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

Year 2 Evaluation Report
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLES

FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Parent Aware is Minnesota's pilot Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The pilot was launched in July, 2007 and will continue through June, 2011. The primary purpose of Parent Aware is to support parents by providing information about the quality of early care and education programs. Parent Aware also uses ratings to recognize the quality of early care and education programs and promotes quality improvement using a variety of resources. Together, these strategies aimed at parents and early care and education programs target an ultimate goal of improving children's school readiness. The purpose of this report is to describe implementation of Parent Aware including the successes and challenges encountered in recruitment and rating of programs, the provision of quality improvement services, and outreach to families. The report describes the perspectives of key stakeholders on the implementation of Parent Aware, the possibility of statewide expansion, and the role of Parent Aware in building components of an early childhood system. It also describes the programs enrolled in Parent Aware and the perceptions of parents with children enrolled in Parent Aware-rated programs

This report is the second to be produced from the Evaluation of Parent Aware being conducted by Child Trends and funded by the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF). It covers 18 months of the pilot from July, 2008 through December, 2009, and is part of the *process* evaluation of the program.[1] A final report from the evaluation will be available in October, 2010 which will provide an analysis of the measurement tools and rating process used in Parent Aware, changes in quality among Parent Aware-rated programs, parents' perceptions of quality and knowledge of Parent Aware, and the school readiness of children participating in Parent Aware-rated programs.

This report includes six sections. In the first section, we describe the current programmatic and market context for the Parent Aware pilot including legislative and funding changes and changes in the administration of Parent Aware. We also examine the supply of programs and the tuition rates charged by programs in the pilot areas. This section was generated from a review of program documents and data (both internal and publicly available), participation in implementation meetings, and interviews with the Parent Aware Implementation Team[2]. In the second section, we synthesize data from multiple sources to describe the number and percent of eligible programs that have enrolled in Parent Aware, their patterns of enrollment, and the star ratings received by those programs. In the third section, we describe the implementation of Parent Aware using program data and information gathered from interviews with the Implementation Team and key Parent Aware stakeholders. In the fourth section we analyze the characteristics of programs participating in Parent Aware, including the number of children served by rated programs and an analysis of early care and education program scores on the Parent Aware Rating Tool. We also describe the quality improvement efforts they have undertaken, both with the support of Parent Aware and on their own. In the fifth section, we

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[1] This timeframe includes the second year of the pilot and half of the third year of the pilot.
[2] The Parent Aware Implementation Team is comprised of staff from agencies and organizations directly responsible for the day-to-day operation of the program. The Implementation Team includes staff from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Minnesota Department of Education, the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network, Resources for Child Caring, Child Care Resource and Referral Inc., and the Assessment and Training Center at the University of Minnesota.

provide information from a subset of parents in Parent Aware-rated programs to understand their perceptions of quality in early care and education, how they select early care and education settings and what they know about Parent Aware. We conclude by looking across the information summarized in the report and providing a description of the next steps that will be taken in the evaluation. The Appendix provides additional information about Parent Aware, including an overview of the rating tool, preliminary analyses of observational measures, and details about the data sources used in the report.

Parent Aware At a Glance…

What is Parent Aware?
Parent Aware is a voluntary quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for early care and education programs including licensed family child care programs, child care centers, Head Start, and school-based pre-K programs. It is being piloted in four Minnesota communities/areas including the city of Minneapolis, the city of Saint Paul, the Wayzata school district, and Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties.

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

How are ratings assigned to early care and education programs?
Programs provide evidence of their quality and earn points in four areas:
- Family Partnerships
- Teaching Materials and Strategies
- Tracking Learning
- Teacher Training and Education

Programs submit documentation and supporting materials for each area. They receive an on-site observation and are scored on nationally-recognized scales that measure their environment, practices and interactions with children. They are assigned one to four stars depending upon the number of points earned.

Accredited child care centers, accredited family child care program, School Readiness Programs and Head Start programs are awarded a 4-star rating automatically if they demonstrate compliance with licensing, current accreditation status and/or compliance with program requirements

How do parents learn about the ratings?
Ratings are posted on the Parent Aware website (www.parentawareratings.org). Parents can search for programs by pilot area. They can also search in languages other than English including Hmong, Spanish, and Somali.

Section 1. PROGRAMMATIC AND MARKET CONTEXT FOR THE PARENT AWARE PILOT

The Parent Aware pilot began in July, 2007. The Year 1 Evaluation Report provided details about the Parent Aware model and how Parent Aware is unique nationally in the goals it has set for the quality rating system. These details are included in the Appendix and can also be found in the Year 1 Report with the early implementation findings (see Tout, Starr & Cleveland, 2008).

In the past 18 months, a number of significant developments have occurred that have implications for the Parent Aware pilot and the potential for Parent Aware to be implemented statewide. Some of these are a result of legislation or activities at the legislative level and others relate to administration and policy decisions at the level of Parent Aware implementation. In this section we outline these important developments and changes. Many of these signal a growing interest in considering statewide expansion of Parent Aware and an interest in using a QRIS framework as a way to leverage quality improvements in the early care and education system as well as corresponding improvements in children's school readiness. Following the description of these changes, we provide an overview of the market context for Parent Aware and how it has changed in the past year.

Legislation Related to Parent Aware

The 2009 legislature directed the Minnesota Department of Human Services to use federal funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in a variety of ways to support early care and education quality. Additional legislation was also passed that has implications for Parent Aware.

Extension of the Parent Aware pilot. The legislature directed that ARRA Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) funding be used to continue the Parent Aware pilot in Saint Paul, Minneapolis, the Wayzata school district, and Blue Earth and Nicollet counties in state fiscal year 2010-2011. Thus, funding for the pilot is extended for a full year past the original end date for the Parent Aware pilot to June 30. 2011. The funds will support DHS as well as the Parent Aware implementation partners. The total funding is $184,000 for SFY2010 and $1.2 million for SFY2011.

Supports to prepare for a voluntary, statewide quality rating and improvement system. The ARRA CCDF funding will also be used to support a set of training, coaching, consultation and grant initiatives aimed at preparing the early childhood workforce for statewide expansion of a quality rating and improvement system. Specifically, funds will be used to develop and deliver infant and toddler resources that are aligned with a quality rating and improvement system; build the capacity of the Minnesota Professional Development System to support a quality rating and improvement system (including the development of the Minnesota Child Care Credential which provides a core curriculum for early care and education practitioners); build the capacity of the child care resource and referral (CCR&R) system to provide consultation on the environment rating scales; and develop and deliver training, consultation and grants to providers who are preparing to participate in a quality rating and improvement system. The total funding is $633,000 per year for FY2010 and FY2011.

Continuation of the School Readiness Connections (SRC) pilot and requirement for SRC providers to enroll in Parent Aware. School Readiness Connections is a state-sponsored pilot initiative in which early care and education providers designated as high quality are eligible to receive a higher rate of reimbursement when serving eligible children ages 0-5 receiving Child Care Assistance (CCAP; see Snow & Spiker, 2008)   The SRC pilot is extended through the end of June, 2011. Beginning in SFY2010, current SRC providers must enroll and be rated in Parent Aware. Those whose ratings fall below a 3-star will submit a plan to demonstrate how they will improve their rating. New SRC providers must have attained a 3- or 4-star Parent Aware rating at the time their School Readiness Service Agreement is signed.

Creation of a framework for a quality rating and improvement system. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) are partnering to develop a framework for a quality rating and improvement system. The legislation (Minnesota Statutes, chapter 124D) directs the state to use the evaluation results from the Parent Aware evaluation to make recommendations for a statewide quality rating and improvement system. The framework will include recommendations for a common set of child outcomes and program standards, a plan to link future funding to the framework, and a plan to realign existing state and federal administrative resources to implement the voluntary quality rating and improvement system. The framework is due to the legislature in March, 2011.

Examination and analysis of a quality rating and improvement system model by the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) and subcommittees. The Early Childhood Advisory Council included a preliminary strategic plan in their Annual Report released in June, 2009 (Minnesota Early Childhood Advisory Council, 2009). Part V.C. of the plan directs the ECAC to make recommendations for improvements in program standards and specifically references the QRIS framework being developed by DHS and MDE. A variety of other suggested items for ECAC committee work are related to components of a QRIS including the creation of program standards, quality improvement options and systems for monitoring.

Commissioning of report on scaling options. While not directed by legislation, an additional development on the legislative front was the commissioning of a report by the Kellogg Foundation for the Early Childhood Caucus of the Minnesota Legislature. The Kellogg Foundation funding allowed the Caucus to work with two national experts on QRIS – Anne Mitchell and Louise Stoney – to prepare options for financing a statewide quality rating and improvement system. They offer three options for consideration, including one based on Parent Aware and two based on models from other states. Elements of the various options may be combined in order to develop cost estimates for a range of proposals for a statewide QRIS. Results of the final report were presented to the Minnesota Legislature in February, 2010 (Mitchell & Stoney, 2009).

Changes in Parent Aware Administration, Implementation and Related Initiatives

In addition to legislative activity, the Parent Aware pilot was shaped by significant changes and additions in administration and implementation over the past 18 months.

Expansion of the pilot area to the City of Minneapolis. When the Parent Aware pilot was launched, the pilot area in Minneapolis included only North Minneapolis. With funding from the Greater Twin Cities United Way and Allina Hospitals and Clinics, the Parent Aware pilot was expanded to the entire City of Minneapolis in April, 2009. The goal of the expansion was to enroll an additional 40 programs from Minneapolis in Parent Aware.

Support for providers "Getting Ready" for Parent Aware. Related to the funding of the Minneapolis expansion of Parent Aware, the Greater Twin Cities United Way also provided support for providers who are preparing for Parent Aware. This includes providers who receive United Way funding as well as other providers who are interested in enrolling or going through the Parent Aware re-rating process. Supports are provided through options for training on Creative Curriculum and Environment Rating Scale Consultation.

Change in certification and rating process for School Readiness programs. A change was made in the process for certifying and rating School Readiness programs in Parent Aware. Initially, School Readiness programs submitted documentation to the Minnesota Department of Education and could receive a 3-star provisional rating if requirements were met. As of July 1, 2009, School Readiness programs can submit documentation showing compliance with indicators (as required by MDE) and can receive a 4-star rating. For items/indicators that are included in the statutorily required School Readiness Plan (Minnesota Statute 124.D.15), the school district must submit assurance that district sites are in compliance with the School Readiness Plan. For items that are not required in statute, the program must submit evidence to MDE that the indicator is being met.

Relocation of Provider Resource Specialists. In an effort to facilitate greater connections between Parent Aware and the local child care resource and referral (CCR&R) sites, the Provider Resource Specialists who work directly with Parent Aware enrollees were relocated from the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network (the Network) to Resources for Child Caring. (Note that the Provider Resource Specialist in Blue Earth and Nicollet counties has always been located at the local CCR&R.) This move was expected as it is commonplace for the Network to start the process with new projects and then relocate them out into the local CCR&R system. The responsibilities of the Provider Resource Specialists did not change, but the co-location with CCR&R staff is intended to enhance their capacity to work with providers.

Changes in the provision of quality improvement supports. Similar to the changes made in the location of the Provider Resource Specialists, the provision of quality improvement supports was also moved from the Network to the local CCR&R sites. This change is intended to support the integration of quality improvement supports into the existing services offered by the CCR&R sites.

Conclusion of the State-funded Pre-Kindergarten Allowances. The State-funded Pre-Kindergarten Allowances provided up to $4,000 for low-income families in the MELF pilot areas to use in programs with a 3- or 4-star rating or a provisional rating (equivalent to a rating of 3 stars; see Appendix for details). This program ended on June 30, 2009. A final evaluation report on the allowances and their effectiveness in providing access for children from low-income families to high quality programs is available (Gaylor et al., 2009) on the MELF website (www.melf.us).

Market Context

In addition to developments in the legislature and administrative changes in Parent Aware implementation, it is also helpful to examine the larger market context in which Parent Aware is being implemented. In this section, we provide an update on three important market indicators that were described in the Year 1 Evaluation Report: the number of programs in Parent Aware pilot areas (described by type of care), accreditation status of programs, and weekly rates.[3]

Number of Programs in Parent Aware Pilot Areas. The numbers and types of early care and education programs in the Parent Aware pilot areas (and the southern Minnesota comparison area which is made up of Sibley, Le Sueur, Waseca, Faribault, Martin, Watonwan, and Brown counties) across seven time points between May, 2008 and December, 2009 are shown in Tables 1 and 2 and Figures 1 and 2.

The majority of the early care and education programs in the pilot areas are family child care programs (82% overall as of December, 2009). In contrast, family child care programs account for 45% of available slots. As of December, 2009, there were 35,555 slots in the pilot areas: 16,173 in licensed family child care programs and 19,382 in center-based programs (which includes licensed child care centers, Head Start/Early Head Start programs, and preschool programs).

As shown in Table 1 and Figure 1, the numbers of center-based programs stayed virtually the same in the pilot areas in the metropolitan area (which includes Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and the Wayzata School District) across the seven time points studied. In contrast, the numbers of center-based programs decreased by 20% in southern Minnesota (from 95 programs in May, 2008 to 76 programs in December, 2009).

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[3] Note that throughout this report, the use of the word *program* refers to a single early care and education program site. It does not refer to a group of sites or a grantee with multiple sites.

Table 1. Numbers of center-based programs in Parent Aware pilot areas from May, 2008 to December, 2009

	May '08	Sep '08	Jan '09	Apr '09	Jul '09	Sep '09	Dec '09
Saint Paul	93	96	97	96	93	93	93
Minneapolis*	19	19	18	119	119	118	118
Wayzata	24	24	24	25	25	24	25
Blue Earth/ Nicollet	40	36	34	33	33	33	34
S. MN Comparison	55	45	44	44	43	41	42

Source: Minnesota NACCRRAware, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network.
*Note: The Minneapolis pilot area consisted of portions of North Minneapolis prior to April, 2009, at which time it expanded to include all of Minneapolis. The significant change in the number of programs between January and April, 2009 reflects the change in the size of the Minneapolis pilot area.

Figure 1. Numbers of center-based programs in Parent Aware pilot areas from May, 2008 to December, 2009
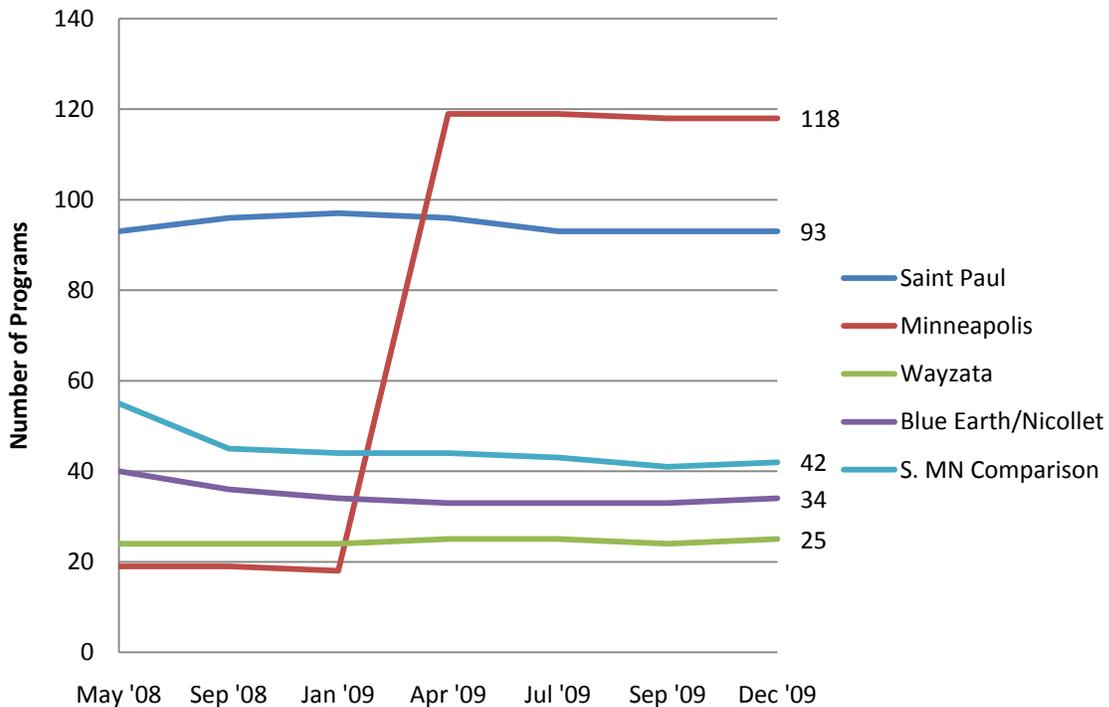
Source: Minnesota NACCRRAware, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network.
Note: The Minneapolis pilot area expansion occurred in April, 2009.

Family child care programs decreased overall in the metropolitan area and increased in southern Minnesota by about 10% (see Table 2 and Figure 2). The increases in family child care

programs in southern Minnesota have fluctuated across the time periods tracked, with a sizeable increase at the end of 2009.

Table 2. Numbers of family child care programs in Parent Aware pilot areas from May, 2008 to December, 2009

	May '08	Sep '08	Jan '09	Apr '09	Jul '09	Sep '09	Dec '09
Saint Paul	363	360	355	351	355	348	352
Minneapolis*	104	106	99	305	297	296	293
Wayzata	23	25	23	23	22	21	21
Blue Earth/Nicollet	245	252	265	263	261	260	267
S. MN Comparison	427	439	476	462	455	453	472

Source: Minnesota NAACCRRAware, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network.
*Note: The Minneapolis pilot area expansion occurred in April, 2009.

Figure 2. Numbers of family child care programs in Parent Aware pilot areas from May, 2008 to December, 2009
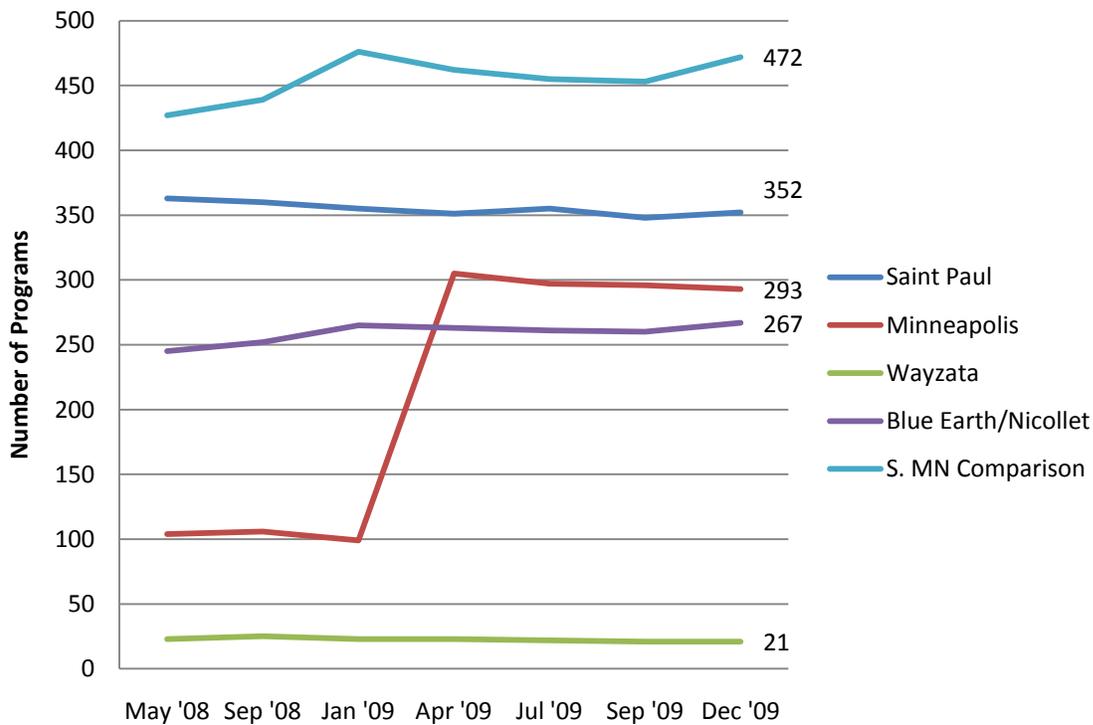
Source: Minnesota NACCRRAware, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network.
Note: The Minneapolis pilot area expansion occurred in April, 2009.

Accreditation. Accreditation by a national accrediting body serves as a marker of quality because programs demonstrate that they meet the set of standards set by the accrediting body. Accreditation is voluntary. The accrediting bodies recognized in Parent Aware include the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation, the National Association for Family Child Care, the Council on

Accreditation, the American Montessori Society, and the Association of Montessori International-USA.

The percentage of accredited center-based programs (which includes accredited child care centers and preschools as well as Head Start, and Early Head Start programs accredited by the National Head Start Association) in the pilot areas stayed quite consistent from May, 2008 to December, 2009 (see Table 3 and Figure 3). Some fluctuation occurred in the Wayzata pilot area, with the number of accredited programs reaching its peak in April, 2009 with 11 programs, and then dropping to 7 accredited programs in September, 2009.

Not surprisingly, the percentage of accredited center-based programs was higher in the expanded Minneapolis pilot area than in the original North Minneapolis pilot area. In the Blue Earth/Nicollet pilot area, there was one accredited program from May, 2008 until April, 2009.

Table 3. Percent of center-based programs (includes child care centers, Head Start, Early Head Start, and preschools) in Parent Aware pilot areas that are accredited

	May '08	Sep '08	Jan '09	Apr '09	Jul '09	Sep '09	Dec '09
Saint Paul	9%	11%	10%	10%	10%	11%	12%
Minneapolis*	11%	11%	11%	28%	26%	26%	31%
Wayzata	38%	38%	42%	44%	32%	29%	32%
Blue Earth/ Nicollet	3%	3%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%
S. MN Comparison	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Minnesota NAACCRRAware, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network
*Note: The Minneapolis pilot area expansion occurred in April, 2009

Figure 3. Percent of center-based programs (includes child care centers, Head Start, Early Head Start, and preschools) in Parent Aware pilot areas that are accredited
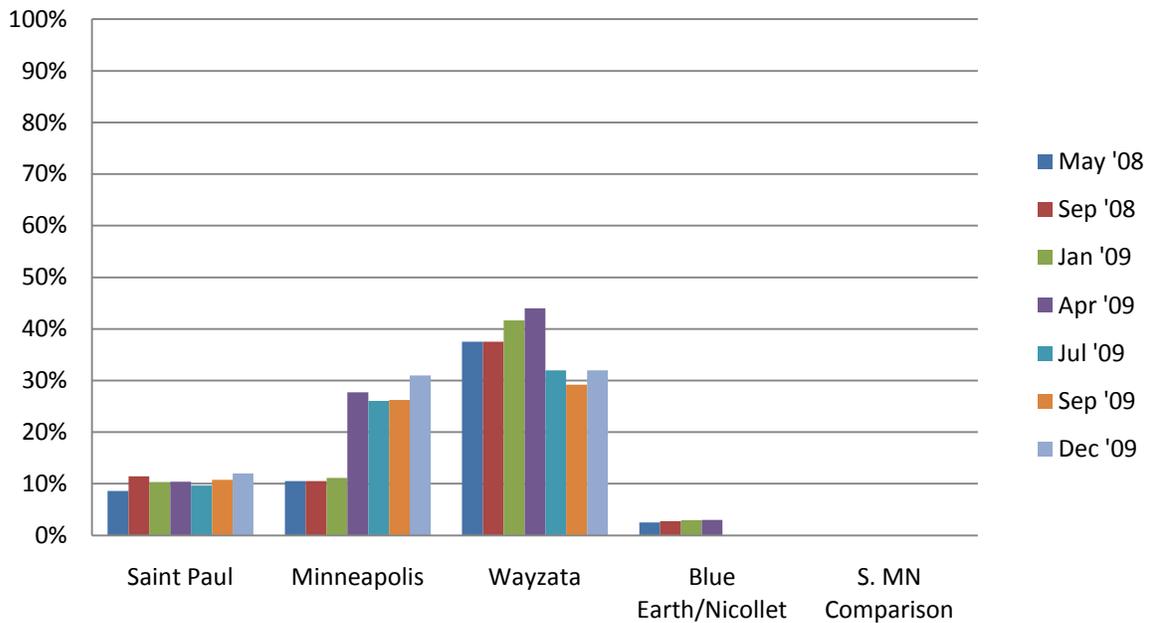
Source: Minnesota NAACCRRAware, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network
Note: The Minneapolis pilot area expansion occurred in April, 2009

There continued to be very few accredited family child care programs in the pilot areas (see Table 4). In May, 2008 there was one accredited family child care program, and it was in the Blue Earth/Nicollet county pilot area. The expanded Minneapolis pilot area had one accredited family child care program at each time point (April, 2009 – December, 2009). By December, 2009 there was one accredited family child care program in each of the pilot areas, except Wayzata, and one in the Southern Minnesota comparison area.

Table 4. Number of accredited family child care programs in Parent Aware pilot areas

	May '08	Sep '08	Jan '09	Apr '09	Jul '09	Sep '09	Dec '09
Saint Paul	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Minneapolis*	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Wayzata	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blue Earth/ Nicollet	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
S. MN Comparison	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

Source: Minnesota NAACCRRAware, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network
Note: The Minneapolis pilot area expansion occurred in April, 2009

Two of the family child care programs and three of the center-based programs in the pilot areas have achieved accreditation through the Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP) since

17

February, 2009. The AFP was developed as a means to help programs achieve a 4-star rating in Parent Aware by becoming accredited, rather than by pursuing a full rating in Parent Aware. AFP programs are required to become rated by Parent Aware in order to receive support from the AFP project.

Weekly Rates. The weekly tuition rates charged to parents is an important indicator to track over time, given its role in determining access to programs. Mean weekly tuition rates by area, program type, and child age as of April, 2009 are presented in Tables 5 and 6. Rates are updated only once a year, so April, 2009, data reflect the most recent information. For child care centers and preschools, weekly rates in the urban areas (which include Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and Wayzata) ranged from just over $200 for preschoolers in Saint Paul to over $300 for infants in Wayzata. The weekly rates documented in the time period assessed here are very similar to the rates reported in the time period assessed in the Parent Aware Year 1 Evaluation Report: They were almost identical in Saint Paul but higher in Wayzata (for infants, rates rose from $308 to $323, for preschoolers from $216 to $220). However, with the small sample sizes reporting weekly rates, it is difficult to draw conclusions regarding changes in rates from Year 1 to Year 2 of the Parent Aware pilot.

Weekly rates for child care centers and preschools (see Table 5) continued to be lower in the southern Minnesota regions included in the Evaluation, ranging from $130 for preschoolers in the comparison area to $165 for infants in Blue Earth/Nicollet Counties. Rates rose approximately $4 on average in Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties and the southern Minnesota comparison areas. Again, sample sizes were too small to draw conclusions about changes in rates from Year 1 to Year 2.

Table 5. Mean weekly rates for child care centers and preschools by pilot area and child age group (April, 2009)

| Child Age Group | Pilot Area | | | | |
	Saint Paul	Minneapolis	Wayzata	Blue Earth/ Nicollet	S. MN Comparison
Infant	$278.01 (n=28)	$304.68 (n=40)	$323.2 (n=5)	$165.18 (m=11)	$145.5 (n=4)
Toddler	$232.45 (n=38)	$249.06 (n=51)	$255.83 (n=6)	$151.72 (n=10)	$135.38 (n=4)
Preschool	$201.05 (n=43)	$217.25 (n=58)	$220.14 (n=7)	$141.28 (n=11)	$130.38 (n=4)

Source: Minnesota NACCRRAware, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network.

For family child care programs (see Table 6), weekly rates in the urban areas ranged from $138 for preschoolers in Saint Paul to $201 for infants in Wayzata. These rates went up a dollar or two from Year 1. In southern Minnesota, family child care rates ranged from $114 for preschoolers in Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties to $127 for infants in the southern Minnesota comparison area. Rates in the rural areas went up anywhere from $2-$8 per week from a year earlier.

18

Table 6. Mean weekly rates for family child care programs by pilot area and child age group (April, 2009)

| Child Age Group | Pilot Area | | | | |
	Saint Paul	Minneapolis	Wayzata	Blue Earth/ Nicollet	S. MN Comparison
Infant	$154.64 (n=212)	$173.23 (n=171)	$201.67 (n=9)	$121.98 (n=101)	$127.17 (n=78)
Toddler	$143.32 (n=217)	$166.44 (n=174)	$193.33 (n=9)	$119.26 (n=102)	$123.14 (n=78)
Preschool	$138.71 (n=218)	$156.96 (n=174)	$182.22 (n=9)	$114.67 (n=102)	$120.34 (n=78)

Source: Minnesota NACCRRAware, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network.

Summary of Programmatic and Market Context

Many factors, both within and outside of Parent Aware can potentially shape its implementation and possible continuation and expansion. This section has provided an overview of some of these factors, such as legislative actions that affect funding and attention paid to initiatives like a quality rating and improvement system, changes in the administration of Parent Aware, and market context variables such as the types and numbers of early care and education programs in the pilot areas that are potential participants in Parent Aware.

Several legislative actions and program changes have affected Parent Aware in the past 18 months. Some of these changes have directly altered the implementation of Parent Aware and others involved planning for the future of a quality rating and improvement system in Minnesota. In terms of implementation and administration, the Parent Aware pilot has been extended a year to June 30, 2011 and the pilot area has been expanded to include the entire city of Minneapolis. Other changes include the automatic rating of School Readiness programs as 4-stars (rather than 3-stars as they were initially), the relocation of the Provider Resources Specialists and quality improvement supports to the local CCR&Rs, the end of the Pre-Kindergarten allowances, and the beginning of supports through a "Getting Ready" initiative funded by the Greater Twin Cities United Way.

Legislative actions have begun paving the way for possible statewide expansion of Parent Aware. These actions include funding for resources aligned with a quality rating and improvement system, such as building the capacity of the Professional Development system and the CCR&R system to deliver trainings and consultation. Legislative actions have also called for a framework for making recommendations for a quality rating and improvement system. In addition, a report was commissioned on scaling options for a quality rating and improvement system.

Market context variables including the numbers of early care and education programs in the pilot areas, the percentage of accredited programs, and the weekly rates charged by programs, did not show much change across the past 18 months. There was some fluctuation, for

example, the numbers of center-based programs decreased in the rural areas while family child care programs increased, but no conclusions can be drawn about the relation between these market context variables and Parent Aware at this time.

Section 2. PARENT AWARE ENROLLMENT, PARTICIPATION AND RATINGS

Three of the most important components to track that can shed light on the implementation and growth of Parent Aware are the number of programs that have enrolled, the percent of eligible programs participating, and the number of programs with current ratings in Parent Aware. This section provides an overview of enrollment trends from the start of Parent Aware through the August, 2009 cohort, numbers of participating programs relative to all programs in the pilot areas that are eligible to participate, and a breakdown of numbers of currently rated programs (as of December, 2009) by area and program type. An overview of programs that have received their second Parent Aware rating (re-ratings) is provided at the end of this section.

