% of families reported their transportation is fair or poor.
- Six percent of caregivers rated their own overall health as fair or poor.



Source: Parent phone interviews.

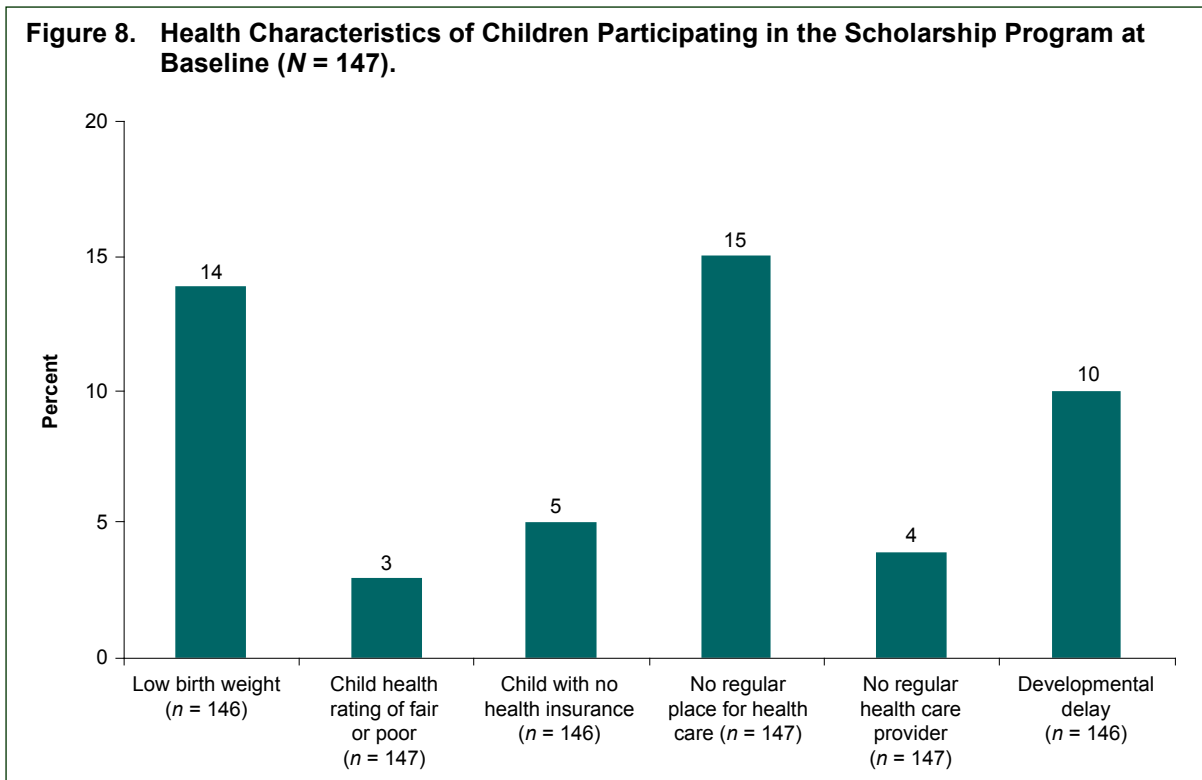
The pilot communities are considerably diverse and include a large number of new immigrant families and a variety of different immigrant groups from countries in east Africa (e.g., Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia) and Burma/Myanmar. The application data displayed earlier showed that only 53% of households speak English at home. The parent interview also captured some of this diversity, including families’ immigrant status.

- Compared to the total sample (N = 256), parents in the phone interview sample were more likely to speak English as the primary home language (63%). However, there were still 13% who spoke Karen, 8% who spoke Hmong, and 3% who spoke Spanish, among other languages. Some of these interviews were conducted in the family’s home language when possible (i.e., Spanish, Hmong, or Karen).

- Over one-third (35%) of the families participating in the scholarship program who were interviewed consider themselves immigrants or from an immigrant group. However, only 9% of the children were born outside of the U.S.
- Some parents who completed the phone interview rated their English proficiency as fair or poor (32% for reading and writing skills, 28% for speaking skills).

The health of a child can also contribute to school readiness. Studies have shown that children learn better when they are healthy.

- Fourteen percent of children were born low birth weight¹⁴ and 3% of children were rated by their caregivers as having fair or poor health.
- Five percent of children did not have any health insurance, and 4% did not have a regular health care provider. However, a much larger percentage (15%) did not have a regular place for health care.
- Ten percent were reported to have a developmental delay as identified by a doctor.
- In addition to these global indicators of health and health care access, 14% of parents reported the child had an illness or condition (e.g., asthma, chronic ear infections) that requires regular, ongoing care, and 8% of the children were limited in their activities because of an impairment or health problem.



Source: Parent phone interviews.

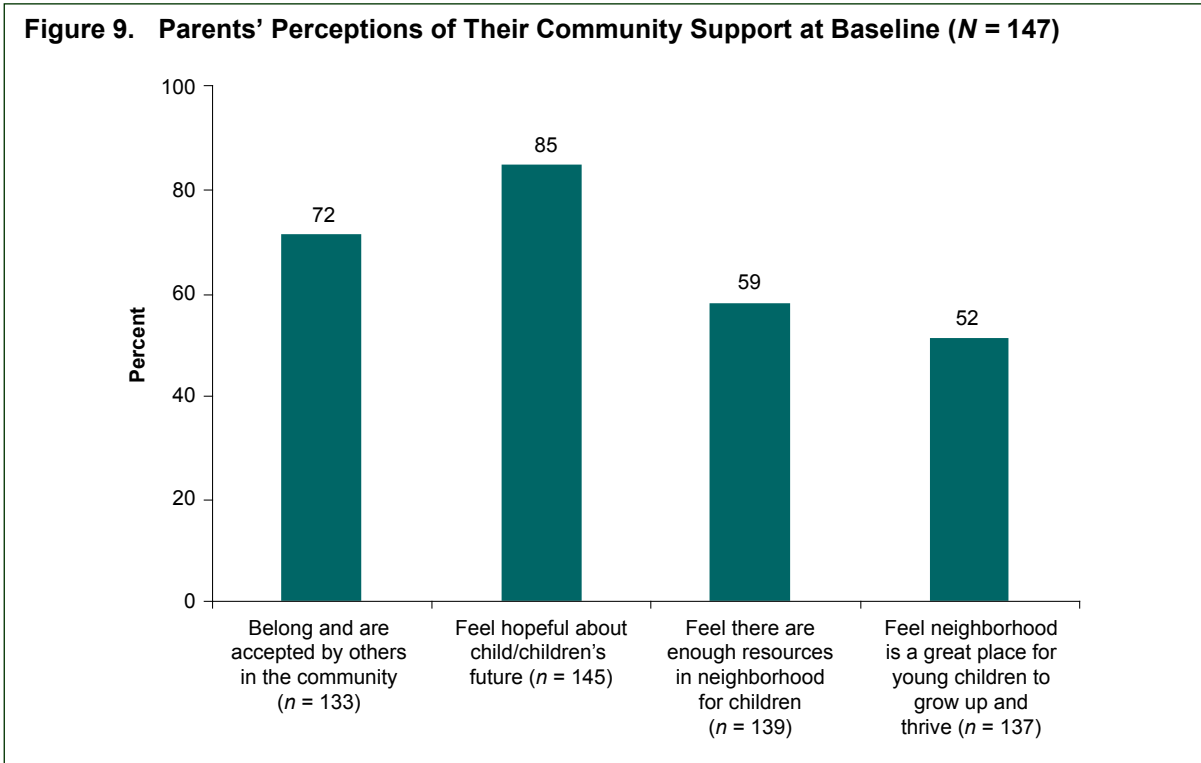
¹⁴ This percentage is nearly double what is typically found in national studies of the general population of young children.

Caregivers were asked to describe any concerns they had about their children’s development, health, and behavior.

- One-third of parents (30%) reported that their child’s doctor had conducted a developmental assessment.
- Ten percent of parents reported their child had a developmental delay that was identified by a doctor.
- When asked if they had concerns about the child’s development, 28% of parents reported “a lot” of concern in at least one area of their children’s development (speech, vision, hearing, behavior, learning, etc.).
 - Most of these parents (78%) reported concerns in multiple areas.
 - Of the parents who reported “a lot” of concern in at least one area, many parents (63%) had shared their concern with a doctor, child care provider, or other professional. Nearly all of the parents who had shared their concern (96%) felt they received good help.

The neighborhoods and communities in which children and families live can also serve to put children’s development at risk or it can help protect children in a way that promotes school readiness. We asked parents to provide their perceptions of community support. The results in Figure 9 suggest that families are positive about their communities.

- Most parents felt a sense of belonging and acceptance in their communities (72%).
- Most parents felt hopeful about their children’s future (85%).
- However, only about half (59%) felt that their neighborhood has enough resources for children and that their neighborhood is a great place for young children to grow up and thrive (52%).

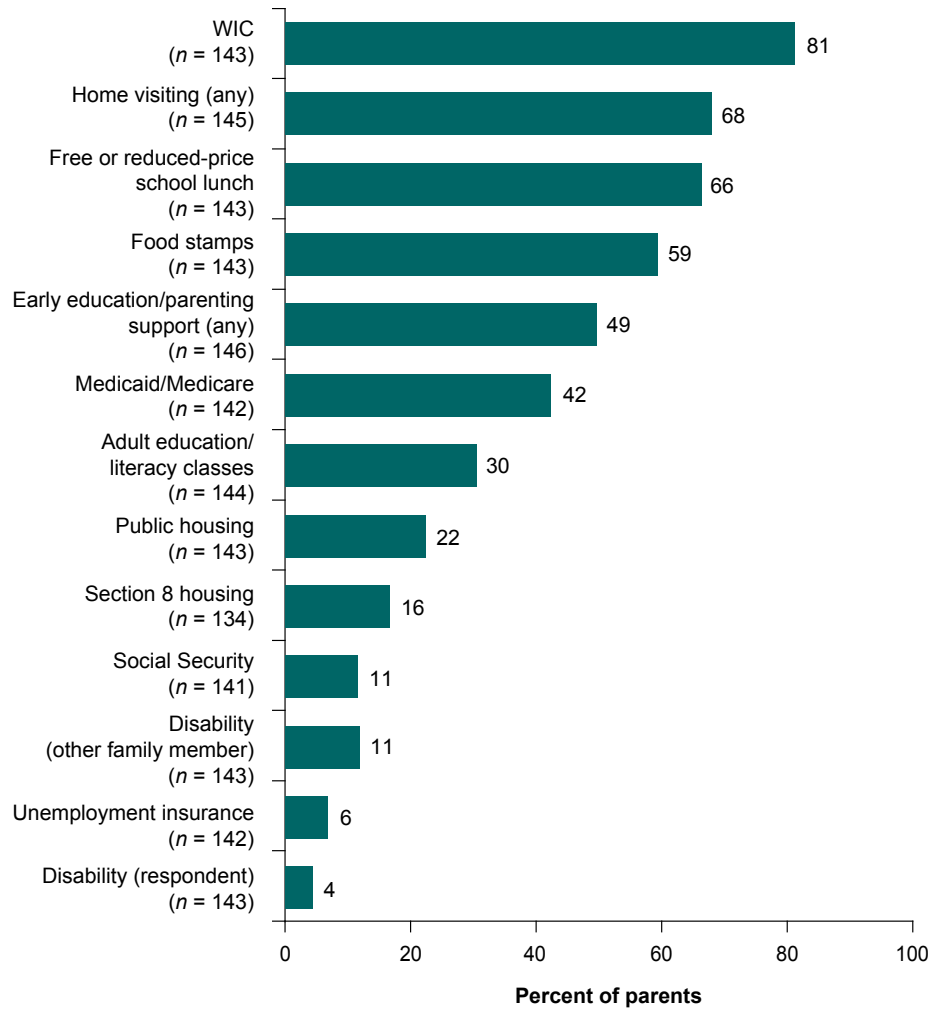


Source: Parent phone interviews.

Families participating in the scholarship program have received a number of local, county, and state services including home visiting and parent education workshops and classes (Figure 10).

- The most common benefit (81%) that families received was WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children).
- More than two-thirds of the families reported receiving any home visiting services (68%) or a free or reduced-price school lunch benefit (66%).
- About half of parents (49%) reported receiving parent education or support and less than one-fourth (22%) reported using public housing assistance.

Figure 10. Families Participating in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Who Reported Receiving Specific Services and Benefits at Baseline (N = 147)

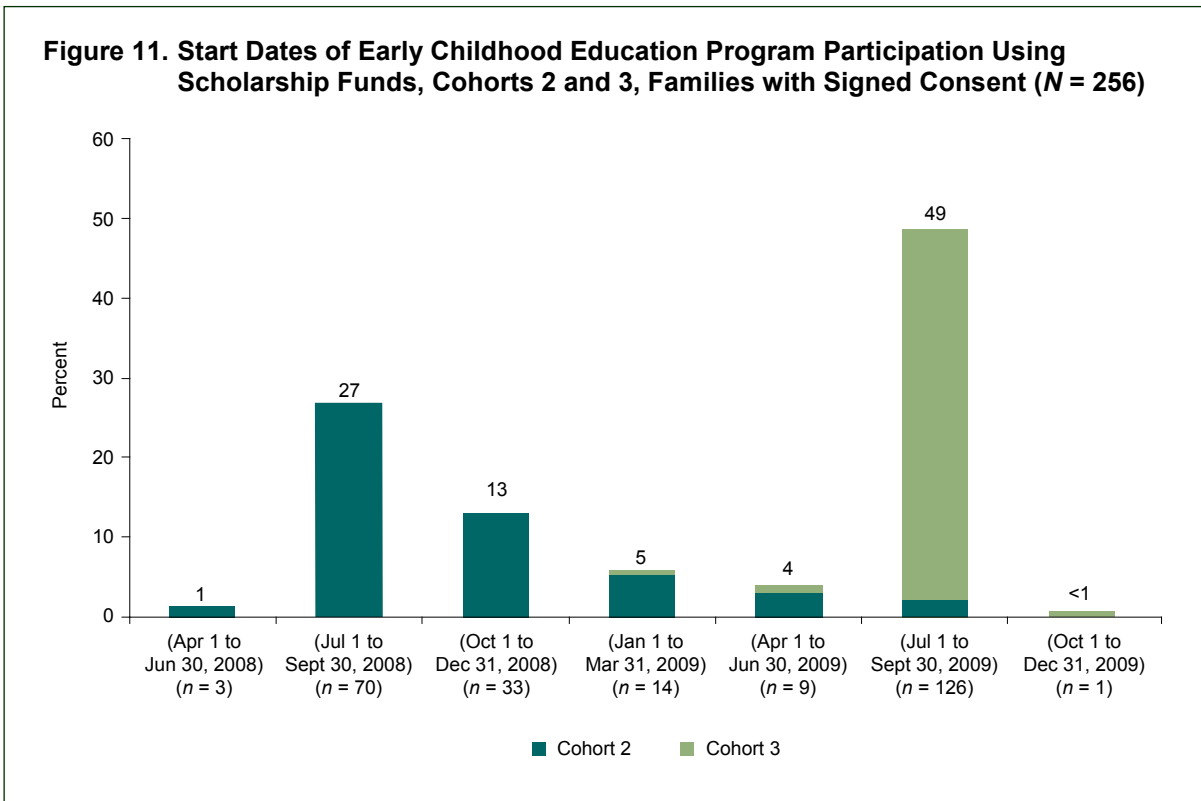


Source: Parent phone interviews.

Enrollment of Children in Cohorts 2 and 3 in High-Quality ECE Programs

Figure 11 shows when children began to attend ECE programs using their scholarship funds.

- By the end of 2009, all of the 256 scholarship-eligible children in Cohorts 2 and 3 with consent had enrolled in an ECE program.
 - More than three-fourths of Cohort 2 children (106 of 130, 82%) enrolled by the end of 2008.
 - Nearly all of the Cohort 3 children (123 of 126, 98%) had enrolled between July 1 and September 30, 2009.



Source: Application forms.

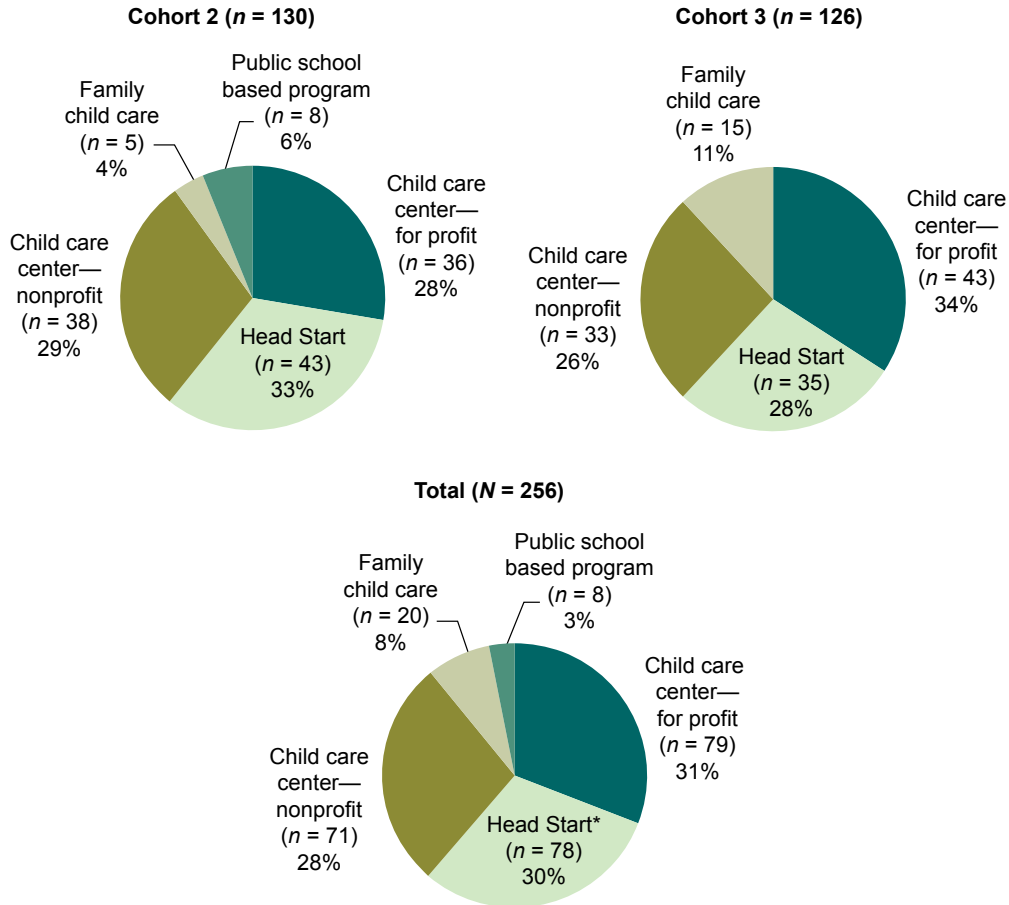
The children in Cohorts 2 and 3 who had enrolled in an ECE program by December 2009 (N = 256) were attending a variety of types of programs (Figure 12).

- Overall, center-based programs (for-profit, Head Start, and nonprofit), enrolled similar percentages of children (31%, 30%, and 28%, respectively), while family child care and public school-based programs attracted fewer children (8% and 3%).
- There were some differences between the types of program chosen by Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 families.
 - Head Start was the program most often chosen by Cohort 2 families (33%), followed closely by nonprofit center-based programs (29%), and for-profit center-based programs (28%). Cohort 3 families most often chose for-profit center-based programs (34%), followed similarly by Head Start (28%) and nonprofit center-based programs (26%).
 - The percentage of Cohort 3 families selecting family child care (11%) was nearly three times larger compared to Cohort 2 children (4%).
 - No Cohort 3 children were enrolled in public school-based programs, compared with 6% of Cohort 2 children. Cohort 3 children, however, were not eligible for public school-based programs unless they were 4 years old.
 - About three-fourths of the children (77%) were using their scholarship funds to attend an ECE program full time, and the other 23% were attending part time.¹⁵

¹⁵ More Cohort 3 than Cohort 2 children used their scholarship funds to attend an ECE program full time (85% vs. 69%).

Additional information about these ECE programs is provided in the next section.

Figure 12. ECE Programs in Which Participating Children Use Their Scholarship Funds, Enrolled by December 2009 (N = 256)



* There were six different Head Start sites.

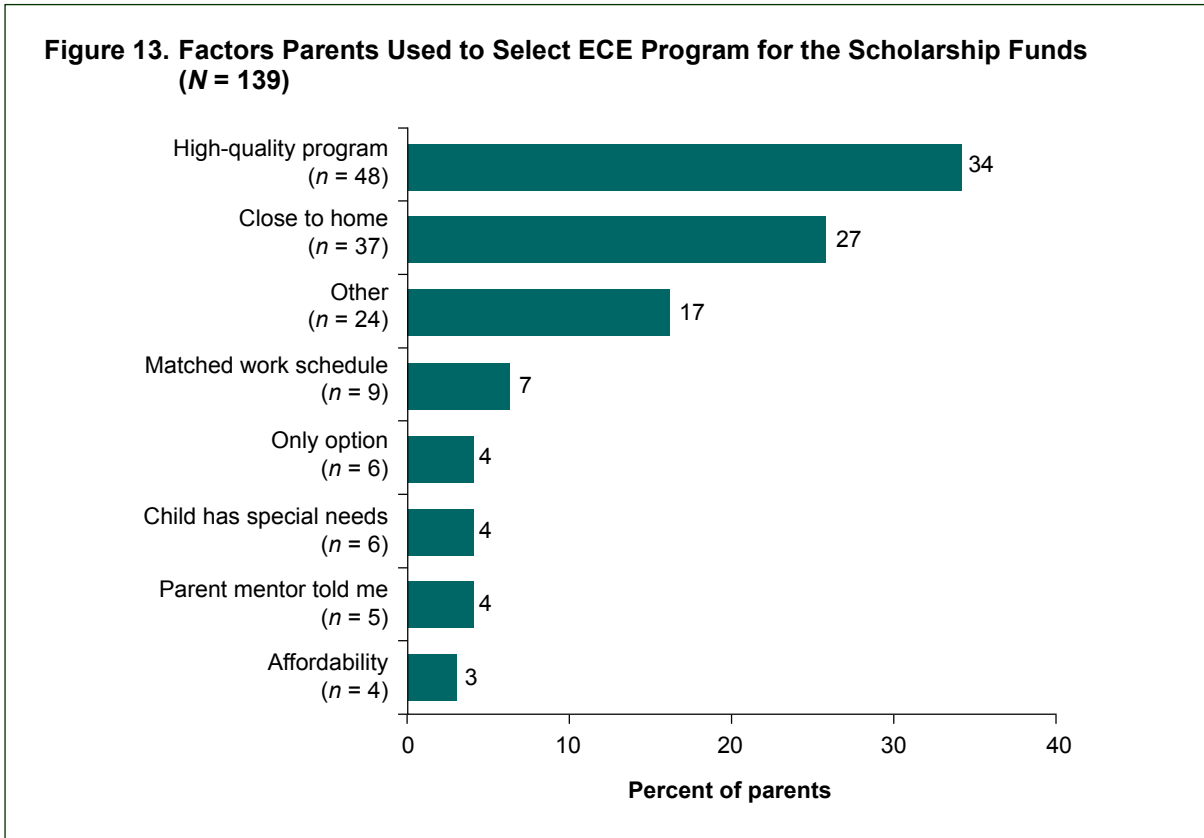
Note: If children attended multiple programs, the last program attended was included in the report.

Source: Application forms.

Parents who completed the phone interview were asked several questions related to their experience of finding a program and participating in the scholarship program.

- Parents heard about the ECE program they selected to use for the scholarship through a variety of ways.
 - One-fourth of parents (25%) learned about the program through relatives or friends, co-workers, and neighbors.
 - Sixteen percent heard about the ECE program through their parent mentor or home visitor.
 - Twelve percent knew of the program because the program provides care for another child in their family.

- Very few (2%) knew of the program through Parent Aware or its website, although some parents reported they learned about it through the Internet or advertisements (7%). Interestingly, 3% of the parents reported seeing the building or the program being developed.
- More than one-third of parents (36%) had heard of Parent Aware.
- The main reasons parents reported selecting the ECE program are displayed in Figure 13. The most common reasons parents reported choosing the program were quality (34%) or location (i.e., the program was close to family’s home) (27%).



Source: Parent phone interviews.

Parents’ Perceptions of the Scholarship Program

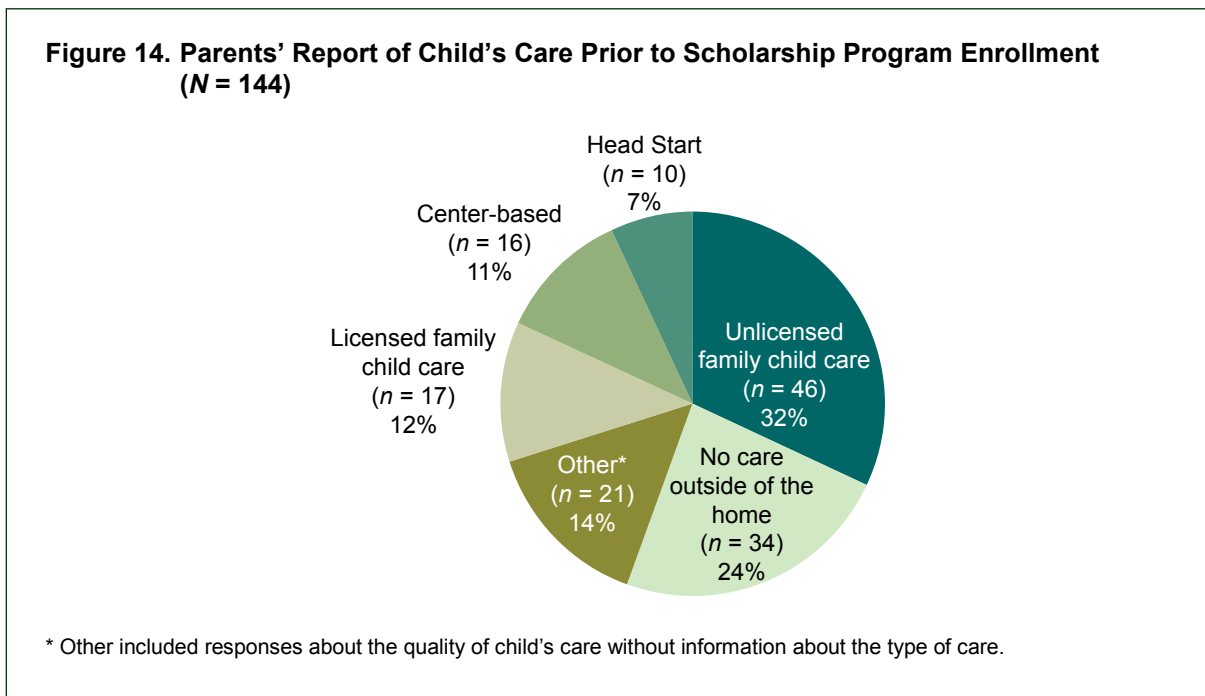
In the interviews, parents were asked a series of questions about the process of completing the application for the Scholarship Program and enrolling their child into an ECE program.

- Most of the parents (84%) felt the application form was easy or somewhat easy to complete.
- Most of the parents (69%) reported that they completed the application by themselves and/or with their spouse or partner.
- Of those parents who received help in completing the application form, 49% reported receiving help from a parent mentor or ECE program staff.

Selecting and enrolling the child in an ECE program was generally an easy process for families.

- The majority of parents (87%) reported that the ECE program selected for their child was their first choice.
- Most of the parents (84%) felt that it was easy or somewhat easy to find an ECE program for their child, but only 55% reported that they or their spouses or partners actually found the ECE program on their own.
 - Of those parents who received help in finding an ECE program, 21% reported receiving help from preschool/ECE program staff, and 39% received help from a public health nurse, home visitor, or parent mentor.
 - The majority (60%) of parents reported that they were able to find an ECE program in which to enroll their child in less than a month; about one-third (29%) reported 1 to 3 months to find a program.
 - Once families found an ECE program, almost all of them (91%) reported that the process of enrolling their child in the program was easy or somewhat easy, with most (68%) reporting completing the process by themselves or with a spouse or partner. If they had help in enrolling, caregivers reported that parent mentors (34%) or ECE program staff (30%) helped them.

When asked where the child was being cared for prior to the Scholarship Program (Figure 14), the largest percentage (56%) described unlicensed care in the child’s home by a family member or friend (24%) or care in another’s home (32%), while 12% reported licensed family child care, 11% center-based program or preschool, and 7% Head Start.



Source: Parent phone interviews.

Year 2 Findings: Parent Mentoring



Parent empowerment is the second tenet of the scholarship program logic model. Parent mentoring services were provided to families participating in the scholarship program to promote access to information about the characteristics and benefits of high-quality ECE programs that would, in turn, empower parents to make good choices about how best to support their children's early learning and school readiness.

SRI collected data about parent mentoring through the RCC data exports and through the Parent Mentor Data Collection Form (see Appendix B), developed with the parent mentor supervisors at the beginning of the evaluation. Parent mentors were asked to complete a form for each home visit they made to participating scholarship families and to send completed forms for consented families only to SRI.

SRI processed and analyzed the forms from families with consent throughout 2008 and 2009. Over 3,000 forms were distributed to the five different participating parent mentoring agencies. SRI received 54% of these forms, and staff were able to match 93% of the forms received.¹⁶ Of the 1586 forms submitted to SRI, 94% were recorded as a completed visit (either in the child's home, a center, or by phone). These parent mentor data collection forms were then used to describe the parent mentoring services received by children and families. SRI also analyzed the data to examine whether there were differences by cohort and/or by agency.

Who is participating in the parent mentoring component?

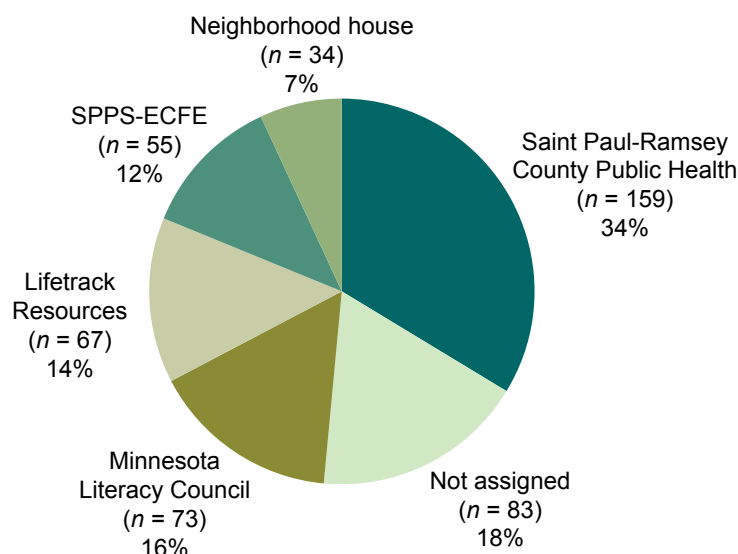
Families were assigned to one of five different parent mentoring agencies that were participating in the scholarship program (Figure 15).

SRI received forms for a total of 1586 parent mentor visits (including 543 completed visits by SPRCPH, 86 by Neighborhood House, 213 by Saint Paul Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), 324 by Lifetrack Resources, and 222 by Minnesota Literacy Council). These visits impacted every member of the family and SRI counted a completed visit for each participating child in a family.¹⁷ Forms were completed for 388 children across the cohorts and across the parent mentor agencies.

¹⁶ Discussions with the implementation team and the parent mentor agencies' supervisor suggest that collecting these forms in addition to the data collection requirements of each individual agency may have resulted in the low response rate. The response rates (number of forms distributed divided by the number of forms received for each agency) are as follows: Saint Paul Ramsey County Public Health = 31%, Neighborhood House = 57%, ECFE = 66%, Minnesota Literacy Council = 46%, and Lifetrack Resources = 100%. We do not know how accurately the response rates reflect the number of visits attempted and made to each family participating in the scholarship program. However, because agencies were only reimbursed when completed data forms were submitted, these data are likely to be representative of all of the visits made to the families in the Scholarship Program.

¹⁷ Children in Cohorts 1 and 2 and Infant Cohort 1 received the majority of visits, together accounting for 73% of the visits. Children in the Infant Cohort 2 received 17% of these visits and those in Cohort 3 received the least amount of parent mentoring visits (11%).

Figure 15. Family Participation in Parent Mentoring, by Parent Mentor Agency, All Cohorts, Families with Signed Consent Only (N = 471)



Source: Parent phone interviews.

What is the average “dose” of home visiting/parent mentoring?

Data were collected about the number of visits to each child/family, the duration of the visit in minutes, and the length of weeks that children received parent mentor visits.

- **Frequency of home visits.** The average number of visits across participating children was 7, ranging from 1 visit to 38 visits, and the median number of visits was 5. Less than one-fifth (18%) of the children received 1 or 2 visits, but 60% received between 3 and 8 visits, with the remaining 20% receiving more than 9 visits.
 - **Cohort differences.** Infant Cohorts received 7 to 8 visits on average and Cohorts 1 and 2 received 5 to 7 on average. Cohort 3 received 5 visits on average.
 - **Agency differences.** SPRCPH and Lifetrack Resources had the most number of visits on average (7 to 8 visits).
- **Length of home visits.** The average length of a visit was 52 minutes, with a range from 5 to 180 minutes, and a median of 60 minutes.
 - **Cohort differences.** Length of visit was similar across children in different cohorts, a similarity that can be at least partially attributed to the fact that many of the families participating in the scholarship program have multiple children receiving parent mentoring services. The main difference is that children in Cohort 1 had the shortest visits. Visits lasted slightly longer for Infant Cohort 2 children (69% lasted 1 hour or longer) compared to Cohort 1 children (54% lasted 1 hour or longer). Analysis of the sum of minutes across visits to assess the dosage over time showed that, on average, children received 337 minutes (or 5.6 hours) of parent mentoring services. These data show that children in Cohorts 2

and 3 had the lowest dosage (285 and 264 minutes, respectively) and those in the Infant Cohorts had the highest dosage (408 to 463 minutes).

- **Agency differences.** Most SPRCPH visits (72%) and ECFE visits (78%) lasted 60 minutes or longer, while about one-third of the Minnesota Literacy Council visits (32%) lasted that long.
- **Duration of parent mentoring.** The average length of time for which children were receiving parent mentoring visits was 33 weeks (from the date of the first visit through date of last visit of forms received).
 - **Cohort differences.** Again, as would be expected, children in Cohorts 2 and 3 received parent mentoring visits for a shorter period of time (27 to 28 weeks) compared to those in the Infant Cohorts (36 weeks) and Cohort 1 (37 weeks).
 - **Agency differences.** SPRCPH provided parent mentoring services for the greatest length of time on average (36 weeks), although all agencies provided services for at least 22 weeks on average.

What activities and referrals occurred during the home visit?

On the form, the parent mentors were asked to describe the topics discussed, the activities that occurred, and the referrals made during each home visit. Because families and children have unique needs, not all visits were used to discuss the scholarship program or choosing child care.

- One-third of the visits included discussing choosing child care (30% of visits, 65% of children) and one-third involved discussing the benefits of high-quality child care (30% of visits, 71% of children).
 - The Minnesota Literacy Council visitors discussed the latter topic with the greatest frequency (48% of visits).
- Topics that were discussed to a greater degree included language/literacy practices and reading to children (49% of visits, 78% of children), modeling good parenting skills (41% of visits, 57% of children), child's developmental progress (42% of visits, 72% of children), child health/nutrition (37% of visits, 54% of children), parenting/caregiver support (30% of visits, 42% of children), and parenting education (29% of visits, 45% of children).
- Some parent mentor agencies distributed materials including books and educational toys as part of the visit. More than half of the visits (59%) involved providing materials to parents and included books, written handouts, and/or toys; provision of materials varied across agency and ranged from 48% of ECFE visits to 87% of Minnesota Literacy Council visits.

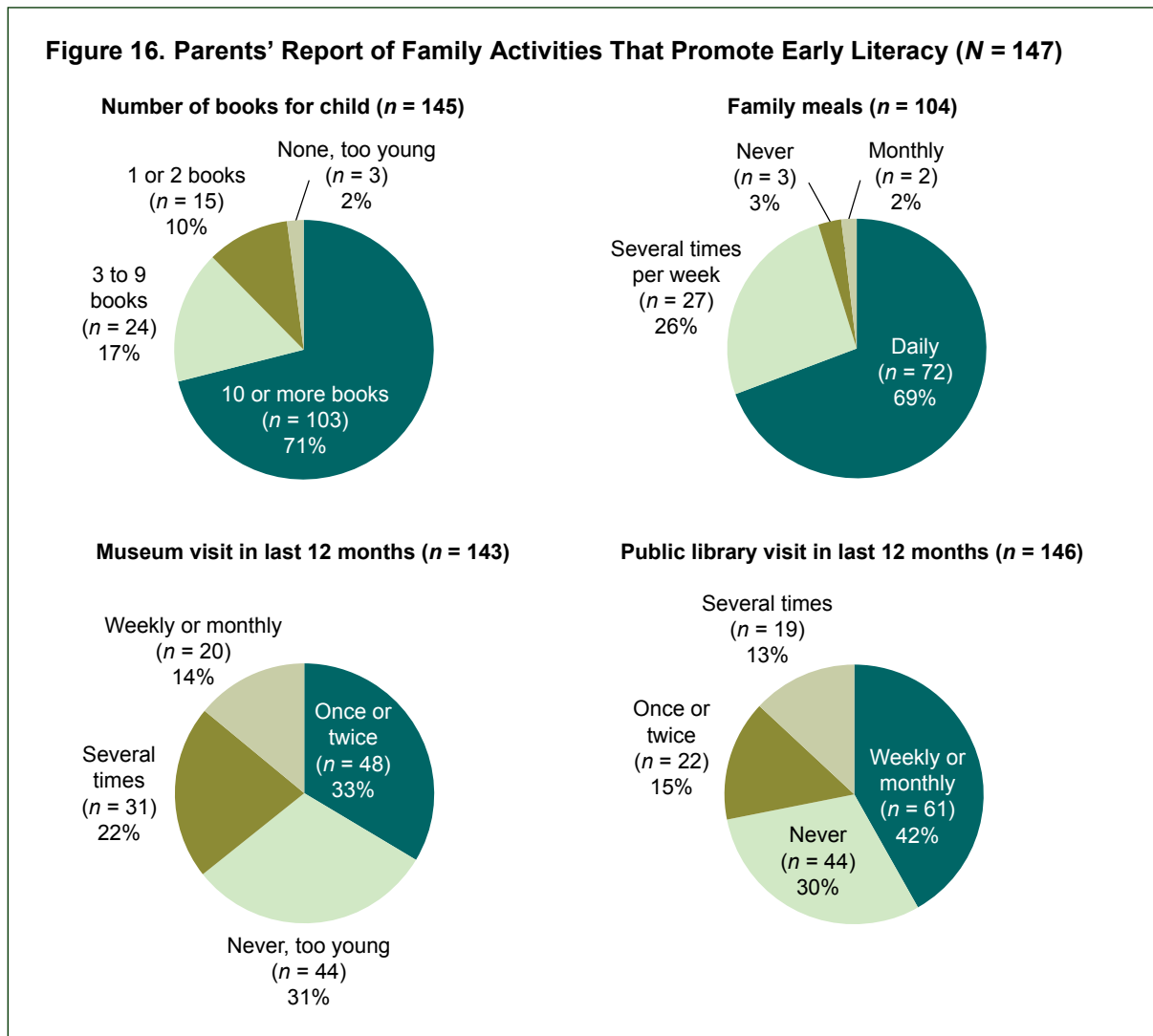
Year 2 Findings: Baseline Home Environment and Developmental Status of Participating Children



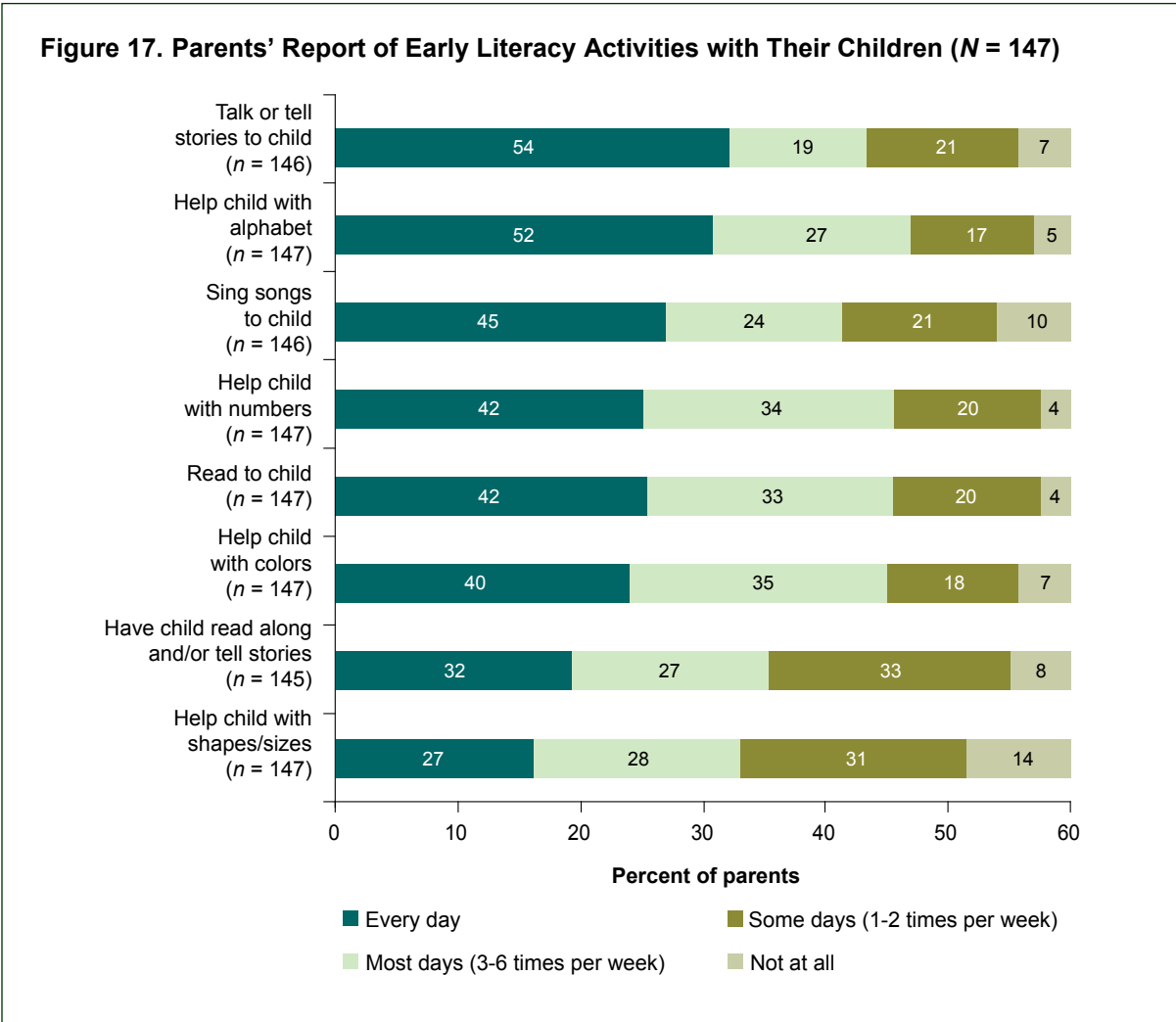
Home and Family Activities Promoting Early Literacy and School Readiness

Parenting practices and family activities that stimulate language and promote early literacy are essential to the success of an initiative like the Scholarship Program. Several of the items below are from the HOME Inventory, a well validated, widely used measure with demonstrated sensitivity to key differences in home environments in terms of enriching activities related to child development and later academic achievement. The degree to which parents or family members read, tell stories, or sing to their children also impacts early development, and in particular, their language and literacy.

Figure 16. Parents' Report of Family Activities That Promote Early Literacy (N = 147)



Source: Parent phone interviews.



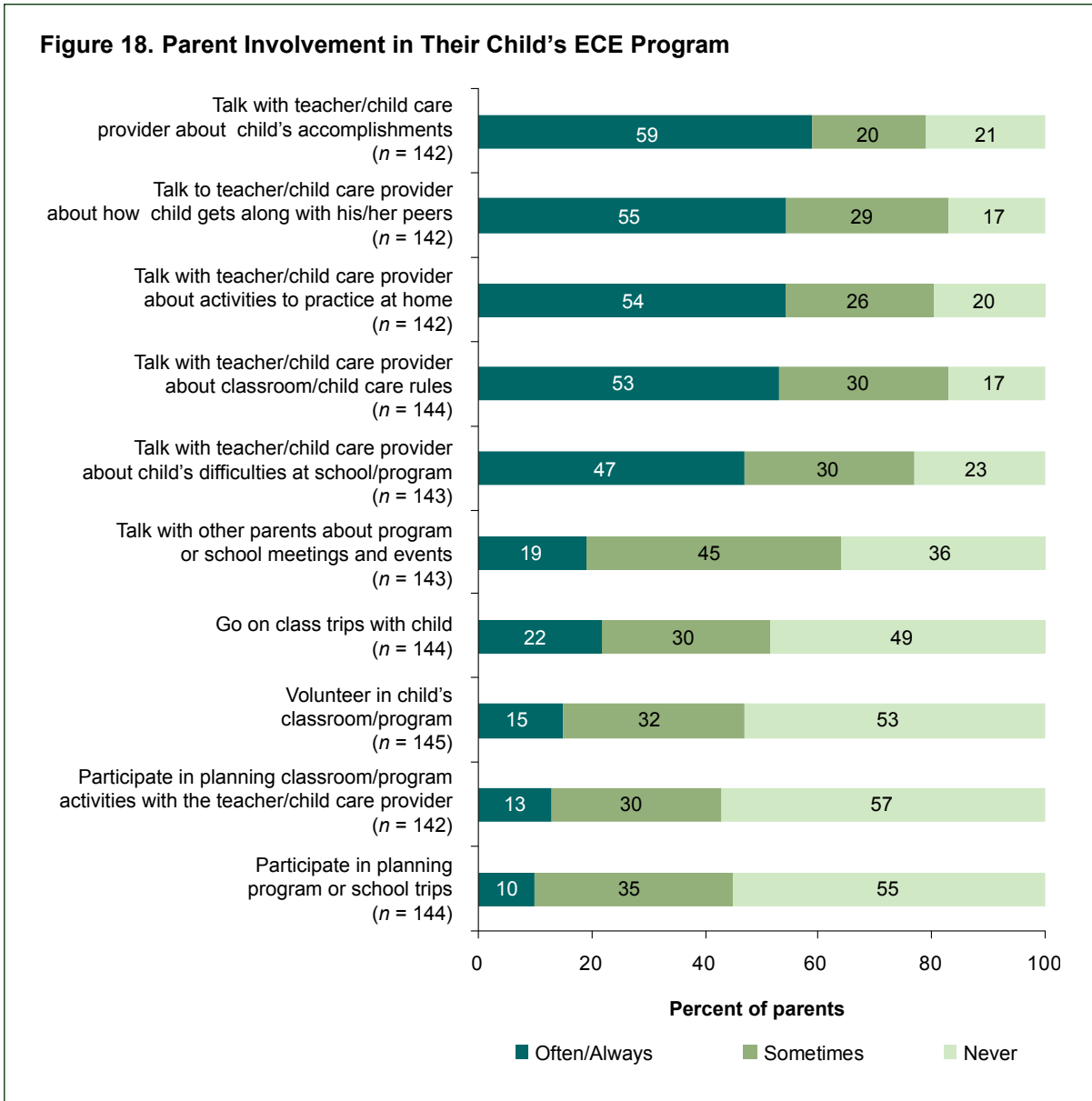
Source: Parent phone interviews.

Parent Involvement in Child's ECE Program

Most parents reported that they engage in one or more activities with the child care program to support their children's learning and development.

- Four-fifths of parents (80%) talk with their child's teacher about behavior and accomplishments, classroom rules and expectations, and activities to practice at home.
- About one-third to half of parents sometimes or often volunteer in their child's classroom, go on class trips, and participate in planning activities or trips.
- A large percentage of parents reported working on skills and knowledge at home.
 - Most parents reported working on number skills (96%), bringing home learning materials (92%), spending time working on creative activities (98%), and having a place for child's books and school materials (98%).

- A majority (82%) reported sharing stories about when he or she was in school. This percentage may be lower than the other activities because of cultural differences in the experience of many of the parents, either because of a lack of experience in the United States (38% did not complete high school) or attending school in a different country (35% reported being from an immigrant group).



Source: Parent phone interviews.

Children's Development at Baseline

The model predicts that children in the community will make progress towards achieving age-expected school readiness skills. The MELF Research Consortium developed a set of measures to assess school readiness. Children's development was assessed with three different methods: parent-reported items in phone interviews, direct child assessments by trained observers, and teacher-reported measures of behavior and social skills. Standardized, norm-referenced measures are helpful because they have well documented reliability and validity and the resulting data can be used to compare participants to their same-age peers (i.e., the direct child assessments and teacher checklists). Parents' reports of children's development on key indicators of school readiness also provide information about skills considered important for children to develop or be in the process of developing before they reach kindergarten. The set of measures captures the five domains of school readiness identified by the National Education Goals Panel.¹⁸

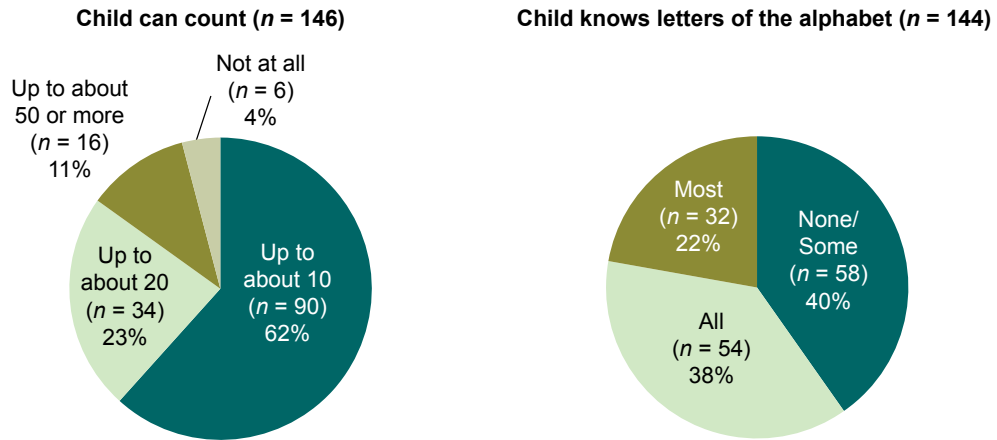
Parent Report of Selected Developmental Skills

According to parents, many of the children are showing proficiency with many important developmental skills (Figures 19 to 21). Children's ages at the time of the phone interview ranged from 37 to 61 months for the Cohort 2 baseline interviews and 38 to 49 months for the Cohort 3 baseline interviews.