Enrollment

Parent Aware enrolls programs in cohorts four times a year. Figures 4 and 5 show the pattern of enrollment over the first 9 cohorts, starting with the initial cohort in August, 2007 through the ninth cohort which entered Parent Aware in August, 2009. As of the August, 2009 cohort, 354 programs had enrolled in Parent Aware (see Figure 4). Of these, 162 programs were accredited, 43 were center-based programs that went through (or will go through) the full rating process, 66 were family child care programs (also enrolling to complete full rating), 23 were Head Start programs, 51 were School Readiness programs, and 9 were programs applying for a provisional rating (see Figure 5).

Figure 4. Total cumulative Parent Aware enrollment by cohort
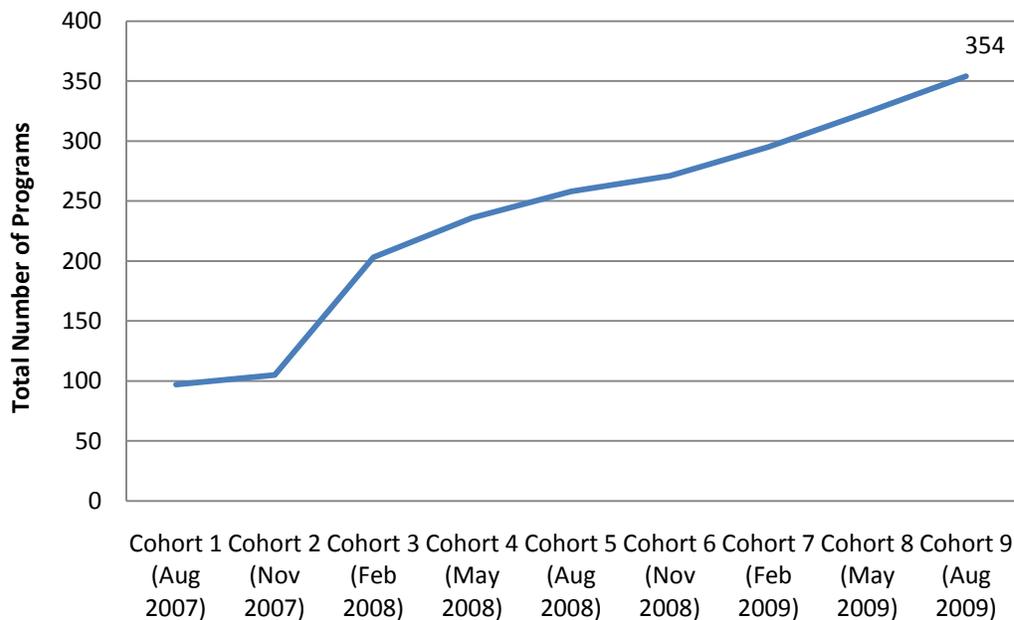
Figure 5. Cumulative Parent Aware enrollment by cohort and program type
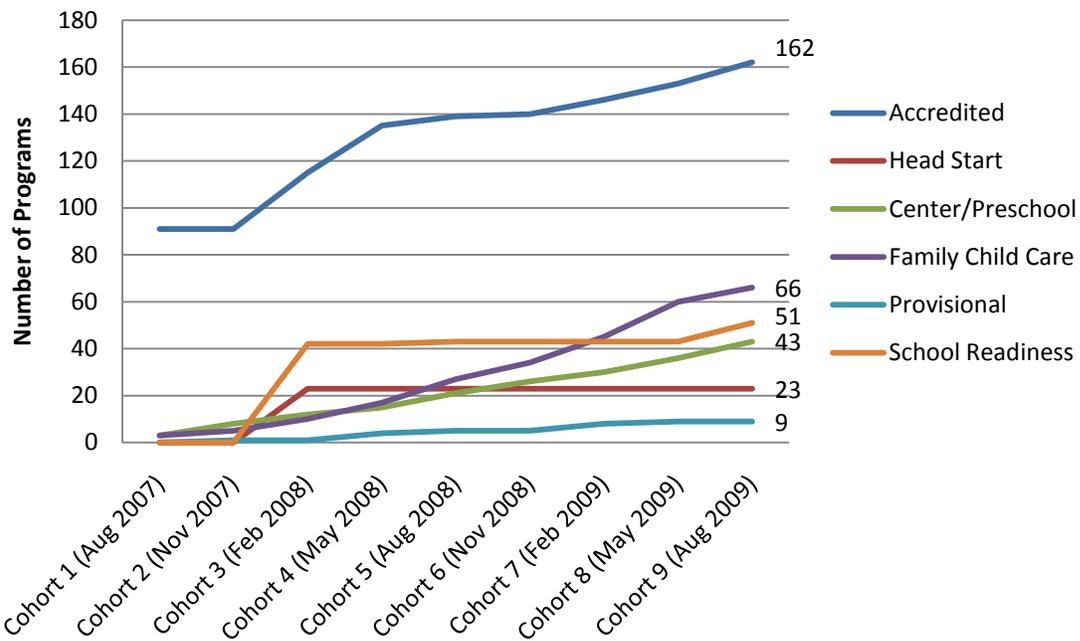
Source: Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network.

With the exception of Head Start programs, all types of programs have continued to enroll in Parent Aware across the most recent three cohorts (February, May, and August, 2009). Programs seeking full ratings have shown an interesting trend across the last three cohorts (see Figure 6): Whereas only 17 center-based programs enrolled seeking a full rating in Parent Aware, family child care programs seeking a full rating nearly doubled in number (from 34 programs as of November, 2008 to 66 as of August of 2009).

Figure 6. Enrollment of programs seeking a full rating in Parent Aware between November, 2008 and August, 2009
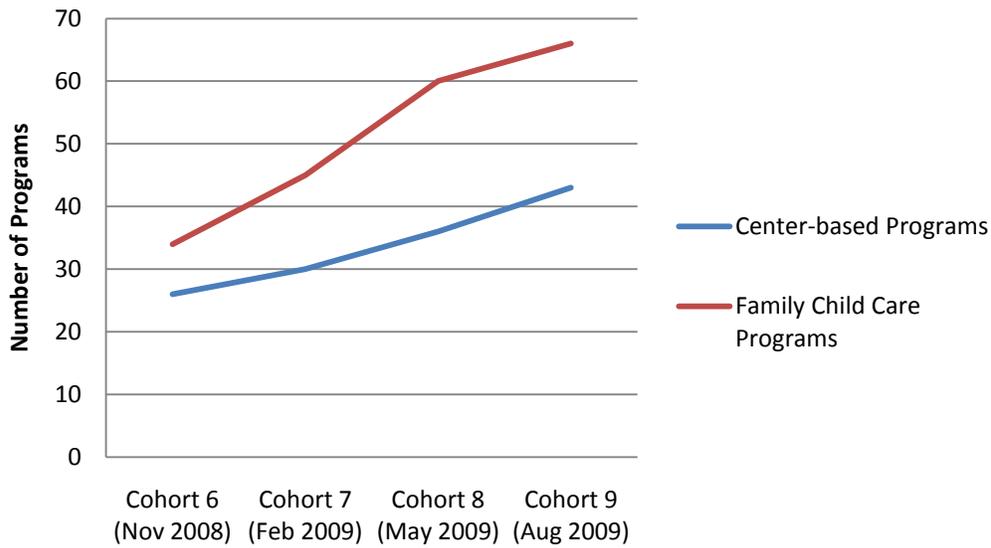
Participation in Parent Aware

A breakdown of Parent Aware enrollment in terms of percent of eligible programs in each pilot area is contained in Figure 7. Percentages of eligible programs (excluding School Readiness programs)[4] enrolled in Parent Aware range from 4% in Blue Earth/Nicollet counties to 16% in St. Paul.

Figure 7. Percent of eligible programs enrolled in Parent Aware by pilot area as of December, 2009
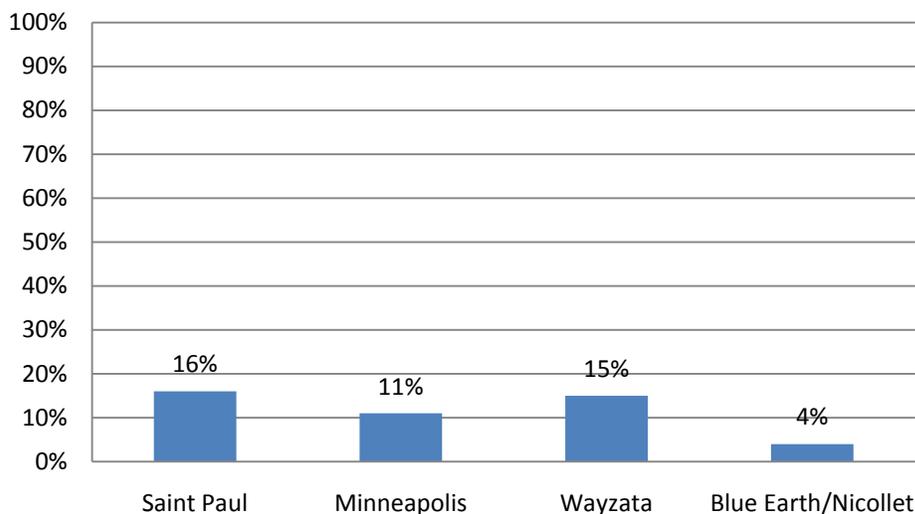
Source: Minnesota NACCRRAware, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network.

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[4] Note that nearly 100% of eligible School Readiness programs in the pilot areas enrolled in Parent Aware.

Overall, 11% of all eligible programs (excluding School Readiness programs) in the pilot areas (Saint Paul, Minneapolis, Wayzata, and Blue Earth/Nicollet Counties) are enrolled in Parent Aware as of December, 2009. In addition, 82% of eligible accredited programs in the 7-county metropolitan area are enrolled in Parent Aware.

Ratings of Programs in Parent Aware

A breakdown of rated programs by pilot area and program type is contained in Table 7. According to the Minnesota Department of Human Services, 318 programs had a current Parent Aware rating as of December, 2009.

Table 7. Parent Aware ratings by pilot area and program type as of December, 2009

Pilot Area	Program Type	4 Star Automatic	4 Stars	Provisional	3 Stars	2 Stars	1 Star	Total
7 County Metro	Head Start/ Early HS	1						1
7 County Metro	Child Care Center	120						120
7 County Metro	Family Child Care	3						3
7 County Metro	Preschool Program	4						4
Subtotals		*128*						128
Blue Earth/Nicollet	Head Start/ Early HS	2						2
Blue Earth/Nicollet	Child Care Center		2		4*	2		8
Blue Earth/Nicollet	Family Child Care	1			1			2
Blue Earth/Nicollet	School Readiness	3						3
Subtotals		*6*	*2*		*5*	*2*	*0*	*15*
Minneapolis	Head Start/ Early HS	9						9
Minneapolis	Child Care Center	11			4	4		19
Minneapolis	Family Child Care	1	3		9*	3	1	17
Minneapolis	Preschool Program	1						1
Minneapolis	School Readiness	20						20
Subtotals		*42*	*3*		*13*	*7*	*1*	66
Saint Paul	Head Start/ Early HS	11						11
Saint Paul	Child Care Center	15	7	1	4*	3	1	31

Pilot Area	Program Type	4 Star Automatic	4 Stars	Provisional	3 Stars	2 Stars	1 Star	Total
Saint Paul	Family Child Care	1	8		10	11	1	31
Saint Paul	Preschool Program							0
Saint Paul	School Readiness	27		1				28
Subtotals		*54*	15	2	14	14	2	101
Wayzata	Child Care Center	5						5
Wayzata	Family Child Care				1	1		2
Wayzata	School Readiness	1						1
Subtotals		*6*	*0*		*1*	*1*	*0*	8
Grand Totals		**236**	**20**	**2**	**33****	**24**	**3**	**318**

*This number includes one program rated as 1 star because of a Negative Licensing Action.
**There are a total of three programs that earned a three star rating but are rated as 1 star because of a Negative Licensing Action.
Source: Parent Aware Rating Tool Database, Minnesota Department of Human Services, December, 2009

Re-Ratings of Programs in Parent Aware

Ratings expire a year after they are issued for fully-rated programs and accredited programs in Parent Aware. To get re-rated, fully-rated programs must go through the full rating process again. Accredited programs in Parent Aware must resubmit proof of accreditation. Automatic 4-star ratings for School Readiness programs and Head Start programs do not expire.

There are several reasons a program might not be re-rated. For example, of the ten programs that were rated in 2008 and did not go through a full re-rating process in 2009, two programs closed, one program became accredited (staying in Parent Aware, but not needing to go through the full rating process), one program is under new management and plans to get re-rated when that transition is complete, one program is currently in the re-rating process (though behind schedule), and five programs chose not to continue in Parent Aware.

As of December, 2009, 12 child care centers or preschools and 20 family child care programs had gone through the full re-rating process. Of the child care centers and preschools, 2 retained their star rating (1 was a 2-star and 1 was a 3-star program), 5 went up one star (4 from 2- to 3-stars and 1 from 3- to 4-stars), and 5 went up two stars (both from 2- to 4-stars).

Of the re-rated family child care programs, 1 went down from a 3- to a 2-star program, 1 retained their 2-star rating, 4 went up one star (2 from 2- to 3-stars and 2 from 3- to 4-stars), and 14 went up two stars (5 from 1- to 3-stars, 9 from 2- to 4-stars).

Overall 83% of centers and preschools and 90% of family child care programs increased their star ratings. Moreover, 17 out of the 32 re-rated programs increased to a 4-star rating (53%).

Summary of Enrollment, Participation and Ratings

Enrollment in Parent Aware is steadily increasing. As of August, 2009, 354 early care and education programs have enrolled in Parent Aware. Over the last three cohorts (February, May and August, 2009), 83 new programs have enrolled (25-30 per cohort), with family child care programs enrolling at a faster rate than other programs.

Approximately 11% of eligible center-based, family child care, and Head Start programs in the pilot areas of Saint Paul, Minneapolis, Wayzata School District, and Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties were participating in Parent Aware as of December, 2009. A much higher proportion of eligible accredited programs have enrolled in Parent Aware and received an automatic 4-star rating. Over $4/5^{th}$ (82%) of eligible accredited programs in the 7-county metropolitan area were participating in Parent Aware as of December, 2009. Nearly 100% of School Readiness programs in the pilot areas have enrolled in Parent Aware.

By the end of December, 2009, 318 early care and education programs had a current Parent Aware rating. Thirty-two programs have gone through the full re-rating process and the majority of those have increased their star rating.

In summary, Parent Aware is growing steadily, but still serves a relatively small percentage of eligible programs. Progress has been made in recruiting family child care programs, and increases in re-ratings relative to initial ratings suggest that Parent Aware is helping programs to increase quality. The next section of the report provides further details about implementation successes and challenges.

Section 3. PARENT AWARE IMPLEMENTATION: SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

Implementation of a multi-faceted initiative like Parent Aware is a complex endeavor. One benefit of launching a pilot phase is that the Parent Aware Implementation Team has an opportunity to identify and address key service delivery issues, needs and challenges before the initiative is launched on a larger scale. One purpose of the Parent Aware Evaluation is to assist the Implementation Team during this learning and adjustment phase by providing objective information gathered from key stakeholders and staff that can be applied to decisions at multiple levels of the initiative.

To gain insights into these facets of Parent Aware implementation and the perceptions of stakeholders, Child Trends conducted 40 semi-structured telephone interviews with over 45 respondents during the fall of 2009. The respondents were identified according to their (or their organizations') role in the Parent Aware pilot or in the early care and education system generally. Respondents included representatives from the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation, members of the Parent Aware Implementation Team (including staff from state agencies, resource and referral agencies, and the University of Minnesota), representatives from Head Start and School Readiness programs, representatives from community agencies that serve programs and providers, and legislators from the Early Childhood Caucus of the Minnesota Legislature.

 Certain respondents received interview questions that were targeted to their expertise on a particular facet of Parent Aware implementation including those that provide support for programs and providers (the Provider Resource Specialists and the Parent Aware Workgroup on English Language Learners), those that are part of the rating process (representatives from the Assessment and Training Center at the Center for Early Education and Development and members from the Curriculum Review Committee), and those programs and providers that participate in Parent Aware (including representatives from programs that completed the full rating process and representatives from programs that were automatically rated in Parent Aware). The Appendix contains a complete listing of interview respondents and organizations as well as the protocols that were used. Note that parents are another important group of stakeholders in the Parent Aware pilot, but information on their experiences and perceptions was not gathered using semi-structured interviews. Instead, parents completed a structured telephone survey. Their responses are summarized in Section 5 of this report.

As noted interviews were conducted by the research team using protocols tailored to each respondent type. All protocols are included in the Appendix. Interviews were recorded digitally, and notes were completed after the interview by reviewing the recording. The research team reviewed the notes by respondent type and identified themes that emerged both within groups and across the interviews.

The Year 1 Report on the Evaluation of Parent Aware focused primarily on stakeholders' perceptions of the potential of Parent Aware to achieve its goals and the factors that will determine whether or not it is successful. Respondents described their hopes and their concerns about Parent Aware and the potential of Parent Aware to improve quality among participating providers. They also discussed their perceptions of the potential of Parent Aware to help parents locate quality early care and education programs.

With Parent Aware well into the third year of implementation, questions for stakeholders in the current reporting period targeted the success and challenges of implementation. Respondents were also asked to consider the changes to the pilot that should be made to scale Parent Aware statewide. In this section, we describe themes that emerged across the different groups of stakeholders as well as issues that were specific to each stakeholder group. The common questions that we report on include:[5]

1. How has the implementation of Parent Aware has been going?
   a. What has been successful?
   b. What challenges have been encountered, and how have you dealt with them?
2. What do you think have been the successes and challenges of implementing Parent Aware in terms of:
   a. Recruitment and participation of programs?
   b. Provision of quality improvement supports?
   c. Outreach to parents?
3. If Parent Aware is implemented statewide, what changes, if any, would need to be made?

Other questions were targeted to groups playing a specific role in Parent Aware implementation. The purpose of these questions was to elicit details on processes, changes over the past year in implementation, successes and challenges.

When possible, we use the terms "many" and "most" respondents if more than half of the respondents to a particular question voiced the theme, "several" or "some" if between one-quarter and one-third of respondents voiced the theme, and "a few" if under one-quarter of respondents voiced the theme.

The findings in this section are subdivided into the following aspects of implementation: overall success and challenges of Parent Aware implementation, recruitment and participation of programs, supports for programs and providers, the rating process, perceptions of participating programs, outreach to parents, and perceptions of changes needed for statewide implementation. Brief summaries are included in each subsection, and an overall summary is included at the end of the section.

Overall Successes and Challenges of Parent Aware Implementation

All interview respondents were asked about the general successes and challenges of Parent Aware implementation. Overall, respondents described the implementation of Parent Aware as typical for a new initiative: some aspects of implementation have been quite successful while other aspects have been challenging. Respondents conveyed a general sense of positive progress, with a few respondents commenting that Parent Aware is "gaining momentum," "coming along," "getting better," and "improving over time". Yet with an acknowledgment of positive progress, some respondents noted that implementation is going slowly in certain areas and that the ambitious timeline for the pilot has been challenging. There have been "hurdles"

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[5] The interview protocols included additional questions, and responses to those questions were also analyzed. Many of the themes that emerged were similar to those that emerged from the other questions and are thus not summarized here to reduce redundancy. When possible, responses were synthesized across common themes.

and "struggles" but also a belief among most respondents that implementation is proceeding with success.

A prevalent theme across respondents when asked about implementation is the fact that Parent Aware is a pilot project with an evaluation that, by definition, is intended to provide an opportunity for "learning as we go" and understanding which components of Parent Aware are more or less successful than other components. Some respondents described the pilot as offering "lessons learned" and the chance to "experiment and make changes when something doesn't work". One respondent stated that "we've had a chance to implement and to learn some things." The evaluation is described by some respondents as an essential component of the pilot. Indeed, a number of respondents stated that they are not exactly sure how implementation was going but would rely on the evaluation to provide information about what went well during the pilot and what did not.

General successes, accomplishments and impact on the early care and education system. Respondents provided examples of ways in which Parent Aware has been successful, from their perspective. They commented on implementation issues as well as ways in which Parent Aware has impacted the early care and education system more broadly. Examples that relate specifically to successes with recruitment and participation of programs, provision of quality improvement supports and outreach to parents are described in separate sections below, though some of the general examples provided here touch on these topics.

The most frequently reported example of success is that Parent Aware has brought the issue of quality to the forefront for programs, parents and for the early childhood community (including legislators) more broadly. Parent Aware has "sparked conversation" and "gotten people talking about quality" and "what the next stage is for early education".

For programs, Parent Aware has sparked a new awareness of quality and a common set of terms for quality.

- ❑ Many respondents referred to the importance of the common standards and common measurement of quality and common language about quality that Parent Aware provides.
  - o Parent Aware provides an infrastructure for quality through the common standards and measurement strategy it uses.
  - o Parent Aware "simply puts quality in the minds of providers, giving them a standard measurement."
  - o One respondent said, "It is an accomplishment to begin the process of establishing a common set of standards across early education programs."
- ❑ Some respondents noted that participation in Parent Aware is important for a sense of professionalism.
  - o Programs are able to see themselves as an environment that promotes school readiness.
  - o The "professionalism is starting to grow" across all staff in the program, not just the director or lead teacher in a child care center.
  - o Parent Aware gives programs a "language for talking about what they are doing to help children and families".

- A few respondents who work directly with providers described how providers are reflecting on their own quality, in part because their awareness has been raised.
  - One respondent said that providers are thinking and planning more intentionally so that they can say "why am I doing this with the children?"
  - "It's huge to get people to recognize what the core components are of quality and why they need these to provide excellent care."
  - "Providers have been reminded why it's so important for them to be intentional in their approach to caring for children."

Another example of success noted by some respondents is that Parent Aware is a name that is now known among key stakeholders (though not necessarily among programs and parents; as described below, the perception of what programs and parents know about Parent Aware is mixed).

- The "awareness" of Parent Aware is growing.
  - As described by one stakeholder, "A lot more people are talking about Parent Aware. They are talking positively about it."
  - Another stakeholder stated that one "success of Parent Aware has been the name itself".
  - One stakeholder stated that providers are arriving at Parent Aware orientations with more information than they had in the past.
- Parent Aware is a unique "brand" that has gained attention among national QRIS stakeholders.

Among parents, Parent Aware has had some success in raising awareness but it is limited, according to stakeholders.

- The success can be attributed to the design and ease of using a rating system.
  - One respondent said that the rating system has an advantage over accreditation because it is easier for families to understand
  - Another respondent noted that the website is easy to use and parent-focused.
- In some cases, rated early care and education programs are providing information about Parent Aware directly to parents which also raises their awareness.

Among legislators and key stakeholders in early childhood, respondents perceive that Parent Aware has been quite successful in creating a central point around which quality initiatives and early care and education can be discussed. This perception is due partially to the decision of the legislature to direct DHS and MDE to create a framework for a quality rating and improvement system (as described above).

- Many respondents noted the legislative interest in and support of Parent Aware as a clear example of an accomplishment. It also provides a signal about the potential of Parent Aware to be implemented statewide
  - "Getting the legislature to agree on the framework as a direction is big. It sends a message to providers that this is important, this is the direction we are moving."

- o "Policymakers are talking about it. People are paying attention to quality child care and starting to really value the fact that it is important."
- o One respondent described that "the Early Childhood Caucus of the Legislature made Parent Aware a shared priority…the one thing they have united behind and pushed for."
- o "For the first time, we've got legislative engagement with the idea of quality rating and that's where it's going to have to be if it's going statewide."
- ❑ Many respondents said that Parent Aware has also created opportunities for dialogue about early childhood education and what is needed.
    - o "People are talking about what the pre-kindergarten environment should be. Having Parent Aware focused us to look at that, and that's a success in itself."
    - o "The key thing is that it put the importance of high quality child care on everyone's mind."
    - o "Parent Aware has raised the bar and raised awareness of a quality rating system in general. You can talk about quality, but unless you have something specific to show to people, providers and parents, it's hard to relate. Parent Aware provides examples of what quality is."
    - o One respondent described Parent Aware as the "guide, the place that we go to look at the effective pieces" of quality and how to assess it.

   General challenges. Respondents were clear that with the successes, Parent Aware also faced a number of challenges during its second year of implementation. As in the description of successes above, examples that relate specifically to recruitment and participation of programs, provision of quality improvement supports and outreach to parents are described in separate sections below, though some of the general examples provided here touch on these topics.

   While the status of Parent Aware as a pilot program provides opportunities for incorporating lessons learned and making changes to improve the program, some respondents noted that the pilot status can also be quite challenging for administration and for programs participating in the pilot.

- ❑ Some respondents described how changes in procedures and protocols can be confusing and frustrating for participants.
    - o A few respondents who work directly with participants in Parent Aware talked about their attempts to protect providers from changes and to "smooth it out so that providers aren't impacted by the changes".
    - o One respondent said when providers "get confused about things, I have to remind them that it's a pilot."
    - o One respondent described the difficulty of managing implementation that "make it seem like the ground is always shifting;
- ❑ Similarly, communication can be difficult in a rapidly changing pilot.
    - o One respondent stated that "literally, just getting enough accurate information to folks is challenging".
    - o Another respondent described that "trying to stay on top" of the information about programs (ratings, which cohorts they are enrolled it, entry of information into the database) is difficult.

- One respondent stated that there are "inconsistent messages amongst the different players".
- Some respondents from the Parent Aware Implementation team noted the challenges of managing communication across a large group and the potential for "miscommunication". Additionally, it is difficult "to message the changes and the reasons for the changes." To address this issue, the team put in place a variety of structures including quarterly debriefing meetings, quarterly policy meetings, regular meetings with the MELF coordination group and with MDE to add more structure to the implementation. They also created a manual to help document procedures and processes.

❑ A few respondents noted that providers want to know what will happen when the pilot is over and what will happen to their program if Parent Aware is implemented statewide.

❑ As described in the Year 1 report, some respondents still reflected on the co-launching of the Parent Aware pilot with other initiatives (including the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarships, the State-funded Pre-Kindergarten Allowances and a rollout of the redesigned Professional Development System for early care and education and school-age care) and the challenges created by the urgency of implementation.
- One respondent stated that there was "a lot of confusion in the beginning. Just getting answers to questions about the whole process" was challenging.
- One respondent described high expectations and a sense of being anxious at the start of the pilot.
- According to one respondent, the short timeline did not allow Parent Aware to have all of the supports in place that were needed for providers.

A second set of challenges described by respondents concerns the way the pilot works for providers and families who are English Language Learners and/or from various cultural groups. The MELF pilot areas have a large percentage of immigrant and refugee families.

❑ The Parent Aware Implementation team used the information provided in the MELF Baseline Study and other sources to learn more about the demographics of the pilot areas and to begin developing strategies for addressing them (further information is provided below in the section on the Parent Aware Workgroup on English Language Learners). The strategies that have been developed include setting up formats that allow providers to fill forms out together, conducting orientations in providers' native languages, and having outreach staff from cultural communities work with providers to explain the program to them and help connect them with resources. Work is also underway to build and deliver training on curriculum and assessment in providers' native languages.

❑ Though provisions have been put in place, challenges still arise. For example, providers speaking languages other than English do participate in the observational component of the rating process. Initially, observations were videotaped and translated at a later time because it was assumed that onsite translations would be disruptive to the program's activities. However, a few respondents described problems with this process including delays in finding interpreters and reluctance of providers to be videotaped. As a result of these challenges, the observations are now conducted with a translator when possible (see below for further details).

❑ Likewise, it is difficult to address the needs of families from various cultural groups. To address this concern, MELF is working with Dr. Aisha Ray from the Erickson Institute on a study of what parents from different cultural communities value and what information they would like to have to help them in their selection of early care and education.

As described in the Year 1 Report, resistance among subgroups of providers remains a challenge for Parent Aware.

❑ One issue voiced by a few respondents is the perception that Parent Aware is geared toward or more appropriate for child care centers and not family child care homes.
❑ Additionally, a few respondents stated that family child care providers have a particular mistrust and feelings that they are being judged. The do not like the idea of someone coming into their program and rating them.
❑ Some providers are also threatened by the possibility of receiving a lower rating. There is resistance among some providers to the use of a formal curriculum, and providers state that it is challenging to use child assessments across the age ranges of children in family child care programs.
❑ A few respondents noted that resistance had been particularly strong in the rural pilot areas.
❑ One strategy that has been tried to help increase trust is to recruit a provider who has already been through the rating process to serve as a "spokesperson" for Parent Aware.

Finally, a lack of consistent resources for quality improvement or for helping providers apply what they have learned is also a concern voiced by a few respondents.

❑ A few respondents with experience providing technical assistance to programs stated that it is challenging to offer adequate resources to providers that would help them make a significant difference in their practice.
  o One respondent stated that there "has to be a lot more professional development. There are a lot of providers who want to do this but are very wary about getting into an extensive program without professional development or training."

Summary of overall successes and challenges in Parent Aware Implementation.
Overall, across the respondents interviewed for the Evaluation, there is a general perception that Parent Aware is having a positive impact on early care and education in the pilot areas by shifting discussions to focus on quality and by providing a common vocabulary. The focus on quality rating and improvement systems by the legislature during the 2009 session sent a clear signal to stakeholders about the potential of Parent Aware to be implemented on a larger scale in the future. The pilot status of Parent Aware offers opportunities for learning and adapting but also challenges staff and participants to track rapid changes and communication gaps. Parent Aware is also challenged by issues related to provision of services for English Language Learners and providers and parents who come from diverse cultural groups. Stakeholders also perceive that recruitment of family child care providers as well as programs in rural areas are posing recruitment challenges (despite the fact that enrollment of family child care providers is outpacing child care centers, according to the data presented in Section 2).

Recruitment and Participation of Programs

In this section, we focus specifically on issues related to the recruitment and participation of programs in Parent Aware. The expectation was that enrollment would increase in the second year of implementation, particularly because of the citywide expansion of the pilot in Minneapolis. As described earlier, enrollment has steadily increased. Many respondents noted this growth in the Parent Aware cohorts, and perceived the growth as an important success.[6]

- ❑ Among many respondents, there is a sense that the programs that could be easily recruited have now enrolled in Parent Aware. The automatic rating process for accredited centers and Head Start/Early Head Start at the outset was perceived as a successful way to get a sizeable group of providers enrolled. Recruitment now requires additional, intentional strategies.
    - o Many respondents noted that recruitment among family child care providers is especially challenging, particularly because providers may hear negative comments from other providers.
    - o Some respondents stated that "providers listen to providers" so it is important to have providers with positive experiences in Parent Aware serve as spokespeople. "A huge media blitz" may be helpful, but providers want to know first how it has worked for other providers.
- ❑ Relationships are an important factor in recruitment. Many stakeholders acknowledged this in their responses and the need for relationship-building as a core recruitment strategy.
    - o One respondent stated that the "most important things is building the relationship and building the trust".
    - o Another respondent said, "It's about relationships, it always is."
- ❑ Some respondents stated that the parent-driven financial incentives for choosing Parent-Aware-rated programs – the State-Funded Pre-Kindergarten Allowances and the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarships – were critical components of program recruitment.
    - o With the expiration of the allowances and the ending of the scholarships in 2011, some stakeholders expressed concern about the challenges posed to recruitment.
    - o One respondent stated that "it will be interesting to see how it will go now that we don't have the scholarships and allowances that we originally had".
    - o The allowances and scholarships were noted as particularly important for the recruitment of School Readiness programs in Parent Aware. One respondent stated that this incentive gives them a reason to complete the paperwork and to see whether and how Parent Aware is worth their time.
- ❑ Another incentive described by some respondents is to offer consultation, training and resources to help providers address key Parent Aware indicators related the environment, curriculum and assessment.
    - o One respondent stated that providers who were initially quite resistant feel more secure and confident about signing up for Parent Aware after participating in curriculum and assessment training.

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[6] Note that all respondents were asked questions about recruitment, but a number of respondents did not feel that they had the knowledge to answer the questions. The question was answered primarily by those who work on the Parent Aware Implementation Team.

o A few respondents noted that Parent Aware can be quite overwhelming for providers, particularly those who have a number of changes that need to be made to their program before they would receive a 3- or 4-star in Parent Aware. Resources to help these providers meet quality indicators prior to enrollment may help with recruitment.

Summary of recruitment and participation of programs. Respondents perceive that recruitment will require new and intentional strategies now that programs that could be more easily recruited have enrolled and now that parent-driven financial incentives have expired (or will expire in the near future). Relationship-building and provision of supports for rating and quality improvement were noted as potential strategies for addressing recruitment challenges.

Supports for Programs and Providers: Provider Resource Specialists

One group that provides supports to programs and providers as they enroll in Parent Aware and complete the rating requirements is the Provider Resource Specialists. During the second year of implementation, Resource Specialists continued to provide individualized support to each early care and education program participating in Parent Aware as a fully-rated program. One additional Resource Specialist was hired in 2009 in order to manage growth due to the Minneapolis expansion. Interviews were conducted with the four Resource Specialists to learn about the continued implementation of this type of support and how it has changed over the past year. Their perceptions of successes and challenges related to their particular role are also described, and in many cases, echo the general theme described above.

The Resource Specialists noted several successes during Year 2 of the Parent Aware pilot. Improvements in the implementation of Parent Aware included potential participants attending the Parent Aware orientations more prepared and with more knowledge of Parent Aware. There has also been more intentional planning for spending quality improvement dollars, higher participation (particularly in the rural communities in Southern Minnesota), increased "buy-in" to the importance of Parent Aware by providers, and ultimately improvements in Parent Aware ratings. An ongoing success reported by the Resource Specialists remains the trusting relationship between themselves and the participants.

The Resource Specialists have run into several challenges similar to those reported in Year 1 of the pilot, but they also reported new challenges during Year 2. Recruitment of programs into Parent Aware from the rural communities remains difficult. Particularly for family child care programs, there is still a "climate of fear, uncertainty, and misunderstanding around Parent Aware." The challenges of working in a pilot program were also noted this year. For example, participants have some concern in regard to what will happen to them when the pilot ends and/or if Parent Aware goes statewide. Consistent with a theme raised earlier in the report, two respondents mentioned challenges related to changes in Parent Aware and the actions they take to "shield" participants from changes or make things "smooth" for them. In addition there are challenges for the providers that the Resource Specialists work with surrounding the Environment Rating Scales and how to make significant improvements in scores. Additional challenges specific to family child care program were also reported, such as the need to formalize or document processes that haven't been formalized in the past. Newly reported

challenges this year reported by the Resource Specialists included providers' resistance to enrolling in the Professional Development Registry, in part because of the emphasis put on college degrees and certificates.

The Resource Specialists voiced a need for additional supports to help meet the challenges. They stated a need for curriculum consultants, additional ERS consultants to meet demand, and interpreters for English Language Learners. Other supports that would be helpful for them are time and resources to network with the community (for example, to be visible at provider and parent gatherings) and help with how to support the ERS consultants.

In Year 1 of the pilot, the Resource Specialists outlined a very individualized approach to support programs, based on their specific needs/wants. Overall, the approach has not changed significantly during Year 2, and is still very individualized rather than standardized across programs. The Resource Specialists talked about an attempted change in procedure that involved fewer visits to each program, perhaps only one or two visits, followed by group meetings. However, they reported that they do not follow the new protocol; rather they still base their visits on the needs of the programs. This has resulted in the Resource Specialists being stretched thinner rather than making fewer visits to each program as caseloads grow. One respondent reported relying on more email and text messaging to maintain relationship-based communication with the programs.

Concerns voiced to Resource Specialists from program staff in Year 2 of the pilot were similar to Year 1, for example anxiety about the ERS and the documentation process, but new concerns were also reported. New issues that arose were concerns about how a state-wide quality rating and improvement system would work, issues with the Professional Development Registry, the timeframe to get the rating (and how it sometimes changes), and videotaping of English Language Learners. A broad concern was with the state of the economy; several early care and education programs are facing a loss of business in this economic climate. One respondent reported hearing from programs that it is difficult to participate in Parent Aware when the top priority of directors and providers is to keep their business running. Concerns specific to family child care providers raised to the Resource Specialists echoed those expressed during Year 1: they have difficulty finding time to complete the Parent Aware process, difficulty with paperwork, and difficulty with making actual changes in their programs. In some cases, family child care providers tell the Resource Specialists they are concerned that Parent Aware is trying to make them into centers.

As in Year 1 of the pilot, Resource Specialists were asked what they thought was the most critical piece of support that providers need. Responses in Year 2 were remarkably similar to those in Year 1. Respondents reported that providers need help with curriculum and assessment (i.e., how to choose them, how to use them, how to get curriculum approved), help with the ERS process including how to understand feedback reports and how to improve scores, and help with professional development (education and training). Respondents in Year 2 also reported that support with the Classroom Assessment Scoring system (i.e., CLASS consultants) would be helpful. Provider relationships with the Resource Specialists and the ERS consultants are seen as critical pieces of support.

In Year 2 of the pilot, the re-rating process began for programs that joined Parent Aware during Year 1. Resource Specialists are available to provide support during the re-rating process, but in general the need is less for the programs than the need during the initial rating. Respondents reported that they call programs going through the re-rating process and offer to meet with them, but they are often told that the programs either do not need help or are too busy to meet. Resource Specialists might meet with programs only once to help them update their documentation. They might assist with some of the same things as during the initial rating, but in a less-intense manner, and they might help address new issues. Overall, however, there is not the same need for the services of the Resource Specialists during re-rating as there had been during the initial rating.

Summary of implementation from the perspective of Provider Resource Specialists. The Resource Specialists continue to play a central role in providing support to Parent Aware participants. Their approach is to provide individualized support based on programs' needs. This has led to greater challenges as the caseloads have grown, but additional supports such as the ERS consultants have helped the Resource Specialists manage the increased caseloads. As programs continue to join Parent Aware, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain the same level of relationship-based, individualized support for participating programs. A systematic analysis of time spent with programs and content covered would help to determine the most effective practices of the Resource Specialists.

Supports for Programs and Providers: Provision of Quality Improvement Supports

Quality improvement supports are viewed by many stakeholders as a critical incentive to encourage participation in Parent Aware. These supports may take a variety of forms including assistance from ERS and CLASS consultants and financial assistance targeted at specific quality improvements. In this section, we review information learned in the interviews about general successes and challenges related to the provision of quality improvement supports. The next section of the report will provide more detail about the quality improvement supports being used by programs in Parent Aware.

Respondents viewed the ability to provide quality improvement supports as an important example of an implementation success.

- ❑ One structural change in the provision of quality improvement supports was also noted by some respondents as a success. The transfer of this function from the Network to the local CCR&Rs is perceived to be an important facilitator of improved services.[7]
  - o One respondent said, "The R&R's have the tools and resources to do this. It is a very positive move."
  - o Other respondents said that the improvement supports can now be more easily coordinated with other grants and resources offered by the local R&Rs.
- ❑ Another success noted by a few respondents is the alignment of the quality improvement supports with the quality improvement plan.

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[7] It should be noted that technically, quality improvement supports are administered by the District CCR&R agencies, not the local CCR&Rs.

- One respondent described this alignment as "an important effort to try to target our very limited quality improvement resources as close as possible to what will help providers move up the rating scale."
- Another respondent referred to the importance of assisting providers who "desperately need help" by working with them to focus their purchasing and their training. This intentionality is different from what happens "just randomly" as providers "take whatever training happens to be available…and purchase toys, equipment and supplies without really thinking about it."

❑ The alignment of resources from partners including DHS and the United Way is a third example of an implementation success in the provision of quality improvement supports.

A number of challenges were also reported that relate to quality improvement supports.

❑ There was mixed opinion among respondents with regard to the amount of money available for quality improvement supports.
- Several respondents said they wish more money were available for supports, especially since the amount that is available for providers has been "steadily going down".[8] One respondent stated that "without sufficient resources for providers, they are not going to be able to make the fundamental changes that need to be made."
- Yet, other respondents, while not disagreeing that it would be helpful to have more money available, focused on the need to target the available resources wisely. One respondent stated that "there is a great deal of variability, provider to provider, as to what they need. Trying to stay open to the variability and what each provider needs rather than saying 'here's a pot of money, figure out all of the ways you can use it to increase your quality' is a challenge".

❑ Similarly, several respondents discussed the importance of allocating limited resources in the most impactful way.
- As one respondent stated, "if our key outcome is school readiness, it has to be figured out how to allocate those resources that have the most impact on children improving their school readiness."
- Other respondents noted that it has been challenging to determine which expenses should be "allowable". Respondents pointed to expenses on items such as computers or portable sinks that may be critical for infrastructure but may not directly impact children's school readiness.
- One respondent said the "quality improvement supports could be more focused on the staff-child interaction rather than the physical environment."
- Another respondent stated that perhaps licensing should be more stringent on basic health and safety issues so that "quality improvement supports can be used to promote school readiness."

❑ A final challenge noted by some respondents is the importance of decreasing the variability across the Provider Resource Specialists and the way they work with

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[8] The Year 1 Evaluation Report states that early cohorts of Parent Aware recipients received up to $5,000 in materials and resources compared with up to $3,500 in materials and resources in subsequent cohorts. However, it is noteworthy that the dollar amount available per provider does not take into account the availability of free training and curriculum materials available for Parent Aware participants.

providers. It is a challenge to balance the needs for individualized supports to making sure that there is a standardized, equitable approach for providing supports.

Summary of perceptions related to quality improvement supports. Respondents overall are pleased that the provision of quality improvement supports is aligned with the quality improvement plans that programs create. Some respondents perceive a need for greater resources; others emphasize the importance of targeting improvement supports in ways that will maximize their effectiveness.

Supports for Programs and Providers: Parent Aware Workgroup on English Language Learners

As noted above, respondents identified the provision of services for providers who come from different cultural communities and who do not speak English as challenges in the Parent Aware pilot. Yet, working with providers and programs from diverse cultural communities is a goal of Parent Aware recruitment efforts. In light of this commitment to improve Parent Aware's responsiveness to programs and providers that are culturally and linguistically diverse, the Implementation Team created the English Language Learner (ELL) Workgroup as a forum for focused discussions about how to better serve ELL providers and communities. The members of the ELL Workgroup include representatives from DHS, staff from local community agencies, staff from Resources for Child Caring, the Provider Resource Specialists, and representatives from the Assessment and Training Center from the University of Minnesota. The group is convened by the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network. According to respondents from the group, a significant proportion of their time is spent identifying potential biases in the rating process and looking for ways to adjust the process to serve diverse populations.

As of December 31st, 2009, 11 programs designated as programs with ELL providers have been rated by Parent Aware, and another 6 programs are in the process of being rated. While this number is small, it is greater than was expected, and is a significant portion (12%) of all programs that have gone through the full-rating process. Table 8 below provides more details about these programs.

Table 8. English Language Learning (ELL) Providers in Parent Aware

Language	Number of programs rated	Number of programs in process	Total number of programs in Parent Aware
Chinese (Mandarin)	0	1	1
East African	1	1	2
Hmong	4	1	5
Somali	2	2	4
Spanish	4	1	5
Total	**11**	**6**	**17**

Source: Department of Human Services' MELF Interim Report, February 19, 2010.

Respondents from the ELL Working Group consider the creation of the group in the first place as its greatest success. According to one member of the group, "These are all things that are pretty unique to Minnesota that I don't know have happened in other states. I'm very proud that we've made [reaching out to English Language Learners] a top priority."

Providers who do not speak English face a number of challenges. In some immigrant communities, literacy rates may be quite low, even in the provider's own language. The ELL Workgroup has noted that, even when forms are translated into a providers' native language, they are not able to complete extensive paperwork. In determining professional development qualifications, many immigrants did not have the opportunity to graduate from high school, and those who did cannot obtain documents to verify their educational achievement. Additionally, many of the concepts used in Parent Aware are not familiar to particular culture groups, so, for example, staff must spend time explaining what a curriculum is and how it is used before they can talk to a provider about getting trained in an approved curriculum. For these reasons, the ELL Workgroup has determined that it is not sufficient to simply have Parent Aware documents translated into multiple languages. Basic recruitment and enrollment documents have had to be totally redesigned to match the level of understanding that most ELL providers have at the beginning of the process. "But that's what the community needs, so that's what we'll do," said one member of the group.

Other provisions that have been made for ELL providers include: the use of outreach staff at Resources for Child Caring that can interpret when Provider Resource Specialists or Assessment and Training Center observers visit ELL providers, the development of orientations in multiple languages, translation of some materials (though not all are translated), intense support from staff in small group settings and one-on-one settings, and expanding translated Creative Curriculum trainings from 16 to 40 hours. In addition, materials may be used in the future to assist ELL providers with learning key concepts about positive interactions and environmental quality indicators.[9]

CCR&R outreach staff and observers from the Assessment and Training Center have worked to find effective ways to meet the special needs of ELL providers, but many solutions are still not ideal. For example, earlier in the pilot, the on-site observations had been videotaped by a trained observer and then watched again later with the help of a translator so that scores can be given. Yet the translators (when available) are often not trained in early childhood and are thus unable to appropriately evaluate interactions between children and providers. Moreover, some providers have objected to the intrusiveness of a video camera and are concerned about protecting the privacy of the children in their care. As a solution, translators are now accompanying the observers on visits. ATC staff provided the translators with some tools to help them identify important components of the visit during which understanding the quality of interactions is critical for scoring items on the observational tools correctly. There is a general sense that this process is working better than review of the videotapes, but it will be important to monitor general effectiveness and satisfaction with this process over time by the providers, the ATC staff conducting the observations and the translators.

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[9] For example, materials are under development by the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals that could be used for this purpose.

A common theme expressed by members of the ELL Workgroup is the need for more resources to be available in a provider's native language rather than merely translated. The process is slowed greatly by the fact that two staff have to be present to provide support (the English speaker who has the critical information and expertise and the translator) and the meetings or trainings take at least twice as long because the material is given is two languages (this is also a challenge for the observers from the Assessment and Training Center, as described below). For example, according to one member of the ELL Workgroup, the process of developing forms (for documenting family partnerships) with Hmong providers took ten home visits for a total of 30 staff hours. Such intense commitment of time is a costly endeavor. Ideally, staff could be found who are both knowledgeable about early childhood and speak the language of providers. Yet finding such people is very difficult, particularly in less-common languages like Vietnamese, Russian, Mandarin, and Karen.

If Parent Aware is expanded beyond the pilot area to the whole state of Minnesota, finding and hiring sufficient staff to provide an adequate level of support to ELL providers around the state will be a significant challenge. Several workgroup members emphasized the time-consuming nature of work with ELL providers and the challenge that it presents in terms of staffing and resources. Even without statewide expansion, it is not clear that sufficient funds have been allocated to respond to issues related to ELL providers. Yet the group also agreed that this work is critical and is making a real difference for ELL providers and families. In other words, the potential for making large improvements is great, but will require significant time and resources. As one member described it, "[the providers I work with] were starting from square one, so to take someone from that point to a three or four star rating, that's a long journey."

Summary of supports provided by the Parent Aware English Language Learner Workgroup. The ELL Workgroup is providing critical feedback and strategies for addressing the needs of providers from cultural communities. Working with diverse providers will require increased resources, including staff and materials, to fully address their needs.

The Rating Process: On-Site Observations

In Parent Aware, on-site observations are conducted for programs seeking full ratings. Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observations are performed by trained observers from the Assessment and Training Center (ATC) within the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) at the University of Minnesota. These scores are a central component in the Teaching Materials and Strategies category of the Parent Aware Rating Tool.

In the past year, ATC has hired two new full-time observers (75% positions) and has had changes in the coordinator position. The changes in staffing along with more demand for observations as participation in Parent Aware increases have been challenging during Year 2 of the pilot. Interviews were conducted with ATC staff regarding this and other challenges encountered during Year 2. Also discussed were any changes that have occurred with the observation process.

Respondents noted that early care and education program staff who attended Parent Aware orientations in Year 2 seemed to have a greater understanding of Parent Aware and what is expected of them if they participate compared to participants in Year 1. However, ATC staff also described several challenges encountered during Year 2, some of which led to changes in their protocol. Some of the challenges had to do with increased participation in Parent Aware, resulting in an increased workload for observers and a more diverse population of participants. Specifically, there were challenges related to the time and resources needed to work with non-English speaking providers (as described above) and providers that were new to the child care field. Other challenges emerged with the protocol used for conducting the observations. The protocol was originally based on the procedures specified by the authors of the ERS, but had to be modified to fit the Parent Aware context. For example, there was a problem with too many observations being canceled, so the decision-making protocol for cancelation was modified to be more lenient (e.g., an observer can now proceed with an observation even if the assistant teacher is absent). Another challenge with the protocol was that the observers were not able to interview the teacher immediately following the observation, so now all interviews are completed within a day of the observation. In addition, the observers were challenged by discrepancies between information in the interview and in the observation (and how to score this information in the scales), and preparing feedback reports in a timely manner. Logistically, there were some issues with sites (mostly School Readiness sites) that are in operation for less than three hours per day (the observations typically take about 3 hours), and the distraction of having an extra staff person in the classroom. Each of these issues has provided an opportunity for the ATC staff to refine their protocols and processes to accommodate the reality in the field.

Similar to Year 1 of the pilot, observers did not get a lot of questions from providers during the visits. One respondent remarked that there seemed to be even fewer questions this year than last year. She reasoned that the Provider Resource Specialists are answering more questions for the participants, so fewer questions remain by the time the observation takes place. Indeed, ATC staff report that the most critical resource providers need is the supportive relationship with the Provider Resource Specialists. ATC also feels more prepared to answer questions because they have better policies and procedures in place (i.e., how to handle observations for non-English speaking participants). The few questions they did hear typically had to do with provider concerns about doing their best for the observations and what scores they would receive. There was also some confusion about the roles of different agencies in the pilot and whom to contact about what issue.

Also similar to Year 1, observers do not generally provide much advice to providers at the time of the observation. The feedback reports they prepare with information about the visit are completed after the observation. One respondent also mentioned that she tries to encourage providers to be good advocates for themselves by encouraging them to contact their Provider Resource Specialist with questions about their scores or feedback. Respondents reported that the feedback report process has become more streamlined during Year 2. For example, they have created templates so that feedback is more standardized across programs. At the same time, observers work to maintain a balance between keeping the feedback reports succinct yet individualized for a given program. ATC does at times hear negative reactions to feedback reports, generally from sites that expected to score better than they did. ATC is working to streamline the process for handling negative reactions from providers so that there will be one

point-person who handles the communication with the programs, who will also check in with the observer who wrote the feedback report for specific information as necessary.

Respondents were asked for their perceptions on how programs are scoring. They reported that scores on the Personal Care Routines subscale of the ERS are still consistently the lowest, and the highest scores really vary. One respondent talked about how programs might excel on particular variables (for example, some programs may have high quality materials) which translates to high scores on various sections of the ERS. It was also reported that programs typically perform the best on the Emotional Support subscale of the CLASS (see the Appendix for preliminary analyses of scores from the ERS and CLASS).

Summary of implementation from the perspective of the on-site observers. Increases in workload, observations with diverse providers, and changes in staff and observation protocols have presented some challenges for Assessment and Training Center observers during Year 2 of the pilot. Although observers still acted as "ambassadors" of Parent Aware, they played less of a role in providing information/advice to programs this year. ATC staff are continually refining procedures to match the reality of conducting observations in a variety of programs.

The Rating Process: Review of Curriculum and Assessment Tools

Use of a research-based curriculum aligned with Minnesota's Early Childhood Indicators of Progress is a key component of the Teaching Materials and Strategies category in the Parent Aware Rating Tool. As in Year 1, if a program is not already using a pre-approved curriculum, they may submit documentation about their curriculum to be reviewed and approved by the Department of Human Services (DHS), based on recommendations from the Curriculum Review Committee.[10] As of the fall of 2009, the Curriculum Review Committee was made up of ten appointed community members, three DHS staff, one Parent Aware staff liaison (from the Child Care Resource and Referral Network), and two reviewers. The ten appointed committee members applied for the position and were appointed by DHS and the Department of Education (MDE). Requirements were that appointed committee members must have at least a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education (or a related field) and must have at least five years of experience in teaching, training, or research in early childhood education, curriculum and instruction, child assessment, or a related area. Four of the appointed members have affiliations with a college or a university, one is from DHS, and the remaining five members are affiliated with schools or organizations that serve the early care and education community. The current committee is the same as it was at the start of Parent Aware, with the exception of one member that joined the committee early in 2009. To gain an understanding about the operation of the Curriculum Review Committee, interviews were conducted with one DHS committee staff member and one appointed community member.

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[10] Use of research-based child assessments is an important part of the Tracking Learning category in Parent Aware, and there is an Assessment Review Committee that reviews assessment tools not on the pre-approved list. However, members of this Committee were not interviewed for the Evaluation because they have never met. Although nine assessments have been submitted to DHS, none have been passed on to the Assessment Review Committee, and none have been approved.

When a program submits a nomination for a curriculum, the general protocol is as follows (also see "Guide to the Curriculum Approval Process" at www.parentawareratings.org):

- DHS committee staff members determine if more information is needed and may purchase materials (if it is a published curriculum).
- DHS committee staff members perform an initial screen of the curriculum materials.
- If the curriculum fails to meet the DHS definition of a curriculum it is not approved.
- If the curriculum meets the DHS definition of a curriculum it is sent to a consultant for a detailed review.
- The consultant completes a summary and sends it to the committee.
- Two appointed members perform a detailed review and then lead the committee through the review.
- For each criterion, the two lead members give their recommendation and then the committee comes to a consensus.
- The committee reports to DHS how many criteria were met and whether they recommend approval.
- DHS makes final approval decision.

Thus far, 11 published curricula have been submitted, 9 of those went to the Committee for review, and 6 were approved (55% of total submitted). For locally-developed curricula, 8 were submitted, 4 of them went to the Committee, and one (13%) was approved. Two bundles of curricula[11] were submitted, both were reviewed by the committee, and both were approved (100%).

One respondent remarked that there has been a wide range in terms of the quality of the curriculum submissions. Some are of high quality, particularly the bundled curricula. The respondent liked the fact that the bundled curricula have enough published material to cover the standards, yet are able to honor the local population and families that programs serve. However, more than half of the submitted curricula have not been approved (12 of 21). Some of the typical reasons that curricula are not approved are that the scope is too narrow, that it is not diverse or sensitive to diverse populations (for published curricula), and lack of clarity/organization (for locally developed curricula).

An appointed community member reported that, overall, she believes that the curriculum review process is working well. She is especially proud of the criteria the committee decided upon in reviewing curricula. According to the respondent, the criteria are comprehensive and have been effective for curriculum review. The most important aspects of the curriculum included in the criteria are that it has a research, philosophical, or theoretical base, that it lends itself to working with families, that it has diversity, and that it covers special education.

The decision making process is also running smoothly. It is beneficial to have two people review the curriculum in detail and then bring it to the group, where new perspectives can lead to rigorous discussion. Following discussion, the committee has been able to come to a unanimous decision on whether or not to recommend approval of the curricula almost every time.

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[11] A bundle is a combination of curricula, usually drawing from two or three primary curricula.

Challenges that have been encountered have been largely logistical. Several committee members live in different parts of the state and sometimes have difficulty getting to the meetings. Another reported challenge was that curricula materials are expensive to ship, so not everyone gets a chance to review them.

Summary of implementation from the perspective of the Curriculum Review Committee. The curriculum review process is running smoothly. The Committee represents a variety of perspectives which helps create good discussion and thorough review of the curricula. Two thirds of the curricula *that were reviewed by the Committee* were approved. The curriculum review process is resource-intensive in terms of the time and logistics needed to organize and complete the review process. Revisions to the process may be needed if Parent Aware is scaled statewide.

Participants' Perceptions of Parent Aware

An important aspect of implementation to understand over time is the perception of participants in the initiative. This information can help the Parent Aware Implementation Team adjust procedures or initiate communication with participants to address issues that arise.

Two strategies were used to gather information about perceptions of Parent Aware. First, Parent Aware participants were asked questions about their perceptions as part of a survey administered by Child Trends of Parent Aware center-based program directors and family child care providers. The survey was administered to programs pursuing a full rating in Parent Aware as well as those with an automatic rating. Eighty-nine directors of center-based programs received the survey between December, 2008 and October, 2009, and 54 directors completed and returned the survey (61%). Sixty-five family child care providers received the survey between January, 2009 and September, 2009, and 30 completed and returned the survey (46%).

In the second strategy, representatives from programs that received automatic ratings were interviewed using the protocols and methods described earlier in this section.

Impressions across Parent Aware participants. When surveyed about their overall impression of Parent Aware, over 90% of responding directors and about 50% of responding family child care providers reported having a positive impression (ranging from "somewhat positive" to "extremely positive"). The majority of respondents say that Parent Aware has been beneficial to their programs. Some of the benefits reported included marketing, training, financial assistance, and materials and equipment. As one family child care provider stated:

"It has put my childcare on a totally different level. The way I feel about my program, the way the children are learning…it helped me figure out where I needed to improve. Even the way I set my room up was based on what I learned. Using Creative Curriculum has really been great- and the kids in my program have really benefitted from that. I would never been able to afford that or afford the training & Parent Aware made that possible."

Several family child care respondents reported that Parent Aware has been beneficial to them in terms of self-confidence/professionalism and access to training and technical assistance. The majority of both groups of respondents also reported benefits to the families they serve including financial benefits as well as improved quality of care.

Center-based directors and family child care providers were also asked what improvements they would like to see for Parent Aware. Nearly all respondents had suggestions for Parent Aware such as increasing the flexibility to accommodate different program philosophies, cultures, and program types. One center director phrased this desired flexibility as "more tolerance in the rating system…[the standards] are too black and white and in child care, there are many grey areas". Other suggestions for Parent Aware were to allow programs more time to complete the requirements and to provide more supports (including technical assistance and financial support).

Perceptions of participants who completed the full rating in Parent Aware. Center-based directors and family child care providers that went through the full rating process in Parent Aware were asked some specific questions about that experience. Overall, respondents expressed positive impressions of the Provider Resource Specialists and said that they were helpful in general as well as specifically with organization/paperwork and providing good feedback. As one director reported: "She [the Provider Resource Specialist] was always open to questions and got right back to me with answers. She was very knowledgeable and helpful. I felt she went above and beyond to help my specific situation."

Impressions were mixed about the observational visits. About half of respondents reported a positive experience with the observations. Others reported negative impressions such as having a stressful experience or that they disagreed with the score they received. Overall, there were some concerns about the amount of documentation required (particularly for family child care providers) and the fairness of the Parent Aware rating process. One respondent remarked: "I do not believe the rating is reflective of the quality program that I offer for families and children".

Perceptions of participants with automatic ratings in Parent Aware. Respondents from programs with automatic ratings report that they decided to participate in Parent Aware for a variety of reasons. Representatives from accredited child care centers listed reasons such as marketing and the possibility of improving their program. Most School Readiness programs reported that they were encouraged by MDE to sign up as it was a way to access the Pre-K Allowance money. Accessing this money allowed some programs to offer more preschool programming, purchase materials, and offer additional training to their staff. A few respondents from School Readiness programs stated that another incentive was to learn as much about the Parent Aware pilot as possible.

Overall, respondents with automatic ratings described their participation with Parent Aware as either positive or neutral. Representatives from accredited child care centers reported being able to share with parents that they are the highest rated program in Parent Aware and are proud to say that their center(s) are of the highest quality. Respondents reported displaying their 4-star rating in their center and many mentioned informing parents about what the rating means.

Furthermore, programs noted that the rating system benefits families too, as it is another resource for them to find and locate high quality early care and education programs. One director of a School Readiness program stated,

> "As I talk with parents who are coming for tours and who are trying to make a decision about where to send their child and I talk about Parent Aware and NAEYC, they are getting educated right on the spot that those things are even out there. And maybe when they're out at other programs looking at them, they now have something else on their checklist to look for. So, now I feel that there is a parent education piece that is going on. We're making them [parents] aware of Parent Aware and helping them understand that just because a place offers a preschool or a child care doesn't mean that they've jumped through all these hoops and been through these rigorous standards and that they are offering outstanding programming."

Most respondents from programs with automatic ratings said that participating in Parent Aware has not changed the number or kinds of children and families they serve. A few respondents reported being able to serve children who received the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship as a result of their 4-star rating. But, programs either didn't know the extent to which parents chose their program because of its Parent Aware rating or said that parents would choose their program regardless of the Parent Aware rating. Respondents from accredited centers did acknowledge that they were able to attract families who otherwise may not have been able to afford their program; the Pre-K Allowance and the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship made it possible for these families to attend a high-quality, accredited child care center. Respondents from School Readiness and Head Start programs did not report a change in the number or kinds of families they serve. This may be in large part because parents do not pay for Head Start and School Readiness programs. They reported already serving low-income children, children at or below the poverty level, ELL children, and otherwise at-risk children as determined by early childhood screening. Being in Parent Aware has not changed this for them.

By and large, respondents from programs with automatic ratings reported that being in Parent Aware has not changed their program operations. One respondent stated that the approval process helped them to name and describe their programming since they pulled it together in a formal manner. Another responded reported that they changed their child assessment tool to an approved assessment tool. A couple of respondents also cited making changes to their programs based on Evaluation feedback results from the ECERS-R and CLASS observations (which are provided as part of participation in the Evaluation, not as part of the Parent Aware rating process).

Most respondents from programs with automatic ratings reported that participating in Parent Aware has not caused any difficulties or challenges, though a few were mentioned including the time needed for approval of curriculum. Another challenge cited by School Readiness programs was the initial 3-star provisional rating (which has now been changed to an automatic 4-star rating). One respondent criticized the process of assigning the provisional (and now 4-star) rating using an automatic process, stating a concern with the integrity of the process.

Summary of participants' perceptions. Despite some frustrations with the rating process, including documentation requirements and observations, center-based directors and family child care providers participating in Parent Aware have an overall positive impression of Parent Aware. They especially appreciate the benefits of Parent Aware such as the feedback, assistance, and financial resources provided. Most participants believe that Parent Aware can be a useful tool to attract parents to their program. Some participants are educating parents about Parent Aware at the time of tour or intake. Participants believe that Parent Aware is another important resource available to parents looking for child care. Questions have been raised by some participants about the validity of the automatic rating process; information from the Evaluation will provide useful information to address this concern.

Outreach to Parents

The role of parents is central in a market initiative like Parent Aware. Parents and their choices in the early care and education system are important drivers of change in the system (though, to date, no research has documented how parents respond to information provided in a Quality Rating System). Access to information and resources are necessary for parents to be active participants in a QRIS. In this section, we report on stakeholders' impressions about outreach to parents in Parent Aware. Findings on parents' actual knowledge about Parent Aware (as reported in a parent interview) are presented in Section 5 of this report (and will be addressed more fully in the final report of the Parent Aware Evaluation).