- Children are expected to know most to all of their letters and to be starting to count when they enter kindergarten. Three-fifths (60%) of the children in the scholarship program were reported to know most or all of their letters, and nearly all of the children (96%) were counting (Figure 19).
- With regard to gross and fine motor development, most children were walking without assistance (97%), catching large balls (95%), and tracing simple shapes (85%) (Figure 20).
- About four-fifths of the children were reported to be using language to communicate simple facts (76%), ask questions (82%), and tell how old they are (81%) (Figure 20).

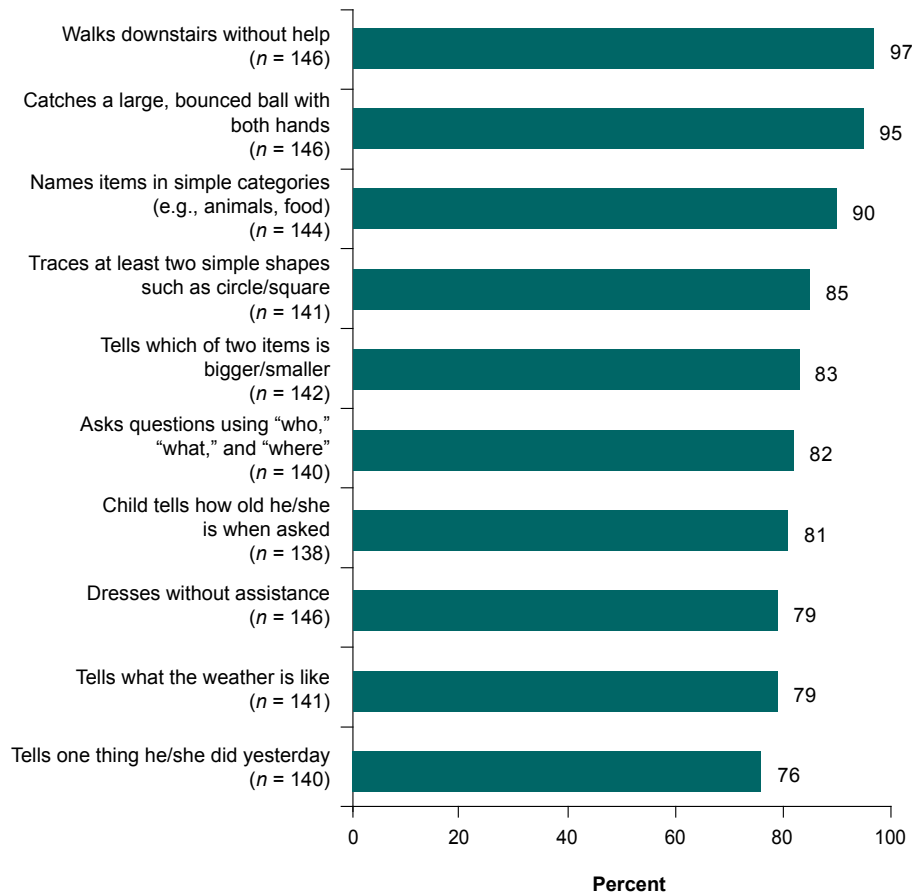
¹⁸ The five areas of school readiness are cognition and general knowledge, communicative skills, emotional well-being and social competence, approaches to learning, and physical well-being and motor development.

Figure 19. Key Child Development Indicators Important for School Readiness, for Scholarship Program Participants at Baseline (N = 147)



Source: Parent phone interviews.

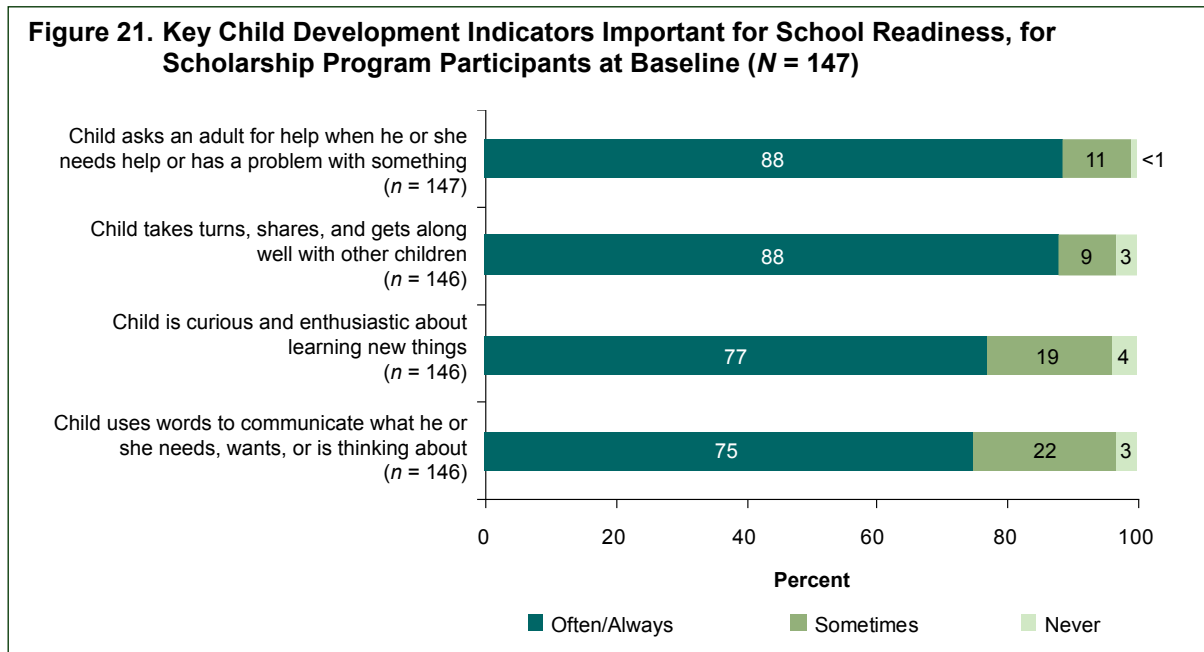
Figure 20. Key Child Development Indicators Important for School Readiness, for Scholarship Program Participants at Baseline (N = 147)



Source: Parent phone interviews.

Children’s social skills and approaches to learning are important aspects of school readiness (Figure 21).

- Most parents reported that their children ask an adult for help (88%) and can share, take turns, and/or get along well with other children (88%).
- About three-fourths of parents report their children use words to communicate (75%) and are curious and enthusiastic about learning new things (77%).



Source: Parent phone interviews.

Direct Child Assessment of Children’s Early Language and Math Skills

In order to examine the impact of participation in high-quality ECE programs on children’s school readiness, a set of standard measures are being used with the children participating in the scholarship program at three points in time: at baseline (shortly after they are initially enrolled in the ECE program, within 6 to 8 weeks of enrollment); one year later, after ECE program attendance for one year; and finally, as they enter kindergarten (within 6 to 8 weeks of entry) after 2 years of ECE program participation. Specifically, direct assessments of children using standardized tests of language and cognition were completed by trained assessors at the ECE programs. In addition, each child’s ECE teacher was asked to complete a checklist form containing two widely used measures of behavior. See Table 4 for a description of the measures used in the assessment protocol.

SRI attempted to conduct the assessments in the fall of 2008 (Cohort 2) and the fall of 2009 (Cohort 3). Unfortunately, some Cohort 2 children were not enrolled in an ECE program by fall 2008, or the assessment team could not complete the assessment in time. A small number of these assessments occurred in February and March of 2009. However, the average age at which each cohort's baseline assessment occurred was similar (Cohort 2 = 45 months and Cohort 3 = 43 months).¹⁹ The data shown here represent 75% of the sample (192 of 256 children).

¹⁹ Children had to be 36 months of age on or before September 1, 2008 (Cohort 2) or September 1, 2009 (Cohort 3). Thus the children's ages at baseline ranged from 37 months to 51 months.

Table 4. MELF Child Outcome Measurement Model

Domain	Measure	Scale	Measure Description
Early Math	Woodcock-Johnson III 3rd edition (WJ-III)	Applied Problems Quantitative Concepts	WJ-III is a widely used collection of tests measuring achievement in reading, mathematics, written language, and general knowledge. Two subtests, Quantitative Concepts and Applied Problems, are included in the MELF measurement model and are combined to create a measure of mathematical reasoning and skills. It is a direct standardized assessment collected by a trained assessor in 10 minutes. A score of 100 is an average score, with standard deviation of 15.
Language	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test 4th edition (PPVT-4)	Receptive Vocabulary	The PPVT-4 is a quick method of assessing receptive language for children over 2 years and 6 months. It is a direct standardized assessment collected by a trained assessor. A score of 100 is an average score, with a standard deviation of 15.
Social-Emotional	Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation – 30 items (SCBE-30)	Social Competence Anxiety-Withdrawal Anger-Aggression	The SCBE-30 is a teacher-completed rating scale measuring the three dimensions of social competence, anxiety-withdrawal, and anger-aggression in children ages 2-1/2 to 6. It takes approximately 15 minutes to complete the items pulled from the longer version of the SCBE-80. This is not a norm-referenced assessment; scores are calculated by summing the scores for each item in a subscale. In addition, SRI compared the scores for children with scholarships to a representative sample of children published by the authors of the measure.
Approaches to Learning	Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale (PLBS)	Attention	The PLBS is a measure of children’s approach to learning which includes items that ask teachers to rate children’s ability to stay on task and pay attention. The raw score is calculated by reverse-scoring some items and then summing to obtain a total (i.e., higher scores reflect more attention, concentration, etc.). The raw score was then converted to a T-score based on the author’s guidelines. In a representative sample, the mean T-score is 50 with a standard deviation of 10.

With regard to children's language and cognitive development, the scores show a wide range of developing skills and abilities (Table 5):

- Children's language (i.e., receptive vocabulary) was measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-4).²² Table 4 shows that the children participating in the scholarship program are diverse in their language/communication skills. Although 18% performed above average on this standardized measure, approximately half (51%) demonstrate below average language development.
- Children's cognitive development was assessed using the Woodcock-Johnson III subtests (Applied Problems and Quantitative Concepts).²³ These subtests measure children's ability to count and to perform other mathematical reasoning (e.g., children are asked to count objects on a page or asked to fill-in the missing number in a series). Approximately 19% of the children performed below average on these tests (i.e., scored below 85). However, most of the children (80 to 82%) scored low average to average or above average on these numeracy and mathematical reasoning tests.
- In examining these scores, it is important to remember the diversity of the children's background. For instance, 22% (43 of 192) spoke a language other than English at home including Karen, Hmong, Korean, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Somali. These children were still administered the PPVT-4 (and their scores are included in the table). A small number of these children scored high enough to continue the testing in English. However, the majority of children most likely have limited English language skills at baseline. This is one area that will be tracked over time to see how these children score after 1 year of high-quality ECE program and then again at kindergarten entry.

²² Dunn, L. M., & Dunn, D. D. (2007). *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test*. (4th ed.). Circle Pines, MN: Pearson, Inc.

²³ Woodcock, R. W., McGrew, K. S., & Mather, N. (2001). *Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement*. Itasca, IL: Riverside Publishing.

Teacher Report of Children’s Social Competence and Behavior

The teacher-completed checklist forms were distributed during the same time period when direct assessments of children were completed. The checklist form included the SCBE-30 (Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation—30 items)²⁴ and the Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale (PLBS) Attention Subscale.²⁵

- The SCBE-30 is a measure of children’s social competence and adjustment, with three subscales that assess three domains of behaviors: social competence, anger-aggression, and anxiety-withdrawal. This is not a norm-referenced assessment; scores are calculated by summing the scores for each item in a subscale. In addition, SRI compared the scores for children with scholarships to a representative sample of children published by the authors of the measure.²⁶ Presented in Table 4 are the percentages of scholarship children whose scores significantly deviated from the average scores of this published sample of preschool children by 1 and 2 standard deviations.
 - The scores show that 24% of boys and 33% of girls have social competence scores that are 1 or 2 standard deviations lower than children of the same age and gender in a representative U.S. sample.
 - For anger-aggression and anxiety-withdrawal, about 5 to 10% of children have scores that would warrant concern in those areas of behavior.
- The PLBS is a measure of children’s approach to learning that includes items that ask teachers to rate children’s ability to stay on task and pay attention. The raw score is calculated by reverse-scoring some items and then summing to obtain a total (i.e., higher scores reflect more attention, concentration). The raw score was then converted to a T-score based on the author’s guidelines. In a representative sample, the mean T-score is 50 with a standard deviation of 10.
 - Table 4 shows that 47% of this sample of 3-year-old children were rated by their teachers as having low attention (i.e., 47% of children had T-scores that were 1 standard deviation below the mean), and 11% had T-scores that were 2 standard deviations below the mean. The data show that nearly half of these children had significantly lower scores on attention and concentration compared to their peers.

²⁴ LaFreniere, P. J., & Dumas, J. E. (1996). Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation in Children Ages 3 to 6 Years: The Short Form (SCBE-30). *Psychological Assessment*, 8, 369-377.

²⁵ McDermott, P. A., Green, L. F., Francis, J. M., & Stott, D. H. (2000). *Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale*. Philadelphia: Edumatic and Clinical Science. Copyright © 2001 by Edumatic and Clinical Science. Reproduced (or adapted) with permission. All rights reserved.

McDermott, P. A., Leigh, N. M., & Perry, M. A. (2002). Development and Validation of the Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale. *Psychology in the Schools*, 39, 353-365.

²⁶ LaFreniere, P. J., & Dumas, J. E. (1996). Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation in Children Ages 3 to 6 Years: The Short Form (SCBE-30). *Psychological Assessment*, 8, 369-377.

Table 5. Baseline Child Assessment Scores for 3-Year-Old Children Participating in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Evaluation

Receptive Language (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test–4)												
Sample	Standard Scores				Range of Standard Scores (low to high)							
<i>N</i>	Mean	SD			< 85	85–100		>100				
187	82.2	21.2			51%	31%		18%				
Mathematical Abilities (Applied Problems Subtest - Woodcock Johnson III)												
Sample	Standard Scores				Range of Standard Scores (low to high)							
<i>N</i>	Mean	SD			< 85	85–100		>100				
140	96.3	12.1			19%	47%		34%				
Mathematical Abilities (Quantitative Concepts Subtest – Woodcock Johnson III)												
Sample	Standard Scores				Range of Standard Scores (low to high)							
<i>N</i>	Mean	SD			< 85	85–100		>100				
114	92.9	9.6			18%	66%		16%				
Social Competence and Problem Behavior (Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation SCBE-30 Subscale Raw Scores)												
Sample	Social Competence (<i>n</i> = 144)				Anger-Aggressive (<i>n</i> = 153)				Anxiety-Withdrawal (<i>n</i> = 155)			
	Mean	SD	% 1 SD BELOW	% 2 SD BELOW	Mean	SD	% 1 SD ABOVE	% 2 SD ABOVE	Mean	SD	% 1 SD ABOVE	% 2 SD ABOVE
Male	30.9	8.8	23	1	19.2	9.1	8	1	19.4	7.2	11	-
Female	36.9	11.0	26	7	15.5	6.0	6	-	17.4	6.2	4	-
Approaches to Learning (Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale – PLBS Attention Subscale)												
Sample	Mean T Score		SD		% 1 SD BELOW		% 2 SD BELOW					
157	39.3		6.2		47		11					

Notes: Woodcock-Johnson III and the PPVT-4 are standardized such that 100 is the average score with a standard deviation of 15. The SCBE-30 does not have published age norms that describe clinically significant problem behavior in these areas. PLBS scores are standardized with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. Source: Direct child assessments and teacher checklists.

Year 2 Findings: ECE Program Supply and Quality in the Pilot Communities



The third component of the scholarship program is implementation of an ECE program quality rating system, Parent Aware, to rate and monitor ECE program supply and quality. In this section, we describe changes in (1) the availability of ECE programs in and near districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul and (2) participation in, and ratings from, the Parent Aware rating system. We also show the geographical span of ECE programs selected by families to enroll their children using the scholarship funds. Early childhood education programs and providers could enroll in Parent Aware beginning in the summer and fall of 2007. (A separate evaluation of Parent Aware, funded by MELF, is being conducted by Child Trends).²⁷ We present total supply of Parent Aware-rated programs by their quality ratings and by the number of slots available at each program in 2008 and in 2009 to show how the supply and quality changed in these specific pilot areas.

To describe the supply of ECE programs and slots in the pilot area, four maps of districts 6 and 7 and nearby areas that include four zip codes (55101, 55103, 55104, and 55117) are seen in figures 22a, 22b, 23a, and 23b. These zip codes were chosen to represent those that overlap in districts 6 and 7 defined throughout the report as in and near the pilot areas. These are areas in which we would expect that (1) parents of children with scholarship funds would seek out ECE programs because of their proximity and (2) programs would want to participate in Parent Aware in order to be available to families with scholarship funds. The maps were developed with data from NACCRRAware, a web-based dataset available from the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies that provides public-use data about many ECE programs throughout the United States,²⁸ and from the Parent Aware website.²⁹ The maps show the change in the past year in supply of programs and slots in and near the pilot area.

- Data on supply (capacity and availability of slots) were obtained from NACCRRAware in September of each year.
- Data on Parent Aware ratings were obtained from the Parent Aware website in December of each year.

²⁷ A Year 1 report about the Parent Aware evaluation is available on the MELF website at www.melf.org.

²⁸ Data are available at <http://www.naccrra.org/membership/naccrraware/>.

²⁹ Data are available at <http://www.parentawareratings.org/>.

Changes in the Supply of ECE Programs in the Pilot Areas from 2008 to 2009

To examine whether the supply of ECE programs changed over the course of the scholarship program implementation, we analyzed the programs in and near the pilot area at the beginning of the Scholarship Program, during the first year of implementation (September 2008), and again during the second year of implementation (September 2009).

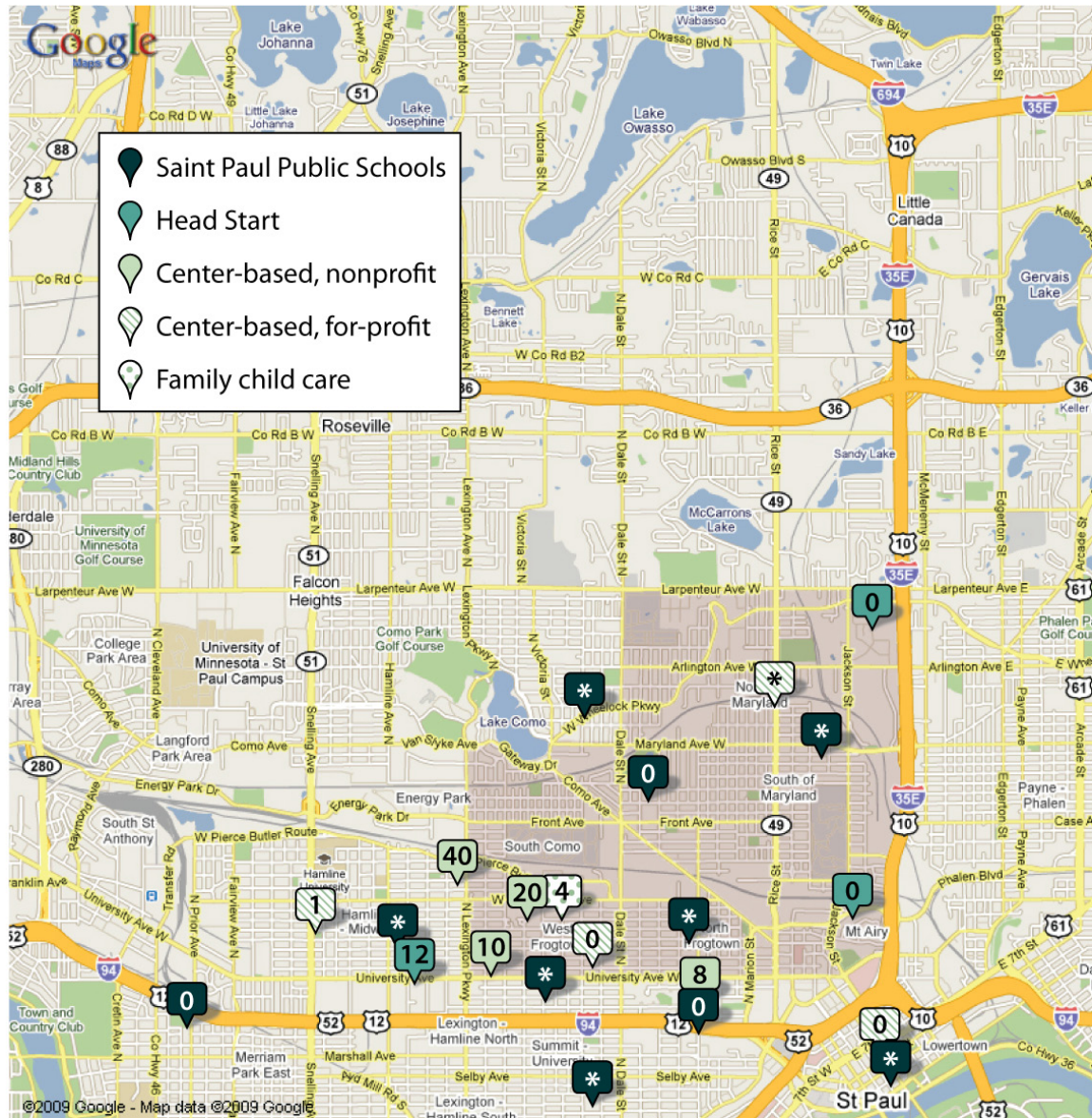
- Prior to Parent Aware, the only indicator of quality was licensure. In 2008, the NACCRRARaware website listed 221 programs that were licensed to provide care for children in and near the pilot area.
- The number of high-quality programs (3- and 4-star rated programs) in and near the pilot area³⁰ increased more than 50%, from 14 programs to 22. The additional programs included 3 center-based programs (two nonprofit and 1 for-profit) and 5 family child care programs. There are additional high-quality ECE programs that do not have capacity and vacancy data in NACCRRARaware (8 in 2008 and 7 in 2009), for an overall increase in high-quality programs of 31%.
- The total capacity of high-quality programs in and near the pilot area increased 33% (from 1,011 slots to 1,345 slots), while the number of available slots (vacancies) in those programs increased 40% (from 95 to 133).
- The total number of slots and changes in capacity from 2008 to 2009 varied by the type of ECE program.
 - For-profit and nonprofit center-based programs increased capacity by 53% (262 slots).
 - Head Start sites on average gained 20 slots (a 7% increase).³¹
 - Family child care programs increased capacity by 371% (52 slots), which can be partially attributed to the fact that the number of high-quality family child care programs in and near the pilot area increased from one to five.
 - The number of slots in school-based programs was the same across the 2 years (204 slots).
- Changes in vacancy from 2008 to 2009 also varied by the type of ECE program although the total percentage across programs increased from 9% to 10%.
 - In September 2008, 79 of the 493 slots (16%) at high-quality center-based programs in and near the pilot area were vacant (i.e., open for children to enroll). In 2009, vacant slots had not increased (14%, 133 of 1,345 slots).
 - Mirroring the change in capacity, there was a significant increase in the vacant slots in family child care programs (29% in September 2008 to 44% in September 2009).
 - Because Head Start and school-based programs enroll children in the fall and do not typically have open slots for the rest of the year, these programs had few to no open slots in September of 2008 or 2009.

³⁰ Programs were only included in this count if NACCRRARaware had data on their capacity and vacancies.

³¹ This change may be due to a difference in the way the data are reported or the question of whether all sites were included in the reporting to NACCRRARaware from year to year.