Reflecting on the second year of implementation, many interview respondents noted the challenges of developing and delivering marketing and outreach to parents when the number and diversity of rated programs is still relatively low. Indeed, marketing and outreach were not primary activities for much of the second year, but there was a sense among respondents that marketing activities would be picking up in the third year. One respondent said, "Ask me a year from now, and I think I'll have a lot more to report. We've just been generating a lot of ideas about how we reach parents so that they really understand what a QRIS means for them as consumers of child care."

- ❑ Many respondents discussed the "timing issue" of marketing to parents once there are enough rated programs. Respondents described the need to focus on program recruitment in Year 2 and to "delay" outreach efforts to parents.
    - o As one respondent stated, "It's hard to market when you're only in pilot, only in certain neighborhoods."
    - o Another respondent asked, "what is the appropriate balance of putting this out to parents when the program options are limited?"
- ❑ Several respondents pointed to success early on with parent focus groups and the incorporation of information learned from the focus groups into promotion materials. Knowing how Parent Aware resonates with parents, especially low-income parents, is important.
    - o Respondents from the Implementation team described the importance of efforts to reach out to "trusted advisors" who can help build more connections with families.

- o Several respondents also referenced findings from the MELF Baseline study indicating that many low-income families do not have access to a computer in their homes. With this information, they can strategize about alternative ways to reach out to parents.
- ❑ Current strategies in use, as described by some respondents, rely more on "grassroots outreach" rather than a comprehensive media campaign, though marketing efforts are planned for the second half of the third year. The grassroots efforts include providing materials at community events (often in partnership with CCR&Rs in the pilot areas) and talking directly with parents who call looking for child care. In addition, a radio campaign launched early in 2010 generated a nearly 300% increase in traffic to the Parent Aware website, indicating the effectiveness of direct marketing as an approach to promoting Parent Aware to parents.

Summary of outreach to parents. In Year 2 of the pilot, outreach efforts to parents were not a focus of Parent Aware as attention was needed on recruitment of programs. However, entering Year 3 of the pilot, outreach efforts are picking up speed, and there is an effort to test innovative strategies (including grassroots efforts and use of trusted advisors). A radio campaign initiated early in 2010 generated a 300% increase in traffic to the Parent Aware website.

Perception of Changes Needed for Statewide Implementation

The final aspect of implementation examined in the Evaluation is the perception among key stakeholders of any changes in Parent Aware that would be needed if it were to be scaled statewide. Respondents were asked to consider the changes that would need to be made and provided a variety of responses to this question which are summarized below.

- ❑ Some respondents referred to the ongoing evaluation of Parent Aware and the importance of using evaluation findings to improve the indicators. They described a need to ensure integrity in the rating process and in the final rating that is issued. Some respondents also questioned the integrity of the automatic rating process and called for the evaluation to review the standards used across different types of early childhood programs.
- ❑ Many respondents noted that statewide implementation will require an improved capacity to provide training on curriculum and assessment and to offer consultation and other supports. Respondents called for continued alignment of Parent Aware with resources in the Professional Development System and the development of more relationship-based approaches for working with providers on quality improvement on a statewide scale.
- ❑ Respondents identified a number of areas that could be strengthened by adding new indicators to the rating system. These include indicators related to infants and toddlers and cultural relevance of programs.
- ❑ Respondents identified the importance of keeping a focus on parents in statewide implementation. Respondents' suggestions for doing this effectively included the provision of a parent-driven incentive, the development of a marketing campaign, and a reexamination of the current branding to ensure that it is resonating with parents.
- ❑ Some respondents called for more upfront incentives for providers to participate in the rating system as well as the addition of financial bonuses for achieving higher quality levels.

- ❑ Some respondents expressed concern about the cost of observational assessments and questioned whether these costs would be sustainable in a statewide implementation. A few respondents also called for a review of the observational tools that are currently used to make them more appropriate across all settings.
- ❑ A few respondents discussed the potential of considering different ways to tailor Parent Aware for different geographical areas.
- ❑ A few respondents were concerned about the capacity challenges of the curriculum review process in statewide implementation.
- ❑ Two respondents noted the need to articulate how family, friend and neighbor caregivers fit into a QRIS.
- ❑ Finally, a few respondents described the importance of removing uncertainties and frequent changes once the program is scaled statewide.

Summary of changes needed for statewide implementation. With over 40 interview respondents from diverse organizations and roles in Parent Aware, a variety of perspectives were shared on the potential for statewide implementation. Few issues were identified by the majority of respondents, though many respondents did note the need to provide improvement support for providers.

Summary of Findings on Implementation

Parent Aware is a pilot, so, by definition, implementation is often changing and shifting in response to issues that have been identified by the Implementation Team or by the Evaluation. This provides flexibility but also some confusion to staff and participants.

Successes and challenges have been identified by stakeholders. Parent Aware has raised awareness (including legislative awareness) about the importance of quality early care and education. Enrollment in Parent Aware has increased steadily; relationships and the provision of financial incentives, training and resources have been identified as keys to recruitment. Provision of quality improvement supports in Parent Aware is becoming more coordinated and targeted, though there is a perception that further supports are needed to improve both recruitment and the quality of participating programs.

Reaching diverse groups such as English language learners and various cultural groups remains a challenge for Parent Aware, and significant resources are being devoted to this issue. Reaching family child care providers, particularly those in rural areas has also been identified as a challenge, though successes have been noted with recruitment of family child care providers in the metropolitan pilot areas.

As statewide implementation is considered, stakeholders emphasize the importance of using evaluation findings to inform changes, improving the capacity of the system to provide resources such as curriculum training and consultation, continuing to focus on parents, and providing incentives for program participation. A re-assessment of capacity in terms of costs and added value of rating components (such as observations, the curriculum and assessment review process and individualized supports) will be needed. The unique needs and circumstances of providers in rural areas should also be considered

Section 4. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAMS PARTICIPATING IN PARENT AWARE

Assessing the effectiveness of an initiative requires an understanding of the participants in the initiative. In particular, it is critical to understand program characteristics of Parent Aware participants as well as details about how they were scored in the Parent Aware rating process.

In this section, we describe certain characteristics of programs participating in Parent Aware. Data in this section come from several sources including NACCRRAware, the Parent Aware database at the Department of Human Services, and a survey administered by Child Trends of Parent Aware center-based program directors and family child care providers (note that the survey data include programs that participated in the full rating process as well as those who received an automatic rating in Parent Aware). See the Appendix for details about each of these data sources.

Number of children served in Parent Aware rated programs

As described earlier, there are currently 318 rated programs in Parent Aware. Enrollment data were obtained from these programs to estimate the number of children served in Parent Aware rated programs.[12] Calculating across the data sources examined (and acknowledging missing data for 30 programs), Parent Aware is currently serving at least 20,910 children.

The majority of these children (at least 13,615) are cared for in center-based programs. Over half of all center-based programs (51%) serve 50 to 100 children, with an average enrollment of 78.7 children and the largest serving 288 children. Family child care programs are currently serving 416 children. The large majority (81%) of family child care programs serve 10 or fewer children, with an average enrollment of 7.7 children and the largest serving 20 children. The largest programs are Head Start programs, the majority of which serve over 100 children, with an average enrollment of 203.1 children, and the largest serving 837 children. In total, at least 2,437 children are cared for in Head Start and Early Head Start programs and another 4,452 children are cared for in school-based Pre-K programs.

Table 9. Enrollment size of currently-rated Parent Aware programs

	Combined (N=237)	Family Child Care (N=52)	Centers/ Preschools (N=173)	Head Start (N=12)
10 or fewer children enrolled	19%	81%	2%	0%
11 to 50 children enrolled	22%	19%	22%	25%
51 to 100	38%	0%	51%	17%

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[12] The majority of enrollment data was obtained from NACCRRAware. However, NACCRRAware does not contain information about the 51 School Readiness programs enrolled in Parent Aware and was missing information for a significant number of other programs. For example, enrollment information was only available for 237 of the 267 non-School Readiness programs. To determine the total number of children served by Parent Aware programs, additional enrollment information about School Readiness programs was obtained from the Minnesota Department of Education.

	Combined (N=237)	Family Child Care (N=52)	Centers/ Preschools (N=173)	Head Start (N=12)
children enrolled				
101 or more children enrolled	21%	0%	25%	58%

Source: NACCRRAware and the Parent Aware Database, as of December 31st, 2009.

Across all types of programs, most children (55%) served by Parent Aware programs are preschool age. Approximately 11% of children served are infants, 18% are toddlers and 16% are school-aged children.

Figure 8. Average number of children enrolled in Parent Aware programs by age group and type of child care program
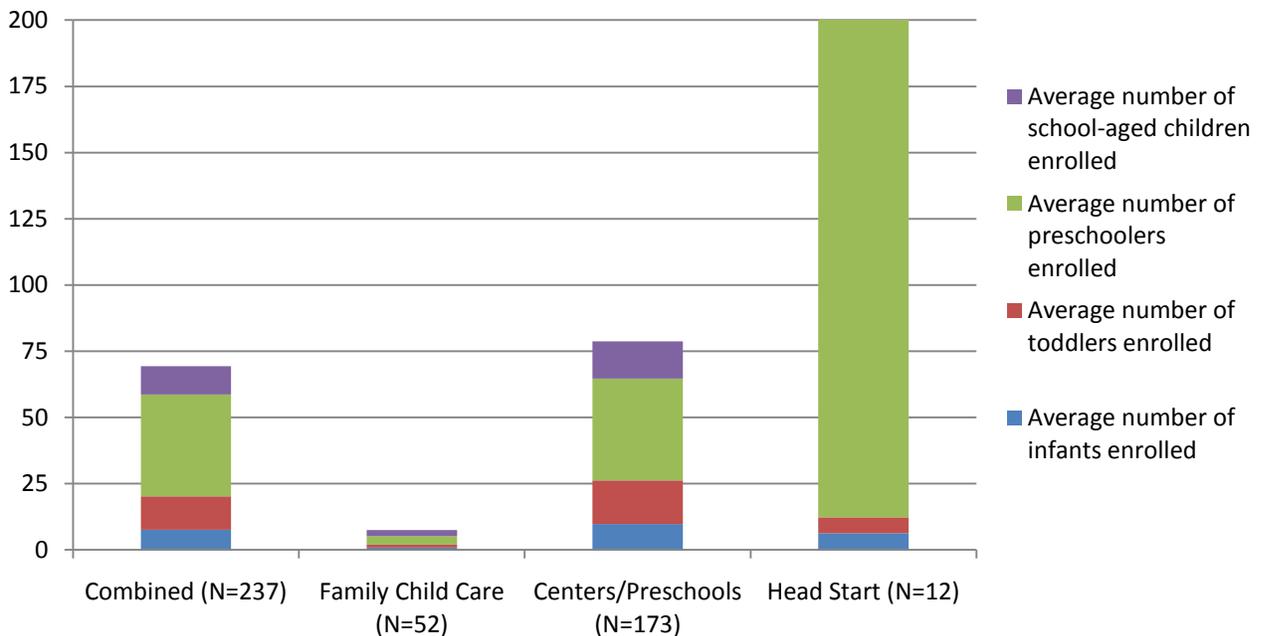
Source: NACCRRAware and the Parent Aware Database, as of December 31st, 2009.

Percentage of Parent Aware rated programs that care for children receiving child care subsidies

Parent Aware has identified low-income families as a priority for receiving care in high quality early care and education settings identified through the Parent Aware rating process. Children who are recipients of subsidies through Minnesota's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) are an important subgroup of low-income families. According to data from NACCRAware, 84% of programs in Parent Aware (not including Head Start or School Readiness programs) are currently caring for children who receive CCAP and another 13% are willing to accept these subsidies as payment for care, but do not have any children currently enrolled who receive CCAP. A small portion of programs (3%; all are accredited center-based

programs) are not willing to care for children who would pay for care using CCAP (See Figure 9).

Figure 9. Number of currently-rated programs that care for children in the Child Care Assistance Program or are willing to care for children in the Child Care Assistance Program

All programs (N=229)

Willing to care for children receiving CCAP
13%

Not willing to care for children receiving CCAP
3%

Currently caring for children receiving CCAP
84%

Family Child Care programs (N=53)

Willing to care for children receiving CCAP
34%

Currently caring for children receiving CCAP
66%

Center-based programs (N=176)

Willing to care for children receiving CCAP
6%

Not willing to care for children receiving CCAP
5%

Currently Caring for children receiving CCAP
89%

Source: NACCRRAware, as of December 31st, 2009.

Low-income families often are in need of care on weekends and evenings, yet finding child care during these non-traditional hours can be difficult. Nearly every program in Parent Aware provides care at least five days a week (Monday through Friday). Only 4.2% of programs provide care on the weekend, approximately half of which are family child care programs and half are center-based programs.

Overview of Rating Tool

Next, we turn to an overview of the Parent Aware ratings that participating programs have received. Table 10 contains details about the scoring system used in Parent Aware.

Table 10. Categories of best practices in the Parent Aware rating tool

Family partnerships	Teaching materials and strategies	Tracking learning	Teacher training and education
Communicate with families so that early education is delivered in a way that is respectful of family norms and traditions, and so that parents are involved, contributing members of the learning community that supports children's growth and development.	Have an educational plan and a setting with appropriate, play-based learning materials, and provide the types of child-adult interaction that research has shown makes a difference in children's school readiness.	Observe children's progress toward achieving the skills and abilities needed to be fully prepared for school success to enable providers and early educators to individualize instruction and use that information to enhance communication with families.	Have early childhood educators with education and training on child development and early childhood education. Highly-qualified director or education coordinator. Staff preparation is recorded and documented through the Minnesota Center for Professional Development Registry. Points are awarded based on the steps achieved by staff in the Career Lattice.
10 points possible/ 4 stars possible	**10 points possible/ 4 stars possible**	**10 points possible/ 4 stars possible**	**10 points possible/ 4 stars possible**

Total points possible: 40

Points in all four categories of best practices are totaled. Stars are awarded using the following scale:

1 star = 0 – 11.9 points
2 stars = 12 – 23.9 points
3 stars = 24 – 31.9 points and is using an approved curriculum in preschool classrooms
4 stars = 32 – 40 points and has received a score of 3 or higher for each category of the CLASS in preschool classrooms (or has earned an exception)

The stars awarded in each category are reported on the Parent Aware website and can be viewed by parents seeking more detailed information about a program's rating. Points, in contrast, are not available online.

In the following section, scores of 90 programs will be examined. All 90 scores are initial ratings, reflecting a program's first experience going through the Parent Aware rating process. The decision to look only at initial ratings was made because these are the best measures of the initial quality of programs, before programs made improvements specifically designed to

improve their rating. All ratings, including re-ratings, will be examined in the final report of the Parent Aware Evaluation.

Family child care programs and center-based programs will be reported together when there are no interesting or significant differences between their scores.

Below, Figure 10 describes the average category subtotals for fully-rated programs by their star rating. As would be expected, 4 star programs have higher averages in all of the categories than their lower-rated counterparts. The range of category subtotals is smaller in the Family Partnerships category than in the other categories, with even 1-star programs earning an average of 5.2 points in Family Partnerships.

Figure 10. Category points subtotals by star rating for initial ratings of 90 fully-rated programs
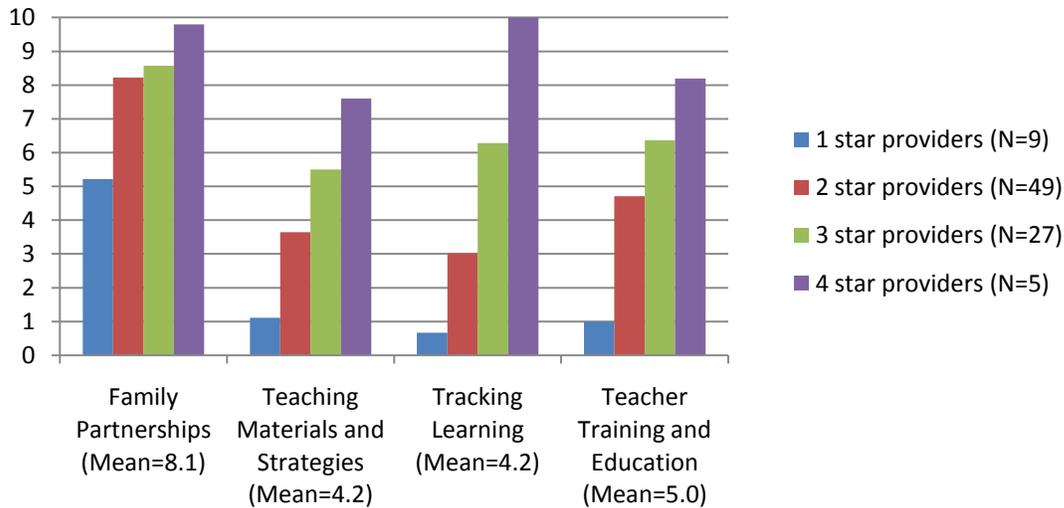
Source: Parent Aware Rating Tool Database, Minnesota Department of Human Services (as of December 31st, 2009).

As mentioned above, category subtotals are also converted into category-specific star ratings, which are different than overall star ratings. For these calculations, the following scale is used:

1 star =   0 – 2 points
2 stars = 2.5 – 4 points
3 stars = 4.5 – 7 points
4 stars = 7.5 – 10 points

As would be expected, programs with an overall star rating of 4 score better, on average, in each category than their lower rated counterparts (see Figure 11). Again, the smallest range is seen in the Family Partnerships category, where even 1-star programs scored, on average, 2.7 stars.

Figure 11. Category stars by star rating for initial ratings of fully-rated providers
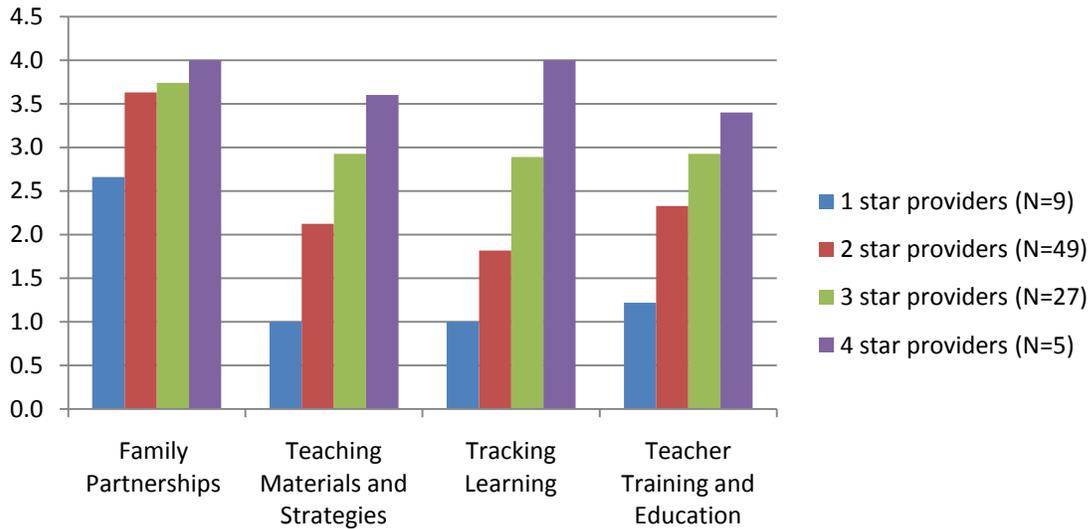
Source: Parent Aware Rating Tool database, Minnesota Department of Human Services, as of December 31st, 2009.

Although 4-star programs have higher average category subtotals and higher average stars in all categories, this does not mean that a program's overall star rating can always predict the category star ratings. Nearly a third of programs (31%) received 4 stars in one category and 1 star in another category. In fact, 44% of 2-star rated programs received 4 stars in one category and 1 star in another.

Summarizing the information about points earned and stars earned in each category, it can be seen that fully-rated programs have received a wide range of initial scores in three of the four categories (Teaching Materials and Strategies, Tracking Learning, and Teacher Training and Education). In contrast, all programs score fairly well in the Family Partnerships category. As would be expected, programs that receive a 4-star rating score better, on average, in all four categories, than programs that receive a lower star rating. However, nearly a third of programs receive 1 star in one category and 4 stars in another.

We turn next to a more detailed review of each indicator category in Parent Aware. For each category, an overview of the scoring system is provided. Next, we describe how programs scored in the category. If applicable, we supplement the scoring information with information from the survey of Parent Aware participants to highlight interesting patterns or trends.

Scores in the Family Partnerships Category

The goal of the Family Partnerships category is to "Communicate with families so that early education is delivered in a way that is respectful of family norms and traditions, and so that parents are involved, contributing members of the learning community that supports children's growth and development." Table 11 describes how points can be earned in the Family Partnerships category.

Table 11. Points that can be earned in the Family Partnerships category

Quality Indicator	Points possible (All programs)
Program collects feedback from parents	1 point
A written plan is developed for using parent feedback	1 point

Program uses family communication strategies
        If 2 strategies, 1 point
        If 3 strategies, 2 points
        If 4 strategies, 3 points
	3 points

Program conducts intake interviews	1 point
Program refers parents to preschool screening	1 point
Program creates transition plans for children	1 point
Program meets with parents about transitions	2 points
Total possible	**10 points**

Source: Parent Aware Program Materials.

Programs can earn one point for documenting how they get feedback from parents by submitting a copy of the survey used to collect this information. Programs can earn a second point by providing documentation that the parent feedback is then used to plan ahead and make improvements in the program. In the initial rating of 90 programs, over 95% of programs received a point for collecting feedback from parents and 85% of programs received an additional point for using that feedback to make improvements in the program.

Programs can earn up to three points for demonstrating that the program has utilized multiple strategies for communicating with families in the last twelve months. Examples of Family Communication Strategies are: newsletters, parent information bulletin boards, daily reports or schedules sent home to families, parent conferences, a website, email messages to parents, "homework" assigned to parents, home visiting, and events for the entire family. While all 90 programs scored well on this indicator in their initial rating, centers were more likely than family child care programs to earn more points for family communication strategies. All centers earned at least two points, with 91% of centers earning three points. In contrast, only 69% of family child care programs earned three points and 22% earned two points.

Survey findings reflect a similar pattern, with all providers reporting multiple family communication strategies. Centers report more frequent communication with parents and more communication strategies for connecting with parents. The survey also asked directors and family child care providers how often they implemented the following family communication strategies: providing parent education activities, holding conferences, distributing newsletters, and informally chatting with parents. Among the 71 providers that completed the Child Trends survey, providers report that they hold conferences quarterly (though some family child care providers do not have conferences at all) (see Figure 12). All providers in the survey sample report that they distribute newsletters, and on average, centers and family child care providers distribute them monthly (though family child care distribute slightly less frequently). Eighty (80) percent of center directors report that they provide parent education activities, mostly quarterly. Over 60% of family child care providers report that they never provide parent education activities. All providers in the survey sample report informally chatting with parents, with over 90% reporting that they do so daily.

57

Figure 12. Percent of programs implementing family communication strategies at least quarterly
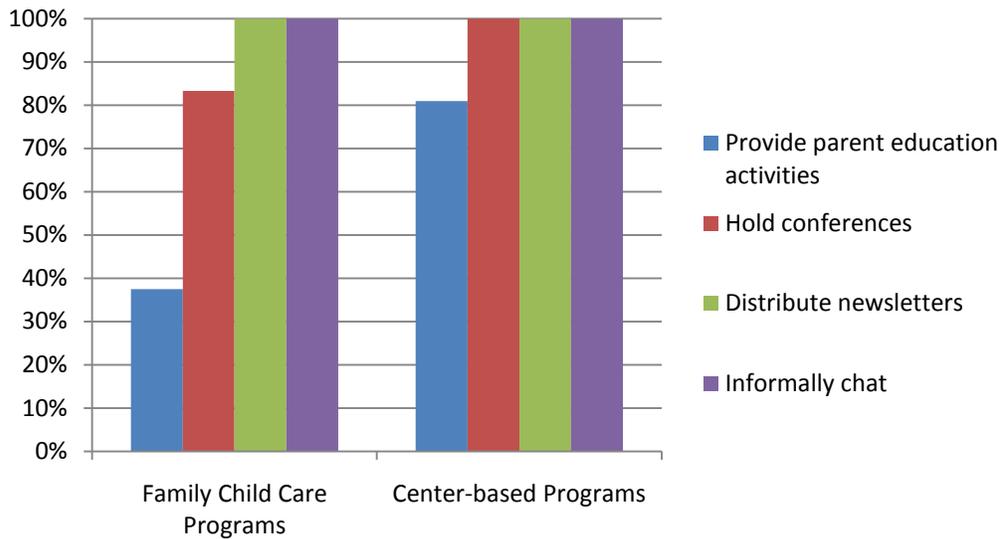
Source: 2009 Child Trends Survey (26 family child care providers and 45 child care centers)

Programs can earn a point by providing documentation that program staff conduct a meeting with each family upon enrollment to discuss the child's entrance into the program. This Intake Interview should include a discussion of program policies, the child's needs and preferences, and the family's needs and preferences including those related to the family's culture. While program policies may be covered in a group orientation session, individual meetings with families are needed to discuss family-specific matters. Over 70% of programs earned a full point for demonstrating that they conduct intake interviews and another 5% earned half of a point. Centers are more likely to earn these points than family child care programs.

In Minnesota, all children are required to have a preschool screening before entering Kindergarten. Preschool screenings are offered for free from the local school district, but it is important that parents know about this state requirement and where they can participate in a free screening. Programs can earn a point toward their Family Partnership subtotal by sharing information with parents regarding preschool screening. In order to receive this point, programs must document how they share information with parents about when and where preschool screenings will be held. Acceptable documentation includes: Brochures or flyers from preschool screening agency or organization (not brochures marketing the 0 to 3 year old screenings) or letters to parents reminding them of the screenings. Over 90% of both centers and family child care programs earned a point for providing parents with referrals for preschool screenings.

Transitions are developmental milestones for children, and also represent a large change in a child's daily routine. Careful planning and coordination with parents is necessary to help children manage the transition successfully. Programs can earn one point for demonstrating that they have a written plan for transitioning children when the child moves to a new classroom (or reaches a milestone) AND a written plan for transitioning children to Kindergarten. Programs can receive half credit (0.5 points) on the "Transition Plans" indicator if they have a transition plan for transitions between classrooms but not for transitions to Kindergarten, or vice versa.

Centers were significantly more likely than family child care programs to meet this indicator, with 77% of centers earning a full point (and another 6% earning a half point) but only 56% of family child care programs earning a point.

Programs can earn two points for demonstrating that transition plans are created with parent input *and* shared with parents at a meeting. Programs can receive half credit (one point) for the "Transition Meetings" indicator if they can document that parents have seen transition plans, but not that parents were consulted about the plan, or vice versa. Again, centers were significantly more likely to earn these points than were family child care programs, with 71% of center-based programs earning two points on this indicator compared to 53% of family child care programs. In contrast, according to the survey data, nearly all center directors (93%) and family child care providers (96%) report sharing information with parents about transitioning to Kindergarten. This may be an example of providers not being able to sufficiently document their practices in a way that meets the requirements for Parent Aware.

Table 12. Total points earned in the Family Partnerships category in initial ratings

	% of Family child care programs	% of Center-based programs	% of All programs
0 or 0.5 Points	2%	0%	1%
1 or 1.5 Point	0%	0%	0%
2 or 2.5 Points	2%	0%	1%
3 or 3.5 Points	2%	0%	1%
4 or 4.5 Points	0%	0%	0%
5 or 5.5 Points	9%	3%	7%
6 or 6.5 Points	15%	11%	13%
7 or 7.5 Points	18%	6%	13%
8 or 8.5 Points	11%	9%	10%
9 or 9.5 Points	11%	23%	16%
10 Points	31%	49%	38%

Source: Parent Aware Database, DHS, Initial Ratings as of December 31st, 2009.

Overall, centers received significantly higher category point subtotals in this category, with an average category subtotal of 8.8 compared to 7.7 for family child care programs. For both family child care programs and centers, ten points is the most common score received. Almost all (94%) family child care providers scored at least five points, and 100% of centers scored at least five points in this category (see Table 12). The average points subtotal in the Family Partnerships category is higher than the average points subtotal in any of the three other categories.

As mentioned earlier, a program's category score is also translated into a category star rating. More programs received 4 stars in the Family Partnerships category than in any other category. The distribution of Family Partnership category star ratings is shown below. Not surprisingly given the difference in category points subtotals, centers received, on average, significantly more stars than family child care programs.

Figure 13. Distribution of Family Partnership category stars

Across all Programs
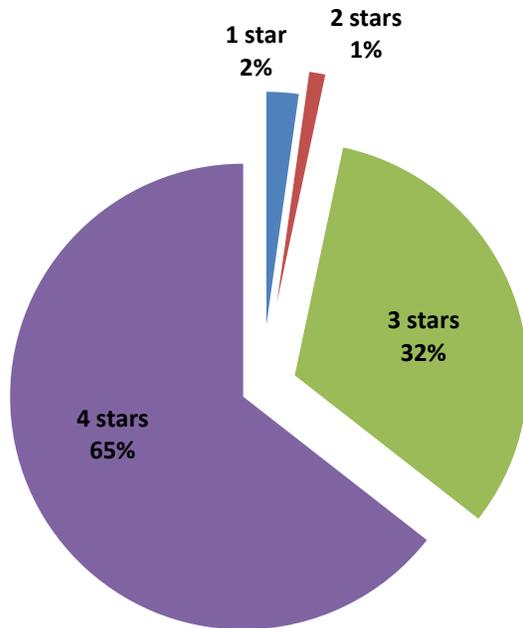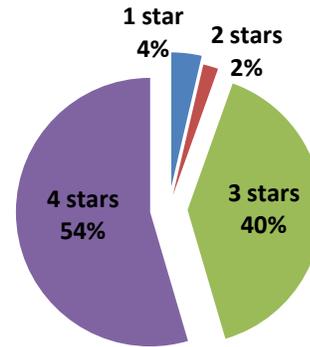
Family Child Care Programs

Center-Based Programs
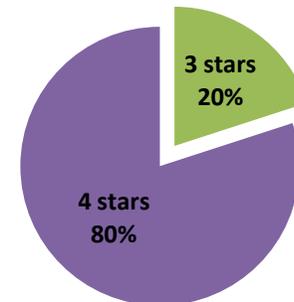
Source: Parent Aware Database, DHS, Initial Ratings as of December 31st, 2009.

Summary of information about the Family Partnerships category. Center-based programs scored well on all the indicators that make up the Family Partnerships category. On each indicator, at least 70% of center-based programs received all the available points. Family child care programs also scored well, though not as well as center-based programs. Family child care programs scored less well in transition planning and sharing transition plans with parents. While it is often assumed that family child care providers are more closely connected to parents than providers in center-based programs, these findings highlight the structures that centers have in place to facilitate communication with parents.

Scores in the Teaching Materials and Strategies Category

The goal of the Teaching Materials and Strategies category is to have an educational plan and a setting with appropriate, play-based learning materials, and to provide the types of child-adult interaction that research has shown to have a positive effect on children's school readiness. These indicators assess the educational approaches used by the program as well as the environment within which children play and learn. Table 13 describes how points can be earned in the Teaching Materials and Strategies category.

Table 13. Points system for Teaching Materials and Strategies category

Quality Indicator	Points possible (Family child care programs)	Points possible (Center-based programs)
Program uses a research-based curriculum and staff have been trained in the curriculum (required for preschool classrooms to achieve 3 or 4 stars). If programs use an approved curriculum for one but not both age groups (infant/toddler and preschoolers), they may receive partial credit (half the available points). If the curriculum is not approved, the provider may earn up to two points for demonstrating that the program's curriculum/approach is aligned with the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs).	5 points	3 points
Environment Rating Scale Scores If average ERS score is at least 3.5, family child care providers earn 2 points and centers earn 1 point. If average ERS score is at least 4.0, family child care providers earn 3 points and centers earn 2 points. If average ERS score is at least 4.5, family child care providers earn 4 points and centers earn 3 points. If average ERS score is at least 5.0, family child care providers earn 5 points and centers earn 4 points.	5 points	4 points
CLASS scores (preschool classrooms only) In each of three (3) categories, if score is 1 or 2 = 0 points If score is 3, 4 or 5 = .5 points If score is 6 or 7 = 1 point	N/A	3 points
Total possible	**10 points**	**10 points**

Source: Parent Aware Program Materials.

Programs can earn points if their staff are trained in and implement a research-based curriculum from a pre-approved list OR use a curriculum that has been approved by the Parent Aware Curriculum Review Committee. (See above for more information about the Curriculum Review Process.) Centers can earn up to three points while family child care programs can earn up to five points. Regardless of points earned, providers must have an approved curriculum for preschool classrooms (though not necessarily for infant/toddler classrooms) to achieve 3 stars or higher in the overall Parent Aware evaluation.

To get these points, programs must provide evidence of the curriculum used if it is on the approved list or get the curriculum approved by the Curriculum Review Committee if it is not on the approved list. They must also provide documentation showing that the provider has completed a minimum of eight hours of training on the use of the curriculum for each age group (infant/toddler and preschoolers). To show that the curriculum is actually in use, programs must provide at least three lessons plans that show that the curriculum has been implemented in the past six months for each age group (infant/toddler and preschoolers). If their curriculum is not

approved, they can earn up to two points by demonstrating that their daily activities align with the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. Table 14 provides details about points earned for this Quality Indicator in the initial ratings of 90 programs.

Table 14. Points earned for using, and being trained in, a research-based curriculum

Description of degree to which indicator was met	Points awarded	% of center-based programs	% of family child care programs
No curriculum used OR curriculum was not approved AND not aligned with ECIPs	0	9%	15%
Activities are aligned with ECIPs for one age group, but not the other (Centers)	0.5	3%	N/A
Activities are aligned with ECIPs for both age groups (centers) or for one age group (FCC)	1	43%	2%
If programs use an approved curriculum for one but not both age groups (centers)	1.5	3%	N/A
Approved curriculum is used for one age group and activities are aligned in other age group (centers) or activities are aligned with ECIPs for both age groups (FCC)	2	3%	22%
If programs use an approved curriculum for one but not both age groups (FCC)	2.5	0%	7%
If program uses an approved curriculum for both age groups (centers)	3	37%	N/A
Approved curriculum is used for one age group and activities are aligned in other age group (FCC)	3.5	N/A	7%
If family child care programs use an approved curriculum for both age groups OR if center only serves infants/toddlers and uses approved curriculum with infants/toddlers.	5	3%	47%

Source: Parent Aware Database, DHS, Initial Ratings as of December 31st, 2009.

Among the initial ratings given to 90 programs, family child care programs were more likely than centers to earn all the available points for having a curriculum, with 47% of family child care programs earning five points and 40% of centers earning three points (or five points if they only serve infants and toddlers). Both types of programs were more likely to have an approved curriculum (or activities aligned with ECIPs) for preschoolers than for infants and toddlers.

Additional insight into curriculum use can be found by examining Child Trends' survey data of 71 providers (which include center directors and family child care providers from both accredited and fully rated programs). The majority of providers reported in the survey that they use a formal written curriculum: 93% of centers and 77% of family child care. Of those who said they used a formal curriculum, a majority of centers (51%) and most family child care programs (93%) report that they use some version of Creative Curriculum (See Table 15). This is

not surprising since trainings for Creative Curriculum are regularly offered in Minnesota while trainings on other curricula are offered less frequently and less widely. Other formal curricula, however, may not be approved by the Parent Aware Curriculum Review Committee and therefore would not earn indicator points in this category.

Table 15. Percent of Parent Aware providers who report using the following curricula

Curriculum Name	% of center-based programs (N=45)	% of family child care programs (N=26)
Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos	11 (24%)	13 (50%)
High/Scope for Infants and Toddlers	3 (7%)	0 (0%)
Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Creative Curriculum for Preschool	12 (27%)	13 (50%)
High/Scope for Preschoolers	6 (13%)	0 (0%)
Opening the World of Learning (OWL)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Program uses an approach, such as Montessori or Project Approach	4 (9%)	1 (4%)
Program uses a locally developed curriculum	8 (18%)	1 (4%)

Source: 2009 Child Trends Survey

Most providers (73% of center directors and 100% of family child care providers) report having received formal training on use of the primary curriculum used for infants and toddlers. Most providers (83% of center directors and 95% of family child care providers) report having received formal training on use of the primary curriculum used for preschool-aged children. It is possible, however, that these providers were trained in a formal curriculum that is not approved by the Parent Aware Curriculum Review Committee, and therefore would not earn points on this quality indicator.

To complete the requirements of the Teaching Materials and Strategies category, programs must participate in an on-site observation conducted by trained observers from the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) at the University of Minnesota. In family child care programs, observers use the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Revised (FCCERS-R; Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2007) to assess the quality of the environment, materials, routines, health and safety precautions, and teacher-child interactions. In center-based programs, observers complete the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R; Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998) or the Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale Revised (ITERS-R; Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 1990) depending on the ages of children in the selected classroom. One-third of the classrooms serving each age group are randomly selected for observation.

There are seven subscales within the Environmental Rating Scale, six of which are used by Parent Aware: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language-Reasoning, Activities, Interaction, and Program Structure. Within each of these subscales, programs are given a score from 1.0 to 7.0. For center-based programs, these scores (whether from the ITERS-

R or the ECERS-R) are then averaged across all the subscales and across the classrooms to create a single program ERS score between 1.0 and 7.0. Indicator points are then determined based on the average ERS score with one additional requirement: If any classrooms receive a score less than 3.0, the program will earn zero points for this indicator. Table 16 provides more details about the distribution of points.

Table 16. Points earned for ERS scores in initial ratings

Average ERS Score, across classrooms	Points earned for center-based programs	Percent of center-based programs that earned these points (N=35)	Points earned for family child care programs	Percent of family child care programs that earned these points (N=55)
< 3.5 OR one classroom with a score of < 3.0	0	51%	0	67%
At least 3.5	1	17%	2	18%
At least 4.0	2	9%	3	9%
At least 4.5	3	23%	4	2%
At least 5.0	4	0%	5	4%

Source: Parent Aware Database, DHS, Initial Ratings as of December 31st, 2009.

As is evident in the table above, family child care programs were more likely than centers to receive an average ERS score of less than 3.5 and therefore earn zero points for this indicator. In contrast, family child care programs were also more likely than centers to receive an average ERS score of at least 5.0 and therefore earn the maximum number of points for this indicator.

As part of the Teaching Materials and Strategies category, center-based programs (but not family child care programs) must also complete the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS; Pianta, La Paro & Hamre, 2008) to assess the quality of emotional support and instruction. Programs can earn up to three points for scoring well on the CLASS. There are three sections of the CLASS: Emotional Support, Instructional Support, and Classroom Organization. Unlike ERS, program scores are not averaged across the subscales of the CLASS. Programs can score between 1.0 and 7.0 on each of the CLASS sections and get up to one point toward their Teaching Materials and Strategies score for each of these sections. A CLASS score below 3.0 earns no points. A CLASS score of 3.0- 5.0 earns half a point. A CLASS score of 6.0-7.0 earns a full point. Thus, a program that scores a 6.0 or higher in all three sections of the CLASS would earn three points. A program that scores a 3.0-3.9 in Emotional Support, a 4.0-4.9 in Instructional Support, and a 5.0-5.9 in Classroom Organization would get half a point in each section and thus receive a total score of 1.5 points.

Notably, all preschool classrooms must receive a CLASS score of 3.0 or higher in each category (Emotional Support, Instructional Support and Classroom Organization) in order for a provider to achieve an overall 4 star Parent Aware rating. DHS will make exceptions in cases where a program has enough total points to achieve a 4 star rating if the program:

a. Achieves a CLASS score in the mid-range (3.0-5.0) in the Emotional Support category *and*
b. Achieves a CLASS score in the mid-range (3.0-5.0) in either of the other two categories—Instructional Support or Classroom Organization.
c. The program develops and submits to DHS an improvement plan to raise the score in the below mid-range scored category. Improvement plans may include activities such as staff training, mentoring, coaching, studying CLASS videos or attending CLASS trainings. DHS then approves the plan and communicates that to the program. The plan must be initiated within one month of the date the rating is received and must be completed within a timeframe that allows for re-rating within six months.

Table 17. Percent of center-based programs earning the following CLASS Scores (and corresponding indicator points) in their initial rating (N=35)

CLASS Category Score	Indicator Points Earned	Emotional Support	Instructional Support	Classroom Organization
Less than 3.0	0	0%	59%	3%
At least 3.0	0.5	68%	41%	85%
At least 6.0	1	32%	0%	12%

Source: Parent Aware Database, DHS, Initial Ratings as of December 31st, 2009.

Providers scored significantly better in the Emotional Support category of CLASS than in any other category, and significantly worse in the Instructional Support category. All providers received a CLASS score of at least 3.0 in Emotional Support and nearly a third received a score of at least 6.0. In contrast, no providers received a score of 6.0 or more in Instructional Support and the majority received a score of less than 3.0. As mentioned above, if a program scores below 3.0 in any category, they are not eligible to receive an overall 4-star Parent Aware rating unless they submit to DHS a plan for how they will raise the low score in six months. This means that nearly 60% of providers were ineligible for an overall 4-star Parent Aware rating in their initial rating and had to submit an improvement plan if they wanted to receive a 4-star rating.

Table 18. Total points earned in the Teaching Materials and Strategies category

	% of Family Child Care Programs (N=55)	% of Center-Based Programs (N=35)	% of All Programs (N=90)
0 or 0.5 Points	11%	0%	7%
1 or 1.5 Point	2%	6%	3%
2 or 2.5 Points	24%	29%	26%
3 or 3.5 Points	2%	14%	7%
4 or 4.5 Points	4%	9%	6%
5 or 5.5 Points	36%	20%	30%
6 or 6.5 Points	4%	6%	4%
7 or 7.5 Points	13%	6%	10%
8 or 8.5 Points	4%	11%	7%
9 or 9.5 Points	2%	0%	1%
10 Points	0%	0%	0%

Source: Parent Aware Database, DHS. Initial Ratings as of December 31st, 2009.

Overall in the Teaching Materials and Strategies category, family child care programs and centers did not score significantly differently. The mean category score was 4.1 for family child care programs and 4.2 for center-based programs.

Figure 14. Distribution of Teaching Materials and Strategies category stars

Across all programs

Family Child Care Programs

Center-Based Programs
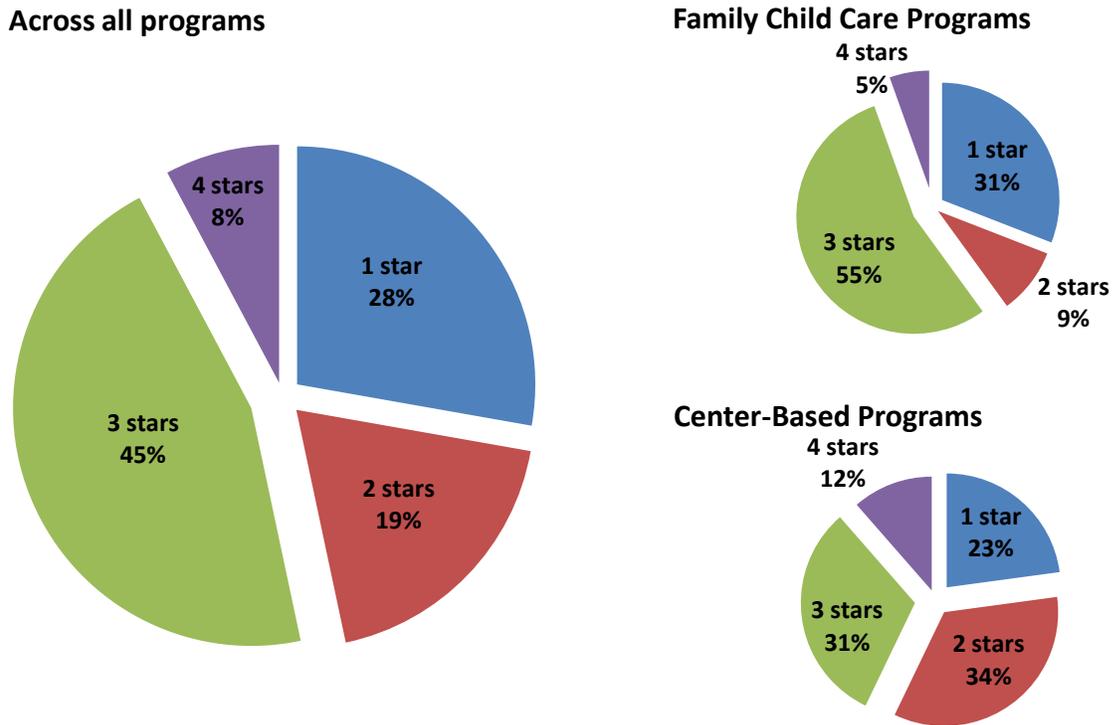
Although family child care programs and centers did not receive significantly different category point subtotals, the difference in their distribution of category star ratings is noticeable. The majority (60%) of family child care programs received 3 or 4 stars compared with only 43% of center-based programs.

Summary of information about the Teaching Materials and Strategies category. The majority of programs receive partial credit (not zero points and not the full points available) for using a research-based curriculum. Family child care programs are more likely than center-based programs to receive the full points available on the curriculum indicator. Creative Curriculum is the most commonly used curriculum among fully-rated programs. Most programs receive an average ERS score of less than 3.5 (or at least one classroom receives a score of less than 3.0) and therefore receive no points on the ERS indicator. Most programs receive a score under 3.0 on at least one section of the CLASS, making the program ineligible for a 4-star Parent Aware rating.

Scores in the Tracking Learning Category

Tracking Learning indicators measure how providers are following each child's progress as he/she grows and develops, how providers share their observations about children's progress with the children's families, and whether that information is shared with parents and used to guide instruction and design individual goals for the child. A select set of assessment tools have been pre-approved by Parent Aware. Other assessment tools must be reviewed and approved by the Child Assessment Review Committee. Table 19 describes how points can be earned in the Tracking Learning category.

Table 19. Points system for Tracking Learning category

Quality Indicator	Points possible (All programs)
Program uses an approved, research-based instructional assessment tool at least twice per year, and staff have training on its use = 4 points Program uses an unapproved assessment tool but can document how children's progress is being tracked = 2 points (If program is using a tool with some, but not all, age groups, partial credit is given.)	4 points
Providers share assessment information with children's families at least twice per year. If approved tool, 3 points are possible. If informal tool, 1 point is possible. (If program is using a tool with some but not all age groups, partial credit is given.)	3 points
Use child assessment information to guide instruction and design goals for individual children. If approved tool, 3 points are possible. If informal tool, 1 point is possible. (If program is using a tool with some but not all age groups, partial credit is given.)	3 points
Total possible	10 points

Source: Parent Aware Program Materials.

Programs can earn up to four points for their assessment tools. To get four points, a program must use a child assessment tool that is on the pre-approved list of assessments or get approval for their assessment tool from the Parent Aware Child Assessment Review Committee. The program must provide documentation that the assessment tool is administered at least twice a year by submitting one completed child assessment from the last six months. They must also submit copies of training certificates that demonstrate that their lead teachers have completed a minimum of eight hours of training on the use of the instructional child assessment for each group (infant/toddler and preschoolers).

Programs that do not use a pre-approved assessment tool (those that do not seek or receive approval for the assessment tool they use from the Child Assessment Review Committee), can earn two points for providing a narrative description of how they are tracking

children's progress using a non-approved assessment tool or through informal assessments. Partial credit can be given if assessment tools are used with one age-group but not another. Notably, programs that are not using an approved tool can earn no more than four total points in the Tracking Learning Category.

Table 20. Points earned by programs for using a child assessment tool

Points Earned	% of family child care programs (N=55)	% of center-based programs (N=35)	% of all programs (N=90)
0	24%	6%	17%
1	15%	3%	10%
2	38%	60%	47%
4	24%	31%	27%

Source: Parent Aware Database, DHS, as of December 31st, 2009.

As seen in Table 20, center-based programs are significantly more likely than family child care programs to earn points for using a child assessment tool. Nearly all (91%) of center-based programs earn at least 2 points on this indicator, compared to only 62% of family child care programs in their initial rating. Both centers and family programs are more likely to earn points for using assessment tools with preschoolers than with infants and toddlers.

According to the survey data, nearly all providers (100% of center directors, 84% family child care providers) report that they routinely and formally track the development or progress of children. Again, we note that although providers report using assessment tools, they may not be earning points for these practices if their implementation of these practices is not well documented or does not meet the standards outlined by Parent Aware.

Table 21 describes the child development assessment tool(s) used by centers and family child care programs as reported in the survye. Note that the tools used vary greatly and that respondents may have reported using more than one of the child assessment tools.

Table 21. Child assessment tools used by programs

	Center directors (N=45)	Family Child Care providers (N=25)
Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos: Developmental Continuum Assessment Toolkit	8	15
Creative Curriculum for Preschool: Developmental Continuum Assessment Tool for Ages 3-5	8	11
High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR) for Infants and Toddlers	1	0
High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR), Second Edition	2	0
The Ounce Scale	6	2
The Work Sampling Checklist, Preschool 3	15	1
The Work Sampling Checklist, Preschool 4	0	1

	Center directors (N=45)	Family Child Care providers (N=25)
Program uses an instructional child assessment tool that is not included on the list above	26	3

Source: 2009 Child Trends Survey of 45 center directors and 26 family child care providers. Note that all tools on this list are on the approved list of assessments for Parent Aware.

The only Parent Aware approved child assessment tools are those listed above. According to center directors completing the survey, the most commonly-used child assessment tool (among the approved tools) is the Work Sampling Checklist. Yet 58% of center directors in the survey report using an instructional child assessment tool that is not pre-approved. For family child care providers in the survey, the most commonly-used child assessment tool (among the approved tools) is Creative Curriculum's Developmental Continuum Assessment Toolkit. Only 12% of family child care providers in the survey report using a child assessment tool that is not pre-approved. Most centers directors (87%) and most family child care providers (91%) in our survey report that they have received some training on the primary tool used in their program.

Programs can earn up to three indicator points for sharing assessment information with children's families at least twice per year. Programs must submit documentation that a parent-teacher conference was held and that this information was provided during it, or provide written summaries or printouts of assessment results with parent signatures to indicate that parents have seen the results. If the assessment tool is approved, three points are possible. If the assessment tool is unapproved or informal, one point is possible. If the program is using a tool with some but not all age groups, partial credit is given.

Center-based programs received significantly more points on this indicator than family child care programs. About half of all family child care programs (47%) earned no points on this indicator in their initial rating compared to only 11% of center-based programs. The majority of centers (54%) earned partial credit on this indicator.

In contrast, according to the survey data, all respondents reported sharing child assessment results with families. The majority of center directors (95%) and family child care providers (90%) reported sharing results with families at least quarterly. Again, survey data indicates that providers may be engaging in good practices but are either not able to document these practices or are not engaging in these practices at the level that Parent Aware ratings demand.

Finally, programs can earn up to three points for using child assessment information to guide instruction and design goals for individual children. Programs must submit documentation of how assessment results affect goal-setting and lesson planning and provide a narrative description of how these results inform their plans. If the assessment tool is approved by the Assessment Review Committee, three points are possible. If the assessment tool is unapproved or administered informally, one point is possible. If a program is using a tool with some but not all age groups, partial credit is given.

Again, center-based programs received significantly more points on this indicator than family child care programs. Over half of all family child care programs (58%) earned no points on this indicator in their initial rating compared to only 20% of center-based programs.

In this case, the survey data matches the ratings data. When asked, "How do you and/or teachers use the results from these assessments to design goals for individual children and to guide instruction?" around 40% of center directors (N=38) reported using the results from assessments to adjust curriculum and lesson planning. A smaller number (18%) specifically mentioned using the results to create individualized plans or goals for the children in their care. Directors also mentioned using results to guide one-one-one instruction and small group activities.

Family child care providers were asked the same question, "How do you and/or teachers use the results from these assessments to design goals for individual children and to guide instruction?" Of the 14 providers who responded, just over a third reported using the results to guide curriculum and lesson planning and the same number reported using results to create individualized plans or goals for the children in their care.

Table 22. Total points earned in the Tracking Learning Category for initial ratings

	Family child care programs (N=55)	Center-based programs (N=35)	All programs (N=90)
0 Points	24%	0%	14%
1 or 1.5 Points	9%	6%	8%
2 or 2.5 Points	11%	9%	10%
3 or 3.5 Points	16%	20%	18%
4 or 4.5 Points	16%	34%	23%
5 or 5.5 Points	4%	3%	3%
6 or 6.5 Points	0%	3%	1%
7 or 7.5 Points	4%	0%	2%
8 or 8.5 Points	0%	3%	1%
9 or 9.5 Points	0%	0%	0%
10 Points	16%	23%	19%

Source: Parent Aware Database, DHS, as of December 31st, 2009.

Overall in the Tracking Learning category, center-based programs scored significantly better than family child care programs, with an average score of 5.1 for centers and 3.6 for family child care. Family child care programs were much more likely to earn no points in this category than center-based programs. This stems from the fact that on each indicator in this category, the most commonly earned score for family child care programs was zero points. Centers also did not excel in this category. On each indicator in this category, the most commonly earned score for center-based programs was partial credit (more than zero, but less than the full points available).

Figure 15. Distribution of Tracking Learning category stars

Across all programs
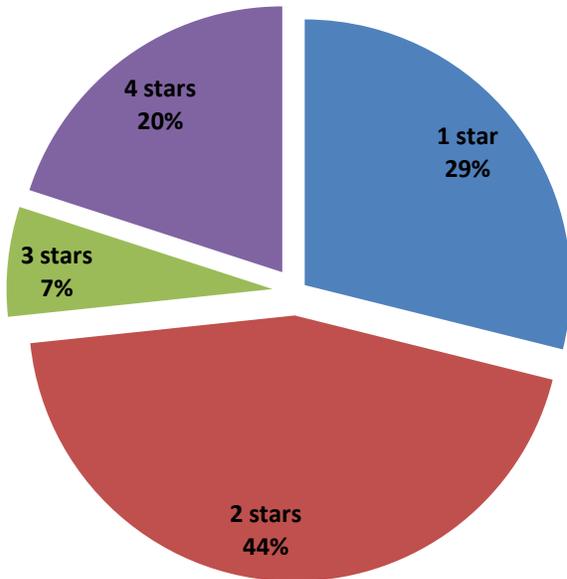
Family Child Care programs
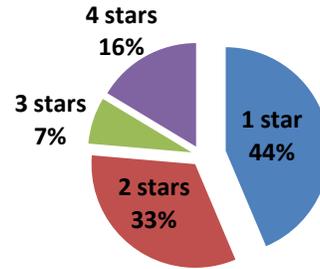
Center-Based Programs
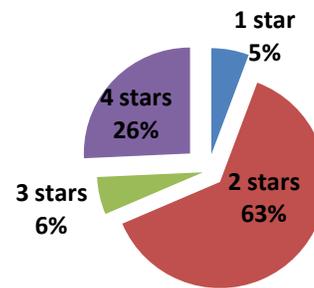
Source: Parent Aware Database, DHS, as of December 31st, 2009.

Not surprisingly, center-based programs received significantly more Tracking Learning category stars than family child care programs. While nearly half of family child care programs earned just one star in this category, the majority of center-based programs earned two stars. When looking only at initial ratings, Tracking Learning is the category in which providers (both centers and FCC) earn the lowest category points totals and the lowest star ratings.

Summary of information about the Tracking Learning category. Without an approved assessment tool, no program can earn more than four points in the Tracking Learning category. The majority of programs (76% of family child care programs and 69% of center-based programs) do not use an approved assessment tool and therefore can earn no more than 4 points. Center-based programs use a variety of child assessment tools, while the majority of family child care programs are using Creative Curriculum's assessment tool. Survey data indicates that over 90% of programs are sharing assessment information with parents, yet very few family child care programs are receiving points for doing so. For each indicator in this category, the most commonly earned score for family child care programs was zero points. Centers also did not excel in this category. On each indicator in this category, the most commonly earned score for center-based programs was partial credit (more than zero, but less than the full points available).

Scores in the Teacher Training and Education Category

The indicators in the Teacher Training and Education category measure the preparedness of early care and education practitioners. In the initial Parent Aware rating tool, all programs

were required to complete and submit professional development worksheets that captured information about the education and training of child care providers. However, the documentation and scoring of this category has evolved as the Minnesota Center for Professional Development has launched the Professional Development Registry.

The Professional Development Registry provides the official record for training, education, and employment in the field of early childhood and school-age care in Minnesota. Once providers have enrolled in the Registry, they are assigned a Career Lattice Step based on the information provided. There are twelve steps on the Career Lattice, each recognizing the achievement of a specified number of training hours, credentials, certificates, college credits, and degrees earned. As providers complete training in the eight Minnesota Practitioner's Core Competency content areas to develop the knowledge and skills they need to provide quality care and education for the children and families, they advance on the Career Lattice.

As the Professional Development Registry became functional, the worksheets were largely (but not entirely) replaced by the Registry. Now instead of documenting teacher education and training in a paper format, this information is recorded permanently in the Registry, and can be accessed by Parent Aware directly.

Programs earn points in this category based on the education and training of program staff, as measured by the Professional Development Registry. Therefore, lead teachers are required to join the Professional Development Registry in order to earn any points. This requires submitting documentation of work experience, transcripts from degrees earned, proof of certificates and credentials earned, and membership cards that document membership in professional organizations. Table 23 describes how points can be earned in the Teacher Training and Education category.

Table 23. Points system for Teacher Training and Education category

Quality Indicator	Points possible (Family child care programs)	Points possible (Center-based programs)
Lead teachers have earned degrees, credentials or are pursuing training to reach a higher step in the Minnesota Career Lattice (http://www.mncpd.org/career_lattice.html).	10 points	10 points
Educational Coordinator holds a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education or related field.	N/A	Required to achieve 4 stars in this category
Provider or lead teachers have professional development plans	Up to 2 points	Required to achieve 3 or more stars in this category
Total possible	**10 points**	**10 Points**

Source: Parent Aware Program Materials.

For centers, the average step on the Career Lattice of all the lead teachers is calculated. Centers must also submit the Teacher Training and Education Worksheet as part of their Quality

Documentation Packet. This worksheet requires them to list each lead teacher's name, position, date of hire, classroom name, and step on the Career Lattice.

For Family Child Care programs, only the provider whose name is on the child care license must join the Professional Development Registry. If there is more than one name on the license, everyone on the license must submit documentation to the Registry to determine their step on the Career Lattice. Their scores are averaged to determine the overall program score for this category.

Family Child Care programs earn one point in this category if their average Career Lattice score is 1, two points if their average Career Lattice score is 2, and so on. Among 43 initial ratings of family child care programs where Career Lattice score was recorded, the average score was 3.4 points.[13]

Family child care programs at Steps 1 – 8 in the Career Lattice are eligible to achieve two bonus points if they have professional development plans describing how they will move up to the next step in the Career Lattice. Providers achieving Step 9 are eligible for one bonus point for having professional development plans. Providers achieving Step 10 or higher are not eligible for bonus points for having a professional development plan. These professional development plans must include: the lead teacher's name, three professional development goals, the Core Competency areas associated with two of those goals, whether they are receiving credit for the completion of each goal or not, and the time frame for completing the goals. Among 43 initial ratings of family child care program where the Career Lattice score was recorded, 76% of programs received points for having a professional development plan.

In contrast, centers cannot earn any points if their average Career Lattice score is 3.0 or less. If the average score is more than 3.0 and less than 4.0, the program earns three points. If the average score is more than 4.0 and less than 5.0, the program earns four points. To score a full ten points, a program's average Career Lattice Step must be over 10.0. Among 21 initial ratings of center-based programs where the average Career Lattice score was recorded, the average points earned was 6.6 points.

Table 24. Total points earned in the Teacher Training and Education category

	Family child care programs (N=55)	Center-based programs (N=35)	All programs (N=90)
0 Points	15%	9%	12%
1 Point	0%	0%	0%
2 Points	20%	6%	14%
3 Points	4%	9%	6%
4 Points	24%	14%	20%
5 Points	2%	3%	2%
6 Points	7%	11%	9%

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[13] As described at the start of the Teacher Training and Education Section, early in the Parent Aware pilot, a different scoring system was used in the Teaching Materials and Strategies category. Career Lattice points were not collected under that system; therefore ratings issued under the old system are excluded from this discussion.

	Family child care programs (N=55)	Center-based programs (N=35)	All programs (N=90)
7 Points	2%	14%	7%
8 Points	15%	6%	11%
9 Points	2%	26%	11%
10 Points	11%	3%	8%

Source: Parent Aware Database, DHS, as of December 31st, 2009.

As seen in Table 24, a small but significant portion of programs (15% of family child care and 9% of Centers) earned no points in this category. Zeros can result from low levels of education and training or from failure to join the Professional Development Registry. Point totals vary widely in this category for both centers and family child care programs.

Moreover, centers are judged by two additional criteria. In order to achieve three or more stars in the Teacher Training and Education category, centers must demonstrate that all lead teachers have professional development plans. Among 21 initial ratings of center-based programs where the presence or absence of this indicator was recorded, four centers did not meet this indicator and were therefore unable to earn three or more stars in this category. Only two of the four, however, would have otherwise earned three or more stars in this category.

Secondly, in order to achieve four or more stars in this category, centers must demonstrate that the program's Education Coordinator has at least a Bachelor's degree. In many centers, the director serves as the Education Coordinator. However, this could also be another staff person or a lead teacher who also has duties related to helping the program implement the curriculum consistently across classrooms (and any other practices related to helping children become ready for school). This is often the staff person who approves the child care program plan as required by Licensing in Rule 3. Among 21 initial ratings of center-based programs where the presence or absence of this indicator was recorded, six centers did not meet this indicator and were therefore unable to earn four stars in this category. Two of the six would have otherwise earned a four star in this category.

Therefore, the category star rating for Teacher Training and Education is determined primarily using the Points total (out of a possible 10 points) but with the above restrictions also in place.