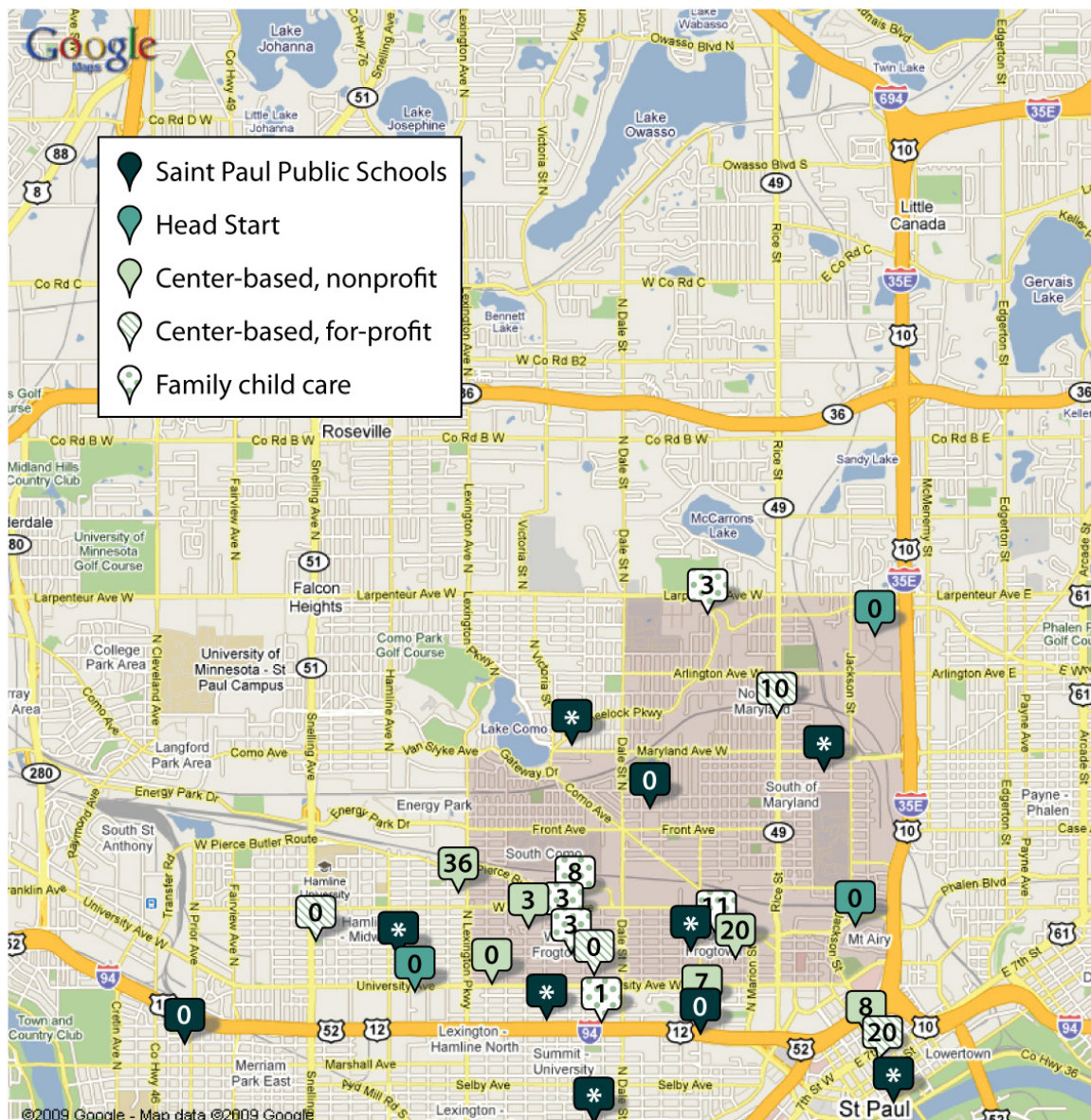
Figures 22a and 22b show the geographical distributions of high-quality programs and the number of available slots at each program in September 2008 (22a) and again in September 2009 (22b).

Figure 22a. Location of 3- and 4-Star Programs in and near Districts 6 and 7 and Vacant Slots, September 2008



Note: The number inside each marker is the number of vacancies at the program in September 2008. The total number of vacancies across all programs shown on this map is 95 slots. Programs with an asterisk did not have capacity and vacancy data in NACCRRAware at the time the data were obtained.

Figure 22b. Location of 3- and 4-Star Programs in and near Districts 6 and 7 and Vacant Slots, September 2009



Note: The number inside each marker is the number of vacancies at the program in September 2009. The total number of vacancies across all programs shown on this map is 133 slots.

Changes in the Quality of ECE Programs in the Pilot Areas from 2008 to 2009

To examine whether the quality of ECE programs changed over the course of the scholarship program implementation, we analyzed the programs in and near the pilot area at the beginning of the Scholarship Program, during the first year of implementation (December 2008), and during the second year of implementation (December 2009). Data on quality were obtained from the Parent Aware ratings website. Prior to Parent Aware, the only indicator of quality was licensure.

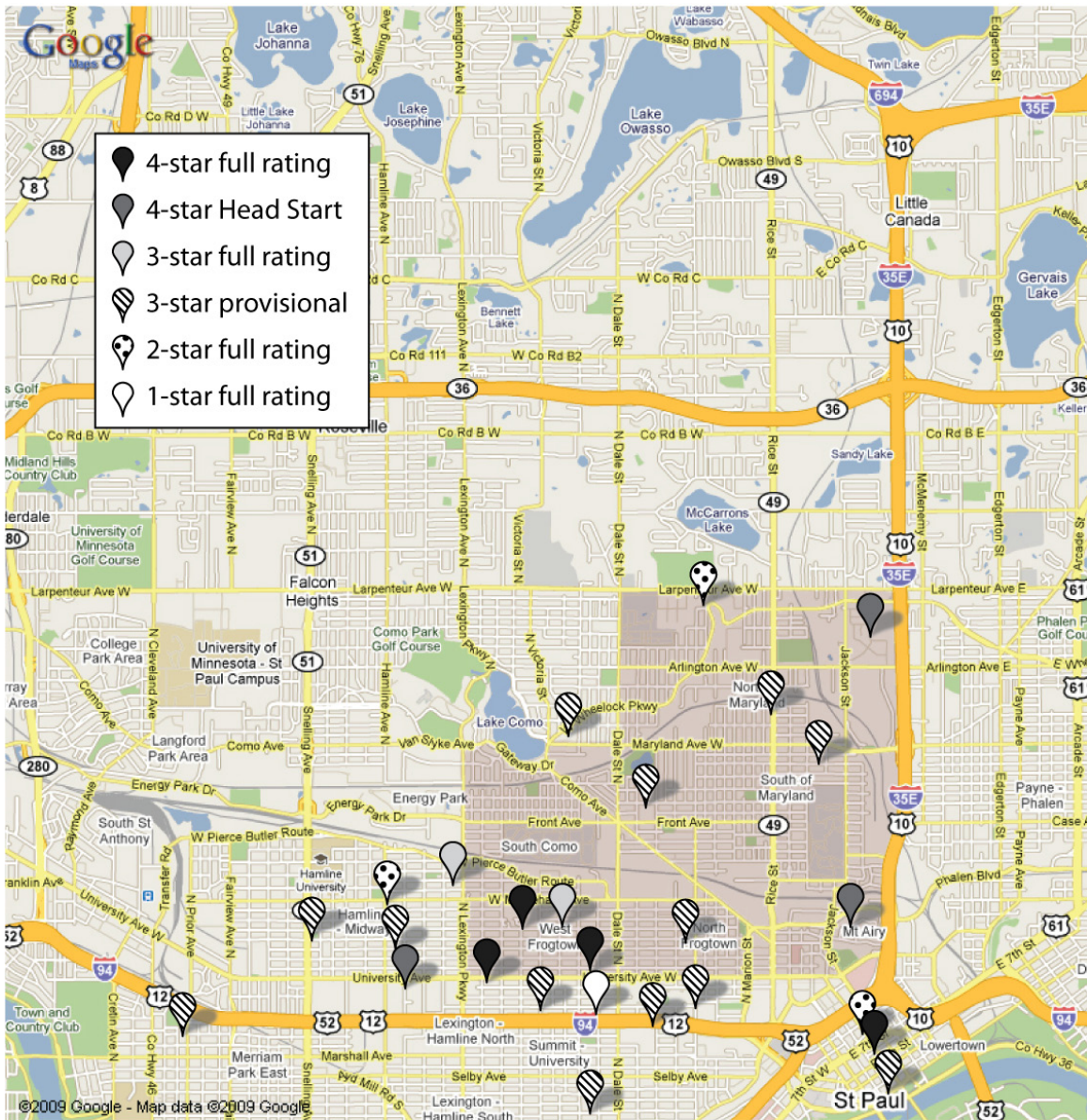
Figures 23a and 23b show the Parent Aware-rated programs (as of December 2008 and December 2009). Displayed are all the rated programs in and near the pilot area and their ratings. Although children can attend programs outside this area, the area was selected because we would expect that (1) parents of children with scholarship funds would seek out ECE programs because of their proximity and (2) programs would want to participate in Parent Aware in order to be available to families with scholarship funds. Figures 23a and 23b show the following:

- The number of programs participating in Parent Aware in and near the pilot area, including those listed as being in the process of getting their rating, increased 23% between 2008 and 2009, from 35 to 43 programs.
- The number of programs that participated in Parent Aware and received a rating increased from 26 to 31 programs (19%) over the year (compare Figures 22a and 22b).
- The proportion of programs receiving a rating of 3 or 4, indicating high quality, increased from 85% (22 of 26 programs) to 94% (29 of 31 programs).
 - The most common rating change was from 3-star provisional to 4-star, though this is largely accounted for by a policy decision that automatically changed the 10 school-based programs from 3-star provisional to 4-star.³²
 - The 3 Head Start sites received an automatic 4-star rating.
- In 2009, only two programs (6%) received a rating of 1 or 2; one of these programs was a family child care program and the other a nonprofit center-based program.³³
- In the past year, 4 programs increased their rating, 6 programs became rated for the first time, and 8 programs began the process to become rated.
- One program that received a 1-star rating in 2008 discontinued participation in Parent Aware in 2009.

³² Definitions of the four rating categories are contained in a report about Parent Aware, available on the MELF website, *Parent Aware Year 1 Evaluation Report*.

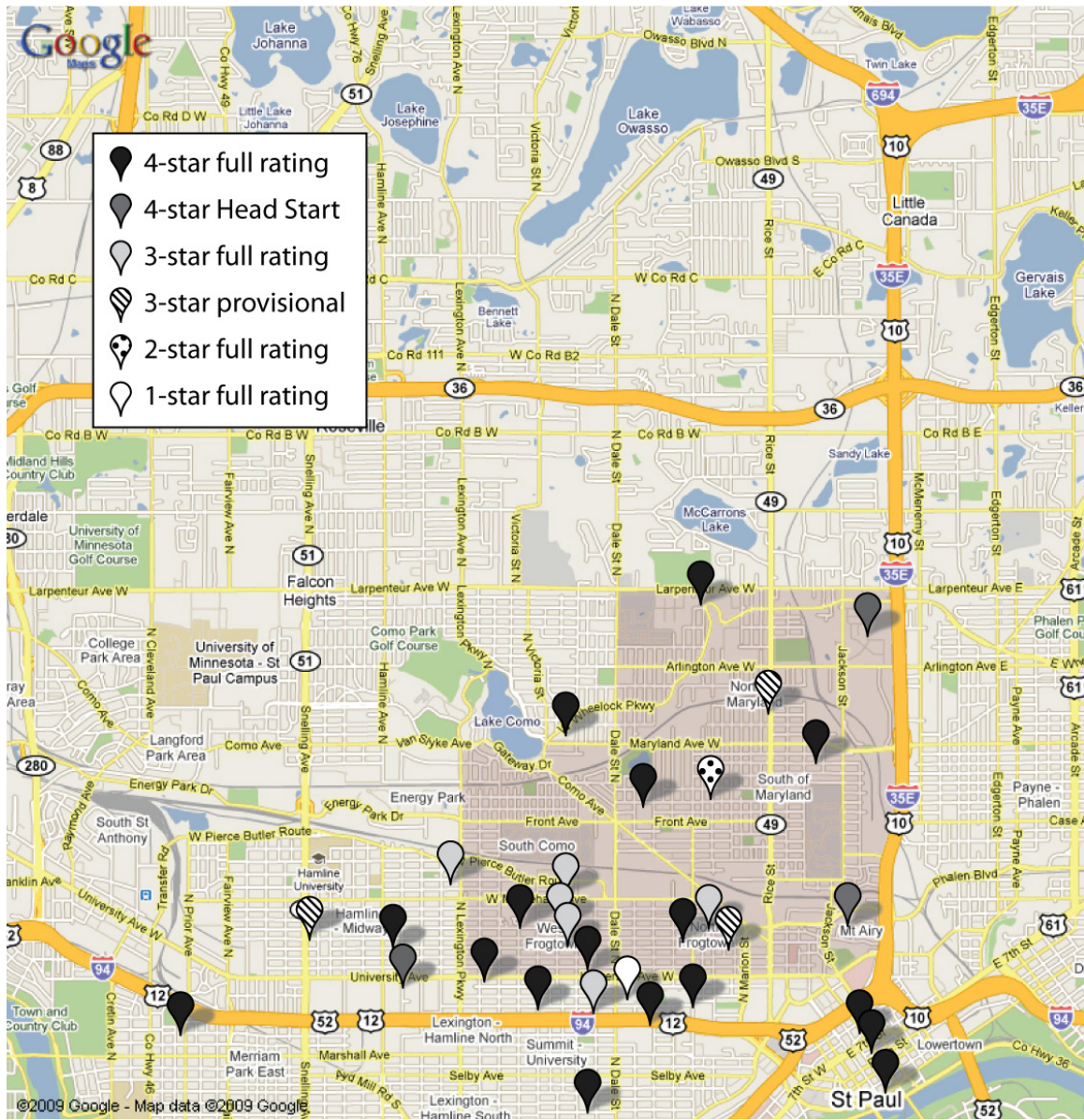
³³ In 2008, 16% (four programs) were rated 1- or 2-star; three were family child care, one was a nonprofit.

Figure 23a. Location of Parent Aware-Rated ECE Programs in and near Districts 6 and 7 and Parent Aware Ratings, as of December 2008



Note: These are the 26 programs in and near the original pilot area of districts 6 and 7. Ten school-based programs that are rated 3-star provisional on this map were upgraded to 4-stars in 2009 due to a policy decision, not to a measured change in quality. This change is reflected on the following map.

Figure 23b. Location of Parent Aware-Rated ECE Programs in and near Districts 6 and 7 and Parent Aware Ratings, as of December 2009



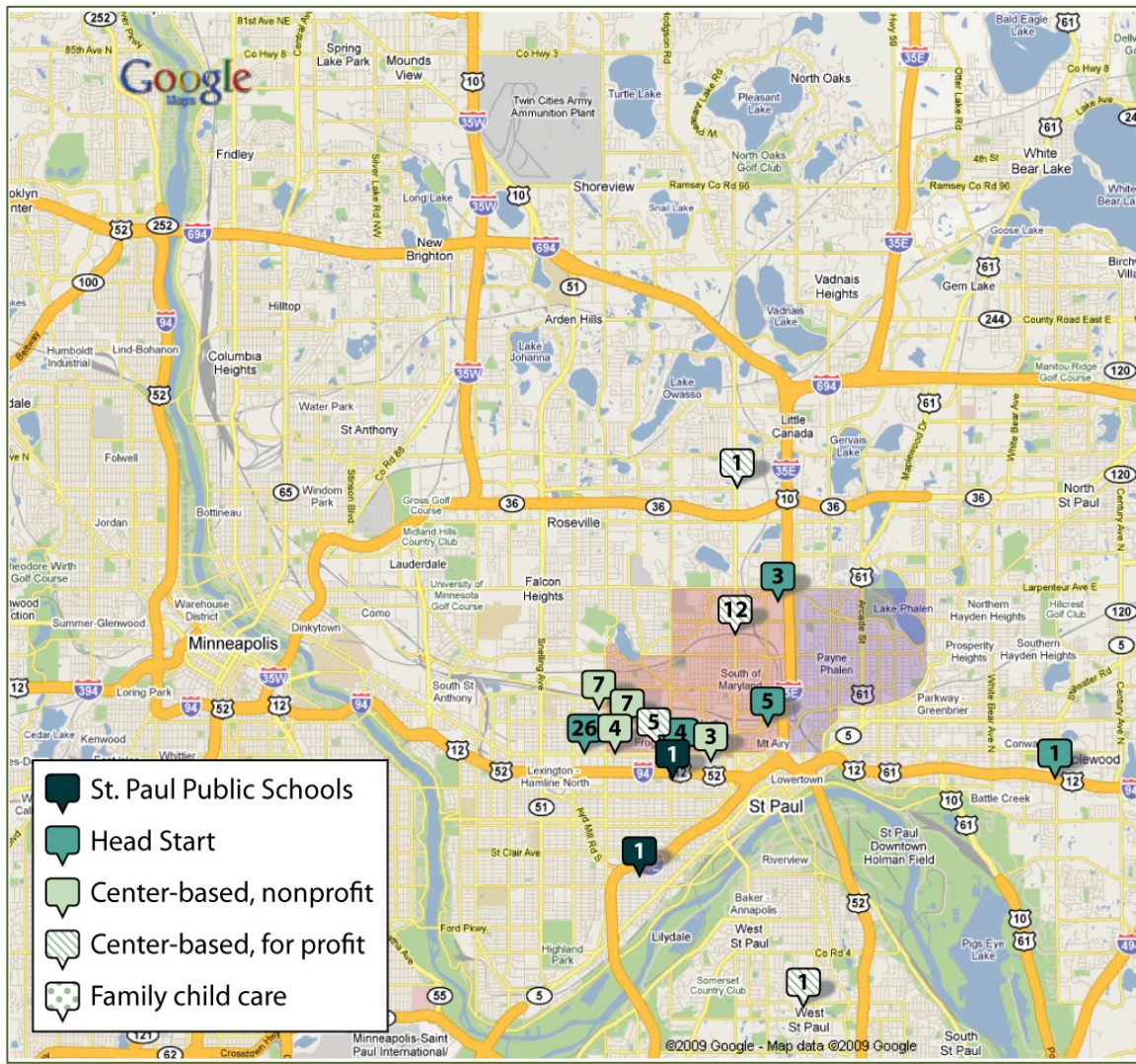
Note: These are the 31 programs in and near the original pilot area of districts 6 and 7.

ECE Programs Selected by Children and Families with Scholarship Funds During 2008 and 2009

Figures 24a and 24b show the location of Parent Aware-rated programs that children attended using their scholarship funds (as of December 2008 and again in December 2009).

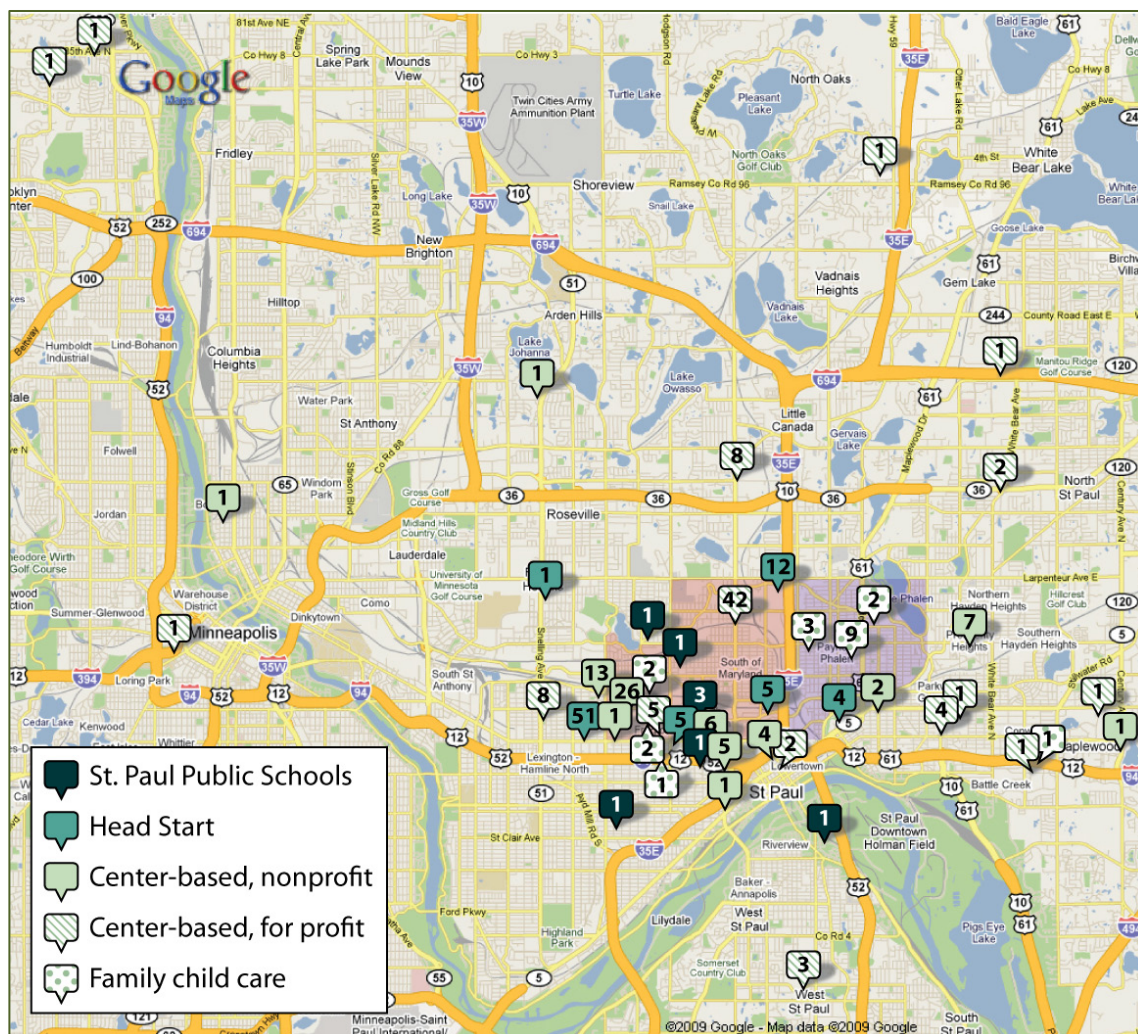
- Between December 2008 and December 2009, the number of children participating in the scholarship program more than tripled, increasing from 81 to 256 children, attending 15 programs in 2008 and 47 programs in 2009.
 - Nearly one-third of the 256 children (78, 30%) attended one of 6 Head Start sites, with 1 Head Start site serving one-fifth of the entire group of children (51, 20%).
 - About one-third of the children (82, 32%) were using their scholarship funds to attend one of 16 center-based for-profit programs.
 - One of these programs was serving more than half of these children (42 of 82, 51%), and the program had opened in the pilot area in response to the anticipated scholarship funds shortly before the start of the 2008–09 school year.
 - More than one-quarter of the children (68, 27%) were using their scholarship funds to attend one of 12 center-based nonprofit programs.
 - In 2009, 20 children (8%) used their scholarship funds to attend a family child care program, but none did so in 2008.
 - A small percentage of children (8, 3%) were using their scholarship funds to attend one of 6 different school-based ECE programs.
- Of the 15 programs that children attended in 2008, 11 (73%) were in the pilot area. However, by 2009, of the 47 programs that children attended, only 19 (40%) were in the pilot area.
- Another way to view the mobility of the children is to look at the location of the ECE programs that the children attended. One-tenth of the children (8, 10%) attended high-quality ECE programs outside of the defined pilot areas in 2008, and more than one-quarter (70, 27%) attended programs outside the original pilot area in 2009.
 - However, 30 of the 70 children (12% of total) attended 7 programs in zip code 55106, which covers the newly opened Payne/Phalen pilot area.

Figure 24a. Location of ECE Programs Where Children Are Using Scholarship Funds, as of December 2008 (Cohort 2 Only)



Note: The number inside each marker is the number of scholarship children attending each program in December 2008. The total number of children using scholarship funds attending these programs is 81. This map includes only Cohort 2 children because Cohort 3 children were not yet eligible.

Figure 24b. Location of ECE Programs Where Children Are Using Scholarship Funds, as of December 2009



Note: The number inside each marker is the number of scholarship children attending each program in December 2009. The total number of children using scholarship funds attending these programs is 256.

Summary of ECE Program Supply and Quality

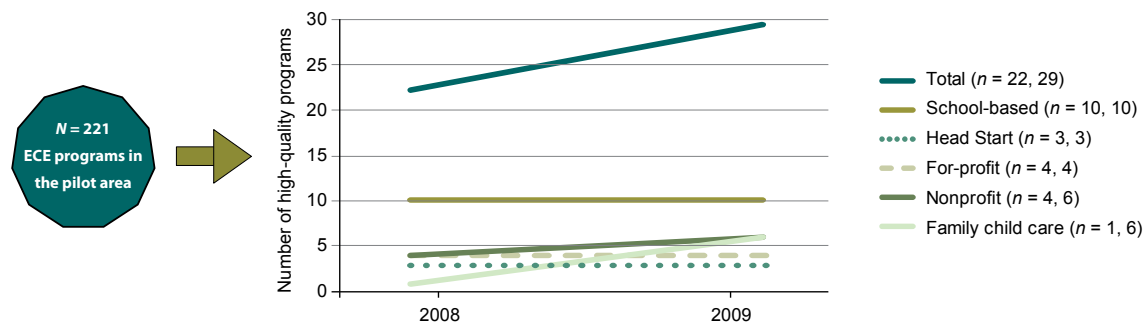


Data showing families' selection of ECE programs over time and ECE programs' participation in Parent Aware provide a window into the market forces that are operating in the scholarship model pilot area.

Figure 25 shows a summary of changes in supply, including the following:

- 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 is licensure. We used this number as a proxy for available programs that could select to participate in Parent Aware and subsequently enroll children with scholarship funds.
- In September 2008, 22 programs were deemed high-quality and had 95 available slots to accommodate children with scholarship funds. In September 2009, 29 programs were deemed high-quality and had 133 available slots to accommodate children with scholarship funds. Thus, approximately 10 to 13% of possible ECE programs in and near the pilot areas were participating in Parent Aware.

Figure 25. Changes in Number of High-Quality ECE Programs in the Pilot Area, from 2008 to 2009



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

Year 2 Findings: Qualitative Data About Implementation



In this final section, we summarize qualitative data collected throughout 2009 that describe how the scholarship program is being implemented. Much of the information was presented to MELF in the second implementation brief in September 2009.³⁴ The key findings about implementation described in the second implementation brief were based on the following:

- Interviews in summer of 2009 with the developers, funders, implementation team members, staff from agencies and programs that are implementing the scholarship program,³⁵ and members of the state legislature³⁶
- Reviews of documents
- Data about participating children and families that were exported from Resources for Child Caring, the agency administering the scholarship applications and payments
- Focus groups with participating parents³⁷

Below, we include the major findings, conclusions, and recommendations from that second implementation brief. Then we describe some of the key lessons learned so far about implementation. Key implementation findings included the following:

- Changes in the scholarship model in Year 2
- The interview respondents' overall perceptions about how implementation had progressed in Year 2, and the goals, outcomes, and accomplishments of the project
- The interview respondents' perceptions about the successes and challenges of the implementation in Year 2, as well as facilitators and barriers to implementation of the model, and lessons learned about implementation
- Experience of the program by a subset of parents of children who are enrolled in the scholarship program

The information from this process evaluation is being used to identify the following:

- Activities and strategies that worked well in the past year
- Changes in activities and strategies that could be improved in implementation in future replications

³⁴ This report, *Issue Brief: Scholarship Implementation in Year 2*, is available on the MELF website at <http://www.melf.us/>.

³⁵ The most recent version of the scholarship implementation manual is in Appendix A.

³⁶ The interview protocol that was used is in Appendix C.

³⁷ The interview protocol that was used with the parent focus groups is in Appendix D.

- Issues or challenges that need continuing discussion and consideration for the scholarship model developers in meeting the goals of the pilot project

Key Implementation Findings

To understand the second year of implementation, it is important to note that during 2009, MELF experienced a 36% reduction in funding due to difficulties in fundraising as a result of the larger economic context. In March 2009, the MELF board and staff made difficult decisions that altered the implementation of the Scholarship Program. The following changes were made as a result of the budget cuts:

- Parent mentoring services ended June 30, 2009. The decision was made to focus the limited amount of resources on the larger component of the Scholarship Program model, the enrollment of children in high-quality ECE programs. This change led to an increase in the role of Resources for Child Caring (RCC) and public health in recruiting and contacting families.
- Those ECE programs that do not charge parent fees (i.e., Head Start and Saint Paul Public Schools) no longer receive the full amount of the scholarship funds, a policy that began in fall 2009, but the programs are paid a small administration amount for scholarship families who select these programs.
- The catchment area for eligible families was expanded in summer 2009 to include the Payne/Phalen neighborhood (district 5) to increase the number of enrolled children with scholarships who begin ECE program attendance in fall 2009.
- MELF and the implementation team needed to cap Cohort 3 enrollment³⁸ in July 2009 due to the fundraising shortfall.

The remainder of this section summarizes information from the interviews and the parent focus groups about how the model has been implemented and effects on children, families, early care and education (ECE) programs, and the targeted community (districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul). Key findings are organized around the following:

- Overall implementation
- Recruitment and outreach to families
- Outreach to and participation of ECE programs
- Implementation of the parent mentoring component of the scholarship model
- Successes in Year 2 implementation
- Challenges in Year 2 implementation
- Lessons learned in Year 2 implementation
- Perspectives from participating parents
- Summary of Year 2 implementation issues for continuing discussion

³⁸ The original recruitment plan included Cohort 1, a group of children enrolled in early 2008 ($n = 129$, with 79 enrolled in ECE programs) as part of initial ramping up of the scholarship program (not intended to be enrolled into the evaluation), and then two cohorts of 3-year-olds, referred to as Cohort 2 (to begin ECE programming in fall 2008) and Cohort 3 (to begin ECE programming in fall 2009). Two infant cohorts (less than 1-year-olds [$n = 102$] and 1-year-olds [$n = 101$]) were also enrolled in 2008.

Overall Implementation

- The majority of respondents (80%) thought that the implementation of the scholarship program was going very well (46%) or somewhat well (34%). The majority of respondents also stated that the early months of the start-up and implementation in 2008 had been challenging, but in the past year, implementation processes had gone more smoothly because earlier challenges had been addressed and/or procedures had been modified.
- The majority of respondents made a number of comments that reflect two overall implementation challenges:
 - **Complexity of the scholarship model.** Those respondents actively involved in implementation activities noted that the scholarship model was difficult to explain to ECE programs and families. Others noted that implementation procedures were not well defined and established in the early months of implementation, and that the Scholarship Program as designed seemed to require a great deal of paperwork and establishment of mechanisms to connect multiple agencies and staff. These issues were seen as barriers that may have been confusing and cumbersome for many of the families. As one respondent said: “Why not just get them in?” referring to eligible families and children. Other respondents commented that the implementation procedures and requirements put into place may have also prevented some types of programs that do not charge fees to parents from initially participating in the scholarship program (e.g., public school programs needed to figure out a way to accommodate children with scholarships on a rolling admission basis when their usual procedures were to enroll in Spring prior to the fall start dates).
 - **Implementing and developing the model at the same time.** Many respondents noted a concern which was also raised in the first year of implementation—the procedures and policies guiding implementation of the scholarship model were being developed as the model was being rolled out (e.g., eligibility, outreach strategies, application process, activities of parent mentors). Confusion and communication problems arose that might have been avoided if all procedures and policies had been defined and communicated in advance of beginning the project with the families, programs, agencies, and communities.

Recruitment and Outreach to Families

- Over the course of the second year of the scholarship program, program staff became better able to identify and implement successful strategies to engage families and recruit them to participate in the scholarship program. However, many respondents noted that more planning and strategic consideration of how outreach to families was going to occur would have been helpful in the beginning of the recruitment period. Respondents raised a number of observations and opinions about the outreach activities, including the following:
 - There are many agencies which have daily contact with at-risk families in the targeted neighborhoods, but their expertise and the relationships they have already

established were not utilized to the full extent possible. These agencies included public health staff, ECE program staff, faith-based organizations, and others.³⁹

- The most recent recruitment efforts (in summer 2009) demonstrated that working door-to-door with experienced and trusted individuals has yielded the majority, if not all, of the latest wave of eligible participants enrolled in the scholarship program. As noted by one respondent, “Handing out literature doesn’t work. Talking face-to-face, not over the phone, that works.” Some respondents believed that more eligible children and families were residing in the targeted communities, but that the way the program was administered probably prevented intensive outreach to families from occurring.
- Respondents noted that the scholarship model needs to consider how to tailor activities of outreach staff to families with different needs. The families who are more at risk appear to need more support and help in completing the application and navigating the system, including the process of selecting an ECE program. Some respondents expressed the concern that the “most needy” families may not have been reached and served by the scholarship program.⁴⁰
- A number of challenges in recruitment of families were related to language and cultural barriers (i.e., each step in the outreach and enrollment/engagement process of the scholarship program takes longer when families do not speak English; it was hard to know what information was being conveyed about the requirements of the scholarship program when parent mentors and outreach staff needed to rely on interpreters; there is a need for credible, trusted community members to help with recruitment).
- It appeared that the easiest way to “recruit” families was through Head Start and other ECE programs; many respondents noted that ECE programs recruited children and families to receive scholarships who already were connected to or enrolled in their program.
 - Some respondents noted that it was difficult to reach families who were not already enrolled in ECE programs. In addition, once they completed the application, it was often difficult to find parent mentors who could work with these families in a culturally and linguistically sensitive manner.
 - When the New Horizons program opened in the pilot area, the program had no trouble enrolling families with scholarships in a period of 2 to 3 months, largely from word-of-mouth.
- Some respondents felt that the restricted geographic boundaries made it hard to recruit. For example, often families who lived across the street or down the block from eligible families were told they could not participate because of the geographic boundaries. Many respondents noted that these boundaries may have

³⁹ In the planning stages of the project beginning in 2007, an advisory group included mayor’s office staff, Head Start and Saint Paul Public Schools directors, other community agency staff including Ramsey County Department of Public Health, and Lifetrack Resources. The advisory group met regularly throughout 2008-09 to consider a variety of implementation processes.

⁴⁰ In the development of the scholarship logic model, the intended types and extent of interventions by outreach and recruitment staff to inform families about the scholarship program and to assist them in enrolling in the program and selecting an ECE program were not explicitly defined. Thus, staff did not have a clear idea about what activities were consistent or not consistent with the scholarship model.

caused negative feelings toward the scholarship program, making it harder to recruit in the neighborhoods.

- Another challenge to recruitment that was not anticipated was how the weak economy affected the neighborhoods and families. One respondent noted that “whole neighborhoods” were “turning over” (i.e., significant mobility), and it changed the makeup of the targeted population.

Related to outreach of families has been the process of enrolling children into ECE programs. A key feature of the scholarship model is that parent mentors will inform parents about the features and benefits of high-quality ECE programs.⁴¹ Armed with this information and the resources (i.e., scholarship funds) to access high-quality programs, the model hypothesizes that parents will create demand (i.e., seek out and choose a high-quality ECE program for their child to attend using their scholarship funds).

- Based on interview responses, it appears that the parent choice/demand aspect of the scholarship model (how parents selected an ECE program for their child) may not have been implemented as intended, or at least was implemented differently across participants. Thus, there are two key questions about the scholarship model: (1) How much was the choice of an ECE program a deliberate and volitional choice by parents? and (2) How independently did parents locate and choose the ECE program? Staff engaged in a variety of activities to assist families to identify and choose eligible ECE programs in which they could use the scholarship funds.⁴²
 - Many of the respondents mentioned that many families were given a list of available ECE programs that had Parent Aware quality ratings of 3 or 4 and had available slots (e.g., RCC created lists of ECE program for families).
 - Interviewees believed that many of the families did not seem to use or know about Parent Aware or its website, especially since the parent mentors provided parents with a list of eligible ECE programs.
 - In a number of cases, outreach staff at RCC did a great deal of follow-up to contact eligible families with completed scholarship program applications to help them find an ECE program with open slots. The follow-up occurred mainly in cases when it was clear that the family had not yet enrolled the child in an ECE program because no payment requests were coming for the child from any ECE program.
 - In some cases, parent mentors and/or outreach staff provided parents with a partial list of ECE programs based on information about the families’ unique needs and resources.
 - As mentioned earlier, some ECE program staff assisted families already enrolled in their ECE program to apply for scholarship funds (e.g., Head Start programs).
- Several respondents stated that they were uncertain about whether parents learned about the features and benefits of high-quality ECE programs from parent mentors or

⁴¹ The scholarship program implementation manual (Appendix A) describes the parent mentoring component and the role of parent mentors in general terms, but does not prescribe specific activities that parent mentors must or can do with families.

⁴² As mentioned above, in explanations of the scholarship logic model, it is not clear the types and extent of interventions by outreach and recruitment staff that are consistent with the model.

from Parent Aware. Rather, it was noted that many parents seemed to learn about ECE program quality from ECE program staff once the child was enrolled in an ECE program, a suggestion supported by comments made by parents in the parent focus groups (discussed below).

Outreach to and Participation of ECE Programs

- The majority of respondents generally felt that participation of center-based programs had been going well. In contrast, the majority of respondents either felt that participation of family-based programs had not gone well or they were not aware of how it was going. Most respondents noted that center-based programs participated in greater numbers than family-based programs because it was easier for them, especially if they were already accredited or could earn three or four stars in the full Parent Aware rating process the first time they signed up to be rated without having to do major improvements to their ECE program.
- Some respondents, noted, however, that “some aspects of Parent Aware may be daunting for programs” such as having to have a curriculum, and that these programs may need to be given extra support in order to participate in the rating system. Some of the Parent Aware requirements may have been unattainable for many family-based programs without the support, technical assistance, and additional resources aimed at assisting programs to meet various quality requirements.⁴³
- Some respondents also noted that center-based programs were more likely to be connected to other providers and agencies like RCC, and, therefore, to have known about the scholarship program and how to access the scholarship funds.
- Many respondents noted that very few parents in the scholarship program requested or sought out a family-based ECE program.
- For both family-based and center-based programs, respondents viewed the possibility of being rated 1 or 2 and being required to publish the rating on the website and in their windows as possible barriers to participation.
- Many respondents reported that the entry of the New Horizons program into the scholarship pilot areas was a direct result of the scholarship program.
 - Several respondents noted, however, that they felt that more for-profit or not-for-profit ECE programs would have located a program in the pilot communities if the scholarship program was not scheduled to sunset in 2011, seeing such a move as too risky fiscally.
- Many respondents commented that the scholarship model does not fit well with ECE programs for which parents do not pay fees, and suggested the need for a thorough review and discussion of how the scholarship model, seen as child-based or fee-based funding, can be accommodated with existing programs that use a program-based funding model.

⁴³ Parent Aware does provide support to ECE programs to upgrade their quality, but comments indicated that some ECE programs were either not aware of the availability of its support or felt the support was not sufficient to fully meet their needs to improve quality.

- Other respondents commented that ECE programs for which parents do not pay fees or nonprofit preschool programs may need to reevaluate how they can accommodate the schedules of many families who need full-day and full-year programming for their children.
- Several ECE program directors suggested that during the start-up phase of the scholarship model, developers could have done a better job of engaging the ECE providers and communicating clearly with them about the requirements, goals, and benefits of the scholarship program and about use of the funding model with all types of ECE programs.

Implementation of the Parent Mentoring Component of the Scholarship Model

- The majority of respondents were clear that the role of the parent mentors to support enrollment with at-risk families in the scholarship program was an essential component of the scholarship model.⁴⁴ That is, respondents commented that without parent mentoring, the cohort of children and families participating in the scholarship program may look very different.
- Many respondents felt that there were a number of specific and unique benefits of the parent mentoring component of the scholarship model for parents and children.
 - Respondents noted that often parent mentors helped address behavioral issues that parents had with their children or helped families get connected to other community services (e.g., WIC).
 - Some ECE program directors commented that the parent mentors play a critical role in giving parents information about parenting, supporting early literacy, and educating parents about the benefits of their child’s participation in a high-quality ECE program.
 - Many parents in the focus groups commented about how much they enjoyed the parent mentor visits and receiving materials to help their child become ready for school (e.g., backpacks, books).
- Many respondents also noted, however, that there has been a lack of clarity about the parent mentoring component, particularly in regard to what activities parent mentors are expected or required to engage in with families. That is, in the scholarship program logic model, the parent mentors are identified as the conduits between the scholarship program and the access to knowledge and a high-quality ECE program.⁴⁵ In practice, however, implementation team staff noted that how parent mentoring was delivered, what information was shared, how decisionmaking by parents occurred, and what additional services were provided to parents varied considerably by agency, by parent mentor, and over time.
 - Many families did not seem to need the parent mentor to find a program (reported both by implementation team staff and by parent respondents).

⁴⁴ As mentioned earlier, the scholarship program implementation manual describes the parent mentoring component in general terms, but does not prescribe specific activities that parent mentors must or can do with families.

⁴⁵ It is worth noting that the scholarship model, as originally described, saw the parent mentors starting work with families when the children were infants, not around age 3. Enrollment at age 3 occurred in this project in order to enroll a sufficient sample into the evaluation to study kindergarten outcomes before the end of 2011, the sunset of the MELF.

- Many respondents reported that they believed that some parents were not as involved in parent mentoring, and did not want the parent mentor to come into their home and talk about parenting skills.
- In parent focus groups, some parents reported that they did not realize that parent mentoring was part of the scholarship program.
- Because of the lack of clarity about the parent mentors’ role and the variety of ways and extent to which parent mentors could support parental decisionmaking in selection of an ECE program, parent mentor trainings reflected a wide range of possibilities. Some respondents reported the following:
 - While some parent mentors helped families call ECE programs and ask questions about available slots, many parent mentors were concerned about doing too much “hand-holding” to be true to the intent of the scholarship model.
 - The parent mentor trainings⁴⁶ seemed to be either too vague, broad, or basic (e.g., “parent mentoring 101”) for more experienced home visitors.
 - Many parent mentors realized, after the fact, that there were many additional steps that they needed to implement to get children enrolled in ECE programs (i.e., according to some respondents, the parent mentoring—if done well— included calling ECE programs for families, assisting families in visiting ECE programs, and following up on the status and availability of slots).
 - The complexity of the scholarship program was also hard to understand and then information about the requirements and policies/procedures had to trickle down from supervisors of all of the parent mentors, including new staff. Respondents noted that it would have been helpful to have more “booster” sessions for new (and old) staff and regular communication to clarify scholarship program policy changes.

Successes in Year 2 Implementation

Several key successes in Year 2 of implementation were identified by the interview respondents.

Some perceived successes were related to **servicing at risk children and families**.

- Almost all respondents referred to the program’s ability to serve many children and families in the last year as the key success, enrolling and serving more than 200 children with scholarships in high-quality ECE programs.
- Most respondents stated that they believed that parents were positively influenced by being empowered to make different choices than they would have without the scholarship funds (mentioned by both implementers and parents).
 - According to respondents who communicated directly with parents of children receiving scholarships, parents seemed proud about being proactive and were eager to find an ECE program that they thought was right for their child and their family. The respondents highlighted the importance of family choice and the respect that parents were given as individuals with the power to make choices for

⁴⁶ There were two parent mentor trainings—one in December 2007 and one in December 2008.

their children, a major feature of the vision underlying the scholarship program model.

- As one respondent noted, a large success of the program was demonstrated in the fact that “parents were learning how to navigate the ECE system, how to do research, advocate for themselves and their children.”
- Other parent mentors and RCC staff mentioned that they gave parents a checklist that parents used to look for safe and high-quality ECE programs.
- At least one ECE program director described hearing a change in the types of questions parents were asking about the program. These questions were more about what is going to happen in the child’s environment, what kinds of activities will the child be exposed to, and so on. Staff noted this subtle change and viewed it as a positive effect of the scholarship program and the other community initiatives (e.g., Parent Aware).
- Parents who have been participating were enthusiastic about the scholarship program and reported how it benefited both their children and themselves. (Additional information from the parent focus groups, described below, show that many parents felt they were directly and positively impacted because the scholarship allowed them to focus on their education, employment, job training opportunities, and, in some cases, allowed them to maintain custody of their child and stay employed).

Some perceived successes were related to **increasing support for high-quality ECE programs** in a variety of key groups.

- Most respondents mentioned that the scholarship program increased community and legislative awareness about the importance and complexity of early childhood.
 - Respondents commented that the scholarship program created “a buzz around early childhood” across the state and across the nation, and MELF brought atypical partners (e.g., business community leaders, banks) into the dialogue about early childhood.
 - Respondents commented that the scholarship program had an impact on how the discussion of the importance of early childhood was being framed by policymakers and stakeholders across Minnesota.
 - Some respondents noted that there was a realization that early childhood education is more like higher education than K–12. For example, in Minnesota there is a balance between public and private higher education. Both early childhood and higher education benefit from public funding, both types of students get scholarship funding through state and federal government. There needs to be a similarly cohesive vision for early childhood. In the scholarship model, both public and private providers can compete for scholarship funds. This model makes sense to many Minnesota legislators.
 - Some respondents felt that the scholarship program has helped to frame discussions of early childhood education as an educational and workforce issue, not as a “child care” issue.

Some perceived successes were related to **raising private funds** for high-quality ECE programs.

- A number of respondents felt that the fact that the scholarship program is supported by private funding offered two benefits: (1) it allowed programs more flexibility in how they used the funds to improve quality, and (2) it encouraged programs to use the funds in creative and innovative ways.⁴⁷

Challenges in Year 2 Implementation

Overall, the majority of respondents cited the problems with fundraising as a major challenge in the past year, and they described additional continuing challenges that also had been mentioned last year.

- The majority of respondents noted that the shortfall in the projected fundraising in the past year was a major problem.
 - By summer 2009, it became evident that the scholarship program was not able to ensure adequate funding to complete the 4-year implementation plan. Additionally, it is important to note that the shortfall in funding affected the evaluation design and sampling. For example, several respondents raised concerns about the design of the outcome component of the evaluation including selection bias in the sample and sample size being too small to detect effects on the outcome measures, especially given the variation in implementation of the model.⁴⁸
 - Some respondents had strong opinions about the fundraising challenges and implications for the scholarship model.
 - Some respondents stated that they do not view the market model as implemented in the scholarship program as feasible or realistic. They believed that public and private funding should be pooled to increase the amount of resources and to serve all children who need a high-quality ECE program. Further, a market model, if implemented, should expand eligibility to include many more families (e.g., families above 185% federal poverty level).
 - Some respondents stated that they believe that a funding model that combines and coordinates both public and private funds is essential to future success of the scholarship model and for providing high-quality ECE programs to as many at-risk children as possible.
- Many respondents commented that the market-based scholarship model, as it was developed, is not well suited for implementation in ECE programs for which parents do not pay fees for a variety of reasons.
 - Many respondents noted that school-based ECE programs work with a different fiscal model from that of community-based ECE programs. In particular, it was

⁴⁷ Use of private funding, which declined in Year 2, was also seen as a major challenge.

⁴⁸ Respondents also noted the need for a comparison group. SRI International revised the evaluation design in 2009 given the shortfall in enrollment and added an adequate comparison group of children who will be recruited and assessed in 2010 as they enter kindergarten.

noted that school-based programs need more guaranteed and sustainable funding to open up new classrooms than the market-driven model allows for.

- Respondents noted that parent mentors and other staff who worked directly with parents in choosing an ECE program may not have fully understood how school-based programs operate, or, in some cases, they were unaware that school-based programs were one option for parents to choose.
- Head Start programs had relatively high participation rates, and at least one respondent attributed the difference in participation from school-based programs to the fact that Head Start programs could provide full-day programming.
- Respondents commented that programs like Head Start and the public schools already receive federal and/or state funding to serve low-income children. Respondents questioned whether this might mean that new or additional children were not being served (e.g., these programs could have served some or all of these children without the additional scholarship funds).
 - Some respondents raised a related issue. Because Head Start and Saint Paul Public School programs primarily (or mostly) serve children from low-income families with no cost to the families, some respondents suggested that a market-driven model is not the most appropriate for low-income families or families who meet these programs' eligibility requirements (i.e., these families would not be paying for their child's ECE program).
- Some respondents commented that within the community-based programs, for-profit ECE programs seem to be well positioned to participate in the scholarship program because they have other resources to support the program.
 - Many respondents referred to the New Horizons center as an example of how the scholarship model led to an increase in the supply of high-quality slots in the targeted community.
- Some respondents noted that many ECE programs struggled with the mechanism for blending scholarship funds with CCAP funds.
 - For example, some ECE program directors described difficulties in managing costs when CCAP payments were delayed and/or not in the amount anticipated.
- The need for transportation to the ECE programs for many families continues to be a significant barrier to participation in the scholarship program.
 - Many respondents felt that transportation was the ultimate barrier for parents in making an informed choice about the ECE program they would really like to choose for their child.
 - For example, part-day Head Start programs have transportation, and outreach staff explained that many families are not comfortable and do not feel safe taking public transportation. Thus, the fact that a program provides transportation often trumps other reasons to choose (or at least consider and visit) a different ECE program.
- Throughout Year 2, administration of the scholarship program and tracking the status of children in their ECE programs continued to present challenges.

- Many respondents noted that not having a comprehensive database to track children and families and their participation made implementation difficult. For example, communicating families’ ECE program choice to the right agencies to be able to track *payments* and to be able to follow children for the evaluation *assessments* was made especially difficult without a comprehensive database.
- The challenge of tracking was also mentioned by respondents when asked about the evaluation, commenting that the lack of a database for evaluation purposes (i.e., tracking eligibility, consent, and enrollment in an ECE program), and relying on RCC’s database was problematic.⁴⁹
- Many respondents (both implementers and ECE program directors) suggested that the start-up of the scholarship model might have gone more smoothly, particularly with regard to enrolling families, if the Parent Aware rating system had been implemented at least 1 year prior to awarding the scholarships to families.
 - Respondents noted that this staggered start-up of the scholarship model components, with Parent Aware starting ahead of the awarding of scholarships, would have given communities time to spread the word about the program, get ECE programs rated with the Parent Aware system, and establish a clearly identified supply of high-quality ECE programs for parents to choose from in their communities (i.e., as one respondent stated, leave enough time at the start-up to “help the supply to grow and to assist programs to improve quality”).

Lessons Learned in Year 2 Implementation

All interview respondents were asked the following question: If the scholarship model were to be replicated in other communities, what are three things that you would tell the developers for successful implementation? The respondents reported about what had worked well and should be retained in future replications and those aspects of implementation that need to be changed or improved. The responses covered the following four categories of lessons learned: planning and funding, communication, logistics of implementation, and collaboration with the participating community.

Several lessons about **planning and funding** were described by respondents.