Figure 16. Distribution of Teacher Training and Education category stars

Across all programs
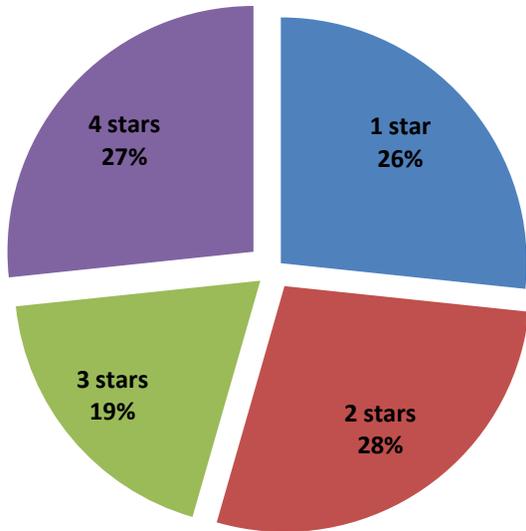
Family child care programs
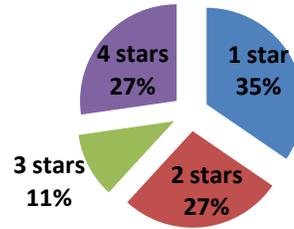
Center-Based Programs
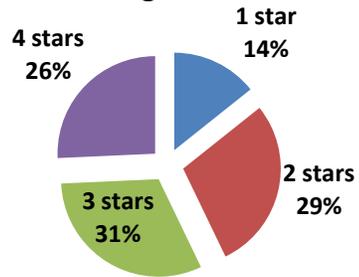
To learn more about professional development practices, the Child Trends survey asked center directors about the types of professional development support they provide teachers. Center directors were most likely to report supporting professional development by having regular meetings with teachers to talk with them about their work and progress and by providing teachers with paid preparation/planning time (see Figure 17). Center directors also reported offering training to their teachers that is considered paid time. Directors also reported several other ways that they support teachers in their professional development.

Figure 17. Percent of center directors who reported offering a form of professional development support to teachers (N=43)
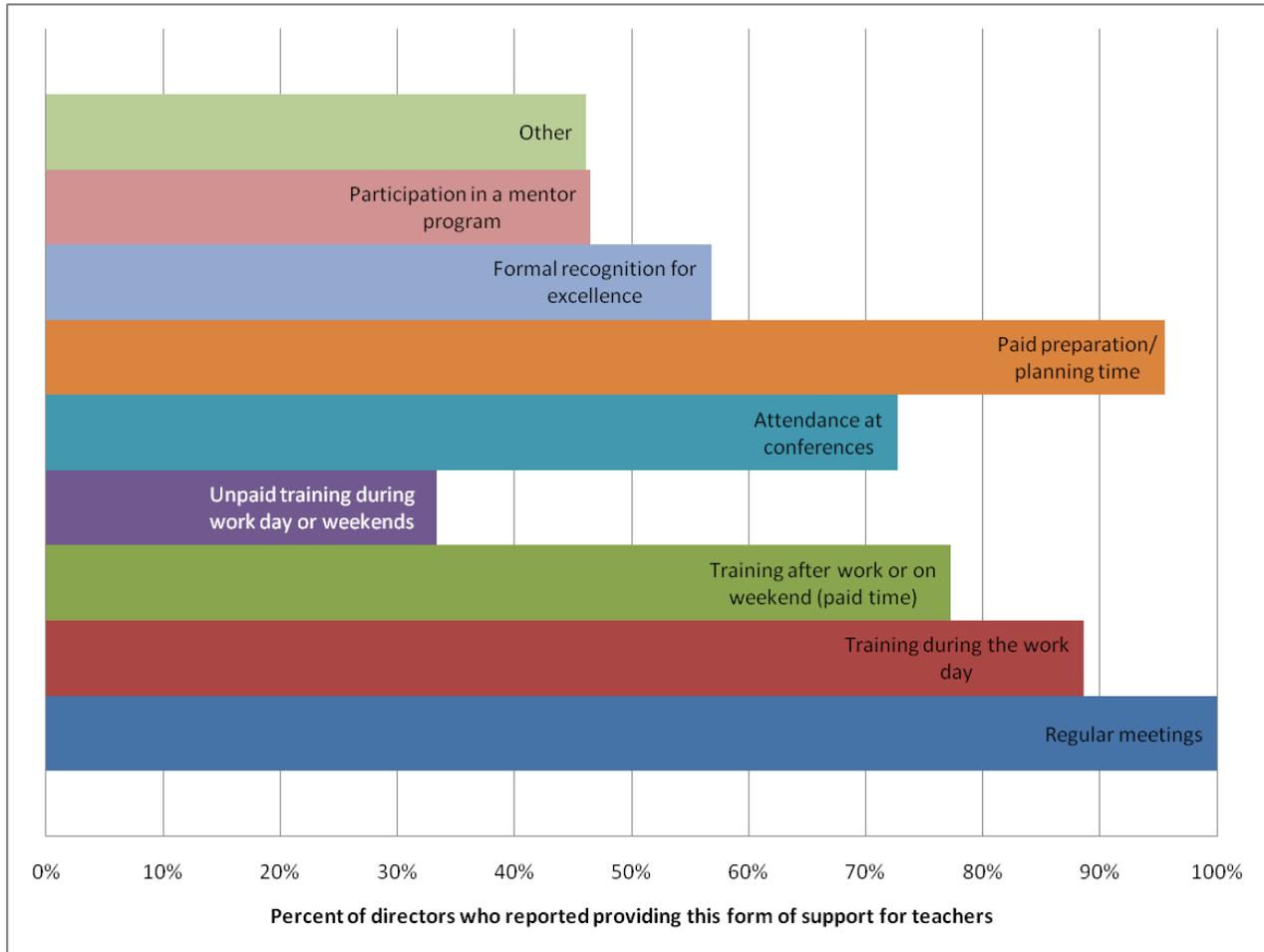
Source: Child Trends 2009 Survey.

Summary of information about the Teacher Training and Education category.
Centers scored significantly (p<1%) higher than family child care providers on the career lattice with an average score of 6.6 compared to 3.4. Over three-quarters of family child care providers earned additional points for their program by having a professional development plan. In contrast, centers were required to demonstrate that all lead teachers have professional development plans in order to receive three or more category stars. Category points totals vary widely in this category for both center-based programs and family child care programs, and centers score significantly (p<10%) higher than family child care programs even with the additional points that family child care providers can earn for their professional development plans. The higher scores of center-based programs may reflect the institutional support and encouragement that teachers receive in center-based programs for ongoing professional development.

Quality Improvement Activities in the Past Two Years

In this final section providing information about the characteristics of programs participating in Parent Aware, we examine the quality improvement efforts undertaken by Parent Aware participants. We begin by describing data reported by the Provider Resource Specialists to the Minnesota CCR&R Network on how providers have spent their Parent Aware quality improvement supports. Then, we describe findings from Child Trends' survey of 45 center directors and 26 family child care providers from both accredited and fully-rated Parent Aware programs. These survey questions focused on the larger question of what quality improvements activities child care programs have undertaken on their own (or with help) and how such efforts were funded.

Use of Quality Improvement Supports. Parent Aware-rated programs that have recently been rated as three or fewer stars are eligible to receive quality improvement supports from Parent Aware. The Minnesota CCR&R Network provided Child Trends with data documenting all Quality Improvement Support funds spent in a one year span, between June 2008 and June 2009. The data describe purchases made for 50 programs that had recently completed the rating process or were in the rating process. Provider Resource Specialists could allocate up to $3500 for each provider to purchase materials or trainings that would improve the program's quality. (The maximum dollar amount per provider depends on the number of providers served per year and therefore may fluctuate.)

The programs were awarded differing amounts over the year. Of the 50 providers who could have received improvement supports in 2008-2009, only one chose not to accept the quality improvement funds. One provider received minimal improvement supports before completing the rating process and then dropped out of Parent Aware. Another provider received minimal improvement supports, but should not have received any funds because she received a four-star rating. One provider received approximately $1500 in improvement supports before receiving her rating because those additional quality improvements allowed her to reach four stars. Another two providers/programs spent less than $2000; 13 spent between $2000 and $3000; 21 spent between $3000 and $3500; and 10 programs spent more than $3500 (see Figure 18).

In certain instances, when a special need is found, programs can receive more than the maximum amount (up to $3500 for each). A full 20% of programs received more than the maximum allotment in financial resources for quality improvement supports.

Figure 18. Amount of quality improvement support dollars spent
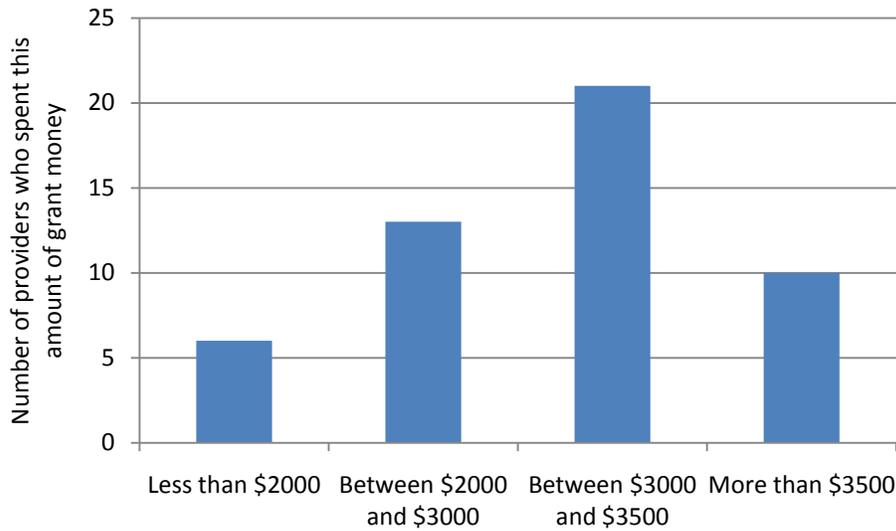
Source: Minnesota CCR&R Network (June 2008-June 2009)

Expenditures are separated into 5 categories: Curriculum, Toys/Books, Equipment, Assessment, and Training. From June 2008-June 2009, these 50 programs spent $2304 on curriculum materials, $91,469 on toys and/or books, $52,256 on equipment, $1129 on assessments, and $8027 on training. Therefore, programs spent the majority of quality improvement support dollars on toys and/or books, followed by equipment, and training. Programs spent the least amount of quality improvement support dollars on curriculum and assessment materials (Figure 19). This is not surprising as curriculum materials and training are offered free of charge to Parent Aware participants.

Figure 19. Type of quality improvement support dollars spent
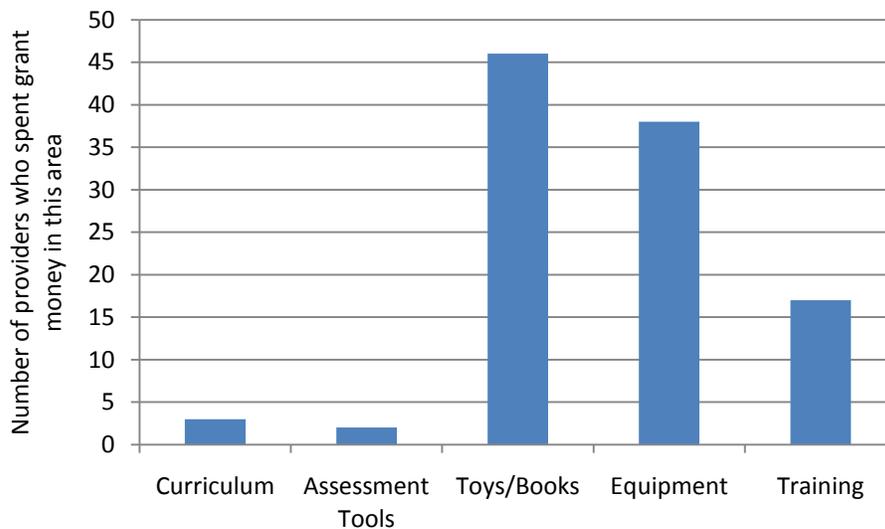
Source: Minnesota CCR&R Network (June 2008-June 2009)

General information about quality improvement in Parent Aware rated programs.
While the findings above highlight the quality improvement supports provided by Parent Aware to fully-rated programs, the survey data provide a broader range of quality improvement initiatives being undertaken by Parent Aware-rated programs, and is not limited to fully-rated providers. The Child Trends survey asked center directors and family child care providers (in both fully-rated and automatically rated programs) questions about their quality improvement efforts over the last two years. For most programs, this time period includes time prior to their involvement in Parent Aware. Survey questions asked how providers have used money from *all* available funding sources for quality improvements in their program (not solely Parent Aware quality improvement support dollars).

Using the survey data, we describe what providers report as the targets of their quality improvement efforts, the funds providers spend on quality improvements, and how programs would like to move forward in the future with quality improvement. This information could help Provider Resource Specialists to think about what kind of quality improvement initiatives programs can and will undertake on their own (or with the help of other funding sources) and what may only be done with the encouragement and financial support of Parent Aware.

Targets of Quality Improvement Efforts. In the survey, center directors and family child care providers were asked to examine a list of target areas for quality improvement and indicate whether they have targeted this area or made improvements in the area in the last 2 years. The most commonly reported targets for quality improvement (for both center-based programs and family child care providers) were equipment and/or supplies, books, and game materials. For centers, other common target areas included curriculum and/or assessment tools, staff training (not for college credit), and staff wage enhancement and benefits. For family child care, the frequency of reporting a target area of equipment and supplies was matched by curriculum and/or assessment tools. Some target areas, such as staff benefits and wage enhancement, NAEYC or other national accreditation, and staff education (for college credit) were reported less often by family child care providers than by center directors (see Figures 20 and 21).

Figure 20. Target areas for quality improvement (centers)
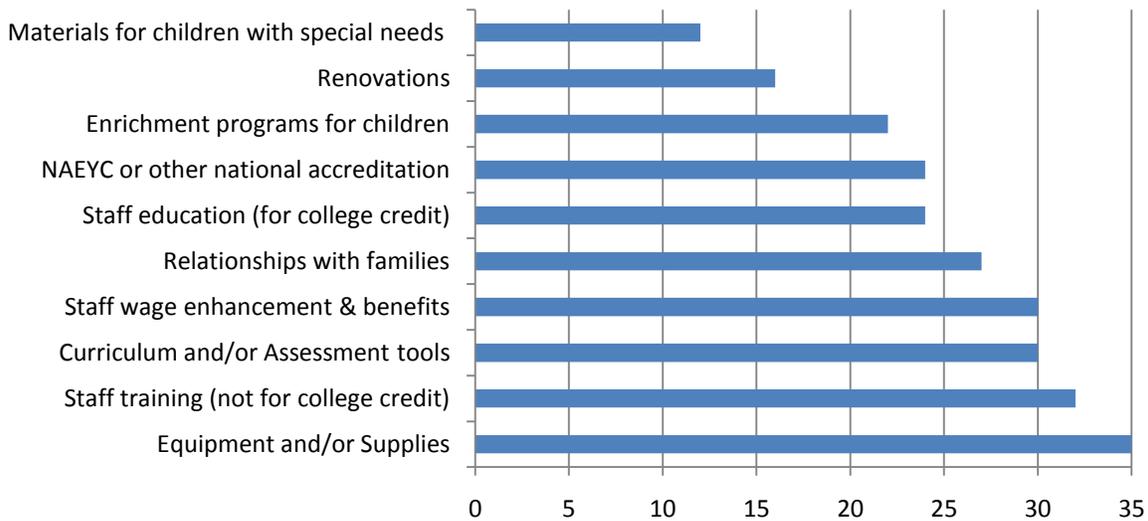
Source: Child Trends 2009 Survey of 45 center directors.

Figure 21. Target areas for quality improvement (family child care)
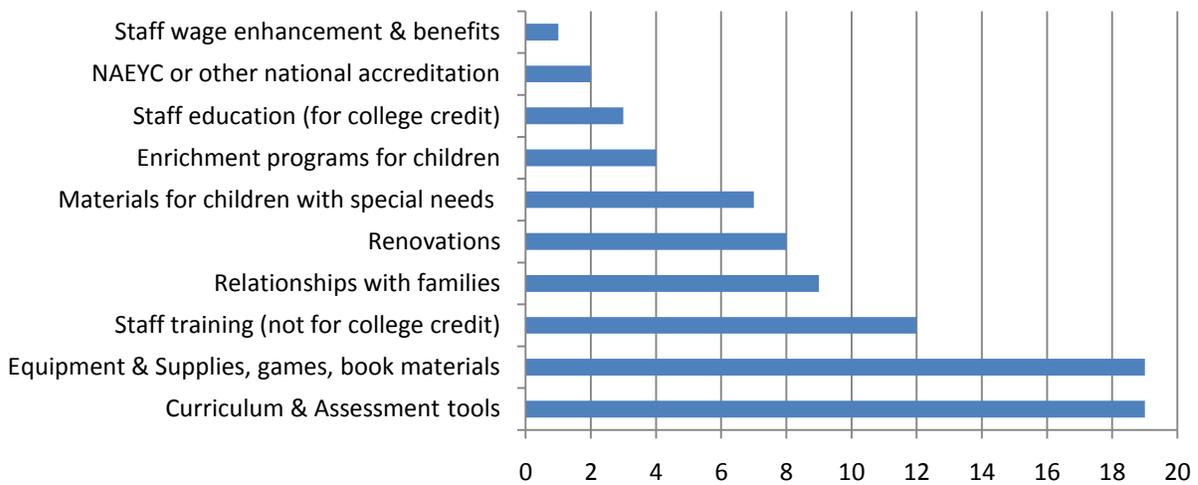
Source: Child Trends 2009 Survey of 26 family child care providers.

Funds programs spend on quality improvement. Family child care providers and center directors were asked to indicate the approximate amount spent on each quality improvement target area. In total, 37% of programs reported spending no funds on quality improvement. Family child care providers were more likely than centers to report spending no funds on quality improvement. In total, 27% of programs reported spending between $1000 and $4,999.

The mean amount spent on quality improvement by centers (in the two years prior to survey administration) was $26,167 (see Figure 22). Family child care spent a mean amount of $3,115 (see Figure 23). On average, centers spent more on quality improvement than family child care programs. As a reminder, the survey sample includes Parent-Aware-rated programs that do not

receive quality improvement supports because they are accredited and received an automatic 4-star rating. Additionally, a greater percentage of automatically-rated 4-star-center-based programs completed the survey than did fully-rated center-based programs.

Through examination of the listed target areas, equipment and supplies, games, books materials are the quality improvement areas where both center and family child care programs seem to be spending the most funds. Center directors also report spending their funds on other areas such as staff training (not for college credit), curriculum, NAEYC or other national accreditation, and enrichment programs.

Figure 22. Approximate total spending on quality improvement (centers)
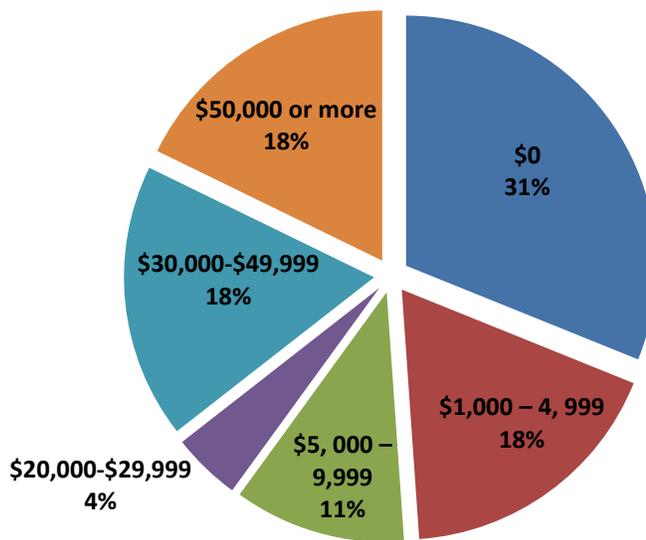
Source: Child Trends Survey of 45 center directors[14]

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[14] Note that directors and family child care providers were asked approximately how much they spent on ten different quality improvement target areas. These numbers are a sum of those ten distinct approximate amounts, and may not accurately represent overall spending on quality improvement. These figures are intended to provide only an approximation of spending patterns.

Figure 23. Approximate total spending on quality improvement (family child care)
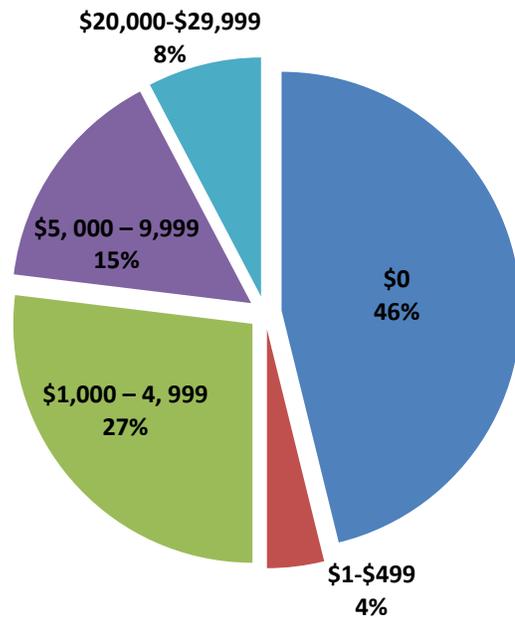
Source: Child Trends Survey of 26 family child care providers.

Quality improvement areas programs want to target. In the survey, respondents were asked, **"**If you had the resources to make quality improvements in your program, what aspects of your program would you target first?" Directors and providers reported similarly, many indicating that improving their outdoor space/playground and increasing the amount of materials and/or improving materials would be their first choice targets. Several respondents suggested that they would make improvements to their indoor spaces (e.g., new windows, carpet, and bathrooms) and/or renovate their building. Many directors and providers also mentioned that they would target curriculum development and professional development activities and trainings. Overall, several respondents focused on materials, curriculum and professional development; however, most of the respondents talked about improving their program's quality by first improving aspects of the program's physical space.

Written planning for quality improvement. Survey findings indicate that most providers are not formally planning for future quality improvement initiatives. Only 40% of center directors and 15% of family child care providers answered "yes" to the question "Does your program have a formal written plan in place to guide quality improvements?" Among the center directors who answered "yes" to that question, most reported that their plan was encouraged or required by Parent Aware or NAEYC. Likewise, most family child care providers with a written plan for quality improvement reported that the plan is the result of their involvement in Parent Aware. In general, most directors and family child care providers do not appear to use written planning to guide quality improvements, unless encouraged or required to do so.

Summary of information about quality improvement activities. Providers tend to spend close to the maximum amount of Parent Aware quality improvement supports they are eligible to receive, mostly on toys/books and equipment. Approximately 20% of programs had special needs

which warranted additional spending on Parent Aware improvement supports, beyond the intended maximum. This may reflect the need for higher funding for quality improvement supports.

Parent Aware programs most often used their Parent Aware improvement supports to purchase toys/books and equipment. Only 10% of programs used any improvement support funds to purchase curriculum and/or assessment tools and only a third of programs used any improvement support funds to pay for training. This is not surprising given that Parent Aware offers training on curriculum and resources (such as curriculum books) free of charge to Parent Aware participants.

Both centers and family child care programs tend to focus their quality improvement activities on materials (including curriculum and assessment tools) and staff training. A large portion of programs (37%) report having spent no money on quality improvements in the last two years. If resources were available, providers express a desire to make improvements to the physical space in which they provide child care. Center directors and family child care providers do not appear to use written planning to guide quality improvements, unless encouraged or required to do so. Therefore, Provider Resource Specialists may want to emphasize to providers that written planning is an important step for guiding their program quality improvements.

Section 5. PERSPECTIVES OF PARENTS IN PARENT AWARE-RATED PROGRAMS

As noted earlier, parents are a central focus of Parent Aware and are considered to be a potentially important driver of program participation in Parent Aware and of quality improvement. Understanding what parents know about Parent Aware and their perceptions about quality of early care and education in general is necessary to inform Parent Aware outreach to parents.

In this section, we turn to a focus on parents and families. Parents of children in Parent Aware programs were interviewed over the phone in the fall of 2008. Wilder Research conducted the phone interviews. Interviews were translated into Hmong, Spanish, Somali, and Karen, and were conducted in English (n=144), Hmong (n=5), Spanish (n=2), and Karen (n=2). (Ninety-four percent of the interviews were conducted in English.) Families were recruited from classrooms serving preschool-aged children in center-based programs and family child care programs that are in Parent Aware. Four- and five-year-old children were recruited (those entering Kindergarten the following fall), and low-income families were targeted. Up to six children from center-based programs and two children from family child care programs were selected to participate in the Parent Aware evaluation, and the parents of those children were asked to participate in the parent interview. In total, 153 (out of 198 eligible) parents were interviewed about their child care selection, usage, and satisfaction, their thoughts on quality, perceptions of Parent Aware, and other child care related questions. [Note that this sample will more than double when a second cohort of parents are added in the final Evaluation Report.]

Demographics. Of the 153 parents interviewed, about 60% are Caucasian, 14% are African American, 8.5% are Asian (just over half of these were Hmong), 4.5% are Alaska Native/American Indian, 11% are Hispanic, and almost 3% are African-Somalian. Approximately 12% of families speak a primary language other than English at home. Eighty-five percent of the respondents were the biological mothers of the preschoolers, and 12% were biological fathers. The remainder of the sample were adoptive mothers/fathers or other guardians. The mean age for mothers was 33, and for fathers it was 35.6 years. 49% of the sample was married and living with their spouse and 25.5% were single and had never been married. Nearly 10% were single, living with a partner, 4.5% were separated, and 10.5% divorced or widowed.

The mean income was $71,017, but 65% of the sample had incomes at $50,000 or below. Many of the families received some form of public assistance. For example, 33% received Child Care Assistance (CCAP), 31% received free/reduced lunch, 29% received WIC, 25% received food stamps, and 9% received MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program).

Respondents were asked about their highest level of education and that of their child's other parent. About 16% of mothers had a High School diploma or less, 22% had some college, 13% had an Associates degree, 24% had a Bachelors degree, and nearly 18% had education beyond a Bachelors degree. Nearly 35% of fathers had a High School diploma or less, 12.4% had some college, 5% had an Associates degree, 23.5% Bachelors degree, and 18% had education beyond a Bachelors degree. About 75% of respondents held a job for pay and 12.4% were not working outside of the home; 4% were looking for work and 5% were going to school.

Early care and education usage. Parents were asked which types of early care and education they had used in each of the past two weeks. The most common response was some type of center-based care, which included child care centers as well as School Readiness programs, preschools and nursery schools (see Table 25). Eighty-one (81) percent of parents reported using this type of care, and on average, children spent about 32 hours a week in center-based care. About 16% of parents reported using family child care programs, for an average of about 32 hours per week. Several parents supplemented center-based care or family child care use with care by a relative or non-relative for about 10 hours per week, most commonly by grandparents (34%). Note that this pattern of early care and education usage reflects the fact that parents in the sample were selected based on their child's enrollment in a Parent Aware rated program.

Table 25. Types of care used in past two weeks

Program	Number of Parents Reporting	Percent (out of 153)	Mean Hours/Week
Child care center, nursery school, preschool or School Readiness program	124	81%	32.16
Licensed Family Child Care (FCC)	25	16%	32.64
Head Start	17	11%	16.71
Care by Grandparent	52	34%	11.31
Care by Other Relative	15	10%	10.27
Care by Non-relative	20	13%	13.32

Source: Parent Aware Evaluation Parent Interview.

Early care and education selection. When parents were asked how they first learned about the primary program their child attends, the most frequent response (16%) was that the program was nearby: Either the program was in their neighborhood or they saw it when driving. The next most frequent responses were that they heard about the program from friends, coworkers, or neighbors (14%) or from their workplace/employer (10%) (see Table 26). Other open-ended responses included referral from their current program (4), word of mouth (3), parent attended as a child (3), parent worked there (2), and several other referrals from sources such as an employment counselor or Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE). Note that Parent Aware is not mentioned as a source of information for finding the current arrangement, but it is important to note that little marketing had been done with parents when theses data were collected in the fall of 2008.

Table 26. Responses to: "How Did You First Learn About the Program?"

Source	Number	Percent
Friends/Coworkers/Neighbors	21	14%
Workplace/Employer	16	10%
Newspaper/Ad./Yellow Pages	12	8%
Internet	12	8%
Relative	10	6.5%
Program provides care for another child	9	6%

Source	Number	Percent
CCR&R	6	4%
Home visitor/Parent mentor/Social worker/Case worker	3	2%
Public or private school	3	2%
Church/Synagogue/Other place of worship	3	2%
Health care provider	0	0%
Parent Educator	0	0%
Parent Aware	0	0%
Other	59	39%
Other, specify: Nearby	24	16%
Don't Know	2	1%

Source: Parent Aware Evaluation Parent Interview.

Parents were also asked about the main reason they chose the program. The most frequent answer was that they heard it was a high quality program (29%). Nineteen (19) percent of parents responded that the location was close to home or work, and another 8.5% reported that they chose the program due to some other convenience (e.g., there were openings available, they provided transportation). Other open-ended responses included a general feeling of being comfortable with the program (7%), School Readiness (6.5%), teacher characteristics (education, experience, interactions with children – 4.5%), personal connections to the program (4%), small class size (4%), and educational offerings (2.5%).

Table 27. Primary reason for choosing child care program

Reason	Number	Percent
Heard (or thought) it was high quality	45	29%
Close to home	29	19%
Affordable cost	4	3%
Matched work schedule	3	2%
Parent Aware rating was high	2	1%
Only option	1	<1%
Parent mentor	1	<1%
Child has special needs	1	<1%
Caregiver speaks my native language	1	<1%
Other	63	41%

Source: Parent Aware Evaluation Parent Interview.

Perceptions of care. Parents were also asked a series of questions regarding their perceptions of the quality of early care and education settings and their priorities concerning what they are looking for from settings. A couple of questions asked parents how they learn about quality in early care and education settings. When asked whether they had heard of Parent Aware, about 20% of parents said "yes". They were then asked what sources they do rely upon to learn about the quality of their child's care or early education program. Responses are summarized in Table 28.

Many parents reported that their communications with program staff (47) and word of mouth (friends/neighbors/family) (33) were sources of information about the quality of care their child is receiving. Several parents also mentioned visiting the facility, communications with other parents, written information from the program, and internet websites as useful sources. A small number of respondents referenced specific sources such as NAEYC accreditation, Child Care Resource & Referrals, and Parent Aware. In general, parents seem to use more informal sources to learn about the quality of their child's early learning program.

Table 28. Responses to "What sources do you rely upon to learn about the overall quality of your child's child care or early learning program?"

Source	Number of Parents Reporting
Communicating with teachers/staff/providers/directors	47
Communication with friends/neighbors/family (word of mouth)	33
Attending open houses/tours/facility visits/personal evaluation	27
Communicating with other parents	23
Program newsletter/daily reports/other written information from the program	20
Internet/websites	14
Feedback/reactions from child	11
Currently employed/involved with the program	9
NAEYC/Accreditation status/Certifications	5
Rating system/Parent Aware	4
Library/books/general research	4
Child Care Resource & Referrals	3
Evidence from child's learning	3
Doctors (medical, unspecified)/social workers	3
Interfaith Outreach Community Partners	2
Previous experience with the program	2

Source: Parent Aware Evaluation Parent Interview

To understand parents' priorities in what they want from their children's early care and education settings, parents were asked to rate the importance of various aspects of programs, such as how teachers and caregivers relate to the children, or how learning materials are provided (see Table 29). Even though most parents responded that most factors were either "somewhat" or "extremely" important, an interesting pattern emerged from these responses. The three questions (d, e, and h) that received 90% or higher for "extremely important, all had to do with the relationships between caregivers and children. For example, "provide a warm and caring environment with positive relationships…" and "staff that are warm and friendly" were rated

"extremely important" with the highest frequency. The next highest rated category (receiving 78% - 88% "extremely important" responses) all had to do with education, including staff education as well as learning materials provided by the program. The pattern of responses suggest that this group of parents may value aspects of social interaction in early care and education settings slightly more than education aspects of the setting, although both are perceived as very important.