- Provide sufficient time for a planning phase to establish policies and procedures, and to communicate the goals, vision, and policies, and procedures of the program and the model. One respondent noted, “Design, then implement.”
 - Incorporate the policies and procedures into an implementation manual that is widely disseminated and used. Such a manual should include a description of roles and responsibilities of staff, including ways parent mentors and ECE program staff assist and support families in the enrollment process, leadership and decisionmaking processes, description of the program components, eligibility criteria (including geographic area targeted for the project) and the application

⁴⁹ A few respondents who worked closely with the evaluation team noted that not having SRI nearby was a limitation. If SRI were closer, there might have been more buy-in by the parent mentors to collect the evaluation forms, staff could have worked more effectively with the implementation staff to monitor children’s enrollment in programs and pursue more aggressively consent by families, and so on.

and enrollment process, explanation of the payment structure, and a description of how ECE programs will need to adapt and work with other funding sources and agencies.⁵⁰

- In the planning period, clarify roles and responsibilities for all agencies and organizations involved, and provide mechanisms for receiving questions and disseminating answers about roles and responsibilities.
- Because ECE programs for which there are no parent fees (Head Start and school-based programs) have federal, state, and school district requirements and other considerations that may not fit well into a market-based funding model, conduct strategic planning with representatives from the ECE programs early in the planning process to establish procedures and policies that allow these types of existing programs to participate in the scholarship program.
- Provide sustainable and adequate funding to carry out the entire project as intended. Challenges in fund raising in Year 2 created uncertainty for the families and staff and may have affected morale in the community when staff found it hard to communicate changes in availability of funds to families and families were uncertain of the status of scholarships for their children.
 - Plan to build on and coordinate with existing funding sources to pay for ECE programs; this method was described by many respondents as the “only way to make this model affordable and sustainable.”
- Establish a sufficient timeline for the project during the planning period to allow for full implementation of the scholarship model before implementing an outcome evaluation.
 - View early implementation of the program as a pilot study in which the developers and implementers are testing out the feasibility of implementation. The pilot phase should include trying out a variety of procedures, clarifying the parameters of the interventions (e.g., parent mentoring component), developing trainings that are needed, identifying considerations involving existing ECE programs that are free to families and for which parents do not pay fees, establishing policies on blending and coordinating funding streams, learning about the characteristics and needs of the local community (both the ECE programs and the families) and their perceived challenges in participating in the program, developing a tracking database, and considering other operational details about starting and running the program.
 - Consider whether to establish the quality rating system for the ECE programs prior to implementing the awarding of scholarship funds (perhaps from 1 to 4 years earlier) in order to allow time for the rating system to become well implemented and also to ensure an adequate supply of high-quality ECE programs for parents to choose from in the community.

Several lessons about **communication** were described by respondents.

- There is a strong need to develop a comprehensive communication strategy early on and make sure to continuously communicate progress about the project with a broad

⁵⁰ The manual, or a companion document, should explain the rationale for policy and procedural decisions.

range of stakeholders. Communication should take many forms, with many audiences, including the following:

- Provide regular updates and communicate with all stakeholders (including frequent interactions between legislators, parents and ECE program staff, local community leaders) through a community awareness or marketing campaign.
- Provide clarity about how the evaluation questions addressed in the project are related to current early childhood policy discussions in the state.
- Develop a clear long-term vision of the program model and how messaging is done, including the following:
 - Commit to long-term investments and outcomes.
 - Hold the community accountable for results achieved.
 - Reward ECE providers who deliver positive outcomes at the lowest cost (i.e., show that cost effectiveness is valued).
- Maintain a well-functioning system of communication between parent mentors and scholarship implementation staff.
- Develop an outreach strategy to get information about the scholarship program to parents that includes a variety of activities tailored to the specific needs of the target communities that is simple, appropriate to the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the families served, and that uses the knowledge, experiences, and established relationships of community members, ECE program staff and others serving the community, with an emphasis on credible, trusted community members.

Several lessons about the **logistics of implementing the scholarship model with the entire range of agencies, ECE programs, and families** were described by respondents.

- Build into the implementation explicit strategies to review implementation progress so that successes are being identified and supported, and challenges receive attention and effective problem solving aimed at overcoming them.
- Develop the payment structure so ECE programs can bill immediately for the scholarship funds (e.g., recommend that the scholarship program work with the county/state subsidies to get reimbursed and leave the providers to do their job with the children).
- Include a transportation component in the scholarship model; many families need transportation in order for their child to participate in any ECE program and need it in order to have the child attend the ECE program they would choose given adequate resources.
- Develop clarity about the parent mentoring component of the scholarship model.
 - Parent mentors need to understand the ECE system and what their role is in helping families make decisions about ECE programs for their children (e.g., the specific types of activities they are expected to do (or not to do) with parents to inform them about ECE programs and to assist them in selecting an ECE program for their child).

- A parent mentoring training process needs to be established and made available throughout the duration of the project so that new staff can be trained consistently and as needed.
- Develop clarity about the Parent Aware quality ratings component of the scholarship model.
 - The quality rating system is an essential component of the scholarship model and must be retained, and there was a strong recommendation by some respondents that all ECE providers are held to the same standard of quality and all programs go through the same process to obtain a rating.⁵¹
 - Many ECE programs, especially family-based programs, need more support, technical assistance, and/or resources to upgrade their quality than is currently available through Parent Aware.⁵² Therefore, the availability of quality enhancement grants so that programs can invest in improving program quality would be a good addition to the model.

Several lessons about the benefits of **collaboration with the participating community** were described by respondents.

- Establish an ongoing collaborative partnership with the community and involve many community partners in the planning and ongoing implementation of the program.
 - Developers need to be open to hearing the thoughts, ideas, and experiences of program staff and community members because they can contribute strategies and resources that can be leveraged and built upon.
 - Partnering well with local child care resource and referral agencies can facilitate tracking the available ECE program slots.
 - It is important to have business community involvement to gain widespread support for the project.
- Develop an effective and efficient outreach strategy by using the accumulated experience and knowledge of the community and families. Specific suggestions include the following points.
 - Assess the community make-up as the project is starting up in order to know the characteristics of the families and community. There was a concern that the implementation team relied too heavily on outdated census data.
 - Develop intensive recruitment strategies for the families, who are faced with many challenges and stresses and who may need extra support and information.
 - Consider coordinating with an agency that serves eligible families or others who have contact with families with young children (e.g., health care providers) and use a targeted list to do one-on-one contact (e.g., going door-to-door to talk with families).

⁵¹ The rationale for automatic assignment of high Parent Aware quality ratings of 3 and 4 to Head Start and school-based ECE programs and use of provisional ratings was confusing and needs to be better communicated and justified throughout the community.

⁵² While the Parent Aware system does provide such support, some ECE programs may not perceive the support to be sufficient or easily accessible.

- Translate the program materials and information into multiple languages and use trusted community members in order to reach new immigrant families and those speaking languages other than English.

Perspectives from Participating Parents

Four focus groups⁵³ were held (between late May and early August 2009) with parents who were asked to comment about their experiences in learning about and participating in the scholarship program (i.e., experiences with their parent mentors, in choosing an ECE program, and perceived impacts of the scholarship program on their children and families to date). Among the key findings were the following:

- Parents learned about the scholarship program in several different ways.⁵⁴
 - A commonly mentioned source was a staff member at their child’s preschool program.
 - Word of mouth was another way parents heard about the scholarship program. Several parents mentioned hearing about the program through friends, family, or coworkers.
 - Many parents also mentioned receiving brochures or seeing fliers or advertisements for the program at locations like the WIC office or their child’s preschool program.
 - A small number of parents mentioned learning about the scholarship program from a parent mentor, home visitor, or case manager.
- Most parents described that they were participating in the scholarship program because, as several parents simply stated, “it’s free” and “it’s worry-free.”
 - In describing the simplicity of participating in the scholarship program, several parents contrasted it with CCAP (the Child Care Assistance Program), describing the difficulties of participating in CCAP, including the need to complete a lot of paperwork on a regular basis, having difficulty reaching the county worker, and having trouble consistently staying eligible (e.g., many parents describe the experience of “always getting cut-off” from CCAP).⁵⁵
- Some parents noted that because the scholarship funds are guaranteed, participation provided them with school and work opportunities.
 - For example, one parent described that she was in school and not working enough hours and so was not eligible for CCAP, but could now further her education and training. She noted how much she appreciated the scholarship program because it allowed her to stay in school and have her child attend a high-quality program at the same time, adding that “the county (referring to CCAP) is not as dedicated to helping parents and kids.”

⁵³ Group size of the four focus groups ranged from 5 to 9 parents, for a total of 27 parents or relatives representing 25 families. Most parents had 4-year-old children who had been in the program about a year.

⁵⁴ Focus group parents were predominantly from Cohort 2 prior to implementation of a door-to-door recruiting strategy.

⁵⁵ Many parents stated that they often did not understand why they had lost their eligibility for CCAP or were denied subsidy assistance altogether.

- Many parents commented that the scholarship funds allowed them to access a full-day program for their child (although the sample may have been biased because all four programs offered full-day ECE programming.).
- Even with CCAP, many of the parents reported that they would not have been able to afford to send their child to a full-day, high-quality program.
 - In one group, two-thirds of the parents were either working and/or going to school during the day. They described the struggles of affording a high-quality ECE program and “making ends meet” at the same time.
- Many of the parents answered the question with how they chose the ECE program their child was attending rather than why they chose to participate in the scholarship program. When we asked where their children would be if they did not have the scholarship program, about half of the parents described a less desirable, alternative child care arrangement.
 - One parent said, “My child would be in someone’s basement, watching TV all day with 10 other children,” adding that this was all the family could afford without the scholarship program.
 - Other parents responded that the alternative was to find a half-day program like Head Start and use CCAP if they could manage it.
- The vast majority (about 80%) of the families participating in the focus groups had a parent mentor.
- The number of home visits by parent mentors and how they helped families varied considerably.
- Regardless of the number of parent mentor home visits received, most of the parents expressed strong positive opinions about the parent mentors, noting that they were incredibly beneficial to their children and families. Further, all parents commented that they were saddened that the parent mentor component had been cut.
 - Many parents described the books and other materials (e.g., backpacks, crayons) that parent mentors provided that were helping their children “learn their letters,” “write their names,” and “be ready for school.”
 - Some parents described how parent mentors helped them at first with parenting concerns that were higher priorities than finding an ECE program.
 - One parent described how the parent mentor worked with her to help develop better interactions with her son and how his behavior had improved considerably.
 - Some, though not all, parents, saw their parent mentors as helpful advocates in completing the scholarship program application forms, assisting them in finding a high-quality ECE program, and enrolling their child in the ECE program.
 - Some parents, however, were confused about the purpose and role of the parent mentoring, stating that since they had already decided where to enroll their child, they did not need the parent mentor.
- Almost all of the parents described the process of finding an ECE program as easy.

- Many of the parents knew which ECE program they wanted their child to attend either because of the ECE program’s reputation, word of mouth, and/or previous experience or because the child’s sibling had attended the ECE program.
- Parents also secondarily described aspects of ECE programs that they needed to consider, mainly including location, transportation, and provision of full-day care.
- When parents were asked whether they received a list of eligible ECE programs from which to choose to use the scholarship funds, at least 30% described a list they received from their parent mentor or in the mail.
- All of the parents knew their children attended a high-quality, “star-rated” ECE program (although, as seen below, many had not actually used Parent Aware).⁵⁶
- When asked to describe what they liked about their child’s ECE program, parents were animated and clear in describing ECE program features that they either learned about the program before enrolling or observed first-hand once their child began attending the ECE program. These features included the following:
 - **Curriculum and early learning environments.** Many parents noted that they liked the ECE program because it was “like a school” and it was preparing their children for kindergarten (e.g., “they teach him how to write his name”). Some parents liked the “curriculum” and others described the learning environment (which often included field trips) that helped achieve better outcomes for their children. One parent advocate⁵⁷ explained how the child’s parents were amazed by their child’s English language skills—their son had gone from one word to full sentences in one year. Another parent liked the different activity centers in her daughter’s classroom.
 - **Caring and compassionate teachers and staff whom their children like.** As one parent put it, “the child will let you know if this is a good place.” Many parents described how their children really liked their teachers, talked about them at home, and were often eager to return to school every day. Some parents also commented that the teachers and staff are really committed to their children and they could tell from their observations (e.g., all staff know all of the children’s names, give children individual attention).
 - **Parent involvement.** Parents appreciated that the ECE programs allowed them to come to the program and observe. One group of parents was impressed that all the children know their classmates’ parents. Another parent liked that the program provided after-school activities for the family. Communication from the program to parents was important.
 - **Location and transportation.** One parent needed an ECE program with a bus that would allow her to continue to go to high school. Other parents described the fact that their child’s ECE program was within walking distance of their home or on a convenient bus line.

⁵⁶ Many of the parents knew their program was rated highly. Interestingly, many parents said their program was five stars and that they thought this because it was like a hotel rating where five is the highest. “It’s like a five-star hotel . . . it’s homey, it’s carpeted . . . not like a high school.”

⁵⁷ The parent advocate was a representative for one family who did not speak English and attended the focus group on its behalf.

- **Nutrition and safety.** Other aspects that were mentioned by parents, but with less excitement than those listed above, included nutrition and safety.
 - It seemed that many of the parents considered nutrition and safety to be consistent with a minimum level of quality.
 - For example, parents spoke about the security of the facility, the fact that they can “pop in,” and the special policies and procedures that determine what kinds of foods are served and allowed in the food area.
- Across all four focus groups, parents were hesitant to describe any negative aspects of the ECE program. Parents did, however, identify activities they would like to have added to their child’s ECE program, including (1) foreign language, (2) more field trips, and, in two focus groups, (3) transportation.
- Mirroring the results from the 2008 parent focus groups, none of the parents reported that they had heard of Parent Aware. After the facilitator then briefly described the Parent Aware rating system, some parents thought they used the website or a similar one (e.g., the program’s website), and many commented that their child’s program had “four or five stars.”
- Many parents were interested to learn more about the process of rating (i.e., what goes into it) and how to get more information. However, parents seem to know which ECE program they wanted to choose for their child before being awarded a scholarship. Again, this seemed to be based on word of mouth, reputation, and familiarity. One parent explained, “If I hadn’t had the experience, then the website would have been handy.”
- Parents made a number of closing comments that suggested their universal support and gratitude for the scholarship program as well as their keen awareness of the importance of high-quality ECE programs in supporting their children’s learning and school readiness.
 - One parent was adamant that children need 2 years of an ECE program, and many parents noted the need for more full-day ECE programs. Parents described themselves as lucky to have made it into an ECE program that meets their needs, and knew many other families who could benefit.
 - The scholarship program has made a big difference in the lives of children and families, especially by addressing the gaps in coverage available from CCAP. It has meant more consistent attendance for their children and they are grateful for this consistency.
 - Many parents recommended making the scholarship program more widely available and doing a better job of advertising it to families
 - Parents made many comments about how much they value their participation in the scholarship program and understand the importance of high-quality ECE programs in supporting their children’s learning and development (both pre-academic and social) and school readiness.

Summary and Next Steps



The data described in this second annual report cover a full 2 years of implementation of the scholarship model. The programs and agencies administering and participating in it have worked hard throughout 2008 and 2009 to get the program model implemented for five cohorts of children. All three interventions (i.e., parent mentoring, distribution and use of scholarship funds to attend high-quality ECE programs, and the Parent Aware ECE program rating system) in the scholarship model have evolved throughout 2008 and 2009 and throughout unanticipated budget crises and implementation challenges. The continuing implementation and evaluation of the Saint Paul Scholarship Program model in the pilot community in 2009 has yielded a lot of additional and new information about how the model has been put into operation and the impacts it is producing for children, families, programs, and the pilot community.

Process Evaluation in 2010

In 2010, SRI will continue to collect data about how implementation is progressing. These activities include interviews and focus groups with participants at all levels (e.g., funders, administrators, ECE program directors, parent mentors, parents) that will address the following questions:

- How did parents learn about the scholarship, and why are they participating and choosing the ECE programs their children attend? Specifically, are they using the Parent Aware rating system?
- How are ECE program directors using scholarship funds in their programs?
- How is the scholarship program impacting how ECE programs operate in the pilot areas?
- How is the time-limited nature of the scholarship program affecting how parents and programs are making decisions?
- Why have some ECE programs in and near the pilot areas chosen not to participate in Parent Aware and the scholarship program?

Outcome Evaluation in 2010

Although there was a shortfall in enrollment, it was still possible to implement a pre-post design, with approximately 200 children (Cohorts 2 and 3). In 2010, this pre-post design outcome study will continue to collect child and family data about Cohorts 2 and 3 including the following:

- **Child assessment data.** SRI will collect (1) direct child assessments completed in the ECE program using standardized assessment tools to measure children's cognitive, language, and literacy development at baseline (i.e., when the children are 3 to 4 years old) and (2) teacher checklists about child social competence, behavior, and general development. These data will provide information on the developmental

- status of 3-year-old children with scholarship funds as they enter ECE programs and the developmental progress they make after approximately 1 year and 2 years of ECE program participation.
- **Comparison group child outcome data.** A comparison group of children ($N = 200$) will be assessed at kindergarten entry with the same child assessment battery used with children with scholarships, to be done in fall 2010 when the Cohort 2 children enter kindergarten.
 - **Parent interview data.** SRI will continue to collect phone interview data on an annual basis for Cohorts 2 and 3. These data will provide information on the needs and risk status of children and families participating in the scholarship program. They will also provide information about parents' perception of their child's development and health.

Other data collection scheduled for 2010 include:

- **ECE program supply and quality data.** SRI will continue to conduct data analysis of changes in the supply of high-quality ECE programs and slots in and near districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul (in collaboration with the Parent Aware evaluation team). In coordination with Child Trends, which is conducting the evaluation of Parent Aware for MELF, SRI also has worked to track the number of ECE programs rated in the scholarship pilot areas and the greater Saint Paul area and the ratings the programs has received.
- **Cost study data.** SRI is finalizing a design to conduct a cost study of the scholarship program model. This cost study was part of the original evaluation design and will be conducted in collaboration with the proposed partner from RAND (under the direction of Lynn Karoly, Ph.D.). Recent discussions with MELF staff and board members have led to a reconceptualization of the goals of this cost study.

The evaluation team will produce the following additional reports through December 2011:

- Implementation Brief 3 (due September 15, 2010) describing implementation findings between June 2009 and July 2010⁵⁸
- Scholarship Program Annual Report 2011 (due March 15, 2011) summarizing data collected through fall 2010
- Implementation Brief 4 (due September 15, 2011) describing implementation findings between June 2010 and July 2011⁵⁹
- Scholarship Program Final Evaluation Report (draft due on November 15, 2011, for review with a technical work group; final report due on December 31, 2011) summarizing final results from the final evaluation report, including all outcome data through kindergarten entry for the entire sample of children with scholarships

⁵⁸ A 1- to 2-page fact sheet based on findings from this brief also will be prepared.

⁵⁹ A 1- to 2-page fact sheet based on findings from this brief also will be prepared.

Appendices



- Appendix A. Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Pilot Manual (updated February 2010)
- Appendix B. Parent Mentor Data Collection Form
- Appendix C. Interview Protocol
- Appendix D. Focus Group Protocol

Appendix A

Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Pilot Manual

February 2010



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Background Information

The Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) was established as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization in 2005. MELF was created through a partnership of leaders from the foundation, corporate, and civic sectors to address growing concerns about the lack of school readiness among many children entering kindergarten, and the significant impact this was having now, and would have in the future, on Minnesota's economy and quality of life.

While early childhood research shows that well-focused early childhood development (ECE) investments can produce high public returns, particularly for children living in families with low income levels, questions remain about the mechanism(s) that will most effectively bring ECE to a larger scale.

As part of its strategy, MELF has designed a pilot project to test the effectiveness of a market-oriented scholarship model based on a model proposed by Art Rolnick and Rob Grunewald from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. The **Scholarship Program** provides scholarships to low-income families in Saint Paul's Planning Districts 6 & 7 (see map of pilot area in Appendices B & C) to allow children to attend a high-quality **Early Childhood Education (ECE) program** at ages 3 and 4. Families select from area public and private ECE programs that meet quality standards set by MELF's pilot Parent Aware rating system and program approval at the Minnesota Department of Education, or provisional rating set forth by the Minnesota legislation.

The Scholarship Program also includes a parent mentoring component beginning as early as prenatal that provides families guidance on selecting an ECE program, skills and knowledge necessary to promote school readiness throughout their child's early years, and information about health, child development, and community resources to support their family's needs. The **City of Saint Paul** has included the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program as part of its larger education initiative and will provide leadership and coordination. Through this pilot, MELF's goal is to provide parent mentoring and/or scholarships for approximately 1,100 low-income children by 2011.

Program Development Process

A working group named the Scholarship Pilot Implementation Team (Implementation Team - see Appendix A for membership) met regularly for the year prior to program implementation to develop the guidelines outlined in the Scholarship Program Manual. The Implementation Team met with the Scholarship Advisory Group (see Appendix A for membership) and various other organizations, including **Resources for Child Caring (RCC)**, **Saint Paul-Ramsey County Public Health (Public Health)**, and the **Parent Aware** development team to solicit input and guidance.

The following decision values were applied in making determinations regarding policy and administration for the Scholarship Program:

- Ease of use for families
- Administrative simplicity
- Consistency with early childhood development theory
- Consistency with economic theory

The primary content of Scholarship Program Manual is presented in the following three sections. *Eligibility and Recruitment* discusses the requirements families must meet in order to participate in the program and the outreach strategies recommended for informing and recruiting families into the program. *Parent Mentoring* presents the goals and content of parent mentoring and how to use and coordinate existing home visiting programs. *Scholarships* discusses ECE program eligibility, the dosage and price of scholarships, and the timing of payments made to ECE programs. Each section begins with a description of policies and activities followed by the administrative duties required to carry them out. Words in **bold** are included in a Definition of Terms section at the end.

Family Eligibility and Recruitment

Family Eligibility

Family eligibility for parent mentoring and scholarships is based on child age, residence, and income. The parent mentoring component provides home visits from prenatal through kindergarten entry. Scholarships are available from age 3 until kindergarten entry. Families' roles and responsibilities are outlined in the application.

Families that apply are required to meet the eligibility requirements discussed below. The eligibility requirements are verified once at program entry; families are not required to re-verify later in the program. Once a family is accepted, they are in the program until the child reaches kindergarten.

Child age

Age cut-offs for both parent mentoring and scholarship eligibility occur on September 1 of the scholarship intake year. Families eligible for parent mentoring must have a pregnant mother or child less than 1 year old on September 1 of the intake year. Parent mentoring starts on a rolling enrollment basis; once families are deemed eligible, parent mentoring will begin shortly thereafter. (See Appendices I and J for details on annual cohorts.)

Families eligible for scholarships must have a child 3 years old on September 1 of the intake year. Only in the first year of the Scholarship Program do children age 3 on September 1, 2007, enroll in a program on a rolling enrollment basis. That is, once a child is deemed eligible, he or she can be enrolled in an ECE program. In subsequent years, the scholarship is applied as of Sept. 1 of that year, not on the day the child turns 3.

Families must show proof of child's age at intake. Pregnant mothers entering their child in the prenatal-age 1 cohort are excluded from this requirement.

Proof of age

The following documents can be used to verify child age

- Birth certificate
- Crib Card
- Passport
- Consulate registration card (Matricula Consular)
- I-94 Card
- Immunization record
- Baptismal record
- Health Insurance card

Eligible children must enroll in an ECE program by either Aug. 31, 2008 during the Ramp-up Year, or by January 15th in subsequent years. See Appendix J for clarification.

Address

Families must reside in Saint Paul Planning Districts 6 or 7 at enrollment of program. The following methods may be used to verify residence:

- Driver’s license
- State identification card
- Passport
- School identification card
- Birth certificate
- Shelter Verification form
- Rental lease
- Mortgage document
- Recent utility bill
- Verification by a Public Health nurse
- Selective service registration

If families move from Districts 6 or 7, they are still eligible to receive parent mentoring and scholarships provided they remain in Ramsey or Hennepin County. However, a family move from Districts 6 or 7 may result in an interruption in service if parent mentoring services and/or a scholarship-eligible ECE program are not available in the family’s new location.

Income

Families living at up to 185% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) are eligible to apply for the program. Table 1 shows the Federal Poverty Guidelines for 100% FPG and 185% FPG.

Table 1. Federal Poverty Guidelines*

Family Income		Family Size
100% FPG	185% FPG	
\$14,570	\$26,955	2
\$18,310	\$33,874	3
\$22,050	\$40,793	4
\$25,790	\$47,712	5
\$29,530	\$54,631	6
\$33,270	\$61,550	7
\$37,010	\$68,469	8
Add \$3,740 for each additional family member to determine 100% FPG. Multiply this number by 1.85 to determine 185% of FPG.		
Federal Register, Jan. 2009		

* Updated annually

Proof of Income

The following methods can be used to verify income:

- Tax Form
- W-2 Form
- Pay Stub
- Statement from Employer

Income verification will also include:

- Child Support Payments/Letter
- Deductions including medical, dental, and visual insurance premiums, court-ordered child support paid for children not living in the home, and court-ordered spousal support

Families who are currently enrolled in MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program) or the Minnesota Child Care Assistance Program may have RCC verify the child age, address through Ramsey County in lieu of sending in above documents. In addition, a photo copy from Public Health of a list that includes birth dates and addresses can be used as verification.