Table 29. Responses to: "Child care programs, teachers, and caregivers do many things when they care for children. How important is it that they…"

	Extremely important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
a. Talk with you each day	61%	31%	6%	<1%
b. Use a curriculum or planning tool for teaching	76%	23%	<1%	0
c. Have a lot of books and learning materials.	88%	12%	0	0
d. Provide a warm and caring environment with positive relationships between teachers and caregivers and children	98%	2%	0	0
e. Help your child get along with other children	90%	10%	0	0
f. Track your child's learning and development using an assessment tool	59%	39%	1%	<1%
g. Have teachers and caregivers with formal education and training to work with young children	78%	20%	2%	0
h. Have staff that are warm and friendly with your child	96%	4%	0	0
i. Enroll children from different backgrounds (for example, race, ethnicity and religion)	66%	30%	3%	1%
j. Have caregivers or teachers who speak your family's native language with your child	61%	29%	7%	3%

Parent were also asked an open-ended question about priorities: "What are the three most important things a child care provider or early care and education program can do for your child's learning and development?" Parent responses were coded into three categories: Promote positive child outcomes, provide a high quality program, and engage in high quality interactions. A few general comments from parents were also noted. The most frequent responses fell into the promotion of child outcomes category, with more than 30% of parents responding that social development/interactions with others and literacy outcomes (i.e., writing, reading, letters, spelling) were in the top three most important things a provider/program can provide. Other child outcomes included readiness for school, math skills, and gaining independence, among other constructs (see

Tables 30a-c). Regarding provision of a high quality program, many parents reported that safety (23), structure (10), and provisions for a variety of learning experiences (13) are crucial for their child's learning and development. The most frequent responses having to do with engagement in high quality interactions were that the environment must be warm and nurturing (23), that teachers need to provide individualized attention (18), and that differences and disabilities must be addressed (12). Finally, general comments from parents typically focused on the program providing good education quality and a stimulating learning environment. Overall, parents value a wide variety of practices that a provider or program can do to promote their child's learning and development.

Table 30a. Parents responses to "What are the three most important things a child care provider or early care and education program can do for your child's learning and development?"

Promote Positive Child Outcomes	Number of Parents Reporting
Social development/interactions with others	49
Literacy (writing, reading, letters, spelling)	46
Readiness for school/transition	25
Math (numbers, counting, shapes)	15
Gaining independence/confidence/self-esteem	11
Activities that promote creativity/imagination	10
Happiness/excitement for learning	10
Communication skills/speech	9
Learning how to respect others	6
Hands-on learning/playing	6
Gets exercise/physical skills/playing outside	4
Learning English	4
Music	4
Emotional development	3
Fine Motor skills	3
Learning about other cultures/diversity	2
Computers	2

Table 30b.

Provide a High Quality Program	Number of Parent Reporting
Safety	23
Provides a variety of new learning opportunities	13
Structure/organization/routines	10
Teaching styles/curriculum	9
Communication with parents	8

Provide a High Quality Program	Number of Parent Reporting
Consistency	7
Teacher background/experience/education	6
Disciple	5
Cleanliness	3
Nutrition	2
Convenience	2
Ratio	1

Table 30c.

Engage in High Quality Interactions	Number of Parent Reporting
Loving/caring/comforting/nurturing/warm	23
Individualized attention	18
Address disabilities/differences	12
Happiness/enthusiasm/positivity	8
Challenging/engaging/motivating students	8
Patience	5
Communicates with students	4
Giving praise/encouragement	4
Good relationships/role models	3
Enjoys teaching	3
Trust/honesty	3
Shows respect	2
Generalized Comments	
Good educational quality	18
Stimulating/fun/learning environment	12
Good teachers	4

Satisfaction with care. Parents were asked questions about their perceptions of the experience their child is having in their early care and education setting, and what they would change about the program to better meet their or their children's needs.

Parents were asked to rate the frequency that they believe their child experiences various aspects of the early care and education setting (see Table 31). Parents generally believe that their child is "always" or "usually" learning new things and skills and that they like their caregiver or provider. When asked about specific activities such as art and music or playing outside, parents responded "always" slightly less frequently. Parents' responses to "my child gets a lot of positive,

individual attention" were divided almost equally between "always" and "usually", suggesting that parents don't believe that this occurs as frequently as some of the other experiences in the ECE setting. Overall, nearly all of the responses were that parents believe the positive experiences (e.g., all except watching TV) are occurring "usually" or "always" and very few reported "rarely" or "never". This suggests that parents are at least moderately satisfied with their child's program.

Table 31. Responses to: "When child is at program, what best represents the experience you believe your child is having there?"

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
a. My child gets a lot of positive, individual attention.	0	1%	9%	44%	46%
b. My child likes the caregiver or provider.	<1%	0	<1%	22%	77%
c. There are lots of creative activities such as art, music, dance, and drama.	0	2%	4%	20%	74%
d. The caregiver provides activities that are right for my child and fit my child's needs.	<1%	0	3%	27%	69%
e. My child is learning new things and new skills.	0	<1%	<1%	18%	80%
f. My child gets a chance to run around and play outside.	0	0	3%	28%	68%
g. My child watches television more than an hour each day.	61%	20%	9%	3%	3%

Another question parents were asked was "If you could change one thing about your program so that it better met your needs or your child's needs, what would it be?" Parent responses were coded into three categories: aspects of child learning, aspects of the program functions, and general comments. The most frequent response was a general comment that parents were content with the program and/or proposed no changes (41). Fourteen parents also responded "do not know". These responses suggest a high level of satisfaction with the programs. Several parents' responses had to do with aspects of children's learning, such as increasing stimulating learning activities (4), adding foreign language learning (3), or more music (3), science/math (3), or outside time (3). Other responses that occurred once or twice included increases in: Diversity, individualized attention, structured time, gross motor activities, free play, art, performance activities, and field trips. One parents responded that they would like less computer time.

Many parents provided responses that had to do with aspects of the program functions. Several parents wanted the program to extend their hours of care (13). Other respondents wanted the program to be more affordable (9) and wanted improved communication with parents (8). Other suggestions included: More gross motor space (5), flexible hours (4), more convenient location (4), more staff (4), more nutritious meals (4), better retention of staff (3), completion of child assessments (3), and environment changes such as more space and more natural light.

Other than wanting extended hours, no single suggested change was voiced by 10 or more parents, and the majority of suggestions were made by fewer than 5 parents. Of parents interviewed, few major issues or concerns emerged about the programs that their children attend.

Summary of Parent Perceptions

Parents primarily learn about their child care program by driving by it in the neighborhood and from friends, neighbors, and co-workers. The number one reason parents report selecting their child care program is that it is of high quality. Parents report that the number one source they use to learn about high quality programming is from informal sources like their preschool teachers.

There is great opportunity for Parent Aware, a more formal source, to reach out to parents to share with them the importance of high quality early care and education programming and those programs that achieve a high quality rating (as of Fall, 2008, 20% of parents surveyed had heard of Parent Aware).

Parents perceive aspects of social interaction (such as a "warm and caring environment") to be of somewhat higher importance than educational aspects (such as "books and learning materials") of early care and education settings, although both are seen as very important.

Parents are generally satisfied with their child's early care and education program. Two factors that may influence whether parents ultimately choose to enroll their children in Parent Aware programs are the extent to which Parent Aware can become a resource for parents to learn about quality and the general satisfaction that parents experience with their current arrangements.

Section 6. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

The Year 2 Evaluation Report summarizes 18 months of implementation of the Parent Aware pilot between July 2008 and December 2009. Several changes occurred in the implementation of Parent Aware, including a number of legislative changes, an expanded pilot area, changes in parts of the rating process, and changes in support services such as additional consultants to aid programs and a "Getting Ready" process for Parent Aware. Programs have continued to enroll in Parent Aware and many programs that enrolled during Year 1 have gone through the re-rating process. Stakeholders acknowledge the successes and challenges of Parent Aware, and are beginning to think about implications for the possibility of Parent Aware becoming a statewide initiative.

The Year 2 report also contains a great deal of information describing the programs that are participating in Parent Aware, including how they are doing in terms of the Parent Aware indicators and on other measures collected by the Evaluation Team. In addition, the Evaluation reports on a sample of parents of children enrolled in Parent Aware programs, including how they choose early care and education settings for their children and how they perceive the quality of care.

There are now over 300 early care and education programs participating in Parent Aware, serving over 20,000 children. The majority of these programs have received a 4-star rating through the "automatic" rating process, but there have been full ratings assigned to 35 center-based programs and 65 family child care programs. On average, programs are receiving the highest scores in the Family Partnership indicator category and the lowest scores in Teaching Materials and Strategies and Tracking Learning. As part of the full-rating process, programs have also had on-site Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observations. On average, Parent Aware programs are scoring in the "minimal" quality range on the ERS. In CLASS observations, programs are scoring better on the Emotional Support subscale and the Classroom Organization subscale than on the Instructional Support subscale.

A small number of programs have received re-ratings (12 centers/preschools and 20 family child care programs). All but one have either maintained their star rating or increased one or two stars. Overall 83% of re-rated centers and preschools and 90% of re-rated family child care programs increased their star ratings.

To summarize key conclusions and details from the report:

- Parent Aware has brought the issue of quality to the forefront and provides an important infrastructure for programs seeing to improve their quality. It is providing a basis for new infrastructure development and planning for improvements to the early care and education system.
- The status of Parent Aware as a pilot has presented challenges and opportunities for administration and for participating programs. Changes in protocols and procedures are difficult to manage; yet, the ability to respond flexibly to issues that arise – a hallmark of a pilot program – also helps the Implementation Team quickly make improvements to the services they provide.

- Relationship-building and the provision of incentives such as quality improvement supports are important recruitment strategies for Parent Aware to increase the number of fully-rated programs.
- There is opportunity for Parent Aware to reach out to parents to educate them on the importance of early care and education programming and the number of high quality early care and education programs available in their area. It will be important to track the success of marketing activities that are being launched in the third year of the pilot.
- Most Parent Aware providers (84%) currently serve families who receive child care assistance.
- Analysis of ratings data reveals important findings about how programs score in each of the Parent Aware categories:
    - On average, programs receive higher scores in the Family Partnership category than in any other category.
    - On average, programs receive their lowest scores in the Teaching Materials and Strategies category and the Tracking Learning category.
    - Family child care programs are more likely than center-based programs to receive the full points available on the curriculum indicator. Most programs receive an average ERS score of less than 3.5 (or at least one classroom receives a score of less than 3.0) and therefore receive no points on the ERS indicator.
    - The majority of programs (76% of family child care programs and 69% of center-based programs) do not use an approved assessment tool and therefore can earn no more than 4 points in the Tracking Learning Category.
    - Centers score significantly better in the Teacher Training and Education category because of significantly higher scores on the Professional Development Registry's Career Lattice. This is true despite the fact that lead teachers in centers are required to have professional development plans while family child care providers earn extra points for having professional development plans.
    - Comparisons between survey data and ratings data indicate that some programs are implementing good practices but are not receiving points for these practices. This may happen because programs are unable to sufficiently document their practices, because programs have only recently implemented these practices, or because they are not implementing the practices with the rigor that Parent Aware requires.
- When receiving quality improvement supports through Parent Aware, fully-rated Parent Aware providers spend, on average, as much money on those supports as is available. The funds are most often used to purchase toys/books and equipment.
- In a survey of both fully-rated and automatically-rated providers, over a third (37%) of programs reported spending no money on quality improvement in the last two years. Another 27% of programs reported spending less than $5000. Nor surprisingly, given differences in enrollment, centers spent significantly more on quality improvement than family child care providers.

One final report will be produced from the Parent Aware Evaluation. The expected date for release of the report is October, 2010. The report will address the following questions.

Status of the Pilot and Programs in Parent Aware

1) What is new about the Parent Aware pilot in 2010 (summary of legislative, funding and administrative changes)?
2) How many programs have enrolled and been rated? What star level are they? How many have been re-rated?
3) What are the characteristics of the programs in Parent Aware?
   a. Quality indicators (including change over time)
   b. Participation in quality improvement activities
   c. Demographics: program: type, enrollment, staff turnover, staff: director, teacher, provider
   d. Experience in Parent Aware

Parents

4) What do we know about parents with children in Parent Aware-rated programs (note that data collection targeted low-income parents)?
   a. Characteristics
   b. Perceptions of what programs should do to promote learning and development
   c. How parents learn about quality
   d. How they selected child care and their satisfaction with it
5) Drawing from a broader group of low-income families (selected through application for financial assistance), what is their knowledge of and use of Parent Aware?

Children

6) How many children are served in Parent Aware-rated programs?
7) How are Parent Aware ratings (and characteristics of the settings) linked to progress in children's school readiness (particularly for low-income children)?

The Rating Tool

8) How well is the Parent Aware rating tool working to measure quality?
   a. Validity of automatic rating strategies
   b. Examination of the rating components and tools used

Looking Ahead

9) What lessons can be learned with respect to possible statewide implementation?

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APPENDIX

DETAILS ABOUT PARENT AWARE

Across the nation, QRISs are a relatively new strategy being used by states to identify and promote quality improvement in early childhood and school-age programs by establishing standards of quality for programs; offering resources, incentives and assistance to programs to meet and maintain higher levels of quality; and informing parents about the quality of early care and education options. The first QRIS was launched in Oklahoma over a decade ago (1998) and since then, at least 26 additional states and local areas have developed a statewide or a pilot QRIS.

QRISs are distinguished by five common components. While the details of these components vary considerably between different QRISs, the core purpose of the components is similar. As described in various publications (Child Care Bureau, 2007; Mitchell, 2005; Zellman & Perlman, 2008), they each contain:

- ❑ **Quality standards** that provide the basis for a program's rating. Standards are usually articulated for: professional development, education or training of the administrators and teachers/caregivers; the learning environment; and parent/family involvement.
- ❑ A process for **rating and monitoring** program quality. A QRIS uses a variety of tools to rate and monitor quality including observation, document review, and self report. It also sets guidelines for the frequency of program assessments and uses methods to ensure integrity of the assessment process.
- ❑ A process for supporting programs in **quality improvement**. A QRIS either provides staff and other resources to assist with improvement efforts or it provides a connection to quality improvement services provided by another organization.
- ❑ **Financial incentives** to promote participation in a QRIS. These incentives include tiered reimbursement, grants, scholarships and awards for programs meeting certain requirements.
- ❑ **Dissemination of ratings** to parents and other consumers. A QRIS uses websites and other materials to inform parents about the quality levels and provides information about the quality of individual programs.

Below, we use this five-part rubric to describe the details of Parent Aware. Before describing these details, however, it is important to describe the three different tracks that programs can take to achieve a Parent Aware rating. Further details about these ratings can be found in the Parent Aware Manual (produced and updated by the Department of Human Services).

Full Rating. Licensed child care centers, preschools and family child care programs that are not accredited can apply for a full rating in Parent Aware. Documentation is required for each of the Parent Aware quality standards, an on-site observation is conducted, and curriculum and assessment tools must by approved by the Department of Human Services. A rating of 1 to 4 stars is possible in the full rating track.

Automatic Rating. Programs (child care centers, preschools and family child care programs) accredited by an approved accredited body, Head Start/Early Head Start programs that are in compliance with the Program Review Instrument for Systems

Monitoring (PRISM), and school-based pre-K programs can apply for an automatic 4-star rating in Parent Aware (as of July 1, 2009).

Provisional Rating. In the initial two years of the pilot, programs that were not accredited and did not have a full Parent Aware rating could apply for a provisional rating of 3 stars. Authority for the provisional ratings was included in legislation passed in 2007 establishing the Pre-Kindergarten Exploratory Allowance project (the "State-funded Pre-Kindergarten Allowances"). Parent Aware programs with a 3- or 4-star rating and programs with provisional ratings (3-stars) were eligible to receive the State-funded Allowances through June 30, 2009. Child care centers, preschools, and family child care programs could apply for a Parent Aware provisional rating designated by the Department of Human Services. School Readiness pre-K programs could apply for provisional approval from the Minnesota Department of Education (this option has now ended as School Readiness pre-K programs are eligible for an automatic 4-star rating). Beginning July 1, 2009, programs that already have a provisional rating have the option to extend their rating *if* they are pursuing a Parent-Aware approved accreditation. Programs enrolling in Parent Aware after July 1, 2009 have the option to apply for a provisional rating if they are pursuing a Parent-Aware approved accreditation. If the program is not pursing accreditation, they must be participating in the full rating process in Parent Aware within six months. Programs with a provisional rating status have a 3-star rating on the Parent Aware website which is denoted in green to distinguish it from the full ratings and automatic 4-star ratings in yellow.

Quality Standards

Programs applying for a full Parent Aware rating must first establish their eligibility for a rating by meeting basic requirements. These include signing a commitment to participate, attending an orientation session, verifying that they are licensed and have a positive licensing history over the past two years (with no negative licensing actions, maltreatment determinations, or operations under a conditional license), submitting a program philosophy statement, and completing a health and safety checklist. Once these requirements are met, the following four areas are rated (with details about the indicators examined in each area):

Family Partnerships. Indicators in this area examine whether a program has a formal process for collecting and using feedback from parents; the strategies used for regular communication with families as well as communication about particular milestones (for example, transitioning to kindergarten); whether a program has an intake interview; whether programs provide information about preschool screening; and whether individual plans are used to help with transitions and other milestones.

Teaching Materials and Strategies. Indicators in this area examine whether the curriculum used is research-based and whether an effective learning environment and child-adult interactions are promoted. A select set of curricula have been pre-approved by Parent Aware. Other curricula must be reviewed and approved by the Curriculum Review Committee (described below). The learning environment and interactions are assessed through on-site observation with nationally-recognized tools (described below).

Tracking Learning. Indicators in this area examine whether the program uses a research-based instructional assessment tool to observe and monitor children's progress and if so, whether that information is shared with parents and used to guide instruction and design individual goals for the child. A select set of assessment tools have been pre-approved by Parent Aware. Other assessment tools must be reviewed and approved by the Child Assessment Review Committee (described below).

Teacher Training and Education. Indicators in this area examine the qualifications of administrators, teachers, or family child care providers; the degree to which credentials or degrees have been attained or specialized training has been completed; and, whether the teachers/family child care providers have a professional development plan. Connections are made between the indicators in this domain and some of the foundational elements of Minnesota's professional development system for early care and education and school-age programs. For example, programs are expected to enter information into the Provider Registry and to categorize their previous training using the categories described in Minnesota's Core Competencies (note that this linkage was a change in the indicators instituted after the Registry became operational in the summer of 2008).

Points are awarded in each of the quality categories and ratings of one to four stars are assigned based on the number of points received.

Rating and Monitoring

Parent Aware uses a combination of strategies to review, analyze, and rate programs on the quality standards described above. Program practices in the four quality standards are established through program documentation, observation by trained researchers, and review of materials by an expert panel (if applicable). At the orientation to the program, providers receive a quality documentation packet that contains all of the relevant forms and explanation of procedures. The following procedures are of particular importance in the rating process:

On-site Observation – To complete the requirements of the Teaching Materials and Strategies category, programs must participate in an on-site observation conducted by trained observers from the Assessment and Training Center in the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) at the University of Minnesota. In family child care programs, observers use the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Revised (FCCERS-R; Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2007) to assess the quality of the environment, materials, routines, health and safety and interactions. In center-based programs with preschool classrooms (serving children ages 3 to 5), observers complete the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R; Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998) or the Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale Revised (ITERS-R; Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 1990) depending on the ages of children in the selected classroom (one-third of the classrooms serving each age group are randomly selected for observation). They also complete the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS; Pianta, La Paro & Hamre, 2008) to assess the quality of emotional support and instruction.

Review of Curricula – If a program is not using a pre-approved curriculum, documentation about the curriculum must be reviewed and approved by the Department of Human Services based on recommendations from the Curriculum Review Committee. The Curriculum Review Committee is comprised of up to six experts in early childhood education who apply for the position and are appointed by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Education (MDE). Committee members must have at least a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education (or a related field) and must have at least five years of experience in teaching, training, or research in early childhood education, curriculum and instruction, child assessment or a related area. Up to four representatives from DHS or MDE may participate in the Committee. Programs can nominate existing curricula for review by the Committee or they can submit written documentation about a curriculum that they have developed themselves. The Committee meets as needed and will end its term at the end of the Parent Aware pilot. To be approved, written curriculum and any associated manuals or instructions for use must address a number of criteria and show how it is aligned with the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPS).

Review of Assessment Tools – If a program is not using an assessment tool already included on the approved assessments list, the assessment tool used must be approved by DHS based on recommendations from the Child Assessment Review Committee. The process for appointing members to the Child Assessment Review Committee is the same as the process used for the Curriculum Review Committee (described above). In addition to other specific, defined criteria that are reviewed by the Committee, they assess the extent to which the assessment tool is aligned with the ECIPS.

Accredited programs that complete a short application, submit proof of their accreditation status and demonstrate their compliance with the licensing requirements described above automatically receive four stars. Their rating process does not involve a review of curriculum and assessment, nor does it involve an on-site observational visit. Parent Aware accepts accreditation from the following bodies: National Association for Family Child Care, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Council on Accreditation, National Early Childhood Program Accreditation, American Montessori Society, and the Association of Montessori International-USA. These accrediting bodies were selected for Parent Aware because they are also used to document eligibility for tiered reimbursement in Minnesota's Child Care Assistance Program. To increase the number of high quality programs in Parent Aware, the decision was made to allow accredited programs throughout the entire Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area to participate.

Similarly, Head Start programs that are in compliance with the Program Review Instrument for Systems Monitoring (PRISM) will automatically receive four stars after submitting an "intent to participate" form to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). Beginning July 1, 2009, School Readiness pre-K programs also receive four stars automatically if they submit evidence to MDE documenting their compliance with the indicators. For items that are included in the statutorily required (Minnesota Statute 124.D.15) School Readiness Plan, the district must submit assurance that district sites are in compliance with the Plan. For items that are not required in statute, the program must submit evidence to MDE that the indicator is being met.

Licensed child care centers and family child care programs that are interested in participating in Parent Aware quickly to accommodate families that would like to use the State-funded Pre-Kindergarten Allowances or the MELF-funded Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship in their program could apply for a temporary Provisional Rating (an option available through the end of June, 2009 as described above). The Provisional Rating involves documentation of the quality standards in the Family Partnership category (all indicators described above), Teaching Materials and Strategies category (reporting the use of an approved research-based curriculum and training on the curriculum), and Tracking Learning category (reporting the use of an approved research-based assessment tool and training on the assessment tool). In addition, programs must operate for a minimum of 12 hours per week. Information is not collected about Teacher Training and Education and on-site observations are not conducted. MELF made a policy decision that a provisional rating is equivalent, in practice, to a rating of 3 stars generated through the full rating process.

School Readiness programs that applied for provisional approval through MDE to receive State-funded Pre-Kindergarten Allowances (through June 30, 2009) demonstrated that they met indicators that are aligned with programmatic requirements for School Readiness programs required by statute (M.S. 124D.15).

Quality Improvement

When programs apply for a full rating in Parent Aware, they are paired with a Provider Resource Specialist (referred to as Resource Specialist) who assists them in the rating process. The Resource Specialist also helps the program initiate a quality improvement process (note that provisionally-rated programs and programs with four stars are not eligible for improvement supports). This process is individualized and tailored to the needs of the program and includes the provision of financial resources as well as technical assistance. The Resource Specialists are able to use the feedback reports generated from the on-site observations to inform their work with programs.

Financial Incentives

Programs receiving a rating of 3 or 4 stars or a provisional rating (equivalent to a rating of 3 stars) are eligible to serve children receiving State-funded Pre-Kindergarten Allowances of up to $4,000 (available to low-income families in the Parent Aware pilot areas) or scholarships through the MELF-funded Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship (covering up to $13,000 annually for a select set of families living in District 6 and 7 within the Saint Paul pilot area). The effectiveness of these financial incentives for families and for programs is being evaluated in separate studies conducted by SRI International with support from the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation. The State-funded Pre-Kindergarten Allowances ended on June 30, 2009.

Dissemination of Ratings

Quality ratings are publicized and shared with parents primarily through the Parent Aware website (www.parentawareratings.org). Options are provided for parents to read information in languages other than English or to speak directly with a referral specialist via a toll-free number.

The website was designed to include portals for parents and programs so that each group is able to access the information most relevant for them.

Parent Aware also provides marketing materials for programs that have been rated. Programs that have achieved a 4-star rating receive a banner, lawn sign, and a Parent Aware highest rating window cling (decal) to display their rating. They also receive a postcard shell and press release template if they want to undertake a mailing or press release. Programs with a 3-star rating receive a Parent Aware participant window cling and press release template. Programs with a 1- or 2-star rating receive a Parent Aware participant window cling.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSES OF SCORES FROM OBSERVATIONAL MEASURES

Parent Aware includes the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) in the ratings for fully-rated early care and education programs. As part of the Parent Aware rating, one third of classrooms from each age group (preschool, infant/toddler) are randomly selected and observed using the appropriate observational tools. The evaluation of Parent Aware has conducted the ERS and CLASS observations in early care and education programs that have received an automatic rating in Parent Aware (this group includes accredited, Head Start, and School Readiness programs). In addition, the evaluation has conducted the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Extension (ECERS-E), in many Parent Aware programs (both automatically- and fully-rated programs). Initial analyses of observational scores and the relation between observational scores and Parent Aware star ratings are presented here (for both initial and re-ratings). It is important to note that observational scores and star ratings are not independent for fully-rated programs, as the observational scores make up a portion of the star rating. However, several other variables also go into the star rating (see Overview of Ratings section in this report) that could affect the relation between observational scores and star ratings. In addition, star ratings for automatically-rated programs are independent of observational scores, thus it is worthwhile to examine the relation between observational scores and star ratings. More detailed analyses of scores from the observational measures and their role in Parent Aware ratings will be available in the evaluation final report.

Environment Rating Scales Overview

The Environment Rating Scales (ERS) are a set of observational tools used to assess the quality of the environment, materials, routines, health and safety, and interactions in early care and education settings. Center-based programs are observed with the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R; Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998) in preschool classrooms and the Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-R; Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 1990) in infant/toddler classrooms. Family child care programs are observed with the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Revised (FCCERS-R; Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2007). The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Extension (ECERS-E) is an observational tool designed to supplement the ECERS-R. It consists of four subscales: Literacy, mathematics, science, and diversity (Syva, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2006). All of the ERS are scored on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 = adequate quality, 3 = minimal quality, 5 = good quality, and 7 = excellent quality, as designated by the authors of the tools.

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R). The ECERS-R was conducted on 1/3 of the preschool classrooms in all fully-rated center-based Parent Aware programs and on all center-based automatically-rated Parent Aware programs (accredited, Head Start, and School Readiness programs) that participated in the evaluation. The analyses in this section include observation scores for programs that had received a Parent Aware rating on or before December 31, 2009 (including initial and re-ratings). When analyzed by star rating, results are only presented for cell sizes of at least five programs.

The mean total ECERS-R score for both automatically- and fully-rated center-based ratings (n = 121), was 3.81 (in the "minimal quality" range). Mean total ECERS-R scores by Parent Aware

star rating are displayed in Figure A1. The scores for all star rating levels are in the "minimal" quality range (a score of 3 = minimal and a score of 5 = good), and 3-star programs have the highest mean ECERS-R score.

Figure A1. Mean total ECERS-R score by star rating
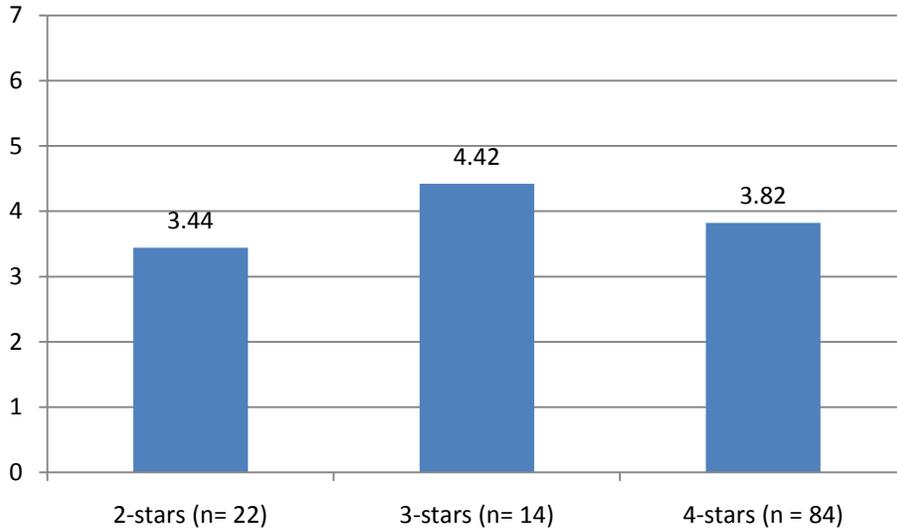
Source: Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

Mean total ECERS-R scores are broken down by intial ratings and re-ratings for automatically-rated programs and fully-rated Parent Aware programs in Figure A2. Though some of the samples are small, a potentially interesting interaction between rating time and program type is emerging. At initial rating, automatically-rated and fully-rated programs have similar ECERS-R scores. At re-rating, however, fully-rated programs have increased their ECERS-R scores and automatically-rated programs have decreased slightly. This could indicate that the improvement supports received by fully-rated programs have helped them to improve their ECERS-R scores. This possibility will be explored further in the final report.

Figure A2. Mean total ECERS-R score by rating time and rating type
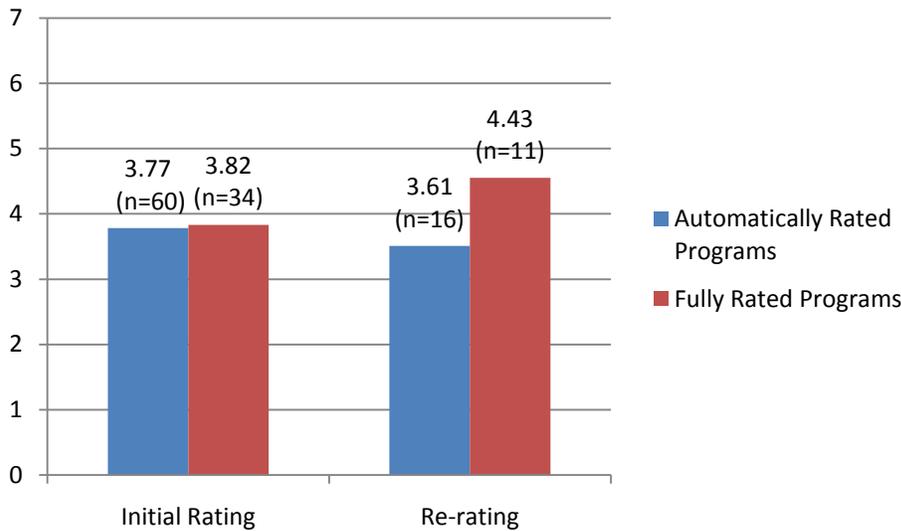
Source: Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Extension (ECERS-E). The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Extension (ECERS-E) is an observational tool designed to supplement the ECERS-R. It consists of four subscales: Literacy, mathematics, science, and diversity (Syva, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2006). Like the ECERS-R, the ECERS-E is based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 = adequate, 3 = minimal, 5 = good, and 7 = excellent, as designated by the authors of the tool.