Children in foster care

Children in the foster care system are eligible to receive scholarships if the child's foster care family is located within a pilot area.

If the child's biological parent or parents are actively working in partnership with the foster care family to provide for the child's well-being, the application should be completed by the child's biological parent or parents in partnership with the foster care family and county worker.

If the child's biological parent or parents are not working in partnership with the foster care family, the county may apply on behalf of the child.

The income of the child's biological parent or parents should be used to determine income eligibility. If the child's parent is unwilling, unable or unavailable to provide proof of income, the county may be able to share this information with you as part of the welfare system, similar to the way data is shared for purposes of CCAP and MFIP.

Use the number of family members in the child's biological family to determine household size, not the foster care family.

If the parent has abandoned the child and the county has no information about the family's income level, the child's family income should be considered \$0.

Service agreement

Parents accepted into the program will be required to complete an application to receive parent mentoring and scholarships. The application includes expectations that a family must follow in order to participate in the program. Note that families will only be allowed to receive a maximum of two years of scholarship. If families choose to wait an extra year to send their child to kindergarten (i.e., the child would enter kindergarten at age 6), the Scholarship Program will not pay for the additional year of scholarship. The Implementation Team reviewed service agreements from Invest Early in Itasca County and a number of Head Start centers.

By completing and signing the application, families agree to the following:

- Enroll their children in a program that provides child care/early education for at least 12 hours per week.
- Select a child care/early education program that has achieved 3 or 4 stars or a provisional rating through Parent Aware, or provisional approval through the Minnesota Department of Education or Minnesota Department of Human Services.
- Give the child care/early education program a two week notice if they move or decide to transfer my child to another program.
- Meet with their assigned parent mentor on a regular basis.

Population Statistics

Table 2 shows the estimated number of eligible children in Districts 6 & 7 in a given year based on 2000 Census data. Note that according to recent research by Social Compact (www.socialcompact.org), the Census often underestimates the population count in urban areas.

Table 2. Approximate Number of Eligible Children in Planning Districts 6 & 7

% FPG (1999 Income)	Annual Total # of Eligible 3 and 4 Year Old Children
100 %	498
125%	604
175%	870
185%	924

Table 3 includes Ramsey County data from December 2006 showing a total of 467 families in the two ZIP codes encompassing most of Planning Districts 6 & 7 were receiving some form of child care assistance.

Table 3. Ramsey County Child Care Assistance Data by ZIP Code*

Zip Code	Basic Sliding Fee	MFIP	Transition Year
55103	42	100	14
55117	111	145	55

TOTAL	153	245	69
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*not all families include child of 3 or 4 years.

Family Recruitment

Eligible families will be identified through a number of channels. Parent mentors will serve as one of the frontline organizations for recruiting. In addition, families will be identified by hospitals, social service agencies, and WIC offices, and medical clinics. In addition, information on parent mentoring and scholarships will be placed in neighborhood newspapers, community centers, and faith-based organizations.

Head Start and Public schools will also be likely recruiting partners, as will Resources for Child Caring (RCC). The children currently enrolled in each of these programs, as well as the children on any of their waiting lists, could all be screened to determine their eligibility for the Scholarship Program.

The Implementation Team will create relationships with other recruiting partners (hospitals, prenatal care providers, FFN providers, pediatricians, social workers, ECE programs, faith-based organizations, and other community-based organizations in and serving the target areas). These partners will be informed about eligibility requirements, application procedures, and program components of the Scholarship Program. Once identified, a family will complete the necessary paperwork and will be screened for eligibility into the Scholarship Program.

Family Eligibility and Recruitment Administration

The City of Saint Paul will implement a system for ongoing marketing of the program to families, and work with the Implementation Team to create and revise the parent brochure, scholarship application, and program policies and procedures. RCC will process applications, determine eligibility, and manage waiting lists (if needed). Below are considerations for each of these administrative tasks.

Marketing

The City of Saint Paul will oversee a broad ongoing strategy to make information available to parents. The Scholarship Implementation Team initially developed marketing materials to be used in each partnering organization. These materials are translated into languages most appropriate for the community.

Receiving applications and determining eligibility

RCC will send out applications to interested families and receive and review completed applications. If eligible, RCC will notify the family of eligibility via a letter from Mayor Coleman and communicate the next steps for the family. If a family's eligibility is unclear or incomplete RCC will follow-up with the family to collect missing information.

Waiting lists

RCC will create a waiting list if needed. If a waiting list develops, families will be prioritized on a first come first served basis. A slot that opens is filled as long as the child

who left wasn't going to be 5 years old on Sept. 1 of the current year.

Brochure for parents

A parent brochure explains the parent mentoring and scholarship components of the Scholarship Program, program eligibility guidelines, and the application process.

When Family Ends Scholarship Program

- Family moves outside of Ramsey or Hennepin County.
- Continual non-response from family enrolled in parent mentoring. See page 17.
- Continual absence from ECE program. ECE program and parent mentor will work with the family to improve attendance, but at some point, on a case by case basis, RCC will determine the date when a child is no longer part of the Scholarship Program.
- Family chooses to exit the Scholarship Program.

In each of these cases RCC will inform the family that they are no longer eligible or enrolled in the Scholarship Program.

Parent Mentoring

Parent mentors visit the homes of enrolled families beginning prenatally until children enter kindergarten. The primary goal of parent mentoring is that each participating parent is provided with information necessary to select a high quality ECE program and be involved in the program's activities and child's education. Secondary goals of parent mentoring include the following: 1) parents have skills and knowledge necessary to promote school readiness throughout their child's early years (birth to 5); and 2) parents have access to community resources to support their family's education and health needs. In summary, parent mentoring will provide a continuum of contact and service prenatal-age 5 to help keep parents engaged in their children's development and education prior to their children reaching age eligibility for scholarships (age 3) and beyond.

The primary goal requires fewer financial resources to accomplish than the secondary goals; nevertheless, providing parents with information to select a high quality ECE program is central to the Scholarship Program's logic model (see Appendices F and G). That is, without information on selecting a high quality ECE program, parents will likely be less able to select the best setting for their child, and parents will less likely be as involved in their child's educational experience.¹

The secondary goals of building and enhancing parent skills to promote school readiness and access to community resources address two fundamental reasons for establishing the Parent Mentoring and Scholarship Program. First, the early years of life are essential to child brain development prior to the age of 3 when children are eligible for scholarships. The parent mentoring component is designed to improve early health, nutrition, bonding and interactions between child and parents. Because of the connection to parent mentors, families who start parent mentoring prenatally or up to the child's first birthday will hopefully be more likely to have their children enter the scholarship phase at an appropriate developmental level. Second, low-income families face barriers to participating in opportunities for their children. These barriers include unemployment, lack of transportation, chemical dependency, mental health issues, among others. The mentoring component is not expected to address these barriers directly, but to connect the family to resources to alleviate these problems.

Content

Parent mentoring involves home visitors trained to work with parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Parent mentoring employs a strengths-based approach, building on family assets and involving parents in the decision-making and planning process.

Mentoring services will focus on various family needs, including:

- Assistance with choosing a quality ECE program, including family friend and neighbor (FFN) care, for children younger than age 3;
- Encouraging preventative health, including check-ups, immunizations, and early

¹ Families eligible for scholarships can only choose among high quality ECE programs; nevertheless, parent mentors can help families make choices based on the characteristics of the ECE programs.

- screenings
- Education about child development, including health, nutrition and early literacy
- Assisting families in accessing other community resources necessary to meet basic needs (financial, food, etc.)

Dosage

The mentoring relationship includes more frequent visits during the first few months and years of a child's life and less frequent visits as the child grows older, particularly at ages 3 and 4. In addition, an intake screening by Public Health of the family will be used to determine the necessary amount of parent mentoring. After Public Health assigns a family to a home visiting agency, the home visiting agency should meet with the family within four weeks of receiving the assignment. A family with relatively more challenges would receive more frequent visits relative to a family with fewer challenges. Ideally, a parent mentor will develop a relatively long-term relationship with a family, but when parent mentors change, a smooth transition will be planned to minimize disruption. A more detailed discussion of dosage levels for each age cohort is listed below.

Cultural Diversity

Mentoring will be culturally appropriate, language-appropriate, and responsive to the unique needs of families.

Eligible home visiting programs

As part of the MELF's commitment to building capacity and leveraging existing resources rather than creating new programs, the Scholarship Program will use existing home visiting programs to deliver mentoring services to participating families. Home visiting programs submitted a response to an RFP released by Saint Paul-Ramsey County Department of Public Health (Public Health) and will enter into a contract relationship. A number of children eligible for parent mentoring in Districts 6 & 7 currently receive home visits from these organizations. The Scholarship Program will harness the resources these programs provide.

Parent Mentor Training

General

Home visitors are trained to work with parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers on issues including health, nutrition, child development, and education. Home visitors include early childhood professionals and public health nurses. The Scholarship Program does not provide general training on parent mentoring. The Program does, however, provide training on the Scholarship Program components, the Selecting Quality Early Education and Care Module (see below). Home visiting programs that provide parent mentoring for the Scholarship Program should staff accordingly. Participating programs are expected to provide families with experienced, well-trained mentors.

Selecting Quality Early Education and Care Module²

The Scholarship Program does provide training to parent mentors on how to select a high-quality ECE program when their children are eligible for scholarships at ages 3 and high-quality ECE settings prior to age 3. The training includes the following elements:

- Providing parents with information about the importance of quality early care and education.
- Guiding parents on how to select quality child care using Parent Aware ratings. If parents select family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care or an informal ECE program prior to age 3, providing guidance on elements that are important to consider.
- For families with children less than age 1 born between Sept. 2, 2006 and Sept. 1, 2007, informing parents about the scholarships that will be available when their children turn 3.
- Informing about and assisting parents in enrolling in CDBG programs/CCAP.
- For parents with children ages 3 and 4, informing parents about the ECE programs available for their children and helping parents select an ECE program.
- Collecting data from home visits for Scholarship Program evaluation.
- Recruiting families into the Scholarship Program based on contacts developed through home visits. That is, parent mentors serve as on-the-ground recruiters in District 6 & 7 neighborhoods.

Staff from home visiting agencies received training on the Module and include it in their curriculum. Home visiting organizations will be compensated for delivering the Module (see Contracts section below).

Foundational Mentoring

Funds for Foundational Mentoring are available to home visiting agencies that provide services to eligible families not already enrolled in a home visiting agency's program. When such a child is enrolled in the Scholarship Program, the home visiting agency serving the family will receive Foundational Mentoring funds, as listed below. The level of service (number of visits, length of visits, etc.) the home visiting agency provides for families receiving Foundational Mentoring in the Scholarship Program can differ from the level of service the home visiting agency provides as part of its program.

Administration

Public Health will administer the parent mentoring component, including the following tasks:

Family recruitment and start time

Family recruitment is outlined in the previous section of the manual. Public Health will play a strong role in recruiting families with pregnant mothers and children younger than

² Training module developed by RCC and Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network

age 1. About half of eligible families in Districts 6 & 7 would have likely come into contact with Public Health's home visiting program without the presence of the Scholarship Program. Parent mentors will play an on-the-ground role in recruiting families into the program for both age cohorts.

An intensive recruitment process will start in the fall of each year (beginning in 2007). Some families will already be receiving home visiting. Families with children less than age 1 born between Sept. 2, 2006, and Sept. 1, 2007, will be eligible for scholarships when their children turn 3 in 2010. Therefore recruiting this particular group is a priority because the children will receive the entire continuum of services – parent mentoring and one year of a scholarship. Additional families could begin receiving home visiting during the fall. Children born after Sept. 1, 2007, will not receive scholarships unless the Scholarship Program is extended.

Assigning parent mentors to families

Once a family is enrolled in the Scholarship Program program, a parent mentor will be assigned to the family. Public Health developed a system to determine which home visiting organization is the best match for the families entering the Scholarship Program with children prenatal to age 1 and at age 3. For all families, an intake visit will occur to assess the best match for a parent mentor, and determine the initial level of the intensity of parent mentoring required. After Public Health assigns a family to a home visiting agency, the home visiting agency should meet with the family within four weeks of receiving the assignment. For families entering the Scholarship Program with children age 3, parent mentoring will be less frequent and focus on maintaining stability and engagement with their child's ECE program.

Contracts with and payments to home visiting organizations

Public Health will administer contracts with area home visiting agencies. Home visiting agencies will sign contracts to deliver the following services:

- Provide the Selecting Quality Early Education and Care Module for families currently receiving their home visiting services.
- Provide Foundational Mentoring to additional families; also deliver the Module.

The payment amounts listed below will be provided on a per family basis. A home visiting agency has discretion regarding how they spread payments out over the families they provide services. That is, some families may require more resources than the given payment amount while other families may require less.

Payment Amounts

Selecting Quality Early Education and Care Module

\$400 per family annually, or \$100 quarterly

Frequency of visits: Either including content in the home visiting agency's current schedule of foundational parent mentoring visits (see below) and/or adding visits to cover the content. On average, it should take the equivalent of three to four home visits to

deliver the Module.

Prenatal-Age 1

- Provide parents with information about the importance of quality care. This information will likely be more pertinent when the child is closer to age 1.
- Guide parents on how to select quality child care using Parent Aware ratings. If parents select FFN care prior to scholarship age, provide guidance on elements that are important to consider.
- For families with children less than age 1 born between Sept. 2, 2006 and Sept. 1, 2007, inform parents the child will be eligible for a scholarship at age 3.
- Inform about and assist parents in enrolling in MFIP/CCAP. (For all age groups)
- Collect data from home visits for Scholarship Program evaluation. (For all age groups)

Age 1-Age 2

- Reinforce the importance of quality care.
- Guide parents on how to select quality child care using Parent Aware ratings. If parents select FFN care prior to scholarship age, provide guidance on elements that are important to consider.

Age 2-Age 3

- Same information as above and begin helping parents enroll in ECE program:
 - Provide parents a list of ECE programs.
 - Possibly make site visits with parents.
 - Parents select program for their child.

Age 3-Age 4

- Help families when they move to ensure they stay connected with current ECE program or move to another program.
- Encourage parent involvement in ECE program.

Age 4-Age 5

- Help families when they move to ensure they stay connected with current ECE program or move to another program.
- Encourage parent involvement in ECE program.
- Around the time of kindergarten enrollment, check with family to ensure they are involved in the process.

Foundational Mentoring

Home visiting agencies identify children who are funded through their regular program and children who are not and therefore are eligible for Foundational Mentoring funds. Home visiting agencies will receive the following payments on a per child basis.

Table 4. Budget for Foundational Parent Mentoring by Child Age

Less than one	\$1,900
1-year-olds	\$1,400
2-year-olds	\$900
3-year-olds	\$400
4-year-olds	\$400

For each age group, visits should include the information that the home visiting agencies already provide to families. The topics listed below serve as guidelines.

Prenatal-Age 1: \$1,900 per family annually, or \$475 quarterly

Frequency of visits: Every other week to once per month

Topics:

- Maternal and child health and nutrition
- Child/parent bonding and interactions
- Information on community resources (For all age groups)

Age 1-Age 2: \$1,400 per family annually, or \$350 quarterly

Frequency of visits: Every other week to once per month

Topics:

- Maternal and child health and nutrition
- Child/parent bonding and interactions

Age 2-Age 3: \$900 per family annually, or \$225 quarterly

Frequency of visits: Once per month to every 6 or 7 weeks

Topics:

- Maternal and child health and nutrition
- Child/parent bonding and interactions

Age 3-Age 4: \$400 per family annually, or \$100 quarterly

Frequency of visits: For some families check in every 3 to 5 months, while others more frequently, especially when child attendance slips or if the family moves.

- Coach and encourage parent involvement in child's education at home, and perhaps reinforce activities child participated in at the ECE program.

Age 4-Age 5: \$400 per family annually, or \$100 quarterly

Frequency of visits: For some families check in every 3 to 5 months, while others more frequently during occasions when child attendance slips or if the family moves.

- Coach and encourage parent involvement in child’s education at home, and perhaps reinforce activities child participated in at the ECE program.

Payment schedule

Payments will be made on a quarterly basis beginning with an Advance payment to enable home visiting agencies to staff up. In order to calculate quarterly payments, the home visiting agency provides Public Health with the number of months X number of families received the Module (families that are enrolled in the home visiting agency’s program) and the number of months X number of families received Foundational Mentoring and the Module. Below is an example of a potential payment schedule.

February 2007	Advance payment
April 1, 2008	Payment for 1 st quarter depending on how many families are served
July 1, 2008	Payment for 2 nd quarter
October 1, 2008	Payment for 3 rd quarter
January 1, 2009	Payment for 4 th quarter

Evaluation

In working with **SRI**, the Implementation Team and Public Health may balance allowing flexibility in home visiting models and prescriptive elements to provide consistency for evaluation. The evaluation will look at child outcomes at age 3 to assess the effect of the parent mentoring program prior to children entering the scholarship component. Additional outcomes to measure include school readiness at kindergarten and parent involvement in selecting and participating in parent programs at an ECE program.

Budget

The enclosed spreadsheet allows for changing assumptions on the number of families currently served by home visiting agencies. Using conservative assumptions, the 4-year total would cost about \$3.1 million, not including administration costs incurred by Public Health.

Minimum number of visits for payment

Home visiting programs are reimbursed based on the number of families they are serving, not on a per visit basis. Therefore, home visiting programs allocate their resources over the balance of the families they serve based on family needs. That is, some families may require more visits than others. Home visiting programs are expected to generally follow the visit frequency guidelines in the manual. The lower limits presented below denote the base number of visits required to receive payment in the quarter. If visits are less than the limit, the home visiting program can't count the family for quarterly reimbursement. Also note that after Public Health assigns a family to a home visiting agency, the home visiting agency should meet with the family within four weeks of receiving the assignment. Home visiting agencies should contact Public Health with questions regarding required number of visits.

Prenatal-Age 1

Lower limit: Program meets with family 3 times per quarter.

Age 1-Age 2

Lower limit: Program meets with family 2 times per quarter.

Age 2-Age 3

Lower limit: Program attempts to meet with family at least 1 time per quarter. Succeeds in meeting with family 1 time in 6 month period.

Age 3-Age 5

Lower limit: Program meets with family 2 times per year.

Cessation of parent mentoring by parents

Parents originally sign a service agreement to participate in parent mentoring services. If a family decides to refuse parent mentoring services prior to their child turning 3 years of age, the child won't be guaranteed a scholarship at age 3. The family can apply for a scholarship when their child turns 3, but will receive one based on availability. However, if a family decides to refuse parent mentoring services after the child has enrolled in an ECE program at age 3, the refusal won't affect the child's scholarship.

Families who enter during pregnancy through age 1, but drop out prior to their child's first birthday, can be replaced with a family in the same cohort who's child is less than age 1 with permission by the MELF. Families that drop out of mentoring with a child older than age 1 are not replaced.

A parent mentoring agency should end service to a family if there has been no response after two months since the time of referral to the parent mentoring agency *or* three months after a parent mentoring agency's last contact with a family, *and* three documented attempts to contact/see client using options of phone, letter and drop in visit, with one of the three attempts being a drop in visit. Mentoring agencies must notify Public Health as soon as this service ends via e-mail to bill.jungwirth@co.ramsey.mn.us and cc. to sue.mitchell@co.ramsey.mn.us. Public Health will inform RCC through an e-mail and make a notation on the shared list when a family's parent mentoring case has been closed.

If the family has not enrolled in an ECE program, RCC then sends the family a letter explaining that their scholarship has been closed and that they would need to re-apply for the scholarship program. If the family has enrolled in an ECE program, scholarship funds continue to be paid to the ECE program.

Total number of children

See Appendices I and J for the annual number of children enrolled each year. 1,100 families will receive 1 to almost 4 years of parent mentoring.

Final consideration

Home visiting services often differ based on the unique training, funding, mission, and/or capacity of an organization. Because of this service variety, agencies may not have consistent contact or coordination with other home visiting organizations. A secondary goal of this pilot is to improve coordination and learning among home visiting agencies while increasing access to parent mentoring.

Scholarships

Scholarships are available to families living below 185% FPG in Saint Paul Planning Districts 6 & 7 when their children are 3 and 4 years old (see Family Eligibility and Recruitment for details). Parents may choose between a half-day and full-day ECE program for their child. Only ECE programs that meet eligibility standards can enroll children with scholarships. This section presents policies regarding ECE program eligibility, the scholarship dosage and amount, and administrative tasks.

ECE programs eligible for scholarships: To access a scholarship, the ECE program must have a Parent Aware rating of 3 or 4 or receive a provisional rating by either the Minnesota Department of Human Services or the Minnesota Department of Education. Programs must also sign a program agreement from with Resources for Child Caring (see Appendix L).

Eligible programs may include:

- Private or non-profit child care centers
- Licensed family child care programs
- Private or non-profit preschools
- Public school-based programs
- Head Start programs

Location

ECD program location is restricted to the Parent Aware pilot area: the City of Saint Paul, neighborhoods in North Minneapolis and Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties. However, accredited programs in the 7-county metropolitan area may apply to be a part of Parent Aware. Any of the above ECE programs may apply to participate in the Scholarship Program.

Maintaining approval status

ECE programs must maintain **approval status** via Parent Aware.

Scholarship Dosage and Amount

Research doesn't definitively set the specific amount of time per day and days per year that achieve school readiness outcomes for low-income children. Some therapeutic preschools offer intensive center-based experiences, but only a few hours per day and not all five days per week. Studies in Oklahoma, Michigan and New Jersey show that high-quality half-day programs 2 ½ to 3 hours per day, 4 or 5 days per week, demonstrate large effects on school readiness. In addition, high-quality child care programs that engage children 8 or more hours per day 5 days per week have shown positive school readiness outcomes.

Research does point to the elements of a program that achieve school readiness outcomes, reflected in the Parent Aware rating too. Furthermore, high-quality ECE programs often cost more than lower quality ECE programs. For example, in order to attract and retain well-trained teachers, high-quality ECE programs may pay higher salaries.

Goals for scholarships:

- Remove financial barriers to families choosing high-quality child care and early education opportunities.
- Provide resources for ECE programs to provide high-quality services that produce improved school readiness outcomes for low-income children.
- Provide incentives to the ECE market to spur new entrants and expansion among current ECE programs.

Dosage and scholarship amounts

Half-day program

Eligible half-day ECE programs include private and publicly funded child care programs, Head Start and Saint Paul Public School programs that provide services 12 hours to 17 hours per week. Payment rates are tiered at two levels of service, 12 to 14 hours per week and 15 to 17 hours per week. When an ECE program applies to participate in the pilot, it declares which level(s) of service it provides.

Half-day ECE programs will be paid up to \$140 per week for a 12 to 14 hour program and \$160 per week for a 15 to 17 hour program. All programs will be paid on a 4-week reimbursement basis.

Example reimbursement set-up:

Hours per Week	Weekly Rate	Annual	4-week Reimbursement
12 to 14	\$140	\$7,280	\$560
15 to 17	\$160	\$8,320	\$640

Full-day program

Eligible full-day programs include center-based and family-based child care programs, as well as half-day programs listed above that provide wrap-around care. The minimum hours of service is 35, which mirrors the minimum number of hours a program needs to provide services in order to qualify for a CCAP weekly reimbursement rate.

Center-based programs will be paid up to \$250 per week and family-based programs will be paid up to \$180 per week. The difference in the two rates matches the difference in Ramsey County's child care subsidy reimbursement rates between a center-based and family-based program. As described in the Manual, programs will be paid on a 4-week reimbursement basis.

Example reimbursement set-up:

35 Hours	Weekly rate	Annual	4-week Reimbursement
Center-based	\$250	\$13,000	\$1,000
Family-based	\$180	\$9,360	\$720

ECE programs that offer 18 to 34 Hours

ECE programs that offer more than a half-day (12 to 17 hours per week) but less than a full-day (35 or more hours per week) will be reimbursed on the following scales for center-based and family-based programs. Fractional weekly hours are rounded down to the nearest hour (for example, 29.5 hours = 29 hours on the payment scale).

Center-based Programs, 18 to 34 Hours per Week			
Hours	Weekly rate	Annual	4-week Reimbursement
18	\$165	\$8,580	\$660
19	\$170	\$8,840	\$680
20	\$175	\$9,100	\$700
21	\$180	\$9,360	\$720
22	\$185	\$9,620	\$740
23	\$190	\$9,880	\$760
24	\$195	\$10,140	\$780
25	\$200	\$10,400	\$800
26	\$205	\$10,660	\$820
27	\$210	\$10,920	\$840
28	\$215	\$11,180	\$860
29	\$220	\$11,440	\$880
30	\$225	\$11,700	\$900
31	\$230	\$11,960	\$920
32	\$235	\$12,220	\$940
33	\$240	\$12,480	\$960
34	\$245	\$12,740	\$980

Family-based Programs, 18 to 34 Hours per Week			
Hours	Weekly rate	Annual	4-week Reimbursement
18 to 23	\$165	\$8,580	\$660
24 to 29	\$170	\$8,840	\$680
30 to 34	\$175	\$9,100	\$700

Scholarship Payment Schedule

This subsection presents the payment schedule first for private early childhood care and education programs and then separately for Head Start programs and public school pre-kindergarten programs.