Through the evaluation, Parent Aware programs were observed with the literacy and mathematics subscales, as well as one item from the diversity subscale (planning for individual learning needs) of the ECERS-E, during the ECERS-R observation visit. The ECERS-E was used to collect more in-depth information about literacy, mathematics, and diversity than could be provided by the ECERS-R alone. ECERS-E scores also provided an additional measure of quality that is not embedded in the Parent Aware star ratings (as the other ERS scales and the CLASS are).

Mean ECERS-E scores by star rating are in Table A1 and Figure A3 (includes automatically- and fully-rated programs). Results are presented for cell sizes of at least 5 programs. Parent Aware programs scored the highest in the literacy subscale, followed by the mathematics subscale, and lowest in individual learning needs. There was a general trend of increasing scores from 2-star to 4-star programs, but the 3-star programs had more variation than the other programs.

Table A1. ECERS-E mean scores for the Literacy Subscale, the Mathematics Subscale, and the Individual Learning Needs item, by star rating

Star Level	Literacy Subscale	Math Subscale	Individual Learning Needs
2 stars (n=16)	3.33	2.25	2.20
3 stars (n=13)	4.19	2.61	1.46
4 stars (n=61)	3.96	2.70	2.38

Source: Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

Figure A3. ECERS-E mean scores for the literacy subscale, the mathematics subscale, and the individual learning needs item, by star rating
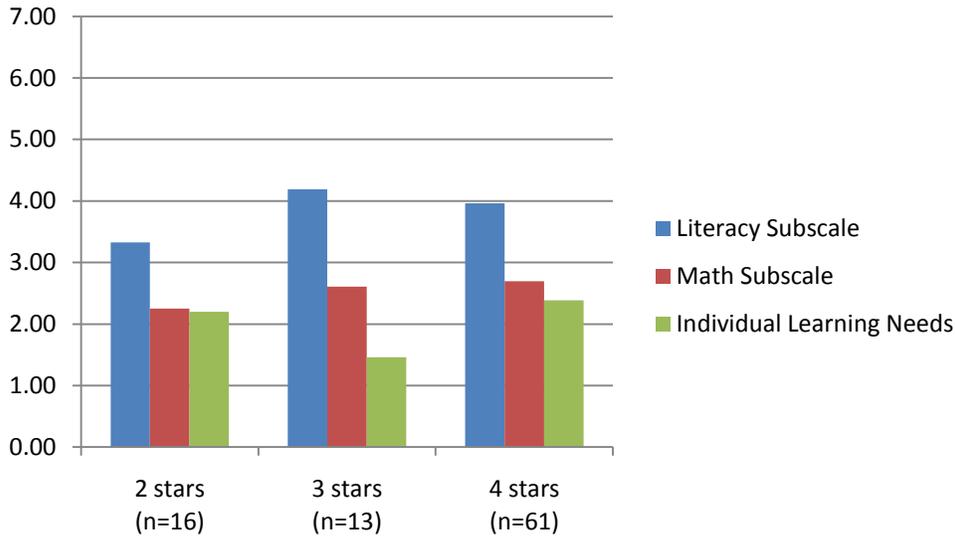
Source: Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

Programs going through the automatic rating process (including accredited center-based, Head Start, and School Readiness programs) had similar ECERS-E scores as fully-rated center-based programs (see Figure A4).

Figure A4. ECERS-E mean scores by rating type
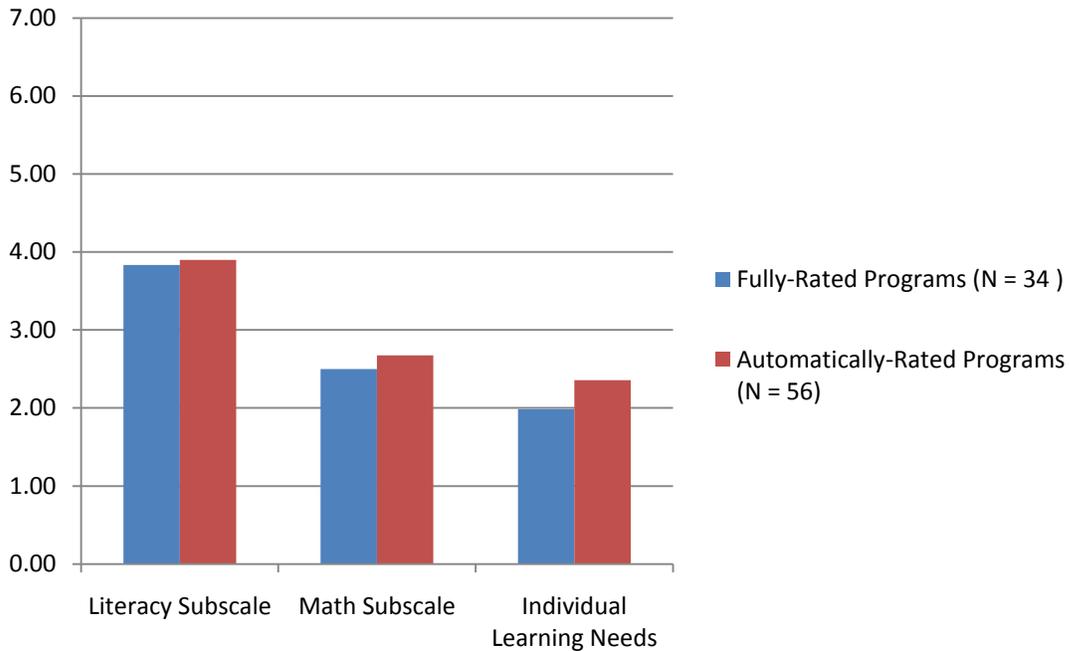
Source: Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-R). The ITERS-R was conducted on 1/3 of the infant/toddler classrooms in all fully-rated center-based Parent Aware programs and on all center-based automatically-rated Parent Aware programs (accredited, Head Start, and School Readiness programs) that participated in the evaluation. The analyses in this section include observation scores for programs that had received a Parent Aware rating on or before December 31, 2009 (including initial and re-ratings). When analyzed by star rating, results are only presented for cell sizes of at least five programs.

The mean total ITERS-R score for all ratings received by December 31, 2009 (n = 63), is 3.13. The scores at all star rating levels range from slightly under the "minimal" range to low scores in the range of "minimal" quality (see Figure A5). Mean ITERS-R scores at the 3- and 4-star rating level are slightly higher than those at the 1- and 2-star levels.

Figure A5. Mean total ITERS-R score by star rating
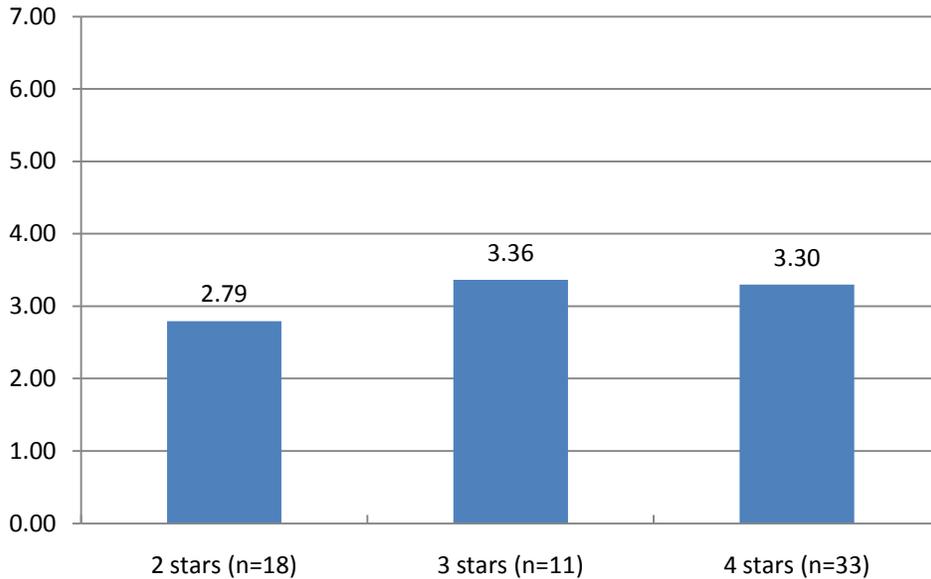
Source: Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

Automatically-rated (including accredited center-based, Head Start, and School Readiness programs) and fully-rated center-based programs scored similarly on the ITERS-R (3.19 and 3.07 respectively).

Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Revised (FCCERS-R). The FCCERS-R was conducted on all fully-rated family child care programs in Parent Aware and on two automatically-rated accredited family child care programs participating in the evaluation.

For family child care programs, the mean total FCCERS-R score for all ratings received by December 31, 2009 (n = 75), was 3.29. The FCCERS-R ranged from just below "minimal" to within the "minimal" quality range (see Figure A6). The biggest difference is between the 3- and 4-star rating levels. There were too few automatically-rated programs to compare them as a group to fully-rated programs, but the two FCCERS-R scores for the automatically-rated programs were 3.21 and 2.64, both below the mean FCCERS-R score across all programs.

Figure A6. Mean total FCCERS-R score by star rating
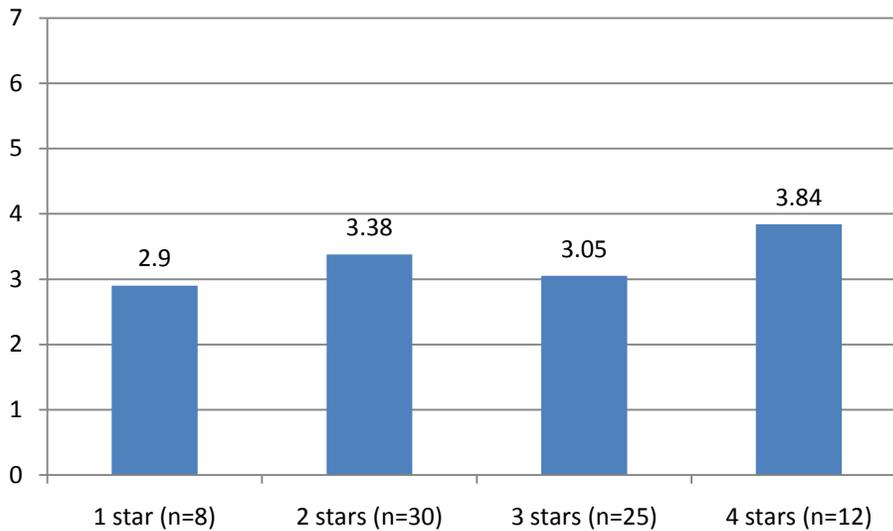
Source: Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

The Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS; Pianta, La Paro & Hamre, 2008) is an observational tool used to assess the quality of emotional support and instruction in preschool classrooms. Scores are given for three domains: Emotional Support (includes constructs such as the emotional connection between teachers and students, expressed negativity such as anger or hostility, and teacher sensitivity to students' concerns), Classroom Organization (includes behavior management, productivity, and instructional learning formats), and Instructional Support (includes concept development, how teachers provide feedback, and language modeling). Scores for each domain are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 and 2 = "low range", 3 – 5 = "middle range", and 6 and 7 = "high range", as designated by the authors of the tool.

The CLASS was conducted on 1/3 of the preschool classrooms in all fully-rated center-based Parent Aware programs and on all center-based automatically-rated Parent Aware programs (accredited, Head Start, and School Readiness programs) that participated in the evaluation. The analyses in this section include observation scores for programs that had received a Parent Aware rating on or before December 31, 2009. When analyzed by star rating, results are only presented for cell sizes of at least five programs.

The mean CLASS scores for all ratings received by December 31, 2009 (n = 118), were as follows: Emotional support M = 5.50, classroom organization M = 4.99, instructional support M = 2.67. Mean CLASS scores by star rating are displayed in Table A2 and Figure A7. All star levels had the same pattern of CLASS scores, scoring the highest in emotional support, scoring slightly lower in classroom organization, and significantly lower in instructional support. There was not a lot of variation across star levels, although CLASS scores at the 3- and 4-star levels were slightly higher than those at the 2-star level.

Table A2. Mean CLASS Scores by CLASS domain and star rating

Star Level	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
2 stars (n=21)	5.15	4.67	2.58
3 stars (n=17)	5.67	5.15	2.81
4 stars (n=79)	5.56	5.05	2.66

Source: Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

Figure A7. Mean CLASS scores by star rating
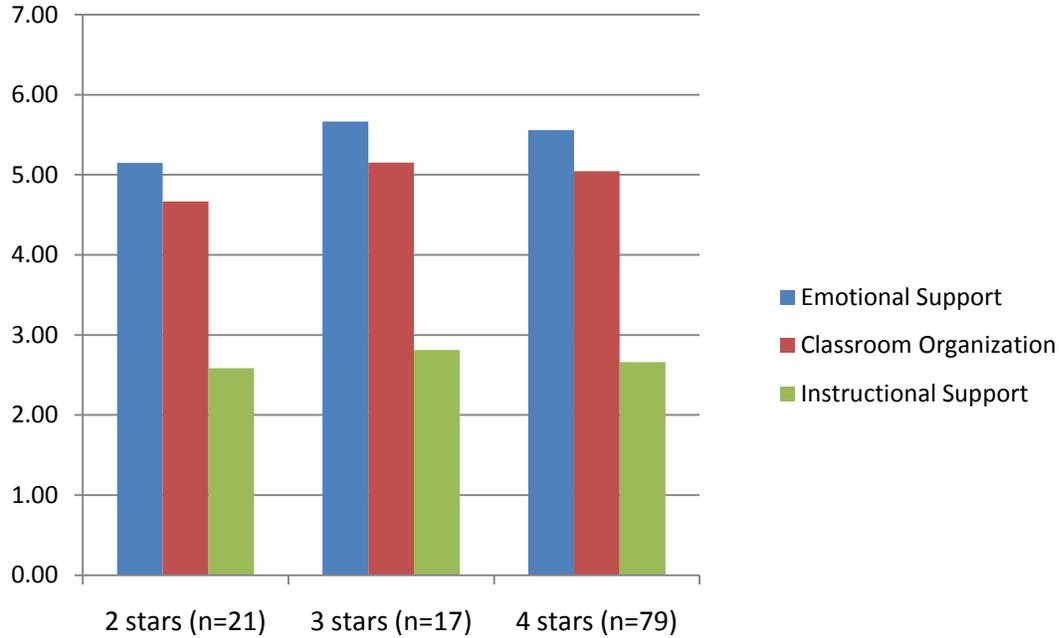
Source: Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

Programs going through the automatic rating process (including accredited center-based, Head Start, and School Readiness programs) had similar CLASS scores as fully-rated center-based programs (see Figure A8).

110

Figure A8. CLASS mean scores by domain and rating type
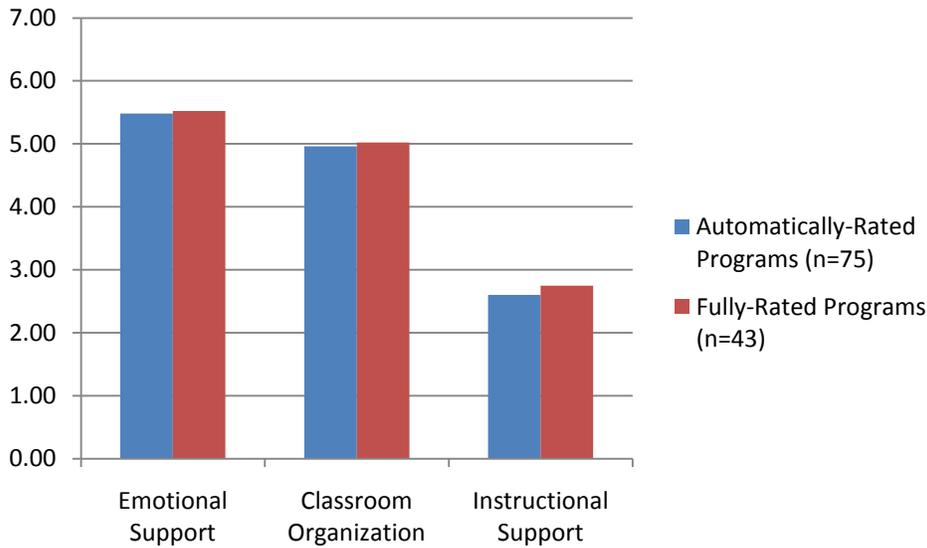
Source: Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

Summary of Observational Scores

The majority of the mean ERS scores (for ECERS-R, ECERS-E, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R) were in the "minimal quality" range (scores between 3 and 5) and some mean scores were in the "adequate quality" range (scores between 1 and 3: ECERS-E math and individual learning needs, ITERS overall mean for 2-star programs, and FCCERS-R overall mean for 1-star programs). No overall mean ERS scores for any group reached the "good quality" level (a score of 5).

Similar to the ERS scores, all mean CLASS scores were in the "low" or "mid" ranges. Mean scores for Emotional Support and Classroom Organization were in the "mid" range (scores of 3 - 5), and mean scores for Instructional Support were in the "low" range (scores of 1 – 2).

There was not a clear linear trend in the relation between observational scores and Parent Aware star ratings. There were often only slight differences in mean observational scores at the different star ratings, and in some cases higher ratings had lower observational scores than lower ratings (i.e., the overall mean ECERS-R score was lower in 4-star programs compared to 3-star programs). However, it is important to note the unequal cell sizes and these relations will be explored in greater detail in the evaluation final report. Differences between automatically-rated and fully-rated Parent Aware programs will also be explored further in the final report.

INTERVIEWEES FOR PARENT AWARE YEAR 2 DATA COLLECTION

Parent Aware Stakeholders: Implementation and Support

Minnesota Early Learning Foundation
1. Duane Benson, Executive Director
2. Laurie Davis, Policy Director

Minnesota Department of Human Services
1. Angie Jensen, Child Development Services
2. Michelle Lenhart, Child Development Services
3. Deb Swenson-Klatt, Director, Child Development Services

Minnesota Department of Education
1. Karen Klinzing, Assistant Commissioner
2. Eileen Nelson, Early Learning Services

Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network
1. Karen Fogolin, Associate Director
2. Ann McCully, Executive Director
3. Scott Parker, Community Outreach Coordinator
4. Valerie Peterson, Parent Aware Director

Resources for Child Caring
1. Sandy Myers, Director of Programs and Public Policy
2. Barb Yates, Executive Director

Child Care Resource and Referral, Inc.
1. Pat Gannon, Executive Director
2. Barb Miller, Resource and Referral Director

On-site Observations, Assessment and Training Center, University of Minnesota
1. Amy Susman-Stillman, Interim Co-Director, Center for Early Education and Development
2. Kerry Gleason, Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota
3. Allyson Candee, Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

Provider Resource Specialists
1. Wanda Hill, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network
2. Kamyala Howard, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network
3. Sue Larsen, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network
4. Gail Mahr, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network

English Language Learner Workgroup
1. Scott Parker, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network

Curriculum Review Committee
1. Jeanette Rydberg, Central Lakes College
2. Michelle Lenhart, Minnesota Department of Human Services

Other Organizations
1. Sameerah Bilal, Executive Director, Early Childhood Resource and Training Center
2. Katy Chase, Executive Director, Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association
3. Mariam Mohomed, Program Officer, McKnight Foundation
4. Maggie Olson, United Way

Legislators

1. Representative Randy Demmer (R) District: 29A, Co-Chair of Early Childhood Caucus
2. Representative Sandra Peterson (DFL) District: 45A, Co-Chair of Early Childhood Caucus
3. Representative Nora Slawik (DFL) District: 55B, Founder and Ex-officio chair of Early Childhood Caucus

Early Care and Education Program Representatives

Accredited Child Care Centers
1. Chad Dunkley, Chief Operating Officer, New Horizon Academy
2. Joy Harken, Center Director, Kindercare Learning Corporation
3. Mary Terass, Vice President of Strategic Planning, New Horizon Academy

Head Start
1. Rico Alexander, Head Start Director, Minneapolis Head Start (Partners in Community Action, Inc.)
2. Shirley Bishop, Child Development Services Director, Head Start Minnesota Valley Action Council
3. Candee Melin, Director of Operations, Minneapolis Head Start (Partners in Community Action, Inc.)

School Readiness
1. Jacqueline Felt, Program Administrator, Pre-Kindergarten Program, Saint Paul Public Schools
2. Mary Jo Hensel, Birth to Five Coordinator for the Lake Crystal Memorial School District, Lake Crystal School Readiness
3. Joyce Heyer, Center Director, Peppermint Fence, Wayzata School Readiness
4. Maureen Siewert, Executive Director of Early Education for Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis School Readiness
5. Denise Teipel, Mankato School Readiness
6. Marcia Treno, Early Childhood Coordinator for the Wayzata Public Schools, Wayzata School Readiness

Other
1. Brenda Heim, Executive Director, Caring for Kids Initiative

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Stakeholder Questions
1. Is there anything you would like to tell us or that we need to know to understand how Parent Aware fits into the programs/services you provide?
2. How do you think the implementation of Parent Aware has been going?
    a. What has been successful?
    b. What challenges have been encountered (and how have you dealt with them?)
3. What do you think have been the successes and challenges of implementing Parent Aware in terms of the following:

    a. Recruitment and participation of programs?
    b. Provision of quality improvement supports?
    c. Outreach to parents?
    d. The potential to improve quality in early care and education programs?

4. What have been the accomplishments of Parent Aware?
5. What do you think the impact of Parent Aware has been on:

    e. Early childhood programs?
    f. Families and children?
    g. The early childhood system or the way that supports and resources are structured to support quality of programs and families with young children?

6. By the end of the Parent Aware pilot in June 2011, what do you think are the ideal outcomes will be? In other words, what will success look like?
7. If Parent Aware is implemented statewide, what changes, if any, would need to be made?

Legislator Questions (Legislators were also asked Stakeholder Questions)
1. How is Parent Aware influencing your views about early childhood and where it fits on Minnesota's legislative agenda and priorities?
2. How do you think that Parent Aware 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, how?

On-Site Observations – Assessment and Training Center

1. Overall, how has the implementation of Parent Aware gone in the past year?
2. What has been successful?
3. What challenges have been encountered and how have you dealt with them?
4. Has anything changed over the past year regarding any of the following?
   a. The protocol for your visits? If so, what?
   b. The questions/concerns providers raise during a visit?
   c. Advice you give to providers?
   d. The feedback that is given to sites?
   e. Anything else?
5. What are your perceptions of how welcome you are at the child care site?
6. What are the challenges you've faced in performing the observations? How have you dealt with the challenges?
7. What sections of the observation tools typically have the highest scores? The lowest scores? How much variation have you experienced in the scores across sites?
8. What, in your opinion, is the most critical piece of support that providers need? Is this different for providers going through the re-rating process?
9. What is your sense of how much preparation providers, teachers, and/or directors are doing to prepare for the observations? Do you get a sense this is different for a re-rating?
10. What reactions have you/CEED received in response to the feedback?
11. What is the protocol for responding to provider or director reactions to the feedback? Has this changed over the past year?
12. What, if anything, about the observational piece of Parent Aware would need to be modified if Parent Aware became a state-wide program?
13. What do you think the impact of Parent Aware has been on:
    a. Early childhood programs?
    b. Families and children?
    c. The early childhood system or the way that supports and resources are structured to support quality of programs and families with young children?

Provider Resource Specialist

1. How has the implementation of Parent Aware gone in the past year?
2. What has been successful?
3. What challenges have been encountered (and how have you dealt with them?)
4. Are there additional supports that you would like to have in place to help you do your job better?
5. Has your approach or model of service changed over the past year? Please comment on any changes in the entire process from how many providers you serve at a given time, to determining which PRS visits a site, the frequency/duration of visits, what happens during a visit, and documentation/follow-up. Has anything about your work with providers become more standardized over the past year?
6. What issues do you hear about from providers?
7. Please describe your process with sites when they are receiving their re-rating?
8. Do providers have access to your services again during their re-rating?
9. Does the same PRS provide consultation with the site for the re-rating as did for the original rating?

10. Do you focus on different things with providers during a re-rating as opposed to their original rating?
11. What, in your opinion, is the most critical piece of support that providers need?
12. Over the last year, what do you think the impact of Parent Aware has been on:
    a. Early childhood programs?
    b. Families and children?
    c. The early childhood system or the way that supports and resources are structured to support quality of programs and families with young children?
13. What, if anything, about the role of the PRS would need to be modified if Parent Aware became a state-wide program?

English Language Learner Workgroup
1. What are the unique challenges faced by ELL programs/providers?
2. What are the goals of the ELL workgroup?
3. What services do you provide?
4. What have been the successes of the workgroup?
5. What have been the challenges of the workgroup and how have you addressed those challenges?
6. What are your priorities at this time?
7. How do you think the implementation of Parent Aware has been going for ELL providers?
8. What do you think have been the successes and challenges of implementing Parent Aware in terms of ELL programs and the following:
    a. Recruitment and participation of programs?
    b. Provision of quality improvement supports?
    c. Outreach to parents?
    d. The potential to improve quality in early care and education programs?
9. What have been the accomplishments of Parent Aware for ELL programs?
10. If Parent Aware is implemented statewide, what changes, if any, would need to be made to accommodate ELL programs?
11. What do you think the impact of Parent Aware has been on:
    a. Early childhood programs in the ELL community?
    b. Families and children in the ELL community?
    c. The early childhood system or the way that supports and resources are structured to support quality of ELL programs and families with young children?
12. By the end of the Parent Aware pilot in June 2011, what do you think are the ideal outcomes will be? In other words, what will success look like for ELL programs?

Curriculum Committee
1. Please describe the curriculum review/assessment review process:
2. Probes (follow up questions if not already answered):
    a. What happens when you receive a form for submitting curriculum/assessment for review?
    b. Do all submissions go to the curriculum review/assessment review committee?
    c. How many people review a(n) curriculum/assessment?
    d. How does the review process differ for published and unpublished or bundled curricula/assessments?

3. If Parent Aware is implemented statewide, what changes, if any, would need to be made to the curriculum/ assessment review processes?
4. Approximately what percentage of submitted curricula/assessments gets approved?
5. Please describe the curriculum review appeal process/assessment review appeal process for programs.
6. How many programs have appealed the committee's decision
    a. For curricula?
    b. For assessments?
7. A program can earn up to three points for the curriculum materials it submits – up to one point if the curriculum is not research-based, but if the activities in the curriculum align with ECIPs and up to three points if the program uses a research based curriculum and staff have been trained in the curriculum. Is it possible for the curriculum to receive partial credit? If so, how is partial credit determined? Ask if this question is relevant for assessments too, that is, is it possible for the assessment to receive partial credit?
8. How many people serve on the curriculum review committee/assessment review committee? Has there been any turnover?
9. How were members selected to serve on the committee? Which disciplines/fields do they represent?
10. Overall, how is the curriculum review/assessment review process going?
11. What has worked well?
12. What challenges have been encountered (and how have you dealt with them)?
13. What is the most common reason/problem for curricula/assessments not getting approval?
14. Can you describe the range of quality of submissions you've received?
15. What are your impressions of the criteria used in the review of curricula/assessments?
16. What are your impressions of the final decisions made by the committee about the curricula and assessments you have reviewed?? (probe: Has there been consensus on the final decisions? If not, how are disagreements resolved?)
17. If Parent Aware is implemented statewide, what changes, if any, would need to be made to the curriculum and assessment review processes?

Early Childhood Education Program Representatives

1. Why did you decide to participate in Parent Aware?
2. Has participating in Parent Aware affected your program? If so, would you describe the effect as positive or negative?
3. What, if any, aspects of your program's participation in Parent Aware 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?
4. Has your program received any help or resources from Parent Aware in the past year to improve your program?
   a. If so, what did you receive?
   b. What changes did your program make as a result?
5. What have been the accomplishments of Parent Aware?
6. If Parent Aware is implemented statewide, what changes, if any, would need to be made?
7. By the end of the Parent Aware pilot in June 2011, what do you think are the ideal outcomes will be? In other words, what will success look like?

DATA SOURCES FOR THE PARENT AWARE EVALUATION

Data/information for this report was collected from several sources. Short descriptions of each data source, format, and organizations responsible for data are listed in this section.

NACCRRAware, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network

NACCRRAware is a web-based data system housed by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. The Minnesota NACCRRAware dataset contains a list of all licensed Head Start/Early Head Start, center-based, preschool, and family child care programs in the state of Minnesota. It also contains information on the following variables discussed in this report: Geographical location (by Parent Aware pilot area, county, or city), accreditation status, and weekly rates charged by age group for each program. Accreditation status is updated twice a year (in late June and in December), rates information is updated once a year (April), and programs are added to the dataset on an ongoing basis. An updated dataset is sent to Child Trends quarterly. Data presented in this report represent information for a specific point in time, which is noted in each table.

Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network

The Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network staff provided Child Trends with information on Parent Aware program enrollment (numbers and types of programs enrolling in Parent Aware for each cohort), as well as rating and re-rating information for Parent Aware programs. This information was sent to Child Trends in an Excel file on December 2, 2009.

Parent Aware Rating Tool Database, Minnesota Department of Human Services

The Minnesota Department of Human Services houses the Parent Aware Rating Tool (PART) database, which contains all Parent Aware programs, their star ratings, points earned for each quality indicator that makes up the star rating, pilot area, accreditation status, and other program information. Data from PART was used to provide the number of programs rated by pilot area and star rating and all information concerning rating points for this report. All data was downloaded from the PART website in December, 2009, and was cleaned and modified via communication between Child Trends and DHS through February, 2010.

Environment Rating Scales Data System, Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

The Environment Rating Scales data (ECERS-R, ITERS, and FCCERS) are collected and entered into the Environment Rating Scales Data System by the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) at the University of Minnesota. The data are housed by Branagh Information Group and were downloaded by Child Trends on January 20, 2010.

Environment Rating Scales Extension (ECERS-E), Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

The ECERS-E data are also collected by CEED and scoring sheets are stored on the University of Minnesota server. Child Trends accesses the scoring sheets and enters the data into an Excel file. ECERS-E data was accessed on January, 7, 2010.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) data, Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) data are collected and entered into an Excel file by CEED. The CEED data file is stored on a server at the University of Minnesota and was accessed by Child Trends on January 28, 2010.

Survey of Programs Participating in Parent Aware, Child Trends

All programs participating in the Evaluation of Parent Aware are asked to complete a survey. Targeted surveys are created for program directors, classroom teachers, and family child care providers. Survey Monkey was used initially as the data collection method. However, due to a poor response rate, a decision was made to use a paper survey mailed to participants. Eighty-nine directors were mailed/emailed the survey between December, 2008 and October, 2009, and 54 directors completed and returned the survey (61%). Sixty-five family child care providers were mailed the survey between January, 2009 and September, 2009. Thirty family child care providers completed the survey (46%). Even with frequent reminders and a $25 gift card for completing survey, the response rates for the survey were disappointing. Efforts are underway in the second round of the survey to increase the response rate.