Private early childhood care and education programs

Scholarship funds flow directly to ECE programs and include three parts: Advance, Tuition, and Quality Grant.

Advance: An upfront payment when child enrolls equal to 2 weeks of the program's tuition. The Advance can be paid up to 2 weeks in advance of the start of a child's participation in the ECE program. The Advance serves as a deposit to cover the last 2 weeks of a child's tuition at the ECE program.³

Tuition: Every 4 weeks the Scholarship Program pays the ECE program the same tuition the ECE program charges private pay parents minus CCAP payments made on behalf of the family to the ECE program. For a child on CCAP, the Tuition payment covers the gap between the CCAP payments and full tuition (including family co-payment and absent day charges).⁴

Quality Grant: Every 12 weeks (and for the fourth payment period in the year 16 weeks) the Scholarship Program pays the ECE program a Quality Grant to enhance and maintain quality. Quality Grants are made based on the aggregate number of scholarship children enrolled at an ECE program. The formula used to calculate the Quality Grant is as follows.

$$\begin{aligned}
 & (4\text{-week reimbursement rate}) * (\# \text{ of } 4\text{-week blocks}^5 \text{ of scholarship children served}) \\
 & - \text{Tuition payments and CCAP payments received} \\
 & = \text{Quality Grant}
 \end{aligned}$$

³ If the child is eligible for CCAP payments, the final two weeks can't be billed for CCAP reimbursement since it is paid for with the Advance.

⁴ For administrative simplicity, the Pilot would make payments every 4 weeks. If a child started during the previous 4 week period, the Tuition payment would be reduced accordingly.

⁵ If the program has weeks that do not divide evenly into four week blocks, then the fraction should be added on to the number of four week blocks (i.e., five weeks served = 1.25, 10 weeks served = 2.5, etc.).

Head Start and public school-based programs

Payments to Head Start centers and public school-based programs will follow the same schedule and rates as payments to private ECE programs. The Advance and Tuition payments to Head Start centers and public school-based programs will equal the maximum amount available minus CCAP payments since neither organization in general charges parents for services (although some School Readiness programs might charge a parent fee). This also means a Quality Grant will not be paid to these programs since the Advance and the 4-week reimbursement Tuition payment will equal the total scholarship amount.

Reporting requirements

Because Head Start centers and public school-based programs receive public funds to pay for operating costs and they are not backed out of the scholarship amount as they are for CCAP payments, both Head Start and public school-based programs are required to submit a Program Plan and a Year-End Report. (Private ECE programs are not required to submit these reports for the Scholarship Program.) The Program Plan is designed to show how these programs will use scholarship funds received that are above private pay tuition based on the number of children enrolled. The Program Plan deadline can be set after ECE programs begin providing services to children with scholarships.

1. Program Plan

Head Start and Public School-Based programs are required to complete a Program Plan based on different levels of potential enrollment. The three categories of acceptable expenditure beyond private pay tuition include:

- *Expand the number of children to whom services are provided.*
- *Increase duration of services provided.* Here the ECE program could expand the amount of time children are served.
- *Increase current quality levels.* Quality improvements include staff training, curricula, infrastructure

Principles:

- Scholarship funds can benefit children who don't have scholarships; that is, the funds don't have to be targeted only to children with scholarships.
- Scholarship funds must be spent by Nov. 1, 2011, but can pay for improvements that will benefit children in subsequent years.
- Scholarship funds must first be used to cover any parent fees or charges.

Review:

- A Review Team that includes members the Implementation Team and MELF reviews the Program Plans and offers feedback to ECE programs..

2. Year-end Report

At the end of each program year, ECE programs are required to submit a 2 to 3 page report on how scholarship funds were used in the following three areas:

- *Expand the number of children to whom services are provided.* How many children were provided services due to the scholarship funds compared with the number of children provided services if the ECE program didn't receive scholarship funds)?
- *Increase duration of services provided.* How many children received a longer duration of services due to the scholarship funds and for how much longer?
- *Increase current quality levels.* How much funds were used to support quality levels and which quality supports did the funds finance?

This report will be developed in cooperation with SRI to reduce duplication in data collection.

Review

- The Review Team reviews the Final Report and offers feedback to ECE programs.

ECE Collaboration Programs

ECE programs can work together to provide a full-day option for families. For example, a half-day preschool program may collaborate with a child care program to offer full-day services to a family. Both of the programs must have a 3- or 4-star or provisional rating on Parent Aware. Each collaboration program must offer a minimum of 12 hours/week to the child. The two programs must complete the Collaboration ECE Program Application and submit it to RCC in order to establish a payment schedule. The two programs must indicate on the Collaboration ECE Program Application how the total payments are to be split between the two programs and the fee schedule both ECE programs would charge private pay families for the same services provided.

Attendance records and payments are submitted to RCC by each program separately. RCC writes two checks, one for each of the programs based on how the funds are split between the two programs (as indicated on the Collaboration ECE Program Application). The ECE program's private pay fee schedule is used to account for CCAP payments and determine Quality Grant amounts.

Here are the steps two programs should take to offer a collaboration program:

1. Select days and hours the collaboration program is offered.
2. Determine whether the collaboration program will provide transportation between the two programs. Scholarship funds can be used for transportation.
3. Determine how funds will be split between the two programs. For example, if the collaboration program offers 40 hours per week total, the two programs must determine how to divide the \$1,000 4-week payment. Two programs could divide the total amount between the programs based on the proportional number of hours each program provides, the private pay fees one or both of the programs charge, and/or the cost of services the programs agree to pay for (such as transportation).

The programs indicate on the ECE Program Collaboration Application how to divide payments between the two programs.

RCC provides information to the City of St. Paul about collaboration ECE programs. The City of St. Paul publishes a complete list of available collaboration ECE programs on its Web site. In addition, RCC includes collaboration ECE programs

Parent choice limited to one program

Parents may send their child(ren) to two programs that are not listed as a collaboration, but may use their scholarship funds to pay for only one of those programs. However, as mentioned above, two ECE programs can work together to provide full-day services as a collaboration. Parents and parent mentors can encourage ECE programs to collaborate, but ECE programs must ultimately take the necessary steps to create a collaboration.

Child Enrollment Start Dates and Child Move

For children currently enrolled in an ECE program

ECE programs can enroll a child by one of these methods:

1. Provide to RCC a faxed copy of the parent's award letter plus the hours per week the child is attending and if the child is receiving CCAP; or fax to RCC the parent's and child's names, the hours per week the child is attending and indicate if the child is receiving CCAP,
2. E-mail RCC the parent's and child's names, the hours per week the child is attending, and if the child is receiving CCAP, or
3. Call RCC; however a fax or e-mail with the above information must be sent to RCC within two weeks. Payment will not be released until RCC receives documentation.

The payment start date will be the date of the fax, e-mail or phone call, provided the ECE program has signed a Program Agreement Form. If an ECE program has not signed a Program Agreement Form, the start date will be delayed until the ECE program has submitted a Program Agreement Form. The Advance will be sent within 2 weeks of the start date. Note that scholarship payments do not apply to fees charged or costs of service incurred prior to this date.

For children with a future start date

ECE programs can enroll a child by one of these methods:

1. Provide to RCC a faxed copy of the parent's award letter plus the hours per week the child will attend, the child's projected start date, and if the child is expected to receive CCAP; or fax to RCC the parent's and child's names, the hours per week the child will attend, projected start date, and indicate if the child is expected to receive CCAP,
2. E-mail RCC the parent's and child's names, hours per week the child will attend, projected start date, and if the child is expected to receive CCAP, or
3. Call RCC; however a fax or e-mail with the above information must be sent to RCC within two weeks. Payment will not be released until RCC receives documentation.

The payment start date will be the date of the fax, e-mail, phone call, or child's actual

start date, whichever is later provided the ECE program has signed a Program Agreement Form. If an ECE program has not signed a Program Agreement Form, the start date will be delayed until the ECE program has submitted a Program Agreement Form. The Advance will be sent within 2 weeks of the start date indicated by the ECE program. Scholarship Tuition payments will begin after the child starts attending the ECE program, as indicated on the claim form ECE programs submit to RCC every four weeks.

ECE programs that charge higher fees than scholarship payments

ECE programs that charge higher fees than scholarship payments can charge parents for the difference. However, ECE programs must inform parents about the cost before they enroll in the ECE program.

Child move from an ECE program

ECE programs receive a 2 weeks notice before scholarship funding is terminated due to a **child move**. The 2 weeks of service is covered by the Advance. A child move is established on the following conditions:

- Family provides written notice to ECE program or RCC.
- Parent mentor informs ECE program or RCC. (RCC confirms with family)
- A social service agency informs ECE program or RCC. (RCC confirms with family)
- Consistent absence from ECE program. ECE program and parent mentor will work with the family to improve attendance, but at some point, on a case by case basis, RCC will determine the date when a child's scholarship has ended and the child is no longer enrolled at the ECE program.

Payments to ECE Programs that drop out of Parent Aware

ECE programs drop out of the Parent Aware system by choosing not be rerated. If a program chooses not to be rerated, any scholarship payments to that program stop when their rated status has concluded. The Advance payment covers the following two weeks of service to children. After the two-week period, parents have 60 days to find a new program.

Payments to ECE Programs that drop below 3-stars

If an ECE program's rating drops below 3-stars, payments for scholarship children attending the program can continue if the program decides to pursue a rerating. However, new scholarship children will not be allowed to enroll in the program during the rerating process.

If such an ECE program receives a rating below 3-stars after the rerating process, payments to the program stop when the new rating is assigned. The Advance payment covers the following two weeks of service to children. After the two-week period, parents have 60 days to find a new program.

Note that the 60 day period is the time allowed for parents to search for and enroll their child in a new ECE program. If a child is not enrolled in a new program within 60 days,

the family loses the scholarship.

Recruitment and Communication with ECE Programs

The Implementation Team has proposed a number of strategies to recruit ECE programs to participate in the Scholarship Program and for ongoing communication. Marketing and communication will work in conjunction with the Parent Aware pilot team, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network, and RCC. Some strategies include:

- News and forms on websites of the MELF, City of Saint Paul, Resources for Child Caring, and the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network
- Joint Parent Aware and Scholarship kick-off event for ECE programs in July 2007
- Brochure for ECE programs
- Site visits to eligible ECE programs (see Family Recruitment, above)
- Outreach to community leaders
- Informational community events for ECE programs about Parent Aware

Administration of Scholarships

This section presents a number of administrative tasks regarding the scholarships that will largely be conducted by RCC.

Implement recruitment and communication strategies with ECE programs

These strategies will be coordinated by the City of Saint Paul, Parent Aware, and RCC.

Administer contracts and payments with ECE programs

ECE programs sign a contract to participate in the Scholarship Program. (see Appendix L.) ECE programs agree to the following:

- Declare whether program is half-day (12 to 14 hours or 15 to 17 hours) or full-day (at least 35 hours per week)
- Maintain and provide Scholarship Program daily attendance records every 4 weeks
- Maintain and provide Scholarship Program CCAP reimbursement records every 4 weeks
- Maintain approval status through the Parent Aware
- Provide specified child information to parent mentor as needed
- The MELF reserves the right to review financial records relevant to the Scholarship payments

RCC agrees to the following: (See Appendix L)

- Make Advance, Tuition and Quality Grant payments as outlined above
- Provide at least two weeks notice before a child leaves the program and payment ends

RCC developed a payment mechanism for calculating payments to ECE programs and delivering funds. The payment calculation requires an application that converts child

enrollment data and program tuition rates into Advance, Tuition, and Quality Grant payments. Payments may be set up for electronic direct deposit transfer. The Scholarship Program is also responsible for determining a child move.

Definition of Terms

approval status: reached when ECE program achieves a Parent Aware rating of 3 or 4; or provisional rating from the Minnesota Department of Education or Minnesota Department of Human Services.

child move: the day Scholarship Program determines a child will be or is no longer enrolled at an ECE program.

City of Saint Paul – Mayor Coleman’s office is responsible for providing overall coordination of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program.

ECE program: includes private or non-profit child care centers, licensed family child care programs, private or non-profit preschools, Saint Paul school-based programs and Head Start programs.

national accreditation: An ECE program accredited through an accrediting body included in rate differential statute.

Parent Aware: Provides ratings of early child care and education programs and also provides resources to programs to improve quality. The 3-year pilot of the Parent Aware Rating Tool will include licensed child care providers/early educators in five locations: Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties, the City of Saint Paul, neighborhoods of North Minneapolis and the Wayzata School District. Accredited programs in the 7-county metro area may apply to be included in Parent Aware. <http://www.parentawareratings.org>

Resources for Child Caring (RCC): Organization responsible for determining family eligibility, child moves from ECE programs and administering payments to ECE programs.

Saint Paul-Ramsey County Department of Public Health: Organization responsible for administering the parent mentoring, including contracting with existing parent mentoring organizations, assessing families and referring families to these organizations for parent mentoring services.

Scholarship Program: refers to the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Pilot project or administration.

SRI: Organization evaluating the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program.



For additional information, please contact:
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Appendix B

Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program
PARENT MENTOR DATA COLLECTION FORM

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Date of visit (mm/dd/yyyy):

INSTRUCTIONS TO PARENT MENTORS: COMPLETE ONE FORM FOR EACH SCHEDULED HOME VISIT WITH FAMILIES PARTICIPATING IN THE SAINT PAUL EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM. Please complete using a BLACK pen. Mark boxes clearly with an X.

A. General Information

Parent's last name: Parent's first name: Home visitor's last name: Home visitor's first name:

Name of Program: Saint Paul-Ramsey County Department of Public Health Neighborhood House ECFE Lifetrack Resources Minnesota Literacy Council

1) Child's last name: Child's first name: Date of birth (mm/dd/yyyy): / / Age in months:

2) Child's last name: Child's first name: Date of birth (mm/dd/yyyy): / / Age in months:

Appointment result (Select one only.):

Visit completed in home/center [GO TO SECTION B] Parent not home at scheduled visit time

Visit completed by phone [GO TO SECTION B] Parent moved

Cancellation prior to scheduled visit Other (Specify.):

STOP HERE IF VISIT WAS NOT COMPLETED. COMPLETE THE REST IF VISIT WAS COMPLETED.

B. Length of Visit (minutes): Individuals participating in visit:

Curriculum used (if applicable):

Location: Home Center Other (Specify.):

Materials visitor gave to parent (Select all that apply.):

Written handouts Books Toys Food/clothes, utilities/telephone, emergency funds, housing or other basic services

Transportation vouchers or bus tokens Other (Specify.):

C. Activities and Referrals Made This Visit (Select all that apply and indicate activity [Act], referral [Ref], or both.)

<p>Act Ref</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Choosing child care</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Benefits of high-quality child care</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Child health and nutrition issues</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Home visitor modeling good parenting skills</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Problem behaviors and management</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Language/literacy practices/reading (child)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Child's developmental progress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Medical/Dental (e.g., immunizations, well-baby or well-child checkups, breast feeding assistance)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental screening/assessments (child)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> School district preschool screening</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Early childhood intervention services (including early childhood special education)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Preschool/Head Start</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health screening/assessment/treatment (parent)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Substance abuse screening/assessment/treatment (parent)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> County employment services counselor</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Social security resources (parent or child)</p>	<p>Act Ref</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting education</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting/caregiver support</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Family planning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Adult/continuing education/job training</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Adult literacy programs/other education (e.g. high school diploma, GED)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Safety education and injury/violence prevention</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> SMRLS (southern MN regional legal services for low-income)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Voter registration</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> House Calls case management (homeless prevention)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> MA/PMAP services (interpreters, medical case management, medical transportation)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Low cost/free tax preparation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Crisis intervention (e.g., domestic violence, child protection)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> MFIP Financial Worker (enrollment in/resolution of problems with DWP, MFIP, food programs/stamps)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify.): <input type="text"/></p>
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TURN THE PAGE OVER

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Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program
PARENT MENTOR DATA COLLECTION FORM

D. Parent Engagement in the Visit

During this visit, in your opinion, how would an outside observer describe the relationship between the parent and the home visitor? (Select only one.)

- A cooperative, trusting partnership; parent shared concerns about child and self; reciprocal interaction
- A working, functional partnership mainly focused on and limited to the curriculum
- An uncertain partnership; issues of trust and cooperation in implementing the program
- Cannot tell

Based on your discussions and interactions with the parent on this visit, how well would you say she/he is understanding information about the Early Childhood Scholarship Program? (Select only one.)

- Very well understood
- Somewhat understood
- Not well understood
- Not at all understood

Mark the number that best describes your perception of the parent's and your relationship during this visit. (Select one for each row.)

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor			
How would you rate the overall level of participation of the parent in the home visit?	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1

How would you rate the overall level of rapport between you and the parent during the home visit?	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
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How would you rate the parent's level of understanding about the characteristics and benefits of high-quality early care and education programs?	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
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	All or most of the time	Some	A little	None of the time			
How often does the parent really listen to what you say during the lesson?	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1

How often does the parent ask you questions about the content of the visit?	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
---	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

How often does the parent ask you for advice that is not related to the information you are giving in the visit?	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
--	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

How often do you think that the parent does parent-child activities that you suggest (e.g, talk with child, read with child, sing nursery rhymes, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
--	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

How often do you think that the parent uses discipline and guidance techniques like those suggested by you (i.e., distraction, time-outs, natural consequences)?	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
--	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

How often do you think that the parent has tried something new to do with her/his child because of the Parent Mentoring?	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
--	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

How often during the visit did the parent seem "down" or depressed to you?	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
--	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

How often during the visit did the parent seem uninterested or distracted to you?	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
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Appendix C Interview Protocol (2009)

A. Core questions (with follow-up probes) for all interviewees

Tell interviewees: "We are asking everyone almost all of the same questions. If I ask you a question for which you have no information, please say so, and we will continue on with the next question."

1. What is your day-to-day connection to/role in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program ?
What specific activities have you been involved in since June of 2008?
 - a. How involved? Would you say that you . . . ?
 - (4) Work on it most days
 - (3) Some involvement . . . about once or twice a week
 - (2) About monthly
 - (1) Updates a few times a year or less

2. Since starting up in January 2008, how do you think the implementation of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program has been going?
 - a. Overall, would you say implementation has gone? Has it gone:
 - (4) Extremely well
 - (3) Very well
 - (2) Somewhat well
 - (1) Not very well

 - b. Why do you say that about how things have gone with implementation?

 - c. How do you think the recruitment and outreach to families has gone? Tell me why you say that.
 - i. Has anything surprised you about how recruitment and outreach to families has gone so far?
 - ii. What has been successful?
 - iii. What has been a challenge?

 - d. How do you think the outreach to and participation of center-based programs has gone? Tell me why you say that.
 - i. Has anything surprised you about how outreach and participation of center-based programs has gone so far?
 - ii. What has been successful?
 - iii. What has been a challenge?

 - e. How do you think the outreach to and participation of family-based programs has gone? Tell me why you say that.
 - i. Has anything surprised you about how outreach and participation of family-based programs has gone so far?
 - ii. What has been successful?
 - iii. What has been a challenge?

 - f. How do you think the evaluation has gone? Tell me why you say that.
 - i. Has anything surprised you about how the evaluation has gone so far?
 - ii. What has been successful?
 - iii. What has been a challenge?

3. How do you think the parent mentoring part of the scholarship model has gone? Tell me why you say that.
 - i. Has anything surprised you about how the implementation of the parent mentoring has gone so far?
 - ii. What has been successful?

- iii. What has been a challenge?
 - iv. Do you think that the parent mentoring is/was having its intended effects on parents - giving them information about the benefits and quality of early education programs that then influences their choices? Tell me why you say that.
4. How do you think the scholarship model has influenced the supply and quality of ECE programs in districts 6 and 7? Tell me why you say that.
- i. Has anything surprised you about how the effects of the model on the supply and quality of ECE programs in districts 6 and 7 have gone so far?
 - ii. What has been successful?
 - iii. What has been a challenge?
5. Since start up in January 2008, from your perspective, what do you see as the accomplishments of the Program so far? We are interested in both general and specific accomplishments.
- a. With the agencies and programs implementing the scholarship program?
 - b. With the early childhood programs in districts 6 and 7?
 - c. With the families and children?
6. Since last June of 2008, what aspects of the scholarship program implementation do you think have been most successful? Why do you say that? What important factors have supported achieving these 'successes'?
7. Since last June of 2008, what aspects of the scholarship program implementation do you think have been least successful, or have been significant challenges? Why do you say that? What important factors have affected those challenges?
8. Now that the program has been up and running since January 2008, what do you think would be the 'ideal' outcome(s) of the scholarship program at the end of the 4 years, by December 2011? Stated differently, what will 'success' look like? How will you know if it is successful?
- a. How might it change "business as usual" for ECE programs?
 - b. How might children, families, programs, and communities look differently because of the program?
9. What would you say have been the 'lessons learned' about the scholarship model and its implementation so far?
- a. What features of the initial implementation would you say worked very well and you would recommend retaining in any replication of the scholarship program?
 - b. What features of the initial implementation would you say did not work well, and what changes would you recommend in any replication of the scholarship program?
10. Thinking about how implementation has gone since January 2008, what do you think is a realistic timeline for full implementation of the scholarship model?
- a. How long do you think it takes to "make a consumer market" respond? Tell me why you say that.
 - b. What percentage of parents in a community do you think need to be demanding high-quality for the consumer market to work? Tell me why you say that.
11. If the scholarship model were to be replicated in other communities, what are 3 things that you would tell the developers for successful implementation?

B. Specific questions for legislators

1. How is the scholarship program influencing your views about early childhood as a priority on Minnesota's legislative agenda and priorities?

2. How do you think that the scholarship program might influence policy or legislation about early childhood in the future?

3. As a legislator, have you been influenced in your views about early childhood by what is happening in other states? If so, tell me about that.

C. Specific questions for ECE programs

1. Why did you decide to participate in the scholarship program? How many children with scholarships attend your program?

OR Why did you decide not to participate in the scholarship program?

If relevant, why did you decide to participate in the Allowances project? How many children with allowances attend your program?

2. Why did you decide to participate in Parent Aware? Has participating positively or negatively affected your program? Tell me why you say that.

OR Why did you decide not to participate in Parent Aware? What prevents you from participating in Parent Aware?

3. What, if any, aspects of your program's participation in the scholarship program have:

- a. changed the way you operate your program?
- b. changed the number and/or kinds of children and families you serve?
- c. caused difficulties or been challenges?
- d. been helpful and beneficial?

If relevant, what, if any, aspects of your program's participation in the allowances project have:

- e. changed the way you operate your program?
- f. changed the number and/or kinds of children and families you serve?
- g. caused difficulties or been challenges?
- h. been helpful and beneficial?

4. How is your program using the scholarship funds? What other funding streams are you blending together with scholarship funds?

If relevant, how is your program using the allowance funds? What other funding streams are you blending together with allowance funds?

5. Have there been any negative effects of the scholarship program on your program? Tell me about them.

If relevant, have there been any negative effects of the allowances project on your program? Tell me about them.

6. Has the scholarship program changed the way you facilitate families' use of CCAP? If so, how?

If relevant, has the Allowances project changed the way you facilitate families' use of CCAP? If so, how?

7. If relevant, how do you see the Scholarship Program affecting the Allowances Project? And vice versa, how do you see the Allowances Project affecting the Scholarship Program?

Is there anything we have not discussed that you think would be important to mention for the evaluation of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program or the PreK Allowances Evaluation?

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us! The information provided is a valuable component of the evaluation.

Appendix D

Focus Group Protocol

(Mostly English-speaking parents whose children were attending an ECE program using their scholarship funds)

Questions

1. Let's start off by introducing ourselves. Please tell us a little bit about you and your family including you child (or children) who are participating in the scholarship program [name/age].

2. How did you hear about the Scholarship Program? [PROBES, IF NECESSARY] Who (agency/person) referred you to the Scholarship Program? Who helped you fill out the application?

3. Why did you choose to be a part of the Scholarship Program?

4. Parent Mentoring: How many people have a parent mentor/home visitor?
 - 4a. If yes, tell us about what your parent mentor/home visitor does (did) when she/he comes to your house. What kinds of things does she/he talk to you about? What does s/he do?
 - a. Is your parent mentor someone that worked with your family for awhile or is this person new to your family?
 - b. What activities and/or services offered by the Parent Mentor are most helpful to you?
 - c. What information offered by the Parent Mentor is most helpful to you?
 - d. Are there topics, information, activities, or services that you still need?
 - e. Is there anything else that you would like your visitor/mentor to help you with?
 - 4b. For those of you that do not have a parent mentor, why don't you have a parent mentor?

5. Tell me how you chose the program to use the scholarship funds.
 - 5a. How long did it take you to find a program to use your scholarship? Was it easy or did it take a long time? Tell me why it took a long time.
 - 5b. How long has your child attended this program? What do you like about this program?
 - 5c. If you did not have this scholarship for your child, where would your child have been cared for this past year?
 - 5d. Are there some things about the program that you think could be improved (made better)? What? [We are talking about this specific program - Wilder or New Horizons]?

- 6a. Have you heard of Parent Aware?
 - IF YES: Is Parent Aware helpful to you? How? Give me some examples.
 - IF NO: It is a new system in Minnesota that rates the quality of child care and preschool programs and provides information to parents about quality. Have you heard of it? Is it helpful to you? How? Give me some examples.

7. Would you change anything about the Scholarship Program?